

# union county



## PARKS & RECREATION comprehensive master plan 2025

draft



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PARKS & RECREATION  
comprehensive master plan  
2025  
draft

PREPARED BY:

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IN ASSOCIATION WITH:

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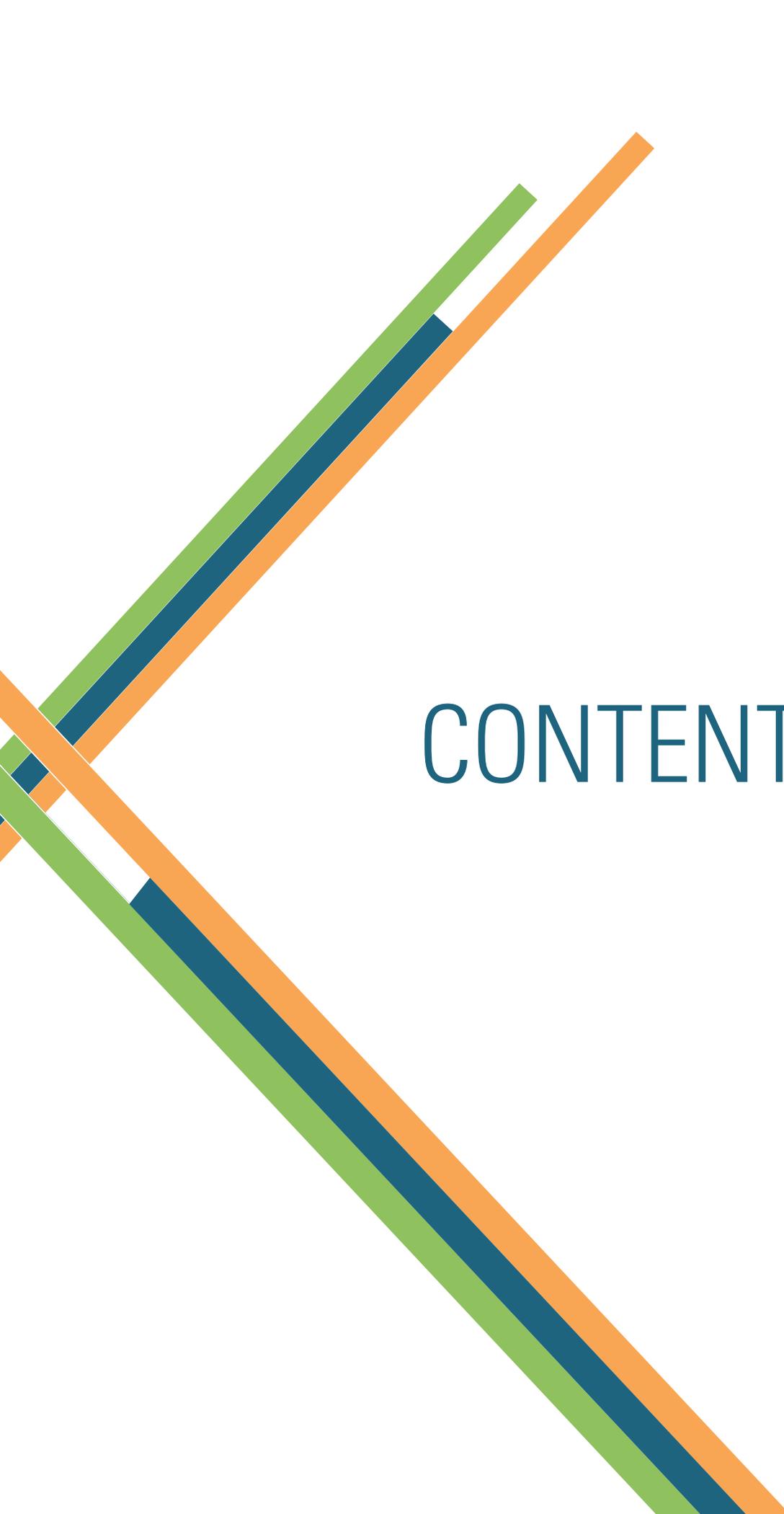
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01



# INTRODUCTION

## Overview

**A PARK IS MORE THAN A PLACE TO RECREATE. PARKS CONTRIBUTE TO THE LIVABILITY OF A**

community and the health and well-being of its citizens. A park is an asset to the community, often functioning as one or more of the following: a community meeting space, a venue for the arts, an environmental conservation area and an economic driver. It is a space that enhances the quality of life in a community; catalyzes development (or redevelopment) stimulating private investment, particularly on land in close proximity; and improves the overall health and well-being of the residents.

The 2015-2025 Union County Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Master Plan provides a framework for expanding the existing parks and recreation system into one that meets the needs of a rapidly growing population in Union County. The successful implementation of the Plan relies upon a solid foundation of partnerships between and coordination across multiple entities with shared interests. It is through partnerships with municipalities, schools, non-profit organizations, private entities and other governmental bodies that a more efficient, effective and expansive system can be achieved. With the implementation of this Master Plan, a wide array of benefits will contribute to a better quality of life throughout the community.



## Benefits of Parks and Recreation Systems

As mentioned, there are innumerable benefits of a robust parks and recreation system. A well-functioning system will result in positive environmental, health, economic and social impacts. In understanding the wide range of impacts beyond improved physical health and well being, we can truly comprehend the real value of the system. The following are ways in which parks and recreation can enhance the quality of life in Union County.

### ENVIRONMENT

Positive environmental impacts from parks and recreation are varied and wide ranging. These benefits include cleaner water from buffering stream corridors, continuous habitat preservation and cleaner air. For example, urban trees in the lower 48 states are estimated to remove 783,000 tons of pollution per year, contributing an estimated \$5.6 billion of added value to society.<sup>1</sup> In addition, parks have the ability, through programming, to educate and build awareness of the natural environment. Nature walks, interpretive exhibits and environmental education classes can transform how residents view the world around them and to foster environmental stewardship.

### HEALTH

Currently, one in three children are overweight, one in six is obese and 1/3rd of adults are clinically obese in the United States.<sup>1</sup> Strong evidence shows that when people have access to parks, they exercise more. A review of studies conducted by the *American Journal of Preventative Medicine* revealed that “creation of or enhanced access to places for physical activity combined with informational outreach produced a 48.4% increase in frequency of physical activity.” Increased physical activity levels leads to improved cardiovascular and respiratory systems, improved joint-function, decreased hypertension and reduced risk of coronary heart disease, among other health benefits.<sup>2</sup>

The physical health benefits provided by parks for active and passive recreation alone have a dramatic impact on the overall health of the community. However, there are many more opportunities for positive health impacts that extend beyond the physical, including increased social and emotional well-being. According to “The Benefits of Parks: Why American Needs More City Parks and Open Space,” park benefits can include increased happiness, increased feelings of “peacefulness”, tranquility or relaxation and improved psychological health.<sup>3</sup>

### ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

Parks and the presence or absence thereof, have a dramatic effect on property values and the overall quality of neighborhoods and cities. There is a direct correlation between vicinity to parks or greenways and overall property values. According to the 2009 article “Measuring the Economic Value of a City Park System,” “more than 30 studies have shown that parks have a positive impact on nearby residential property values. Other things being equal, most people are willing to pay more for a home close to a nice park.”<sup>4</sup> In addition, there are quality of life benefits from a well-functioning

parks and recreation system that can influence business relocation decisions. In the 2003 study, “The Importance of Quality of Life in the Location Decisions of New Economy Firms” by David Salvesen and Henry Renski, the authors suggest “quality of life is becoming an increasingly important consideration in modern business location decisions.” In this study, factors that influence quality of life include museums, concerts, parks, major sporting venues, environmental quality, cost of housing, recreational opportunities and community attitudes, among others.<sup>5</sup>

### SOCIAL COHESION

Parks and recreation systems have a unique ability to bring people together and improve social cohesion within among communities. Through the programming of these public facilities, people from different neighborhoods, diverse backgrounds and socioeconomic classes can enjoy activities together. According to “Measuring the Economic Value of a City Park System,” “Numerous studies have shown that the more webs of human relationships a neighborhood has, a stronger, safer, and more successful [place] it is.”<sup>4</sup> Additionally, according to “Synopsis of 2010 Research Papers: The Key Benefits,” research suggests that parks and recreation facilities alleviate isolation in individuals, especially the elderly, and help youth to “build optimism, self-confidence and a sense of autonomy.”<sup>1</sup>

## Project Purpose

Union County residents recognize the health, economic, social and environmental value of parks. The County has expressed a commitment to improving community health and an interest in investing in parks and recreation facilities to ensure that Union County is a location of choice for residents, businesses and visitors alike. More importantly, the County has demonstrated a desire to expand the Union County Parks and Recreation system in a manner that meets the needs of existing and future populations, promotes healthy living, accomplishes multiple community objectives, complements and connects to municipal systems, and utilizes resources efficiently. For this reason, the County engaged its residents and other stakeholders in a formal planning process to develop a Comprehensive Master Plan for Parks and Recreation.

## About the Plan

In general, this Plan is a guiding policy document. It is a framework intended to inform and guide decisions throughout the community. The Master Plan provides a resource for the public to learn about the existing and potential future parks and recreation facilities and programs, and understand the potential benefits of the expanded system. The Master Plan also defines priorities, informs decisions to be made about public investments, and aids the coordination of community- and health-focused programming throughout the County. The Master Plan brings together elements of Union County’s past and present, recognizing community values and providing a structured approach to Plan implementation through a community-supported set of recommendations that will move the County toward its desired future.

This Comprehensive Master Plan is comprised of several components:

- An **Inventory** of the facilities and programs that comprise existing Union County Parks and Recreation system;
- An **Assessment** of the system based on an examination of
  - a community profile, which summarizes demographic information about the community,
  - national trends within the parks and recreation field, and
  - nationally accepted service standards;
- A **Vision and Goals** for future growth and expansion of the proposed Union County Parks and Recreation system as determined with input from the community;
- A **Conceptual System Map** and **Classification System**;
- **Recommendations** categorized in terms of policies, facilities and programs with an indication of the goals the recommendations are intended to help achieve;
- A **10-year Implementation Action Plan** that includes strategies to be undertaken in the near and long term, responsible groups, and funding strategies.

The Master Plan was developed with community input gathered through stakeholder interviews, public meetings and two community surveys. A detailed explanation of the process follows and is supplemented with documentation of specific input in Appendix A.

## The Planning Process

The process to develop the Plan took the community from an understanding of the current system (the facilities and programs available today), to the creation of a vision for a future system, to the identification of near-term and long-term steps to realize that future vision. Carried out over a ten-month period, the planning process included four phases:

- Phase One: Community Involvement
- Phase Two: Inventory and Analysis
- Phase Three: Master Plan Development
- Phase Four: Final Plan and Adoption.

Critical to the success of the project was a comprehensive public engagement program that provided multiple opportunities for Union County residents and other stakeholders to give feedback and offer suggestions regarding the future system. These efforts included three public forums, monthly Master Plan Committee meetings and community surveys. The following is a summary of the avenues through which community input was gathered. More information is provided in Appendix A.

- Guiding the entire process was a Master Plan Committee made up primarily of individuals representing residents, property owners, local business interests, municipal representatives and staff, supplemented by community leaders representing schools and the Catawba Land Conservancy. (For a complete list of Master Plan Committee members please refer to the Acknowledgments section.) Feedback from six meetings with the Union County Master Plan Committee gave insight on issues specific to Union County and helped clarify the needs of Union County residents.
- To supplement the quantitative and qualitative data gathered through the project team’s efforts, interviews were conducted with key personnel from relevant County departments, key staff members of County and regional agencies and selected stakeholders, such as representatives of community groups, recreation groups and recreation-based business organizations.
- Three community meetings held at critical decision-making points during the process gave the public opportunities to become acquainted with the planning process, understand the purpose of the Plan, provide feedback, help guide Plan development and offer ideas for system components, programs, policies, and implementation action steps.
- A community survey of existing and future facilities and programming was administered online and by phone to the residents of Union County
- Links to the online survey, community meeting notes and presentation slides were posted to the Union County Parks and Recreation website.

All of the input received through these activities was synthesized to formulate the goals presented in this document, providing guidance throughout the planning process.

## PLANNING PROCESS

### 1 Community Involvement

Public meetings, stakeholder interviews, community survey

### 2 Inventory and Analysis

Existing conditions assessment, study of relevant previous plans and precedent communities

### 3 Master Plan Development

Creation of goals, recommendations and an implementation action plan

### 4 Final Plan and Adoption

Plan refinement and County approval

02



# PROPOSED UNION COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION SYSTEM

## Vision and Goals

**UNION COUNTY IS A GROWING COMMUNITY. IT HAS STRONG CONNECTIONS TO THE PAST AND** great aspirations for the future. Recognizing this, the following goals were defined early in the process to ensure that the community’s values remained in focus as the Plan took shape. These goals were formulated based on conclusions drawn from a review of related plans and studies as well as a comparison of other precedent communities (Appendices B and C), a study of national trends in parks and recreations (Appendix D), research of demographic and socioeconomic data (Appendix E), stakeholder interviews and results of phone and online surveys (Appendix A), and meetings with County staff. In addition to informing the development of the Master Plan, the goals are also intended to inform all decisions related to Plan implementation in order to realize a parks and recreation system that meets community expectations.

**PROJECT GOALS**

-  Improved quality of life for existing and future residents
-  Increased access to facilities
-  Improved health of all residents
-  A socially, financially and environmentally sustainable parks and recreation system
-  A variety of facilities, programming and events for all residents
-  A connected system of parks throughout the County

**VISION STATEMENT**

*Building a stronger community by providing high quality, healthy, and memorable experiences through activities that are exciting, educational, and family-friendly to all citizens.*

**MISSION STATEMENT**

The mission of Union County Parks and Recreation is to meet the need for quality recreational activities for all citizens by providing:

- Safe, family-friendly and well-maintained parks,
- “Hands-on” outdoor activities,
- “Active play” opportunities for children and adults,
- Quality athletic fields,
- Conservation and environmental education
- And, other special programming events, as appropriate.

Something Fun for Everyone!



## IMPROVED QUALITY OF LIFE FOR EXISTING AND FUTURE RESIDENTS

A community's quality of life is measured or defined by a number of factors. Access to amenities, particularly those that typically comprise a parks and recreation system, is among those factors. Other factors include cost of living; quality of schools; and the availability of services, programs and events that foster better health, social interaction, and educational opportunities. A county's ability to offer such services, programs and events are a function of the parks and recreation system.

Union County has successfully attracted residential development, offering a low tax rate, high-performing schools and close proximity to the employment centers of Charlotte. As a result, it has been one of the fastest growing counties in North Carolina. Unfortunately, the County is not having similar success in attracting commercial development and the tax base is unbalanced. According to the market study conducted in conjunction with the update to the Union County Comprehensive Plan, higher-paying, white collar jobs, such as those associated with finance and insurance, real estate, professional services, technology, and the management of companies, are largely missing from the employment mix.<sup>6</sup> One of the goals of the Comprehensive Plan update was to attract these types of jobs and employers, a task that has been challenging because quality of life is one of the most important factors when determining a corporate location. Employers are choosing other areas in the region, as evidenced by several large companies recently locating in nearby counties. Lash and LPL have located to York County, while Alevo and Gordon Food Service moved to Cabarrus County. In addition to having more efficient transportation infrastructure, other counties are successfully competing by offering a higher quality of life.

As previously mentioned, "quality of life" as a community attribute ranks highly in corporate location decisions. Employers prefer places where they and their employees can enjoy various amenities. In the 2003 study, *The Importance of Quality of Life in the Location Decisions of New Economy Firms* by David Salvesen and Henry Renski, the authors suggest "quality of life is becoming an increasingly important consideration in modern business location decisions. This is particularly true for technology firms."<sup>6</sup> Technology firms are one of the most desired employers in Union County. According to a 2010 article in *Area Development Magazine*, a publication for site and facility planning industry, "... companies planning information technology, life sciences, research and development, and corporate headquarters projects tend to rank quality of life issues higher on the list ...."<sup>7</sup> when relocating.

Currently, Union County provides three recreational facilities for its residents and the 14 municipalities provide an additional 33 recreational facilities. This provides a significant amount of recreation for the community. However, public input gathered through stakeholder interviews (see Appendix A for Stakeholder Interview Summary) and public meetings (see Appendix A for Public Meeting Summaries), revealed a substantial desire for more recreational amenities, specifically greenways and trails. Stakeholder interviews also indicated the importance of building a community that promotes its authenticity and builds community pride. Additionally, in public

meeting participants were asked "What makes Union County special?" The top three responses were its small town / rural character, history and natural beauty. A system that connects all these elements that make Union County special, has the potential to vastly improve the quality of life of Union County residents while building an authentic recreation experience.

Union County has an opportunity to improve the quality of life for its current residents through parks and recreation. In doing so, the County can also become more competitive in the region by promoting the parks and recreation system in the County's economic development initiatives. As the system is expanded and improved, it should make the County more attractive to businesses wishing to relocate to the area.



## INCREASED ACCESS TO FACILITIES

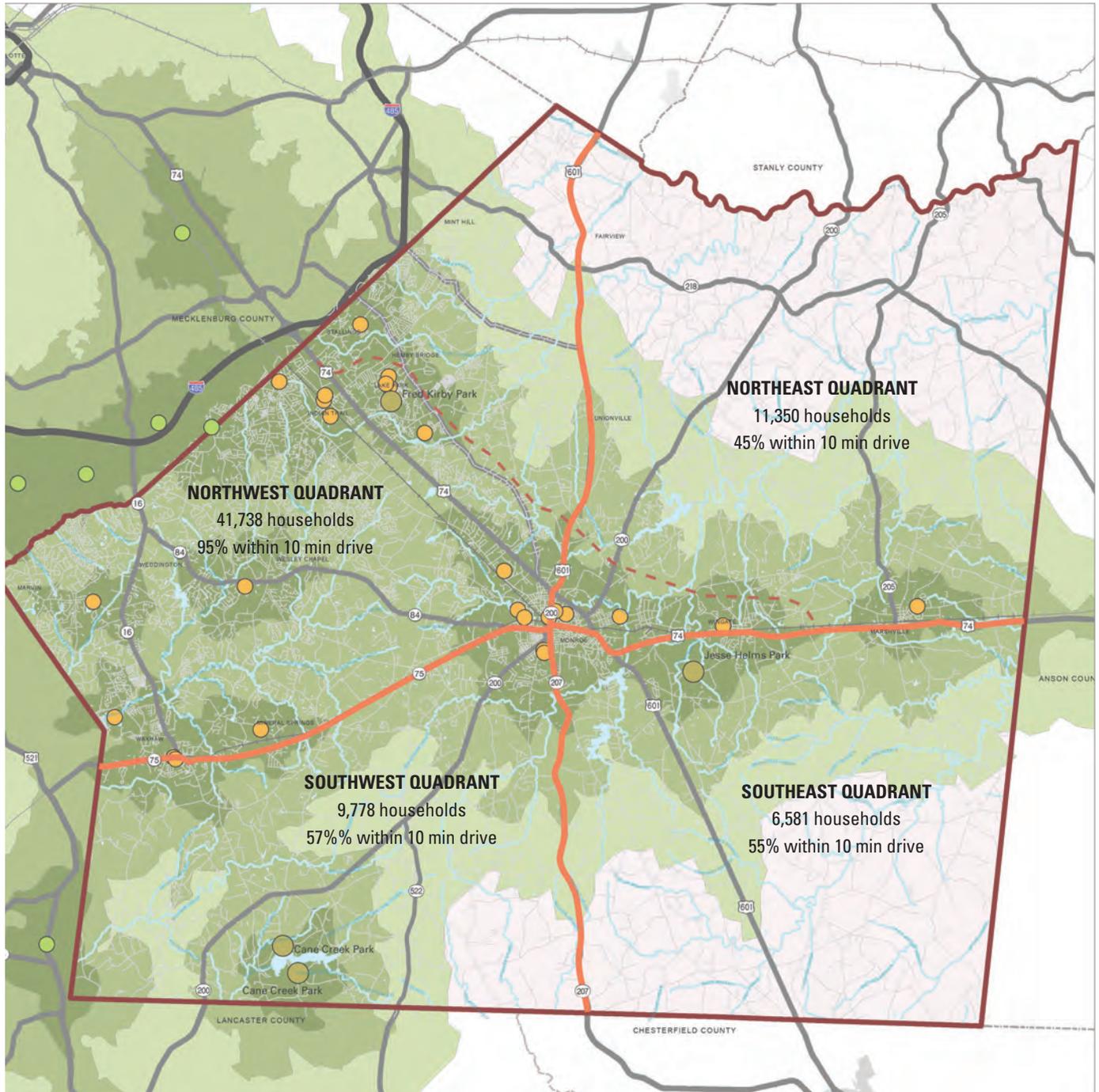
Easy access and proximity to parks and recreation facilities is associated with increased park use, elevated levels of physical activity, and improved health. According to a 2007 article, "Contribution of Public Parks to Physical Activity" in the *American Journal of Public Health*, people who live within a half-mile of a park are five times more likely to exercise than those who reside further away.<sup>8</sup>

Currently Union County has areas with good access to parks and open space (northwest quadrant), and other areas that have significantly less access (southwest, southeast and northeast). Data acquired through mapping (Appendix E) and the results of the level of service analysis (Appendix F), reveal that there are a number of facilities, varying in size and type, distributed throughout the study area.

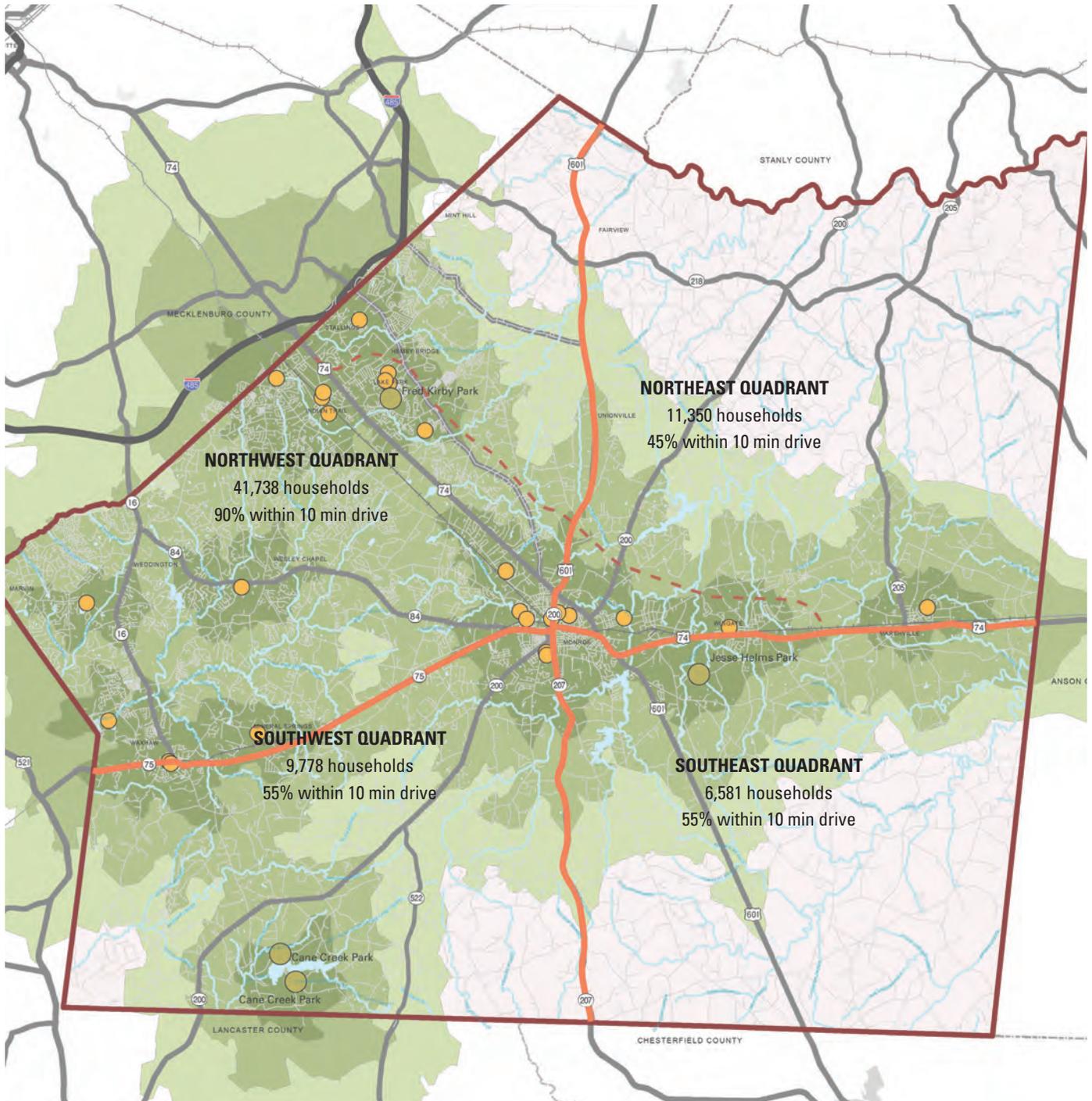
To further examine park access in Union County, a drive time analysis using three different access scenarios was conducted (see Maps 1, 2 and 3), based on what type of open space is available to residents (all, some or just County). (Note: This analysis does not take into account park classification.) The scenario depicted in Map 1 includes all Union County parks, municipal parks in Union County, and regional facilities in neighboring counties. From the drive time analysis of all municipal, county and regional facilities, 95% of households in the northwest have access to parks and open space facilities within a 10-minute drive, although the space is not evenly distributed throughout the sector. In the other quadrants, access is more limited. Fewer than half of the households in each have a comparable drive time. In Map 2, the scenario excludes the regional facilities in adjoining counties. Map 3 considers only drive time to Union County's three county parks: Cane Creek Park, Jesse Helms Park and Fred Kirby Park. In this third scenario, it is evident that the greatest access to County facilities is in the southeast quadrant. While Cane Creek Park is a regional facility, and therefore has a service area that encompasses a much larger geography, Union County residents' real and perceived access is low due to limited population in the low-density development surrounding the facility and the lack of direct road access from the populated areas.

# PROPOSED UNION COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION SYSTEM

MAP 1: DRIVE TIME ANALYSIS FOR ALL OPEN SPACE TYPES: UNION COUNTY PARKS, UNION COUNTY MUNICIPAL PARKS AND NEARBY REGIONAL PARKS



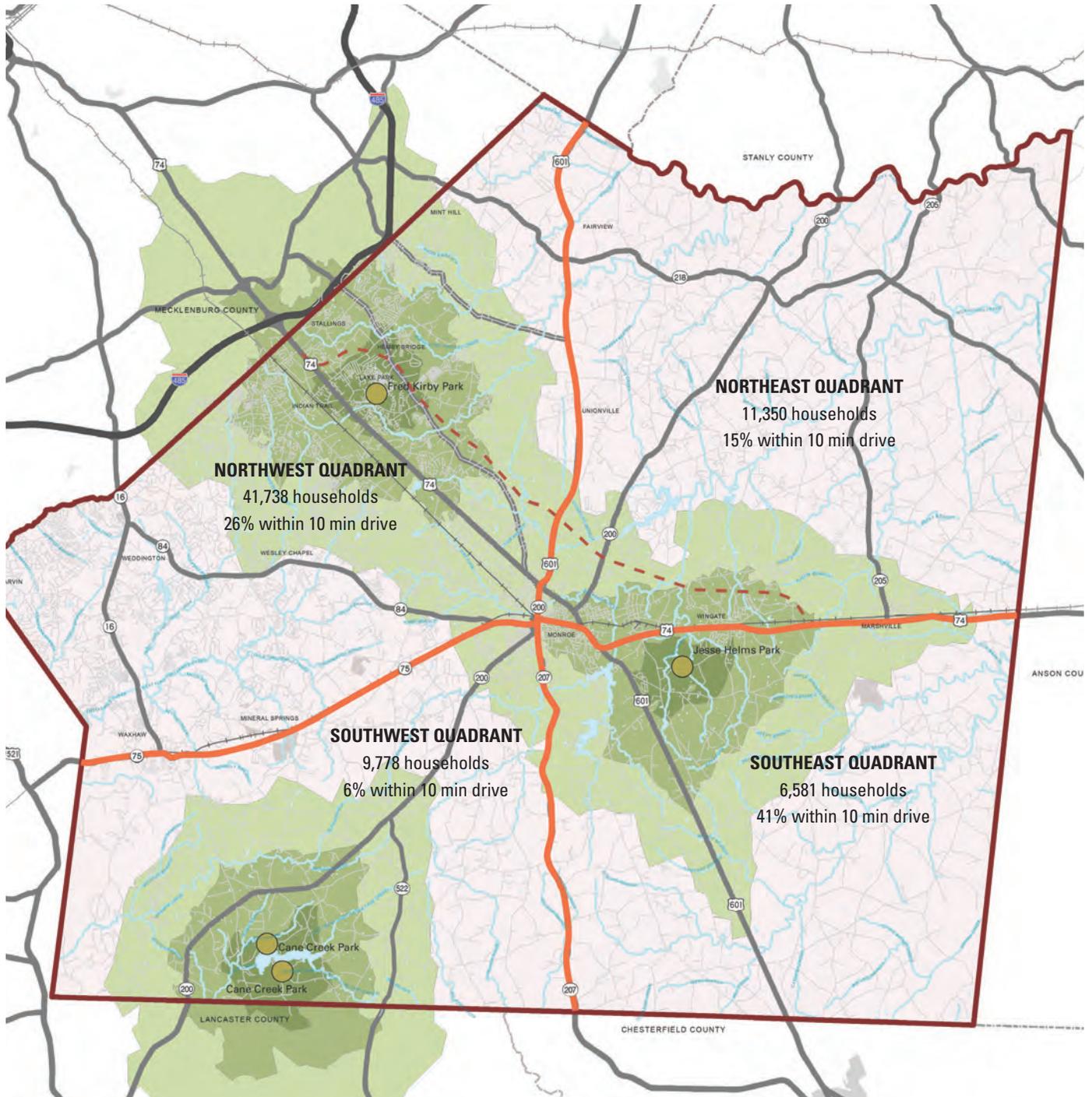
MAP 2: DRIVE TIME ANALYSIS FOR TWO OPEN SPACE TYPES: UNION COUNTY MUNICIPAL PARKS AND NEARBY REGIONAL PARKS



DRIVE TIME  
 ■ 5 Min  
 ■ 10 Min  
 ■ 15 Min  
 ■ >15 Min

PARK TYPE  
 ● Municipal Park  
 ● Union County Park  
 ● Existing Park

MAP 3: DRIVE TIME ANALYSIS FOR UNION COUNTY PARKS ONLY



DRIVE TIME  
 ■ 5 Min  
 ■ 10 Min  
 ■ 15 Min  
 ■ >15 Min

PARK TYPE  
 ● Municipal Park  
 ● Union County Park  
 ● Existing Park

Input gathered through the public meetings, stakeholder interviews, and both phone and online surveys (see Appendix A for a review of community engagement activities) indicated a lack of awareness as to what programs and facilities are offered at the County and municipal level. These results are not indicative of actual levels of service, but rather the perceived levels of service. Most compelling were the results of the online survey. When asked about factors discouraging respondents from utilizing recreational facilities or programs, the leading answer (33%) was distance from home.

This low perception of access may be affected by a lack of awareness of facilities and programming due to ineffective wayfinding signs or marketing campaigns. Currently, the County offers a variety of facilities and programming to its residents, but may not be effectively communicating them to its citizenry. According to the online survey results, 50% or more of the respondents answered “don’t use” when asked to indicate the level of satisfaction with the following Union County recreational programs and activities:

- Family Safety and Wellness
- Youth Activities
- Guided Nature Hikes
- Art & Cultural Activities
- Outdoor Education
- Master Gardener Series

Additionally, when asked in the phone survey if there were any factors that discourage them from using Union County recreational facilities, programs, or activities, “lack of awareness” was the second most common response (26%, behind “distance from home” with 33%). See Appendix F for Survey Summary.



## IMPROVED HEALTH OF ALL RESIDENTS

Obesity among children and adults is reaching near epidemic levels in the United States. Parks and recreation departments play a critical role in improving the health and wellness of residents nationally. This role has only strengthened in recent years, with trends for municipal and county governments providing increased access to passive and active recreational spaces in order to help fight this health epidemic. These departments have been recognized as essential partners to help combat health issues such as poor nutrition, hunger, obesity and lack of physical activity. Through alliances with local health organizations, doctors have begun prescribing park use to their patients, expanding community walking programs to lower barriers to participation and paying closer attention to recreation deserts and expanding access to all of their residents.

To properly address health in the context of Union County parks and recreation system improvements, the current state of public health must be acknowledged. In 2012, Union County published its Community Health Assessment (CHA).<sup>9</sup> This document, which is published every four years, is a comprehensive overview of the state of health in Union County. It lists the four leading chronic health issues in the County as cancer, heart disease, cerebrovascular disease / stroke and chronic respiratory disease. The Union County CHA also listed three health issues related to lifestyle and behavior: obesity, lack of exercise and poor eating. Primarily physical health and wellness issues, all of these can lead to more serious chronic disease, but also can partially be addressed through a robust parks and recreation system. The CHA community survey asked, “What can be done to change these?”<sup>9</sup> The overwhelming response was increasing access to affordable or free exercise venues. In addition to facilitating exercise, parks and recreation systems can serve as accessible venues for programs on nutrition choices and dietary habits to address poor eating.

Another recognized health risk is exposure to harmful chemicals in drinking water. Due to the underground shale belt throughout the region, Union County has significantly elevated levels of arsenic in the groundwater. This primarily affects the eastern section of the County due to where residents rely heavily on well water. A recent study by Duke University revealed



a correlation between the arsenic levels in the eastern portion of Union County and higher rates of Alzheimer's disease. A targeted land acquisition program in areas without utilities can reserve land for future park use and simultaneously limit development in these areas, which could decrease the potential number of future households that might rely on wells for water.

Examining health beyond what is normally addressed in the physical activity realm is essential to understanding the holistic experience a parks and recreation system can provide. While physical activity is important and oftentimes the most prominent health-related endeavor undertaken at a public park, there are six other dimensions of health to be considered. Based on the seven dimensions of health and wellness developed by University of California Riverside (see Appendix J for definitions of seven dimensions of health and wellness),<sup>10</sup> the impacts of parks and recreation investments can go well beyond the physical activity benefits they promote. Parks and recreation systems are, therefore, evolving to address all of these dimensions to improve the health and well being of citizens nationwide. The following explain how the seven dimensions of health might shape a comprehensive system of parks and recreation facilities and programs.

**Physical Health and Wellness.** Parks and other recreation facilities can maximize the potential for increases in physical activity by providing facilities, particularly if such facilities address diversity in terms of physical ability, age and interests. In addition to facilitating physical activity, a parks and recreation system can improve community health through programs and facilities that support healthy eating (e.g., community gardens, gardening classes, nutrition and cooking classes, etc.), better lifestyle and behavioral choices, and management of chronic diseases (mobile units for health screenings and education).

**Social Health and Wellness.** Any type of facility or program that promotes social interaction can have a positive impact on the community by bringing people together and helping to maintain and build positive relationships. Exercise classes and dog parks are two examples of activities that parks and recreation departments are supporting that can improve social health. Greenways, community centers, and outdoor spaces designed for formal and informal gatherings can also facilitate social interaction.

**Emotional Health and Wellness.** A person's emotional well-being is dependent upon one's ability to connect with others and develop a network through which they feel supported. It is also dependent upon one's access to the natural environment and the healing effects that such natural features can offer. In addition to bringing people together and minimizing issues of isolation, a parks and recreation system can also provide access to nature, which has been shown to reduce stress and alleviate feelings of depression and anxiety.

**Environmental Health and Wellness.** Parks and recreation systems support effort related to environmental conservation and stewardship. The preservation of open space (and vegetation within) and relatively

limited land development achieved with a system can protect air and water quality as well as important plant and animal species. Environmental conservation objectives can be more easily achieved through educational programs (classes, nature walks, and informational signage and interactive devices) offered in connection with the various facilities, as they can have the positive effect of influencing human behavior with respect to the environment and encourage environmental advocacy.

**Economic Health and Wellness.** On a broad community scale, economic health is measured through the economic return on investment for counties and municipalities. The quality of life in a community, which is determined in part by the availability and accessibility of parks and recreation opportunities, is an important factor in a community's ability to retain and attract residents and employers and see increases in investments. For individuals, economic benefits are less direct but important; growth and successful recruiting of a diverse range of employers expands the job opportunities for residents.

**Intellectual Health and Wellness.** Educational programming that helps to stimulate the mind and improve intellectual health can address topics ranging from environmental conservation to healthy eating. Such offerings can be accomplished programming delivered through a parks and recreation system. Partnering with area agencies, local schools, colleges, and nonprofits, land trusts, and other groups can enhance such programs and help expand opportunities for lifelong learning throughout the community.

**Spiritual Health and Wellness.** Spiritual health can be enhanced through access to open space and natural systems, quiet spaces for prayer and meditation, and places for community interaction, all of which can be supported through the design and operation of parks and recreation systems. In addition, faith-based institutions' use of facilities or participation in the delivery of programs can expand the opportunities for community members' spiritual growth.

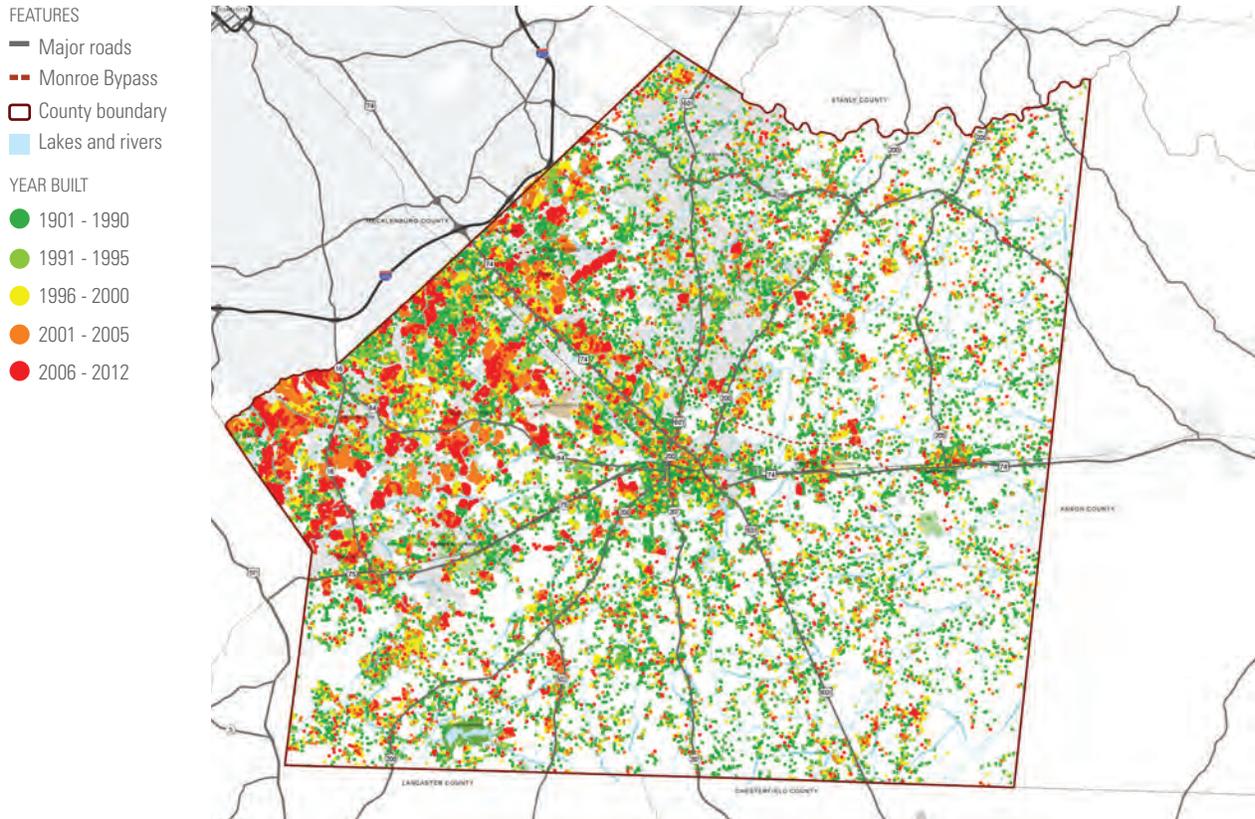


### A SOCIALLY, FINANCIALLY AND ENVIRONMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE PARKS AND RECREATION SYSTEM

For the Union County Parks and Recreation system to be successful, it must be socially, financially and environmentally sustainable. Sustainability requires a system that is run efficiently (maximizes the utilization of resources, such as land, funding and staff), helps to build social capital, and facilitates stewardship of the natural environment.

**Financially Sustainable:** As Union County's population grows, it is vital for the parks and recreation department to plan for financial sustainability. Understanding existing funding needs and projecting future needs as the department grows is very important. Because the needs of the County can and will be partially fulfilled by existing and future municipal facilities, an analysis must be conducted for all public facilities, not just those owned

MAP 4: YEAR BUILT OF STRUCTURES IN UNION COUNTY 1901 - 2012



SOURCE: UNION COUNTY 2025 TRANSPORTATION PLAN / COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

and operated by Union County. With the Union County Parks and Recreation department leading county-wide program and facilities coordination, a more efficient system that provides increased access to all can be achieved. This will help maximize utilization of available resources for a more financially sustainable system, a concept stressed in stakeholder interviews (Appendix A), by staff, and the Master Plan Committee.

To properly measure and track the efficiency of the system, a set of benchmarking metrics showing use and benefits can be established. Once those benchmarking metrics are established and the system is running efficiently, they can also be translated into marketing literature to show residents the added value of the parks and recreation system

**Environmentally Sustainable:** With recent population growth, depicted by the rapid development of structures in Union County in the past few years (Map 4), and increased development pressures from Mecklenburg County, a need to preserve natural open space has arisen throughout the County.<sup>6</sup> Union County has some very specific environmental issues: stream degradation, the presence of endangered species such as the Carolina Heelsplitter, and 23 sites identified as Significant Natural Heritage Sites.<sup>11</sup> These issues were addressed in the Comprehensive Plan and the 2006 Parks and Recreation Master Plan Update.<sup>12</sup> Both Plans suggest a land acquisition program to preserve dwindling open space. As part of a land acquisition and park development strategy, a parks and

recreation department can target areas of significant environmental features for conservation. This strategy coincides with one that is currently being advanced by the Catawba Lands Conservancy, one of many potential implementation partners in this effort (Appendix G). In addition to a targeted strategy, a department can also adopt standards for types of parks that limit the amount of land developed and require a certain percentage to be preserved.

**Socially Sustainable:** To be socially sustainable, the parks and recreation system must help to bring people together and build social capital in the community. This can begin with the planning process. By creating a connected vision of Union County, the sense of community ownership can build social capital. That social capital can be leveraged for county-wide advocacy in support of a unified parks and recreation system.

A more socially sustainable system is one that seeks to serve the community in a manner that is equitable and, more importantly, reinforces the concept of a single, unified place and system. For this to happen, the system should also be one that residents view as beneficial to the whole community, while embracing community values. An example of this would be a system that builds on Union County's unique small-town feel, the highest rated response to "What makes Union County special?" from the public meeting (see Appendix F for public meeting feedback). A community-supported vision is more easily implemented, and with vocal champions, can become a crucial component of a retention strategy

for businesses and residents even before the vision is fully implemented. Additionally, through public events and programs, particularly those that utilize public park space, Union County can unite people to form a more socially cohesive community. In the phone survey, when asked to indicate the level of access to the various resources, only 34.2% stated they had easy access to social groups and activities. Furthermore, when asked, what public recreation activities are most needed in Union County, community events or festivals ranked first with 45.4% (see Appendix A for survey results).

**A VARIETY OF FACILITIES, PROGRAMMING AND EVENTS FOR ALL RESIDENTS**

Nationally, the population is growing, and as it grows, changes in the size and composition of different age groups are becoming more apparent. Preferences are also shifting in a way that will affect the offerings of parks and recreation departments everywhere. For example, the two largest segments of the population in the next 20 years are likely to be the baby boomers (born between 1946 and 1964) and the millennials (born between early 1980s and early 2000s), as shown in Figure 1.

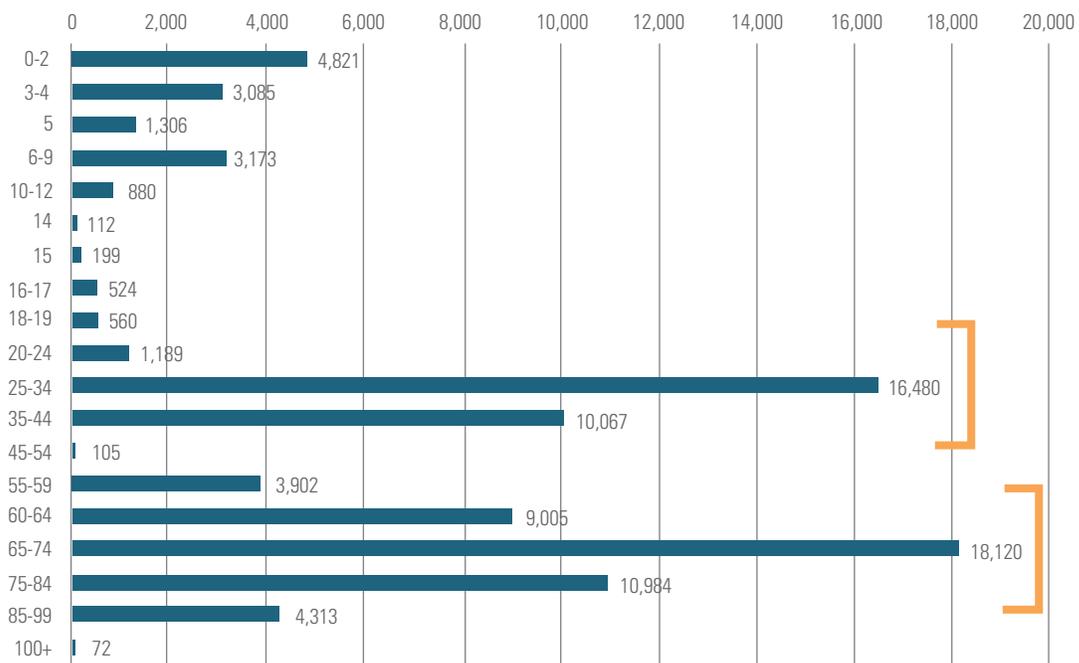
Characteristics of the older group include enhanced discretionary income, longer retirement periods and greater recreational expectations. More active than the same age cohort two decades ago, these retirees will require a broad range of activities to maintain physical health, including those for people with limited mobility. The social interaction facilitated

by recreational activities and specific programs also helps seniors feel connected, which is important for their mental and emotional health. Expansion of senior-oriented facilities and programs to meet these needs will be necessary. Current trends in senior facilities and programming include outdoor exercise equipment in public spaces, senior centers with facilities and programming specifically geared towards prevalent age-related health issues, arts and craft classes and life skills classes such as computer skills and financial assistance.

National trends for the 25-44 year-old cohort, the other large segment of the population, show a need for facilities and programming for both adults and their children. Some programs and facilities to meet these needs of this age group are passive recreational spaces, yoga, water sports, and gardening. Coupled with programs and facilities to meet the needs of their children, such as environmental education, life sports, or natural play spaces,<sup>7</sup> the demand for multi-purpose facilities will likely increase.

Union County is a diverse community with a multitude of needs. It is one that has had substantial growth over the last 20 years, and much of that growth has been families. Rapid growth is expected to continue in the future. In the next 20 years, Union County is projected to grow by 72,744 people. Following national trends, much of that growth will be in the 25-44 year-old and 65+ year old age cohorts (Figure 1). Therefore, Union County will need the same types of facilities and programs noted above to accommodate these age groups.

FIGURE 1: PROJECT POPULATION INCREASES BY AGE COHORT (2014-2034)



SOURCE: NORTH CAROLINA STATE OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET



Based on input from the surveys conducted, there is a considerable desire for expanded facilities. As presented in the results of the online survey, 24% of respondents believed senior activities were most needed. This was reinforced through stakeholder interviews and from the Master Plan Committee. According to stakeholders, the few existing providers of senior facilities, such as the Ella Fitzgerald Senior Center and the Monroe Aquatics and Fitness Center, which have many low-cost offerings, are currently overcrowded. Other small organizations and municipalities are supplementing these existing senior facilities by providing additional programming and facilities throughout Union County. Examples of these organizations are the Council on Aging, which provides educational and informational classes, and the City of Marshville, which offers senior exercise classes. However, the combination of County-managed facilities and those provided by other municipalities and organizations is still not sufficient to meet the demand of current and future residents.

Research also indicates a need to expand existing and provide new facilities for the 25-44 year-old cohort and their children. Currently County residents have access to a significantly larger amount of active recreation areas than they do passive recreational space (See Appendix E for level of service analysis). Results from the phone survey revealed a significant need for these facilities. When asked what County recreation

facilities are most needed in Union County?, 37% responded “greenways.” This number is nearly three times more than the second most common response (swimming pool with 13%). Results from the phone survey also helped illuminate Union County’s children’s needs. When asked what new recreational activity is most needed in Union County?, after-school activities or summer day camps ranked second (20%) after senior activities (24%). Youth sports league ranked third with 12% of the responses.

### A CONNECTED SYSTEM OF PARKS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTY

To better meet the needs of the greater Union County community, the parks and recreation facilities throughout the County should be well connected. Currently, each unit of local government (the County and its 14 municipalities) provides parks and recreation facilities and services that are not as connected as they could be, physically or governmentally. Provided in a coordinated fashion, the variety of parks and related facilities, connected by trails, bike paths, greenways and blueways, should function as a single, seamless system. Functioning as such, the system has the potential to increase access to recreation and improve residents’ perception of the quality of life in the county. Union County Parks and Recreation is in a position to



ensure a connected system by coordinating with and complementing the efforts of the municipal governments. In addition to collectively working to build a multi-faceted system efficiently, participating entities could minimize unnecessary redundancy where avoidable and maximize resources.

Both the online and phone survey results revealed an overwhelming desire from Union County residents for greenways, trails and overall connectivity. When residents were asked via phone or at the public meeting about the importance of physically-connected greenways and trails that provide bicycle and pedestrian connections between neighborhoods, parks, schools and other popular destinations, most stated this was either very important or somewhat important

Being connected physically requires the provision of facilities in a manner that ensures each individual component is experienced as an element of one larger system that extends into and beyond municipal boundaries. With facilities and programs that allow for the connections to occur, such as County greenways linking parks in two separate municipalities, the County can provide that connectivity. In some instances, the County-provided connections may allow one system to augment the offerings of another. In addition, those connections should ideally provide access to regional facilities operated by

the County, ensuring that municipalities are not burdened with providing the offerings that are more appropriately provided at the County level.

Mapping exercises of the inventory of existing recreation facilities revealed that there were significant opportunities to create physical connections between various facilities in the system via greenways or blueways. In addition, the Level of Service analysis revealed existing gaps in the Union County Parks and Recreation System. The programs and recreation opportunities currently lacking in County-provided facilities can, in most cases, be eliminated by incorporating municipal facilities into the system (see Appendix F).

Governmentally connected refers to a level of coordination amongst providers that extends beyond collaboration in the creation of the physical system and allows for the collection of otherwise separate systems be perceived as one place. A common thread throughout the stakeholder interviews was the need for coordination between all of the existing recreation providers to help maximize their potential. Through branding, which strengthens the identity of the place while informing marketing efforts and uniform design standards for sites and signage, a more cohesive system can emerge. By building the sense of connectivity even before the system is physically linked, will build social capital by increasing community pride.

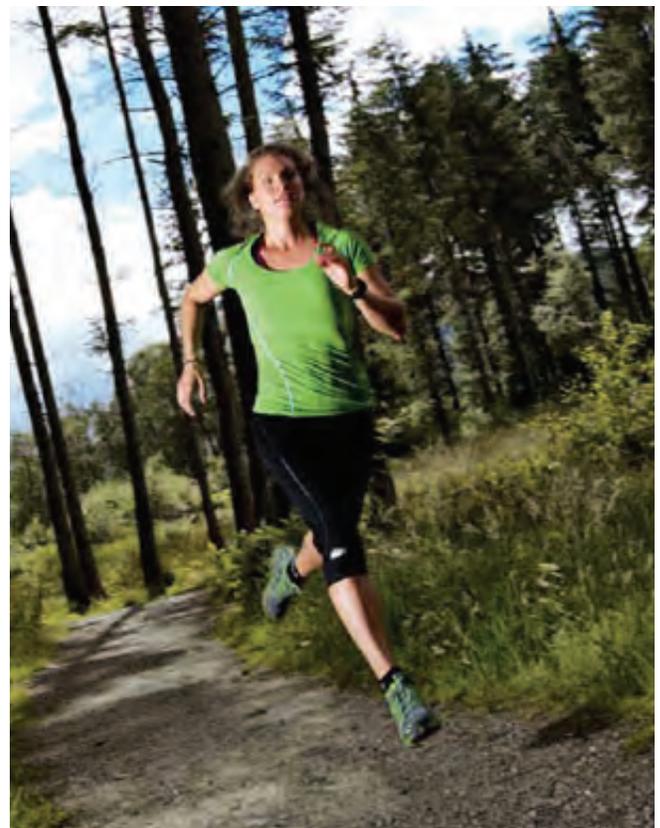
## Proposed Union County Parks and Recreation System

The proposed Union County Parks and Recreation System is one that seeks to provide equitable access to recreation and open space throughout Union County. This is achieved by including all recreation facilities in the County and expanding the Carolina Thread Trail alignments to promote additional connections to facilities where appropriate. The following Union County system map (Map 5) illustrates this system, which includes Union County parks (with the proposed northern regional park), municipal parks, school parks, and greenways and blueways. Each of the existing and proposed parks is represented by its classification type (Regional, Community, Neighborhood, etc.) according to the system outlined in this Plan. When all mapped together, a the future vision for a cohesive system of parks, open space, and trails available to Union County residents is revealed.

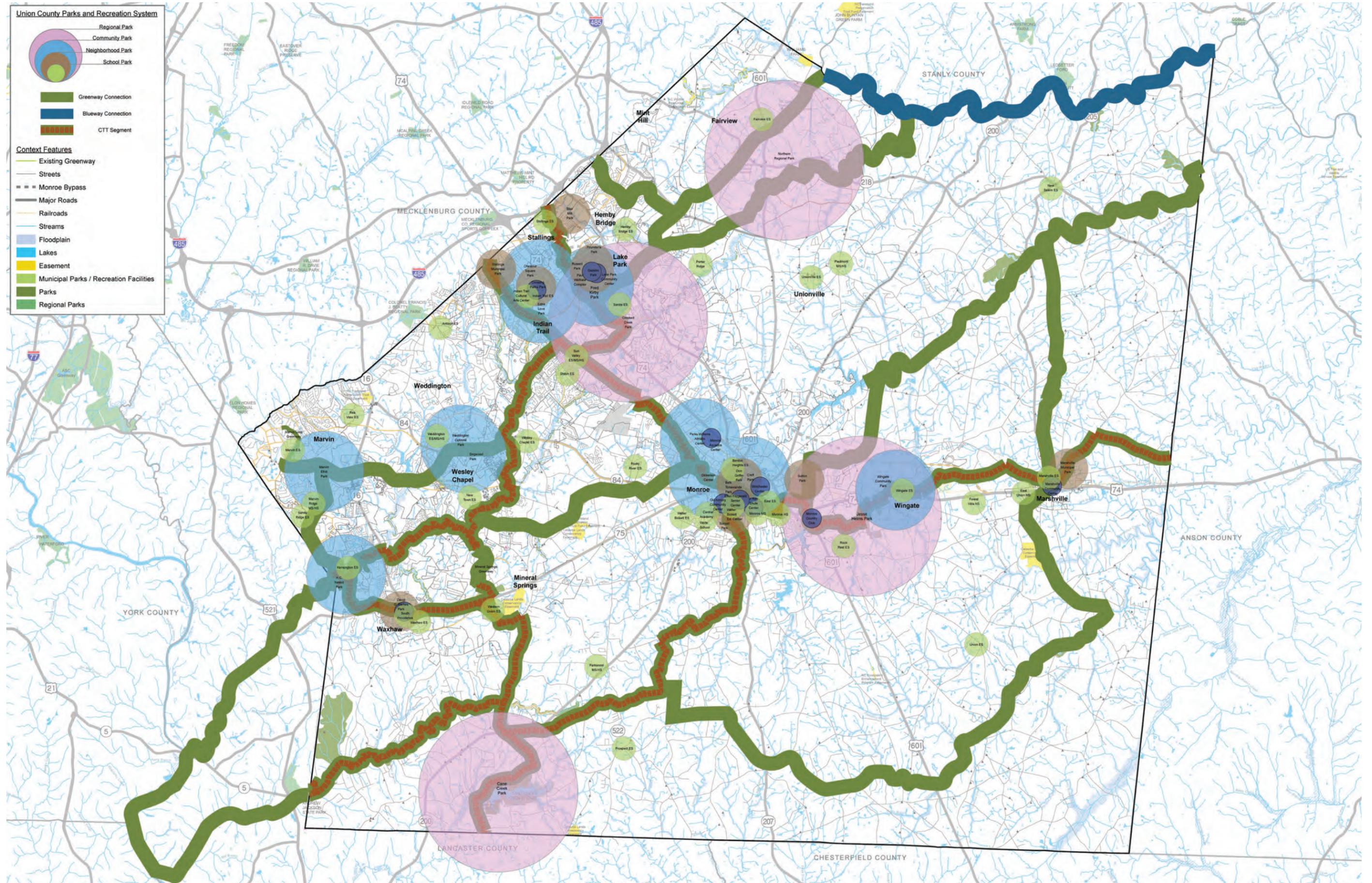
### Facility Classification System

A park classification system is a general framework intended to guide open space and recreation facility planning and design. The framework is also intended to inform the development of facility management plans and decisions regarding partnerships. A classification system groups parks according to shared common characteristics, such as park size, types of amenities, and service radius standards. The classification system recommended for Union County has been revised from the 2000 Recreation Standards<sup>13</sup> and 2006 Parks and Recreation Master Plan Update.<sup>12</sup> The new classification system recognizes how the existing parks could function more effectively for existing and future citizens, and provides a flexible framework intended to promote efficient use of public resources. Refer to Figure 2 at the end of this section for a complete inventory of existing system components (County, municipal and schools). In addition, District Parks and Regional Parks have been combined into one category, and the addition of the Nature Preserves has been added as a new category to the system.

A theme that evolved throughout the planning process was the need for Union County Parks and Recreation to spearhead efforts that increase coordination among the County, the Union County Public School system, individual schools in Union County, municipalities and other community partners in meeting the recreational and open space needs of the County. Therefore, this classification system proposes that Union County focus on the development and ongoing management of regional, large scale parks, facilities and nature preserves, while supporting the municipalities in developing and maintaining community and neighborhood facilities. Both the County and municipalities can work together to develop and manage trails and School Parks depending on their geographic location, function and intended service radius. By providing mini-grants to build Neighborhood and Community Parks and greenways, or by assisting with grant writing and coordination, the County can help municipalities can achieve their goal of increasing access to nearby open space that is part of a cohesive system.



MAP 5: PROPOSED UNION COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION SYSTEM MAP





**REGIONAL PARK**

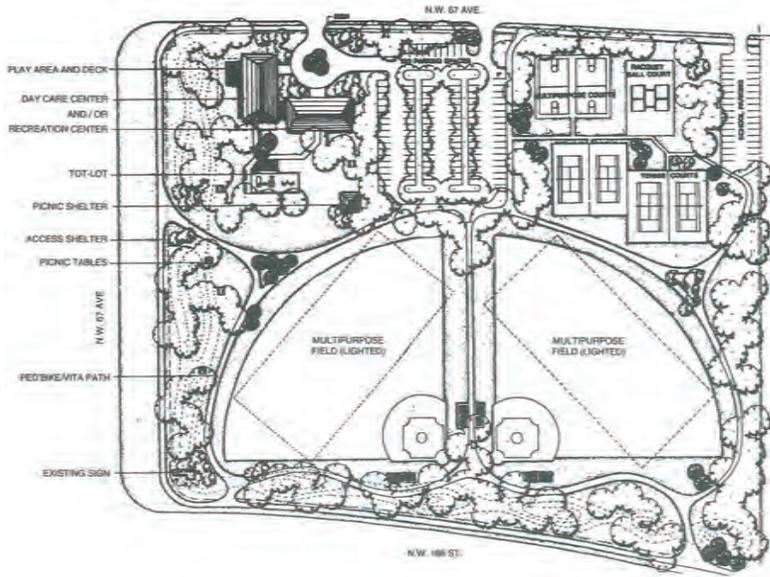
A Regional Park is a park with a wide service area radius of 10-15-miles intended to serve several communities. Regional parks can provide facilities for active or passive recreation or both. Generally, a minimum of 100 acres is ideal for developing a regional park. Union County has two regional parks: Cane Creek Park and Jesse Helms Park (upon full development).

Typical Regional Park Amenities:

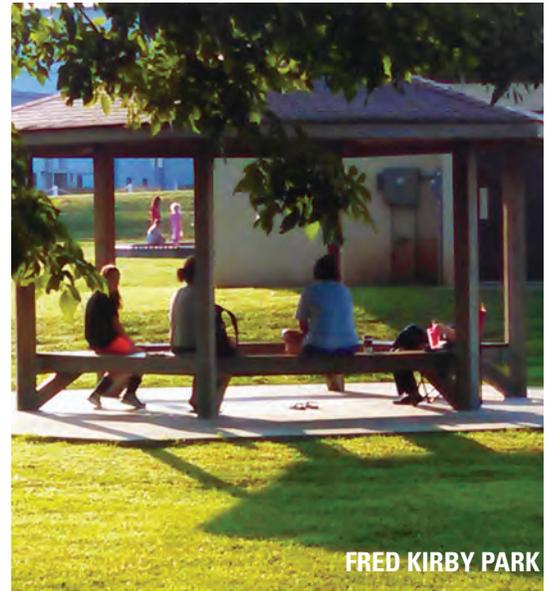
- Internal path system which connects to a greenway system
- Play areas for children of varying ages
- Restrooms
- Indoor recreation facilities
- Programmed and un-programmed, multipurpose open space
- Athletic fields
- Basketball courts
- Tennis courts
- Picnic shelters
- Natural preservation areas and landscape features such as ponds, prairies and wooded areas
- Interactive water features, such as spray grounds and/or pool
- Historic interpretation areas
- Lighting for security, safety and facilities
- Space for a community garden, if desired



## COMMUNITY PARK



SOURCE: MIAMI-DADE COUNTY PARKS, RECREATION AND OPEN SPACES DEPARTMENT



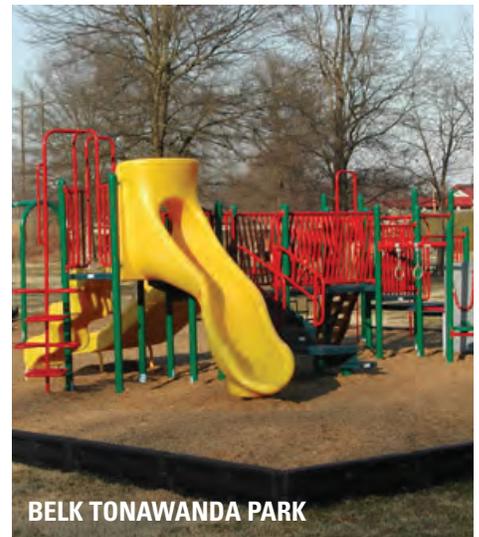
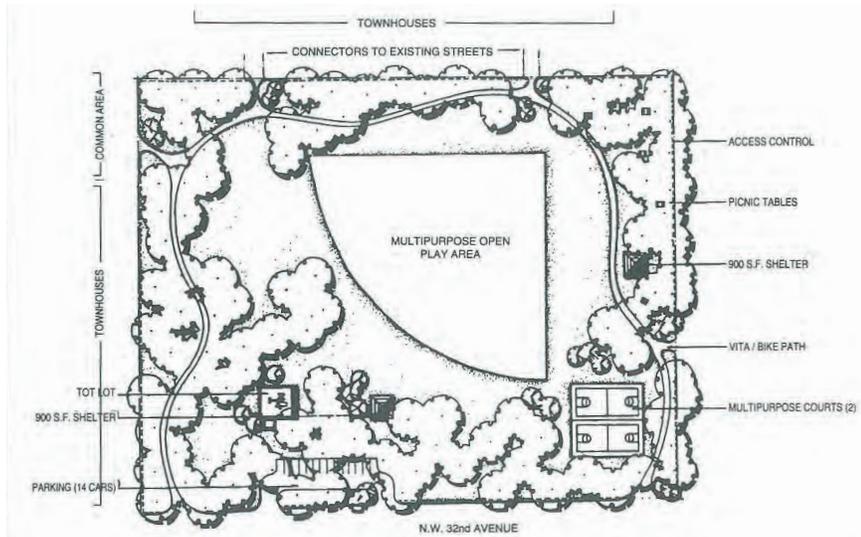
The Community Park serves a more local community within a geographic sub-region of the County than the Regional Park. The main purpose of a Community Park is to provide the community a focal point for a variety of active and passive recreational needs. It can function as a meeting place for social and recreational activities. A Community Park is ideally more than 15 acres in size and has a service radius of 3 miles from the park. Since the Community Park is designed to meet the recreational needs of the surrounding community, it is usually located near arterial and collector streets that can accommodate the expected volume of vehicular traffic to the park. When possible, the park should be developed adjacent to a high or middle school, in a partnership with the school's needs. Ownership and operation of Community Parks are generally the role of municipalities.

Typical Community Park amenities (this list is for guideline purposes only, with the intent that the municipalities dictate the design and programming of these parks):

- Internal path system which connects to a greenway system
- Play facilities for children of varying ages
- Restrooms
- Programmed recreational fields and courts
- Picnic shelters and seating
- Landscape features
- Parking areas
- Lighting for security, safety and facilities
- Space for a community garden, if desired



**NEIGHBORHOOD PARK/MINI PARK**



SOURCE: MIAMI-DADE COUNTY PARKS, RECREATION AND OPEN SPACES DEPARTMENT

The Neighborhood Park is intended to provide close-to-home opportunities for recreation and social interaction. Additionally, such parks integrated into the development pattern help to preserve urban greenspace. These parks are the smallest in size, but often times the most widely used. They offer a recreational and social focus for the neighborhood they serve and are gathering spots for informal active and passive recreation. Neighborhood Parks generally have a 1-mile service radius and are typically located on lightly travelled local roads. As with all parks in the parks system, it should be connected to--or provide linkages to--the existing or planned greenway system. A Neighborhood Park size is typically up to 15 acres in size and has minimal on-site parking or on-street parking. Ownership and operation of Neighborhood Parks are generally the role of municipalities.

Typical Neighborhood Park Amenities (this list is for guideline purposes only with the intent that the municipalities determine the design standards and programming of these parks):

- Internal path system which connects to a greenway system
- Play facilities for children of varying ages
- Un-programmed, multipurpose open space
- Picnic and seating areas
- Pedestrian-scale lighting for safety and security
- Design that reflects the neighborhood character
- Space for a community garden, if desired



## SPECIAL-USE PARKS

Special-Use Parks play an important role within the park system. These parks offer users different activities that complement those typically found in a traditional parks and recreation system. Special-Use Parks are usually a single-use facility and can vary in the range of programming and how much each facility is used depending on the nature of the activities. Examples of these types of facilities would be skate parks, dog parks, or a sports complex.





**SCHOOL PARKS**

School Parks can be a great asset to the community. A School Park is a joint-use facility made available through an agreement between the Parks and Recreation Department and school system or individual school. Typically, such parks are located next to a school facility so that they can be used by both the school and the general public. The park can function either as a Neighborhood Park, Community Park or a Regional Park depending on the acreage of available land and the proposed facilities. A School Park typically offers both active and passive recreational activities and is oriented more towards youth recreation. Due to the nature of the park as a shared-use facility between the Parks and Recreation Department and the Union County Schools, a joint-use agreement will need to be enacted to specifically define financial responsibilities, maintenance responsibilities, liabilities, accessibility, and use (park hours, scheduling of users, etc.). See the explanation and examples of Joint-Use Agreements in Appendix I.

**TRAILS: GREENWAYS AND BLUEWAYS**

Trails offer multiple users, including hikers, runners, cyclists, and kayakers, opportunities for recreation while linking key destinations in the park system and in the communities through which they pass.

Greenways provide pedestrian and bicycle connections between. Trails can be located in a variety of settings. Greenways are typically separated from vehicular traffic and may follow streams and river corridors. Locating greenways in natural corridors buffers riparian corridors protecting them from future development impacts. Greenways can also be located within utility corridors, making construction and obtaining easements quicker and

potentially more financially feasible. Blueways are water-based trails in rivers, lakes or streams that have public access for boating. Access, or trailheads, with such amenities as signage that includes instructions and maps, benches, lighting and trash receptacles, should be located at parks and at intersections with public streets. Depending on the location and potential number of users accessing the trail at that location, trailheads can contain different types of amenities. Smaller trailheads may simply have a sign indicating access, while larger trailheads may contain parking areas, seating, and restrooms. Future park location decisions should consider the existing and planned alignments of the trails. By linking and constructing parks and trails together, a connected park system of corridors and nodes will be developed that will enhance the accessibility of the system for the residents throughout the County.

**NATURE PRESERVE**

This is a new category added to Union County’s park classification system. Nature Preserves are natural areas that are managed in order to protect their natural ecological value. Where appropriate, they can provide the public with opportunities for nature-based experiences. Nature Preserves are intended to protect high-quality natural areas from development and provide multiple benefits to the community through the protection and enhancement of water and air quality, public education about natural systems, and the preservation of natural resources and beauty in the County.

Areas for citizen access should focus on the natural ornamental qualities that provide diverse and unique natural resources for nature-oriented outdoor recreation including nature viewing and study, wildlife habitat

FIGURE 2: EXISTING COUNTY, SCHOOL AND MUNICIPAL FACILITIES

conservation, hiking, camping, canoeing and fishing. In Nature Preserves a minimum of 80% of the land should be reserved for conservation and natural resource management, with less than 20% developed for recreation purposes.

## Access Standards

Having more community-wide access to public open space is a goal of this Master Plan and is noted through several recommendations. While park types and classification systems typically provide a recommended travel distance and service capacity, increasing the percentage of the residents in

close proximity to any public open space should be a primary focus for the Department over the next 5 to 10 years. The hierarchy of parks is typically based on size; the bigger the park, the more people it can serve. Therefore, a higher classification has a larger service radius. Facilities can serve more than one function. A Regional Park, for example, could also serve as the Neighborhood Park for the residents living in close proximity, thereby eliminating the need for a Neighborhood Park and avoiding unnecessary redundancy. In evaluating the locations of all existing and future parks in the system, the ultimate goal for Union County and its municipalities should be accessible public open space within one mile of all residents. In more heavily populated areas (i.e. Downtown Monroe or Downtown Waxhaw), this standard should be increased to ½ mile.

PROPOSED UNION COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION SYSTEM

RESPONSIBILITY	PARK TYPE	ACREAGE REQUIREMENTS	CURRENT FACILITIES
UNION COUNTY	Regional Park	Min. 100 acres	Cane Creek Park (Union County -1050 ac.) Jesse Helms Park (Union County - 230 ac.) Crooked Creek Park (Indian Trail owned and maintained - 137.27 ac.)
	Nature Preserve	Varies	None
MUNICIPALITIES	Community Park	Typically more than 15 acres	Fred Kirby Park (Union County – 17.4 ac.) Dickerson Center (Monroe – 62.7 ac.) Creft Park (Monroe – 30.9 ac.) Park Williams Athletic Complex (Monroe – 30.5 ac.) Chestnut Square Park (Indian Trail - 44.8 ac.) H.C. Nesbit Park (Waxhaw - 41.34 ac.) Marvin Efrid Park (Marvin – 28 ac.) Wingate Community Park (Wingate – 37 ac.) Dogwood Park (Wesley Chapel – 21.57 ac.)
	Neighborhood/Mini Park	Typically less than 15 acres	Belk Tonawanda Park (Monroe – 13.6 ac.) Don Griffin Park (Monroe – 5.1 ac.) Sutton Park (Monroe – 11.8 ac.) Winchester Center (Monroe – 8 ac.) J Ray Shute Center (Monroe – 10.6 ac.) Sunset Park (Monroe – 13.2 ac.) Crossing Paths Park (Indian Trail – 2.4 ac.) Marshville Municipal Park (Marshville – 10 ac.) David G. Barnes Park (Waxhaw – 1 ac.) Blair Mill Park (Stallings – 12.7 ac.) Stallings Municipal Park (Stallings – 8.7 ac.) Gazebo Park (Lake Park – 3 ac.) Founder’s Park (Lake Park – 4.9 ac.) Garden, Balsam & Sages Ponds (Lake Park – 7 ac.) Lake Charles Park (Lake Park – 7 ac.) Normandy Pond Park (Lake Park – 4 ac.) Veteran’s Pond and Playground (Lake Park - 6 ac.) Russell Park (Lake Park – 5 ac.) Alden Pond Park (Lake Park – 4 ac.) Highland Park Playground (Wingate – 2 ac.)
UNION COUNTY P&R, MUNICIPALITIES & UNION COUNTY SCHOOLS	School Park	Varies	[Currently, there is not a formal agreement about the public use of school facilities for the general public outside of school operating hours.]
VARIES	Special Use Park	Varies	Ellen Fitzgerald Senior Center (Monroe) Old Armory Community Center (Monroe) Aquatics and Fitness Center (Monroe) Monroe Country Club (Monroe) J Ray Shute Center (Monroe) Cultural Arts Center (Indian Trail) Marshville Community Center (Marshville) Dare Steele Memorial Garden (Waxhaw) Waxhaw Skate Park (Waxhaw) Paul Wolfcale Complex (Lake Park) Community Center (Lake Park)
	Trails: Greenways and Blueways	Publicly accessible and connected to the larger system	Cane Creek Park Trails (Union County – 13.4 miles) Bearskin Creek Greenway (Monroe 1.6 miles) Mineral Springs Greenway (Mineral Springs – 2.8 miles) 12 Mile Creek Greenway (Waxhaw – 3.5 miles)

03



# RECOMMENDATIONS

## THE FOLLOWING RECOMMENDATIONS WERE DEVELOPED IN RESPONSE TO THE ISSUES AND

opportunities determined through the planning process. They are intended to provide guidance to the County and its partners in order to implement the future vision of the Union County Parks and Recreation system and achieve stated goals. The recommendations are organized under three major headings: policy, facilities, and programs. Where appropriate, specific implementation strategies are provided to clearly outline potential actions steps. Relevant case studies complement some suggested actions to provide implementers with information from other precedent communities that have demonstrated success.

## Policy Recommendations

The following policy recommendations should be used to guide the department in the planning and development of the Union County System.

### POLICY RECOMMENDATION 1

**Partner with municipalities so that all entities can jointly create a seamless park and recreation system that offers a range of facilities and programs to meet the needs of County residents.**

#### STRATEGY 1.1

Support municipal efforts to create and improve local park and recreation facilities to ensure that such facilities function as suitable components of the larger, county-wide parks and recreation system.

##### ACTION 1.1.1

Help municipalities with the funding of facilities and services. Rather than offering facilities and services that can be more

appropriately provided and maintained at the municipal level, the County should establish a means by which municipalities can secure funding support from the County to meet local needs.

##### ACTION 1.1.1.1

Re-establish the Union County Athletic Council Grants (UCAC), a grant program provided from Union County to the athletic associations for facilities and programming, and include eligibility for municipal facilities and programs.

##### ACTION 1.1.1.2

Re-establish the Union County Community Grant program, a grant program provided from Union County to the municipalities for facilities and programming, and include eligibility for non-profit facilities and programs.

#### CASE STUDY (SUPPORTS STRATEGY 1.1.1.2)

### DANE COUNTY, WI

Dane County has a history of providing grants to communities within its jurisdiction. Their 2015 budget allocated \$750,000 in matching grants to communities interested in expanding trail connectivity.

For more information, please refer to: <https://www.countyofdane.com/lwrp/parks/grants.aspx#PARC>



CASE STUDY (SUPPORTS STRATEGY 2.)

## JOINT USE OF SCHOOL PARKS AND FACILITIES (CABARRUS COUNTY, NC)

Cabarrus County has developed strong relationships and partnerships with the school district to enable joint use of school parks and facilities. There are 45 playgrounds and parks located throughout Cabarrus County built and operated through joint planning, joint administration and joint financing.

STRATEGY 1.1.2

The County could also offer support to municipalities is through grant writing.

STRATEGY 1.2

Improve communication and coordination between the County and municipal departments.

ACTION 1.2.1

Establish a mechanism for regular communication between municipal and County Parks and Recreation department heads, such as bi-monthly or quarterly meetings. The primary purpose of these meetings could be to discuss county-wide issues and opportunities. Resulting initiatives should effectively address issues and seize opportunities through an exchange of information, sharing or combining resources, clarify priorities, and avoid duplication of services or facilities.

ACTION 1.2.2

For any shared initiatives resulting from better communication, formalize partnerships through agreements that assign responsibilities in accordance with a work plan, identify ways to utilize available resources, and define metrics to measure progress.

### POLICY RECOMMENDATION 2

**Partner with area schools to maximize use of existing public resources.**

STRATEGY 2.1

Collaborate with the Union County School Board in the planning of future parks and schools. By collocating school and park facilities, more effective utilization of resources can be realized.

STRATEGY 2.2

Create and utilize a joint-use agreement. Enter into formal joint-use agreements (refer to Appendix I for a sample joint-use agreement, or JUA) for use of existing and future school sites and facilities.

STRATEGY 2.3

Coordinate a pilot demonstration joint-use agreement with one school as an example of the benefits and execution efforts involved.

STRATEGY 2.4

Consider the educational opportunities provided by the parks and recreation system that can augment school curriculum to support those efforts.

ACTION 2.4.1

Support initiatives to create schoolyard gardens to meet a community need while creating teaching opportunities as an outdoor classrooms.

ACTION 2.4.2

Consider other outdoor classroom opportunities that introduce students to nature, agriculture and the environment.

### POLICY RECOMMENDATION 3

**Promote the system.**

Promote awareness of the existence and benefits of the system to residents, visitors, and employers. Such promotion will not only increase use but could be effective in attracting and retaining residents and employers, foster job creation, and increase use of facilities and programs offered throughout Union County.

STRATEGY 3.1

Work with Union-Monroe Economic Development to develop a parks and recreation-based economic development strategy.

STRATEGY 3.2

Maintain an updated inventory of county-wide parks, greenways and trails and create maps and other materials to market related information to all potential users.

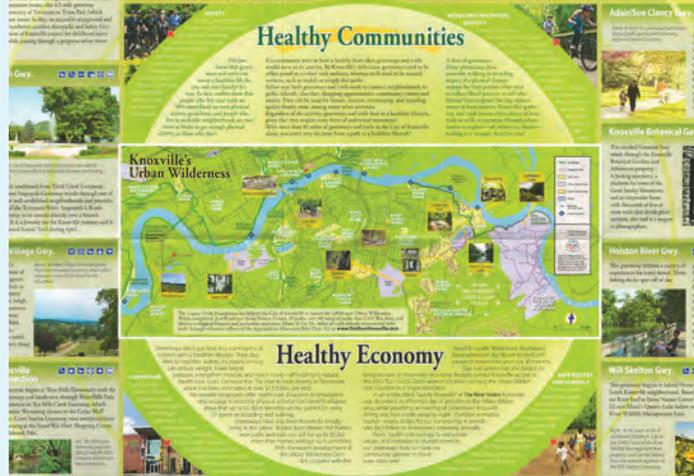
ACTION 3.2.1

Develop interactive online maps that include all recreational facilities in Union County.

CASE STUDY (SUPPORTS STRATEGY 3.2.3)

**KNOXVILLE, TN  
(KNOXVILLE, TN)**

The City of Knoxville recognizes the value of parks and recreation—and the promotion of healthy, active living—in creating an economically vibrant community. In conjunction with the expansion of facilities and programs, the city is marketing its offerings to existing and future residents.



**ACTION 3.2.2**

Create database of all recreation in Union County that is searchable by type of use. For example one could search for dog parks, special needs facilities or tennis facilities and would be directed to all places these uses are available.

**ACTION 3.2.3**

Produce printed maps that include all recreational facilities in Union County.

**ACTION 3.2.4**

Use web-based, mobile, and social media apps to disseminate information.

**ACTION 3.2.5**

Consider quarterly publications for interested users without internet access.

**STRATEGY 3.3**

Provide low-cost introductory programs, spread throughout the County, to reduce barriers to entry, thereby increasing the number of people utilizing parks and recreation.

**STRATEGY 3.4**

Expand programming to meet needs of greater portion of population at existing parks to attract more users (more information under programming recommendations).

**STRATEGY 3.5**

Develop a wayfinding system to ease navigation to park facilities.

**STRATEGY 3.6**

Market the Union County Parks and Recreation system as one that promotes the community's assets and builds community pride.

**ACTION 3.6.1**

Develop a strategy that showcases Union County's unique historic,

cultural and environmental resources and tells its story to brand the new system.

**ACTION 3.6.2**

Develop consistent messaging that resonates with various user groups.

**ACTION 3.6.3**

Prepare and utilize materials that are produced in print and web-based form that convey general and specific information about the array of offerings. These materials should be produced in both English and Spanish.

**ACTION 3.6.4**

Thematically categorize the inventory of parks and recreation facilities. Under each theme, group events and activities, and associate specific facilities and destinations in accordance with the events and activities. Promoting the system in such terms will ensure that its benefits will resonate with targeted user groups, which could help increase the user experience. The mock-up brochure on the following page (Figure 3) illustrates a way to tell the story of the County and the experiences offered by the County parks and recreation system.

**ACTION 3.6.4.1**

Define the experience. Building on the assets mapped during this comprehensive master planning process, create an inventory of assets that are valued by the community such as trails and recreational fields, as well as those lesser-known assets that have shaped the history, identity, and heritage of the County and therefore warrant inclusion. Using the five ideas described above as a starting point, examine the existing and planned system in the context of all inventoried County assets and confirm or modify the themes. It may be common for assets to be part of two or more themes.

**ACTION 3.6.4.2**

Create the experience. Once an experience has been defined, the missing pieces (e.g., a trail linking two cultural destinations) can then be



FIGURE 3: SAMPLE BROCHURE OF THE UNION COUNTY EXPERIENCE

Union County has numerous natural, historical, cultural and other assets, many of which are—or can be—encompassed by the parks and recreation system. While expanding and enhancing the system over the next 10 years, the County has an opportunity to leverage groupings of assets in a manner that could improve the way residents and visitors experience Union County. This system functions in addition to the traditional role of active recreational programs and facilities already being provided by the Union County Parks and Recreation Department. Beyond describing the system in terms of its component parts (regional parks, community parks, neighborhood parks, nature preserves, trails, etc.), the County should also promote the opportunities of the system to entice different types of users.

For example, adventurers might be drawn to Union County to kayak the Rocky River Blueway if the trip could be extended to include historic sites, nature preserves, farm and food opportunities, and lodging or camping facilities, all linked by Greenway segments. The above mock-up brochure, along with supporting conceptual map diagrams, defines five types of potential experiences to be considered. Each demonstrates how a set of assets can be grouped to maximize residents’ and visitors’ enjoyment of the park and recreation system.

Promoting the system in terms of themes allows for each experience to offer other benefits, such as:

**Economic Development:** This organization of the park and recreation system offers benefits for Union County that extend well beyond meeting parks and recreation needs of the population served. The series of experiences lends itself to economic development efforts. Shifting away from service delivery and focusing on the opportunity to enjoy the County

in a variety of ways could help attract residents of all ages and interests. Furthermore, it could give Union County a competitive edge. Employers who seek a business location that helps attract and retain their employees may find this differentiator among the top factors influencing their decision.

**Public Health:** In each of the themed experiences is an opportunity to improve an individual’s health and well-being. While the recreational aspects of each of the experiences will likely encourage more physical activity, mental, emotional, spiritual and intellectual health can also be affected in a positive way. Whether reducing stress while communing with nature, developing a stronger sense of belonging while connecting with other people at programmed events, or developing a stronger sense of community pride while being exposed to local art or indigenous plants incorporated into the design of system elements, each experience should provide opportunities to achieve an improved state of health.

**Education:** Through the themed experiences, there will also be an opportunity to expand users’ knowledge of Union County and the world around them. Through branding, interpretive signage or brochures, residents can be taught about historic structures, cultural features, or significant environmental habitats. Through this system, visitors will gain a better knowledge and understanding about what makes Union County unique. A project which has successfully included educational elements in facility development, is Little Sugar Creek Greenway in Mecklenburg County. Interpretive signage along the new urban section explains the process of transforming an area dominated by asphalt into a newly daylighted stream, restored habitat and linear park.

## CASE STUDY (SUPPORTS STRATEGY 3.2.4)

**WEBSITE / E-INTERFACE  
(SALT LAKE COUNTY, UT)**

Salt Lake County has developed a mobile app using iCity that includes all of the parks and recreation resources within Salt Lake County. This easy-to-use app is one location for all recreational opportunities in Salt Lake County, and is marketed through the visitors bureau, local businesses and airport. For more information, refer to:

<http://slco.org/recreation/>

<http://icity.us/resources/case-studies/salt-lake-county-utah-parks-andrecreation-for-public-service/>



prioritized so that the County, working with various public and private sector partners, can “complete” the experience. This may require the coordination of several entities to address phasing and funding. Additionally, pieces of the system could also be created by other entities (e.g. non-profits) and the role of the County could be solely to acknowledge it as part of the system and to promote it as such.

**ACTION 3.6.4.3**

Brand and promote the experience. Each experience should have its own identity to fully convey that component and its uniqueness within the greater Union County experience. This can be done with printed brochure(s) as well as online interactive maps should clearly delineate each experience, displaying the components (destinations and linking trails between them). Equally important will be the recommended route to follow should the users choose to move through the series of places that comprise an experience.

**POLICY RECOMMENDATION 4****Grow Union County Parks and Recreation department to meet needs of population.****STRATEGY 4.1**

Create and fund new Parks and Recreation department staff positions to address the following:

- Programming (two positions)
- Trail coordination and development with municipalities (one position)
- School facilities / joint-use agreement coordination between users and Union County schools (one position)
- Joint marketing position with shared funding by Union County and municipalities (one position)

**POLICY RECOMMENDATION 5****Coordinate with other Union County departments to align policy initiatives and decisions.**

Often, county departments have separate but complementary plans. Such plans guide decision making and budgeting of resources. Frequently, the implementation of some plans is carried out without regard for overlapping elements. Through coordination across departments, complementary objectives could be identified and strategies that lead to more efficient use of resources can be defined. In addition, the policies and implementation actions of one could reinforce another, thereby elevating some priorities. For example,

**STRATEGY 5.1**

Work with Union County Planning to accomplish specific objectives.

**ACTION 5.1.1**

Provide parks and recreation facilities in accordance with the adopted Future Land Use Map.

**ACTION 5.1.2**

Coordinate with private property owners and developers to support planning and development policies regarding the provision of public open space (i.e., dedication of improved public spaces created through the private development process).

**ACTION 5.1.3**

Consider policies that require sidewalks along street frontages (within ½-mile of existing and planned parks) to link new subdivisions to parks.

**ACTION 5.1.4**

Conduct a study of the Rocky River corridor to identify water-based recreation and tourism opportunities.

**STRATEGY 5.2**

Work with Union County Public Health to ensure the parks and recreation system facilitates initiatives to improve the health of Union County citizens. Review the results of the Community Health Assessment (CHA) updates to identify partnerships that could support the Health Department’s recommendations. Identify additional parks and active transportation questions to ask during CHA updates.



CASE STUDY (SUPPORTS STRATEGY 3.2.1)

**ONLINE TOOLS  
(SEMINOLE COUNTY, FL)**

Seminole County has effectively created online tools that not only provide a comprehensive inventory of the parks and recreation system but also provide information about each facility through a simple click of the mouse. Using icons to represent the various facilities, the interactive maps take users to summaries about each place. Images, location information, and a listing of specific park facilities are some of the data displayed.

To experience the interactive map on Seminole County’s web site, please go to <http://www.seminolecountyfl.gov/parksrec/index.aspx>

**STRATEGY 5.3**

Work with the County Environmental Health Division to create initiatives that promote a healthier environment in Union County.

**STRATEGY 5.4**

Work with Monroe-Union County Economic Development to promote parks and recreation to future employers as a demonstration of Union County’s high quality of life.

**STRATEGY 5.5**

Work with Union County Public Health Department to develop a Health and Wellness Council. Representatives of parks and recreation departments and other providers, the agricultural community, the healthcare industry, social services, and planning departments and related agencies as well as interested residents could be included on council.

**POLICY RECOMMENDATION 6**

**Coordinate with other entities that share mission and/or objectives.**

**STRATEGY 6.1**

Appoint a person or persons representing historic and cultural interests to the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board.

**STRATEGY 6.2**

Include neighboring counties, such as Mecklenburg and Cabarrus that offer facilities and services in close proximity to the population concentrations of Union County when planning new facilities and/or services.

**STRATEGY 6.3**

Coordinate regularly with Carolina Thread Trail for new trail, greenway and blueway planning and development.

**STRATEGY 6.4**

Support municipalities to develop initiatives, facilities and programs for Union County’s special needs populations.

**STRATEGY 6.5**

Consistent with the recently adopted Comprehensive Transportation Plan for Union County, work with NCDOT, the CRTPO, the RPO, and County transportation planners to identify critical pedestrian, bicycle and greenway linkages to parks and other destinations that provide an opportunity for physical activity in addition to meeting a transportation need (active transportation). Refer to the Activity Connection Plan (ACP) on pages 34 and 35 for more specific information.

**POLICY RECOMMENDATION 7**

**Stay relevant.**

**STRATEGY 7.1**

Update Parks and Recreation Master Plan a minimum of every 10 years to stay relevant and meet grant and accreditation requirements when such opportunities arise.

**STRATEGY 7.2**

Conduct a statistically-valid survey every two years to measure satisfaction with existing facilities and services and identify new community needs and preferences.

**STRATEGY 7.3**

A comprehensive review of the Department’s progress, vision, department goals, programs and facilities should be undertaken every 5 years at a minimum by department staff to ascertain if the direction and progress is in line with the master plan and community feedback.

**STRATEGY 7.4**

Pursue Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA) accreditation for the Union County Parks and Recreation department and maintain into the future. CAPRA is the commission in charge of accreditation of park and recreation agencies in the United States. It is charged with providing assurance to the public that their agency meets national standards of best practice.



CASE STUDY (SUPPORTS STRATEGY 5.4)

## PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS (JAMES CITY COUNTY, VA)

James City County, VA – James City County, Virginia In 2012, the County was the first of its size to receive a Gold Medal NRPA Award for park and recreation system. The Gold Medal Awards program honors US communities that, according to NRPA, “demonstrate excellence in parks and recreation through long-range planning, resource management, volunteerism, environmental stewardship, program development, professional development and agency recognition.” The County has been successful with establishing public-private partnerships to fund parks and recreation facilities. For example, a public-private partnership with Go Ape USA resulted in a tree top adventure course built without added taxpayer expense, and citizens enjoy reduced admission fees (see YouTube.com video here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E1F82zeJMec&feature=youtu.be>). Also, a public-private partnership was created to develop, install and operate an ice skating rink in Sullivan Square. According to the Annual Report (FY13), the rink operated from November to January, attracting over 5,000 visitors in its first season. Go to <http://www.jamescitycountyva.gov/recreation/programs/partneredsites.html> for a complete list pf partners, including businesses.

### POLICY RECOMMENDATION 8

**Develop a benchmarking system to measure the effectiveness of the Union County Parks and Recreation Department.**

#### STRATEGY 8.1

Establish metrics to help determine the success of the system as it grows. Annually, utilize such metrics in review of progress with respect to the action plan.

### POLICY RECOMMENDATION 9

**Ensure the components of the system, together or individually, advance public health goals and work to improve the seven dimensions of health.**

#### STRATEGY 9.1

To address issues of access to fresh produce, support efforts to create community or neighborhood gardens that can meet identified needs.

##### ACTION 9.1.1

To aid in this effort, Union County can supply land in existing parks, develop educational programs, promote programs by other organizations, and coordinate existing efforts.

## POTENTIAL PARTNERS

Partnerships are an effective means to advance specific projects. Funding challenges can delay projects, especially if such projects are dependent upon the availability of resources of a single entity. When two or more entities have a common interests and are aligned in their commitment to deliver facilities or programs that support their common interests, sharing of resources can move a project forward. By leveraging County resources, the Parks and Recreation Department can establish partnerships to increase available funding for projects and programs. The following are examples of potential partnering opportunities to realize elements of this master plan.

- CTT – greenways and blueways
- CLC – land acquisition
- Hospitals – CMC, Presbyterian
- Institutions (Union County Schools and Wingate University, for example) – recreation facilities and ball fields
- Corporations – contributions, construction and dedication to County, sponsorship (maybe an adopt-a-park program)
- Cooperative Extension – agricultural programs, community garden support
- Municipalities
- Other County departments (Health, Public Works, etc.) – Health programs, greenways in easements, etc

*An extensive list of potential partners is provided in Appendix G*

## ACTIVITY CONNECTION PLAN

The concept of an Activity Connection Plan or ACP is to focus on improving conditions for walking and bicycling by recommending short-term infrastructure improvements that link parks and recreation facilities via walking and biking networking to promote increased participation and grow momentum and interest. The goals for ACP recommendations are focused on improvements that safely and efficiently allow citizens to access locations where they are most likely to participate in recreation or sport, as research shows these are the majority of types of walking and bicycling trips people make. Union County's context for an ACP analysis is unique in that it is a place where the County's parks system is presently located in areas with few opportunities for direct linkages via greenways, sidewalks or on-street bikeways.

Since many active transportation trips are for recreation purposes, many of the recommendations of the Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Master Plan continue to focus on walking and bicycling investments along greenway corridors. Many of these corridors are already identified through the Carolina Thread Trail plans and through actions by individual municipalities. Union County's role should be to determine how to best link communities and advance establishment of the Thread Trail in unincorporated areas.

As Union County continues to urbanize and the County's Parks and Recreation department pursues partnerships with various municipalities, County officials can consider how park features can be designed to maximize physical activity (e.g. providing a walking trail around a sports facilities complex like at Jesse Helms Park). By considering additional on-site recommendations around or near parks and recreation facilities the County, its partners and the Health Department can improve public health conditions. Beyond the park site, County officials can identify how these parks can be linked to other nearby nodes, such as the potential linkage between Jesse Helms Park and the nearby Cooperative Extension offices—a connection that exists in theory today but is not formalized or marked to encourage walking or biking this route as a recreational loop.

Citizens, more and more, are looking to make other trips via active modes and it was heard during the public outreach elements of the Master Plan that Union County residents see walking and bicycling facilities in adjacent Mecklenburg County and are desirous of similar features in their own community. While communities are working to implement long-term improvements in active transportation plans and parks/recreation plans, there are other needs that can be implemented to improve conditions today while long-term strategies are pursued.

The ACP element of Union County is also intended to be forward-thinking. The County can begin pondering the projects, programs and policies that are needed to get communities started on improvements that increase physical activity and help link users to desirable community assets.

As new parks are opened in the County or within municipalities, the design of those facilities and linkages along streets and trails should consider:

1. Nearby community activity sites (Parks, schools, trails, gyms) that can link to the park;
2. Other participant generator areas (neighborhoods, office, civic) near the park;
3. Primary and secondary streets connecting sites with users and those that require sidewalks, greenway connection and/or on-street bicycle facilities;
4. Meetings with stakeholders and review plans for existing projects or ideas to determine likely usage and necessary linkages; and
5. Recommend physical and programmatic projects or policies to improve conditions of streets and sites.

There are several elements of the Master Plan recommendations that link these themes of activity connection. They include:

- Working with municipalities to eliminate "recreation deserts;"
- Seeking places to provide outdoor exercise equipment in parks and along trails;
- Identifying greenway projects and five key destinations through the County;
- Providing active recreation facilities and trails for youth;
- Providing paved trails and nature trails for adults;
- Providing easy and close access as well as flat walking areas for seniors.

In consideration of how these recommendations impact access, other community facility needs should be considered in tandem with such improvements. They are:

- Crosswalks at intersections where greenway or walking routes link to subdivision, parks and school driveways or primary access roads;
- Bicycle racks and fix-it stations at trailheads and destinations along greenways;

- Lighting of intersections where crossing of state highways occur; and
- Providing maps and kiosks to show best walking and biking routes.

A challenging aspect of addressing linkages between parks, trails and communities is the historical limitations in County-specific policies for providing for such infrastructure. Just as the role of Parks and Recreation Departments is evolving to include greenways and trails in addition to traditional nature-based sites and sports complexes, the manner in which counties examine how they link these destinations is also important.

Union County is urbanizing, particularly in its western reaches and this will likely require new considerations in policy. Most notably this includes requirements for sidewalks along state highways and state secondary streets in subdivisions that are approved in unincorporated or ETJ areas but are in close proximity to existing or planned parks.

Therefore, ACP-specific recommendations include:

- Identify additional parks and active transportation questions to ask during Community Health Assessment updates.
- Determine where short segments or micropath connections are needed to link existing neighborhoods to planned greenways and seek alternatives where constraints exist.
- Identify locations and walking radii around existing and planned parks where sidewalks also serve a role in linking neighborhoods to trails and parks.
- Develop programs related to physical activity that focuses on pockets of poor health conditions or where vulnerable populations reside. These may need to be more location-based than county-wide based on local conditions.

Counties are not accustomed to making requirements on development to build sidewalks along external streets or having counties maintaining sidewalks in these locations. But that does not mean that demand does not exist and/or residents do not expect them. Union County should consider identifying sidewalk policies in pockets of growth where links to future Thread Trail routes, parks and municipal services exist. This does not require Union County to provide sidewalks along all streets within its land use jurisdiction; some places simply do not have enough density to justify the requirement.

One scenario that could arise would be subdivisions near the entrance to the Cane Creek or surrounding Jesse Helms Park. A subdivision located within, say, ½-mile can generate demand for people wanting to access that route via a mode other than the automobile. This also helps maximize the County's investment in these facilities, particularly at places like Jesse Helms Park where utilization is confined to times when events are occurring even though the playground, walking trail and picnic facilities could be used at other times of the day or week.

The issue of maintenance responsibilities for these sidewalks is always a touchy one with counties that are not accustomed to playing that role. There are, however, several options available to mitigate these concerns in the short-term. They include:

- Requiring sidewalks along state road frontage to be placed in an easement rather than within public right-of-way and placing maintenance responsibilities on the homeowners association;
- Negotiating maintenance agreements with nearby municipalities to maintain sidewalks or short segments of trails (this has been done in Asheville in agreements between the city and Buncombe County for sidewalks near schools in unincorporated areas);
- The County developing a set of policies outlining those conditions in which they will maintain sidewalks (e.g. within a certain radius of a county park or greenway; this is occurring in Jackson County in the Cullowhee community near Western Carolina University).

Such policies will also challenge NCDOT. Its Complete Streets policies and related design guidelines acknowledge that there is demand for walking and bicycling in facilities in unincorporated areas. There are gaps in project development and policy as NCDOT is not accustomed to asking county governments about their needs for walking and bicycling infrastructure along or crossing state highways. As Union County participates in future long-range transportation plan and comprehensive transportation plan updates, it can integrate these recommendations into these plans to help form relationships with NCDOT on how to best accommodate these needs.



FIGURE 3: GOALS RELATED TO POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS	IMPROVED QUALITY OF LIFE FOR EXISTING AND FUTURE RESIDENTS	IMPROVED ACCESS TO FACILITIES	IMPROVED HEALTH OF ALL RESIDENTS	A SOCIALLY, FINANCIALLY AND ENVIRONMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE PARKS AND RECREATION SYSTEM	A VARIETY OF FACILITIES, PROGRAMMING AND EVENTS FOR ALL RESIDENTS	A CONNECTED SYSTEM OF PARKS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTY	INPUT SOURCE
							
<b>POLICY RECOMMENDATION 1</b> Partner with municipalities so that all entities can jointly create a seamless park and recreation system that offers a range of facilities and programs to meet the needs of County residents.	X	X	X	X	X	X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parks and Rec Trends</li> <li>• Stakeholder Interview</li> <li>• Level of Service</li> <li>• Plan Review</li> </ul>
<b>POLICY RECOMMENDATION 2</b> Partner with area schools to maximize use of existing public resources.	X	X	X	X	X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parks and Rec Trends</li> <li>• Public Meeting</li> <li>• Stakeholder Interview</li> <li>• Level of Service</li> <li>• Survey</li> <li>• Plan Review</li> </ul>
<b>POLICY RECOMMENDATION 3</b> Promote the system. Promote awareness of the existence and benefits of the system to attract employers, foster job creation, and increase use of facilities and programs offered throughout Union County.			X	X		X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demographic Trends</li> <li>• Parks and Rec Trends</li> <li>• Public Meeting</li> <li>• Stakeholder Interview</li> <li>• Level of Service</li> <li>• Survey</li> </ul>
<b>POLICY RECOMMENDATION 4</b> Grow Union County Parks and Recreation department to meet needs of population.	X		X		X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demographic Trends</li> <li>• Parks and Rec Trends</li> <li>• Stakeholder Interview</li> </ul>
<b>POLICY RECOMMENDATION 5</b> Coordinate with other Union County departments to align policy initiatives and decisions.	X	X	X	X	X	X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parks and Rec Trends</li> <li>• Stakeholder Interview</li> <li>• Plan Review</li> </ul>
<b>POLICY RECOMMENDATION 6</b> Coordinate with other entities that share mission and/or objectives.	X	X	X	X	X	X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parks and Rec Trends</li> <li>• Stakeholder Interview</li> <li>• Level of Service</li> </ul>
<b>POLICY RECOMMENDATION 7</b> Stay relevant.	X			X			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demographic Trends</li> <li>• Parks and Rec Trends</li> <li>• Stakeholder Interview</li> <li>• Plan Review</li> </ul>
<b>POLICY RECOMMENDATION 8</b> Develop a benchmarking system to measure the effectiveness of the Union County Parks and Recreation department.	X	X	X	X	X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stakeholder Interview</li> <li>• Level of Service</li> </ul>
<b>POLICY RECOMMENDATION 9</b> Ensure the components of the system, together or individually, advance public health goals and work to improve the seven dimensions of health.							

## Facility Recommendations

The facilities that comprise the system now and in the future vary in terms of size, design, number and location. As noted above, many facilities that could comprise the system are or will be maintained and operated by other entities, either separately or in partnership with the County. Such facilities are expected to complement the facilities for which the County is responsible. A seamless system that takes into account all elements (regardless of ownership and management) is critical to adequately meeting the needs of existing and future populations. The following facility recommendations focus on County-provided facilities but also acknowledge facilities maintained and operated by other entities that are or could be available for public use throughout the County and would therefore satisfy current or future needs.

### FACILITY RECOMMENDATION 1

**Adopt a new classification system as outlined in the Facility Classification System defined in the Proposed Union County Parks and Recreation System section.**

### FACILITY RECOMMENDATION 2

**Focus on providing the major (regional) facilities.**

Union County should focus on providing the larger, major facilities that serve a more regional population. The municipalities, which are at the heart of the population centers within the County, have facilities and programs to serve the residents of their communities, and such facilities are enjoyed by County

residents living in close proximity. Rather than duplicate such offerings, the County can meet a different set of needs by concentrating on regional parks.

#### STRATEGY 2.1

The Union County Parks and Recreation Department should be responsible for regional facilities while municipalities take responsibility for smaller community and neighborhood facilities.

##### ACTION 2.1.1

Continue maintenance of County parks to ensure all facilities consistently meet high-quality standards.

##### ACTION 2.1.2

Improve Cane Creek Park to better serve needs of community with new or improved facilities (i.e. equestrian, running, mountain biking, environmental education, etc.).

##### ACTION 2.1.2.1

Update the Master Plan for Cane Creek Park, and determine phasing for implementation..

##### ACTION 2.1.2.2

Make improvements to Cane Creek Park in accordance with the updated Master Plan (and phasing plan).

##### ACTION 2.1.2.3

Conduct a feasibility study for a nature center at Cane Creek Park or other County-owned park. The feasibility study would consider funding availability, willing partners, opportunities for economic return on investment, etc.



#### STRATEGY 2.1.3

Develop a new regional park in the northern portion of the County close to population centers and along at least one existing or planned trail segment.

#### STRATEGY 2.1.4

Develop the remaining phases (2-5) of Jesse Helms Park per the plan completed in 2011, and provide bleachers and lights for fields.

#### STRATEGY 2.2

Transition ownership, operations and maintenance of smaller (community- and neighborhood-scale) facilities to municipalities or other appropriate entities.

##### ACTION 2.2.1

Seek to deed Fred Kirby Park to a nearby municipality to be developed, operated and maintained as a community park.

##### ACTION 2.3

During park development, consider historic and cultural aspects of the project in its design.

#### STRATEGY 2.4

Allocate space within parks to accommodate programming (events, festivals, classes of various types, etc.) and fixed features created and maintained by partner agencies for community activities, such as community gardens.

### **FACILITY RECOMMENDATION 3**

**Facilitate the provision of Greenway connections between County facilities and other destinations, such as downtowns, municipal parks, schools, and privately-operated recreation facilities.**

#### STRATEGY 3.1

Move forward with pilot greenway projects that connect key destinations in Union County to demonstrate the benefits of greenways and to build support for greenways throughout the County.

##### ACTION 3.1.1

Identify up to five greenway segments that are feasible in the short- and mid-term.

##### ACTION 3.1.2

Prioritize the five projects based on feasibility (funding availability, willing partners, opportunities for economic return on investment, etc).

##### ACTION 3.1.3

Design and build the identified projects in order of priority.

#### STRATEGY 3.2

Coordinate with Carolina Thread Trail (CTT) to implement the *CTT Master Plan for Union County and Participating Municipalities*.

##### ACTION 3.2.1

Work with CTT to update CTT Master Plan for Union County and participating municipalities to reflect recommendations in this Master Plan.

##### ACTION 3.2.2

Work with CTT to update or modify alignments proposed in *CTT Master Plan for Union County and Participating Municipalities* to reflect recommendations in this Master Plan

#### ACTION 3.2.3

Provide a northern greenway connection to Rocky River, Cabarrus County and Stanly County.

#### ACTION 3.2.4

Coordinate with CTT to better utilize programs and marketing offered.

#### STRATEGY 3.3

Coordinate with NCDOT to locate new multi-use trails in conjunction with the construction of new, improved roadways.

##### ACTION 3.3.1

When planning new transportation projects (road widening, new highways, etc.), the County should have discussions with NCDOT to ensure that new multi-use trails are extending and bridging the County's existing and future greenways system.

#### STRATEGY 3.4

Coordinate with NCDOT, utility companies (Duke Energy, Piedmont Natural Gas, etc.), and Union County Parks and Recreation to incorporate new multi-use trails within local street rights-of-way (including those maintained by NCDOT), utility easements, and other publicly-maintained corridors.

#### STRATEGY 3.5

Work with willing property owners to obtain easements for trails where such an alignment would implement an adopted plan. Small successes could help the County and its partners persuade other property owners who are currently less interested in granting easements to allow the construction of critical trail segments identified in adopted plans.

##### ACTION 3.5.1

Create standardized process by which easements are obtained and standard terms for such easements.

#### STRATEGY 3.6

Encourage developers to provide publicly-accessible multi-use trails with new development, particularly where such greenways would provide a connection between two existing or planned greenways constructed by other entities.

#### STRATEGY 3.7

Cooperate with municipalities to develop common policies and regulations.

##### ACTION 3.7.1

Create common policies and regulations with municipalities regarding the provision of greenways in new development.

##### ACTION 3.7.2

Create common policies and regulations with municipalities regarding connectivity in accordance with adopted plans.

#### STRATEGY 3.8

Promote places of historic significance by making them more accessible.

##### ACTION 3.8.1

For sites/structures that are open to the public, make connections via the existing and future greenway system.

**STRATEGY 3.9**

Connect the eastern part of the County to important cultural and historic destinations.

**ACTION 3.9.1**

Provide a connection to Dogwood Park and Weddington Optimist Park from alignment F of Master Plan

**ACTION 3.9.2**

Provide a connection along Richardson Creek to the Anson County line.

**ACTION 3.9.3**

Provide a connection from Cane Creek Park through southeast portion of Union County to Marshville.

**ACTION 3.9.4**

Provide a connection from Marshville north to Richardson Creek.

**STRATEGY 3.10**

Determine where short segments or “micropath” connections are needed to link existing neighborhoods to planned greenways and seek alternatives where constraints exist.

**STRATEGY 3.11**

Identify locations and walking radii around existing and planned parks where sidewalks also serve a role in linking neighborhoods to trails and parks.

**FACILITY RECOMMENDATION 4**

**Enhance the trail network with Blueways.**

**STRATEGY 4.1**

Provide improved access points to the Rocky River, a regionally popular paddling route, so that it can function as a blueway in the overall system of trails. Such improvements should ensure that the natural edges are maintained, and the river experience is not negatively impacted by the presence of development or features associated with conventional parks.

**ACTION 4.1.1**

Locate (map) launch and take-out points that can also be enhanced as small parks.

**ACTION 4.1.2**

Design and construct the small parks at launches and take-out points to include small parking areas, picnic tables and other conveniences, as needed, away from the water's edge.

**STRATEGY 4.1.3**

Maintain a buffer of natural vegetation along the river to screen park facilities from view from the river, and supplement existing vegetation where necessary to achieve this condition.

**STRATEGY 4.1.4**

Improve the boat launches and take-outs to make them easier to use.

**STRATEGY 4.2**

Amend the Carolina Tread Trail Master Plan to clearly delineate future greenway connections to Rocky River blueway.

**FACILITY RECOMMENDATION 5**

**Address the needs of the growing population segments (25-44 years, and 65+) by providing appropriate facilities.**

**STRATEGY 5.1**

Seek to provide facilities for the growing adult cohort (25-44 years).

**ACTION 5.1.1**

Identify locations for new facilities or expanded facilities. Some examples of these facilities are:

- Natural playscapes
- Swimming / water play
- Active recreational facilities
- Trails

**ACTION 5.1.2**

Prioritize identified projects and potential funding sources.

**ACTION 5.1.3**

Implement the top 3 high-priority projects.

**ACTION 5.1.4**

Partner with municipalities, schools, non-profits and private recreation providers to provide some facilities and, in doing so, maximize resources and avoid unnecessary redundancy in the system.



CASE STUDY (SUPPORTS ACTION 5.2.4)

## BROADENING STUDENTS' AND COMMUNITY PHYSICAL EDUCATION ACTIVITIES (PALMOMARES ACADEMY, POMONA, CA)

Palmomares Academy has provided outdoor fitness equipment free and open to the community outside of school hours. There are 16 exercise stations and can accommodate up to 30 people at one time. This was a joint effort between the school's physical education department and the county health department to tackle increasing rates of obesity in the community. The goal is to increase community-wide exercise by providing a less intimidating atmosphere than private gyms and provide a an enjoyable social experience.

### STRATEGY 5.2

Provide facilities for the growing senior cohort (65+ years). Please see national trends report (Appendix A) for more information on potential facility needs of this group.

**ACTION 5.2.1**

Identify locations for new facilities or expanded facilities. Some examples of these facilities are:

- Dog Parks
- Paved Trails
- Nature Trails
- Canoe / kayaking
- Active living centers with therapeutic pools, walking tracks, and multi-use spaces for social activities

**ACTION 5.2.2**

Prioritize identified projects and potential funding sources.

**ACTION 5.2.3**

Implement the top 3 high-priority projects. Ensure, when developing new park spaces and facilities to host events, to plan for aging populations by providing: easy and close access, restrooms, flat walking areas, benches and seating areas, and shaded areas.

**ACTION 5.2.4**

Partner with municipalities, schools, non-profits and private recreation providers to provide some facilities and, in doing so, maximize resources and avoid unnecessary redundancy in the system.

## FACILITY RECOMMENDATION 6

**Protect open space throughout the County to conserve natural, cultural and historic assets.**

### STRATEGY 6.1

Acquire land for and create Nature Preserves. A nature preserve will allow for proper utilization of land dedicated for open space through minimally invasive

development like trails, small seating areas and interpretive signage.

**ACTION 6.1.1**

Conduct a GIS analysis to identify locations of valuable assets and to prioritize parcels for acquisition based on a defined set of criteria, such as:

- Wetland and floodplain protection
- Habitat protection (i.e., migratory corridors)
- Protection from encroaching development or development pressure
- Proximity to concentrations of population (now and in the future), as this would suggest an area of need as well an area of potential development which could interfere with future acquisition
- Land owner willingness
- Threats to cultural and historic assets
- Funding opportunities

### OPEN SPACE PRESERVATION

Protecting open space for environmental purposes can have multiple benefits, both direct and indirect. Healthcare savings (health related issues, such as asthma, COPD, mental illness, etc.), lower infrastructure costs (water treatment), higher property values, and fewer days in "nonattainment" status for air quality as defined by the EPA. Strive to protect:

- Water bodies, particularly those upon which we rely for drinking water, healthy wildlife habitats, and recreation (swimming and other water sports)
- Environmentally sensitive areas, particularly those identified in the natural heritage inventory (NHI) as the locations of threatened and endangered species (plant and animal).

CASE STUDY (SUPPORTS STRATEGY 6.1)

## NATURE PRESERVES (MECKLENBURG COUNTY, NC)

Mecklenburg County Parks and Recreation Department has 24 nature preserves in its system. Managed by the Division of Nature Preserves and Natural Resources, the nature preserves are intended to “protect the county’s biological resources and natural areas,” while providing opportunities for environmental education, more than 5,000 nature-based programs annually, and outdoor recreation across approximately 6,500 acres total. Three nature centers and miles of nature trails contained within, these preserves give users better access to the natural environment.

For more information, please go to <http://charmec.org/mecklenburg/county/ParkandRec/StewardshipServices/Pages/default.aspx>



### ACTION 6.1.2

Acquire high-priority lands utilizing multiple mechanisms, such as purchasing outright (fee simple ownership), dedications, etc.

### ACTION 6.1.3

Create Nature Preserves utilizing acquired land in accordance with the definition provided in the Facilities Classification System.

### STRATEGY 6.2

Establish minimum standards for natural areas within the various facility types described in the Facility Classification System. For example, require a minimum of 80% of the total area devoted to a Nature Preserve to be maintained in a natural, minimally developed or undeveloped state. Other parks, such as Community Parks could be subject to lower minimums (less than 50%).

### STRATEGY 6.3

Encourage area land trusts and conservation organizations, such as Catawba Lands Conservancy (CLC) to preserve areas identified in the GIS analysis (see 6.1.1 above).

## FACILITY RECOMMENDATION 7

### Provide more water-based recreation opportunities.

#### STRATEGY 7.1

Work with the City of Monroe to review an increase in opportunities at Lake Twitty, Lake Lee and Lake Monroe for water-based recreational access.

#### STRATEGY 7.2

Expand water-based opportunities at Cane Creek by providing stand-up paddleboards (SUPs). Consider number, storage, location(s), fees, etc.

#### STRATEGY 7.3

Improve access to the Rocky River blueway (see Facilities Strategy 4.1).



FIGURE 4: GOALS RELATED TO FACILITY RECOMMENDATIONS

FACILITY RECOMMENDATIONS	IMPROVED QUALITY OF LIFE FOR EXISTING AND FUTURE RESIDENTS	IMPROVED ACCESS TO FACILITIES	IMPROVED HEALTH OF ALL RESIDENTS	A SOCIALLY, FINANCIALLY AND ENVIRONMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE PARKS AND RECREATION SYSTEM	A VARIETY OF FACILITIES, PROGRAMMING AND EVENTS FOR ALL RESIDENTS	A CONNECTED SYSTEM OF PARKS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTY	INPUT SOURCE
							
<b>FACILITY RECOMMENDATION 1</b> Adopt a new classification system as outlined in the Facility Classification System defined in the Proposed Union County Parks and Recreation System section.		X		X	X	X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Demographic Trends</li> <li>Parks and Rec Trends</li> <li>Public Meeting</li> <li>Stakeholder Interview</li> <li>Level of Service</li> </ul>
<b>FACILITY RECOMMENDATION 2</b> Focus on providing the major (regional) facilities.	X	X		X	X	X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parks and Rec Trends</li> <li>Stakeholder Interview</li> <li>Level of Service</li> <li>Plan Review</li> </ul>
<b>FACILITY RECOMMENDATION 3</b> Facilitate the provision of Greenway connections between County facilities and other destinations, such as downtowns, municipal parks, schools, and privately-operated recreation facilities.	X	X	X	X	X	X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Demographic Trends</li> <li>Parks and Rec Trends</li> <li>Public Meeting</li> <li>Stakeholder Interview</li> <li>Level of Service</li> <li>Survey</li> <li>Plan Review</li> </ul>
<b>FACILITY RECOMMENDATION 4</b> Enhance the trail network with Blueways.	X	X			X	X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parks and Rec Trends</li> <li>Public Meeting</li> <li>Stakeholder Interview</li> </ul>
<b>FACILITY RECOMMENDATION 5</b> Address the needs of the growing population segments (25-44 years, and 65+) by providing appropriate facilities.	X		X	X	X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parks and Rec Trends</li> <li>Public Meeting</li> <li>Stakeholder Interview</li> <li>Survey</li> <li>Plan Review</li> </ul>
<b>FACILITY RECOMMENDATION 6</b> Protect open space throughout the County to conserve natural, cultural and historic assets.	X	X	X	X	X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Demographic Trends</li> <li>Parks and Rec Trends</li> <li>Public Meeting</li> <li>Stakeholder Interview</li> <li>Level of Service</li> <li>Survey</li> </ul>
<b>FACILITY RECOMMENDATION 7</b> Provide more water-based recreation opportunities.	X	X	X	X	X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Demographic Trends</li> <li>Parks and Rec Trends</li> <li>Public Meeting</li> <li>Stakeholder Interview</li> <li>Level of Service</li> <li>Survey</li> <li>Plan Review</li> </ul>

## Programming Recommendations

A meaningful system is one that is enhanced by the availability of programs that are appropriate for and target specific groups based on need. By recognizing the needs geographically (across the County as well as in subareas) or demographically, the County can utilize facilities in the system to deliver programs independently or in cooperation with partnering agencies. The following recommendations suggest a range of programs to consider in the short and long term, including some that could begin as small, pilot programs to gauge community interest.

### PROGRAMMING RECOMMENDATION 1

**Ensure the equitable and feasible delivery of programs throughout the County, especially in terms of the identified needs of specific segments of the population.**

#### STRATEGY 1.1

Work closely with municipalities and local non-profit agencies to efficiently deliver programs and avoid redundancy. Provide support in the form of coordination, funding and/or staffing. Develop process by which Union County Parks and Recreation is to provide staffing, funding, land, and/or marketing to support to municipalities and local non-profit agencies in the expansion of existing or the addition of new programming geared towards youth (10-19 age cohort).

#### STRATEGY 1.2

Provide programming geared towards youth (10-19 age cohort).

##### ACTION 1.2.1

Focus on programs that are appropriate for that age group, including life sports, night programs, educational activities, day camps, and after-school camps.

##### ACTION 1.2.2

Work closely with municipalities and local non-profits, through coordination, funding and/or staffing, to develop programs for life sports programming, such as biking, canoeing/kayaking, tennis, swimming, jogging/walking, and golf.

#### STRATEGY 1.3

Address the needs of growing population groups (25-44 years, and 65+ years) by ensuring programming needs are met for each.

##### ACTION 1.3.1

With a significant percentage of the existing and future population in the 25-44 age cohort, ensure programming needs of this age group are met.

##### ACTION 1.3.1.1

Focus on programs that are appropriate for that age group, including running/jogging groups, yoga, boat / kayaking tours, food preparation education, and gardening.

##### ACTION 1.3.1.2

Consider the needs of the children of this age group to ensure parents are able to participate in their preferred activities (above).

##### ACTION 1.3.2

With a significant percentage of the existing and future population in the 65+ age cohort, ensure programming needs of this age group are met.

##### ACTION 1.3.2.1

Focus on programs that are appropriate for that age group, including walking groups, job or volunteer placement, computer skills, financial education, arts and crafts classes, mobile fitness programs.

#### STRATEGY 1.4

Establish mobile demonstrative gardens (truck farms) to educate the County's residents on agricultural propagation and food preparation.

### PROGRAMMING RECOMMENDATION 2

**Working with the municipalities, ensure that the range of programs offered now and in the future can be accommodated by spaces within the overall system that are appropriate in terms of quantity, size, and location.**

#### STRATEGY 2.1

Through partnerships and sharing of facilities, seek opportunities to provide programs equitably throughout the County and/or in close proximity to the segments of the populations that would benefit from the programs.

##### ACTION 2.1.1

Identify organizations with whom the County can partners (or facilitate partnerships between). Consider a range of public spaces including municipal parks, fire stations, schools, libraries, as well as facilities owned and managed by community groups and faith-based organizations.

##### ACTION 2.1.2

Utilize joint use agreements to formalize such agreements between the County and other entities.

### PROGRAMMING RECOMMENDATION 3

**Increase programming that utilizes—and increases appreciation for—Union County's natural resources.**

#### STRATEGY 3.1

Increase programming for water-based recreation including fishing, boating, kayaking, canoeing and paddle boarding.

#### STRATEGY 3.2

Increase programming with an environmental focus.

##### ACTION 3.2.1

Expand nature-based hiking tours by the County and local organizations at Cane Creek Park and throughout the County.

##### ACTION 3.2.2

Offer native plants classes to raise awareness of and encourage landscaping with indigenous plants. Such classes could include landscaping projects within County and municipal parks.

##### ACTION 3.2.3

Consider the addition of nature-based programming in the feasibility study for a nature center in Union County.

## PROGRAMMING RECOMMENDATION 4

### Continue to provide and expand events in County parks and support current and future events in municipal parks.

#### STRATEGY 4.1

Expand existing cultural events programming to include music, art festivals, movies in the park and similar events.

##### ACTION 4.1.1

Expand existing events programming to include music and arts festivals, movies in the park and other events at County parks.

#### STRATEGY 4.2

Expand existing recreational events programming.

##### ACTION 4.2.1

Partner with municipalities to provide regular (i.e. biannual, monthly, etc.) days to recreate throughout the County.

## PROGRAMMING RECOMMENDATION 5

### Boost health programs offered in Union County.

#### STRATEGY 5.1

Develop partnerships with Carolinas Medical Center, Novant Health and other health providers to expand mental health programs offered to Union County residents.

#### STRATEGY 5.2

Work with Union County Agricultural Center, NC State Cooperative Extension

and area food industry representatives to promote existing and expand educational programs about Union County's agricultural tradition, healthy food sources, and healthy eating.

#### STRATEGY 5.3

Develop programs related to exercise and physical activity to encourage more active lifestyles for all Union County residents.

#### STRATEGY 5.4

Develop programs that focus on pockets of poor health conditions or where vulnerable populations reside.

##### ACTION 5.4.1

With help from Union County Public Health Department, continue to track the locations of at-risk populations by conduct GIS spatial analysis of health trends to understand where at risk populations are located.

##### ACTION 5.4.2

Partner with Union County Health Department and area healthcare providers to provide programs or modify existing programs that address the location-specific health issues.

#### STRATEGY 5.5

Increase health-related events such as a free diabetes screening (using mobile unit) in County and municipal parks.

#### STRATEGY 5.6

Utilize Rec and Roll wagon and "truck farm" to boost awareness of growing food, community gardens and healthy eating with mobile food education.



#### CASE STUDY (SUPPORTS STRATEGY 1.4)

### TRUCK FARMS (OMAHA, NE)

Truck Farm Omaha is a mobile gardening program. Run by volunteers, it provides an opportunity to teach kids how seeds grow and how seeds end up in gardens; about farming and sustainability; and how to make healthy snacks.

For more information, please go to <http://truckfarmomaha.com/>.

FIGURE 6: GOALS RELATED TO PROGRAMMING RECOMMENDATIONS

PROGRAMMING RECOMMENDATIONS	IMPROVED QUALITY OF LIFE FOR EXISTING AND FUTURE RESIDENTS	IMPROVED ACCESS TO FACILITIES	IMPROVED HEALTH OF ALL RESIDENTS	A SOCIALLY, FINANCIALLY AND ENVIRONMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE PARKS AND RECREATION SYSTEM	A VARIETY OF FACILITIES, PROGRAMMING AND EVENTS FOR ALL RESIDENTS	A CONNECTED SYSTEM OF PARKS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTY	INPUT SOURCE
							
<b>PROGRAMMING RECOMMENDATION 1</b> Ensure the equitable and feasible delivery of programs throughout the County, especially in terms of the identified needs of specific segments of the population.	X		X	X	X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demographic Trends</li> <li>• Parks and Rec Trends</li> <li>• Public Meeting</li> <li>• Stakeholder Interview</li> <li>• Level of Service</li> <li>• Survey</li> </ul>
<b>PROGRAMMING RECOMMENDATION 2</b> Working with the municipalities, ensure that the range of programs offered now and in the future can be accommodated by spaces within the overall system that are appropriate in terms of quantity, size, and location.	X		X	X	X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demographic Trends</li> <li>• Parks and Rec Trends</li> <li>• Public Meeting</li> <li>• Stakeholder Interview</li> <li>• Level of Service</li> <li>• Survey</li> </ul>
<b>PROGRAMMING RECOMMENDATION 3</b> Increase programming that utilizes—and increases appreciation for—Union County’s natural resources.	X		X	X	X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demographic Trends</li> <li>• Parks and Rec Trends</li> </ul>
<b>PROGRAMMING RECOMMENDATION 4</b> Continue to provide and expand events in County parks and support current and future events in municipal parks.	X	X	X	X	X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parks and Rec Trends</li> <li>• Stakeholder Interview</li> <li>• Level of Service</li> <li>• Plan Review</li> </ul>
<b>PROGRAMMING RECOMMENDATION 5</b> Boost health programs offered in Union County.	X		X	X	X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public Meeting</li> <li>• Stakeholder Interview</li> <li>• Survey</li> <li>• Plan Review</li> </ul>

04



# IMPLEMENTATION ACTION PLAN / STRATEGIC PLAN

## Policy Implementation Action Plan

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS	FACILITY STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS	RESPONSIBILITY	SHORT-TERM	MEDIUM-TERM	LONG-TERM
<b>POLICY RECOMMENDATION 1</b> <b>Partner with municipalities so that all entities can jointly create a seamless park and recreation system that offers a range of facilities and programs to meet the needs of County residents.</b>	<b>STRATEGY 1.1</b> Support municipal efforts to create and improve local park and recreation facilities to ensure that such facilities function as suitable components of the larger, county-wide parks and recreation system.				
	<b>ACTION 1.1.1</b> Help municipalities with the funding of facilities and services. Rather than offering facilities and services that can be more appropriately provided and maintained at the municipal level, the County should establish a means by which municipalities can secure funding support from the County to meet local needs.	Union County P&R	X (O)		
	<b>ACTION 1.1.1.1</b> Re-establish the Union County Athletic Council Grants (UCAC), a grant program provided from Union County to the athletic associations for facilities and programming, and include eligibility for municipal facilities and programs.	Union County P&R	X		
	<b>ACTION 1.1.1.2</b> Re-establish the Union County Community Grant program, a grant program provided from Union County to the municipalities for facilities and programming, and include eligibility for non-profit facilities and programs.	Union County P&R	X		
	<b>STRATEGY 1.1.2</b> The County could also offer support to municipalities is through grant writing.	Union County P&R	X	X	X
	<b>STRATEGY 1.2</b> Improve communication and coordination between the County and municipal departments.				
	<b>ACTION 1.2.1</b> Establish a mechanism for regular communication between municipal and County Parks and Recreation department heads, such as bi-monthly or quarterly meetings. The primary purpose of these meetings could be to discuss county-wide issues and opportunities. Resulting initiatives should effectively address issues and seize opportunities through an exchange of information, sharing or combining resources, clarify priorities, and avoid duplication of services or facilities.	Union County P&R	X	X	X
	<b>ACTION 1.2.2</b> For any shared initiatives resulting from better communication, formalize partnerships through agreements that assign responsibilities in accordance with a work plan, identify ways to utilize available resources, and define metrics to measure progress.	Union County P&R	X	X	X
<b>POLICY RECOMMENDATION 2</b> <b>Partner with area schools to maximize use of existing public resources.</b>	<b>STRATEGY 2.1</b> Collaborate with the Union County School Board in the planning of future parks and schools. By collocating school and park facilities, more effective utilization of resources can be realized.	Union County P&R, Union County Schools	X	X	X
	<b>STRATEGY 2.2</b> Create and utilize a joint-use agreement. Enter into formal joint-use agreements (refer to Appendix I for a sample joint-use agreement, or JUA) for use of existing and future school sites and facilities.	Union County P&R, Union County Schools	X		
	<b>STRATEGY 2.3</b> Coordinate a pilot demonstration joint-use agreement with one school as an example of the benefits and execution efforts involved.	Union County P&R, Union County Schools	X		

\*Short-Term = 1-3 years, Medium-Term = 3-5 years, Long-Term = 5+ years, (O)= Ongoing

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS	FACILITY STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS	RESPONSIBILITY	SHORT-TERM	MEDIUM-TERM	LONG-TERM
<b>POLICY RECOMMENDATION 2 (cont'd)</b>	STRATEGY 2.4 Consider the educational opportunities provided by the parks and recreation system that can augment school curriculum to support those efforts.				
	Action 2.4.1 Support initiatives to create schoolyard gardens to meet a community need while creating teaching opportunities as an outdoor classrooms.	Union County P&R	X(0)		
	Action 2.4.2 Consider other outdoor classroom opportunities that introduce students to nature, agriculture and the environment.	Union County P&R	X	X	
<b>POLICY RECOMMENDATION 3 Promote the system.</b>	STRATEGY 3.1 Work with Monroe-Union County Economic Development to develop a parks and recreation-based economic development strategy.	Union County P&R		X	
	STRATEGY 3.2 Maintain an updated inventory of county-wide parks, greenways and trails and create maps and other materials to market related information to all potential users.				
	ACTION 3.2.1 Develop interactive online maps that include all recreational facilities in Union County.	Union County P&R	X	X	
	ACTION 3.2.2 Create database of all recreation in Union County that is searchable by type of use. For example one could search for dog parks, special needs facilities or tennis facilities and would be directed to all places these uses are available.	Union County P&R		X	
	ACTION 3.2.3 Produce printed maps that include all recreational facilities in Union County.	Union County P&R	X	X	
	ACTION 3.2.4 Use web-based, mobile, and social media apps to disseminate information.	Union County P&R	X	X	
	ACTION 3.2.5 Consider quarterly publications for interested users without internet access.	Union County P&R		X	
	STRATEGY 3.3 Provide low-cost introductory programs, spread throughout the County, to reduce barriers to entry, thereby increasing the number of people utilizing parks and recreation.	Union County P&R	X(0)		
	STRATEGY 3.4 Expand programming to meet needs of greater portion of population at existing parks to attract more users (more information under programming recommendations).	Union County P&R	X(0)		
	STRATEGY 3.5 Develop a wayfinding system to ease navigation to park facilities.	Union County P&R		X	
	STRATEGY 3.6 Market the Union County Parks and Recreation system as one that promotes the community's assets and builds community pride.				
	ACTION 3.6.1 Develop a strategy that showcases Union County's unique historic, cultural and environmental resources and tells its story to brand the new system.	Union County P&R	X	X	
	ACTION 3.6.2 Develop consistent messaging that resonates with various user groups.	Union County P&R	X	X	
	ACTION 3.6.3 Prepare and utilize materials that are produced in print and web-based form that convey general and specific information about the array of offerings. These materials should be produced in both English and Spanish.	Union County P&R		X(0)	

\*Short-Term = 1-3 years, Medium-Term = 3-5 years, Long-Term = 5+ years, (0)= Ongoing

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS	FACILITY STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS	RESPONSIBILITY	SHORT-TERM	MEDIUM-TERM	LONG-TERM
<b>POLICY RECOMMENDATION 3 (cont'd)</b>	<b>ACTION 3.6.4</b> Thematically categorize the inventory of parks and recreation facilities. Under each theme, group events and activities, and associate specific facilities and destinations in accordance with the events and activities. Promoting the system in such terms will ensure that its benefits will resonate with targeted user groups, which could help increase the user experience. The mock-up brochure on the following page (Figure 3) illustrates a way to tell the story of the County and the experiences offered by the County parks and recreation system.				
	<b>ACTION 3.6.4.1</b> Define the experience. Building on the assets mapped during this comprehensive master planning process, create an inventory of assets that are valued by the community such as trails and recreational fields, as well as those lesser-known assets that have shaped the history, identity, and heritage of the County and therefore warrant inclusion. Using the five ideas described above as a starting point, examine the existing and planned system in the context of all inventoried County assets and confirm or modify the themes. It may be common for assets to be part of two or more themes.	Union County P&R	X	X(0)	
	<b>ACTION 3.6.4.2</b> Create the experience. Once an experience has been defined, the missing pieces (e.g., a trail linking two cultural destinations) can then be prioritized so that the County, working with various public and private sector partners, can “complete” the experience. This may require the coordination of several entities to address phasing and funding. Additionally, pieces of the system could also be created by other entities (e.g. non-profits) and the role of the County could be solely to acknowledge it as part of the system and to promote it as such.	Union County P&R	X	X(0)	
	<b>ACTION 3.6.4.3</b> Brand and promote the experience. Each experience should have its own identity to fully convey that component and its uniqueness within the greater Union County experience. This can be done with printed brochure(s) as well as online interactive maps should clearly delineate each experience, displaying the components (destinations and linking trails between them). Equally important will be the recommended route to follow should the users choose to move through the series of places that comprise an experience.	Union County P&R	X	X(0)	
<b>POLICY RECOMMENDATION 4</b> <b>Grow Union County Parks and Recreation department to meet needs of population.</b>	<b>STRATEGY 4.1</b> Create and fund new Parks and Recreation department staff positions.	Union County P&R	X	X	
<b>POLICY RECOMMENDATION 5</b> <b>Coordinate with other Union County departments to align policy initiatives and decisions.</b>	<b>STRATEGY 5.1</b> Work with Union County Planning to accomplish specific objectives.				
	<b>ACTION 5.1.1</b> Provide parks and recreation facilities in accordance with the adopted Future Land Use Map;	Union County P&R	X(0)		
	<b>ACTION 5.1.2</b> Coordinate with private property owners and developers to support planning and development policies regarding the provision of public open space (i.e., dedication of improved public spaces created through the private development process);	Union County Planning	X(0)		
	<b>ACTION 5.1.3</b> Consider policies that require sidewalks along street frontages (within ½-mile of existing and planned parks) to link new subdivisions to parks.	Union County Planning	X(0)		

\*Short-Term = 1-3 years, Medium-Term = 3-5 years, Long-Term = 5+ years, (0)= Ongoing

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS	FACILITY STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS	RESPONSIBILITY	SHORT-TERM	MEDIUM-TERM	LONG-TERM
<b>POLICY RECOMMENDATION 5 (cont'd)</b>	<b>ACTION 5.1.4</b> Conduct a study of the Rocky River corridor to identify water-based recreation and tourism opportunities.	Union County Planning		<b>X(0)</b>	
	<b>STRATEGY 5.2</b> Work with Union County Public Health to ensure the parks and recreation system facilitates initiatives to improve the health of Union County citizens. Review the results of the Community Health Assessment (CHA) updates to identify partnerships that could support the Health Department's recommendations. Identify additional parks and active transportation questions to ask during CHA updates.	Union County P&R, Union County Public Health	<b>X(0)</b>		
	<b>STRATEGY 5.3</b> Work with the County Environmental Health Division to create initiatives that promote a healthier environment in Union County.	Union County P&R, Union County Environmental Health	<b>X</b>		
	<b>STRATEGY 5.4</b> Work with Monroe-Union County Economic Development to promote parks and recreation to future employers as a demonstration of Union County's high quality of life.	Union County P&R, Monroe-Union County Economic Development	<b>X</b>		
	<b>STRATEGY 5.5</b> Work with Union County Public Health Department to develop a Health and Wellness Council. Representatives of parks and recreation departments and other providers, the agricultural community, the healthcare industry, social services, and planning departments and related agencies as well as interested residents could be included on council.	Union County P&R	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	
<b>POLICY RECOMMENDATION 6</b> <b>Coordinate with other entities that share mission and/or objectives.</b>	<b>STRATEGY 6.1</b> Appoint a person or persons representing historic and cultural interests to the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board.	Union County P&R	<b>X</b>		
	<b>STRATEGY 6.2</b> Include neighboring counties, such as Mecklenburg and Cabarrus that offer facilities and services in close proximity to the population concentrations of Union County when planning new facilities and/or services.	Union County P&R	<b>X(0)</b>		
	<b>STRATEGY 6.3</b> Coordinate regularly with Carolina Thread Trail for new trail, greenway and blueway planning and development.	Union County P&R	<b>X</b>		
	<b>STRATEGY 6.4</b> Support municipalities to develop initiatives, facilities and programs for Union County's special needs populations.	Union County P&R	<b>X</b>		
	<b>STRATEGY 6.5</b> Consistent with the recently adopted Comprehensive Transportation Plan for Union County, work with NCDOT, the CRTPO, the RPO, and County transportation planners to identify critical pedestrian, bicycle and greenway linkages to parks and other destinations that provide an opportunity for physical activity in addition to meeting a transportation need (active transportation).	Union County P&R, NCDOT, CRTPO, RPO, Union County Planning	<b>X(0)</b>		
<b>POLICY RECOMMENDATION 7</b> <b>Stay relevant.</b>	<b>STRATEGY 7.2</b> Conduct a statistically-valid survey every two years to measure satisfaction with existing facilities and services and identify new community needs and preferences.	Union County P&R		<b>X</b>	
	<b>STRATEGY 7.3</b> A comprehensive review of the Department's progress, vision, department goals, programs and facilities should be undertaken every 5 years at a minimum by department staff to ascertain if the direction and progress is in line with the master plan and community feedback.	Union County P&R	<b>X(0)</b>		

\*Short-Term = 1-3 years, Medium-Term = 3-5 years, Long-Term = 5+ years, (0)= Ongoing

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS	FACILITY STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS	RESPONSIBILITY	SHORT-TERM	MEDIUM-TERM	LONG-TERM
<b>POLICY RECOMMENDATION 7 (cont'd.)</b>	<p>STRATEGY 7.4 Pursue Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA) accreditation for the Union County Parks and Recreation department and maintain into the future. CAPRA is the commission in charge of accreditation of park and recreation agencies in the United States. It is charged with providing assurance to the public that their agency meets national standards of best practice.</p>	Union County P&R	X		
<b>POLICY RECOMMENDATION 8</b> <b>Develop a benchmarking system to measure the effectiveness of the Union County Parks and Recreation Department.</b>	<p>STRATEGY 8.1 Establish metrics to help determine the success of the system as it grows. Annually, utilize such metrics in review of progress with respect to the action plan.</p>	Union County P&R		X	
<b>POLICY RECOMMENDATION 9</b> <b>Ensure the components of the system, together or individually, advance public health goals and work to improve the seven dimensions of health.</b>	<p>STRATEGY 9.1 To address issues of access to fresh produce, support efforts to create community or neighborhood gardens that can meet identified needs.</p>				
	<p>ACTION 9.1.1 To aid in this effort, Union County can supply land in existing parks, develop educational programs, promote programs by other organizations, and coordinate existing efforts.</p>	Union County P&R	X(0)		

\*Short-Term = 1-3 years, Medium-Term = 3-5 years, Long-Term = 5+ years, (0)= Ongoing

## Facility Implementation Action Plan

FACILITY RECOMMENDATIONS	FACILITY STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS	RESPONSIBILITY	SHORT-TERM	MEDIUM-TERM	LONG-TERM
<b>FACILITY RECOMMENDATION 1</b> <b>Adopt a new classification system as outlined in the Facility Classification System defined in the Proposed Union County Parks and Recreation System section.</b>		Union County P&R	X		
<b>FACILITY RECOMMENDATION 2</b> <b>Provide the major (regional) facilities.</b>	<b>FACILITY STRATEGY 2.1</b> The Union County Parks and Recreation Department should be responsible for regional facilities while municipalities take responsibility for smaller community and neighborhood facilities.				
	<b>FACILITY ACTION 2.1.1</b> Continue maintenance of County parks to ensure all facilities consistently meet high-quality standards.	Union County P&R	X(0)	X	X
	<b>FACILITY ACTION 2.1.2</b> Improve Cane Creek Park to better serve needs of community with new or improved facilities (i.e. equestrian, running, mountain biking, environmental education, etc.).	Union County P&R		X	X
	<b>FACILITY ACTION 2.1.2.1</b> Update the Master Plan for Cane Creek Park, and determine phasing for implementation.	Union County P&R		X	
	<b>FACILITY ACTION 2.1.2.2</b> Make improvements to Cane Creek Park in accordance with the updated Master Plan (and phasing plan).	Union County P&R		X	X
	<b>FACILITY ACTION 2.1.2.3</b> Conduct a feasibility study for a nature center at Cane Creek Park or other County-owned park. The feasibility study would consider funding availability, willing partners, opportunities for economic return on investment, etc.	Union County P&R		X	
	<b>FACILITY ACTION 2.1.3</b> Develop a new regional park in the northern portion of the County close to population centers and along at least one existing or planned trail segment.	Union County P&R			X
	<b>FACILITY ACTION 2.1.4</b> Develop the remaining phases (2-5) of Jesse Helms Park per the plan completed in 2011, and provide bleachers and lights for fields.	Union County P&R		X	
	<b>FACILITY STRATEGY 2.2</b> Transition ownership, operations and maintenance of smaller (community- and neighborhood-scale) facilities to municipalities or other appropriate entities.				
	<b>FACILITY ACTION 2.2.1</b> Seek to deed Fred Kirby Park to a nearby municipality to be developed, operated and maintained as a community park.	Union County P&R, Municipal P&R Department	X		
	<b>FACILITY STRATEGY 2.3</b> During park development, consider historic and cultural aspects of the site or area in its design.	Union County P&R, Municipal P&R Department	X(0)	X	X
	<b>FACILITY STRATEGY 2.4</b> Allocate space within parks to accommodate programming (events, festivals, classes of various types, etc.) and fixed features created and maintained by partner agencies for community activities, such as community gardens.	Union County P&R, Municipal P&R Department	X(0)	X	X

\*Short-Term = 1-3 years, Medium-Term = 3-5 years, Long-Term = 5+ years, (0)= Ongoing

FACILITY RECOMMENDATIONS	FACILITY STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS	RESPONSIBILITY	SHORT-TERM	MEDIUM-TERM	LONG-TERM
<b>FACILITY RECOMMENDATION 3</b> <b>Facilitate the provision of Greenway connections between County facilities and other destinations, such as downtowns, municipal parks, schools, and privately-operated recreation facilities.</b>	<b>FACILITY STRATEGY 3.1</b> Move forward with pilot greenway projects that connect key destinations in Union County to demonstrate the benefits of greenways and to build support for greenways throughout the County.				
	<b>FACILITY ACTION 3.1.1</b> Identify up to five greenway segments that are feasible in the short- and mid-term.	Union County P&R	X		
	<b>FACILITY ACTION 3.1.2</b> Prioritize the five projects based on feasibility (funding availability, willing partners, opportunities for economic return on investment, etc).	Union County P&R	X		
	<b>FACILITY ACTION 3.1.3</b> Design and build the identified projects in order of priority.	Union County P&R	X(0)	X	X
	<b>FACILITY STRATEGY 3.2</b> Coordinate with Carolina Thread Trail (CTT) to implement the CTT Master Plan for Union County and Participating Municipalities.				
	<b>FACILITY ACTION 3.2.1</b> Work with CTT to update CTT Master Plan for Union County and participating municipalities to reflect recommendations in this Master Plan.	Union County P&R	X	X(0)	
	<b>FACILITY ACTION 3.2.2</b> Coordinate with CTT to provide a northern greenway connections to Rocky River, Cabarrus County and Stanly County.	Union County P&R	X	X	
	<b>FACILITY ACTION 3.2.4</b> Coordinate with CTT to better utilize programs and marketing offered.	Union County P&R	X(0)	X	X
	<b>FACILITY STRATEGY 3.3</b> Coordinate with NCDOT to locate new multi-use trails in conjunction with the construction of new and improved roadways.				
	<b>FACILITY ACTION 3.3.1</b> Have discussions with NCDOT to ensure that new multi-use trails are extending and bridging the County's existing and future greenways system.	Union County Planning	X(0)	X	X
	<b>FACILITY STRATEGY 3.4</b> Coordinate with NCDOT, utility companies (Duke Energy, Piedmont Natural Gas, etc.), and Union County Parks and Recreation to incorporate new multi-use trails within local street rights-of-way (including those maintained by NCDOT), utility easements, and other publicly-maintained corridors.	Municipal Departments	X(0)	X	X
	<b>FACILITY STRATEGY 3.5</b> Work with willing property owners to obtain easements for trails where such an alignment would implement an adopted plan.				
	<b>FACILITY ACTION 3.5.1</b> Create standardized process by which easements are obtained and standard terms for such easements.	Union County P&R	X		
	<b>FACILITY STRATEGY 3.6</b> Encourage developers to provide publicly-accessible multi-use trails with new development, particularly where such greenways would provide a connection between two existing or planned greenways constructed by other entities.	County and Municipal Planning Departments throughout Union County	X		
	<b>FACILITY STRATEGY 3.7</b> Cooperate with municipalities to develop common policies and regulations.				

\*Short-Term = 1-3 years, Medium-Term = 3-5 years, Long-Term = 5+ years, (0)= Ongoing

FACILITY RECOMMENDATIONS	FACILITY STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS	RESPONSIBILITY	SHORT-TERM	MEDIUM-TERM	LONG-TERM
<b>FACILITY RECOMMENDATION 3 (cont'd)</b>	FACILITY ACTION 3.7.1 Create common policies and regulations with municipalities regarding the provision of greenways in new development.	Union County P&R		X	
	FACILITY ACTION 3.7.2 Create common policies and regulations with municipalities regarding connectivity in accordance with adopted plans.	Union County P&R		X	
	FACILITY STRATEGY 3.8 Promote places of historic significance by making them more accessible.				
	FACILITY ACTION 3.8.1 For sites/structures that are open to the public, make connections via the existing and future greenway system.	Union County P&R	X (0)		
	FACILITY STRATEGY 3.9 Connect the eastern part of the County to important cultural and historic destinations.				
	FACILITY ACTION 3.9.1 Provide a connection to Dogwood Park and Weddington Optimist Park from alignment F of Master Plan.	Union County P&R	X	X	
	FACILITY ACTION 3.9.2 Provide a connection along Richardson Creek to the Anson County line.	Union County P&R	X	X	
	FACILITY ACTION 3.9.3 Provide a connection from Cane Creek Park through southeast portion of Union County to Marshville.	Union County P&R	X	X	
	FACILITY ACTION 3.9.4 Provide a connection from Marshville north to Richardson Creek.	Union County P&R	X	X	
	FACILITY STRATEGY 3.10 Determine where short segments or “micropath” connections are needed to link existing neighborhoods to planned greenways and seek alternatives where constraints exist.	Union County P&R	X	X	X
	FACILITY STRATEGY 3.11 Identify locations and walking radii around existing and planned parks where sidewalks also serve a role in linking neighborhoods to trails and parks.	Union County P&R	X	X	X
<b>FACILITY RECOMMENDATION 4 Enhance the trail network with Blueways.</b>	FACILITY STRATEGY 4.1 Provide improved access points to the Rocky River, a regionally popular paddling route, so that it can function as a blueway in the overall system of trails.				
	FACILITY ACTION 4.1.1 Locate (map) launch and take-out points that can also be enhanced as small parks.	Union County P&R	X		
	FACILITY ACTION 4.1.2 Design and construct the small parks at launches and take-out points to include small parking areas, picnic tables and other conveniences, as needed, away from the water's edge.	Union County P&R	X	X	
	FACILITY ACTION 4.1.3 Maintain a buffer of natural vegetation along the river to screen park facilities from view from the river, and supplement existing vegetation where necessary to achieve this condition.	Union County P&R	X	X	X
	FACILITY ACTION 4.1.4 Improve the boat launches and take-outs to make them easier to use.	Union County P&R	X		
	FACILITY STRATEGY 4.2 Amend the Carolina Tread Trail Master Plan to include the Rocky River Blueway and a Carolina Threat Trail connection to Rocky River.	CTT	X		

\*Short-Term = 1-3 years, Medium-Term = 3-5 years, Long-Term = 5+ years, (0)= Ongoing

FACILITY RECOMMENDATIONS	FACILITY STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS	RESPONSIBILITY	SHORT-TERM	MEDIUM-TERM	LONG-TERM
<b>FACILITY RECOMMENDATION 5</b> <b>Address the needs of the growing population segments (25-44 years, and 65+) by providing appropriate facilities.</b>	<b>FACILITY STRATEGY 5.1</b> Provide facilities for the growing adult cohort (25-44 years).				
	<b>FACILITY ACTION 5.1.1</b> Identify locations for new facilities or expanded facilities.	Union County P&R	X (0)	X	X
	<b>FACILITY ACTION 5.1.2</b> Prioritize identified projects and potential funding sources.	Union County P&R	X		
	<b>FACILITY ACTION 5.1.3</b> Implement the top 3 high-priority projects.	Union County P&R		X	X
	<b>FACILITY ACTION 5.1.4</b> Partner with municipalities, schools, non-profits and private recreation providers to provide some facilities and, in doing so, maximize resources and avoid unnecessary redundancy in the system.	Union County P&R		X	X
	<b>FACILITY STRATEGY 5.2</b> Provide facilities for the growing senior cohort (65+ years).				
	<b>FACILITY ACTION 5.2.1</b> Identify locations for new facilities or expanded facilities.	Union County P&R	X (0)	X	X
	<b>FACILITY ACTION 5.2.2</b> Prioritize identified projects and potential funding sources.	Union County P&R	X		
	<b>FACILITY ACTION 5.2.3</b> Implement the top 3 high-priority projects.	Union County P&R		X	X
	<b>FACILITY ACTION 5.2.4</b> Partner with municipalities, schools, non-profits and private recreation providers to provide other facilities and, in doing so, maximize resources and avoid unnecessary redundancy in the system.	Union County P&R		X	X
<b>FACILITY RECOMMENDATION 6</b> <b>Protect open space throughout the County to conserve natural, cultural and historic assets.</b>	<b>FACILITY STRATEGY 6.1</b> Acquire land for and create Nature Preserves.				
	<b>FACILITY ACTION 6.1.1</b> Conduct a GIS analysis to identify locations of valuable assets and to prioritize parcels for acquisition based on a defined set of criteria (i.e., colocation of two or more assets, value to community, availability of property, environmental benefits, etc.).	Union County P&R	X		
	<b>FACILITY ACTION 6.1.2</b> Develop a program to acquire high-priority lands utilizing multiple mechanisms, such as purchasing outright (fee simple ownership), dedications, etc.	Union County P&R		X	X
	<b>FACILITY ACTION 6.1.3</b> Create Nature Preserves utilizing acquired land in accordance with the definition provided in the Facilities Classification System.	Union County P&R		X	X
	<b>FACILITY STRATEGY 6.2</b> Establish minimum standards for natural areas within the various facility types described in the Facility Classification System.	Union County P&R	X		
<b>FACILITY RECOMMENDATION 7</b> <b>Provide more water-based recreation opportunities to residents.</b>	<b>FACILITY STRATEGY 7.1</b> Work with the City of Monroe to review an increase in opportunities at Lake Twitty, Lake Lee and Lake Monroe for water-based recreational access.	Union County P&R, Monroe P&R Department		X	X
	<b>FACILITY STRATEGY 7.2</b> Expand water-based opportunities at Cane Creek by providing stand-up paddleboards (SUPs). Consider number, storage, location(s), fees, etc.	Union County P&R		X	
	<b>FACILITY STRATEGY 7.3</b> Improve access to the Rocky River blueway (see Facilities Strategy 4.1).	Union County P&R, Carolina Thread Trail	X		

\*Short-Term = 1-3 years, Medium-Term = 3-5 years, Long-Term = 5+ years, (0)= Ongoing

# Programming Implementation Action Plan

PROGRAMMING RECOMMENDATIONS	PROGRAMMING STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS	RESPONSIBILITY	SHORT-TERM	MEDIUM-TERM	LONG-TERM
<b>PROGRAMMING RECOMMENDATION 1</b> <b>Ensure the equitable and feasible delivery of programs throughout the County, especially in terms of the identified needs of specific segments of the population.</b>	<b>PROGRAMMING STRATEGY 1.1</b> Work closely with municipalities and local non-profit agencies to efficiently deliver programs and avoid redundancy. Provide support in the form of coordination, funding and/or staffing. Develop process by which Union County Parks and Recreation is to provide staffing, funding, land, and/or marketing to support to municipalities and local non-profit agencies in the expansion of existing or the addition of new programming geared towards youth (10-19 age cohort)	Union County P&R	X (0)		
	<b>PROGRAMMING STRATEGY 1.2</b> Provide programming geared towards youth (10-19 age cohort).	Union County P&R	X (0)		
	<b>PROGRAMMING ACTION 1.2.1</b> Focus on programs that are appropriate for that age group, including life sports, night programs, educational activities, day camps, and after-school camps.	Union County P&R	X (0)		
	<b>PROGRAMMING ACTION 1.2.2</b> Work closely with municipalities and local non-profits, through coordination, funding and/or staffing, to develop programs for life sports programming, such as biking, canoeing/kayaking, tennis, swimming, jogging/walking, and golf.	Union County P&R	X (0)		
	<b>PROGRAMMING STRATEGY 1.3</b> Address the needs of growing population groups (25-44 years, and 65+ years) by ensuring programming needs are met for each.				
	<b>PROGRAMMING STRATEGY 1.3.1</b> With a significant percentage of the existing and future population in the 25-44 age cohort, ensure programming needs of this age group are met.				
	<b>PROGRAMMING ACTION 1.3.1.1</b> Focus on programs that are appropriate for that age group, including running/jogging groups, yoga, boat / kayaking tours, food preparation education, and gardening.	Union County P&R	X (0)		
	<b>PROGRAMMING ACTION 1.3.1.2</b> Consider the needs of the children of this age group to ensure parents are able to participate in their preferred activities (above).	Union County P&R	X (0)		
	<b>PROGRAMMING STRATEGY 1.3.2</b> With a significant percentage of the existing and future population in the 65+ age cohort, ensure programming needs of this age group are met.				
	<b>PROGRAMMING ACTION 1.3.2.1</b> Focus on programs that are appropriate for that age group, including walking groups, job or volunteer placement, computer skills, financial education, arts and crafts classes, mobile fitness programs.	Union County P&R	X (0)		
	<b>PROGRAMMING STRATEGY 1.4</b> Establish mobile demonstrative gardens (truck farms) to educate the County's residents on agricultural propagation and food preparation.	Union County P&R	X (0)		
<b>PROGRAMMING RECOMMENDATION 2</b> <b>Working with the municipalities, ensure that the range of programs offered now and in the future can be accommodated by spaces within the overall system that are appropriate in terms of quantity, size, and location.</b>	<b>PROGRAMMING STRATEGY 2.1</b> Through partnerships and sharing of facilities, seek opportunities to provide programs equitably throughout the County and/or in close proximity to the segments of the populations that would benefit from the programs.				
	<b>PROGRAMMING ACTION 2.1.1</b> Identify organizations with whom the County can partners (or facilitate partnerships between). Consider a range of public spaces including municipal parks, fire stations, schools, libraries, as well as facilities owned and managed by community groups and faith-based organizations.	Union County P&R	X (0)		
	<b>PROGRAMMING ACTION 2.1.2</b> Utilize joint use agreements to formalize such agreements between the County and other entities.	Union County P&R	X (0)		

\*Short-Term = 1-3 years, Medium-Term = 3-5 years, Long-Term = 5+ years, (0)= Ongoing

IMPLEMENTATION ACTION PLAN / STRATEGIC PLAN

PROGRAMMING RECOMMENDATIONS	PROGRAMMING STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS	RESPONSIBILITY	SHORT-TERM	MEDIUM-TERM	LONG-TERM
<b>PROGRAMMING RECOMMENDATION 3</b> Increase programming that utilizes—and increases appreciation for—Union County’s natural resources.	PROGRAMMING STRATEGY 3.1 Increase programming for water-based recreation including fishing, boating, kayaking, canoeing and paddle boarding.	Union County P&R		X	
	PROGRAMMING STRATEGY 3.2 Increase programming with an environmental focus.				
	PROGRAMMING ACTION 3.2.1 Expand nature-based hiking tours by the County and local organizations at Cane Creek Park and throughout the County.	Union County P&R		X	
	PROGRAMMING ACTION 3.2.2 Offer native plants classes to raise awareness of and encourage landscaping with indigenous plants. Such classes could include landscaping projects within County and municipal parks.	Union County P&R		X	
	PROGRAMMING ACTION 3.2.3 Consider the addition of nature-based programming in the feasibility study for a nature center in Union County.	Union County P&R		X	
<b>PROGRAMMING RECOMMENDATION 4</b> Continue to provide and expand events in County parks and support current and future events in municipal parks.	PROGRAMMING STRATEGY 4.1 Expand existing cultural events programming to include music, art festivals, movies in the park and similar events.				
	PROGRAMMING ACTION 4.1.1 Expand existing events programming to include music and arts festivals, movies in the park and other events at County parks.	Union County P&R		X	
	PROGRAMMING STRATEGY 4.2 Expand existing recreational events programming.	Union County P&R		X	
	PROGRAMMING ACTION 4.2.1 Partner with municipalities to provide regular (i.e. biannual, monthly, etc.) days to recreate throughout the County	Union County P&R		X	
<b>PROGRAMMING RECOMMENDATION 5</b> Boost health programs offered in Union County.	PROGRAMMING STRATEGY 5.1 Develop partnerships with Carolinas Medical Center, Novant Health and other health providers to expand mental health programs offered to Union County residents.	Union County Public Health Department	X (0)		
	PROGRAMMING STRATEGY 5.2 Work with Union County Agricultural Center, NC State Cooperative Extension and area food industry representatives to promote existing and expand educational programs about Union County’s agricultural tradition, healthy food sources, and healthy eating.	Union County Public Health Department	X (0)		
	PROGRAMMING STRATEGY 5.3 Develop programs related to exercise and physical activity to encourage more active lifestyles for all Union County residents.	Union County Public Health Department	X (0)		
	PROGRAMMING STRATEGY 5.4 Develop programs that focus on pockets of poor health conditions or where vulnerable populations reside.				
	PROGRAMMING ACTION 5.4.1 With help from Union County Public Health Department, continue to track the locations of at-risk populations by conduct GIS spatial analysis of health trends to understand where at risk populations are located.	Union County P&R		X	X
	PROGRAMMING ACTION 5.4.2 Partner with Union County Health Department and area healthcare providers to provide programs or modify existing programs that address the location-specific health issues.	Union County P&R		X	X
	PROGRAMMING STRATEGY 5.5 Increase health-related events such as a free diabetes screening (using mobile unit) in County and municipal parks.	Union County Public Health Department	X (0)		
	PROGRAMMING STRATEGY 5.6 Utilize Rec and Roll wagon and “truck farm” to boost awareness of growing food, community gardens and healthy eating with mobile food education	Union County P&R	X	X	

\*Short-Term = 1-3 years, Medium-Term = 3-5 years, Long-Term = 5+ years, (0)= Ongoing

05



# FUNDING STRATEGIES

## **THERE ARE SEVERAL METHODS THROUGH WHICH PARKS AND RECREATION SYSTEMS CAN**

be funded. The first step is to update the Capital Improvement Plan to provide the guiding framework for the financing of the department. The following section defines several funding tools that, when used in conjunction with municipal or other available funds, will enable the acquisition of land, planning, design, construction, and programming of critical community amenities.

Prior to allocating funds, capital improvements must be defined within a capital improvements program (CIP). A capital improvements program is a framework for planning a community's capital expenditures. It is a six-year schedule of infrastructure and facilities to be built or upgraded annually. The CIP is composed of two parts – a capital budget and a capital program. The budget is the upcoming year's spending plan; the program is a plan for expenditures five years beyond the budget. A complete, properly developed CIP should identify funding sources and timelines for completion of projects upon which all citizens can rely. A well-planned capital improvement plan has the following benefits:

- Facilitates coordination between capital needs and the operating budgets.
- Enhances the community's credit rating, control of its tax rate, and avoids sudden changes in its debt service requirements.

- Identifies the most economical means of financing capital projects.
- Increases opportunities for obtaining federal and state aid.
- Relates public facilities to other public and private development and redevelopment policies and plans.
- Focuses attention on community objectives and fiscal capacity.
- Keeps the public informed about future needs and projects.
- Coordinates the activities of neighboring and overlapping units of local government to reduce duplication.
- Encourages careful project planning and design to avoid costly mistakes and help a community reach desired goals.

This section of the Master Plan describes sources of funding to be considered in conjunction with the CIP.

## Funding

The identification of capital investment needs for the development of new facilities for the 10 year planning period is summarized below. The proposed costs are planning level estimates and intended to be used as allowances. These estimates should be updated on a regular basis by staff as more information becomes available through on-going planning. The budgeted costs only include physical improvements, and do not include design, staff or land acquisition. There are several types of funding options available.

### GRANT RESOURCES

A variety of special grants exist through federal, state and local agencies which can be used to fund parks and recreation facilities and programs. Utilizing grants creates opportunities to fund projects that may not be feasible if only reliant on other traditional for funding. Figure 12 highlights a variety of grants available from local, state and federal sources that could help achieve some of the aforementioned recommendations.

### GENERAL FUND ALLOCATIONS

General funds come from property taxes and other municipal income sources. These are typically used to fund park operations and maintenance, but are not usually used to fund land acquisition and park development projects.

### COUNTY BONDS

County bonds are another tool commonly used by governments to fund parks and recreation programs and facilities. A county bond is a bond issued by a county or other local government. There are two basic types of bonds:

- **General obligation bonds:** Principal and interest are secured by the full faith and credit of the issuer and usually supported by either the issuer's unlimited or limited taxing power. In many cases, general obligation bonds are voter-approved.
- **Revenue bonds:** Principal and interest are secured by revenues derived from tolls, charges or rents from the facility built with the proceeds of the bond issue. Public projects financed by revenue bonds include toll roads, bridges, airports, water and sewage treatment facilities, hospitals and subsidized housing. Many of these bonds are issued by special authorities created for that particular purpose.

### PAYMENTS IN LIEU

Financial contributions by a developer to substitute for land requirements in land development ordinances.

### SPECIAL USE TAX

A dedicated sales tax

### PARK AND OTHER FOUNDATIONS

Private and or nonprofit funding source to support a park system or individual park or greenway.

### USER FEES

Fees paid by a user of recreational facilities or programs to offset the costs of services.

### LOCAL EQUITY

Through land donations or land swaps, the Parks and Recreation Department can utilize local equities to help fund facility development. Donations of land to parks and recreation departments have become very popular due to the many tax benefits. The department can help to minimize land acquisition costs by developing on donated parcels. In addition, they may also lower acquisition costs by taking part in a land swap. This involves the county trading existing county-owned property for it to be developed commercially in exchange for a property more suitable for parks and recreation. The County and the developer enter into this agreement as it is mutually beneficial for both parties.

### PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships are a cornerstone of this Master Plan and essential for it to be successfully implemented. By partnering with municipalities, schools and other local organizations, the County can leverage their programs and facilities in order to create a parks and recreation system with a wide variety of offerings for all County residents. Creating joint-use agreements with schools is one example of such partnerships. In addition, hospitals, corporations and other special interest groups can offer classes and educational opportunities that can be incorporated into the system, while partnerships with the Carolina Thread Trail and the Catawba Lands Conservancy can forge connections between facilities in the form of trails and open space.

The possibilities are numerous. By identifying and communicating with potential partners, the County can uncover opportunities that can benefit all organizations involved. Refer to Appendix G for an extensive list of potential partners.

The County can also help municipalities and other organizations by reinstating and expanding the grants programs that Union County had previously used to help municipalities, athletic associations and non-profits to fund recreational facilities and programs. Through a matching program, the County can help support projects that fit within the vision of Union County Parks and Recreation. In addition to helping these groups financially, there are other instances where the County can help in different ways. While they may not provide any funding, they can help with planning efforts, provide facilities for programs or simply include them as a part of the system being marketed. Increased communication and partnerships between the organizations will lead to a more efficient use of capitol and existing and future resources.

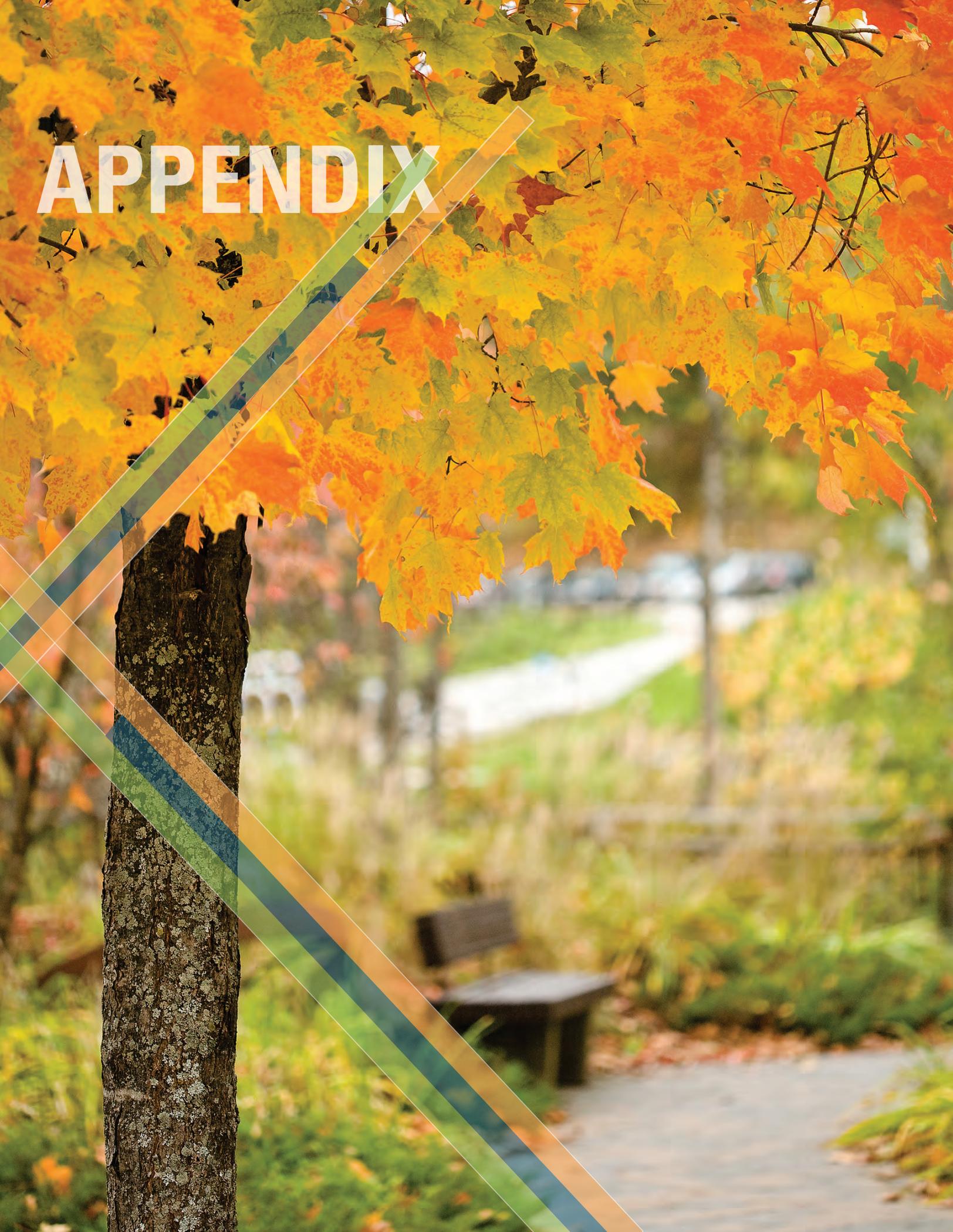
FIGURE 12: AVAILABLE GRANTS

LEVEL	GRANT TYPE	SOURCE	PURPOSE
Local	Carolina Thread Trail Grant	Carolina Thread Trail	This grant funds greenway/trail implementation projects.
State	PARTF Grant	State of North Carolina	PARTF (The Parks and Recreation Trust Fund) provides dollar-for-dollar matching grants to local governments for parks and recreation projects that serve the public interest.
State	Healthy Active Communities Grant	Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Carolina	The aim of Healthy Active Communities is to lead young and old North Carolinians to healthier, more active lifestyles.
State	Land and Water Conservation Fund Grant	State of North Carolina	The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) program is a reimbursable, 60/40 split between local governments and state agencies grants program given to states for conservation and outdoor recreation purposes, and through states to local governments to address "close-to-home" outdoor recreation needs.
State	Clean Water Management Trust Grant	State of North Carolina	This grant supports projects that enhance or restore degraded waters, protect unpolluted waters, and/or contribute toward a network of riparian buffers and greenways for environmental, educational and recreational benefits.
State	Safe Routes to School Grant	State of North Carolina	This grant is designed to create and improve safe walking and bicycling facilities to and from school.
State	Recreational Trails Program (MAP-21) Grant	State of North Carolina	Grant program to help fund trails and trail-related recreational needs at the State level. Funds are distributed by Department of Environment and Natural Resources.
Federal	Our Town Grant	National Endowment for the Arts	This endowment is for creative placemaking projects that contribute toward the livability of communities and help transform them into lively, beautiful and sustainable places with the arts at their core.
Federal	Urban Waters Grant	EPA	Projects that contribute to improved water quality and community revitalization qualify for this program.
Federal	Transportation Alternatives Program (MAP-21) Grant	US Department of Transportation	This grant can be used for a variety of projects, including pedestrian and bicycle facilities, rail-to-rail program, acquisition of historic easements, landscaping and scenic beautification.
Federal	Congestion Mitigation Air Quality Program (MAP-21) Grant	US Department of Transportation	Funds from CMAQ are available to communities that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has designated as "non-attainment" areas for air quality. Much of Union County is designated as this. Eligible projects include the creation of sidewalks, bike lanes, or multi-use trail, as well as marketing, education, and outreach efforts designed to support walking and bicycles as a form of transportation.

FIGURE 13: IMPROVEMENT ALLOWANCES

IMPROVEMENT	PROPOSED BUDGETARY ALLOWANCE		
	SHORT-TERM (1-3 YEARS)	MEDIUM-TERM (3-5 YEARS)	LONG-TERM (5+ YEARS)
<b>FACILITY ACTION 2.1.2.2</b> Make improvements to Cane Creek Park in accordance with the updated Master Plan (and phasing plan).		\$100,000	
<b>FACILITY ACTION 2.1.3</b> Develop a new regional park in the northern portion of the County close to population centers and along at least one existing or planned trail segment.			\$4,000,000
<b>FACILITY ACTION 2.1.4</b> Develop the remaining phases of Jesse Helms Park, including providing bleachers and lights for the existing soccer fields. \$12,500,000* based on 2006 UC Park and Rec Master Plan estimate with 16% cumulative rate of inflation.		Get from UC	
<b>FACILITY ACTION 3.1.3</b> Design and build the identified greenway projects in order of priority.	\$1,000,000	\$3,000,000	\$5,000,000
<b>FACILITY ACTION 4.1.2</b> Design and construct the small parks at launches and take-out points to include small parking areas, picnic tables and other conveniences, as needed, away from the water's edge.	\$300,000	\$800,000	
<b>FACILITY ACTION 4.1.4</b> Improve the boat launches and take-outs to make them easier to use.	\$40,000		
<b>FACILITY ACTION 5.1.3</b> Implement the top 3 high-priority projects to address the needs of the 24-45 population.		\$20,000	\$40,000
<b>FACILITY ACTION 5.2.3</b> Implement the top 3 high-priority projects to address the needs of the 65+ population.		\$30,000	\$60,000
<b>FACILITY ACTION 6.1.3</b> Create Nature Preserves utilizing acquired land in accordance with the definition provided in the Facilities Classification System.		\$80,000	\$2,000,000
<b>FACILITY ACTION 7.2</b> Expand water-based opportunities at Cane Creek by providing stand-up paddleboards (SUPs). Consider number, storage, location(s), fees, etc.		\$12,000	

# APPENDIX



# APPENDIX A:

## Community Input

### OVERVIEW

Community input is an essential element of any parks and recreation needs assessment process. A proper engagement process is one that reaches residents through multiple methods at different stages of Plan development. When implemented effectively, a public engagement process allows Plan developers to expand their knowledge beyond what has been learned through the Level of Service analysis and tailor it to create a Plan that truly meet the community's needs.

To successfully accomplish this, several public input exercises were conducted. These include the following:

- Stakeholder interviews,
- Three public meetings at different stages of the Plan development, and
- Two community surveys administered online and by phone during the planning process.

The Union County Parks and Recreation department also conducted an extensive marketing campaign to promote attendance to public meetings and survey responses. Based on this input, a clear portrait of local trends and preferences for facilities and programs emerged and informed the recommendations and strategies proposed in this Plan. In the end, the public involvement campaign proved to be very successful. Union County received 2,339 responses to the online survey over a three-month period. Additionally, there were more than 50 attendees at the first public meeting and over 40 attendees at the second.

### SURVEY

A primary focus of the Union County Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Master Plan process was to reach as many people for input as possible. The online and phone survey proved to be the most effective tool in the public engagement campaign. Detailed information regarding the survey and its results can be found in the Public Input Survey Results located at the end of this appendix. The following methods were used to maximize the amount of survey responses received:

- Links to the online survey were posted on the Union County website and the Union County Parks and Recreation website, Twitter accounts, and Facebook pages.
- The online survey was also advertised through community events, public meetings, and posters in local businesses and governmental agencies.
- Postcards with the survey link were included in residents' water bills.
- Hard copies of the online survey were made available at the Union County Parks and Recreation office, Cane Creek Park, and other Union County departments. Hard copies were also distributed to miscellaneous municipal governments and businesses throughout Union County.
- Translated hard copies were circulated to the Hispanic community through the IASO Sports Center.
- Survey stations were provided at the first public meeting, so those who attended had a chance to complete it.

### PUBLIC MEETINGS

Public meetings were held at critical stages throughout the planning process.

Two of these meetings were held to gather input regarding issues and opportunities as well as proposed recommendations for the Plan. The third meeting included a presentation of the final Plan. See details of the first two meetings on the pages that follow. To promote attendance to the public meetings, the County employed the following methods:

- Advertising for meetings through local radio, television and newspaper.
- Printing and distributing posters to businesses for display.
- Marketing via posters, postcards and word-of-mouth efforts by Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Master Plan committee members.
- Drawings for prizes to reward attendance at both public meetings.

### STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

Stakeholder meetings were held early in the master planning process in order to gain a quick and comprehensive understanding of Union County's needs. These meetings included members from local schools, sports organizations, faith-based organizations, businesses and County staff, representatives from invested County interest groups and others. Some of the overall ideas that arose during the process included the following:

- A connected, cohesive system that is physically (i.e. trails, which also provide a transportation option) and visually linked is desired.
- There is a significant amount of recreation available within Union County, just a lack of awareness that it exists. There is a need for marketing the existing resources
- Union County schools are an underutilized recreational facility and could be leveraged to provide access to facilities to all County residents.
- More coordination between County, Municipal and non-profit recreational providers is necessary.
- There is a sizable equine population in Union County with a need for additional facilities.
- As towns grow and new parks and recreation departments are established, the municipalities have begun to provide more recreation for the public.
- Partnerships are key!

In addition there were many specific comments about facilities and programming in Union County which were very important to understanding the County's parks and recreation needs in regard to future trends. The following is a sampling of these comments:

- Union County Farmers Market has been very successful since it started and continues to grow.
- Ella Fitzgerald Center in Monroe is convenient and inexpensive (\$25 per year for County residents; free to City of Monroe residents) for seniors.
- The Master Gardeners program has been successful. There is a need for more marketing and advertising, however, to grow the program.
- Cane Creek Park is a gem in Union County. It is as good as any facility in the area.

## NOTES FROM PUBLIC MEETING 1 (9/16/2014)

More than 50 people attended the first Union County Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Master Plan Public Meeting on September 16<sup>th</sup>, 2014. The meeting's format and organization was divided into four exhibits / exercises.

- **Live Work & Play:** As attendees entered the room they were asked to point out, on a map, where they live, work and play.
- **Existing Conditions Exhibit and Goals Exercise:** This was an exhibit describing the draft goals of the Park & Recreation Master Plan, the project schedule and some existing conditions statistics. Attendees were asked to comment on the draft project goals, vote for the three goals most important to them and add any goals they thought may be missing.
- **Tell Us What You Want / Like Exercise:** Attendees were asked to place cards and/or post-it notes upon boards with questions about the type of activities and services they would like provided in a parks and recreation system. Most boards limited the amount of cards placed to three.
- **Share Your Thoughts:** Using markers, attendees provided any additional feedback not covered in the previous three exercises by writing comments on a final feedback board.

### 5 TAKEAWAYS FROM UNION COUNTY PUBLIC MEETING #1

- **Attendees of the public meeting were residents from all over the County.** The Live, Work & Play map had a relatively even distribution of "live" dots on the map.
- **There appears to be strong support for trails across all of the boards.** Overall there were a total of 41 votes for natural trails, greenways or blueways on all the boards except the one specifically about types of trails.
- **Attendees preferred the natural trail type by a margin of nearly two to one over any other trail type.** When asked, "There are many different types of trails. What kinds of trails do you want in Union County?" the attendees voted for Nature Trail 24 times. Greenway s (paved trails) received the second most votes with 13.
- **Dog parks had strong support from the attendees on multiple boards.** Dog parks received the most votes (7) when asked "What are the three most important activities or programs?" and the second-most votes (6) when asked, "What are your top three most pressing recreation needs?"
- **There is a significant desire among residents to highlight Union County's cultural, natural and historical resources.**

Throughout all of the boards there were several votes for preserving Union County's unique character and history. When asked, "What makes Union County special?" the most votes (9) were for Small Town / Rural Character followed by History and Natural Beauty, each with 6 votes.

The following is a summary of the feedback from these exercises:

### SUMMARY OF "LIVE, WORK & PLAY"

Attendees placed colored dots on a map of Union County where they work (yellow dot), live (green dot) and play (blue dot). The results of the exercise showed that people who came to the public meeting represented all geographic areas of the County. Other observations where the following:

- Areas used for recreation in Union County currently occurs in the western portion of the County. A significant amount of respondents also recreate in Mecklenburg County.
- The majority of people who responded with blue dots to where the work, were located within Union County. Only four were located in Mecklenburg County.
- While many of the respondents came from the northwest portion of the county, there were equally as many who came from the southwest quadrant and the eastern portion of the County.

### SUMMARY OF "GOALS EXERCISE"

The goals exercise allowed attendees to choose which draft goals are most important to them. They were each given three dots to choose their top three goals. The following are the results:

TABLE 1: SUMMARY OF "GOALS EXERCISE"

GOAL	VOTES
Improved quality of life for all residents	11
Increase access to parks and recreation facilities	18
Improved health of all residents	13
A socially, financially and environmentally sustainable parks and recreation system	16
A variety of programming and events for all residents	18
A connected system of parks throughout the County	18

From the results we see a very even distribution of goal preference among respondents.

## SUMMARY OF TELL US “WHAT YOU WANT / LIKE EXERCISE”

The following details the questions asked of the attendees on each of the boards and a summary of their responses:

### What are your top three most pressing recreation needs?

- The most popular cards added to the board were **Indoor Pool** (7 votes), **Dog Park** (6 votes), **Greenway** (6 votes), **Running Track** (5 votes), **Nature Trail** (4 votes) and **Athletic Complex** (4 votes).
- Many people also responded with open-ended answers to the board. The most common responses were trails (greenways, equestrian & nature), aquatic-related activities, and fishing and passive recreational activities. For a full list of responses see the end of this summary.

### What are the three most important activities or programs?

- The most popular cards added to the board were **Dog Park** (7 votes), **Nature Center** (5 votes), **Botanical Gardens** (5 votes), **Nature Trail** (5 votes) and **Farmers Market** (4 votes).
- In addition, many people responded with open ended answers of their most important activities or programs. The most common responses were youth sports programs and activities, nature-based classes and programs and aquatic-based activities. For a full list of responses see the end of this summary.

### Access to parks and recreation can help improve your health. What three things would help improve your health?

- Very few people responded to this question with cards, but the cards added to the board were **Natural Stream** (2), **Nature Trail** (1) and **Historic Preservation** (1).
- The majority of the responses to this question of “What three things would help improve your health?” were open ended. The most common responses were trails (greenways, blueways, equestrian & nature), aquatic facilities and clean / fresh air. For a full list of responses see the end of this summary.

### There are many different types of trails. What kinds of trails do you want in Union County?

- The most popular cards added to the board were **Nature Trail** (22 votes), **Greenway - paved** (13 votes), **Horse Trails & Facilities** (8 votes) and **Blueway** (7 votes).
- Additionally there were a few who responded with open-ended answers. Please see full list of responses at the end of this summary.

### Why are trails important to you?

- Only one person responded to this question with a card and that was a **Greenway** (1).
- The majority of the responses to “Why are trails important to you?” were open-ended. The most common responses were exercise, relaxation, natural beauty and a place to take their dogs. Please see full list of responses at the end of this summary.

### Where would you like to see trails in Union County?

- Only one person responded to this question with a card and that was a **Historic Preservation** (1).
- The majority of the responses to “Where would you like to see trails in Union County?” were open-ended. The most common responses were implement Carolina Tread Trail, Waxhaw – Mineral Springs – Wesley Chapel connection, horse trails near Cane Creek and throughout the entire County. Please see full list of responses at the end of this summary.

### What makes Union County special?

- Very few people responded to this question with cards, but the cards added to the board were **Historic Preservation** (2), **Natural Stream** (1) and **Farmers Market** (1).
- The majority of the responses to this question of “What three things would help improve your health?” were open-ended. The most common responses were Union County’s historic sites, Cane Creek Park, natural beauty and rural / small town communities.

# APPENDIX A

## COMMENTS FROM INSTRUCTION SHEETS AND FEEDBACK BOARD

### Comments:

- Larger social media footprint to share activities / locations / events. Ex: this large County has less than 200 facebook likes – should be much higher!
- Blueway on Rocky River
- More horse trails to keep the money in the County on the weekends. We have the largest horse population in the state. Please help preserve green spaces for the equine community.
- Archery / shooting complex. We have church shooting teams and we go out of the County for competition. Bow, shotgun, rifle, pistol and black powder.
- Blair Mill Park handicap section with a wood barn
- Museum – save our history
- Museum in the historic courthouse
- Blueway on Rocky River
- More sidewalks
- Indoor / outdoor archery facility for all ages!
- Bike lanes beside existing roads in country – i.e. New Salem 205 / Hwy 218 (we dodge bikes)
- Bikes need their own separate space
- Indoor pool w/ aquatic programs for adults & youth – also provide practice space for high school teams. MAFC is not able to accommodate all UCPS teams.

## FEEDBACK FROM BOARDS

TABLE 2: WHAT MAKES UNION COUNTY SPECIAL

WHAT MAKES UNION COUNTY SPECIAL?	VOTES
Small Town / Rural Character	9
History	6
Natural Beauty	6
Cane Creek Park	4
Open Space	4
Great People	3
Great Schools	2
Equestrian	2
Low-taxes	2
Diversity	2
Parks	1
Shooting & Bow Teams	1
Industries	1
Proximity to Charlotte	1
Divergent Socio / Economic / Density (east/west)	1
Farmers Market	1

TABLE 3: PREFERRED TRAIL TYPES FOR UNION COUNTY

THERE ARE MANY DIFFERENT TYPES OF TRAILS. WHAT KINDS OF TRAILS DO YOU WANT IN UNION COUNTY?	VOTES
Nature Trail	24
Greenway (paved)	14
Horse Trails & Facilities	9
Blueway	8
Mountain Biking	5
Natural Stream	2

TABLE 4: IMPORTANCE OF TRAILS IN UNION COUNTY

WHY ARE TRAILS IMPORTANT TO YOU?	VOTES
Exercise	10
Natural Beauty	4
Safety	4
Relaxation	3
Dogs	3
Environmental Education	2
Equestrian Uses	2
Birding	1
Family Outings	1

TABLE 5: PREFERRED TRAIL LOCATIONS IN UNION COUNTY

WHERE WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE TRAILS IN UNION COUNTY?	VOTES
Waxhaw	3
New Salem Area	2
Blueway on Rocky River	2
Connecting Communities	2
Implement Carolina Thread Trail	2
Indian Trail	2
Bearskin Creek	1
Ag center, Wingate and Rural Marshville Into Anson County	1
Wesley Chapel, Waxhaw and Mineral Springs	1
Wingate	1
Horse Trails Other Than Cane Creek & Mineral Springs Greenway	1
Nice to Have Scenic Trails by River, Creeks and Woods	1
Porter Ridge Area	1
Wesley Chapel, Waxhaw & West Monroe	1
Fairview Area	1
Monroe	1
Out-of-Use Railways	1
Waxhaw, Mineral Springs	1
Unionville	1
Northern and Southern Portions of the County	1
Stallings Park	1
Near Lake Monroe	1

TABLE 6: TOP THREE RECREATION NEEDS

WHAT ARE YOUR TOP THREE MOST PRESSING RECREATION NEEDS?	VOTES
Indoor Pool	7
Dog Park	6
Running Track	5
Nature Trail	5
Athletic Complex	5
Restroom	4
Natural Stream	4
Historic Preservation	4
Aquatic Center	4
Multi-Use Center	3
Lighted Fields	3
Community Garden	3
Environmental Education	3
Horse Trails & Facilities	3
Nature Preserve	3
Greenway	2
Botanical Garden	2
Playground	2
Rain Garden	2
Special Events	2
Soccer	2
Outdoor Pool	2
Blueway	2
Senior Center	2
Nature Center	1
Spray Ground	1
Basketball	1
Bocce	1
Farmers Market	1
Therapeutic Recreation	1
Life Skills Classes	1
Shade	1
Mountain Biking	1
Archery Park	1
Fishing Parks	1

TABLE 7: TOP THREE ACTIVITIES OR PROGRAMS

WHAT ARE THE THREE MOST IMPORTANT ACTIVITIES OR PROGRAMS?	VOTES
Dog Park	7
Nature Center	5
Botanical Garden	5
Nature Trail	5
Environmental Education	5
Farmers Market	4
Natural Stream	4
Historic Preservation	4
Special Events	3
Greenway	3
Indoor Pool	3
Senior Center	3
Multi-use Center	3
Horse Trails & Facilities	3
Large Event Space	2
Public Art	2
Playground	2
Community Garden	2
Restroom	2
Formal Picnic	2
Nature Playground	2
Performing Arts	2
Blueway	2
Youth Sports Programs	2
Life Skills Classes	1
Recreation Center	1
Outdoor Pool	1
Rain Garden	1
Therapeutic Recreation	1
Soccer	1
Swimming	1
Archery Program	1
Shooting Range	1
Rock Climbing	1
Camping	1

TABLE 8: HEALTH IMPROVEMENT PREFERENCES

ACCESS TO PARKS AND RECREATION CAN HELP IMPROVE YOUR HEALTH. WHAT THREE THINGS WOULD HELP IMPROVE YOUR HEALTH?	VOTES
Trails	12
Blueway	6
Swimming Pool	4
Biking	3
Active Senior Programs	2
Gardening	2
Historic Preservation	2
Fresh Air	2
Reduce Stress	1
Horse Trails	1
Archery	1
Outdoor Areas for Cultural Events	1

## NOTES FROM PUBLIC MEETING 2 (11/18/2014)

More than 40 people attended the second Union County Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Master Plan Public Meeting on November 18<sup>th</sup>, 2014. The meeting's format and organization was divided into a presentation that gave an overview of the draft recommendations, followed by an open house viewing of project exhibits with exercises to gather public feedback on the draft recommendations.

- **Existing Conditions Exhibits:** Included the draft goals of the Park & Recreation Comprehensive Master Plan, the project schedule and existing conditions statistics.
- **Draft Recommendation Prioritization:** Attendees were asked to place dots and/or post-it notes upon boards with draft recommendations which may be provided in a parks and recreation system. Residents were limited to three preferences (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup>) for each type of category (policy recommendations, facility recommendations and program recommendations).
- **Share Your Thoughts:** Using markers, attendees provided any additional feedback not covered in the recommendation exercise.

### 5 TAKEAWAYS FROM UNION COUNTY PUBLIC MEETING #2

- **Strong support for policies across recommendation categories that build partnerships among the municipalities.** Of the 15 recommendations that received the most amount of votes, nine of them involved coordination between municipalities to better provide services to all residents.
- **Marketing and advertising are very important to a successful system.** Of the policy recommendations, two of the top five involved marketing, advertising and increasing the awareness of parks available to residents. This was also a comment listed on the feedback board.
- **Passive, natural spaces and connectivity continue to be important issues among Union County residents.** Ranked second overall among facility recommendations, preserve natural areas to provide places for passive recreation was a high priority for the residents at the public meeting. Additionally connectivity and the availability of natural surface trails were very important to residents.
- **Life sports were popular among the residents.** Life sports such as biking, canoeing / kayaking, tennis, swimming, jogging / walking and golf received the most votes for the programming recommendations. There were also several comments for activities like trails, tennis and running which fall under the life sports category.
- **There is a sizable and vocal tennis community of all ages in Union County.** Attendee feedback and post-meeting emails, indicated the potential for bringing a large central tennis facility to Union County. Currently many singles and families are traveling a significant amount of time to other county and private facilities in the region.

The following is a summary of the feedback from the meeting:

### SUMMARY OF DRAFT RECOMMENDATION PRIORITIZATION

The following shows a summary of responses and votes from each of the three types of draft recommendations (policy, facility, programs). For purposes of comparison, a ranking system was created where a 1<sup>st</sup> priority vote equals 3 points, a 2<sup>nd</sup> priority vote equals 2 points and a 3<sup>rd</sup> priority vote equals 1 point.

#### Draft policy recommendation priorities:

When asked to prioritize policy-related recommendations, the following are the five that received the highest number of points:

1. Help fund municipalities to provide facilities and programs for their residents. (27 points)
2. Maintain an updated inventory of county-wide parks, greenways, trails and blueways. (23 points)
3. Consider educational opportunities provided by the parks and recreation system that can augment school curriculum to support those efforts. (18 points)
4. Produce interactive online maps that include all recreational facilities in Union County. (16 points)
5. Coordinate closely with municipalities to develop neighborhood and community parks. (15 points)

#### Draft facility recommendation priorities:

When asked to prioritize facility related recommendations, the following are the five that received the highest number of points:

1. Seek to provide facilities for the 25-44 age cohort through partnerships with municipalities, non-profits and private recreation providers. (49 points)
2. Preserve natural areas to provide places for passive recreation. (30 points)
3. Provide connections between County facilities and other destinations, such as municipal centers (i.e. downtowns), municipal parks, schools and privately owned recreational facilities. (29 points)
4. Encourage developers to provide publicly accessible multi-use trails with new development, particularly where such trails would provide a connection between two existing or planned trails. (22 points)
5. Seek to provide facilities for the 0-14 age cohort through partnerships with schools, municipalities, non-profits and private recreation providers. (15 points)

**Draft programming recommendation priorities:**

When asked to prioritize program related recommendations, the following are the five that received the highest number of points:

1. Work with local municipalities, non-profit and private recreation organizations to increase amount of life sports programming available within the County. Traditionally aimed at kids, these are activities that are fun and individuals can participate at well into their later years. Examples of these programs are: biking, canoeing/kayaking, tennis, swimming, jogging / walking and golf. (40 points)
2. With a large percentage of the existing population in the 10-19 year-old cohort, ensure youth programming needs are met. (25 points)
3. Create partnerships with municipalities, non-profits and private community organizations to geographically distribute programming evenly throughout Union County. (16 points)
4. Boost mental health programs offered in Union County. (16 points)
5. Expand nature based hiking tours at Cane Creek and throughout the County. (12 points)

Please see the end of document for complete table of feedback for recommendations.

#### COMMENTS FROM INSTRUCTION SHEETS AND FEEDBACK BOARD

Written comments from attendees:

- Equestrian park – unpaved trails, camping, rings, education centers
- Don't forget about accessibility issues in programs and parks
- Multi-use trails – not paved
- Advertise parks – advertise meetings – advertise classes at parks – get the word out – connect on social media by connecting ads on current and relevant sites (i.e facebook page with links connecting to other pages like what's up Waxhaw or Charlotte Area Equestrians.
- The county should specifically address special needs in the master plan as an area they will help / encourage municipalities to champion. County can provide series of educational opportunities for directors...

Low cost for county...big impact. If not specifically addressed, this group tends to get lost. ADA compliance is not adequate for meeting the needs of this group.

- Create historic centers w/classes which can range from old traditional things like candle making to current and future concerns like living economically, preserving nature and senior classes. These can be at a "homestead" type of facility which can include trails, gyms, campsites, etc.
- Hiking trails are more important than tennis courts!!
- Need accessible park with wheelchair swings – similar to Zahra Baker Park in Hickory.
- Outdoor arts center – e.g. amphitheater for theatre
- Advertise better what we already have
- All greenways should be for multi-use...bikes, walking, horses, etc. no or little paving
- Connecting greenways for bicycles, runners and walkers and equestrian
- Tennis courts – indoor and outdoor
- We need blue way on Rocky River with wilderness camping spots and launches.

#### COMMENTS RECEIVED BY EMAIL FROM RESIDENTS UNABLE TO ATTEND PUBLIC MEETING

In addition to the feedback we received from the public meeting, we also requested feedback through email, from residents that may not have been able to attend. The following is a summary of the comments we received from those residents:

- The majority of feedback received from the residents through email was regarding a new central tennis facility located in Union County. Due to few public facilities and lack of access to school facilities, many residents are traveling 25+ minutes to access public courts. In total we received thirteen (13) comments about the addition of a large tennis facility
- Other comments were requests for: indoor pool facilities (3 residents), the need for facilities and programs to address special needs users, additional dog parks and paved multi-use trails.

# APPENDIX A

## FEEDBACK FROM BOARDS

The following charts summarize the public feedback from the meeting. The columns in the table represent the number of votes for each recommendation and what priority it was given. We have also included a column with a weighted total, which gives a 1<sup>st</sup> priority vote three points, a 2<sup>nd</sup> priority vote two points, and a 3<sup>rd</sup> priority vote 1 point. This was done to make for easier comparisons between recommendations.

TABLE 9: POLICY RECOMMENDATION PRIORITIES

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS	1ST PRIORITY	2ND PRIORITY	3RD PRIORITY	WEIGHTED TOTAL
Work with the Union-Monroe Economic Development to develop strategy for parks and recreation based on economic development.	1		1	<b>4</b>
Produce interactive online maps that include all recreational facilities in Union County.	4	1	2	<b>16</b>
Produce printed maps that include all recreational facilities in Union County.		1	2	<b>4</b>
Establish and market Union County Parks and Rec system as one that focuses on building a community that promotes its community's unique assets and builds community pride.	2	1		<b>8</b>
Conduct a statistically valid survey every two years to measure satisfaction with existing facilities and services and identify new community needs and preferences.			1	<b>1</b>
Create and fund a new parks and rec department staff position to address trail coordination and development with the municipalities.		2		<b>4</b>
Work together with Union County Planning Department to conduct study of the Rocky River corridor to identify tourism development opportunities and key natural areas that need to be preserved.		1	1	<b>3</b>
Increase number of people who utilize recreational facilities in Union County.		3	1	<b>7</b>
Maintain an updated inventory of county-wide parks, greenways, trails and blueways.	7	1		<b>23</b>
Expand programming at existing parks to attract more users.			2	<b>2</b>
Help fund municipalities to provide facilities and programs for their residents.	6	3	3	<b>27</b>
Coordinate closely with municipalities to develop neighborhood and community parks.	3	3		<b>15</b>
Improve coordination and communication between the County and municipal departments.	1			<b>3</b>
Partner with municipal parks and recreation department heads to meet regularly and discuss county-wide issues and opportunities to develop common complementary priorities related to shared interests and initiatives to avoid duplication of services or facilities.			1	<b>1</b>
Partner with Union County schools to maximize use of existing public resources.	2	3		<b>12</b>
Enter into formal joint use agreements for use of existing and future school sites and facilities.			8	<b>8</b>
Coordinate with the Union County School Board in the planning of future parks and schools. By collocating school and park facilities, more effective utilization of resources can be realized.			2	<b>2</b>
Consider the educational opportunities provided by the parks and recreation system that can augment school curriculum to support those efforts.	4	3		<b>18</b>
Support efforts to create schoolyard gardens to meet a community need while creating a teaching opportunity in the form of an outdoor classroom.	2	1		<b>8</b>

TABLE 10: FACILITY RECOMMENDATION PRIORITIES

FACILITY RECOMMENDATIONS	1ST PRIORITY	2ND PRIORITY	3RD PRIORITY	WEIGHTED TOTAL
To address issues of access to fresh produce, support efforts to create community or neighborhood gardens, that meet needs identified in the Community Health Assessment.		1		2
Preserve natural areas to:		1	2	4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintain or improve water quality</li> </ul>		1	1	3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide places for passive recreation. Studies have shown that access to nature leads to improved mental and emotional health.</li> </ul>	10			30
Mobile nature and environmental teaching units		1	1	3
Rotating farm and garden classes, which would simultaneously raise awareness of the importance of agriculture to Union County , including interpretive signage that explains natural systems and functions		1	2	4
Dog parks, equestrian trails, natural hiking trails, kayaking, tennis courts.	12	6	1	49
Ensure when developing new park spaces, to plan for aging populations by providing easy and close access, restrooms, flat walking areas and benches and seating areas.			2	2
Identify locations to provide outdoor exercise equipment in parks and along trails.		3	1	7
Identify public spaces to host events for older adults that are easily accessible, relatively adequate seating and close restrooms.			1	1
Therapeutic pools, walking tracks, multi-use spaces for social activities.		2	2	6
Continue maintenance of County parks to ensure all facilities meet consistently high-quality standard.	4		1	13
Update the master plan for Cane Creek Park to better serve needs of community (i.e. equestrian community, running, mountain biking, environmental education).	4			12
Conduct a feasibility study for Nature Center at Cane Creek Park.			1	1
Consider a new regional park in the northern portion of the county close to population centers and connected by planned greenway and trail system.	2			6
Develop remaining phases (2-5) of Jesse Helms Park.	2			6
Work with the City of Monroe to create plan for recreational areas like Lake Twitty, Lake Lee, and Lake Monroe.			1	1
Provide connections between County facilities and other destinations, such as municipal centers (i.e. downtowns), municipal parks, schools, and privately operated recreation facilities.	9	1		29
In the short-term, determine and construct one highly visible and accessible greenway project to demonstrate the benefits of greenways to build support for several throughout the County.			2	2
Partner with Carolina Thread Trail (CTT) to implement the planned alignments documented in the Carolina Thread Trail Master Plan for Union County and participating municipalities.				
Partner with NCDOT to locate new multi-use trails in conjunction with the construction of new improved roadways.		2	2	6

## APPENDIX A

FACILITY RECOMMENDATIONS	1ST PRIORITY	2ND PRIORITY	3RD PRIORITY	WEIGHTED TOTAL
Work with willing property owners to obtain easements for trails where such an alignment would implement an adopted plan. Small successes could help the County and their partners engage in constructive dialogue with other property owners who are presently less interested in granting easements to allow the construction of critical trail segments identified in adopted plans.	1	2	2	9
Encourage developers to provide publicly accessible multi-use trails with new development, particularly where such trails would provide a connection between two existing or planned trails.	4	3	4	22
Identify and preserve sites of historic significance by making them more accessible. Accessibility would raise awareness and appreciation. Make connections via existing and future trail and greenway system.	1		4	7
Amend the proposed Carolina Thread Trail Master Plan to connect east part of the County and important cultural and historic destinations. Consider the following amendments/additions to the adopted Carolina Thread Trail Master Plan:	3	1		11
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Add a connection to Dogwood Park and Weddington Optimist Park from alignment E of Master Plan.</li> </ul>			2	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Add a connection along Richardson Creek to the Anson County Line.</li> </ul>			3	3
With a significant percentage of the existing population in the 10-19 age cohort(s), ensure youth facility needs are met.		3		6
Seek to provide facilities for the 0-14 age cohort through partnerships with schools, municipalities, non-profits, and private recreation providers. The following are examples: active recreation facilities (can be through joint-use agreements), trails, swimming/water play, and natural playscapes.	3	1	4	15

TABLE 11: PROGRAMMING RECOMMENDATION PRIORITIES

PROGRAMMING RECOMMENDATIONS	1ST PRIORITY	2ND PRIORITY	3RD PRIORITY	WEIGHTED TOTAL
With a growing aging population, ensure senior programming needs are met for existing and future populations.	1			3
Working with the municipalities and local non-profit agencies, develop programs specially geared towards aging populations.	1			3
With a large percentage of the existing population in the 10-19 cohort (s), ensure youth programming needs are met.	8		1	25
Bike safety, environmental education, swimming, day -camps, after school programs and multi-use spaces for school activities.	1			3
Partner with local community groups and religious organizations for shared use of facilities.	2			6
Partner with municipal parks and recreation departments to utilize facilities for Union County programming.	1	2		7
Biking, canoeing/kayaking, tennis, swimming, jogging/walking and golf.	12	1	2	40
Create partnerships with municipalities, non-profits and private community organizations to geographically distribute programming evenly throughout Union County.	2	5		16
Establish list of public, non-profit and private community spaces that can be utilized for programming throughout Union County.		1		2
Expand existing events programming to include music and arts festivals, movies in the park and other events at County parks.		5		10
Boost mental health programs offered in Union County.	4	1	2	16
Increase programming that utilizes Union County’s natural resources.		1	1	3
Expand nature based hiking tours at Cane Creek and throughout the County.	4			12

The following pages provide an extensive review of the public input survey results.



# Union County Parks and Recreation Public Input Survey Results

# Executive Summary

The public input process for the Union County Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Master Plan included both a phone survey and an online survey. The phone survey was designed to collect statistically valid results from a random sample of 623 Union County residents. In order to maximize opportunities to for public input, an online survey open to all Union County residents was developed. This online survey was completed by over 2,300 Union County residents. The online survey allowed for multiple and open-ended responses to each question that provided additional context on the parks and recreation preferences of residents. Key findings from the phone and online surveys are summarized below.

## Use of Union County Parks and Programs

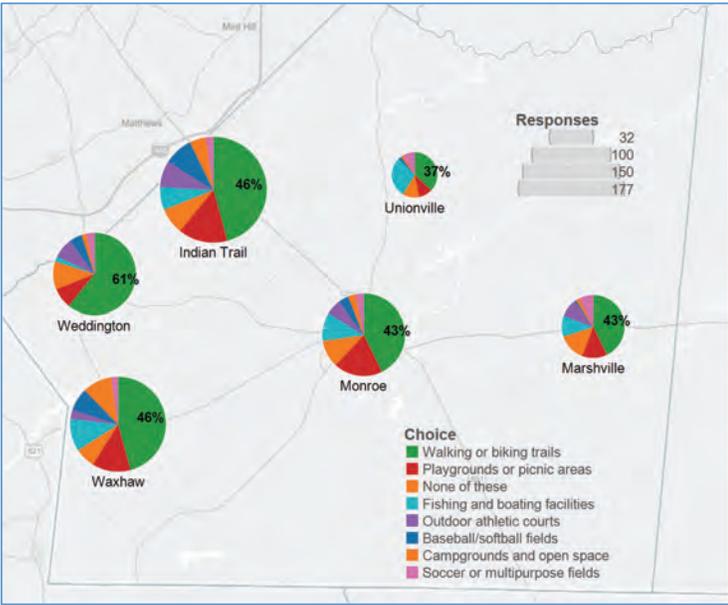
Based on results from the phone survey, roughly three-fourths of residents have been to a Union County park, which most likely includes Cane Creek Park. Few residents, however, visit Union County parks on a regular basis. A majority of residents use Union County parks once a year or less, and fewer than 10% of residents from the phone survey use Union County parks on a monthly or more frequent basis. Findings from the online survey also revealed low levels of participation in Union County recreation programs and activities. A lack of awareness or marketing and distance from home appear to be two factors that discourage greater use of Union County recreation facilities and programs.

## Recreation Facilities

The most common recurring theme in both the online and phone surveys was a desire among residents in all areas of the County for greenways and trails, and particularly for a network of trails that provide connections between parks, neighborhoods and other popular destinations. The second most popular choice for a most-needed recreation facility among both online and phone survey respondents was a swimming pool. Other popular recreation facility types included an indoor recreation facility, outdoor athletic courts, and a dog park.

## Recreation Programs and Activities

There were no clear priorities among phone survey respondents for recreation programs or activities to expand or improve. A slight plurality of phone survey respondents selected nature-based hikes and boat tours (23%) as a recreation activity that they would most like to see expanded. Among online survey respondents, community events were identified by almost half of all respondents as a most needed recreation activity. Input on existing programs also indicated that community events, such as the Family Safety and Wellness Day, are among the most popular existing recreation activities. Over 40% of online survey respondents also identified life skills classes (e.g. learn-to-swim or a cooking course) as a most-needed recreation activity.



Phone Survey Q5. Which type of recreation facility would you most like to see expanded or improved?

## Paying for Parks

Phone survey respondents were evenly split on support for a marginal tax increase to fund improvements in Union County Parks and Recreation amenities. Meanwhile, just a third of respondents felt that the Cane Creek Park \$4 entry fee was unreasonable.

## Methodology

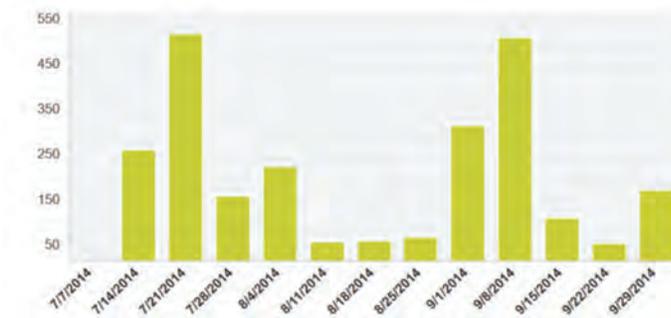
The phone survey of Union County residents was conducted by Public Policy Polling in August 2014. PPP interviewed 623 randomly selected Union County voters on August 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>. The margin of error for the phone survey is +/- 4.0% with a 95% confidence interval.

The online survey, which was open to all Union County residents, collected 2,339 responses over a three-month period between July and October of 2014. Figure 1 displays the weekly response rate from the survey. Online links and hard copy versions of the survey were distributed through multiple channels to maximize opportunities for input from County residents. Other methods of outreach included the following:

- Links to the online survey were posted on the Union County website and the Union County Parks and Recreation website, Twitter accounts, and Facebook pages.
- The online survey was also advertised through community events, public meetings, and posters in local businesses and governmental agencies.
- Postcards with the survey link were also sent out to residents through their water bills.
- Hard copies of the online survey were made available at the Union County Parks and Recreation office, Cane Creek Park, and other Union County departments. Hard copies were also handed out to miscellaneous municipal governments and businesses throughout Union County.
- Translated hard copies were handed out to the Hispanic community through the IASO Sports Center.

The phone and online surveys were both developed with input from the Master Plan Committee and Union County staff.

FIGURE 1: WEEKLY RESPONSES TO ONLINE SURVEY

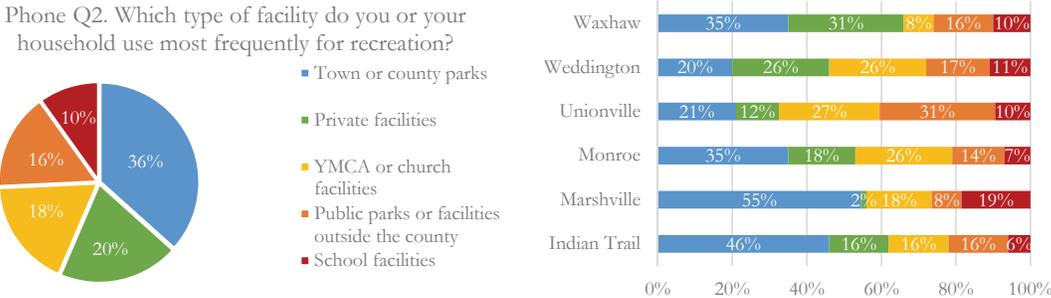


# Survey Summary

This survey summary highlights the key findings from the phone survey and complements those findings with relevant results and comments from the online survey. Figures from the phone survey results are shown with a white background, while figures from the online survey are shown with a gray background.

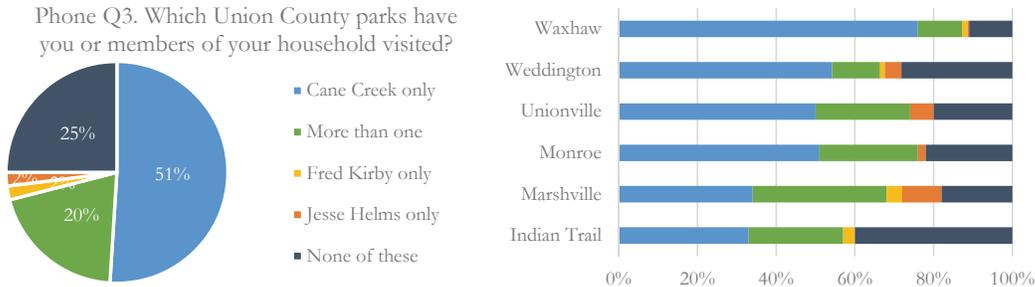
## Preferred Recreation Locations

FIGURE 2: TYPE OF RECREATION FACILITY USED MOST FREQUENTLY BY HOUSEHOLD



Over a third of phone survey respondents use town or County parks most frequently (Figure 2). An equally large share of respondents use private or non-profit facilities most frequently. Respondents living in the eastern side of Union County around Marshville are most likely to use local town and County parks most frequently, while respondents from Unionville or Weddington were least likely to do so.

FIGURE 3: UNION COUNTY PARKS VISITED BY HOUSEHOLD



The phone survey found that three-fourths of respondents have visited a Union County park, and half of them have only visited Cane Creek Park (Figure 3). It is likely that most of the respondents who have visited more than one park have also been to Cane Creek, a large regional park with a wide variety of recreational facilities and programs (Table 1).

TABLE 1: UNION COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION FACILITIES\*

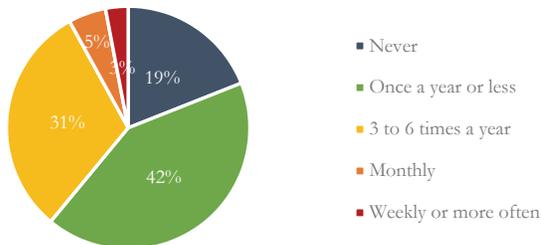
	Cane Creek Park	Jesse Helms Park	Fred Kirby Park
<b>Size</b>	1050 acres	230 acres	17 acres
<b>Walking / Biking Trails</b>	13.4 miles, trail	0.4 miles, paved	1/3 mile, paved
<b>Shelter / Picnic Areas</b>	7	1 shelter, 4 picnic areas	2 gazebos
<b>Playgrounds</b>	multiple	1	1
<b>Soccer / Multi-Purpose Fields</b>	1	6	1
<b>Baseball / Softball Fields</b>	1	none	2
<b>Volleyball Courts</b>	1	none	none
<b>Camping Sites</b>	RV / car (109), group camp (11), wilderness (9), horse camping (5), cabins (6)	none	none
<b>Rental Boats (Paddle, Canoe)</b>	Yes	none	none
<b>Lake Access for Boating and Fishing</b>	Yes	none	none

\*Only includes facilities listed as choices in online or phone surveys

Very few households from the phone survey appear to use Union County parks on a regular basis. Just under 40% of phone survey respondents indicated that they visit Union County parks more frequently than once a year. Less than a tenth of households visit Union County parks monthly or more frequently.

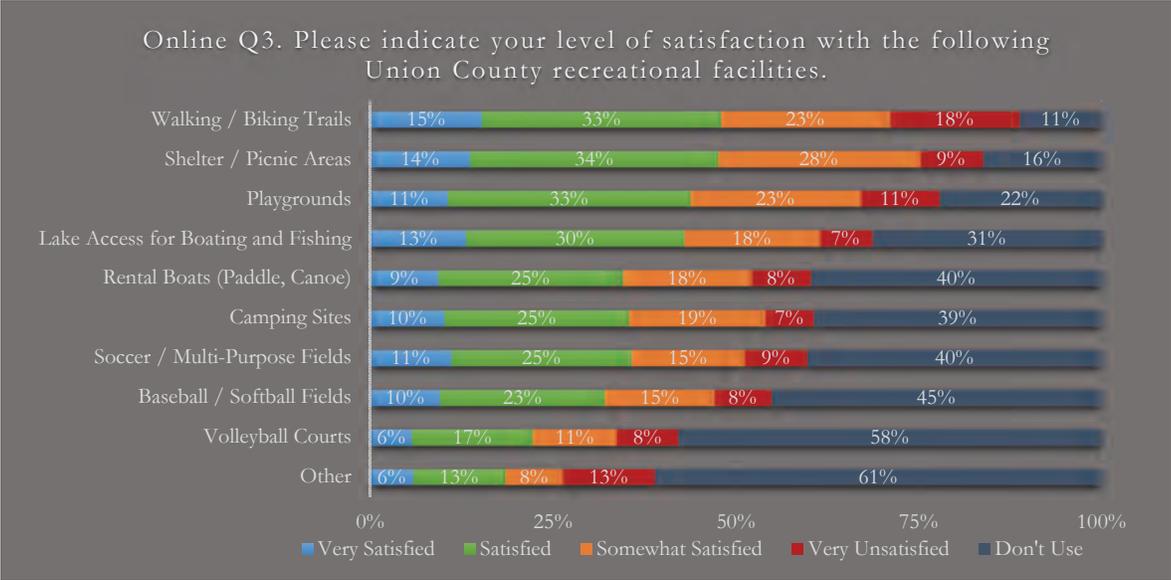
FIGURE 4: FREQUENCY OF VISITS BY HOUSEHOLD TO UNION COUNTY PARKS

Phone Q4. Approximately how often do you or members of your household visit Union County parks?



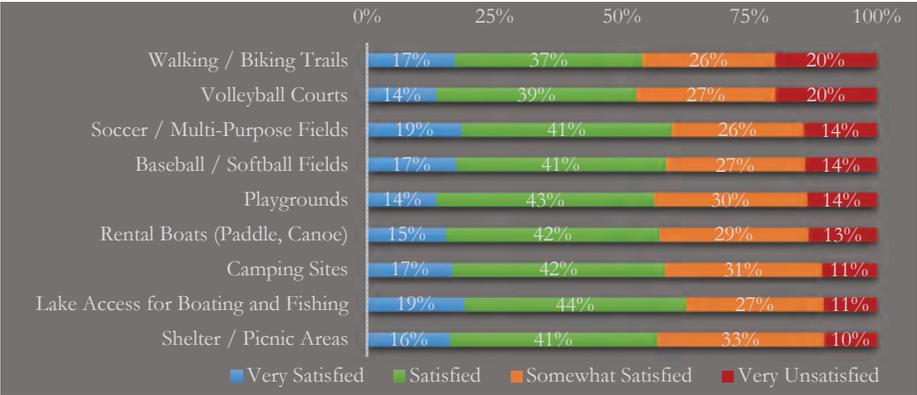
# Recreation Facilities

FIGURE 5A: UNION COUNTY RECREATION FACILITY USE AND SATISFACTION



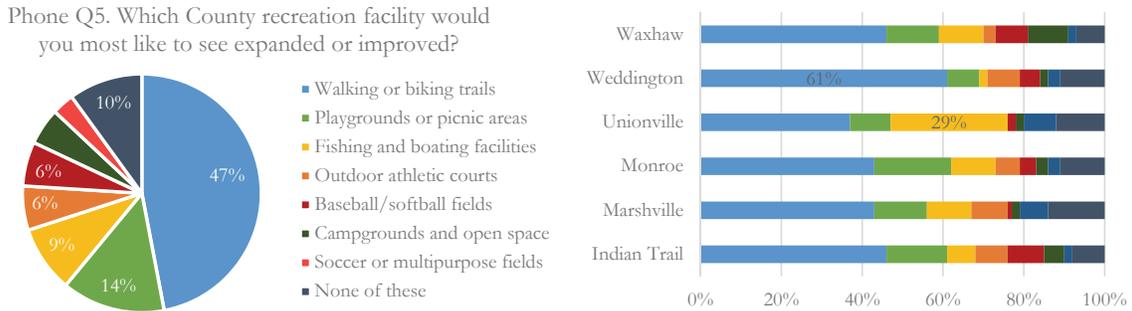
Based on results from the online survey, walking and biking trails are the most commonly used facilities in Union County parks, with only 11% of respondents reporting that they did not use them. Shelters / picnic areas and playgrounds also stood out as commonly used facility types among online survey respondents. Nearly 50% of respondents were either very satisfied or satisfied with walking / biking trails and shelters / picnic areas. Over 40% were either very satisfied or satisfied with playgrounds and lake access. With the exception of volleyball courts and baseball / softball fields, over half of respondents were at least somewhat satisfied with recreational facilities in Union County.

FIGURE 5B: USER SATISFACTION FOR UNION COUNTY RECREATION FACILITIES



At least half of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the condition of each facility that they reported using. However, one fifth of online respondents that reported using Union County walking / biking trails were very unsatisfied with those facilities. Based on open ended comments attached to the question suggest that the dissatisfaction of respondents stemmed from the lack of walking or biking trails rather than their condition.

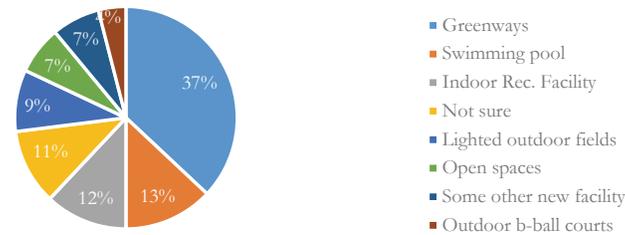
FIGURE 6: UNION COUNTY RECREATION FACILITY MOST IN NEED OF IMPROVEMENT



Phone survey respondents were asked to select the one recreation facility that they would most like to see expanded or improved, choosing from a list of existing Union County facilities. Walking or biking trails, selected by almost half of all respondents, was by far the most popular choice for a facility type to expand or improve. Walking or biking trails was also the most popular facility type to expand or improve in all areas of the County, but especially for respondents living around Weddington. Playgrounds / picnic areas, the second most popular choice, was selected by only 14% of respondents. A breakdown of phone survey results by residence also reveals that 29% of respondents in Unionville would most like to see fishing and boating facilities expanded or improved, compared with just 9% of respondents at the County level.

FIGURE 7: NEW RECREATION FACILITY MOST NEEDED

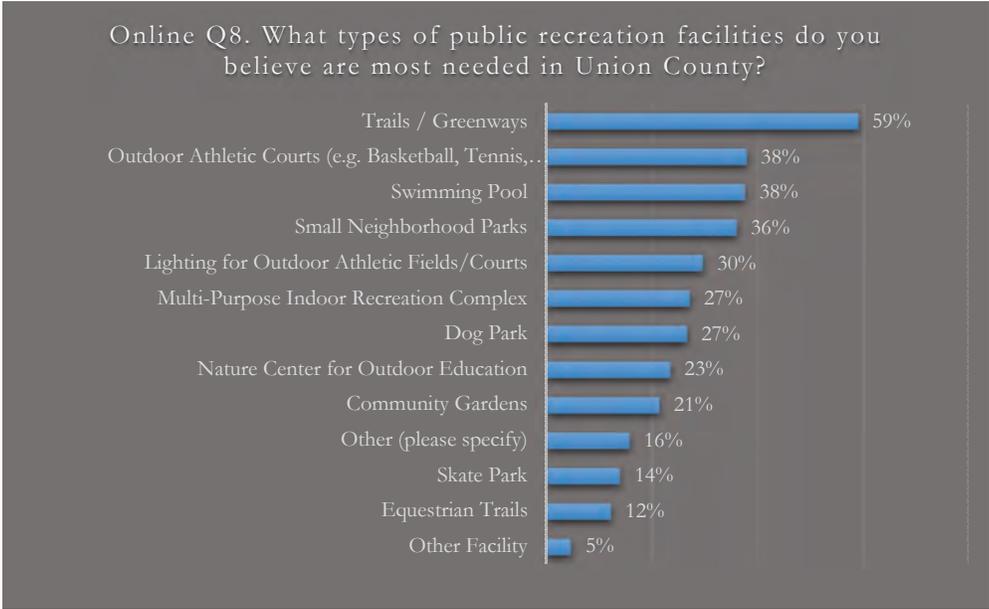
Phone Q6. Which type of new recreation facility is most needed in Union County?



“I cannot afford the fees for the Aquatic Center...It would be great to have a community pool available.”  
 —Monroe Resident, Online Survey

Phone survey respondents were asked to choose the one new recreation facility type that they believed was most needed in Union County from a list of facility types not currently offered by the County. Greenways (37%) was by far the most popular choice for most-needed new facility type; a swimming pool and an indoor recreation facility were chosen as the most-needed facility type by 13% and 12% of respondents, respectively.

FIGURE 8: NEW RECREATION FACILITIES MOST NEEDED

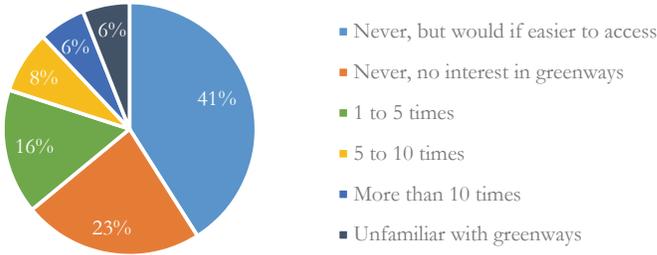


“There are no dog parks that I am aware of in Union County. That would be great if we could have one.”  
 –Wingate Resident, Online Survey

The online survey also included questions about most-needed new recreation facility types, but provided a more extensive list of choices and allowed respondents to select more than one most-needed facility type. Online survey respondents also emphasized the need for new trails and greenways. Trails/greenways was by far the most popular choice among online survey respondents asked about most-needed facilities. As in the phone survey, a swimming pool was the second most popular choice among online survey respondents as a most-needed recreation facility. Other popular new facility types among online survey respondents included outdoor athletic courts (38%) and small neighborhood parks (36%). Neither small neighborhood parks nor dog parks were included as choices in the phone survey. Dog parks and the lack thereof in Union County came up frequently in the open-ended comments and in public meetings for the plan.

FIGURE 9: USE OF GREENWAY TRAILS

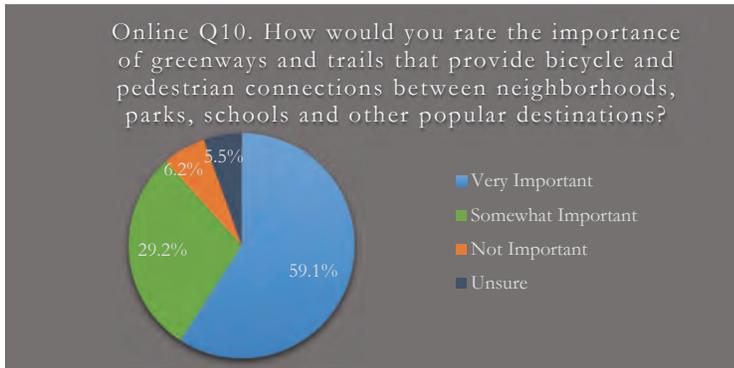
Phone Q7. How many times have you or a person in your household used a greenway trail in the last 12 months?



“Trails would help the neighborhood immensely, but it would also be an incredible draw to this whole area if there were bike trails added through parks and greenways.”  
 –Waxhaw Resident, Online Survey

Over two-thirds of phone survey respondents have not used a greenway in the past year, but most would do so if access were easier. While paved walking / biking paths and trails exist within all three Union County parks, the County has not developed any greenways or trails that connect these parks with nearby residences and other popular destinations.

FIGURE 10: IMPORTANCE OF GREENWAYS

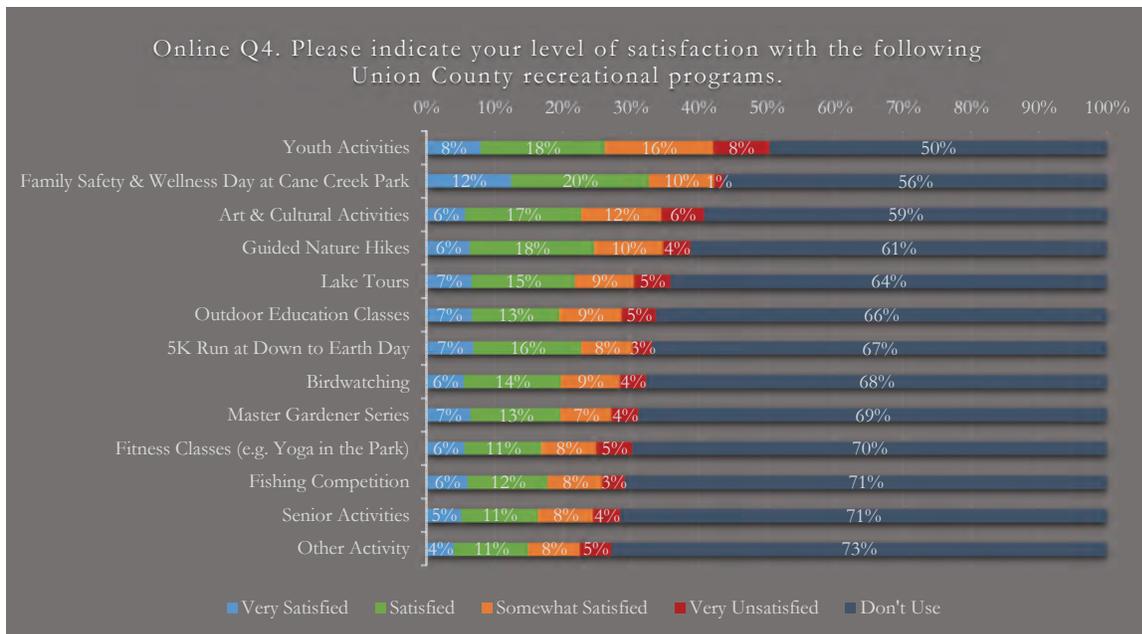


“Trails are important. Families should be able to bike and walk throughout their community. It would be nice for trails to take people to scenic/historic destinations.”  
 –Wesley Chapel Resident, Online Survey

Roughly 90% of online survey respondents rated greenways and trails that connect popular destinations as important, including 60% who felt they were very important. These findings suggest that simply building more walking and biking trails or paths within existing parks will not address real community priorities behind support for walking and biking trails.

## Recreation Programs

FIGURE 11: UNION COUNTY RECREATION PROGRAMS USE AND SATISFACTION

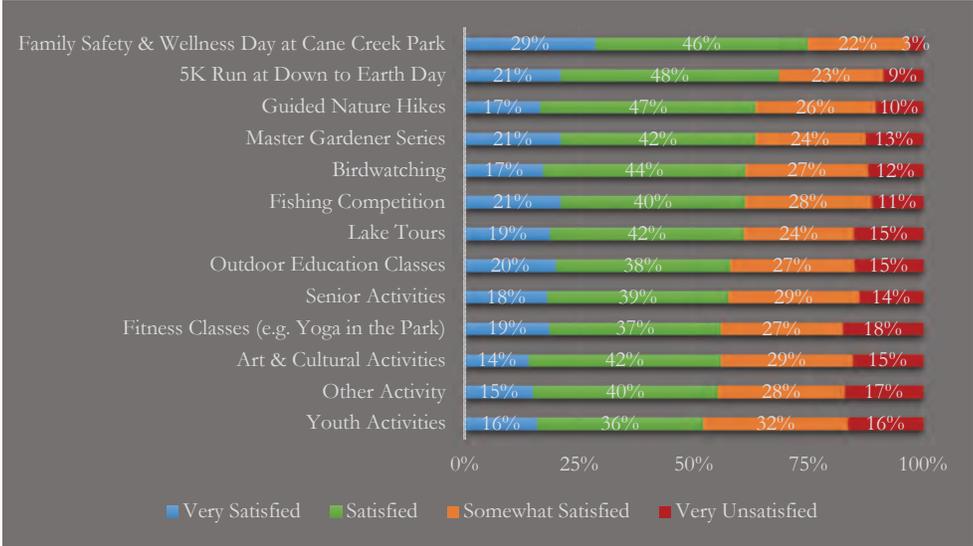


Online survey responses to questions about Union County recreation programs indicate a relatively low level of participation in most programs. Participation in recreation programs among online survey respondents ranged from 50% for youth activities to roughly 30% for fitness classes and senior activities. Most activities are reportedly used by less than 40% of online

survey respondents. The lack of participation among many online survey respondents is probably explained, at least in part, by the distance from activity and event locations. Most, if not all, Union County recreation programs are offered at Cane Creek Park, which is a 30 minute drive from most towns in the County. As shown in Figure 20, Distance from home (33%) is also the most commonly cited deterrent to more frequent use of Union County recreation facilities and activities. Low participation can also be explained by a simple lack of awareness, which is cited by a fourth of respondents in Question 6. Open-ended comments in the online survey also indicate a lack of awareness of the Union County recreation programs and the channels through which program information is advertised.

“If there were more classes near my home, our family would probably participate.”  
 –Waxhaw Resident, Online Survey

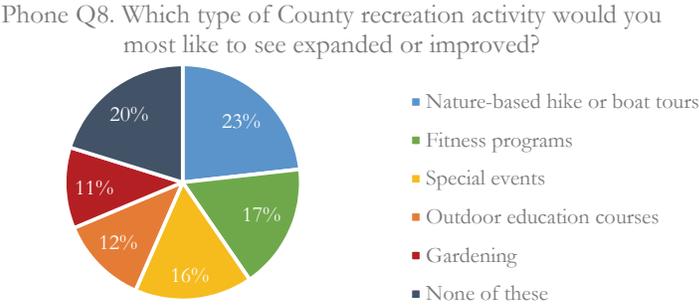
FIGURE 12: USER SATISFACTION LEVELS OF EXISTING COMMUNITY EVENTS



“Better marketing (Newspaper, Local Radio, etc.) when events are to occur so more people can participate”  
 –Waxhaw Resident, Online Survey

Community events, such as Family Safety and Wellness Day and the Earth Day 5K, enjoy the highest levels of satisfaction among online survey respondents. While youth activities have the highest level of participation among survey respondents, they also receive the lowest satisfaction ratings from those who participate.

FIGURE 13: EXISTING UNION COUNTY RECREATION ACTIVITY MOST IN NEED OF IMPROVEMENT

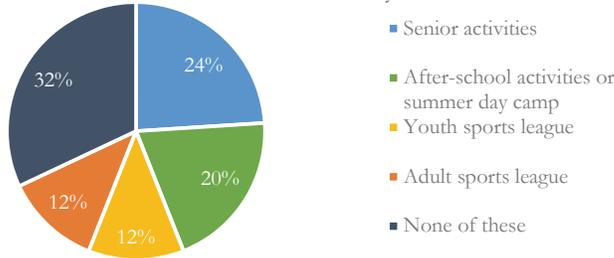


# APPENDIX A

Nature-based hike and boat tours (23%) was the most popular type of Union County recreation activity to expand or improve among phone survey respondents. One-fifth of respondents indicated that none of the activities listed were the one that they would most like to see expanded or improved.

FIGURE 14: NEW RECREATIONAL ACTIVITY MOST NEEDED

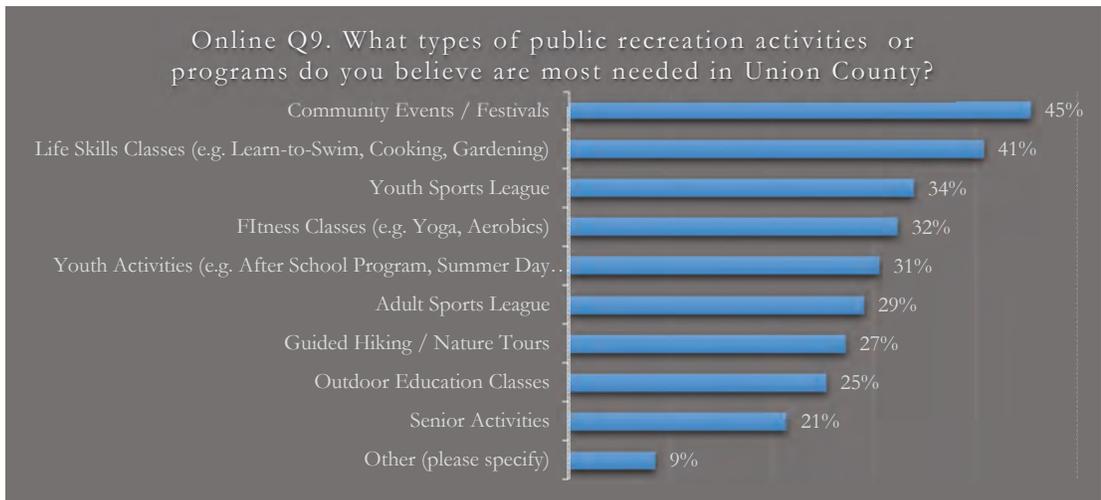
Phone Q9. Which type of new recreation activity is most needed in Union County?



“It would be fun to have an adult tennis league, something you can do through your senior years. All ages could benefit.”  
 –Weddington Resident, Online Survey

A plurality of phone survey respondents indicated that none of the activity choices provided were most needed; senior activities was the most popular new activity choice (Figure 16).

FIGURE 15: NEW RECREATION ACTIVITIES MOST NEEDED

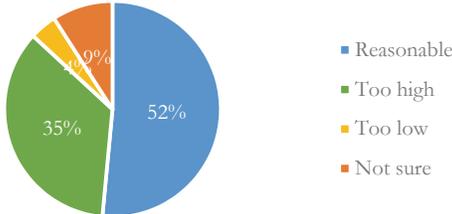


Community events (45%) and life skill classes (41%) were clear favorites as most-needed programs among online respondents. Senior activities, the top choice among phone survey respondents for a new facility, received the lowest level of support among choices provided to online survey respondents.

# Funding County Recreation Facilities and Activities

FIGURE 16: CANE CREEK PARK ENTRY FEE

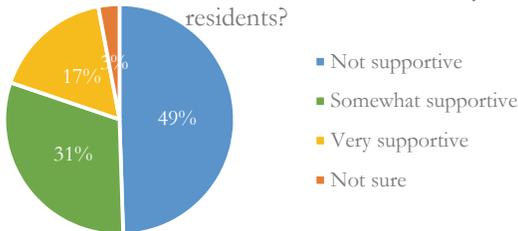
Phone Q10. Cane Creek Park currently charges an entry fee of \$4 per vehicle. Do you feel that this fee is too high, reasonable, too low or are you unsure?



Fees were opposed by some respondents, but do not appear to be a major factor in determining whether most residents will utilize County facilities or programs. Just over a third of respondents thought the \$4 Cane Creek Park entry fee was too high, compared with 56% who felt that the fee was reasonable or too low. There was also little variation in the opinion of respondents across income groups. Meanwhile, facility and activity fees were cited by just 16% of online survey respondents as a factor that discourages their household's use of Union County recreational facilities and programs.

FIGURE 17: SUPPORT FOR TAX INCREASE TO IMPROVE UNION COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION RESOURCES

Phone Q13. How supportive would you be of a marginal increase in taxes to improve the parks and recreation resources available to Union County residents?

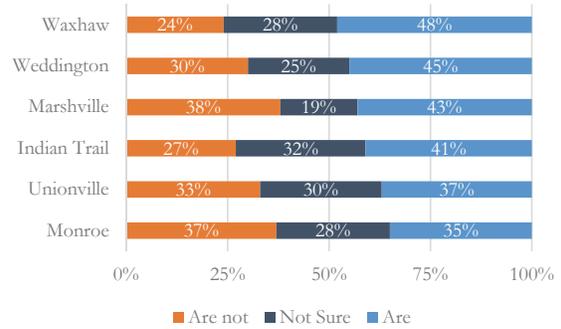
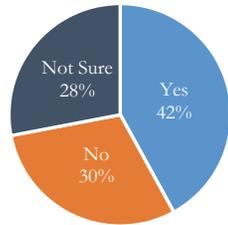


Respondents were split with the margin error (+/- 4%) on support for a tax increase to improve parks and recreation resources available to Union County residents.

## Access to Nearby Recreation

FIGURE 18: ACCESS TO RECREATION FACILITIES AT UNION COUNTY SCHOOLS

Phone Q14. Are you or members of your household able to use nearby recreation facilities at Union County schools, such as ballfields or playgrounds, after school hours or when students are not in school?



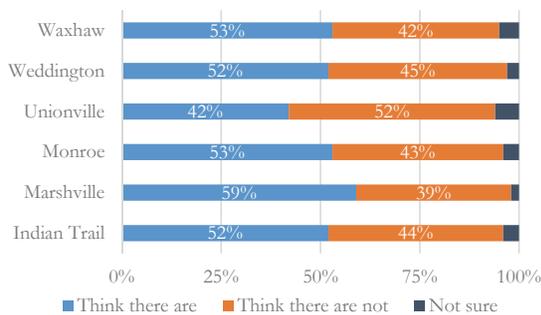
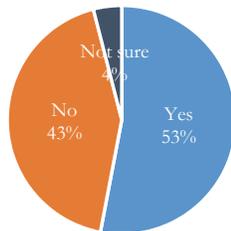
Thirty percent of phone survey respondents reported that their household was unable to use nearby school facilities after hours. Respondents from Monroe and Marshville were more likely to report a lack of access to school facilities than respondents living in the Waxhaw or Indian Trail areas.

“Access to parks is a problem, especially the distance. School baseball fields are closed and locked when not in use by the school”

—Union County Resident, Online Survey

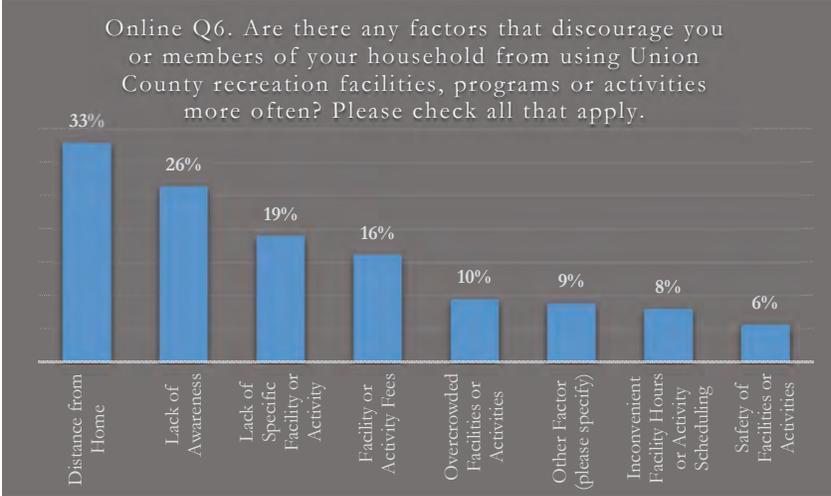
FIGURE 19: PARKS AND RECREATION FACILITIES NEAR HOME

Phone Q1. Are there sufficient parks and recreation facilities close to home?



Slightly more than half of phone survey respondents felt that there were sufficient parks and recreation facilities close to their home. Just 42% of respondents living around Unionville in the north of Union County felt that there were sufficient recreation facilities nearby.

FIGURE 20: BARRIERS TO RECREATION



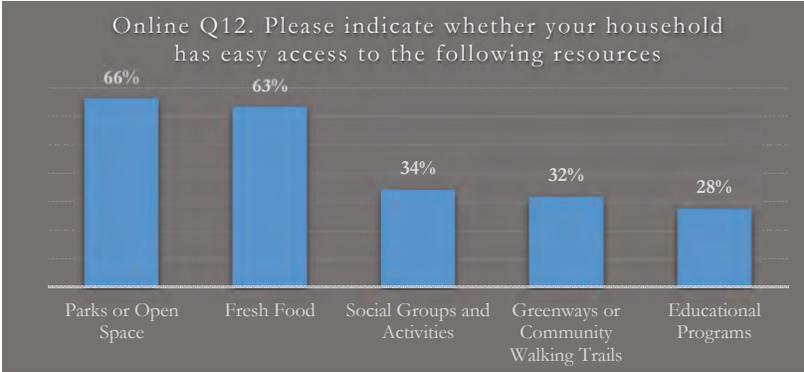
“Decent parks and recreation areas are too far away from Unionville area.”  
 –Unionville Resident, Online Survey

“Enhance communication about activities at recreation facilities, as I normally find out about them after event dates.”  
 –Lake Park Resident, Online Survey

Online survey respondents were asked to select factors that discouraged more frequent use of Union County recreation facilities and activities by their household. Distance from home was selected by a third of respondents. A lack of awareness of programs and facilities was cited as a factor by a fourth of survey respondents.

Health

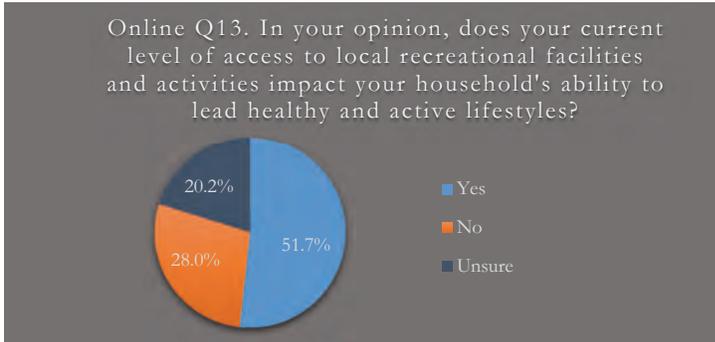
FIGURE 21: ACCESS TO NEARBY RESOURCES FOR HEALTHY LIVING



“We use Mecklenburg County facilities frequently, but it is an inconvenience to drive to them. We'd definitely be more active if there were facilities that were closer.”  
 –Union County Resident, Online Survey

Two-thirds of online survey respondents indicated that they had easy access to parks and open space. However, only around a third of online survey respondents felt that their household had easy access to greenways and walking trails, social groups and activities, or educational programs.

FIGURE 22: HEALTH IMPACTS FROM ACCESS TO RECREATION



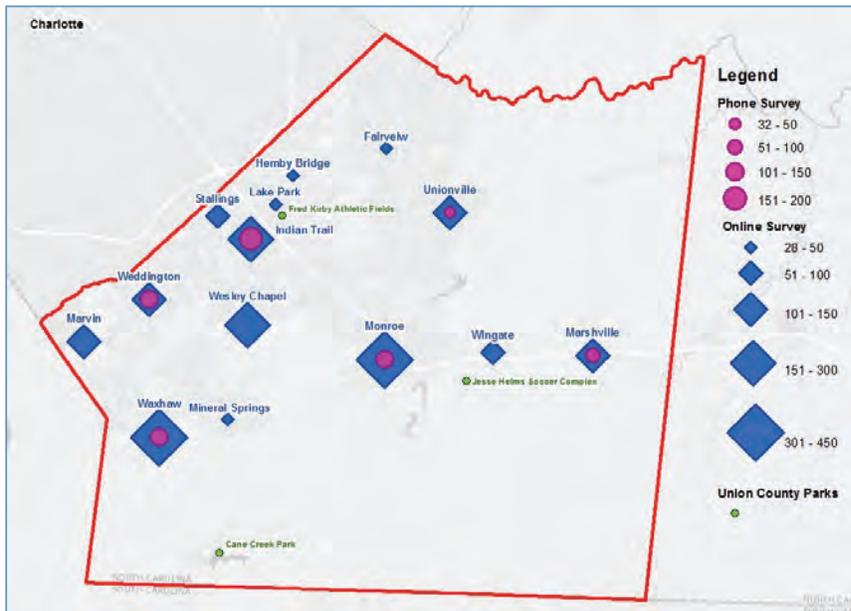
“We are fairly active and healthy, but would love to have more options available for outdoor exercise”  
 –Waxhaw Resident, Online Survey

Just over half of online survey respondents felt that their current level of access to recreation facilities and activities, such as those listed in Question 12, impacted the ability of their household to live healthy and active lifestyles.

## Demographics

Demographic data collected from phone and online survey respondents is summarized below and compared against the demographic profile for Union County based on US Census Bureau data from the American Community Survey and the 2010 Census.

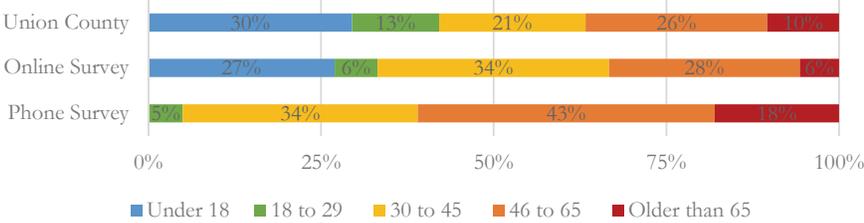
FIGURE 23: RESIDENCE



Phone survey respondents were asked to select the Union County city closest to their residence from a list of six options. These six cities are shown in as pink circles in Figure 25. Phone survey calls were stratified into six sub-County areas surrounding each city to ensure that survey results provided adequate representation of residents from all areas of Union County. Online survey respondents were asked to select the town or city closest to their residence from a larger list of

municipalities that are shown as blue diamonds in Figure 25. Online survey respondents were well distributed across the County, with some overrepresentation of residents living around Waxhaw.

FIGURE 24: AGE



Although the automated phone survey did not explicitly exclude respondents under the age of 18, no phone survey respondents were under the age of 18. Phone survey responses were weighted for age to account for the relatively older demographic profile of phone survey respondent in comparison with estimated age distribution of Union County residents.

FIGURE 25: GENDER

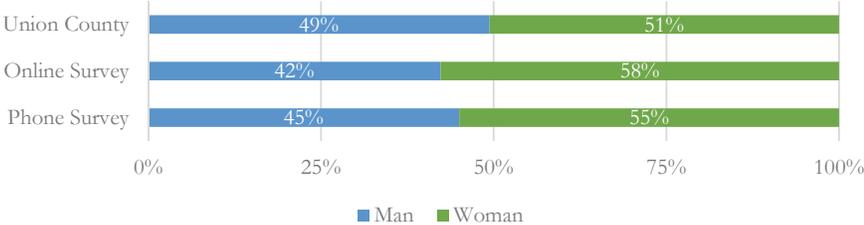


FIGURE 26: HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS UNDER 18 YEARS OF AGE

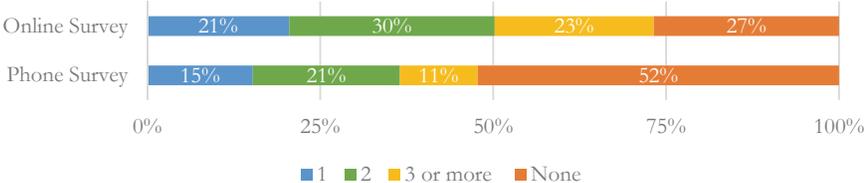
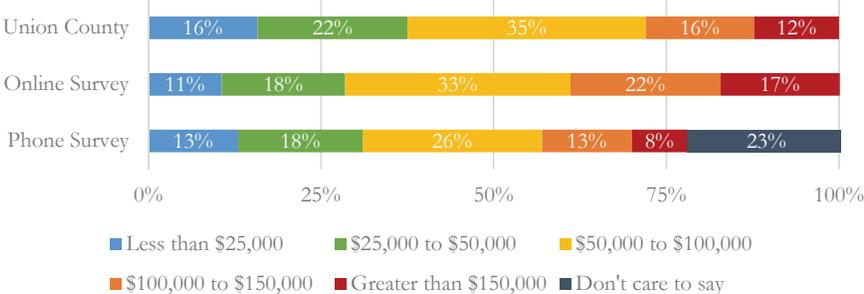


FIGURE 27: TOTAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME



## Phone Survey Results

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Q1 In your opinion, are there sufficient parks and recreation facilities within a reasonable distance from your home?

Yes	53%
No	43%
Not sure	4%

Q2 Which type of facility do you or your household use most frequently for recreation: town or County parks and facilities, school facilities, YMCA or church facilities, private facilities, public parks or facilities outside Union County, or none of these?

Town or county parks	37%
Private facilities	20%
YMCA or church facilities	18%
Public parks or facilities outside the county	16%
School facilities	10%
None of these	0%

Q3 Union County maintains three public parks: Cane Creek Park, Fred Kirby Park, and Jesse Helms Park. Which Union County parks have you or members of your household visited?

Cane Creek only	51%
More than one	20%
Fred Kirby only	2%
Jesse Helms only	2%
None of these	25%
Not sure	0%

Q4 Approximately how often do you or members of your household visit Union County parks: never, once a year or less, three to six times a year, monthly, or weekly or more often?

Never	19%
Once a year or less	42%
3 to 6 times a year	31%
Monthly	5%
Weekly or more often	3%
Not sure	0%

Q5 Which type of County recreational facility would you most like to see expanded or improved: walking or biking trails, outdoor athletic courts, soccer or multipurpose fields, baseball or softball fields, playgrounds or picnic areas, fishing and boating facilities, campgrounds and open space, or none of these facilities?

Walking or biking trails	47%
Playgrounds or picnic areas	14%
Fishing and boating facilities	9%
Outdoor athletic courts	6%
Baseball/softball fields	6%
Campgrounds and open space	5%
Soccer or multipurpose fields	3%
None of these	10%

Q6 In your opinion, which type of new recreation facility is most needed in Union County: greenways, outdoor basketball courts, lighted outdoor fields, a multipurpose indoor recreation facility, a swimming pool, open space, or some other new facility?

Greenways	37%
Swimming pool	13%
Multipurpose indoor recreation facility	12%
Not sure	11%
Lighted outdoor fields	9%
Open spaces	7%
Some other new facility	7%
Outdoor basketball courts	4%

Q7 How many times have you or a person in your household used a greenway trail over the last 12 months: never, but would use if they were easier to access; never, no interest in greenways; one to five times; five to 10 times; more than 10 times; or unfamiliar with greenways?

Never, but would if easier to access	41%
Never, no interest in greenways	23%
1 to 5 times	16%
5 to 10 times	8%
More than 10 times	6%
Unfamiliar with greenways	6%

Q8 Which type of county recreation activity would you most like to see expanded or improved: nature-based hikes or boat tours, outdoor education courses, fitness programs, special events, gardening, or none of these activities?

Nature-based hike or boat tours	23%
Fitness programs	17%
Special events	16%
Outdoor education courses	12%

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Gardening	11%
None of these	20%

Q9 In your opinion, which type of new recreation activity is most needed in Union County: a youth sports league, an adult sports league, after-school activities or summer day camp, senior activities, or none of these?

Senior activities	24%
After-school activities or summer day camp	20%
Youth sports league	12%
Adult sports league	12%
None of these	32%

Q10 Cane Creek Park currently charges an entry fee of \$4 per vehicle. Do you feel that this fee for entry is too high, reasonable, too low, or are you not sure?

Reasonable	51%
Too high	35%
Too low	4%
Not sure	9%

Q11 Do you feel that fees charged for recreation activities, facilities, and rentals at Union County parks are too high, reasonable, too low, or are you not sure?

Reasonable	35%
Too high	29%
Too low	5%
Not sure	31%

Q12 How important are parks, open space, and recreation activities to you or your household: very important, somewhat important, not important, or are you not sure?

Very important	42%
Somewhat important	37%
Not important	17%
Not sure	4%

Q13 How supportive would you be of a marginal increase in taxes to improve the parks and recreation resources available to Union County residents: very supportive, somewhat supportive, not supportive, or are you not sure?

Not supportive	50%
Somewhat supportive	31%
Very supportive	17%
Not sure	3%

Q14 Are you or members of your household able to use nearby recreation facilities at Union County schools, such as ballfields and playgrounds, after school hours or when students are not in school?

Yes	42%
No	30%
Not Sure	28%

Q15 Which of these six cities is closest to your residence: Indian Trail, Marshville, Monroe, Unionville, Weddington, or Waxhaw?

Indian Trail	28%
Waxhaw	23%
Monroe	17%
Weddington	17%
Marshville	10%
Unionville	5%

Q16 If you are a woman, press 1. If a man, press 2.

Woman	55%
Man	45%

Q17 If you are 18 to 29 years old, press 1. If 30 to 45, press 2. If 46 to 65, press 3. If you are older than 65, press 4.

18 to 29	5%
30 to 45	34%
46 to 65	43%
Older than 65	18%

Q18 How many members of your household are under the age of 18: one, two, three or more, or none?

1	15%
2	21%
3 or more	11%
None	52%

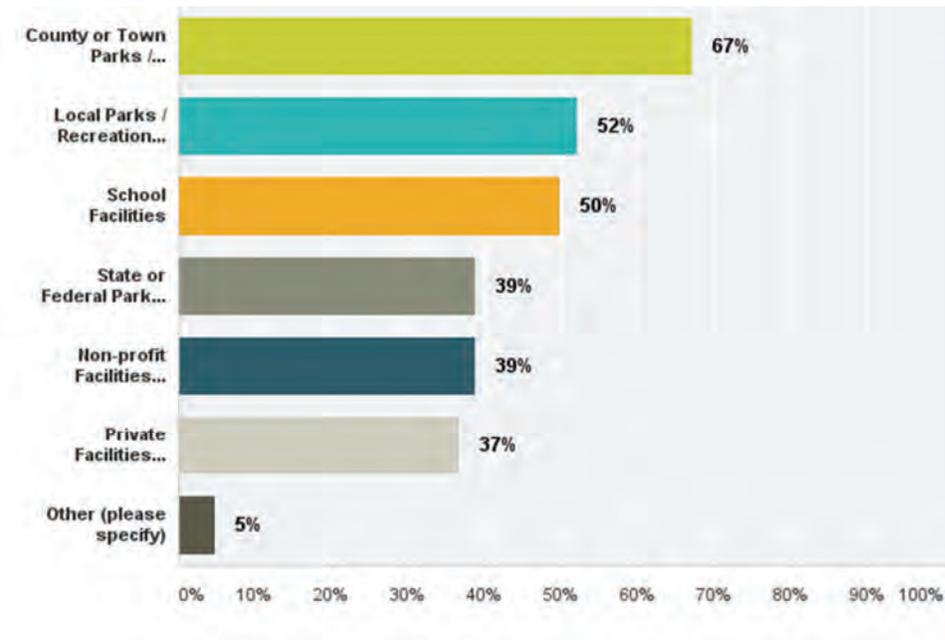
Q19 Please estimate your total household income from last year. Was your total household income less than \$25,000, \$25,000 to \$50,000, \$50,000 to \$100,000, \$100,000 to \$150,000, or greater than \$150,000?

Less than \$25,000	13%
\$25,000 to \$50,000	18%
\$50,000 to \$100,000	26%
\$100,000 to \$150,000	13%
Greater than \$150,000	8%
Don't care to say	23%

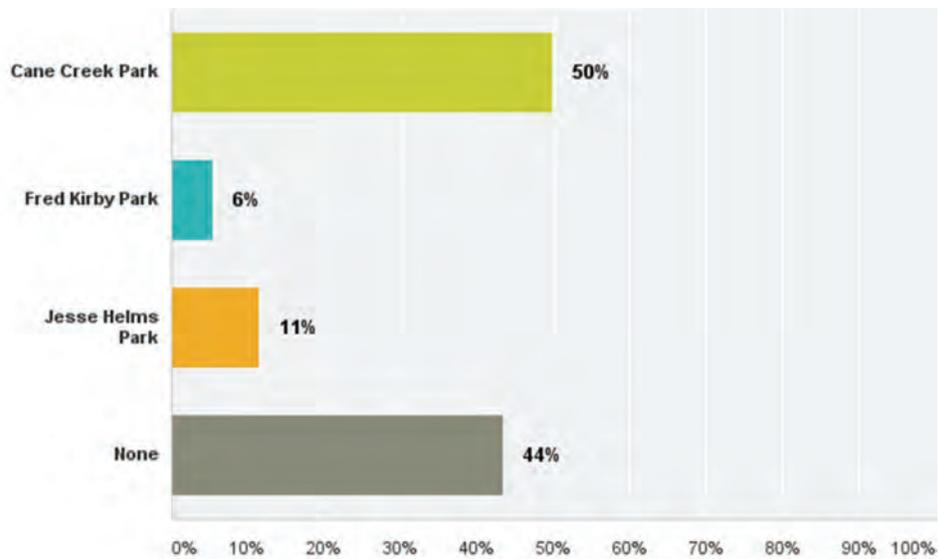
## Online Survey Results

This section includes the detailed results from the online survey that was open to all Union County residents during the planning process for the Union County Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Master Plan. While results are not considered statistically valid, this survey allowed all Union County residents to participate in the planning process, contribute more detailed input, and provide additional context for trends identified in the phone survey.

Q1: Which of the following types of recreation facilities have you or members of your household used in the past year?

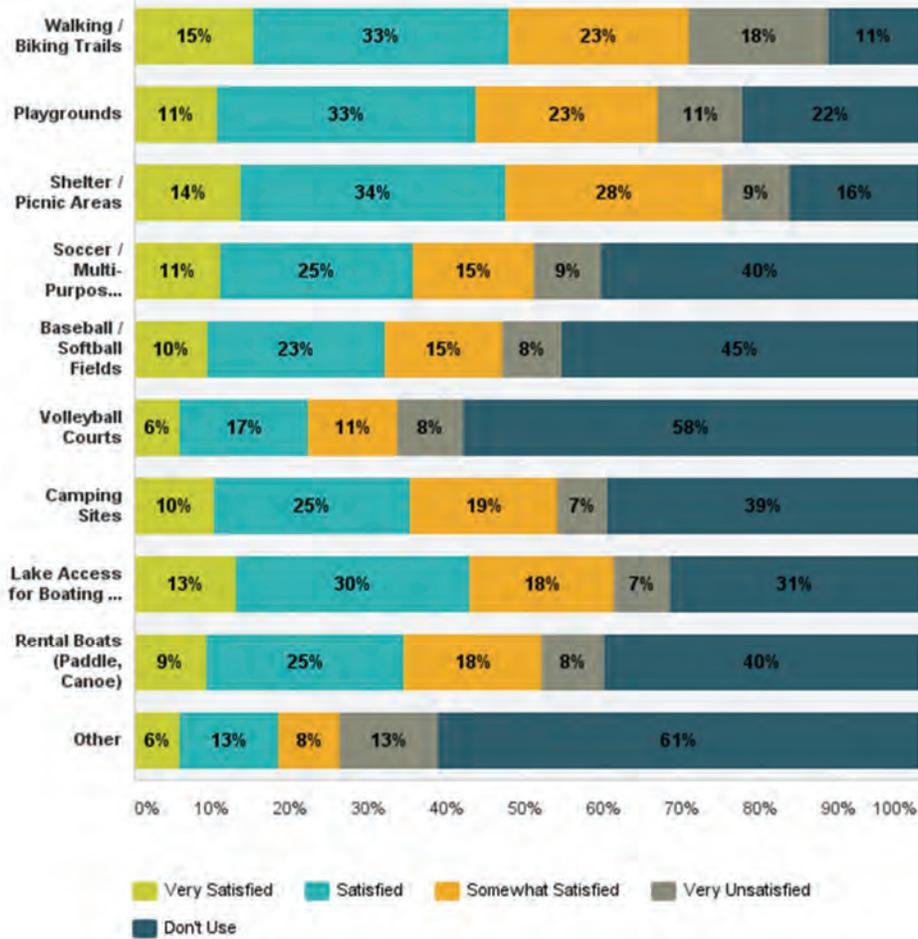


Q2: Which Union County parks have you or members of your household visited in the past year?

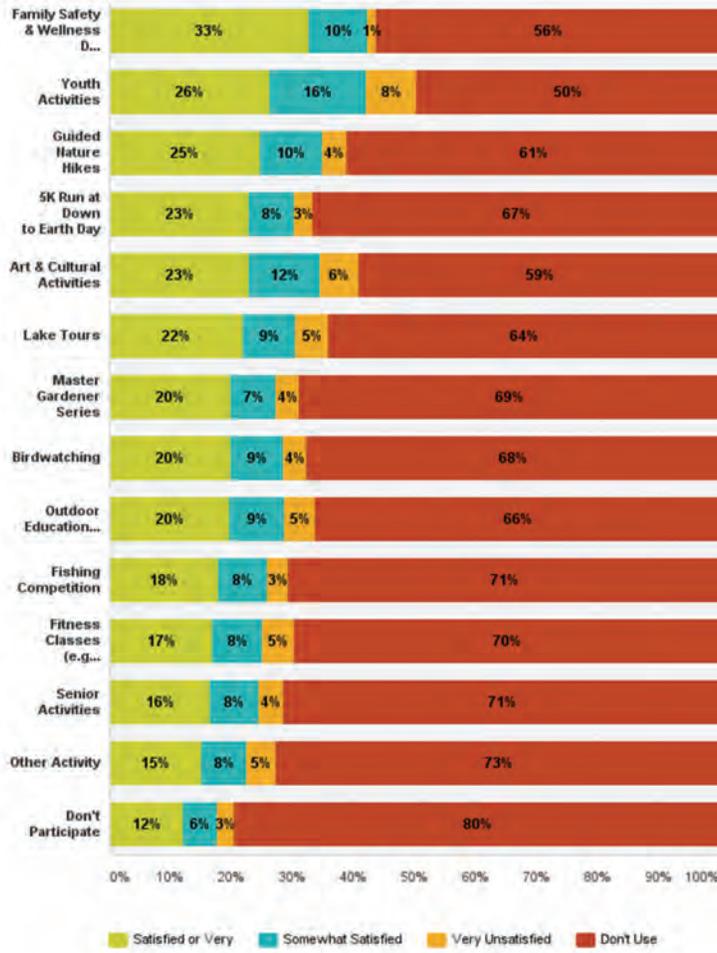


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Q3: Please indicate your level of satisfaction with the following Union County recreational facilities.

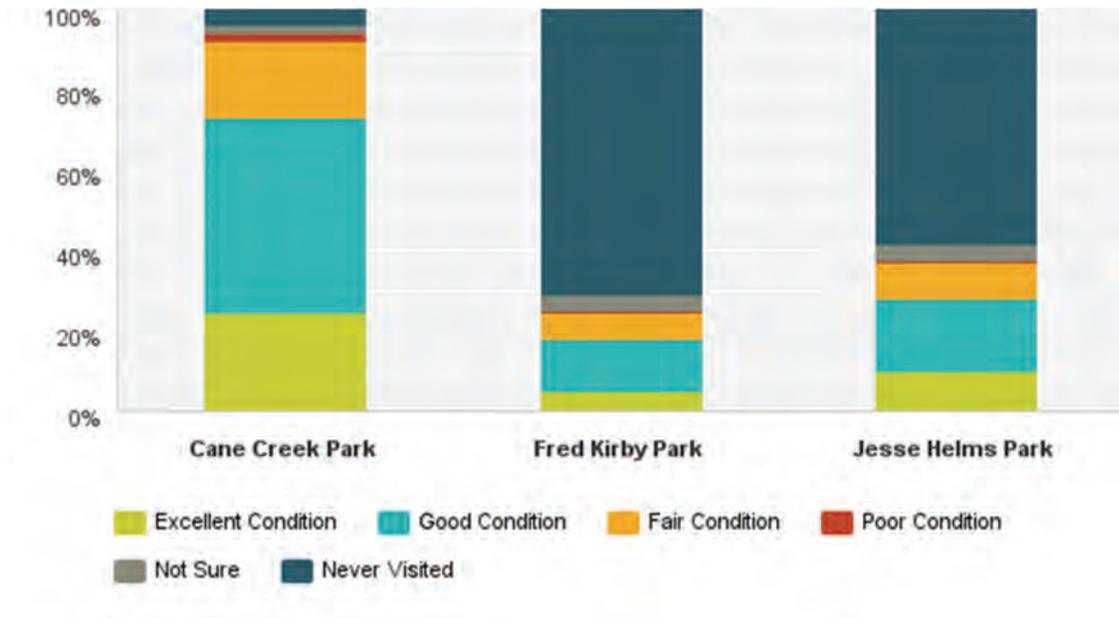


Q4: Please indicate your level of satisfaction with the following Union County recreational programs or activities.

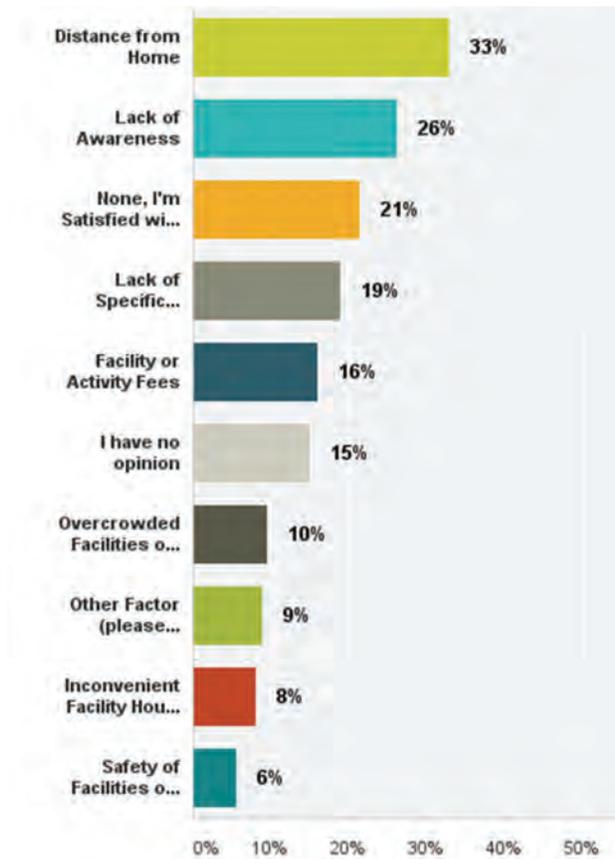


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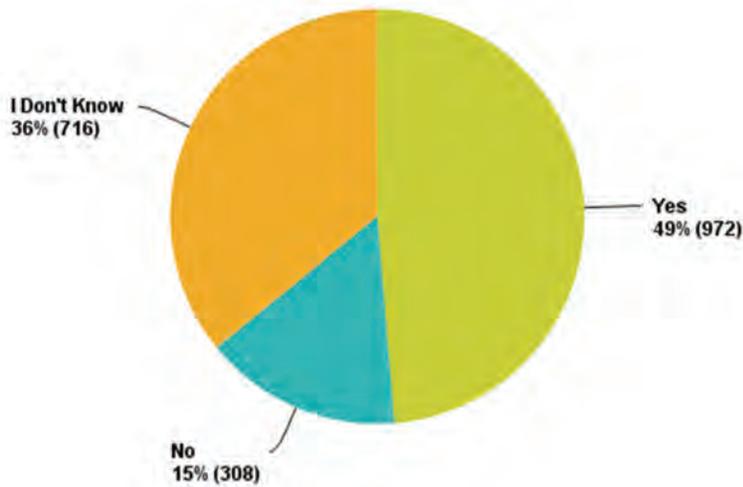
Q5: Please rate the overall condition of the Union County parks that you have visited.



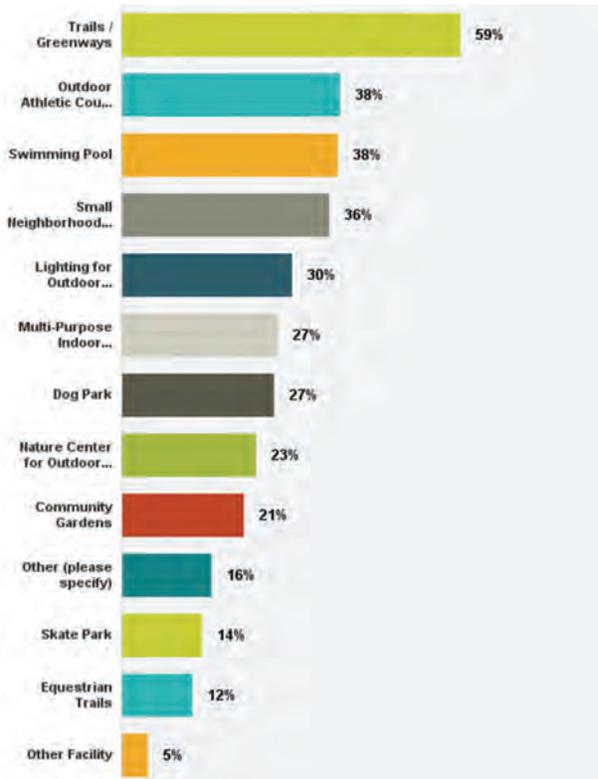
Q6: Are there any factors that discourage you or members of your household from using Union County recreation facilities, programs or activities more often? Please check all that apply.



Q7: Are you able to use local school facilities in your area (e.g. ballfields, playgrounds, running tracks) after school hours and when students are not in school?



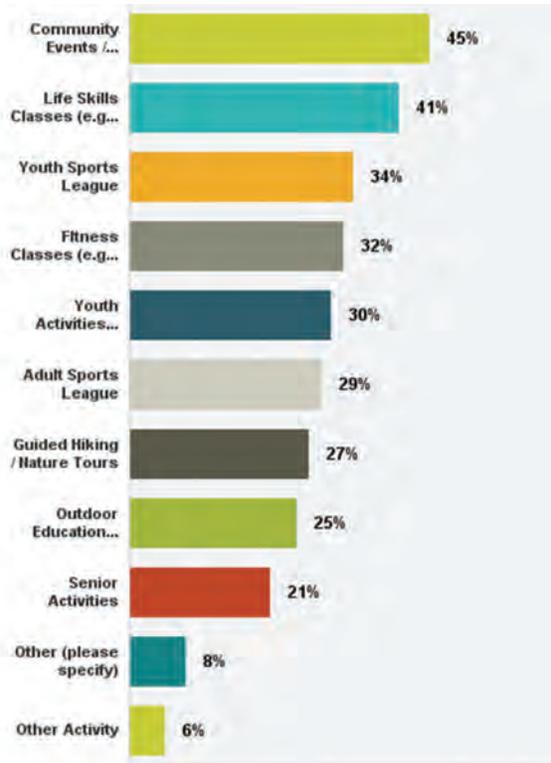
Q8: What types of public recreation facilities do you believe are most needed in Union County?



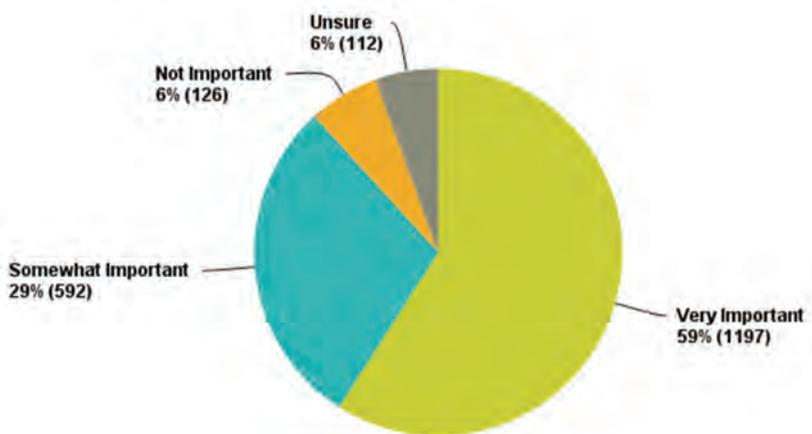
“Greenways are a must for both connectivity and healthy living”  
 –Wesley Chapel Resident,  
 Online Survey

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Q9: What types of public recreation activities or programs do you believe are most needed in Union County?

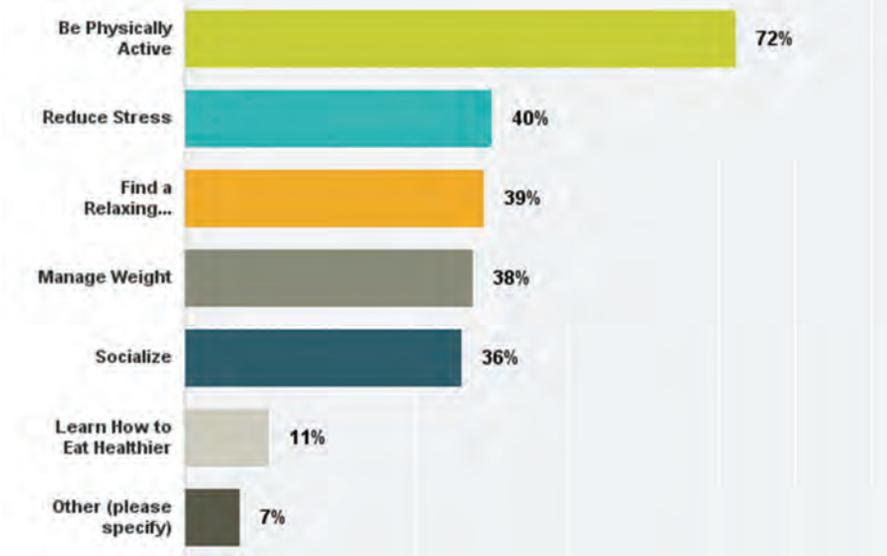


Q10: How would you rate the importance of greenways and other trails that provide bicycle and pedestrian connections between neighborhoods, parks, schools and other popular destinations?

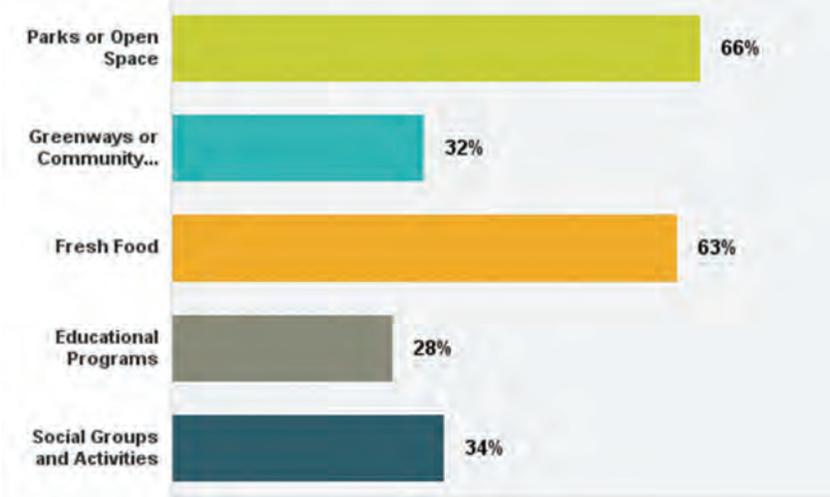


“It’s important for any community to have easy access to outdoor recreational facilities such as greenways, walking & bicycle trails. Our County doesn’t currently have that available and it’s very disappointing. I believe that if we invested in such areas, we, as a community, would be investing in better health for our citizens.”  
 –Marsville resident, Online Survey

Q11: Do you or members of your household use local recreation programs, activities, and/or facilities for any of the following health-related purposes?

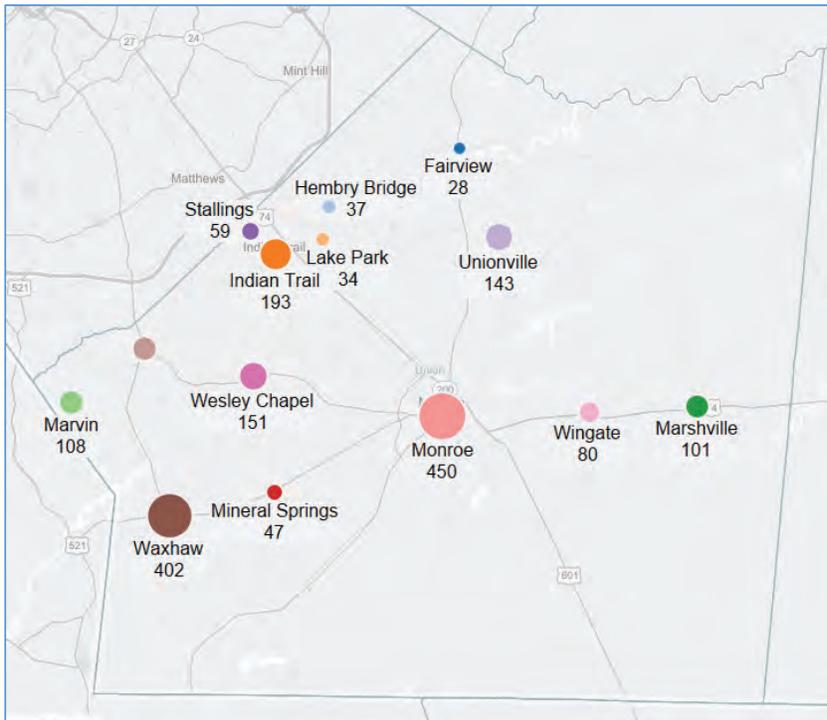


Q12: Please indicate whether your household has easy access to the following resources.





Q15: Please select the town or township nearest to your home address.



## APPENDIX B: Plan Review

This report review provides an overview of plans adopted by Union County or pertinent to Union County and therefore informing the process to develop a Comprehensive Master Plan for Parks and Recreation (Master Plan). It includes a brief synopsis of each relevant plan. Many of the recommendations from the previous plans are still relevant today and will be considered for incorporation into the recommendations of the Master Plan. In addition, a matrix that organizes the relevant recommendations of these plans by common themes is included at the conclusion of this report (Table 12). The number in parenthesis at the end of each recommendation listed with each plan synopsis correlates with the number in the matrix.

### UNION COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN UPDATE (2006)

This Plan is an update to the Union County Parks and Recreation Master Plan developed in 2000. The update was necessary as Union County has experienced a substantial amount of development. As a result, the County was facing a lack of parkland and park facilities in the west/northwest part of the County – called the suburban crescent. This is where the majority of growth in the County is occurring due to its relative location to Charlotte. The updated Plan indicated a significant need for—and community support for—bicycle and pedestrian facilities as well as connectivity. Using National Park and Recreation Association (NRPA) standards for Regional Parks, District Parks, Community Parks, Neighborhood Parks, and taking into account existing public park acreage, the Plan suggested the following:

- Baseball / softball fields
- Soccer fields
- Playground activities
- Trails (including hiking, interpretive, and equestrian)
- Camping areas (some proposed at Cane Creek)
- Volleyball courts
- Picnic shelters
- Swimming pools
- Bicycling routes
- Archery areas

Of those facilities, soccer fields (Jesse Helms Park), trails (Cane Creek Park), picnic shelters (Jesse Helms Park and Cane Creek Park), and camping areas (Cane Creek Park) have been developed since 2006.

Recommendations from the Plan that have been completed are as follows:

- Complete Phase 1 of Jesse Helms Park

Recommendations from the Plan that are ongoing or have not been completed are as follows:

- Concentrate on providing District Parks and Special / Regional Park facilities. (1)
- Continue to work on formal joint-use agreements for use of existing and future school sites. (2)
- Coordinate on possible joint ventures and partnerships with municipalities concerning sites or programs. (3)
- Coordinate closely with towns/municipalities to develop Neighborhood and Community Parks. (4)
- Create County Grant Program for towns that do not provide recreation departments and/or services of their own. (5)
  - Through the Union County Athletic Council, grants are awarded to provide assistance in providing recreational facilities and land for general recreation for use by the citizens throughout the County.
- Develop two new District Parks (North District Park & Western School Park). (6)
- Continue renovations and improvements as proposed by Phase-1, Phase-2, and Phase-3 of the Site Master Plan. (7)
- Continue to develop remaining phases (2-5) of Jesse Helms Park per the Master Plan completed in 2004. (8)
- County should be the facilitator of trail development in the area and should take the lead in encouraging and promoting partnerships for developing greenways/trails. Creating connections between parks and recreation facilities in the County is a priority. (9)

### CAROLINA THREAD TRAIL MASTER PLAN FOR UNION COUNTY AND PARTICIPATING MUNICIPALITIES (2011)

This Plan provides a vision for Union County focused on enhancing the quality of life for residents through identifying key opportunities to create greenway trails in the County that not only augment transportation system but link important destinations such as parks, town centers, historic sites, and natural features that define Union County. As part of a 15-county regional initiative, the Carolina Thread Trail seeks to create an interconnected system of trails throughout an urbanizing area of the Piedmont. Working together with Union County, the 14 municipalities of Union County, and local non-governmental agencies, a set of trail alignments and recommended actions were drafted. The following are pertinent actions derived from this process:

- Encourage the incorporation of this Plan by the County and local governments as an integral part of local comprehensive planning and land use planning efforts. (10)
- Develop a minimum of 1.5 miles of greenways each year for the next 10 years and a minimum of 3 miles of greenways each year thereafter. (11)

- Strategically pursue trail projects to maximize results and minimize costs. (12)

Of the segments recommended, none have been completed so far. The only existing segment of the proposed system is the Mineral Springs Greenway, which was constructed prior to the adoption of the Plan.

### **INDIAN TRAIL PARK AND GREENWAY MASTER PLAN (2010)**

The Indian Trail Park and Greenway Master Plan creates a framework for the development of recreational programs and facilities for the Town. Due to recent rapid growth in the municipality, pressure has been growing for the Town to provide recreational services for its residents. To help fund this expansion of services, the Town Council established a ½-cent park allocation fund. This Plan, along with the Pedestrian Master Plan, seeks to create a linked system of parks that will improve the overall quality of life for Town citizens.

Recommendations in this Plan relevant to the Union County Master Plan include the following:

- Create a Nature Preserve in the Goose Creek Watershed in the northeast portion of the Town's planning area. (13)
- Connect Parks and Greenway facilities to existing and future neighborhoods. (14)
- Coordinate with public entities such as Union County and Union County School systems for potential park land use or acquisition. Note: Specially coordinate with Union County Public Schools system to design future school facilities within Indian Trail Planning Area that could provide opportunities for joint use. (15)
- Work with Union County Public School System to incorporate environmental education into the curriculum of the students. (16)
- Work with Union County and other local municipalities to tailor a maintenance program for the Town of Indian Trail. (17)

Since the Plan was adopted in 2010, the Town has created a new Parks and Recreation department, constructed a cultural arts center, constructed one park (Crossing Paths Park), and is currently constructing two more (Crooked Creek Park and Chestnut Square Park).

### **INDIAN TRAIL BICYCLE MASTER PLAN (2011)**

The Indian Trail Bicycle Master Plan creates an overall framework to allow the community to grow and flourish as a connected, bicycle-friendly town. Recent rapid population growth, due to Indian Trail's geographic disposition relative to the Charlotte Metropolitan area, has driven the town to expand its recreational opportunities for its residents. During their Parks and Recreation Master Plan process, the Town noted that most of the major roads within Indian Trail are two-lane facilities with no shoulders and drainage ditches on each side, indicating a need for improved bicycle facilities.

Recommendations in this Plan relevant to the Union County Master Plan include the following:

- Continue to coordinate with regional entities, such as Carolina Thread Trail, on the development of greenways and other bicycle facilities. (18)

Since the Plan was adopted in 2011, intermittent 10' multi-use paths have been built as new development or redevelopment happens along US-74 and two miles of sidewalk have been constructed along Unionville-Indian Trail Road from Younts Road to Sardis Church Road.

### **UNION COUNTY 2025 TRANSPORTATION PLAN / COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE (2014)**

The Union County 2025 Transportation Plan / Comprehensive Plan Update was developed to give a vision for future growth and development in Union County through year 2025. The process resulted in two plans, a new Transportation Plan, which had never been created at a county-wide level, as well as an update to the Comprehensive Plan adopted in 2010. The updated Comprehensive Plan completely replaced the 2010 Plan in order to respond to rapidly changing economic conditions in the County.

The updated Comprehensive Plan, which has just been adopted, has the following relevant recommendations:

- The County should work with town leaders and private developers to create development design guidelines that emphasize walkability, connectivity, park/greenway creation, etc., to encourage development that provides desired lifestyle. (30)
- Connect the Carolina Tread Trail through Union County (31)
- Provide additional connections to the Carolina Thread Trail that link residential areas and other community destinations. (32)
- Provide safe and connected on-road pedestrian and bicycle facilities. (33)
- The County should partner with local governments, non-profits and private entities to construct regional greenways. Priority should be given to lands that provide multiple benefits, for instance hardwood forests adjacent to Twelve Mile Creek provide buffers that maintain water quality for rare mussels and fish and could be key linkages in the Carolina Tread Trail. (34)
- The Planning Department should coordinate with Parks and Recreation departments and other public and non-profit entities to identify opportunities for land acquisition that preserves key open space and provides opportunities for passive recreation (i.e. nature preserves). (35)
- The Planning Department and the Parks and Recreation Department should partner together to conduct study of the Rocky River valley to identify tourism development opportunities and key natural areas that need to be preserved. The study should include: (36)
  - Determine feasibility and preliminary location of canoe launches, hiking trails and other support facilities adjacent to the proposed Rocky River blueway and the Carolina Thread Trail.

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- Identify infrastructure needs of and threats to agricultural operations in the area.
- Identify habitat critical to the health of resident populations of the Septima's Clubtail dragonfly (Rocky River macrosite), a federal species of concern.
- Parks and Recreation should develop joint-use agreements with schools in Union County to allow access to school recreation spaces and facilities to provide more opportunities for convenient, low-cost options for physical activity. (37)
- Promote the development of on and off-road pedestrian and bicycle facilities as outlined in the *Comprehensive Transportation Plan* (38)
- To improve coordination and communication between the jurisdictions, the County should partner with municipal leaders to establish a consortium of appointed and elected officials to meet regularly and discuss county-wide issues and opportunities and develop common priorities related to shared interests and relate initiatives. (39)

### WAXHAW PARK, RECREATION, AND CULTURAL RESOURCES MASTER PLAN (2012)

In the past few decades, the Town of Waxhaw has seen its population grow significantly. While the Town was already providing a few park and recreation facilities to its residents, it had no dedicated Park and Recreation Department. The Town of Waxhaw Comprehensive Plan recommended a new Parks and Recreation Master Plan and new Parks and Recreation Department. The Parks and Recreation Master Plan that was subsequently adopted, provides a framework for operation and maintenance of its existing system and its expansion to meet the community's needs.

Recommendations in this Plan relevant to the Master Plan include the following:

- Actively pursue and formalize partnership and joint-use agreements with a broad range of public and private entities to supplement facility needs. (40)
- Formalize relationship with Union County Public Schools to secure a joint-use agreement to alleviate some of the demand for recreational field space. (41)
- Identify and preserve sites of historic significance (42)
- Partner with Union County Public Schools to repair and update facilities at South Providence School site. (43)
- Continue to develop a town-wide pedestrian & bicycle network. Reference the Town's Comprehensive Pedestrian Plan and the Union County Carolina Thread Trail Plan, in the development of a town-wide Greenway Master Plan. (44)

Of these recommendations, the repairs and update to the facilities at South Providence have been completed since the Plan's adoption.

### DOWNTOWN WAXHAW VISION PLAN (2013)

The Plan provides a detailed list of recommendations and priorities to improve, revitalize and strengthen Waxhaw's downtown through strategic civic investments and leveraged private development. Facing rapid population growth in the foreseeable future, the Town developed this Plan to help direct how that future growth will look. Action items are detailed with estimated funding levels and timeframes

Recommendations in this Plan relevant to the Master Plan include the following:

- Encourage the construction of the Carolina Thread Trail through Main Street to connect to the greater regional network. (45)
- Construct a multi-use path connecting other areas of the community to Downtown Waxhaw. (46)
- Build a Community and Senior Center near downtown and connect it to the larger parks and trails system. (47)

### THE VILLAGE OF MARVIN, PARKS AND GREENWAY MASTER PLAN (2008)

Based on a 2006 Adopted Conceptual Greenway Master Plan Map, this Plan provides a framework for new park and greenway planning in the Village of Marvin. It is an initial effort meant to provide initial guidance on providing recreational facilities to a relatively new and growing community, but flexible enough to be changed and molded to meet their changing needs.

Recommendations in this Plan relevant to the Master Plan include the following:

- Work in cooperation with the school district and Union County to jointly develop new recreation facilities and programs to reduce recreation facility and service redundancy. (48)
- Discuss with Union County officials and staff the possibilities of developing a regional community park in close proximity to the Village of Marvin. (49)
- Help to plan and develop multi-jurisdictional trail connections. (50)

Of the recommendations in the Plan, portions of the Marvin Loop Trail have been completed since its adoption, Marvin Eford Park has opened, and the Village has secured two new easements for greenways.

### THE VILLAGE OF WESLEY CHAPEL COMPREHENSIVE PARKS AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN (2009)

Traditionally a rural agricultural community, the Village of Wesley Chapel has experienced a great deal of growth since it was incorporated in the 1990s. Growing over 500% in the 10 years from its inception in 1998 until 2008, the Village recognized a need to provide a variety of solutions to their citizens' recreation needs while protecting the natural beauty of the formerly rural area. Thus, this Master Plan was created.

Recommendations in this Plan relevant to the Master Plan include the following:

- Develop Dogwood Acres, a large wooded property close to the Town Center as a park. (51)
- Incorporate recommendations from the Carolina Thread Trail into future Parks and Recreation plans. (52)

Of the recommendations in the Plan, Dogwood Park is currently being constructed and is scheduled to be completed for its grand opening on July 12, 2014.

### **MECKLENBURG COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN (2008)**

The Mecklenburg County Parks and Recreation Master Plan is a comprehensive plan that lays out a vision for Park and Recreation facilities in Mecklenburg County, the City of Charlotte, and the surrounding towns. It clearly states the vision of the Plan is “to provide neighborhood parks, community parks, and regional parks across the County that provides a balance of park related experiences for people of all ages. The County will continue to acquire additional park and open space to protect the regions biodiversity and natural heritage through the promotion of open space, preservation, conserving natural communities, fostering awareness and stewardship through environmental education and outdoor recreation.”

Some of the specific on-going recommendations affecting the Master Plan listed in the Plan are:

- It is recommended that the County continue partnering with neighboring town and cities to provide recreational opportunities throughout the County. For optimal service offerings, PROS recommends that all existing and potential partners define strategies and policies for delivering services. (53)
- Work with surrounding counties to identify desired regional connections (54)

Since the adoption of this Plan, much of the Six-Mile Creek Greenway has been completed. Currently the Nature Center at Stevens Creek is funded and slated to be constructed.

### **2035 LONG-RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN, MUMPO & RRRPO (2010)**

This comprehensive plan provides key information regarding the existing and planned environments for the county. Specifically regarding transportation the LRTP recommends extensive expansions of the services provided by the Charlotte Area Transit System and future HOV and /or HOT lanes. Construction of toll roads or instituting managed lanes will assist in new revenues to meet the challenges of securing financing for the future transportation needs. In addition, it has recommendations for bicycle, pedestrian, and greenway improvements throughout the region.

Currently funded projects in this Plan relevant to the Master Plan include the following:

- Additional bike lanes along Indian Trail Road (US-74 to Old Monroe Road) (55)

Long-Range projects in this Plan relevant to the Master Plan include the following:

- John Street / Old Monroe Road (I-485 to Indian Trail Road) (56)

# APPENDIX B

TABLE 12: PLAN REVIEW MATRIX

PLAN REVIEWED	RELEVANT RECOMMENDATION THEMES								
	PRESERVE OPEN SPACE	BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN SYSTEMS	PROVIDE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS	PROVIDE RECREATIONAL PROGRAMS	PASSIVE RECREATIONAL FACILITY	ACTIVE RECREATIONAL FACILITY	COORDINATION BETWEEN REGIONAL AGENCIES	P&R POLICIES AFFECTING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	REGULATORY RECOMMENDATIONS
Union County Parks and Recreation Master Plan Update (2006)	6, 7, 8	9	3,5	3,5	1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9	2, 3, 4, 5, 9	5	3
Carolina Thread Trail Master Plan for Union County and Participating Municipalities (2011)		10, 11, 12			10, 11, 12		10,11,12	12	10
Indian Trail Park and Greenway Master Plan (2010)		14	16				13, 15, 16, 17		
Indian Trail Bicycle Master Plan (2011)		18					18		
Union County 2025 Comprehensive Plan (2010)		24, 25					19, 22, 24, 25, 27, 28		20, 21, 23, 24, 25, 26, 29
Union County 2025 Comprehensive Plan Update (2014)	34	30, 31, 32, 33, 38			30, 31, 32, 33		30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 39		35
Waxhaw Park, Recreation, and Cultural Resources Master Plan (2012)		44			41	41	40, 41, 43, 44		42
Downtown Waxhaw Vision Plan (2013)		45, 46	47			47	45		
The Village of Marvin, Parks and Greenway Master Plan (2008)		50			48, 49	48, 49	48, 49, 50		
The Village of Wesley Chapel Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan (2009)		52			51	51	52		
Mecklenburg County Parks and Recreation Master Plan (2008)		54					53, 54		
2035 Long-Range Transportation Plan, MUMPO & RRRPO (2010)		55, 56					55, 56	55, 56	
Comprehensive Transportation Plan, Union County (2012)		57					57	57	
Cane Creek Park Master Plan*									
Jesse Helms Park Master Plan*									

\*The Cane Creek Park and Jesse Helms Park Master Plans were also part of the plan review, but because the recommendations considered were illustrative in nature, they do not appear in the text preceding this matrix.

# APPENDIX C:

## Precedent Study

To better determine the issues and opportunities facing Union County related to Parks and Recreation, it is helpful to study other counties who have similar characteristics as Union County and can also serve as a model as the Union County Parks and Recreation system develops and grows. Communities were selected based on the physical, functional, and economic characteristics that were deemed pertinent to Union County. Five Southeastern counties were examined to uncover innovative ideas that might be emulated in the enhancements to the Union County system, programs and staffing.

The counties chosen, Cabarrus County, Orange County, Buncombe County, Wake County, and James City County, Virginia, all currently have significant development pressures and have positive qualities that can be adapted and replicated by the Union County system. Overviews of each of the departments are described below. For comparison purposes, the physical, functional and economic characteristics of each of the counties are listed. Table 13 outlines each community's system components. Table 14 details the characteristics of each precedent community in relation to Union. Tables 15 and 16 respectively illustrate the physical and functional characteristics in terms of facilities, policies and programming. Finally, Table 17 highlights the economic characteristics of each community in relation to Union.

### **CABARRUS COUNTY, NC**

Cabarrus County was identified by the selection committee as an excellent example of a community dealing with the same development pressures as Union County. It provides the types of facilities and programming needed by their residents. In the past ten years the County has grown its department considerably to serve a wide swath of people in Cabarrus County. The department is currently growing and is focused on expanding access to facilities, expanding its greenways and trails system, and developing and expanding joint-use agreements. The department has also formed meaningful relationships with local organizations to partner for the development of facilities.

### **ORANGE COUNTY, NC**

Orange County, and its Parks and Recreation Department, was chosen due to several factors. It is currently dealing with similar development pressures from the research triangle and has realized it needs to provide services that the municipalities of Chapel Hill and Hillsborough are not, as well as offer services to its smaller towns and unincorporated citizens. In addition the County has successfully leveraged many local organizations such as Blue Cross Blue Shield and UNC Chapel Hill Health to provide funding and programming for healthy living initiatives. Additionally Orange County Parks and Recreation Department has effectively offered a variety of programming options for all of its population, especially seniors. Orange County is also currently working with Orange County Schools to develop a joint park/ educational facility and plans to build more in the future.

### **JAMES CITY COUNTY, VA**

James City County is one of the only medium-sized counties to ever win a Gold Medal NRPA award. The County was recognized for this due to its ability to provide excellent long-range planning services, resource management, volunteerism, environmental stewardship, program development, professional development and agency recognition. With a very similar unincorporated population to Union County, and development pressures coming from both Richmond, VA and Newport News, VA, James City County has provided a large amount and diverse facility and program offerings for all of its citizens. While the County is spending far more per capita than most County departments, much can still be learned from how and what services the County provides. James City County has successfully developed partnerships with for-profit facility providers, nearby municipalities and non-profit organizations. The department's after-school program is also rated one of the best in the nation.

### **BUNCOMBE COUNTY, NC**

Located in Western North Carolina and home to Asheville, Buncombe County has a growing population. In recent years Buncombe County has taken strides to develop new parks to help support the smaller communities outside of Asheville. The County has also developed a new Greenways Master Plan to help connect existing and future municipal and regional trail systems, while working with local schools to develop joint-use agreements and joint-recreation school facilities. Additionally, Buncombe County has a very successful grant program for funding of improved facilities and non-profits to develop programming, an effort similar to the former grant program

### **WAKE COUNTY, NC**

Wake County, which includes Raleigh, is one of the fastest growing counties in North Carolina. The goal of the Parks, Recreation & Open Space Department of Wake County is to support existing municipal parks, build a connected system and preserve as much open space as financially possible. Wake County has developed an extensive open space purchasing program, which uses land suitability analyses, that is tied to an outreach program for identifying protection of most critical parcels. Much can be learned in Union County from this approach. By focusing primarily on open space, it has allowed the County to preserve large amounts of land on the periphery of a quickly developing area. The County is also seeking out joint-use agreements to help lower costs and provide additional facilities for its residents. Considering the size of Wake County and its relatively low budget, the County has used resources efficiently to provide recreational amenities.

# APPENDIX C

TABLE 13: COMPONENTS OF THE SYSTEMS OF THE SELECTED PRECEDENT COMMUNITIES

PRECEDENT COUNTY FOR PARKS AND RECREATION	FACILITIES													PROGRAMS AND POLICIES								
	SENIOR CENTER	INDOOR ACTIVITY CENTER	NATURE CENTER	REGIONAL PARKS	COMMUNITY / DISTRICT PARKS	NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS	SCHOOL PARKS	SIGNIFICANT ACTIVE RECREATIONAL FACILITIES	SWIMMING FACILITIES	WATER ACCESS POINTS	SPECIALTY SPORTS CENTERS	FARMERS MARKET	REGIONAL TRAIL SYSTEM	TRAILS MASTER PLAN	EXISTING JOINT USE AGREEMENTS	WORKS WITH LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS	YOUTH PROGRAMMING	TEEN PROGRAMMING	ADULT PROGRAMMING	HEALTH AND WELLNESS COMPONENT	PRESSURES FROM DEVELOPMENT GROWTH	GRANTS PROGRAM
Cabarrus County	X				X		X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Orange County	X	X	X	X	X		X	X		X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
James City County	X	X		X	X	X		X	X	X	X		X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Buncombe County					X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	
Wake County			X		X					X			X			X	X				X	

TABLE 14: CHARACTERISTICS OF SELECTED PRECEDENT COMMUNITIES

	UNION COUNTY	CABARRUS COUNTY	ORANGE COUNTY	JAMES CITY COUNTY	BUNCOMBE COUNTY	WAKE COUNTY
Population of county	212,756	184,498	137,941	69,546	238,318	900,933
Unincorporated population	64,204	49,976	51,941	69,546	135,768	185,175
Total land area	631 sq. miles	362 sq. miles	247 sq. miles	141 sq. miles	657 sq. miles	832 sq. miles
Total parks	3	4	8	22	4	6
Acres of parkland	1,297	378	404	348	390	1,363

TABLE 15: PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF SELECTED PRECEDENT COMMUNITIES– FACILITIES AVAILABLE

	UNION COUNTY	CABARRUS COUNTY	ORANGE COUNTY	JAMES CITY COUNTY	BUNCOMBE COUNTY	WAKE COUNTY
Indoor activity / recreation centers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No existing indoor activity / recreation centers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No existing indoor activity / recreation centers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Central Recreation Center</li> <li>Efland-Cheeks Community Center</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>James City County Recreation Center</li> <li>Abram Frink Jr. Community Center</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Zeugner Center</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No existing indoor activity / recreation centers</li> </ul>
Senior centers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Senior Center run in Monroe by the City</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cabarrus County Senior Center – Concord</li> <li>Cabarrus County Senior Center – Mt. Pleasant</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Central Orange Senior Center</li> <li>Robert &amp; Pearl Seymour Center</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Housed within the James City County Recreation Center</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No existing senior center</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Five senior centers are run by their regional planning association (Triangle J)</li> </ul>
Nature centers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No existing nature centers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No existing nature centers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No existing nature centers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No existing nature center</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No existing nature centers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No existing nature centers</li> </ul>
Regional parks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cane Creek Park</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No existing regional parks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Little River Regional Park and Natural Area</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Freedom Park</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No existing regional parks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No existing regional parks</li> </ul>

	UNION COUNTY	CABARRUS COUNTY	ORANGE COUNTY	JAMES CITY COUNTY	BUNCOMBE COUNTY	WAKE COUNTY
Community / district parks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fred Kirby Park</li> <li>• Jesse Helms Park</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Frank Liske Park</li> <li>• Camp T.N. Spencer Park</li> <li>• North Cabarrus Park</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cedar Grove Park</li> <li>• Efland-Cheeks Park</li> <li>• Fairview Park</li> <li>• River Park &amp; Farmers Market Pavilion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chickahominy Riverfront Park</li> <li>• Daiscund Reservoir Park</li> <li>• Ironbound Park</li> <li>• Sanford B. Wanner Stadium</li> <li>• James City County Recreation Center Park</li> <li>• Abram Frink Jr. Community Center Park</li> <li>• Jamestown Beach Park</li> <li>• Little Creek Reservoir Park</li> <li>• Mid County Park</li> <li>• Powhatan Creek Park</li> <li>• Skate Park</li> <li>• Upper County Park</li> <li>• Waller Mill Dog Park</li> <li>• Warhill Sports Complex</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BC Sports Park</li> <li>• Charles Owen Park</li> <li>• Hominy Valley Park</li> <li>• Lake Julian</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Blue Jay Point County Park</li> <li>• North Wake Landfill County Park</li> <li>• Lake Crabtree County Park</li> <li>• Historic Oak View County Park</li> <li>• Historic Yates Mill County Park</li> <li>• Crowder District Park</li> <li>• American Tobacco Trail</li> <li>• Harris Lake County Park</li> </ul>
Active recreation facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Soccer fields, baseball fields, volleyball court</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Volleyball courts, tennis courts, soccer fields, softball fields, outdoor basketball courts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ball fields, basketball courts, football field, soccer center, tennis courts, volleyball court</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Baseball fields, softball fields, soccer fields, football field, volleyball courts, basketball courts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Soccer fields, volleyball courts, basketball, baseball fields, softball fields,</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No existing active recreation</li> </ul>
Swimming facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lake swimming at Cane Creek Park</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Swimming pool at Camp T.N. Spencer Park</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No existing swimming facilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outdoor pool at Upper County Park</li> <li>• Outdoor pool at Chickahominy Riverfront Park (CRP)</li> <li>• Beach swimming at Jamestown Beach Park</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indoor pool at The Zeugner Center</li> <li>• Outdoor pool at Hominy Valley Park</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No existing swimming facilities</li> </ul>
Water access points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paddleboats/kayak/canoe/row boat rental and launches plus a swimming beach at Cane Creek Park.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fishing and paddle boats at Frank Liske Park</li> <li>• A kayak / canoe launch point at the Rocky River in the Town of Midland</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kayak / canoe launch at Little River Regional Park and Natural Area.</li> <li>• Kayak / canoe launch at River Park and Farmers Market</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Boat ramp at Brickyard Landing</li> <li>• Boat ramp and canoe / kayak launch at Chickahominy Riverfront Park</li> <li>• Boat ramp at Diascund Reservoir Park</li> <li>• Boat ramp and slips for rent at Jamestown Yacht Basin</li> <li>• Boat ramps, kayak / canoe launch, and rentals at Little Creek Reservoir Park</li> <li>• Small non-motorized boat / canoe kayak launch at Powhatan Creek Park</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Buncombe County offers seven river parks at which they feature grills, picnic tables and river access.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fishing is offered at Blue Jay Point County Park, Lake Crabtree County Park, Historic Oak View County Park, Historic Yates Mill County Park, Harris Lake County Park</li> <li>• Boating and canoeing are offered at Lake Crabtree County Park and Harris Lake County Park</li> </ul>

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	UNION COUNTY	CABARRUS COUNTY	ORANGE COUNTY	JAMES CITY COUNTY	BUNCOMBE COUNTY	WAKE COUNTY
Specialty sports center (i.e. soccer multi-plex)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Soccer complex which serves as host to league play and various tournaments throughout the year</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Eurosport Soccer Center with 5 full-size lighted fields</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sanford B. Wanner has a regulation size football stadium</li> <li>Warhill Sports Complex has various sized baseball fields, synthetic multi-use fields, and turn multi-use fields used to host leagues and tournaments.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Buncombe County Sports Park has seven regulation soccer fields to host leagues and tournaments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No existing specialty sports center</li> </ul>
Regional trail system		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Through the Carolina Thread Trail (CTT), Cabarrus County has the Bakers Creek Greenway, the Harold B. McEachern Greenway, Irish Buffalo Creek Greenway, Buffalo Creek Preserve Trail, and the Riverbend Farm Trail.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Through the Mountains-to-Sea Trail (MST), which seeks to connect the Great Smokey Mountains in the west to the Outer Banks. Portions of this have been developed within the Orange County park system like the Kings Highway Park</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Virginia Capitol Trail is a 55 mile trail connecting all of the state capitols of Virginia's history: Jamestown, Williamsburg and Richmond. 7.5 miles of the trail have been completed within James City County – over 40 miles of existing trails in system</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Buncombe County has developed a Greenway Master Plan and is currently in the process of developing portions of that.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A significant portion of the American Tobacco Trail has been developed by Wake County in Apex, NC</li> </ul>
Farmers market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Union County Farmer's Market is operated by Union County Cooperative Extension</li> <li>Multiple municipalities also have farmer's markets.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Privately owned farmers market – no county run facility</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>River Park &amp; Farmers' Market Pavilion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Privately owned farmers market – no county run facility</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Farmers markets are run by municipalities – no county run facilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Farmers markets are run by municipalities – no county run facilities</li> </ul>

TABLE 16: FUNCTIONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF SELECTED PRECEDENT COMMUNITIES – PROGRAMMING & POLICY

	UNION COUNTY	CABARRUS COUNTY	ORANGE COUNTY	JAMES CITY COUNTY	BUNCOMBE COUNTY	WAKE COUNTY
Trails Master Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Yes, done in coordination with the Carolina Thread Trail (CTT)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Yes, done in coordination with the Carolina Thread Trail (CTT)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>They were involved in the planning of the local mountain to sea trail effort, but do not have a dedicated Orange County document.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A regional trail plan called the Virginia Capitol Trail has been developed, but no specific one to James City County</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Buncombe County Greenways and Trails Master Plan was developed in 2012 and works to connect the municipalities in the County and to the greater western North Carolina region</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is no existing trails master plan for Wake County</li> </ul>

	UNION COUNTY	CABARRUS COUNTY	ORANGE COUNTY	JAMES CITY COUNTY	BUNCOMBE COUNTY	WAKE COUNTY
Existing Joint Use Agreements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Currently there are informal agreements between Union County Schools and some athletic associations - done on a case-by-case basis and decision is ultimately up to Principal</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Yes, currently a formal joint use agreement between County Active Living and Parks Department and Cabarrus County Schools for upkeep and maintenance of playground and park facilities at schools</li> <li>Have a joint use agreement with FC Carolina Alliance and the City of Concord Parks and Recreation Department for operation of the soccer complex</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Orange County currently has a formal joint use agreement with county schools – it is presently developing the Twin Creeks Park which is a joint park / school facility</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The County currently has a joint use agreement with Newport News at Diascund Reservoir Park and with several non-profit athletic associations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Possibly a joint use agreement between Sand Hill-Venable Elementary and Buncombe County Sports Park</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There are no existing joint use agreements between the County Parks and Recreation Department and Wake County Schools – there have been joint use agreements between municipalities and the Wake County Schools</li> </ul>
Partnerships with local organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Existing partnerships are primarily for programming, examples include local athletic associations, master gardeners and the ag center</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Currently working with the following organizations for programming: NC Wildlife Commission, Boys and Girls Club, athletic associations</li> <li>Stonewall Jackson Training School (working farm) currently occupies space at Frank Liske Park</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Orange County has partnered with a handful of local agencies with common interests – some of these are: Blue Cross Blue Shield and Orange Soil and Water Conservation District. Some of their partners for programming are the following: North Carolina Museum of Art, Orange County Department of Social Service, UNC-Chapel Hill and NC Cooperative Extension</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The County has partnered with a handful of local organizations for facilities (Williamsburg Indoor Sports complex, Newport News, City of Williamsburg) and with local organizations for programming.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Buncombe County has partnerships with local athletic associations, County Schools, and receives funding from a number of private organizations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wake County Parks, Recreation and Open Space has partnered with several outdoor organizations including, the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and NC Wildlife Resource Commission</li> </ul>
After-school programming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Taken care of by Union County Schools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Taken care of by Cabarrus County Schools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Taken care of by Orange County Schools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The County has a program called REC Connect that provides summer camps and after school programs for school age children</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>County offers Buncombe County Afterschool – a program at all 18 school sites that runs from the time when school lets out to 6pm</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Taken care of by Wake County Schools</li> </ul>
Youth programming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some youth programming is available through the County</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Youth athletics are provided by athletic associations</li> <li>Youth sports camps and a discovery day camp are available in the summer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extensive youth programming with everything from traditional active athletics to outdoor camps and art classes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extensive list of programming for youth – includes athletic programs, educational classes and camps</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Buncombe County offers playgrounds at several of their parks for youth activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extensive list of youth programming in environmental education and through camps</li> </ul>

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Teen Programming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some teen programming is available through the County</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Few programs are available for teens, like wilderness survival and fun runs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teen adventure summer camp is only programming offered</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Considerable amount of teen programming available – these include job training, career exploration, and athletic programs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teen activities offered are soccer leagues, adult kickball and dodgeball</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Several camps and teen outdoor education programs</li> </ul>
Adult Programming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some adult programming available through the County</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Two adult softball leagues are available</li> <li>All ages races are available</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extensive adult and senior programming</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extensive adult and senior programming</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adult activities include kickball, soccer leagues, fishing and open swimming</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No existing adult programming</li> </ul>
Additional key functional features			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extensive programming, senior programming and activities (many health based), and partnerships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extensive programming, senior programming and activities (many health based), and partnerships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Buncombe County has put health at the forefront of its parks and recreation department.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Aggressive open space acquisition program is the highlight of program</li> </ul>

TABLE 17: ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS OF SELECTED PRECEDENT COMMUNITIES– BUDGET & STAFFING

	UNION COUNTY	CABARRUS COUNTY	ORANGE COUNTY	JAMES CITY COUNTY	BUNCOMBE COUNTY	WAKE COUNTY
Tax rate	.660%	.7%	.858%	.77%*	.569%	.534%
Budget (Per capita spending)	\$7.65	\$9.51	\$21.99	\$82.77	\$7.00	\$2.66
FTE (Full-time Equivalent employees)		17.83	17	101		23.5
Grant programs	No existing grant program	Yes, grants are offered for non-profits and athletic associations	No existing grant programs	No existing grant program	Yes, grants are offered for the improvement/development to community organizations that support recreational activities.	No existing grant program

\*NO MUNICIPAL TAX RATE

The precedent communities reviewed all exhibit qualities that can be adapted and replicated by the Union County system. For example, Cabarrus County has developed strong relationships and partnerships with the school district to enable joint use of school parks and facilities. Orange County has forged health partnerships with local health organizations to improve health and awareness within their community. James City County, Virginia has been so successful with establishing private-public partnerships to fund

parks and recreation facilities the County has become the only county park and recreation system of its size to receive a Gold Medal NRPA Award. All of these precedent communities have overcome funding challenges and accommodated dwindling budgets by finding alternative ways, through partnerships and coordination, to provide excellent programs and facilities. It is also interesting to note that many of these systems function with a tax rate and budget comparable to Union County.

# APPENDIX D:

## National Trends in Parks and Recreation

Recreation preferences are constantly changing throughout the United States. Awareness of the national trends affecting parks and recreation helps a department determine the potential preferences of the existing and future populations served. National trends can guide Union County as it builds and grows the system. The following are the national trends most pertinent to Union County:

### PASSIVE RECREATION OVER ACTIVE RECREATION

For many years, the percentage of the population that utilizes active recreational facilities has been declining, while the percentage that utilizes the passive recreation has been increasing. Preferences toward activities that are more flexible to busy schedules and reach a wider swath of age cohorts have changed the way parks and recreation departments provide for their citizens. According to the 2013 *Sports, Fitness and Leisure Activities Topline Participation Report* by the Sports and Fitness Industry Association, there has been a decrease in traditional team sports participation over the past 5 years. This is punctuated by significant decreases in participation (>4%) specifically in football, baseball, and wrestling. Conversely, participation in outdoor activities such as overnight backpacking, hiking and hunting, as well as aerobic and conditioning activities such as running/jogging, using elliptical machines, and yoga have all see significant increases (>4%).

### GREENWAYS, TRAILS AND BLUEWAYS

Also apparent from survey results, is that greenways, trails and blueways are among the most popular facilities being requested by communities. This is a trend that is apparent in the region as well and the entire country. As more communities become connected by trails, more people see the economic, social and physical benefits of having such facilities. These benefits have led to a steadily growing demand throughout the US.

### SMALL-SCALE, ACTIVE RECREATION

A trend towards small-scale, active recreation that requires less space, time and people to play is occurring within parks and recreation systems throughout the country. Games and facilities that are scaled toward neighborhood and community parks can help to provide equitable access to active recreation to all. Examples of this type of recreational activities are bocce ball, pickle ball, mini-soccer, badminton, basketball and outdoor fitness stations.

### PARTNERSHIPS, PARTNERSHIPS, PARTNERSHIPS!

According to the 2014 *State of the Managed Recreation Industry* by Emily Tipping, 86.4% of all recreation agencies (public, non-profit, private) currently have partnerships with other agencies. Of all of those partnerships, the most common partnership is with local schools. Other common partnerships included local YMCA's and colleges and universities. As budgets continue to decrease and requests for services expand, partnerships are becoming essential for parks and recreation departments to continue to provide a high level of service.

### GROWING SENIOR POPULATIONS

As the baby boomer generation moves towards retirement in this country, there is an increased need to provide facilities and programming for this demographic. Parks and recreation departments are, therefore, beginning to offer more options for active adults over 65. Some examples of these trends are the following:

- Grand Prairie, TX has constructed a 50,000 SF, \$23 million facility for use only by those over 50. Touted as "the first baby boomer facility in America," Grand Prairie is an example of one community that is using its parks and recreation department to attract relatively affluent retirees with a significant disposable income. Offerings include aquatic areas, gyms, weight rooms and a jogging / walking track.
- In Marana, AZ senior communities have swarmed to nearby parks to play pickleball. A growing sport for the senior population, it is played on a smaller court than tennis so it requires less space. According to the USA Pickleball Association, there are more than 6,000 pickleball courts across the country and up to 30 new courts are being added every month.

### UTILIZATION OF PARKS FOR PUBLIC HEALTH

A central goal of parks is and has been to improve the public health. This has come into a greater focus as communities recognize additional benefits beyond the traditional physical benefits. Parks and public open space provide benefits to mental, social, emotional, and spiritual health as well as physical health. Examples of communities that are putting health at the forefront are:

- San Antonio, TX has developed several programs to increase the use of their facilities and programs by bringing the facilities to the residents. The City has constructed 38 outdoor fitness stations in local parks and libraries, created a Fit Pass program to increase participation in fitness programming, and has started the Mobile Fit program to bring the programming directly to the citizens. This has been extremely successful as it has reduced the obesity rate by 3.5% in two years.
- When discussions began regarding the 22-mile Atlanta BeltLine project that converted a former freight railway into a transit and trail loop, the first question was "How do we build a healthy place?" To better understand the health implications of the proposed development, the City partnered with Georgia Tech University to conduct a Health Impact Assessment (HIA). This assessment is a collection of procedures and tools used to evaluate projects, policies and programs based on their potential effects on the health of a population. One of the first of its kind in the United States, the HIA allowed the stakeholders to better understand the health implications of the BeltLine prior to development.

### USE OF TECHNOLOGY IN PARKS

Over the past several years, parks and recreation departments all over the country have been embracing the use of technology in parks. Whether it is for interactive trail maps that use smartphone GPS, for awareness, information, navigation, activity within a park (i.e., geo-caching), or for environmental guides which tell about the local flora and fauna, technology is becoming incredibly useful in lowering barriers to use and improving overall user experience.

# APPENDIX E: Existing Conditions and Trends in Union County

## COMMUNITY PROFILE

Union County is one of the fastest growing counties in the State of North Carolina. It also happens to be one of the most productive agriculture areas. From its high growth suburbs to its farms, Union County provides a unique blend of suburban and rural living. Balancing these interests while developing a parks and recreation system to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse population will be critical to Union County's future.

## POPULATION

Union County had an estimated population of 212,756 residents in 2013. The 89,079 new residents between 2000 and 2013 equated to a growth rate of 72% (Table 18). This rate was significantly greater than North Carolina, which only grew at a rate of 22.3% during the same period.

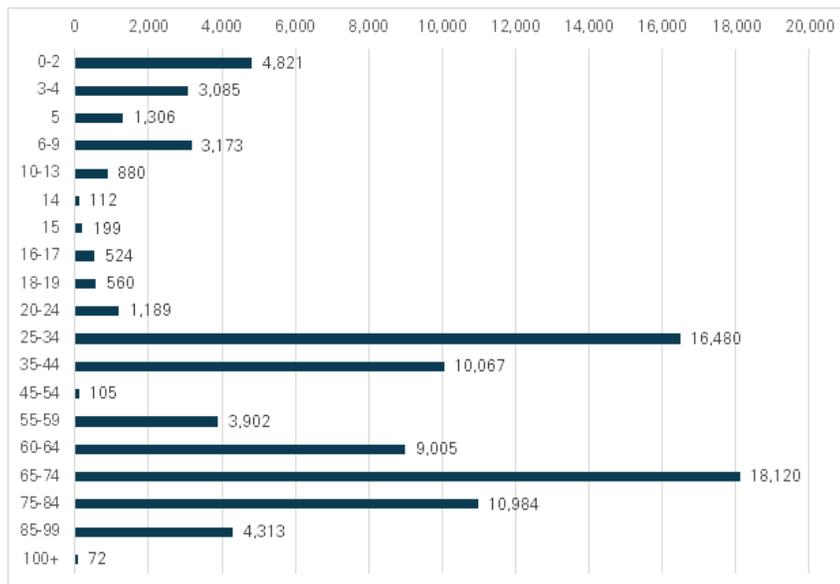
TABLE 18: POPULATION GROWTH FROM 2000 TO 2013

POPULATION	UNION COUNTY	NORTH CAROLINA
Population, 2000	123,677	8,049,313
Population, 2013	212,756	9,848,060
% Change	72.0%	22.3%

SOURCE: U.S. CENSUS BUREAU QUICK FACTS

The North Carolina Office of State Budget and Management is projecting Union County to grow by 72,744 people in the next 15 years. Assuming this estimate to be true, the County can expect the population to be 285,500 by the year 2030. This will create a significant demand for additional and expanded parks and recreation facilities and programs.

FIGURE 1: POPULATION BY AGE



SOURCE: U.S. CENSUS BUREAU QUICK FACTS

## POPULATION BY AGE COHORT

Table 19 provides Union County's population change between 2000 and 2010 by age cohort. School-aged children, from 5-19 years of age, had some of the highest growth rates indicating that Union County continues to be a location of choice for families. Other groups that experienced considerable growth were the 45-54, 60-64 and the 65-74 age cohorts.

TABLE 19: POPULATION GROWTH BY AGE 2000 – 2010

AGE	2000	2010	% CHANGE
Under 5 years	9955	14574	46%
5 to 9 years	9691	18077	87%
10 to 14 years	10001	18032	80%
15 to 19 years	8025	15291	91%
20 to 24 years	7127	9,673	36%
25 to 34 years	18722	21688	16%
35 to 44 years	22245	33995	53%
45 to 54 years	16163	30241	87%
55 to 59 years	6184	10567	71%
60 to 64 years	4341	9757	125%
65 to 74 years	6789	12426	83%
75 to 84 years	3359	5335	59%
85 years and over	1075	1961	82%

SOURCE: U.S. CENSUS BUREAU QUICK FACTS

As shown in Figure 1, the largest groups of people and the largest amounts of population growth are expected from 25-34 years old, 35-44 years old and greater than 65 years old. With the rapid growth in Union County, these age groups will drive the recreational demand for the next 20 years.

## ETHNICITY AND RACE

Union County's racial and ethnic composition in 2010 paints a picture that is significantly different than the composition of the rest of the state. The largest group, whites, comprised a vast majority of the county (87.8%). From the data, Union County appears much less racially diverse than North Carolina as a whole.

TABLE 20: ETHNICITY AND RACE BY PERCENTAGE 2010

RACE	UNION COUNTY	NORTH CAROLINA
White	83.5%	68.5%
Black	12.1%	21.5%
American Indian and Alaska Native	0.6%	1.3%
Asian	2.0%	2.2%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0.1%	0.1%
Persons reporting two or more races	1.7%	2.2%
Hispanic or Latino origin	10.9%	8.4%
White persons not Hispanic	73.8%	65.3%

SOURCE: U.S. CENSUS BUREAU QUICK FACTS

## HOUSEHOLDS

There are an estimated 67,520 households in Union County, a 55.6% increase from 2000. This increase is lower than the population growth rate, indicating that the average household size appears to be growing in Union County. In line with this, Union County also has a higher percentage of homeowners in owner-occupied, single-family structures, when compared to North Carolina. In addition, as noted in Table 21, amount of multi-unit housing structures is very low compared to the state. This can be seen in the characteristic low density development that has become the norm in the last 20 years.

TABLE 21: HOUSEHOLD INFORMATION

HOUSEHOLDS	UNION COUNTY	NORTH CAROLINA
Housing units, 2013	74,688	4,394,261
Homeownership rate, 2008-2012	82.3	67.1%
Housing units in multi-unit structures, %, 2008-2012	5.8%	17.1%
Median value of owner-occupied housing units, 2008-2012	\$197,600	\$153,600

SOURCE: U.S. CENSUS BUREAU QUICK FACTS

## EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Union County continues to very similar to North Carolina (83.0%) in terms of high school graduation rates at 87%. The percentage of persons older than 25 with a bachelor's degree or higher (30.8%), is also slightly greater than the percentage for the North Carolina (25.8%).

## INCOME

The median household income in Union County is currently estimated at \$64,953, which is significantly higher than the state median of \$46,450. In addition, as noted in Table 22, poverty rate of Union County is much lower than North Carolina.

TABLE 22: INCOME INFORMATION

INCOME	UNION COUNTY	MECKLENBURG COUNTY	NORTH CAROLINA
Median household income, 2008-2012	\$64,953	\$55,961	\$46,450
People of all ages in poverty, %, 2008-2012	9.7%	14.5%	16.8%

SOURCE: U.S. CENSUS BUREAU QUICK FACTS

## ENVIRONMENTAL AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Union County lies within the Southern Outer Piedmont, a transition area from the mountainous Appalachians to the relatively flat coastal plains. The rolling hills, woodlands and rich soils of Union County contribute both to its beloved rural character and agrarian-based economy.

## TOPOGRAPHY

Originally this region was covered with dense forests or open woodland but now is mostly agricultural crops, pasture and housing. The topography still includes rolling hills that fall into streams with rocky bottoms. The highest elevation in the County is 770 feet and the lowest elevation (275 ft.) is located along the Rocky River.

## CLIMATE

Union County experiences four distinct seasons each year. The area is encompassed by humid southwestern airflows during spring and summer and dry northwesterly cold front alternating with easterly rainy spells during late fall and winter. Fall and spring are the driest seasons. The average temperature during winter is 43 degrees Fahrenheit.

## WATER RESOURCES

Union County collects water from surface streams, lakes/reservoirs, and ground water. The major sources of drinking water for the County come from the Catawba River and the Yadkin Pee Dee River. The 2013 Annual Drinking Water Quality Report notes that both sources are moderately susceptible to potential contaminant sources. Other water resources in the County are the Rocky River in northern Union County, and Cane Creek Lake in the southwest part of the County. The Rocky River, which empties into the Yadkin Pee Dee River. East of US-52,

# APPENDIX E

is a moderately-paced, navigable river. The 25-mile stretch located in the County has steep slopes and is un-dammed its entire length. The majority of streams in the County flow northeast into the Rocky River but in the western portion of the County Six-mile Creek, Twelve-mile Creek, and Waxhaw Creek flow southwest into Catawba River.

In addition, there are numerous wetlands throughout the County. These wetlands provide critical habitat to a variety of plant and animal species. As development continues, attention to the conservation of these habitats is critical to sustain aquatic species and protect water quality in the County.

## SOILS & FARMLAND

Agriculture and farming operations are a key component of the economy in Union County. According to the North Carolina Department of Agriculture 2013 Stat Book, there are 1,107 farms in the County totaling 404,160 acres of land. These operations brought in \$464,077,235 in receipts in 2012, ranking 3rd in the state. In addition, the County ranks 3rd in livestock, dairy and poultry production. Key to promoting and sustaining the agriculture economy is protecting the prime farmland soils that farmers rely on for crop production. Prime farmland is defined as land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops and that is available for these uses. It has the

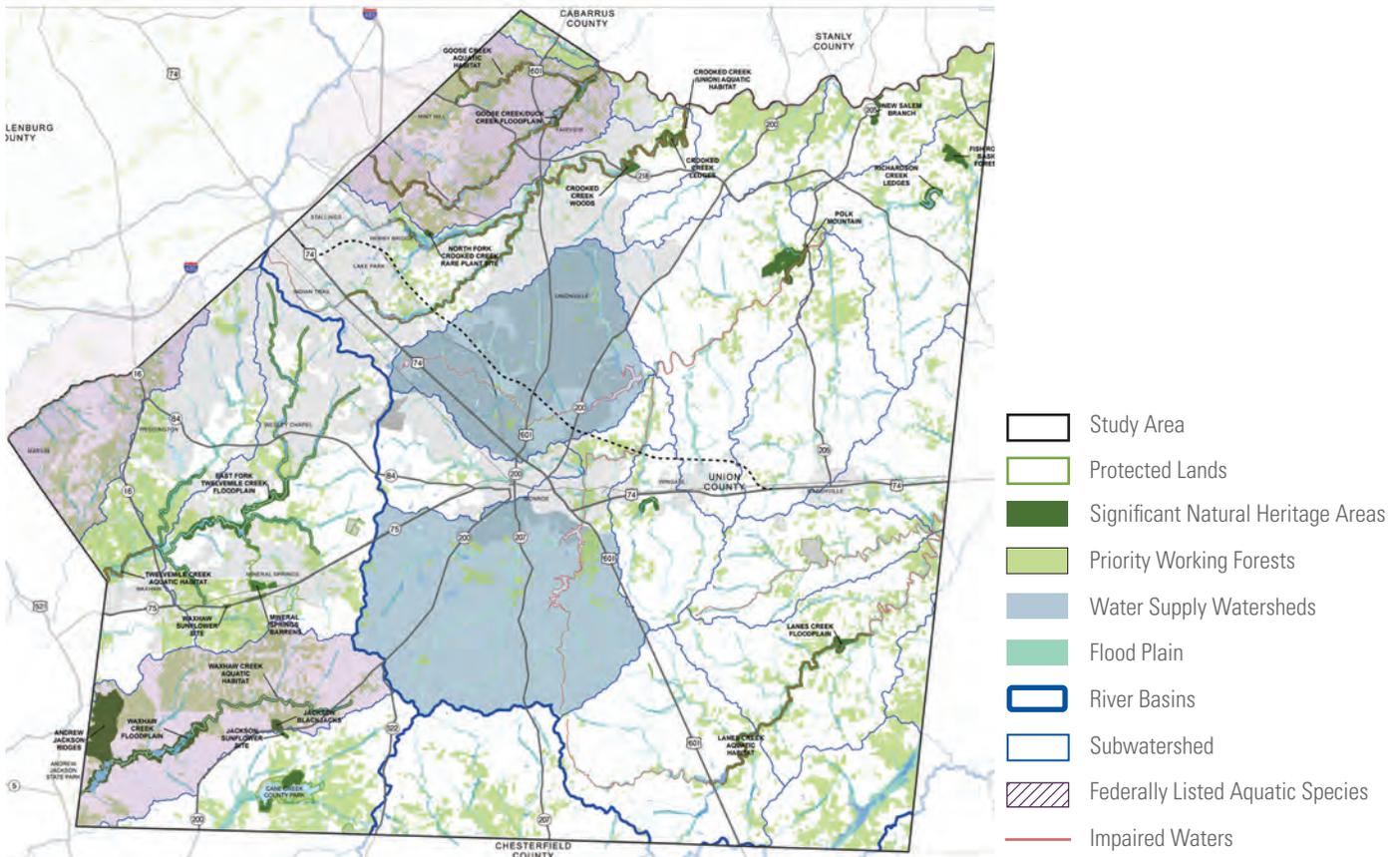
combination of soil properties, growing season, and moisture supply needed to produce sustained high yields of crops if it is managed according to acceptable farming methods. As detailed in Table 23 there are approximately 93,000 acres of prime farmland in Union County (approximately 23% of all soils) and 212,000 acres of farmland of statewide importance. As development continues into areas of agriculture production, measures are needed to mitigate the potential conflicts between active farming operations and residential development.

TABLE 23: FARMLAND CLASSIFICATION

FARMLAND SOIL CLASSIFICATION	ACRES	%
Prime farmland	93,621.29	22.9
Farmland of statewide importance	212,574.24	51.9
Prime farmland if drained and either protected from flooding or not frequently flooded during the growing season	20,158.51	4.9
Not prime farmland	82,953.10	20.3

SOURCE: NATIONAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE (NRCS)

MAP 1: ENVIRONMENTAL FEATURES



## SIGNIFICANT NATURAL HERITAGE AREAS

A Significant Natural Heritage Area is defined either an area of land or water that contains significant populations of rare plants and/or of animals, or an area containing one to several exemplary natural communities that function in a natural manner and that form a distinct geographical unit, the boundary of which can be natural (a watershed) or artificial (a road or a property line). During a recent study of the area, 23 sites were identified as Significant Natural Heritage Areas. Of these sites, three were identified as having national significance. These include Goose Creek Aquatic Habitat, Mineral Springs Barrens, and Waxhaw Creek Aquatic Habitat.

## HABITATS

Union County has a moderate diversity of habitats. It is estimated that there are well over 1,100 species of plants in the County including dangleberry, butterweed, and slender flat-topped goldenrod, among others. In addition, a variety of rare animals have been documented in the County. These include the eastern fox squirrel, loggerhead shrike, timber rattlesnake, coachwhip, mole salamander, Carolina darter, and robust redhorse. In addition, there are a collection of mollusks that can be seen in many rivers that cover the area. These including the Atlantic pigtoe, eastern lampmussel, Carolina heelsplitter, creeper, savannah Lilliput, eastern creekshell, Carolina creekshell and notched rainbow.

## CAROLINA HEELSPLITTER

Union County has identified that 30,795.87 acres are Carolina Heelsplitter Critical Habitat. The Carolina Heelsplitter is a freshwater mussel. It is named the “Carolina Heelsplitter” because of its sharp edges that can cut the foot of someone walking on the river or stream bed. This species is only found in North and South Carolina. It is currently listed as “Critically Endangered” which means that the species is facing an extremely high risk of becoming extinct in the wild in the immediate future. Recently the Heelsplitter has made headlines for its role in curbing development in certain parts of the County.

## HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

The first inhabitants of the area were the Waxhaw and Catawba tribes. European settlers, mainly from Scotland and Ireland, moved to the region in the 1700’s and established productive farms and homesteads. The settlers also brought smallpox which nearly decimated the indigenous populations. The North Carolina gold rush in 1799 also drew a diversity of settlers to the region. To this day, privately-owned gold and gem mines are still operating in Union.

Over time and with development of the railroad, Union County grew as a productive and prosperous county. Many of the historic buildings and sites that remain reflect this golden age of Union County. The first Belk Store opened in Monroe in the late 1880s. Wingate University, founded as a school for Baptists, opened in 1896. Many of the homes on the National Register were also built during this period. Preserving this historic sites ensures that as Union County continues to grow, the story of its history is well-preserved.

## NATIONAL REGISTER SITES

There are currently 12 National Register sites and four National Historic Districts in Union County. There are an additional 91 potential National Register sites including four potential historic districts still in consideration. Most of the Historic Districts and National Register sites are within incorporated municipalities.

## CULTURE RESOURCE SITES

There are a number of cultural resources in Union County including a variety of museums and art galleries.

## MUSEUMS & FACILITIES

- **Museum of the Waxhaws:** This regional museum is dedicated to the Native Americans who called this region of North Carolina home. This facility covers the history of the Waxhaws, The Civil War, and the American Revolution.
- **JAARS Museum of the Alphabet:** This museum presents several tours and provides a unique perspective on writing systems. This location has exhibits about ancient and modern alphabet makers and walks a visitor through the history of the written language.
- **JAARS Mexico-Caradenas Museum:** This museum features exhibits of Mexican culture with folk, art, photos, artifacts, and clothing. This museum offers an exhibit on Lazaro Caradenas who was Mexico’s President from 1934 – 1940.
- **Jesse James Historical Society:** Waxhaw is home to a historical society dedicated to the memorial of Jesse James.
- **Jesse Helms Center Foundation:** The Jesse Helms Center provides educational programs and information about Senator Jesse Helms and values he prioritized during this life. This center offers lectures and has an interactive museum dedicated to the work Senator Jesse Helms.
- **Cold Blooded Encounters:** Cold Blooded Encounters is a reptile zoo located in Monroe, NC. It has large exhibits of reptiles, amphibians, and bugs. This facility also incorporates an outreach program where they bring the Zoo to the community.

# APPENDIX E

## ARTS

Union County supports the Arts through the Union County Community Arts Council. Their mission is to lead, cultivate and promote the arts as an essential component of community life and education. This organization awards grants to organizations, schools, and artists to increase available resources for enhancing community arts and arts education.

In addition, Wingate University offers 2 art galleries on campus, the Helms Gallery and the Griffin Gallery. The Helms Gallery features guest artists, faculty exhibits, and senior exhibits, while the griffin Gallery features Masters Collection of art work. The George A. Battle, Jr. Fine Arts Center and the Austin Auditorium on the Wingate Campus offer a variety of musical and theatrical events open to the public.

TABLE 24: CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL FACILITIES IN UNION COUNTY

NAME	ADDRESS	DESCRIPTION	NATIONAL REGISTER YEAR
Union County Courthouse	Courthouse Sq.	1888, 1926 Italianate, Neo-classical brick courthouse.	1971
John C. Sikes House	1301 E. Franklin St.	1926 Colonial Revival	1982
Piedmont Buggy Factory	514 Miller St.	1910 3 story brick buggy factory, textile mill 1919-1956	2004
Pleasant Grove Camp Meeting Ground	NE of Waxhaw on SR 1327	1830 & Later arbor & Ground	1974
Malcolm K. Lee House	Address Restricted	1919 Colonial Revival 2 story brick house	1988
North Carolina / South Carolina Cornerstone		1813 stone marker at state boundary corner	1984
Monroe City Hall	102 W. Jefferson St.	1847 3 story brick building	1971
United states post office	407 N. Main St.	1913 Neoclassical federal	1985
Waxhaw-Weddington Roads Historic District	Jct. of NC 75, NC 34 & W. Franklin St.	20th Century Residential District	1988
Monroe Downtown Historic District	Roughly bounded by Jefferson, Church, Windsor & Stewart St.	1875-1930 Commercial / Residential District	1988
Waxhaw Historic District	Portions of Main, Broad, Church, Broom, Providence, Old Providence, Brevard and McKibben Sts.	1888-1940 Commercial / Residential	1991
Monroe Residential Historic District	Roughly bounded by Hough, Franklin, Jefferson, McCarten, Windsor, Sanford, Washington. Braden, Church & Hudson Sts.	1870 – 1940 Residential District	1988

SOURCE: NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

# APPENDIX F:

## Needs Assessment

### INVENTORY OF EXISTING PARKS AND RECREATION FACILITIES MAINTAINED AND OPERATED BY UNION COUNTY

Union County currently owns and maintains 3 different parks. These parks have facilities that range from active (Fred Kirby Park) to passive (Cane Creek Park) recreational facilities. These facilities offer a wide variety of uses for many age groups. This inventory also includes facilities not owned and operated by Union County in order to indicate that a portion of the County's population participates in recreation activities outside of Union County-owned facilities.

#### CANE CREEK PARK – 1050 ACRES

Cane Creek Park is a large regional facility located in the southwestern portion of Union County. Consisting of 1050 acres, the park includes a multitude of diverse facilities. Facilities available at Cane Creek Park are the following:

- 300+ acre lake
- 109 RV sites
- 11 campsites
- 2 boat ramps
- Boat, canoe and kayak rentals
- 1 softball field
- 1 multi-use field
- Performance facility
- Mini-golf course
- Arcade
- Climbing wall
- 13.4 miles of nature trails

#### JESSE HELMS PARK – 230 ACRES

Jesse Helms Park is a regional park located just southwest of Wingate. Currently only 19 Acres of the parcel is developed with 6 regulation sized soccer fields, a playground and some seating areas. There is also a master plan for the remaining portion of the 230 acres to be developed and eventually connecting to the Union County Agricultural Center. Upon completion, Jesse Helms Park will have the following additional facilities:

- Festival area
- Nature paths
- Homestead area
- Passive recreation area

#### FRED KIRBY PARK – 17.4 ACRES

Fred Kirby Park is a community park owned at operated by Union County and located between Indian Trail and Lake Park. It currently has the following facilities:

- 2 baseball fields
- 1 multi-use field
- 2 Gazebos
- Playground
- loop asphalt walking trail



	ACREAGE	BASEBALL FIELDS - ADULT	BASEBALL FIELDS - YOUTH	SOFTBALL FIELDS - ADULT	SOFTBALL FIELDS - YOUTH	RECTANGULAR FIELDS: FOOTBALL	RECTANGULAR FIELDS: SOCCER, FIELD HOCKEY - REGULATION SIZE	RECTANGULAR FIELDS: SOCCER, LACROSSE, FIELD HOCKEY - SMALL-SIDED FIELDS	RECREATION / COMMUNITY CENTER	FITNESS CENTER	PLAYGROUND	TOT LOTS	TENNIS COURT (OUTDOOR)	BASKETBALL COURT (OUTDOOR)	SWIMMING POOL (OUTDOOR)/NON-COMPETITION POOLS	SENIOR CENTER	ICE SKATING RINK (INDOOR)	ICE SKATING RINK (OUTDOOR)	CAMPITES	RV SITES	BOAT RAMPS(S)	BOAT / CANOE RENTALS	SLIP RENTALS	GYM	DRIVING RANGE	DOG PARK	NATURE / INTERPRETIVE CENTER	PERFORMING AND/OR VISUAL ARTS / COMMUNITY CENTER	COMMUNITY GARDENS	GREENWAYS (MULTI-USE TRAILS)	GREENWAYS (NATURAL SURFACE)		
<b>INVENTORY</b>																																	
Union County Facilities																																	
Cane Creek Park	1050		1					1			2									11	109	2	1							1			13.4
Jesse Helms Park	230						6				1																		1				
Fred Kirby Park	17.4		1		1		3				1																						
<b>TOTALS:</b>	1297.4	0.0	2.0	0.0	1.0	0.0	9.0	1.0	0.0	0.0	4.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	11.0	109	2.0	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.0	1.0	0.0	0.0	13.4	
Facilities by Municipality																																	
<b>MONROE</b>																																	
Belk Tonwanda Park (Monroe)	17										1																		1				
Don Griffin Park (Monroe)	5.1		2								1		2																			0.33	
Creft Park (Monroe)	10.3				1						1			3																			
Dickerson Center (Monroe)	62.7				1				1	1	1		6											1									
Sutton Park (Monroe)	11.8				1				1		1		2	2									1										
Ellen Fitzgerald Senior Center (Monroe)	0.8															1																	
Winchester Center (Monroe)	8										1																	1	1				
J Ray Shute Center (Monroe)	10.6							3	1		1																						
Old Armory Community Center (Monroe)	3.2								1	1	1																						
Sunset Park	8.2		3								1	1																					
Aquatics and Fitness Center	13								1	1					1																		
Park Williams Athletic Complex	30.5			2			2																										
Monroe Country Club (Monroe)	157																															1.5	
<b>INDIAN TRAIL</b>																																	
Crossing Paths Park	2.4										1																			1			
Chestnut Square Park	44.8						2						3																				
Crooked Creek Park	137.27	1	5				8				1															1	1					3.1	
Cultural Arts Center	0.9								1																			1					
Marshville																																	
Marshville Municipal Park	10		1	2							1																						
Marshville Community Center	0.6								1																								
<b>WAXHAW</b>																																	
David G. Barnes Park	1										1																						
H.C. Nesbit Park	41.34		4				4	4																									
Dare Steele Memorial Garden	0.1																																
Waxhaw Skate Park																																	







**INVENTORY**

	ACREAGE	BASEBALL FIELDS - ADULT	BASEBALL FIELDS - YOUTH	SOFTBALL FIELDS - ADULT	SOFTBALL FIELDS - YOUTH	RECTANGULAR FIELDS: FOOTBALL	RECTANGULAR FIELDS: SOCCER, FIELD HOCKEY - REGULATION SIZE	RECTANGULAR FIELDS: SOCCER, LACROSSE, FIELD HOCKEY - SMALL-SIDED FIELDS	RECREATION / COMMUNITY CENTER	FITNESS CENTER	PLAYGROUND	TOT LOTS	TENNIS COURT (OUTDOOR)	BASKETBALL COURT (OUTDOOR)	SWIMMING POOL (OUTDOOR)/NON-COMPETITION POOLS	SENIOR CENTER	ICE SKATING RINK (INDOOR)	ICE SKATING RINK (OUTDOOR)	CAMPSITES	RV SITES	BOAT RAMP(S)	BOAT / CANOE RENTALS	SLIP RENTALS	GYM	DRIVING RANGE	DOG PARK	NATURE / INTERPRETIVE CENTER	PERFORMING AND/OR VISUAL ARTS / COMMUNITY CENTER	COMMUNITY GARDENS	GREENWAYS (MULTI-USE TRAILS)	GREENWAYS (NATURAL SURFACE)		
Private Facilities in Union County																																	
JAARS Community Center	N/A																															1	
Beaver Dam Swim and Racquet	N/A														1																		
Valhalla Swim and Racquet Club	N/A												3		1																		
Olive Branch Community Building	N/A								1																								
Pebble Creek Executive Golf Course	N/A																							1									
Weddington Swim and Racquet Club	N/A								1				16		1																		
Wesley Chapel Weddington Athletic Association / Optimist Park	52	2	3	2	1	1	2	3	1																							1	
Catawba Lands Conservancy	2.26																														1		
The Athletic Barn	N/A								1																								
Red Fox Fitness	N/A									1	0													1									
Snap Fitness	N/A																							1									
Labor of Love	N/A									1														1									
Fitness Together	N/A									1														1									
Sucuri Jiu Jitsu	N/A									1														1									
A2Z Fitness	N/A									1														1									
Reed's Karate	N/A								1	1	1	1		1																			
Taekwondo Martial Arts and Fitness Studio	N/A									1																							
Waxhaw Crossfit	N/A																							1									
BC Kickboxing BBJ Inc.	N/A									1																							
Hopewell Baptist Church	N/A								1																								
Ebenezer Baptist Church	N/A	1							1																								
<b>TOTALS:</b>	54.26	3	3	2	1	1	2	3	7	8	1	1	19	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	
Private Schools																																	
Wingate University	N/A	2					*	*	1	1			8		1								1	*									
Central Academy of Lake Park																							1										
South Providence	N/A													1									1										
Union Academy	N/A					1		2			1			1									1									1	
<b>TOTALS:</b>	N/A	2	0	0	0	1	0	2	1	1	1	0	8	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	

\*Nine-hole disc golf course, one intramural field, one sand volleyball court



	ACREAGE	BASEBALL FIELDS - ADULT	BASEBALL FIELDS - YOUTH	SOFTBALL FIELDS - ADULT	SOFTBALL FIELDS - YOUTH	RECTANGULAR FIELDS: FOOTBALL	RECTANGULAR FIELDS: SOCCER, FIELD HOCKEY - REGULATION SIZE	RECTANGULAR FIELDS: SOCCER, LACROSSE, FIELD HOCKEY - SMALL-SIDED FIELDS	RECREATION / COMMUNITY CENTER	FITNESS CENTER	PLAYGROUND	TOT LOTS	TENNIS COURT (OUTDOOR)	BASKETBALL COURT (OUTDOOR)	SWIMMING POOL (OUTDOOR)/NON-COMPETITION POOLS	SENIOR CENTER	ICE SKATING RINK (INDOOR)	ICE SKATING RINK (OUTDOOR)	CAMPsites	RV SITES	BOAT RAMP(S)	BOAT / CANOE RENTALS	SLIP RENTALS	GYM	DRIVING RANGE	DOG PARK	NATURE / INTERPRETIVE CENTER	PERFORMING AND/OR VISUAL ARTS / COMMUNITY CENTER	COMMUNITY GARDENS	GREENWAYS (MULTI-USE TRAILS)	GREENWAYS (NATURAL SURFACE)				
<b>INVENTORY</b>																																			
Public Facilities outside of Union County																																			
Andrew Jackson State Park	360								1		1									25	25		1								1			2	
Colonel Francis Beatty Park	265	*	*	2	*	*	5	*	1	0	1		6	2																				1	
Arthur Goodman Memorial Park	21	2	3	2	2		1	1																											
McKee Road Neighborhood Park	20						5																												
Mint Hill Veterans Memorial Park	50+			1			2		1		1		6																				1	1	
Matthews Sportsplex	160	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	1		1																								
<b>TOTALS:</b>	876	2	3	5	2		13	1	4	0	4	0	12	2	0	0	0	0	0	25	25	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	4

\*Two medium shelters, five multi-purpose fields

\*\* Five multi-purpose fields in phase 1, 12 fields in ultimate build-out, stadium sits approximately 2,700 people

## UNION COUNTY LEVEL OF SERVICE

The following section provides an analysis of the parks and recreation system serving Union County's existing and future population. This type of analysis is referred to as a Level of Service (LOS) study in that it identifies the type and scale of facilities required by the current and future population in terms of demand and the future needs given existing supply.

The type of LOS study used for Union County is different from the typical municipal parks and recreation analysis supported by the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) in two key ways. First, the analysis was performed on a county-wide level. These systems generally serve a different purpose than municipal systems. For example, county systems typically provide a more supportive role for the municipalities within their

jurisdiction by focusing on larger regional facilities the municipalities may not be able to afford. Second, with the launch of the Park and Recreation Operating Ration and Geographic Information System (PRORAGIS) by the NRPA, a self-reported database of national county parks and recreation facilities has replaced the typical NRPA system that was last updated in 1995. This allows the County jurisdiction to compare themselves directly to other counties and to revisit those benchmark comparisons annually. Table 25 from NRPA's PRORAGIS Database Report: Counties 2014, contains the most recent Level of Service Standards which were compared to Union County's Parks and Recreation system. The benchmarking number represents population per facility.

TABLE 25: LEVEL OF SERVICE BENCHMARKS

JURISDICTION POPULATION PER FACILITY	BENCHMARK BASED ON MEDIAN OF ALL COUNTIES
Recreation/Community center	70286
Fitness center	131375
Playground	14793
Tot lots	63780
Tennis court (outdoor)	12688
Basketball court (outdoor)	28995
Swimming pool (outdoor)/Non-competition pools	209503
Senior center	227330
Ice skating rink (indoor)	257414
Ice skating rink (outdoor)	535153
rectangular fields: Football	27574
rectangular fields: Soccer, lacrosse, field hockey (regulation size)	21022
rectangular fields: Soccer, lacrosse, field hockey (small-sided fields)	42320
Diamond Fields: Baseball with 90-ft. base paths	52376
Diamond Fields: Baseball with 50-65-ft. base paths and mound	16387
Diamond Fields: Softball (youth)	19206
Diamond Fields: Softball (adult)	35227
Campsites	17397
RV sites	8640
Boat ramp(s)	158333
Boat/canoe rentals	311762
Slip rentals	4798
Gym	92831
Driving range	421407
Dog park	262671
Nature/interpretive center	311132
Performing and/or visual arts/ community center	421407
Community gardens	440045
Greenways (multi-use path in miles)	21625
Greenways (natural surface in miles)	33296

SOURCE: BENCHMARKING STATS ARE BASED OFF OF NRPA PRORAGIS DATABASE REPORT: COUNTIES 2014

# APPENDIX F

## EXISTING DEMAND

Union County has been experiencing considerable growth in recent years. Such growth places heavy burdens on infrastructure, facilities and services. In order to best understand the impact of this population growth on the County's need for additional recreation facilities, it

is necessary to conduct both a current and future Level of Service analysis. The Level of Service analysis is summarized in the following table (Table 26). This is based on the Union County 2013 population of 212,756.

TABLE 26: LEVEL OF SERVICE ANALYSIS

JURISDICTION POPULATION PER FACILITY	BENCHMARK	FACILITIES REQUIRED	UNION COUNTY	CURRENT GAP
Recreation/Community center	70286	3.03	0.00	3.03
Fitness center	131375	1.62	0.00	1.62
Playground	14793	14.38	4.00	10.38
Tot lots	63780	3.34	0.00	3.34
Tennis court (outdoor)	12688	16.77	0.00	16.77
Basketball court (outdoor)	28995	7.34	0.00	7.34
Swimming pool (outdoor)/Non-competition pools	209503	1.02	0.00	1.02
Senior center	227330	0.94	0.00	0.94
Ice skating rink (indoor)	257414	0.83	0.00	0.83
Ice skating rink (outdoor)	535153	0.40	0.00	0.40
rectangular fields: Football	27574	7.72	0.00	7.72
rectangular fields: Soccer, lacrosse, field hockey (regulation size)	21022	10.12	9.00	1.12
rectangular fields: Soccer, lacrosse, field hockey (small-sided fields)	42320	5.03	1.00	4.03
Diamond Fields: Baseball with 90-ft. base paths	52376	4.06	0.00	4.06
Diamond Fields: Baseball with 50-65-ft. base paths and mound	16387	12.98	2.00	10.98
Diamond Fields: Softball (youth)	19206	11.08	1.00	10.08
Diamond Fields: Softball (adult)	35227	6.04	0.00	6.04
Campsites	17397	12.23	11.00	1.23
RV sites	8640	24.62	109.00	(84.38)
Boat ramp(s)	158333	1.34	2.00	(0.66)
Boat/canoe rentals	311762	0.68	1.00	(0.32)
Slip rentals	4798	44.34	0.00	44.34
Gym	92831	2.29	0.00	2.29
Driving range	421407	0.50	1.00	(0.50)
Dog park	262671	0.81	0.00	0.81
Nature/interpretive center	311132	0.68	0.00	0.68
Performing and/or visual arts/ community center	421407	0.50	0.00	0.50
Community gardens	440045	0.48	1.00	(0.52)
Greenways (multi-use path in miles)	21625.00	9.84	0.00	9.84
Greenways (natural surface in miles)	33296.00	6.39	13.40	(7.01)

SOURCE: BENCHMARKING STATS ARE BASED OFF OF NRPA PRORAGIS DATABASE REPORT: COUNTIES 2014

The existing Level of Service analysis compares current demand to the current supply of recreation acreage. Union County currently has 1297 acres of recreation facilities. Given the PRORAGIS county park planning standards, roughly 13.1 acres per 1,000 residents, and the current population (2013) of 212,756, Union County is currently operating a system that is currently not meeting its demand (2,787 acres).

When analyzing individual facilities and where there are gaps in service, we see some recreational needs are being met or exceeded (boat ramps, RV sites, natural surface greenway trails). But many others that are either not offered (nature center, senior center, multi-use greenway trail) or which currently underserve the population (rectangular fields for soccer, baseball fields, camp sites).

While a typical LOS analysis will only compare county owned and operated facilities, we have identified currently underutilized facilities through the

county which may help meet parks and recreation needs in the future. In order to understand how much of the current gap could be potentially filled by some of these underutilized facilities, we have included an analysis which takes school and municipal facilities into account. The following table (Table 27) shows Union County Parks and Recreation facilities with Union County school facilities, Union County Parks and Recreation facilities with municipal facilities and Union County Parks and Recreation facilities with Union County school facilities and municipal facilities.

As apparent from the table, many of the areas where the County is currently running at a significant gap, are ones which could and many times are being supplemented with school and municipal facilities. An even greater emphasis on shared facilities and joint use agreements could help Union County to maximize the utilization all the parks and recreation facilities.

TABLE 27: LEVEL OF SERVICE ANALYSIS FOR COUNTY, SCHOOLS AND MUNICIPALITY FACILITIES

JURISDICTION POPULATION PER FACILITY	FACILITIES REQUIRED	UNION COUNTY	MUNICIPAL FACILITIES	CURRENT GAP (COUNTY + MUNICIPALITY)	SCHOOL FACILITIES	CURRENT GAP (COUNTY + SCHOOLS)	CURRENT GAP (COUNTY + SCHOOLS + MUNICIPALITY)
Recreation/Community center	3.03	0.00	8.00	(4.97)	0	3.03	(4.97)
Fitness center	1.62	0.00	2.00	(0.38)	0	1.62	(0.38)
Playground	14.38	4.00	21.00	(10.62)	57	(46.62)	(67.62)
Tot lots	3.34	0.00	0.00	3.34	0	3.34	3.34
Tennis court (outdoor)	16.77	0.00	17.00	(0.23)	42	(25.23)	(42.23)
Basketball court (outdoor)	7.34	0.00	7.00	0.34	24	(16.66)	(23.66)
Swimming pool (outdoor)/Non-competition pools	1.02	0.00	4.00	(2.98)	0	1.02	(2.98)
Senior center	0.94	0.00	1.00	(0.06)	0	0.94	(0.06)
Ice skating rink (indoor)	0.83	0.00	0.00	0.83	0	0.83	0.83
Ice skating rink (outdoor)	0.40	0.00	0.00	0.40	0	0.40	0.40
Rectangular fields: Football	7.72	0.00	0.00	7.72	10	(2.28)	(2.28)
Rectangular fields: Soccer, lacrosse, field hockey (regulation size)	10.12	9.00	15.00	(13.88)	11	(9.88)	(24.88)
Rectangular fields: Soccer, lacrosse, field hockey (small-sided fields)	5.03	1.00	7.00	(2.97)	52	(47.97)	(54.97)
Diamond Fields: Baseball with 90-ft. base paths	4.06	0.00	1.00	3.06	8	(3.94)	(4.94)
Diamond Fields: Baseball with 50-65-ft. base paths and mound	12.98	2.00	14.00	(3.02)	18	(7.02)	(21.02)
Diamond Fields: Softball (youth)	11.08	1.00	3.00	7.08	5	5.08	2.08
Diamond Fields: Softball (adult)	6.04	0.00	2.00	4.04	18	(11.96)	(13.96)
Campsites	12.23	11.00	0.00	1.23	0	1.23	1.23
RV sites	24.62	109.00	0.00	(84.38)	0	(84.38)	(84.38)
Boat ramp(s)	1.34	2.00	0.00	(0.66)	0	(0.66)	(0.66)
Boat/canoe rentals	0.68	1.00	0.00	(0.32)	0	(0.32)	(0.32)

# APPENDIX F

JURISDICTION POPULATION PER FACILITY	FACILITIES REQUIRED	UNION COUNTY	MUNICIPAL FACILITIES	CURRENT GAP (COUNTY + MUNICIPALITY)	SCHOOL FACILITIES	CURRENT GAP (COUNTY + SCHOOLS)	CURRENT GAP (COUNTY + SCHOOLS + MUNICIPALITY)
Slip rentals	44.34	0.00	0.00	44.34	0	44.34	44.34
Gym	2.29	0.00	2.00	0.29	49	(46.71)	(48.71)
Driving range	0.50	1.00	0.00	(0.50)	0	(0.50)	(0.50)
Dog park	0.81	0.00	1.00	(0.19)	0	0.81	(0.19)
Nature/interpretive center	0.68	0.00	1.00	(0.32)	0	0.68	(0.32)
Performing and/or visual arts/ community center	0.50	0.00	5.00	(4.50)	0	0.50	(4.50)
Community gardens	0.48	1.00	2.00	(2.52)	0	(0.52)	(2.52)
Greenways (multi-use path in miles)	9.84	0.00	0.75	9.09	0	9.84	9.09
Greenways (natural surface in miles)	6.39	13.40	7.35	(14.36)	0	(7.01)	(14.36)

\* Benchmarking stats are based off of NRPA PRORAGIS Database Report: Counties 2014

## FUTURE DEMAND

In order to forecast future demand for recreation facilities, a projected population estimate is needed. The projections used in this analysis are taken from the North Carolina Office of State Budget and Management (NC OSBM). The NC OSBM projects Union County population to grow to 304,313

by 2035. Table 28 illustrates the current and future demand for recreational acreage based on population figures and the existing and future Level of Service Standards for recreation facilities in Union County:

TABLE 28: CURRENT AND FUTURE RECREATIONAL DEMAND (BY ACRE)

JURISDICTION POPULATION PER FACILITY	BENCHMARK	FACILITIES REQUIRED	UNION COUNTY	FUTURE GAP
Recreation/Community center	70286	4.33	0.00	4.33
Fitness center	131375	2.32	0.00	2.32
Playground	14793	20.57	4.00	16.57
Tot lots	63780	4.77	0.00	4.77
Tennis court (outdoor)	12688	23.98	0.00	23.98
Basketball court (outdoor)	28995	10.50	0.00	10.50
Swimming pool (outdoor)/Non-competition pools	209503	1.45	0.00	1.45
Senior center	227330	1.34	0.00	1.34
Ice skating rink (indoor)	257414	1.18	0.00	1.18
Ice skating rink (outdoor)	535153	0.57	0.00	0.57
rectangular fields: Football	27574	11.04	0.00	11.04
rectangular fields: Soccer, lacrosse, field hockey (regulation size)	21022	14.48	9.00	5.48
rectangular fields: Soccer, lacrosse, field hockey (small-sided fields)	42320	7.19	1.00	6.19
Diamond Fields: Baseball with 90-ft. base paths	52376	5.81	0.00	5.81
Diamond Fields: Baseball with 50-65-ft. base paths and mound	16387	18.57	2.00	16.57
Diamond Fields: Softball (youth)	19206	15.84	1.00	14.84
Diamond Fields: Softball (adult)	35227	8.64	0.00	8.64
Campsites	17397	17.49	11.00	6.49
RV sites	8640	35.22	109.00	(73.78)
Boat ramp(s)	158333	1.92	2.00	(0.08)
Boat/canoe rentals	311762	0.98	1.00	(0.02)
Slip rentals	4798	63.42	0.00	63.42
Gym	92831	3.28	0.00	3.28
Driving range	421407	0.72	0.00	0.72
Dog park	262671	1.16	0.00	1.16
Nature/interpretive center	311132	0.98	0.00	0.98
Performing and/or visual arts/ community center	421407	0.72	0.00	0.72
Community gardens	440045	0.69	1.00	(0.31)
Greenways (multi-use path)	21625.00	14.07		14.07
Greenways (natural surface)	33296.00	9.14		9.14

\* Benchmarking stats are based off of NRPA 2014 State of the Counties Report

# APPENDIX F

Similarly to the existing demand analysis, an analysis of the Union County Parks and Recreation facilities, Union County School facilities and the municipal facilities was completed using future demand projections. The following table show the results of that analysis.

TABLE 29: CURRENT AND FUTURE RECREATIONAL DEMAND FOR COUNTY, SCHOOLS AND MUNICIPALITY FACILITIES

JURISDICTION POPULATION PER FACILITY	FACILITIES REQUIRED	UNION COUNTY	MUNICIPAL FACILITIES	CURRENT GAP (COUNTY + MUNICIPALITY)	SCHOOL FACILITIES	CURRENT GAP (COUNTY + SCHOOLS)	CURRENT GAP (COUNTY + SCHOOLS + MUNICIPALITY)
Recreation/Community center	4.33	0.00	8.00	(3.67)	0	4.33	(3.67)
Fitness center	2.32	0.00	2.00	0.32	0	2.32	0.32
Playground	20.57	4.00	21.00	(4.43)	57	(40.43)	(61.43)
Tot lots	4.77	0.00	0.00	4.77	0	4.77	4.77
Tennis court (outdoor)	23.98	0.00	17.00	6.98	42	(18.02)	(35.02)
Basketball court (outdoor)	10.50	0.00	7.00	3.50	24	(13.50)	(20.50)
Swimming pool (outdoor)/Non-competition pools	1.45	0.00	4.00	(2.55)	0	1.45	(2.55)
Senior center	1.34	0.00	1.00	0.34	0	1.34	0.34
Ice skating rink (indoor)	1.18	0.00	0.00	1.18	0	1.18	1.18
Ice skating rink (outdoor)	0.57	0.00	0.00	0.57	0	0.57	0.57
Rectangular fields: Football	11.04	0.00	0.00	11.04	10	1.04	1.04
Rectangular fields: Soccer, lacrosse, field hockey (regulation size)	14.48	9.00	15.00	(9.52)	11	(5.52)	(20.52)
Rectangular fields: Soccer, lacrosse, field hockey (small-sided fields)	7.19	1.00	7.00	(0.81)	52	(45.81)	(52.81)
Diamond Fields: Baseball with 90-ft. base paths	5.81	0.00	1.00	4.81	8	(2.19)	(3.19)
Diamond Fields: Baseball with 50-65-ft. base paths and mound	18.57	2.00	14.00	2.57	18	(1.43)	(15.43)
Diamond Fields: Softball (youth)	15.84	1.00	3.00	11.84	5	9.84	6.84
Diamond Fields: Softball (adult)	8.64	0.00	2.00	6.64	18	(9.36)	(11.36)
Campsites	17.49	11.00	0.00	6.49	0	6.49	6.49
RV sites	35.22	109.00	0.00	(73.78)	0	(73.78)	(73.78)
Boat ramp(s)	1.92	2.00	0.00	(0.08)	0	(0.08)	(0.08)
Boat/canoe rentals	0.98	1.00	0.00	(0.02)	0	(0.02)	(0.02)
Slip rentals	63.42	0.00	0.00	63.42	0	63.42	63.42
Gym	3.28	0.00	2.00	1.28	49	(45.72)	(47.72)
Driving range	0.72	0.00	0.00	0.72	0	0.72	0.72
Dog park	1.16	0.00	1.00	0.16	0	1.16	0.16
Nature/interpretive center	0.98	0.00	1.00	(0.02)	0	0.98	(0.02)
Performing and/or visual arts/ community center	0.72	0.00	5.00	(4.28)	0	0.72	(4.28)
Community gardens	0.69	1.00	2.00	(2.31)	0	(0.31)	(2.31)
Greenways (multi-use path)	14.07		0.75	13.32	0	14.07	13.32
Greenways (natural surface)	9.14		7.35	1.79	0	9.14	1.79

\* Benchmarking stats are based off of NRPA 2014 State of the Counties Report

The expanded LOS analysis once again shows that a large portion of future Union County Parks and Recreation demand can be met through partnerships with Union County Schools and the fourteen Municipalities.

# APPENDIX G:

## Potential Partners

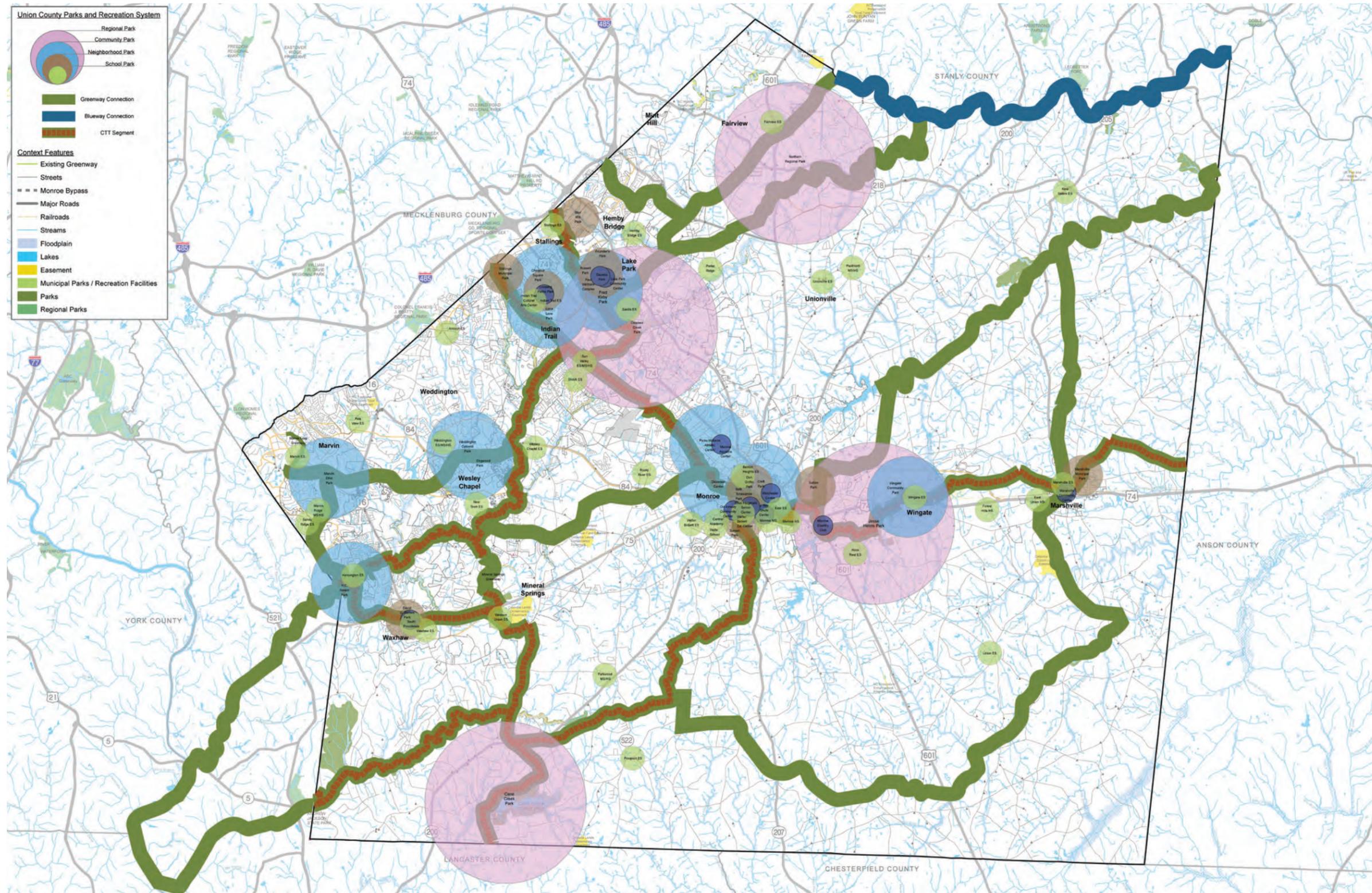
Developing successful partnerships is essential to the success of this Comprehensive Master Plan. The following is a list of potential partners to help achieve the goals of this Plan:

- Landowners
- Developers
- Fire Stations
- Libraries
- Union County Departments
  - Union County Planning Department
  - Monroe-Union Economic Development Department
  - Union County Public Health Department
  - Union County Environmental Development
  - Union County Nutrition for the Elderly
  - Union County Soil and Water Conservation District
  - Union County Transportation services
  - Union County GIS/Maps
- Neighboring Counties
  - Mecklenburg County
  - Cabarrus County
  - Stanley County
  - Anson County
  - Lancaster County, SC
  - Chesterfield County, SC
- Schools
  - Union County School District
  - Colleges and Universities
    - South Piedmont Community College
    - Wingate Universities
  - Private Schools
    - Central Academy of Lake Park
    - Chesterbrook Academy
    - Cranfield Academy
    - Union Academy
- Municipalities
  - Weddington
  - Marvin
  - Monroe
  - Wesley Chapel
  - Indian Trail
  - Marshville
  - Waxhaw
  - Mineral Springs
  - Marshville
  - Lake Park
  - Fairview
  - Stallings
  - Unionville
  - Wingate.
- Private & Non-profit Facilities
  - JAARS Community Center
  - Moose Lodge
  - Beaver Dam Swim and Racquet Club
  - Wesley Chapel Swim Club
  - Valhalla Swim and Racquet Club
  - County Valley Swim and Racquet Club
  - Olive Branch Community Building
  - Pebble Creek Executive Golf Course
  - Weddington Swim and Racquet Club
  - Wesley Chapel Weddington Athletic Association Optimist Park
  - Catawba Lands Conservancy
  - The Athletic Barn
  - Red Fox Fitness
  - Snap Fitness
  - Labor of Love
  - Fitness Together
  - Sucuri Jiu Jitsu
  - A2Z Fitness
  - Reed's Karate
  - Taekwondo Martial Arts and Fitness Studio
  - Waxhaw Crossfit
  - BC Kickboxing BBJ Inc.
  - Hopewell Baptist Church
  - Ebenezer Baptist Church
  - Museum of the Waxhaws
  - Marshville Museum and Cultural Center
- Non-profit / Government organizations
  - Carolina Thread Trail
  - Catawba Lands Conservancy
  - Union County 4-H
  - North Carolina Cooperative Extension
  - NC Department of Transportation
- Farms / agricultural organizations
  - Union County Farmers Market
  - Waxhaw Farmers Market
  - Southerland Brothers Produce
  - Cook Farms
  - Creekside Farms
  - The Hunter Farm
  - Peaceful Meadows Farm
  - Piedmont Produce
  - Treehouse Vineyards
- Health organizations
  - Carolinas Medical Center
  - Novant Health
  - Blue Cross Blue Shield

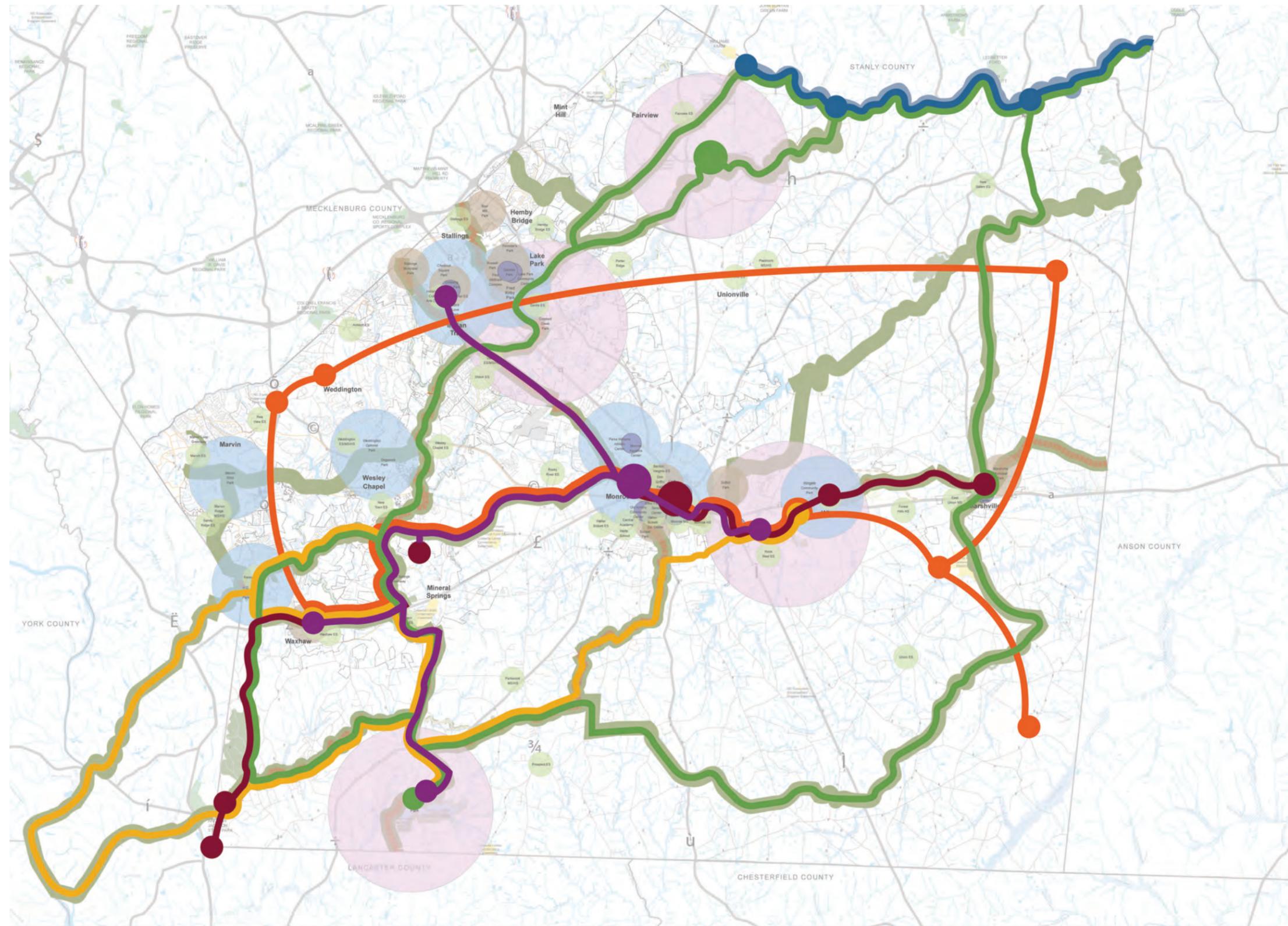


# APPENDIX H: Relevant Maps

MAP 2: PROPOSED UNION COUNTY SYSTEM MAP

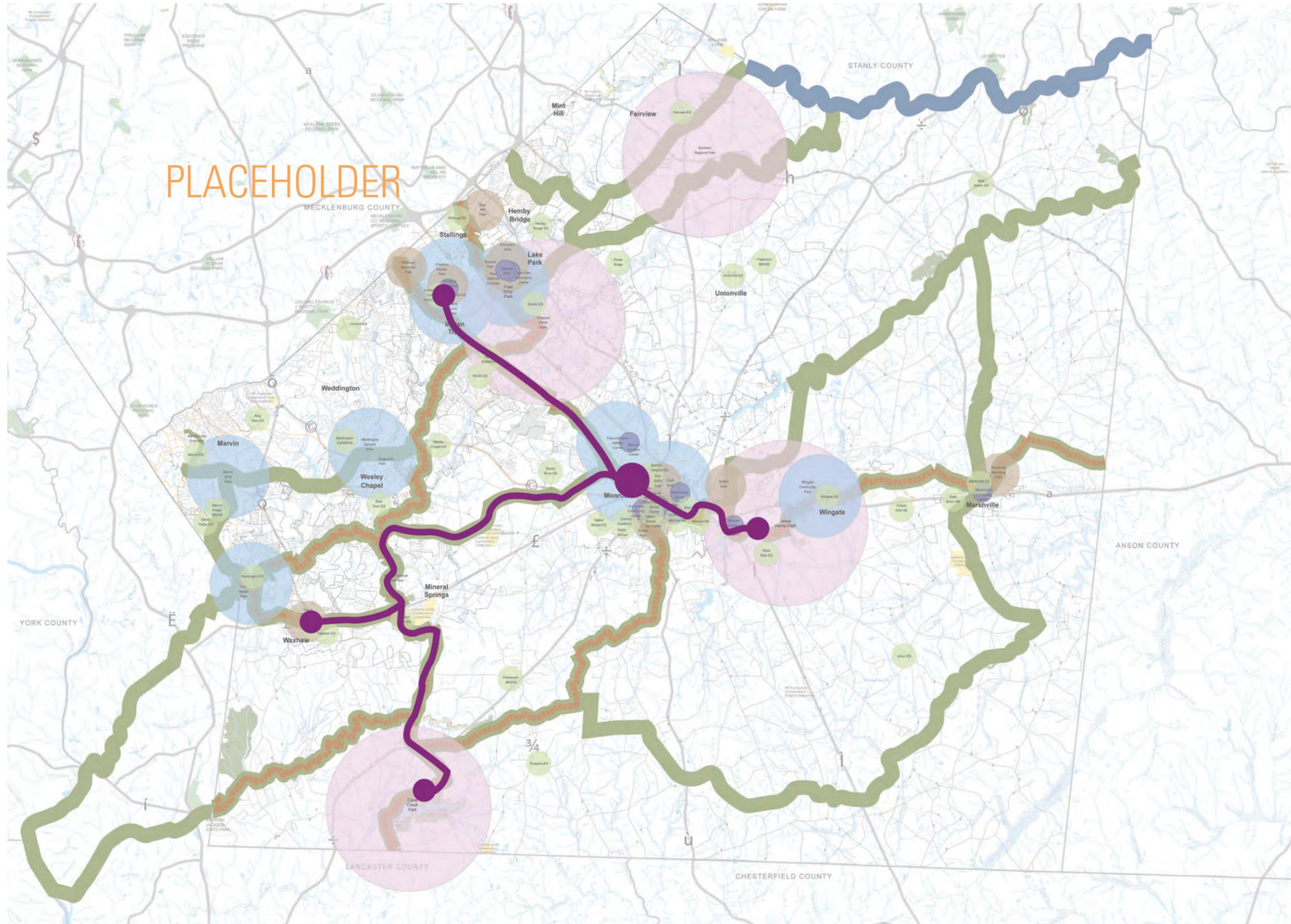


MAP 3: EXPERIENCE UNION COUNTY SYSTEM MAP

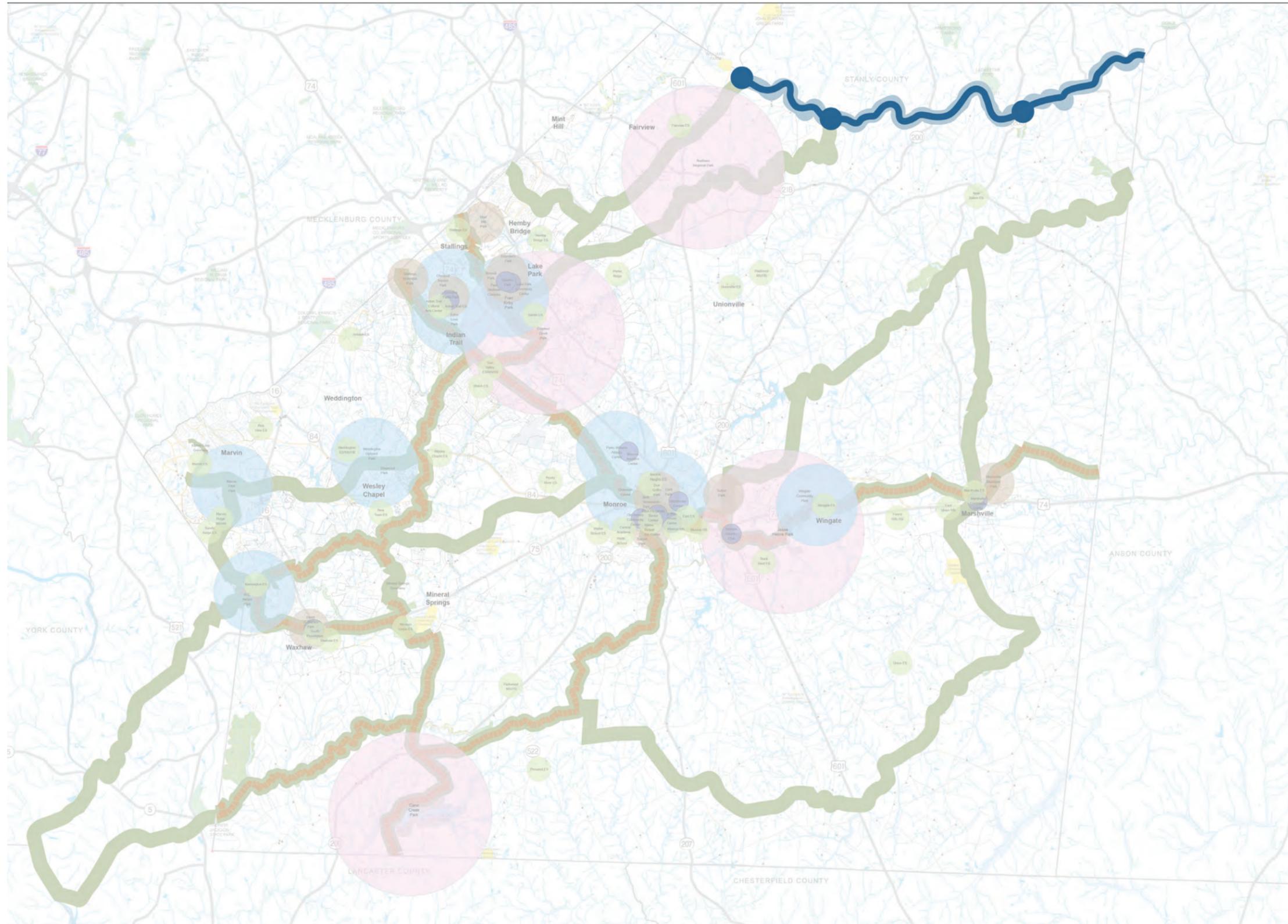


- Active System
- Adventure System
- Agricultural System
- Cultural System
- Environmental System
- Equestrian System

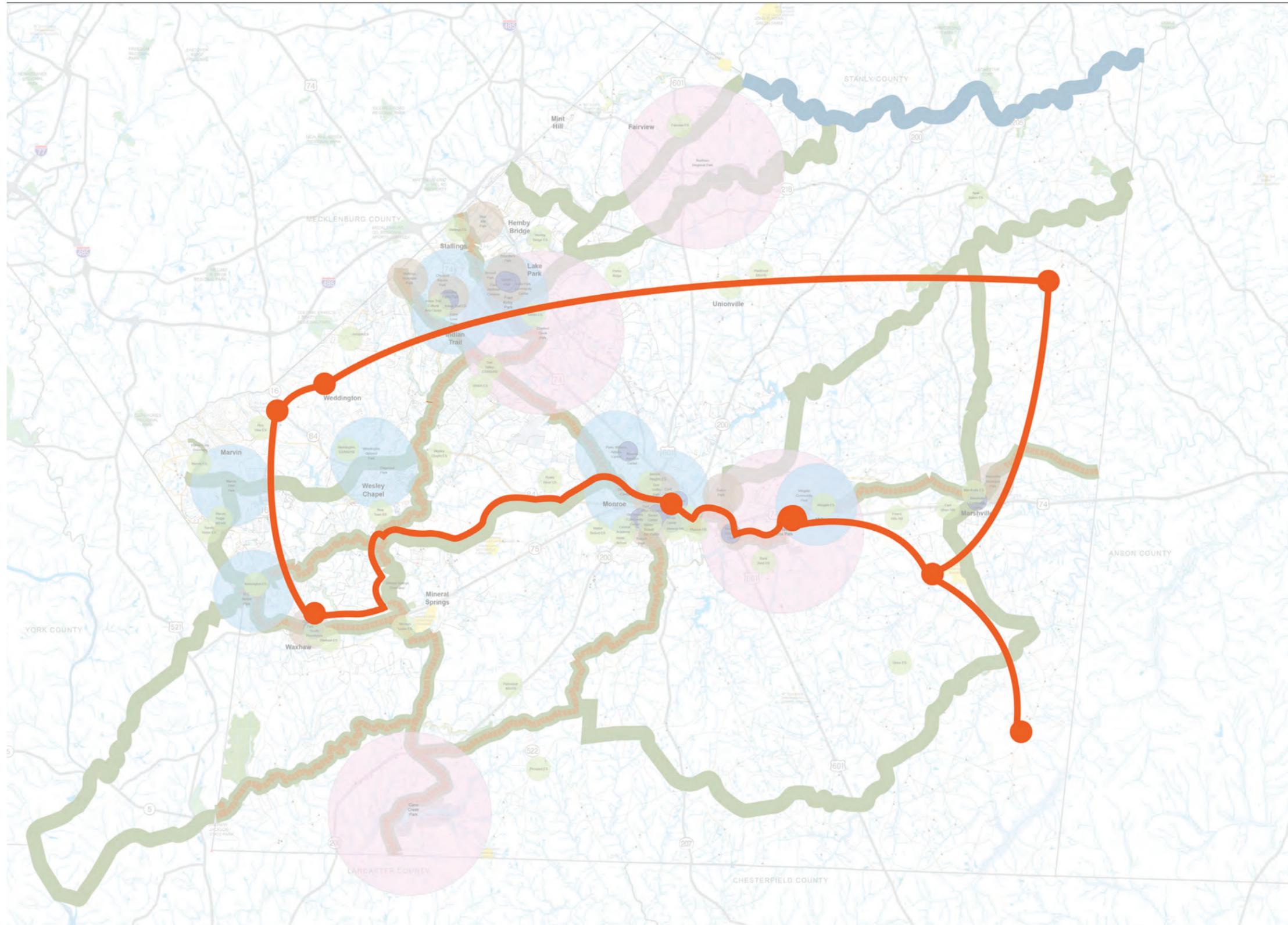
MAP 4: EXPERIENCE UNION COUNTY ACTIVE SYSTEM MAP



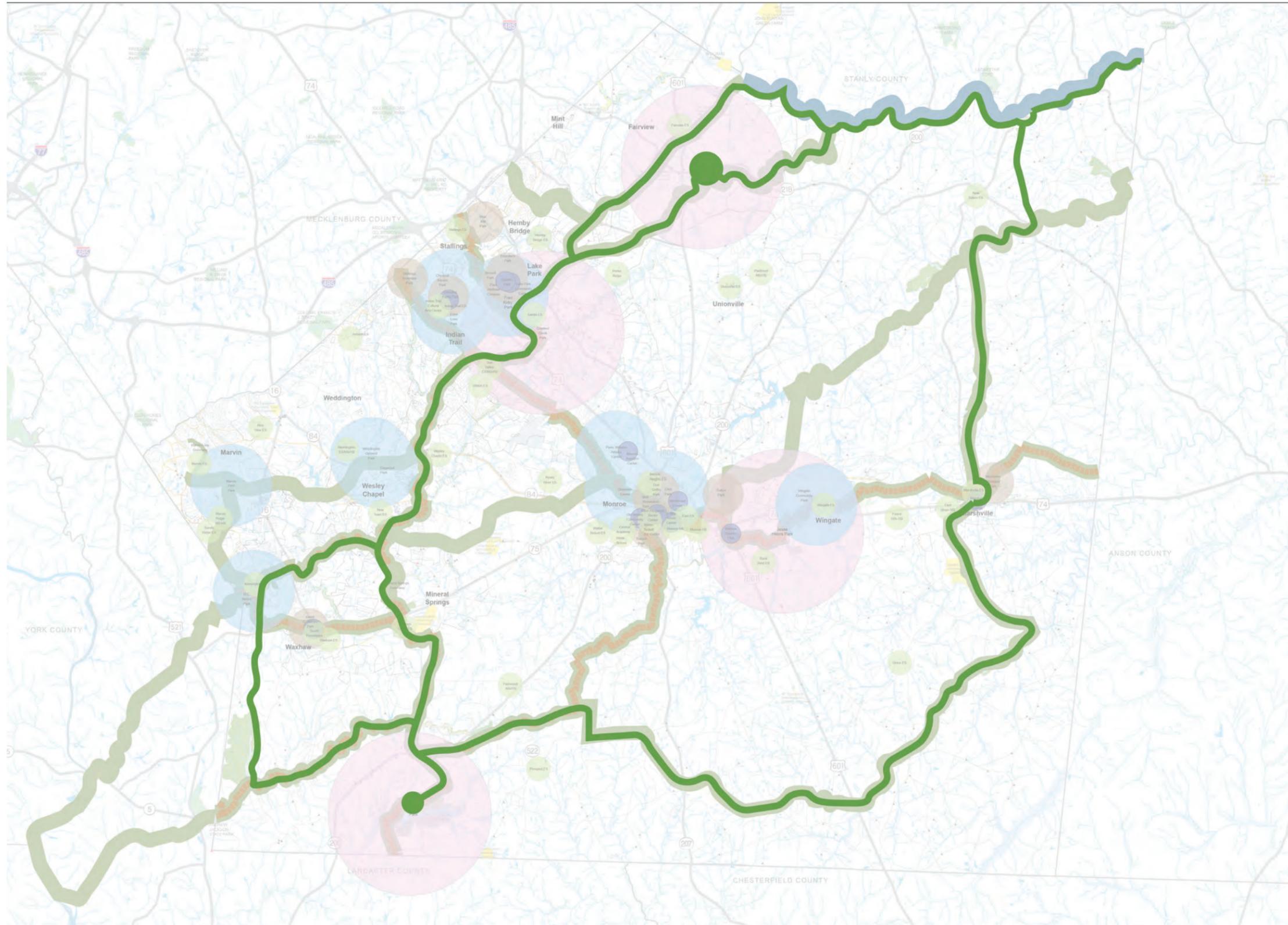
MAP 5: EXPERIENCE UNION COUNTY ADVENTURE SYSTEM MAP



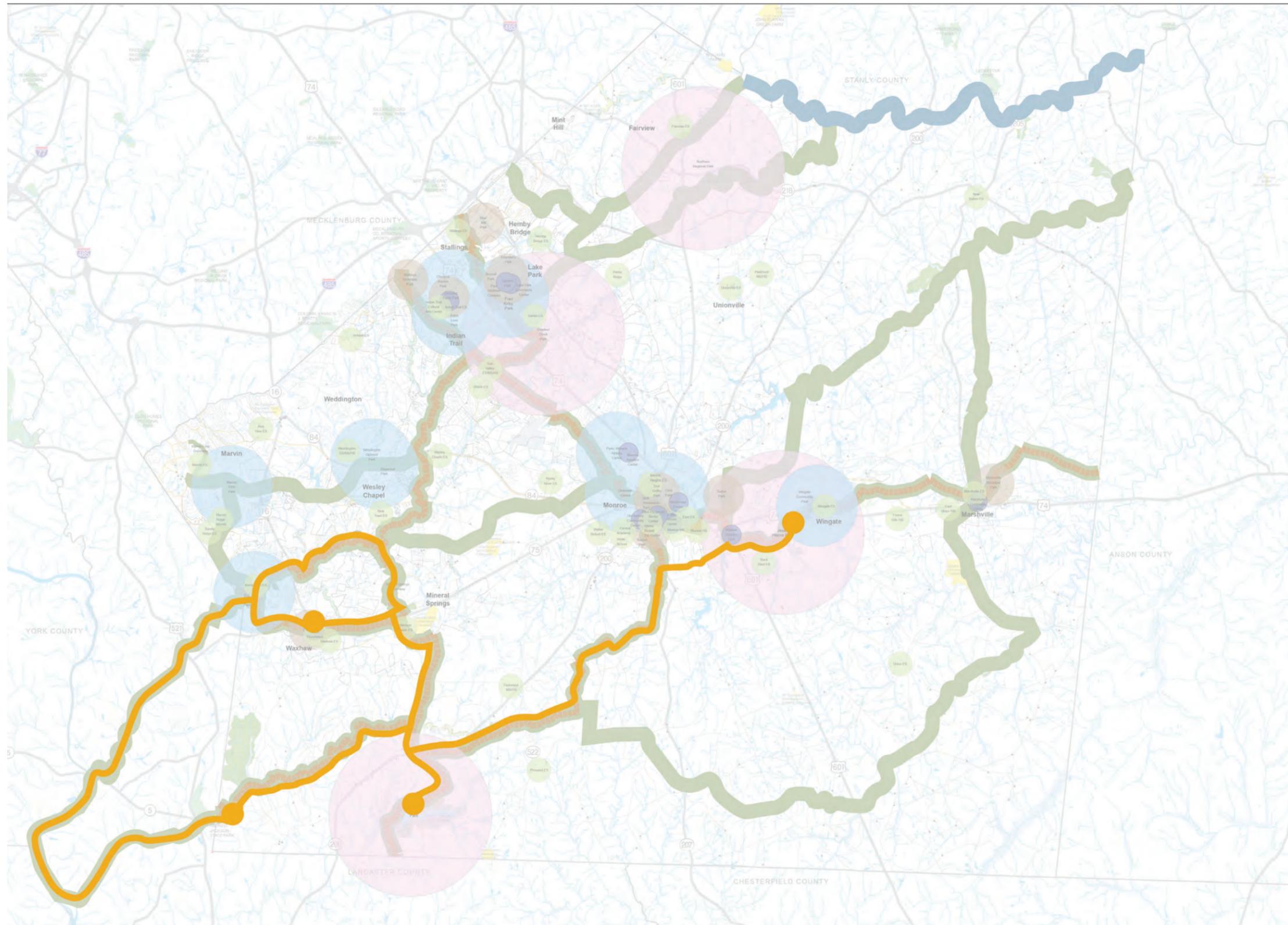
MAP 6: EXPERIENCE UNION COUNTY AGRICULTURE SYSTEM MAP



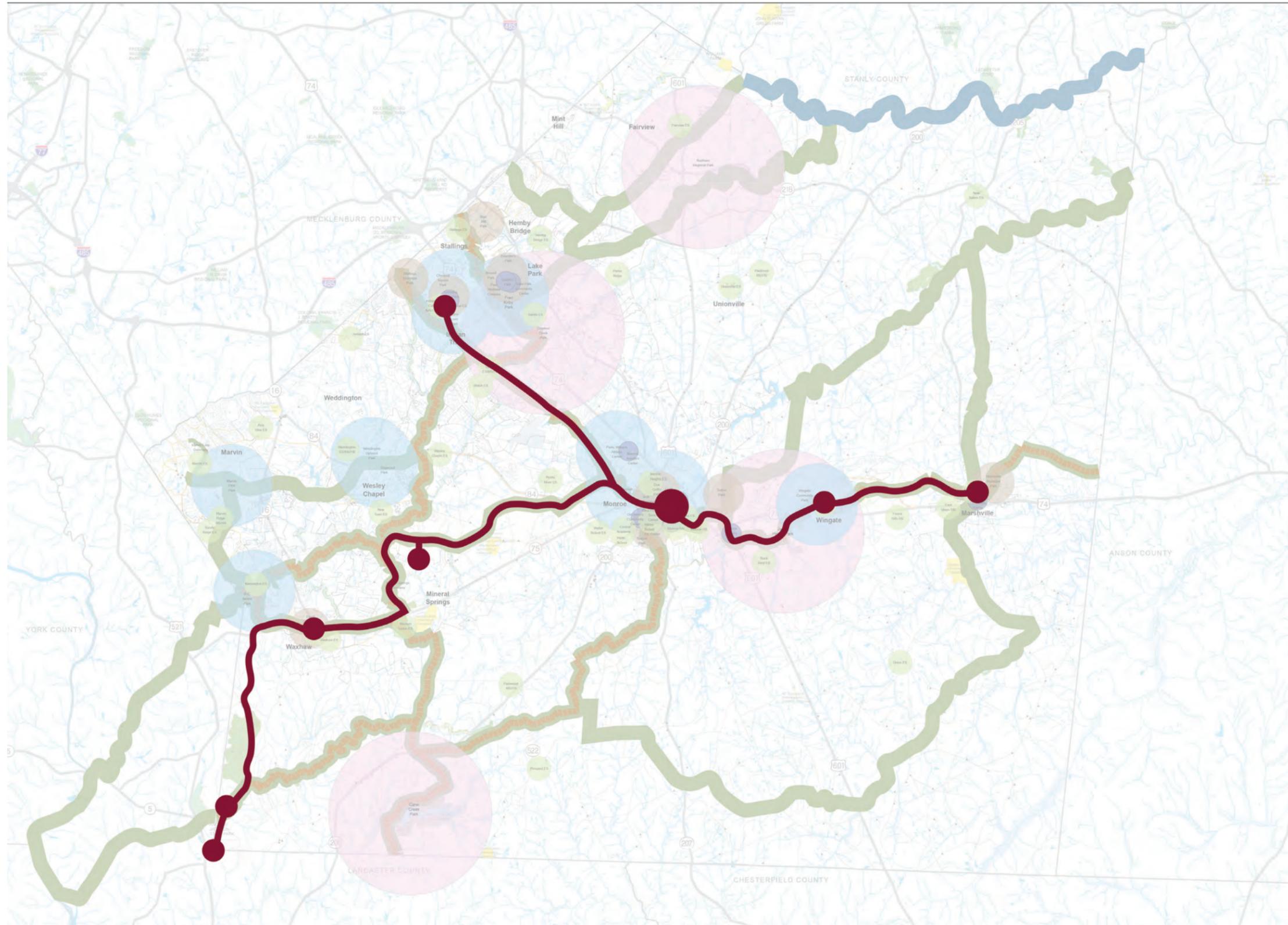
MAP 7: EXPERIENCE UNION COUNTY ENVIRONMENTAL SYSTEM MAP



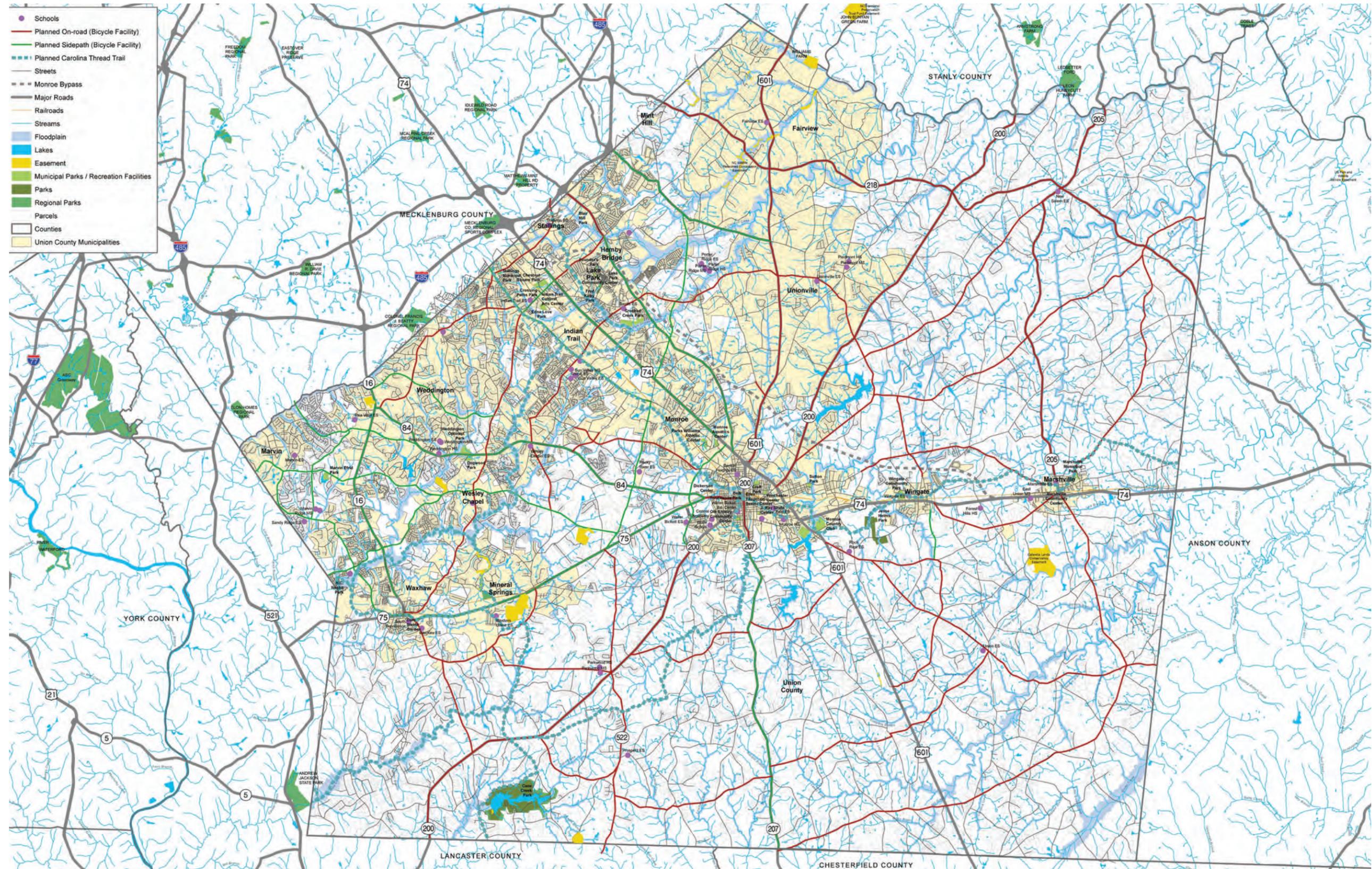
MAP 8: EXPERIENCE UNION COUNTY EQUESTRIAN SYSTEM MAP



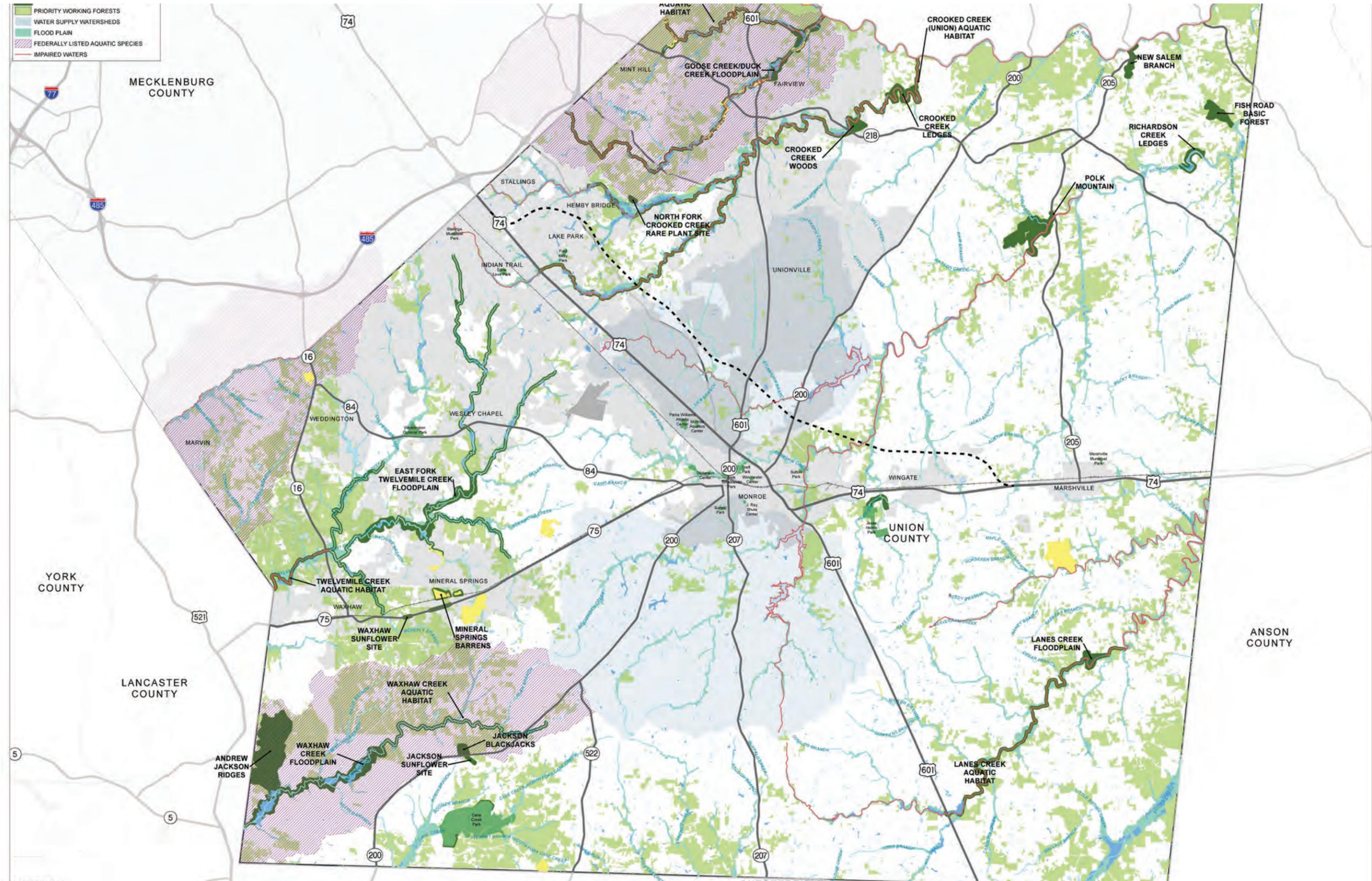
MAP 9: EXPERIENCE UNION COUNTY CULTURAL SYSTEM MAP



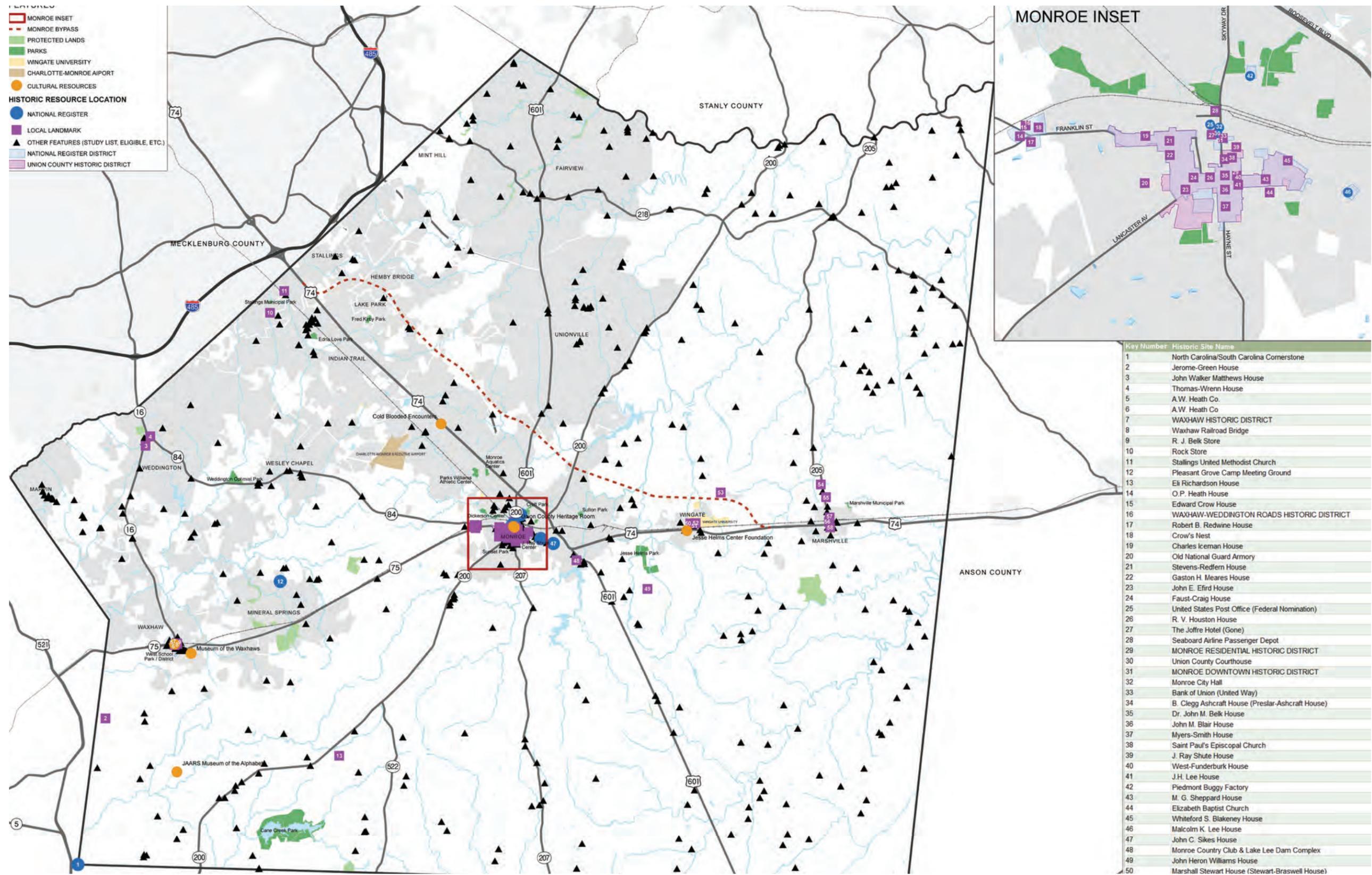
MAP 10: EXISTING CONDITIONS IN UNION COUNTY



MAP 11: ENVIRONMENTAL FEATURES



MAP 12: CULTURAL AND HISTORIC FEATURES IN UNION COUNTY





# APPENDIX I:

## Example Joint-Use Agreements

### OVERVIEW

While joint-use agreements are an important tool for all communities to provide adequate Parks and Recreation facilities for their residents, they are especially important for smaller communities with limited budgets. They benefit the community by allowing departments to provide far more facilities than they normally could afford to build or maintain. Currently North Carolina General Statute 115C-12 (35) and General Statute 115C-524 enable these to occur. These statutes are listed at the end of Appendix .

While the organization of time and management with a joint-use agreement can be a challenge, there are certain steps that can help with the process. The primary caveat when implementing joint-use agreements is that terms need to be specifically laid out and communicated between all potential user groups of the facilities. According to Promoting Physical Activity through Joint-Use Agreements, the Department should engage all stakeholders in the process to ensure the needs of everyone are addressed. “Developing a joint-use agreement requires consideration of several different points.

- **Definition of terms** – Define all items important to the agreement. This includes naming partner agencies, the facility open for use and the hours of operation.
- **Guidelines for Operation** – Create guidelines that say who can use the facility, when they can use it, how much it costs, and when payment is due. Also, decide who will schedule the facilities and who will lock the facilities if open past normal hours. All collaborating partners should develop and agree upon these guidelines. Guidelines should be documented in a written contract mutually agreed upon and signed by all parties.
- **Partner Roles and Responsibility** – Clearly define roles and responsibilities for all partners. Decide who is responsible for general clean-up or maintenance, long term maintenance updates, cost for operation, and any additional responsibilities related to the agreement.
- **Liability** – North Carolina schools are well protected by sovereign immunity, a type of immunity that protects the school from a civil suit. Partners should agree on liability and establish procedures to resolving conflict. This will provide more protection for everyone involved in the agreement.

As an example, two successful joint-use agreements have been placed in this appendix. They are from Wake County Public Schools and Byron Township Recreation Department.

### OTHER RESOURCES INCLUDE:

**Promoting Physical Activity Through Joint-Use Agreements: A Guide for North Carolina Schools and Communities to Develop and use Joint-Use Agreements** - <http://www.nchealthyschools.org/docs/home/use-agreements.pdf>

**North Carolina: Strengthening Joint-Use Agreements for Schools and Communities** - <http://www.astho.org/North-Carolina-Joint-Use-Agreements-Case-Study/Example-Joint-Use-Agreements>:

**BYRON TOWNSHIP RECREATION DEPARTMENT**  
and  
**Byron Township Little League**

**Facilities Agreement**

This agreement will begin on January 1, 2011 between Byron Township, 8085 Byron Center Avenue, Byron Center, MI 49315, and Byron Township Little League, PO Box 320, Byron Center, MI 49315.

Byron Township is the owner of Whistlestop Park, Bicentennial Park and Cutler Park. Byron Township Little League (BTLL) has permission to use above listed parks as written in this agreement.

This agreement shall be a term of one year from the date listed above. This agreement shall thereafter be automatically renewed annually for successive one year periods, unless either Byron Township or BTLL has notified the other in writing at least ninety days prior to the end of the initial term or any renewal hereof that the agreement shall terminate at the end of the then current term. If such notice is properly and timely given, this agreement will terminate at the end of the then current term, and no further automatic renewal shall occur thereafter.

**Byron Township Little League**

BTLL shall provide the following to Byron Township 3 weeks prior to the start of the season.

1. Proof of insurance and indemnification.
2. Financial report of all expenditures and revenues from previous year, including balance sheet.
3. Proposed budget for upcoming year.
4. List of current officers and board members with addresses, phone numbers, and emails. Byron Township must be notified of any changes immediately.
5. A block schedule will be given to Byron Township Recreation Department.
6. Provide documentation that criminal history background checks were performed on all BTLL coaches and assistant coaches before being assigned to coach a team.
7. Provide an inventory of all equipment owned by BTLL such as buildings, sheds, concession stand equipment and pitching machines.

BTLL shall have permission to use youth baseball and softball fields located at Whistlestop Park, Bicentennial Park and Cutler Park from **April 1-June 30** (Monday-Saturday) and the month of July (Monday-Thursday). Byron Center Christian School and Legacy Christian School will be allowed use of Bicentennial Park and Cutler Park fields for their regular season games. Byron Township will supply BTLL with the Christian school schedules as soon as they are available. If Byron Township decides to limit the use of any baseball and /or softball fields that BTLL used the previous year, Byron Township will inform BTLL by the 10<sup>th</sup> of January for the upcoming season. BTLL will provide Byron Township with their proposed dates, times, and field usage by January 31 for the upcoming season to allow for the coordination of the BTLL and Byron Township's use of the Township fields.

BTLL will have the first right to rent the fields on Fridays and Saturdays during the month of July. BTLL will receive a 25% discount on the field rental rate.

BTLL shall have exclusive use of the concessions stands at Bicentennial Park, Cutler Park and Whistlestop Park to raise funds for their program.

BTLL understands and agrees that at times weather and/or field conditions may result in Byron Township denying the use of certain fields on dates for which approval has been granted. BTLL understands and agrees that the Township has the authority to deny the use of said facilities.

BTLL will be responsible for the following tasks between April 1-July 31.

1. Line and drag fields on weekends.
2. Maintain trash around the youth fields (put in barrels).
3. Maintain scoreboard controllers during season at BTLL own cost.
4. Request field improvements in writing to the Township Board.
5. Maintain concession stands and keep them clean and sanitary.
6. Maintain sheds and storage buildings.

#### **Byron Township Parks and Recreation Department**

Byron Township will be responsible for the following tasks between April 1-July 31.

1. Maintain all dugouts, fences, bleachers and gates to make sure they are in a safe and secure condition.
2. Maintain all turf areas on the fields to include weekly mowing, weed control and fertilizing.
3. Provide sand, soil, and seed to be used in leveling or backfilling low areas when necessary.
4. Line and drag fields during the weekdays.
5. Maintain trash during the weekdays.
6. Maintain structural integrity of concession stands and restroom buildings.
7. Maintain field irrigation system.
8. Maintain restroom facilities, including routine cleaning and stocking of paper products.

#### **Insurance and Indemnification**

BTLL shall at all times during the term of this Agreement maintain in effect general public liability insurance covering Byron Township at the Facilities against claims for personal injury, death or damage to property. Byron Township shall be named as additional insured on such policy and shall be entitled to thirty (30) days notice of cancellation or changes of any kind.

BTLL shall indemnify and save harmless Byron Township and its officers, agents and employees from and against any and all suits, actions, or claims of any character, type, or description, including all expenses of litigation, court costs and attorney's fees, brought or made for or on account of any injuries or damages received or sustained by any person or persons or property, arising out of, or occasioned by, the act or failure to act of BTLL or its agents, volunteers, or employees in the use of the Facilities arising out of obligations of BTLL as set forth in this Agreement.

Byron Township shall indemnify and save harmless BTLL and its officers, agents and employees from and against any and all suits, actions, or claims of any character, type, or description, including all expenses of litigation, court costs and attorney's fees, brought or made for or on account of any injuries or damages received or sustained by any person or persons or property, arising out of, or

occasioned by, the act or failure to act of Byron Township or its agents, volunteers, or employees in the use of the Facilities arising out of obligations of Byron Township as set forth in this Agreement.

**Termination of Agreement**

This agreement may be terminated at any time for cause, provided Byron Township complies with the following termination procedure: If any obligations under this agreement are not met by BTLL, Byron Township shall provide written notice to BTLL which describes the obligation that is not being met. BTLL shall have 15 days from the receipt of the written notice to meet their obligation as described in the notice. If there is a disagreement between the Byron Township Recreation Department and the BTLL with regard to whether BTLL has met or is meeting their obligations under this agreement, BTLL shall have the right to appeal the Byron Township Recreation Department’s decision to the Byron Township Board.

**BYRON TOWNSHIP LITTLE LEAGUE**

\_\_\_\_\_  
President Date

**BYRON TOWNSHIP**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Carrie Klingelsmith, Byron Township Recreation Director Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Audrey Nevins, Byron Township Supervisor Date

## JOINT-USE AGREEMENT EXAMPLE 2 | WAKE COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION AND TOWN OF CARY

**NORTH CAROLINA  
WAKE COUNTY****JOINT USE AGREEMENT:  
MILLS PARK SCHOOLS**

This Joint Use Agreement: Mills Park Schools ('Agreement') made and entered into this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2008, by and between the **TOWN OF CARY**, a municipal corporation of the State of North Carolina ("Town") and the **WAKE COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION**, a body corporate ("Board").

**WITNESSETH:**

**THAT WHEREAS**, the Town entered into an agreement with a developer ('Developer') dated November 16, 2001 pursuant to which Developer provided funds and a letter of credit to be applied toward the acquisition of property and construction of an elementary school on property known as the 'Hawes' Tract'; and

**WHEREAS**, Town acquired Hawes' Tract for the purpose of using a portion of the tract for a Town park and conveying a portion to an entity that would build an elementary school, and

**WHEREAS**, Town entered into an agreement with Board dated June 19, 2007 pursuant to which Board agreed to build an elementary school and Town agreed: (i) to convey portions of Hawes Tract to Board for the elementary school at no cost and for a middle school at a cost that was substantially less than its fair market value, (ii) to assign to Board the developer's letter of credit for construction of the elementary school, and (iii) to share in the cost of certain road and utility line design and construction. Both parties agreed to work jointly to coordinate the development of middle school site with Town's park site and to enter into joint use agreements; and

**WHEREAS**, Town conveyed to Board a portion of the Hawes Tract for elementary and middle school sites by deed recorded in Book 12665, Page 1265, Wake County Registry; and

**WHEREAS**, Board has, with some Town input, designed the Mills Park Elementary School and Mills Park Middle School with athletic fields and facilities situated such that they can be jointly used by the parties; and

**WHEREAS**, Town desires to enhance athletic fields and facilities with amenities that are above Board system's educational program requirements, and to assist in the maintenance of fields and facilities; and

**WHEREAS**, two of the athletic fields and certain other Board site amenities are located wholly or partially on Town property and Town desires to permit such encroachment for as long as Board operates a school on the site; and

**WHEREAS**, two of the athletic fields and certain other Board site amenities are located partially on Board property and wholly or partially on Town property, and Board and Town desire to jointly use said amenities for as long as Board operates a school on the site; and

**WHEREAS**, the parties recognize that joint action and cooperation between Board and Town will help ensure that the public receives the best facilities and services with the least expenditure of public funds and desire to enter into this Agreement for the enhancement, joint use and shared maintenance of athletic fields and facilities; and

**WHEREAS**, Board has determined that the areas to be jointly used are not necessary at all times or after normal school hours for public school purposes during the term of this Agreement; and

**WHEREAS**, community use of school property and facilities is encouraged by the Community Schools Act North Carolina General Statute (N.C.G.S.) 115C-203 *et seq.*; and

**WHEREAS**, Board and Town are authorized to enter into this Agreement pursuant to the provisions of N.C.G.S. 115C, Article 13; N.C.G.S. 115C-518; N.C.G.S. 160A- 460 *et. seq.* and N.C.G.S. 160A-274:

**NOW, THEREFORE**, in consideration of the premises and such other mutual promises and covenants as are hereinafter set forth, the Board and Town do hereby agree as follows:

**1. Property Description.**

Board Property upon which Mills Park Elementary (“MPES”) and Middle Schools (“MPMS”) are located has a street address of 509 Mills Park Drive, Cary, and is more specifically identified as having Wake County PIN#0735007496 and consisting of approximately 53.7 acres. Town property, upon which some improvements associated with MPMS has a street address of \_\_\_ Green Level to Durham Road and is more specifically identified as having Wake County PIN# 0735011739 and consisting of approximately 103.85 acres. A Site Layout Plan prepared by McNeely Associates PA dated 09/25/2007 is attached hereto as Exhibit A and incorporated herein by reference to more particularly define the Middle School Site and Elementary School Site and related athletic fields and facilities.

**2. Term.**

Board and Town anticipate a mutually cooperative long-term joint use association at MPMS and MPES. The initial term of this Agreement shall be for a period of twenty-five (25) years from the date of execution of the Agreement. At the end of the initial term of this Agreement, the Board and Town shall have the exclusive right to extend the Board’s and Town’s shared use for up to an additional twenty-five (25) year period so long as the property is not needed for Board purposes and the facilities are operated as a school.

**3. Liability.**

A. Board and Town agree that Board is authorizing the use of its property pursuant to this Agreement, only to the extent permitted by N.C.G.S. 115C-524(b), and that the Board does not hereby incur any liability to the Town or any member of the public for permitting this use. No liability shall attach to the Board of Education, individually or collectively, for any injury suffered by reason of the Town’s use or maintenance of Board property pursuant to this Agreement. To the extent allowed by law and covered by insurance, the Town shall indemnify, protect, and hold harmless the Board, its agents, and employees from and against claims or damages, including attorney’s fees, caused by the negligence or intentional wrongdoing of the Town, its agents, invitees, contractors, or employees when they are on the Board’s property.

B. Board and Town agree that Town is authorizing the use of its property pursuant to this Agreement, only to the extent allowed by law, and that the Town does not hereby incur any liability to the Board or any member of the public for permitting this use. No liability shall attach to the Town, individually or collectively, for any injury suffered by reason of the Board's use or maintenance of Town property pursuant to this Agreement. To the extent allowed by law and covered by insurance, the Board shall indemnify, protect, and hold harmless the Town, its agents, and employees from and against claims or damages, including attorney's fees, caused by the negligence or intentional wrongdoing of the Board, its agents, invitees, contractors, or employees when they are on the Town's property.

**4. Town's Use of Board Property: Joint Use Areas**

The Board hereby gives and grants to the Town permission to use the following areas pursuant to the terms of this Agreement that are located upon Board property and depicted on Exhibit A attached hereto (hereinafter referred to collectively with those areas identified in Paragraph 5 below as "Joint Use Areas"):

A. Areas associated with MPMS

1. Multipurpose field and track with lights and irrigation
2. Softball field with lights and irrigation
3. Practice field with lights and irrigation
4. Outdoor basketball court with lights
5. Staff parking area and drive access (Currently planned to contain 104 spaces)
6. Visitor parking area and drive access (Currently planned to contain 86 spaces)

B. Areas associated with MPES

1. Multipurpose field with walking track and irrigation
2. Playground
3. Shelter/restroom building
4. Parking area and drive access (Currently planned to contain 118 spaces)

**5. Board's Use of Town Property: Joint Use Areas**

The Town hereby gives and grants to the Board permission to use the following areas pursuant to the terms of this Agreement that are located upon Town property and associated with MPMS as depicted on Exhibit A attached hereto (hereinafter referred to collectively with those areas identified in Paragraph 4 above as "Joint Use Areas"):

- A. Multipurpose Field and Track with lights and irrigation
- B. Softball field with lights and irrigation
- C. Designated parking area and field access
- D. Drive Access from Mills Park Drive to Board Property

**6. Enhancements, Modifications, Renovations, and New Construction on Board Property by Board and Town.**

The Board and Town shall consult, plan, and coordinate prior to making improvements to the areas of MPES and MPMS identified for joint use. The Board may make any enhancements, modifications, renovations, or new construction except as noted below as directed by the North Carolina Department of Public Instructions for educational programming needs. The Board may make such enhancements, modifications, renovations, or new construction in its sole discretion without the approval from the Town; however, the Board shall notify and consult with the Town that it is making such improvements to areas of MPMS or MPES identified for joint use. The Board shall seek and obtain the Town's written consent prior to making

modifications or renovations to Joint Use Areas. The Town’s written consent shall not be unreasonably withheld, so long as the Town’s use of Joint Use Areas is not unreasonably impaired, and the modifications and improvements are required by Department of Public Instruction. The Town shall be responsible for any enhancements, modifications, renovations, or new construction for Town needs to all Joint Use Areas; however, the Town shall make no such improvements without the Board or Board designee’s prior written approval. After the Board approves the plans and schedule for improvements proposed by the Town, the Town may proceed at the Town’s expense. The parties shall plan and coordinate all modifications and improvements to ensure that such improvements pursuant to this Agreement are completed with minimal impact on the operations of the parties. Town will be responsible for and shall repair any damage to Board and Town property incurred due to Town’s use, maintenance, or construction at no cost to the Board. Board will be responsible for and shall repair any damage to Board and Town property incurred due to Board’s use, maintenance, or construction at no cost to the Town. The parties agree to work together in good faith, to provide timely notice of any desired changes to the properties that are jointly used, to provide opportunities for input into the planning process, and execution of such changes in a manner and method intended to minimize impact upon the Town and Board’s utilization of the premises.

**7. Ownership.**

All permanent improvements made to or upon Board Property shall be the property of the Board. Permanent improvements made upon Town Property shall be the property of the Town.

**8. Easements.**

Board and Town have agreed that upon completion of an “as built” survey that illustrates the location of the joint use areas, particularly as those improvements that cross the common boundary line between the parties and lie upon both Board and Town Property, the parties will convey such cross-access, recreational and other easements as are necessary to effectuate the terms of this Agreement.

**9. Appropriate Use.**

No use of the Joint Use Areas associated with MPMS or MPES shall be inconsistent with the proper care and preservation of public school property.

**10. Joint Use and Scheduling of Joint Use Areas**

The Board and Town agree that use of Joint Use Areas as shown on Exhibit A attached hereto shall be in accordance with the following conditions and provisions:

**A. Administrative Control.**

1. The Superintendent of the Wake County Public School System or designee shall have administrative control of Board Property and Joint Use Areas located upon Town property, subject to the Town’s rights under this Agreement at all times.
2. Normal school hours are defined as daily student and teacher workdays from 7a.m. - 6p.m. From time to time, specific school activities, events, or games may end before or extend beyond normal school hours.
3. Non-school hours are defined as daily after normal school hours, weekends, holidays, staff vacation days, during the schools’ calendar breaks when no students are scheduled to attend classes and days when the school campus is closed by Board due to inclement weather.

4. Board shall have priority of use of Joint Use Areas at all times, subject to the Town's rights under this Agreement.

B. Scheduling and Use.

1. Town may schedule the use of the Joint Use Areas:
  - a. During all non-school hours as defined in Paragraph 9.A.3. above , and
  - b. During normal school hours beginning 45 minutes after the student release bell when the Joint Use Areas are not needed for school-organized educational, athletic or recreational activities.
  - c. During normal school hours on teacher workdays when the Joint Use Areas are not needed for school-organized administrative, educational, athletic or recreational activities.
  - d. Town may schedule the use and establish fees for any third party use of the Joint Use Areas during those times when the Joint Use Areas are not needed by the school. .
2. Board and Town agree to meet a minimum of three times per year to coordinate use, review maintenance schedules, update MPMS and MPES master calendars as well as evaluate the conditions of the Joint Use Areas.
  - a. Board and Town shall work together to develop and maintain a master schedule
  - b. Board and Town shall exchange athletic schedules and planned activity schedules at least 3 months in advance of the event.
  - c. Board and Town shall maintain an on-going, open communication between one another by reviewing the master calendars within 45 days of but not later than 20 days prior to the beginning of each sports season to prevent scheduling conflicts, or within such other time frames as Board staff, school staff and Town staff may hereafter agree.
  - d. Board and Town shall act in good faith to build a positive reciprocal relationship for the use of the Joint Use Areas and other shared areas.
3. Board and Town shall each designate one person as their point-of-contact for communication with the other's Designee. Designees shall:
  - a. Participate in the site coordination and field evaluation meeting (at least three times each year) as defined in paragraph 2 above.
  - b. Be aware of necessary actions for special circumstances such as emergency lockdowns, shelter designations, and notification procedures for inclement weather.
  - c. Be responsible for making their scheduled participants aware of any cancellations or rescheduling of their programmed activities.
4. Use of the Joint Use Areas shall be in accordance with the following conditions and provisions:
  - a. Board and Town designees shall:
    1. Coordinate and establish the times available for use.
    2. Determine appropriate field availability for use based on existing turf and surface conditions and potential safety risks.
  - b. Board and Town designees may establish by agreement maintenance charts for their convenience to clarify and confirm the specific responsibilities of the parties to be included in maintenance and repairs as further described in Paragraph 12 and its subparts.

- c. Field and landscape maintenance shall be performed by the Town to meet or exceed Board Maintenance Standards as established by Board and Wake County Board of Commissioners in 2004, a copy of which has been provided to Town and incorporated herein by reference, and as may be updated or amended from time to time. Town shall be provided reasonable notice if any updates or amendments to the Board Maintenance Standards.

**C. Supervision and Security of Joint Use Areas.**

1. When using Joint Use areas for its activities, Town will provide appropriate supervision, adhere to all Town and Board rules and policies, provide security as appropriate to provide a safe environment for the participants, and protect Town and Board property.
2. When using Joint Use areas for its activities, Board will provide appropriate supervision, adhere to Board and Town rules and policies, provide security as appropriate to provide a safe environment for the participants and protect Board and Town property.
3. During school hours, all maintenance personnel shall make their presence known on site by signing in at the school office upon arrival. If advance notice is given by Town staff of their anticipated presence on campus to appropriate school staff, such Town staff as are dressed in Town uniforms or other Town-authorized identifiable apparel that possess and carry Town-issued identification and travel to the school in a recognizable Town vehicle shall not be required to sign in at the school office upon arrival. Contractors employed by Town will be required to sign in at the school office upon arrival unless accompanied at all times on campus by a readily identifiable Town staff member as described hereinabove.

**D. Fees/Charges.**

1. Board and Town agree that, except as expressly stated in this Agreement, there shall be no additional fees and/or charges associated with the Town or Board use of the Joint Use Areas unless mutually agreed upon.
2. Board and Town agree that Town may establish and retain fees for the use of the Joint Use Areas for programs the Town initiates, directs, schedules, coordinates, or funds, including events scheduled by the Town pursuant to paragraph 10.B.1(d) for third party use.

**E. Income from Programs.**

Board and Town agree that they shall each be entitled to collect and retain income from their respective programs and events operated on Joint Use Areas that are subject to this Agreement. Income derived from a jointly planned event shall be shared by Board and Town with a percentage allocation that shall be mutually agreed upon by Board and Town prior to the event.

**F. Concession Operations.**

Board and Town agree that they or their operating agents shall be entitled to collect and retain income from their operation of concessions in conjunction with their respective programs and events operated on Joint Use Areas that are subject to this Agreement. Concessions proceeds derived from a jointly planned event shall be shared by Board and Town with a percentage allocation that shall be mutually agreed upon by Board and Town prior to the event.

## 11. Joint Use Areas General Guidelines

- A. Board and Town designees shall utilize the Board's Facility Inspection and Evaluation Checklist, a copy of which has been provided to Town and is incorporated herein by reference, to conduct the periodic evaluations and to monitor conditions, identify damage, identify safety issues and identify repair concerns regarding the Joint Use Areas.
- B. Prior to the walk through evaluation for the final construction punch list for all Joint Use areas, and prior to the Town's written acceptance of maintenance responsibilities for the certain Joint Use areas as identified within this Agreement, Board and Town designees shall establish written procedures for emergency maintenance requests during the construction coordination meeting.
- C. Board shall allow Town to have access to the Joint use Areas during the school day to provide routine maintenance and repairs as prescribed in this Agreement. Maintenance and repair work shall be coordinated between the Board and Town designees to ensure:
  - 1. Minimum disruption of the school day.
  - 2. Minimum disruption of use of the program areas for school activities.
  - 3. Availability of necessary maintenance resources.
  - 4. Maintenance areas are secured for safety until completion.
- D. Board and Town shall be responsible for general cleanup activities after their respective events and programs to maintain acceptable appearances and required safety levels in accordance with the Board Landscape Maintenance Standards described in Paragraph 9.B.4.d. herein.
- E. In the event of damage to Board or Town property attributed to the Town's use or maintenance, the Town shall make restoration. In the event of damage to Board or Town property attributed to the Board's use or maintenance, the Board shall make restoration.
- F. Board and Town shall keep the Joint Use Areas in a clean and safe condition while under their respective control and to ensure that any equipment, materials, or supplies brought onto the Joint Use Areas are properly and safely stored when not in use.
- G. Board and Town acknowledge that construction, maintenance, and use pursuant to this Agreement will take place on a school site at which children, school employees, and members of the public are present. Board and Town shall employ reasonable care under the circumstances to protect and secure the construction and maintenance areas to minimize the possibility of injury to students, staff, and the public.
- H. Board and Town shall regulate the use of the Joint Use Areas associated with MPMS and MPES consistent with the Board's and Town's standards and understanding of how to best maintain the property and to prevent deterioration of the property.
- I. The Board reserves the right to take actions on the MPMS and MPES sites that the Board deems reasonably necessary and related to new educational requirements prescribed by the Department of Public Instructions. The Board shall:

1. Make good faith efforts to examine and consider such reasonable alternatives as are available prior to taking action,
2. Invite the Town to work with the Board to identify and explore such alternatives as may be available to minimize adverse impacts upon the Town, and
3. Provide the Town with reasonable notice prior to taking actions that adversely affect Town's use of the shared areas associated with this Agreement.

**12. Joint Use Areas Allocation of Maintenance and Repair Responsibilities:**

- A. Town shall be responsible for all upkeep, maintenance and repairs of the following Joint Use Areas:
  1. MPMS - Softball Field, Multipurpose Field, the related lighting and irrigation systems, and other related improvements. .
  2. MPMS Outdoor Basketball Courts, the related lighting and other improvements.
  3. MPES Shelter/Restroom Buildings, the related lighting and other related improvements
  4. MPMS Track lighting system only.
  
- B. Board shall be responsible for all upkeep, maintenance and repairs of the following Joint use Areas pursuant to the Standards prescribed in the Board Landscape Maintenance Standards described in Paragraph 9.B.4.d. above:
  1. Playground Equipment located in association with MPES and included in the Joint Use Areas.
  2. Track and improvements related to the track only.
  3. Parking Area Lighting and other related improvements.
  4. Storm Water Management Areas (Bio-Retention Ponds) and other related improvements located upon Board property, or as otherwise agreed upon by the parties.
  5. Retaining Walls located on Board or Town property as are necessary to the construction of the school facilities including the joint use areas.
  
- C. Town and Board shall share equally responsibility for the maintenance and repair of the following Joint use Areas pursuant to the Standards prescribed in the Board Landscape Maintenance Standards described in Paragraph 9.B.4.d. above:
  1. **MPMS Visitor and Staff Parking Areas and Drive Access.**  
 Board shall be responsible for the routine and major maintenance of the **MPMS Visitor and Staff Parking Areas and Drive Access** for a period of 5 years from the date of the completion of the construction of said areas or until the development and initiation of construction of the adjacent Town Park, whichever first occurs. Thereafter, Board and Town shall equally share responsibility for upkeep, maintenance and repair. Town shall be responsible for the costs of repairs due to damages to pavement or permanent markings caused by Town construction activity. Board shall be responsible for the costs of repairs due to damages to pavement and permanent markings caused by Board construction activity.
  2. Storm Water Management Areas (Bio-Retention Ponds) and other related improvements located upon Town property as agreed upon by the parties.

Board shall be responsible for the routine and major maintenance of the storm water management areas for a period of 5 years from the date of the completion of the construction of said areas or until the development and initiation of construction of the adjacent Town Park, whichever first occurs. Thereafter, Board shall be responsible for upkeep, maintenance and repair of the storm water management areas located on Board property, and Town shall be responsible for upkeep, maintenance and repair of the storm water management areas located upon Town property.

**13. Utilities.**

Town shall be responsible for establishment of accounts, usage, billings receipt, and timely payment of all utilities (electric, water, sewage, etc.) necessary for the use, maintenance and operation of the Joint Use Areas. The Town shall be responsible for the provision and installation of a metering system to serve the Joint Use Areas that is separate from the Board's utility metering system-that supports the other facilities of MPMS and MPES.

**14. Joint Use and Scheduling of MPMS Gymnasium** (Not included in Joint Use Areas described hereinabove). Town shall have priority to schedule use of MPMS Gymnasium after normal school hours and in non-school hours provided:

- A. Gym is not needed for a school use.
- B. Town has coordinated use with the MPMS school administration.
- C. Town has coordinated use with WCPSS Community Schools, and has properly executed and submitted a WCPSS *Facility Use Application*, Form 2900, to the WCPSS Community Schools office not later than 180 days prior to the event.
- D. Town agrees to pay the appropriate WCPSS Community Schools user fee as prescribed by the Board of Education.
- E. Town agrees to comply with the WCPSS Community Schools requirements and conditions related to site use.

**15. Insurance/Liability.**

- A. Town shall maintain at all times during the term of this Agreement and during any and every extension thereof public liability insurance in the amount of \$1,000,000 / \$2,000,000, or the minimum amount required by North Carolina State Law, covering personal injury for each accident or occurrence growing out of the Town's use or maintenance of the said Licensed Areas and at least \$1,000,000 or the minimum amount required by North Carolina State Law to cover property damage growing out of each accident or occurrence. The Board shall be named as an additional insured on all insurance policies. The Town shall furnish the Board with evidence of such insurance and of its renewal as the premiums become due. The Town shall provide the Board with thirty days prior written notice of any reduction in coverage or cancellation of such insurance. Town agrees to obtain Fire and Hazard insurance in the amount equal to the replacement value of the insurable structure and areas.
- B. Board and Town are each responsible for insuring replacement value of their respective personal property located within the Joint Use Areas.

**16. Nondiscrimination.**

The Town shall not discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment because of race, color, creed, sex, age, religion, or national origin. Neither the Town or its employees shall

discriminate against any person or organization on the basis of race, color, creed, sex, age, religion, or national origin by refusing to furnish such person or organization services for privileges offered to or enjoyed by residents of Wake County, nor shall the Town or its employees publicize the facilities provided hereunder in any manner that would directly or inferentially reflect negatively on any person because of race, color, creed, sex, age, religion, or national origin.

**17. Nonperformance.**

- A. In the event either party should fail to keep, perform or abide by any term, condition or covenant of this Agreement for a period of thirty (30) days after written notice of such violation by the non-breaching party, then in addition to any other remedies available at law or equity, the non-breaching party shall have the right to remedy such nonperformance. In such event, the breaching party shall reimburse the non-breaching party for any expenses incurred by the non-breaching party in effecting such remedy. Such reimbursements shall be due and payable within forty-five days after receipt by the breaching party of written notice specifying the amount due.
- B. If the Board is the non-breaching party, it may suspend the Town's use and ability to schedule the Joint Use Areas on its property that are effected by or related to the breach until the Town demonstrates to the Board's satisfaction that the Town has corrected its breach and is fully performing its obligations under the terms, conditions, and covenants of this Agreement. Prior to Board's suspension of Town's use, Board shall notify Town in writing of the suspension, which notice may issue thirty (30) days after Board issues written notice of a violation as described above.
- C. If the Town is the non-breaching party, it may suspend the Board's use and ability to schedule the Joint Use Areas located on Town property that are effected by or related to the breach until the Board demonstrates to the Town's satisfaction that the Board has corrected its breach and is fully performing its obligations under the terms, conditions, and covenants of this Agreement. Prior to Town's suspension of Board's use, Town shall notify Board in writing of the suspension, which notice may issue thirty (30) days after Town issues written notice of a violation as described above.
- D. The Board and Town reserve the right to request a review of action taken pursuant to this Paragraph by an Oversight Committee appointed by the Superintendent of Wake County Public School System which will include representatives of Wake County Parks and Recreation department, Town Parks and Recreation department, WCPSS school representatives and others as may be appropriate.

**18. Default/Termination.**

- A. With good cause shown by the terminating party, either party may terminate this Agreement in whole or as to any particular Joint Use Area upon one hundred and eighty (180) days written notice to the other party ("Termination Notice"), as provided below.
- B. The Board reserves the right to amend or terminate this Agreement in whole or as to any particular Joint Use Area at any time that the Board in its sole discretion deems Board property necessary for school purposes. However, the Board shall extend its best efforts to examine and consider reasonable alternatives readily available to terminating the Town's use

of Joint Use Areas and the Board shall invite the Town to work with it to identify and explore such reasonable alternatives. Should the Board, in its sole discretion, find a reasonable alternative to terminating Town's use of Joint Use Areas, the Board shall implement that alternative rather than terminating the Town's use.

- J. The Board shall exercise its best efforts to avoid the displacement of or damage to Town funded recreational improvements located on Board property. Should it become necessary for the Board to temporarily locate mobile classroom units or a similar temporary use for a period of less than 5 years on recreational fields or parking areas upon which the Town funded improvements, the Board agrees that during any such period of up to five years that the Town is displaced from the use of the recreational fields under the circumstances cited hereinabove, Board will exercise its best efforts to make alternative Board-owned recreational field space ("substitute field") available that is located within the municipal limits of the Town and not under other long term joint use agreements at the time of displacement notification.
1. Board shall provide the Town a minimum of 180 days advance notice of any such displacement.
  2. Board and Town will collaborate in the review, identification and selection of suitable substitute fields.
  3. Town may elect to take over maintenance of a substitute field to the level of the field maintenance standards as described herein, and may schedule the use of the substitute field space at no additional costs to the Town for the duration of the displacement; or
  4. Town may elect to execute and submit a *WCPSS Facility Use Application, Form 2900* to the WCPSS Community Schools office and pay the appropriate WCPSS Community Schools user fee as prescribed by the Board of Education.
    - a. Board agrees that the Town shall have priority use of substitute field(s) for Town programs.
    - b. Town agrees to comply with the WCPSS Community Schools requirements and conditions related to the site.
  5. Upon ceasing the use of the property and removal of the mobile units, all improvements will be restored at the Board's expense to their condition prior to the temporary use of the property.
- C. Continuous Board use of areas identified as school program space and for a period of 5 or more years which prohibits the Town's use of the Town-funded improvements on those spaces shall require amendment of this Agreement and shall require the Board to pay the Town the depreciated value of said improvement. Depreciation of all improvements shall be calculated as straight line depreciation for a 25-year period commencing with the date of this Agreement and the depreciation calculation shall be based on the depreciated value of the facilities at the time the Board initiated its continuous use of the facilities. (i.e., if the Board's continuous use of the facilities exceeds 5 years in Year 8 after the date of the Agreement, the Board shall pay the depreciated value of the facilities as of Year 3). Town is not entitled to compensation for any temporary use by the Board beyond the initial 25-year term of this Agreement. Upon determination that the Board's use during the initial 25-year term of this Agreement has exceeded a continuous 5-year period, the actual amount due the Town for depreciation will be promptly calculated based upon the Town's contribution to the cost of said improvements. Payment to Town by the Board shall be made within 90 days after said determination. Town is not entitled to reimbursement for improvements to parking areas,

access drives, or the upkeep, maintenance and repair costs of fields or for outdoor facility improvements.

- D. If the Board should exercise the right of termination of this Agreement at any time during the initial term of this Agreement in whole or as to any particular Joint Use Area, the Board shall provide one hundred and eighty (180) days notice set forth above to the Town. Town shall have no further obligation to provide services or maintenance with respect to the specific Joint Use Areas subject to the termination under this Paragraph for ninety (90) days prior to the effective date of the termination.
- E. If the Board should exercise its right to amend any part of this Agreement or termination of this Agreement in its entirety, then and in that event, the Board shall reimburse the Town the depreciated value based upon the cost of construction of the improvements completed by the Town on the licensed area(s) affected. Depreciation of all improvements shall be calculated as straight line depreciation for a 25-year period commencing with the date of this Agreement and the depreciation calculation shall be based on the depreciated value of the facilities at the time the Board officially notified the Town of termination. Town is not entitled to compensation for any use by the Board beyond the initial 25-year term of this Agreement. The actual amount due the Town for depreciation will be promptly calculated based upon the Town's contribution to the cost of said improvements. Payment to Town by the Board shall be made within 90 days after said determination. Town is not entitled to reimbursement for improvements to parking areas, access drives, or the routine maintenance costs of fields or for outdoor facility improvements.
- F. The Town reserves the right to terminate this Agreement at any time that the Town in its sole discretion deems necessary and proper. If the Town should exercise this right of termination at any time during the term of this Agreement, then and in that event, Town shall complete any improvements begun on MPMS and MPES and leave MPMS and MPES in a safe condition. The Town shall relinquish any interest Town may have in any of the improvements Town has made to Board Property under this Agreement, and no reimbursement shall be due to the Town.
- G. If the Town should exercise the right of termination of this Agreement at any time during the initial term of this Agreement in whole or as to any particular Joint Use Area, the Town shall provide one hundred and eighty (180) days notice set forth above to the Board. Town shall continue to be obligated to provide services and/or maintenance with respect to the specific Joint Use Areas subject to the termination under this Paragraph for a period ending ninety (90) days prior to the effective date of the termination. Thereafter, Board shall provide services and/or maintenance with respect to the specific Joint Use Areas subject to the termination under this paragraph.
- H. So long as Board operates a school on Board property, neither Board nor Town may terminate the other party's use of the Joint Use Areas that are located both upon Board and Town Property or are related thereto for the duration of this Agreement and any extensions thereof without written approval of the other party. Those Joint Areas that are exempted from termination are specifically identified as the MPMS multipurpose field and track and related improvements, the MPMS softball field and related improvements, the MPMS drive access and visitor parking and related improvements, and the greenways and related improvements.

- I. The Board and Town reserve the right to request a review of action taken pursuant to this Paragraph 14 by an Oversight Committee appointed by the Superintendent of Wake County Public School System which will include representatives of Wake County Parks and Recreation department, Town Parks and Recreation departments, WCPSS school representatives and others as may be appropriate.

19. **Notices.**

All notices, requests, approvals, or consents required to be given hereunder shall be in writing and hand delivered or sent by certified mail, return receipt requested, postage prepaid, and addressed as follows:

Board:	The Board of Education Wake County Public School System 3600 Wake Forest Road P. O. Box 28041 Raleigh, NC 27611-8041 Attention: Director, Real Estate Services
Town:	William B. Coleman, Jr., Town Manager Town of Cary P.O. Box 8005 Cary, NC 27512-8005

or to such other address as either party may specify in the manner hereinabove prescribed.

20. **Severability.**

In the event any term or provision of this Agreement shall be adjudged to be partially or completely invalid or unenforceable, then such term or provision shall be severed from this Agreement, and the remainder of this Agreement shall be valid and enforceable to the fullest extent permitted by law

21. **Preservation and Care of Public School Property.**

- A. Town agrees to regulate the use of MPMS and MPES consistent with the Board's standards and understanding of how to best maintain the property and to prevent deterioration of the property. The Town may only schedule use of the Joint Use Areas of MPMS and MPES so long as its use is consistent with the proper care and preservation of the public school property and the maintenance is performed at or above the prescribed standards of the Board Landscape Maintenance Standards described in Paragraph 9.B.4.d. above.
- B. Board agrees to regulate the use of Joint Use Areas consistent with the Town's standards and understanding of how to best maintain the property and to prevent deterioration of the property.

22. **Non-Assignment.**

- A. The Town may not assign this Agreement. The Town may schedule and use Board Property only as provided in this Agreement.
- B. The Board may not assign this Agreement.

**23. Entire Agreement.**

The Town agrees that this document constitutes the entire agreement between the parties and may only be modified by a written mutual agreement signed by the parties. To the extent that there is any conflict between the terms of this Agreement and any prior understanding or agreement between the parties, the terms of this Agreement shall control. This Agreement fully incorporates herein or by reference the following:

- A. Exhibit A: Site Layout Plan dated September 25, 2007.
- B. Exhibit B: Site Layout Plan dated with Joint Use Areas Identified.

**24. Agreement in Counterparts.**

This Agreement may be executed in several counterparts, each of which shall be deemed an original, and all of which shall constitute one and the same instrument.

**IN WITNESS WHEREOF**, the Wake County Board of Education has caused this Agreement to be signed by its Chair, attested by its Secretary, and sealed with its seal, and the Town of Cary has caused this Agreement to be signed by its Mayor/Chair, attested to by its Town Clerk/Secretary, and sealed with its seal, by order of the respective governing boards duly given the day and year first written above.

*See signature pages attached hereto.*

**THE WAKE COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION**

By: \_\_\_\_\_(SEAL)  
Rosa U. Gill, Chair

(Affix Board Seal)

ATTEST:

By: \_\_\_\_\_(SEAL)  
Del Burns, Ed.D., Superintendent/Secretary

NORTH CAROLINA

WAKE COUNTY

The undersigned, a Notary Public of the County and State aforesaid, hereby certified that Del Burns, Ed.D., personally appeared before me this day, and being duly sworn by me, acknowledged that he is Superintendent/Secretary of the Wake County Board of Education, and that by authority duly given and as the act of the Board the forgoing instrument was signed by its chair, sealed with its seal, and attested by him as its Superintendent/Secretary.

Witness my hand and notarial seal this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2008.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Notary Public

My commission expires: \_\_\_\_\_

(Notary Seal)

**TOWN OF CARY**

By: \_\_\_\_\_(SEAL)  
Mayor

(Affix Town Seal)

ATTEST:

By: \_\_\_\_\_(SEAL)  
Town Clerk

NORTH CAROLINA

WAKE COUNTY

The undersigned, a Notary Public of the County and State aforesaid hereby certified that \_\_\_\_\_ personally appeared before me this day, and being duly sworn by me acknowledged that he/she is Town Clerk of the Town of CARY, and that by authority duly given and as the act of the Town, the forgoing instrument was signed by its Mayor, sealed with its corporate seal, and attested by him/her as its Town Clerk.

Witness my hand and notarial seal this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2008.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Notary Public

Commission expires: \_\_\_\_\_

(Notary Seal)

# APPENDIX J:

## Seven Dimensions of Health & Wellness

While physical activity is important and oftentimes the most prominent health-related endeavor undertaken at a public park, there are six other dimensions of health to be considered. The following are the seven dimensions of health and wellness developed by University of California Riverside.

# 7 Dimensions of Health & Wellness



**Physical-** the ability to maintain a healthy quality of life that allows us to get through our daily activities without undue fatigue or physical stress. .. ability to recognize that our behaviors impact our wellness.. adopting healthful habits while avoiding destructive habits will lead to optimal Physical Wellness.



**Social-** the ability to relate to and connect with other people in our world...establish and maintain positive relationships with family, friends and co-workers



**Economic (Occupational)-**is the ability to get fulfillment from our jobs or career fields while still maintaining balance in our lives. Our desire to contribute in our careers to make a positive impact on the organizations we work in and to society as a whole.



**Environmental-** the ability to recognize our own responsibility for the quality of the air, the water and the land that surrounds us. The ability to make a positive impact on the quality of our environment, be it our homes, our communities or our planet.



**Spiritual-** the ability to establish peace and harmony in our lives. The ability to develop congruency between values and actions and to realize a common purpose that binds creation together.



**Emotional-** the ability to understand ourselves and cope with the challenges life can bring. The ability to acknowledge and share feelings of anger, fear, sadness or stress; hope, love, joy and happiness in a productive manner.



**Intellectual-** the ability to open our minds to new ideas and experiences that can be applied to personal decisions, group interaction and community betterment. The desire to learn new concepts, improve skills and seek challenges in pursuit of lifelong learning.

SOURCE: [HTTP://WELLNESS.UCR.EDU/SEVEN\\_DIMENSIONS.HTML](http://wellness.ucr.edu/seven_dimensions.html)

# APPENDIX K:

## Typical Costs

Some typical costs of facilities are as follows\*:

Park Facility	Cost
Lawn	\$200,000 - 600,000 / acre
Garden	\$500,000 - 800,000 / acre
Plaza	\$2 million - 5 million / acre
Food Vendor / Kiosk	\$10,000 - 200,000
Cafe	\$500,000 - 2 million
Playground	\$150,000 - 500,000
Splash Pad	\$300,00 - 800,000
Pond	\$500,00 - 1.5 million
Performance Stage	\$200,000 - 1 million
Fountain	\$500,000 - 2 million
Small Amphitheater	\$500,000 - 3 million
Picnic Pavilion	\$100,000 - 175,000 / pavilion
Greenway / Multi-use Trail	\$750,000 - 1 million
Neighborhood Park	\$200,000 - 300,000 / acre
Community Park	\$200,000 - 300,000 / acre
Soccer Fields	\$200,000 - 300,000 / acre
Multipurpose Fields	\$200,000 - 300,000 / acre
Outdoor Pool	\$5 million - 7 million
Baseball / Softball Fields	\$225,000 - 325,000 / field
Tennis Courts	\$75,000 - 100,000 / court
Outdoor Basketball Court	\$75,000 - 100,000 / court

\* Typical costs are only estimates and will be different from final actual costs.

# APPENDIX L:

## Definitions, Abbreviations and Acronyms

### DEFINITIONS

**Active Recreation** – A physical activity that a person voluntarily undertakes in their leisure time for the purpose of mental and/or physical satisfaction. Active recreation facilities operated by Union County Parks and Recreation include recreation centers, aquatic facilities, ball diamonds, volleyball courts, basketball courts, tennis courts, and rectangular fields. While some of these facilities can be used for different activities, many are single- or narrow-purpose.

**Assessment** – The process of comparing and evaluating an entity against established standards, and documenting the differences.

**Asset** – Real or personal property which organizations desire to track and manage as a distinct identifiable entity. It may be a physical structure or grouping of structures, land features, or other tangible property that has a specific service or function. The term “asset” can also be applied to movable items, such as vehicles and equipment.

**Asset management** – A systematic process of maintaining, upgrading, and operating physical assets in a cost-effective manner.

**Benchmark** – A well-defined, widely accepted standard of performance used to measure progress toward a specific state or level of competency.

**Benchmarking** – The continuous process of measuring a product, service, or process against the best practices of recognized leaders in the field in order to achieve superior performance.

**Community benefit** – A good that is shared for all (or most) members of a society or social group.

**Condition assessment** – The inspection and documentation of the condition of the features of an asset as measured against the applicable maintenance or condition standards. It provides the basis for long range maintenance planning, as well as annual work plans and budgets.

**Current acres** – As used in this plan, the number of acres that are developed and open for use at present.

**Ball field** – An athletic field used for baseball or softball.

**Dog parks** – Areas where dogs can play without leashes.

**Existing acres** – See “current acres”

**Facility** – See “asset”

**Feasibility study** – An evaluation and analysis of the potential of a proposed project or venture that objectively explores costs versus benefits. Costs and benefits can be financial, social, environmental, or political.

**Level of Service (LOS)** – An expression of the minimum recreation and park infrastructure capacity required to satisfy the needs of residents of the community. Unless otherwise specified, LOS is expressed as per 1,000 population.

**Life Cycle** – All stages of providing a facility or service including conception, planning, design, implementation, evaluation, monitoring, retirement, and/or disposal.

**Multipurpose field** – Areas that are typically rectangular and consist of either sand-based engineered soils or artificial turf used as playing surfaces for athletics.

**Needs Assessment** – A systematic process for determining and addressing gaps between current conditions and desired conditions.

## APPENDIX L

**Passive Recreation** – Recreational activities that do not require prepared facilities like sports fields or pavilions. Passive recreational activities place minimal stress on a site's resources; as a result, they can provide ecosystem service benefits and are highly compatible with natural resource protection. Passive or community recreation facilities include playgrounds, picnic shelters, community gardens, and some open rectangular fields for use that is unstructured and informal. These facilities play a significant role in giving parks their character, and as a result of their broader use, a wider segment of the general public tends to access them.

**Recreation facility** – Major sport or leisure complexes that host many formal and informal athletic events.

**Setting** – The categorization type for park and recreation facilities that describes the intended use and function. A setting also provides contextual information for managers about operational decisions.

**Stakeholder** – A group or individual who can affect, or is affected by, the achievement of the organization's mission. Examples include managers, employees, policy makers, suppliers, vendors, citizens, and community groups.

### ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

**ACP** – Activity Connection Plan

**BRFSS** – Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System

**CDC** – Center for Disease Control

**CHA** – Community Health Assessment

**CHS** – Carolinas Healthcare System

**CIP** – Capital Improvement Plan

**EPA** – Environmental Protection Agency

**GIS** – Geographic Information Systems

**LOS** – Level of Service

**MAP-21** – Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act

**NRPA** – National Parks and Recreation Association

**PARTF** – Parks and Recreation Trust Fund

**SCHS** – State Center for Health Statistics

# APPENDIX M:

## Endnotes

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