

## 2. Existing Conditions

## Overview

Parks, greenways, and open space play a key role in the quality of life in an area. They can provide residents and visitors the opportunity to be physically active, can improve nearby property value, and can offer locations for relaxation and social interactions. As Wake County continues to experience tremendous population growth, it is necessary to assess existing conditions and demographic trends to forecast park needs.

The following chapter establishes an existing conditions profile for Wake County through the culmination of demographic analyses and fieldwork evaluation. Due to the large service area of county parks, a comprehensive understanding of county-wide trends is critical to understanding the current and future needs of the community. The data outlined in the composition section helps show whether current facilities are appropriately serving the diverse and growing populations in the county, and the Equity Analysis displays concentrations of traditionally underserved populations to suggest specific program or equipment needs. In addition to demographic profiles, the Live, Work, Play Analysis uses geospatial representation to show where there are high demand for park facilities and programs throughout the county by assessing factors such as where people live, work, play, learn, and ride transit. To complement this analysis, public input from a recent planning endeavor was used to quantify the wants and needs of residents in Wake County.

The resulting existing conditions profile of Wake County was used to guide the consultant team as they conducted a thorough field inventory and evaluation of each county park site. The profile helped frame the existing facilities, accessibility, and user information identified in each of the Park Profiles.

## Composition of the Community

### GENERAL STATISTICS

The Parks and Recreation facilities of Wake County are often used regionally and service a diverse assortment of individuals. The following demographic, composition, and equity data and analyses were completed to better understand municipality and county constituents.

### AGE

Wake County has a relatively uneven distribution of its population, with the 18 to 64 age bracket having the largest percentage of the population at 65 percent while the 65 and over age bracket has the second lowest percentage at 9.7 percent followed by persons under 5 years at 6.7 percent.

Characteristic	Percent of Population
Persons under 5 years, percent 2013	6.7%
Persons under 18 years, percent 2013	25.3%
Persons 65 years and over, percent 2013	9.7%
Female persons, percent 2013	51.3%
White alone, percent 2013	69.3%
Black or African American alone, percent 2013	21.4%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone, percent 2013	0.8%
Asian alone, percent 2013	6.1%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone, percent 2013	0.1%
Two or More Races, Percent 2013	2.3%
Hispanic or Latino, percent 2013	10.0%
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino, percent 2013	61.3%

Based on their average ages, the three youngest places in Wake County are Knightdale, Raleigh, and Morrisville, and the three oldest communities are Garner, Wendell, and Zebulon. To better understand this distribution, the Equity Analysis on page 2-6 visualizes the concentration of the under 18 and the 65 and older age groups throughout the County. It is important to understand the distribution of these groups as they are often key users of Parks and Recreation programs and facilities. Identifying the geographic concentrations of these ages will help tailor recommendations to specific geographic areas to best serve the community.

### POPULATION DENSITY

According to Wake County Planning Board's *Demographic Trends 2014*, Wake County's density is constantly growing, with a county wide average population density of 1,140 persons per square mile. The least dense areas in Wake County exist mostly on the outer edges of the county, with the 3 least densely populated areas being Wendell, Zebulon, and Rolesville.

More densely populated areas, with densities from 2,500 to 2,939 persons per square, are located in the central and western areas of the county. The three most densely populated areas in Wake County consist of Raleigh, Cary, and Apex.

### HEALTH CHARACTERISTICS

In keeping with the pillar of Health and Wellness, it was imperative to understand any overarching themes in health risk behaviors. According to the Wake County Community Health Needs Assessment, two in three adults in Wake County, or 59.9%, are classified as either overweight or obese. Additionally, only 29.18% of the population was reported to use any of the parks for exercise. The high obesity and overweight percentage and low physical inactivity rates have become common themes in the U.S., and parks and programs will be a significant component to improving these unhealthy trends.



## Equity Analysis

### PROCESS

An Equity Analysis was conducted to assess traditionally underserved populations and special groups in Wake County. The eight equity factors are shown individually and then aggregated into a composite equity map to display the overall equity score across the county. The Equity Analysis and the resulting spatial location of the equity factors can be used to help identify potential facility and program recommendations.

This section summarizes the method and results of the Equity Analysis for Wake County. The analyses were tied to the project study area using the available data from the Wake County GIS website and from the American Community Survey (ACS).

### Methodology

The analysis uses census tract data to display the relative percentage of the equity factor as it relates to the county-wide data. Each census tract is displayed using a score of 1-5, or lightest to darkest blue. The composite equity map was created using an average score threshold for each equity factor. Such that if a census tract had a greater value than the mean for any specific indicator, it was given a factor of one.

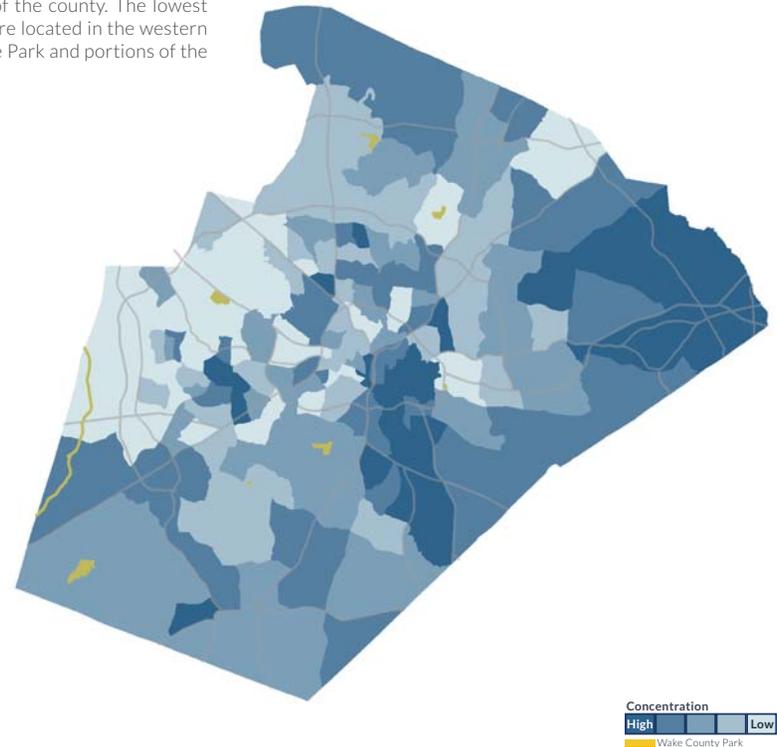
### Data Sources

Variable	Source	Description
Special Needs	2013 ACS; 5-Year	Percentage of population that classify as having a hearing, vision, cognitive, ambulatory, self-care, or independent living disability
Diversity	2013 ACS; 5-Year	Percentage of residents that identify themselves as "non-white"
Language	2013 ACS; 5-Year	Percentage of residents that speak a language other than English at home and classify their English speaking ability as "not well" or "not at all"
Youth Population	2013 ACS; 5-Year	Percentage of residents that are under 18
Retirement Age	2013 ACS; 5-Year	Percentage of residents that are 65 and older
Poverty	2013 ACS; 5-Year	Percentage of residents that are classified as 200% below the national poverty level
Unemployment	2013 ACS; 5-Year	Percentage of residents 16 and older that classify as unemployed (determined by work status, layoff, job search, and availability for work factors).
Vehicular Access	2013 ACS; 5-Year	Percentage of households that do not have access to a private motor vehicle

## EQUITY ANALYSIS RESULTS

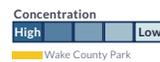
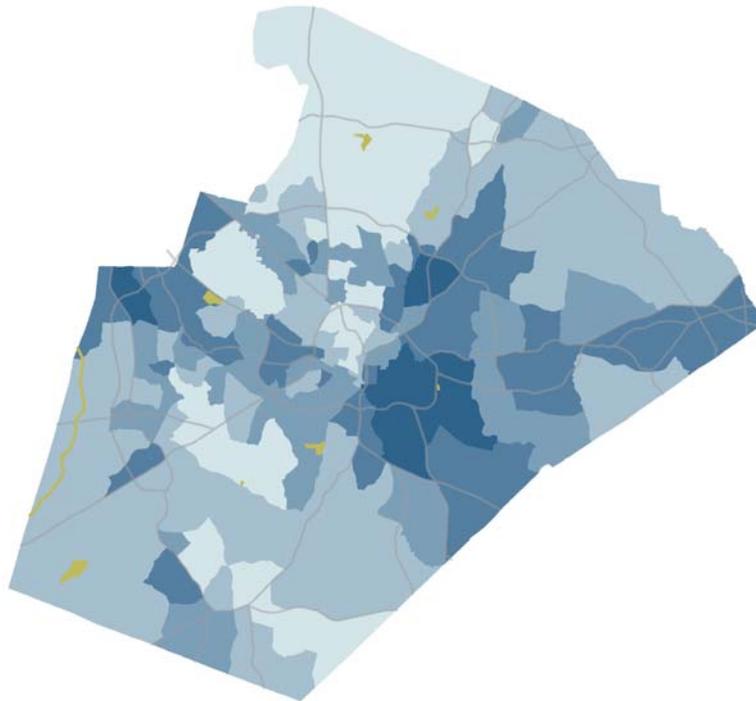
### Special Needs

This map shows the percentage of Wake County residents that classify as having a hearing, vision, cognitive, ambulatory, self-care, or independent living disability. The analysis reveals that the average composition of special needs residents per census tract is 7.6 percent, with large portions of Wake County having a 12 percent or greater composition. The highest concentrations of residents (12 to 22 percent) are located in the southeast portion of Raleigh near Historic Oakview Park, throughout the majority of Garner, and in the northeast quadrant of the county. The lowest percentages of special needs residents are located in the western portion of the county near Lake Crabtree Park and portions of the American Tobacco Trail.



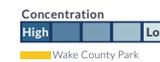
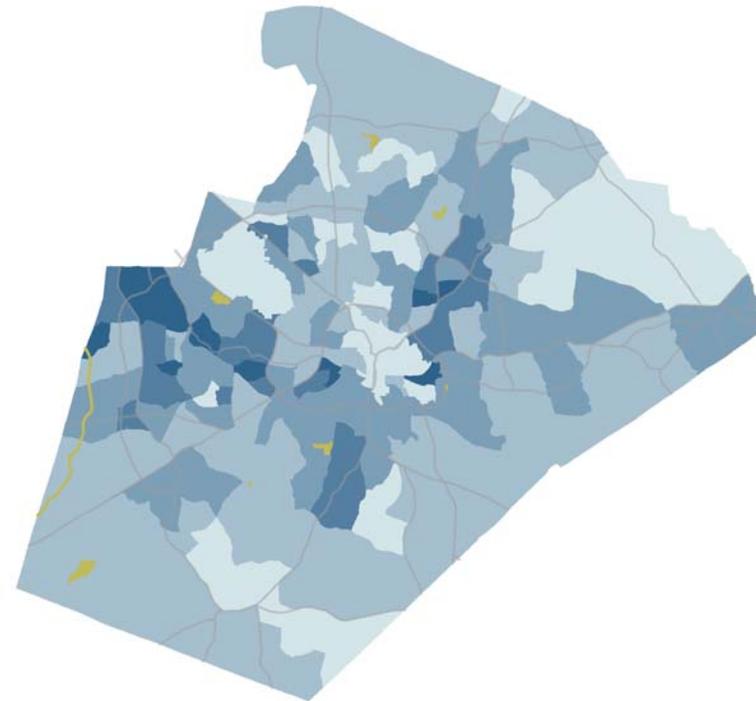
### Diversity

The following map shows the percentage of Wake County residents who identified themselves as “non-white” in the 2013 American Community Survey. The map indicates that the highest percentages of non-white residents (57 to 88 percent) are located in the southeast portion of Raleigh near Historic Oakview Park. Moderate to moderate-high percentages of non-white residents (25 to 36 and 36 to 57 percent) are located near Yates Mill Park, Lake Crabtree County Park. The highest percentages of “white” residents (0 to 14 percent non-white) are located near Blue Jay Point and the Crowder District Park.



### Language

The analysis shows the percentage of Wake County residents that speak a language other than English at home and classify their English speaking ability as “not well” or “not at all.” The analysis reveals that, on average, 74 percent of Wake County residents primarily speak English at home and can speak English “well” or better. The highest concentrations of non-English speakers are located in portions of Cary and Morrisville near Lake Crabtree County Park.



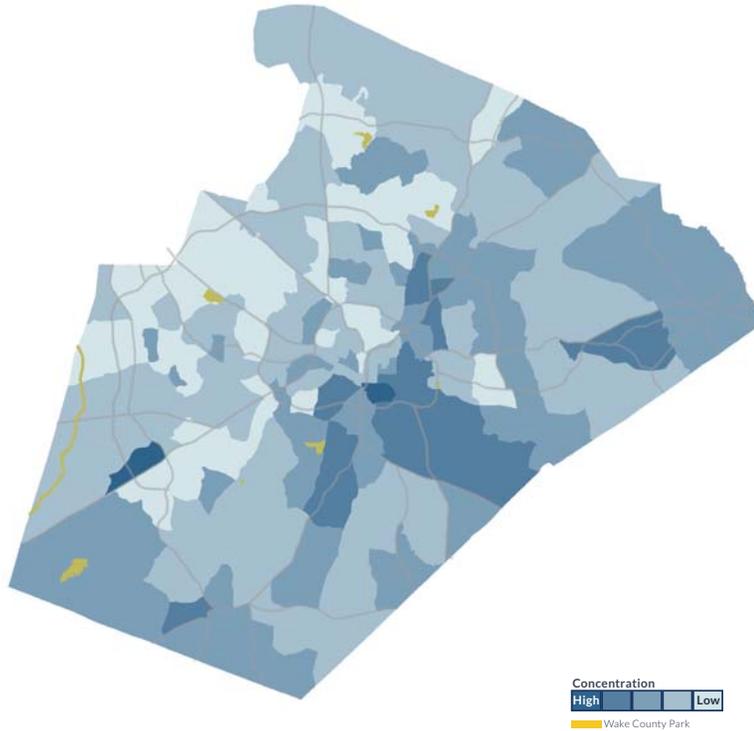


### Age Distribution:

The following age distribution maps show the percentage of Wake County residents that are younger than 18 and those who are 65 and older. These two groups constitute the “youth” and the “retirement age” population demographics in the county and are an important consideration due to their specialized park and recreation needs.

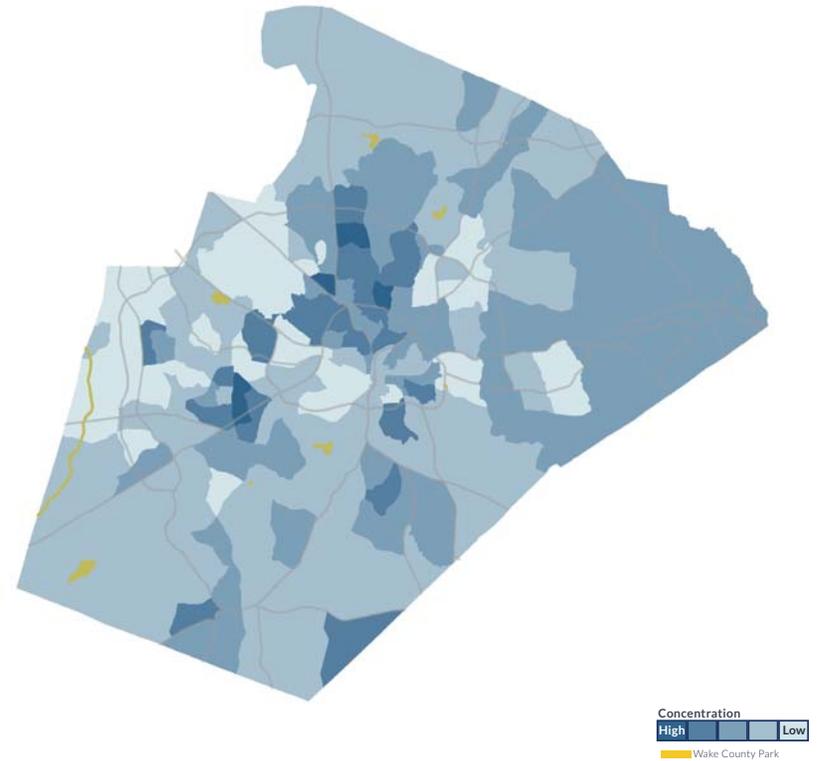
### Youth Population

The highest percentages of under 18 residents (29 to 37 percent) are located throughout the county, with high concentrations in Apex, Holly Springs, and Cary. North Wake Landfill District Park, Yates Mill Park, Harris Lake County Park, Historic Oakview, Crowder District Park, Blue Jay Point, and the American Tobacco Trail are all located within close proximity to high concentrations of the youth population.



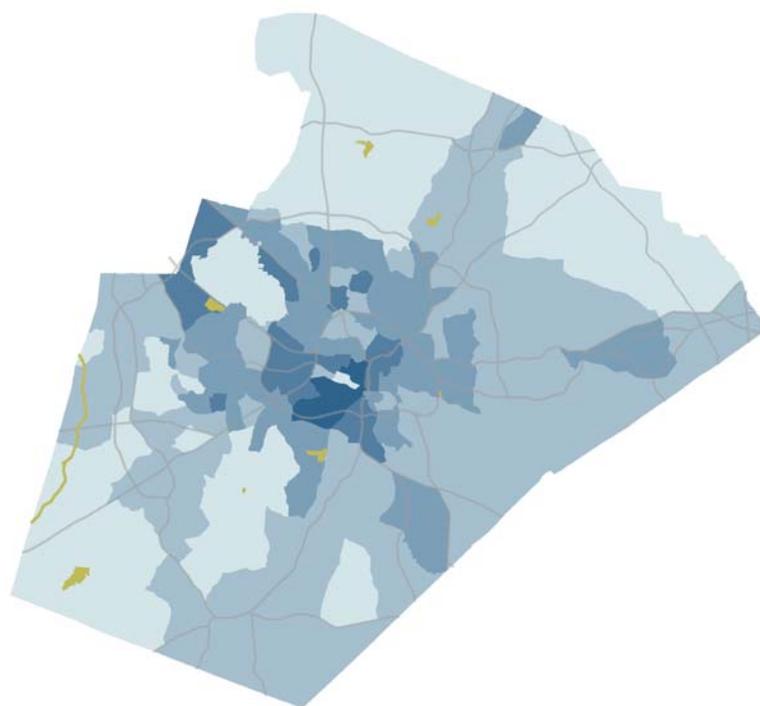
### Retirement Age Population

The over 65 analysis revealed that Wake County has very few areas with high concentrations of retirement residents. The highest percentages (20 to 30 percent) are located in northern Raleigh, with no nearby county parks or greenways. The closest Wake County facility is the North Wake Landfill District Park.



### Poverty

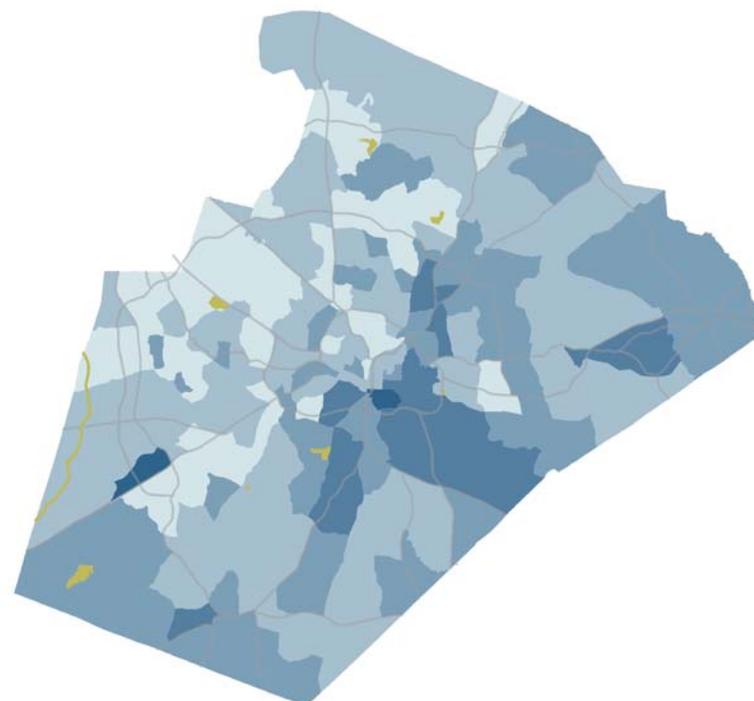
This map indicates the percentage of Wake County residents that are classified in the 2013 American Community Survey as being at or below 200 percent of the nation poverty level (the national poverty level for one persons in family/household was \$11,490). The analysis reveals that there are a small number of census tracts that are classified as having a high poverty level. The highest concentrations of poverty (47 to 70 percent) are located to the west and southwest of downtown Raleigh. All Wake County park and greenway facilities, besides Lake Crabtree County Park (31 to 47 percent), are located in low and moderate poverty locations (0 to 31 percent).



Concentration  
 High Low  
 Wake County Park

### Unemployment

This map indicates the percentage of Wake County residents that classify as being unemployed per the 2013 American Community Survey. The dataset is composed of Wake County residents that are 16 and older and are considered unemployed due to work status, layoff, job search, and availability for work factors determined by the U.S. Census. The analysis reveals that the concentration of unemployment is relatively distributed throughout the county. The highest concentration of unemployment status (20 to 28 percent) is located directly southeast of downtown Raleigh. All Wake County parks and greenway facilities are located in low to moderate locations of unemployment (0 to 13 percent).

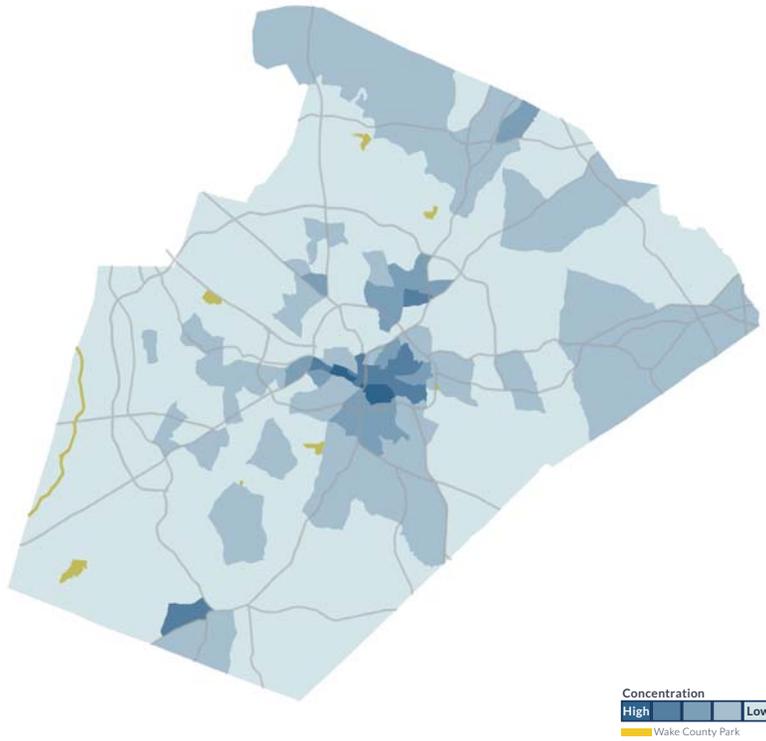


Concentration  
 High Low  
 Wake County Park



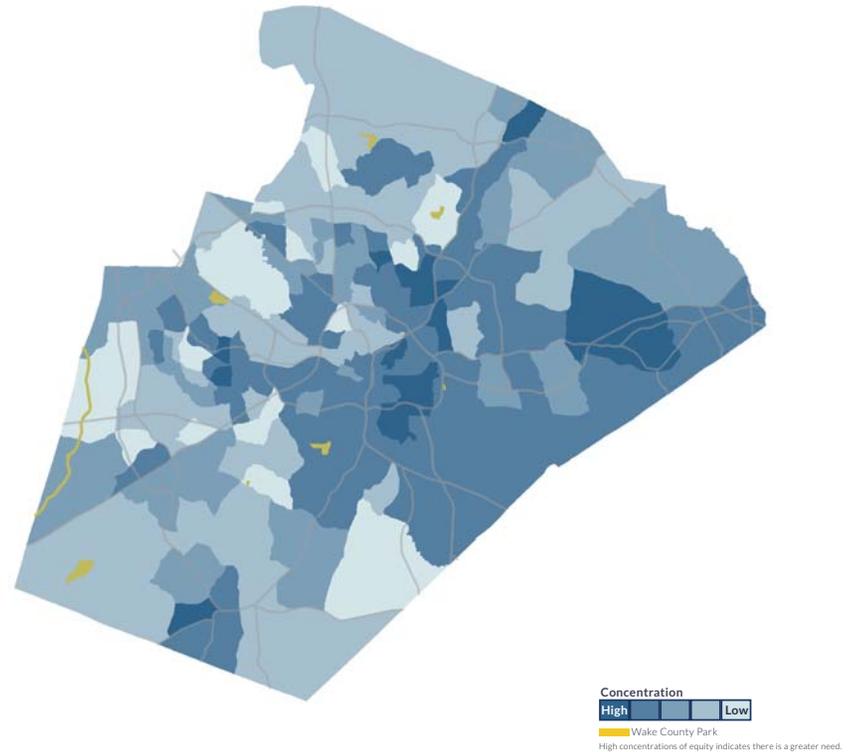
### Vehicular Access

The following map shows the percentage of households without access to a private motor vehicle. On average, 5.2 percent of Wake County households do not have access to a car. The highest concentrations of these households (31 to 47 percent) are located to the south and west of downtown Raleigh, with zero vehicle access dissipating as you move away from downtown Raleigh. All Wake County parks and greenway facilities are located in areas with low to low-moderate concentrations (0 to 3 and 3 to 9 percent) of households that do not have access to a private vehicle.



### Composite Equity Analysis

The Composite Equity Analysis map shows the aggregate equity score based on the Special Needs, Diversity, Language, Age Distribution, Poverty, Unemployment, and Vehicular Access factors. The analysis effectively shows the "least equitable" locations of Wake County determined by the previous eight analyses. As it relates to Wake County parks and greenways, only Yates Mill Park and Historic Oakview are located in areas with moderately-high and high composite equity scores (4 and 5). North Wake Landfill Park, Blue Jay Point, Harris Lake County Park, Lake Crabtree County Park, Crowder District Park, and the American Tobacco Trail are located in areas with a composite equity score of moderate or lower (1, 2, and 3). This is due to a majority of the census tracts with a high composite equity score being located in Raleigh and in the east portion of Wake County where there are few County facilities.



## Demand for Parks and Recreation

### LIVE, WORK, PLAY PROCESS

The consultant team conducted a Live, Work, Play Analysis for the Wake County, NC Park Facilities Master Plan. The Live, Work, Play model identifies expected demand for parks, greenways, and programs by overlaying the locations where people live, work, play, go to school, and ride transit into a composite sketch of regional demand. The results can be used to help identify areas in need of improvement and where there is high demand for parks and recreation facilities.

This section summarizes the method and results of the Live, Work, Play Analysis for the project study area. The models were tailored to Wake County using the available data from the Wake County GIS website and from the U.S. Census.

### DATA SOURCES

The following data inputs were incorporated into the Live, Work, Play model. Table 1 displays each variable, its source, and notes on limitations of the available data and assumptions that were made.

Table 1. Data Inputs

Model Input	Source	Notes
Total Population	2010 U.S. Census	Summarized by census block
Total Employment	2010 U.S. Census	Summarized by census block
School Location	Wake County	Includes elementary, middle, and high schools
Parks & Greenway Locations	Wake County	
Commercial Destinations	2010 U.S. Census	Commercial destinations are approximated by service sector jobs (Retail trade; arts, entertainment, recreation; accommodation and food services; other services)
Transit Routes	Triangle Transit System, Capital Area Transit, C-Tran, and Wolfline Transit System	

### METHODOLOGY

The Live, Work, Play Analysis is an objective, data-driven process to identify the demand for parks, greenways, and programs. The demand potential was measured based on the proximity and density of trip generators (such as homes and workplaces) and trip attractors (such as shopping centers, parks, and greenways) to establish potential for walking and bicycling trips. The resulting models represent "heat maps" that displays hot spots as a variable of hierarchy based on the Live, Work, Play Learn, and Transit factors and then as a heat map showing a composite of all the factors.

### Approach

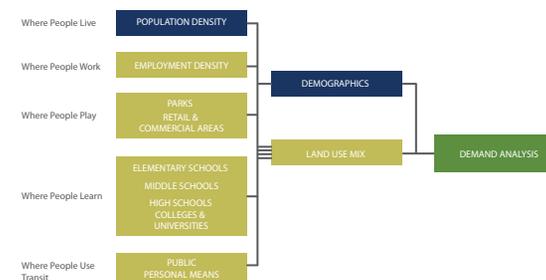
The demand model identifies expected pedestrian and bicycle activity by overlaying the locations where people live, work, play, go to school, and use transit into a composite sketch of regional demand.

### Scale of Analysis

The demand model relies on spatial consistency in order to generate logical distance and density patterns. It is for this reason that all scores are aggregated to a central location at the census block level and then the census block corner. Census blocks closely represent the street network and therefore Census block corners closely represent street corners, where foot and bicycle traffic is prevalent. This method is based on the Low-Stress Bicycling and Network Connectivity report (Mineta Transportation Institute, May 2012). The report discusses the benefits of using a smaller geographic setting for pedestrian and bicycle demand analyses rather than using more traditional traffic model features such as census block groups, census tracts, or traffic analysis zones. Due to the low speed of pedestrian movement, a much smaller geographic unit of analysis is needed.

### Scoring Method

The demand model's scoring method is a function of density and proximity. Scores are a result of two complementing forces: distance decay – the effect of distance on spatial interactions yields lower scores for features farther away from other features; and spatial density – the effect of closely clustered features yields higher scores. Scores will increase in high feature density areas and if those features are close together. Scores will decrease in low feature density areas and if features are further apart.





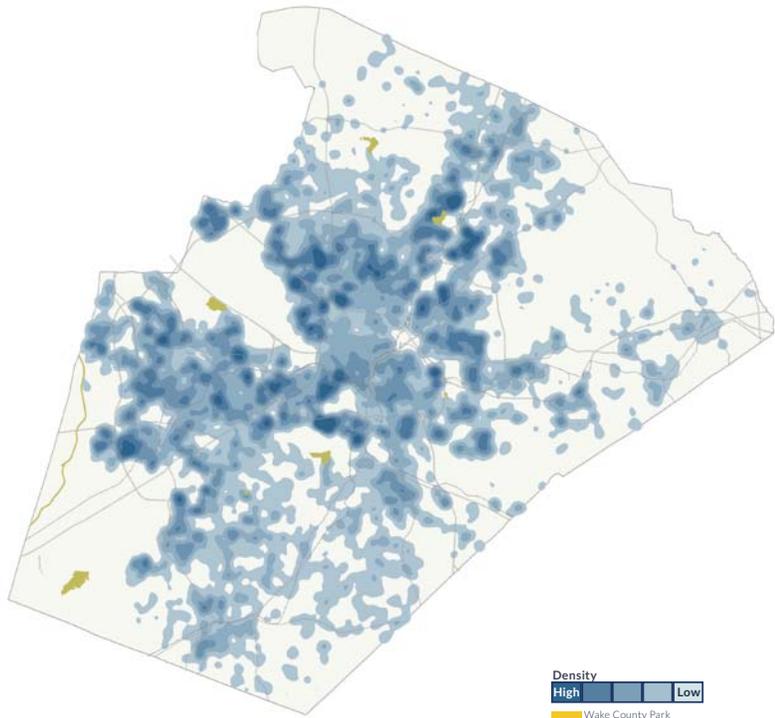
## LIVE, WORK, PLAY ANALYSIS RESULTS

### Demand Model

The results of the demand analysis are presented in the following map series. As for all maps, **the areas shaded more deeply in blue represent higher demand areas relative to other colors on the map.**

### Where People Live

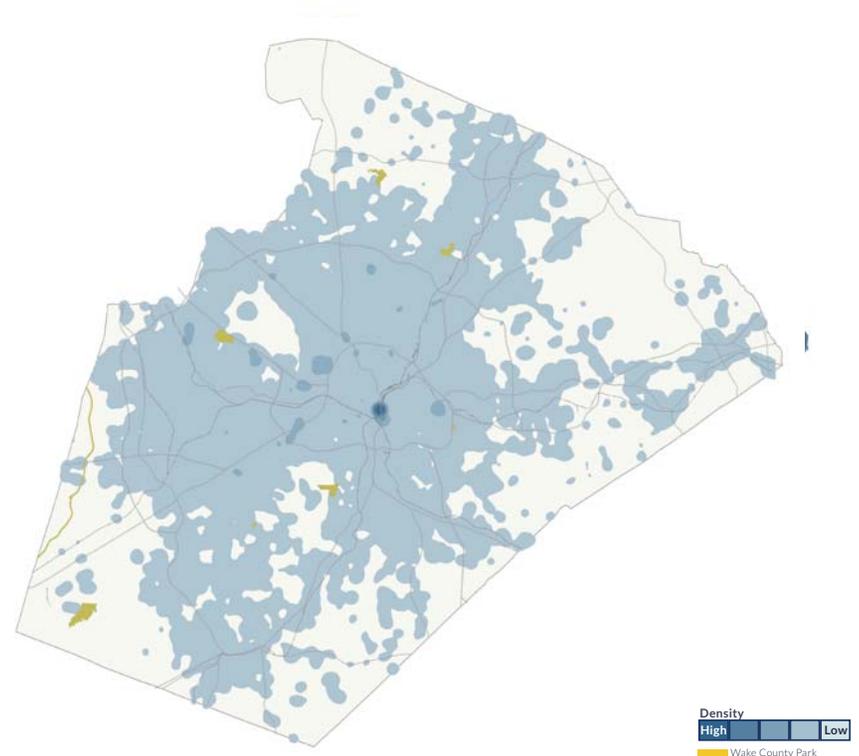
This category includes 2010 census block level population density. These locations represent potential trip origin locations. More trips can be made in areas with higher population density if conditions are right. A majority of the population density is located within municipality boundaries, with the highest density located in Raleigh and Cary. North Wake Landfill District Park, Lake Crabtree County Park, and Historic Oakview are located within close proximity to a high density of Wake County residents.



### Where People Work

This category represents trip ends for people working throughout Wake County, regardless of residency. Its basis is 2010 total employment by census block. Depending on the type of job, employment can act as a trip attractor (i.e., retail stores or cafes) or trip generator (i.e., office parks and office buildings) or both. Specific employment types, such as retail, are therefore also used in the where people play category.

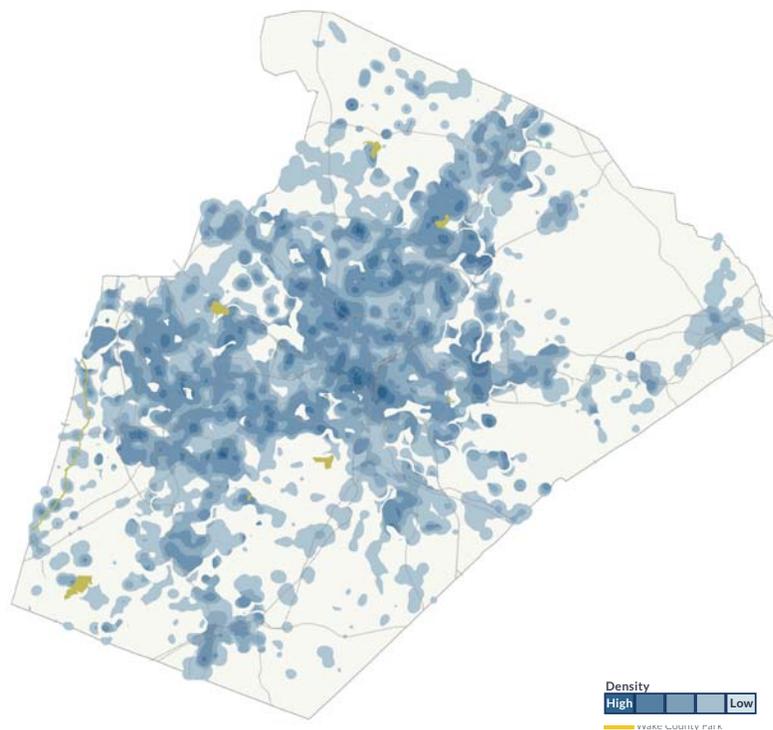
The analysis reveals high employment density in downtown Raleigh and a relative even distribution of employment throughout the rest of Wake County. Due to the relatively even distribution, most of the Wake County parks are located near a moderate amount of work locations.



### Where People Play

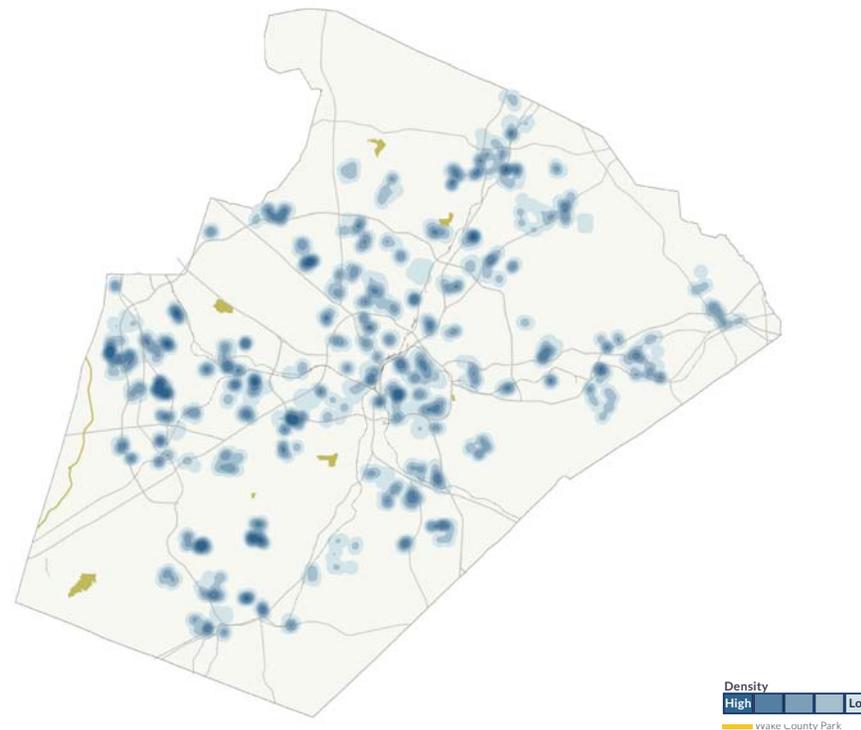
This category is a combination of varied land use types and destinations. Retail destinations, parks, and greenways were selected because they are land use types where people most often "play." In addition to where residents often "play," this layer is also a good predictor of where tourists will be attracted.

The combination of retail with parks and greenways reveals that North Wake Landfill District Park, Yates Mill Park, Historic Oakview, Lake Crabtree County Park, and Crowder District Park are located in areas that are complemented by retail attractors and thus have a stronger Play density. Conversely, Harris Lake County Park, Blue Jay Point, and sections of the American Tobacco Trail are more isolated from retail. It can be suggested that people will be attracted to these locations strictly for park and greenway use.



### Where People Learn

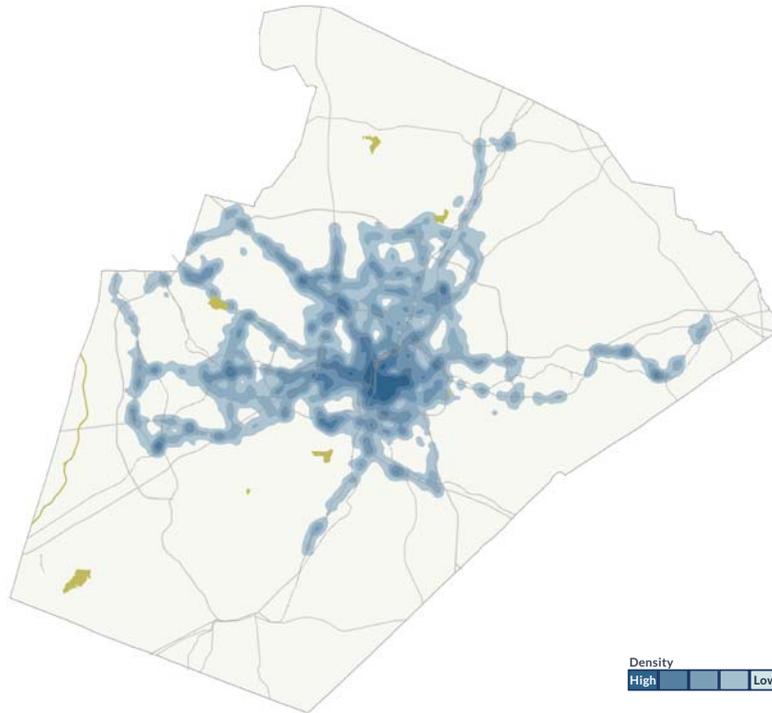
This category shows the density of educational facilities, including elementary, middle, and high schools. As with most K-12 schools, they are scattered throughout the county and generally reflect population density. A majority of the schools are located within municipality boundaries, and with the exception of North Wake Landfill District Park, are all isolated from county parks and greenways.





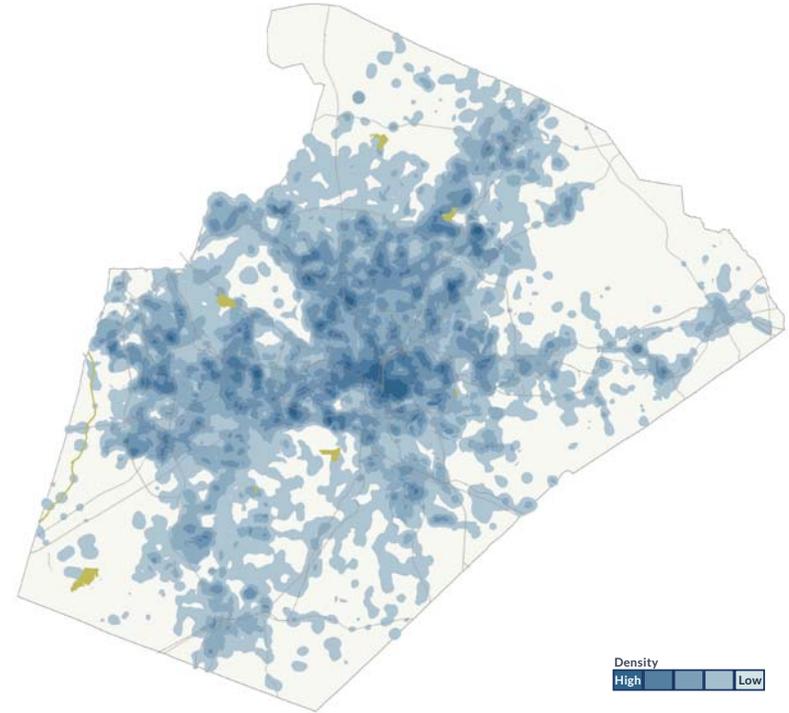
### Where People Ride Transit

The Transit category displays the route density of Go Raleigh, C-Tran, Wolfline Transit, and Go Triangle that offer service in Wake County. The analysis reveals that North Wake Landfill District Park, Historic Oakview, and Lake Crabtree County Park are the only county parks that have direct or nearby transit routes. Yates Mill Park, Blue Jay Point, Harris Lake County Park, Crowder District Park, and the American Tobacco Trail have zero access to public transportation. A preliminary recommendation may be to extend transit service to the county parks and greenways that also have a high population density nearby.



### Composite Demand

The map below displays the composite demand for the Live, Work, Play, Learn, and Transit factors, revealing the composite demand for parks, greenways, and programs in Wake County. Overall, the Composite Map displays demand throughout the urbanized areas of the county with high demand in large portions of Raleigh, Cary, Apex, and Wake Forest.



## 2014 Citizen Survey

Public involvement is imperative in parks and recreation planning as it directly asks users for their desires, opinions, and ideas. To include this key element to the plan, the results of the citizen survey from the recent Wake County Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Division Community Interest and Opinion Survey was reviewed. A citizen survey was conducted for this study to assess thoughts on current facilities and what improvements could be made. In total, the survey collected responses from 852 residents through telephone and online mediums. Demographically, the cross-section of those surveyed is mostly consistent with the composition of the county. Trails and greenways ranked high in the interest of the residents in terms of things they would like to see more of or added. This was not only within the county parks themselves but also greenways and trails as a way to get to the parks.

## Modeling And Survey Synthesis

After analyzing the Equity Model, Demand Model, and Citizen Survey, it was found that some parks within the Wake County system have different target audiences based on the facility, programming, or adjacent populations, which are listed below.

**Blue Jay Point County Park:** Youth

**North Wake Landfill County Park:** Youth; Over 65

**Lake Crabtree County Park:** Groups of racial or ethnic diversity; Groups that do not speak English as a first language

**Historic Oak View County Park:** Special Needs Populations (hearing, vision, cognitive, ambulatory, self care, or independent living disabilities); Groups of racial or ethnic diversity; Youth

**Historic Yates Mill County Park:** Groups of racial or ethnic diversity; Youth

**Crowder District Park:** Youth

**American Tobacco Trail:** Trail, Bicycle, and Pedestrian Advocacy Groups; Equestrian Groups/Users; Youth

**Harris Lake County Park:** Youth

## Municipal Park Director Interviews

The Parks and Recreation Directors from Apex, Holly Springs, Raleigh, and Cary were contacted for an interview or involved on the Steering Committee for the Wake County Park Facilities Master Plan Update. Interviews were intended to elicit insights from the department heads regarding their ideas and suggestions on how Wake County can better serve their communities. Conversation topics ranged from funding opportunities to balancing open space and athletic facility needs. Feedback about particular parks are included in the park profile sheets.

## Park Profiles

### OVERVIEW

In order to understand the existing conditions present at each park facility, a thorough site inventory and field evaluation was conducted. In addition to assessing park and greenway facilities, existing marketing and educational literature was also reviewed to determine what information is publicly available to park users via printed brochures, personal visits (kiosks, signage, etc.), interactive opportunities, or online media. Assessing what information is available and how the public perceives and experiences each park facility is as important as the existing facilities and services present at each site. Overall, the inventory further confirmed that each site is unique and serves the County mission in specialized ways. However, several common trends were discovered throughout:

- A streamlined trail wayfinding system that addresses routes by color and skill level would improve navigation and overall experience.
- Some of the parks are difficult to locate due to a lack of signage or entrance visibility. A better use of system wide park entrance signage with more attention grabbing details would improve the visibility and branding of park entrances.
- Visitors have limited access to staff and park offices due to the locations of these buildings in relation to high use areas.
- Updated information on park facilities and maps are needed at several park sites. There also needs to be a greater level of continuity between brochures, website, and maps.

- Many parks are “drive to” only due to their lack of public transit and trail accessibility options. Car-only accessibility limits the amount of facilities offered to those that either don't have access or prefer not to use a vehicle.
- Lack of connectivity to other county and local parks.
- Programs, facilities, and events would benefit from a dedicated marketing plan.
- Many features and facilities lack ADA accessibility. An internal ADA accessibility audit and the goal of more universal design would improve accessibility.





# American Tobacco Trail

No current mission statement for this park.

### Addresses:

Wimberly Parking Area:  
1017 Wimberly Rd, Apex, NC 27502

1309 New Hill-Olive Chapel Rd  
Apex, NC 27502

1305 White Oak Church Rd  
Apex, NC 27523

### Unique Feature:

Regional Connectivity

### Size:

6.5 Miles

### Hours:

8am to 1 hour before sunset

## ACCESS

Currently, the American Tobacco Trail is not accessible by public transit. Arriving by vehicle to a trailhead and connecting with the trail via a spur or roadway on foot or bicycle are the means by which most users access the trail. There are currently three separate public access points with available parking lots at the New Hill Trailhead, Wimberly Trailhead, and the White Oak Trailhead. Horse trailer parking is available as well at the New Hill-Olive Chapel Rd and White Oak Church Rd parking areas. Links and signed routes to public transit should be explored.

## OPPORTUNITIES TO CONNECT

There are several opportunities for the trail to connect to nearby neighborhoods, other trails, local parks, and services. Trail spurs, on-road facilities, and routing through neighborhoods can provide connections to other recreation facilities, food, water, and resting places. Exploring these connections is critical as there is no drinking water available along the trail. Further, a wayfinding system within the trail system and outside the trail system will improve orientation, awareness, and safety.

## DEED RESTRICTIONS

Currently there are lease agreements with the North Carolina Department of Transportation and the Town of Cary. Sub leases exist with the State of North Carolina and Wake County for the trailheads within Jordan Lake gamelands (New Hill and Wimberly).



Wayfinding at road crossings can help trail users understand if they are near water sources and other services.

## OUTREACH AND AWARENESS

Conveying information about a trail in print and online can be a challenge. Online interactive maps are increasing in popularity and help users with trip planning and gaining an understanding of amenities before they embark on their journey. Regulations and proper etiquette are strongly conveyed in terms of bicyclists, walkers, runners, and equestrians. However, the web, brochure, and trail could improve the historic and cultural importance of the trail. While the website gives a brief story of the American Tobacco Trail, there is a deeper lesson that could be expressed about the trail, its connection to Wake County, and its roll as a component of the East Coast Greenway.

### Website

- Great information about trail use, etiquette, and safety.
- Clearly demonstrates need for water.
- Not many wayfinding icons.
- No map directly pictured on the site to help identify access points, parking etc.
- Good extent of equestrian information.

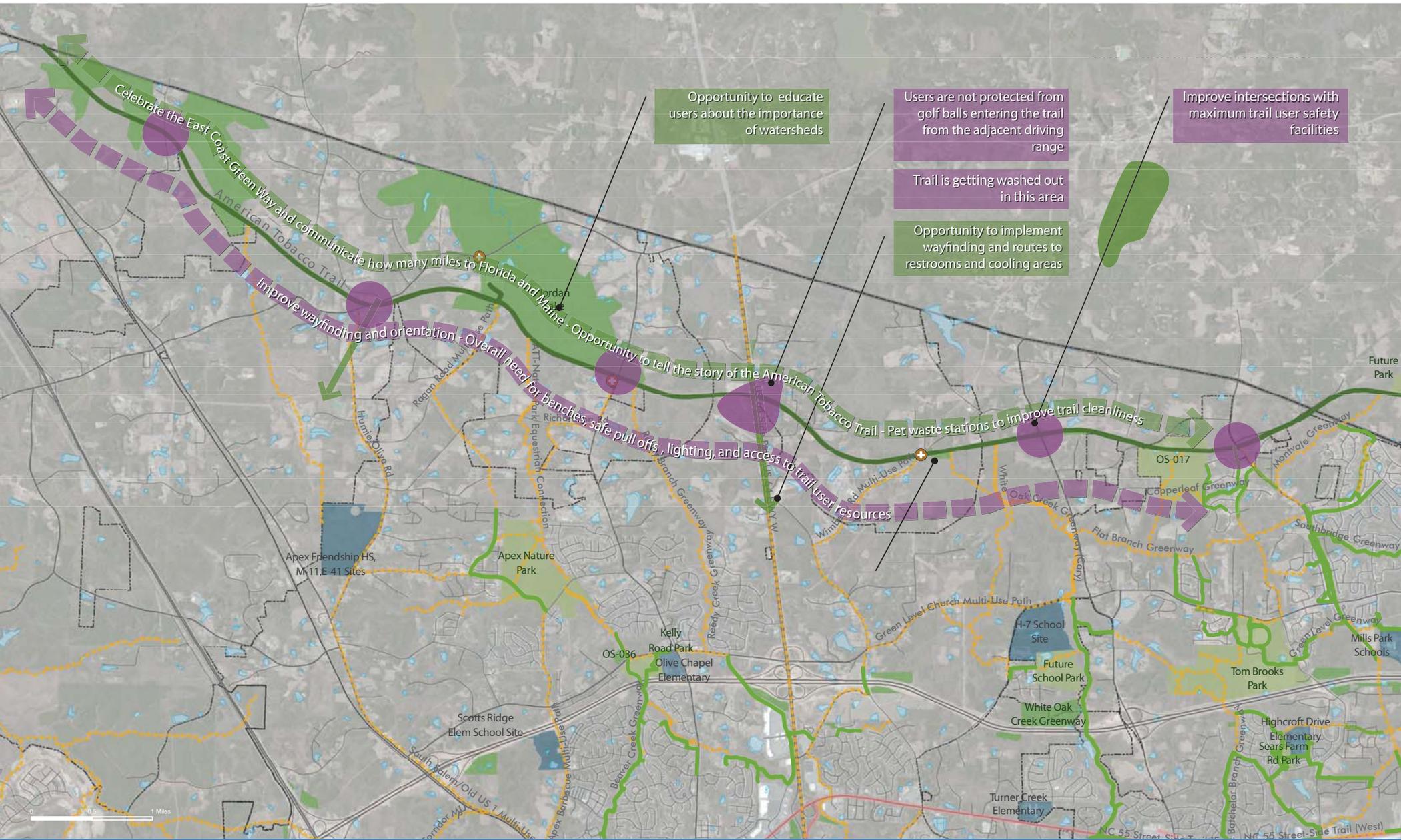
### Brochure

- Rules and regulations clearly stated.
- Equestrian information is not as extensive as website.
- Better job of describing passing etiquette and trail user ethics.
- Maps could provide better contextual information and access points.
- Lack of educational program description and awareness.

Existing Facility	Web	Brochure
6.5 Miles Built Trail	✓	✓
Biking	✓	✓
Equestrian	✓	✓
Picnic Area	✓	✓
Environmental Education	✓	✓
Cultural Exhibits	✓	
Educational Gardens	✓	



Story telling, access points, and nearby facilities can be conveyed on the existing kiosks.



# American Tobacco Trail site analysis



## American Tobacco Trail

### STRENGTHS OF THE PARK

The American Tobacco Trail has a number of strengths and provides a variety of benefits for Wake County. Core strengths include:

- The ATT serves as a regional connector and multi-use path which is almost entirely separated from vehicular traffic.
- The Trail has the opportunity to connect many communities within and outside of Wake County.
- There is potential for the Trail to serve as an opportunity to teach about the local environment, cultural, transportation, and scale.
- Ample shade along the trail helps keep users cool and rested.

### CHALLENGES OF THE PARK

While there are great benefits to the American Tobacco Trail, there are also some challenges. With these challenges comes the opportunity to improve and transform them into strengths to further benefit the County. Currently several challenges include:

- No water, food, or support facilities for users along the trail.
- Limited pull offs for users to rest or repair outside of the travelway.



Simple, clear etiquette signage is well placed and essential for educating users. These signs should be placed along the entire alignment.



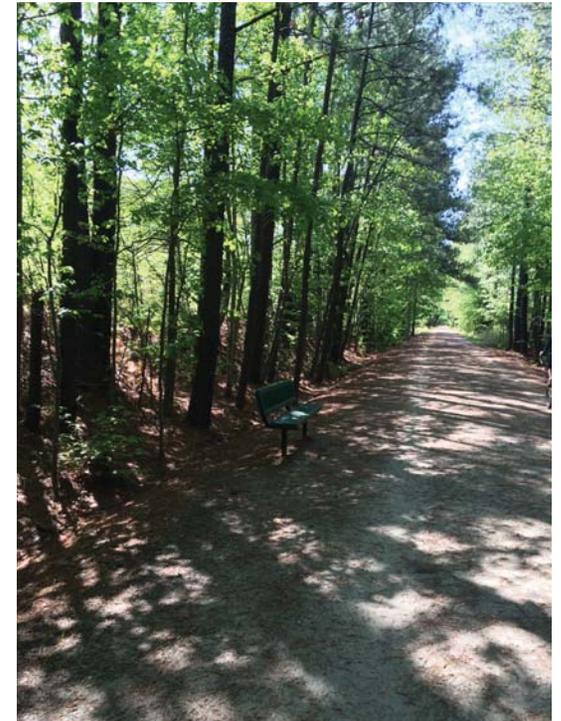
The adjacent driving range can be a hazard for trail users.

- Lack of interpretation along the trail to narrate and illustrate the history and story of the region, rail trails, local environment, and connectivity.
- Few regional trail connections to the ATT are constructed, forcing many people to drive to trailheads to gain access.

### POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES

After analysis of the trail and region there are many opportunities that were discovered that could enhance user experience and expand the benefits of the trail, including:

- Private nearby business “partners” could serve the trail by providing food, water, resting places, and repairs.
- Food and water could be brought to the trail through vendors, Saturday Farmers Markets, and carts.
- Create more pull offs and connections to local trails to make it more user friendly for varying skill levels.
- The Rail line that serves the American Tobacco Trail ends at the Shearon Harris Reactor. Continuing the Trail alignment to reach Harris Park should be explored.



Areas without steep drop-off are candidates for pull off areas and other trail amenities.



Transitions from the trail to trailhead areas are wide with adequate visibility for all users.



Additional locations for comfort station should be explored. The New Hill trailhead creates a precedent for developing other trailheads along the corridor.



Update and streamline signage for users to have continuity in message.



Incorporate more history and art along the trail.



Expand upon the signage for the ECG and celebrate the connection to Maine and Florida.



The story of the trail should be expanded beyond the existing signage.



Murals, art, and graphics can enhance the character of this space and provide an opportunity to tell the story of history and transportation.



Wonderful shade along the trail, however, limited areas for users to pull off for water breaks and rest.



Wayfinding signage with destinations and mileage will help trail users orient themselves within the community and find key resources.



Provide more information stations such as this one located at the White Oak Comfort Station.



<b>Address:</b> 3200 Pleasant Union Church Road, Raleigh NC, 27614		
<b>Unique Features:</b> Adventure Recreation/Retreat Center	<b>Size:</b> 236 Acres	<b>Hours:</b> 8am-Sunset Exhibit Center 8am-5pm

### ACCESS

Currently there is no access to Blue Jay Point County Park by public transit. This park is only reachable by vehicle or hiking along the Mountains-To-Sea Trail (MST). There is one point of access for cars into the park on Six Forks Road. Those hiking the Mountains-To-Sea Trail can access the park, however signage should be improved to indicate there is a park, and which amenities are available.

### OPPORTUNITIES TO CONNECT

The Lake Trail contains a section of the Mountains to Sea Trail - which connects across the State of North Carolina. This segment needs to be highlighted to bring more awareness to its purpose as a statewide trail. Blue Jay Point County Park has an expansive shoreline to Falls Lake. This could be an opportunity for blueway connectivity and waterfront park entrances. The termination of the existing lake trails could provide launch points, camping locations, and points of interest for canoeists, paddle boarders, and kayakers. Blueway access could also connect visitors to Falls Lake Boat Ramp and two nearby Fish and Wildlife Boat Ramp access locations along Six Forks Road.

### DEED RESTRICTIONS

There is currently a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), the NC Division of Parks and Recreation, the NC Wildlife Resources Commission, and the Friends of the Mountains-To-Sea Trail. As part of this agreement it is understood the Lake Trail shall be promoted and identified as the MST along the Falls Lake shoreline. In addition, this agreement prohibits motorized, bike, and equestrian traffic.

- The primary land lease agreement exists between the USACE and the State of NC for Blue Jay Point to serve as a recreational resource.
- A sub-lease exists between the State of North Carolina and Wake County to operate Blue Jay Point as a park; this lease runs until 2026 and outlines plans for active recreation park development.

### OUTREACH AND AWARENESS

This park website is a valuable resource to its visitors and provides information about many programs and facilities. In order to ensure visitors can plan their visit and fully utilize the park, informational resources need to clearly convey what is offered. For example, there is currently no reference to the Mountains-To-Sea Trail on any public information.

#### Website

- Generally outlines what is available in the narrative but does not discuss the outdoor classroom or t-ball field.
- Outlines natural history, park rules, regulations, and facility activities.
- Communicates more clearly than the brochure about additional information such as scouting opportunities and a calendar of events.

#### Brochure

- Outlines accessible facilities better than the information found on the website.
- Successfully discusses health and wellness and segments trails by distance, this is not done on the website description.
- Trail distances are found on the map, but walking times are not indicated.

Existing Facility	Web	Brochure
Outdoor Classroom		
Hiking Trails	✓	✓
Limited Paved Trails		✓
Restrooms	✓	✓
Picnic Area		
Garden	✓	✓
Open Play Area	✓	✓
Natural Play Area	✓	✓
Educational Center	✓	✓
T-Ball	✓	✓

Existing Facility	Web	Brochure
Fishing along Shore Line		✓
Go Ape		✓



Great opportunities and space for a Blueway trailhead.



# Blue Jay Point County Park site analysis

Two foot contours





## Blue Jay Point County Park

### STRENGTHS OF THE PARK

Blue Jay Point County Park has a number of strengths and provides a variety of benefits for Wake County. Core strengths include:

- With leased land (Go Ape) this park has a great public and private partnership established. Three to eight percent of all private proceeds are returned back to Blue Jay Point Park Programs pending the success of Go Ape.
- The advertising from Go Ape draws people to the park who may not normally be users. It builds awareness of the park, healthy activities, and provides a multi generational experience.
- The playground is accessible with appropriate materials and entries to play areas.
- The park has multiple locations where visitors can access the water, but no formal overlook or fishing access for users to enjoy.
- The education center has a map on the building that clearly articulates what is there and offered to visitors. This information should be matched in the printed maps.
- The park has a great mix of shade, sun, and active and passive areas for users.
- There are great opportunities for hiking.
- There is nature-based education for all ages including beginner, intermediate, and more skilled visitors.
- The park successfully showcases several educational features such as the map overlay in the parking lot, bird boxes, and labeled plant species; these feature should be expanded.

### CHALLENGES OF THE PARK

While there are great benefits to Blue Jay Point County Park, there are also some challenges. With these challenges comes the opportunity to improve and build new strengths. Currently several challenges include:

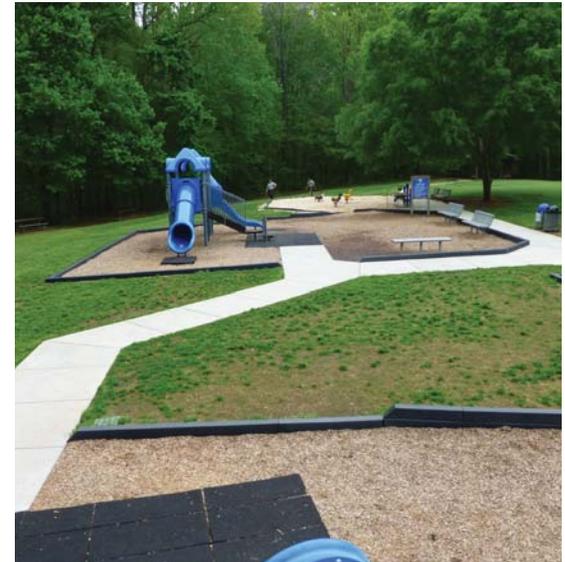
- Pedestrian wayfinding is needed to indicate how to circulate throughout the park on foot.
- Currently, there is no connection from the MST across the bridge immediately north of the park entrance. By connecting this MST section, users can enjoy longer hiking opportunities and be connected to support facilities at the Falls Lake Boat Ramp.
- To a new visitor, the park site is difficult to find due to limited wayfinding and entry signage from the primary roadway system. The Park entrance sign is set far into the access road and should be examined for placement and letter height.
- Some of the slopes and terrain on hiking trails may be too difficult for a beginner user. Signage should include distance, skill level, and approximate trip timing.
- There is currently no formal location or support facilities for kayak or canoe access to Falls Lake.

### POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES

After analysis of the park and region many opportunities were revealed that have the potential to increase usership and improve overall experience:

- The garden could serve as an accessible outdoor classroom since it is already shaded, is connected by an accessible path, and contains a large lawn area.
- There could be an opportunity to provide water access through public/private partnerships for kayak, canoe, and paddle board rentals. This resource would also complement the activities at the retreat.
- The west side of the park (near the maintenance area) is not in high use. Additional activities and other uses for this space could be implemented.
- Although fishing is allowed along the shoreline there are no piers or docks.
- Wayfinding and kiosk maps can expand access and awareness of the hiking trail system throughout the park.

- Potential new facilities include a dog park. These facilities types should include drinking water, shade, and areas for small and large dogs.
- There is an opportunity to create a paved beginner loop by linking the already built elements; this would not only improve access but also create a "hub" for the unpaved trail network.



*Proper ADA materials, access points, and design are a strength of the playground at Blue Jay Point Park and should become a precedent for other County Parks.*



*Bicycle parking and signage should be updated to the latest standards established by the League of American Bicyclists.*



*The park map is one of the best resources available that displays which activities are available and how users circulate throughout the park.*



*Expand on layers of interpretation that already exist within the park. Let users know the opportunity for discovery during their visit.*



*Begin to identify areas marked as "Amphitheaters" as outdoor classrooms.*



*There is an opportunity to use the garden lawn as an accessible outdoor space.*



*Opportunity to provide more formal shoreline access for fishing, kayaking, and canoeing to minimize shoreline erosion.*



*Marketing and outreach for GO APE will help promote Blue Jay, and therefore Blue Jay can serve as a gateway for other parks.*



*Natural Play is a growing trend and the facility at Blue Jay should be widely marketed.*



*Improve trail wayfinding into a streamlined County Wide standard that depicts length, skill level, and travel time.*



# Crowder District Park

No current mission statement for this park.

<b>Address:</b> 4709 Ten Ten Road Apex NC, 27539		
<b>Unique Features:</b> Gardens/Environmental Programs	<b>Size:</b> 33 Acres	<b>Hours:</b> 8am - sunset 7 days a week

## ACCESS

There is not currently access to Crowder District Park by public transit. This park is a traditional "drive to" park and is accessed from Ten Ten Road, which serves as the primary entrance for the park. The vehicular circulation reaches to several areas in the park that provide parking close to points of interest such as the shelters, play fields, and pond. There are several opportunities to connect the park via sidewalk, trail, or neighborhood path which would increase pedestrian and overall user access. Additionally, there may be opportunity to improve nearby controlled intersections with pedestrian improvements. Plenty of space is available in the park near current parking areas to add bus stops, etc. to make Crowder District Park more public transit friendly.

## OPPORTUNITIES TO CONNECT

The Park could connect to several nearby neighborhoods, trails, and the nearby YMCA, via sidewalk and crosswalk improvements. Points where existing sidewalks could connect include most corners of the park. These would help connect Crowder District Park to Dutchman's Branch and the future Cary Park.

## DEED RESTRICTIONS

This is a Wake County owned facility.



Playground material and equipment needs to be upgraded.

## OUTREACH AND AWARENESS

Public knowledge of Crowder District Park on both the website and brochure generally consistent. While the physical information and awareness is prominent, graphic information (such as the maps) could be made more detailed and useful.

### Website

- Clearly outlines features and opportunities within the park.
- Great information regarding public event programming.
- Would benefit from a map.

### Brochure

- Excellent narrative detailing park features.
- The map lacks accurate trail details and could be made more useful to visitors.

Existing Facility	Web	Brochure
Pond		✓
Trails	✓	✓
Fishing		
Shelters	✓	✓
Observation Deck of Pond		✓
Educational Gardens	✓	✓
Open Play Area	✓	✓
Sand Volleyball	✓	✓
Playground	✓	✓
Restrooms		✓
Little Free Library		

Existing Facility	Web	Brochure
Park Office		✓
Environmental Education	✓	✓



One of the most beloved parks in the system, Crowder feels like "everyone's back yard."



# Crowder District Park site analysis

Two foot contours



# Crowder District Park

## STRENGTHS OF THE PARK

Adjacency to residential areas, daily use facilities, and ample public event programming space are just a few key features and benefits of Crowder District Park. Core strengths include:

- Crowder District Park is completely County owned.
- Special Events such as Frog Fest in spring and the Canine event in fall bring new people and a variety of users to the park.
- Environmental education and camps offered increases use and visitorship.
- The Park gives adjacent residential developments open green space to experience nature, and learn about the environment.
- This is an example of a site that addresses the national (NRPA) pillars of conservation, social equity, and health and wellness.

## CHALLENGES OF THE PARK

While there are great benefits to Crowder District Park, there are also some challenges. Currently challenges include:

- The site is already fairly developed and heavily used. Additional features should be carefully placed to avoid habitat and environmental impacts. (Is expansion a possibility?)
- Due to heavy use, the park, trails, and equipment are beginning to show signs of wear and tear.
- There is a high amount of impervious coverage which increase stormwater runoff and sediment build up.
- You cannot easily walk or bike to the site even though it is surrounded by residential development.

## POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES

Due to its high use and great location there are many opportunities for this park to continue to be stimulating and inviting for the community. These opportunities include:

- More shelters and indoor spaces could be added to accommodate the growth of camps and programs.
- Opportunities to acquire adjacent land would allow for future park expansion.
- Visitors have stated a need for upgraded play equipment.
- Opportunities should be evaluated to connect to adjacent community greenway systems.
- A connection could be made from this park to the YMCA by constructing sidewalks along Ten Ten Road and connection through neighborhoods.



Mile markers could be improved to be more visible to trail users.



Small gardens throughout the park provide an intimate, personal experience.



The Little Free Library supports social equity and education in the park.



There is good outdoor classroom space - but more indoor space is needed.



Personalized park features create a neighborhood feel.



Several areas are present throughout the site for camps and outdoor classrooms, but no indoor space is available.



Expand on interpretive elements.



Great example of shoreline access for environmental education.



Expand on interpretive elements.



Several accessible shelters exist.



Great balance of shade, open space, and programmed and unprogrammed space in this park.



Look for community trail connections to make this a walk to and bike to park site, wear paths already exist.



This is a heavily used park, is there nearby adjacent land to expand?



# Harris Lake County Park

No current mission statement for this park.

<b>Address:</b> 2112 County Park Drive, New Hill NC, 27562		
<b>Unique Features:</b> Hiking	<b>Size:</b> 680 Acres	<b>Hours:</b> 8am -sunset 7 days a week

## ACCESS

There is not currently access to Harris Lake County Park by public transit. This park is only reachable by personal vehicles and serves primarily as a "drive to" park. The park is currently accessed from New Hill Holleman Road. The only other accessible points from outside the park are from the water off Harris Lake. There is potential to expand the trails and multiuse connections to the park to make it more user friendly. Added docks for boats can also create improved access.

The vehicular access point currently provides several parking areas throughout the site to reach the many park features available. There is space is available to provide public transit and bus stops.

## OPPORTUNITIES TO CONNECT

This site could greatly benefit from regional trail and greenway connectivity. There may opportunities for this to occur at the north end of Harris Lake County Park.

## DEED RESTRICTIONS

The park land was leased from CP&L (now Duke Energy) to Wake County for use as a park beginning in 1986 for a period of 25 years and has subsequently been amended to 40 years (2026). Restriction include any septic and/or drain fields must be set above Elevation 243. Duke Energy may possibly expand their facilities in the future which would raise the elevation of the water level in Harris Lake and impact about 50 percent of the park site. Careful consideration should be give to the development below the anticipated flood line.



Thoughtfully designed railings allow users to sit on benches or in wheelchairs and enjoy the views.

## OUTREACH AND AWARENESS

The information accessible to the public for Harris Lake County Park is extensive and easy to get. The brochure clearly displays the offerings of the park. However, the map does not accurately portray trail alignments and can be confusing if using this as a tool to navigate in the park. Both the website and the brochure communicate the variety of trails available.

### Website

- The website provides a good general description.
- If perception of Duke Energy is a challenge, this is a great place to learn about power (why it is necessary, types of energy, consumption patterns).

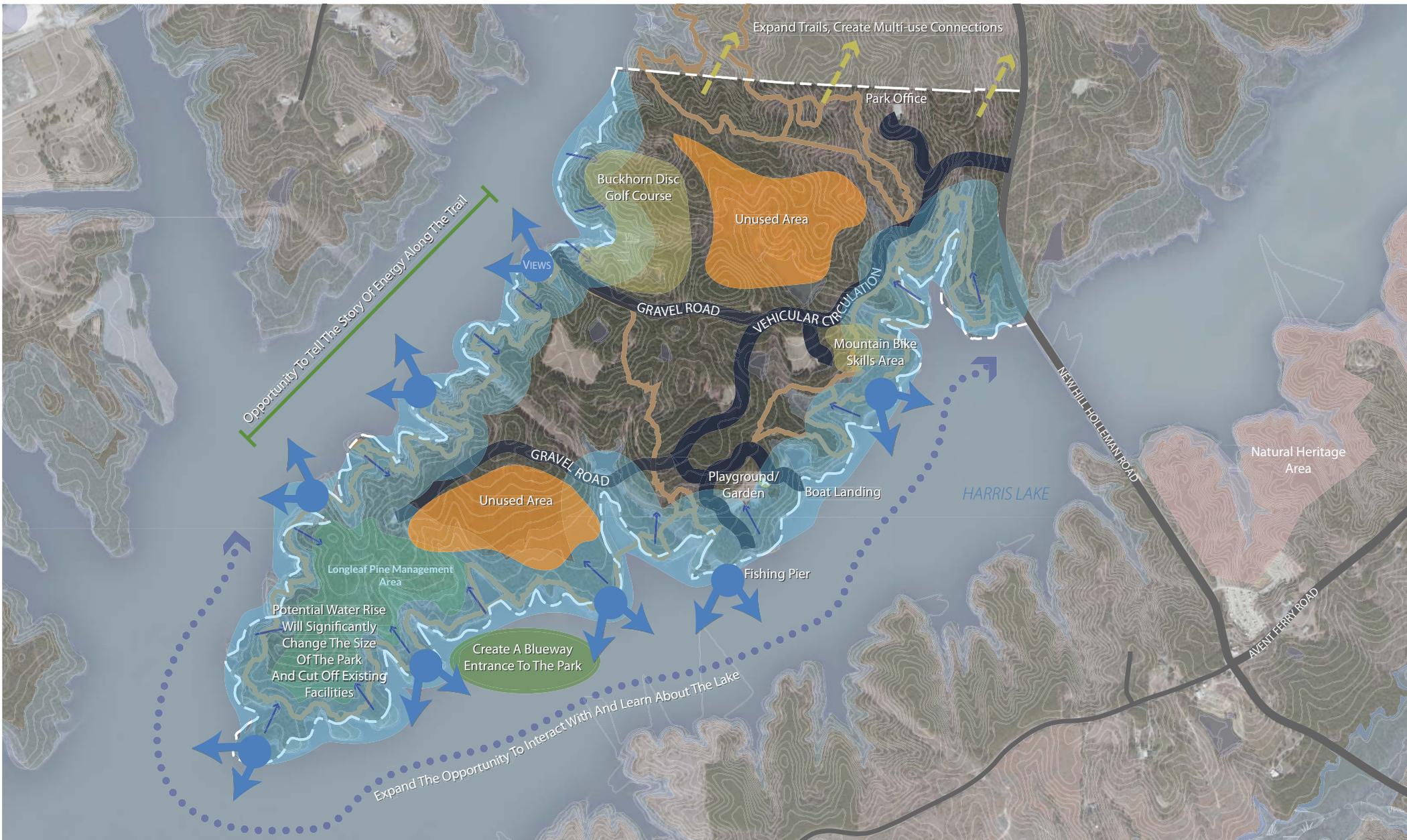
### Brochure

- Use of color to indicate beginner, intermediate, and advanced trails are not consistent with other park maps.
- Map reflects facilities that are present, but may not be accurately placed on the map.

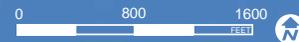
Existing Facility	Web	Brochure	Existing Facility	Web	Brochure
Picnic Areas	✓	✓	Fishing Pier	✓	✓
Playground	✓	✓	Park Office		✓
Amphitheater		✓	Camping		✓
Picnic Shelters	✓	✓	Disc Golf	✓	✓
Restrooms		✓	Managed Forest Area (Long Leaf Pine)		✓
Educational Garden	✓	✓			
Hiking Trails (Natural Surface)	✓	✓			
Mountain Bike Trails	✓	✓			
Mountain Bike Skills Area		✓			
Open Play Field	✓	✓			
Boat Launch (Car Top)		✓			



Family events are an excellent method for attracting new users to the park and becoming repeat visitors.



# Harris Lake County Park site analysis





## Harris Lake County Park

### STRENGTHS OF THE PARK

Harris Lake County Park has many strengths - one being that it provides a resource to spend the entire day outside and learn about and experience nature. It serves as a host to area special events which bring people to the park who may not otherwise visit. Core strengths include:

- This park offers a cell phone tour, which can offer educational access to people who enjoy technology. This can reduce staff needs - but can also be seen as counterproductive to some users goals of being "disconnected" in the wilderness.
- Partnerships with outside organizations strengthen the quality of specialized facilities (ex. Triangle Off Road Cyclists and the Raleigh Area Disc League).
- Water access and view are abundant.
- Partnerships for events bring in people to the park that might not otherwise visit: triathlons, cross-country meets, mountain bike races, adventure races, Longleaf Festival, Haunting at Harris, 5k and 6k races, swim events, Raven Rock Road Bike Ride, and others.

### CHALLENGES OF THE PARK

While there are great benefits to Harris Lake County Park, there are also some challenges. Currently several challenges include:

- The park map does not accurately reflect trail alignments. An example is the Peninsula Trail. The Womble House, primitive camping, etc. do not appear on site where they were indicated on the map. This can confuse trail users and cause anxiety - especially for visitors who are not well acclimated with navigating through woods. An updated trail map with improved way finding would improve site access and encourage repeat use.
- While the cell phone tour may be great for some users, not everyone wants to be "connected" while outdoors and some educational and interpretive signage would aid in expanding the experience of day users who do not wish to hike with a cell phone.

- There are many small ponds along the trails that should be named and properly located on maps to aid in navigation.
- The trail system needs to have improved identification, wayfinding, and naming for use and safety. There are a few kiosks that identify routes and safety, but they are not situated at all access points nor are they represented on the brochure.
- This site is such a valuable resource, but awareness has been identified as a challenge. Marketing to nearby neighborhoods and communities could increase park use.
- There are misconceptions about Duke Energy, this needs to be acknowledged and addressed; there is an opportunity to celebrate energy and educated the community about power and consumption.
- The park has been in use since 1999 and some of the facilities need to be upgraded.
- There is frequent off leash dog use on trails; there is an opportunity to address this by providing a facility or place where dogs are permitted to be off leash.
- A maintenance schedule should be created to monitor wear on trails from mountain bike use.
- The park office is removed from the main use areas of the park and is not currently serving as a visitor resource. This could be corrected with wayfinding signage and an arrival sequence for new visitors.

### POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES

- The Park office could be expanded to serve as a Nature center/Visitor/Environmental Education Center with classrooms; the park office does not experience much visitor interaction.
- The site is very large and could serve as a place for family camping/individual camping/special event camping.
- Because it is situated on Harris Lake, there is an opportunity to provide boat rentals and additional dock space.

- Larger shelters would be an appropriate addition to the park to accommodate some of the larger events.
- Providing Disc rental for the Disc Golf Course would encourage beginner users. This could be a function of the improved Visitor Center.



Kiosks should include information about trail safety including how long it takes to traverse the entire Peninsula Trail, the importance of trail navigation, and a suggestion to bring water.



Banners are a great method for advertising events to park users.



*Celebrate and market natural play areas through outward awareness and by drawing visitors from the traditional playground to the natural play area.*



*Audio tours provide great self-guided activities, however, field interpretation should also be present for those who want to be 'disconnected.'*



*Several ponds are located throughout the site. They do not seem accessible to users. Ponds should also be used as wayfinding tools.*



*Improve wayfinding and trail user safety at all trail access locations. Signs should depict level of difficulty and time needed to complete a trail loop.*



*Provide more education and interaction about energy and power through fun and interactive activities. Use the challenges of the site as positive education tools.*



*Identify features with naming signage for non phone users.*



*The park office is disconnected from the rest of park and does not create a sense of being welcomed or helped.*



*A series of boardwalks provide access across low, wet areas.*



*The park is a perfect opportunity to make a connection between energy sources, transmission, and consumption.*



## Historic Oak View County Park

*In the tradition of a great state which celebrates its past, cherishes its heritage, and nurtures its resources for future generations, Historic Oak View County Park interprets and preserves the agricultural heritage and rural farm life of North Carolina through educational programs, special events, and exhibits, and provides cultural enrichment and passive recreation opportunities for visitors.*

<b>Address:</b> 4028 Carya Drive, Raleigh NC, 27610		
<b>Unique Features:</b> Historic Farm	<b>Size:</b> 27 Acres	<b>Hours:</b> 8am -sunset 7 days a week

### ACCESS

The number 18 CAT bus provides public transit access to the park via a stop at Poole Road and Carya Drive. Pedestrian actuated signals exist to aid in crossing Poole Road; high visibility crosswalks would increase visibility of the presence of pedestrian across this wide road. While Carya Drive has a sidewalk connecting to the bus stop, the connectivity is fragmented throughout Wake County Office Park. Additional pedestrian wayfinding could indicate how to access the park through the entrance by the Library as well as the main entrance.

### OPPORTUNITIES TO CONNECT

The Park sits within a County complex of offices and municipal buildings where employees could use the park site for daily walks and walking office meetings if sidewalk connections were completed. Additionally, this site could connect to nearby greenways and Walnut Creek Park. For regional connectivity, less than two miles to the east is Anderson Point Park and Poole Road Park which serve as trailheads to the Neuse River Trail. Pedestrian and bicycle facility improvements along Poole Road and linking proximate park sites will join Historic Oak View Park to a series of local and regional recreation and transportation facilities.

### DEED RESTRICTIONS

This is a Wake County owned facility.

### OUTREACH AND AWARENESS

Historic Oak View County Park provides a number of exhibits, livestock encounters, and opportunities for cultural education. With all of these activities, it can be difficult to convey all the park offers on one web page and in a brochure. The website contains less information on park features than the brochure while the website is more informative about the history of the Park.

#### Website

- Clearly informs public about the history of the park.
- Needs to include more of the featured exhibits.
- Information on goats is present but is hard to find.

#### Brochure

- Several items clearly identified on the map that are not highlighted on the website.
- Map is clear and convey all the park has to offer.
- Needs to more deeply inform users of the sites historical background.

Existing Facility	Web	Brochure	Existing Facility	Web	Brochure
Shelters	✓	✓	Tenant House	✓	✓
Barn	✓	✓	Pecan Grove		✓
Cotton Gin House		✓	Picnicking	✓	✓
Plank Kitchen	✓	✓	Fishing	✓	✓
Garden		✓	Pond	✓	✓
Carriage House		✓	Brick and Concrete Walkways		✓
Fruit Orchard		✓	Goats	✓	✓
Library		✓	Farm History Center	✓	✓
Main Farmhouse	✓	✓	Water Tower	✓	✓
Gazebo			Cemetery	✓	✓



Lack of Visibility And Awareness Of Entrance To Park

Sidewalk Ends

Opportunity To Provide Pedestrian Circulation

Paved Path

VEHICULAR CIRCULATION

**BUILDINGS**

1. History Center	6. Carriage House
2. Livestock Barn	7. Main Farmhouse
3. Cotton Gin House	8. Gazebo
4. Kitchen and Garden	9. Tenant House
5. Water Tower	

Unclear Entry No Pedestrian Access

# Historic Oak View County Park site analysis



# Historic Oak View County Park

## STRENGTHS OF THE PARK

This park is a cultural gem for North Carolina, Wake County, and nearby cities and towns. The stories, potential for hands-on activities, and ability for this park to educate future generations about the importance of agricultural practices is an asset to the community. Other strengths include:

- This site is situated in a great location within the City and County. There are several neighborhoods along Poole Road that could access the site via sidewalks.
- The site serves many organized group programs and visitors each year which brings people to the site who might not otherwise visit.
- The park is used to host several special events: Antique Car Show, a Goat Birthday Party, a Storytelling Festival, Heritage Day, and an evening Christmas program which aid in creating awareness of the park.
- There is a self-guided cell phone tour for those who are not participants in an organized group.
- The facility is well maintained and the design fits the programming intent.
- The park draws high visitation numbers from school groups. These age groups are critical to reach as future generations become further removed from historic agricultural practices and need to develop an appreciation for where food originates.



Interpretive displays tell this story of North Carolina's agricultural history.

## CHALLENGES OF THE PARK

While the park is a treasure for Wake County, the site is hidden within an office park. It is highly unlikely to draw vehicular, pedestrian, or bicycle passing traffic from Poole Road. Other challenges include:

- There are gaps in connectivity to nearby regional greenways, parks, and public sidewalks.
- Internal trails terminate without an opportunity to loop around the park, or loop around the office park via a sidewalk network.
- While interactive elements exist, many inside buildings and within the outside environment are "no touch"; teaching through interactive stations could heighten learning and improve access for young families and student groups.

## POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES

The opportunities are bountiful to enhance Oak View. Many will increase daily use and some will heighten the participation of educational components. Opportunities include:

- Large title signage branded with the Wake County Park personality will help draw new users to the site and aid in navigation.
- A worn path along Poole Road is evidence that a sidewalk is needed. Contextual connectivity would improve access to Walnut Creek Park, Walnut Creek Greenway, Poole Road Park, the Neuse River Greenway, and Anderson Point Park.



School groups comprise one of the largest visiting populations to this park.

- Adding activities offered to the general public within the park would enhance the understanding of how people lived and worked in the period of time portrayed in the park outside of school groups. These activities should be multigenerational with opportunities for interaction at various skill levels - including mobility challenged.
- With the growth of breweries and wineries, and new trends in agriculture, this site could connect people to current day agricultural practices in addition to the historic culture.
- This site could increase participation from the adjacent business park by providing an outlet for lunch walks and walking meetings.
- A loop trail would enhance the experience and likely attract more people to the site.
- Sidewalks and an entry monument will welcome visitors and indicate the park is a public place.
- Public/private partnerships with the adjacent business park could be beneficial for special events, parking, and day use.
- Interactive and play space to engage young visitors would open the site to a wider variety of users. A playground has been identified as a need by users and is currently being designed.



Live animals would enhance user experience but also require additional staff and expertise.



*Provide ADA connectivity to the picnic pad.*



*Rebuild lake bank and provide a path around the lake as well.*



*Paths through the garden are not ADA accessible.*



*Clarify the function of the space by renaming it "Outdoor Classroom"*



*Ample space is available to provide pedestrian access into the park.*



*Extend the trail surface for pedestrian activity.*



*Circulation path around pecan grove can provide use for adjacent employees.*



## Historic Yates Mill County Park

*"Escape the Daily Grind" through a variety of unique recreational, cultural, natural and agricultural experiences.*

### Address:

4620 Lake Wheeler Road, Raleigh NC, 27603

### Unique Features:

Historic Mill

Size: 174 Acres

### Hours:

8am -sunset 7 days a week

### ACCESS

There is currently no access to Historic Yates Mill County Park by public transit. Access via walking and biking is also difficult as the park is located in a rural environment with no connecting greenways, sidewalks, or on-road facilities. Currently, this park is a "drive to park." However, the location near North Carolina State University's research property primes the park for future connectivity via campus or City transit.

### OPPORTUNITIES TO CONNECT

The site is situated within and adjacent to several NC State University agricultural buildings. Yates Mill County Park could partner with those facilities to support and/or fund trails and public transit to enhance local and regional access. There also may be an opportunity to connect to the Cary and Raleigh greenway system through the north west side of the park.

### DEED RESTRICTIONS

- A Lease exists between the State of NC and Wake County for the property referred to as the "Ground Lease" which outlines what is permitted on the general property.
- An agreement exists between Wake County and Yates Mill Associates (with approval from the State) for the management, maintenance, upkeep, and operations of the historic Mill building.



The Finley Center provides restrooms, meeting rooms, and educational opportunities for visitors.

### OUTREACH AND AWARENESS

Historic Yates Mill County Park offers unique features that make it a valuable addition to Wake County's Park System. Both the website and brochure clearly demonstrate why the park is unique and what the site offers. The Park is known for its public programs and the website effectively communicates these events. The brochure more clearly details trail uses and skill levels.

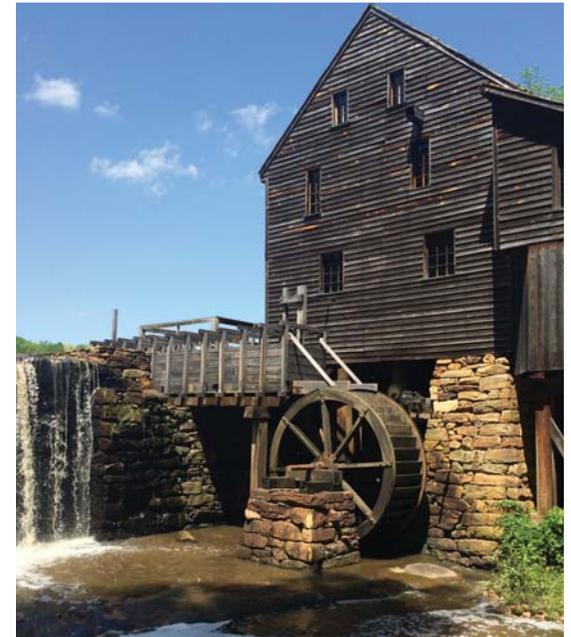
#### Website

- Clearly outlines the history, but not public access features.
- Provides updated information about upcoming public programs.
- Does not clarify trail uses and skill levels.

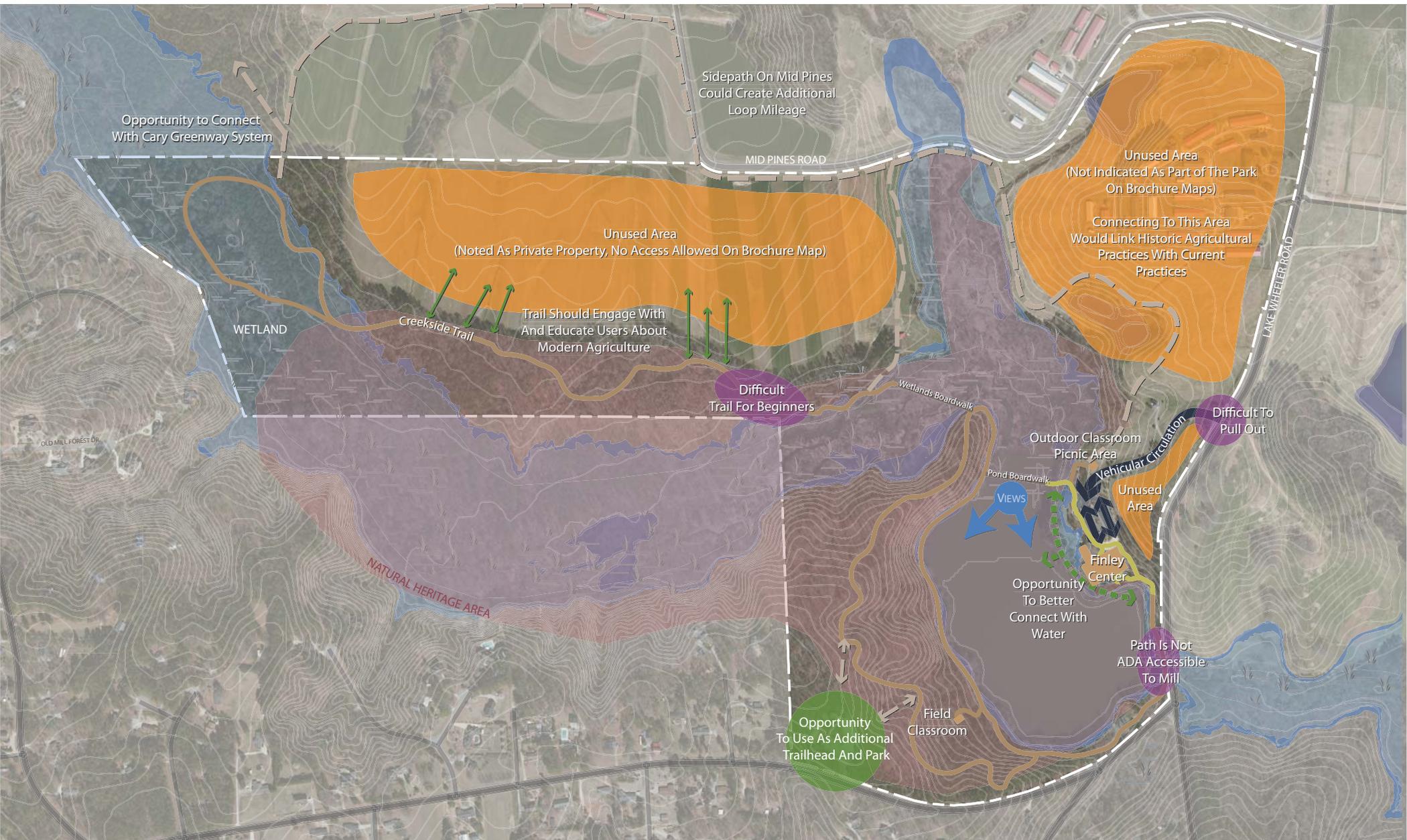
#### Brochure

- Illustrates a balance of education and features. The trail rating system could be used County wide on other park trails.
- Needs to highlight photography rules, Mill Tour information, and pet restrictions.
- Fishing locations should be clearly marked.

Existing Facility	Web	Brochure
Water - powered Gristmill	✓	✓
Park Center for Education and Research	✓	✓
20 AC Pond with Boardwalk and fixed Dock	✓	✓
Wildlife Refuge	✓	
Picnic Areas	✓	✓
Amphitheater		
Field Classroom		✓
Research Site for NCSU	✓	
Hiking Trails	✓	✓
Fishing	✓	✓



A public private partnership is in place to guide tours of the mill.



# Historic Yates Mill County Park site analysis

Two foot contours





## Historic Yates Mill County Park

### STRENGTHS OF THE PARK

Historic Yates Mill County Park is surrounded by NC State research facilities. The rural character of the context and adjacent research farms preserve the original landscape surrounding the mill. This departure from the urban environment is an asset to residents living in Raleigh and is a short ten minute drive from downtown. The facilities are modern and new while successfully blending into the natural landscape. Additional strengths include:

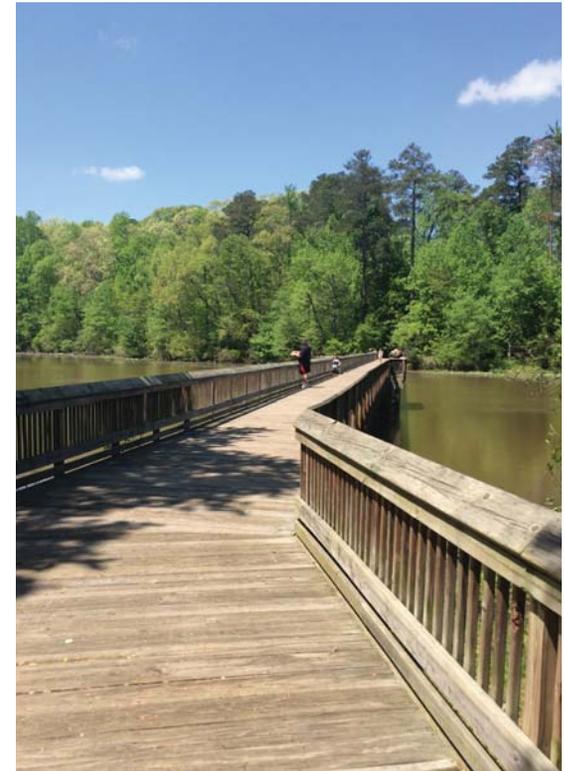
- The trails elevate the Park from only a historic educational facilities to a daily use Park.
  - Historic Yates Mill County Park's signature event, the Annual Harvest Celebration (September) and the Mill As Muse Art and Photography event bring people to the site who may not otherwise visit.
  - While much of the site focuses on agricultural history, it also serves as a wonderful setting for environmental education.
  - Picnic areas are located away from the main building .
  - The easy and moderate trail lengths are manageable for multigenerational hikers.
  - Fishing and canoeing provide activities that attract all ages and generate repeat use of the park.
- Mill tours are limited to specific days and times. This can be frustrating for visitors and staff.
  - The park lacks traditional park facilities such as a playgrounds and picnic shelters that some visitors identify with a park facility.
  - Park photography is very popular, specifically professional session photography. The park recently instituted a permitting process for session photography to monitor professional activity. This rule (posted on signs throughout the park) should be clarified to not dissuade visitors from taking non-professional photos.
  - The investment in time to hike a trail should be posted for users - particularly those who may not be able to double back on the Creekside Trail.
  - There is a need for more interactive elements within the park to offset the "No" signs posted throughout the park - specifically near the Mill.

### CHALLENGES OF THE PARK

While the site offers daily use and special uses, the accessibility of the site can be a challenge. Specific challenges include:

- As a unique County resource, accessibility is critical to key features. Access to the Mill is not ADA accessible and can be disappointing and embarrassing for physically challenged visitors, especially those in groups.
  - Self-designated as a wildlife preserve, the park does not allow pets (such as dogs) except service animals. This is a difficult rule to enforce because many people assume dogs are permitted in parks. Historic Yates Mill County Park is the only park in the system that does not allow dogs. Additional commentary on the purpose of this rule will help visitors understand the importance of respecting this limitation.
- Adjacency with NC State University Agricultural Field Laboratories provide partnerships for trails and transit connections.
  - Marketing the educational and recreation opportunities to schools will increase weekday use and expose the park to more families in Wake County.
  - The restriction of shoreline fishing, additional opportunities may need to be explored to meet fishing demands
  - The park could expand interpretation through the preservation of the Phares Yates House located off park property (¼ mile from the park).
  - The park could expand by acquiring the property adjacent to the park and just downstream on Steep Hill Creek. This land would connect to the Phares Yates House.

- Plans are progressing to link the park with some of the University Field Laboratories including constructing a greenway trail from the Dairy Museum to the park. The plans exist conceptually and are not currently funded.



Fishing is a popular activity at Historic Yates Mill County Park.





## Lake Crabtree County Park

To serve the growing needs of Wake County residents by having passive leisure and recreational opportunities available in a natural setting.

**Address:**  
1400 Aviation Parkway, Morrisville NC, 27560

**Unique Features:**  
Mountain Biking/Water Access

**Size:** 215 Acres

**Hours:** 8am-Sunset 7 days a week  
Park office 8am- 1pm

### ACCESS

Lake Crabtree does not currently have direct access to public transit. The closest bus stop is located at the intersection of Weston Parkway and Norwell Boulevard. Connectivity could be provided through Black Creek Greenway and supported by wayfinding signage.

### OPPORTUNITIES TO CONNECT

The park is situated in a highly populated area of Wake County in proximity to several key destinations such as the Raleigh Durham International Airport, William B. Umstead State Park, and the Research Triangle Park. The Black Creek Greenway provides bicycle and pedestrian access into the park, connecting the park with the Town of Cary's greenway system. Interstate 40 provides easy vehicular access for residents across the County.

The opportunity to connect to Umstead State Park exists with improvements to Old Reedy Creek Road which would also connect the park to the City of Raleigh's extensive greenway trail network. Improvements to Aviation Parkway could also provide better multi-modal access.

### DEED RESTRICTIONS

- Lake Crabtree County Park leases the land from the Raleigh Durham Airport Authority. Wake County owns the Flood Control Structure on the property.
- The lease stipulates that mountain bike trails and other special recreation areas be provided within the park and maintained by TORC.
- RDU recently hired a firm to evaluate all of their property leases, including Lake Crabtree County Park, with a focus on land use policy and revenue.

### OUTREACH AND AWARENESS

The website and brochure are both valuable marketing tools and provide users with a clear understanding of the amenities the park has to offer. The brochure map makes it easy for visitors to differentiate between types of trails and the skill levels needed.

#### Website

- Instead of linking to the brochure, language could be added to the "Park information" to showcase the amenities of the park and attract new users.
- The historic homesite is highlighted on the website, but not in the brochure.

#### Brochure

- Providing a legend of park amenities would clearly inform users of key park features.
- Successfully showcases the different types of trails and skill levels needed in an easy to understand map.
- Canoeing classes and boating activities are not indicated.

Existing Facility	Web	Brochure
Playgrounds	✓	
Hiking Trails	✓	✓
Multit-Use Trails	✓	✓
Mountain Biking	✓	✓
Mountain Bike Skills Area	✓	✓
Boat Launch	✓	✓
Historic Home Site		
WaterWise Garden	✓	
Shelters	✓	✓
Fishing	✓	
Canoeing	✓	

Existing Facility	Web	Brochure
Volleyball	✓	✓
Boating Rental	✓	✓
Sailing	✓	✓
Amphitheater		✓
Maintenance and Managers Office		✓



Education and recreation are expertly woven together in this park.



# Lake Crabtree County Park site analysis

Two foot contours





## Lake Crabtree County Park

### STRENGTHS OF THE PARK

Lake Crabtree County Park's greatest strength lies in its location. With easy access off of I-40, the park is very popular with County residents, especially as an event venue. The lake itself provides multiple recreation opportunities and the trail system offers some of the best beginner mountain biking. Additional strengths include:

- The existing mountain biking trails are well marked and provide opportunities for cyclists of all skill levels.
- The park offers residents of a highly dense area a chance to enjoy the outdoors and the serenity of the lake.
- The park offers a diverse menu of activities ensuring that there is "something for everyone."
- Some of the most popular activities are a result of the park's water access: kayaking, canoeing, row boating, fishing, and paddling.
- The rental business allows residents who do not have access to water sport equipment to enjoy Lake Crabtree.

### CHALLENGES OF THE PARK

While there are many benefits of Lake Crabtree County Park, there are also some challenges including:

- ADA improvements are needed to ensure that users of all abilities can enjoy the various programming and recreational opportunities in the park.
- Public perception of the lake contamination may be preventing use of the park. Displays and kiosks educating users may reduce these concerns.
- The park has the potential to be the most well-linked County Park, and yet several of the streets bordering the park lack multimodal accommodations.
- Pedestrian wayfinding signs are needed to connect users to all of the features of the park - not just the trail system.

- While I-40 provides regional access, sound impacts of the interstate affect user experience along the Lake Trail.
- Due to flooding issues, the trail system can have several closures during wet periods, therefore limiting access to one of the most popular facilities in the park.
- Parking can be a challenge for large events as there is not a designated overflow parking area.
- There are many visitors that allow their dogs off leash even though it is prohibited.
- Due to the designed use of the trails, user conflicts exist. The trails are heavily used by cyclists, therefore there seems to be an unspoken expectation for pedestrians to yield to cyclists.

### POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES

Lake Crabtree County Park truly has the opportunity to become a park for everyone. Some improvements include:

- The rental season could be expanded to meet the current user demand for water activities.
- The park currently serves many specialty groups, such as the Triangle Model Yacht Club and can continue to attract these niche groups by developing a formal process for using the property.
- With the addition of an educational classroom, users would have the opportunity to participate in expanded programming focusing on water quality, environmental protection, and wetland conservation.
- User feedback highlights the demand for a disc golf course in the area.
- Installing boardwalks along the Old Beech Trail would make it accessible to all users and also limit the number of trail closures due to flooding.



A variety of offerings activate this park during all hours and for all ages.



Mountain biking trails and skills areas draw area residents and visitors throughout the region.



Mountain biking and hiking trails are clearly marked throughout the park.



Overlooks and viewing areas should be added along the shoreline.



Formalize and improve trail connections to Umstead and the Cary Trail system.



Identifying all park features on maps will aid in navigation.



Celebrate and promote unique features like the waterwise Garden.



Explore the potential to add a boardwalk and/or make trail improvements so this section is accessible when wet.



Complete an internal hard surface trail system to create a more ADA accessible park experience.



Expand waterfront offerings from rental units to access into the park from across the Lake.



Accessibility is a huge challenge for this park that otherwise seems like the perfect opportunity to serve all users.



# North Wake Landfill County Park

*No current mission statement for this park.*

<b>Address:</b> 9300 Deponie Drive Raleigh NC, 27614		
<b>Unique Features:</b> Reuse/Viewshed	<b>Size:</b> N/A	<b>Hours:</b> 8am- Sunset 7 days a week

### ACCESS

The park is served by the City of Raleigh's transit system, with a bus stop located near the the park entrance on Durrant Road. Sidewalk connectivity on Deponie Drive coupled with wayfinding would improve the safety and experience of arriving at the Park. Adding more stops along Durant Road will provide better access to the park from surrounding neighborhoods.

### OPPORTUNITIES TO CONNECT

The Abbotts Creek Trail connects the park to surrounding neighborhoods. Providing safe crossings of Durant Road would increase the bicycle and pedestrian access to the park. The addition of an elementary school and community center provides the opportunity for increased park usage.

### DEED RESTRICTIONS

This is a Wake County owned facility.



Restroom facilities serve users of Abbotts Creek Trail and prepares the park for hosting events and expanding facilities that will lengthen visit times.

### OUTREACH AND AWARENESS

The North Wake Landfill County Park is unique in the fact that it was once a landfill. The story behind this conversion is made clear in the brochure, but is missing on the website and within the park itself. The mountain bike skills trails is a great asset to the park and should be highlighted on the website and brochure.

#### Website

- Relaying the story behind "the Big Hill" would provide context to the users unsure of what the park has to offer.
- Including maps of the trail system and park features on the website would easily display the various park amenities.
- The mountain bike skills course should be emphasized to attract more users.

#### Brochure

- Educational components of the history of the park are well explained and identified.
- Clearly outlines what facilities are available.
- The trail distances that are described in the pictures should also be conveyed on the map.

Existing Facility	Web	Brochure
Paved Trails		✓
Hiking Trails	✓	✓
Mountain Biking Trail		✓
Mountain Bike Skills Area	✓	✓
Picnic Areas	✓	✓
Playground	✓	✓
Shelter	✓	✓
Restroom		✓



Connectivity to Abbotts Creek Trail is a huge asset of this park.



# North Wake Landfill County Park site analysis

Two foot contours





## North Wake Landfill County Park

### STRENGTHS OF THE PARK

This park has the unique opportunity to educate and challenge citizens and visitors to contemplate their consumptive behavior and personal effects on the environment. The mission and educational opportunities can be linked to those of Harris Lake providing a deeper understanding of how our lifestyles impact the earth and reveal some of the more difficult visual reminders of how our society defines livability.

- Biking opportunities throughout the site are abundant, including the main road, mountain biking, and connections to neighborhoods.
- The location and access to the site avails the educational features to impact a large audience.
- The park site is new and has updated site furnishings and equipment.
- This park features one of the most incredible views in the County.

### CHALLENGES OF THE PARK

Many challenges of the park are associated with perception and the lack of connection between what the site was before and how it has transformed into the park it is today.

- Many residents still consider the site a landfill and do not recognize the transformation as a county park.
- The presence of methane gases in the gas collection area can be intimidating to users and cause safety concerns.
- There is limited shading in the park, especially around the park loop road and the playground area.
- There is no signage leading pedestrians from the parking lot to the top of the hill trail. There is also no separation for cars and pedestrians along the road leading to the top of the hill trail.
- There are no interpretive signs or public art to link the transition from a dangerous, waste-filled site to a well-functioning park with opportunities to educate young generations about our behavioral impacts on the environment.

### POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES

This park is replete with opportunities to transform the way people think about their lifestyles. Some opportunities that can improve user experience and elevate the educational opportunities include:

- The view of the Raleigh skyline is a unique asset to the park and an accessible trail from the playground to the top of the hill would help to highlight this feature.
- Installing interpretive signage and educational kiosks throughout the park would highlight the history of the park and educate users on solid waste management and recycling.
- Adding shade trees to the Peak Trail would improve the user's experience.
- The interior road network provide opportunities to host events such as a criterion, looped running races and distance markers.
- The proximity of the recycling center provides educational opportunities within the park and can promote Wake County's 86ers campaign.
- Currently, the name of the park is creating a barrier to use. By modifying the name, it may remove the negative connotation of being a landfill and promote the site as a park - not a brownfield.



*In addition to the skills area, mountain bike trails weave throughout the northern section of the site.*



*Views from the top of the hill are a reward for climbing the slope. A map depicting neighborhoods and downtown Raleigh will impress upon users how massive the trash pile is to create such a vast view.*



*The Mountain bike skills area can be marketed to help spread awareness of this park.*



*There is an opportunity to create shade and tell a story about waste as users ascend the hill and pass by the recycling center.*



*The recycling center should not be buffered from sight. This should be used as an opportunity for education.*



*Tell the story of how far visitors can see with maps. Add interpretive signage and information detailing how far the trash came from to form this hill.*



*Create awareness about site furnishings selections: recycled, LED, solar, and ways to reduce consumption.*



*Provide shade for exposed playground equipment.*



*Shade should be artfully incorporated at the top of the hill without blocking views.*



*Highlight the benefits of recycling versus mindlessly adding to the mound of trash.*



*The hill provides a great view for spectator sports and races: Runs, criterion, etc.*