



**PARK AND RECREATION
MASTER PLAN
Hickory, North Carolina
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PART ONE – ASSESSMENT

CONTEXT

BACKGROUND

This report builds on a 1979 study of park and recreation needs prepared by Gardner Gidley and Associates.

Actions recommended in that study have largely been completed. Standards and principles recommended in the previous study have served the City well, and with minor changes, continue to form the basis of recommendations in this current study.

Most of the standards recommended relate to population. Since 1979, Hickory's population has grown to 32,300 and is projected to be 48,000 by 2020. Regionally, the Hickory-Morganton SMA is expected to grow to 324,000 by 2000. In 1990, the average age in Catawba County was 34.2 years, becoming 37.2 by 2000.

Employment in the region is steady and unemployment has remained in an acceptable range for the past decade.

The median family income in Catawba County was \$34,153, only slightly below the State median.

Hickory's population is 81.4% white, 17.1% black and 1.5% other. Approximately 23% of the population is 55 or older, and this percentage is increasing. School aged children comprise about 10% of the total population.

Hickory is increasingly involved in regional planning in all areas. Vision Quest 2010, Catawba County's Comprehensive Plan, identifies two major recreation issues:

"Recreation Facilities – Municipal / Private

At present, the County does not directly fund and maintain park or recreation facilities. Municipal, private and civic recreation facilities are growing in the County due primarily to the rapid growth of residential development and influx in populations. Most of the larger municipalities in Catawba County offer parks and recreation services to their residents. In order to expand the recreational options

for all County citizens, particularly those who do not have access to municipal or private recreational facilities, there needs to be a mechanism for establishing joint partnerships between these public and private entities.

There are virtually unlimited opportunities for development of access areas for Lakes Hickory, Lookout Shoals and Norman. Such recreational sites could be developed on little land area and with minimal environmental impacts. However, the use of these natural recreational resources in the past has been primarily limited to boat access at a few sites. Catawba County shares with its neighboring Counties three reservoirs along the Catawba River (Lake Hickory, with an estimated 4,100 acres and 105 miles of shoreline; Lake Lookout Shoals with 1,270 acres and 39 miles of shoreline and Lake Norman with 32,510 acres and 520 miles of shoreline). In spite of these abundant water resources, relatively few access areas exist for swimmers, sunbathers and other to enjoy water-based recreational activities. For example, no public swimming areas on the Catawba River exist within the Unifour.

Future Park Needs

The most effective way to accurately determine the potential demand for recreational facilities in Catawba County is through a comprehensive needs assessment. Such a project will help policy makers determine the need for County park and recreation facilities and the cost of developing such a County service. This study should reflect the demand for these services in rapidly developing areas of the County which also are generating recreational needs.

A portion of the demand for residential services could be minimized by requiring recreational space in new residential developments and large-scale commercial and industrial projects to serve employees and residents.

Regional concerns, along with demographic factors have major implications for future recreation programming and for the provision of facilities. As examples, more innovative programming will be required for an aging population, and more methods must be found for meeting the needs of single parent families and families where both parents work. Additional, cooperative efforts between all recreation suppliers will be needed in the future."

At the present time, Hickory's existing recreation system is positioned very well to meet many of these needs. With the exception of swimming places, recreation facilities are mostly conveniently located and are for the most part adequate in number to meet present needs. The problem, then, is to anticipate future needs which will develop as the population continues to grow. Thus, the focus of this report is on extending recreation services to new areas and

improving the existing recreation system, to bring it up to contemporary standards.



TRENDS IN PUBLIC RECREATION

Since the early 1950s, the role of government in providing recreation opportunities has increased dramatically throughout the nation, and in North Carolina. This trend was accelerated in the mid-1960s following studies prepared by the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation and the creation of the Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund, which provided matching federal money to local governments for the development of outdoor recreation facilities and areas.

Our technological society has also promised abundant leisure. However, for most people, this leisure has turned out to be a myth. With sixty percent of the women in the work force and many individuals working more than one job, it is apparent that we, as a society, have opted for greater financial security over leisure time. The implications for public recreation are that people increasingly want their leisure opportunities near at hand in order to take advantage of the small blocks of time which are available to them. Much recreation takes place after the work day, and on weekends and holidays.

Much of the demand for recreation is for programs requiring indoor facilities and active opportunities. However, ongoing studies conducted by the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation indicate that Americans prefer relatively simple outdoor recreation opportunities. The well-balanced recreation system provides opportunities for both indoor and outdoor activities of both an active and a passive nature.

Since the early 1970s, national studies and park attendance figures have shown steady increase in participation. In 1989, the State of North Carolina conducted an "Outdoor Recreation Participation Survey". These survey results provide good insight into current participation in a wide range of outdoor recreation activities by North Carolinians.

The five most popular outdoor recreation activities in North Carolina are:

- Walking for pleasure;
- Driving for pleasure;
- Viewing scenery;
- Beach activities; and
- Visiting historical sites.

In addition to these activities, over fifty percent of the households responding participated at least once in the following activities:

- Swimming;
- Visiting natural areas;

Picnicking;
Attending sports events;
Visiting zoos; and
Freshwater fishing.

Based on participation rates, the following activities were ranked highest:

Walking for pleasure;
Driving for pleasure;
Viewing scenery;
Jogging or running; and
Bicycling for pleasure.

The presence of three fitness-related activities – walking, jogging and bicycling – in the top five, along with swimming, indicate that we are increasingly fitness-oriented.

Activity preferences vary significantly among different age groups.

While some of the outdoor recreation needs indicated by the North Carolina and earlier federal studies can be adequately met on existing developed sites within Hickory, there is a need to adequately provide additional facilities for walking and bicycling. It should be emphasized that these outdoor recreation needs do not constitute the entire spectrum of recreation activities, but refer only to selected activities which take place in an outdoor setting. It should also be noted that the demand for specific recreation activities constantly changes, thus creating a need for new and different types of facilities.

Recreation demand for specific activities has changed significantly in the last few years. For example, winter sports did not exist in the North Carolina Highlands until the late 1960s, nor could the present level of interest in soccer have been accurately predicted a decade ago.

The demand for "high risk" activities continues to be high. This category includes such activities as parachuting, hang gliding, karate, judo, surfing, skin diving, white water canoeing, rock climbing, water skiing and snow skiing. Public recreation areas are increasingly supplying opportunities for these activities. Difficult problems must be resolved in such matters as liability, reasonable safety standards, etc. With care and ingenuity, however, it may be possible to extend the challenges and excitement of such risk activities from specialized groups to the general public with reasonable degrees of safety, and without generating lawsuits.

Perhaps the most significant trend in the provision of public recreation services is the severe budget cuts currently being experienced by federal, state and local governments. Caught in the squeeze between rising costs and reduced revenues, government at all levels is seeking ways to balance over-strained budgets. While it is hoped that this trend will be short-lived, it is

appropriate to seek methods to continue to provide the desired level of services. Among the devices being used are contracting for certain services, great dependence on revenue-producing facilities and programs, and seeking ways to become more efficient in the program delivery system, volunteerism, and seeking contributions from corporations, foundations and individuals.

Local systems are trending away from direct activity leadership towards more self-directed activities.

There is also a trend to consolidate programs and facilities in larger, more efficient operations and to close smaller neighborhood operations.

The number of women in the work place continues to increase, with approximately 60% of women now working outside the home.

Finally, our population is aging. In Catawba County, 17% of the population is over 65 years old. Much of this older population is extremely active, and many have the time and the money to engage in a variety of leisure pursuits.



Public Participation

Public participation in the planning process was attained through several means, primarily:

- a survey of recreation needs and interested conducted by the Department in 1996
- four scheduled public meetings
- interviews with key individuals representing various agencies
- meetings with the Department's staff
- regular meetings with the Park and Recreation Commission
- public meetings were held as follows:

Date	Location	Number Attending
October 28, 1996	Brown-Penn Center	9
October 29, 1996	City Hall	15
November 4, 1996	Neill Clark Center	6
December 16, 1996	Kenworth Area	+/- 50

Principal concerns expressed in the public meetings were for:

- service to newly annexed area (NE Hickory),
- senior facilities in the Northeast,
- traffic at Kiwanis Park,
- more soccer fields,
- bike paths - greenways,
- better access to Lake Hickory,
- security in parks,
- walking trails,
- swimming pools,
- centrally located recreation center,
- aquatics center at Ridgeview,
- beautification in all parks,
- close Highland Center, and
- convert Highland to Senior Center

The following individuals were interviewed:

- Jim Rash, President, BLAST Soccer
- Gary Hogue, CEO, YMCA

- Dr. Stuart Thompson, Superintendent, Hickory City Schools
- Tom Lundy, Manager, Catawba County
- Joab Cotton, Recreation Commission
- Duane Barron, Ridgeview Association
- Tom Carr, Director of Planning
- Brendan Prichard, Engineering Department
- Ms. Kim Clark, Laurie Newman Tennis Memorial
- Ms. Kathy Merrill, Highland Neighborhood Association
- Ms. Rene Icard, Highland Neighborhood Association
- Graham Gilley, Public Services Director.

Comments from the meetings and interviews were fully considered throughout the study.



CONCEPT OF SERVICE

INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines the present and projected roles of the City and County governments, the schools, the voluntary agencies, and private agencies as they relate to the overall provision of recreation services.

While the principal thrust of this report is to define the present and future role of the Parks and Recreation Department in providing recreation services to the residents of Hickory, this role must be understood in light of services provided by other agencies. For that reason, this report examines all agencies which now, or in the future, might conceivably play a part in offering recreation services which will affect the residents of Hickory. This planning approach is essential to avoid costly overlaps and duplication of services.



ROLE OF THE MUNICIPALITIES

Historically, public recreation in Catawba County started with the Hickory and Newton Parks and Recreation Departments. A significant percentage of the participation in programs offered by the Hickory Department live outside the City limits. The primary responsibility of the Department is to provide first for the citizens of its own jurisdiction. This is appropriate inasmuch as those who pay taxes should be the first to enjoy the benefits of the programs offered.

The Department should also assume the responsibility of coordinating all recreation programs offered within the City, and of cooperating with other agencies such as the Arts Council, the school system and the YMCA. Further, the Department should constantly seek ways to combine and coordinate programs with the County as it becomes increasingly involved in recreation.

Specific recommendations for improving services within the City are found in [Chapter VI](#) of this report.



ROLE OF THE COUNTY

Catawba County does not have a recreation system. However, at this writing, the County is holding public hearings on developing passive recreation parks at Baker's Mountain and at a second location on the Catawba River. The County may also have an interest in cooperating in the development of a soccer complex, possibly at a new middle school site.

In the future, the County may also become involved in programming for recreation. Many county programs have started by utilizing school sites.

County-wide, there remains a need to preserve open space and to provide large areas for relatively passive forms of recreation which represents the kinds of recreation which most people prefer. These types of parks should be designed to serve all residents of the County, and may be of particular value to the urban dweller who may have limited opportunities to enjoy a natural environment.

Basically, the role of the County should be to provide a broad umbrella of creation service for all County residents, to coordinate and cooperate with other agencies in the provision of services, and to utilize the County's existing resources to the optimum extent in the provision of these services.

If it elects to start a recreation program, the County should pursue joint school park planning where new schools are planned, and should cooperate in the development of recreation facilities on school sites.

While it is beyond the scope of this study to make specific recommendations for the location of areas and facilities to be supported by County government, it is hoped that the County will, in the future, pursue the provision of parks and recreation programs and services.



ROLE OF THE SCHOOLS

The City has maintained an excellent relationship with the City School System over the years. School properties continue to provide some recreation within the City.

In discussing the use of school properties, it is acknowledged that the primary purpose of the school is education and that recreation programs must be subordinate to this purpose. Still, significant recreation programming can and should take place on school grounds in order to get maximum results from tax dollars. This is especially true in the County, where sites are newer and larger.

In future planning, plans for new school sites and for athletic or other recreation facilities on school properties should involve the City or County in the planning process in order to ensure utilization of school sites.

An additional opportunity for cooperation between the schools and the Department is the Community Schools Act, which presents unique opportunities for joint efforts. Many of the activities permitted under this Act are leisure oriented, and the Department should be alert for opportunities for jointly-sponsored programs. Unfortunately, at the present time, state funding for the Community Schools Act is subject to severe budgetary restrictions. However, these restrictions may be rescinded at some future date.



VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers are a critical component in the delivery of recreation services in Hickory. Volunteers manage several youth leagues and serve on several committees; they can help with fund-raising activities. Adopt-a-Park Programs have proven to be effective in other jurisdictions in reducing maintenance cost and in stimulating interest in involvement in parks or programs.

This study recommends the establishment of a Non-Profit Foundation and an endowment fund for the Department. Funds are needed for capital development, program development, and facility maintenance. The volunteers who are involved and committed to the work of the Department are a primary source for donations, and for soliciting funds for the endowment.

Properly recruited, trained and utilized volunteers add a dimension to the recreation program that cannot be attained by the staff alone.



OTHER SUPPLIERS

Much recreation in Hickory is provided by private agencies. For example, four fitness centers serve approximately 2,400 people. A private gymnastics center and the country clubs serve specific groups.

The YMCA has just completed a successful capital funds drive and planning extensive renovations on its 17 acre site. Improvements will include an indoor track, a daycare center, expanded fitness areas and an indoor pool. The "Y" currently serves about 3,500 people, and membership is expected to grow.

There are 18 swimming pools and 29 tennis courts at apartments or condominiums. Private developers also provide recreation services including all of the area's golf facilities. In the future, private developers or homeowners' associations may provide space for children's play areas and other recreation amenities as a result of the City's Land Dedication Ordinance. All of these facilities provided by private developers are a part of the inventory of recreation facilities and are considered in determining the need for the provision of public facilities.



OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

With constantly increasing pressures on local tax dollars, it will be more difficult in the future to obtain sufficient funding for parks and recreation programs and facilities. This report examines all facilities and programs which can produce revenue for the Department. The report recommends that emphasis be placed on these revenue facilities. The creation of a Parks and Recreation Foundation, and the creation of a gifts catalog listing facilities and programs which can be sponsored by individuals, corporations, and foundations can stimulate donations to the Department.

This report further recommends a cost-benefits approach to evaluating the effectiveness of recreation programming. (See [Chapter VII](#)).



POLICY GUIDELINES AND STANDARDS OF SERVICE

INTRODUCTION

During the course of this study, a number of issues have surfaced relative to service, management, and the adequacy and location of land areas and facilities. Many of these issues reflect the need for broad statements of policy and the establishment of standards of service. These statements form the basis for evaluating the existing system and for addressing specific concerns in later chapters of the report.



STANDARDS OF SERVICE

1. Introduction

The standards of service recommended in the 1979 study have served the City well. With minor modifications, those same standards are recommended to carry the City into the next century.

In preparing this and similar studies, the planners have examined standards developed by numerous other agencies, including the National Park and Recreation Association and the State of North Carolina's State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan. The standards recommended in this study are generally consistent with those recommended by the above agencies; however, they have been modified to meet Hickory's specific needs. It should be noted that recreation space standards, other than those required for games such as tennis or football, represent relative rather than absolute requirements.

The National Park and Recreation Association states, "Outdoor recreation space standards are goals which have proved to be desirable and practical. The need for outdoor recreation space is increasing so rapidly that standards established as a result of past experience may not be adequate to meet the needs of the next century. Therefore, the following standards should be exceeded wherever possible."

Basic for the planning approach used throughout this study is that the recommendations of this report be periodically reviewed. This same review process should be applied to the proposed standards to see that they are adequately meeting needs, since today's standards may change in the future. As examples, standards recommended for soccer fields, passive recreation places, and tennis courts presently provide for more facilities of these types than would have been the case just a few years ago.

2. Standards for Park Lands

This report recommends a minimum of ten acres of recreation land per one thousand of population served. Hickory's 1997 population is approximately 32,300 people, estimated to grow 45,000 in the next twenty years. This report further recommends that recreation land should be approximately equally divided between land for active recreation pursuits such as softball, soccer, etc., and land for passive pursuits such as nature study, hiking, etc. These passive areas are also described as open space.

Parks recommended in this report, and the population which they serve are as follows:

Classification	Acres per 1,000 People	Size Range	Population Served	Service Area
Tot Lots	NA	2,500 SF to two acres	500 - 2,000	Sub-Neighborhood
Neighborhood Parks	2.5	Minimum five acres	2,000 - 4,000	Approximately 1/2 - 1 mile
District Parks	2.5	Fifteen to fifty	5,000 - 15,000	Approximately 2 - 2.5 miles
City-Wide and Special Areas	NA*	Varied	Total	City-Wide
Open Space and Linear Parks	5.0	Varies with resource	Total	City-Wide

Source: Gardner Gidley and Associates

*Includes parkways, historical sties, small parks and ornamental parks, as well as special use areas, acres are included in appropriate categories (active, passive, etc.).

NOTE: In low income areas, where transportation to recreation areas is a major problem, neighborhood level areas and facilities should predominate. In more affluent areas, the need for neighborhood areas is not as great, since district and private facilities are more available to this income group.

3. Standards for Selected Facilities

Facility	Standard per 1,000 People	Comment
Baseball	1 / 15,000	Regulation, 90' Diamond, 4000' Outfield
League Softball	1 / 6,000	Lighted, 275' Outfield
Youth / Practice Fields	1 / 3,000	200' Outfield
Tennis Courts	1 / 1,200	Best in Batteries of Four
Basketball Goals	1 / 1,000	Outdoor Courts
Football / Soccer	1 / 5,000	May be Multi-Use Fields
Indoor Facilities	1,500 SF / 1,000	See Section 4
Amphitheaters	1 / 20,000	None
Swimming	500 SF / 1,000	See Section 5
Picnic Shelters	1 / 4,000	Each to seat 60 - 150 people

Source: Gardner Gidley and Associates

NOTE: These standards differ from national, state and county recommended standards, and have been created specifically for Hickory.

4. Indoor Spaces

A search of existing literature in the field reveals no specific recommended standards for indoor spaces. However, such spaces are a vital part of any comprehensive recreation program as they are required in order to provide year-round services. Numerous factors affect the creation of a reasonable standard. Chief among these being the availability of other public spaces such as schools and spaces offered by quasi-public and private agencies. Other factors include the local climate and local interests in specific building-centered activities.

As a general guide, the planner has proposed one and one-half square feet of indoor program space per person served.

5. Swimming

Nationally, swimming continues to rank among the most popular of all recreation activities. The many aspects of swimming include learning, recreation, fitness, competitive and activities for the handicapped.

In determining the need for swimming areas, it can be expected that at least sixty percent of the population will want to swim at some time. Of this number, about one-half, or thirty percent of the population can be expected to swim about once a week, and finally, about fifteen percent of the population will want to swim on a regular basis.

While requirements differ for deep water swimmers, shallow water swimmers, and divers, or instructional programs, on the average, a swimmer will require approximately twenty square feet of water surface. Thus, if five hundred people wish to swim at one time, approximately ten thousand square feet of water surface will be required. This requirement, however, may be reduced by the fact that no more than seventy percent of the swimmers will actually be in the water at any given time, and by the availability of private and quasi-public facilities serving specific segments of the population.

This formula works out to five hundred square feet of swimming pool surface for every one thousand of the population served.

For Hickory, this means that fifteen thousand square feet of swimming area should be provided to meet current needs. Part of this being met by private agencies at Lenoir-Rhyne and at the YMCA.

6. Types of Areas

The types of areas described below fall into three general classifications: places for active

recreation, resource oriented (open space) areas, and specialized facilities. Each of the functions implied by these descriptions requires different types of areas and facilities.

The descriptions of various areas describe space requirements and facilities or programs associated with typical areas of each type. Where few facilities exist, areas such as those described below may conform to the typical plan. In some cases, however, it may not be practical to place all of the activities described for a typical site at one locations. Thus, the functions described for a District Park may be dispersed over several sites because of the availability of existing areas and facilities or limited land availability.

a. Neighborhood Facilities

Tot Lots - Tot lots are small, near-at-hand areas ranging in size from 2,500 square feet up and are designed to serve populations where urban densities are quite high and where yard space is limited. The tot lot is specifically designed to serve pre-school children. It has a service radius of one-eighth to one-quarter mile, and usually includes age-grade play apparatus, sandboxes, benches, and perhaps picnic tables.

Neighborhood Parks - The neighborhood park is a near-at-hand area serving a neighborhood with a population of approximately one thousand to two thousand people, and should contain a minimum of five acres and up to fifteen acres. It should have a service radius of one-half mile to one mile. Where space is available, the neighborhood park may adjoin an elementary school.

It should provide recreation opportunities for each member of the family and contain a play lot for small children, a ball field with a 60' diamond for softball and junior baseball, an open field for fall sports, an apparatus area for older children, and a multi-use slab for basketball, volleyball, and similar court games.

It may also include areas for quiet activities and for such adult games as shuffleboard, horseshoes and croquet. Picnic tables and places for quiet activities such as chess, checkers and card games are also appropriate. Supervised play activities may be offered during the summer months. Parking may or may not be required. Where possible, the land area should be equally divided between active play areas and quiet areas. Wooded areas and other natural features are also desirable. A typical Neighborhood Park is shown in the [appendix](#).

b. District Park

The term "District Park" as used in this report describes large activity parks. These parks have a service radius of approximately two to two and one half miles.

The district park serves several neighborhoods or communities - about the same area normally served by a junior high or senior high school. The district park should be easily accessible and should contain 5 acres per 1,000 of the ultimate population served. Again, this acreage should be roughly divided between areas for active games and sports and areas which are left in a natural park-like or wooded state.

The district park should contain an indoor recreation building, where possible. These parks should contain facilities for basketball, volleyball, and similar court games, fields for softball, soccer, several tennis courts, and, if needed, a swimming pool. Parking facilities are necessary as are toilet facilities.

In addition, the district park may provide those activities which are included in the neighborhood park - apparatus and active play areas, a tot lot for smaller children, a turf area, shaded areas for crafts and similar activities, picnic facilities, nature trails, and perhaps a small outdoor theater.

Multiple athletic fields for league activity such as softball or soccer can be concentrated in district parks where separate city-wide facilities have not been provided.

District parks should contain a minimum of fifteen acres and up to fifty acres, and should serve populations of five thousand to fifteen thousand people.

c. Open Space Parks

In contrast to neighborhood and community parks where space for activities is the primary concern, open space parks are resource-oriented and place great emphasis on the beauty and attractiveness of the site. Greenways and linear parks are examples of open space parks. These parks, which may vary in size, are designed to provide open spaces, access to water, and opportunity for more passive and less structured recreations. Studies by numerous public agencies over the last several decades indicate that most people choose relatively simple forms of outdoor recreation and that they want opportunities to enjoy these experiences near at hand.

Picnicking, walking for pleasure, sightseeing, swimming, visiting the beach, bicycling, fishing, and nature activities are the most frequently mentioned activities. Open space parks are designed to provide these opportunities. Each park will vary in character and in size, depending on the resource, but each is resource oriented. That is, the resource itself forms the basis of activity.

Generally, activities in these parks are self-directed and require no direct leadership. The management role is primarily custodial and, in some cases, interpretive.

d. City-Wide Facilities and Special Use Areas

City-wide facilities are those which serve all city residents. Examples are athletic complexes, open space parks, unique areas, and special use areas.

7. Levels of Responsibility

In Catawba County, the provision of recreation services should be shared by more than one agency or level of government. The following chart indicates these levels of responsibility.

Type of Area	City	County	State & Federal	Private Developers
Tot Lots	X			X
Ornamental Parks	X	X		X
Neighborhood Parks	X			X
Community Parks		X		
District Parks	X	X		
Open Space Parks	X	X	X	X
Regional Parks		X	X	

*Private developers should be responsible for tot lots, special facilities such as swimming and tennis, and neighborhood parks, if their developments are large.



RECOMMENDED POLICY GUIDELINES

The following policy guidelines are recommended to blueprint future actions by the Parks and Recreation Commission and by the Board of Aldermen:

1. **Recreation areas and facilities shall be equitably distributed and conveniently located throughout the City to provide opportunities for all.** This statement implies fairness in the distribution of facilities. It also recognizes that needs differ from one part of the City to another. For example, close-at-hand recreation opportunities are more important in lower income neighborhoods than in more affluent areas where transportation does not create problems. Therefore, neighborhood-serving facilities should be more readily available in low income areas.
2. **The Department shall provide diverse facilities and programs to meet the basic needs of children, teenagers and adults, and the special needs of the elderly, the deprived, and the handicapped.** This statement recognizes that extra steps must be taken to provide for those with special needs. All facilities should be accessible to the handicapped and the economically deprived should have an opportunity to participate in all recreation programs.
3. **A variety of land and water areas adequate in size and strategic in location for both active and passive leisure pursuits and for visual enhancement and conservation shall be provided.** The importance of location and variety in opportunities enhances the recreation experience.
4. **Programs, services and facilities which complement and supplement those provided by other public and private agencies shall be offered. The Department shall actively work to coordinate all local recreation services.** This statement assigns to the Department the responsibility of coordinating local recreation services. It also implies close cooperation with the County, the YMCA, the schools and others to avoid competing for program services.
5. **Standards recommended in this report shall be adopted as minimums for: (1) publicly-owned acreage for recreation and open space; (2) convenient and equitable site location; and (3) facilities for both indoor and outdoor recreation programs.** The standards recommended have proven to be adequate minimums and can serve as a blueprint for future land acquisition and development.
6. **The Department shall strive to establish levels of local fundings sufficient to: (1) match other sources of funds as the opportunity arises; and (2) sustain a program of land acquisition, facility construction and program administration in the absence of outside funding.** This statement is designed to encourage ongoing capital funding to take advantage of federal or state funds as they become available, and in the absence of such funding, to continue to build the recreation system in an orderly way.
7. **The quality of the recreation experience and its contribution to the growth and**

development of the individual is a paramount concern, and is reflected both in the type of program offered and in the physical setting in which it takes place. The recreation experience is greatly enhanced by its physical setting. Over-used or poorly-maintained recreation areas detract from the value of the recreation experience. In addition, the type of program offered and its quality are significant in the development of the individual participant.

8. **Facilities and programs shall take full advantage of all existing resources, both natural and man-made.** As new opportunities arise, the City should seek ways to use them advantageously.
9. **Priorities for development will be assigned on the basis of providing the greatest benefits for the greatest number of people.** While this statement is fairly self-evident, it does give additional guidance in determining where available funds should be spent.
10. **The first obligation of the Department is to residents of the City; however, when and where practical, non-residents will be accommodated in the various programs and facilities.** Taxpayers should have the first opportunity to enroll in various programs. The City has established a non-resident fee policy.
11. **All recreation areas and facilities shall be maintained as a minimum, to their original design standards.** This report strongly recommends that all areas and facilities be upgraded to their original design standards and further, that they be maintained constantly to those standards. Specific recommendations regarding this guideline are contained in the proposed [Action Plan](#).



INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS - EXISTING AREAS AND FACILITIES

INTRODUCTION

The following inventory of land areas and facilities, when compared with the standards outlined in Chapter III, indicates the need for new land areas and for specific facilities. There is a matrix showing existing areas and facilities

Projected needs are based on populations to be served as follows:

1997 Population	32,300
2002 Population*	35,000
2010 Population*	41,500
2020 Population*	48,000
*Source: Gardner Gidley and Associates	



LAND USE ANALYSIS

Present service area or function is shown as follows:

N	Neighborhood Serving
D	District Serving
CW	City Wide
OS	Open Space, Passive Uses
U	Undeveloped

I. City Owned Lands

Area	Size in Acres	Service Function
Brown-Penn / Ridgeview	9.6	N
Civitan	7.5	N
Cliff Teague	8.1	N
Cloninger Mill	20.0	OS, U
Fairbrook Optimist	6.6	N
Geitner / Rotary	96.0	OS, CW
Grayfield	6.97	OS, U
Hickory Optimist	6.0	N
Hickory City / Jaycee	20.0	D, CW
Highland	6.0	N
Hilton	59.5	OS, CW
Kiwanis	16.0	N, CW
Neill Clark	22.73	D, CW
Sandy Pines	13.0	U
Southside Heights	12.66	N
St. Stephens	7.0	N
Stanford	47.5	D, CW
West Hickory	5.6	N
Westmont Center	3.0	N
Winkler	50.0	CW
Caldwell County Site	+ / - 150.0	U
Total Acres	573.76	

2. Summary by Principal Use

Active Recreation	178.29
Passive Recreation / Open Space	155.50
Undeveloped	39.97
Caldwell County Site (Undeveloped)	150.00

3. Summary by Service Function (Excludes Undeveloped Land)

Neighborhood Serving	88.06
District Serving	90.23
City-Wide and Open Space	206.50

4. Summary by Districts (Excludes Caldwell County Land and Winkler Park)

	NW	NE	SE	SW
1997 Population: Total 32,300	9,155	14,510	4,800	3,745
Active Recreation	45.73	76.10	22.60	33.86
Passive Recreation	155.50	.00	.00	.00
Undeveloped Lands	.00	39.97	.00	.00
	201.23	106.07	22.60	33.86
Active Recreation Land / 1,000 Population	5.03	5.24	4.71	9.00



PROJECTED LAND NEEDS

The following gross land needs are based on the standards previously outlined. It should be noted that the standards are based generally on population projections. At the present time, Hickory is expected to grow at a rate of approximately 2.5% annually. Future land acquisition should also anticipate annexation patterns. This report recommends standards based on the convenience and location of land in addition to gross land needs.

The greatest population growth is expected to occur in the Northeast quadrant of the City, with growth also anticipated in the Mountain View area.

Population				
	<u>1997</u>	<u>2002</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>2020</u>
	32,300	35,000	41,500	48,000
Land in Acres	Active			
Need	161	175	207.5	240
Have	178.3	178.3	178.3	178.3
Net Needed	<17.3>	<3.3>	+29.2	+61.7
	Passive and Open Space*			
Need	161	175	207.5	240
Have	195.97	195.97	195.97	195.97
Net Needed	<34.47>	<20.97>	+11.53	+44.03

*Excludes Caldwell County property, but includes 39.97 undeveloped acres.

In summary, land for both active and passive recreation is adequate until the population reaches + / - 37,000 people, or an increase of about 16%, which is projected to occur in eight to ten years.

As the population continues to grow, additional land will be needed for both active and passive pursuits, and by 2020, with a population estimated at 48,000, these needs will total 62 acres of land for active recreation and 44 acres of land for passive recreation.

Land should be acquired for one District Park of 20 - 30 acres and two or three Neighborhood Parks of 12 - 15 acres each. Each park should have a balance of developed and undeveloped land.

In addition, a 40+ acre parcel should be acquired for passive use. This land would ideally be located on Lake Hickory, but may be on a flood plain.



FACILITY INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS

1. Needs Analysis

Recommended standards for selected facilities are shown in [Chapter III-C](#). Following is the present inventory and facilities need in the future (non-cumulative).

Facility	Standard	1997 Inventory (Population 32,300)	Needed by 2002 (Population 35,000)	Needed by 2010 (Population 41,500)	Needed by 2020 (Population 48,000)
League Softball	1 / 6,000	5	1	1	1
Youth Softball	1 / 12,000	2	1	0	1
Youth Baseball	1 / 6,000	6	0	1	1
Tennis Courts	1 / 2,000	19*	0	0	0
Basketball Courts	1 / 5,000	12	0	0	0
Football / Soccer	1 / 5,000	6	0	1	1
Indoor Facilities	1.5 SF / Person	42,000 SF	6,000 SF	14,250	9,750
Swimming	500 SF / 1,000	10,240 SF	7,260 SF	3,250 SF	3,250 SF

*3 courts at Ridgeview are in poor condition. 6 new courts are proposed at Hickory High. 10 courts at the YMCA are not included in the inventory.

2. Quasi-Public and Private Facilities

Not all of Hickory's recreation needs are met on public facilities. In fact, private facilities and quasi-public facilities serve a great many people. The presence of these facilities relieves the City of a portion of its responsibility for providing public facilities. In determining the extent to which such facilities can offset public needs, however, it is not possible to use the same standards of service as are used to determine public needs. In the case of private and quasi-private public facilities, the number of people to be served by public facilities may be reduced by the number served by private facilities. This assessment is made somewhat more complex by the fact that only certain types of recreation needs are met by these facilities. As an example, an individual residing in an apartment may swim and play tennis at the apartment but may also be an active participant in league play activities sponsored by the City. Thus, in the final analysis, subjective as well as objective means are used to determine the extent to which private and quasi-public facilities can offset the need for public areas and facilities.

In Hickory, swimming pools are located at 18 different apartment areas, and these pools serve approximately 2,000 people. Swimming facilities at the YMCA serve approximately 3,400. Country Clubs serve approximately 1,500 residents. Thus, the total need for public swimming

facilities in Hickory can be reduced by the area required to serve approximately 4,000 to 5,000 people.

In the case of tennis courts there are 29 apartment or condominium tennis courts. When the private courts and the YMCA are added, approximately 5,000 to 6,000 people are served adequately with tennis facilities. Courts are also proposed at the High School.

There are also four private fitness centers serving an estimated 2,400 people.

In projecting the future need for public recreation facilities, the availability of private and quasi-public facilities has been fully considered as it affects future needs to be met by the City.

3. Indoor Spaces

The Recreation Department has indoor facilities at these locations:

Location	Square Footage
Hickory Optimist	1,767
Highland	11,000
Brown-Penn	6,633
Kiwanis	1,932
Ridgeview	15,680
Westmont	5,217
TOTAL	42,229

Indoor facilities at the YMCA serve approximately 3,400 people.

The distribution of these facilities is significant. The building at Hickory Optimist Park is used only for storage. Facilities at Brown-Penn and Ridgeview are concentrated and Westmont Center is barely a mile from this area. Thus, much indoor space is concentrated in the southern part of the City.

After accounting for the number of people using the YMCA, there is a gross need for approximately 56,000 SF of indoor space to serve the residents of Hickory, versus a present inventory of 42,229 SF. There is a need for a major indoor facility to serve the growing northeast area as well as some City-wide functions. This facility should contain approximately 18,000 SF of floor space and should include two indoor basketball courts of a junior high school dimension.

4. Swimming Pools

Private and quasi-public facilities serve approximately 3,000 Hickory residents for swimming. This leaves approximately 29,000 people to be served by public pools. Using the formula developed in Chapter V, the City should have approximately 14,500 square feet of swimming pool area to serve this number of people. Against this need, there is a current inventory of 10,240 square feet in the pools which are located at Ridgeview, West Hickory and St. Stephens Parks.

There is a present need for an additional 4,200 SF of swimming pool area, and it is recommended that this need be met by constructing one large pool consisting of approximately 5,000 SF in the immediate future. When this pool is completed, the pools at Ridgeview and West Hickory should be closed.



EVALUATION OF EXISTING AREAS

Following is a brief description of areas and facilities currently available for recreation. Improvements proposed for these areas are shown in Chapter VI.

1. Brown-Penn / Ridgeview Center Complex

This 9.6 acre park contains adult and youth recreation centers as well as a senior center. The youth center is in good condition, the adult center is in poor condition, and the senior center is in fair condition. A child day care center is located adjacent to the park and a new library is scheduled for construction. Other facilities include a swimming pool and bathhouse, three lighted tennis courts, playground, fenced tot lot, lighted softball field, two basketball courts, an asphalt slab and basketball goal, four horseshoe pits, a small shelter, a picnic shelter, and a variety of picnic tables, grills, and benches.

The pool, bathhouse, and tennis courts receive very little use at this time and are in fair to poor condition. The slab of the 2 basketball courts has settled and contains numerous cracks.

The two tennis courts closest to Ridgeview Center are in poor conditions. The courts have settled and large cracks have developed.

Parking is a problem at both centers. Land has been purchased next to the softball field to help relieve this problem.

Ridgeview Center now has no windows. The windows have been bricked and boarded up and the brick walls have a white residue left after the removal of spray paint. The Center has no aesthetic appeal. Also, the Center has no distinguishable main entrance where access can be controlled.

2. Civitan Park

This 7.5 acre park is a small neighborhood park located on a hill. This separates the park into several developed levels. The facilities are in generally good condition but the grounds are not. Erosion is a problem and maintenance of the hillsides between levels is labor intensive. An agreement with an adjacent property owner allows a skate board ramp to be located in the parking lot. Facilities include a shelter with tables and grills, 2 picnic tables with roofs, a wood/chain climber, a tire apparatus, 2 spring animals, an 80 yd. youth football field, a toilet building, an adult lighted softball field, 2 tennis courts and a basketball court.

3. Cliff Teague Park

This 8.1 acre park is located in a stream valley and has a pleasant natural atmosphere. The play equipment and swings are not in good condition. Facilities in the park include a shelter, a tennis court, a horseshoe pit, a basketball court, a play area, and a variety of benches, and picnic tables.

4. Cloninger Mill (20 acres)

Undeveloped - The principal future use is as a passive area.

5. Fairbrook Optimist Park

This 6.66 acre park is located in an industrial area. It contains a civic club meeting facility and an adult softball field. The facilities are in good condition. Other facilities include a piece of play equipment, 4 picnic tables and grills, 7 benches, and 2 picnic tables with roofs.

6. Geitner / Rotary Park

This 96 acre park is located on the shore of Lake Hickory. The park is passive in nature with no active recreation facilities. Heavy use by patrons and a hillside location has resulted in erosion and wave action has deteriorated the docks and the lake wall. The boat launch ramp cannot be used by the majority of boaters because of the steep incline. Unscreened dumpsters reside in one corner of the parking lot. The large multi-purpose building is in need of renovation. The toilet building has been vandalized as has the shelter. Facilities include a multi-purpose building, a shelter with picnic tables and grills, a gazebo, a toilet building, a boat launch ramp, 2 boat docks, a fishing pier, a BBQ pit, picnic tables and walking trails.

7. Grayfield (6.97 acres)

Undeveloped. This park is mostly in flood plain and should remain undeveloped.

8. Hickory Optimist Park

This 6 acre park is in good general condition, however, several facilities need maintenance attention. Facilities include a lighted youth baseball field, a shelter with tables and grills, a tennis court, a basketball court, a play complex, and a

storage building.

9a. Hickory City Park

This 15 acre park is located between Jaycee Park and Geitner / Rotary Park and contains the maintenance center. Maintenance facilities are in poor condition and should be relocated. Space needs for the maintenance department must be addressed because the site has been reduced by approximately 1/3 because of expansion of the Army Reserve Unit. Facilities include 8 lighted tennis courts and a storage building / shelter, a shelter with toilets, a new 1/6 mile paved bike / walking path, and 3 picnic tables with roofs.

9b. Jaycee Park

This 5 acre park contains the administrative offices of the Hickory City Park System. The park office building is in generally good condition. There are upgrade and maintenance needs in the buildings and on the grounds and some older equipment should be removed or replaced. Space needs for the maintenance department and the office staff must be addressed. Facilities include 20 pieces of play equipment, a basketball court, a junior league baseball field, and a shade shelter.

10. Highland Center

This 6 acre park contains a community center. The center is a converted school cafeteria and gymnasium. It is heavily used in the evenings by a wide variety of socio-economic classes and ethnic backgrounds. It exhibits a wide variety of maintenance, operational and aesthetic problems typically associated with old school buildings. The small park associated with the center is heavily used and needs some redesign to meet demands. The park contains a volleyball court, a basketball court, a shuffleboard court, a T-ball practice field, a play equipment complex, a youth soccer field, and a horseshoe pit.

11. Hilton Park

This 59.5 acre park is located at the site of an old sewer treatment facility on a creek/inlet of Lake Hickory. The park is in generally good condition. It has a wide variety of activities and is one of the most heavily used parks in the system. Facilities include a canoe launching ramp, a gazebo, 9 picnic tables with roofs and grills, a small play complex, a large play complex with 16 pieces, 26 picnic tables, 2 horseshoe pits, a climbing wall, a toilet / storage building, a volleyball court, trails, and a butterfly garden.

12. Kiwanis Park

This 16 acre park is intensively developed with a four field youth baseball complex. The facilities are new or are generally in good condition. Other facilities include 2 picnic shelters with tables and grills, a paved walking track, a variety of play equipment, a basketball court, a tennis court, an activity building, 2 horseshoe pits, a concession stand with toilets, a toilet building, a spray pool and a roofed picnic table.

13. Neill Clark Recreation Park

This 22.73 acre park was a private school which has been converted to public use. It contains a variety of indoor and outdoor activity spaces and a four field soccer complex. While still attractive, the multi-purpose building shows signs of wear and tear and the effects of cleaning up after a fire. Many improvements are needed to accommodate the great variety of uses this building receives. Other facilities include a gymnasium with weight room, game room, and snack bar, a play ground, 4 basketball goals in the parking lot, and 2 horseshoe pits.

14. Sandy Pines (13 acres)

Undeveloped. This park can be developed in the future as a neighborhood park.

15. Southside Heights Park

This 12.66 acre park is a small neighborhood park. Facilities are in fair condition and include a T-ball practice field, a basketball court, a shelter with tables and grills, and 8 pieces of play equipment.

16. St. Stephens Park

This 7 acre park is a small single purpose park with a swimming pool. The park is an extra territorial acquisition. Associated with the pool is a small shelter and 3 pieces of play equipment and an open field. The park is closed when the pool is closed. The pool and bathhouse are in fair condition.

17. Stanford Park & Bumbarger Property

This park, of 47.7 acres, is located adjacent to the National Guard Armory. The facilities are in good condition. This park has the potential, because of geographic location and the availability of land, to be developed into a district park which can

serve the entire City. Current facilities include 3 adult softball fields, 2 concession stands with toilets, a tennis court, 4 pieces of play equipment, a shelter with tables and grills, a basketball court and a variety of benches, tables and grills.

18. West Hickory Park

This 5.6 acre park contains a small swimming pool. It is located in an industrial area and across the street from the West Hickory Senior Center. The pool is showing signs of age and receives very little use. The park facilities are generally in good condition. The facilities include a lighted youth softball field, a 1/2 court basketball court, 6 pieces of play equipment, 9 benches, 2 grills, 1 picnic table.

19. Westmont Center / Senior Citizen Center

This 3 acre park has an old school gymnasium and classroom building converted to recreation purposes. Two tennis courts are located across a residential street from the center. The senior center is in good condition; however, the youth recreation center exhibits a wide variety of maintenance, operational, and aesthetic problems typically associated with old school buildings. Other facilities include 2 horseshoe pits, 2 picnic tables and a grill, 2 shuffleboard courts, 1 basketball court, and 18 pieces of play equipment.

20. Winkler Park

This 50 acre park contains a 5,100 seat professional baseball stadium which dominates the park. A new playground with 6 activity complexes and 2 sets of swings are under construction. Most of the facilities are new or are in excellent condition. Other facilities include a restored home place, a museum, a multi-purpose building, 2 nature trails, and a group shelter with toilets. With the large play complex and stadium, an opportunity exists to develop a large group shelter to complement these facilities.

21. Caldwell County Site (+/- 50 acres)

This site has been studied as a potential golf course site. Because of its location and topography it is of limited recreation use, and should be reserved for future golf or open space uses.



Matrix

MATRIX

	Acres	Rec. Center	Senior Center	Pools	Tennis	Play Areas	Soccer Fields	Youth Fields	Volleyball/ Soccer	Basketball	Picnic Facilities	Concessions/ Toilets	Trail/Track	Practice Fields	Other
Brown-Pass/ Ridgeview	9.6	2	1	1	3L	2	1L			2.5	2	1			
Civitan Park	7.3				2	1	1L		1L	1	3	1			
CHI Teague Park	8.1				1	1				1					
Cloninger Mill	20.0														
Fairbrook Optimist Park	6.6						1L				2	1			
Geltner/ Rotary Park	96.0										1	1			Boat Launch
Grayfield	6.97														
Hickory Optimist Park	6.0				1	1		1L		1	1	1			
Hickory City Park	15.0				8L						4	1	1		
Highland Center/Park	6.0	1				1			1	1				1	
Hilton Park	59.5					2					14	1	4		Nature Trails Boat Launch
JayCee Park/ Adm. Bldg.	5.0					1		1L		1	1	1			
Kwanis Park	16.0				1	1		4L		1	3	2	1		
Neill Clark Rec. Park	22.73	1				1			4L		1				
Sandy Pines (Undeveloped)	13.0														
Southside/ Heights Park	12.66					1				1	1			1	
St. Stephens Park	7.0			1							1				
Stanford Park	25.5 22.8					1	1	3L		1	2	2			
West Hickory Park	5.6			1		1	1L			3		1			
Westmont Center/ Senior Center	3.0	1	1			1				1	1				
Winkler Park/ Stadium	50.0					1						1	2		Homeplace & Museum
TOTAL	423.76	5	2	3	17	16	7	6	6	12	37	14	8	2	
CATAWBA COUNTY SITE OF <u>4</u> 150 ACRES IS NOT INCLUDED IN TOTAL ACRES.															



SPECIFIC ISSUES

In the course of this study, a number of issues have arisen. These issues have been identified in public hearings and through meetings with the Recreation Commission, departmental staff, City officials and other concerned individuals, as well as from observations of the consultants. They summarize problems and concerns which emerged during the course of this study. Each issue is discussed below in detail, and the remedial actions recommended follow in the action plan.

A. Management Issues

1. Policy guidelines are needed. From the outset of this study, it was apparent that general statements of policy were needed in order to evaluate the existing system and to plan future directions. This report recommends specific policy guidelines (see Chapter III) to guide the future of public recreation in Hickory.

2. Funding for recreation will be more difficult to obtain in the future.

Present levels of funding from federal and state sources makes the provision of local government services increasingly expensive. Throughout the nation, there is a trend toward more fee-supported activities. While Hickory does operate some fee-supported facilities and programs, planning for new programs and areas should emphasize the revenue-generating aspect in order that programs can be more nearly self-supporting.

At the present time, there is no means of determining the exact cost of existing programs and services. Cost-per-participant figures should be developed for each specific activity, and where necessary, appropriate adjustments should be made in fees for the level of service offered. In addition, new revenue sources should be developed.

One of the guidelines developed early in this study states that there should be a balance between fee and free services. Basic recreation services should continue to be offered to all citizens and means should be devised to provide adequately for those who cannot afford the fee system. Beyond the provision of these basic services, however, the participants should be expected to help bear part of the cost as they are the chief beneficiaries of such service. This balance will constantly change as social conditions change, and the definition of "basic services" will also change from time to time.

Other devices which should be explored in the process of seeking non-tax support are the creation of a foundation for parks and recreation to encourage

private donations, exploring means other than fee simple acquisition for utilizing private lands for the public benefit, and constantly seeking means to utilize volunteers more successfully in the program.

3. Maintenance Operations A general review of the Maintenance Department revealed a number of strengths and several deficiencies.

The current organization, comprised of a maintenance director, two maintenance supervisors and various crew leaders and maintenance laborers totaling 23 employees, is a reasonable structure for providing maintenance services, and has resulted in providing good quality maintenance to the parks. Service to the recreation centers, however, is not adequate. Lack of maintenance personnel on site working with the recreation personnel, has created service problems. Response time to minor emergencies and the coordination of priorities has created some personnel morale problems. Additional maintenance personnel assigned to the various centers on a part time basis could improve coordination and quality of maintenance in the centers and reduce time and travel expenses. Contracting for janitorial services should be explored.

Maintenance equipment appears to be adequate, with the exception of dumping equipment. This lack affects the efficiency and productivity of maintenance personnel. A dump truck should be purchased.

The Maintenance Center is not adequate to service the park system. The site does not have adequate equipment or materials storage space and the buildings do not have adequate heated or unheated work space. Renovation of the old Public Works facility appears to be a reasonable alternative for providing an appropriate maintenance facility. This facility provides a more central location.

Maintenance personnel will tackle almost any problem; however, many projects are too large for the department to take on without compromising daily maintenance activities. Large projects which interfere with general maintenance activity should be deferred until budgeted for outside contract.

As the park system expands, some satellite maintenance functions should be explored. For example, when the maintenance function has relocated, City, Jaycee, Geitner and possibly Hilton Parks could be maintained from Winkler Park.

4. Department Offices The Department offices are poorly located, especially as the City continues to grow eastward. When Stanford Park has been developed, the offices should be relocated. This will place them near Hickory's geographic and population center. The old building can be modified and used for

scheduled activities and meetings.



B. Service Issues

1. Standards of Service Standards of service for land acquisition and provision of facilities are needed in order to assure equitable distribution of facilities and services throughout the City, to adequately serve newly annexed areas, and to guide land acquisition and development decisions related to future growth of the City. This report recommends that the standards in [Chapter III](#) be adopted by the City and implemented as funds permit.

2. Neighborhood Facilities Several of the public meetings focuses on neighborhood concerns. In the Kenwood area the main concern is for traffic. This issue is being addressed by extending an exit street from the new parking lot. It is recommended that in the future, league play facilities should be built only in District Parks such as Neill Clark or Stanford, or in city-wide parks designed specifically for that purpose.

The Highland Neighborhood Association views the Highland Center as a liability, or as an attractive nuisance which bring in unruly groups. They would like to see the center closed.

The Brown-Penn / Ridgeview neighborhood has been studied extensively. A new library is being constructed. Attendance at both the Ridgeview Center and pool have declined. In 1996, the pool attracted 1,271 people in 66 days, or 19 people per day. Only half of these paid admissions, and total revenue was \$850.00. The George Ivey pool did not fare much better, with 1,736 admissions, or 27 people per day.

The trend is away from small neighborhood operations and towards larger facilities serving several neighborhoods. This report recommends constructing a large pool at Stanford Park, closing the smaller pools, and bussing participants to Stanford if required.

Ridgeview Center is losing attendance. The neighborhood is aging. There are fewer young people to be served. The group using Ridgeview is mobile and can go to other centers. Ridgeview should be studied carefully. Where possible, programs should be moved to Brown-Penn, thus concentrating staff and program dollars in one location.

This report recommends a new recreation center be built at Stanford Park. This plan will serve newly annexed areas as well as existing neighborhoods and will permit phasing out the Highland Center.

3. Swimming Swimming opportunities in Hickory are inadequate. The City operates pools at Ridgeview, George Ivey and St. Stephens. There are 18 apartment / condominium pools, plus those at the country clubs. The YMCA operates a large outdoor pool and expects to construct an indoor pool by 1998. The indoor pool at Lenoir Rhyne College is available to the public on a very limited basis.

The present need is for a large outdoor pool centrally located and designed to serve the multiple purposes of fitness, instruction, competitive, recreation and rehabilitative swimming.

In this location, the pool will not only meet present needs, but is well located to serve the growing northeast area. Opening this pool will permit closing inefficient operations at George Ivey and Ridgeview.

Specific recommendations for the size and functions of this pool are appended to this report. ([See Appendix A.](#))

4. Service to Annexed Areas The standards of service recommended in this study provide a blueprint for serving annexed areas, both now and in the future.

Land and facilities are presently adequate to serve newly annexed areas, but additional areas will be needed as the City continues to grow.



PART TWO - ACTION PLAN

VI CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Conclusions

1. The Park System Overall, the system is in good condition. Land areas are adequate in size and location to meet most present needs. There is a good balance between places for active and passive recreation. Additions since 1979, including Winkler Park, Hilton Park, Highland Center, St. Stephen Park, Neill Clark Park, Southside Heights and new land areas at Sandy Pines, Stanford and Kiwanis Parks great enhance the system and provide opportunities for future development.

The system is well-maintained, but minor upgrades are needed in several areas to improve appearance or functions.

Spaces for active recreation such as athletic fields are adequate to meet immediate needs; however additional practice areas are needed and an additional neighborhood park is needed in the Northeast quadrant of the City to serve newly annexed areas. Stanford Park should be developed as a District Park.

Additional opportunities for walking should be provided in several locations, including Brown-Penn, Neill Clark, Kiwanis and Stanford Parks.

Better access to Lake Hickory should be provided at the old police range. New facilities should be built for boat launching, parking and picnicking. The boat launching facilities at Geitner Park should be closed.

A large group picnic facility seating 200 people should be built at Winkler Park. Some additional parking and toilet facilities will also be required.

2. Swimming Opportunities Swimming opportunities are inadequate. The neighborhood pools at Ridgeview and George Ivey are antiquated and difficult to staff and maintain. Attendance at these pools hardly justifies their continuing operation if other opportunities are available. The trend in public recreation is away from small neighborhood pools and towards large, district-serving facilities.

It is recommended that the City construct a district-serving outdoor pool at Stanford Park, and that neighborhood groups be bussed to the site if required.

3. Indoor Facilities The Department operates indoor facilities at Brown-Penn, Ridgeview, Highland, Neill Clark and Westmont. All of these centers are old school sites. More than half of the total square footage of these centers is located in the southern part of town where only 27% of the population resides. As with swimming pools, there is a trend to consolidate smaller neighborhood facilities into more efficient district-serving facilities.

Ridgeview Center should be studied carefully. Attendance at this center has declined by 22% in the past five years, and the center now serves fewer than 40 persons per day. The possibility of consolidating Ridgeview and Brown-Penn programs should be explored. This would allow a concentration of staff and financial resources at one location rather than two.

Further consolidation should take place by constructing a new district-serving recreation center at Stanford Park to meet both present and future needs. This will permit the phasing out of Highland Center and lead to a higher level of service for all city residents.

4. District Park Stanford Park is ideally located to serve as a district park. Recent land acquisitions have almost doubled the size of this park, and new thoroughfare plans make the area readily accessible. More than 90% of the City's population lives within 2.5 miles of the site. This 2.5 mile radius also includes large areas in the Northeast quadrant of the City which will be subject to future annexation.

Building on the basic facilities within the park, functions should be expanded to include:

- A 5,000 SF Outdoor Pool
- A 18,000 SF Recreation Center with 2 gyms; Fitness, aerobic and meeting rooms, Game rooms; and Air conditioned program space
- 1/2 mile Walking Track
- Picnic Shelters
- Practice Soccer and Softball Fields
- Parking, Outside Toilets
- Play Areas
- Natural Areas

5. Departmental Offices The existing offices are poorly located and poorly designed. A new building should be built at Stanford Park (apart from the Recreation Center) to house these offices.

6. Maintenance Areas The present maintenance facility is inadequate and must be replaced. The old public works area, while in need of renovation, can be adapted at a cost smaller than building a new space. This area is well located to serve this function.

7. Cooperative Efforts The Department should take a lead role in efforts to coordinate recreation programs throughout the area. The YMCA, the schools, County government and groups such as BLAST Soccer and Arts Council all offer opportunities for joint planning, as do other recreation systems in the Unifour area.

A Recreation Coordinating Council should be formed by the Department. All agencies conducting recreation programs should be invited to regularly scheduled meetings.

8. Soccer Complex Interest in soccer continues to grow rapidly among all age groups. There is a regional need for a major soccer complex. While the City should not be solely responsible for this project, city residents (along with the region) would benefit greatly from it. The complex should consist of 10-12 fields and ancillary facilities (clubhouse, toilets, concessions, parking, picnic areas, etc.), and would require 25-40 acres of topographically suitable land.

Ideally, the Complex would be funded with a combination of public and private funds, with each governmental unit and interest group contributing to both capital and operating costs.

Responsibility for developing and operating the facility could be given to a foundation or to a separate managing authority.

9. Passive Recreation Geitner, City, Winkler and Hilton Parks form the basis of the passive recreation system. A bikeway program connecting City Park to Hilton Park is being constructed. There are few opportunities to link other parks into a greenway system, however efforts should continue to extend the bike way - greenway program, and especially in the vicinity of Neill Clark Park.

The Cloninger Mill property should be made accessible by developing a parking area and trail system.

The seven acre Grayfield property should be reserved for future passive use.

The Caldwell County site near MDI should also be reserved for future use.

10. Neighborhood Facilities The City has acquired a 13 acre tract at Sandy

Pines which should be developed as a neighborhood park. There is also the possibility of developing a neighborhood park jointly with the City Schools at the proposed middle school site off 29th Avenue, NE. It is likely that both of these sites will be needed within the next 10 - 15 years.



B. RECOMMENDED IMPROVEMENTS: IMMEDIATE PHASE

Projects are listed in the general order of priority in three time phases: Immediate (1-5 years), Intermediate (6-10 years), and Long Range (11 years and beyond).

Cost estimates are based on the cost of recent similar projects in North Carolina. These estimates are general in nature. Final costs are dependent in a number of variables. All estimates are in 1997 constant dollars. Cost increases should be budgeted for projects scheduled in later years.

Immediate Phase (1-5 Years)

1. Minor Improvements to Existing Areas

It is assumed that these items, each \$5,000 or less, will be funded from operating budgets over the next 2-3 years.

Brown Penn/Ridgeview Center Complex

Brown Penn Center

<i>Cabinets in center director's office</i>	\$500
<i>Repair roof on new addition</i>	4,000
<i>Replace or repair score clock</i>	3,000
<i>Paint exterior wood and metal</i>	2,000

Brown Penn Senior Center

<i>Repair broken floor tiles, strip and seal. Replace broken ceiling tiles, paint casement windows, repair broken bench in front of Center, repair window blinds.</i>	550
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Park Exterior

<i>Remove tennis courts and lights adjacent to Ridgeview Center</i>	4,800
<i>Install a score clock for softball field</i>	3,000
<i>Close 3rd Street</i>	
<i>Repair and paint chain link fence beside road, remove gate to small parking lot, repair broken benches, repair asphalt path at playground.</i>	1,200

Civitan Park

<i>Repair all eroded areas and install paving, water diversion or plantings. Areas include hills between park activity areas, path behind ballfield backstop and lawn areas beside street</i>	3,000
<i>Remove wood and chain climber and tire apparatus, paint shelter, repair broken picnic tables, paint football goalpost</i>	700
<i>Remove gates at football field and install barriers, repair concrete at basketball slab.</i>	400
<i>Remove the skateboard / bike ramp in lower parking lot. Cancel the agreement with the adjacent property owner.</i>	
<i>Repair or replace broken score board</i>	3,500

Cliff Teague Park

<i>Remove all play equipment and wood swings</i>	1,000
<i>Remove A-Frame swings, remove the cable across the main access path from the 9 space parking lot. Replace with removable post, repair railroad tie steps, fill in and repair the path at the ends of the bridge.</i>	700

Cloninger Mill

See Capital Improvements

Fairbrook Optimist Park

<i>Replace toilet room doors with metal doors</i>	600
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Geitner / Rotary Park

<i>Redesign lake front hillside to control water runoff and foot traffic and prevent erosion.</i>	3,500
<i>Repair and relocate boat docks to old police firing range access area.</i>	2,500
<i>Repair and relocate fishing pier to the existing boat ramp. Rebuild shelter</i>	3,500
<i>Make repairs, paint and replace rotten boards and water fountain at the toilet building. Move soil away from the bottom of the wall boards on the back side of the building.</i>	2,000
<i>Repair notice board and paint, relocate 3 picnic tables away from the lake front to the picnic area, remove benches and reinstall them beside the lake.</i>	750

Grayfield

Undeveloped (Reserve for open space)

Hickory Optimist Park

<i>Repair eroded areas, remove stumps in the lawn, paint fence at tennis courts, paint play equipment.</i>	1,800
<i>Remove large oak tree on hill above ball field. Erosion has undermined the roots.</i>	2,000
<i>Convert tennis court to sand volleyball</i>	3,000
<i>Paint snack bar / rest rooms and replace rolled roofing with shingle roof</i>	3,000

Highland Center / Park

<i>Repair eroded areas</i>	3,000
Highland Center	
<i>Install ventilation in gymnasium</i>	3,000
<i>Strip locker room floors and reseal</i>	500
<i>Repair or replace score clock</i>	3,000
<i>Improve entrance lighting</i>	300

Hilton Park

<i>Canoe launch ramp - divert water causing erosion, move dumpster to burning area, creating 8 additional parking spaces, repair play equipment, reset fitness trail posts, move fit trail from shelter area.</i>	600
<i>Pave end of concrete bridge to eliminate wash outs, remove climbing wall</i>	500
<i>Refinish laminated wood supporting the bridge to the boardwalk</i>	1,100

Hickory City Park

<i>Raise grade around picnic shelter with non-erodible material</i>	800
<i>Paint picnic shelter rest rooms, control erosion beside parking lot for picnic shelter, paint the tennis building, repair wind curtains, remove junk pile behind the VFW Post near picnic shelter</i>	1,500

Jaycee Park

<i>Remove defective play equipment, including spring animal, pipe maze, and the sliding board on hill, inspect metal for rust</i>	900
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<i>Remove lights and electrical boxes at the basketball court</i>	300
Kiwanis Park	
<i>Replace slide bolt locks on the upper ball field restroom, restrooms cannot be locked open, remove hillside slide, remove barrel roller play equipment, replace rotten boards on small shelter, place dumpster on pad beside parking lot and screen.</i>	1,500
Neill Clark Recreation Park	
Multi-purpose building	
<i>Replace lights with recessed light fixtures or place covers on all lights (65 covers). Exposed florescent bulbs are a safety hazard.</i>	1,000
<i>Sheetrock and paint main entrance</i>	1,000
<i>Build storage bins/area for gymnastics equipment</i>	500
<i>Replace worn out gymnastics mats</i>	2,000
<i>Install concrete walkways outside rooms 12, 13, & 14</i>	1,500
<i>Install 30 cubby holes for individual storage in room 14</i>	500
<i>Replace all damaged ceiling tiles</i>	1,200
<i>Build spray room for ceramics</i>	3,500
Gymnasium	
<i>Install high volume ventilation system</i>	3,000
<i>Repair water leak in weight room</i>	500
<i>Install partitions in men's toilets in gymnasium dressing rooms.</i>	2,500
Park Exterior	
<i>Bury cable wire behind multi-purpose building, place dumpster on concrete pad and screen, repair broken concrete steps leading to gymnasium, paint entrance gates and basketball posts, replace cable and post barriers between gymnasium and multi-purpose building.</i>	1,500
Sandy Pines	
<i>Undeveloped (future neighborhood park)</i>	
Southside Heights Park	
<i>Replace I-beams and cable with wood fence or guard rail (approx. 400 ft.)</i>	1,200
Stanford Park	
<i>Replace post and cable with fence or wood guard rail (approx. 150 ft.)</i>	450
<i>Remove railroad tie hillside bleachers and landscape to prevent erosion</i>	500
<i>Implement planting program to screen off the National Guard operation from the park</i>	3,000
<i>Repair eroded areas on hills leading from upper ball field</i>	500
St. Stephens Park	
<i>Repair and paint all deteriorated wood surfaces</i>	1,500
<i>Install automatic water control system</i>	4,800
West Hickory Park	
<i>Stump removal</i>	150
Westmont Park	
Gymnasium	
<i>Install ventilation</i>	3,000
<i>Strip restroom floors and reseal, place covers on all interior lights, remove cleaning materials from the rest rooms, close door to rest room and ventilate.</i>	400
<i>Repair or replace score clock</i>	3,000
Senior Center	

<i>Install ice machine</i>	3,500
<i>Strip tile floors and reseal</i>	500
Park Exterior	
<i>Install walking track</i>	1,500
<i>Remove retaining wall beside gymnasium</i>	300
Winkler Park	
<i>Naturalize slopes created by grading</i>	2,000
TOTAL OF MINOR IMPROVEMENTS	\$128,700

2. New Capital Projects

Winkler Park

Install large group shelter with access road, parking and toilets \$80,000

Lake Hickory (Police Range)

Double boat launching ramp, install boat dock, parking lot and picnic area. 68,000

Maintenance and Administration

Relocate to old public works building 100,000

Purchase dump truck 35,500

Upgrade computer system 50,000

Glenn Hilton Park

New toilet building 60,000

Stanford Park

District Park Development, Phase I

Master site plan, parking, practice soccer and softball fields, 1/2 mile walking track, 5,000 SF outdoor pool and bath house with related facilities 680,000

Brown-Penn / Ridgeview

New 1/2 mile walking track, grassed play area, landscaping 39,700

Continue to acquire land adjoining park No Est.

Kiwanis Park

Upgrade walking track 18,000

Replace play equipment 6,000

Neill Clark Park

1/2 mile walking track 26,000

Replace roof 100,000

Cliff Teague Park

Replace play equipment with all new small play complex (climber, swings, slide). 10,000

Geitner / Rotary Park

Renovate multi-purpose building, lower and insulate ceiling, paint, upgrade kitchen, install lake view windows, replace heating system, install air conditioning 30,000

Repair lake wall (100 ft.) and place a paved walking path beside the wall (600 ft.) 15,000

Hickory Optimist Park

Add complementary play apparatus to existing equipment (4 pieces) 10,000

Highland Center / Park

Repair gutter drains around Center 6,000

Neill Clark Park

Multi-Purpose Building

<i>Replace flooring in areas used for dancing, karate, fitness workout, etc.</i>	9,000
<i>Commercial fitness equipment (8 pieces)</i>	20,000
<i>Replace worn carpet</i>	7,500
<i>Equip kitchen to hold and serve catered food</i>	15,000
Gymnasium	
<i>Replace gymnasium lights with metal halide lights</i>	12,000
St. Stephens Park	
<i>Remove the existing play equipment and replace with a small play complex (climber, swings, slide).</i>	7,500
<i>Install a vinyl liner in the pool</i>	40,000
Westmont Park	
Senior Center	
<i>Expand the main assembly room in the Senior Center (1,000 SF)</i>	100,000
<i>Replace fitness equipment with commercial equipment (4 pieces)</i>	10,000
Civitan Park	
<i>Replace play equipment with a new small play complex (climber, swings, slide)</i>	10,000
Cloninger Mill	
<i>Parking for 20 cars, hiking trail</i>	25,000
Stanford Park	
District Park Development, Phase II	
<i>18,000 SF Recreation Center with double gyms, dressing rooms, activity room, meeting rooms, game rooms, parking, etc.</i>	2,350,000
New department officers - 2,000 SF	180,000
Sandy Pines	
Neighborhood Park	
<i>Develop neighborhood park with practice fields, picnicking, parking, toilets, a walking track, play equipment, multi-use area and volleyball</i>	285,000
Soccer Complex	
<i>The appropriate role of the City in financing this project depends on a number of variable factors including size, location, type of organization, persons served, etc. Therefore, no cost estimates are possible at this time.</i>	
IMMEDIATE PHASE TOTAL	\$4,404,700



INTERMEDIATE PHASE (6-10 YEARS)

During this stage, needs are largely dependent on population growth and annexation. By 2007, Hickory's population is projected to be +/- 40,000. Assuming the proposed development program is completed, land and facilities are largely adequate to serve this number; however, land should be acquired in anticipation of further growth.

Growth is most likely to continue to the Northeast. Twenty to 30 acres of land should be acquired in this area for a future District Park. This park should be at least 3 miles from Stanford Park.

Land for a neighborhood park should be acquired at the new city middle school.

The Mt. View area is also expected to grow. Land for a Neighborhood Park (12-15 acres) should be acquired in this area.

Specific facilities (based on a population of 40,000) needed include one adult league softball field and one youth softball field. These facilities should be located at the proposed District Park, where space will allow for future development.

In principle, league play facilities should only be located in District Parks. Facilities in Neighborhood Parks should be limited to practice fields.



LONG RANGE PHASE (11 YEARS AND BEYOND)

Again, long range development is dependent on population growth. The standards recommended for land acquisition, facility development and service areas have served the City well and are recommended to guide future actions.

By 2020, Hickory's population is estimated to be +/- 48,000.

If the recommended program has been followed, the City will have acquired and developed land as follows:

1. Immediate Phase (1-5 Years)

- developed Stanford Park as a District Park
- made Cloninger Mill property accessible
- developed Neighborhood Park at Sandy Pines
- significantly improved existing parks
- worked jointly with others to develop a Soccer complex.

2. Intermediate Phase (6-10 years).

- acquired 12-15 acres in the Mt. View area for a Neighborhood Park
- acquired 12-15 acres at the new City Middle School for a Neighborhood Park
- acquired 20-30 acres in the Northwest for a District Park.

3. Long Range Phase (11 years and beyond)

- developed the three parks above, concentrating league activities at the District Park



FINANCING THE PROJECTS

Financing for public recreation is dependent on conventional methods such as general obligation bonds and general revenues including property and sales taxes. User fees can help defray operating costs, but cannot be expected to amortize capital expenditures.

The N.C. General Assembly established the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF) in 1993 to provide funding for the state parks system, local park and recreation projects, and coastal beach access programs. It is anticipated that approximately \$5 million will be available for local projects this fiscal year, with a \$250,000 maximum on individual grants. State funds must be matched dollar-for-dollar with local revenues. This is an excellent source of funding.

The Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund administered by the State has minor matching grant funds available from time to time for outdoor recreation projects.

Impact fees have been used successfully in several western states. These fees are imposed on new developments to help defray the cost of bringing municipal services on line. The Town of Apex has recently adopted such a fee for recreation. Alternately, Hickory's land dedication ordinance will continue to produce revenues on land areas which can be brought into the parks system.

Several local governments have established not-for-profit foundations to encourage donations to the system. Foundations, businesses and individuals seem more comfortable giving to a foundation rather than directly to the City.

After the Foundation is created, a gifts catalog of desired improvements should be prepared. The catalog should list, and preferably illustrate, each desired improvement along with its cost. A system for recognizing donors or honorees should be created; gift acknowledgment cards, etc.

Items to be included in the gifts catalog should have donor appeal. Some examples are park benches, special purpose room, memorial trees, walks, landscaped areas and picnic shelters.

A companion program is the Adopt-a-Park program, where agencies or groups contribute time or money to help maintain or improve an area. As an example, a civic club or garden club might adopt a landscaping project. Variations include Adopt-a-Shelter and memorial tree programs.

Once the initial investment is recouped, revenues generated from L. P. Frans Stadium could be directed to parks and recreation capital projects.



APPENDIX A SWIMMING POOL

This report recommends a pool (approximately 5,00 square feet) designed to meet a variety of needs, with separate areas for instructional, competitive and fitness swimming and for diving. Special provisions will be made for the handicapped.

Any multiple purpose facility necessarily compromises some of the proposed functions. The proposed design minimizes these compromises and adequately meets the needs of all of the proposed user groups. Following are details of the design.

1. **Main Pool Area.** The pool is designed to accommodate all levels of swimming skills. Swimming proficiency levels are physically divided from each other. The main pool is actually three pools in one. The shallow end of the pool contains water which varied in depth from forty-two inches to five feet. This portion of the pool will be used primarily for recreation purposes and for the teaching of swimming. The deep water area contains water from five feet to eight feet in depth. Most public pools today do not have diving boards. Should boards be desired, water depth must increase to eleven feet.
2. **Competitive Swimming.** The third function of the main pool area is for competitive swimming. This pool is an official short-course pool, seventy-five feet, one inch long with six swimming lanes, each of which is seven feet wide. The pool can be used for major competition. Other special provisions for competitive swimming which are proposed include a roll-out gutter system which minimizes wave action, tile lane markers and end wall targets, recessed anchors for lane ropes, starting blocks, backstroke flags, false start ropes, etc., and provisions for electric timing and for spectators.
3. **Training Pool Area.** The training pool area contains approximately 1,370 square feet. Water in this area should vary in depth from two to three feet. Provision of this area will make it possible to eliminate a wading pool.

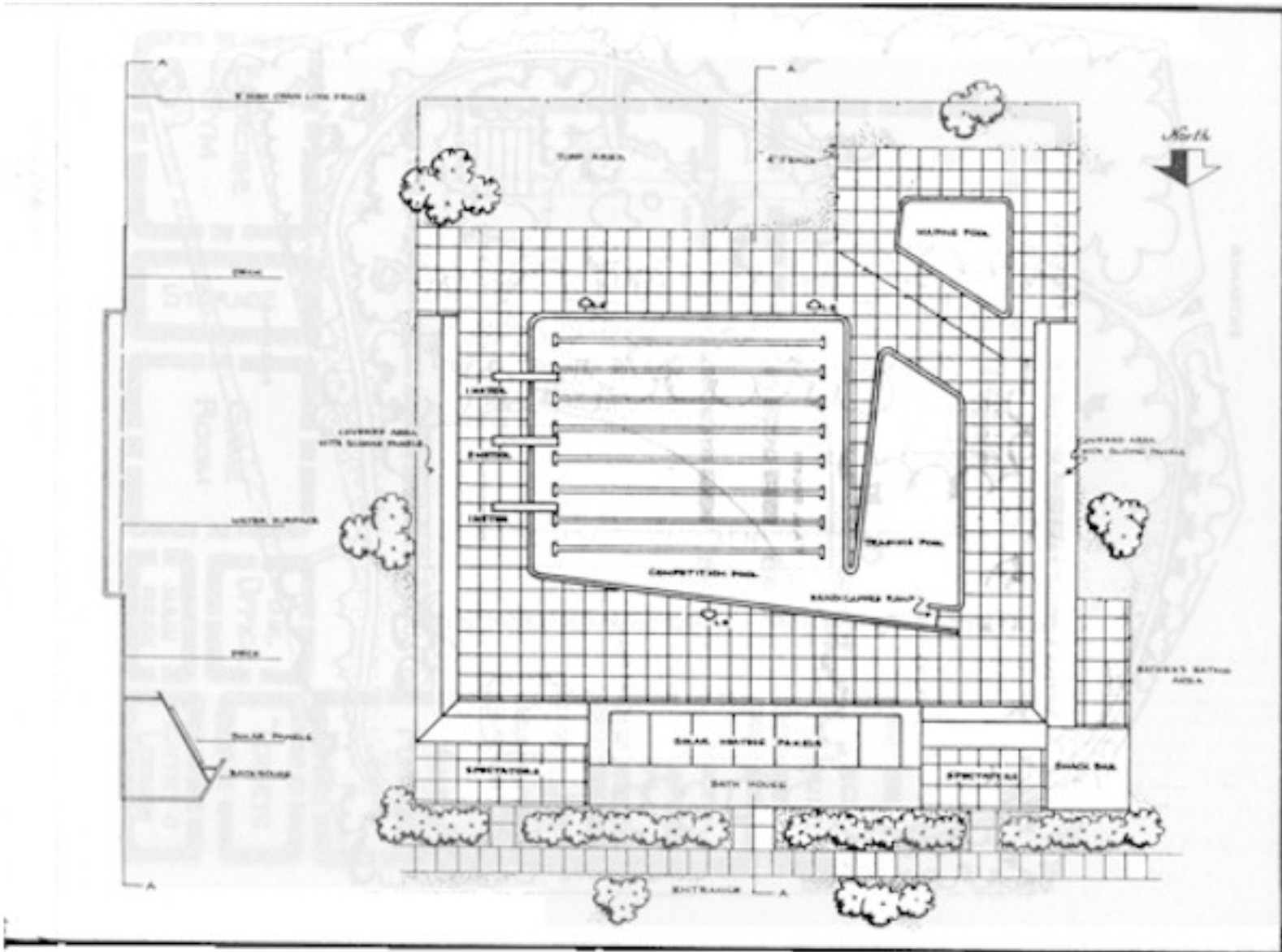
Invariably, it is suggested that short-course pools use metric dimension, i.e. 25 meters (82'6") instead of 25 yards (75'). The Council for National Cooperation on Aquatics recommends the following:

"The short-course competitive pool dimension in the United States is 25 yards and is expected to remain so for an indefinite period. All competition indoors is conducted in the 25-yard course; 25 meters should only be considered as a secondary course. Outdoor pools, where possible, should be constructed with 50 meter competitive courses. Where funds do not permit the construction of a 50 meter course, a 25 yard course should be built. At present, there is little justification for building pools at 25 meters, since this dimension is not a recognized competition swimming course in the United States. There are too many 25 yard courses in existence to make it practical to consider changing to the 25

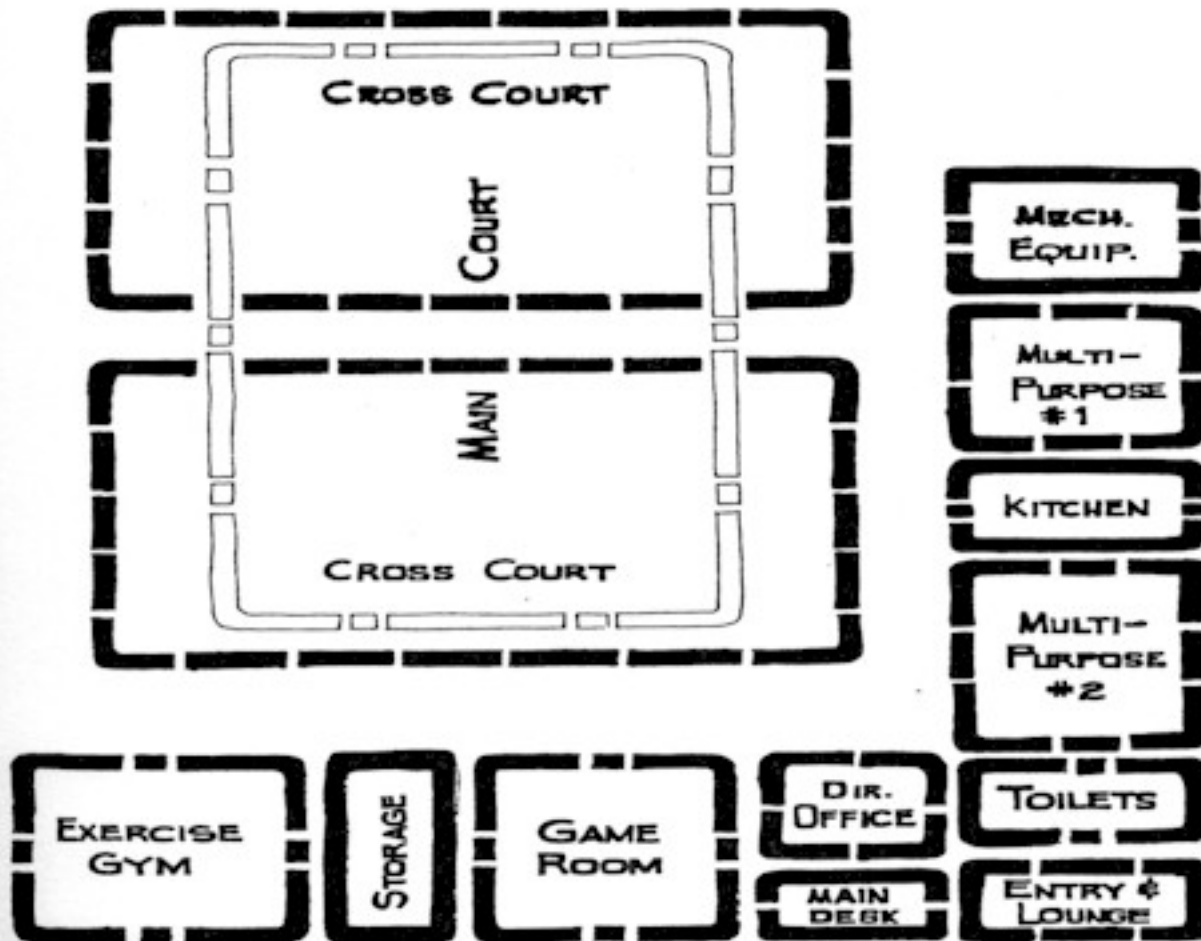
meter course in the foreseeable future."

Serious consideration should be given to installing a solar collection system for heating the pool water. Consideration should also be given to modified indoor-outdoor designs which will enhance the use of the pool during the summer months.

Sketch of the Proposed Pool

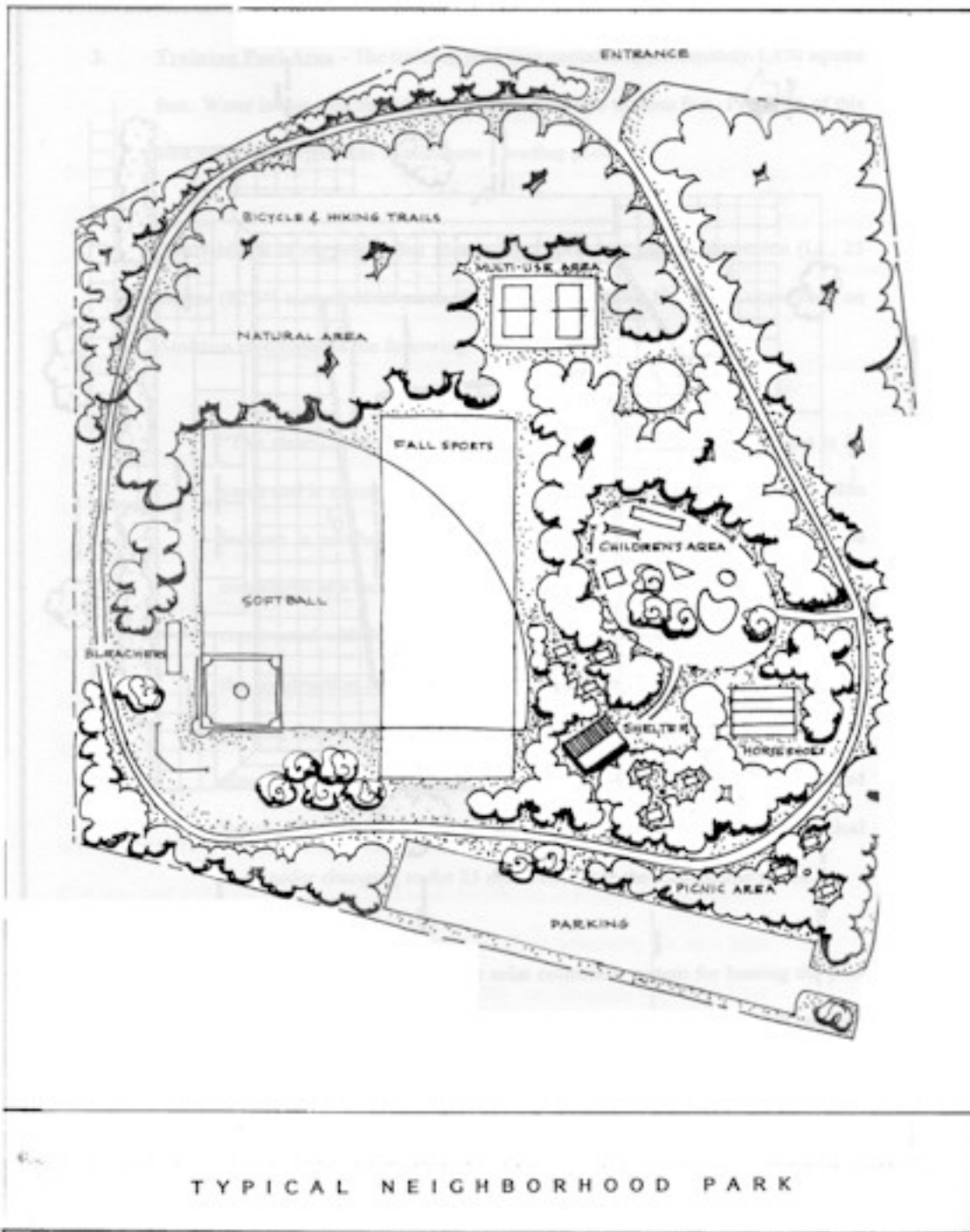






*SCHEMATIC PLAN:
PROPOSED RECREATION CENTER,
HICKORY, N.C.*









PARKS & RECREATION MASTER PLAN
LEGEND

	EXISTING	PROPOSED
NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS	●	●
DISTRICT PARKS	▲	▲
PASSIVE / OPEN SPACE	●	●
LAKE ACCESS	▶	▶

PREPARED BY
GARDNER GIDLEY & ASSOCIATES
HICKORY, NORTH CAROLINA
1997



MATRIX

	Acres	Rec. Center	Senior Center	Pools	Tennis	Play Areas	Softball Fields	Youth Fields	Volleyball/Soccer	Basketball	Picnic Facilities	Concessions/Toilets	Trail/Track	Practice Fields	Other
Brown-Penn/ Ridgeview	9.6	2	1	1	3L	2	1L			25	2	1			
Civitan Park	7.5				2	1	1L		1L	1	3	1			
Chil Teague Park	8.1				1	1				1					
Cloinger Mill	20.0														
Fairbrook Optimist Park	6.6						1L				2	1			
Geitner/ Rotary Park	96.0										1	1			Boat Launch
Grayfield	6.97														
Hickory Optimist Park	6.0				1	1		1L		1	1	1			
Hickory City Park	15.0				8L						4	1	1		
Highland Center/Park	6.0	1				1			1	1				1	
Hilton Park	59.5					2					14	1	4		Nature Trail Boat Launch
JayCee Park/ Adm. Bldg.	5.0					1		1L		1	1	1			
Kiwanis Park	16.0				1	1		4L		1	3	2	1		
Neill Clark Rec. Park	22.73	1				1			4L		1				
Sandy Pines (Undeveloped)	13.0														
Southside/ Heights Park	12.66					1				1	1			1	
St. Stephens Park	7.0			1							1				
Stanford Park	25.5 22.0				1	1	3L			1	2	2			
West Hickory Park	5.6			1		1	1L			5		1			
Westmont Center/ Senior Center	3.0	1	1			1				1	1				
Winkler Park/ Stadium	50.0					1								1	2
TOTAL	423.76	5	2	3	17	16	7	6	6	12	37	14	8	2	

CATAWBA COUNTY SITE OF ± 150 ACRES IS NOT INCLUDED IN TOTAL ACRES.

MEASURING PROGRAM EFFECTIVENESS

While accountability for all local government services has long been a standing fact, recent budget shortfalls and increasing pressures on tax dollars vividly illustrate the need for employing more sophisticated means of continually evaluating the cost effectiveness of recreation services.

Because of the nature of the services offered, recreation programs are especially difficult to evaluate and, as a consequence, most local government recreation services are ineffectively measured. Recreation activities are, at times, highly structured and organized and at other times, extremely casual; thus, we have little objective data, such as number of books checked out or gallons of water per day, by which to measure the program. In addition, recreation activities involve both small and large segments of time and involve both participants and spectators. Traditional methods of measuring recreation services include dollars spent per capita, daily attendance figures, recreation facility and land inventories, "feedback" from recreation advisory councils and similar groups, and occasional surveys of recreation interests. These methods are valuable and should be continued.

The Recreation Department currently maintains attendance records for many activities and areas, including league play athletics; special activities; scheduled classes.

Records are difficult to keep for less controlled areas, and for casual visitors to certain recreation areas. While attendance figures for these unstructured recreation experiences are extremely difficult to obtain, spot checks should be made in order to secure periodic estimates.

Some efforts have been made at cost accounting; however, not all costs are assigned. The system below is effective for determining the actual cost per participant in various activities, and can aid in determining which programs are cost effective. Costs are allocated in several ways.

1. **Direct costs** are those incurred as a result of the particular activity. Supplies and the fees paid the instructor in a crafts class are examples of direct costs.
2. **Fixed costs** are those costs which are incurred regardless of whether the activity takes place or not. Painting, heating and janitorial costs are examples of fixed costs.
3. **Indirect costs** include supervisory personnel, vehicles, etc. These costs may be combined in some instances with fixed costs.
4. **Administrative burden** is the pro-rated cost of administrative expenses, determined by applying a percentage of total administrative expense as it relates to the cost of a particular program as a percentage of the overall budget. As an example, the cost per participant and the cost per participant occasion can be computed for a particular program (say, a summer playground). Thus: (all figures are hypothetical).

Participation

Number of regular participants	30
Number of participant occasions (30 x 90 days)	2,700
Number of spectators	500
Total occasions (b and c above)	3,200

Cost

Direct costs	
Activity leader	xx
Supplies, travel, etc.	xx
Fixed Costs	
Maintenance, etc.	xx
Indirect costs	
Say, 5% of supervisor time +	
Expenses (auto, etc.)	xx
Administrative burden	xx

Total Cost

	xxx
Cost per participant	$\frac{xxx}{30} = xy$
Cost per participant occasion	$\frac{xxx}{2,700} = xyy$
Cost per occasion (including spectators)	$\frac{xxx}{3,200} = xyyy$

Such financial information, applied to each program or activity area, can be a valuable administrative tool in guiding future program expenditures.

Similar cost analysis systems should be kept to determine the actual cost of maintaining specific areas such as Hilton Park.

Two government studies offer an insight into the evaluation process. The first of these is **How Effective Are Your Community Recreation Services?**, prepared by the United States Department of the Interior. (*U. S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, Washington, D.C., April 1973*) The second is **Measuring the Effectiveness of Local Government Services - Recreation**, published by the Urban Institute. (*The Urban Institute, 2100 M Street, NW, Washington, D.C., 20037, 1971*)

These reports should be required reading for recreation administrators as they contain a number of valuable suggestions for measuring the delivery of recreation services.

The following programs are recommended:

1. Effective measurement should be an integral, routine function of local government departments of recreation. Just as local government currently maintain and analyze

similar records concerning their program effectiveness.

2. An annual citizens survey should be included as a part of every medium and large sized jurisdiction's recreation measurement system. Feedback from a representative cross-section of citizens, a primary source of data for many measures such as citizen perceptions and reasons for non-participation, can best be collected only through a citizen survey. The information obtained from this source is probably the core of a really useful effectiveness measurement system.
3. In developing an effectiveness measurement system, initial efforts should include measurement for which data are already collected or are easily available. These include physical accessibility, attendance, physical safety and program variety.
4. Data analysis should be part of every measurement system.

Methods used to accomplish these recommendations should include the following measures:

1. **Total attendance and participant hours for each major activity or facility during a given time period.** Attendance figures are relatively easy to collect on structured programs. Systematic samplings should be used to measure participation in informal activities on representative occasions throughout the season. Information should also be collected on participant hours. One measure frequently used is a participant occasion. For facilities served primarily by vehicular traffic, traffic counters may be employed.
2. **Number of percent of different participants and non-participants for each major recreation service.** Attendance figures do not tell how many different persons receive a particular recreation service. Certain recreation activities lend themselves well to this type of record keeping, but specific portions of the population should be sampled regularly by survey methods to identify the number of participants and non-participants in specific services. An indirect way to estimate participation rates is to survey random samples of participants to determine the approximate number of times such persons used the facility during a specific time period. This information can be extrapolated to determine the number of non-participants.
3. **Number and percent of persons living within and not within accessible distance of a specific facility or activity.** Geographical accessibility is a principal factor in the provision of recreation opportunities. This plan specifically addresses this problem in detail, but in a continuing evaluation, such considerations as number and nonautomobile users, physical barriers and other "frustration factors" should be considered.
4. **Crowdedness** Overcrowded facilities can adversely affect certain types of activity. Specific measures of waiting times, number of persons turned away, ratio of usage to capacity at various times and number of times citizens feel crowded in recreation situations can be effective measurements of use.
5. **Variety, number of different activities, facilities or features available at specific times.** To illustrate variety, a simple itemization of the number of activities that are available will usually be sufficient. Accessibility needs to be considered in measuring the variety of activities available to specific clientele groups, such as communities. Any survey of the community should also include activities of interest not currently available

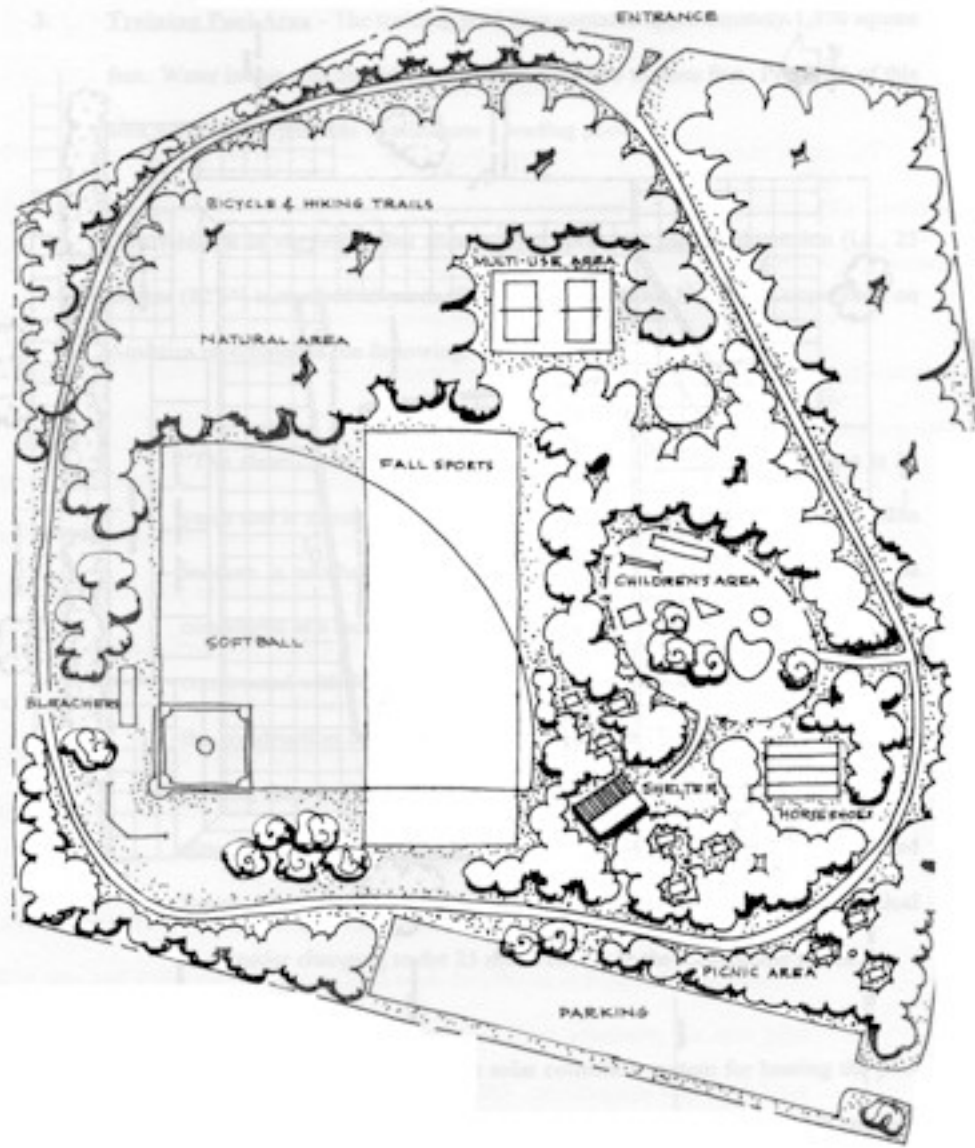
to determine new areas of possible service.

6. **Safety; number and rates of accidents, injuries, et cetera.** Obtaining information on accidents, injuries, etc., should present no major difficulty. These records should be maintained for specific facilities, and accident rates can be projected.
7. **Physical attractiveness of recreation areas and facilities.** Concepts of physical attractiveness vary from person to person. To obtain representative opinions, it is important to sample the viewpoints of both users and non-users of specific areas. This sort of subjective information can be included in the periodic recreation survey.
8. **Overall perceived recreation satisfaction level.** Again this type of subjective question might be a part of the periodic survey.
9. **Delinquency and crime rates** This information may be available from the Police Department, and can provide very specific information.
10. **Economic impacts.** The economic well-being of the community can have a profound impact on recreation services. During periods of high unemployment, for example, many people have more time available for recreation. Those economic factors which have an effect or are affected by recreation services should be periodically measured.
11. **Knowing the clientele.** Specific information on communities is essential base data in determining recreation needs and interests. This information, which should be periodically updated, should be studied to determine population characteristics in specific areas in order to design more effective program delivery systems.
12. **Annual survey.** The annual survey should be a part of the evaluation program. The survey should be designed to local informational requirements, and data, when compiled, should be thoroughly analyzed to complement other data. The cost of the above program, in all probability, will amount to roughly one to two percent of a park and recreation budget, and this cost seems justified in terms of the results which such a study would yield.

A note of caution is in order. To be truly effective, these surveys should be designed and interpreted (at least initially) by persons professionally trained in survey techniques.



ENTRANCE



TYPICAL NEIGHBORHOOD PARK

PREFACE

In October 1996, Gardner Gidley & Associates were employed by the City of Hickory to prepare a comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan, updating a plan prepared by this firm in 1979. Most of the goals set forth in the 1979 study have been obtained. As the City and County have grown, new challenges have emerged and new plans must be developed to meet new and growing needs.

Public involvement in the planning process has included four public meetings, regular meetings with the Recreation Commission and numerous meetings with individuals representing a variety of agencies and interests. Regular meetings have also been held with the Department and Planning staffs.

As in 1979, this present study consists of an analysis of park and recreation needs, an inventory and evaluation of existing areas and facilities, and a plan and recommendations for meeting the immediate, intermediate, and long-range needs for programs and facilities for both active and passive recreation. The study recognizes the roles to be played by voluntary agencies, the County, the schools, the City and private suppliers of recreation in meeting these needs.

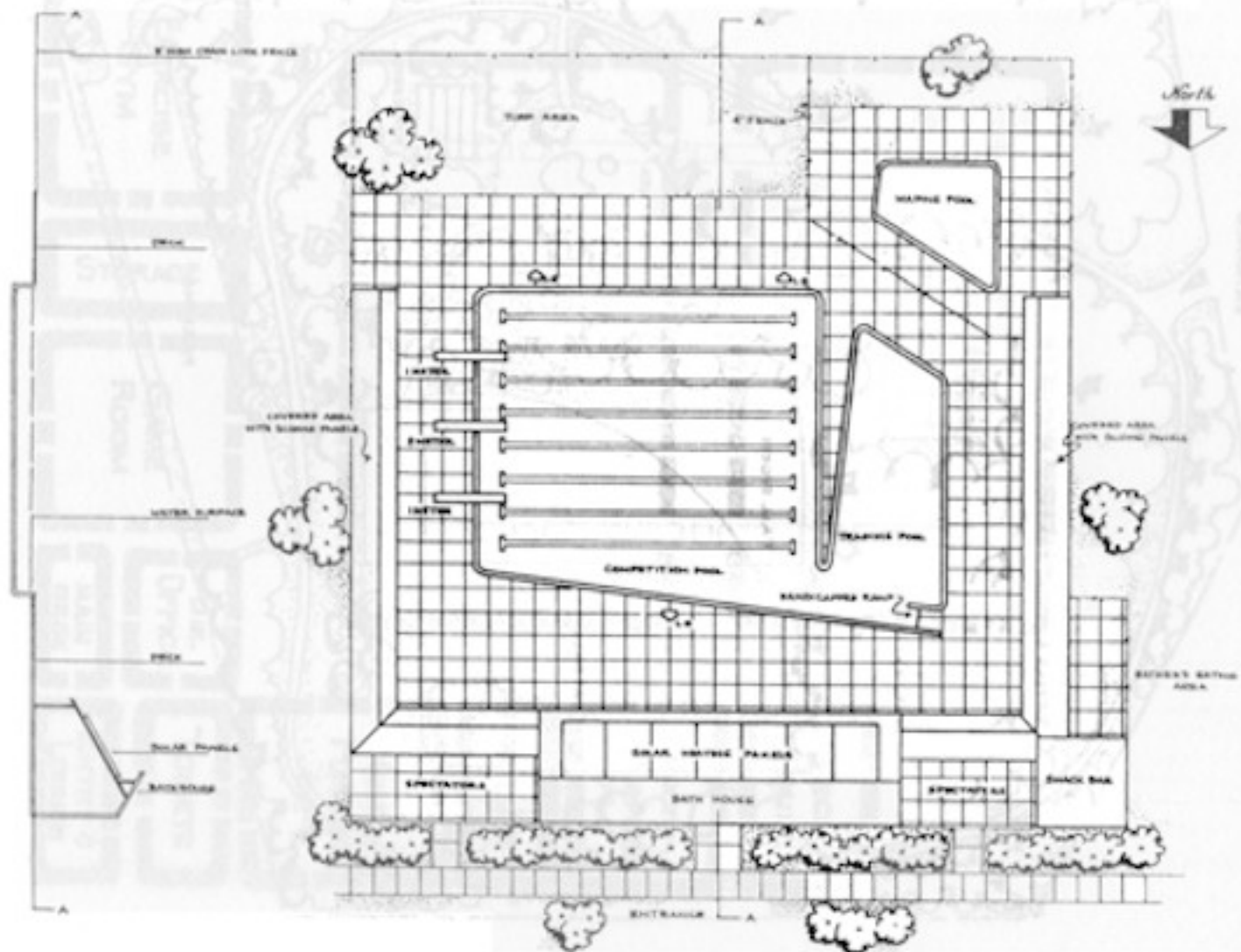
The plan is concerned with principles as well as with specific recommendations. It is a viable document designed to be adapted as necessary. As needs change, plans must change with them. Thus, this plan should be periodically reviewed in light of ever-changing conditions. The principles and standards herein have been developed in response to specific needs. Using these principles and standards, it is possible to project the needs for additional areas and facilities as the City grows in the future.

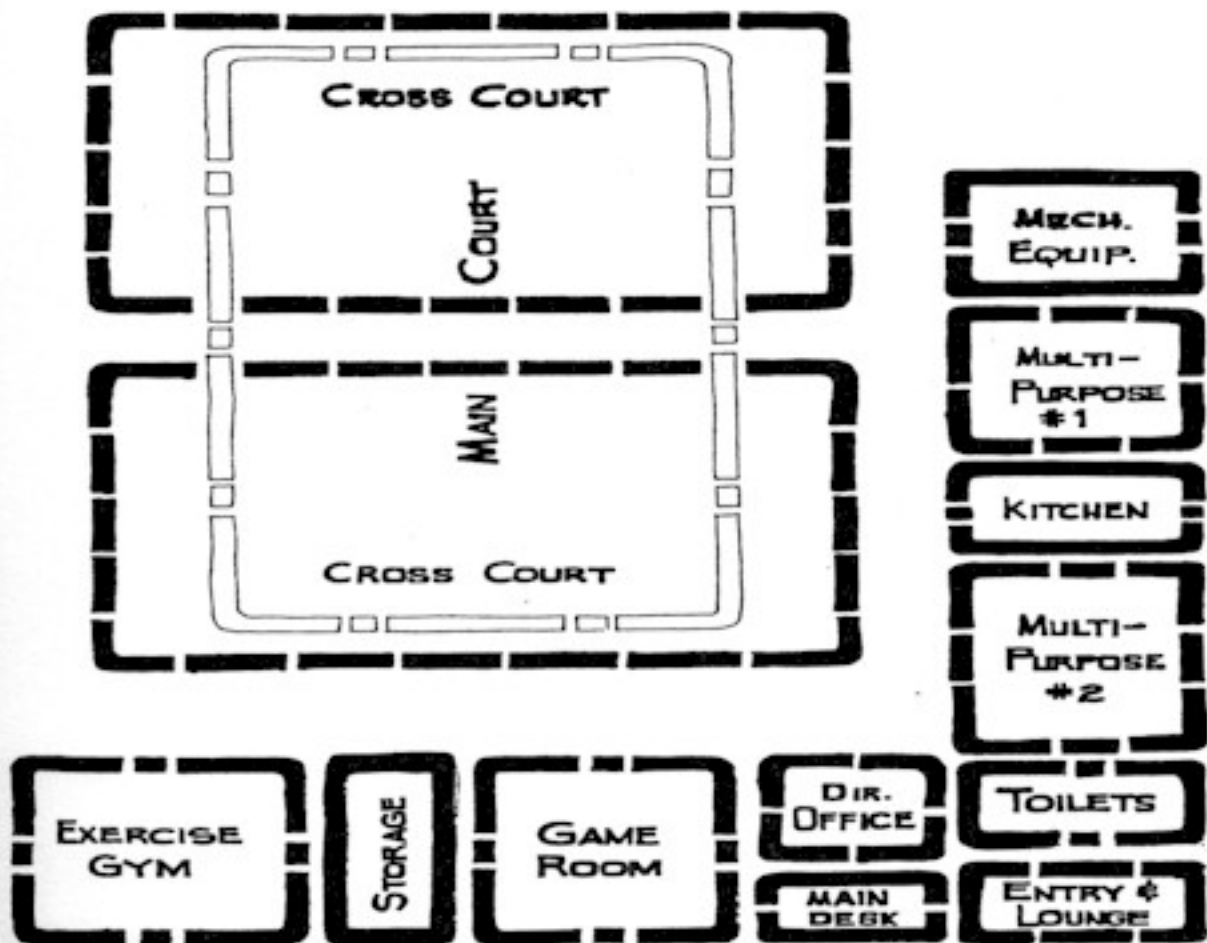
The plan is an element of the comprehensive planning process for the City. The comprehensive planning process includes many elements dealing with population trends, economy, land use, zoning, transportation and utilities. Each of these elements, and many more, affect parks and recreation planning.

This report deals with recreation needs in three time frames: immediate, intermediate, and long-range. A specific development program is recommended for each. The report uses local and national recreation preferences and needs to establish space and facility standards for recreation and parks in Hickory.

The quality of recreation sites and their development, the adequacy of space and facilities, and the optimum use of both public and private resources are key recommendations of this report.







*SCHEMATIC PLAN:
 PROPOSED RECREATION CENTER,
 HICKORY, N.C.*