PRIORITIES

Skatepark - Gained then Lost, It’s Time to Replace

Consensus: Transylvania County has done very well at providing recreational facilities for team sports, but there is a great need for a recreational facility that can be used for what are considered individual sports. Skateboards are one of the most economical “vehicles” a child or young adult can acquire. The creation of a sanctioned space to use these sport vehicles will, without question, meet a need of this under-served group and their families. It may also prove to be an economic benefit to the larger community. What it will absolutely guarantee is that our skateboarding youth will be safer than they would be rolling on the streets.

Skatepark - Gained then Lost, It’s Time to Replace

Consensus: Skateboarding is another form of exercise that has many benefits. Given the specific needs of this community and the infrastructure currently in place, we believe the installation of mini parks, with a special emphasis on pre-school AND adult equipment, will best help meet the overall goals of our community.

Alternative Means of Access - Safer Pedestrian & Bicycle Pathways

Consensus: Implement a new Downtown Streetscape which provides for wider sidewalk areas and increased support for bicycles (including bike racks). Work towards installation of bike lanes and/or sidewalks on streets that funnel to community assets (i.e. Probart, McLean Rd., Whitmire St., Old Hendersonville Hwy). Lengthen the greenway to include more residential neighborhoods so that it becomes a safer way for bicycles and pedestrians to reach destinations across town. Construct a parking garage (preferably behind the courthouse so that it tucks in and is not a visual monstrosity) that takes more parked cars off Main, Probart and Jordan, making it easier to squeeze in sidewalks and bicycle lanes. Continue to look at Rails To Trails as another means of extending alternative transportation and recreation routes.

Mini Parks - Time to Invest in our Human Infrastructure

Consensus: Play equipment for pre-schoolers is especially lacking in our current parks. In addition to this, our adult population suffers from a lack of close-to-home fitness opportunities. To address this need, we recommend the installation of Mini Parks. Mini parks put parks close to families so that they can be quickly accessed in small windows of time in the midst of busy schedules. This access is linked to better success in school, reduced obesity, reduced behavioral problems, less depression, better health and lower crime rates. In residential neighborhoods, if a neighborhood park like Franklin Park is not easily within reach, these mini parks should be popped in to serve the needs of families. To be most effective, these parks should serve all ages, increasing the chances of daily community use.

Overlapping Needs Require an Annual Investment Towards Goals

1. 90% of deaths involving a skateboard in the U.S. happen outside of skateparks, making skateparks much safer for kids than the alternative. Research also indicates that skateboarders are less likely to smoke cigarettes, have sex or skip school. (Pediatrics, Vol. 117 No. 4. April 2006) And it goes without saying (though we’ll say it anyway) that a kid on a skateboard is going to be more fit than a kid sitting in front of a TV. These are all the same type of reason a municipality supports team sport facilities. The advantage of a skatepark is that it only takes one person to play!

   The cost of a skatepark is not inconsiderable, but will certainly cost less in maintenance than a swimming pool. While smaller, individual skate “features” could be added to existing infrastructure, they will not become the destination and attraction that a full-scale park would be. This attraction is likely to encourage skaters from other areas to come to our community, as well. A free guide to assist in the development of a public skatepark can be found at www.publicskateparkguide.org.

   The scale of a skatepark makes it an ideal candidate to fill the role of a Neighborhood Park. Adding additional features, such as tables, playground equipment or a splash pad, could turn the skatepark into a full-scale park that encourages participation of families. These additional features could be added in successive years or as funds become available, provided they have been included in the planning from the start.

   In-town fitness opportunities will be essential to Brevard’s competitiveness as we move forward. Kids who are active at school or play sports are 20% more likely to earn an “A” in Math or English than sedentary teens (Active Living Research). It is in our own interest to keep our youth on their feet.

2. Multi-age mini parks will serve Transylvanians better than age-specific parks, in nearly all instances. We are a community of families, so our parks should address the needs of the range of ages within those families. In addition, it may be beneficial to update some existing parks (such as Silvermont) with pocket features appropriate for multi-age activities. New equipment designs provide for safe fitness activities for adults needing to restore flexibility as much as they need to maintain muscle. Likewise, new designs for children and teens have come along that are more engaging and likely to keep kids actively involved.

   Why bother? New research tracking cognitive development in children [see pages 8-12 in “The role of parks and open space in early learning,” on the CD provided indicates that 46% of children entering kindergarten are coming to school at risk for failure. A lack of stimulating environments is in large part to blame for this problem. Transylvania County has made a tremendous investment in families with our library. Outdoor sensory experiences, however, can play just as large a role for early childhood, if those experiences can be close at hand for families. Mini parks are one way of meeting this need. As part of a multi-year approach, we recommend installing engaging pre-school equipment in neighborhoods all over town to simply family interaction with play sites. We also recommend a hospital partnership to install an adult fitness park just off the greenway behind the hospital.

   Given the specific needs of this community and the infrastructure currently in place, we believe the installation of mini parks, with a special emphasis on pre-school AND adult equipment, will best help meet the overall goals of our community.

3. Consensus: There is a clear desire among dog owners for a place to take dogs safely “off-leash.” Having a public space in which to do this would increase social activities for dogs and their owners. Ideally, this community asset would be located in close proximity to other recreation assets where parking is already in place. In a community as full of dog-lovers as this one, a “Bark Park” is a natural fit.

Dog Park - Happier Dogs, Happier Dog People

Consensus: Play equipment for pre-schoolers is especially lacking in our current parks. In addition to this, our adult population suffers from a lack of close-to-home fitness opportunities. To address this need, we recommend the installation of Mini Parks. Mini parks put parks close to families so that they can be quickly accessed in small windows of time in the midst of busy schedules. This access is linked to better success in school, reduced obesity, reduced behavioral problems, less depression, better health and lower crime rates. In residential neighborhoods, if a neighborhood park like Franklin Park is not easily within reach, these mini parks should be popped in to serve the needs of families. To be most effective, these parks should serve all ages, increasing the chances of daily community use.

4. Given the specific needs of this community and the infrastructure currently in place, we believe the installation of mini parks, with a special emphasis on pre-school AND adult equipment, will best help meet the overall goals of our community.
Becoming a more bicycle and pedestrian-friendly community will pay off in reduced healthcare costs, reduced traffic congestion and increased social activity in pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods. The percentage of adults who get enough physical activity is 15% higher in neighborhoods that have sidewalks than it is in those that don’t (Active Living Research). Making the transition will require strategies like the city’s UDO and also reinvesting in existing neighborhood infrastructure.

Restructuring the street layout of downtown Brevard will be essential to increasing the economic activity of this area. That restructuring should include a parking garage, because property that is currently used for parking is, in large measure, private property. We can not plan to keep “borrowing” the rights of use to this property, given that increasing the attractiveness of downtown Brevard will, of course, increase the number of vehicles driving into it. At the same time, we need increased space for sidewalks in front of our retail establishments, which can only come by sacrificing parking spaces. For these reasons, we support a well-designed parking garage tucked into the hill behind the courthouse. It should become part of a new Downtown Streetscape design that increases pedestrian and cyclist assets in the immediate area and extending towards the college and the old Brevard Lumber Mill.

It is also essential to begin using easements along some of our “feeder” roads, such as Probart or McLean, that lead to community assets such as the Music Center or our schools. These easements need to be re-developed as sidewalks and/or bike lanes to provide safe passage for our students and citizens on foot. Along with the use of these easements, the City should continue their work on the Greenway, ensuring a greater number of people can reach school and/or work without the need to walk along Highway 64.

In addition to our Greenway transportation corridor, there is much support for a Rails To Trails transportation corridor. Included in the packet presented to the Planning Department is a compilation of the parks and pathways-related suggestions from “opening night” for Imagine Brevard. The prominence of “Rails To Trails” within this document makes it clear how widespread the desire is to see this project become a reality. While this may not be the exact right time to pursue this option, we recommend that the City keeps its options open, as the likely economic impact of such an infrastructure project would be very positive.

Council will need to set aside a minimum of $40,000 for the fencing of a one acre lot, based on common estimates. Dog parks should be divided into larger and smaller dog areas. A dual gate entry is recommended to keep dogs from exiting the off-leash area in an untimely fashion. Flood plain areas are harder to maintain than higher ground, and wooded areas can be some of the easiest to maintain. A blend of wooded area with more open area is highly recommended. A park that is not maintained is likely to become a disease problem quickly, so the costs of labor for maintenance must be considered, even if dog owners do “self-police” their own and other dogs the majority of the time. A short story on dealing with a parvo-stricken park can be found at www.theridgefieldpress.com/9391/parvo-report-closes-dog-park/.

There are two options for setting up a park. One is the completely public park, with no admission costs on the part of dog owners. This is, of course, the most popular with the majority of dog owners. Since the average home income in Transylvania county is lower than the state overall, this is hardly surprising. However, the City may prefer to implement a fee-based park, in which owners pay an annual fee and are issued a key card for entry into the park. Some municipalities are able to turn their dog parks into money-making ventures. However, successfully implementing a fee-based park may require the purchase of more attractive land than the City deems appropriate.

Any Bark Park will need a couple of benches for owners, clean up stations at regular intervals within the park and preferably a water fountain for both dogs and their humans.