

Effective Solutions

CITY OF MORGANTON  
2015 COMPREHENSIVE  
RECREATION MASTER PLAN

City of Morganton, NC

June, 1997



**2015 COMPREHENSIVE  
RECREATION MASTER PLAN**

**RECREATION DEPARTMENT  
CITY OF MORGANTON, NC**

**JUNE 1997**

**PREPARED BY:  
WOOLPERT  
8731 RED OAK BOULEVARD  
CHARLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA 28217**

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## **Acknowledgments**

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### **Recreation Advisory Commission**

Chris Stephens, Chair  
Clyde Eskridge  
David Smith  
Eddie Hicks  
Edith Brothers  
Larry Brewer  
Johnny Morrison  
Lawrence Whitesides

### **Recreation Foundation & Master Plan Team Members**

Doug Smith  
Terri Robinson  
Jerry Norvell

### **Recreation Department**

Gary Leonhardt, Director  
Butch McSwain, Assistant Director

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*This document is the Executive Summary of the Morganton — 2015 Comprehensive Recreation Master Plan prepared in 1997. Refer to the full Comprehensive Master Plan report for accompanying tables, exhibits, and maps.*

### Master Plan Purpose

- This document assesses the current and future park recreation needs for the City of Morganton over the next eighteen years and establishes a guide for meeting these needs. The overall goal of the plan is to provide a long range plan for parks recreation and open space that adequately addresses the short and long term recreation needs for all citizens within the community. The plan was accomplished through the efforts of the city staff, the Recreation Advisory Committee and Woolpert.
- The Recreation Department and Planning Department requested that a master plan be completed and that recommendations be developed for the following specific areas:
  - Renovations to existing facilities or proposed new facilities
  - Changes to existing programs or adding new programs
  - Expansion of existing parks or acquisition of new sites
  - Joint use of school facilities
  - Aquatic facilities
  - Cross over recreation with Burke County
  - Community centers, auditoriums, and meeting space
- The main purpose of this document is to provide the City of Morganton with an accurate, usable plan to guide its actions and decisions concerning:
  - The future recreation role for the City;
  - Park renovations, acquisitions, and developments;
  - Facility renovations and developments;
  - Recreation programming strategies.
- The Master Plan is organized into five major components:
  1. Review of Demographic Information
  2. Inventory of Existing Recreation Facilities
  3. Community Needs Assessment
  4. Master Plan Proposals and Recommendations
  5. Action Plan Implementation

### DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

- Total land area for the City encompasses approximately 18 square miles. The planning area for this study is approximately 60 square miles and includes land defined by the Extra-territorial Jurisdiction (ETJ) boundary for the City. This boundary coincides with the study limits of the 1996 Morganton Thoroughfare Plan, from which population data for this plan was obtained.
- The growth potential of Morganton appears to be moderate leading into the 21st century. Capable infrastructure, quality of life influences, and strategic location on a major interstate highway are significant factors that enhance its growth potential.

- Population information provided for this plan came from 1990 US Census Data, 1996 Morganton Thoroughfare Plan prepared by NCDOT, North Carolina Municipal Population 95, and data from Sales and Marketing Management, 1995 Survey of Buying Power. The data from NCDOT, encompasses a study area of approximately 60 square miles which is larger than the area defined by Extra-territorial Jurisdiction (ETJ) boundary for the city of Morganton. The NCDOT study area is the basis for the population figures used in this study for the planning area.
- Between 1980 and 1990, the annual growth rate was .92%. The population growth rate between 1990 and 1996, as estimated by the State Planning Office was 8.76% overall and 1.41% per year. The growth is primarily attributed to annexation.
- Population projections for Morganton and the Planning area from 1996 to 2015 are as follows:

	1996	2000	2005	2010	2015
City of Morganton	16,407 <sup>2</sup>	17,019 <sup>4</sup>	17,816	18,651	19,525
Planning Area	28,359 <sup>3</sup>	28,930	29,661	30,410	31,180

- The median age is 39.8 years old as compared with the 34.4 years old within the overall state. The largest segment of the population falls within the age group of over 50, which accounts for 34.6% of the population. Trends indicate the median age will continue to increase through the planning period.

## ANALYSIS OF EXISTING PARK FACILITIES

- The inventory of existing recreation facilities in Morganton was compiled and site inspections were conducted by Woolpert. Inspections focused on determining the number and types of facilities provided at each site. The inventory did not include a detailed assessment as to the quality and condition of each facility. The facilities as offered in Morganton and the planning area are presented in the following categories: Recreation center and gymnasiums, park sites, and special use facilities, Burke County park facilities, state/regional park facilities, and school recreation facilities. (See Existing Facilities Map for park facility locations)

## RECREATION STANDARDS AND COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

- The identification of community needs of new recreation programs and park facilities were determined by using three separate assessment techniques: public involvement, group interviews and recreation standards. One of the most important aspects in preparing a comprehensive master plan is to solicit public comment on the perceived recreation and park needs in the community.
- Eighteen special interest group meetings were held between January 21, 1997 and January 23, 1997 to solicit input for the plan. Each group was asked to identify services, needs, activities or important issues pertaining to recreational services, programs, and facilities provided by the city. In addition two public workshops were held to solicit public input.



- A community-wide public workshop was held on January 30, 1997. Input statements from the special interest group meetings were displayed at the workshop, and participants were given the opportunity to read the statements concerning the recreation needs of the community. In a democratic fashion, participants were given the opportunity to vote any statements they supported.
- In addition to the public workshop input, written statements from Morganton citizens or groups were received and incorporated into the public involvement process.
- The following represents a brief summary of the key issues brought forward at the community workshop meeting that had high community support: (a complete summary is provide in Section 3 of the report, divided into statements concerning facilities, programs, or policies)

#### **Facility Statements**

- An indoor pool is needed in the community for all forms of water recreation. (recreational swimming, competitive swimming, swimming instruction, and exercise classes).
- An indoor pool is needed because existing facilities cannot provide adequate time for all the existing users.
- There is a strong need for more gymnasium space because existing facilities are currently overloaded with programed activities and there is no place for practice and open play.
- There is a strong need for more sports fields (especially soccer, baseball and softball) because existing facilities are currently overloaded with programed activities and there is no place for practice and open play. This causes overuse of fields and contributes to poor quality of playing surfaces.
- Consider the Edwards Nursery site as a potential new multi-use park, where the new athletic fields could be located.
- The City Council is committed to continuing with the development of the Catawba River Greenway. The initial phases have been well received by the community because it satisfies the needs of many users (nature walkers, joggers, bicyclists, etc.).
- Provide bike routes for safe access to facilities

#### **Program Statements**

- The Morganton community is very recreation oriented and is desiring diverse facilities and programs to meet their needs.
- Keeping tournaments in Morganton will keep dollars here also (gas, restaurants, hotels, etc.).
- Expand programs for kids at risk and provide easily accessible locations for these activities.
- Provide environmental and educational programs associated with the greenway and the parks

#### **Policy Statements**

- Recreation facilities and programs must be affordable and accessible to all segments of the community, especially those who cannot afford "private memberships".
- Many people moving into the area will probably live outside the Morganton City limits, but will depend upon the recreation facilities and programs that the City offers. Fees must be revaluated for non- residents.
- A successful recreation bond will need to be tied to various recreation improvements throughout the City, and not just to one special use facility such as a swimming pool.

- Recreation Department does an excellent job providing facilities and programs with limited resources
  - Try to get money for recreation improvements through federal or state grants.
  - a strong Recreation Department with numerous programs can help keep the youth of the community active in a positive way and will help reduce crime
  - Bring in an outside consultant to help further research the need for an indoor pool, and help with a bond promotion.
  - Funding will have to come from many sources but a key source will be the private sector. Alliances will be needed.
  - An indoor pool, if jointly developed with other entities will require policies on maintenance, operation, and funding.
- In preparing the Master Plan, standards developed by organizations including the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) and the North Carolina Department of Environment Health and Natural Resources, (NCDEHNR) were analyzed to support the development of individual standards for Morganton. Specific circumstances such as varying natural resources, cultural conditions, economic conditions, land use availability and community needs helped to determine the unique standards for Morganton.

#### **Park Classifications and Land requirements**

- The types of parks which will be needed by the end of the planning period (year 2015) based upon the acreage standards provided in Table 3-2 of the report includes:
  - District Parks - 156 acres or 1 district park
  - Community Park - 187 acres or 5-6 community parks.
  - Neighborhood Parks - 62 acres or 6-7 neighborhood parks
  - Mini-Park - 7.8 acres, or 8-10 mini- parks.

#### **Facility Standards and Needs**

- Minimum standards for recreational facilities (i.e., ballfields, courts, outdoor areas, etc.) have been developed for Morganton in accordance with guidelines established by the NRPA and the NCDEHNR.
- Based upon the standards immediate needs for additional facilities include:
 

(4) Youth baseball fields	(12) Play areas
(2) Softball fields	(4) Neighborhood centers
(7) Soccer fields	(4-5) Miles of and walking/hiking trails
(2) Volleyball courts	(18) Miles of bike paths
(8) Picnic facilities/tables	(4.7) Miles of canoe stream miles
- Through the year 2015 the facility needs increase to the following totals:
 

(1) Swimming pool	(16) Play areas
(1) Baseball field (adult)	(5-6) Miles of and walking/hiking trails
(1) Football fields	(21) Miles of bike paths
(16) Picnic facilities/tables	(5.2) Miles of canoe stream miles

### **MASTER PLAN PROPOSAL RECOMMENDATIONS**

- In order to present a realistic plan of meeting the recreational needs of the future, three master plan scenarios were developed as part of the overall planning process. Proposals and recommendations were prepared for each scenario and the plans were

evaluated as to how well each addressed the recreational needs of the community. The plans were presented and reviewed with the Recreation Advisory Committee.

### Roles

- Meeting all the recreational needs of the community will require a joint effort between the various government agencies and the private sector. No one group can be held solely responsible for providing all the programs and facilities for the community. The following is a recommendation summary describing the roles of each recreational providers over the next 18 year period:
  - The state of North Carolina should continue to offer a variety of recreational facilities and programs on a multi-county regional basis.
  - The state of North Carolina should also financially assist Morganton in the acquisition and development of new parks, and renovations of existing parks, through a state grant programs.
  - Burke County needs to supplement the recreation and park facilities that are offered throughout the City.
  - The primary focus for both the City of Morganton and Burke County is to insure that recreational facilities and programs are available to satisfy the needs for their citizens. Through cooperation and coordination, some of these facilities and programs may be offered jointly by the city and county.
  - Morganton will be responsible for providing community, neighborhood, and mini parks and should request assistance from Burke County for the development of the Edwards Nursery site as a city-wide/district park. Additionally the city should seek assistance for Special Use Parks such as greenways, trails, and sports complexes. The planning for parks and facilities needs to be closely coordinated between Morganton and Burke.
  - The Master Plan is based on the premise that Morganton recreation system will be serving a study area population of 31,180 people by the year 2015.
  - The schools in the area should assist in serving the community by supplying existing school sites for active recreation. A joint use agreement between the school system and the Morganton Recreation Department will require a cooperative effort to ensure best use of community resources.
  - It will be important through the year 2015 that the quasi-public sector continue to their support role in providing recreation facilities and programs.
  - Large industries such as Dana, Shadowline Industries, and Henredon Furniture, can play a vital role in assisting the city with providing leisure services.
  - Land developers should be responsible for the dedication of open space when it is associated with the development of residential, commercial, or industrial properties within the city ordinances and codes. The land development process provides an excellent opportunity to gain additional land for natural area preservation and greenway development.

### Park Proposals and Recommendations

- It is recommended by the year 2015 that Morganton makes provisions for: (1) district/city-wide park, (5) community parks, (6) neighborhood parks, (8) mini-parks, (2) neighborhood centers, (1) community center, (1) special use athletic/soccer park, (1) centrally located indoor pool, and (12) miles of greenways/urban bike paths and promotion of a rural bike route. (see the Park Master Plan and proposal summaries listed below by park type)

**City-Wide/District Parks**

- A district park provides active and passive recreational opportunities; is easily accessible by the population it serves within a 5-10 mile radius; contains a minimum of 5 acres per 1,000 population and is a minimum of 200 acres.
- The city-wide/district park should be located at the Ralph Edwards Nursery Site ( $\pm 200$  acres) on the Catawba River. The site master plan for the park that encompasses approximately 150-acres and includes facilities such as softball fields, soccer fields, tennis courts, camping, educational/nature center, greenway connections, and river access points.
- Currently the City nor the County provide this type of facility.
- Typically, counties take responsibility of developing District Parks while cities and towns focus on providing community and neighborhood parks. However the City has been looking at purchasing the Nursery Site for a “city-wide park”.
- The proposed park is an opportunity for the City to actively seek support from the County in developing a park. It’s an opportunity for both governing bodies to share in a project for the citizens of the planning area.

**Community Parks**

- Collett Street Center/Turner Park - to remain the same size, however additional facilities such as an indoor pool, play area, and picnic facilities may be located at this site. The park will need general renovations through the planning period. In addition, the existing outdoor pool may need to be replaced by the end of the planning period. A pool study should be performed for locating an indoor pool at this site. In conjunction with this study the master plan will be updated.
- Freedom Park - Expansion of the park is not proposed. Facilities in the park appear spread out, which make the park look poorly planned. The park layout should be evaluated to optimize the use of park land and eliminate conflicting uses. Conflicting uses such as the basketball courts at the park entrance, and walking paths abutting the tennis courts may be improved or eliminated through redesign. Additional parking is needed for peak use periods and a widened walking trail will improve use. Redesign will allow for additional recreation facilities such group picnic facilities and play apparatus. The park will require general renovations and an updated site master plan is needed.
- Bethel Park - The park will remain same size and primarily serving residents in the east Morganton area. The park requires general renovations including those for the track/soccer field. Similar to Freedom Park this park appears to be spread out and arranged randomly. An example is the location of the main parking area next to neighboring residences; and the location of the basketball courts next to the tennis courts. The arrangement of park elements should be evaluated to optimize use of park land, eliminate conflicting uses, and increase overall participation. More parking is needed during peak use periods. The park will be affected a by a future roadway project that will abut the park property. The road project may be an opportunity to expand the park and update a site master plan.
- Shadowline Park - This leased facility needs overall general renovations and improvements to the soccer fields, play equipment, and picnic facilities. The 2 mile radius service area of approximately a serving those in north Morganton. Allow for additional recreation facilities. The park may need to be replaced by another northern site if the lease is not renewed with Shadowline Industries.
- “South or North Community Park” - One new community park is needed in the area by 2015. A southern location is proposed using the joint use of state property near Western Piedmont. The park will have a 2-3 mile service radius

serving those in south Morganton. A combination of active and passive recreation facilities should be provided and a site master plan is needed. An alternate location for a community park is shown on the master plan in the northern part of the city. This site is suggested for two reasons: 1. As a replacement for Shadowline Park if the lease is discontinued; 2. As an alternate location, in lieu of the south site, if urban growth to the north develops a demand faster than to the south.

### **Neighborhood Parks**

- Mountainview/Martin Luther King, Carbon, and Parker Road Parks - The existing sites will remain the same size and primarily serving adjacent neighborhoods. Some of the elements in these parks, such as softball fields and group picnic shelters will make their service radii larger than typically found for neighborhood parks. All parks will require general park renovations such as improved play equipment.
- “Northern, South and Hillcrest Neighborhood Parks” - A total of three neighborhood parks are recommended by the 2015. The parks should be 8-10 acres and be located in the areas where the city is expanding and in the area near Hillcrest school. Sites can to be acquired through the land development process, through Community Development projects, or through coordination with the school system. Neighborhood centers are also proposed for the South Neighborhood Park and Hillcrest sites, (see individual facility proposals and recommendations). The parks will consist of primarily active recreation facilities. Site master plans will be required for each park.

### **Special Use Parks**

- Shuey Park - This park is characterized as a special use facility for softball and baseball is to remain the same size. The park is in overall good condition and will require only minor renovations and additions such as play equipment and picnic facilities. The existing softball fields are short for current standards of play, (280' vs 300'), and expansion should be reviewed. The development of new softball facilities in the city will most likely make these fields available for lower level league play and practice.
- 40 Acre Soccer Site - The need for soccer facilities was made very evident during the public involvement process. The facility standards recommend that 6-7 new fields be constructed by 2015. The site, located near the Catawba greenway, is being purchased by the City from Crescent Resources (Duke Power) and is suitable for development of soccer fields. A site master plan is to be prepared to determine how many fields can be located at the site.

### **Mini-Parks**

- Children's Park - This play area facility is in excellent condition and is used by the entire city. Expansion of the park is not proposed and the park will only require routine renovation and maintenance through the planning period.
- Various Locations - The recreation standards established in Section 3 recommended that Morganton 8 mini parks by the year 2015. Morganton has four existing sites, including Children's Park, that primarily serve the central area of the city. The four new mini-parks should be scattered throughout the city as land is made available. The sites can be acquired through cooperative efforts with neighborhood associations, land developers, and community development projects.

### Greenways/Bike Route

- Catawba River Greenway - The existing greenway project has proven to be a very successful recreation opportunity for the city. The master plan proposes to expand the greenway to connect with downtown, other park sites, and the proposed bike route. The greenway corridor of  $\pm 13$  miles will primarily will follow the Catawba River and Hunting Creek. It will also connect through urban walkways and trails to the downtown area. Most of the proposed greenway is to be located on sewer and road right-of-ways; or easements and other government properties which will reduce the need for land acquisition.
- Rural Bike Route - A rural bike route of approximately 20 miles heading toward Lake James is proposed for the plan. The route will use existing roads to connect to the greenway system and Freedom Park. Construction of off road trails would be part of the greenway system and the bike route would only require minor funding for signage and promotion of the route.

### Facility Proposals and Recommendations

- Individual facility improvements that need to be strongly considered in future park development include the following:
  - (1) adult baseball fields be added at a city-wide/district park or community park;
  - (4) youth baseball fields be added at a city-wide/district park or community park;
  - (4) softball fields ( $\pm 300'$ ) be added at city-wide/district park or community park;
  - (1) football field at one of the community park sites;
  - (6-7) soccer fields be added at a special facility, city-wide/district park and/or community parks;
  - (2-4) additional volleyball courts be provided community, neighborhood, or special use parks;
  - (1) large group picnic pavilion/ shelter be added at a city-wide/district park;
  - (4) group picnic shelters be added at community parks sites;
  - (4) small group picnic shelters be added at neighborhood park sites;
  - (16) new playgrounds be provided throughout the park system;
  - (12) miles of new nature / hiking trails be provided throughout the park system;
  - (1) indoor swimming facility be provided at a central city location,
  - (2) neighborhood centers (1 with a gym) be added by year 2015.

### Program Recommendations

- Forecasting of specific recreation program needs on a long-range basis is an extremely difficult task. The interest and needs of a community can differ so rapidly and are influenced by unpredictable cultural, economic, social, and technological factors. It is, however, important to have an overall philosophical direction regarding programming for decision-making purposes. To perhaps overly simplify, programming is a process which includes the following steps:
  - Define Program Mission Statement
  - Assess Specific Program Needs
  - Define Operational Goals and Objectives
  - Evaluate Programs
- In Section 3, "Community Needs Assessment of Recreation and Facilities" numerous program improvement suggestions were offered by the general community. The following statement deserve further consideration by the city, and if proven worthy, action should take place immediately.

- Better communication of available programs is needed in the community. Consider a citywide communication network encompassing news media, public schools, churches, civic organizations, all local government agencies.
  - Better awareness of the comprehensive nature of available programs is needed in the community. For example, there is currently a perception that programming is slanted towards adult athletics when in reality there are more organized youth teams. More staff time is devoted to youth athletics than adult athletics.
  - Consider extended hours of operation and schedule flexibility. Give the youth a place to “hang out” especially during the evening hours.
  - Expand athletic programs for females in the community.
  - Continue professional development of recreation staff so they may become better skilled at leading new programs and services.
  - Make Morganton a better place to live and work through enhanced quality of life leisure programs such as cultural and performing arts, trails and greenways, and community beautification.
  - Make Morganton an environmentally aware community demonstrated through programs involving recycling, greenways, and environmental interpretation.
  - Consider consolidation of city and county facilities and programs regarding youth athletics. Additional facilities and programs may wish to be considered after evaluating the success/failure of consolidating youth athletics.
  - Encourage a more comprehensive and coordinated community approach to recreation including the use of schools (athletics, swimming pools, and playgrounds), quasi-public (church, YMCA) programs, and the private sector.
- The park and facility proposals have been prioritized into three separate time frames for implementation. The prioritization was influenced by the evaluation of existing facilities, the community needs assessment and the financial ability of the city to implement the overall capital improvement plan.

#### **Years 1998-2000**

- Provide general on-going renovations to existing facilities at all community, neighborhood, and special use sites/parks including the Old Armory building.
- Purchase 200 acres of property to begin design of a district/city-wide park at the Ralph Edwards Nursery site. Funds for purchasing the property are coming from a sale of city property for watershed protection.
- Commit the 40 acres which was recently purchased next to the Catawba Greenway for development of a special use facility for soccer.
- Begin acquiring property along the designated greenway routes and start developing facilities where possible.
- Create a mini-park site and install play apparatus at neighborhood park sites.
- Negotiate with the school system to enter into a joint use agreement that is beneficial to both parties for use of facilities and programs.

#### **Years 2001-2005**

- Continue to provide on-going renovations to existing facilities at community, neighborhood, and special use sites.
- Purchase property and develop a mini-park in the city.
- Purchase 8-10 acres of property and develop a new neighborhood park in the Hillcrest area of Morganton.
- Develop Phase I of the district/city-wide park at the Ralph Edwards Nursery site along the Catawba River.
- Continue to acquire property along the designated greenway routes and continue development of facilities where possible.
- Develop an indoor pool facility to meet the needs of recreational, competitive, and instructional swimming programs.

**Years 2006-2010**

- Continue to provide on-going renovations to existing and new facilities at community, neighborhood, and special use parks.
- Purchase another 8-10 acres of property and develop a second new neighborhood park in south Morganton.
- Purchase property and develop a mini-park in the city.
- Develop Phase II of the district/city-wide park at the Ralph Edwards Nursery site along the Catawba River.
- Develop a neighborhood center with a gymnasium at one of the proposed neighborhood park sites.
- Continue to acquire property along the designated greenway routes and continue development of facilities.

**Years 2011-2015**

- Continue to provide on-going renovations to existing and new facilities at community, neighborhood, and special use parks.
- Purchase another 8-10 acres of property and develop a second new neighborhood park in north Morganton.
- Purchase property and develop a mini-park in the city.
- Develop Phase III of the district/city-wide park at the Ralph Edwards Nursery site along the Catawba River.
- Develop a neighborhood center without a gymnasium at one of the proposed neighborhood park sites.
- Continue to acquire property along the designated greenway routes and continue development of facilities.
- Purchase 30-40 acres of property and develop a new community park in north or south Morganton.

**ACTION PLAN IMPLEMENTATION**

- The capital improvement program for the acquisition and development of parks is for a eighteen year period. All of the proposed costs are shown in 1997 dollar values. The capital improvement costs include for land acquisition, site preparation, site utilities, access and parking along with specific recreation improvements. The capital improvement plan also includes for estimated planning and design fees. The capital improvement program can be summarized into the following components:

Renovation/Maintenance Program	\$1,375,000
Land Acquisition Program	1,930,000
Park Development Program	7,810,000
Special Use Facilities Development Program	<u>11,770,000</u>
Total Capital Improvement Cost	\$22,885,000

This total equates to spending approximately \$1,271,389 annually through the year 2015.

- The proposed operations budget includes cost for staff, operations, and general maintenance requirements similar to those that are currently being performed by the Recreation Department.
- The grand total cost for operations through the year 2015 is estimated to be \$26,368,295 or approximately \$1,464,905 per year throughout the 18-year period. The 18 year per capita cost average equals \$80.01 which indicates a 3.5% annual increase through the planning period.



- The Morganton Recreation Department's structure and number of personnel appears to be consistent with other similar size municipal departments in the state. All existing positions within the Department are warranted but responsibilities are recommended to change over the next 18 years. A new organizational structure for the Department will include the following positions:
  - Parks Superintendent/District Park Manager
  - Administrative Specialist/Secretary I
  - Aquatics Superintendent/Manager
  - Program Supervisor
  - Neighborhood Center Director
  - Laborers
- The following is a listing of potential funding revenue sources that Morganton will need to consider in financing the proposals and recommendations of the Master Plan:
 

— General Tax Revenues	— Fees and Charges
— General Obligation Bonds	— Contributions
— Federal Assistance	— General Foundations
— State Assistance	— Partnership Structures
- Methods available to Morganton for acquiring and developing parks as recommended in the Master Plan include the following:
 

— Fee Simple Purchase	— Local Gifts
— Fee Simple With Lease-Back or Resale	— Life Estate
— Long-Term Option	— Easement
— First Right of Purchase	— Zoning/Subdivision Regulations/Mandatory Dedication

#### Proposed Funding Strategy

- The average municipal expenditure from the general fund for parks and recreation has ranged from \$58.00 to \$62.00 per capita throughout North Carolina municipalities. Communities of similar size to Morganton (Municipal Class D) average \$62.57 per capita for FY 95/96. In the past the Morganton Parks and Recreation Department has operated in the \$57.00 to \$65.00 range. With this in mind, it appears that Morganton falls within the average ranges in the state.
- Over the next 18 years, the City of Morganton will not be able to support the overall capital improvements and operations budget of \$49,253,295 solely through the general fund. A combination of revenue services will need to be applied. There are numerous combinations of funding strategies that can be explored and implemented by the City Council. This Master Plan proposes that City Council begin the process by evaluating the following strategy:
  - If allocations from the general fund are maintained as shown in Table 5-2 at average of \$80.01 per capita throughout the next 18 years, it will provide approximately \$26,368,295 for the Recreation Department. This equates to 53.54% of the total projected expenditures for capital improvements and operations, or 100% of the operations budget. Based on current trends, the Morganton Recreation Department should be able to return approximately 18%-20% of the operations budget, (approx.\$9.0 million), back into the general fund through fees and charges.
  - General obligation bonds should be used in acquiring and developing new park facilities. A minimum goal of \$9.0 million should come from bonds. This represents approximately 39% of the proposed capital improvement program and

18.27% of the total budget. Bonds could be formatted in three separate campaigns at ±\$3.0 million each, spaced four years apart.

- A combination of gifts, mandatory land dedication, grants and other revenue sources will need to offset the remaining \$4.93 million, 10% of the total budget, to implement the Master Plan. The state, Burke County and the private sector should be aggressively approached in helping with this financing.

**Funding Strategy Summary**

Source	Percentage of Overall Budget	Amount
General Fund	53.54%	\$26,368,295
Bonds	18.27%	\$9,000,000
Gifts, Grants, & Foundations	10.00%	\$4,925,330
<u>Revenues</u>	<u>18.19%</u>	<u>\$8,959,670</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>\$49,253,295</b>

**Benefits of Parks and Recreation**

- The vast majority of the American public use and benefit from the service and facilities provided by their local recreation and parks department and the citizens of Morganton are no different. Recreation services and parks are valuable resources for many different reasons. These benefits can be categorized into personal, environmental, social, activity-oriented, and economic.
- According to the Benefit's of Local Recreation and Park Services: A Nationwide Study of the Perceptions of the American Public, individuals feel they benefit the most from recreation when they participate in programs that provide exercise and fitness. As a result, a large segment of the population views parks and recreation agencies as being health and wellness organizations.
- Environmentally, parks provide habitat for wildlife, and green space for wildlife viewing. Socially, recreation and parks help to foster community awareness or a "sense of community."
- Recreation and parks departments provide many recreational activities that would not otherwise be available to the general public.
- The economic benefits of parks and recreation is perceived differently by various segments of the community. For example, developers, and realtors consider whether the facilities increase property values, increase selling time of property or persuades a corporate relocation.
- Whether it be personal, environmental, social, activity-oriented or economic, benefits of recreation and park services can be summarized as simply providing a better way of life for the community and its citizens.

Effective Solutions

Section



WOOLPERT

## SECTION 1

### REVIEW OF DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

#### INTRODUCTION

The City of Morganton was founded in 1784 as Morganborough, the trading center and county seat of Burke County, North Carolina. It was later renamed the town Morganton and was incorporated in 1885. The City is located in the western part of North Carolina along the Appalachian Mountain Range and Interstate 40, about 55 miles east of Asheville, and 70 miles northwest of Charlotte. As Burke County's largest and most populous city, Morganton is a major service center for retail, commercial, administrative, and governmental services in the region. Total land area for the City encompasses approximately 18 square miles. The planning area for this study is approximately 60 square miles and includes land defined by the Extra-territorial Jurisdiction (ETJ) boundary for the City. This boundary coincides with the study limits of the 1996 Morganton Thoroughfare Plan, from which population data for this plan was obtained. The Catawba River bounds the City to the north, Interstate 40 to the south, the town of Drexel to the east, and the town of Glen Alpine to the west. The population according to the 1990 US Census was 15,085 for the City and approximately 27,500 for the planning area. The estimated growth rate for the planning area through the year 2015 is approximately .5% per year. The estimated growth rate for only the City of Morganton through the year 2015 is approximately .92% per year. At these rates of growth the Morganton Recreation Department can count on serving a City population of 19,525, and a planning area of 31,180 by the year 2015. Population characteristics are further outlined in this chapter under the demographic information and cultural factors. In order to maintain the quality of life standards it has attained, Morganton must use good planning practices to accommodate for this future population and associated impacts. An officially adopted master plan will help the City in make decisions regarding the development of existing and future recreation facilities and guide this development to meet the needs of the entire community.

#### MASTER PLAN PURPOSE

The City Council, Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee, Planning Department and the Parks and Recreation staffs have recognized the urgency in preparing a new Comprehensive Recreation Master Plan for the City. The only other adopted park plan in the city's history was completed in the 1970's. This plan was prepared by the Morganton Recreation Foundation and analyzed the recreation needs for the City and provided recommendations for potential development. The 1973 Community Facilities Report prepared by Traffic Planning Associates, also helped to address facility needs, and the need for new park sites. The Recreation Department and Planning Department requested that a master plan be completed and that recommendations be developed for the following specific areas:

- Renovations to existing facilities or proposed new facilities
- Changes to existing programs or adding new programs
- Expansion of existing parks or acquisition of new sites
- Joint use of school facilities
- Aquatic facilities
- Cross over recreation with Burke County
- Community centers, auditoriums, and meeting space

Woolpert was assigned the responsibility of evaluating the existing park facilities and developing new strategies for meeting future recreation needs through the year 2015. In preparing the master plan, Woolpert worked closely with the Recreation Commission, Recreation Department Staff, and Planning Department staff. A key objective in preparing the plan was to extensively involve the community in helping to identify both current and future recreation needs.

The main purpose of this document is to provide the City of Morganton with an accurate, usable plan to guide its actions and decisions concerning:

- The future recreation role for the City;
- Park renovations, acquisitions, and developments;
- Facility renovations and developments;
- Recreation programming strategies.

The Master Plan is organized into five major components:

1. Review of Demographic Information
2. Inventory of Existing Recreation Facilities
3. Community Needs Assessment
4. Master Plan Proposals and Recommendations
5. Action Plan Implementation

## **REVIEW OF DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION**

Demographic information for the City of Morganton has been reviewed to gain an understanding of the unique characteristics of the community, and to identify factors that may influence park planning. The current and projected factors pertinent to the City of Morganton are presented in two categories: cultural factors and natural factors. Cultural factors include existing land use, future land use, historical properties, transportation, economy, and population trends and projections. Natural factors considered are physiographic features, water resources, and unique natural areas.

## **CULTURAL FACTORS**

### **Growth Potential**

The growth potential of Morganton appears to be moderate leading into the 21st century. Capable infrastructure, quality of life influences, and strategic location along a major interstate highway are significant factors that enhance its growth potential. The City has a good water supply for future development and Interstate Highway 40 (I-40) provides

easy access to large urban centers such as Asheville to the west, and the Triad to the east. Factors that limit growth potential for the City are low unemployment rate and scarcity of developable sites for nonresidential uses. Refer to the location map to see the proximity of Morganton within North Carolina.

## Population

Information concerning the demographic characteristics of the population such as age, sex, and income play a significant role in determining recreational needs and demands for the community. Population information provided for this plan came from 1990 US Census Data, 1996 Morganton Thoroughfare Plan prepared by NCDOT, North Carolina Municipal Population 95, and data from Sales and Marketing Management, 1995 Survey of Buying Power. The data from NCDOT, encompasses a study area that exceeds the Morganton city limits. The NCDOT study area is approximately 60 square miles which is larger than the area defined by Extra-territorial Jurisdiction (ETJ) boundary for the city of Morganton. The NCDOT study area is the basis for the population figures used in this study for the planning area.

The projected growth rate for Burke County and Morganton is modest as compared with the state and the Hickory-Morganton-Lenoir Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). Between 1980 and 1990, the growth rate for the state was 12.7% while the growth rate for the MSA was 7.7%. Morganton's population growth rate between 1990 and 1996, as estimated by the State Planning Office was 8.76% overall or 1.41% per year. This high rate of growth is primarily attributed to annexation and is one reason for using the moderate population projections developed for the planning area by NCDOT in the 1996 Morganton Thoroughfare Plan. Additionally, the study's use of moderate growth projections for the City of Morganton are based upon a historical annual growth rate of .92% between 1980 and 1990 per US Census data.

Population projections for the City of Morganton (annual growth rate of .92%) and the planning area (annual growth rate of .50%), through the year 2015 are as follows:

	1990 <sup>1</sup>	1996	2000	2005	2010	2015
Morganton, City of	15,085	16,407 <sup>2</sup>	17,019 <sup>4</sup>	17,816	18,651	19,525
Planning Area	N/A	28,359 <sup>3</sup>	28,930	29,661	30,410	31,180

<sup>1</sup> Source: 1990 US Census

<sup>2</sup> Source: Office of State Planning, certified estimate of municipal population, "North Carolina Municipal Population"

<sup>3</sup> Source: NCDOT population projection based on a 1994 Planning Area base population of 28,078 and a .5% annual growth rate.

<sup>4</sup> Source: Woolpert population projection based on a .92% annual growth rate (per 1980 and 1990 US Census data) applied to the 1996 Morganton base population of 16,407.

The City of Morganton is currently approximately 91% white and 9% non-white as compared with the state's percentage of 75.8% white and 24.2% non-white. The median age (1995 Market and Marketing Management Data) is 39.8 years old as compared with the 34.4 years old within the overall state. The largest segment of the population falls within the age group of over 50, which accounts for 34.6% of the population. Age group 35-50 follows with 23.1%, and then age the group less than 18 with 19.4%. The aging population is expected to continue through the planning period and will likely increase in total number.

TABLE 1-2 POPULATION BY AGE					
Area	Less than 18	18-24	25-34	35-50	Over 50
Morganton	19.4%	8.5%	14.4%	23.1%	34.6%
Burke County	23.8%	9.1%	14.4%	24.0%	28.7%
MSA	24.1%	9.3%	14.9%	24.3%	27.4%

Source: 1995 Survey of Buying Power, Sales and Marketing Management

### Economy

Manufacturing industries in Burke County employ approximately 50% of the work force. There is also a very large portion of the work force, approximately 20%, who work for government agencies. This large portion of the work force supplies a stable core of workers that are relatively immune to the effects of economic fluctuation and is an overall asset to the local economy. There are opportunities to further diversify employment in manufacturing outside the fields of textiles and furniture, particularly in the service oriented industries, warehousing, and distribution.

Given the scarcity of land for new nonresidential development, it is expected that Morganton will experience moderate overall growth due to the incremental addition of new employment opportunities.

### Existing Land Use

Existing land use in Morganton can be categorized as residential, commercial/general business, and industrial/manufacturing. Most of the high density development occurs around the major thoroughfares of the City, especially along the highway corridor of US 70 and US 64.

Residential developments in Morganton are primarily found within the city limits and Extra-territorial Jurisdiction (ETJ) limits. Most of the new residential development is occurring south, east, and north-northwest of the City.

The primary commercial and retail area is the downtown central business district. This district occurs along Sterling Street, Union Street, Meeting Street and King Street. Strip

shopping areas are also located on the major thoroughfares of the City such as US 70, NC 181, US64 and NC18. These areas contain most of the motels, shopping centers, gas stations, and restaurants that serve the City, and Burke County residents.

Most of the office and institutional land uses are associated within the downtown area or the large land holding of the State. This area is directly south of the city center extending to I-40 along Sterling Street/NC 18, Enola Road, and Burkemont Avenue/US 64. The land owned by the State of North Carolina includes the North Carolina School for the Deaf, Western Piedmont Community College, Broughton Hospital and Western Carolina Center. Other concentrations of this type of land use are the Grace Hospital/Parker Road area and City facilities located downtown. Manufacturing/Industrial zones are linked with the Southern Railway corridor that runs through the City in an east west direction between Glen Alpine and Drexel. The predominant manufacturing/industrial zones are along Fleming Drive near the center of the city and along Carbon City Road/US 70. Small areas of industry are also found along US 64.

### **Future Land Use**

Future residential, commercial and manufacturing development will follow the available sewer and water line extensions in the Morganton area, where access to major thoroughfares and highways are best. Commercial and industrial growth will continue to grow along the main corridors of the City as described above, however, a significant site has been targeted for light industrial use near the planned Causby Road interchange at Interstate 40. Heavy industrial sites are planned for areas relatively isolated from other land uses and reuse of former sites will be encouraged. Most new residential development will tend to locate along available utility routes and will be typically low density. Areas of this type of residential development include Riverside Drive , Ervin Drive, Bethel Road, Laurel Hills Drive, Valdese Drive, Golf Course Road and Bost Road. This trend should continue into the 21st century because of the availability of land, possible utility extensions, and proximity to employers.

### **Historical Resources**

The historical sites found in Morganton and its environs are significant in the region. The City possesses outstanding historic residential neighborhoods fringing the downtown area that extent their grace and historic flavor to other portions of the community. These areas reflect the City's commitment to architectural preservation, represent a stable tax base, and provide a variety of housing opportunities for various economic groups. The County Court House square and Sterling Street provide a feeling of pride and respect within the community.

### **Transportation**

Morganton is served by an abundance of road types such as interstate highways, US Highways, State Highways/Routes, and Southern Railroad Tracks. This network of roads and railway provides Morganton with easy access to other parts of the state and region.

Principal Highways/Arterial Routes, Interstates & Railways



- I-40—Crosses the southern portion of the City from east to west and connects Morganton to Asheville in the west, and Hickory to the immediate east.
- US 70—Travels east-west through the City and is a primary business route. It is also known as Carbon City Road and Union Street and it provides direct access to Glen Alpine to the west and Drexel, Valdese and Rutherford College to the east.
- US 64—Is a major north-south radial route that provides access from I-40 to the center of the city and continues north with NC18 towards Lenoir.
- NC 18—From Morganton this highway travels north-south through the city and provides primary access to Shelby in the south and Lenoir to the north. The route is also known as Sterling Street, the first exit off I-40. It provides direct access to the central business district.
- NC 181—Also known as Cobb Highway, is northwest from the city and provides direct access to the Blue Ridge Parkway. The route serves as a major thoroughfare for commuter traffic into the central part of the city.
- Southern Railroad—The Southern Railroad tracks run east-west through the city and many industrial sites are located along the corridor. The rail lines connect to other urban areas within North Carolina.
- Bike Routes—The City has numbered and signed bike routes along existing roads which provide for a safe alternative to driving.
- Greenways—The City has been developing a greenway along the Catawba River for the past five years. The system has great potential for expansion and provides an alternative transportation route that also offers recreational opportunities.

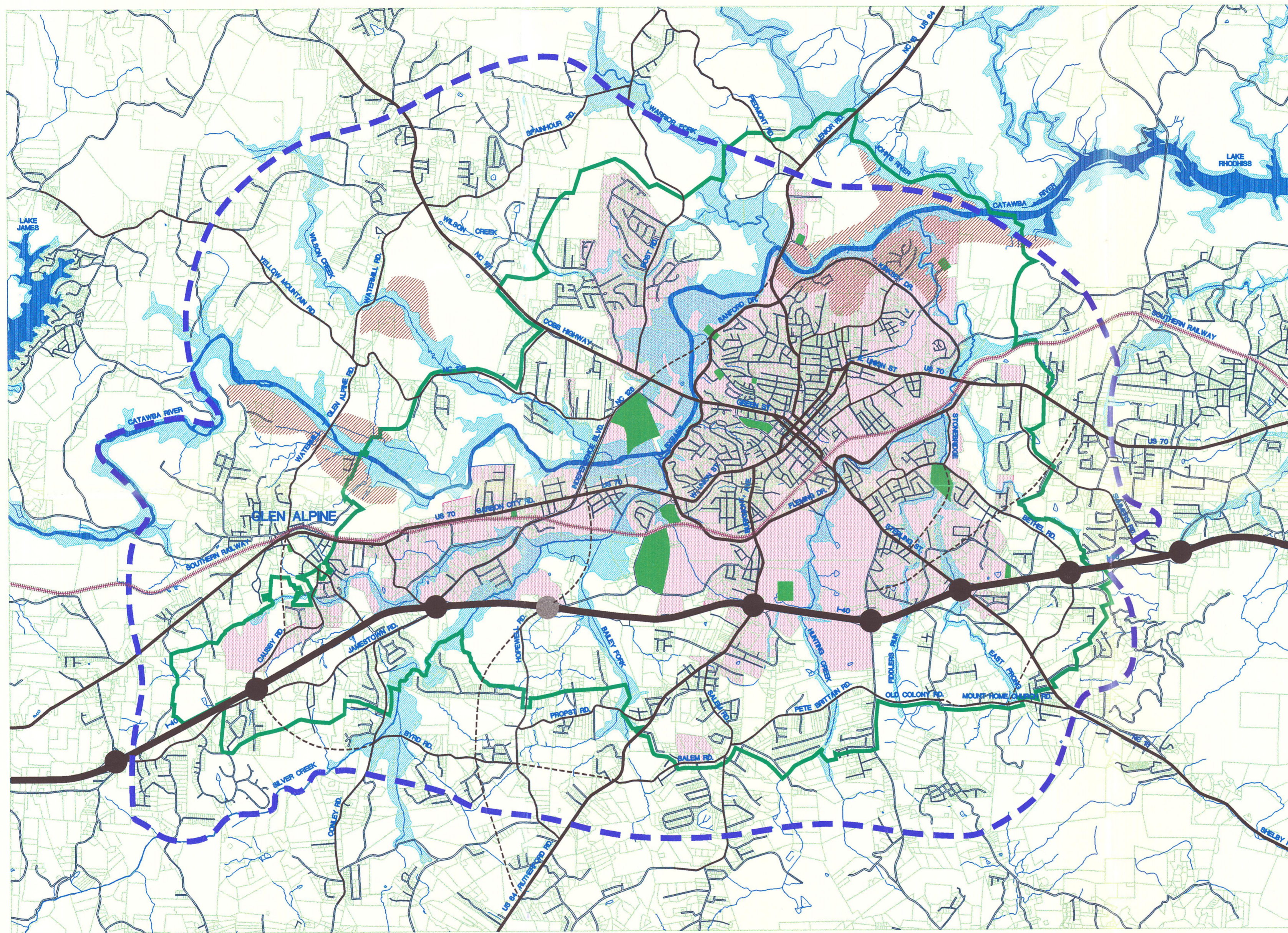
## NATURAL FACTORS

### Physiographic Features

Morganton is centrally located in Burke County in a broad valley lying south of the Catawba River. The terrain in Morganton and central Burke County is characteristic of the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains in North Carolina. The topography consists of gently to steep rolling terrain with ridges and hills drained by streams which have V-shaped valleys. Elevations in the City range between 1,000 and 1,200 feet above sea level, which is typical for the area. The Downtown is located on a ridge line which runs northeast and southwest and offers beautiful views to the mountains and the Catawba River Valley.

### Water Resources

The most important water resource is the Catawba River. The major creeks that drain the Morganton area south of the Catawba River are Silver Creek, Bailey Fork, Hunting Creek, and Fiddlers Run. The creeks that drain the Morganton area north of the Catawba River are Canoe Creek, Wilson Creek and Warrior Fork. The entire city drains into the Catawba River Basin. The major creeks that contribute to the Catawba River Basin as noted above are also limiting factors to development due to steep slopes associated with their channels. The three sources of raw drinking water for the City are the Henry River Reservoir located in the South Mountain Area, Warrior Fork located north of the City and the Catawba River. Current water capacity is approximately 15.5 million gallons per day, well in excess of current demand.



**LEGEND**

- EXISTING INTERCHANGE
- FUTURE INTERCHANGE
- INTERSTATE HIGHWAY
- US & NC HIGHWAY
- MAJOR THOROUGHFARE
- FUTURE HIGHWAY & THOROUGHFARE
- EXTRATERRITORIAL JURISDICTION
- STUDY LIMITS
- CITY LIMITS
- RECREATION AREA
- FLOODWAY
- STEEP SLOPES



**Demographics Map**  
**2015 COMPREHENSIVE**  
**RECREATION MASTER PLAN**  
**City of Morganton, NC**

Effective Solutions

Section



Effective Solutions

## SECTION 2

# INVENTORY OF EXISTING RECREATION FACILITIES AND PROGRAMS

### INTRODUCTION

The inventory of recreational facilities in the City of Morganton was performed by Woolpert using the information provided by the Recreation Department staff. The facilities review required site visits to gain more specific information on elements and characteristics. Recreation facilities are presented based on ownership and actual type of facility. Refer to Tables 2-1 through 2-2 for information on recreation facilities.

### MORGANTON PUBLIC DEVELOPED PARK FACILITIES

Public developed facilities are categorized as property that is owned or being leased by the City for the purpose of park and recreational activities. The land contains park facilities made available to the general public and maintained by the City.

### RECREATION CENTERS AND GYMNASIUMS

#### Collett Street Center and Park Facilities

Collett Street Center is the life-blood of the Morganton recreation system. The recreation center building houses the recreation department offices and provides the City with a central meeting and activity facility. The center is located on property that includes athletic fields known as Gene Turner Park, tennis courts, a swimming facility, and an oriental garden. The center and oriental park cover approximately nine acres including parking and a wooded area near the oriental garden. The center and park facilities offer the following features (excluding Gene Turner Park):

#### Collett Center Building Facilities

- Recreation staff offices
- Large gymnasium with for basketball and volleyball (gym can be set up for 2 basketball courts)
- Seating capacity for 900 during basketball
- Seven meeting rooms
- Weight/exercise room
- Exercise/mat room
- TV room
- Game room
- Large social hall
- 2 kitchens
- Restroom and shower/locker rooms

#### Exterior Facilities

- Olympic size swimming pool with a diving area (lighted)
- Five (5) lighted tennis courts
- Paved parking
- Oriental Garden with seating area and walking path

**Collett Center Evaluation:**

The center building is in excellent condition for its age. This is due to the superb work the City has done on maintaining it. The gymnasium, meeting rooms and kitchens offer adequate space for the population of Morganton, however, the equipment is difficult to maintain and are out-dated. Many of the rooms, especially the exercise rooms, need better heating and ventilation (HVAC) systems. Additional storage areas are needed because many clubs and city events store materials at the center that are used seasonally or on a limited basis. Additional parking is necessary during peak use of the center, pool, and adjacent athletic fields at Gene Turner park. Overall, the facility is utilized for every possible program the city offers and it provides adequate service to the public.

**Mountain View Recreation Center:**

The recreation center is located on Bouchelle Street adjacent to Martin Luther King Park (MLK Park) and Mountain View Elementary School. Similar to the Collett Street Center the center houses a small recreation department office and provides meeting and activity space. The center is located on property that includes a lighted softball field that covers approximately 18 acres excluding MLK Park. The center offers the following features —excluding MLK Park:

**Mountain View Recreation Center Building Facilities**

- Recreation staff office
- Large gymnasium (2 basketball courts)
- Seating capacity for 300 during basketball
- Four (4) meeting rooms
- Game room/area
- Kitchen
- Restroom and Shower/locker rooms

**Exterior Facilities**

- 25 meter swimming pool and wading/baby pool
- One (1) lighted softball field (also used for soccer & football)
- Paved parking
- Play apparatus for small children (1-5 yrs.)

**Mountain View Recreation Center Evaluation:**

Similar to Collett Street Center, the Mountain View Center is well maintained. The only significant flaws with the building are that the amenities are difficult to maintain, are out-dated, and have outlived their design. Rooms could be better ventilated with use of an improved HVAC system; and additional storage space would help the use of the overall building. The gymnasium, meeting rooms and kitchens offer adequate space, but more room is necessary for day care and after school programs. Overall the facility is in excellent condition for its age. The exterior facilities are well maintained, the swimming pool has recently been repaired, and the softball field is in excellent condition. A limiting factor in the use of the softball field is that it is undersized for use by adult men.

**Old National Guard Armory**

The armory is located on McDowell Street near the site of old Morganton High School field. The armory is used full time for children gymnastics, wrestling, and exercise classes. The building offers a gymnasium with mats set up for gymnastic instruction. The facility has small offices and restroom facilities.

**Old National Guard Armory Evaluation:**

The old armory provides needed space for the gymnastic programs run by the City. It is also used for adult exercise and self defense training classes. The building is also used by the police department and other city departments for miscellaneous storage which limits the use of the building for recreational activities. The facility is very old but is well maintained for its purpose. However, the building is difficult to maintain and improvements are needed to the lighting and HVAC systems. Classes are canceled during the summer because it is too hot in the building to hold an activity.

**PARK SITES****Freedom Park**

Freedom Park contains 50 acres and is located adjacent to Freedom High School. This site is a joint use facility used by Burke County Schools and Morganton Recreation Department. The following facilities are located in the park:

- Lighted walking track/trail ( $\pm 1$  mile)
- One (1) softball field (women/girls)
- One (1) baseball field (practice/informal)
- Two (2) soccer/multi-purpose fields (practice/informal)
- Six (6) lighted tennis courts
- Two (2) basketball courts
- Four (4) family/table picnic shelters
- One (1) volleyball court (sand)
- Two (2) football/soccer fields
- Restroom building
- Play equipment (2 groupings)
- One large multi-age play structure
- Educational exhibit (recycling, composting etc.)
- Paved parking

**Freedom Park Evaluation:**

Overall the park is well maintained and there is little evidence of vandalism or misuse for the amount of use it receives. Facilities in the park appear to be spread out which makes it look like they were not very well planned. The arrangement of park elements, such as the play areas, ball fields, and courts should be evaluated to optimize the use of park land and eliminate conflicting uses. Conflicting uses such as the basketball courts located at the park entrance and walking paths abutting the tennis courts could be improved or eliminated through redesign of the park layout. Additional parking is needed for peak use periods and staff has also considered widening the walking trail to improve its use.

**Bethel Road Park**

Bethel Road Park is a  $\pm 28$ -acre facility located on Bethel Road at the intersection of two large creeks (Fiddlers Run and East Prong). This site provides the city with facilities similar to those found in Freedom Park. The following facilities are located in the park:

- Lighted walking track/trail ( $\pm .7$  mile)
- One (1) softball field (practice/informal)
- Two (2) lighted tennis courts
- Two (2) lighted basketball courts
- Three (3) family/table picnic shelters
- One (1) volleyball court
- One (1) football/soccer field (lighted)

- Restroom building
- Play equipment (2 groupings)
- Lighted 1/4 mile track
- Paved parking
- Pedestrian bridges (4)

#### **Bethel Road Park Evaluation:**

The park facilities are well maintained and there is little evidence of vandalism or misuse. The park receives much use and is popular with the public for picnics, walking, and soccer games. Drainage within the park is a problem due to seasonal flooding, especially with the 1/4-mile track and soccer field. It makes maintenance very difficult and often causes the field not to be used. Similar to Freedom Park this park appears to be spread out and the park elements appear to have been arranged randomly and not planned as a unit. An example is the location of the main parking area next to neighboring residences; and the location of the basketball courts next to the tennis courts. The arrangement of park elements, such as play areas, ball fields, and courts should be evaluated to optimize use of park land, eliminate conflicting uses, and increase overall participation. More parking is needed to accommodate peak use periods especially on the weekends. Additionally, the park will be affected by the development of a future roadway project within a 100' right-of-way that abuts the park property. The road project may be an opportunity to expand the park.

#### **Gene Turner Park**

Gene Turner Park is located adjacent to the Collett Street Recreation Center complex and contains the remaining active recreation facilities that are located in the area. The park covers approximately six-acres and includes support facilities such as a maintenance building, restroom facility, and concession/field house building. The park offers the following facilities:

- Two (2) youth baseball fields (lighted, 180 ft., and 200 ft.)
- Restroom building
- Field house/scorers booth
- Concession area (at field house)
- Maintenance building
- Paved parking

#### **Gene Turner Park Evaluation:**

The facility is in excellent condition and the fields are used at maximum capacity for organized games. There is little to no evidence of vandalism or neglect to the facilities. The fields are adequate for youth leagues but are small by current standards. Additional parking is necessary during peak use and spectator areas could be enhanced by adding seating and providing play space for younger children.

#### **Children's Park**

Children's Park is located at the corner of Collett and College Streets, across from the Collett Street Center. This facility is a large play area for children of various ages. The park is approximately 1.3-acre and has the following attributes:

- Restroom building (w/storage)
- Three (3) family/table picnic structures
- One (1) group picnic shelter
- One (1) large play structure
- Individual play apparatus (swings, slides, go-rounds, monkey bars)
- Benches, drinking fountain

- Spray pool
- Miniature/play house

**Children's Park Evaluation:**

This park is one of the most used facilities in the Morganton system. The park is well maintained and offers play equipment in downtown Morganton for children of various ages. The Recreation Department is incrementally replacing individual play equipment in the park with multi-station play structures that will increase play opportunities and make maintenance easier for staff.

**Shadowline Park**

Shadowline Park is located along NC-18 at Shadowline Drive in north Morganton. The park is a leased facility that encompasses approximately 20-acres. The park site is owned by Shadowline Industries and offers the following features:

- Group picnic shelter
- Mountain bike trail
- Two (2) soccer fields
- Practice softball field
- Restroom building
- Individual play equipment (swings)
- Volleyball
- Horse shoe pits

**Shadowline Park Evaluation:**

The park is in good condition and could benefit from updating its equipment and renewing its master plan. Currently the park is used primarily for picnicking and soccer. The plan should be responsive to the facility needs determined by Section 3 of this study.

**Martin Luther King Park**

As previously noted, this park is located adjacent to Mountain View Recreation Center and Mountain View Elementary School. The site covers approximately 1.5-acres and provides the local neighborhood with play and picnic facilities. The park offers a great view of the mountains over the softball field at Mountain View Recreation Center. The park has the following features:

- Three (3) family/table picnic structures
- Restroom building
- Play equipment (a small structure and individual apparatus)
- Paved parking

**Martin Luther King Park Evaluation:**

The park is in overall good condition but a primary problem is soil erosion on the slopes near the play equipment and the restroom facility. Measures have been taken to protect some of the critical areas affected by the erosion but most of the site is very shaded and it is hard to establish a stand of grass. The facilities in the park are primarily used by the local neighborhood and people who participate in the athletic programs at Mountain View Recreation Center field. The park has limited expansion capabilities near the school property.



## Shuey Park

Shuey Park is located on Golf Course Road and covers approximately 14.5-acres. The park is a primary site for athletic programs, especially baseball and softball, run by the city. The park has the following facilities:

- Two (2) lighted softball fields (270-ft.)
- One (1) lighted American Legion baseball field (350-ft.)
- One (1) lighted soccer/football field
- Six (6) lighted horseshoe pits
- Main restroom/concession/storage building
- Field house/concession building (for softball, w/scorers boxes)
- Maintenance building
- Legion field scorers and concession building
- Three (3) concession areas (softball, main building, legion field)
- Scoreboards and spectator seating
- Batting cage
- Paved Parking

### Shuey Park Evaluation :

Shuey Park is well maintained and the facility is in good condition. The sight is used for adult athletic programs however the softball fields are not up to current distance standards. The main concession building shows minor signs of vandalism and the equipment could use updating. The playing fields are in very good condition considering the amount of play they receive during the season. No major problems are identifiable at this facility and expansion of the park is not practical.

## Carbon City Park

This park is located on US-70/Carbon City Road on the west side of Morganton. The park covers approximately 4.2-acres and offers the following facilities.

- Group picnic shelter (10 tables)
- Restroom building
- Volleyball court
- Two (2) lighted tennis courts
- Basketball court
- Individual play apparatus (swings, climber, slide)
- Paved parking

### Carbon City Park Evaluation:

The park's athletic courts, tennis and basketball, are in poor condition and are in need of resurfacing. The basketball court has two backboard assemblies but only one goal is in place. Both courts appear as if they do not get much use. The courts are to be resurfaced as part of the 1997 improvements for use in the annual tennis tournament. The use of the courts should be evaluated for alternative uses, such as skate boarding or in-line skating, or possibly removed to make space for other activities. The remaining facilities in the park, such as the picnic area and play equipment, are in good condition and appear to be well used. The play equipment needs to be updated.

## Ralph Edwards Park

This leased facility is on land that is part of the N.C. Forestry Service center on Sanford Drive. The park covers approximately five-acres and offers the following facilities:

- One (1) lighted softball field (250-ft.)

- Restrooms/concession building
- Parking area

#### **Ralph Edward Park Evaluation:**

This facility is used heavily and is maintained in excellent condition. The site will be available after the NC Forest Service terminates its lease with the owner, Duke Power/Crescent Resources. The existing ballfield does not meet current field distance standards and parking is not adequate for the site. The expansion potential of this site is extraordinary and has already examined through preparation of a site master plan that encompasses approximately 150 acres. The plan includes facilities such as softball fields, soccer fields, tennis courts, camping, educational/nature center, greenway connections, and river access points.

#### **Old Morganton High School Field**

This facility is located between Herron Street and McDowell Street in the south-central part of the city. The site covers approximately four acres and includes the following features:

- Lighted football/soccer field
- Stadium bleacher seating
- Press box and scoreboard
- Soccer practice field

#### **Old Morganton High School Field Evaluation:**

The main field is in good condition and is used for youth soccer and football programs. The electrical system for the field lights is in need of repair/upgrading and minor improvements to the site could accommodate future expansion of sports fields. However, the site has been identified as a possible location for new City offices and expansion is unlikely.

### **SPECIAL FACILITIES**

#### **Catawba River Greenway**

Catawba River Greenway is located along the Catawba River between Green Street (NC-181) and Air Park Road. The walking trail extends approximately 1.5-miles along the river and includes the following amenities:

- 10' wide asphalt trail ( $\pm$  1.5 mi.)
- Canoe launch/landing steps
- Three (3) small group picnic shelters
- Wood/timber fishing pier
- 100' Pedestrian bridge
- River overlook deck
- Benches
- Paved parking

#### **Catawba River Greenway Evaluation:**

The greenway trail and park is a relatively new facility to the Morganton recreation system. The facilities are in excellent condition and the site is heavily used by the community. The City is completing construction on approximately one-mile of greenway and has plans to extend the trail to NC-18. Additionally, the master plan for the Greenway identifies a large park at the Ralph Edwards Nursery site that includes sports

fields (soccer, softball and baseball), a nature/cultural center, historic home site, play areas, picnic shelters, observation decks, and R/V camping.

### **Skeet Range**

This special use facility is located in northeast Morganton off of Kirksey Drive near Causby Quarry Road. The site is approximately two acres and includes the following features:

- Two (2) lighted skeet shooting fields
- Combination high/low target houses
- Clubhouse facility with restrooms and meeting room

#### **Skeet Range Evaluation:**

The skeet range is maintained by volunteers from the shooting club and it is in excellent condition. The grounds are well maintained and provide a great environment for this recreation activity.

### **Community House**

The Community House is a special facility located on North King Street in the Morganton Central Business District. The building is used for group events such as workshops, meetings, receptions, dinners, banquets and parties. The facility consists of two large dining areas, one of which can be divided into three small meeting/eating areas, a lobby, restrooms, large full service kitchen, and a basement storage area.

#### **Community House Evaluation:**

The Community House is an excellent catering/banquet facility that has a recently renovated full service kitchen used for dining purposes. The City operates the facility without using city taxes. The fees from meals and room rentals, and an annual donation from the Beatrice Cobb Foundation, pay all costs for operation of the facility. The City plans to renovate the restroom facilities in the next year..

### **Morganton Municipal Auditorium**

The City of Morganton Municipal Auditorium (CoMMA) is a  $\pm 1,150$ -seat auditorium/theater used by the city for a variety of educational, cultural and entertainment events. The facility has offices, meeting/class rooms, gallery/exhibition space and a main auditorium/theater.

#### **CoMMA Evaluation:**

This facility is 10 years old and is one of the best municipal theater/auditoriums in North Carolina. The facility is a proud example of the type of project the City is willing to support in order to make sure its citizens have first quality facilities. Not many cities the size of Morganton can boast such a fine facility.

### **BURKE COUNTY PARK FACILITIES**

In order to better identify the recreation opportunities made available within the study area, Woolpert visited the following two (2) Burke County sites located in Morganton.

## Parker Road Park

This County facility is located on Parker Road adjacent to the Burke County Department of Human Resources. The park covers approximately 17-acres and includes the following features:

- Large group picnic shelter (w/12 tables, 3 grills)
- Restroom building
- Small Pond/Lake
- Walking trail ( $\pm$ 1 mi. loop)
- Basketball court
- Play equipment
- Horseshoe pits
- Picnic tables (5)

## Morganton-Burke Senior Center

The Senior Center is located on Green Street near the intersection of College Street. The facility has office space for the management of senior programs offices and meeting facilities for programs run by the county.

## MORGANTON/BURKE COUNTY SCHOOL RECREATION FACILITIES

In order to better understand the recreation opportunities made available to the citizens of Morganton and the study area, Woolpert visited the following school sites.

- Freedom High School
- Liberty Middle School
- Table Rock Middle School
- Forest Hills Elementary School
- Hillcrest Elementary School
- Mountain View Elementary School
- Glen Alpine Elementary School
- Mull Elementary School
- Oak Hill Elementary School
- Western Piedmont Community College
- NC School for the Deaf

These school sites were selected because they are all within the study area and many of the sites provide recreational facilities for use by the general public. Table 2-2 itemizes the facilities found at each site. The use of these facilities is coordinated through the recreation department or other recreational groups or organizations in the area.

## STATE/REGIONAL PARK FACILITIES

The following locations have been included in Table 2-3 as part of the inventory of facilities. The table identifies the amenities offered by these sites.

- Lake James State Park (and lake access points)
- Lake Rhodhiss (lake access points)
- South Mountains State Park
- Mount Mitchell State Park
- Broughton Hospital

In addition the Pisgah National Forest offers outdoor recreational opportunities such as campground of all types, nature/hiking trails, horse trails, fishing access, picnic areas,

scenic overlooks, and educational/informational programs and facilities. There are more than 50 sites within the forest that offer one or more recreational opportunity within thousands of acres of natural beauty.

### **PRIVATE OUTDOOR RECREATION FACILITIES**

The following outdoor recreation locations have been included in as part of the inventory of facilities and the amenities offered by these sites.

- Dana Employees Park - Large picnic facility and ball field.
- Mimosa Hills Golf Club - Private Club 18-hole course
- Quaker Meadows Golf Club - Public play, 18-hole course
- Riverview Sports Complex - game rooms, batting cages, driving range and putt-putt
- Silver Creek Golf Course - Public play, 18-hole course

### **GENERAL PROGRAMS**

The Morganton Recreation Department provides organized programs for the enjoyment of the Citizens of Morganton and the study area. Programs include leisure classes, workshops, clubs, educational instruction, trips, athletic leagues, and special events for citizens of all ages. Most of the programs for clubs, groups, classes, and special events are conducted at the Collett Street Center. The athletic programs are scattered around the city at various facilities in order to accommodate scheduling. It is estimated that attendance for all programs, events and activities is approximately 900,000 visits annually.

Statistical and descriptive program summaries for the year are divided into sections:

- Instructional Programs and Classes
- Special Interest Clubs & Groups — Special Events and Programs
- Athletic Programs

#### **Instructional Programs and Classes**

Thirty four instructional programs were provided in FY 95-96. These programs provided hundreds of hours of activity for over 1500 participants. Most of the programs and classes are listed in Table 2-4 however some of the programs are athletic in nature or are tied to special events and they are listed under these categories.

#### **Special Interest Clubs & Groups — Special Events and Programs**

There were approximately 630 total special interest group meetings, civic club meetings, exhibits, shows, and special events held in FY 95-96. Table 2-5 identifies fifteen organizations or clubs who utilize the recreation facilities for meetings on a regular basis. Thirty-Eight special events and programs were held in FY 95-96. These events and programs are identified in Table 2-6.

#### **Athletic Programs and Classes**

The department offers leagues, special events, clinics, and other recreational opportunities, such as tournaments and sports camps, to all citizens of Morganton in the area.

The City offered fifty-four athletic leagues for adults and youths in FY 95-96 for an estimated 252 teams. Offerings included youth sports such as baseball, softball, football, soccer, tennis gymnastics and wrestling. Adult sports leagues included basketball, golf, volleyball, tennis, and softball.

Additionally the recreation department programs time for non-structured activities that include basketball, free play, weight training/lifting, swimming, billiards, skeet shooting and skating. These activities involve thousands of participants annually.

Tournament programming basketball, baseball and softball are scheduled annually for baseball, basketball, and softball.

Sports camps and instructional/training programming include Youth Baseball Camp, Coaching Clinics, Youth Basketball Camp, and a Rehab/Conditioning Clinic for softball players.

**TABLE 2-1  
MORGANTON RECREATION FACILITIES**

	Collett St. Center/Park	Mt. View Rec. Center	Old N.G. Armory	Freedom Park	Bethel Road Park
<b>Fields</b>		1*		1	1
Softball					
Baseball					
Soccer/Football		1 <sup>2</sup>		2	1*
<b>Outdoor Courts</b>	2/4 <sup>1</sup>	2/4 <sup>1</sup>		2	2*
Basketball/ Goals					
Tennis	5*			6*	2*
Volleyball	1 <sup>1</sup>			1	1
<b>Outdoor Area</b>				4	3
Picnic/table shelters					
Group Picnic Shelters	1				
Playground Area		1		2	2
Walking Trails				1 mi.*	.7 mi.*
Bike Trail					
Running Track (¼ mi.)					1*
Swimming Pool/Fountain	1	1			
Horse Shoes					
<b>Indoor/Special Use</b>				1	
Restrooms/Bldg.					
Gymnasium	1	1	1		
Rec./Community Ctr.	1				
Maintenance Bldg.					
Field/Concession Building					
Pool House	1				
Acres	+9.0	+18.0	N/A	+50.0	+28.0
* Lighted <sup>1</sup> Indoor court/facility <sup>2</sup> Shared w/softball					

**TABLE 2-1  
MORGANTON RECREATION FACILITIES  
(Continued)**

	Gene Turner Park	Children's Park	Shadowline Park	ML King Park	Shuey Park
<b>Fields</b>					
Softball			1 <sup>2</sup>		2*
Baseball	2*				1
Soccer			2		1*
<b>Outdoor Courts</b>					
Basketball/Goals					
Tennis					
Volleyball			1		
<b>Outdoor Area</b>					
Picnic/table shelters		3		3	
Group Picnic Shelters		1	1		
Playground Area		1	1	1	
Batting Cage					
Bike Trail			.5 mi.		
Running Track					
Swimming Pool/Fountain		1 <sup>1</sup>			
Horse Shoes			2		6*
<b>Indoor/Special Use</b>					
Restrooms	1	1	1	1	
Gymnasium					
Rec./Community Ctr.					
Maintenance Bldg.	1				1
Field/Concession Building	1				2
Meeting Facility					
Restroom/Concession					1
Acres	±6.0	±1.3	±20.0	±1.5	±14.5
* Lighted <sup>1</sup> Spay pool <sup>2</sup> Practice					



**TABLE 2-1  
MORGANTON RECREATION FACILITIES  
(Continued)**

	Carbon City Park	Ralph Edwards Park	Old MHS Field	Catawba Greenway	Skeet Range
<b>Fields</b> Softball		1*			
Football			1*		
Soccer			1		
<b>Outdoor Courts</b> Basketball/Goals	½				
Tennis	2*				
Volleyball	1				
<b>Outdoor Area</b> Picnic/table shelters					
Group Picnic Shelters	1			3	
Playground Area	1				
Walking Trails				1.5 mi.	
Bike Trail				1.5 mi.	
Canoe Launch				1	
Observation Decks				2	
Pedestrian Bridge				1	
<b>Indoor/Special Use</b> Restrooms	1				1
Gymnasium					
Rec./Community Ctr.					
Maintenance Bldg.					
Field/Concession Building		2			
Clubhouse/Meeting Facility					1
Target Bldgs.					3
Acres	+4.2	+5.0	+4.0	N/A	+2.0
* Lighted					

**TABLE 2-1  
MORGANTON RECREATION FACILITIES  
(Continued)**

	Community House	Municipal Auditorium			
Fields Softball					
Baseball					
Outdoor Courts Basketball/ Goals					
Tennis					
Volleyball					
Outdoor Area Picnic/table shelters					
Group Picnic Shelters					
Playground Area					
Walking Trails					
Bike Trail					
Running Track					
Swimming Pool/Fountain					
Horse Shoes					
Indoor/Special Use Restrooms					
Gymnasium					
Rec./Community Ctr					
Maintenance Bldg.					
Field/Concession Building					
Meeting Facility	1				
Auditorium		1			
Acres	N/A	N/A			
* Lighted					

**TABLE 2-2**  
**SCHOOL RECREATION FACILITIES**  
 (Within the Morganton Planning Area)

	Freedom High School	Liberty Middle	Table Rock Middle	Forest Hills Elementary	Hillcrest Elementary
<b>Outdoor Facilities</b>					
Football Stadium	1	1	1		
Football Practice Field	1				
Baseball/Softball	2	1	1		
Soccer		1	1	1 <sup>(1)</sup>	1 <sup>(1)</sup>
Tennis	Shared				
Basketball/Goal	1	1	1		1
Play Area/equipment				1	1
Running Tracks	1	1	1		
Nature Trails	1				
Fitness stations					1
<b>Indoor Facilities</b>					
Gymnasium	1	1	1		
Multi-Purpose Gym		1	1	1	1
Auditorium	1				
* Lighted (1) Combined multi-purpose fields,					

**TABLE 2-2  
SCHOOL RECREATION FACILITIES  
(Continued)**

	Mt. View Elementary	Glen Alpine Elementary	Mull Elementary	Oak Hill Elementary	WPCC
<b>Outdoor Facilities</b>					
Football Stadium		1			
Football Practice Field				1	
Baseball/Softball		1	3	1	
Soccer	1 <sup>(1)</sup>	1 <sup>(1)</sup>	1 <sup>(1)</sup>	1 <sup>(1)</sup>	
Tennis					2
Basketball/Goal	1	1	1	1	1
Volleyball					1
Play Area/equipment	1	1	1	1	
Running Tracks		1			
Nature Trails					1
Fitness stations	1				
Picnic Facilities					1
Lake/Pond					1
<b>Indoor Facilities</b>					
Gymnasium		1			
Multi-Purpose Gym	1	1	1	1	
Auditorium					1
* Lighted (1) Combined multi-purpose fields,					

**TABLE 2-3  
STATE/REGIONAL  
RECREATION FACILITIES**

	Lake James	South Mountains	Mount Mitchell	Lake Rhodhiss	Broughton Hospital
<b>Outdoor Facilities</b>					
Sports Fields					1 <sup>(1)</sup>
Basketball/Goal					2
Tennis					
Volleyball					1
Boating Access	13			5	
Fishing	yes	yes(river)	none	yes	
Swimming Access	yes(private)				
Play Area/equipment					
Horse/Bike Trails		29/18			
Walking paths					1-2 mi
Hiking/Nature Trails	1-1/2 mi	41 mi	6 mi.		
Camping	20	13	9		
Picnic Sites/shelters	6/2	2/0	2/2		1/1
Lake/Pond	1			1	
<b>Indoor Facilities</b>					
Gymnasium					1
Multi-Purpose Gym					
Auditorium					1
Restrooms/Washhouse	1	1	4		
Office/Concession	1	1	3		
* Lighted (1) Combined multi-purpose fields,					

**TABLE 2-4  
INSTRUCTIONAL  
PROGRAMS AND CLASSES**

Facility	Activity
Collet Street	Karate Dance Exercise Yoga Aqua Fitness Dog Obedience Roller Skating Play School Western Dance Square Dance Tennis Swim Lessons Springboard Diving Weight lifting
Mountain View	Karate Roller Skating Swim Lessons Springboard Diving Weight lifting Social Services Meals for Seniors Social Service Day Care Special Activities Club
Old Armory	Gymnastics

**TABLE 2-5  
SPECIAL INTEREST  
ORGANIZATIONS AND CLUBS**

Facility	Activity
Collet Street	American Legion Garden Club Council Writers Club Recreation Advisory Commission Brown Mountain Light Steppers Square Dancers Beekeepers AARP Ballroom Dance Club Take Off Pounds Sensibly (TOPS) Fleet Reserves Foothills Stamp Club Blue Ridge Bass Masters Home Extension Club Burke Tennis Club Big Oak Hunt Club

**TABLE 2-6  
SPECIAL EVENTS AND PROGRAMS**

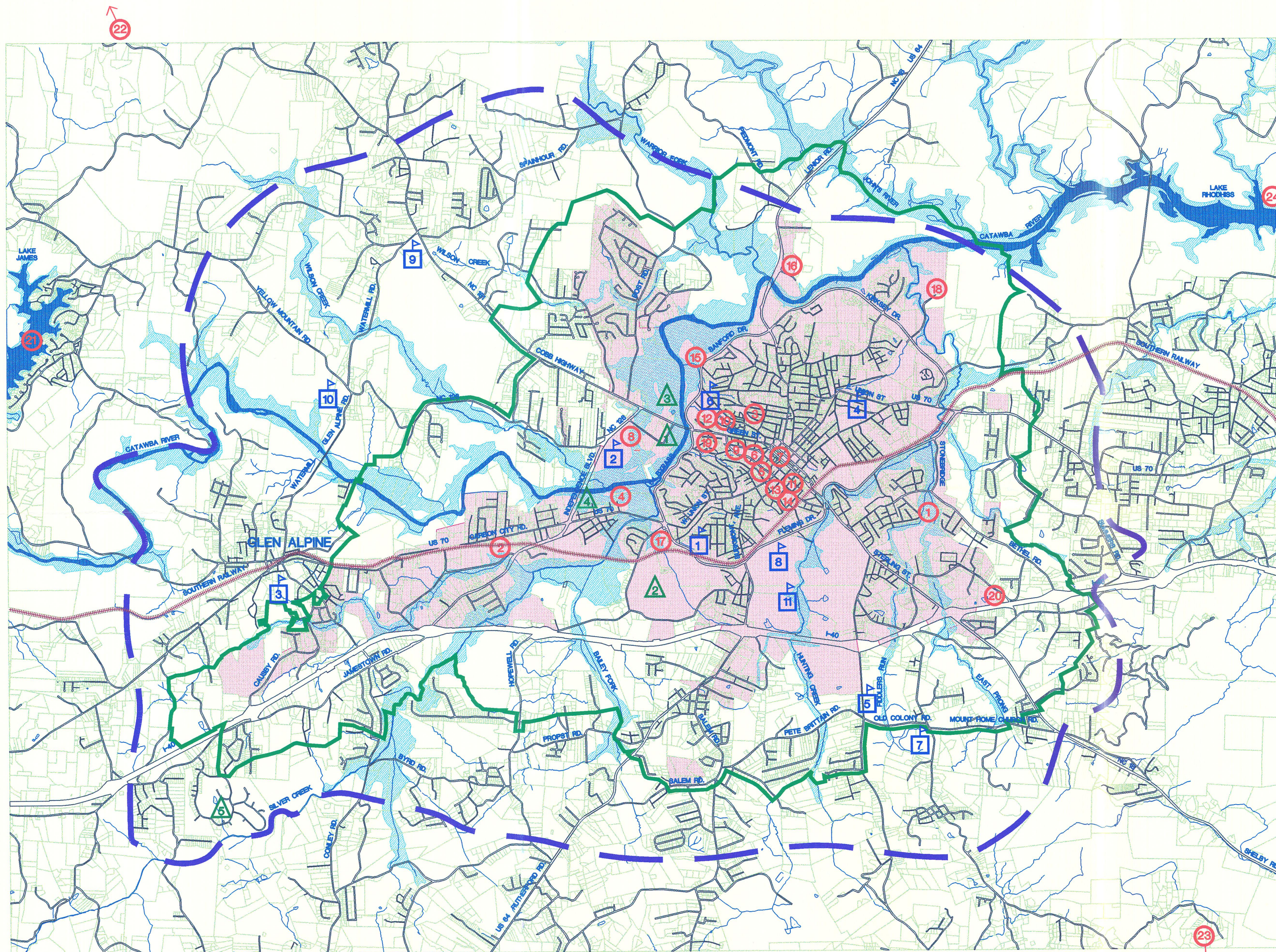
Facility	Activity
Collet Street	Elks Hoop Shoot Martin L. King Banquet Partners - In - Play Great Lakes Federal Credit Union Annual Mtg. Western Youth Athletic Association Basketball Tournaments Smokey Mountain Gaged Bird Society Spring Show Gold Star Youth basketball Tournament Rock and Gem Show Burke Rehab Softball Clinic For League Softball Players Foothills Area Programs Employee Appreciation Day Tri-Star Basketball Skating Banquet and Show Swim Team Cook-Out and Registration Queen of the West Lodge Annual Banquet Law Enforcement Awareness Day Basketball Camp City Employee Picnic Friends of Library Book Sale Smokey Mountain Bird Fall Show Toughman Contest I. H. Clayborn Consistory Annual Banquet Halloween Carnival Voting Grace Hospital Guild Holiday Show and Sale Department of Social Services Annual Christmas Party M.R.D. Senior Citizens Club Annual Christmas Party AARP Annual Christmas Party Red Cross Annual Christmas Blood Drive Unifor Area Senior Games
Mountain View	Elks Hoop Shoot Western Youth Athletic Association Gold Star Youth Basketball Tournament Burke Rehab Softball Clinic for League Softball Players Mountain Region State Games Unifor Area Senior Games
Gene Turner Park	Youth Baseball Camp Baseball Tournaments
Catawba Greenway	Riverfest

**TABLE 2-7  
ATHLETIC PROGRAMS**

<b>Facility</b>	<b>Activity</b>
<b>YOUTH ATHLETICS/SPORTS LEAGUES</b>	
<b>Baseball</b> (T-ball, Coach Pitch, Minor League, Midget League, Junior League)	Gene Turner, Mt. View, Shuey,
<b>Girls Softball</b> (Midget&Junior)	Gene Turner
<b>Boys &amp; Girls Basketball</b> Bidy, Pee-Wee, Mighty-Mite, Midget Boys, Midget Girls, Juniors & Seniors)	Collett Street, Mt. View
<b>Football</b> (9-12)	Mt. View
<b>Soccer</b> (Instructional, Mite, Pee-Wee, Midget, Junior)	Shuey, Bethel, Mt. View, Shadowline,
<b>Tennis</b>	Collett St.
<b>Gymnastics</b>	Old Armory
<b>Youth Wrestling</b>	Old Armory
<b>ADULT ATHLETICS/SPORTS LEAGUES</b>	
<b>Basketball</b> (industrial, church, open)	Collett St., Mt. View
<b>Golf</b> (industrial, church)	Quaker Meadows
<b>Volleyball</b>	Collett St.
<b>Men's &amp; Women's Softball</b>	Shuey, Nursery, Mt. View,

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**EXISTING PUBLIC PARK FACILITIES**

**MORGANTON FACILITIES**

- 1 BETHEL ROAD PARK
- 2 CARBON CITY PARK
- 3 CASCADE PARK
- 4 CATAWBA RIVER GREENWAY
- 5 CHILDREN'S PARK
- 6 COLLETT STREET CENTER AND PARK
- 7 COMMUNITY HOUSE
- 8 FREEDOM PARK
- 9 GENE TURNER PARK
- 10 MARTIN LUTHER KING PARK
- 11 MORGANTON MUNICIPAL AUDITORIUM
- 12 MOUNTAIN VIEW RECREATION CENTER
- 13 OLD NATIONAL GUARD ARMORY
- 14 OLD MORGANTON HIGH SCHOOL FIELD
- 15 RALPH EDWARDS PARK
- 16 SHADOWLINE PARK
- 17 SHUEY PARK
- 18 SKEET RANGE

**COUNTY FACILITIES**

- 19 BURKE / MORGANTON SENIOR CENTER
- 20 PARK ROAD PARK

**STATE FACILITIES**

- 21 LAKE JAMES STATE PARK
- 22 PISGAH NATIONAL FOREST
- 23 SOUTH MOUNTAINS STATE PARK
- 24 LAKE RHODISS

**EXISTING SCHOOL FACILITIES**

- 1 FOREST HILL ELEM. SCHOOL
- 2 FREEDOM HIGH SCHOOL
- 3 GLEN ALPINE ELEM. SCHOOL
- 4 HILLCREST ELEM. SCHOOL
- 5 LIBERTY MIDDLE SCHOOL
- 6 MOUNTAIN VIEW ELEM. SCHOOL
- 7 MULL ELEM. SCHOOL
- 8 NC SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF
- 9 OAK HILL ELEM. SCHOOL
- 10 TABLE ROCK MIDDLE SCHOOL
- 11 WESTERN PIEDMONT COMMUNITY COLLEGE

**PRIVATE PARK FACILITIES**

- 1 DANA EMPLOYEES PARK
- 2 MIMOSA HILLS GOLF CLUB
- 3 QUAKER MEADOWS GOLF CLUB
- 4 RIVERVIEW SPORTS COMPLEX
- 5 SILVER CREEK GOLF COURSE

**KEY**

- EXTRATERRITORIAL JURISDICTION
- STUDY LIMITS
- FLOODWAY
- CITY LIMITS



# Existing Facilities

## 2015 COMPREHENSIVE RECREATION MASTER PLAN

### City of Morganton, NC

▶▶▶ Effective Solutions

Section



WOOLPERT

▶▶▶

## SECTION 3

# RECREATION STANDARDS AND COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

## INTRODUCTION

The quantity and distribution of recreation land and facilities within a community, or for a specific user group, is determined by standards established by the recreation and park industry.

The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA), in their publication Recreation, Park and Open Space Standards and Guidelines, edited by R. a. Lancaster defines recreation and park standards in this manner:

"Community recreation and park standards are the means by which an agency can express recreation and park goals and objectives in quantitative terms, which in turn, can be translated into spatial requirements for land and water resources. Through the budget, municipal ordinances, cooperative or joint public-private efforts, these standards are translated into a system for acquisition, development and management of recreation and park resources."<sup>1</sup>

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

The recreation needs of Morganton have been ascertained through public comment, an inventory of existing land and facilities, select interviews with recreation user groups, and a review of typical and generally accepted park, recreation and open space standards. The national standards are a useful guide in determining minimum requirements, however, the Town of Morganton must establish its own standards in consideration of the expressed needs and the town's economic, administrative, operational and maintenance capabilities.

## COMMUNITY INPUT NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Community needs for new recreation programs and park facilities were determined by using three separate assessment techniques: public involvement, group interviews, and recreation standards. One of the most important aspects in preparing a comprehensive master plan is the solicitation of public comment on the perceived recreation and park needs of the community. The input gathered from the community involvement process can then be cross-checked with the recreation standards and survey approaches.

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<sup>1</sup> Source: NRPA Recreation, Park and Open Space Standards and Guidelines, 1983 edition.

It is imperative that a master plan be community-driven if it is to truly identify the unique recreation needs of the citizens it is to serve. Community input can identify both needs and priorities that surveys or standards cannot normally accomplish. Extensive effort was made to involve as many citizens as possible in the planning process. Knowing that Morganton is composed of citizens who represent a wide range of recreational needs, the public involvement process was formatted in an effort to reach all the special interest groups in the community. Eighteen separate meetings were held to discuss recreation and park issues with sixteen special interest groups between January 21, 1997 and January 23, 1997. Most of the meetings were conducted at the Collett Street Center. Each group focused on discussing its own special needs and interests but members also contributed comments as individuals concerning issues or needs they felt were important to the entire community. The special interest groups for which meetings were organized include:

- Youth/Teens (Forest Hills and Mt. View Elems.)
- Youth/Teens-Middle School-age (Liberty Middle)
- Senior Adults
- Citizens with Special Needs
- Adult Athletics
- Arts and Humanities
- School Personnel
- Exercise Groups
- Youth Athletics
- Environmentalists
- Chamber of Commerce
- Private Recreation Providers
- Swim Club
- WPCC
- Tennis Club
- City Department Heads
- Churches

Each group was asked to identify at least 10 pressing or important issues pertaining to recreational services, programs, and facilities provided by the City of Morganton. The number of participants in the special interest group sessions ranged from 1 to as many as 25 people. Once all the special interest needs were identified, a community-wide public workshop was held on January 30, 1997. All the input statements from the special interest group meetings were displayed at the workshop, and participants were given the opportunity to read the statements concerning the various needs of the community. In a democratic fashion, participants were then given the opportunity to vote on the statements that they supported. Approximately fifty citizens actively participated in this workshop, some of which represented the special interest groups that participated in the original meetings. In addition to the public workshop input, written statements from Morganton citizens or groups were received and incorporated into the public involvement process.

The community input information presented at this workshop has been organized into facility, program, or policy statement categories. It is important to note that the statements are not listed in order of priority. Rather, they are grouped by the level of public interest showed at the meeting, (a complete listing of the statements is provided in the appendix of this report). The following represents a summary of the results of the community input needs assessment.

## Facility Statements

### High Community Support of Statement

- An indoor pool is needed in the community for all forms of water recreation. (recreational swimming, competitive swimming, swimming instruction, and exercise classes).
- An indoor pool is needed because existing facilities cannot provide adequate time for all the existing users.
- There is a strong need for more gymnasium space because existing facilities are currently overloaded with programed activities and there is no place for practice and open play.
- There is a strong need for more sports fields (especially soccer, baseball and softball) because existing facilities are currently overloaded with programed activities and there is no place for practice and open play. This causes overuse of fields and contributes to poor quality of playing surfaces.
- Consider the Edwards Nursery site as a potential new multi-use park, where the new athletic fields could be located.
- The City Council is committed to continuing with the development of the Catawba River Greenway. The initial phases have been well received by the community because it satisfies the needs of many users (nature walkers, joggers, bicyclists, etc.).
- Provide bike routes for safe access to facilities

### Medium Community Support of Statement

- Indoor walking track is needed
- Consider an environmental center as part of the development for the Nursery site park plan and clearly separate passive from active recreation uses.
- Greenways are fine, but don't forget that the kids who live in the inner city also need easily accessible recreation facilities for entertainment and social purposes.
- Historically, City Council has been somewhat conservative in financially supporting new recreation facilities.
- Facilities at some of the parks are too spread out and at others uses are conflicting. Redesigns should be evaluated.
- There is a need field adult softball field complex, where tournaments can be played. One large adult softball complex is preferred, over separate fields at various park sites throughout the City.
- Additional tennis courts are needed in the city a single location because of joint use with the schools. One large tennis complex is preferred possibly with soft surfaces.
- Consider footbridge connection from Catawba River Greenway Park to Freedom High School. Would enhance biking, jogging, walking, and environmental education opportunities
- Improve the exercise and weight rooms at Collett Street Center by expanding, reorganizing and renovating existing space.

### Some Community Support of Statement

- Adult soccer is becoming more popular and fields will need to be provided and reserved for league play.
- Consider the extension of the Catawba River Greenway to include other important tributaries such as: Hunting Creek, Silver Creek, John's River, and Warrior Fork.
- Additional canoe access points along the river

- Provide space for sledding
- Provide areas for skateboarding, in-line skating and bike-jumping
- Provide “challenge facilities” like ropes course and climbing walls.
- Provide space for indoor soccer

## **Program Statements**

### **High Community Support of Statement**

- The Morganton community is very recreation oriented and is desiring diverse facilities and programs to meet their needs.
- Keeping tournaments in Morganton will keep dollars here also (gas, restaurants, hotels, etc.).
- Expand programs for kids at risk and provide easily accessible locations for these activities.
- Provide environmental and educational programs associated with the greenway and the parks

### **Medium Community Support of Statement**

- Seniors programs will become more important with the increase of a retired population. (walking, arts/crafts, exercise classes, and golf)
- Tapping into the huge tourism market through special events which bring people into the City, or special facilities which caters to the tourist
- Provide programs that will keep pace with the changing demographic make-up of the population.
- Expand the soccer program and seek joint use with the county
- Joint use agreements with the schools for use of facilities to increase programs.
- Increase outdoor programs like camping and hiking

### **Some Community Support of Statement**

- The Recreation Department needs to add a Special Population Staff person to help coordinate and promote activities/programs for citizens with special needs. (High concentration of disabled people in Morganton.)
- In the past, the Recreation Department had a “buddy system” to help kids with disabilities participate in recreation programs. Parents want the “buddy system” to continue in the future and it needs better promotion.
- The Special Olympics needs to be led by either the City or the Burke County Recreation Departments and not the schools.
- Increase support for the summer tennis program
- Provide programs that promote creative play

## **Policy Statements**

### **High Community Support of Statement**

- Recreation facilities and programs must be affordable and accessible to all segments of the community, especially those who cannot afford “private memberships”.
- Many people moving into the area will probably live outside the Morganton City limits, but will depend upon the recreation facilities and programs that the City offers. Fees must be revaluated for non- residents.
- a successful recreation bond will need to be tied to various recreation improvements throughout the City, and not just to one special use facility such as a swimming pool.

- Recreation Department does an excellent job providing facilities and programs with limited resources
- Try to get money for recreation improvements through federal or state grants.
- a strong Recreation Department with numerous programs can help keep the youth of the community active in a positive way and will help reduce crime
- Bring in an outside consultant to help further research the need for an indoor pool, and help with a bond promotion.
- Funding will have to come from many sources but a key source will be the private sector. Alliances will be needed.
- An indoor pool, if jointly developed with other entities will require policies on maintenance, operation, and funding.

#### **Medium Community Support of Statement**

- There is opportunity and willingness to work together even more on joint use of facilities or programs. (My be joint use agreements with the schools will help open gym space, develop pools and provide other facilities etc.)
- Try more sponsorships of special events or tournaments with the private sector to offset public cost. They want to participate.
- Overall, the disabled community currently feels that the existing park system is physically accessible.

#### **Some Community Support of Statement**

- Overall, the Recreation Department needs to promote more strongly what is available for to community. People are not aware of the easy access to some great recreational opportunities.
- As the population continues to diversify ethnically interpretation may become necessary.
- With retirees, park facilities and recreation programming will probably be placed in a lower priority, as compared with public safety, water and sewer, and a good roadway network.

## **STATE AND NATIONAL ASSESSMENTS**

Surveys designed to determine the demand for outdoor recreation have been conducted on the Federal level by the President's Commission on Americans Outdoor and by the State of North Carolina.

The President's Commission Report indicated the following significant facts:

- Top ten outdoor recreation activities nationwide:
 

1. Picnicking	6. Playing sports
2. Driving for pleasure	7. Fishing
3. Swimming	8. Attending sport events
4. Sightseeing	9. Boating
5. Walking for pleasure	10. Bicycling
- Activities rapidly growing in popularity:
 

1. Canoeing	5. Sailing
2. Bicycling	6. Hiking/backpacking

- |                             |                         |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| 3. Attending outdoor sports | 7. Walking for pleasure |
| 4. Camping, all types       | 8. Water skiing         |

The local level (Cities and Counties) of the nation is providing 39% of the public recreation opportunities.

The North Carolina Outdoor Recreation Survey conducted in 1989, provided an indication on the most popular outdoor recreation activities in the State. The most popular outdoor recreation activities in North Carolina are:

- |                              |                            |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Walking for pleasure      | 6. Swimming                |
| 2. Driving for pleasure      | 7. Visiting natural areas  |
| 3. Viewing scenery           | 8. Picnicking              |
| 4. Beach activities          | 9. Attending sports events |
| 5. Visiting historical sites | 10. Visiting zoos          |

## **PARK CLASSIFICATIONS AND LAND REQUIREMENTS**

The Master Plan preparation process includes reviewing recreation standards developed by organizations including the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA), the North Carolina Department of Environment Health and Natural Resources (NCDEHNR) and the master plans for counties of similar size. In addition, specific characteristics such as local natural resources, economic conditions, land use availability, cultural preferences and community needs contribute to the formation of the town's recreation standards.

The recommended standards for park classifications and land area requirements are described below and itemized in Table 3-1. The park classifications conform to one of three general categories: places for active recreation, resource oriented areas and specialized facilities. The park types are further defined by space requirements, typical facilities and programs and unique environmental features.

### **Regional Park**

a regional park has a fifty mile service radius that serves several communities or a multi-county region. Approximately 10 acres per 1,000 population is served and the park is generally 1,000 acres or more. a regional park is an area of natural ornamental quality that provides diverse and unique natural resources for nature oriented outdoor recreation such as nature viewing and study, wildlife habitat conservation, hiking, camping, canoeing and fishing. Usually 80% of the land is reserved for conservation and natural resource management, with less than 20 % of the site developed for active recreation. Active recreation areas consist of play areas and open fields for informal use. Exhibit 3-1 illustrates a typical regional park.

### **District Park**

a district park provides more diverse recreational opportunities than the regional park, yet on a smaller scale. Similar to a regional park, a district park emphasizes passive recreational opportunities, but it also includes limited active recreational facilities. a



district park is easily accessible by the population it serves and maintains a 5-10 mile service radius. The park contains a minimum of 5 acres per 1,000 population and should be a minimum of 200 acres in size.

District parks normally include an indoor recreation building or an interpretive center which reflects the character of the park. Active recreational facilities located in a district park include active play areas, ballfields, hard surface courts, multi-purpose play fields, picnic facilities, and various types of trails. Exhibit 3-2 illustrates a typical district park.

### **Community Park**

The community park is easily accessible to a single, or several neighborhoods depending on local needs and the population distribution at the time it was developed. When possible, the park may be developed adjacent to a middle or elementary school. The community park provides recreational opportunities for the entire family and contains areas suited for intense recreational purposes such as a recreation center building, athletic fields, swimming, tennis, and walking/jogging trails. The park may also possess areas of natural quality for outdoor recreation such as viewing, sitting and picnicking.

Community parks have an average service area of 1- 2 miles and requires a minimum of 5-8 acres per 1,000 population served. Community parks should be at least 25-40 acres minimum in size. Exhibit 3-3 illustrates a typical community park. Community parks are usually provided by municipal government.

### **Neighborhood Park**

The neighborhood park is designed to serve a population of up to 5,000, but in many instances even more are served. The park requires 2-2.5 acres per 1,000 population served and should be a minimum of 10 acres, however many times they are smaller. The neighborhood park is typically characterized by recreational activities for each family. Such as games, court games, crafts, playground apparatus, picnicking and space for quiet/passive activities.

The service radius for a neighborhood park is one-half to one mile and is easily accessible to the neighborhood population through safe walking and biking access. Parking may or may not be required. Where feasible the activity areas are equally divided between quiet/passive activities and active play. This type of park may be developed as a school/park or community center facility. Exhibit 3-4 illustrates a typical neighborhood park. Neighborhood parks are normally provided by municipal government.

### **Mini-Park**

a mini-park is characterized by relatively small size (approximately an acre), and its specialized facilities are serve a specific segment of the population (i.e., tot lots or senior citizens). This park is typically located close to higher density neighborhoods such as apartment complexes, townhouse developments and housing for the elderly. The service are for a mini-park is less than 1/4 mile. Exhibit 3-5 illustrates a typical mini-park. Mini-parks are normally provided by municipal government if they are to occur.

## Linear Park

a linear park is an area developed for one or more varying modes of recreational travel such as hiking and biking. Often times the linear park will be developed to connect recreational facilities, as well as schools and residential neighborhoods.

The acreage and service area of a linear park is variable and subject to existing natural and man-made features, the existence of public right-of-way, and the public demand for this type of park. In some cases, a linear park is developed within a large land area designated for protection and management of the natural environment, with the recreation use a secondary objective. Exhibit 3-6 illustrates a typical linear park. These parks are provided by all levels of government.

## Unique or Special Areas

The unique or special areas are park types which exist to enhance or utilize a special man-made or natural feature. They can include beaches, parkways, historical sites, sites of archeological significance, arboretums, conservation easements, flood plains, etc. Minimum standards relating to acreage or population have not been established by the park and recreation industry for this category. a size that is sufficient to protect and interpret the resource, while providing optimum use is considered desirable. Special use parks are provided by all levels of government.

## EVALUATION OF PARK LAND NEEDS

The minimum park land requirement (in acres) for the total population of the Morganton planning area is provided in Table 3-2. The acreage requirement is based upon the population ratio method (acres of park land per 1,000 population) established for each park classification.

The types of parks which will be needed by the end of the planning period (year 2015) based upon the acreage standards provided in Table 3-2 include, District Parks, Community Parks, Neighborhood Parks and Mini-parks. The recommended total acreage for District Parks by the end of the planning period is 156 acres. This recommended acreage requires a total of 1 district park by 2015. Recommended Community Park acreage for 2015 is 187, or approximately 5-5 community parks. The recommended total acreage for Neighborhood Parks by the end of the planning period is 62 acres. This recommended acreage requires a total of 6 neighborhood parks by 2015. Recommended Mini-Park acreage for 2015 is 7.8 acres, or approximately 8 mini- parks.

## OPEN SPACE

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

Public open space is defined as any land acquired for the purpose of keeping it in a permanent undeveloped state. The functions of such land include: a] protection of

drainage areas for water supplies (watersheds); b] protection of areas which are particularly well suited for growing crops (farmland preservation); c] protection of attractive waterways (wild and scenic rivers); d] preservation of spaces between communities to prevent urban sprawl (greenbelts); e] protection of wildlife habitat (sanctuaries); f] protection of approach and take-off areas near airports (clear zones); and g] protection of undevelopable land (landfills). While these are some of the more common open space functions, many others exist. The majority of open space in Morganton is comprised of state owned property and privately held agricultural and watershed land.

## **FACILITY STANDARDS**

Minimum standards for recreational facilities (i.e. ball fields, courts, outdoor areas, etc.) have been developed for Morganton in accordance with industry guidelines established by the NRPA (National Recreation and Park Association) and the NCDEHNR (North Carolina Department of Environment Health and Natural Resources). Identified in Table 3-3, Standards for Public Facilities, are the minimum recreation facility standards that may be used to compare the Town of Morganton with other public entities in North Carolina and the United States.

## **EVALUATION OF FACILITY NEEDS**

The number of public facilities needed in Morganton through the planning period (1997-2015) are identified in Table 3-4, Public Facilities Needs Analysis. Based upon the standards immediate needs for additional facilities include:

- (4) Youth baseball fields
- (2) Softball fields
- (7) Soccer fields
- (2) Volleyball courts
- (8) Picnic facilities/tables
- (12) Play areas
- (4) Neighborhood centers
- (4-5) Miles of and walking/hiking trails
- (18) Miles of bike paths
- (4.7) Miles of canoe stream miles

Through the year 2015 the facility needs increase to the following totals:

- (1) Swimming pool
- (1) Baseball field (adult)
- (1) Football fields
- (16) Picnic facilities/tables
- (16) Play areas
- (5-6) Miles of and walking/hiking trails
- (21) Miles of bike paths
- (5.2) Miles of canoe stream miles

**TABLE 3-1  
CITY OF MORGANTON  
PARK CLASSIFICATION AND LAND AREA  
REQUIREMENTS**

Park Type Standard	Acres/1000 Population	Acres	Population Served	Service Area
<b>Regional Park</b>				
National	10	1000	Sev. Communities	1 hr. drive
State	20	1000	Sev. Communities	1 hr. drive
Recommended	10	1000	100,000	50-60 mi. radius
<b>District Park</b>				
National	5-10	200	Sev. Communities	1 hr. drive
State	10	200	Sev. Communities	15-20 mi. radius
Recommended	5-10	200	20,000	8-10 mi. radius
<b>Community Park</b>				
National	5-8	25+	Several Neighs.	1-2 mile radius
State	8	25+	20,000	1-3 mile radius
Recommended	6	25-30+	8 - 10,000	1-2 mile radius
<b>Neighborhood Park</b>				
National	1-2	15+	5,000	¼-½ mile
State	2	6-8	4,000	¼-½ mile
Recommended	2	8-10	5,000	½-1 mile
<b>Mini Park</b>				
National	.25	1	Adjacent Neigh.	¼ mile
State	-	-	500-2,500	-
Recommended	.25	1	Adjacent Neigh.	¼-½ mile
<b>Special -Use or Linear Park</b>				
National	Varies	Varies	Varies	Varies
State	30	Varies	Varies	Varies
Recommended	Varies	Varies	Varies	Varies

**TABLE 3-2  
CITY OF MORGANTON  
TOTAL PARK SITES AND ACREAGE REQUIREMENTS**

Park Type	Year/Population and Requirements					
	1996 (28,359)	2000 (28,930)	2005 (29,661)	2010 (30,410)	2015 (31,180)	Existing
<b>Regional Parks*</b> +1000 acre park (10 Ac/1000)	284 acres	289 acres	297 acres	304 acres	312 acres	N/A <sup>1</sup>
<b>District Parks*</b> +200 acre park (5-10 Ac/1000)	142 acres <i>1 sites</i>	144 acres <i>1 sites</i>	148 acres <i>1 sites</i>	152 acres <i>1 sites</i>	156 acres <i>1 sites</i>	0 acres <sup>2</sup> <i>0 sites</i>
<b>Community Parks</b> +25-40 acre park (6 Ac/1000)	170 acres <i>4-5 sites</i>	174 acres <i>4-5 sites</i>	178 acres <i>4-5 sites</i>	182 acres <i>4-5 sites</i>	187 acres <i>4-5 sites</i>	114 acres <i>4 sites</i> <sup>3</sup>
<b>Neighborhood Parks</b> 8-10 acre park (2 Ac/1000)	57 acres <i>6 sites</i>	58 acres <i>6 sites</i>	59 acres <i>6 sites</i>	61 acres <i>6 sites</i>	62 acres <i>6 sites</i>	28 acres <i>3 sites</i> <sup>4</sup>
<b>Mini Parks</b> ½ - 1 acre park (.25 Ac/1000)	7.1 acres <i>7 sites</i>	7.2 acres <i>7 sites</i>	7.4 acres <i>7 sites</i>	7.6 acres <i>8 sites</i>	7.8 acres <i>8 sites</i>	3 acres <i>4 sites</i> <sup>5</sup>
<b>Linear Parks</b> (no std.)	Varies	Varies	Varies	Varies	Varies	±50 acres <i>1 sites</i>

\* The acreage shown for the Regional and District Parks denotes Morganton's planning area share for these types of parks to be provided by the State and Burke County.

<sup>1</sup>Mt. Mitchell, Lake James, South Mts. And Pisgah Natl. Forest lands provide regional park service for the area.( Its service radius is ±50 miles, which encompasses the Morganton planning area.)

<sup>2</sup> No district parks exist within the Morganton park system or in Burke County.

<sup>3</sup> Community parks include Bethel Rd., Freedom, Collett St./Gene Turner , and Shadowline. Shuey Park has been classified as a special use facility/park used for athletics— specifically baseball and softball.

<sup>4</sup> Neighborhood Parks include Mt. View/MLK, Carbon City and Parker Road Park (Burke County facility).

<sup>5</sup> Mini-Parks include Children's, Cascade, Downtown Seating Areas

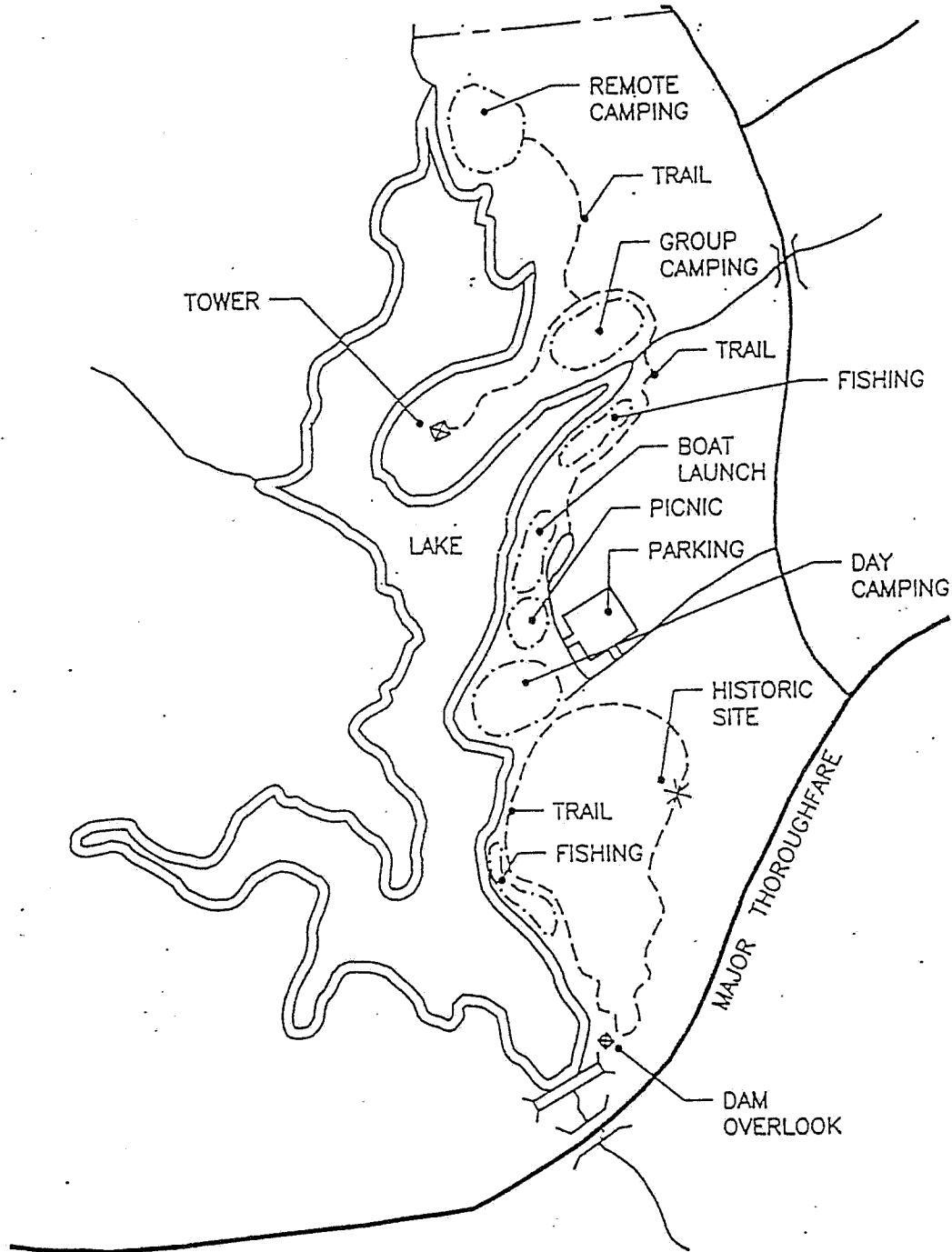
**TABLE 3-3  
CITY OF MORGANTON  
STANDARDS FOR PUBLIC FACILITIES**

Facility	National Standard/ 1000 pop.	State Standard/ 1000 pop.	Morganton Standard/ 1000 pop.
<b>Fields</b>			
Adult Baseball	1/12,000	1/5,000	1/12,000
Youth Baseball	N/A	N/A	1/5,000
Softball	1/5,000	1/5,000	1/5,000
Football	1/10,000	1/20,000	1/20,000
Soccer	1/10,000	1/10,000	1/3,000
<b>Courts</b>			
Basketball	1/5,000	1/5,000	1/5,000
Tennis	1/2,000	1/2,000	1/2,000
Volleyball	1/5,000	1/5,000	1/5,000
Shuffleboard	N/A	N/A	1/5,000
Horseshoe	N/A	N/A	1/5,000
<b>Outdoor Areas</b>			
Picnic Tables	N/A	N/A	1/400
Picnic Shelters	N/A	N/A	1/5,000
Playground Activities	N/A	1/1,000	1/2,000
Trails			
- Hiking	1/region	.4 mile/1,000	1 mile/4,000
- Interpretive	1/region	.2 mile/1,000	1 mile/5,000
Archery/Shooting Area	1/50,000	1/50,000	1/50,000
Amphitheater	N/A	N/A	1/20,000
<b>Specialized</b>			
Community Center	N/A	N/A	1/20,000
Neighborhood Center	N/A	N/A	1/10,000
Swimming Pool	1/20,000	1/20,000	1/20,000
Golf Course	1/25,000	1/25,000	1/25,000
Bicycling			
- Urban	N/A	1 mile/1,000	1 mile/1,000
- Rural touring	N/A	2 mile/1,000	2 mile/1,000
Canoeing			
- Stream Mileage	N/A	.2 mile/1,000	.2 mile/1,000
- Access points	N/A	1/10 miles	1/10 miles

**TABLE 3-4  
CITY OF MORGANTON  
PUBLIC RECREATION FACILITIES NEEDS ANALYSIS**

Year Population	1996 (28,359)	2000 (28,930)	2005 (29,661)	2010 (30,410)	2015 (31,180)	Existing
<b>Facility</b>						
Adult Baseball	2	2	2	3	3	2
Youth Baseball	6	6	6	6	6	2
Softball	6	6	6	6	6	4/8 <sup>1</sup>
Football	1	1	1	2	2	1
Soccer	10	10	10	10	10	3/8 <sup>2</sup>
<b>Courts</b>						
Basketball	6	6	6	6	6	8 <sup>3</sup>
Tennis	14	14	15	15	16	15
Volleyball	6	6	6	6	6	4
Shuffleboard	6	6	6	6	6	0
Horseshoe	6	6	6	6	6	4
<b>Outdoor Areas</b>						
Picnic Tables	70	72	74	76	78	62
Picnic Shelters	6	6	6	6	6	7 <sup>4</sup>
Playground Areas	28	29	30	30	32	16 <sup>5</sup>
Trails						
- Hiking	7.1 mi	7.2 mi	7.4 mi	7.6 mi	7.8 mi	2
- Interpretive	5.7 mi	5.8 mi	5.9 mi	6.0 mi	6.2 mi	2
Archery Area	1	1	1	1	1	0
Amphitheater	1	1	1	1	1	1
<b>Specialized</b>						
Gymnasiums	3	3	3	3	3	3 <sup>6</sup>
Community Center	1	1	1	1	2	1
Neighborhood Ctr.	3	3	3	3	3	1
Swimming Pool	1	1	1	1	2	2
Golf Course	1	1	1	1	1	2
Bicycling						
- Urban	28 mi	29 mi	30 mi	30 mi	31 mi	10
- Rural Touring	56 mi	58 mi	60 mi	60 mi	62 mi	30
Canoeing						
- Stream Miles	5.7 mi	5.8 mi	5.9 mi	6.0 mi	6.2 mi	1.0
- Access Points	1	1	1	1	1	1
<p>* Recommended number of facilities to support the planning area.  <sup>1</sup> Four fields suitable for structured play, four others are mixed-use or for informal play.  <sup>2</sup> Three fields suitable for structured play, 5 more are used (2 overlap baseball fields and 3 are informal).  <sup>3</sup> Includes indoor facilities  <sup>4</sup> Does not include small family/table shelters (10)  <sup>5</sup> Includes school sites and Parker Road park  <sup>6</sup> Includes the Old Armory used for gymnastics (no schools)</p>						

EXHIBIT 3-1

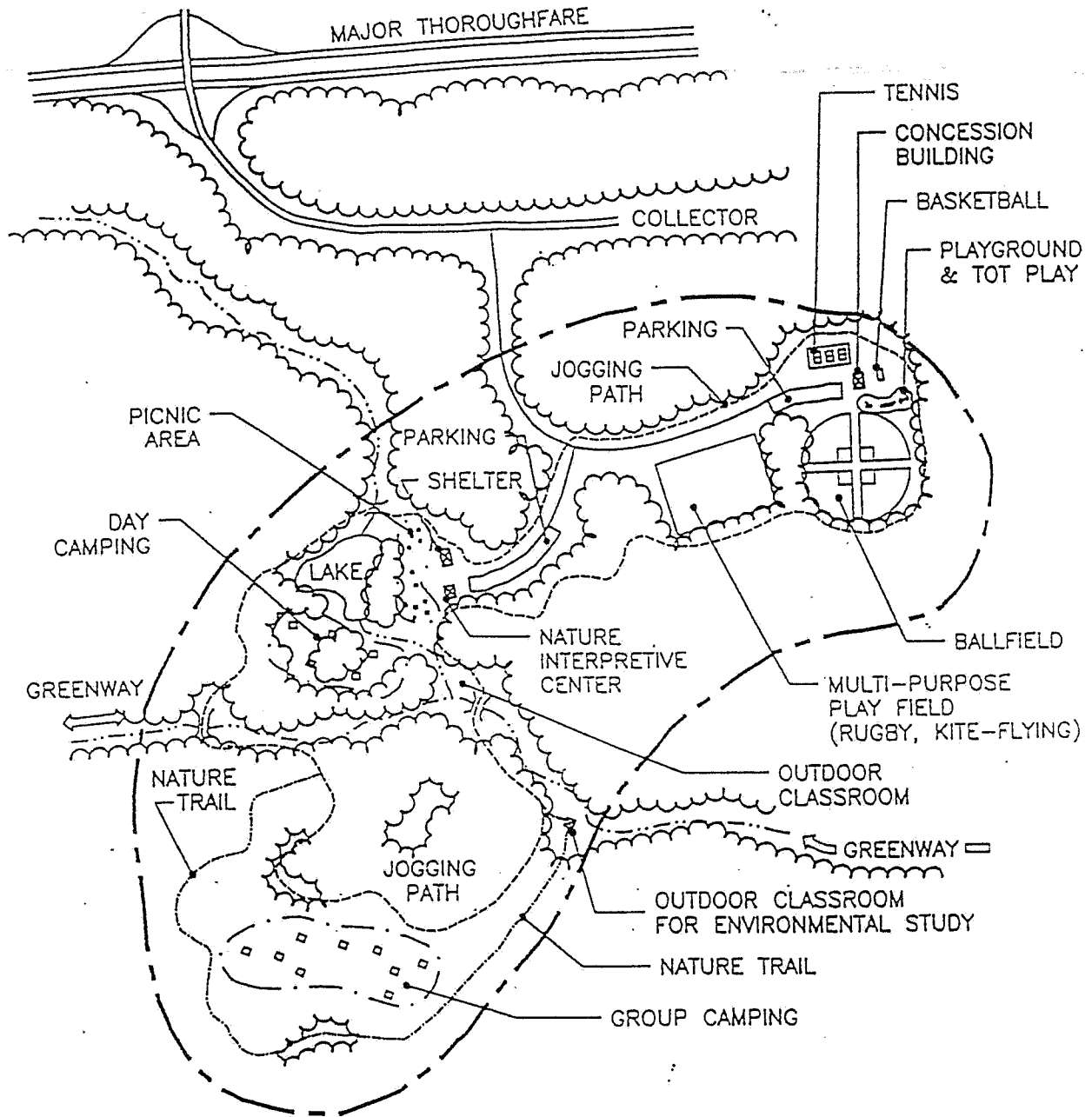


**Typical Regional Park**  
(+1000 Ac.)

**CITY OF MORGANTON  
NORTH CAROLINA  
2015 Recreation Master Plan**



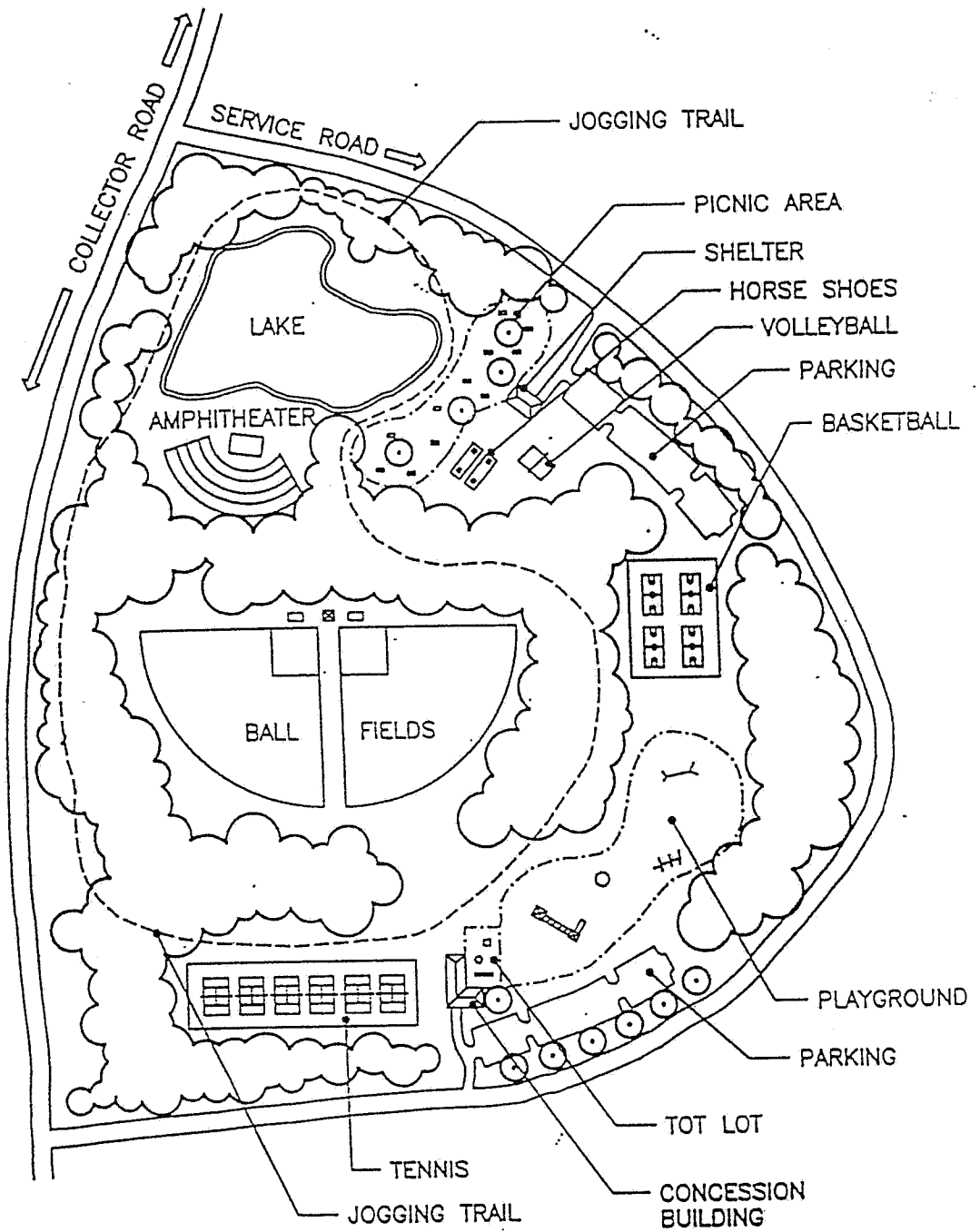
EXHIBIT 3-2



**Typical District Park**  
(+200 Ac.)

**CITY OF MORGANTON**  
**NORTH CAROLINA**  
**2015 Recreation Master Plan**

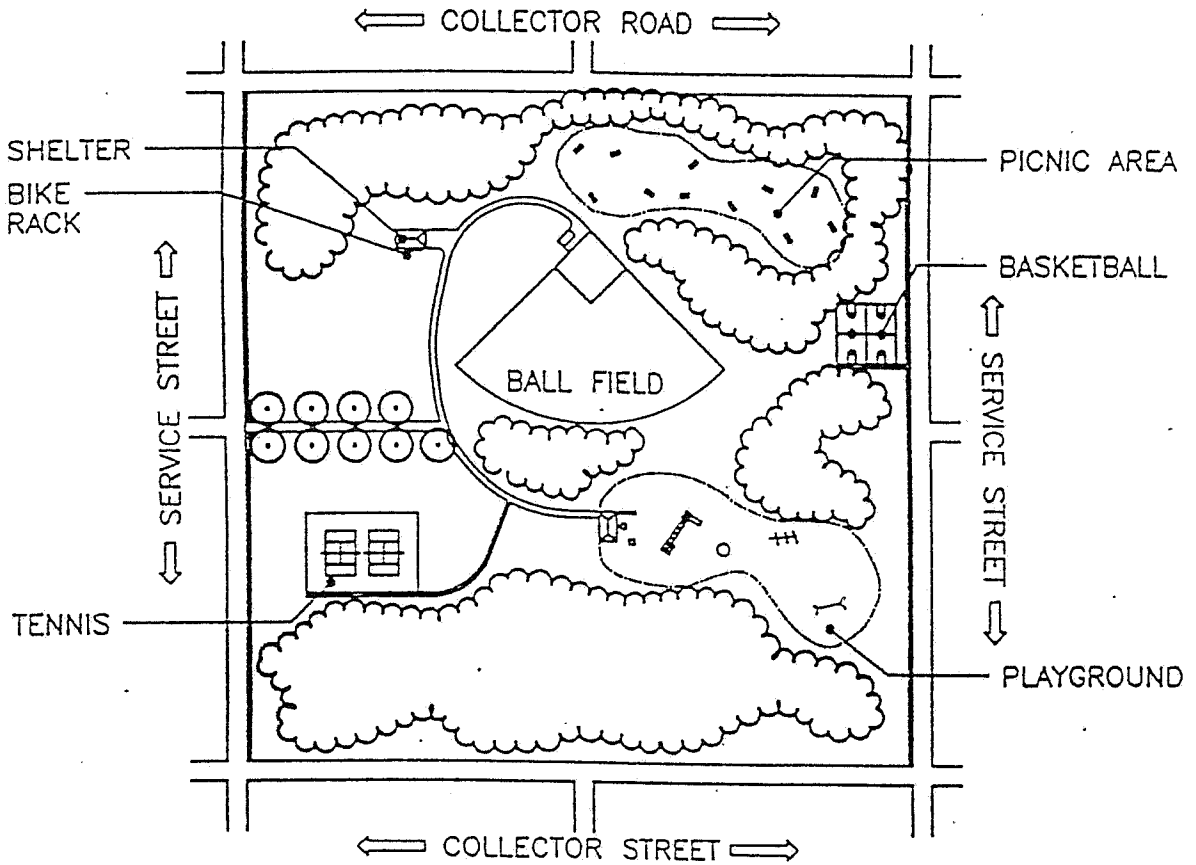
EXHIBIT 3-3



**Typical Community Park**  
(+25 Ac.)

**CITY OF MORGANTON**  
**NORTH CAROLINA**  
**2015 Recreation Master Plan**

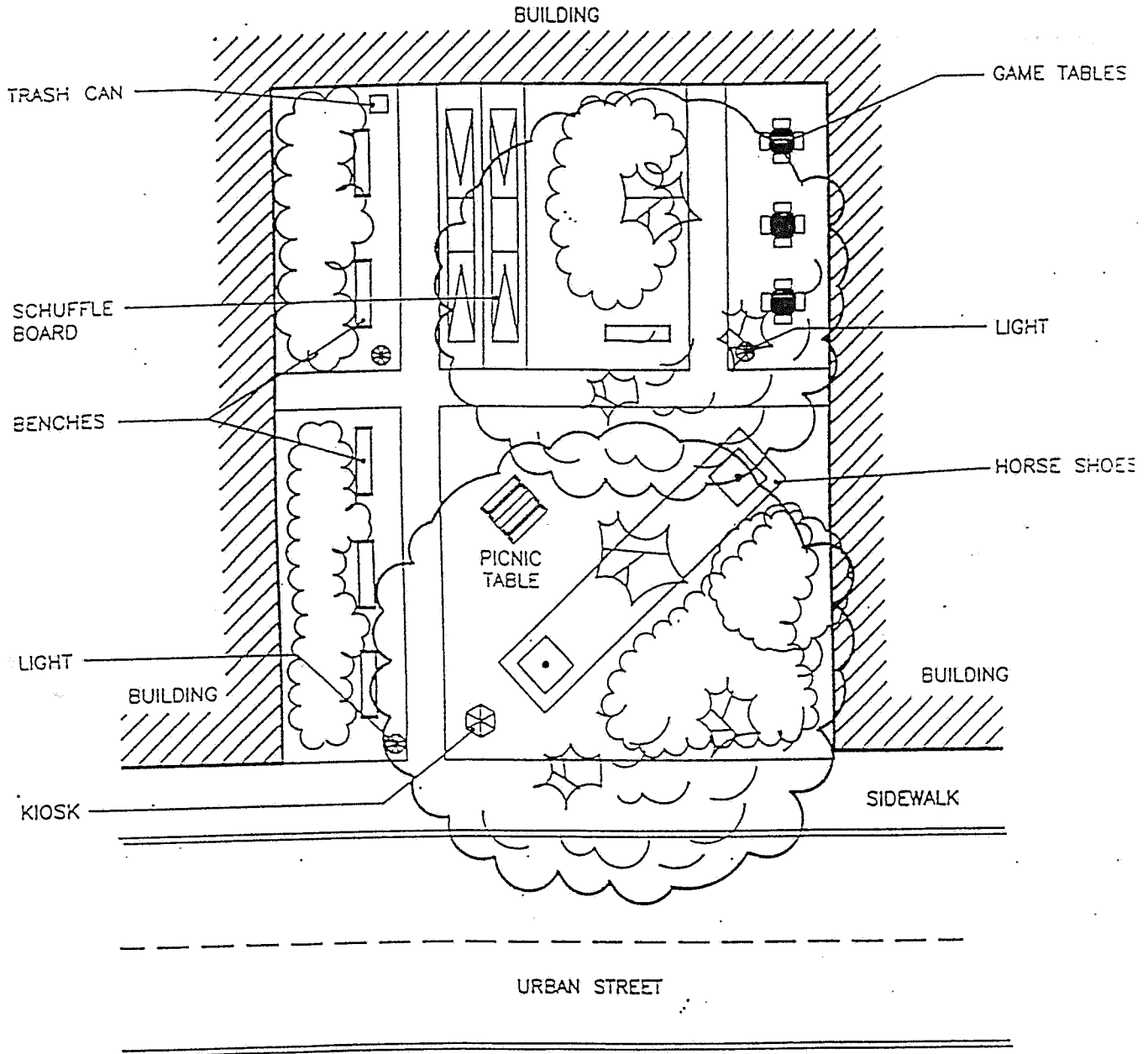
EXHIBIT 3-4



**Typical Neighborhood Park**  
(+6 Ac.)

**CITY OF MORGANTON**  
**NORTH CAROLINA**  
**2015 Recreation Master Plan**

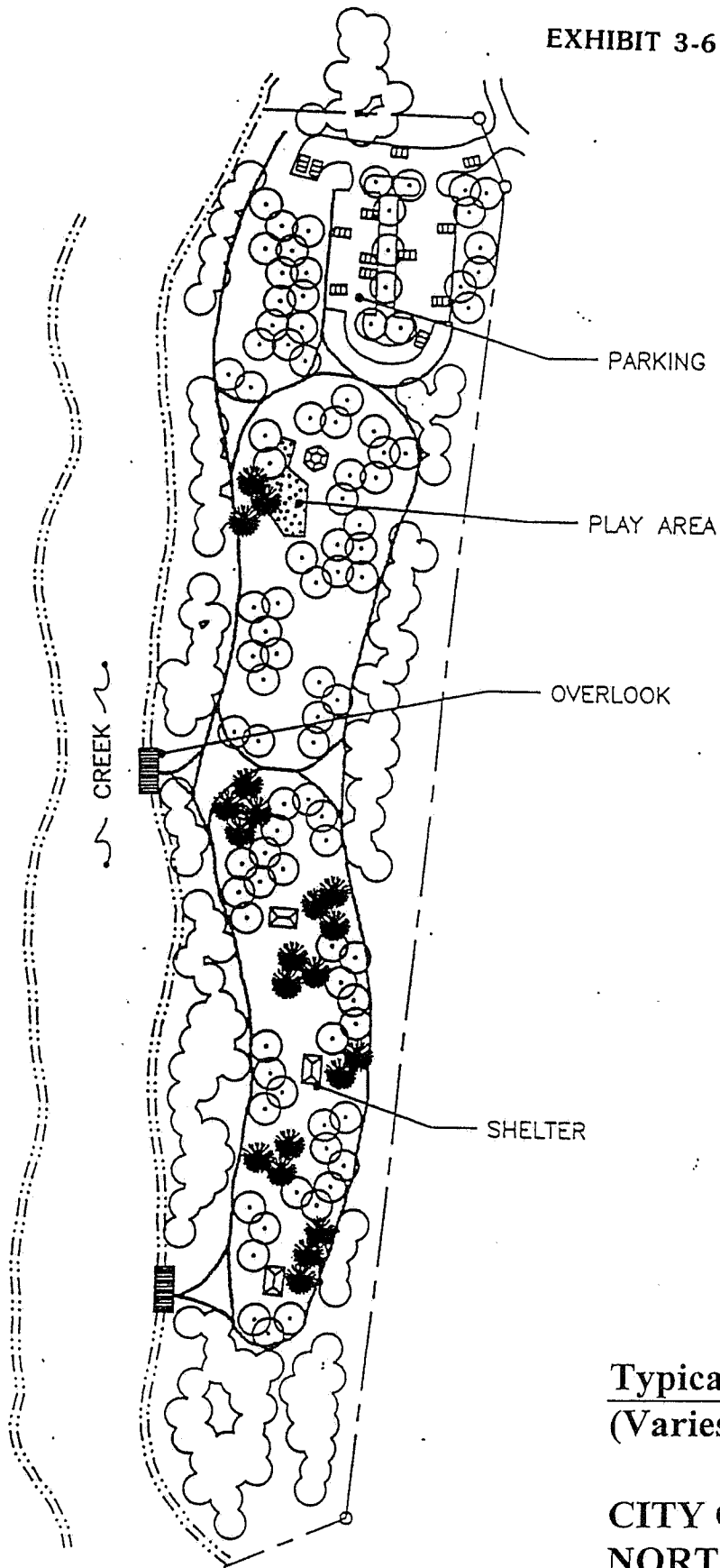
EXHIBIT 3-5



**Typical Mini-Park**  
**(1 Ac. or less)**

**CITY OF MORGANTON**  
**NORTH CAROLINA**  
**2015 Recreation Master Plan**

EXHIBIT 3-6



**Typical Linear Park**  
**(Varies)**

**CITY OF MORGANTON**  
**NORTH CAROLINA**  
**2015 Recreation Master Plan**

▷▷▷ Effective Solutions

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## SECTION 4

### MASTER PLAN PROPOSAL AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### INTRODUCTION

Morganton is recognized throughout the state as having excellent park facilities along with high quality recreation programs. The challenge in the future will be to maintain this optimum performance level. It is a foregone conclusion that the city's population will continue to grow moderately to the northwest and south placing additional burden on the existing park system. Additionally, Burke County residents participate often in programs offered by the City and further use of facilities by this population is expected. The unique facilities within the system such as the greenway, pools, children's park, and the recreation centers will also continue to age requiring renovations, modification, or expansion.

The citizens of Morganton are accustomed to having opportunities to be part of many diverse recreational activities provided through the Recreation Department and they will settle for no less in the future. Public input brought forward during the planning process suggests that the citizen's interest and demand for "quality leisure services" will only increase as time passes. Additionally, the citizens expect local government to be the main provider of these services.

With the future growth, it is also anticipated that the city of Morganton will be pressed to meet the demands placed on its other municipal services such as fire and police protection, sewer and water services, and education to name a few. Balancing the budgets for all city operations while providing adequate services will continue to be an enormous challenge.

In order to present a realistic plan of meeting the recreational needs of the future, several master plan scenarios were developed as part of the overall planning process. Proposals and recommendations were prepared for each scenario and the plans were evaluated as to how well each addressed the recreational needs of the community. The plans were presented and reviewed with the Morganton Recreation Commission. This section of the master plan presents the final proposals and recommendations which are a result of this interactive process.

#### ROLES OF RECREATIONAL PROVIDERS

Meeting all the recreational needs of the community will require a joint effort between the various government agencies and the private sector. No one group can be held solely responsible for providing all the programs and facilities for the community. The following recommendations describe the roles that each recreational provider should take over the next 16 year period.

##### State of North Carolina

The state of North Carolina should continue to offer a variety of recreational facilities and programs on a multi-county regional basis. The state should be the provider of regional state parks which include opportunities for camping, fishing, biking, and special

facilities such as zoos and preservation of historic sites. The closest state facilities to Morganton include: South Mountains State Park, Lake James State Park, and Mount Mitchell State Park. Additionally, the Pisgah National Forest offers many recreational opportunities that are typically found in state parks. The state does have plans to expand some of these facilities but a new state park is not anticipated in the region through the year 2015. South Mountain State Park, which is an approximate 20-30 minute drive from Morganton offers the greatest potential for future use. The state has recently been approached about acquiring additional land along its borders.

The state of North Carolina should take the lead responsibility of coordinating and planning the Mountains to Sea Trail that is envisioned to go from the Great Smoky Mountains National Park to Nags Head on the Outer Banks. It will incorporate all types of trails including: hiking, horse, bicycle, and canoe. The state has not indicated that the trail will directly connect with Morganton but opportunities to connect to the trail via the Catawba River and/or future county trails may become viable as the plan moves forward. The state should work closely with the city of Morganton to determine if access by the river is possible and where this may occur. Location of support facilities, such as canoe launch areas, restrooms, and parking areas can be jointly developed to save on development costs.

The state of North Carolina should also financially assist Morganton in the acquisition and development of new parks, and renovations of existing parks, through a state grant program. With the demise of the Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund Program, Morganton will need to look to the state for some form of financial assistance. The General Assembly has set aside funds through the Park Authority/Park and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF) to help upgrade and expand local parks. The fund dedicates the state deed excise stamp tax to acquire, maintain, and develop both state and local parks. The deed excise stamp tax generates \$12-15 million each year. It is anticipated that approximately \$2.5-3 million will be available each year for local governments to renovate or develop their park systems. The PARTF system allows Morganton to apply for a 50/50 cost sharing grant to develop or acquire park land and facilities. It is in the best interest of the city to apply for funds through this program.

Additionally the state can fund projects, such as bikeway and pedestrian walks, through the federally funded Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA). The funds are administered by the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) and the City has used these funds for developing the existing portion of the Catawba Greenway. The State also makes funds available for development of facilities and programs through the Community Development Block Grant system (CDBG) administered by the Division of Community Assistance. Eligible communities can use these federal funds for development of projects such as recreation facilities, land acquisition, and neighborhood centers.

## **Burke County**

Burke County must supplement the recreation and park facilities that are offered through the city of Morganton. Currently the county maintains very few facilities and does not provide any district parks. The Parker Road Park site in Morganton, and the Huffman Center in Drexel, provide the only facilities operated by the county park and recreation department. These facilities are open and available to all citizens living within Burke County. The county does provide recreational opportunities at school sites and the recreation department and local athletic associations use these facilities primarily for



athletic league programs such as baseball, softball, soccer, and basketball. By the year 2015, it is forecasted that there will be 93,827 people living in Burke County which will create a strong need for additional recreation services and park facilities. If these increased needs are to be met, Burke County will have to provide more recreation programs and park facilities than exist today. Burke County's primary role should be to offer programs and facilities on a county-wide basis. Typically, county government provides these facilities primarily through district parks which are approximately 200 acres in size and serve multiple townships. Currently the county does not have a park that fits this classification. Based on recreation standards, four (4) district parks will need to be developed by the county by 2015. The estimated population within master plan study area currently warrants the development of a district park. District parks should emphasize passive recreational opportunities, yet also include some active recreation facilities, such as ballfields, and courts. If the county provides these parks along with the new facilities, it should help to alleviate some of the demands placed on Morganton's system. If the county elects not to develop any new parks over the next 17 years, then the city of Morganton should be eligible for significant financial assistance through Burke County to help subsidize their recreation and parks system. This Master Plan should be presented to the county immediately to begin the coordination of long term recreation and park planning. Joint programming and sharing of facilities should be encouraged.

### **City of Morganton**

As its primary focus, the city of Morganton needs to offer recreation programs and park facilities for its own citizens. Historically, the city has been serving both Morganton residents and those living in Burke County. Through the planning period, it will be increasingly more difficult to follow this trend. It is anticipated that the city will not be in a financial position to offer recreation programs and park facilities for a large population of citizens living in the county. The Master Plan is based on the premise that the city of Morganton's recreation and parks system will be structured to primarily serve the approximately 31,180 people who are anticipated to live within the city or its sphere of influence (extraterritorial planning area) by the year 2015. The proposed facilities will not be able to accommodate the entire county, except for those offered at special use parks.

In the future, the Morganton Recreation Department's role should continue to offer a variety of recreational activities that meet the diverse needs of the community. The city should also continue being the provider of community, neighborhood, and special-use parks. The extent of programming and offering recreation facilities will ultimately be determined by what Morganton can afford for leisure services. The city should search for teaming opportunities with other governmental agencies and the private sector in sharing of programs and facility development.

### **Other Municipalities**

Similar to Morganton, the other towns in Burke County will need to assist in offering recreational programs and facilities for their own communities. Currently the only town Valdese offers recreation and park services. It is anticipated that the towns of Glen Alpine and Rutherford College may need to provide leisure services for their citizens at some point in time. However, this will most likely take place very late in the planning period or beyond the year 2015. The municipalities should focus on providing small neighborhoods parks and centers with the primary emphasis on active facilities such as

ballfields, tennis courts, and playgrounds. With all of these municipalities being within close proximity to one another, there should be an opportunity of having joint recreation programs and sharing of facilities.

## School System

The Burke County School System has cooperated in the past in making school property available for recreational use where possible. Currently, most of the recreational programs taking place at school sites are associated with programs offered through the county park and recreation department. Daycare and after school programs conducted by the schools occasionally use Morganton recreation facilities on an informal basis. Freedom park is a joint use facility that has school facilities and park facilities co-located. The Schools and the Recreation Department should work more closely together in identifying additional programs that may take place on school or park properties.

Programs that enhance and supplement the educational process should receive top priority. In addition, athletic facilities should be considered for joint use to help reduce duplication of these expensive improvements by both the school system and the city. For joint use of facilities to occur on both school and city properties, a formal agreement should be developed highlighting the responsibilities of both groups. Joint use agreements between school systems and city governments have occurred in other communities for a number of years. There are many good models to study and most will include some of the following conditions:

- A proposed recreation use plan must be submitted for approval.
- Schedules must be coordinated between the school system and the city, with school events having the first priority on school sites. Conversely, city events should receive first priority on city sites.
- When using school properties, the city is responsible for supervision and clean-up, and must supply all expendable materials to carry out the event.
- The city at their cost, can improve recreation facilities, i.e., ballfield lighting, irrigation, etc. on school sites. Plans must be approved by the school system.
- Cost of maintaining facilities is borne proportionally by the city and school system as determined by the relative use of each group.

The Burke County/Schools and the Morganton Recreation Department have an agreement in place for Freedom Park but must look closely at developing a joint use agreement that encompasses the entire service area of the plan.

## Quasi-Public Sector (Churches, Civic Organizations and Community Organizations)

Through the years quasi-public organizations in Morganton have provided or supported vital recreational activities in the community. The development Collet Street Center and other facilities in the system are due to the strong support that came from the quasi-public sector Morganton Recreation Foundation. Many of the facilities that exist in City today; demonstrates the past commitment from this group and other quasi-public groups in helping to support leisure services.

Quasi-public organizations such as churches and YMCAs, also have a unique role of complementing the programs and facilities offered by the city of Morganton. It will be

important through the year 2015 that the quasi-public sector continues to maintain their strong support role in helping to provide new recreation facilities and programs.

## **Private Sector**

### **Commercial Providers**

Generally the private sector has provided recreational facilities and programs that the public or quasi-public organizations have chosen not to, or have been unable to afford. Examples within Morganton of commercial outdoor recreation providers include: the Mimosa Hills Golf Club, Quaker Meadows Golf Course, Riverview Sports Complex, and Silver Creek Golf Course. Additionally there are private commercial providers of bowling facilities, fitness/work-out gyms and pools. The commercial providers are in the recreation business to make a profit, and thus their pricing and operation policies will reflect this mission. These private facilities still help to complement recreation provided by the city of Morganton and in many instances these facilities are used for programs offered by the city.

### **Corporate Community**

Large corporations such as Dana, Shadowline Industries, and Henredon Furniture can play a vital role in assisting the city with providing leisure services. Many corporations who have a large number of employees, often have their own facilities. This can help to reduce some of the demands placed on the public sector. Also good corporate citizens usually desire to become an integral part of the community and are willing to assist in the development of facilities. As evident through the efforts of the Morganton Recreation Foundation and the corporate sponsorship of the wellness center at the hospital. In the future, the city of Morganton will need to target private industries in helping to mutually develop new recreation facilities. There are many partnerships being formed and private contributions given in the support of public leisure services will be important to attain.

### **Developers**

Developers need to assist the city of Morganton in the dedication or reservation of future park sites as part of the overall land development process. The city's subdivision regulations require that when a proposed development includes a designated park or playground site that has been identified in the Comprehensive Plan, then the city may require the developer to dedicate or reserve these sites as a condition for plan approval. Morganton allows for density bonus developments for those projects which are dedicating park land. As an alternative, developers could provide payment in lieu of mandatory land dedication to the city.

## **PARK PROPOSALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

As previously stated, the city of Morganton should focus on developing, and operating community, neighborhood and special use parks, along with greenways. Section 3 "Community Needs Assessment of Recreation and Facilities" identified the existing and future parks needed in the city. It is recommended by the year 2015 that Morganton makes provisions for: (1) district/city-wide park, (5) community parks, (6) neighborhood parks, (8) mini-parks, (2) neighborhood centers, (1) special use athletic/soccer park and (12) miles of greenways/urban bike paths and promotion of a rural bike route. An overall summary of the park proposals and recommendations are listed below. In addition the

proposals and recommendations are graphically shown on the Master Plan (Exhibit 4-1) "Master Plan through the Year 2015."

## Regional Parks

There are three State Parks within a 50-mile radius of Morganton. These facilities include Mt. Mitchell, Lake James and South Mountains State Parks. These facilities provide Morganton the regional recreation land necessary to meet the standards without establishing any new facilities.

## District/City-wide Parks

In accordance with the recreation standards established for the plan it is recommended that Morganton and/or Burke County provide one District Park based upon their population and current facility needs within the study area by the year 2015. Currently the City nor the County provide a facility that fits the requirement of a district park. Typically Burke County should take the responsibility of developing District Parks while cities and towns focus on providing community and neighborhood parks. However the City has been investigating the purchase of property for a "city-wide park" at the Edwards Nursery Site. This proposed park is a great opportunity for both the City of Morganton to actively seek support from the County in developing the park. It is an opportune time for both governing bodies to share in the planning process for the possible park for the citizens of the Burke County within the Morganton planning area.

The proposed city-wide district park should be located at the Nursery Site ( $\pm 200$  acres) on the Catawba River. Typically half of the property should be preserved as open space, and the remaining portion developed with park facilities. The site master plan for the park that encompasses approximately 150-acres and includes facilities such as softball fields, soccer fields, tennis courts, camping, educational/nature center, greenway connections, and river access points.

## Community Parks

**Collett Street Center/Turner Park** - The park is proposed to remain the same size however additional recreation facilities such as an indoor pool may be located at this site. The park will need general renovations through the planning period to add a play area and picnic facilities. In addition, the existing outdoor pool may need to be replaced by the end of the planning period. It is recommended that a pool study be performed for development of an indoor pool at this site and an updated site master plan be performed in conjunction with the study.

**Freedom Park** - Expansion of the park is not proposed, however, facilities in the park appear to be spread out which makes it look like they were not very well planned. The arrangement of park elements, such as the play areas, ball fields, and courts should be evaluated to optimize the use of park land and eliminate conflicting uses. Conflicting uses such as the basketball courts located at the park entrance and walking paths abutting the tennis courts could be improved or eliminated through redesign of the park layout. Additional parking is needed for peak use periods and the walking trail is to be widened to improve its use. Redesign will allow for additional recreation facilities such as additional picnic facilities and play apparatus. The park will require general renovations and an updated site master plan is needed.

**Bethel Park** - The park will remain same size and primarily serving residents in the east Morganton area. The park will require general renovations including those for the track/soccer field. Similar to Freedom Park this park appears to be spread out and the park elements appear to have been arranged randomly and not planned as a unit. An example is the location of the main parking area next to neighboring residences; and the location of the basketball courts next to the tennis courts. The arrangement of park elements, such as play areas, ball fields, and courts should be evaluated to optimize use of park land, eliminate conflicting uses, and increase overall participation. More parking is needed to accommodate peak use periods especially on the weekends. Additionally, the park will be affected a by the development of a future roadway project within a 100' right-of-way that abuts the park property. The road project may be an opportunity to expand the park and an updated site master plan is needed to address all the concerns with the site.

**Shadowline Park** - This leased facility needs overall general renovations and improvements to the soccer fields, play equipment, and picnic facilities. The 2 mile radius service area of approximately a serving those in north Morganton. Allow for additional recreation facilities. The park may need to be replaced by another northern site if the lease is not renewed with Shadowline Industries.

**“South or North Community Park”** - One new community park is needed in the area by 2015. A southern location is proposed using the joint use of state property near Western Piedmont. The park will have a 2-3 mile service radius serving those in south Morganton. A combination of active and passive recreation facilities should be provided and a site master plan is needed. An alternate location for a community park is shown on the master plan in the northern part of the city. This site is suggested for two reasons: 1. As a replacement for Shadowline Park if the lease is discontinued; 2. As an alternate location, in lieu of the south site, if urban growth to the north develops a demand faster than to the south.

## Neighborhood Parks

**Mountainview/Martin Luther King, Carbon, and Parker Road Parks** - The existing sites will remain the same size and primarily serving adjacent neighborhoods. Some of the elements in these parks, such as softball fields and group picnic shelters will make their service radii larger than typically found for neighborhood parks. All parks will require general park renovations such as improved play equipment.

**“Northern, South and Hillcrest Neighborhood Parks”** - A total of three neighborhood parks are recommended by the 2015. The parks should be 8-10 acres each and be located in the areas where Morganton is expanding and the area near Hillcrest school. The sites can to be acquired through the land development process in cooperation with private developers, through Community Development, or through coordination with the school system. Neighborhood centers are also proposed for the South Neighborhood Park and Hillcrest sites, (see individual facility proposals and recommendations). The parks will consist of primarily active recreation facilities. Site master plans will be required for each park.

## Special Use Parks

**Shuey Park** - This park is characterized as a special use facility for softball and baseball is to remain the same size. The park is in overall good condition and will require only minor renovations and additions such as play equipment and picnic facilities. The existing softball fields are short for current standards of play, (280' vs 300'), and expansion should be reviewed. The development of new softball facilities in the city will most likely make these fields available for lower level league play and practice.

**40 Acre Soccer Site** - The need for soccer facilities was made very evident during the public involvement process. The facility standards recommend that 6-7 new fields be constructed by 2015. The site, located near the Catawba greenway, is being purchased by the City from Crescent Resources (Duke Power) and is suitable for development of soccer fields. A site master plan is to be prepared to determine how many fields can be located at the site.

## Mini-Parks

**Children's Park** - This play area facility is in excellent condition and is used by the entire city. Expansion of the park is not proposed and the park will only require routine renovation and maintenance through the planning period.

**Various Locations** - The recreation standards established in Section 3 recommended that Morganton 8 mini parks by the year 2015. Morganton has four existing sites, including Children's Park, that primarily serve the central area of the city. The four new mini-parks should be scattered throughout the city as land is made available. The sites can be acquired through cooperative efforts with neighborhood associations, land developers, and community development projects.

## Greenways/Bike Route

**Catawba River Greenway** - The existing greenway project has proven to be a very successful recreation opportunity for the city. The master plan proposes to expand the greenway to connect with downtown, other park sites, and the proposed bike route. The greenway corridor of  $\pm 13$  miles will primarily will follow the Catawba River and Hunting Creek. It will also connect through urban walkways and trails to the downtown area. Most of the proposed greenway is to be located on sewer and road right-of-ways; or easements and other government properties which will reduce the need for land acquisition.

**Rural Bike Route** - A rural bike route of approximately 20 miles heading toward Lake James is proposed for the plan. The route will use existing roads to connect to the greenway system and Freedom Park. Construction of off road trails would be part of the greenway system and the bike route would only require minor funding for signage and promotion of the route.

## FACILITY PROPOSALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As previously stated, by the year 2010 Morganton should contain (1) district/city-wide park, (5) community parks, (6) neighborhood parks, (8) mini parks and (13) miles of greenways. These park sites and active greenway corridors will allow for expansion of

needed recreation facilities. All new facilities will need to comply with federal, state and local building codes. This includes the requirements of the American Disabilities Act which requires access to all public services. In Section 3, "Recreation Standards and Community Needs Assessment", specific facility needs were identified through the community public involvement process and by using recreation standards. This section summarizes facility improvements that need to be considered in future park development.

### **Adult Baseball**

Outside of the field at Shuey Park, and the field at the high school, there are currently no adult baseball fields within the city. The Recreation Department does not currently offer any adult baseball leagues. Softball is presently a much more popular program. Recreation standards identified that (3) adult baseball fields were needed by the year 2015, although there was no strong interest brought out of the public involvement process. It is recommended that (1) adult baseball field be added to the system at a community park or city-wide park site.

### **Youth Baseball**

Youth baseball is consistently one of the most popular and largest athletic programs that the town offers. The program includes participants from Morganton, and surrounding areas of Burke County. The two (2) existing youth baseball fields cannot presently accommodate all who wish to participate in the program. There was strong interest voiced during the community input meetings for additional fields. The recreation standards suggest by the year 2015 that (4) additional youth baseball fields be developed. It is recommended that fields be placed at a district/city-wide park or community park site.

### **Adult Softball**

Morganton currently has four (4) fields within their park system that are used for competitive play. Four (4) additional fields exist in the city but these fields are for informal/pick-up play and consist backstops in multi-use fields. The recreation standards indicate that two (2) additional softball fields are needed by the year 2015 however the existing fields do not meet current standards. It is recommended that four (4) fields be developed to compensate for these small fields.

### **Football**

Outside of school sites, there is only one football fields located in the city. The standards suggest that one (1) additional football field be provided by the year 2015. It is recommended that a football field be developed at a community park site. Where possible the field should be stand alone football field that is not overlapped with softball, baseball, or soccer fields. Overlap facilities tends to destroy turf conditions from overuse and creates problems in coordinating programs.

### **Youth Soccer**

Similar to baseball, the youth soccer program has a very high rate of participation. There was strong interest voiced during the community input meetings for additional fields

because existing facilities are over used. From all indications the popularity of soccer in the community will continue to increase and this interest will continue to have an immediate impact on Morganton. The standards suggest that (6-7) soccer fields be added in the future. These fields should be located at a special use facility, district/city-wide park, or community park and programming should be coordinated with the county.

### **Volleyball Courts**

There are currently (4) volleyball courts in Morganton and the recreation standards recommend a two (2) additional courts be provided. These courts can be located at any of the community, neighborhood, or special use park sites.

### **Tennis Courts**

There are (15) existing tennis courts located in the city with the majority being at Freedom Park and Collet Street Center. The courts at Freedom Park are jointly used with the high school. Morganton offers a tennis league and sponsors a regional tennis tournament annually. The public involvement process identified the need for (6-8) tennis courts that are not shared and can assist in promoting tennis in the area. The recreation standards suggest one (1) new courts in the future. It is recommended that a grouping of six (6) courts be new analyzed for implementation at the district/city wide park site. An alternative would be to provide additional courts, or improve existing facilities at the high school sites for joint use.

### **Picnic Shelters and Tables**

A total of seven (7) group picnic shelters currently exist throughout the park system. Some of the existing shelters are small, old and are in need of repair. The standards indicate no additional need for shelters during the planning period. However, during the public involvement process of the plan a need was expressed for a large picnic facility to accommodate 100 -200 people. In addition national and state users surveys have determined that picnicking is consistently one of the top desired outdoor recreation activities. Usually there are never enough picnic shelters and tables within a park system. It is recommended by 2015, that a large picnic facility/pavilion be provided at the District/city-wide park. Also, each community park should have a large picnic shelter and each neighborhood park should have a small group picnic shelter. Picnic tables should be clustered around each shelter for both individual and group use. The standards only indicate a need for 16 additional tables; but more should be provided to accommodate the new shelters.

### **Playground Activities**

In accordance with the recreation standards, Morganton has a deficiency in the number of playgrounds within the city. By the year 2015, the city should strive to have a separate playground structure at each of their park sites. Several playground units for different age groups should also be provided at the community parks and where picnic activities occur. The city should work with the school system to upgrade the playgrounds located at the elementary schools. There is a need for 16 play grounds by the year 2015.

### **Hiking/Interpretive Trails**



Currently, there is a nature trail at Western Piedmont Community College and walks that connect to the state property within Broughton Hospital. Recreation standards indicate that by 2015, 14 miles of hiking/interpretive trails will be needed to serve the community. It is recommended that the majority of these trails be incorporated as part of the proposed greenways. Interpretive trails should be located along select routes of the greenways, where there are opportunities for environmental interpretation.

## Swimming Pools

Swimming pools received the most discussion from the community involvement process. The general public stated that there is a desire for an indoor facility that will accommodate recreational swimming, competitive swimming, and instructional class for swimming and exercise. Support for swimming pools seems to be strong and comes from all age groups, seniors, adults and the youth. Recreation standards indicate that adequate pools are provided through the planning period. However, the age of the existing facilities will most likely cause one of the two existing facilities to be replaced. In addition the public outcry for an indoor pool warrants the recommendation of a pool to be located in the center of the city possibly at Collet Street Center/Gene Turner park. The pool will require a site specific study to see how it affects the existing park.

## Neighborhood Centers

Centers are multi-purpose facilities serving a variety of needs. Art programs, senior activities, day camps and special events all use neighborhood centers similar to Mt. View Center. The community involvement process identified a strong desire to have additional center/gym space in the city. The standard indicates a need for two (2) additional centers by 2015. The master plan identifies these centers be located at the South and Hillcrest Neighborhood Park sites. It is recommended that one of these centers have a gymnasium for multi-purpose use. Additionally the existing Old Armory Gyms should be renovated.

## PROGRAM PROPOSALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The ultimate purpose of programming is to create diverse, enjoyable recreation experiences which meet the various needs of those participating individuals. It is programming that provides the services which are offered through staff at the various park facilities.

Forecasting of specific recreation program needs on a long-range basis is an extremely difficult task. The interest and needs of a community can differ so rapidly and are influenced by unpredictable cultural, economic, social, and technological factors. It is, however, important to have an overall philosophical direction regarding programming for decision-making purposes. To perhaps overly simplify, programming is a process which includes the following steps:

- Define Program Mission Statement
- Assess Specific Program Needs
- Define Operational Goals and Objectives
- Evaluate Programs

The Morganton Recreation and Parks Department currently follows this general process.

## Define Program Mission Statement

A clear, credible, and realistic mission statement should be the overall philosophical and administrative guiding face in any organization. Development of a mission statement includes consideration of: individual needs, organization limitations, and collective community needs.

The Morganton Recreation and Parks Department needs to immediately redefine an appropriate overall program mission statement. Many issues will influence this process. The most prominent issue will be to what extent does the city offer leisure services for both Morganton and non-Morganton residents. The city must also decide at what level of service it has met its obligation in providing recreational opportunities for its citizens. A sampling of individual needs that can be anticipated over the next 16-year period that the city will need to address in its mission statement includes:

- Comprehensive accessibility to all recreation facilities and programs. This includes youth, seniors, females, and the disabled. The Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990 has already begun the process of making this issue a mandate.
- Developmental instructional programs where one can realistically progress through stages of accomplishment/skill (sports, swimming, arts and crafts, and cultural/performing arts).
- Leisure awareness/education programs.
- More passive leisure opportunities such as walking, hiking, and bicycling.

Examples of organization limitations which will hinder the ability to meet both individual and collective community needs will be the ongoing concern for operation cost and changes in political leadership. Some administrations will be very supportive of recreation and parks while others will be conservative.

Examples of community needs which were identified in the community involvement process and will have an impact on the mission statement include:

- Concern for the environment and a more desire for passive nature parks, and greenways,
- Enhanced quality of life experiences through expanded arts, library, and physical fitness programs.
- Comprehensive outreach efforts so that citizens are better aware of leisure opportunities.

## Assess Specific Program Needs

Surveys are often used to assess program interests for both participating and non-participating individuals in the community. Morganton should consider using surveys throughout the year to determine if their programming is meeting the needs of their citizens. There are various types of surveys that can be used with each one designed to obtain different information. The following are some types of surveys which are currently being used by recreational professionals.

**General Activity Interest Survey** - provides a long list of various recreational activities and the respondee ranks those which they would like to participate in. Simply identifies high and low interest activities.

**Current Participant's Survey** - provides detailed information on those individuals already participating in a program. Data such as age, hours of participation per week, income level, and travel distance to the program can be collected and used to determine which segment of the community is being served.

**Program Evaluation Surveys** - allows the participants to evaluate the program and services. The survey measures satisfaction levels while also allowing for comments on areas of improvement relating to facilities, staff, etc.

**Non-Participant's Survey** - helps to identify reasons why individuals do not participate in programs. Also seeks data on past dissatisfaction of programs and service.

**Opinion/Attitude Survey** - allows for more flexibility in responses, and usually is not in a standard "check the box" format. Helps to establish priorities and allows for feedback to various proposals.

## Define Operational Goals and Objectives

Since mission statements are general and all encompassing, specific direction must come through operational goals and objectives. A participating, on-going goals and objectives process helps to indicate degrees of consistency with the program mission statement. The staff within the Recreation Department should collectively develop these goals and objectives. Some typical goal statements include:

- Recreation programs should provide for variety and balance including different skill levels, male/female participation, competitive/non-competitive formats, and be respectful of the various income level of participants.
- Recreation programs should be facilitated by top-quality leaders who are experienced in delivery of leisure services.
- Recreation programs should be designed to utilize all available facilities throughout the city and be sensitive to travel distance for the participant.

## Evaluate Programs

Evaluation of programs is essential if improvements are to occur. Evaluation is an on-going process and helps to determine if the goals and objectives of the program are being met. It is recommended that the city complete a formal evaluation once a program has been concluded. Typical areas that are evaluated include:

**Program** - evaluates how well the program actually met the needs of the participant.

**Program Leader** - evaluates the individual performance of the leader. Serves as a basis for rehiring, promotion, salary increase, and provides suggestions for improvement.

**Administration** - measures how well the administration group helped to support the program. Areas such as planning, organizing, directing, innovation, and resource allocation are evaluated.

**Facility** - the facility that supported the program must be evaluated. Areas such as adequacy, safety, availability, attractiveness, appropriateness, and accessibility need to be reviewed.

An on-going evaluation process from the staff programmers should help them be able to respond to the following questions:

- What new programs should be provided and why?
- What existing programs should be eliminated and why?
- Who benefits and pays for each of the programs?
- Is the overall recreation program consistent with the mission statement, including the goals and objectives?

These basic questions need to be brought up and answered at least 3-4 times a year.

## IMMEDIATE PROGRAM CONSIDERATIONS

In Section 3, "Community Needs Assessment of Recreation and Facilities" numerous program improvement suggestions were offered by the general community. The following statement deserve further consideration by the city, and if proven worthy, action should take place immediately.

- Better communication of available programs is needed in the community. Consider a citywide communication network encompassing news media, public schools, churches, civic organizations, all local government agencies.
- Better awareness of the comprehensive nature of available programs is needed in the community. For example, there is currently a perception that programming is slanted towards adult athletics when in reality there are more organized youth teams. More staff time is devoted to youth athletics than adult athletics.
- Consider extended hours of operation and schedule flexibility. Give the youth a place to "hang out" especially during the evening hours.
- Expand athletic programs for females in the community.
- Continue professional development of recreation staff so they may become better skilled at leading new programs and services.
- Make Morganton a better place to live and work through enhanced quality of life leisure programs such as cultural and performing arts, trails and greenways, and community beautification.
- Make Morganton an environmentally aware community demonstrated through programs involving recycling, greenways, and environmental interpretation.

- Consider consolidation of city and county facilities and programs regarding youth athletics. Additional facilities and programs may wish to be considered after evaluating the success/failure of consolidating youth athletics.
- Encourage a more comprehensive and coordinated community approach to recreation including the use of schools (athletics, swimming pools, and playgrounds), quasi-public (church, YMCA) programs, and the private sector.

## **PRIORITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT**

The park and facility proposals have been prioritized into three separate time frames for implementation. The prioritization was influenced by the evaluation of existing facilities, the community needs assessment and the financial ability of the city to implement the overall capital improvement plan.

### **Years 1998-2000**

- Provide general on-going renovations to existing facilities at all community, neighborhood, and special use sites/parks including the Old Armory building.
- Purchase 200 acres of property and begin design of a district/city-wide park at the Ralph Edwards Nursery site along the Catawba River. Funds for purchasing the property are coming from a the sale of city property for watershed protection.
- Commit the 40 acres which was recently purchased next to the Catawba Greenway for development of a special use facility for soccer.
- Begin acquiring property along the designated greenway routes and start developing facilities where possible.
- Create a mini-park site and install play apparatus at other neighborhood park sites.
- Negotiate with the school system to enter into a joint use agreement that is beneficial to both parties for use of facilities and programs.

### **Years 2001-2005**

- Continue to provide on-going renovations to existing facilities at community, neighborhood, and special use sites.
- Purchase property and develop a mini-park in the city.
- Purchase 8-10 acres of property and develop a new neighborhood park in the Hillcrest area of Morganton.
- Develop Phase I of the district/city-wide park at the Ralph Edwards Nursery site along the Catawba River.
- Continue to acquire property along the designated greenway routes and continue development of facilities where possible.
- Develop an indoor pool facility to meet the needs of recreational, competitive, and instructional swimming programs.

### **Years 2006-2010**

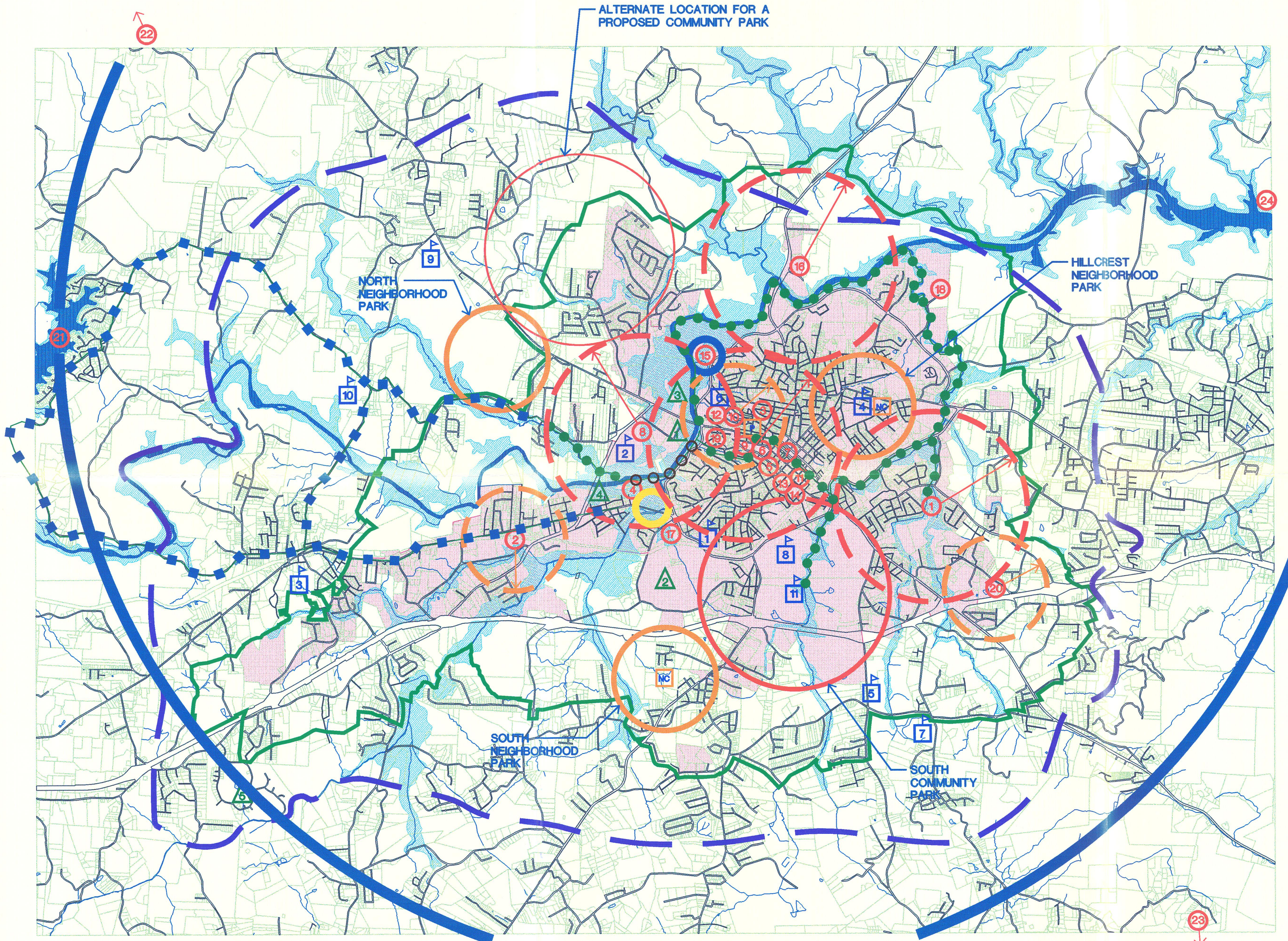
- Continue to provide on-going renovations to existing and new facilities at community, neighborhood, and special use parks.
- Purchase another 8-10 acres of property and develop a second new neighborhood park in south Morganton.
- Purchase property and develop a mini-park in the city.

- Develop Phase II of the district/city-wide park at the Ralph Edwards Nursery site along the Catawba River.
- Develop a neighborhood center with a gymnasium at one of the proposed neighborhood park sites.
- Continue to acquire property along the designated greenway routes and continue development of facilities.

### Years 2011-2015

- Continue to provide on-going renovations to existing and new facilities at community, neighborhood, and special use parks.
- Purchase another 8-10 acres of property and develop a second new neighborhood park in north Morganton.
- Purchase property and develop a mini-park in the city.
- Develop Phase III of the district/city-wide park at the Ralph Edwards Nursery site along the Catawba River.
- Develop a neighborhood center without a gymnasium at one of the proposed neighborhood park sites.
- Continue to acquire property along the designated greenway routes and continue development of facilities.
- Purchase 30-40 acres of property and develop a new community park in north or south Morganton.

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**EXISTING PUBLIC PARK FACILITIES**

- MORGANTON FACILITIES**
- BETHEL ROAD PARK
  - CARBON CITY PARK
  - CASCADE PARK
  - CATAWBA RIVER GREENWAY
  - CHILDREN'S PARK
  - COLLETT STREET CENTER AND PARK
  - COMMUNITY HOUSE
  - FREEDOM PARK
  - GENE TURNER PARK
  - MARTIN LUTHER KING PARK
  - MORGANTON MUNICIPAL AUDITORIUM
  - MOUNTAIN VIEW RECREATION CENTER
  - OLD NATIONAL GUARD ARMORY
  - OLD MORGANTON HIGH SCHOOL FIELD
  - RALPH EDWARDS PARK
  - SHADOWLINE PARK
  - SHUEY PARK
  - SKEET RANGE
- COUNTY FACILITIES**
- BURKE / MORGANTON SENIOR CENTER
  - PARK ROAD PARK (BURKE CO. FACILITY)
- STATE FACILITIES**
- LAKE JAMES STATE PARK
  - PISGAH NATIONAL FOREST
  - SOUTH MOUNTAINS STATE PARK
  - LAKE RHODHISS

**EXISTING SCHOOL FACILITIES**

- FOREST HILL ELEM. SCHOOL
- FREEDOM HIGH SCHOOL
- GLEN ALPINE ELEM. SCHOOL
- HILLCREST ELEM. SCHOOL
- LIBERTY MIDDLE SCHOOL
- MOUNTAIN VIEW ELEM. SCHOOL
- MULL ELEM. SCHOOL
- NC SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF
- OAK HILL ELEM. SCHOOL
- TABLE ROCK MIDDLE SCHOOL
- WESTERN PIEDMONT COMMUNITY COLLEGE

**PRIVATE PARK FACILITIES**

- DANA EMPLOYEES PARK
- MIMOSA HILLS GOLF CLUB
- QUAKER MEADOWS GOLF CLUB
- RIVERVIEW SPORTS COMPLEX
- SILVER CREEK GOLF COURSE



**KEY**

- EXTRATERRITORIAL JURISDICTION
- STUDY LIMITS
- FLOODWAY
- CITY LIMITS
- PROPOSED RURAL BIKE ROUTE
- EXISTING COMMUNITY PARK SERVICE RADIUS
- EXISTING NEIGHBORHOOD PARK SERVICE RADIUS
- PROPOSED CITY-WIDE / DISTRICT PARK SERVICE RADIUS (Ralph Edwards Nursery Site)
- PROPOSED POOL
- EXISTING GREENWAY
- PROPOSED COMMUNITY PARK SERVICE RADIUS
- PROPOSED NEIGHBORHOOD PARK SERVICE RADIUS
- PROPOSED SPECIAL USE SITE (SOCCER)
- PROPOSED CENTER
- PROPOSED GREENWAY

8731 Red Oak Boulevard  
Charlotte, North Carolina  
28217-3958  
704.525.6284  
Fax: 704.525.8529  
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**Park Master Plan**  
**2015 COMPREHENSIVE RECREATION MASTER PLAN**  
**City of Morganton, NC**

▷▷▷ Effective Solutions

Section



WOOLPERT



## SECTION 5 ACTION PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

### INTRODUCTION

The Morganton Comprehensive Recreation Master Plan is based upon a review of the entire community, an analysis of the existing park system, the identification of user needs, the development of recreation standards, and an adherence to stated proposals and recommendations. The plan is intended to be "action oriented"—designed to provide a framework from which the city can enhance its park and recreation system.

Instrumental to implementation of the Master Plan is the identification of adequate funding, at a time when balancing municipal budgets throughout the state has become increasingly difficult. The recently completed North Carolina Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan identified inadequate funding for park facilities and recreation programs as a key issue needing to be addressed in the next 5 years if government is to maintain basic minimum services. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, per capita funding for parks and recreation services throughout the State of North Carolina, including local government, is 33% below the national average. Even though funding is currently low, it does not appear to reflect the high value Morganton citizens place on parks and recreation.

Implementing the Master Plan will result in meeting the future needs for parks and recreation services, as well as preserving some transitional open space in Morganton. The city will need to continue to establish annual budgets for the Recreation Department based on projected capital improvement costs, staffing needs, and operations and maintenance costs. The action plan is formatted in 5 year increments and is designed to give Morganton a realistic approach to finance the proposals and recommendations of the Master Plan.

### CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

The capital improvement program for the acquisition and development of parks is for a eighteen year period. All of the proposed costs are shown in 1997 dollar values. The capital improvement costs include for land acquisition, site preparation, site utilities, access and parking along with specific recreation improvements. The capital improvement plan also includes for estimated planning and design fees.

The capital improvement program can be summarized into the following components:

Renovation/Maintenance Program	\$ 1,375,000
Land Acquisition Program	1,930,000
Park Development Program	7,810,000
Special Use Facilities Development Program	<u>11,770,000</u>
Total Capital Improvement Cost	\$22,885,000

This total figure equates to spending approximately \$1,271,389 annually through the year 2015. Table 5-1 shows the capital improvement program costs divided into five year increments after the year 2000 and reflects the proposals and recommendations as outlined in Section 4 of this Master Plan.

## PROPOSED OPERATIONS BUDGET

The proposed operations budget includes cost for staff, operations, and general maintenance requirements similar to those that are currently being performed by the Parks and Recreation Department. The Department also contracts out some maintenance to the private sector which seems to be working well. The proposed operations budget has been projected for the Parks and Recreation Department. Operation budgets from the General Fund for the past two years of the Department were studied in making the forecast for the planning period. The overall historical budgets are as follows:

Year	Operations Including Equipment	Capital Improvements Including Renovations	Total
FY 95/96	855,423	88,500	943,312
FY 96/97	917,703	147,600	1,065,303

Table 5-2 presents a proposed operations budget and projected per capita amounts to come from the General Fund through the year 2015. Revenues generated from the park system are not included in this analysis. The grand total cost for operations through the year 2015 is estimated to be \$26,368,295 or approximately \$1,464,905 per year throughout the 18-year period. The 18 year per capita cost average equals \$80.01 which indicates a 3.5% annual increase through the planning period.

## STAFF NEEDS

The Morganton Recreation Department's structure and number of personnel appears to be consistent with other similar size municipal departments in the state. The department is comparable with staff positions for the municipalities of Carrboro, Elizabeth City, Mooresville, Salisbury, Shelby, and Statesville, all with populations ranging from 12,000 to 24,000 people. Elizabeth City and Shelby are similar in size to Morganton's existing population while Salisbury and Statesville are the size that Morganton will be by the year 2015. The following staffing positions are recommended for addition to the existing department structure:

- Parks Superintendent/District Park Manager
- Administrative Specialist/Secretary I
- Aquatics Superintendent/Manager
- Program Supervisor
- Neighborhood Center Director

The positions are shown in Table 5-3, Proposed Morganton Recreation Department Organization Chart.

## **FUNDING/REVENUE SOURCES**

### **General Tax Revenues**

General tax revenues traditionally provide the principal sources of funds for general operation and maintenance of a municipal recreation and park system. Recreation as a public service, is scheduled along with roadways, health, public safety, schools, etc. in regular budgets established by the municipality. Assessed valuation of real and personal property provide the framework for the major portion of the tax base for the city.

### **General Obligation Bonds**

General tax revenue for parks and recreation are usually devoted to current operation and maintenance of existing facilities. In view of the recommended capital improvements suggested in this plan, borrowing of funds to acquire new lands and develop facilities will be necessary. The State of North Carolina gives municipal governments the authority to accomplish this borrowing of funds for parks and recreation through the issuance of bonds not to exceed the total cost of improvements (including land acquisition). For the purpose of paying the debt on these bonds the city is empowered to levy a special tax. Total bonding capacities for local government is limited for parks and recreation to a maximum percentage of assessed property valuation.

The real value of a municipality's bonding authority and capacity is not necessarily the funds made available for capital improvement program alone (in terms of local moneys). Bonding allows the city to utilize local funds to match federal grant-in-aid moneys. General obligation bonds are still the greatest source utilized to fund park projects in North Carolina. The City of Morganton has never proposed a bond referendum for park development however a bond referendum was proposed and defeated for development of an indoor pool in the 1970s.

### **Federal and Assistance**

Federal funding sources necessary to help finance the Master Plan have been historically available from the U.S. Park Services's Land and Water Conservation Fund. Potential funding through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Community Development Block Grant Program is also available given certain conditions. Other potential sources for recreational funding are available through the National Foundation of Arts and Humanities.

In 1991 the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act was passed by Congress which provides \$3.3 billion in Federal Highway Funds for local enhancement related projects. Greenways are eligible for this program. The Fund is administered through the North Carolina Department of Transportation.

## State Assistance

The North Carolina State Legislators recently passed a bill creating a consistent source of funds for parks and recreation in the state. The Parks and Recreation Trust Fund will provide money for capital improvements, repairs, renovations and land acquisition in state and local parks. Revenues from the state's portion of the real estate deed transfer tax supports the Fund and is estimated to be \$18 million annually. Of the funds allocated, 65% will go to the state parks system, 30% will provide matching grants to local governments and the remaining 5% will go to the Coastal and Estuarine Water Beach Access Program. The maximum matching grant is limited to \$250,000 for a single project and the anticipated awards to local governments will exceed \$5 million for fiscal year 1997/98.

## Fees and Charges

Fees and charges for recreational services are recognized as an acceptable source of revenue. In 1988 the North Carolina Recreation Resources Service conducted a survey on user fees and charges.

The following statements were included in the executive summary of the results of the survey.

- 24% of North Carolina's park and recreation agencies operate with a written revenue policy. Greater than 50% of these revenue policies contain each of the following elements: agency philosophy on revenue; provision for citizen involvement; provision for elected officials' involvement; classification of services by program activity; description of pricing methods and guidelines for differential pricing.
- 94% of the agencies charge fees for programs and/or facilities. The method of determining the fee is generally the need to recover a portion of the costs. 81% of the agencies used this method, while the "going rate" (what others charge) is used 22% of the time, and the willingness of the participants to pay a determined fee is used 18.4% of the time.
- The expenses recovered by the collection of fees and charges most often include equipment and/or supplies, and rental of facilities or equipment.
- Fees collected are being retained by 22% of the 125 agencies responding. Of the departments that keep the fees, 30% are able to retain all of the collected monies. In general, most agencies retain less than 20% percent. In 1995 only 15% of the fees collected were retained by the agency.
- 54% of the agencies charge senior citizens as much as the general public for entrance into parks and recreation facilities and/or programs. Only 40% reported charging less because of differential pricing methods. 50% reported charging non-residents more to use local parks. 25% charge the economically

disadvantaged less to use facilities or services. Differential fees are determined by the park and recreation staff 46% of the time.

As indicated by the survey, a number of approaches are used today in terms of fees and charges. Some advocate that fees should only cover day-to-day operation and maintenance costs. Others look upon fees and charges to cover only a portion of operation and maintenance, with the balance coming from general tax revenues. Some advocate no fees and charges, viewing parks and recreation as a "free" public service. The final decision as to fees and charges once again rests with elected officials. A word of caution may be appropriate however: fees should not be so high that persons of modest income will be effectively denied the use of a park facility. This is particularly appropriate during periods of high unemployment. It is recommended that the City review its policy towards fees and be established a schedule of rates for city resident and non-residents.

## Contributions

Increasing numbers of park and recreation agencies are exploring non-public (non-governmental) sources of revenue for their park systems. A public outdoor recreation estate, as known today, has been greatly enriched by many gifts of property, easements, and direct moneys. The National Recreation and Park Association recommends the use of private, nonprofit, tax-exempt foundations as a means of accepting and administering private gifts to a public park system.

## General Foundations

Another source of revenue is the direct contribution of money from General Foundations within the state or nation. A listing of appropriate foundations can be found in the text entitled Grant Seeking in North Carolina, made available through the North Carolina Center of Public Policy Research, P.O. Box 430, Raleigh, North Carolina 27602

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

## Partnership Structures

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

Partnerships with the private sector can be beneficial to all participants. Typically, a private developer can use private funds to develop a facility on city property with the city leasing it to the developer on a long-term basis. During the period of the lease the

developer returns a portion of the revenues to the city and at the end of the lease the facility reverts to city ownership. This type of arrangement would be appropriate for an improvement to a special use facility requiring a large capital investment.

## **METHODS FOR ACQUISITION AND DEVELOPMENT**

Methods available to Morganton for acquiring and developing parks as recommended in the Master Plan include the following:

### **Fee Simple Purchase**

The outright purchase is perhaps the most widely used method of obtaining parkland though this method is the most difficult to reconcile with limited public resources. Fee simple purchase has the advantage of being relatively simple to administer and to explain to the general public in terms of justifying a particular public expenditure.

### **Fee Simple With Lease-Back or Resale**

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

### **Long-Term Option**

A long-term option is frequently used when a particular piece of land is seen as having potential future value though it is not desired or affordable to the city at the time. Under the terms of a long-term option, the city agrees with the landowner on a selling price for the property and a time period over which the city has the right to exercise its option. The first benefit of this protective method is that the land use of the property is stabilized because its future is in doubt and an expenditure of money in the property would be lost in the previously agreed upon selling price. 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 settled upon. The disadvantage of this method lies in that every right given by the property owner, a price must be paid. In this case, the cost of land use stabilization and a price commitment comes in the form of the cost of securing the option.

### **First Right of Purchase**

This approach to acquiring parkland eliminates the need for fixing the selling price of a parcel of land yet alerts the city of any impending purchase which might disrupt the parkland acquisition goals. The city would be notified that a purchase is impending and would have the right to purchase the property before it is sold to the party requesting the purchase.

## Local Gifts

A significant and yet most often untapped source of providing funds for acquisition and development of local park projects is through a well organized local gifts program. The pursuit of land, money, construction funds or donated labor can have a meaningful impact on the development of a well rounded system.

The most frequently used type of gift involves the giving of land (through a full gift of agreed upon below market value sale) to be used for a park. The timing of such a donation can correspond with a Land and Water Conservation Fund Project or PART-F Grant application, thereby providing all or a significant portion of the local matching requirement associated with this program. A still familiar use of gifts involves donated labor or materials which become part of an improvement project and help to reduce project costs. The value of the services or materials can also be used to match non-local grant funds. When not tied into a grant, such donations (land, labor or materials) still can play an important role in reducing the demand for local capital expenditures.

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

To aid this type of gift program, a strategy for contacting potential donors (individuals, businesses, foundations, service clubs, and the like) 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 to make sure these groups are aware of the potential for an individual to include a gift to a recreation department.

## Life Estate

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

## Easement

The most common type of less-than-fee interest in land is an easement. Since property ownership may be envisioned as a bundle of rights, it is possible for the city to purchase any one or several of these rights. An easement seeks either to compensate the landholder for the right to use his land in some way, or to compensate him for the loss of one of his privileges to use the land. One advantage, of this less-than-fee interest in the land, is the private citizen continues to use the land while the land remains on the tax records continuing as a source of revenue for a city. Perhaps the greatest benefit lies in the fact that the community purchases only those rights which it specifically needs to

execute its park land objectives. By purchasing only rights that are necessary to the system and on the land itself, the city is making more selective and efficient use of its limited financial resources.

### **Zoning/Subdivision Regulations/Mandatory Dedication**

Zoning ordinances, subdivision regulations, and mandatory dedications may be utilized to create new park land at no cost to the community. This, however, must be approved through special state legislation in Raleigh.

Subdivision regulations can be revised to contain written provisions making allowance for both "cluster and planned unit development". Design standards relating to tree cover, drainage-ways and other natural features can be instrumental in the preservation of the natural setting. Regulations can require that land be dedicated and/or compensation in lieu be made to the city for the development of park lands. Morganton currently does not have subdivision regulations which allow for park land dedications.

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

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

- The city is financially able to purchase parks in accordance with a predetermined set of plans;
- The money is available when needed;
- The benefit of the park fee is directly felt by the residents involved.

### **PROPOSED FUNDING STRATEGY**

In a recent report prepared by the North Carolina Recreation Resources Services, entitled Municipal and County Park and Recreation Service Study Fiscal Year 1995-1996, a survey was completed to identify how communities were obtaining revenue sources. The survey found that typically 80% of the total revenues needed to operate and maintain a parks and recreation system came from the general fund of the community. Other sources included fees and charges 13%, grants 1%, gifts and contributions 1%, mandatory land dedication .5%, foundations concessions .5%, and other governing bodies (bonds /other) 4%, Revenues generated from parks and recreation activities usually are returned to the general funds of the individual communities.



The average municipal expenditure from the general fund for parks and recreation has ranged from \$58.00 to \$62.00 per capita throughout North Carolina municipalities. Communities of similar size to Morganton (Municipal Class D) average \$62.57 per capita for FY 95/96. In the past the Morganton Parks and Recreation Department has operated in the \$57.00 to \$65.00 range. With this in mind, it appears that Morganton falls within the average ranges in the state.

Over the next 18 years, the City of Morganton will not be able to support the overall capital improvements and operations budget of \$49,253,295 solely through the general fund. A combination of revenue services will need to be applied. There are numerous combinations of funding strategies that can be explored and implemented by the City Council. This Master Plan proposes that City Council begin the process by evaluating the following strategy:

- If allocations from the general fund are maintained as shown in Table 5-2 at average of \$80.01 per capita throughout the next 18 years, it will provide approximately \$26,368,295 for the Recreation Department. This equates to 53.54% of the total projected expenditures for capital improvements and operations, or 100% of the operations budget. Based on current trends, the Morganton Recreation Department should be able to return approximately 18%-20% of the operations budget, (approx.\$9.0 million), back into the general fund through fees and charges.
- General obligation bonds should be used in acquiring and developing new park facilities. A minimum goal of \$9.0 million should come from bonds. This represents approximately 39% of the proposed capital improvement program and 18.27% of the total budget. Bonds could be formatted in three separate campaigns at ±\$3.0 million each, spaced four years apart.
- A combination of gifts, mandatory land dedication, grants and other revenue sources will need to offset the remaining \$4.93 million, 10% of the total budget, to implement the Master Plan. The state, Burke County and the private sector should be aggressively approached in helping with this financing.

#### Funding Strategy Summary

Source	Percentage of Overall Budget	Amount
General Fund	53.54%	\$26,368,295
Bonds	18.27%	\$9,000,000
Gifts, Grants, & Foundations	10.00%	\$4,925,330
<u>Revenues</u>	<u>18.19%</u>	<u>\$8,959,670</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>\$49,253,295</b>

## BENEFITS OF PARKS AND RECREATION

The vast majority of the American public use and benefit from the service and facilities provided by their local parks and recreation department and the citizens of Morganton are no different. Recreation services and parks are valuable resources for many different reasons. These benefits can be categorized into personal, environmental, social, activity-oriented, and economic.

According to the Benefit's of Local Recreation and Park Services: A Nationwide Study of the Perceptives of the American Public, individuals feel they benefit the most from recreation when they participate in programs that provide exercise and fitness. Yet there are many other personal benefits such as relaxation, learning, education, stress release, enjoyment from being outdoors, peace and quiet, as well as time alone. Even individuals who don't actually use recreation facilities or services, feel a sense of comfort knowing that the parks simply exist. Research shows these personal benefits can contribute to both improved mental and physical health. As a result, a large segment of the population views parks and recreation agencies as being health and wellness organizations.

Environmentally, parks provide habitat for wildlife, and green space for wildlife viewing. As raw land continues to be developed, open space preservation will become more important, especially in the protection of environmentally sensitive areas. Open space, especially within the urban areas, is increasingly valuable and is directly related to health and wellness. Greenway corridors also help preserve natural areas and foster a unique kind of learning opportunity about the environment.

Socially, parks and recreation help to foster community awareness or a "sense of community." Other social benefits of parks for the general public include providing a safe place for kids to play, providing a place for youth and teens to socialize, and creating spaces for adults and senior citizens to meet. Recreation helps to create interaction between children and adults, and promotes the development of both team spirit and sportsmanship.

Parks and recreation departments provide many recreational activities that would not otherwise be available to the general public. Programs offer instructional classes as well as exposure to the arts thus raising cultural awareness. Facilities provide for a wide range of recreational opportunities such as play areas for children, places to picnic and areas to exercise pets. Planned activities, organized sports, and special events like July 4th celebrations typically occur at park sites and help contribute to a healthier, and stronger community.

The National Park Service has published two documents which address the economic benefits of recreational facilities. The Economic Impacts of Parks and Recreation Resource Book is a workbook designed to help park and recreation directors quantify the economic activity their parks, programs and facilities contribute to the local and state economy. The resource book offers a methodology for collecting and analyzing economic information, then presenting it in a concise manner. Information such as quotations, testimonials and comparisons help to emphasize the significance of the data that has been collected.

The economic benefits of parks and recreation is perceived differently by various segments of the community. For example, developers, and realtors consider whether the facilities increase property values, increase selling time of property or persuades a corporate relocation. For example:

The Boise River Greenbelt is 9.5 miles in length, runs through the center of Boise, Idaho and connects a series of sports facilities, seven town parks, and two state parks along the Boise River. Over the past twenty-five years, Boise has invested \$10 million into the Greenbelt. The appraised value of properties within the Greenbelt is now over \$200 million which is directly attributable to improvements which have happened because of the Greenbelt. Property values of undeveloped land are \$26,000 to \$34,000 per acre near the Greenbelt versus \$10,000 to \$17,000 elsewhere. (John D. Cooper, Director of Parks, Boise, Idaho, 1989).

The other National Park Service resource publication, Economic Impacts of Protecting Rivers, Trails and Greenway Corridors expands the traditional recognition of these corridors for their role in environmental protection, recreation value and aesthetic appearance, to their potential to create jobs, enhance property values, expand local businesses, attract new business, increase local tax revenues, and decrease local government expenditures. Similar to the traditional park and recreational facilities, a greenway corridor can positively impact a range of economic conditions such as real property values, expenditures by residents, tourism, and business development and job creation.

The Town of Burlington, NC Parks and Recreation Department in 1993 studied some of the positive economic impacts which results from their programs. An example is to look at the breakdown of economic impact which comes from one participant in the Adult Softball League.

- Based on one participant in the Adult Softball League;
- Based on a 15-week season including practice and games.

<u>Expenditure Item</u>	<u>Economic Impact</u>
Equipment: Bat, Ball, Glove, Cleats, Batting Glove	\$125.00
Uniforms	30.00
Transportation	50.00
Team Get-Together	10.00
Dinners	<u>75.00</u>
Total Economic Impact Per Participant	\$290.00

- There are an average of 15 participants per team which equates to \$4,350 per team.
- There are an average of 92 teams which equals to \$400,200 worth of positive economic impact from one town program that is returned back to the community.

In a nationwide survey of 1,000 of the largest U.S. corporations, Fortune magazine found "style of living for employees" as an important factor for 41% of firms that had relocated and 43% of firms with plans for relocation. ("The Contribution of Outdoor Recreation to State Economic Development", Suellen Kiener, The Council of State Planning Agencies, Washington, DC 1985)

Manufacturers, vendors and support businesses also benefit from the presence of recreational facilities in a community. Wilson, a well known manufacturer of sporting equipment found that 30% of their corporate/domestic sales were directly or indirectly supported by park and recreation agencies.

There is plenty of documentation regarding the benefits of parks and recreation for the entire community, such as physical assets like parks, street trees, open space, museums and theaters, or intangible assets like community image and lifestyle. Costs relating to energy, environmental resources, healthcare, crime prevention and education can be indirectly reduced by the presence of a recreation and park system in a community. Whether it be personal, environmental, social, activity-oriented or economic, benefits of recreation and park services can be summarized as simply providing a better way of life for the community and its citizens.

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**TABLE 5-1  
CITY OF MORGANTON RECREATION DEPARTMENT  
CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM**

	Total Cost Projection	Time Frame of Improvement			
		1998-2000	2001-2005	2006-2010	2011-2015
<b>Capital Improvement and Land Acquisition</b>					
Renovation Program					
Existing Parks	\$1,000,000	\$100,000	\$300,000	\$300,000	\$300,000
New parks	\$250,000	\$25,000	\$50,000	\$75,000	\$100,000
Planning & Design	\$125,000	\$12,000	\$35,000	\$38,000	\$40,000
<b>Renovation Program Total</b>	<b>\$1,375,000</b>	<b>\$137,000</b>	<b>\$385,000</b>	<b>\$413,000</b>	<b>\$440,000</b>
Land Acquisition Program					
District Park	\$900,000	\$900,000			
Community Parks	\$200,000				\$200,000
South or North Community Park	\$50,000				\$50,000
Neighborhood Parks	\$50,000		\$50,000		
North Neighborhood Park	\$50,000				
South Neighborhood Park	\$50,000				
Hillcrest Area site	\$20,000	\$5,000	\$5,000		\$5,000
Mini Parks	\$500,000	\$150,000	\$150,000		\$100,000
Greenway	\$160,000				
Special Facilities					
40 Acre Soccer site	\$1,215,000				
<b>Land Acquisition Program Total</b>	<b>\$1,930,000</b>	<b>\$1,215,000</b>	<b>\$205,000</b>	<b>\$155,000</b>	<b>\$355,000</b>
Park Development Program					
District Park	\$3,300,000		\$2,000,000	\$800,000	\$500,000
Community Parks	\$1,500,000				\$1,500,000
South or North Community Park	\$700,000				\$700,000
Neighborhood Parks	\$700,000		\$700,000		
North Neighborhood Park	\$700,000				
South Neighborhood Park	\$200,000	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$50,000
Hillcrest Neighborhood Park	\$710,000	\$205,000	\$75,000	\$155,000	\$275,000
Mini Parks	\$200,000				
Planning and Design	\$7,810,000	\$255,000	\$2,825,000	\$1,705,000	\$3,025,000
<b>Park Development Program Total</b>	<b>\$7,810,000</b>	<b>\$255,000</b>	<b>\$2,825,000</b>	<b>\$1,705,000</b>	<b>\$3,025,000</b>
Special Use Facilities Program					
40 Acre Soccer Facility	\$900,000	\$900,000			
Neighborhood Centers (w/Gym)	\$1,500,000				\$1,500,000
Neighborhood Centers (w/o Gym)	\$500,000				\$500,000
Pool	\$2,800,000		\$2,800,000		
Greenway	\$5,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,500,000	\$1,500,000
Planning & Design	\$1,070,000	\$190,000	\$380,000	\$300,000	\$200,000
<b>Special Use Facilities Program Total</b>	<b>\$11,770,000</b>	<b>\$2,090,000</b>	<b>\$4,180,000</b>	<b>\$3,300,000</b>	<b>\$2,200,000</b>
<b>Total Capital Improvement Budget Cost</b>	<b>\$22,885,000</b>	<b>\$3,697,000</b>	<b>\$7,595,000</b>	<b>\$5,573,000</b>	<b>\$6,020,000</b>

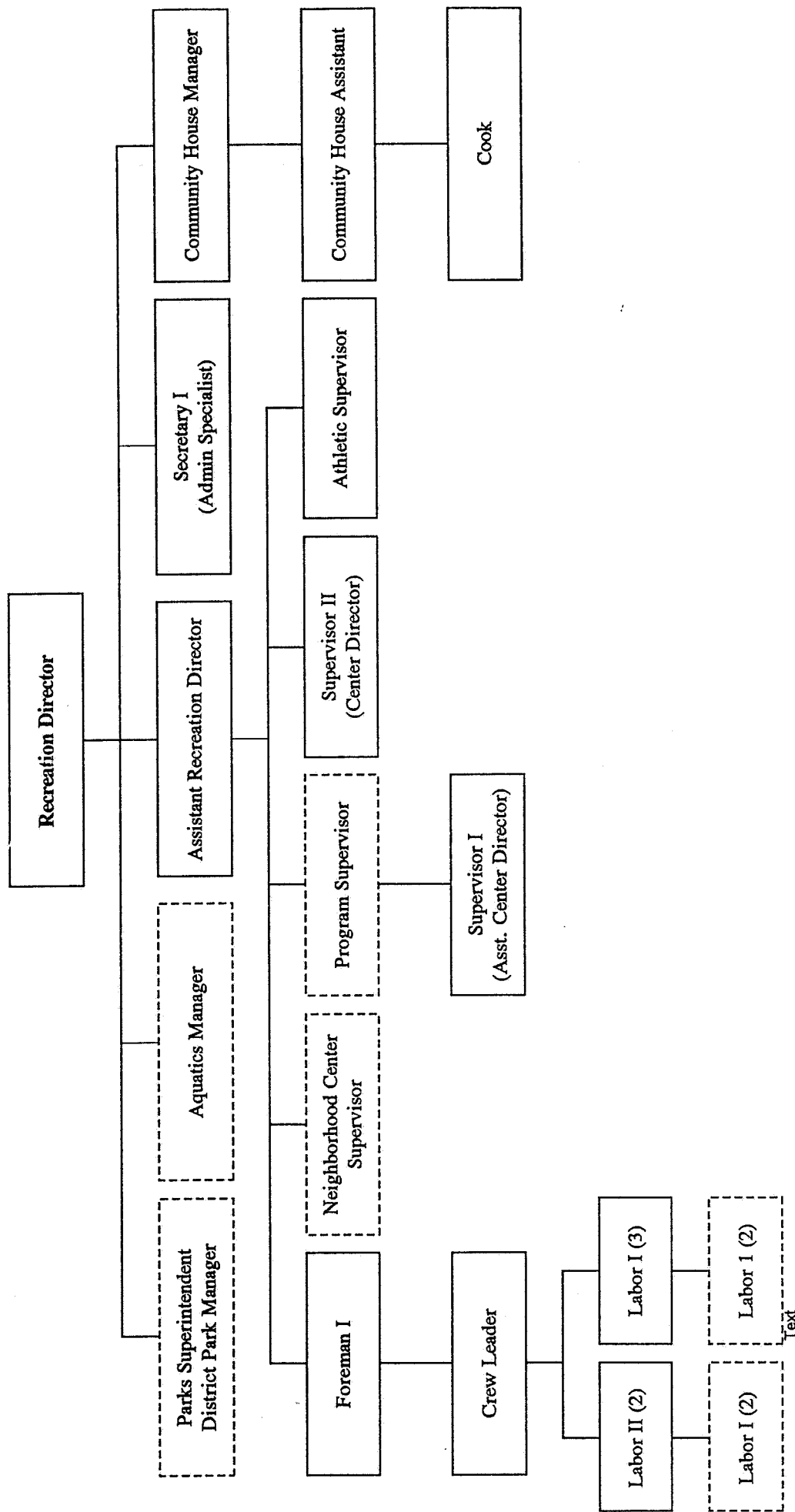
Proposed costs are presented in 1997 dollar values and makes no allowance for inflation.

**TABLE 5-2  
CITY OF MORGANTON RECREATION DEPARTMENT  
PROPOSED OPERATIONS BUDGET**

Fiscal Year	Population Estimate	Operations Budget From General Fund	General Comments
1995-1996 1996-1997	16,407/28,359 16,558	\$859,172 \$917,703	Actual operations budgets to show historical trends. (Base = 96/97 per capita budget of \$55.42) <b>2 Year Per Capita Average - \$53.89</b>
1997-1998 1998-1999 1999-2000	16,710 16,864 17,019/28,930	\$967,741 \$1,020,610 \$1,076,340	Years 1998-2000: Existing parks have on-going renovations, land is purchased for the soccer facility, district park & greenway. The Soccer Facility and a Mini Park are developed. Planning & design is done for the pool and District Park <b>5 Year Per Capita Average - \$60.58</b>
2000-2001 2001-2002 2002-2003 2003-2004 2004-2005	17,175 17,333 17,493 17,654 17,816/29,661	\$1,129,654 \$1,185,648 \$1,244,456 \$1,306,146 \$1,370,857	Years 2001-2005: Park renovation continues at existing parks. Additional sections of the Greenway are acquired and developed. Phase I of the District Park, one Mini Park, Hillcrest Neighborhood Park, and an Indoor Pool are developed. <b>5 Year per Capita Average - \$71.30</b>
2005-2006 2006-2007 2007-2008 2008-2009 2009-2010	17,980 18,145 18,312 18,480 18,651/30,410	\$1,424,981 \$1,481,199 \$1,539,677 \$1,600,416 \$1,663,682	Years 2006-2010: Existing parks continue renovations; additional sections of the Greenway are acquired and developed. Phase II of the District Park, one Mini Park, South Neighborhood Park, and a Neighborhood Center (w/Gym) are developed <b>5 Year Per Capita Average - \$84.20</b>
2010-2011 2011-2012 2012-2013 2013-2014 2014-2015	18,823 18,996 19,170 19,346 19,525/31,180	\$1,729,395 \$1,797,649 \$1,868,538 \$1,942,264 \$2,019,042	Years 2011-2015: Existing parks continue renovations; additional sections of the Greenway are acquired and developed. Phase III of the District Park, one Mini Park, North Neighborhood Park, One Community Park and a Neighborhood Center (w/o Gym) are developed <b>5 Year Per Capita Average - \$97.61</b>
Total Operation Budget for 18 year period (1997/98-2014/15)		\$26,368,295	<b>18 Year Per Capita Average - \$81.01</b>

\* Budgets are presented in 1997 dollar values and makes no allowance for inflation.

**TABLE 5-3  
MORGANTON RECREATION DEPARTMENT ORGANIZATION CHART**



Future/Positions [Dashed Box]  
Existing Positions [Solid Box]

