

# CARROLL COUNTY PASSIVE RECREATION

M a s t e r P l a n

Prepared For:

**Carroll County**

Prepared By:



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# INTRODUCTION

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Carroll County has been working toward preserving greenspace and expanding passive recreation uses for its citizens. The county purchased several sites in recent years, including a 270 acre tract along the Little Tallapoosa River, a 320 tract on the Heard County line that includes Blackjack Mountain, the highest point in the County, and the 150 acre former site of Oak Mountain Academy. These sites, when included with McIntosh Reserve, a 527 acre tract owned by Carroll County since 1978, and other smaller county sites, a total of over 1,400 acres of greenspace in Carroll County will be developed for passive recreation and greenspace.

Carroll County commissioned a design team led by Jordan, Jones and Goulding of Norcross, Georgia to develop a passive recreation “Needs Assessment”, encourage public input and comment during the planning process, develop conceptual master plans for all four parks, and encourage public input participation during the planning process.

### Overview of Proposed Park Development Programs

Based on public comment, client input, and design development, the design team reviewed all four sites, developed a program, and planned improvements for a variety of passive recreation uses. Each separate park program includes a conceptual opinion of probable construction costs based on the approved Master Plans. A suggested implementation plan for each park is provided to the County, although final phasing and development plans will be implemented as the county directs. These programs are presented in four sections dedicated to each individual park.

#### About the Park Designs:

Each park site is different and demands special consideration for the preferred uses as determined by

community input and the needs analysis. The design solutions for each park do have a variety of elements in common. There are no recreational fields for organized sports or activities within these parks. Hiking trails are prominent in each park, and “group experiences” are promoted through the development of community, cultural, or nature centers with associated improvements such as outdoor classrooms, playgrounds and campgrounds.

Carroll County has the opportunity to look back to the golden era of park design, the New Deal of the 1930’s, when planning their new structures and facilities. Stone masonry and wood construction will complement the natural settings of each park and provide a rustic appearance for all user facilities. Design details are important to consider, such as timber guardrails along roadways, stone parapet walls with timber guardrails at overlooks, comparable design materials for entry signs and wayfinding systems, and limiting the use of concrete curb and gutter except where absolutely necessary.

Each park was planned with a “Park Center.” The center would be the focus of management, visitor contact, and orientation. Unless a specific destination is predetermined for returning visitors, many will be visiting the park for the first time. Once entering the park, visitors will gravitate to the “Park Center” to determine what facilities of the park are best suited for their preferred experience. Some of these “Park Centers” are closer to the park entrances or some are more centrally located.

#### Visitor Use and Enjoyment

The goal of setting aside large parcels of greenspace is to provide recreational opportunities to the public and preserve areas of highly scenic, natural or historic value. Each of these goals can be accomplished through active park management based on current standards set by local, state and/or federal

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agencies. As certain types of facilities become popular with a certain segments of the population, such as mountain bikers, horseback riders, campers, etc. It may be perceived that parks could be “loved to death,” or at least require additional maintenance programs to alleviate heavy use. The addition of three new parks to the county for a variety of recreational uses will benefit existing parks such as McIntosh Reserve by providing additional facilities and recreational opportunities to the county. Even with these new parks, the amount of use the park facilities can tolerate is a concern. The carrying capacity of these uses within passive recreation parks was examined closely during the design process.

Carrying capacity for passive recreational use cannot be quantified in sample numbers for a designated area. Rather, based on research regarding the subject, passive recreational carrying capacity is defined by the management objectives of each specific park, and further defined by the multiple uses, facilities and program elements within a park. Therefore, specific recreational carrying capacity for objectives such as solitude on a hiking trail, equestrian activities, class field trips, mountain biking, or special events can only be quantified based on the quality of the experience a visitor wants to achieve.

Another issue to consider is the intensity of use park facilities can tolerate before the resources of the park are degraded. In passive parks, this is usually accentuated by the overuse of hiking and equestrian trails, comfort stations, unpaved parking areas, picnic areas, and other commonly used facilities. The location of trails is an important factor in managing this most common passive park maintenance issue. Therefore, the location of hiking trails should be carefully routed to minimize erosion and compaction so that overuse will not precipitate degradation.

It is highly unlikely that limiting a type of recreational use during certain periods can be used as a way to protect a park resource. It will be hard to justify these decisions with an inventory of figures such as “visitors per acre” or “visitors per day.” However, by basing the extent of visitor uses against the visitor experience preferred for certain areas of each park, a better reasoning can be determined for limiting equestrian use on certain weekends, mountain biking on certain days, or other uses determined by park managers as causing maintenance issues, conflicts with other users, or otherwise limiting the expected park experience.

It is our opinion that quantitative carrying capacities for each passive park are not available, and only after evaluating the result of several years of use will park managers be able to determine the affects of possible overuse. It should be noted that Carroll County now enjoys a considerable amount of preserved greenspace and passive recreational areas. These new parks will provide ample opportunities for multiple passive recreational uses that will eventually alleviate the high demand at existing parks such as McIntosh Reserve.

References: “Tourism Carrying Capacity: Tempting Fantasy or Useful Reality?” By Stephen F. McCool and David W. Lime, Journal of Sustainable Tourism, Vol. 9, No. 5, 2001



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### Phasing and Implementation

Each park Master plan is designed with phased improvements in mind. If the County does not wish to implement all the proposed projects at one time, portions of each park can be developed over time. The County will need to evaluate how best to determine staffing levels, hours of operation and increases to the Parks and Recreation budget. Recommended major improvement projects in order of priority are listed below.

#### McIntosh Reserve:

1. Extension of the counties domestic water line to park
2. Development of Cultural Center, Parking Lot, Equestrian Parking Area, Observation Tower, and Boardwalks
3. Rerouting of access roads, circulation and a roundabout
4. Wayfinding signage program

#### Blackjack Mountain

5. Development of soft surface hiking/equestrian trails
6. Access control (additional fencing and gates)

#### Little Tallapoosa

7. Entry Road, Parking Area, Community Center, Picnic Pavilions, Play Structure and Spray Pool
8. Paved walking and biking trails combined with soft surface trails
9. Disc Golf course

#### Oak Mountain

10. Entry Road, Parking Area, Picnic Pavilions, Play Structure and Spray Pool
11. Paved walking and biking trails, Observation tower
12. Dog Park
13. Folds House Renovations

#### Little Tallapoosa

14. Hiking trails, group camp and primitive camping
15. Arboretum development, outdoor classrooms, canoe launches

#### Blackjack Mountain

16. Development of Entry road, Visitor Center and parking area
17. Equestrian staging areas

#### Future:

18. McIntosh Reserve paved bike trail and new hiking trails
19. Oak Mountain Entertainment lawn and Gym renovations
20. Blackjack Mountain summit development and observatory
21. Little Tallapoosa Campground and RV park

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### Site Analysis

Each site was visited, inventoried and analyzed for special characteristics, vegetation, scenic views, soils, hydrologic conditions, existing trails, and other attributes that would help direct design decisions for new developed areas. Special consideration was given to preparing a slope analysis for each park. The slope analysis is prepared to determine the affect of slope on possible recreational facilities and how best to situate them on sites with a minimum of disturbance. It was determined that all the parks have slopes favorable for development, but some parks will be more challenging to develop than others. A slope analysis map is shown for each park and is divided into five categories. Each of these categories is illustrated by a color code on the analysis sheets.

1) 0 – 5% slope

These are the flattest areas and are most suited for open play, parking, and accessible trails. Trails and roads can run perpendicular to the contours in these areas and still provide handicap accessibility.

2) 5 – 10% slope

These areas are still suitable for roads and parking, but require some careful grading. Open play, trails, or buildings can be worked into these areas with additional grading.

3) 10– 15% slope

These areas are still suitable for roads and parking, but require some grading. Open play, trails, or buildings can be worked into these areas with additional grading as well.

4) 15 – 20% steep slopes

These slopes are not accommodating to any form of flat land use. Roads and trails have to run at angles to the contours in order to meet minimum gradients. Buildings can be located on these sites, but may need more rigorous design innovations.

5) 20% plus slope

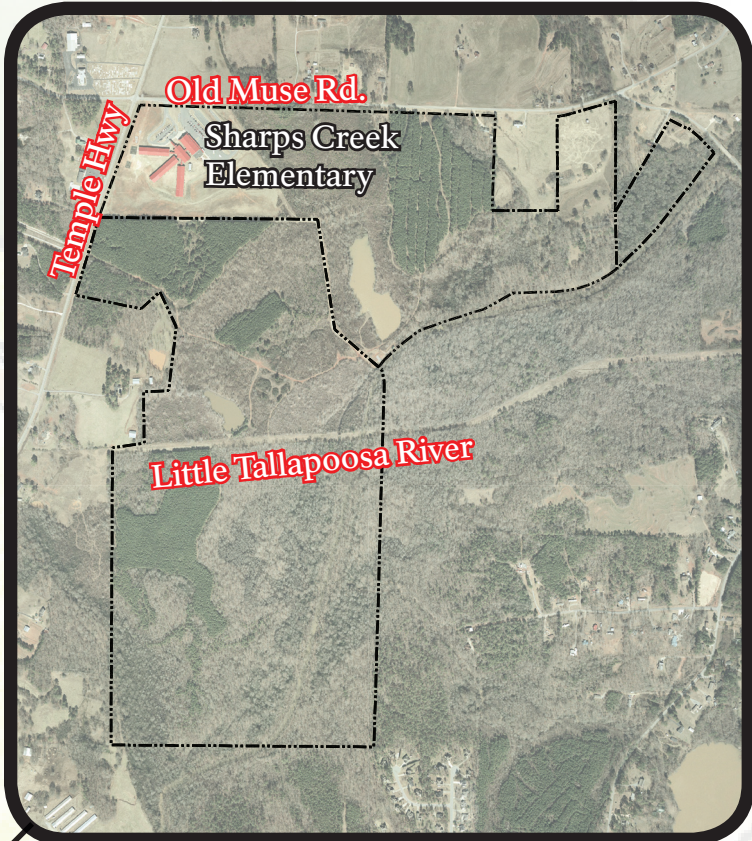
These slopes are virtually unusable for traditional recreational purposes. Narrow soft surface trails can run parallel to the contours, but slopes are too steep for any other type of trail. These slopes are generally held in place by old growth vegetation and are highly susceptible to erosion if disturbed. This area generally represents the most diverse vegetation cover on the land.



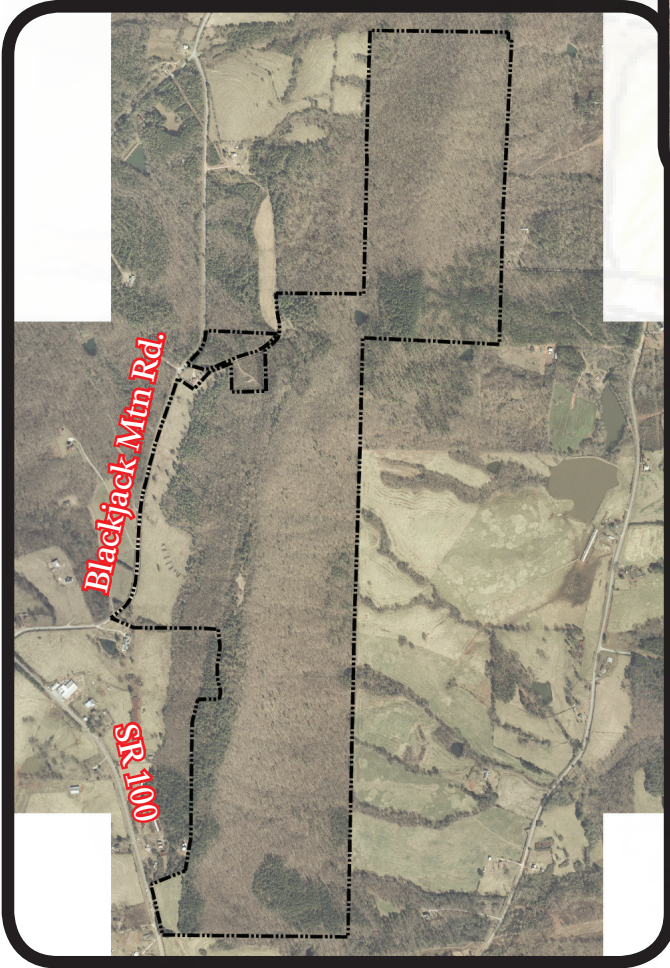
Oak Mountain



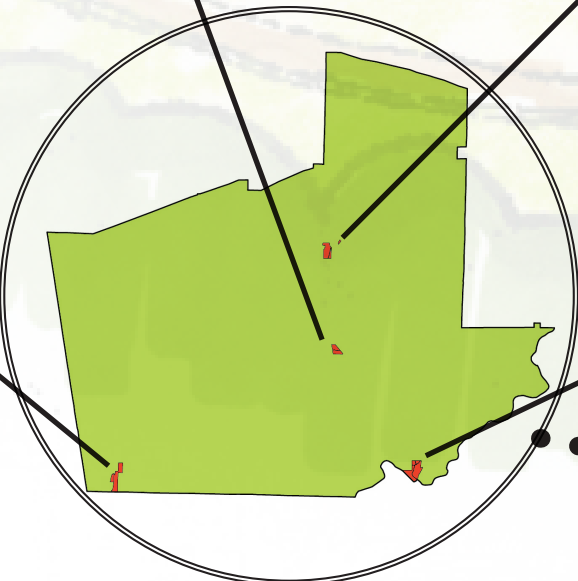
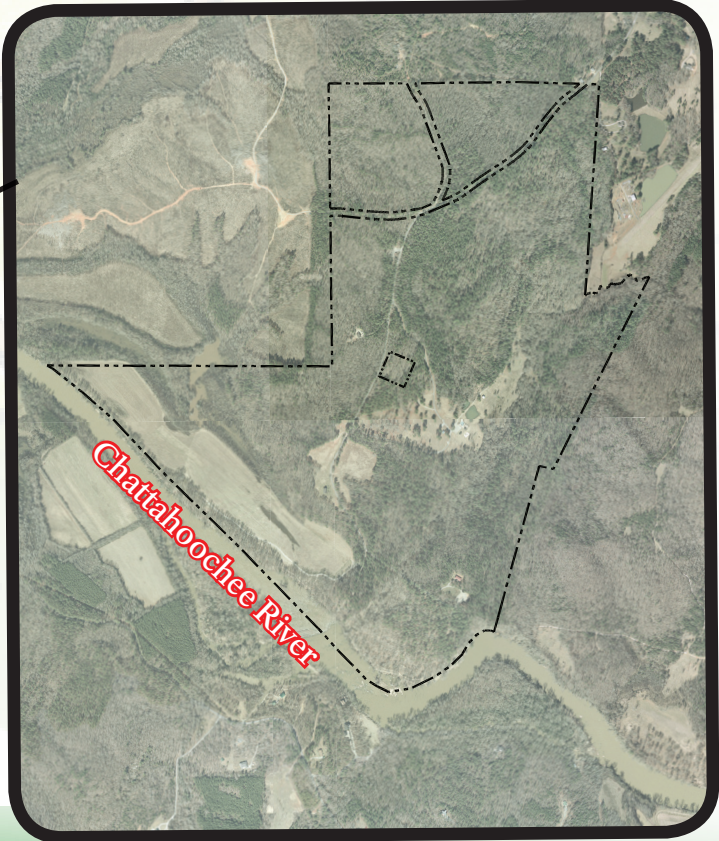
Little Tallapoosa / Sharps Creek



Blackjack Mountain



McIntosh Reserve



CARROLL COUNTY



Georgia Map



## CARROLL COUNTY NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND ANALYSIS

Located approximately 50 miles southwest of the City of Atlanta, Carroll County is in west central Georgia on the Georgia-Alabama state line. The County occupies a land area of 503 square miles and is characterized by gently rolling topography with elevations ranging from 850 to 1500 feet above sea level.

The 2000 Census of Population showed a population of 87,268, an increase of 22 percent above the 1990 population. The population has continued to increase during the first half of the present decade, and the Planning Department estimates the 2005 population to be approximately 101,000.

The County has a well-developed transportation system with Interstate 20 being the principal east-west artery and U.S. 27 the principal north-south thoroughfare. There are several significant waterways present in Carroll County, including the Chattahoochee River, Little Tallapoosa River and the Tallapoosa River.

The City of Carrollton is the largest urban center in the county. Other municipalities include: Bowdon, Villa Rica, Mt. Zion, Whitesburg, Temple and Roopville.

### Existing Conditions

This section of the Passive Recreation Master Plan presents an overview of area recreational resources, focusing on passive facilities. The purpose of this overview is to identify major passive-use areas and facilities to accommodate preparation of the needs assessment.

#### OVERVIEW OF AREA RECREATIONAL RESOURCES

Within and proximate to Carroll County are a wealth of both active and passive recreational resources. These include: federal and state sites, city and county facilities and quasi-public recreation sites and trails.

Of these, the majority of city and county recreation sites are dedicated to active recreational facilities while sites under other jurisdictional authorities are largely passive in nature. With the exception of Lake Carroll in Carrollton and Gold Dust Park in Villa Rica, which has limited passive facilities, all other city parks are characterized by active recreation. Facilities at the Carroll County Athletic Complex are all

active and organized sports. McIntosh Reserve, one of the four parks being master planned as part of this study, is a county park devoted to passive-use opportunities.

#### PASSIVE-USE PARKS AND FACILITIES

The inventory of passive-use parks and facilities includes recreational sites under the jurisdiction of Federal and state agencies, municipal governments and quasi-public organizations. This section of the report contains an overview of these facilities. The inventory, in conjunction with public meetings and the website survey will be used to determine potential demand for new passive facilities to be incorporated into the four park sites presently being master planned.

A total of 18 sites were included in the inventory, of which one is under federal jurisdiction, two are state owned, one is regional in nature, eight are owned and operated by municipal governments and six are quasi-public or private. The majority of these facilities are developed; however, several are in either the planning or implementation stage.

#### FEDERAL SITES

At present, there are no formal Federal recreational sites within, or proximate to Carroll County. There is a feasibility study that has proposed to extend the Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area (CRNRA) southward from Cobb County to West Point Lake.

**CRNRA Expansion** – The CRNRA, Chattahoochee Hill Country Alliance and the Trust For Public Land are proposing that the present CRNRA boundary be extended for a distance of approximately 70 river miles from its present terminus in Cobb County to the northern boundary of West Point Lake in Heard County. The primary purpose of this extension would be the protection of the river corridor and the provision of recreational resources similar to those found in National Park Service Units presently in existence throughout the Atlanta Metropolitan Area. These units of the CRNRA contain passive recreational amenities including trail systems, picnicking, boating and fishing facilities.

#### STATE SITES

There is one state park within Carroll County and a new park in the master planning stage that will be located proximate to the County's southern boundary.



# Carroll County Passive Recreation Master Plan

## John Tanner State Park

Located in west central Carroll County just northwest of the City of Carrollton, John Tanner State Park is a 138-acre site affording a wide range of predominantly water-oriented recreational facilities. The park has the largest sand beach for swimming of any state park in Georgia. There are two lakes within the park, and recreational opportunities include: swimming, fishing, boating, picnicking, camping, volleyball, horseshoes and miniature golf. Within the park is a group lodge and a motor lodge. The park is heavily utilized on a seasonal basis.

## Chattahoochee Bend State Park

When completed, this 3,000-acre site will be one of the largest state parks in Georgia. The site is located along the Chattahoochee River south of Whitesburg, and the Department of Natural Resources is in the process of developing a master plan for the site. When completed, Chattahoochee Bend State Park is anticipated to contain passive-use facilities similar to those found in other water-oriented state parks.

## REGIONAL FACILITIES

The sole regionally operated recreation facility is a bikeway and pedestrian plan that has been developed by the Chattahoochee Flint Regional Development Center (CFRDC).

## CFRDC Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan

In 2004, the CFRDC prepared the CFRDC Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan, which includes Carroll County. This plan proposes several bikeways, recreational routes with intercity connections and sidewalk networks. When implemented, these routes will afford linkages between municipalities and parks, including McIntosh Reserve, Little Tallapoosa, Blackjack Mountain and Oak Mountain.

## CITY AND COUNTY PASSIVE PARKS

Of the eight municipal recreation sites that provide passive recreational opportunities, four have been developed and four are in the planning stages.

## Buffalo Creek Outdoor Education Center

Buffalo Creek is a cooperative effort between Carroll County, the Extension Service, the Georgia Forestry Commission and city and County schools. The site occupies 26 acres adjacent to the Agricultural Center in Carrollton. Site facilities include wetlands (an aquatic study area), pre-historic sites,

an amphitheater, observation areas, a log cabin, and interpretive trails.

## Gold Dust Park

Gold Dust Park is a 31-acre site located in Villa Rica. While a large portion of the site is designated for active use, a portion is devoted to passive-use activities.

## Lake Carroll

Lake Carroll is a 171-acre site operated and owned by the City of Carrollton. Located in the northeast portion of the city, this park contains a fishing lake with which permits water skiing, boating facilities, picnic areas, restrooms, and concessions.

## McIntosh Reserve

This 527-acre site is partially developed for passive-use and is operated by the Carroll County Recreation Department. Facilities include: two fishing ponds, river fishing, canoeing, 14 miles of multi-use trails (hiking, biking and equestrian), camping, a water park, wetland area, model airplane flying, river overlooks, historic home site and graves, pavilions, and an amphitheater.

## Blackjack Mountain

Blackjack Mountain (304 acres) is located in extreme southwestern Carroll County. This site contains the highest point in the county (1550 feet) and is currently undeveloped.

## Little Tallapoosa

This 270-acre site is located in north central Carroll County and is divided into two sites, connected by County-owned school land. It is a portion of a larger tract, the Upper Little Tallapoosa Watershed (12,556 acres), and includes approximately 3,600 linear feet of the Little Tallapoosa River. The Little Tallapoosa River is the primary source of drinking water for the cities of Carrollton and Villa Rica. The site contains several small ponds and a pole barn. It was purchased using a combination of SPLOST and Georgia Greenspace funds. The portion of the site protected under the Greenspace program, has restrictions in terms of the type and intensity of development that can take place. Of the 270 acres, only 37 acres, (15 percent) can be developed for park facilities. As planned, the park accomplishes the goals of the Greenspace program, and is within this 15 percent development threshold.



### **Oak Mountain**

At 150 acres, Oak Mountain is the smallest of the four sites to be included in the Master Plan. Oak Mountain is located within the City of Carrollton. The southern portion of the site is undeveloped and offers scenic vistas of the surrounding countryside and a small pond. The northern portion includes the former Oak Mountain Academy, including several buildings, some having historic significance. There are also two poorly maintained tennis courts and another small pond on the northern portion of the site.

A passive recreation project is currently underway which includes pedestrian trails, open grassed playfields, scenic overlook development, picnic facilities, an amphitheater, and conversion of the existing cottage into restrooms.

### **The Carrollton Greenbelt**

Plans have been prepared for a greenbelt that will encircle the City of Carrollton. It is anticipated that when completed, this greenbelt will contain multi-use trails and other passive-use facilities.

### **QUASI-PUBLIC AND PRIVATE FACILITIES**

Six quasi-public passive-use areas have been identified. These include sites owned by medical facilities, the state university system, semi-public organizations and proposed private developments.

### **Carroll County Greenprint**

The Trust for Public Land (TPL) is involved with Carroll County to develop plans for the protection of drinking water. This effort focuses on the Upper Little Tallapoosa watershed and will identify land to be designated as conservation and forest management areas. The greenprinting effort includes the four watershed tributaries of the Chattahoochee River within Carroll County.

### **Chattahoochee Hill Country**

The Chattahoochee Hill Country Conservancy is a non-profit organization working to implement a land use plan that will protect the quality of life in portions of Fulton, Coweta, Douglas and Carroll Counties. The land use plan covers a land area of 65,000 acres and implementation will be accomplished through acquisition of land for greenspace protection.

A focal point of this effort is the utilization of the Chattahoochee River corridor as the “spine” of a regional greenway trail system. A spur trail will be developed just northeast of Whitesburg from the river corridor to the City of Carrollton. The Highway 16 bridge, connecting Carroll and Coweta counties will be converted to a “non-motorized” access trail.

### **Tanner Medical Center**

Tanner Medical Center in Carrollton contains a one-mile walking/jogging trail on its property.

### **University Of West Georgia**

The western portion of the campus consists primarily of wooded open space. The campus master plan envisions development of most of this land for athletic facilities, but includes provisions for a trail system along the Little Tallapoosa River.

### **Upper Little Tallapoosa Watershed**

This 12,556 acre property includes the Little Tallapoosa park site and also functions as the water supply watershed for the cities of Carrollton and Villa Rica.

### **Wolf Creek Development**

Wolf Creek is a 10,845-acre planned unit development proposed by Temple Inland Land and Timber Company. The proposed property does not form a uniform shape, with some of the tracts not contiguous to the primary tract of land. The proposed development is located in southeast Carroll County between Carrollton and Villa Rica. Approximately 2,711 acres is proposed as open space, including several lakes. An extensive greenbelt will weave throughout the development, but at this time specific recreation sites have not been identified.



**TABLE 1**  
**SUMMARY OF DEVELOPED PASSIVE-USE FACILITIES**  
**CARROLL COUNTY, GEORGIA**

	Buffalo Creek	Gold Dust	John Tanner S.P.	Lake Carroll	McIntosh Reserve	Oak Mountain	Tanner Medical Center	West Georgia Univ.
<b>Acreage</b>	26.0	31.0	138.0	171.0	527.0	150.0	5.0	N/A
<b>Facilities</b>								
Beach			X					
Water Park					X			
Swimming			X					
Lakes/Ponds			X	X	X	X		
Fishing			X		X			
Boating			X	X				
Picnicking		X	X	X		X		
Camping			X					
Volleyball			X					
Horseshoes			X					
Lodges			X					
Golf			X					
Wetlands	X				X			
Amphitheater	X				X	X		
Historic Sites	X				X	X		
Log Cabin	X							
Walking Trails		X			X	X	X	X
Interpretive Trails	X							
Pavilions		X		X	X			
Water Skiing				X				
Canoeing					X			
Bike Trails					X			
Equestrian Trails					X			
Model Airplanes					X			
Playfields						X		
Observation Areas	X				X	X		
Restrooms	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Concessions			X	X				

## Analysis of Supply

There are no formal standards established for passive-use acreages as a function of the population. However, many municipal governments use standards that vary between five to 15 acres of passive-use per 1,000 persons as a guideline for recreation planning process. At present, Carroll County has approximately 1622 acres of passive-use land (includes Blackjack Mountain and Little Tallapoosa sites). With a 2005 estimated population of 101,000 this equates to approximately 16 acres per 1,000 persons. This compares very favorably with the passive-use standards being used nationally.

Table 1 presents a summary of developed passive-use facilities within Carroll County. Included in this table are the projects that have been funded for development at Oak Mountain. A commitment from the County has been made to utilize these funds.

## Public Meetings

JJG held a design workshop to gather input into the design of the four parcels. The meeting was broken out into four groups for each parcel. Based on input at the charrette, the following items were suggested by workshop attendees for the program development of each park.

### McIntosh Reserve:

- Improve gateway markers and overall signage system in the Park.
- Review routing of trails and redesign or reorient them based on use (separation of equestrian and hiking) or improved routes.
- Provide canoe put in at river
- Identify important natural and cultural resources during design and planning of any construction project.
- Develop paved or hard surface accessible (ADA) trail somewhere on site
- Construct observation tower overlooking wetlands and floodplain.
- Develop new soft-surface hiking trails where appropriate.
- Build interpretive boardwalk in wetland area.

### Little Tallapoosa:

- Develop a Nature Center/Visitor Center with restrooms, interpretive facilities and administrative offices.
- Develop a separated system of soft surface equestrian trails, hiking trails and paved multi-purpose trails in the park.
- Construct an Adventure Playground and interactive fountain (sprayground)
- Develop group pavilions
- Clear a 1-2 acre area for Open Play.
- Develop trail connection to adjacent school with separated nature educational trail.
- Provide canoe put in at Muse Bridge Road.
- Allow development of archery range separated from other park features.  
Construction could be spearheaded by local hunting and sporting groups.

### Blackjack Mountain:

- Retain in majority wilderness setting.
- Provide park entrance at GA 100.
- Develop Visitor Center at park entrance; require sign in for day use, reservations for group camping on summit.
- Maintain existing pasture as an open play area.
- Develop soft-surface hiking trail system throughout park.

### Oak Mountain:

- Develop parking areas, multi-purpose trail system and soft surface hiking trails
- Plan trail connection to County Recreation Park
- Develop festival field area on south end of park
- Provide entry to US 27A as an event entrance only
- Develop observation tower in south end of park
- Renovate existing facilities as appropriate for restroom facilities and other recreational use.
- Develop ADA accessible adventure playground
- Develop open play field on south end of park

## Small Group Workshops

Separate interviews and small group workshops were held with the Friends of McIntosh Reserve and a group of area Equestrian enthusiasts.

The following are the results of the interviews with Friends of McIntosh. (Note the parenthetical numbering references the number of participants agreeing with the statement.)

### What are the strengths related to McIntosh Reserve as a passive recreation facility?

- Wildlife diversity (8)
- Pristine tributaries (2)
- Historic sites: Home of McIntosh; Carroll Co. government beginnings; archeological and



# Carroll County Passive Recreation Master Plan

- geological features (Brevard Fault); moonshine trade; wagon trail (12)
- Camping and recreation (5)
- Undeveloped land (3)
- Closeness of Chattahoochee River and greenway (11)
- Flora & fauna diversity (12)
- Footprint for nature trails (5)
- Oasis for personal spiritual renewal (5)
- Education potential for Pre-K and up (8)
- Topographic diversity (5)
- Local use for recreation and renewal (3)
- Quiet beauty (2)
- Proximity for locals and isolation from others (2)

## What are the weaknesses related to McIntosh Reserve?

- Polluted river
- Lack of educational facilities/interpretive center
- Lack of signage
- Poor condition of trails
- Only County passive park bearing all the needs
- Horse/hiking trails are shared
- Gate location not at park boundary
- Lack of public awareness of the park
- Silt collection in creeks
- Floral & fauna threatened
- Due to lack of funding for general care and/or staff who understand the care needs
- Lack of flora/fauna inventory
- Lack of expertise of historical/geological features
- Lack of emphasis/interpretation of Native American heritage
- Lack of funding for programs and maintenance
- Too much clearing along streams
- Reserve vs. park (water park is undesirable, but brings revenue for maintenance);  
is the reserve going to be set aside as a historic designated site?
- Isolation from other parks
- Lack of knowledge/education/experience of management staff; need continuing education

## What are the future opportunities of McIntosh Reserve?

- Heritage Tourism development
- Canoe ramp at creek
- Return artifacts for an interpretative center
- Continued protection of artifacts
- Increase indoor & outdoor education potential for young people & future generations
- Include McIntosh in scenic highway designation
- Connectivity to all parks with trails
- Fishing lake with edible fish
- Pavilion removed from council bluff and developed as a natural meditation area
- Separate equestrian and pedestrian trails/balance uses
- Historic re-creations of McIntosh out buildings
- Heritage emphasis
- Saving of greenspace as a model
- Combine historical and natural trails with organized interpretive hikes
- Catch & Release fishing program
- Water monitoring program for educational purposes
- Passive recreation advisory board to the County commission
- Noise ordinance
- Historical re-enactments
- Improved qualifications of administration

## What are the threats to McIntosh Reserve?

- Economic threats – lack of funding (8)
- Continued pollution of river – siltation/contamination/runoff (5)
- Deterioration of riverbank (7)
- Overuse of park with conflicting purposes (5)
- Lack of interface with external entities (2)
- Flooding dangers/erosion (7)
- Lack of protective zoning surrounding the park; ex. Wolf Creek (4)
- Change of management – lack of concern for preservation (9)
- Lack/loss of political leadership focus on McIntosh compared to other new parks (5)
- Adjacent landowners and future development(6)

- Development across the river(3)
- Lack of wildlife management plan/overall management plan (10)
- Nature blight potential – pine beetles infestation in 2000 was the reason for the formation of FoM (1)

**The group then discussed issues of connectivity and potential for the other proposed parks:**

- Who's protecting the park sites until development?  
4-wheelers are trespassing on Blackjack Mtn.
- What are the soil conditions of Oak Mtn.; Were dioxins tested by EPA?
- McIntosh Reserve does not need to have connections
- Each park should have walking trails, picnicking, restrooms and drinking fountains at a minimum
- Bike Paths could be developed from McIntosh Reserve to Blackjack Mtn. on Highway. 5 up Little Tallapoosa River corridor to Little Tallapoosa site south on Highway. 113 and 27 to Oak Mtn. and down Whooping Creek corridor back to McIntosh forming a continuous connection
- Horse Trails on Blackjack Mtn.
- Rotation of horse and pedestrian trail use and away from waterways
- More nature trails at McIntosh Reserve
- Paved walking trails at Little Tallapoosa
- Connect Chattahoochee Hills Trail to McIntosh Reserve to River Bend Park
- Coordinate with Other Local and Regional Interests
- Dog Friendly Parks – Establish areas for free run
- Overnight primitive camping
- Use Tanner State Park for all RV camping
- Little Tallapoosa connect to Buffalo Creek
- Participation models for each park for maintenance and needs underway
- Observatory and observation deck/tower on Blackjack Mtn.
- Blackjack Mtn. access with a paved road or a tram or ski lift
- Observation tower or overlook on Oak Mtn.
- Canoe trail on Little Tallapoosa – Is the water too shallow?
- Connect the trails to Tanner State Park

A separate meeting with equestrian enthusiasts reviewed equestrian use at McIntosh Reserve and use at the other parks. In general, it was noted there was presently little conflict between equestrian users of trails and hikers, and the preference was stated that equestrians should be able to utilize the trails in a mixed use format. Equestrian users prefer unpaved trails and additional equestrian facilities would be appreciated, such as a dedicated parking and camping area, better water sources, and restrooms near any proposed equestrian area. Equestrian users noted that volunteers had begun development of equestrian trails before the County began to control access and would like to continue development of these trails. While the possibility of equestrian development at Little Tallapoosa was considered positive, continued access to all the trails at McIntosh Reserve and development of trails at Blackjack Mountain was the main issue discussed.



## Interactive Website Survey

An interactive survey was placed on the county’s website for a period of six weeks during the summer of 2005. Response to the survey was excellent, with some 450 county residents completing the survey. The purpose of the survey was to determine the types of parks and recreational activities preferred by county residents, the frequency and duration of participation, activities in which individuals and families participate, and to secure specific input relative to developing each of the four parks of this study. In addition, respondents were afforded the opportunity to provide comments relative to recreation within Carroll County. The following is a summary of the survey results.

### Recreational Preferences

A range of recreational activities were included on the survey and respondents indicated preferences for the following (in order from highest to lowest):

- Outdoor relaxation (camping, picnicking etc.)
- Individual pursuits (jogging, hiking, climbing etc.)
- Educational (classes or programs)
- Active outdoor sports (hunting, fishing etc.)
- Outdoor group activities (retreats, church activities, scouting etc.)
- Athletics (team or individual sports)
- Outdoor adventures (challenge courses, team building etc.)

### Visitation, Frequency And Duration

The majority of those responding indicated a preference for visiting passive-use parks such as McIntosh Reserve, followed in order by State Parks and National Forests. City and County parks and Wildlife Management Areas were visited on a less frequent basis.

Over 53 percent of those responding participated in recreational activities three to four time weekly, while 38 percent recreate once each week and the remaining nine percent recreate on a daily basis.

The average duration of a recreation session lasts two to three hours (58 percent of responses). Twenty-two percent of respondents recreate for four hours or more at a time.

Activities Participation – A total of 53 different recreational activities were listed on the survey. Those responding were asked to indicate all activities in which they, or family members participate. Of these

53 activities, 15 received a much higher response than all others. These are listed below beginning with the highest response:

- Nature walks
- Picnicking
- Swimming
- Hiking
- Natural areas
- Fishing
- Tent camping
- Playgrounds
- Nature centers
- Bicycling
- Free play areas
- Outdoor concerts
- Children’s water parks
- Arts and crafts
- Horseback riding

### Theme Parks

The survey asked if one or more of the four parks should be developed with an overall theme, and if so what type of theme should be considered. Fifty-eight(58%) percent of those responding are not in favor of developing any of the parks with an overall theme. Of those favoring a theme, outdoor adventures, equestrian and multi-use trails were most favored.

### Park Facilities

Survey questions also addressed the type of recreational activities to be included in each of the four parks. Respondents were asked to prioritize the type of activities that should be considered for inclusion in the park master plans. In addition, the survey requested specific suggestions for improvements or additions to McIntosh Reserve. The activities mentioned the most included:

- Hiking/walking trails
- Nature walks/nature centers
- Picnicking

- Horseback riding
- Environmental education
- Bicycling
- Camping

**Suggestions for additions or improvements to McIntosh Reserve included:**

- Separate and improve trail systems
- Improve/add restroom facilities
- Add camping sites/facilities
- Expand the water park
- Provide additional information/advertising
- Add drinking fountains
- Improve signage
- Improve ADA accessibility

**Park Linkages**

The concept of providing linkages between recreation sites throughout the county was included in the survey. Typical linkages can include walking trails, bikeways, greenways and water-oriented trails.

Seventy-six percent(76%) of those responding indicated that they would walk or bicycle to parks if safe routes were provided. Seventy-one percent(71%) indicated that linkages should be considered even if the distance between parks is significant. When asked what type of linkages would be preferable, survey respondents indicated the highest preference for multi-purpose trails, followed by walking trails and sidewalks, with bikeways being the third most popular preference.

**Equestrian Activities**

A question was included in the survey relative to which of the four parks should include equestrian activities. Eighty-three percent(83%) indicated that equestrian activities should be located at Blackjack Mountain. The remaining seventeen percent(17%) favored Little Tallapoosa. None of those responding indicated a preference for equestrian activities at either McIntosh Reserve or at Oak Mountain.

**Observatory Tower**

Due to its distinction as having the highest elevation in Carroll County, the idea of developing an observation tower at Blackjack Mountain was included as a survey question. Eighty-three percent (83%) of those responding agree that an observatory would make sense at this location.

**Other Comments**

At the end of the survey those responding had the opportunity to include comments of relevance to the park master planning process. Over 220 comments were received, the majority of which were substantive in nature. The following comments are included for consideration in developing plans for each of these four sites:

- Provide drinking water at each location
- Advertise and promote each of these parks
- Provide educational opportunities as feasible
- Preserve natural areas by incorporating low impact activities
- Limit overnight activities at sites where security could be a problem
- Include picnic areas, trails and free-play areas at each park
- Consider an amphitheater at one of the parks
- Make sure that facilities are accessible to the handicapped
- Include interpretive information where feasible
- Provide linkages between parks
- Don't overload the parks with facilities
- Provide adequate support facilities (restrooms, electricity, concessions and parking) at each park
- Incorporate greenspace into the park master plans
- Make sure that equestrian activities are kept separate from other activities that are not compatible
- Consider a tennis complex at one of the parks



SUMMARY OF RECREATIONAL DEMAND

Recreational demand can be defined as what a population will choose to do when given a range of opportunities or choices. Determining demand focuses the park master planning process on the location, type and number of facilities needed. Throughout the planning process to date, residents of Carroll County were presented with a range of recreational opportunities, asked to express their desires relative to specific activities and expressed opinions regarding the preferred locations) for such activities.

It is evident from the public input process that residents desire relaxing, individual or family recreational pursuits, involving frequent participation in a wide range of passive activities. There is a clear demand for developing each of the four parks for passive-use, and the inclusion of a wide range of compatible facilities that afford recreational opportunities to all age groups.

Based upon the foregoing, adherence to the following principles will satisfy demand and result in high levels of utilization of each park site:

- Incorporate natural features and physical characteristics of the sites into the development process
- Integrate interpretive and educational opportunities into the development schemes
- Maintain a separation between activities that are not compatible
- Insure provision of adequate support facilities in each park
- Use care to protect sensitive environmental resources
- Adequately publicize each of the parks and provide directional and printed information for users
- Provide linkages between parks and other activity centers throughout the County

Needs Assessment

As previously mentioned, there are no quantitative standards that address all types of passive-use facilities. Therefore, this “Needs Assessment” is qualitative, based largely on input received during the planning process and the professional judgments of those preparing the master plans. The intent is to provide a range of recreational opportunities that will result in high utilization of each site with minimal impacts to the area resource base.

TABLE 2  
POTENTIAL PASSIVE-USE FACILITIES

FACILITY TYPE	BLACKJACK MOUNTAIN	MCINTOSH RESERVE	OAK MOUNTAIN	LITTLE TALLAPOOSA
Swimming/Water Park			X	X
Nature Walk	X			X
Picnicking	X	X	X	X
Camping	X	X		X
Canoeing/Kayaking		X		X
Free-Play Area	X	X	X	X
Festivals/Events			X	
Playground	X	X	X	X
Pavilion	X	X	X	X
Interpretive Area	X		X	X
Outdoor Education		X		X
Fishing		X		X
Bicycling		X	X	X
Mountain Biking	X			X
Bird Watching	X		X	X
Walking/Hiking Trail	X	X	X	X
Group Outings/Retreats	X	X		
Horseback Riding	X	X		
Dog Park			X	
Orienteering/Gecoaching	X			
Arboretum/Plant Rescue			X	
Gardening			X	X
Challenge Course	X			
Archery Range		X	X	

TABLE 3  
POTENTIAL RECREATIONAL STRUCTURES AND INDOOR FACILITIES

FACILITY TYPE	BLACKJACK MOUNTAIN	MCINTOSH RESERVE	OAK MOUNTAIN	LITTLE TALLAPOOSA
Amphitheater			X	
Interpretive Center	X		X	X
Retreat Center	X			
Group Pavilion	X	X	X	X
Observatory	X			
Museum		X		
Historic Restoration		X	X	
Nature Center		X		X
Stables	X	X		

### Passive-Use Facilities

Table 2 depicts the potential range of passive-use facilities that could be considered for each of the four park sites. The list is not all-inclusive and the actual program elements for each park will take into consideration policies that might restrict development and the physical and environmental limitations of each site.

### Structures/Indoor Facilities

Several types of recreation structures and indoor facilities were suggested during the public input process. Table 3 depicts the range of structures and indoor facilities that could be developed at each of the four park sites.

### SUPPORT FACILITIES

The provision of adequate support facilities is critical to the success of any park. Many comments were received relative to improving or adding support facilities at McIntosh Reserve. The following support facilities should be provided at/for each of the four park sites:

- Restrooms
- Parking
- Electricity
- Drinking fountains
- Directional signage (at ½ and ¼ miles from entryways)
- Entryways (signage and landscaping)
- Brochures and park maps
- Interior directional signage

In addition, depending upon the type of recreational facilities developed at each park, concessions may or may not be required.

### LINKAGES

Input received indicates that there is strong support to provide linkages between these parks, to other Carroll County parks, and to recreational areas in adjacent counties. The preferred types of linkages include: multi-purpose trails, bikeways, sidewalks and greenways. Consideration should be given to providing the following linkages:

- Provide a bikeway link from Oak Mountain to the Carroll County Athletic Complex and to the Carrollton Greenbelt
- Develop a greenway/bikeway link between McIntosh Reserve, the Chattahoochee Hill Country and Chattahoochee Bend State Park
- Develop a bikeway along S.R. 5/S.R. 100 to link McIntosh Reserve with Blackjack Mountain
- Develop a greenway/sidewalk/bikeway linkage between Oak Mountain and Little Tallapoosa

### PROGRAM ELEMENTS

The final step prior to preparing the individual park master plans is to develop the program elements for each of the four sites. Input received during the planning process identified a desire for far more facilities than can reasonably be located at these four sites. Policies and development constraints will require focusing the provision of facilities into those areas that can support development without adversely impacting physical and environmental resources, and the ability of Carroll County to provide necessary infrastructure and support facilities.

### CAVEATS FOR DEVELOPING PARK PROGRAMS

Each of the park sites has constraints that will limit the type and intensity of development that can realistically occur. These will all have to be considered when developing both the program and the initial conceptual master plans. The master planning caveats can be summarized on a site-by-site basis as follows.

#### Blackjack Mountain

Access to this site is limited by its remote location in the extreme southwestern corner of Carroll



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County and poor site distances. Much of the site is characterized by steep slopes, sensitive vegetation and wildlife habitat are present and the northern portion of the site is somewhat isolated. There will likely be a need to acquire additional property or an easement to better connect Little Blackjack Mountain ridge to Blackjack Mountain.

### Little Tallapoosa

This site was purchased with Greenspace funds and therefore is required by law to be placed under permanent protection in perpetuity. The development of recreational facilities on land purchased with Greenspace funds is severely limited. It is also adjacent to Carroll County School Property

### McIntosh Reserve

The presence of historic and archaeological resources and unique plant species are a limitation to additional development of this site. While there is support for equestrian activities there is also concern about horse/pedestrian conflicts, dual use of trails, and whether these activities should be expanded at this site. There is also a question relative to the compatibility of the water park with other activities. In addition, there is a need to improve/upgrade some existing recreational and support facilities.

### Oak Mountain

This site has use restrictions that will affect the removal/modification of existing structures. All building sites must remain. Grading will need to be very limited in certain areas. In addition, a trail system is presently being designed for this site.

### FACILITIES COMMON TO ALL PARKS

There are low impact facilities that should be present at each of these four sites. Some are already present at McIntosh Reserve and do not need duplication. These passive-use facilities are typically found at any park and are intended to afford attractive activities for individuals and entire families. The following facilities are proposed for each site:

- Pavilions and picnic facilities
- Free-play fields
- Playgrounds
- Walking/hiking trails



## PROPOSED PROGRAMS FOR PARKS

### McIntosh Reserve Program

The following improvements should be considered at McIntosh Reserve:

- Separate horse, bike and pedestrian trails
- Improve the trail surfaces
- Improve restroom facilities
- Decide on either expanding or relocating the water park
- Relocate the Council Bluff pavilion
- Relocate festival activities and events to Oak Mountain
- Make facilities ADA accessible where feasible

The following constitute new program elements for McIntosh Reserve:

- A dog park
- Add free-play fields
- An interpretive facility at the wetlands location
- An interpretive facility at the cemetery
- Complete museum as archaeological interpretive center
- Construct a canoe ramp at the river
- Construct playgrounds proximate to the model airplane area, at both campgrounds and at the Council Bluff pavilion
- Construct horse stalls and holding paddock
- Add new restroom facilities at the model airplane field and proximate to the pavilions
- Add drinking fountains throughout the park

### Blackjack Mountain Program

The proposed program elements for Blackjack Mountain include the following:

- An observatory
- A group pavilion
- Free-play fields
- A group campsite
- A hiking trail
- A horse trail
- A mountain biking trail
- A nature trail with interpretive stations
- Bird watching area and shelter
- Pavilions and picnic areas
- Playgrounds at the group pavilion and group campsite
- A retreat center with challenge course
- Orienteering/geocaching course
- Support facilities (restrooms, concessions and parking)

### Little Tallapoosa Program

Program elements for Little Tallapoosa include:

- Stocking ponds for fishing
- A canoe or kayak trail
- A nature trail with interpretive stations and bird watching shelter along the bottomlands
- An education center with classroom space and demonstration garden proximate to the school site\*
- A group camping area\*
- A group pavilion\*
- An archery range\*



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- Pavilions and picnic areas
- Playgrounds
- Free-play fields
- Walking trails
- A mountain biking trail\*
- Support facilities (restrooms, concessions and parking)

\* As permitted under Georgia Greenspace Program regulations.

## Oak Mountain Program

The Oak Mountain program elements include the following:

- An open area designed to accommodate large festivals and events to include an amphitheater and wedding area
- Restoration of the Folds House for garden area and plant rescue facility
- An observation tower
- An arboretum
- A dog park
- A pavilion with picnic area
- A playground with equipment for the handicapped
- A free-play field
- Trail system (by others)
- Support facilities (restrooms and parking)