



PARKS & RECREATION COMPREHENSIVE MASTER PLAN UPDATE

Gaston County,
NORTH CAROLINA

Presented by
Benesch
April 25, 2023



PLANNING OBJECTIVES & ISSUES

- History and Future of Growth
- Measuring Placement of Park & Recreation Facilities – Equitable Distribution
- Availability of Land/Park Expansion
- How to Become a Rounded Community?
- Creating Partnerships Within Gaston County
- Providing Connectivity, Inclusivity, Accessibility
- How Can We Help Boost Tourism?
- Guiding Park Development Towards the “10-Minute” Rule
- What Recreation Does Gaston County Want to Offer/Program/Manage?
- How Will Gaston County Improve Parks & Recreation in the Next 8-10 Years?
- How Do We Communicate Services to County Residents?

Gaston County Parks, Recreation and Greenways Map

benesch
May 15, 2017

0 2.5 5
Miles



Stanley Parks

1. Harper Park
2. R.M. Thompson Park

Ranlo Parks

1. Ranlo Central Park
2. Gardin Park

High Shoals Parks

1. High Shoals Park

Cherryville Parks

1. Aaron Moss Park
2. Andy Hovis Community Skate Park
3. Ben Black Park
4. Bill Edwards Park
5. Gazebo Mini Park
6. J. Ralph Beam Jr. Heritage Park
7. Kenwood Park
8. Robert H Ballard Park
9. Stroupe Park
10. Westgate Park

Bessemer City Parks and Recreation Centers

1. Bessemer City Park and Recreation Center
1. Bessemer City Pool and Park
2. Central Park
3. Founders Park
4. Indian Spring Park
5. Kevin Millwood Park
6. Uptown Park

Gastonia Parks

1. All America Park
2. Bradley Center and Park
3. East Park
4. Erwin Center and Park
5. Ferguson Park
6. I. C. Falls Park
7. Lineberger Park
8. Martha Rivers Park (District Park)
9. Optimist Club Park
10. Phillips Center and Park
11. Rankin Lake Park (District Park)
12. Sims Legion Park
13. Smyre Millennium Park
14. T. Jeffers Center and Park

Lowell Parks

1. Bob Bolick Park
2. Harold Rankin Park
3. Joe Hudson Park

Gaston County Parks and Schools

1. Bessemer City Park
2. Camp Sertoma
3. Catawba Heights Elementary
4. Chapel Grove Elementary
5. Cramerton Middle School
6. Dallas Park (District Park)
7. East Gaston High School
8. Forestview High School
9. George Poston Park (District Park)
10. Hershah H. Beam Elementary
11. Lewis Brooks Airfield
12. New Hope Elementary
13. North Belmont Park
14. Pearl Henderson Park
15. Pinewood Elementary
16. Robinson Elementary
17. South Fork River Park
18. Tryon Park
19. W.A. Bess Elementary

Cramerton Parks

1. Central Park
2. Goat Island Park
3. McAdenville Elementary
4. Riverside Park and Greenway
5. Stuart W. Cramer High School
6. C.B. Hess Recreational Complex

Mount Holly Parks

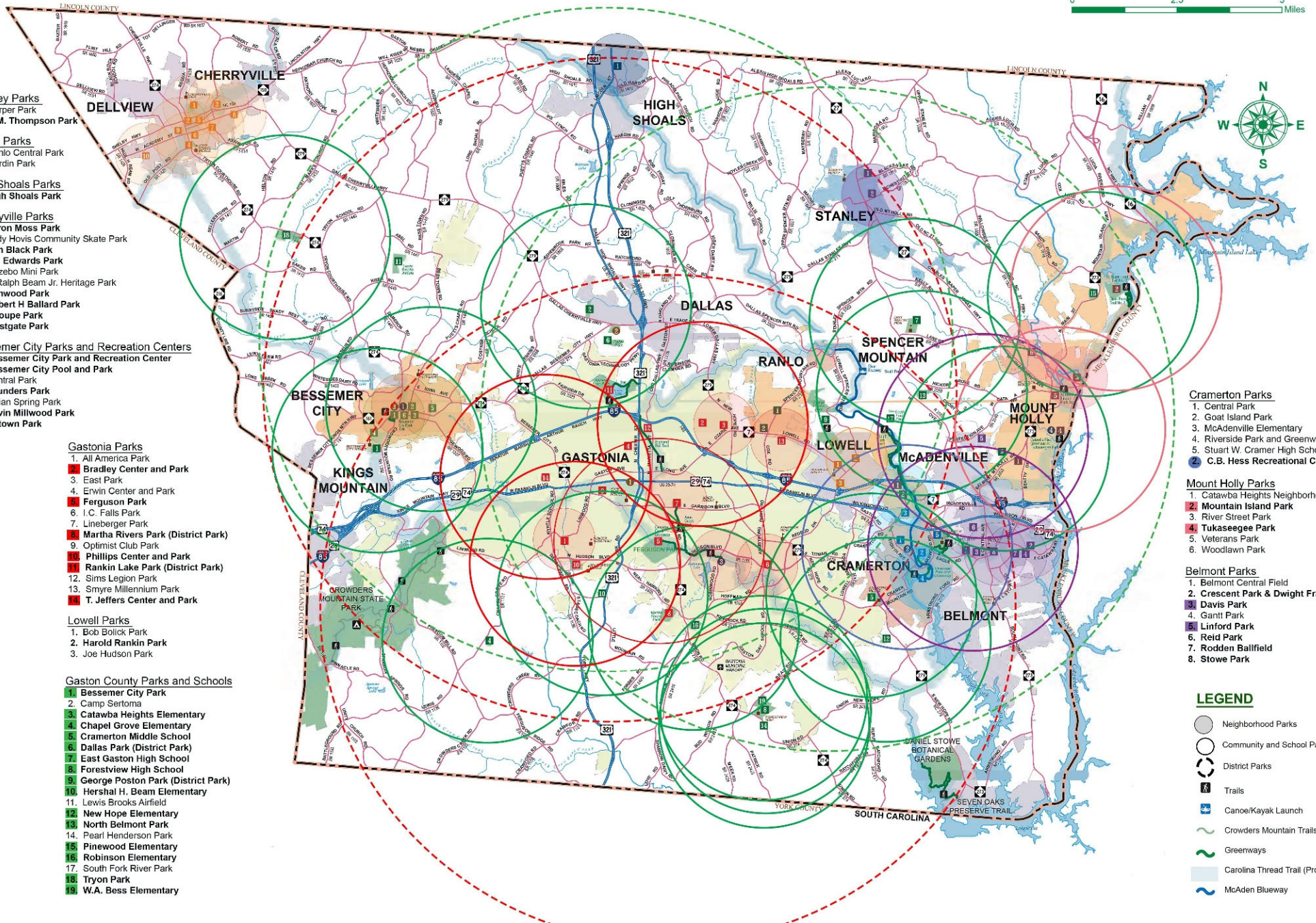
1. Catawba Heights Neighborhood Park
2. Mountain Island Park
3. River Street Park
4. Tukaseegee Park
5. Veterans Park
6. Woodlawn Park

Belmont Parks

1. Belmont Central Field
2. Crescent Park & Dwight Frady Fields
3. Davis Park
4. Gantt Park
5. Linford Park
6. Reid Park
7. Rodden Ballfield
8. Stowe Park

LEGEND

- Neighborhood Parks
- Community and School Parks
- District Parks
- Trails
- Canoe/Kayak Launch
- Crowders Mountain Trails
- Greenways
- Carolina Thread Trail (Proposed)
- McAden Blueway



SPECIAL USE FACILITIES

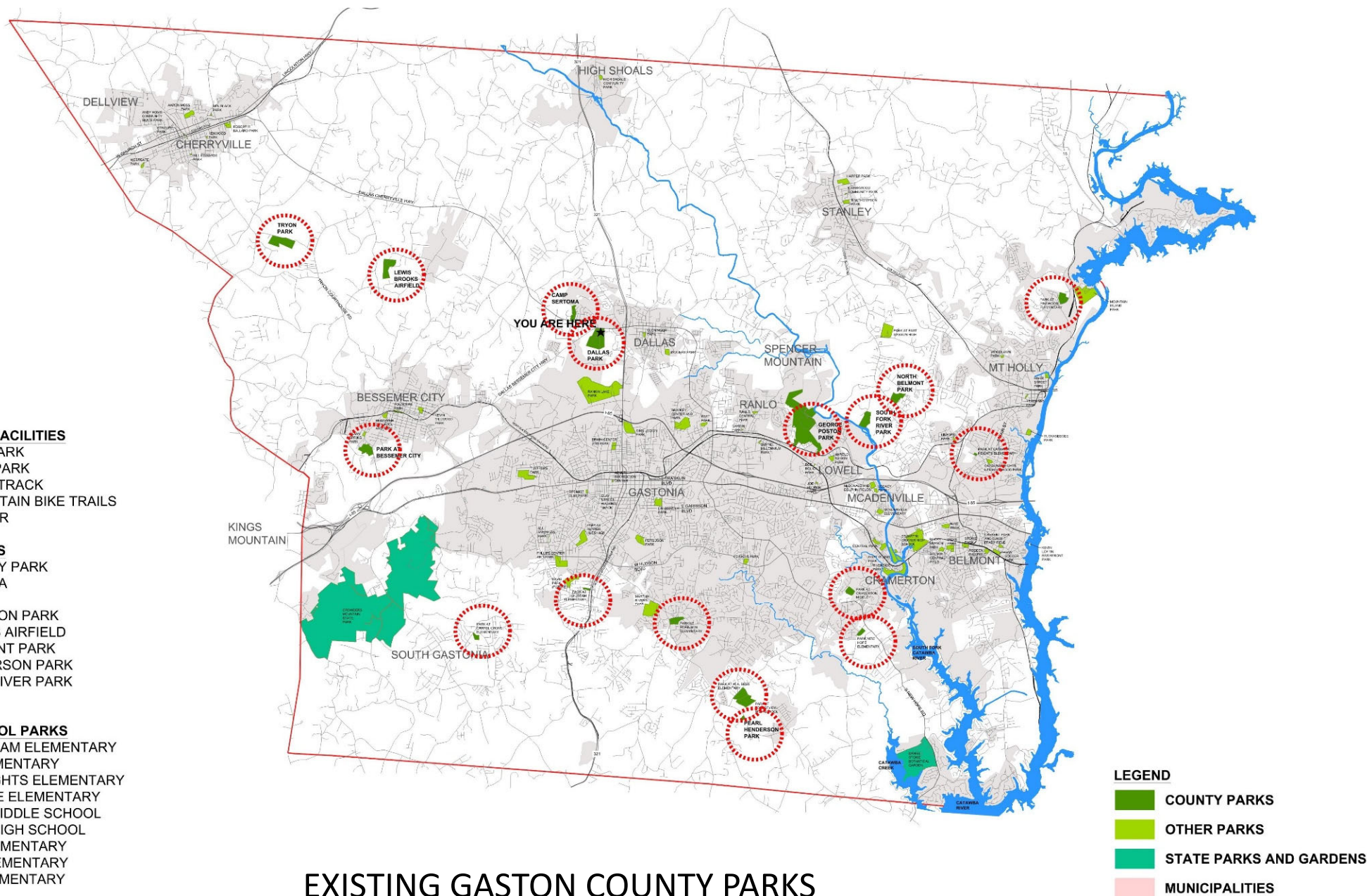
DALLAS DOG PARK
POSTON DOG PARK
POSTON PUMPTRACK
POSTON MOUNTAIN BIKE TRAILS
SENIOR CENTER

COUNTY PARKS

BESSEMER CITY PARK
CAMP SERTOMA
DALLAS PARK
GEORGE POSTON PARK
LEWIS BROOKS AIRFIELD
NORTH BELMONT PARK
PEARL HENDERSON PARK
SOUTH FORK RIVER PARK
TRYON PARK

COUNTY SCHOOL PARKS

HERSHAL H. BEAM ELEMENTARY
W.A.BESS ELEMENTARY
CATAWBA HEIGHTS ELEMENTARY
CHAPEL GROVE ELEMENTARY
CRAMERTON MIDDLE SCHOOL
FORESTVIEW HIGH SCHOOL
NEW HOPE ELEMENTARY
PINWOOD ELEMENTARY
ROBINSON ELEMENTARY



EXISTING GASTON COUNTY PARKS

Methodology

- **Survey Description**
 - five-page survey
 - survey took approximately 12-15 minutes to complete
- **Method of Administration**
 - by mail and online to a randomly selected sample of households in the County
- **Sample size:**
 - goal number of surveys: 400
 - goal exceeded: 417 completed surveys
 - demographics of survey respondents accurately reflects the actual population of the County
- **Confidence level:** 95%
- **Margin of error:** +/- 4.7% overall

Here's What We Learned

Parks and Recreation Facilities/Amenities Rated as High Priority Items:

1. Natural trails (PIR=197.7)
2. Greenway trail system (PIR=185.5)
3. Indoor fitness/exercise facilities (PIR=133.9)
4. Water access (boating, kayaking, canoeing) (PIR=124.7)
5. Picnic shelters (PIR=113.2)
6. Indoor event space (PIR=111.7)
7. Dog park (PIR=102.9)
8. Community gardens (PIR=102.3)

Here's What We Learned

Recreation Programs/Activities Rated as High Priority Items:

1. Adult fitness & wellness programs
(PIR=200.0)
2. Outdoor music/concerts (PIR=173.8)
3. Special events/family festivals
(PIR=129.6)
4. Arts, crafts (PIR=127.0)
5. Aquatics programs (PIR=124.4)
6. Outdoor adventure programs
(PIR=111.5)

Additional Findings

- Community Meetings (2) – 48+ Participants
- Parks/Facilities currently used
 - Dallas Park, Poston Park, Senior Center / Rankin Lake, Crowders Mountain, Avon/Catawba Creek Greenway
- Most Important Facilities
 - Nature Trails, Greenway Trails, Indoor Fitness & Exercise Facilities, Water Access, Multi-Purpose Fields, Pier Fishing
- Most Important Programs/Activities
 - Playground for All Abilities, Outdoor Music/Concerts, Pickleball, Adult Fitness & Wellness Programs, Special Events/Family Festivals, Life Skills Programs
- To use Senior Center, people need to be able to drive or have a driver to get there
- Desire for canoe/kayak access at Poston Park
- More lighting at park facilities



Accomplishments Since 2017 Plan



Capital Needs – 2017 Plan

- ADA improvements to existing parks
- Construction of 3-5 miles of new greenways
- Development of additional spraygrounds
- Renovations to several existing parks
- Acquisition of land for a new District Park in northeastern section of the County
- Acquisition of land for a new District Park in northwestern section of the County

OUR MISSION:

To acquire, develop, maintain, and manage parks; to efficiently manage public resources; and to provide opportunities for citizens to participate in wholesome leisure activities.



1

Special Use Park

Camp Sertoma located in Dallas

Pump Track

at George Poston Park



Air Field

Located in Bessemer City



We also offer many fields that can be used for baseball, softball, soccer, and football. Check out our website for more details.
www.gastongov.com

2

Dog Parks

Fishing Locations

Both amenities located at:

George Poston Park • Dallas Park

638

Total Acres

18

Parks

5

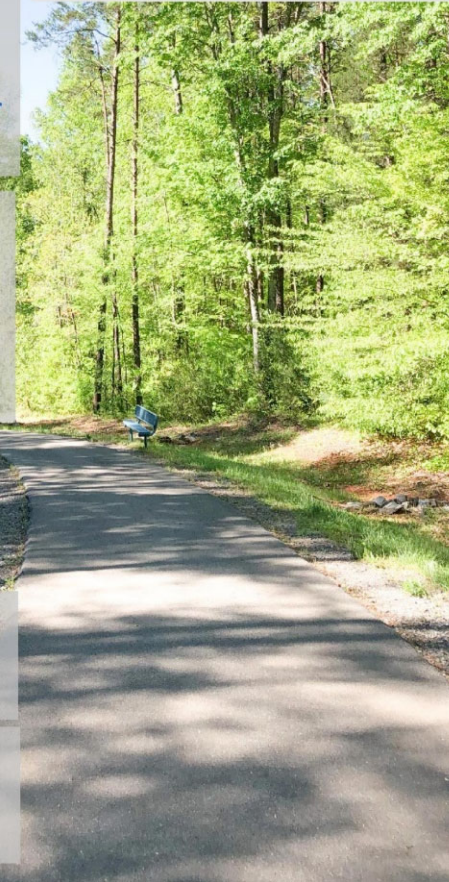
Lighted Walking Trails

at Area School Parks

13

Picnic Shelters

across Gaston County





What Have We Done since 2017?

- ✓ ADA improvements to existing parks
 - ✓ *ADA Transition Plan 2018*
 - ✓ *ADA improvements mostly complete – Dallas Park remains*
- ✓ Construction of 3-5 miles of new trails
 - ✓ *Poston Park - 3 miles of mountain bike trails*
 - ✓ *North Belmont Park – Learning Trail*
 - ✓ *Gaston Tech Park Trail Connector – In NCDOT Review*
- ✓ Development of additional spraygrounds
 - ✓ *Dallas Park Splash Pad*

What Have We Done since 2017?

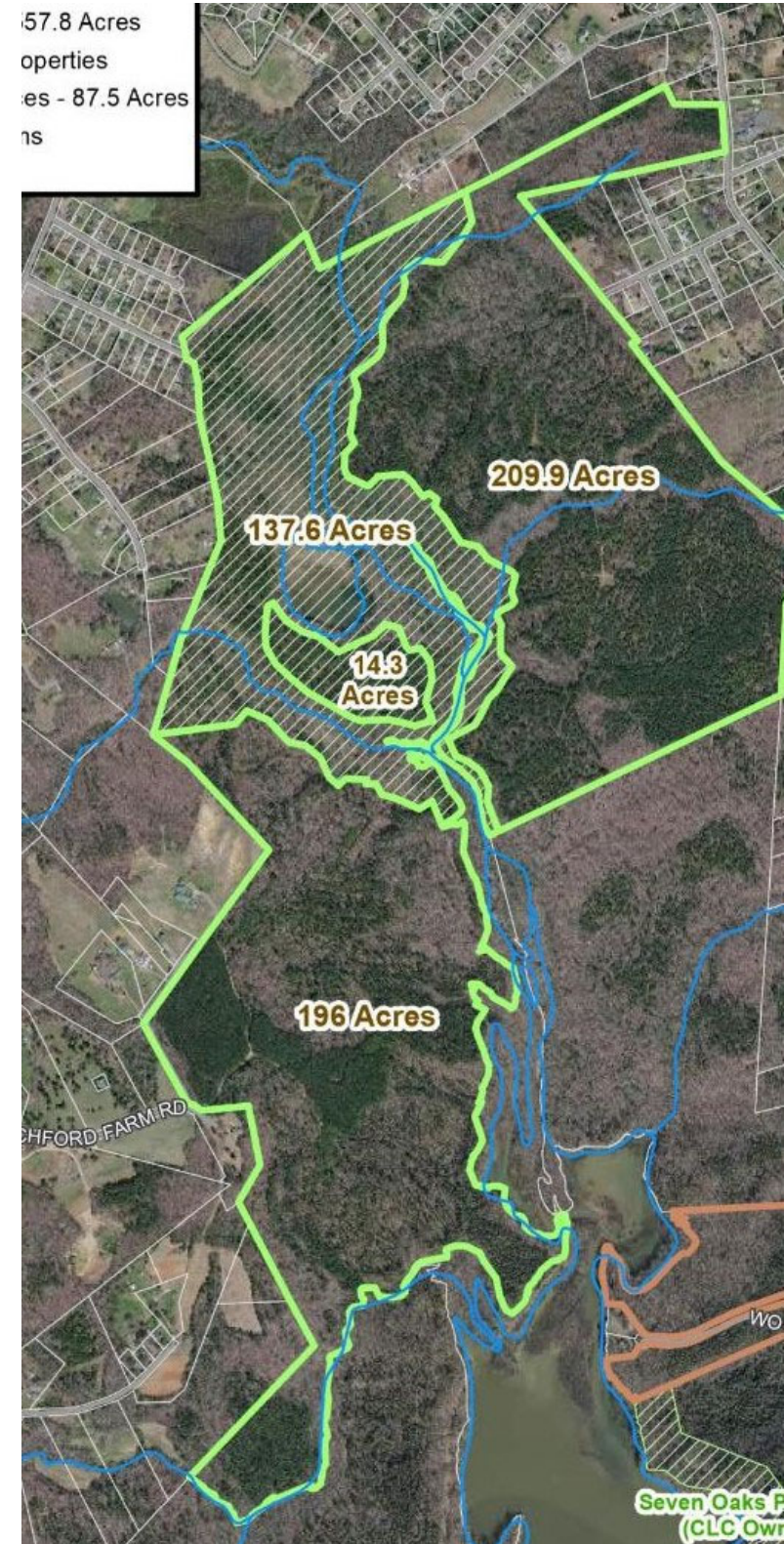
- ✓ Renovations to existing parks
 - ✓ *Dallas Park – Dog Park, Fitness Pavilion, New Playground, Multi-purpose Field, Amphitheater Cover, Splash Pad w/Restrooms*
 - ✓ *Poston Park – Mtn Bike Trails, Lighted Pump Track, Batting Cage*
 - ✓ *Tryon Park – 18-hole Disc Golf (in Design)*
 - ✓ *North Belmont Park – Learning Trail, Playground Replacement*

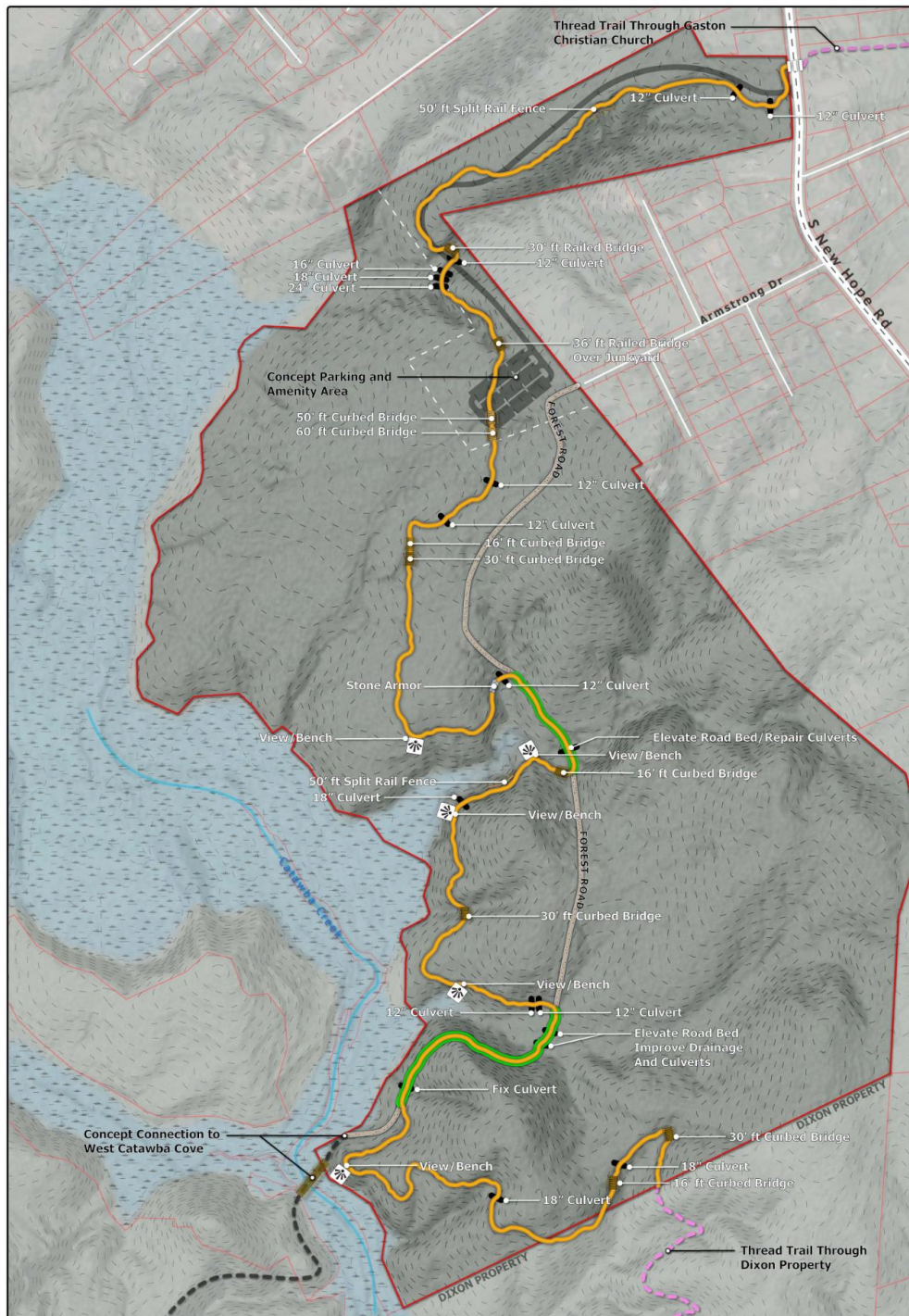


What Have We Done since 2017?

- Acquisition of land for a new District Park in northeastern section of the County
- Acquisition of land for a new District Park in northwestern section of the County
- ✓ *Acquisition of Catawba Cove property – 550 AC (Passive Recreation)*

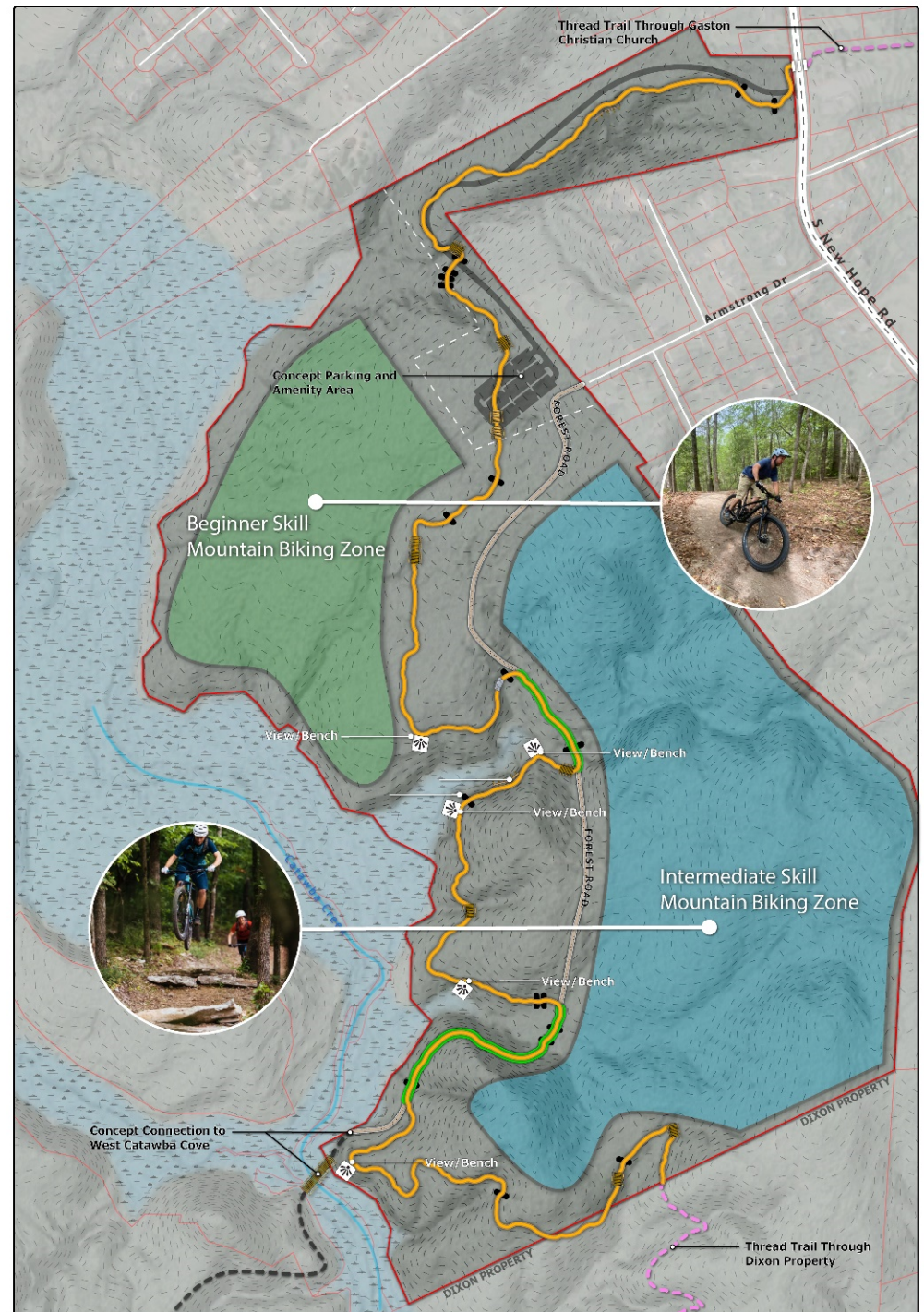
57.8 Acres
properties
es - 87.5 Acres
ns





SOUTH FORK TRAIL- CATAWBA COVE

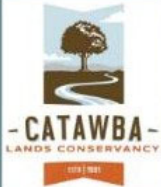
TRAIL CORRIDOR DESIGN- Approx. (2.2 Mi) *Not a Survey



SOUTH FORK TRAIL- CATAWBA COVE

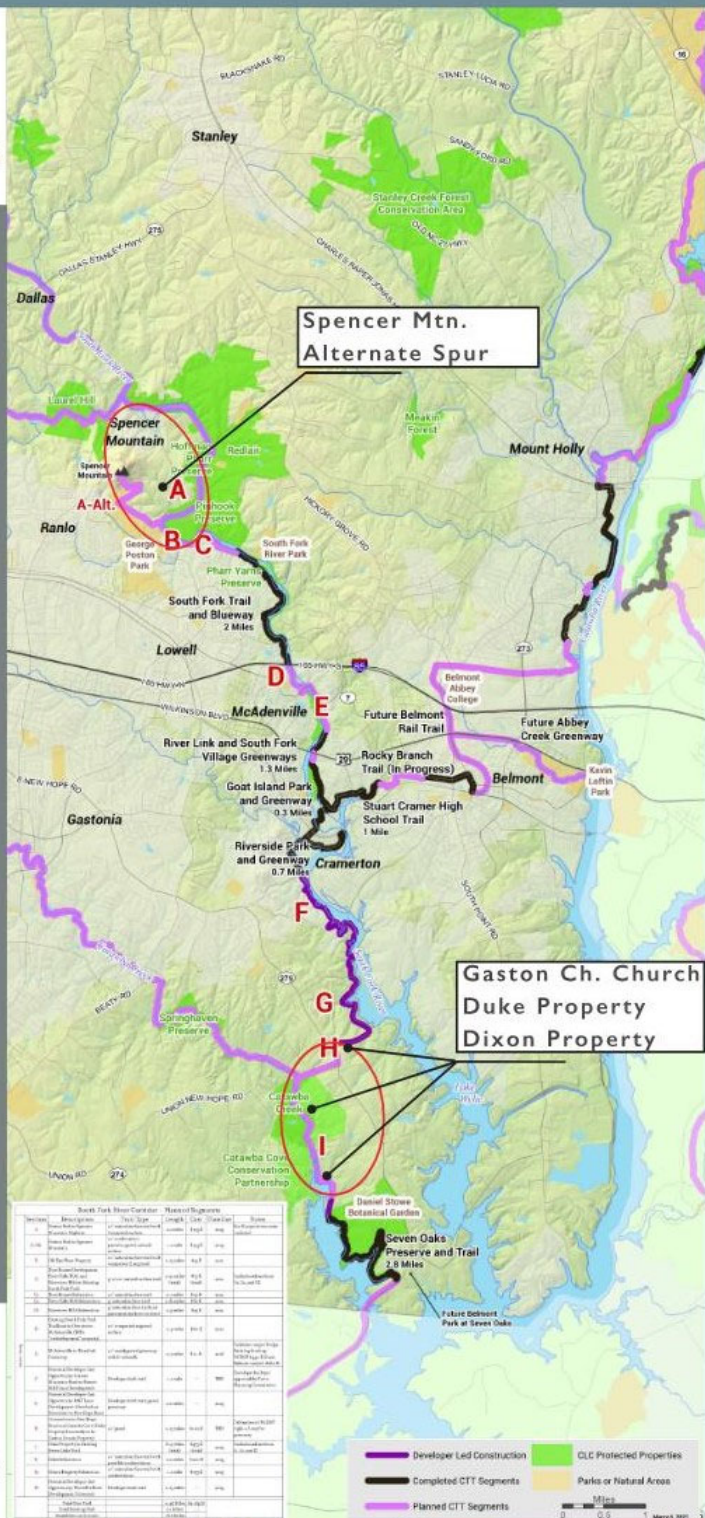
TRAIL CORRIDOR DESIGN- Approx. (2.2 Mi) *Not a Survey





Carolina Thread Trail Gap Assessment

South Fork Corridor Gaston County



SOUTH FORK TRAIL- SPENCER MOUNTAIN SPUR

TRAIL CORRIDOR SEGMENTS (4.6 MILES TOTAL)

- A South Connector**
1,200 LF
- B Gravel Park Connector**
2,750 LF
- C Poston Connector**
3,100 LF
- D Spencer Base Loop**
8,400 LF
- E Spencer Summit Trail**
4,500 LF
- F North Connector (Concept)**
4,400 LF





*Proposals &
Recommendations*

Recommendations – Facilities/Programming

Trail connectivity - destinations / regional greenways & trail systems

- Create a county-wide greenway master plan
- Work with CLC to seek land/corridors to create a Greenway from Spencer Mountain to Catawba Cove (South Fork River Corridor)
- Enhance/expand trail network at Dallas Park

Consider leasing the South Point Access Area from Duke Energy

- Operate as a County Park, provide additional water access

Continue upgrades to ensure all parks & facilities are accessible

- All facilities within each park shall be accessible to each other & parking
- Complete ADA upgrades at Dallas Park
- All facilities should be connected to adjacent neighborhoods, greenways, sidewalk systems, where possible

Recommendations - Facilities & Programming

Create programming for each Gaston County park & facility

- Provide educational, healthy & active programs & opportunities for all ages & abilities
- Offer excellent opportunities throughout the Gaston County parks system for all to use.
- Expand on recent new opportunities such as disc golf, pickleball, fitness stations/clusters or other new sports trends
- Provide venues for expanded Senior Olympics events

Plan, design and phase the construction of Catawba Coves

Seek new park development opportunities in areas underserved by parks

- Add walking loops to all existing parks where feasible
- Seek a location to develop a new District Park in the northeastern quadrant of Gaston County; acquire land and prepare a master plan; include athletic fields, inclusive play equipment, walking paths, recreation center
- Provide destination facilities that could also serve as a revenue source for non-Gaston County residents (splash pad, X-country, inclusive playground, etc.)

Recommendations - Operations

Seek & develop partnerships with other recreation providers

- Expand programming partnerships with Gaston County municipalities; assign responsibilities; municipalities to provide more active recreation
- Continue partnerships with Catawba Lands Conservancy and Carolina Thread Trail

Maintain quality park management, operations & maintenance on an equitable basis for each facility

Strive to provide a greenspace, trail, park, or amenity located within a 15-20 minute walk or drive from each County resident

- Require Developers to provide parks, greenways & open space within new developments; potential to dedicate greenspace to Gaston County Parks

Strive to provide funding to maintain or exceed minimum level of service standards & create a sustainable economic base for Gaston County Parks & Recreation

Recommendations - Operations

Establish vision, goals and responsibilities of the Parks & Recreation Advisory Board

- Development of new funding sources relating to Parks & Recreation
- Assist and facilitate additional special events and family festivals
- Assist in the development of long-range planning for programs and facilities
- Promotion of community awareness on the needs for parks & recreation as part of a healthy community
- Review and make recommendations for proposed community projects and acquisitions related to parks, recreation and greenways
- Develop annual work plan; review plan accomplishments with staff

Increase community outreach / parks & recreation marketing / social media

- Hold scheduled 'Meet the Director' gatherings to gain user input; rotate around the parks

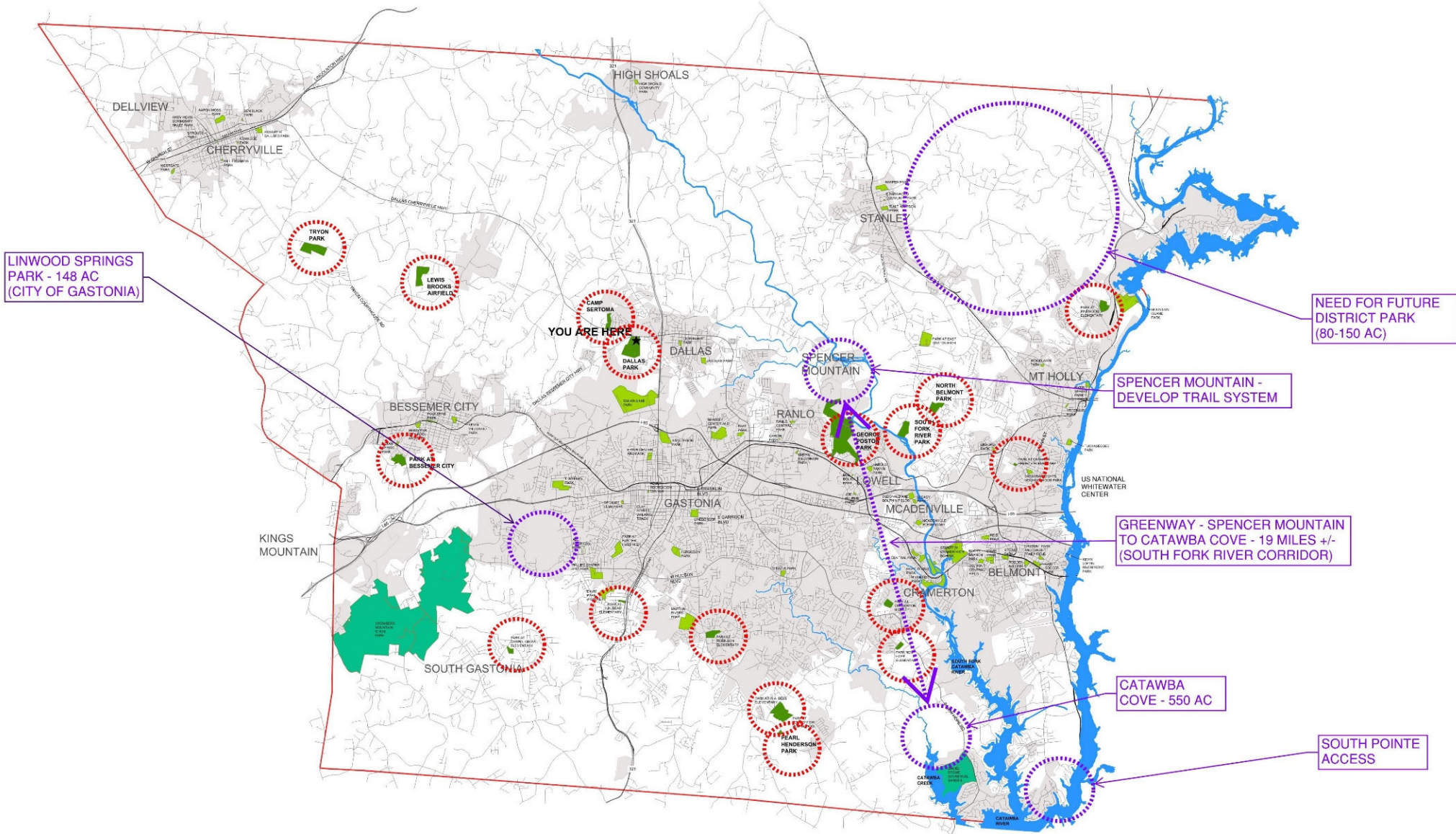
Ensure park & recreation master plan is coordinated with other municipal plans, ordinances & policies

Considerations - Operations

Providing increased recreation facilities and offerings leads to increased...

- **Budgets/CIPs**
- **Maintenance Costs**
- **Staffing Needs**
- **Equipment Needs**
- **Insurance Costs**

Keeping parks and facilities regularly maintained = safer park environments = more park usage



NEXT STEPS



*South Point Access Area
(to be continued)*



Next Steps – Moving the Plan Forward

Gaston County Board of Commissioners may consider the final 2023 Parks & Recreation Master Plan Update for future acceptance/adoption

- Adoption of the Master Plan does not commit Gaston County to implement all projects listed in the recommendations
- Recommendations provided to aid with decision making for future projects/grant pursuits

Staff along with PRAB work together to prioritize recommendations and projects for implementation to present to the BOC for consideration

Balance the needs with the budget; 3-5 year CIP for Parks & Recreation for implementation of agreed upon projects

Research and seek grants and funding opportunities; develop partnerships

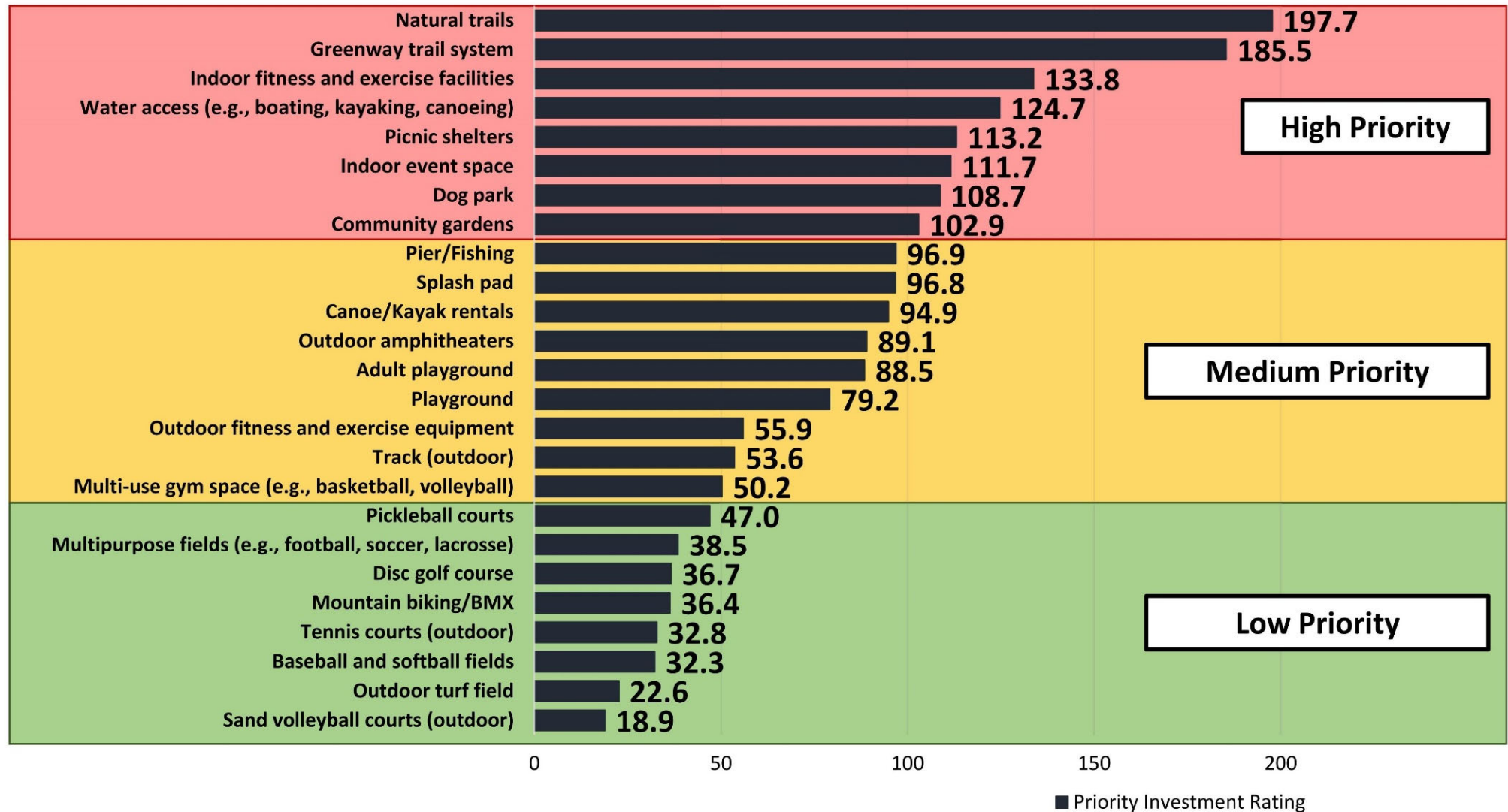
Strive to improve the quality of life and access to quality recreation and greenspace for all citizens of Gaston County



QUESTIONS?

Here's What We Learned

Parks and Recreation Facilities/Amenities Rated as High Priority Items:



Here's What We Learned

Recreation Programs/Activities Rated as High Priority Items:

