

TOWN OF HARRISBURG



INTRODUCTION

The Livable Community Blueprint for Cabarrus County 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 recreation in the Town of Harrisburg.

The Town of Harrisburg is located in the southwest part of Cabarrus County and is included in Subdistrict 5 of this study. The population of the Town of Harrisburg has and is continuing to experience very rapid growth. Incorporated in 1974, the Town is in close proximity to the northeast corner of Mecklenburg County and only 10 miles northeast of the center of Charlotte. Harrisburg's accessibility and proximity to Charlotte have helped spur residential and industrial growth.

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 Town of Harrisburg. 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 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 capital development of mini parks neighborhood parks, and civic parks.

RECREATION SUMMARY

The Town of Harrisburg does not currently have a recreation department and has only recently built phase one of their first town park, however, they are not without vision and plans to provide recreation in their community. The Harrisburg Area Plan, a joint plan between Cabarrus County and the Town of Harrisburg was issued in February of

2001. The purpose of the plan was to look at the current state of the area, goals for the future and a logical plan to guide the area into the future. In the plan, the Town identified goals for recreation to enhance the quality of life for its residents. The goals included:

- Identify land for new public facilities such as parks, greenways, schools, and other local government facilities.
- Encourage the development of alternative transportation facilities in the planning area, including pedestrian, bicycle and express transit facilities.
- Provide a plan for pedestrian, bicycle and transit access to major employment centers within the planning area.

Historically, the Town has relied on the county to develop and operate their parks, which occurred only at school properties. This is no longer completely the case as in January of 2000; the town and county jointly developed a park master plan for Harrisburg Town Park. Phase one of the park, which includes soccer/football fields, has been built and is being used.

EXISTING CITY PARKS

Until recently the only public recreation facility in the Harrisburg planning area was the ball fields at the old Harrisburg Elementary School. The new Harrisburg Elementary School is a school park. The Town is constructing the Town Park. A detailed inventory of all the parks and facilities in the Harrisburg 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 following public parks are located in the Town of Harrisburg:

Town of Harrisburg- Existing Public Parks
Special Purpose Parks
Harrisburg Town Park

It should also be noted that three school parks are located in the Town of Harrisburg, however, they are not owned by the City. These include Harrisburg, J.M. Robinson and Rocky River Elementary schools.

PARK DEVELOPMENT

The Town of Harrisburg has developed the first phase of the Harrisburg Town Park and has plans for future phases to fully develop the park.

COMMUNITY INPUT

Four public workshops were conducted in late August to early September 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.

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 Town of Harrisburg workshop was held on March 20. 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 Chapter 8: Mail-Out Survey.

In addition to the surveys and questionnaires prepared as part of this study, the Park Master Plan for the Harrisburg Town Park distributed a mail-out survey in December of 1997. The findings of this survey revealed that the majority of respondents were not satisfied with the level of recreation activities in Harrisburg nor were the respondents satisfied with the availability of recreational facilities in Harrisburg. Recreation activities should be provided for children, teenagers, young and old adults. Respondents indicated that if activities were provided for these groups, their family would participate.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTION PLAN

PARK AND FACILITY DEVELOPMENT

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

Town of Harrisburg - Proposed Public Parks	
Current	Location
1 Mini Park	In Town owned floodplain property
2 Neighborhood Parks	Expansion of Town Park, Between 29 and 49
1 Community Park	Pharr Mill road Site
Intermediate	
2 Mini Parks	In Town owned floodplain property
2 Neighborhood Parks	Near 24/27, New elementary school
1 Civic Park	At the new town center development
Long Term	
1 Mini Park	In town owned floodplain property
1 Neighborhood Park	South of 49
1 Community Park	At new High School

There are additional facilities that are also recommended. Refer to Subdistrict 5 chapter for additional information.

BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN SYSTEMS

Harrisburg is developing very rapidly. Fortunately, much of the development is a spin-off from Mecklenburg County and developers are utilizing national trends to incorporate greenways into the developments. Several subdivisions in Harrisburg have preserved areas along creeks and waterways for open space and public access corridors.

Rocky River Crossing subdivision has preserved public lands adjacent to the river. Another subdivision planned adjacent to the river near Pharr Mill Road and Coddle Creek have agreed to preserve the floodplain. The town already has property and easements along Back Creek near Caldwell Rd, and has acquired property around the Pharr Mill site on the Rocky River, a two acre parcel on the river approximately ¼ mile south of the mill. The Town also has another site on Back Creek near Stallings Road. All of these sites will become recreation areas, either active or passive. The creek and the river already connect them. Routes along the waterways should be developed for pedestrian and bicyclists.

Most of the routes identified by the Livable Community Blueprint, in the Harrisburg area are along the Rocky River and it's tributaries. The Rocky River has been designated by this study as a bicycle and pedestrian corridor, as well as Mallard Creek, Back Creek and Reedy Creek. These corridors will connect the residential areas of Harrisburg to the schools and parks in the area and to the activities in Mecklenburg and Cabarrus County. Reedy Creek will connect to a major park in Mecklenburg County. Cabarrus County

school district plans a new middle school along Reedy Creek off Rocky River Road. The school site will be a node between Reedy Creek and the Rocky River. These corridors must accommodate pedestrians and cyclists to ease the traffic from the area's streets.

Within Harrisburg, the New Town Park, Town Center and new Harrisburg Elementary School sites should be connected with bike and pedways. This can be accomplished by incorporating bike lanes and sidewalks into the planned major and minor street thoroughfares identified in the 2000 Collector Street Plan. Combined with the routes along Back Creek, Reedy Creek, Mallard Creek and Rocky River will create a remarkable livable and walkable community for Harrisburg. Refer to the Subdistrict 5 Chapter for additional information regarding bicycle and pedestrian routes in the Harrisburg area.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As the most rapidly growing subdistrict, the park development recommendations for this area are extensive. It will be critical that a realistic strategy for land acquisition and development be established to allow for the further development of parks to serve community residents. There are some critical factors that can help keep recreation development heading in a positive direction.

- Recognize that the growth of the city is one of the biggest challenges to park development.
- Implement a plan for land acquisition to secure land before prices rise even higher.
- Consider implementing requirements for developers to contribute land or dollars to recreation development.
- Look at opportunities for the developer of Town Center to develop and fund a civic park as part of the project. This park would enhance the overall project and provide a quality park for town residents.
- Consider the establishment of a town parks department to address the specific needs of the Town of Harrisburg.
- Work closely with the school district to establish school parks at new facilities being built in the area to meet the growing school-aged population.
- Designate the routes identified in the Livable Community Blueprint as routes to pursue the development of safe and friendly pedestrian and bicycle corridors.
- Create a task force of city agencies and citizens for the purpose of promoting and overseeing the establishment of bicycle and pedestrian corridors.
- Continue to encourage developers to preserve open space corridors for public access.
- 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.