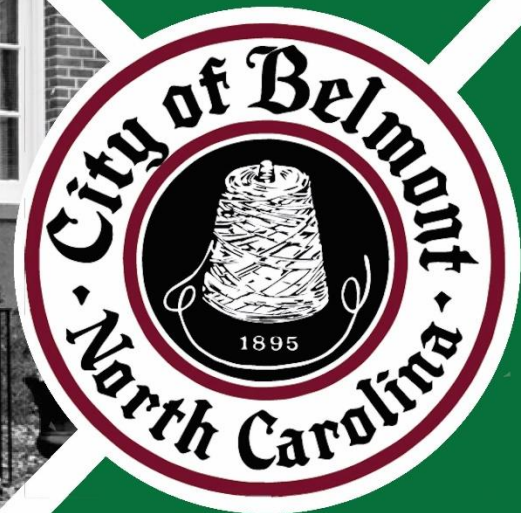


# Recreation Facility Feasibility Study



Master of Public Administration Program  
*at*  
The University of North Carolina at Charlotte

Advanced Seminar in Public Management Problem Solving  
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## Executive Summary

### Overview

The City of Belmont enlisted students of the Gerald G. Fox Master of Public Administration (MPA) program at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte to conduct a feasibility study on a recreation facility for the Parks & Recreation Department. Currently, the Parks & Recreation Department manages a dozen parks and facilities, multiple sports leagues, and oversees the daily operations and maintenance of recreation facilities.

The growing demand for an indoor recreation space prompted the City to investigate the cost of constructing and operating its own recreation facility to accommodate community needs. The City uses local facilities, such as the Belmont Middle School and Foursquare Church, to hold athletic leagues and programs, but the time constraints, limited gymnasium space, and parking issues all create challenges for an enjoyable experience for local citizens. The City pursued a feasibility study in hopes of using the findings to address these issues, and further analyze the financial and social impacts of constructing a new recreation facility.

### Methodology

To provide a comprehensive analysis and offer recommendations on the feasibility of constructing a new recreation facility, the MPA Class used multiple research methods:

1. Identified community needs, type of facility, and building and operating costs;
2. Conducted a literature review of national recreation facility trends and data;
3. Visited existing facilities within the City of Belmont;
4. Met with the Parks & Recreation Advisory Board and discussed community needs;
5. Benchmarked 25 facilities of comparable cities, both in- and out-of-state;
6. Administered a community survey, collecting feedback from over 200 local citizens;
7. Interviewed 12 key community stakeholders for insight on interest and partnerships;
8. Analyzed existing feasibility studies to gather data on attributes, trends, and cost;
9. Collected financial statements to gain information on costs, revenue and funding sources.

Leveraging these nine methods of data collection, the MPA class compiled the necessary elements for an initial feasibility study on construction and operation of a City recreation facility.

### Findings

Based on the research conducted, the MPA class identified 11 findings addressing the three main questions developed when defining the scope of the feasibility study. These findings fall into one of three main categories: **community needs, facility programs and features, and finances.**

A chart with this information is presented on the following page.

Category	Finding
Community Needs	1. There is inadequate recreation space in the City of Belmont
	2. There is significant community support for a recreation facility in Belmont
	3. A recreation center can provide multiple benefits to the Belmont community
Facility Programs and Features	4. Create programming that engages the whole community
	5. A multipurpose facility would best fit the community
	6. The community indicated strong support for an indoor walking track, multipurpose space, and a weights and fitness space
	7. Comparable multipurpose facilities range from 24,000 square feet to 91,000 square feet depending on purpose and features
Finances	8. Construction cost for comparable multipurpose facilities varies from \$4 million to \$15 million based on size, purpose, and material quality
	9. Most comparable facilities used multiple sources of capital for construction costs
	10. The City lacks a current recreation master plan
	11. A feasible operating cost recovery target for a recreation facility is 50%

*Table i. Findings*

## Recommendations

The MPA class developed five recommendations for the City of Belmont to consider when evaluating the feasibility of a new recreation facility. Specific recommendations are displayed in Table ii.

1	Create a new Parks & Recreation Master Plan
2	Continue the planning process
3	Develop a cost recovery philosophy for Parks & Recreation facilities
4	Evaluate multiple capital financing sources to reduce the debt burden
5	Build a multipurpose facility to meet multigenerational needs

*Table ii. Recommendations*

Based on the research, the community desires a multipurpose, multigenerational recreational facility. There is an opportunity for the City of Belmont to address these community needs through the construction of an indoor facility which could offer new programs, features, events, and tournaments. The findings of this feasibility study reveal a need for a more detailed analysis to determine potential financial and social impacts of a recreation facility. The MPA Class recommendations provide the foundation for future cost estimates and measures of community need.

## Introduction

The City of Belmont, North Carolina is a vibrant community in the Greater Charlotte region that seeks to provide recreation activities, festivals, and public spaces to its residents. Compared to jurisdictions of comparable size, Belmont lacks the indoor recreation space needed for indoor athletics like basketball and volleyball. Other programming, such as exercise classes and activities for seniors, is also limited due to existing space constraints. The City leases space from the Foursquare Church and Belmont Middle School in order to provide space for athletic leagues to practice or play games.

To better understand the feasibility of an indoor recreation facility in Belmont, City officials contracted the Spring 2018 Advanced Seminar in Public Management Problem Solving capstone class in the Gerald G. Fox Master of Public Administration program at UNC Charlotte (MPA Capstone Class or class). Belmont tasked the class of 10 advanced MPA students with creating a feasibility study to evaluate the recreation needs of the community, the best type of facility to meet those needs, and the financial considerations of building and operating a new facility. The project followed the Scope of Work available in Appendix A.

To gain insight into the needs of the Belmont community, the class collected 273 survey responses from Belmont residents and recreation facility users, interviewed 10 stakeholders, and conducted a focus group with the Parks & Recreation Advisory Board. The class benchmarked 25 comparable municipalities to shed light on trends in facility features and programming as well as suggest the type of recreation facility to best meet the community's needs. The class also compiled and analyzed academic and professional literature to understand the benefits of recreation centers on different segments of the population. In addition, the class gathered financial information from statements, comprehensive annual reports, and interviews collected to examine the construction costs, funding options, operating costs, and operating revenues of comparable facilities.

The class researched three major focus areas. First, the class provided evidence demonstrating the need for a recreation facility through a community survey and stakeholder interviews. Next, academic and professional literature highlighted best practices for facility programming and features. Third, the class explored the finances of constructing and operating a recreation facility, offering detailed construction estimates and financing options. This report concludes with a listing of each finding by category and a set of five recommendations for the City of Belmont to consider.

## Community Profile

The following section provides background information on the City of Belmont and its unique position as a growing community in the Greater Charlotte region.

### Overview

The City of Belmont, North Carolina is located in Gaston County along the banks of the Catawba River to the east, the South Fork of the Catawba River to the west, and Lake Wylie to the south.<sup>1</sup> Confined within natural barriers, Belmont's geography contributes to the City's unique identity as a close-knit community of working North Carolinians. Belmont maintains a strong sense of local pride while also benefiting from the Charlotte region's growth. This is evident in its vibrant business community, festivals, schools, and local activities. Belmont connects to the cities of Charlotte and Gastonia via Interstate 85 and is three miles from the I-485 interchange. Residents enjoy a convenient 20-minute commute to Uptown Charlotte. Belmont's location near the rapidly expanding Charlotte Douglas International Airport and the popular U.S. National Whitewater Center makes the City an attractive location for economic development.



The City prides itself on several distinct assets, including the private college, Belmont Abbey, which enrolled over 1,500 students in 2016.<sup>2</sup> Kevin Loftin Riverfront Park highlights Belmont's roots as a river town by providing acres of community space along the Catawba River for walking, fishing, and recreation.<sup>3</sup> Downtown boasts several locally owned restaurants such as Nellie's, an establishment dedicated to the late Nellie Jonas, a Belmont local and grandmother to the Jonas Brothers.<sup>4</sup> The City hosts dozens of festivals and events each year, including the keynote Garibaldi Festival every spring in Stowe Park.

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<sup>1</sup> "City of Belmont." History. <https://cityofbelmont.org/241/History>

<sup>2</sup> "College Board." Belmont Abbey College. <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/college-university-search/belmont-abbey-college>

<sup>3</sup> "Gaston Co. Travel & Tourism." Kevin Loftin Riverfront Park. <http://visitgaston.org/kevin-loftin-riverfront-park.html>

<sup>4</sup> "Nellie's Southern Kitchen." Our Story. <http://nelliessouthernkitchen.com>



**Government**

Belmont operates as a council-manager form of government with an elected Mayor, a five-member City Council and an appointed City Manager. The Belmont City Government consists of six departments: Administration, Fire, Parks & Recreation, Planning & Zoning, Police, and



Public Works.<sup>5</sup> Built in 1939, the historic Belmont City Hall is located in Downtown, housing the Administration units and City Council chambers. Each department in Belmont is in a separate physical location, although some plans propose bringing departments together into a single building. The City operates five citizen advisory boards, including the Parks & Recreation Citizens Advisory Board and the Environmental Sustainability Board.<sup>6</sup>

**Finances**

Belmont’s financial operations are in accordance with North Carolina statutes. Each year, the City Manager and Finance Department staff present a budget proposal to Council. After several workshops and a public hearing, Council votes to approve a budget by June 30. Figure 1 shows that in the 2017-2018 fiscal year, Belmont budgeted \$10,906,700 in general fund expenses with the top three expenditures listed as police (\$3,132,577), fire (\$1,516,407), and streets (\$1,510,844). The City plans to spend \$545,995 on Recreation during the year, including salaries, programming, and maintaining current parks and facilities.<sup>7</sup>

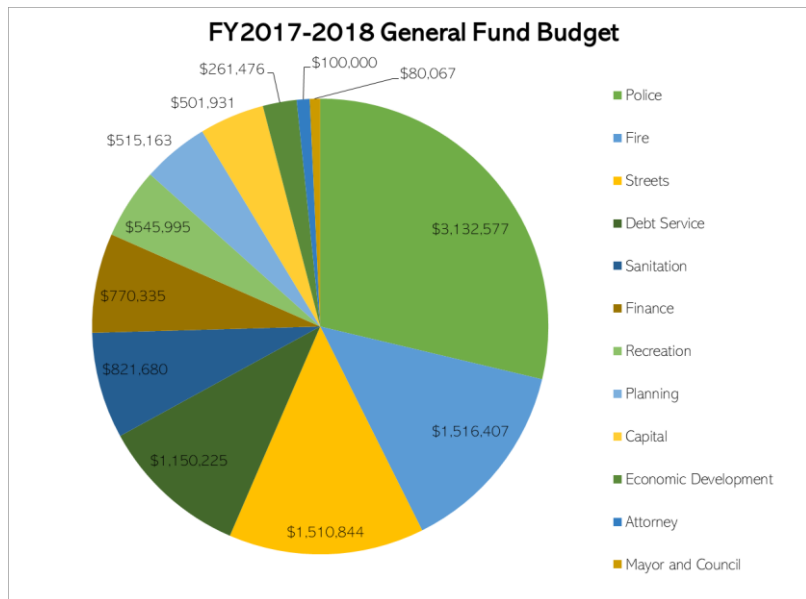


Figure 1. General Fund

<sup>5</sup> City of Belmont. “Departments.” <https://cityofbelmont.org/158/Departments>.

<sup>6</sup> City of Belmont. “Boards and Commissions.” <https://cityofbelmont.org/149/Boards-Commissions>.

<sup>7</sup> City of Belmont. “City Budget.” <https://cityofbelmont.org/162/City-Budget>.

According to the City’s 2016 government-wide financial statements, Belmont held \$44,609,979 in total assets as well as \$12,740,595 in total liabilities. With a positive net position of \$31,912,235. The City increased its capital asset spending by over \$2 million between 2015 and 2016. In the 2017-2018 fiscal year, Belmont budgeted \$1,150,225 for financing and \$501,931 for capital projects, such as utility system upgrades and a comprehensive street paving program. The City spent \$860,038 on debt service in 2016, an increase from \$789,978 in 2015.<sup>8</sup> The City held \$27,168,975 in capital assets in 2016, primarily in facilities, parks, land, machinery, vehicles, and other equipment.

**Demographics**

Belmont’s estimated 2016 population was 10,748, a 7.0% increase since 2010. The Charlotte – Concord – Gastonia NC-SC Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), which includes the City of Belmont, had a population of 2.47 million in 2016 and an 11.6% growth rate since 2010. For demographic comparison, data was collected on 18 municipalities in the Greater Charlotte region listed in Figure 2 below.<sup>9</sup>

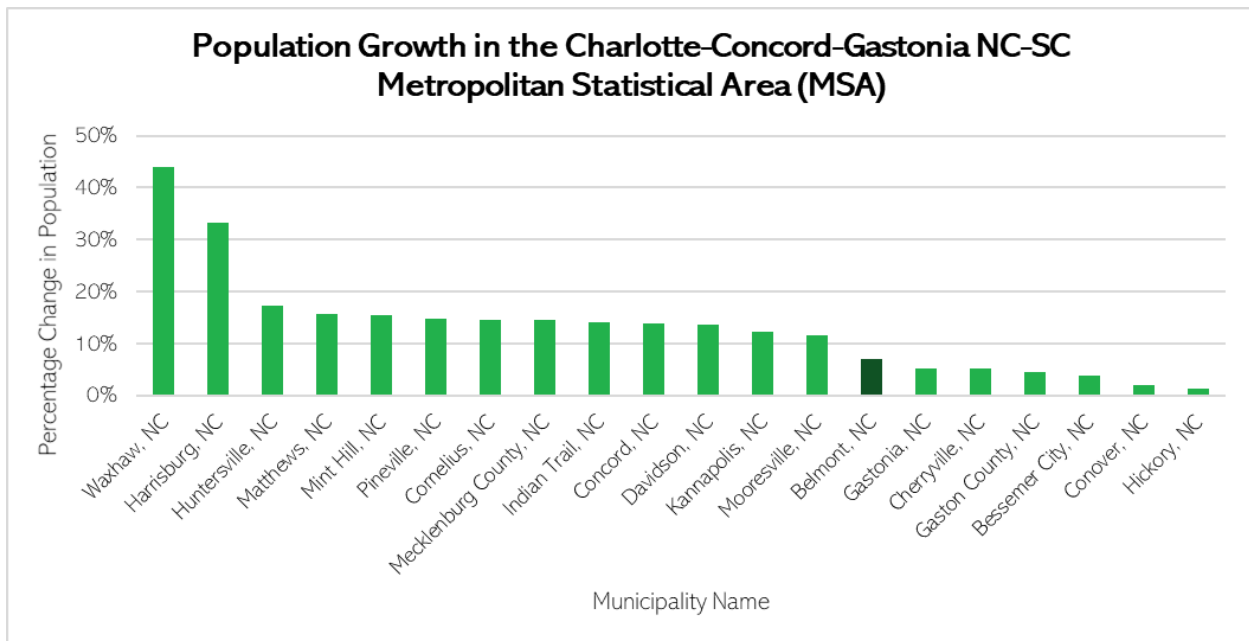


Figure 2. Population Growth

Belmont is among the fastest growing communities in Gaston County, a county that experienced a growth rate of 4.5% from 2010 to 2016. If growth continues at the same rate of 7.0% every five years, Belmont’s population will reach 14,151 by 2030 and 17,351 by 2050.

<sup>8</sup> City of Belmont, North Carolina. Martin Starnes & Associates, CPAs, P.A. Financial Statements for the Year Ended June 30, 2016.” Last modified 2017.

<sup>9</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census. “Annual Estimates of the Resident Population: April 1, 2010 to July 1, 2016.” American FactFinder, last modified 2016. <https://factfinder.census.gov/bkmm/table/1.0/en/PEP/2016/PEPANRES/0400000US37.16200>.

In 2016, Belmont’s median household income of \$60,314 was slightly higher than Mecklenburg County’s \$59,268 and significantly higher than Gaston County’s \$44,288. These differences in median household income may reflect Belmont’s geographic proximity to the City of Charlotte, which shows higher income levels than rural areas of Gaston County. For income, Belmont ranked 10th out of the 18 Charlotte Metropolitan Area communities observed.<sup>10</sup>

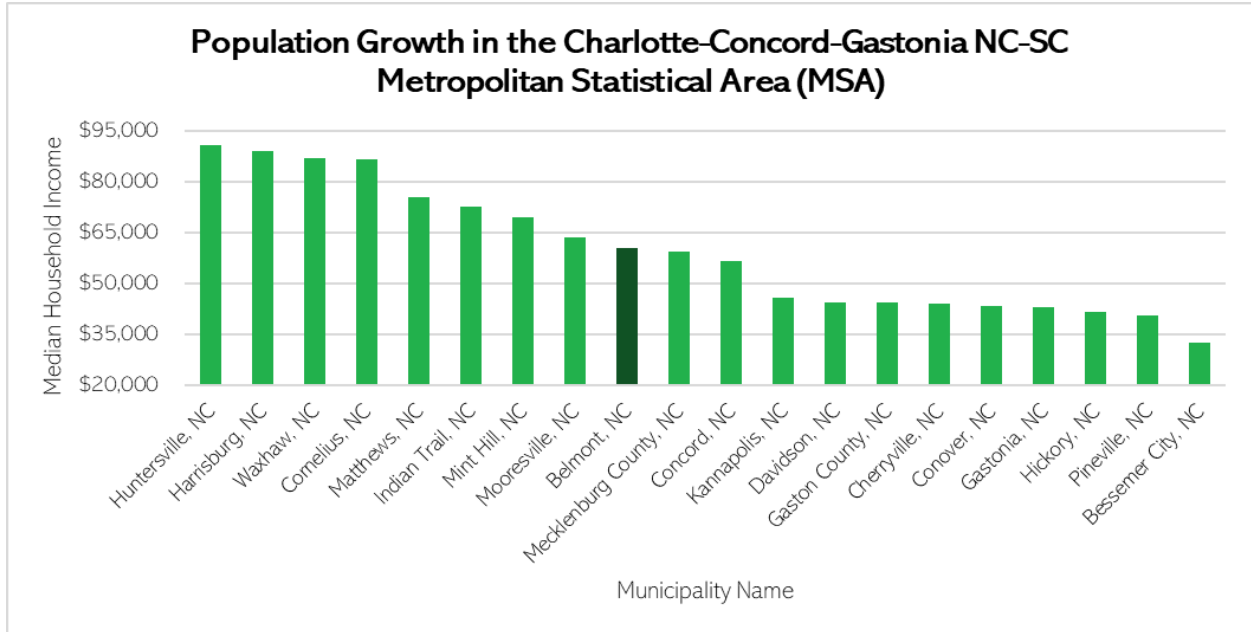


Figure 3. Median Household Income

Compared to similar communities in the Charlotte Metropolitan Area, Belmont exhibits a more homogenous population with 18.9% identifying as non-white in 2016. For comparison, only Cornelius, Davidson, Bessemer City, and Cherryville showed a smaller non-white population than Belmont out of the 18 Charlotte Metropolitan Area cities analyzed. The median age in Belmont is 40.1, the fourth highest out of the 18 Charlotte Metropolitan Area cities included in the comparison.

<sup>10</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census. “Income in the Past 12 Months: 2012-2016 American Community Survey.” American FactFinder, last modified 2016. [https://factfinder.census.gov/bkmk/table/1.0/en/ACS/16\\_5YR/S1901/1600000US3704840](https://factfinder.census.gov/bkmk/table/1.0/en/ACS/16_5YR/S1901/1600000US3704840).

## Parks and Recreation Profile

The Belmont Parks & Recreation Department’s mission is to “Enhance the quality of life for residents and visitors, by acquiring, developing, operating, and maintaining a park and recreation system.” With a focus on the outcomes of healthy lifestyles, the Department’s vision is “We enhance lives through quality parks and programs.” The Department mentions that recreation increases economic development, builds relationships and pride within the community, and reduces crime.<sup>11</sup>

The Department has four full-time employees as well as 12-15 part-time employees and interns.<sup>12</sup> Parks & Recreation has its own office space located in the J. Paul Ford Center. The City established a five-member Parks & Recreation Citizens Advisory Board to serve as the connection between Belmont residents, City Council, and the Department. Council appoints each member to serve a three-year term and the Board meets quarterly.<sup>13</sup>



Belmont offers a variety of athletic and recreation programming for both adult and youth participants. For adults, the City provides seasonal basketball, soccer, softball, and tennis leagues. Youth offerings include baseball, basketball, soccer, softball, t-ball, tennis, and volleyball. The City also provides senior programming for the active-aging population of Belmont, such as aerobics and line dance classes.<sup>14</sup> Several private, nonprofit, and faith-based organizations also afford Belmont citizens recreational opportunities. The Stowe Family YMCA, for example, offers aquatic, fitness, and gymnasium activities to Belmont residents.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> City of Belmont. “Parks and Recreation.” <https://www.cityofbelmont.org/151/Parks-Recreation>.

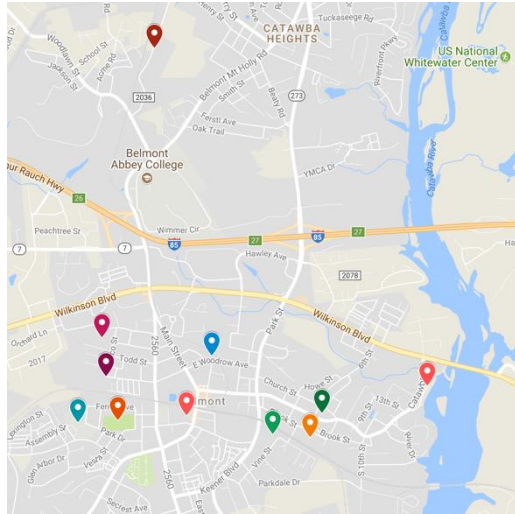
<sup>12</sup> Zip Stowe, Parks and Recreation Department Director. Email.

<sup>13</sup> City of Belmont. “Parks & Recreation Citizen Advisory Board.” <https://cityofbelmont.org/157/Parks-and-Recreation-Citizens-Advisory-B>.

<sup>14</sup> City of Belmont. “Programs.” <https://cityofbelmont.org/378/Programs>.

<sup>15</sup> Gaston Co. Family YMCA. “Stowe Family YMCA.” <http://gastonymca.org/locations/stowe>.

## Facilities



- Davis Park
- Ebb Gantt Park
- Kevin Loftin Riverfront Park
- Linford Park
- Reid Park
- Rocky Branch Park
- Stowe Park
- Dwight Frady Field
- Rodden Field
- Belmont Central Elementary
- J. Paul Ford Center

The Department manages seven parks, two baseball fields, two soccer fields, and a tennis court facility.<sup>16</sup> The popular Stowe Park in the downtown area serves as a central meeting place for residents and visitors and is currently receiving upgrades to its amenities. With several rental facilities and ample event space, Stowe Park generates revenue for the City. The park is also the focal point for the Garibaldi Festival, drawing thousands of visitors to the City center each spring.<sup>17</sup> In 2016, the Department completed Kevin Loftin Riverfront Park. This scenic park spans 10 acres along the Catawba River and features two shelters available for rent, a natural-wood playground set, and a public boat launch.

In 2015, the City opened Ebb Gantt Park, with two regulation-size fields for Belmont’s adult and youth soccer programs. As a multipurpose park, Ebb Gantt Park features a walking trail, playground equipment, restrooms, and space for concessions. One block away on Catawba Street is the Dwight Frady Baseball Field and a renovated outdoor basketball court with six goals. The recreation facilities and small business community located along Catawba Street contributed to the revitalization of the East Belmont neighborhood.

The City continues to expand its recreation assets in response to the growing demand for youth and adult athletics. While places like Ebb Gantt Park and the Davis Tennis Courts addressed needs for outdoor space, the City lacks an adequate indoor recreation facility. Beyond housing the Parks & Recreation Department, the City uses the J. Paul Ford Center for indoor activities, such as senior aerobics and dance classes.<sup>18</sup>



Due to the lack of a dedicated gymnasium space, the City leases space from various organizations to operate its basketball and volleyball leagues.

<sup>16</sup> City of Belmont. “Parks, Ballfields, and Facilities”. <https://cityofbelmont.org/193/Parks-Ballfields-Facilities>.

<sup>17</sup> City of Belmont. “Stowe Park.” <http://cityofbelmont.org/403/Stowe-Park>.

<sup>18</sup> Gaston Co. Travel & Tourism. “Kevin Loftin Riverfront Park.” <http://visitgaston.org/kevin-loftin-riverfront-park.html>.

### State of Indoor Facilities

The Belmont Middle School is one of the rented locations for the City's youth basketball games. Built 77 years ago, the Middle School's single-court facility fails to meet regulations for tournament leagues and does not provide adequate parking for the games. Since the Middle School sports teams have priority use of the gymnasium, City programs cannot begin practice until after 7:45 PM on weekdays. With a late start time and limited space, only two



teams may practice on a weekday. The space issue becomes apparent once basketball season begins as many of the teams do not get the opportunity to practice due to the number of games taking place.<sup>19</sup>

The City also rents space from the Foursquare Church. While Foursquare Church's Aldridge Center facility has a single court and parking lot, space availability issues consistently affect Belmont's athletic leagues since it shares gym space and time with the Church's league. Space is limited for concessions and spectators, who use metal chairs along the gymnasium sideline, sitting floor-level with the players. The small recreation space in the J. Paul Ford Center is not equipped for basketball or volleyball games and lacks the modern amenities to attract special events and rental interest.

The facilities at Belmont Middle School, Foursquare Church, and J. Paul Ford Center all fail to meet American Disabilities Act (ADA) standards and lack the space necessary to provide an enjoyable recreation experience for participants and spectators. Safety and compliance are concerns at the current owned and rented recreation facilities. For example, most safety authorities recommend a distance of 10 to 12 feet between the back wall and the basketball hoop to allow for adequate clearance when a player takes a running shot.<sup>20</sup> Both the Belmont Middle School and Foursquare Church fail to meet these recommendations, only having two to five feet of clearance.

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<sup>19</sup> City of Belmont. "Senior Programs." <https://cityofbelmont.org/392/Senior-Programs>

<sup>20</sup> EMC Insurance Companies. "Basketball Courts: Clearance and Padding Rules." [http://www.emcins.com/Docs/Risk/TechSheets/Tech\\_Basketball\\_Court\\_Clearances\\_and\\_Padding\\_Rules\\_20120112.pdf](http://www.emcins.com/Docs/Risk/TechSheets/Tech_Basketball_Court_Clearances_and_Padding_Rules_20120112.pdf)

The City of Belmont worked with its available facilities to create a youth basketball program of over 35 teams and 235 participants, as well as a youth volleyball league with over 30 participants.<sup>21</sup> The need for an exclusive indoor area is increasingly important. Other recreational activities, such as senior and adult programming, tournaments, and special events also add to the need for more space. With a growing



nationwide demand for recreation programs across all age groups, Belmont has the opportunity to invest in the infrastructure necessary to ensure sustainable future growth.

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<sup>21</sup> According to information provided by Belmont Parks and Recreation Officials.

## Methodology

The MPA Capstone Class used the following methods to make recommendations on the feasibility of a recreation facility in the City of Belmont:

### Research Questions

The class developed three primary research questions regarding the feasibility of a recreation facility in Belmont:

- What are the community's recreation needs?
- What type of programs and facility will meet these needs?
- How do cities pay to build and operate these facilities?

### Community Survey

With assistance from the City, the class administered an online survey to Belmont community members and athletic facility users through the City of Belmont's Facebook accounts and main website. The survey consisted of seven primary questions and five optional demographic questions. While the sample was not statistically representative of the community, the survey's 273 responses provided the class with valuable insights into the needs of the community and potential facility attributes. A full overview of the survey questions and responses can be found in Appendix B.

### Stakeholder Interviews

The class conducted interviews with 10 community stakeholders, including local businesses, Gaston County offices, current facilities' managers, and athletic associations. These interviews provided perspectives from stakeholders into how a potential recreation facility might be used and how the City may be able to create partnerships in the community. A summary of each stakeholder interview can be found in Appendix C.

### Meeting with Parks & Recreation Advisory Board

Select members of the class met with the City of Belmont Parks & Recreation Advisory Board during a scheduled special meeting. The Advisory Board offered their opinions and thoughts on the current and future needs of Belmont residents in addition to their vision for parks and recreation growth. Notes from the Parks & Recreation Advisory Board meeting can be found in Appendix D.

### Interviews with Parks & Recreation Staff

Brief interviews with Belmont Parks & Recreation staff provided the class with a holistic view of internal needs and opinions on the proposed facility. A written interview with 11 questions was distributed to staff through email with follow up phone calls. These questions focused on general department information, current challenges, and demand for facility features.

### Site Visits

The class traveled to the City of Belmont to see existing facilities. The class visited Belmont City Hall, Downtown Belmont, Stowe Park, Belmont Middle School, Foursquare Church, Stowe



Family YMCA, Kevin Loftin Riverfront Park, and Ebb Gantt Park. The class watched youth basketball games in the existing facilities, which made clear the need for a modern facility. The class also took photographs of these facilities to document the current conditions.

### Benchmarking

To understand the current market for recreation facilities in comparable municipalities, the class gathered data points from 25 facilities, which can be found in Appendix G. The class used the following criteria to identify benchmark cities:

- City population less than 75,000
- Facility built or underwent major renovation within the past 20 years
- Facility includes a gymnasium with basketball equipment
- Preference to facilities in the state of North Carolina
- Preference to facilities with available feasibility studies
- Preference to facilities in cities with comparable demographics to Belmont

Data points collected in the benchmarking process include demographic variables, facility information, cost and budgetary data, programming information, and department organization.

To understand Belmont's position in the Greater Charlotte region, the class collected demographic information for 18 comparable communities in the area. A full table of this demographic information can be found in Appendix K.

### Feasibility Study Review

The class analyzed existing feasibility studies of comparable recreation facilities to gather insights on attributes, trends, community needs, and cost. Only two of the facilities in the benchmarking had corresponding professional feasibility studies completed.

### Financial Statement Review

The class gathered relevant financial statements and comprehensive annual financial reports for each of the benchmarked municipalities, Belmont, and other comparable jurisdictions. These financial statements helped shed light on the scale of operations for each of the facilities included in the study. The class compiled available capital costs, operating costs, revenue sources, and funding sources.

### Literature Review

To better understand the social impacts of a recreation facility and programs, the class analyzed several academic and professional studies on physical and environmental health, youth programming, adolescent crime, and senior quality of life.

## What are the Recreation Needs of the Community?

The class previously described the challenges and opportunities associated with parks and recreation in Belmont. Many of these challenges directly impact how parents and residents view their town. In order to make any conclusions about the proposed facility, the class gathered public input through a community survey and stakeholder interviews to gain understanding of community needs and desires.

### Survey

#### Methodology

In coordination with City officials, the MPA class administered an online survey to analyze community opinions on the proposed facility and program offerings. The survey consisted of twelve questions, the full text of which is located in Appendix B. These questions focused on participation in current programs, facility satisfaction, and basic demographic information. The MPA class distributed the survey through a link posted on Belmont's main website and Facebook pages. 273 respondents completed the survey between February 8<sup>th</sup> and February 16<sup>th</sup>.

#### Information on Survey Respondents

The community survey did not capture every demographic representative of the City's population. Of the 273 respondents, 77% were women and 88% have children. However, not all questions resulted in such skewed results. For example, the age of respondents ranged from 18 to 76 and household recreational participation varied across a wide variety of programming as evident in Figure 4.

Many survey respondents described themselves as parents of children participating in Belmont's largest sports leagues: youth soccer and basketball.

The MPA class gained valuable insight from the survey responses, especially for parents of youth basketball participants who would use a new recreation facility.

Because the survey was distributed primarily via Facebook, we did not expect the survey to provide a representative and comprehensive sample of the community. To better assess community needs, several questions refer to household behavior in addition asking questions about the respondent's beliefs and expectations. As a result, the data provided a better, but not complete, view into community attitudes regarding parks and recreation.

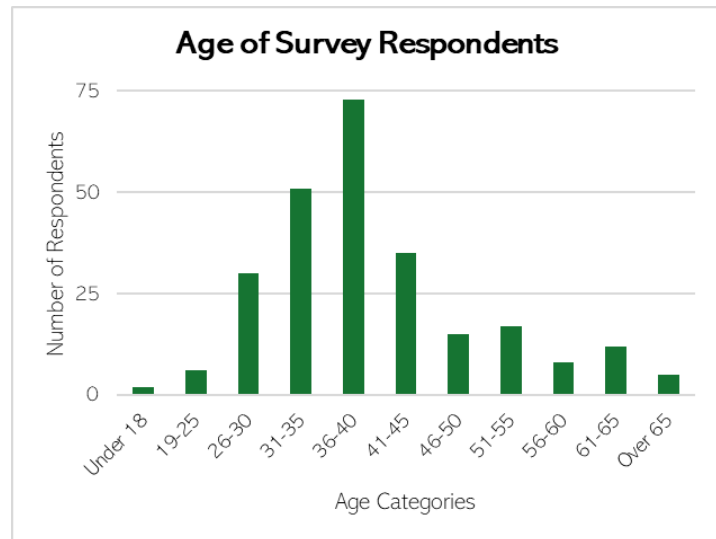


Figure 4. Ages of Survey Respondents

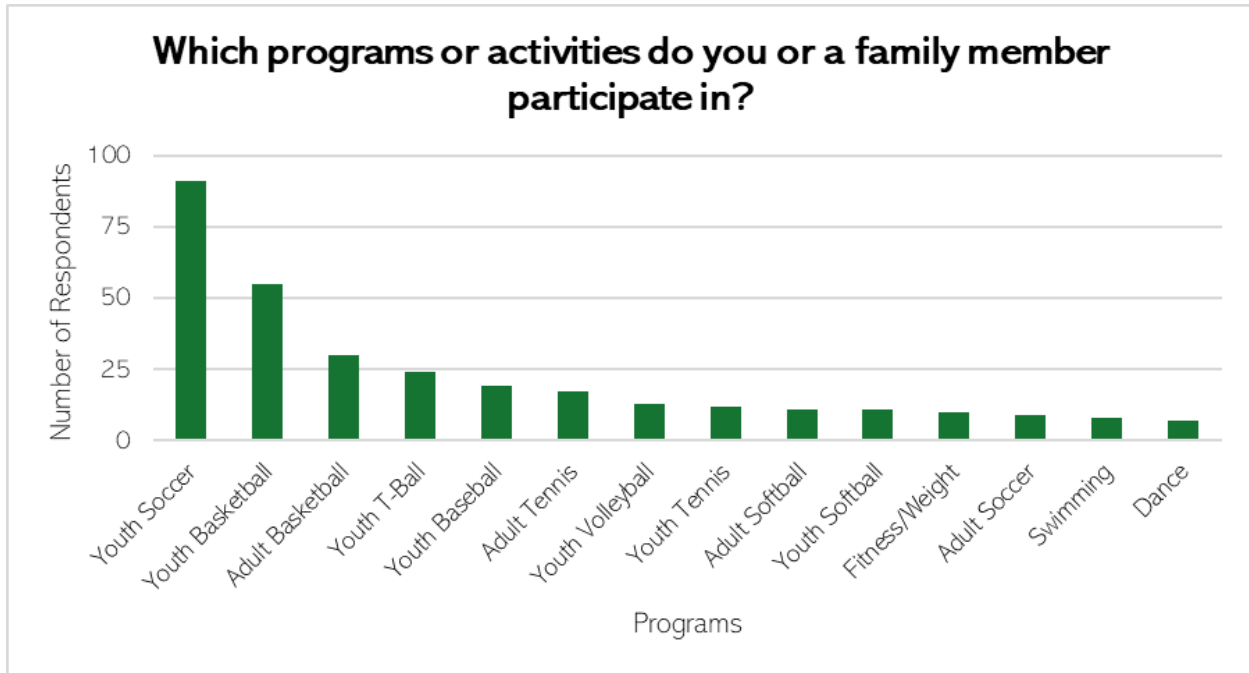


Figure 5. Survey Respondents' Programs and Activities Participation

#### Opportunities for Improved Service

In order to find potential areas for improvements, a survey question asked about residents' overall satisfaction with the Department's current facilities. The responses revealed mixed opinions, as evident in Figure 6.

**Although a majority of residents shared generally positive opinions about the facilities, fewer respondents expressed a "very satisfied" perspective.** Through follow-up questions asked during the survey, the class identified challenges faced by the City's Parks & Recreation Department resulting in the low "very satisfied" response count as shown in Figure 7.

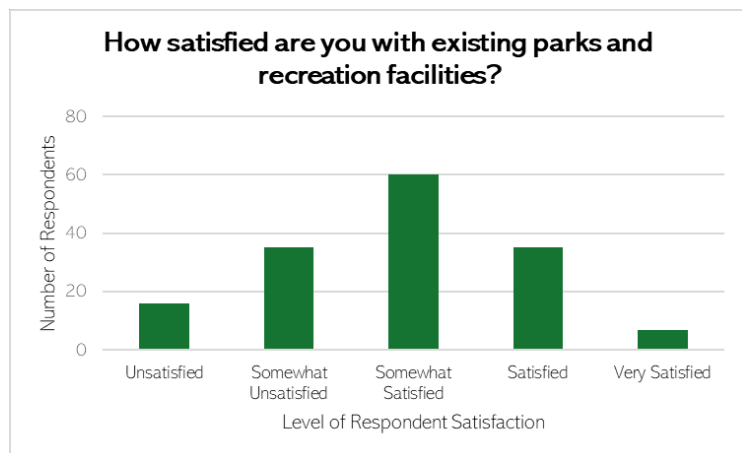
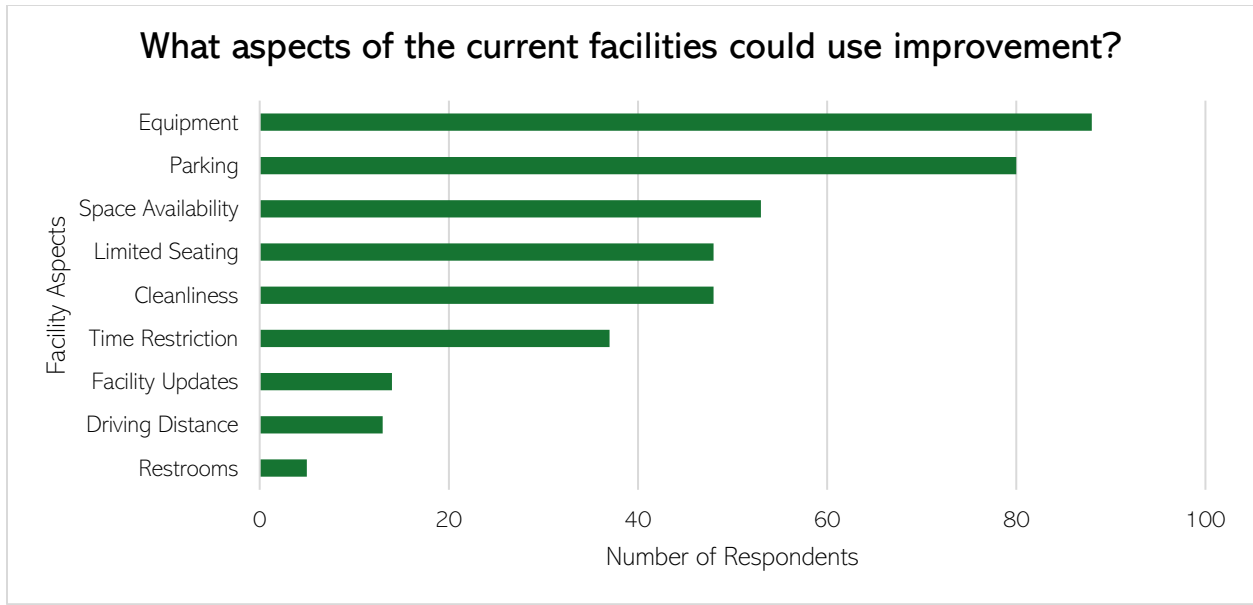


Figure 6. Satisfaction in Existing Parks and Recreation Facilities



*Figure 7. Current Facilities' Improvements*

The class derived three interpretations from this data. First, parents in the community noticed issues with space availability and time restrictions on practices. Changing the current practice structure and increasing availability is vital to address these concerns.

Secondly, while many people cite the lack of parking at existing facilities as an area of concern, significantly fewer individuals take issue with the driving distance required to attend games and practices. Additional public dialogue is necessary to confirm this observation.

Lastly, numerous respondents identified issues with facility cleanliness and old equipment. This concern could be remedied without building a new facility, but a new building would address many of these concerns.

### Limitations

The survey did not reach all segments of the Belmont community. The majority of respondents were women with children, which could be a result of how the class distributed the survey. Eighty-eight percent of respondents took the survey on Belmont Facebook pages. This survey serves as a starting point for assessing community interest, but it is necessary to capture the thoughts of more men and seniors in the community in future surveys since they are not well represented.

## Stakeholder Interviews

### Identification and Methodology

The MPA class undertook two separate processes for gauging stakeholder views on the proposed facility. First, the class conducted ten interviews with community stakeholders to gain further insight into community attitudes. Community agencies and organizations were selected to provide their perspectives on the needs of various constituencies within Belmont, all of which provide services to Belmont residents and maintain an interest in parks and recreation. Individual

interviews were conducted in person, over the phone, or via email. The list of agencies contacted and questions asked are located in Appendix C.

The second part of our stakeholder engagement involved gauging internal stakeholder views. To begin, the MPA class attended a Parks & Recreation Advisory Board meeting on January 29<sup>th</sup>. This meeting is summarized in Appendix D. Once the class had finished preliminary research, the class interviewed Parks & Recreation staff in order to have a more complete view of city needs. Staff members were contacted either via email or by phone and asked a scripted series of questions, which are outlined in Appendix E.

### Stakeholder Views

Many of the stakeholders, speaking for their respective organization rather than their own needs, described different concerns from those expressed in the community survey. Overall, three trends emerged from the interviews of organizations in the community, the Parks & Recreation Advisory Board, and Parks & Recreation staff members.

First, some stakeholders stated a new facility would allow for greater exposure for the City of Belmont. Through effective planning of community events, either by hosting town events or partnering with community organizations, the new recreation facility could be a source of community pride, reinforcing a sense of place among Belmont residents. To further this goal, numerous stakeholders expressed interest in a multipurpose use facility. Offering events and programs that expand beyond sports-oriented programming would foster greater community engagement in Belmont. Both internal and external stakeholders advocated for multipurpose uses, which are explored in more detail later in this study.

Second, many interviewees noted the lack of adult programming. Programming options that cater to adults could include ongoing classes, such as art or small business classes, as well as group and individual fitness activities. Programming options could also include event hosting, such as the annual Senior Games. High profile events like the Senior Games would reinforce the recreation center's role as a central location in the community.

Lastly, many of our external stakeholders were skeptical of our interviews. Some did not wish to be interviewed initially; others refrained from answering certain questions. When some organizations offered preliminary interest in partnerships, they were reserved and stated it would depend on the circumstances of the project. Such hesitation and skepticism is understandable and reveals an opportunity for City officials to reach out to stakeholders to discuss long-term recreation needs. **Expanding communication efforts with community stakeholders would provide the City with vital input on future recreation needs and partnerships, encouraging the creation of engaging programming and events that are popular with residents.**

### Community Input Trends

Many of the trends from the community sources are explored later in this analysis, such as those regarding specific program requests. However, two key elements stand out as relating specifically to the need community outreach initiatives.

### Creating a Recreation Hub

A common theme emerged of an interest in a recreation hub within Belmont from the various sources of community feedback. Concerns with facilities gravitated towards issues with space availability, scheduling, and parking/seating limitations. A new facility would expand the time available for youth basketball practices and games as well as resolve capacity issues. The community survey shed light on the local interests for a broader range of programming. In addition, community stakeholders expressed interest in having new event space. **The prevailing trend in public opinion is that a new recreation facility would serve as a key driver of pride in Belmont. It would be a place for local gatherings, both for recreation and community programs.**

### The Need for Ongoing Communication

Regardless of their opinions on parks and recreation in Belmont, many survey respondents reacted positively to receiving a request for input. Comments left in the open-ended survey questions captured their praise. From these comments, a gap became apparent in respondents' knowledge of parks and recreation as a whole. Many residents did not know of any discussion surrounding the proposed recreation facility and others did not know of any adult program offerings. Individual interviews with community stakeholders revealed a similar information gap, with some interviewees specifically reporting a desire for increased communication from City officials. Members of the Parks & Recreation Advisory Board stated their desire to emulate parks and recreation departments from surrounding communities, which communicate with and contact the public more often. The limitations of the community survey can be resolved through expanding conversations with Belmont residents who may not have had access to the survey. Such ongoing communication strategies should serve as a guiding principle for future Parks & Recreation planning.

## What Programs Should be Provided?

To assess the recreation needs and programming for Belmont, the MPA class first examined national trends. The class then analyzed data from the 21 comparable recreation facilities, 10 stakeholder interviews, and the community survey with 273 respondents and compiled a summary of the findings.

### Recreation is Key to a Healthy Community

There is a well-documented connection between an individual’s health and his or her level of physical activity.<sup>22</sup> A review of academic journals revealed a positive association between parks and recreation facilities and physical activity. **The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) reported that citizens with a recreation facility in their community were more likely to achieve the recommended levels of physical activity.**

### Benefits of Youth Recreation

Currently, youth sports leagues have the highest number of participants in the City of Belmont. A study of the physical activity of elementary school children aged 6 to 12 showed the increasing reliance on after school activity offerings for children’s physical activity. The study concluded how after school activities, such as free play and modeled play, provided the most physical activity. These forms of play should be considered for programming for children ages 6 to 12 because parks and recreation departments are in a position to help them reach the recommended amount of physical activity and prevent obesity.<sup>23</sup>

### National Programming Trends

According to the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA), programming influences parks and recreation usage. Programming efforts, combined with registration fees, create the largest non-taxed revenue source for many parks and recreation agencies. Those agencies serving a population with 20,000 or fewer residents offer an average of 35 fee-based programs. In a survey with 1,069 parks and recreation agencies, the NRPA found that 60% offered the programs

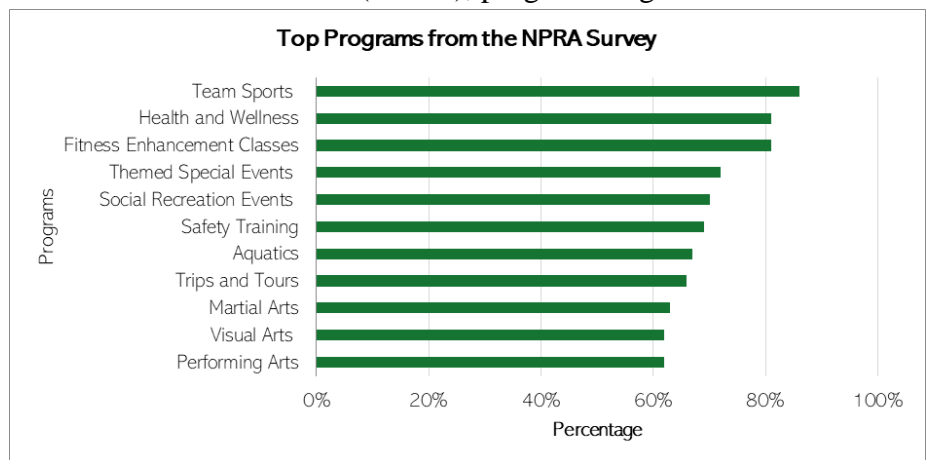


Figure 8. Top Programs of NRPA Survey Results

<sup>22</sup> Kaczynski, A. T., & Henderson, K. A.. “Environmental Correlates of Physical Activity: A Review of Evidence about Parks and Recreation.” *Leisure Sciences* 29, no. 4 (2007): 315-354. doi:10.1080/01490400701394865.

<sup>23</sup> Ayers, S. F.. “Recreation Facilitation Styles And Physical Activity Outcomes In Elementary School Children.” *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation & Dance* 80, no. 2 (2009): 10-15. doi:10.1080/07303084.2009.10598274.

and activities highlighted in Figure 8.<sup>24</sup> The top programs include team sports, fitness enhancement classes, and health and wellness education.

### Teen Programming

Studies showed adolescents, ages 13 to 18, who used a community recreation facility reported higher levels of moderate to vigorous physical activity. Adolescents with access to a recreation facility are also less likely to commit crimes. Recreation facilities can provide opportunities for increasing physical activity and reducing aggression in adolescents through a variety of targeted programming.<sup>25</sup>



However, most parks and recreation departments struggle with recruitment and retention when creating programming for adolescents. To combat this issue, parks and recreation departments should consider the needs and expectations for young people from different cultural and socioeconomic demographics. A 2010 NRPA study suggested programs to practice job-related skills and professional experience. Activities like mentoring and service learning projects encourage adolescent

participation in their respective communities. Other recommended programs include camps that align with local school's scheduled breaks and leadership development activities.<sup>26</sup> Utilizing school breaks is an easy method to engage with teens and improve recruitment and retention.<sup>27</sup>

Benchmarked facilities that provided programming specifically for teens, included sports leagues and camps to improve athletic skills. Many facilities offered other programming not related to sports, such as cooking classes, lifeguard training, and resume help. Parks and recreation departments are in a unique position to facilitate adolescent development and growth through programming. This opportunity should be leveraged to support younger generations in becoming citizens and leaders who contribute to their communities.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> National Parks and Recreation Association. "2017 NRPA Agency Performance Review: Park and Recreation Agency Performance Benchmarks." National Parks and Recreation Association, last modified 2017.

<sup>25</sup> Gordon-Larsen, P., McMurray, R. G., and Popkin, B. M. "Determinants of Adolescent Physical Activity and Inactivity Patterns." *Pediatrics* 105, no. 6. (2000).

<sup>26</sup> National Parks and Recreation Association. "2017 NRPA Agency Performance Review: Park and Recreation Agency Performance Benchmarks." National Parks and Recreation Association, last modified 2017.

<sup>27</sup> Witt, P. A., & Caldwell, L. L. "The Rationale for Recreation Services for Youth: An Evidenced Based Approach." Last modified 2010. [http://www.nrpa.org/uploadedFiles/nrpa.org/Publications\\_and\\_Research/Research/Papers/Witt-Caldwell-Full-Research-Paper.pdf](http://www.nrpa.org/uploadedFiles/nrpa.org/Publications_and_Research/Research/Papers/Witt-Caldwell-Full-Research-Paper.pdf)

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.



### Senior Programming

There is a new focus in the parks and recreation industry on active aging, which includes adults in their mid-fifties and older. Recreation Management magazine recommends parks and recreation departments take advantage of underutilized times of the day and create targeted programming for the active-aging demographic. Balance training and functional fitness are popular for older age groups. Even programming such as walking clubs can positively



influence elder populations by providing opportunities for physical activity as well as a social outlet. However, the active-aging population is interested in more than walking clubs. According to stakeholder feedback from the Gaston County Senior Center, older adults are interested in more active offerings such as rappelling, hiking, and dancing. This increased interest in more intermediate and advanced levels of physical activity from the older demographic changes the program offerings of recreational facilities and senior centers.<sup>29</sup>

### Generational Programming

Recent national trends suggest movement towards generational or family-friendly activities that bring multiple generations together. This differs from the traditional recreational program perspective of targeting specific age groups. Some generational activities involve family fossil hunts or dance classes.<sup>30</sup> Generational programming from benchmarked facilities include Parent and Tot Tumbling classes and holiday events. The community survey revealed how most respondents identified being between the ages of 36 to 40 with children in their household, highlighting the need for generational programming to attract family participation.

### Community Input

Two key trends came out of the community input regarding programming. The first pertains to adult-oriented programming, the second to senior-oriented programming. By conducting further communication initiatives, the City can offer tailored programs to meet resident desires and expectations.

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<sup>29</sup> Dandes, R. "Coming of Age: Shifting Trends in Design and Programming." *Generation Recreation*, last modified January. <http://recmanagement.com/201701fe03.php>

<sup>30</sup> LERN, "Top Trends in Recreational Management." Last modified July 7, 2014. [blog.lern.org/recreation/blog/2014/07/07/top-trends-in-recreation-programming-marketing-and-management](http://blog.lern.org/recreation/blog/2014/07/07/top-trends-in-recreation-programming-marketing-and-management).

### Adult Programming

When asked about which programs should be offered at the new facility, respondents selected their top three choices from a predefined list. The top responses were basketball (38%), art classes (31%), and weights/fitness classes (29%). The interest in basketball came as no surprise, but the popularity of art and fitness classes was stronger than volleyball (16%).

#### **Open-ended responses in the survey also reiterated the desire for expanded program options.**

From the survey results, adult oriented programming is important to town residents.



Stakeholder interviews reflected the popularity of adult programs as well. The Parks & Recreation Advisory Board suggested a multipurpose space to use as a classroom for business development classes to community business owners. The most prominent classes desired centered around fitness and art. Additional interviews with community stakeholders revealed similar interests. Specific classes, tailored to the diverse needs and demands of residents, would provide an opportunity for economic and personal growth to Belmont residents.

### Senior Programming

The community survey did not capture the opinions of many older residents of Belmont. Due to this lack of data, the class interviewed Ellen Fenters with the Gaston County Senior Center to gain perspective on the senior population. Many older residents expressed a desire for a dedicated block of time to use fitness equipment, as indicated through the interview. The Gaston County Senior Center currently offers several classes in local churches and parks, but access to additional equipment and space could allow Belmont to provide a popular amenity to its senior citizens. Ms. Fenters also suggested computer literacy classes. These classes are offered at most other recreation facilities, as they provide a beneficial service to community residents.

### Comparable Sports Programming

The MPA class found 25 total comparable facilities on several measures of facility features and programs. The 25 total facilities can be seen in Appendix G. Four cities were removed for comparison purposes due to a lack of data availability within the time frame of this study. The class included 21 total facilities in the comparisons based on the data available to analyze. Figure 9 below highlights the results of the benchmarked facilities. The 21 benchmarked facilities can be viewed in Appendix J. Many of Belmont's current programs align with offerings

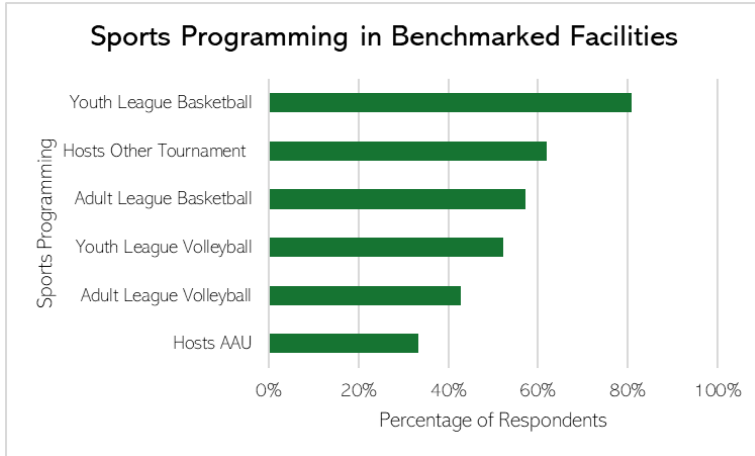


Figure 9. Benchmarked Facilities' Sports Programming

in comparable facilities. Because of the similarity in program offerings, this could indicate that comparable facilities are good examples to look to when Belmont is creating a new recreation facility. Due to the infrequency of AAU tournaments in comparable facilities, Belmont may want to consider looking at other tournaments they could host outside of AAU because of the popularity in the comparable facilities.

Programming unrelated to sports were frequently mentioned. Programming not associated with sports can be found in Figure 10. Looking at comparable facilities, the most popular program offering is senior programming, with 81% of facilities offering this type of targeted programming. Seventy-one percent of these facilities offer group fitness classes such as yoga, karate, and cycling classes. Other popular programs offered at comparable facilities include summer camps, educational classes, and special events. Clayton, North Carolina, for example, hosts an annual special needs dance with games and prizes. Volunteer and community support allows the town to host this free event. The City of Belmont, in conjunction with organizations such as Holy Angels, could replicate a similar event and offer a safe, fun outlet for the youth the organization serves. The benchmarked facilities provide a variety of programs, many of which reflect the findings of the community survey, stakeholder interviews, as well as the researched national trends. Overall, this highlights a need for Belmont to consider which ones apply most to its residents.

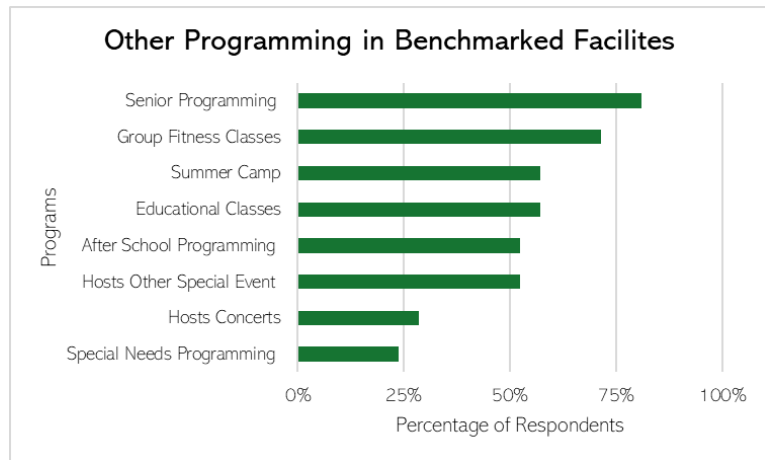


Figure 10. Benchmarked Facilities' Other Programming

### Gaps in Current Programming

One of the most common program offerings from the benchmark research is hosting different sports tournaments. Other popular programming in the benchmarked facilities not currently available in Belmont are educational classes, group fitness classes, and special needs programming. These programs were popular in stakeholder interviews and the community survey as well. Current space limitations are a major contributor to these differences in programming between the City of Belmont and the benchmarked facilities.

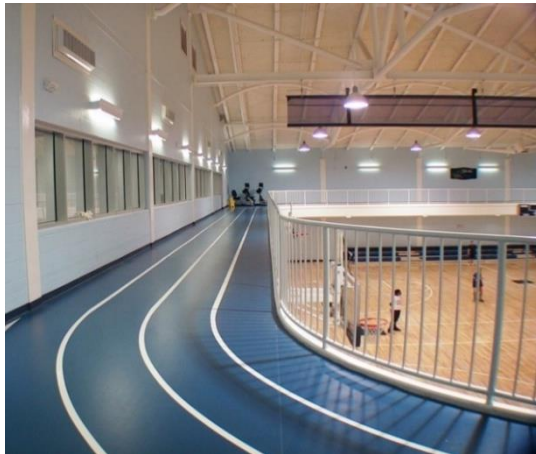
## Programming Summary

**Overall, only 56% of the community survey respondents currently use or have a family member who uses the existing recreation facilities in Belmont.** The City of Belmont Parks & Recreation Department should expand its approach to programming and create programs for families as well as target age groups. Youth, teen, and active-aging programming are essential to supporting multigenerational activities while also serving the needs and interests of Belmont citizens.

A walking track is the top request from community members and key stakeholders. This feature of a recreation center could be a key driver of multiple fitness programs for all ages to enjoy. An example of a potential fitness program targeted at women is a stroller exercise club that uses an indoor walking track.<sup>31</sup> This program would attract the target demographic who answered the community survey with the greatest frequency. Trending fitness programs for seniors, like walking clubs and walking bingo, would also use a walking track and appeal to the active-aging community.

The results of the community survey and interviews with stakeholders also revealed a desire for educational classes. This aligns with the trend in recent research of the growing popularity of multipurpose facilities.<sup>32</sup> Other programs of interest from our research included day and summer camps, adult sports teams, and technology programs geared towards senior citizens. From the stakeholder interviews, the top programs of interest to the citizens are dance classes, basketball, volleyball, and events or classes for disabled individuals. Appendix H summarizes the findings pertaining to programs that should be offered at a new recreation facility.

## Indoor Walking Track Smithfield Recreation & Aquatic Center (SRAC)



### Facility Information

Smithfield, NC  
70,000 square feet  
\$7.5 million capital cost || \$8.8 million adjusted  
Aquatic center, two multipurpose courts, weight room

### Indoor Walking Track

The SRAC provides members with a second story elevated indoor walking track for runners and walkers to enjoy while viewing the multipurpose courts from above. Fitness and cardio equipment is available in the track corners.

<sup>31</sup> "Generation Recreation, Catering Wellness and Fitness to Active Agers, Teens and More," *Recreation Management*, last modified 2015. <http://recmanagement.com/feature/201511WE02/1>.

<sup>32</sup> Tipping, E.. "State of the industry: A look at what's happening in recreation, sports and fitness facilities." *Recreation Management*, last modified 2017. <http://recmanagement.com/feature/201706fe01/14>.

## What Features Should the Facility Include?

When considering the feasibility of a recreation facility in the City of Belmont, the MPA class examined trends that emerged nationally as well as from comparable facilities. Feedback from the community on features of interest are discussed along with features of benchmarked facilities. Gaps in current recreation facilities are identified. Based on this analysis, the MPA class summarized the findings from the research on facility features.

### Trends

Recreation Management magazine, a resource for recreation, sports, and fitness facility managers, provides information on latest trends for recreation facilities. A survey of 1,743 respondents from the parks and recreation industry found multipurpose rooms, Wi-Fi services, playgrounds, and spectator seating as the top 2017 trends.<sup>33</sup> Features of recreation centers such as indoor multipurpose courts, locker rooms, and multipurpose rooms were also recognized in the trend analysis found in Figure 11. Appendix I shows top trends from 2014 for comparison, which included playgrounds, open spaces, and community centers.<sup>34</sup>

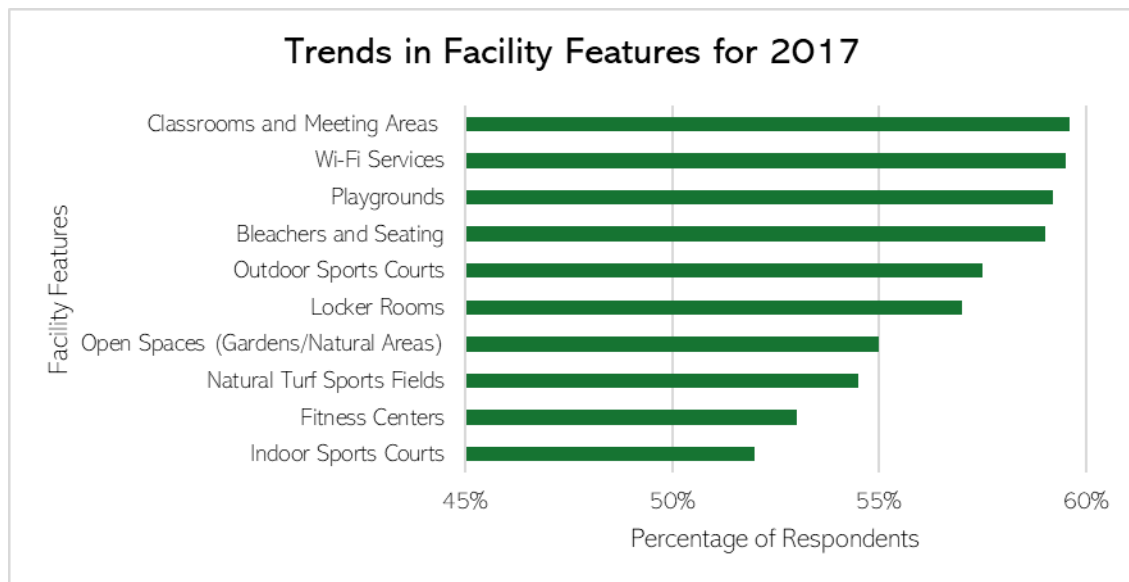


Figure 11. 2017 Trends in Facility Features

### Community Input

A few features trends emerged from analyzing the community input. Both stakeholders and survey respondents expressed frustration with the limited amount of space and time availability for basketball league practices in current facilities. The community also viewed an indoor walking track and community meeting space as desirable features of a recreation facility.

<sup>33</sup> Tipping, E. "State of the industry: A look at what's happening in recreation, sports and fitness facilities" *Recreation Management*, last modified 2017. <http://recmanagement.com/feature/201706fe01/14>.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

### Current Capacity

Many of the stakeholder interviews, including those with Parks & Recreation staff, revealed strong concern regarding issues of capacity. The Parks & Recreation Advisory Board members mentioned how time limitations for youth basketball practices is a longstanding challenge. Beyond the concerns with current space availability, many of the county and regional stakeholders discussed the population growth in the area. Capacity will continue to be an issue as new community members participate in parks and recreation activities.

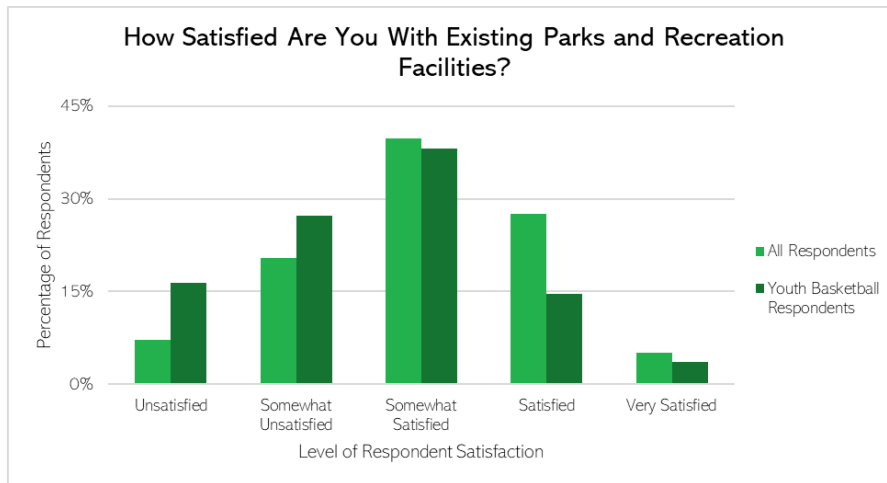


Figure 12. Survey Respondents' Satisfaction with Existing Facilities

The class was particularly interested in the issue of youth basketball practice times, which was relevant in the discussions of facility features. During the survey, parents of youth basketball participants offered differing views in comparison with other respondents. For instance, when asked about overall satisfaction with facilities, youth basketball respondents

were less satisfied than other survey respondents. This pattern indicates how concerns about facility capacity and aging equipment are most prevalent within youth basketball.

### Feature Requests

The survey asked respondents which activities and features they would be most interested in having at a new facility. The responses were diverse, like the interests expressed by the Parks & Recreation Advisory Board and the common elements of the benchmark facilities. Nearly half of all survey respondents, and many internal and external stakeholders, expressed interest in an indoor walking track.

Additionally, the inclusion of a multipurpose space used for classrooms and meeting spaces is a recreation trend. The Senior Center and Advisory Board were enthusiastic about these extra spaces, both stakeholders discussing the programming options within classroom space if built. Multipurpose space creates opportunities for Belmont Parks & Recreation to offer a wider range of programming, like rental space for community meetings and event opportunities. Events would foster community pride and improve Belmont's ability to bring in visitors from around the region. The open-ended portion of the survey revealed strong awareness among community residents of how the facility could be used for a wide range of purposes.

## Comparable Facilities

**All 21 of the benchmarked facilities were multipurpose, coinciding with national trends and the interests of the Belmont community.** Figure 13 describes the frequency of different facility features from the benchmark data.

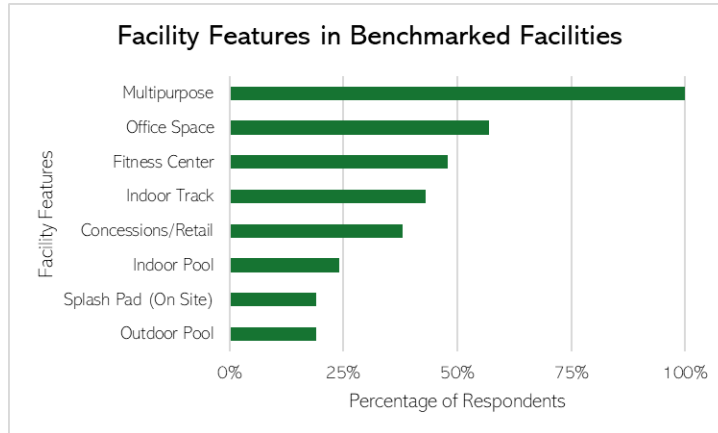


Figure 13. Facility Features in Benchmarked Facilities

## Gaps in Current Facility Features

The benchmarked facilities often featured an indoor track, fitness center, multipurpose rooms, and office space. These features are not currently available in the City of Belmont Parks & Recreation facilities. The community called for features such as an indoor walking track, a fitness center, multipurpose rooms and concessions. A lack of available multipurpose courts was overwhelmingly expressed in stakeholder interviews. The features of these comparable facilities and those requested from the community are not able to be incorporated in any of the City of Belmont's current facilities and would need to be part of a new recreation facility.

## Facility Features Summary

The results from the community survey as well as stakeholder interviews, national trends and benchmarked facilities can be seen in Appendix H. The table provides a visual comparison of feedback from the various sources of collected data.

**Stakeholders and the community are most interested in the following features:**

- Indoor walking track
- Basketball courts
- Multipurpose rooms
- Fitness center



The community also showed a desire for splash pads and dog parks as other notable features of a recreation facility. While both features were reported on the lower spectrum of the survey, splash pads and dog parks are among the most popular features for all types of newer recreational facilities.<sup>35</sup> Belmont can use this data for future recreational projects of interest.

It is evident many of the recreation programming findings reflect facility feature findings. For example, the programming finding of the popularity of educational classes correlates with the facility feature finding of multipurpose rooms. The relationship between facility features and programming should be considered in the creation of a new recreation facility.

## Fitness Center

### Statesville Fitness & Activity Center (SFAC)



#### Facility Information

Statesville, NC  
35,000 square feet  
\$6 million capital cost || \$7 million adjusted  
4 multipurpose rooms, 2 multipurpose courts, group fitness studio

#### Fitness Center

The SFAC's fitness center includes cardiovascular equipment, resistance machines and free weights for members. It also offers group fitness courses and programs such as cycling, yoga, and Zumba.

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<sup>35</sup> Tipping, E., "State of the industry: A look at what's happening in recreation, sports and fitness facilities," *Recreation Management*, last modified 2017. <http://recmanagement.com/feature/201706fe01/14>



## How Should the Facility be Financed?

### Introduction

To understand the financial implications of a facility meeting the community needs of Belmont, the class analyzed financial data from comparable facilities and feasibility studies. This financial analysis included:

- Benchmarks of the construction costs of comparable facilities
- Construction cost estimates and options
- Operating cost analysis and estimates
- Capital funding sources
- Operating revenue analysis and estimates

Each facility benchmarked in this analysis operates within the unique constructs of the jurisdiction and may not be fully comparable to the City of Belmont. The data collected in this analysis is meant to uncover trends and provide a basis for estimating costs. Each benchmark includes only facilities with complete and reliable data.

### Construction Cost Variability

The cost of constructing a multipurpose recreation facility varies widely depending on the features included, the quality of the materials, and land availability. For example, a facility with fitness or aquatic equipment may have a higher cost than a facility with gymnasium space and multipurpose rooms. The class used benchmarks, professional construction companies, and comparable feasibility studies to estimate the cost of construction for a recreation facility in Belmont.

### Construction Cost Estimates

Prior to approaching the class, the City obtained construction estimates from the Triangle Construction Company, Inc. (Triangle) based in Greenville, SC. Triangle referenced four past projects, such as the Easley Recreation Center and Rock Springs Activity Center, as benchmarks for estimating the cost of constructing a facility in Belmont. As seen in Appendix O, the facility construction costs cited by Triangle ranged from \$6.4 million in a 2007 project to \$9.6 million in a 2014 project. Triangle separated the cost per square foot into different categories depending on the material, but totals ranged from \$170 to \$209. The level of detail and Triangle's long-term experience in the field makes this estimate a useful comparison with other benchmarks.

### Benchmarked Facilities

Table 1 displays cost information collected from case studies and reports by construction firms, consulting groups, financial reports, and interviews conducted with City employees. The class adjusted all monetary figures for inflation as of January 2018 using the online Bureau of Labor Statistics Consumer Price Index Inflation Calculator. Fourteen of 25 benchmarked municipalities provided reliable construction cost information.

<b>Benchmarked Facilities Construction Cost Table</b>			
Jurisdiction	Facility	Cost (In Millions)	Cost/Sq. ft.
Smithfield, NC	Smithfield Recreation & Aquatic Center*	\$8.8	\$117
Clayton, NC	Clayton Community Center	\$8.6	\$268
Fruita, CO	Fruita Community Center*	\$7.9	\$144
Huntersville, NC	Huntersville Recreation Center	\$7.0	\$292
Statesville, NC	Statesville Fitness & Activity Center	\$7.0	\$201
Monroe, NC	Monroe Aquatics and Fitness Center*	\$6.9	\$86
Holly Springs, NC	W.E. Hunt Recreation Center	\$6.6	\$147
Goldsboro, NC	W.A. Foster Center	\$6.2	\$248
Easley, SC	J.B. Owens Complex	\$6.1	\$122
Mebane, NC	Mebane Arts & Community Center	\$4.0	\$125
Carol Stream, IL	Fountain View Recreation Center*	\$20.8	\$229
Mooresville, NC	Talbert Recreation Center	\$2.2	\$84
Kinston, NC	Woodmen Community Center*	\$14.2	\$249
Garner, NC	Garner Recreation Center*	\$10.3	\$257

Table 1. Benchmarked Facilities Construction Cost Table

\*Facility has aquatics equipment

Many variables affect the cost of a recreation facility, making it necessary to standardize cost per square foot and per resident. The cost per square foot in the benchmarked facilities ranges from \$84 in Mooresville, NC to \$292 in Huntersville, NC. The average cost per square foot of all observed facilities is \$184 while the median is \$174. Both figures align with the Triangle estimates of \$170 to \$209 per square foot.

<b>Construction Costs Descriptive Statistics</b>				
	Year	2018 Adjusted Cost (In Millions)	Sq. ft.	Adjusted Cost/Sq. ft.
<b>Maximum</b>	2018	\$21	90,846	\$292
<b>Median</b>	2011	\$7	42,500	\$174
<b>Average</b>	2010	\$9	47,632	\$184
<b>Minimum</b>	1996	\$2	24,000	\$84

Table 2. Construction Cost Descriptive Statistics

Based on the benchmarked facilities in Table 2, the total cost of a multipurpose, multigenerational facility ranges from \$2 million to \$21 million depending on features, quality, and amenities. Triangle estimated Belmont’s facility would cost \$6.9 million, slightly less than the median cost of \$7 million uncovered in the class benchmarks.

To estimate the specific cost of each feature and total construction, the class developed the construction cost estimates table based on square footage included in Appendix L. These estimates from construction reports and comparable feasibility studies included a detailed breakdown of costs per feature. The options provided in Table 3 show estimated costs using the highest, average, and lowest construction cost per square foot from the class benchmarks, with the intention to provide a framework for discussing the potential cost of a recreation facility. These should not be used as final figures because the actual cost of a facility depends on the context of the jurisdiction, such as land availability, amenities, and the quality of materials used in the construction process.

<b>Construction Cost Estimate Summary Table</b>				
Option	Sq. Ft.	Cost at High (\$292)	Cost at Average (\$184)	Cost at Low (\$84)
2 Courts   Fitness Center   Indoor Track   2 Multipurpose Rooms	56,380	\$13.9 M	\$8.8 M	\$4.0 M
2 Courts   Indoor Track   2 Multipurpose Rooms	53,630	\$13.1 M	\$8.3 M	\$3.8 M
2 Courts   2 Multipurpose Rooms	47,380	\$11.3 M	\$7.2 M	\$3.3 M
<b>Average</b>	<b>52,463</b>	<b>\$12.8 M</b>	<b>\$8.0 M</b>	<b>\$3.7 M</b>

Table 3. Construction Cost Estimate Summary

All construction cost estimates include office space for five employees, general building spaces, and the base building site. The median number of Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) employees staffing each facility in our list of benchmarked facilities is five, while estimates for general building spaces are based on averages from comparable feasibility studies. Total square footage estimates range from 44,255 to 56,380 depending on the features and amenities included. For all features and amenities, estimates ranged from \$4 million to \$14 million depending on the price per square foot. At the average cost per square foot of \$184, a facility with all desired features would cost \$9 million, but could be reduced to \$6.5 million if certain features, like an indoor walking track, are not included.

Through the benchmarking and research process, the class found construction cost trends were consistent across multiple sources. Table 4 shows the range of estimates across the class benchmarks, detailed square foot estimates, and the Triangle estimates. The average construction cost based on the three sources is \$8 million.

<b>Cost Estimate Sources (In Millions)</b>			
Source	High	Average	Low
Benchmarked Facilities	\$21	\$9	\$2
Triangle Construction	\$10	\$7	\$6
MPA Class Model Estimates	\$14	\$9	\$4
Average	\$15	\$8	\$4

Table 4. Cost Estimate Sources

Due to the consistency across the sources, \$8 million is a realistic estimate for constructing a multipurpose recreation facility that meets the needs of the community. **At this price range, it should be feasible for the City to build a facility with a minimum of two multipurpose courts, an indoor walking track, and two multipurpose rooms, along with several offices and locker rooms. The class estimates the City could include a fitness room for an additional \$500,000 to \$700,000.**

### Facility Operating Costs

The class gathered complete facility operating cost information from 8 of the 25 benchmarked facilities (see Table 5 below). Most municipalities do not separate the operating costs and revenues of each facility in their financial statements, creating a challenge for the class to compile complete financial information on recreation facilities. The class gathered operating estimates through interviews with parks and recreation officials to provide context on his or her municipal recreation center. Operating costs typically include utilities, staffing costs, and ongoing maintenance. Other variables influencing operating costs include the facility’s size, age, type, program offerings, and membership.

Benchmarked Facilities Operating Costs					
Facility Name	Location	Facility Operating Costs	Total Weekly Cost to Operate Facility	Total Weekly Hours of Operation	Total Hourly Cost to Operate Facility
Fruita Community Center	Fruita, CO	\$1,577,472	\$30,336	95	\$321
W.E. Hunt Recreation Center	Holly Springs, NC	\$1,502,508	\$28,894	98	\$294
Huntersville Recreation Center	Huntersville, NC	\$270,000	\$5,192	78	\$66
Woodmen Community Center	Kinston, NC	\$1,668,984	\$32,095	97	\$332
Mebane Arts & Community Center	Mebane, NC	\$300,000	\$5,769	45	\$128
Monroe Aquatics and Fitness Center	Monroe, NC	\$3,600,000	\$69,230	101	\$685
Smithfield Recreation & Aquatic Center	Smithfield, NC	\$906,644	\$17,435	90	\$194
Statesville Fitness & Activity Center	Statesville, NC	\$582,272	\$11,197	89	\$126

Table 5. Benchmarked Facilities Operating Costs

Operating costs ranged widely across the benchmarked facilities, from the lowest of \$270,000 in Huntersville, NC to the highest of \$3.6 million in Monroe, NC. Analyzing the list of features within each facility sheds light on the variation in cost. For example, Monroe operates a large aquatic facility with an indoor pool, outdoor waterpark, on-site wellness center and indoor track

in addition to a fitness room and gymnasium. The average annual operating cost for the benchmarked facilities is \$1.3 million and the median is \$1.2 million.

The class also standardized the cost of facility operations to provide sound estimates. This study used both the cost per square foot and cost per operating hour in the facilities. Table 5 shows the benchmarked facilities’ weekly operating hours and hourly operating costs. The average hourly operating cost is \$268 and appears to depend on facility features and staffing levels. The average annual operating cost per square foot of the benchmarked facilities is \$20 with a median of \$14. Facilities with extensive aquatic and exercise equipment, like Monroe, NC and Fruita, CO, demonstrated high costs per square foot at \$45 and \$29 respectively.

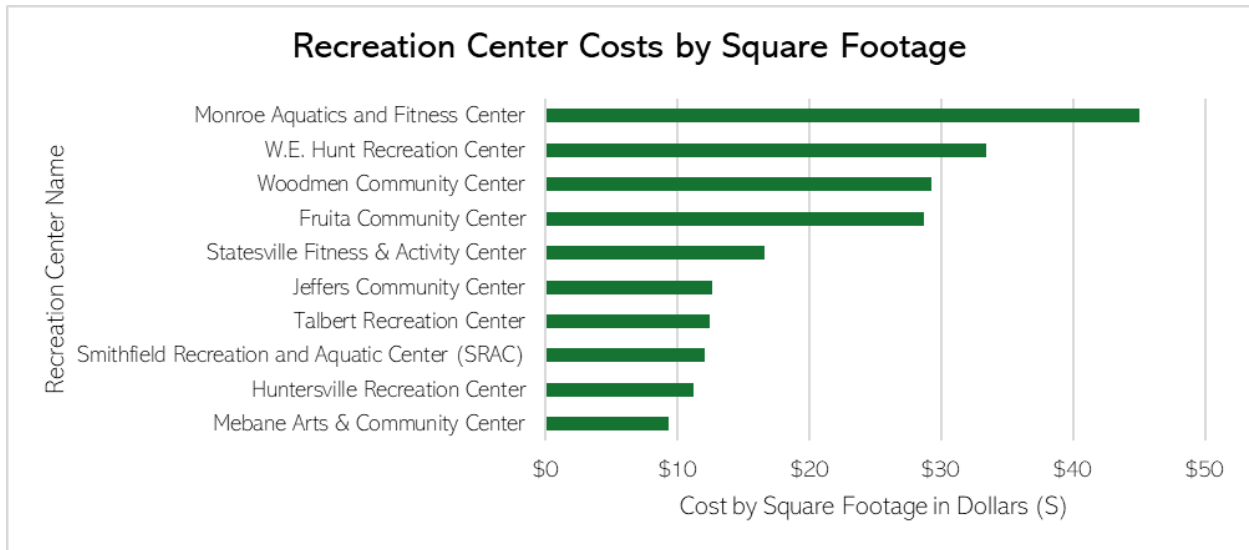


Figure 14. Recreation Center Costs by Square Footage

### Staffing Costs

Facility staffing levels were a key indicator of higher operating costs. The class gathered facility staff numbers from 13 of the 18 benchmarked facilities. The benchmarks had a median of five full-time equivalent (FTE) employees, while Monroe, NC staffed the most at 11. The number of employees needed to staff each facility appeared to correlate with the square footage and complexity of facility features. Currently, the Parks & Recreation Department has four full-time staff members and six part-time staff members. This is below staffing levels seen in our benchmarked municipalities, and additional staff may be required at the new facility. Current employees believe that the new employees would be essential to supporting the expanded programming offerings.

### Building Design

A top priority in the recreation industry is increasing energy efficiency as a method for reducing operating costs. Strategies for energy efficiency include installing water-reducing plumbing fixtures like low-flow shower heads, automatic faucets, and automatic flush valves. Occupancy sensors in spaces such as meeting rooms, locker rooms, and bathrooms can reduce lighting costs

when spaces are empty. Solar panels on the roof of recreation centers as an alternative energy source can also be beneficial in reducing operating costs given the proper environment.<sup>36</sup>

### Sources of Capital Funding

The City should explore several financing options to reduce the burden of financing a recreation center. Appendix N offers insights into how 17 of the 25 observed municipalities paid for constructing its recreation facility. The benchmarking analysis identified seven unique sources: bonds, grants, loans, municipal funds, private funds, sponsorships/partnerships, and special

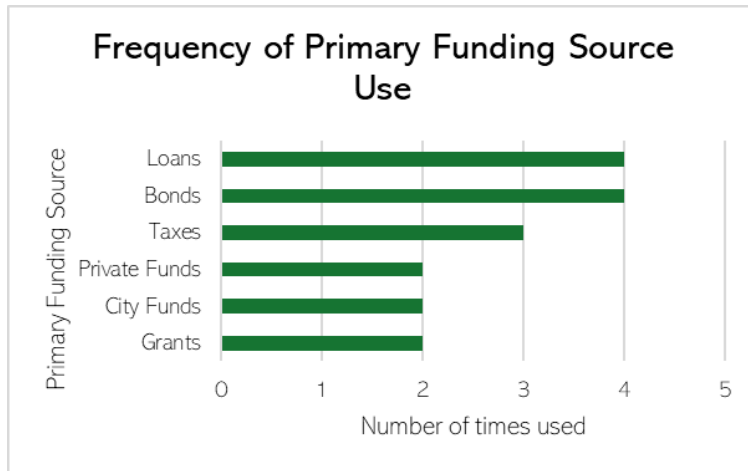


Figure 15. Frequency of Primary Funding Source Use

recreation taxes. Figure 15 below highlights the frequency of each source in funding the benchmarked facilities.

None of the North Carolina facilities used special recreation tax, and Belmont does not have the ability to create a special tax for recreation. The following sections analyze different authorized sources of capital funding and estimates the fiscal impact of debt financing, using the \$8 million construction cost figure as a baseline.

### Debt Financing

Bonds or direct loans were the most common primary funding sources for the benchmarked facilities as seen in Figure 15. Municipalities have access to three types of bonds: general obligation, revenue, and special obligation bonds. The primary difference between the types of debt financing is how the debt is secured. General Obligation (GO) bonds have the broadest use and the lowest interest rates since they are secured with the full faith and credit of the government. GO bonds require voter and NC Local Government Commission approval. Based on fee structures gathered from comparable municipalities, it is unlikely that a multipurpose recreation facility would generate enough revenue to qualify for a revenue bond. Finally, special obligation bonds would not be appropriate in this case as their use in North Carolina is restricted to only a few vital projects, like solid waste and water infrastructure.

Four of the 17 municipalities paid for its facilities with loans from public and private sources, such as the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) or private banks. Loans are a practical way to pay for recreation facilities given the jurisdiction follows Local Government Fiscal Control Act regulations and other state statutes. As an innovative loan method, the City could consider project development financing, which is backed by the expectation of an increase in private investment in a blighted area of the community following restoration efforts. The City may be eligible for this type of financing if it decided to build a facility in an area designated as in need

<sup>36</sup> Vence, Deborah. (2016). "Energy Boost: Alternative Energy Sources Help Improve Efficiency." *Recreation Management*. <http://recmanagement.com/feature/201603FE03/>.

of development. The most common loan in North Carolina is installment financing, which does not involve any issuance of bonds, and is a more traditional loan with a financial institution or vendor. Other debt instruments are potentially available, such as lease-purchase arrangements and certificates of participation, but were not commonly used in this analysis.

Regardless of the form of debt financing, the primary concern should be the annual cost of servicing the debt. In Table 6, the class estimated the annual debt payments for a facility using the high, average, and low costs of the benchmarks. Using interest rates of 3%, 4%, and 5%, the class provided estimates of the tax revenue necessary to compensate for the debt. The NC Local Government Commission sets net debt limits on units of local government for bonds, installment financing, and capital lease debt. In future financial analysis, the City needs to ensure that new debt for a facility does not exceed 8% of value of property that falls within the City’s taxing authority.

Table 6 shows that a facility with the estimated average cost of \$8 million at 3% interest would incur annual debt payments of approximately \$391,000 per year. Belmont collects approximately \$125,000 in revenue for each penny of its property tax. \$391,000 represents just over 3 cents of the property tax rate.

Debt Financing Estimates				
Facility (In Millions)	Interest	Years	Annual Debt	Tax Allocation
\$8	3%	30	\$390,666	\$0.032
\$8	4%	30	\$432,000	\$0.034
\$8	5%	30	\$473,333	\$0.038

*Table 6. Debt Financing Estimates*

### Grants

A major recreation grant in North Carolina is the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF), a key funding source for five facilities listed in Appendix N. Managed by the NC State Parks and Recreation Authority, PARTF grants match local government contributions up to \$500,000. While all incorporated governments in North Carolina are eligible to apply for PARTF assistance, Appendix P shows that the second most important selection criteria is “the degree of local recreational planning for the project and how the specific elements in the project conform to the plan(s).”<sup>37</sup> The focus on strategic planning in the PARTF statutes is notable given Belmont Parks & Recreation does not have a current master plan. The City’s most recent Comprehensive Land Use Plan from 2018 highlighted the need to update the master plan. Strategic planning will be key to obtaining PARTF funding, although the City received a sizable PARTF grant for the completion of the Kevin Loftin Riverfront Park.

<sup>37</sup> North Carolina State Parks, Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF). “Administrative Code Regarding Partf.” <https://files.nc.gov/ncparks/37/partf-admin-rules.pdf>.

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) offers a Community Facilities Direct Grant Program. This federal program targets rural communities with populations of less than 20,000 and provides funds for “community facilities.”<sup>38</sup> USDA prioritizes funding for communities with low household incomes and populations of less than 5,500; however, several different funding packages exist based on financial need and size. While Belmont may not meet the priority funding requirements, the City is still eligible based on the 20,000-resident threshold. Other requirements for USDA assistance include the inability to finance the project through other means, a demonstration of community support, and an environmental review.

Foundations and other nonprofit organizations offer private grants focused on health, athletics, recreation, and specific sports. Online searches revealed opportunities such as the National Recreation Foundation \$30,000 Trustee Grant, or the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Culture of Health Prize. While grant applications are a time-consuming process, the payoff of securing a grant could be worth the investment.

#### Other Sources of Capital Funding

In five of the example facilities studied, municipalities used private funds for construction costs in the form of a grant from an individual donor or foundation, or as a direct personal contribution. Securing private funding can be difficult and should not be relied upon as a primary source of funding unless a contribution has already been pledged. For example, the Town of Garner, NC opened a 40,000-square foot facility in 2017, made possible by a \$2.5 million contribution from the private company, ConAgra.<sup>39</sup> The City may consider investing time and staff into direct fundraising efforts, seeking both major gifts and small-dollar contributions to assist with construction costs.

## Multiple Funding Sources The Woodmen Community Center



#### Facility Information

Kinston, NC  
53,000 square feet  
\$13 million capital cost || \$14.2 million adjusted  
Wellness pool, two multipurpose courts, community rooms

#### Multiple Funding Sources

The Woodmen Community center received funding from the City of Kinston, Lenoir County, Golden Leaf Foundation, Parrott Academy, Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF) as well as the Woodmen Foundation.

<sup>38</sup> United States Department of Agriculture, Rural Development. “Community Facilities Direct Loan & Grant Program.” <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/community-facilities-direct-loan-grant-program>.

<sup>39</sup> Town of Garner, NC. “Town Breaks Ground on Recreation Center.” Last modified October 19, 2016. [www.garnernc.gov/Home/Components/News/News/250/](http://www.garnernc.gov/Home/Components/News/News/250/).



Major partnership opportunities should be pursued to reduce the financial burden of bonds, taxes, or loans. In 2017, Mecklenburg County partnered with Queens University to bring a new tennis complex to the Queens Sports Complex at Marion Diehl Park. Mecklenburg County contributed \$3.8 million while Queens University paid \$1.5 million. Queens student athletes use the complex 40% of the allotted time, while the remaining 60% is open to the public.<sup>40</sup> Potential partnerships should be explored with local education stakeholders like Belmont Abbey College and Gaston County Schools. The City could explore selling naming rights to the facility as seven of the 17 facilities had an individual's name in the title. To sell naming rights, the City first needs to draft a formal policy if one is not already in place. These policies should cover all aspects of the naming agreement such as minimum amounts to name a facility, the length of time, the procedures for making changes to the agreement, and a payment schedule.<sup>41</sup>

## Operating Revenues

### Cost Recovery Philosophy

Prior to building a facility, it is important for the municipality to decide on an operating cost recovery philosophy. During the benchmarking and interview process, the class asked recreation officials to describe their views on cost recovery for their respective facility. Most facilities do not reach full operating cost recovery, but instead focus on delivering recreation services as a public good. Ben Benshoof, Director of the Huntersville Recreation Center, stressed that while they strive to recover costs, their priority is serving the community. Officials at the Mebane Arts and Community Center said they strive for 80% cost recovery but obtained 18% based on financial information provided by the Director of Parks and Recreation, Dean Ray. Fruita, CO, Monroe, NC, and Kinston, NC, were the three benchmarked facilities to achieve full operational cost recovery through their membership offerings and program features. The City should consider a realistic cost recovery schedule, revising the fee structure as the facility builds its revenue capacity.

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<sup>40</sup> "Park and Recreations Teams Up with Queens University." Last modified May 26, 2017. <http://wheretogobeyond.com/2017/05/park-and-recreations-teams-up-with-queens-university/>.

<sup>41</sup> Schipp, Dan. "Using Naming Rights in Fundraising: Best Practices for Success." <http://info.jgacounsel.com/blog/best-practices-for-using-naming-rights-in-fundraising-campaigns>.

Cost Recovery Philosophy				
Municipality	Cost Recovery	Op. Cost	Op. Revenue	Net Position
Fruita, CO	137%	\$1,577,472	\$2,167,200	\$589,728
Monroe, NC	111%	\$3,600,000	\$4,000,000	\$400,000
Kinston, NC	100%	\$1,668,984	\$1,664,469	-\$4,515
Smithfield, NC	81%	\$906,644	\$734,113	-\$172,531
Statesville, NC	52%	\$582,272	\$301,703	-\$280,569
Huntersville, NC	50%	\$270,000	\$135,000	-\$135,000
Clayton, NC	49%	\$98,231	\$48,175	-\$50,056
Holly Springs, NC	39%	\$1,502,508	\$585,000	-\$917,508
Henderson, NC	21%	\$398,450	\$85,000	-\$313,450
Mebane, NC	18%	\$300,000	\$55,000	-\$245,000

Table 7. Cost Recovery Philosophy

Table 7 highlights a wide range in the cost recovery of the 10 benchmarked facilities. The facility in Fruita, CO, however, is less comparable with North Carolina facilities due to its special tax revenues, but it consistently receives a surplus in revenue through its wide range of programming and a robust aquatics membership. All three benchmarked facilities that recover its full costs have aquatic facilities and charge membership fees based upon different categories. The Woodmen Community Center in Kinston, NC, for example, charges \$47 per month for a single person or \$65 per month for a family. Removing those three aquatic facilities from the list of benchmarks reduces the average facility cost recovery from 65% to 44%. With a median cost recovery of 51%, it would be reasonable for the City to strive to recover at least half of its costs using a variety of revenue options. **In summary, cost recovery should be rooted in realistic estimates while prioritizing the primary mission of the facility.**

### Revenue Sources

After developing a cost recovery philosophy, the City needs to determine fee schedules for using and renting the facility. Common revenue sources include membership, athletic special programs, and rental fees. The following analysis includes estimates of the rates the City can charge for these services based on the benchmarked facilities. This section also contains revenue estimates for hosting athletic tournaments in the facility.

Operating Revenue Descriptive Statistics			
	Op. Cost	Op. Revenue	Surplus Deficit
Maximum	\$3,600,000	\$4,000,000	\$589,728
Average	\$1,036,343	\$845,384	-\$135,000
Median	\$582,272	\$301,703	-\$90,605
Minimum	\$98,231	\$48,175	-\$917,508

Table 8. Operating Revenue Descriptive Statistics

The average annual operating revenue in the benchmarked facilities is \$1.2 million, while the median is \$659,557. The highest operating revenue is \$3.6 million in Monroe, NC, which offers aquatic and fitness membership programs. According to the Director of the Monroe Aquatics and

Fitness Center, Kathy Henderson, the facility operates similar to a large YMCA, generating revenue from over 18,000 members. Due to Monroe’s position as the principal city in Union County, the facility serves a large constituency that is not comparable to the needs of Belmont. The lowest operating revenue of the benchmarked facilities was \$55,000 in Mebane, NC, which does not have a membership program or aquatics equipment.

**Membership Fees**

To expand revenue streams, many facilities offer monthly or annual membership packages to use the recreation facilities (see Table 9 below). These packages provide access to different programs and amenities, with the costs reflecting the quality and selection of programs. On average, benchmarked membership packages are offered for \$32 per month for residents and \$40 for non-residents. Many facilities, however, reduce the rate for annual membership purchases. Fort Mill, SC and Smithfield, NC have two of the highest membership fees for town residents, at \$52 per month and \$40 per month respectively. However, both facilities provide access to indoor pools, contributing to the higher membership costs.

Membership Categories						
Facility Name	Location	Residency	Age Groups	Family Unit	Group Packages	Discounts
Clayton Community Center	Clayton, NC	✓	✓	✓		✓
Larry D. Bagwell Gymnasium	Easley, SC	✓				
Fruita Community Center	Fruita, CO	✓	✓	✓		✓
Complex on the Greenway	Fort Mill, SC		✓	✓		
Aycock Recreation Center	Henderson, NC	✓	✓	✓		
W.E. Hunt Recreation Center	Holly Springs, NC	✓	✓	✓		✓
Woodmen Community Center	Kinston, NC		✓	✓	✓	✓
Monroe Aquatics and Fitness Center	Monroe, NC		✓	✓		
Reeves Community Center	Mount Airy, NC	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Smithfield Recreation & Aquatic Center	Smithfield, NC	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Statesville Fitness & Activity Center	Statesville, NC	✓	✓	✓		
	Totals	8	10	10	3	5

Table 9. Membership Categories

Facilities often set membership fees in line with the established cost recovery philosophy. For example, Clayton, NC has the lowest membership fee of any community at \$5 per month, but has the philosophy that, “recreational services [are] an amenity for your tax dollar.”<sup>42</sup> The Town does not seek to make any recreation program self-supporting, though it takes steps to generate revenue. The low cost of membership to access fitness facilities in Clayton makes the center more feasible for residents. Clayton charges more for individual fitness classes than other towns, with the registration fee becoming an optional add-on that residents pay for if they are interested in the activity. See Table 10 below.

Monthly Membership Prices						
Facility Name	Location	Resident	Non-Resident	Senior Resident	Family Resident	Youth Resident
Clayton Community Center	Clayton, NC	\$5	\$12	\$5	-	\$5
Fruita Community Center	Fruita, CO	\$35	\$37	\$30	\$63	\$25
Aycock Recreation Center	Henderson, NC	\$30	\$45	\$25	\$35	\$25
W.E. Hunt Recreation Center	Holly Springs, NC	\$27	\$41	\$22	-	\$22
Woodmen Community Center	Kinston, NC	\$47	-	\$35	\$65	\$35
Monroe Aquatics and Fitness Center	Monroe, NC	\$38	-	\$33	\$65	\$28
Reeves Community Center	Mount Airy, NC	\$28	\$37	\$20	\$56	\$20
Smithfield Recreation & Aquatic Center	Smithfield, NC	\$40	\$57	\$27	\$60	-
Statesville Fitness & Activity Center	Statesville, NC	\$20	\$30	\$15	-	\$15

Table 10. Monthly Membership Prices

The benchmarked facilities highlight the need to tailor membership fees to meet resident needs. Smithfield, NC, Kinston, NC, and Fort Mill, SC, for instance, offer partial fee waivers for low income residents. All municipalities reduced membership rates for seniors, and all but one reduced rates for youth. The exact discount for these groups, however, varied widely across communities. On average, the discounted rate charged for memberships, either for seniors or youth, is \$23 per month, with exact charges ranging from \$15 to \$35.

<sup>42</sup> Nancy Medlin, Assistant Town Manager, Clayton, NC. Email. March 6, 2018.

## Membership Categories

### W.E. Hunt Recreation Center



#### Facility Information

Holly Springs, NC  
45,000 square feet  
\$6 million capital cost | | \$6.6 million adjusted  
Community room with kitchen, elevated track, 2 multipurpose courts

#### Membership Categories

The W.E. Hunt Recreation Center provides a number of membership classifications, varying pricing accordingly. Categories dependent on residency, age and number of people using facility in family. Discount when purchasing annual membership instead of by month.

The tiered rates charged for memberships allows the facility to be used by a greater number of residents and can encourage healthier lifestyles in target populations. For example, every town looked at offers significantly reduced senior citizen pricing. Some communities, such as Mount Airy, offer additional discounts for senior residents as they age, with discounts taking effect at 70, 80 and 90 years of age.

#### Program Fees

Facilities take different approaches when charging for programs. Some municipalities offer most of their fitness and art classes to all residents for free, while others offer them for free for their registered members. Other facilities have higher program fees but offer lower membership fees. Of the benchmarked facilities that charge for fitness classes, the average fee is \$30 per class, with most classes lasting for one to two months. Henderson, NC and Morganton, NC offer a different pricing method; in these two communities, there is a \$1 or \$5 fee per session respectively. This pricing method lets people try a class before committing to a long-term program, although it does create inconsistent class sizes, as no pre-registration is needed to attend. Additionally, some facilities charge extra for non-residents. Others allow membership holders to access classes and programming at an in-town rate, regardless of their actual residence.

Costs vary widely for art programming and other non-athletic programs. Differences in costs for materials, computers, and other program supplies make comparisons of these fees ineffective. For example, as a service to seniors, the Town of Apex, NC offers computer literacy classes for free for residents. By eliminating the registration fee, the class is more accessible to this target group. Nearly all communities have some form of a discounted senior rate for programming. Art programming tends to have the highest registration fees of all programming at these facilities. Clayton, NC, for example charges \$105 for a month-long adult pottery class. In many cases, the higher registration fee can be attributed to the need for materials. The most common fee for art programming among the benchmarked facilities is \$40 per class.

**Facility Rental Fees**

Separate from charging individuals to use features and programs, most facilities have rental fee structures for organizations, groups, and special events. Most of the facilities benchmarked charge based upon the size and duration of the event. Facilities like Fruita, CO, and Mebane, NC distinguish between nonprofit and for-profit organizations when setting rates. Residency is another common consideration in setting rental fees, with several facilities charging slightly higher rates for non-residents. Appendix M shows how some facilities like Smithfield, NC implement creative charges, such as an extra \$25 per hour charge for rentals with alcohol.

There is an extensive amount of variation and special pricing features at each facility, making it difficult to determine meaningful estimates. The City should conduct a comprehensive analysis of competition in the region to set rates to attract business but meet cost recovery goals.

**Tournament Revenues**

Recreation facilities can attract the business of athletic organizations needing space for practices and tournaments. While facilities may negotiate special rates for tournaments, this study used the high, median, and low gymnasium rental fees from the benchmarked facilities to estimate the revenues associated with hosting tournaments. The City could also sell concessions during tournaments. Out of 21 benchmarked facilities with available information, 10 sold concessions at the facility on their own, while one partnered with a local vendor to operate the sales. Concession sales vary depending on goods provided and are therefore not estimated in the analysis of tournament revenue.

There are several athletic organizations that rent space for their practices, regular games, and larger tournaments. Interviews with Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) officials indicated a range of hourly rates the organization is willing to pay for rentals. For example, AAU recently declined an offer to pay \$75 per hour at a new facility, but regularly uses the facility in Easley, SC for \$30 per hour. With a strong amount of competition for tournaments in the Charlotte region, rental fees would need to be set at a competitive rate to attract tournaments. Interviews with managers also revealed the need to invest resources into marketing the facility to attract tournaments.

Table 11 highlights a range of potential revenues depending on the number of hours for the tournament rental and the hourly rental rate from \$30 to \$70. At the low end, a three-day or 24-hour tournament would generate \$720 in revenue for the City. If the City hosted 24 tournaments per year (two per month), this would generate \$17,280 annually at \$30 per hour, and \$28,800 at \$50 per hour. The City could charge setup fees or other service charges to account for the cost of operating a larger tournament.

Tournament Revenue					
Hours	Rate - \$30	Rate - \$40	Rate - \$50	Rate - \$60	Rate - \$70
31	\$930	\$1,240	\$1,550	\$1,860	\$2,170
24	\$720	\$960	\$1,200	\$1,440	\$1,680
16	\$480	\$640	\$800	\$960	\$1,120
8	\$240	\$320	\$400	\$480	\$560

*Table 11. Tournament Revenue*

Multiple stakeholders stated that hosting tournaments failed to meet their revenue expectations. One facility noted losses on weekend traveling tournaments due to increased staff time for security and cleanup. The figures provided in Table 11 are simply revenue estimates for rental hours, but do not account for expenses associated with hosting large tournaments. **If a staff member is required to be at the facility during the tournaments and is paid \$15 per hour, the City would be paying 50% of the \$30 per hour revenue in staffing alone.**

Another parks and recreation director warned that **facilities should be prepared to create policies to prevent athletic organizations from dominating the schedule.** If the price is right, these organizations are likely to demand a significant portion of time in the gymnasium for practice and games. This facility created weekly limits for how much time an organization can book for one week and adjusted the limits based on demand.

### Operational Partnerships

A recreation facility presents opportunities for collaboration with local organizations to assist with operations. A common partner for recreation centers is healthcare providers, such as the health and wellness partnership between the Cleveland Clinic and the Medina County (Ohio) Recreation Center. Selling on-site advertising spaces on digital screens and poster areas can provide reliable operating revenue. Furthermore, the Medina County District Library and Total Exterior Systems sponsor banners along the gymnasium railing.<sup>43</sup>

Another potential local partner for operations is the Gaston County Parks and Recreation Department. **The 2017 Master Plan for the Gaston County Parks and Recreation Department highlights the County's recreation goals and needs for the next ten years. In the plan, there is a discussion of the inadequate amount of indoor facilities and the limitations in opportunities to provide indoor programming.**<sup>44</sup> These findings from Gaston County align with the current recreation facility needs in Belmont. The County understands the large cost of recreation facilities and is unable to cover the full cost of construction or operations. Gaston County believes that community needs will be best met through collaboration and proposes municipal-County partnerships as a solution.

### Summary and Estimates

The cost of constructing and operating a recreation facility are critical factors in determining its feasibility. Setting a sound cost recovery philosophy for operations is essential. The City must consider the recreation facility as a community investment, setting realistic expectations for revenues generated and cost associated with the project in order to improve the likelihood of stakeholder support. According to a 2015 recreation facility feasibility study from Jacksonville, NC, recreation centers should expect to operate with an annual public subsidy.<sup>45</sup> Major events and tournaments are not stable revenue streams, while regular events with the local community do not generate additional tourism spending.

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<sup>43</sup> Wood, A.. "Board approves Rec sponsors, places levy on ballot". Last modified December 09, 2017. [http://www.thepostnewspapers.com/medina/local\\_news/board-approves-rec-sponsors-places-levy-on-ballot/article\\_86a44ea8-cc7e-55f1-9f1c-b8a07ad09305.html](http://www.thepostnewspapers.com/medina/local_news/board-approves-rec-sponsors-places-levy-on-ballot/article_86a44ea8-cc7e-55f1-9f1c-b8a07ad09305.html).

<sup>44</sup> Gaston County, NC. "Parks and Recreation Master Plan." Parks and Recreation Master Plan, 2017.

<sup>45</sup> The Sports Facilities Authority, LLC. "Feasibility Report. Jacksonville Sports and Events Center." December 2015.

The class estimates the annual operating cost of a multipurpose recreation facility in Belmont with two basketball courts, an indoor walking track, and two multipurpose rooms will be \$384,000. The estimate is based on average operating costs of the benchmarked facilities. These costs include items such as staff salaries for employees who manage the facility, utilities, programming costs, and maintenance. Another important annual cost is debt financing payments. For this estimate, the class assumes a 30-year General Obligation bond with a 4% interest rate. Given the facility construction cost is \$8 million and no other funding sources are used, the class estimates the total annual debt service payment to be \$432,000. The construction cost estimate table in Appendix L shows how the City may reduce the cost of constructing the facility by removing features.

The model in Table 12 combines the general operating and debt financing costs to estimate the annual subsidy from the City using the recommended 50% cost recovery target. The class estimates the total annual cost of the facility to be \$624,000, which is equivalent to a five-cent tax allocation. This study found that the only facilities to fully recover operating costs invested in expansive features such as aquatics or fitness equipment. The City should consider feedback from the community to ensure that each feature included aligns with community demand.

Summary Model						
Facility	Interest	Years	Annual Debt Service	50% Operating Subsidy	Subtotal	Tax Allocation
\$8 Million	4%	30	\$432,000	\$192,000	\$624,000	\$0.05

*Table 12. Summary Model*

The class believes that based on the estimates provided in Table 12 and the debt capacity of the City, constructing and operating an \$8 million facility is feasible. To reduce debt financing, the City should seek multiple sources of funding, including private partnerships, public and private grants, and tax revenues.



## Findings

Based on the research presented in this report, the MPA Class identified 11 specific findings within our three research categories. These findings guide the recommendations the class suggests as next steps for the City of Belmont.

### What are the Community's Recreation Needs?

**Finding 1: There is inadequate recreation space in the City of Belmont**

While the City operates the J. Paul Ford Center and rents space from Belmont Middle School and Foursquare Church, there is no dedicated gymnasium space suited to host the City's indoor athletic programs. Without dedicated space, Belmont's recreation facilities face several challenges:

- Failure to meet American Disabilities Act standards
- Limited practice time and late-night games due to scheduling and time constraints
- Outdated equipment
- Inadequate parking at current facilities

**Finding 2: There is significant community support for a recreation facility in Belmont**

The challenges outlined above have led to frustration among residents, especially among parents of participants in Belmont's youth athletic programs. The community survey revealed a high degree of dissatisfaction with current basketball scheduling. One of the largest drivers of support for the recreation facility, however, is a lack of adult programming in Belmont. The desire for this type of programming was expressed by both community stakeholders in interviews and the community survey. This was also substantiated by the open-ended portion of the survey. This survey was the first time many residents heard of the proposed facility, with many respondents eager to learn more about the plans, demonstrating strong interest and support for the recreation facility.

**Finding 3: A recreation facility can provide multiple benefits to the Belmont community**

A recreation facility offers multiple benefits, including the potential for a more active and healthy community and fewer adolescent criminal offenses. A recreation facility can be a hub of recreation activity and a central gathering place for the community, thereby creating a stronger sense of community pride.

### What Type of Facility and Programming Will Meet these Needs?

**Finding 4: Create programming that engages the whole community.**

Programming for all age demographics, or multigenerational programming, is an essential outreach tool to increase park and recreation facility usage. There is a new emphasis in the parks and recreation industry on creating targeted programming for all age demographics like job-related skills and professional experience to engage adolescents. These targeted programs allow Parks and Recreation departments to take advantage of underutilized times of the day and create targeted programming, especially for the active-aging demographic. Stakeholders expressed a

need for a wider range of program offerings like educational classes and senior programming.

*Finding 5: A multipurpose facility would best fit the community*

A multipurpose facility aligns with programming desires of the community, stakeholder feedback, as well as national trends. Stakeholders also expressed the variety of new opportunities a recreation center could provide. Additionally, all 21 benchmarked facilities were classified as multipurpose facilities. Several multipurpose courts would enable the Parks & Recreation Department to host tournaments and other events as well as address current space limitations, while also providing broader programming options in addition to youth athletics. Multipurpose classrooms can enable a variety of health and learning activities.

*Finding 6: The community indicated strong support for an indoor walking track, multipurpose space, and a weights and fitness space.*

The community survey and multiple stakeholder interviews highlighted the interest for these specific facility features. The strong interest in the indoor walking track could be leveraged as an opportunity to offer a variety of programming to reach target demographics, such as walking clubs for senior citizens. Fitness and classroom space allow for the development of a diverse range of programming, in line with community needs and desires.

*Finding 7: Comparable multipurpose facilities range from 24,000 square feet to 91,000 square feet depending on purpose and features*

Facilities like Monroe Aquatics and Fitness Center at 80,000 square feet and the Smithfield Recreation & Aquatic Center at 75,000 square feet were in a different class than facilities like the Huntersville Recreation Center. Huntersville already has aquatic facilities elsewhere, so a facility with 24,000 square feet, with two basketball courts and two multipurpose rooms, meets the needs of the community in those areas. The size of the facility should be reflective of the size and needs of the community. If aquatics facilities are not included, the range drops from 24,000 to 50,000, which is more in line with the estimates in the study. Also, while aquatic equipment was not the focus of this feasibility study, the range in size provided rough estimates for services that the City could explore in future research.

## How Should the Facility be Financed?

*Finding 8: Construction cost for comparable multipurpose facilities varies from \$4 million to \$15 million based on size, purpose, and material quality*

Using the average of the benchmarked facilities, construction cost estimates, and estimates provided by Triangle Construction Company, the class estimates a facility meeting or exceeding the needs of Belmont would range from \$4 million to \$15 million. Based on square footage estimates of various features indicated in the community survey, the class estimates an \$8 million facility will meet the most prominent needs identified, such as multiple basketball courts, an indoor walking track, and multipurpose rooms. Facilities on the higher end of this range may provide fitness center or aquatic amenities that can generate membership revenues.

*Finding 9: Most comparable facilities used multiple sources of capital for construction costs*  
Sixty-five percent of facilities benchmarked used more than one method for financing. While loans or bonds finance the majority of the construction cost, sources like grants, private funds,

sponsorships, and partnerships reduce the debt burden as well. State restrictions on tax revenue make it more practical for North Carolina municipalities to issue general obligation bonds, secure loans or take advantage of generous grant programs through PARTF. All organizations that would benefit from the construction of a recreation facility should be included in discussions of partnerships.

*Finding 10: The City lacks a current recreation master plan*

As noted in the 2018 Draft Comprehensive Land Use Plan for the City, the Parks & Recreation Department's most recent master plan expired in 2013. Both PARTF and USDA grant selection criteria emphasize the importance of strategic planning. PARTF judges applications on the project's alignment with the municipality's overall planning and goals. Applicants to grant programs should be prepared to demonstrate facility needs along with community demand, all which strategic plans identify. Because master plans require public input sessions, going through this process could better inform recreation facility planning while opening up new funding sources through grants.

*Finding 11: A feasible operating cost recovery target for a recreation facility is 50%*

Based on the benchmarked facilities and insights from comparable feasibility studies, it would be feasible for the City to recover 50% of the facility operating costs. A common theme of the findings is that a recreation facility is meant to serve the community as a public good. The cost recovery goals should be set prior to building a facility and should be included in a broader initiative to set a cost recovery philosophy for Parks & Recreation programming.

## Recommendations

### 1) Create a new Parks & Recreation Master Plan.

The City of Belmont Comprehensive Land Use Plan of 2018 specifically notes the need to create an updated master plan for the Parks & Recreation Department after the last master plan expired in 2013. To create an informed master plan, there needs to be greater communication and involvement with the community members as well as stakeholders. Large capital projects should incorporate strategic planning and align with other City objectives. Developing a new master plan provides the City with a vision and increases the likelihood of obtaining PARTF grant funding.

### 2) Continue the Planning Process

This feasibility study provides preliminary findings for interest in recreation facility features and programming. It also provides estimates for the cost of constructing and operating a recreation facility. Strategic planning will be key to building a facility that is feasible and meets current and future demands. As a next step, the City should consider consulting architects to begin the spatial planning process which will better inform financial estimates. The City should begin the process of creating a detailed financial plan that aligns with master plan priorities. While this study gathered input from the community, the City should continue to engage residents to ensure that spatial plans align with public needs.

### 3) Develop a cost recovery philosophy for Parks & Recreation facilities.

As a part of the master plan and overall strategic planning process, the City should develop a cost recovery philosophy for each facility the Parks & Recreation Department manages. This philosophy needs to align with City officials' goals for tailoring programming to community needs. Prior to starting construction on a recreation facility, all City stakeholders should have a clear understanding of how much cost the facility will recover through its operations.

### 4) Evaluate multiple capital financing sources to reduce the debt burden.

Few facilities observed in this study were financed with a single source. Because debt financing is the most likely option for constructing a facility, the City should strive to obtain funding from other sources such as grants, private donors, and partnerships. State grants, like PARTF and USDA grants, are common sources of reducing debt financing. The City should explore partnerships with local organizations like Gaston County Schools, Belmont Abbey College, and other interested stakeholders.

### 5) Build a multipurpose facility to meet multigenerational needs.

This feasibility study indicated an interest in a new multipurpose recreation facility. Features of community interest in a new recreation facility are an indoor walking track, multipurpose courts, and multipurpose rooms. Research shows programs are key to outreach and targeted programming should be created for all generations. By having ample gymnasium space, the City can provide youth and adult athletic programming and senior activities. Multipurpose rooms will serve as classroom space for all ages, and an indoor walking track can help build an active-aging community.

## Summary and Conclusion

After gathering public input, analyzing comparable facilities, and conducting a review of academic and professional literature, the class made several recommendations regarding the feasibility of a multipurpose recreation facility in the City of Belmont, North Carolina.

The 11 findings in this study attempt to answer:

- What are the community's recreation needs?
- What type of programs and facilities will meet these needs?
- How should the facility be financed?

The class developed five recommendations for the City's consideration. These recommendations should serve as action steps for the City to move the forward with constructing a multipurpose recreation facility.

The recommendations are:

1. Create a new Parks & Recreation master plan
2. Continue the planning process
3. Develop a cost recovery philosophy for Parks & Recreation facilities
4. Evaluate multiple capital financing sources to reduce the debt burden
5. Build a multipurpose facility to meet multigenerational needs



The findings from this study indicate community demand and support for a multipurpose recreation facility in Belmont. The second recommendation highlights the need to continue the planning process by consulting architects for spatial plans that will further inform financial estimates. This comprehensive feasibility study was the first step in identifying the type of programs and facility features that will meet the needs of Belmont. Using the results of this study, the City should move forward in building a multipurpose facility.

## Acknowledgements

Students of the Spring 2018 MPA Capstone Class would like to extend our sincere thanks to the City of Belmont, and especially to:

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Michelle Wood, Finance Director  
Jamie Campbell, City Clerk  
Brett Bumeter, Parks & Recreation Advisory Board  
Casey McCotter, Parks & Recreation Advisory Board  
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Parks & Recreation Staff

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Megan Childers, Fitness & Activity Center Facility Manager, Statesville, NC  
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Nancy Nance, VP Community Relations, Holy Angels, Belmont, NC  
Peter Raymer, Program Supervisor, Mount Airy, NC  
Rod Seaford, Boys AAU Basketball Director, NC  
Shannan Parish, Town Clerk, Smithfield, NC  
Susan Mosk, District Executive Director, Stowe Family YMCA, Belmont, NC  
Timothy Sullivan, Athletics Program Manager, Mooresville, NC  
Ture Nycum, Parks and Recreation Director, Fruita, CO

## Appendix

### Appendix A: Scope of Work

#### Project Overview

The City of Belmont, North Carolina (City) is a growing community in Gaston County, nestled along the banks of the Catawba River. The City boasts a vibrant downtown area and takes advantage of its natural assets through its Parks & Recreation Department. In 2016, the U.S. Census Bureau estimated the population of Belmont to be 10,784, growing at a rate of 5.5% since 2010. The Charlotte-Concord-Gastonia NC-SC Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) includes the City of Belmont, showcasing a population of 2.47 million in 2016, and a 11.6% growth rate since 2010

The City of Belmont administers a variety of adult and youth recreation activities through the Parks & Recreation Department, including baseball, basketball, softball, soccer, t-ball, tennis, and volleyball. Demand for indoor sports programs, such as basketball, continues to grow, but the City does not own its own recreation facility, renting space from Belmont Middle School, a structure constructed in the 1930s. Time restrictions, limited gymnasium space, and parking issues at the school are the primary causes for complaints from residents. The City and the Parks & Recreation Department believe building a new indoor recreation facility will solve these issues and will help Belmont to become a center for recreational events in the Piedmont region.

The City of Belmont has contracted with the Master of Public Administration (MPA) Capstone Class at UNC Charlotte to develop a feasibility study for constructing a recreation facility. This ten-member class, comprised of students in the MPA program, shall be responsible for producing a professional and comprehensive report analyzing the financial and community impact of constructing a recreation facility.

### Scope

#### Determine Community Needs

The class shall present data on the demand for a new facility, including statistics provided by the City, surveys from similar projects, and a survey of Belmont residents.

#### Identify Facility Attributes

Using information from the resident survey, benchmarks from other jurisdictions, and academic literature, the class shall make a recommendation on the type of facility that will meet the needs of the community in terms of size, space options, and athletic association eligibility requirements.

#### Analyze Financial Impact

Using financial data from Belmont and the benchmarking of similar projects, the class shall provide estimates for the overall financial impact of the proposed facility including operating costs, capital costs, and potential revenues from activities and special events. The class shall present models for potential partnerships for the City to reduce costs.

## Tasks

### Plan the Project and Conduct Initial Research

The project shall begin with the collection of relevant data, documents, and other information necessary for the class to become familiar with the City. Representatives from the City presented the basic framework of the project to the class early in the semester.

This phase includes implementing tools for effective project management, building teams, and appointing special roles. This phase also includes a class field trip to the City to observe current facilities, proposed facility locations, and the general cityscape.

### Collect Data and Benchmark Similar Jurisdictions

To provide a comprehensive analysis of facility options, the class shall collect relevant data and documentation from the City and other comparable jurisdictions. This data will provide insight on facilities in comparable jurisdictions including the operational and capital cost of the facility, programs offered, physical spaces such as basketball courts and multipurpose rooms, indoor tracks, and other recreation facility.

### Meet with the Parks & Recreation Advisory Board

The class shall send representatives to meet with the Belmont Parks & Recreation Advisory Board to learn more about their long-term goals, objectives, and outlook on the proposed recreation facility.

### Conduct a Resident Survey

With assistance from the City, the MPA Capstone Class shall design and implement a survey to investigate resident demand for a new recreation facility. The final report will include the survey results and test for statistical significance.

### Conduct a Comprehensive Literature Review

The class shall collect and review relevant academic and non-academic literature, including feasibility studies of facilities in comparable jurisdictions, and literature from recreation professional associations such as the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU). The class shall synthesize the literature review into the final report to provide evidence of feasibility.

### Submit a Draft Report

The MPA Capstone Class shall submit an electronic version of the final report to the City. This draft report shall present:

- Why there is a need for a new recreation facility in the community using data collected from residents and comparable jurisdictions;
- What type of facility the City should build based on community needs identified in the survey, interviews, review of current recreation data, and projected needs and usage.
- How the facility could be paid for, including estimates of operating costs and partnerships to potentially reduce costs.



The City shall have one (1) week to provide feedback to the MPA Capstone Class to consider and incorporate into the final version, if possible

#### Submit the Final Report

The MPA Capstone Class shall deliver both hard and electronic copies of the final report to the City and other interested parties.

#### Present Findings

The class shall create a PowerPoint presentation to summarize the key points of the final report, and present this document to City of Belmont employees, elected officials, the Parks & Recreation Advisory Board, and any other interested parties.

#### Timeline

Please note that the following is a preliminary schedule, designed to provide a final report and presentation to the City by May 2018.

- **January 16, 2018:** City presents the project to the MPA Capstone Class.
- **January 23, 2018:** Finalize scope of work.
- **January 27, 2018:** Class visit to the City of Belmont.
- **February 18, 2018:** Complete resident survey, data collection, and research.
- **February 25, 2018:** Complete first draft of report.
- **April 8, 2018:** Submit final draft report for the City to review.
- **May 1, 2018:** Review final printed copy of report.
- **May 1, 2018:** Complete PowerPoint presentation.
- **May 8, 2018:** Presentation to City officials, elected officials, and Parks & Recreation Advisory Board members (specific date is pending confirmation).

#### Limitations

The MPA Capstone Class noted several limitations of the project:

- **Time:** The timeframe of the study is limited to the spring semester, or January 8, 2018 through May 11, 2018.
- **Statistical Significance of Data:** Due to time limitations of the study, some of the data collected through survey research or other methods may not meet the necessary level of statistical significance to draw scientific conclusions.
- **Location Evaluation:** This study shall focus on the financial and community feasibility of constructing the facility and shall not focus on location selection or land-use.

#### Changes to the Scope of Work

Once signed by representatives of the MPA Capstone Class and the City, proposed changes to this scope of work must be submitted in writing to the MPA Capstone Class professors and agreed upon by both parties.

## Appendix B: Survey Questions

### Parks and Recreation Community Survey

This community survey is being conducted by students in the capstone class at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte's Master of Public Administration program and City of Belmont officials to better understand community opinions regarding parks and recreation facilities and programs. This survey is anonymous, and your honest responses are greatly appreciated. Thank you in advance for your participation.

**\* Required**

1. Do you or a family member currently use any recreational center for fitness or athletic activities? \*

Mark only one oval.

- Yes  
 No Skip to question 5.

Skip to question 2.

2. Which programs or activities do you or a family member participate in? \*

Check all that apply.

- Adult: Basketball  
 Adult: Soccer  
 Adult: Softball  
 Adult: Tennis  
 Youth: Baseball  
 Youth: Basketball  
 Youth: Soccer  
 Youth: Softball  
 Youth: T-Ball  
 Youth: Tennis  
 Youth: Volleyball  
 Other: \_\_\_\_\_

3. How satisfied are you with existing parks and recreation facilities?

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not Satisfied	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very Satisfied

**4. What aspects of the current facilities could use improvement?**

*Check all that apply.*

- Cleanliness
- Driving Distance
- Equipment
- Limited Seating
- Parking
- Space Availability
- Time Restrictions
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**5. Which activities/amenities would you or a family member be interested in seeing in a new recreation facility?**

*Check all that apply.*

	Not interested	Somewhat interested	Very interested
Art classes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Basketball	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Community meeting space	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cycling	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Event Rental Space (including kitchen use)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Indoor Walking Track	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pickleball	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pilates	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Small business development classes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Volleyball	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Weights and fitness Equipment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Yoga	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**6. Which activities/amenities should the City of Belmont include if they were to build a new recreation facility? (Select up to three) \***

*Check all that apply.*

- Art Classes
- Basketball
- Community meeting space
- Cycling
- Event Rental Space (including kitchen use)
- Indoor Walking Track
- Pickleball
- Pilates
- Small Business Development Classes
- Volleyball
- Weights and Fitness Equipment
- Yoga
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

7. Is there anything else you would like to share regarding parks and recreation in Belmont?

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**Thank you for participating!**

Completion of this section is optional.

8. How did you hear about this survey?

*Mark only one oval.*

- City of Belmont Website
- Email
- Facebook
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

9. Gender?

*Mark only one oval.*

- Female
- Male
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

10. Age

---

11. Do you have children?

*Mark only one oval.*

- Yes
- No

12. Do you live in the City of Belmont?

*Mark only one oval.*

- Yes
- No

## Appendix C: Stakeholder Interview Questions

### Stakeholder Interview Questions

1. What types of services or programs do you offer members of your organization and the community?
2. How many people make use of your programs or facilities annually?
3. What programs are your members asking for that you currently do not offer?
4. What are the main age groups of the members of the organization that you serve?
5. Does your organization currently use an off-site facility to hold programs, events, or athletic activities? If yes, what is the name of the off-site facility?
6. What is your perspective on the current recreational facilities within the City of Belmont?
7. What type of programs and features would you utilize in a potential recreation center?

## Appendix D: Summary of Parks & Recreation Advisory Board Meeting

What are the community's recreation needs?	Belmont needs "a place to call their own."
	The program with the most needs is basketball.
	There is a large need for spectator space in general.
	The town needs a rainy-day makeup space for community events
What type of facility and programming will meet these needs?	Yoga is believed to be a popular request.
	Belmont could offer business development classes, possibly streamed online for additional audience reach.
	Programming for seniors needs to be a top priority.
	An indoor walking track is highly desirable.

## Appendix E: Parks & Recreation Staff Interview Questions

### Questions for Belmont Parks & Recreation Staff

1. What do you think of the current recreation facilities in Belmont?
2. What challenges or limitations do you face with the current recreation facility options as it relates to your position in Belmont's Parks & Recreation department?
3. How would a potential new recreation center assist how you deliver Parks & Recreation athletics and programs?
4. What is the current size of the overall staff for Belmont Parks & Recreation?
5. How do you currently staff your athletic programs?
6. Do you need more staff members for the current athletic needs?
7. How would you staff a potential new recreation center?
8. What recreation center features do you believe would work best for a new facility in Belmont? (Courts, Multipurpose Rooms, Walking Track, Pool, Gymnasium, Weight Room, Classrooms)
9. Is there any programming or activities the Belmont Parks & Recreation Department does not offer that you would like to see at a new facility?
10. Does your department partner with any organizations within the community to offer programming or to hold events?
11. A new recreation facility would likely include some space for offices. What does the Belmont Parks & Recreation staff think about this? Are you lacking office space at your current facilities and would this be beneficial for you?

**Appendix F: Targeted Programs for Children, Seniors, and People with Disabilities**

<b>Targeted Programs for Children, Seniors, and People with Disabilities</b>						
	All Agencies	Less than 20,000	20,000 to 49,999	50,000 to 99,999	100,000 to 250,000	over 250,000
Summer Camps	80%	73%	81%	83%	85%	87%
Before school programming	31%	22%	24%	38%	35%	46%
After School Programming	50%	44%	36%	64%	62%	66%
Preschool	34%	25%	36%	41%	31%	38%
Full daycare	9%	2%	7%	12%	12%	18%
Specific teen programs	60%	44%	59%	74%	73%	68%
Specific senior programs	73%	62%	75%	88%	80%	72%
Programs for people with disabilities	58%	39%	55%	72%	69%	78%

**Appendix G: Benchmark Cities**

Benchmark Cities		
All Cities	Facilities and Programming Benchmark Facilities	Financial Benchmark Facilities
1. Apex, NC	1. Apex, NC	1. Carol Stream, IL
2. Black Mountain, NC	2. Carol Stream, IL	2. Clayton, NC
3. Carol Stream, IL	3. Clayton, NC	3. Easley, SC
4. Clayton, NC	4. Easley, SC	4. Fruita, CO
5. Easley, SC	5. Fruita, CO	5. Garner, NC
6. Fruita, CO	6. Ft. Mill, SC	6. Goldsboro, NC
7. Ft. Mill, SC	7. Garner, NC	7. Holly Springs, NC
8. Garner, NC	8. Gastonia, NC	8. Huntersville, NC
9. Gastonia, NC	9. Goldsboro, NC	9. Kinston, NC
10. Goldsboro, NC	10. Henderson, NC	10. Mebane, NC
11. Henderson, NC	11. Holly Springs, NC	11. Monroe, NC
12. Holly Springs, NC	12. Huntersville, NC	12. Mooresville, NC
13. Huntersville, NC	13. Kinston, NC	13. Smithfield, NC
14. Kinston, NC	14. Mebane, NC	14. Smithfield, NC
15. Knightdale, NC	15. Monroe, NC	15. Statesville, NC
16. Lincoln, MA	16. Mooresville, NC	
17. Mebane, NC	17. Mount Airy, NC	
18. Monroe, NC	18. Smithfield, NC	
19. Mooresville, NC	19. Southern Pines, NC	
20. Morganton, NC	20. Statesville, NC	
21. Mount Airy, NC	21. Tarboro, NC	
22. Smithfield, NC		
23. Southern Pines, NC		
24. Statesville, NC		
25. Tarboro, NC		

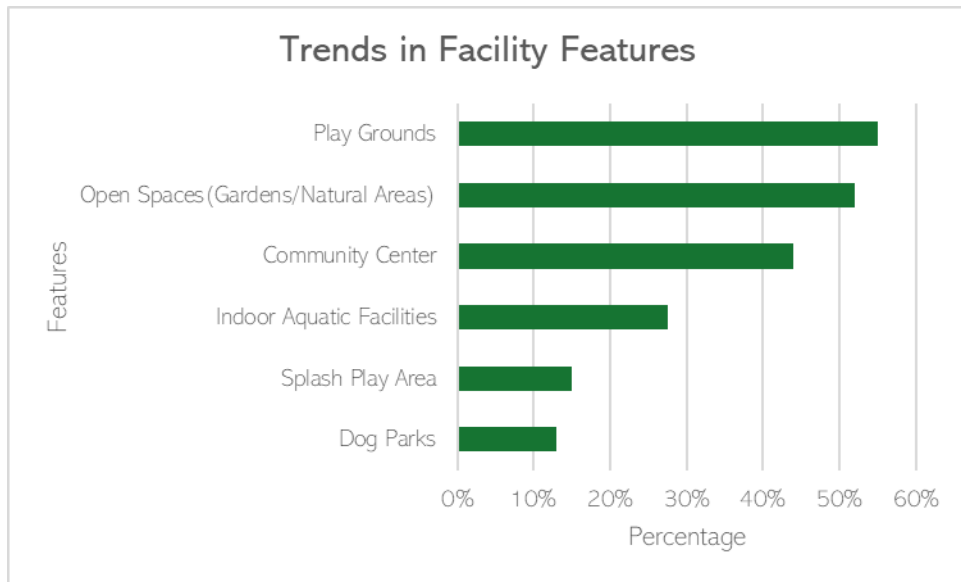


**Appendix H: Summary of Programming and Features**

Facility Programming Summary Table			
Community Survey	Stakeholder Feedback	Trends	Benchmark Facilities
Multigenerational programming	Multigenerational programming	Multigenerational programming	Basketball classes / tournament
Volleyball classes/tournaments	Basketball classes / tournaments	Volleyball classes / tournaments	Volleyball classes / tournament
Basketball classes/tournaments	Dance classes / events	Basketball classes / tournament	Adult volleyball
Dance classes/events	Classes / events for the disabled and elderly	Dance classes / events	Fitness classes
Art Classes	Indoor walking track	Classes / events for the disabled and elderly	Educational classes
Yoga		HIIT	After school programs
Indoor walking track		Yoga	Summer camps programs

Facility Features Summary Table			
Community Survey	Stakeholder Feedback	Trends	Benchmark Facilities
Multipurpose Court	Multipurpose court	Fitness center	Multipurpose court (2 or more)
Meeting space/classrooms	Meeting space/classrooms	Splash pad	Office space
Walking track	Walking track		Concessions
Fitness center	Events or classes for disabled individuals		Indoor pool
Splash pad			Outdoor pool
			Fitness center
			Splash pad

### Appendix I: Trends in Facility Features for 2014



**Appendix J: Benchmarking Programming and Features Chart**

Benchmarking Programming and Features Chart																				
Variables	Kinston, NC	Clayton, NC	Easley, SC	Fruita, CO	Ft. Mill, SC	Henderson, NC	Mebane, NC	Moorestville, NC	Mount Airy, NC	Smithfield, NC	Tarboro, NC	Statesville, NC	Apex, NC	Garner, NC	Goldboro, NC	Holly Springs, NC	Huntersville, NC	Monroe, NC	Carol Stream, IL	Gastonia, NC
Number of Courts	2	2	3	2	3	2	2	2	3	2	1	2	1	3	1	1	2	2	3	2
League Youth Basketball	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
League Adult Basketball	√	√		√			√		√			√	√		√	√		√	√	√
League Youth Volleyball				√	√	√			√	√		√	√		√		√		√	√
League Adult Volleyball			√	√	√		√		√			√	√						√	√
Office Space	√	√	√					√	√	√		√	√	√	√	√		√		
Concessions / Retail	√		√	√			√	√		√				√				√		
Group Fitness Classes (Yoga, Karate, Spin Classes, Etc.)	√	√	√	√					√	√		√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Educational Classes (Art, Small Business, Etc.)	√	√							√	√		√	√	√	√	√		√	√	√
Special needs programming		√										√	√		√			√		
Hosts AAU Tournaments	√		√				√	√	√	√		√								
Hosts Other Tournaments	√	√	√	√	√		√	√	√	√	√	√			√		√			
Hosts Concerts				√	√		√		√	√		√								
Hosts Other Special Events		√		√			√		√	√	√	√			√	√	√	√		
Senior Programming	√	√	√	√	√		√	√	√	√	√	√	√		√	√	√	√	√	√
After School Programming	√	√							√	√		√		√	√	√	√		√	√
Summer Camp	√	√							√	√		√	√	√	√	√	√	√		√
Multipurpose	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Fitness Center	√	√							√	√		√		√	√	√		√	√	
Indoor Pool	√								√	√								√	√	
Outdoor Pool	√								√			√						√		
Splash Site (On Site)	√									√		√						√		
Indoor Track		√	√	√		√				√				√		√		√	√	

## Appendix K: Demographic Comparison Data

Demographic Comparison Table								
Jurisdiction	2010 Census	2016 Est.	Percent Change	Median Age	White Alone	Non-white	Med. Income	Percentage Non-White
Mecklenburg County, NC	882,761	1,011,774	15%	34.7	565,183	446,591	\$ 59,268	44%
Gaston County, NC	202,642	211,753	5%	40	162,526	49,227	\$ 44,288	23%
Concord, NC	79,066	89,981	14%	35.8	59,327	30,654	\$ 56,459	34%
Gastonia, NC	71,741	75,536	5%	37.4	46,149	29,387	\$ 43,003	39%
Huntersville, NC	46,773	54,839	17%	36.6	42,242	12,597	\$ 90,633	23%
Kannapolis, NC	42,625	47,839	12%	35.3	31,020	16,819	\$ 45,863	35%
Hickory, NC	40,010	40,567	1%	37.6	29,325	11,242	\$ 41,533	28%
Indian Trail, NC	33,518	38,222	14%	35.1	30,055	8,167	\$ 72,726	21%
Mooresville, NC	32,711	36,543	12%	33.8	29,266	7,277	\$ 63,632	20%
Matthews, NC	27,198	31,495	16%	43.2	24,141	7,354	\$ 75,205	23%
Cornelius, NC	24,866	28,515	15%	39.9	24,487	4,028	\$ 86,355	14%
Mint Hill, NC	22,722	26,236	15%	43.9	19,477	6,759	\$ 69,336	26%
Harrisburg, NC	11,526	15,349	33%	37.1	10,476	4,873	\$ 88,865	32%
Davidson, NC	10,944	12,452	14%	36.1	10,589	1,863	\$ 44,469	15%
Belmont, NC	10,076	10,784	7%	40.1	8,749	2,035	\$ 60,314	19%
Waxhaw, NC	9,859	14,194	44%	35.8	10,555	3,639	\$ 86,771	26%
Conover, NC	8,165	8,331	2%	39.2	5,518	2,813	\$ 43,418	34%
Pineville, NC	7,479	8,593	15%	36.6	5,461	3,132	\$ 40,597	36%
Cherryville, NC	5,760	6,058	5%	44.1	4,927	1,131	\$ 43,942	19%
Bessemer City, NC	5,340	5,548	4%	38.6	4,641	907	\$ 32,500	16%

## Appendix L: Construction Cost Estimates

<b>Construction Cost Estimate Table</b>				
General Building	Sq. Ft.	Cost at High (\$292)	Cost at Average (\$184)	Cost at Low (\$84)
Entry Lobby	500	\$146,000	\$92,000	\$42,000
Reception Office	150	\$43,800	\$27,600	\$12,600
Vending Area	75	\$21,900	\$13,800	\$6,300
Restrooms	300	\$87,600	\$55,200	\$25,200
Miss. / Structure / Mechanical	260	\$75,920	\$47,840	\$21,840
<b>Total General Building</b>	<b>1285</b>	<b>\$375,220</b>	<b>\$236,440</b>	<b>\$107,940</b>
<b>Employee Areas</b>				
Private Office - Director	150	\$43,800	\$27,600	\$12,600
Private Office - Asst. Director	150	\$43,800	\$27,600	\$12,600
Open Space (3 FTES)	375	\$109,500	\$69,000	\$31,500
Storage	450	\$131,400	\$82,800	\$37,800
Breakroom / Copy Room	250	\$73,000	\$46,000	\$21,000
Miss. / Structure / Mechanical	345	\$100,740	\$63,480	\$28,980
<b>Locker Rooms</b>				
Locker Rooms - Women	1000	\$292,000	\$184,000	\$84,000
Locker Rooms - Men	1000	\$292,000	\$184,000	\$84,000
Family Locker Rooms (5 Rooms)	500	\$146,000	\$92,000	\$42,000
Miss. / Structure / Mechanical	625	\$182,500	\$115,000	\$52,500
<b>Total Locker Rooms</b>	<b>3125</b>	<b>\$912,500</b>	<b>\$575,000</b>	<b>\$262,500</b>
<b>Multipurpose Public Spaces</b>				
Room	500	\$146,000	\$92,000	\$42,000
Room	500	\$146,000	\$92,000	\$42,000
Storage	300	\$87,600	\$55,200	\$25,200
Miss. / Structure / Mechanical	325	\$94,900	\$59,800	\$27,300
<b>Total Multipurpose Rooms</b>	<b>1625</b>	<b>\$474,500</b>	<b>\$299,000</b>	<b>\$136,500</b>
<b>Indoor Running Track</b>				
Elevated Track in Gymnasium	5000	\$1,460,000	\$920,000	\$420,000
Miss. / Structure / Mechanical	1250	\$365,000	\$230,000	\$105,000
<b>Total Indoor Track</b>	<b>6250</b>	<b>\$1,825,000</b>	<b>\$1,150,000</b>	<b>\$525,000</b>

**Appendix M: Facility Rental Fees**

Facility Rental Fees				
Facility Name	Location	Gym	Multipurpose*	Meeting Room*
Apex Community Center	Apex, NC			\$25 Resident \$37.50 Non-Resident
Larry D. Bagwell Gymnasium	Easley, SC	\$30	\$15 Resident \$25 Non-Resident	
Fruita Community Center	Fruita, CO			\$30 Divided Room \$90 Full Room
Aycock Recreation Center	Henderson, NC	\$70	\$70	
W.E. Hunt Recreation Center	Holly Springs, NC	\$40 Resident \$60 Non-Resident	\$30 Resident \$45 Non-Resident	\$40 Resident \$60 Non-Resident
Huntersville Recreation Center	Huntersville, NC	\$50 Resident \$100 Non-Resident	\$45	
Mebane Arts & Community Center	Mebane, NC		\$1000 Event (For Profit) \$300 Hour (Nonprofit)	\$150 Under 5 Hours \$75 Over 5 Hours
Smithfield Recreation & Aquatic Center	Smithfield, NC			\$85   \$110 with Alcohol
			*Price is hourly unless otherwise stated	

## Appendix N: Capital Financing Sources

Capital Funding Sources				
Jurisdiction	Facility	Primary	Secondary	Other
Apex, NC	Apex Community Center	Bonds	City General Fund	
Huntersville, NC	Huntersville Recreation Center	Bonds	City General Fund	
Garner, NC	Garner Recreation Center	Bonds	Grant - PARTF	Private Funds
Holly Springs, NC	W.E. Hunt Recreation Center	Bonds		
Statesville, NC	Statesville Fitness and Activity Center	City General Fund	Grant - PARTF	
Mount Airy, NC	Reeves Community Center	City General Fund	Private Funds	
Gastonia, NC	Jeffers Community Center	Grants - Federal	City General Fund	
Smithfield, NC	Smithfield Recreation & Aquatic Center*	Loan		
Monroe, NC	Monroe Aquatics and Fitness Center*	Loan		
Mebane, NC	Mebane Arts & Community Center	Loan		
Clayton, NC	Clayton Community Center	Loan	Grant - PARTF	Private Funds/ Impact Fees
Kinston, NC	Woodmen Community Center	Private Funds	Grant - PARTF	City General Fund
Fort Mill, SC	Complex on the Greenway	Private Funds		
Fruita, CO	Fruita Community Center*	Taxes	Bonds	
Carol Stream, IL	Fountain View Recreation Center	Taxes	Grant - PARC	
Easley, SC	J.B. Owens Complex	Taxes		
Goldsboro, NC	W.A. Foster Center	Grant - PARTF	Grant - Equal Match	City General Fund

Appendix O: Triangle Construction Company Chart

**Civic/Athletic Center Cost Chart**

	Anderson Recreation Center Completed 2007 32,000		Easley Recreation Center Completed 2008 40,000		First Baptist Activity Center Completed 2009 42,000		Rock Springs Activity Center Completed 2014 55,000		Belmont Civic Center 40,000	
	Total/Div.	Cost/SF	Total/Div.	Cost/SF	Total/Div.	Cost/SF	Total/Div.	Cost/SF	Total/Div.	Cost/SF
Division 1-General Conditions	\$325,000	\$10.16	\$346,000	\$8.65	\$405,685	\$9.66	\$387,584	\$7.05	\$355,124	\$8.88
Division 2-SiteWork/Landscaping	\$780,326	\$24.39	\$459,012	\$11.48	\$830,112	\$19.76	\$582,535	\$10.59	\$662,166	\$16.55
Division 3-Concrete	\$624,985	\$19.53	\$815,378	\$20.38	\$574,768	\$13.68	\$692,019	\$12.58	\$661,823	\$16.55
Division 4-Masonry	\$767,056	\$23.97	\$412,543	\$10.31	\$447,196	\$10.65	\$615,770	\$11.20	\$561,274	\$14.03
Division 5-Steel	\$771,800	\$24.12	\$763,081	\$19.08	\$1,205,530	\$28.70	\$1,072,059	\$19.49	\$913,909	\$22.85
Division 6-Wood/Millwork	\$64,915	\$2.03	\$75,049	\$1.88	\$162,622	\$3.87	\$158,439	\$2.88	\$106,575	\$2.66
Division 7-Thermal/Moisture Control, & Roof	\$366,791	\$11.46	\$205,010	\$5.13	\$297,138	\$7.07	\$365,407	\$6.64	\$303,059	\$7.58
Division 8-Windows & Doors	\$351,501	\$10.98	\$319,078	\$7.98	\$565,851	\$13.47	\$365,101	\$6.64	\$390,722	\$9.77
Division 9-Finishes	\$395,468	\$12.36	\$636,191	\$15.90	\$964,094	\$22.95	\$1,184,144	\$21.53	\$727,477	\$18.19
Division 10-Specialties	\$43,379	\$1.36	\$55,576	\$1.39	\$50,332	\$1.20	\$59,080	\$1.07	\$50,176	\$1.25
Division 11 - Furnishings	\$94,558	\$2.95	\$277,500	\$6.94	\$57,698	\$1.37	\$261,252	\$4.75	\$160,162	\$4.00
Division 12 - Signage/Access Control	\$45,000	\$1.41	\$33,000	\$0.83	\$5,000	\$0.12	\$25,000	\$0.45	\$28,048	\$0.70
Division 13 Special Construction	\$0	\$0.00	\$0	\$0.00	\$0	\$0.00	\$0	\$0.00	\$0	\$0.00
Division 14 - Elevators	\$32,500	\$1.02	\$52,367	\$1.31	\$58,500	\$1.39	\$72,552	\$1.32	\$50,368	\$1.26
Division 15 - Fire Protection	\$86,975	\$2.72	\$79,881	\$2.00	\$158,700	\$3.78	\$110,220	\$2.00	\$0	\$2.62
Division 15 - Plumbing	\$168,332	\$5.26	\$172,553	\$4.31	\$308,800	\$7.35	\$216,000	\$3.93	\$0	\$5.21
Division 15 - Mechanical	\$217,897	\$6.81	\$197,000	\$4.93	\$680,500	\$16.20	\$1,098,561	\$19.97	\$479,105	\$11.98
Division 16 - Electrical	\$340,600	\$10.64	\$319,500	\$7.99	\$529,112	\$12.60	\$789,770	\$14.36	\$455,886	\$11.40
Sub Total	\$5,477,083	\$171.16	\$5,218,719	\$130.47	\$7,301,638	\$173.85	\$8,055,493	\$146.46	\$5,905,874	\$153.48
Bonds	\$45,000	\$1.41	\$31,677	\$0.79	\$20,000	\$0.48	\$0	\$0.00	\$26,744	\$0.67
Bus. Lic and Permit	\$30,000	\$0.94	\$32,000	\$0.80	\$42,000	\$1.00	\$61,400	\$1.12	\$38,539	\$0.96
Contingency	\$250,000	\$7.81	\$200,000	\$5.00	\$200,000	\$4.76	\$200,000	\$3.64	\$212,108	\$5.30
Design Fee	\$295,000	\$9.22	\$285,000	\$7.13	\$300,000	\$7.14	\$360,000	\$6.55	\$300,321	\$7.51
G.C. Fee	\$320,000	\$10.00	\$330,000	\$8.25	\$431,771	\$10.28	\$450,955	\$8.20	\$367,294	\$9.18
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$6,417,083</b>	<b>\$200.53</b>	<b>\$6,822,396</b>	<b>\$170.56</b>	<b>\$8,795,409</b>	<b>\$209.41</b>	<b>\$9,627,848</b>	<b>\$175.05</b>	<b>\$6,850,879</b>	<b>\$188.89</b>

\* Totals here are using average of other four projects





## Appendix P: PARTF Grant Approval Criteria

Priority	Criteria
1	New public recreation facilities provided by the project
2	The degree of local recreational planning for the project and how the specific elements in the project conform to the plan
3	The acquisition or the conservation of unique natural, cultural, recreational, or scenic resources
4	The level of public involvement in developing and supporting the project
5	The applicant's commitment to operating and maintain the project
6	The sustainability of the site for the proposed development

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