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-Town of Blacksburg Parks and Recreation Master Plan

Introduction

The residents of Blacksburg are highly satisfied with their quality of life, according to the Blacksburg Comprehensive Plan 2046, which states, “The citizens of Blacksburg respect and maintain certain key community values to achieve a quality of life so one can “live, work, shop, and play” within the Town of Blacksburg.” These values are reflected throughout the Comprehensive Plan:

- A “whole-life community”
- An intellectually and culturally stimulating environment
- Economic development
- Environmental stewardship
- Open government
- A sense of regionalism

This Master Plan for the Blacksburg Department of Parks and Recreation represents the culmination of many hours of research and consensus-building, a vision of recreational amenities, a shared vision for protecting the natural environment; and an offering of transportation alternatives. The Master Plan is specific to the unique characteristics of Blacksburg: the needs and desires of Town residents; its demographics reflecting the presence of a large university population; its valued small-town charm; and its setting among natural amenities.

The Master Plan is a comprehensive planning tool to create an integrated park system for the Town by defining and illustrating recommended short- and long-range improvements. The purpose of this plan is to provide guidance in the growth and development of Blacksburg’s park and recreation facilities and programming consistent with the Department’s goals. The Blacksburg Department of Parks and Recreation plays a key role in enhancing the quality of life of the town citizens and visitors.

The Master Plan represents a synthesis of recommendations for the Town of Blacksburg from previous studies as well as recommendations based on new research. Consulted studies include the following:

- Virginia Outdoors Plan (2007)
- Blacksburg 2046 Comprehensive Plan (2006)
- National Citizen Survey (2006 and 2003)
- Town of Blacksburg Economic Development Strategy (2003)
- Montgomery County Parks and Recreation: Outdoor Facility Master Plan (2003)
- Rediscovering the Heart of Blacksburg: A Master Plan for Downtown (2001)

- Cost of Land Use Study, RKG Associates (2001)
- Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Guidelines (1996)

Planning Process

The Parks and Recreation Master Plan process began in 2004, after the Town hired LandDesign, a recreation consulting firm. LandDesign completed a draft plan after conducting surveys, holding public input meetings, and gathering inventory and assessment information from the current system. This plan was completed and stalled after it did not receive endorsements from the Recreation Advisory Board, Corridor Committee, and ultimately Town Council.

The planning process was reinitiated in 2006, built upon all the positive work completed as part of the 2004 draft, and culminated in the current document. The overall process included:

- Evaluation of surveys and public comments from the 2004 draft
- Assessment and inventory of current facilities, properties, and programs
- Development of facility standards and level of service standards
- Development of a Vision and Guiding Principles
- Interviews of key stakeholders, staff, and Recreation Advisory Board members
- Development of Goals, Objectives, and Action Strategies
- Coordination of Comprehensive Plan document as it relates to Parks and Recreation
- Establishment of priorities
- Document drafting and extensive review by the Recreation Advisory Board
- Public review and comment period
- Evaluation of the public comment and development of changes to the draft document
- Review of final document draft

The Master Plan should be evaluated on a 5-year cycle to ensure the Vision and priorities reflect the needs and desires of the community. The first review of the plan, however, should be completed in 2010 so that it can be incorporated into the Comprehensive Plan 5-year update scheduled for 2011.

Town Context

Blacksburg is located in southwestern Virginia's Montgomery County atop a plateau in the Appalachian Mountains. The town covers 19.7 square miles, and is the largest town (per population) in Virginia. The 2000 census reported Blacksburg's population at 39,573 residents (2007 estimates – 43,926), with Montgomery County having 83,629 (2007 Census Estimate - 89,193). Since 2000 the town has grown by 13.6% and the county by 6.6%.

Its striking mountainous setting and close proximity to the Jefferson National Forest and the New river lend Blacksburg a unique, adventurous character. The presence of Virginia Tech adds a youthful and energetic college-town atmosphere. Of the Town's 43,926

residents, 26,500 are students. The university does not have plans to expand its total student population; therefore, the population of the town is only expected to grow about 1% per year in the near future. Over the next 20 years the population of the town is expected to grow by 16% (RKG Associates).

The history of the town parallels the history of the University. The town was founded in 1798 on land deeded by William Black, and included 16 blocks bounded by Draper Road, Jackson Street, Wharton Street and Clay Street. Virginia Tech was originally the Olin and Preston Institute, a Methodist seminary founded in 1851. In 1872, after closing for years during the Civil War, the school reopened as the Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College.

Trends Affecting the Future of Parks and Recreation

Demographic Trends

The population for the Town of Blacksburg varies considerably from the state and national average due to the student population. Table 1-1 illustrates that people aged 18 to 24 make up the largest age group in Blacksburg (57.4%) and in Montgomery County (33.3%) compared to the national and state average of 9.6%. In all other age groups, Blacksburg has fewer than the national average. Montgomery County has similar population characteristics, but does not differ as markedly from the national and state norms as does the Town.

Age	Blacksburg	Virginia	National Average
Under 18 years	9.7	24.6	25.7
18-24 years	57.4	9.6	9.6
25-44 years	18.9	31.6	30.2
45-64 years	9.2	23	22
65 and over	4.9	11.2	12.4
median age	21.9	35.7	35.3

Table 1-1. Comparative Blacksburg Demographics

Nationally, the trend is toward an older, healthier population. The median age increased from 33 to 35 between 1990 and 2000. By the year 2020, people over 65 will make up 20% of the national population. Blacksburg is an attractive retirement location, attracting increasing numbers of retirees.

It is important to understand the unique Blacksburg demographics in terms of use of park facilities and programs. The college age, or “Y” generation, is physically very active, but lacks a large amount of expendable income. Members of this generation have somewhat limited access to personal automobiles, and are more likely to use facilities near the University.

Another trend, driven by the goals of the University to become a top 30 research institution, is the gradual increase of graduate students and researchers. The overall

population of students is not intended to change from the 26,500 range. However, university enrollment trends in the past suggest modest growth. In the research initiatives, a demographic change will be seen with graduate students and researchers increasing and the undergraduates remaining stable. These new residents typically are more established and have a longer term of residency in the community. This group also tends to bring families and use more community facilities. Younger families and established singles create needs ranging from family and children programs, social venues, active lifestyles, and safe and attractive parks and facilities.

Similarly, senior citizens are concerned about how safe and attractive parks feel, and desire active and socially oriented recreational programs. Public input from Blacksburg seniors revealed that bus trips and tours are popular, for example. While these demographics differ in many ways, opportunities are needed to gather and socialize with other Town residents.

American lifestyles have changed in recent years, reflecting reduced leisure time; greater health and environmental consciousness; increased ethnic diversity; and population increases.

Land Use Trends

Nationally, more people are living in urban centers. The population of Blacksburg has grown faster than that of Montgomery County or the surrounding region, mainly due to the steady growth of Virginia Tech. Blacksburg has grown an average of 2% per year over the past 20 years, compared to 1.2% and 0.7% for Montgomery/Radford and the New River Valley, respectively (RKG Associates). Blacksburg is projected to grow more slowly in the future, approximately 1% average annually, still faster than the surrounding county and region.

Residential uses occupy 31% of the Town's land, while 40% is agricultural or vacant. Of the residential land units, 71% are rental. The majority of the rental housing is located in the Midtown and Southwest sectors, while 60% of the single-family housing is located in the Midtown Sector (RKG Associates).

Growth trends cited by RKG Associates are useful in determining the future needs for parks and recreation services in Blacksburg's eight planning sectors. The eight sectors are defined by land use and development patterns. (Illustration 1-1)

Blacksburg's core is highly developed with commercial uses, and is surrounded by mid- to low-density residential uses. Downtown and Midtown have traditionally functioned as the Town's employment centers, with higher density residential neighborhoods surrounding commercial development. South end is driven by industrial, strip retail, and services, as well as research- and development-related activities at the Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center. In contrast, the Southwest, Northwest, and the North end sectors consist of more traditional suburban-style neighborhoods and rural countryside,

with a predominance of open space, low-density residential development, and nodes of commercial development.



Illustration 1-1

The RKG study reveals that the Southwest, Northwest, and North End sectors are more rural in nature and character; these have a much higher percentage of vacant and agricultural land. The Downtown and Midtown sectors are denser in population and commercial uses. The South end, though similar to Downtown and Midtown in its lack of agricultural land, is more industrial in character, with a small residential population.

This land use information, when combined with an understanding of existing park facilities, helps match needs and opportunities for different types of parks in the appropriate sections of town. Conservation; preservation; hiking and biking trails; and nature tour opportunities are found in the northern portion of town. More active recreation and accommodations of new trends in recreation (such as a dog park, skate park, and trails) should be located close to more densely populated areas like the University, Downtown and Midtown sectors. Large sports complexes are best located near compatible land uses like schools or in areas where increased noise and traffic would cause the least amount of conflict with the adjacent land uses. As residents will travel by car to large sports facilities, these must be easy to access from main roads and thoroughfares and include adequate parking areas

Much of the future residential development will occur in the North End, Northwest, and Southwest sectors of the town. Through the development process, town codes require new subdivisions to dedicate 10% of their parcel acreage as recreation space. Many are

building greenway trails that can be connected to the public system and small mini-parks serving the immediate neighborhood. Through these subdivisions most of the neighborhood-scale recreation and open-space needs will be met. However, larger community and regional parks and recreation facility needs require the investment of the town in the purchase, development, and maintenance of such assets.

Parks and Recreation Trends

National trends in parks and recreation reflect our nation's recent lifestyle changes. While a scattering of neighborhood parks sufficed in the past, current and future populations expect more from their parks systems. These lifestyle changes (such as increased structured leisure time; greater health and environmental consciousness; increased ethnic diversity; population increases in a generation known to prefer instant information and a more active senior population) result in a greater demand for organized opportunities for active outdoor recreation. Demand is high for eco-tourism featuring nature and history walks; environmental education centers; organized competitive youth and adult sports; family entertainment centers with pools, playgrounds and restaurants; skate boarding parks; golf courses; mountain bike trails; fishing areas; and hiking trails, for example.

Because of the high costs associated with many of these facilities, some function best when they are developed and managed privately or in a public/private partnership and require fees to sustain operations and maintenance expenses.

Another national parks trend is the development of linear parks and greenways. Greenways are the second most requested amenity for homebuyers, according to a survey conducted by the National Association of Realtors in 2002¹. Greenways, specifically trails, are consistently rated as the top amenity and provide the largest value for their cost in surveys completed by the Town and the Virginia Outdoors Plan. A well-planned greenway system lends environmental, recreational, educational, circulation and, economic benefits to the community. Greenways offer connectivity and linkages to active places and between land uses. They can safely connect school children to nearby educational opportunities, natural conservation sites, and historical sites. Greenways also provide a critical link to improving green spaces and linkages for clean air and water and a diverse, healthy ecosystem.

Local Trends

Parks and Recreation trends for the Town of Blacksburg and the surrounding community are very similar to the national trends. Organized youth sports, senior programs, natural

¹ Wylde, M. (2000). Consumers Survey on Smart Choices for Homebuyers. Survey Sponsored by the National Association of Home Builders and National Association of Realtors.

environment activities, aquatics, and community activities have been the predominant programs and services. The Town has worked diligently to keep pace with the demand for these services with current facilities. The future trends continue to show that these programs and services are in high demand. Increasing population; aging and overused facilities and athletic fields; and an underserved teen population demand planning and capital investment to accommodate these stresses on the Parks and Recreation System.

The Comprehensive Plan approved for the Town of Blacksburg, Virginia, in 2006 provided general guidance for the development of recreation, parks, open-space resources and services to the community into the new millennium. However, the Town's Department of Parks and Recreation found that more specific direction was needed to identify current and future citizens' needs and desires and to respond to them in a timely manner. This Parks and Recreation Master Plan fills that void, identifying the vision, goals and objectives through 2046. It lays the groundwork for implementation of projects and programs which will meet the community's recreation, parks, and open-space needs over this time period. The master plan should be evaluated every five years to respond to new trends and changes in the community's demographic make-up and demand for recreation, parks, and open-space services.

Vision, Goals, Objectives

This chapter is the heart of the Blacksburg Parks and Recreation Master Plan, a set of dynamic, direction-setting recommendations for improvements to park programs and facilities; preservation of natural areas; connectivity of greenways; land acquisitions; and major amenity concepts to enhance the park system Blacksburg residents enjoy.

This section is comprised of the following elements:

- Vision
- Guiding Principles
- Goals
- Objectives

Vision

Blacksburg's parks, public places, and recreational opportunities give life and vibrancy to our community and successfully merge the natural and built environments. These essential assets connect people to place, self, and others. Blacksburg residents will treasure and care for this legacy, building on the past to provide for future generations.

Guiding Principles

Quality of Life

Excellence

A full spectrum of diverse, high-quality parks, recreation facilities, and excellent education programs bring joy, fulfillment and growth to the lives of Blacksburg's residents.

Stewardship

Blacksburg's residents value and care for public spaces and resources, recognize and respect the intrinsic values of the built and natural world, thus they recognize the value of sustaining them for future generations.

Connected system

The Town and region have an interconnected system of trails, parks, and streams that are well protected and ecologically healthy. Active and passive amenities are integrated into a system of the natural and built environment serving all residents.

Inclusive

All of Blacksburg's residents have access to, feel safe and welcome in, and are well served by Blacksburg's parks, open space, recreation facilities, and programs.

Future Needs

Protect and acquire ample land and facilities in public or private ownership to provide a wide variety of high-quality parks, recreation facilities, programs and open spaces so as to meet current and future needs.

Health

The system will contribute to preventive health care and preventive public safety by promoting physical, mental, and social well being.

Vibrancy of the community

Essential Element

The Town's parks, recreation facilities and programs are essential elements that create a livable, dynamic and economically vibrant town.

Beauty and Innovation

Beautiful public spaces and innovative park designs provide places for a wide variety of experiences ranging from active recreation to passive recreation.

Civic Involvement

Residents are involved and participate in the planning, development and programming of the town's parks, recreation programs and natural resources.

Goals

1. Ensure Blacksburg's Park and Recreation legacy for future generations.
2. Provide a wide variety of high quality parks, recreation services, and special events for all residents that promote the Blacksburg community.
3. Provide opportunities for healthy lifestyles including mind, body, and social well being.
4. Preserve, protect, enhance, and restore Blacksburg's natural resources within the park system.
5. Create an Interconnected regional and local system of trails and walks to make Blacksburg "the most connected town of the east."
6. Market the Parks and Recreation opportunities through community and regional outlets.
7. Develop partnerships within the community and region to increase funding sources and to maximize utilization of public funds in meeting the recreational needs of the community.

Objectives and Action Strategies

General

Administration

The Parks and Recreation Department should:

- Pursue national accreditation through the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA).
- Create a Risk Management group to evaluate and keep current with risk trends and implementation of new standards.
- Support the Public Works Departments for maintenance of parks and facilities. The support should focus on communication, prioritizing, scheduling, funding, and safety.
- Attract and retain highly qualified staff.

Programs

Administration

Objectives

- Create and implement technology to improve registration, facility management, and program management functions
- Increase marketing and partnerships with local businesses and organizations to promote the wide range of services and events offered through the Parks and Recreation Department

Outdoor Programs

Objectives

- Develop programs to focus on the environmental assets and ecosystem of Blacksburg and the New River Valley. The unique resources in the Blacksburg community and surrounding area present a unique opportunity for education aimed at all ages.

Action Strategies

- Continue and further develop a connection with the Montgomery County Schools departments to provide programs that complement and expand on classroom lessons

- Develop environment programs focused on animals, insects, flora, and ecosystems
- Construct a new Nature Center to provide a unique learning environment
- Develop outdoor programming that focuses on high adventure activities
 - Action Strategies*
 - Use overnight programs and weekend programs to expand the offerings and allow for a more in depth experience.
- Expand summer camp programs to offer multiple outdoor programs through increased program staff and partnerships with other organizations.

Seniors Programs

Objectives

- Increase the participation of Seniors in programs
 - Action Strategies*
 - Pursue the purchase of a suitable vehicle fleet for senior trips to allow for increased program offerings for both short- and long-distance trips. This will allow for multiple trips to be accommodated or increase the available seating capacity of taking trips with larger groups.
 - Develop an intern program with Virginia Tech where the Senior Center Program Director is supported in the senior program development and execution. Long-duration trips have had to be eliminated from the schedule due to the lack of personnel coverage.
 - Increase the fitness offerings with appropriate equipment for low-impact exercise.
 - Develop an outdoor social gathering area adjacent to the Community Center to host events during nice weather.
 - Organize programs geared towards the environment such as hiking, bird watching, and similar activities. These activities are best for small groups and can usually be lead by senior volunteers. Coordination, logistics, and marketing can be provided by town staff.
 - Aquatic fitness programs may be developed in association with a future Family Aquatic Center and expansion of the indoor Aquatic Center to include amenities such as a warm water therapy pool and hot tub.
 - Athletic programs such as baseball, softball, basketball, and swimming are desired for the increase in the baby-boomer population. Coordination with surrounding communities may be needed to create an adequate base of teams.
 - Increase the diversity of programs offered.

Athletic Programs

Objectives

- Provide safe and well maintained athletic fields

Action Strategies

- Evaluate current maintenance levels of athletic fields and develop a system to make maintenance improvements throughout the year.
- Develop a relationship with the Virginia Tech Turf grass Research Program to develop ways to improve field conditions on high demand fields.
- Develop a classification system of fields identifying levels of investment and of maintenance for different levels of use. Ex: Competition fields, recreation fields, practice fields, etc.
- Continue to develop and improve partnerships with the Montgomery County School System for use of school indoor and outdoor athletic facilities.
- Develop partnerships with community organizations to increase the capability of maintaining existing and new athletics fields.
- Evaluate the configuration of current and future athletic fields to maximize multi-use opportunities while balancing turf maintenance.
- The use of multipurpose athletic fields allow for the testing of new sports to the array of athletic programs offered such as field hockey, Ultimate Frisbee, etc., as well as existing sports organizations such as the Blacksburg Rugby team.
- Develop a tennis program to introduce and advance participants skills in the sport. Offerings should target low to moderate income residents and families, while being available to any interested person.
- Increase the number of athletic playing fields to support the demand of both the Town and private association organized leagues. The number of fields and scheduling should work to maximize opportunity for maintenance and rest for healthy playing fields.
- Install irrigation systems on all priority athletic fields and as the opportunity becomes feasible, install systems on secondary fields.
- Install eco-friendly restroom facilities on all priority athletic fields.

- Create and support high quality sports leagues

Action Strategies

- Develop stronger partnerships with existing private athletic associations to improve and maximize the athletic sports offerings and programming of town athletic fields.
- Evaluate the demand for sports leagues offered to the baby boomer population
- Develop a core set of sports offered to young children focused on team work, basic sport skills, self confidence, and good sportsmanship.
- Evaluate and offer new types of sports programs (i.e. lacrosse Frisbee golf).

Aquatic Programs

Objectives

- Design and develop an outdoor aquatic center in general accordance with the Family Aquatic Center master plan completed in 2001 by Markey and Associates. This would include amenities such as interactive play features, slides, spray pads, 50-yard competition length pool, and a pool house.

Action Strategies

- Identify and secure a site of approximately 5-acres as determined by a feasibility study
 - Initiate the preliminary design of the outdoor aquatic center to include schematics and cost estimates of alternatives
 - Develop a funding strategy to finance the project through the Capital Improvement Program
- Expand the Aquatic Center program offerings to improve the exercise, recreation, and entertainment components of the facility

Action Strategies

- Create classroom space around the existing grassed sun bathing area adjacent to the Aquatic Center. This would be a glassed structure providing space for classroom activities and party rentals.
- Design and construct a warm water therapy pool with adjacent hot tub. Partner with local health care providers to refer patients to the therapy pool for health-related treatment.
- Install a slide to provide additional recreational uses to the traditional pool activities and design.

Community Center Programs

Objectives

- Increase programming offered to youth and seniors

Action Strategies

- Develop an indoor youth area dedicated to preschool programming. This will provide the opportunity for tumbling, indoor activities during inclement weather, and reduced setup/breakdown time.
- Create an Arts and Crafts area that can remain set up and incorporate storage. Art tables, supplies, drying/curing areas are impossible to setup/breakdown for each class, therefore, a dedicated room would allow for increased programming and usage by all ages.
- Design and construct a new fitness room that is large enough to provide amenities for a broad age range from senior to teenagers. Amenities such as aerobic equipments, weight machines and free weights are desired.

Additionally, the room should include entertainment options as well as transitional space for warming up and cooling down.

- Increase the recreational opportunities offered to the community through the development and expansion of the Community Center or the construction of a new Recreation Center.

Action Strategies

- Complete a needs assessment focused on recreational amenities and community programs
- Identify alternative sites for developing a new recreation center or renovating the current recreation center to serve the identified needs
- Consider the possibility of combining the Aquatic Center needs with other recreational needs found here. There may be synergistic effects that would make a combined facility more cost effective.
- Evaluate and identify funding sources to finance the project

Special Events/Community Programs

Objectives

- Offer programs and events that emphasize and celebrate Blacksburg as a special place for the residents and visitors

Action Strategies

- Continue to expand and improve programs such as the Flower and Garden Show, Easter Egg Hunt, 4th of July, and the Holiday Parade.
- Purchase a mobile stage to improve the professionalism of events, attract higher grade performers, and make setup/breakdown easier and more cost efficient for town staff.
- Support and partner with community businesses and organizations to develop and improve existing festivals and events.

- Coordinate the Community Center activities with private community centers/organizations to offer a wide range of programs

Action Strategies

- Develop partnerships to co-advertise programs offered through the Town and other community-oriented facilities in the community
- Develop an Arts and Crafts room(s) dedicate to this use for children, adults, and seniors.
- Develop a youth room focused on toddlers to preschool age children for tumbling and other indoor activities.
- Evaluate facilities and amenities that better serves the needs of our middle and high school age youth.

- Increase the documentation of the value and connection between special events and economic development

Action Strategies

- Identify advertising efforts to increase attendance and participation in events
- Develop new and stronger partnerships with community organizations and private businesses to sponsor and support major community events
- Develop special event plans to include parking areas, transportation, electrical needs, staging areas, security needs, etc.
- Identify opportunities to sponsor or support themed events.

Golf Programs

Objectives

- Attract and retain players to the sport of golf as a healthy, fun, and lifelong sport

Action Strategies

- Continue to develop and offer competitive and noncompetitive golf tournaments
- Develop partnerships with local businesses and organizations to offer wellness activities related to the sport of golf
- Offer youth golf training and special playing packages to encourage participation in the sport at a young age

- Expand non-golf revenue generation opportunities

Action Strategies

- Evaluate the opportunity to develop a restaurant at the golf course offering a unique venue at the golf course and at the highest elevation in the Town
- Pursue the leasing of designated property at the golf course to telecommunication companies to provide wireless services. The elevation of the course creates a valuable location for wireless providers to serve large sectors of the town. Any facility that would be considered should create minimal impact on the view shed and not impact the operations of the course (i.e. flag pole)

Parks Guidelines and Inventory of Parks and Facilities

The parks and recreation system includes a wide range of park property and facilities serving town residents and the broader Blacksburg community. An inventory of our system was completed and included below. The inventory includes assets that are present at each park or facility and includes a comparative analysis of these assets to the standards set forth in the 2007 Virginia Outdoors Plan. The maps and tables below represent the inventory, comparative analysis and maps showing each park’s designation

and role in the overall system. Each of these facilities is detailed in the Parks and Facilities Recommendation section of the Master Plan.

PARK GUIDELINES

The following parks and facility standards are guidelines that have been derived after consultation with parks and recreation experts, local staff, citizens, National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) guidelines, the *2007 Virginia Outdoors Plan*, and with numerous communities in both Virginia and North Carolina that possess similar population demographics and interests. Both the NRPA and the Virginia guidelines emphasize the importance of using standards that reflect the unique nature of local parks, as well as the community's recreational needs.

These park classifications identify the type of recreation facilities within Town: Regional Park, District Park, Community Park, Neighborhood Park, Mini-park, and Special Use Facilities. These classifications are based upon minimum standards for area and service radii, and include individual activity recommendations. These five park classifications provide a total minimum standard of 16 acres per 1,000 citizens of park land over all classifications of parks or about 704 total acres for a town population of 44,000. The Town currently owns 394 acres of park land, not including greenways and the golf course.

All parks should be planned, designed, and constructed in a sensitive manner to preserve the natural environment and to maximize the natural features of the land. This approach does not preclude the development of parking lots, rooftops, impervious trails, fencing, lights, and other amenities commonly provided in parks, but it does encourage environmentally responsible planning in accordance with best available technologies and planning practices.

The Park System should be balanced for both active and passive recreational activities. To accomplish this, parks should include appropriate buffers around property boundaries and as needed between centers of activity within the park. Trails or other passive amenities are commonly found within buffer areas. The inclusion of these features depends on the park activities, the orientation of adjacent structures such as residential housing, and other specific details.

Regional Park

Definition

Regional parks typically provide a wide variety of activities for the greater community, and also present opportunities for non-traditional recreation. These parks are often funded, developed, or operated as multi-jurisdictional facilities. Nature and community centers, festival grounds, extensive trail systems, and water activities are features that can typically be found in regional parks. To accommodate their unique amenities, regional parks span a minimum of 100 acres and have a service radius of approximately 2.5 miles. Additionally, the typical acreage/population ratio for regional parks is four to five acres per 1,000 persons.

Blacksburg Status-2008;

The Heritage Community Park & Natural Area (169 acres) is a regional park due to its attraction of specific users from well beyond the town's boundaries. Features proposed for the Heritage Park & Natural Area include a lake, wetlands enhancement and preservation, a nature center, several miles of paved and unpaved trails, a national forest connection, a small amphitheater, and other family-oriented recreational amenities. (See Illustration 1-4)

District Park

Definition

District parks serve a wide variety of community interests and include intensively developed areas for active recreation, as well as supporting infrastructure. Typical active recreational amenities include playgrounds; athletic fields for soccer, baseball/softball, and for multi-use; tennis and volleyball courts; and trails. Typical infrastructure may include restrooms, concession stands, benches, picnic areas, shelters, and parking areas. Access to district parks should be along or near a major road, and access should be multi-modal in nature. District parks are a minimum of 50 acres in size and have a service radius of approximately five miles.

Blacksburg Status-2008

Blacksburg does not have a district park but, based on population projections for 2010 and on a typical acreage/population ratio at four acres per 1,000 persons for district parks, it should have one with approximately 180 acres. Current park acreage including Kipps Park, Kipps Elementary School and the Blacksburg Middle School totals just over 70 acres, 11 of these acres are owned by the town, the remaining is owned by Montgomery County. (See Illustration 1-5)

Community Park

Definition

Community parks serve several neighborhoods within a community. They typically provide active recreation facilities for neighborhoods, but otherwise they act as oversized neighborhood parks. Typical recreational amenities found in community parks are similar to those provided in district parks; however, differences include varying scales, more traditional neighborhood park amenities like horseshoes, basketball courts, recreation centers, and similar amenities unique to the community. Community parks are usually a minimum of 20 acres in size and have a service radius of approximately one-mile. Access should be along, or near, a major road that is multi-modal in nature. A typical acreage/population ratio for community parks is three to four acres per 1,000 persons. For the Town of Blacksburg this ratio translates into 125 – 175 acres of park land.

Blacksburg Status-2008

The only Community Park in Town, the Municipal Park is Blacksburg's main recreational facility and serves as an undersized District Park. The 35-acre facility includes a lighted ball field, a multi-use field, two playgrounds, five shelters, eight tennis courts, a roller hockey court, a skate park, an aquatic center, a community center and the Parks and Recreation administrative offices. The development of the Interchange Park will provide additional athletic fields, shelters, parking, and passive recreation components, including trails. (See Illustration 1-6)

Neighborhood Park

Definition

Neighborhood parks are located within walking distance of adjacent neighborhood(s) and serve the area's specific recreational interests. A neighborhood park usually does not provide parking or restrooms, but depending on service level demand, a park may offer such facilities. Typical neighborhood park amenities include playgrounds, shelters, trails, and multipurpose fields. School parks may also be considered functional neighborhood parks. Neighborhood parks span a minimum of five acres and have a service radius of one-half mile. A typical acreage/population ratio for neighborhood parks is three acres per 1,000 persons. For the Town this means about 132 acres of park land for neighborhood parks.

Blacksburg Status-2008

Tom's Creek, Nellie's Cave and Kipps Parks are neighborhood parks that function as community parks and include facilities for athletics. (See Illustration 1-8). These three parks comprise of a total 30-acres. Additional Neighborhood Parks include Wong Park, Seneca Drive Park, Primrose Lane Park, and the undeveloped Northside Park property. There are a total of 73-acres (57-acres developed) of Neighborhood Parks, 30-acres of which function as Community Parks. The highest demand and burden placed on the town's park properties falls in this area. (See Illustration 1-7)

Miniparks

Definition

Mini-parks contain playgrounds or tot lots, and are similar in nature to neighborhood parks, but offer fewer amenities due to their small size. These lots may range in size from one-quarter acre up to five acres and are located within one-half mile of their major users. Playgrounds have a facility standard of one unit per 1,000 persons. No support amenities such as parking or restrooms are provided, although it is not unusual to find water fountains and safety lights in mini-parks. In addition, a play unit, benches, and possibly a picnic shelter are typically found at these facilities. Mini-parks are primarily intended for children with adult supervision.

Blacksburg Status-2008

The parks system includes a total of twelve mini-parks primarily located in neighborhood settings. These twelve properties include a total of 50-acres.

Special Use Facilities**Definition**

The special use facilities park category includes recreation centers, aquatic centers, nature centers, outdoor swimming pools, school parks, mini-parks, golf courses, urban spaces, historic sites, and greenways.

Recreation Center**Definition**

Recreation Centers are created to provide a variety of activities to serve the needs of the entire community. They are typically located within district or community parks and can include gymnasiums, exercise rooms, arts and crafts rooms, community rooms, kitchens, stages, restrooms/lockers/showers, and other community specific amenities. A recreation center may serve the needs of the entire town depending on its size relative to the size of the surrounding community. A 13,000-15,000 square foot facility typically has a three-mile service radius and serves approximately 20,000 people.

Blacksburg Status-2008

The current Community Center located within the Municipal Park is approximately 24,000 sq. ft. The facility includes a gymnasium and associated locker rooms (12,400 sq. ft.), a Senior Center (3,000 sq. ft.), as well as multi-purpose rooms, game room, computer lab, and support areas (8,600 sq. ft). The facility began operation in 1981 with a senior wing addition in early 2000's.

Aquatic Center**Definition**

Aquatic centers are unique amenities that may serve as competition facilities or may provide general recreational use depending on the needs of the community.

Blacksburg Status-2008

Blacksburg's natatorium includes a 25-yard swimming pool with zero depth entry, men and women's locker rooms with saunas, a unisex restroom with shower, and a hot tub. The pool is used for local competitions, general recreation and instruction, and therapeutics.

Nature Center**Definition**

Nature centers are also unique facilities that serve to educate the general public on a wide variety of environmental and wildlife issues, usually emphasizing a few key topics.

Blacksburg Status-2008

The nature center was located in the Price House downtown and closed due to previous water damage which has been remediated. Short term plans include identifying and partnering with a third-party entity to operate and manage the nature center activities. The nature center was oriented towards native flora and fauna species, and featured live wildlife and botanical displays. The long range plans are to relocate the center from the historic Price House in downtown to the Heritage Community Park & Natural Area.

Outdoor Swimming Pool**Definition**

Outdoor swimming pools in this area are used for leisure and should be designed for general water activities and not for structured swimming. Leisure pools can contain water slides, sitting areas, wave activity, waterfalls, play equipment, and other similar amenities.

Blacksburg Status-2008

Blacksburg has no such facility at this time.

School Parks**Definition**

School parks are County school properties that are used by the community as public recreation facilities.

Blacksburg/County Status-2008

The shared use of the Kipps Elementary School gymnasiums and grounds in conjunction with Kipp's Park is an excellent example of joint use of public facilities. Blacksburg elementary schools supplement the town's recreational facilities and are heavily used by the community. The general public should also use new schools located within Town after school hours as a community resource. Elementary schools have appropriate levels of athletic fields, play equipment, and other park-like amenities to serve as neighborhood parks. Blacksburg utilizes all of its elementary school sites as neighborhood parks and those facilities are programmed with recreational activities by the town each summer and after school hours.

Golf Course**Definition**

Golf courses are classified as Regulation Length, Executive Length, and Par-Three, and each type has its own standards. Regulation length courses are full-sized at over 7,200 total yards; they have 18 holes and a par rating of 66 or higher. Executive length courses are measured between 4,000-5,200 total yards with 18 holes and have par ratings between 58-66. Par-three courses are sized less than 4,000 yards and have over 18 holes with a par rating of 54. Golf courses typically serve the entire metropolitan area with a standard of one 18-hole course per 50,000 persons with a minimum size of 150 acres.

Blacksburg/Virginia Tech Status-2008

Blacksburg has one nine-hole course (2,731 yards, par 35) and the area is also served by the Blacksburg Country Club, which has a regulation length course (6,750 yards, par 72). Virginia Tech has a nine-hole golf course located on campus where buildings are proposed for future construction. The Pete Dye River Course of Virginia Tech is another public golf course situated on the New River and is a regulation length course (7,665, par 72).

Urban Spaces**Definition**

Urban spaces are areas of open space, including existing parks, which are underutilized or unknown that contribute to the integrity and quality of the urban environment. Urban parks can be created or enhanced town wide through neighborhood planning, through a Recreation Advisory Board recommendation, or through citizen demand. Urban parks are closely related to neighborhood parks and can be developed as funding permits.

Blacksburg Status-2008

Bicentennial Square (Marcia's Park next to the police station) is one such space. This entryway into downtown is the bridge between the Huckleberry and Bicentennial Trails and was redeveloped and landscaped in 1998 as part of the town's Bicentennial celebration.

Greenways**Definition**

Greenways are an essential element for establishing an integrated park system. They form linear parks and often contain bikeways and other trails that connect parks, historic landmarks, schools, neighborhoods, and businesses. Greenways also provide recreational opportunities, alternative transportation, as well as stormwater management opportunities.

Blacksburg Status-2008

The Pathways to the Future map shown on Illustration 1-3 provides an overall vision for greenway system.

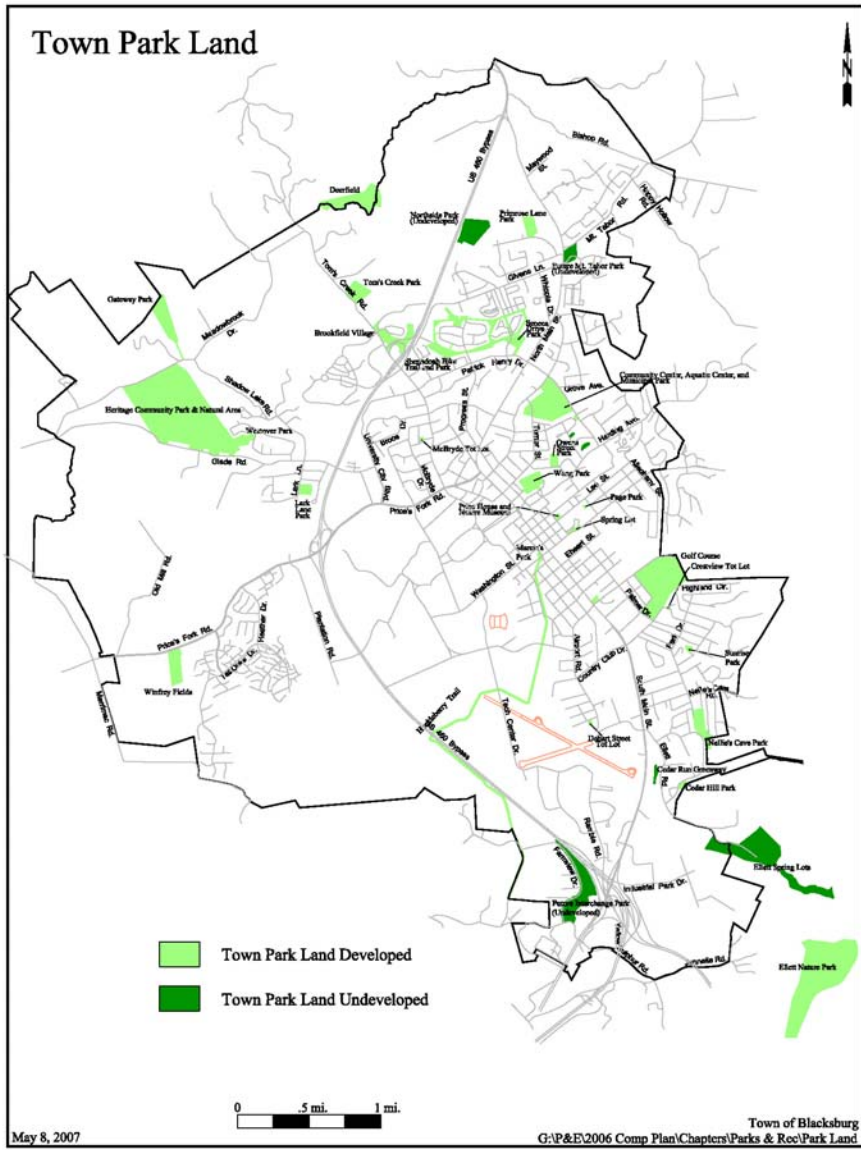


Illustration 1-2

PATHS TO THE FUTURE

BLACKSBURG'S BIKEWAY / GREENWAY MASTER PLAN

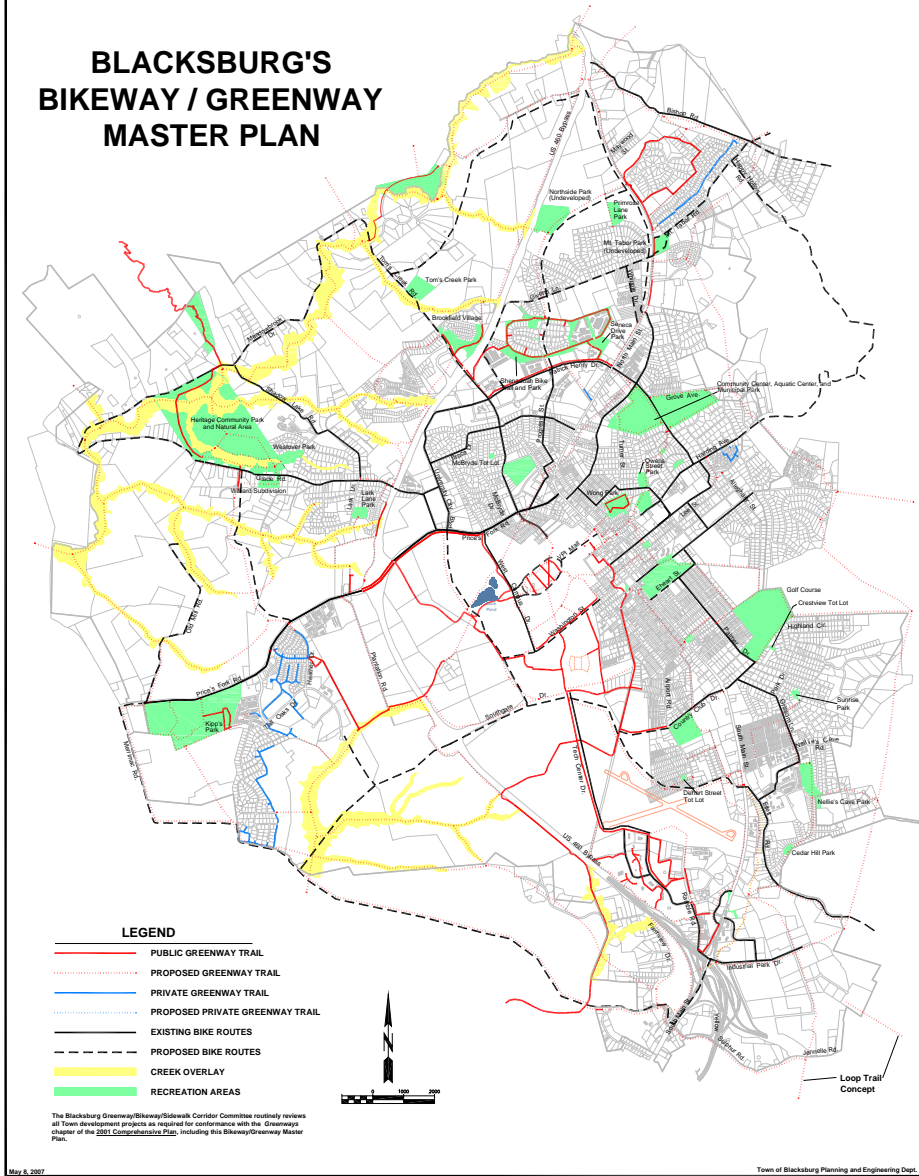


Illustration 1-3

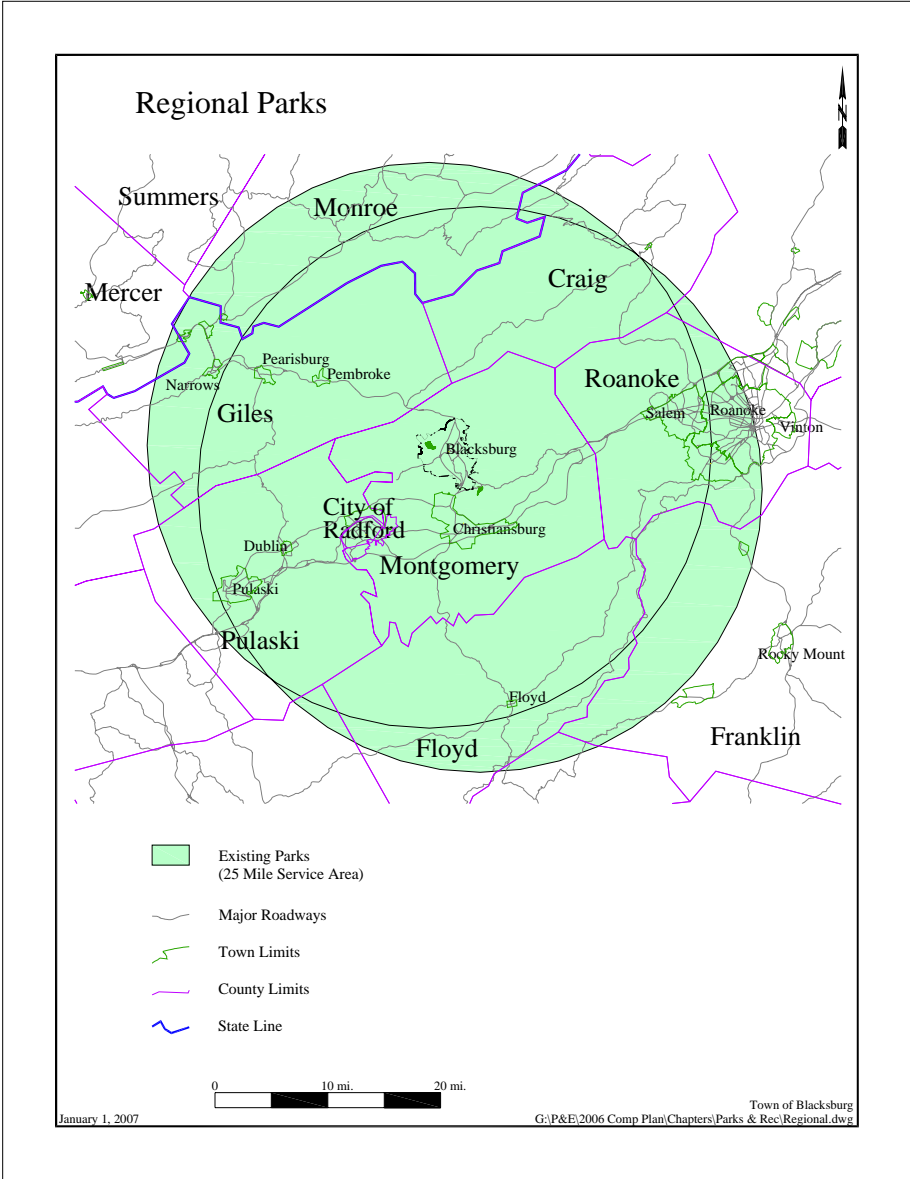


Illustration 1-4

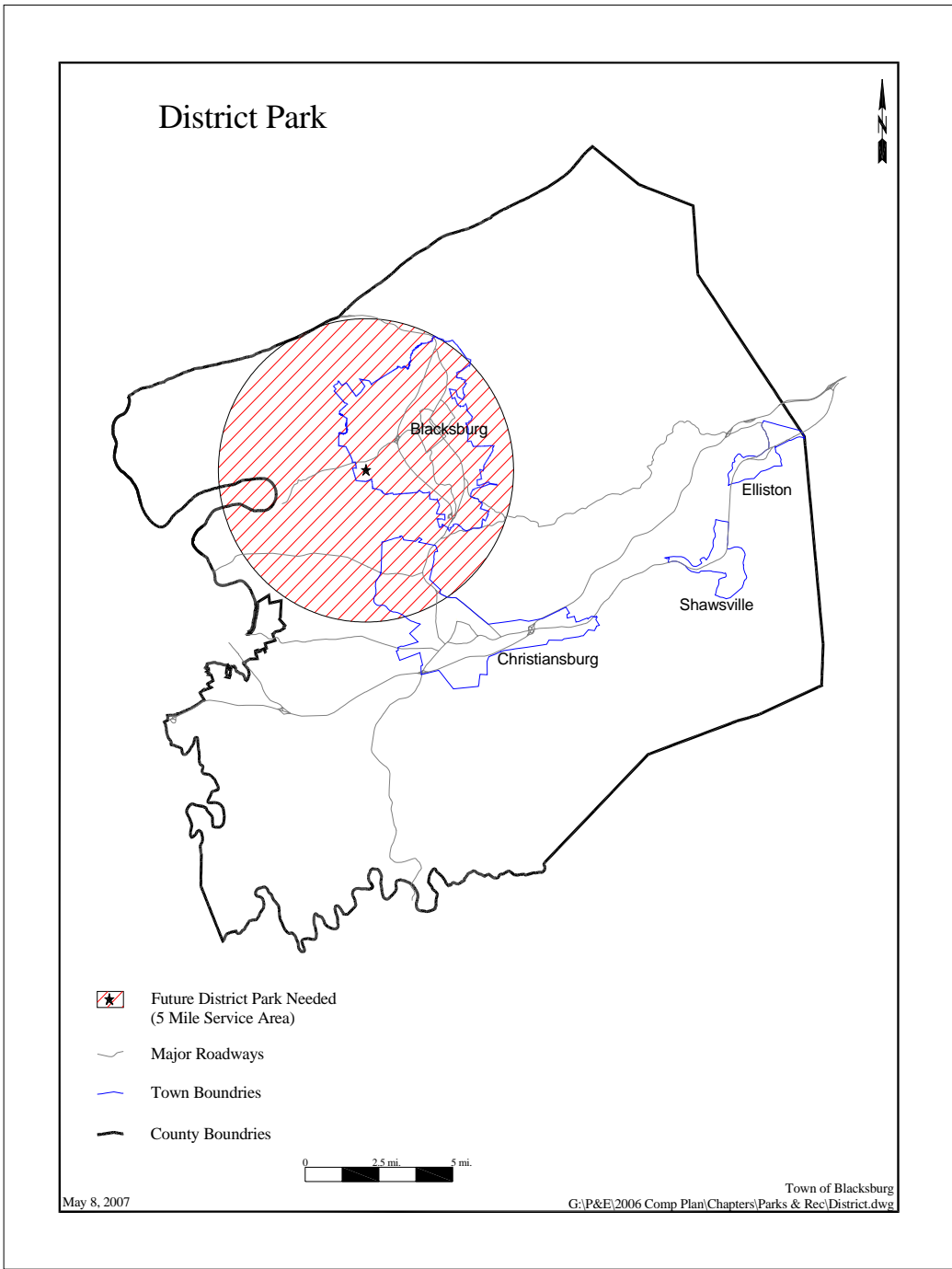


Illustration 1-5

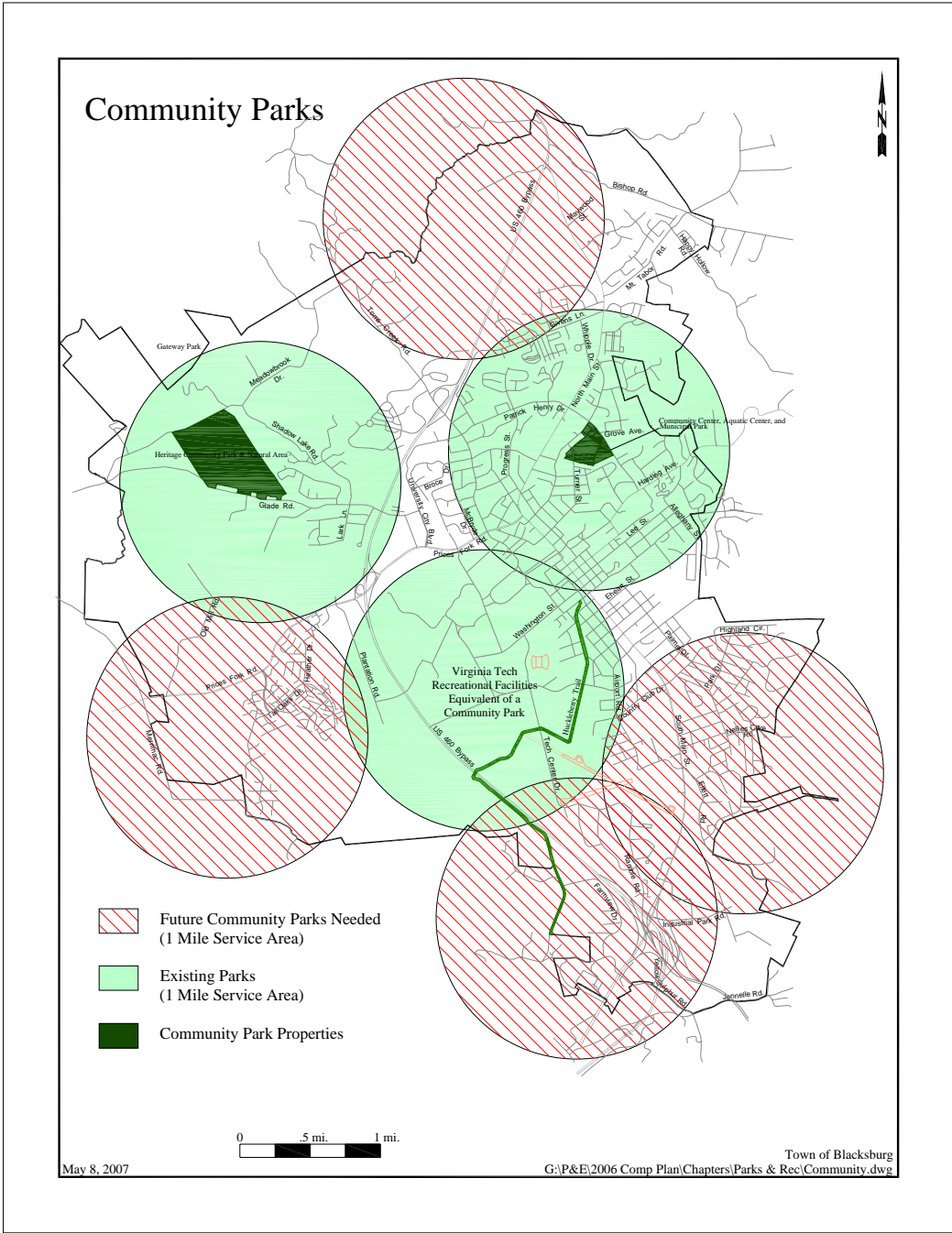


Illustration 1-6

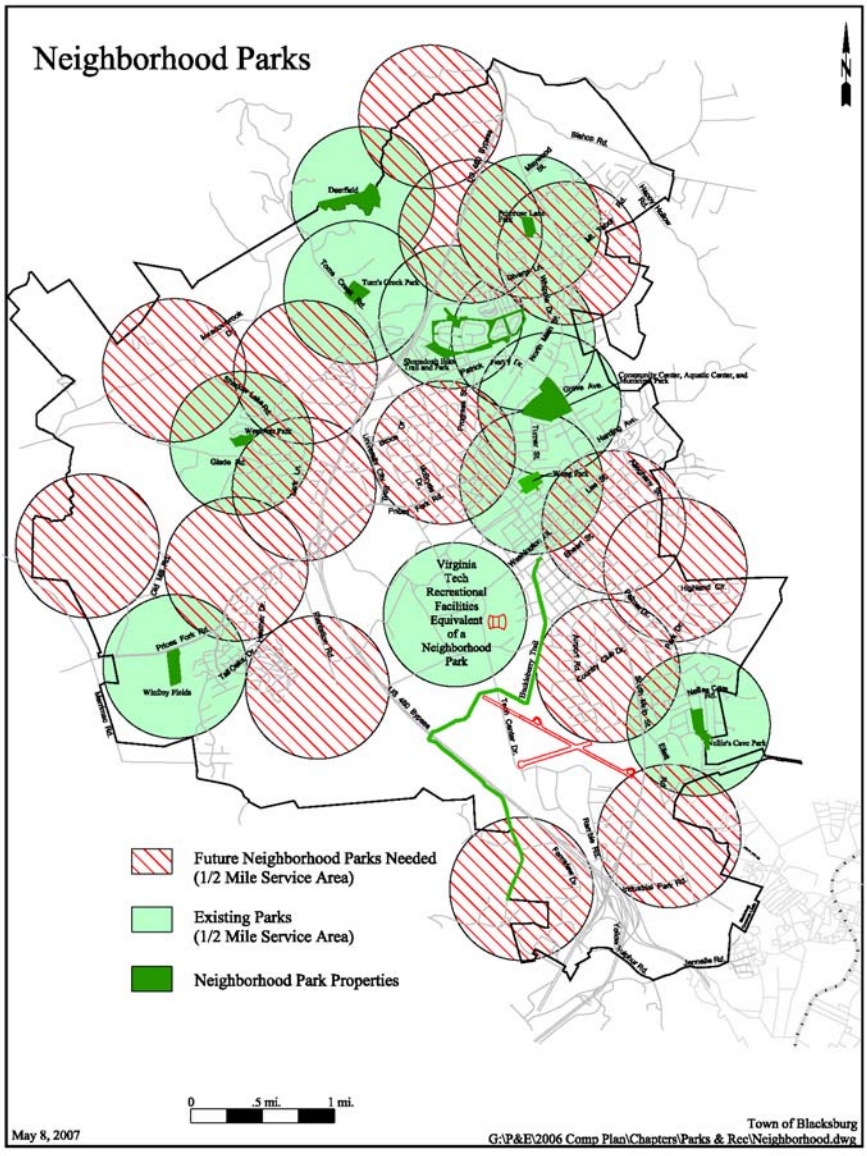


Illustration 1-7

Inventory of Park Facilities																
Sector	Park Name	Acres	Classification - Standard	Classification - Actual Use	Amenities											
Northwest																
	<i>Heritage Community Park and Natural Area</i>	169.8	Regional Park	Minimally developed	Master Plan includes	Nature Center	Wildlife Center	Pond	Wetlands enhancement	amphitheater	greenways/trails	parking	30-acres for active recreation	Tom's Creek		
	<i>Gateway Park</i>	21	Regional - extension of Heritage Park		Trail connection to National forest											
	<i>Tom's Creek Park</i>	9.3	Neighborhood Park	Community Park	1 - baseball/softball field (lighted)	Picnic Shelter	Playground equip	benches	Police Firing Range							
	<i>Westover Park</i>	4.8	Neighborhood Park		basketball court	playground equip	benches	multi-purpose field	tennis court							
	<i>Lark Lane Park</i>	3.1	Mini-park		basketball court	playground equip	benches	picnic table								
	<i>Brookfield Village Park</i>	30	Mini-park	open space/mini park	playground equip	trail										
	<i>Deerfield Park</i>	2.6	Mini-park		trail	benches	Tom's Creek									
Southwest																
	<i>Kipps Park</i>	11.1	Neighborhood Park	Community Park	Indoor Gym	4 - multipurpose fields	restrooms in gym	parking	playground equip							
South End																
	<i>Cedar Hill Park</i>	1.3	Mini-park		playground equip	benches										
	<i>Ellett Valley Recreation Area</i>	109	Regional		natural environment	hiking trails										
	<i>Interchange Park</i>	34	Undeveloped (Community Park)		Master Plan	multi-purpose fields	parking	trails	accessory park structures/uses	future facility space potential						
Midtown South																
	<i>Nellie's Cave Park</i>	9.3	Neighborhood Park	Community Park	Arboretum	trails	basketball court	Multipurpose field	playground equip	picnic shelter + tables	parking	benches	restrooms	bbq grill	horseshoes	
	<i>The Hill Golf Course</i>	56	Special Use		9 hole golf course	Club house	restrooms	cart building	benches	parking	gazebo					
	<i>Sunrise Park</i>	0.8	Mini-park		playground equip	benches	tables									
	<i>Dehart Street Tot Lot</i>	0.4	Mini-park		playground equip	benches	picnic table									
	<i>Crestview Tot Lot</i>	0.2	Mini-park		playground equip	benches	picnic table									
	<i>Graves Park</i>	2.5	Mini-park		benches	flower beds	Water retention area									
Midtown North																
	<i>Municipal Park</i>	34.4	Community Park	District Park	Community Center	Aquatic Center	Skate park	tennis courts	indoor gym	playground equip	inline skate facility	lighted softball field	multi-purpose field	parking	restrooms	P&R Admin offices
	<i>Wong Park</i>	9.2	Neighborhood Park		Town offices	trail	parking	benches	picnic shelter	playground equip	other uses per master plan	low impact development designed				
	<i>McBryde Tot Lot</i>	0.4	Mini-park		playground equip	benches										
	<i>Owens Street Park</i>	2.7	Mini-park		playground equip	picnic table	benches	small stream	water retention area							
	<i>Page Park</i>	0.14	Mini-park		playground equip											
North End																
	<i>Seneca Drive Park and Trail</i>	7.7	Neighborhood Park		Greenway trail	basketball court	playground equip	multi-purpose field	volleyball court	picnic table	benches					
	<i>Primrose Lane Park</i>	5.6	Neighborhood Park		basketball court	playground equip	multi-purpose field	picnic table	benches							
	<i>Northside (undeveloped)</i>	16.2	Undeveloped (Neighborhood Park)	Undeveloped	no road access	can accommodate wide range of uses, primarily active recreation										
Downtown																
	<i>Price House Nature Center and Garden Park</i>	0.7	Special Use		Nature Center	Flower garden	picnic table	benches								
	<i>Spring Lot</i>	1.4	Mini-park		parking	bench										
	<i>Marcia's Park</i>	0.5	Mini-park		benches	creek	gazebo	picnic tables	flowers							

Summary of Acreage	
Mini Park subtotal	46.04
Neighborhood Park subtotal	57
Community Park subtotal	34.4
District Park subtotal	0
Regional Park subtotal	299.8
Special Use Land (not included above)	56.7
Undeveloped Park Land	50.2
Developed Park Land	493.94
Total Park Land	544.14