

# Town of Forest City Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Plan



2005  
Updated 2015

# **Town of Forest City Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Plan**

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# Town of Forest City Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Plan

## Table of Contents

	<b>Page</b>
<b>Plan Introduction</b>	
Purpose and Scope	1
Methodology	2
<b>Section 1. Review of Demographic, Physical, and Historical Characteristics</b>	
Introduction	5
Physical Characteristics	
Geography	5
Climate	5
Existing and Future Land Use	7
Floodplains	7
Infrastructure	7
Demographics	
Population	8
Socio-Economic	9
Historical Characteristics	10
<b>Section 2. Inventory and Analysis of Existing Recreation Facilities and Programming</b>	
Introduction	13
James F. Crowe Park	13
Hardin Road Park	15
Charles R. Summey II Park	15
Callison’s Recreation Center (Including Clay Street Courts and Pool)	16
Forest City Golf Course	16
Spring House Park	17
Cool Springs Gym	17
McNair Field	17
Mooneyham Public Library	18
Rutherford Opportunity Center	18
Programming	19
Budget	20
<b>Section 3. Community Survey and Needs Assessment</b>	
Introduction	23
Community Survey	
Development	23
Methodology	23
Results	24
Needs Assessment	32
<b>Section 4. Recommendations and Implementation</b>	
Introduction	34

## **Town of Forest City Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Plan**

### **Table of Maps, Charts and Tables**

	<b>Page</b>
Map 1, Locater Map of Forest City	6
Map 2, Park and Recreation Areas in Forest City	14
Table 1, 40 Years of Population Change	8
<b>Resources</b>	
Pedestrian Planning Information	41
Rail to Trail Information	
Regional Trail Map	
Forest City 2014-2015 Budget	

## **Plan Introduction**

Contained herein, is the updated Town of Forest City Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Plan. This is the second update for this plan. The initial plan involved approximately one year of documenting and analyzing data, interviewing league officials, interviewing town personnel, documenting and analyzing facilities, conducting a survey of users, and the hard work of a volunteer committee that is committed to providing quality parks and recreation facilities and programming to the citizens of Forest City and Rutherford County. The second update to this plan involved the same process as the initial plan, included a new survey, reviewed accomplishments, and recommends new implementation strategies. In the second update a suite of different data collection processes were used including a meeting with Recreation Commissioners, facility tours, an online survey and interview with staff. The 2015 update was completed by Isothermal Planning and Development with support of Forest City Recreation Department staff.

Currently, the Town of Forest City serves town residents, but is used by families living outside the town limits. Nearby towns, including Rutherfordton and Spindale do not offer large organized programs or facilities, but are growing the passive recreation effort by way of trail development.

Statistics indicate that although the Town of Forest City's population hasn't grown very much during the last census period, Rutherford County's population is continuing to grow. How will this affect the Forest City Recreation Department? As the population continues to grow, additional burdens will be placed upon the Town of Forest City's ability to provide recreational services, not only for its own citizens, but also for those in outlying areas that participate in their programs, or use facilities. Through this planning process, it is envisioned that Forest City will be able to meet current and future needs. It is also envisioned that Rutherford County will take more of an active role in recreation, to take some of the resource load off of the municipalities. Hopefully, all of the local government entities within Rutherford County will work together to assist and complement each other, to offer more diverse types of recreation, and to help each other meet future needs.

## **Purpose and Scope**

This planning process actually began with a recommendation in the Rutherford County Land Use Plan update completed in 2001. Issue #5 within the Land Use Plan was "The Need for Recreational Opportunities in Rutherford County". The goal to be addressed from this issue is "to develop a wide range of recreational opportunities to serve residents, tourists, and visitors, and to act as a stimulus for economic development". The objective of this issue is to "inventory all facilities, programs and participants throughout the County to determine what needs exist, and determine how those needs are to be addressed". The final recommendation from the Land Use Plan is that "Rutherford County should form a recreation advisory committee consisting of members from various age groups, and recreational backgrounds". This committee would inventory all public

and private facilities, programs and participants to determine what needs exist and how Rutherford County can best address these needs. From this recommendation the Rutherford County Arts, Parks and Recreation Committee was formed. The RCAPRC felt that the inventory of programs and facilities, in conjunction with a Comprehensive Plan would provide the best direction to Rutherford County to address current and future recreational needs. It was also at this time that the larger municipalities (Lake Lure, Rutherfordton, Spindale, and Forest City) were offered the opportunity to become actively involved by creating their own mini-plans based upon the data that the County was accumulating. Lake Lure, Rutherfordton and Forest City accepted this offer. Forest City activated its Parks and Recreation Commission, and started development of its Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Plan. This plan will act as Forest City's Parks and Recreation Plan.

The main purpose of this document is to provide the Town of Forest City with an actionable plan to guide its actions and decisions regarding:

- Future parks and recreation programs and facilities.
- Renovation of existing parks and/or facilities.
- Cooperative efforts in providing recreation needs.
- Possible land acquisitions.
- Provide assistance in obtaining grants.

The Forest City Comprehensive Recreation Plan is organized into four sections:

- Review of physical, demographic and historical characteristics.
- Inventory and analysis of existing recreation facilities.
- Community survey and needs assessment.
- Recommendations and implementation.

## **Methodology**

From commencement to completion, the work on the original plan, and also the other recreation plans, spanned from the summer of 2004 until the summer of 2005. The 2015 update was explored during the fall of 2014 and completed through 2015. The information utilized for this plan was gathered from a number of sources including the Town of Forest City Recreation Survey, Census Bureau, North Carolina State Data Center, North Carolina Division of Community Assistance, Rutherford County Comprehensive Land Use Plan, Rutherford County Economic Development Department, North Carolina Municipal and County Parks and Recreation Survey, and town staff. The update process involved a thorough review of the plan, making necessary changes to data and the inventory and analysis of facilities, rewriting the survey section to reflect the more current survey and responses, reviewing implementation strategies and changing or adding as necessary.

An inventory of existing programming and facilities was carried out over the course of the initial planning process and the update process.

A random scientific survey for Forest City citizens was developed and performed during the initial planning process and the update process. The same survey was used for the 2015 update. In effort to save financial resources the survey was entered into Survey Monkey, an online survey data collection service ([www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com)). The use of the service was paid for through the Appalachian Resource Commission. Hard copies were made available at Town Hall and the Mooneyham Library. Hard copies were hand-entered into Survey Monkey for calculation and analysis purposes.

The Forest City Parks and Recreation Commission, representing a cross section of interest and expertise assisted the planner in the preparation of the Plan. The commission's duties included the following:

- Assisting with the creation and review of the community survey.
- Analyzing existing programming and facilities.
- Identifying the issues, strengths and weaknesses of Forest City.
- Assisting the planner in formulating recommendations.
- Reviewing the draft plan and recommendations.

## Section 1

### Review of Physical, Demographic and Historical Characteristics



# **Review of Physical, Demographic and Historical Characteristics**

## **Introduction**

The analysis of physical, demographic and economic characteristics of a municipality is very important when planning for future growth and development. This is especially true when considering parks and recreation. By reviewing and analyzing past and present data, and projecting future data, we should be able to determine what impacts the Town of Forest City may expect regarding parks and recreation.

## **Physical Characteristics**

### **Location**

The Town of Forest City is located in the central Rutherford County at latitude North 35 degrees 20 minutes 01 second, and longitude West 81 degrees 51 minutes 51 seconds along US Highway 74 Business. Forest City is bounded to the west by the Town of Spindale. Forest City is approximately 60 miles east of Asheville, 60 miles west of Charlotte, and 25 miles north of Spartanburg, South Carolina. (See Map 1 Locator Map)

### **Geography**

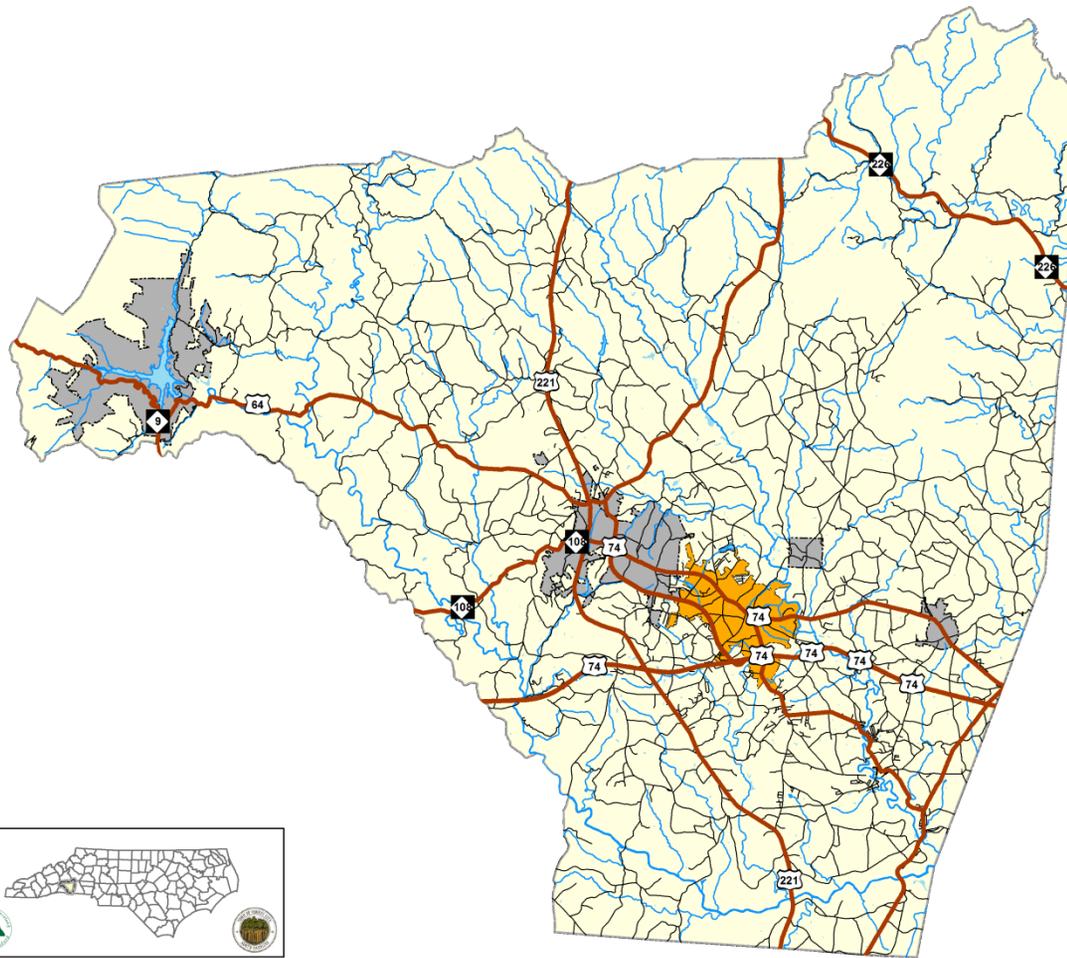
Forest City is located within a geographic zone of the State typically referred to as foothills (gently rolling terrain). Elevations within Forest City range from approximately 800 feet above sea level along the Second Broad River, to over 1,050 feet above sea level in the central western portion of the Town. Underlying rock formations are generally gneiss and schist from the Paleozoic Era, and because much of the town is developed, much of the typical Appalachian Hardwood Forests have been replaced by roads, buildings and other landscaping. All 8.5 square miles of the Town of Forest City are located within the Broad River Basin.

### **Climate**

Forest City is located within a climate zone in North Carolina known as the Thermal Belt. Summers in Forest City are typically moderately warm and very humid. Winters are moderately cold. Precipitation is evenly distributed throughout the year. According to data collected from the Southeast Regional Climate Center, the average annual temperature is 58 degrees, with an average high temperature of 71 degrees, and an average low temperature of 45 degrees. The highest temperature of 107 degrees was recorded in August of 1999. The lowest temperature of -8 degrees was recorded in January of 1982. In the summer months the average high temperature is 88 degrees, and the average low temperature is 63 degrees. In the winter months the average high temperature is 53 degrees, and the average low temperature is 28 degrees.

The yearly precipitation average is 50 inches, and is generally spread out evenly throughout the year. The heaviest average monthly rainfall amounts occurred during the months of March (5.26 inches), and January (4.7 inches). The lowest monthly averages

# MAP 1 LOCATOR MAP



- Primary Roads
- Secondary Roads
- Major Rivers/Streams
- Water Body
- Municipalities
- Forest City



4.5

Miles

Isothermal Planning and Development Commission  
serving Cleveland, McDowell, Polk and Rutherford Counties

Map intended for planning purposes only. © IPDC 2015.

Data Sources: NC OneMap, 2000-2010.

occurred during the months of April (3.63 inches), and December (3.76 inches). The average annual snowfall amount is 5.5 inches with the heaviest monthly averages occurring in January (2.9 inches), February (1.4 inches), and March (.9 inches).

### **Existing Land Use**

While most of Rutherford County would be classified as rural, Forest City would be classified as *developed* (urban environment with normal municipal services) and *urban transitional* (outlying municipal areas being developed for urban purposes). Forest City has a mix of several residential classifications, several commercial classifications and two manufacturing classifications. The older downtown commercial growth has occurred along US Highway 74 Business. Newer highway commercial growth has occurred along the US Highway 74-A. Industrial areas are located along Duke Street, US Highway 74-A, Vance Street, US Highway 74 Business East, and in the Alexander Mills area of Forest City. According to the 2010 US Census, Cool Springs Township has a population density of 445 persons per square mile.

### **Future Land Use**

It is anticipated that land uses will continue to intensify within both the municipal boundaries, and transitional areas around Forest City. Extensions of water and sewer utilities will encourage growth. One trend that should be noted within Rutherford County is that most residential growth in the last 10 year census period occurred outside of municipal boundaries. Only the municipalities of Rutherfordton, Chimney Rock and Lake Lure increased their populations. Forest City's population (even with the annexation of Alexander Mills) decreased by 8%. It is anticipated that commercial and industrial growth will continue where water and sewer utilities are available. It is also anticipated that residential growth will continue to dominate rural areas outside of municipalities.

### **Floodplains**

The Town of Forest City has flood plains that are delineated on the National Flood Insurance Rate Maps. For most locations these flood prone areas are within prescribed elevations of known streams or creeks. These maps have been updated using LIDAR technology. These maps are much more accurate than what used to be available. This could be helpful in the future for creating greenways or open space along creeks, streams and rivers. (Greenways along floodplains are also recommended within the Rutherford County Hazard Mitigation Plan.)

### **Infrastructure**

Infrastructure is typically defined as utilities (water, sewer, electricity, gas) and roads.

*Water System*-The Town of Forest City currently operates an 8 million gallon per day water system that draws water from the Second Broad River. Supply lines not only serve Forest City, but many outlying areas as well. There is also the possibility that Forest City may construct a new water plant along the Broad River at the Riverstone Industrial Complex on US Highway 221 South. Forest City also supplies water for the municipalities of Bostic and Ellenboro.

*Sewer System*-The Town of Forest City operates a 4.95 million gallon per day sewage treatment facility with in excess of 8,500 customers. This system also serves areas outside of the municipality. The Town will also provides sewage services for the Town of Ellenboro.

*Electricity*-The Town of Forest City supplies the Town’s electric utilities. This utility also serves areas outside of the Town’s corporate limits.

*Natural Gas*-Natural gas where available is supplied by Public Service Company of North Carolina.

*Streets, Roads and Sidewalks*-There is a large network of streets, roads and sidewalks within the corporate limits of Forest City. The majority of streets are maintained by the Town of Forest City. Some of the streets and roads falling under state maintenance include, US Highway 74 Business, US Highway 74-A, Vance Street, Cherry Mountain Street, Hudlow Road, Oak Street, South Church Street, Hardin Road, South Broadway St., and Old Caroleen Road. Forest City maintains all of the sidewalks within the corporate limits. We will discuss sidewalks in another section of this Plan. The Town began a new pedestrian plan in 2015 to improve overall connectivity and walkability.

## **Demographic Characteristics**

### **Population**

According to the 2010 US Census, the Town of Forest City’s population was 7,475. The high point of Forest City’s population (8,331) was just after it combined with the Town of Alexander Mills in 1980. The population has decreased since then, in 2000, it was 7,531. In 2010, it was virtually unchanged at 7,475. In 2014, the estimate is 7,324, or only a loss of 207 citizens in almost 15 year.

Rutherford County’s population in 2010 was 67,784. This represents a growth of 7.8% since 2000. Over the past fifty years, the differences between the growth trends is much more stark

Table 1, 50 Years of Population Change

Location	1970 Pop.	1980 Pop.	1990 Pop.	2000 Pop.	2010 Pop.	%Pop. Change 1970-2010	%Pop. Change 2000-2010
Forest City	7,179	7,688	7,475	7,549	7,475	4.12%	-0.98%
Alexander Mills	988	643	662 *			NA	NA
Rutherford County	47,337	53,787	56,918	62,899	67,784	43.19%	7.77%

\* The Town of Alexander Mills was merged into Forest City prior to the 2000 Census.

with the County growing ten times faster than Forest City, see Table 1, 50 Years of Population Growth. However, the current projections from the State have the County's future growth more closely mirroring Forest City's, with the County losing approximately 1,100 people over the next 15 years to 2030.

The service area for the Town of Forest City's recreation services covers more than the Town. In 2013, there were 18,619 people that live within a 10 minute drive of downtown Forest City (ESRI, 2013).

### **Age**

Forest City's median age in 2010 of 40 was lower than Rutherford County's (42.5), but higher than the state average of 37.4. 2,048 persons (or 27.4%) within Forest City were between the ages of 0 to 19. 2,175 persons (or 32.1%) were between the ages of 20 to 44. 1,903 persons (or 21.2 %) within Forest City were between the ages of 45-64. 1,350 persons (or 19.3%) were age 65 and older.

Within a 10 minute driving distance, 26.2% were under 19, 29.5% were between 20 and 44, 27% were 45-64 years of age and 17.3% were over 65. The biggest distinction with the Town is the slighter larger number of people nearing the end of their working careers.

### **Race/Ethnicity**

Within Rutherford County, Forest City, along with Spindale and Rutherfordton, has a more diverse population. Rutherford County was 84.1% non-Hispanic White in 2010. Forest City, in contrast, was 63.5% non-Hispanic White. 24% of its population were African American and 726 (9.0%) were Hispanic. Of the 726 Hispanic persons, 40% of them are under 18. Within the 10 minute drive time, approximately 76% were non-Hispanic White and 5.6% were Hispanic.

### **Socio-Economic Characteristics**

According to the 2010 US Census, Rutherford County's labor force had increased 6.8% from 2000 to 2010. The labor force in 2000 consisted of 28,250 workers age 16 and older. This figure represents 45% of the total persons age 16 and older. The labor force examined as part of the 2010 Census was 30,177 workers 16 and older. This represents 56.3% of the total persons age 16 and older.

In 2015, there were 27,168 jobs within Rutherford County, according to EMSI. The government sector was the primary employer in the County with 13.2% of the workforce. Health Care and Social Services sector had another 12.6%. There were two other sectors, Manufacturing and Retail Trade that accounted for 23.3%. All four only represent 49.1%. This is significantly different from 2000 when 40.5% of all the jobs were in manufacturing. There has been a loss of 6,400 jobs in this sector since then.

Currently, Rutherford County is recovery from a severe depression. This downturn in the economy started in October of 2008 and Rutherford County's unemployment rate rose from between 6% and 8% to 19.4% in January 2010. Most job sectors are down (including health related fields), with a few isolated specialty industries or businesses

maintaining their current level of employment. Currently, in August 2015, the unemployment rate is 8.4%. During the timeframe from 2008 to now, Rutherford County's unemployment rate has been much higher than the state or national average, which currently stands 5.9% for North Carolina and 5.1% for the United States (August 2015).

The median household income for Forest City in 1999 was \$24,243 and in 2013, it stands at \$23,757, a loss of \$486, compared to \$35,364 for Rutherford County, and \$45,540 for North Carolina (US Census, 2010).

In 2010, 70.5% of the population in Forest City had received a high school diploma, compared to 70.4% in Rutherford County, and 84.9% in North Carolina. 12.2% of the population in Forest City had received a bachelor's degree, compared to 17% in Rutherford County, and 27.3% for North Carolina.

### **Historical Characteristics**

Although Rutherford County was officially formed in 1779, there is much history dating back to the pre-revolutionary period. Prior to white settlers, the area was part of the Great Cherokee Nation. Although Indians did not have permanent settlements here, there were many small encampments and trails that were used to move and trade with their lands to the west and the north. During the 1700's, white settlers from the east and south began to filter through using the Indian trails.

According to the *History of Rutherford County*, written by Nancy Ellen Ferguson, Tryon County was formed from Mecklenburg County in 1768. In April of 1779, Lincoln and Rutherford Counties were created from Tryon County. Rutherford County was named in honor of Brigadier General Griffith Rutherford who fought in the Revolutionary War.

The original County seat was Gilbertown, which also served as an encampment for the British and Tory Troops under Major Patrick Ferguson. In 1787 the County seat was moved to Rutherford Town (which later became Rutherfordton).

According to the Town of Forest City website, the Town of Burnt Chimney was a crossroads community (along the Shelby-Rutherfordton and Spartanburg-Lincolnton Roads) that was originally incorporated in 1877. A replica of the chimney stands close to the original site in the Town's public square today, and was the remains of the McArthur home that marked the crossroads. The name was changed in 1887 to Forest City in honor of prominent citizen Forest Davis. Forest City has grown into the commercial and industrial hub of Rutherford County, and its largest municipality.

According to recreation staff, the original pool and golf course were constructed around 1933. The pool was replaced in the 1950's. A "Blueprint for Recreation" which may have been the original recreation plan for Forest City, was written in 1954. This was also the year when the first recreation commission was appointed.

## **Summary**

The growth potential of Rutherford County appears to be above average for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Good infrastructure, strategic location close to major highways, and proximity to larger metropolitan areas are significant factors that enhance its growth potential. Proper planning for parks and recreation services is needed to accommodate the future population growth of the Town and the surrounding area.

In a study prepared for the City of Charlotte and reviewed by the Charlotte Observer in February 2005, it was pointed out “that the new generations of workers are more impulsive, they will narrow their choices by where they want to live, rather than who they want to work for.” “This is a paradigm change from the baby boomer generation who first looked at who they wanted to work for.” In answering the question what makes a location desirable, it was pointed out overwhelmingly in the survey this new generation of persons is interested in local arts, the embracing of local heritage and history, and among other things they like dog parks, and hiking and biking trails. These trends are confirmed in the 2015 survey response and reflected in the regional recreation field.

According to an economic development study performed in 2003, when industrial or commercial companies are looking for sites for expansion or relocation, they consider site selection factors and quality of life factors as very important. Under quality of life factors, recreational opportunities ranked 8<sup>th</sup>, and cultural opportunities ranked 9<sup>th</sup>. This was seen firsthand when Facebook selected to build a major facility in Forest City.

The Town of Forest City has laid the ground work. Hopefully, by taking advantage of these studies and enhancing its recreational and cultural resources, Forest City’s population will start to grow in a positive direction.

## Section 2

### Inventory and Analysis of Existing Facilities and Programming



# Inventory and Analysis of Existing Facilities and Programming

## Introduction

The Town of Forest City offers numerous opportunities for recreational activities at various parks and facilities. In this section we will examine each location and activities are offered. Park and recreation areas are noted on Map 2.

## Facilities & Recreational Program Inventory

### James F. Crowe Park Complex

The James F. Crowe Park Complex is a large park facility located in the northern section of Forest City between Cherry Mountain Street and Flack Road. The complex was originally built with Department of the Interior Land and Water Conservation Funds (LWCF), and is owned by the Town of Forest City, and maintained and operated by the Forest City Recreation Department. The complex consists of two tracts of land totaling approximately 80 acres, and abuts the Second Broad River.

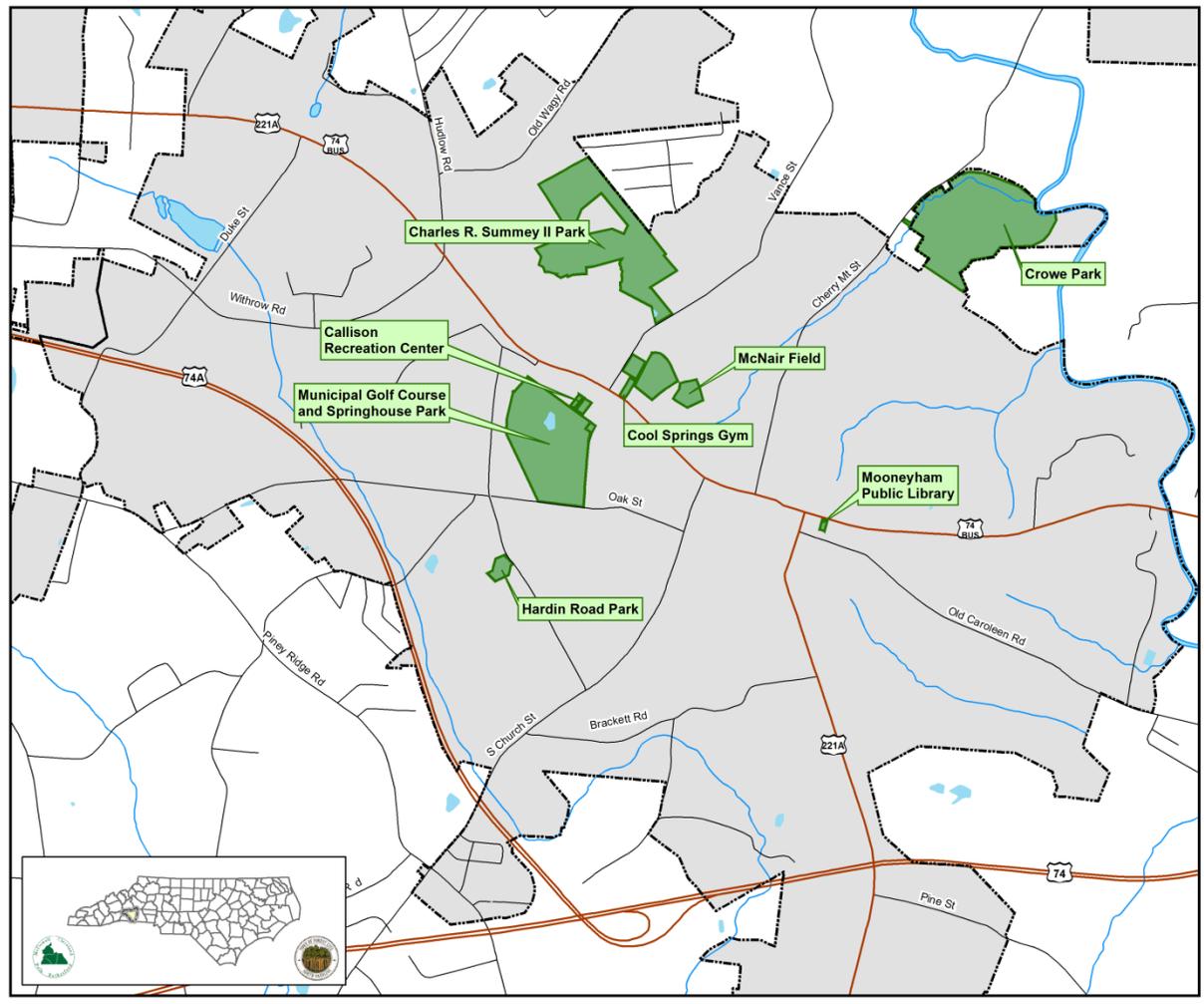
James F. Crowe Park facilities include:

- 2 Lighted Baseball Fields
- 1 Lighted Softball Fields
- Equipment Storage
- Bathrooms
- 2 Horseshoe Pits
- 5 Large Picnic Shelters
- 2 Small Picnic Shelters
- Sand Area
- Large Children Play Unit
- Numerous Children Play Stations
- Marked Parking for 145 Vehicles

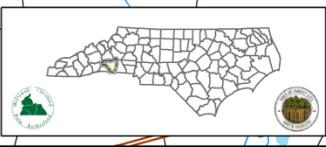
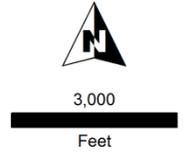


Although this facility is older, it is clean and well maintained. There is also quite a bit of acreage not in use, including access to the Second Broad River. Fields are not in as much demand since the Charles R. Summey II Park has been completed. There are no sidewalks or bikeways leading to this Park. Since the original plan was written, the Town of Forest City has received a Parks and Recreation Trust Fund Grant to upgrade this park. New bathrooms, a large picnic shelter, new baseball dugouts and new playground equipment have been added. The parking facility has also been updated.

# MAP 2 RECREATION AREAS



- Primary Roads
- Secondary Roads
- Major Rivers/Streams
- Water Body
- Parks & Recreation
- Municipalities



Isothermal Planning and Development Commission  
 serving Cleveland, McDowell, Polk and Rutherford Counties  
 Map intended for planning purposes only. © IPDC 2015.  
 Data Sources: NC OneMap, 2000-2010.

### **Hardin Road Park**

The Hardin Road Park is a small community park area located in central southwestern Forest City on Hardin Road, south of its intersection with Oak Street. This park is located adjacent to a Forest City water storage tank and also the Dunbar Community Center. The park consists of two tracts of land totaling approximately 3 acres. This park is owned by the Town of Forest City, and maintained by the Forest City Recreation Department.



Hardin Road Park facilities include:

- 1 Outdoor Basketball Court
- Bathrooms
- 1 Large Picnic Shelter
- 3 Children’s Play Units
- Parking for 10 Vehicles

The park is showing signs of age. There are also problems with vandalism at this park. There is a sidewalk leading to this park along Hardin Street, however it does not connect to a neighborhood or to downtown.

### **Charles R. Summey II Park**

The Charles R. Summey II Park is a large regional facility recently constructed in partnership with Rutherford County Schools. The park is located off of Vance Street north of its intersection with Main Street. Forest City Dunbar Elementary School is located in the central portion of this property. The portion of the property owned by the Town of Forest City consists of approximately 71 acres. The Forest City Recreation Department maintains the park property as well as the school property.

Charles R. Summey II Park facilities include:

- 2 Lighted Baseball Fields
- 1 Lighted Softball Field
- 2 T Ball Fields
- Field Tower with Bathrooms
- 1 Small Picnic Shelter
- 1 Children’s Play Unit
- 3 Irrigated Multi-Purpose Fields adjacent to School
- 1 Irrigated Multi-Purpose Field
- Quarter Mile Rubberized Walking Track
- 2 Shelters with Bathrooms
- Marked Parking for 138 Vehicles



This facility is heavily used by Forest City Little League. The facility is beautifully landscaped with lots of additional greenspace. Sidewalks connect this facility to Vance Street and back to Main Street.

### **Callison Recreation Center**

Callison Recreation Center is a large facility located two blocks south of Main Street on Clay Street. This facility is located on the same tract of land as the Forest City Golf Course, Springhouse Park, and the Forest City Club House. The total tract covers over 60 acres. The center is owned by the Town of Forest City, and is maintained and operated by the Forest City Recreation Department.

Callison Recreation Center facilities include:

- Recreation Offices
- Gym with multiple Basketball Courts
- Fitness Room
- Equipment Storage
- 6 Regulation Tennis Courts
- Swimming Pool
- Combined Parking with the Golf Course for 150 Vehicles
- 2 Senior Citizens Club



The Callison facility is used most by recreational basketball leagues, fitness groups and senior citizens. The pool is used by the Forest City Swim Team, swim lessons are taught in the summer. In the summer the pool operates at capacity. The facility is landscaped and maintained well. There are no sidewalks or bikeways connecting this facility with other sidewalks. An abandoned railway lies just north of the main parking area. This rail corridor has been purchased by the town with the intent to create a certified Rails- to-Trail. Since the original plan was adopted the following improvements have been made to Callison Recreation Center: the pool pumps and drains have been updated, the weight room has been expanded, and air conditioning has been added.

### **Forest City Golf Course**

The Forest City Golf Course is located on the same tract as Callison Recreation Center off of Clay Street. The golf course was begun in 1933 as a civil works administration program. The golf course was remodeled and improved in 1998/1999. The course is 9 holes, 3,005 yards from the white tees, and has a par of 36. There is a practice chipping green, a practice putting green, and a driving net available. There is a full service pro shop with a club pro. Carts are available for a fee. The course is owned by the Town of Forest City, and is maintained by a golf course maintenance crew.



The golf course was updated in 1999. The course is in excellent shape. The following improvements have been made since the original plan was adopted: the clubhouse has been reroofed, painted and new HVAC has been installed.

### **Spring House Park**

Spring House Park is located past the Forest City Golf Course Pro Shop, in the middle of the golf course. This facility is named for an artesian well located on site. There is a large lighted picnic shelter on this site, with picnic tables, and 3 fireplaces.



With the other park facilities offering picnic shelters along with playgrounds and fields, this facility does not have as great a demand for usage. There are not many picnic tables available, possible due to less demand. This facility needs some basic repairs such a new picnic tables to be fully utilized by the community. Currently the facility is used largely for outdoor storage.

### **Cool Springs Gym**

Cool Springs Gym is located on West Main Street next to the Rutherford County Schools administrative offices. The Town of Forest City acquired the property from Rutherford County Schools, and completed renovations in 2004. The gym is in great shape, and is used for youth and adult basketball programs. There is parking for approximately 155 vehicles located behind the gym off of Vance Street. The rear of the gym serves as locker rooms for the Forest City Owls and visiting baseball teams playing at McNair Field. Since the adoption of the original plan, Cool Springs Gym has received the following improvements: new gym floor, new paint, new HVAC, a restroom for persons with disabilities, new sidewalks, new parking, and owls lockers. In addition to these improvements the gym foyer has been completely renovated.



### **McNair Field**

McNair Field is located on the site previously occupied by the Martin Green Legion Field. Since the adoption of the original plan, through a public/private partnership, McNair Field was created and is the newest ballpark in the Coastal Plain (summer collegiate) League. McNair Field was named in honor of Robert McNair, who was originally from Forest City, and was a major contributor for this project. The grandstands have 556 reserved seats and general admission seating for over 1,000. There is a press box, two separate food areas, a beer garden, ample parking, and a state of the art scoreboard. The natural field surface and irrigation system are as nice as any other field in the



summer league program. McNair Field is home to the Forest City Owls.

### **Mooneyham Public Library**

Mooneyham Public Library began as a small collection of books housed in an upstairs room in Forest City's Town Hall. Today the library is located in a building constructed in 1964 on Main Street. Mooneyham Public Library is dedicated to providing free and equal access to quality resources and reliable information and to fostering lifelong learning. The building is two levels. On the street level is contains the library and learning center, along with offices for administration of library services. On the basement level are meeting rooms that are used by various groups within the town, or serve as space for senior citizen groups. The library offers books, audio and video cassettes, magazines, tax forms, public access to the internet for on line resources, free wireless internet, accelerated reader collections, fax service, copies, and story time. The building (which is 3,300 square feet on each level) is located on .4 acre lot, with an adjoining .5 acre lot providing additional parking and green space.



### **Rutherford Opportunity Center (Former Forest City Elementary School)**

The Town of Forest City, through an agreement with Rutherford County, has agreed to operate and maintain the playground portion of the Rutherford Opportunity Center located along Old Caroleen Road. Originally, this property housed the Forest City Elementary School. When the new school was built off Vance Street, the property became the Rutherford Opportunity Center. The property consists of 10.9 acres, with school building, and a large playground area (approximately 3 acres). The playground consists of a combination play structure and park benches. The playground is spread out around the 3 acres of open space, and is located within a large residential area. There are sidewalks connecting this park with the residential areas and the downtown area of Town. The park is heavily used, but is in fair condition.



## **Programming Information 2014-2015**

**Forest City Little League**-The Forest City Little League is one of three local divisions of the Little League of America offered in Rutherford County. It encompasses tee ball through senior league teams for boys and girls in both spring and fall. Games are played at Charles R. Summey II Park and James F. Crowe Parks. There are between 30 and 35 teams, with a range of 400 to 500 children participating in this program. It should be noted, because of the division of Rutherford County by the three little league charters, a large portion of participants in the Forest City league are from outside of Forest City's municipal boundaries (approximately 30%). This program is partially funded through the Forest City Recreation Department, but is operated by a volunteer board of directors.

**Forest City Youth Football**-Forest City Youth Football is one of four youth football leagues offered in Rutherford County, and plays under the regulations of American youth Football which uses weight limits to help prevent injury and enhance the competitive parity of the league. It encompasses four age groups (5-13) and includes cheerleaders. There were approximately 210 children participating. These teams compete on a regional basis with other teams. The team practices at the Charles R. Summey Park School, and plays its home games at East Rutherford High School. Approximately 50% of the participants are from outside of Forest City's municipal boundaries. This program is partially funded through the Forest City Recreation Department, but is operated by volunteers.

**Forest City Recreation Basketball League**-The Forest City Recreation Basketball League (1 of 3 leagues in Rutherford County) offers opportunities in three different leagues. There is a Men's Civic League (for ages 21 and over) which averages 6 teams and approximately 55 participants. There is a Church League comprised of teams from local churches averaging 10 teams and 120 participants, and there is a Youth League for children, (ages 5-13) which averages 12 teams and approximately 120 participants. Approximately 60% of the participants reside outside of the corporate limits of Forest City. The Town of Forest City totally funds and operates these leagues.

**Forest City Heat Basketball**-The Town of Forest City hosts this organization for boys and girls with opportunities to compete on a national level. Forest City Heat teams have been highly competitive in both state and national competitions. There are 10 teams with approximately 120 participants. Forest City provides facilities (Callisons, and Cool Springs Gym) for their use, and the program is operated by volunteers. Tournaments can have a significant impact on the local economy with as many as 6000 visitors yearly. They have won several state and national titles.

**Forest City Swim Team**-The Forest City Swim Team is one of the recreational swim teams organized in Rutherford County. The team is open to anyone between the ages of 5-18. The program operates two seasonal competitions with the winter team averaging 60 participants, and the summer team averaging 80 participants. The summer competitions utilize the Clay Street Pool, and the winter competitions utilize the indoor pool at Isothermal Community College. This team competes on a western North Carolina

regional basis. Approximately 60% of participants reside outside the corporate limits of Forest City. This team is partially funded through the recreation department, and is operated by volunteers.

**Senior Citizens Clubs**-The Town of Forest City sponsors two senior citizens clubs through the Recreation Department. The Forest City Senior Citizens Club was formed in 1969 and meets twice monthly at Mooneyham Library. The Golden Rutherford Senior Citizens Club was formed in the 1970's and originally met at the Forest City Housing Authority. Both groups now meet twice monthly at Mooneyham Library. Activities include programs such as musical entertainment, exercise, outings (such as fishing, picnicking, cookouts, etc.), crafts, overnight and day trips, luncheons and bingo. Currently there are 150 participants in both clubs. These programs do not duplicate what Rutherford County offers at its Senior Citizen Center. Approximately 50% of the participants reside outside of the Forest City corporate boundaries. The Forest City Recreation Department totally funds and operated these programs.

**Sports Camps**-The Forest City Recreation Department conducts youth sports camps each year to give instruction to young people to assist them in learning basic skills, and improving their level of competitiveness. Camps offered include: basketball, golf, soccer, and tennis. Qualified instructors are utilized, and approximately 190 participants are served each year.

**Camp Harmony**-Camp Harmony is a two-week camp held each year in June at the Callison Recreation Center for children with special needs. It is co-sponsored by the United Way of Rutherford County and the Town of Forest City. Recreation department personnel provide assistance in scheduling activities, preparing registration and consent forms, facility preparation and maintenance, swimming pool supervision, and any other assistance requested by camp counselors.

**Other Programs**-The Recreation Department provides and maintains facilities in cooperation with the schools and other organizations that offer sports programs for youth. These include: Clay Street Tennis Courts (utilized by tennis teams at East Middle, Chase Middle, and East High Schools), the soccer field at Charles R. Summey II Park (utilized by East High's women's team, and Thomas Jefferson Classical Academy), and the Forest City Golf Course which is home to the East High Golf Team. The department also offers swim lessons and fitness swimming at the Clay Street Pool.

### **Budget**

According to a Forest City Parks and Recreation Department budget for the 2014/2015 fiscal year, the budgeted appropriations and expenditures were as follows:

Total Appropriated for all Parks and Recreation	\$1,867,188
Expenditures for Non-Park and Program Facilities	
Golf Course	\$407,193
Mooneyham Library	\$141,782

FC Clubhouse	\$27,700
McNair Field Loan	\$268,871
Total	\$830,238

Expenses Related to Facility Maintenance, Supplies and Utilities

Parks and Playgrounds	\$383,481
Callison Recreation Center	\$289,587
Clay Street Pool	\$84,500
McNair Field	\$80,600
Cool Springs Gym	\$69,146
Contingency	\$3,675
Total	\$1,861,885

Program Expenses

Swim Team	\$14,550
Youth Football	\$13,000
Little League Baseball	\$13,000
AAU Basketball	\$17,000
Senior Citizens	\$11,000
Athletic Program Salaries	\$44,000
Other	\$11,550
Total	\$107,100

A link to the full budget has been included on the resource page at the end of this document to provide additional context for recreation spending.

**Section 2 Summary**

The Town of Forest City is very fortunate to be able to offer facilities and programming that larger municipalities would be envious of. Not only does the Town own and operate these facilities, but they are kept in excellent condition. Town staff has done a good job, despite challenges to maintain and operate this department, these facilities, and also provide maintenance for other Town and County properties such as maintenance of McNair Field, grass cutting at the Rutherford County Education Offices, grass cutting at Town entrances on East and West Main Street, grass cutting at Mooneyham Library, grounds maintenance on the downtown square, grass cutting at Forest City Elementary ball field, maintenance of the Forest City Clubhouse, grass cutting at the Firing Range, grass cutting at the Cool Springs Cemetery, and grounds maintenance at the ABC Store.

## Section 3

### Community Survey and Needs Assessment



## **Introduction**

In an effort to get more public input regarding parks and recreation programming and facilities, a community survey was conducted for both the original and updated plans. This survey, along with analysis of existing programming and facilities, and the expertise of the members of the Forest City Recreation Commission was to be the basis of the Plan and its updates. The original survey was used to gather demographic information, understand what opportunities the respondent was currently using, and what opportunities the respondent was not utilizing but was interested in, and gather specific comments. The survey used for this update focused more on facility usage and improvements to facilities and programming. Also, the meetings of the Forest City Recreation Commission are open meetings and can be used to gather further information. An initial meeting was held with the Recreation Commissioners to determine the scope of the update. After this meeting Commissioners were provided an opportunity edit the survey questions. No changes or edits were suggested and the same questions were used.

## **Development**

In developing the original Forest City Survey, the Forest City Recreation Commission utilized examples of other surveys and information obtained during participation in a seminar provided by the North Carolina Division of Environment and Natural Resources Division of Parks and Recreation. For the 2005 update, the Forest City Recreation Commission utilized a more user friendly survey that focused more on Forest City's actual facilities and programming. The update survey was printed on three sheets of white paper. The front had a letter from the Town that discussed the importance of the survey, and how to complete it and return it. There was also a map on the front that depicted the location of all of the recreation areas in Forest City. There were some general demographic questions, then there were a set of questions for each facility, with space to add additional comments. There was a section of programming questions, then there were some additional questions about the needs being met, and also giving the citizen a chance to address anything else not contained in the survey. The survey was to be completed by the entire household. There was a self-addressed, stamped envelope to enclose the survey in and return it to Isothermal Planning and Development Commission. A copy of the survey is included within this section for reference. In the 2015 update an online survey was created using the same questions. Paper copies are also available in town.

## **Methodology**

Once the survey was developed for the original plan, a methodology was devised for printing, distribution, returning of surveys, and tabulation of surveys. The limiting factor regarding the usage of community surveys is cost. This is an expensive process for the amount of return that Forest City received. However, it is believed that the data and information obtained is more random than having a small group of persons (that share the same interests) show up at public meetings.

In 2005 Forest City had 550 surveys printed, along with special sized envelopes for the initial mail-out. A random mailing list (peel and stick) was provided by the Forest City Utilities Billing Department. This list provided a peel and stick label for most

households within the Forest City municipal boundaries. The surveys included a return addressed, stamped envelope with return postage. Initially, 500 surveys were mailed out, and the respondents were given approximately 30 days to complete and return them. The mailing list provided by the Utilities Billing Department was very accurate and caused very few returned surveys. However, those that were returned were promptly put into a new envelope with a new address label and remailed. 500 surveys were kept in circulation at all times during the 30 day period. Total cost for this process (not including labor for development) was in excess of \$2,000.

The Recreation Commissioners decided to use the same survey for the 2015 update. However, in order to keep costs down an online platform was utilized. Everyone living in the town limits of Forest City was sent a notice in their power bill providing information about the online survey and contact information for IPDC. Paper forms were available at Town Hall, Mooneyham Library and the Recreation Office.

### **Forest City 2015 Parks and Recreation Survey Results**

There were 30 completed surveys completed online. No paper surveys were collected. The notes below show results of these survey questions.

#### **How long have you lived in Forest City?**

There were no non responses.

Shortest tenure was 10 months.

Longest tenure was 93 years.

#### **What is the age and gender of the persons in your household?**

There were 2 non responses.

There were 28 households identified, and the average household size was 2.32.

The average age of those surveyed was 34.29 years.

The youngest male included was 7 months, the eldest 93.

The youngest female include was newborn, the eldest 72.

#### **What was the household income for 2014?**

There were 27 responses from the 30 total of surveys.

\$25,000 to \$50,000	10 (37% of the 30 responses)
\$50,000 to \$100,000	12 (44% of the 30 responses)
Over \$100,000	5 (19% of the 30 responses)

### **Mooneyham Library**

There was 1 non-response.

Of the 29 that did respond, 11 (38%) said that they used the library, and 18 (62%) did not. Of the 13 that did respond, 11 (85%) said that they were there to check out books, 2 (15%) used the computers, 5 (38%) utilized the reference materials, 0 were there for the club room, and 2 (15%) were there for club meetings.

Comments:

- Is mail floor restroom in good condition?
- later hours/weekend hours
- Programs for stay-at-home mothers with small children. Workshops for homeschooling. Authors coming to speak.
- evening or weekend hours
- More frequent purchases of new books, expanded ebook lending
- More Audio Books
- digital books

### **Forest City Golf Course**

There were no non-responses.

Of the 30 that did respond, 15 (50%) said that they played at the Forest City Golf Course.

Regarding the number of rounds per year, the lowest number was 0 rounds per year, and the highest number was 30 rounds per year. The average for the 19 responses was 5.5 rounds per year.

2 (7%) are annual members.

3 (10%) play in tournaments.

One household was associated with a golf team that uses the Forest City Golf Course.

Comments:

- Fully stocked pro shop
- Lessons for young kids and teenagers
- Snack bar

### **Cool Springs Gym**

There was 1 non-response.

Of the 29 that did respond, 5 (18%) said that they did utilize Cool Springs Gym.

2 (29%) responded that they play basketball there. 4 (57%) responded that they participated in youth basketball league. 1 (14%) responded that they participated in adult basketball league, and 1 (14%) responded that they participated in basketball camp.

Comments:

- More tennis camps
- More practice time...Spindale league is much better organized
- Inclusion of a real gym
- More camps for kids and teens
- Better camps and basketball leagues
- There is a gym? List it on the website along with address
- Updating
- More exercise programs
- More fitness classes
- Expanded services and recreation areas

### **Clay Street Tennis Courts**

There was 1 non-response.

Of the 29 that did respond, 9 (32%) stated that they utilized the Clay Street Tennis Courts.

1 (11%) responded that they took tennis lessons. 2 (22%) responded that they played there because of participation in a school tennis team. 7 (78%) responded that they participated in recreational tennis play. 3 (33%) responded that they participated in tennis camp.

Comments:

- We didn't realize you had tennis lessons available
- Backboard
- Keep surface in good condition
- Spectator seating
- Tennis lessons for kids and teens
- List it on the website! I didn't know it existed!
- Fence repair where ball do not go underneath

### **Callison Recreation Center**

There were 2 non-responses.

Of the 27 that did respond, 11 (41%) responded that they utilized Callison Recreation Center.

No one responded that they participate in the adult basketball league. 1 (11%) responded that they participate in the youth basketball league. 6 (67%) responded that they utilize the weight room. 6 (67%) stated that they participate in gym walking.

Comments:

- Better workout/gym facility
- Arc Training and Cable Row in the weight room
- Free play basketball
- Longer hours
- More space in gym
- Didn't know there was a weight room or walking in gym! Did I miss the promotions?
- Increased ability for trainers to use the rec center for classes
- Toddler pool area
- Remove the carpet
- Larger weight room
- Squat rack
- Greater awareness and promotion of activities already available
- More equipment
- Better incline benchpress bench
- Extended hours on weekends

**Clay Street Pool**

There was 1 non-response.

12 (43%) responded they used Clay Street Pool.

15 households responded about number of times the pool was used per year. The lowest number of times was 0, and the highest number of times was "2-3 times a week". Due to the nature of responses a true average could not be determined.

2 (29%) responded that they participated in swim team.

6 (86%) households responded that they rented the pool. And 2 households (29%) responded that they participated in swim lessons.

Comments:

- Toddler pool/splash zone
- More available times for pool rentals
- Swim lessons for children under 5
- Bubble line in Morganton and make it more year round
- Indoor pool
- More shaded areas (umbrellas)
- Greater promotion of available activities
- More seating
- Extended weekend hours
- Better swim time for camp Harmony
- Focus on quality clean water

### **James F. Crowe Park**

There was 1 non-response.

13 households (46%) responded that they utilized James F. Crowe Park.

7 (70%) responded that they use the picnic shelters. No one responded that they rented ball fields. No one responded that they participated in softball league. 1 (10%) stated that they utilize the playground. 2 (20%) responded that they are there as a spectator, and 2 (2%) responded that they participate in little league baseball.

#### Comments:

- Found nails on the ground, that if stepped on could have caused harm.
- Playground is awful
- Hiking trail around property
- Cleaner bathrooms
- New playground equipment (it's old and falling apart)
- Dog park area without small children so there be no concerns
- Where is THAT??!!
- Parking is awful
- River Walk along the river bank
- Better playground maintenance
- New mulch
- Develop put-in & take out for kayaks, canoes, tubes

### **Charles R. Summey II Park on Vance Street**

There was 1 non-response.

13 households (47%) responded that they utilized Charles R. Summey II Park.

5 (33%) stated that they participated in Little League baseball. 7 (47%) responded that they were a spectator at sporting events. 4 (27%) responded that they utilized the playground. 14 (93%) responded that they utilized the walking track. 2 (13%) responded that they rent fields, and 2 (13%) responded that they participated in youth football.

#### Comments:

- There is a big hole in the track that needs to be repaired
- Soccer league
- Fix fence above soccer field and include a gate so near by families have access
- Cleaner bathrooms
- Just better maintenance of restroom facilities
- Exercise spots to work different muscle groups
- Youth soccer camp
- Maintenance has not been good on the fields
- Better grounds maintenance

- Repairs to the track surface
- Availability for soccer teams such as Rumble to practice in evenings

### **Hardin Road Park**

There were 4 non-responses.

No households responded that they utilized Hardin Road Park.

No one responded that they utilized the picnic shelter. No one responded that they utilized the playground, and no one stated that they used the outdoor basketball court.

Comment:

- Where is THAT????!! Wish it was on your website

### **Spring House Park**

There were 5 non-responses.

No one responded that they had utilized Spring House Park.

Comments:

- WEBSITE!!!

### **Forest City Clubhouse**

There were 2 non-responses.

12 households (44%) responded that they utilized the Forest City Clubhouse. 11 of those households responded to the number of times per year. The lowest was 0, the highest was 5. A true average could not be determined due to the nature of the responses. 11 (50%) responded that they had made reservations for usage of the clubhouse.

Comments:

- PARKING
- Handrail & safe stairs & walk from parking spaces on the north side
- Updated atmosphere
- Better sound
- Website
- Add a room for wedding parties to get ready
- Better maintenance
- Better lighting

### **McNair Field**

There were 2 non-responses.

21 households (75%) responded that they attended games at McNair Field. The respondents stated that they attended between 1 and 30 games per year.

**Comments:**

- Speaker system
- Few more shady spots on hot summer days
- Cleaner bathrooms
- More seating in the beer garden area
- Beer being allowed to be taken to your seats
- Alcohol consumption in general seating areas
- Lovely facility, happy to have it here!

**Other Facilities Comments:**

- Toddler play areas/splash park
- Local neighborhood parks
- Public drinking water fountain
- YMCA (2)
- Skateboard area
- Soccer fields
- Splash pad (water fountain for kids to play in)
- More public basketball courts
- Swimming pool bubble
- FC Fourth Friday Food Truck event, maybe across from Main St. on 1<sup>st</sup> Baptist Church or at Farmers Market. Maybe income could support local school or down town beautification or more sidewalks or trails or local charities
- Outdoor venue at the mill
- Youth soccer facility that can be used freely by local soccer teams not just rec
- Water park like Boiling Springs
- Shaded walking trails
- Repair all the railroad crossings
- Soccer fields
- Bicycle lanes
- Café/dining with outdoor seating options
- A good, responsible Dog Park

**Programs**

Only 13 households responded about participation in Forest City programs.

5 responded about participating in Forest City Little League.

2 responded that they participated in youth football.

5 responded that they participated in AAU/YBOA basketball.

2 responded that they participated on the Forest City Swim Team.

3 responded that they participated in youth basketball.

4 responded that they participated in Camp Harmony.

3 responded that they participated in golf camp.

3 responded that they participated in soccer camp.

3 responded about participation in tennis camp.  
No one responded that they participated in summer day camp.  
3 responded that they took swim lessons.  
1 responded that they took lifeguard training.  
No one responded that they participated in church softball league.  
No one responded that they participated in men's basketball.  
3 responded that they participated in senior citizens programming, and  
No one responded about participation in volleyball league.

**Other program or activity comments:**

- Evening access to exercises classes
- Driving range
- Exercise classes for women, Pilates, Tai Chi, Zumba

**Are the recreational needs of Forest City being met? If no, explain why.**

26 households responded to this question. 18 (69%) responded that Forest City was meeting those needs.

Comments:

- I don't think you make it known to the general public about all the things the town offers.
- In terms of activities and recreational centers, the town has done a fantastic job, however, the maintenance (ie bathrooms, trash, grounds in general) at the park (ie Crowe Park, Summey Park, McNair Stadium, etc) is by far in poor condition everytime we utilize them.
- More specific space for exercises classes for all ages. The exercise programs are very successful and growing. A better fitness gym.
- We have prime nature trails and a water source that is not being utilized for recreation and tourism.
- If anything of this makes the power bill go up, I'll be furious.
- It would be nice to have an indoor walking facility/track.
- Growth downtown Forest City dining and shopping options would also encourage more physical activity
- IF ANY OF THE PLANS MAKE THE POWER BILL GO UP I'LL BE FURIOUS
- Yes, we need sidewalks around town and biking paths, and some hiking trails would be nice. For a town called "Forest City" there are no forests to enjoy. The trails on ICC campus are a disgrace, but at least they tried.

The conclusion of the 2005 survey, according to the tabulation, showed a broad range of interests and usage according to the respondents of this survey. According to the survey results, a high emphasis should be placed upon fitness, outdoor recreation, attending performances, and outdoor leisure activities.

The 2009 survey results show how much usage each facility was receiving, what types of activities each facility was being used for, a multitude of comments about each facility and other pertinent information. The 2009 survey also shows which programs are being utilized, and asked for comments for activities that the citizens would like to see added.

The 2015 survey group was smaller, but the questions the same. Many of trends are similar. Respondents are very interested in engaging with the recreation options in Forest City, and take pride in the offerings. Those who responded provided feedback on additional opportunities, communication, and programming.

We feel that the recommendations offered within this plan will address many of the deficiencies noted from the surveys.

### **Needs Assessment**

When discussing and identifying the needs of the Forest City Recreation Department we tried to look from different viewpoints. We also considered that with the present economy and the financial burden that has been placed upon the Town and its citizens, that there were not any pressing needs for new facilities, so the Parks and Recreation Commission focused more on maintenance and improvements. Over the course of several meetings the responses of the survey, the expertise of the parks and recreation staff, and the expertise of the Parks and Recreation Commission, were all utilized to determine what areas needed the most attention. The recommendations in Section 4 address all needs that were discussed.

### **Section 3 Summary**

As far as the community survey, Forest City had the most accurate addresses based upon information supplied by the utility billing department. We had hoped that we would have received more responses. However, we feel that we received good information from the those who completed surveys, and this information coupled with actual usage data from the parks and recreation department helped to establish the needs that Forest City should address over the next 5 to 10 years.

## Section 4

### Recommendations and Implementation



## **Introduction**

The Town of Forest City Parks and Recreation Plan is based upon a review of the community, an analysis of existing programs and facilities, identification of user needs, and an adherence to stated proposals and recommendations. The plan is designed to provide a framework from which the Town of Forest City can enhance its parks and recreation system. This plan is intended to be implemented over a period of 5 to 10 years.

The goal and purpose of the Forest City Recreation Department is to actively encourage, provide, promote, and protect quality leisure, recreation and cultural opportunities, facilities and environments that are essential for the enhancement of the lives of the citizens of Forest City. This plan is intended to provide recommendations that will improve service delivery and encourage continual improvement.

Instrumental to implementation of the plan is the identification of adequate funding, at a time when balancing municipal budgets throughout the state has become increasingly difficult. The *North Carolina Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan* identified inadequate funding for park facilities and recreation programs as a key issue needing to be addressed in the next five years if government is to maintain basic minimum services. According to the US Census Bureau, per capita funding for parks and recreation services throughout the State of North Carolina, including local government is 33% below the national average. Even though funding is currently low statewide, it does not appear to reflect the high value citizens' place on parks and recreation.

Implementing the plan will result in meeting the present and future needs for parks and recreation services, as well as possibly preserving conservation areas in Forest City. The Town of Forest City will have to continue to consider parks and recreation as an important part of its budget, and earmark funds to continue this important service. The 2005 planning process identified numerous recommendations, (many) that have come to fruition and were built upon in the 2009 update. The 2015 update has kept some of the previous pertinent recommendations and combined them with new recommendations. Also, in keeping with a statement made in Section 3, in light of the current economic downturn that is expected to last well into 2010, the Town should focus on taking care of what we have, and making it the best that it can be.

Areas of focus are ranked on priority at the direction of the Recreation Department.

### **Funding Sources (High Priority) (Ongoing from the 2005 Plan)**

We recommend that the Town of Forest City use a variety of funding strategies to fund these recommendations, including but not limited to: Community Development Block Grants, Land and Water Conservation Fund, Park and Recreation Trust Fund, Clean Water Management Trust Fund, NCDOT as well as private foundations seeking to improve community health and equitable access to recreation opportunities.

Capital Improvement Program-This important budget tool would allow the Town to plan for and prioritize large projects, and then fund them. Generally, capital improvement

programs include all Town departments and shows what services the Town will build or replace, where these services are or will be located, and when the construction or replacement will take place. Usually these CIP's are 5 to 10 year plans.

User Fees and Sponsorships-Practically all recreation departments (including Forest City) researched for the Rutherford County Recreation Plan included the use of user fees and sponsorships. User fees are paid by the participant and help to offset whatever program the participant is participating in. Most municipalities charge a higher fee for participants from outside the municipal boundaries. Sponsorships are generally paid by an individual, business or industry and generally include the team name, uniforms and equipment to be used in team sports programs.

General Tax Revenues-The operation and maintenance of most parks and recreation departments are funded primarily by general tax revenues. Recreation is a public service, and funding should be scheduled along with other Town services. It is also important, that as other sources of recreation revenue increase, the Town should not decrease the amount of funds available from general tax revenues for recreational purposes. Ultimately, it is the decision of the governing body to distribute general tax revenues.

Grant Programs-There are numerous grant programs that can be utilized for parks and recreation programs. Federal programs include the Land and Water Conservation Fund (which can be used for land acquisition and park development) and Community Development Block Grants (which along with housing and infrastructure may be used for recreation purposes). State programs include the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund which provides a dollar for dollar match up to \$500,000 for the development and rehabilitation of parks and recreation facilities, the Clean Water Management Trust Fund which provides funding for acquisition of riparian property and greenways, and NCDOT which can provide enhancement funding for bikeways, sidewalks and other types of trails. Private foundations from financial institutions and banks, large companies (Wal Mart, Target), health insurance companies, and well-focused organizations also have small grant programs for specific needs, including but not limited to purchasing playground equipment, facility and equipment upgrades, program development, and marketing needs.

There are numerous other grant programs, foundations, and funding sources that could be utilized. It should also be noted that the Rutherford County Arts, Parks and Recreation Plan requested that Rutherford County assist the Town of Forest City financially for providing parks and recreation facilities and programming for residents outside of Forest City's corporate boundaries.

## **Partnerships**

High Priority

Ongoing from the 2005 Plan

Parks and recreation opportunities are provided in contemporary societies through a diverse collection of organizations that exist at the neighborhood, state and national level. Leisure service organizations meet the needs of the community by operating within a

broad range of missions, motivations, structures, resources, and techniques. With such a large number of organizations (public, private, and non-profit) playing vital roles in the community, coordination and cooperation between providers is crucial.

The department can benefit by working with the recreation commissioners to develop an independent 501(c) 3 organization to work on behalf of the department. In this model the non-profit organization is a constant partner to the department. The primary role of the non-profit is to promote for the department in the community and raise funds for the department through ongoing effort and/or special project initiatives. Creating a 501(c)3 organization requires filing appropriate paperwork with North Carolina Department of Commerce as well as the Internal Revenue Service. Creating a “friends of the Forest City Recreation Department” organization is traditional partnership model and is a highly encouraged.

Partnerships can be formed with local public, quasi-public, or private entities. Joint use agreements between community partners can assist in meeting the needs of those in the community, while protecting and respecting the assets of the Recreation Department. Opportunities for recreation in both the Town of Forest City, and in Rutherford County may include partnerships with the following types of entities:

- Rutherford County Government
- Rutherford County Schools
- Another Municipality
- User Groups (such as Little League, or RC Soccer Association)
- Adopt-a-Park Programs
- Adopt-a-Trail Programs
- RHI Legacy Foundation or another medical provider (Fitness Activities)
- Kaboom! (playground funding)
- Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Carolina
- Community Forestry (NC Forestry Service)
- Private Sector (such as Business, Industry, Developers, etc.)
- Churches

Partnership agreements are essential to demonstrate the commitment of each party and identify the resources each party will contribute. Regardless of which party (or combination) contributes acquisition, development, operational, maintenance, replacement or other resources, tracking these contributions to strive for a dollar for dollar cost sharing between partners over the life of the project is the goal. Negotiations for these contributions should focus on demonstrating the advantages and disadvantages of each partner’s participation. Issues need to be identified between both parties and solutions to overcome them need to be demonstrated. Some of the key priority issues that need to be addressed within a partnership agreement are:

- Liability issues that face both parties.
- Addressing how both parties will try to reach an equity position of 50/50 cost sharing during a specific time frame.
- Land use and management needs to be addressed so neither parties’ environmental concerns are compromised.

- Joint capital cost development and how both parties need to be involved in the design component, equipment needs, and storage needs.
- It is important that each party share with the other what their mission statement is so there is a greater appreciation of what each party desires to achieve. The key is to get both parties to think on behalf of the overall community first, and their respective needs second.
- In the partnership agreement, each party needs to make a decision on how they will resolve conflicts with each other.
- The partnership agreement is a living document and needs to change in time based on the needs of the community. Facility usage and contribution philosophy will remain consistent in the agreement, but the conditions of the agreement may change.
- If both parties jointly develop a facility or park, a capital enhancement fund needs to be established for ongoing maintenance and facility upgrades.
- Usage within facilities, pricing of activities, schedule of events, equipment, operational issues, tracking process of partner contributions, and review sessions need to be evaluated periodically by both governing bodies.

The Rutherford County Arts, Parks and Recreation Plan, recommended that Rutherford County form a partnership with the Town of Forest City, not only to jointly fund future parks and facilities (such as a possible soccer complex), but for Rutherford County to make a contribution for programming that Forest City is already providing on a per capita basis (similar to Cleveland County) for Rutherford County participants.

### **Information and Communication**

High Priority

Ongoing from the 2005 Plan

One of the issues identified in all of the surveys performed in Rutherford County, was that there were numerous people in each planning jurisdiction that do not know what is offered, who contacts are for various leagues, where facilities are located, and where parks are located. In the Rutherford County Arts, Parks and Recreation Plan it was recommended that a clearinghouse be created to disseminate this information. It was recommended that a part-time person be hired at the Tourism Development Authority to put together a contact list, and be able to put this information (by local forms of media) out on a monthly or quarterly basis. Forest City needs to identify a contact person to work with the County for information related to Forest City. Forest City also needs to create and update a brochure with information on different programs, contacts, and calendars. Forest City could create an information sign along Main Street at Cool Springs Gym that could post current events, tournaments, sign-ups, etc. Forest City also needs to keep the Forest City Recreation web page updated.

### **Facility Linkage**

Medium Priority

Ongoing from the 2005 Plan

One item that both State and National Park people like to see (especially when applying for grant funding) is how park and recreation facilities are linked. This can be done by sidewalks, bikeways, greenways with trails, and rails to trails. As noted in James F. Crowe Park Renovations, James F. Crowe Park is not easy for pedestrians to get to. It should also be noted that Callison Recreation Center does not have access for pedestrians without walking on streets with traffic. All other Forest City parks and facilities are linked by sidewalks. The Town is currently going through a pedestrian planning process lead by Don Kostelec. This comprehensive bike and pedestrian plan is called Heart and Sole. The completed plan will be adopted by DATE. It will be available for the Recreation department, and added as an addendum to this plan. Design and construction work for the Rail to Trail project being led by the Town will also be included upon completion.

Map 3 shows where all 100 year floodplains are located within Forest City that could be used to create greenways and trails. Map 4 shows current sidewalks and the railroad track that travels through the center of Town. New sidewalks could be created, and the current rails to trails that stops in Spindale could be extended to Alexander Mills. Funding sources have already been identified in this section regarding sidewalks and greenways.

### **Relationships with User Groups**

High Priority

Ongoing from the 2005 Plan

In an effort to make user groups more aware of rules and regulations governing the usage of Forest City Parks and Recreation Facilities, budgetary constraints, scheduling, and to better understand the needs of our user groups the following is proposed:

- Creation of a user's handbook governing the usage of all parks and facilities to be received by the head of all user groups utilizing said parks and facilities that would address such issues as code of behavior, scheduling of fields for maintenance, scheduling the fields for practice, and any other topic that may be deemed appropriate.
- The Forest City Recreation Commission shall appoint one member of the commission to act as a liaison with all user groups utilizing Forest City Parks and Recreation Facilities.

### **Recreation Planning**

Medium Priority

Being in the midst of a tight economy does not lend itself well to new and expensive projects. But this does not mean that you cannot continue to plan for new future facilities when the time and economy is right. The Parks and Recreation Commission discussed several planning activities that could benefit the Town of Forest City in the Future. The five areas that the Commission thought that could use some planning efforts were:

- Community Walkability-the development of a pedestrian and possibly a bicycle plan. Walking is still the number one recreation activity in the country today and

the Town could expand its pedestrian and bicycle ways. This would encourage desirable neighborhoods, and could possibly help with facility linkage.

- The Town could develop a site specific park plan for the unused portion of James F. Crowe Park. There is a lot of undeveloped acreage along the Second Broad River that could be utilized for a number of recreation activities. In the event the Town wanted to apply for a Parks and Recreation Trust Fund Grant, a site specific park plan would maximize points in the scoring system.
- Develop a site specific park plan for the usage for the old elementary school that currently houses the Rutherford Opportunity Center. Determine if the Town could utilize the building and grounds for future parks and recreation purposes.
- Creation, programming development, support and connectivity through the construction of certified Rail-to-Trail. The trail development was initiated in 2015 when Forest City purchased the old Thermal Belt rail corridor. This is included the Heart to Sole Plan. Maps of this the planned facility are included with this plan.
- The Town should consider the creation of mini-parks in the downtown business district supports walkability and livability in small towns. Mini parks promote pedestrian comfort, provide opportunities for social interaction, and are a way to support economic and community development.

## **Staffing**

### High Priority

The Parks and Recreation Department has a tremendous amount of area to maintain, and with the addition of McNair Field since the adoption of the 2005 plan, this area has grown. The department lost some maintenance workers due to recent budget cuts and this has made it harder to keep up with park maintenance. The department would like to add one full time maintenance worker.

## **Facility Improvements (Medium to High Priority)**

The following improvements should be scheduled for the Town's existing parks over the next 5 to 10 years:

### **James F. Crowe Park:**

1. Relighting of all baseball fields – Completed
2. Repair of fencing. 1 Field Completed
3. Repair of field drainage, regarding and resurfacing of ball fields.
4. Tree Planting (for screening and shade).
5. Continued replacement of aging playground equipment.

### **Hardin Road Park:**

1. Resurfacing of basketball courts.

### **Charles R. Summey II Park:**

1. New maintenance and storage building.
2. Consider and review a parking study to improve safety and walkability. Supporting documents are attached.

**Callison Recreation Center/Clay Street Pool:**

1. Recoat the tennis courts. (2 courts completed)
2. Refinish the pool bottom surface.
3. Expand areas inside the fence around the pool.
4. Develop some shade structures and picnic shelter for around the pool.
5. Replace the gym floor.

**New Park Benches at various parks and facilities, as well as along certain pedestrian walks.**

**Programming**

Medium Priority

Ongoing

Based upon the survey response there were several areas of programming needs. Walking has been discussed, but the other was volleyball. The recreation department should consider forms of volleyball programming. This could be various leagues, lessons or camps.

The recreation department should consider an ongoing manner to gather input to develop future programming. This could be surveying users or user groups, any way to continue to develop the department and offer new programs that would be utilized by its citizens.

**Fees**

Medium Priority

Ongoing

Each year the Parks and Recreation Department should review its user fee structure to determine the most equitable way to generate funds to offset costs of facility and program operations.

**Section 4 Summary**

As stated earlier, this plan is to be implemented over the next 5 to 10 years. However, as with all plans, changes and amendments should be occur as they are anticipated. This plan and its recommendations should be reviewed on a yearly basis by the Parks and Recreation Commission to determine what recommendations have been implemented, which recommendations need to be addressed in the short term, and to determine if any changes or new recommendations need to be addressed or included within this plan.

## **Resources**

Town of Forest City 2014-2015 Budget

<http://www.townofforestcity.com/Reports/2014%20to%202015%20Budget.pdf>

Pedestrian Planning / Heart and Sole

The adopted plan will be added to this page upon completion.

Trail to Trail Project

Maps

Regional Trail Map

<http://www.regionc.org/IPDC/Docs/Innovatetrailsbrochure.pdf>

Summey Park

Parking Facility Improvement Drawings