

PARKS AND RECREATION



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FY2004-2010

1. BACKGROUND ISSUES

The population of Wake County has grown by 48 percent since 1992. This dramatic growth, coupled with the changing demographic makeup of the county, has increased demands on recreation facilities and services. Wake County has many different agencies involved in the provision of park and recreation facilities and services. These include twelve municipalities, two state agencies, one federal agency and numerous private entities. In Fall 2002, staff completed a two-year master planning process to ascertain the facility needs across the county and to define county government's role in meeting those needs. Based on this process, along with a comprehensive inventory of existing facilities, a Wake County Parks and Recreation Master Plan (Plan) was produced. The Plan represents a thorough examination of the state of leisure in the county. In addition, the role of Wake County in the provision of leisure services is more clearly defined. The Board of Commissioners approved the master plan in October 2002.

The plan indicates that the County should have two major roles in the area of parks and recreation. The first role is to provide large, resource-based parks for county citizens. Currently the county operates four such parks: Lake Crabtree County Park (opened 1987), Blue Jay Point County Park (opened 1991), Historic Oak View County Park (opened 1995), and Harris Lake County Park (opened 1999). In addition, the County operates Crowder District Park (opened 1998). Two new resource-based facilities currently under construction are the American Tobacco Trail and Historic Yates Mill County Park.

The second role of the County is to provide leadership in cooperating and collaborating with partners in the provision of other types of recreational opportunities. The 2002 Wake County Parks and Recreation Master Plan (Plan) identified many deficits in the area of active recreation facilities (i.e., ballfields and swimming pools). Building and programming parks

with more active athletic complexes and aquatic centers has been determined not to be a key responsibility of the County. However, partnering with other agencies in planning and encouraging the development of these facilities continues to be the County's role.

The foremost example in fulfilling this second role is the unique relationship the County maintains with the Wake County Public School System (WCPSS) in developing community school parks. Through this successful partnership 19 community school parks have been completed and another 12 school parks are in the planning or construction phase. The County has successfully partnered with Capital Area Soccer League (CASL) and Time Warner in the development of the SAS Soccer Park. Cedar Fork District Park was also developed through a partnership with CASL. Developing parks and recreation through partnerships is the primary approach the County has initiated to reduce the deficits identified in these categories of facilities in the Wake County Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

Another separate, yet closely related component is the Consolidated Open Space Plan. This plan includes land acquisition and conservation easements for future greenways. A description of the context, progress, and future plan for the ongoing Open Space Preservation initiative is contained in a separate element in this CIP entitled Open Space. Open Space has a more direct focus on achieving water quality outcomes, reducing risks to people and property in flood zones, protecting biological diversity, and providing places for passive recreation. The Consolidated Open Space Plan in conjunction with the Growth Management and Watershed Management Plans recognize the value of green infrastructure including forests, greenways, parks, meadows, fields, wetlands, floodplains, and other relatively undisturbed areas. The delineation of the Open Space initiative as a distinctive element also allows for a more visible illustration

of the use of bond funds to support preservation and land acquisition efforts.

2. PROGRAM & FACILITY GOALS

As outlined in the 2002 Master Plan, the citizens of Wake County benefit from a thriving parks system through a healthier environment, increased social interaction, and tourism opportunities yielding economic benefits. Toward this end, the County's capital investment supports the infrastructure of parks and recreation resources countywide with a focus on achieving the following operational goals:

- Provide a quality recreational experience for Wake County residents through clean, attractive, and safe recreation environments.
- Provide facilities for educational enrichment and leisure opportunities at school sites, to other organized groups, and to the general public.
- Preserve and protect Wake County's natural and historic resources.
- Educate the public about environmental issues in accordance with the County's environmental stewardship agenda.

3. COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The Parks and Recreation Master Plan (Plan) provides guidance to the Board of Commissioners in appropriating capital funds for specific projects. The master plan process included preparing comprehensive inventory of all park and recreation programs and facilities open to the general public across Wake County. In addition, it included the development and application of locally generated standards to forecast facility and acreage deficits. The published plan represents a multi-faceted approach to meeting parks and recreation needs across the county, while being mindful of the role of county government in the provision of services and facilities.

Key recommendations of the plan include:

- Complete phase IV and V of Yates Mill County Park, including the park center and trails.

- Complete final phases of the American Tobacco Trail, including trail and trailhead design and construction.
- Complete the next three phases of Harris Lake County Park, including a park center, family camping, staff residences and overnight lodge.
- Acquire land and begin planning and developing Southeastern County Park in the southeastern section of the county.
- Finalize land acquisition and begin planning and developing Little River County Park
- Continue to collaborate and build partnerships with the WCPSS on community school parks.
- Collaborate with municipalities, school system, non-profit groups, and the private sector in striving to meet the parks and recreation needs of the citizens of Wake County.

4. SEVEN-YEAR CIP PROGRAM SUMMARY

The Parks and Recreation Master Plan uses per capita standards for facilities (ballfields, courts, picnic shelters) or acreage standards to project the need to expand the parks and recreation system over the next seven years. The estimated cost to make all facility improvements outlined in the referenced plan is approximately \$56 million (in 2004 dollars). There are many challenges to estimating costs associated with this plan. First, each project is different, with unique problems and complexities. While past projects can be used as models, costs vary drastically depending on specific site issues including slope, soil condition, accessibility and so forth. Many of the projects listed herein do not have a preliminary site master plan. Once a preliminary site plan is developed a better cost estimate can be made. The composition of capital investments in parks and recreation improvements is influenced heavily by the capacity to incur new debt while supporting competing capital needs in other areas (open space, libraries, schools, and criminal justice). Even though the Parks and Rec-

recreation Master Plan was recently approved, the seven-year capital plan for park improvements funds selected projects totaling \$28.3 million. This funding is dependent on the successful passage of a bond referendum in Fall 2006, yielding at least \$10 million for park projects from FY2008-2010. The current plan also contains \$17.7 million of pay-as-you-go County funding. In addition, the plan includes \$600,000 from the federal government revenue for the American Tobacco Trail. Land dedication, private funding, and partnering will play essential roles in the realization of the long-term implementation of planned capital improvements. Therefore, the 2002 plan emphasizes increased cooperation with the development community, other County departments, the school system, municipalities, private businesses, and federal and state agencies.

Consistent with the County's defined role in the area of parks and recreation the following projects are included in the seven year CIP:

Completion of Yates Mill County Park; Phase II of American Tobacco Trail will be completed; Land will be acquired and Phases I and II of new Southeastern County Park will be completed; Completion of Phases II, III and IV of Harris Lake County Park; Finalize land acquisition and Phases I and II of Little River County Park; Various small improvement projects to existing County and school parks; Partnerships with the school system and others on 19 new community school parks.

5. PROJECT ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN FY2003

In FY2003, several project improvements were accomplished, including the following:

Community School Parks

The County partnered on the following projects:

- Brier Creek Elementary School Park: Land acquisition with school system and City of Raleigh
- Ballentine Elementary School Park: Land acquisition and Phase I park improvements were completed with school system and Town of Fuquay-Varina.

- Holly Springs Elementary/Jones Park: Land acquisition and construction of the Phase I park improvements commenced with school system and Town of Holly Springs.
- Creech Road Elementary School Park: Land acquisition and construction of the Phase I park improvements underway.
- Knightdale High School and adjacent Forestville Elementary School Park: Construction of park improvements underway with Town of Knightdale and school system.
- Zebulon Elementary School Park: Phase I park improvements completed with school system
- Cedar Fork Elementary School, Highcroft Elementary School, Carpenter Village Elementary School and Turner Creek Elementary School Parks: Construction commenced at all sites; land acquisition partnership for Cedar Fork Elementary; school system provided land for all others in partnership with Morrisville or Cary.
- Heritage High School Park: Land acquisition and joint site design underway with school system and Town of Wake Forest.
- Panther Creek High School Park: Site master planning underway with Town of Cary and school system.
- Holly Springs High School Park: Site master planning underway with Town of Holly Springs and school system.

Yates Mill County Park

- Completed construction of Phase II, including the new park entrance drive, parking lot, pathway to the mill, and temporary office building.
- Prepared bid documents and commenced construction of Phase III, including boardwalks and decks associated with the pond.

- Received one million dollars in donations from A.E. Finley Foundation for Education and Research Center.
- Completed bid documents and received bids for Phase IV construction of the 16,000 square foot Education and Research Center.

American Tobacco Trail

- Completed construction of Phase I of the trail, including 3.75 miles of trail, two trailheads, and three 100 foot long pedestrian bridges.
- Finalized the purchase of property for a trailhead at White Oak Church Road in conjunction with the Open Space program and in partnership with Town of Cary.
- Received grant from the Federal Transportation Enhancement Program totaling \$192,800.
- Received notice that funds from the Federal government, totaling \$600,000, would be forthcoming.
- Executed the sub-lease agreement with Army Corps of Engineers and State of North Carolina for two trailheads.

Lake Crabtree County Park

- Substantially completed construction of the re-alignment of the entrance road at intersection with Aviation Parkway.

6. FY2004 PROJECT ACTIVITY SUMMARY

Implementation of key elements of the 2002 Parks and Recreation Master Plan will commence in FY2004 as follows:

Facility Improvements

- Initiate highest priority facility improvements identified in the annual park facility assessment report; anticipate expending \$250,000 on these improvements.

Community School Parks

- Based on determination of facility needs participate in joint land acquisitions and planning with school system and potentially other partners for four (4) new community school park projects; planned expenditures total \$800,000.
- Complete construction of school park improvements at Ballentine Elementary, Holly Springs Elementary, Creech Road Elementary, Carpenter Village Elementary, Highcroft Elementary, and Turner Creek Elementary.
- Complete joint facility needs assessment and planning for potential community school parks at Holly Springs and Panther Creek High School sites and Brier Creek Elementary; possibly partner with school system and others to meet defined parks and recreation facility needs at these sites.

Yates Mill County Park

- Complete construction of Phase III, including boardwalks and decks associated with the pond.
- Commence construction Phase IV, which includes the Education and Research Center.

American Tobacco Trail

- Complete design and commence construction of Phase II, including approximately two miles of trail, trailhead, and restroom facilities.

Southeastern County Park

- Begin land acquisition in the southeastern part of the county for a future regional park site.

Harris Lake County Park

- Update master plan and solicit proposals for design services.

7. SUMMARY OF FUTURE PHASES (FY2005-2010)

Continue implementation of key elements of the 2002 plan consistent with the capital funding schedule as follows:

Facility Improvements

- Continue priority facility improvements program identified in the annual park facility assessment report; project expenditures of \$250,000 each year.

Community School Parks

- The County will evaluate long-term facility needs at each new school; based on this assessment a determination of the level of partnership commitment will be made; funding could be used for joint land acquisition or development of facility improvements.

Yates Mill County Park

- Complete construction (begun in FY2004) of Phase IV, including the Education and Research Center (FY2005).
- Complete Phase V, including the trail system.

American Tobacco Trail

- Complete construction (begun in FY2004) of Phase II, including approximately two miles of trail, trailhead, and restroom facilities (FY2005).
- Complete Phase III, to complete one mile of trail northward to the Chatham County line (subject to securing grant(s) to cover entire cost of Phase III segment).

Southeastern County Park

- Develop and secure Board of Commissioners approval of overall site master plan for the park once land is acquired (FY2007).
- Complete construction of Phase I and finalize design work for Phase II (FY2009-2010).

Harris Lake County Park

- Complete Phase II, including the development of a park center (FY2006).
- Complete Phase III, including family camping areas and staff residences (FY2007).
- Complete Phase IV, including an overnight lodge (FY2008).

Little River County Park

- Develop and secure Board of Commissioners approval of overall site master plan for the park (FY2006).
- Complete Phase I construction (FY2009).
- Complete Phases II construction (FY2010).

8. OPERATING IMPACT

The specific impact of capital investments on operating budgets depends on the facility improvements. The 2002 Parks and Recreation Master Plan includes the development of additional facilities at existing parks, acquiring land and developing new parks, and partnering with the school system for new school parks.

The capital improvements planned over the next seven years will primarily impact operating budgets in terms of additional personnel needed for program and maintenance at the county regional parks. Harris Lake County Park is scheduled to have a park center, family camping area and an overnight lodge developed. This will also require staff residence(s) to be developed for the overnight uses beginning in FY2007.

Each of the new County parks, Little River and Southeastern do not have master plans developed. It is these plans that will identify specific operating needs. It is assumed that staff and operating costs would be comparable to other existing County Regional Parks. These facilities are expected to open in FY2008 and 2009.

New community school parks will require additional maintenance resources. The school system has assumed full responsibility for program/scheduling costs and generally recover their costs through collection of user fees. Maintenance costs will be negotiated between the various partners involved in the development of school parks. The County's goal is for the nearest municipality or the school system to maintain school parks.

9. RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PLANS

The 2002 plan was developed in consideration of municipal, private, non-profit, and school system plans for park facility development over the next 10 years. Elements of the 2002 plan are coordinated with other projects included in the County's Capital Improvement Plan.

10. ILLUSTRATIONS



Yates Mill County Park



Penny Elementary School Park Playground



Reedy Branch Bridge, American Tobacco Trail



Vance Elementary School Park Shelter

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11. ILLUSTRATIONS

PART I. EXPENDITURES	FY2004	FY2005	FY2006	FY2007	FY2008	FY2009	FY2010	TOTAL
YATES MILL	\$1,500,000	\$1,200,000	\$250,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$2,950,000
EXISTING FACILITY IMPROVEMENTS	\$250,000	\$250,000	\$250,000	\$250,000	\$250,000	\$250,000	\$250,000	\$1,750,000
AMERICAN TOBACCO TRAIL	\$600,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$600,000
SOUTHEAST WAKE CO PARK	\$1,847,046	\$0	\$0	\$50,059	\$144,497	\$1,856,493	\$586,676	\$4,484,770
HARRIS LAKE CO PARK	\$0	\$1,759,493	\$452,169	\$1,720,602	\$1,574,763	\$0	\$0	\$5,507,027
COMMUNITY USE OF SCHOOL PARKS	\$800,000	\$1,550,000	\$1,150,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,300,000	\$800,000	\$1,000,000	\$7,600,000
LITTLE RIVER CO PARK	0	0	\$48,366	\$139,611	\$1,793,713	\$566,836	\$2,831,655	\$5,380,181
TOTAL APPROPRIATIONS	\$4,997,046	\$4,759,493	\$2,150,535	\$3,160,271	\$5,062,973	\$3,473,329	\$4,668,330	\$28,271,977
PART II. FUNDING SOURCES	FY2004	FY2005	FY2006	FY2007	FY2008	FY2009	FY2010	TOTAL
Debt Financed	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$4,000,000	\$3,000,000	\$3,000,000	\$10,000,000
Pay As You Go	\$4,397,046	\$4,759,493	\$2,150,535	\$3,160,271	\$1,062,973	\$473,329	\$1,668,330	\$17,671,977
Grant	\$600,000							\$600,000
TOTAL	\$4,997,046	\$4,759,493	\$2,150,535	\$3,160,271	\$5,062,973	\$3,473,329	\$4,668,330	\$28,271,977
PART III. OPERATING IMPACT	FY2004	FY2005	FY2006	FY2007	FY2008	FY2009	FY2010	TOTAL
Total Operating Cost	\$151,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0