

Chapter 11: Parks & Recreation

Chapter Overview

The City's parks, recreation facilities, and public open spaces are among its most important and valued assets. City parks, playgrounds, trails, and recreation centers and facilities contribute to the City's quality of life in many ways. In addition to offering places to play, meet, relax, and exercise, they enhance neighborhood livability, improve the image and attractiveness of commercial areas, give context to historic and cultural sites, bolster property values, and provide access to the natural environment.

Commitment to a long-term program of recreational facility and park improvement, maintenance, and expansion is key to preserving the City's investments and ensuring the recreational needs of all citizens, including seniors, youth, indoor and outdoor athletic users, and others are met.

This element of the Comprehensive Plan builds on the City's *Recreation Facilities Study and Parks and Recreation Master Plan*, adopted by the City Council in 1997.

Recommendations in the *Recreation Facilities Study and Parks and Recreation Master Plan* call for improvements to existing parks and recreation centers, the development of new facilities in underserved areas, the preservation of historic facilities and landscapes, and the expansion of local and regional bikeways and greenways. The recommendations of the *Recreation Facilities Study and Parks and Recreation Master Plan*, along with new opportunities identified through the planning process, are addressed below.

Park & Facility Improvement

The *Recreation Facilities Study and Parks and Recreation Master Plan* includes an inventory of public recreation facilities and parks with an evaluation of their condition and quality. Existing parks and recreation facilities are mapped in Exhibit 11-1. In addition, planners used a variety of methods to assess demand for facilities and activities. Research on the demand for recreation facilities and activities included a telephone survey, an analysis of current participation in recreation activities, and a review of recreation demand standards published by the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation in the Virginia Outdoors Plan. Based on this research, the *Recreation Facilities Study and Parks and Recreation Master Plan* recommends standards for the number and types of recreation facilities needed in Lynchburg. Taken together, the inventory and demand assessment resulted in recommendations for improvements to facilities throughout the City as well as the development of new facilities in underserved areas. A summary of key findings and recommendations follows.

- Many of the City's community centers as well as the Department's headquarters at 301 Grove Street are in need of renovation to make them more usable and to ensure that they meet current fire and building codes, as well as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards.



- The City's 770 acres of parkland generally are in good condition, though many require improvement to meet ADA standards.
- Playgrounds and play equipment must be rehabilitated for improved safety according to modern standards.
- Several parks, including Miller and Riverside Parks, contain historic City Beautiful landscapes that need to be preserved, improved and interpreted. The City Beautiful movement of the late 1800s featured classically designed parks, many modeled after those developed by Daniel Burnham and Frederick Law Olmsted for the 1893 World Columbian Exposition in Chicago. Examples include New York City's Central Park and the parks in Boston's Emerald Necklace.
- The inventory of parks in the *Recreation Facilities Study and Parks and Recreation Master Plan* shows that recreation facilities and park lands are not evenly distributed across the City. The Cheese Creek and Tomahawk Creek-Timberlake areas are underserved, so the Plan recommends establishing new community parks in those areas and in the Tyreeanna/Pleasant Valley area. In addition, since the publication of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan, the City has been able to acquire land in the Lynchpin Industrial Center for a nature park and an environmental education center.
- Large recreation facilities in the plan include a new athletic field complex and an indoor recreation center with gym and, in the future, an indoor pool. Citizens expressed a desire for neighborhood-based recreation, but also supported the construction of a new central indoor recreation center with a gym and pool.

Shared Use of Facilities

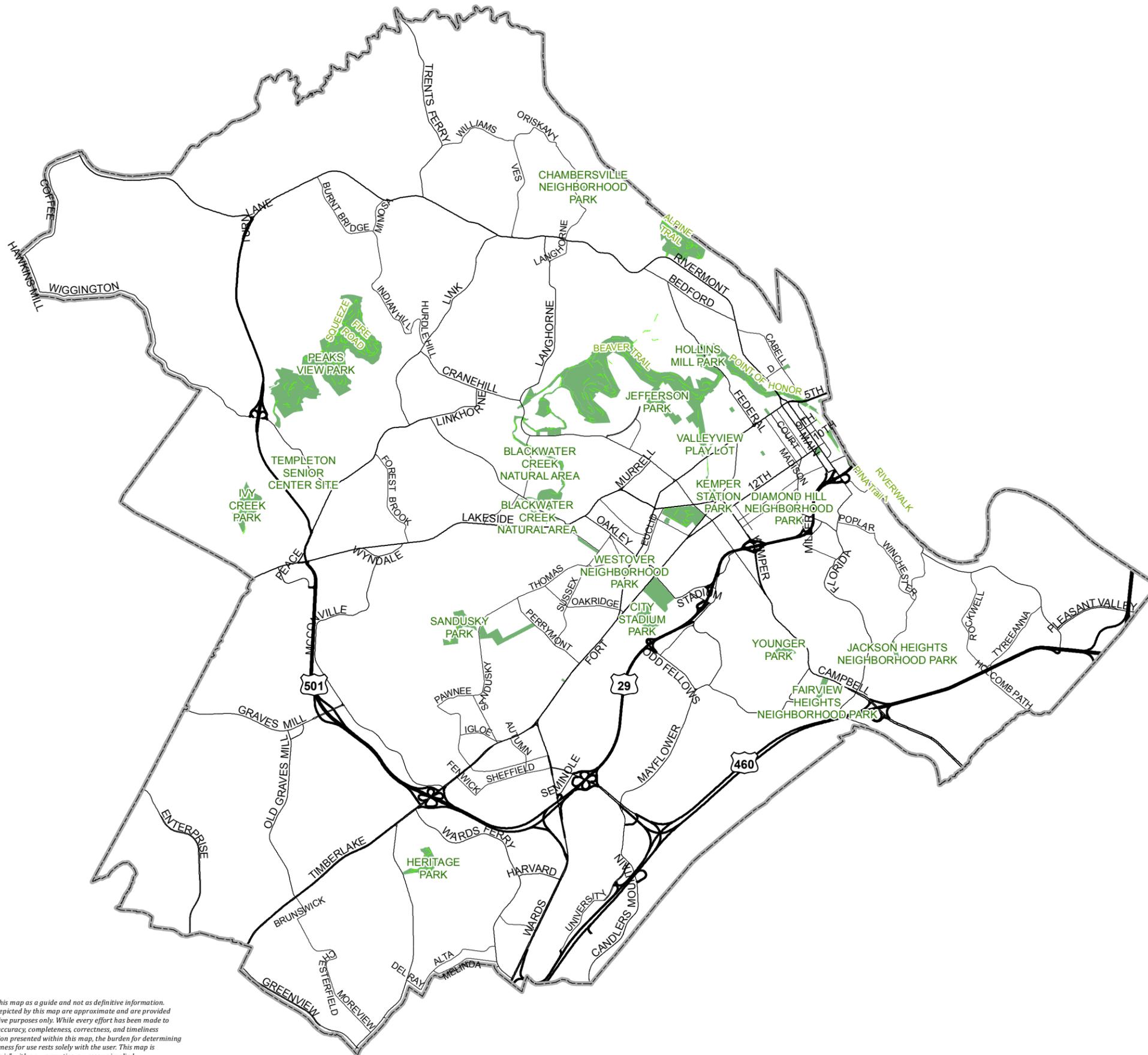
City residents depend a great deal on ballfields, outdoor courts, and gymnasiums in the school system to provide opportunities for general recreation. Many of those facilities show wear due to heavy use and are in need of renovation and improvement. Lynchburg's colleges and universities also provide recreational facilities and their students generate demands for City facilities. The City should continue to coordinate efforts to establish and refine shared use agreements with each of these entities to make efficient use of facilities and to equitably address operations, maintenance and improvement costs.

Park Master Plans

The *Recreation Facilities Study and Parks and Recreation Master Plan* contains detailed recommendations for improvements to Perrymont, Jefferson, and Peaks View parks. Master plans have been created for many of the City's parks. These master plans are the basis for the Parks & Recreation Department's 10-year capital improvements program, which schedules major improvements for parks, trails and facilities, such as the City's football stadium.

In addition to improving existing parks, citizens support the provision of indoor recreational facilities, additional neighborhood parks, facilities for teens and expansion of the City's greenway system.

Exhibit 11-1 Parks & Recreation September 2013



- - - Trails
- Park
- Highway
- Major Arterial
- Minor Arterial
- Collector

Please use this map as a guide and not as definitive information. The areas depicted by this map are approximate and are provided for illustrative purposes only. While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy, completeness, correctness, and timeliness of information presented within this map, the burden for determining appropriateness for use rests solely with the user. This map is provided "as is" with no warranties, express or implied.

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Greenways

Citizens place particular emphasis on protecting existing open space and expanding the City's greenway system. The City should continue to expand its greenway system to extend and create additional connections to the James River Heritage Trail, the Blackwater Creek Natural Area and trails along other City streams. Restoring, preserving and protecting sensitive natural environments along the City's streams is likely to be a high priority in the City's comprehensive water quality plan. The City's Parks & Recreation Department should coordinate greenway trail efforts with water quality initiatives and the City's bikeway improvement plans.

Additionally, greenway planning efforts should be coordinated with the development review process to facilitate efforts to purchase or accept donations of open space in fee simple or by easement. To maximize planning efforts and develop a comprehensive greenway system, the City should coordinate its greenway planning efforts with on-going regional efforts.

Water Recreation

Citizens attending the public forums also favored water recreation and improved access to the James River. Connected to this interest in the James River was support for the recreational and community event spaces of the *Downtown and Riverfront Master Plan 2000*.

Funding

Additional sources of funding, both public and private, must be explored in order to pay for all the recommended park and recreation improvements, as well as maintenance and operations costs. The City needs to evaluate fee structures on an annual basis to ensure delivery of quality recreational programs and to seek funds from all available state and federal resources to support facility and program improvements. The City should also pursue donations and sponsorships from private individuals, businesses, industries, and others.

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