

# CITY OF ASHEVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA PARKS, RECREATION, CULTURAL ARTS, & GREENWAYS MASTER PLAN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



FEBRUARY 2009





# **Acknowledgements**

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**Jan Davis, Council Vice Mayor**  
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**Holly Jones, Councilmember**  
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## ***Executive Summary***

### **Purpose and Vision of this Plan**

The Asheville Parks, Recreation, Cultural Arts and Greenways Master Plan is intended to help meet the needs of current and future residents by positioning Asheville to build on the community's unique parks and recreation assets and identify new opportunities. The citizen-driven plan establishes a clear direction to guide City staff, advisory committees, and elected officials in their efforts to enhance the community's parks, recreation and cultural arts programs, services and facilities.

The vision for the City of Asheville's parks and greenways system is an interconnected system of parks and greenways. The goals of the vision are to:

- Provide a diversity of parks and greenways.
- Ensure all parks and greenways meet the City's high standards for level of service.
- Create a system of interconnected local and regional parks and greenways, including trails, paths, and walks.
- Preserve and celebrate unique cultural, historical, and natural features within the City of Asheville throughout the system.

The vision for the City of Asheville's recreational facilities and programs is one that works in collaboration with other providers to deliver core services at the neighborhood and community level. The goals of the vision are to:

- Assure high quality facilities by concentrating facility improvement efforts on bringing older facilities up-to-date as neighborhood centers before adding new community-wide center elements to the system.
- Maximize the use of the capacity of each facility by designing for multiple, simultaneous uses, flexible spaces, appropriate support spaces and minimization of other non-activity space.
- Centralize new facility components to serve the entire community while enhancing access through collaboration with public transit.
- Assure high quality services through centralized expertise in programming areas providing a resource for facility managers.
- Employ a pricing philosophy conveying the value of the experience through an equitable fee structure that encourages participation.
- Create a cohesive and comprehensive connectivity system for all geographic areas of the city.

To accomplish the goals of the vision it is important to ensure that all parks, greenways, recreational facilities, programs and cultural arts meet the City's high standards for level of service. This involves improvements to existing, as well as the development of new, parks, greenways, public art, and facilities. Preserving and celebrating the unique cultural, historical and natural features of the City of Asheville throughout the system will create an image or brand helping connect the user to the system, as well as enhancing the experience of its use.

Implementing a master can bring about a positive impact on the community as a whole. Of the proposed capital improvements, \$40 million will be spent in the community. Local contractors using local labor will likely perform most of the proposed work. These dollars and proposed maintenance dollars have a compounded impact as they hit local markets. The new positions noted in the plan may

provide jobs for local residents or may bring new employees into the community. The new projects and improvements proposed in this plan are likely to impact Asheville by making it a more desirable destination for businesses, tourists and citizens.

### **History of Asheville Parks, Recreation and Cultural Arts Department**

The City of Asheville began providing parks and recreation services in the late 1890s with the construction of Riverside, Montford, and Aston Parks. Shortly after, Recreation Park, McCormick Field, and the Municipal Golf Course were added to the system. With a growing park system, the City created the Parks and Playgrounds Division in the Public Works Department.

The Parks and Recreation Department came into its own in 1956. For the next 15 years significant progress occurred in delivering recreation programs to the community, but little to no development occurred in establishing facilities in which to house the services. The City relied on using public schools, the YMCA, and local churches to house programs.

During the 1970s and 1980s the Department experienced tremendous growth due to the abundance of federal funds to support public parks and recreation facilities throughout the United States. In all, over \$5.2 million of non-city funds renovated existing recreation facilities and built new ones in Asheville.

In 1994, Asheville Parks and Recreation became the first municipal recreation department to receive national accreditation from the Commission for the Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies, and was reaccredited in 1999 and 2004.



In the late 1990s, the City began upgrading Asheville's parks and recreation system by developing the first long-range comprehensive master plan and a greenway master plan. These documents have served as the guide to improve existing facilities and to build new facilities, develop greenways, land acquisitions, expansion of services and staff, and development of funding opportunities.

The National Recreation and Parks Association named Asheville Parks, Recreation and Cultural Arts Department the Gold Medal winner in 2002 in recognition of comprehensive and quality programs, services and operations. Top-notch departments from around the country vie for the award each year based on population size.

After a long period of operation, the City of Asheville took over the operations of the Municipal Golf Course, Western North Carolina Nature Center, McCormick Field, Aston Park, and Recreation Park in 2005 resulting in a significant increase in land, facilities, programs, staff, and overall operations.

## Parks, Recreation and Cultural Arts Department Overview

### ***Department Description***

Asheville Parks, Recreation and Cultural Arts is a department within the City of Asheville that is dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for all Asheville citizens by providing diverse cultural and recreational experiences. The Department maintains over 50 public parks, 6 miles of greenways, 11 community centers, numerous programs for all ages, public art programs, a comprehensive athletic program, and many facilities that provide resources for a wide range of activities. Asheville Parks, Recreation and Cultural Arts receive funding authorized by the City Council through budget appropriations. Additional funding is provided through fundraising. Through these means parks, recreational programs and cultural arts services are provided and maintained for the citizens of Asheville.

### **Related Planning Efforts and Integration**

The City of Asheville has undertaken several planning efforts in recent years that have helped inform the planning process for this Parks, Recreation, Cultural Arts, and Greenways Master Plan. These plans and studies include:

- Asheville Greenway Master Plan (1998, updated 2003, 2005)
- Park and Recreation 2015 Comprehensive Master Plan (1998, updated 2003)
- Public Art Master Plan (2001)
- 2025 Comprehensive Development Plan
- Wilma Dykeman Riverway Plan
- Asheville Comprehensive Bicycle Plan (2008)
- Downtown Master Plan (in progress)

### **Methodology of this Planning Process**

This project has been guided by a project team, made up of City staff, the Greenway Commission, the Public Art Board, and the Recreation Advisory Board. These teams provided input to the GreenPlay consulting team throughout the planning process. This collaborative effort creates a plan that fully utilizes the consultant's expertise and incorporates the local knowledge and institutional history that only community members can provide. The project consisted of the following tasks:

#### ***Needs Assessment and Public Involvement***

- Review of previous planning efforts and a considerable amount of city historical information.
- Consideration of the profile of the community and demographics, including anticipated population growth.
- Extensive community involvement efforts including many focus groups, meetings with key stakeholders, attendance at board meetings, communitywide public meetings, and a direct mail survey.
- Research of trends and statistics related to American lifestyles to help guide the efforts of programming staff.

#### ***Level of Service Analysis***

- Interviews with staff to provide information about parks and recreation facilities, public art, cultural arts, festivals, services, and greenways, along with insight regarding the current practices and experiences of the City in serving its residents and visitors.

- Analysis addressing parks, recreation, cultural arts, public art, festivals, greenways, and related services.

**Inventory**

- Inventory of parks, greenways, and facilities using existing mapping, staff interviews, and on-site visits to verify amenities and assess the condition of the facilities and surrounding areas.

**Assessment and Analysis**

- Review and assessment of relevant plans
- Organizational SWOT Analysis (Strength, Weakness, Opportunities, Threats)
- Measurement of the current delivery of service using the GRASP® Level of Service Analysis and allowing for a target level of service to be determined that is both feasible and aligned with the desires of citizens as expressed through the citizen survey. This analysis is also represented graphically in GRASP® Perspectives.
- Exploration of finance and funding mechanisms to support development and sustainability of the system.

**Recommendations: Goals, Objectives, and Action Plan**

- Identification and categorization of recommendations into themes with goals, strategies, and an action steps for implementation.
- Development of an action plan for capital improvements including cost, funding source potentials, and timeframe to support the implementation of the plan.

**Timeline for Completing the Master Plan**

Start-up	November 2007
Needs Assessment and Public Involvement	January - May 2008
Inventory and Assessment of Existing Assets and Services	January - June 2008
Findings Compilation Report	June - July 2008
Standards and Recommendations	July - August 2008
Financial Resource Analysis	July - August 2008
Recommendations and Action Plans	September-October 2008
Final Plan and Presentation	November 2008
City Council Adopt Plan	February 2009

**Community Profile and Demographic Information**

Asheville is a progressive city focusing on quality of life issues and attracting the creative class. The City’s success in this pursuit is supported by the ranking of Asheville as one of the Country’s “Best Places for Business and Careers” by Forbes Magazine (Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce). In an effort to better strengthen the parks, recreation and cultural art amenities for the City, the demographic makeup should better be understood.

The 2007 Asheville Economy Outlook states: “Asheville is continuing to experience stable economic growth. A balance of forces, centered on the area’s quality of life amenities, supports this durable pattern.” Furthermore, the economic strength of Asheville is led by “record-setting professional services growth, stable tourism activity, a resilient housing market, and baby-boom population growth.”

To enhance the quality of life for residents, communities often devote their efforts towards strengthening parks, recreation and cultural arts amenities, a crucial piece of the puzzle for a healthy community. To better understand citizen needs for this public good, it is important to assess the demographic makeup of the population.

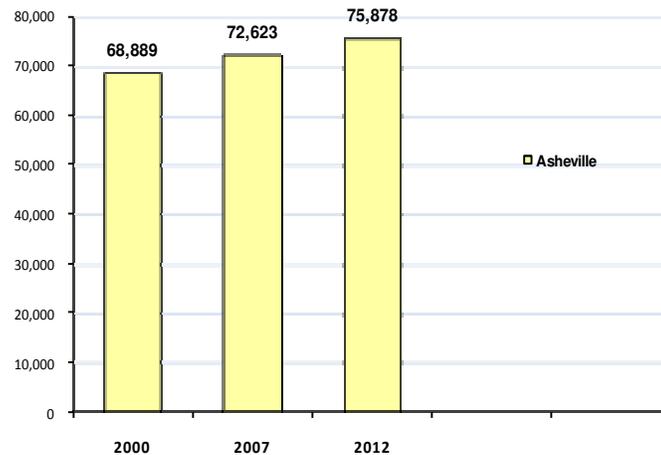
### **Population Forecast**

Although we can never know the future with certainty, it is helpful to make assumptions about it for planning purposes. **Figure 3** details the population projections for Asheville estimated by ESRI Business Information Solutions.

This study indicated the following:

- From 1990-2000, the percentage growth in the Asheville population was substantially lower (11%) than growth in Buncombe County as a whole (18%)
- Average annual growth for the City of Asheville population is slightly higher between 2000 and 2006 (1.7%) than Buncombe County population (1.2%)
- City of Asheville population increases are largely due to annexation
- Buncombe County population increased substantially by 18 percent from 1990 to 2000, though this remained below the statewide growth rate of 21 percent
- Since 2000, the population of Buncombe County is estimated to be growing at a slower rate (7%) than over the previous 10 years, though growth continues
- Most population growth in the county is due to net migration, rather than to natural growth (excess of births over deaths)

**Figure 3: Asheville Population Projections 2000 - 2012**



Source: Buncombe County Population Projections for the Asheville Water Resources Master Plan

## Community and Stakeholder Input

The following is a synopsis of issues that were identified in meetings held during January 2008. Over 540 community members, as well as Asheville Parks, Recreation and Cultural Arts Department staff, participated in eight stakeholder meetings, seven public focus groups, and seven staff led public meetings. Consultants received input from over 280 participants; staff convened seven additional meetings with 260 participants.

### ***Meeting the diverse needs of the community***

Many residents commented on how much the Department was able to accomplish with little resources, yet had concerns regarding the City's ability to take care of its existing facilities and to provide programming and facility amenities to the diverse population of Asheville. The following are key issues that were identified from the meetings. For a complete summary, see **Appendix II**.

## ***Strengths***

### ***Staff***

- Responsive and creative

### ***Funding***

- More Aggressive support by City Council in last 3-4 years
- Department can do a lot with a little

### ***Programming***

- Diversity of opportunity for all ages, multi-ethnic
- Nice blend of athletics and the arts
- Appreciation for new emphasis on the arts, quality instruction
- Good variety of festivals

### ***Facilities***

- Good quality, many well-maintained parks
- Many multiuse areas, nice greenways
- Flexibility among centers, variety of activities
- Many specialty facilities
- North Carolina flavor in parks

### ***Image***

- Good presence in the community, good job of advertising
- National Accreditation, award winning
- Park seen as an economic engine
- Programs promoted for health benefits

### ***Partnering***

- Builds community
- Engages other providers of facilities and services

## ***Areas for Improvement***

### ***Administration and Funding***

- Need adequate funding for existing facilities and to support new
- Need to direct staff responsibility for greenways, marketing, and fundraising
- Need internal cross-training and basic
- Need to improve many processes
- Recycling program needs improvement

### ***Budgeting***

- Need dedicated land acquisition fund
- Need new resource to support growth
- Need pricing and cost recovery policy
- Need to separate non-parks and recreation costs from department budget
- Soft costs for projects should be included in capital budget
- Need more program funding; need to fund financially struggling programs
- Concern about who is using and paying for the system regarding nonresidents and part-time visitors; need to review agreement with County

### ***Facilities and Equipment***

- Increase capacities and upgrade existing facilities
- Provide better access and connections
- Increase safety at centers
- Improve perception of senior centers
- Replace/provide equipment and vehicles that are lacking or old

### ***Programs***

- Provide intergenerational offerings and increase outreach to minorities
- Engage community members for program instruction and volunteer efforts

### ***Planning***

- Develop a strategic plan and a business plan
- Take leadership role in regional open space planning
- Improve public transit, accessibility, and connectivity to affordable housing
- Provide safe, easily identifiable connecting bike paths/sidewalks/greenways
- Review and clarify existing policies, develop new policy to provide sustainable operations
- Keep neighborhood focus for centers, repurpose where appropriate, prepare for growth, comply with ADA; more equitable distribution of facilities

***Additional Facilities Desired***

Indoor and outdoor aquatic center, athletic complex for baseball, athletic fields, greenspace in urban core, community gardens, cultural arts center, dance facility, disc golf at Richmond Hill Park, more special event areas, indoor ice rink, multigenerational indoor large recreation center, recreation center in west Asheville with indoor pool, river amenities, roller derby, spraygrounds, indoor tennis courts

***Additional Programs Desired***

Social recreational programs, non-sports programming, health and wellness, arts, more athletics, teen and youth programming, gang education, senior programming

***Potential funding Opportunities***

Develop requirements and incentives with County buy-in for unincorporated areas, revitalize bond referendum, include trails in sidewalk fund, free increases, advertise donation opportunities, increase citizen advocacy, teen employment, volunteers, increase taxpayer support

***Potential Partners***

School district and colleges, Chamber of Commerce, economic development, churches, developers, other government agencies, neighboring cities, public health, public transit, housing authority, utility companies, medical community, YMCA/YWCA, nonprofit organizations, neighborhood associations, sports associations, private groups and individuals



**Statistically Valid Community Survey Findings**

***Overview of the Methodology***

The City of Asheville conducted a Master Plan Survey through a direct mail methodology. The survey was originally sent to 5,000 randomly selected households located in the City of Asheville and the ZIP codes associated with it, which may include households outside the city limits. A net estimated 4,754 surveys were actually delivered out of which a total of 481 completed surveys were returned. This represents an average response rate of approximately 10.1%. Based upon the total sample size of 481 responses received, overall results have a margin of error of approximately +/-4.5 percentage points calculated for questions at 50% response. Also, note that the resultant database is weighted by age of respondent, ethnicity, and household income to ensure appropriate representation of City residents across different demographic cohorts in the overall sample.

**The following summarizes key findings:**

*Current Parks, Recreation, Cultural Arts, and Greenway Facilities and Amenities*

- Festivals in Asheville were visited by the greatest proportion of respondents (74% visited at least one festival in the last 12 months)
- Paved recreational paths (greenways), the Nature Center, picnic areas and playgrounds followed festivals for number of respondents who had visited once in the last 12 months
- Approximately 50-51 percent have viewed public art or visited designated open space areas at least once in the last 12 months
- Respondents indicated the highest number of average visits per year to playgrounds, paved recreational paths and Carrier Park
- 85% of respondents rated the Nature Center as “very important”
- 82% rated recreational paths, and playgrounds “very important”
- Least important to the community were the municipal golf course (44% rated it “not at all important”) and the skateboard park (34%)
- Overall, most parks, facilities and amenities available in Asheville received relatively positive satisfaction ratings
- Festivals and the Nature Center were meeting the needs of the community the most, followed by Carrier Park, playgrounds, ball fields and picnic areas.
- Approximately 24% of respondents cited Aston Park as not meeting the needs of the community.

*Future Recreation Facilities and Amenities*

- Respondents indicated that a teen activities center and the Nature Center would be the most important to add, expand or improve (73% of respondents indicated it as “very important”)
- A recreation center, indoor walking and jogging track, indoor pool with lap lanes for fitness swimming and competition and cultural arts center are also relatively important (66-69% of respondents indicated they are “very important”)
- The Cultural Arts Center was the most important indoor facilities to be added, expanded or improved (19% of respondents indicated it as their top priority and 34% as one of their top three priorities)
- Unpaved/natural trails, open space/natural areas, more trail connections, playgrounds, paved recreational paths and community gardens are the most important to add, expand or improve (all rating above 70% “very important”)
- Least important to add, expand, or improve was in-line hockey facility, disc golf amenities and a skateboard park
- Restrooms were the top priority when asked what amenities would be most important to respondents when expanding and improving outdoor park areas. (70% of respondents indicated it as one of the three most important amenities to be included.

*Future Direction and Use of Specific Facilities*

- Overall, respondents preferred multipurpose centers to “magnet centers” by a margin of 60% vs. 40%
- Overall, 48% of respondents preferred “fewer but larger regional centers,” 43% preferred “more but smaller neighborhood centers” and 10% indicated “neither.”

### *Programs, Activities and Special Events*

- Individual activities such as biking and hiking (55% of respondents), special events such as concerts and festivals (54%) and cultural/arts programs (40%), were indicated to have the highest participation rates among responding households
- Special events (40%), individual activities (36%) and youth athletic leagues (32%) were the most frequently identified as potentials for expansion or improvement
- Respondents indicated that they would like to see environmental education (39%), general skills education such as computer or cooking classes (37%) and individual activities (36%) added in the Asheville area
- The majority (62%) of respondents indicated that they did not know to what degree and what the appropriate level is for spending on programs. Twenty-one percent of the respondents said the City was spending too little on programs and 13% thought the spending on programs was about right. Only 4% of the respondents thought the City was spending too much on programs.

### *Most important concerns for the City of Asheville to address through the Master Plan Update*

- Top priorities indicated by respondents include more greenway trails (40% of respondents), better pedestrian/bike access (31%) and awareness of programs (25%)

### *Financial Choices*

- 43% of respondents indicated that they would definitely or probably vote “yes,” to a property or sales tax increase or other financial method in order to allow the City to issue bonds in support of building, renovating, and operating these facilities
- Respondents were asked how they would allocate \$100 to city services. Residents distributed the greatest share to law enforcement (\$22), followed by parks, trails, greenways and open space (\$19), fire and emergency services (\$17), recreation/aquatics/cultural arts (\$15), code enforcement (\$10), sidewalks/street maintenance/street lighting (\$8) and public administration (\$7).
- Respondents were also asked how they would allocate \$100 to parks, recreation, cultural arts and greenways. Respondents indicated greenways as the top priority (\$18), followed by parks (\$17), environment (\$15), community centers (\$12), recreation activities (\$12), athletic fields (\$11), cultural arts (\$10) and others (\$4).



## Recommendations and Action Plans

### Administration and Planning

#### Goal 1: Maximize the planning effort

**Strategy:** *Incorporate the action items of this plan into the City's annual work plans to achieve the recommendations of this plan and to enhance effectiveness of staff effort.*

##### Action Step

- Assign responsibility and time frame, and allocate resources necessary to complete each action identified in annual work plans.

**Strategy:** *Assure that all levels of staff are informed of and are set up to work together to implement the recommendations and strategies of the plan.*

##### Action Steps:

- Inform all levels of staff of the direction of the Plan, allow for staff input, encourage buy-in, and encourage input from all staff members.
- Provide cross-departmental staff teams/team members, as appropriate, with education development opportunities, necessary equipment, and supplies.

**Strategy:** *Involve the entire community in supporting and planning the recommendations of this plan and to enhance effectiveness of the City's effort.*

##### Action Steps:

- Educate the public through marketing of the Master Plan to gain support, solicit volunteers to assist in the implementation and seek community buy-in to accomplish the goals.
- Incorporate the overall themes of the Master Plan in each implementation step. These themes include: connectivity, integration, comprehensiveness, continuity, sustainability and safety.

#### Goal 2: Improve administration effectiveness and transparency

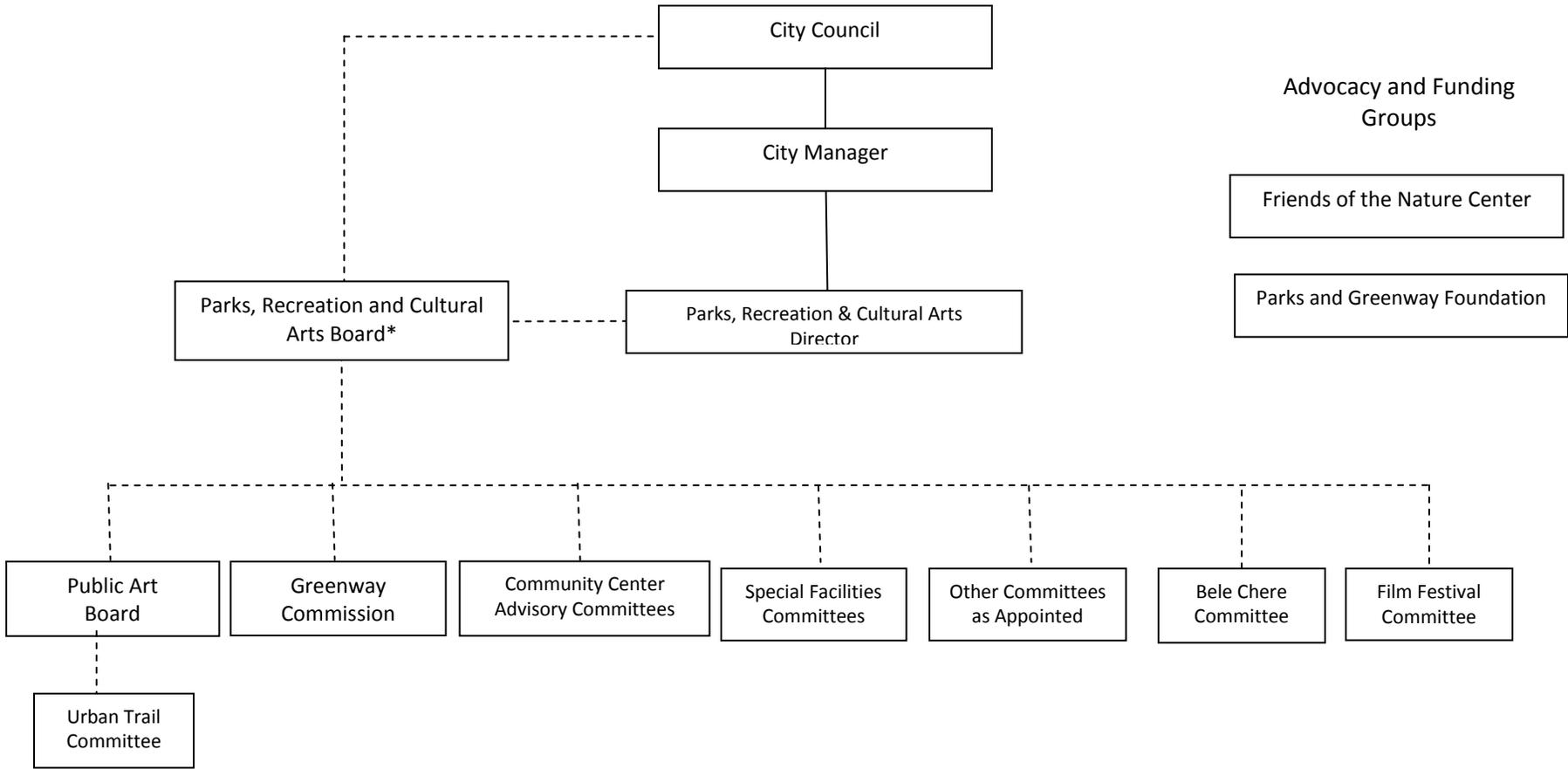
**Strategy:** *Clarify role of Boards, Commissions, their relationship with staff and with each other, and relationship with City Council*

##### Action Steps:

- Establish the Recreation Advisory Board as the umbrella advisory board for the department to be supplemented by the Public Art Board, Greenways Commission and committees. The organizational chart below demonstrates a proposed boards and committees reporting flow chart.  
Review and update the authorizing resolutions or ordinances for the Board and Commissions to more accurately identify, describe make-up, eligibility, appointment processes, charge, relationship to City Council, role of staff in supporting the entities and as liaison to City Council, relationship with other Boards and Commissions, and other time enduring characteristics of the entities.

- Consider a name change for the *Recreation Advisory Board* to the *Parks, Recreation and Cultural Arts Board* to more accurately reflect the intended role of the board. The name change should occur formally when the authorizing documents are revised.
- Create consistent operating procedures for each entity addressing officers and duties, agenda format, public input protocol, etc. Other entity-specific procedures may be adopted by each board.
- Establish protocol between Board and Commissions, staff and City Council for dealing with citizen requests or items that fall outside of approved budget. Any item deemed worthy by City Council should be referred to the Recreation Advisory Board and staff for review and make recommendation to City Council before final disposition.
- Provide initial formalized training for all members of Recreation Advisory Board and supporting boards and committees on an annual basis, thereafter, as new members are appointed.
- Create a system of staff led advisory committees for each area of department operations to replace the current inconsistent approach that exists today.





Propose changing *Recreation Advisory Board* to the *Parks, Recreation and Cultural Arts Board*, to more accurately reflect the intended role of the board.

***Strategy: Clarify the role of citizen groups established to support community centers, City produced festivals/events and all other areas of the department as specified by the Recreation Advisory Board and staff.***

**Action Steps:**

- Change name of these groups from “boards” to “committees.” The committees should be staff led, but could provide policy recommendations to the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board.
- The committees should be advisory and can also be working committees or establish sub-committees for this purpose on an annual basis.
- Develop written committee membership selection provisions and operating procedures.

***Strategy: Establish continuity within the Department to clarify processes and procedures of operation, budgeting and financial targets.***

**Action Steps:**

- Create business plans for special facilities, recreation program areas and centers and other appropriate areas within each division of the Department.
- Separate the budget that supports the non-parks and recreation functions of the department so that the true costs of the parks and recreation system are more transparent and cost recovery expectations are not applied to non-parks and recreation services.
- Include soft costs for capital projects in the capital budgets so that the parks and recreation operating budget is not negatively impacted by these unanticipated costs.

## **Partnerships**

**Goal 3: Maximize the level of service available to the community by using partnerships to take advantage of existing facilities, share new facilities, and provide additional programming and services to the community.**

***Strategy: Strengthen existing partnerships through a formalized partnership policy***

**Action Steps:**

- Formalize existing partnerships through adoption of a Partnership Policy (see Sample Partnership Policy in **Appendix VIII**) supplemented with equity agreements that are reviewed annually.
- Strengthen and expand Intergovernmental Agreements (IGA) with schools and Buncombe County for use of fields, gyms, and multipurpose spaces.

***Strategy: Use community partnerships to promote pride and “ownership” of park system elements***

**Action Steps:**

- Explore the possibilities of promoting adopt-a-park/trail program to help with maintenance, beautification, safety, and civic pride.
- Create a “Park Ambassador” program where residents living adjacent to parks are trained to inspect parks and then file a weekly report in exchange for a nominal fee or pass.

***Strategy: Enhance relationships with other governmental entities, community non-profits, and other service providers, both locally and regionally as a way to expand parks and recreation offerings***

**Action Steps:**

- Strengthen partnerships with funding partners, such as Friends of the Nature Center and Asheville Parks and Greenways Foundation, through comprehensive memorandums of understanding (MOU).
- Build partnerships within the community to take advantage of existing facilities, share new facilities, and provide additional programming and services to the community.
- Investigate partnerships with local medical and health organizations to increase fitness and health programming particularly for the aging population and youth population within the community.
- Strengthen and expand intergovernmental agreements (IGA) with schools for use of the fields, gyms, and multipurpose spaces on a more consistent basis.
- Investigate partnerships with organizations suggested by the Asheville community to further facility development, programming, and promotion.



**Management**

**Goal 4: Create management resources to increase efficiency, continuity, and sustainability in critical focus areas needed in the Department.**

***Strategy: Develop a system of data collection and analysis to provide an accurate basis for decisions and management of parks, natural areas, and facilities.***

**Action Steps:**

- Develop inventory and assessment information for the park and public facility systems city wide.
- Develop a 10-year infrastructure master plan that will identify all park and recreation facility system needs, estimate capital costs, identify the city's existing ability to fund current capital needs and identify multiple and specific funding strategies to close the gap between the system's needs and the Department's current ability to meet them.

***Strategy: Create standards for all activities and services.***

**Action Steps:**

- Establish service standards for all community services activities. Suggested criteria for service standards include:
  - Programs: participation levels, revenue, instructors, customer satisfaction, cost per unit of experience, customer retention
  - Instructors: experience, knowledge, friendliness, recruiting, rewarding, training,
  - Volunteers: experience, knowledge, friendliness, recruiting, rewarding, training,
  - Facilities: cleanliness, aesthetics, comfort, security
  - Staff: experience, knowledge, friendliness, rewarding, training, trends
  - Park and Facility Maintenance: turf, plantings, restrooms, sidewalks, irrigation, litter control, equipment, etc.

***Strategy: Designate or add staff to organize, integrate, coordinate, and manage organizational needs within the Department***

**Action Steps:**

- Hire or designate a staff member dedicated to facility asset management to determine and track facility life cycle conditions, needs, and upgrades as well as coordinate priorities for annual CIP budget.
- Hire or designate a staff member as a greenways coordinator dedicated to implementation of the greenways recommendations.
- Hire or designate a staff member dedicated to the organization and coordination of all aspects for a comprehensive program including volunteers, sponsorships, fundraising, and partnerships for the Department.
- Hire or designate a staff member dedicated to the organization and coordination of all aspects for a comprehensive marketing program for the Department.
- Hire or designate a staff member as a cultural arts coordinator dedicated to the organization and coordination of all aspects for a comprehensive cultural arts program for the Department.
- Develop a park security program that will focus on quality of life issues by patrolling city parks and providing assistance to park visitors concerning the proper use of park facilities, and deter acts of vandalism and destruction within the parks by providing necessary security procedures.

***Strategy: Maximize the use of volunteers throughout the department***

**Action Steps:**

- Create a department wide list of current projects and opportunities available for volunteers.
- Develop a comprehensive volunteer management program addressing recruitment, training, evaluation, appreciation and retention.
- Track and report volunteer hours annually.

## Funding Options

### Goal 5: Increase parks, recreation, and cultural arts department funding

**Strategy: Research potential traditional funding opportunities.**

The City has the ability to use these mechanisms to enhance the quality of life in Asheville and expand recreation, park, trails, programs, and services to the community.

#### Action Steps:

- Work with City Council, Recreation Advisory Board and supporting boards and committees, residents, and partners to establish additional revenue through a combination of funding sources, located in **Section VI** and in **Appendix VIII** of this report, to implement the recommendations of the Master Plan.
- Further investigate support for an education campaign for a ballot initiative to pass a bond referendum for future capital improvements identified in this Master Plan.



**Strategy: Pursue alternative funding to implement the Master Plan.**

The City of Asheville has experienced challenging times in the recent past, with limited funding and staffing levels, and the Department should explore the best means of achieving its funding goals. Alternative funding methods may be instrumental to the operations of the City's park and recreation facilities and services on an ongoing basis. Allocating resources (assigning staff time, matching funds, etc.) to pursue alternative funding should be considered an investment in the future, with an outlined and expected positive rate of return.

#### Action Steps:

- Identify opportunities to increase community support and revenue opportunities such as grants, partnerships, sponsorships, volunteers, fundraising, and earned income (See **Section V** for Funding Sources).
- Assign staff resources and/or investigate the possibility of utilizing volunteer efforts to research alternative funding sources.
- Develop a "Wish List" to identify philanthropic opportunities that align with these needs. Once identified, aggressively apply for grant funding.
- Organize, plan, and coordinate fundraising with project timelines.

- Expand and formalize a volunteer program to include standards, recruiting, training, retaining, and rewarding volunteers in all program areas.
- Create new and formalize existing sponsorships (see Sample Sponsorship Policy in **Appendix IX** with agreements that are reviewed annually.
- Create an annual “Sponsorship Manual” listing all the opportunities for the year and distribute within the community in a menu format that creates a sense of urgency within the business community.

## Marketing

### Goal 6: Marketing, communications, and credibility

**Strategy: Generate awareness and credibility about Asheville Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Arts offerings and needs as expressed by the public.**

#### Action Steps:

- Formalize an evaluation and annual in-house benchmarking program to solicit participant feedback and drive programming efforts. In addition to traditional evaluation tools, consider those that directly evaluate services at the delivery level such as “Mystery Shopper.”
- Collect feedback data that supports the expressed desire for improvements to programs and activities.
- Prepare an annual report providing information to the public about parks and recreation funding, stewardship of tax dollars and fees and charges, and distribute the report as widely as possible.
- Work with the Chamber of Commerce and the local relocation organizations to develop information packets that promote city services to tourists and new residents.
- Create an annual Marketing and Communications Plan for the Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Arts Department.
- Create a consistent brand of departmental and city logos for recognition by community.
- Develop an evaluation process for marketing media such as newspaper, seasonal brochures, website, direct mail, targeted e-mails, radio, and television advertising to continuously determine effectiveness of marketing dollars.
- Create seamless product delivery for park and recreation services that delivers from a consumer vantage point.

**Strategy: Promote the social, personal, environmental, and economic benefits of parks and recreation.**

#### Action Steps:

- Highlight the individual health benefits of participating in recreation programs and using parks and recreation facilities in all program descriptions and Department marketing materials.
- Establish the Department as the model for environmental awareness by providing educational tips and literature regarding trees, native vegetation, local wildlife, recycling, etc.
- Provide an annual report of facilities and activities of the Department contributing to a high quality of life, attracting visitors, and encouraging both residential and business relocation to the area.

## Recreation Program and Services

### Goal 7: Strategically increase recreational programming level of service

**Strategy: Regularly solicit community input in program and facility operations planning efforts**

#### Action Steps:

- Broaden programming market to include more members of the community of various income levels, ethnicity, age, geographic distribution.
- Develop a standard practice for program customer feedback, program evaluation and program development.
- Include ongoing opportunities to solicit youth input.
- Establish relationships between each community center director and the City's Neighborhood Coordinator to maximize the ability to respond to local neighborhood needs.
- Formalize an effective staff-led community advisory committee for each community center to provide outreach and input to programming and facility operations.



**Strategy: Seek ways to respond to identify programming priorities**

#### Action Steps:

- Implement new programs based on research and feedback.
- Evaluate the development of new programs based on community interests
  - Special events, individual activities and youth athletic leagues were identified as potentials for expansion or improvement in the citizen survey.
  - Environmental education, general skills education (computer, cooking classes) and individual activities were identified in the survey as those citizens would like to see added.
  - Social recreational programs, more athletics, health and wellness, dance, and the arts were identified in focus groups.
  - Job training, leadership development opportunities, and resource and referral center was identified for middle school youth and teens.
  - One-stop shopping and resource and referral center was identified to meet the needs of senior citizens.

- Evaluate the development of new programs related to trends in parks, recreation and cultural arts
  - Focus on the enhancement of fitness and wellness programming at community centers
  - Prepare for the fitness and wellness desires of the aging Baby Boomers
  - Provide concurrent youth and adult programming as a way to increase participation
- Involve all supporting divisions including maintenance, administration, and recreation staff, as necessary, in new program and facility development. Engaging all who are associated with a new program, both directly and indirectly, in the decision making process will help ensure a quality experience for the customer.

***Strategy: Define core programs and services for the Department***

**Action Steps:**

- Perform a Services Assessment to define the City’s core services as they relate to vision and mission of the department and to community benefit.
- Create intentional, outcomes focused programming and programming to engage neighborhood pride and address gang activity.
- Staff program area experts should be assigned to develop and oversee specific program areas in order to ensure consistent program characteristics particularly in the areas of fitness and wellness; cultural arts; youth sports; environmental education; aquatics; summer/before and after school programming, youth at risk, gang intervention and prevention, and therapeutic recreation.
- A menu of core services should be available to community center directors to include in center offerings.

***Strategy: Create a seamless and cohesive customer service delivery system for the provision of all parks, recreation, and cultural arts programs and services.***

**Action Steps:**

- Develop a comprehensive cross training program for all staff and instructors including knowledge of all program areas as well as customer service.
- Develop program evaluation criteria and annual process.
- Use program tracking and evaluation tools to capacity by designing reports to readily identify life cycles of programs, identify programs not meeting minimum capacity (review all program minimums for cost effectiveness), identify waiting lists, etc.
- Continue to support and build on partnership with the Asheville Police Department to address the safety and security issues present at some of the community centers.

***Strategy: Reach out to those with financial need***

**Action Steps:**

- Review the existing financial assistance program to maximize use.
- Research transportation accessibility issues and work with other community groups and private entities (such as public transit or the school bus system) to develop options to address needs.

***Strategy: Assure financial sustainability within the Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Arts Department***

**Action Steps:**

- Clarify the Department’s Resource Allocation and Pricing Philosophy and Policy and update as necessary using the Pyramid Methodology to establish categories of services.
- Determine to what level different categories of City recreation programs and services should be subsidized.
- Use market based fee structure for appropriate programs.
- Develop fee schedules that provide cost recovery balanced against needed services. Continue to subsidize certain programs that serve populations with a demonstrated need.
- Provide services to City tax-paying residents at lower costs than non-tax-paying users.

***Strategy: Use volunteers to expand programming***

**Action Steps:**

- Seek volunteer effort to support expansion of programming into opportunities to connect people to nature.
- Use evaluation methods to hold volunteer-led programming to high departmental standards and outcomes.
- Harness the energy of seniors and the retiring Baby Boomer generation as instructors and program leaders.

**Festivals**

**Goal 8: Assure administrative policies promote effective provision of community festivals and events**

***Strategy: Clarify responsibilities of the festivals within of the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Arts Department***

**Action Steps:**

- Create a “statement of purpose” for the Festivals staff clarifying its roles as coordinator of all festivals/events taking place on city property; producer of a limited number of specific festivals/events; permitting entity; supporter of eligible festivals/events through in-kind services per adopted policy parameters (see other strategies below); and developer and enforcer of policy adopted by City Council regarding festivals/events.
- Establish City policy that refers any direct request from an outside group or individual regarding the holding of, or the City’s financial or in-kind support of, a festival/event to the Parks , Recreation and Cultural Arts Department for evaluation and recommendation prior to any action by City Council. The Department should review all requests for funding/support and program/project approvals in consultation with its appointed Boards and Commissions prior to recommending action to the City Council. In turn, the City Council should expect Department staff and appointed Boards and Commission members to report back to Council with their recommendations regarding funding and/or implementation of a project or program within 60 days.

***Strategy: Create consistent and coordinated fiscal year planning***

**Action Steps:**

- Work with the Finance Department to align festivals and event budget structure with the City's fiscal year to have festival funding on a cycle to allow adequate planning through encumbering of allocated funds as necessary.

***Strategy: Coordinate potential sponsorship resources***

**Action Steps:**

- Create criteria or research methods to develop a sponsorship guide for all festival/event/program options operated by the Department to include mission statements, sponsorship levels, and benefits for each festival/event/program in order to efficiently solicit sponsorships.



**GOAL 9: Analyze festivals/events based on the mission and values established by council and the Department**

***Strategy: Review and analyze events and festivals***

**Action Steps:**

- Develop criteria or performance measures to evaluate all festivals and events within the City

***Strategy: Measure the Return on investment for all City supported categories of festivals/events***

**Action Steps:**

- Develop an evaluation matrix for festivals/events to include such information as mission, attendance, total cost, total revenues and sources, financial support from City, cash value of in-kind support from City
- Define and recognize intangible benefits
- Work with Western Carolina University and the Convention and Tourism Bureau to perform visitors' studies.
- Work with the city's Economic Development Department to create and implement a tool of measurement for financial impact to business districts.

***Strategy: Establish criteria by which festivals/events would be considered for in-kind support from the City***

**Action Steps:**

- Align criteria with City Council annual statement of mission and goals.
- Determine annual allocation of value of in-kind services available.
- Establish consistent “request for support” process and schedule on an annual basis with identified maximum support levels.
- Establish an orientation program to educate potential applicants to the application and allocation process.

**Goal 10: Develop a rationale for festivals/events produced by the City**

***Strategy: Align mission and goals of each City produced festival/event with the vision established annually by City Council***

**Action Steps:**

- Establish clear, attainable, goals and objectives for City-produced festivals and events.
- Determine what function and impacts large festivals/events have for the City of Asheville and local business.
- Explore management structure options for festivals/events produced by the City of Asheville including consideration of non-profit or professional promoters as well as the City continuing to produce the festivals/events.

***Strategy: Promote community involvement and acceptance for City produced festivals/events***

**Action Steps:**

- Allow more collaboration with the community for entertainment, food, vendors, etc.
- Provide a communication tool for feedback on what the City of Asheville needs/wants from festivals and events.
- Engage the local business community in the evaluation of the downtown events.
- Evaluate community feedback on the negative connotation associated with the large size that some festivals/events have become. Create a balance accommodating local needs as well as tourism benefits. Evaluate if some festivals/events could be moved or cut back to a single focus.
- When allowing alcohol at events, review the locations and times that alcohol is permitted.

## **Cultural and Public Art**

**Goal 11: Enable sustainable funding for permanent and temporary public art**

***Strategy: Support public expectation for public art of the highest quality with public engagement***

**Action Steps:**

- Rewrite the current Percent for Art Ordinance to eliminate the requirement that all funds for public art be matched dollar for dollar with private support and guarantee a full one-percent from municipal capital improvement project budgets for the inclusion of public art at the project

site (if funds are allocated from bond revenue) or elsewhere (when pooled from non-bond and accumulated allocations.) Simultaneously, formally define which CIP projects are eligible for a percent for art allocation and which CIP expenditures are ineligible for public art appropriation.

- Create a public art fund for special public art projects (artist residencies, temporary commissions, non-CIP projects, or projects with matching State, County, Municipal, and/or private funds), and to be used for annual maintenance and long-term conservation of public art.
- Implement a payment-in-lieu for public art in private development whereby private interests are requested to contribute one-percent of the valuation of the development to a fund to realize public art on site, at a designated site elsewhere in the City, or to be allocated toward an already approved public artwork. The first step is to draft a resolution for review by the City Council.
- Explore a “round-up” program that allows for residents to round-up their tax (and utility) bills to support a fund for the public and cultural art.
- Identify CIP and public art projects that affirm and contribute to existing, approved master plans and strategies including: RiverLink; the RiverWay Plan; the Riverfront Plan; and, transportation, open space, and land use goals cited in the City Development Plan 2025.

## **Goal 12: Enhance public confidence for and appreciation of the arts**

### ***Strategy: Maintain and enhance Asheville as an arts destination***

#### **Action Steps:**

- Change the governing ordinance of the Public Art Board to redefine its role and responsibility to maximize its efficacy of project approval processes and realize new public artworks. The revised ordinance should be written such that professional Department staff has the ability and authority to serve as liaison between and among project interest groups and representatives.
- New ordinance language should address how the public can actively participate in decision-making whether through the Board or as a consequence of the Public Art Board taking the initiative to invite the public into its annual evaluation of projects.
- Rewrite public art implementation procedures to clarify who shall review and approve public art projects, when these project reviews should occur, who selects public art project sites and artists, who manages public art projects, and how to conduct public outreach and education about the artists and the project. Rewritten text should state that the Department should review all requests for funding and program/project approvals in consultation with its appointed Boards and Commissions prior to recommending action to the City Council. In turn, the City Council should expect Department staff and appointed Boards and Commission members to report back to Council with their recommendations regarding funding and/or implementation of a project or program within 60 days.
- Implement a biannual progress report regarding the status of all public art projects and programming activities to be given to the City Council and the public.
- Attend to current and future development plans and master plans throughout the City and identify opportunities for the integration of public art and funding for public and cultural arts projects, including changes to the Land Use Ordinance.
- City Council should take under advisement the recommendations of Department staff when considering appointments to the Public Art Board and other cultural arts commissions and task forces.
- Organize independent public art selection committees for each public art project.

- Identify collaborative arts projects with complementary arts organizations such as the Pack Square Conservancy; Asheville Art Museum; Asheville Area Arts Council; Center for Craft, Creativity and Design; Handmade in America; UNC-Asheville; Black Mountain; West Carolina Arts; Penland School of Crafts; among others. Discuss and develop collaborative public art projects with appropriate City Boards and Commissions as well as City Departments.
- Affirm through municipal policy that public art projects will take advantage of sites approved through CIP appropriations and be sited to complement these priorities, which are affirmed by residents and taxpayers.
- Develop an outreach and educational campaign targeted to the general public about public art. Specific educational approaches could include invited lectures, workshops, regional conferences, and roundtable discussions.
- Create a marketing and communication plan that strengthens communications with constituent organizations and the public through both top-down and bottom-up dialogues, and utilizes technology to communicate with artists, arts organizations, residents, and visitors about events and programs of interest. Specifically, establish a listserv to reach artists to solicit and inform about public art opportunities and issues of mutual concern and interest; create an e-newsletter and arts blog with area artists; and, regularly schedule podcasts of interviews with artists and event organizers.

**Goal 13: Develop and expand the public art collection**

***Strategy: Create a coherent, comprehensive, and exciting municipal collection of public art***

**Action Steps:**

- Create a list of additional and alternative sites for public art beyond the geography of downtown Asheville. New and proposed sites should be able to create “place” for a developed and renewed sense of Asheville, referencing existing locations where public art can already be found as well as planning documents of City and County greenways and parks systems.
- Identify city-owned properties as potential sites for permanent and/or temporary public art in response to citizen interest for an arts park as a community resource.
- Develop an inventory of interior and exterior public spaces, including community centers, in which to receive temporary public art, as facilities for artists-in-residence, for cultural arts exhibitions, and public review of design proposals for public art and other public and cultural arts projects.
- The City should be responsible for the annual maintenance and long-term conservation of the works of art.
- Invest in a portable public art collection organized by the City and selected by a rotating independent public art advisory committee. The Department should convene an independent public art task force to offer formal analysis and curatorial review of the existing public art collection with the goal of developing a list of complementary types of works (scale, material, content, location). The Department could offer residents the opportunity to recommend their preferences prior to the final selection.

## Goal 14: Enhance facilitation and resources among arts interests

**Strategy:** *Lead and direct arts programming by promoting partnerships across artistic disciplines*

### Action Steps:

- Allocate a percentage of staff time devoted to serving as a liaison between and among arts organizations to enhance efficiencies and create more comprehensive and developed programs and projects, including a database of volunteers interested in working on public and cultural arts projects.
- Provide direct facilitation services and technical assistance to artists and arts organizations seeking information, funding, and counsel regarding proposed programs and projects to foster collaborations, mentor relationships, and create joint ventures.
- Conduct a cultural assessment and regional inventory of arts organizations and facilities that can be viewed against a cultural market analysis of Asheville. This effort would require the compilation of a list of cultural organizations and an inventory of their programs squared off against market, tourist, and local and regional demographic data.
- The Public Art Program should explore partnerships and promote collaborations with the Parks, Recreation, and Greenways Foundation; Asheville Area Arts Council; Asheville Art Museum; Asheville City Schools; Convention and Visitors Bureau; Tourism Development Authority; regional artists and galleries; Pack Square Conservancy; Asheville Community Theater; NC Stage; Living Tree Foundation; Quality Forward; RiverLink; UNC-Asheville; Mars Hill College; Warren Wilson College; Penland School of Crafts; and Black Mountain to advance appropriate projects.
- Clearly define policies and procedures for public art programs and projects, cultural arts programming and projects, and festivals.
- Cultivate public-private partnerships, including consideration of a special tax district overlay to develop live-work housing for artists and rehearsal / exhibition space for artists.
- Explore and develop City and County funding that links the arts to economic development initiatives and tourism advertising.



## Goal 15: Build public and organizational capacity for the arts

**Strategy:** *Take advantage of existing strengths in public and cultural arts organizations*

### Action Steps:

- Appoint an Arts Task Force supplemented with membership from the Public Art Board, the Recreation Advisory Board, and the Greenways Commission to identify leadership in the cultural

sector and work toward developing regional approaches to program delivery and project development.

- Invite arts professionals from the community to participate on a grants review panel to select annual awards for specific programs or projects that enhance collaborations among more than three arts organizations and/or venues.
- Partner with cultural arts organizations that can offer programs and opportunities for youth and adults in City-owned and operated facilities.
- Strengthen and sustain the networks among City and County facilities and organizations that can deliver arts programming locally (within neighborhoods) and regionally (across western North Carolina) including arts in educational contexts such as schools and universities.
- Forge working relationships among the 500 non-profit organizations in Asheville - combine and create programs to provide cultural arts education and integrate specific arts disciplines into public education, community centers, after school programs, and at senior centers, as well as reduce redundant expenses borne by individual organizations.
- Develop public spaces for public and cultural arts programming within private development, including environmentally sustainable and energy efficient works of art.
- Take advantage of the diversity of cultural arts venues across the city, throughout the county, and at regional sites in the western part of the state to encourage participation in the arts and target populations without primary access to the arts. This approach could be implemented through municipal transit and/or reduced admissions.
- Offer public interventions to maximize public participation: grow website of event listings, install highway and wayfinding signage, and accommodate free parking for selected arts events.
- Pilot cultural arts programming and temporary public art programming in municipal parks, open space, greenways, and walking trails.
- Conduct an economic analysis to determine the feasibility of establishing designated Arts Districts (in addition to river arts) taking advantage of tax incentives, redistricting, and artist live-work designations, among other zoning overlays.
- Consider artists first when hiring cultural arts program instructors at community centers and other public facilities.

#### **Goal 16: Strengthen the organizational structure of public and cultural arts delivery**

***Strategy: Realign the strategic goals of the public and cultural arts to generate additional community goodwill and accurate annual budgeting***

#### **Action Steps:**

- Hire a temporary or part-time Cultural Arts Outreach Coordinator who is charged with soliciting ideas for public art from artists, constituent arts organizations, private interests, and relevant non-profit organizations. This temporary and part-time employee would develop a database of residents, arts organizations, artists, and others interested in the arts, to initiate a listserv, targeted e-blasts and mailings about programs and projects of interest to the community based on geography and demography. Within six to twelve months, this information would be disseminated to and coordinated with the City Neighborhood Liaison.
- Create an artists' and fabricators' registry.
- Through revised implementation policies and procedures for the Public Art Board and its Department staff, determine when to review proposals for public art, who has responsibility and authority to approve proposed projects and make recommendations regarding design

modifications, and who is charged with project management for municipal percent for art projects.

- Rewrite “Section 2-185.8: Purposes, Responsibilities, and Powers” of the Public Art Board to clarify the role of the Board and Department staff in artists’ contracts. Department staff should serve as the project manager for all public and percent for art projects; contracts should be written between the artist(s) and the City with the responsibility and authority for successful project completion with the Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Arts Department.
- Create a biannual review of public art projects and programs across America to inform the Public Art Board and the public about new definitions of public art; lectures, tours, and conferences to attend; and articles and books to read about the field.
- Infuse and embed public and cultural arts projects when planning and developing capital projects and other public expenditures.
- Provide greater coordination between City and County to develop public art and cultural arts funding and program initiatives; meet quarterly with the Recreation Advisory Board, Planning staff, Public Works staff, and Parks and Recreation staff; and, solicit information about future and potential public art projects through meetings and reviews with relevant City departments and the City Council.
- Establish an annual summit on the arts to receive input and feedback about public art and cultural arts programming in advance of an annual budget presentation and request to the City Council.
- Broaden arts programming geographically, demographically, and through content.
- Increase professional development opportunities for members of the Public Art Board and staff.

## Facilities and Parks

### Goal 17: Ensure a continued high level of service in parks

***Strategy: Develop maintenance plans across department boundaries for efficient and effective maintenance service delivery***

#### Action Steps:

- Assess, evaluate and then develop a park and recreation facilities maintenance plan that provides for:
  - Ongoing care and maintenance of park grounds, facilities and infrastructure
  - Equipment and park component replacement schedule
  - Performance measurements
  - Number of employee hours necessary to carry-out plan
  - Level of maintenance required before and after an event or festival
  - An estimate for the potentially required increased level of maintenance due to increasing tourism in the City. (Further study and/or analysis may be necessary to complete this section.)
  - An increased effort to maintain athletic fields to increase current level of service and to maximize use of those fields.

**Strategy: Assess staff structure and duties to maximize overall Department performance and delivery of maintenance services.**

**Action Steps:**

- Develop a maintenance delivery system to track the staff hours and equipment/supplies needed to provide the established level of service and to ensure adequate facilities and resources for efficient park maintenance service provision. Assure adequate staffing and funding to maintain the level of service.
- Evaluate and develop a scoring system for each task to meet desired and consistent service levels. Involve staff in the development of the standards and scoring system. Conduct maintenance standards training for all staff.
- Apply appropriate maintenance standards and define set up/tear down requirements for all special events, tournaments, or other activities that currently stress resources. Assure adequate staffing and funding to take on the task, prior to making a commitment.



**Strategy: Create site-specific maintenance plans for developing parks and assure funding is in place to support the plan.**

**Action Steps:**

- Articulate the maintenance plan required to support the development or redevelopment of any park site and define associated annual cost. Secure funding source to support the plan.
- If a maintenance funding partner is involved, a specific agreement for service should be negotiated and reviewed annually. If the City is funding maintenance services, it shall be the sole determiner of maintenance service levels.

**Strategy: Address capital maintenance of existing parks to continue to meet community standards**

**Action Steps:**

- Develop long and short-term funding plans to stabilize park funding and provide the money needed for renovations, acquisitions, and improvements.
- Update the department's Capital Improvement Project budget with each department budget cycle.
- Update the GRASP® Atlas (provided to the City Landscape Architect in digital format) annually to provide an accurate basis for decisions and management of existing parks, natural areas and indoor facilities.

- Continue to provide comfort and convenience features in existing parks, such as shade, drinking fountains, restrooms, and plantings. (Refer to the GRASP® Atlas [provided to the City Landscape Architect in digital format] for a complete inventory of comfort and convenience features for each park.)
- Replace equipment as it becomes old or outdated with high quality equipment which will be easy to maintain and have a long lifespan.
- Conduct an inventory and survey of all historic park features, such as the train depot at Recreation Park.
- Formalize good communication between City landscape architects and field crews for maintenance, repairs, and the implementation of park designs.
- Maintain and improve special facilities including, Riverside Cemetery, WNC Nature Center, Asheville Municipal Golf Course, Food Lion SkatePark, Aston Park Tennis Center, McCormick Field and the swimming pools at Malvern Hills, Recreation Park, and Walton Street Park.
- Assess feasibility of Walton Street Pool for repairs, operations, return on investment, best use of facility, etc.
- When renovate existing facilities or build new, assess facility location to best serve the community, enhance access, community needs, etc.
- Improve wayfinding and signage to and between existing parks, greenways, and indoor facilities for pedestrian and bike navigation. Information, such as park maps, can also be placed on-line for the community to access and use.

***Strategy: Address ongoing maintenance of parks to meet community expectations***

- Increase funding and staffing for park maintenance as needed when new amenities are added. For example, Pack Square Park will add new amenities to the park system, increasing the need for funding and staffing.

***Strategy: Develop design standards for new and existing parks and greenways.***

**Action Steps:**

- Develop a team to create citywide park, greenway, and blueway design standards that include unifying standards for site furnishings, colors, entry gateways, signage, and potential themes unique to Asheville. It is suggested that the team include staff, landscape architects, and planners, as well as community leaders.
- Establish a design process to support the design standards, to include:
  - How a project is initiated
  - How the design is implemented
  - The persons or departments involved in the process.
- Look for opportunities to include sustainable design practices during the development of the design standards such as LEED standards.
- Incorporate design standards for blueways and greenways that include requirements for park amenities such as seating nodes, plantings, shade, developed water access, public art and signage that can be incorporated along the length of the greenway or blueway. Refer to the information in the Wilma Dykeman Riverway Plan's "RiverWay Landscape Design Palette" when developing the blueway design guidelines and standards.

**Strategy: Allow flexibility in design standards**

**Action Steps:**

- Develop an “urban” and a “rural” aesthetic for the design of parks and greenways within the design standards.
- Allow variation to occur within these design standards to reflect the character of specific neighborhoods.
- Allow variation to occur within these design standards to reflect the character of the neighborhood as well as the city in parks and greenways outside of the inner city.
- Allow variation to occur within these design standards to reflect the unique character of the downtown area.
- Develop and integrate a Park Development Menu list within or in conjunction with the design standards. This list will ensure a continued high level of service for parks by establishing park component and amenity requirements. (Refer to **Appendix X** for Example Park Development Menu List.)



**Strategy: Improve design and theming (place-making) of new and existing parks.**

**Action Steps:**

- Design new parks and enrich existing parks according to developed design standards mentioned in the previous strategy. Implement themes that reflect the history of the site, the diversity of the community, or other unique themes, such as the importance of water to Asheville. Public art, interpretive signage, and unique elements in the park details and design should be explored.
- Create site plans for all new and existing parks and greenways or hire qualified professional landscape architects as needed. The site plans will require site survey data for boundaries and topography. In addition to a site survey, large community and regional parks will require formal master plans which will require a public process.
- Regional and community parks should be given priority when implementing theming because the parks are positioned to have a greater impact on a larger amount of people than neighborhood parks. The following is a suggested list of existing parks that require a new or updated formal site master plan (including a new survey), listed by priority:

**High Priority** (parks listed play an important role not only at a neighborhood level, but at a regional level)

- Recreation Park
- Carrier Park

- Amboy Road River Park
- French Broad River Park
- Martin Luther King , Jr. Park
- McCormick Field/Memorial Stadium/Mountainside Park

**Medium–to-Low Priority** (parks listed play an important role at a neighborhood level)

- Grove Park
  - Haw Creek Park
  - Jake Rusher Park
  - Kenilworth Park/Seven Springs Park
  - Montford Complex
  - Ray L. Kisiah Park
- For parks not requiring formal master plans, such as smaller neighborhood parks, develop a park development menu list for park amenities and component requirements, as stated in the strategy above. This menu will help ensure that all smaller parks meet a standard and are providing an adequate level of service. (Refer to **Appendix X** for an Example Park Development Menu List.) This list can be developed and used for all types and sizes of parks as well.
  - Include a strong public process in the development or redevelopment of parks and facilities. The master planning and design processes should include a strong outreach component to the surrounding neighborhood to solicit ideas and to ensure that the new master plan reflects the needs and desires of the people who will most likely use the park.

***Strategy: Identify and develop facilities for new trends in parks and recreation***

**Action Steps:**

- Look for opportunities to add special features to an existing park such as a “destination playground” or a “boundless playground” (fully accessible) that include play features or themed elements.
- Consider adding a “sprayground” or water feature as well as a destination playground to Recreation Park as part of the site master plan. Its adjacency to the WNC Nature Center creates a regional destination.
- Highlight and market unique parks and park features, such as the velodrome, WNC Nature Center, and Food Lion SkatePark. These features will not only appeal to users within the City, but will also draw people from the region. These parks should be considered community/regional destinations.
- Explore local and regional partnership opportunities to support and invest in regional destination facilities such as the WNC Nature Center.

**Strategy: Address safety concerns in parks.**

**Action Steps:**

- Create a security plan for the park and greenway systems that will establish park rules, park hours, deter vandalism, implement methods of locking and unlocking facilities, and establish regularly scheduled patrols by police or park rangers.
- Increase visibility into problem parks by removing dense vegetation or relocating components to more highly visible areas.
- Establish an “Adopt-a-Park Program” to foster pride and sense of ownership in all of Asheville’s parks.
- Add safety lighting to problem parks.
- Develop a park patrol to patrol parks to enhance safety and deter vandalism.
- Provide opportunities for youth to interact with police officers via recreational programming.

**Goal 18: Increase level of service for parks**

**Strategy: Look for opportunities to add parks or amenities to each sub-area**

**Action Steps:**

**Citywide**

- Acquire fee simple or through easements, key parcels and complementary land for future facilities and for preservation of significant natural and cultural resources.
- Ensure that public parks and greenways are provided in new residential developments by requiring a specified amount of land, .5 acres for example, to be dedicated or maintained as park land. If development is adjacent to a greenway, land could also be dedicated to add acreage to greenway.
- Increase park acreage in expanding areas and as opportunities arise. According to the GRASP® LOS Analysis, gaps (gray areas) appear between the East and South sub-areas as well as along the fringes of the North and West sub-areas. (Refer to Perspectives A-E.) These gaps are highlighted on the Recommendation Map in **Appendix VI**. It is recommended that the City increase park acreage within these gaps as opportunities arise.
- Asheville has several parcels of land designated as future park sites. These future parks should be developed as planned and funded projects. White Fawn Park and Beaucatcher Park are priorities due to the proximity to the downtown area and potential to link to existing parks and greenways.

Future park sites include:

- Beaucatcher Park
  - Falconhurst Park
  - Jean Webb Park
  - Hummingbird Park
  - Progress Energy land donation
  - White Fawn Park
  - White Pine Park
- Coordinate plans for acquisition and location of new parks with the City of Asheville Development Plan 2025.

- Look for opportunities to add parkland within the River Arts District as outlined in the Wilma Dykeman Riverway Plan.

#### **Central Sub-Area**

- Maintain focus for this sub-area to develop and maintain a network of urban parks.
- Seek land acquisitions in the Central sub-area of the City to create an urban network of parks and greenways in the downtown area and to improve connections to outlying-sub-areas. Due to the expansion of the downtown area and the increasing demand for land and parks, it is suggested the land acquisition in the downtown and Central sub-area be a high priority. Work in collaboration with the Downtown Master Plan. (Refer to **Appendix VI** for the Recommendation Map).
- Jointly develop White Fawn Park, Memorial Stadium, McCormick Field, and Mountainside Park into a centrally located regional park.
- Refer to the Park Matrix in **Appendix XI** for park priority according to sub-area in which it is located.

#### **East Sub-Area**

- Maintain focus for this sub-area to develop and maintain regional and community parks.
- Place a focus on maintaining and enhancing existing regional parks in the East sub-area, such as the WNC Nature Center, and Azalea Park.
- Develop Recreation Park into a regional park. The location of the park and its proximity to the WNC Nature Center and Azalea Park, as well as the site's rich history will create a lively regional destination in Asheville.
- Improve outdoor ADA accessibility at the WNC Nature Center. Most trails do not allow for ADA access. Further study is needed to determine the extent of the improvements.
- Look for opportunities to add new parks to the north end of the East sub-area along the proposed greenway.
- Refer to the Park Matrix in **Appendix XI** for park priority according to sub-area in which it is located.

#### **West Sub-Area**

- Maintain focus for this sub-area to develop and maintain regional and community parks.
- Create and maintain connections to downtown area and nearby regional parks (Carrier Park, Amboy River Park) through the use of greenways, sidewalks, and bike lanes.
- Improve and develop existing regional and neighborhood parks by adding amenities and additional components.
- Look for opportunities, where possible, to add park acreage to the outlying west area of this sub-area. Due to pedestrian barriers in this region of the West sub-area, it may be difficult to add park acreage, therefore, it is a priority for this sub-area to update and improve existing parks and greenways. Pedestrian barriers can be crossed by adding connectors, such as pedestrian bridges and underpasses. Potential pedestrian connections should be reviewed where feasible.
- Refer to the Park Matrix in **Appendix XI** for park priority according to sub-area in which it is located.

#### **North Sub-Area**

- Maintain focus for this sub-area to develop and maintain neighborhood parks.

- Continue to maintain and improve existing parks, such as Weaver Park and Grove Park.
- Look for opportunities to add additional park components and comfort and convenience features to existing parks as a priority. A gap in service does appear in the north end of this sub-area, however adding park acreage will be difficult due to large lot sizes within developments.
- Refer to the Park Matrix in **Appendix XI** for park priority according to sub-area in which it is located.

#### South Sub-Area

- Maintain focus for this sub-area to develop and maintain neighborhood parks.
- Continue to maintain and improve existing parks, such as Valley Springs Middle School Ballfield and Jake Rusher Park.
- Look for opportunities to add new neighborhood parks within this sub-area. Any new park land should meet specified criteria for park land as stated above.
- Add neighborhood parks, if possible, to this sub-area. A gap in service does appear in between this sub-area and the East sub-area, however adding park acreage may be difficult due land restrictions in this region, such as Blue Ridge Parkway and industrial lots.
- Refer to the Park Matrix in **Appendix XI** for park priority according to sub-area in which it is located.



**Strategy:** *Improve existing parks to meet community standards.*

#### Action Steps:

- Use the Park Matrix in **Appendix XI** in conjunction with a Park Development Menu List as a starting point for updating and improving existing parks. (Refer to **Appendix X** for an Example Park Development Menu List.)
- Review components that scored below expectations (score of 1) when updating parks. Quick Reference List-A in **Appendix XI** contains a list of park amenities that scored 1 for Neighborhood Score and Community score according to the GRASP® process. There may be instances where a score of a 1 is acceptable; please review the context of each component.
- Update parks over time to reflect changing community needs. When updating or replacing equipment in parks, consider replacing the equipment with new components which might better serve the needs of the community. For example, a sandbox might be replaced with new modular play equipment. It is important to request community input during this process to discover the needs of the community.

- Add 2 ballfields, 2 open turf areas, 3 playgrounds, and 3 tennis courts to meet 2012 identified needs suggested in the Capacities LOS for Community Components **Error! Reference source not found.** in Section V of this plan. This section recommends adding specific components to meet the demands of the population in 2012 based on capacity.
- Add comfort and convenience features to parks where missing, such as benches, drinking fountains, and restrooms. It is recommended that at least 7 out of the 14 listed comfort and convenience features listed in the park inventory data report be provided in each park. Quick Reference List-B in **Appendix XI** contains a list of parks that have less than 7 out of 14 comfort and convenience features as well as a cost list for these features.
- Create smaller seating areas along greenways, particularly at the water's edge.
- Identify parks where events or festivals can be held and develop the park or area within the park as a designated event space.
- Continue to develop access to the water, either developed or undeveloped. Developed water access includes fishing docks or overlooks and undeveloped water access includes a simple boulder edge or an unpaved path.
- Improve river access to Jean Webb Park as recommended by the Wilma Dykeman Riverway Plan.
- Update playgrounds that are out-dated or do not meet current ADA and safety guidelines for replacement. Further study may be necessary to identify playgrounds and parks that are not ADA accessible. (Refer to the **Quick Reference List-A** in **Appendix XI** for playgrounds scoring a 1.) There are several parks in the list that require the addition of playground equipment or new playgrounds. The following is a suggested priority list (from high to low) of the playgrounds by park:
  - Martin Luther King, Jr. Park
  - French Broad River Park
  - Montford Complex
  - Haw Creek Park
  - Meadow Park

**Strategy: Improve walkable access to parks and recreation facilities.**

**Action Steps:**

- Strive to provide parks, greenways, or indoor facilities within one third mile of residents to increase walkability.
- Partner with community groups to conduct walkability workshops. The walkability checklist, as shown in **Appendix X**, is a tool to be filled out by residents in all areas of the community to assess the walkability of the community as a whole. These workshops could be led by the department and focus on access to a park and recreation facilities.
- Address walkability issues as identified in the community walkability analysis. Work with other City departments to address issues that are identified.
- Work with other City departments and community groups to ensure safe pedestrian access across physical barriers to parks and recreation facilities. Incorporate traffic calming strategies at access points to parks, open space, and trailheads. Incorporate traffic calming design techniques into design guidelines, as appropriate.
- Create walking maps with routes and mileages for park and trail routes. Make these available online and in printed form.

- Work with the other City departments to provide safe and enjoyable sidewalks or sidepaths as routes to parks.

**Strategy: *Create and develop designated blueways.***

**Action Steps:**

- Design and maintain the French Broad River and the Swannanoa River as linked blueways. Refer to the Wilma Dykeman Riverway Plan for further information and design guidelines.
- Blueways should be approached as linear parks and include park amenities such as seating nodes, public art, and wayfinding and signage.
- An inventory of all existing water-related park amenities should be conducted to count and assess the condition of existing kayak courses, water-access points and other developed water-sport amenities and features.

**Strategy: *Increase the urban network of parks and greenways in the downtown area.***

**Action Steps:**

- Coordinate park development and land acquisition with the Downtown Master Plan.
- Continue to identify parcels in the downtown region that can be developed into parks or green spaces. Focus on parcels that are located near an existing or proposed greenway, other parks or bike or mass transit systems.

## Greenways

### **Goal 19: Create greenway priorities and identify development timeline.**

The vision for the Asheville greenway system is a network of off-road trails utilizing natural corridors to connect people and places within the city. Asheville greenways will provide transportation, environmental, health, recreation, economic, educational, cultural, water quality, air quality and habitat preservation benefits.

The City needs to establish a bold and efficient greenway development plan in order to keep pace with other regional cities such as Cary, Raleigh and Chattanooga and to meet the expectations of citizens who consistently rate greenways as a high priority. Asheville has lagged behind other cities in greenway development mainly because of a limited land inventory, the high cost of land acquisition in a rapidly growing city and the exceptional costs of greenway development in a mountainous region.

**Strategy: *Develop a bold and efficient greenways development plan by refocusing the City’s current greenway strategies.***

**Action Steps:**

- Asheville Parks, Recreation and Cultural Arts Department should return to the original definition of a greenway and focus solely on off-road development in natural corridors. Many of the corridors identified in the current Greenways Master Plan are in essence bike lane and sidewalk projects that can be more effectively managed by transportation agencies such as North Carolina Department of Transportation and Asheville’s Transportation and Engineering Department. In fact, most of the on-road greenway corridors have been included in the 2007 Comprehensive Bicycle Plan and 2005 Pedestrian Plan. However, Asheville Parks, Recreation and Cultural Arts Department should continue

to advocate for bike and pedestrian facilities because of their potential to tie into the greenway system. Therefore the Asheville greenway system should not include on-road greenway corridors, which are in essence bike lanes and sidewalk projects identified in the 2007 Comprehensive Bicycle Plan and 2005 Pedestrian Plan:

- Asheland Avenue/Erskine Street-Southern Segment
  - Asheland Avenue/Erskine Street-Northern Segment
  - Beaverdam Creek
  - Brevard Road
  - Haw Creek
  - Haywood Rd.
  - Hendersonville Rd.
  - Reed Creek, Northern Segment
  - Sweeten Creek Rd.
- The City of Asheville should take the initiative to develop numerous partnerships with private and public agencies to continue the development of the French Broad River Greenway and Swannanoa River Greenway corridors since both overlap with the Wilma Dykeman RiverWay Plan, a massive initiative, which will take many shapes and partners before implementation. Asheville Parks, Recreation and Cultural Arts Department should continue its momentum towards greenways while the Dykeman plan unfolds and the major development players are in place.
  - Asheville Parks, Recreation and Cultural Arts Department should target its resources on strategic connectivity instead of sporadic, piecemeal development.
  - Asheville Parks, Recreation and Cultural Arts Department should engage in proactive land acquisition in undeveloped parts of the City where future growth is projected. Land costs are lower in undeveloped areas and a large inventory will allow flexibility in the alignment and connection of future corridors. It is challenging to retrofit greenways into pre-developed areas where little buildable land is available. The retrofit approach is necessary to establish import connections, but often results in expensive easement acquisition and interrupted corridors. Asheville Parks, Recreation and Cultural Arts Department should transition to a position of leading planned development around pre-identified greenway corridors.



- Due to the limited number of resources that can be allocated towards greenway development, Asheville Parks, Recreation and Cultural Arts Department should focus the majority of its resources on land acquisition of greenway corridors.

- Asheville Parks, Recreation and Cultural Arts Department should return to its original intent of naming each corridor after an associated natural feature when possible, i.e. mountain, river, creek, etc.
- Classify all greenway corridors as either “Primary,” “Secondary,” or “Spur.” The Primary category designates corridors that provide a cross-city connection, linking neighborhoods and quadrants of the city. The Secondary category designates corridors that are neighborhood specific and sometimes link into Primary corridors. The Spur category designates short connections within neighborhood corridors to certain points of interests such as a park, a river or stream, etc. to a greenway corridor.

**Strategy: Revise and prioritize the greenway corridor list.**

After omitting all on-road greenways that overlap with the 2007 Comprehensive Bicycle Plan as suggested in the refocusing strategy, the list of city-wide and neighborhood greenways will be reduced to the following corridors:

**Primary Greenways**

***French Broad River Greenway***

Because much of the French Broad River Greenway falls within the Dykeman Plan, Asheville Parks, Recreation and Cultural Arts Department should not put resources towards its development at this time. Asheville Parks, Recreation and Cultural Arts Department should instead play a support role for the project. Asheville Parks, Recreation and Cultural Arts Department should pursue development of the northwest segment because it is separate from the Dykeman Plan and will compliment it in the future.

The French Broad River Greenway system is Asheville’s major north-south alternative transportation corridor and overlaps with a portion of the Wilma Dykeman RiverWay Plan, a major urban waterfront redevelopment project. The Dykeman plan calls for a 10’ wide greenway trail along Riverside Drive, Lyman Street, Meadow Street and Swannanoa River Road. The trail will be separated from the road by a grass strip and will at times meander in and out of various riverfront parks. The French Broad River Greenway is broken into two segments:

- *French Broad River Greenway-Northeast Segment*  
*Length:* 3.2 miles  
*Trail Type:* 10’ wide asphalt  
*Description:* This segment begins at the corner of Amboy Road and Lyman Street (confluence of Swannanoa and French Broad Rivers) and runs north up Lyman Street and Riverside Drive to Broadway. The City owns a few parcels of land along Riverside Drive (Jean Webb Park, Progress Energy Park), which are suitable for pieces of greenway development. However, connectivity will be a problem and it is advisable to coordinate the development of these few parcels with the Dykeman plan.  
*Connections:* Connect a series of proposed riverfront parks on Riverside Drive and the River Arts District to the Amboy Road river park system.
- *French Broad River Greenway-Northwest Segment*  
*Length:* 0.8 miles  
*Trail Type:* 10’ wide asphalt  
*Description:* This segment begins at the French Broad River Park and travels north along the French Broad River bank to Haywood Ave at the RiverLink Bridge. Progress

Energy owns this property and has offered to donate it to the City for greenway development. This corridor has commanding views of the river and is lush with tall riparian grasses.

*Connections:* Connect the French Broad River Park to West Asheville and the River Arts District.

### **Swannanoa River Greenway**

The Swannanoa River Greenway system is Asheville’s major east-west alternative transportation corridor and overlaps with a portion of the Dykeman Plan that calls for greenway trail along Riverside Drive, Lyman Street, Meadow Road and Swannanoa River Road. The trail will be separated from the road by a grass strip and will at times meander in and out of open space parks. Asheville Parks, Recreation and Cultural Arts Department developed a small segment of the Swannanoa River Greenway at RiverBend Park and acquired a number of adjacent parcels to the east via funding after the most recent floods. The Azalea Park Greenway is part of the Swannanoa River Greenway system and should be developed by Asheville Parks, Recreation and Cultural Arts Department independently of the Dykeman Plan.

- **Azalea Park Greenway**

*Length:* 1.75 miles

*Trail Type:* 10’ wide asphalt

*Description:* This corridor begins at the intersection of East Hawthorne Drive and Swannanoa River Drive at Anne Patton Joyce Park, travels south on Swannanoa River Road, east onto Azalea Road, crosses over the Gashes Creek bridge and follows the Swannanoa River around Azalea Park. The corridor ends at the Blue Ridge Parkway. This corridor largely passes through riparian woods with serene views of the Swannanoa River and park properties. The greenway will have one short on-road segment on Azalea Road. This corridor largely passes through riparian woods with serene views of the Swannanoa River and park properties, and will have one short on-road segment on Azalea Road.

*Connections:* This greenway corridor will connect the Beverly Hills community to the Swannanoa River, Asheville Municipal Golf Course, Recreation Park, Nature Center and Azalea Park.



## **Secondary Greenways**

### ***Beaucatcher Mountain Greenway***

*Length:* 1.25 miles

*Trail Type:* 10' wide Asphalt

*Description:* This corridor begins at Memorial Stadium, travels north along the west slope of Beaucatcher Mountain to the abandoned Ardmion Road Right-of-Way, then travels east on-road on South Beaumont Street to College Street. The corridor ends at the old Beaucatcher Reservoir. This wooded corridor will have commanding views of downtown Asheville and connects Beaucatcher Park and White Fawn Reservoir. The greenway will be a paved asphalt trail with brief on-road segments in the form of bike lanes and/or sidewalks.

*Connections:* This corridor will connect Beaucatcher Park and White Fawn Reservoir to the old Beaucatcher Reservoir near the intersection of College Street and Windswept Drive. There are potential connections to Memorial Stadium/Mountainside Park, McCormick Field and the Asheland Avenue greenway corridor.

### ***Beverly Hills Greenway***

*Length:* 0.5 miles

*Trail Type:* 10' wide asphalt and concrete sidewalk

*Description:* This greenway winds itself through the rolling and beautifully wooded Beverly Hills neighborhood that was developed around a notable Donald Ross golf course.

*Connections:* This segment would connect the Haw Creek Greenway to the Swannanoa River Greenway via Ann Patton Joyce Park and the Asheville Municipal Golf Course and new neighborhood sidewalks.

### ***Clingman Forest Greenway***

*Length:* 0.5 miles

*Trail Type:* 10' wide Asphalt

*Description:* This wooded corridor begins at Aston Park at Hilliard Avenue and follows an existing sewer line and stream down to Clingman Avenue.

*Connections:* There are potential connections to Aston Park, Asheville Middle School, YWCA, future affordable housing complex at the corner of Hillard and Clingman Avenue, Owens Bell Park and surrounding residential areas.

### ***Glenns Creek Greenway***

This trail extends from Weaver Park to the Botanical Gardens of UNC-Asheville for a length of one mile. It is a paved trail mostly 10' wide and connects the Norwood, Montford and University neighborhoods.

- ***Glenns Creek Greenway-Eastern Segment***

*Length:* 0.09 miles

*Trail Type:* 10' wide asphalt

*Description:* This short section begins at Weaver Park and ends at Kimberly Avenue where an on-road greenway is proposed. The greenway is proposed along the creek, in an existing sewer right-of-way, and in close proximity to residences on both east and west sides of Glenns Creek. Due to the close proximity of the greenway to adjacent properties and unsuitable topographical issues, this segment of the Glenns Creek Greenway should be routed via sidewalk or bike lane from Murdock Avenue to Evelyn Place to Kimberly Avenue.

*Connections:* Will connect Glens Creek Greenway to the Reed Creek Greenway.

### ***Reed Creek Greenway***

The Reed Creek Greenway is Asheville's highest profile greenway. It stretches from W.T. Weaver Blvd. to Starnes Avenue, parallel to Broadway Avenue. The southern segment is broken into various phases totaling 1.0 miles, more than half of which are completed or fully funded or under development.

- ***Reed Creek Greenway- Southern Segment***

*Length:* 0.2 miles

*Trail Type:* 10' wide asphalt

*Description:* The last phase of the southern segment will stretch from Magnolia Avenue to Starnes Avenue. The trail will meander along the bank of Reed Creek and hug the back property lines of high-density residential and commercial developments. The corridor is wooded and has an urban feel due to its close proximity to Broadway Avenue and the Montford neighborhood.

*Connections:* Connect to Glenn's Creek Greenway, UNC-Asheville, the future Health Adventure facility and the Montford neighborhood to downtown Asheville. Greenway will also connect into the high density residential and commercial developments that are proposed along Broadway Avenue as part of the neighborhood corridor district re-zoning.

### ***Hominy Creek Greenway***

The Hominy Creek Greenway is a fundamental corridor that will link the West Asheville community to the French Broad River Greenway system. It is approximately 2.6 miles long.

- ***Hominy Creek-Eastern Segment***

*Length:* 0.8 miles

*Trail Type:* 10' wide asphalt

*Description:* The section begins at Hominy Creek Park (Buncombe County facility) located on the west bank of the French Broad River, travels north on-road along Hominy Creek Road, crosses the road near the transfer station entrance and winds northwest along Hominy Creek, below the I-40 West, Brevard Road, and I-240 West overpasses. This sections ends at the old Brevard Road bridge and the Waller property, a large track of land under option by the Trust for Public Land.

*Connections:* Potential connections to the Farmers Market and the North Carolina National Guard (slated for re-development by the City of Asheville). The majority of land is publicly controlled.

- ***Hominy Creek Greenway-Western Segment***

*Length:* 1.8 miles

*Trail Type:* 10' wide asphalt

*Description:* The section is a continuation of the Hominy Creek Greenway-Eastern Segment. The corridor begins near the old Brevard Road bridge, winds west along Hominy Creek through the Waller Tract, crosses Bear Creek Road, continues to follow the creek until it bends at I-40 West and then heads west away from the creek to Sand Hill Road. There is an option to have a second trail run along the opposite side of Hominy Creek from the Waller Tract, but it would require a significant easement from the West Asheville Assembly of God Church.

*Connections:* This section has potential connections to numerous residential areas and existing sidewalk systems. The beginning of the corridor offers a direct

connection to the Rhododendron Creek Greenway. The greenway could follow the alignment of an existing sewer system to minimize disruption of the corridor. This greenway extends access to West Asheville.

**Haw Creek Greenway**

*Length:* 0.75 miles

*Trail Type:* 10' wide asphalt

*Description:* The section of greenway will link into the proposed bike lane and sidewalk facilities on New Haw Creek Road.

*Connections:* Will connect East Asheville Center and East Asheville Park to New Haw Creek Road and Haw Creek Elementary School.

**Montford Greenway**

*Length:* 0.8 miles

*Trail Type:* 10' wide asphalt

*Description:* Begins at Gudger Street below the Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce Visitors Center and Randolph Learning Center and follows an existing sewer line and stream down to Hill Street. The section continues west along Hill Street underneath I-26 and ends at Riverside Drive. Portions of the greenway have challenging terrain.

*Connections:* Potential connections to Isaac Dickson Elementary School, Randolph Learning Center, Chamber of Commerce, public housing, residential areas and the Wilma Dykeman RiverWay



**Rhododendron Creek Greenway**

*Length:* 0.75 miles

*Trail Type:* 10' wide asphalt

*Description:* This corridor begins at Shelburne Road directly across the street from the North Carolina National Guard (slated for re-development by the City of Asheville), runs through the former National Guard property and becomes a shared road with Talmadge Street. At West Asheville Park the greenway goes off-road, runs behind the Davenport co-housing development for which an easement has been granted to the City, heads northwest and ends at Sand Hill Road near Vance Elementary School.

*Connections:* This section will increase greenway access for a significant amount of residential area, West Asheville Park, and indirectly utilizing the existing sidewalk system to Vance Elementary School.

### **Town Branch Creek Greenway**

**Length:** 0.6 miles

**Trail Type:** 10' wide asphalt

**Description:** Begins at Choctaw Park, 500 feet west from the intersection with McDowell Street, travels west along Town Branch Creek and ends near the northern tip of Livingston Street Park. The entire corridor falls within City-owned land.

**Connections:** This section provides connections to the Asheland Avenue bike lane (future), Choctaw Park, Livingston Street Park, transit system, and public housing areas.

**Strategy:** *Focus on greenway development based on priorities in five-year segments.*

#### **Action Steps:**

- Asheville Parks, Recreation and Cultural Arts Department should focus on development of the following priority greenways during the first five-year segment:
  - Beaucatcher Mountain Greenway
  - Clingman Forest Greenway
  - Town Branch Creek Greenway
  - Reed Creek Greenway-Southern Segment
- Asheville Parks, Recreation and Cultural Arts Department should focus on development of the following non-priority greenways during the second five-year segment:
  - Rhododendron Creek Greenway
  - Montford Greenway
  - Haw Creek Greenway
  - Hominy Creek Greenway-Western Segment
  - Hominy Creek-Eastern Segment
  - French Broad River Greenway-Northwest Segment
  - Azalea Park Greenway

### **Goal 20: Increase the level of service and access for greenways**

Based on community input and survey results Asheville expects a high level of service. Greenways are well used in Asheville with 68% of the community using existing greenways. There is strong support for greenway development with 82% of the community believing greenways are important.

**Strategy:** *Extend existing and develop new greenways.*

#### **Action Steps:**

- Extend existing greenways by starting construction on greenways, which are currently funded.
- Design site plans for new greenways on assimilated tracts of publicly owned or controlled land.
- Construct greenways, which are designed.
- Explore a new greenway corridor from an existing or currently planned greenway to connect with Beaucatcher Park.
- Prioritize construction to make the most impact that lists greenway development in order of priority.
- Prioritize and evaluate greenway development for connectivity after five years.

## Goal 21: Increase resources for greenways

Finding adequate resources for greenway development is a difficult task in this period of unstable construction cost and land values. This uncertainty places an even greater value on plan implementation.

**Strategy: Develop and implement a consistent funding and management strategy for land acquisition, design, and construction.**

### Action Steps:

- Add staff to provide full time greenway planning to manage land acquisition, design, administration, and project management.
- Continue to pursue grant funding with North Carolina Department of Transportation, Parks and Recreation Trust Fund, and other local, state, and federal public and private sources.
- Budget \$1 million per year for greenway development. Allocate 25% of the budget for land acquisition and design, and the remaining 75% for new construction.

## Goal 22: Increase land acquisition efforts for greenways

**Strategy: Begin the process of finding land while it remains available and affordable to expand the greenway system in the future.**

### Action Steps:

- Watch for, identify parcels to be obtained, and begin assimilation of land from willing property owners for all off-road greenway corridors as it becomes available. Focus on land along Sweeten Creek and Hendersonville Road in South Asheville, New Haw Creek Road in East Asheville, north of Brevard Road in West Asheville where gaps in service exist.
- Work with current non-profit partners to purchase land along the French Broad and Swannanoa River greenways.
- Investigate zoning ordinance changes to encourage greenway development through the subdivision development process.
- Explore land acquisition opportunities for greenways when the City acquires property for other non-recreation public facilities (Fire Station, Utilities, Libraries, etc.).
- Evaluate and prioritize land within City control after five years to determine constructible segments.



### **Goal 23: Expedite greenway development**

In order for the City of Asheville to provide needed greenways, it must work in conjunction with other partners in the community. The Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Arts Department has worked well with non-profit partners in the past and needs to continue to rely on these organizations and lead the collaboration to achieve a higher level of service sooner.

***Strategy: Facilitate a multi partner approach to greenway development.***

#### **Action Steps:**

- Non-profit partners to provide assistance with land acquisition, funding, or other pertinent rules determined by the City staff to focus on off-road greenway development.
- Aggressively advocate for other governmental agencies to begin implementation of the Wilma Dykeman Riverway Plan for Asheville's signature greenways, the French Broad River and Swannanoa River Greenway. Other government agencies should assume a leadership, management, acquisition, design, and construction roles. The City and non-profit partners should play an advisory role.
- Reassign on-road greenway development to the Bicycle and Pedestrian Task Force and City of Asheville Department of Transportation to develop a bike lane for Ashland Avenue, Haywood Road, and Broadway Street, and shared road for Emma Road within the next five years. Within the next ten years bike lanes, shared roads, and striped shoulders are proposed for Biltmore Avenue, Brevard Road, Hendersonville Road, Kimberly Avenue, Sweeten Creek Road, and Swannanoa River Road. Beyond ten years shared road facilities are proposed for Beaverdam Road, New Haw Creek Road, and Town Mountain Road.
- Pursue a joint use agreement with Beaver Lake homeowners association to allow public use of the existing trail system around Beaver Lake.

### **Goal 24: Increase connectivity to parks and greenways**

***Strategy: Create a cohesive and comprehensive greenway and parks connectivity system for all geographic areas of the City.***

#### **Action Steps:**

- Prioritize development of greenways
  - Swannanoa River Greenway
  - French Broad River Greenway – Northwest Segment
  - Beverly Hills Greenway
  - Clingman Forest Greenway
  - Montford Greenway
  - Town Branch Greenway
  - Rhododendron Creek Greenway
  - Hominy Creek Greenway – Western Segment
  - Hominy Creek Greenway – Eastern Segment
  - Glenss Creek Greenway – Eastern Segment
  - Reed Creek Greenway – Northern Segment
- Work with City planning and other departments to accomplish goals as established by the City's most current Downtown Master Plan, Public Arts Master Plan, and any planned bike and

pedestrian improvements to coordinate greenway development and to develop an interconnected trail system for Center City.

- Distribute greenway development in all regions of the City including neighborhood connector greenways. Focus on finding new off-road routes in north, south, and east Asheville where there are gaps in service.
- Collaborate and coordinate greenway connections with Buncombe County and the Town of Woodfin.
- Work with UNC Asheville, A.B. Tech, public and private schools, transit system, and future neighborhoods to develop on-site trails which connect to greenway system.
- Add bicycle parking at all park access points, prioritizing parks that connect to side paths, multi-use trails, or greenways.
- Make connectivity a priority in park and greenway construction in the City to make connections to:
  - Existing multiuse trails and greenways
  - Parks
  - Recreation facilities
  - Other city services and businesses
  - Downtown area



- Coordinate park development with other planning studies such as the Downtown Master Plan and the Public Arts Master Plan.
- Improve wayfinding and signage between parks and greenways. Physical connections, such as bike lanes are extremely important, however, visual connections such as streetscapes, unique signage, or other wayfinding techniques can help people navigate the park system.
- Focus on connecting parks, either physically or visually that are within a close proximity to each other. A physical connection could be a trail or a loop walk that meanders between parks. A visual connection could be public art pieces or signage. The following is a list of parks where connections are a priority: (Refer to **Appendix VI** for the Recommendation Map)
  - Memorial Stadium/McCormick Field/White Fawn Park(future park)/Beaucatcher Park(future park)
  - Meadow Park/Seven Springs Park/Kenilworth Park
  - Grove Park/Sunset Park/Albermarle Park
  - French Broad River Park/Jean Webb Park

**Strategy:** *Increase recreational and fitness walking opportunities for residents.*

The direct mail survey revealed that residents want more walking and biking trails. Improving or adding amenities in existing parks that encourage recreational and fitness walking will increase the level of service throughout Asheville's system while providing a popular and desired recreational amenity to residents.

**Action Steps:**

- Look for opportunities to add loop walks or nature trails to new and existing parks, either paved or unpaved. The following is a list of existing parks where the addition of a loop walk or nature trail is suggested:
  - Montford Complex
  - Murray Hill Park
- Provide signs with route maps and mileage in parks with loop walks, nature trails, and connector trails.

**Goal 25: Integrate public art into parks and greenways**

**Strategy:** *Continually search for opportunities to integrate public art into parks and greenways.*

**Action Steps:**

- Identify parks that will continually showcase or focus on public art, such as French Broad River Park.
- Continue to integrate public art into the design of existing and new parks and greenways, such as benches, gateways and passive nodes.
- Coordinate and partner with a liaison from the Public Art Board and/or local artists when developing design standards or creating new master plan for parks and greenways.



**Goal 26: Increase level of service for indoor facilities**

**Strategy:** *Increase level of service for existing indoor facilities.*

**Action Steps:**

- Bring older facilities up to date as neighborhood community centers before building new communitywide facilities.

- Create a facility assets management and long-term maintenance plan. This effort should involve all necessary departments and establish priorities, responsibilities, and a preventative maintenance program. Regular inventory and condition updates should build upon the inventory created as a part of this master planning effort.
- Create or designate staff to a Facility Asset Manager position in order to place appropriate focus and attention on this issue.
- Pursue major facility renovation or new construction urgently needed at the WC Reid Center. This facility scored below expectations in several major areas. In addition, improve the design and ambience of the WC Reid Center by enhancing the entry aesthetics, building condition, and capacity/condition of restrooms.
- Pursue other major facility renovations or new construction as an aggressive search for funding allows including the Burton Street Center, the Harvest House, Murphy-Oakley Center and the Stephens- Lee Center as priorities.
- Pursue an aggressive funding campaign to design and construct new community-wide mega centers as funding allows.
- Improve entry aesthetics, building condition, and overall storage at the Montford Center

### **Recommendation Cost Estimates and Timetables**

Recommendations presented in Table 13 take into consideration: vision, community programming needs, geographical distribution, public comment, costs, and planning processes. The visions are presented in three timetables. Capital cost observations are in 2008 rates and do not reflect exact cost estimates.

#### **Initial Connectivity Vision**

These projects represent the first five years of development during 2009-2013. They emphasize the connectivity of vital park and community center resources that surround the heart of Asheville which are shared by the entire community. This critical mass of improvements will be the initial model to manifest connectivity of recreation resources in the various sub-areas of Asheville.

#### **Neighborhood Resources Vision**

These projects represent the second five years of development during 2014-2018. They emphasize filling in the gaps of services in Asheville by enhancing existing centers and constructing new parks and greenways in all of the sub-areas of the City of Asheville. These facilities will provide key resources and destinations in future connectivity plans. A secondary area of connectivity is being developed in east Asheville as the second model.

#### **Future Connectivity and Neighborhood Vision**

These projects represent development that will occur after 2019. It is not realistic to delineate the priorities of costs for these projects at this time due to the rapid changes transpiring in the Asheville community. These projects will further fill in service gaps and provide connectivity within the sub-areas of Asheville and eventually linkages between the sub-areas. Concentrations of connected parks, recreation centers, special facilities and greenways will be developed in each of the five sub-areas of the City and these will be ultimately connected through primary greenway corridors.

**Table 13: Cost Estimates and Timetables**

<b>RECOMMENDATION</b>	<b>CAPITAL COST OBSERVATION</b>	<b>ANNUAL OPERATING COST OBSERVATION</b>
<b>2009-2013: Initial Connectivity Vision</b>		
<b>CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT</b>		
New WC Reid Community Center	\$3,000,000	
Land Acquisition for Parks and Greenways	\$2,000,000	
Livingston Street/Walton Park/Pool Improvements	\$2,000,000	
Beaucatcher Park	\$1,500,000	
Clingman Forest Greenway	\$1,250,000	
Reed Creek Greenway-South Segment	\$750,000	
Town Branch Creek Greenway	\$1,250,000	
Beaucatcher Mountain Greenway	\$1,250,000	
New Senior Opportunity Center	\$6,000,000	
Neighborhood Parks Improvements	\$1,000,000	
<b>OPERATIONS</b>		
<b><u>Maintenance &amp; Repair</u></b>		
Recurring routine maintenance (community center and recreation facility improvements such as roof replacement, restroom/concessions, athletic fields, sport courts resurface, landscape/amenities replacement, ADA compliance, paint facilities, graffiti removal, etc. Significant facility renovation or new construction begins after first 5 years.)		\$2,000,000
Park Maintenance Equipment		\$200,000
<b><u>Cultural &amp; Public Art</u></b>		
Regional Art Organization/Facilities Assessment & Inventory		\$30,000
Artists & Fabricator Registry		\$500
Annual Summit on Arts (\$2,500/year)		\$12,500
Bi-Annual Public Art Projects Review (\$1,000/year)		\$3,000
Cultural Arts Programs (\$50,000/year)		\$250,000
<b><u>Staff</u></b>		
Park & Greenway Planner (\$45,000/year)		\$225,000
Fundraiser & Resource Director (\$45,000/year)		\$225,000
Marketing Director (\$55,000/year)		\$275,000
Cultural Arts Coordinator (\$40,000/year)		\$200,000
Recreation Programmer (2) (\$35,000/year)		\$350,000
Park Patrol Unit (\$600,000/year)		\$3,000,000
Park Maintenance Crew Staff (10) (\$35,000/year)		\$1,750,000
<b>SUB-TOTAL</b>	<b>\$20,000,000</b>	<b>\$8,521,000</b>
<b>TOTAL 2009-2013</b>	<b>\$28,521,000</b>	

<b>RECOMMENDATION</b>	<b>CAPITAL COST</b>	<b>OPERATING COST</b>
<b>2014-2018: Neighborhood Resources Vision</b>	<b>OBSERVATION</b>	<b>OBSERVATION</b>
<b>CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT</b>		
Western North Carolina Nature Center	\$2,750,000	
Land Acquisition for Parks and Greenways	\$1,000,000	
Jake Rusher Park and Splash Pad	\$1,250,000	
Charlie Bullman Park	\$1,250,000	
Carrier Park	\$3,000,000	
Richmond Hill Park	\$500,000	
Roger Farmer Memorial Park	\$1,500,000	
New District Park-North Asheville	\$2,500,000	
Recreation Park	\$1,750,000	
French Broad River Greenway-Northwest Segment	\$1,250,000	
Haw Creek Greenway	\$500,000	
Hominy Creek Greenway-East Segment	\$2,000,000	
Neighborhood Parks Improvements	\$750,000	
<b>OPERATIONS</b>		
<b><u>Maintenance &amp; Repair</u></b>		
Recurring routine maintenance (roof replacement, restroom/concessions, athletic fields, sport courts resurface, landscape/amenities replacement, ADA compliance, paint facilities, graffiti removal, etc)		\$1,000,000
Park Maintenance Equipment		\$200,000
<b><u>Cultural &amp; Public Art</u></b>		
Public Art Outreach & Educational Campaign		\$5,000
Sustain Arts Programming Facilities & Organizations Network		\$10,000
Arts Website Event List, Highway & Wayfinding Signs		\$10,000
Cultural Arts Programs (\$10,000/year)		\$50,000
Economic Analysis: Feasibility of Designated Arts Districts		\$10,000
Portable Public Art Collection	\$25,000	
<b><u>Staff</u></b>		
Recreation Programmer (5) (\$35,000/year)		\$875,000
Park Maintenance Crew Staff (10) (\$350,000/year)		\$1,750,000
<b>SUB-TOTAL</b>	<b>\$20,025,000</b>	<b>\$3,910,000</b>
<b>TOTAL 2014-2018</b>	<b>\$23,910,000</b>	

RECOMMENDATION 2019+: Future Connectivity and Neighborhood Vision	CAPITAL COST OBSERVATION	OPERATING COST OBSERVATION
<b>CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT</b>		
Burton Street Community Center with New Gym		
Harvest House Senior Center		
Montford Community Center		
Murphy-Oakley Community Center with New Gym		
Malvern Hills Pool		
Asheville Municipal Golf Course		
Food Lion Skate Park		
Riverside Cemetery		
Stephens-Lee Community Center		
Memorial Stadium/Mountainside Park		
New Shiloh Community Center		
New North District Community Center with Pool		
Recreation Park Pool Convert to Indoor Pool		
New East District Community Center-Recreation Park		
Aston Park Tennis Center		
John B. Lewis Soccer Complex		
New West District Community Center-Former National Guard Site		
Land Acquisition for Parks and Greenways		
Malvern Hills Park		
Martin Luther King, Jr. Park		
Montford Complex Park		
Montford Park		
Azalea Park		
Amboy Road River Park		
Jean Webb Park		
Kenilworth Parks (Seven Springs, Meadow, Forest, Kenilworth)		
Magnolia Park		
Pritchard Park		
Ray L. Kisiah Park		
Weaver Park		
West Asheville Park		
Falconhurst Site		
River Bend Park		
Progress Energy Site		
New District Park-South Asheville		
New Regional Park-Mills River Site		
Aston Park		

Montford Greenway		
Beverly Hills Greenway		
Neighborhood Parks Improvements		
<b>TOTAL 10-YEAR CIP</b>	<b>\$40,025,000</b>	
<b>TOTAL 10-YEAR OPERATIONS</b>	<b>\$12,431,000</b>	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$52,456,000</b>	

### **Funding Strategies**

To successfully implement this long-range master plan, the City of Asheville will need to accomplish several funding strategies. The strategies listed below recognize the most favorable means to fund this master plan for the City of Asheville.

- Reassigning existing City resources including the General Fund and the CIP Fund
- Expanding existing Asheville Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Arts Department resources such as Grants, Sponsorships, Volunteerism, Inter-local Agreements, Fees and Charges, Development Fees, Foundation Gifts, Concession and Merchandise Sales, and Friends Associations (defined above)
- Implement new traditional funding sources (listed above) particularly Partnerships, Advertising Sales, Fundraisers, Foundation Gift Catalog, and Capital Improvement Fees
- Pass a Bond Referendum for General Obligation Bonds for new improvements
- Research the potential of implementing alternative funding sources (listed in **Appendix VII**) such as a Sales Tax (.125 - .5%) dedicated to Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Arts; a Hotel, Motel, Restaurant Tax (.5 - 1%) with a portion funding the Department; a volunteer Utility Roundup Program; Real Estate Transfer Fees; and Maintenance Endowments.

**Table 14** demonstrates estimated budget amounts and percentage of the funding sources spread out over ten years that could be utilized to successfully implement this long-range master plan. Amounts are based on the feasible capacity each funding source can be expected to deliver during that time.

**Table 14: Potential Sources of Funding as Percentage of Overall Budget**

<b>Funding Source</b>	<b>Percentage of Overall Budget</b>	<b>Amount</b>
General Fund	3.79%	\$1,988,083
CIP	18.85%	\$9,887,956
Bonds	57.74%	\$30,288,094
Partnership, Grants, Donations	10%	\$5,245,600
Other Funding Options	9.62%	\$5,046,267
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>\$52,456,000</b>