



Recreation and Open Space

Providing recreational opportunities and preserving open space areas within a community makes it attractive for residents and enhances heritage tourism efforts that bolster the community's economic vitality. In Gordonsville, public park spaces mix with privately-owned park areas, and the designation of a Virginia Byway along West Gordon Avenue, to provide both active and passive recreational opportunities for town citizens and visitors.



Figure 1. Little League Baseball at Blue Omohundro Park (photo courtesy of Jeff Poole).

Recreation and Open Space in Gordonsville Today

Within the town there are approximately seven acres of recreational and open space, both publicly and privately owned, available for the enjoyment of town citizens and visitors.

Below is a table that lists each of the spaces available and their approximate acreages:

Map #	Name	Acreage	Location	Ownership
4	Verling Park	~0.5 Ac	Allen Street and Linney Street	Private
4	Dix Memorial Pool	~0.35 Ac	Market Street and Allen Street	Public
5	Cooke Park	~0.15 Ac	Main Street	Public
2	Blue Omohundro Field	~1 Ac	E. Baker Street and Weaver Street	Private
1	Gordon Barbour Elementary School	~2.5 Ac	W. Baker Street	Public
6	Confederate Manor subdivision lot	~0.2 Ac	Jackson Street	Public
3	Firemen's Fairgrounds	~2.5 Ac	E. Baker Street	Private

Of these, only 0.7 acre is owned by the Town. The map below illustrates the location of these facilities:



With this map one can clearly see those areas of town that are underserved with regard to recreational facilities. Specifically, the southeastern and southwestern areas of town are lacking in established public recreational facilities. However, most of the existing facilities in town are within a 5-15 minute walk to all areas of town. In addition to these facilities, a number of the churches in town have picnic pavilions that may be reserved for family gatherings or parties. Specifically, both the Gordonsville Methodist Church and the Gordonsville Baptist Church have picnic shelters that may be reserved for such use.

Verling Park and Dix Memorial Pool

Verling Park is a park complex within the town that includes a tennis court, picnic shelter, playground equipment, and the only public pool in Orange County – Dix Memorial Pool. The park is maintained by the Town and is available for day-to-day use; it may also be reserved for special events.

Dix Memorial Pool was built in the early 1960's, and until the mid-1980's was one of two pools located in Town. The facility is maintained by the Town and is open each year from Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day. The Town offers



Figure 2. Verling Park (Staff photo, 2012)



Figure 3. Swimming at Dix Memorial Pool (Staff photo, 2012)

swim lessons through its Learn to Swim program—in 2014, 75 children and adults learned to swim through this program. In 2012, the town proudly re-established a Gordonsville-based swim team—the Gordonsville Orcas—which is affiliated with the [Jefferson Swim League](#).

The town intends to construct a new pool facility in the next several years, funding allowing. Plans for the new facility are being developed so that fundraising may begin in earnest. Currently the town has approximately \$49,000 held in reserves for pool construction, nearly \$19,000 of which was donated to the town by the New Millennium Sports Committee in 2011. When Orange County had control of the pool in the early 2000's,

approximately \$27,000 was raised in the Gordonsville community for the construction of a new pool. In 2011, the county turned this money over to the town.

Cooke Park

Cooke Park, located downtown on Main Street next to Town Hall, provides a respite for anyone who comes downtown to visit or conduct business. Funded through private donations, the ornamental trees and shrubs, the benches for sitting and the wall fountains in the park create a pleasant atmosphere for social gatherings, lunch breaks or just taking time out to enjoy the sights and sounds of downtown.



Figure 4. Cooke Park in Downtown Gordonsville (photo courtesy of Jeff Poole).



Figure 5. Blue Omohundro Field (Google Earth, 2015).

Blue Omohundro Field

Gordonsville also boasts a sanctioned Little League field known as Blue Omohundro Field. Located adjacent to the Gordonsville Volunteer Fire Company on East Baker Street, this park has a lighted field with a concession area, bleachers and restrooms and is an asset to the community.



Gordon Barbour Elementary School

The playgrounds and play equipment at GBES provide recreational space for the community outside of school hours. While the playing field may be used with permission for organized sport activities, the playground is generally open and is often utilized as a play area for private or church daycare groups.



Figure 6. Play equipment at Gordon Barbour (Staff photo, 2012)

Confederate Manor Subdivision

In the mid 2000's, one of the smaller lots within the Confederate Manor subdivision was donated to the town for use as a tot lot or playground for the community. To date, this property remains undeveloped and, because of its remote location within the development, is more likely to be used as a park for the subdivision than a park that serves the greater community.

Firemen's Fairground



Figure 7. GVFC Fairground (Staff photo, 2012)

The fairgrounds located behind the Gordonsville Volunteer Fire Company are used as the location for the annual Firemen's fair. The fairgrounds are also used for events such as the town Police Department's annual Cops for Kids Day. The concession stand and other frame structures on the property make it an ideal site for town festivals and other events.

Recreational Programs

The Orange County Parks & Recreation Department offers youth athletic programs in soccer, football, wrestling, basketball and baseball, all of which practice in Gordonsville. Both the VFW just outside of Gordonsville and Gordon Barbour Elementary School provide fields and facilities for these teams to practice and play games.

Walkers and Runners

Whether it's taking an evening stroll or that morning walk or run, Gordonsville is a great place for people who like to walk or run for exercise. Most mornings and evenings town residents, as well as people who drive in from outside of town just to exercise, can be seen walking or running through town--the most popular route seems to be Main Street, West Gordon Avenue and High Street, also known as "the loop", where wider streets and sidewalks afford a safer walk. Continued sidewalk construction throughout town will better link neighborhoods and increase the areas in town where citizens can safely walk.

Trails

Currently there is no formal trail system within the Town or in surrounding localities. Desire has been expressed, however, to create such a trail system to link historic sites within Town to those



outside of Town. Of specific interest is the development of a multi-use trail system that links the Town to Montpelier, which may ultimately connect to the Town of Orange and the Virginia Central Rail-Trail, a multi-use trail proposed to connect Civil War sites, historic properties, schools, playgrounds and commercial sites within Fredericksburg and the counties of Spotsylvania, Culpeper and Orange¹.

West Gordon Avenue - Virginia Byway

Route 231 South, which is West Gordon Avenue in the town, is designated as a Virginia Byway by the state. “The Virginia Byways recognition program began in 1966, when the Virginia General Assembly passed the Scenic Highways and Virginia Byways Act (*Code of Virginia* §33.1-62)...Virginia Byways are existing roads with significant aesthetic and cultural values that connect areas of historical, natural or recreational significance”.² West Gordon Avenue was likely designated as a Virginia Byway because of its passage through historic Gordonsville, and because it links Route 231 North and properties in the Madison Barbour Rural Historic District with Route 231 South and properties in the Southwest Mountains Rural Historic District. Development along this corridor should be sensitive to the Virginia Byway designation and reflective of the character of the town.

Community Meetings and Survey Responses

During the community meetings held in the fall of 2011, recreation and open space were discussed and the following issues were identified by meeting participants:

- Need a playground and recreation for older children such as a basketball court
- Need to update the play equipment at Verling Park
- Need to work with owners of vacant properties to find available park land
- Need to bring the carnival back to Town
- Develop a link to regional trail network (equestrian)
- Set aside park land in new development
- Establish movie nights at Verling Park or other suitable areas in Town; develop Verling Park as a venue for cultural events
- Renovate Dix Memorial Pool (offer Mommy & Me swim lessons)
- Create a park at Meadow Run
- Develop a walking/hiking (multi-use) trail in town and link neighborhoods
- Promote the development of a community center that provides programs for all age groups
- Develop a community garden where residents may grow and harvest their own fruits, vegetables and flowers
- Partner with churches in town for community event space (Boys & Girls club, etc.)
- Partner with the Police Department or the volunteer fire company to develop a mentoring/recreational activities program for community youth
- Develop a career mentoring program for youth to demonstrate future job opportunities

Developing a multi-use trail in the town to link neighborhoods is an idea that was mentioned at each of the community meetings. Bringing the Firemen’s Fair back to town was mentioned at two

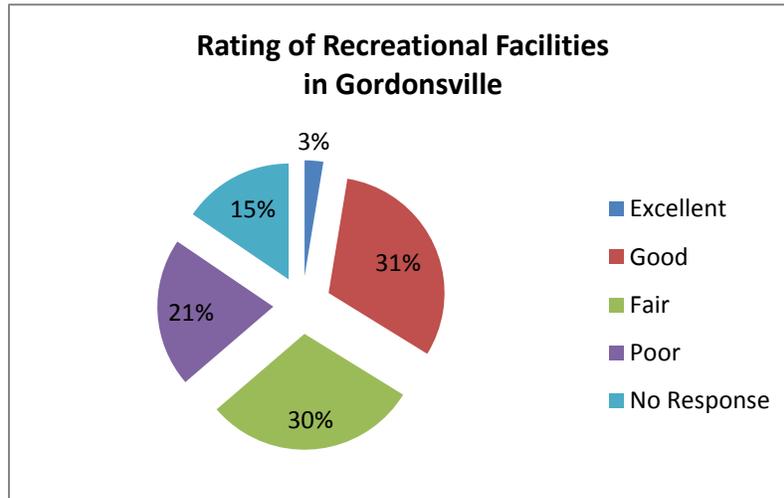
¹ 2007 Virginia Outdoors Plan, Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation.

² 2007 Virginia Outdoors Plan, Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation.

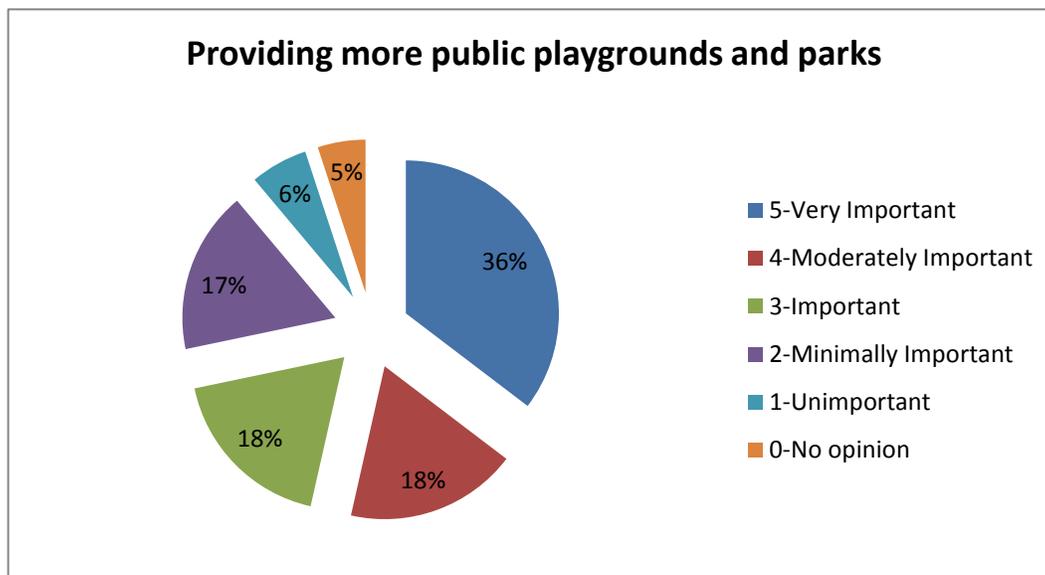


of the three meetings, as was utilizing Verling Park as a venue for cultural events and establishing a community center that offers activities and programs for all age groups within the town.

In the community survey that was mailed out in the fall of 2011, residents were asked to rate both the current provision of recreational facilities within the town and the importance of providing more public playgrounds and parks.



As shown in the chart above, 31% of survey respondents indicated that the provision of recreational facilities in the town is good, while more than 50% indicated it is fair or poor. Correspondingly, the chart below shows that nearly three-quarters of survey respondents stated that providing more public playgrounds and parks is important, moderately important or very important. Only 6% of survey respondents indicated that the provision of public playgrounds and parks is unimportant.





Recreation and Open Space Goal

To provide both active and passive recreational facilities for all Town residents and to preserve all open spaces that contain recreational potential or enhance and protect the natural environment.

Objective A. To protect and enhance existing Town park and play areas.	
A1.	<i>Obtain funding for park enhancement, playground equipment, restroom facilities, etc.</i>
A2.	<i>Work with CSX to obtain the Verling Park property.</i>
Objective B. To encourage the development of family oriented recreational/fitness facilities, both privately and publicly owned.	
B1.	<i>Identify properties in town or in proximity to town that may be utilized for recreational or event space.</i>
B2.	<i>Develop recreational areas in town that are accessible for pedestrians and service vehicles, if necessary, and that are in locations that are compatible with adjoining uses, convenient to users, and suitable for supervision.</i>
B3.	<i>Locate areas in the southeastern and southwestern quadrants of town where playgrounds or neighborhood parks may be developed.</i>
B4.	<i>Require new developments to set aside and develop a minimum of 25% of usable land area for passive and active recreational uses and open space.</i>
B5.	<i>Develop specifications for recreational facilities to be located in new developments.</i>
B6.	<i>Seek funding for trail development through the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation Recreational Trails Program.</i>
B7.	<i>Partner with the Rappahannock Rapidan Regional Commission to seek grant funding for the development of recreational facilities within the town.</i>
B8.	<i>Replace Dix Memorial Pool with a competition ready facility that may be enclosed to provide year-round aquatics programs for residents of the town and surrounding communities.</i>
B9.	<i>Encourage the development of a multi-use trail in town to link neighborhoods.</i>
B10.	<i>Work with Orange County to develop a multi-use trail to link the town to Montpelier.</i>
B11.	<i>Promote the development of a community center that provides programs for all age groups.</i>
B12.	<i>Encourage the development of a community garden where residents may grow and harvest their own fruits, vegetables and flowers.</i>
B13.	<i>Partner with churches in town for community event space (Boys & Girls club, etc.).</i>



B14.	<i>Review the location of sidewalks in town to ensure that all neighborhoods are safely connected for pedestrian access to recreational facilities.</i>
B15.	<i>Work with residents of each town neighborhood to determine the best location for a neighborhood park.</i>
Objective C. To encourage the development of organized recreational activities for all age groups.	
C1.	<i>Coordinate the development of a mini-triathlon to be held in the town.</i>
C2.	<i>Encourage the Gordonsville Volunteer Fire Company to keep the Firemen's Fair in town.</i>
C3.	<i>Partner with the Police Department or the volunteer fire company to develop a mentoring/recreational activities program for community youth.</i>
C4.	<i>Develop varying levels of aquatics programs for all ages at Dix Memorial Pool.</i>