

# LEE COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION

# MASTER PLAN UPDATE



**Southeastern Regional Office  
(Adopted March 15, 2010)**

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

### Board of Commissioners

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Amy M. Dalrymple  
Nathan E. Paschal  
Larry C. "Doc" Oldham  
Robert T. Reives  
Linda A. Shook  
James C. Kelly

### County Manager

John A. Crumpton

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Edgar Underwood  
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Jusin Coggins  
Mark Kline  
Ed Paschal, Commissioner  
Charles Taylor, Councilman  
Kenneth R. Hoyle, County Attorney

### Lee County Parks and Recreation Staff

John Payne, Parks and Recreation Director

### Prepared By

NC Department of Commerce, Division of Community Assistance  
Southeastern Regional Office

Shanelle Bullock, Community Development Planner

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## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

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This is an update to the current Lee County Parks and Recreation Plan. Like the first plan, a public input session was held as well as an online survey that gathered additional input from the citizenry about facilities and current and future programming. Public forum opportunities have been held and a recreation needs survey has been conducted. Some elements from the previous master plan completed in 2002 are still valid and relevant to our community today. Some of the recommendations from that document have been completed and some remain to be accomplished. Other elements of the former plan have been replaced.

Lee County is strategically located in the approximate geographic center of the state and less than one hour's driving time from three large metropolitan areas; Greensboro, Raleigh, and Fayetteville. The US 421 By-pass is under construction with one section ready to open to traffic. Highway US 1 is now a multi-lane highway from Raleigh to Southern Pines. NC 87 from Sanford to Fayetteville is now multi-lane. Sanford/Lee County has a very good, modern airport facility. Downtown Sanford is in the midst of restoring many buildings encouraging new small businesses to start up. A new high school has just been completed and opened in the fall of 2005. The latest census information puts our resident population over 54,000. This milestone has created interest from chain restaurants and retailers to locate in the county. In view of these facts, it is important for us to continually look at planning and providing for future recreation and leisure opportunities.

The county is blessed with abundant natural resources and historically important areas. A varied terrain, several historically significant sites, a thriving art community, and more than 43 miles of riverfront provide ample opportunities for leisure pursuits. Lee County has a rich sports heritage. The Hispanic community continues to grow and has increased the need for additional soccer fields. Given the improvements in infrastructure mentioned earlier, our community is situated for more growth to occur. The challenge lies in protecting, preserving, and maintaining areas for parks and open space that will be accessible to the public in the future.

This update seeks to address additional recreation and leisure needs expressed by the public and staff. The overall goal of the plan is to provide a variety of recreation and leisure opportunities in an organized, well-maintained, and safe environment. In achieving this mission our community will continue to be viewed as a great place to live, work, and play.

## **CHAPTER 2: PURPOSE**

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The goal of this document is to provide a framework in which to provide increased opportunities for recreation and leisure with new or improved facilities and programs to better meet the demands due to growth within our community.

Park and recreation departments are better able to determine issues that are important to the development and maintenance of a park with an understanding of how each park functions within the community. These issues include:

- Why people come to a particular park.
- What activities they engage in.
- When it is used and for how long.
- What types of design elements support these activities.
- Development of management and maintenance procedures.

## **CHAPTER 3: GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

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The Lee County Parks & Recreation Master Plan establishes recreational objectives through the year 2015. This plan is also an opportunity to reassess and reaffirm the policies and philosophies that shape and support Lee County's recreational objectives. This plan is also part of an ongoing effort to document the needs, objectives and processes that have been the foundation of past planning endeavors and that will continue to inform future decision making.

The goals and objectives outlined below, in conjunction with their related recommendations and implementation steps found in later chapters, is intended to guide staff, elected officials, and community volunteers and activists to work toward and accomplish the development and management of necessary and desired recreation facilities for the next decade.

**Goal 1: When planning for improvements to recreational facilities and programs, consider the needs and desires of the traveling public and promote recreational opportunities to enhance the local recreation and tourism industries.**

Objectives:

- 1-1: Replace spillway and stabilize stream bank for the dam at San-Lee Park.
- 1-2: Make additional improvements to Kiwanis Children's Park that is adjacent to Historic Downtown Sanford.
- 1-3: Utilize the 10 acre gift adjacent to O.T. Sloan Park and other improvements.
- 1-4: Reassess facilities and programming at Horton Park.

**Goal 2: Acquire additional property or redefine the usage of existing land of under-utilized park facilities to expand recreational opportunities.**

Objectives:

- 2-1: Incorporate permanent soccer facilities into the inventory.
- 2-2: Investigate the feasibility to a skating or skateboard park as identifies in the survey.
- 2-3: Incorporate new recreational facility needs identified in Chapter 7 on an annual basis.

**Goal 3: Support land dedication, or money in lieu of land, by developers. Staff should reserve the right to demand money in lieu of land for current or future improvements, and shall have the right to allocate as needed.**

Objectives:

- 3-1: Amend the open space standards of Lee County Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) to permit land dedication or money in lieu of land.
- 3-2: Improve facilities by promoting safe and efficient routes from neighborhoods to adjacent park facilities.
- 3-3: Improve facilities by connecting to or continuing existing greenways and trails.
- 3-4: Support and encourage non-motorized links within the community as well as to adjacent communities and regional trail systems.

**Goal 4: Work with other agencies and community groups to expand park, recreation, and leisure resources. This would involve working with schools, athletic associations, civic groups, non-profit organizations, and businesses to develop partnerships to provide opportunities that could not be achieved individually.**

Objectives:

- 4-1: Establish a memorandum of agreement (MOA) with other organizations that provide additional community recreational services.
- 4-2: Work with the Board of Education to develop neighborhood parks at community schools.
- 4-3: Conduct special events such as athletic tournaments or festivals with the assistance of outside organizations.
- 4-4: Partner with City of Sanford to acquire the Depot building and develop programs and special events that would be suitable for that site.

**Goal 5: It is very important to maintain existing facilities in a safe and accessible condition. Providing quality facilities that are clean, with equipment that is safe, with trails and walks that are free of hazards, with plumbing and lighting that is maintained contributes to the leisure experience and increases the appreciation of the facility by the user.**

Objectives:

- 5-1: Perform a detailed analysis of existing facilities annually with recommendations for improvements and modifications.
- 5-2: Develop a Drainage Improvement Plan to address existing and future drainage problems at park facilities.
- 5-3: Seek additional funding to improve lighting and visibility of facilities.
- 5-4: Seek alternative funding sources and partnerships to assist in implementing the goals and capital improvements over the next five years.

- 5-5: Preserve and protect the natural resources and environmentally sensitive lands within the County while maintaining public use, access, and enjoyment. This applies to clean-up and maintenance of natural and scenic rivers within the County as needed.
- 5-6: Strive to ensure effective and efficient operation and maintenance of public parks and facilities within the County.

## CHAPTER 4: DEMOGRAPHICS

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Lee County has experienced a rapid pace of growth over the past decade. The County's population increased 16% between 2000 and 2009. In July 2009, the total population for Lee County was 58,709. Roughly 47% of Lee County's population resided in Sanford, the County seat, in 2000.

Census data from the year 2000 and the 2009 data from the State Data Center (SDC), in addition to a growing population also indicate some trends that directly influence the provision, programming and management of parks and recreation facilities:

- The percent of population of children under 5 years old is 9.0%; an increase of 34% from the 2000 Census.
- The percent of population of adults 65 years and older is 12.7%; an increase of 18% from the 2000 Census.
- School age children (ages 5-17) comprise approximately 17.8% of the population.
- The median age for the County is 36.64 years of age.
- The median household income is \$40,785.
- The County's population is becoming more diverse. The percentage of those identified as "white" has decreased to 67.6%. Those identified as "African American" has increased to 19.9%. Those identified as "Asian" has increased to 0.9% and those identified as "Hispanic or Latino" has increased to 15.2%. These shifts in population composition are expected to continue, with a significantly more diverse population profile expected by year 2015.

This information, along with the survey conducted by staff suggest that demands for facilities for young and school-age children will rise and that demand for facilities and programs for adults older than age 65 will continue to grow within the next decade.

**Population Projections for Lee County:**

Lee County is in the northern region of the Fort Bragg BRAC (Base Realignment and Closure) study area. As part of the 11 counties in the 5 mile boarder surrounding the largest US Army base, Lee County is only 25 miles away from Fort Bragg. Low property taxes make Lee County an affordable place to live for families of four or more. With the closure of Fort McPherson in Atlanta, GA, the Fort Bragg region is expected to grow by more than 40,000 people, which includes military personnel, dependents, and contractors. Lee County is expected to grow to 63,500 people. This projection includes 3,124 people as a direct result of the military expansion. Population projections for the County are expected to rise to 71,884 by the year 2020.

**Table 1: Lee County Population Projections**

<b>Year</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2020</b>
<b>Population</b>	59,906	63,500	65,894	71,884

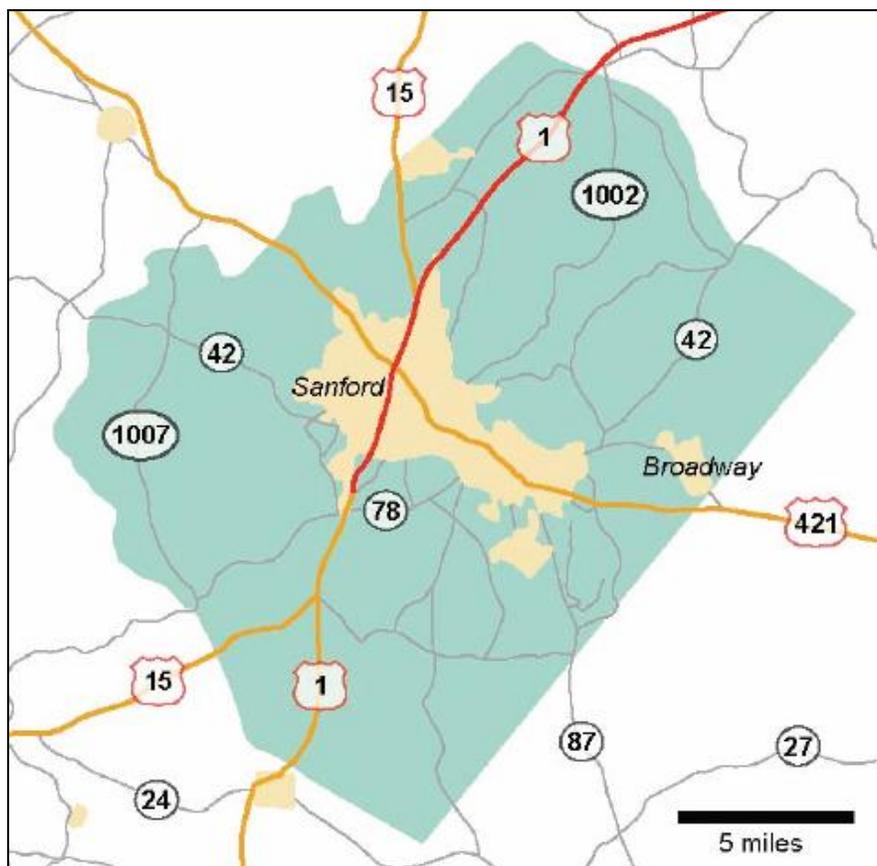
Source: NC Office of State Budget and Management

## CHAPTER 5: TRANSPORTATION

### Highways and Roads

Located on the Fringe of North Carolina's piedmont region, Lee County is served by a transportation network ideal for many industries. Many roadways are four lanes or more. The major north-south route in the area is US Highway 1 and provides a direct route to Raleigh and Southern Pines. US Highway 1 also intersects in Sanford with US Highway 421 and NC Highway 87, leading to Greensboro and Fayetteville. Interstate 40 and 85 can be easily accessed via US 421 and Interstate 95 can be accessed by NC Highway 87.

Figure 1: Lee County



### Railroads

CSX, Norfolk Southern and an Atlantic and Western short line all provide rail service within Lee County.

### Airports

Commercial air service is available at the Sanford-Lee County Regional Airport that offers a 6,500 foot runway with a parallel taxiway. Raleigh-Durham International, just 45 minutes away, provides nearly 450 passenger flights each day to destinations throughout the United States and abroad.

## CHAPTER 6: EXISTING FACILITIES

Park agencies have developed park category guidelines to aid in identifying the role a park plays in the community. To establish appropriate categories for city parks, the Lee County Parks and Recreation Department uses guidelines established by the National Recreation and Park Association as a primary tool and have tailored those guidelines for the County.

The Department has established the following six categories of parks:

1. Mini Parks
2. Neighborhood Parks
3. Community Parks
4. Regional Parks
5. Special Purpose Parks
6. Greenways/Trails

Listed below are definitions for each of the park categories. Following the definitions is a list classifying Lee County's parks by their respective category, which also represents the primary function of the park.

Lee County currently owns and manages 323.15 (includes 10-acre gift adjacent to Sloan Family Park) parks and recreation acres. Lee County manages several trails and greenways including Big Buffalo Creek that contains a 7 mile trail. The County also leases a 7,700 square foot gymnastics facility.

### Mini Parks

Mini Parks, or pocket parks, are the smallest type of park and are usually less than five acres in size. The park is designed primarily to attract limited populations and parking is either limited or absent with the assumption that patrons live, work, or have services needs close by. Mini Park amenities typically include benches, tables, and attractive landscaping. Lee County currently does not have any Pocket Parks in its inventory; however, if the County purchases Depot Park in downtown Sanford, this will be the first mini park maintained by the Department.



*The County hopes to purchase Depot Park*

**Table 2: Existing Mini Parks**

Existing Parks	None
Typical Size	1 ace or less
Typical Facilities	Benches Landscaping Tables Small playground equipment

### Neighborhood Parks

Lee County currently maintains six Neighborhood Parks. These parks are typically five to 20 acres in size, usually serving the immediate surrounding neighborhood (1/2 mile radius), although they can provide town-wide service. Neighborhood parks have fulfilled many of the recreational needs for the County. Maintenance and management cost have increased with age and use of smaller facilities. The County makes continued effort to update facilities as needed and as prioritized. There is not a current need for additional Neighborhood Parks, but the County reserves the right to demand land or money in lieu of land as residential developments occur. Opportunities to enhance neighborhood parks and facilities in conjunction with special natural and historical places within the study area should be further pursued. An example would be the need for updated amenities and equipment at Kiwanis Children’s Park Place adjacent to Historic Sanford.

<b>Table 3: Existing Neighborhood Parks</b>	
Existing Parks	Buchanan Park Weatherspoon Courts Bob E. Hales Center Kiwanis Children’s Park Place Wicker Gym Temple Park
Typical Size	5 to 20 acres
Typical Facilities	Playgrounds Shelters Restrooms Concession areas Basketball courts

### Community Parks

Lee County currently has five Community Parks. Community Parks are intended to provide active and passive recreation facilities for resident of all ages. These parks are typically accessed via the roadway system and may include sports fields and community centers. Community parks expand beyond the immediate neighborhood and may serve several communities with access by a short car ride or through a connection of pedestrian trail and greenways. Community parks also typically serve as Neighborhood Parks for those living within close proximity of the park.



*O.T. Sloan pool*

<b>Table 4: Existing Community Parks</b>	
Existing Parks	Darlymple Park Horton Park Kiwanis Family Park O.T. Sloan Park Tramway Road Park
Typical Size	25 to 75 acres
Typical Facilities	Playgrounds Shelters Restrooms Concession areas Basketball courts Baseball fields Soccer fields Indoor meeting facilities Open space Trail and greenways Swimming Pools

### Regional Parks

The largest park typically found within a parks and recreation inventory is the regional park. The size of a regional park varies, but usually greater than 75 acres. Parks of this type, usually adjacent to or in close proximity of major highways or arterial roads, are highly desirable in order to accommodate relatively large volumes of traffic at peak



*Scenic view from the river at San-Lee Park*

times. Additionally, access via trails/greenways should be planned or continued wherever feasible. Regional parks provide Lee County with a diversity of recreational opportunities in both natural settings and intensely developed indoor or outdoor facilities that can accommodate large numbers of people without significant deterioration of the recreation experience. Sensitive environmental areas and cultural resource sites will be managed as natural or cultural resource sub-units of these parks.

There are two Regional Park facilities in Lee County. San-Lee Park is 160 acres and offers a nature center in addition to varied amenities and recreational facilities in a natural and serene environment such as RV parking, camp grounds, and hiking and mountain bike trails. Big Buffalo Creek Greenway is a seven mile greenway along the scenic Deep River that flows from Kiwanis Family Park down to Endor Iron Furnace.

<b>Table 5: Regional Parks</b>	
Existing Parks	San-Lee Park Big buffalo Creek Greenway
Typical Size	75 acres or greater
Typical Facilities	Playgrounds Shelters Restrooms Concession areas Basketball courts Baseball fields Soccer fields Indoor meeting facilities Open space Trail and greenways Swimming Pools

### Special Purpose Parks

Special purpose parks include parks that provide the community with a unique or specific function, possibly managed under joint public/private partnerships or public/quasi-public partnerships, and/or located as independent sites or as sub-units within other types of park lands. Types of special purpose areas include golf courses and related uses, water parks, recreation centers, field houses or stadiums for major sporting events, simultaneous tournament-level athletic complexes. Lee County currently does not own any Special Use Parks; however, the County leases and utilizes such facilities as needed. Moore Park Gymnastics Facility is a 7,700 square foot leased facility and provides an exercise floor, trampoline, and routine bars. Other special purpose facilities are owned and operated by non-profits and mostly for the specific purpose of baseball fields and batting cages.

<b>Table 6: Special Use Parks</b>	
Existing Parks	Moore Park Gymnastics Facilities Old Broadway Town Hall American legion Optimist Park Deep River Park Northview Optimist Park Broadway Optimist Park (Lett Family Park)
Typical Size	Varies
Typical Facilities	Places on the National Historic Register Natural resource park preserves Golf courses Driving ranges Aquatics parks Equestrian facilities Horticulture centers and gardens

	Recreation centers Large athletic stadiums/complexes
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**Greenways/Trails**

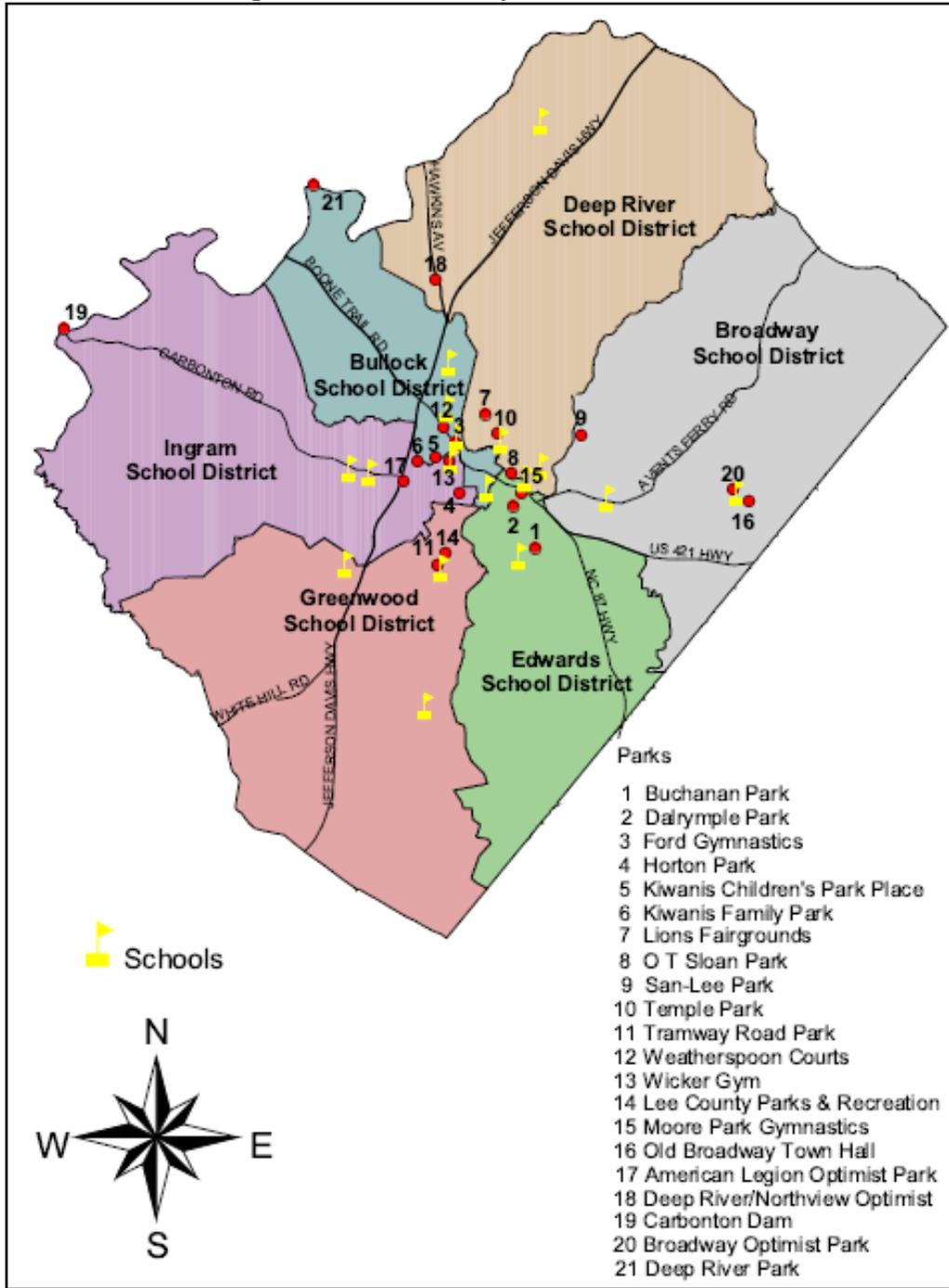
Greenways are open space corridors, often adjacent to waterways and trail systems and protect natural, cultural, and recreational resources. A greenways has not been established in Lee County, but the County currently has four walking trails totaling two miles, hiking trails in excess of two miles, and one five-mile mountain biking.

**Table 7: Existing Facilities and Programs**

	Buchanan Park	Dalrymple Park	Weatherspoon Courts	Horton Park	Kiwanis Children's'	Wicker Gym	Kiwanis Family	O.T. Sloan Park	Temple Park	San-Lee Park	Tramway Road Park	Moore Park Gymnastics
Amphitheater										x		
Bandstand area							x					
Barbecue Grills								x				
Baseball/softball field	x	x		x				x	x		x	
Basketball Courts		x	x			x						
Batting Cage		x										
Benches							x					
Boating/canoeing										x		
Camp Sites (RV)										x		
Camp Sites (Tent)										x		
Concession area				x				x				
Concession area									x			
Disc Golf Course								x				
Fish ponds										x		
Fishing Pier										x		
Football field				x				x				
Gazebo							x					
Gymnastics Equipment												x
Hiking Trails										x		
Horse Show Courts								x		x		
Mountain Bike Trails										x		
Multi-purpose Room										x		

	Buchanan Park	Dalrymple Park	Weatherspoon Courts	Horton Park	Kiwanis Children's'	Wicker Gym	Kiwanis Family	O.T. Sloan Park	Temple Park	San-Lee Park	Tramway Road Park	Moore Park Gymnastics
Nature Center										x		
Office Space												
Open air chapel										x		
Open Space							x			x		
Picnic shelter	x											
Picnic Tables							x	x		x		
Playground	x	x		x	x		x	x		x	x	
Restrooms					x		x			x		
Restrooms (Seasonal)	x								x			
Sensory Garden							x					
Shelter				x	x		x			x		
Soccer field								x			x	
Swimming Pool								x				
Swimming pool				x								
Tennis courts					x			x				
Trail(s)							x				x	
Volleyball								x		x		

Figure 2: Lee County Park Locations



## CHAPTER 7: NEEDS ANALYSIS

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### Overview

In order to determine the future recreational needs for Lee County, several forms of community and staff input and both qualitative and quantitative data were analyzed. These forms of input and data included:

- Comments received during a public open house held in April 2009.
- Survey data received through the Public Interest Survey, administered in Summer 2009.
- Discussions with Town staff throughout the project process and input received during meetings with the Parks and Recreation Commission.
- National trends

Of these various sources of input, none were used exclusively. Meetings with staff and site visits were used to determine the initial set of facility needs. The Public Interest Survey data was used as the baseline to establish additional facility needs and programming. This survey was developed in conjunction by Lee County staff and represents a broad range of the most popular activities and facilities in the county. Each activity and facility was examined based on responses in the survey and the needs assessment performed by staff. These facility needs were then used to for the facilities recommendations found later in this chapter. Each activity/facility is identified in the "Recreation Facility Needs" table that will set guidelines for the development of new park facilities.

Based on the current inventory and level of service, additional facilities are not needed at this time. However given the current budget constraints, decisions about improvements future programming versus available financial resources will have to be made. It is unlikely that all facilities will receive improvements simultaneously or that demands for all recreational activities will be fulfilled.

Other important factors that staff and elected officials will also need to consider in the future for the execution of objectives and goals identified in the document include:

- The recreational needs and interests of the community as expressed in future public input meetings, correspondence, and surveys.
- Staff interpretation of the facility needs with respect to barriers to participation identified in the survey. (e.g. lack of information, lack of interest, cost, etc.)
- Actual population change over time versus relying solely on population growth projections.
- Changes in recreational trends and facility needs over time.
- Alternate financial resources for future improvements. (e.g. grants, money in lieu of land from subdivision developers, collaboration with local nonprofits for fees associated with maintaining special use parks.

## **Input Summary**

The following summaries represent comments received that relate to desired facilities or activities within the Lee County Parks and Recreation System as expressed during the planning process.

### Public Input Meeting held on April 27, 2009

Public input at this session was lacking in contrast to exhaustive advertising. Many of those that provided input were staff and elected and appointed officials. The primary input received was to develop a priority list of the parks that had the most urgent improvements based on use and proximity to areas of interest. The priority parks identified by staff were Horton Park, O.T. Sloan Park, Kiwanis Children's Park and San-Lee Park.

### Input received from meeting with staff and the Parks and Recreation Commission

Staff was an instrumental resource throughout the process of updating the Parks and Recreation Master Plan. Staff provided the facility inventory and identified priority parks based on critical needs. The Parks and Recreation Commission has been updated continuously throughout the process and expressed interest in skate/skateboard parks in relation to community interest and national trends. Safety of the public was the top concern for staff and the Commission.

### Survey data received through the Public Interest Survey Summer 2009

Recreation facility needs for Lee County were also determined in this plan by calculating three estimates based on the Recreation Participation and Preference Survey. The first estimate indicates a possible level of latent demand that exists which is the difference between the proportions of the participants using facilities in Lee County and the proportions of those residents in the community that have a high to very high interest in an activity but are not currently participating in a given activity. And second, the level of service (LOS) that current facilities provide for the current population is determined. This evaluation was determined satisfaction and usage of facilities. Estimates of needed facilities were projected for future needs based on the current level of interest and projected population growth. In establishing the current LOS for a given activity, results from the resident survey were used to estimate participation and interests in various activities. In addition to the facility based activities included in this needs analysis, there are also programmed activities included in the listing of activities on the survey. Participation in the survey was limited; however, all districts were represented.

The County was divided into six territories using boundaries of elementary school districts: Ingram (29.2%), Greenwood (14.6%), Edwards (12.4%), Broadway (17.4%), Deep River (11.2%), and Bullock (15.2%).

The average household size for all of the respondents was 3.5 persons. Deep River has the highest average household size of 43.1 persons. Ingram had the lowest average household size of 3.1 persons. Respondents from the Ingram School district

utilized the park facilities the most on a daily and weekly basis; respondents from Broadway School District used the park facilities the least. Respondents from Bullock School District responded as least satisfied with Lee County Parks and Recreation facilities. It should be noted that no individual school district had a strong dislike for any particular park. Also, respondents responded as SATISFIED with parks within the district or near their residence. Most respondents gave NEVER VISIT or NO OPINION for park facilities outside the school district of which they lived.

Overall, San Lee Park and Kiwanis family Park are the most visited. 39.3% of respondents visit San Lee yearly; 35.9% visit Kiwanis Family Park monthly.

*Most visited daily (in descending order):*

1. Tramway Road Park
2. Kiwanis Family Park
3. Kiwanis Park Place
4. O.T. Sloan
5. San Lee Park

*Most visited weekly (in descending order):*

1. Temple Park
2. Kiwanis Family park
3. Tramway Road park
4. OT Sloan
5. Kiwanis Park Place

*Most visited yearly (in descending order):*

1. San Lee Park
2. OT Sloan Park
3. Kiwanis Family Park
4. Dalrymple Park
5. Kiwanis Park Place

*When asked to rate their experience at the park facilities (in descending order):*

Unsatisfactory- would not return:

1. Horton Park
2. OT Sloan Park
3. Wicker Gym
4. Kiwanis family Park
5. Temple Park

As expected:

1. Kiwanis family Park
2. OT Sloan Park
3. Kiwanis Park Place
4. Buchanan Park
5. Dalrymple Park

Better than expected:

1. San Lee Park
2. Kiwanis Family Park
3. Kiwanis Park Place
4. Tramway road Park
5. Bob E. Hales Center

Excellent:

1. San Lee Park
2. Kiwanis family Park
3. Tramway road Park
4. Kiwanis Park Place
5. OT Sloan Park

*Factors influencing park visits (in order of importance):*

1. Safety
2. Maintenance and upkeep
3. Crowded conditions
4. Lighting
5. Appearance
6. Amenities
7. Access

*Utilization of facilities/programs (in descending order):*

1. Walking/exercise trails
2. Playgrounds
3. Picnic shelters
4. Picnic tables
5. \*Hiking trails/ \*Fishing

*Factors limiting participation in program activities (in descending order):*

1. Lack of information about facilities/programs
2. Lack of interest in facilities/programs offered
3. Registration/rental fee too expensive
4. Cost of equipment/uniforms too expensive
5. Lack of transportation

When asked about preferences for specific Youth and Adult activities the results were skewed. Responses for each activity were to ADD, ELIMNATE, or MAINTAIN. Activities that were not currently offered by the Lee County parks and Recreation Department were marked with an asterisk (\*). Even though the option of ELIMINATE was utilized, the number was unnoticeable compared to the overwhelming response to either ADD or MAINTAIN the same activity.

Youth activities that are not currently offered had a strong response to ADD (i.e., golf, outdoor skills camps, and soccer). Other recommended additions to activities included cheerleading, lacrosse, kickball, skating/skateboard facilities, and girls only sports (i.e., tee-ball/ softball).

Adult activities that are not currently offered also had a strong response to ADD (i.e., special events/festivals, soccer, golf, baseball, and outdoor skills camps). Other recommended additions to activities included yoga, martial arts, swimming lessons, canoeing, and kickball.

Respondents were also asked their preference for specific facility types. Responses for each facility were to ADD, ELIMNATE, or MAINTAIN. Activities that were not currently offered by the Lee County parks and Recreation Department were marked with an asterisk (\*). There was an overwhelming response to ADD or MAINTAIN. The facility types that received the most support were to ADD were biking paths, gymnastics/fitness centers, water splash parks, skateboard parks, and indoor swimming pools. Lee County currently does not own or operate any of the previously mentioned facilities. Other recommended facilities were to expand RV campgrounds and parks that accommodate all children 1-12 years or age.

When asked about preference for funding decisions, respondents preferred to increase fees/charges as opposed to limiting programs or increasing taxes.

### Level of Service

In addition to the current facility needs due to the residents' interests, the growing population of Lee County is also creating additional demand for recreational programming. Using the population service requirement (persons served/facility), the needed number of facilities can be projected based on population growth. The prioritized activities found in the survey are ordered based on the latent demand which is the difference between the proportion of the population participating in the activity and the proportion indicating that they are very or extremely interested in participating. The decisions that must be made in regard to future park development and improvements are difficult because of resources, topography, and fear of alienating groups who feel their needs are not being addressed. Not all needs will be met by this document alone; however, this document should be consulted regularly when making development decisions.

Based on recreation standards and population projections for the years 2013 and 2015 Table 8 illustrates additional recreational needs for Lee County.

**Table 8: Recreational Facility Needs**

<b>Activity/Facility</b>	<b>Standard</b>	<b>Existing</b>	<b>Est. Needs 2013 (pop. 63,500)</b>	<b>Est. Needs 2015 (pop. 65,894)</b>
<b>Baseball/Softball</b>	1 per 5,000	18	13	14
<b>Basketball</b>	1 per 10,000	11	6	7
<b>Football</b>	1 per 20,000	2	3	3
<b>Golf (18-holes)</b>	1 per 50,000	1	1	1
<b>Golf (driving range)</b>	1 per 50,000	1	1	1
<b>Soccer</b>	1 per 10,000	2	6	7

<b>Activity/Facility</b>	<b>Standard</b>	<b>Existing</b>	<b>Est. Needs 2013 (pop. 63,500)</b>	<b>Est. Needs 2015 (pop. 65,894)</b>
<b>Swimming Pools</b>	1 per 20,000	3	3	3
<b>Tennis</b>	1 per 5,000	10	13	14
<b>Trails</b>	1 System per Region	4	1	1
<b>Volleyball</b>	1 per 5,000	6	13	14

According to the NC State Data Center, Lee County's population is expected to increase at a rate of 1.9% annually until the year 2020. The recreation standards referenced include NRPA. Using the standards provided by NRPA will allow the Parks and Recreation to anticipate present and future facility needs.

Lee County owns 12 baseball/softball fields. In addition, there are six (6) leased baseball fields within the county that are owned by numerous not-for-profit organizations that also provide additional, though competing, recreational activities and services for the community. There are a total of 18 softball/baseball fields available to the public, well above expected needs in the future. However, in the event that not-for-profits can no longer fill the gap of needed facilities, the Department should seek resources to be self sufficient by adding at least one (1) additional baseball/softball field to meet the demands of the 2015 population.

Lee County Parks and Recreation Department maintains six (6) basketball courts (two (2) indoor and four (4) outdoor). The indoor courts also double as available volleyball courts. In addition, the Department often utilizes five (5) basketball courts through an agreement with the Lee County School System. There are a total of 11 basketball courts available to the public, well above the expected needs of the future. However, in the event that schools can no longer fill the gap of needed facilities, the Department should seek resources to be self sufficient by adding three (3) additional basketball courts to meet the demands of the 2015 population.

The Department owns one (1) full sized football field and one (1) smaller field. Both fields double as soccer fields as well. With two (2) football fields total, the Department should seek additional resources to add one additional field to its inventory in order to meet the needs of the 2015 population.

The City of Sanford owns and operates one (1) public golf course. The Sanford Municipal Golf Course offers a driving range, chipping and putting greens, and a pro shop amongst its many amenities. Though this facility is not in Lee County's facility inventory, the current and future needs of the community have been met, and no further action is needed at this time. There are also many privately owned courses throughout the county.

There are two (2) swimming pool sites owned by the Parks and Recreation Department, for a total of three (3) swimming pools for public use within inventory. The number of present swimming pools is adequate to meet the demands of the future.

The Lee County Parks and Recreation Department currently has 10 lighted courts. The number of tennis courts available to the public is future needs. Based on the standards provided by NRPA, The Department needs at least 14 tennis courts to meet the needs of 2015.

The citizens of Lee County enjoy ample trail systems for leisure walking, running, and biking. The Department currently maintains four (4) walking trails for a total of two (2) miles; hiking trails totaling four (4) miles; and mountain biking trails totaling five (5) miles. NRPA Standards only require one (1) trail system per region, and the Department has worked diligently to insure that needs are currently being met by offering variety. The Department intends to connect portions of isolated walking trails to the main network to guarantee continuity of surface material.

Lee County Parks and Recreation Department maintains six (6) volleyball courts (two (2) indoor and four (4) outdoor). The indoor courts are utilized for league play and also double as basketball courts. Present and future volleyball needs are inadequate. The Department will need to add eight (8) volleyball courts to meet the demands of the 2015 population.

#### Other Recreational Needs

Other recreational needs to consider are trends, specialty and unique recreational facilities, and wayfinding. Lee County Parks and Recreation Department has kept up with many growing trends such as greenways and conservation. Other trends to consider are preventative health, connectivity, and sustainability; however, providing such services comes at a price that will continue to increase even as resources for funding continue to shrink as tax bases dwindle and competition arises. It is necessary for the Department to seek out multiple funding sources for the continuity of services, connecting trails, and maintenance.

Specialty and unique recreational facilities vary and includes splash pads and aquatic facilities, dog parks, skating and skate board parks, and fitness facilities. Aquatics facilities continue to provide low-impact cardiovascular exercise for the aging and handicapped populations while the splash pads appeal to younger children. Dog parks are not a necessity, but people enjoy walking their dogs in designated areas where pets are not deemed nuisances.

A proper wayfinding system will aid to direct citizens, pedestrians, and visitors to and within designated recreational areas. Wayfinding helps park visitors reach their destinations easily and efficiently while reducing congestion issues. Wayfinding programs and signage provides a sense of comfort in unfamiliar environments and help to create a sense of place for the community. Lee County has several significant and unique park facilities that would greatly benefit from a wayfinding program.

## CHAPTER 8: RECOMMENDATIONS

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The recommendations that are included in this section have been organized to respond to the goals and objectives summarized in Chapter 3. These recommendations are intended to:

- Prioritize key projects;
- Establish a structure by which park facilities can be developed and enhanced for continued leisure activities; and
- Identify specific ways in which the Department can strive to develop or enhance stewardship programs, community involvement, and partnership opportunities.

**Goal 1: When planning for improvements to recreational facilities and programs, consider the needs and desires of the traveling public and promote recreational opportunities to enhance the local recreation and tourism industries.**

Objectives:

**1-1: *Replace spillway and stabilize stream bank for the dam at San-Lee Park.***

This is a CRITICAL project for the continued operation of the park facility. The engineering and design of the dam project has been approved; however, funding for the construction is still necessary. Other improvements include, but are not limited to:

- Upgrade electrical system in camping area to increase voltage to 30 amps to accommodate newer RV vehicles. It is also necessary to investigate feasibility to increase the number of RV bays.

**1-2: *Make additional improvements to Kiwanis Children's Park that is adjacent to Historic Downtown Sanford.***

Funding has been approved for this project for improvements that include, but not limited to:

- Add or increase handicap accessibility of picnic shelters.
- Upgrade playground equipment
- Re-locate park sign for better visibility to passerby traffic
- Upgrade signage
- Upgrade landscaping

**1-3: *Utilize the 10 acre gift adjacent to O.T. Sloan Park and other improvements.***

Various options have been explored to utilize the 10 acre gift at O.T. Sloan. The gift will be used for a new skateboard park and the relocation of the

relocation or the entrance off of Bragg Street to promote a safer and more efficient ingress and egress to the park. O.T. Sloan also has a 50M pool, which is a rarity in the area. However, the pool is six (6) inches too shallow in order to hold competitive meets. The benefits of upgrading the pool for competitions outweighs the option of doing nothing; therefore the task of retrofitting the pool at O.T. Sloan is deemed CRITICAL for the economic sustainability of Lee County. Other improvements include, but are not limited to:

- Upgrade signage
- Enclose the pool for year-round access
- Add gymnastics facility
- Upgrade trail from parking area to tennis courts
- Upgrade showers at pool
- Interior painting of buildings
- Upgrade landscaping
- Add rails to bleachers at tennis courts
- Add trail

**1-4: Reassess facilities and programming at Horton Park.**

Park conditions have deteriorated from lack of use and maintenance. The park contains an outdoor pool that is not operable due to lack of staff. This presents a unique opportunity to create a new use at Horton Park. The community has expressed a desire for a splash pad. This option should be seriously investigated and compared to the current status and location of the park. Other improvements include, but are not limited to:

- Improve parking
- Upgrade signage
- Improve drainage around ball field and bathhouse
- Upgrade landscaping
- Repaint basketball court lines
- Add batting cage

**Goal 2: Acquire additional property or redefine the usage of existing land of under-utilized park facilities to expand recreational opportunities.**

Objectives:

**2-1: Incorporate permanent soccer facilities into the inventory.**

Responses in the survey and conversations with staff indicate a growing demand for soccer fields. With a growing interest in soccer and increased interest in travel soccer play by youth, suitable soccer fields are in short supply. The Parks and Recreation Department currently has no official soccer fields, and open space in parks is often overused resulting in bare spots in the lawns of parks and schools. The development of additional fields

would relieve pressure on these school fields as well as some park areas that are not conducive to soccer play.

One possible location is on property owned by the Sanford Optimist Club at the end of Wilkins Drive near US Hwy 421 and would be donated to Lee County. This site is conducive to developing two or three fields. The heavy grading has already been done. Work to be done at this site would include finish grading of fields, establishing turf, constructing a gravel drive and parking areas, purchase of soccer goals, and portable toilet facilities. A site master plan is necessary for this project. The estimated cost to develop this project would be \$75,000 - \$100,000, but cost will increase if permanent lavatories are desired.

***2-2: Investigate the feasibility to a skating and/or skateboard park as identifies in the survey.***

In response to the community's desire for skating and/or skateboard parks, a skateboard park will be added to O.T. Sloan Park. Start up costs for a basic skateboard park is as little as \$3,000 to \$10,000 if considering wood framed plywood. The disadvantage would be increased maintenance and wood deterioration. The advantage is that the equipment is portable and affordable. Steel frame should be favored over wood. Costs will range around \$25,000 to \$30,000 and can be bolted to an existing concrete pad with less continued maintenance.

***2-3: Incorporate new recreational facility needs identified in Chapter 7 on an annual basis.***

Chapter 7 identifies recreational facility needs based on recreation standards for population projections for 2013 and 2015. Facilities such as additional tennis courts, baseball/softball fields, and golf ranges will be necessary to accommodate all who use the Lee County's park system. Every facility need may not be met, but small additions of new facilities on an annually basis will mark improvements. This document should be consulted regularly when making development decisions.

**Goal 3: Support land dedication, or money in lieu of land, by developers. Staff should reserve the right to demand money in lieu of land for current or future improvements, and shall have the right to allocate as needed.**

Objectives:

***3-1: Amend the open space standards of Lee County Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) and Subdivision ordinance to permit land dedication or money in lieu of land.***

The current UDO allows for land to revert back to the community. This portion of the UDO needs to be amended to no longer allow for this practice. Execution of this goal is CRITICAL. As the population of Lee County

continues to grow, further demand will be placed on park facilities and rapid deterioration will be eminent. There is no way to accurately gauge an expiration date for open space and therefore should not revert back to the land owner.

It is also necessary for future residential developments to share the burden of providing adequate facilities to adjacent neighborhoods. The Lee County subdivision ordinance should also be amended to grant authority to demand land dedication or money in lieu of land. An adequate formula based on tax value of raw land and the number of lots proposed could potentially generate significant revenue for the department.

**3-2: *Improve facilities by promoting safe and efficient routes from neighborhoods to adjacent park facilities.***

Providing all citizens with barrier-free access to natural resources and recreational opportunities will increase park usage and promote a sense of community. In order to do this the County will have participate more in development review at the planning stages of proposed subdivisions and enforce connections from the community.

It is necessary to require safe and efficient access where feasible. It is not always necessary to increase parking at local parks as it further adds to impervious surface and increased storm run-off.

**3-3: *Improve facilities by connecting to or continuing existing greenways and trails.***

The Lee County Parks and Recreation Department should incorporate connections projects in the Capital Improvement Program (CIP). There are several unconnected greenways and trails within the inventory. Connecting and continuing pedestrian facilities adds to property values and tax revenue, supports additional recreational activities for increased quality of life, and supports local tourism and adjacent businesses.

**3-4: *Support and encourage non-motorized links within the community as well as to adjacent communities and regional trail systems.***

Support and encouragement for pedestrian facilities can be accomplished through the implementation of a county-wide wayfinding program. A simple wayfinding program that identifies parks and recreation facilities and trails can be constructed and implemented for \$5,000 to \$10,000 depending on design and building materials.

**Goal 4: Work with other agencies and community groups to expand park, recreation, and leisure resources. This would involve working with schools, athletic associations, civic groups, non-profit organizations, and businesses to develop partnerships to provide opportunities that could not be achieved individually.**

Objectives:

**4-1: *Establish a memorandum of agreement (MOA) with other organizations that provide additional community recreational services.***

The Parks and Recreation Department provides landscaping services for several not-for-profit organizations free of charge. These partnerships are necessary in order to accommodate overflow for programming and facilities, to diversify programming opportunities, and provide other services that are cost effective and efficient. It is CRITICAL that the department either charge for its services or that all parties embark on a mutual exchange of services with one another to keep costs low for the involved organizations and for participants.

The Department can also utilize interagency agreements for the protection of cultural resources and interlocal agreements to promote tourism opportunities.

**4-2: *Work with the Board of Education to develop neighborhood parks at community schools.***

Neighborhood parks are especially needed in rural communities. All parks and recreation property with the exception of San-Lee Park is located within the city of Sanford. Development of school sites for community use during non-school times would provide more convenient leisure opportunities for residents and would also enhance a sense of community.

The use of school property as neighborhood parks would reduce the need to purchase other property for the purpose of recreation. An MOA or agreement with the school system that would allow shared responsibility for the maintenance and upkeep of these areas that in turn would reduce the burden on the schools but would allow the expansion of neighborhood recreational opportunities. Joint use of school parks typically includes ball fields, soccer fields, tracks, tennis courts, and multi-use courts.

**4-3: *Conduct special events such as athletic tournaments or festivals with the assistance of outside organizations.***

The use of public-private partnerships is a mutual exchange of sharing know-how and resources. The ultimate goal for public-private partnerships collaborating to produce a tournament or festival is the benefit to the community as a vehicle for local economic and social development. The Department should plan for an initial public-private collaborative event as a pilot such as a community day festival or an environmental awareness event with local private and non-profit organizations.

**4-4: *Partner with City of Sanford to acquire the Depot building and develop programs and special events that would be suitable for that site.***

The building at Depot Park is currently own by the Sanford Board of Realtors, while the City of Sanford has a 100 year lease on the land. If the City of Sanford or Lee County acquires the property, the building could be utilized for arts programming, art exhibits, dance classes, meetings, parties, receptions, and special events. Money for acquisition could be from use of cultural grants because of the historic nature of the building or from earmarked funds.

**Goal 5: It is very important to maintain existing facilities in a safe and accessible condition. Providing quality facilities that are clean, with equipment that is safe, with trails and walks that are free of hazards, with plumbing and lighting that is maintained contributes to the leisure experience and increases the appreciation of the facility by the user.**

Objectives:

***5-1: Perform a detailed analysis of existing facilities annually with recommendations for improvements and modifications.***

When specific needs are identified, seek opportunities to improve existing recreation facilities and park amenities.

***5-2: Develop a Drainage Improvement Plan to address existing and future drainage problems at park facilities.***

There are several parks that experience several inches of standing water during heavy storms. The result is that standing water attracts insects and poses a drowning threat to small children. This also results in the ground being unusable for long periods of time. The ground needs to be built up and seeded in order to allow the swales to carry the excess water into the adjacent stormwater system while nourishing the ground along the way. Care needs to be taken to ensure that the adjacent stormwater system can handle the added runoff without creating or exacerbating an existing flooding problem.

***5-3: Seek additional funding to improve lighting and visibility of facilities.***

To supplement existing resources, there are many organizations that provide grants for parks and recreation related activities such as lighting and other facility improvements.

***5-4: Seek alternative funding sources and partnerships to assist in implementing the goals and capital improvements over the next five years.***

Limited resources will force the Department to pursue alternative funding. There are state, federal, and private grants available.

**5-5: Preserve and protect the natural resources and environmentally sensitive lands within the County while maintaining public use, access, and enjoyment.**

This applies to clean-up and maintenance of natural and scenic rivers within the County as needed.

**5-6: Strive to ensure effective and efficient operation and maintenance of public parks and facilities within the County.**

Additional facility improvements:

Buchanan Park

- Improve drainage around ball field
- Stabilize stream banks
- Develop agreement with church for additional parking during events
- Develop walking trail
- Signage
- Add additional small bridge

Dalrymple Park

- Install storm drainage piping at entrance to park
- Re-pave drive
- Re-grade both infields
- Upgrade signage
- Upgrade kitchen in Ingram Recreation Hall
- Add batting cage
- Add picnic shelter
- Renew outfield turf

Weatherspoon Court

- Exterior cleaning and painting
- Add handicap accessible shelter
- Replace baseboard molding
- Upgrade signage
- Renovate locker rooms in gym
- Air-condition gym
- Upgrade landscaping

Wicker Gym

- Exterior cleaning and painting
- Add handicap accessible shelter
- Replace baseboard molding
- Upgrade signage
- Renovate locker rooms in gym
- Air-condition gym
- Upgrade landscaping

#### Kiwanis Family Park

- Upgrade signage
- Link greenway south to Nautilus (former Dr. & Mrs. Howard property)
- Link greenway north to Riverbirch Shopping Center and Dr. Knight property
- Replace footbridge at strolling garden
- Repair pickets on gazebo railing

#### Temple Park

- Upgrade access to parking at 8<sup>th</sup> & Maple Streets
- Negotiate for additional parking at 8<sup>th</sup> & McIver Streets
- Re-grade both infields, stabilize batter boxes

#### Tramway Road

- Complete Phase III

#### Lee County Parks and Recreation Offices

- Gazebo/small shelter for public use
- Improve storage building floor
- Signage
- Exterior building repairs brick work and patio
- Complete landscaping
- Tree work-removing dead/broken limbs
- Improve parking area

The Lee County Parks and Recreation Department has an operating budget of less than \$1.2 M (million) to include part-time salaries and operating costs. The budget has been slashed due to the current economic climate of 2009-2010 fiscal year and independent of expected declines in revenue. It is necessary for the department to pursue all avenues of potential funding in order to implement the plan.

Other funding sources:

State Funding Sources:

- North Carolina Parks and Recreation Trust Fund
- Clean Water Management Trust Fund
- Farmland Protection Trust Fund
- Natural Heritage Trust Fund
- Ecosystem Enhancement Program
- North Carolina Adopt-A-Trail Grant Program
- Urban and Community Forestry Assistance Program
- Water Resources Development Grant Program
- Recreational Trails Program

Federal Funding Sources:

- The Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21)
  - Bicycle Transportation and Pedestrian Walkways
- Conservation and Reinvestment Act (CARA)
- Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)
- Urban Parks and Recreation Recovery Fund (UPARR)
- Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Grants

Private and Non-profit Sources:

- American Greenways Eastman Kodak Awards
- Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation
- Mitigation Banking

The capital improvements schedule (Table 9) and other improvements (Table 10) have been established to provide a guide for decision makers and to enable Lee County to apply for grant funding for proposed projects. Only two projects that total more than \$500,000 were considered for the CIP. Other improvements identified in Table 10 are general and reflect the results of discussion with City staff and the Parks and Recreation Commission. This schedule may be amended as necessary to reflect anticipated circumstances such as private gifts and donations, changes in recreation trends, community opinions and needs, and/or available funding. The schedule should be considered in close conjunction with the goals of this Plan. The following improvement schedules provide an outline and guide to the desires of the community.

**Table 9: Capital Improvement Schedule**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Recreation Project</b>	<b>Est. Cost</b>	<b>Funding Sources</b>
2010	Improvements to O.T. Sloan	\$5,000,000	General fund, grants, donations
2011	Acquisition and maintenance of Depot Park	TBD	General fund, grants,

**Table 10: Schedule of Other Improvements**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Recreation Project</b>	<b>Est. Cost</b>	<b>Funding Sources</b>
Annually	Routine maintenance of all parks	TBD	Municipal services
Annually	Add new facilities at parks or identify new uses for underutilized parks	TBD	General fund, grants
Annually	Publicize recreational facilities/events through advertising, brochures, website, signage, events schedules	\$5,000-\$10,000	General fund, grants
Annually	Upgrade play equipment, picnic tables, benches at parks	TBD	General fund
Annually	Connecting walking trails	\$5,000-\$10,000	General fund, future development
2010	Replace spillway and stabilize stream bank at San-Lee Park	TBD	
2010	Upgrade Kiwanis Children's Park	\$3,000	General fund, grants
2011	Create a permanent soccer ground	\$5,000	Grants
2011	Create a skate park	\$3,000 - \$15,000	Grants
2012	Sprayground	\$10,000-\$20,000	General fund, grants

## **CHAPTER 10: IMPLEMENTATION**

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The Parks and Recreation Master Plan update establishes guidelines to be used by Lee County as it seeks to meet the recreation and leisure needs of the citizens of Lee County over the next five years. The goals and objectives in Chapter 3 along with recommendations in Chapter 8 set the framework for these efforts. This plan is a tool to provide guidance to the County Commissioners and staff as they carry out planning and development of parks and recreation facilities. Citizens and outside organizations may use this tool as they contribute and respond to parks and recreation planning efforts to be considered by the County Commissioners and the Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission.

Lee County Parks and Recreation Department acquires land, develops plans, and constructs facilities utilizing the following:

- The Capital Improvement Program (CIP). This is proposed by County Administration on an annual basis. Parks and Recreation needs are often underfunded, so it is important for the Department to seek support of projects identified as CRITICAL.
- Trends. Awareness of national trends is usually at a staff level, but oftentimes citizens and special interest groups will express interest in other programming and facilities currently not offered. Understanding trends will keep programming and facilities fun and interesting for the community.
- Special Interests. Both staff and the Parks and Recreation Commission receive specific requests from organized groups. Requests are thoroughly researched and evaluated to determine feasibility and benefits to the community. It is not possible to accommodate all requests, but the Department strives for equitable distribution of funds.

In addition to the above options, it is important for the Lee County Parks and Recreation Department to pursue partnering opportunities with private and non-profit entities as well as hospitals and businesses. Interests from outside organizations should be welcomed so long as benefits for all involved parties can be identified.

### **Plan Evaluation**

The plan evaluation process should be periodically initiated to ensure that the document accurately reflects current needs and conditions for Lee County. Minor plan revisions accommodate change gained from experience in the application of parks and recreation goals, objectives and recommendations.

This document is just an update to the existing Parks and Recreation Master Plan adopted in 2005. A new Master Plan that involves more input from citizens and stakeholder as well as staff input will be necessary. A full-scale review of the Parks and Recreation Plan and other supporting documents should be initiated in five years, or 2015.