

Recreation Master Plan



Town of Matthews
Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resource Department
November 27, 2006



**TOWN OF MATTHEWS
PARKS, RECREATION AND CULTURAL RESOURCE DEPARTMENT**

**RECREATION MASTER PLAN
2005-2016**

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2320 W. Morehead Street

Charlotte, NC 28208

November 27, 2006



Executive Summary



Matthews Town Green alive with an evening celebration.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PLANNING OVERVIEW

The Town of Matthews has changed significantly in the past several decades. Originally settled in the early 1800's as "Stumptown" (named for the land clearing efforts of early farmers), the town's early growth was spurred by the railroad, which laid tracks in the town in 1874. The 1940's and 1950's saw growth as the result of post-World War II return and the start of the Baby Boomer Generation. The past two decades have presented explosive growth as the Charlotte metropolitan area has become one of the fastest growing urban areas in the country. Matthews' current population (over 24,000) is almost double its population in 1990 (13,651). By 2015, the town's population is projected to exceed 31,000.

As the town has grown, the demand for municipal services has increased. Parks and recreation services are included in the municipal services provided by the Town of Matthews. The purpose of this master plan is to evaluate recent changes throughout the community and initiate a public discussion on future park and recreation needs. The most important aspect of the planning study was to identify the public's desire for park and recreational facilities. The public was offered the opportunity to participate in the planning effort through:

- Three public meetings to discuss community recreational needs
- Interviews with park and recreation stakeholders
- Input from the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board
- A survey (conducted by others) of residents that included questions regarding park/recreational preferences

Based on this input, standards for future park development, specifically for the Town of Matthews, have been established.

Once the public’s desires for park and recreation facilities were determined, demographic and population data was reviewed to understand the anticipated growth in the area. Based on planning/census predictions, Matthews Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resource Department will have a service area population of 31,500 by 2015.

By overlaying the standards for park development with the current and expected population growth, a needs assessment was developed.

PARK AND RECREATION FACILITY NEEDS

As described in Section Three: Recreation Standards and Facility Needs Assessment, a park system is typically comprised of eight park types. These park types include:

- Mini Parks
- Neighborhood Parks
- Community Parks
- District Parks
- Regional Parks
- Greenways
- School Parks
- Unique/Special Facilities

Each of these park types provide recreation opportunities that are needed by residents. Likewise, a variety of public and private agencies often play

a role in providing a well-rounded compliment of park and recreation facilities.

The Town of Matthews is a relatively new provider of parks and recreation services. The Town’s Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resource Department was originally established in the mid-1990’s. Since that time, the Town has invested in the development of several small parks and has made significant commitment in the renovation of the Matthews Community Theatre. In 2004, the citizens of Matthews approved a bond referendum for park improvements, open space, and park land acquisition. The Town is currently acquiring property that will soon become its largest community park as a result of the bond referendum.

Town leaders have significantly improved the facilities and programs offered by the department over the past five years. There is still much to be accomplished, as identified in this study’s needs assessment. These needs are identified based on the following park types:

Mini Parks

Mini parks are the smallest of park types. These parks typically range in size from one-half to three acres and provide a limited range of activities (playgrounds, picnic shelters, benches, etc.). Currently Matthews has three mini parks (Matthews/Sardis, Stumptown, and Baucom Park). These existing mini parks are well designed, maintained, and geographically dispersed. As noted in Section Four: Proposals and Recommendations, there are some improvements that are needed at each of these parks.

In addition to improvements to existing facilities, the Town should construct two additional mini parks by 2015. These new parks should be in the business/urban section of town. One located in the downtown business area and a second located at the future Transit Oriented Development that will occur as part of Charlotte’s light rail line.



Playground at Windsor Park.

Neighborhood Parks

Neighborhood parks play an important role in providing both active and passive recreation in a community. Preferably in the ten acre range, these parks are large enough to provide program space (ballfields, play courts, playgrounds, etc.) and still provide some areas for open space (wooded or open).

Currently Matthews only provides one neighborhood park (Windsor Park). In order to meet current and future demand, the Town should build seven additional neighborhood parks in the next ten years. These parks should be geographically dispersed throughout the town to serve residential neighborhoods.

Community Parks

Community parks are the foundation of most communities' park systems. With a desired size of fifty plus acres, community parks provide league play athletic facilities while maintaining enough open space for passive recreation. Currently the department offers one community park (Squirrel Lake Park). This park, which was given to the Town by Mecklenburg County, provides a play area and picnic shelter, but is largely undeveloped. A master plan should be developed for Squirrel Lake Park that will provide for additional park activities.

The Town has acquired 94.5 acres of land in the eastern section of Matthews along Highway 51. This land will provide an important second community

park. The Town should begin development of a park master plan as soon as possible. This site will also be the location of a future elementary school. The Town should work with Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools to develop a gymnasium as part of this school development.

In addition to these two community parks, Idlewild Road Park (located in the northern section of town) provides a third community type park. While Idlewild Road Park is classified by Mecklenburg County Parks and Recreation Department as a district park, its strategic location in the northern part of Matthews allows it to cross serve those citizens in the northern part of the town. As noted below, by partnering with Mecklenburg County to develop portions of Idlewild Road Park to serve as a community type park, Matthews (through joint use/development) could expand the use of this facility to more closely meet the Town's needs.

District Parks

District parks emphasize passive recreation opportunities, but offer limited active recreational facilities. Typically 150 to 200 acres, district parks are large enough to provide significant preservation of open space. Currently there is one district park within Matthews' town limits (Idlewild Road Park) and several district parks within the service area of much of the town's population. All of the district parks currently servicing Matthews were developed and are operated by Mecklenburg County.

While the development and operation of district parks typically falls within the responsibility of county agencies or large municipal departments, Matthews has an opportunity to work with Mecklenburg County to improve the offerings of the existing district park that falls within its town limits. By partnering with the County in the development of facilities at Idlewild Road Park, Matthews can influence the facilities developed, speed the schedule for park expansion, and alleviate the need for a third community park in the northern part of town.

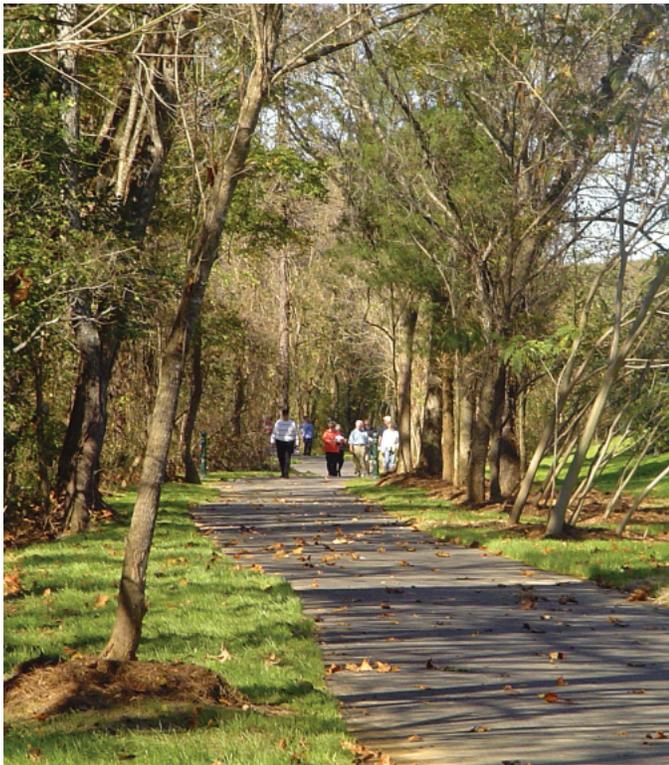
Regional Parks

Regional parks are large parks that have a service area that covers an entire county or several counties. These large parks are predominately passive and are typically provided by large municipalities, counties, or state agencies.

Currently the State of North Carolina offers residents of Matthews three state parks within an hour drive. These parks include:

- Lake Norman State Park
- Crowders Mountain State Park
- Morrow Mountain State Park

In addition to these state parks, Mecklenburg County offers regional park facilities at Latta Plantation, McDowell Park, and Reedy Creek Park. With the availability of large regional parks, the Town of Matthews should not focus its financial and administrative resources on the development of regional parks.



Greenways provide important pedestrian links to community facilities and open space.

Special Use Facilities

In addition to these basic park types, well developed park systems also provide their constituents with a variety of specialized facilities. During the public input process, much attention was given to the importance (and need) of several special use facilities. These facilities include:

Greenways

Greenways are natural corridors often associated with streamways that provide trails for pedestrians and bicyclists. The community's desire for the development of walking trails, as well as the preservation of public open space, was expressed in each of the public meetings and through the public survey.



Aquatic facilities are lacking in the town and throughout Mecklenburg County.

The Town is currently working with the County on the development of a greenway from Squirrel Lake Park to the Matthews Community Center, and ultimately to the downtown area. This greenway corridor has been planned for many years, and will make an excellent start to a town-wide greenway system which will ultimately connect to the County's greenway system.

Development of the Squirrel Lake Greenway should be completed as soon as possible and Matthews should commission a greenway master plan to identify other greenway corridors.

Swimming Facilities

Currently there are no public swimming pools in the Town of Matthews. The County has excellent facilities in the uptown area of Charlotte, designed to serve all county residents. While these facilities meet many competitive and free play swimming needs, these centralized facilities require considerable travel time by Matthews residents.

The Town of Matthews should construct a twenty-five meter outdoor swimming pool with associated spray ground. This facility would provide an opportunity for competitive and exercise swimming and provide a place to teach swimming, water safety, and life guarding. This facility could be built at one of the Town's community parks or could be developed as a stand alone facility.

Renovations to Existing Parks

In addition to developing new park facilities, the Town should assess each of its existing parks to see how these facilities can be expanded and/or updated to maximize use. As noted above, the majority of the park sites are well developed and well maintained. There are some areas of infrastructure improvements (signage, restrooms, etc.) that should be considered. Expansion of the facilities in Squirrel Lake Park and Idlewild Road Park will significantly improve facility offerings. The cost of these recommended improvements is shown in the Capital Improvements Program on Table 4-1.

Joint Use Opportunities

Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools

Currently there is no joint use agreement in place to provide public use of school facilities outside of the school curriculum. The Town should work with Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools to develop joint use agreements to allow recreational use of the schools located within Matthews. These five existing schools have facilities which could significantly improve the offerings of the Town's Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resource Department:

- Butler High School
- Crestdale Middle School
- Crown Point Elementary School
- Matthews Elementary School
- Elizabeth Lane Elementary School

In addition to these existing school facilities, there is an excellent opportunity for joint use as the Town plans its future community park on Highway 51.

Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation

As a county-wide agency, Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation Department is responsible for providing parks and recreational facilities to all county residents. In that effort, they have constructed several district parks to serve this portion of the county (Idlewild Road, Colonel Frances J. Beatty, and William R. Davie). One of these district parks (Idlewild Road District Park) is located within the northern town limits of Matthews. This park is only partially developed and offers a wonderful opportunity for joint use between the County and the Town. The Town of Matthews should work with the County to develop a master plan for the park that will meet both County and Town needs.

The Town and County are currently working together on the Squirrel Lake/Four Mile Creek Greenway. As noted under the section on greenways, this is an excellent collaboration of local and county agencies and should be duplicated on future greenway projects.

Role of the Private Sector

The private sector provides recreation facilities and programs that the department and public sector are unable to offer. These facilities include golf courses, private swim clubs, tennis clubs, and private athletic associations and complexes. Having the private sector provide some of these facilities may significantly reduce the demand for these facilities.

Land developers should be responsible for the dedication of open space as required by land development codes. The land development process provides an excellent opportunity to gain additional land for natural area preservation and greenway development. The Town's subdivision ordinance requires that anyone who subdivides land for residential purposes must dedicate a portion of the land for public park, greenway, recreation and open space or pay a fee in lieu of that dedication. Section 152.40 of this subdivision ordinance defines this dedication of open space and recreational land. This dedication requirement is a valuable tool in assisting the Town to set aside land for parks and open space, but could be amended to provide even greater use to the public. The Town should consider amending its development ordinances to require non-residential uses to dedicate land for open space and greenway development when development occurs in areas critical to the development of greenways.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

The Capital Improvement Program for the acquisition, renovation, and development of parks

for the planning period was prepared with input from department staff, the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board, and public involvement. All of the proposed costs are shown in 2006 dollar values. The capital improvement costs include funds for land acquisition, building construction, site preparation, site utilities, access, and parking along with renovation and significant maintenance improvements. The capital improvement plan also includes estimated planning and design fees.

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

Renovation/Improvement Program	\$ 330,000
Land Acquisition Program	2,220,000
Park Development Program	7,370,000
Special Use Facilities	<u>2,200,000</u>
Total Capital Improvement	\$12,120,000

Table 4-1: Capital Improvement Budget shows the costs associated with the capital improvement program for the ten year planning period. The table reflects the proposals and recommendations as outlined in Section Four of this Master Plan.

Table 3-1
Town of Matthews
Standards for Park Classification
and Land Area Requirements

Acres per 1000 Population

Park Type	NRPA	NCDEHNR	Mecklenburg County	Recommended Town of Matthews
*Mini-Park	.25-.5	N/A	N/A	.25
*Neighborhood	1-2	2	3	2.5
**/*Community	5-8	10	5	5
**District	5-10	10	5	5
***Regional	N/A	20	N/A	10
Unique/Special Areas Linear/Greenway Parks	Variable	Variable	Variable	Variable

* Parks typically provided by city and town governments

** Parks typically provided by county governments

*** Parks typically provided by federal and state governments

Table 3-2
Town of Matthews
Total Park Sites and Acreage Per Park Classification

Park Type & Matthews Standards Typical Acreage	Parks Required Based on Standards		Existing Parks	Park Needs	
	Current Population 24,000	2015 Population 31,500	Total Acreage # of Sites	Current Population 24,000	2015 Population 31,500
Mini Parks 1-3 Acres/Park (.25 acres/1,000)	6 acres 4 sites	7.88 acres 5 sites	4.7 acres 3 sites*	1.3 acres 1 site	3.18 acres 2 sites
Neighborhood Parks 7-15 Acres/Park (2.5 Acres/1,000)	60 acres 5 sites	78.75 acres 8 sites	5.0 acres 1 site**	55 acres 5 sites	73.75 acres 7 sites
Community Parks 40-100 Acres/Park (5 Acres/1,000)	120 acres 3 sites	157.5 acres 3 sites	89 acres 2 sites***	31 acres 1 site	68.5 acres 1 site
District Parks ± 200 Acres/Park (5 Acres/1,000)	Provided by the County				
Regional Parks 100-250 Acres/Park (10 Acres/1,000)	Provided by the County and State				

*Stumptown Park, Matthews/Sardis Park, Baucom Park

**Windsor Park

***Squirrel Lake Park, Idlewild Road Park

Note: Idlewild Road Park is defined as a district park in the Mecklenburg County park system. While it serves the county as a district park, its location within Matthews' town limits allows for it to serve as a community park in the northern section of town.

Table 3-3 Town of Matthews Standards for Public Facilities

Utilizing national and state standards as a guide and based on public input, the following Standards for Recreation Facility Development are recommended for the Town of Matthews.

Facilities	National Recreation and Park Association	N.C. Department of Environment & Natural Resources	Town of Matthews 2006 Standards
Fields			
Adult Baseball	1/12,000	1/5,000	1/15,000
Youth Baseball	1/10,000	1/10,000	1/10,000
Softball	1/5,000	1/5,000	1/5,000
Football	1/10,000	1/20,000	1/20,000
Soccer	1/10,000	1/20,000	1/10,000
Courts			
Basketball	1/5,000	1/5,000	1/10,000
Tennis	1/2,000	1/2,000	1/4,000
Volleyball	1/5,000	1/5,000	1/10,000
Shuffleboard	1/5,000	1/5,000	1/10,000
Horseshoe	1/5,000	1/5,000	1/10,000
Outdoor Areas			
Picnic Shelter	N/A	1/3,000	1/3,000
Playground Activities*	N/A	1/1,000	1/1,000
Trails			
Hiking	1/region	.4 mile/1,000	.4 mile/1,000
Equestrian	N/A	.4 mile/1,000	.4 mile/1,000
Specialized			
Community Center (+20,000 SF)	1/20,000	1/20,000	1/20,000
Neighborhood Center (10,000 SF)	1/20,000	1/3-10,000	N/A
Swimming Pool	1/20,000	1/20,000	1/20,000
Golf Course	1/25,000	1/25,000	N/A
Bicycling/Urban	N/A	1 mile/1,000	1 mile/1,000
Camping	N/A	2.5 sites/1,000	1 site/1,000
Archery Area	1/50,000	1/50,000	1/50,000
Stream/Lake Mileage	N/A	.2 mile/1,000	.2 mile/1,000
Stream/Lake Access	N/A	1/10 miles	1/10 miles

*Standards for playgrounds are expressed in play activities. Each playground contains 3-5 activities.

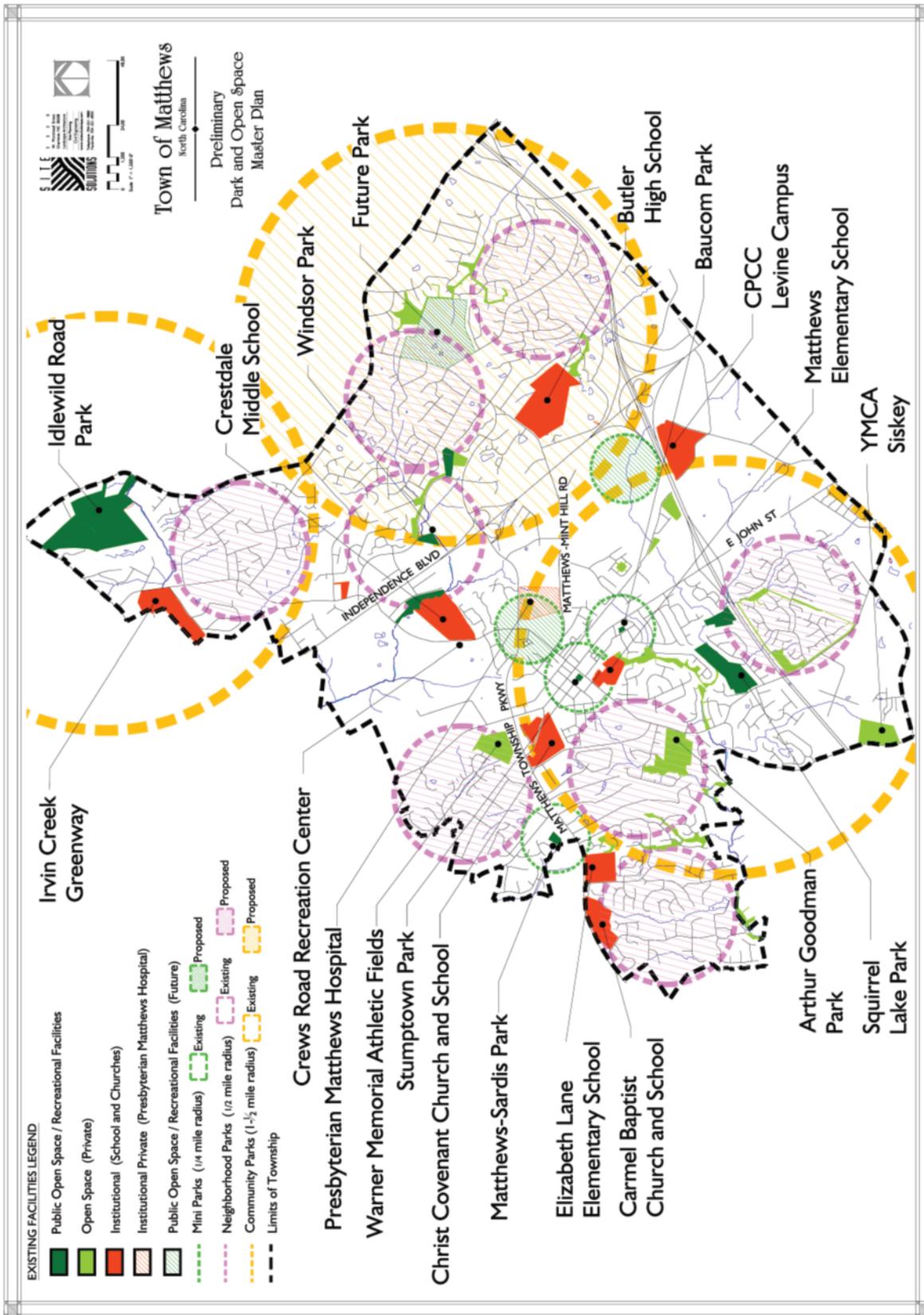
**Table 3-4
Town of Matthews
Current and Projected Facility Needs**

Facilities	Matthews 2006 Standards	Existing Facilities	Current Demand 24,000	Current Need	2015 Demand 31,500	2015 Projected Need
Fields						
Adult Baseball	1/15,000	2*	2	0	2	0
Youth Baseball	1/10,000	4*	2	0	3	0
Softball	1/5,000	7*	5	0	6	0
Football	1/20,000	0	1	1	2	2
Soccer	1/10,000	2*	2	0	3	1
Courts						
Basketball	1/10,000	0	2	2	3	3
Tennis	1/4,000	0	6	6	8	8
Volleyball	1/10,000	0	2	2	3	3
Shuffleboard	1/10,000	0	2	2	3	3
Horseshoe	1/10,000	0	2	2	3	3
Outdoor Areas						
Picnic Shelter	1/3,000	7	8	1	10	3
Playground Activities	1/1,000	15**	24	9	31	16
Trails						
Pedestrian	.4 mile/1,000	4.25	9.6	5.35	12	7.75
Biking	1 mile/1,000	0	24	24	31	31
Specialized						
Community Center	1/20,000	1	1	0	1	0
Swimming Pool	1/20,000	0	1	1	1	1
Golf Course	N/A	0	-	-	-	-
Camping	1 site/1,000	0	24	24	31	31
Archery Area	1/50,000	0	-	-	-	-
Stream/Lake Mileage	.2 mile/1,000	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Stream/Lake Access	1/10 miles	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

*Includes facilities located at Arthur Goodman Memorial Park.

**Assumes 3 “playground activities” in each of the 5 existing playgrounds.

EXHIBIT 3-1



**TABLE 4-1
MATTHEWS PARKS, RECREATION AND CULTURAL RESOURCE DEPARTMENT
CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM**

Capital Improvement and Land Acquisition	Total' Cost Projection	2006-2010	2011-2016
Renovation Program	\$300,000	\$300,000	
Restrooms			
Signage			
Parking Improvements			
Planning & Design	\$30,000	\$30,000	
Renovation/Maintenance Program Total	\$330,000	\$330,000	
Land Acquisition Program			
Neighborhood Parks (7 new sites)			
N1 5 acres @ \$60,000/acre	\$300,000	\$300,000	
N2 5 acres @ \$60,000/acre	\$300,000	\$300,000	
N3 5 acres @ \$60,000/acre	\$300,000	\$300,000	
N4 5 acres @ \$60,000/acre	\$300,000	\$300,000	
N5 5 acres @ \$60,000/acre	\$300,000	\$300,000	
N6 5 acres @ \$60,000/acre	\$300,000	\$300,000	
N7 5 acres @ \$60,000/acre	\$300,000	\$300,000	
Mini Parks (2 new sites)			
MP 1 1 acre @ \$60,000 per acre	\$60,000	\$60,000	
MP 2 1 acre @ \$60,000 per acre	\$60,000	\$60,000	
Land Acquisition Program Total	\$2,220,000	\$2,220,000	
Park Development Program			
Community Parks			
Highway 51 Community Park	\$1,500,000	\$1,500,000	
Squirrel Lake Park Expansion	\$750,000		\$750,000
Idlewild Road Park Expansion	\$750,000		\$750,000
Neighborhood Parks			
N1	\$500,000	\$500,000	
N2	\$500,000	\$500,000	
N3	\$500,000		\$500,000
N4	\$500,000		\$500,000
N5	\$500,000		\$500,000
N6	\$500,000		\$500,000
N7	\$500,000		\$500,000
Mini Parks			
MP1	\$100,000	\$100,000	
MP2	\$100,000		\$100,000
Planning and Design	\$670,000	\$260,000	\$410,000
Park Development Program Total	\$7,370,000	\$2,860,000	\$4,510,000
Special Use Facilities Program			
Swimming Pool	\$1,000,000		\$1,000,000
Greenways (3 Miles)	\$1,000,000	\$500,000	\$500,000
Planning & Design	\$200,000	\$50,000	\$150,000
Special Use Facilities Program Total	\$2,200,000	\$550,000	\$1,650,000
Total Capital Improvement Budget Cost	\$12,120,000	\$5,960,000	\$6,160,000

¹Proposed cost is presented in 2006 dollar values and makes no allowance for inflation, increased construction cost, or land price increases.

Section One
Inventory of Existing
Parks and Recreation Facilities



The Matthews Community Center was originally Matthews' first public high school.

SECTION ONE

INVENTORY OF EXISTING PARKS AND RECREATION FACILITIES

INTRODUCTION

The inventory of recreational facilities in the Town of Matthews was performed by Site Solutions using information provided by the parks and recreation staff and Parks and Recreation Advisory Board members. The facilities review required site visits to gain more specific information on park elements and characteristics. Park facilities are presented based on ownership and facility type. This analysis does not include a detailed assessment as to the quality and condition of facilities.

INVENTORY OF EXISTING PARK AND RECREATION FACILITIES

Town of Matthews



Symbolic front entrance of the Matthews Community Center

Matthews Community Center

- Park Type: Community Center
Facilities: 362 Seat Theater (with lighting and sound system)
7 Classrooms (40-50 people)
1 Community Room (120 person capacity)
Caterer's Kitchen
3 Studio Rooms
1 Dance Studio

The heart of the Matthews Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resource Department's programming is located at the Matthews Community Center. The Community Center is a town landmark. Opened in 1907, this wonderful building was originally Matthews' (and surrounding area's) first public high school. In the early 1980's, the school was replaced with a new elementary school and through the 1990's, the building was used as a community center with some school use. In 1997, the Town of Matthews began major renovations on the building which expanded and improved the auditorium and provided classroom/meeting space. Today, the Matthews Community Center serves as home to the Matthews Playhouse of the Performing Arts and other programs.



Crews Road Recreation Center opened its doors to the public in August of 2006.

Crews Road Recreation Center

- Park Type: Recreation Center
Facilities: 1 Full Court Gymnasium
6 Basketball Goals
3 Volleyball Courts
1 Dividing Curtain
1 Multi-Purpose Room (option to use partitions for 3 individual rooms)

Crews Road Recreation Center is the Town of Matthews' first indoor recreation center. The Recreation Center is located at 1201 Crews Road (behind the Matthews Police Station). In January 2006, the Town of Matthews began construction on the building. Doors were open to public on August 26, 2006. The Recreation Center will offer a variety of programs, athletic leagues and classes to the Matthews community.



Picnic shelter at Squirrel Lake Park.

Squirrel Lake Park

Park Type: Community Park
Acreage: 34.0
Facilities: Squirrel Lake
(stocked by N.C. Wildlife
Federation)
Playground
Picnic Shelter/Tables
Walking Trails
Parking (gravel)

Squirrel Lake Park is the largest park in the Matthews system and is currently the only town-owned community park. Existing facilities provide a pleasant setting for picnicking and passive recreation. Much of this park is undeveloped; with 34 acres of park land, this park could provide a wider variety of recreational activities. Visibility of the park is low. Additional signage at the entrance would allow more public exposure. Currently, the park has no public restrooms, and relies on portable toilets to provide restroom facilities.



Playground at Matthews/Sardis Park.

Matthews/Sardis Park

Park Type: Mini Park
Acreage: 2.8
Facilities: Playground
Gazebo/Picnic Shelter
Paved Walking Trail
Paved Parking
Open Space

Matthews/Sardis Park, located in the western section of town, provides a playground, picnic shelter, and walking trail. Located off Sardis Road behind the town's water tower and public works area, this park has little visibility and is rather isolated. Park facilities provide an excellent mini park, but are possibly under utilized because of lack of visibility and concern for safety.



Baucom Park was recently renovated.

Baucom Park is a very good mini park that has recently been renovated. It provides an updated playground in a very comfortable setting that is inviting to parents and children alike.

Baucom Park

Park Type: Mini Park
Acreage: 1
Facilities: Playground (with age appropriate areas)
Picnic Shelter/Gazebo
Paved Parking



Stumptown Park provides a valuable civic/greenspace for the town.

Stumptown Park is the town's civic park that serves as the home of the Matthews Alive! Festival and as a special events site. The park is a wonderful civic space with lawn and trees, but lacks permanent restrooms.

Stumptown Park

Park Type: Civic Park/Mini Park
Acreage: 1
Facilities: Stage
Picnic Area
Open Space
Veterans Memorial
Playground Equipment



Windsor Park is an excellent neighborhood park in a natural setting.

Windsor Park

- Park Type: Neighborhood Park
- Acreage: 5
- Facilities:
 - Playground
 - Picnic Shelter/Grills
 - Open Play Field
 - Trails
 - Bocce Court
 - Gravel Parking
 - Exercise Station

Windsor Park is an excellent neighborhood park offering playground, trails, picnicking, and a bocce court. While located on a very busy street, lack of signage along Northeast Parkway limits its visibility. Likewise, the simple driveway cut makes access from the Parkway difficult. Currently, the park does not have a permanent restroom building and relies on portable toilets.

Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation Facilities



The playground at Idlewild Road Park.

Idlewild Road Park

- Park Type: District Park
- Acreage: 55
- Facilities:
 - Picnic Shelter/Tables
 - Playground
 - Softball Complex
 - 1.5 Mile Walking Trail
 - Outdoor Fitness Center
 - Restrooms/Concession

Idlewild Road Park is a Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation community park located in the northern section of Matthews. This park, which has a variety of active and passive recreational facilities, serves as an important park for Matthews and could play an even greater role in the Town’s overall park and recreation system. There is opportunity for expansion of facilities within this park. While this park is considered a district park by the Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation Department, it also serves as a community park for Matthews residents in the northern part of town.

Private Recreation Facilities



Arthur Goodman Memorial Park provides a variety of sports fields.

Arthur Goodman Memorial Park

Matthews Athletic and Recreation Association (MARA)

Park Type: Athletic Complex
Acreage: 26:46
Facilities: Little League Baseball Field
2 Baseball Fields
1 Coach-pitch Baseball Field
2 T-Ball Fields
1 Minor League Baseball Field
2 Softball Fields
3 Soccer Fields
Parking (gravel)
Restrooms/Concession

Arthur Goodman Memorial Park is the center of league athletics for baseball, football, and softball. Leagues are run by MARA, and provide team participation in a variety of sports for all ages and all skill levels. Arthur Goodman Memorial Park is a highly developed sports complex with athletic fields and associated support facilities.

Siskey YMCA

Park Type: Multi-purpose Recreation Facility
Acreage: 26.25
Facilities: Fitness Center
Gymnasium (2 full courts)
Indoor Track
Indoor Swimming Pool
2 Aerobic Studios
Childwatch Center
Wellness Center
Multi-purpose Room
Volunteer Center
Locker Rooms
Walking Track
Water Park
Soccer Fields/Multi-purpose Fields

The Siskey YMCA is an outstanding indoor and outdoor facility that offers a wide variety of health/wellness programs, youth athletics, and aquatics programs. While it is a private facility, it provides recreational needs to the Matthews community, thus reducing demand on public facilities.



The Lions celebrate a victory.

Christ Covenant Soccer Field Christ Covenant Church/Day School

Acreage: 29.77
Facilities: 1 Soccer Field
2 Baseball Fields (300')
2 Little League Fields (200')
1 T-Ball Field

These facilities are part of a private church/school campus. Facilities are in good condition and provide valuable athletic program space for the church school and leagues. Some of the programming by the church helps meet the Town's league athletic needs, but this is a private facility.

Matthews Tennis, Swim, and Golf Club

Facilities: 1 Swimming Pool
3 Indoor Tennis Courts
10 Outdoor Courts, 5 of which are lighted
Driving Range
Concessions

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools

Five Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools are located within the town limits of Matthews. These schools are:

- Butler High School
- Crestdale Middle School
- Crown Point Elementary School
- Matthews Elementary School
- Elizabeth Lane Elementary School

Section Two
The People of Matthews



A sense of place, history, and community are evident in Matthews.

SECTION TWO THE PEOPLE OF MATTHEWS

INTRODUCTION

The first step in planning for the park and recreational needs of Matthews is to obtain an understanding of the people making up the community. This understanding comes from reviewing the population and demographics of the town and the changes that are occurring within the community.

Change is occurring rapidly in Matthews. Settled in the 1800's, the town was a small farming community with an important railroad stop for many years. The years following World-War II saw significant growth, and today the affects of Charlotte have caused Matthews to become one of North Carolina's fastest growing communities. The town's population has increased dramatically since 1990. While that growth is expected to continue for the coming decades, the rate of population growth is expected to slow as land becomes more scarce.

It is not enough to simply understand the population growth and demographic shifts in the town. In order to develop a plan that meets the community's specific needs, this planning effort utilized several public input initiatives to gain an understanding of citizen preferences for park and recreation activities. These initiatives included:

- Working closely with the Park and Recreation Advisory Committee
- Conducting two public workshops to listen to citizen's recommendations on park and recreation needs
- Holding one-on-one interviews with key stakeholders from the community
- Gaining input from a town-wide survey on park and recreation needs

In addition to this planning initiative, this report utilizes information gathered through previous planning efforts including the Matthews Cultural Action Plan, the Town of Matthews Open Space Plan, and the previous Comprehensive Parks, Recreation and Cultural Arts Plan.

Town History

Originally settled in the early 1800's as "Stumptown" (named for the land clearing efforts of early farmers), Matthews received its name from Watson Matthews. Watson Matthews was a director of the Carolina Central Railway Company, which originally laid tracks through the town in 1874. The railway proved to be an important link to the town's development by connecting farm products with markets and mills. After World-War II, Matthews grew and flourished and farmland was replaced with homes and businesses. In the past decade, Matthews has felt the impact of Charlotte as urban growth has expanded to the southeast.

Town Population/Demographics

The Charlotte metropolitan area is one of the fastest growing areas in the country. The Town of Matthews is located in the very heart of that growth. Since the 1990 census, the population of Matthews has almost



The railroad played an important role in Matthews' early development.

doubled. While that growth rate may slow slightly, significant growth is still anticipated over the next ten years (planning period). Based on population projections provided by the Centralina Council of Governments (CCOG), the population of Matthews will exceed 31,000 by 2015.

1990	2000	2004	2006	2015
13,651	22,127	23,897	24,000	31,224

Some planning reports have an even greater projected population growth. As noted in the planning study Our Town - Our Vision, conducted by Glenn Harbeck Associates, Matthews' growth has been phenomenal. According to this study, while the greatest growth occurred in the 1980's (led by annexation), growth through 2030 is expected to remain significant. Based on this study, the projected population is expected to exceed 35,000 by 2016.

An important aspect of this planning effort is to understand the fundamental characteristics of Matthews' population. Socioeconomic factors such as age, sex, and family organization affect a community's demand for park and recreation facilities. With this understanding, a review of local population characteristics is helpful.

The 2000 U.S. Census provides a wealth of information on community characteristics. While the data is now over five years old, a review of the information provides insight. Obviously, there have been some shifts in demographics since the last census, but the overall characteristics of the survey still hold true.

At the time of the 2000 census, Matthews' population was just above 22,000. The majority of the population was female (51.4%), at a slightly higher proportion than the national percentage (50.9%). The median age was 36.4 years; slightly higher than the national median age of 35.3 years. Approximately 6,500 of the population ($\pm 30\%$)

was under the age of 18. This is somewhat higher than the national average, where approximately 25% of the population is under the age of 18. On the other end of the age spectrum, approximately 9% of the town's population was over 65, considerably less than the national average of 12.4%.

Approximately 90% of the town's population is White (compared to the national average of 75.1%). Black or African Americans comprise 5.3% of the population, with Asians representing another 2%. American Indians, Alaskan Natives, and other race combinations form the remaining 2.5% of the population.

The 2000 census identifies 7,837 households within the Town of Matthews. Over three quarters (78.4%) of those households were made up of families, with 21.6% being non-family (people living alone or with roommates). By far, the most prevalent household arrangement is a married couple (69% of all households) with children under 18 living in the house (37.6% of all households). The density of these households is also increasing. Prior to 1993, there were no permits issued for attached homes in the town. In 2004, attached home permits almost equaled permits for detached homes (171 for detached versus 162 for attached).

The people of Matthews are very well educated. Of the population 25 years and older, 93.2% have a high school education or greater. This is significantly greater than the national average of 80.4%. Likewise, the people of Matthews have a much higher percentage of college graduates. Over 42% of the town's population (25 or older) hold a bachelor's degree or higher; considerably more than the national average of 24.4%.

Three fourths of the town population over 16 years of age are in the labor forces (as opposed to \pm 64% of the nation). The mean family income (in 1999 dollars) was \$75,791, significantly greater than the national median family income of \$50,046. Less than 3% of



the families in Matthews fall below the poverty level. Almost half (48.8%) of the town's workers are employed in management, professional, or related occupations. More than a quarter of the workforce (28%) is involved in sales and office occupations. Service (10.2%), construction (7.5%), production (5.4%) and farming (1%) make up the remainder of the workforce.

From this review of demographic characteristics, we find that the Town of Matthews is a community of predominately white, upper/middle class families with a relatively high population of young people (under the age of 18). Town residents are well educated and are predominately employed in the management, professional, and sales occupations.

MATTHEWS: OUR TOWN - OUR VISION

In December of 2005, the Town of Matthews completed a visionary process that led to the development of vision statements. These statements define how Matthews will develop and the character it hopes to maintain. The twelve vision statements include:

1. Small Town Feeling and Identity
2. Well Planned, Functional Transportation System
3. Walkable and Bikeable Community
4. Vibrant, Pedestrian Friendly Downtown
5. Extensive Park and Open Space System
6. Locally Controlled Neighborhood Schools
7. Healthy Town Financial Footing
8. Firm and Fair Growth and Development Process
9. Balanced, Compatible Commercial Development
10. Quality Residential Development
11. Destination for Arts and Culture
12. Healthy, Sustainable Environment

While many of the twelve vision statements are indirectly related to park and recreation improvements, obviously statements #3, Walkable and Bikeable Community, and #5, Extensive Park and Open Space System, have direct implications to Matthews' park system.

1997 COMPREHENSIVE PARKS, RECREATION AND CULTURAL ARTS PLAN

In 1997, the Town developed a comprehensive plan for parks and recreation to (1) identify the necessary improvements required in order “to meet the recreational needs of the town”, and (2) develop an implementation plan “to meet these needs”. Much like the current planning process, the 1997 plan relied heavily on public input from public meetings and surveys to develop its recommendations.

The 1997 plan made the following recommendations:

- Develop a plan for a new multi-purpose center
- Develop a greenway between Squirrel Lake Park and Matthews Elementary School; identify other potential greenway connections
- Construct neighborhood parks in Crestdale and Eastwood Forest
- Build a new “district” park on the east side of Independence Boulevard

- Start to develop joint use relationships with schools
- Work with Mecklenburg County and surrounding communities to provide a trails system and well spaced parks
- Expand Parks and Recreation staff

Many of the recommendations made in the 1997 plan have been acted upon. Others are a work in progress. Most of the recommendations made in 1997 still have relevance today. Likewise, many of the recommendations found in the 1997 plan will be found as recommendations in this planning document. The Town has made considerable strides in the area of parks and recreation since the 1997 plan, but there is still work to do.

PUBLIC INPUT

As part of the planning process, the Town of Matthews, along with the planning consultant (Site Solutions), developed a methodology for obtaining public input through several means. This input included:

Public meetings

Three public meetings were held to discuss the comprehensive plan and gain input on citizen's desires for parks and recreation facilities and programs. The first of these meetings was held to introduce the public to the planning process



and to obtain input with regard to their desires for park development in the community. The second public meeting was held about three quarters of the way through the planning process to present draft recommendations for the plan. Input from the public was then used to fine-tune the recommendations as they were formalized into the planning document. The third and final public meeting was to present the finalized plan to the public as well as the Park and Recreation Advisory Board.

First Public Meeting Thursday, March 2, 2006

The first public meeting to obtain citizen input on park and recreational needs for the Town was held at the Matthews Community Center. Turnout for the meeting was very good; over forty people attended.

Geralynn Trelue, Director of the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resource Department, opened the meeting. Ms. Trelue thanked everyone for attending the meeting, introduced staff and local officials that were present, and gave a brief overview of the Town's desire to develop a master plan. Mayor Lee Myers was introduced and he spoke about the importance of the plan and the value of the public's input. Jeff Miller, Chairman of the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board, addressed the audience to discuss the initiatives currently underway by the Advisory Board and to explain their role in providing guidance to the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resource Department.

Derek Williams, of Site Solutions, then spoke to the group about the master plan process. He explained the steps in developing the plans, reiterated the value of the public's input, and defined the time line and deliverables of the final report.

Following the presentation, Mr. Williams led the group through a public participation process by asking a series of open-ended questions regarding the desire/need for parks and recreation facilities.

The group responded with enthusiasm and excellent comments. Discussion lasted over an hour. The following questions and comments were discussed.

What do you like most about living in Matthews?

- Small town feel
- Use of cul-de-sac, no connectivity
- Children/family oriented
- Stumptown Park – activities
- Sidewalk system – connectivity
- Town's character
- Diversity of downtown area
- Town library
- Different classes/activities/festivals
- Community center
- The people
- Newsletter/News & Record
- Public meetings – citizens show up
- Availability of arts/performing arts
- Emphasis on history
- Don't have to leave Matthews – no malls – convenience
- Town Council investment in keeping downtown small town character

What do you like the least?

- Over development – Pleasant Plains/Trade Street
- Driving through Matthews
- Developments built without infrastructure considerations (roads supporting traffic)
- Traffic lights – car dealerships as gateway
- Lack of connectivity
- Lack of accommodations for bikes on roadways
- Lack of four lane roads for traffic

What things are the Matthews Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resource Department accomplishing (facilities and programs)?

- Keeping a healthy community

- Stress reduction
- Safe place for kids to play – some there/need more
- Connection to nature
- Walking trails, parks have short walking trails - more needed
- Programs for adults/children that are provided are amazing
- Activities for families (are provided)
- Baucom Park – good use of space/equipment – matches audience

What can the Department/Town improve upon?

- Improve restrooms and signage
- Squirrel Lake Park – nestled back – good and bad – isolated, but safety an issue
- Emergency phones in parks
- Good, safe, clean public pool – spraypark
- Skateboard Park – need something
- Lack of places to play basketball
- Unused land in Squirrel Lake Park
- Improved communication between the Park and Recreation Advisory Board and public
- Small campground
- Cross country trails – need 2-3 miles
- Lack of focus on downtown – revitalize downtown area
- Unconnected sidewalks – could connect/make large trail system
- Calm/nature park – separate active and passive parks
- Encourage walking system away from side of the road
- Working with developers and citizens
- Three hole golf course
- Better relationship between the town and CMS – school buildings/facilities accessible after school hours
- Sidewalks could be a part of the walking system
- Sidewalks don't have to be concrete
- Get buy-in from neighbors before you do anything
- Encourage town to creatively use buffers
- Need restrooms

In the next ten years, the Town of Matthews Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resource Department should have:

- More mini parks
- Connections to mini parks/larger parks
- More activities in parks/weekends – programs
- A safe way to get to park without driving
- Shelters in parks
- Shade structures on playground equipment
- Cost of improvements – working with private sector
- Public tennis courts
- Trail markers

Open discussion lasted over an hour. From this open dialog, a central theme seemed evident. People like living in Matthews, it is a community with a small town feel, while providing the convenience of living in a large city. Shopping and cultural opportunities are readily available. As with most urban locations, overdevelopment and traffic are the primary concerns. Most everyone felt future development should be carefully planned, and developers should invest in adequate infrastructure (utilities, roads, and parks) to support the developments they build.

The majority felt parks play an important role in elevating the quality of life in the community, and that while the town has several nice parks, additional parks (land and facilities) are needed. Likewise, most everyone felt bikeways, sidewalks, and trails are needed throughout the community. Specific recommendations with regard to future parks included:

- Improvement of signage at parks
- Construction of restrooms at existing and new parks
- Improve Squirrel Lake Park (some concern over isolation in park)
- Addition of emergency telephones in park
- Construction of a skateboard park
- Addition of a public swimming pool or at least a sprayground

- Improved communications with citizens
- Add basketball courts
- Consider constructing a campground

Following the public input session, everyone was thanked for his or her time and input. Participants were reminded that the draft plan will be developed during March and April, and a second public meeting will be held in May. The preliminary findings will be posted on the Park and Recreation Department’s web site a week before the meeting so that citizens will have an opportunity to review the document prior to the next public meeting.

**Second Public Meeting
Thursday, June 8, 2006**

A second public meeting was held on Thursday, June 8, 2006 at the Matthews Community Center to present to the public a draft summary of the planning document and to discuss the recommendations. Approximately twenty citizens attended the meeting to review the park proposal. Geralynn Trelue, Director of Matthews Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resource Department, opened the meeting by welcoming the public and introducing the Park and Recreation staff present. She briefly summarized the planning process to date and explained the importance of public comments on the draft plan.

Derek Williams, of Site Solutions, led the meeting through a power point presentation that described the findings from the study; including public input from the first public meeting, town-wide survey and stakeholders interviews. He explained how that input led to the development of standards for parks and facilities and how those standards then led to a needs assessment for both parks and facilities.

The needs assessment indicates there is a need for several new parks and renovation and/or expansion of several existing parks. Ten year park needs for the Town of Matthews include:

- 2 new mini parks and several civic parks in the Town’s urban core.

- 7 new neighborhood parks.
- New community park on property recently acquired on Highway 51.
- Master plan and expansion of Squirrel Lake Park.
- Expansion of facilities at Idlewild Road Park in cooperation with Mecklenburg County.
- Regional park development should be delegated to county, state and federal agencies. Most small towns do not become actively involved in the development of large regional parks.
- Based on the Town’s population and lack of public swimming facilities in the immediate area, the Town should build a 25 meter swimming pool.
- Walking is the most popular outdoor recreation in America. The Town has begun preliminary design of a greenway from Squirrel Lake Park to the downtown area. These plans should be finalized and the greenway developed. The Town should also develop a greenway master plan to identify other greenway corridors.

It was noted that by instituting these park initiatives over the next ten years, the Town will meet most of the park, recreation and open space needs of its citizens. It was also noted that undertaking these recommended improvements would cost +/- \$12 million.

In addition to the facilities needs, a number of recommendations were made with regard to the Town working with other agencies (county, schools, etc.) to joint develop and joint use these facilities.

Following the summary presentation, the meeting was opened to comments from those present. Overall those attending felt the plan addressed the Town’s needs for open space and facilities and supported the recommendations that were included as part of the draft plan. Comments included:

- Squirrel Lake Park is a nice park, but is extremely secluded. Expansion of the park would encourage more use and activity.
- More trails need to be developed to provide

- areas to walk, jog, and ride bicycles.
- MARA is doing an outstanding job in providing youth athletics. Additional athletic facilities are needed to take the demand off the MARA complex on Trade Street.
- There is a need for a swimming pool in Matthews. A swimming pool allows competitive and recreational swimming and provides a place for swim lessons.
- Concern was expressed over the projected cost of building all of these facilities and asked how the Town could pay for all of the improvements. It was noted that the proposed improvements would be constructed in connection with other agencies over time and alternative funding sources (grants, donations, etc) would be sought.
- There is a desire for additional neighborhood parks which will provide facilities close to residential development and provide easy access to parks and recreation facilities.
- There was considerable concern over the growth that has occurred in Matthews in the last decade and recommended the Town purchase property now to ensure that public park and open space are available for future generations.

Public comments lasted for 30-45 minutes. The meeting was concluded by thanking those in attendance and assuring them that their input was heard and would be instrumental in developing the master plan.

Interviews

As part of the planning process, one on one interviews were held with several Matthews citizens who have been actively engaged in promoting parks and recreational activities. Citizens interviewed include:

Connie Kleinberg, downtown merchant and longtime supporter of Matthews Business District

Tom Williams, former member Parks and Recreation Advisory Board

Kathy Ingrish, Matthews Planning Director

Paula Lester, former Town Council member, Town Historian

While each of those interviewed had specific areas of interest in park and recreation opportunities, all had a strong commitment to the community and believed that park and recreation improvements (programs and facilities) are important to the quality of life for the Town and will add to the vitality of the community. The following is a summary of comments made and ideas put forward by those interviewed:

- Stumptown Park is an important part of Matthews and provides a valuable place for special events. While the park is providing an important role as a town-wide civic park, permanent restrooms should be added and a dumpster (with appropriate screening) is needed. Additional lighting would provide a better sense of security. Seasonal colors and flowers would add life and interest to the park.

Several people mentioned the park is hardly large enough to support current use. As the Town and its associated special events grow, Stumptown Park will not be able to sustain the demand. The Town should look for ways to expand the park, or look for another site to hold town-wide special events.

- The Town has several excellent festivals/special events held in the downtown area. Hometown Holiday, Matthews *Alive!*, and the summer movie concert series are all important events for the community. These events should be expanded/encouraged and additional events added. These additional special events will add to the downtown Matthews experience. The Town should consider adding a stand-alone arts festival and antiques show.
- Everyone interviewed felt that the Parks and Recreation Director and staff are doing an excellent job. Likewise, most felt the department is understaffed and should add personnel to

expand programs, facilities, and maintenance.

- The downtown area is nice, but could be improved. Flowers and hanging baskets would add color. Irrigation in civic areas is important.
- The Town should begin looking for land for parks immediately. In ten years no land will be available. This sentiment was expressed by most all interviewed. Several expressed a need for developers to take a stronger responsibility for providing parks.
- Several people suggested land development regulations be made stronger, requiring developers to provide adequate open space for the new homes they build. The open space provided must be usable.
- When asked what they most liked about living in Matthews, everyone talked about small town values, friendly people, and moderate climate. Likewise, most everyone expressed concern over rapid growth, congestion, and traffic.
- Several people mentioned Idlewild Road Park. Concern was expressed over lack of facilities and a sense of isolation when in the park. Several recommended expanding improvements, opening up visibility, and utilizing the park more.
- Several people expressed the importance of maintaining some natural areas in parks for passive recreation and environmental programs. Someone suggested these natural areas could provide an excellent link with schools; schools using parks for field trips and outdoor education programs.
- Everyone interviewed felt the Town of Matthews should play a role in preserving the cultural heritage of the Town.
- Everyone felt the Town should preserve and conserve public open space.



Stumptown Park was mentioned in both public meetings and interviews as an important civic space.

- Several people mentioned the need for a town-wide bike trail. The Town is currently working on a community bikeway plan.
- Most everyone felt that the Matthews Community Center and the proposed gymnasium located at the police station provide excellent indoor opportunities for athletics and cultural activities.
- Everyone supported the construction and expansion of greenways and recommended they be coordinated with neighboring towns and Mecklenburg County. Someone expressed a need to include sidewalks (along public streets) as part of the greenway. On-street sidewalks can reduce the cost of greenway development, and provide a more complete walk system.
- A master plan has been developed for the downtown area. Small, vest-pocket parks have been included in the plan. These parks will provide excellent public spaces.
- Duke Power has many easements through the Town. These easements will provide excellent opportunities for walk/bicycle connections.
- Charlotte-Mecklenburg mass transit plans call for a southern link that will run from Center City to Matthews (and beyond). This transit

corridor runs parallel to Independence Boulevard (to the west).

- Matthew's long range plan envisions a small area plan along the transit corridor with a TOD (Transit Oriented Development) which will include a village center with mixed use (including higher density residential). Parks, recreation, and greenways will be part of this development. Portions of this development are on land owned by the County (originally planned for a landfill). The County has discussed plans for a soccer stadium with multiple fields (+18 fields) to be developed as a tournament level facility to promote tourism/economic development. The Town recently was awarded a grant by the County to assist in the development of this soccer complex.
- The Town should add a grant writer, or find someone in the private sector that will write grants for a fee/percentage. There are funding opportunities being missed.
- The downtown area should be more pedestrian oriented; should not be a transit corridor.
- Several people mentioned the Outen Pottery site and expressed an interest in having the Town assist in the preservation and restoration of this facility as a downtown historic site and center for pottery and arts.

Survey Results

In the spring of 2006, the Town of Matthews commissioned a citizen satisfaction survey through Research and Training Specialists, Inc. of Concord. The survey looked at a variety of citizen perceptions, attitudes, needs, and expectations on local issues; including parks and recreation. Sent to 1,200 randomly selected residents, 252 completed surveys (21%) were returned. This return generated a 95% confidence that findings from the survey are within \pm 6% of the property owners true responses.

When asked to assess the potential contributions of

park and recreational facilities to the community, most respondents felt strongly that parks create a positive community image, enhance community pride, improve an individual's health, protect the environment/open space, and enhance real estate values. Likewise, the majority of respondents felt parks attract business and tourism and promote ethnic/cultural harmony. Less than half of the respondents believed that parks reduce congestion or crime in a community.

When asked about the adequacy of existing park facilities, less than 40% of the respondents believed existing facilities currently meet the need for:

- Walking/jogging/fitness/bicycle paths
- Playgrounds
- Picnic shelters
- Single family picnic sites
- Open space

Only one quarter (26.4%) of the respondents felt there are adequate restrooms in existing parks.

When asked about outdoor recreational needs, those activities which received the highest demand for additional facilities (available/inadequate or important/not available) included:

- Walking/hiking trails 35.9%
- Swimming pools 27.3%
- Running tracks 25%
- Dog park 24.4%
- Splash park 22%
- Golf course 20.7%

Field sports (soccer, softball/baseball, and multi-purpose) received the lowest demand and court games (basketball, tennis, and volleyball) scored low as well.

The survey also included a question regarding the adequacy of recreational programs offered by Matthews. When ranking programs by proportion of persons responding to the questions with express interest in that program, a very high percentage (+80% or greater) felt the following programs meet their needs:

- Outdoor concert/movie series 90.9%
- Special events/festivals 87.0%
- Theater production 81.5%
- Dance 79.7%

At the opposite end of the spectrum, less than 50% of those expressing interest in the activities felt the following meets their needs:

- Open public pools/swim areas 37.5%
- Teen activities 46.0%
- Nature/environmental activities 49.4%

Approximately three quarters (73.6%) of those responding favored joint use of schools and parks.

The majority (57.1%) of those responding to the survey felt that the Town adequately supports the park system; only 12.5% felt there was inadequate support. Almost a third (30.4%) of the respondents did not give an opinion.

When asked if they would support an increase in property taxes to improve park and recreation facilities/programs, 13.5% did not respond. Of those responding, almost 60% (59.6%) said they did not support an increase in taxes to fund park improvements. The age of the respondents influenced their preference on this issue. Less than a quarter (23.1%) of those respondents over 65 supported a tax increase. Likewise, income had an influence on support of a tax increase. Almost half (49.3%) of those making over \$65,000 supported a tax increase, while only 10% of those making under \$35,000 supported a tax increase.

Of those who said they could support a tax increase, 73.5% said they would pay as much as \$25.00 per year, 26.6% said they would pay as much as \$50.00 per year, and 10.3% said they would pay \$100.00 per year in additional property tax to support additional parks.

Section Three
Recreation Standards
And Facility Needs Assessment



SECTION THREE

RECREATION STANDARDS AND FACILITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

INTRODUCTION

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

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

The publication further describes the role standards have in establishing a base for the amount of land required for various types of parks and recreation facilities, in developing the community's acceptable minimum, correlating needs to spatial requirements, and for providing justification for recreational expectations and needs.

National and state standards are a useful guide in determining minimum requirements; however, the Town of Matthews must establish its own standards in consideration of the expressed needs of the residents and the Town's economic, administrative, operational, and maintenance capabilities.

PARK CLASSIFICATIONS

A community's park system is comprised of a variety of park types. Each of these park types meets certain park and recreation needs. A variety of public, and sometimes private, agencies are responsible for these park types.

The following written and graphic descriptions define the various park types:

Regional Park

A regional park is a park with a fifty-mile service radius that serves several communities or a multi-county region. Approximately 10 acres per 1,000 population served is typically the standard for providing regional park acreage. These parks are usually several hundred acres in size, but may be as large as 1,000 acres. The regional park provides access to diverse and unique natural resources for nature oriented outdoor recreation such as nature viewing and study, wildlife habitat conservation, hiking, camping, canoeing and fishing. Usually 80% of the land is reserved for conservation and natural resource management, with less than 20% of the site developed for active recreation. The recreation areas consist of play areas and open fields/meadows for informal use.



Typical Regional Park

100-250 Acres

District Park

A district park provides more diverse recreational opportunities than the regional park. The district park emphasizes passive recreational opportunities that are similar to the regional park in addition to including limited active recreational facilities. It is easily accessible by the population (typically 40,000) it serves and maintains a 2½ -5 mile service radius. The park contains a minimum of 5 acres per 1,000 population and should be a minimum of 200 acres in size.

An indoor recreation building/community center will normally be included in a district park. These facilities typically reflect the character of the park with a historic, natural, or urban theme. Active recreational facilities located in a district park include play areas, ballfields, hard surface courts, multi-purpose play fields, picnicking locations, and various types of trails.



Typical District Park

+200 Acres

Community Park

A community park is easily accessible to either a single or several neighborhoods depending on local needs and population distribution at the time the park is developed. When possible, the park may be developed adjacent to public schools to provide multiple or joint use of facilities. The community park provides recreational opportunities for the entire family and contains areas suited for intense active recreational purposes including a recreation center building, athletic fields, swimming, tennis, and walking/jogging trails. The park may also possess areas of natural quality for passive outdoor recreation such as viewing, sitting, and picnicking.

Community parks have an average service radius of two miles and require a minimum of 5 acres per 1,000 population served. Community parks should be at least 40 acres in size and serve a population from 5,000 - 10,000. However, it may become necessary to use a site that is smaller than 40 acres and many times these sites can accommodate community park usage if they have very few limitations for development (gentle slopes, no easements or restrictions etc.).



Typical Community Park

40 - 100 Acres

Neighborhood Park

A neighborhood park is designed to serve a population of up to 5,000, but in many instances it may even serve more. The park requires 2.5 acres per 1,000 population served and should be a minimum of 7 to 15 acres. Neighborhood parks are typically characterized by recreational activities for each member of the family, such as field games, court games, crafts, playground apparatus, picnicking, and space for quiet/passive activities.

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

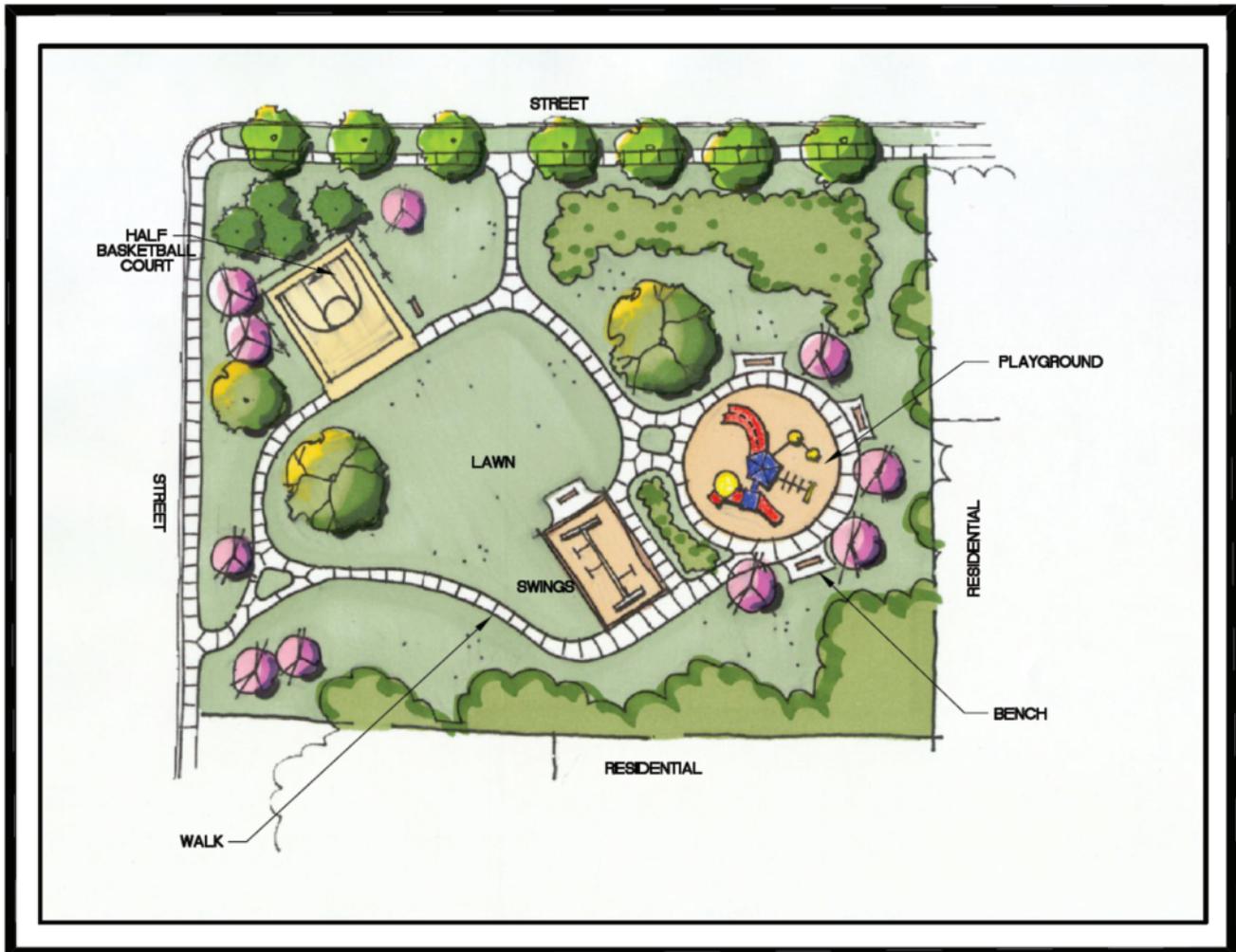


Typical Neighborhood Park

7 - 15 Acres

Mini-Park

A mini-park is characterized by its relatively small size (approximately an acre) and its specialized facilities are to serve a specific segment of the population (i.e., children or senior citizens). This park is typically located close to higher density neighborhoods such as apartment complexes, townhouse developments, and housing for the elderly. The service area for a mini-park is less than ¼ mile.



Typical Mini Park

1-3 Acres

Linear Park / Greenway

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

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

Unique or Special Areas

Unique or special areas are park types that exist to enhance or utilize a special man-made or natural feature. They can include beaches, parkways, historical sites, sites of archeological significance, arboretums, conservation easements, floodplains, etc. Minimum standards relating to acreage or population have not been established for this category. A size sufficient to protect and interpret the resource while providing optimum use is desirable.



Park Acreage Needs for the Town of Matthews

Table 3-1 outlines the standards for park development utilized by the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA), the North Carolina Department of Environmental Health and Natural Resources, and Mecklenburg County. The final column on this table represents the standards adopted for the Town of Matthews for park acquisition and development. It should be noted that the standards adopted for the Town are relatively consistent with the standards currently used by Mecklenburg County. Table 3-2 “Total Park Sites and Acreage Per Park Classification” summarizes how these standards establish park needs for the Town. Utilizing these park development standards, minimum parkland requirement (in acres) for the total population for the Town of Matthews is provided in Table 3-2. The acreage requirement is based upon the population ratio method (acres of parkland per 1,000 population) established for each park.

Parkland Needs

Total park sites can be determined from the total acreage requirements for each park classification by dividing the total acreage by the park size standard. By the year 2015 there will be a need for the following parks (existing and proposed) within the town:

- 5 Mini Parks
- 8 Neighborhood Parks
- 3 Community Parks
- 12 Miles of Greenway

In addition, Matthews’ population will contribute to the overall requirements for regional and district parks (provided by others). These park types are typically provided by county or state agencies. See Table 3-2 “Total Park Site and Acreage Per Classification” for a detailed breakdown of the needs for the entire planning period.

Currently, there are two community parks serving the Town of Matthews. Squirrel Lake Park is

owned and operated by Matthews, and Idlewild Road Park is owned and operated by Mecklenburg County. Idlewild Road Park is actually considered a district park by Mecklenburg County Parks and Recreation. Its role in providing needs for the people of Matthews, Mint Hill, and the City of Charlotte reinforce this district park function. However, with its location in the northern section of Matthews, Idlewild Road Park has the potential to also function as a community park for Matthews. These parks are geographically located in different areas of town and offer considerable potential for providing recreation opportunities. Unfortunately, neither park is developed to its full potential. Adding recreational facilities to each of these parks would significantly expand recreational opportunities in the town.

In addition to the two existing community parks, the Town has purchased 94.5 acres of property adjacent to Highway 51 in the eastern part of town. This land purchase was made possible by the 2004 Parks Bond. This park acreage will provide valuable community park activities to this section of town, and should be developed as soon as possible. This site will also be the location of a future elementary school. Matthews should work with CMS to develop a gymnasium as part of this school development. The development of this



Greenways provide opportunities for walking and jogging.

future community park, along with the expansion of Squirrel Lake and Idlewild Road Parks, will give Matthews adequate coverage of community parks.

Neighborhood parks provide valuable park and recreational amenities to communities. At 7-15 acres, they are large enough to allow active recreation facilities (playgrounds, court games, etc.), while preserving some undeveloped natural areas. Most importantly, the relatively small size of neighborhood parks allows them to be located throughout the community. While not always “walk-to parks”, these parks are easily accessible and typically heavily used. Windsor Park is an excellent example of a neighborhood park; unfortunately, it is the only park in this category. Based on a standard of 2.5 acres per 1,000 population, Matthews will need to construct seven new neighborhood parks by 2015. These parks, which should be located throughout the town limits (see Exhibit 3-1), will greatly enhance community access to park facilities.

The smallest park type is the mini park. These parks typically provide limited recreation facilities (playground, picnic shelters, etc.) to immediate areas (neighborhoods). The trend in park development has been away from mini parks because the limited facilities and small service area make maintenance and operation difficult.

Matthews has several existing mini parks, and these parks should be maintained because they are providing valuable play facilities to the community. However, future park development should focus on community and neighborhood parks. Even with that philosophy, this study recommends the development of two additional mini parks by 2015 (see Table 3-2). These mini parks could be provided by private developers as part of subdivision development.

In addition to the typical mini park, Matthews should consider the development of pocket parks or civic squares in the downtown area and as part of the



Gazebo at Matthews Town Hall is an example of a civic space.

small area plan for the mass transit corridor west of Independence Boulevard. These small civic spaces do not provide significant recreation value, but provide civic and landscape value.

Open Space

Perhaps the most appropriate standard used to calculate the need for open space is a determination by the community that certain open space and significant natural areas are necessary to protect. Public open space is defined as any land acquired for the purpose of recreational opportunities either developed or undeveloped for the public or private good. The functions of such land include:

- Protection of drainage areas for water supplies (watersheds)
- Protection of areas that are particularly well suited for growing crops (farmland preservation)
- Protection of attractive waterways (wild and scenic rivers)
- Preservation of spaces between communities to prevent urban sprawl (greenbelts)
- Protection of wildlife habitat (sanctuaries)
- Protection of approach and take-off areas near airports (clear zones)
- Protection of land (landfills) that cannot be developed

One of the public amenities most mentioned in both interviews and public meetings was the need for preservation of public open space. The public seems to have a real desire to preserve open space.

National/State Trends in Recreational Activities

President's Commission

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

The top ten most popular outdoor recreation activities nationwide are:

Picnicking	Playing sports
Driving for pleasure	Fishing
Swimming	Attending sporting events
Sightseeing	Boating
Bicycling	Walking for pleasure

Activities rapidly growing in popularity are:

Canoeing	Sailing
Bicycling	Hiking/backpacking
Attending outdoor sports	Walking for pleasure
Camping, all types	Water skiing

The President's Commission report also noted that municipal agencies are providing 39% of the public recreation opportunities.

North Carolina Outdoor Recreation Survey

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

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

National Sporting Goods Association Survey

The National Sporting Goods Association (NSGA) conducts an annual study of sports participation. The survey lists the following top 25 activities per million participants. A participant is defined as someone seven years of age or older who participates in a sport more than once within a year for all sports except aerobic exercising, bicycle riding, exercise walking, exercising with equipment, running/jogging, step aerobics, weight lifting, and swimming. For these seven fitness sports, participation is defined as six times or more during the year. The following information reviews the findings for the past ten years.

Ten-Year History of Selected Sports Participation

Sport	2004	2002	2000	1998	1996	1994
Aerobic Exercising	29.5	29.0	26.7	25.8	24.1	23.2
Archery (target)	5.3	4.2	4.5	4.8	5.3	na
Backpack/Wilderness Camp	17.3	14.8	15.4	14.6	11.5	9.8
Baseball	15.9	15.6	15.6	15.9	14.8	15.1
Basketball	27.8	28.9	27.1	29.4	31.8	28.2
Bicycle Riding	40.3	39.7	43.1	43.5	53.3	49.8
Billiards/Pool	34.2	33.1	32.5	32.3	34.5	34.0
Boating, Motor/Power	22.8	26.6	24.2	25.7	28.8	26.4
Bowling	43.8	42.4	43.1	40.1	42.9	37.4
Camping (vacation/overnite)	55.3	55.4	49.9	46.5	44.7	42.9
Exercise Walking	84.7	82.2	81.3	77.6	73.3	70.8
Exercising with Equipment	52.2	46.8	44.8	46.1	47.8	43.8
Fishing	41.2	44.2	47.2	43.6	45.6	45.7
Football (tackle)	8.2	7.8	8.0	8.1	9.0	na
Football (touch)	9.6	10.3	9.8	10.8	11.6	na
Golf	24.5	27.1	26.4	27.5	23.1	24.6
Hiking	28.3	27.2	24.3	27.2	26.5	25.3
Hockey (ice)	2.4	2.1	1.9	2.1	2.1	1.9
Hunting with Firearms	17.7	19.5	19.1	17.3	18.3	16.4
Hunting w/Bow & Arrow	5.8	4.6	4.7	5.6	5.5	na
Ice/Figure Skating	na	na	6.7	7.8	8.4	7.8
Kayaking/Rafting	na	na	3.1	3.2	3.6	na
Kick Boxing	2.8	na	3.9	2.3	na	na
Martial Arts	4.7	4.2	5.4	4.6	4.7	na
Mountain Biking (off road)	8.0	7.8	7.1	8.6	7.3	5.7
Muzzleloading	3.8	3.6	2.9	3.1	3.2	na
Paintball Games	9.4	6.9	5.3	na	na	3.7
Roller Skating (in-line)	11.7	18.8	19.2			23.9
Running/Jogging	24.7	24.7	22.8	22.5	22.2	20.6
Sailing	2.6	na	2.5	3.6	4.0	4.1
Scooter Riding	12.9	13.4	11.6	na	na	na
Skateboarding	10.3	9.7	9.1	5.8	4.7	4.9
Skiing (alpine)	5.9	7.4	7.4	7.7	10.5	10.6
Skiing (cross country)	2.4	2.2	2.3	2.6	3.4	3.6
Snorkeling	na	na	5.5	7.3	7.1	5.9
Soccer	13.3	13.7	12.9	13.2	13.9	12.5
Softball	12.5	13.6	14.0	15.6	19.9	18.1
Swimming	53.4	53.1	58.8	58.2	60.2	60.3
T'ai Chi/Yoga	6.7	6.1	na	na	na	na
Target Shooting	19.2	18.9	16.9	18.9	21.2	na
Tennis	9.6	11.0	10.0	11.2	11.5	11.6
Volleyball	10.8	11.5	12.3	14.8	18.5	17.4
Water Skiing	4.7	6.9	5.9	7.2	7.4	7.4
Weight Lifting	26.2	25.1	22.8	na	na	na
Workout at Club	31.8	28.9	24.1	26.5	22.5	20.4

SOURCE: National Sporting Goods Association, Mt Prospect IL 60056

Facility Standards for the Town of Matthews

Minimum standards for recreational facilities (i.e., ballfields, courts, outdoor areas, etc.) proposed for the Town of Matthews were developed in accordance with the industry guidelines established by the NRPA (National Recreation and Park Association) and the NCDENR (North Carolina Department Environmental Health and Natural Resources) and from input gained during the public meetings, survey, and from the interviews with local stakeholders. These standards, identified in Table 3-3 “Standards for Public Facilities”, are the minimum recreation facility standards that should be used to establish a needs assessment for Matthews.

Facility Needs for the Town of Matthews

The number of public facilities needed in Matthews through the 10-year planning period (2006 to 2015), are identified in Table 3-4, “Current and Projected Facility Needs”.

The table illustrates that there are areas of deficiencies in many recreation facility categories. Based on the standards that have been established specifically for Matthews, there will be a need for a number of additional recreational facilities by 2015. By the year 2015, the Town will need to construct the following additional recreational facilities:

- 2 Football fields
- 1 Soccer Field
- 3 Basketball courts
- 8 Tennis courts
- 3 Volleyball Courts
- 3 Shuffleboard Courts
- 3 Horseshoe Pits
- 3 Picnic Shelters
- 16 Playground activities (4-5 new playgrounds)
- 7.75 Miles of pedestrian trails
- 31 Miles of urban bikeways
- 1 Swimming pool
- 31 Campsites

Benchmarking Relative to Other Communities

To better understand how towns/cities similar to Matthews are funding their park and recreation programs, this study conducted a review of other similar agencies. This review began with an assessment of the data presented in the 2005/2006 “North Carolina Municipal and County Parks and Recreation Services Study” conducted by North Carolina’s Recreation Resources Services. This is an annual study on tax supported funding trends for both operational and capital expenditures. In addition, this study provides limited information on existing facilities of the departments included in a similar study conducted by Recreation Services in 2004/2005.

In addition to the review of North Carolina communities, this study looked at data provided by the American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration on their Gold Medal Award Winners. The Park and Recreation programs found in these communities represent the finest programs in the country.

North Carolina Municipal and County Parks and Recreation Survey

Based on the 2005/2006 report, this study identified ±ten towns/cities in North Carolina that exhibit similar population characteristics to Matthews. Many of the towns/cities have a larger population than Matthews’ current population, but they are representative of Matthews’ anticipated population in the next five to ten years.

Population Estimates for Communities Comparable to the Town of Matthews

Huntersville Parks and Recreation	29,387
Salisbury Parks & Recreation	28,158
Apex Parks, Recreation & Cultural Resources	24,701
Statesville Recreation & Parks	24,622
Matthews Parks, Recreation & Cultural Resources	24,000
Havelock Recreation Department	22,861
Asheboro Parks & Recreation	22,709
Lumberton Recreation & Parks	22,192
Shelby Parks & Recreation	20,986
Mooresville Recreation Department	20,711
Lexington Parks & Recreation	20,492
Garner Parks & Recreation	20,144

Acres of Owned Park and Recreation Lands

A review of the states 2003/2004 study on existing developed and undeveloped parkland shows that Matthews currently ranks very low among municipalities of similar size.

Agency	Developed P&R Land	Undeveloped P&R Land	Total Acreage	Acres per 1000 people
Asheboro Parks & Recreation	1,310	350	1,660	74.286
Cornelius Parks & Recreation	335*	137	472	32.52
Lexington Parks & Recreation	237	100	337	16.60
Kernersville Parks & Recreation	242	68	310	15.65
Statesville Recreation & Parks	274	4	178	7.35
Mooresville Recreation Department	111	20	131	6.58
Matthews Parks, Recreation & Cultural Res.	98***		98	4.10
Thomasville Parks & Recreation	84	8	92	3.63
Huntersville Parks & Recreation	10	16	26**	.93
Apex Parks Rec & Cult Resources		Information not available		
Salisbury Parks & Recreation		Information not available		

* Includes the 177 acres of Mecklenburg County parkland within Cornelius town limits

**Does not include any Mecklenburg County parkland

***Includes acres of Mecklenburg County parkland within Matthews' town limits

Operating and Capital Expenditures

Looking at a more recent study (2005/2006) on both operational and capital spending, the Town of Matthews is well below North Carolina’s median range for operational expenditures for towns approximately its size or larger. The range of per capita expenditure for capital expenditures in North Carolina varies greatly (\$.42 to \$110 per capita). Due to this fluctuation in funding from one year to the next, it is difficult to determine an average; but by taking these fluctuations into consideration, there is a pattern that can be seen by reviewing these numbers.

Capital expenditures are more difficult to chart because of the variance in spending by agencies from year to year. In addition, many agencies fund capital improvement projects from funds other than general funds, so these projects may not be included in this analysis.

It should be noted that significant increases in both operational and capital spending have been made over the past five to six years. As noted in Exhibit 3-2, operational expenditures have more than tripled since 2000. Likewise, capital improvement spending has exceeded \$2,000,000 in the last 3 years.

Per Capita Expenditures

	Operation Expenditures	Capital Expenditures	Total Per Capita Expenditures
Kernersville Parks & Recreation	\$34.92	\$110.47	\$145.39
Statesville Recreation & Parks	\$121.09	\$8.76	\$129.85
Apex Parks, Recreation & Cult Res.	\$117.85	\$3.08	\$120.92
Mooresville Recreation Department			\$103.46
Salisbury Parks & Recreation	\$63.45	\$3.68	\$67.13
Huntersville Parks & Recreation	\$59.58	\$2.11	\$61.67
Cornelius Parks & Recreation **	\$57.32	\$0.42	\$57.74
Asheboro Parks & Recreation	\$46.23	\$6.37	\$52.60
Thomasville Parks & Recreation	\$33.23		\$33.23
Matthews Parks, Rec & Cultural Res.	\$29.61*	\$2.05*	\$31.41*
Lexington Parks & Recreation	\$27.48		\$27.48

*Operational and capital spending based on Park, Recreation and Cultural Resource Department’s budget information for 2005/2006.

**Operational and capital spending for the Town of Cornelius is based on information from 2003/2004.

Gold Medal Winners

The American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration, in partnership with the National Park and Recreation Administration, presents National Gold Medal awards to the nation’s outstanding park and recreation agencies for excellence in the field of recreation management. Gold medal winners exhibit excellence in:

- Dedication to serving the needs of citizens
- Creative financing
- Use of volunteers
- Service to the disabled and disadvantaged

As part of this planning effort, several previous gold medal winning agencies were reviewed to learn more about their programs and facilities. Agencies reviewed included:

Evans, Colorado	Winner 2004		
Population	17,000	Tax Rate	3.5% Sales Tax
Family Income	\$38,000	House Price	\$120,000
Employees: Full Time	10	Part Time/Seasonal	50
Per Capita Expenditure	\$88.23		
Budget	\$1.5 million + \$1m capital		

The Evans Parks and Recreation Department currently operates a 25,000 square foot Community & Senior Center and has an outdoor pool. They will be adding an indoor pool. The Town provides mostly youth and senior programs. Adults utilize nearby Greeley, CO programs. The Town levies an impact fee on new construction of \$2,132 per unit for parks. In addition, it requires dedication of usable land for park development (4 ac min) based on 3.5ac/1,000 (2.9 persons per household). The impact fee is split between neighborhood and district parks.

Itasca, Illinois	Winner 2003		
Population	9,000	Tax Rate	.3597/100
Family Income	\$70,000	House Price	\$208,000
Employees: Full Time	13	Part Time/Seasonal	100+
Per Capita Expenditure	\$344.44		
Budget	\$3.1 million (must generate \$1.5 m in fees to balance budget)		

The Department operates a 40,000 square foot fitness center, an outdoor water park, a softball complex, a community garden, and school facilities. It combines with 11 agencies to provide services to people with disabilities (Town share \$100,000).

Lafayette, Colorado	Winner 2002		
Population	25,000	Tax Rate	3.5% Sales Tax
Family Income	\$70,000	House Price	\$200,000
Employees: Full Time	15	Part Time/Seasonal	100-150
Per Capita Expenditure	\$80.00		
Budget	\$2 million		

The Parks and Recreation Department operates a 43,000 square foot recreation center with admission and membership fees, and a golf course. 66% of the budget is recovered from fees. Produces an annual Wine Festival and an Oatmeal Festival.

Hernandon, Virginia	Winner 2001		
Population	22,000	Tax Rate	.28/100
Family Income	\$73,000	House Price	\$185,200
Employees: Full Time	28	Part Time/Seasonal	150
Per Capita Expenditure	\$163.63		
Budget	\$3.6 million		

Operates three indoor facilities of 45,000 square feet or greater, has a golf course and a little theater program that utilizes a lease (\$25k per year) in an industrial park.

North Carolina Communities

In addition to looking at National Gold Medal Award Winners, this study reviewed five North Carolina communities to be used as a benchmark for the Matthews Parks and Recreation Department. The populations listed below are estimated as of 2004 and the Family Income and House Price are based on the 2000 census. These communities included:

Apex, North Carolina

Population	28,000	Tax Rate	.40/100
Family Income	\$71,052	House Price	\$178,800
Employees: Full Time	14	Part Time/Seasonal	150
Per Capita Expenditure	\$89.00		
Budget	\$2.5 million		

2 indoor facilities, 5 school sites, 9 parks. Passed a 13 million bond in November with 87% of vote.

Cary, North Carolina

Population	108,000	Tax Rate	.42/100
Family Income	\$75,122	House Price	\$196,700
Employees: Full Time	50	Part Time/Seasonal	200+
Per Capita Expenditure	\$66.00		
Budget	\$7.2 million		

Operates 3 recreation centers, an arts center, a senior center, a 7,000 seat amphitheater, a 30 court tennis center, and a 7 field soccer complex with stadium. There will be a \$10 million bond election in May.

Cornelius, North Carolina

Population	16,827	Tax Rate	.26/100
Family Income	\$71,122	House Price	\$196,700
Employees: Full Time	8	Part Time/Seasonal	
Per Capita Expenditure	\$60.00		
Budget	\$7.2 million		

Davidson, North Carolina

Population	8,172	Tax Rate	.345/100
Family Income	\$78,370	House Price	\$270,000
Employees: Full Time	8	Part Time/Seasonal	
Per Capita Expenditure	\$118.00		
Budget	\$960,000		

Huntersville, North Carolina

Population	32,323	Tax Rate	.28/100
Family Income	\$71,932	House Price	\$182,800
Employees: Full Time	16	Part Time/Seasonal	18

Table 3-1
Town of Matthews
Standards for Park Classification
and Land Area Requirements

Acres per 1000 Population

Park Type	NRPA	NCDEHNR	Mecklenburg County	Recommended Town of Matthews
*Mini-Park	.25-.5	N/A	N/A	.25
*Neighborhood	1-2	2	3	2.5
**/*Community	5-8	10	5	5
**District	5-10	10	5	5
***Regional	N/A	20	N/A	10
Unique/Special Areas Linear/Greenway Parks	Variable	Variable	Variable	Variable

* Parks typically provided by city and town governments

** Parks typically provided by county governments

*** Parks typically provided by federal and state governments

Table 3-2

Town of Matthews

Total Park Sites and Acreage Per Park Classification

Park Type & Matthews Standards Typical Acreage	Parks Required Based on Standards		Existing Parks	Park Needs	
	Current Population 24,000	2015 Population 31,500	Total Acreage # of Sites	Current Population 24,000	2015 Population 31,500
Mini Parks 1-3 Acres/Park (.25 acres/1,000)	6 acres 4 sites	7.88 acres 5 sites	4.7 acres 3 sites*	1.3 acres 1 site	3.18 acres 2 sites
Neighborhood Parks 7-15 Acres/Park (2.5 Acres/1,000)	60 acres 5 sites	78.75 acres 8 sites	5.0 acres 1 site**	55 acres 5 sites	73.75 acres 7 sites
Community Parks 40-100 Acres/Park (5 Acres/1,000)	120 acres 3 sites	157.5 acres 3 sites	89 acres 2 sites***	31 acres 1 site	68.5 acres 1 site
District Parks ± 200 Acres/Park (5 Acres/1,000)	Provided by the County				
Regional Parks 100-250 Acres/Park (10 Acres/1,000)	Provided by the County and State				

*Stumptown Park, Matthews/Sardis Park, Baucom Park

**Windsor Park

***Squirrel Lake Park, Idlewild Road Park

Note: Idlewild Road Park is defined as a district park in the Mecklenburg County park system. While it serves the county as a district park, its location within Matthews' town limits allows for it to serve as a community park in the northern section of town.

Table 3-3
Town of Matthews
Standards for Public Facilities

Utilizing national and state standards as a guide and based on public input, the following Standards for Recreation Facility Development are recommended for the Town of Matthews.

Facilities	National Recreation and Park Association	N.C. Department of Environment & Natural Resources	Town of Matthews 2006 Standards
Fields			
Adult Baseball	1/12,000	1/5,000	1/15,000
Youth Baseball	1/10,000	1/10,000	1/10,000
Softball	1/5,000	1/5,000	1/5,000
Football	1/10,000	1/20,000	1/20,000
Soccer	1/10,000	1/20,000	1/10,000
Courts			
Basketball	1/5,000	1/5,000	1/10,000
Tennis	1/2,000	1/2,000	1/4,000
Volleyball	1/5,000	1/5,000	1/10,000
Shuffleboard	1/5,000	1/5,000	1/10,000
Horseshoe	1/5,000	1/5,000	1/10,000
Outdoor Areas			
Picnic Shelter	N/A	1/3,000	1/3,000
Playground Activities*	N/A	1/1,000	1/1,000
Trails			
Hiking	1/region	.4 mile/1,000	.4 mile/1,000
Equestrian	N/A	.4 mile/1,000	.4 mile/1,000
Specialized			
Community Center (+20,000 SF)	1/20,000	1/20,000	1/20,000
Neighborhood Center (10,000 SF)	1/20,000	1/3-10,000	N/A
Swimming Pool	1/20,000	1/20,000	1/20,000
Golf Course	1/25,000	1/25,000	N/A
Bicycling/Urban	N/A	1 mile/1,000	1 mile/1,000
Camping	N/A	2.5 sites/1,000	1 site/1,000
Archery Area	1/50,000	1/50,000	1/50,000
Stream/Lake Mileage	N/A	.2 mile/1,000	.2 mile/1,000
Stream/Lake Access	N/A	1/10 miles	1/10 miles

*Standards for playgrounds are expressed in play activities. Each playground contains 3-5 activities.

**Table 3-4
Town of Matthews
Current and Projected Facility Needs**

Facilities	Matthews 2006 Standards	Existing Facilities	Current Demand 24,000	Current Need	2015 Demand 31,500	2015 Projected Need
Fields						
Adult Baseball	1/15,000	2*	2	0	2	0
Youth Baseball	1/10,000	4*	2	0	3	0
Softball	1/5,000	7*	5	0	6	0
Football	1/20,000	0	1	1	2	2
Soccer	1/10,000	2*	2	0	3	1
Courts						
Basketball	1/10,000	0	2	2	3	3
Tennis	1/4,000	0	6	6	8	8
Volleyball	1/10,000	0	2	2	3	3
Shuffleboard	1/10,000	0	2	2	3	3
Horseshoe	1/10,000	0	2	2	3	3
Outdoor Areas						
Picnic Shelter	1/3,000	7	8	1	10	3
Playground Activities	1/1,000	15**	24	9	31	16
Trails						
Pedestrian	.4 mile/1,000	4.25	9.6	5.35	12	7.75
Biking	1 mile/1,000	0	24	24	31	31
Specialized						
Community Center	1/20,000	1	1	0	1	0
Swimming Pool	1/20,000	0	1	1	1	1
Golf Course	N/A	0	-	-	-	-
Camping	1 site/1,000	0	24	24	31	31
Archery Area	1/50,000	0	-	-	-	-
Stream/Lake Mileage	.2 mile/1,000	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Stream/Lake Access	1/10 miles	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

*Includes facilities located at Arthur Goodman Memorial Park.

**Assumes 3 “playground activities” in each of the 5 existing playgrounds.

EXHIBIT 3-2

	FY96-9	FY97-98	FY98-99	FY99-00	FY00-01	FY01-02	FY02-03	FY03-04	FY04-05	YTD 05-06 (Mar. 30, '06)	YTD 06-07 (Requested)
Revenues											
Parks & Recreation	-	4,052.96	6,218.75	6,973.38	25,724.12	71,352.80	61,643.44	44,698.88	59,795.69	40,238.00	40,000.00
Community Center	-	20,564.25	3,273.75	-	60,016.56	63,943.43	102,167.86	166,543.09	180,202.94	151,200.00	175,000.00
Gym	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	25,000.00
TOTAL		24,617.21	9,492.50	6,973.38	85,740.68	135,296.23	163,811.30	211,241.97	239,998.63	191,438.00	240,000.00
Expenditures											
Parks & Recreation	-	30,521.75	41,543.19	32,395.18	43,896.85	72,889.61	76,880.20	66,949.48	83,083.18	32,723.54	66,000.00
Community Center	-	-	-	-	-	-	38,606.85	70,606.16	81,173.20	64,649.17	85,000.00
Gym	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	30,000.00
TOTAL		30,521.75	41,543.19	32,395.18	43,896.85	72,889.61	115,487.05	137,555.64	164,256.38	97,372.71	181,000.00
Operating											
Parks & Recreation	-	-	-	-	201,034.20	264,002.01	349,974.00	203,451.00	237,209.00	294,663.00	271,873.00
Community Center	-	-	-	-	41,319.50	76,136.95	208,448.00	297,394.00	375,134.00	392,050.00	450,471.00
Gym	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	18,037.00	190,759.00
TOTAL					242,353.70	340,138.96	558,422.00	500,845.00	612,343.00	704,750.00	913,103.00
Cap Outlay											
Parks & Recreation	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	15,673.00	2,871,343.00	13,000.00	1,500.00
Community Center	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	141,246.00	109,883.00	10,610.00	8,500.00
Gym	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	25,500.00	0.00
TOTAL								156,919.00	2,981,226.00	49,110.00	10,000.00

Section Four
Proposals and Recommendations



Squirrel Lake Park

SECTION FOUR

PROPOSALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

INTRODUCTION

The Town of Matthews and its Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resource Department are charged with the responsibility of serving the recreation needs of the Town's citizens by offering a variety of recreation programs and facilities through a growing system of public parks. The population of Matthews has grown significantly in the past ten years and will continue to show significant growth for the next decade. Based on current population projections, the Town's current population ($\pm 24,000$) will exceed 30,000 by 2015. As this population base continues to grow, there will be increased demand for quality leisure services and the citizens of Matthews will expect the Town to be the main provider.

Currently Matthews has a need for both new facilities and additional park acreage. This need will grow with the population over the next decade. Available land for recreational development within Matthews' town limits is very limited and the Town will need to act quickly to acquire property for parks and recreation facilities. Large tracts of property are difficult to assemble due to market demand and extremely high land values. More recreation programs will be desired and existing programs will be expected to expand with the addition of new park facilities. These demands will create a need for additional staff and increased funds for the Department to adequately meet its mission.

The inventory of the Town's developed parks and facilities has increased somewhat since the 1997 Master Plan. The Town has developed a gymnasium and meeting rooms adjacent to the Police and EMS Center, is in the process of acquiring land for the proposed community park in the eastern part of town, and has begun planning a greenway that will run through Squirrel Lake Park and connect to the Matthews Community Center.

Mecklenburg County, which provides the valuable resources found in Idlewild Road Park, has also been active in the Matthews area by assisting with the development of the Squirrel Lake Greenway.

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS), which operates several schools within the Matthews' town limits, has not been a participant in providing park and recreation facilities for town use. School facilities within the Matthews service area offer a tremendous potential for meeting recreational demand. The Town should explore ways to strengthen ties with CMS and utilize the many facilities that are available on their Matthews campuses.

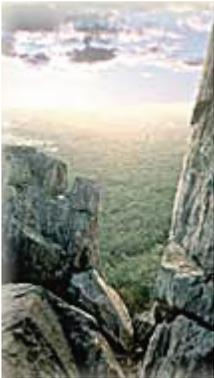
Finally, the private sector maintains an important and diverse role in providing recreation opportunities to the Matthews community. The Matthews Athletic Recreation Association (MARA) provides an

outstanding facility at Arthur Goodman Memorial Park. Likewise, the YMCA offers a variety of indoor and outdoor facilities and programs at its Siskey YMCA. Christ Covenant Church offers youth athletics in a number of indoor and outdoor activities. Each of these private sector initiatives provides the citizens of Matthews with a wide variety of activities, reducing demand on public facilities.

This plan addresses the need for providing both active and passive recreation opportunities at parks and along greenway corridors. The term "passive recreation" is one that refers to recreation opportunities such as walking, hiking, and picnicking. These activities allow people the opportunity to enjoy open space and experience nature. Passive facilities are usually found in large parks (community, district, and regional). "Active recreation" includes activities such as soccer, softball, and basketball. These types of recreation activities have facilities that are usually provided by municipal agencies at district/community parks, recreation/community centers, neighborhood parks, and school sites.

To determine specific park and recreation recommendations for the Town of Matthews, it is essential to clearly define how the Town will interface with other recreational providers in the community. Duplication of services and facilities can be eliminated through this identification of roles and partnerships. With this understanding, the proposals and recommendations of this Master Plan are organized by what each recreational provider should offer through the ten year planning period (2006 through 2015).

ROLE OF RECREATION PROVIDERS



State of North Carolina

While the State of North Carolina does not operate a state park in Mecklenburg County, it does operate three state parks within an hour's drive for the citizens of Matthews. These parks are:

- Lake Norman State Park
- Crowders Mountain State Park
- Morrow Mountain State Park

As their names imply, these parks offer a variety of natural settings and experiences for park visitors. In addition to these three existing parks, a future state park has been considered along the Rocky River corridor in Mecklenburg and Cabarrus Counties.

The state plays a very important role by providing these large natural areas with unique features. These sites provide valuable passive recreation opportunities to the citizens of Matthews and Mecklenburg County. The state should be encouraged to maintain and operate these facilities and to build a new state park along the Rocky River.

Mecklenburg County

As a county-wide agency, Mecklenburg County has the responsibility of providing park and recreation services to citizens throughout the county. In the Matthews area, the County is providing a number of facilities that are serving the citizens of Matthews. These facilities include:

- Idlewild Road Park (within town limits)
- Frances Beatty Park (within 4 miles of the town)
- William R. Davie Park (within 5 miles of the town)
- McAlpine Creek Greenway (within 3 miles of the town)
- McAlpine Creek Community Park (within 3 miles of the town)

Each of these facilities provides a variety of active and passive recreation opportunities and are important to the park and recreational needs of Matthews.

Idlewild Road Park is of particular importance to the citizens of Matthews. Located in the northern part of town, this park is large enough to provide both active and passive recreational opportunities. Currently this park offers some facilities, but is under-utilized. Recently acreage has been added to this park through Mecklenburg County's bond funded land acquisition program. This land will provide for the proposed greenway expansion. The County should work with the Town to determine a strategy for developing Idlewild Road Park so that it can provide more active and passive recreation opportunities.

Mecklenburg County and the Town of Matthews should also work together in the development of greenways throughout the town. Currently, a joint planning effort is underway for the Squirrel Lake Greenway. This collaborative effort should be expanded to include other greenway corridors in Matthews. The County should continue its leadership role in developing a county-wide greenway system that will ultimately connect Matthews to Charlotte and other communities in Mecklenburg County.



Athletic fields at William R. Davie Park.

Town of Matthews

The Town of Matthews should focus its park development efforts on construction and operation of community, neighborhood, and mini parks, along with greenways, recreation/community centers, and special use facilities. Section 3: Recreation Standards and Facility Needs Assessment identifies existing and future park needs. It is recommended that by 2015 the Town of Matthews provide a total of three community parks, eight neighborhood parks, five mini parks, and twelve miles in trails/greenways. In addition to these overall park types, Matthews will also need to develop a variety of special use facilities as identified in Section 3. These special use facilities will likely be incorporated into the parks listed above. With this understanding, it is important to define the Town's overall park needs first.

Community Parks

The Recreation Standards and Community Needs Assessment recommends that three community parks be provided throughout the town by 2015. Community Parks should be at least 40 acres in size and have a service radius of approximately two miles. These parks provide recreational opportunities for the entire family and contain areas suited for intense recreational purposes such as recreation centers, athletic fields, swimming pools, court games (tennis, basketball, etc.). These parks may also possess areas of natural quality for outdoor recreation such as viewing, sitting, picnicking, etc.

Idlewild Road Park

Mecklenburg County's Idlewild Road Park is the largest existing park found in Matthews. While correctly identified as a district park in the County's park hierarchy, this park also has the potential to serve as a community park for the Town of Matthews. Located in the town's most northern limits, this park provides park and recreation facilities/services to the citizens of Matthews, Mint Hill, and southeastern Charlotte. While existing facilities (softball, playground, picnic, trails) provide valuable active recreation to Mecklenburg County citizens, additional

facilities could be constructed at this park to meet even greater recreational demand. The Town of Matthews should partner with Mecklenburg County in developing a plan to provide greater utilization of these facilities. This joint use effort between the Town and the County is an excellent way for government agencies to work together to conserve public resources.

Squirrel Lake Park

Squirrel Lake Park is the largest park owned and operated by Matthews. This park offers some very nice passive amenities (picnicking, trails, pond), but is not being utilized to its full potential. With thirty-four acres of land, this park could provide considerably more recreational opportunities, including more active recreation facilities. In addition, improvements should be made to the park to provide greater visibility from the street and reduce concerns of security (as expressed in the public meeting). The Town should develop a master plan for Squirrel Lake Park to provide better utilization of the property and offer much needed recreational facilities by expanding the facilities and putting more "eyes" in the park.

Highway 51 Community Park

Matthews has recently purchased land in the eastern section along Highway 51. This 94.5 acre tract will provide an excellent community park in an area of Matthews that is currently under served. The Town should proceed with a master plan for this site as soon as possible. In addition, the Town should begin working with CMS in the development of a gymnasium facility at the proposed elementary school. This facility will provide valuable indoor recreation opportunities while minimizing costs through joint use with the school.

Neighborhood Parks

Matthews' only existing neighborhood park is Windsor Park. This park is well designed, well maintained, and well used. Minor improvements such as new signage and the entrance drive, as

well as the addition of restrooms, would improve the visibility and use of this park.

Neighborhood parks are the foundation of most smaller municipal park and recreation programs. Large enough to provide both active and passive recreation opportunities, neighborhood parks are small enough to be geographically dispersed in a community to provide localized park facilities. The Town of Matthews should build seven new neighborhood parks in the next ten years. These parks should be five to ten acres in size and be dispersed geographically to provide all citizens with easy access to these parks (see Exhibit 3-1).

These parks should be developed with active recreation components (playgrounds, playfields, tennis and basketball courts, etc.). In addition, neighborhood parks should be large enough to provide limited open space (trees, lawn, etc.). Each new park should have a site specific master plan developed, with public input (particularly from the neighborhood) as a prime force in determining park development. Where feasible, neighborhood parks should be linked to other parks and schools by greenways/trails and bikeways/routes.

Mini Parks

Matthews currently has three mini parks; Stumptown Park, Matthews/Sardis Park, and Baucom Park. These parks have been developed and maintained with quality, and serve the community well. This Master Plan recommends two additional mini parks to be developed in the future. This represents the current planning philosophy that mini parks, except in very urban areas, are too limited in their recreational value and too expensive to construct and maintain.

Future mini park sites should be one to two acres and should include playground equipment, picnic shelter, and court games. The Town should look for opportunities to encourage developers to construct mini parks as part of multi-family projects and subdivision development.

In addition to these mini parks, small mini parks/pocket parks should be included in the downtown area and as part of the proposed small area plan developed for the Transit Oriented Development (TOD). These pocket parks are small civic green spaces that provide landscaping, seating, and fountains/art. While providing valuable public enjoyment and visual interest, these civic pocket parks do not play a significant role in providing recreational opportunities for the community.

Special Use Facilities

Greenways

Greenway trails are typically trails/walkways that traverse through natural areas and are enjoyed by walkers, joggers, and bicyclists. The trail surface can be either natural or paved and is normally ten feet in width. Greenways are also green corridors that provide transportation without the use of the automobile; thus reducing both the pollution and gas consumption associated with driving. Typically found running along natural drainage corridors, greenways also provide a natural buffer to filter stormwater runoff from roads and parking areas before it reaches our streams and rivers. Finally, the development of greenways protect open space and creates linear parks throughout the community.

Mecklenburg County has long recognized the importance of greenways and has developed a county-wide greenway plan. This master greenway plan shows connections to the Town of Matthews along Four Mile Creek. This plan is currently being implemented in communities throughout the county. Matthews is included in the County's proposed greenway system. Plans are currently underway to design and construct a greenway from Squirrel Lake Park to the Matthews Community Center. The proposed greenway stretches north from Squirrel Lake Park to the Matthews Community Center, east along Four Mile Creek ending at East John Street and west to Trade Street. This section of greenway will be an excellent start to the Town's greenway

system; connecting neighborhoods with a park, a school, a community center, and the downtown area.

In addition to developing this section of the greenway trail, Matthews should establish its own greenway master plan. This plan should be created with public involvement and should coordinate with the County's Greenway Master Plan.

Swimming Facilities

Currently there are no public swimming pools in the Town of Matthews. Mecklenburg County has excellent facilities in the uptown area of Charlotte, designed to serve all county residents. While these facilities meet many competitive and free play swimming needs, these centralized facilities require considerable travel time by Matthews residents.

The Town of Matthews should construct a twenty-five meter outdoor swimming pool with associated spray ground. This facility would provide an opportunity for competitive and exercise swimming and provide a place to teach swimming, water safety, and life guarding. This facility could be built at one of the community parks or could be developed as a stand alone facility.

Renovations to Existing Parks

In addition to developing new park facilities, the Town should assess each of its existing parks to see how these facilities can be expanded and/or updated to maximize use. As noted above, the majority of the park sites are well developed and well maintained. There are some areas of infrastructure improvements

(signage, restrooms, etc.) that should be considered and expansion of facilities in Squirrel Lake Park and Idlewild Road Park will significantly improve facility offerings. The cost of these recommended improvements is shown in the Capital Improvements Program on Table 4-1.

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools

A joint use agreement between Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools (CMS), and the Town of Matthews that provides for a sharing of community resources by allowing public use of school athletic facilities will offer the most efficient use of tax payers dollars. There are a number of schools within the Matthews town limits. These include:

- Butler High School
- Crestdale Middle School
- Crown Point Elementary School
- Matthews Elementary School
- Elizabeth Lane Elementary School

Currently, there is no agreement in place to have public use of these facilities outside of the school curriculum. Since many of the recreational uses for these facilities occur on weekends or after school hours, use by the public during these hours would reduce the need to build town facilities, thus reducing capital cost. An excellent opportunity for joint use between the Town and CMS would be the joint development of a gymnasium facility at the proposed Highway 51 Elementary School. Discussions for this joint use opportunity should begin as soon as possible.

TABLE 4-1
MATTHEWS PARKS, RECREATION AND CULTURAL RESOURCE DEPARTMENT
CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

Capital Improvement and Land Acquisition	Total¹ Cost Projection	2006-2010	2011-2016
Renovation Program	\$300,000	\$300,000	
Restrooms			
Signage			
Parking Improvements			
Planning & Design	\$30,000	\$30,000	
Renovation/Maintenance Program Total	\$330,000	\$330,000	
Land Acquisition Program			
Neighborhood Parks (7 new sites)			
N1 5 acres @ \$60,000/acre	\$300,000	\$300,000	
N2 5 acres @ \$60,000/acre	\$300,000	\$300,000	
N3 5 acres @ \$60,000/acre	\$300,000	\$300,000	
N4 5 acres @ \$60,000/acre	\$300,000	\$300,000	
N5 5 acres @ \$60,000/acre	\$300,000	\$300,000	
N6 5 acres @ \$60,000/acre	\$300,000	\$300,000	
N7 5 acres @ \$60,000/acre	\$300,000	\$300,000	
Mini Parks (2 new sites)			
MP 1 1 acre @ \$60,000 per acre	\$60,000	\$60,000	
MP 2 1 acre @ \$60,000 per acre	\$60,000	\$60,000	
Land Acquisition Program Total	\$2,220,000	\$2,220,000	
Park Development Program			
Community Parks			
Highway 51 Community Park	\$1,500,000	\$1,500,000	
Squirrell Lake Park Expansion	\$750,000		\$750,000
Idlewild Road Park Expansion	\$750,000		\$750,000
Neighborhood Parks			
N1	\$500,000	\$500,000	
N2	\$500,000	\$500,000	
N3	\$500,000		\$500,000
N4	\$500,000		\$500,000
N5	\$500,000		\$500,000
N6	\$500,000		\$500,000
N7	\$500,000		\$500,000
Mini Parks			
MP1	\$100,000	\$100,000	
MP2	\$100,000		\$100,000
Planning and Design	\$670,000	\$260,000	\$410,000
Park Development Program Total	\$7,370,000	\$2,860,000	\$4,510,000
Special Use Facilities Program			
Swimming Pool	\$1,000,000		\$1,000,000
Greenways (3 Miles)	\$1,000,000	\$500,000.00	\$500,000.00
Planning & Design	\$200,000	\$50,000	\$150,000
Special Use Facilities Program Total	\$2,200,000	\$550,000	\$1,650,000
Total Capital Improvement Budget Cost	\$12,120,000	\$5,960,000	\$6,160,000

¹Proposed cost is presented in 2006 dollar values and makes no allowance for inflation, increased construction cost, or land price increases.

Section Five
Plan Implementation



Programming for youth athletics is predominately undertaken by MARA.

SECTION FIVE

ACTION PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

INTRODUCTION

The previous four sections of this report have been devoted to establishing a comprehensive plan for recreation for the Town of Matthews. The development of this plan included an inventory of existing facilities, a review of previous planning efforts, and, most importantly, a public forum to allow citizens to express their needs/desires for park and recreation facilities and programs. From this assessment, park and recreation standards were established and from these standards, recommendations for park expansion and improvements have been made. These recommendations resulted in a 10-year capital improvement budget for the Department. This section provides recommendations on how the goals and standards of the Master Plan can be realized.

Adequate funding will be instrumental to the implementation of this Master Plan. According to the North Carolina Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, adequate funding for park facilities and programs is critical if existing and future needs are to be met. This is particularly true in North Carolina, where funding for parks is well below the national average.

Based on the public input received during this planning process, it is apparent there is considerable demand for park and recreational facilities by the citizens of Matthews. While there has been a considerable increase in park and recreation spending by the Town, the Matthews Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resource Department is not receiving adequate funding to support the programs and facilities to meet this expressed demand. Implementing the recommendations in this plan will result in meeting existing and future needs for park and recreation services, as well as preservation of open space in the community. The Town of Matthews will need to increase its annual budgeting for capital improvements, staffing, operations, and maintenance.

In addition to this spending increase, the Town should seek new opportunities for joint use, earned income options, and raising money through grants. Recommendations on funding opportunities are included in this section.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

The capital improvement program for the acquisition, renovation, and development of parks for the planning period was prepared with input from staff, the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board, and public involvement. All of the proposed costs are shown in 2006 dollar values. The capital improvement costs include funds for land acquisition, site preparation, site utilities, access, and parking along with renovation

and significant maintenance improvements. The capital improvement plan also includes estimated planning and design fees.

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

Renovation/Maintenance Program	\$ 330,000
Land Acquisition Program	2,220,000
Park Development Program	7,370,000
Special Use Facilities	<u>2,200,000</u>
Total Capital Improvement	\$12,120,000

This total figure equates to spending over \$1.2 million annually through the year 2015. Table 4-1: Capital Improvements Program shows the costs associated with the capital improvement program divided into two funding intervals starting in 2006 and ending 2015 (10-year planning period). The table reflects the proposals and recommendations as outlined in Section 4 of this Master Plan.

Operational Budget

The Department's operating budget includes cost for staff, operations, and general maintenance requirements similar to those that are currently being performed by the Department. Operation budgets from the past several years have increased significantly. Still, Matthews is well below the North Carolina average per capita funding for parks.

The mean per capita cost for total operations (not including capital costs) in North Carolina for municipal systems the size of Matthews (Class-D, departments serving populations between 10,000 and 24,999) was \$67.71 for FY05/06 compared to \$±30.00 (\$704,750/24,000) for the Town. The per capita costs indicate that Matthews is considerably behind the average of North Carolina in its efforts to fund parks and recreation. Considering that North Carolina is well below the national average in park and recreation funding, this places Matthews' current level of funding well below national averages. Greater funding for park operations will be required if the

Town is to provide the types of facilities and services that are represented by a community concerned with the quality of life of its citizens.

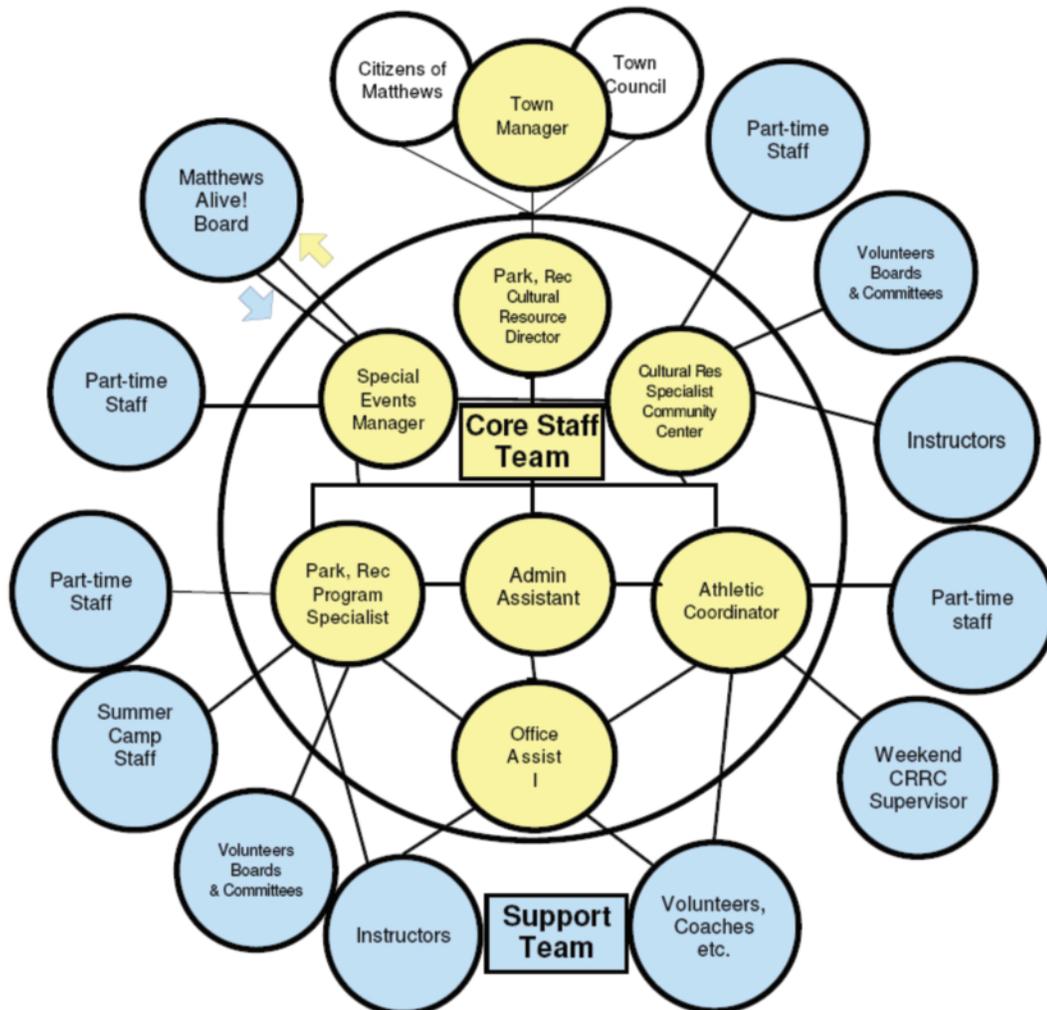
As Matthews grows and new parks and facilities are added, new staff will be required. These postings will likely include:

Staff Needs

The Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resource Department currently operates with five full time employees (Director, Cultural Recreation Specialist, Parks and Recreation Program Specialist, Administrative Assistant, and Office Assistant) and fifteen to twenty part time/seasonal employees. Funding has been approved for two new full time positions (Special Events Manager and Athletic Coordinator). The current organizational chart is shown below.

- Deputy Director – will report directly to the Parks and Recreation Director and will oversee the day-to-day operations of the department including the athletic program division, recreation program division, recreation center operations, and park maintenance operations. The position will be responsible for overseeing the management, maintenance, development, and operations of all existing and future park properties/facilities.
- Marketing/Fund Development Director – reports directly to the Parks and Recreation

TOWN OF MATTHEWS PARKS, RECREATION AND CULTURAL RESOURCE DEPARTMENT ORGANIZATIONAL CHART OF EXISTING STAFF



Director and is responsible for the development and coordination of a comprehensive public information program for the entire department. The position will spend considerable time interfacing with the local business community working closely with civic organizations and various boards, including the Chamber of Commerce and Convention and Visitors Bureau, to cultivate relationships for the development of sponsorships and to fund development for support of departmental programs and projects. The position will also oversee the development of a non-profit "Partners for Parks" program with the purpose of raising money through private citizen donations, corporations, land and in-kind services.

- Athletic Program Coordinator (new gymnasium) – reports directly to the Recreation Programs Specialist and is primarily responsible for the management, coordination, and promotion of programs and activities at the community center and gymnasium. This position will require a large portion of time dedicated to developing, attracting, and promoting activities and programs at the center. The purpose is to keep the center "booked" at full capacity, to accomplish participation and revenue goals, and to manage the center's reservations and community use. Coordination with the athletics and program supervisors is also required.
- Maintenance Supervisor- a "working supervisor" to assist with, oversee, and direct the day-to-day activities of maintenance technicians, custodians, and contracted employees while providing direct support to the Deputy Director. Responsible for coordinating the daily inspection of all park facilities while ensuring that all facilities are clean and safe. Responsible for day-to-day inspections and maintenance of park playgrounds. Coordinates set-up and breakdown of equipment for special events.
- General Maintenance Technicians (five total positions through 2015) - will be responsible for day-to-day maintenance and preparation of individual parks and facilities for use by

the general public. (One technician should be competent with building maintenance procedures to facilitate the needs of the recreation center.)

- Greenways Ranger – reports directly to the Deputy Director. Will be responsible for monitoring n greenways, parks, and park amenities to ensure safety of patrons and compliance with rules, regulations, and ordinances by park users. Position will spend considerable time interfacing with and assisting general public, observing facility use, managing on-site facility and shelter reservations, opening / closing facilities, and turning lights on / off in accordance with reservation schedules.
- Registrar – reports directly to the Recreation Program Specialist. Provides broad-based support to the entire program division. Coordinates all program registration, manages and maintains program databases, and manages on-line registration system.

Earned Income Opportunities

One important means of offsetting the increased cost of recreation facilities and programs is to develop programs that generate income. The Town should look for programs to increase income-providing opportunities by expanding upon the following methods:

- Sponsorships from private businesses operating in the area. Sponsorship opportunities within the Department will need to be coordinated to not confuse sponsors by sending two or three requests to the same business. Sponsorships typically come in the form of product sponsors, event sponsors, program sponsors, cause-related sponsors, and in-kind sponsors.
- Based on the needs of the Department, grants from local foundations, state and federal agencies, or individuals are typically created by staff. Most grants take time to prepare and require coordination effort with other agencies or departments from within the community to create a quality submittal. Grants also require extensive tracking of expenditures and outcomes

for attaining future funding.

- Partnerships are the new area of earned income that many communities are seeking to share costs in providing services to the community. Many times the partners are two or more government agencies. This earned income requires both agencies to have a common vision, values, and goals for the partnership to be successful. Typically, partnerships follow some of these general trends:
 - Church partnerships that assist in providing neighborhood parks or recreation services.
 - Youth sports associations where volunteers help the Department in providing the service to the community for the sports that they represent.
 - Trail sponsors that adopt sections of trails for maintenance and cleanup.
 - Adopt-a-park partners that help maintain parkland. These sponsors are typically in the form of neighborhood associations and businesses that are next to parks.
 - School partnerships where both partners invest in the development of facilities and programs based on shared use of facilities and staff.
 - Special event partners that assist with the development of community-wide events.
 - Program partners who assist each other in providing services to the community. The YMCA or schools working with the Parks and Recreation Department to co-sponsor programs is an example of this partnership.
- Park foundation development is another earned income opportunity that park systems have embraced to achieve added dollars to their budget. Park foundations help seek out individuals who wish to invest in the system by providing donations of land, cash, or in-kind related services.
- Advertising and licensing in programs, facilities, and events the Department provides. This earned income allows the Town to leverage highly exposed advertising space where businesses will pay a premium for the right to advertise.
- Volunteer development programs are a highly valued earned income opportunity the Department can create through effective recruitment. Volunteers can create advocacy and bring down the cost of programs and services. Volunteers will be more important as the Department grows and offers more activities and facilities.
- Privatizing the development of facilities or services is an earned income opportunity that is used by communities 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 local government a management tool to create an asset or improve a service without tapping into its own resources. Facilities that are typically privatized include golf courses, marinas, camping/RV facilities, boat rentals, bike rentals, equipment rentals, and other forms of concessions.
- Marketing strategies are an important component in developing earned income opportunities. The Town should consider assessing program participants \$1 for development of a marketing budget that will provide promotional services, research, and reserve funds for the Department. These promotional activities improve awareness of the activities provided by the Department and assist in bringing more revenue to the system by filling programs and facilities. This will be more important to the Department with the development of community parks and a community/recreation center.

Key Funding/Revenue Sources

The Matthews Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resource Department has good public support for parks, programs, and services. While funding sources have increased slightly over the last five years, innovative measures will be needed if the Town is to keep up with the growing need for parks and recreation. The proposed additional facilities and expanded operations will only add to the need

for funding dollars from a variety of sources. The Town of Matthews will need to create a combination of revenue sources to meet the future needs of local residents. The following funding sources are provided to help evaluate these options.

Revenue Plan

Upon adoption of the Master Plan, the Department, with input from Town leaders, should consider the establishment of a revenue plan. A revenue plan incorporates all available funding resources in a community, 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:

General Tax Revenues

General tax revenues traditionally provide the principal sources of funds for general operations and maintenance of a municipal recreation and parks system. Recreation, as a public service, is scheduled along with roadways, health, public safety, schools, etc. in regular budgets established by the municipality. Assessed valuation of real and personal property provides the framework for this major portion of the tax base. The Town of Matthews is currently funding its park and recreation program well below the state's mean per capita spending for towns of similar size. In the past funding year (05/06), the Town spent just under \$30 per capita on parks and recreation, considerably below the state average. If the Town wishes to offer a park and recreation system that truly provides a quality of life for the community, this level of funding must be increased to meet or exceed the state's average per capita spending.

User Fees

Recreation facilities such as game fields, courts, and boat/lake areas are typically covered by a combination of general tax revenues and user fees. All park and recreation systems have different values in place for how they fund various portions of a recreation experience. Tax subsidies vary by activity and Matthews will need to determine the

level of commitment expected under these values or principles.

The Department will also need to update its current revenue and pricing policy as part of an overall revenue plan based on the values and guiding funding principles of the Town.

General Obligation Bonds

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

The real value of a municipality's bonding authority and capacity is not necessarily the funds made available for the capital improvement program alone (in terms of local monies). Bonding enables local government to utilize local funds to match federal grant-in-aid monies or state funds. General obligation bonds are still the greatest source utilized to fund park projects in North Carolina. The Department will need to create a series of bond referendums to achieve the capital improvements identified in the plan.

In 2004, the Town passed a bond referendum to fund park expansion. This money is currently being spent and has resulted in significantly greater spending on capital improvements in the past few years. As the Town plans for future protection of open space and future development of its park system, a second bond referendum may be needed in five to seven

years. This may be the avenue to provide funding for much of the proposed park improvements. Through a well thought out and publicly presented bond campaign, voters would be given the authority to choose to support park improvements through the sale of bonds.

Revenue Bonds

Revenue bonds have become a popular funding method for financing high use specialty facilities like golf courses, aquatic centers, ice rinks, tennis centers, and complexes for softball and soccer. The user and other on-site revenue sources pay revenue bonds. This revenue source would only be of use to the Town if they choose to change their tax subsidy policy for using this type of funding. Based on current pricing practices, the Town most likely would not seek out this option. However, if Matthews decided to move in this direction, the type of projects to use this style of financing would be a golf course, baseball/softball complex, large recreation center, or conference/meeting center.

Limited Option or Special Use Tax

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 proposal will require legislative approval. Typically, special use taxes are structured on sales tax or transfer taxes and earmarked for a project need. A local 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 the accomplishment of the purpose or projects.

Park Foundation (Partners for Parks)

The Department has the opportunity to create a park foundation to assist the Town in acquiring land, developing facilities, sponsoring programs, and buying equipment for the Department. Park

foundations typically create five funding strategies for accessing money to build up their coffers. These include a foundation membership, individual gifts, grants from other recognized and national foundations, long term endowments, and a land trust for future acquisitions.

General Foundations

Another source of revenue is the direct contribution of money from general foundations within the state or nation.

Foundation funds should be sought for both development and construction of facilities as well as providing programs. They should include general-purpose foundations that have relatively few restrictions, special program foundations for specific activities, and corporate foundations found with few limitations and typically from local sources. The Trust for Public Land and NC Rails-Trail have been instrumental in providing financial and technical assistance for open space conservation and development of greenways in North Carolina. They, and other land trusts, such as the Conservation Trust for North Carolina and the Catawba Lands Conservancy, would be a good source to investigate. Other sources of local assistance may be available by contacting large corporations with a local presence to review any possible funding opportunities they might offer. Companies such as Bank of America, Wachovia, and Duke Energy, may have available funding through existing grant programs, or they may be interested in creating a program or partnership for specific projects. The Department 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://foundationcenter.org>) and the Non-Profit Gateway to federal government agencies.

Federal and State Assistance

Federal funding sources necessary to help finance Master Plan recommendations have historically been available from the U.S. Park Service's Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). Potential

funding through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program is also available given certain conditions. Other potential sources for recreational funding are available through the National Foundation of Arts and Humanities and the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA).

The North Carolina General Assembly passed a bill in 1995 creating a consistent source of funds for parks and recreation in the state. The Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF) provides money for capital improvements, repairs, renovations, and land acquisition for state and local parks. Revenues from the State's portion of the real estate deed transfer tax support the Fund and are estimated to be \$15-\$18 million annually. 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 the Town to apply for a 50/50 cost-sharing grant to develop or acquire parkland and facilities. The Town should apply for funds through this program on a regular basis.

Additionally, the State can fund projects such as bikeways and pedestrian walks through the federally funded TEA-21 [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." The State also makes funds available for development of facilities and programs through the Community Development Block Grant system (CDBG) administered by the Division of Community Assistance. Eligible communities can use these federal funds for development of projects such as recreation facilities, land acquisition, and

neighborhood centers. Non-profit neighborhood groups can receive assistance from this program and the Department can assist these groups by identifying possible projects.

Another source of State administered funding is through the Clean Water Management Trust Fund (CWMTF). These funds are set aside for the acquisition of riparian properties, financing of innovative wastewater management initiatives, storm water 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 affects of urban encroachment. The General Assembly initially set aside \$88 million for the CWMTF to allocate grants to restore and/or protect water quality in the State's rivers, lakes, and estuaries.

Master Plan Funding Strategy

Over the 10-year planning period (2006-2015), the Town of Matthews will not be able to support the growth in operational cost and the proposed capital improvement (\pm \$12,120,000) with the current level of appropriations. The Department will need to use a combination of revenue sources to accomplish the recommendations of the Master Plan. There are numerous combinations of funding strategies that can be explored and implemented. Upon careful analysis of past budget documents, current practices, available resources, national trends and standards, a funding strategy is presented for consideration. The Master Plan proposes a viable funding strategy that emphasizes realism.

General Funds

Allocations from the General Fund will need to increase to pay for the operation of future facilities. By increasing funding for park and recreation operations 15 to 25%, Matthews will raise this level of funding to the state's average (or slightly higher). This additional per capita funding, along with the increase in population, will fund the majority of

future operational costs, but will not provide the funding required for capital improvements.

In addition to this increased operational spending, the Town should begin budgeting capital improvements projects on an annual basis. For purposes of this planning effort, the recommended annual capital improvements budget should be \$300,000. This source of funding will provide \$3,000,000 for capital needs (approximately 25% of the proposed capital improvements) over the next ten years.

Grants

The Town staff has been successful in finding and procuring funds from State and local grants. The Town should continue to explore grants such as LWCF, PARTF, ISTEPA, clean water grants, etc. Active pursuit of this funding could provide \$2-3 million in funds for capital improvements over the next ten years.

Partnerships and Gifts

The Town of Matthews is already working to generate revenues through sponsorships of its summer programs. This initiative of raising money from the private sector through gifts, sponsorships, and partnerships should be encouraged and expanded. One avenue for expanding this effort will be establishing a Matthews' Partners for Parks program. This non-profit organization should be established independent of the Department and operate as a stand alone charitable organization, much like Mecklenburg County's Partners for Parks. This non-profit organization allows private citizens and corporations to donate money, land, and in-kind services for use by the parks department. Once established, Matthews' Partners for Parks should be able to raise \$100,000 to \$125,000 in funds annually. Over the next ten years, that would generate \$1,000,000 to \$1,250,000 for capital improvements.

Revenues & User Charges

A crucial strategy to accomplish the goals of this plan is to price services based on the value and benefits received by the participants beyond those

of all taxpayers. Increasing participants in using the facilities and programs will increase revenue opportunities. A good time to price services to their value and benefits is after new facilities are constructed or when facilities have been renovated to enhance a participant's recreational experience. A proposed user charge revenue strategy is not a quantum leap to market value pricing, but a slightly enhanced program of increasing fees based on new and renovated facilities. This will create more revenue and capacity opportunities for Matthews' growing population.

Currently, revenues and user charges account for approximately 10% of the operating budget. This level will need to increase throughout the planning period and represents the largest challenge for the department if new facilities are built. Likewise, the Town should develop a fee structure that will allow greater net revenue to be realized. Assuming the level of funding can increase, it will generate approximately \$15,000 to \$20,000 annually that can be used for operating new facilities developed as recommended in this Master Plan. To accommodate this goal, revenue from user charges must increase throughout the planning period. This goal is achievable by bringing new facilities on-line and making modest changes to the current fee structure for activities and programs.

General Obligation Bonds

General Obligation Bonds should be used in acquiring and developing new parks and recreation facilities. The funding strategy proposes that General Obligation Bonds be targeted to raise approximately \$5,250,000. This would represent the majority of funds needed for the proposed capital improvements budget (\$12,120,000). The \$5.25 million can be dedicated to the construction of neighborhood parks, a swimming facility and greenways. This bond referendum would come on-line in approximately five to seven years.

Summary of Capital Improvements Funding

Capital Improvements Funding (\$300,000 annually)		\$3,000,000
Grants		\$2,500,000
Partnerships/Gifts		\$1,250,000
User Charges		\$200,000
General Obligation Bonds		
2011 – 2015 Package		\$5,250,000
Greenway Development	\$1,000,000	
Neighborhood Park Development	\$2,500,000	
Land Acquisition	\$750,000	
Swimming Facility	\$1,000,000	
		\$12,200,000

Other Methods for Acquisition and Development

In order to meet the future park needs of Matthews, administration and staff must be creative in acquisition and development of new facilities. Other methods available for acquiring and developing parks as recommended in the Master Plan include the following:

Fee Simple Purchase

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

Fee Simple with Lease-Back or Resale

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

Long -Term Option

A long-term option is frequently used when a

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

First Right of Purchase

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

Land Trust

The role and responsibility of a Land Trust is to

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

Local Gifts

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

The most frequently used type of gift involves the giving of land (through a full gift or agreed upon below market value sale) to be used for a park. The timing of such a donation can correspond with a PARTF grant application, thereby providing all or a significant portion of the local matching requirement associated with this fund. A 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 also be used to match non-local grant funds. When not tied into a grant, such donations (land, labor, or materials) still can play an important role in reducing the demand for local capital expenditures.

Some municipalities have developed a gift catalog

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

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

Life Estate

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

Easement

The most common type of less-than-fee interest in land is an easement. Since property ownership may be envisioned as a bundle of rights, it is possible for the Department to purchase any one or several of these rights. An easement seeks either to compensate the landholder for the right to use his land in some manner or to compensate him for the loss of one of his privileges to use the land. 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 Matthews. Perhaps the

greatest benefit lies in the fact that the community purchases only those rights that it specifically needs to execute its parkland objectives. By purchasing only rights that are necessary to the system and on the land itself, the Department is making more selective and efficient use of its limited financial resources.

Zoning/Subdivision Regulations/Mandatory Dedication

The Town of Matthews Subdivision Ordinance contains requirements for mandatory open space and recreational use when subdividing land for

residential purposes. The code makes provisions for the land to be reviewed by the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resource Department prior to acceptance. The regulations also stipulate a formula for making payment to Matthews in lieu of dedicating property.

This section of the Subdivision Ordinance should be reviewed by the Planning Department, the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resource Department, and the Town Manager to consider revising the dedication requirements to non-residential property.



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