

VII. Recommendations

The following recommendations are summarized based on the public participation component, National Recreation and Park Association Standards, Comprehensive Plan Update, Recreational Services Study and professional observations. Recommendations are shown in five categories -- acquisition/new parks, development, programming, funding, and management. Potential funding sources are further identified in the following chapter. Main components for consideration are the following:

- Acquisition of land for the development of community neighborhood and mini parks particularly in the southern quadrant
- Development of a multi-purpose indoor complex including aquatic, fitness, social, teen, and gym facilities
- Development of linkages between parks and the downtown district which could include nature/hiking trails and bikeways
- Research and consider various acquisition and funding mechanisms
- Increased support for the Parks and Recreation Department in terms of funding and staffing for existing and future facilities and programs

A. Acquisition/New Parks

The discussion of parks and recreation area needs by park classification and acres in section IV. Demand Analysis, indicates that Winchester-Clark County is currently short of meeting accepted national standards by 266 acres. This deficit grows to 289 acres by year 2010.

1. **Community Park** - The largest deficit is in the area of community-wide parks with a deficit of 192 acres. Community parks are considered to be 10 - 40 plus acres in size with a wide range of passive and active facilities. Land adjoining Lykins Park should be considered for lease or purchase to upgrade the site. A new community park should be located in the southern quadrant to serve the growing population in that area.
2. **Neighborhood Park** - The second largest deficit is neighborhood parks with a deficit of 59 acres. Neighborhood parks are those which are easily accessible to neighborhood populations and typically have a playground, athletic field, court and supporting facilities. A neighborhood park has between 2 - 20 acres. Two neighborhood parks are recommended, both on the south end. The need for these parks should be identified in new subdivision plats and could be acquired from developers of the subdivisions.
3. **Mini Park** - Although this type of park by acreage has the lowest deficit--15 acres--it is still critical to the overall park system. A mini park is normally 1 acre or less and includes a playground, walkway, multi-use court area and benches. In addition to the two mini parks, the school system provides 11 playgrounds which could be classified as mini parks. However, the school system recognizes that the existing schools are not in the growth areas; thus, there is a need for 2 or more mini parks in the unserved areas. The need for these parks should be identified in new subdivision plats and could be obtained through developers of the subdivisions.
4. **Linear Park** - The community currently does not have a linear park. This type of park provides for hiking, walking, jogging, biking and could include active play areas, fitness courses, picnicking and other similar activities. Linear parks are generally utilized along creek beds, abandoned rail beds, and other built or natural corridors. This type of park could provide necessary linkages between parks and the downtown district. The city is proposing the utilization of an abandoned rail bed for a trail. The city is also proposing a park within the downtown district. Although the downtown park will not be a linear park, it will provide for linkages. These types of efforts should be expanded.

B. Development

1. **Aquatic Center** - Based on all public participation components, the top ranked active facility is for an indoor pool. A national institute is held each year for communities considering such development. It is recommended that individuals attend one of these meetings and visit communities with a new aquatic complex. A building with support facilities for an aquatic center would require the following:
 - Minimum 5 acre site
 - Highly visible site to increase attendance
 - Water and sewer service
 - Could be developed as a stand alone facility or with the proposed multi-use recreation center in order to share parking and access
 - Could be constructed at Lykins especially if adjoining land could be acquired or construction could be at new park
 - Good access to majority of population required
 - Approximately \$1.5 million for construction based on Lebanon facility
2. **Recreation Multi-Purpose Center** - The second strongest need is for a multi-purpose center with areas for a gymnasium, socialization, fitness, cultural activities, and meetings. The multi-purpose center could also include an aquatic complex. This type of complex could include about 50,000 sq. ft. with areas for offices, pool, child care, meetings, dance/aerobics/gymnastics, fitness, gymnasium, kitchen/ concession, lounge, track, and teen center. With the growing elderly population, consideration should be given to activities which would encourage participation by the elderly such as specific programs in the pool, low impact activities, along with other programs. A visit to local communities with this type complex is recommended. Site requirements include the following:
 - About 7 acres for building and parking
 - Could be located at Lykins if adjoining land available or at new park in south end
 - Easily accessible to the majority of the population
 - Water, sewer and major utilities required
 - Cost of multi-purpose complex about \$9 million based on recent bid of Georgetown facility
3. **Teen Center** - The need for a teen center was exhibited not only by the teens in the interview sessions and survey but also through the public survey. The center could be included within the multi-purpose facility. Immediate needs could be served by leasing a vacant downtown building.
4. **Nature/Hiking Trails** - The highest ranked passive facility, based on all public participation components, is nature and hiking trails. A trail system has vast economic, social and environmental benefits as stated in *The Economic Impact of Protecting Rivers, Trails, and Greenway Corridors, A Resource Book; 1991 Second Edition; by the River, Trails and Conservation Assistance, National Park Service*. Specifically, the benefits are stated as follows:
 - a. **Economic Benefits**

The primary social benefits of greenways--urban amenity, recreation, ecological diversity, historic and scenic preservation--should be sufficient in themselves to rationalize the public cost. However, greenway-makers will sooner or later have to demonstrate how well their greenway will pay. Other greenways have experienced the following economic benefits:

 - Real Property Values - Greenways and trails may increase nearby property values. An increase in property values can increase local tax revenues and help offset greenway acquisition costs.
 - Expenditures by Residents - Spending by local residents on greenway-related activities can help support recreation-oriented businesses and employment, as well as other businesses which are patronized by greenway, river and trail users.

- Commercial Uses - The potential for concessions and special events within the greenway can boost local business as well as raise funds for the greenway itself.
- Tourism - Greenways, rivers and trails which attract visitors to a community support local businesses such as lodging, food establishments, and recreation-oriented services. Greenways may also help improve the overall appeal of a community to visitors and increase tourism.
- Agency Expenditures - The agency responsible for managing a river, trail or greenway can support local businesses by purchasing supplies and services. Jobs created by the managing agency may also help increase local employment opportunities and benefit the local economy.
- Corporate Relocation - The quality of life of a community is an increasingly important factor for retaining and attracting corporations and businesses, and greenways, rivers and trails can be important contributors to the quality of life. Corporations bring jobs to a community and help support businesses which provide services and products to corporations and their employees.
- Public Cost Reduction - Conservation of rivers, trails and greenways may help local governments and other public agencies to reduce long-term costs for services such as roads and sewers; reduce costs resulting from injury to persons and property from hazards such as flooding; and avoid potential costly damages to natural resources such as water and fisheries.
- Benefit Estimation - The recreational benefits of rivers, trails and greenways can be estimated in monetary values. Users can be surveyed to estimate the value of a visit to a greenway.

b. Social Benefits

The implementation of a trail system in the community will provide several social benefits for the well being of all residents. Some of these are as follow:

- Increased opportunities for group and individual recreation activities
- Enhancement of the quality of life in the community
- Provision of increased opportunities for social interaction
- Opportunities for the understanding and appreciation of community's past history
- Visual quality enhancement of the residential and business areas of the community
- Opportunity to utilize non-polluting transportation methods throughout the entire community
- Source of community pride

c. Environmental Benefits

The benefits of a trail and/or greenways system in a community has a multitude of environmental benefits including:

- Environmental health and protection
- Enhanced property values within the designated areas
- Protection of the ecosystem
- Preservation of open space
- Clean air and clean water

Public outcry is for the development of nature and hiking trails. National standards call for 6 miles of trails within the community. Additional needs are seen in the form of linking the parks and downtown with a system of walkways/bikeways. The trails recommended are:

- Development of a walking/fitness trail at Lykins Park
 - Trail system within a proposed community park on the south end or within a linear park system
 - An identified area in the *Comprehensive Plan* for walking/biking access to Lykins Park is along the creek between KY 627 north of the interstate and Lykins Park
 - Support should be shown for the recognized need shown in the *Comprehensive Plan* for scenic corridors and “gateways” which beautify, protect and delineate urban/rural areas. These scenic corridors could act as linear parks with walkways and bikeways.
 - Explore and support the proposed new collector road crossing the northeastern portion of the eastern by-pass which would be required to provide pedestrian and bike access to Lykins Park
5. **Athletic Fields** - The need for athletic fields within the active needs category was ranked fourth of six listed needs. This need was also exhibited in the *Comprehensive Plan*, specifically for soccer and softball fields. The need, however, is for practice fields not regulated play fields.
6. **Skate Park** - Development of a skate park was recognized by the teens and through the public survey. Plans are underway by the city to secure land for the development. Input on the development should be secured from the teens who have ideas on design and funding.
7. **Fishing/Boating** - Although not a high priority, the need for this activity for recreational purposes has been expressed. Therefore, consideration should be given to continuing the lease agreement between the City of Winchester and the Fish & Game Club which expires in 2005. The Club provides the facilities for members.
8. **Existing Public Park Improvements** - To meet existing demands, improvements are necessary to the public parks system. A list of negative features and needs is within section V. Facilities Inventory. Identified improvements include:
- Lykins Park - walking trail, large shelter with access and parking, lighting for large events, light minor league and softball fields, pave driveway and parking lots, dog park
 - Harmon Park - playground equipment, walking trail linking with Community Park
 - Community Park - wading pool, concession building and renovation of bath house at swim complex; renovation of concession building; driveway to shelter; walking trail linking with Harmon Park
 - College Park - air condition community building, construct restroom building, resurface walking trail
 - Soccer Complex - pave driveway and parking lots
 - Fairfield Park - playground equipment
 - Wiseman Park - playground equipment
 - Melbourne Park - playground equipment
 - All Parks - added landscaping including trees
 - Provision of “mature” play equipment for teens
9. **Signage** - A coordinated park signage system should be developed to provide effective information and direction to and within the parks. The signs should project a good positive image, provide a sense of place and pride, and provide park rules. Four different park signs could be considered, each serving a different purpose--park maps, information or bulletin boards, educational, and directional. Information on park signage from the Urban Parks Institute is enclosed as Appendix D.

C. Programming

An exhibited need in the public participation component is for programming. The types of programs identified are: arts/crafts, fitness, environmental, socialization, enrichment, among others. Initially, an intern could be secured from Eastern Kentucky University or University of Kentucky to conduct seasonal programs. The County Extension Service, Kentucky Humanities Council (for adult programs only), and volunteers may be utilized in providing programs.

D. Funding

It is evident that additional resources are required to maintain existing facilities and provide for future needs. It is recommended that:

- Local governments should consider increased funding levels at a rate comparable to other communities. The existing parks and recreation per capita expenditure for Winchester-Clark County is \$8.99 compared to Versailles-Woodford County at \$24.09 and Nicholasville-Jessamine County at \$33.33.
- Various funding mechanisms are available for parks and recreation. These should be explored by a committee for consideration by the parks board and local governments.

E. Management

In order to maintain and enhance the public parks, improvements are recommended.

- Increase department staff at a level so that recommended improvements can be implemented. The average staff within a parks department with similar facilities is 8 full-time employees. Winchester has 3 full-time employees.
- Increased visibility for the parks department should be provided through brochures and other media.
- Continued input, especially from the teens, should be sought. A teen advisory board is recommended.