

City Services

Introduction

In this section, *basic infrastructure* will be discussed. For the purposes of this section, basic infrastructure includes streets, water, sewer, solid waste collection and disposal, and recycling. City services include fire, police, public schools, and parks, recreation and office space. Infrastructure and city services provide the vehicle for growth, substantially contribute to the perceived quality of life, support the public safety and health and welfare of the community, and consume a large portion of the City budget.

The City of Asheville has numerous infrastructure challenges. In many areas, the local street network is not well-connected and continued pressure is placed on a limited number of arterial and collector roads to carry an ever-increasing volume of traffic. Deferred maintenance of streets and utilities compounds infrastructure problems and further exacerbates underfunded capital improvement programs. The Asheville area topography and climate make the installation of streets and utilities, as well as their maintenance, more difficult than in flatter areas. In addition, some

infrastructure that is now seen as critical to local economic development efforts - particularly sidewalks, parks, open space, and stormwater management systems - were regarded as “luxuries” by the community, even the relatively recent past.

In order to understand and appreciate how the current situation came to be, it is necessary to examine historical information about the City’s fiscal circumstances beginning with the Great Depression. In 1927, the assessed valuation of the City of Asheville was approximately \$100 million. In 1933, the taxable values in the City were reduced by almost 50 percent to \$51 million. At that time, the bonded debt of the City, including its proportionate share of County debt and that of the Asheville School District, was about \$36 million. With the reduction in valuation, the City had bond debts amounting to over 70 percent of the total value of all of the properties in the City. To compare this with today, this level of debt would equal \$3.2 billion. By contrast, the current City general fund debt (also FY 2000-2001) is \$42 million and the legal cap on the debt level the City could undertake is \$380 million - 8.5 times less than \$3.2 billion.

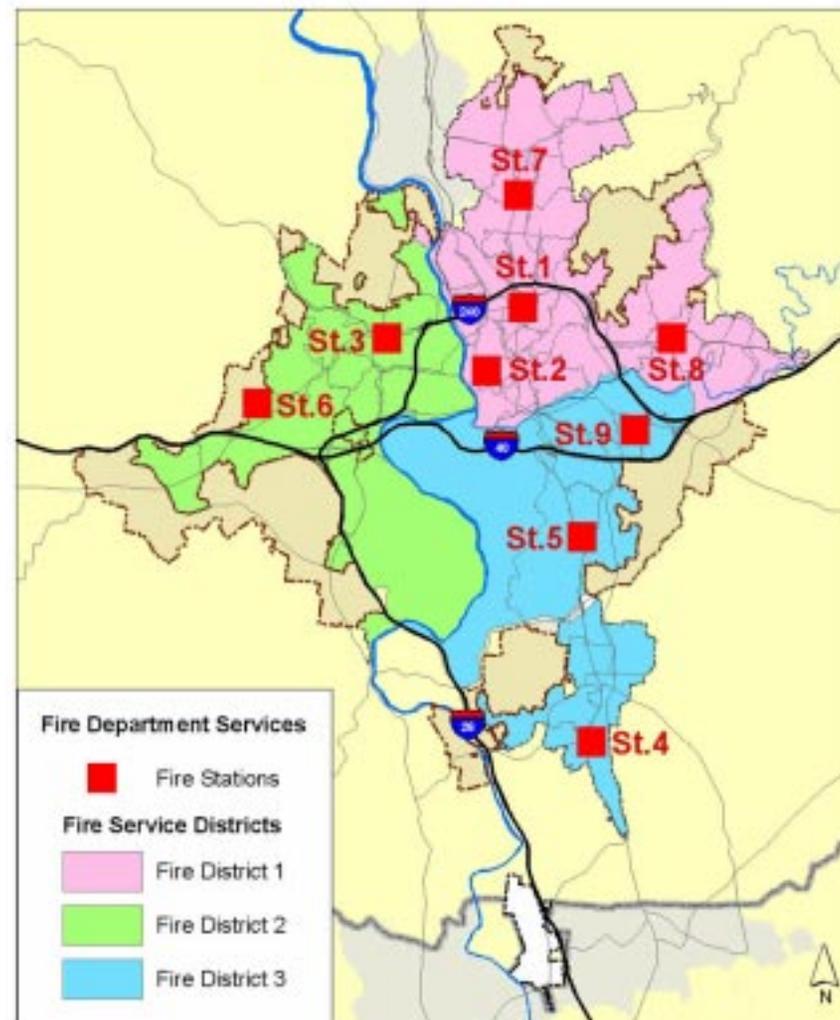


In the Depression, many communities were faced with similar financial circumstances. Most chose to default on their debts. By contrast, the City of Asheville chose to refinance their debt and it was paid off in full by the mid-1970s. This course of action placed a huge burden on the taxpayers of the community and, as a result, most government expenses, except for basic public safety, were eliminated or deferred. The deferral of basic infrastructure and capital infrastructure investments have resulted in severe strains and challenges to the City's infrastructure that can only be corrected with many years of earnest investment.

Fire

The Asheville Fire Department was created in the 1800's to respond to fires within the City of Asheville, North Carolina. The Department has evolved over the past century into the Asheville Fire and Rescue Department, providing an array of emergency and preventive services for the citizens of Asheville.

The Department provides emergency services to the corporate limits of the City of Asheville



and also provides services through contractual agreements with the Town of Biltmore Forest and the Biltmore Estate. In addition, the Department provides hazardous materials response to Western North Carolina through contract. The Department is a participant in the Buncombe County mutual aid agreement, responding anywhere in Buncombe County when necessary.

Emergency services currently provided by the Department include: fire response, emergency medical response, hazardous materials services, technical rescue services, urban interface services, fire scene investigations and basically response to any emergency situation that occurs within the City of Asheville.

Preventive services currently provided by the Department include: periodic fire inspections, new construction code enforcement, permits, public fire and life safety education programs and injury prevention programs including child safety seat checks.

Map 18 (page 203) illustrates the three Fire and Emergency Service Districts in the City. The North, central and eastern areas of the

City are recognized as District 1, the western area of the City as District 2 and the southern area of the City as District 3.

Map 18 also illustrates the location of fire stations throughout the City. Deployment of companies within these stations is as follows:

- Station 1 – Downtown- Engine Company, Ladder Company, Rescue Company
- Station 2 – South French Broad – Engine Company
- Station 3 – West Asheville – Engine Company, Ladder Company
- Station 4 – Skyland Area – Engine Company
- Station 5 – South Asheville – Engine Company, Ladder Company
- Station 6 – West Asheville – Engine Company
- Station 7 – North Asheville – Engine Company
- Station 8 – East Asheville – Engine Company, Ladder Company
- Station 9 – Oakley Area – Engine Company

Preventive services are carried out by dual role Deputy Fire Marshals who provide specialized code enforcement services, but are also trained as firefighters. The Asheville/Buncombe

County Arson Task Force operates from this division. This is a joint City/County program for determination of the origin and cause of fires and the apprehension of persons committing the crime of arson.

The Asheville Fire and Rescue Department contracts with the State of North Carolina Department of Crime Control and Public Safety to provide technician-level hazardous materials services to Western North Carolina. The State provides funding and equipment and the City provides staff to carry out the necessary functions.

The Department is rated by the North Carolina State Fire Marshal (OSFM) and the Insurance Services Office (ISO) as a class 3 fire department. The rating scale goes from class 10 (considered unprotected) to class 1 (considered the highest level of protection). The department's public protection classification rating has a direct relationship to insurance premiums paid by property owners within the area serviced by the department. Non-sprinklered, commercial properties receive discounts for the public protection classification rating at each level. One and two family

homes receive discounts through class 6. On average, the savings to property owners in Asheville is approximately twice what their funding share is for the Asheville Fire and Rescue Department services. In 2002, an average homeowner saves approximately \$400.00 annually because of the services of the Department.

Through OSFM and ISO standards, placement of operating fire stations and companies is accomplished. Engine companies are located with the objective of traveling no more than 1.5 miles to any area in their first due, or immediate, response area. Ladder companies are located with the objective of traveling no more than 2.5 miles to any area in their first due response area. Rescue companies are located with the objective of traveling no more than 5 miles to any area in their first due response area.

In 2002, Asheville had very good compliance with the national response and deployment standard of responding to any location for an emergency situation within 5 minutes 90% of the time. This includes turn out and actual travel time. Asheville has good compliance

with a secondary unit arriving within a total of 8 minutes 90% of the time.

Medical emergencies are definitely increasing in number. Our population overall is getting older and with advances in medical care and treatment, pre-hospital treatment services are becoming more and more important to the Asheville community. In 2002, medical emergencies comprise approximately 65% of all emergency calls. By 2010, it is estimated that medical emergencies will comprise over 75% of all emergency calls. In response to that need, the Department may need to continue to diversify and become more involved in pre-hospital care. The Department will explore adding a paramedic/firefighter on engine companies to provide a higher level of patient care. In addition, the Department plans to operate quick response vehicles (QRVs) to respond to most medical emergencies at all stations with two or more companies located there. The QRVs are specially-equipped pickup trucks that can respond more quickly and more cost efficiently than large apparatus.

Additional collaboration and partnerships with volunteer fire and rescue departments in Bun-

combe County will need to occur. As annexations reduce the response areas for traditionally volunteer fire departments, we will need to be receptive to new and innovative ways to work together and utilize the resources that we have to the best of our ability. A good partnership exists with the Skyland Fire Department. Similar opportunities may exist with the Reynolds, Riceville, Haw Creek, Reems Creek, Woodfin and Enka-Candler departments.

Goals and Strategies

Goal I. Maintain Departmental ISO rating at class 3 in the 2003 classification rating evaluation and work toward improving the ISO rating in future evaluations.

Goal II. Achieve national accreditation by 2005.

Goal III. Continue to add stations and equipment to maintain and improve levels of service.

Strategies

1. Add additional Ladder company at Station 4

in Skyland by July, 2003.

2. Renovations and improvements to Station 8 in East Asheville and Station 3 in West Asheville are scheduled for 2003-2005.

3. The addition of a station on the western area of the City is in the planning phase. The City has purchased land to relocate Fire Station 6 from the current location on Haywood Road to a new location on Eastview Drive, near I-40, exit 44. The station is planned to be both a fire station and a police service center. It is anticipated that this station will be in place and in service prior to 2005.

4. An additional station is also in the planning phase for the Biltmore Square Mall area.

5. Supplemental coverage is needed in the far northern area of the city known as Beaverdam. A stronger City fire and rescue presence is needed in that area and it is possible that cooperative agreements can occur which would enable the City to accomplish a stronger presence at minimal costs.

6. Systematic, periodic replacement of appara-

tus will continue to occur through 2005.

7. A fourth geographical district may be created in response to providing service to annexation areas.

Goal IV. Diversify services and technology in response to more specialized demand for services and to improve organizational effectiveness.

1. Increase emphasis on emergency preparation and pre incident planning, including homeland defense and preparedness for terrorism incidents.

2. Implement traffic pre-emption technologies for emergency vehicles in congested areas.

3. Become more involved in pre-hospital care through such efforts as integrating a paramedic/firefighter on engine companies and operation of quick response vehicles (QRVs).

4. Modernize Stations 6,7 and 9 to accommodate today's fire apparatus and fire officers.

5. Place a much greater emphasis on installa-

tion of automatic fire sprinkler systems in both new construction and existing construction.

Goal V. Identify opportunities to collaborate with other agencies and entities, such as the rural fire districts and private landholders like the Biltmore Estate, to enhance fire and rescue services.

Police

Since its beginning in 1849 with one captain and nine volunteers, the Asheville Police department has grown into a modern, professional force of 174 sworn and 48 non-sworn employees offering full police services to all of the citizens of the city and its many yearly visitors.

The department is organized into four functional divisions:

Administration – provides top management support, direction, and coordination for all operations and activities of the department. Specific activities include professional standards, project management, and employee services.

Investigations – responsible for investigating all serious crimes reported to police. Functions include general investigations, youth services and sexual assault investigations, support for the Metropolitan Enforcement Group, Forensic Services, DARE, School Liaison, and Victim Services.

Support – provides services to both the public and the police operating divisions. Functions include police and fire communications, property control, police records, court liaison, crime analysis, and building maintenance.

Patrol – responds to public calls for service, conducts criminal incident and traffic accident investigations, enforces laws, maintains continuous 24-hour patrol, and provides organization and leadership in community-based problem solving activities.

The police department is headquartered in the City's Municipal Building, which was built in 1925-6 and renovated in 2001. It also maintains police community resource centers in its five patrol districts, each of which is assigned its own patrol officers, a Traffic Officer, a K-9 Officer, and a Community Resources Officer.

Map 19

The five patrol districts and their corresponding Resource Centers are shown in Map 19. These resource centers serve as district offices and places for police and district resident interaction.

Departmental divisions work together to help achieve the goals set forth by the Department in its Strategic Plan.

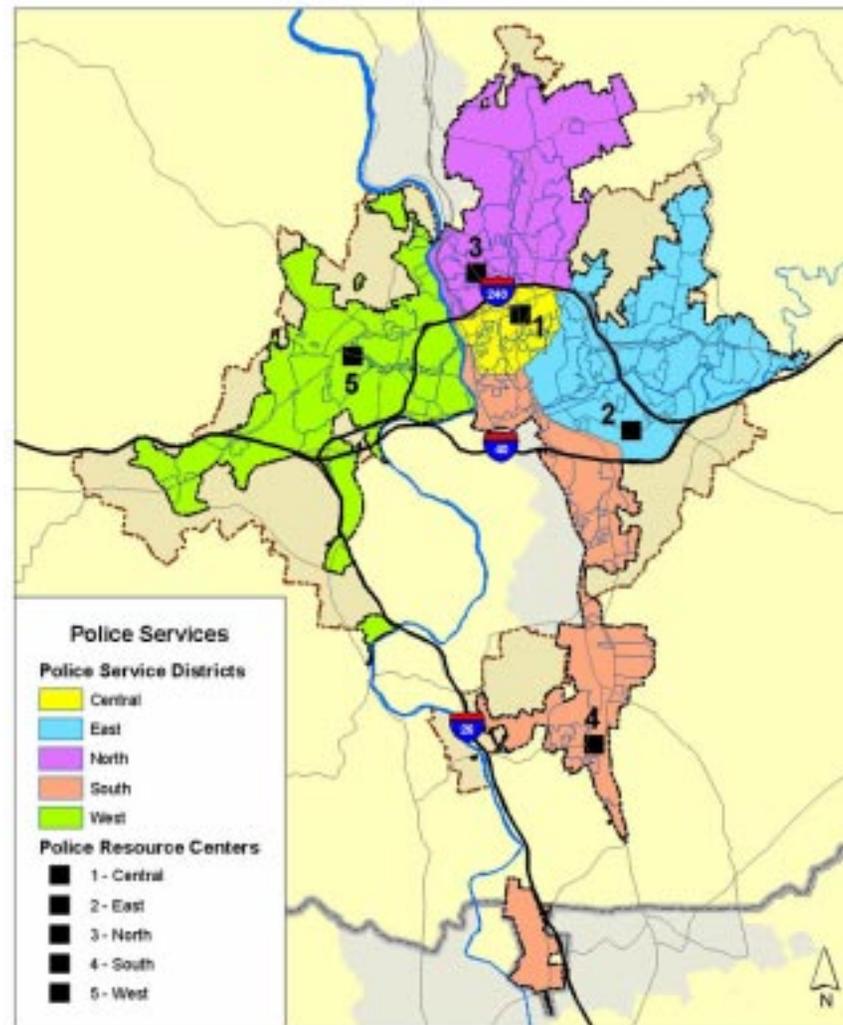
Police Goals

Goal I. Partner with the community to enhance the quality of life and resolve neighborhood concerns.

Goal II. Establish a working environment that encourages teamwork, empowerment, communication, and professional development.

Goal III. Utilize resources efficiently in preventing and suppressing criminal activity.

Goal IV. Foster a dynamic organization that utilizes leading-edge technology and methods in enhancing community policing.



Goal V. Enhance external and internal communication.

Goal VI. Maintain the highest level of quality of service, integrity, and professionalism.

Goal VII. Continue to use community-oriented police practices, including assignment of officers by district, to promote effective law enforcement.

Goal VIII. Utilize CPTED practices and development review and in retrofitting existing infrastructure and neighborhoods in order to reduce the incidence of crime.

The in the coming years the department will also continue to use its crime prevention program named Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CEPTD). CEPTD is based on the belief that the way the built environment is constructed and managed can impact both the fear of crime and the actual frequency of criminal events in a given location. The five principles of CEPTD are:

1. Defensible space
2. Natural and technological surveillance
3. Lighting designed to reduce criminal activity
4. Landscape planting sensitive to issues of crime prevention
5. Physical security measures used to delay or deny access to protected space

Streets

The City of Asheville owns and maintains more than 377 miles of paved public streets. To help maintain this street network, the State of North Carolina provides what is known as “Powell Bill” funding from State gasoline tax proceeds. Powell Bill funding for Asheville is based on population and the amount of street mileage under municipal maintenance. As new streets are constructed or taken into the City through annexation, City Powell Bill funding is increased consistent with the reimbursement criteria.

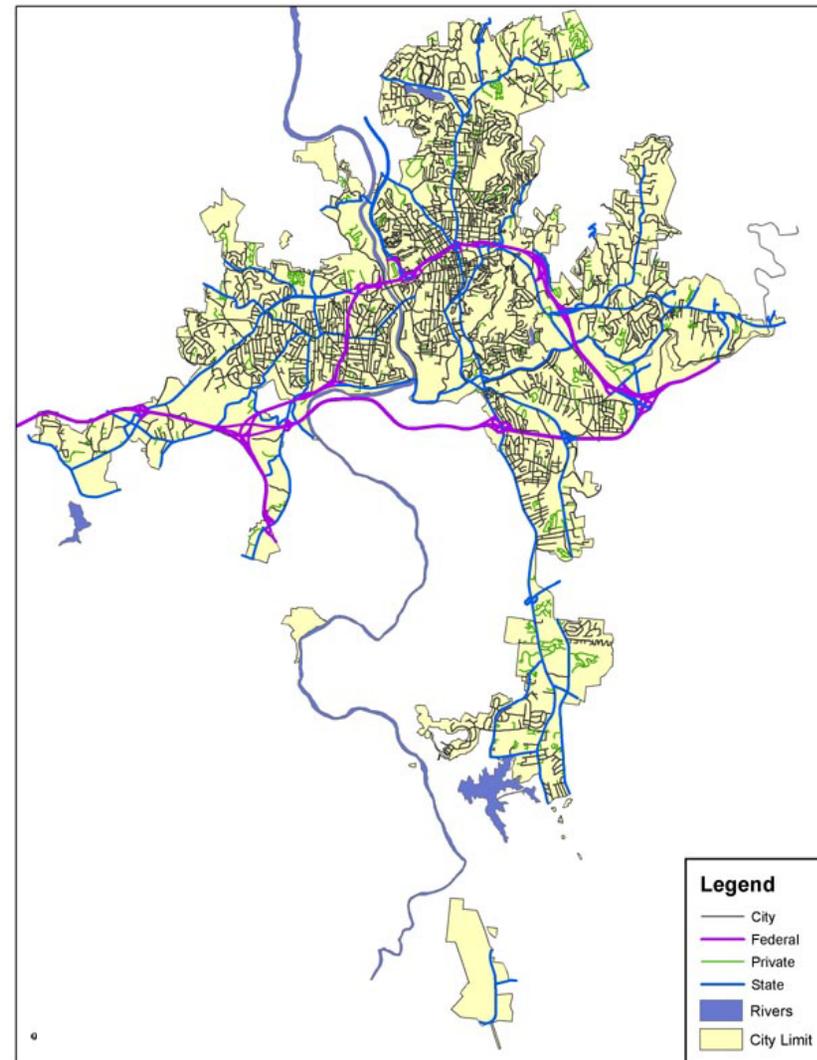
For Asheville, Powell Bill funding is about \$2.4 million per year. In 2000, recognizing the insufficiency of these funds to cover the growing street infrastructure needs, the



Map 20

Asheville City Council raised property taxes to add to the capital resurfacing funds. Approximately \$4.2 million is currently earmarked for maintaining the City street system; this figure includes \$500,000 for singles and markings, \$1.2 million for capital resurfacing projects, and \$2.5 million for the Streets Division budget.

The Institute for Transportation Research and Education (ITRE) recently surveyed the Asheville street network. The survey included a physical inspection of every City maintained street. The streets were rated on a scale ranging from 1-100 with 1 being the lowest rated with the poorest conditions and 100 being the best with the highest rating. The study found that the average rating for City maintained streets was 74. The ITRE has conducted similar studies in North Carolina cities and found that their average rating was 85. Based on this finding, the City of Asheville has relatively poor pavement conditions. The study also determined that the cause of the low average rating was the result of long-term deferred maintenance. The new funds allocated under the year 2000 City property tax increase represent an effort to allow maintenance to catch up with the need. Street



maintenance occurs under a priority needs schedule developed by the City's Public Works Department.

The State of North Carolina owns and maintains approximately 90 miles of public streets within the City limits. These streets are primarily arterial roads and include the interstate system and major roads like Patton Avenues and Smoky Park Highway in West Asheville, Hendersonville and Sweeten Creek Roads in South Asheville, Merrimon and Broadway Avenues in North Asheville, and Tunnel and New Haw Creek Roads in East Asheville. Some of the minor State streets within the City are occasionally moved from the State system to the City system as their function changes from regional transportation to more local transportation. Annexed areas are also evaluated as to whether streets should be maintained by the City.

Buncombe County, like other North Carolina counties, does not own or maintain any public streets or roads.

Map 20 (page 213) illustrates the City and State road system in Asheville and its extrater-

ritorial jurisdiction.

Streets Goals and Strategies

The following goals and strategies are established with regard to the City's street infrastructure.

Goal I. Maintain a level of local spending on street and road maintenance that will ensure that infrastructure is maintained at the state average for pavement condition rating.

Goal II. Continue to encourage the provision of public streets to serve new development.

Strategies

1. Continue to require that street construction within the City limits be to public street standards in order to ensure long service life.
2. Evaluate non-residential development proposals to determine if public streets should be required in within the developments in order to improve interconnection

of public street system and to more effectively serve the projects.

Goal III. City staff will work with the NCDOT to evaluate the area road network within the City limits in order to determine whether the City should assume maintenance of State roads.

Solid Waste Collection and Recycling

The City of Asheville offers a full-service solid waste collection and recycling program to its residents. Commercial waste is handled by private haulers. Some 25,000 households are served by the City solid waste collection and recycling program.

The City has been very aggressive in its effort to recycle a variety of paper, metals and plastic (including mixed paper), and in removing brush and leaves from the waste cycle. Nearly 50 percent of the total solid waste generated is diverted from the landfill, substantially increasing the effective life of the landfill, providing limited revenue from the recycling program, and providing citizens with mulch and compost. The City of Asheville currently has an

interlocal agreement with Buncombe County and disposes of its Municipal Solid Waste at the Buncombe County Landfill. The life expectancy of the Buncombe County Landfill is estimated at 15-20 years.

The City is currently automating municipal solid waste collection. As of July 1, 2002, 50 percent of the City had been automated with plans in place complete automation by July, 2004. Automation will result in an overall savings of \$250,000 + per year which includes a full automated truck replacement program.

In addition, the City is currently disposing of brush with a private entity at a cost of \$90,000 + per year. Administrators are investigating possibility of a City owned facility for grinding of brush. The facility may also contain a leaf composting facility.

Total Annual Per Capita Solid Waste Collected		
	Tons	Tons/capita
Municipal Solid Waste	20,130.00	0.292
Recycling	7,076.48	0.103
Brush/leaves	11,334.00	0.164
Total	38,540.48	0.559
Solid Waste Diverted From Landfill =		
Municipal Solid Waste + Recycling = 26%		
Total Diversion = Recycling + Brush/Leaves = 47.8%		

Solid Waste and Recycling Goals

Goal 1. Continue to divert a substantial amount of solid waste and organic materials from landfill disposal through creative and innovative measures.

Goal 2. Continue to use technology and other innovations to reduce the total cost of solid waste disposal and recycling.

Water Infrastructure

Potable water is provided in the Asheville area through the regional organization known as the Regional Water Authority of Asheville, Buncombe and Henderson (the Water Authority). The Water Authority has been formed over a period of years through interlocal agreements between the three local governments that make up the Authority. As part of these agreements, several private water systems were purchased and included in the system.

The Water Authority is responsible for establishing policies for the water system and setting billing rates and fees for water and

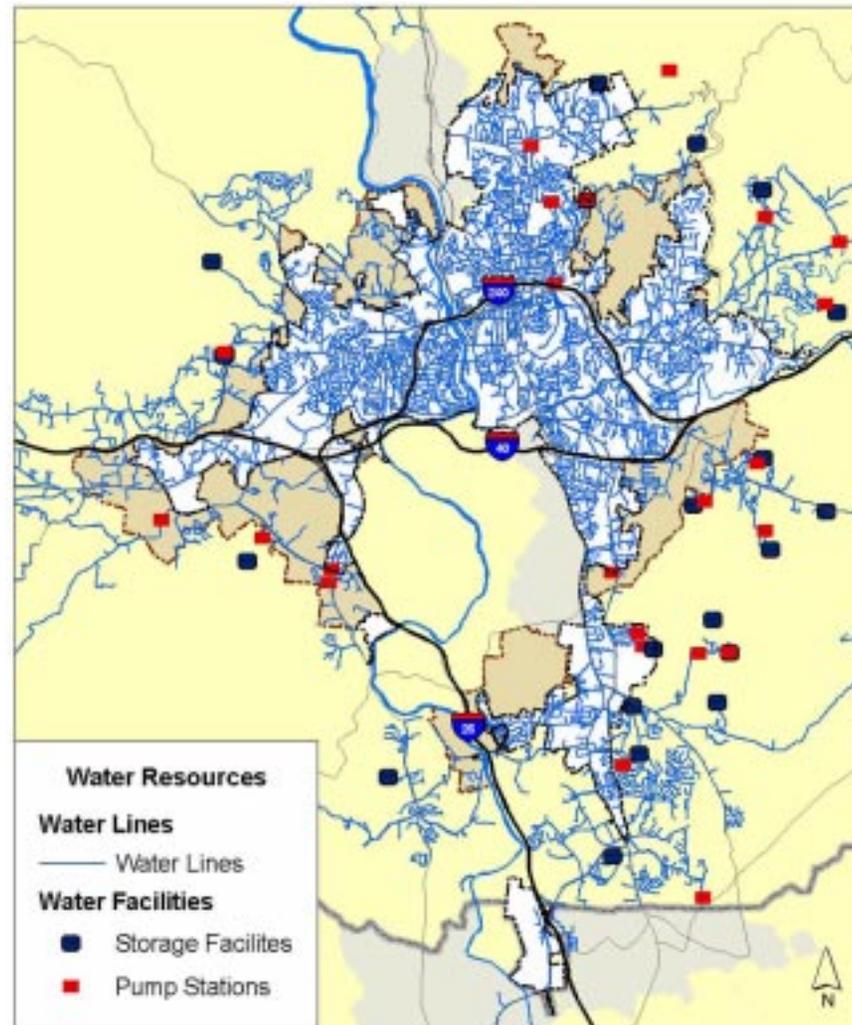
water related services. The staff of the City of Asheville Water Resources Department, under the direction of the City Manager through a Water Resources Department Director, implements the policies and daily operations of running the water system. Water is considered the regional asset and regional water management structures should be limited only to manage assets, which are truly regional in nature. Decisions regarding local issues, such as where to expand or replace water lines within the community, should be made by the governing board of the community, not by a regional agency.

The City of Asheville operates three water treatment facilities. The North Fork Water Treatment Plant (WTP) is a 31 million gallon per day (mgd) direct filtration plant located on an impoundment of the North Fork of the French Broad River. The lake is known as Burnette Reservoir. The William DeBruhl WTP is a five mgd direct filtration plant supplied by the Bee Tree Reservoir. The William DeBruhl WTP has been out of service for 18 months while major renovations are being done to the spillway and water intake structure on Bee Tree Reservoir. The Mills

Map 21

River WTP is a five mgd direct filtration plant, located at the confluence of the Mills River and the French Broad River in Henderson County, has been operational since 1999.

The City of Asheville's water distribution system contains approximately 1500 miles of mainline pipe with diameters ranging from 2 to 36 inches and supplies approximately 45,000 metered connections. The majority of the distribution lines are 6 inches in diameter. Although some water mains date as early as 1884, most of the water mains were installed from 1920 to 1940 and from 1965 to present. The water lines installed are a cross-connection of water system piping technology ranging from old cast iron pipes and plastic pipes to new ductile iron pipes. The water system pressures are much higher than is normal due to the topography of the service area. This higher water system pressure and the age of much of the infrastructure contribute to a high incident of leaks and higher maintenance cost. Pressures in the system range up to over 600 pounds with a normal operating pressure ranging from 150 to 250 pounds.



The water distribution system is served by 21 ground storage reservoirs, ranging in capacity from 30,000 gallons to five million gallons, with a combined storage volume of 22 million gallons. These reservoirs are supplied by 30 water booster pumping stations with capacities ranging from 6 to 25,000 gallons per minute.

Key Facts and Trends - Water Supply

- The abundance of water is increasingly becoming a factor in the location decisions of individuals, businesses, and industries. Our water supply is therefore a regional asset that affects our region's growth and economic development.
- Our regional development patterns and population growth rates reflect a largely suburban, sprawl-type development pattern rather than an urban one. Additionally, some major industrial users have ceased their operation in our area. As a consequence, the Water Authority is selling less water than it did 10 years ago and it is being sold through a much more dispersed distribution pattern.
- Absent other growth management tools like zoning, the provision of water and sewer service is the key determinant of where commercial and high-density residential development will happen. In areas that do have zoning, the provision of utility services is a primary method of carrying out the zoning plans.
- Industrial development needs a dependable water supply at good rates. Industrial site selection professionals will examine all of the following categories, but are most concerned about dependability, affordability and consistent delivery:
 - Water rates and rate structure
 - Water availability, both current and long-term
 - Water quality and treatment system capabilities
 - Customer service capabilities
 - System age and maintenance
 - Incentives that can be offered by the water system

Structural Problems

The structure of the Water Authority, while regional in nature, is not consistent with state statutory requirements for a true independent regional water authority. As a result, some of the benefits that accrue to regional water authorities are not available to the Water Authority, specifically the provision that exempts regional water authorities from paying for the reinstallation of water lines that need to be located as a part of NCDOT road widening projects. This non exemption from what are known as “non-betterment” costs, results in a Water Authority expense of about \$1 million a year.

Water is a viable part of economic development and growth in Asheville and throughout the Asheville, Buncombe and Henderson region. Water should be used to help create development and spearhead growth. The following goals help define the Water Authority's position as a regional asset.

Water Resources Goals

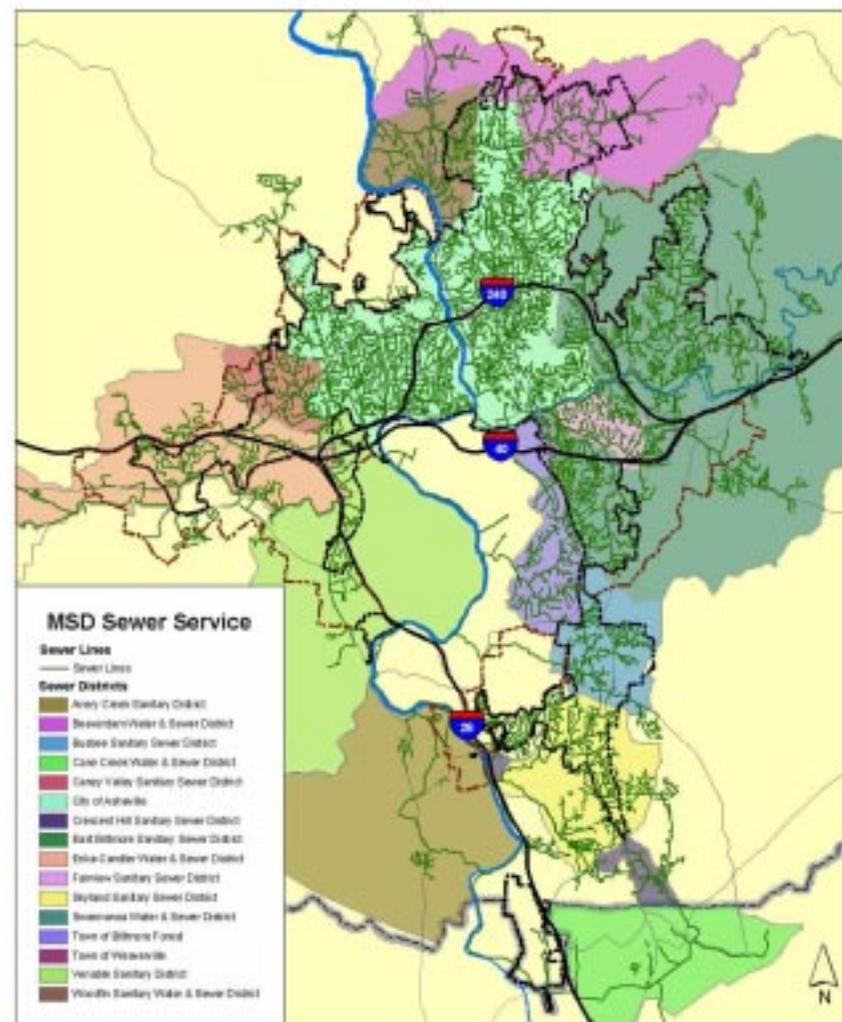
Goal I. Develop a comprehensive plan and set of policies for the extension of water lines in the Asheville area that is consistent with local land use plans for development and conservation of key natural features, along with the financial capabilities of the Water Authority.

Goal II. Continue to make preventative and remedial maintenance and repair a capital improvement priority for the Water Authority.

Goal III. Market the availability and quality of local water resources as an industrial attraction incentive.

Sewer

Sewerage in the City of Asheville, as well as 14 other political districts within Buncombe County is owned, managed and maintained by the Metropolitan Sewerage District of Buncombe County (MSD), created in 1962. The system is highly innovative, containing the largest RBC (Rotating Biological Contractors)



treatment facility in the world, biosolids incubation (using methane gas from a closed landfill), and hydroelectric power generation. The Wastewater System Master Plan Final Report published in December 2001 is the most current study covering all areas of wastewater management. The report is a conglomeration of information and studies designed to evaluate the current system, make recommendations and determine future goals.

The wastewater system is extensive, consisting of collector sewers, interceptor sewers, trunk lines, pump stations, and treatment plants. The report evaluates the system components based on performance during wet and dry times as well. Other important aspects of the report include evaluations of pump station and treatment plant management, operation, and maintenance, along with recommendations for capital improvements.

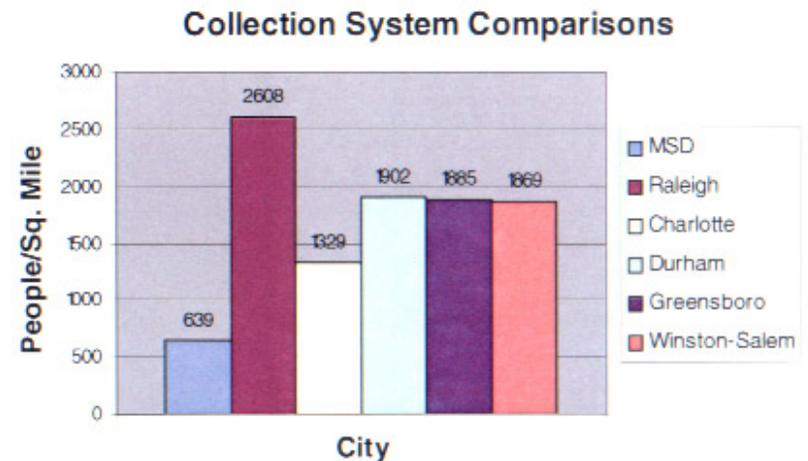
Key findings of the report include:

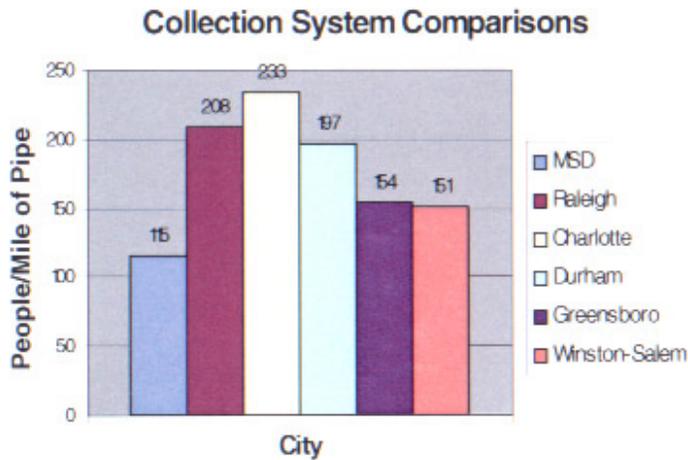
- It is estimated that over 55 percent of the customers of MSD are served through the Asheville metropolitan area.
- As the fastest growing area of western North Carolina, the demand on MSD resources

is continually growing.

- Sewage treatment capacity is currently 40 million gallons per day; demands on this capacity currently range between 17 and 22 million gallons per day.
- The plan uses a variety of factors and assumptions to predict future demands on the wastewater system and makes recommendations for capital improvements based on those projections. MSD has a six year \$91 million capital improvement program based on this information.

The following graph illustrates the spread out nature of the MSD system.





Sewer Goals

Goal I. Continue to coordinate between City authorities and MSD to provide consistent levels of service to the development community and residents.

Goal II. Guide developments to areas with adequate infrastructure to support proposed uses.

Goal III. Guide large-scale developments to areas that coincide with future infrastructure improvements.

Goal IV. Continue to make preventative and

remedial maintenance and repair a capital improvement priority for MSD.

Goal V. Market the availability and quality of local sewage treatment resources as an industrial attraction incentive.

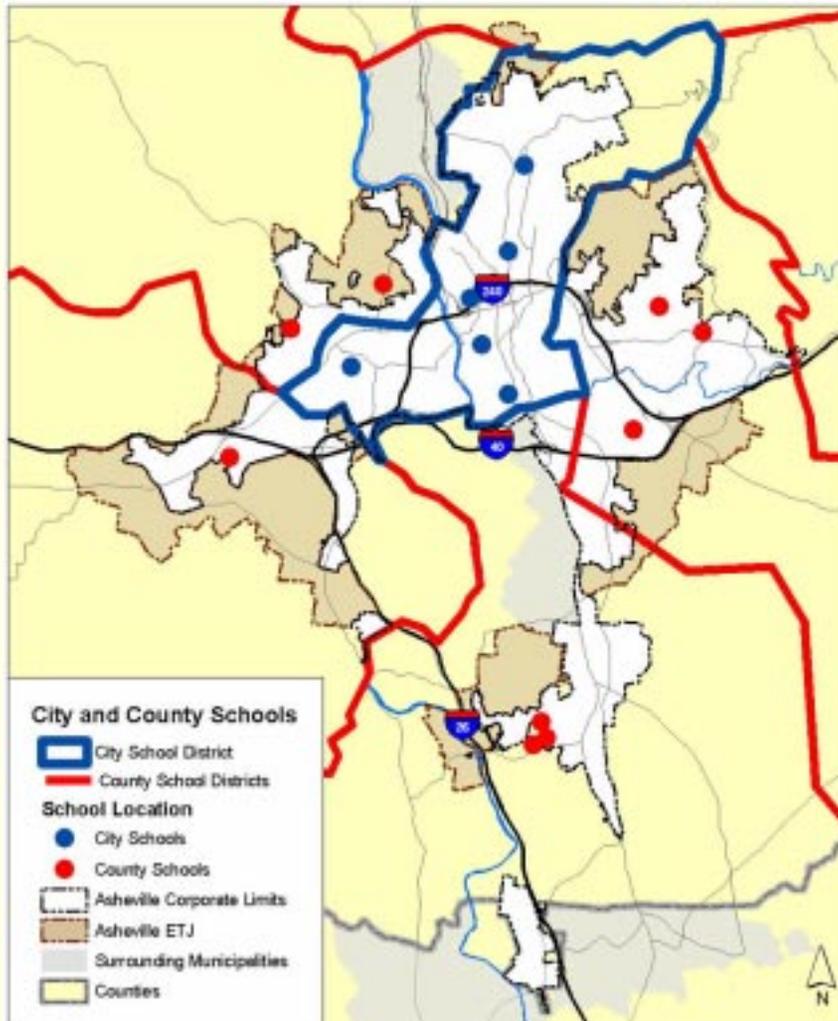
Public Schools

The City of Asheville is served by two different school systems. The Asheville City School system primarily serves the north and central areas of the City. The Buncombe County School system serves the remainder of the City. Map 23 (page 222) indicates the location of all public schools within the City and their respective school districts.

Public schools serve a variety of purposes in addition to their function of providing public education. Frequently, schools - particularly elementary schools - serve as the centers of neighborhoods, providing meeting space, recreational opportunities, and open space that the surrounding community uses.

As a consequence, effective neighborhood planning must recognize these important roles

Map 23



and attempt to facilitate the ability of schools serve as important places in the neighborhood and community. This means that efforts should be made to improve bicycle and pedestrian access to public schools, address the impact of new development on individual schools and the school systems themselves, and mitigate vehicular traffic impacts on neighborhoods due to school traffic.

Public Schools Goals and Strategies

Goal I. Facilitate the effective functioning of public schools as places of education and as important neighborhood and community centers.

1. Recognize public schools as important destinations in transportation planning, especially with regard to bicycle and pedestrian access and traffic calming programs.
2. Support additions to existing schools and the construction of new schools in areas that lend themselves to good neighborhood and community access and where the schools can serve the function of serving as neighborhood and community centers.

-
3. Continue to involve the school systems in the development review process.
 4. Work with the school systems to develop an effective impact analysis methodology to appropriately assign fiscal costs to the entities creating the need for these costs.

"It is our task in our time and in our generation to hand down undiminished to those who come after us, as was handed down to us by those who went before, the natural wealth and beauty which is ours."

John F. Kennedy from a speech dedicating the National Wildlife Federation Building March 3, 1963 as quoted in Power Quotes by Daniel B. Baker (1992)

Parks, Recreation and Open Space

The City of Asheville has a long history of providing community parks and recreation services through the efforts of the Parks

and Recreation Department. The first park areas in Asheville were built over 100 years ago. This long program of community leadership has grown in Asheville with considerable success. The Asheville Parks and Recreation Department is the first nationally accredited recreation program in the United States.

The Parks and Recreation Department has evolved to include management of 54 parks on approximately 722 acres, 11 community centers, and 5 after school sites. It serves as the lead organizing agency for 4 adult sports leagues serving 200 teams and 4 youth sports leagues serving 4,500 participants. The department manages and organizes 7 festivals and special events on behalf of the City, including Bele Chere, the largest free outdoor festival in the Southeastern US. It co-sponsors 100

community events, and partners with non-profits to develop park facilities, playgrounds and parks.

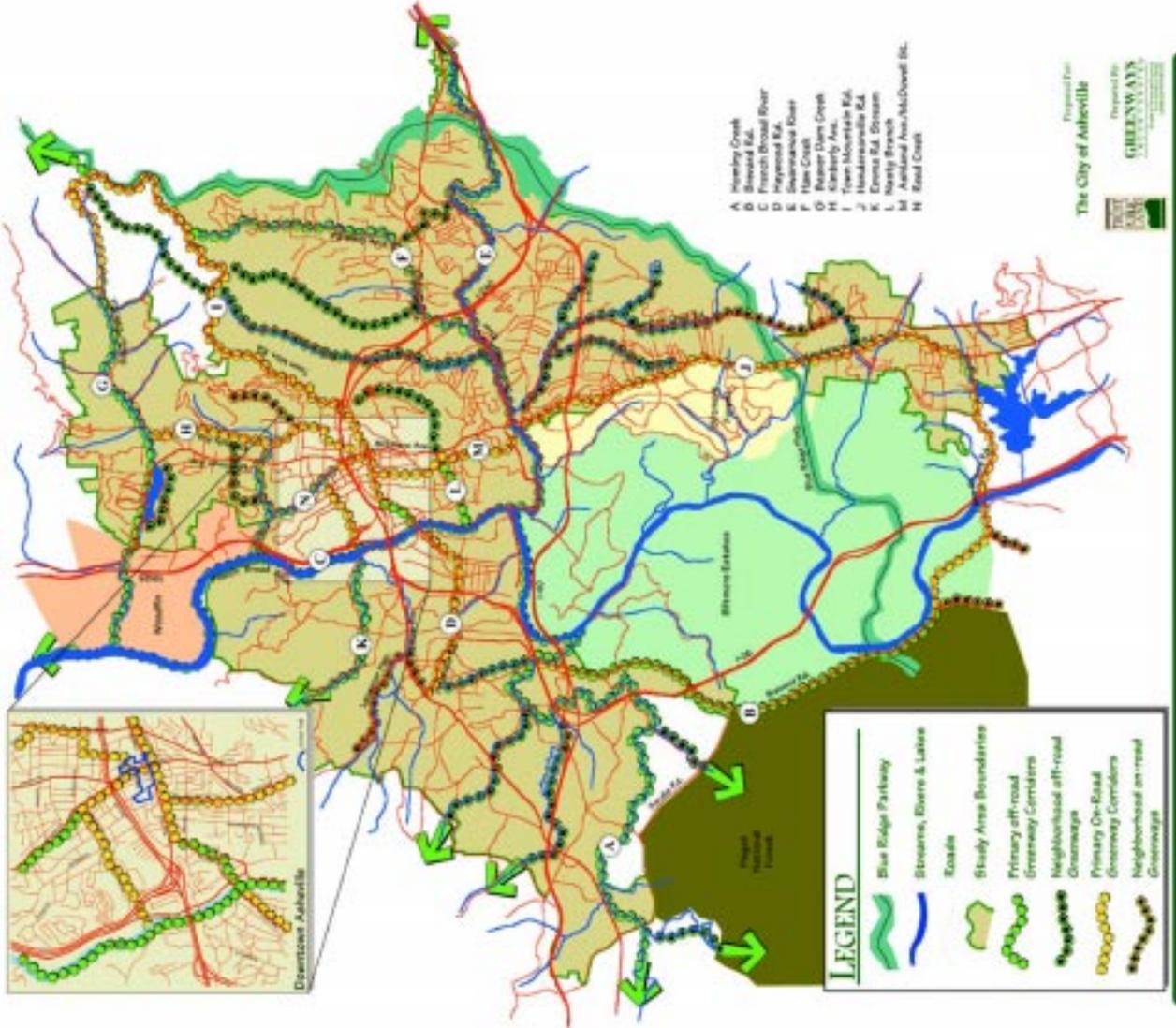
The Asheville Parks and Recreation Department has worked very hard over the past several years to develop master plans for the park system and greenway program. These plans reflect current and long-range planning, as well as growth and development trends in the recreation industry to determine the recreation needs of the community. After completion of these plans, the Parks and Recreation Department has focused its energy to begin implementing the goals of the master plans.

In the past few years alone, a regionally celebrated skateboard facility has been designed and built, as have large expansions to the French Broad River Park system and the playground at Royal Pines Park in the south area of the City. In the east area of the City, land has been acquired and a masterplan developed for the important Azalea Road Park on the former Lake Craig property. In addition greenway segments have been completed along the French Broad River and Weaver



ASHEVILLE GREENWAYS MASTER PLAN

Primary & Neighborhood Greenway Route System



The human body does not wear out with use. On the contrary, it wears down when it is not used.

A Pattern Language, Christopher Alexander et al. 1977

Boulevard. The Parks and Recreation Masterplan and the Greenway Masterplan are useful in identify-

ing areas of growth for department programming and expansion of facilities. They act as a roadmap for parks and recreation improvements in the coming decades.

With such a long history of success as important assets for the Asheville community, it may seem unnecessary to examine the numerous benefits to the community from a healthy parks system and recreation programs. The park system and the programming of the recreation programs have the benefit of strengthening the community, developing the individual as a part of the community, being a partner in developing the economic vitality for the City and region, and protecting and improving the natural environment. Many of these benefits are considered to be “public” benefits even if an individual does not participate in a recreation program or visit a park. In short, a parks and recreation department that has strong recreation programs and well-designed parks is the City’s partner in recruit-

ing businesses to locate and remain in the City of Asheville. A strong parks and recreation program also benefits the development of healthy lifestyles for City residents, strengthens the community bonds and improves the well-being of the environment.

The population of Asheville will continue to grow and additional facilities will be required to serve the needs of the added residents. The Parks and Recreation Department will continue to offer quality services to the community and will cooperate with commercial recreation and not-for-profit partners to develop facilities and deliver services to the community.

There are some key trends and identified needs that must be reflected in the goals and strategies for the coming years. These include:

- With our shortage of land for all types of land uses, including parks, recreation facilities and open space, along with the diversity of our population with regard to recreational needs, it is highly important to tailor the design of parks carefully in order to maximize their benefit for the community. Techniques that



can be used to achieve this objective include: respecting the history of the area in each park; reflecting the unique qualities and context of each neighborhood in which a park is located; implementing high quality design appropriate for the community where the park is located; and insure that park design reflects the special facilities or needs of the park. Each park should not be a copy of the next park in the adjacent neighborhood.

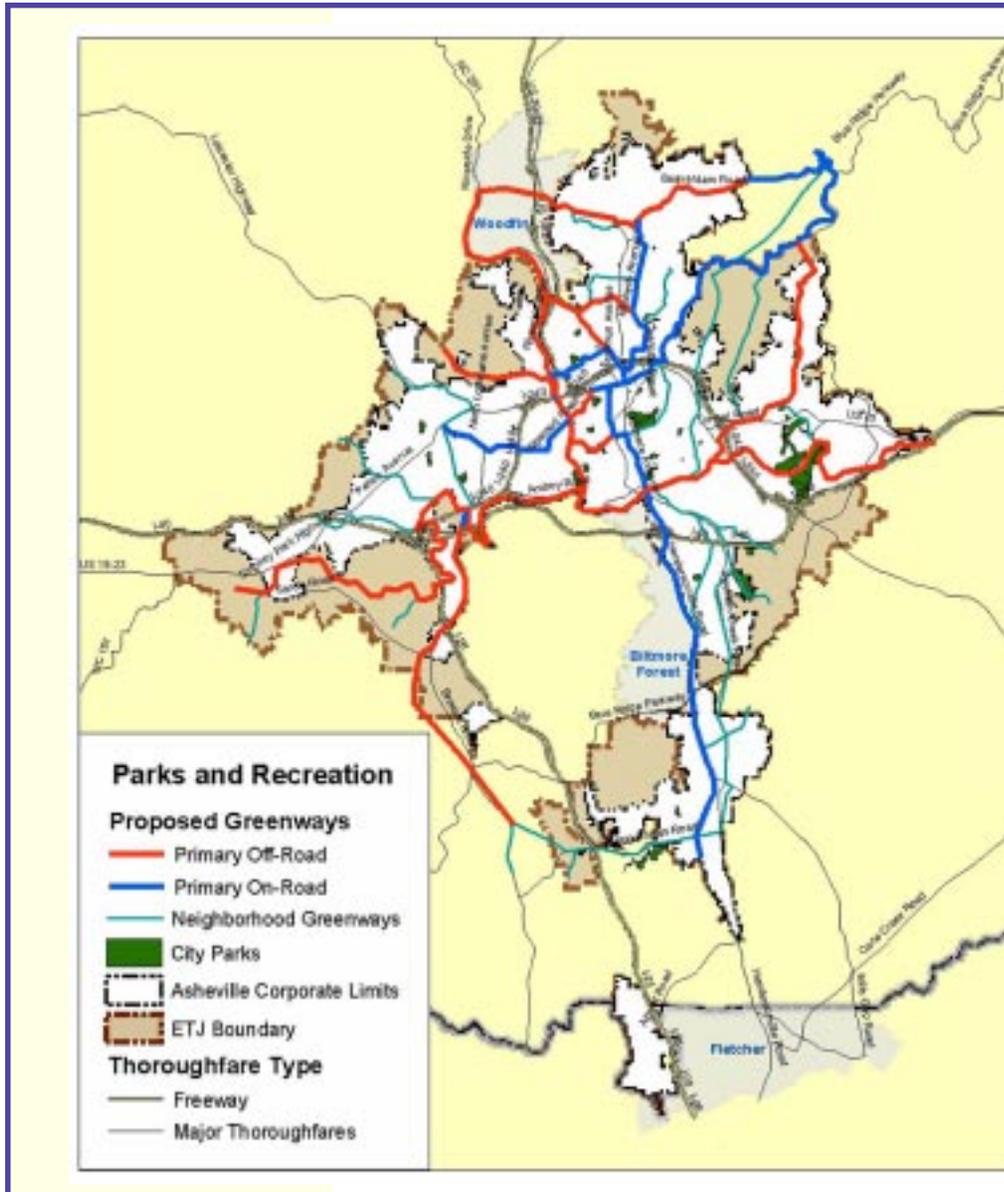
- Develop special use facilities where possible as a means of maximizing the efficiency of the resources available for parks and recreation uses. “Special use facilities” is a broad category that covers such services as aquatic facilities, skateboard parks, or golf courses. Special use facilities are often income-producing and pay for themselves with extra revenues may help over the long term. Existing sites for improvement with special use facilities include Richmond Hill, City County Plaza, and Thomas Wolfe Plaza.
- In the future there may be the need for more adult facilities for semi professional adult sports. Already there is a woman’s semi-professional softball team and football team. There are also semi-professional men’s sports programs including rugby and football. A

comprehensive sports facility to serve these growing segments may be needed in the future.

- There is a need for community parks to serve the North, East, and West sectors of the City. Community parks serve the majority of active facilities and sports fields. The standard of 40 to 75 acre parcels to develop community parks are needed to serve the diverse interests of the community. The Richmond Hill property will be developed as a community park to serve the North and West area of the City. The Azalea Road Park will be developed to serve the needs of the East area of the City.
- Neighborhood parks are typically scattered throughout the community on a smaller scale than community parks and still may provide a

Parks and Recreation Department Master Plan was completed in 1998 as a way for the City and community to vision together the future growth of the park system for the coming 20 years. The plan reviewed the City population and recreation needs and divided the City into 5 planning areas for the purposes of the Master Plan (North, South, East, West and Central). Recommendations were made for each of the 5 review areas of the community. Since then it has provided a road map for the Department to focus its energies to develop parks and facilities for the citizens of Asheville.

The **Asheville Greenway Master Plan** was developed with the help of a citizen steering committee and community meetings to identify in a general way a city-wide greenway trail system. The Plan which was also completed in 1998 made suggestions for the types of uses that would be appropriate for the corridors. The Master Plan also prioritizes the corridors in order of development in the coming decades.



variety of facilities. Five additional parks are needed to serve the north Asheville area (Beaverdam and Merrimon-Elkmont), a South Asheville (Dingle Creek), an east Asheville (Haw Creek Valley) and West Asheville (Starnes Cove area).

- Mini Parks are the smaller parks scattered throughout neighborhoods. They can provide a green respite and often smaller facilities. Nine park facilities are noted in the master plans: two parks in the north planning area; four in the south area of the City; one in the east area; and two parks in the west area of the City.
- The key greenway development continues to be the French Broad River Park greenway system. The greenway has already been incorporated into several parks along Amboy Road. Work will focus in developing recreation and environmental facilities at these locations and linking the off-road trail system.
- A significant piece of land has been purchased in the eastern portion of the City in the Azalea Road area that borders on the Swannanoa River. In addition to park facilities, a substantial greenway segment is planned for the property.
- The Reed Creek Greenway has been master-

planned using a community planning effort. Most of the property has been acquired for a continuous corridor from “Five Points” at Broadway and Chestnut St. north to Catawba Street. Although funds are not in place at this time, this project is an important link for the bike and pedestrian users from downtown, the Montford and Hillside-Mont Clare neighborhoods to UNCA and north Asheville.

- Following the Greenway Master Plan, several other corridors are prioritized and should receive some attention and action. These greenway projects include: Hominy Creek, Beaverdam Creek, Haywood Road, Brevard Road, Haw Creek, Kimberly Avenue, Crystal Creek (noted in the plans as ‘Nasty Branch’), Hendersonville Road, Asheland Avenue/ McDowell Street, and Town Mountain Road. Since the Greenway Master Plan was developed another route has been identified: the Beaucatcher Ridge Trail.

Parks, Recreation and Open Space Goals and Strategies

Goal I. Continue to cooperate with public agencies and private individuals and organizations in an effort to make the provision

Benefits of Strong Parks and Recreation Program

Benefits to the Community

- Promotes City’s quality-of-life-based economic development program
- Defines focus and spirit of the community
- Develops pride in community and nation
- Reduces crime and delinquency
- Connects families
- Enhances ethnic and cultural understanding, harmony and tolerance
- Provides constructive outlets for conflict resolution
- Supports and educates youth of all ages
- Offers lifelines for elderly
- Builds neighborhood pride and strengthens neighborhoods
- Greenways and parks can provide transportation corridors between origins and destinations such as work, schools, libraries, parks, shopping areas, and tourist attractions
- Team building in the community
- Promotes volunteerism and developing new skills
- Opportunities for individuals to make a contribution to the community

Benefits to the Individual

- Healthier longer lives
- Reduces risk of stress related disease
- Holistic approach to health for general well-being
- Increases self esteem and self reliance
- Feeling of safety and security
- Builds a sense of social belonging and team spirit
- Environmental awareness and understanding
- Creates balance between work and play

of parks, recreation facilities and programs, and open space as effective and efficient as possible.

Strategies

1. Continue efforts for cooperation between the Asheville Parks and Recreation Department and the Buncombe County Recreation Services to avoid duplication of services and find opportunities for partnerships in serving residents.
2. Continue existing partnerships and identify new partnerships to expand facilities and programming, including: additional programming with Asheville City and Buncombe County School systems, long term leases for land with private corporations, and sponsorships of major facilities and events with local agencies and corporations (such as the recently completed Food Lion Skateboard Park and the current involvement of Mission St. Joseph Health System as a corporate sponsor of Bele Chere).
3. Continue to explore opportunities to work with non profit partners such as Quality

Forward and RiverLink to provide critical facility development.

Goal II. Design and build park facilities that address the unique needs of the population they serve and that respect the heritage and character of the neighborhoods in which they are located.

Strategies

1. Plan to add more adult facilities for semi professional adult sports.
2. Look for opportunities to develop “special use facilities.”
3. Research and understand the unique place-making characteristics of the neighborhoods and community as a whole and incorporate that through design.
4. Develop “pocket parks” as part of larger scale residential developments.

Goal III. Maximize the use of scarce resources for parks, recreation and open space facility development and programming.



Strategies

1. Examine existing and identify new user fees as a method of financing parks, recreation and open space facility development and programming.
2. Continue to aggressively seek grants and other philanthropic sources of revenue for parks, recreation and open space facility development and programming.
3. Consider opening large tracts of City controlled land for recreation uses, such as Bee Tree Reservoir, North Fork Reservoir, and the Mills River property.
4. Develop open space requirements that include fee-in-lieu-of provisions for new developments above a certain size.

Goal IV. Implement the various adopted parks and recreation master plans through priority capital improvement programming and by responding with flexibility and creativity when opportunities arise.

Strategies

1. Make provisions for the following new park facilities: (2) Community Parks, (6) neighborhood parks, (9) mini parks, (4) renovated existing recreation centers, (2) special use athletic/ sports park, and (1) indoor swimming facility.
2. Offer flexibility from the adopted park and greenway master plans for the location of parks and greenways to respond to market availability of land, as well as grant and partnership opportunities, and be able to identify and move to acquire and/or develop land within short planning horizons.

Goal V. Implement the adopted Greenway Master Plan through priority capital improvement programming and by responding with flexibility and creativity when opportunities arise.

Strategy

1. Have City funds available to leverage public and private grants and to be able to match donations from individuals in the community.

Benefits of a Strong Parks & Recreation Program

Benefits to the economy

- A partner in recruiting new businesses to the region
- A catalyst in increasing tourism by providing activities and venues for enjoyment
- A crucial component of making a community a viable place to live, work and play
- Enhances land and property values
- Contributes to business retention
- Revenue generator and support business opportunities for entrepreneurs
- Self supporting programs
- Reduces vandalism and crime
- Encourages a healthy workforce and reduces health costs