

Section 2

Parks and Facility Recommendations

This chapter presents a comprehensive listing of specific Master Plan recommendations for existing and future parks and facilities, arranged by planning sector.

Recommendations are based on assessment of existing facilities and land resources; results of public surveys and meetings; current parks research; and findings from committee meetings held during the Master Plan process.

Overall, the park system is functioning well within its current physical resources of land and facilities. It could be said that there is a little bit of something for everyone within the Blacksburg parks, facilities, and programs. However, given the current and future program needs, some park land has been forced to try to accommodate the functions of larger parks. This overuse and overcrowding results from the overlapping of multiple activities and programs at the same small parks. This section contains recommendations for expanding existing facilities, acquiring new land, and improving the overall functionality of the park system.

Recommendations by Planning Sector

Northwest Sector

The northwest planning sector is primarily rural, featuring mostly agricultural uses, large areas of open space, and very low density residential neighborhoods. This is the largest area of town that is undeveloped and is envisioned to be residential with one unit per acre or less density. Public sewer is generally unavailable except for smaller pockets of existing neighborhoods. Small-neighborhood-scale parks will be needed as future development of neighborhoods occurs. Additionally, significant opportunities exist for preserving open space, implementing components of the Heritage Park and Natural Area master plan, and making greenway trail connections.



Tom's Creek Park

Relocating the police firing range would create the opportunity for changes to the activities offered at this park. The Blacksburg Police Department is working with regional law enforcement agencies to develop a new firing range facility in Montgomery County. This additional space will require environmental assessment and remediation to be completed to secure the site of used ammunition. The additional space provides ample room for a new dog park. The space could also function as a large multi-purpose field for

spontaneous, non-league athletic games and practice field space. However, these two uses cannot be combined and share the area. Conflicts with dog and people safety as well as dog feces create incompatible uses.

Heritage Community Park and Natural Area

Heritage Community Park is one of only two existing parks in the system with the acreage sufficient to qualify as a regional park. Heritage Park has a gently sloping terrain with a diverse ecosystem, together creating the potential to support a variety of activities and act as a regional attraction.

Educational opportunities abound, as well as open areas for recreation. The existing and proposed multi-purpose trails within the park will eventually link the proposed Huckleberry Trail extension to the Gateway Trail, which, in turn, will connect to the Jefferson National Forest.

Many of the programs and activities hosted by Nellie's Cave Park are better located

here. Existing parking lots and picnic shelters can serve groups for gatherings, barbecues, and educational classes. A master plan for the park was adopted by Town Council in 2003, and is an appendix to this plan.



Expansion of Heritage Community Park may be possible through the acquisition of additional lands as development expands in this direction. Dedication of open space, as required by the Town Code, as part of development projects, should be oriented to add additional land, trail connections, and preserve sensitive environmental areas adjacent to the park, such as the creek valley.

The development of this park, in conformance with the adopted Heritage Park Master Plan is a long-term project. To protect and manage the property over this time period, a Heritage Park Land Management Plan must be created. The plan should focus on areas such as best management practices for the wide range of vegetation, wildlife, creek valley areas, and physical park improvements.

Gateway Park

An essential link in the greenway system, this 20-acre park links Heritage Park to the Jefferson National Forest and creates a larger regional park. This connection provides access to a vast area of federal land and provides a venue for a range of non-competitive sports such as horse back riding, fly fishing, mountain biking, backpacking and camping. Interpretive signage along trails should provide information about local flora and fauna, offering the opportunity for self-guided hikes from Heritage Park into the national forest. With its easily accessible connection between the Town and the wilderness,



Gateway Park may provide an ideal location for a retreat center with equestrian facilities. The current ownership agreement between the Town and the property owner transfers the existing house and equestrian assets to the Town in the future.

Westover Park

Westover Park is currently a 4.8-acre neighborhood park. Expansion opportunities are limited due to existing single-family homes and church property surrounding the park. However, the park is directly adjacent to Heritage Park and would benefit from having an improved access point into the park for the neighborhood.

Brookfield Village Park

Brookfield Village Park is a 30-acre parcel that offers significant opportunity. Developers have preserved a substantial portion of the original drainage area, preserving its function as open space, and providing connectivity as a significant link in the Town's greenway trail system. The surrounding neighborhood has worked directly with the Town to financially sponsor improvements to the park by adding a tot lot. Similar neighborhood recreation amenities could be added to the park in coordination with the neighborhood association sponsorship.

Deerfield Park

Deerfield Park is a 2.6-acre mini-park. Its location along the floodplain of Tom's Creek suggests future expansion along the floodplain to make more greenway connections. In its current condition, the park and trail primarily serves the immediate neighborhood. Additional trail connections to the larger greenway system would also offer the opportunity for interpretive trails with educational information regarding the identification of wetland and upland plants.

Southwest Sector

With development expanding into this sector and with the Town ordinance requiring 50% dedication of open space in land zoned rural residential (RR-1), this sector could serve to meet the need for parks, open space, and trails. Most of the sector is zoned RR-1, except for the Hethwood planned residential community and small areas zoned commercial and mixed use near Rt. 460. It is imperative; given the growing demand for public open space in this sector, that a portion, at least 50% of the land dedicated be used for public recreation and open space.



Kipps Park/Winfrey Fields

Kipps Park, or Winfrey Fields, is an 11.1-acre Neighborhood park located next to Kipps Elementary School and Blacksburg Middle School. As the largest active recreation area in the Town, it is the best location for expansion into a District park featuring a sports complex. With its convenient proximity to parking, restrooms, utilities and major roads, along with its existing fields, acquisition of land to expand this facility is highly desirable.

Montgomery County Schools has expressed conceptual long-range plans to invest future education facilities around this campus design. A new Blacksburg High School stadium was approved in 2006 to be located behind the middle school. This investment and vision of the county presents significant opportunities for active recreation facilities. The Town should work closely with the public, Montgomery County, and Montgomery County Schools as the future of this area is planned. Expanded discussion and of this concept is located in the Recommended Priority Projects section.

Southend Sector

This sector's primarily office, commercial, and industrial uses with easy access to major transportation corridors creates an opportunity for a District park serving a regional need.

There are also pockets of residential development ranging from very low density single family off of Hightop Road, to a full range of residential densities along Ellett Road. Most of the property zoned for residential is built out and includes a range of recreation service levels from small mini parks, a community park, and a natural recreation District park.



Cedar Hill Park

Cedar Hill Park is a 1.3-acre Mini-park located in a residential community. There is little room to acquire additional land. Suggestions include the addition of a basketball court or other small facility based on neighborhood needs.



Ellett Valley Park and Ellett Spring Lots

Associated but not adjacent to each other, are the Ellett Spring lots and Ellett Valley Park. They offer opportunities for natural environment amenities. The rugged character of the terrain renders this land best suited for trails. Ellett Valley Park is approximately 109-acres and contains basic hiking trails throughout the property. A small gravel parking area



provides several parking spaces for users. The property's primary value is the preservation of open space and protection of a water shed that serves a small number of residential homes adjacent to the park. The Ellett Spring lots along Cedar Run Road provide a potential trail connection between the larger Ellett Valley Park and the Town corporate boundary. This valuable connection may be made through a rugged hiking trail running along the Cedar Run Creek and connecting back into Town-owned industrial park property. This is also a valuable link to Montgomery County's unincorporated area around the Town with potential future links to Ellett Valley. This is more specifically shown on the [Pathways to the Future Greenway Map](#).

Linking the town to the Jefferson National Forest is a higher priority than a linkage with Ellett Valley Park. The National Forest offers a significantly wider array of long distance trails, camping, and other outdoor activities for residents and visitors when compared to the Ellett Valley Park. Improving the parking area and access to the park would add value and increase its usability. Opportunities also exist to partner with the County and other interested organizations to increase the educational value of the park through programs and interpretive signs. The property serves as an asset to the community's goal of open space preservation and protection.

Interchange Park

A master plan has been approved for the proposed Interchange Park, located at the junction of Rt. 460 and South Main Street. Covering approximately 34-acres, the park will serve as a District park and is expected to be a regional draw. Its proximity to the highway makes it easily accessible by car, rendering it a convenient regional destination. The master plan for the park shows a baseball facility including two fields, restrooms, concessions, bleachers, and dugouts, a regulation-size soccer field, tennis courts, playgrounds, trails, shelters and rain gardens.

The development concept reserves approximately 6-acres of the property for future office/commercial development. This creates the opportunity for a public-private partnership to allow a developer to purchase and develop a portion of the property which, in turn, would generate revenue to fund the initial creation of the park amenities.

University Sector

The facilities in this sector are primarily owned by Virginia Tech; therefore, this area was excluded from study. As a major entity within the Town, it is important to further develop the relationship and partnership between the University and Town. Both entities are dependent on each other to provide recreational opportunities and amenities to residents, employees, and visitors. Additionally, there are opportunities



for special events, such as Steppin’ Out, Music on the Lawn, and other cultural and arts events that would benefit from a strong collaborative relationship.

Also within this sector is the Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center (CRC). As an employer of more than 2,000 people, the CRC has provided a number of amenities and services. These include a fitness center, extensive paved trails and bicycle lanes, and large areas of open space.

Midtown Sector

This older residential area located adjacent to downtown is densely populated, and its existing parks receive heavy use. The parks in this sector are best served by the creation of additional parks in general and larger parks in other sectors, to reduce this sector’s overuse.



Nellie’s Cave Park

Ideally situated but somewhat difficult to find, this 9.3-acre park serves the surrounding neighborhoods and sector well. Potential for expansion is limited by the park’s proximity to existing residences and lack of adjacent open space. There is a small amount of property owned by Montgomery County that abuts the park, which may provide for some expansion opportunity. However, it would not serve as active recreation space due to its topography. The existing arboretum is limited in size, but offers a unique feature in the Blacksburg Parks and Recreation inventory. Providing a similar facility at another park (in the North End or Northwest sector) would help reduce the overuse of this park. Additionally, a second arboretum featuring different plants would expand the content of educational opportunities.



The Hill Golf Course

The Hill is a 9-hole executive golf course (54-acres) located in the heart of this sector. It is one of two 9-hole course located within the town. The second being Virginia Tech’s 9-hole course, formerly an 18-hole course but was reduced to provide room for the new hotel and conference center on campus. Its future is also limited based on the Virginia Tech’s Master Plan calling for the course to be closed for future campus expansion. To this end, The Hill is in a competitive advantage to be the sole public course in the Blacksburg community.

A 9-hole course provides golfers a local venue to play; however, it does not have the revenue potential or a strong regional draw of an 18-hole course. Per the 2001 Golf Course study, the opportunity exists to provide an 18-hole (par 72) course in the local area. The study identified the potential for the existing golf course to be expanded in to the adjacent county property.



However, the feasibility of this option is very unlikely. It is more likely that a new course may be developed elsewhere to serve the county and region. A public/private partnership should be explored to reduce the need for the Town to fund the entire project.

The Golf Course is also a prime location and opportunity for a full-service restaurant and reception facility. The views and generally enjoyable environment of a golf course lend themselves to this type of facility. This, in turn, would provide non-golf generated revenues that could be reinvested into the operations and improvements to the course.

Downtown Sector

The Downtown sector is comprised of significant historical structures and densely populated, established residential neighborhoods. The parks in this sector act as key terminals for greenways. Expansion opportunities are limited by the density of development. However, a number of cultural and arts destinations are present and planned for the historic downtown. There is also a lack of child-oriented amenities in and around the downtown, such as a mini park or other “safe” area for children to play.



Marcia's Park

Marcia's Park, a 0.5-acre park, links the downtown area with the Huckleberry Trail. Located adjacent to the police station, it is frequently used as a lunch spot for area workers. While the park supports mostly passive recreation, its greenway link into downtown and the university area supports active recreation and transportation uses. Mature vegetation and dappled shade make this a pleasant focal point for small events. Maintenance of existing mature trees and a replanting plan is vital to retaining the overall feel of this park. Opportunities also exist to daylight the creek that runs through this property and adjacent to the Police Department building.



Price House Nature Center and Garden Park

The Price House property, 0.7 acres, features a circa 1853 log and frame home with architectural elements from the Greek revival period. It currently functions as a garden and nature center, however, the nature center and office use are very limited in use due to significant issues with the house foundation and water damage. Planning is underway to repair the home and improve its usability. The Nature Center and associated programs would be best served by relocating and creating a new structure to operate. In the short term, nature programs may be operated out of other existing parks and recreation facilities. In the long term, a new nature center is planned for Heritage Park. The relocation of the Nature Center provides a key opportunity for the Price House to create a distinct identity for itself as a period house and garden for the Town. Historical education could become a tourist draw as part of the Town's history and museum initiatives.



Midtown North Sector

The sector is densely populated with older residential neighborhoods and multi-family developments. This sector has exciting possibilities for growth because of its central location (near Downtown and Virginia Tech) and because of the recent development of a new park called Wong Park.



Wong Park

The purchase of 9.2-acres for the development of Wong Park fulfilled key visions of the Central Blacksburg Greenway by connecting the neighborhood to the downtown district. In conformance with Wong Park Master Plan, the park includes a regional storm water management facility, renovation of the Bennett House for Town offices and community room space, playground amenities, trails, and associated parking. The park serves as a model for using low-impact design concepts such as porous pavers in the parking lot and rain gardens for storm water management and water quality. The Wong Park Master Plan includes future opportunities such as facilities to support local artists with studio space and exhibitions, and developing gardens with international themes.

Focus in being placed on improving the aesthetics of the storm water management pond to provide the needed retention while serving as an asset to the park. This would include investment in landscaping at the inlet and outlet of the pond. The pond also offers a unique opportunity due to the grading for an outdoor amphitheater. The resulting bowl would provide large areas of seating to offer music, theater, movie, and other outdoor events.

Municipal Park

Located near the heart of Town, the 34.4-acre Municipal Park is the hub of Blacksburg recreational activities. A single building currently serves the dual role of community center and recreation center. Although opportunities for expanding the park area are constrained by surrounding residences and the Blacksburg High School, the opportunity exists to improve service by relocating



some activities to other sites within the park system. Moreover, opportunity to expand current Aquatic and Community Center facilities while moving certain fields is a potential option for improved service to the community.

Community Center

Currently the Community Center serves multiple roles providing recreational, civic/community room, and senior center activities. The center is heavily used providing a number of multi-use rooms. Continual maintenance keeps the facility functioning, but it is dated and under serves the needs of the community, especially the teen segment of the community. There are opportunities for expansion and renovation with significant open areas surrounding the facility; however this would require the relocation of certain athletics fields. An assessment should be conducted to evaluate the community's current and future facility needs. Through this study alternatives need to be evaluated to determine the viability of expansion or development of a new center and the impacts an expansion would have on adjacent recreation amenities, such as the athletic fields

In the short term, the community has clearly identified the need for an expanded fitness center. The current room provides minimal apparatuses and is primarily programmed through the Senior Center. Expansion into an adjacent multipurpose room provides the quickest and most cost-effective alternative to provide for this need. However, this will stress the currently overstressed facility.

Aquatic Center

The Aquatic Center provides an indoor-pool facility with a traditional rectangular 25-meter pool and attached zero-entry shallow area. Community needs include a therapeutic pool, improvements to the existing hot tub, and renovations to update the bathroom/locker rooms.

The creation of an outdoor pool/water park has been a high priority expressed by the community. The Town closed the outdoor pool located at the golf course in early 2000 and left a larger void in the outdoor pool offerings for the community. There are several private pools located in town that serve specific neighborhood needs and have hefty waiting lists. A concept analysis and master plan was completed in 2001 for an Outdoor Family Aquatic Center. The plan identified several alternatives providing a range of amenities dependent on financial resources. In general, a 4-6 acre site is ideal. Locations ranged from close to Rt. 460 for a facility that would draw from a regional area to a smaller facility located behind the existing aquatic center focusing on town residents.

Recreation fields and playgrounds

The recreation fields and playgrounds are heavily used due to their central location and inadequate number of available soccer and baseball/softball fields across town. Development of new facilities on the Interchange Park, Kipps Park, and Northside Park, would be the primary solution to improving the field conditions. Additionally, Hand-in-Hand Park, an extensive wooden playground structure, will need extensive improvements over time. Current maintenance addresses small structural and safety issues; however,

the wooden structure does have a limited useful lifespan. Attention to this structure is required to ensure safety and conformance with recreation industry standards.

Improvements to the tennis courts are needed, planned, and funded for the immediate short term. Improved court grading, surface, fencing, and programming is currently underway. In addition, the program focus addresses the opportunities for low- to moderate-income residents and families to learn a life-long sport, which is relatively inexpensive to play.

Skate Park

A new skate park has been completed to replace the old park located within the Municipal Park. The old park was no longer adequate for the use that it received and upgrading the facility was neither cost-effective nor a safe alternative. The new facility has been constructed with concrete and offers a bowl, stairs, ramps, and table tops. It is now a premiere facility in Southwest Virginia and offers the opportunity to host competition events. Its location is in the heart of Town and is easily within walking distance for many users. It is also convenient to Rte 460 for regional events.

North End Sector

This sector is sparsely populated and includes a large amount of open space and undeveloped land. Existing parks in the area are limited in the services and amenities they provide. Further development of the parks in this sector is recommended, and greenways should be used to provide connections to the Northwest and Midtown North sectors. Additional athletic fields are needed to support the future growth of the area. Many of these new parks and trails should be provided through the land development process. Developments should be encouraged and when appropriate required to dedicate park land to the Town.



Seneca Drive Park and Shenandoah Trail

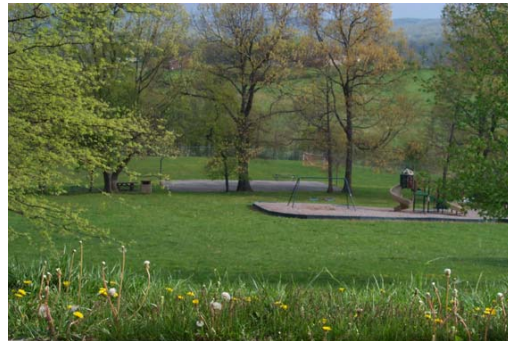
Seneca Drive Park, totaling 7.7-acres has potential for additional facilities, but parking is a major constraint for those who live outside the adjacent residential area. Area residents often use the fenced multi-use field as a dog park, which is incompatible with recreational uses of the field. Because the field is not a standard size, it does not work well for regulated sports such as soccer. In its current state, it



is best suited, instead, as a place for “pick up games” and Frisbee tossing. Once additional athletic fields are created, this park would be best served as a dedicated dog park. This would serve the demand for the area and provide a safe environment for both animals and people. The trail system at this location is excellent, receiving much use by area residents wishing to connect to adjacent neighborhoods. The trail does not connect to an outside trail system. This prevents its use as a commuter trail. This will be resolved as part of the Progress Street Extension road project that will extend Progress Street from its existing cul-de-sac to the existing Progress Street extension that exists beyond Givens Lane. The trail then continues into the Meadows of Northside Park section of the larger Northside Park neighborhood.

Primrose Lane Park

Primrose lane Park is a 5.6-acre neighborhood park with potential for additional facilities as the area becomes more developed. Way-finding for this park is important due to its remote location. While the park is currently underused, it will receive increased use as the area continues to grow. The possibility exists for Primrose to connect to the Northside Park as part any future development of the adjacent Givens property On-street parking is available but very limited. Off-street parking should be considered if the park is expanded.



Mt. Tabor Park (undeveloped)

Mt. tabor Park consists of 5-acres of relatively level, open land at the intersection of North Main Street and Mt. Tabor Road. It will be dedicated to the Town as part of completion of Village 3 at Maple Ridge. It is currently serving as a storm water detention pond. The property will be divided by a future road project that will realign the Mt. Tabor Road, Givens Lane, and North Main Street intersection. The resulting property will serve as a storm water management facility but also provides the opportunity for a neighborhood park. The North End Trail crosses the property and the property may serve as the trail’s hub. Connection to the Primrose Lane Park would be accomplished through a short section of new sidewalk or trail alongside Countryside Court.

Northside Park (undeveloped)

Northside Park is currently open farmland that has been deeded to the Town. However, it is not accessible to the public until such time as the surrounding property is developed. Its 16.2-acres can accommodate a wide variety of activities. Because the terrain consists of rolling hills, creating ball fields would require



significant grading. This may be accomplished through a partnership with the developer as part of the development of the farm as a new neighborhood. There is very little vegetation which will require trees to be planted as part of the development of the park and will take many years to mature to provide adequate landscaping and shade. It may be possible to begin planting trees on this property now so that when it is developed, some level of tree canopy is established. This requires some basic level of planning so that removal of any planted trees is minimized.

Northside should be developed as a Community park with athletic fields and picnic facilities for the growing population in this sector. Due to the lack of any trees in this area, the creation of a future arboretum may also benefit the environment and use of the park. Further study into the natural site conditions and drainage features will help determine whether this use is appropriate for the site.