



# RECREATION NEEDS ASSESSMENT

1999 - 2009

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## INTRODUCTION

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Participation in recreation and leisure activities can elevate the quality of life of Spartanburg citizens. Recreation is not an amenity to be afforded only by the affluent, but is a basic necessity which benefits individuals, their community, the environment and economy. Recreation promotes physical and psychological well being and interaction between families, communities and work groups. It provides open space that enhances the desirability of an area and contributes to the health and safety of its inhabitants. Many prospective residents consider the quality of recreation services when evaluating an area in which to live. Lifetime residents of the County will appreciate the long-term physical and emotional benefits of sports and leisure activities. Recreation must not be viewed as an optional expense but as necessary investment in the future viability of the Spartanburg community.<sup>1</sup>

The Spartanburg County Parks and Recreation Department is a relatively young department having been established in 1989. Its formation came as a result of a joint agreement between the City and County of Spartanburg whereby the City transferred the financial and operational responsibility for the City Parks and Recreation Department to the County. In recent years, the County has struggled to define an achievable role for their Recreation Department. The large county size, small staff and limited funding have made it difficult to provide quality programs and facilities throughout the County. Development of the County's facilities for active and passive recreation has not kept pace with the rapid growth of the region. Active recreation has already outgrown the available County resources and access to passive facilities is limited. There are a multitude of small facilities, but multi-purpose parks with a variety of passive and active spaces and facilities are lacking.

In order to proceed it is helpful to understand the history of recreation in this County. This is not the first recreation needs assessment that has been prepared for the area. A similar study conducted in 1966 proposed four major parks for the City of Spartanburg and four larger parks to serve the outlying areas of the County. Thirty-three years have passed with little investment by the County or municipalities for parks and recreation. Prior to the 1989 agreement, Spartanburg County had contributed funding support of \$500,000 per year to help finance park and recreation services into the suburban and rural areas. When the transition was implemented, the City gradually decreased its \$1,249,074 per year commitment to zero by 1994. The city has made no financial provisions for parks and recreation since 1994 and the County has not appropriated funds for park development in the budget for the last three years.<sup>2</sup> City and County representatives need to discuss and determine appropriate contributions to be made by each party to achieve the desired level of recreation throughout Spartanburg County.

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<sup>1</sup> The Benefits of Parks and Recreation

<sup>2</sup> Spartanburg County Comprehensive Plan (Draft)

It is time to re-evaluate the existing recreation system to determine what is working efficiently and what requires modification to best serve the residents of Spartanburg County. Some improvements have been made in recent years such as the development of parks like Happy Hollow, the North Spartanburg Complex and the Old Cannon Road Soccer Complex. Also, Duncan Park, Cleveland Park and multiple lakes offer significant potential for recreational use. However the small steps taken so far do not replace the need for a cohesive approach to recreation development across the County. The growing population and scarcity of land available for recreational use demand that action be taken now. Land acquisition efforts for four large recreation complexes to serve the County have already begun. It is imperative that these efforts continue until the County owns sufficient land and has sufficient funds to build parks to serve the recreational needs of its residents.

## **PURPOSE**

This recreation needs assessment was prepared as a guide to assist Spartanburg County in developing parks and recreation facilities over the next decade. In order to meet the demands for recreation offerings, Spartanburg County must be proactive. The plan includes an inventory of all parks, schools and facilities in the County as well as a prioritized action plan and a statement of capital improvement costs. Projections of need are soundly based on an analysis of current trends, community input, and a thorough resource inventory. The master plan, which addresses park needs for 1999, 2004 and 2009, illustrates the County's renewed commitment to provide recreation services for Spartanburg County residents. However, the plan will only prove to be a worthwhile investment if its recommendations are seriously considered and strategically implemented.

## **STUDY FINDINGS**

The results of this study indicate that a total of 1 Regional Park, 1 Community Park, 4 Regional Recreation Complexes, 38 Neighborhood Parks and numerous additional facilities will be needed to serve Spartanburg County's growing population in the year 1999. The results of the mail-out survey and public workshops conducted as part of this study showed that residents of the county requested a diversity of facilities at recreation sites. This study recommends that multi-use parks with facilities and programs aimed at serving a variety of interests and age groups be constructed at centralized locations throughout the county. A regional approach is suggested, concentrating first on creating large recreation centers strategically located to equally serve all county residents, then attempting to respond to more localized recreation needs with smaller parks and facilities.

Recommendations for current park and facility development represent a capital investment of approximately \$101,289,320. To meet the need of the projected growth in the year 2004, one Regional Park and three Neighborhood Parks will be needed. One Regional Park, 3 Community Parks and 6 Neighborhood Parks are recommended by the year 2009. Capital improvement costs for 2004 and 2009 are \$6,257,311 and \$10,757,460, respectively. It is important to realize that these numbers are conservative. Standards, used to compare the level of recreation provided to other counties around the nation, have been adjusted downward considerably in an attempt to create realistic recreation goals.