

Parks and Recreation Master Plan 2022

Lee County, North Carolina



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Lake at San-Lee Park

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

Currently, there are thirteen primary county owned recreation facilities that serve as the locations for the County's recreation programs and activities. Lee County currently operates eleven parks and two special use facilities that are primarily located within the city limits of Sanford or within the City's ETJ. These parks cover approximately 328 acres and provide a wide range of active and passive recreational activities. There is still a need and community desire to plan and develop additional park facilities within the County, especially through the multi-use sports plex, and there is a heavy community desire, to develop more walking trails along with greenway, and blue way connectivity throughout the community.

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

Lee County is not alone in its mission to provide parks and recreational facilities to its citizens. There are numerous public and private agencies and organizations in the region that could share in that role.

The City of Sanford Parks Department is also a provider of parks and recreation programs to Lee County residents. While the City of Sanford does a good job providing facilities and programs on a smaller scale, the facilities, and parks they offer provide additional recreation opportunities and experiences. Wherever possible, the Lee County and the City of Sanford should work collaboratively to improve park and recreation opportunities.

The purpose of this master plan update is to establish a vision for the County's parks and recreation offerings, work with citizens to assess recreational needs for the County and provide recommendations on park and recreational facility needs based on the assessment.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

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

- Community Workshops (2)
- Community-Wide Survey
- PRAC & Staff input

Service Population

The US Census reflects an estimated 2020 population of 63,285 for Lee County, based on projections from the 2020 US Census estimates reflects 9.3% growth from the 2010 US census that showed 57,866. Current annual growth rate is around 0.93%.

This increase in population should be noted as the County is striving to be a vibrant region and provide a wonderful quality of life indicating a future with continued positive economic activity and a reasonable expectation of future growth. Using the current annual growth rate of 0.93% yields a projected 2031 population of around 69,170 residents.

Based on the above data this plan will use the County's estimated 2020 population of 63,285 as the service population for this study. For ease of calculations, the plan will slightly round up this population figure to 63,300.

As a ten-year plan, recommendations in this plan will be designed to meet the need of the County's population in 2031. For planning purposes, it is assumed the County will increase annually in population

similar to the projected population of the County's population; approximately 0.93%. Again, for ease of discussion and calculation, the projected population for the County (the projected service population) for 2031 has been rounded up to 69,200.

Community Input - Public Workshops

Community workshops were held to receive input on June 8, 2021, at O.T. Sloan Park and June 9, 2021, at Kiwanis Family Park, both from 5-7pm. The workshops were held as informal drop-in sessions that allowed for social distancing. Ninety-six (96) citizens signed in, but it was apparent others (especially children) participated in the event.

Attendees were asked what parks and facilities they currently use in Lee County. Top 10 selected were:

- Kiwanis Family Park – 20.6%
- Kiwanis Children's Park – 17.2%
- Endor Iron Furnace Greenway – 16.4%
- San-Lee Park – 10.8%
- O.T. Sloan Park – 6.6%
- Bob Hale Center – 6.6%
- Dalrymple Park – 5%
- Horton Park – 5%
- Temple Park – 3.2%
- Lee Gymnastics – 2.6%

Attendees were asked what recreational amenities they currently use and what they would like to see offered. Top 10 amenities currently used include:

- Greenways/Walkways/Biking/Fitness Trails – 20.7%
- Swimming Pool – 17%
- Playgrounds – 16.3%
- Splash Pad/Water Park – 15.5%
- Outdoor Tennis – 14.7%
- Picnic Shelters/Picnic Areas – 12.4%
- Canoeing/Kayaking – 9.9%
- Baseball/Softball Fields – 8.4%
- Camping – 7.8%
- Gymnastics – 7.8%

Top 10 amenities they would like to see offered include:

- Outdoor Amphitheater – 16.2%
- Outdoor Tennis – 12.3%
- Outdoor Fitness – 12.3%
- Skate Park – 11.6%
- Canoeing/Kayaking – 11.2%
- Outdoor Aquatic Facilities – 10.9%
- Swimming Pool – 10.3%
- Indoor Turf Field – 9.5%
- Greenways/Walkways/Biking/Fitness Trails – 8.5%
- Outdoor Volleyball – 8.3%

Attendees were asked what recreational activities they currently use and what they would like to see offered. Top 10 activities currently used include:

- Community Events – 31%
- Gymnastics/Tumbling Programs – 21.3%
- Nature Programs/Environmental Education – 21.3%
- Adult Fitness and Wellness – 17%
- Martial Arts Programs – 12.8%
- Youth Sports Leagues – 12.1%
- E-Gaming – 12.1%
- Youth Sports Lessons – 10.3%
- Water Fitness Programs – 8.6%
- Birthday Parties – 8.5%



Community workshop at O.T. Sloan Park

Top 10 activities they would like to see offered include:

- Outdoor Challenge/Adventure Course – 24.7%
- Adult Art, Dance, Performing/Theater Arts – 15.5%
- Community Events – 13.7%
- Nature Programs/Environmental Education – 12.2%
- Adult Learn to Swim Programs – 10.8%
- Adult Fitness & Wellness – 10.1%
- Adult Sports Leagues – 10.1%
- E-Gaming – 8.8%
- Workshops (CPR, Babysitting, etc.) – 8.8%
- Water Fitness Programs – 8.2%

Community Input - Community Survey

To better understand the community's perception of existing parks and recreation facilities, and to gather input of recreational needs, a six-page community survey was conducted. The survey was prepared by ETC Institute and distributed by mail and online to a randomly selected sample of Lee County households. The survey took approximately 12-15 minutes to complete. The sample size goal for completed surveys was 400 which was exceeded with 416 completed surveys being returned. The full Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment Survey can be found in the Appendix.

- A. Top takeaways from the community survey include:
1. Water Access (boating, kayaking, canoeing)
 2. Outdoor aquatics/swimming facility
 3. Outdoor amphitheaters
 4. Indoor fitness & exercise facilities
- B. The two most important parks & recreation facilities and amenities are:
1. Natural trails
 2. Greenway trail systems
- C. Based on residents' needs, unmet needs, and feeling of importance the list below shows the recreation facilities and amenities with Priority Investment Ratings that are considered "High Priority" for investment.

<u>Parks and Recreation Facility/Amenity</u>	<u>Rating</u>
Natural trails	174.5
Greenway trail system	147.7
Water access (boating, kayaking, Canoeing)	146.4
Aquatics/swimming facility	143.2
Dog park	121.8
Indoor fitness & exercise facilities	116.6
Outdoor amphitheaters	107.5
Picnic shelters	102.3
Playground	102.2

- D. The four programs/activities with needs that are currently being partly or not met include:
1. Adult fitness and wellness programs
 2. Outdoor music/concerts
 3. Aquatics programs
 4. Outdoor adventure programs
- E. The two most important parks & recreation programs and activities are:
1. Adult fitness and wellness programs
 2. Outdoor music/concerts
- F. Based on residents' needs, unmet needs, and feeling of importance the list below show the programs and activities with Priority Investment Ratings that are considered "High Priority" for investment.

<u>Parks and Recreation Program/Activity</u>	<u>Rating</u>
Adult fitness & wellness programs	200.0
Outdoor music/concerts	162.0
Special events/family festivals	137.4
Aquatic programs	129.6
Outdoor adventure programs	125.1

Based on input from the community through the Community Survey, and discussions with Citizens of Lee County at the community open houses, and Lee County staff, the following goals and objectives have been created that formulate the foundations of this Parks and Recreation Master Plan Update for Lee County:

Facilities & Programming

- A. Trail connectivity - destinations / regional greenways & trail systems
 - Create a county-wide greenway master plan
 - Seek land/corridors to continue expansion of the Endor Iron Furnace Greenway
 - Enhance/expand trail network and wayfinding at San-Lee Nature Park
 - Provide more water access points on Deep and Cape Fear Rivers for canoes/kayaks; designate a blueway system; develop partnerships with outfitters
- B. Develop locations & plans for indoor multi-purpose community center space
 - Add fitness & exercise equipment room @ Bob Hales Center
 - Seek locations for community center space in southern/northern parts of county with fitness & exercise equipment, walking track, gymnasium, classrooms, community room
- C. Make sure all parks & facilities are accessible
 - Conduct ADA assessment at each park/facility
 - All facilities within each park shall be accessible to each other & parking
 - All facilities shall be accessible
 - All facilities should be connected to adjacent neighborhoods, sidewalk systems, where possible
- D. Create programming for each Lee County park & facility
 - Provide educational, healthy & active programs & opportunities for all ages & abilities, especially fitness and exercise facilities
 - Provide educational, healthy & active programs & opportunities for all ages & abilities
 - Offer excellent opportunities throughout the Lee County parks system for all to use.
 - Expand on recent new opportunities such as disc golf, pickleball, fitness stations/clusters or other new sports trends
 - Provide venues for Senior Olympics events
- E. Plan, design and phase the construction of a multi-use sports complex
- F. Seek new park development opportunities in areas underserved by parks
 - Remaster plan six (6) parks; seek funding and redevelop parks
 - a. Buchanan Park

- b. Dalrymple Park
- c. Kiwanis Family Park (County portion)
- d. Lett Family Park
- e. San-Lee Park
- f. Tramway Road Park
- Seek locations to develop neighborhood or small community park (s) in the northern, western & southern regions of Lee County
- Update/expand facilities & offerings at San-Lee Nature Park
- Provide destination facilities that could also serve as a revenue source for non-Lee County residents (splash pad, X-country, inclusive playground, etc.)

Operations

- A. Seek & develop partnerships with other recreation providers
 - Hold quarterly meetings, at a minimum with other municipal departments/agencies – Sanford Parks & Recreation, public schools, Library, Coop. Extension (LeeCan), Senior Services, Veteran Services; Rotate meeting locations
 - Expand programming partnerships with City of Sanford; assign responsibilities
 - Development partnership with Triangle Land Conservancy
- B. Maintain quality park management, operations & maintenance on an equitable basis for each facility
- C. Strive to provide a greenspace, trail, park, or amenity located within a 15-20 minute walk or drive from each County resident
- D. Strive to provide funding to maintain or exceed minimum level of service standards & create a sustainable economic base for Lee County Parks & Recreation
- E. Establish vision, goals, and responsibilities of the Parks & Recreation Commission
 - Development of new funding sources for the County relating to Parks & Recreation
 - Assist and facilitate special events
 - Assist in the development of long-range planning for programs and facilities
 - Promotion of community awareness on the needs for parks & recreation as part of a healthy community
 - Review and make recommendations for proposed community projects and acquisitions related to parks, recreation, and greenways
 - Develop annual work plan
- F. Increase community outreach / parks & recreation marketing / social media
 - Hold regularly scheduled 'Meet the Director' gatherings to gain user input; rotate around the parks
- G. Ensure the park & recreation master plan is coordinated with other municipal plans, ordinances & policies

PARKS AND RECREATION FACILITY NEEDS

A park system is typically comprised of eight park types. These park types include:

Mini Parks

Civic Parks

Neighborhood Parks

Community Parks

District Parks

Regional Parks

Greenways

Unique/Special Use Facilities

Each of these park types provide recreation opportunities that are needed by area residents. A variety of public and private agencies often play a role in providing a well-rounded compliment of parks and recreation facilities.

As previously discussed, Lee County is the primary provider of parks and recreation programs within the county. The County has continuously worked to provide quality facilities and programs for its residents.

While the County is the primary provider of parks and recreation to Lee County residents, it should work with other agencies in the region to provide the park land and facilities whenever possible. This collaborative effort should include working with the City of Sanford's Parks Department.

An overview of the different park types and how these parks can be provided in the future follows:

Regional Parks

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

As previously noted, Lee County is very fortunate to be proximate to one State Park located to the east of the county. This outstanding park (Raven Rock State Park) provides a wide variety of nature based recreational activities. The facilities at Raven Rock provide valuable recreation opportunities for Lee County residents and attract visitors from across the region.

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

District Parks

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

There is one District Park in Lee County, San-Lee Park. This wonderful facility offers a variety of nature-

based and passive recreation activities. There is still a current need for a second District Park as well as a third District Park by 2031. The current planned sports complex of 120 acres will satisfy the second District Park when it is developed in the next 2-3 years.

Community Parks

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

There are five (5) parks in Lee County that are currently serving as Community Parks: Dalrymple Park, Kiwanis Family Park, Lett Family Park (Broadway), O.T. Sloan Park and Tramway Road Park. The sizes for Dalrymple and Lett Family Parks fit the size of Neighborhood Parks, but their offerings and the populations they serve places them as Community Parks. Park re-master planning should occur for Dalrymple, Kiwanis Family, Lett Family and Tramway Road Parks to address expansion opportunities, accessible circulation, and opportunities for new and updated facilities, at a minimum.

Even with these wonderful facilities, the County still has a current need of two (2) to three (3) additional Community Parks, plus an additional Community Park by 2031.



Playground at Dalrymple Park

Neighborhood Parks

Neighborhood Parks play an important role in providing both active and passive recreation in most municipal park systems. These parks, usually in the 5-15 acre range, are large enough to include both active and passive recreation opportunities. Most Community Parks also serve as Neighborhood Parks to

those citizens living within a mile radius such as do most of the Lee County parks. There are currently four (4) parks in Lee County that are currently serving as Neighborhood Parks: Buchanan, Horton, Kiwanis Children's, and Temple Parks.

Since Neighborhood Parks typically serve as the primary building block of most municipal park systems, there is a current need for at least three (3) more Neighborhood Parks, plus one (1) more Neighborhood Park by 2031. These parks should be located in the northern, western, and southern parts of the County.

In the future, the County should seek land and develop site-specific master plans for new Neighborhood Parks especially in the outer fringes of the County.

Mini Parks

Mini Parks are the smallest park type and typically include a playground, shelter and possibly a play court. Weatherspoon with its one basketball court is closest to the mini-park category. There is currently a current need for three (3) Mini Parks and a future need for one (1) additional Mini Park.

In the future, the County may continue to encourage private developers to construct small amenity areas (playgrounds, shelters, etc.) when building single family residential and/or mixed-use developments to help fulfill the need for Mini Parks.

Civic Parks

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

Several of the City of Sanford parks in the Downtown area function as Civic Parks. Lee County does not need to make Civic Parks a focus of their park expansion program.

Greenways

The most popular form of outdoor recreation in the nation is walking. This popularity was reflected in the survey that was conducted as part of this planning study and in comments made during the public workshops. Greenways are typically off-road trails that meander through neighborhoods and natural areas providing transportation corridors and recreational opportunities for walkers, joggers, rollerbladers, and cyclists. The trail surface can either be natural or paved. Paved trails are normally eight to ten feet in width, but due to increasing popularity, many communities are widening paved trails to twelve (12) feet. Natural surface trail widths can vary based on conditions. In addition to providing environmental protection and recreation opportunities, greenways and bike trails can produce economic development.

The Endor Iron Furnace Greenway serves as a good beginning point for an area greenway system. Further extension of this greenway system should be a focus not only in procurement of land and/or easements, but design and implementation of trail to connect to more neighborhoods and destinations. Most residents, who took the survey, desire for more natural surface trails and off-road greenways. Lee County and the City of Sanford should continue to partner to expand this greenway for connectivity to municipal parks and neighborhoods. Part of the partnership should include the preparation of a greenway master plan for the region. Recommendations from this study should be used to guide implementation of a community-wide greenway system with local connectors.



Endor Iron Furnace Greenway

Blueways

Another popular form of outdoor recreation that is continuing to increase is canoeing and kayaking. This popularity was reflected in the survey that was conducted as part of this planning study and in comments made during the public workshops that Lee County needs more water access on Deep River and Cape Fear River. Blueway master planning to help locate launch locations and layup areas can be done in conjunction with the county-wide greenway master plan noted above.

FACILITY PROPOSALS & RECOMMENDATIONS

This report also recommends the County acquire additional park land, construct some new district, community and neighborhood parks, community facilities, expand greenways, and make improvements to existing parks and facilities by the year 2031. The improvements that will be made as part of these renovations and expansions will add new facilities and offerings to the Lee County parks inventory. The County should consider the list of facility needs established in Section Three and described in greater detail in this section as it makes park and recreation improvements:

Baseball/Softball

The County currently provides fourteen (14) ballfields for baseball and softball. With baseball and softball both heavily programmed by the County, there is still a need to add more ballfields to expand softball offerings. Some of this need will be addressed when the new sportsplex comes on-line in the future.

Football

Football's popularity as a community-based youth sport has been reduced by the emergence of soccer and (more recently) lacrosse. The standard for development of football fields is one field for every 20,000 people within the service community (a standard used by many municipal agencies). This standard indicates there is a need for football fields in Lee County, but these could be provided in conjunction with multi-use fields as noted below.

Soccer/Lacrosse/Multi-Use

Soccer continues to be a fast-growing sport in America. This master plan reflects this demand by establishing a standard of one field for every 7,000 people within the service population. Utilizing this standard for development, the County needs at least eight (8) soccer fields or multi-use fields, sized for soccer.

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

Basketball

Basketball remains an extremely popular sport in the United States. Played by a variety of ages, and increasingly by females, this sport can be played either indoors or out. Currently, the County provides two outdoor basketball courts at Dalrymple Park and one outdoor court at Weatherspoon. The court at Weatherspoon is in need of upgrade. Indoor basketball is programmed at Bob Hale Center as well as at Tramway and BT Bullock Elementary Schools. Based on proposed Lee County standards of development of one outdoor basketball court per 20,000 people, there is not a need for basketball courts. However, should neighborhood parks be constructed in the future, the placement of half-court basketball facilities could be located within these parks as easy recreational offerings.

Tennis

Based on input received through the community survey, tennis fell in the middle of priority investments for Lee County, and there does not appear to be demand for additional tennis courts. With the recent renovations at O.T. Sloan and Kiwanis Children's Parks the County currently has five (5) lighted tennis courts, which should suffice for the current and future needs.

Pickleball

Pickleball received much support from Lee County users, and nationally and regionally, the popularity of the sport continues to grow. In response, the County recently redesigned the court areas at O.T. Sloan and Kiwanis Children's Park to reduce tennis court offerings and introduce seven (7) lighted outdoor pickleball courts. In addition, the gymnasium at Bob Hales Center is striped for three (3) indoor pickleball courts. With these modifications, the County does not currently have a need to add any more pickleball courts.

Volleyball

The demand for volleyball in the community survey was very low. There was one (1) outdoor sand volleyball court at San-Lee Park that was available for use with the shelter rental, but this volleyball court is being removed, and the space dedicated to another use. Based on the proposed standard of 1 court/ 20,000 people,

there is a need for volleyball. Sand volleyball courts could easily be added into some of the neighborhood parks but are also shown in the recent sportsplex concept plan as well.

Shuffleboard

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

Horseshoes

There has been no expressed demand for horseshoe pits in the community. This activity does provide a recreation outlet for social interaction, particularly for seniors. However, until there is demand, horseshoe pits should not be a priority.

Picnicking/Picnic Shelters

Picnicking was one of the more popular recreational activities listed by respondents in the survey scoring 8th as a high priority. There are currently ten (10) shelters of varying sizes offered in Lee County parks. Based on a standard of one shelter per 5,000 people and the feedback from the survey, there is a current need for at least three (3) additional shelters now and one (1) more additional shelter by 2031.



Kiwanis Shelter at Kiwanis Family Park

Playgrounds/Play Equipment

Playgrounds and equipment scored within the high priority segment of the needs assessment. There are nine (9) playgrounds offered in the Lee County system. As parks are improved, these existing playgrounds should be improved, but the County should also look for locations for additional playgrounds. Larger parks may warrant more than one playground and all Neighborhood Parks should have a playground. Safety inspections and ADA accessibility audits should be conducted at all existing playgrounds. The all-inclusive

playgrounds that have been recently installed at Horton and Kiwanis Children's Park should be considered the new standard in all of the parks. As new playgrounds are completed and existing playgrounds renovated, the County should replace wood fiber and sand surfaces with poured-in-place (PIP) safety surfacing. PIP surfaces provide wheelchair accessibility and reduces maintenance and lifecycle costs of the playgrounds.

Special Use Facilities

Community Centers and Gymnasiums

Lee County offers three (3) community centers and one (1) gymnastics studio in the system. Bob Hales Center is the only facility that offers a multi-use gymnasium with classroom space. Ingram Center at Dalrymple and the community building at Lett Family Park provide primarily classroom and meeting space

Multi-use indoor space, fitness and wellness programs, teen programs and activities scored relatively high in the community survey and during the community workshops. Based on the County's population, there is a need to find a locations that could support an indoor community center in the northern and southern portions of the county to allow flexible recreation space and classrooms to serve the County's residents.

The construction and operation of a multi-use recreation center is a significant undertaking, but it is a recommendation of this master plan to seek a partnership and/or plan for construction of a center. The County should seek a partnership with the City of Sanford, or private entity towards developing an indoor facility that would benefit all County residents.

Swimming Pools and Splash Pads

In the past, NRPA and NCDENR provided a standard for pool development of one pool for every 20,000 people. This standard was based on the concept of multi-neighborhood or community pools. Today, with the high cost of operations and construction of swimming pools, very few agencies develop neighborhood/ community pools to that old standard. Instead, municipalities typically provide more centralized facilities where one pool may serve a greater population. With the Lee County standard of one pool for every 30,000 people, the outdoor pool at O.T. Sloan Park and re-emergence of the outdoor pool at Horton Park should meet the County's needs.

Splash Pads continue to grow in popularity across the country. In addition to offering a water-based play experience, the play structures, sprays, etc. afford children of all ages and abilities a total play environment and are much more economical to operate than a standard swimming pool. A properly designed splash pad can serve as a regional draw, provide revenue, and provide a beneficial economic impact to the surrounding areas. Development of a splash pad scored well in the survey and in the community workshop. The new splash pad developed by the City of Sanford at Kiwanis Family Park meets the current splash pad needs, but the County should seek a location, plan, and develop an additional splash pad facility to meet the needs for 2031.

Amphitheaters and Performance Areas

Currently, there is only one (1) amphitheater/outdoor performance area currently serving residents at San-Lee Park. The gazebo at Kiwanis Family Park serves as a place to hold small events, but not performances. Outdoor amphitheaters scored relatively high with most survey and community workshop participants, and as continued structure for the County there is a need to expand opportunities for at least two (2) amphitheaters/performance areas for the County.

Trends in Park & Recreation Facilities

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

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

Disc Golf

Disc golf did not receive heavy support in the survey, but nationally and regionally, the popularity of the sport continues to grow. The County currently has one (1) disc golf course at O.T. Sloan, but it will need to be relocated due to construction of the new park entrance. Though interest in the sport did not surface during the community engagement, the County may desire to design and install at least one (1) additional disc golf facility elsewhere in the system.

Skate Parks

Skateboarding has been popular for several decades. In the past decade, many communities have recognized its popularity and have tried to provide a safe and vandal resistant setting for this creative sport. Many municipal agencies have developed skateboard parks to provide a recreational outlet for preteens and teens. The County should reach out to and survey those users to see if their needs are being met. A Skate Park would be a good facility for Lee County and Sanford on which to partner and develop a park somewhere in Downtown Sanford.

Outdoor Fitness

Outdoor fitness has regained popularity especially when installed as equipment clusters rather than being spread out along a trail or walkway system. The existing outdoor equipment at Kiwanis Family Park on the greenway should be upgraded and relocated further into the park. Based on a standard of one fitness cluster per 20,000 people there is a need to add at least two (2) additional clusters within the park system. If the Parks & Recreation offices are relocated from Tramway Road, a larger multi-generational facility could be introduced on the that site especially with the new residential development occurring in the area.

Off-leash Dog Areas

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

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

The existing dog park at O.T. Sloan, like the disc golf course will need to be relocated due to the new park entrance road. There is a need for a second dog park to be opened elsewhere in the system.

IMPROVING/EXPANDING EXISTING PARKS & FACILITIES

Renovation and Expansion of Existing Parks & Recreation Facilities

In 2020, Lee County embarked on a site-specific master planning process for four of the County's parks: Horton Park, Kiwanis Children's Park, O.T. Sloan Park, and Temple Park. There is also a need to improve and expand at six of the other County's existing parks and facilities. Recommended projects which should be considered include:

Buchanan Park

- Study western side of park for introduction of additional opportunities: Walking Loops, Picnic Shelters, Disc Golf
- Shift the park entrance to improve sight distance along Cameron Drive
- Create accessible routes between upper and lower facilities
- Expand play equipment; provide accessible surfacing
- Add an outdoor games court
- Address drainage issues below lower parking area
- Replace shelter and pad; add utilities



Shelter at Buchanan Park

Dalrymple Park

- Introduce outdoor fitness cluster
- Add crosswalk and pipe drainage between ballfields at north end of parking
- Relocate and expand play equipment to the north side of Ingram Center; provide accessible surfacing; add foul ball protection
- Create a paved walking loop around the perimeter
- Create accessible routes between facilities
- Construct paved flex sport/games court south of Ingram Center
- Enhance stream feature along W. Globe Street

Kiwanis Family Park (County Portion)

- Consider paving greenway through flood prone areas
- Consider stream restoration with flood control and forebay areas
- Consider relocating/updating fitness equipment with accessible surfacing
- Add better wayfinding system for greenway
- Expand paved walking loop to western side of park
- Upgrade/replace gazebo
- Add outdoor event space for gazebo; add small shelter and trails
- Replace/upgrade Kiwanis Shelter

Lett Family Park

- Study northern end of park for additional recreation opportunities: disc golf, fitness stations
- Add shelter and pad to northern playground
- Add paved walking loop around perimeter of the park
- Provide accessible surfacing for southern playground
- Add small shade shelter to southern playground
- Define and pave parking areas; provide accessible routes to buildings and facilities

San-Lee Park

- Update play equipment; make equipment more inclusive in nature; relocate more central in park
- Redesign parking/circulation at western entrance to park
- Create accessible routes between facilities/from parking to facilities
- Provide more group camping sites
- Update amphitheater; provide ADA facilities; add small shelter
- Add ADA canoe/kayak launch area; update paddle boat area for ADA
- Add small rentable shelters throughout park
- Provide better wayfinding for trails; extend nature trails; consider developing accessible paved trail segment with overlook.

Tramway Road Park

- Provide accessible surfacing to playground
- Pave northern walking loop segment
- Complete walking loop on southwestern side with a designated paved segment
- Relocate offices to O.T. Sloan Park; demolish house and re-purpose site for consideration as:
 - a. Dog Park
 - b. Group Picnic Facility
 - c. Multi-Generational Fitness Cluster
 - d. Close drive access from Tramway Road, create parking access from interior road



Tramway Road Park

CAPITAL NEEDS

A Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for the acquisition, renovation, and development of parks and greenways for the planning period was prepared with based on the results of the community survey, observations of the consultant and input from parks & recreation staff. Proposed costs are shown in current dollar values. The capital improvement costs include funds for land acquisition, site preparation, site utilities, and facility development as well as estimated planning and design fees.

The 10-Year CIP can be summarized into the following components:

Existing Parks Renovations/Improvements	\$ 3,976,000
Land Acquisition	\$ 600,000
New Park Facility Development	\$ 1,344,000
Greenway Development	\$ 2,843,800
Special Use Facilities	\$ 576,800
<u>Site Specific Park Master Planning</u>	<u>\$ 150,000</u>
Total Capital Improvement Budget	\$ 9,490,600

RECOMMENDED TEN-YEAR PRIORITY PROJECTS

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

- Re-master plan: Buchanan, Dalrymple, Kiwanis Family, Lett Family, San-Lee and Tramway Road Parks
- Update master plan and prepare detailed design for phase one of the sportsplex.
- Construction of two miles of greenway; seek grant opportunities, partnership(s) City of Sanford
- Seek locations for at least two neighborhood parks in the northern and southern ends of the County
- Seek a location for a splash pad
- Seek a location for a dog park
- Develop a work plan with the Parks and Recreation Commission
- Seek partnerships with City of Sanford Parks that focus on health and wellness to expand park and recreation offerings

MASTER PLAN FUNDING STRATEGY

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

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

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



Lake at San-Lee Park

SECTION ONE

PARKS & RECREATION OVERVIEW/INVENTORY

INTRODUCTION

The first step in the master plan update process is to inventory and assess the existing parks and recreation facilities currently serving Lee County residents. With the current demand on County resources, it is extremely important to identify and utilize existing facilities to their fullest potential. This section identifies all existing parks and recreation facilities found within Lee County.

Lee County currently operates eleven parks and two special use facilities that are primarily located within the city limits of Sanford or within the City's ETJ. These parks cover approximately 328 acres and provide a wide range of active and passive recreational activities.

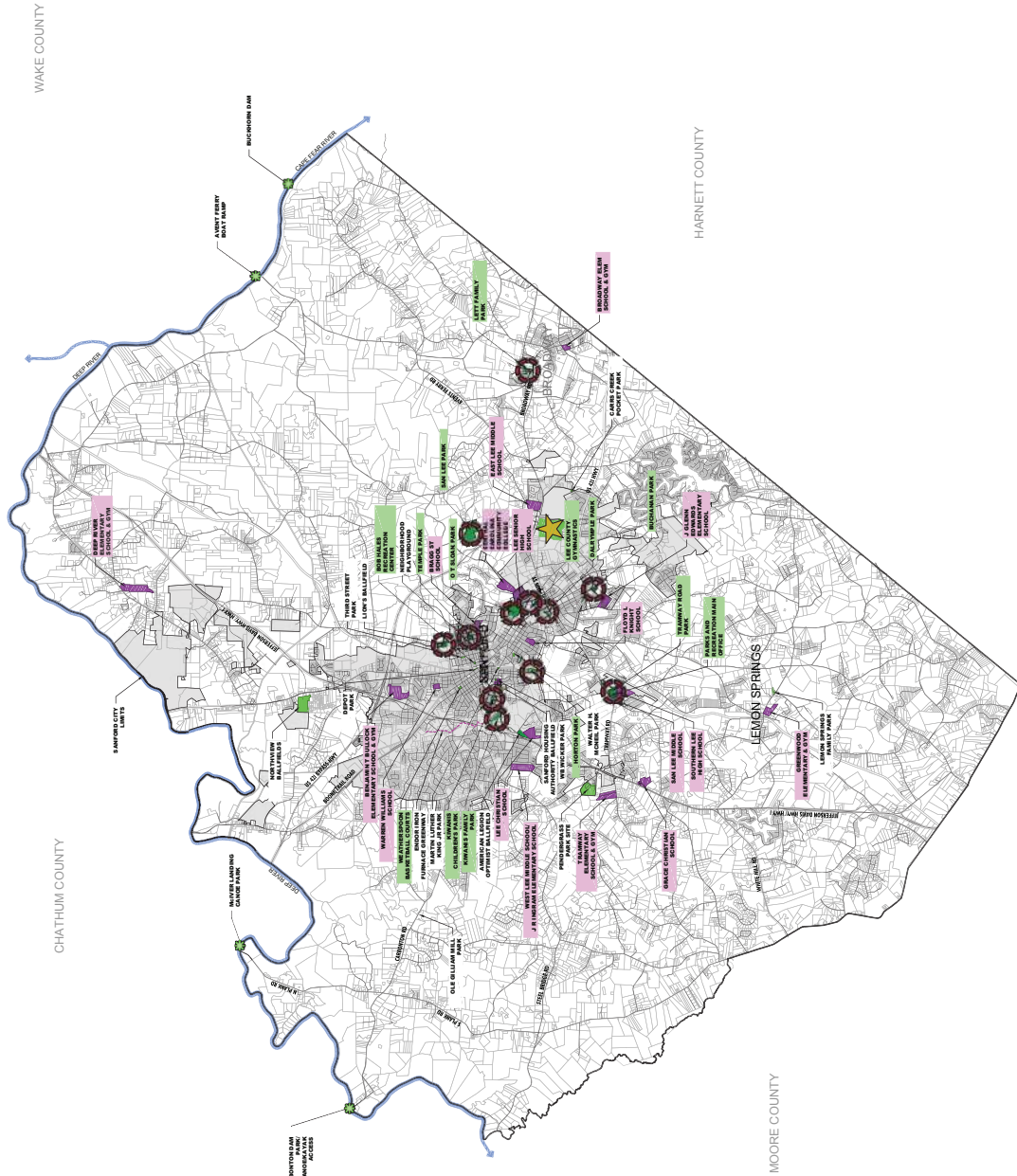
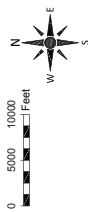
In addition to city and county parks, Lee County Board of Education has two high schools, two middle schools and three elementary schools in the city. These school facilities offer indoor and outdoor recreational facilities that could be used for public recreation. While joint use agreements for many of these schools are not currently in place, it is important to recognize the potential value of these facilities for public recreation.

Finally, the private sector offers recreational activities throughout the city. These private sector options include golf courses, private swim clubs and residential amenity areas operated by homeowner's associations. These private recreation opportunities are an important component in meeting recreational needs of county residents.

LEE COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION FACILITIES

This section identifies the existing parks and recreation facilities currently serving the citizens of Lee County including a list of noted issues and opportunities for each park.

In addition, the City of Sanford re-established a Parks Department in 2019 to program and maintain eight parks as well as the Endor Iron Furnace Greenway.





DESCRIPTION

Bob Hales Center is a 0.89-acre Community Center which serves as a local indoor sports destination for Lee County. The center has a full-size indoor basketball court along with striping for 3 pickleball courts when the basketball court is not in use. The center also has several programming areas/rooms. The Center is well maintained and is due for internal upgrades to the restroom facilities.

Current challenges and opportunities for the center include limited adjacent parking areas and outdated amenities.

Amenities located within the facility:

- 1 indoor basketball court that also functions as 3 pickleball courts
- Programming Areas/Rooms

Challenges and opportunities for development:

- Limited Parking adjacent to the facility
- Pedestrian Connectivity to the Neighborhood
- No exterior amenities





DESCRIPTION

Buchanan Park is a 5.4-acre neighborhood park which serves as a local destination for the southern part of Sanford. The upper end of the park features 1 lighted baseball diamond with bleacher seating and restrooms. The lower end of the park includes greenspace, a small children's playground, and a rental shelter. The shelter has seating for 50 and has 1 grill.

Current challenges and opportunities for Buchanan Park include drainage issues, pedestrian circulation restrictions, lack of ADA accessible walkways, restricted sight triangles at the entrance. Rental shelter and concrete pad in need of replacement (drainage has caused severe cracks and voids in pad). Also, portion of property across the stream is under-utilized and could use programming. Buchanan Park is lightly used in the community.

Amenities located within the park:

- 1 lighted baseball diamond w/ bleacher seating
- Greenspace
- Picnic shelter w/ 5 picnic tables, grill
- 1 Playground system
- Restrooms (at the ballfield)

Challenges and opportunities for development:

- Drainage and ADA accessibility throughout
- Conversion of gravel parking to paved with designations
- Pedestrian Connectivity within the park and to the Neighborhoods
- Limited entrance sight lines
- No utilities available (water/electric) at the shelter





DESCRIPTION

Dalrymple Park is a 6.31-acre Community Park which serves as a local sports destination for the central part of the county. It is currently home to 2 lighted & irrigated baseball diamonds and 2 full basketball courts. The site also includes Ingram Center that is rentable and can accommodate 100 people. There is a rectangular paved area outside Ingram Center that could have been used as court space in the past.

Current challenges and opportunities for Dalrymple Park include field drainage issues, pedestrian circulation restrictions, lack of ADA accessible sidewalks to playground and inclusive play components. Need better defined parking.

Amenities located within the park:

- 2 lighted baseball diamonds with covered dugouts, batting cage
- Press box at main field
- Outdoor basketball courts (2)
- Rental Building (Ingram Center)
- Concessions building with restrooms
- Playground

Challenges and opportunities for development:

- Drainage and ADA accessibility
- Opportunities for playground improvements (Inclusive Play), etc.
- Pedestrian connectivity within the park and to the neighborhood
- Add working kitchen inside Ingram Center
- Re-program space outside Ingram Center





DESCRIPTION

Kiwanis Family Park is a 51.75-acre Community Park which serves as a destination for the county and the City of Sanford. It currently serves as the trailhead to the Endor Iron Furnace Greenway and other walking trails. The park also features outdoor exercise facilities. The Kiwanis Shelter and a gazebo are other amenities.

The City of Sanford took ownership of the front portion of the park in 2018 that features a newly installed splash pad, inclusive playground, shelters, restrooms, walking loop and expanded parking.

Current challenges and opportunities for Kiwanis Family Park include drainage issues, pedestrian circulation restrictions.

Amenities located within the park:

- Kiwanis Shelter (10 tables, 1 grill, utilities available upon request) – accommodates 100 people
- Gazebo (no utilities) – accommodates 50 people
- Exercise equipment
- Walking Trails
- Endor Iron Furnace Greenway trailhead

Challenges and opportunities for development:

- Drainage improvements and ADA accessibility (trails and exercise equipment areas)
- Wayfinding
- Kiwanis Shelter and gazebo both need upgrades and/or replacement





DESCRIPTION

Lett Family Park is a 7.81-acre Community Park which serves as a local sports destination for the eastern part of the county and Broadway community. It currently offers 2 lighted & baseball diamonds with bleacher seating. The site includes playgrounds at each end and large picnic shelter at the upper end of the park.

Lett Family Park is a recently acquired park from Broadway. No upgrades have occurred to the facility since the acquisition.

Current challenges and opportunities for Lett Family Park include drainage issues (especially on the upper end), lack of pedestrian circulation and connectivity, lack of ADA accessible walkways to restrooms and upper playground.



Amenities located within the park:

- 2 lighted baseball diamonds w/bleachers, dugouts, and press boxes
- Playgrounds (2)
- Large shelter
- Community Center (accommodates 65 people) – has warming kitchen, fridge, microwave
- Concession Stand w/Restrooms

Challenges and opportunities for development:

- Drainage and ADA accessibility throughout
- Better definition of parking
- Need for shade: trees, sunshades, small shelters
- Opportunities for playground improvements (Inclusive Play), etc.
- Pedestrian Connectivity within the park
- Add walking loop around park





DESCRIPTION

San-Lee Park is a 174.12-acre District Park which serves as a local nature destination for the county. It is currently home to the San-Lee Park Nature Center, raptor center, mountain biking & hiking trails, paddle boats, fishing pier, tent campground and Amphitheater. The Nature Center includes a large rental multi-purpose room with scenic views.

San Lee Park is similar in feel to a state park and has great accessibility to the county and City of Sanford.

Current challenges and opportunities include continued program management and expanded trail connectivity throughout the park. Trail mapping and wayfinding is currently lacking and requires GPS mapping. The current park ranger lives on site and performs many duties from an operations side. Large void to fill when he retires

Amenities located within the park:

- Nature Center with multipurpose room (accommodates 50 people)
- Meadow (Rentable)
- Tent Campground w/Bathhouse (6 sites: Apr/Oct)
- Restrooms
- Large Shelter w/Volleyball court (12 tables, 2 grills, accommodates 100 people, utilities available upon request)
- Boat Dock (Paddleboat rental)
- Fishing Pier/Bridge
- Playground
- Hiking Trails
- Mountain Biking trails/ pumptrack (12 miles)
- Amphitheater (seats approx. 50 people)

Challenges and opportunities for development:

- Program and Facility Management
- Infrastructure improvements
- Update playground, provide accessibility





DESCRIPTION

Tramway Road Park is a 20.05-acre Community Park which serves as a local sports destination for the central part of the county. It is currently home to 4 lighted baseball diamonds with bleacher seating, tournament soccer field, large playground, and a partial walking loop. The Lee County Parks & Recreation Offices are located across from the ballfields.

Tramway Road Park fields receive much of their usage from Sanlee Middle School and Southern High School as their home fields.

Current challenges and opportunities for Tramway Road Park include continuation of the paved walking loop, accessibility to the playground.

Amenities located within the park:

- 4 Baseball Field Complex w/batting cages, concession, restrooms
- Soccer field
- Playground
- Walking Loop
- Main Parks & Recreation Office

Challenges and opportunities for development:

- Complete paving and extension of the walking loop
- Provide accessible route to the playground
- Introduce new programming opportunity should Parks & Recreation Offices relocate such as a dog park, outdoor fitness, or picnicking facilities



OTHER AREA FACILITIES

Carrs Creek Park - 1.5 acres

Located on Mount Pisgah Church Road, Carrs Creek Park is a small Mini Park with a small modular play structure. The park is fenced with a separate fence surrounding the play structure. A small gravel parking area is provided.

Depot Park - 1.3 acres

Located on the grounds of the Railroad House and Old Railroad Depot, this Civic Park is the hub of downtown and community activities. The park includes an amphitheater, event lawn for ±750 people, an interactive splash fountain, public restrooms, play area and ornamental fencing, lighting and landscape.

Kiwanis Family Park - 13.84 acres

In 2019, the management and operations for the front section of Kiwanis Family Park transitioned from Lee County to the City of Sanford. New facilities added through this transition include an inclusive playground, splash pad with restrooms and shelter, renovated restrooms next to the playground, new picnic shelter, paved loop trail with improved connections to Endor Iron Furnace Greenway.



New inclusive playground at Kiwanis Family Park

Maple Avenue Park - 0.36 acres

Maple Avenue Park is a playground at the corner of Fourth Street and Maple Avenue. The park has a very nice playground with swings, slides and climbing platforms on a rubberized safety surface. Amenities include a bench and sidewalk.

Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Park - 0.6 acres

Very nice civic memorial for Martin Luther King Jr. located on Horner Boulevard at Washington Avenue. The park includes a brick monument with relief sculpture of Dr. King. Other amenities include flags, ornamental lights, and benches.

Third Street Park - 1.7 acres

Third Street Park - 1.7 acres

Third Street Park is an older playground located at the corner of Third Street and North Avenue. This park

includes a fenced play structure with swings and slide. The area is well lit and maintained and has safety surfacing. Several benches are provided at the play area and the street. Large trees provide excellent shade.

Sunset Park - 2.94 acres

Largely undeveloped greenspace at the corner of Hillcrest Drive and Sunset Drive, this park is a passive park with large shade trees and a bench.

Walter McNeil Park - 1.0 acres

Walter McNeil Park is located at the end of Martin Street. It provides a large playground structure with swings, slides and climbing platforms. The playground equipment is fenced and has safety surfacing. The park also provides horseshoe pits and grills. The site is relatively open but has many large pines to provide shade. There is space for parking, although it is unpaved.

Triangle Land Conservancy

White Pines Nature Preserve – 275 acres

Located north of Sanford and accessed off NC 87/15-501 via S. Rocky River Road, White Pines Nature Preserve fronts both Rocky River and Deep River. The Preserve provides a canoe/kayak launch on Rocky River and offers seven different hiking trail experiences.

McIver Landing on the Deep River

Located northwest of Sanford on US 421, McIver Landing provides a public canoe/kayak launch on the Deep River.

LEE COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION OFFERINGS

Events/Programs

Lee County provides a variety of recreation programming throughout the year. The following programs have

been recently held and/or are currently offered:

Fall/Winter Athletics

Adult Softball
Boys/Girls Basketball
Coed Basketball
Coed Wrestling
Flag Football
T-Ball
Track & Field
Volleyball
Youth Baseball
Youth Softball

Spring/Summer Athletics

Adult Softball
Adult Wiffleball
T-Ball
Youth Baseball/Softball (Coach Pitch)
Youth Baseball/Softball (10U/12U)

Youth Kickball
Youth Recreation
Art
Dance
Gymnastics
Tiny Tots

Adult Fitness

Motivation While Walking
Yoga

Outdoor Recreation

Conservation Cubs
Day Camps
Environmental Education Programs
Nature Days
Summer Camp
Swim Lessons



New inclusive playground at Kiwanis Children's Park

SECTION TWO - THE HISTORY AND PEOPLE OF LEE COUNTY

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

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

- Community-Wide Survey
- Community Workshops (2)
- PRC Input
- Staff Input

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

Lee County History and Context

Geographically centered in North Carolina and located between Raleigh, Greensboro and Fayetteville, Lee County is located at the crossroads of US 421, US 1/501 and NC 87. Municipalities located in Lee County include the City of Sanford and the Town of Broadway.

A brief history of Lee County is summarized at the front of the Plan SanLee Land Use Plan adopted in November 2018:

”Although hunters and traders knew the area as early as the mid-17th century, permanent settlers did not locate to the area until the middle of the 18th century. According to historian Blackwell P. Robinson, the region was largely settled by Scotch settlers, many of them Highland Scots, fleeing oppression in their own country. The discovery of coal deposits in neighboring Chatham County led to the beginning of growth in Lee County.

In 1872, Col. Charles O. Sanford, the City of Sanford’s namesake, was credited for bringing the railroad from Raleigh to Sanford. Sanford had an initial population of approximately 200 persons. “The town of Sanford began to have a place on the map of the state about the year 1870 when the Raleigh and Augusta Railroad reached this point on its way south from the state capitol. For several years Sanford was the terminus of the road...” Lee County was later formed in 1907 and the Town of Broadway was incorporated around that same time. Lee County was formed from parts of Chatham and Moore counties, and named for General Robert E. Lee, who served as the General in Chief of the Armies of the Confederate States in 1865. Broadway was named for a broad level opening in the vast pine forest, which covered the area.

Growth in the area focused around the original town limits of Sanford adjacent to the crossing of the railroads. The railroad system had an important impact on the entire area. As more and more people came to Sanford and the surrounding area, the economy grew. Banks, industries, schools, churches, and a hospital were needed. The population steadily grew from 236 people in 1880 to 1,044 in 1900. The population of Sanford in 1940 reached 4,960. Another nearby town, Jonesboro had developed just southeast of Sanford, and due to Sanford’s location and growth, Jonesboro merged with Sanford in 1947. The Jonesboro merger increased the population of Sanford drastically and opened Sanford to urbanized areas southeast of the original city limits. By 1950, Sanford had a population of 10,013.”

Today the population of Sanford is estimated at 30,261 (2020) according to the US Census. The population of Lee County is 63,285 (2020), while the population of the Town of Broadway is 1,267.

The People of Lee County

An important aspect of this planning process is understanding the people who make up the Department’s Service Population. To better understand the park and recreational needs of Lee County a review of demographic and income data prepared by the US Census Bureau, provides valuable information on the demographic makeup of the County.

The US Census reflects an estimated 2020 population of 63,285 for Lee County, based on projections from the 2020 US Census estimates reflects 9.3% growth from the 2010 US census that showed 57,866. Current annual growth rate is around 0.93%. Lee County’s population reflects an estimated age distribution as follows:

Under 5	6.3%
6-18	23.7%
18-64	53.2%
Over 65	16.8%

16.8% of Lee County’s population is 65 years or older which is right in line with the State’s senior population representing 16.7 % of the total population. The County’s youth (persons under 17 years of age) represent around 30% of the overall population, a bit higher than the State’s youth population (27.7%). There are 4,029 veterans in Lee County or about 6.4% of the total population just above the State at 6.3%. 12.3% of the County’s population under 65 claims having a disability, slightly higher than the State at 9.4% while 15.9%

of the County’s population under 65 claims to not have health insurance compared to 13.4% of the State’s population.

While the State’s average household contains 2.52 persons, the average household in Lee County in 2020 is comprised of 2.72 persons. Currently, the rate of home ownership in Lee County is around 66.7%, just above the State’s average of 65.2%.

The 2020 US Census also reflects the following demographics for Lee County in comparison with the State of North Carolina.

	<u>Lee County</u>	<u>State of NC</u>
White	74.4%	70.6%
Black or African American	20.0%	22.2%
Hispanic/Latino	19.6%	9.8%
Two or More Races	2.4%	2.3%
Asian	1.4%	3.2%
American Indian/Alaska Native	1.3%	1.6%
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	0.2%	0.1%

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

- It is obvious from the age demographics, that while the County doesn’t have a very high percentage of residents that are seniors (65 and older), they were represented at the community workshop and/or participated in the community survey and expressed their passion for recreation. The County should provide facilities and programs that meet the desires and interest of this senior population as well as the 50+ population. Likewise, facilities and programs should be aimed at aiding the senior population in living active and healthier lifestyles.
- While the senior segment of the population is important, the Department should also be sensitive to the needs of its younger citizens, recognizing that a third of the population are youth (persons under 17 years of age).
- The Hispanic/Latino population is 10% higher than the State’s population and was well represented at the community workshop at Kiwanis Family Park.
- Populations of veterans and people with disabilities under the age of 65 are also higher than the State’s population suggesting a need for more inclusive recreation opportunities.

Service Population

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

The US Census reflects an estimated 2020 population of 63,285 for Lee County, based on projections from the 2020 US Census estimates reflects 9.3% growth from the 2010 US census that showed 57,866. Current annual growth rate is around 0.93%.

This increase in population should be noted as the County is striving to be a vibrant region and provide

a wonderful quality of life indicating a future with continued positive economic activity and a reasonable expectation of future growth. Using the current annual growth rate of 0.93% yields a projected 2031 population of around 69,170 residents.

Based on the above data this plan will use the County's estimated 2020 population of 63,285 as the service population for this study. For ease of calculations, the plan will slightly round up this population figure to 63,300.

As a ten-year plan, recommendations in this plan will be designed to meet the need of the County's population in 2031. For planning purposes, it is assumed the County will increase annually in population similar to the projected population of the County's population; approximately 0.93%. Again, for ease of discussion and calculation, the projected population for the County (the projected service population) for 2031 has been rounded up to 69,200.

Community Input - Public Workshops

Community workshops were held to receive input on June 8, 2021 at O.T. Sloan Park and June 9, 2021 at Kiwanis Family Park, both from 5-7pm.

The workshops were held as informal drop-in sessions that allowed for social distancing. Ninety-six (96) citizens signed in, but it was apparent others (especially children) participated in the event.

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

- showed a current map of Lee County that identified existing parks and recreation facilities, Town owned property, and schools
- offered images of recreation facilities/activities typically found in a county-wide park system.
- provided information on existing recreation opportunities found in each of the County's parks
- representative images of each of the County's parks

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

It should be noted that while 96 people signed in as attending these public workshops, not every attendee signed in, and not every attendee answered every question. Many of those in attendance were focused on voicing opinions on one or two specific issues or facilities and did not take the time and effort to respond to all questions. The following is a summary of the participant's responses. A full tally and listing of the responses can be found in the Appendix.

Attendees were asked what parks and facilities they currently use in Lee County. Top 10 selected were:

Kiwanis Family Park – 20.6%
Kiwanis Children's Park – 17.2%
Endor Iron Furnace Greenway – 16.4%
San-Lee Park – 10.8%

O.T. Sloan Park – 6.6%
Bob Hale Center – 6.6%
Dalrymple Park – 5%
Horton Park – 5%
Temple Park – 3.2%
Lee Gymnastics – 2.6%

Attendees were asked what recreational amenities they currently use and what they would like to see offered. Top 10 amenities currently used include:

Greenways/Walkways/Biking/Fitness Trails – 20.7%
Swimming Pool – 17%
Playgrounds – 16.3%
Splash Pad/Water Park – 15.5%
Outdoor Tennis – 14.7%
Picnic Shelters/Picnic Areas – 12.4%
Canoeing/Kayaking – 9.9%
Baseball/Softball Fields – 8.4%
Camping – 7.8%
Gymnastics – 7.8%

Top 10 amenities they would like to see offered include:

Outdoor Amphitheater – 16.2%
Outdoor Tennis – 12.3%
Outdoor Fitness – 12.3%
Skate Park – 11.6
Canoeing/Kayaking – 11.2%
Outdoor Aquatic Facilities – 10.9%
Swimming Pool – 10.3%
Indoor Turf Field – 9.5%
Greenways/Walkways/Biking/Fitness Trails – 8.5%
Outdoor Volleyball – 8.3%

Attendees were asked what recreational activities they currently use and what they would like to see offered. Top 10 activities currently used include:

Community Events – 31%
Gymnastics/Tumbling Programs – 21.3%
Nature Programs/Environmental Education – 21.3%
Adult Fitness and Wellness – 17%
Martial Arts Programs – 12.8%
Youth Sports Leagues – 12.1%
E-Gaming – 12.1%
Youth Sports Lessons – 10.3%
Water Fitness Programs – 8.6%
Birthday Parties – 8.5%

Top 10 activities they would like to see offered include:

Outdoor Challenge/Adventure Course – 24.7%
Adult Art, Dance, Performing/Theater Arts – 15.5%
Community Events – 13.7%
Nature Programs/Environmental Education – 12.2%
Adult Learn to Swim Programs – 10.8%
Adult Fitness & Wellness – 10.1%
Adult Sports Leagues – 10.1%
E-Gaming – 8.8%
Workshops (CPR, Babysitting, etc) – 8.8%
Water Fitness Programs – 8.2%

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

- Temple field area – Don't lose its initial purpose. The fields are part of our history.
- Sport facilities need to have bathroom/showers for teams that visit the area.
- Greenway- maintain/keep up and move dedicated parking
- Build multi-sport complex!
- Integrate greenways with schools to allow sports to have access. Leave more than one area.
- Ensure homeless don't use the bathrooms for bathing.
- I would suggest copying as much as possible from Pullen Park in Raleigh, NC. Pullen is a very nice family park.
- Canoe/Kayak access to local rivers. Put in/take out ramps to Deep River.
- Expansion of greenway
- Auto flush toilets and pet waste bins
- Get kids outdoors – avoid Wi-Fi access or they will not do anything except make their thumbs stronger.
- Build the sports complex now!
- Build a second disc golf course
- Public access to Deep River
- Build the sports complex! The voters spoke and they want it!
- Beware of snakes on the greenway
- Gymnastics program for boys
- Concerned about losing five tennis courts at OT Sloan. Two middle schools currently use all five for practice and games.
- We need to move forward with the sports complex now. We voted!
- Make a beginner level bike trail. San Lee is awesome but none of it is beginner level.
- Ensure all new outdoor facilities do not destroy all trees, bushes, etc.
- Swimming not popular at OT Sloan.
- Open old airport for bikers to ride.
- Fix and reopen San Lee gravity bike park.
- Teen center for multi-use. Homework area, meeting area, sports, etc.
- If you expand greenway downtown, provide separate parking so as not to impact businesses and government parking.
- Fix erosion on Kiwanis trails. Bad for runners because it is very uneven.

- Expand opportunities for swimming. Enclose OT Sloan and make it year-round.
- Auto lighting for outdoor facilities. Allow for year-round use.
- Love that you are putting in the effort to help Sanford/Lee County grow.
- Expand the greenway please.
- Utilize the Deep River for water recreations.
- Add another 18-hole disc golf course away from people like OT Sloan.
- Add Kayak / Canoe access to Deep River with canoe launch. Kill the poison ivy on US 421, US 15/501
- Security at park. Cars have been broken into during the day.
- Extend the greenway
- Would like to see more greenway. Extend the current greenway for longer runs and bike rides.
- Extend the bathroom hours.
- Would like paved walk greenspaces :)
- Extend greenway
- Moved here from Raleigh – young adult. Would love to see more things for younger folks to enjoy
- Expand greenway
- 20 something miles of Endor furnace trail will bring in tons of bikers and events using the trail.
- Offer kayaking / tubing / canoe trips
- Extend Endor Iron Greenway
- Kayak access to river
- Better communication
- Airport bicycle training races
- We need things to keep the young kids active and hopefully out of trouble. I have three kids and we usually end up going out of town to do family things because Lee County only offers the standard playground parks (other than the new splash pad). There is not any indoor activities offered (other than organized sport seasons) and the whole family can't participate. While on vacation a few years ago my family visited a place that had a small arcade, skating rink, bouncing houses, laser tag, a virtual reality gaming area and go carts. The go carts were "enclosed" and outside (you started under shelter and went outside). This was fun for all ages. They also had a snack bar that sold a variety of things from candy bars to whole pizzas. I understand with covid some of these things were harder to maintain or may not be something allowed to happen, but I think long term it's very doable.
- Family park ideas for Lee County
 - a. Nice ball fields
 - b. Second community pool, maybe opposite side of town
 - c. Another splash pad (current one is so busy)
 - d. Indoor or Outdoor skating rink
 - e. Volleyball (sand courts)
 - f. Batting cages (indoor and outdoor)
 - g. Putt-Putt
 - h. Indoor play area for kids under

Community Input - Community Survey

To better understand the community's perception of existing parks and recreation facilities, and to gather input of recreational needs, a six-page community survey was conducted. The survey was prepared by ETC Institute and distributed by mail and online to a randomly selected sample of Lee County households. The survey took approximately 12-15 minutes to complete. The sample size goal for completed surveys was

400 which was exceeded with 416 completed surveys being returned. The full Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment Survey can be found in the Appendix.

Top takeaways from the survey include:

- The top four facilities/amenities with needs that are currently being partly and not met include:
 1. Water Access (boating, kayaking, canoeing)
 2. Outdoor aquatics/swimming facility
 3. Outdoor amphitheaters
 4. Indoor fitness & exercise facilities
- The two most important parks & recreation facilities and amenities are:
 1. Natural trails
 2. Greenway trail systems
- Based on residents' needs, unmet needs, and feeling of importance the list below shows the recreation facilities and amenities with Priority Investment Ratings that are considered "High Priority" for investment.

<u>Parks and Recreation Facility/Amenity</u>	<u>Rating</u>
Natural trails	174.5
Greenway trail system	147.7
Water access (boating, kayaking, Canoeing)	146.4
Aquatics/swimming facility	143.2
Dog park	121.8
Indoor fitness & exercise facilities	116.6
Outdoor amphitheaters	107.5
Picnic shelters	102.3
Playground	102.2

- The four programs/activities with needs that are currently being partly or not met include:
 1. Adult fitness and wellness programs
 2. Outdoor music/concerts
 3. Aquatics programs
 4. Outdoor adventure programs
- The two most important parks & recreation programs and activities are:
 1. Adult fitness and wellness programs
 2. Outdoor music/concerts
- Based on residents' needs, unmet needs, and feeling of importance the list below show the programs and activities with Priority Investment Ratings that are considered "High Priority" fir investment.

<u>Parks and Recreation Program/Activity</u>	<u>Rating</u>
Adult fitness & wellness programs	200.0
Outdoor music/concerts	162.0
Special events/family festivals	137.4
Aquatic programs	129.6
Outdoor adventure programs	125.1

Additional findings from the survey include:

- Over half (55.8%) of households learn about Lee County Parks and Recreation Department programs by word of mouth and 38.2% learn through social media. Less than 10% learn through direct e-mail (7.7%), yard signs (7.2%), and conversation with staff (6.5%).
- The majority of households indicated the reasons they use the parks, facilities, and programs offered by Lee County Parks and Recreation is because they enjoy the outdoors (59.9%), and they are close to their home (50.5%).
- When asked what the reasons were that prevented households from using the parks, facilities, and programs offered by Lee County Parks and Recreation Department, the responses with the highest percentages were, lack of information/do not know what is offered (24.5%) and not enough time/too busy (21.2%).
- Most households agree with the following two statements regarding the Lee County Parks and Recreation Department.
 - a. Public parks add to the quality of life in the community (91.2%)
 - b. Parks and recreation are an essential service to the County (84.3%)
- Over half (57.5%) of households indicated if potential indoor facilities could be added or expanded, they would use a walking and jogging track and 40.1% would use a leisure pool.
- 42.1% of households are willing to support an increase in taxes for the development of new recreation facilities in the County.
- Six of ten households (60.3%) indicated they use Lee County Parks and Recreation for parks, facilities, and programs. A quarter (24.8%) indicated they use Lee County Parks and Recreation the most.
- 73.3% of households indicated they have a desire to use parks, facilities, and programs to meet their physical health needs and 52.4% have a desire to use them for their mental health needs.
 - a. At least half of households indicated their physical (53.3%), environmental (53.2%), and spiritual health (51.8%) needs are being met.
- Four of ten households indicated that it would help them be more physically active if there were closer parks, walking trails, or greenways (43.0%) or more/better sidewalks or crosswalks (41.6%).
- 50.1% of households indicated that in the past 12-months, they have used County greenway/walking trails 1 to 5 times; 14.6% used them 6 to 10 times, 16.1% used them 11 to 20 times, 5.7% used them 21 to 25 times, and 13.4% used them 25 or more times.
- Households were asked how often they would want to use greenways or walking trails.
 - a. 30.8% indicated a few times a month,
 - b. 24.9% indicated a few times a week,
 - c. 16.9% indicated a few times a year,
 - d. 15.4% indicated never, and
 - e. 12.1% indicated daily.
- The top four reasons that households gave for what discourages them from using greenway/walking trails are personal safety concerns (33.7%), lack of information about existing greenways/walking trails (28.6%), lack of time (25.5%), and lack of safe connections to greenways/walking trails (23.8%).

- Households were asked what destinations they would most like to get to by greenway or walking trail and the following had the highest percentage of responses.
 - a. Natural areas/open space (50.7%)
 - b. Parks and playgrounds (41.3%)
 - c. Other greenways/walking trails (40.9%)
 - d. Shops and restaurants (32.5%)
- 18.6% of households are very supportive of paying increased taxes to develop new greenways/walking trails; 31.4% are somewhat supportive, 21.7% are neither supportive or not supportive, 11.0% are not supportive, and 17.3% are not at all supportive.

Community Survey Conclusions

To ensure that Lee County continues to meet the needs and expectations of the community, ETC Institute recommends that Lee County Park and Recreation Department sustain and/or improve the performance in areas that were identified as “high priorities” by the Priority Investment Rating (PIR). The ratings for Parks and Recreation facilities, amenities, and recreational programs/activities are listed below.

Parks and Recreation Facilities/Amenities Rated as High Priority Items:

1. Natural trails (PIR=174.5)
2. Greenway trail system (PIR=147.7)
3. Water access (PIR=146.4)
4. Aquatics/swimming facility (outdoor) (PIR=143.2)
5. Dog park (PIR=121.8)
6. Indoor fitness & exercise facilities (PIR=116.6)
7. Outdoor amphitheaters (PIR=107.5)
8. Picnic shelters (PIR=102.3)
9. Playground (PIR=102.2)

Recreation Programs/Activities Rated as High Priority Items:

1. Adult fitness & wellness programs (PIR=200.0)
2. Outdoor music/concerts (PIR=162.0)
3. Special events/family festivals (PIR=137.4)
4. Aquatic programs (PIR=129.6)
5. Outdoor adventure programs (PIR=125.1)



Lee County Gymnastics Facility

SECTION THREE - RECREATION STANDARDS AND NEEDS ASSESSMENT

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

Introduction

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

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

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

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

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

Lee County strives to meet the park and recreation needs of residents by providing eleven parks and one community center and a gymnastics facility that offer active and passive recreation venues. The County has also recently passed a Parks & Recreation Bond and acquired 120 acres for a future Sports Complex, currently in design.

Lee County is undertaking an update to its 2020 Lee County Parks and Recreation Master Plan Update. This plan is designed to consider and work in conjunction with other regional planning efforts including,

- City of Sanford Comprehensive Parks & Recreation Master Plan – March 2017
- City of Sanford Comprehensive Bicycle Plan – January 2014
- Horton Park Master Plan – December 2018
- Kiwanis Children's Park Master Plan – December 2018
- O.T. Sloan Park Master Plan – December 2018
- Temple Park Master Plan – December 2018
- Plan SanLee Land Use Plan – November 2018

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

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

PREVIOUS PLANNING STUDIES

There have not been many long range/system-wide plans developed for the County in the past that are directly related to developing an update to the 2010 Parks and Recreation Master Plan for Lee County. Below is a brief listing/summary of plans that were considered in the development of the recommendations found in this plan.

Lee County Parks & Recreation Master Plan Update 2010

Recommendations from the most recent plan are as follows:

Goal 1: When planning for improvements to recreational facilities and programs, consider the needs and desires of the traveling public and promote recreational opportunities to enhance the local recreation and tourism industries.

Objectives:

1-1: Replace spillway and stabilize stream bank for the dam at San-Lee Park.

This is a CRITICAL project for the continued operation of the park facility. The engineering and design of the dam project has been approved; however, funding for the construction is still necessary. Other improvements include, but are not limited to:

- Upgrade electrical system in camping area to increase voltage to 30 amps to accommodate newer RV vehicles. It is also necessary to investigate feasibility to increase the number of RV bays.

1-2: Make additional improvements to Kiwanis Children's Park that is adjacent to Historic Downtown Sanford.

Funding has been approved for this project for improvements that include, but not limited to:

- Add or increase handicap accessibility of picnic shelters.
- Upgrade playground equipment
- Re-locate park sign for better visibility to passerby traffic
- Upgrade signage
- Upgrade landscaping

1-3: Utilize the 10-acre gift adjacent to O.T. Sloan Park and other improvements.

Various options have been explored to utilize the 10 acre gift at O.T. Sloan. The gift will be used for a new skateboard park and the relocation of the entrance off of Bragg Street to promote a safer and more efficient ingress and egress to the park. O.T. Sloan also has a 50M pool, which is a rarity in the area. However, the pool is six (6) inches too shallow in order to hold competitive meets. The benefits of upgrading the pool for competitions outweighs the option of doing nothing; therefore, the task of retrofitting the pool at O.T. Sloan is deemed CRITICAL for the economic sustainability of Lee County. Other improvements include, but are not limited to:

- Upgrade signage
- Enclose the pool for year-round access
- Add gymnastics facility
- Upgrade trail from parking area to tennis courts
- Upgrade showers at pool
- Interior painting of buildings
- Upgrade landscaping
- Add rails to bleachers at tennis courts
- Add trail

1-4: Reassess facilities and programming at Horton Park.

Park conditions have deteriorated from lack of use and maintenance. The park contains an outdoor pool that is not operable due to lack of staff. This presents a unique opportunity to create a new use at Horton Park. The community has expressed a desire for a splash pad. This option should be seriously investigated and compared to the current status and location of the park. Other improvements include, but are not limited to:

- Improve parking
- Upgrade signage
- Improve drainage around ball field and bathhouse
- Upgrade landscaping
- Repaint basketball court lines
- Add batting cage

Goal 2: Acquire additional property or redefine the usage of existing land of under-utilized park facilities to expand recreational opportunities.

Objectives:

2-1: Incorporate permanent soccer facilities into the inventory.

Responses in the survey and conversations with staff indicate a growing demand for soccer fields. With a growing interest in soccer and increased interest in travel soccer play by youth, suitable soccer fields are in short supply. The Parks and Recreation Department currently has no official soccer fields, and open space in parks is often overused resulting in bare spots in the lawns of parks and schools. The development of additional fields would relieve pressure on these school fields as well as some park areas that are not conducive to soccer play.

One possible location is on property owned by the Sanford Optimist Club at the end of Wilkins Drive near US Hwy 421 and would be donated to Lee County. This site is conducive to developing two or three fields. The heavy grading has already been done. Work to be done at this site would include finish grading of fields, establishing turf, constructing a gravel drive, and parking areas, purchase of soccer goals, and portable toilet facilities. A site master plan is necessary for this project. The estimated cost to develop this project would be \$75,000 - \$100,000, but cost will increase if permanent lavatories are desired.

2-2: Investigate the feasibility to a skating and/or skateboard park as identifies in the survey.

In response to the community's desire for skating and/or skateboard parks, a skateboard park will be added to O.T. Sloan Park. Start up costs for a basic skateboard park is as little as \$3,000 to \$10,000 if considering wood framed plywood. The disadvantage would be increased maintenance and wood deterioration. The advantage is that the equipment is portable and affordable. Steel frame should be favored over wood. Costs will range around \$25,000 to \$30,000 and can be bolted to an existing concrete pad with less continued maintenance.

2-3: Incorporate new recreational facility needs identified in Chapter 7 on an annual basis.

Chapter 7 identifies recreational facility needs based on recreation standards for population projections for 2013 and 2015. Facilities such as additional tennis courts, baseball/softball fields, and golf ranges will be necessary to accommodate all who use the Lee County's park system. Every facility need may not be met, but small additions of new facilities on an annually basis will mark improvements. This document should be

consulted regularly when making development decisions.

Goal 3: Support land dedication, or money in lieu of land, by developers. Staff should reserve the right to demand money in lieu of land for current or future improvements, and shall have the right to allocate as needed.

Objectives:

3-1: Amend the open space standards of Lee County Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) and Subdivision ordinance to permit land dedication or money in lieu of land.

The current UDO allows for land to revert back to the community. This portion of the UDO needs to be amended to no longer allow for this practice. Execution of this goal is CRITICAL. As the population of Lee County continues to grow, further demand will be placed on park facilities and rapid deterioration will be eminent. There is no way to accurately gauge an expiration date for open space and therefore should not revert back to the landowner.

It is also necessary for future residential developments to share the burden of providing adequate facilities to adjacent neighborhoods. The Lee County subdivision ordinance should also be amended to grant authority to demand land dedication or money in lieu of land. An adequate formula based on tax value of raw land and the number of lots proposed could potentially generate significant revenue for the department.

3-2: Improve facilities by promoting safe and efficient routes from neighborhoods to adjacent park facilities.

Providing all citizens with barrier-free access to natural resources and recreational opportunities will increase park usage and promote a sense of community. In order to do this the County will have participate more in development review at the planning stages of proposed subdivisions and enforce connections from the community.

It is necessary to require safe and efficient access where feasible. It is not always necessary to increase parking at local parks as it further adds to impervious surface and increased storm run-off.

3-3: Improve facilities by connecting to or continuing existing greenways and trails.

The Lee County Parks and Recreation Department should incorporate connections projects in the Capital Improvement Program (CIP). There are several unconnected greenways and trails within the inventory. Connecting and continuing pedestrian facilities adds to property values and tax revenue, supports additional recreational activities for increased quality of life, and supports local tourism and adjacent businesses.

3-4: Support and encourage non-motorized links within the community as well as to adjacent communities and regional trail systems.

Support and encouragement for pedestrian facilities can be accomplished through the implementation of a county-wide wayfinding program. A simple wayfinding program that identifies parks and recreation facilities and trails can be constructed and implemented for \$5,000 to \$10,000 depending on design and building materials.

Goal 4: Work with other agencies and community groups to expand park, recreation, and leisure resources. This would involve working with schools, athletic associations, civic groups, non-profit organizations, and businesses to develop partnerships to provide opportunities that could not be achieved individually.

Objectives:

4-1: Establish a memorandum of agreement (MOA) with other organizations that provide additional community recreational services.

The Parks and Recreation Department provides landscaping services for several not-for-profit organizations free of charge. These partnerships are necessary in order to accommodate overflow for programming and facilities, to diversify programming opportunities, and provide other services that are cost effective and efficient. It is CRITICAL that the department either charge for its services or that all parties embark on a mutual exchange of services with one another to keep costs low for the involved organizations and for participants.

The Department can also utilize interagency agreements for the protection of cultural resources and interlocal agreements to promote tourism opportunities.

4-2: Work with the Board of Education to develop neighborhood parks at community schools.

Neighborhood parks are especially needed in rural communities. All parks and recreation property with the exception of San-Lee Park is located within the city of Sanford. Development of school sites for community use during non-school times would provide more convenient leisure opportunities for residents and would also enhance a sense of community.

The use of school property as neighborhood parks would reduce the need to purchase other property for the purpose of recreation. An MOA or agreement with the school system that would allow shared responsibility for the maintenance and upkeep of these areas that in turn would reduce the burden on the schools but would allow the expansion of neighborhood recreational opportunities. Joint use of school parks typically includes ball fields, soccer fields, tracks, tennis courts, and multi-use courts.

4-3: Conduct special events such as athletic tournaments or festivals with the assistance of outside organizations.

The use of public-private partnerships is a mutual exchange of sharing know-how and resources. The ultimate goal for public-private partnerships collaborating to produce a tournament or festival is the benefit to the community as a vehicle for local economic and social development. The Department should plan for an initial public-private collaborative event as a pilot such as a community day festival or an environmental awareness event with local private and non-profit organizations.

4-4: Partner with City of Sanford to acquire the Depot building and develop programs and special events that would be suitable for that site.

The building at Depot Park is currently own by the Sanford Board of Realtors, while the City of Sanford has a 100 year lease on the land. If the City of Sanford or Lee County acquires the property, the building could be utilized for arts programming, art exhibits, dance classes, meetings, parties, receptions, and special events. Money for acquisition could be from use of cultural grants because of the historic nature of the building or

from earmarked funds.

Goal 5: It is very important to maintain existing facilities in a safe and accessible condition. Providing quality facilities that are clean, with equipment that is safe, with trails and walks that are free of hazards, with plumbing and lighting that is maintained contributes to the leisure experience and increases the appreciation of the facility by the user.

Objectives:

5-1: Perform a detailed analysis of existing facilities annually with recommendations for improvements and modifications.

When specific needs are identified, seek opportunities to improve existing recreation facilities and park amenities.

5-2: Develop a Drainage Improvement Plan to address existing and future drainage problems at park facilities.

There are several parks that experience several inches of standing water during heavy storms. The result is that standing water attracts insects and poses a drowning threat to small children. This also results in the ground being unusable for long periods of time. The ground needs to be built up and seeded in order to allow the swales to carry the excess water into the adjacent stormwater system while nourishing the ground along the way. Care needs to be taken to ensure that the adjacent stormwater system can handle the added runoff without creating or exacerbating an existing flooding problem.

5-3: Seek additional funding to improve lighting and visibility of facilities.

To supplement existing resources, there are many organizations that provide grants for parks and recreation related activities such as lighting and other facility improvements.

5-4: Seek alternative funding sources and partnerships to assist in implementing the goals and capital improvements over the next five years.

Limited resources will force the Department to pursue alternative funding. There are state, federal, and private grants available.

5-5: Preserve and protect the natural resources and environmentally sensitive lands within the County while maintaining public use, access, and enjoyment.

This applies to clean-up and maintenance of natural and scenic rivers within the County as needed.

5-6: Strive to ensure effective and efficient operation and maintenance of public parks and facilities within the County.

Additional facility improvements:

Buchanan Park

- Improve drainage around ball field
- Stabilize stream banks

- Develop agreement with church for additional parking during events
- Develop walking trail
- Signage
- Add additional small bridge

Dalrymple Park

- Install storm drainage piping at entrance to park
- Re-pave drive
- Re-grade both infields
- Upgrade signage
- Upgrade kitchen in Ingram Recreation Hall
- Add batting cage
- Add picnic shelter
- Renew outfield turf

Weatherspoon Court

- Exterior cleaning and painting
- Add handicap accessible shelter
- Replace baseboard molding
- Upgrade signage
- Renovate locker rooms in gym
- Air-condition gym
- Upgrade landscaping

Wicker Gym

- Exterior cleaning and painting
- Add handicap accessible shelter
- Replace baseboard molding
- Upgrade signage
- Renovate locker rooms in gym
- Air-condition gym
- Upgrade landscaping

Kiwanis Family Park

- Upgrade signage
- Link greenway south to Nautilus (former Dr. & Mrs. Howard property)
- Link greenway north to Riverbirch Shopping Center and Dr. Knight property
- Replace footbridge at strolling garden
- Repair pickets on gazebo railing

Temple Park

- Upgrade access to parking at 8th & Maple Streets
- Negotiate for additional parking at 8th & McIver Streets
- Re-grade both infields, stabilize batter boxes

Tramway Road

- Complete Phase III

Lee County Parks and Recreation Offices

- Gazebo/small shelter for public use
- Improve storage building floor
- Signage
- Exterior building repairs brick work and patio
- Complete landscaping
- Tree work-removing dead/broken limbs
- Improve parking area

LEVEL OF SERVICE

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

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

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

PARK NEEDS

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

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

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

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

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

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

Table 3B-Park Acreage
Lee County

Park Sites and Acreage Needs Assessment

Park Types	2021 Existing Facilities	Standard for Development	Current Demand 63,300	Current Need	2031 Demand 69,200	2031 Need
Mini Parks*	1 Park 0.25 Acres	1-3 Acres/Park (.1 Acres/ 1,000)	3 Parks 6.3 Acres	3 Parks* 6 Acres	3 Parks 6.85 Acres	1 Park* 1 Acre
Neighborhood Parks*	4 Parks 24.32 Acres	5-15 Acres/Park (1 Acres/ 1,000)	7 Parks 63 Acres	3 Parks 35 Acres	8 Parks 68.5 Acres	1 Park* 10 Acres
Community Parks**	5 Parks 127.96 Acres	±40 Acres/Park (4 Acres/ 1,000)	6-8 Parks 253 Acres	2-3 Parks** 125 Acres	9 Parks 274 Acres	1 Park** 20-40 Acres
District Parks	1 Park 174.12 Acres	±100 Acres/Park (5 Acres/ 1,000)	2-3 Parks 316.5 Acres	1 Park 100 acres	3 Parks 342.5 Acres	1 Park 100 Acres
Regional Parks***	0 Parks 0 Acres	NA ***	Needs Met by State Parks***	Needs Met by State Parks***	Needs Met by State Parks***	Needs Met by State Parks***

* There is a need for additional Mini Parks and Neighborhood Parks in Lee County, but typically these smaller parks are built and operated by municipal departments. However, with no municipal agencies outside of the City of Sanford, Lee County may need to take the lead on developing some neighborhood parks in those underserved areas around the fringes of the County

**There is still a need for additional Community Parks to be developed by the County. There could be the need for the City of Sanford to develop additional Community Parks based on local needs.

*** While there are currently no Regional Parks located in Lee County, Raven Rock State Park is within reasonable driving distance to serve this need.

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

FUTURE LAND/OPEN SPACE NEEDS

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

FACILITY NEEDS

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

Based on these LOS, the number of public facilities needed in the park system through the planning period (2022 to 2031), are identified in Table 3B-Facilities, “Recreation Facilities Needs Assessment” and summarized on the following table.

In the following table, the “Existing Facilities” column indicates the number of existing recreation facilities currently available in Lee County. The “Current Need” column identifies the total number of additional facilities currently needed. The “2031 Need” column reflects the total number of additional facilities that will be needed by 2031.

As an example of how the Needs Assessment is presented, consider dog parks. Currently, there is one existing dog park within the County. Based on the Standards for Facility Development that have been recommended for Lee County (one dog park for every 35,000 people in the service population), there is a current demand for 2 dog parks ($63,300 \div 35,000 = 1.8$, rounded up = 2). Since there is only one dog park currently serving county residents, there is a current need to develop 1 more dog park (demand of 2-1 existing dog parks) to meet the demand.

	Existing Facilities	Current Need	2031 Need
Baseball/Softball Fields	14	7	1
Soccer/Multi-Use Fields	1	11	11
Basketball Courts	5	0	0.5
Tennis Courts	5	1	1
Pickleball Courts	10	0	0
Volleyball Courts	0	3	0
Shuffleboard Courts	0	1	0
Picnic Shelters	10	3	1
Playgrounds/Equipment	9	7	1
Trails/Greenways (miles)	±4.3	11.5	1.2
Mountain Bike (miles)	±12	3.8	1.2
Community Center	1	1	0
Classroom Space	2	1	1
Gymnasium	1	1	1
Swimming Pool	1	1	0
Water Access	1	3	0
Skate Park	0	1	0
Disc Golf	1	1	0
Dog Park	1	1	0
Splash Pad	1	0	1
Outdoor Fitness Area	1	2	0
Amphitheater	1	2	0

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

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

	NRPA Guidelines	State Standard	Currituck County	Elizabeth/ Pasquotank County	Gaston County	Iredell County	Cabarrus County	Yadkin County	Franklin County	Lee County Proposed Standards
Fields										
Adult Baseball	1/20,000	1/15,000	1/10,000	1/15,000	1/20,000	1/20,000	1/15,000	1/30,000	1/30,000	1/30,000
Youth Baseball	N/A	N/A	1/5,000	1/5,000	1/6,000	1/6,000	1/5,000	1/12,000	1/12,000	1/12,000
Softball	N/A	N/A	1/5,000	1/5,000	1/6,000	1/5,000	1/5,000	1/20,000	1/10,000	1/10,000
Football	1/5,000	1/5,000	1/20,000	1/20,000	1/3,500	1/20,000	1/10,000	1/40,000	1/20,000	1/20,000
Soccer/Multi-Use	1/5,000	1/5,000	1/5,000	1/5,000	1/3,500	1/8,000	1/4,500	1/10,000	1/7,000	1/7,000
Courts										
Basketball	1/5,000	1/5,000	1/10,000	1/5,000	1/7,000	1/10,000	1/7,500	1/20,000	1/20,000	1/20,000
Tennis	1/2,000	1/2,000	1/10,000	1/3,000	1/3,500	1/10,000	1/4,000	1/10,000	1/10,000	1/10,000
Pickleball	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1/10,000
Volleyball	1/5,000	1/5,000	1/5,000	1/10,000	1/20,000	1/20,000	1/7,500	1/10,000	1/20,000	1/20,000
Shuffleboard	1/2,000	N/A	1/10,000	1/10,000	1/40,000	1/20,000	1/1,000	1/20,000	1/40,000	1/40,000
Outdoor Areas										
Picnic Shelters	1/2,000	N/A	1/2,000	1/3,000	1/4,000	1/5,000	1/3,000	1/5,000	1/5,000	1/5,000
Playground Activities	N/A	1/1,000	1/3,000	1/2,000	1/4,000	1/5,000	1/3,000	1/5,000	1/4,000	1/4,000
Trails										
Trails/Greenways	1/region	.4 mile/1,000	.4 mile/1,000	.4 mile/1,000	1 mile/4,000	-	1 mile/4,000	.3 mile/1,000	1 mile/4,000	1 mile/4,000
Mountain Biking	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1 mile/4,000
Specialized										
Community Center	1/25,000	-	1/20,000	1/20,000	1/25,000	-	1/50,000	1/40,000	1/25,000	1/25,000
Classroom Space	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1/20,000
Gymnasium	1/10,000	-	1/20,000	1/20,000	1/50,000	-	1/50,000	-	1/25,000	1/25,000
Swimming Pool	1/20,000	1/20,000	1/20,000	1/20,000	1/20,000	-	1/50,000	1/30,000	1/30,000	1/30,000
Water Access	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1/10 miles of shoreline	1/10 miles of shoreline
Disc Golf	-	-	-	1/20,000	1/25,000	-	1/15,000	-	1/25,000	1/25,000
Skateboard Park	-	-	-	1/20,000	1/50,000	-	1/50,000	-	1/50,000	1/50,000
Dog Park	-	-	-	1/20,000	1/35,000	-	1/50,000	-	1/35,000	1/35,000
Splash Pad	-	-	-	1/40,000	1/40,000	-	1/50,000	-	1/40,000	1/40,000
Outdoor Fitness	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1/20,000
Amphitheater	1/20,000	-	-	-	1/20,000	-	1/20,000	-	1/20,000	1/20,000

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

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

Facilities	Existing Facilities	2021 Standards	2021 Demand Population 63,300	2021 Need	2031 Demand Population 69,200	2031 Need
Fields						
Adult Baseball	0	1/30,000	2	2	2	0
Youth Baseball	13	1/12,000	6	0	6	0
Softball	1	1/10,000	6	5	7	1
Football	0	1/20,000	3	3	3	0
Soccer/Multi-Purpose	1	1/7,000	9	8	10	1
Courts						
Basketball	5	1/20,000	3	0	3.5	0.5
Tennis	5	1/10,000	6	1	7	1
Pickleball	11	1/10,000	6	0	7	0
Volleyball	0	1/20,000	3	3	3	0
Shuffleboard	0	1/40,000	1	1	1	0
Outdoor Areas						
Picnic Shelter	10	1/5,000	13	3	14	1
Playground	9	1/4,000	16	7	17	1
Trails						
Trails/Greenways	4.3	1 mile/4,000	15.8	11.5	17	1.2
Mountain Bike	12	1 mile/4,000	15.8	3.8	17	1.2
Specialized						
Community Center	1	1/25,000	2	1	2	0
Classroom Space	2	1/20,000	3	1	4	1
Gymnasium	1	1/25,000	2	1	3	1
Swimming Pool	1	1/30,000	2	1	2	0
Water Access	1	1/10 mi. shoreline	4	3	4	0
Skate Park	0	1/50,000	1	1	1	0
Disc Golf	1	1/25,000	2	1	2	0
Dog Park	1	1/35,000	2	1	2	0
Splash Pad	1*	1/40,000	1	0	2	1
Outdoor Fitness Area	1	1/20,000	3	2	3	0
Amphitheater	1	1/20,000	3	2	3	0

*Provided by City of Sanford at Kiwanis Family Park



Picnic Shelter at Buchanan Park

SECTION FOUR - PROPOSALS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

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

Currently, there are thirteen primary county owned recreation facilities that serve as the locations for the County's recreation programs and activities. There is still a need and community desire to plan and develop additional park facilities within the County, especially through the multi-use sports plex, and there is a heavy community desire, to develop more walking trails along with greenway, and blue way connectivity throughout the community.

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

Lee County is not alone in its mission to provide parks and recreational facilities to its citizens. There are numerous public and private agencies and organizations in the region that could share in that role.

The City of Sanford Parks Department is also a provider of parks and recreation programs to Lee County residents. While the City of Sanford does a good job providing facilities and programs on a smaller scale, the facilities and parks they offer provide additional recreation opportunities and experiences. Wherever possible, the Lee County and the City of Sanford should work collaboratively to improve park and recreation opportunities.

To determine specific park and recreation recommendations for Lee County, it is essential to clearly understand how the County will partner with the other recreational providers in the community and region.

This cooperative effort will eliminate duplication of facilities and services. The proposals in this Master Plan are based on what each recreational provider is anticipated to offer through the ten-year planning period (2022-2031).

State of North Carolina

While the State of North Carolina does not have any state parks within the County, the State of North Carolina does have one State Park (Raven Rock) approximately 25-30 minutes east of Downtown Sanford. This large regional park helps to meet the passive recreation needs of the County. The State should be the provider of regional parks that include opportunities for camping, fishing, biking, and special facilities of regional and statewide interest.

Triangle Land Conservancy

The Triangle Land Conservancy (TLC) works to conserve open space, both directly and indirectly in the region. One of the TLC's conservation efforts, White Pines Nature Preserve is located north of Sanford and accessed off NC 87/15-501 via S. Rocky River Road, White Pines Nature Preserve fronts both Rocky River and Deep River. The Preserve also serves as a regional recreation area providing a canoe/kayak launch on Rocky River and offering seven different hiking trail experiences.

City of Sanford Parks Department

As noted throughout this report, City of Sanford Parks Department is the provider of additional parks and recreation facilities within Sanford. Since its re-inception, Sanford has been responsible for maintaining its parks and providing recreation programs to all City residents; including those living in Lee County.

Sanford Parks offers four (4) Mini Park facilities, three (3) Civic Park facilities and in 2019 re-developed the front end of Kiwanis Family Park featuring the new splash pad and inclusive playground along with two new picnic shelters and restroom structures. The City also partners with Lee County on the management of the Endor Iron Furnace Greenway.

As the County moves to expand its parks and improve its existing parks and greenways these improvements will also benefit County and City residents as well. It is important that the County and the City communicate (and work together) as they both strive to provide parks and recreation services to their citizens.

Lee County Parks & Recreation

Lee County Parks & Recreation proudly notes on its website their Mission Statement:

"The mission of Lee County Parks and Recreation is to enhance the quality of life in Lee County by providing a broad variety of accessible leisure, recreation and cultural activities and services"

In addition, the Department's overview is as follows:

"The staff at Lee County Parks and Recreation is dedicated to enhancing the quality of life of all Lee County citizens and fostering a sense of community. This vision is facilitated by providing a broad range of recreational and leisure opportunities to the diverse groups within our community. We offer family parks, walking & bike trails, outdoor education programs, camps, adult and youth recreational activities, aquatics classes, and sports for all ages. There's something for everyone at the Lee County Parks and Recreation Department. We look forward to serving you in the future!"

Based on input from the community through the Community Survey, and discussions with Citizens of Lee County at the community open houses, and Lee County staff, the following goals and objectives have been created that formulate the foundations of this Parks and Recreation Master Plan Update for Lee County:

Facilities & Programming

A. Trail connectivity - destinations / regional greenways & trail systems

- Create a county-wide greenway master plan
- Seek land/corridors to continue expansion of the Endor Iron Furnace Greenway
- Enhance/expand trail network and wayfinding at San-Lee Nature Park
- Provide more water access points on Deep and Cape Fear Rivers for canoes/kayaks; designate a blueway system; develop partnerships with outfitters

B. Develop locations & plans for indoor multi-purpose community center space

- Add fitness & exercise equipment room @ Bob Hales Center
- Seek locations for community center space in southern/northern parts of county with fitness & exercise equipment, walking track, gymnasium, classrooms, community room

C. Make sure all parks & facilities are accessible

- Conduct ADA assessment at each park/facility
- All facilities within each park shall be accessible to each other & parking
- All facilities shall be made accessible
- All facilities should be connected to adjacent neighborhoods, sidewalk systems, where possible

D. Create programming for each Lee County park & recreation facility

- Provide educational, healthy & active programs & opportunities for all ages & abilities
- Offer excellent opportunities throughout the Lee County parks system for all to use.
- Expand on recent new opportunities such as disc golf, pickleball, fitness stations/clusters or other new sports trends
- Provide venues for Senior Olympics events

E. Plan, design and phase the construction of a multi-use sports complex

F. Seek new park development opportunities in the areas underserved by parks

- Remaster plan six (6) parks; seek funding and redevelop parks
 - a. Buchanan Park
 - b. Dalrymple Park
 - c. Kiwanis Family Park (County portion)
 - d. Lett Family Park
 - e. San-Lee Park
 - f. Tramway Road Park
- Seek locations to develop neighborhood or small community park (s) in the northern, western & southern regions of Lee County
- Update/expand facilities & offerings at San-Lee Nature Park
- Provide destination facilities that could also serve as a revenue source for non-Lee County residents (splash pad, X-country, inclusive playground, etc.)

Operations

- A. Seek & develop partnerships with other recreation providers**
 - Hold quarterly meetings, at a minimum with other municipal departments/agencies – Sanford Parks & Recreation, public schools, Library, Coop. Extension (LeeCan), Senior Services, Veteran Services; Rotate meeting locations
 - Expand programming partnerships with City of Sanford; assign responsibilities
 - Development partnership with Triangle Land Conservancy
- B. Maintain quality park management, operations & maintenance on an equitable basis for each facility**
- C. Strive to provide a greenspace, trail, park or amenity located within a 15-20 minute walk or drive from each County resident**
- D. Establish vision, goals, and responsibilities of the Parks & Recreation Commission**
 - Development of new funding sources for the County relating to Parks & Recreation
 - Assist and facilitate special events
 - Assist in the development of long range planning for programs and facilities
 - Promotion of community awareness on the needs for parks & recreation as part of a healthy community
 - Review and make recommendations for proposed community projects and acquisitions related to parks, recreation, and greenways
 - Develop annual work plan
- E. Increase community outreach / parks & recreation marketing / social media**
 - Hold regularly scheduled ‘Meet the Director’ gatherings to gain user input; rotate around the parks
- F. Ensure the park & recreation master plan is coordinated with other municipal plans, ordinances & policies**

PROPOSALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As previously discussed, Lee County is the primary provider of parks and recreation programs within the county. The County has continuously worked to provide quality facilities and programs for its residents.

Existing parks in the county are primarily oriented toward larger parks (Community Parks). While the existing county-wide parks provide a foundation of recreational facilities and green space, there are still recreational needs that are not adequately being met, and the existing parks need some improvements, updates, and expansions.

While the County is the primary provider of parks and recreation to Lee County residents, it should work with other agencies in the region to provide the park land and facilities whenever possible. This collaborative effort should include working with the City of Sanford’s Parks Department.

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

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

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

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

Regional Parks

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

As previously noted, Lee County is very fortunate to be proximate to one State Park located to the east of the county. This outstanding park (Raven Rock State Park) provides a wide variety of nature based recreational activities. The facilities at Raven Rock provide valuable recreation opportunities for Lee County residents and attract visitors from across the region.

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

District Parks

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

There is one District Park in Lee County, San-Lee Park. This wonderful facility offers a variety of nature-based and passive recreation activities. There is still a current need for a second District Park as well as a third District Park by 2031. The current planned sports complex of 120 acres will satisfy the second District Park when it is developed in the next 2-3 years.



San-Lee Nature Center

Community Parks

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

There are five (5) parks in Lee County that are currently serving as Community Parks: Dalrymple Park, Kiwanis Family Park, Lett Family Park (Broadway), O.T. Sloan Park and Tramway Road Park. The sizes for Dalrymple and Lett Family Parks fit the size of Neighborhood Parks, but their offerings and the populations they serve places them as Community Parks. Park re-master planning should occur for Dalrymple, Kiwanis Family, Lett Family and Tramway Road Parks to address expansion opportunities, accessible circulation, and opportunities for new and updated facilities, at a minimum.

Even with these wonderful facilities, the County still has a current need of two (2) to three (3) additional Community Parks, plus an additional Community Park by 2031.



Ballfields at Dalrymple Park

Neighborhood Parks

Neighborhood Parks play an important role in providing both active and passive recreation in most municipal park systems. These parks, usually in the 5-15 acre range, are large enough to include both active and passive recreation opportunities. Most Community Parks also serve as Neighborhood Parks to those citizens living within a mile radius such as do most of the Lee County parks. There are currently four (4) parks in Lee County that are currently serving as Neighborhood Parks: Buchanan, Horton, Kiwanis Children's, and Temple Parks.

Since Neighborhood Parks typically serve as the primary building block of most municipal park systems, there is a current need for at least three (3) more Neighborhood Parks, plus one (1) more Neighborhood Park by 2031. These parks should be located in the northern, western, and southern parts of the County.

In the future, the County should seek land and develop site-specific master plans for new Neighborhood Parks especially in the outer fringes of the County.



Kiwanis Children's Park

Mini Parks

Mini Parks are the smallest park type and typically include a playground, shelter and possibly a play court. Weatherspoon with its one basketball court is closest to the mini-park category. There is currently a current need for three (3) Mini Parks and a future need for one (1) additional Mini Park.

In the future, the County may continue to encourage private developers to construct small amenity areas (playgrounds, shelters, etc.) when building single family residential and/or mixed-use developments to help fulfill the need for Mini Parks.

Civic Parks

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

Several of the City of Sanford parks in the Downtown area function as Civic Parks. Lee County does not need to make Civic Parks a focus of their park expansion program.

Greenways

The most popular form of outdoor recreation in the nation is walking. This popularity was reflected in the survey that was conducted as part of this planning study and in comments made during the public workshops. Greenways are typically off-road trails that meander through neighborhoods and natural areas providing transportation corridors and recreational opportunities for walkers, joggers, rollerbladers, and cyclists. The trail surface can either be natural or paved. Paved trails are normally eight to ten feet in width, but due to increasing popularity, many communities are widening paved trails to twelve (12) feet. Natural surface trail widths can vary based on conditions. In addition to providing environmental protection and recreation opportunities, greenways and bike trails can produce economic development. The North Carolina Department of Transportation Division of Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation conducted a study on a bicycle trail constructed along the northern Outer Banks region. This study determined that a \$6.7 million investment in off-road bike paths and shoulder improvements produced an estimated \$60 million annually in economic benefit.

In addition, the study found that Greenways also offer a valuable alternative to automotive transportation. A greenway often provides a linkage between communities, schools, churches, businesses, and parks.

The Endor Iron Furnace Greenway serves as a good beginning point for an area greenway system. Further extension of this greenway system should be a focus not only in procurement of land and/or easements, but design and implementation of trail to connect to more neighborhoods and destinations. Most residents, who took the survey, desire for more natural surface trails and off-road greenways. Lee County and the City of Sanford should continue to partner to expand this greenway for connectivity to municipal parks and neighborhoods. Part of the partnership should include the preparation of a greenway master plan for the region. Recommendations from this study should be used to guide implementation of a community-wide greenway system with local connectors.



Endor Iron Furnace Greenway

Off Road Bikeways

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

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

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

Blueways

Another popular form of outdoor recreation that is continuing to increase is canoeing and kayaking. This popularity was reflected in the survey that was conducted as part of this planning study and in comments made during the public workshops that Lee County needs more water access on Deep River. Blueway master planning to help locate launch locations and layup areas can be done in conjunction with the county-wide greenway master plan noted above.

FACILITY PROPOSALS & RECOMMENDATIONS

This report also recommends the County acquire additional park land, construct some new district, community and neighborhood parks, community facilities, expand greenways, and make improvements to existing parks and facilities by the year 2031. The improvements that will be made as part of these renovations and expansions will add new facilities and offerings to the Lee County parks inventory. The County should consider the list of facility needs established in Section Three and described in greater detail in this section as it makes park and recreation improvements:

Baseball/Softball

The County currently provides fourteen (14) ballfields for baseball and softball. With baseball and softball both heavily programmed by the County, there is still a need to add more ballfields to expand softball offerings. Some of this need will be addressed when the new sportsplex comes on-line in the future.

Football

Football's popularity as a community-based youth sport has been reduced by the emergence of soccer and (more recently) lacrosse. The standard for development of football fields is one field for every 20,000 people within the service community (a standard used by many municipal agencies). This standard indicates there is a need for football fields in Lee County, but these could be provided in conjunction with multi-use fields as noted below.

Soccer/Lacrosse/Multi-use

Soccer continues to be a fast-growing sport in America. This master plan reflects this demand by establishing a standard of one field for every 7,000 people within the service population. Utilizing this standard for development, the County needs at least eight (8) soccer fields or multi-use fields, sized for soccer.

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

that can be used for a variety of field games. As noted above with the ballfields, some of this need will be addressed when the new sportsplex comes on-line in the future

Basketball

Basketball remains an extremely popular sport in the United States. Played by a variety of ages, and increasingly by females, this sport can be played either indoors or out. Currently, the County provides two outdoor basketball courts at Dalrymple Park and one outdoor court at Weatherspoon. The court at Weatherspoon is in need of upgrade. Indoor basketball is programmed at Bob Hale Center as well as at Tramway and BT Bullock Elementary Schools. Based on proposed Lee County standards of development of one outdoor basketball court per 20,000 people, there is not a need for basketball courts. However, should neighborhood parks be constructed in the future, the placement of half-court basketball facilities could be located in these parks as easy recreational offerings.



Basketball Court at Dalrymple Park

Tennis

Based on input received through the community survey, tennis fell in the middle of priority investments for Lee County, and there does not appear to be demand for additional tennis courts. With the recent renovations at O.T. Sloan and Kiwanis Children's Parks the County currently has five (5) lighted tennis courts, which should suffice for the current and future needs.

Pickleball

Pickleball received much support from Lee County users, and nationally and regionally, the popularity of the sport continues to grow. In response, the County recently redesigned the court areas at O.T. Sloan and Kiwanis Children's Park to reduce tennis court offerings and introduce eight (8) lighted outdoor pickleball courts. In addition, the gymnasium at Bob Hales Center is striped for three (3) indoor pickleball courts. With these modifications, the County does not currently have a need to add any more pickleball courts.



Pickleball Courts at Kiwanis Children's Park

Volleyball

The demand for volleyball in the community survey was very low. There was one (1) outdoor sand volleyball court at San-Lee Park that was available for use with the shelter rental, but this volleyball court is being removed, and the space dedicated to another use. Based on the proposed standard of 1 court/ 20,000 people, there is a need for volleyball. Sand volleyball courts could easily be added into some of the neighborhood parks but are also shown in the recent sportsplex concept plan as well.

Shuffleboard

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

Horseshoes

There has been no expressed demand for horseshoe pits in the community. This activity does provide a recreation outlet for social interaction, particularly for seniors. However, until there is demand, horseshoe pits should not be a priority.

Picnicking/Picnic Shelters

Picnicking was one of the more popular recreational activities listed by respondents in the survey scoring 8th as a high priority. There are currently ten (10) shelters of varying sizes offered in Lee County parks. Based on a standard of one shelter per 5,000 people and the feedback from the survey, there is a current need for at least three (3) additional shelters now and one (1) more additional shelter by 2031.

Playgrounds/Play Equipment

Playgrounds and equipment scored within the high priority segment of the needs assessment. There are nine (9) playgrounds offered in the Lee County system. As parks are improved, these existing playgrounds should be improved, but the County should also look for locations for additional playgrounds. Larger parks may warrant more than one playground and all Neighborhood Parks should have a playground. Safety inspections and ADA accessibility audits should be conducted at all existing playgrounds. The all-inclusive playgrounds that have been recently installed at Horton and Kiwanis Children's Park should be considered the new standard in all of the parks. As new playgrounds are completed and existing playgrounds renovated,

the County should replace wood fiber and sand surfaces with poured-in-place (PIP) safety surfacing. PIP surfaces provide wheelchair accessibility and reduces maintenance and lifecycle costs of the playgrounds.



New Inclusive Playground at Horton Park

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

SPECIAL USE FACILITIES

Community Centers and Gymnasiums

Lee County offers three (3) community centers and one (1) gymnastics studio in the system. Bob Hales Center is the only facility that offers a multi-use gymnasium with classroom space. Ingram Center at Dalrymple and the community building at Lett Family Park provide primarily classroom and meeting space.



Bob E. Hales Center

Multi-use indoor space, fitness and wellness programs, teen programs and activities scored relatively high in the community survey and during the community workshops. Based on the County's population, there is a need to find a locations that could support an indoor community center in the northern and southern portions of the county to allow flexible recreation space and classrooms to serve the County's residents.

The construction and operation of a multi-use recreation center is a significant undertaking, but it is a recommendation of this master plan to seek a partnership and/or plan for construction of a center. The County should seek a partnership with the City of Sanford, or private entity towards developing an indoor facility that would benefit all County residents.

Swimming Pools and Splash Pads

In the past, NRPA and NCDENR provided a standard for pool development of one pool for every 20,000 people. This standard was based on the concept of multi-neighborhood or community pools. Today, with the high cost of operations and construction of swimming pools, very few agencies develop neighborhood/community pools to that old standard. Instead, municipalities typically provide more centralized facilities where one pool may serve a greater population. With the Lee County standard of one pool for every 30,000 people, the outdoor pool at O.T. Sloan Park and re-emergence of the outdoor pool at Horton Park should meet the County's needs.

Splash Pads continue to grow in popularity across the country. In addition to offering a water-based play experience, the play structures, sprays, etc. afford children of all ages and abilities a total play environment and are much more economical to operate than a standard swimming pool. A properly designed splash pad can serve as a regional draw, provide revenue, and provide a beneficial economic impact to the surrounding areas. Development of a splash pad scored well in the survey and in the community workshop. The new splash pad developed by the City of Sanford at Kiwanis Family Park meets the current splash pad needs, but the County should seek a location, plan, and develop an additional splash pad facility to meet the needs for 2031.



Splash Pad at Kiwanis Family Park

Amphitheaters and Performance Areas

Currently, there is only one (1) amphitheater/outdoor performance area currently serving residents at San-Lee Park. The gazebo at Kiwanis Family Park serves as a place to hold small events, but not performances. Outdoor amphitheaters scored relatively high with most survey and community workshop participants, and as continued structure for the County there is a need to expand opportunities for at least two (2) amphitheaters/performance areas for the County.

TRENDS IN PARK & RECREATION FACILITIES

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

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

Disc Golf

Disc golf did not receive heavy support in the survey, but nationally and regionally, the popularity of the sport continues to grow. The County currently has one (1) disc golf course at O.T. Sloan, but it will need to be relocated due to construction of the new park entrance. Though interest in the sport did not surface during the community engagement, the County may desire to design and install at least one (1) additional disc golf facility elsewhere in the system.

Skate Parks

Skateboarding has been popular for several decades. In the past decade, many communities have recognized its popularity and have tried to provide a safe and vandal resistant setting for this creative sport. Many municipal agencies have developed skateboard parks to provide a recreational outlet for preteens and teens. The County should reach out to and survey those users to see if their needs are being met. A Skate Park would be a good facility for Lee County and Sanford on which to partner and develop a park somewhere in Downtown Sanford.

Outdoor Fitness

Outdoor fitness has regained popularity especially when installed as equipment clusters rather than being spread out along a trail or walkway system. The existing outdoor equipment at Kiwanis Family Park on the greenway should be upgraded and relocated further into the park. Based on a standard of one fitness cluster per 20,000 people there is a need to add at least two (2) additional clusters within the park system. If the Parks & Recreation offices are relocated from Tramway Road, a larger multi-generational facility could be introduced on the that site especially with the new residential development occurring in the area.

Off-leash Dog Areas

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

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

The existing dog park at O.T. Sloan, like the disc golf course will need to be relocated due to the new park entrance road. There is a need for a second dog park to be opened elsewhere in the system.

SITE SPECIFIC PARK RECOMMENDATIONS RENOVATION & EXPANSION OF EXISTING PARKS & RECREATION FACILITIES

In 2020, Lee County embarked on a site-specific master planning process for four of the County's parks: Horton Park, Kiwanis Children's Park, O.T. Sloan Park and Temple Park. There is also a need to improve and expand at six of the other County's existing parks and facilities. Concept plans for each facility can be found in the Appendix. Recommended improvements which should be considered include:

Buchanan Park

- Study western side of park for introduction of additional opportunities: Walking Loops, Picnic Shelters, Disc Golf
- Shift the park entrance to improve sight distance along Cameron Drive
- Create accessible routes between upper and lower facilities
- Expand play equipment; provide accessible surfacing
- Add an outdoor games court
- Address drainage issues below lower parking area
- Replace shelter and pad; add utilities

Dalrymple Park

- Introduce outdoor fitness cluster
- Add crosswalk and pipe drainage between ballfields at north end of parking
- Relocate and expand play equipment to the north side of Ingram Center; provide accessible surfacing; add foul ball protection
- Create a paved walking loop around the perimeter
- Create accessible routes between facilities
- Construct paved flex sport/games court south of Ingram Center
- Enhance stream feature along W. Globe Street

Kiwanis Family Park (County Portion)

- Consider paving greenway through flood prone areas
- Consider stream restoration with flood control and forebay areas
- Consider relocating/updating fitness equipment with accessible surfacing
- Add better wayfinding system for greenway
- Expand paved walking loop to western side of park
- Upgrade/replace gazebo
- Add outdoor event space for gazebo; add small shelter and trails
- Replace/upgrade Kiwanis Shelter

Lett Family Park

- Study northern end of park for additional recreation opportunities: disc golf, fitness stations
- Add shelter and pad to northern playground
- Add paved walking loop around perimeter of the park
- Provide accessible surfacing for southern playground
- Add small shade shelter to southern playground
- Define and pave parking areas; provide accessible routes to buildings and facilities

San-Lee Park

- Update play equipment; make equipment more inclusive in nature; relocate more central in park
- Redesign parking/circulation at western entrance to park
- Create accessible routes between facilities/from parking to facilities
- Provide more group camping sites
- Update amphitheater; provide AD facilities; add small shelter
- Add ADA canoe/kayak launch area; update paddle boat area for ADA
- Add small rentable shelters throughout park
- Provide better wayfinding for trails; extend nature trails; consider developing accessible paved trail segment with overlook.

Tramway Road Park

- Provide accessible surfacing to playground
- Pave northern walking loop segment
- Complete walking loop on southwestern side with a designated paved segment
- Relocate offices to O.T. Sloan Park; demolish house and re-purpose site for consideration as:
 - a. Dog Park
 - b. Group Picnic Facility
 - c. Multi-Generational Fitness Cluster
 - d. Close drive access from Tramway Road, create parking access from interior road

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



Tramway Road Park

SECTION FIVE - ACTION PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

Introduction

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

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

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

This section will look at a Capital Improvements Plan for addressing recommendations found in Section Four and provide a strategy for raising funds to construct the proposed improvements and new facilities. Implementing the recommendations made in this Master Plan will result in meeting the future needs for parks, recreation services, and facilities. If the needs identified in this report are to be met, the County must establish adequate budgets for projected staffing, operations, and maintenance costs, and for capital improvements for parks and recreation facilities. This Action Plan is designed to give County staff viable options to help finance the proposals and recommendations of this Master Plan.

REVENUE PLAN

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

KEY FUNDING/REVENUE SOURCES

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

General Tax Revenues (operational & capital)

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

General Foundations (operational & capital)

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

Foundations with Emphasis on Conservation, Healthy Lifestyles & Parks

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

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

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

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

W.K. Kellogg Foundation places optimal development of children at the center of all their grants. They

concentrate on early childhood development within the context of families and communities. The W.K. Kellogg Foundation's areas of focus: educated kids, healthy kids, secure families, community and civic engagement, and racial equity.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Pilgrim's (Pride) through its community outreach supports their local communities through numerous sponsorships, volunteer efforts and donations/grants. As an example, the Town of Marshville recently received a Pilgrim's Pride grant that funded an outdoor fitness cluster in their Municipal Park.

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

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

General Obligation Bonds (capital)

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

Lee County used this method of financing for the future Sports Complex. In view of the recommended capital improvements suggested in this plan, borrowing of funds to acquire new land and develop facilities may be a consideration. Response from the community wide survey indicated there may be support for additional spending to develop parks and greenways.

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

Revenue Bonds (capital)

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

The legal requirements for utilizing these funding mechanisms are extremely complicated and can require approval from the state legislature. With the passing of the Parks and Recreation Bond in 2020 use of revenue bonds seem to be unlikely at this time.

Limited Option or Special Use Tax (capital)

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

Federal and State Assistance (capital)

Federal funding sources are available to assist financing capital improvement recommendations found in this plan. One of the oldest park funding sources has been available from the U.S. Park Service's **Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)**. Funding through this program has been sporadic over the past few years, but through recent legislation action has infused new stream of continual funding into the program. Lee County has previously received LWCF grants for Buchanan, Dalrymple, Horton, Kiwanis Family and O. T. Sloan Parks.

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

The North Carolina General Assembly passed a bill in 1994 creating a consistent source of funds for parks and recreation in the state. The **Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF)** provides money for capital improvements, repairs, renovations, and land acquisition of state and local parks. Originally, revenues from the state's portion of the real estate deed transfer tax support the fund. Revenues vary from year to year. The

structure of this funding source has recently gone through changes based on legislative action. While the funding structure for this fund has changed, PARTF will continue to fund park and recreation facilities in North Carolina.

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

Lee County has received PARTF grants in the past for Kiwanis Family and Kiwanis Children's Parks, San-Lee Land Acquisition and two phases of Tramway Road Park.

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

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

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

Community Development
Environment
Health
Natural Resources
Transportation

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

User Fees (operational)

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

Currently, the County charges rental fees for the following facilities:

- Ballfields at Buchanan, Dalrymple, Horton, Lett Family & Tramway Road Parks

- Bob Hales Center
- Buchanan Park Shelter
- Gymnastics Facility
- Horton Park Shelter
- Ingram Center
- Kiwanis Children's Park Shelter
- Kiwanis Family Park Gazebo
- Kiwanis Family Park Shelter
- Lett Family Park Community Center
- Lett Family Park Shelter
- Meadow at San-Lee Park
- O.T. Sloan Shelters (Upper & Lower)
- San-Lee Park Nature Center
- San-Lee Park Shelter

The rental fees vary based on hours needed for use, county resident vs. non-county resident.

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

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

Revenue Opportunities

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

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

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

Partnerships are a relatively new method of sharing funding resources to provide services. These partnerships can be formed with a wide variety of other public or private agencies. Often partnerships are two or more government agencies. Through these partnerships, a municipality receives direct benefit in either facility use, programming assistance, or volunteer man-hours. These benefits add value and help offset cost thus creating

earned income. This earned income requires both agencies to have common visions, values, and goals for the partnership to be successful. Some examples of partnerships include:

- Church facilities for recreation services. Some churches or religious organizations in the region are providing recreation facilities.
- Youth sports associations are an important partner in organizing and programming many youth sports in the region.
- Trail sponsors that adopt sections of trails for maintenance and cleanup.
- Adopt-a-park or adopt-a-greenway partners that help maintain park lands and greenway corridors. These sponsors are typically in the form of scout units, neighborhood associations and businesses that are in proximity to parks.
- School partnerships where both partners invest in the development of facilities and programs based on shared use of facilities and staff. This investment may be financial or may include other means of support.
- Municipal partnerships with the City of Sanford to share in land acquisition, development funding for park and recreation development as well as staffing.
- Special event partners that assist with the development of community-wide events.
- Program partners who assist in providing services to the community.
- Advertising and licensing in programs, facilities, and events sponsored by the County. The County could leverage highly exposed advertising space to businesses willing to pay a fee for the right to advertise.
- Volunteer development programs can reduce staff costs. Volunteers can create advocacy and bring down the cost of programs and services.
- Privatizing the development of facilities or services is an opportunity that is used by some departments when they are unable to control the cost of labor and are unable to find the needed capital to develop a recreational facility or a concession operation. This gives the government agency a management tool to create an asset or improve a service without tapping into their own resources. Facilities that are typically considered for privatization include community centers, golf courses, marinas, camping and RV facilities, boat rentals, bike rentals, equipment rentals, and other forms of concessions.
- Marketing strategies are an important component in developing untapped revenue opportunities. Promotional activities improve awareness of the activities provided by the County and assist in bringing more revenue to the system by filling programs and facilities.

METHODS FOR LAND ACQUISITION & DEDICATION

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

Fee Simple Purchase

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

Fee Simple Purchase with Lease-Back or Resale

This technique of land acquisition enables the County to purchase land to lease or sell to a prospective

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

Long-term option

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

First Right of Purchase

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

Land Trust

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

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

Donations

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

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

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

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

Life Estate

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

Easement

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

Zoning/Subdivision Regulations

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

PARK FACILITIES AS ECONOMIC DEVELOPERS

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

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

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

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

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

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

OPERATIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

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

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

Staff Needs

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

Parks and Recreation Commission

Lee County currently has a Parks and Recreation Commission (PRC) that provides more focus on the mission, goals and objectives listed at the beginning of Section Four. The purpose of the PRC is typically to promote, advise and assist a Parks and Recreation Department. PRC assistance can include, but not be limited to:

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

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

Operational Costs

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

Greener Operation

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

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

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The Capital Improvement Plan for the acquisition, renovation, and development of parks and greenways for the planning period was prepared with based on the results of the community survey, observations of the consultant and input from parks & recreation staff. All of the proposed costs are shown in current dollar values. The capital improvement costs include funds for land acquisition, site preparation, site utilities, and facility development as well as estimated planning and design fees.

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

Existing Parks Renovations/Improvements	\$ 3,976,000
Land Acquisition	\$ 600,000
New Park Facility Development	\$ 1,344,000
Greenway Development	\$ 2,843,800
Special Use Facilities	\$ 576,800
<u>Site Specific Park Master Planning</u>	<u>\$ 150,000</u>
Total Capital Improvement Budget	\$ 9,490,600

Table 5-1 “Capital Improvement Plan” shows the project costs associated with the capital improvement program. The table reflects the proposals and recommendations as outlined in Section Four of this Master Plan. These costs are very conservative given the highly volatile construction market resulting from the pandemic and other global influences. These projected costs should be re-evaluated when projects are master planned and again designed in more detail.

RECOMMENDED TEN-YEAR PRIORITY PROJECTS

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

- Re-master plan: Buchanan, Dalrymple, Kiwanis Family, Lett Family, San-Lee and Tramway Road Parks
- Update master plan and prepare detailed design for phase one of the sportsplex.
- Construction of two miles of greenway; seek grant opportunities, partnership(s) City of Sanford
- Seek locations for at least two neighborhood parks in the northern and southern ends of the County
- Seek a location for a splash pad
- Seek a location for a dog park
- Develop a work plan with the Parks and Recreation Commission
- Seek partnerships with City of Sanford Parks that focus on health and wellness to expand park and recreation offerings

MASTER PLAN FUNDING STRATEGY

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

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

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

Table 5-1
Lee County
Parks and Recreation Master Plan - 2022
Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) (10 Years)*

Capital Improvements & Land Acquisition	10-Year Total	2022-2026	2027-2031
Existing Parks Renovations/Improvements			
Buchanan Park	\$500,000	\$250,000	\$250,000
Dalrymple Park	\$650,000	\$400,000	\$250,000
Kiwanis Family Park	\$500,000	\$250,000	\$250,000
Lett Family Park	\$500,000	\$250,000	\$250,000
San-Lee Park	\$800,000	\$400,000	\$400,000
Tramway Road Park	\$600,000	\$300,000	\$300,000
Planning & Design (12%)	<u>\$426,000</u>	<u>\$222,000</u>	<u>\$204,000</u>
Renovations/Improvements Total	\$3,976,000	\$2,072,000	\$1,904,000
Land Acquisition			
Neighborhood Parks (2 @ 5-7 AC)	\$500,000	\$250,000	\$250,000
Greenway Easements	<u>\$100,000</u>	<u>\$50,000</u>	<u>\$50,000</u>
Land Acquisition Total	\$600,000	\$300,000	\$300,000
New Park/Facility Development			
Neighborhood Parks (2)	\$1,200,000	\$0	\$1,200,000
Planning & Design (12%)	<u>\$144,000</u>	<u>\$0</u>	<u>\$144,000</u>
Park/Facility Development Total	\$1,344,000	\$0	\$1,344,000
Greenway/Blueway Development			
Greenway/Blueway Master Plan	\$55,000	\$55,000	\$0
Greenway Development (2+ miles)	\$2,200,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,200,000
Canoe/Kayak Launch Points (2)	\$200,000	\$100,000	\$100,000
Natural Trail Development	\$90,000	\$45,000	\$45,000
Planning & Design (12%)	<u>\$298,800</u>	<u>\$137,400</u>	<u>\$161,400</u>
Greenway Development Total	\$2,843,800	\$1,337,400	\$1,506,400
Special Use Facilities			
Splash Pad	\$500,000	\$0	\$500,000
Dog Park	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$0
Planning & Design (12%)	<u>\$61,800</u>	<u>\$1,800</u>	<u>\$60,000</u>
Special Use Facilities Total	\$576,800	\$16,800	\$560,000
Site Specific Park Master Planning			
San-Lee Park	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$0
Buchanan/Dalrymple/Kiwanis Family/Lett/Tramway	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$0
Neighborhood Parks (2)	<u>\$50,000</u>	<u>\$0</u>	<u>\$50,000</u>
Site Specific Park Master Planning Total	\$150,000	\$100,000	\$50,000
Total Capital Improvement Budget Cost	\$9,490,600	\$3,826,200	\$5,664,400



APPENDICES

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