

CITY OF CONCORD



INTRODUCTION

The Livable Community Blueprint for Cabarrus County and its municipalities provides a comprehensive study of parks, recreation and bike and pedestrian routes across the county. Cabarrus County, similar to many other counties across North Carolina, provides public recreation on both a county and municipal level. This study takes into consideration all the recreation providers within the county, but recognizes that it is critical to look at how the municipalities operate together as well as on an individual basis. This will insure that all the recreation providers work together so that all residents have access to quality recreation parks, facilities and programs regardless of where they live in the county.

For the purposes of this study, the overall county area has been broken down into 6 subdistricts or planning areas. Within this report a detailed analysis of each subdistrict has been provided that includes an inventory of existing public, quasi-public and private recreation facilities, recommendations for new park development and bike and pedestrian routes, and associated costs for new development. This chapter serves to focus specifically on the City of Concord and its parks and recreation department.

The City of Concord is located in the central part of Cabarrus County and is included primarily in Subdistrict 4 of this study. Concord also occupies a substantial portion of the northern end of Subdistrict 5. See “Subdistrict 4” and “Subdistrict 5” chapters for additional information.

While all the recreation providers in the county impact one another with their existing parks and trails, development projects, and delivery of services, it is the County Recreation Department that most impacts the City of Concord. In recent years the county has made several significant changes in the way they operate. They have reduced the number and variety of program offerings for county residents and they are focusing on the development of larger community, district and regional parks. This leaves municipalities with the task of programming parks and community centers as well as the capital development of mini parks, neighborhood parks, and civic parks. Since the City of Concord is a primary provider of recreation to both city and county residents these changes have had a significant impact on their department.

RECREATION SUMMARY

The Parks and Recreation Department is a well-established agency that has expanded over the years to meet the needs of the growing population. The department provides

numerous parks as well as a wide variety of recreation programs that attract participation from residents of the City of Concord as well as county and other municipalities. In recent years they have taken on the responsibility of providing even more programs since the county has decreased what they are offering. The City may also agree to operate several of the county developed parks including W.W. Flowe.

Because of the longevity of the City’s parks and recreation department as well as recent construction and renovation projects, the City has more existing public park acreage than the other subdistricts. Consequently, they draw many participants from outside the city limits, which places additional demand on city parks and programs and creates the need for more development and renovation.

Most of the City of Concord parks and school parks are concentrated in the traditional downtown neighborhoods with areas to the west and north having a limited number of parks. For this reason, it is necessary to look closely at the distribution of parks in the city. Additionally, because this area of the county is largely urban and land is expensive, land acquisition will be a crucial step in the process of planning and construction of proposed parks.

EXISTING CITY PARKS

A detailed inventory of all the parks and facilities in the Concord area has been compiled. These include public, quasi-public, school parks, private subdivisions and clubs. A comprehensive listing of this inventory is located in **Appendix B** of this report.

The City of Concord owns and/or operates the following public parks:

City of Concord - Existing Public Parks and Facilities	
Mini Parks	Special Purpose Parks and Facilities
Academy Park	Academy Recreation Center
Beverly Hills Park	Gibson Ball Park
Neighborhood Parks	Hartsell Recreation Center
Hartsell Park	Logan Recreation Center
James L. Dorton Park	McAllister Field
Community Parks	J.F. McInnis Aquatic Center
Les Myers Park	Webb Field (owned by school district)
Marvin Caldwell Park	
W.W. Flowe Park (owned by County)	

For locations of existing parks, see “Existing Parks” map located at the end of this chapter. It should also be noted that the Cabarrus County Senior Center as well as numerous school parks are located in the City of Concord, however, they are not owned by the City. Frank Liske Park and W. W. Flowe are both located just outside the city limits of Concord.

PARK UPGRADES

The City of Concord has been proactive in recreation over the past few years and has done a lot to improve their parks and programs. They have recently opened Dorton Park, and are in the process of upgrades to Marvin Caldwell and Les Myers Park. The city anticipates they will take over the operation of the county owned W.W. Flowe Park. They have added programming and office space to Academy and Hartsell Centers and contributed over \$1 million to construct the new Boys and Girls Club and the YMCA. They also have been unofficially tasked with expanding programs to fill in where the county has pulled out.

COMMUNITY INPUT

Four public workshops were conducted at the beginning of this study in various locations around Cabarrus County to give community residents an opportunity to voice their opinions on the topic of recreation in the area. Three of the workshops were held in the City of Concord. The first was held on August 24, 2000 at Concord Middle School and two others were held in September 2000 at J.N. Fries and at the City Council Chambers.

As part of the workshop, participants were asked to fill out a written questionnaire. A portion of the survey asked individuals to indicate how important they felt it was to have certain parks and facilities developed within the community. The remainder of the survey asked numerous open-ended questions concerning parks and recreation. These results can be found in the countywide summary section of this report and in Appendix H-1.

A second series of workshops were held in six locations between March 7 and March 20, 2001 to present the preliminary findings of the study. The City of Concord workshop was held on March 13. More information about the findings can be found in Appendix H-2.

Additional public input was solicited with a random mail-out survey. The detailed results of the survey can be found in the Chapter "Mail-Out Survey".

RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTION PLAN

PARK AND FACILITY DEVELOPMENT

The following are recommendations for new parks and facilities that should be built in the City of Concord. For additional information see: Subdistrict 4 and 5 Chapters -Park and Facility Recommendations.

City of Concord - Proposed Public Parks	
Current	Location
1 Mini Park	To be determined
1 Neighborhood Park	Southwest Concord
1 Civic Park	On 14 acre city property along Three Mile Branch River
1 Community Park	Northeast Concord
Intermediate	
2 Neighborhood Parks	North Concord and Central Concord
Long Term	
2 Neighborhood Parks	Southeast Concord and South Concord

For locations of proposed park goals see “Park Goals and Bicycle/Pedestrian Transportation Routes” map and “Existing Parks and Park Goals Bicycle/Pedestrian Transportation Routes” map located at the end of this chapter. There are additional facilities that are also recommended. Refer to Subdistrict 4 and 5 chapters for additional information.

BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN SYSTEMS

The bicycle and pedestrian system identified for the City of Concord is extensive and connects through the many residential areas to the schools and parks in the community. The major north-south connectors are designated routes that generally run along the creeks and the river. Other routes connect east-west along roads or off-road through undeveloped land.

To give the city direction for establishing development priorities, major routes are listed below. The main intent for listing priorities is to establish public access in these corridors within the next ten years. Public access refers to establishing easements for public use, primarily in the form of earthen or dirt trails. Portions of these routes may developed for more intensive use, but again the priority for the next ten years should be on gaining public access with minor trails in these areas of priority.

Bike and Pedestrian priorities for the City of Concord include:

1. Three Mile Branch Corridor: from Country Club Dr to Les Myers Park (4.5 miles)
2. Concord Route - Downtown Spur from Three Mile Branch through stormwater management property to Union Street (0.8 miles)
3. Afton Run / Coddle Creek: From J. Dorton Park to Hwy. 29 (3.2 miles)
4. Weddington Hills Connection: from Weddington Hills Elementary north to Coddle Creek (1.4 miles)
5. Concord Route - Irish Buffalo Creek Spur: From Corban Ave to McGill St connecting the Boys and Girls Club and the Academy Center (1.1 miles)

The city has begun working with citizen groups and through the recreation department to establish bikeways and pedways. One project underway will establish a 1½-mile greenway along Three Mile Branch near Les Myers Park. Another current city project is a Brownfield project that incorporates a greenway component to connect the Old Electric Depot near the Irish Buffalo Creek to the Boys and Girls Club. The City has also constructed a trail around the Brown Operations Center. Additionally, the Engineering Department is working on a stormwater management facility at the proposed civic park site. This park could serve as a focal point along the Three Mile Branch bicycle and pedestrian route.

Two citizens groups have been working over the last few years to foster public support for greenways. Cabarrus Community Greenways has been working to identify routes primarily along Coddle Creek through the numerous subdivisions. Another group, the Southwest Cabarrus Rotary Club, has been working to identify routes along the Rocky River from Concord Mills Mall area to Harrisburg.

Refer to Subdistrict 4 and 5 Chapters for additional descriptions of bicycle and pedestrian routes that will make Concord a walkable community. For locations of proposed bike and pedestrian transportation route goals see “Park Goals and Bicycle/Pedestrian Transportation Routes” map and “Existing Parks and Park Goals and Bicycle/Pedestrian Transportation Routes” map located at the end of this chapter.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The City of Concord is in a unique position within the county. As a provider of many of the available public parks in the county as well as the vast program offerings, the direction of the City of Concord’s recreation department is sure to be pivotal to recreation in the county. While there are many opportunities on the horizon, there are numerous issues that can adversely affect efforts to move forward. The following recommendations should be taken into consideration to assist in moving forward in a positive direction.

- Focus on the acquisition of land to ensure that recreation parks and facilities serve all areas of the City of Concord.
- Pursue dedicated funding source to support the ongoing development and operations of parks.
- Anticipate growth patterns to acquire land prior to escalating land prices.
- Develop mini parks, neighborhood parks and civic parks recommended in this plan.
- Develop passive parks including opportunities for trails, picnicking, camping and nature study. Acquire land that has an environmental quality that lends itself to preservation and nature-based activities.
- Preserve environmentally sensitive areas such as the Rocky River Corridor.
- Continue efforts to improve and expand existing parks and facilities.
- Work with the county in the development of Community Parks in the City of Concord.
- Review program offerings and impact of reduced County programming on City Recreation Department. Work with Cabarrus County and other municipalities

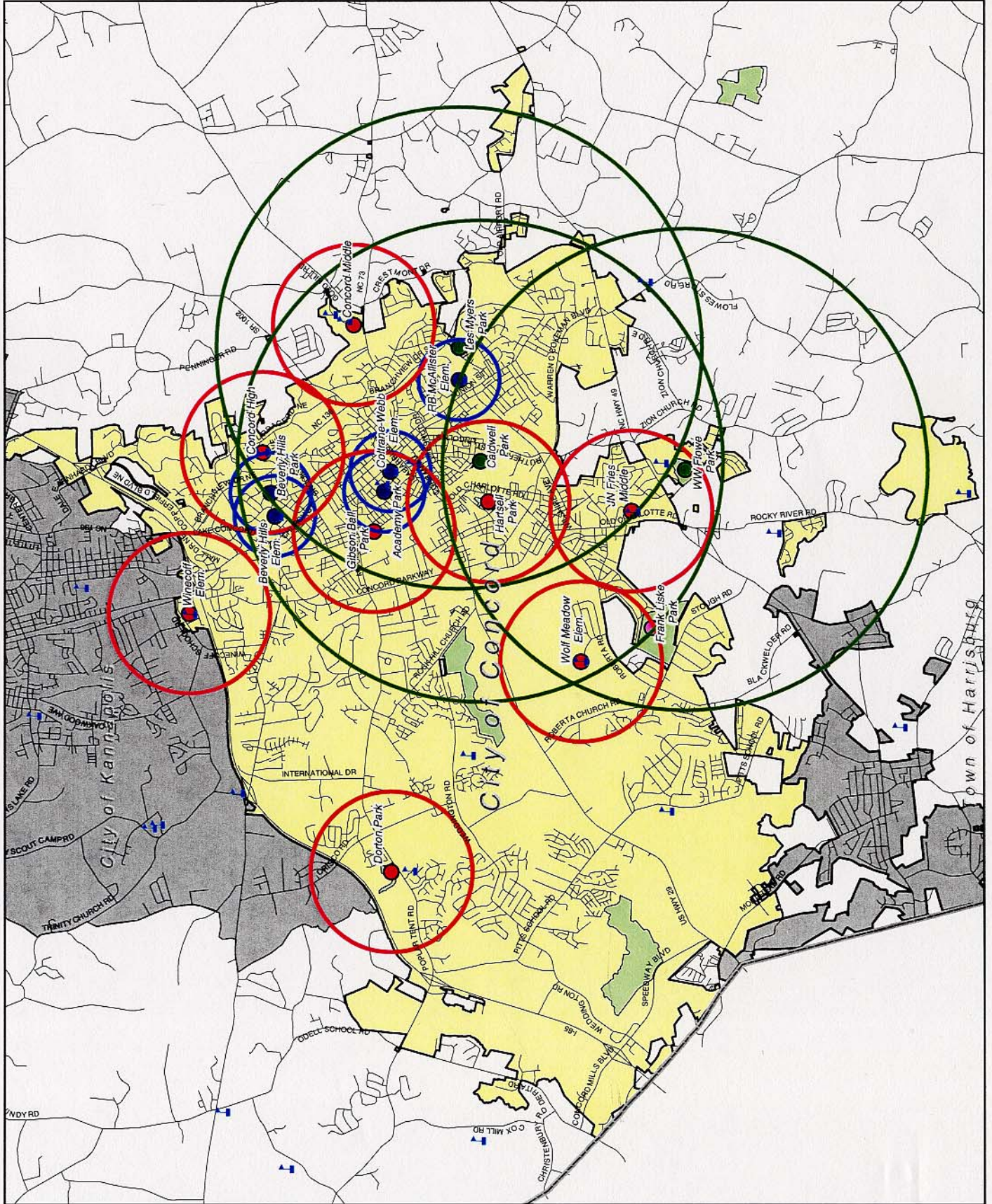
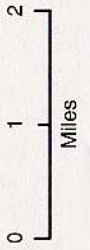
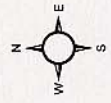
to determine how to serve all residents.

- Designate the routes identified in the Livable Community Blueprint as routes to pursue the development of safe and friendly pedestrian and bicycle corridors.
- Continue the momentum begun by citizen groups by supporting their efforts to promote and establish greenways that can be used for bicycle and pedestrian corridors.
- Identify an agency and an individual responsible for coordinating and promoting bicycle and pedestrian routes.
- Continue the efforts by the many city agencies that have identified bike and pedestrian corridors.
- Encourage new developments to incorporate sidewalks and off-road facilities for bicycles and pedestrians.
- Encourage all new utility and street projects to incorporate a bike and pedestrian element.
- Ensure all future NCDOT road projects and improvements provide for bike lanes, and that road conditions better facilitate bicycle transportation.
- Continue public/private partnerships for program and facility development.
- Continue to partner with schools for the development of school parks.
- Expand cultural and artistic activities including concerts, art shows and festivals.
- Partner with non-profit organizations (such as the Boys and Girls Club and YMCA) to minimize duplication of services and to provide for more programming for the public.

Existing Parks

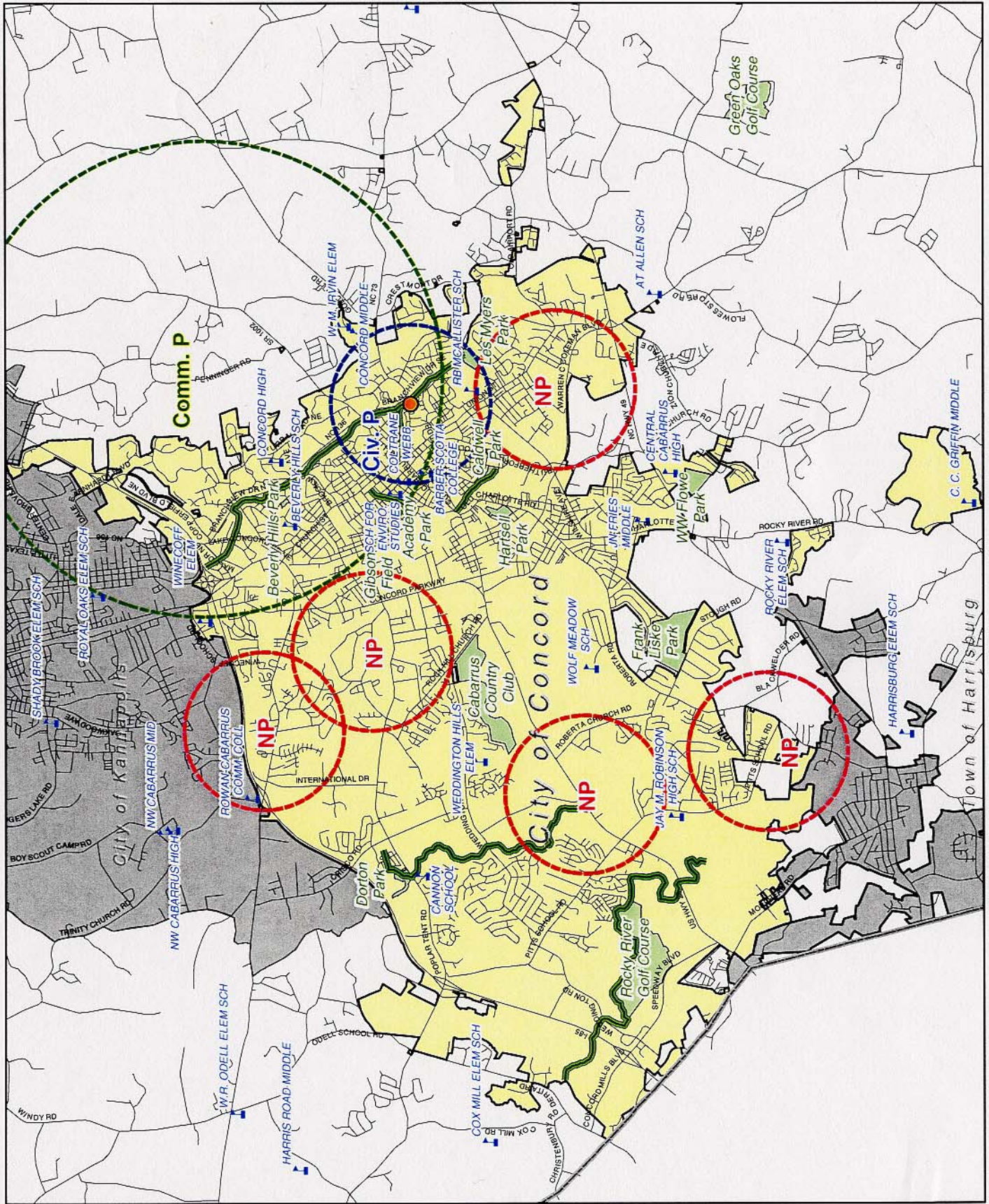
Livable Community Blueprint

- Legend**
- Community Parks
 - Neighborhood Parks
 - Mini Parks
- Existing Parks**
- District Park
 - Community Park
 - Neighborhood Parks
 - Mini Park
- Schools
 - Greenspace
 - Streets
 - City of Concord



Park Goals and Bicycle/Pedestrian Transportation Routes

*Livable
Community
Blueprint*



- Legend**
- Civic Park
 - Community Parks
 - Neighborhood Parks
 - Streets
 - Schools
 - Greenways
 - Greenspace
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