

City of Young Harris

"The Enchanted Valley"

Young Harris Parks, Recreation and Trail System Plan

Project Summary

The City of Young Harris's parks and trail amenities are significant assets to the quality of life of the community. The Parks, Recreation, and Trail System Plan (Plan) is designed to be a basic guide for developing usable, complete, well-maintained, safe, and high-quality amenities that are accessible to all ages, functional abilities, and socio-economic groups.

This Plan is also a guide for the creation of a non-motorized, world-class recreational mountain bikeway and trail system connecting the City of Young Harris with the larger community and the valley. Bicycle and pedestrian access and the development of lively public spaces will further establish the downtown area as a community hub and destination for visitors. An expanded bicycle and pedestrian network and diversified recreational and cultural experiences throughout the city will strengthen Young Harris's community fabric and help with creating a strong sense of place as the city grows.

This will be the first time the City of Young Harris has an official Park System Plan. The Plan will serve as the starting point for the development of an exceptional parks system in the enchanted valley.

Purpose

The purpose of this Plan is (1) to provide information that will guide decisions related to the development of public parks, (2) to provide information that will guide decisions related to the development of a non-motorized recreational trail system that is safe, enjoyable, accessible, connected, and sustainable. (3) to provide information to guide strategic location and implementation of public parks and trail system over a 10-year time horizon; and (4) to provide and/or incorporate appropriate recreational opportunities that will engage the community while providing for economic development opportunities. This plan is meant to work with the overall master plan of the city, and to provide for multiple opportunities for engagement, enjoyment, and use. The public feedback gathered as part of the community master planning process in 2016 will help guide the plan development.

Vision

The City of Young Harris shall strive to expand and improve its parks, recreation facilities, bikeways, and trails to provide a variety of recreational experiences for all ages and abilities, to support community health, economic development, and quality of life in Young Harris.

Young Harris – History

Young Harris has unique and rich history that is deeply intertwined with the history of Young Harris College for which the city is named. Young Harris was originally the village of "McTyeire. In 1885 a twenty-nine-year-old circuit rider, Artemas Lester, was assigned to the Blairsville Circuit in the North Georgia Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Lester's

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responsibilities were inclusive of the Towns mission and he became concerned for the underprivileged students living in the valley then known as Brasstown Valley. In January 1886 he established a school for students that were remote from good roads and meagerly supplied with means for even an elementary education. By March 1887, Judge Young Lofton Geraldine Harris had learned of the little school and became the school’s first major benefactor. In March 1888 the first charter was granted to the Young Harris Institute.

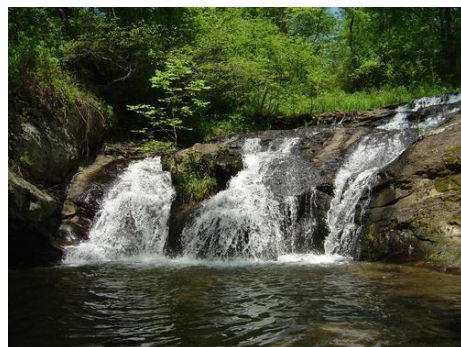
A small local community of businesses providing services to the college and local residents began to develop along the roadway near the school. Around 1894 people started to refer to the slow growing community as the town of Young Harris with Young Harris College as the centerpiece of the community. In 1892 the Post Office authorities changed the name of the Post from McTyeire to Young Harris and on December 5, 1895 the City of Young Harris was incorporated.

Young Harris sits in the most enchanted valley in North Georgia, with one of the most beautiful sites in the state being when you drive over the hill from Hiawassee and see the valley below. For years Young Harris was known only for Young Harris College, but in the past decade it has gained fame as a relaxing golf and resort destination where residents and visitors enjoy the culture, heritage, a premier resort with a championship golf course, excellent lodging, cultural expressions, fine dining and local eateries, as well as miles and miles of hiking trails and horseback riding.

The City utilizes the County’s recreation facilities to serve residents and supports sports tourism, which is central to Young Harris College and the Towns County economic development strategy. The City is committed to providing an integrated recreation system composed of high-quality bikeways, trails, parks, and recreation facilities that respond to the needs and desires of the growing community.

Young Harris Existing Parks, Trails System and Amenities

Within the city limits is **Cupid Falls at Corn Creek Preserves**. Cupid Falls is a picturesque and ideal public recreational area that offers a quiet and tranquil picnic area next to the rushing waters of a waterfall. The preserve also has a native plant garden area, picnic tables and a short hiking trail.

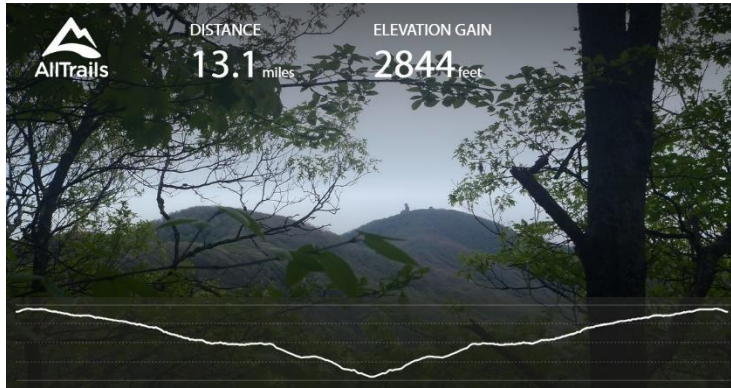


Mayors Park located at 50 Irene Berry Drive in the heart of Young Harris. This family friendly park is home to the annual Seafood Festival which attracts over 5000 visitors into the downtown during its three-day celebration.

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Wagon Train Trail point to point is 7.4 miles from Young Harris College to the top of Brasstown Bald. This trail has beautiful views, unique rock formations and a large variety of wildflowers along the trail. This trail has a moderate rating.



Miller Trek Trail begins near the service entrance of Brasstown Valley Resort at the parking area on the right. It has several loops totaling 9 miles in trail distance. The trail head can't be missed as it is an elaborate rock and wooden arch. The trail is named after Georgia Governor and U.S. Senator Zell Miller, Starting Elevation: Miller Trek Trail Head 1,926 and Highest Elevation: 3,325 at Rocky Knob.



Young Harris College offers a gym membership to residents for a minimal fee. The facilities consist of high-quality amenities that are accessible year-round to all ages, functional abilities, and socio-economic groups.



Guiding Principles:

1. Preserve and protect the natural beauty of Young Harris
2. Walkable and pedestrian friendly community
3. Healthy, engaged and active

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4. Vibrant parks
5. Environmental sustainability
6. Multigenerational
7. Connectivity

Goals and Objectives:

Goal 1: ENHANCE COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS Great parks and public spaces build community pride, bring people together, and increase civic engagement and the sense of belonging.

Goal 2: Provide a high quality, diversified parks, recreation and open space system that provides for all age and interest groups.

Goal 3: Create regionally significant trails, making full use of powerlines, scenic corridors, roadways, and open spaces

Goal 4: Provide quality trails for all users

Goal 5: Integrate trails into everyday life

Goal 6: Provide appropriate recreational opportunities to enhance quality of life.

Recommendations:

- a. Complete an analysis of existing parks, and amenities to determine current needs and projection of future needs.
- b. Inventory existing trails and identify trails to be preserved, desired trails, and maintenance strategies
- c. Develop park location and site plans with projected timeframe and cost estimate—the plans will identify type (pocket, recreational, trail, etc.), location of parks, the general location of connective pathways and desired amenities for each location.
- d. Develop a continuous trail system to provide connections to neighborhoods, business districts, and other trail, park and recreation Specify appropriate trails uses and coordinate with respective landowners to promote a cohesive, official, and protected trail system
 - a. Prioritize preservation of public lands and trailhead locations
 - b. Provide a pedestrian connection between Cupid Falls Trail and public picnic area
- e. Redevelop the lower falls area into a usable, connected trail
- f. Connect to the Zell Miller Trail
- g. Connect to Brasstown Valley Resort
- h. Provide for appropriate, healthy recreation options
- i. Develop Park and Trail Management Plan

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Trails Maintenance

Effective trail maintenance is critical to the overall success and safety of trails in Young Harris. Maintenance activities typically include pavement stabilization, landscape maintenance, facility upkeep, sign replacement, mowing, litter removal, and painting. A successful maintenance program requires continuity and often involves a high level of citizen participation. Routine maintenance on a year-round basis will not only improve trail safety, but will also prolong the life of the trail.

The benefits of a good maintenance program are far-reaching, including:

- A high standard of maintenance is an effective advertisement to promote the trail as a regional and state recreational resource.
- Good maintenance can be an effective deterrent to vandalism, litter, and encroachments.
- Good maintenance is necessary to preserve positive public relations between the adjacent land owners and managing agency.
- Good maintenance can make enforcement of regulations on the trail more efficient.
- Local clubs and interest groups will take pride in "their" trail and will be more apt to assist in protection of the trail.
- A proactive maintenance policy will help improve safety along the trail.
- Ongoing trail maintenance likely includes some, if not all, of the following activities:
 - Vegetation - In general, plantings should be placed far enough apart to maintain good visibility and avoid creating the feeling of an enclosed space. This will also give trail users good, clear views of their surroundings, which enhances the aesthetic experience of the trail.
 - Under-story vegetation within most trail rights-of-way should not be allowed to grow higher than 36 inches, except in cases where the under-story vegetation is natural, desirable, and part of the habitat required for wildlife.
 - Trees species selection and placement should be made that minimizes vegetative litter on the trail and root uplifting of pavement.
 - Vertical clearance along the trail should be periodically checked, and any overhanging branches over the trail should be pruned to a minimum vertical clearance of 10 feet.
 - Some basic measures should be taken to protect the trail investment. This includes a bi-annual mowing along both sides of the trail to prevent invasion of plants into the pavement area. The recommended times of year for mowing are fall and spring.

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- Wherever possible, vegetation control should be accomplished by mechanical means or hand labor.
- Some species may require spot application of state-approved herbicide.
- Trail Maintenance Surfacing - Where concrete is the recommended surface material, cracks, ruts, and water damage will need to be repaired periodically. Where drainage problems exist along the trail, ditches and drainage structures will need to be kept clear of debris to prevent washouts along the trail and maintain positive drainage flow. Checks for erosion along the trail should be made during the wet season, and immediately after any storm that brings flooding to the local area. The use of trails with natural soft surfaces should be minimized and / or prohibited during wet conditions. The trail surface should be kept free of debris, especially broken glass and other sharp objects, loose gravel, leaves, and stray branches. Trail surfaces should be swept periodically. Soft shoulders should be well maintained to maximize their usability.
- Litter and Illegal Dumping - Staff or volunteers should remove litter along the trail. Litter receptacles should be placed at access points such as trailheads. Illegal dumping should be controlled by vehicle barriers, regulatory signage, and fines as much as possible. When it does occur, it should be removed as soon as possible in order to prevent further dumping. Neighborhood volunteers, friends groups, alternative community service crews, and inmate labor should be considered in addition to maintenance staff.
- Signage - Signage should be replaced along the trail on an as-needed basis.
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- Maintenance of Off-Street Trails Item Frequency
- Inspections Seasonal - at both beginning and end of summer
- Signage replacement 1 - 3 years
- Pavement markings replacement 1 - 3 years
- Major damage response (fallen trees, washouts, flooding)
- Schedule based on priorities
- Pavement sealing, potholes 5 - 15 years
- Introduced tree and shrub plantings, trimming Every 1 - 3 years
- Culvert inspection Before winter and after major storms
- Cleaning ditches As needed
- Trash disposal Weekly during high use, twice monthly during low use
- Lighting luminaire repair Once a year
- Pavement sweeping / blowing As needed, before high use season. Weekly in fall.

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- Maintaining culvert inlets Inspect before the onset of the wet season, then again in early fall.
- Shoulder plant trimming (weeds, trees, brambles) Twice a year, middle of growing season and early fall
- Site furnishings, replace damaged components As needed
- Fencing repair Inspect monthly for holes and damage, repair immediately.
- Shrub / tree irrigation for introduced planting areas: Weekly during summer months until plants are established.
- Litter pick-up Weekly for high use, twice a month for low us