

Appendix A: Summary of Public Input

The citizens of Wake County have been provided with numerous opportunities to become involved with the development of this Open Space Plan. First, Wake County provided grants to 10 of the 11 municipalities within the County to prepare individual open space plans. For each municipality, public workshops were advertised and conducted. The Town of Knightdale, as one example, sent notification to all residents, farm families and landowners through their water billing system. An estimated 55 workshops, meetings and public events took place during the calendar years 2001 and 2002, at which time the citizens of each municipality and the county were invited to view open space materials and maps, fill out public opinion surveys and direct questions about open space planning to consultants and staff of each municipality. Additionally, prior to adopting each municipal open space plan, public hearings were conducted by the elected officials of each community.

Second, the electronic and print media of Wake County featured the preparation of both the municipal open space plans and the county-wide consolidated open space effort within numerous stories during calendar years 2001 and 2002. For example, the Wendell Gazette prepared an article entitled "Keep the Green." Additionally, the Wake County Public Information Officer worked with county staff and the team of consultants employed by the county to publish a quarterly newsletter, called "Growth and Community Initiatives," that summarized the work of the Open Space, Watershed, Growth Management and Transportation planning efforts.

Third, several working committees were established by Wake County to work in conjunction with staff and consultants to prepare the various growth and environmental initiatives plans. For the open space plan, staff and the consultant worked with the county Open Space Advisory Committee (OSAC) and with Partners for Open Space and the Environment (POSE), which is comprised of municipal staff, to prepare this plan. Further, the staff and consultants for the open space plan also attended and solicited input from other working committees, including the Watershed Management Task Force, Growth Management Task Force and Transportation Task Force. This has resulted in a coordinated set of policies, programs and recommendations which are shared by each of the individual plans.

How the Public Was Involved



Citizens of Wake Forest participate in one of the public workshops conducted for the Town's Open Space Plan.



An editorial from the Wendell Gazette illustrates the coverage and support that news media have provided the open space planning effort.



Citizens view some of the open space maps that were made available during the fall 2001 Park Fest event.

Public Support for Open Space Protection

Fourth, the County has utilized its web site (www.co.wake.nc.us) to inform the public about the progress of the Growth and Environmental Initiative work. The web site has been used to post meeting dates and times, summaries of recommendations and conclusions and feature articles on issues. Additionally, the municipal governments have also used their web sites to furnish information to their residents. For example, the Town of Cary has published its Open Space and Historic Resources Plan on its web site (www.townofcary.org/depts/dsdept/P&Z/openspace/openspacehome.htm) and provides regular updates for residents. This has proven to be one of the most popular programs among Cary citizens. Other towns and cities in Wake County are also utilizing the internet to furnish information about their open space activities.

Fifth, Wake County also used public festivals and events as avenues to solicit input from the public for the open space plan. In the fall 2001, the annual Park Fest celebration featured a booth on the Open Space Plan. Earth Day 2002 and Artspllosure 2002 were other events that featured information about the plan. The county staff will continue to use these venues to both inform the public about open space and invite comment on the goals of the program.

Finally, Wake County has always had cooperative relations with private sector groups as it carries out the objectives of environmental stewardship, park and recreation programming. Toward this end, Wake County has worked closely with the Triangle Land Conservancy, the Trust for Public Land, the Triangle Greenways Council and other groups to establish recommendations that are featured in this Open Space Plan.

The recommendations contained within the plan are representative of the desires of the citizens of Wake County. The plan resolves the diverse range of opinions and views about open space and its importance to the quality of life, economy, environment and the future growth of Wake County. The process used throughout the preparation of this plan has been open and participatory.

Throughout the preparation of this master plan, the citizens of Wake County have shown enthusiastic support for the protection of critical open space resources. Most of the municipal governments conducted surveys of the public to better gauge the level of support for open space protection. When asked what should be accomplished by open space preservation, a majority of residents concluded that acquiring land to protect water supply and native habitat, linking people to the natural resources of the County, and protecting land that offers places to interpret local history, were the most important pursuits.

When asked who should manage and care for open space lands, the majority of residents felt that a partnership among public and private organizations was the preferred method, followed by a commitment on the part of municipal and county governments.

When asked if they supported the use of public funds for the preservation of open space, an overwhelming majority of residents responded yes.

When asked the type of activities that they would most likely want to participate in within an open space or greenway landscape, the majority of residents concluded that walking along a creek or stream, picnicking with friends and family members, and riding a bicycle for fun or fitness were their top three activities.

In addition to responding to the opinion surveys, residents defined that their most important issues regarding open space protection included:

- the rapid loss of the native landscape throughout Wake County,
- how the County and municipal governments will pay for open space protection,
- putting a halt on development that adversely affects streams and wildlife habitat, and
- encouraging developers to dedicate open space during the land development process.



Matt Cusak, of EcoScience Corporation, leads citizens from Fuquay-Varina through a discussion of open space resources found with the municipal government urban service area.