

RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE

INTRODUCTION

Most of this element is an updated summary of the 2000 Boone County Parks and Recreation Master Plan:

Purpose

Boone County is faced with the reality of providing parks and recreational opportunities to a population base that is rapidly expanding. Therefore, the Boone County Fiscal Court and City Councils are forced to make difficult decisions regarding services to be provided and parks that are needed and techniques to be used to develop, finance, operate and maintain park areas, facilities and recreation programs. With the impending rapid growth of the County population, it is critical for the Fiscal Court to act quickly to secure the land that will be the future parkland for the County. Since the completion of the 1989 Boone County Open Space Plan, major improvements have been made including the development of England-Idlewild Park and Central Park. The land for these parks was the result of opportunities that presented themselves. The County would be in much better condition to serve its citizens with the needed park land if the County had taken a pro-active approach and implemented the 1989 Plan. The result is the need to catch up on the needed land as well as act upon the demand to acquire land for the future parks.

The purpose of the Boone County Parks and Recreation Master Plan is to identify parks and recreation needs throughout the area and to develop strategies that could be implemented to provide services consistent with the existing potential resources and demands of the area.

Why are parks important?

Here are some reasons why this Master Planning effort, additional planning and the future of Parks and Recreation in Boone County are very important:

- The Parks and Recreation Department manages approximately 976 acres of land designated for parks and recreation purposes. The schools operate several additional areas of campus and recreational area. Boone County cooperates with the Cities of Walton and Florence in the operations of parks within their jurisdictions. These agencies have the responsibility to manage this land in an efficient manner that is consistent with the health, safety and welfare of the community.
- For many residents, parks provide their only access to the natural environment. For all residents they provide natural and active outdoor recreational opportunities.
- The quality of a community's parks and recreation system is viewed as one of the indicators of the overall quality of life.
- Property values around parks tend to be considerably higher than other areas, thereby making an annual contribution to the community in the form of higher property tax revenues, as well as additional profits to the owners at point of sale. More valuable properties also tend to be maintained at a higher level, improving the appearance of the communities.
- Parks preserve important cultural and natural features for future generations to enjoy.

PREVIOUS STUDIES

The 2000 Boone County Parks and Recreation Master Plan replaces the 1989 Boone County Open Space Master Plan

Natural Areas Inventory of Boone and Gallatin Counties, 1989

This study was completed in December of 1989 by the Kentucky State Nature Preserves Commission. The natural area inventory utilized four approaches within the counties. One - gathering existing information, two - examining maps and aerial photographs, three - conducting their own aerial surveys and four - conducting their own ground surveys. The first approach, gathering existing information, reviewed flora and fauna, soils, geology, physiology, numerous published and unpublished sources. Individual interviews were also conducted of knowledgeable persons within the study areas. The second approach, examining maps and aerial photographs, used soil, geologic and topographic maps to identify potential natural areas. The third approach, conducting aerial surveys, focused on using aerial surveys to examine possible Potential Natural Areas (PNA) in the study area. This was beneficial in narrowing sites to be ground checked in the future. Finally the fourth approach, conducting own ground surveys, investigated possible PNA's for natural significant features. These PNA's were grouped into four categories depending on the information gathered at the site. The four categories were, one - significant, two - notable, three - eliminated, and four - in need of further investigation. Sites under the significant and notable categories were designated as areas to be further protected from future development. The survey resulted in 55 PNA's being identified in both Boone and Gallatin Counties. Of those 55 PNA's four received a significant designation and two received a notable designation. The final

recommendations of the author are that these notable and significant designated areas should be protected in the future from possible development.

Northern Kentucky's Greenspace, Opportunities to Enhance Quality of Life and Economic Development, March 1996, By The Northern Kentucky City And County Administrators Association.

The Executive Summary indicates that the Northern Kentucky City and County Administrators Association (NKCCAA) brought together representatives from the development and environmental communities in order to determine whether or not northern Kentucky has an adequate amount of publicly controlled greenspace and what steps should be taken to ensure adequate amounts for the future. Based on data taken from comprehensive plans and geographical information systems databases from all three counties, the committee members unanimously reached the following conclusions:

- Boone, Campbell and Kenton Counties taken together currently have publicly controlled greenspace to meet only 50% of the amount required by a population determined by commonly accepted planning standards.
- As the population increases and the amount of undeveloped land decreases, this deficiency will become steadily greater.
- It is essential that an effective and properly funded public program for the acquisition and management of public land be established for the three county northern Kentucky areas. Their report indicated that Boone County has 1,270 acres available and recommends 2,046. Kenton County has 2,242 with a recommended amount of 5,550. Campbell has 1,677 acres with 3,026 recommended. This results in a total of 5,197 acres of open space including neighborhood, community and district parks, public school grounds and public recreational land in the three counties. This report recommended a total of 10,622 acres or roughly 50% of the amount required. "Northern Kentucky has no comprehensive, integrated plan for the acquisition and management of public greenspace. The increase in demand for recreation, "active and passive" will only compound this problem. Both large spaces and small spaces are needed. The kind that should be saved first are those that are the most useful to people – the spaces that are closest to them.
- The study went on to analyze the need for individual parks and recreation facilities in Boone County based on accepted national standards. It indicated that there are very large shortages in the amount of jogging/running trails, bicycling trails, hunting areas, canoeing areas, swimming facilities, hiking/walking trails, horseback riding trails, fishing areas and for large park areas.
- The plan recommended a process of identifying and evaluating the potential for development and for preservation of various areas throughout the County. It is recommended that this could be accomplished through a three-county board to acquire, develop programs and monitor the preservation of open space. It noted that the source of funding will be a limiting factor for this body. It states that the most vital component of a long range strategic plan will be the establishment of a reliable source of adequate funds and an effective broad based board representing all segments of the community.

A Strategy for Meeting Boone County's Recreation Future, March 1997

The following study was prepared by the Boone County Parks and Recreation Department with the Boone County Planning Commission. A citizen committee identified four areas of recommendation for meeting the County's recreation future.

- **Create a Park Foundation:** This foundation is to be citizen based to better meet the public needs. The goal is to insure continuous revenue support and future land acquisition, capital improvement, and operations and maintenance of the park facilities.
- **Funding Sources:** The Committee is of the opinion that Boone County needs a long term steady source of revenue. The County should not rely strictly on conventional methods of land acquisition for future park use. Local and government park foundations should encourage business districts and residential communities to create local funds to be utilized by parks within these localities.
- **Land Acquisition:** The County is doing well in providing the needed amount of parks recommended within the 1989 Master Plan. However, there is greater need for neighborhood parks to be developed (in accordance with the Master Plan). The Planning Commission should provide incentives and regulations to encourage developers and builders to integrate parks into their future plans.
- **Short Term Operations:** The goal is to make existing parks as useful as possible and to address the needs of the public by:
 - Providing access to school amenities.
 - Developing neighborhood groups to monitor existing parks.
 - Enhancing existing facilities.

Western Boone County Study, 1998

Recognizing that the access, topography, urban services river frontage and general character are quite different in Western Boone County (WBC) than Eastern Boone County, the purpose of this study was to recommend a different way to develop this area that was consistent with its distinct characteristics. The general direction of the study

recommendations was that the Planning Commission, through a list of projects, take a more pro-active approach and a less regulatory approach to addressing the future of WBC. Most of the recommended projects were designed to work directly with the land owners and affected people on a smaller scale. The study concluded that the traditional planning approach of a large land use plan and extensive regulations is not the best way to guide the future of WBC. The proposed list included the following projects that relate to the delivery of parks and recreation services:

- Form a non-profit Recreation Foundation that has been recommended by other planning efforts and conduct an active search for riverfront public access/recreation properties. The focus would be toward county acquisition or tax benefit/contribution through the Recreation Foundation.
- Develop a preservation plan for the Middle Creek Valley through concentrated property owner meetings and discussions.
- Begin a process where Boone County and the Planning Commission take an active role in approaching the State Tourism Cabinet to create a plan for Big Bone Lick State Park:
 - Re-plan the park layout and theme.
 - Consider expansion plans for the park, including a land connection to the Ohio River.
 - Involve Tri-Ed because the parks are a quality of life issue for N. Ky.
 - Explore potential for including corporate retreat facilities.
- Design a conceptual path system connecting large green areas and stream valleys of Western Boone County.

Natural Areas Inventory

The Boone County Conservation District contacted Dr. Bill Bryant with Thomas More College about the Boone County Parks and Recreation Master Plan Study. They requested Dr. Bryant's opinion on the natural areas in Boone County that should be considered under this plan. Dr. Bryant has conducted extensive studies and surveys on natural areas in Boone County, as well as other areas in Kentucky, Ohio and Indiana. The Boone County Conservation District often seeks his opinion regarding natural resources issues. Dr. Bryant's priority list for areas of concern in Boone County includes:

- Middle Creek Valley – Highly significant and once proposed for trail connecting these lands.
 - Boone County Cliffs State Nature Preserve and surrounding lands.
 - Dinsmore Woods State Nature Preserve and surrounding lands.
 - Split Rock – Illinois glacial material of historical significance.
- Bald Point – off Hathaway Road, near Camp Michael Boy Scout Camp – glacial material and prairie remnants.
- Steep Gut Creek (on maps listed as Steep Creek) – area owned by Don Stites – Illinois glacial material, steep alluvial soils and unique vegetation.
- Petersburg – Indian mound areas.
- Big Bone Lick State Park – land around the park.
- Elijah Creek – Carter Dolwick Preserve owned by the Hillside Trust and surrounding lands.
- Intact forested slopes along the Ohio River – should be kept in forest due to underlying Kope formations and possibility of slides.
- Beech-Maple forest communities – virtually gone from this area. Were some remnants on East Bend Road, privately owned, and a section near the interchange of I-75 and I-71, privately owned.

NEEDS ANALYSIS

General

The Needs Analysis consists of the following elements:

- An analysis of the participation levels of programs offered by the Parks and Recreation Department.
- The classification of existing Parks and Recreation facilities into standard park classifications.
- A discussion of the Parks and Recreation area needs by park types.
- A discussion of the geographic distribution of parks and recreation facilities.
- A summary of the public workshops.
- A summary of the parks and recreation surveys that were accomplished in 1996 and 1999.
- A facility needs analysis based upon accepted standards and guidelines and past experience of the Consultant.
- A summary of the overall parks and recreation facility needs.

Parks and Recreation Classification System

The purpose of developing a park and recreation classification system for a community is to evaluate the total recreation opportunities that are being made available to the public. Too often, a community will "meet the standard" in terms of acreage, but it may meet this provision through only a single park that does not provide for the entire County. Therefore, a system of parks should be developed that provides a combination of local space such as mini parks, neighborhood parks and community parks with county-wide space such as linear parks, county parks, and support by regional or state parks.

The parks and recreation facilities inventory in the previous section identified each park by its park type category and also listed the number of specific facilities that are located within each park. **Table 7.1** defines each park type by its typical size and service area of each category, population served by each park, typical features and facilities, and the desirable characteristics of each park in these categories. The categories and descriptions were adapted from the Recreation, Park and Open Space Standards and Guidelines that is published by the National Recreation and Parks Association, 1987 and the previous studies prepared for Boone County such as the 1989 Open Space Plan and the 1995 Comprehensive Plan.

A park system is generally reviewed and analyzed as a composite of recreation areas, each existing to meet a particular public need. Based on a review of national and regional standards, a parks and recreation area classification system has been developed to affect the actual conditions and opportunity for Boone County and the communities contained within it.

Survey Results

1996 Survey

A survey was completed in 1996 with the results printed in the 1997 report entitled "A Strategy for Meeting Boone County's Recreation Future" which was prepared by the Boone County Planning Commission and the Boone County Parks and Recreation Department. This project was overseen by a citizen board formed specifically for this purpose. This board, known as the Recreation Advisory Committee, provided guidance in preparation of the report. A survey was mailed to 1000 randomly selected Boone County residents. The results of the survey indicated that a combination of state and local taxes with 28% and land donation of 24% were most preferred funding methods. The most utilized park in Boone County was Boone Woods with 51% of the survey respondents indicating they used this park. This survey found that 30% of the respondents believed that an indoor swimming pool was needed and 27% believed that an outdoor swimming pool was needed within Boone County. The other most needed outdoor facilities included more bike trails and horse trails.

1999 Survey

A survey was included in the July issue in the "What's Happening" newsletter which was sent to every household in Boone County. In addition, this survey was handed out at the Boone County Fair. A total of 595 surveys were returned through these methods. In addition, four thousand surveys were distributed through the Boone County School System and completed by school students and their families. This summary is from the initial sample of 595 from the "What's Happening" and another sample of 1056 school students. Some of the key results from this survey include the following. In these summaries, the first number is from the "What's Happening" sample and the second number is from the youth sample.

Summary of Parks and Recreation Facility Needs

Table 7.2 indicated acreage needs, while the surveys demonstrated the following needs:

- General shortage of park land in the areas of Hebron and north of I-275, the southern part of Florence to Richwood and Union and the Verona areas.
- The need for a wide variety of specific recreation facilities in primarily the same locations.
- The strong desire for more open space and land to be preserved as future green space and some land to remain as natural areas.
- The development of non-traditional activities such as skate parks, BMX tracks, and similar facilities.
- The realization that, as the population grows dramatically, the demand for park land, recreation facilities and programs will also need to expand dramatically to meet the County's demands and expectations.
- A very high demand for an outdoor aquatic center.
- High demand for all types of trails including jogging, walking, nature, bicycle and horseback.
- Demand for open space for the future.
- Demand for indoor activities including an indoor swimming pool, youth center, gymnasium and other activities.

**Table 7.1
Recommended Park and Recreation Area Classification System**

PARK TYPE	TYPICAL SIZE & SERVICE AREA	ACRES/1,000 POPULATION	TYPICAL FEATURES/FACILITIES	DESIRABLE CHARACTERISTICS
LOCAL SPACE:				
Mini-Park (MP)	+/- 1 Acre 1/8 – 1/2 Mile Service Radius	0.5 Acre/1,000	Typical facilities may include playgrounds, small multi-use court area, and benches.	Most often provided in association with school facilities. May also provide as needed to serve high density neighborhoods where children do not have adequate yard space.
Neighborhood Park (NP)	5-15 Acres 1/2-1.0 mile service radius. To serve a population up to 5,000	2.0 Acres/1,000	Suited for intense development. Typical facilities include field games, court games, playground apparatus, small pools, small neighborhood centers, drinking fountains, and restrooms.	Easily accessible to neighborhood population (safe walking and bike distance) May be developed as park/school facility or in conjunction with service agency facility. May not be needed in areas served by "community", "county" or "regional" parks.
Community Parks (CmP)	25-50+ Acres 1.0-2.0 mile service radius to serve several neighborhoods with populations up to 20,000+.	2.5 Acres/1,000	Typical facilities include all listed for Neighborhood Parks plus; major swimming pool, field or court game complex, major recreation or community center, etc. May be an area of natural quality for picnicking, walking, etc.	Capable of providing a range of intensive recreational or provides one or two activities that attract users from multi-neighborhood area. Park should ideally be located at or near a school. May meet needs of neighborhood park for users within a 1-mile radius.
Linear Park (LP)	N/A	N/A	Area developed for one or more varying modes of recreational travel (pleasure driving, hiking, walking, jogging, biking, etc.). May also include active play areas, fitness courses, picnicking areas, etc.	Built on natural corridors, such as utility rights-of-way, bluff lines, creek beds, and roads that link other components of the park system or other community facilities (schools, libraries, etc.) with park areas.
Special Use-Local (SUL)	Serves community-wide area.	N/A	Area for specialized or single purpose recreational activities, such as golf courses, plazas in commercial areas, major pools, riverfront park areas, indoor facilities, etc.	Area should be located to meet the special needs of the intended use.
COUNTY SPACE				
County Parks (CoP)	200 + Acres 5-6 mile service radius to serve most of the County.	5.0 Acres/1,000	County operated large properties that contain some active recreation facilities and a large percentage of natural or geographical features. Target size of 200 or more acres with 25% developed for active recreation. Located in rural areas but readily accessible to most of the county population. Travel time within 20 minutes. Should be located off of major roads. Destination-oriented parks. Should connect to linear park system.	Capable of providing a range of intensive recreational facilities; Should include unique natural areas with ecological interest. May meet needs of neighborhood and/or community park for users within a 2-mile radius. May include views of the Ohio River.
Nature Parks (NaP)	Size as needed to protect the resource.		Majority of park to remain in its natural state. Facilities should support nature education activity including: habitat enhancement, trails, nature centers, interpretive signage, parking and restrooms. The park should be of sufficient size to protect the natural resource and provide a buffer from offsite conditions.	Should include unique natural areas with ecological interest. Typical size should be over 50 acres for management efficiency. May be smaller in urban areas such as the Florence Nature Park.
C. MULTI-COUNTY/REGIONAL SPACE				
Regional or State Park (SP)	500 + Acres 30 + mile service radius to serve several counties or region of the state.		State or multi-county agency operated park with large size. Attracts visitors from multiple counties. Contains some active facilities but primarily large areas of natural environments. Main attractions could include a lodge, outstanding natural features, historical features, trail system or other unique characteristics.	Includes unique natural, cultural or ecological features.

**Table 7.2
Parks and Recreation Needs by Park Type**

Park Type	Existing Developed Acres	Recommended Acres/1000 Population	2000 Recommended Acres	2000 Surplus/Deficit(-)	2010 Recommended Acres	2010 Surplus(+)/Deficit(-)	2020 Recommended Acres	2020 Surplus(+)/Deficit(-)
Mini-Park	4	0.5	42.5	-38.5	56	-52	69.5	-65.5
Neighborhood	51	2	170	-119	224	-173	278	-227
Community	45	2.5	212.5	-167.5	280	-235	347.5	-302.5
County	221	5	425	-204	560	-339	695	-474
Special Use	39	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Linear	0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total	360	10	850	-529	1120	-799	1390	-1069
<i>Population projections provided by the Boone County Planning Commission</i>								
	2000 = 85,000							
	2010 = 112,000							
	2020 = 139,000							

COUNTY WIDE RECOMMENDATIONS

Future Vision

The vision for the future of Parks and Recreation in Boone County, as determined from the surveys, workshops, community input and the Consultant's recommendations, include the following components:

- A new family outdoor aquatic center is developed in a location that will serve a large portion of the County.
- Land is acquired for the development of parks in areas that currently need parks and also land will be set aside for the expansion of these parks as the population grows.
- Develop a system of greenways, hike and bikeways and linkages that connect the parks, schools, playgrounds, neighborhoods, appropriate historic resources, and green spaces throughout the County.
- An indoor recreation and community center is developed which allows for a variety of active and leisure recreation opportunities.
- Unique or significant natural areas of the County are studied and preserved.
- A conservancy is formed with the purpose of soliciting and acquiring land and financial resources that can be used to implement the recommendations of the Master Plan.

Land / New Parks

The following are the recommendations for the acquisition of land and the development of new parks. This information was based upon public comment and upon the completion of the tabulation of the surveys and has been updated to reflect changes and developments since 2000. **Table 7.3**, **Table 7.4**, and **Table 7.5** describe the final costs and assigned priorities of the planned projects.

- North Central Area North of I-275 – The plan recommended the development of three small neighborhood parks that would be strategically located adjacent to the subdivisions and which would provide playgrounds, picnic shelters, game courts and other neighborhood related recreation activities for close to home access. These small neighborhood parks would also be activity nodes along a larger Sand Run Creek Watershed Park, which is recommended for the County to obtain control of this unique resource that would connect the subdivisions to Route 8 and the Ohio River.
- Riverfront Park – One of the best locations for a large portion of the County to have access to the Ohio River is in this same general area in the northernmost portion of the County. Some of the flat floodplain area should be developed into a riverfront access park, which would provide views of the river, picnic areas, boat launch ramps and related river oriented facilities. In 2004, Boone County opened its first riverfront park - Giles Conrad Riverfront Park. Located along Route 8, approximately ½ mile east of KY 237, the 43-acre park has a 1.6-acre walking trail, playground, basketball court and picnic shelter. Boone County has a lease agreement on the Conrad Park parcel and has also recently acquired title to the adjacent 89-acre riverfront parcel for future expansion of the park. In addition, the recommended and Potential Green Areas Map indicated lands at Federal Hall in the northwestern portion of the County that could provide access to the riverfront. Also, East Woolper Creek, watershed and specifically the Split Rock area provides another opportunity for the development of a riverfront park. This plan recommended at least one neighborhood park and a community park be developed in Florence, west of Interstate 275 and south of Burlington Pike, and between Florence and the Burlington area. This may be difficult since much of this land is already developed but the search should begin for appropriate 8-15 acre and 25-50 acre parcels, which can be developed into neighborhood and community park space.

- This plan also recommended the development of a neighborhood park in the area east of I-75 in Florence. In 2001, the City of Florence acquired an 8-acre parcel on the north side of KY 18 and east of I-71/75. Following a community survey, the park was named Stringtown Park; it is currently under development.
- A new recreation/community center and aquatic center should be developed in the Florence area. In 2003, Florence developed and opened the Florence Family Aquatic Center on Ewing Boulevard just south of the Florence Government Center. Furthermore, the old YMCA on Main Street has been privately purchased and is currently being run by the county. The YMCA has a new facility on KY 18 (R.C. Durr YMCA) that replaced the Union and Florence YMCA facilities.
- The Plan recommended that a new community park should be developed in the area just west of I-275 in the vicinity of Mt. Zion Road extending south to Frogtown Road. This park would be similar in nature to Boone Woods Park in providing a wide variety of activities that would serve both the community wide needs for the area from Richwood up to Florence.
- The Plan recommended that land should be set aside for a community park in the Union area. This would be developed as an 8-15 acre neighborhood park but should have land for future development of up to 25-50 acres, similar to a Boone Woods type park. In 2002, Boone County acquired 31 acres adjacent to the existing YMCA pool property on U.S. 42 just south of Hathaway Road. The county has taken over operation of the pool from the YMCA and is currently planning a community park that will incorporate the pool.
- A large County park is recommended that should be located in the area between U.S. 42 and I-75 and north of the I-71 split. This is basically in the area between Walton and Union. This would be a 200 acre park. Ultimately this would include a recreation/community center and a second family aquatic center as the need develops. In 2002, Boone County acquired 100 acres along I-71 north of Verona. The county will lease an adjacent 67-acre parcel from the Walton-Verona School District to create a 167-acre tract. Planning for this large County park is underway.
- The park in Petersburg is recommended to be expanded to have a wider variety of facilities so that it serves as a neighborhood park of 8-15 acres.
- A park should be developed in the Belleview area that would be a neighborhood park initially with land available for a future community park.
- Upgrade the park at Big Bone Landing to a neighborhood park, which would require the development of additional local recreation facilities. The County and this plan recommend that the State expand this State Park and extend their land mass over to the Big Bone Landing area so that the park will provide Ohio River frontage and facilities that will make this State Park a better draw and provide the facilities that are needed to serve this portion of the County and State. In 2001, the Kentucky State Parks acquired a 23-acre mobile home park and several smaller parcels at the northwest corner of Big Bone Lick State Park. The park now totals approximately 525 acres. In 2004, Phase I of a new museum and visitors center opened at the park. These acquisitions and improvements were paid for by \$1,000,000 in state funding together with \$127,000 from Boone County Fiscal Court. The estimated cost of Phase II of the museum and visitors' center is \$6.9 million.
- The Plan recommended acquiring land and develop a neighborhood park in the Verona area with land available to expand into a community park in the future. The property has been acquired, but funds are needed for future development adjacent to the proposed Walton-Verona High School.
- Expand Central Park. The definition of the County Park states that approximately a quarter of the land will be developed for active recreation. Currently, all of Central Park is developed and there should be at least 100 acres of additional passive space.
- Develop the England-Idlewild Park as indicated in the Master Plan. In 2003, the El Bike/Hike Trails opened at England-Idlewild Park as a result of a public-private partnership between citizens, county departments and the Planning Commission. The trail system presently includes approximately 11 miles of single track trails suitable for mountain bike or pedestrian use. Additional trail segments are under development and there have been discussions about expanding the 100-acre trail portion England-Idlewild park onto adjacent property.
- The Plan recommended opening the Sperti Property as a nature area and provide parking access for nature trails in this area. In 2004, Gunpowder Creek Nature Park opened on 122 acres located off East Bend Road 1.5 miles south of Burlington. The park includes both paved and unpaved trails, a small outdoor amphitheater, shelter, playground and parking.
- Perform a study of all of the watersheds and significant natural areas in the County to determine the most desirable areas to preserve. Several of the watershed areas have been studied and preliminary indications include recommendations to preserve many of the watersheds for natural areas. Some specific items on the priority list include the Split Rock area because the Illinois glacial materials are of historic significance, the Bald Point area within the Gunpowder Creek watershed because of the glacial material and prairie remnants. The Steep Gut Creek area along the Ohio River also includes the Illinois glacial material, steep alluvial soils and unique vegetation. This site is immediately adjacent to the planned Western Wastewater Treatment Plant. Some areas are important for immediate protection because of the strong development pressures around these watersheds. These include the Sand Run Creek watershed in the extreme northern portion of the County, the North and East Gunpowder Creek watersheds in the central portion of the County and the Woolper Creek/Ohio River quadrant area. Other areas that have been recommended for preservation include

Federal Hall Ohio River waterfront, which is located south of I-275 along the Ohio River, expansion of the Middle Creek watershed including the lands adjacent to Middle Creek Park and the lands adjacent to Boone Cliffs Nature Preserve. The north/west Gunpowder Creek area and south Gunpowder Creek watershed are also on the priority list for areas that should be preserved. East Woolper Creek watershed also deserves to be preserved. The Boone Conservancy may pursue lands in these significant natural areas. Their priorities should be the protection of significant natural features followed by the riparian corridor for preservation, waterway protection and the development of greenways and trails followed by the acquisition of significant pieces of farmland and other properties that may be available in these areas. These acquisitions could be in a variety of methods. These could include fee simple purchase, purchase of development rights, scenic easements, conservation easements, and greenway and trail easements.

**Table 7.3
Advisory Committee Priority Recommendations
Property Acquisition Ranking**

Rank	Park	Top Priority
1	Union Neighborhood Park and Future Community Park	✓
2	Central Park Expansion	✓
3	South County Park	✓
4	North Riverfront Park	✓
5	Florence Community Park (West of I-75)	✓
6	New Community Park at Mt. Zion Rd./ Frogtown Rd.	✓
7	West Riverfront Park	✓
8	Hebron Neighborhood Park #2 (north of I-275)	✓
9	Verona Neighborhood and Future Community Park	✓
10	Florence Neighborhood Park #1 (East of I-75)	✓
11	Belleview Neighborhood Park	✓
12	Hebron Neighborhood Park #3 (north of I-275)	✓
13	Petersburg Neighborhood Park	✓
14	Florence Neighborhood Park #2 (West of I-75)	✓
Subtotal		\$8,550,000

**Table 7.4 -
Capital Development Project Ranking**

Rank	New Park Capital Improvement	Budget
1	North Family Aquatic Center No. 1	\$2,200,000
2	Union Neighborhood Park	\$550,000
3	Hebron Neighborhood Park #1 (north of I-275) (5 acres donated)	\$300,000
4	Florence Skate Park	\$165,000
5	North Community/Recreation Center No. 1	\$3,500,000
Subtotal		\$6,715,000
Existing Park Improvements		\$2,668,000
Improvements at School Sites (0-5 Years)		\$50,000
Maintenance Equipment (0-5 Years)		\$271,000
Total - Top Priority Land Acquisition and Capital Projects		\$18,254,000

BOONE CONSERVANCY

The National Association of Homebuilders defines Land Trusts as “privately based, nonprofit, tax-exempt charitable corporations and partnerships whose primary focus is to conserve open space or purchase conservation easements.” Land Trusts are usually operated by private entities funded through membership dues, donations and grants, although Pennsylvania’s Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easements (PACE) program was recently authorized to award grants of up to \$5000 for eligible land trusts to defray expenses incurred from acquiring agricultural conservation easements. The Nature Conservancy and Trust for Public Land are examples of well-known national land trusts. However, there are over 1,200 nonprofit Land Trusts currently operating in the United States, most of them operating

Table 7.5

Priority Ranking for Remaining New Parks

Rank	New Park	Budget
1	North Riverfront Park	\$550,000
2	Upgrade Union Neighborhood Park to a Community Park	\$1,650,000
3	West Riverfront Park	\$550,000
4	New Community Park at Mt. Zion Rd.	\$2,200,000
5	South County Park	\$3,300,000
6	Florence Community Park (West of I-75)	\$2,200,000
7	Florence Neighborhood Park #1 (East of I-75)	\$550,000
8	Verona Neighborhood Park	\$550,000
9	Hebron Neighborhood Park #2 (north of I-275)	\$550,000
10	Upgrade Verona Neighborhood Park to a Community Park	\$1,650,000
11	Florence Neighborhood Park #2 (West of I-75)	\$550,000
12	Petersburg Neighborhood Park	\$550,000
13	Belleview Neighborhood Park	\$550,000
14	Hebron Neighborhood Park #3 (north of I-275)	\$550,000
		\$15,950,000

Priority Ranking for Remaining Major Capital Projects

Rank	Major Capital Project	Budget
1	North Community/Recreation Center No. 2	\$3,500,000
2	North Family Aquatic Center No. 2	\$2,200,000
3	South Community/Recreation Center	\$3,500,000
4	South Family Aquatic Center	\$2,200,000
		\$11,400,000

Future School Improvements (5-15 Years)	\$100,000
Future Maintenance Equipment (5-15 Years)	\$400,000

Total Cost for Remaining New Parks and Capital Projects \$27,850,000

at the local, state, or regional level. The Boone Conservancy, Nature Conservancy, Archaeological Conservancy, and Hillside Trust are land trusts that own or administer easements over land in Boone County.

- In early 2000, The Boone Conservancy was established as a non-profit 501-C3 organization with the purpose of assisting in the implementation of this Master Plan by acquiring land. Currently there are approximately 30 members on the Board of the Conservancy which includes a variety of individuals with interest in expanding the parks system throughout the County. Specific constitution and by-laws have been established for this organization and they should establish their own goals and objectives but should use this Master Plan as a guide.
- The Conservancy's primary focus is on fund-raising for the acquisition and development of the natural areas that are identified in this plan. Their fund-raising efforts could also be of great assistance in establishing corporate sponsors for other County recreation programs and facilities such as aquatic facilities, recreation centers and others.
- The land acquisition costs for the neighborhood, county and community parks that are recommended in this plan are significant. Therefore, the assistance of the Conservancy to evaluate potential lands for these purposes as well as the nature preserves should be included in their mission.
- Another role of the Conservancy will be to acquire land, easements and other methods of acquisition and control of land that can be used for the greenways and bikeways that will truly make Boone County unique. There is already a great deal of bicycle traffic in certain areas of the County and this activity can be greatly enhanced through the addition of the greenways and bikeways that are indicated on the Recommendations Plan. To date, The Boone Conservancy has acquired conservation easements totaling 35 acres of the riparian corridor of Gunpowder Creek as well as a 129-acre parcel adjoining Middle Creek Park.

Nature Parks, Greenways and Bike Trails

The acquisition of the nature parks and greenways and the development of the bike trails that are identified in this Plan are also very important in providing the quality of life that is desired in Boone County. It is generally hoped that the Boone Conservancy can lead the efforts for these acquisitions and developments. The Fiscal Court should concentrate on the funding for the basic parks and recreation services that are recommended in this Plan, and look for opportunities to partner with the Conservancy on key green space acquisitions. The County and Municipalities will provide the leadership for the greenways and bike trails, especially in urban areas. Please refer to the 2000 Boone County Parks and Recreation Master Plan for more discussion of the proposed Nature Parks and Greenways. The Elijah's, Sand Run, Woolper, Middle, Gunpowder, Big Bone, and Mudlick creek valleys all contain future potential as greenbelt pathway systems that serve population centers.

Green Infrastructure

Recently, a team of planners from the Planning Commissions of Boone, Kenton, and Campbell Counties responded to a request from the LAND Group to develop a definition and method for quantifying what has commonly been referred to as open space or green space. The team recommended use of the term Green Infrastructure (a term already accepted by the Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana Regional Council of governments and other organizations) and defined it as:

A network of vegetated or non-paved areas(s) that sustains the diversity and quality of natural systems and that contributes to the health, economic vitality, and quality of life for communities and people.

The team proposed a classification system including five distinct types of green infrastructure (Public Access Land, Private Reserves, Private/Restricted Land, Fee Access Land and Transportation Rights-of-Way. Using GIS, each county will be able to quantify the amount of land in their jurisdiction according to each type. Following analysis, the counties will be able to make recommendations for how best to achieve a balance between the various classes of Green Infrastructure relative to the total land area of the county. This information can be used by Land Trusts and local government.

2002 Florence Pedestrian/Bicycle Plan

This plan was requested by the Florence City Council in order to update the 1992 Pedestrian and Bike Path Plan. Some of the recommendations in the 1992 Plan have been implemented by the City of Florence. The City of Florence needed a formal strategy on which to base its capital decisions. This Plan provided that strategy based on impartial, technical data and needs assessment. This plan recommended that sidewalk improvements are more important than providing bicycle circulation system in the early stages of the plan implementation.

In general, this Plan assumed that all parts of Florence should be evaluated as to pedestrian/bike needs and that existing or future connections to adjacent parts of unincorporated Boone County should be planned. The major planning steps included:

1. Develop a list of sidewalk needs.
2. Develop criteria and score each project.
3. Adjust results of weighting process based on known projects and emergency situations.
4. Develop a bike circulation network.
5. Examine overlap between pedestrian and bike network recommendations.

This Plan contained specific recommendations based on both scientific formula and on real world considerations. Even though this document included small scale map reproductions of the entire city, the information is readily available at any level of detail through the Boone County Geographic Information System (GIS). The Plan provided a guideline for the City of Florence to make decisions, and also enabled the staff of the City to draft realistic work programs for each fiscal year. It's implementation will help ensure that Florence remains the center of activity of the area, and maintains a high quality of life.