

## Chapter Eleven: Community facilities, utilities & recreation

The growth of a community is partially determined by the adequacy of its community facility and utility systems. A combination of public and private facilities and utilities adequately serves the current population. To continue this service, the City needs to monitor current demand and plan for future growth.

### COMMUNITY FACILITIES

The City of Charlottesville's capital facilities inventory includes 136 miles of streets, more than 250 miles of sidewalks, more than 80 traffic signals, 27 City and school buildings, 9 recreation centers, and 25 parks.

### Utilities

Several different agencies are responsible for utilities in Charlottesville: the City of Charlottesville (natural gas, water distribution, sewage collections); the Rivanna Water and Sewer Authority (water and sewer treatment); the Rivanna Solid Waste Authority (refuse disposal); Dominion Virginia Power (electricity), the Central Virginia Telephone Company (telephone); and Adelphia Cable Communications and CFW Cable (cable television service).

### Natural Gas

The City of Charlottesville, Gas Utility, operating under the Department of Public Works, supplies natural gas to Charlottesville and the urban areas of Albemarle County. In 2000 there were 16,580 customers (12,240 in the City and 4,340 in the County). Current growth is approximately 300 new customers per year, most in the County. The system consists of 24 miles of feeder lines and 283 miles of distribution lines. Through an aggressive marketing effort, the gas division is constantly seeking new customers in an attempt to broaden its sales base and spread its fixed costs over a larger number of customers.

The utility finished a seven-year replacement program in 1999, which upgraded old lines and dramatically improved the safety of the system. In 2000-2001 the utility is working with its supplying pipeline to increase the pressure on its main feeder line to increase the amount of gas that it can supply to its customers. The Gas Utility is operated as an enterprise fund and all operational costs are financed by revenue generated through the sale of natural gas and not from tax revenues. In addition, the gas utility pays an amount each year into the City's general fund called a payment in lieu of taxes, which is the approximate amount it would pay to the City if it were a private entity.

### Water and Sewer

The Water Utility and Wastewater Utility of the City operate under the Department of Public Works. They supply Charlottesville residents and the University of Virginia with water and collect sewage. The Rivanna Water and Sewer Authority operates all treatment facilities for the City and the County. The City and the Albemarle County Service Authority purchase treated water from Rivanna Water and Sewer Authority, sell it to their customers, collect sewage from their customers and transport it to Rivanna Water and Sewer Authority for treatment. Rivanna Water and Sewer Authority was formed in 1973 and is governed by a five member board of directors including the City Manager, Director of Public Works, County Administrator, Executive Director of the Albemarle County Service Authority and one citizen appointed jointly by the City and County.

### Water Facilities

Three water treatment plants, four reservoirs, and one diversion structure supply water in Charlottesville. The two Ragged Mountain reservoirs and the Sugar Hollow Reservoir feed the Observatory Mountain Water Treatment Plant, for a safe yield of 5 million gallons per day (MGD). The South Rivanna Reservoir has a safe yield of 7.6 MGD and feeds a treatment plant with an approved capacity of 12 MGD. A small diversion structure on the North Rivanna River also feeds the system through the associated treatment plant. Average finished water storage capacity is over 11 million gallons.

A study to identify alternative water supply resources is currently underway with the Buck Mountain Reservoir as one of the alternatives.

## **Wastewater Facilities**

The City portion of the Charlottesville urban area is served by interceptor sewers draining to the Moore's Creek Regional Wastewater Treatment Plant. Treatment capacity is 15 MGD, expandable to 30 MGD. This regional wastewater treatment plan is an EPA Pollution Control Project completed in 1982. The Crozet Interceptor Sewer, also a part of the regional system, was completed in 1987.

## **Storm Drainage**

The storm drainage system in the City of Charlottesville is relatively underdeveloped. Until the mid- 1970's, the system was limited to insuring that pipes were of adequate size where natural drainage ways intersected streets. In 1976, an engineering study was conducted to evaluate existing facilities. Pursuant to that study, the City began to appropriate funds annually for drainage projects, resulting in numerous improvements to the citywide drainage system.

In the early 1980's development in the upper reaches of all watersheds, particularly Meadow Creek, began to have a noticeable effect on the frequency and degree of drainage problems. As a result of a drainage policy statement by the City Planning Commission, a study of the Meadow Creek watershed was commissioned by City Council in 1984. Completed in 1985, it identified problem areas and buildings subject to flooding, and suggested improvement projects and possible retention sites. Since then, the City has developed a priority list of possible drainage projects across the City, along with funding recommendations. A neighborhood drainage program has also been developed to help address smaller problems, and additional funding for drainage has been provided in the City's Capital Improvements Program. In 1995, the City created a full-time storm drainage crew. This crew systematically cleans all storm drainage facilities to keep the system clear and fully functioning.

## **Electricity**

Electricity in Charlottesville is provided by Dominion Virginia Power, a privately-owned utility that services portions of Virginia, West Virginia and North Carolina. Dominion Virginia Power has eleven major power stations, which use oil, coal, water and nuclear energy or a combination of these to generate electricity throughout the system. All generating stations are tied together through a grid of transmission lines. Dominion Virginia Power maintains its Western Division Headquarters and district office in Charlottesville, and serves 44,800 customers in the City and Albemarle County.

## **Telephone**

Telephone service in Charlottesville is provided by Sprint/Centel, a privately-owned facility that began serving Charlottesville in the 1920's. Sprint/Centel's Regional Headquarters is located in the City and serves not only Charlottesville but Albemarle County and the surrounding communities as well. Sprint/Centel serves approximately 78,000 customers in a four-county area, with approximately 47,000 customers in the Charlottesville urban area. The major long distance carrier services now available in this area include AT&T, U. S. Sprint, Southern Net, and MCI.

## **Refuse Collection Disposal**

The Public Service Division of the Charlottesville Public Works Department provides solid waste collection and disposal to all residential and commercial sites in the City through a contract with BFI, Inc. Residential areas are provided curbside collection service once a week while commercial areas (Downtown Mall, West Main Street, and the University Corner) are provided curbside service 6 days per week. Dumpster customers elect a level of service 1 to 6 times per week depending on their needs. The City also collects large items from curbside customers up to two times a year upon request and conducts a special Christmas tree pick-up in January.

In 1992, the City implemented a volume based user fee program for all refuse collection. Curbside customers purchase stickers to be placed on each bag of trash set on the curb for collection. Dumpster customers are billed monthly based on the size of their containers and frequency of collection.

All collected refuse is disposed at Ivy Landfill located in Albemarle County. In February 1991, ownership and operation of the Ivy Landfill was assumed by the Rivanna Solid Waste Authority, a joint authority governed by representatives from the City and County. All operations of the Authority are funded through tipping fees charged to users. The landfill handles domestic refuse, construction debris, tires, appliances, and asbestos. In May of 1994, the landfill opened a Household Hazardous Waste Collection Center that operates on certain Saturdays each month. In order to preserve the useful life of the Ivy Landfill, the City instituted an aggressive recycling program in 1991. All curbside customers are provided with recycling containers and their recyclables are collected once a week on the same day as their trash collection for no additional cost. The City also offers containers and recycling collection service at not cost to multi-family residential units and complexes within the City. The Rivanna Solid Waste Authority also operates a drop-off recycling center on McIntire Road, which receives a large assortment of materials including cardboard and mixed paper which are not collected in the City's curbside collection program.

## **FUTURE NEEDS**

While the City of Charlottesville will not be growing physically in the future, the service needs of Charlottesville's citizens will continue to do so. As many of the City's facilities get older, there will be an increasing need for funds to properly maintain them. Other facilities, such as the City Yard, may no longer be best operated at their present location because of space constraints. Not only will new locations have to be found for such facilities, but thoughtful consideration should be given to the subsequent use of the old sites.

## **GOVERNMENT**

The role of government is evolving to meet the changing needs of the community. The City of Charlottesville is working to foster a community that is responsive to all its members, and mindful of the needs of the disadvantaged. While the City strives to meet the needs of all its residents, these needs must be prioritized and a strategic plan for the use of limited tax dollars must be developed in order to maximize the use of the resources available.

## **GOVERNMENT AUTHORITY**

The authority of the City government of Charlottesville comes from the Charter granted by the Virginia General Assembly on March 28, 1946. This charter calls for a city council-city manager type of government, with jurisdiction over legislative, judicial, and financial matters including public health and welfare, schools, and geographic limits, as defined in the charter.

## **GOVERNMENTAL STRUCTURE**

The three basic functions of government--legislative, administrative, and judicial--are carried out by a combination of elected and appointed officials. The various roles of these branches are discussed below.

### **Legislative**

The City of Charlottesville's legislative and governing body is the City Council, consisting of five members elected at large from among the qualified voters for four-year terms. The terms of the members are staggered so that three are elected in one year and two in the next election two years later. The Council elects one of its members as Mayor and another as Vice-Mayor, each to serve two years in that capacity. The Mayor presides over Council meetings. Council is responsible for appointments to advisory boards. Meetings are held the first and third Monday of every month at 7:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers in City Hall. These meetings and minutes are open and available to the public.

### **Administration**

While some executive powers are shared with City Council, the Council-appointed City Manager is responsible for the overall administration of the City government. The manager supervises all business affairs of the City, appoints most City department heads and employees, and directs their work. The directors of various branches of City government are appointed by the City Manager. The City also has a number of independent authorities and boards that perform specific functions for the City and/or County. These organizations include the School Board, the Charlottesville Industrial Development Authority, the Charlottesville Redevelopment and Housing Authority, the Rivanna Water and Sewer Authority, the Rivanna Solid Waste Authority, the Library Board, and the Airport Authority.

## **Judiciary**

Charlottesville is part of the 16th Judicial Circuit, which is served by four full-time judges, elected by the General Assembly for eight-year terms. Circuit courts are primary courts of civil, chancery and criminal jurisdiction. Appeals from the Circuit Courts go directly to the Supreme Court of Virginia or to the Virginia Court of Appeals. Petit juries are chosen by lot from a list of qualified voters. Grand juries are selected yearly by the judge presiding in each court. Charlottesville is also part of the 16th Judicial District, which is served by four General District Court judges and two Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court Judges. All district court judges are full time and are elected by the General Assembly of Virginia for six years. The Judicial Branch is also shown on the Organizational Chart.

## **CITY/COUNTY REVENUE SHARING AGREEMENT**

The Virginia General assembly enacted legislation in 1979 which, among other things, provided annexation reforms to encourage cooperation between local governments as an alternative to annexation proceedings. In 1982, the City of Charlottesville and Albemarle County took advantage of this opportunity to enter into a revenue sharing agreement, which allows both localities an equitable share in the area's growth. However, increasing disparities in economic and social conditions in Charlottesville and Albemarle has recently reopened the debate concerning alternative forms of consolidation.

## **NEEDS**

The City of Charlottesville faces a number of challenges in the future that are long term in nature and do not have easy solutions. Some of these challenges include:

- Near zero growth in population
- A population that is increasingly less affluent
- A population that is aging
- Fixed boundaries of the City and lack of developable land
- Increasing financial strain on City government
- Increasing demand for City services

In order to ensure the City's vitality, solutions to these problems must be found or the City faces serious erosion of its financial strength and moral fiber in the future. While the above-mentioned problems are confined geographically to the City, the health and vitality of the City, or lack thereof, has a tremendous impact on the region as a whole. The long-term success of the community at large will rest on how well we can work together to address these and other problems.

## **RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE**

Recreation is a fundamental and enjoyable part of life. It aids physical fitness, helps develop skills, provides opportunities for family enjoyment, and promotes appreciation of the natural environment. Recreational programs must be diverse to adapt to people of different ages and interests.

Charlottesville residents are fortunate to have an abundance of recreational resources. The City's system of recreation and open spaces includes twenty-five parks, eight playlots, six indoor recreation centers, nine school

playground and open space areas, one major natural area at Ivy Creek and numerous supervised recreational program.

## **PARKS**

Charlottesville's parks can be grouped into 6 different classifications: civic parks, playlots, neighborhood mini-parks, neighborhood parks, community parks, and major parks. Map 11-1 shows the location of these parks and other recreational facilities in the City.

- 1. Civic Parks** – Civic parks can be located anywhere in the community and are less related to service area concerns than other parks. Their primary function is to provide small amounts of open space in otherwise densely developed areas, enhancing the urban landscape. The City's civic parks include Jackson Park, Lee Park, the Central Place on the Mall, and Rothwell Park next to the Downtown Recreation Center. These parks provide a combined total of 1.7 acres of open space.
- 2. Playlots** – Playlots are small areas intended for use primarily by children under twelve years of age within a particular development. They are substitutes for individual backyards that may not always be present in dense living environments. At present, public playlots in the City include: two at the Westhaven Apartments; two at the First Street Public Housing; one at 6th Street Public Housing; one at Riverside Drive Public Housing; one at Michie Drive Public Housing, and; one at the Madison Avenue Public Housing. The housing developments at First Street, 6th Street and Madison Avenue also have basketball courts. A number of large-scale residential developments have also included playlots in their development plans, a practice which is encouraged through the City's site plan review process.
- 3. Neighborhood Mini-Parks** – Neighborhood mini-parks are designed to bring the benefits of a larger playground into densely developed settings. Such parks are located on a minor neighborhood street near the center of neighborhoods for easy access. The four mini-parks in the City, which provides a combined total of approximately 2.5 acres of open space, include Fifeville, Starr Hill, McGuffey and Bailey Parks.
- 4. Neighborhood Parks** – Neighborhood parks are centrally located in neighborhoods, are larger in size and provide a wider range of recreational opportunities. Space in these parks has been designed for a diversity of active and passive recreational activities, encouraging use by persons from different age groups. Currently, there are ten neighborhood parks with 82 acres of recreational space scattered throughout Charlottesville.
- 5. Community Parks** – Charlottesville has four community parks designed to serve primarily older children and adults, and to provide access to natural areas for passive recreational activities. They include Greenbrier, Meadow Creek Park (old Fairgrounds), Quarry Road and Riverview Parks. Azalea Park, a neighborhood park, also serves some community park functions. Greenbrier and Quarry Parks (35.8 acres) have been in the City system for many years. Riverview Park (26.6 acres) was developed in 1989 with passive areas, play equipment, picnic areas and a walking trail with parking. Meadow Creek Park (16.7 acres) is not developed except for the use of much of it for community garden plots.
- 6. Major Parks** – Major parks offer substantial recreational expanses for both active and passive users. They provide facilities which cannot be provided efficiently at smaller parks (i.e. golf courses) and space to accommodate large groups. Careful site planning and facility development has produced spaces which complement natural environmental assets. A full range of facilities is available to Charlottesville residents at both McIntire and Pen Parks, which account for over 400 acres of City recreational space. In 1990, the City and County constructed Darden Towe Park on Elks Drive and Route 29 North just across Rivanna River from Charlottesville. Providing a total of 111 acres of open space, this park contains a wide variety of activity areas and space for team/field sports on unlighted fields. The joint development of this park represents an excellent example of how City-County cooperation can address mutual recreational needs.



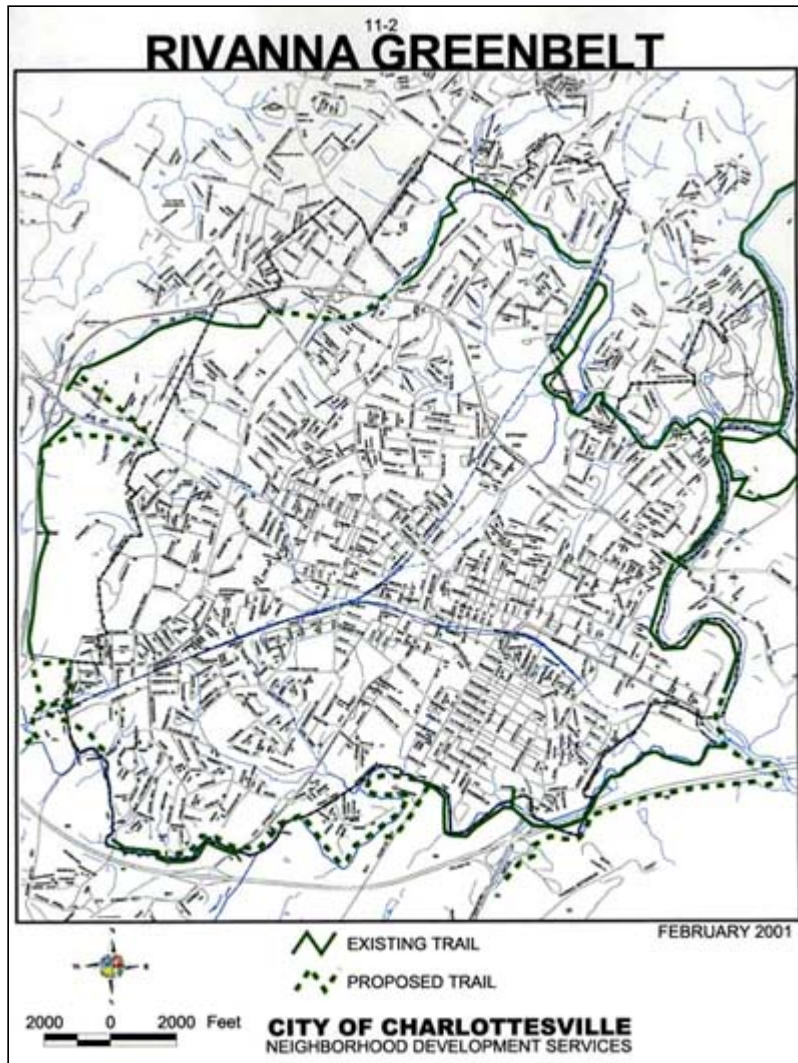
### OTHER RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

In addition to these parks, active recreation areas are available at each of the City's nine public schools. These schools, contain playground equipment, eight football fields and nine tennis courts, among other facilities. A total of 143 acres of school property is available for recreational use when the schools are not in session.

The City currently has several indoor recreational centers. Four of these, the Downtown, Carver, Smith and Crow Centers, provide a broad range of activities. The Tonsler, South 1st Street, and Westhaven Centers are run by the housing authority and offer more limited recreational resources. There is also the Senior Center, a private non-profit center for the citizens 55 years or older, located in the County north of the City. The Carver Recreation Center also has a seniors program. Because these six centers are scattered throughout Charlottesville, most City residents are reasonably near an indoor recreation site. The Downtown Center was remodeled in 1978, adding classrooms and basketball and volleyball courts. Carver Center was remodeled in 1993.

There are several special recreational areas serving Charlottesville residents including Moorman's River Reservoir, Ragged Mountain Reservoir, the Ivy Creek Natural Area, and several trails. Both reservoirs are located west of Charlottesville in Albemarle County and provide expansive recreational areas for hiking, picnicking, boating, fishing and other nature-oriented activities. The Ivy Creek Natural Area, jointly owned by the City and County, consists of 215 acres of protected wildlife area, and a small farm with provisions for parking and hiking. In addition, City residents make use of County parks such as Chris Green Lake, Mint Springs, Walnut Creek and Beaver Creek. Physical Fitness and walking trails also exist in Pen Park and along the Rivanna River Greenbelt starting at Riverview Park. An extensive greenbelt trail network is proposed to run along Meadowcreek, the Rivanna River and Moore's Creek (See Map 11-2). The Rivanna Trails Foundation, a volunteer non-profit group is also working to improve trails along the rivers and creek.

Supervised recreational programs sponsored by the City include playground activities, dancing, roller skating, bowling, billiards, table games, and arts and crafts. Other instructional programs such as skiing, painting, ceramics, and swimming are available periodically throughout the year. A program of therapeutic recreation is offered for the handicapped through the City parks and recreational system. The City has two indoor pools, two outdoor pools and two wading pools.



Extensive programs and leagues are offered for City youth, adults and families including youth basketball, softball, volleyball, various table games, fitness classes, gymnastics and other sports. Special youth trips are organized through the various seasons and transportation is provided to the Teen Center on Berkmar Drive. During the summer, a number of special programs are offered at parks and playgrounds in the City, including teen dances and socials. There are also various community leagues and programs, such as SOCA (Soccer Organization of Charlottesville/Albemarle) for children and youth. School playgrounds are also used as community open space and play area. They are maintained by the Parks and Recreation Department. There is also a need for better coordination and scheduling the use of these open spaces.

### **PARKS DIVISION – SERVICES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

The Park Division is responsible for grounds and facility maintenance of all public recreational facilities throughout the City. Areas include city parks, school grounds, thoroughfares, and public building grounds. Services provided by the Parks Division include major turf maintenance and renovations, maintenance of all facilities and accessories, horticulture and arboricultural services, parks maintenance and improvements, equipment repair and maintenance, and plumbing and welding services.

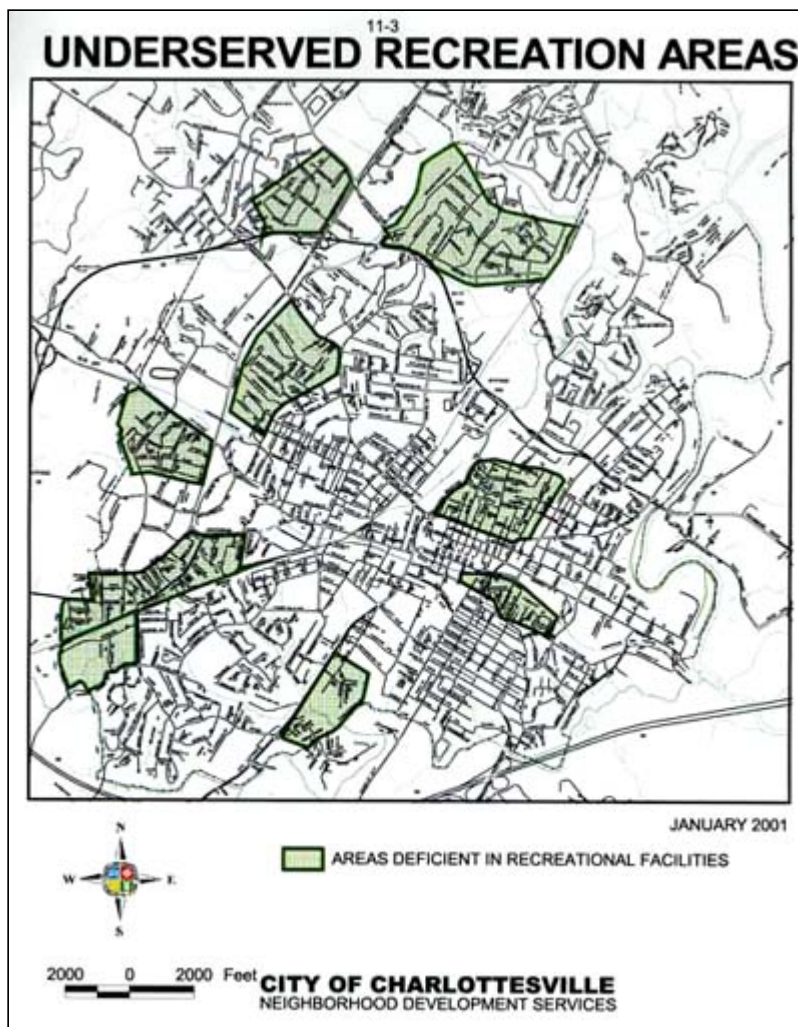
Facility maintenance and construction services are provided to all locations and involve maintenance and installation of all fences, shelters, recreational courts, bleachers, restrooms, tables, trash cans, benches, playground equipment, road maintenance, signs, and maintenance of all fitness trails.

Tree maintenance is city-wide and involves contract and in-house responsibility for all hazardous and sight distance tree work in all locations and in city rights-of-way.

Mechanical equipment repairs and maintenance are provided for the entire Parks and Recreation department.

Cemetery Maintenance provides quality, professional services to citizens and funeral directors. The program involves operation and maintenance of Oakwood and Maplewood Cemeteries, providing preparation and execution of all requested burials, turf, shrub, and tree maintenance, and headstone repair.

[Open Standards for Parks \(PDF\)](#) in a new window.



## STANDARDS FOR SPECIFIC RECREATIONAL FACILITIES



FACILITY	STANDARD PER 1,000 PEOPLE	TOTAL FACILITIES IN CITY	DEFICIENCY OR SURPLUS	COMMENTS
Baseball Diamonds (90")	1/10,000	2	-2	Could use more 90" Diamonds
Youth Diamonds	1/5,00	13	+3	With completion of Darden Towe Park
Softball Diamonds	1/5,00	10	+1	
Football/Soccer	1/3,000	11 (excluding Towe Park)	Sufficient	With completion of Darden Towe Park. Many fields are Multi-Purpose
Basketball Courts	1/1,500	30	Sufficient	Includes half-courts
Swimming Pools	1/10,000	6	Sufficient	Pools (indoor/outdoor)
Community Recreation Centers	1/25,000	6	4	Smith and Crow Centers have indoor facilities
Golf Courses (9 holes)	1/25,000	1	Sufficient	Pen Park was expanded to 18 holes in 1991-92.
Golf Courses (18)		1		
Tennis Courts	1/000	27	+11	Excluding Towe Park

## RECREATION NEEDS

Charlottesville residents have a wide array of recreational alternatives. The City's park system provides the community with over 714 acres of recreational space – one acre for every 40 persons in 1990. Because Charlottesville experienced only modest population growth in the 1970's and 1980's a trend that is likely to continue, this ratio cannot be expected to change substantially. The addition of the Ivy Creek Natural Area and Darden Towe Park has reduced the overall ratio from one acre per 57 persons in 1980. The City's ambitious pursuit of recreational space in the recent past, and the likelihood that existing recreational areas will be maintained and protected, ensures Charlottesville of sufficient recreational space for the future.

Although viewed as a whole the City appears to have sufficient recreational space, there are pockets of under-served areas exist throughout the City. Map \_\_\_\_ shows all parks and recreational facilities and identifies areas of the City which are either more than one-half mile from existing or developing recreation areas or separated from such areas by major physical barriers such as four-lane highways or railroads. Based on these criteria, several areas emerge as being deficient in neighborhood recreation.

Additionally, some natural areas of parks are experiencing deterioration or severe erosion which threaten the parks themselves. One acute example of this is the area along Moore's Creek in Azalea park which has eroded to the extent that the fences have been moved back from the creek bank.

## CONCLUSION

Charlottesville has invested in its infrastructure through the years and has great parks, good utilities, and a respected government. Public facilities are provided in most neighborhoods as evidenced by the map of community facilities, map 11-4. However, it should be remembered that Charlottesville began developing as a City over 200 years ago. Much of the infrastructure is aging and in need of extensive maintenance. The City should focus on maintenance as well as expansion of infrastructure

