

WATAUGA COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEMWIDE PLAN



2010-2019

Watauga County Parks & Recreation Department
Stephen Poulos, Director
231 Complex Drive
Boone, North Carolina 28607
828-264-9511

Prepared with assistance from:
High Country Council of Governments
Kelly Coffey, Planner
Jessica Brannock, Geographic Information Systems Planner
468 New Market Blvd
Boone, North Carolina 28607
828-265-5434

WATAUGA COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEMWIDE PLAN 2010-2019

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

I. Introduction & Purpose.....	1
Background	
Plan summary	
Limitations & revisions	
II. Need for Parks & Recreation.....	3
III. Population Patterns & Implications	6
IV. Health & Fitness.....	7
V. Natural Features & Climate.....	8
Climate	
Surface Water	
Topographic Regions	
Locations of Recreation Facilities	

THE PLAN: INPUTS, ANALYSIS, & RECOMMENDATIONS

VI. Existing Facilities.....	11
Overview	
Watauga County	
public schools	
community parks	
towns	
Appalachian State University	
state and national parks	
Detailed Inventory	
Watauga River South Communities	
Watauga River North Communities	
New River Communities	
Central Communities	
Blue Ridge East Communities	
Blue Ridge South Communities	

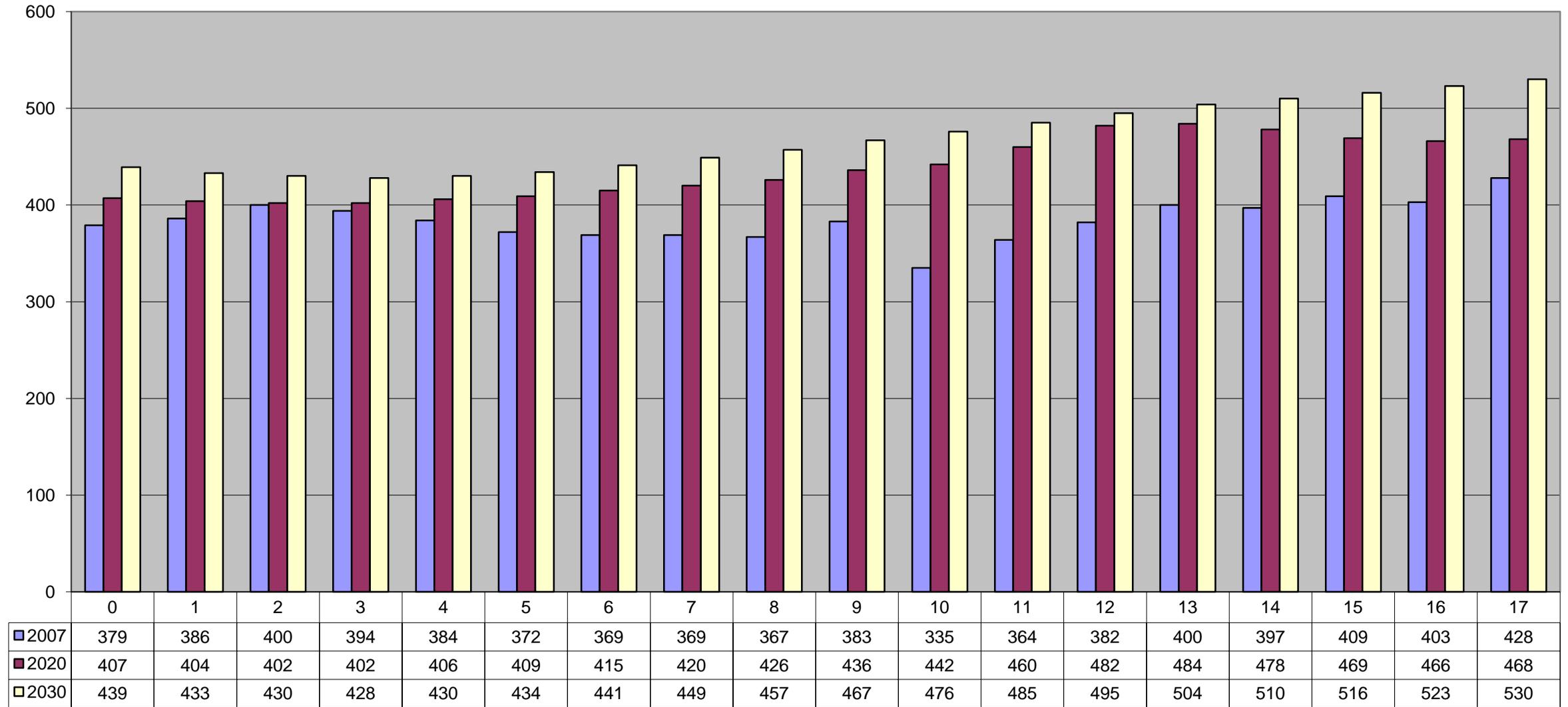
VII. Public Input & Other Needs Assessment.....25
 Analysis of Citizen Survey
 North Carolina Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan
 Priorities of other recreation providers

VIII. Programs.....36

IX. Recommendations.....42

X. Appendices.....45
 1. Outdoor Casual map
 2. Outdoor Sports Fields map
 3. Indoor Facilities map
 4. Physical Activity Guidelines
 5. Watauga County Eating Smart & Moving More
 6. Percentage Meeting Physical Activity Requirements
 7. Percentage Overweight
 8. Key Health Indicators
 9. Temperature & Precipitation maps (source: *North Carolina People & Environments*)
 10. Heating & Cooling Degree Days maps (*NC People & Environments*)
 11. North Carolina Community Schools Act
 12. Watauga County Community Use of School Facilities policy
 13. Glen Burney Trail map
 14. Moses Cone Park map
 15. Price Park map
 16. Tanawah Trail map
 17. Grandfather Mountain Trail map
 18. Town of Boone Greenway & State Farm Area Trails map
 19. High Country Regional Trail Plan
 20. citizens survey
 21. community meetings

Population Projections Children



The purpose of this document is to help Watauga County government make informed decisions regarding recreation facilities over the next decade. The same information will be available to other recreation providers in the county (e.g. municipalities, schools, camps, etc.), which they may find useful for their recreation planning. The master plan will enable the County and others to achieve the following objectives:

- ensure that decisions regarding future facilities are based on wants and needs of citizens, and that new facilities will be used
- ensure that future facilities will be available, accessible, and convenient to as much of the county's population as possible
- consider the need for recreation facilities in the context of Watauga County's climate, topography, population patterns & trends, other recreation providers, and other factors
- maximize the impact of each dollar spent on recreation
- plan with existing resources in mind, maximize the use of existing facilities, and consider recreation offered by other entities
- ensure that the recreational concerns of all citizens and groups are addressed
- avoid duplication of facilities and services where duplication is unnecessary and undesired

Background

Watauga County's most recent recreation master plan was produced in 1999. That plan anticipated the development of the Anne Marie Fields, an indoor recreation center, continued development of community parks, and the establishment and extension of greenway trails. Several of these goals have been achieved, some have not; a few facilities have closed, while unforeseen facilities have been built as a result of unexpected opportunities and public demand. For example, the Carroll Leather Park and Coleman Field no longer exist while Brookshire Park and the Ted Mackorell Soccer Complex are two of the most notable new facilities. Other recreation providers (other than the County government) have established new recreation opportunities that are open to county citizens, such as Elk Knob State Park, Payne Branch Park, Green Valley Community Park, Todd Island Community Park, and Durham Park on the ASU campus. Watauga County is exceptional in that numerous other recreation providers are active in our jurisdiction: towns, state government, federal government, the university, community organizations, churches, camps & retreat centers. Numerous local recreation opportunities exist that are not targeted specifically to county residents, but yet are accessible to Watauga citizens. Despite the overwhelming number of recreation opportunities in the county, significant gaps do exist. The purpose of this plan is to identify those recreational gaps and plan the process of filling them.

Plan Summary

This master plan identifies recreational needs of the county's citizens using various methods such as household surveys, interviews with staff, stakeholder interviews, and community meetings. The benefits of recreation in general are listed, along with an explanation of the role of recreation in successful communities and the need for local government support. Current programs are analyzed, especially in relation to their use of facilities. Existing recreation facilities are listed and described in order to identify resources that presently may not be fully recognized and utilized, but have significant potential. Transportation routes, population patterns & projections, and natural features are considered in relation to existing and future recreation facilities. All of this information is analyzed to produce recommendations for future facilities.

Limitations and revisions

This document is a guide for recreation planning, but not a prescription. Adoption of the plan should not be interpreted as a rigid, step-by-step directive for facility construction. All recommendations are dependent on funding availability, meaning that even the most highly desired and needed facilities may remain unrealized for several years before they can be adequately financed. A separate financial plan with progress dates (typically referred to as a Capital Improvement Plan) can be created, but such a document is not within the bounds of this broad plan.

Recreation priorities can change rapidly due to cultural trends, fluctuating costs, and activities of private businesses and organizations. Other variables include unexpected donations and unique opportunities tied to a particular form of recreation, occurrences in neighboring counties, and numerous other factors. Various efforts have been made to accurately forecast the recreation needs and wants of the Watauga County citizenry, and the feasibility of achieving these objectives. This plan, however, reflects situations and outlooks at a particular point in time, and may be amended as necessary to remain current and relevant.

II. THE NEED FOR PARKS AND RECREATION

The need for recreation facilities and programs in a rural county located in a rural region may not be obvious. The seeming abundance of open space and natural landscapes offers an impression of opportunities to recreate, enjoy nature, and relax. The fact that Watauga is a resort area and tourist destination reinforces the perception that recreation is close at hand, with little need for deliberate provision.

When examined closely, however, these perceptions are misleading. While many Watauga citizens are rural residents, most live an urban or suburban lifestyle on single-family lots and commute to typical 40-hour/week jobs. The availability of recreation in Watauga County (and elsewhere) is usually an issue of access, facilities development, and organization. While open space may be abundant, access to it is not universal. Even where access is available, barriers may be present and/or facilities may not exist to make recreation possible (a potential streamside walk, for example, may be impossible due to vegetation and fencing). In addition, much meaningful recreation is a community activity; requiring planning, organization, and structure.

The State of North Carolina's Recreation Enabling Law (G.S. 160A Article 18) declares "the lack of adequate recreational programs and facilities is a menace to the morals, happiness, and welfare of the people of this State." Recreation is a basic human physical and mental need, widely recognized as essential to the proper functioning of society, and as important as other local government services such as waste disposal, law enforcement, or education. Recreation as a government service ensures that all citizens- regardless of income level- have access to parks and recreation. Because government is not motivated by profit, it is able to provide parks and natural areas that may not produce income directly, but do have a value to society. Local governments offer stability and permanency to parks and basic recreation facilities that might otherwise be subject to changing economic conditions or fads.

Resource-Based and User-Oriented Facilities

Recreation facilities can be categorized as resource-based or user-oriented. Resource-based facilities are focused on natural or semi-natural *features* such as rivers, lakes, geologic features, scenic settings, etc. They usually encompass many acres and are significant to a broad constituency; i.e. having regional or national significance. Examples in Watauga County include Elk Knob and the Blue Ridge Parkway. Typical providers of resource-based recreation are state and federal agencies.

User-oriented facilities focus on a particular *activity*, such as ball games and picnicking. These activities usually require a relatively small land area, and typically are not dependent on a natural feature; hence they can be established most anywhere. Municipalities typically focus on providing user-oriented facilities- such as ball fields, tennis courts, and playgrounds- because of space limitations.

Counties customarily fit in the middle of this recreation spectrum; i.e. many counties are responsible for providing both resource-based *and* user-oriented facilities. Some natural features in a given county may be attractive, but have little, if any, regional or national significance. Small towns cannot reasonably serve a large rural population beyond their municipal boundaries with user-oriented facilities. Therefore counties fill the gap.

Many resource-based recreation facilities in Watauga County are along the Blue Ridge Parkway. More recently, North Carolina has established state parks at Elk Knob and Grandfather Mountain. Because of these state and federal facilities, and others in neighboring counties, Watauga County has focused more on user-oriented facilities. In addition, towns in Watauga County have had limited recreation programs and facilities (though many have been added in

recent years) primarily because of their small size. Blowing Rock, for example, has had a recreation director and a very active program for many years, but does not have the capacity, nor the obligation, to serve a large rural population beyond its corporate boundaries. Consequently, County recreation has operated more like a municipal program in order to meet the needs of county citizens.

The provision of recreation is a common service offered by most local governments, but the benefits of recreation to a locality are not always fully recognized and appreciated. Various studies and research show how recreation has a significant positive impact on everything from mental health to economic development. These benefits are far-reaching and widespread. A national survey of perceptions of local recreation and park services, for example, revealed that 71% of *non-users* said they received some benefit from their communities' parks and recreational services (e.g. preventing juvenile delinquency, et al).

Benefits of parks and recreation are as follows:

Social capital Social capital is “the collective value of all social networks and the inclination that arise from these networks to do things for each other.”¹ Recreation enables social interactions that benefit endeavors where collective efforts are essential for success; e.g. government, charitable undertakings, business, and other aspects of the social order.



Health Beyond the obvious health benefits of exercise associated with active recreation, passive recreation and parks have important health implications as well. One study states, “In terms of overall health, local park and recreation users reported fewer visits to a physician for purposes other than check-ups than did non-park users, even when controlling for the effects of age, income, education level, health status, and other possibly influencing factors.”² At a time when increasing health care costs is a major societal concern, the provision of recreation and exercise opportunities could have positive healthcare economic implications magnified beyond the immediate cost of the facilities.

Mental health Though more difficult to measure and quantify, recreation can definitely have a significant positive impact on a person's mental health. Exercise is widely recognized as a significant factor in the prevention and treatment of depression. Research has revealed “that just the act of driving by parks and green spaces is related to stress relief.” Community recreation alleviates loneliness and strengthens social ties that are critical to a balanced lifestyle.

Personal Development Meaningful recreation enhances self-esteem, encourages maturity, and aids in other positive character developments.

¹ Don DeGraaf & Deb Jordan *Social Capital: How Parks & Recreation help to build community*

² “Parks, Recreation, & Public Health” Ho, Ching-Hua et al *Parks & Recreation – Research Update April 2003*

Water quality The collective effect of parks and other natural areas (even grassy ballfields) helps filter-out pollutants that potentially could contaminate drinking water sources, both surface and ground water. Improved water quality reduces water treatment costs, lessens health threats, and benefits fish and other wildlife with economic value.

Flood prevention & stormwater management Parks and ballfields absorb rainfall, reducing runoff which lessens the likelihood of flooding.

Crime prevention North Carolina's recreation enabling law frankly states that lack of recreation "is a menace to the morals" of its citizens. Though a cliché, several studies support the notion that recreation gives people (especially youths) "something to do" thus "keeping them out of trouble." Beyond this obvious influence though, the cumulative impact of recreational benefits such as social capital, economic development, mental health benefits, and personal development would seemingly help create a community environment that is not conducive to criminal activity.

Economic value Parks usually increase the value of nearby properties, which in turn increases property tax revenue. The need for clothing and equipment associated with recreation programs stimulates retail sales.

Economic development "Corporate CEOs say quality of life for employees is the third-most important factor in locating a business, behind only access to domestic markets and availability of skilled labor. Owners of small companies ranked recreation/parks/open space as the highest priority in choosing a new location for their business."³

³ Trust for Public Land

III. POPULATION PATTERNS & IMPLICATIONS

Population projections for Watauga County through 2030 exhibit a significant total population increase (an increase of 5,799 residents or approximately 13% between 2010 & 2020), but no dramatic change in the age proportions. The most remarkable change is the rise in the proportion of older children (preteens & teens) compared to the present proportions, which are roughly even. (see Attachment 1 *Watauga County Population Projections* & Attachment 2 *Children Population Projections*)

A factor not reflected in the population numbers alone is that people are more likely to be healthy at all ages. According to the latest North Carolina State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, “Even with millions more people reaching retirement age, the number of people in nursing homes declined nationwide during the 1990s, according to surveys by the Duke Center for Demographic Studies. The center also found that Medicare recipients are much less likely to be disabled than 20 years ago....people are remaining active in their chosen activities longer in life, creating additional demand for outdoor recreation areas and facilities.” The same could be said for indoor facilities as well.

Recreation planning based on demographics

Since the composition of the county’s population will change little, the *type* of recreation provided (based on population alone) will not need to change, assuming that recreation needs of all age groups are currently being met. The only exception is a possible increase in recreation forms that appeal to older children, as this age cohort will change proportionally. Otherwise, the *quantity* of recreation will need to increase to match the gains in population.

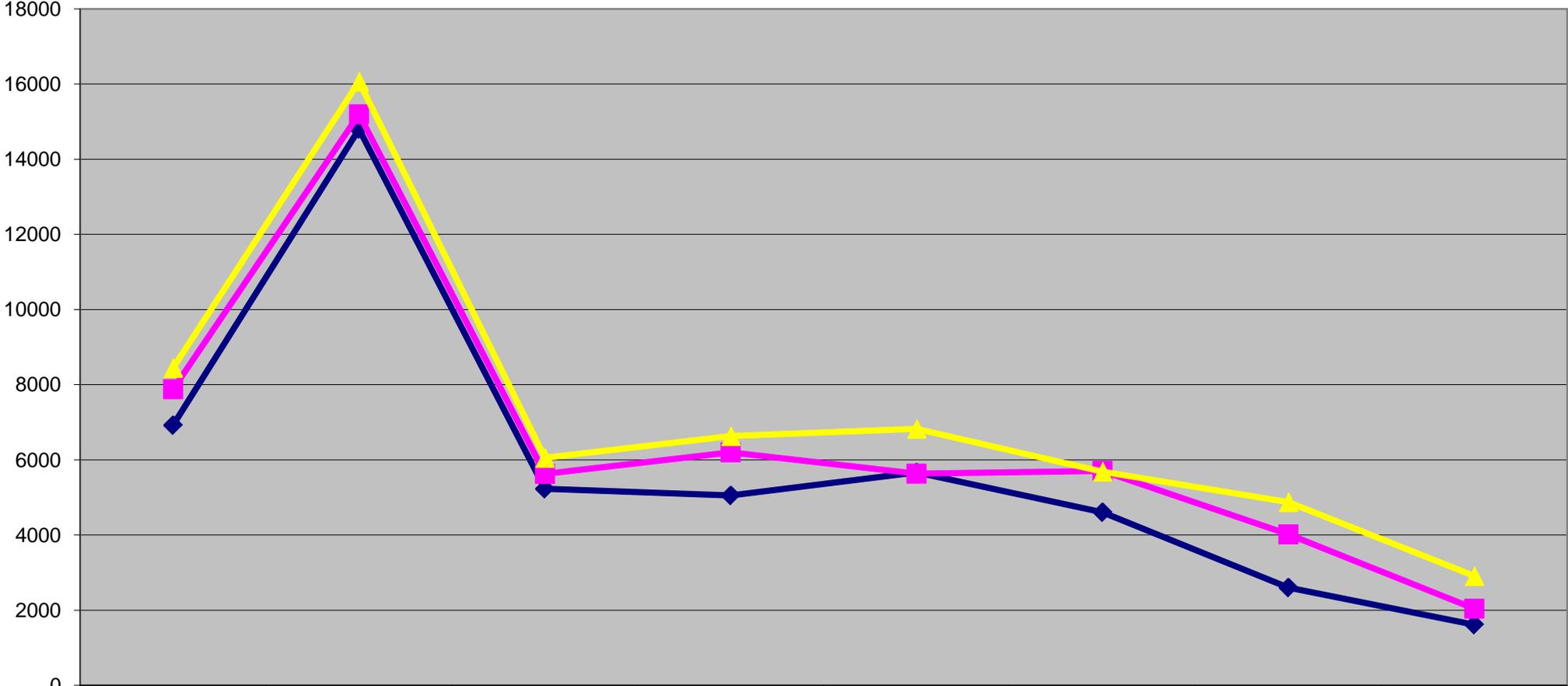
Population distribution

Population distribution is illustrated in the Attachment 3 *Population Density by Township* map, and the Attachment 4 *Land Parcel Density* map. Though each of these maps have limitations (for example, not all land parcels are occupied by a dwelling unit) the patterns generally correspond with the actual locations of residences. The maps show that the population distribution of Watauga County is characterized by concentrations in the geographic center and south, with secondary concentrations in the Watauga and New River Valleys. Population density generally falls toward the county periphery (Beech Mountain, Foscoe, and Blowing Rock are significant exceptions) As might be expected, major transportation routes follow these patterns as well. See Topographic Regions section for additional information on natural factors affecting population distribution.

The current distribution of recreation facilities (see Appendix pages 1-3) generally corresponds to the denser population concentrations.

Watauga County Population Projections

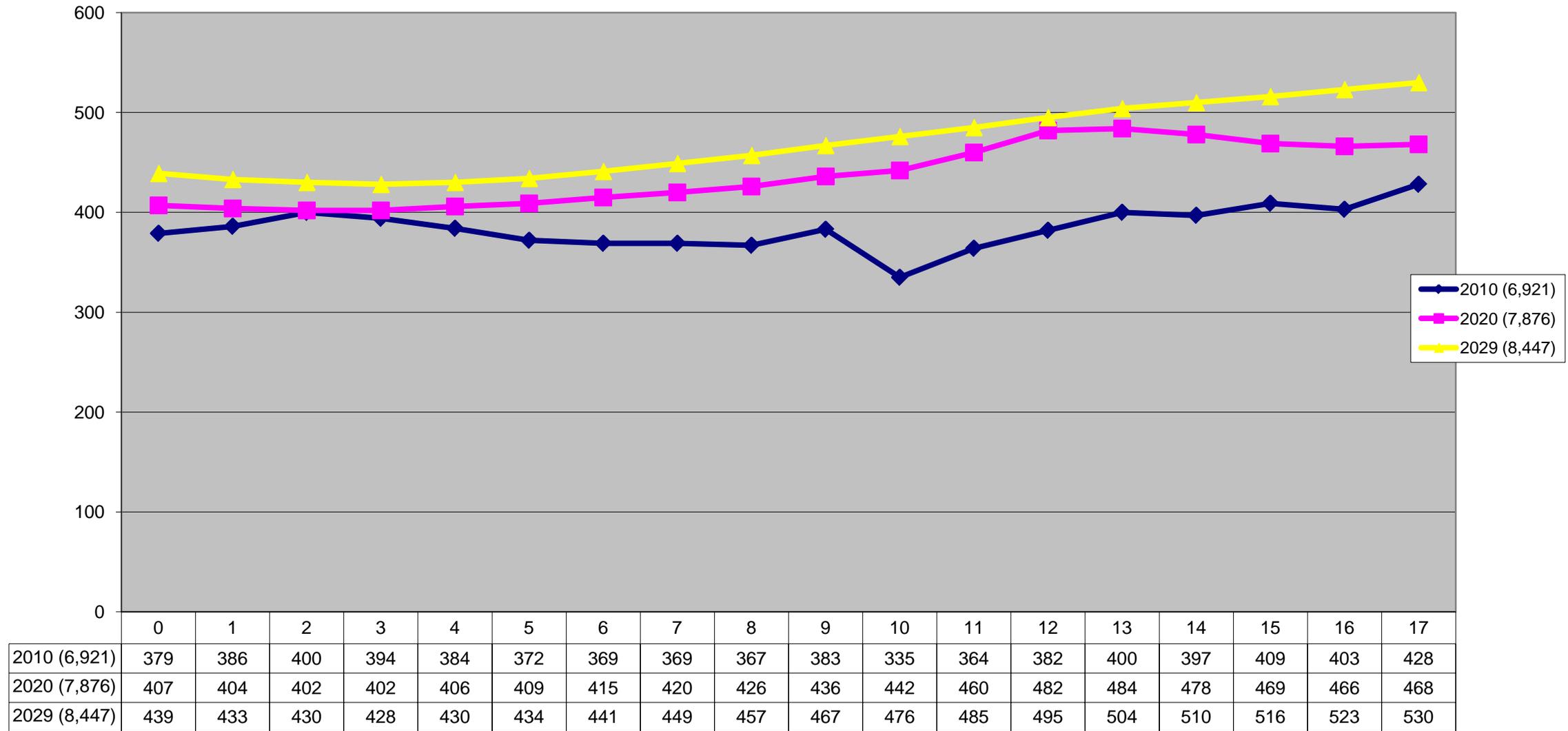
Source: North Carolina Office of State Budget & Management



	0-17	18-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70-79	80+
2010 (46,481)	6921	14801	5228	5051	5663	4604	2600	1613
2020 (52,280)	7876	15194	5623	6195	5631	5704	4017	2040
2029 (57,494)	8447	16064	6053	6634	6826	5686	4875	2909

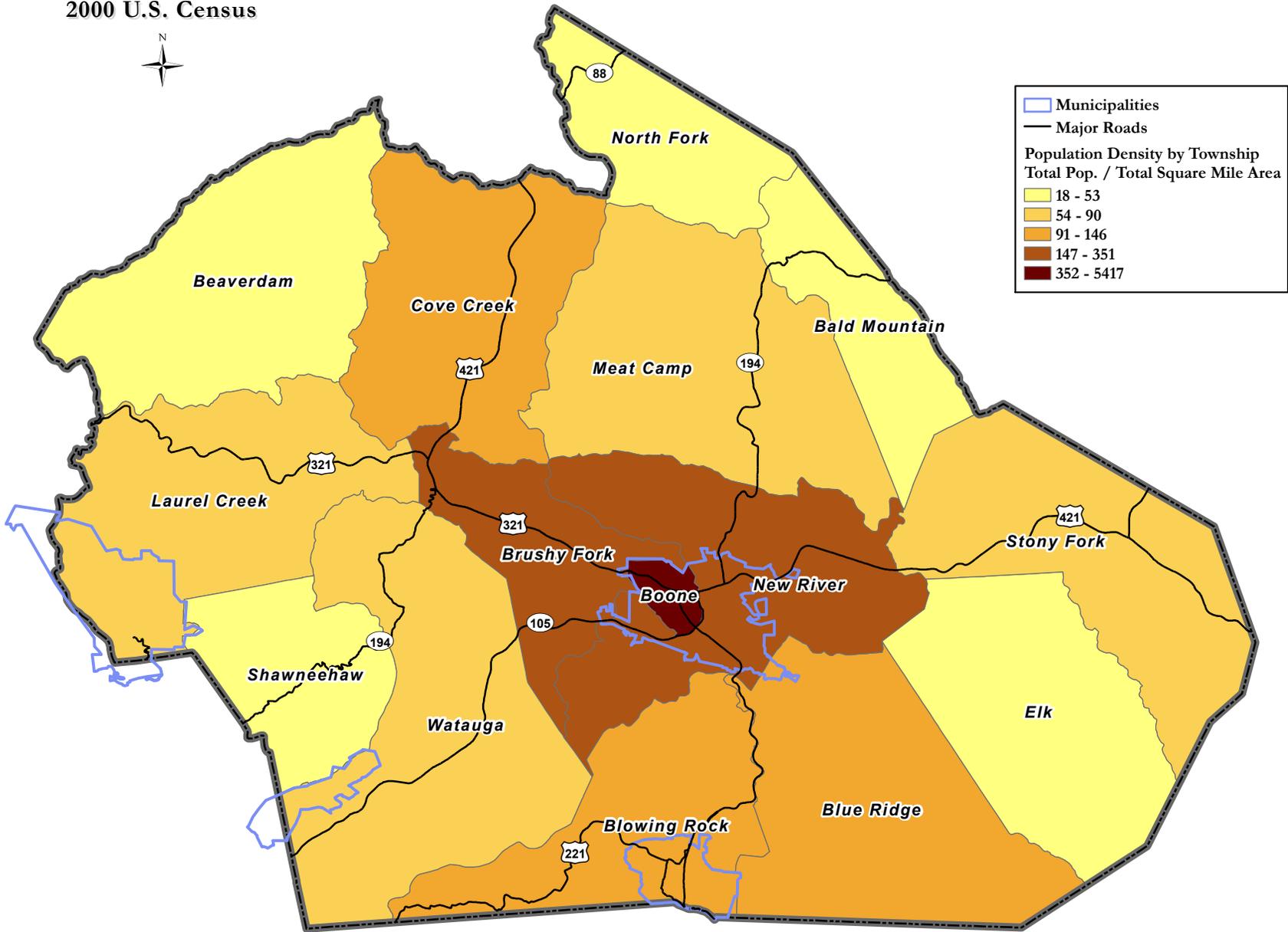
Watauga County Children Population Projections

Source: North Carolina Office of State Budget & Management



Watauga County

Population Density by Township
2000 U.S. Census



Watauga County

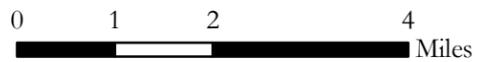
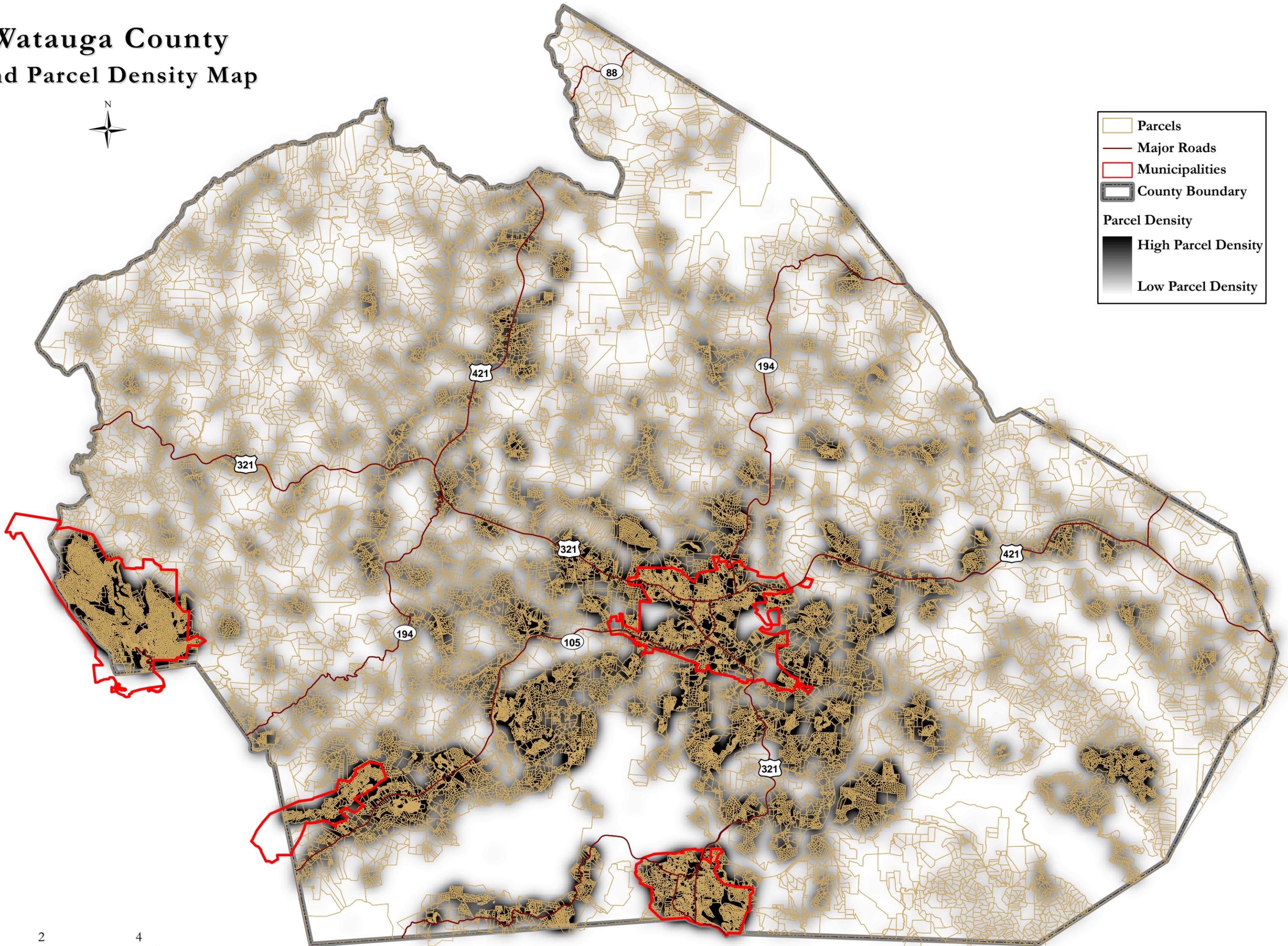
Land Parcel Density Map



-  Parcels
-  Major Roads
-  Municipalities
-  County Boundary

Parcel Density

-  High Parcel Density
-  Low Parcel Density



IV. HEALTH & FITNESS

Research shows a strong correlation between regular exercise and good health. Physical activity can lower the risk of early death, heart disease, stroke, diabetes, high blood pressure, some cancers, depression, and other maladies.

The U.S. Department of Health & Human Services' recommendations for physical activity are as follows:

Ages 6-17

- one hour or more of physical activity every day; most should be at least moderate aerobic activity
- vigorous-intensity activity at least three days per week
- muscle-strengthening & bone-strengthening activity at least three days per week

Adults

- at least 2 ½ hours of moderate-intensity activity per week (or equivalent combination with vigorous-intensity aerobic; see Appendix 4)
- muscle-strengthening activities that involve all major muscle groups two or more days per week

According to statistics compiled by Eat Smart Move More North Carolina⁴, Watauga County compares favorably with the rest of North Carolina for meeting the physical activity recommendations, but in absolute terms most of the county's population does not. In Watauga County 55% are not getting recommended physical activity, compared to 58% statewide. 61% of the county's population is overweight or obese compared to 63% of North Carolina (see Appendix 5-7).

Charted below (for sources see Appendix 8) are various health indicators where exercise and recreation can be factors. Watauga County compares favorably with the rest of the state in every category except suicides. Nevertheless, conclusions that could be drawn from this data are mixed, since the statewide indicators themselves may not be ideal.

Per 100,000 population	Watauga County	North Carolina
Total deaths	≤ 899	875
Heart disease death rate	≤ 199	238
Cancer incidence rate	425	437
Cancer death rate	Less than 180	205

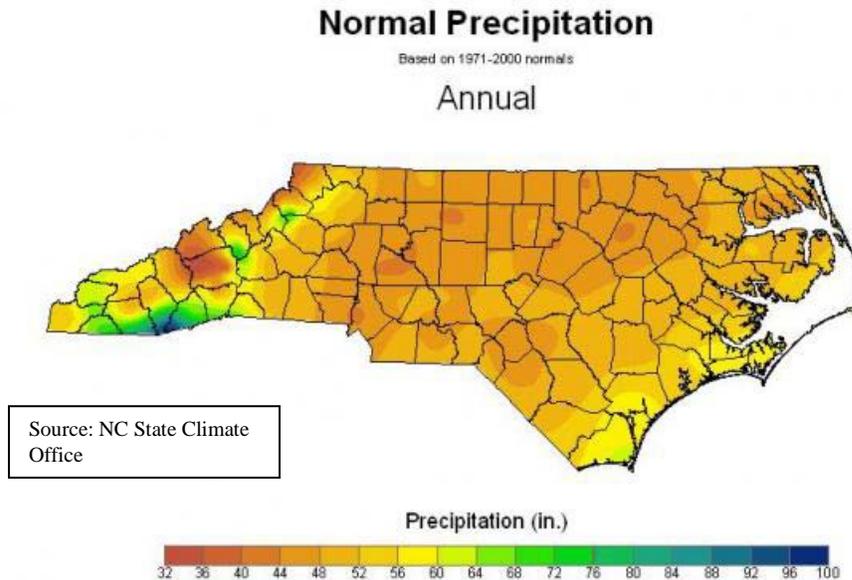
Per 100,000 population	1992-96	1997-2001	2002-06
Diabetes death rate NC	24.7	26.6	27.1
Diabetes death rate Watauga	13.4	19.0	15.2
Suicide rate NC	12.2	11.4	11.6
Suicide rate Watauga	13.1	16.9	15.4
Homicide rate NC	10.3	7.9	7.2
Homicide rate Watauga	3.7	0.9	3.0

⁴ Eat Smart Move More North Carolina is a multi-agency partnership, including Cooperative Extension, N.C Medical Society, NC Div of Public Health, Farm Bureau, and many others, "that promotes increased opportunities for healthy eating and physical activity." More information is available at www.eatsmartmovemorenc.com.

V. NATURAL FEATURES & CLIMATE

CLIMATE

Watauga County's climate is characterized by four distinct seasons, with cold winters and moderately warm summers. Temperatures also vary considerably according to elevation. Seasonal transition times in the fall and spring often result in unpredictably wide temperature fluctuations over a short period of time. The average date of the last spring freeze is around mid May, and the average date of the first fall freeze is late September, resulting in a growing season of a little over three months (varying with elevation). These dates very roughly correspond to the time period when games and other recreation activities can be comfortably scheduled outdoors. Though many pleasant days occur before and after this timeframe, the weather becomes more unpredictable for any given day the farther way from the growing season. As shown in Appendix 9, Watauga ranks at or near the top among the coldest counties in the state, and also receives a great deal of rainfall and snow, compared to other counties. As the maps show, there is marked variation in temperature and precipitation *within* the county as well. Watauga's frequently wet and chilly climate affects opportunities for outdoor recreation, and makes planning games and other activities difficult.



A meteorological measure called “heating degree days” or “cooling degree days” provides an alternative method of calculating the *intensity* of temperature highs and lows, in addition to averages. A degree day is based on average daily temperatures above

or below 65°F. For example, if the average daily temperature in Boone on a given day is 25°F, the number of heating degree days is 40 (65-20=45) for that particular day. Likewise, if the average daily temperature is 75°F, the number of cooling degree days is 10 (75-65=10).⁵ As illustrated in Appendix 10, Watauga is among those counties with the highest number of heating degree days in the state (up to 8,300 compared to as little as 2,470 for much of the state). Similarly, Watauga is among those with the lowest number of cooling degree days, with some of the highest elevations having zero (i.e. no daily average temperature above 65°F). These figures further illustrate the harshness of the county's climate and the need for indoor recreation alternatives.

⁵ The terms “heating” and “cooling” obviously are not descriptive of the outdoor temperature, but rather refer to heating a building on a cold day, or cooling a building on a hot day. For example, the larger the number of heating degree days, the more heat is required to warm a building. “Days” is not a measure of time (as in 24 hrs) but simply a way to express this unit of measurement.

SURFACE WATER

The headwater streams for several river basins begin in Watauga County: the New River in the east, the Yadkin River in the southeast, the Watauga River in the west, and a small area with headwater streams of the Johns River (Catawba River basin) in the south near Blowing Rock. The wide variation in streamflow- from seeps & bogs to small rivers- offers a variety of scenic settings, wildlife observation opportunities, and recreation. Waterfalls, for example, are common, and several streams are large enough for canoeing and rafting. (see following Attachment 5 & 6 *River Basins & Streams and Designated Trout Water*)

TOPOGRAPHIC REGIONS

Familiarity with the county's topography (i.e. terrain, or lay of the land) enables one to understand existing population and transportation patterns, which in turn, guide the placement and success of future recreation facilities. Topography is especially significant in Watauga County because the geographic features themselves (e.g. mountains, rivers) are recreation facilities, and usually accessible with only minimum support facilities.

Watauga County is located in the North Carolina mountains. Most of the county lies west of the Blue Ridge escarpment, with about 20% of the land area situated on the escarpment itself (i.e. the Triplett community and surrounding areas). Watauga's topography can be described generally as a mountainous spine running north-south through the center of the county, with two significant river valleys (the Watauga and New) on either side. (see following Attachment 7 Topography map) The spine consists of Flattop, Rich, and Snake Mountains, among others. The town of Boone is situated at the geographic center of the county, at the center of the mountainous spine, and also at the convergence of the New and Watauga River Valleys.

A secondary topographic feature is a highland area in southwestern Watauga that includes portions of Hanging Rock, Grandfather, and Beech Mountains. This high elevation area is mirrored in the southeast by the low elevation area along the Blue Ridge escarpment (the Triplett area). Even though it contains the lowest elevations in the county, the area is generally steep and rugged due to the precipitous drop in elevation.

A major topographic feature of the county is the **Watauga River valley**, which includes the Cove Creek tributary, the Beaverdam Creek tributary, and the communities in this watershed: Valle Crucis, Bethel, Sugar Grove, Zionville, etc. The **New River valley** somewhat mirrors the Watauga in the east, but its floodplain is less pronounced, and generally lies at a higher elevation. This area includes the communities of Todd, Deep Gap, Meat Camp, Rutherford, and others. The **Blue Ridge** includes communities in southern Watauga that are located on the crest of or near the Blue Ridge escarpment: Boone, Blowing Rock, Aho, Triplett, Stony Fork, and Bamboo. Foscoe, Seven Devils, Grandfather community, and Beech Mountain in **Southwestern Watauga** form a distinct section characterized by higher elevations.

Though Boone is mostly within the New River watershed, all the sections converge at its central location, making it reasonably accessible from almost all areas of the county. Beech Mountain, Triplett, and the North Fork community -located at extreme ends of the county- are somewhat disconnected from these overall patterns due to topography and road patterns.

Several factors influence potential locations for recreation facilities, including proximity to population concentrations, accessibility, available land/structures, other nearby facilities, and landform characteristics (e.g. amount of grading needed). Geographic proximity to a community

alone, for example, does not guarantee a desirable site if the site is not on a main thoroughfare or requires excessive grading. The topographic features described above and their influence on population and transportation patterns should be considered when planning recreation facilities. Though most Watauga residents are inherently mindful of these features and patterns from everyday living, a deliberate awareness and analysis of the county's topography will result in confident placement of future recreation facilities.

LOCATIONS OF RECREATION FACILITIES

Based on topography, transportation, and population patterns, many future recreation facilities will need to be centrally located in order to be widely accessible and available to the largest number of citizens. Even without a plan, many existing recreation facilities have followed this pattern for the same reasons (essentially the same reasons for the location of the county seat when the county was formed in 1849).

Such a plan, however, does not exclude *all* recreation facilities from areas beyond the center. Walking trails and playgrounds, for example, are less costly facilities that could be distributed more broadly. Many facilities that are typically utilized by individuals (rather than teams or large groups) would be feasible for sparsely populated communities. Also, unforeseen circumstances such as a gift of land or a large financial donation might make a facility feasible in an area where otherwise it would not be cost-effective.

The Blue Ridge Parkway and its parks have provided the southern portion of the county with accessible regional recreation facilities. With the recent addition and expansion of Elk Knob State Park, the northern portion of the county will have closer access to regional facilities as well.



Foscoe/Grandfather Community Park

Watauga County

NC Wildlife Resource Commission's
Designated Public Mountain Trout Water

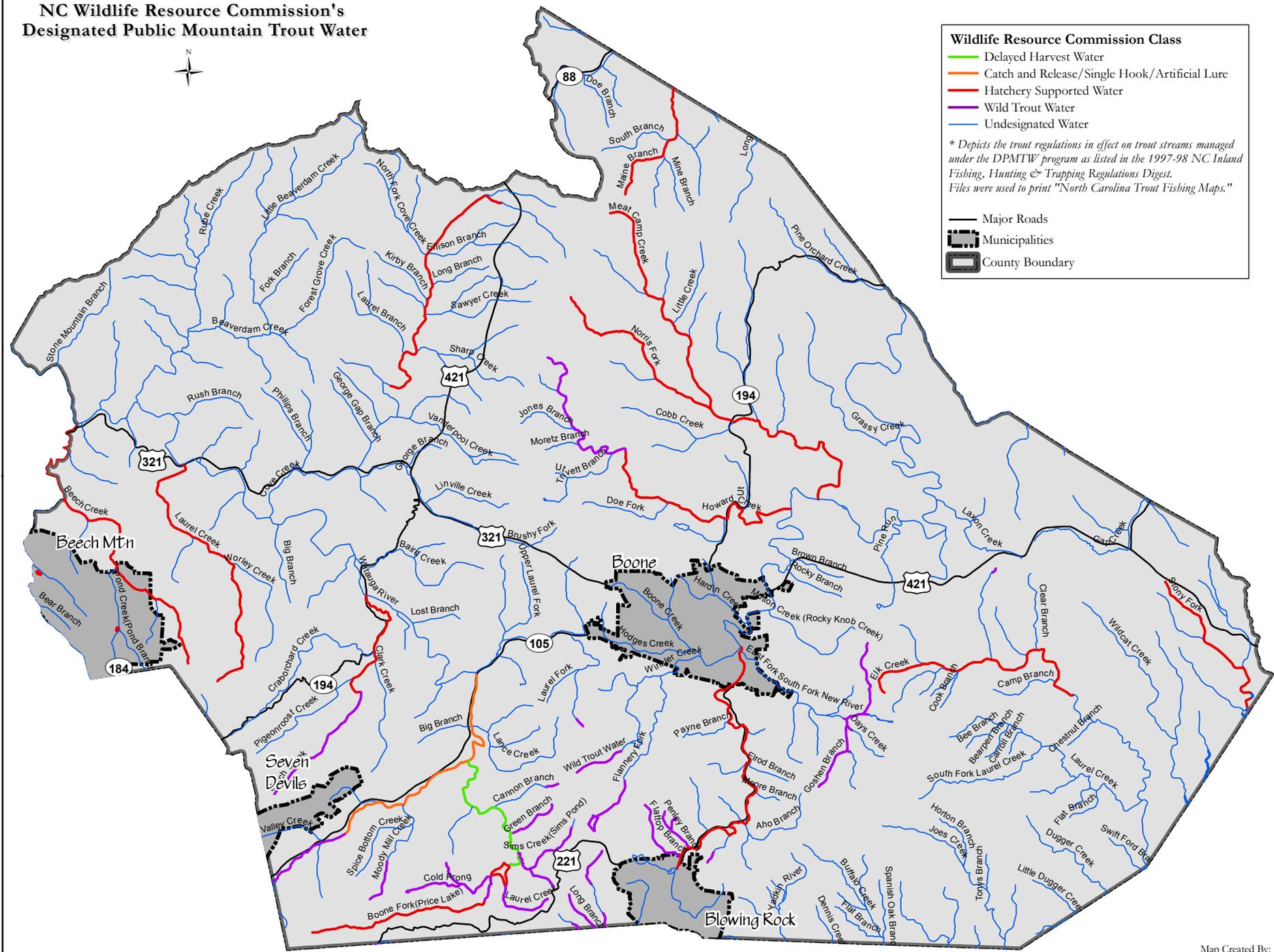


Wildlife Resource Commission Class

- Delayed Harvest Water
- Catch and Release/Single Hook/Artificial Lure
- Hatchery Supported Water
- Wild Trout Water
- Undesignated Water

** Depicts the trout regulations in effect on trout streams managed under the DPMTW program as listed in the 1997-98 NC Inland Fishing, Hunting & Trapping Regulations Digest. Files were used to print "North Carolina Trout Fishing Maps."*

- Major Roads
- Municipalities
- County Boundary



Watauga County Topography



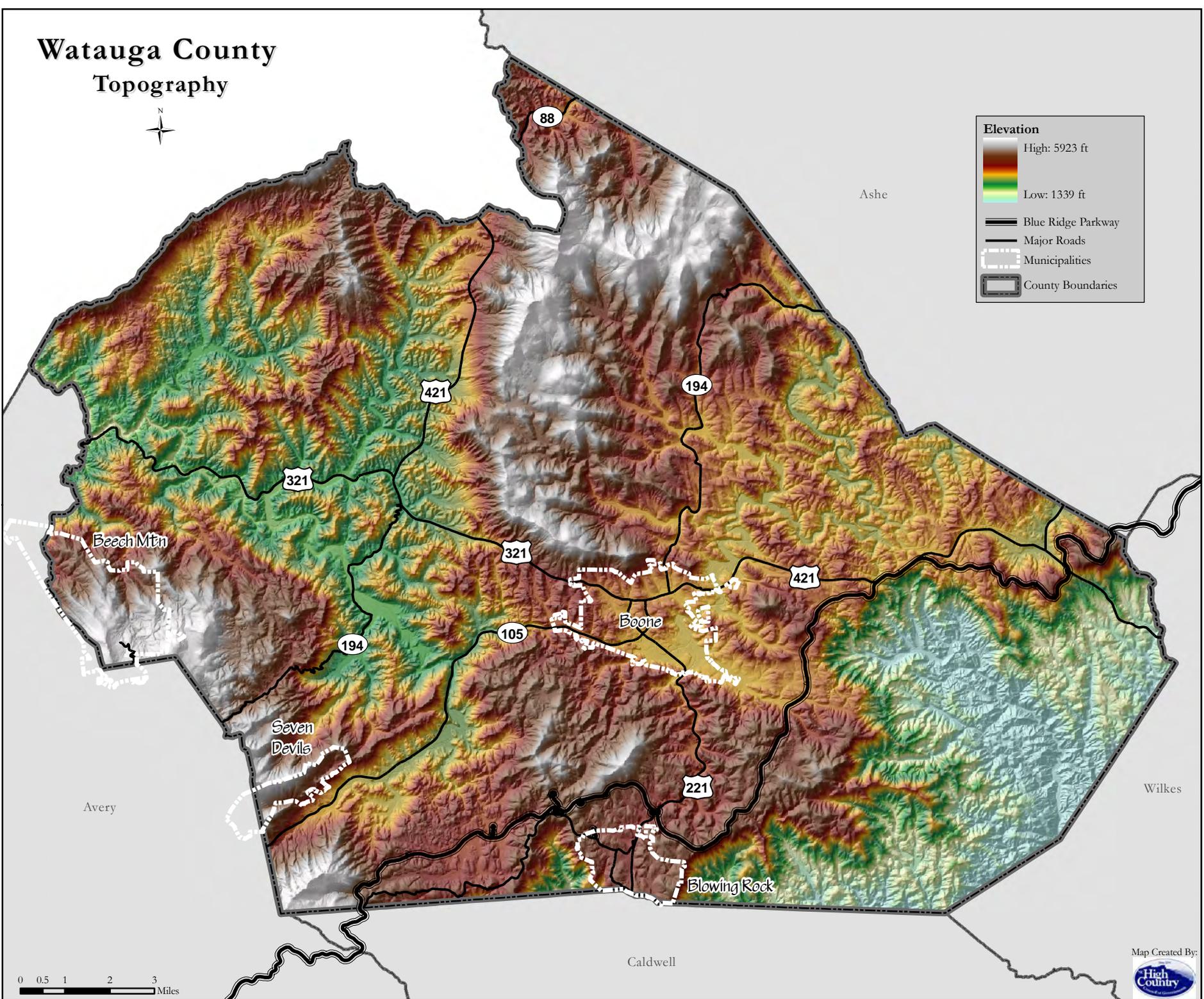
Elevation

High: 5923 ft

Low: 1339 ft

- Blue Ridge Parkway
- Major Roads
- Municipalities
- County Boundaries

Ashe



Beech Mtn

Boone

Seven Devils

221

Blowing Rock

Wilkes

Caldwell

Avery



VI. EXISTING FACILITIES

OVERVIEW

Watauga County facilities

Watauga County Parks and Recreation Department owns and manages the following facilities:

- the Recreation Complex off State Farm Road
- Brookshire Park and the Ted Mackorell Soccer Complex off Hwy 421 east of Boone
- Old Cove Creek school park and gym
- Health Department field on West King Street
- Howards Knob park

The County leases the following facilities and manages them for County recreation programs:

- Anne Marie fields off State Farm Road (leased from Town of Boone)
- Industrial Fields off State Farm Road (leased from Town of Boone)
- Optimist Park off State Farm Road (leased from Optimist Club)

Public school facilities

Watauga County's eight public elementary schools (geographically distributed throughout the county) and one high school have recreation facilities typical of most schools: gym, playground, ballfield, etc.

The North Carolina Community Schools Act (G.S. 115C Art 13) (see Appendix 11) was passed to allow "greater community use of public school facilities." The Watauga County Board of Education policy for these school facilities (see Appendix 12) states that the Board "shall make school facilities available for use by local community groups and organizations when such use does not interfere with the instructional program of the schools." The policy prioritizes use (other than by the school itself) as follows: 1) school affiliated groups; 2) Watauga County Parks & Recreation; 3) other non-profit use. Additional uses are listed. See the full policy in the appendix for details, including fees. Watauga Parks & Recreation Department frequently uses school recreation facilities.

Community Parks

Watauga County contains three community-owned and operated parks: Green Valley, Valle Crucis, and Foscoe/Grandfather. These community organizations are significant recreation providers, with each park being relatively large and offering many recreation opportunities. In addition, two community parks in Todd- Todd Island Park and Cook Park – are located in Ashe County but at the county boundary, making them accessible to many Watauga citizens.

Towns

Boone, Blowing Rock, and Beech Mountain own and/or operate major parks and recreation facilities. Blowing Rock and Beech Mountain also have recreation programs and dedicated staff. Seven Devils offers recreation facilities, along with private opportunities.

Town of Boone

The Town of Boone operates four parks, a greenway trail, and undeveloped open space. These facilities are maintained by the Town's public works department (the Town does not have a separate recreation department or staff).

The Boone greenway trail follows the south fork of New River through Boone from Pride Drive to the Town's wastewater treatment plant (with three spurs) totaling 4.8 miles. The greenway also connects to Appalachian State University's cross-country trail system, adding another 3.5 miles to the route. A connecting segment to Faculty Street is planned.

Town of Blowing Rock

Blowing Rock's Davant, Broyhill, Cannon, and Glen Burney parks are contiguous and therefore function to some degree as a single large park. Collectively, they offer a wide variety of recreation opportunities in a small area, from team sports to a quiet nature walk. The Town's Memorial Park, though not immediately adjacent, is a short walk from the others and has active recreation facilities such as play equipment and tennis courts. The Town employs a full-time recreation director and other staff.

Town of Seven Devils

The Town's tourism development authority operates two tennis courts and outdoor basketball. The Town recently developed a recreation plan in order to enhance existing facilities, revitalize dormant recreation facilities, and develop new opportunities.

Town of Beech Mountain

The Town of Beech Mountain has an active recreation department and numerous recreation facilities, including: Buckeye Indoor Recreation Center, parks, and 22 miles of hiking, biking, and cross country skiing trails. Most of the town is located in Watauga County, but the primary access is through Banner Elk in Avery County. Therefore, the Town's recreation facilities are not convenient to most Watauga County residents beyond the immediate Beech Mountain area.

Appalachian State University

Most ASU facilities are not open to the public, but staff, faculty, and their families (in addition to students) have access to numerous recreation and fitness facilities for a relatively low fee. Considering the fact that ASU employs over 3,000 persons (all of whom have access to the facilities along with their families), the university is, in effect, a significant recreation provider in Watauga County and should be factored into any analysis of available recreation.

Three fitness/recreation centers offer a wide variety of recreation, including a swimming pool, fitness equipment, racquetball courts, a climbing wall, gyms, and an indoor track. Various sports equipment (e.g. volleyball) can be checked-out. University Recreation (a division of Student Development) offers summer camp and a winter sports academy open to all children (not just university associates) for a fee.

The university's 24-acre State Farm Fields Complex merges with County recreation facilities and the Boone greenway trail. ASU's website states, "Under normal configurations, State Farm has six intramural flag football/soccer fields as well as three club sports fields commonly used for rugby, ultimate Frisbee, and soccer. Also in the layout are three softball fields." Cross-country running trails encompass this area, and connect to the Boone greenway. The fields are lighted, and the site has restrooms, a picnic shelter, and an equipment check-out center.

State & National Parks

Facilities at Elk Knob State Park are still under development but a picnic area is currently available, as well as a trail to the summit. Grandfather Mountain State Park's trail system offers numerous hiking opportunities.

Though the Blue Ridge Parkway's primary recreational opportunity is scenic driving, Watauga County contains a large number of non-road related Parkway recreation facilities such as trails and picnic areas. The Blue Ridge Parkway is routed along the southern and southeastern edge of Watauga County. The roadway itself offers several natural open spaces for picnicking and passive recreation. The Parkway's most significant contribution to recreation in Watauga County, however, is the two contiguous parks- Moses Cone and Julian Price- located in the southern part of the county between Blowing Rock and Foscoe. The two parks contain many miles of walking/jogging and horseback riding trails. The trails can also be used for cross-country skiing. The trails pass through varied landscapes- from open pastures to deep woods- offering a variety of opportunities for passive recreation. A developed picnic area exists in Price Park.

DETAILED INVENTORY

With only a few exceptions, all sports fields are identified as multi-purpose, even though some may have permanent features (e.g. infield or goalposts).

Watauga River South Communities

Valle Crucis **Foscoe** **Seven Devils** **Beech Mountain**
Matney

Valle Crucis school 2 acres Owned/operated by: Watauga County Schools

- meeting room/community center
- gymnasium
- multi-purpose field
- playground
- picnic shelter
- picnic tables 7

Valle Crucis park 22 acres Owned/operated by: Valle Crucis Community Park

- picnic shelters 2
- picnic tables in shelters 18
- grills 2
- picnic tables elsewhere in park 9
- performance stage
- walking trail, paved 1 mile
- playground
- basketball court (outdoor)
- volleyball court
- multi-purpose fields large enough to accommodate several simultaneous events
- fishing
- undefined open space/natural area near river and pond
- bleachers
- restrooms

The Valle Crucis Community Park is one of the largest parks in the county, and also one of the most varied. Numerous recreation opportunities are available with ample space.

Town of Seven Devils

- tennis courts 2
- outdoor basketball
- town roads (13 miles) and a state road (3 miles) “are used by residents and visitors for walking and biking. Signs are in place advising motorists to respect these uses.”⁶

⁶ Town of Seven Devils Recreation Plan

Town of Beech Mountain

Owned/operated by: Town of Beech Mountain

▪ Buckeye Recreation Center

-indoor

-basketball

-volleyball

-tennis

-walking track

-group fitness classes

-lounging area (w/WIFI)

-badminton

-children's play area

-meeting rooms

-fitness center

-outdoor

-tennis

-softball field

-picnic shelter & restrooms

-playground

-fishing

-campfire area

-walking track

-soccer field

-basketball

-boating

-hiking & biking trails

A fee is charged for use of some of the Buckeye facilities.

▪ Lake Coffey

-walking trails

-basketball court

-fishing

-picnic facilities

▪ Hayden's Park

-picnic facilities

▪ Perry Park

-trailhead

-lighted waterfall

-picnic facilities

▪ Sunset Park

-picnic facilities

▪ 22 miles of hiking trails that include sections for mountain biking and cross country skiing

▪ sledding hill

Most of Beech Mountain is located in Watauga County, but the primary access is through Banner Elk in Avery County. Therefore, the Town's recreation facilities are not convenient to most Watauga County residents beyond the immediate Beech Mountain area.

Foscoe/Grandfather Park

Owned/operated by: Foscoe/Grandfather Community Center, Inc.

- multi-use field lighted
- indoor community center with a kitchen and large porch
- playground
- outdoor basketball court
- picnic shelter
- picnic tables 10
- grills 3
- fishing
- covered performance stage with lights
- undefined open space/natural area near river
- restrooms



Performance stage at Foscoe/Grandfather Park

Watauga River North Communities

Zionville

Bethel

Sugar Grove

Mabel school 4 acres Owned/operated by: Watauga County Schools

- meeting room/community center
- gymnasium
- multipurpose field
- basketball court (outdoor)
- walking trail .25 mile
- playground
- picnic shelter
- picnic tables 8

Bethel school 3 acres Owned/operated by: Watauga County Schools

- meeting room/community center
- gymnasium
- multi-purpose field
- basketball court (outdoor)
- walking trail .25 mile
- playground
- picnic shelter
- picnic tables 7

Cove Creek school 3 acres Owned/operated by: Watauga County Schools

- meeting room/community center
- gymnasium
- multi-purpose field
- basketball courts (outdoor) 2
- walking track 0.12 mile
- playground
- picnic shelter
- picnic tables 7
- restrooms

Old Cove Creek school park 3 acres Owned/operated by:
Watauga County Parks & Recreation

- meeting room/community center
- gymnasium
- multipurpose field with bleachers
- tennis courts 2
- basketball court (outdoor)
- walking trail, paved 0.25 mile
- playground
- picnic shelter
- picnic tables 10
- four other picnic tables

- grills 2
- horseshoe courts 3
- fishing
- areas of undefined grassy open space
- restrooms in gym (not open all the time)

The park, an open field with few trees, is on the grounds of the former Cove Creek school, a historic rock structure whose preservation is the objective of the nonprofit Cove Creek Preservation & Development, Inc. The site also offers indoor recreation facilities, parking, access to Cove Creek, and a rural location near community thoroughfares but away from traffic. The Western Watauga Community Center is located nearby. The park and gymnasium are managed by the county Parks & Recreation Department.

- | | | |
|--|--------|--------------------------|
| Mountaineer Ruritan Field | 1 acre | Owned/operated by: |
| ▪ multipurpose field with infield, backstop, soccer goals, & bleachers | | Mountaineer Ruritan Club |
| ▪ restrooms | | |
| ▪ picnic shelter | | |
| -six tables | | |
| -two grills | | |

The Mountaineer Ruritan field is located on Hwy 321 in Sugar Grove. Watauga County Parks & Recreation has use of the field as needed.

New River Communities

Meat Camp	Green Valley	Todd
------------------	---------------------	-------------

- | | | |
|---------------------------------|---------|---|
| Green Valley school | 2 acres | Owned/operated by: Watauga County Schools |
| ▪ meeting room/community center | | |
| ▪ gymnasium | | |
| ▪ multi-purpose field | | |
| ▪ tennis court | | |
| ▪ basketball court (outdoor) | 2 | |
| ▪ playground | | |
| ▪ picnic shelter | | |
| ▪ picnic tables | 5 | |

- | | |
|---|--|
| Green Valley Community Park | Owned/operated by: Green Valley Community Park, Inc. |
| ▪ 19 acres | |
| ▪ picnic shelter with 12 tables | |
| ▪ walking trail | |
| ▪ playground | |
| ▪ canoe ramp | |
| ▪ fishing in New River | |
| ▪ multi-purpose field large enough to accommodate several simultaneous events | |
| ▪ undefined open space/natural area near river | |

- covered performance stage
- several benches
- restrooms

Green Valley Community Park is an expansive multi-purpose facility bordering the New River. It consists of the floodplain and a higher-elevation level that serves as the park's main entrance. A grassy walking trail encircles the riverside area, with additional trails along the hillside which connect the two levels.



Green Valley Community Park overlooking New River

Todd Island Park Owned & operated by: Todd Community Preservation Organization

- five acres
- multi-purpose fields large enough to accommodate several simultaneous events
- canoe access
- fishing
- grassy walking trail around perimeter (almost one mile)
- undefined open space/natural area near river

Todd Island Park is actually in Ashe County, but on the boundary with Watauga, and thus accessible to many Watauga residents. As the name states, the park is an island in the middle of New River, with access via a footbridge from the parking lot.

Walter & Anne Cook Memorial Park Todd

Elk Knob State Park Owned/operated by: State of North Carolina

- picnic area
- trail to the summit

Elk Knob is a newly established state park that is currently “in an interim development stage.”

Central Communities

Boone

Watauga High School 94 acre campus Owned/operated by: Watauga County Schools

- soccer field lighted
- football field lighted
- field house
- softball field lighted
- baseball field lighted

- baseball practice building
- tennis courts (6) lighted
- connection to 5.32 miles trails
- concession buildings (2) with restrooms
- gymnasium

Hardin Park elementary school 3 acres Owned/operated by: Watauga County Schools

- meeting room/community center
- gymnasium
- multi-purpose field
- outdoor basketball court
- playground
- picnic shelter
- picnic tables 7

The multi-purpose field at Hardin Park is very large and can accommodate simultaneous activities.

The Recreation Complex fields, Anne Marie fields, Industrial Fields, and Optimist Park- all contiguous- are the primary sites for sports programming.

Recreation Complex 9 acres Owned/operated by: Watauga County Parks & Recreation

- softball field lighted
- indoor pool
- tennis courts 4
- basketball courts (outdoor) 2
- playground
- picnic shelters 3
- picnic tables 13
- grill
- restrooms
- bleachers

The Recreation Complex site merges with several other recreation facilities in the same area, but each is differentiated in this plan for ease of reference. The Boone greenway, Anne Marie fields, Industrial Fields, Clawson-Burnley Park, and the Recreation Complex are mutually accessible, as well as various university recreation facilities. In addition, Optimist Park is located across State Farm Road from these sites. The Recreation Complex playground and basketball courts are new, and the pool was recently renovated.

Anne Marie Fields

- baseball fields 2
- lighting
- bleachers

Owned by: Town of Boone

Operated by: Watauga County Parks & Recreation

The Anne Marie fields are new.

- Clawson-Burnley Park Owned/operated by: Town of Boone
- picnic tables 9
 - picnic shelters 2
 - gazebo
 - natural area
 - walking trail (gravel)

This is a new park designed as a natural area for passive recreation.

- Broyhill Wellness Center Owned/operated by: Appalachian Regional Healthcare System
- track
 - basketball/volleyball court
 - racquetball court
 - swimming pool
 - fitness equipment
- Fees are charged for access to all wellness center facilities.

- Health Dept Fields Owned/operated by: Watauga County Parks & Recreation
- youth soccer practice field

- Brookshire Park Owned/operated by: Watauga County Parks & Recreation
- multipurpose fields with one pair of soccer goals
 - picnic shelter
 - picnic tables 5
 - grills 2
 - walking trail (0.42 mile)
 - access to South Fork New River
 - lighting
 - restrooms

This multi-purpose park and the contiguous Ted Mackorell soccer fields, are relatively new and located on the eastern periphery of Boone.

- Ted Mackorell Soccer complex Owned/operated by: Watauga County Parks & Recreation
- soccer fields 2
 - lighting
 - bleachers

- Howard's Knob park 5 acres Owned/operated by: Watauga County Parks & Recreation
- hiking trail
 - picnic shelter
 - picnic tables 10
 - grill
 - restrooms

Jones House

- meeting room/community center
- picnic tables 2
- undefined open space
- restrooms

Durham Park

Owned/operated by: Appalachian State University

This park, located on the ASU campus near downtown Boone, offers a natural setting with a walking trail and benches.

Blue Ridge East Communities

Deep Gap

Triplitt

Rutherford

Bamboo

Stony Fork

Parkway school 1.5 acres

Owned/operated by: Watauga County Schools

- meeting room/community center
- gymnasium
- multi-purpose field
- outdoor basketball courts 2
- playground
- picnic shelter
- picnic tables 9



Blue Ridge South Communities

Blowing Rock

Aho

Middle Fork

Payne Branch Park 4 acres Owned by: ASU Endowment Fund; 25-year lease to Watauga County

- linear natural area along creek
- two picnic tables and one bench

Payne Branch Park was established by the Middle Fork Greenway Association as a feature of the planned Middle Fork greenway. The park borders a remarkable rock formation on the road known historically as the Devil’s Gate.

Blowing Rock school 1 acre

- meeting room/community center
- gymnasium
- outdoor basketball goal
- multi-purpose field
- playground
- picnic shelter
- picnic tables 5

Blowing Rock's Davant, Broyhill, Cannon, and Glen Burney parks (below) are contiguous and therefore function to some degree as a single large park. Yet each is distinctive and their boundaries are prominent. Collectively, they offer a wide variety of recreation opportunities in a small area, from team sports to a quiet nature walk. Parking is available near all three. The Town's Memorial Park, though not immediately adjacent, is a short walk from the others and has active recreation facilities such as play equipment and tennis courts.

Davant Park 3 acres Owned/operated by: Town of Blowing Rock

- baseball field
- restrooms
- outdoor pool
- walking track around field 1,760 feet
- picnic pavilion with 11 tables

Broyhill Park Owned/operated by: Town of Blowing Rock

- lake
- natural area
- numerous benches
- walking trail 1 mile
- lighting

Broyhill Park is designed as a natural area for passive recreation.

Annie Cannon Garden Owned/operated by: Town of Blowing Rock

- creekside natural area with cascades
- amphitheater

Glen Burney Trail (see map Appendix 13) Owned/operated by: Town of Blowing Rock

With the trailhead in the middle of town, the Glen Burney Trail offers a unique opportunity for a rugged, remote hiking experience that is easily accessible. The trail parallels New Years Creek for 1.6 miles down the Blue Ridge escarpment, beginning at the Annie Cannon Garden. Other than the overall forested setting, numerous cascades and waterfalls are the primary attraction of this trail. In addition to the scenic and natural experience, a hike along Glen Burney is vigorous exercise as well.

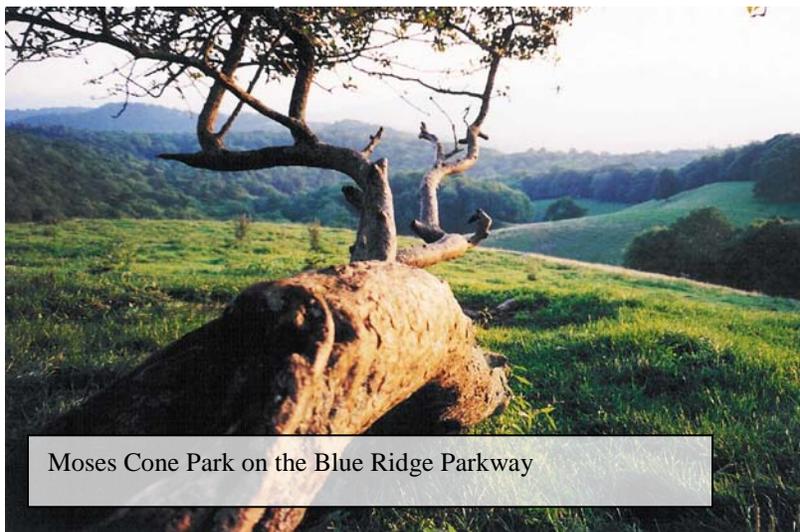
Memorial Park Owned/operated by: Town of Blowing Rock

- picnic shelter
- picnic tables 4
- tennis courts 2
- basketball courts 2
- playground
- restrooms
- entire park is lighted

Blue Ridge Parkway

The Blue Ridge Parkway traverses the southern and southeastern sections of the county. Watauga County contains an exceptional number of Parkway recreation facilities (in addition to the road itself). Most of these facilities are located in Moses Cone Park and Julian Price Park; two contiguous areas in the southern part of the county near Blowing Rock. Various overlooks and open spaces are scattered along the entire route, with some having picnic tables. These federal facilities are significant local assets that don't require management and maintenance by the local governments. They are accessible to many residents and their use by Watauga County citizens should be encouraged in order to maximize their value and minimize duplication in County-owned facilities.

- North Carolina Mountains-to-Sea Trail- A section is currently being constructed parallel to the Parkway between Price Park and Deep Gap. Existing sections overlap with Parkway trails in some locations. While the trail is intended for long-distance hiking, it will pass through several Watauga communities and thus be accessible for many residents to use as a local walking trail.
- Cone Park carriage trails (25 miles)- for hiking, jogging, horseback riding, and cross-country skiing. Short and easily accessible loop trails are located at Bass and Trout Lakes. Parking and access is available at the Cone Manor House, Bass Lake (via Hwy 221), and Trout Lake (via Shulls Mill Road). Open spaces along the trails offer picnicking and passive recreation opportunities, with some areas located close to parking. (see map Appendix 14)
- Price Park picnic area- developed recreation area offering numerous picnic tables and grills. Undefined open fields are available for casual ball games. The picnic area includes restrooms, access to trails, and streamside natural areas.
- Price Park trails (10.5 miles)- These hiking trails vary in difficulty. (see map Appendix 15)
- Tanawha Trail (13.5 miles total; a portion is in Avery County)- This trail parallels the Parkway from Price Park, around the southeastern side of Grandfather Mountain, to the Beacon Heights Parking Area. Parking and access is available at Price Park and the Boone Fork Parking Area. Tanawha intersects and offers access to Grandfather Mountain State Park Trails, specifically, the Nuwati Trail and the Daniel Boone Scout Trail. (see map Appendix 16)



Grandfather Mountain State Park

Grandfather Mountain's trail system totals 13 miles in Watauga, Caldwell, and Avery Counties. This trail system can be accessed in Watauga County via the Blue Ridge Parkway's 13-mile Tanawha Trail, which generally parallels the road, extending from Julian Price Park to the Beacon Heights parking area. Parkway overlooks at Cold Prong Pond, Calloway Peak, and Boone Fork parking area offer parking and access to the trail. From the Tanawha Trail, hikers can access Grandfather's Nuwati and Daniel Boone Scout Trails. (see Appendix 17 for map)

Public Input & Other Needs Assessment

A random-sample, scientific survey (Needs Assessment) of Watauga County residents was conducted by students and faculty of Appalachian State University's Health, Leisure, & Exercise Science program. The results are summarized and analyzed below. In order to gain a complete understanding of the needs assessment, however, please read the full survey, results, and analysis in Appendix 20.

Community Priorities Capital Improvements	Very & somewhat Unsupportive	Very & Somewhat Supportive	Not Sure
A. Repair/update all parks & athletic fields	8%	86%	5%
C. Extend existing and/or develop new paved trails	15%	79%	5%
E. Purchase land to preserve open space and protect it from future development	20%	72%	8%
B. Build a new indoor recreation center	25%	65%	11%
D. Develop new parks & athletic fields	28%	63%	9%
H. Build a new aquatic facility	29%	59%	12%
F. Renovate Old Cove Creek Gym	24%	55%	20%
G. Expand Brookshire Park	24%	52%	24%
I. Other (please identify):			

Analysis- Capital Improvements

For ease of summary and interpretation, responses have been grouped above into three categories: Unsupportive (very & somewhat), Supportive (very & somewhat), and Not Sure. All items received support greater than 50%. Citizen support is significant enough to justify action on any of the listed potential projects. Even the items receiving the lowest support were not offset by higher Unsupportive responses, but rather a higher Not Sure response.

Indoor Recreation Facility Priorities	Disagree & Strongly Disagree	Neutral & Unfamiliar	Agree & Strongly Agree
Indoor Walking/Jogging Track	9%	19%	71%
Fitness Room/Weight Room (Weight Machines, Ellipticals, Treadmills, etc...)	9%	23%	67%
Indoor Swimming Pool	12%	23%	66%
Multipurpose Courts (Basketball, Volleyball, Badminton, etc...)	10%	31%	59%
Yoga/Aerobics/Dance Studio	13%	30%	57%
Day Care Center	14%	33%	54%
Art/Craft/Pottery Room	18%	33%	49%
Community Meeting/Banquet Rooms	18%	37%	45%

Kitchen/Cooking Classroom Space	19%	36%	44%
Computer Lab	25%	34%	42%
Indoor Climbing Wall	23%	36%	41%
Racquetball Courts	19%	46%	34%
Concessions/Juice and Snack Bar	22%	43%	34%
Indoor Batting Cages/Pitching Area	27%	41%	33%
Theater/Lecture Hall	30%	38%	32%
Indoor Turf Area (Soccer, Baseball, Softball)	34%	36%	30%
Game Room (Billiards, Foosball, etc...)	31%	40%	28%
Table Tennis (Ping-Pong)	25%	50%	26%
Indoor Soccer Courts	34%	42%	24%
Video Game Arcade (XRKade – exercise based video games; ex: DDR)	49%	30%	21%
Boxing Equipment (Bags, Ring, etc...)	37%	43%	20%
Wrestling Room/Pads	35%	50%	15%

Analysis- Indoor Recreation Facility

For ease of summary and interpretation, responses are grouped above into three categories: disagree (includes strongly), neutral and unfamiliar, and agree (includes strongly). Thus, a totally equal and undefinitive outcome (other than 100% neutral) would be 33.3% for each category. Therefore, anything over 33% in one of the categories for a recreation item can be interpreted as indicative (e.g. if we assume half of the 33% neutral/unfamiliar would tend to be supportive, and add it to the supportive category, the result would be 50% supportive).

Using this methodology, 19 of the 22 items listed received greater than 33% agreeing that the facility is desired. Only five items exceed 33% in the disagree category, with four being only marginally above 33%. The one exception is the video game arcade (XRKade- exercise based video games) where 49% disagree. Given the support or neutrality of all the other recreation opportunities, many respondents might have misunderstood the item as only passive video games rather than an active exercise method.

The neutral/unfamiliar category is fairly even across most items with 10 of 22 items between 30-36% and other items moderately close. The two outliers are the walking track (the highest supported) at a low of 19% neutral/unfamiliar, and the wrestling room being highly neutral at 50%.

Six items received over 50% agreement (agree and strongly agree) that they should be built

1. walking/jogging track (71%)
2. fitness/weight room (67%)
3. swimming pool (66%)
4. multipurpose courts (59%)
5. yoga/aerobics/dance studio (57%)
6. day care center (54%)

Assuming- at least for the purpose of analysis- that an indoor recreation center will be built, the most significant conclusion drawn from the indoor recreation center survey results is that, overall, the County would have a great deal of flexibility in choosing the specific recreation opportunities that would go into such a facility. The items receiving overwhelming support (noted above) are standard in a recreation center, while a wide range of other recreation forms are supported significantly. Neutrality on many items is common, and the undesirableness of almost all items does not seem to be intense. Such results will aid in the planning and design of a facility.

Outdoor Sports Facility Priorities	Disagree & Strongly Disagree	Neutral & Unfamiliar	Agree & Strongly Agree
Lighted Multipurpose Athletic Fields (football, soccer, lacrosse, ultimate, etc)	15%	34%	51%
Tennis Courts	14%	36%	50%
Outdoor Basketball Courts	21%	31%	48%
Baseball/Softball Complex	16%	39%	45%
Sand Volleyball Courts	21%	42%	36%
Outdoor Climbing Wall/Tower	26%	38%	36%

Similarly, for ease of summary and interpretation, responses are grouped above into three categories: disagree (includes strongly), neutral and unfamiliar, and agree (includes strongly). Thus, a totally equal and undefinitive outcome (other than 100% neutral) would be 33.3% for each category. Therefore, anything over 33% in one of the categories for a recreation item can be interpreted as indicative (e.g. if we assume half of the 33% neutral/unfamiliar would tend be supportive, and add it to the supportive category, the result would be 50% supportive).

Two of the six items, multipurpose fields and tennis courts, received 50% or greater agreement that they should be built; with outdoor basketball courts and a baseball complex not far behind. All items are above the 33% threshold that indicates significant support. Disagreement is low in all items, with none approaching the 33% threshold that indicates significant unsupport.

Outdoor Recreation Facility Priorities	Disagree & Strongly Disagree	Neutral & Unfamiliar	Agree & Strongly Agree
Picnic Shelters/Tables/Grills	7%	18%	75%
Paved Walking Trails	10%	19%	73%
Unpaved Hiking Trails	9%	19%	72%
Biking Trails	10%	20%	70%
Lighting on Paved Walking Trails	22%	10%	67%
Paddling Access Pts on Watauga River	11%	28%	61%

Community Vegetable Gardens (space available to rent for personal gardens)	16%	30%	54%
Mountain Biking Trails	16%	30%	54%
Sledding Hill	19%	28%	54%
Outdoor Swimming Pool	20%	29%	51%
Flower Gardens	14%	37%	48%
Fishing Pond/Fishing Pier	19%	37%	45%
Horseshoe Pits	18%	39%	44%
Sprayground/Water Spray Park	33%	32%	36%
Ice Rink	25%	40%	35%
Shuffleboard Courts	24%	43%	34%
Skate Park/Rollerblading Facility	29%	40%	32%
Frisbee Disc Golf Course	23%	40%	29%
Concessions	26%	47%	28%
Equestrian Trails	28%	47%	25%
Croquet Fields	32%	45%	22%
Corn Hole/Bean Bag Toss Games	33%	48%	19%
Four Square Courts	25%	57%	18%
Bocce Ball Courts	25%	58%	17%
BMX Park	31%	53%	16%

Again, for ease of summary and interpretation, responses are grouped above into three categories: disagree (includes strongly), neutral and unfamiliar, and agree (includes strongly). Thus, a totally equal and undefinitive outcome (other than 100% neutral) would be 33.3% for each category. Therefore, anything over 33% in one of the categories for a recreation item can be interpreted as indicative (e.g. if we assume half of the 33% neutral/unfamiliar would tend be supportive, and add it to the supportive category, the result would be 50% supportive).

16 out of the 25 items rank 33% or greater agreeing that the item is desired. 10 out of the 25 items rank greater than 50%, with four of those being 70% and above. All trail-related facilities (with the exception of equestrian, which has 47% neutral or unfamiliar) rank greater than 50%, with three 70% and above.

The highest score in the disagree categories is 33%, with only four items ranking over 30%; indicating few, if any, items that are intensely undesired. In the Neutral and Unfamiliar category, 14 items rank greater than 33%, with only three over 50%.

The most obvious and striking conclusion in these results is that county residents want trails. With the exception of equestrian, every type of trail (paved walking, unpaved hiking, biking, mountain biking) scored over 50%. Other desired forms of outdoor recreation seemingly fit no

obvious patterns; i.e. other high scorers include such disparate items as picnic facilities, paddling access, community vegetable gardens, etc.

Overall, a wide range of other outdoor recreation forms are supported significantly. Neutrality on many items is common, and the undesireableness of almost all items does not seem to be intense. As with the indoor recreation options, the County has a great deal of flexibility in planning- overall- for specific outdoor recreation opportunities.

In addition to the citizen survey, the County staffs' familiarity with daily operations, and their constant contact with recreation users is a valuable source of information about recreation needs.

North Carolina Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan

The North Carolina Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan is updated every five years. While not as targeted as the Watauga County survey, the statewide plan includes survey results and information that enhance the county-level data, confirm local findings, and put county information in a broader context. Following are statewide survey results. Keep in mind that this information is for *outdoor* recreation only, and does not include indoor activities.

Percentage of NC Residents Participating in Outdoor Recreation Activities⁷

Rank	Activity	Percent	Rank	Activity	Percent
1	Walk for pleasure	82	41	Coldwater fishing	11.5
2	Family gathering	74.6	42	Hunting (any type)	9.9
3	Gardening or landscaping	65.4	43	Inline skating	9.5
4	Driving for pleasure	58.2	44	Rafting	9.3
5	View/photo natural scenery	57	45	Soccer outdoors	9
6	Visit nature centers, etc.	52.9	46	Volleyball outdoors	9
7	Sightseeing	52.9	47	Softball	8.9
8	Picnicking	50	48	Basketball outdoors	8.5
9	Attend sports events	48.6	49	Backpacking	8.4
10	Visit a beach	44.2	50	Use personal watercraft	8
11	Visit historic Sites	43.1	51	Sledding	8
12	View/photo other wildlife	43	52	Horseback riding (any type)	7.8
13	View/photo wildflowers, trees	41	53	Horseback riding on trails	7.3
14	Swimming in an outdoor pool	39.9	54	Big game hunting	7.2
15	Swimming in lakes, streams, etc.	39.7	55	Canoeing	6.7
16	Yard games, e.g., horseshoes	38.5	56	Small Game hunting	6.4
17	View/photograph birds	34	57	Waterskiing	6.3
18	Bicycling	31	58	Downhill skiing	6.1
19	Boating (any type)	31	59	Mountain climbing	5.3
20	Freshwater fishing	30.9	60	Football	4.2
21	Attend outdoor concerts, plays, etc.	30.6	61	Caving	4.2
22	Visit a primitive area	29.8	62	Snorkeling	4.1
23	Day hiking	29.7	63	Sailing	3.7
24	Running or jogging	28.3	64	Baseball	3.5
25	Visit a farm	28.2	65	Anadromous fishing	3.1
26	View/photograph fish	26.5	66	Kayaking	3.1
27	Gather mushrooms, berries, etc.	26.3	67	Handball or racquetball	3.1
28	Warmwater fishing	25.9	68	Snowboarding	3.1
29	Visit other waterside (not a beach)	24.4	69	Orienteering	3
30	Motorboating	22.5	70	Rowing	2.5
31	Boat tours or excursions	21.7	71	Rock climbing	2.3
32	Drive off-road (any type)	20.7	72	Ice skating outdoors	2.1
33	Developed camping	20.5	73	Surfing	1.8
34	Visit archeological sites	18	74	Migratory bird hunting	1.7
35	Snow/ice activities (any type)	17.9	75	Snowmobiling	1.5
36	Saltwater fishing	17	76	Scuba diving	1
37	Mountain biking	15.7	77	Cross country skiing	1
38	Tennis outdoors	14.8	78	Windsurfing	0.5
39	Primitive camping	14.6	79	Snowshoeing	0.2
40	Golf	13.9	80	Ice fishing	0

⁷ The 2002-2007 National Survey on Recreation and the Environment (NSRE) is the eighth in a series of national surveys started in 1960 by the Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission and now coordinated by the USDA Forest Service. The survey was accomplished by interviewing approximately 90,000 Americans aged 16 and over in random-digit-dialing telephone samplings. In 2007, the U.S. Forest Service prepared an analysis of responses to the NSRE for residents from North Carolina.

Considering the top ten items alone, walking trails and picnic facilities would be the most needed facilities to match the level of participation. Of course, high participation alone does not necessarily imply a shortage of those facilities. In fact, high participation could imply an abundance of facilities; otherwise people could not participate in the activities. The survey does not measure the ease or difficulty in accessing facilities needed for a particular activity. Nevertheless, this information is valuable as background and confirmation for the Watauga County survey and other statistics regarding needed facilities.

A significant pattern in the survey results is the popularity of activities usually considered to be tourism-oriented: natural scenery, sightseeing, historic sites, wildlife, etc. These activities are typically beyond the scope of county recreation departments, but their popularity should be considered and is especially relevant in a county with federal and state recreation providers. In other words, the provision of these facilities by other entities relieves the County of doing so, other than directing county citizens to these existing assets.

While the above table is useful for comparing the popularity of all possible activities, a more narrow approach yields relevant information that may not be evident in the aggregate table. Grouping the activities by category allows for more in-depth analysis and also segregates recreation typically provided by county recreation departments from recreation usually offered by other providers. For example, persons who participate in team sports may be an entirely different group from those participating in nature-based activities; meaning that ignoring team sports because of an overall low score would fail to address the recreation needs of a significant segment of the population as well as facilities that are the responsibility of local governments. Also, a low rank in the table of all activities does not necessarily imply little demand or no shortage of facilities. Age and many other factors affect the *intensity* of demand, which is not measured in this particular survey. For example, soccer participation may be limited to youth, resulting in a low overall rank, but the percentage of youth participating in soccer may be very high, resulting in a high demand for soccer fields. Many activities are also seasonal, resulting in a high demand for facilities during certain time periods. Following are the same statistics in the above table rearranged according to category:

Nature-based Activities

1. visit a primitive area
2. day hiking
3. visit a farm
4. drive off-road
5. developed camping
6. mountain biking
7. primitive camping
8. hunting
9. backpacking
10. horseback riding on trails

Team sports Activities (outdoors)

1. attend sports events
2. soccer
3. volleyball
4. softball

Developed Setting Activities

1. walk for pleasure
2. family gathering
3. gardening or landscaping
4. driving for pleasure
5. picnicking
6. yard games (e.g. horseshoes)
7. bicycling
8. attend outdoors concerts/plays/etc
9. horseback riding

Viewing/Learning Activities

1. view/photo natural scenery
2. visit nature centers
3. sightseeing
4. visit historic sites

- 5. basketball
- 6. football
- 7. baseball

- 5. view/photo wildlife
- 6. gather wild foods
- 7. boat tours or excursions

Individual Sports Activities (outdoor)

- 1. running or jogging
- 2. tennis
- 3. golf
- 4. inline skating
- 5. handball or racquetball

North Carolina Resident Outdoor Participation Percent Change by Activity 1995-2006⁸

outdoor adventure	88%
snow/ice activities	83%
individual sports	68%
fishing	66%
camping	59%
trail/street/road activities	57%
social activities	57%
viewing/learning activities	43%
spectator activities	34%
boating	31%
hunting	27%
swimming	26%
team sports (outdoor)	-2%

⁸ Ibid

Priorities of other recreation providers

Citizens Plan for Watauga County

This comprehensive planning effort sponsored by Watauga County government involved a variety of public input methods. A relevant excerpt follows:

After reviewing our survey, survey comments, and citizen input from community meetings, the top ten priorities in Watauga County planning seem clear and compelling. They have consistently appeared as the most important items in the survey rankings; have appeared repeatedly in the survey comments, and were the topics of the most discussion and obvious concern at the area meetings. They are listed in priority order:

10. Widespread Recreational Opportunities- A primary concern was that recreational opportunities truly be available countywide rather than centered around Boone. Most frequently mentioned were:

- *recreation centers (especially for teens and seniors)*
- *bike paths (both for recreation and alternative transportation)*
- *greenways (walking, exercise trails, pet paths)*
- *river access (fishing, canoeing, swimming if possible)*
- *additional public parks*
- *special events based on mountain heritage /local history*

The County is perceived as falling behind other regions in the area of recreation.

Town of Blowing Rock

The Town of Blowing Rock conducted a citizens survey for its 2005 recreation master plan. From a list of 29 facilities, full-time citizens chose the following eight as the most desired: (number selecting each option in parenthesis)

1. jogging/walking trails 2-3 miles (67)
2. fitness facility, cardio/strength (65)
3. jogging/walking trails 3-6 miles (45)
4. bicycle trails 3-6 miles (44)
5. bicycle trails 6-12 miles (41)
6. teen center (40)
7. open space/natural areas (40)
8. indoor swimming pool (33)

Half of the top priorities are trail-related. This is remarkable considering that access to over 20 miles of walking/hiking trails at Moses Cone Park is within one mile of town (bikes are not allowed on these trails). Unlike other recreation activities (e.g. team sports), walking seems to be more of a neighborhood activity that people engage in for short trips or within a limited amount of time. In other words, citizens are less likely to drive somewhere to walk than they are to engage in other forms of recreation or exercise. Having destinations (stores, church, post office) and relatively short trips stimulates the desire to walk; whereas a complex system of trails in a large undeveloped park may be perceived as a weekend, leisurely activity, or for tourists only. Lighting may be another factor as well.

Three of the top eight priorities are related to some form of indoor recreation. When asked Would you would support an indoor recreation facility? 107 responded yes; 45 no.

In short, the results of this survey of Blowing Rock citizens concur with the survey results of the county as a whole, and help confirm the countywide results.

The Town of Blowing Rock has five recreation employees (including landscape and maintenance) and several seasonal workers. The Town operates a broad recreation program that is open to everyone (not just town citizens). Some facilities can be reserved for a fee.

Town of Boone

The Town of Boone’s 2006 Comprehensive Plan Update includes the following items relevant to recreation planning:

- “There is a pressing need for a major multipurpose [indoor recreation facility, including] indoor pool, drama theater, dance room, weight room, and storage areas.”
- Very few neighborhood parks exist for the thirty neighborhoods in town. The Town should “pursue a program for the long term development of neighborhood mini-parks, pocket parks, and other, more sizable neighborhood facilities...”
- “The identification and appropriate development of a system of open space greenways...shall be encouraged for both recreational and alternative transportation purposes. The use of natural corridors such as streams, floodplains, and secondarily, man-made corridors such as utility and transportation rights-of-way and easements shall be emphasized.”

Town of Seven Devils

The Town recently developed a recreation plan in order to enhance existing facilities, revitalize dormant recreation facilities, and develop new opportunities. A recent community survey identified the following top ten desired recreation facilities

- | | |
|---------------------------|-------------------|
| 1. greenway/hiking trails | 6. driving range |
| 2. golf | 7. picnic grounds |
| 3. walking | 8. fishing |
| 4. skiing | 9. snowboarding |
| 5. general park | 10. putting green |

The plan encourages the Town to assess the viability of these items “while insuring due consideration of practicability.”

Valle Crucis Community Park

The following needs and priorities have been identified for the park:

- meditative garden
- resurface playground areas
- improve Watauga River access
- acquire more land
- additional restrooms
- develop a Valle Crucis Riverwalk

Green Valley Community Park

Park officials and the community have identified the following items as needs/priorities for the park:

- volleyball court
- basketball court
- various support facilities including maintenance shed and additional parking
- backstop for athletic field
- extend the walking trail
- community center building
- restroom on the lower level
- two additional river access points
- garden
- another athletic field

Watauga County Tourism Development Authority

While the mission of the Watauga County Tourism Development Authority (TDA) is broad, having many components and seemingly little related to local recreation, the TDA has made the enhancement and further development of outdoor recreation a high priority. Given existing natural resources, facilities, and the potential for more facilities, the organization hopes to establish Watauga County among the top outdoor recreation destinations in the country. Though the targeted population of the TDA (tourists) differs from the beneficiaries (county residents) of this plan, the recreation needs and desires of the two populations do overlap considerably, and local citizens will benefit incidentally from several objectives of the TDA.

The Authority has identified the following recreation activities as priorities:

1. mountain biking
2. multi-use greenways
3. road cycling
4. paddling
5. rock climbing
6. fishing
7. hiking & backpacking
8. equestrian
9. disc golf

Road cycling, paddling, hiking, equestrian, rock climbing, and fishing opportunities already exist but could be enhanced with identifiers such as maps and signs. Directions are not as critical to county residents, but many local citizens may not be fully aware of all local options. In addition, access points are needed for paddling and fishing in order to maximize these assets. Land acquisition will be necessary for mountain biking, greenways, rock climbing, and disc golf.

Plans are underway for the development of a mountain bike and hiking park located on Hwy 421 adjacent to the old county landfill and current solid waste transfer station. The property is county-owned and will include a tract recently purchased. Rocky Knob Park will be a 175-acre facility that will also include picnic, playground, and restroom facilities.

PROGRAMS

Baseball/Softball

Little League

Coordinator: Watauga County Parks & Recreation
Season: April-June
Ages: 11-16

Tee Ball

Coordinator: Watauga County Parks & Recreation
Season: April-June
Ages: 5-6

Kinder T-ball

Coordinator: Town of Blowing Rock Parks & Recreation
Number of participants: 40
Ages: 3-5

Coach-pitch baseball

Coordinator: Watauga County Parks & Recreation
Season: April-May
Ages: 7-8

Major 2 baseball

Coordinator: Watauga County Parks & Recreation
Season: April-June
Ages: 9-10

Girls coach-pitch softball

Coordinator: Watauga County Parks & Recreation
Season: April-May
Ages: 6-8

Girls Little League Major League softball

Coordinator: Watauga County Parks & Recreation
Season: April-May
Ages: 9-12

Girls Senior League softball

Coordinator: Watauga County Parks & Recreation
Season: June-July
Ages: 13-16

Adult softball

Coordinator: Watauga County Parks & Recreation
Season: May-June; August-September
Number of teams: six divisions
Ages: 16 +

Tennis

Junior Tennis

Coordinator: Watauga County Parks & Recreation
Season: June-July
Ages: 7-15

Football

Mite

Coordinator: Watauga County Parks & Recreation
Season: August-September
Ages: 3rd & 4th graders

Midget

Coordinator: Watauga County Parks & Recreation
Season: August-September
Ages: 5th & 6th graders

youth cheerleading

Coordinator: Watauga County Parks & Recreation
Season: August – mid-October
Ages: 5-13
Needs/Comments: designed to accompany midget football

Soccer

Kinder soccer

Coordinator: Town of Blowing Rock Parks & Recreation
Number of participants: 40
Ages: 3-5

U-6

Coordinator: Watauga County Parks & Recreation
Season: August-September
Ages: under six years old

U-8 through U-15

Coordinator: Watauga County Parks & Recreation
Season: August-September
Ages: 7-15

Adult

Coordinator: Watauga County Parks & Recreation
Season: August-October
Ages: 16 & older

Volleyball

Co-ed adult

Coordinator: Watauga County Parks & Recreation
Season: September-October
Ages: 16 & older

Men's/Women's

Coordinator: Watauga County Parks & Recreation
Season: January-February
Ages: 16 & older

old Cove Creek gym

Coordinator: Watauga County Parks & Recreation
Facilities used: old Cove Creek gym

Basketball

Adult

Coordinator: Watauga County Parks & Recreation
Season: November-January
Ages: 16 & older

Girl's

Coordinator: Watauga County Parks & Recreation
Season: October-November
Ages: 5th & 6th graders

Boy's

Coordinator: Watauga County Parks & Recreation
Season: January-February
Ages: 5th & 6th graders

old Cove Creek gym

Coordinator: Watauga County Parks & Recreation
Season: January-February

Kinder basketball

Coordinator: Town of Blowing Rock Parks & Recreation
Number of participants: 40
Ages: 3-5

Jr. NBA basketball

Coordinator: Town of Blowing Rock Parks & Recreation
Ages: 3-5

Youth basketball

Coordinator: Town of Blowing Rock Parks & Recreation
Ages: 5-9

Swim

Swim lessons

Coordinator: Watauga County Parks & Recreation
Season: spring, summer, fall
Ages: 3 up

Swim lessons

Coordinator: Town of Blowing Rock Parks & Recreation
Season: summer
Ages: youth

parent/infant swim classes

Coordinator: Watauga County Parks & Recreation
Ages: 6 months- 3 years

lifeguard training class

Coordinator: Watauga County Parks & Recreation
Season: as needed

aquacise classes

Coordinator: Watauga County Parks & Recreation
Season: year-round

lap & public swim

Coordinator: Watauga County Parks & Recreation
Season: year-round

Other Programs

Summer park program

Coordinator: Town of Blowing Rock Parks & Recreation
Season: summer
Facilities used: Memorial Park and Davant Field
Needs/Comments: a wide variety of activities including tennis, basketball, volleyball, softball, playground activities

Summer adventure camp

Coordinator: Watauga County Parks & Recreation
Season: June-July (7 weeks)
Facilities used: Watauga High School, swimming pool?
Ages: 5-13

Summer Day Camp

Coordinator: Town of Blowing Rock Parks & Recreation
Number of participants: 80 per week
Ages: rising 1-7 graders

Fun in the Sun camp

Coordinator: Watauga County Parks & Recreation
Season: June-July (6 weeks)
Facilities used: Hardin Park School, swimming pool?
Ages: 5-13

extreme dance camp

Coordinator: Watauga County Parks & Recreation
Season: one week
Facilities used: Watauga High School
Ages: 5-13

Senior Games

Coordinator: Watauga County Parks & Recreation
Season: mid-May – early June
Ages: 55 & older

Special Olympics

Coordinator: Watauga County Parks & Recreation
Season: year-round
Number of participants: 200

beginning ballet

Coordinator: Watauga County Parks & Recreation
Season: spring & fall

Adult Day Trips

Coordinator: Town of Blowing Rock Parks & Recreation

various seasonal events

Town of Blowing Rock Parks & Recreation

RECOMMENDATIONS

To the extent possible, all new and upgraded recreation facilities will conform to the Americans with Disability Act accessibility guidelines.

The following recommendations have been developed based on a wide variety of factors including: survey results, costs, management considerations, plans and activities of other entities, existing facilities, condition of existing facilities, current opportunities, and others. These recommendations are presented with the knowledge that some facilities that scored high in the survey and/or were mentioned frequently in community meetings are not directly addressed below. However, one purpose in commissioning a survey and developing a plan is to keep many interests visible and viable, even though immediate action on all may not be possible. The plan acknowledges all of these interests in some form, so that if circumstances change or unique opportunities develop, the plan can easily be revised to recommend action on such facilities.

Watauga County Parks and Recreation is always striving to meet the needs of our county residents. Various interested individuals and groups approach WCP&R, the Watauga County Parks and Recreation Commission, or the Watauga County Board of Commissioners with ideas for programs and/or facilities. Watauga County is open to continuing input from citizens, and will investigate these suggestions to determine the feasibility of such proposals.

Indoor Recreation

The need for indoor recreation opportunities was expressed as a priority by virtually all input methods: e.g. citizen survey, stakeholder interviews, and recreation staff discussions. The county's climate is the primary reason for this need, though health and fitness are other motivating factors. Multi-use gym space, aquatics area, office space, and meeting space are among the features needed in such a facility.

In the mid to late 1990s, the High Country Recreation Task Force was formed in response to public interest concerning a possible indoor recreation center. The committee gathered public input, investigated options, and produced a detailed plan with cost estimates. Without funding readily available, the project lost momentum and eventually faded, though the need for the center and general public support has remained. Appalachian Regional Healthcare System subsequently opened the Paul H. Broyhill Wellness Center that included some fitness facilities originally envisioned in the indoor recreation center. The Broyhill Wellness Center is heavily used, and has since expanded. This facility, though, is not as comprehensive as the task force plan. Fees, while affordable for many, are beyond the income of some county residents. The success of the Broyhill Wellness Center, however, confirms the continuing relevance of the original public indoor recreation center concept and indicates that additional public facilities would complement, rather than compete with, existing indoor offerings. The new Watauga high school site was designed with space to accommodate a future indoor recreation center.

Trails

Public demand for trails in almost all forms is evident in all methods of public input (county survey, community meetings, surveys by other entities) and in all ways the question is asked, even indoors. The desire for more trails is not only obvious but the intensity of the demand is exceptional.

The popularity of existing trails is another indicator of this need. Paved walking trails are important for a variety of reasons. Health benefits of walking are well-known, and for this reason many citizens engage in it where possible. Walking trails serve all ages, but are especially important to seniors, people with disabilities, and families with small children. Few recreation facilities serve such a wide segment of the population, as well as segments of the population that are often underserved in recreation. Trails require little maintenance, no supervision, and are available at all times. In addition to recreation benefits, walking trails incidentally support economic development and community appearance.

In planning for walking trails, consideration should be given to other uses such as biking, pets, rollerblades, etc. in order to maximize the benefit and serve a broader segment of the population.

Ideally, walking trails should be geographically distributed as widely as possible in the county because trail use is often a casual activity and short in duration. Citizens are not likely to drive far to use a walking trail (as opposed to a team sport game). While acknowledging the importance of community trails, citizens should also be aware that Watauga County has an exceptionally large number of easy to moderate trails in Moses Cone Park (25 miles) and Price Park (see maps Appendix 14-16). Though not easily convenient for many county residents, these trails do offer Wataugans opportunities for longer walks/runs, or weekend hikes. County residents may perceive these trails as rugged and/or for tourists only; when, in fact, most are quite easy, uncrowded, and relatively accessible.



Unlike athletic fields or other recreation facilities such as parks, trails do not require large parcels of land nor major capital commitments. They can be started with small segments and expanded as opportunities arise. Thus the establishment of widely disbursed trails is more feasible and affordable than other types of recreation facilities. A trail segment may form the core for additional recreation facilities later, and can stimulate the development of a larger and diverse park.

The High Country Regional Trail Plan was developed in 2008 by North Carolina State Parks and High Country Council of Governments, based on extensive input from communities and stakeholders. Following are trails within Watauga County that are planned or proposed by local citizens and groups (see Attachment 8 *High Country Regional Trail Plan; Watauga County* and Appendix 19 for the entire regional plan):

- North Carolina **Mountains-To-Sea Trail** from Blowing Rock to Ashe County; generally paralleling the Blue Ridge Parkway
- **Middle Fork Greenway** between Boone and Blowing Rock
- **Northwest Peaks Trail** along Rich Mountain, Snake Mountain, and Elk Knob; connecting public lands in this area
- **New River Trail** along the South Fork New River

- **Laurel Creek-Watauga River Trail** from Boone to the Tennessee state line
- **Cove Creek Trail**
- **Watauga River-Appalachian Trail Connector** following the county boundary from Watauga River into Avery County to the Appalachian Trail across the state line in Tennessee

Other possible walking trails identified during the course of plan development:

- extension of the Boone greenway from its current terminus to Brookshire Park. Ideally the trail would eventually be extended beyond Brookshire along the New River.
- extension of the Boone greenway to the ASU campus
- a greenway between Boone and Blowing Rock
- a trail from the New Market area in Boone to the new Watauga High School

Picnic shelter/outdoor basketball court

Picnic facilities ranked high in the survey. A double-use picnic shelter/outdoor basketball court at Brookshire Park would maximize the benefit of a picnic facility. The shelter would also accommodate a full-size basketball court with lights and a roof (open on the sides) when not in use as a picnic shelter.

Purchase land to enable the development of Rocky Knob Park

Plans for Rocky Knob Park call for mountain bike trails, hiking, playground, and picnic facilities. See Watauga Tourism Development Authority projects below for details. This land acquisition and development will address many of the high-scoring facilities in the survey results. (see attached aerial photo for boundaries)

Support appropriate Watauga County Tourism Development Authority projects

Support the efforts of the TDA to the extent that its mission and goals coincide with the recreation needs of county residents. Such objectives that will be underway relatively soon include:

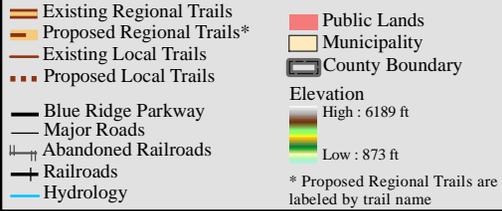
- establishment of **Rocky Knob Park**, primarily for mountain biking, but will also include other recreation opportunities such as hiking, playground, and picnic facilities. Purchasing land adjacent to the existing county property is a priority. (see attached aerial photo for boundaries)
- establishment of **Middle Fork Greenway**. Some easements have been obtained that will enable the opening of a portion of the planned route, in addition to the existing Payne Branch Park.
- identification of **paddle trail routes**, including the construction of trailheads

Watauga County Parks and Recreation will also assist these projects by applying for grant funds through the North Carolina Parks and Recreation Trust Fund and other funding sources to purchase land and/or develop facilities.

Take advantage of existing regional recreation facilities

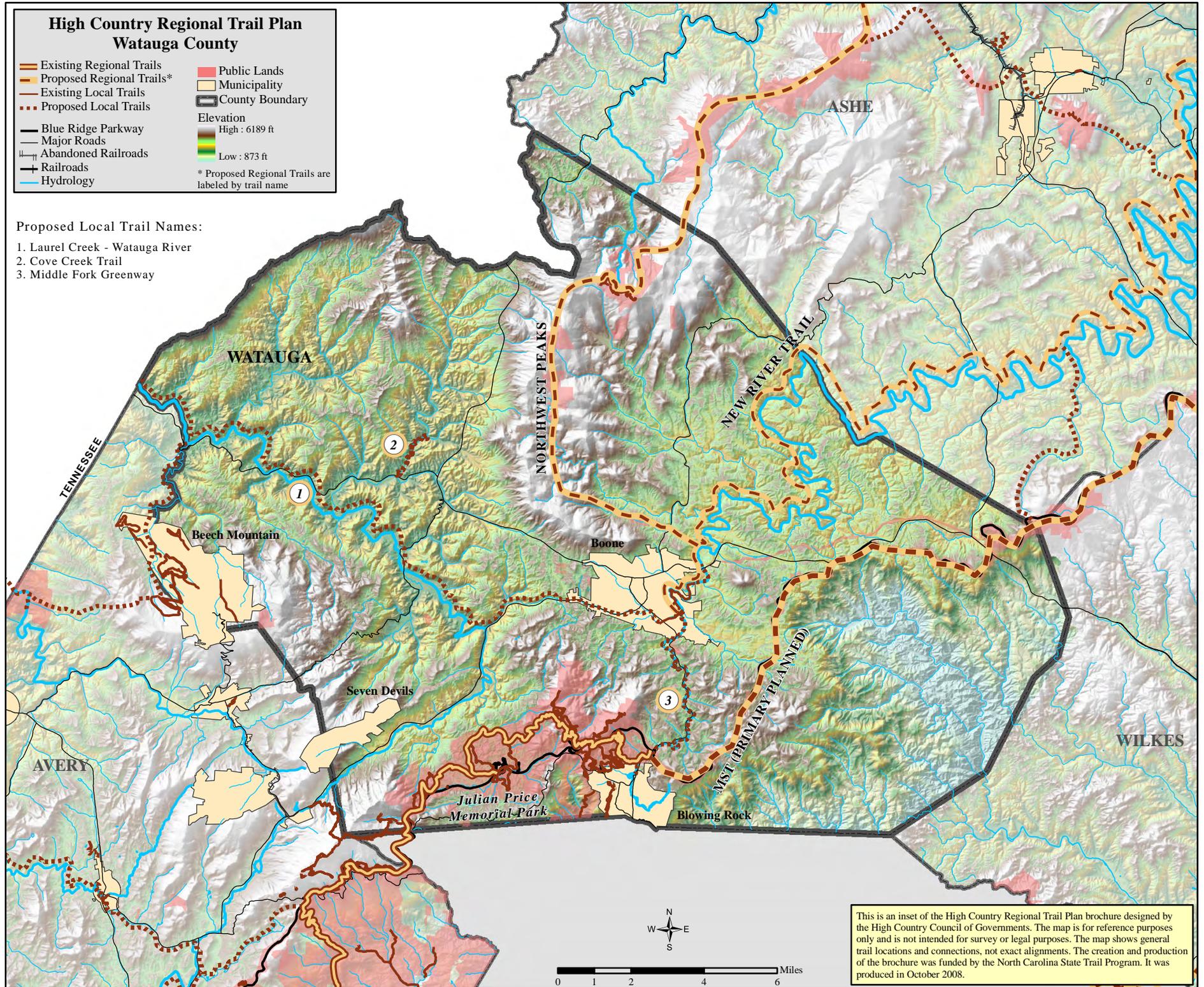
Watauga County is a regional destination for various forms of outdoor casual recreation that includes hiking, scenery, picnicking, and fishing. Most of these recreation opportunities are under the management of the Blue Ridge Parkway, Grandfather Mountain State Park, and Elk Knob State Park. While these entities serve a much broader constituency than Watauga County residents, their facilities should be considered in planning local recreation. By simply highlighting and encouraging the use of these trails, picnic areas, and other facilities, the county's recreation inventory is, in effect, expanded with little effort and at no cost.

High Country Regional Trail Plan Watauga County

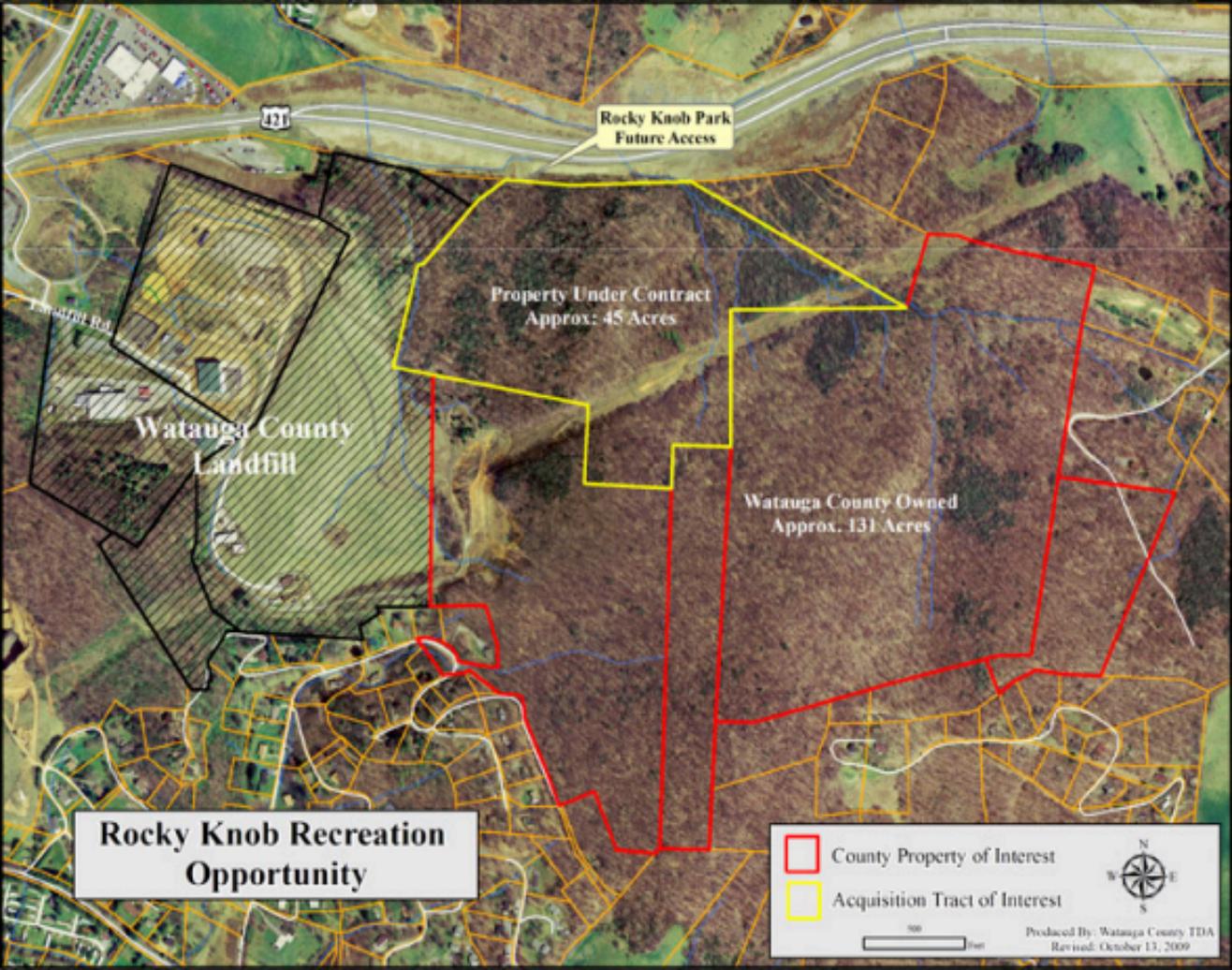


Proposed Local Trail Names:

1. Laurel Creek - Watauga River
2. Cove Creek Trail
3. Middle Fork Greenway



This is an inset of the High Country Regional Trail Plan brochure designed by the High Country Council of Governments. The map is for reference purposes only and is not intended for survey or legal purposes. The map shows general trail locations and connections, not exact alignments. The creation and production of the brochure was funded by the North Carolina State Trail Program. It was produced in October 2008.



121

Rocky Knob Park
Future Access

Tansford Rd.

Watauga County
Landfill

Property Under Contract
Approx: 45 Acres

Watauga County Owned
Approx. 131 Acres

**Rocky Knob Recreation
Opportunity**

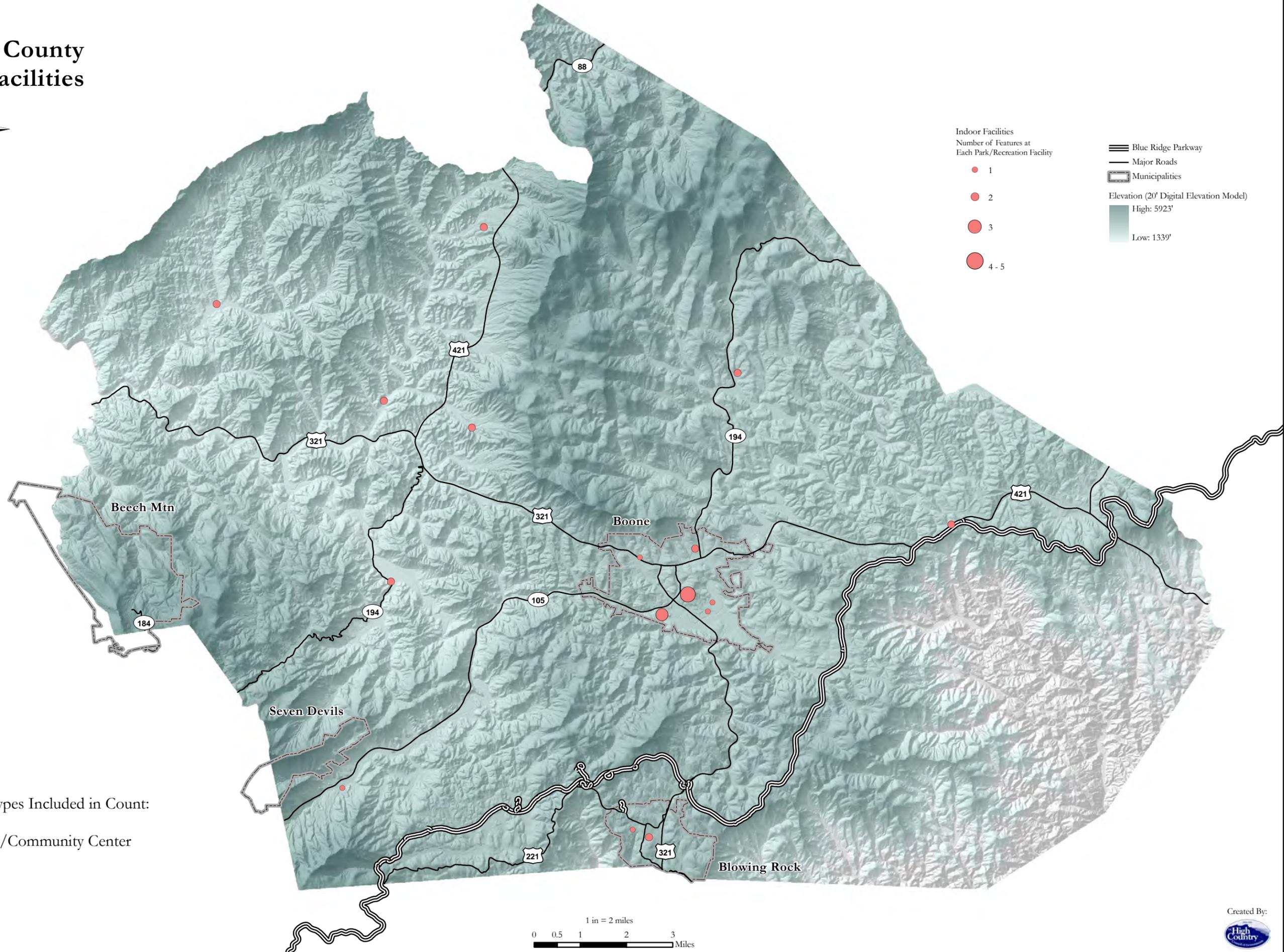
-  County Property of Interest
-  Acquisition Tract of Interest



0 100 Feet

Produced By: Watauga County TDA
Revised: October 13, 2009

Watauga County Indoor Facilities



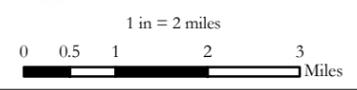
Indoor Facilities
Number of Features at
Each Park/Recreation Facility

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4 - 5

Blue Ridge Parkway
Major Roads
Municipalities

Elevation (20' Digital Elevation Model)
High: 5923'
Low: 1339'

- Indoor Facility Types Included in Count:
1. Gym
 2. Meeting Room/Community Center
 3. Fitness
 4. Pool



Watauga County Outdoor Casual Recreation Facilities



Outdoor Casual Facilities
Number of Features at Each Park/Recreation Facility

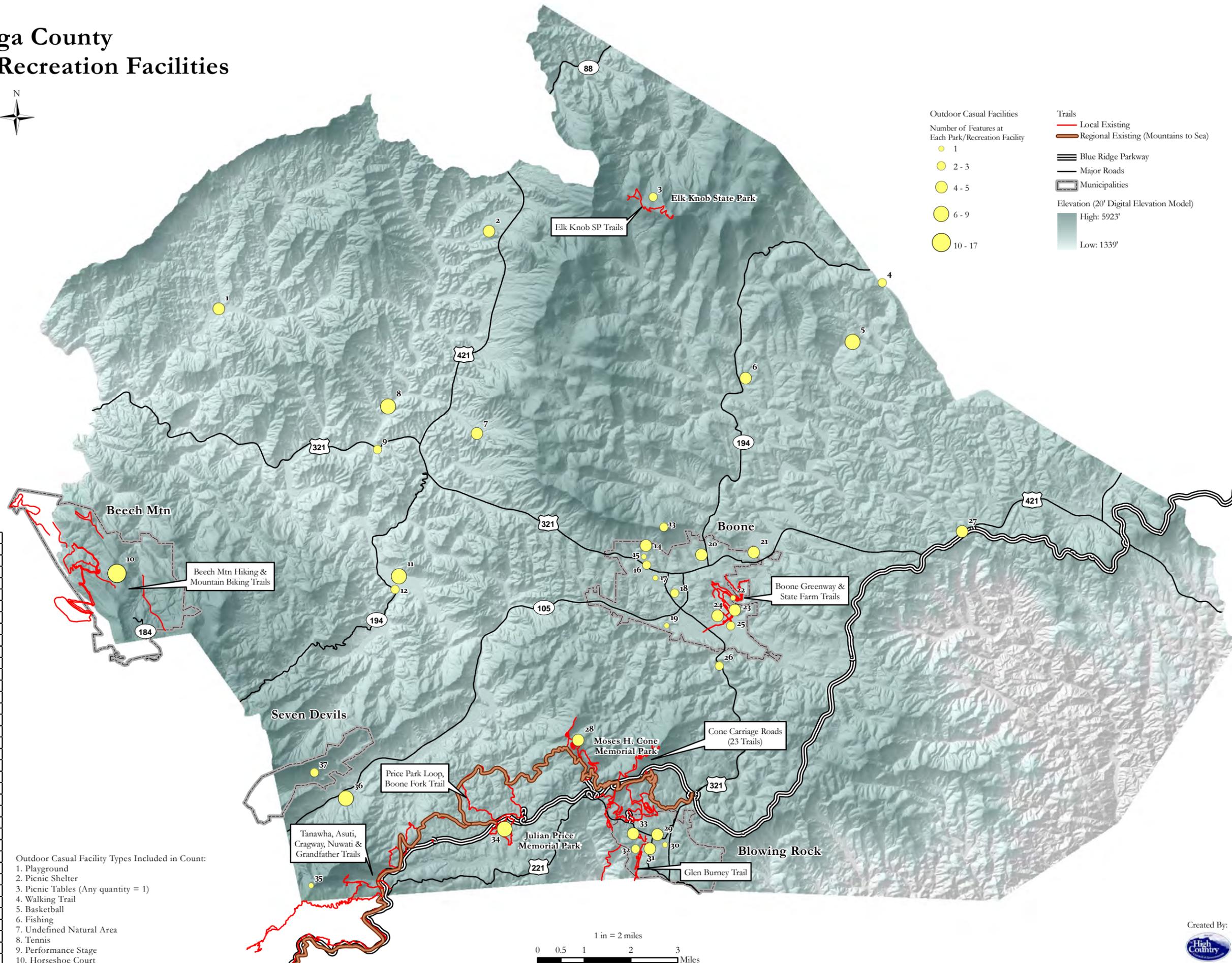
- 1
- 2 - 3
- 4 - 5
- 6 - 9
- 10 - 17

Trails

- Local Existing
- Regional Existing (Mountains to Sea)

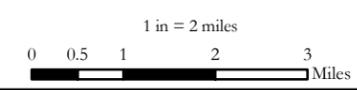
Blue Ridge Parkway
Major Roads
Municipalities

Elevation (20' Digital Elevation Model)
High: 5923'
Low: 1339'

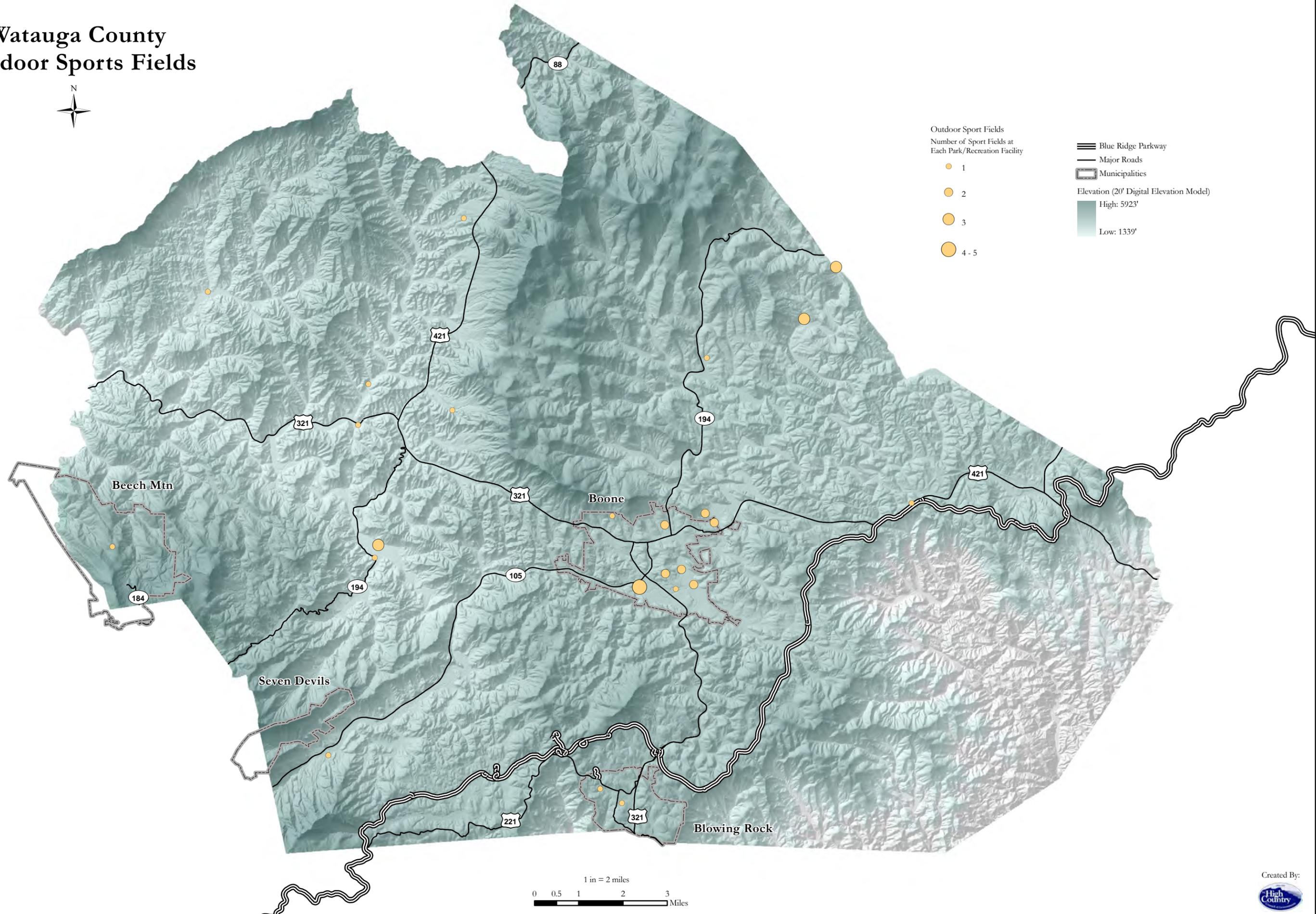


ID	LOCATION	FEATURE COUNT
1	Bethel Elementary School	5
2	Mabel Elementary School	5
3	Elk Knob State Park	2
4	Todd Island Park	3
5	Green Valley Community Park	7
6	Green Valley Elementary School	5
7	Cove Creek Elementary School	5
8	Old Cove Creek School Park	9
9	Moutaineer Ruritan Field	2
10	Beech Mountain	17
11	Valle Crucis Community Park	9
12	Valle Crucis Elementary School	3
13	Howard's Knob Park	3
14	Junaluska Park	4
15	North Street Playground	1
16	Jones House	2
17	Durham Park	1
18	Jaycees Park	3
19	Watauga High School	1
20	Hardin Park Elementary School	4
21	Brookshire Park	4
22	Boone Greenway	1
23	Clawson-Bumley Park	5
24	Recreation Complex	5
25	Industrial Fields	2
26	Payne Branch Park	2
27	Parkway Elementary School	4
28	Moses H. Cone Memorial Park	5
29	Blowing Rock Elementary School	4
30	Broyhill Park	1
31	Memorial Park	5
32	Annie Cannon Garden	2
33	Davant Park	4
34	Julian Price Memorial Park	7
35	Grandfather Mountain State Park	1
36	Foscoe/Grandfather Park	7
37	Seven Devils	3

- Outdoor Casual Facility Types Included in Count:
1. Playground
 2. Picnic Shelter
 3. Picnic Tables (Any quantity = 1)
 4. Walking Trail
 5. Basketball
 6. Fishing
 7. Undefined Natural Area
 8. Tennis
 9. Performance Stage
 10. Horseshoe Court



Watauga County Outdoor Sports Fields



2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans

At-A-Glance:

A Fact Sheet for Professionals

The Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans At-A-Glance: A Fact Sheet for Professionals is designed for busy professionals as a quick desk-side reference to the *2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans* published by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

These Guidelines are needed because of the importance of physical activity to the health of Americans, whose current inactivity puts them at unnecessary risk. The latest information shows that inactivity among American children, adolescents, and adults remains relatively high, and little progress has been made in increasing levels of physical activity among Americans.

Key Guidelines

Substantial health benefits are gained by doing physical activity according to the Guidelines presented below for different groups.

Children and Adolescents (aged 6–17)

- Children and adolescents should do 1 hour (60 minutes) or more of physical activity every day.
- Most of the 1 hour or more a day should be either moderate- or vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity.
- As part of their daily physical activity, children and adolescents should do vigorous-intensity activity on at least 3 days per week. They also should do muscle-strengthening and bone-strengthening activity on at least 3 days per week.

Adults With Disabilities

Follow the adult guidelines. If this is not possible, these persons should be as physically active as their abilities allow. They should avoid inactivity.

Children and Adolescents With Disabilities

Work with the child's health care provider to identify the types and amounts of physical activity appropriate for them. When possible, these children should meet the guidelines for children and adolescents—or as much activity as their condition allows. Children and adolescents should avoid being inactive.

Pregnant and Postpartum Women

Healthy women who are not already doing vigorous-intensity physical activity should get at least 2 hours and 30 minutes (150 minutes) of moderate-intensity aerobic activity a week. Preferably, this activity should be spread throughout the week. Women who regularly engage in vigorous-intensity aerobic activity or high amounts of activity can continue their activity provided that their condition remains unchanged and they talk to their health care provider about their activity level throughout their pregnancy.



www.health.gov/paguidelines



For all individuals, some activity is better than none.

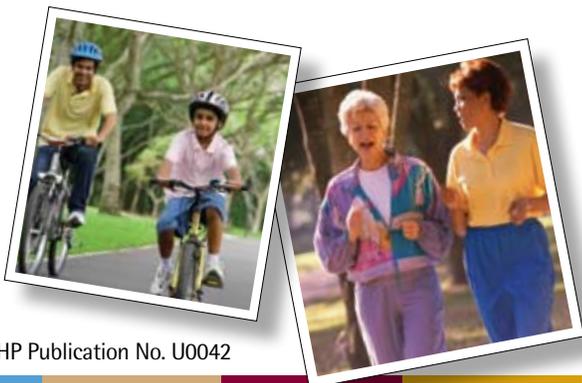
Adults (aged 18–64)

- Adults should do 2 hours and 30 minutes a week of moderate-intensity, or 1 hour and 15 minutes (75 minutes) a week of vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity, or an equivalent combination of moderate- and vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity. Aerobic activity should be performed in episodes of at least 10 minutes, preferably spread throughout the week.
- Additional health benefits are provided by increasing to 5 hours (300 minutes) a week of moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity, or 2 hours and 30 minutes a week of vigorous-intensity physical activity, or an equivalent combination of both.
- Adults should also do muscle-strengthening activities that involve all major muscle groups performed on 2 or more days per week.

Older Adults (aged 65 and older)

- Older adults should follow the adult guidelines. If this is not possible due to limiting chronic conditions, older adults should be as physically active as their abilities allow. They should avoid inactivity. Older adults should do exercises that maintain or improve balance if they are at risk of falling.

For all individuals, some activity is better than none. Physical activity is safe for almost everyone, and the health benefits of physical activity far outweigh the risks. People without diagnosed chronic conditions (such as diabetes, heart disease, or osteoarthritis) and who do not have symptoms (e.g., chest pain or pressure, dizziness, or joint pain) do not need to consult with a health care provider about physical activity.



Health Benefits of Physical Activity—A Review of the Strength of the Scientific Evidence

Adults and Older Adults

Strong Evidence

Lower risk of:

- Early death
- Heart disease
- Stroke
- Type 2 diabetes
- High blood pressure
- Adverse blood lipid profile
- Metabolic syndrome
- Colon and breast cancers

Prevention of weight gain

Weight loss when combined with diet

Improved cardiorespiratory and muscular fitness

Prevention of falls

Reduced depression

Better cognitive function (older adults)

Moderate to Strong Evidence

Better functional health (older adults)

Reduced abdominal obesity

Moderate Evidence

Weight maintenance after weight loss

Lower risk of hip fracture

Increased bone density

Improved sleep quality

Lower risk of lung and endometrial cancers

Children and Adolescents

Strong Evidence

Improved cardiorespiratory endurance and muscular fitness

Favorable body composition

Improved bone health

Improved cardiovascular and metabolic health biomarkers

Moderate Evidence

Reduced symptoms of anxiety and depression

Watauga County: Eating Smart and Moving More

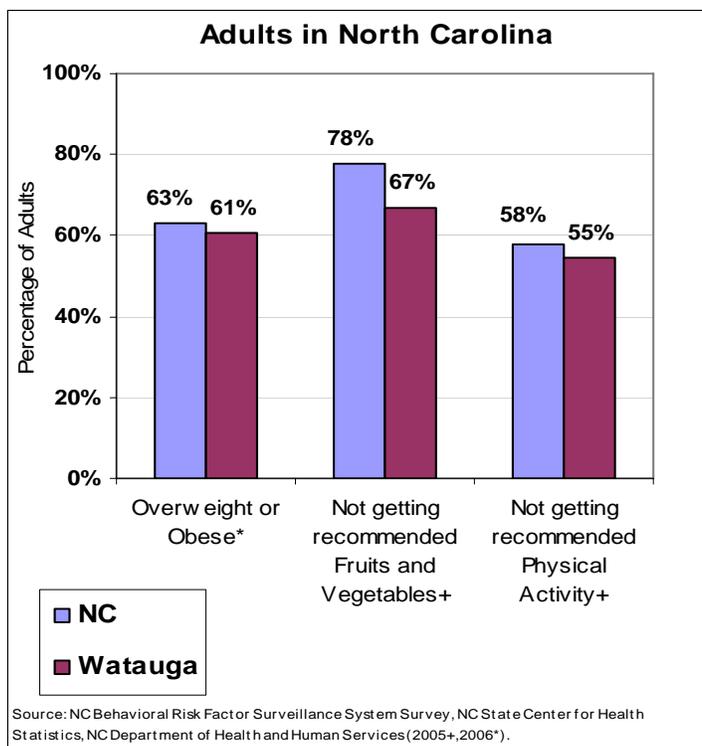
Report Card*		COST
Overweight or Obese	B	In 2007, \$1,220,995 (approximately 8%) of total dollars spent on Watauga County Medicaid were attributed to overweight and obesity.
Meets physical activity recommendation	A-	
Meets fruit and vegetable recommendation	A+	

*Using 2006 BRFSS data, NC counties were ranked and then graded according to their position within that ranking. Ranks above the 60th percentile mark received grades A+ through D-; scores below received an F

In Watauga County, residents are most likely to...**

- ...drink 8+ glasses of regular cola per week (calories equal to an 18 pound weight gain in 1 year)
- ...try to eat a healthy, balanced diet
- ...perceive a lack of time to prepare or eat healthy meals
- ...lack regular exercise

**Claritas iMARK™ Online, PRIZM 2006



Children and Youth in North Carolina:

Overweight or obese	30%
Not getting recommended fruit servings	37%
Not getting recommended vegetable servings	74%
Not getting recommended physical activity	27%

As a result...

- Children's life expectancy is declining due to an increase in overweight¹
- One in three American children born in 2000 will develop diabetes in their lifetime²

However...

- Active young people are more likely to remain active as adults³
- Family meals are associated with a greater intake of fruits and vegetables and fewer fried foods and soft drinks⁴

¹ Olshansky, S. et al., 2005. ² VenkatNarayan, K.M., et al., 2005.
³ www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/obesity/childhood/contributing_factors.htm#top. 2007.
⁴ Neumark-Sztainer, D. et al., 2003.

2007 County Highlights:

- Six Schools implemented physical activity curricula
- A worksite adopted a policy for staff to earn leave time when they log 10 hours of exercise per month
- One community conducted a walk-ability audit to promote walking and improve pedestrian safety

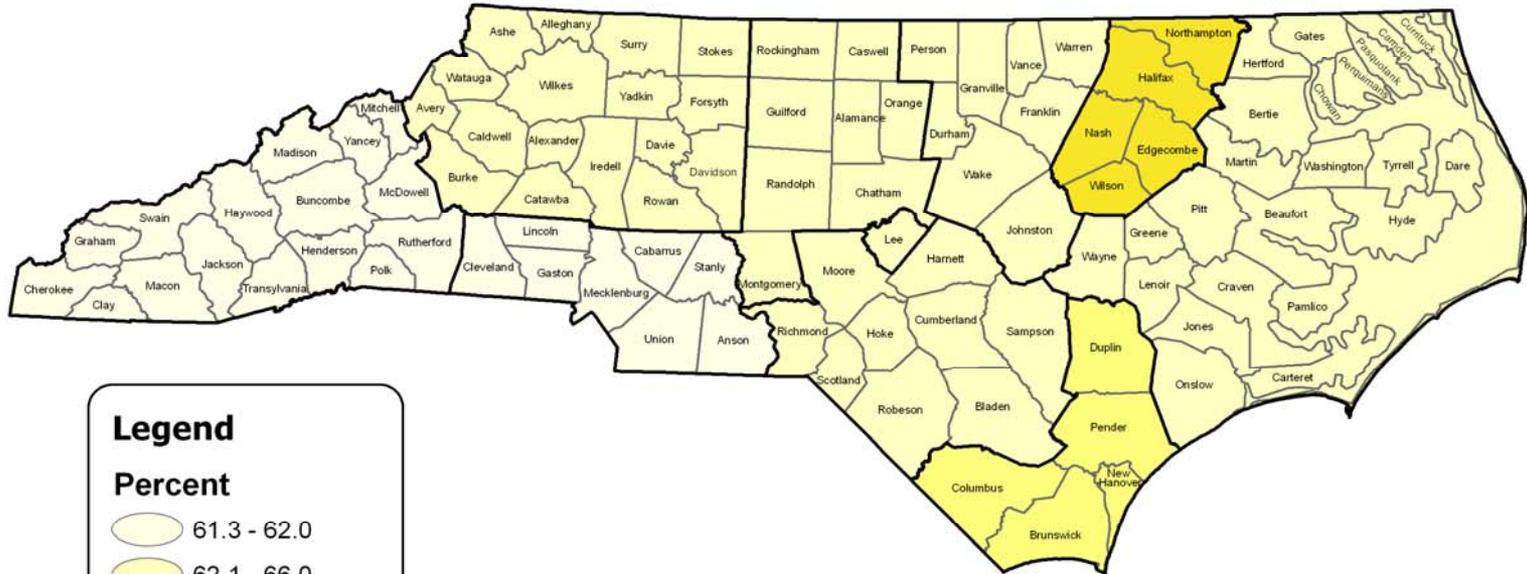
Where and how changes can be made in all counties:

Community	Increase access to places for physical activity, create farmers' markets and/or farm stands
Schools	Ensure children receive quality physical education, implement nutrition standards
Worksite	Offer physical activity classes, provide nutrition counseling

To find more information on obesity programs in your county go to www.EatSmartMoveMoreNC.com



Percentage of North Carolina Adults Who Are Overweight or Obese BMI* ≥ 25 by Area Health Education Center (AHEC) Regions



Legend

Percent

- 61.3 - 62.0
- 62.1 - 66.0
- 66.1 - 67.6
- 67.7 - 71.5
- AHEC Regions
- County Boundary

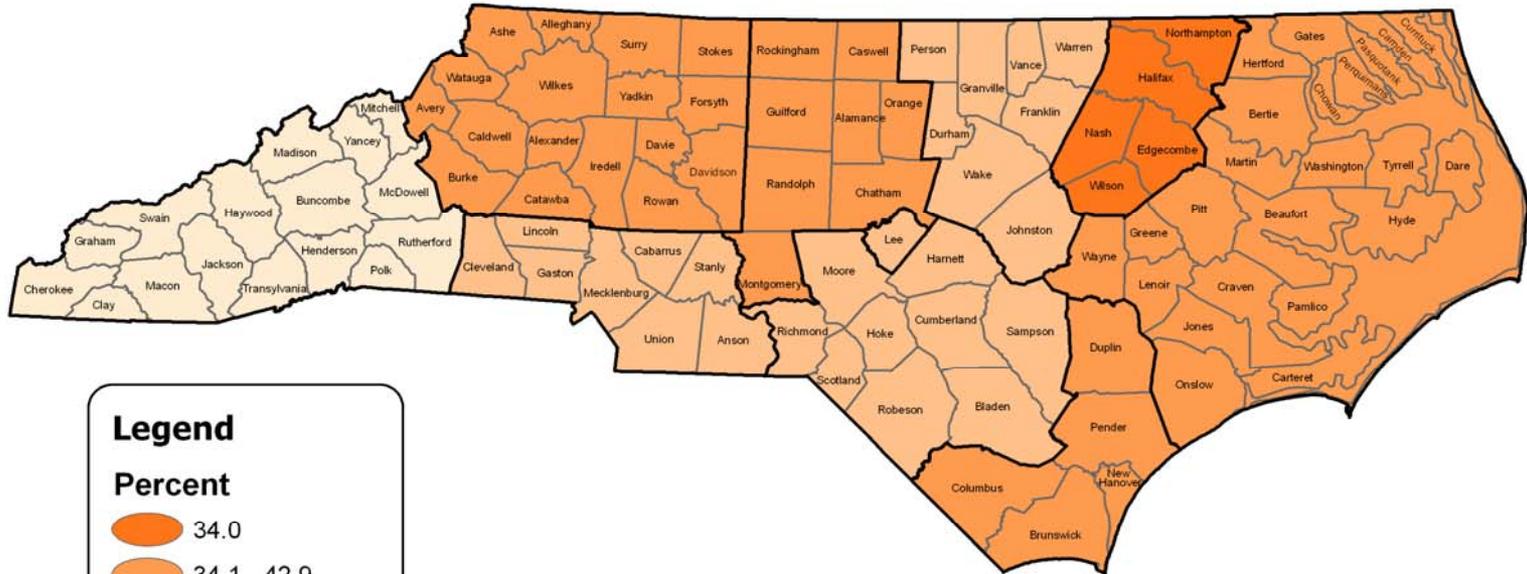
Source: 2007 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS)

*Body mass index is computed as weight in kilograms divided by height in meters squared: (kg/m²). BMI is an intermediate variable used in defining overweight and obesity. Underweight= BMI less than 18.5, Recommended Range= BMI 18.5 to 24.9, Overweight= BMI 25.0 to 29.9 and Obese= BMI greater than 30.0





Percentage of North Carolina Adults Who Are Meeting Daily Physical Activity Requirements* by Area Health Education Center (AHEC) Regions



Legend

Percent

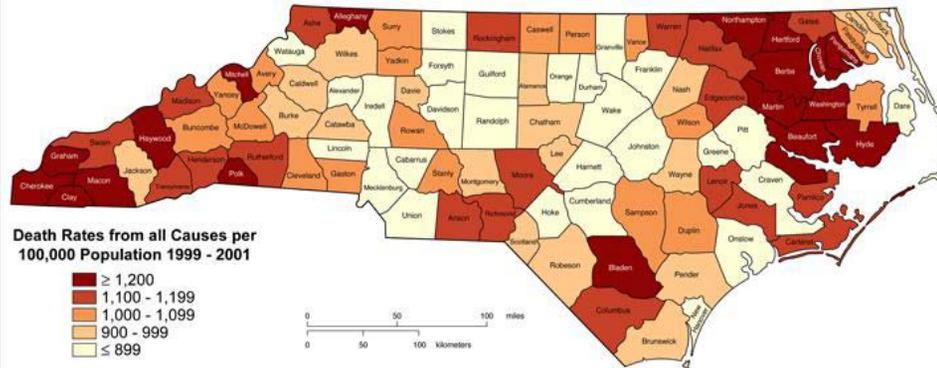
- 34.0
- 34.1 - 42.9
- 43.0 - 45.9
- 46.0 - 49.2
- AHEC Regions
- County Boundary

Source: 2007 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS)

*Moderate physical activity for 30 or more minutes per day, five or more days per week or vigorous physical activity for 20 or more minutes per day, three or more days per week.



Figure 1. Total Deaths



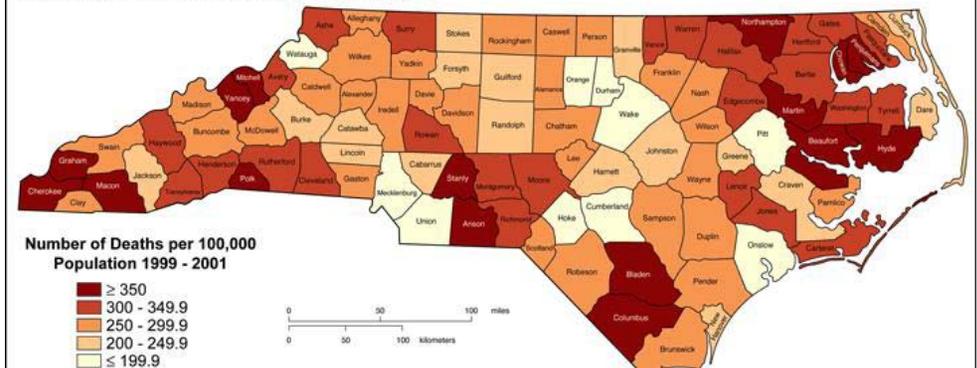
Death Rates from all Causes per 100,000 Population 1999 - 2001

- ≥ 1,200
- 1,100 - 1,199
- 1,000 - 1,099
- 900 - 999
- ≤ 899

Note: N.C. average = 874.7 deaths per 100,000 population.

Source: N.C. Dept. of Health and Human Resources, State Center for Health Statistics and U.S. Census.

Figure 3. Death Rates from Heart Disease



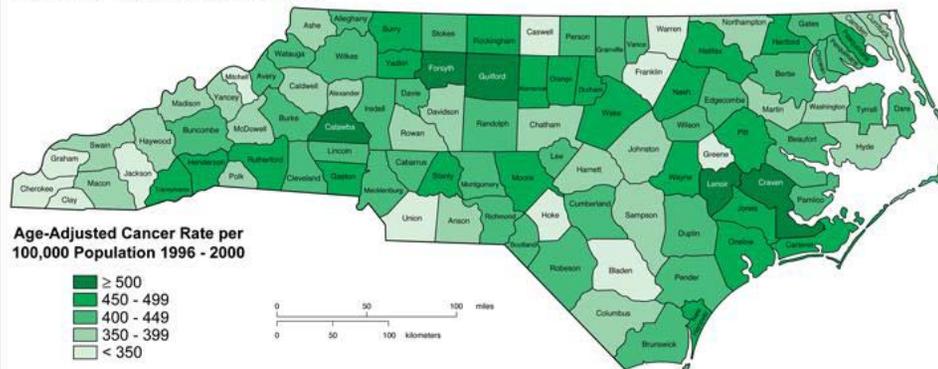
Number of Deaths per 100,000 Population 1999 - 2001

- ≥ 350
- 300 - 349.9
- 250 - 299.9
- 200 - 249.9
- ≤ 199.9

Note: N.C. average = 237.6 heart disease deaths per 100,000 population.

Source: N.C. Dept. of Health and Human Resources, Center for Health Statistics and 2000 U.S. Census.

Figure 5. Cancer Incidence Rate



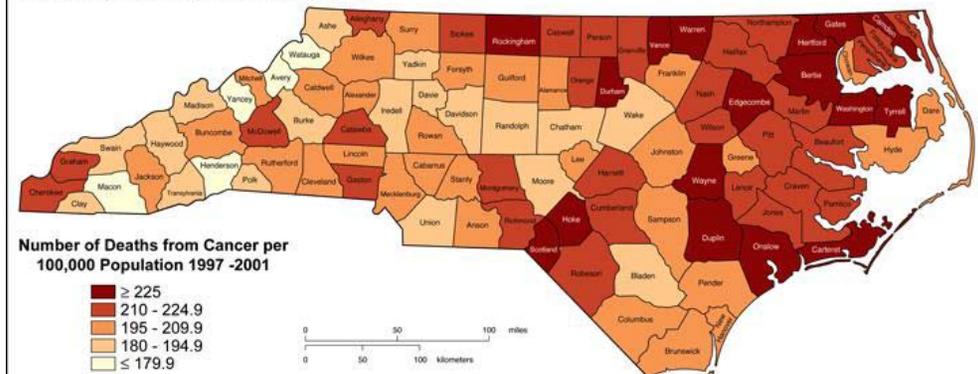
Age-Adjusted Cancer Rate per 100,000 Population 1996 - 2000

- ≥ 500
- 450 - 499
- 400 - 449
- 350 - 399
- < 350

Note: N.C. Average = 437.2 cancer incidences per 100,000 population.

Source: N.C. Central Cancer Registry, March 2003.

Figure 6. Death Rates from Cancer



Number of Deaths from Cancer per 100,000 Population 1997 - 2001

- ≥ 225
- 210 - 224.9
- 195 - 209.9
- 180 - 194.9
- ≤ 179.9

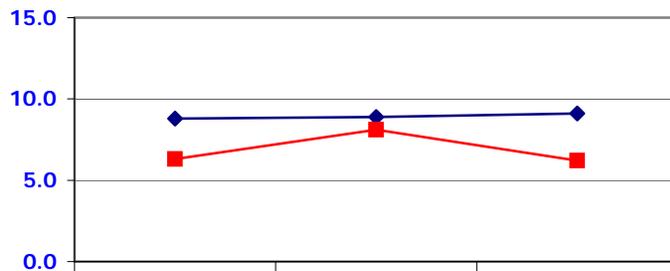
Note: N.C. average = 204.5 cancer deaths per 100,000 population.

Source: N.C. Dept. of Health and Human Resources, State Center for Health Statistics and U.S. Census.

NORTH CAROLINA STATEWIDE AND COUNTY TRENDS IN KEY HEALTH INDICATORS: WATAUGA COUNTY

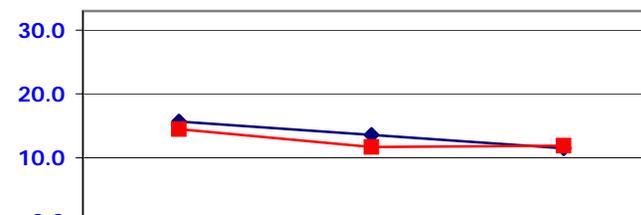


Percentage of Resident Live Births Classified As Low Birthweight (2,500 grams/5 lbs 8 ozs or less)



	1994-1998	1999-2003	2004-2008
◆ NORTH CAROLINA	8.8	8.9	9.1
■ WATAUGA	6.3	8.1	6.2

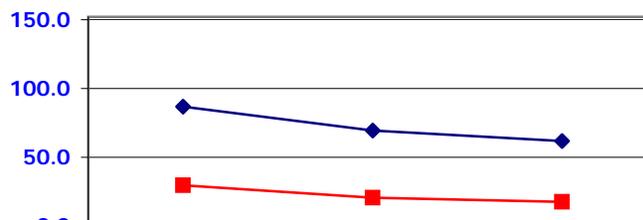
Percentage of Resident Live Births Where Mother Smoked During Pregnancy



	1994-1998	1999-2003	2004-2008
◆ NORTH CAROLINA	15.7	13.6	11.5
■ WATAUGA	14.5	11.7	11.9

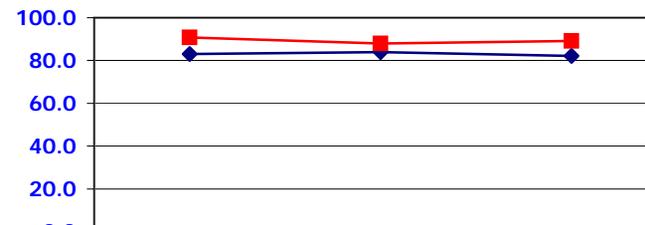
Resident Teen Pregnancies (Ages 15-19) per 1,000 Female Population

Rate per 1,000 Females, Age 15-19



	1994-1998	1999-2003	2004-2008
◆ NORTH CAROLINA	86.7	69.3	61.7
■ WATAUGA	29.7	20.7	17.6

Percentage of Resident Live Births Where Mother Received Prenatal Care in the First Trimester



	1994-1998	1999-2003	2004-2008
◆ NORTH CAROLINA	83.1	84.0	82.1
■ WATAUGA	90.7	87.9	89.1

2008 Total Population: 45,319

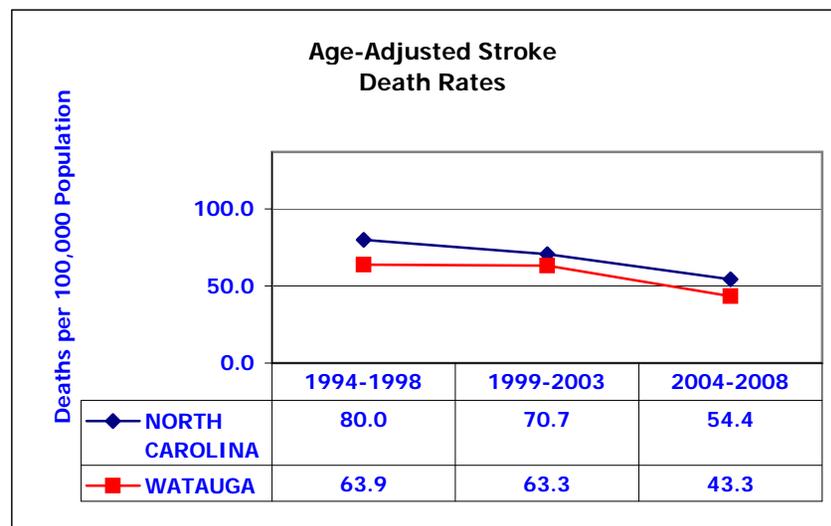
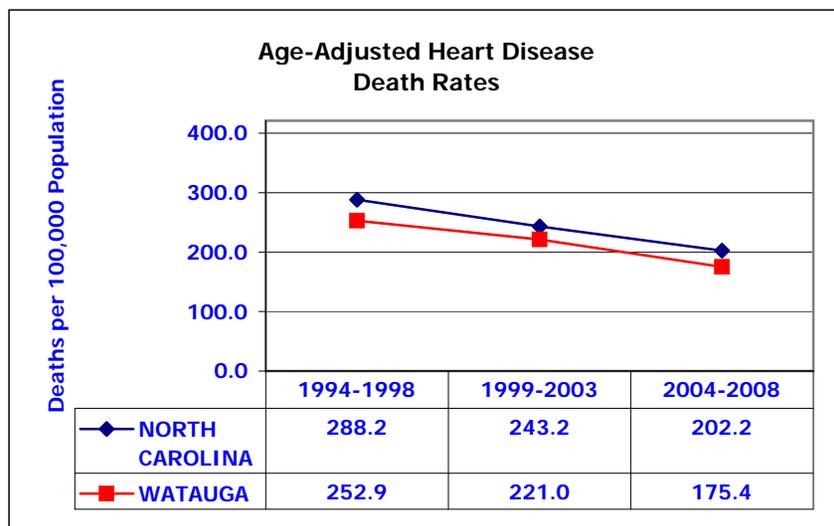
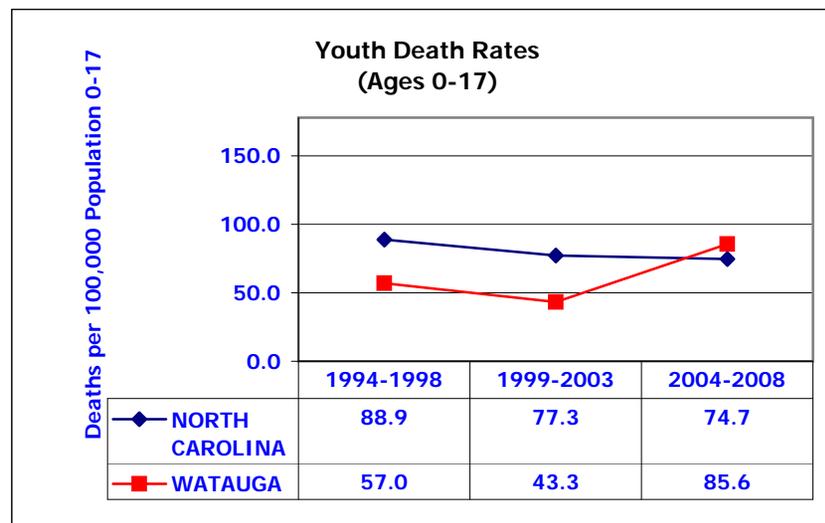
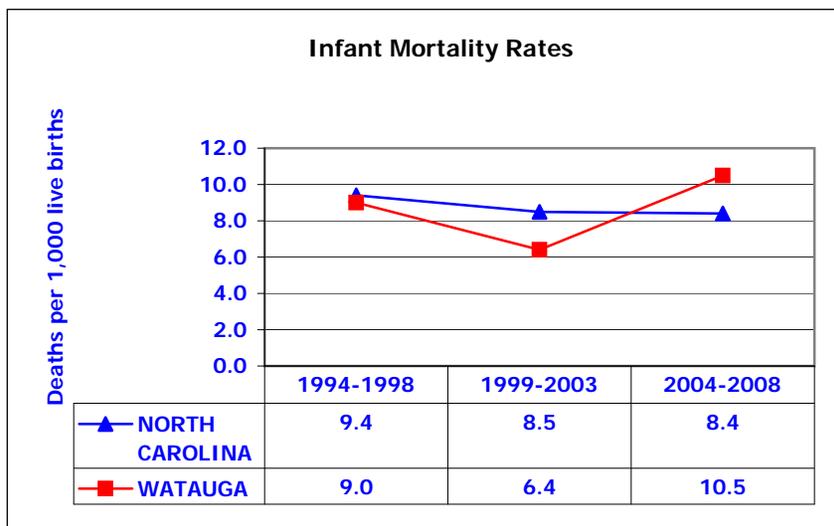
Percentage Population Ages 65+: 12.8

12.8

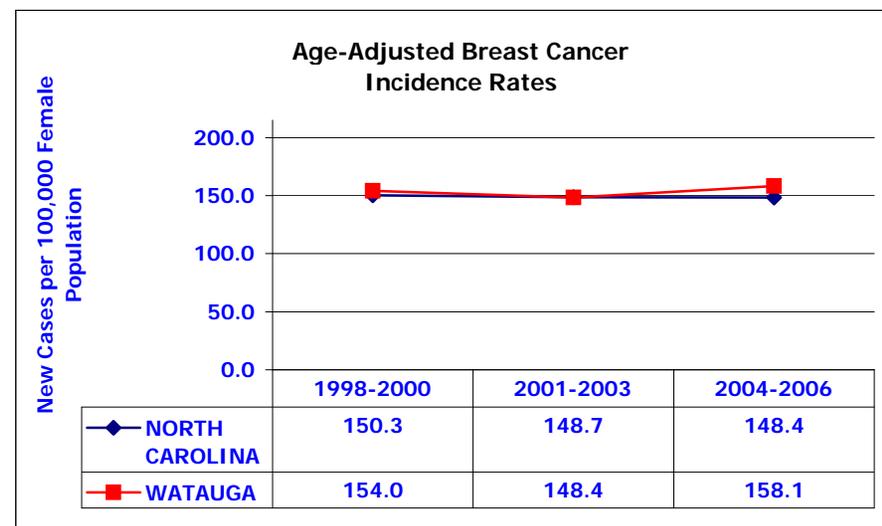
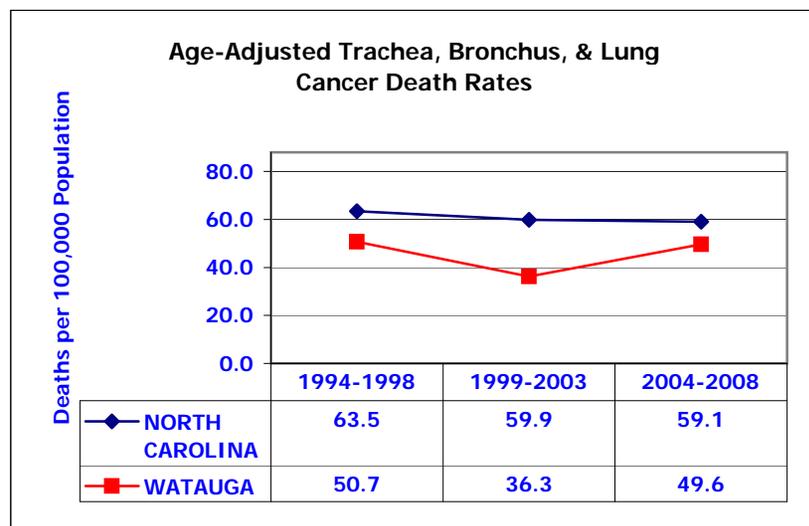
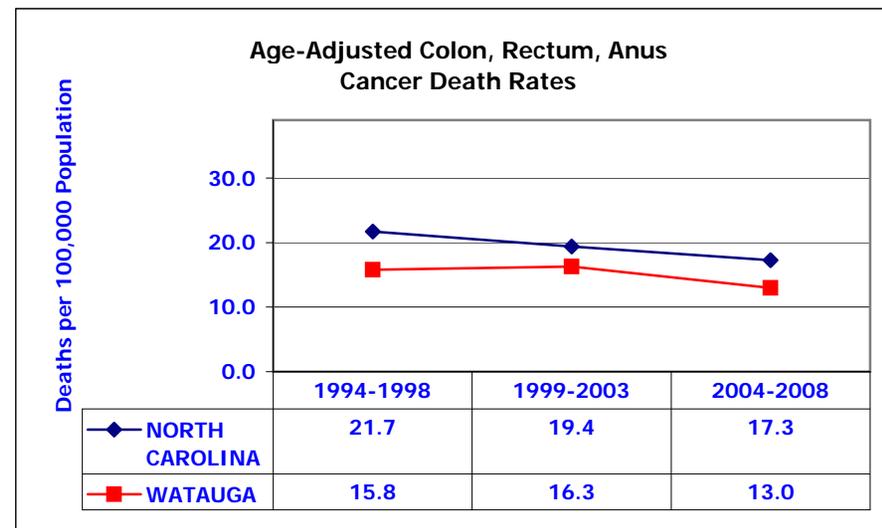
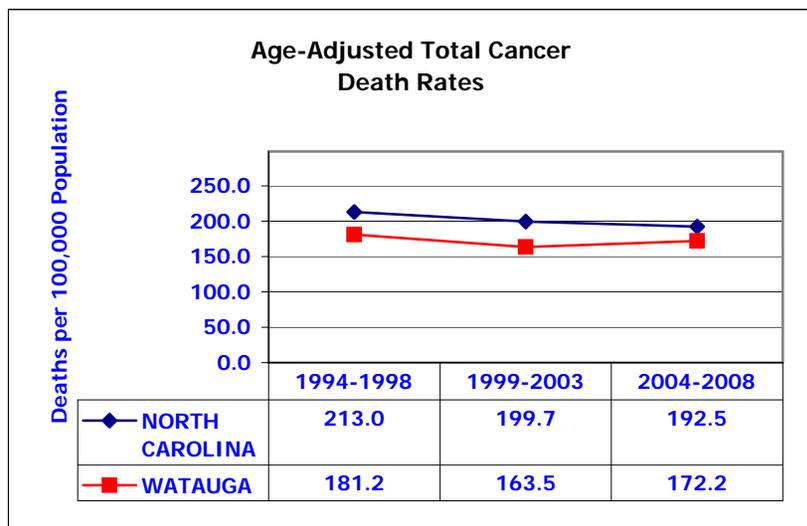
Percentage Population Minority: 2.9

2.9

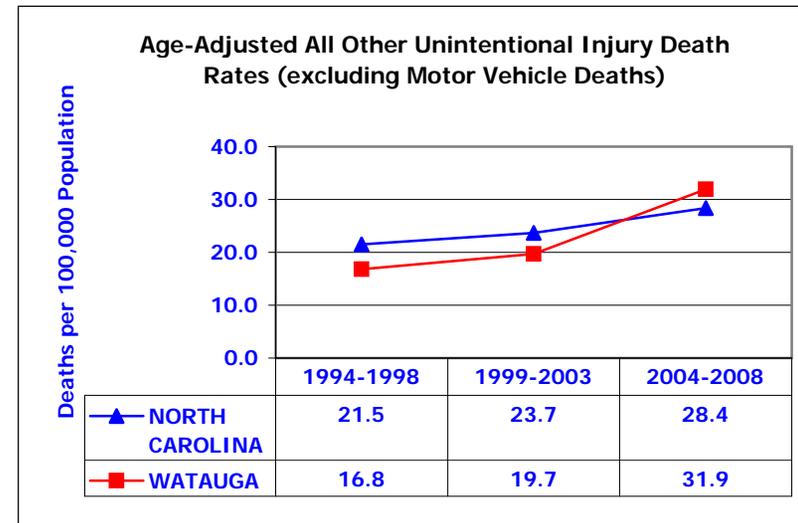
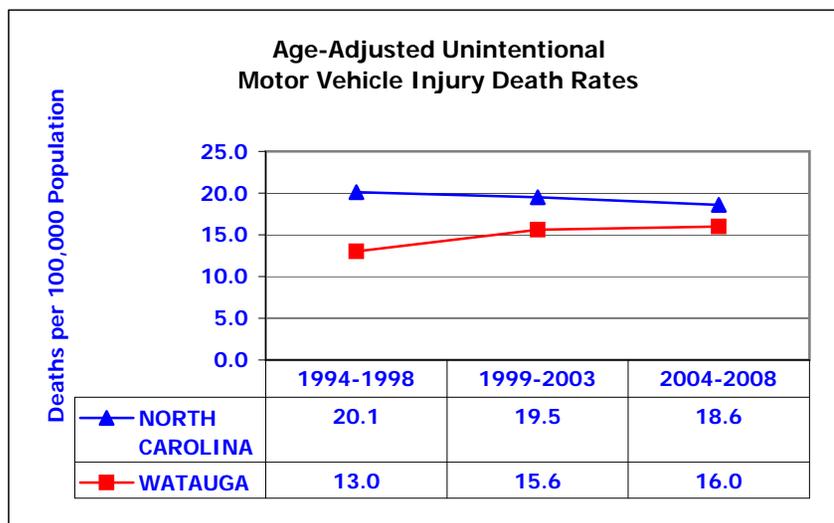
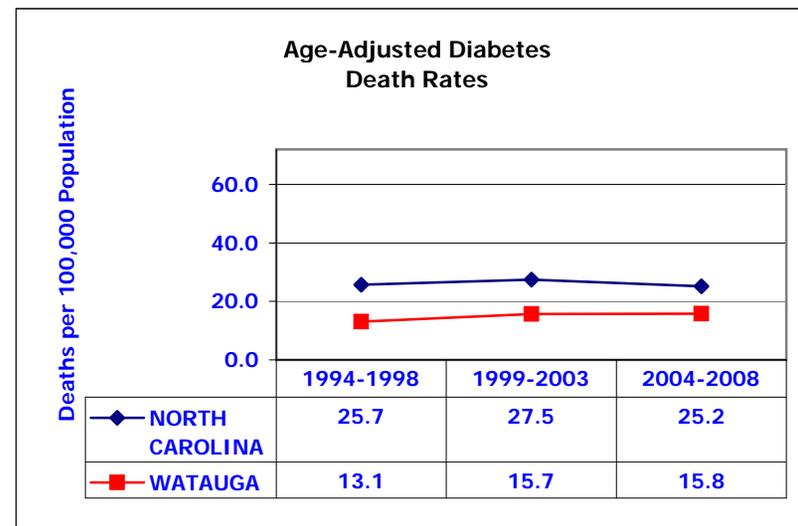
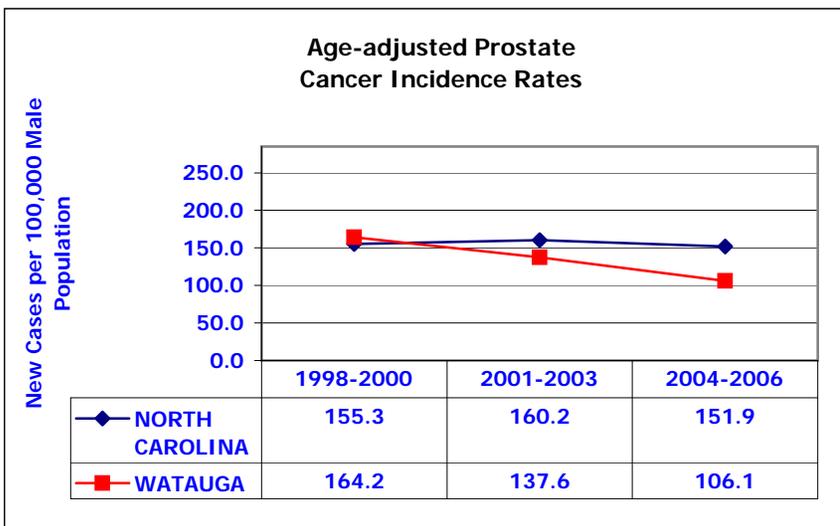
NORTH CAROLINA STATEWIDE AND COUNTY TRENDS IN KEY HEALTH INDICATORS: WATAUGA COUNTY



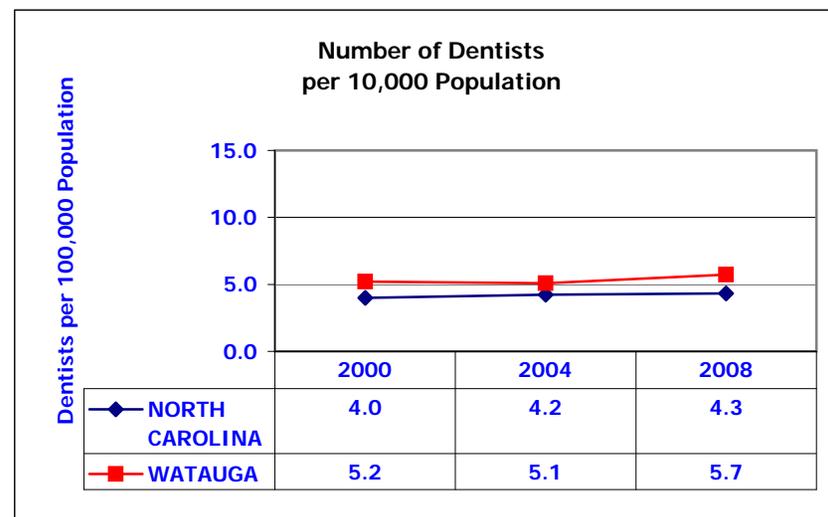
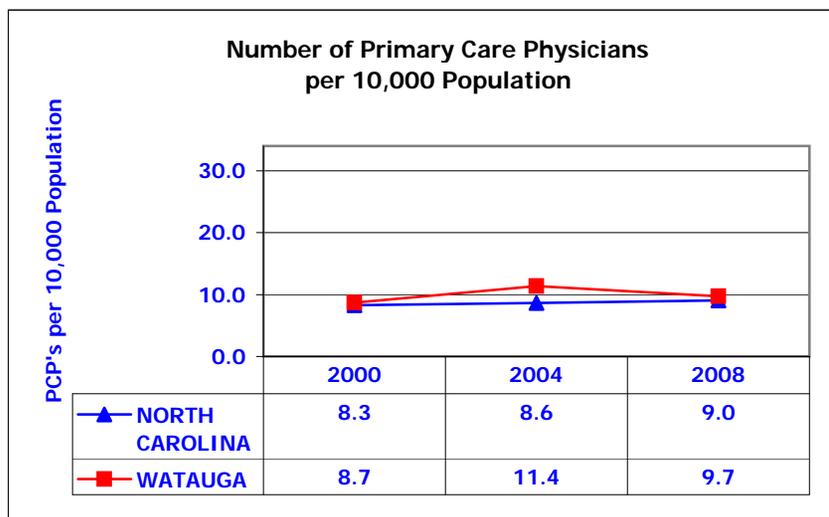
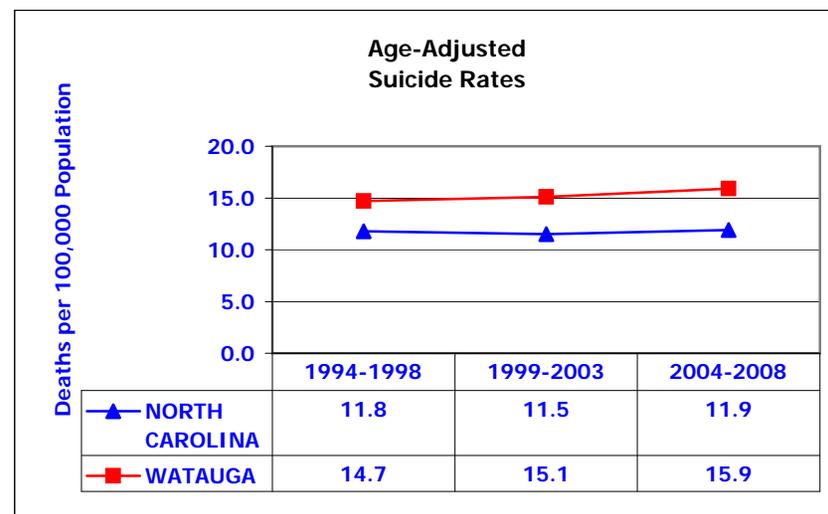
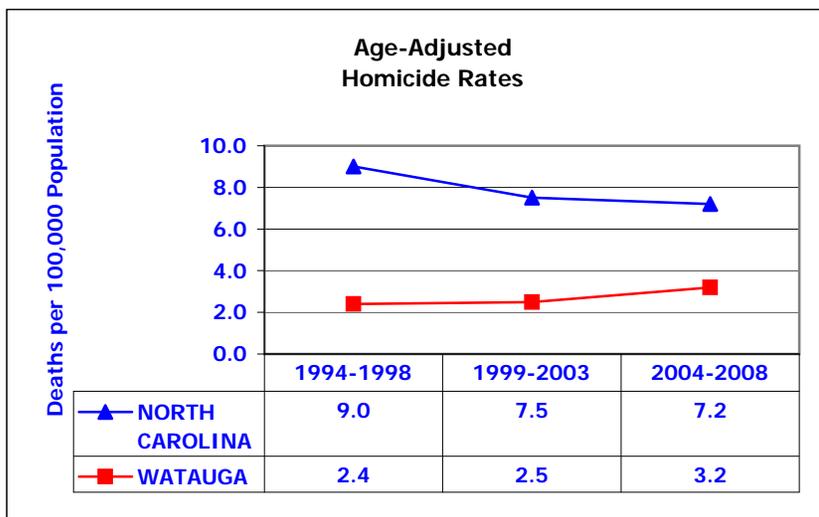
NORTH CAROLINA STATEWIDE AND COUNTY TRENDS IN KEY HEALTH INDICATORS: WATAUGA COUNTY



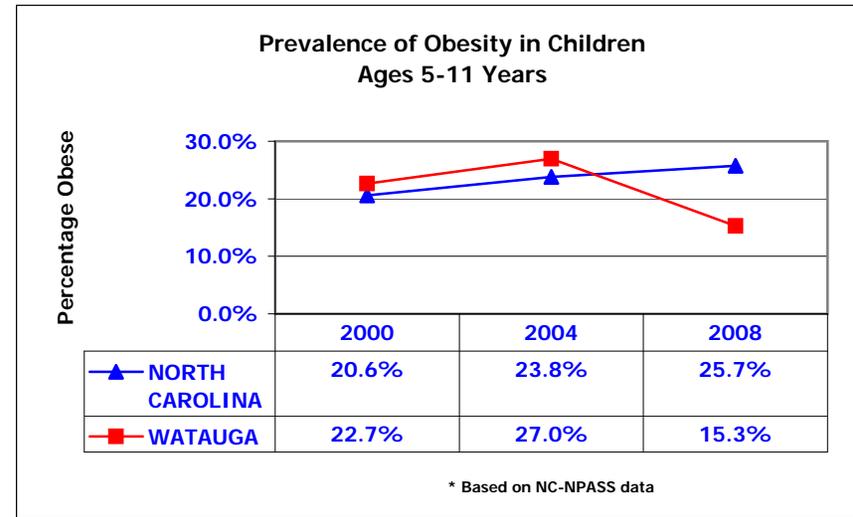
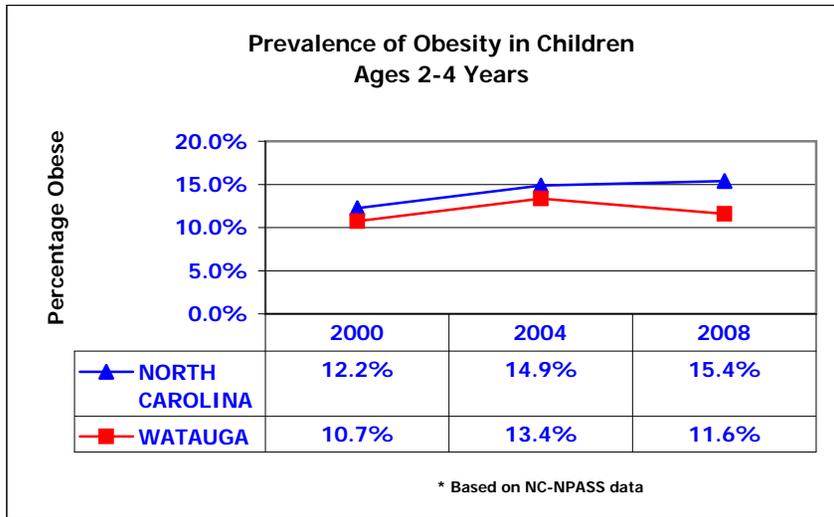
NORTH CAROLINA STATEWIDE AND COUNTY TRENDS IN KEY HEALTH INDICATORS: WATAUGA COUNTY



NORTH CAROLINA STATEWIDE AND COUNTY TRENDS IN KEY HEALTH INDICATORS: WATAUGA COUNTY



NORTH CAROLINA STATEWIDE AND COUNTY TRENDS IN KEY HEALTH INDICATORS: WATAUGA COUNTY



Average Annual Precipitation

Millimeters	Inches
965 - 1,067	38 - 42
1,068 - 1,194	43 - 47
1,195 - 1,321	48 - 52
1,322 - 1,448	53 - 57
1,449 - 1,575	58 - 62
1,576 - 1,702	63 - 67
1,703 - 1,829	68 - 72
1,830 - 2,438	73 - 96



Average Annual Snowfall

Centimeters

Inches

5 - 28

2 - 11

29 - 53

12 - 21

54 - 78

22 - 31

79 - 104

32 - 41

105 - 264

42 - 104



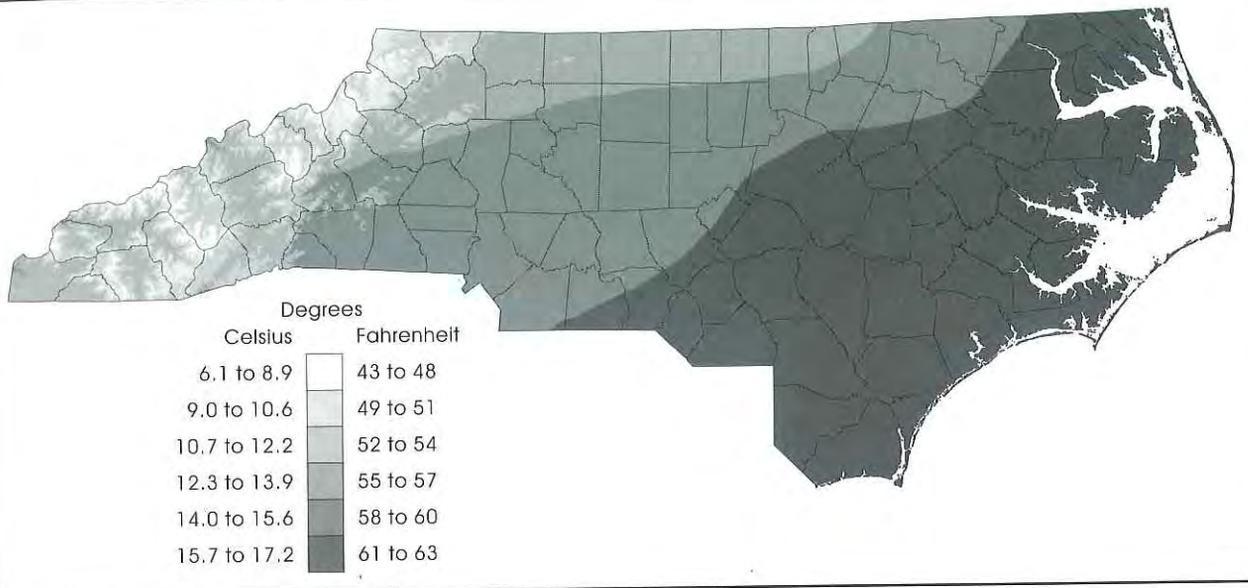


Figure 2.8: Average Annual Temperature.

Source: Monthly Station Normals of Temperature, Precipitation, and Heating and Cooling Days 1961-1990: North Carolina.

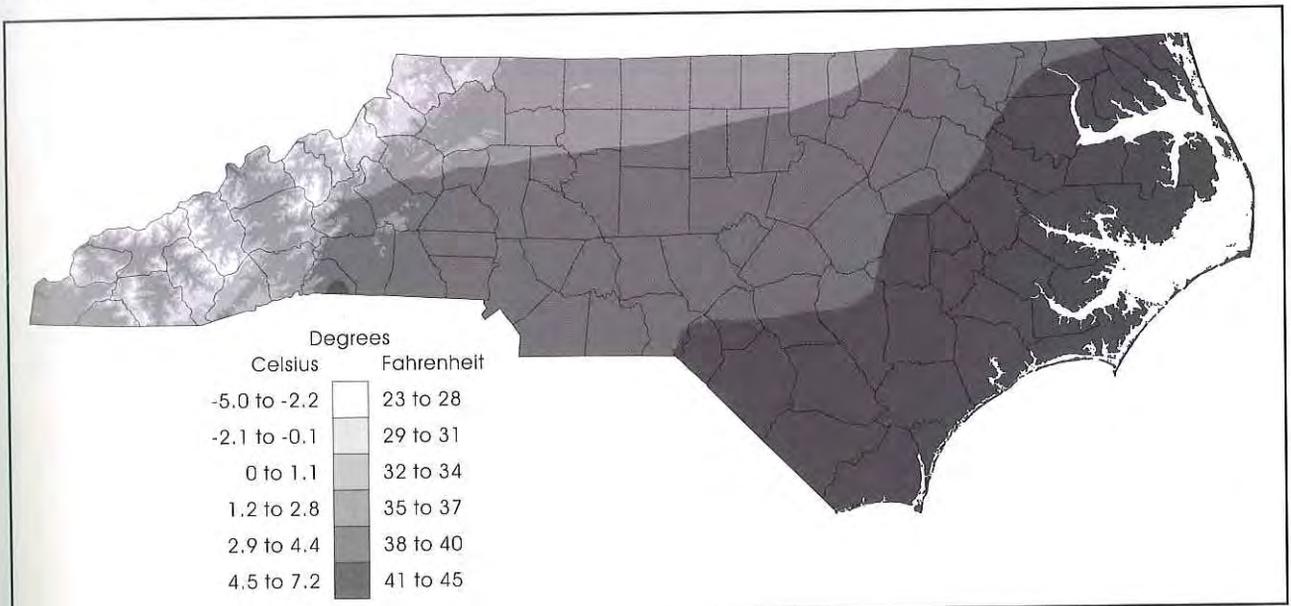


Figure 2.9: Average January Temperature.

Source: Monthly Station Normals of Temperature, Precipitation, and Heating and Cooling Days 1961-1990: North Carolina.

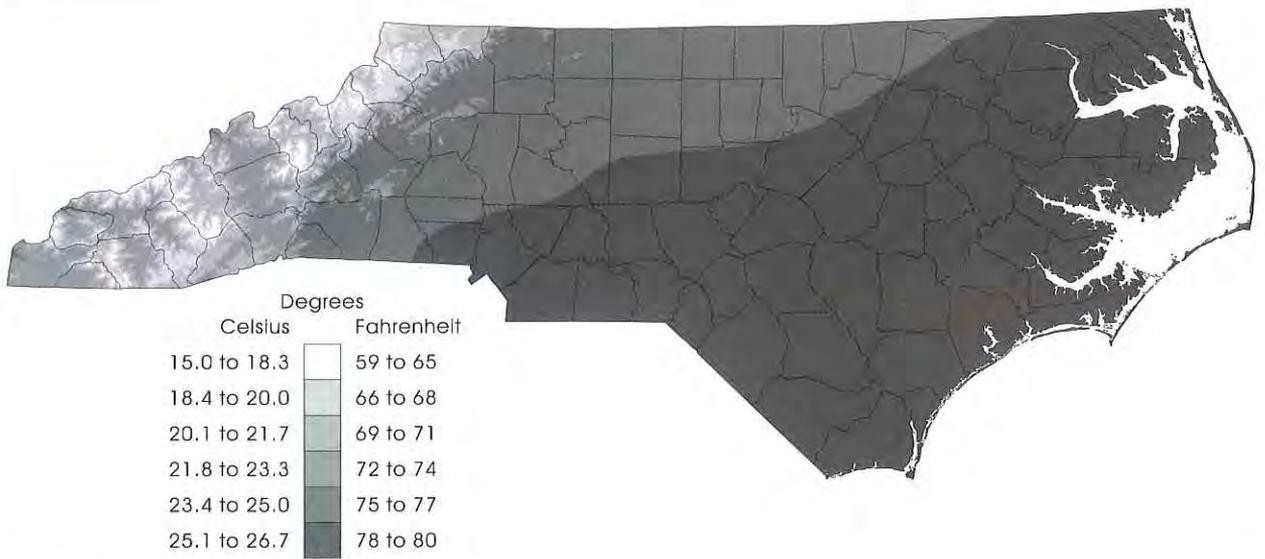


Figure 2.10: Average July Temperature.

Source: Monthly Station Normals of Temperature, Precipitation, and Heating and Cooling Days 1961-1990: North Carolina.

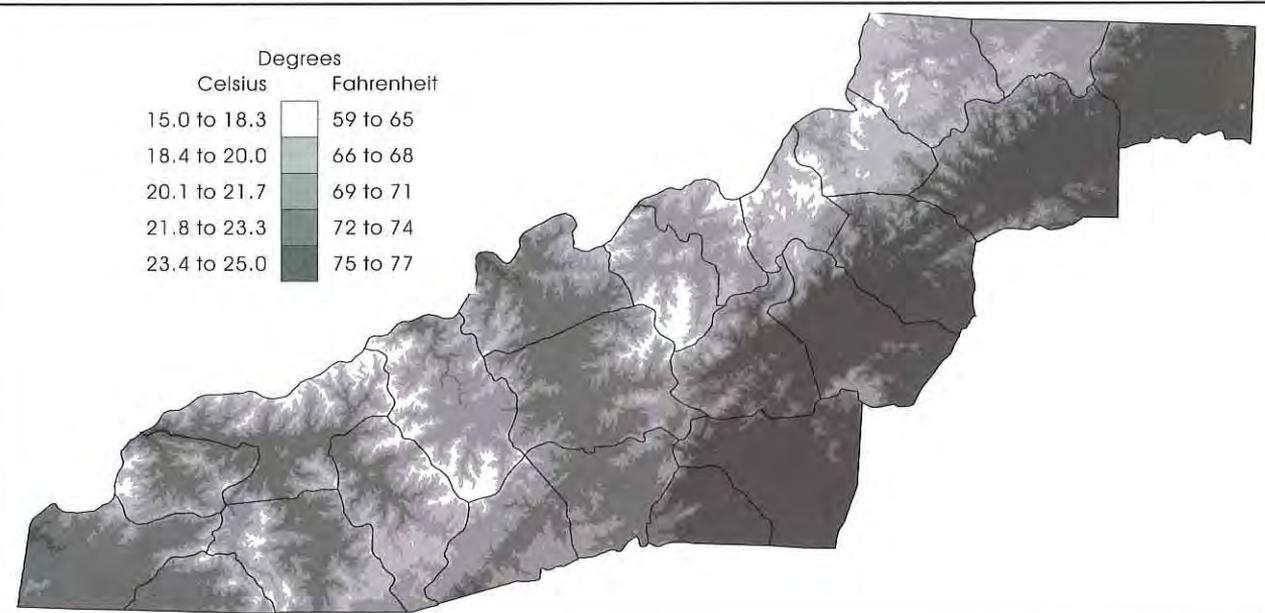


Figure 2.11: Average July Temperature in the Mountain Region.

Source: Monthly Station Normals of Temperature, Precipitation, and Heating and Cooling Days 1961-1990: North Carolina.

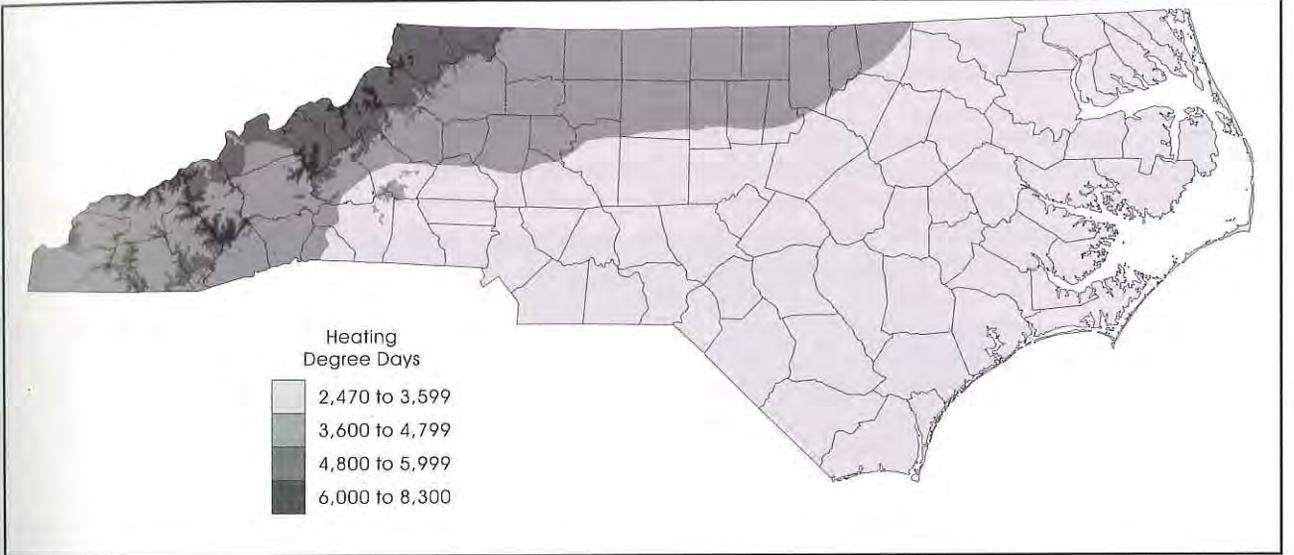


Figure 2.16: Average Annual Heating Degree Days.

Source: Monthly Station Normals of Temperature, Precipitation, and Heating and Cooling Days 1961-1990: North Carolina.

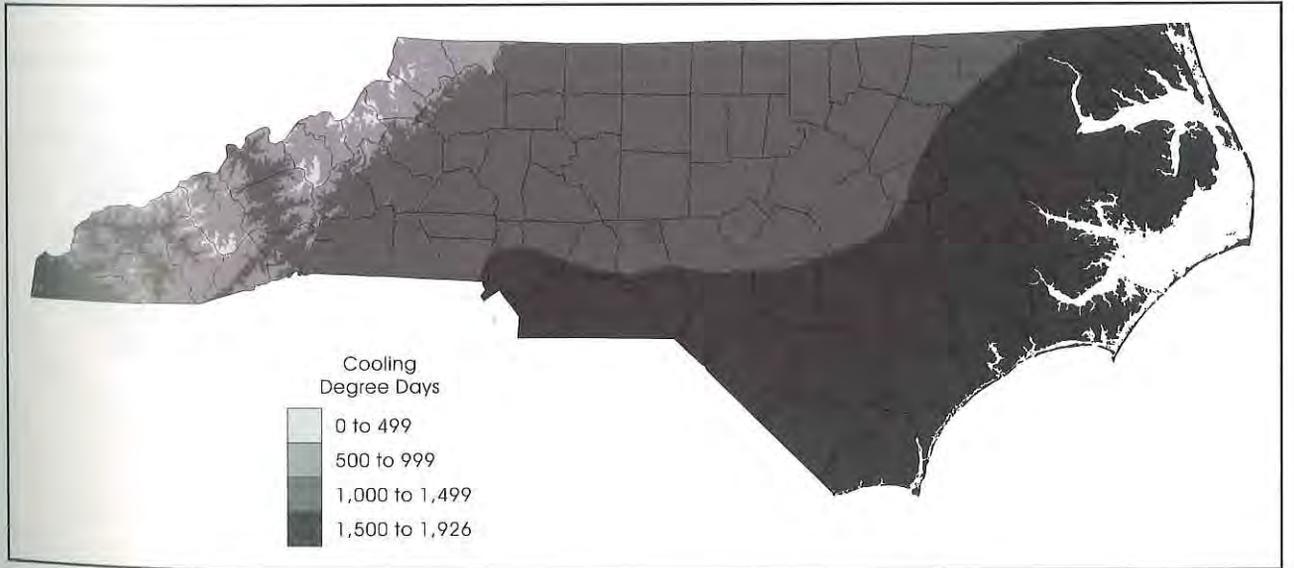


Figure 2.17: Average Annual Cooling Degree Days.

Source: Monthly Station Normals of Temperature, Precipitation, and Heating and Cooling Days 1961-1990: North Carolina.

APPENDIX 7

Article 13. Community Schools Act. [North Carolina General Statutes]

§ 115C-203. Title of Article.

This Article shall be known and may be cited as the "Community Schools Act." (1977, c. 682; 1981, c. 423, s. 1.)

§ 115C-204. Purpose of Article.

The purpose of this Article is to encourage greater community involvement in the public schools and greater community use of public school facilities. To this end it is declared to be the policy of this State:

- (1) To provide for increased involvement by citizens in their local schools through community schools advisory councils.
- (2) To assure maximum use of public school facilities by the citizens of each community in this State.

It is further declared to be the policy of this State that, to the extent sufficient funds are made available, each local board of education shall comply with the provisions of this Article. (1977, c. 682; 1981, c. 423, s. 1.)

§ 115C-205. Definitions.

As used in this Article:

- (1) The term "community schools advisory council" means a committee of citizens organized to advise community school coordinators, administrators, and local boards of education in the involvement of citizens in the educational process and in the use of public school facilities.
- (2) The term "community schools coordinator" means an employee of a local board of education whose responsibility it is to promote and direct maximum use of the public schools and public school facilities as centers for community development.
- (3) The term "interagency council" means a committee of agency and organizational representatives appointed by the Governor to work with the Superintendent of Public Instruction concerning the involvement of statewide agencies and organizations with the public schools.
- (4) The term "public school facility" means any education facility under the jurisdiction of a local board of education, whether termed an elementary school, middle school, junior high school, high school or union school. (1977, c. 682; 1981, c. 423, s. 1.)

§ 115C-206. State Board of Education; duties; responsibilities.

The Superintendent of Public Instruction shall prepare and present to the State Board of Education recommendations for general guidelines for encouraging increased community involvement in the public schools and use of public school facilities. These recommendations shall include, but shall not be limited to provisions for:

- (1) The use of public school facilities by governmental, charitable or civic organizations for activities within the community.
- (2) The utilization of the talents and abilities of volunteers within the community for the enhancement of public school programs including tutoring, counseling and cultural programs and projects.
- (3) Increased communications between the staff and faculty of the public schools, other community institutions and agencies, and citizens in the community.

Based on the recommendations of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the State Board of Education shall adopt appropriate policies and guidelines for encouraging increased community involvement in the public schools and use of the public school facilities. (1977, c. 682; 1981, c. 423, s. 1; 1995, c. 450, s. 8.)

§ 115C-207. Authority and responsibility of local boards of education.

Every local board of education that uses State funds to implement programs under this Article shall:

- (1) Develop programs and plans for increased community involvement in the public schools based upon policies and guidelines adopted by the State Board of Education.
- (2) Develop programs and plans for increased community use of public school facilities based upon policies and guidelines adopted by the State Board of Education.
- (3) Establish rules governing the implementation of such programs and plans in its public schools and submit these rules along with adopted programs and plans to the State Board of Education for approval by the State Board of Education.

Programs and plans developed by a local board of education may provide for the establishment of one or more community schools advisory councils for the public schools under the board's jurisdiction and for the employment of one or more community schools coordinators. The local board of education shall establish the terms and conditions of employment for the community schools coordinators.

Every local board of education using State funds to implement a community schools program under this Article may enter into agreements with other local boards of education, agencies and institutions for the joint development of plans and programs and the joint expenditure of these State funds. (1977, c. 682; 1981, c. 423, s. 1; 1995, c. 450, s. 9.)

§ 115C-208. Community schools advisory councils; duties; responsibilities; membership.

Every local board of education that establishes a community schools program under this Article may establish one or more community schools advisory councils which may become involved in matters affecting the educational process in accordance with rules established by the local board of education and approved by the State Board of Education and further may consider ways of increasing community involvement in the public schools and utilization of public school facilities. Community schools advisory councils may assist local boards of education in the development and preparation of the plans and programs to achieve such goals, may assist in the implementation of such plans and programs and may provide such other assistance as may be requested by the local boards of education.

Community schools advisory councils may work with local school officials and personnel, parent-teacher organizations, and community groups and agencies in providing maximum opportunities for public schools to serve the communities, and may encourage the maximum use of volunteers in the public schools.

At least one half of the members of each community schools advisory council should be the parents of students in the particular public school system: Provided, that less than twenty-five percent (25%) of the pupils attending a particular school reside outside the immediate community of the school, at least one half of the members should be parents of students in the particular school for which the advisory council is established. Wherever possible the local board of education is encouraged to include at least one high school student. The size of the councils and the terms of membership on the councils shall be determined by the local board of education in accordance with the State guidelines. (1977, c. 682; 1979, c. 828; 1981, c. 423, s. 1; 1995, c. 450, s. 10.)

§ 115C-209. Community schools coordinators.

Every local board of education may employ one or more community schools coordinators and shall establish the terms and conditions of their employment. Community schools coordinators shall be responsible for:

- (1) Providing support to the community schools advisory councils and public school officials.
- (2) Fostering cooperation between the local board of education and appropriate community agencies.
- (3) Encouraging maximum use of community volunteers in the public schools.
- (4) Performing any other duties as may be assigned by the local superintendent and the local board of education, consistent with the purposes of this Article. (1977, c. 682; 1981, c. 423, s. 1; 1995, c. 450, s. 11.)

§ 115C-209.1. Nondisclosure of certain volunteer records.

(a) The records comprising a volunteer file of a local school administrative unit are not public records as provided in Chapter 132 of the General Statutes. These records shall be open for inspection only to the following individuals:

- (1) The volunteer, former volunteer, individual who applied to be a volunteer, or that individual's properly authorized agent who may examine the individual's file in its entirety at any reasonable time.
- (2) The superintendent and other supervisory personnel.
- (3) The parent or guardian of any student with whom the volunteer has or had contact.
- (4) Members of the local board of education and the board's attorney.
- (5) A party to a lawsuit, by authority of a subpoena or proper court order, only to the extent authorized by and in accordance with that subpoena or court order.

(b) A local board of education shall also release or permit the inspection of a volunteer file, except as prohibited by State or federal law, if prior to the release of the information or inspection of the file:

- (1) The local board of education determines that the release of the information or inspection of the file is essential (i) to maintaining the integrity of the local board of education or (ii) to maintaining the level or quality of services provided by the local board of education; or
- (2) The local board of education makes a written finding that there is a substantial showing of the criteria set forth in subdivision (1) of this subsection. The local board of education's written finding shall be a public record.

(c) A volunteer shall be notified at the time the individual applies to volunteer that the local board of education may maintain a volunteer file on the individual, and that information in that file may be open to inspection in accordance with this section.

(d) This section shall not be construed to require a local school administrative unit to maintain records on volunteers, former volunteers, or individuals applying to be volunteers.

(e) As used in this section, the following terms mean:

- (1) Volunteer. – An individual who provides services to a local board of education without expectation of compensation and with the understanding that the local board of education is under no obligation to continue accepting those services or to compensate the volunteer for them.
- (2) Volunteer file. – Any information collected by the local board of education regarding volunteers, former volunteers, and individuals applying to be volunteers that relates to the individual's application, selection or nonselection, performance, disciplinary action, or termination, wherever that information is located or in whatever form it is maintained. (2003-353, s. 1.)

Watauga County Schools

Policy COMMUNITY USE OF SCHOOL FACILITIES	Number 2.05.20
	Adopted 8/4/77
	Revised 6/13/05

Policy

The Watauga County Board of Education shall make school facilities available for use by local community groups and organizations when such use does not interfere with the instructional program of the schools.

As a condition of use, users shall accept all responsibility for damages and/or injuries to persons or property occurring during, or as a result of, their use of school facilities, and shall hold the Board of Education and its employees and agents harmless from any liabilities arising directly or indirectly from the use of school facilities.

Users will pay for any personnel needed for security, kitchen, and/or custodial duties if/as required by the principal. If school system employees are used, the user shall pay the Watauga County Schools for each employee's time at his/her overtime rate of pay, including applicable fringe benefits.

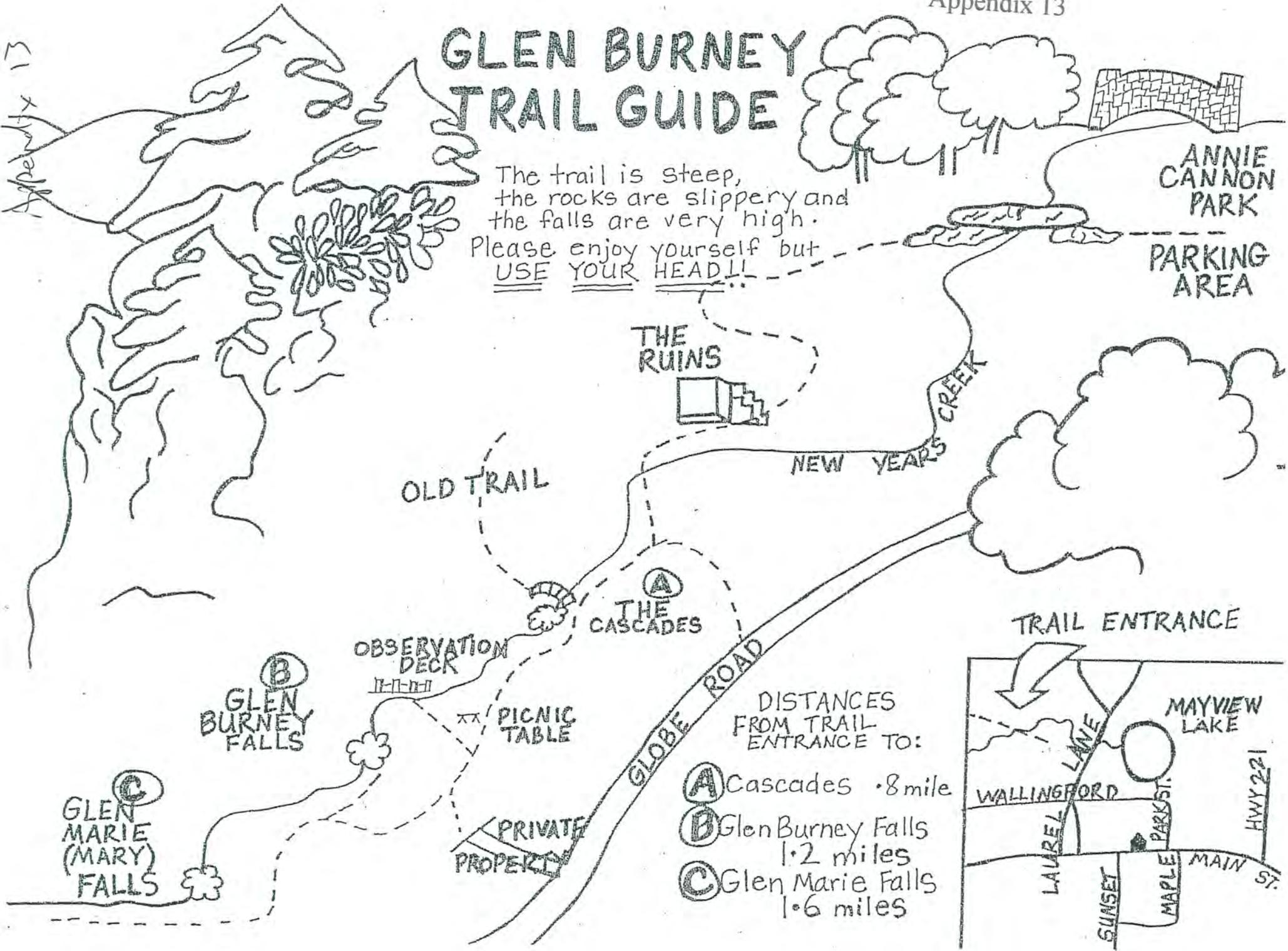
The school principal may impose such additional conditions as he/she believes necessary to protect school facilities and/or the interests of the Watauga County Schools, and may refuse the use of school facilities by any group. An applicant who is refused facility use may appeal the decision to the Superintendent of Watauga County Schools.

Priorities for Use

1. Use by the school, including the after school program.
2. School affiliated groups such as PTA/PTO organizations and booster clubs, and use by the Watauga Education Foundation.
3. Watauga County Parks and Recreation, if exclusively or primarily for Watauga County residents.
4. Other non-profit use, including use by government and non-profit agencies, families, and groups of individuals. Priority shall be given to use by and for Watauga County residents and organizations.
5. Use by persons or groups wishing to promote or sell educational products or services for profit. This use must be approved by the principal and by the Director of School-Community Relations. School facilities may not be used to promote or sell any products or services which do not have a major emphasis on education.
6. Special consideration may be given to government and non-profit use in case of emergencies due to flooding, fire, or other disaster situations.
7. Once a principal has approved a contract for use of school facilities on a given date, that use takes priority over any later request for use, unless the space is needed by the school, the after school program, or to allow for emergency situations as in item #6 above.

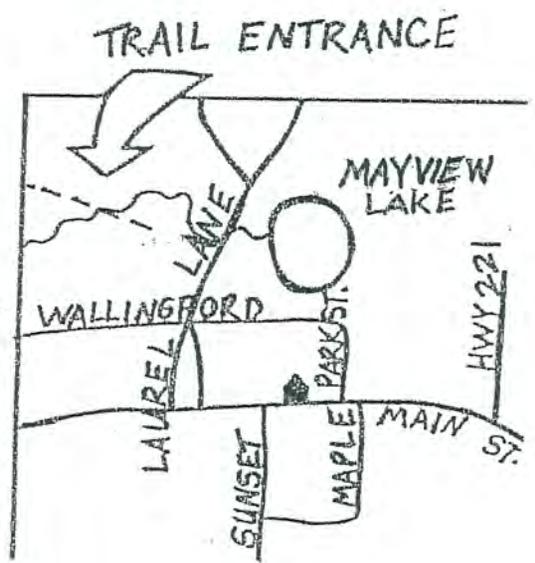
GLEN BURNEY TRAIL GUIDE

The trail is steep, the rocks are slippery and the falls are very high. Please enjoy yourself but USE YOUR HEAD!!



DISTANCES FROM TRAIL ENTRANCE TO:

- A** Cascades .8 mile
- B** Glen Burney Falls 1.2 miles
- C** Glen Marie Falls 1.6 miles



Town Of Blowing Rock

Blowing Rock, North Carolina 28605
Post Office Box 47
704-295-3004 5200

GLEN BURNEY TRAIL

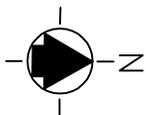
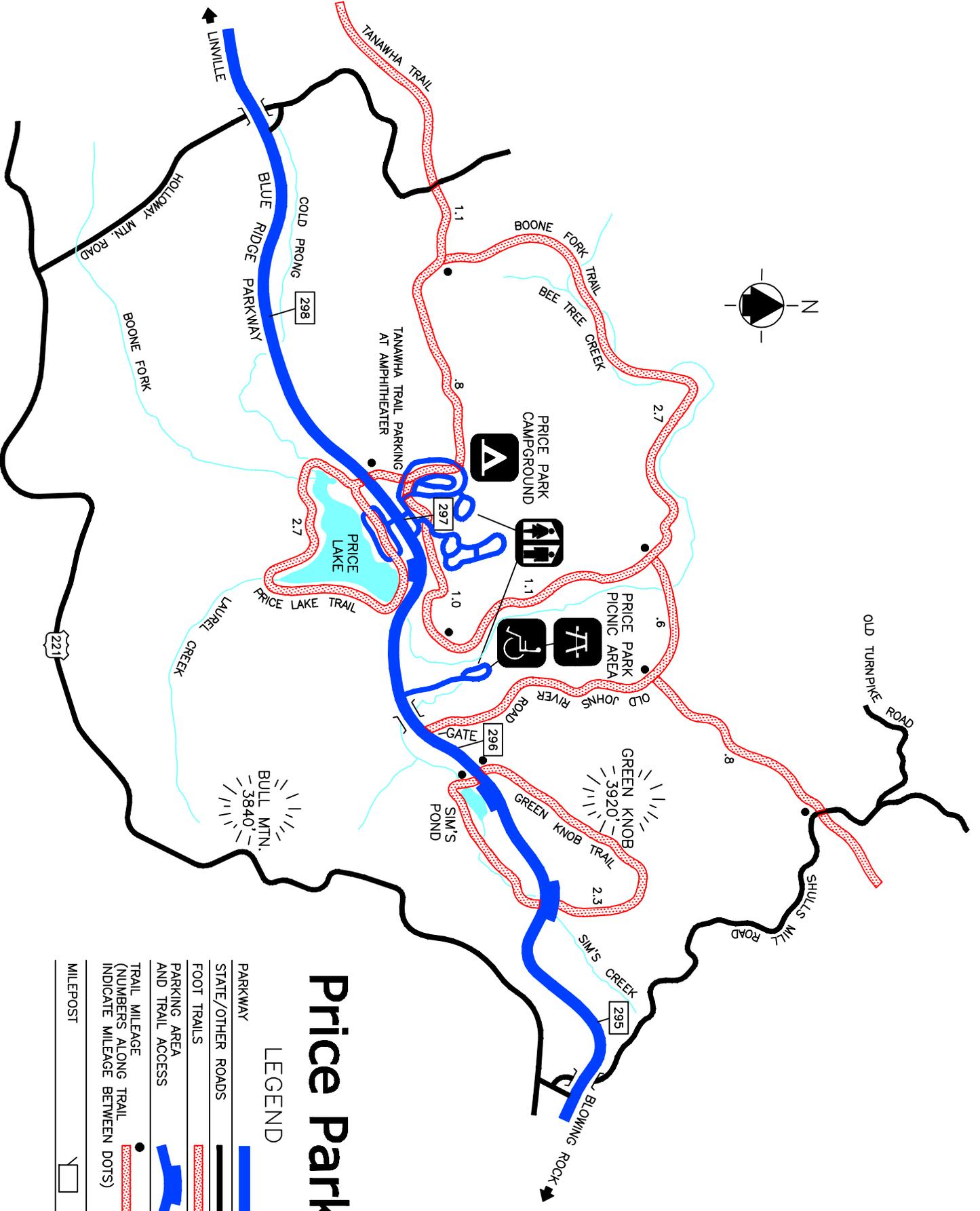
Glen Burney Trail skirts the cascading New Year's Creek in Blowing Rock, North Carolina as the stream falls into the John's River Gorge south of town. The trail, long used by Indian hunters and later as access to the turn of the century logging camps, now delights visitors and newcomers as well as old timers with an escape from day to day life.

The 1.5 mile foot trail descends some 800 feet below Blowing Rock and provides breathtaking vistas of two substantial waterfalls, the Glen Burney and the Glen Mary.

The Glen Burney Falls have a face of about 45' over granite and moss which splashes into a large shallow pool at the base. The Glen Mary drops even steeper at 55' as the brook winds it's way towards John's River.

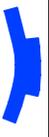
A little history, the trail has been there forever according to old timers who confirm that it was most likely used by Archaec Indians. Beacuse it was used the early part of this century by logging camps, a crew of CCC works were dispatched during the Great Depression to improve the trail from Globe Valley to Blowing Rock. The existing portion used today to access the falls, is the only remaining portion preserved in usable condition.

In 1989, the Town of Blowing Rock received a \$15,000 N.P.S. matching grant to restore the trail and falls' overlooks. Today, the foot trail is an inviting two hour round trip walk into a virgin Appalachian hardwood forest with spectacular cascades. The cool mist of the falls is an antidote to the stress of the daily grind. We in Blowing Rock view the area as a natural treasure.

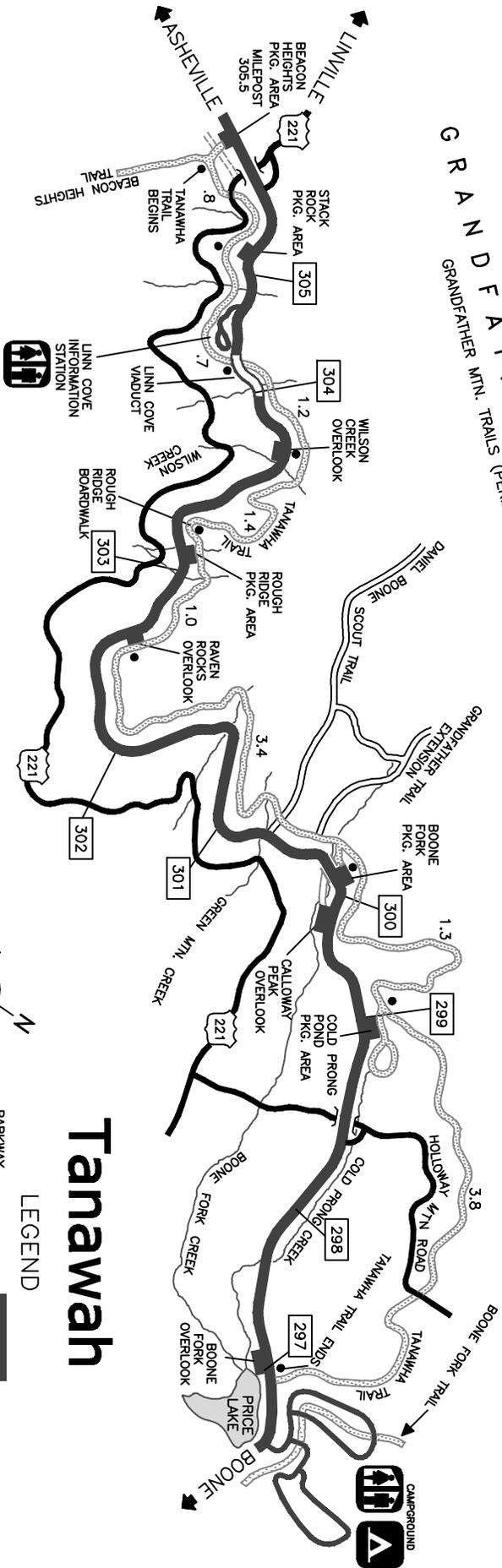


Price Park

LEGEND

-  PARKWAY
-  STATE/OTHER ROADS
-  FOOT TRAILS
-  PARKING AREA AND TRAIL ACCESS
-  TRAIL MILEAGE (NUMBERS ALONG TRAIL INDICATE MILEAGE BETWEEN DOTS)
-  MILEPOST

GRANDFATHER MTN. TRAILS (PERMIT REQUIRED) MOUNTAIN

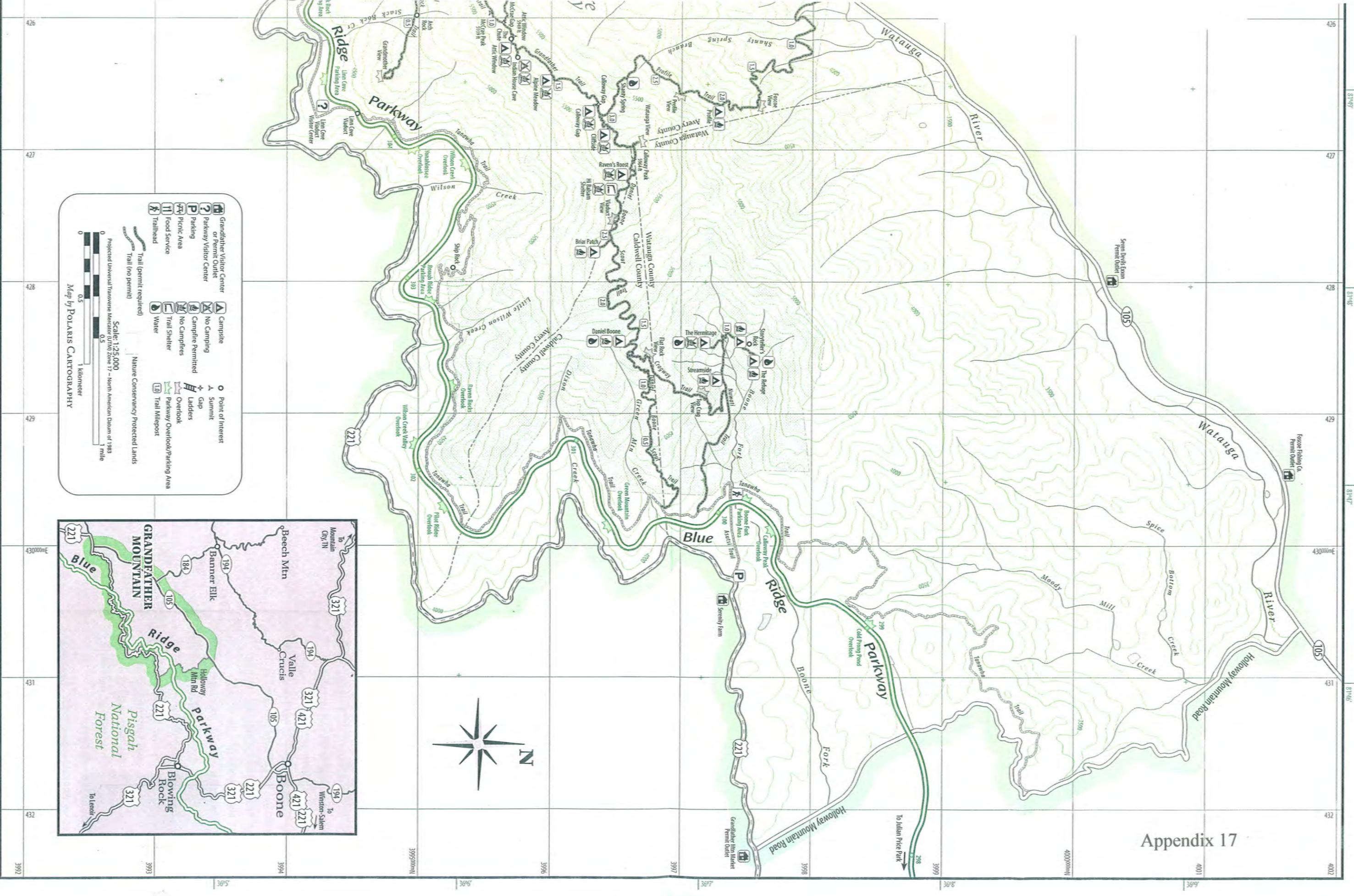


Tanawah

LEGEND

- PARKWAY
- STATE/OTHER ROADS
- FOOT TRAILS
- PARKING AREA AND TRAIL ACCESS
- TRAIL MILEAGE (NUMBERS ALONG TRAIL INDICATE MILEAGE BETWEEN DOTS)
- MILLEPOST





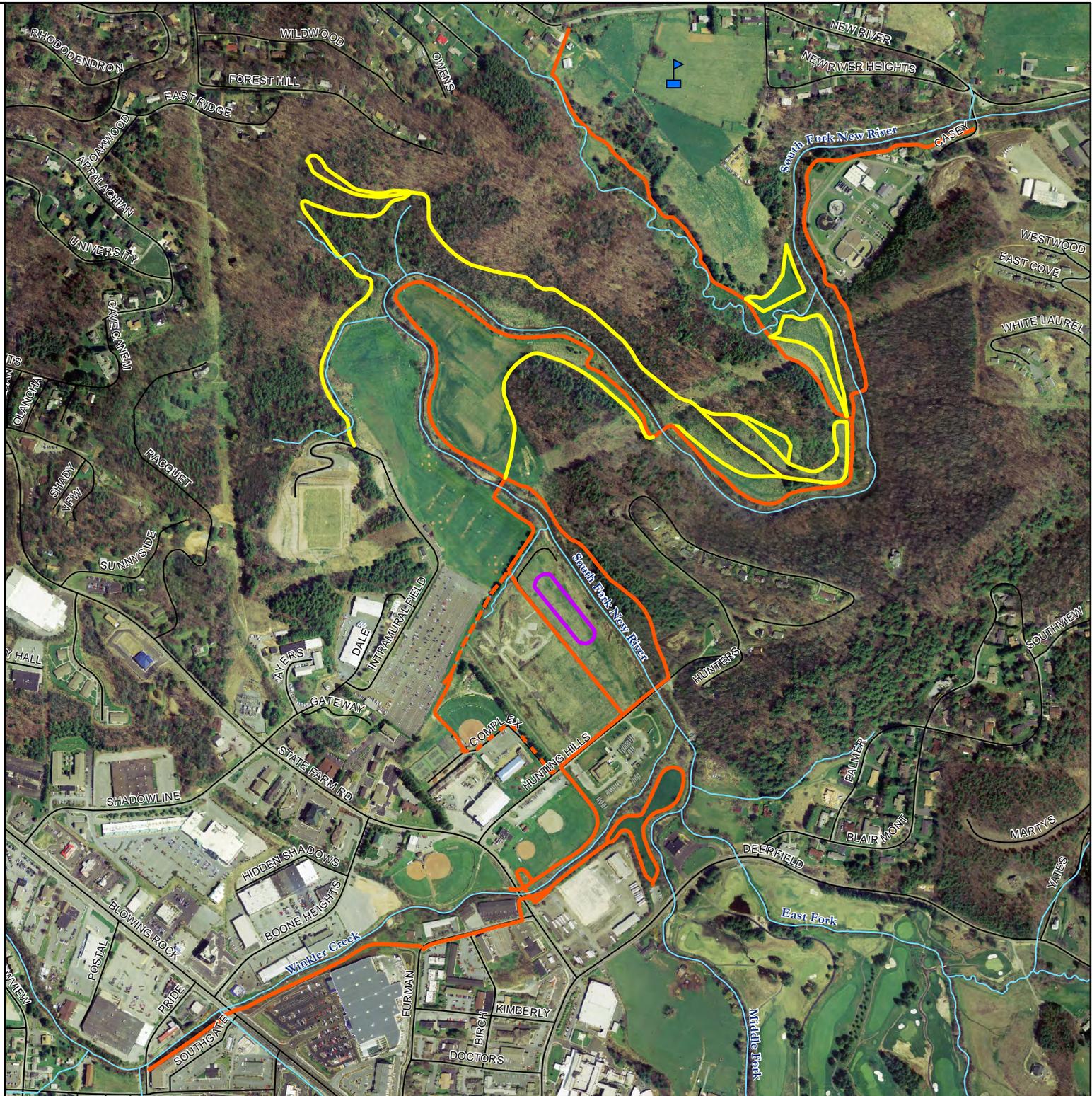
- | | | | | | |
|--|---|--|--------------------|--|------------------------------------|
| | Grandfather Visitor Center or Permit Outlet | | Campsite | | Point of Interest |
| | Parkway Visitor Center | | No Camping | | Summit |
| | Parking | | Campfire Permitted | | Gap |
| | Picnic Area | | No Campfires | | Ladders |
| | Food Service | | Trail Shelter | | Overlook |
| | Trailhead | | Water | | Parkway Overlook/Parking Area |
| | Trail (no permit) | | Trail Milepost | | Nature Conservancy/Protected Lands |
| | Trail (permit required) | | | | |



Town of Boone Greenway & State Farm Area Trails



- Clawson-Burnley Park Trail
- State Farm Area Trails
- Boone Greenway
- Parks & Rec. Connector
- Roads
- Streams / Rivers
- New Watauga Co. High School



High Country Regional Trail Plan

Existing Regional Trails	Public Lands
Proposed Regional Trails*	Municipality
Existing Local Trails	County Boundary
Proposed Local Trails	Elevation
Blue Ridge Parkway	High : 6672 ft
Major Roads	Low : 1761 ft
Abandoned Railroads	
Railroads	
Hydrology	

Avery, Ashe, Alleghany, Watauga, Wilkes, Mitchell, & Yancey Counties

* Proposed Regional Trails are labeled by trail name

Proposed Local Trail Names:

Yancey

1. Callaway Mountain Trail
2. Bowlers Creek
3. Flattop Mountain Connector

Mitchell

4. Roan Mountain Connector
5. Bakersville Creekwalk to Cane Creek Park

Avery

6. Linville - Crossnore
7. Parkway - AT Connector
8. Riverwalk Extension to Shoemaker Bottom
9. Newland Heritage Park - Waterfall Park Connector
10. Watauga River - AT Connector

Watauga

11. Laurel Creek - Watauga River
12. Cove Creek Trail
13. Middle Fork Greenway

Ashe

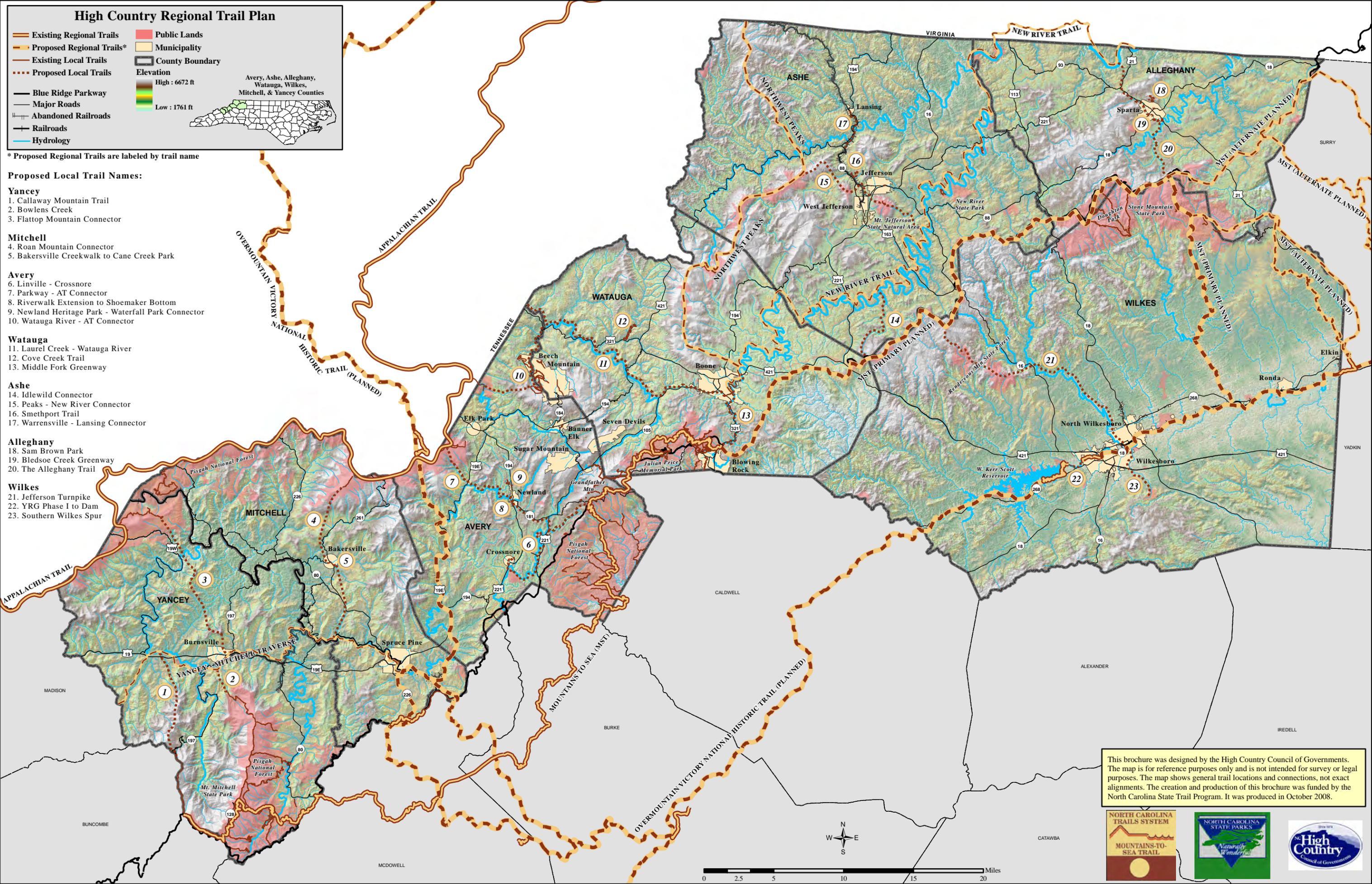
14. Idlewild Connector
15. Peaks - New River Connector
16. Smethport Trail
17. Warrensville - Lansing Connector

Alleghany

18. Sam Brown Park
19. Bledsoe Creek Greenway
20. The Alleghany Trail

Wilkes

21. Jefferson Turnpike
22. YRG Phase I to Dam
23. Southern Wilkes Spur



This brochure was designed by the High Country Council of Governments. The map is for reference purposes only and is not intended for survey or legal purposes. The map shows general trail locations and connections, not exact alignments. The creation and production of this brochure was funded by the North Carolina State Trail Program. It was produced in October 2008.



Appalachian State University
Health, Leisure & Exercise Science
Recreation Management

Needs Assessment for Watauga County Parks and Recreation Department

Submitted on behalf of the Watauga County Parks and Recreation Department

Prepared by Miss Megan Childers & Dr. Stephanie West
Spring 2010

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SECTION

I.	LIST OF TABLES	3
II.	LIST OF FIGURES	4
III.	INTRODUCTION	9
IV.	METHODOLOGY	
	A. Survey Development & Pre-Test	10
	B. Data Collection	10
	C. Characteristics of the Sample.....	10
V.	RESULTS	12
	A. Most Desired Park Facilities/Amenities	21
	B. Least Desired Park Facilities/Amenities.....	22
VI.	COMPARISON OF RESPONDENTS PREFERENCES BASED ON DEMOGRAPHICS	12
VII.	CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS.....	70
VIII.	APPENDICES	
	A. Pre-test survey instrument.....	74
	B. Final survey instrument.....	80
	C. First cover letter	85
	D. Follow-up postcard	87
	E. Second cover letter.....	89
	F. Comments from respondents	91

List of Tables

1. Most Desired Amenities by Overall Respondents	20
2. Least Desired Amenities by Overall Respondents.....	21
3. Percentage of Respondents More Likely than Not to Want Indoor Recreation Facility Priorities	23
4. Percentage of Respondents' More Likely to Agree than Disagree with a User Fee Price Policy	36
5. Percentage of Respondents More Likely than Not to Want an Amenity for Outdoor Sports Facilities Priorities	44
6. Percentage of Respondents' More Likely than Not to Want an Outdoor Facility Priority.....	49
7. Top Five Priorities in each Town.....	88

List of Figures

1. Breakdown of Respondents by Gender.....	12
2. Breakdown of Respondents by Years in Watauga County.....	12
3. Breakdown of Respondents by Ethnicity.....	13
4. Breakdown of Respondents by Household Composition.....	13
5. Breakdown of Respondents by Age.....	14
6. Breakdown of Respondents by Residential Status.....	14
7. Breakdown of Respondents by Annual Income.....	15
8. Breakdown of Respondents by Housing Type.....	15
9. Respondents' Average Desirability Ratings for Community Priorities.....	16
10. Desirability to Repair/Update all Parks & Athletic Fields.....	17
11. Desirability to Build a New Indoor Recreation Center.....	17
12. Desirability to Extend Existing and/or Develop New Paved Trails.....	18
13. Desirability to Develop New Parks & Athletic Fields.....	18
14. Desirability to Purchase Land to Preserve Open Space and Protect it From Future Development.....	19
15. Desirability to Renovate Cove Creek Gym.....	19
16. Desirability to Expand Brookshire Park.....	20
17. Desirability to Build a New Aquatic Facility.....	20
18. Respondents' Average Desirability Ratings for Indoor Recreation Facilities.....	23
19. Respondents' Interest in Adding Indoor Multipurpose Courts.....	25
20. Interest in Adding an Indoor Walking track.....	25
21. Interest in Adding Indoor Table Tennis.....	26

22. Interest in Adding Indoor Racquetball Courts	26
23. Interest in Adding an Indoor Game Room.....	27
24. Interest in Adding Indoor Boxing Equipment	27
25. Interest in Adding an Indoor Fitness Room.....	28
26. Interest in Adding an Indoor Wrestling Room/Pads.....	28
27. Interest in Adding Indoor Batting Cages	29
28. Interest in Adding Indoor Soccer Courts	29
29. Interest in Adding Indoor Turf Area.....	30
30. Interest in Adding a Indoor Swimming Pool	30
31. Interest in Adding a Indoor Climbing Wall	31
32. Interest in Adding Community Meeting/Banquet Rooms	31
33. Interest in Adding Kitchen/Cooking Classroom Space	32
34. Interest in Adding a Computer Lab	32
35. Interest in Adding a Day Care Center.....	33
36. Interest in Adding a Yoga/Aerobics/Dance Studio.....	33
37. Interest in Adding Indoor Concessions/Juice and Snack Bar	34
38. Interest in Adding a Video Game Arcade.....	34
39. Interest in Adding a Theater/Lecture Hall	35
40. Interest in Adding a Art/Craft/Pottery Room.....	35
41. Respondents' Average Desirability Ratings for User Fee Policies	36
42. Interest in “Everyone should be charged to use the facility”	38
43. Interest in “Youth should be charged to use the facility”	38

44. Interest in “Adults participating in county sponsored athletic programs should be charged an additional fee to use the facility”	39
45. Interest in “Low income households should be charged less (on a sliding scale) to use the facility”	39
46. Interest in “Non-Residents should be charged a higher fee to use the facility”	40
47. Interest in “An individual membership of \$20/month is reasonable”	40
48. Interest in “An individual membership of \$10/month is reasonable”	41
49. Interest in “A family membership of \$30/month is reasonable”	41
50. Interest in “A family membership of \$20/month is reasonable”	42
51. Interest in “Discounted family rates should be available”	42
52. Interest in “Lower user fees should be charged to use the facility during non-peak times”	43
53. Respondents’ Average Desirability Ratings for Outdoor Sports Facilities	44
54. Interest in Adding Lighted Multipurpose Athletic Fields.....	46
55. Interest in Adding Outdoor Basketball Courts.....	46
56. Interest in Adding a Baseball/Softball Complex	47
57. Interest in Adding an Outdoor Climbing Wall/Tower	47
58. Interest in Adding Tennis Courts.....	48
59. Interest in Adding Sand Volleyball Courts.....	48
60. Respondents’ Average Desirability Ratings for Outdoor Recreation Facilities	49
61. Interest in Adding Paved Walking Trails.....	51
62. Interest in Adding Unpaved Hiking Trails.....	51
63. Interest in Adding Biking Trails	52
64. Interest in Adding Equestrian Trails.....	52

65. Interest in Adding Mountain Biking Trails.....	53
66. Interest in Adding Lighting on Paved Walking Trails.....	53
67. Interest in Adding a Skate Park/Rollerblading Facility	54
68. Interest in Adding a BMX Park	54
69. Interest in Adding Flower Gardens.....	55
70. Interest in Adding Concessions	55
71. Interest in Adding Picnic Shelters/Tables/Grills.....	56
72. Interest in Adding Fishing Pond/Fishing Pier.....	56
73. Interest in Adding an Outdoor Swimming Pool	57
74. Interest in Adding a Sprayground/Water Spray Park	57
75. Interest in Adding a Sledding Hill	58
76. Interest in Adding an Ice Rink	58
77. Interest in Adding Corn Hole/Bean Bag Toss Games	59
78. Interest in Adding Croquet Fields.....	59
79. Interest in Adding Four Square Courts	60
80. Interest in Adding Bocce Ball Courts	60
81. Interest in Adding Shuffleboard Courts.....	61
82. Interest in Adding Horseshoe Pits.....	61
83. Interest in Adding a Frisbee Disc Golf Course.....	62
84. Interest in Adding Paddling Access Points on Watauga River.....	62
85. Interest in Adding Community Vegetable Gardens.....	63
86. Top Priorities in the Town of Boone	65
87. Top Priorities in the Town of Blowing Rock.....	65

88. Top Priorities in the town of Valle Crucis66

89. Top Priorities in the Town of Banner Elk.....66

90. Top Priorities in the Town of Todd67

91. Top Priorities in the Town of Deep Gap.....67

92. Top Priorities in the Town of Sugar Grove68

93. Top Priorities in the Town of Vilas68

94. Top Priorities in the Town of Zionville69

Introduction

The Watauga County Parks & Recreation Department is interested in knowing what needs best fit the resident's of their county. To be able to determine these needs, the High Country Council of Governments is creating a countywide Parks & Recreation Master Plan. A part of this Master Plan is a needs assessment, which collects information on residents' priorities for park and recreation facilities. The needs assessment will help Watauga County determine what is most desired from the resident's. In addition, conducting a needs assessment and having a current Watauga County Parks & Recreation master Plan will allow Watauga County to apply for grant funds available from North Carolina Parks & Recreation Trust Fund.

Methodology

Survey Development & Pre Test

For the Watauga County Parks & Recreation evaluation project 1,309 people were distributed surveys. Lists of the registered voters in Watauga County were randomly selected out of an Excel database. Since the subjects were collected through registered voters each participant had to be 18 years of age or older. Of the 1309The subjects were chosen at random to allow more diversity and a fair opportunity to all registered voters and residents' of Watauga County.

The survey that was sent out consisted of Likert-type scale based questions consisting of 4 to 5 choices, (e.g. 1= Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree). There were 4 sections of questions that measured 1=Strongly Agree to 5=Strongly Disagree and one section measuring 1=Very Unsupportive to 4=Very Supportive. There were also open ended questions on certain matters and also a demographic section that was mostly multiple choice answers. To determine what questions would be on the survey, different resources were used. First, a rough draft of the survey was made and shown to the employees of the Watauga County Parks & Recreation department. Next, the researcher's attended a Watauga County Parks & Recreation Commission board meeting and asked what they thought was important to ask on the survey. After looking at other survey examples and including everything that was imputed, 50 sample surveys were sent out. These were distributed to the Watauga County Parks & Recreation Commission members, as well as an Introduction to Recreation class at Appalachian State University. After these surveys were collected, the received data was put into an SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) file to make any corrections if needed before the survey was administered to the public.

Data Collection

Following the pre-test and editing, a cover letter (Appendix C), survey and postage paid business reply envelope were sent to 1600 residents of Watauga County. These residents were randomly selected by the Watauga County list of registered voters. Reminder postcards (Appendix D) were sent approximately ten days following the mail out of the first survey, and then followed approximately two weeks later by a second cover letter (Appendix E), survey, and postage paid business reply envelope.

At the conclusion of the second mail out, 492 usable surveys were returned, with 232 surveys returned as undeliverable. In addition, approximately 20 surveys were received after the data was analyzed and were therefore not included for analysis. With 232 undeliverable surveys and 20 surveys from households who were not included in analysis, 492 out of 1395 surveys were returned within the time frame necessary to be included for analysis; the overall response rate was 35.27%. The data was analyzed initially using descriptive statistics and then comparisons between demographic groups were made using cross-tabular and SPSS analyses.

Characteristics of the Sample

Of the 492 respondents who reported their gender, 43% were male and 57% were female. A majority of respondents' years in Watauga county was between 0-10 years (32.30%), followed by 11-20 years (19.25%), 50+ years (15.71%), 21-30 years and 31-40 years (12.39%), and 41-50

years (7.96%). The majority of respondents' (97.23%) ethnicity concluded as Caucasian/white, followed by African-American (1.28%), then Hispanic/Latino (.85%), and other (.64%). Majority of the households fell into the "other" category (29.06%), followed by seniors (27.78), single adults (16.67%), 2 Adults & 2 Children (10.90%), 2 Adults & 1 Child (9.19%), Single Adult & 2+ Children (2.14%), Single Adult & 1 Child (1.71%), 2 Adults & 1 Senior and 3 Adults and 2+ Children (1.07%), and 2 Adults & 2+ Seniors (.43%).

Majority households consisted of adults ages 50-59 (20.30%), followed by ages 40-49 (19.44%), ages 60-69 (17.74%), ages 18-29 (16.24%), ages 70-79 (9.62%), and ages 80+ with (4.49%). The majority of respondents (92.63%) reported they live in Watauga County on a permanent basis, only 1.47% reported a seasonal residential status, and 5.89% responded as a student. Similarly, the majority of respondents indicated they live in a house (85.32%), while 8.39% reported living in an apartment/condo and 6.29% reported other.

Respondents came from a wide range of income levels; however the majority of respondents reported a combined annual household income of 100,000+ (21.71%). Remaining respondents reported their combined annual household income: at less than 10,000 (3.71%), \$10,001-\$19,999 (5.4%), \$20,000-\$29,999 (8%), \$30,000-\$39,999 (10.29%), \$40,000-\$49,999 (8.29%), \$50,000-\$59,999 (12.86%), \$60,000-\$69,999 (11.43%), \$70,000-\$79,000 (8.57%), \$80,000-89,999 (7.14%), and \$90,000-\$99,999 (2.86%) Graphic representations of the sample characteristics are provided in Figures 1-8.

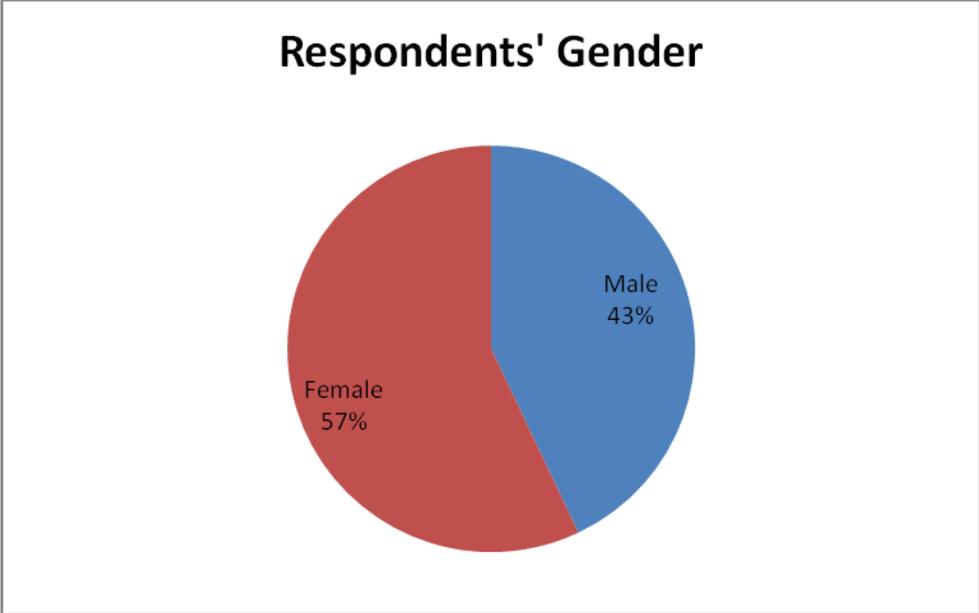


FIGURE 1: Breakdown of Respondents Gender

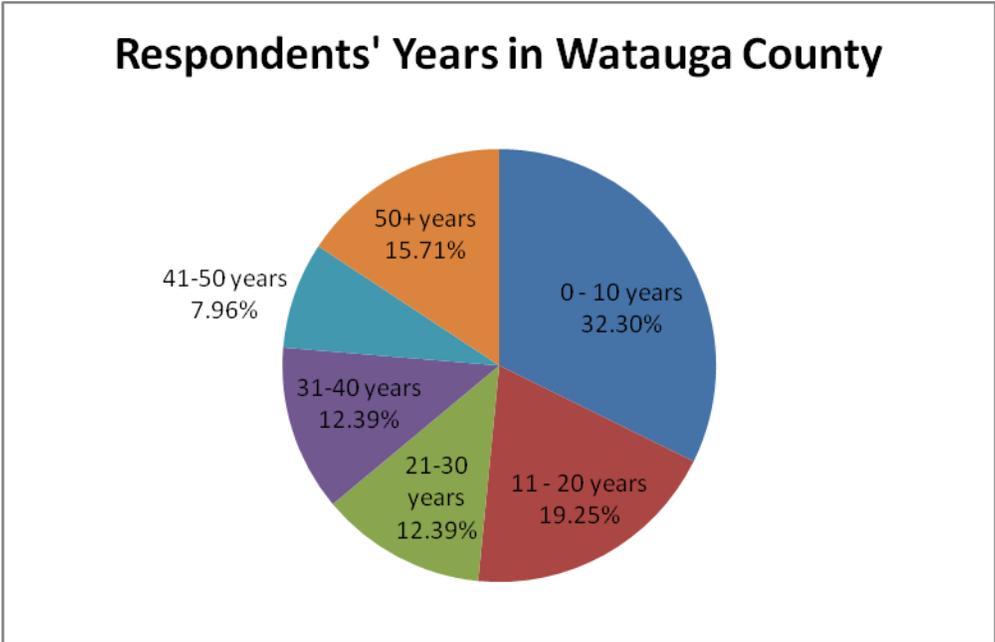


FIGURE 2: Respondents' Years in Watauga County

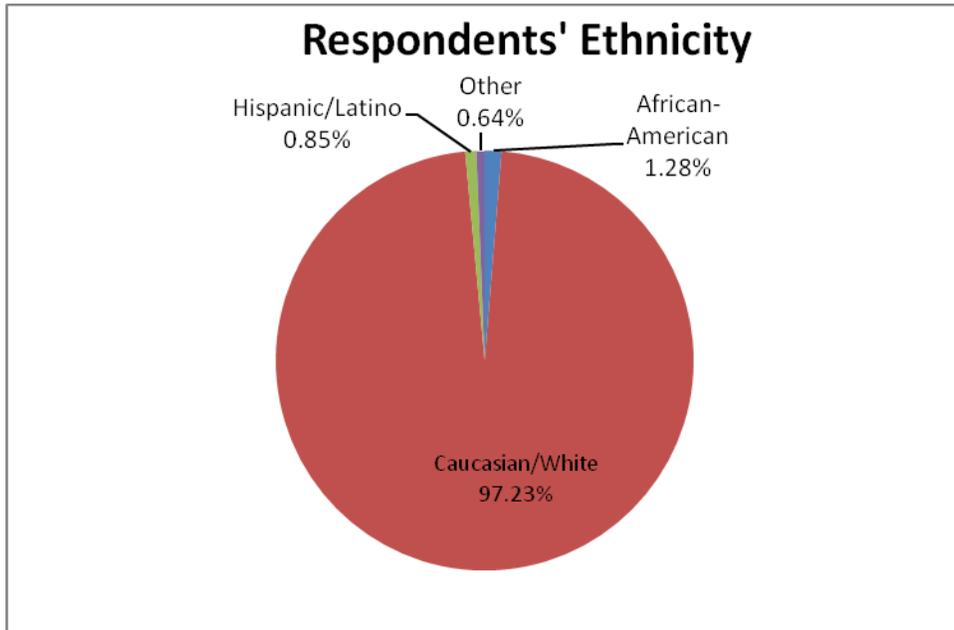


FIGURE 3: Respondents' Ethnicity

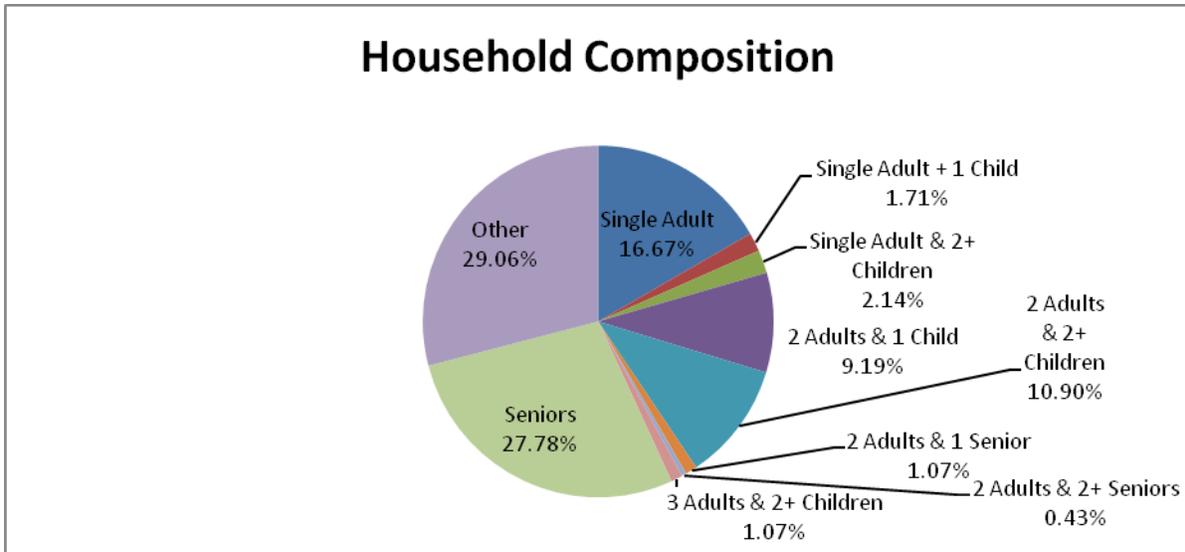


FIGURE 4: Respondents' Household Composition

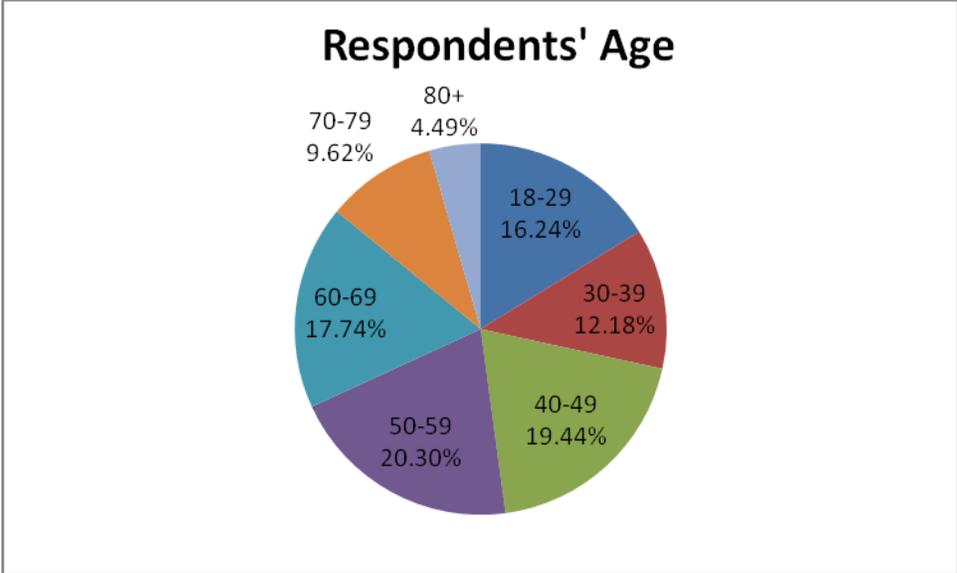


FIGURE 5: Respondents' Age

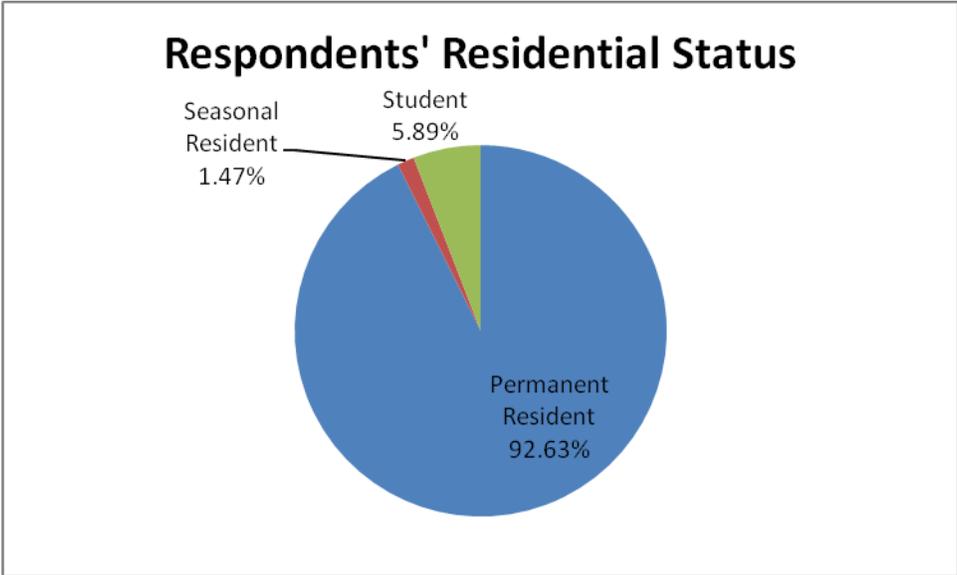


FIGURE 6: Respondents' Residential Status

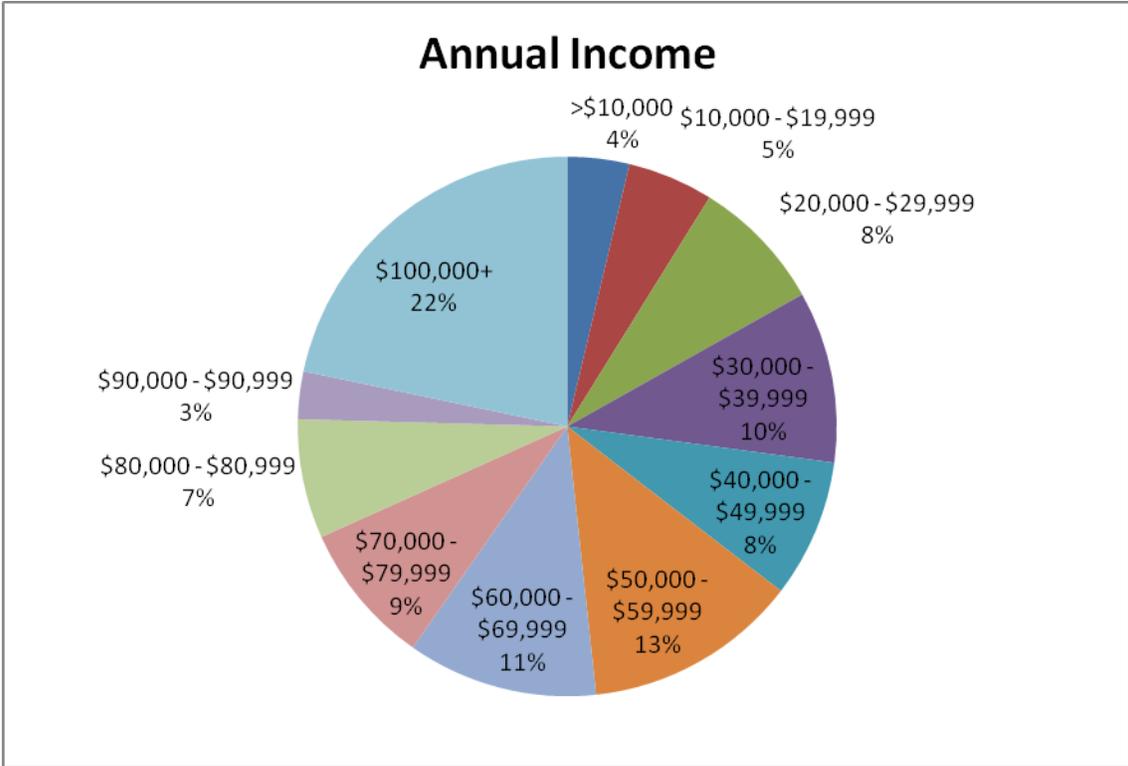


FIGURE 7: Respondents' Annual Income

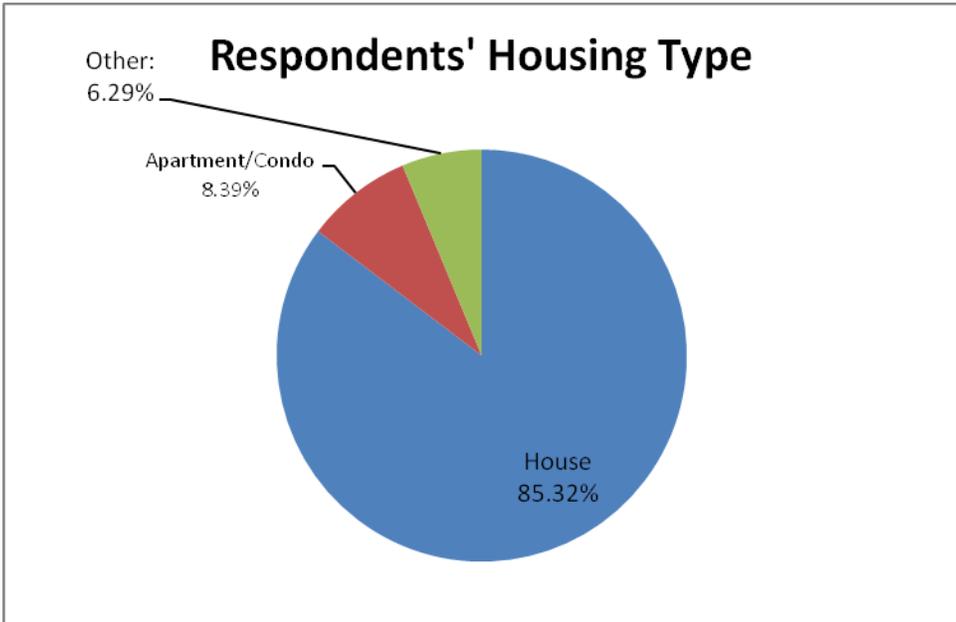


FIGURE 8: Respondents' Housing Type

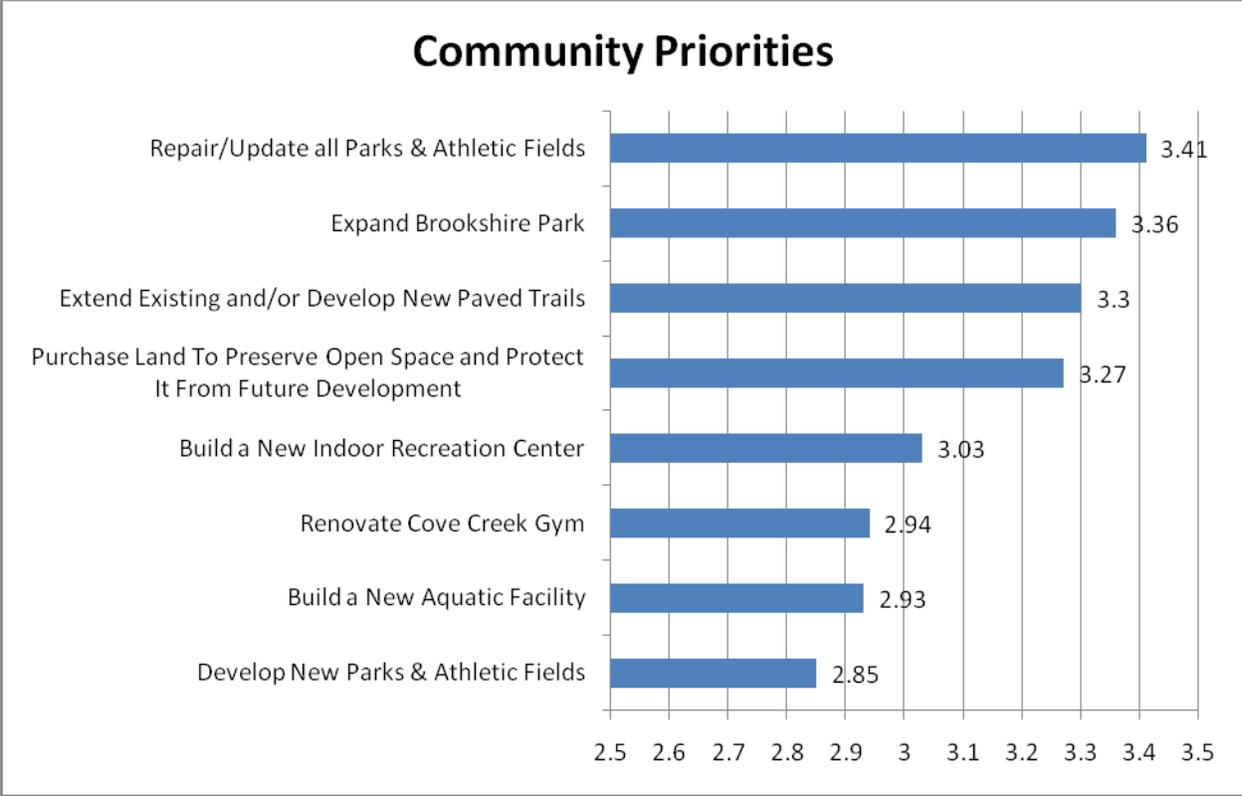


FIGURE 9: Respondents’ Overall Community Priorities

Information provided in Figures 10 through 17 explains the respondents’ level of support (percentage) for each individual community priority with the priorities listed (Very Unsupportive, Somewhat Unsupportive, Somewhat Supportive, and Very Supportive).

The Community Priorities Section was based on a 4 point Likert Scale, (1=Very Supportive to 4=Strongly Agree and 5=Not Sure) for each of the following options: Repair/update all parks & athletic fields, Build a new indoor recreation center, Extend existing and/or develop new paved trails, Develop new parks & athletic fields, Purchase land to preserve open space and protect it from future development, Renovate Old Cove Creek Gym, Expand Brookshire Park, and Build and new aquatic facility.

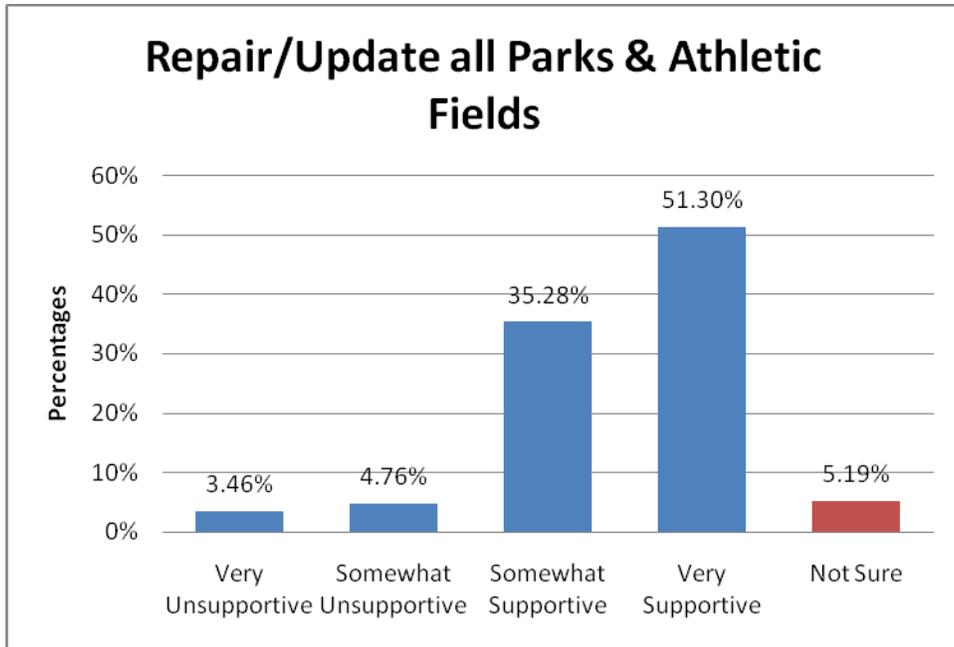


FIGURE 10: Community Priority
“Repair/Update all Parks & Athletic Fields”

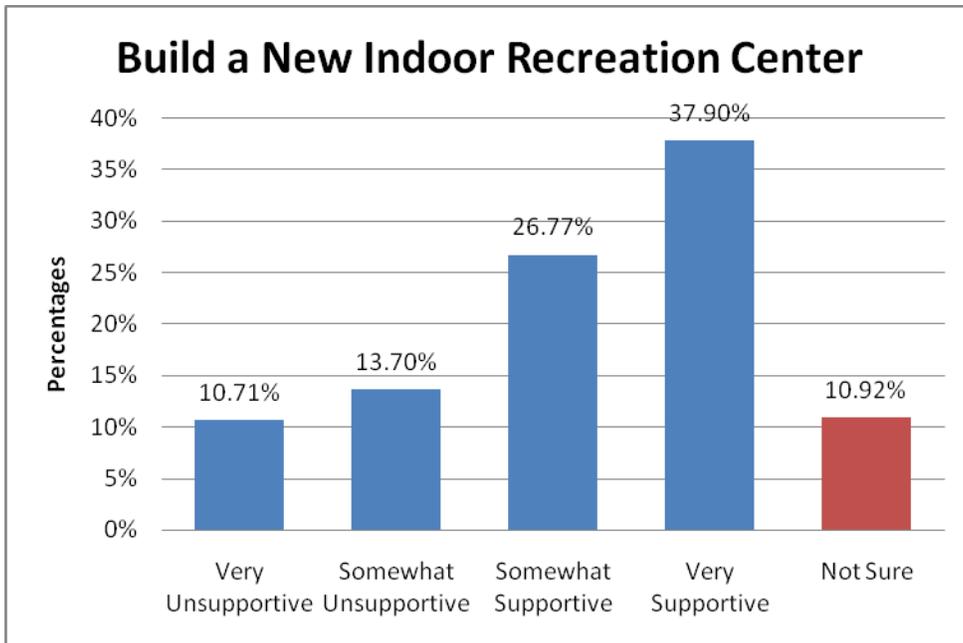


FIGURE 11: Community Priority
“Build a New Indoor Recreation Center”

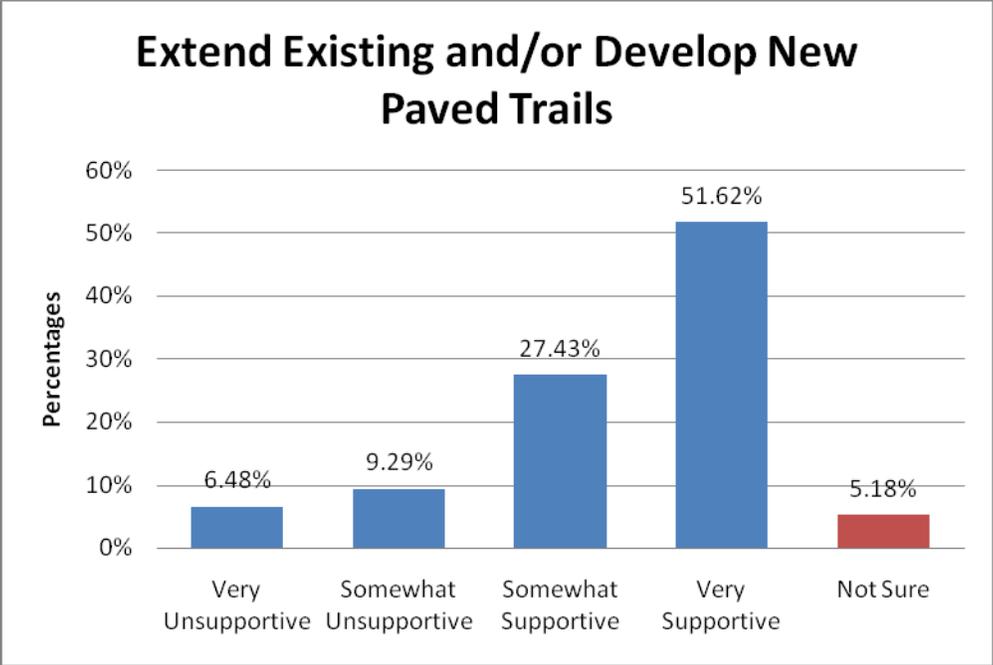


FIGURE 12: Community Priority
 “Extend Existing and/or Develop New Paved Trails”

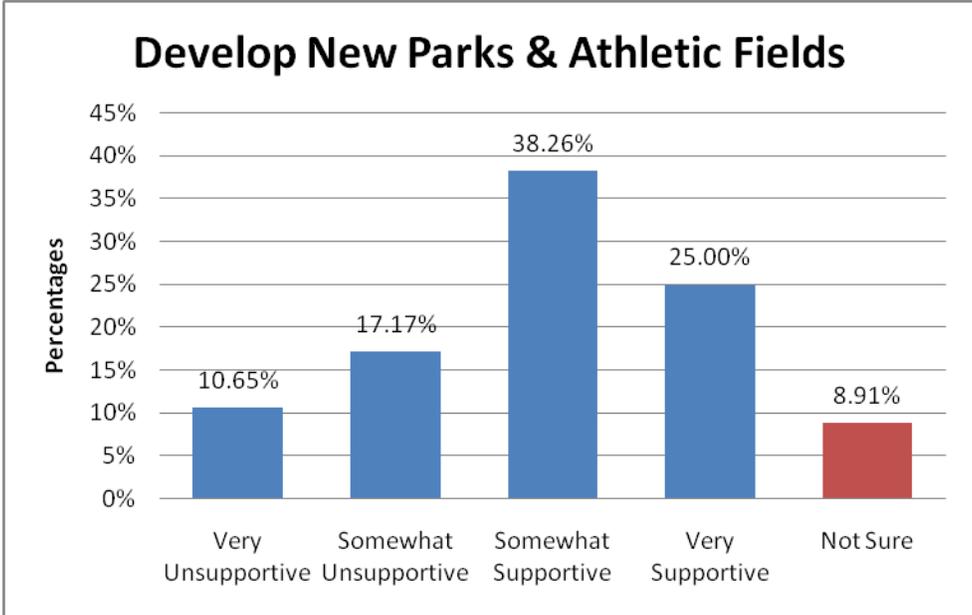


FIGURE 13: Community Priority
 “Develop New Parks & Athletic Fields”

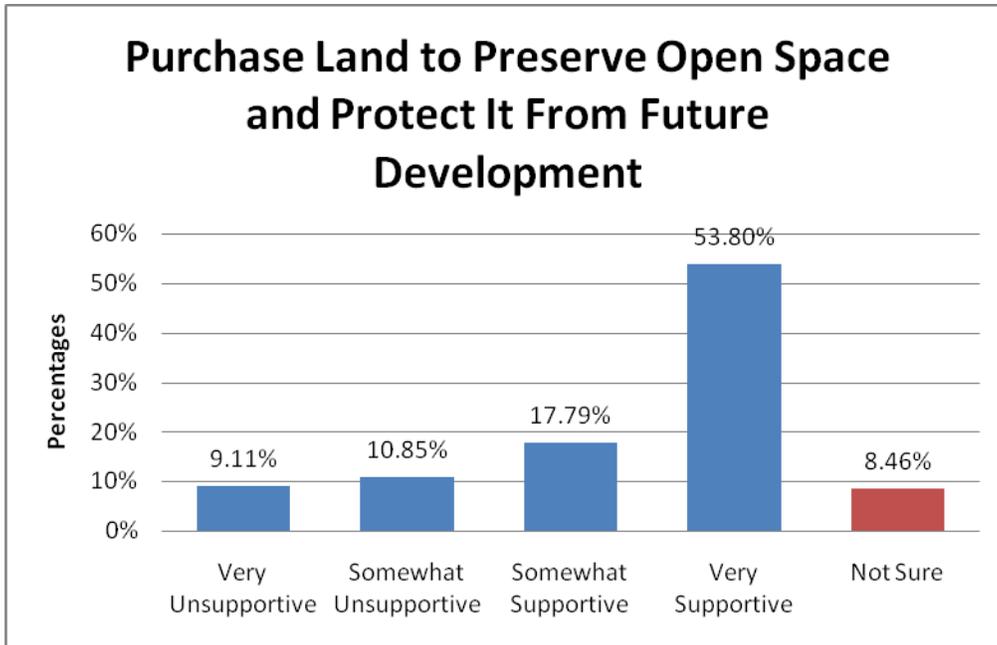


FIGURE 14: Community Priority
 “Purchase Land to Preserve Open Space and Protect It from Future Development”

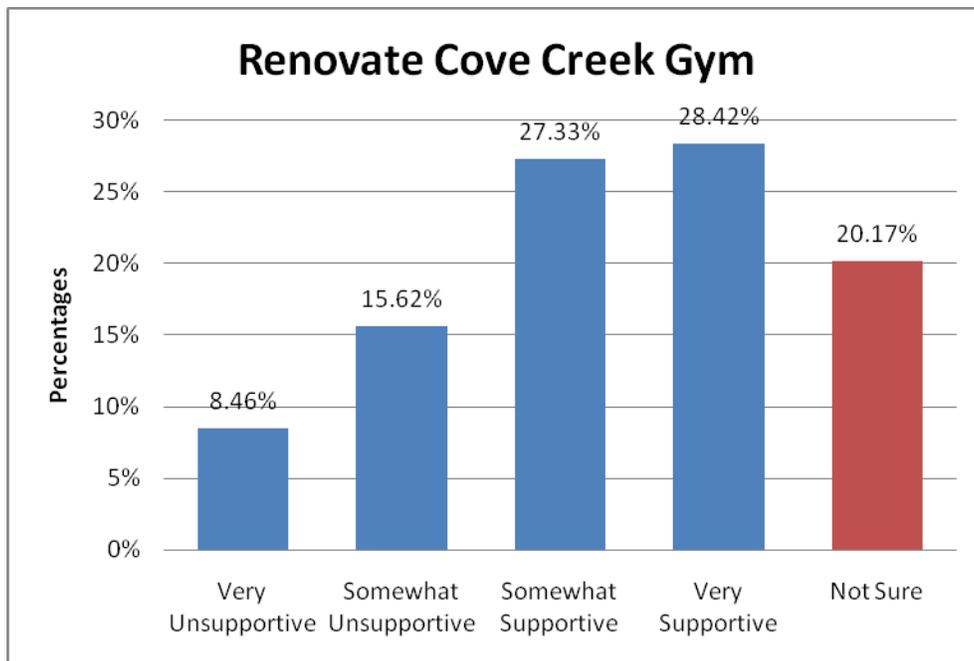


FIGURE 15: Community Priority
 “Renovate Cove Creek Gym”

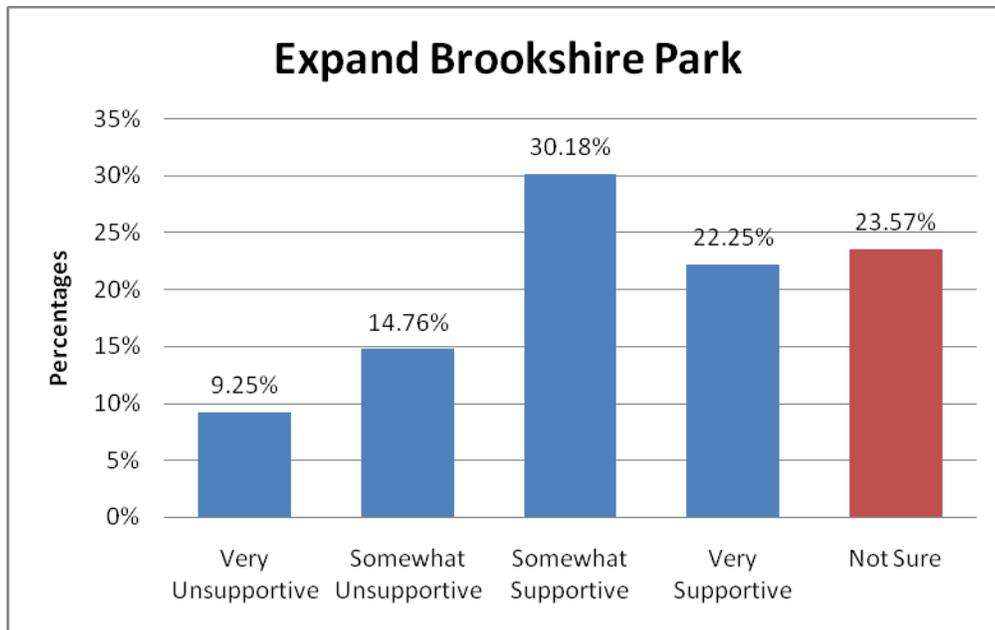


FIGURE 16: Community Priority
“Expand Brookshire Park”

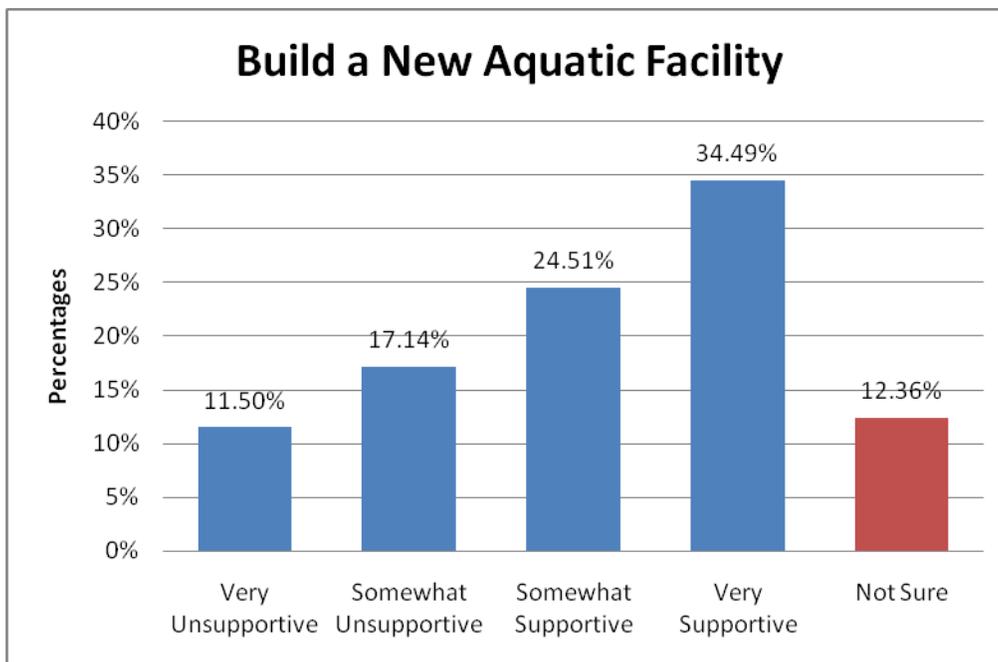


FIGURE 17: Community Priority
“Build a New Aquatic Facility”

Respondents' Preferences for Specific Facility Types or Amenities

The third, fifth, and sixth sections of the final survey instrument (Appendix B) asked respondents to rate how strongly they agree that each facility type or amenity “should be built to add to the existing facilities available in Watauga County.” Response choices were on a scale from 1 to 6 with 1 representing “Strongly Disagree,” 5 representing “Strongly Agree,” and 6 representing “Unfamiliar” to indicate that they were unfamiliar with that type facility. Section three consisted of 22 Indoor Recreation Facility Priorities, the fifth section consisted of 6 Outdoor Sports Facility Priorities, and the final section consisted of 25 Outdoor Sports Facility Priorities. After combining all three categories the ten most desired amenities based on the percentage of respondents more likely to want an amenity were: picnic shelters (90.06%), paved walking trails (86.89%), unpaved hiking trails (86.78%), indoor walking track (86.26%), biking trails (85.72%), fitness room (84.45%), indoor swimming pool (83.15%), Day Care Center (81.65%), Paddling Access Points on Watauga River (81.54%), and a Dance Studio (81.52%). See Table 1.

TABLE 1: Most Desired Amenities by Overall Respondents

Amenity	%
1. Picnic Shelters	90.06
2. Paved Walking Trails	86.89
3. Unpaved Hiking Trails	86.78
4. Indoor Walking Track	86.26
5. Biking Trails	85.72
6. Fitness Room	84.45
7. Indoor Swimming Pool	83.15
8. Day Care Center	81.65
9. Paddling Access Points on Watauga River	81.54
10. Dance Studio	81.52

The ten least desired amenities from the combined three categories based on the percentage of respondents more likely than not to want an amenity were: wrestling room/pads (15.22%), BMX park (16.13%), Bocce Ball Courts (16.99%), four square courts (18.3%), corn hole/bean bag toss (19.23%), boxing equipment (19.87%), video game arcade (20.85%), croquet fields (22.22%), indoor soccer courts (24.52%), equestrian trails (24.95%).

TABLE 2: Least Desired Amenities by Overall Respondents

Amenity	%
1. Wrestling Room/Pads	15.22
2. BMX Park	16.13
3. Bocce Ball Courts	16.99
4. Four Square Courts	18.3
5. Corn Hole/Bean Bag Toss	19.23
6. Boxing Equipment	19.87
7. Video Game Arcade	20.85
8. Croquet Fields	22.22
9. Indoor Soccer Courts	24.52
10. Equestrian Trails	24.95

The most desired Indoor Facility Priorities, based on mean scores, were a Indoor Walking Track, an Indoor Swimming Pool, Fitness Room, Indoor Multipurpose Courts and a Yoga/Aerobics/Dance Studio. See Figure 18.

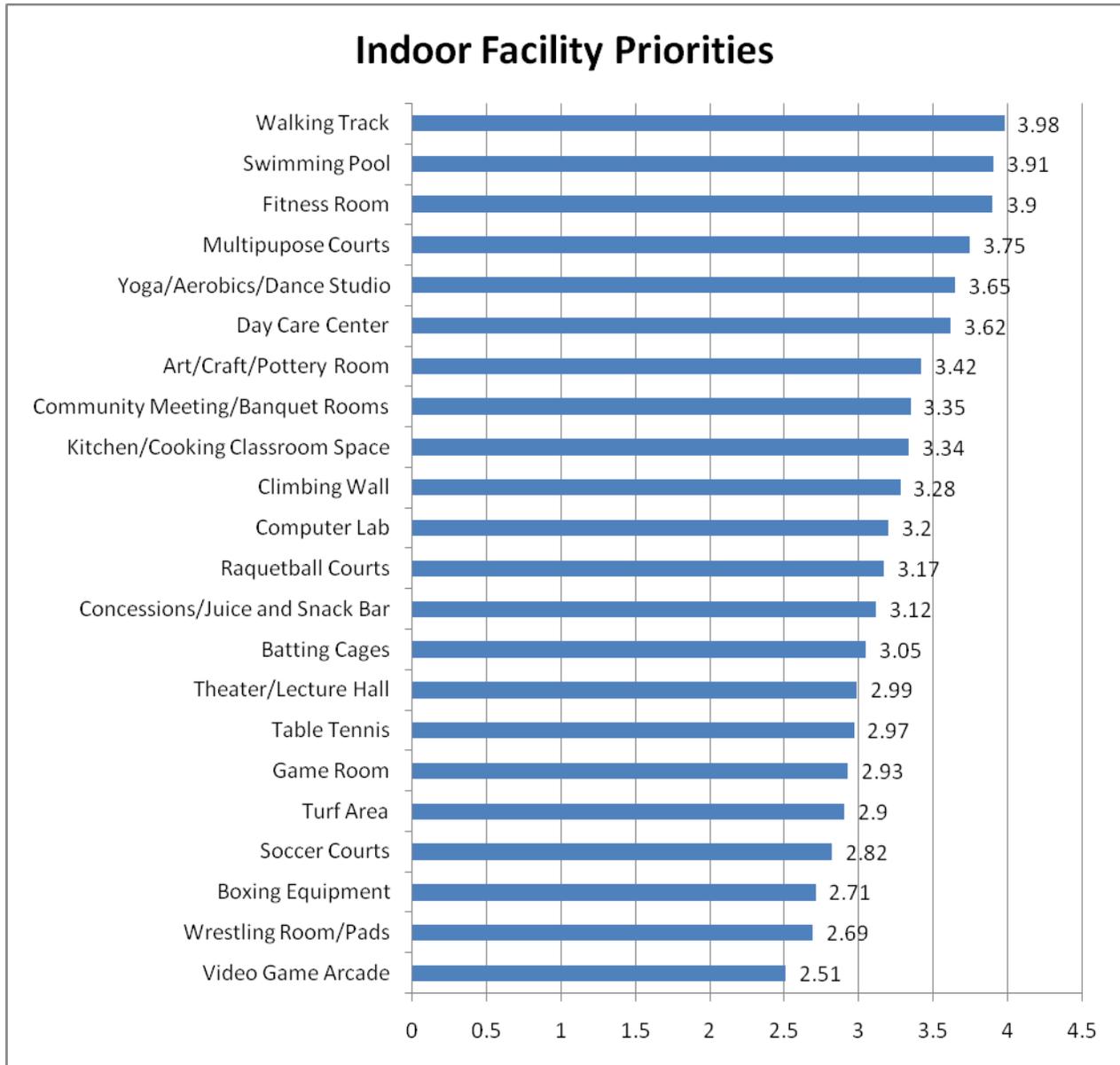


FIGURE 18: Respondents’ Interest in Various Indoor Facilities/Amenities

In addition to calculating the average responses for each indoor facility/amenity option, the percentage of respondents who indicated they were more likely than not to want to include each amenity in the proposed park (that is they indicated a response of “neutral,” “agree,” or “strongly agree”) is provided in Table 3. Four of the 22 Indoor Recreation Facilities Priorities were

included on the list of ten most desired facilities/amenities overall. These were: indoor walking track (86.26%), fitness room (84.45%), indoor swimming pool (83.15%), and Day Care Center (81.65%). In addition, four facilities/amenities from the Indoor Facility Priorities were included in the ten least desired amenities. These include: wrestling room/pads (16.23%), video game arcade (20.85%), Boxing Equipment (19.87%) and indoor soccer courts (24.52%).

TABLE 3: Percentage of Respondents' More Likely than Not to Want an Indoor recreation Facility Priority

Amenity	%
Walking Track	86.26
Fitness Room	84.45
Swimming Pool	83.15
Day Care Center	81.65
Dance Studio	81.52
Multipurpose	81.15
Pottery Room	76.69
Community Meeting/Banquet Room	76.6
Kitchen	75.64
Concessions	71.7
Climbing Wall	71.3
Racquetball Courts	70.76
Computer Lab	69.21
Table Tennis	66.69
Batting Cages	64.98
Theater/Lecture Hall	64.18
Game Room	60.72
Indoor Turf Area	58.41
Indoor Soccer Courts	58.21
Boxing Equipment	52.30
Video Game Arcade	44.25
Wrestling Room/Pads	16.23

Figures 19-40 provide a breakdown of respondents' answers to how likely they were to agree that each facility/amenity within the list of Indoor Recreation Facility Priorities should be built in order to add to the existing facilities available in Watauga County.

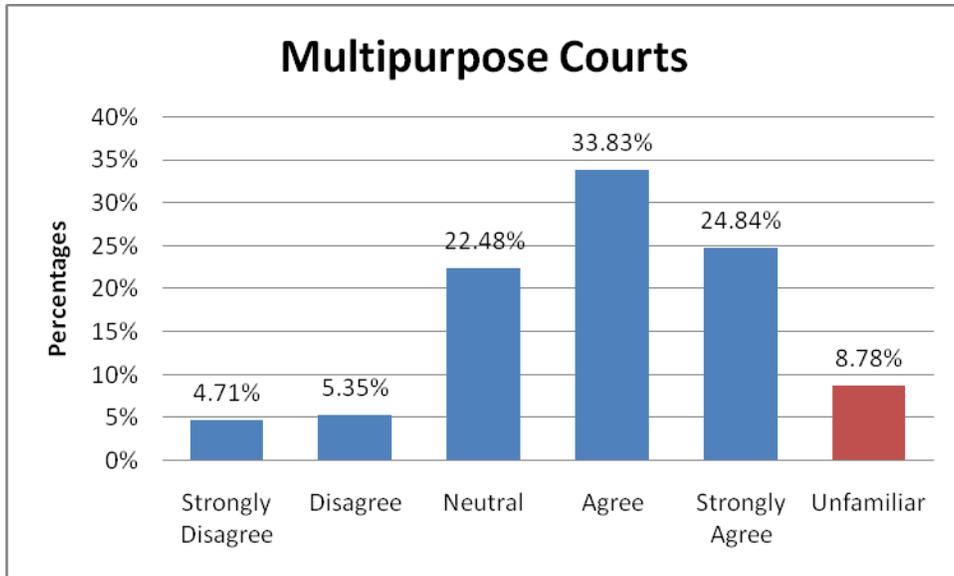


FIGURE 19: Interest in Indoor Multipurpose Courts (Basketball, Volleyball, Badminton, etc...)

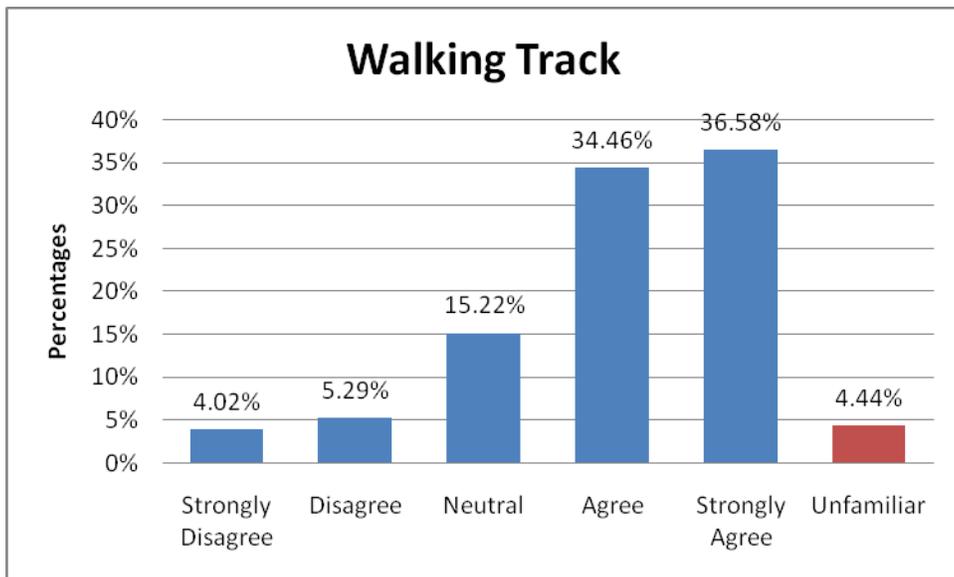


FIGURE 20: Interest in Indoor Walking Track

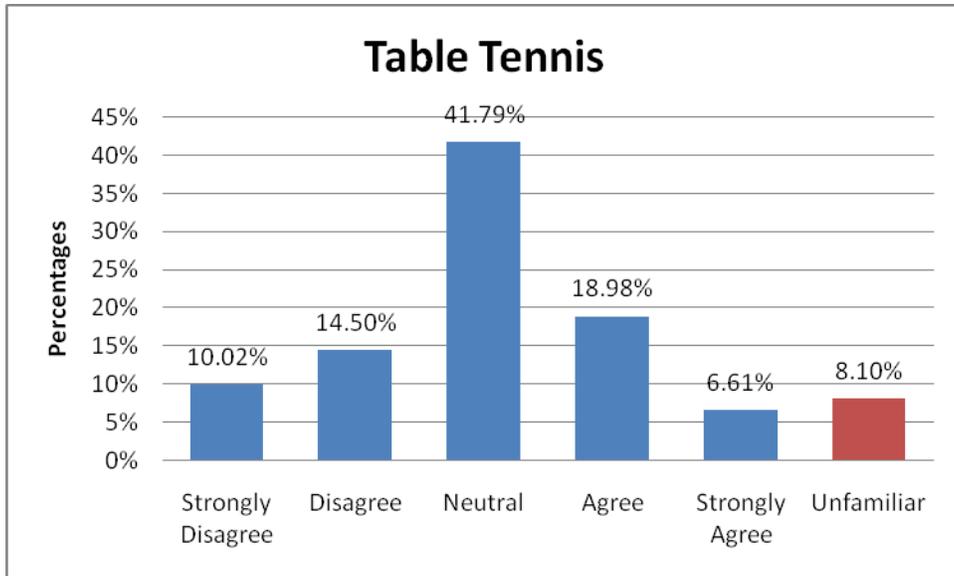


FIGURE 21: Interest in Indoor Table Tennis

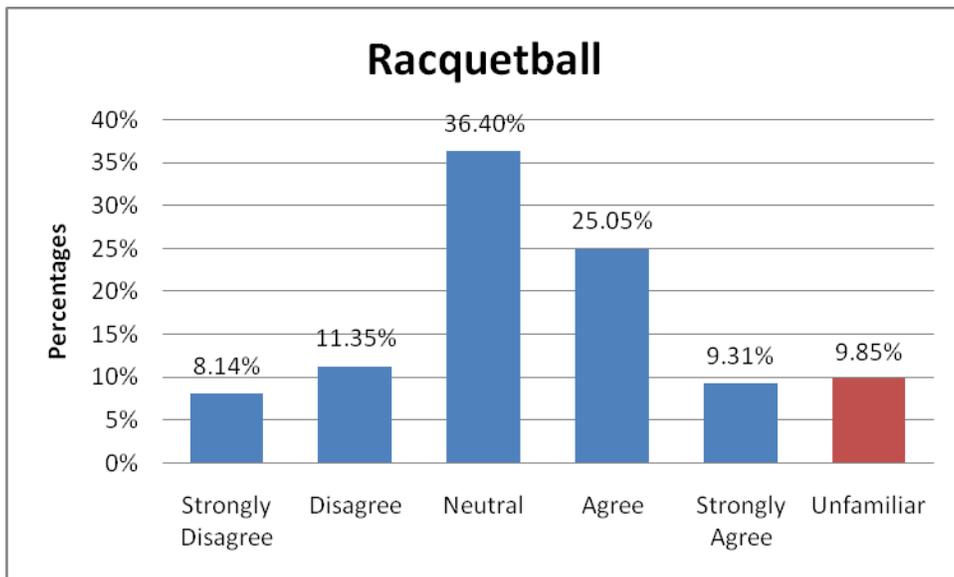


FIGURE 22: Interest in Indoor Racquetball Courts

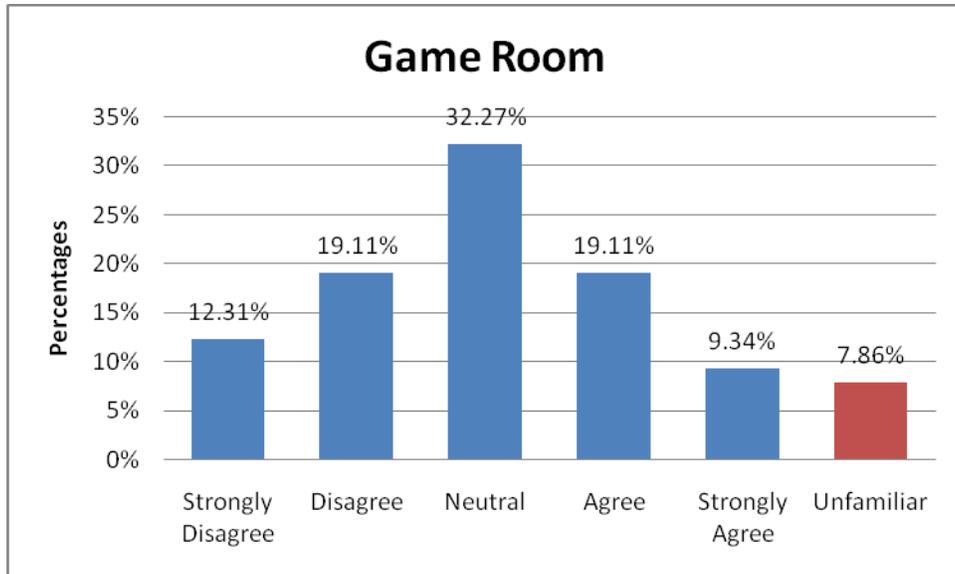


FIGURE 23: Interest in an Indoor Game Room

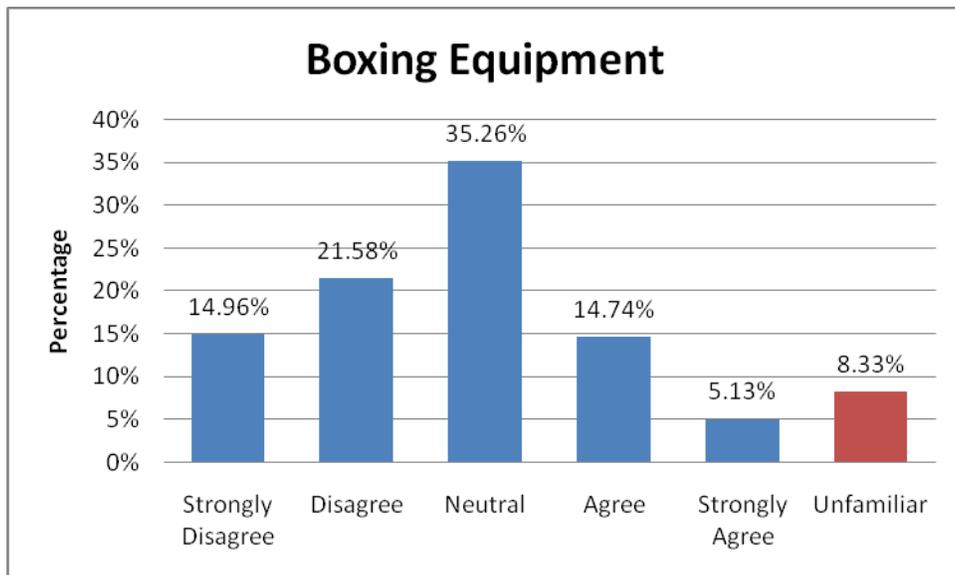


FIGURE 24: Interest in Indoor Boxing Equipment (Bags, Ring, etc...)

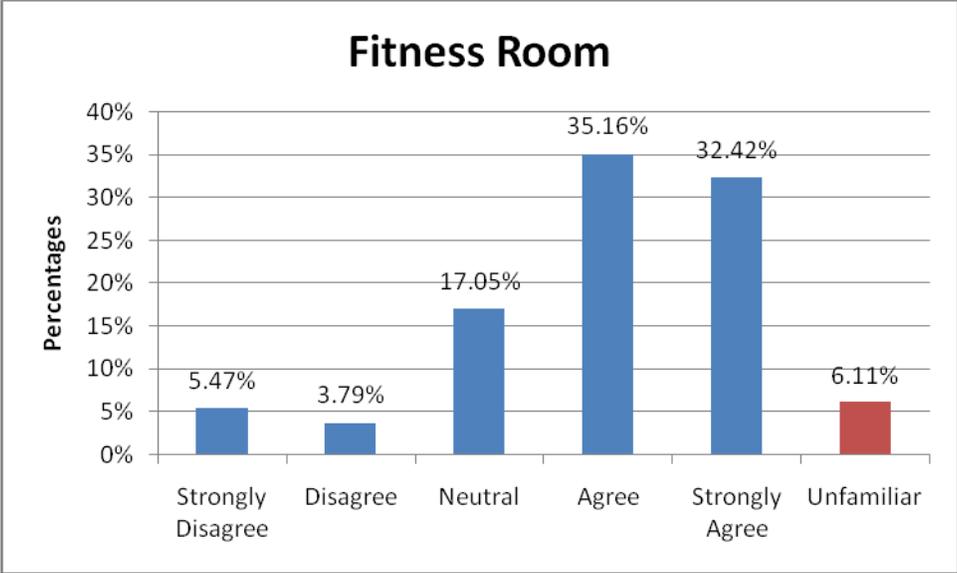


FIGURE 25: Interest in an Indoor Fitness Room

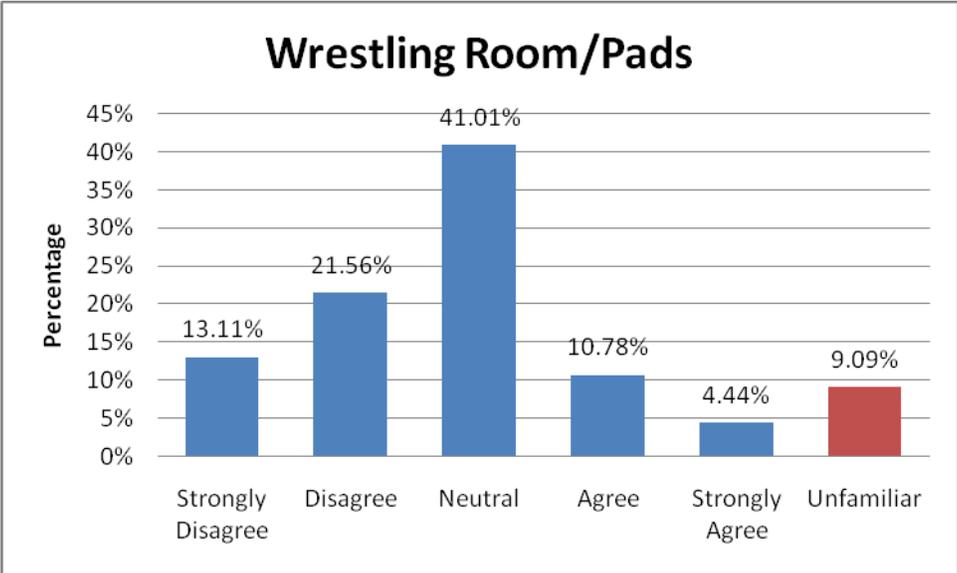


FIGURE 26: Interest in Indoor Wrestling Room/Pads

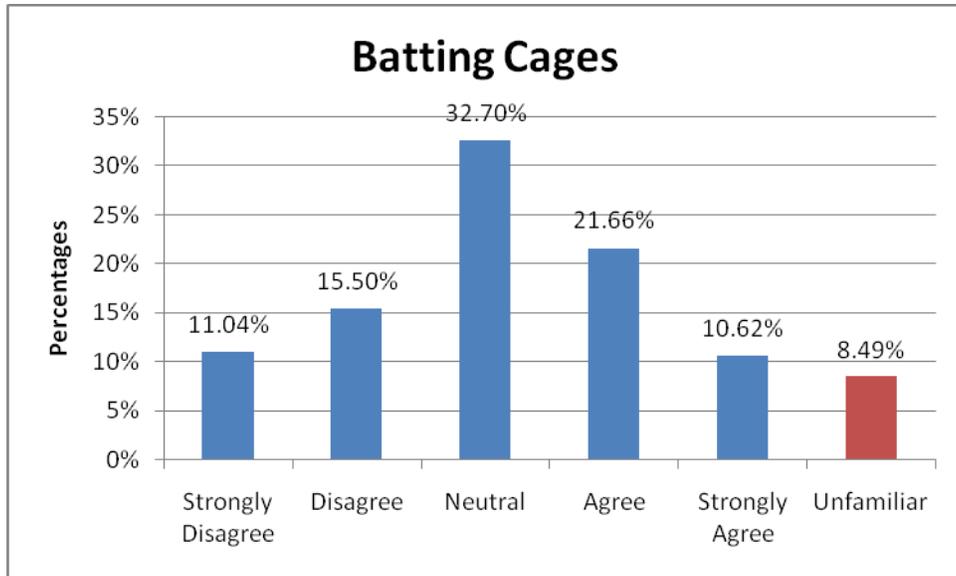


FIGURE 27: Interest in Indoor Batting Cages

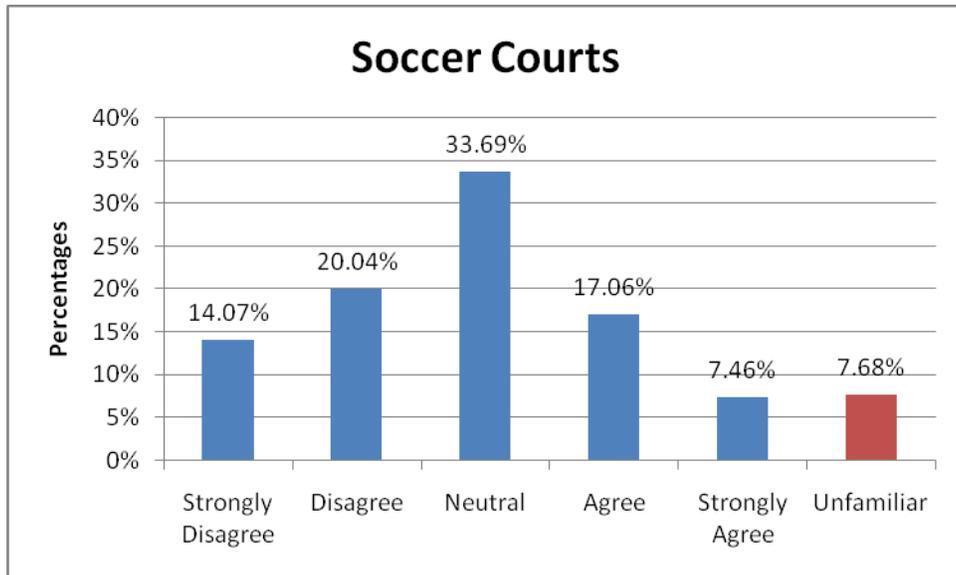


FIGURE 28: Interest in Indoor Soccer Courts

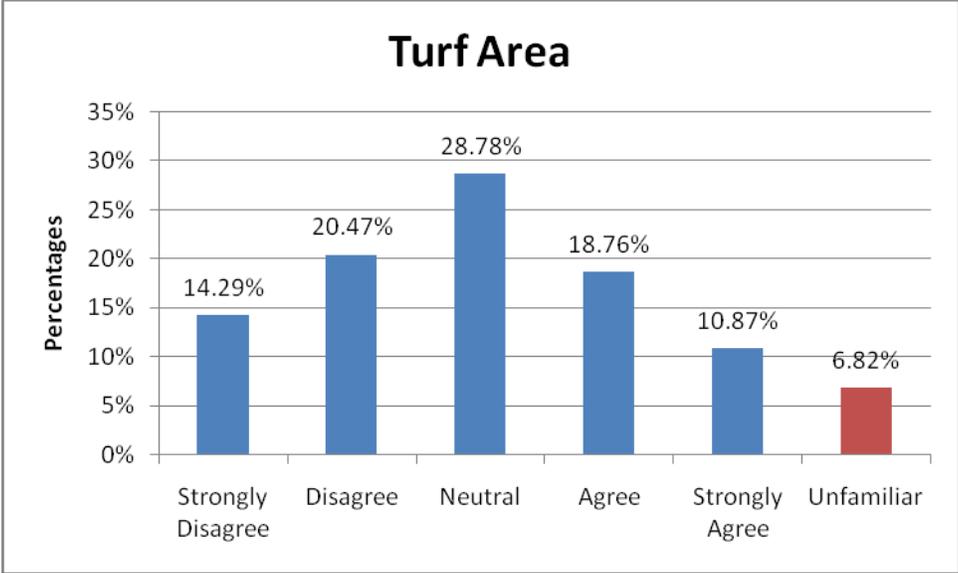


FIGURE 29: Interest in an Indoor Turf Area (Soccer, Baseball, Softball)

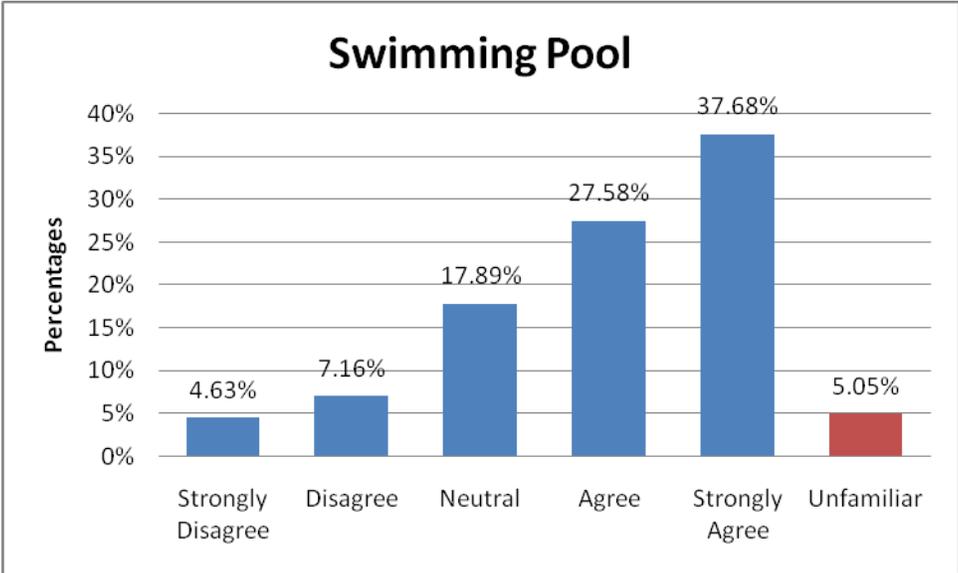


FIGURE 30: Interest in an Indoor Swimming Pool

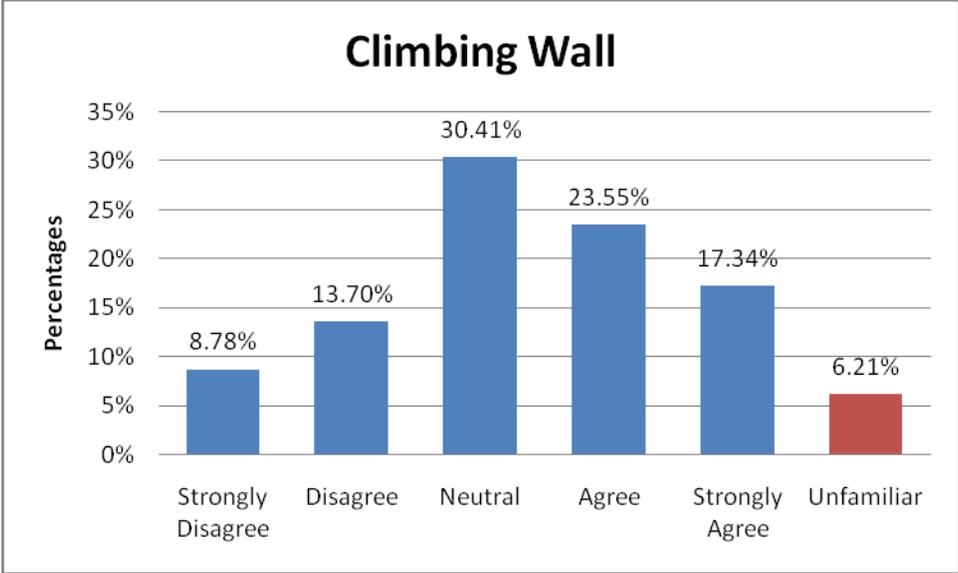


FIGURE 31: Interest in an Indoor Climbing Wall

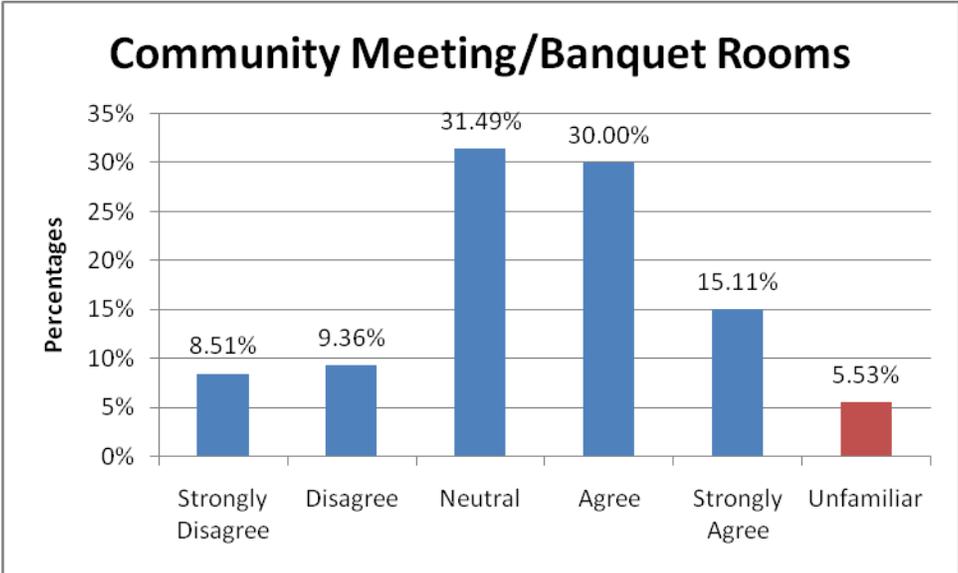


FIGURE 32: Interest in an Indoor Community Meeting/Banquet Rooms

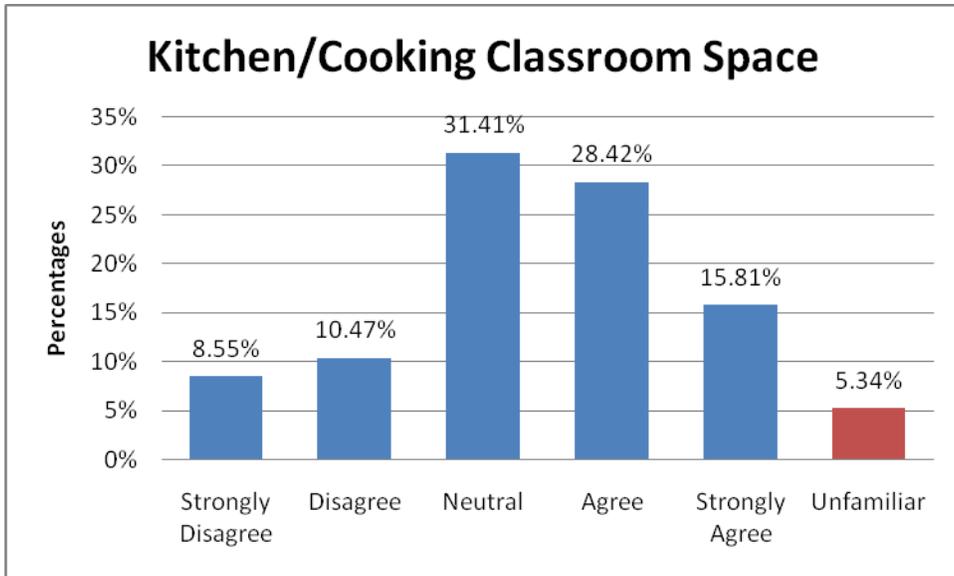


FIGURE 33: Interest in a Kitchen/Cooking Classroom Space

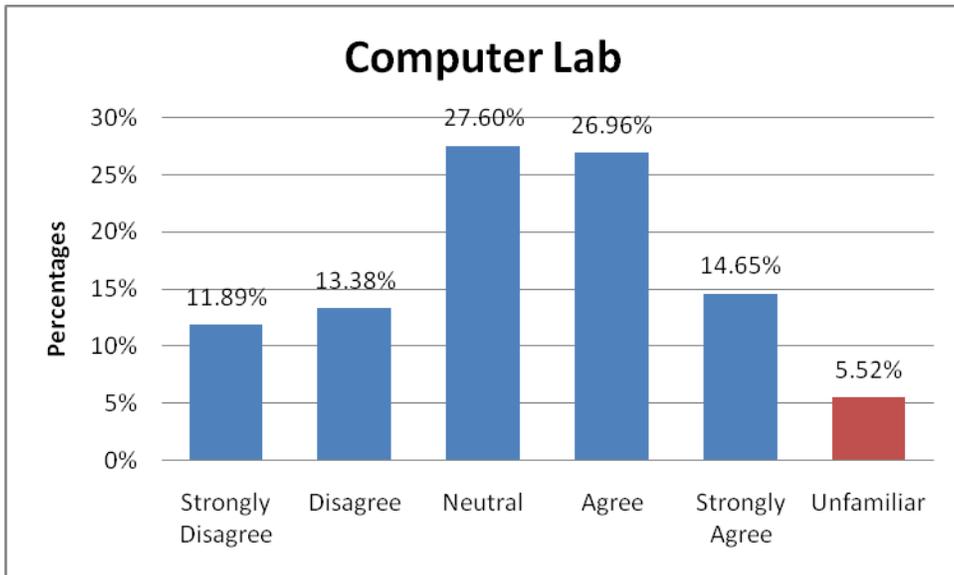


FIGURE 34: Interest in a Computer Lab

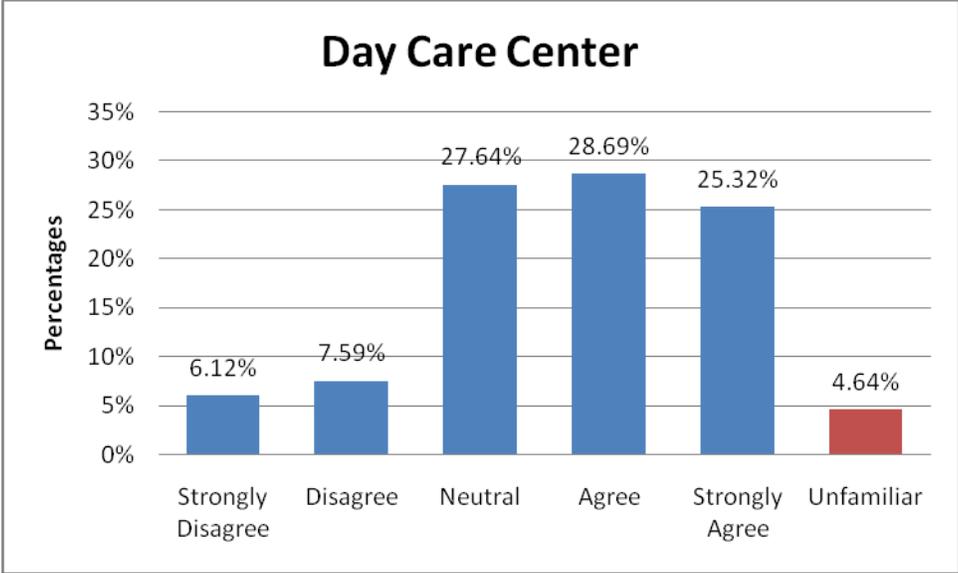


FIGURE 35: Interest in a Day Care Center

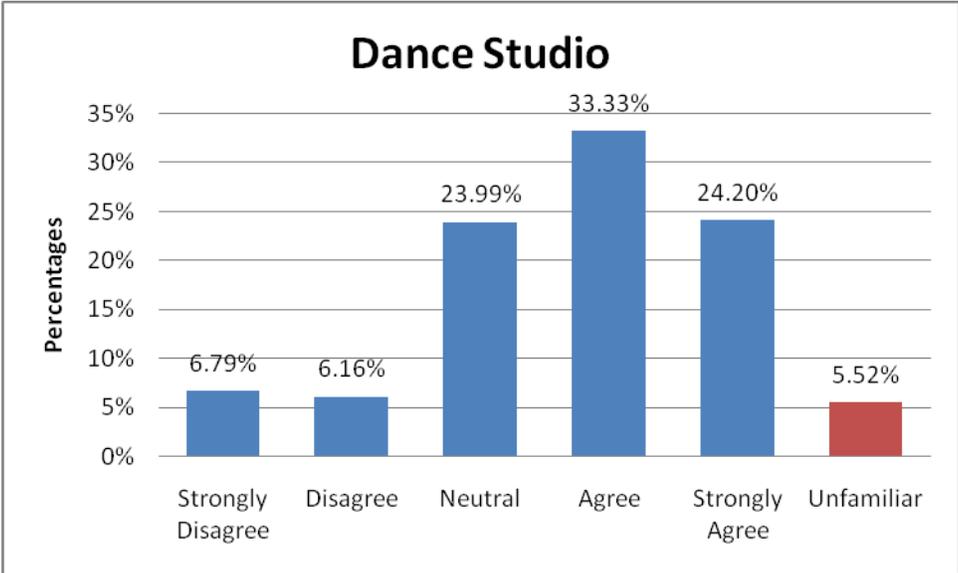


FIGURE 36: Interest in a Yoga/Aerobics/Dance Studio

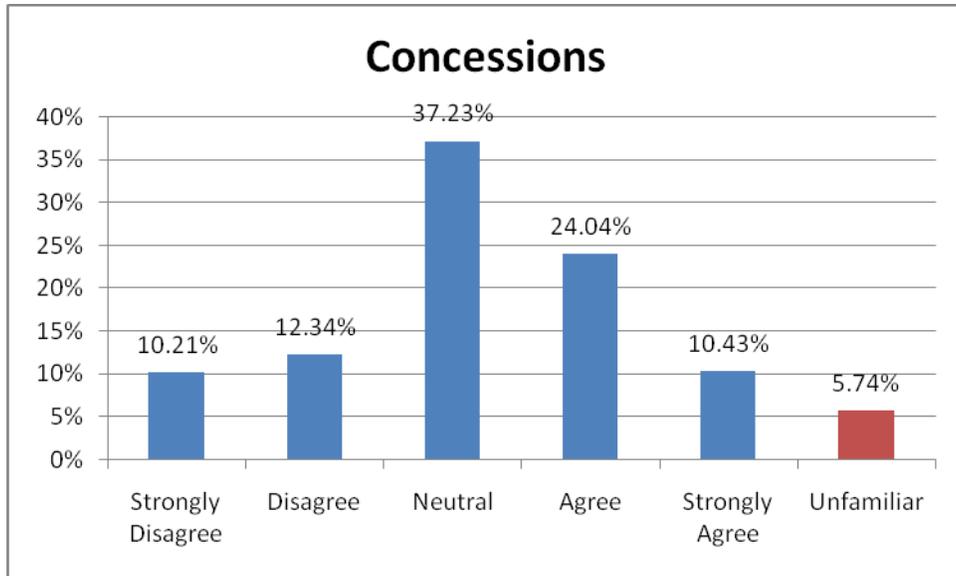


FIGURE 37: Interest in Concessions/Juice and Snack Bar

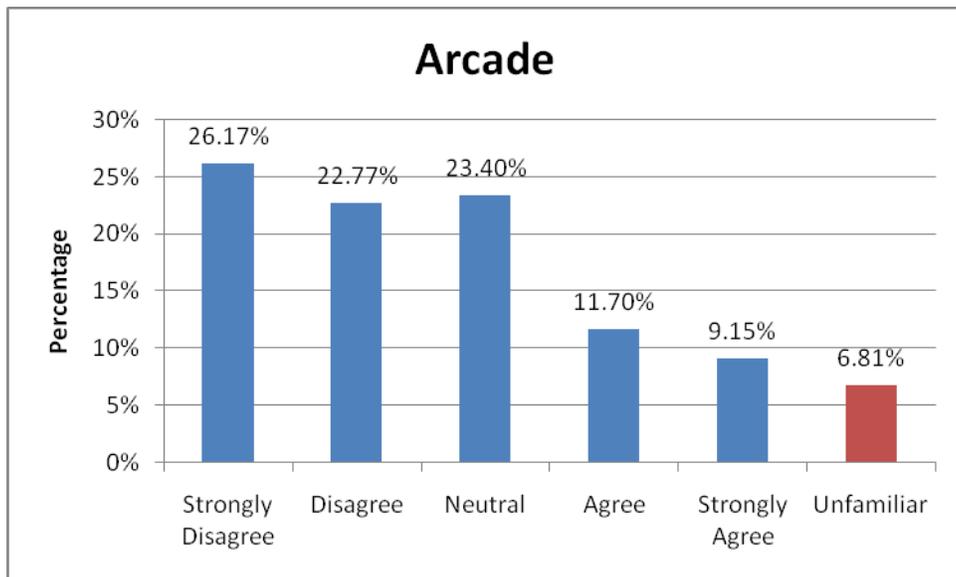


FIGURE 38: Interest in a Video Game Arcade (XRKade – exercise based video games; ex: DDR)

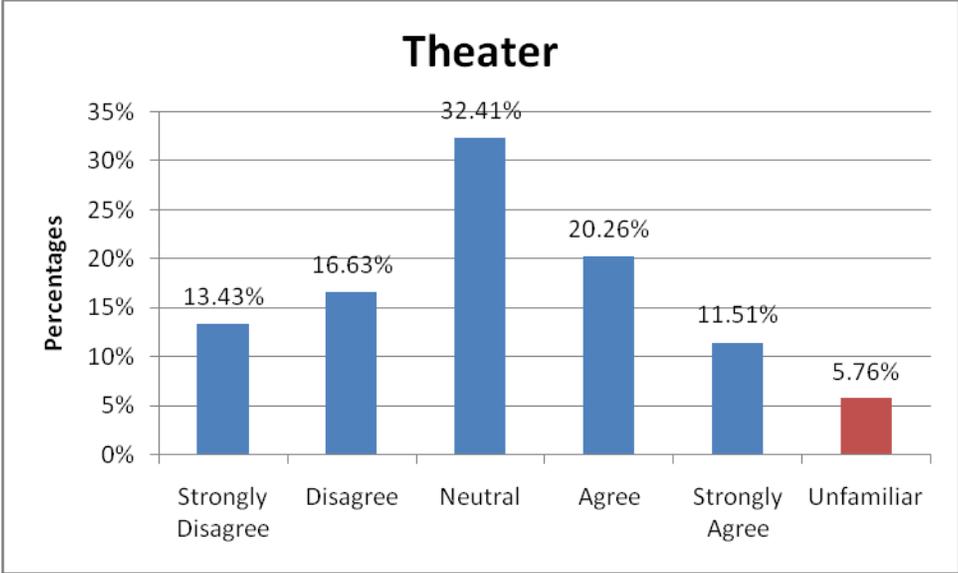


FIGURE 39: Interest in a Theater/Lecture Hall

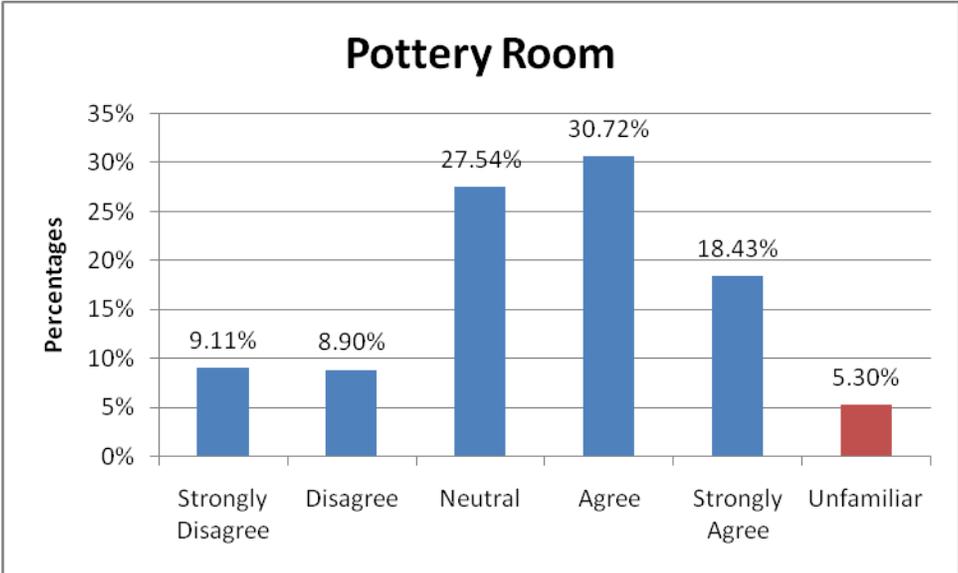


FIGURE 40: Interest in Art/Craft/Pottery Room

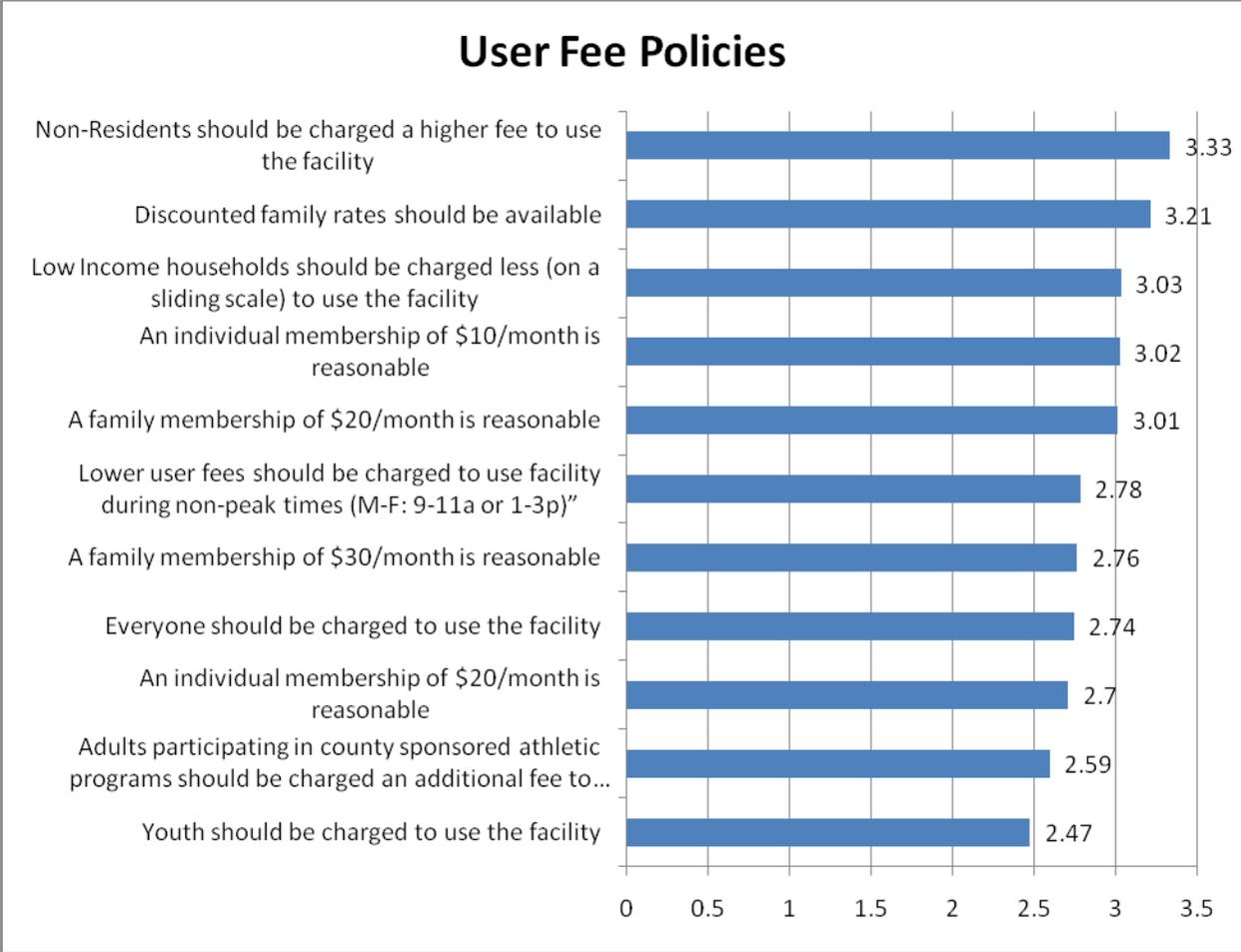


FIGURE 41: Respondents’ Average Desirability for Various User Fee Policies

Again, a summary of the percentage of respondents who indicated they were more likely than not to agree with each of the user fee policies (that is, they indicated a response of “agree,” or “strongly agree”) is provided in Table-.

TABLE: 4 Percentage of Respondents’ More Likely to Agree than Disagree with a User Fee Price Policy

User Fee Policies	%
Discounted family rates should be available	79.91
Non-Residents should be charged a higher fee to use the facility	78.6
Low Income households should be charged less (on a sliding scale) to use the facility	73.61
An individual membership of \$10/month is reasonable	68.42
A family membership of \$20/month is reasonable	67.76
Everyone should be charged to use the facility	59.44
A family membership of \$30/month is reasonable	57.58
An individual membership of \$20/month is reasonable	56.06
Lower user fees should be charged to use facility during non-peak times (M-F: 9-11a or 1-3p)”	55.65
Adults participating in county sponsored athletic programs should be charged an additional fee to use the facility	48.8
Youth should be charged to use the facility	46.9

Figures 42–52 provide breakdowns of respondents’ answers to how much they were to agree with each user fee policy within the list of User Fee Policies with a new recreation center in Watauga County.

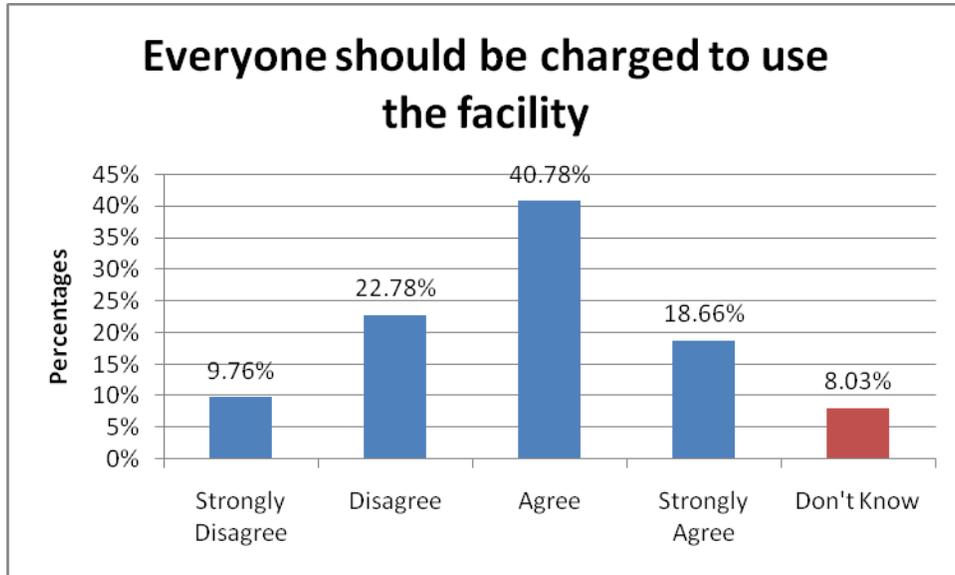


FIGURE 42: User Fee Policies
“Everyone should be charged to use the facility”

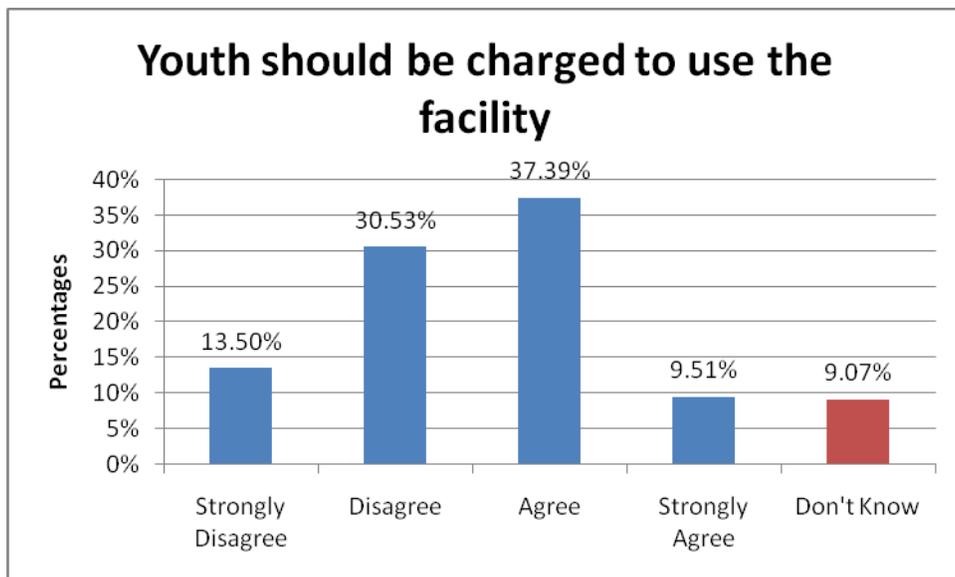


FIGURE 43: User Fee Policies
“Youth should be charged to use the facility”

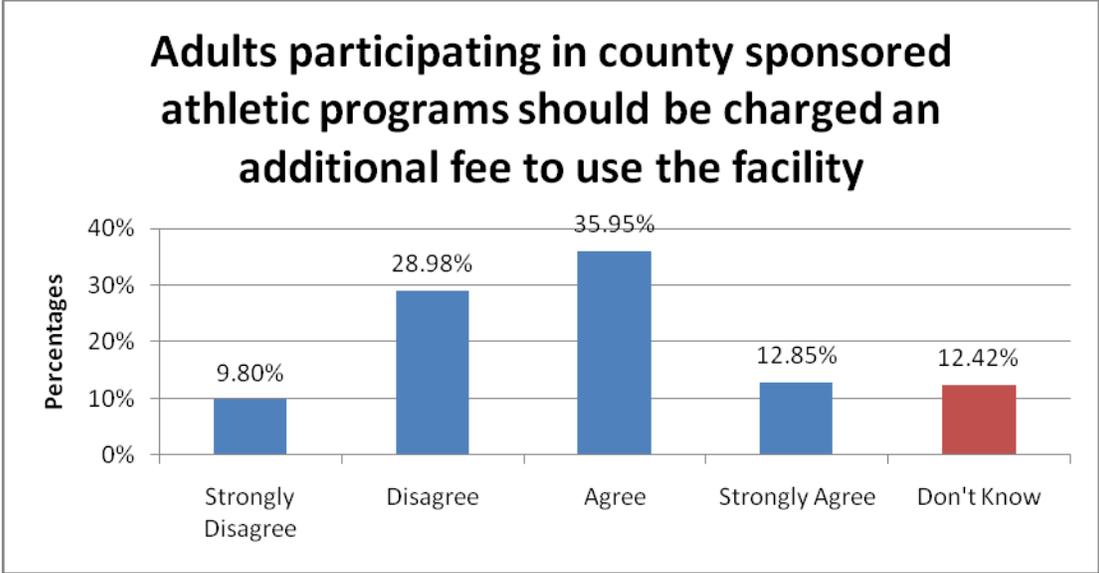


FIGURE 44: User Fee Policies

“Adults participating in county sponsored athletic programs should be charged an additional fee to use the facility”

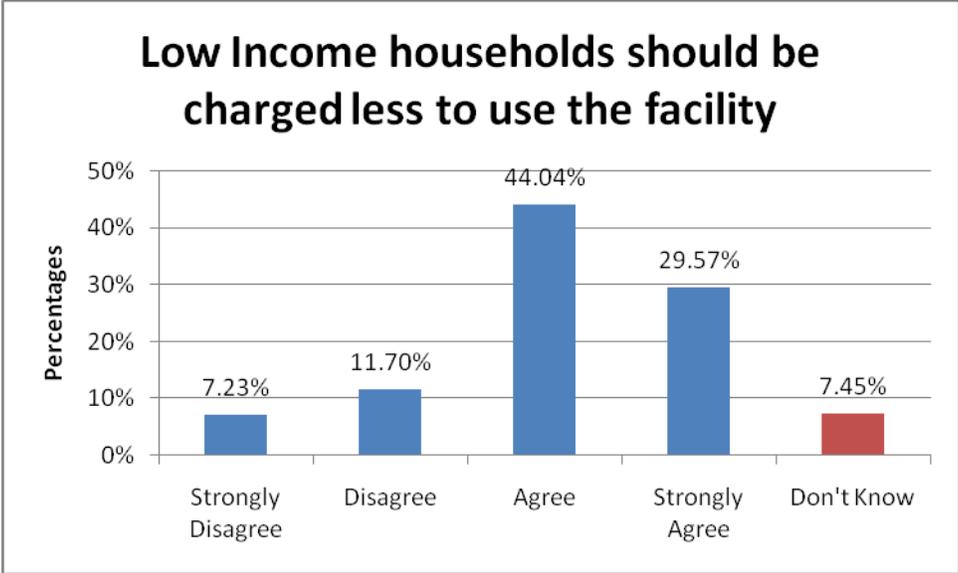


FIGURE 45: User Fee Policies

“Low Income households should be charged less (on a sliding scale) to use the facility”

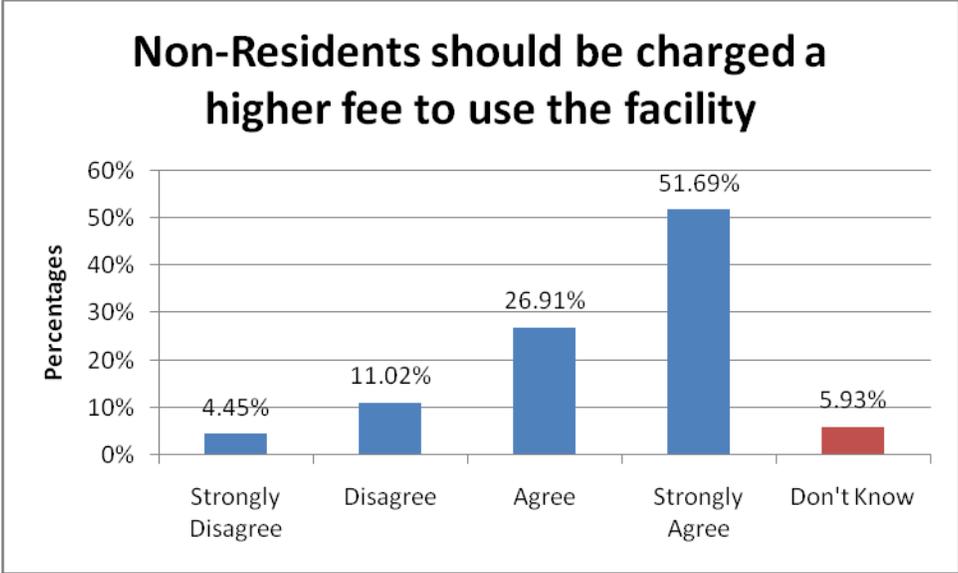


FIGURE 46: User Fee Policies
 “Non-Residents should be charged a higher fee to use the facility”



FIGURE 47: User Fee Policies
 “An individual membership of \$20/month is reasonable”



FIGURE 48: User Fee Policies
 “An individual membership of \$10/month is reasonable”

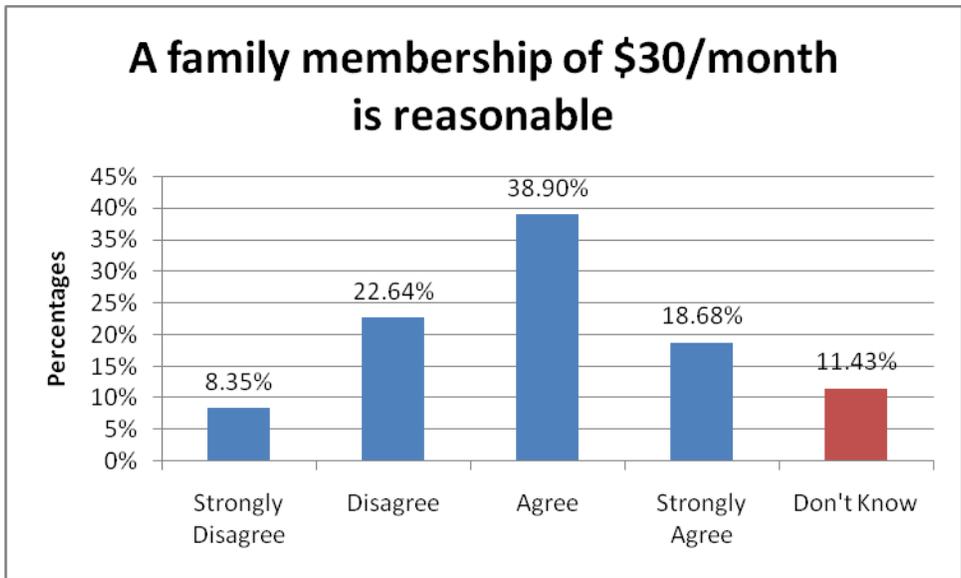


FIGURE 49: User Fee Policies
 “A family membership of \$30/month is reasonable”

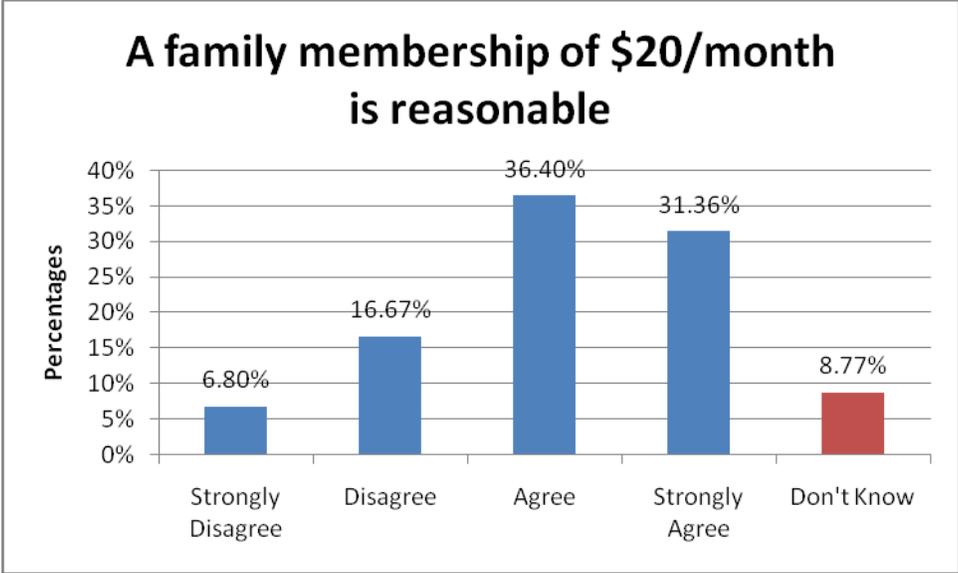


FIGURE 50: User Fee Policies
 “A family membership of \$20/month is reasonable”

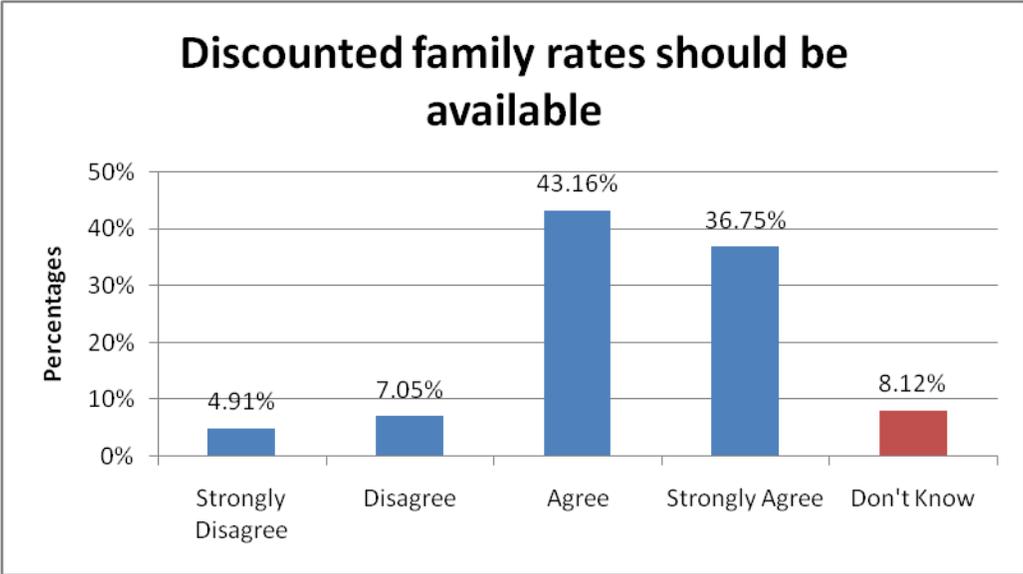


FIGURE 51: User Fee Policies
 “Discounted family rates should be available”

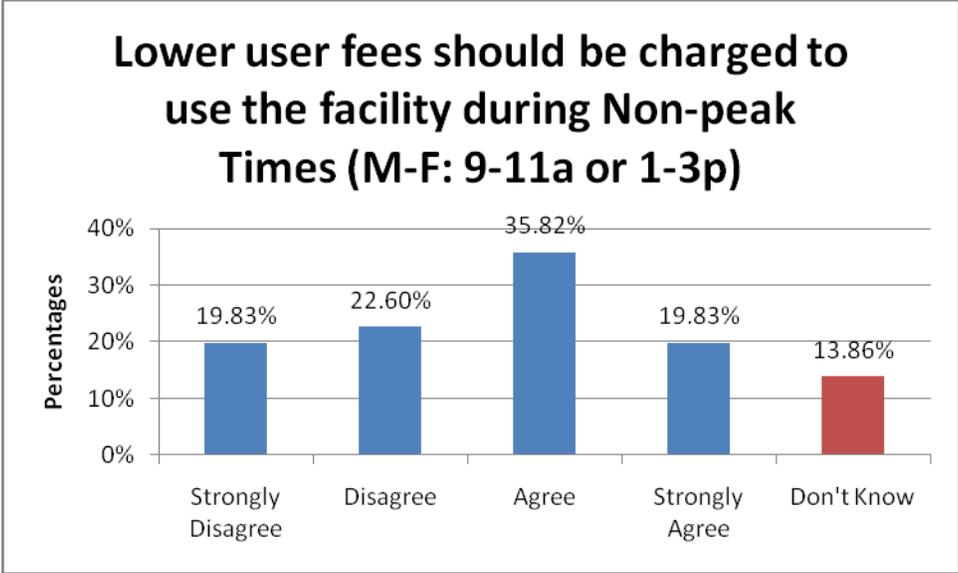


FIGURE 52: User Fee Policies

“Lower user fees should be charged to use facility during non-peak times (M-F: 9-11a or 1-3p)”

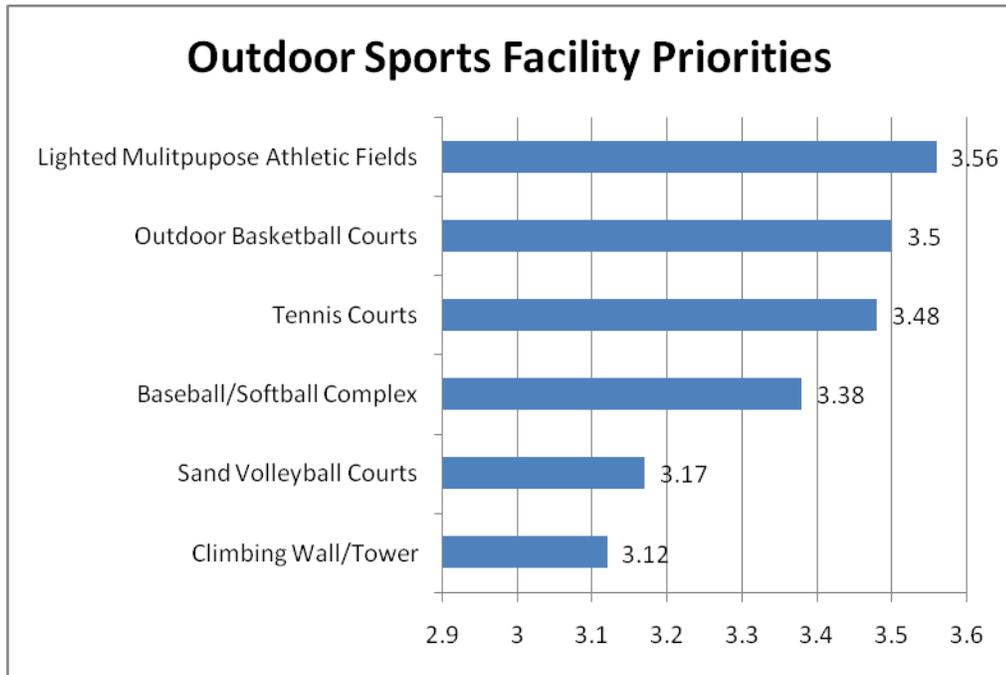


FIGURE 53: Respondents' Interest in Various Outdoor Sports Facility Priorities

Again, a summary of the percentage of respondents who indicated they were more likely than not to want to include each facility/amenity in the proposed park (that is, they indicated a response of “neutral,” “agree,” or “strongly agree”) is provided in Table 5. None of the twelve Outdoor Sports Facilities Priorities were included on the list of ten most or least desired facilities/amenities overall.

Table 5: Percentage of Respondents More Likely than Not to Want an Amenity for Outdoor Sports Facilities Priorities

Outdoor Sports Facility Priorities	%
Tennis Courts	77.66
Lighted Multipurpose Athletic Fields	73.9
Baseball/Softball Complex	73.6
Outdoor Basketball Courts	69.06
Sand Volleyball Courts	67.73
Outdoor Climbing Wall/Tower	63.67

Figures 54–59 provide breakdowns of respondents’ answers to how likely they were to agree that each facility priority within the list of Outdoor Sports Facility Priorities should be built in order to add to the existing facilities available in Watauga County.

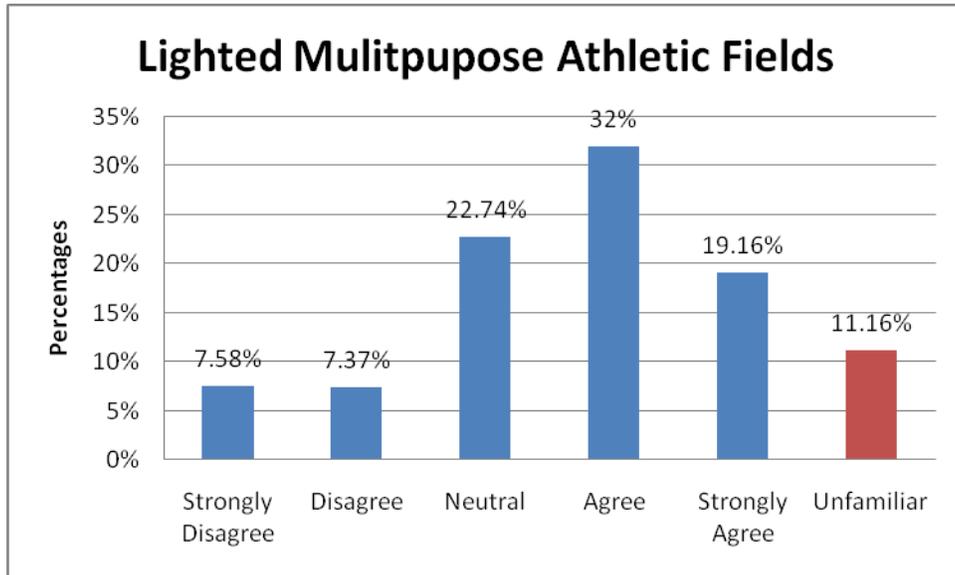


FIGURE 54: Interest in Lighted Multipurpose Athletic Fields (football, soccer, lacrosse, ultimate, etc)

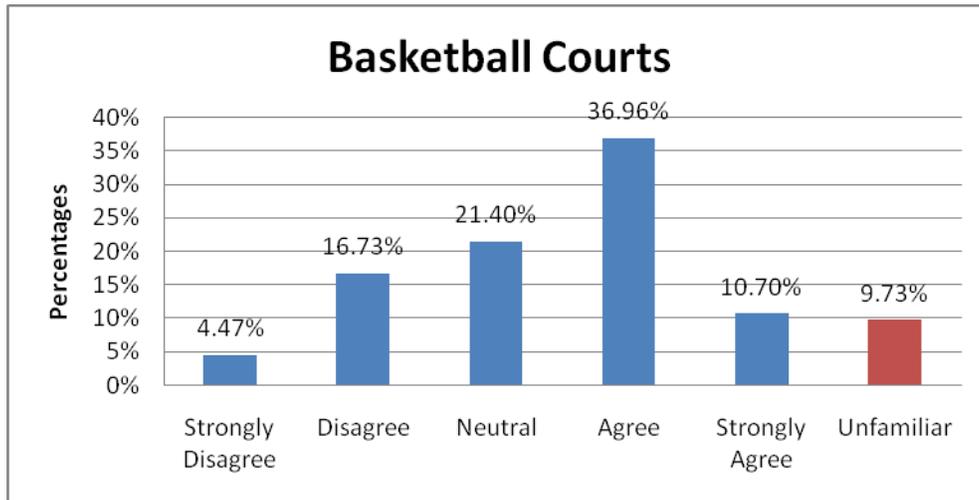


FIGURE 55: Interest in Outdoor Basketball Courts

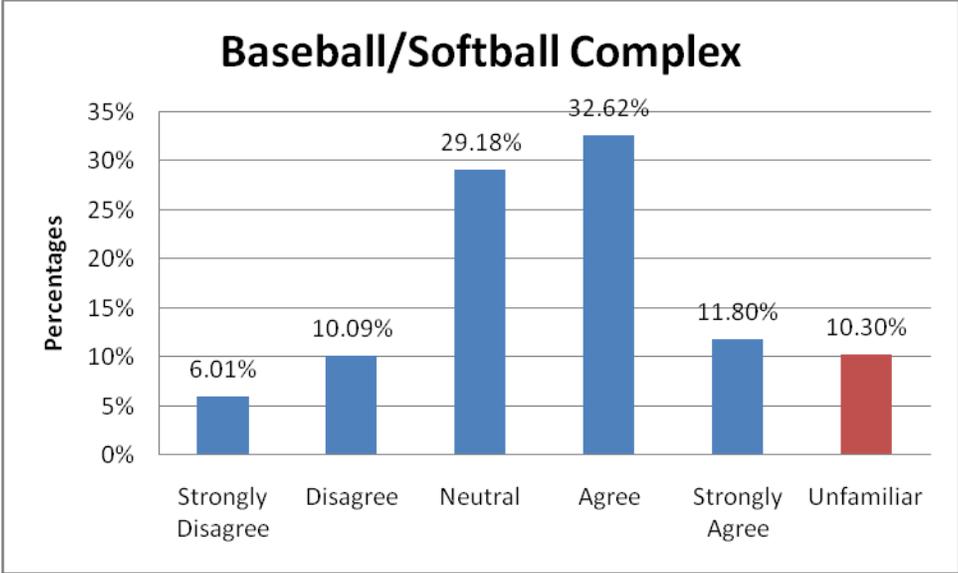


FIGURE 56: Interest in a Baseball/Softball Complex

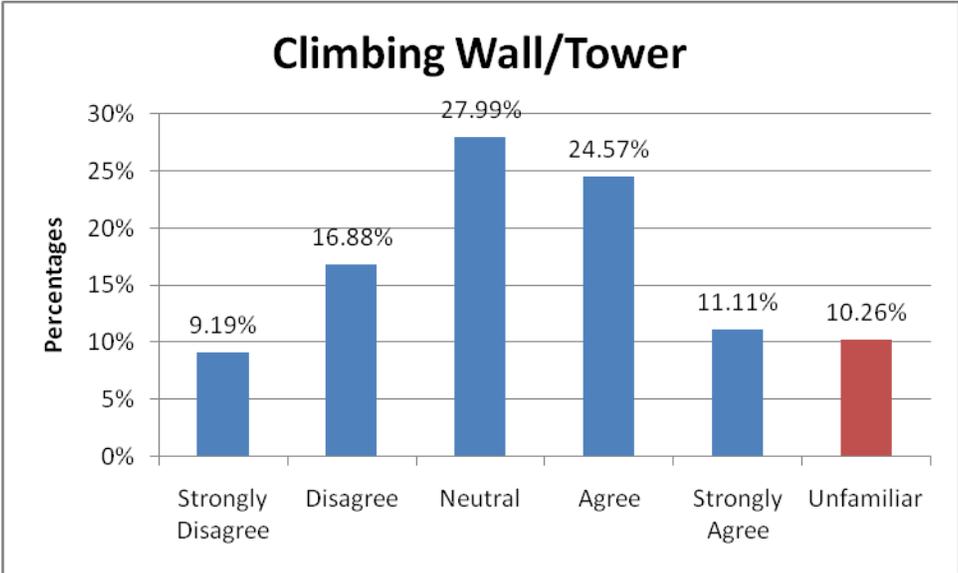


FIGURE 57: Interest in an Outdoor Climbing Wall/Tower

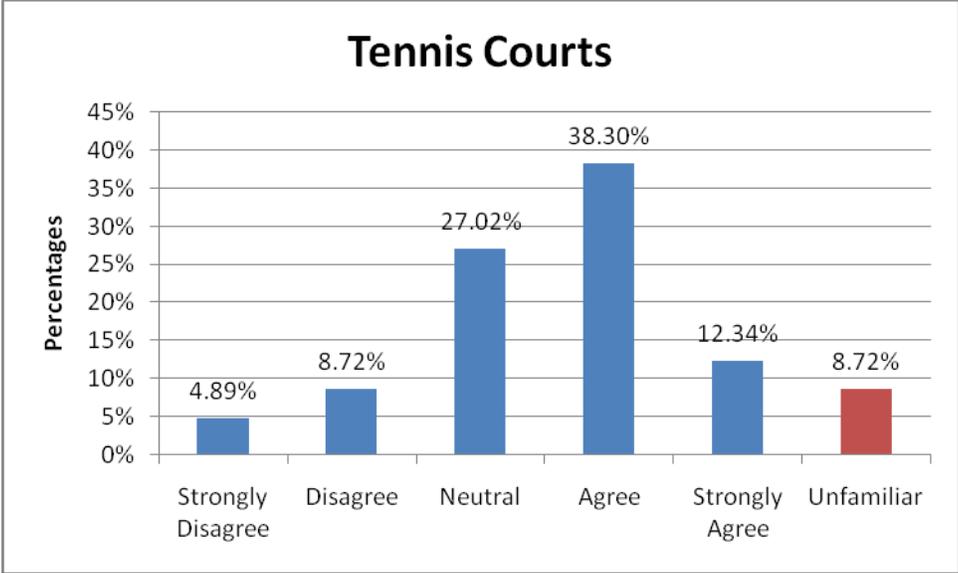


FIGURE 58: Interest in Tennis Courts

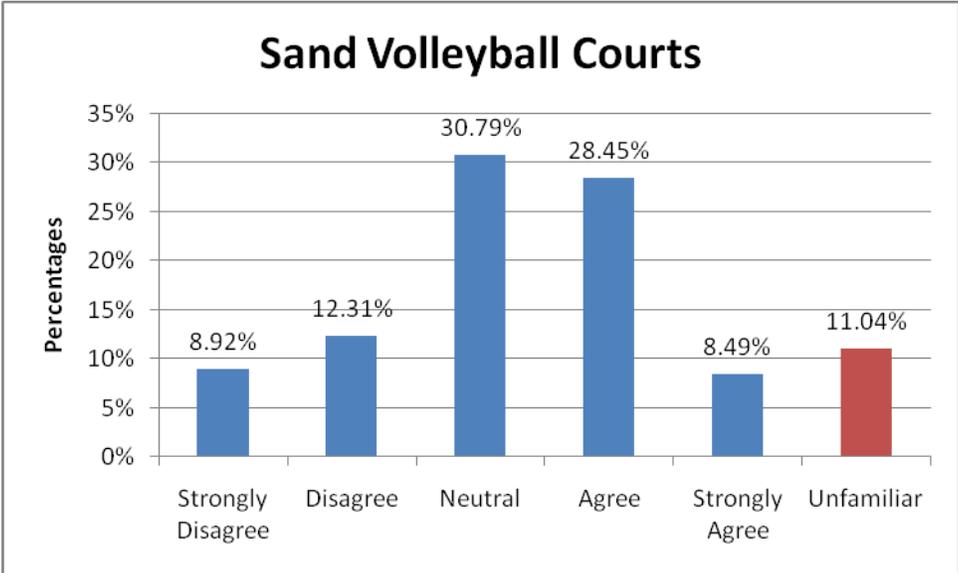


FIGURE 59: Interest in Sand Volleyball Courts

Figure 60 (below) displays the most desired Outdoor Recreation Facility Priorities, based on mean scores. The top five mean scores were: Paved Walking Trails, Unpaved Hiking Trails, Biking Trails, Picnic Shelters and Light on Walking Trails.

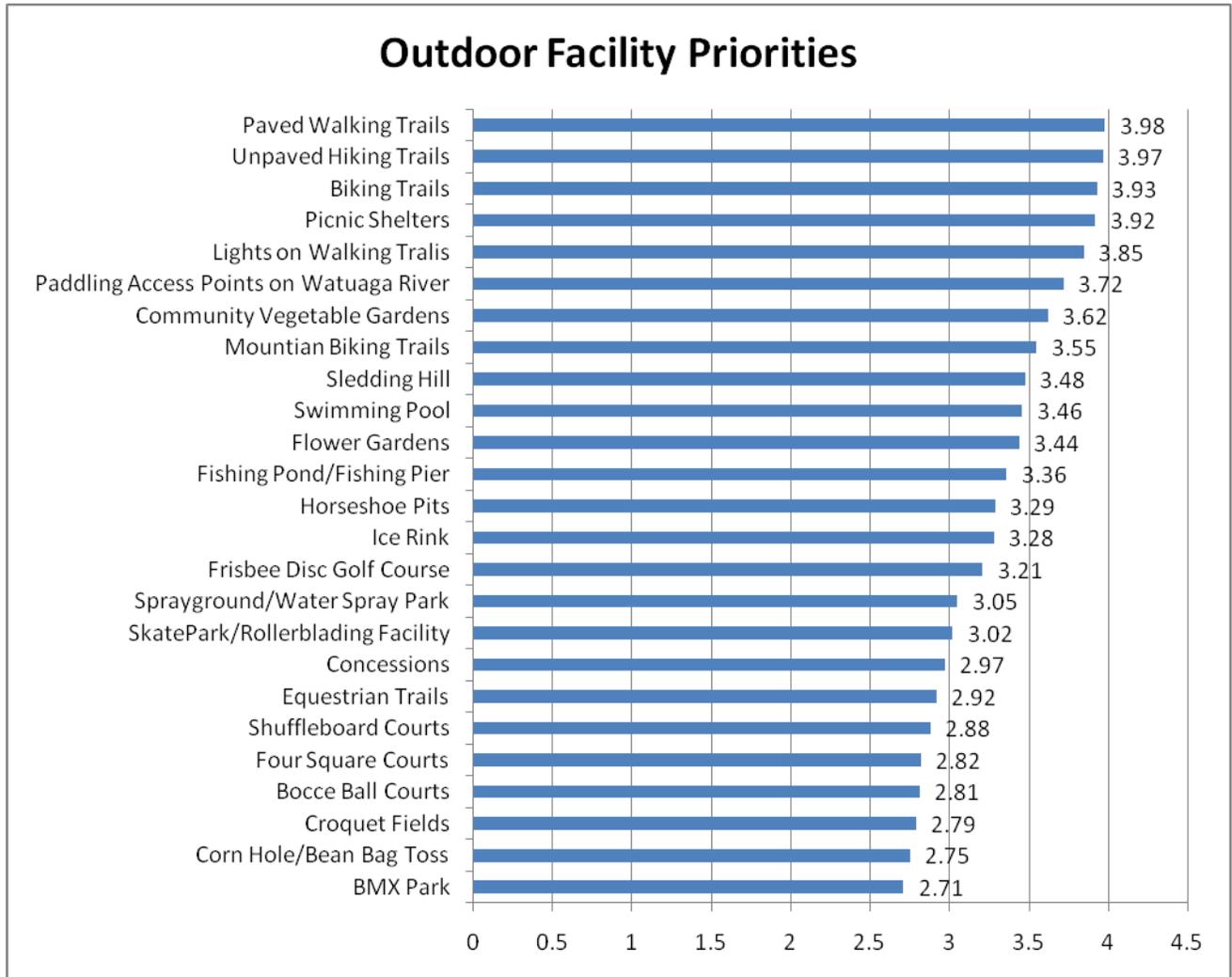


FIGURE 60: Respondents' Average Desirability for Various Outdoor Facility Priorities/Amenities

Again, a summary of the percentage of respondents who indicated they were more likely than not to want to include each facility priority in the outdoor recreation facility (that is, they indicated a response of “neutral,” “agree,” or “strongly agree”) is provided in Table 6. Six of the 25 Outdoor Recreation Facilities priorities were included on the list of ten most desired facilities/amenities overall. These were: picnic shelters (75.47%), paved walking trails (72.1%),

unpaved hiking trails (72.07%), biking trails (70.38%), lighting on paved walking trails (67.23%), and paddling access points on Watauga River (60.94%). In addition, six facilities/amenities from the Outdoor Facility Priorities list were included in the ten least desired amenities. These were: BMX Park (16.13%), bocce ball courts (16.99%), four square courts (18.3%), corn hole/bean bag toss games (19.23%), croquet fields (22.22%), and equestrian trails (24.95%).

TABLE 6: Percentage of Respondents' More Likely than Not to Want an Outdoor Facility Priority

Amenity	%
Picnic Shelters	90.06
Paved Walking Trails	86.89
Unpaved Hiking Trails	86.78
Biking Trails	85.72
Paddling Access Points on Watauga River	81.54
Flower Gardens	80.6
Community Vegetable Gardens	78.67
Mountain Biking Trails	76.81
Horseshoe Pits	76.75
Swimming Pool	76.21
Sledding Hill	75.9
Fishing Pond/Fishing Pier	75.26
Lights on Walking Trails	74.68
Concessions	70.36
Ice Rink	69.23
Shuffleboard Courts	68.83
Skate Park/Rollerblading Facility	62.82
Frisbee Disc Golf Course	61.33
Sprayground/Water Spray Park	58.68
Croquet Fields	58.33
Corn Hole/Bean Bag Toss	56.84
Bocce Ball Courts	50.97
Four Square Courts	50.85
BMX Park	46.02

Figures 61-85 provide a breakdown of respondents' answers to how likely they were to agree that each facility/amenity within the list of Outdoor Recreation Facility Priorities should be built in order to add to the existing facilities available in Watauga County.

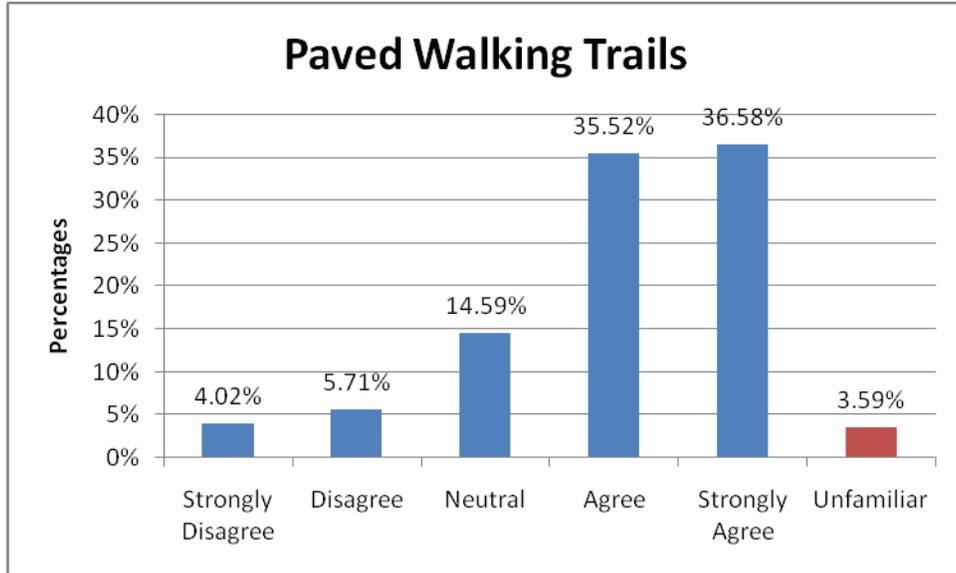


FIGURE 61: Interest in Paved Walking trails

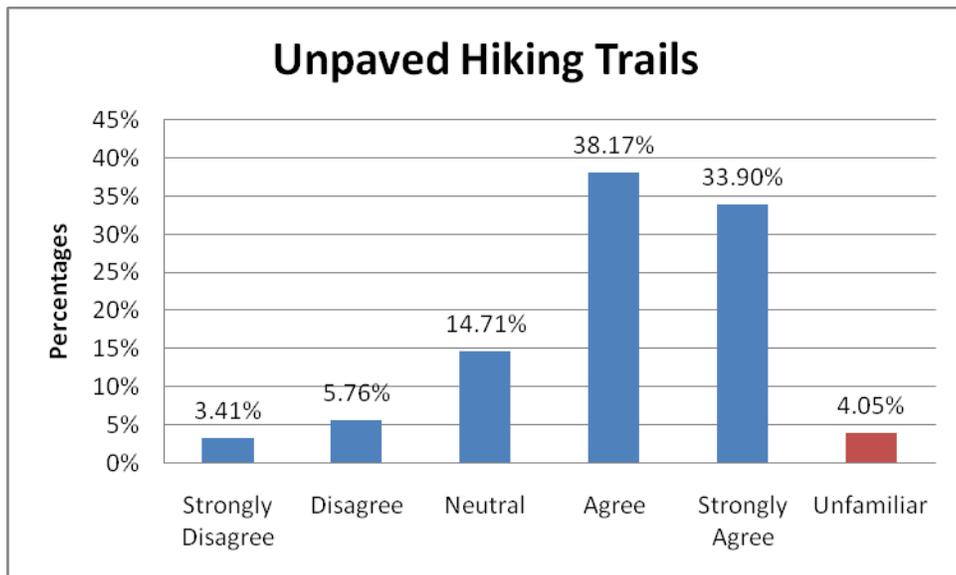


FIGURE 62: Interest in Unpaved Hiking Trails

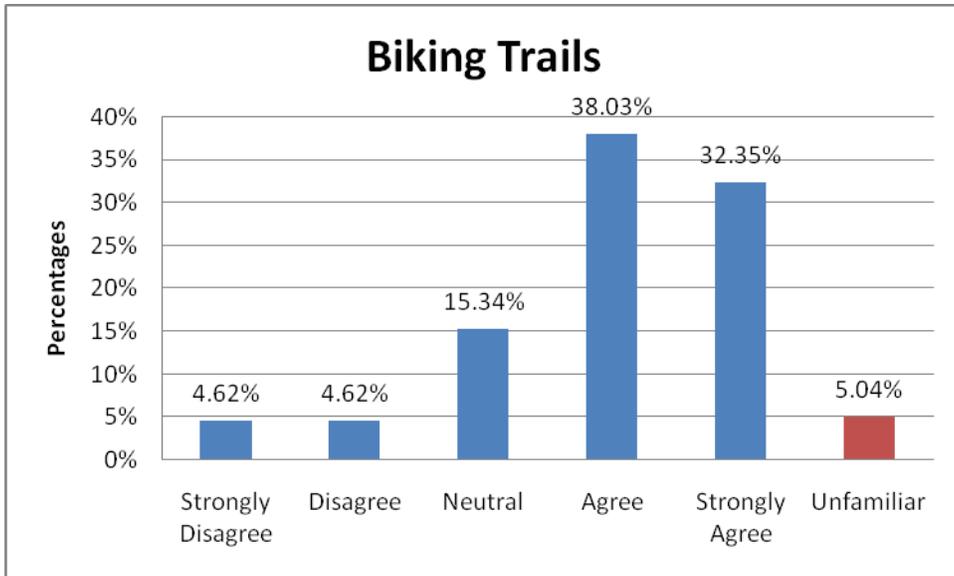


FIGURE 63: Interest in Biking Trails

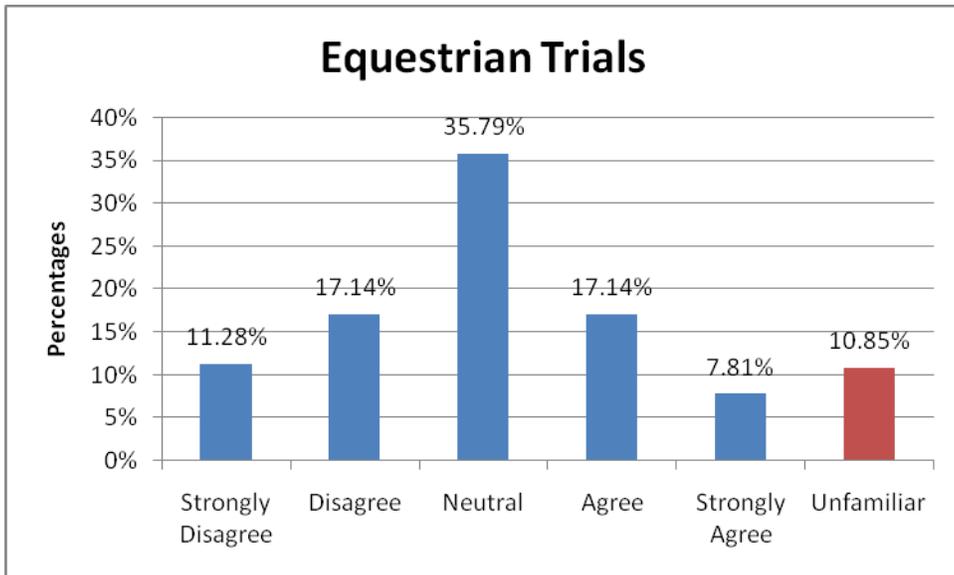


FIGURE 64: Interest in Equestrian Trails

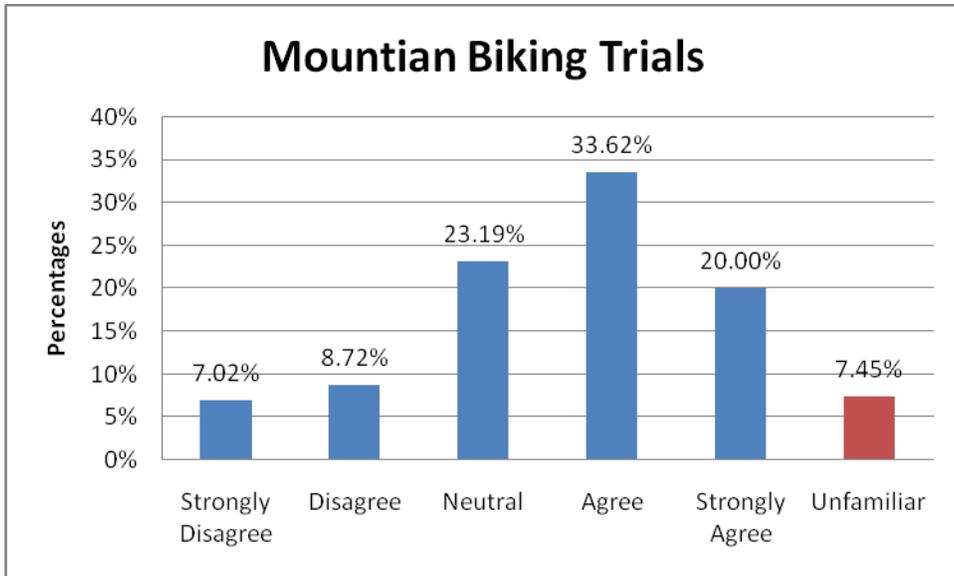


FIGURE 65: Interest in Mountain Biking Trails

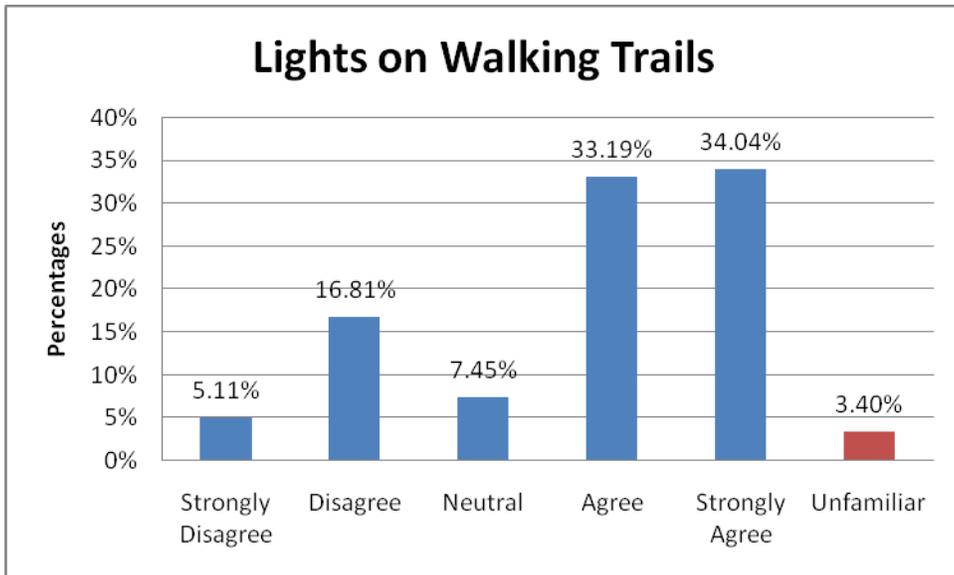


FIGURE 66: Interest in Lighting on Paved Walking Trails

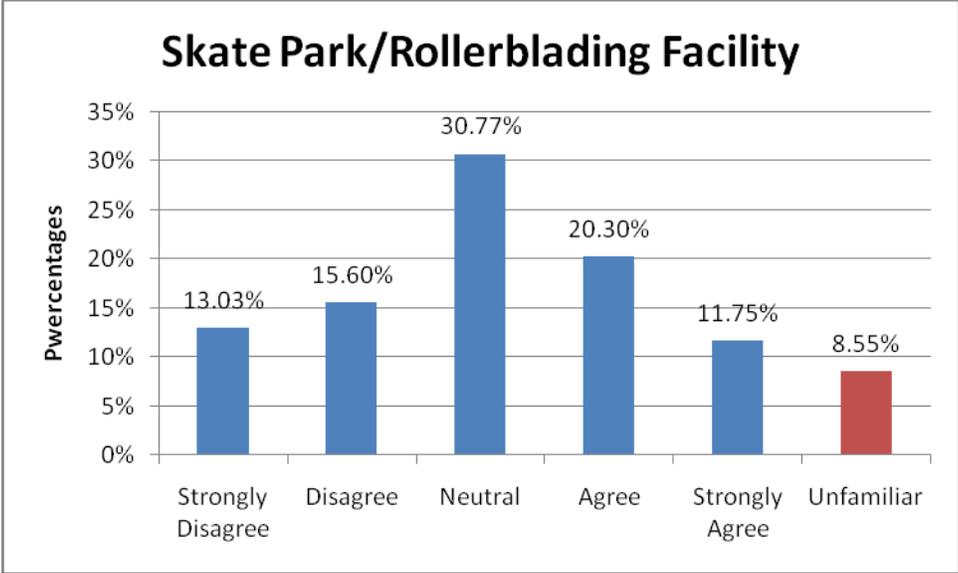


FIGURE 67: Interest in a Skate Park/Rollerblading Facility

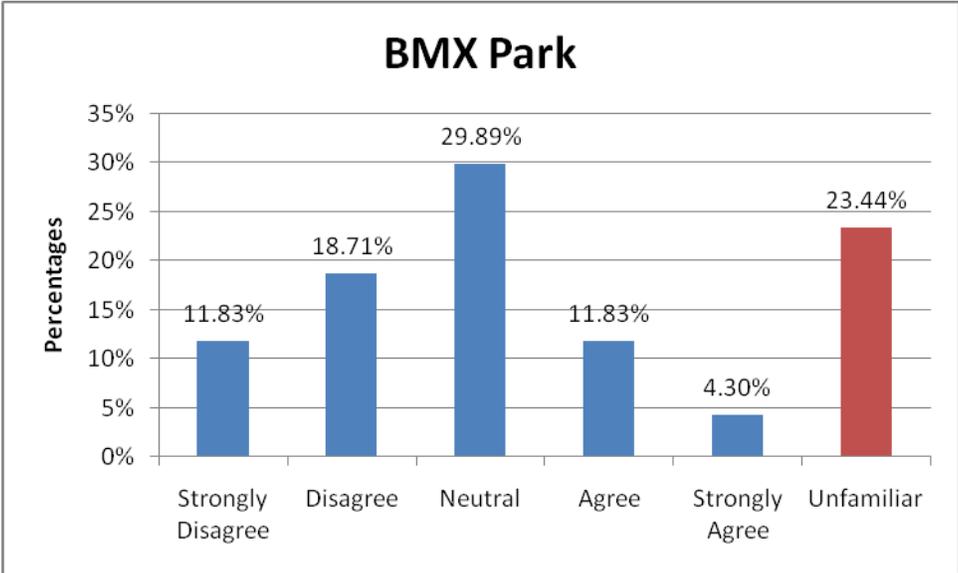


FIGURE 68: Interest in a BMX Park

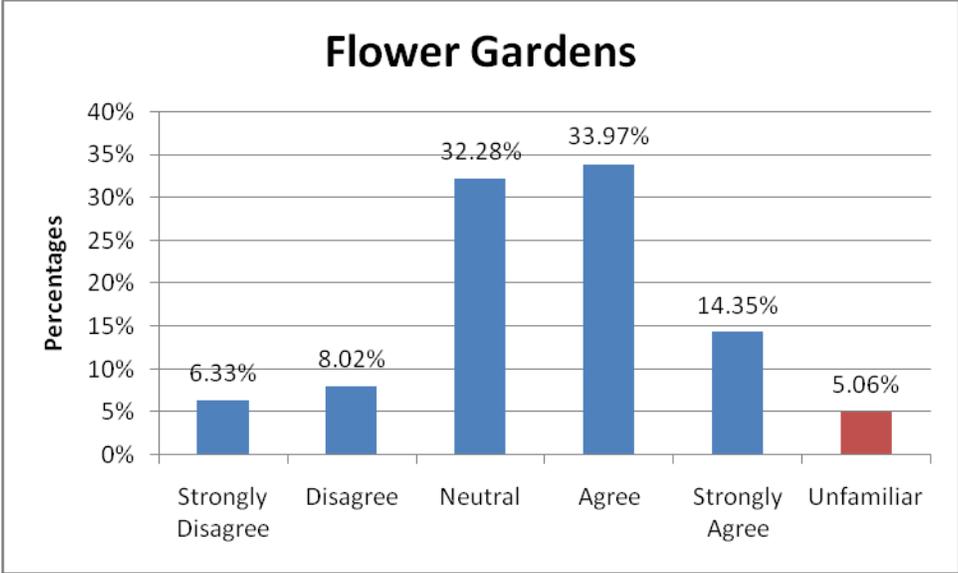


FIGURE 69: Interest in Flower Gardens

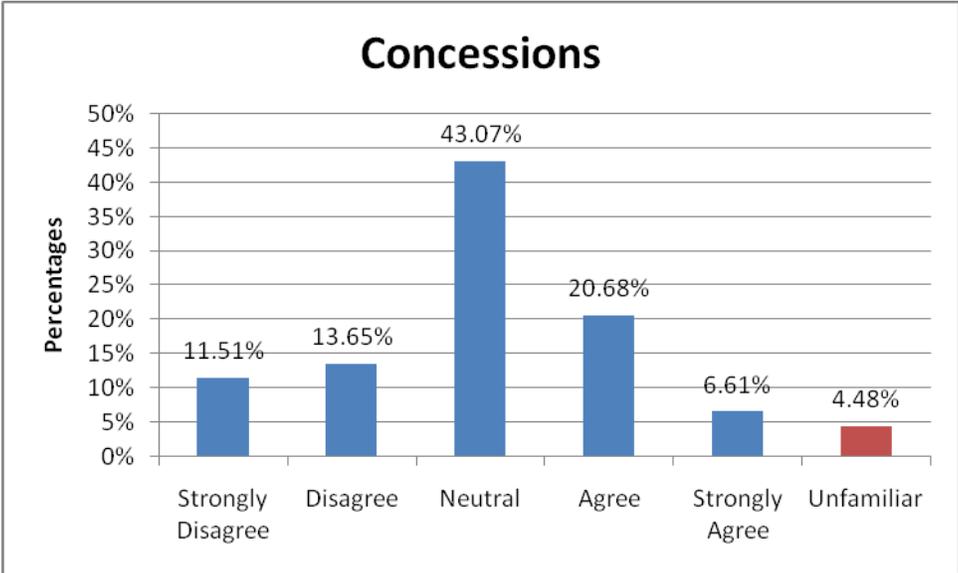


FIGURE 70: Interest in Concessions

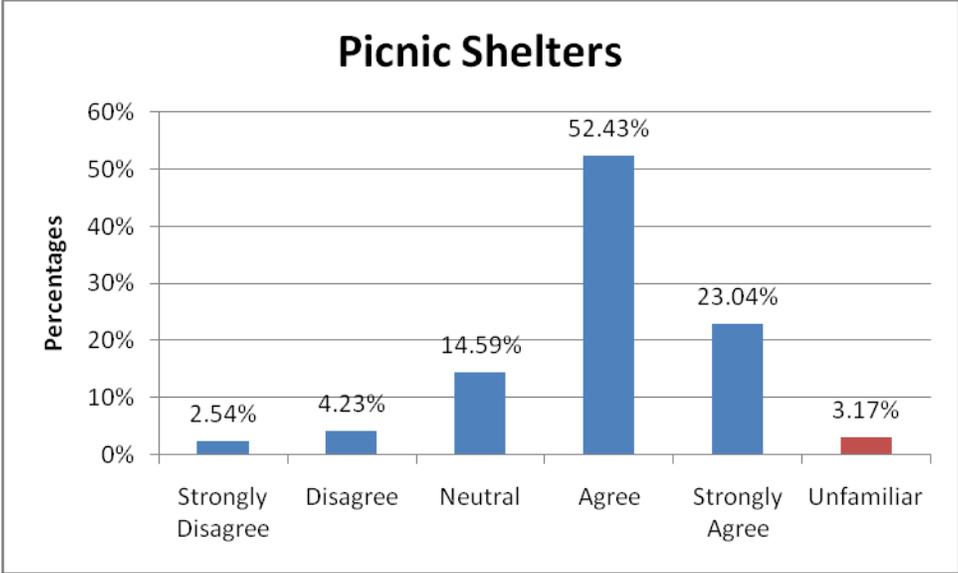


FIGURE 71: Interest in Picnic Shelters

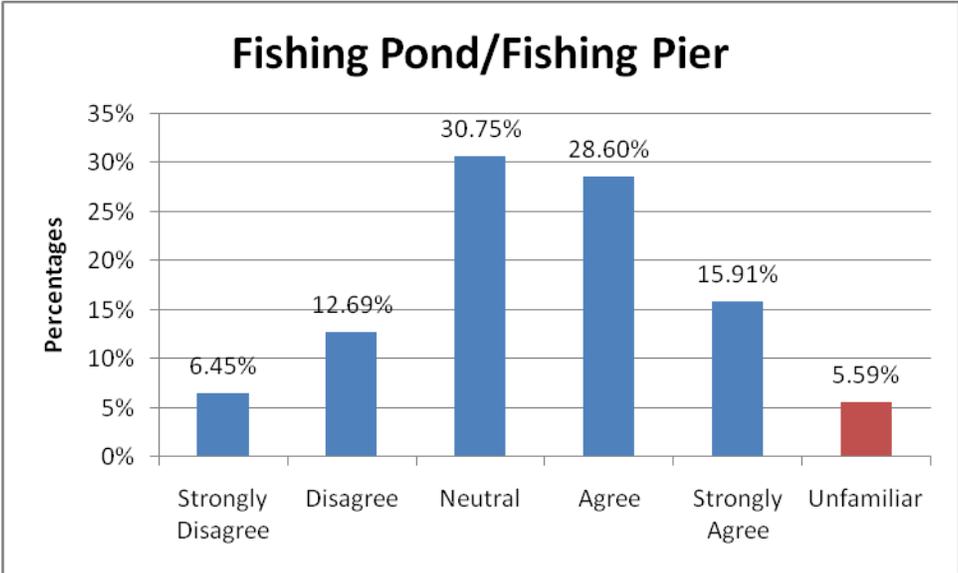


FIGURE 72: Interest in a Fishing Pond/Fishing Pier

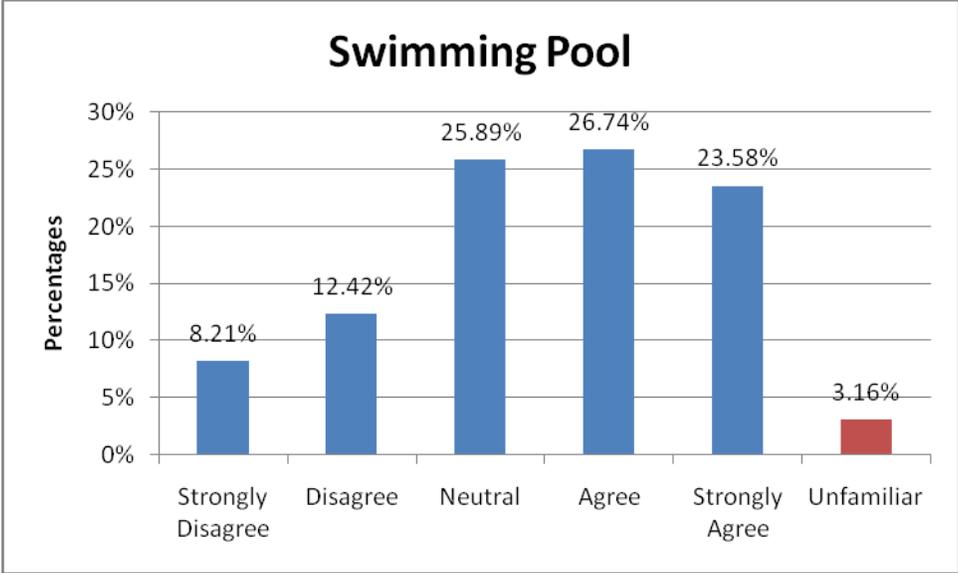


FIGURE 73: Interest in an Outdoor Swimming Pool

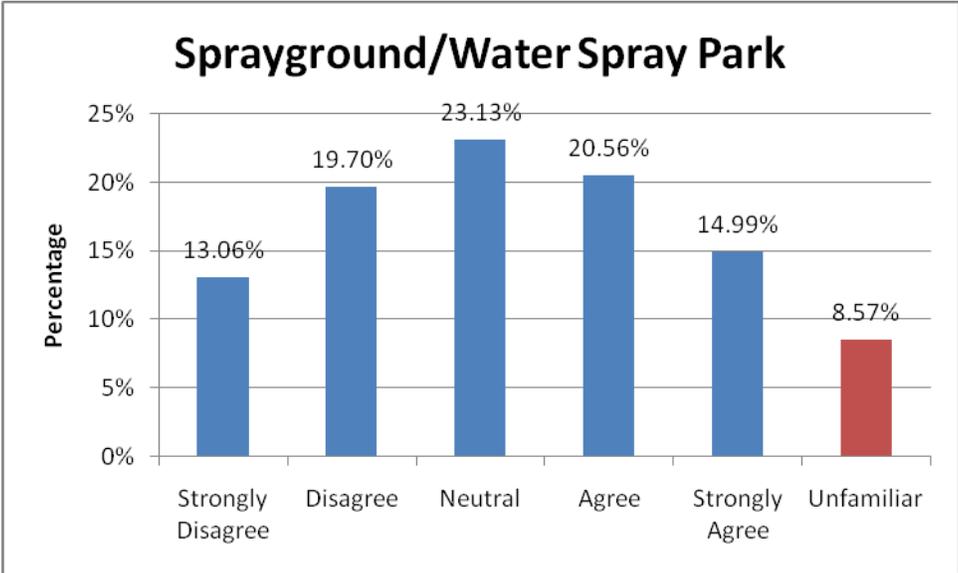


FIGURE 74: Interest in a Sprayground/Water Spray Park

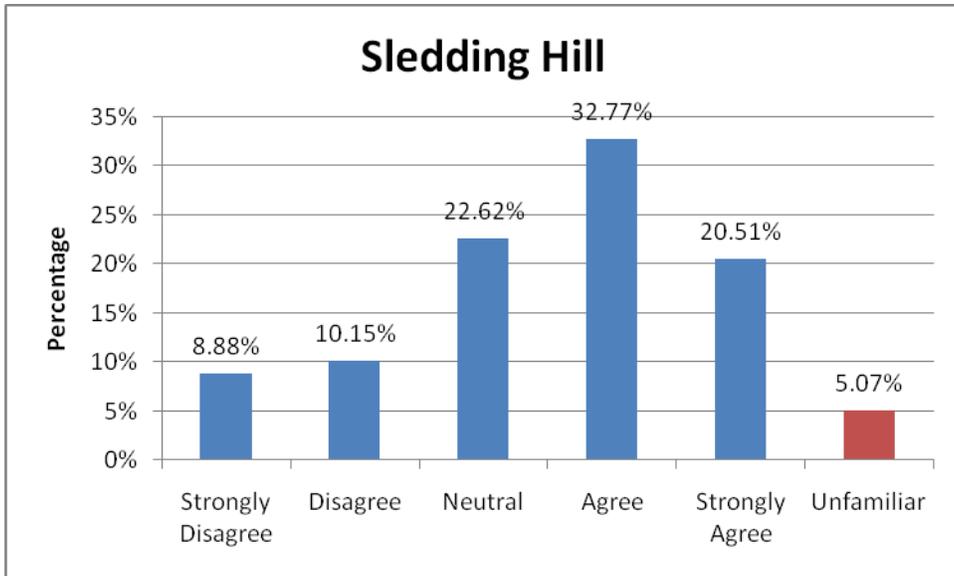


FIGURE 75: Interest in a Sledding Hill

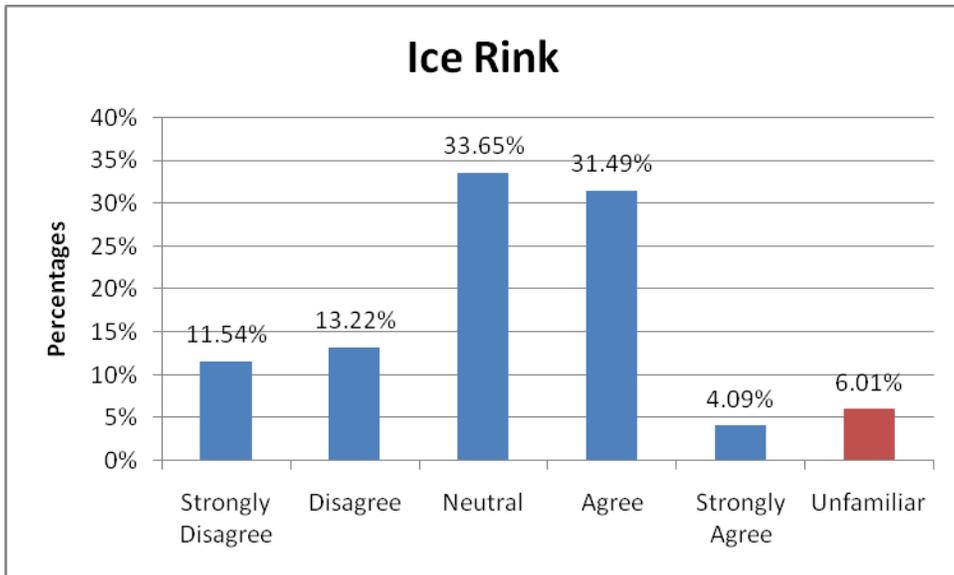


FIGURE 76: Interest in an Ice Rink

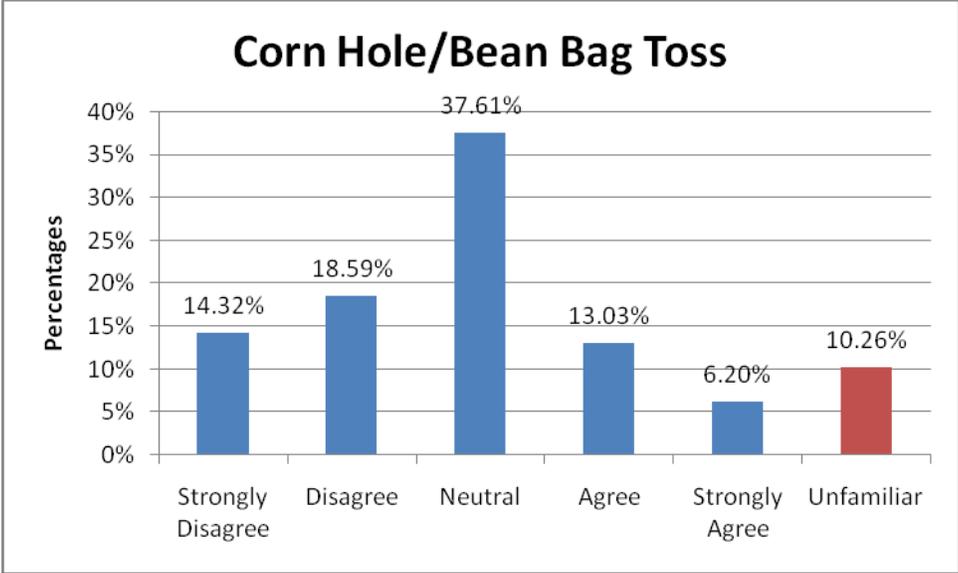


FIGURE 77: Interest in Corn Hole/Bean Bag Toss Games

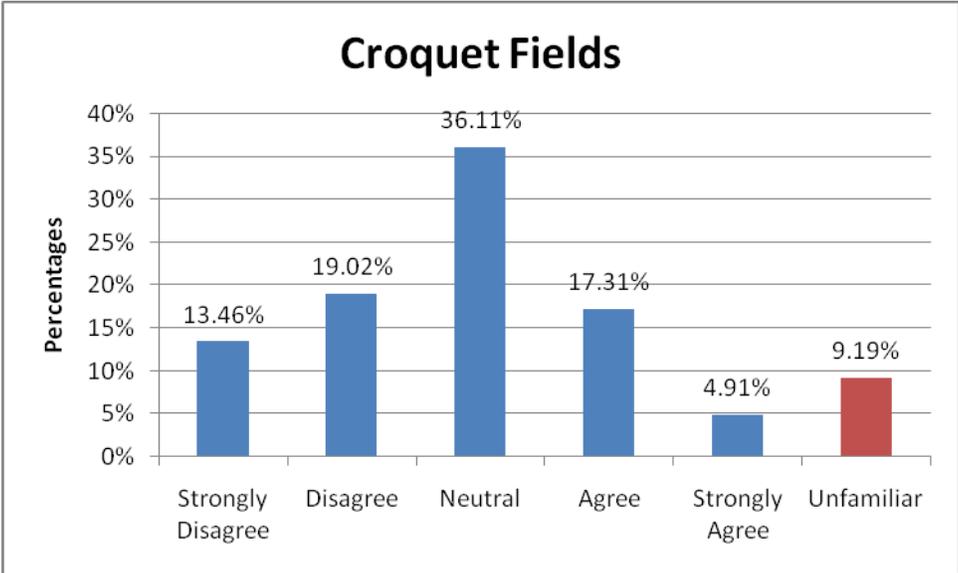


FIGURE 78: Interest in Croquet Fields

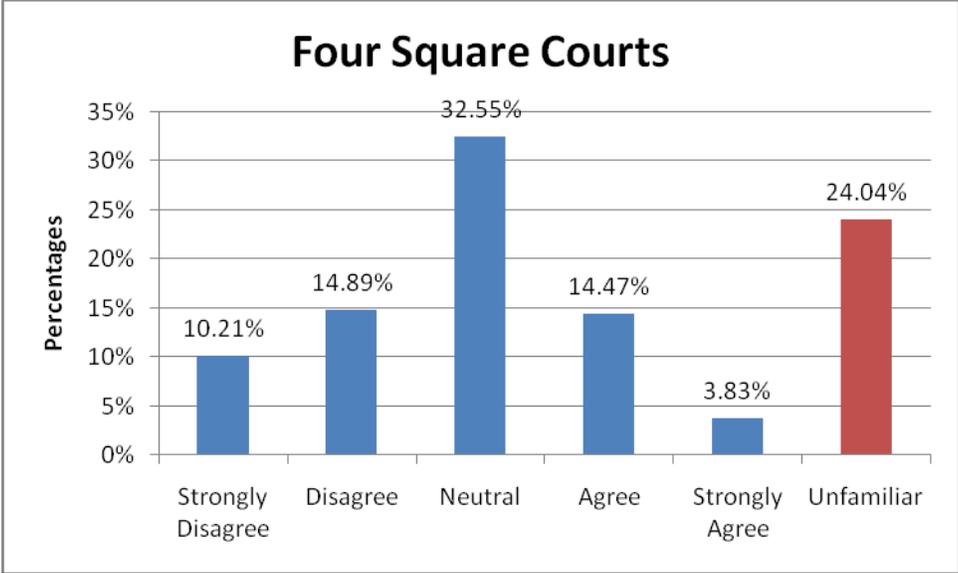


FIGURE 79: Interest in Four Square Courts

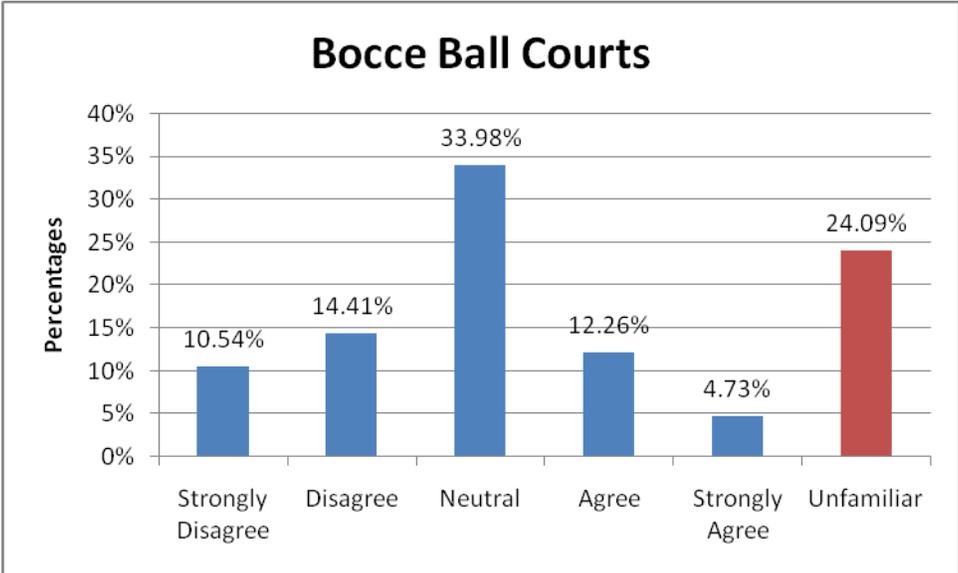


FIGURE 80: Interest in Bocce Ball Courts

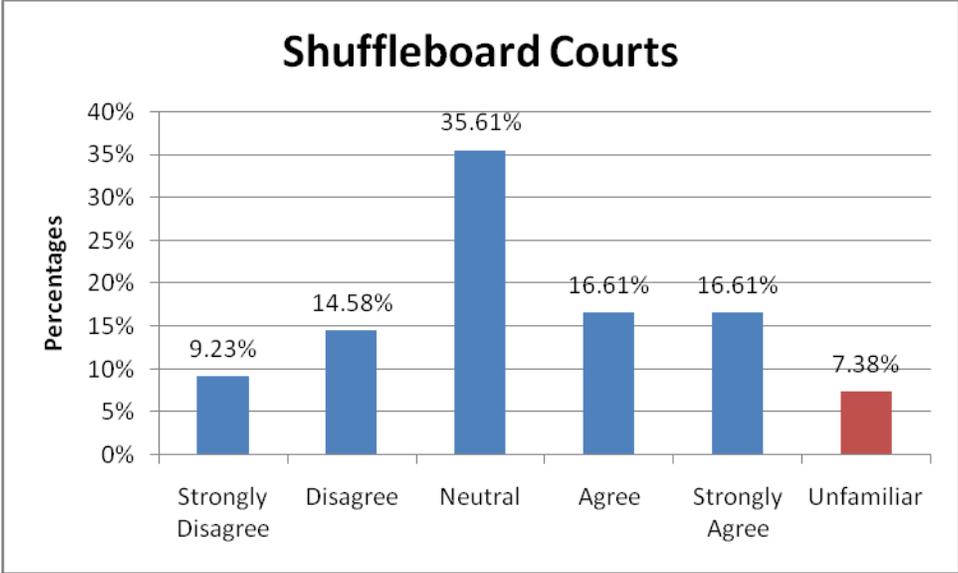


FIGURE 81: Interest in Shuffleboards Courts

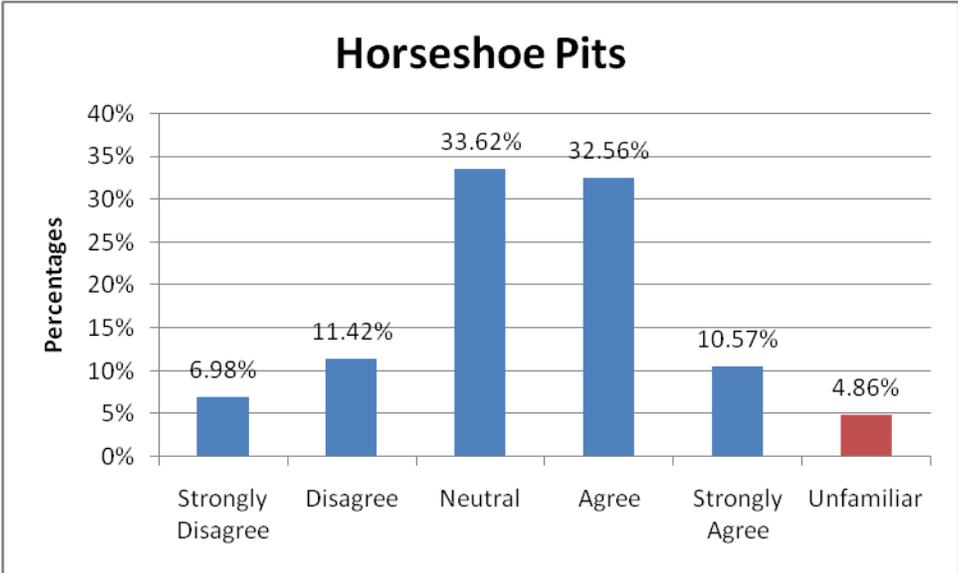


FIGURE 82: Interest in Horseshoe Pits

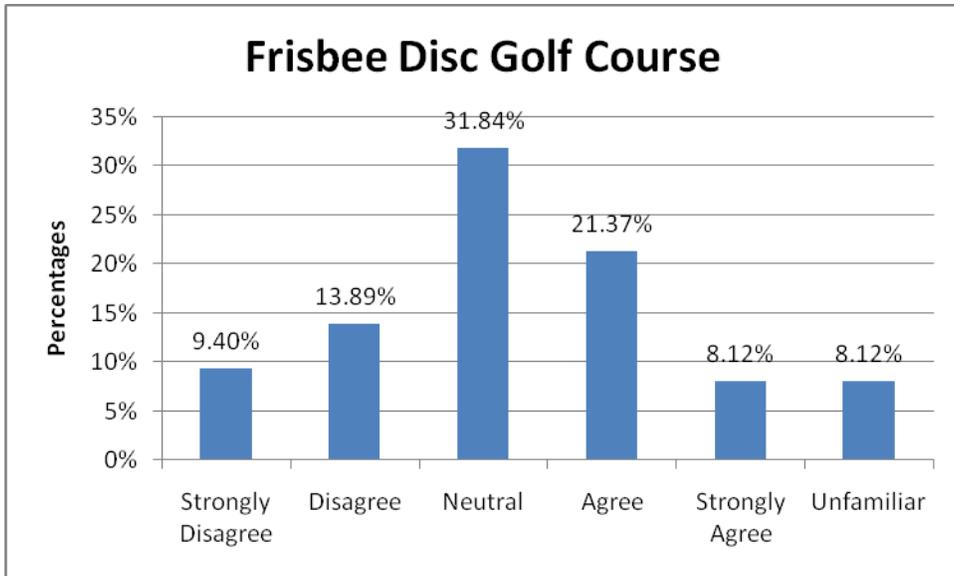


FIGURE 83: Interest in a Frisbee Disc Golf Course

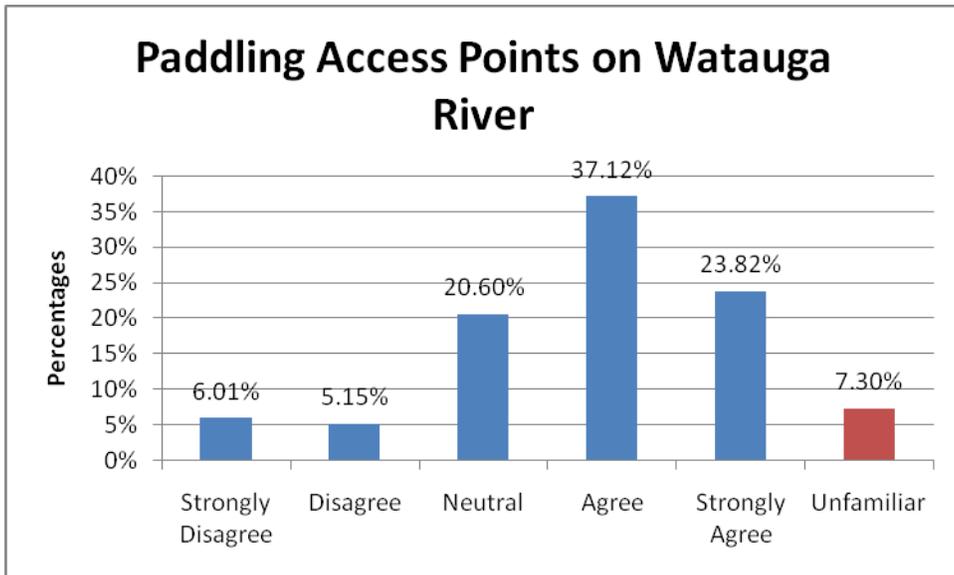


FIGURE 84: Interest in Paddling Access Points on Watauga River

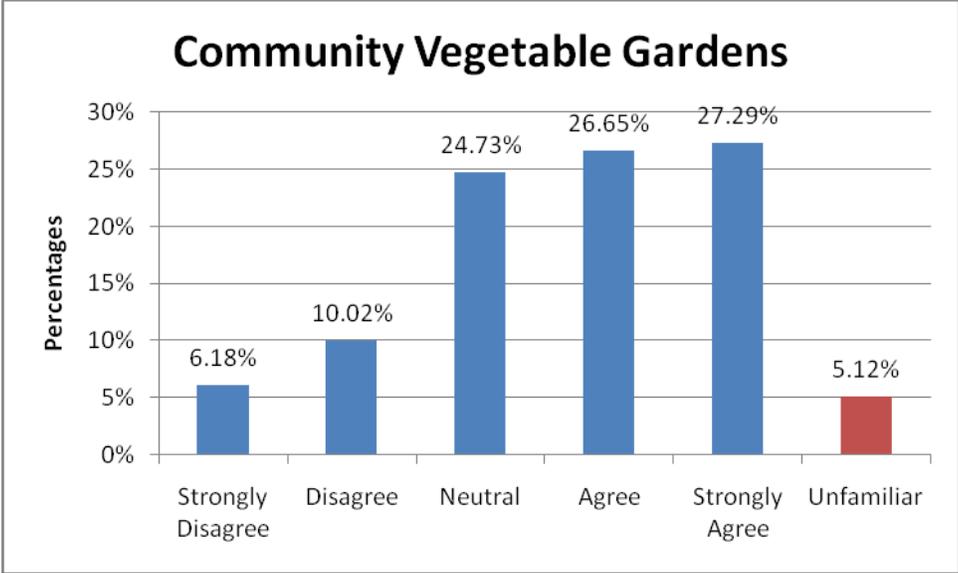


FIGURE 85: Interest in Community Vegetable Gardens

Top 5 Priorities	Town								
	Boone	Blowing Rock	Valle Crucis	Banner Elk	Todd	Deep Gap	Sugar Grove	Vilas	Zionville
Unpaved Hiking Trails	1	2		5	2				
Biking Trails	2				5	4	5		
Paved Walking Trails	3	4		2		5			5
Indoor Walking/ Jogging Track	4	5		4		1	2	1	1
Lights on Paved Walking Trails	5			1	1		4		3
Fitness Room/Weight Room		3		3			3	5	2
Shuffleboard Courts		1							
Picnic Shelters/Tables/Grills			1		4	3	1	3	4
Renovate Old Cove Creek Gym			3						
Paddling Access Pts on Watauga River			4		3		5		
Indoor Swimming Pool			5			2		2	
Indoor Multipurpose Courts								4	
Flower Gardens			2						
Day Care Center									4

TABLE 7: Top Five Priorities in Each Town

Figures 86-94 provide a breakdown of respondents' town answers to how likely they were to agree that each facility/amenity within the list of community/ facility priorities should be built in order to add to the existing facilities available in Watauga County.

Top five priorities of each Surveyed Town

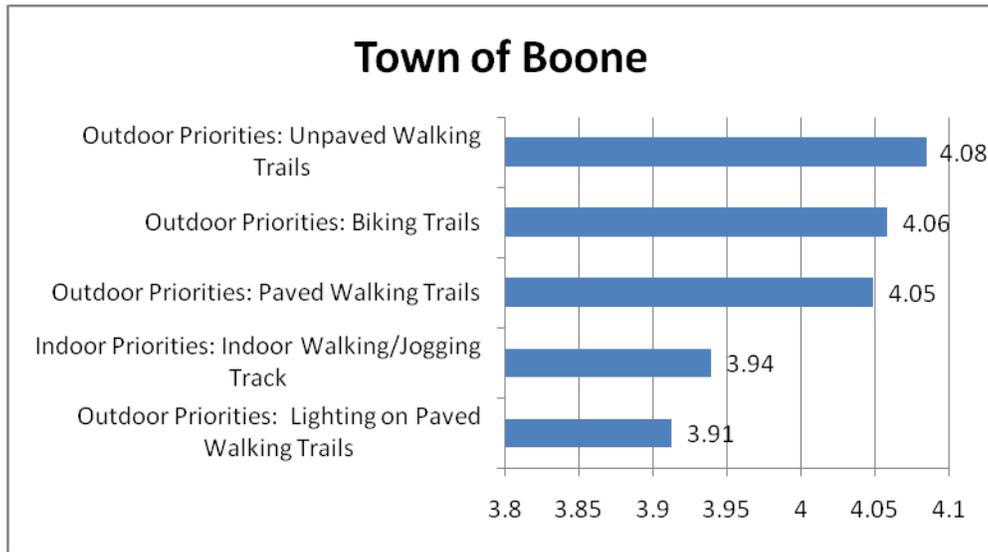


FIGURE 86: Top priorities in Boone

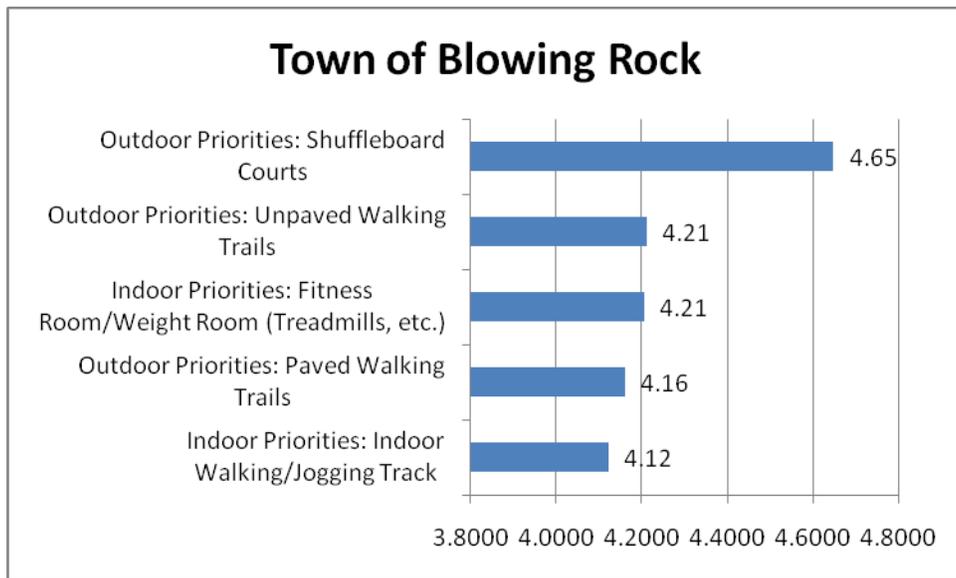


FIGURE 87: Top priorities in Blowing Rock

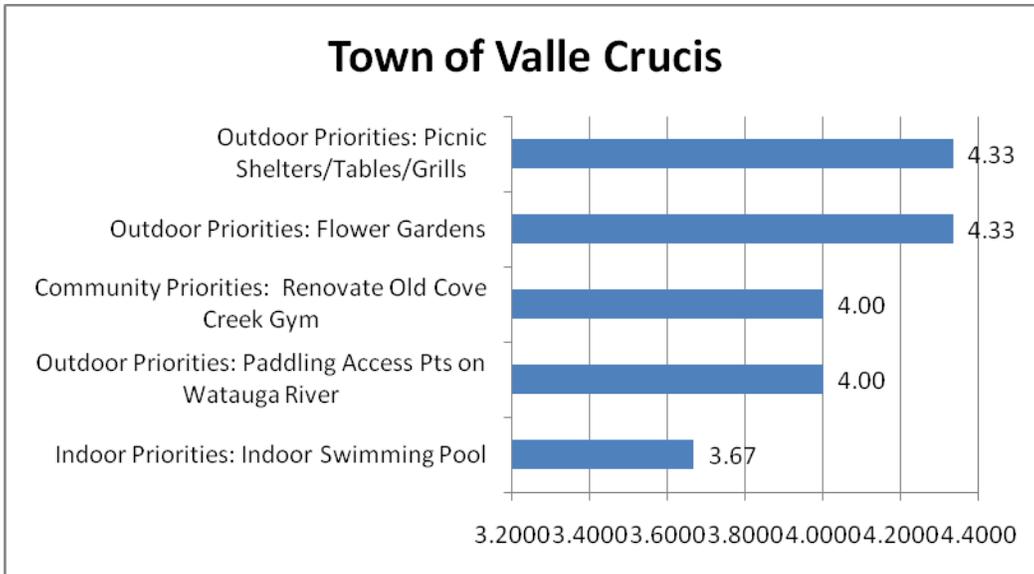


FIGURE 88: Top priorities in Valle Crucis

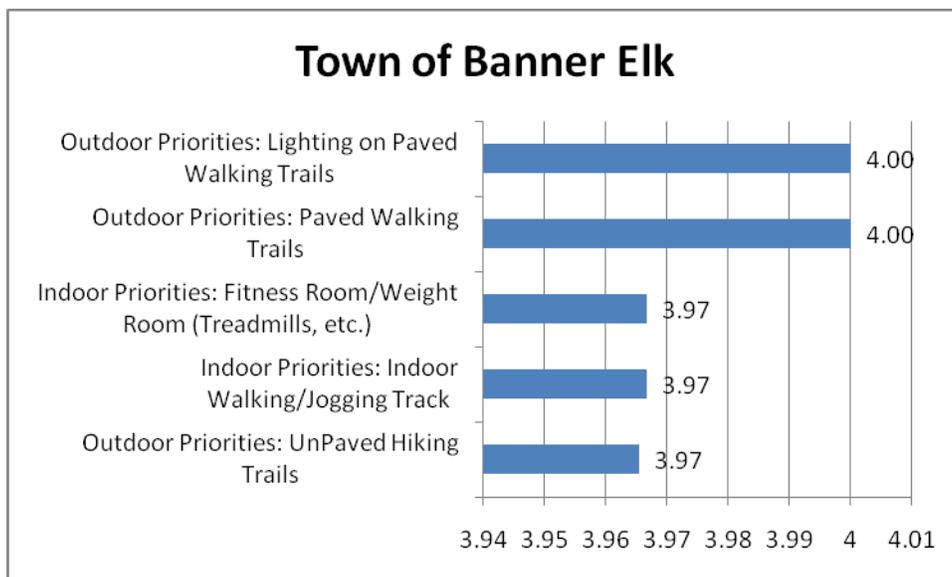


FIGURE 89: Top priorities in Banner Elk

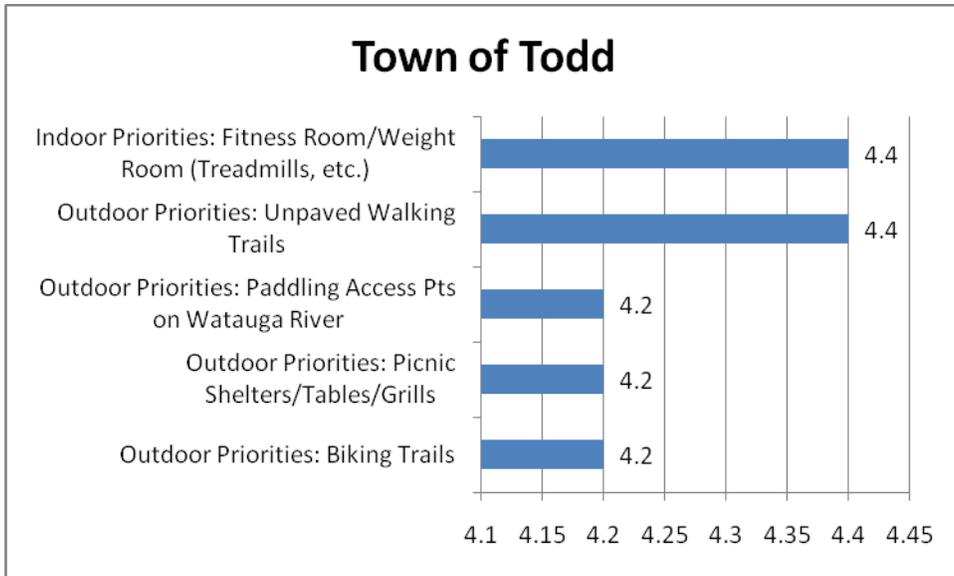


FIGURE 90: Top priorities in Todd

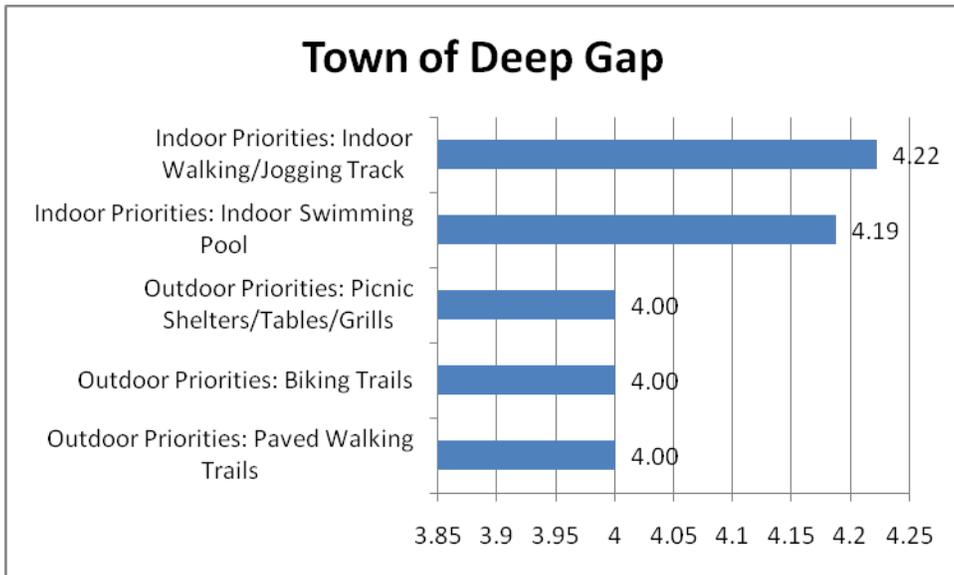


FIGURE 91: Top priorities in Deep Gap

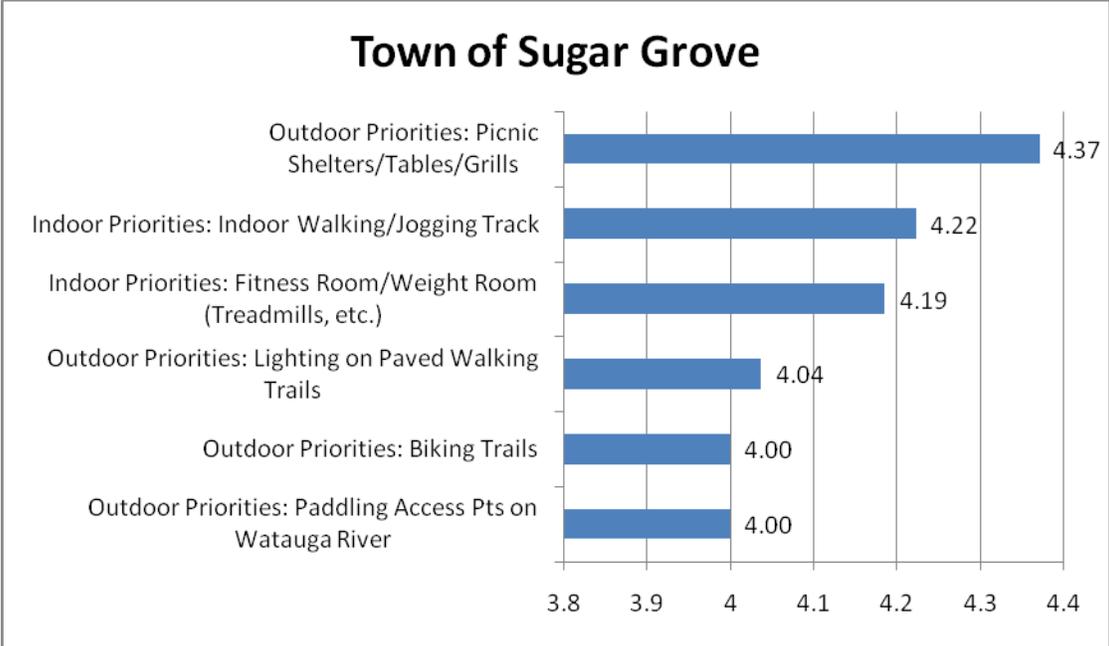


FIGURE 92: Top priorities in Sugar Grove

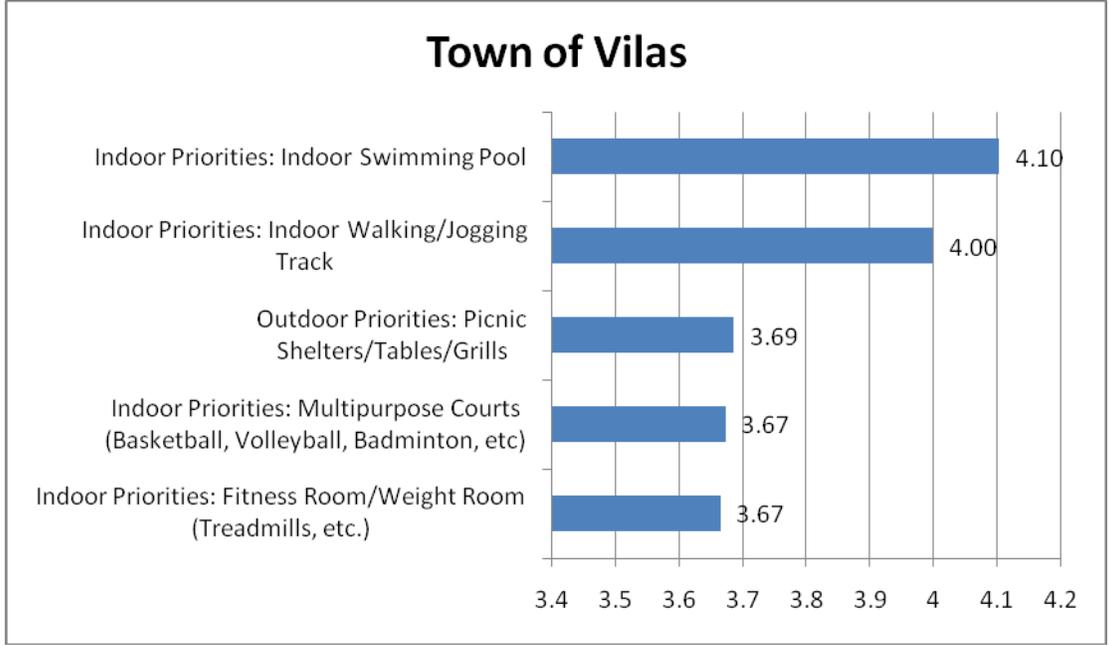


FIGURE 93: Top Priorities in Vilas

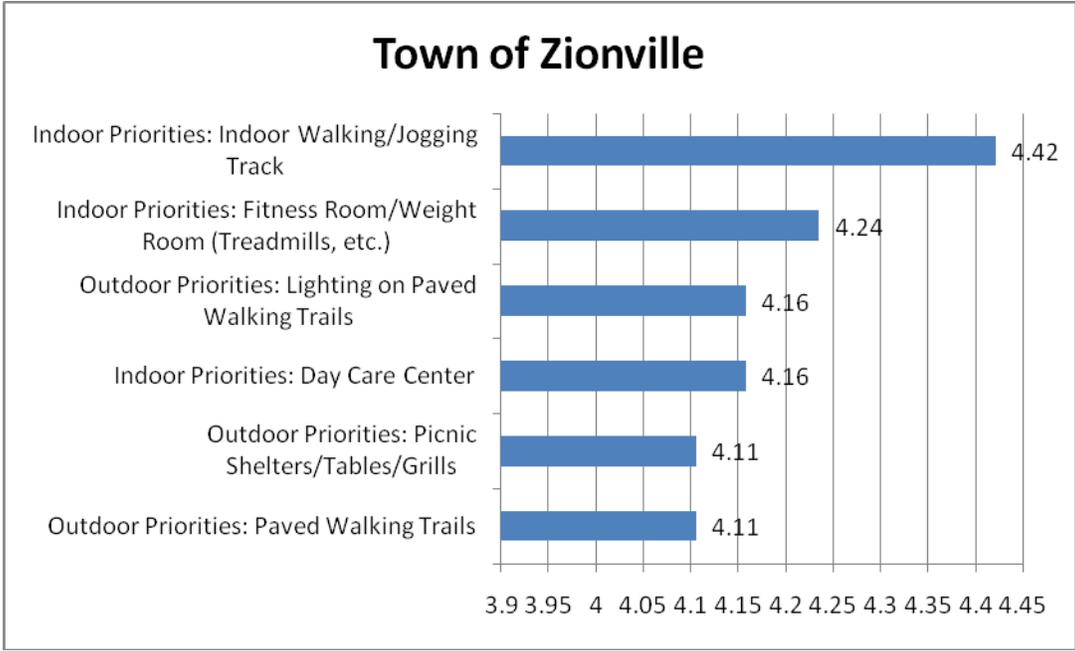


FIGURE 94: Top priorities in Zionville

Conclusions & Recommendations

Results from this needs assessment describe the facility priorities of Watauga County's residents. However, results should be used with caution and Watauga County is advised that the needs assessment would be best used to help develop a Parks and Recreation Master Plan for Watauga County. Additional considerations, such as current facilities available in the county (both public and private), access to funding for both facility development and operations and the equitable distribution of resources within the county, are necessary before resource allocation decisions are made. Although the survey was distributed randomly, it was not available in Spanish or any other language for that matter. In addition, to allow all Watauga County residents the opportunity to voice their opinions, general focus groups which invite the entire Watauga County population are recommended to supplement the information obtained in this needs assessment.

The first section of the survey asked residents to identify how supportive they were of the following capital improvements (Repair/update all parks & athletic fields, build a new indoor recreation center, extend existing and/or develop new paved trails, develop new parks & athletic fields, purchase land to preserve open space and protect it from future development, renovate Old Cove Creek Gym, Expand Brookshire Park, or Build a new aquatic facility). Given that respondents were more interested in Repair/update all parks & athletic fields, they were also interested in Expanding Brookshire Park and Extend existing and/or develop new paved trails. While slightly more respondents were interested in maintaining current facilities than building new ones, the consideration of facility age and whether facilities can be effectively maintained or improved should be addressed in the Master Plan.

The most popular facilities/amenities that residents would like to see built or added include an indoor walking track, fitness room, indoor multipurpose courts, and an indoor swimming pool. All of these amenities would require an indoor facility. These findings clearly suggest that one of the greatest needs for park and recreation facilities according to Watauga County residents is a new indoor recreation center. Most of the remaining top ten amenities desired (Picnic shelters, paved walking trails, unpaved hiking trails, biking trails, lights on walking trails, and paddling access points on Watauga River) are already available in Watauga County. Several of these options (trails for walking and hiking, paddling access points and a mountain biking area that would include biking trails) are already being proposed by the Watauga County Tourism Development Authority. In addition, the Greenway is currently operated by the Town of Boone, not the Watauga County Parks & Recreation Department. For these reasons, the Watauga County Parks and Recreation Department should focus on providing an indoor recreation facility. Given the high interest in additional walking trails, however, the County might also consider two options. The first would be to develop additional trails in parts of the County outside of Boone. The second would be to partner with the Town of Boone to provide lighting along the greenway. The .4 mile loop of the Greenway that can be easily accessed from Deerfield Road is recommended as the most obvious place to light as access to electricity seems likely given the commercial real estate nearby and because the area is not near very many residential homes lighting the area would have a minimal impact on nearby residents. While residents indicated they would like to see additional picnic shelters, ones have recently been constructed behind the new softball fields at the Watauga Sports Complex. In addition, several picnic shelters are available throughout the county. However, if funding exists, additional shelters should be considered to meet public interests.

Respondent choices were also separated based on their town of residence. Those in Boone were most interested in walking and biking trail development, including lighting. Because the Town of Boone is responsible for the Greenway, Watauga County should be most interested in providing residents with an indoor walking/jogging track. Blowing Rock residents were most interested in shuffleboard courts, unpaved walking trails, an indoor fitness room, paved walking trails and an indoor track. Shuffleboard courts are a very inexpensive facility and should therefore be the first priority of the department. Blowing Rock residents also appear to support the building of an indoor recreation center.

Valle Crucis residents were most interested in picnic shelters/tables/grills, flower gardens, renovating Old Cove Creek Gym, providing paddling access on Watauga River and an indoor swimming pool. The first two options were relatively higher in interest and given the lower cost of these provisions, they seem like a reasonable way to meet resident interests. However, the Valle Crucis Park is not operated by Watauga County Parks and Recreation Department so these suggestions should be passed onto the Valle Crucis Park Advisory Board and again, Watauga County should consider partnering with this entity to enhance resident satisfaction. Banner Elk residents were most supportive of spending on lighting paved walking trails and providing paved walking trails, biking trails an indoor track and an indoor weight room. Although Banner Elk residents have access to the Buckeye Recreation Center, they are either dissatisfied with the fitness and walking facilities there or would like to see additional facilities built. Other possibilities for these results may be that the Banner Elk residents are unaware of the existence of the Buckeye Recreation Center, are unhappy with the hours of the facility or would like a variety of weight equipment and a more developed indoor track, as opposed to having to walk around the perimeter of basketball courts.

The mean scores for each priority were used to determine the top five priorities in each town within Watauga County (Boone, Blowing Rock, Valle Crucis, Banner Elk, Todd, Deep Gap, Sugar Grove, Vilas and Zionville). The following were the top five priorities for respondents within each town:

- Town of Boone: Unpaved Walking Trails, Biking Trials, Paved Walking Trials, Indoor Walking/Jogging Track, and Lighting on Paved Walking Trials
- Town of Blowing Rock: Shuffleboard Courts, Unpaved Walking Trails, Fitness Room/Weight Room, Paved Walking Trials, Indoor Walking/Jogging Track
- Town of Valle Crucis: Picnic Shelters/Tables/Grills, Flower Gardens, Renovate Old Cove Creek Gym, Paddling Access Points on Watauga River, and an Indoor Swimming Pool
- Town of Banner Elk: Lighting on Paved Walking Trials, Paved Walking Trials, Fitness Room/Weight Room, Indoor Walking/Jogging Track, and Unpaved Hiking Trails
- Town of Todd: Fitness Room/Weight Room, Unpaved Walking Trails, Paddling Access Pts on Watauga River, Picnic Shelters/Tables/Grills, and Biking Trials

- Town of Deep Gap: Indoor Walking/Jogging Track, Indoor Swimming Pool, Picnic Shelters/Tables/Grills, Biking Trials, and Paved Walking Trials
- Town of Sugar Grove: Picnic Shelters/Tables/Grills, Indoor Walking/Jogging Track, Fitness Room/Weight Room, Lighting on Paved Walking Trials, Biking Trials, Paddling Access Pts on Watauga River
- Town of Vilas: Indoor Swimming Pool, Indoor Walking/Jogging Track, Picnic Shelters/Tables/Grills, Indoor Multipurpose Courts, and Fitness Room/Weight Room
- Town of Zionville: Indoor Walking/Jogging Track, Fitness Room/Weight Room, Lighting on Paved Walking Trials, Day Care Center, Picnic Shelters/Tables/Grills, and Paved Walking Trials.

Analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests were run to determine if the facility priorities differed for respondents based on their town of residence. Town of residence served as the independent variable and the various facility priorities as the dependent variables. Results indicate that there were few differences between the priorities of respondents based on their town of residences. There were a few significant differences, however, and they included the following:

- Capital Improvement Priority - Renovating Old Cove Creek Gym: Sugar Grove town residents were more likely to consider Renovating Old Cove Creek Gym as a priority than Boone (mean = 3.44 vs. 2.80, $p = .001$).
- Unpaved Walking Trails: Boone residents were more likely to want unpaved walking trials than Vilas (mean = 4.08 vs. 3.36, $p = .000$). Blowing Rock residents were also more likely to want unpaved walking trials than Vilas (mean = 4.21 vs. 3.36, $p = .000$).
- Biking Trails: Boone residents were more likely to want Biking Trials than Vilas (mean = 4.05 vs. 3.36, $p = .013$).
- Sledding Hill: Boone residents were more likely to want a Sledding Hill than Vilas (mean = 3.69 vs. 2.80, $p = .001$).
- Disc Golf Course: Boone residents were more likely to want a Disc Golf Course than Vilas (mean = 3.36 vs. 2.72, $p = .031$).
- Paddling Access Points: Boone residents were more likely to want Paddling Access Points on the Watauga River than Vilas (mean = 3.83 vs. 3.26, $p = .033$).

Although the results indicate that residents are most likely to agree with the need to further develop walking opportunities in the county, readers should consider that walking is the most popular recreational activity in the US. The reason for this is that walking requires little in the way of skill, training, expertise, people (companions, teammates and/or opponents are not

required) or equipment. Providing walking facilities is therefore highly likely to be rated among the top choices by any recreation needs assessment.

Based on the comments provided in the open ended response sections of the survey, the Watauga County Parks and Recreation Department should address equity and cost through additional public forums in order to determine whether residents have strong opinions or concerns about them. Several residents voiced concerns about keeping costs reasonable, as well as contradictory opinions about whether there should be multiple facilities throughout the county to ensure equitable access or whether the Department should avoid duplicating amenities to instead be able to offer additional breadth in services.

APPENDIX A: PRE-TEST

INSERT: Watauga County
Parks & Rec Logo

WATAUGA COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION 2009 Facility Priority Survey

Watauga County is currently updating its master development plan for its park and recreation system. When completed, the plan would make recommendations for additional facilities and other services. The following questions are intended to identify residents' facility priorities.

Please identify how supportive you are of each of the following capital improvements.

Community Priorities	Very Unsupportive	Somewhat Unsupportive	Somewhat	Very Supportive	Not Sure
Repair/update all parks & athletic fields	1	2	3	4	5
Build a new indoor recreation center	1	2	3	4	5
Extend existing/develop new paved trails	1	2	3	4	5
Develop new parks & athletic fields	1	2	3	4	5
Purchase land to preserve open space and protect it from future development	1	2	3	4	5
Renovate Old Cove Creek Gym	1	2	3	4	5
Expand Brookshire Park	1	2	3	4	5
Build a new aquatic facility	1	2	3	4	5
Other:	1	2	3	4	5

Using the above list, please identify which capital improvement you think should be Watauga County's first priority: _____

Which of the above do you think should be Watauga County's first capital improvement priority? _____

Gender: Male Female **How many years have you lived in Watauga County?** _____

Ethnicity: African-American Caucasian/White Hispanic/Latino Other: _____

Number of children in home: _____ pre-school _____ elementary _____ high school

Your age: _____ **Ages and genders of other adults in home:** _____

Your residential status: Permanent Resident Seasonal Resident Student

Your housing type: House Apartment/Condo Other: _____

To help us ensure that we have received surveys from an economically diverse group of Watauga County residents, please indicate the approximate total gross annual income of your household:
\$ _____

For each of the following outdoor recreation facility types or amenities please indicate how strongly you agree that they should be built to add to the existing facilities available in Watauga County.

If you are unfamiliar with a particular facility type or amenity, please indicate “Unfamiliar.”

Outdoor Recreation Facility Priorities	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Un-familiar
Paved Walking Trails	1	2	3	4	5	6
Unpaved Hiking Trails	1	2	3	4	5	6
Biking Trails	1	2	3	4	5	6
Equestrian Trails	1	2	3	4	5	6
Lighting at the Boone Greenway	1	2	3	4	5	6
Playgrounds	1	2	3	4	5	6
Community Gardens	1	2	3	4	5	6
Flower Gardens	1	2	3	4	5	6
Concessions	1	2	3	4	5	6
Picnic Shelters	1	2	3	4	5	6
Picnic Tables	1	2	3	4	5	6
Outdoor Grills	1	2	3	4	5	6
Fishing Pond	1	2	3	4	5	6
Fishing Pier	1	2	3	4	5	6
Indoor Recreation Center	1	2	3	4	5	6
Swimming Pool	1	2	3	4	5	6
Sprayground/Water Spray Park	1	2	3	4	5	6
Dog Parks	1	2	3	4	5	6
Sledding Hill	1	2	3	4	5	6
Ice Rink	1	2	3	4	5	6
Corn Hole/Bean Bag Toss Games	1	2	3	4	5	6
Croquet Fields	1	2	3	4	5	6
Four Square Courts	1	2	3	4	5	6
Bocce Ball Courts	1	2	3	4	5	6
Shuffleboard Courts	1	2	3	4	5	6
Horseshoe Pits	1	2	3	4	5	6
Frisbee Disc Golf Course	1	2	3	4	5	6
Shuffleboard Courts	1	2	3	4	5	6

Please list any other outdoor recreation facilities you would like to see included in Watauga County:

For each of the following indoor recreation facility types or amenities please indicate how strongly you agree that they should be built to add to the existing facilities available in Watauga County.

If you are unfamiliar with a particular facility type or amenity, please indicate “Unfamiliar.”

Indoor Recreation Facility Priorities	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Un-familiar
Multipurpose Courts (Basketball, Volleyball, Badminton, etc...)	1	2	3	4	5	6
Indoor Walking/Jogging Track	1	2	3	4	5	6
Table Tennis (Ping-Pong)	1	2	3	4	5	6
Racquetball Courts	1	2	3	4	5	6
Game Room (Billiards, Foosball, etc...)	1	2	3	4	5	6
Boxing Equipment (Bags, Ring, etc...)	1	2	3	4	5	6
Fitness Room/Weight Room	1	2	3	4	5	6
Wrestling Room/Pads	1	2	3	4	5	6
Cardiovascular Equip. (Treadmills, etc)	1	2	3	4	5	6
Indoor Soccer Courts	1	2	3	4	5	6
Indoor Batting Cages	1	2	3	4	5	6
Indoor Tennis Courts	1	2	3	4	5	6
Climbing Wall	1	2	3	4	5	6
Community Meeting/Banquet Rooms	1	2	3	4	5	6
Kitchen/Cooking Classroom Space	1	2	3	4	5	6
Locker Rooms	1	2	3	4	5	6
Computer Lab	1	2	3	4	5	6
Day Care Center	1	2	3	4	5	6
Yoga/Aerobics/Dance Studio	1	2	3	4	5	6
Concessions/Juice and Snack Bar	1	2	3	4	5	6
Video Game Arcade (XRKade – exercise based video games; ex: DDR)	1	2	3	4	5	6
Theater/Lecture Hall	1	2	3	4	5	6
Art/Craft/Pottery Room	1	2	3	4	5	6

Please list any other indoor recreation facilities you would like to see included in Watauga County:

Please also indicate your needs for more accessible park and recreation facilities (be as specific as possible, attach an additional sheet if necessary):

For each of the following outdoor athletic facilities and amenities please indicate how strongly you agree that they should be built to add to the existing facilities available in Watauga County.

If you are unfamiliar with a particular facility or amenity, please indicate “Unfamiliar.”

Outdoor Sports Facility Priorities	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Un-familiar
Multipurpose Athletic Fields (football, soccer, lacrosse, ultimate Frisbee, etc)	1	2	3	4	5	6
Outdoor Basketball Courts	1	2	3	4	5	6
Baseball/Softball Complex	1	2	3	4	5	6
Additional Lighted Athletic Fields	1	2	3	4	5	6
Electronic Scoreboards	1	2	3	4	5	6
Outdoor Climbing Wall/Tower	1	2	3	4	5	6
Tennis Courts	1	2	3	4	5	6
Sand Volleyball Courts	1	2	3	4	5	6
Skate/Bike Park	1	2	3	4	5	6

Please list any other outdoor athletic facilities you would like to see included in Watauga County:

In addition to the funds necessary to build an indoor recreation center, funds would also be needed to cover its operating costs (utilities, maintenance and staff).

With the understanding that user fees could help offset the amount of tax dollars needed to support a new recreation center, how much do you agree with each of the following user fees:

How much do you agree with each of the following user fee policies:	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
All households should be charged to use the facility.	1	2	3	4	5
Youth should be charged to use the facility.	1	2	3	4	5
Adults participating in county sponsored athletic programs should be charged an additional fee to use the facility.	1	2	3	4	5
Low income households should be charged less to use the facility.	1	2	3	4	5
Non-residents should be charged a higher fee to use the facility.	1	2	3	4	5
Groups should be charged to use facility space for a private function.	1	2	3	4	5
Non-profit groups should be charged to use facility space for a related function.	1	2	3	4	5
An individual membership of \$20/month is reasonable.	1	2	3	4	5

An individual membership of \$10/month is reasonable.	1	2	3	4	5
A family membership of \$30/month is reasonable.	1	2	3	4	5
A family membership of \$20/month is reasonable.	1	2	3	4	5
Discounted family rates should be available.	1	2	3	4	5
Lower user fees should be charged to use the facility during non-peak times (such as M-F: 9-11a and 1-3p).	1	2	3	4	5

APPENDIX B: FINAL SURVEY INSTRUMENT



WATAUGA COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION 2009 Facility Priority Survey

Watauga County is currently updating its master development plan for its park and recreation system. When completed, the plan would make recommendations for additional facilities and other services. The following questions are intended to identify residents' facility priorities.

Please identify how supportive you are of each of the following capital improvements:

Community Priorities	Very Unsupportive	Somewhat Unsupportive	Somewhat	Very Supportive	Not Supportive
A. Repair/update all parks & athletic fields	1	2	3	4	5
B. Build a new indoor recreation center	1	2	3	4	5
C. Extend existing and/or develop new paved trails	1	2	3	4	5
D. Develop new parks & athletic fields	1	2	3	4	5
E. Purchase land to preserve open space and protect it from future development	1	2	3	4	5
F. Renovate Old Cove Creek Gym	1	2	3	4	5
G. Expand Brookshire Park	1	2	3	4	5
H. Build a new aquatic facility	1	2	3	4	5
I. Other (please identify):	1	2	3	4	5

Which of the above do you think should be Watauga County's first capital improvement priority? _____

Gender: Male Female **How many years have you lived in Watauga County?** _____

Ethnicity: African-American Caucasian/White Hispanic/Latino Other: _____

Number of children in home: _____ pre-school _____ elementary _____ high school

Your age: _____ **Ages and genders of other adults in home:** _____

Your residential status: Permanent Resident Seasonal Resident Student

Your housing type: House Apartment/Condo Other: _____

To help us ensure that we have received surveys from an economically diverse group of Watauga County residents, please indicate the approximate total gross annual income of your household:
\$ _____

For each of the following indoor recreation facility types or amenities please indicate how strongly you agree that they should be built to add to the existing facilities available in Watauga County.

If you are unfamiliar with a particular facility type or amenity, please indicate “Unfamiliar.”

Indoor Recreation Facility Priorities	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Un-familiar
Multipurpose Courts (Basketball, Volleyball, Badminton, etc...)	1	2	3	4	5	6
Indoor Walking/Jogging Track	1	2	3	4	5	6
Table Tennis (Ping-Pong)	1	2	3	4	5	6
Racquetball Courts	1	2	3	4	5	6
Game Room (Billiards, Foosball, etc...)	1	2	3	4	5	6
Boxing Equipment (Bags, Ring, etc...)	1	2	3	4	5	6
Fitness Room/Weight Room (Weight Machines, Ellipticals, Treadmills, etc...)	1	2	3	4	5	6
Wrestling Room/Pads	1	2	3	4	5	6
Indoor Batting Cages/Pitching Area	1	2	3	4	5	6
Indoor Soccer Courts	1	2	3	4	5	6
Indoor Turf Area (Soccer, Baseball, Softball)	1	2	3	4	5	6
Indoor Swimming Pool	1	2	3	4	5	6
Indoor Climbing Wall	1	2	3	4	5	6
Community Meeting/Banquet Rooms	1	2	3	4	5	6
Kitchen/Cooking Classroom Space	1	2	3	4	5	6
Computer Lab	1	2	3	4	5	6
Day Care Center	1	2	3	4	5	6
Yoga/Aerobics/Dance Studio	1	2	3	4	5	6
Concessions/Juice and Snack Bar	1	2	3	4	5	6
Video Game Arcade (XRKade – exercise based video games; ex: DDR)	1	2	3	4	5	6
Theater/Lecture Hall	1	2	3	4	5	6
Art/Craft/Pottery Room	1	2	3	4	5	6

Please list any other indoor recreation facilities you would like to see included in Watauga County:

Please also indicate your needs for more accessible park and recreation facilities (be as specific as possible, attach an additional sheet if necessary): _____

In addition to the funds necessary to build an indoor recreation center, funds would also be needed to cover its operating costs (utilities, maintenance and staff).

With the understanding that user fees could help offset the amount of tax dollars needed to support a new recreation center, how much do you agree with each of the following user fees:

How much do you agree with each of the following user fee policies:	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
Everyone should be charged to use the facility.	1	2	3	4	5
Youth should be charged to use the facility.	1	2	3	4	5
Adults participating in county sponsored athletic programs should be charged an additional fee to use the facility.	1	2	3	4	5
Low income households should be charged less (on a sliding scale) to use the facility.	1	2	3	4	5
Non-residents should be charged a higher fee to use the facility.	1	2	3	4	5
An individual membership of \$20/month is reasonable.	1	2	3	4	5
An individual membership of \$10/month is reasonable.	1	2	3	4	5
A family membership of \$30/month is reasonable.	1	2	3	4	5
A family membership of \$20/month is reasonable.	1	2	3	4	5
Discounted family rates should be available.	1	2	3	4	5
Lower user fees should be charged to use facility during non-peak times (M-F: 9-11a or 1-3p).	1	2	3	4	5

For each of the following outdoor athletic facilities and amenities please indicate how strongly you agree that they should be built to add to the existing facilities available in Watauga County.

If you are unfamiliar with a particular facility or amenity, please indicate "Unfamiliar."

Outdoor Sports Facility Priorities	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Un-familiar
Lighted Multipurpose Athletic Fields (football, soccer, lacrosse, ultimate, etc)	1	2	3	4	5	6
Outdoor Basketball Courts	1	2	3	4	5	6
Baseball/Softball Complex	1	2	3	4	5	6
Outdoor Climbing Wall/Tower	1	2	3	4	5	6
Tennis Courts	1	2	3	4	5	6
Sand Volleyball Courts	1	2	3	4	5	6

Please list any other outdoor athletic facilities you would like to see included in Watauga County:

For each of the following outdoor recreation facility types or amenities please indicate how strongly you agree that they should be built to add to the existing facilities available in Watauga County.

If you are unfamiliar with a particular facility type or amenity, please indicate “Unfamiliar.”

Outdoor Recreation Facility Priorities	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Un-familiar
Paved Walking Trails	1	2	3	4	5	6
Unpaved Hiking Trails	1	2	3	4	5	6
Biking Trails	1	2	3	4	5	6
Equestrian Trails	1	2	3	4	5	6
Mountain Biking Trails	1	2	3	4	5	6
Lighting on Paved Walking Trails	1	2	3	4	5	6
Skate Park/Rollerblading Facility	1	2	3	4	5	6
BMX Park	1	2	3	4	5	6
Flower Gardens	1	2	3	4	5	6
Concessions	1	2	3	4	5	6
Picnic Shelters/Tables/Grills	1	2	3	4	5	6
Fishing Pond/Fishing Pier	1	2	3	4	5	6
Outdoor Swimming Pool	1	2	3	4	5	6
Sprayground/Water Spray Park	1	2	3	4	5	6
Sledding Hill	1	2	3	4	5	6
Ice Rink	1	2	3	4	5	6
Corn Hole/Bean Bag Toss Games	1	2	3	4	5	6
Croquet Fields	1	2	3	4	5	6
Four Square Courts	1	2	3	4	5	6
Bocce Ball Courts	1	2	3	4	5	6
Shuffleboard Courts	1	2	3	4	5	6
Horseshoe Pits	1	2	3	4	5	6
Frisbee Disc Golf Course	1	2	3	4	5	6
Paddling Access Pts on Watauga River	1	2	3	4	5	6
Community Vegetable Gardens (space available to rent for personal gardens)	1	2	3	4	5	6

Please list any other outdoor recreation facilities you would like to see included in Watauga County:

Thank you for your time!

Please return the survey in the enclosed envelope or send it to:

Watauga County Parks & Recreation • 231 Complex Drive • Boone, NC 28607 • 828.264.9511

APPENDIX C: FIRST COVER LETTER

October 20, 2009

Dear FirstName LastName,

Watauga County Parks and Recreation is currently developing a multi-year long range plan for future development of services and facilities. The department is currently in the process of preparing a parks and recreation master plan for Watauga County and is planning to submit a park and recreation grant available from the North Carolina Parks and Recreation Trust Fund that would assist in building new facilities. It is the goal and hope of the department to develop our facilities according to the wishes of our citizens, and your help with the planning process is now needed.

In an effort to be responsive to the current needs and desires of our citizens, Watauga County Parks and Recreation has enclosed a questionnaire designed to help us identify your priorities while planning future departmental investments in facilities, services and programs. How strongly you agree or disagree with each of the listed facility or program options will allow the department to develop its long range plan.

You are one of a relatively small number of people who have been selected by a scientific sampling procedure to receive this questionnaire. For the results to be a valid representation of the views of county residents, it is most important that the questionnaire be completed and returned. The survey should be filled out by someone in your home who is 18 years of age or older. By returning your questionnaire, you are agreeing to participate in this study. The responses of all respondents will be kept confidential and your household will not be personally identified in any way within the results.

The questionnaire will take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete. A self addressed postage-paid return envelope is enclosed for your convenience. The sooner you are able to return the survey, the more money and paper can be saved by reducing the number of follow-up reminders and additional surveys that need to be sent. The results will be analyzed by Dr. Stephanie West of Appalachian State University's Department of Health, Leisure & Exercise Science and made available to all residents on the Watauga County Parks and Recreation Department website.

If you have any questions about the study, feel free to contact Dr. West at 828-262-6328 or the ASU Institutional Review Board at 828-262-7981. Thank you for your assistance with this project!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S Poulos', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Stephen Poulos
Director, Watauga County Parks & Recreation

APPENDIX D: FOLLOW UP POSTCARD

October 30, 2009

Dear Watauga County Resident,

A questionnaire was recently mailed to you seeking your opinions about your recreation facility priorities. You are one of a small number of people who were randomly chosen to receive the questionnaire.

For the results to be a valid representation of the views of county residents, it is very important that you complete and return it. If you have already done so, please accept our sincere thanks. If not, please call 828-262-6328 or email westst@appstate.edu to request a recent copy of the survey.

We appreciate your help because it is only by asking people like you for your opinions that we can understand and respond to the needs and desires of county residents. Thank you again for your assistance.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'SAP', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Stephen Poulos
Watauga County Parks & Recreation

APPENDIX E: SECOND COVER LETTER

November 6, 2009

Dear FirstName LastName,

About two weeks ago, a questionnaire was sent to you inquiring about your opinions regarding your facility priorities for Watauga County Parks and Recreation. Once all of the questionnaires are returned, we think that the results will be very useful in improving our service to Watauga County residents.

We are writing again because of the importance that your questionnaire has for helping to get accurate results. You are one of a relatively small number of people who have been selected by a scientific sampling procedure to receive this questionnaire. In order for the results to be representative of the views of county residents, it is very important that the questionnaire be completed and returned by those who receive it.

A questionnaire identification number is printed on the back of each questionnaire so that we can check your name off of the mailing list when it is returned. Please be assured that the responses of all respondents will be kept confidential and grouped together so that, at no time, will your answers ever be personally identified with you.

The questionnaire will take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete. A reply-paid envelope addressed to the Health, Leisure & Exercise Science Department is enclosed for your convenience. The results are being analyzed free of charge by Dr. Stephanie West from Appalachian State University and will be used to guide our planning decisions in the development of a \$500,000 grant for Watauga County.

We hope that you will fill out and return the questionnaire soon. If you have already done so, please accept our sincere thanks. If you have any questions about the study, feel free to contact Dr. West at 828-262-6328 or the ASU Institutional Review Board at 828-262-7981.

Thank you for your assistance with this project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S Poulos', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Stephen Poulos
Director, Watauga County Parks & Recreation

APPENDIX F: OPEN-ENDED COMMENTS FROM SURVEY

Watauga County Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment
Comments from Respondents

Community members were offered the chance to add additional comments to the end of each survey section. The following concerns were expressed by multiple members of Watauga County and should be taken into consideration while developing a master plan.

Other First Priorities:

- Skate Park
- YMCA
- Bike Trails
- Paintball
- Boys & Girls Club
- Frisbee Golf
- Indoor climbing gym

Indoor Facilities

- Community center
- Dog Park/Pet Friendly (Inside and Out)
- Senior Games & Activities
- Facilities for social dance like contra, clogging and ballroom dance
- Sauna/Steam Room/Hot Tub
- Pool should be salt water (no chemicals) and have a retractable roof.
- Many of the above overlap with already existing facilities at ASU. Rather than spend tax \$ to duplicate existing space a partnership between the county and university would be better.
- Senior exercising programs
- After School Programs
- Gun & Archery Range
- Swimming pool in west end of county, Complex pool is pitiful. Outdoor pools in Boone and west end near TN.
- Walking Track (Indoor & Out)
- Indoor playground (tot lot)

- Indoor Tennis Courts

Outdoor Facilities

- Bike Lanes
- Paddle Boats, Canoe Rentals
- Sand Volleyball
- Mtn. bike trails/park
- Lights on all outdoor Parks & Recreation and at schools.
- Use of equipment (balls, rackets) for use by the greenway similar to check out system at Blowing Rock Park.
- More between Boone and Blowing Rock.
- Greenway connection from end by Wal-Mart along roadway to Baptist church into downtown.
 - o Extend Greenway biking into downtown.
- Outdoor pool in green valley area.
- Outdoor pool in Boone
- Crosswalks on 321 and 421
- Well lit parking
- Family place for music and dancing
- Outdoor Swimming pool
- Swim & Weight Classes
- Campgrounds; shelter that could be used to teach outdoor skills, flora & fauna identification, herb usage, campfire cooking etc.
- Tennis courts indoor without exorbitant cost to play or join club.
- Lacrosse
- Better maintenance of existing facilities
- Play boat Park
- Paved Bicycle trails
- Extend greenway path to blowing rock
- Swim Lessons
- ATV Area

- Restrooms on Greenway
- Large and Small Playgrounds (Divided by a fence)
- More running trails on the greenway.
- Golf Programs for Youth
- Archery
- Cross Country Skiing
- Squash Courts
- Adult Sized Playground
- Kite Flying Field
- Golf Course

Accessibility:

- Make pool accessible
- Accessible Trails
- Bus access for youth to facilities

Other:

- Make locations in throughout the county so people can travel equal distance from one to another.
- Fix the roads
- Need more Parking
- No skate park.
- Close down Parks & Recreations and cut taxes!
- Crosswalks on 321 & 421
- Livestock shows/Rodeos
- Lower gas prices and see more facilities in the rural areas of the county.
- Easy safe non automobile access to parks.
- Do not raise property Taxes!
- Fix Old Cove Creek!
- Let concessions be used by local schools in order to raise money for their school/field trips.
- Affordable Centers
- Complete Greenway all the way to ASU with safe crossing over Blowing Rock Road.

- Paint existing buildings
- Reduce the fee for senior Bowling

Public Input Documentation

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Watauga County Parks & Recreation Announces Three Master Planning Community Meetings

Boone, North Carolina (Tuesday, November 24, 2009) Watauga County Parks and Recreation will hold three community meetings to discuss residents needs and desires for future improvements and additions to the community recreation provisions in Watauga County, NC. The meetings will take place on the following dates:

Wednesday, December 2, 2009, 7pm: Valle Crucis Elementary School Cafeteria

Monday, December 14, 2009, 7pm: Parkway Elementary School Gym

Thursday, December 17, 2009, 7pm: Hardin Park Elementary School Gym

These community meetings are an opportunity for all residents to provide public input. The information gathered from these meetings will be used to supplement that obtained from a recently mailed needs assessment conducted by Appalachian State University. This public input will help guide the recommendations that will be included in the 2020 Watauga County Parks & Recreation Master Plan. The High Country Council of Governments is currently in the process of developing this 10-year master plan on behalf of the Watauga County Parks & Recreation Department. The plan is comprehensive, and will address most aspects of the County's program and facilities. In addition, the master plan will make recommendations regarding new recreation facilities, upgrades needed on existing facilities, and other recreation-related issues.

For more information about the Master Plan, the community meetings, or to obtain directions to the meetings, please contact Stephen Poulos, Director of Parks and Recreation at 828-264-9511 or by email: stephen.poulos@ncmail.net.

FOR RELEASE TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 24, 2009

Watauga County Parks and Recreation Master Plan

Input Received

- 1) Wednesday, December 2, 2009
7-8:30pm
Valle Crucis Elementary School Cafeteria
Attendance: 16
- 2) Monday, December 14, 2009
7-8:30pm
Parkway Elementary School Gym
Attendance: 19
- 3) Thursday, December 17, 2009
7-8:30pm
Hardin Park Elementary School Gym
Attendance: 24

Valle Crucis; 12/2/09 Comments

- Facilities need updating like Watauga High School – lots of towns have updated facilities and we are lacking.
- Pool definitely needs updating.
- We have only what we need to get by.
- Indoor complex (many agreed) – that combine many of these things with basketball, pool, fields, fitness or wellness classes, family friendly, for individuals, track.
- Community members use private gyms, greenways, and University only if you have connections. No where to work-out.
- Need new facility with the following requirements:
 - Ideally in Boone – central location
 - Near high school
 - Membership driven (but affordable)
 - Shared with community and students
 - No pool close by where diving is allowed
 - Facility to allow gen. wellness and give kids a place to exercise during winter
 - Youth programs
 - Need feeder program for competitive sports, but also need alternative sports for kids who don't make team, intramurals
 - Large homeschooled community not allowed to play on teams at schools
 - General philosophical issue with competition vs. recreation;
 - In this community, if your child wants to be involved with comp, you need to be willing to drive a lot which limits many.
- Need new pool with following requirements:
 - Water aerobics/aquacize pool
 - Meet water temperature requirements
 - Accommodate various clientele (aging)

- Zero level entry
 - Lift/lower capability
 - Under water bars
 - Audio speakers for instructors
 - Deck space
 - Pool deck non-slip surface
- Locker Rooms
 - Semi-private shower stalls
 - Non-slip surface
 - Handicap accessible shower stall
 - Changing areas/tables/accessories
- Competition/Lap Pool
 - Meet USA swimming requirements
 - Permanent time locks
 - Storage for equipment
 - Diving blocks
 - Ability to hold meets
- Now, we devise programs around facilities we have – ball leagues run out of churches and are limited. Another 6th grade league can only play 6 weeks at a time because boys and girls have to learn. Then, they get to 7th grade to try out for team and they aren't developed enough. Don't have opportunity to develop and be competitive and then they hit high school and don't even compare. Nowhere for year round ball. Using same fields for football, soccer and baseball.
- With better facility, we can achieve offering more venues, build on every program, best way to raise our children. Also, facility would be central and we could host tournaments and bring in money.
- Big pic = creating community where wellness is important. Everyone needs opportunity to find something that they enjoy that is good for them.
- Have large range of ability and enthusiasm within kids. Some kids are better for team based on skill and could hurt other kids and prevent growth; other kids on same team could use some instructions
- Need family friendly center:
 - Younger children to have opportunity to have indoor active playtime. 5-6 year olds go shoot hoops, 3-4 years old tumble, etc. Very lest – age appropriate child care. They have this at wellness center but it is young, too young for many kids.
 - Place where teens could go hang out.
 - Smaller town than Boone (Pinedale, Wyoming) had most amazing indoor complex – waterslide, pool, climbing wall, racquetball, volleyball, board games.
- Fields – considering going after grants for physical fitness in schools? Need upgrading badly.
- Spend more to start with, saves money in long run.
- County is totally diverse and it's difficult for some people to get their kids to and from. We are challenged to have "central" location.
- Disc golf course; fun, outdoorsy, any ages, not too expensive, easy to maintain.
- most people see Boone as central, most agree;
- Trail that gets us from Boone to Valle Crucis; more elaborate trail system.

- Take advantage of Watauga River – put in & take out points that are public.
- Brochure to let people know where to go.
- Watauga Co. TDA – to make best spot in E US for recreation (mtn biking, disc golf, donating land for canoes).
- NOWRC – start stoking rivers for more fishing.
- Ted Mackrel Complex – issue with kids playing at TMC & Brookshire, & 50 ft there is river and curves which is SO DANGEROUS – no way to get from TMC to Brookshire – should almost be one complex. Most complexes have lots of siblings hanging out during games and there are no playgrounds for them to play while waiting.

Parkway Elementary; 12/14/09 Comments

- The County needs a community center to include the following:
 - Family gym
 - Swimming pool with diving and ability to have meets
 - Indoor track
 - Wellness/weight lifting
 - Kids play area
 - Picnic areas
 - Big screen TV/Conference Area
 - Dance Studio
 - Cooking Area/Kitchen
 - Kiln room
 - Concession for special events
 - Make sure necessary requirements are met for different sports (size, etc.)
 - Seating to watch events
 - Ability to bring in revenue and tourism to area.
- Expand park complex across river from Ted Mackrel soccer complex.
- BMX area
- Veleldrome
- Need additions:
 - Bocce ball
 - Shuffleboard courts
 - Dis golf course
 - Horseshoes pits
 - Restrooms at indoor/outdoor parks that are ADA accessible
 - Playground areas at ball fields
 - Better field maintenance at schools in outlying areas of counties
- Need connecting trails/greenways leading to locations where people need to go.
- Signage for greenways to help people get around.
- Better, more information signage for outdoor areas; branding area.
- Picnic shelters
- Programs Needed:
 - Athletic feeder programs
 - Web-site with updated information about leagues, weather, etc.
 - Intramural style leagues for kids
 - Referee certification

- Non athletic programs needed:
 - Summer camps
 - After school programs
 - Special needs programs
 - Dance programs
 - Arts & crafts
 - Leave No Trace educations
 - Martial arts/self-defense
 - Certifications programs (CPR, Lifeguard, babysitting, etc.)

Hardin Park; 12/17/09 Comments

- Need following:
 - Sand volleyball courts
 - Mountain bike trails
 - Skate park
 - Dog park
 - Pool
 - Diving blocks and depth
 - Steam pool; hot tub; sauna
 - Deck space
 - Salt water pool
 - Two pools; 1) lap, and 2) aquacize
 - Continuous heat
 - Extend greenway (across 105 & 421)
 - Outdoor pool
 - Water park/water play area
 - Water slide
 - Comprehensive facility for youth
 - Ball courts
 - Connect to greenways
 - Pool
 - Family activities
 - Multi-purpose courts/fields/rooms
 - Climbing wall
 - Synthetic playing fields outdoors
 - Connect greenways
 - Playgrounds/picnic area along greenway
 - Green space downtown
 - Bike lanes/paths
 - Sidewalks
 - Use SRC at University as a model for community center
 - Indoor cycling area
 - Need Community Center to include:
 - Weight room/wellness
 - Nicer park and recreation offices
 - Arts and crafts area
 - Play area for kids indoors

- Community theater area in gym (stage)
 - Ability to hold events/meets (economic return)
 - Concession area
 - Driving rang for baseball and golf
 - Batting cages
 - High/low ropes course
- Need more public fishing opportunities
- Disc golf course
- Tot lots next to swim are need better drainage and shade
- Pedestrian crossing at 105/421
- More signage and marking of trails
- Restrooms that open for use at fields/trails
- Valle Crucis school bathrooms
- Towel and soap to wash hands in restrooms
- Dog bag waste dispensers
- Bathrooms in swim complex for outside use
- Tear down old cove creek gym and replace
- Keep wood floors
- Need the following programs:
 - Swimming
 - Middle school volleyball
 - Arts programs for all ages
 - Spring/fall soccer
 - Mountain/cx trails
 - Sports camps
 - Competitive tennis
 - Better field planning (field too close together/kids get hurt)
 - Recreation facility/staff/youth and adults need to be more inclusive to different programs and transportation.
 - Pick-up nights at gym where anyone can show up and play.
 - Certification training programs
 - Senior trip opportunities
 - Trips for different ages
 - Shops inside center to buy water, smoothies, treats, etc.
 - Child care