

C.G. Hill Memorial Park

Conceptual Master Plan

Publication Date: December 2017



Parks & Recreation
Forsyth County, North Carolina



Winston-Salem/Forsyth County
PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT
SERVICES

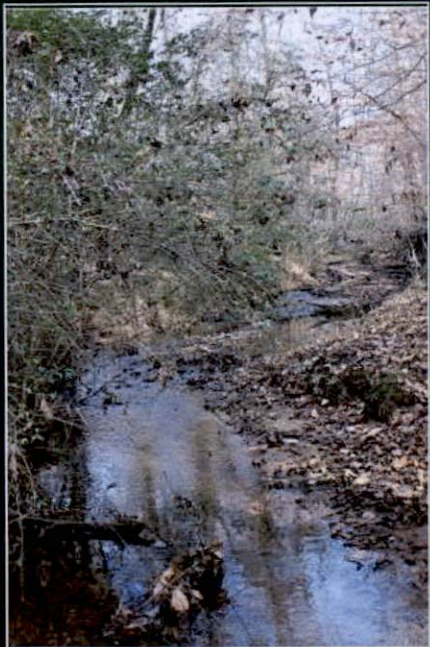


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Park Boundary

INTRODUCTION

The Forsyth County Parks and Recreation Department, along with the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Planning and Development Services Department, has developed a Conceptual Master Plan for C.G. Hill Memorial Park with participation from citizens and stakeholders. This Conceptual Master Plan is the first step in assessing the continued development of the park and in identifying the type of facilities it could support while preserving its distinctive physical qualities and environmental value.

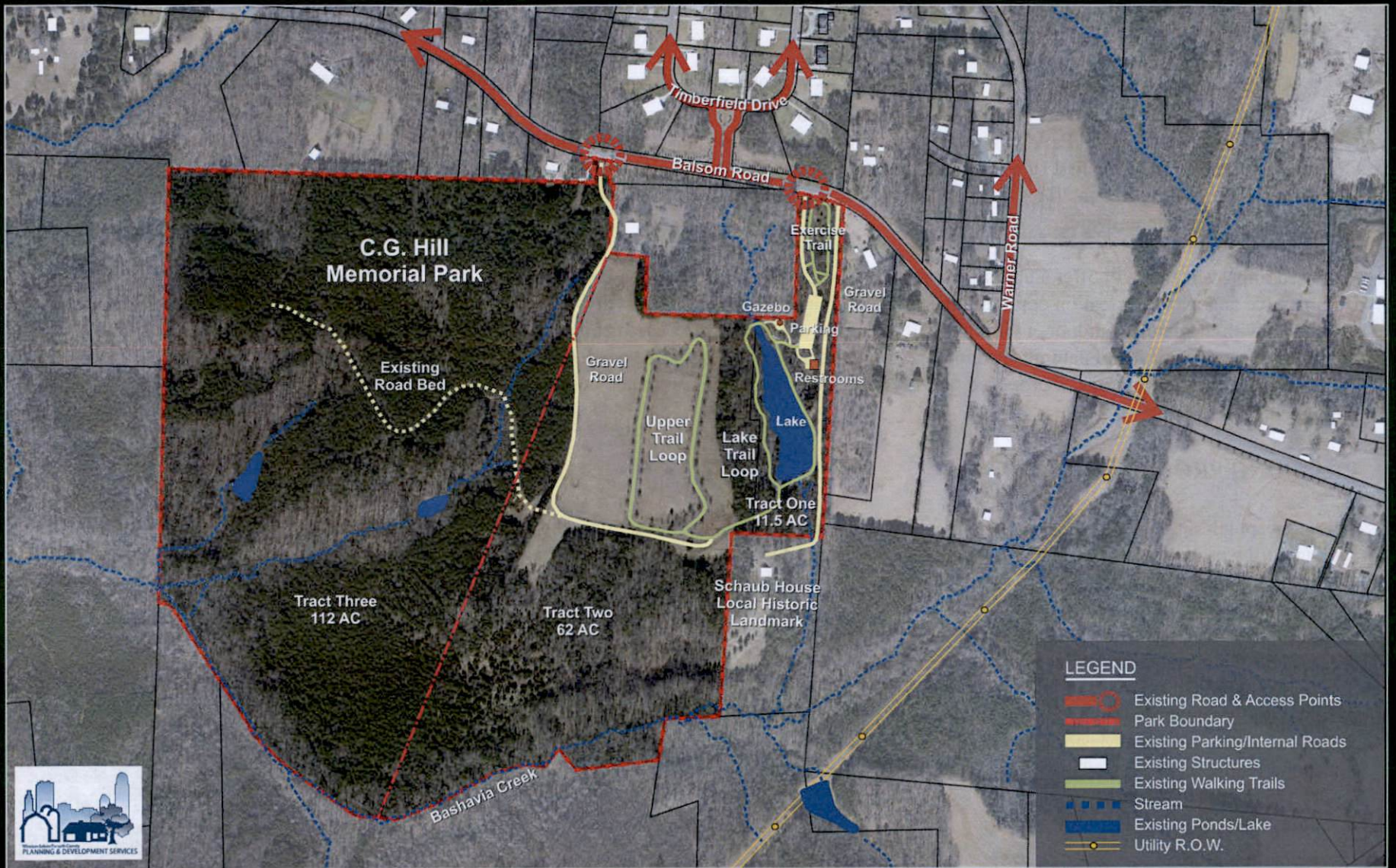
Proposed improvements will offer a unique and rewarding experience for future park visitors. Both passive and active recreation opportunities will further allow citizens of Forsyth County to connect with the natural outdoor environment of the park, and to reap the benefits of outdoor exercise in beautiful and natural surroundings. More detailed studies will be needed to determine the specific locations of proposed facilities, detailed site design, estimated costs, and implementation phasing.

PLANNING PROCESS

This Conceptual Master Plan consists of a feasibility study and proposal for the continued development and redevelopment of C.G. Hill Memorial Park in northwestern Forsyth County. The planning process, as described in the following pages, was conducted from August 2017 to October 2017. The County Parks and Recreation Department and the City-County Planning and Development Services Department developed the following process for the development of the Conceptual Master Plan:

1. Preliminary meetings held to discuss scope of the project
2. C.G. Hill Memorial Park Master Plan Survey
3. Site Inventory and Analysis
4. Initial Public Input Meeting
5. Preliminary Conceptual Master Plan
6. Second Public Input Session
7. Draft Conceptual Master Plan
8. County Commissioners Briefing





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Existing Conditions

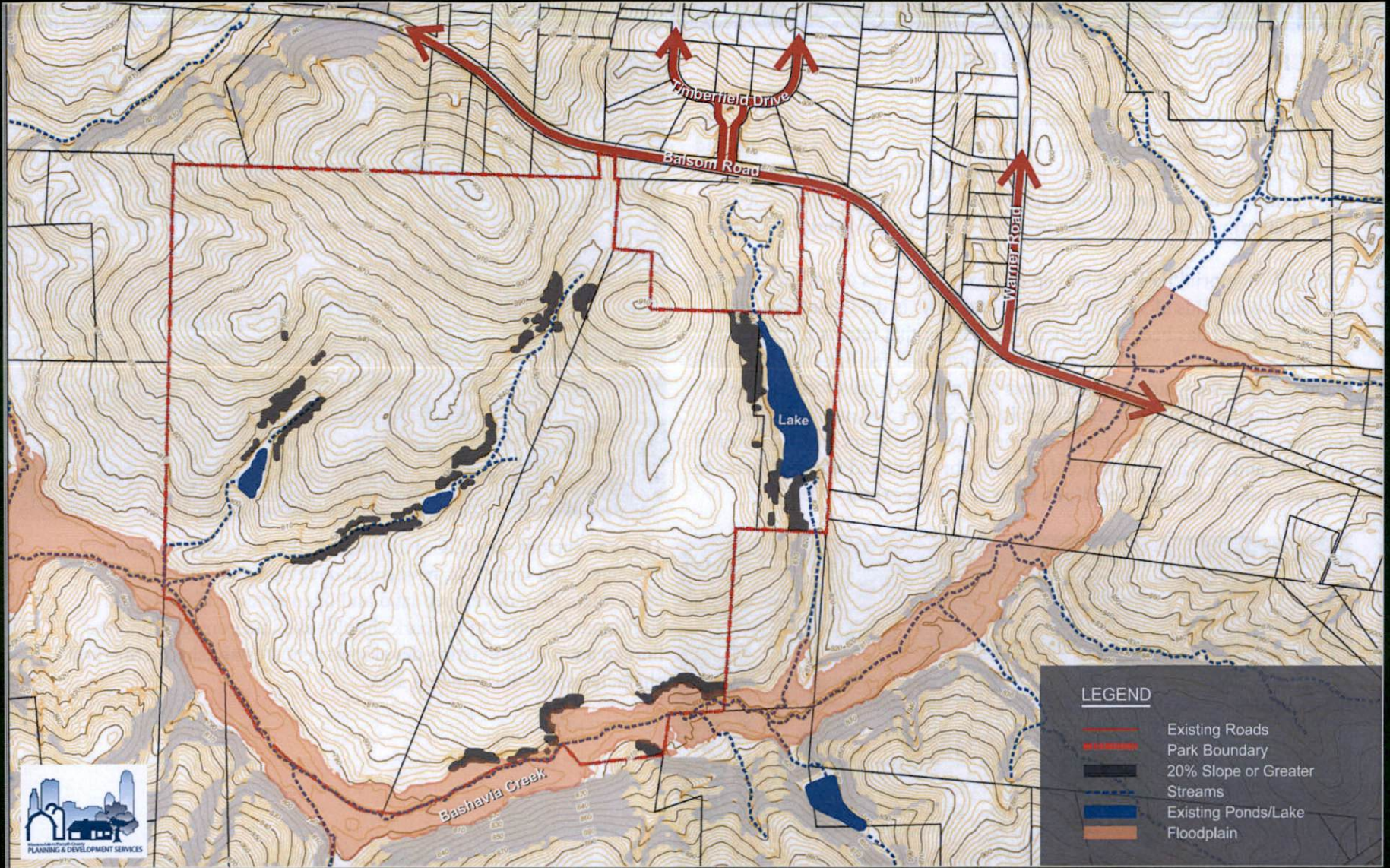
DESCRIPTION OF C.G. HILL MEMORIAL PARK

C.G. Hill Memorial Park is located in northwestern Forsyth County in the Piedmont area of North Carolina. Located in a rural setting within the Yadkin/Pee Dee River Basin, the park is on Balsom Road and easily accessible from central Winston-Salem via Reynolda Road or Yadkinville Road. It is about a 20 minute drive from the downtown area (see **Boundary Map**)

C.G. Hill Memorial Park is made up of about 185 acres of rolling wooded hills and open fields along with a small lake. This is the County's fourth largest park and has been developed in a manner that retains its appeal to families and nature lovers with many amenities and facilities for the public to enjoy. Over the years, improvements and additions have been made to the park, including paved walking trails, the Sesquicentennial Grove, a Gazebo, picnic areas, and other amenities. Over the years the Hill Family has made and continues to make donations for continued improvements to the park. (see **Existing Conditions Map** and **Topography Map**).



The area surrounding C.G. Hill Memorial Park is semi-rural in character with large lots, residential developments, and some large tracts of undeveloped land and open space. Efforts to add additional facilities to the park should take into consideration the limited amount of existing development and established semi-rural character of the surrounding area.



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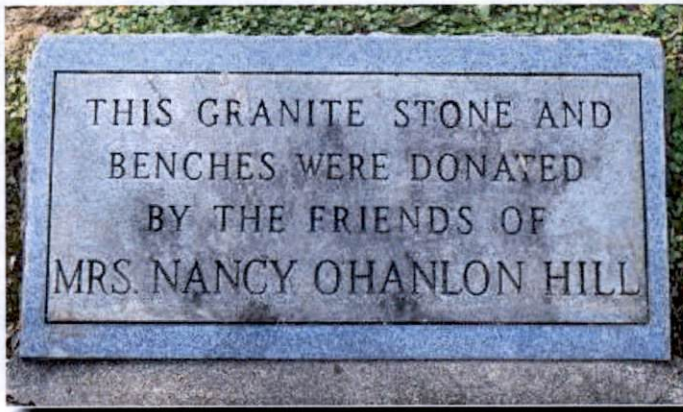
Topography

HISTORY

C. G. Hill Memorial Park has a rich history. The property was originally owned by a third generation American named John Jacob Schaub, one of the early Moravian settlers. He built his family's home on the site in 1830 and lived there until his death seven years later. Mr. Schaub's descendants sold the property to Mr. Charles G. Hill in 1951.

The Hill family donated 13 acres to the City of Winston-Salem and Forsyth County in 1971 for use as a public park. The Schaub House and certain parcels of surrounding land were sold in 1983. The dwelling has since been restored and placed on the National Register of Historic Places and has been designated as a Local Landmark. The County used its portion of the funds generated from the sale to develop the park facility which opened May 30, 1985, and was named after its benefactor. Some additional funds from Mrs. Hill have been received by the County to continue development of the park.

In the meantime, the County acquired adjoining land from the City of Winston-Salem to grow the park to 73 acres in size. An asphalt trail system was enlarged to accommodate park walkers and bicyclists. In 2014, approximately 112 acres of wooded land were added, allowing the park to grow to its current 185 acre size.



CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

As part of the master plan process, opportunities for citizens to provide input were developed. A Master Plan Survey was designed and posted online so the design team could better understand the needs and desires of the community for C.G. Hill Memorial Park. The survey was also mailed to adjacent property owners and copies were made available at the park. Two public input meetings were held in October 2017 for citizens to share their ideas about the future development of the park and answer questions related to the master plan process (see Appendix for **Survey Results**).

As a result of the survey and public input meetings, an overall concept for the future development of the park became apparent. One of the guiding principles in developing the Conceptual Master Plan was to preserve and enhance the park's natural areas and unique physical features. **Any expansion of current facilities or the addition of new ones should be done in a manner which has minimal impact on the natural environment.**



INVENTORY OF EXISTING FACILITIES

Walking Trails

Three loop walking/biking trails are found in the park:

- Exercise Trail near the park entrance with a length of 850 Feet
- Lake Trail Loop around the lake with a length of 1,825 Feet
- Upper Trail Loop on an open meadow with a length of 2,337 Feet

Gazebo/Courtyard

The gazebo/courtyard is nestled in the woods overlooking the lake, and is landscaped with shrubs and flowering plants. The gazebo is located near the parking lot and off to the side of the walking path. The gazebo area can accommodate up to 50 people and may currently only be reserved for wedding ceremonies.

Fishing Lake

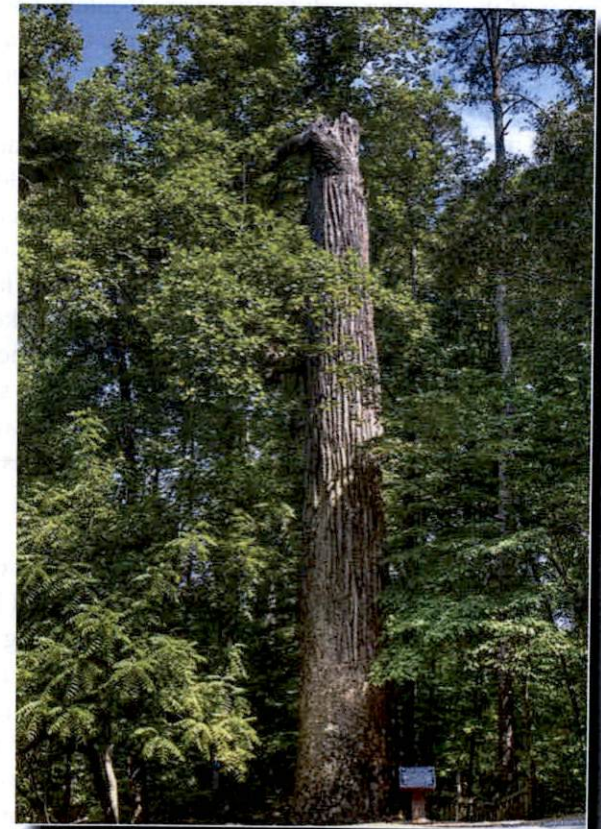
A 2.5 acre fishing lake with a water spray fountain is located at the center of the park. The lake is periodically stocked by the NC Wildlife Resources Commission and is a prime place to catch catfish. Nearly the entire perimeter is open and available for fishing. No swimming or boating is allowed.

500 Year Old Poplar Tree

An old yellow poplar tree, one of the largest hardwood trees in the U.S. at 72 feet tall, is located at one end of the lake. This ancient poplar tree sprouted before Columbus sailed for the New World. After being struck by lightning centuries ago, it decayed to form a hollow center which provided a hiding place for possessions. The tree gave travelers shelter from the rain and couples called it the “Loving Tree” because of all the initials carved into the bark by couples over the years.

Additional Facilities

- Picnic tables and grills
- Restrooms
- Parking lot – 50 spaces, including 3 handicap spaces



SITE INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS

The planning team completed an overview and analysis of the site's physical properties and environmental conditions. The results are described through various maps and photographs (see **Site Analysis Map**).

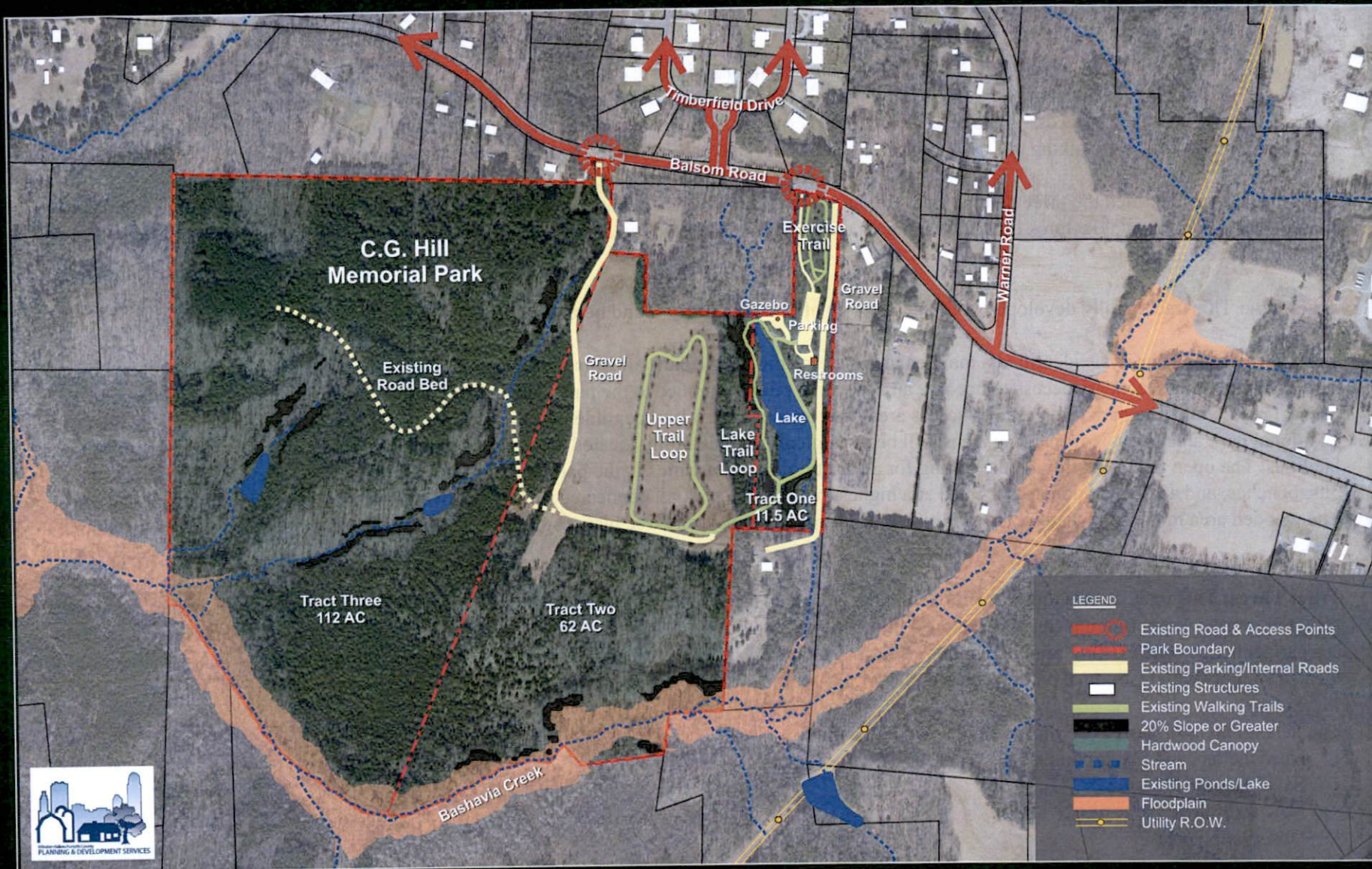
The overall site can be better described and analyzed by looking at the characteristics and existing development of the three distinctive tracts of land found in the park. Within these areas, the existing environmental features, such as creeks, steep slopes, and forest edges, have shaped the development and character of the site.

Tract One: This tract includes the original donated land containing approximately 11.5 acres, where most of the existing park facilities are located: The parking lot, lake, gazebo, walking trails (exercise trail and loop trail around the lake), picnic tables and grills, and restrooms are all located in this area of the park. This section of the park is not anticipated to require any additional facilities.

Tract Two: This tract includes the remaining 62 acres of the original C.G. Hill Memorial Park. This tract comprises two distinctive areas: An open field and a wooded area. A walking trail, the Upper Trail Loop, built in the 1990s and lined with trees on both sides can be found in the flatter section of the open field area. A secondary, unpaved, access road can be found at the western edge of the open field, connecting this section of the park with the lake area. Steep slopes and a dense canopy separate this area from the existing facilities around the lake on the eastern edge. The southern boundary of this tract is bounded by Bashavia Creek, which together with some steep slopes and imposing trees, makes this section interesting to explore. The remaining southern portion of this tract of land is wooded with hardwoods as the dominant vegetation. The hardwoods are healthy and the tree stand is quite open with little understory vegetation present suggesting this area would be best conserved as woodland with the development of various hiking trails.

Tract Three: This recently acquired tract of land contains approximately 112 acres. This tract is undeveloped and contains woodland that is dominated by pines that grew on abandoned agricultural land or pastureland, and hardwoods mostly along existing streams. Bashavia Creek forms the southern boundary of this tract and two of its tributaries run through this area. Steeper hillsides with slopes in excess of 20% are located in some parts of the valley along these tributaries. A couple of small ponds are also located towards the middle of the tract. A small portion of this tract faces Balsom Road where a secondary access point is located. An old road bed found in this tract could be used to provide access to this portion of the park. The existing character of this tract suggests limiting future development in this area and leaving it in its natural state as much as possible. This section would best be conserved as woodland with the development of various types of trails, opportunities for picnicking in designated areas, and possibly picnic shelters.





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Site Analysis

LAND USE SUGGESTIONS

The Conceptual C.G. Hill Memorial Park Master Plan proposes maintaining the existing facilities in the park and adding new facilities in keeping with the general principles of enhancing and preserving the natural environment. One of the limitations in developing new activities in the park is the current lack of vehicular access to the areas located further away from the lake area. The potential of improving/adding a new internal road with a wide shoulder for biking/walking and providing strategically located parking areas could open up a greater portion of the park for future use.

The site analysis identified the three distinct tracts of land found in the park. The land use suggestions presented here respond to the existing development and environmental features found in each tract of land in the park and the desires of the community expressed through the survey responses and public meetings input.

Tract One: This tract is fully developed with the majority of park amenities found here. No additional development is anticipated.

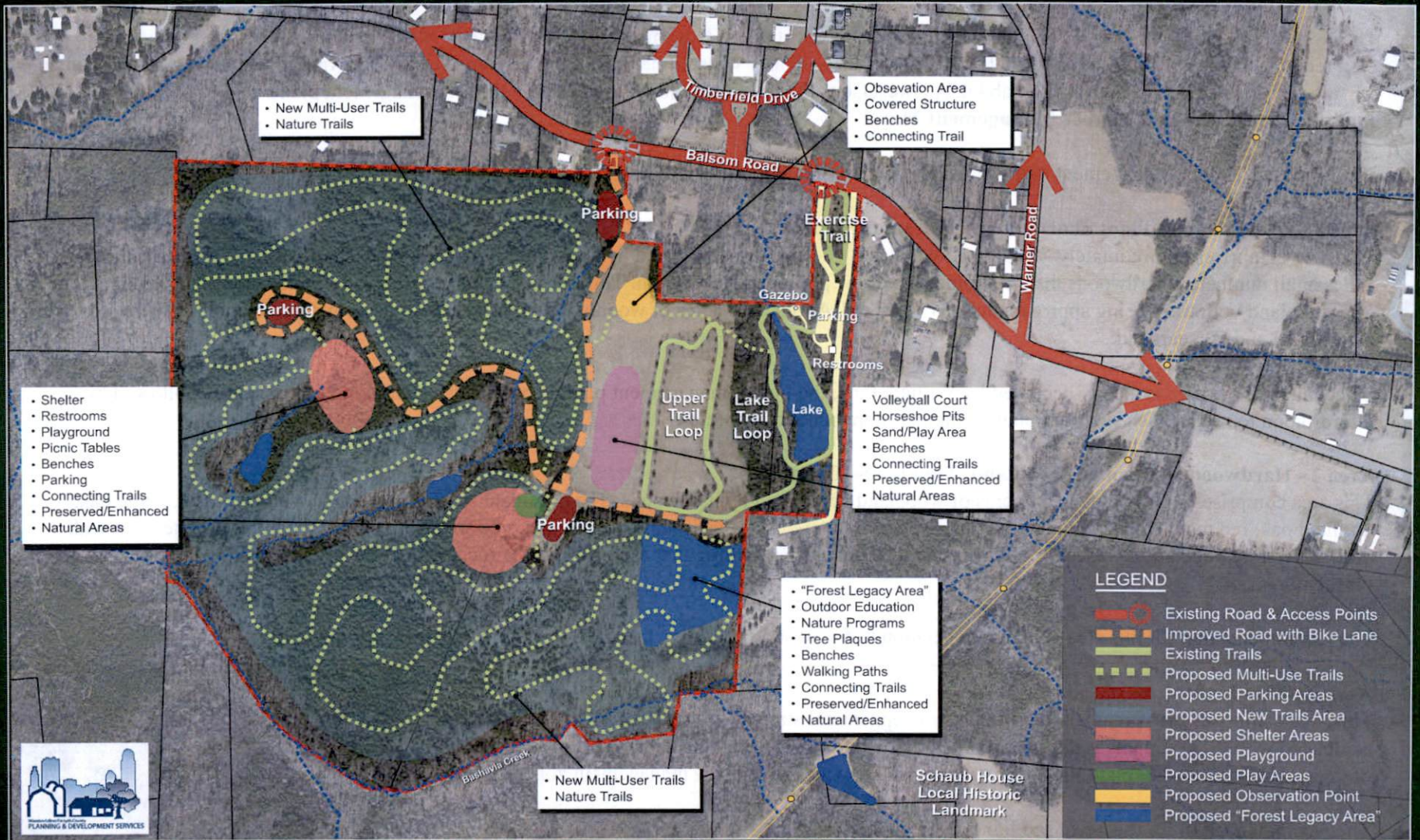
Tract Two: The site analysis identified a maintenance access point to the park off Balsom Road. Securing an easement or acquiring additional land here will allow this secondary access to become an additional public entrance to the park. The existing gravel road can be improved to become an internal road within the park to be used to access areas that are not currently accessible by car and serve as the foundation for the development of additional park amenities. New parking areas will be strategically and carefully located along this internal road for easy access to existing and new facilities. The open field will provide the setting for a variety of new amenities in the park including a sand/play area, volleyball court, horseshoe pits, benches, and an observation area located at a highest point in the park all connected by the improved road and/or by additional walking trails. The wooded area to the south can include multi-user trails, picnic tables, and tree plaques throughout the proposed "Forest Legacy" preservation area.

Tract Three: This tract, as previously mentioned in the site analysis, is better left in its natural state. Multi-user trails for hiking, biking, horseback riding or cross country running can be developed under the tree canopy here. A new parking area for these users can be located close to the secondary park entrance. The existing road bed in this section of the park can be improved with a wide shoulder for biking/walking to access strategically located shelters with restrooms, picnic tables, a playground, and parking areas (see **Proposed Areas Map**).

The general areas proposed are shown on the map and include:

- New shelters and playground area
- Sand/play area
- New trails area
- Observation area
- "Forest Legacy" preservation area

No additional areas for park expansion have been identified in the Conceptual Master Plan. However, acquiring surrounding land as it becomes available would provide additional open space for trails, a lake, or other low intensity uses.



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Proposed Areas

WOODLAND MANAGEMENT

The North Carolina Forest Service conducted a forest resources study in November 2015 for C.G. Hill Memorial Park. The Forest Stewardship Plan recommends harvesting the areas that are overstocked primarily with Virginia Pine, an inexpensive slow growing pine tree with little ornamental value that provides limited wildlife habitat. A Forest Consultant was later hired to develop a timber management plan which was completed in June, 2017 (see **Proposed Timber Management Map**).

The Proposed Timber Management map delineates the park into 4 major areas described below.

Area 1 – Clear cut and Plant Shortleaf Pine (or another species)

This area comprises approximately 78 acres of woodland. 62 acres are dominated by a mixture of Virginia pine, shortleaf pine, eastern red cedar, and a small number of hardwoods that are primarily yellow poplar and sweetgum. This current stands originated from abandoned agricultural land or pastureland with trees being approximately 24 years old. Another 16 acres of woodland in this area are pine dominated, but older, with trees being between 45 and 60 years old.

Since much of the area is mostly occupied by Virginia Pine, the timber management plan recommends undertaking a final harvest followed by reforestation to re-establish shortleaf pine or another more beneficial species.

Area 2 - Hardwood Dominated Woodland, Thin to 65-70 sf/ac

This area comprises approximately 59 acres of woodland dominated by hardwoods. The dominant species present are yellow poplar, white oak, northern oak, red maple, hickory, and other hardwoods. Scattered shortleaf pines and Virginia pine are also present. The stand is quite open with little understory vegetation present providing beneficial habitat for wildlife that can utilize older successional forests and seeding that provides food for them.

The recommendation for this area is to thin vegetation to 65-70 sf/ac and leave the stand to continue to grow and develop.

Area 3 - Thin Lightly

This area comprises the perennial, intermittent, and ephemeral streams found in the park. The vegetation associated with these streams is important in determining how beneficial the stream is to wildlife. Strips of trees, shrubs, and other plant life along streams are known as streamside management zones (SMZ).

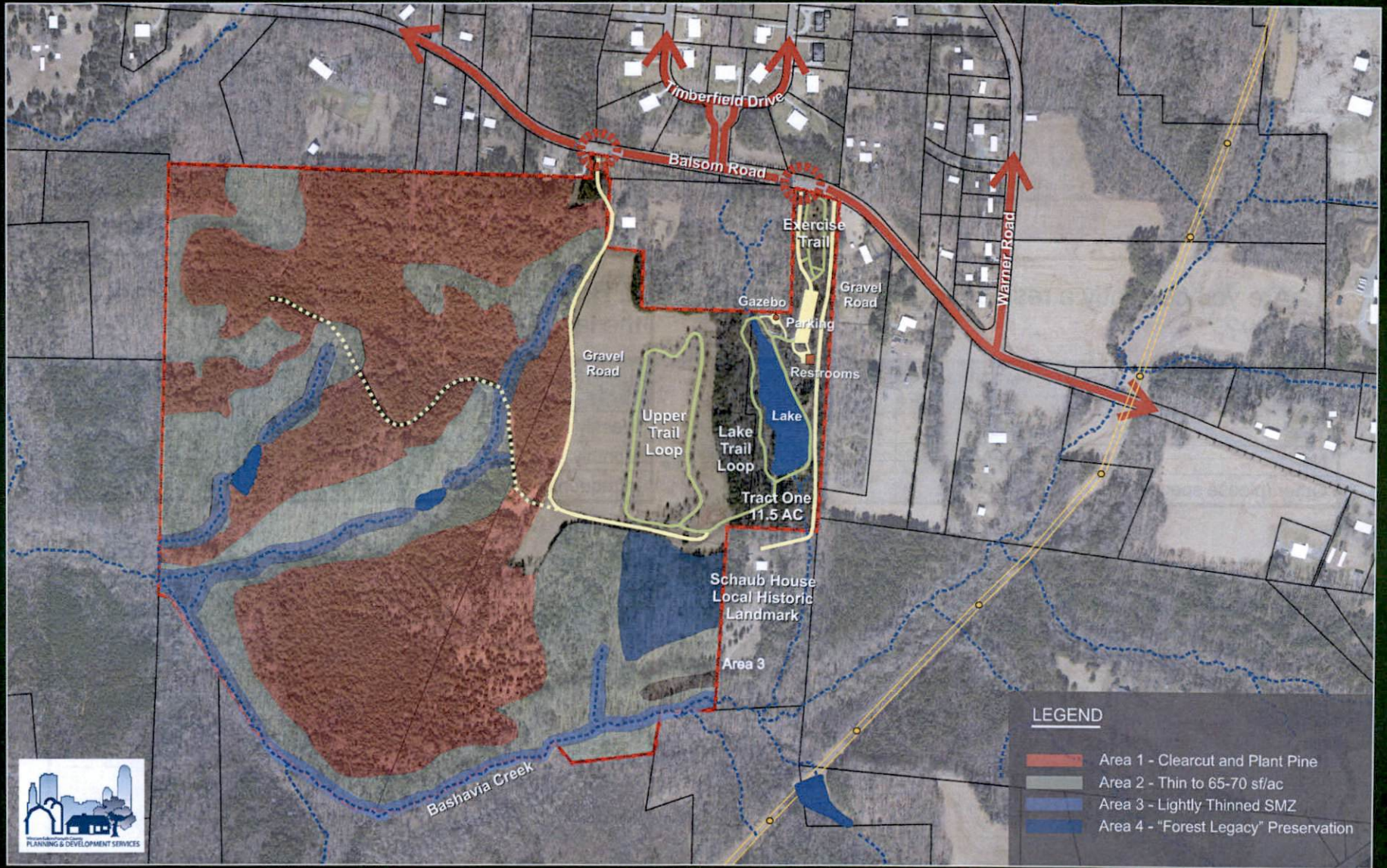
The recommendation for this area is to lightly thin the SMZs.

Area 4 - “Forest Legacy” Preservation

This area comprises approximately five acres of woodland dominated by high quality hardwoods.

The recommendation for this area is to leave the stand to continue to grow and develop.





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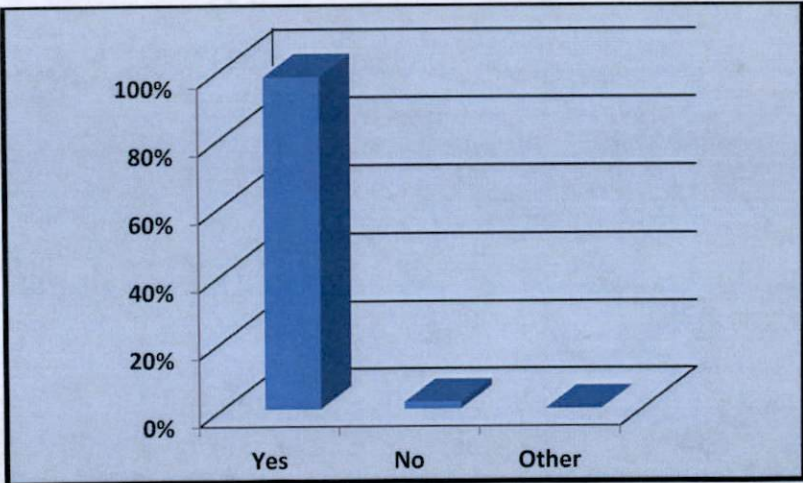
Proposed Timber Management

Appendix: Survey Results

C.G. Hill Memorial Park Conceptual Master Plan

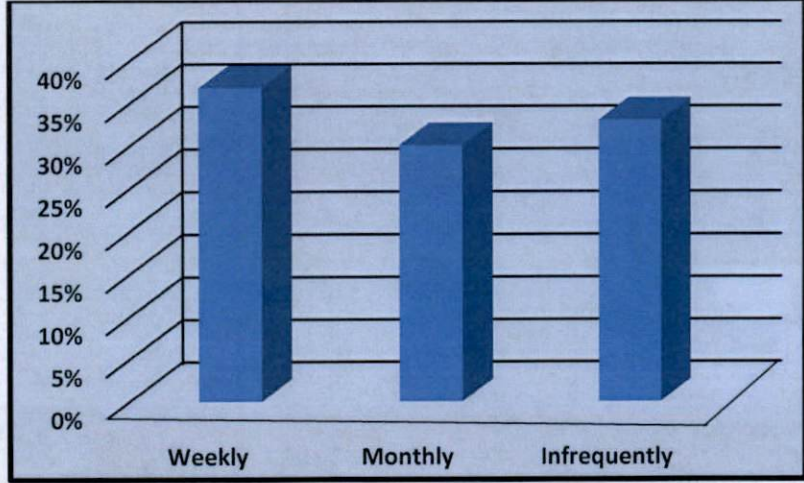
1. Are you currently a resident of Forsyth County?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	80.6%	434
No	19.4%	9
Other (please specify)	0.00%	0



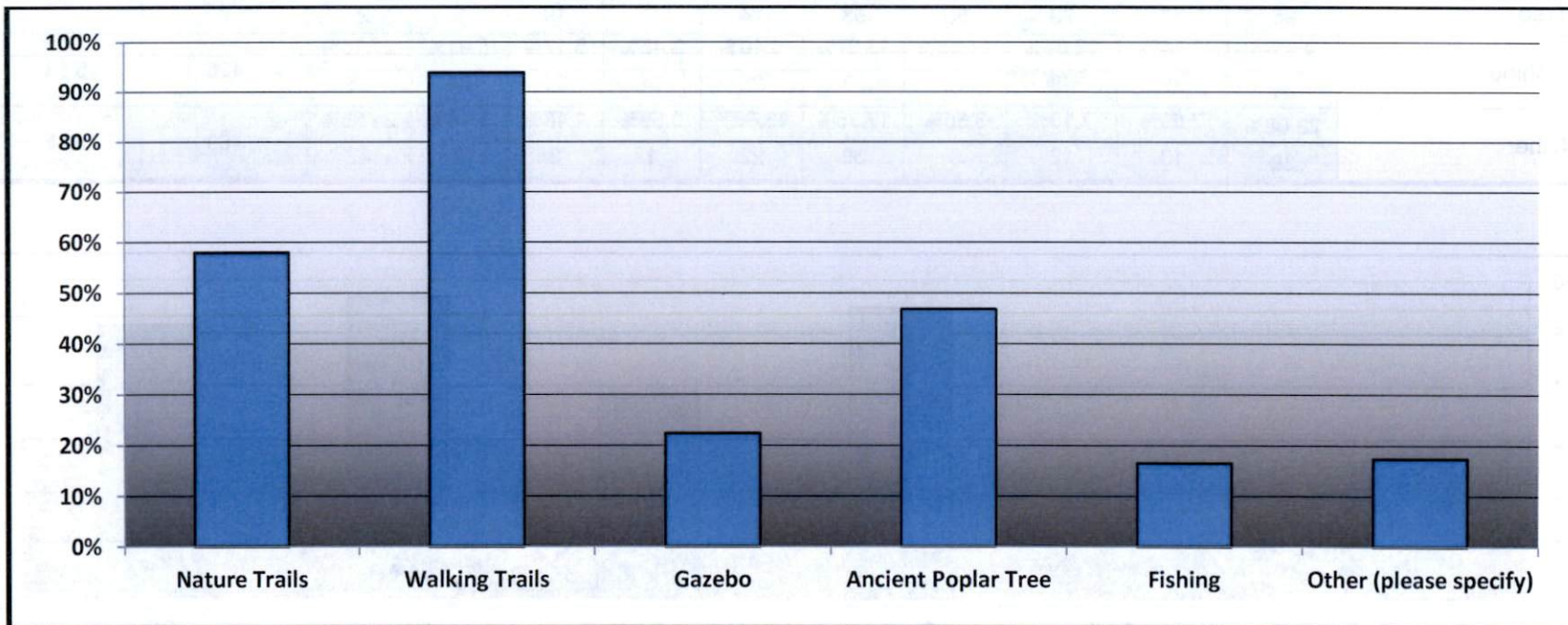
2. How often have you visited C.G. Hill Park in the last 12 months?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Weekly	36.88%	163
Monthly	30.09%	133
Infrequently	33.09%	146



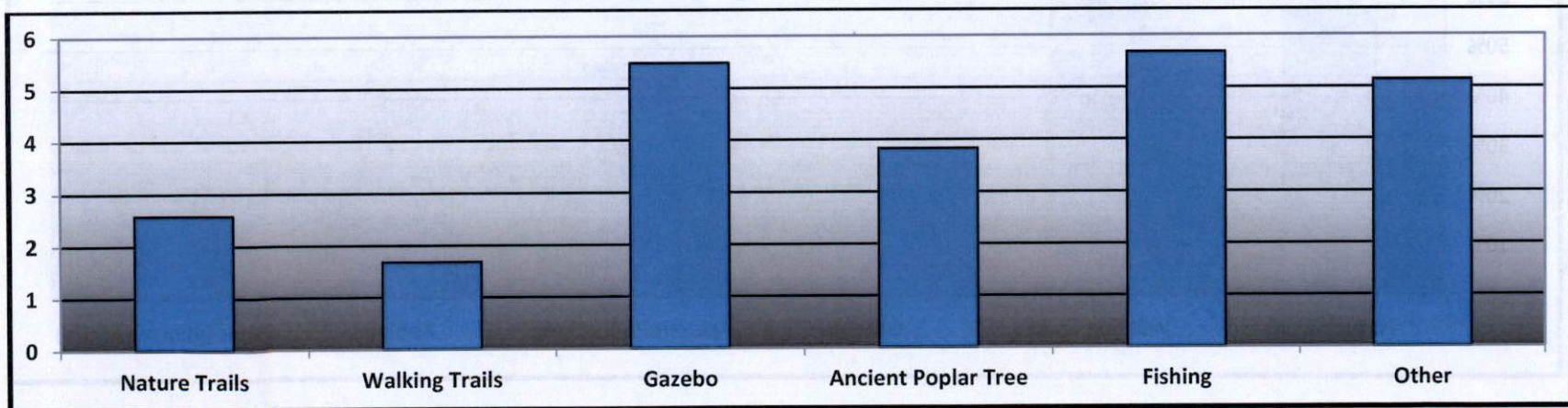
3. What existing amenities do you use at C.G. Hill Park? (Please select all that apply)

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Nature Trails	57.92%	256
Walking Trails	93.89%	415
Gazebo	22.40%	99
Ancient Poplar Tree	46.83%	207
Fishing	16.52%	73
Other (please specify)	17.42%	77



4. Please rank your priority of use for each of the following amenities. (1 being most important to you, 6 being least important)

Answer Options	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total	Weighted Average
Nature Trails	41.65%	20.71%	14.35%	6.59%	8.47%	3.06%	1.18%	1.41%	0.47%	2.13%	425	2.58
	177	88	61	28	36	13	5	6	2	9		
Walking Trails	74.31%	11.81%	6.25%	0.93%	2.08%	0.69%	0.69%	1.85%	0.46%	0.93%	432	1.68
	321	51	27	4	9	3	3	8	2	4		
Gazebo	5.71%	5.21%	15.63%	13.40%	19.35%	8.93%	6.45%	6.45%	3.97%	14.89%	403	5.48
	23	21	63	54	78	36	26	26	16	60		
Ancient Poplar Tree	20.87%	15.29%	17.72%	13.59%	14.08%	3.40%	2.18%	4.61%	1.94%	6.31%	412	3.83
	86	63	73	56	58	14	9	19	8	26		
Fishing	8.37%	7.14%	12.07%	11.33%	18.97%	6.40%	3.45%	5.17%	5.91%	21.18%	406	5.68
	34	29	49	46	77	26	14	21	24	86		
Other	23.08%	7.69%	7.10%	3.55%	17.75%	13.02%	0.59%	1.18%	1.18%	24.85%	169	5.14
	39	13	12	6	30	22	1	2	2	42		



5. What is your favorite feature of C.G. Hill Park?

Answered: 415

Skipped: 28

Summary of Responses

Response	Estimated Number
Trails	200
Lake	110
Tree	45
Nature	25
Fishing	20
Other	15

6. In your opinion, what do you think is missing from C.G. Hill Park?

Answered: 409

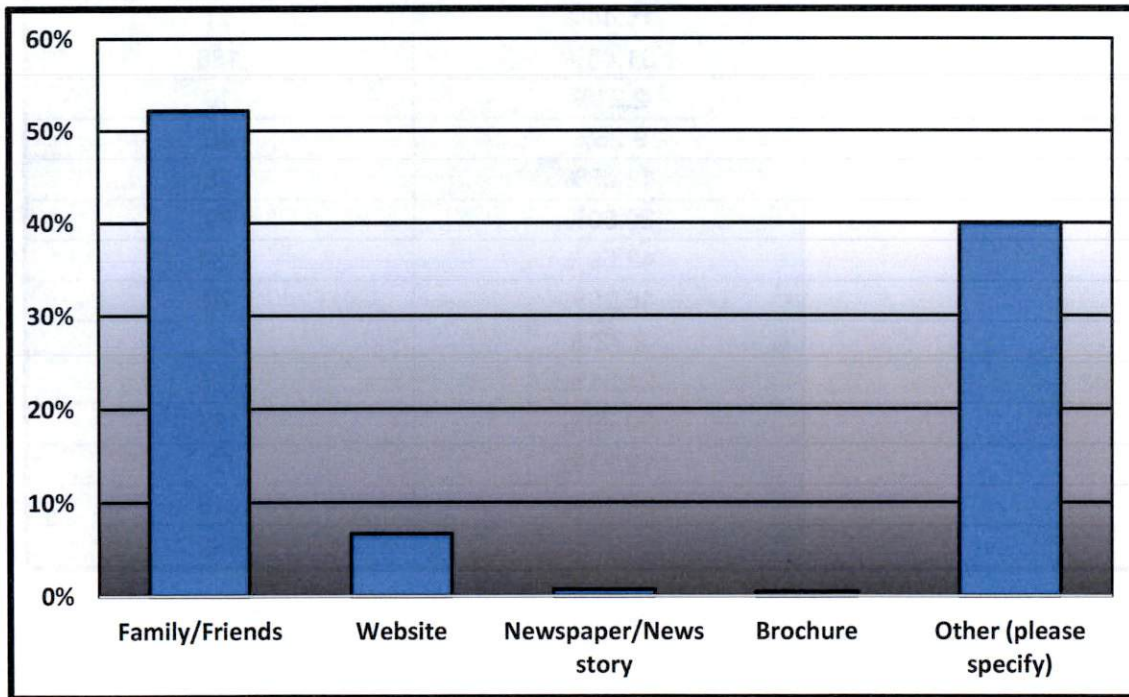
Skipped: 34

Summary of Responses

Response	Estimated Number
Playground	115
Additional Trails	115
Nothing	50
Dog Park	25
Shelter/Shade Structure	20
Disc Golf	15
Athletic Fields/Courts	15
Fish	15
Garden	5
Lighting	5
More Water Fountains	5
Other	24

7. How did you first learn about C.G. Hill Park?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Family/Friends	52.18%	227
Website	6.67%	29
Newspaper/News Story	0.69%	3
Brochure	0.46%	2
Other (please specify)	40.00%	174
TOTAL		435

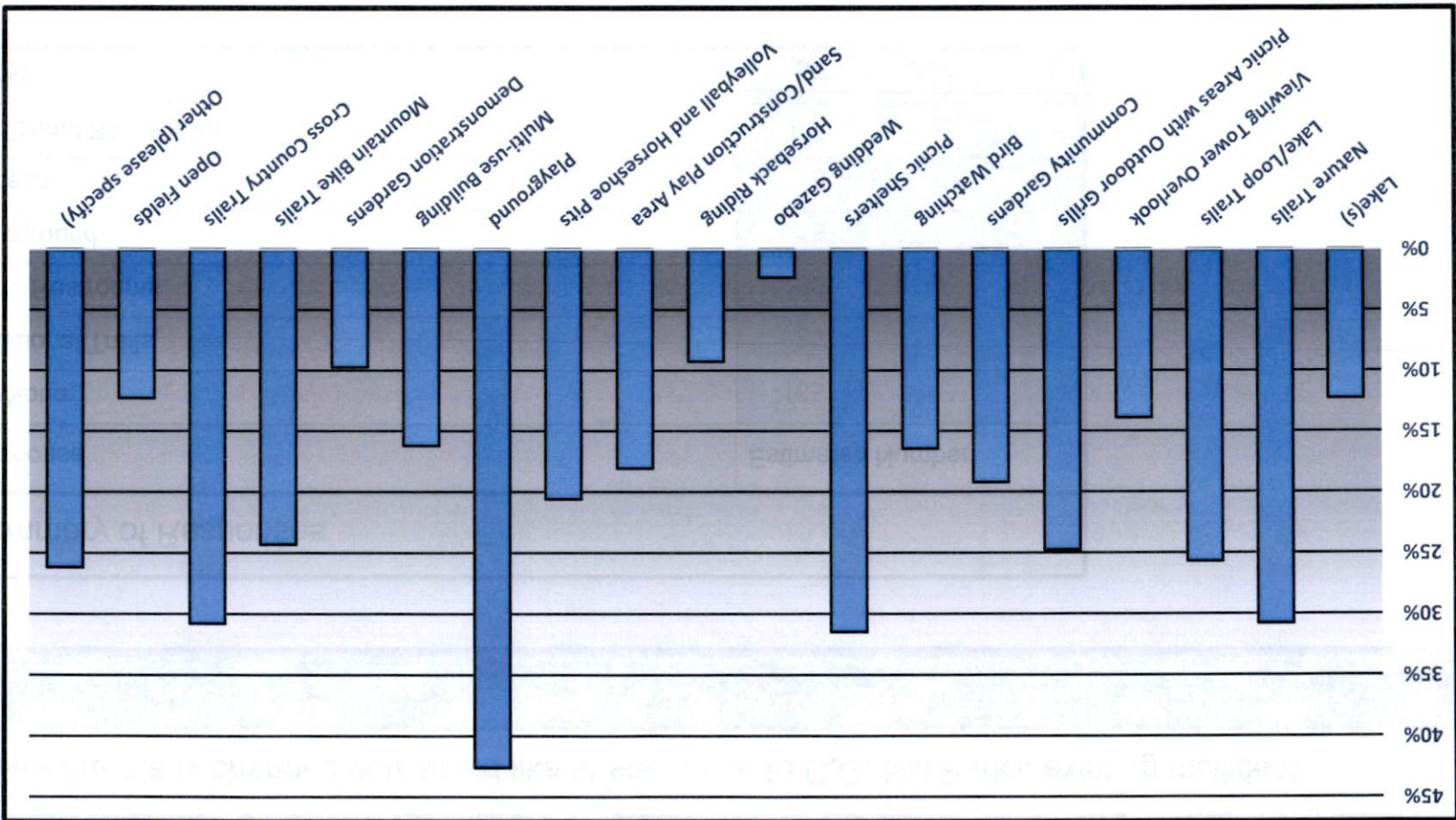


Summary of "Other" Responses

Response	Estimated Number
Playground	115
Additional Trails	115
Nothing	50
Dog Park	25

**8. What new or additional amenities or facilities would you like to see added C.G. Hill Park?
(Please select all that apply)**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Lake(s)	12.27%	53
Nature Trails	30.79%	133
Lake/Loop Trails	25.69%	111
Viewing Tower Overlook	13.89%	60
Picnic Areas with Outdoor Grills	24.77%	107
Community Gardens	19.21%	83
Bird Watching	16.44%	71
Picnic Shelters	31.48%	136
Wedding Gazebo	2.31%	10
Horseback Ridding	9.26%	40
Sand/Construction Play Area	18.06%	78
Volleyball and Horseshoe Pits	20.60%	89
Playground	42.59%	184
Multi-use Building	16.20%	70
Demonstration Gardens	9.72%	42
Mountain Bike Trails	24.31%	105
Cross Country Trails	30.79%	133
Open Fields	12.27%	53
Other (Please Specify)	26.16%	113
TOTAL		432



9. Are there any changes you would like to see made to C.G. Hill Park's existing facilities?

Answered: 310

Skipped: 133

Summary of Responses

Response	Estimated Number
No/None	165
Additional Trails	35
More Restrooms	30
Playground	15
Access	5
Additional Bike Racks	5
Other	55

Acknowledgements

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