

Chapter 11: Parks, Recreation, and Trails



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R: Recreation Goals, Policies, and Strategies

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Background

Importance of Recreation

Throughout history, parks, trails and open spaces have provided a structure and an aesthetic identity to communities while providing diverse recreational opportunities. While it is difficult to place a precise dollar value on parks and open space, they provide a variety of benefits that contribute to a livable and healthy town and help foster growth and development of the tourism industry for a resort community such as Beech Mountain. Since its inception with the development of the ski resort and the golf club, Beech Mountain has continued to be a recreation-based community. As such, it is difficult to overstate the importance of recreation to the Town and community.

Purpose of Plan

The purposes of this plan are many, but they all serve one overarching goal: to ensure that Beech Mountain's efforts are aligned towards making our recreational programs and amenities the best they can be. This plan will help us to ensure that our work is all in the same direction, towards a single, unified goal and vision. Such unified and carefully forethought effort will lead to a higher quality recreation system than spontaneous, disjointed efforts would ever amount to. The plan allows us to evaluate existing programs, parks, facilities, and services, and better serve taxpayers by better aligning recreation demands with supply. It allows us a centralized forum to capture and put forth the key priorities identified by residents, guests, and stakeholders, and it also provides us an environment to discuss the challenges and obstacles that we face in achieving our goals. Based on these inputs, **this plan is a crafted framework and roadmap for the town to use in evaluating and developing improved and enhanced services.**

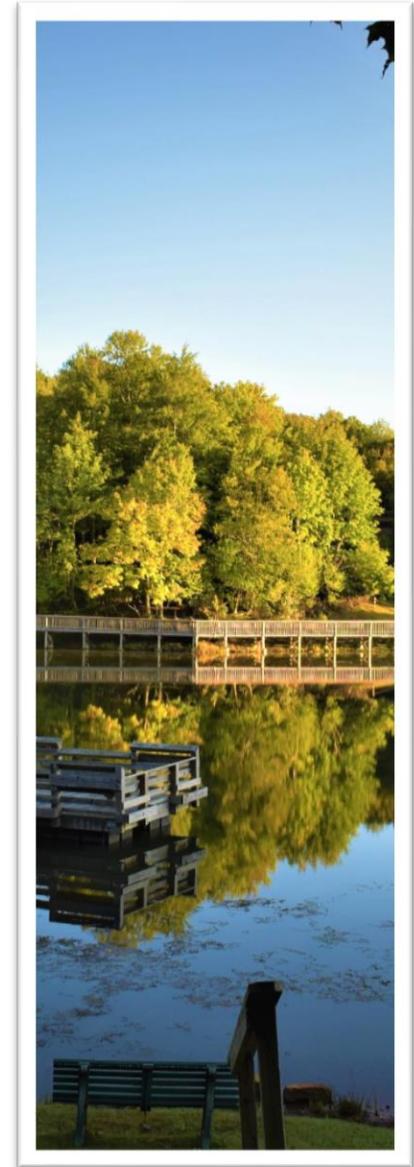
Methodology/ Surveys/ Results

The goals and recommendations for this plan were taken directly from the citizens and stakeholders of Beech Mountain as the plan is for them. An ongoing recreational survey was carried out from 2009 to 2012 to gather feedback and input regarding recreation initiatives. Also, in the fall and winter of 2011-12 several public forums were held to solicit input on the direction of the Parks and Recreation Department. An ongoing recreational survey was carried out in 2016 to gather feedback and input regarding recreation initiatives. Additionally, in 2017-18 a Recreation Master Plan was developed incorporating results of the surveys and the goals and policies of this plan. Finally, as part of the Comprehensive Plan update, surveys were conducted, and public forums were held in 2018. The recommendations contained in this plan are a result of the compilation of survey responses, input from town committees (especially the Recreation Committee and Planning Board), and from comments received regarding draft versions of the plan that were widely circulated to receive feedback.



Some of the observations and conclusions that can be made from the survey results are as follows:

- **Overall, the respondents were supportive of our Parks and Recreation Department**, citing the top-notch facilities and program offerings as strengths. However, it must be kept in mind that the subset of the population who responded to the surveys was generally people who participated in recreational activities. The survey does not necessarily adequately reflect the opinions of Beech Mountain residents or visitors who do not use our recreational amenities and thus were less likely to participate in the survey or forums.
- **The recreation department is the hub for a close-knit community atmosphere on Beech Mountain.** Recreation Dept. activities bring people together. Survey and forum respondents praised the friendliness of the Recreation Department staff and volunteers and community collaboration as some of the positives about the department.
- **The single most common recommendation received in both the survey and the forums was to “concentrate on making existing facilities the best they can be,” presumably rather than undertaking the creation of new facilities.** Financial considerations in general were a major theme in survey and forum responses. Many respondents cited the low cost of using the public recreation facilities as a plus. Many other respondents were leery of the tax dollars that are spent to fund recreation facilities and amenities. Most respondents said they were willing to pay increased user fees to defray some of the cost of recreation programs.
- **Utilization is a key concern.** It seems to be the general consensus that Beech Mountain offers great programs and amenities, but that as a general rule they could be utilized more. One of the fundamental issues seems to be the question of how to reach out to people and get them to use our facilities.
- **Connectivity, especially pedestrian mobility, was a large concern of respondents.** Respondents saw the need to better link together Beech Mountain’s trails and walkways to connect parks, neighborhoods, and communities. Accordingly, hiking and walking were cited as some of the activities that respondents participated in most often.
- **Respondents cared about the natural environment of Beech Mountain**, and they want our recreation amenities to accentuate and protect it accordingly. Respondents believe that recreation amenities should not only be useful, but also further beautification efforts because outdoor recreation is predominant on Beech Mountain.
- **Many respondents identified possibilities for new, expanded, or improved facilities.** However, these ideas should be balanced against the concerns regarding the importance of focusing on existing facilities.



Inventory of Existing Facilities

Buckeye Recreation Center

The prize asset of Beech Mountain's recreational offerings is Buckeye Recreation Center. Completed in 2006, Buckeye Recreation Center is Beech Mountain's state of the art recreation facility established for the Town's citizens and guests. It is an approximately 23,000 square foot facility with various top-notch amenities including:

Buckeye Recreation Center



Basketball Court/Gymnasium

Buckeye Recreation Center boasts a state-of-the-art gymnasium that offers basketball, volleyball, ping pong, air hockey, bad mitten, indoor walking track and more.



Multi-Purpose Room

Buckeye's multi-purpose room is available for rental and is an ideal location for parties, meetings, reunions, etc.



Indoor Tennis courts

With the only indoor tennis court on Beech Mountain, Buckeye is the perfect place to come enjoy a game, even in the cold of winter. Ball machine and complementary rackets are available.



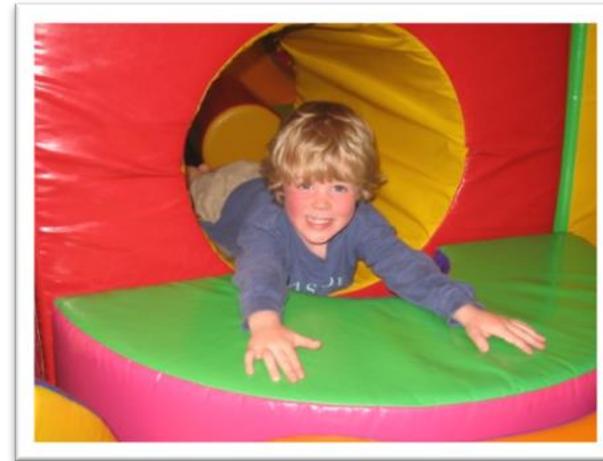
Fitness Room

In the fitness room you will find free weights, cardio, Nautilus equipment and an ideal location to get a great workout.



Kids Playroom

The kid's playroom offers a fun and stimulating environment with soft play equipment for children ages seven and under.



Lobby

The lobby offers such complimentary services to the community and its guests such as satellite television, wireless internet, games, puzzles and a lending library.



Outdoor Tennis Courts

Buckeye Recreation Center has two outdoor, paved tennis courts available on a first come-first serve basis. Complimentary loaner rackets are available.



Softball Field

The softball field can also claim expansive mountain views and is perfect for a fun family pick-up game or group get together.



Walking Track

With gorgeous panoramic views, the walking track circumnavigates Buckeye Recreation and connects directly to Falls Trail.



Picnic Area

The picnic area overlooks beautiful Buckeye Lake and is available on a first come-first serve basis through the recreation center.



Kitchen

Buckeye offers a full catering kitchen with the rental of the multi-purpose room, making it a perfect location for events.



Children's Playground

The playground at Buckeye is the only public playground of its kind on Beech Mountain. Comparable to a low ropes course it can provide hours of fun for all ages.





Buckeye Lake

Buckeye Lake is the town's municipal drinking water reservoir, which has also been classified to allow recreational use. It is a beautiful 6.5-acre mountain lake surrounded by over 60 acres of land. Buckeye Lake offers the following amenities:

- Picnic Shelter
- Restrooms
- Fishing Areas and Access Trails
- Campfire Area
- Canoes/Paddle Boats

Lake Coffey

Lake Coffey is a small mountain lake nestled near the Beech Mountain Club facilities off of Lakeledge Road. It is also one of Beech Mountain's signature neighborhood parks. Lake Coffey is a great place to fish as it is stocked regularly with mountain trout. Lake Coffey Park is also a great place for exercise with its ¼ mile walking track circumnavigating the lake and its outdoor basketball court. It is also a popular hiking trail head, as it serves as the junction for Beech Mountain's premier Upper and Lower Pond Creek Trails. Lake Coffey is also the home to the free annual Kiddo Fishing Derby. Lake Coffey offers the following amenities:

- Fishing and Fishing Pier
- Walking Track
- Basketball Court



Bark Park

Beech Mountain boasts one of the most beautiful dog parks in the High Country. With its panoramic views, large and small dog play areas, walking path and covered picnic shelter, it is one of the premiere recreational areas on Beech Mountain.



Beech Community Sledding Hill

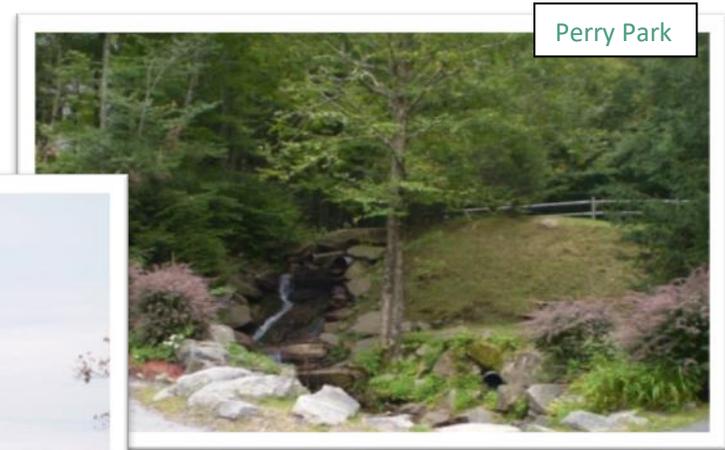
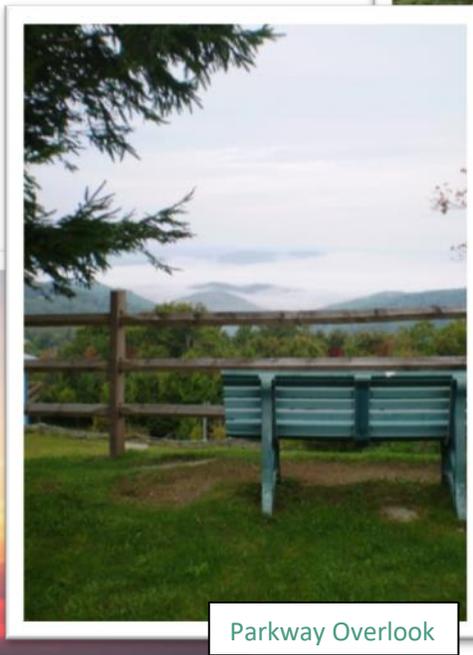
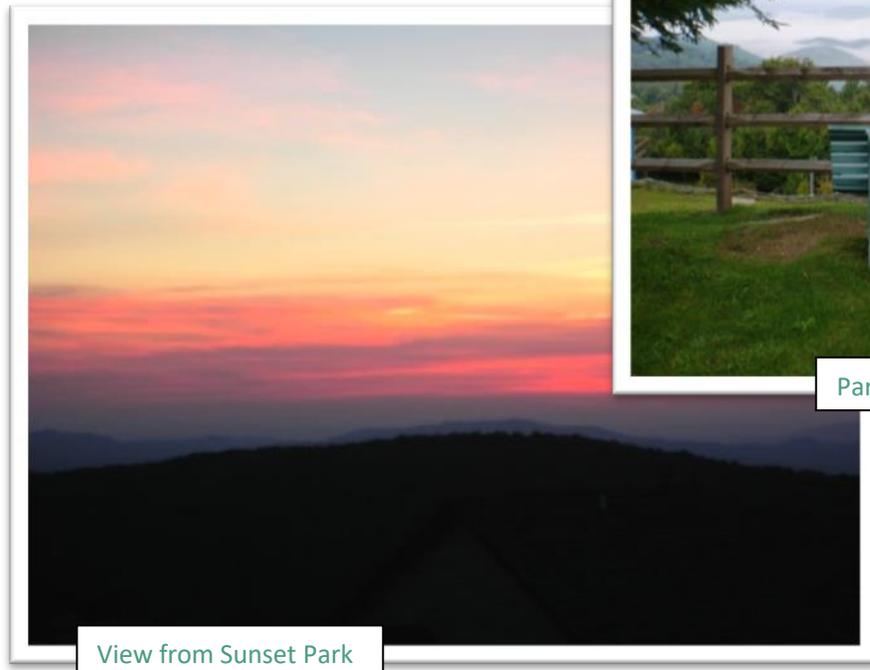
Beech Mountain is home to the High Country's only free, publicly maintained and groomed (complete with artificial snow making) community sledding hill. The sledding hill park is open (weather permitting) throughout much of the winter. Located atop Beech Mountain near the Town Hall and Chamber of Commerce/Visitors Center, this is a wonderful winter park complete with holiday music and ample outdoor winter recreational opportunity. The sledding hill is for children under 12 years of age or younger.



Neighborhood Parks

In addition to these larger parks and facilities, Beech Mountain has numerous neighborhood parks that are located throughout the residential areas and roadways on Beech Mountain. These areas are a great place to stop and have lunch, read a book, or just sit and enjoy the view.

- Hayden's Park
- Sunset Park
- Perry Park
- Fireman's Park
- Parkway Overlook



Town Hiking Trails

The Town of Beech Mountain maintains over 30 miles of hiking trails, which have become a tremendous recreational asset. The trails include:

Falls Trail

Falls trail is a very popular trail due to its ease of access from Buckeye Recreation Center. It is a roughly 1.25-mile loop that includes terrain that once served as a railroad for the logging industry in the first half of the 20th century. The slope is easy to moderate, making this a very family friendly hike. Along the trail is a beautiful natural waterfall near the convergence of Grassy Gap Creek and Buckeye Creek.

Grassy Gap Creek Trail

Grassy Gap Creek Trail is an important connection between many of the Town's other hiking trails and the Buckeye Recreation Area. The trail follows the path of Grassy Gap Creek from Hawthorne Road to Pine Ridge Road near the Recreation Center.

Lower Pond Creek Trail

Lower Pond Creek Trail connects with Upper Pond Creek at Lake Coffey. This is a single track strenuous hiking trail that follows Pond Creek to Locust Ridge Road. Lower Pond Creek is one mile, but the terrain is steep. On the trail one can see water cascading over rocks and many small and large waterfalls. The trail is strenuous but well worth the effort.

Upper Pond Creek Trail

Upper Pond Creek has been designated as a nature trail. Different stations are located along the trail with interesting information regarding the ecosystem, flora and fauna

Wild Iris Loop Trail

Best described as an easy family friendly woodland trail, Wild Iris Trail is two miles in length with only a moderate elevation change along the way. Beginning at Cherry Gap, the trail heads north toward Bear Paw Path. At Bear Paw the trail loops back around making its way to connect again at the one-mile point.

Sassafras Trail

This trail is a leisurely walk through the woods on a gravel roadway built 40 years ago as part of the Beech Mountain Resort by Carolina Caribbean. To date no development has occurred over this one-mile beautiful, wooded pathway with almost an even grade all the way through to Jackpine, a distance of one mile.

Other prominent trails include:

Red Fox/ Arrowhead Loop Trail

Smoketree Trail

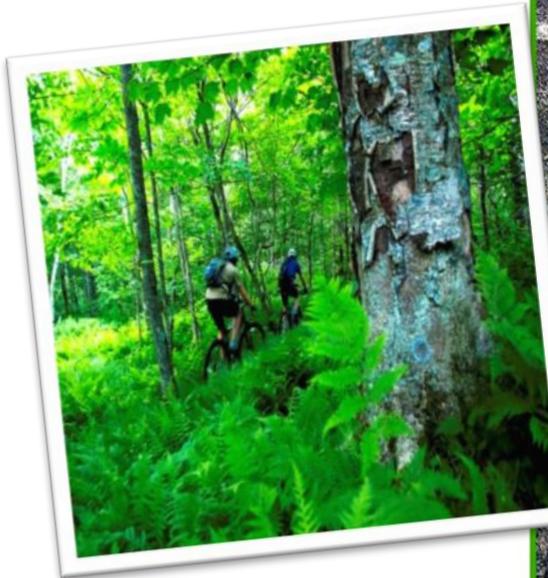
Westerly Hills Trail



The EMERALD OUTBACK

Emerald Outback

Among all the Town's hiking trails, the "Emerald Outback" deserves special discussion. Began in 2011 as a public-private partnership between the Town and a local landowner/ development company (Emerald Opportunities, Inc.), a gorgeous, flowing network of multiuse trails have been developed. The trails are situated between 4,700 and 5,000 feet in elevation, giving them astounding views of the Elk River Valley and unique terrain and vegetation that is unlike any other in the area. The trails have been extremely successful and have drawn hikers and mountain bikers to Beech Mountain from the local region and beyond.



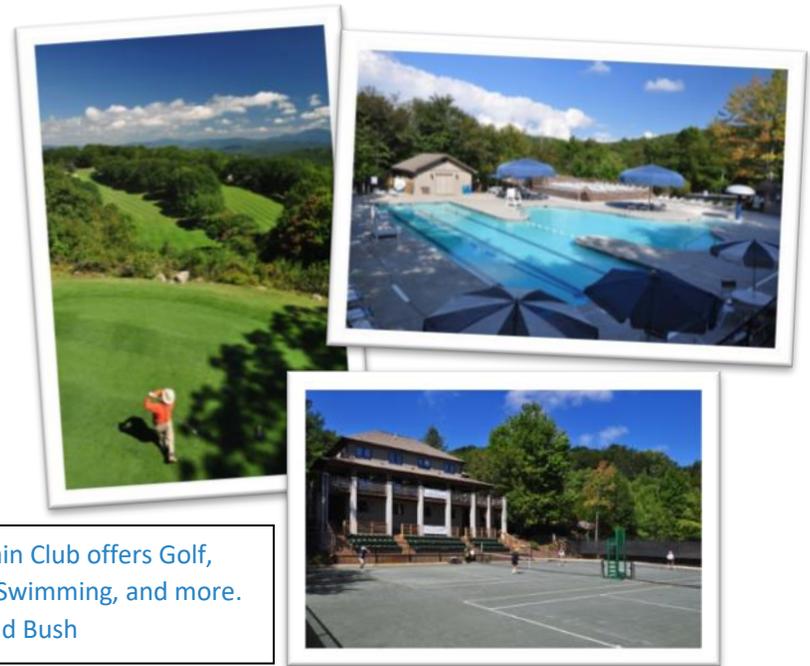
Non-Town-Controlled Recreational Facilities

Beech Mountain Club

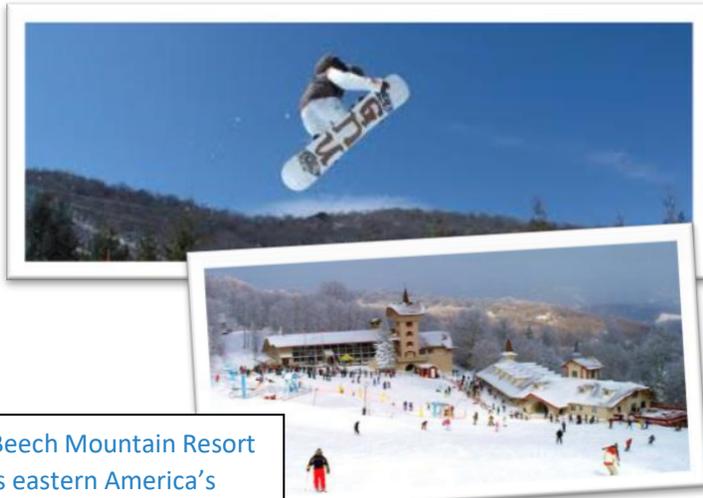
Beech Mountain Club is a private membership club providing a rich diversity of comforts and activities set against the scenic, mile-high backdrop of the North Carolina, Tennessee and Virginia mountains. Members and their guests can spend their days playing an 18-hole championship golf course or enjoying premium quality tennis facilities; swim in an outdoor heated pool; take a guided trip or hike; workout in the wellness center; or relax and dine in the clubhouse or one of the more casual seasonal cafes.

Amenities:

- 5 New Pickleball Courts
- Fitness Classroom
- 10 Tennis Courts
- Outdoor Pavilion
- Fire Pit
- Summer Camp
- Bocce Ball



The Beech Mountain Club offers Golf, Tennis, Pickleball, Swimming, and more.
—Photo Credit: Todd Bush



Beech Mountain Resort is eastern America's highest ski resort

Beech Mountain Resort

Beech Mountain Resort opened in 1967 and is the highest ski area in Eastern America. It contains over 95 skiable acres, with a vertical rise of 830 feet. The ski mountain has 17 trails, two terrain parks, and ice skating for skiers, ice skaters, and snowboarders of diverse ability and tastes. It also has four restaurants, two sport shops, and a full rental facility. At a peak elevation of 5506' feet it is Eastern America's Highest Ski Resort and often has more and better snow than other resorts in the region.

Additional Amenities:

- Snow Tubing
- Brewery
- 5506' Skybar



Evaluation of Recreation Facilities and Programs

The Town of Beech Mountain's Parks and Recreation Department has a plethora of state-of-the-art facilities, beautiful natural resources and amenities to offer its community members and guests. One of the best ways for those community members and guests to utilize those assets is through participation in the program offerings of the department.

These program offerings can be categorized into community and educational programs, major events, summers camps, volunteer programs and fundraisers to improve upon existing facilities and amenities. In striving to make every aspect of recreation on Beech Mountain the best that it can possibly be, the department is in a constant state of improvement and evaluation. The program offerings, facilities and amenities are truly assets to the community but can always be made better and improved upon.

Goal R.G1: Beech Mountain becomes a well-known and praised recreation destination- locally, regionally, and even nationally

Recreation in a resort town such as Beech Mountain is for more than just leisure, pastime or amusement. It is also more than personal development and growth or health and fitness. It is also one of the primary economic drivers for the community. Recreation is one of the main engines that bring income to our community by drawing tourists and visitors, some of whom decide to stay and become seasonal or full-time residents.

Because of the economic impacts of recreation on Beech Mountain, it is important that they be well known and well praised. It is our vision that Beech Mountain can become acclaimed locally, regionally, and even nationally for our recreation offerings.

The quality of our recreational experience is its own best advertisement.

The first, the simplest, and the most direct way to gain acclaim and recognition for Beech Mountain's recreational amenities is for them to simply be the best. While such a goal may be vague and broad sweeping, it is incorporated into this plan as a policy statement that Beech Mountain will strive to offer the best in recreational offerings that it possibly can, given the restraints and obstacles involved. The rest of this Chapter will focus on the details of what being the "best" means and how to achieve it.

Policy R.G1.P1: Effectively market our recreational amenities

As good as Beech Mountain's recreational amenities may be, the town will never achieve its goal of becoming a preeminent recreation destination without effectively marketing its offerings and letting the world know about our special mountain.



Strategy R.G1.P1.S1: Coordinate Marketing efforts with the Beech Mountain Chamber of Commerce, the Tourism Development Authority, and the major private recreational entities on Beech Mountain.

Beech’s main entities can accomplish so much more together than they could separately. The town should endeavor to pull together all available resources to develop a combined, unified recreation marketing strategy that “synergizes” the strengths of all of our major entities.

Strategy R.G1.P1.S2: Utilize the internet, “Facebook,” “Twitter” and other emerging social media outlets to promote Beech Mountain.

Social media outlets have grown tremendously over the past few years and are projected to continue to expand in the future. Beech Mountain will need to capitalize on these ubiquitous forums to reach out to new generations of visitors and recreation tourists.

Strategy R.G1.P1.S3: Improve support for Town residents

Although tourism is an important driver for the prosperity of Beech Mountain, effort should be made to provide a maximum level of service to Town residents.

Policy R.G1.P2: Foster and cultivate effective partnerships and close relationships with the major private recreation entities on Beech Mountain

Some of Beech Mountain’s biggest recreational attractions are offered by the Town’s two large private recreational entities: The Beech Mountain Club and the Beech Mountain Resort. Cooperation and partnership with these entities will allow Beech Mountain’s total recreation effort to be synergized with their offerings and will vastly multiply the effectiveness of each of the entities.

Goal R.G2: Beech Mountain will offer recreational programs and services that are unparalleled

In striving to offer the best in recreation, there are two components that must be considered: 1) *recreational services and programs* and 2) *recreational facilities*. This section will focus on how to refine our recreational *programs and services* so that they will be unparalleled in quality.

Policy R.G2.P1: Beech Mountain will strive to offer the best programming and activities that are fun, safe, fulfilling, and rewarding

What makes Recreation activities high-quality? This is a difficult question because the answer is highly subjective, and each individual’s answer may be slightly different. Nevertheless, some basic elements seem to be universally acknowledged as key factors. Beech Mountain’s recreational opportunities should always meet these four criteria:

- Fun
- Safe
- Rewarding
- Fulfilling



Recreational offerings that meet these criteria emphasize participation for enjoyment, self-understanding, self-discipline, team work, and sportsmanship. Programming such as this will help youth and adults reach their full potential and will enhance the quality of life for all of Beech Mountain’s residents and visitors and will thereby help us achieve our goal of being widely recognized for our excellence in recreation.

Policy R.G2.P2: Beech Mountain will have recreation programs that reflect our community’s character and values
All of its residents and visitors know that Beech Mountain is an incredible place. Its natural environment is magnificent, and its people are close-knit and friendly in a way that is uncommon in our modern society. We hold that these values themselves are solid building blocks for any endeavor. If our recreation programs are geared towards and abide by these fundamental values, they will amalgamate with those values.

Strategy R.G2.S1: Programs retain their focus on the outdoors.
One of the tenets of Beech Mountain’s “character” is our focus on and appreciation of the outdoors. The Parks and Recreation Department should concentrate its efforts on programs and services that get people outside enjoying our mountain.

Policy R.G2.P3: Focus on the quality of programming rather than the quantity

In the department’s endeavors to have a successful recreation program, it seems that there is a tendency to try to offer more programs and more services in order to entice more participation. However, the amount of programming offered can sometimes stretch the staff too thin. And more programming hasn’t always resulted in better programming. In the future, the staff should focus on those programs and services for which there is the highest demand and strive to make those the best they can be. As usage increases, the demand for more programming will also increase and more programming can be offered.



Goal R.G3: Beech Mountain’s recreational facilities (indoor and outdoor) stay second to none in terms of quality, maintenance, availability and friendliness

Policy R.G3.P1: Beech Mountain will consider human resources/ staff requirements for successful recreation endeavors
In the past, Beech Mountain has undertaken recreation and recreation related projects without fully considering the cost of the projects in terms of manpower. For example, the addition of the streetscape walking paths and “Bark Park” have added significant demands to existing town staff in terms of mowing, landscaping, and trail maintenance. Future additional facilities should take into account the manpower and staffing requirements that they will create. For our facilities to remain “top notch” they must be expertly maintained and operated.



Also, one of the strengths that has been recognized in our Recreation Programs is the friendliness of our staff and their willingness to help. Beech Mountain should seek to establish continuity in terms of recreation personnel so that established relationships between recreation users and recreation staff is maintained.

Policy R.G3.P2: Our programs remain conscious of aesthetics and the importance of beautification of the community. As mentioned previously, recreation amenities in a resort town such as Beech Mountain are for more than amusement alone. Our recreation amenities can also be ways to accentuate the beauty of the town. Our recreation amenities should be valued not only for how they function but also for how they look. An example of a successful employment of this principle is in the children’s playground at Buckeye Recreation Center, with its rustic style that fits well with the image of Beech Mountain. The playground is enjoyed not only for its usefulness, but it is also pleasant and attractive, which may be reasons that it is one of the more popular amenities at Buckeye.

To further this goal, it is recommended that all recreation structures should conform to a set of design standards for town buildings. They will in this way contribute to a pervasive theme and create uniformity throughout the town. This also carries the added benefit that buildings will instantly be recognized as recreational offerings...

Respondents to the surveys and forums also suggested that a similar policy for recreation signs be employed. Disparate colors and styles of signage for trails, parks, etc. were confusing and difficult to recognize.

Policy R.G3.P3: Where possible, recreation endeavors help to conserve the natural environment and remain compatible with the environment at all times

Congruent with our focus on the outdoors and our image as an outdoor destination, Beech Mountain’s recreation facilities should aim to preserve the natural environment that brings it such distinction. This can be done by ensuring that environmental ethics are employed in all of the department’s projects and activities. For example, trail maintenance and construction can aim to minimize erosion. New facilities, when created, can avoid locating in sensitive areas or habitats. One of the most powerful ways this can be done is through the acquisition of land for passive recreation, for which support was indicated in the surveys and forums.

Policy R.G3.P4: Look for opportunities to improve upon existing facilities and amenities

In terms of delivering excellent Recreation facilities, Beech Mountain is off to a great start. The existing facilities of the mountain’s recreation infrastructure are wonderful, but extra effort and attention to their maintenance and upgrades and improvements where necessary could bring them to another level. The following items have been identified through the survey responses, forum feedback, and discussions with town staff as some of the bigger items that need improvement. It is recommended that the town pursue these improvements as budgeting and manpower allows:

Parking at BRC



From its inception, parking has been an issue at Buckeye Recreation Center. While its parking facility is often sufficient, it is sorely lacking during events at Buckeye and on busier days. Also, part of the great potential that Buckeye Recreation Center has is its adaptability to use its 23,000 square feet to accommodate large events. However, its current lack of parking is largely a barrier to doing so. Finally, when Buckeye realizes the increase in usage that it desires, parking will be a major problem.

One of the largest obstacles to providing more parking is the unavailability of suitable land for expansion. Probably the best spot for parking would have been the area that is now occupied by outdoor tennis facilities. These tennis facilities are excellent and to get rid of them for parking would be a travesty, however, in the long term their relocation should be considered.

In the meantime, consideration should be given to the potential for the courts to be adaptable for parking usage during large events. There is potential to replace the existing fence with a gated or removable alternative on one side.

The town owns several lots along Pine Ridge Road that are near Buckeye Recreation Center. Another measure that can be taken in the meantime is to create a parking area on one of these lots to be used as overflow or event parking.

Finally, there is an existing overflow parking area near the water treatment facility, but its use is limited because access from there to Buckeye is difficult. Creating a set of stairs from this parking area to the Recreation Center would ease the parking burdens in the main lot above.

Parking at Trails

Beech Mountain's trails also face problems with parking. Trailheads for major trails should be improved, with adequate parking provided along with improved signage and information kiosks, and landscaping that fits the Town's theme.

Picnic Shelter Facilities at Lake Coffey

A picnic shelter facility would be well suited and often used at the popular Lake Coffey recreation area.

Sheltered, Outdoor Cooking Facility at BRC

Buckeye Recreation Center is often used to cater large events. It has been noted that an outdoor cooking facility would be useful for preparing food for these events. The indoor kitchen is inadequate for preparing large meals for events.

Overnight Camping Facilities

Camping is an activity that fits well with Beech Mountain's rustic image and could bring visitors to our mountain. While a larger private campground could be successful here, there is also potential for camping of smaller scale on town-maintained property. There is little doubt that such a facility would be successful.

Covered Shelter/Amphitheater



A covered shelter or amphitheater would be well suited for outdoor performances, especially those that reflect our mountain heritage, such as bluegrass music. Similar facilities have been extremely successful in nearby Banner Elk and other local communities.

Outdoor Experiential Recreation Facilities such as a Low and High Ropes Course, Climbing Wall, or Zip Line

The addition of this type of feature to our present capabilities would poise the Town and the Recreation Center to be marketed as a destination location for corporations, schools and clubs for retreats, reunions, camps, team & trust building courses as well as motivational and education programs. Such amenities could make Beech Mountain an even more desirable destination for groups and in the process raise revenues for the Recreational facility and the town.

Goal R.G4: Beech Mountain will encourage participation in recreation programs

In striving to serve its constituents to the fullest extent possible, Beech Mountain will be a community that goes the extra mile to encourage participation and seek to increase utilization of recreation facilities in order to foster healthy and active lifestyles for its people. One of the foremost objectives of the Recreation Department in coming years should be to increase usage of our facilities.

Several of the following recommendations focus on marketing. In contrast to the marketing efforts described under Goal R.G1, the marketing described here is geared more towards getting the people who are already in the area to participate, rather than marketing to attract new people to Beech Mountain, which is discussed in Goal R.G1.

Policy R.G4.P1: Effectively communicate the availability of upcoming recreation opportunities

One of the best ways to increase usage of our facilities is to keep people informed about what is going on. Survey respondents indicated that receiving emails from the Recreation Center was an effective reminder and encouragement to attend Recreation Center activities. The Recreation Department's Program Guides are also very popular and effective means of getting interest and attendance at our programs.

Policy R.G4.P2: Market activities and programs to out-of-town residents

There is no public recreation facility in Watauga County that is comparable to Buckeye Recreation Center. The Recreation Center could capitalize upon that fact and sequester users beyond Beech Mountain's town limits. It is easily foreseeable that many residents of areas such as Vilas, Bethel, Cove Creek, and Boone would use Buckeye's facilities if they were aware of what was offered. Many people in these areas are probably unaware that Buckeye exists, and many more probably do not know how to access the Recreation Center and Buckeye Recreation Center via U.S. 321 and Buckeye Creek Road.

A method of increasing usage in the surrounding communities would be to offer Buckeye as a location for local school functions or events, as well as local youth sporting events such as church basketball leagues, etc.



Policy R.G4.P3: Offer a variety of recreational programs and amenities that serve groups of diverse abilities and interests, including consideration of expanding non-athletic recreational opportunities.

In order to obtain interest from a broad group of participants, Beech Mountain will continue to offer programs for various age groups and for people with various interests and abilities, when possible.

Policy R.G4.P4: Stress the health and fitness benefits of recreation

Public Recreation exists to better the lives of the people whom the government entity serves. People’s lives are bettered by recreation in many ways, including better health and fitness for participants. The importance of healthy living and exercising regularly are becoming more widely recognized all the time. As more and more people realize their needs to be fit, the Recreation Department should position itself as a means to better health.

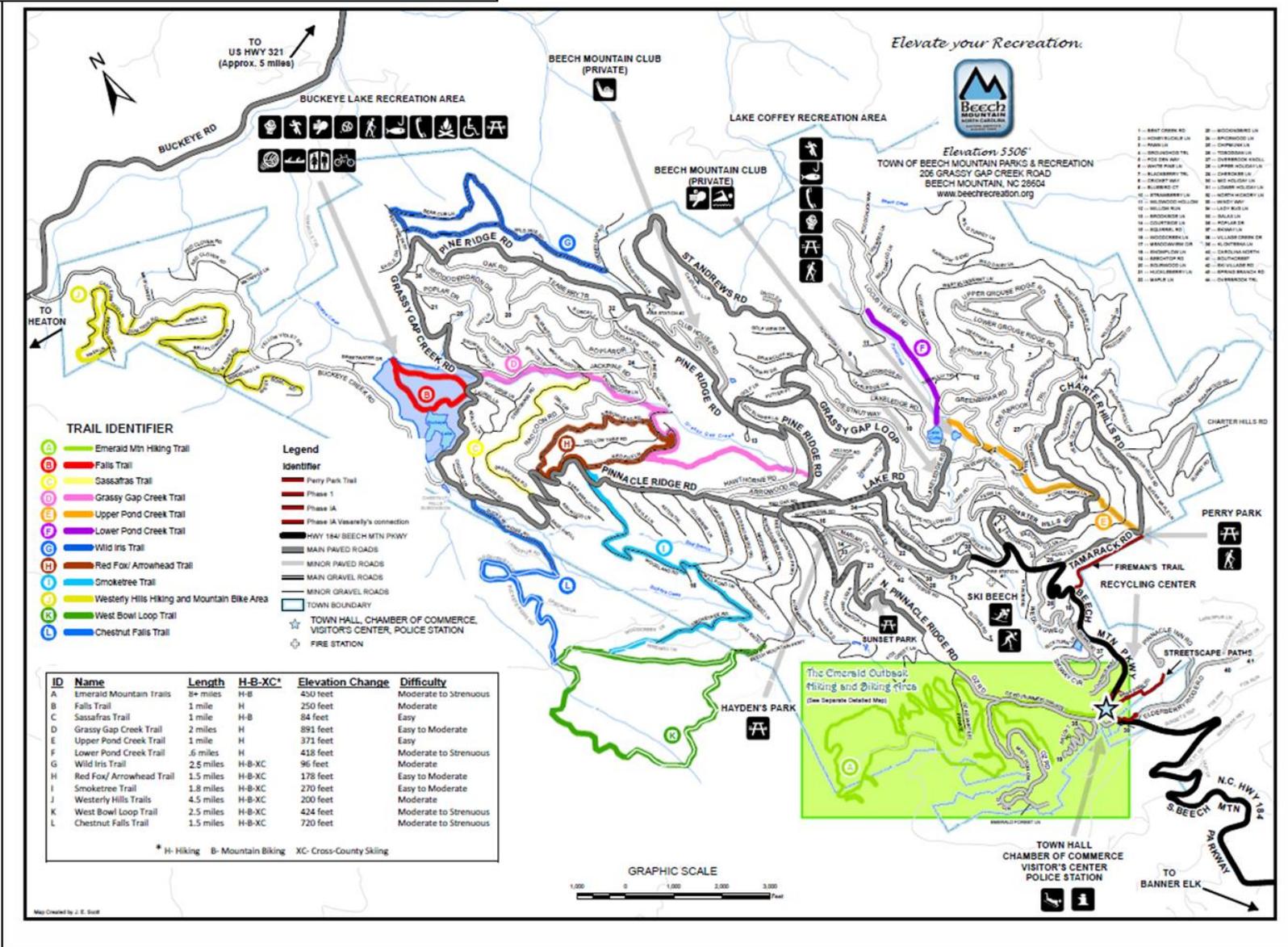
Goal R.G5: Beech Mountain will have an interconnected trail network that links parks, neighborhoods, and communities



As previously noted, connectivity, especially pedestrian mobility, was a large concern of Beech Mountain stakeholders as reflected in surveys and forums. Respondents saw the need to better link together Beech Mountain’s parks and facilities to connect parks, neighborhoods, and communities. Beech Mountain’s trail system is an important part of the total pedestrian mobility. Beech Mountain should pursue development of trails, paths, and walkways that interconnect its various amenities and key locations.



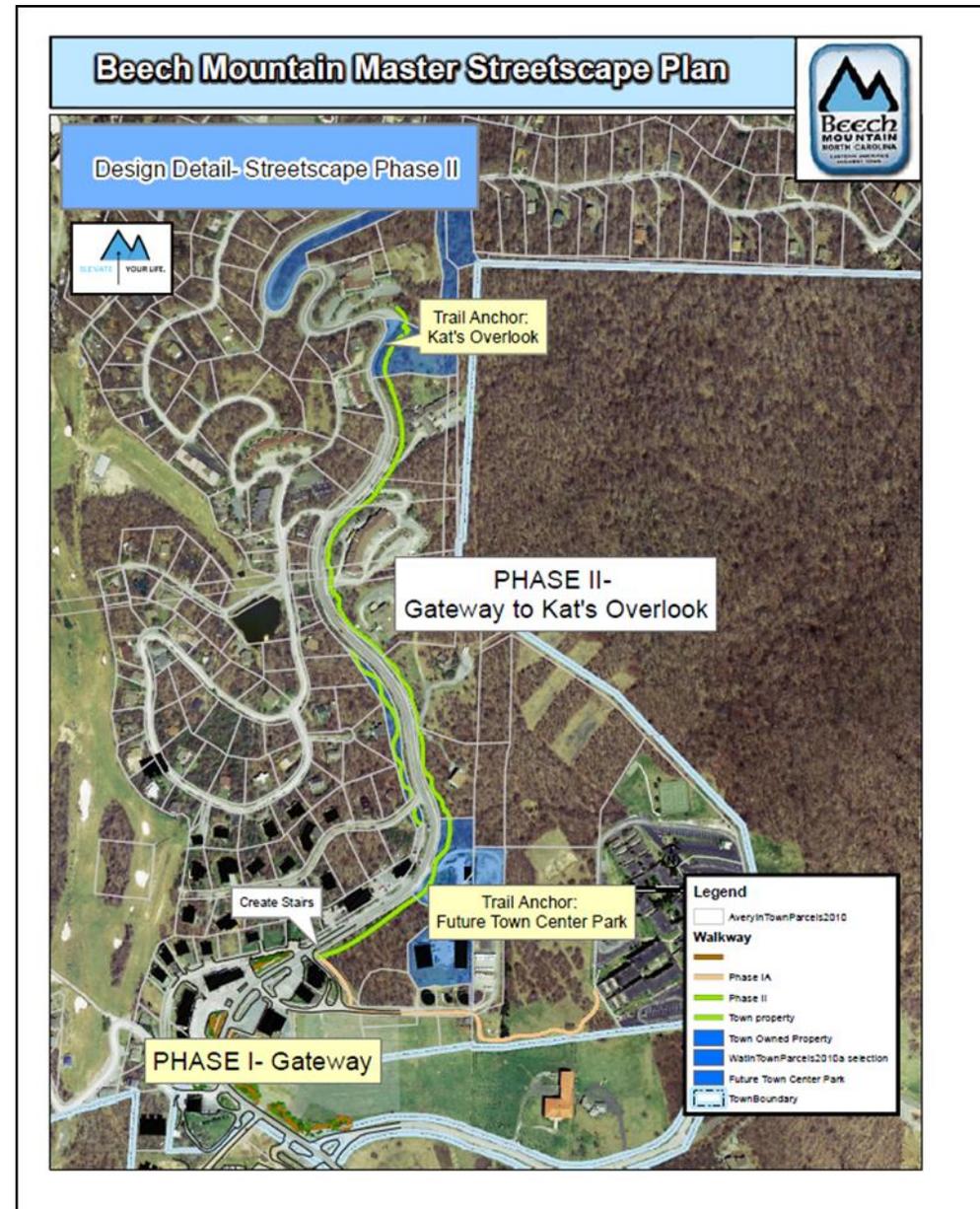
BEECH MOUNTAIN'S CURRENT TRAIL SYSTEM



The Town's current trail system is depicted on the map on the previous page. The trail network, as well as the recreational amenities as a whole, are largely separate and individual entities. To tie this network together, several needed linkages are as follows:

Phase II of the Streetscape Improvements

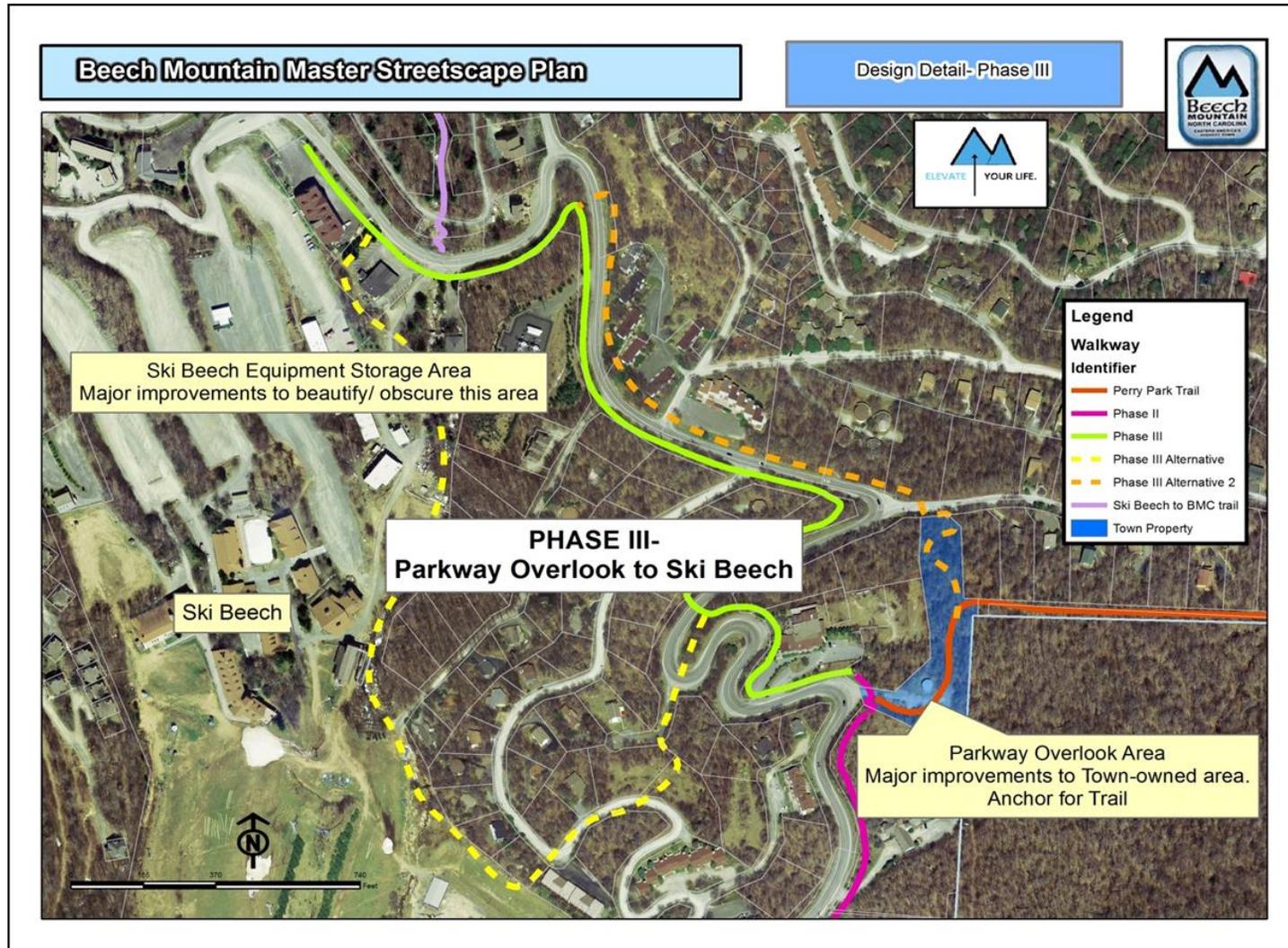
Possibly the single most important linkage in our trail/ pedestrian system is the creation of a linkage that allows pedestrian mobility up and down Beech Mountain Parkway from Town Hall to the Parkway overlook. Such a connection would provide access to the Town's main commercial entities as well as connect to the hiking trail network via "Fireman's Trail" from the overlook to Perry Park.



Phase III of Streetscape Improvements.

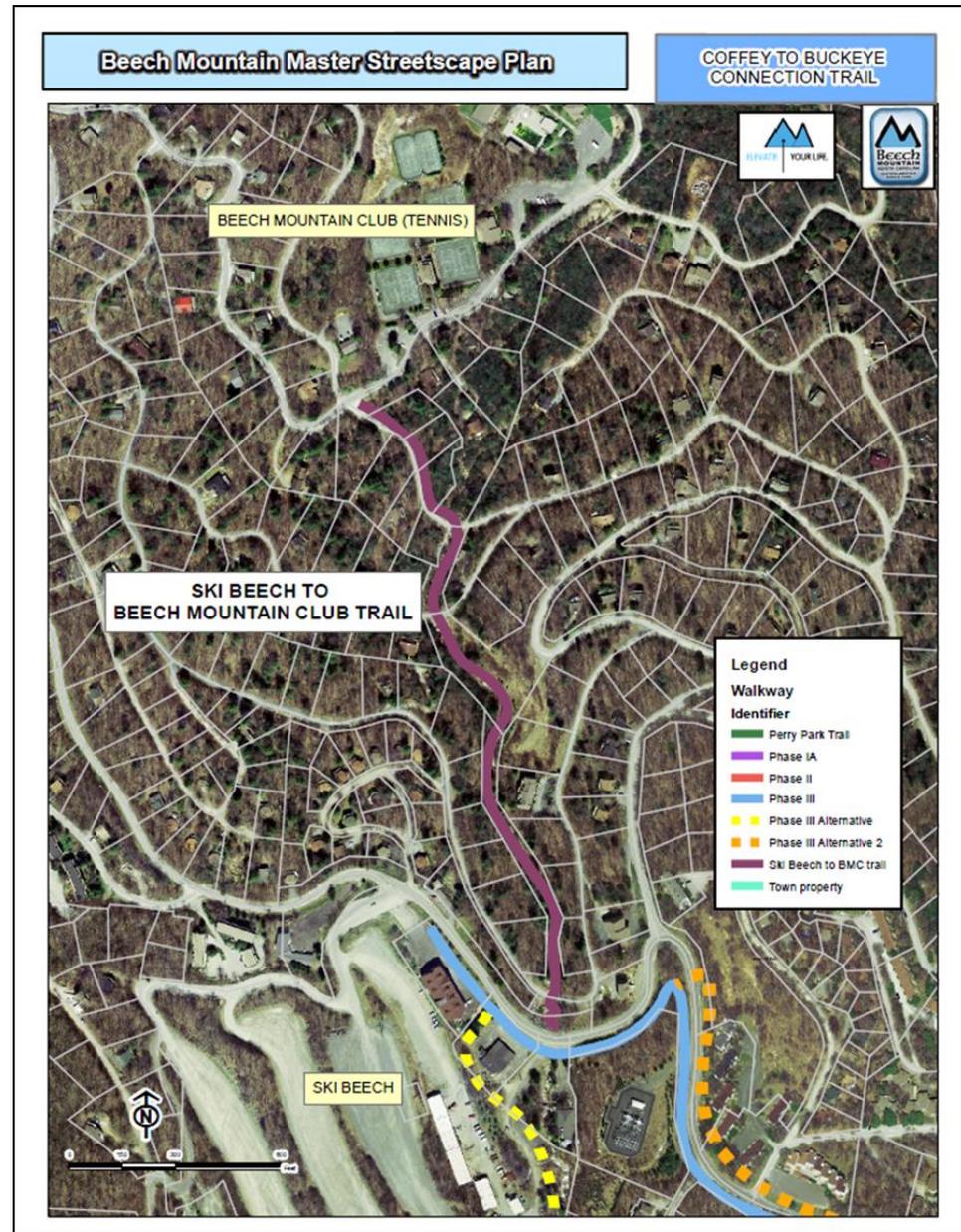
Continuation of the path to the other commercial hub of Beech Mountain at the ski resort is another critical section of necessary path. This section is faced with several sharp road switchbacks and difficult terrain, and therefore multiple routes have been suggested.

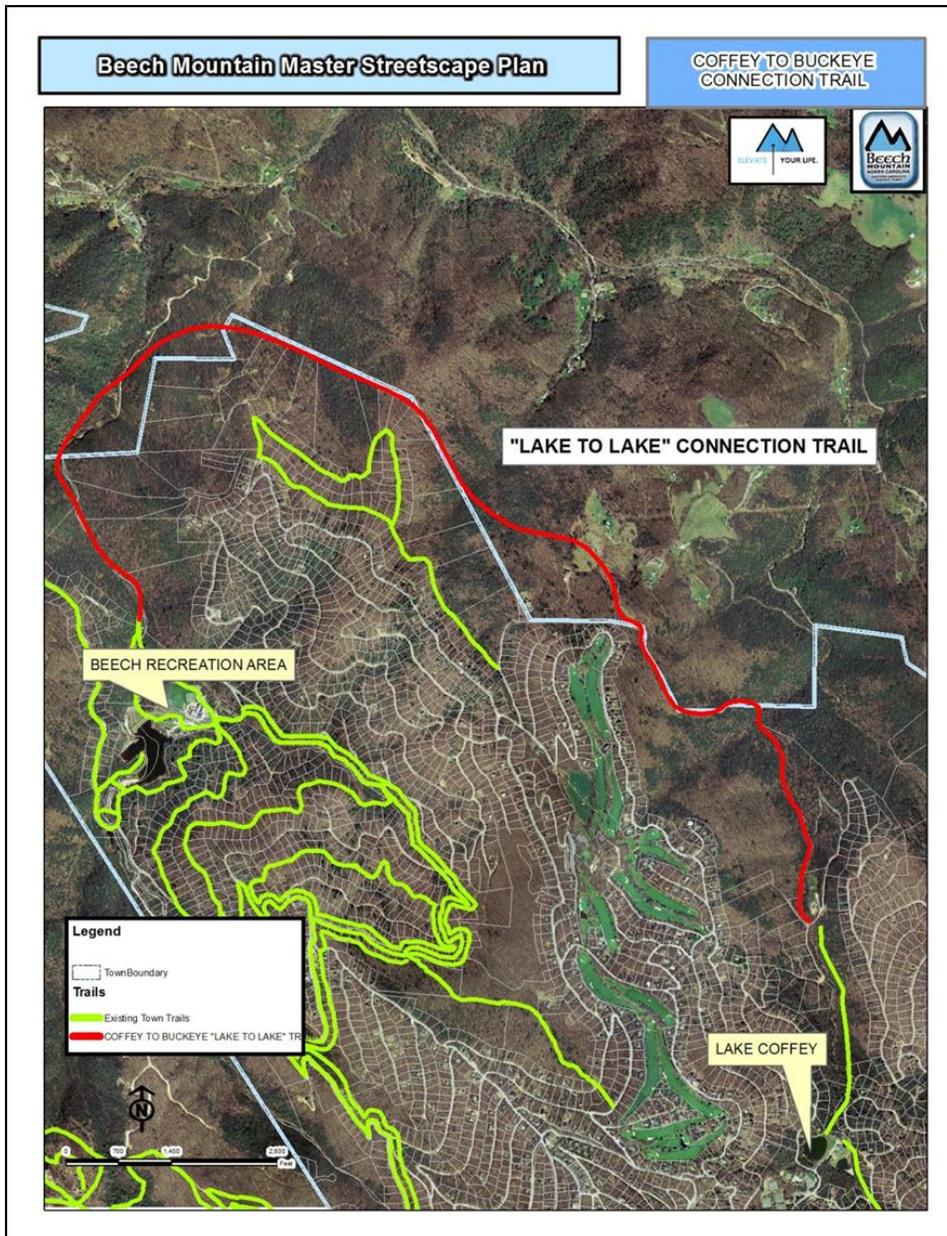
Regardless of which route is eventually pursued (maybe several of these routes could be built), it is clear that this is an important linkage in the pedestrian network.



Beech Mountain Resort to Beech Mountain Club Trail

This trail would provide important connectivity between Beech Mountain Resort and the neighboring commercial establishments and Beech Mountain Club's tennis complex off of Lakeledge Road.





"Lake to Lake" Trail

This trail would connect Buckeye Lake and Lake Coffey, two of Beech Mountain's most important recreational sites. In doing so, the trail would also tie together the trail networks at the top of the mountain (Streetscape, Fireman's Trail, Upper and Lower Pond Creek Trails) with the network of trails near Buckeye (Falls Trail, Grassy Gap Creek Trail, etc.). This would result in a interconnected trail scheme that could theoretically be hiked from start to finish without having to exit the system.



West Bowl Connector Trail

Similar to the Lake to Lake Trail, this connection from the Emerald Outback to the West Bowl would provide a needed linkage between the trail networks at the top of the mountain and those around Buckeye. One section of this trail was recently completed in 2012 through funding from the Adopt-A-Trail Program, and further grants have been submitted through the Recreational Trails Program of the North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources to obtain funding to complete the connection.

Trail Connections to out of Town locations (Banner Elk, Appalachian Trail)

Beyond Beech Mountain's Town Limits, it is important to consider how our trail network fits in with the growing number of regional trails in the area. Several linkages in particular would be useful:

- 1) Proposals have been made to link Beech Mountain, Banner Elk, and Sugar Mountain by a continuous hiking trail. Such a trail would carry many benefits and would be heavily used.
- 2) A trail connecting Beech Mountain to the Appalachian Trail holds much promise, and would have many economic as well as recreational benefits. Such an offshoot of the Appalachian Trail would open up Beech's trails to day hikes from the AT. Long distance hikers on the AT could take the diversion to come and rest from the trails for several days at our inns and hotels. Appalachian Trail hikers are often vocal advertisers of their journeys, and trail logs and blogs could spread the word about the friendly and fun town with a focus on outdoor recreation on Beech Mountain.



Goal R.G6: Beech Mountain will strive to provide the highest quality recreational opportunities while working within limits of the Town budget.

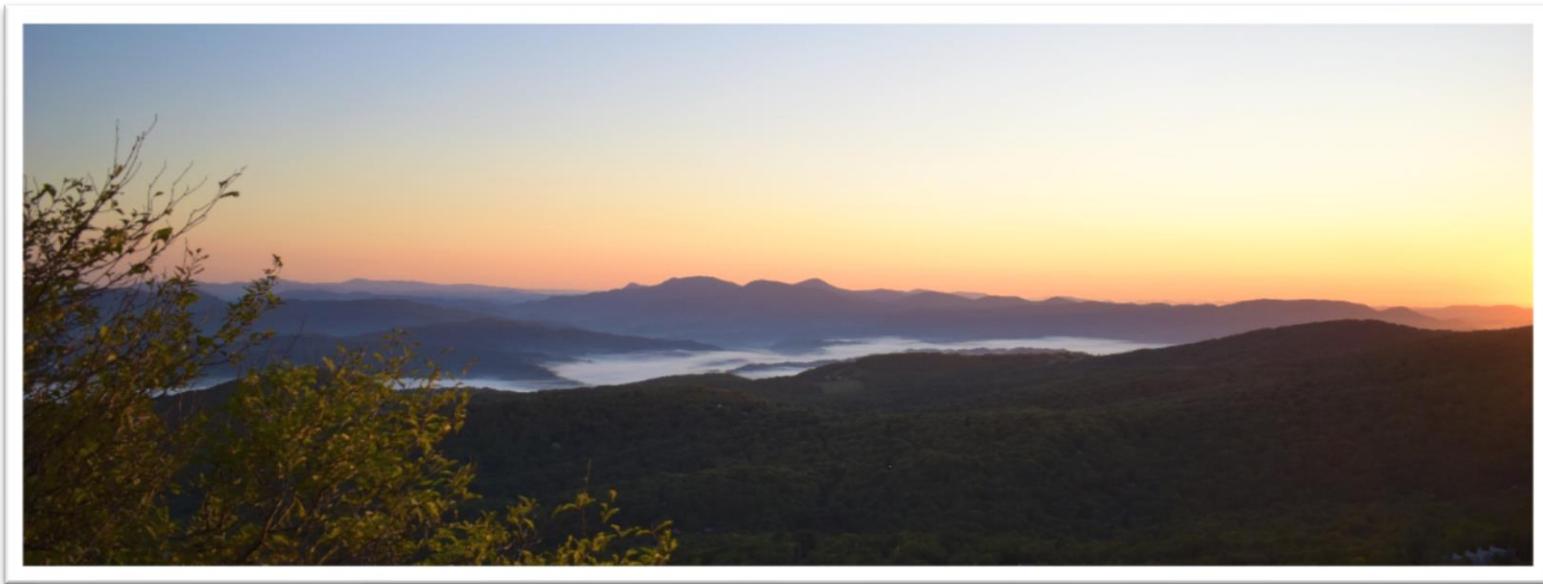
The Town of Beech Mountain recognizes that recreation is much more important than just an “extra”- it is an essential and critical component of the services provided to our residents and visitors. Therefore, recreation development in Beech Mountain will move forward wisely and prudently, but it will continue to move forward.

Policy R.G6:P1: Concentrate on improving and maintaining existing facilities first

One of the best ways to be wise with spending on recreation is to focus on our existing facilities and infrastructure before further extending our obligations. The respondents to the recreation survey and forums were clear in their support of this policy. Concentrating on existing facilities, however, does not mean that no more money will be spent on recreation. In fact, concentrating on existing facilities in many cases may mean the expenditure of additional money to properly staff, maintain, and care for our recreational entities. Beech Mountain should be good stewards of the abundant recreation assets it has by ensuring they are in top condition.

Policy R.G6:P2: Capitalize on opportunities for external funding

A second way to ensure that Beech Mountain’s recreation endeavors are fiscally responsible is to search out grants and funding opportunities to accomplish necessary initiatives. Aggressively searching and pursuing these opportunities could result in improved recreation facilities while minimizing burdens on taxpayers.

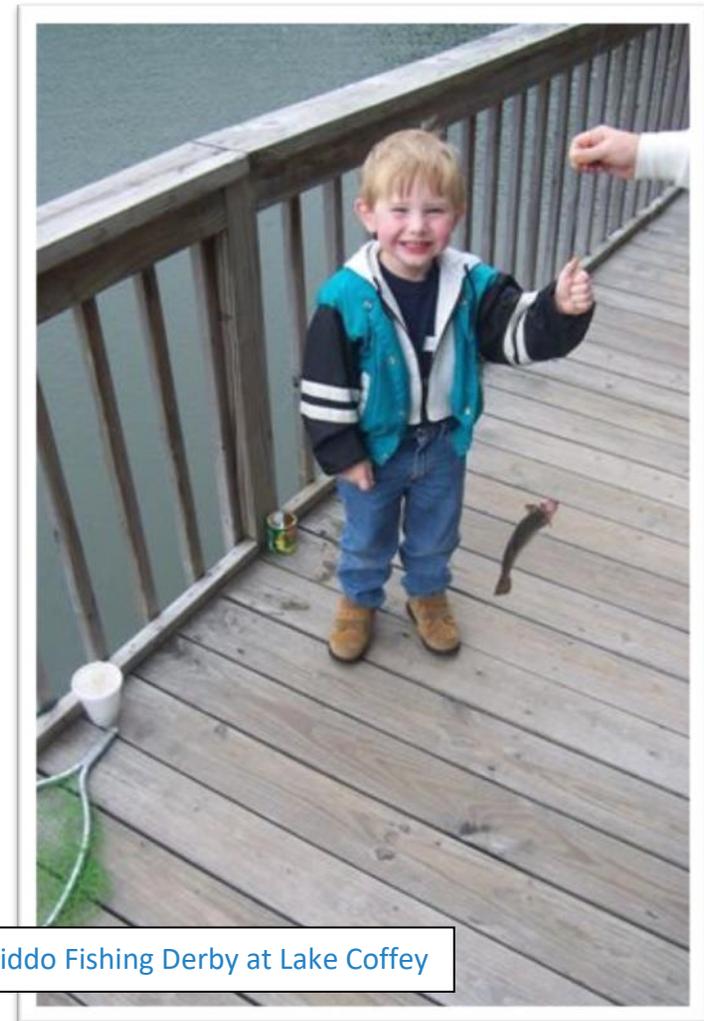


R: Discussion and Conclusion

Beech Mountain is a resort-based community and thus the importance of recreation is invaluable. Some of the primary reasons that community members choose to live on Beech Mountain- and guests choose to visit- are the recreational opportunities that the town has to offer. The breathtaking views, unparalleled facilities, extremely pleasant summer temperatures, enriching programs and amazing and supportive community members collectively make up the draw to the mountain.

The importance of the continuation of positive direction for the recreational opportunities on Beech Mountain cannot be stressed enough. If the Town of Beech Mountain is going to continue to be competitive as a resort destination in the mountains of North Carolina, the amenities that it has to offer must be second to none in both the private and public sectors. There is an imperative need to meet the collective goals of this plan and for the town to improve on its assets and capitalize on opportunities to improve in the future.

Recreation is a vital part of healthy living. Beech Mountain is an ideal location to recreate both indoors and out and should continue to strive to be the best that it can possible be for its community members, visitors and guests.



Kiddo Fishing Derby at Lake Coffey

