

Parks, Recreation, Trails, and Open Space Plan



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Amended on October 10, 2022 by the Town Council

**Town of Lake Lure
Parks, Recreation, Trails and Open Space Plan**

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Town of Lake Lure Parks, Recreation, Trails, and Open Space Plan

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Plan Introduction

Contained herein, is the Town of Lake Lure Parks, Recreation, Trails, and Open Space Plan. This is the first plan developed exclusively for the Town of Lake Lure specifically targeting the topics of parks and recreation. Development of this plan initially involved approximately one year of documenting and analyzing data, interviewing town personnel, documenting and analyzing facilities, conducting a survey of citizens, and the work of a volunteer Parks and Recreation Board that is committed to providing quality parks and recreation facilities and activities to the citizens of Lake Lure and Rutherford County. This plan has been updated five times since first adopted by the Lake Lure Town Council in December of 2007.

Currently, the Town of Lake Lure provides passive recreation opportunities for citizens and visitors to Lake Lure and Rutherford County, as well as Polk County, which is located less than a quarter mile from the Town's boundaries. Passive recreation means that local government provides parks and recreation facilities and areas for individual usage, but does not offer programming.

Statistics indicate that during the last census period (2010-2020) Lake Lure and Chimney Rock Township have experienced a very high growth rate in comparison to other municipalities in Rutherford County. In addition, Lake Lure experiences a very high seasonal population from May through October. How does this affect Lake Lure's parks and recreation? As the population of Lake Lure and Rutherford County continues to grow, additional burdens are being placed upon the Town of Lake Lure to provide recreational services not only for its citizens, vacationers, and other visitors, but also for those in outlying areas of Rutherford, Polk, and Henderson Counties that utilize Lake Lure's park and recreation areas and facilities. Through this planning process, it is envisioned that Lake Lure will be able to meet current and future needs for parks and recreation. The Rutherford County Tourism Development Authority (TDA) is attempting to take some of the resource load off the municipalities with the creation of Rutherford Bound. With Rutherford Bound, all of the local government entities within Rutherford County have begun to work together to offer more diverse types of recreation.

Purpose and Scope

This planning process began from a 2001 recommendation in the Rutherford County Land Use Plan update. Issue #5 within the Land Use Plan was "The need for recreational opportunities in Rutherford County". The goal addressed in that issue was "to inventory all facilities, programs and participants throughout the County to determine what needs exist, and determine how those needs are to be addressed". The final recommendation from the Land Use Plan was that "Rutherford County should form a recreation advisory committee consisting of members from various age groups, and recreational backgrounds". This committee would assess all programs, participants, and public/private facilities, to determine what needs exist and how Rutherford County can best address those needs. From the committee's recommendation, the Rutherford County Arts, Parks and Recreation Committee was formed. The RCAPRC felt that the inventory of programs and facilities, in conjunction with a Comprehensive Plan, would provide the

necessary framework for Rutherford County to address current and future recreational needs. It was also at this time, that the larger municipalities (Lake Lure, Rutherfordton, Spindale, and Forest City) were offered the opportunity to become actively involved by creating their plans based on the data that the County was accumulating. Lake Lure, Rutherfordton, and Forest City accepted this offer. Lake Lure formed a Parks and Recreation Board, and they became actively involved in the planning process by starting the development of Lake Lure's Parks, Recreation, Trails, Lake, and Open Space Plan.

The main purpose of this document is to provide the Town of Lake Lure with an accurate, usable plan to guide its actions and decisions regarding:

- Future parks and recreation programs and facilities
- Maintenance of existing parks and/or facilities
- Cooperative efforts in meeting recreation needs
- Possible land acquisitions
- Grant funding
- Development of new parks and trails

The Lake Lure Parks, Recreation, Trails, and Open Space Plan is organized into four sections:

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

Methodology

From commencement until completion, the work on this plan, as well as the other recreation plans, spanned from the fall of 2006 until the present. The information utilized for this plan was initially gathered from several sources. These sources included the Lake Lure Comprehensive Plan, Town of Lake Lure Recreation Survey, Census Bureau, North Carolina State Data Center, North Carolina Division of Community Assistance, Rutherford County Comprehensive Land Use Plan, Rutherford County Economic Development Department, North Carolina Municipal and County Parks and Recreation Survey, Parks and Recreation volunteers, and Town staff. Additional sources of input through the years since initial adoption have come from a revision to the Town of Lake Lure Comprehensive Plan update and the Morse Park Development Plan, which was adopted in 2018.

Inventory of existing parks and recreation areas and facilities was carried out throughout the planning process. A randomized scientific survey for Lake Lure citizens was developed and performed during the initial planning process in 2006. The survey, along with analysis of existing programming and facilities, and the expertise of town staff and the members of the Lake Lure Parks and Recreation Board was to be the initial basis of this Plan. Obtained from the survey was demographic information, insight as to which opportunities the respondent was currently using, or not using but was interested in, and comments for what the respondent would like to see. Approximately 25% of Lake Lure property owners responded to the survey. An additional user survey was done during the development of the Morse Park Master Plan, which was used, along with resident participation, in plan development.

The Lake Lure Parks and Recreation Board, representing a cross-section of interest and expertise assisted the planner in the preparation of the Plan.

Section 1

Review of Physical, Demographic and Historical Characteristics

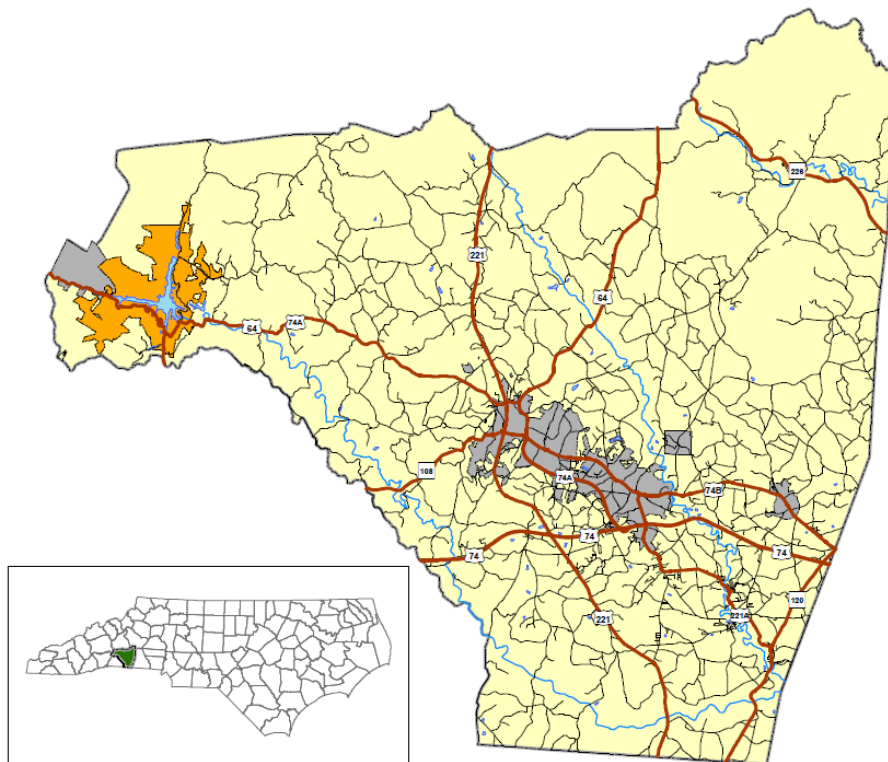


Introduction

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

MAP 1

LOCATOR MAP



Legend

- Primary Roads
- Secondary Roads
- Major Rivers
- Water Bodies
- Lake Lure
- Municipalities
- Rutherford County

Physical Characteristics

Location

The Town of Lake Lure is located in the western portion of Rutherford County at latitude 35 degrees, 44 minutes north, and longitude 82 degrees, 23 minutes west at Town Hall. The Town of Lake Lure is located along Highway 64/74A, just east of Chimney Rock Village, and approximately 20 miles northwest of Rutherfordton. Lake Lure is approximately 25 miles southeast of Asheville, 90 miles northwest of Charlotte, and 30 miles north of Spartanburg, South Carolina.

Geography

Rutherford County is located within a geographic zone of North Carolina typically referred to as foothills (gently rolling terrain). However, Lake Lure is located on the western edge of this geographic zone and is more typically mountainous. Elevations within Lake Lure range from approximately 882 feet above sea level at the Lake Lure Wastewater Treatment Plant, to over 3,020 feet above sea level at Rumbling Bald Mountain.

Underlying rock formations are generally gneiss and schist from the Paleozoic Era, and the land cover is that typical of Appalachian hardwood forests. The Town encompasses 13.25 square miles within its municipal boundaries, has 1.13 square miles of lake area, and 20.5 miles of shoreline (based upon current GIS technology). All of Lake Lure is located within the Broad River Basin.

Climate

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

The yearly precipitation average is 50 inches and generally falls evenly throughout the year. The heaviest average monthly rainfall amounts occurred during March (5.26 inches), and January (4.7 inches). The lowest monthly averages occurred during April (3.63 inches), and December (3.76 inches). The average annual snowfall amount is 5.5 inches with the heaviest monthly averages occurring in January (2.9 inches), February (1.4 inches), and March (.9 inches).

Existing Land Use

While most of Rutherford County would be classified as rural, Lake Lure would be predominately classified as developed (urban environment with normal municipal services), urban transitional (outlying municipal areas being developed for urban purposes), and rural. Urban in this case would

mean mainly residential, although Lake Lure has several commercial nodes. Lake Lure has a mix of several residential zoning classifications, and several commercial zoning classifications. The older commercial growth has occurred along US Highway 64/74 A, at the western end of the lake. Newer commercial growth has occurred along NC Highway 9.

Future Land Use

It is anticipated that land uses will continue to intensify within both the municipal boundaries and transitional areas around Lake Lure. Renovation to the wastewater treatment plant and replacement of its collection system will encourage growth. A trend in recent years has been the growth of residential areas just outside the municipal boundaries of Lake Lure. It is anticipated that residential growth will continue to dominate rural areas outside of the municipalities of Rutherford County. It is further anticipated that Lake Lure's population and growth will continue at a high rate over the next ten to twenty years.

Floodplains

The Town of Lake Lure has flood plains that are delineated on the National Flood Insurance Rate Maps. For most locations, these flood-prone areas are within prescribed elevations of known streams or creeks. These maps have been updated using LIDAR (Laser Imaging Detection and Ranging) technology. This could be helpful in the future for creating greenways, blueways, or open spaces along creeks, streams, rivers, and lakes.

Infrastructure

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

Electricity - Lake Lure is served by the Duke Energy Corporation. The Town of Lake Lure produces electricity at its hydroelectric dam, which it sells to Duke Energy.

Water - Lake Lure operates its own water system. The Town has several wells and storage tanks, 23 linear miles of water lines, 378 residential customers, and 74 commercial customers. The Water System has 0.48 million gallons of storage and is capable of producing 0.53 million gallons per day. This system is not available to all citizens within the municipal boundaries, but efforts are underway to increase public water distribution within the Town. Areas in the northern part of the Town, within the Rumbling Bald Resort, are serviced by the Carolina Water System.

Wastewater - The Town of Lake Lure operates its own wastewater treatment system. The plant is located below the Lake Lure Dam, and most of the large collection lines are located under the lake. The plant capacity is 0.995 million gallons per day and the average daily usage is 0.300 million gallons per day. There are approximately 20.4 linear miles of service lines serving 859 residential customers, and 128 commercial customers. The system is not available to all citizens within the municipal boundaries, with many residences relying on septic tank systems. The Town of Lake Lure has embarked on a program to replace, over the next few years and in phases, the entire municipal wastewater collection system.

Gas - No public gas lines are located in Lake Lure.

Streets, Roads, and Sidewalks - There are a large number of streets and roads within the corporate limits of Lake Lure. US Highway 64/74A, NC Highway 9, Buffalo Creek Road, and Buffalo Shoals Road are State maintained. The rest of the network of streets and roads are maintained by the Town or are privately maintained by either individuals or property owners associations. There are limited sidewalks, all within the Town Center area, consisting of approximately one mile of paver walkway.

Demographic Characteristics

Population

According to the latest census data available (2020 US Census), the Town of Lake Lure's population was 1,365. Chimney Rock Township's population was 3,067. Rutherford County's population was 64,444. Over the past 40 years, there have been substantial changes to these populations.

Table 1: 50 Years of Population Change

<u>Location</u>	<u>1970 Pop.</u>	<u>1980 Pop.</u>	<u>1990 Pop.</u>	<u>2000 Pop.</u>	<u>2010 Pop.</u>	<u>2020 Pop.</u>
Lake Lure	456	474	747	1,027	1,192	1,365
Chimney Rock Twp.	1,094	1,457	1,700	2,246	2,666	3,067
Rutherford County	47,337	53,787	56,918	62,899	67,810	64,444
Polk County	11,735	12,894	14,416	18,184	20,510	19,328

Lake Lure has 1,365 year-round residents, according to the 2020 census. During the summer and fall, the population is much higher due to tourists and people that live here part-time.

According to 2020 U/S. Census data, Lake Lure's median age of 62.7 is higher than Rutherford County's (45.2), and higher than the state average of 38.9.

Socio-Economic Characteristics

Lake Lure's largest employers are Rumbling Bald Resort, the Town government, and the Ingles Market located off NC Highway 9. Most employment is in small business and the hospitality tourism industry. Lake Lure is dependent for economic development on tourism and is working hard on developing as a year-round outdoor recreation destination.

The median household income for Lake Lure in 2020 was \$60,882 compared to \$43,183 for Rutherford County, and \$56,642 for North Carolina.

Historical Characteristics of the Land

Although Rutherford County was officially formed in 1779, there is much history dating back to the pre-revolutionary period. Prior to white settlers, the area was part of the Great Cherokee

Nation. Although Native Americans did not have permanent settlements here, there were many small encampments and trails for travel and trade with lands to the east and the north. Hernando Desoto led a Spanish expedition through Hickory Nut Gorge in 1540. During the mid-1700, settlers from the north, east, and south, began to filter through using the Indians' trails. The new settlers started claiming land, beginning in the 1760's, which led to conflict with the Cherokee. At the time of the initial settlements, what is now Rutherford County was a part of Mecklenburg County. The part of then, Mecklenburg County west of the Catawba River, became Tryon County in 1768. In April of 1779, Lincoln and Rutherford Counties were formed from Tryon County. Rutherford County was named in honor of Brigadier General Griffith Rutherford who fought in the Revolutionary War. The Hickory Nut Gorge became a primary transportation corridor between the foothills and mountains.

The Town of Lake Lure was incorporated in 1927 by an act of the North Carolina General Assembly. Incorporation occurred approximately one year after the construction of the dam that formed the lake. Originally, the lake was built to form a resort community with the dam providing electricity. Lucius Morse, from St. Louis, Missouri was the primary investor in the building of Lake Lure and its incorporation. His wife is credited with naming the lake and town, Lake Lure. In 1965, the Town of Lake Lure acquired the lake and the dam through the sale of revenue bonds. Over time, Lake Lure has evolved into a large municipality (square mileage) with a large resort on the northeast side and a newly formed state park on the western edge. The development of the Rumbling Bald on Lake Lure resort, with rental and timeshare lodging has done much to bring visitors from all over the country as well as from foreign countries. Many of these visitors fell in love with the area and have gone on to purchase land and build permanent and/or vacation homes.

Section 1 Summary

The growth potential of Rutherford County and Lake Lure appears to be above average for the twenty-first century. Quality of life influences, good infrastructure, strategic location to major highways, and proximity to metropolitan areas are significant factors that enhance its growth potential. Planning for this population growth in correlation with the needs for parks and recreation will be crucial for Rutherford County and the Town of Lake Lure to provide its citizens with parks and recreational opportunities.

A study prepared for the City of Charlotte and reviewed by the Charlotte Observer in February 2005, pointed out,

“The new generation of workers is more impulsive, they will narrow their choices by where they want to live, rather than who they want to work for.”
“This is a dynamic change from the baby boomer generation who first looked at who they wanted to work for.”

In answering the question of what makes a location desirable, it was pointed out overwhelmingly in the survey that this new generation of people is interested in local arts, the embracing of local heritage, local history, and

among other things, they like parks, hiking, and bike trails.

According to an economic development study performed in 2003, when industrial or commercial users are looking for sites for expansion or relocation, they consider site selection factors and quality of life factors as very important. Under quality of life factors, recreational opportunities ranked eighth, and cultural opportunities ranked ninth.

The Town of Lake Lure has laid the groundwork. Town services are in place and existing infrastructure is being updated. Hopefully, by taking advantage of these studies and enhancing its recreational and cultural resources, the Town of Lake Lure will continue to make positive strides into the future.

Section 2

Inventory and Analysis of Existing Parks and Recreation Facilities



Introduction

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

The Lake

Lake Lure is approximately 728 acres with approximately 21 miles of shoreline. Lake Lure is considered a cold-water lake with the deepest part of the lake being approximately 104 feet deep. Both warm water and cold-water species of fish inhabit Lake Lure, including large and smallmouth bass, white bass, trout, bream/bluegills, crappie, carp, and several species of catfish. In the summer months, gradient layers of progressively colder waters form in the lake, but run over to a uniform temperature in the winter, causing a turn over to a uniform temperature in the winter. Other wildlife species seen around Lake Lure



include whitetail deer, squirrels, chipmunks, bobcats, black bear, wild turkey, ducks, geese, shorebirds, and several species of birds of prey (such as eagles, ospreys, hawks, and falcons), a multitude of songbirds, and various species of reptiles (salamanders, lizards, and snakes). Lake Lure has excellent water quality. The main issue regarding lake-based recreation would be Lake Lure's size and the possibility of overcrowding during peak boating season creating safety concerns.

Morse Park **Gardens / Meadow / Riverside/ Pavilion**

Morse Park is a popular large community park located adjacent to the Town Center at the far west end of the lake consisting of approximately 23 acres (including the Lake Lure Municipal Center and the Lake Lure & Blue Ridge Foothills Visitor Center). The park offers passive outdoor recreation activities and opportunities for residents and visitors alike.



Morse Park facilities include:

- Approximately one mile of paved walking paths
- Landscaped gardens with a large pond
- Large covered pavilion (for special events such as concerts and weddings)
- Multi-purpose event field for festivals and soccer play (with goal nets).
- Two regulation tennis courts and an outdoor basketball court
- Children's playground (including swings, slides, and climbing apparatus)
- Four covered picnic tables with grills and trash receptacles
- Docks for temporary boat tie-up and water access for fishing
- Wetland area for waterfowl and songbird viewing
- Temporary boat trailer storage
- Restrooms (at Visitor Center and Washburn Marina ticket office) and port-a-johns
- Parking spaces for 196 vehicles in Morse Park, with an additional 40 parking spaces available at the Municipal Center on weekends

Morse Park has been transformed in recent years. This transformation corrected drainage issues in the Meadow by diverting storm water from the parking areas via buried piping and gravity flow to

newly created ponds located in the three wetland areas of the park. This project expanded the useable event and athletic space in the Meadow and allowed for wetland restoration and enhancement. Additional landscaping was also completed.

Lake Lure Flowering Bridge

In 2011 a new US64/74A/NC9 NCDOT vehicular bridge was opened across Broad River at the western end of the Town Center. Ownership of the adjacent old historic bridge was transferred to the Town of Lake Lure. A non-profit citizen group has been formed and the group of volunteers has landscaped the historic bridge and its approaches, with year-round plantings to make the Flowering Bridge “a gateway to something beautiful”. The Town purchased a lot with vacant commercial buildings adjacent to the bridge. The vacant buildings were torn down to provide a parking area for bridge visitors. The Flowering Bridge has become a very popular attraction for both residents and visitors.

Lake Lure Beach and Water Park

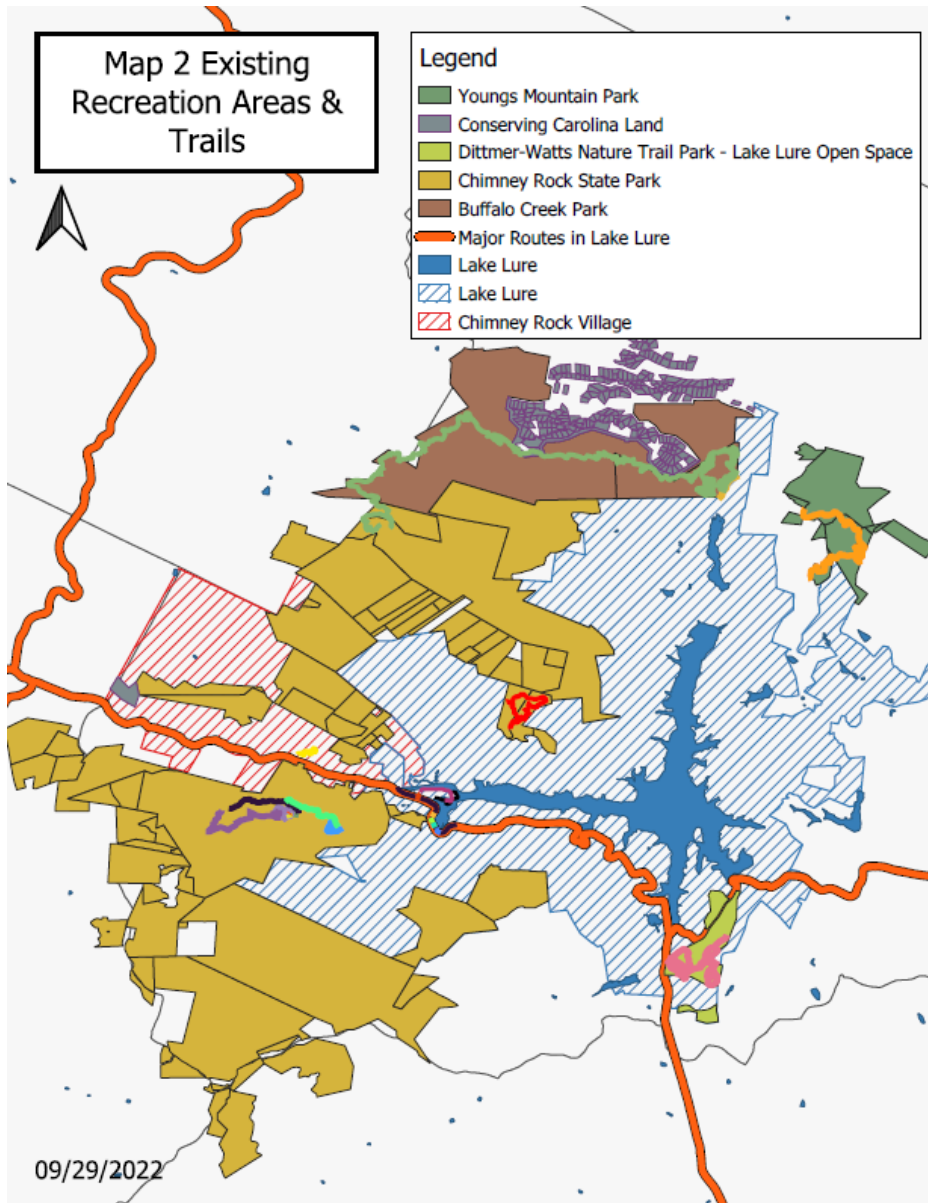
Lake Lure Beach and Water Park is a special-use public recreation facility approximately 2.9 acres in size, located close to the Town Center area. The facility is currently operated through a concession agreement with a private company and the Town collects a percentage of the facilities revenues. This facility is available for public



use between Memorial Day and Labor Day each year and requires a user fee based upon individual, group and season pass rates. Rental space for a variety of special, corporate, and family events is also available. Lake Lure property owners are allowed free access to the park. Lake Lure Beach & Water Park facilities include:

- 100 yards of sandy beach and swim area with lifeguards
- Building used for office, dressing area, and restrooms
- Covered large picnic shelter and snacks/drinks for sale
- Water Park (kayaking, paddleboats, water slides, water games)
- Marked parking for 70 vehicles

Lake Lure Beach and Water Park facilities are kept clean and are in good condition. Aerators have been installed in waters to help maintain good water quality.



Washburn Marina

Washburn Marina is a Town-owned facility adjacent to Morse Park and offers a variety of boating and lake-based recreation opportunities. The marina is operated through a concession agreement with a private company, with the Town receiving a percentage of the charged revenues. The marina is available for use year-round and requires a user fee depending on what activity is used. The marina is in excellent condition, having undergone a complete renovation in 2019 that included new floating aluminum docks, accommodating 214 boat slips for rent. The marina boat slips are accessed with a newly completed floating aluminum walkway (the “Water Walk”) stretching from Morse Park to Lake Lure Beach & Water Park and forms part of the Town Center Walkway. The seawall and wharf on the Morse Park side of the marina were also replaced and a new covered seating area for people waiting to take lake-boat excursion tours has been attached to the ticket and rental office. A landscaped waiting area under a pergola with tables and chairs was added adjacent to the ticket office. Private boat permits for same day use on the lake are available for purchase at the ticket office. Washburn Marina amenities include:

- Boat slips (for season or daily rental)
- Boat launch for permitted boats
- Gasoline, ice, and snack purchase
- Restrooms
- Picnic table and seating areas
- Boat and kayak rental
- Lake tour excursions (for a fee)
- Floating walkway (the “Water Walk”) connects the boat slips to Morse Park and Lake Lure Beach & Water Park)

Lake Lure Green Space

In January 2022, the Lake Lure Golf Course and its office was converted into green space for the community. A master plan is currently being developed for this area. The Green Space, open to the public year round, offers 2,738 yards of green space for the public’s enjoyment for activities such as walking, running, and bicycling. Scenic views of the Hickory Nut Gorge can be enjoyed at the southeastern end of this area. Paved parking is provided. Dogs on leashes are allowed.

Pool Creek Picnic Park

For years, the area around Pool Creek has been a place for picnicking while enjoying views of the mountains. In 2018, Pool Creek Picnic Park was incorporated as one of the Town’s official park areas. It encompasses approximately 2 acres of grassy shaded space along the Town Center Walkaway on the lower east side of Pool Creek in the Town Center area, to the east of Lake Lure

Beach and Water Park. The park is intended to be an auxiliary picnic area to Morse Park. The area offers paved parking, picnic tables and grills. The park also provides additional picnic space with tables on the west side of Pool Creek, north of Memorial Highway.

Dittmer-Watts Nature Trail Park

Members of the Lake Lure Parks and Recreation Board began construction of trails in 2006 on then, unused Town property that had been originally earmarked in the late 1920's for an expansion of the Lake Lure Golf Course to 18-holes. Using mostly volunteer labor with Public Works equipment support, approximately three miles of trails were built over several years. Work on the trail system was completed in 2016. Dittmer-Watts became the first Town park conducive to a hike in the woods. The graveled trailhead parking area is located on NC 9 in the southern section of Lake Lure. The trail system has become a popular recreational facility for walking, easy hiking, and enjoying nature. The 3.3-mile trail consists of natural surface trails over level, and rolling terrain complete with signage. Benches, picnic tables, and an ADA-approved picnic shelter with tables are available along the trail. Dogs on a leash are allowed.

Buffalo Creek Park and Weed Patch Mountain Trail

The Town of Lake Lure acquired Buffalo Creek Park and Weed Patch Mountain Trail through an NC PARTF grant in 2010. The 200-acre mountain parkland borders Buffalo Creek Road at the far north end of the Town. In 2012, the Town obtained two additional grants to develop the park. An initial 5 miles of type 2 trails for hiking and mountain bike use have been professionally constructed with beautiful wooden bridges built over Buffalo Creek and water ravines. Just off Buffalo Creek Road is the 35-space parking lot built by the Town in 2022. This parking lot serves as the public trailhead. There is a second and private trailhead built by Rumbling Bald Resort for their residents and guests on adjacent Resort property, with the two trailheads connected by a half mile of type 1 trail.

In 2013, the Town of Lake Lure received another grant to expand the trail system westward some eight miles to Eagle Rock within the bounds of Chimney Rock State Park. Carolina Mountain Land Conservancy (now Conserving Carolina) actively cooperated with the Town of Lake Lure in bringing this enhanced hiking and mountain biking trail system to reality. The backcountry Weed Patch Mountain Trail was completed in 2017 and offers wonderful view sheds for both adventurous hikers and mountain bikers. The approximate 1,325-acre parkland through which this trail traverses connects with the north section of Chimney Rock State Park on Shumont Mountain. This land was deeded to the Town of Lake Lure in 2027 and was incorporated into Buffalo Creek Park, resulting in a 1,525-acre Town of Lake Lure municipal park. Conserving Carolina maintained the Weed Patch Mountain Trail for three years but volunteers, organized by an AmeriCorps trails maintenance person employed by the Town of Lake Lure, Rutherford County, and Rutherford Outdoor Coalition, now maintain it. The role of the AmeriCorps member is to oversee routine maintenance of trails in Lake Lure and elsewhere in Rutherford County.

Rumbling Bald Resort

Although this is a private resort facility, it is worthy of mention in this plan because it serves many Lake Lure residents and visitors with superb recreational opportunities. Rumbling Bald is a large resort community located at the north end of Lake Lure. Its amenities include two 18-hole golf

courses, 100 yards of sandy beach, an outdoor pool with a lazy river, miniature golf, lighted outdoor basketball courts, lighted outdoor tennis/pickleball courts, marina, boat launch, boat slips, and beach volleyball. It also offers an area for outdoor meetings and events area. Other amenities offered are an indoor facility with a swimming pool, hot tub, game room, and workout/gym area. The facilities at Rumbling Bald resort are in excellent condition.

Chimney Rock State Park

Chimney Rock State Park is not Town-owned or operated but is worthy of mention. In 2007, the State of North Carolina purchased the 1,000 acres of privately developed Chimney Rock Park and added it to over 5,000 acres of other lands to form a new Chimney Rock State Park. This park has the potential of becoming the premier state park in the southeastern United States. This North Carolina State Park System consists of breathtaking views, hiking trails, monolithic rock formations, and large boulder fields for rock climbing, waterfalls, and beautiful natural areas. The park offers a snack bar, gift shop, and a 13-story elevator that has been built inside the mountain. A significant part of the property is within the Lake Lure municipal boundaries and can be viewed from the Town Center area.

Section 2 Summary

The Town of Lake Lure is fortunate to be able to offer the number of parks and recreational areas that it has. The Town has done a great job of making the most of its recreational opportunities. In addition to what the Town offers, there are a host of private recreation services providing activities such as fitness, off-road motorcycling, zip lines, water tours, horseback riding, camps for children, and fishing. As the Town continues to grow in both permanent and vacation/tourist populations, the Town will need to consider the possibility of changing from a passive recreation department to an active recreation department with a complete staff. The Town will continue to take good care of its recreation and park facilities and will make efforts to take advantage of partnerships and possible funding sources in the future.

Section 3

Recommendations and Implementation



Introduction

The Town of Lake Lure Parks, Recreation, Trails and Open Space Plan is based upon a review of the community; an analysis of existing programs and facilities, identification of user needs, and adherence to stated proposals and recommendations. The plan is designed to provide a framework from which the Town of Lake Lure can enhance its parks and recreation system. This plan is intended to be implemented over a ten-year period.

Instrumental to implementation of the plan is the identification of adequate funding. The Town of Lake Lure should continue to consider parks and recreation as an important part of its budget and earmark funds to continue this important service, as well as research outside funding sources.

In this section, we will attempt to transform the identified needs from Section 3 into recommendations with a possible implementation strategy. While we feel that all of the recommendations are important, we realize that some are more important than others, so as we identify each recommendation, we will give it some type of prioritization.

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Funding Sources (High Priority) - We have found that the key issue to the implementation of this plan involves the ability fund the recommendations. We recommend that the Town of Lake Lure utilize various means to plan for and fund these recommendations such as Capital Improvement Programs, general tax revenues, partnerships, user fees, sponsorships, and various grant programs (such as Land and Water Conservation Fund, the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund, Community Development Block Grant, Clean Water Management Trust Fund, and NCDOT grants). It should be noted that, where possible, the Town should strive to make facilities and activities self-supporting or self-funding.

Capital Improvement Program - This important budget tool allows the Town to plan for and prioritize large projects, and then fund them. Generally, capital improvement programs include all Town departments and show what services or facilities the Town will build or replace, where these services or facilities will be located, and when the construction or replacement will take place. Usually, these CIPs are five to ten-year plans.

User Fees and Sponsorships - Practically all recreation departments, whether active or passive, that were researched for the Rutherford County Recreation Plan, included the use of user fees and sponsorships. User fees are paid by the participant and help to offset the costs of the program in which the participant is engaging. Most municipalities charge a higher fee for participants from outside the municipal boundaries. An individual, business or industry generally pays sponsorships and often includes the team name, uniforms, and equipment to be used in team sports programs.

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

Rutherford County Tourism Development Authority - Rutherford County TDA's mission is to grow tourism in Rutherford County and drive visitors to our area. Their goals and commitment to those goals align with the Town's and making an ongoing partnership a necessity. The TDA has worked with representatives from municipalities in Rutherford County to create Rutherford Bound. Rutherford Bound collectively leverages the county's assets to provide a strategic public investment guide to ultimately increase visitation, help spawn new business, attract industry, and entice a younger workforce to relocate.

Grant Programs - Numerous grant programs can be utilized for parks and recreation programs. Federal programs include the Land and Water Conservation Fund (which can be used for land acquisition and park development) and Community Development Block Grants (which along with housing and infrastructure, may be used for recreation purposes). State programs, such as, Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (which provides a dollar-for-dollar match, up to \$500,000 for the acquisition, development and rehabilitation of parks and recreation facilities), Clean Water Management Trust Fund (which provides funding for acquisition of riparian property and greenways), and the North Carolina Department of Transportation can provide enhancement

funding for bikeways, sidewalks and other types of trails. The Town of Lake Lure can be commended for using grant funding amounting to over one million dollars over the last ten years to acquire and develop parkland for outdoor recreation activities such as Buffalo Creek Park.

Numerous grant programs, foundations, and funding sources could be utilized. It should also be noted that the Rutherford County Arts, Parks, and Recreation Plan requested that Rutherford County assist its municipalities financially for providing parks and recreation facilities and programming for residents outside of municipal boundaries.

Partnerships (High Priority) - Parks and recreation opportunities are provided in contemporary societies through a diverse collection of organizations that exist at the neighborhood, local, state, and national levels. Leisure service organizations meet the needs of the community by operating within a broad range of missions, motivations, structures, resources, and techniques. With such a large number of organizations, (public, private, and non-profit) playing vital roles in the community, coordination and cooperation between providers are crucial.

Partnerships have been formed with many local, public, quasi-public, or private entities. Opportunities for recreation in the Town of Lake Lure will continue to include partnerships with the following types of entities:

- Rutherford County Government
- Rutherford County TDA
- Hickory Nut Gorge Chamber
- Polk County Government
- Lake Lure Classical Academy
- Other Municipalities
- User Groups
- Adopt A Park Program
- Adopt A Trail Program
- Rutherford Regional Hospital or another medical provider (Health and Fitness)
- Private Sector (business, industry, developers, etc.)
- Churches
- Outdoor Recreation Groups (such as Rutherford Outdoor Coalition and Carolina Climbers Coalition)
- Land Conservation Groups (such as Conserving Carolina, Foothills Conservancy, and Nature Conservancy)
- Other Non-Profits (such as Boy Scouts, 4-5, youth Empowerment, etc.)
- Volunteers

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

- Liability issues that face both parties
- Addressing how both parties will try to reach an equity position of 50/50 cost sharing during a specific time frame.
- Addressing land use and management so neither party's environmental concerns are compromised.
- Joint capital cost development and how both parties need to be involved in the design component, equipment needs, and storage needs
- Ensure transparency through mission statements so there is a greater appreciation of what each party's agenda. The key is to get both parties to think on behalf of the overall community first, and their respective needs second.
- In the partnership agreement, each party needs to make a decision on how they will resolve conflicts with each other.
- The partnership agreement is a living document and needs to change in time based on the needs of the community. Facility usage and contribution philosophy will remain consistent in the agreement, but the conditions of the agreement may change.
- Contributions by each partner need to be tracked and shared with all parties while trying to achieve the cost-sharing goal within the period agreed upon.
- If both parties jointly develop a facility or park, a capital enhancement fund needs to be established for ongoing maintenance and facility upgrades.
- Usage within facilities, pricing of activities, schedule of events, equipment, operational issues, tracking process of partner contributions, and review sessions need to be evaluated periodically by all entities involved in the partnership.

A potential opportunity for the Town of Lake Lure to establish a partnership would be for the building and staffing of an indoor regional recreation center in the NC Highway 9 corridor. Potential partners would be Rutherford and Polk Counties, concessionaires, etc. An alternative opportunity for a partnership would be for a regional recreation center/library/senior center on the undeveloped portion of Town property along Island Creek Road.

Information and Communication (High Priority) - The Town of Lake Lure should continue its efforts to create means of information sharing with Lake Lure residents and visitors on what parks and recreational facilities and opportunities are available in the Lake Lure area. Posting the Parks, Recreation, Trails, and Open Space Plan, along with the minutes of the Parks and Recreation Board, on the Town website helps spread the word on current and planned facilities. The Town efforts to create other means of information sharing with brochures, signage, website notices, and newsletters should be continued. The Town should continue to work closely with the Rutherford County Tourism Development Authority (TDA) to ensure that information on parks and recreation facilities, opportunities available in the Lake Lure area, and where these opportunities can be accessed, as well as events planned in Lake Lure, are available to staff at the TDA-manned Lake Lure and Blue Ridge Foothills Visitor Center so that they can accurately inform visitors. These measures will help Lake Lure residents and visitors stay informed.

Future Development of Park Facilities

Morse Park Development and Amphitheater (High Priority)

A potential additional location for hiking trails in the Town Center is on Town-owned property on the slopes above the east side of Marina Bay, incorporating the beautiful upland Point of Rocks area. The Town developed a plan years ago to construct a pedestrian bridge from Morse Park Gardens to the Point of Rocks area across the channel to connect the pathways in Morse Park Gardens with new hiking trails in this Town-owned upland terrain that would allow a connection to the Town Center Walkway. Once completed, this pedestrian bridge would allow pedestrian traffic to flow around the Town Center area and potentially be an economic boost to the Town much as the Flowering Bridge has become. Morse Park offers the potential for additional level paved walking paths around the large pond in Morse Park Gardens, along Broad River, and to the new outdoor amphitheater area. This latter area in Morse Park offers the potential of larger cultural events that have previously been too large for the Morse Park Meadow alone. New plans for Morse Park include universal picnic tables, a universal playground, a restroom area, and additional parking.

Community/Regional Recreation Center (High Priority)

The Town of Lake Lure should actively pursue the development of recreational facilities on Town-owned property off Island Creek Road to include walking and hiking paths to connect with the existing trail system in Dittmer-Watts Nature Trail Park. The Town has provided long-term lease of land on this property, needed for both the construction of a permanent K-12 public charter school (Lake Lure Classical Academy or LLCA), completed in 2015, a gymnasium/performing arts auditorium, along with a ballfield and soccer field, added in 2018, to support LLCA athletics and performing arts. Potentially, an agreement could be reached between the Town of Lake Lure and LLCA to allow the use of LLCA gymnasium and athletic fields for organized public sports leagues after hours and not to conflict with LLCA use. Potentially, a similar agreement could be reached concerning hosting cultural events at the school.

Hopefully, the YMCA-type recreational facility could follow as soon as year-round demand develops, thereafter to provide additional recreation/sports opportunities which would complement each other, with the latter also providing a needed program of after-school care and activities. If a YMCA recreational complex does not materialize, the Town should consider a partnership with other local governments and potentially use PARTF (NC Parks & Recreation Trust Fund) and other grants to build and operate an indoor recreation center on the Island Creek Road property. This facility could also include a county branch library and a senior center to support both the school and the predominant senior demographic group in the Town. A school has the potential to dramatically change the demographics of the Town. The Town needs to consider providing adequate recreation facilities to support such a change.

An alternative to the afore mentioned plan could be the Town's consideration of offering a portion of the Island Creek Road property to Rutherford County government to build a suitably sized library and possibly a senior center. A partnership could be formed with Polk County

government. This would be more centrally located for citizens of western Rutherford County, northern Polk County and residents of Lake Lure and Chimney Rock Village. It would also support the nearby public charter school. The Mountains Branch Library on county-owned land on Bills Creek Road is undersized for the use it receives, and an alternative is needed.

Buffalo Creek Park and Trail Development (High Priority)

The Town of Lake Lure has successfully obtained grants since 2010 in cooperation with Carolina Mountain Land Conservancy (now Conserving Carolina) to purchase and develop a 30,325-acre tract of bottomland and upland terrain on Buffalo Creek and Weed patch Mountain on the northern border of the Town bordering Rumbling Bald Resort. A challenging 5-mile trail system professionally designed and constructed for dual hiking and mountain biking use, has been completed, with pedestrian bridges and a public trailhead 35-vehicle parking area off Buffalo Creek Road. The Town worked with Rumbling Bald Resort on their construction of a private trailhead parking area to access the park for their residents and guests from their property. An additional Recreational Trails Program (RTP) grant was obtained in 2013 to extend the trail system westward across, then Conserving Carolina property, some 8 miles to connect with the overlook destination of Eagle Rock on Shumont Mountain within Chimney Rock State Park. The construction of this professionally designed and built backcountry trail was completed in 2017. The 1,325 acres of land on which this Weed Patch Mountain Trail was built has been deeded by Conserving Carolina to the Town of Lake Lure and combined with the adjoining Buffalo Creek to make a 1,535 acre park one of the largest, if not largest municipal parks in North Carolina.

A new 1-mile long spur trail to a scenic overlook and a bouldering field is currently being constructed through a partnership with the Carolina Climbers Coalition. This new trail will be open for hiking and bouldering by 2023. Bicycles will not be permitted on this trail section, due to the steep terrain and narrow trail.

The Town should continue its goal of making Buffalo Creek Park a multi-day hiking and mountain biking destination to spur tourism by the construction of additional trails within the bounds of Buffalo Creek Park. The park should accommodate both casual ADA accessible walking Type 1 trails, as well as more demanding Type 2 and Type 3 hiking and mountain biking trails (perhaps in stacked loops). The Town should also work with climber groups such as Carolina Climbers Coalition to develop the potential of the large boulder field and cliff faces inside the park. Development of the Buffalo Creek parkland should maximize the use of grant funding and volunteer labor wherever possible, as well as active partnerships with Rumbling Bald Resort, the NC State Parks Division, and regional land conservation groups and hiking and other outdoor recreation groups.

Lake Lure Summits Trail (High Priority)

This new initiative should be supported and led by the Town in an effort to create more challenging hiking trails in Lake Lure. Intended to provide a 30+ mile hiking trail, the Lake Lure Summits Trail would traverse the ridge lines and connect the high points around Lake Lure. The Summits Trail would link up with trail systems being developed by Chimney Rock State Park and Conserving Carolina and connect such attractions as the World's Edge escarpment, Dittmer-Watts Nature Trail Park, Green Space, Buffalo Creek Park, Weed Patch Mountain Trail, and

Youngs Mountain Trail. It would also connect lookout points on Cane Creek Mountain, Rumbling Bald Mountain, Shumont Mountain, vista points above Buffalo Shoals Road, numerous access points from Lake Lure Town Center, Rumbling Bald Resort, and Chimney Rock Village, et al. See Map 3. The Lake Lure Summits Trail would be an integral part of the Hickory Nut Gorge State Trail, which is discussed below.

The planned Lake Lure Summits Trail would use existing trails and logging roads, as much as possible. Since the land this trail would traverse is either privately owned, State or Town owned, or land conservancy owned, the development of this Summits Trail will require the cooperation of all affected landowners for land easements and outdoor and hiking groups to help develop and maintain the trail. The Town of Lake Lure should take the lead in obtaining grant funding and promoting this challenging trail which has the potential to make Lake Lure not only a destination for lake related recreational activities, but also a destination for serious hikers and other outdoor enthusiasts.

Hickory Nut Gorge State Trail Development (High Priority)

In 2019, the State of North Carolina announced the establishment of the vision of a Hickory Nut Gorge State Trail in the Lake Lure and Hickory Nut Gorge area. Meetings were held with interested stakeholders, including the Town of Lake Lure, Chimney Rock State Park, Conserving Carolina, Carolina Climbers Coalition, among others. The purpose of these meetings was to lay out the proposed route for the envisioned trail system. It was agreed that the vision of the Lake Lure Summits Trail linking Buffalo Creek Park and Weed Patch Mountain Trail with the Dittmer Watts Nature Trail Park, Green Space, and Chimney Rock State Park would be a key part of the planned Hickory Nut State Trail System. This vision for a 100+ mile, Hickory Nut Gorge State Trail is moving forward, but much work needs to be done to bring this vision to full reality. Conserving Carolina has taken the lead in the actual fulfillment of this vision. The construction of the Weed Patch Mountain Trail (now part of Buffalo Creek Park), completion of the 2.1-mile, Youngs Mountain Trail in the northeast quadrant of Lake Lure along and the development of trail systems in Hickory Nut Gorge, including Bearwallow Mountain Trail, Florence Nature Preserve trails, Wildcat Rock Trail, and Trombatore Trail were all spearheaded by Conserving Carolina.

Applications have been submitted by the Town to get sections of the Dittmer-Watts Nature Trails and Green Space, as well as all of Buffalo Creek Park and the Weed Patch Mountain Trail designated as part of the Hickory Nut Gorge Trail System.

Luremont Trail (High Priority)

Plans should proceed on the development of a system of hiking trails in the Luremont area, utilizing Town-owned property and public rights-of-way originally laid out and platted for trails in the 1920s by Earl Draper, the planner of the original Town of Lake Lure. The Luremont Trail would be a one to two mile trail that would connect to the Town Walkway and potentially to the Cane Creek Mountain area of Chimney Rock State Park. This new trail would allow visitors to enjoy a walk in a wooded surrounding and provide a gorgeous view of Chimney Rock.

Development of a Tent Camping Facility in Lake Lure (High Priority)

In 2017, the Town of Lake Lure purchased a 3.88-acre parcel on Boys Camp Road that backs up to Broad River below the Flowering Bridge with access to Lake Lure. This land has been earmarked as a parks and recreation site for a tent camping facility. It was recognized that there was a need for such a campground for outdoor enthusiasts wishing to spend their nights in Lake Lure in tents, rather than in a motel or B & B. This offers the town user fees and the potential for non-motorized watercraft rental from the site. Efforts should continue to seek grant funding to bring this to reality.

Pedestrian Bridge between Morse Park and Boys Camp Road Campground

A pedestrian Bridge is being researched as an option to connect the Boys Camp Road property to Morse Park. The pedestrian bridge would be an attraction for many visitors to enjoy. The bridge would be ADA compliant and would provide visitors a view of the Broad River from above. The connection to Boys Camp Road property would allow campers to access Morse Park, the Flowering Bridge, the Town Walkway, beach, and more. It would also allow Morse Park visitors to enjoy a picnic area on the other side of the river.

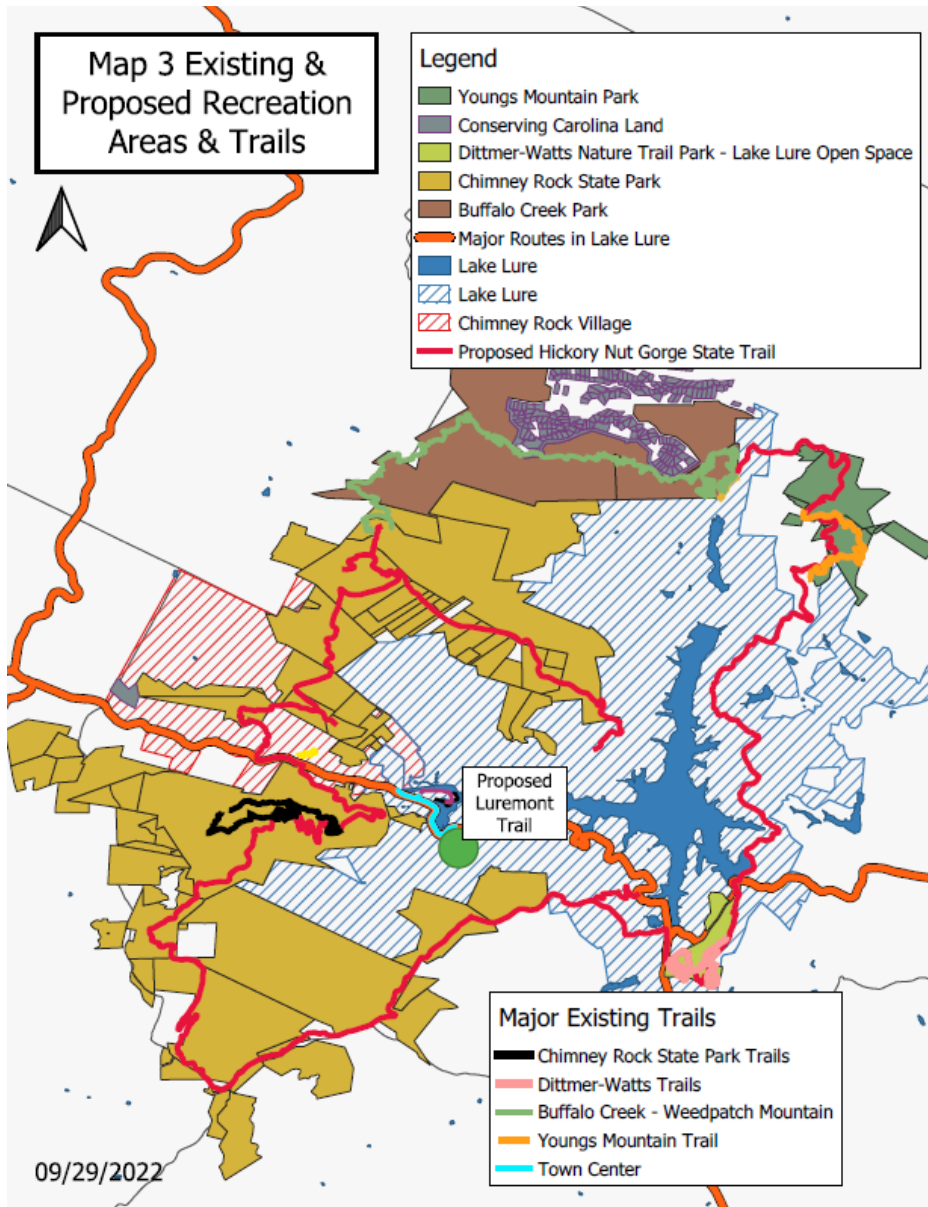
Enhancement of Walking Opportunities (High Priority)

National surveys, as well as the survey used to form the basis of this Plan, have pointed out that walking (in many forms) is the number one recreational activity for all ages and contributes greatly to health and wellness. The Town of Lake Lure should consider providing as many walking and hiking opportunities as possible in all areas of the Town. Walking opportunities can be provided by constructing walking trails, hiking trails, walkways, sidewalks, trails along greenways, as well as other types. Map 4 identifies existing walking areas, and shows possibilities for extensions of these areas, or new areas. Some of the areas identified are:

- Funding and construction by a NCDOT Project in partnering with Chimney Rock Village of a continuation of the Town Center Walkway westward along US 64/74A/NC 9 Highway from its current terminus at Boys Camp Road onward to Chimney Rock Village
- Funding and construction by a NCDOT Project of a paved walkway that would connect The Bald Mountain Golf Course with Apple Valley Golf Course along Buffalo Creek Road. A paved pathway would also offer walking opportunity to the residents of the planned senior living facility to be built off Buffalo Creek midway along this route.

Strategically Located Parks and Facility Development (Medium Priority)

The Town of Lake Lure should additionally look for other opportunities for parkland, greenway, or open space acquisition for future development to serve the needs of town residents and guests in other areas not now served by nearby parks and recreation facilities.



Standards for New Development (High Priority)

One of the ways that Lake Lure can ensure open space in the future is to require new developments to set aside land for open space, greenways, and recreational areas. The Lake Lure Subdivision Regulations would have to be amended after study and recommendations by the Community Development staff and the Planning and Zoning Board. Lake Lure should review what other resort areas with high growth are doing to manage this issue.

Senior Programming/Senior Center (High Priority)-

Although the Town of Lake Lure should try to meet the needs of all its citizens, one age group it should try to enhance activities for is its senior citizens. Lake Lure is well known for the number of retirees that have located here, as evidenced in the 2020 U.S. Census data. The Town should take the lead and try to provide programs and activities for its seniors. Such programs could include organized walking, hiking, field trips, tours, lake tours, home tours, art classes, and other cultural endeavors. Leagues or team sports such as golf, senior softball, tennis, and pickleball could be offered. Although private groups currently provide some of these activities, the Town of Lake Lure could collaborate with the Rutherford County Senior Center to enhance senior programming. Town government should be proactive in pursuing a joint effort with Rutherford (and possibly Polk) County for a branch senior center to provide appropriate programs for western Rutherford and northern Polk County residents.

Alternative Programming and Activities (Medium Priority)

Lake Lure, because of its geography, water resources, and other natural resources, should investigate, plan for, and develop alternative types of outdoor recreation. The Broad River below Lake Lure is perfect for the development of a paddle trail for kayaks and other non-motorized watercraft. Buffalo Creek Park offers the potential for additional rock climbing and bouldering, as the need arises. There are other areas ideal for hiking, mountain biking, and road biking. It is recognized that with limited staff, the development of these outdoor activities likely will not occur without the help of volunteers or interested organizations. Volunteers and interested organizations will not be inclined to develop these types of recreation without resolving liability issues or having active Town support.

Site Specific Planning for Lake Lure's Parks and Recreation Facilities (Medium Priority)

Lake Lure has developed site-specific master plans for each of its existing parks and recreation facilities, as well as proposed sites for future parks and recreation/cultural development. The North Carolina Parks and Recreation Trust Fund Grant Application describes a Park Master Plan as a long-range plan for one park that contains a site analysis, a description of the community's recreational needs, property acquisition boundaries, and the proposed location of all capital improvements. At a minimum, the Park Master Plan should contain a site analysis, recreational needs, program description, physical needs, cost projections, site plans, and illustrations. The master plan development should include public

involvement. Such a Master Plan has been developed and adopted for Morse Park. Work is needed to complete similar master plans for other Lake Lure parks.

Personnel and Maintenance (High priority)

Because Lake Lure is a small Town with limited Town staff and financial resources, especially with major infrastructure needs pending, Lake Lure's parks and recreational opportunities are passive. The Town now has a fully staffed recreation department for planning, programming, coordination, and maintenance. The limited number of staff does a commendable and professional job with the needs of parks, recreation, and lake maintenance and improvements. The Town relies additionally upon volunteers or non-profits for significant programming and park maintenance. The recent creation of a Parks, Recreation, and Lake Department was a good first step, but the addition of a program coordinator, in addition to the current Parks, Recreation and Trails Coordinator and/or additional maintenance personnel is needed in meeting parks and recreation needs of the Town of Lake Lure.

Coordinate Efforts with Lake Advisory Board

To maintain the health, safety, and beauty of Lake Lure, any activities or programs affecting the Lake property should be coordinated with the Lake Advisory Board.

Section 4 Summary

As stated earlier, this plan is to be implemented over the next ten years. However, as with all plans, changes and revisions should occur as they are anticipated. This plan and its recommendations should be reviewed annually by the Parks and Recreation Board and staff, to review what recommendations have been implemented, which recommendations need to be addressed in the short term and to determine if any changes or new recommendations need to be addressed or included within this plan.

The Town of Lake Lure needs to continue to make a positive commitment to parks and recreation. Parks and recreation funding is an easy mark for budget cuts. The Parks, Recreation, and Lake Department leadership and Parks and Recreation Board should be proactive in promoting or lobbying for needed parks and recreation facilities and programming.