Mecklenburg County
Park & Recreation
PLANNING FOR HEALTHY COMMUNITIES
The Impact of Parks

Access is Key: Living close to parks is consistently related to higher physical activity levels for both adults and youth. One study showed children living within 1/2 mile of park or playground are 5 times more likely be a healthy weight, rather than overweight, as compared to children who didn’t have a park nearby. Another 3-year study concluded children have a much better chance of avoiding obesity if they live in neighborhoods where they can safely bike, walk and have access to parks.

Significant health care cost savings are realized by individuals living near parks and utilizing them. Adults under 65 who are moderately active in parks experience approx. $300 in health savings per year. This rises to $700/year for individuals over 65.

Parks and open spaces create community, strengthen relationships & build caring qualities. Park users who are more physically active and make frequent contact with friends during their leisure are less likely to report feeling depressed.

Close proximity to green spaces and parks is associated with less depression, anxiety, and other health problems.

Increased Social Capital: Research shows residents who live near outdoor green space and parks are more familiar with their nearby neighbors, socialize more with them, and express greater feelings of community and safety than residents lacking nearby parks.
The Impact of Parks
The Impact of Parks – Residents Agree

Q13. Level of Agreement with the Benefits Being Provided by Parks, Nature Preserves, and Greenways

by percentage of respondents (excluding "don't know" responses)

- **91%** Provide healthy recreational opportunities
- **90%** Improve physical health and fitness
- **89%** Improve the quality of life in Mecklenburg County
- **87%** Preserve open space and the environment
- **84%** Contribute to a sense of community
- **76%** Increase property values in surrounding area
- **76%** Help attract new residents and businesses
- **71%** Improve water and air quality
- **68%** Protect historical attributes
- **55%** Help reduce crime

Source: Leisure Vision/ETC Institute (August 2013)
Initiatives – Access & the Old Analysis Method

Community Parks - Service Area Analysis

This map illustrates distribution and gaps in the service capacity of current Community Park facilities.
Initiatives – Access & the New Analysis

Total of Mecklenburg County Population, served by a developed Nature Preserve, determined by a 5 Minute Drive Time at a Normal Speed Limit

- Total Mecklenburg County population for 2013: 969,110
- Total Mecklenburg County population living within a 5 minute drive time of a developed Nature Preserve: 210,572
- Total percentage of Mecklenburg County residents that live within a 5 minute drive time of a developed Nature Preserve: 21.7%
Initiatives – Access

Total of Mecklenburg County Population, served by a developed Community Park, determined by a 5 Minute Drive Time at a Normal Speed Limit

Total Mecklenburg County population for 2013: 969,110
Total Mecklenburg County population living within a 5 minute drive time of a developed Community Park: 676,620
Total percentage of Mecklenburg County residents that live within a 5 minute drive time of a developed Community Park is 70%
Initiatives – Access

Parks & Recreation - Access Analysis

- Developed Recreation Amenities
  - COMMUNITY PARK
  - DIRTWAY
  - GREENWAY
  - NATURE PRESERVE
  - NEIGHBORHOOD PARK
  - POOL
  - RECREATION CENTER
  - REGIONAL PARK
  - SPECIAL FACILITY

- Greenways

- DIRT WAYS
  - Complete
  - Future

Analysis for Recreation Amenity A to L

0 - 5 Minutes
Initiatives – Fit Zones & Prioritization
15 Park Sites Prioritized

Methodology Included:
• Population Density
• % Low Income
• % Obese Children
• Diabetes Mortality Rate
• Heart Disease Mortality Rate
• Access to Fitness
• Likelihood of Adult Physical Inactivity
Initiatives – Land Acquisition

- Currently 21,000+ acres
- Good progress since end of recession
- Approx. $6.5M/year
- FY14 247 acres
  FY15 418 acres
  FY16 682 acres
  (247 of those leased by NC)
Initiatives – Land Acquisition Priorities

Service Gap Areas for Parks
Expand/add to existing Parks when possible
Greenway parcels needed for trails
Expansion of existing Nature Preserves, high quality natural areas remaining, & watershed protection (esp. Mountain Island Lake area)
Opportunity acquisitions
Initiatives – Land Acquisition Gap Analysis

Using GIS Greenprinting first ID parcels that meet criteria that may be potentially acquired.

- Example shows Greenprint of potential locations of future Community or Regional Parks in Eastern Mecklenburg County (parcels that meet size requirements and that are undeveloped).

County contact owners of parcels to gauge interest.

If interested, acquisition process initiated.

Success! Parcel purchased Spring 2015 for future Regional Park (140 acre Hagler property). The other two pink colored parcels no longer a priority as the service gap is closed.
Initiatives – Acquisition Outcomes

- Position County to have land to plan for future recreational needs. (Most Parks and Preserves being developed purchased between 1998-2004.)
- Increase public access to recreation – health & social benefits.
- Realize tax benefit. (On average a 3.3% park effect in Mecklenburg County, or an average of $8,032 more per sale for homes within 500 feet of a park.)
- Realize environmental benefits. (Improved air quality, improved water quality, significant cost savings, and significant health care savings.)
Mecklenburg County Park & Recreation

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