ORANGE COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT
131 W. MARGARET LANE, SUITE 201
HILLSBOROUGH, NORTH CAROLINA 27278

AGENDA
ORANGE COUNTY PLANNING BOARD

ORANGE COUNTY WEST CAMPUS OFFICE BUILDING
131 WEST MARGARET LANE – LOWER LEVEL CONFERENCE ROOM (ROOM #004)
HILLSBOROUGH, NORTH CAROLINA 27278
Wednesday, July 2, 2014
Regular Meeting – 7:00 pm

No.	Page(s)	Agenda Item
1.		**CALL TO ORDER**
2.		**INFORMATIONAL ITEMS**
	3-4	**a.** Planning Calendar for July and August
3.	**5-8**	**APPROVAL OF MINUTES** June 4, 2014 Regular Meeting
4.		**CONSIDERATION OF ADDITIONS TO AGENDA**
5.		**PUBLIC CHARGE**

Introduction to the Public Charge

The Board of County Commissioners, under the authority of North Carolina General Statute, appoints the Orange County Planning Board (OCPB) to uphold the written land development laws of the County. The general purpose of OCPB is to guide and accomplish coordinated and harmonious development. OCPB shall do so in a manner which considers the present and future needs of its residents and businesses through efficient and responsive process that contributes to and promotes the health, safety, and welfare of the overall County. The OCPB will make every effort to uphold a vision of responsive governance and quality public services during our deliberations, decisions, and recommendations.

Public Charge

The Planning Board pledges to the residents of Orange County its respect. The Board asks its residents to conduct themselves in a respectful, courteous manner, both with the Board and with fellow residents. At any time, should any member of the Board or any resident fail to observe this public charge, the Chair will ask the offending member to leave the meeting until that individual regains personal control. Should decorum fail to be restored, the Chair will recess the meeting until such time that a genuine commitment to this public charge is observed.

6. **CHAIR COMMENTS**

No.	Page(s)	Agenda Item
7.	**9-130**	**PARKS & RECREATION MASTER PLAN:** To review and comment upon Orange County's draft Parks & Recreation Master Plan. At the June 3, 2014 Board of County Commissioners meeting, the BOCC referred the draft plan to several advisory boards for review and comment. Comments are due no later than August 31, 2014. **Presenter:** Perdita Holtz, Planning Systems Coordinator and Department of Environment, Agriculture, and Parks & Recreation (DEAPR) staff
8.		**COMMITTEE/ADVISORY BOARD REPORTS** **a.** Board of Adjustment
9.		**ADJOURNMENT**

IF AN EMERGENCY OCCURS, OR IF YOU ARE RUNNING LATE FOR THE MEETING, PLEASE LEAVE A VOICE MAIL FOR PERDITA HOLTZ (919-245-2578).

July 2014

July 2014

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August 2014

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	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
Jun 29 - Jul 5	**Jun 29**	**30**	**Jul 1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
				6:30pm ORC 7:00pm *PLANNING BOARD MEETING (West Campus Office Bldg)		HOLIDAY	
Jul 6 - 12	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**	**11**	**12**
Jul 13 - 19	**13**	**14**	**15**	**16**	**17**	**18**	**19**
		7:30pm Board of Adjustment (West Campus Office Bldg) CANCELLED					
Jul 20 - 26	**20**	**21**	**22**	**23**	**24**	**25**	**26**
Jul 27 - Aug 2	**27**	**28**	**29**	**30**	**31**	**Aug 1**	**2**

*Planning Board Member Attendance Required

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August 2014

August 2014

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September 2014

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	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
Jul 27 - Aug 2	**Jul 27**	**28**	**29**	**30**	**31**	**Aug 1**	**2**
Aug 3 - 9	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**
				7:00pm *PLANNING BOARD MEETING (West Campus Office Bldg)			
Aug 10 - 16	**10**	**11**	**12**	**13**	**14**	**15**	**16**
		7:30pm Board of Adjustment (West Campus Office Bldg)					
Aug 17 - 23	**17**	**18**	**19**	**20**	**21**	**22**	**23**
				7:00pm OUTBoard Meeting (West Campus Office Bldg)			
Aug 24 - 30	**24**	**25**	**26**	**27**	**28**	**29**	**30**
Aug 31 - Sep 6	**31**	**Sep 1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**

*Planning Board Member Attendance Required

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D R A F T

MINUTES
ORANGE COUNTY PLANNING BOARD
JUNE 4, 2014
REGULAR MEETING

MEMBERS PRESENT: Peter Hallenbeck (Chair), Cheeks Township Representative; Lisa Stuckey, Chapel Hill Township Representative; Maxecine Mitchell, At-Large Bingham Township; Herman Staats, At-Large, Cedar Grove Township; Buddy Hartley, Little River Township Representative; Tony Blake, Bingham Township Representative; Andrea Rohrbacher, At-Large Chapel Hill Township; James Lea, Cedar Grove Township Representative; Laura Nicholson, Eno Township Representative; Bryant Warren, Hillsborough Township Representative;

MEMBERS ABSENT: Paul Guthrie, At-Large Chapel Hill Township; Vacant-At-Large;

STAFF PRESENT: Craig Benedict, Planning Director; Michael Harvey, Current Planning Supervisor; Patrick Mallett, Planner II; Tina Love, Administrative Assistant II

OTHERS PRESENT: Terry Boylan, Glenn Futrell

AGENDA ITEM 1: CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

AGENDA ITEM 2: INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

a) Planning Calendar for June and July

AGENDA ITEM 3: APPROVAL OF MINUTES
MAY 7, 2014 REGULAR MEETING

MOTION by Lisa Stuckey to approve the May 7, 2014 Planning Board minutes. Seconded by James Lea.
VOTE: UNANIMOUS

AGENDA ITEM 4: CONSIDERATION OF ADDITIONS TO AGENDA

AGENDA ITEM 5: PUBLIC CHARGE

Introduction to the Public Charge

The Board of County Commissioners, under the authority of North Carolina General Statute, appoints the Orange County Planning Board (OCPB) to uphold the written land development laws of the County. The general purpose of OCPB is to guide and accomplish coordinated and harmonious development. OCPB shall do so in a manner which considers the present and future needs of its citizens and businesses through efficient and responsive process that contributes to and promotes the health, safety, and welfare of the overall County. The OCPB will make every effort to uphold a vision of responsive governance and quality public services during our deliberations, decisions, and recommendations.

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AGENDA ITEM 6: CHAIR COMMENTS

Pete Hallenbeck: I would like to mention that part of being on the Planning Board is attending the Quarterly Public Hearings. We have had a few close calls. We need to be able to contact you in case we do not have a quorum. I would like Michael to remind us of the ground rules.

Michael Harvey: The last Quarterly Public Hearing we began to review the Class A Special Use Permit application for a solar facility off Mount Sinai Road. The hearing ran about four and one half hours when it was determined that the BOCC wanted the applicant and the adjacent property owners who were expressing concern over the project to submit additional information. They adjourned that public hearing until the September 8 regular quarterly public hearing. That means the public hearing is still technically open. It has not been closed. Remember that special use permits are reviewed in a quasi-judicial setting which means they are based on sworn testimony and material evidence has been introduced into the records by those in favor or against by public application. There is a prohibition in you engaging in communication meaning you should not talk to anyone about the project. It is reasonable to ask myself or my staff for information that you need.

Craig Benedict: You are like the jury so that any information that is presented to you is what you base your decision on.

Pete Hallenbeck: These meetings normally start and stop in one evening.

Tony Blake: Fortunately, this is the first quarterly public hearing I have missed. What is my position in the next quarterly public hearing?

Craig Benedict: If you looked at all the evidence in the hearing, you could read the minutes and ask questions. You had to attest that you have read everything that was in the documents to vote.

Pete Hallenbeck: Quasi-judicial means everyone gets sworn in and give evidence and you will have all the evidence available to read so when you get to the next quarterly hearing, you will have the same as everyone else.

Craig Benedict: Our Unified Development Ordinance allows someone to provide written documents to the planning board and they can read that script. The reason we ask for written documents is that when it comes back to the BOCC, they see that specific information.

Buddy Hartley: For the Chair's information, I was ready and on call if I needed to be there.

Michael Harvey: The question was asked if members are prohibited from visiting locations where special use permits applications are being reviewed. My opinion is there is no technical prohibition on a member visiting the site after the public hearing is held but you cannot engage, or allow yourself to be engaged in, conversation with anyone. I believe that site visits can be helpful but if you have not done so, I would ask that you don't.

Pete Hallenbeck: If you do see the site, you can't say I saw the site and I think this.

AGENDA ITEM 7: MAJOR SUBDIVISION CONCEPT PLAN: To review and make a decision on an major subdivision concept plan application seeking to sub-divide a 25.33 acre parcel of property into 14 single-family residential lots with 16.29 acres of common open space near the intersection of Stroud's Creek Road and NC Highway 57 in Hillsborough Township.
Presenter: Patrick Mallett, Planner II

Patrick Mallett: *Presented a PowerPoint presentation and reviewed abstract.*

James Carter: Where is that fence and will it remain there?

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Patrick Mallett: That was installed by the school.

Michael Harvey: As covered in our abstract, one of the reasons you are seeing lots of this size is because water and sewer service is being provided. That is the only way this project was allowed to get these smaller lots, which is in accordance with the provisions of Article 7. The other comment is that you will recall previous major subdivisions, applications are typically required to submit a conventional and flexible development options.

Pete Hallenbeck: There is a power line easement and it goes and disappears. Is there a power line in that easement now?

Pat Mallett: There is a power line that goes through here and extends north.

Pete Hallenbeck: Currently the power line does not go through.

Terry Boylan: It does not go through. That is a tree line from when it did before.

Pete Hallenbeck: What about the dual water line fees?

Pat Mallett: They are proposing a fire service line with two hydrants.

Terry Boylan: There are two different lines.

Tony Blake: Craig, wouldn't this be part of Hillsborough's ETJ?

Craig Benedict: Just outside of that.

Tony Blake: By state law they could petitioned to be annexed?

Craig Benedict: Yes. Most likely as part of the water/sewer agreement.

Pat Mallett: They are interested in selling water and sewer and not annexation.

Tony Blake: How large are the houses?

Terry Boylan: The setbacks will allow 3,600 square foot.

Pete Hallenbeck: What could the residences do with the light green space?

Pat Mallett: You have building setbacks on the roadside, 35 foot buffer. There was originally a concept plan that had two lots there.

Terry Boylan: We have a 100 foot or setback off this property line and that gives us this set back here for lot 14.

Pat Mallett: I think it is not so much what can be built there but what is held in common.

Pete Hallenbeck: It seems like a setup for a wonderful neighbor war.

Herman Staats: Why was the open space left open and not part of Lot 14?

Terry Boylan: It could conceivably be part of Lot 14.

Pete Hallenbeck: That is an issue for you as the developer.

Pat Mallett: Typically you want to see like to like.

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Terry Boylan: That is one reason it is not so much larger than the other lots.

Glenn Futrell: We, my wetland consultant, we had all the wetlands reevaluated and we received that report last week. We comply with all the setback requirements and we are not changing anything previously to what was done six or seven years ago.

MOTION by Maxecine Mitchell to recommend approval to the BOCC. Seconded by James Lea.
VOTE: UNANIMOUS

AGENDA ITEM 8: COMMITTEE/ADVISORY BOARD REPORTS:

a. Board of Adjustment

AGENDA ITEM 12: ADJOURNMENT:

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ORANGE COUNTY
PLANNING BOARD
ACTION AGENDA ITEM ABSTRACT
Meeting Date: July 2, 2014

Action Agenda Item No. 7

SUBJECT: Parks & Recreation Master Plan

DEPARTMENT: Planning and Inspections **PUBLIC HEARING: (Y/N)** No

ATTACHMENT(S):
Draft Parks & Recreation Master Plan

INFORMATION CONTACT:
Perdita Holtz, 919-245-2578
Craig Benedict, 919-245-2592
Ardra Webster, DAEPR, 919-245-2664
David Stancil, DEAPR, 919-245-2510

PURPOSE: To review and comment on the draft Parks & Recreation Master Plan.

BACKGROUND: Orange County's draft Park & Recreation Master Plan was presented at the June 3, 2014 Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) meeting. Staff of the Department of Environment, Agriculture, Parks and Recreation (DEAPR) are the lead County staff members on this project. At the June 3 meeting, the BOCC referred the draft plan to a number of advisory boards for review and comment, with comments due by August 31. The Planning Board is one of the advisory boards to which the draft plan was referred.

Additional information regarding the draft plan is available as part of the June 3 BOCC meeting materials available at: http://orangecountync.gov/occlerks/140603.pdf. Planning Board members are encouraged to review the materials prior to Planning Board meeting to become familiar with the background information provided.

Ardra Webster of DEAPR will attend the Planning Board meeting to present the highlights of the draft master plan and answer any questions.

FINANCIAL IMPACT: There is no financial impact in reviewing the draft Parks & Recreation Master Plan and providing comments.

RECOMMENDATION: The Planning Director recommends the Planning Board review the draft Park & Recreation Master Plan and provide any comments by the August 31, 2014 deadline.

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2030

Parks & Recreation Master Plan

Orange County, North Carolina

Public Hearing Draft—June 3, 2014

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NORTH CAROLINA

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Orange County
Parks and Recreation Master Plan 2030

Board of County Commissioners
Barry Jacobs, Chair
Earl McKee, Vice-Chair
Mark Dorosin
Alice Gordon
Bernadette Pelissier
Renee Price
Penny Rich

Parks and Recreation Council
Neal Bench, Chair
Eric Roeder, Vice-Chair
Joel Bulkley
James Carter
Denise Dickinson
Erin Dillard
Allan Green
Betty McDade Khan
Jamie Paulen
Tori Williams Reid
Robert Robinson

Staff Master Plan Team (Department of Environment, Agriculture, Parks & Recreation)
Marabeth Carr
Dan Derby
Lynn Hecht
Rich Shaw
Chris Sousa
David Stancil
Lori Taft
Ardra Webster
Beth Young
Renisha Howard, Graduate Intern (UNC MPA)

Staff Resources Group
Myra Austin (Department on Aging)
Donna King (Health Department)
Meredith Stewart (Health Department)
Brian Carson (Planning and Inspections Department)
Perdita Holtz (Planning and Inspections Department)
Margaret Jones (Tax Administration)
Laurie Paolicelli (Chapel Hill-Orange County Visitors Bureau)
Yvonne Scarlett (Economic Development Commission)
Michael Talbert (Assistant/Interim County Manager)

Special Thanks to: Dr. Nancy Gladwell and Dr. Erick Byrd, UNC-Greensboro; John Stock and Vicky Wilson, Orange County SportsPlex; Durham Technical Community College

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Summary of the Plan

In July 1988, the Orange County Board of Commissioners adopted the County's first master plan for the provision of parks and recreation services. This document, the "Master Recreation and Parks Plan" included on its opening page the following introduction:

"The growing population of America has more leisure time than ever before, a factor encouraging greater participation in recreational activities…As a consequence, federal, state and local governments are challenged with providing adequate recreational activities for an expanding population. This challenge is heightened by the fact that urbanization is reducing existing open space. Increased demand often results in the overuse of existing facilities which in turn leads to mis-use or deterioration."

What was true in 1988 appears true or even exacerbated in 2014. Greater demand for a wide range of recreational opportunities is still evident. The past 25 years have seen further dramatic changes in Orange County, where almost 50,000 additional residents have come to reside since 1988. Urban and suburban development has changed the landscape of much of the nation, the state and our county.

This same quarter-century has also been a period of dramatic change in the degree of park facilities and recreation programs in the county – especially in the past 15 years. Since 1998, Orange County has funded, constructed and opened six new parks, and witnessed substantial increases in recreation and athletic program participation. The facilities and programs available in 2014 offer opportunities beyond those envisioned in 1988, into program areas and types of facilities only opaquely seen at that time. Likewise, the linkages between public parks, recreation programs and public health has become an issue of national significance, and interest in healthier lifestyles (whether through athletic events on playing fields or opportunities to commune with nature on an interpretive trail) is of heightened awareness.

To provide for these places, the County embarked on an innovative and proactive Lands Legacy Program which works in part to acquire future park sites, many of which were identified back in the 1988 plan.

The Parks and Recreation Master Plan 2030 contained herein is, in essence, an attempt to:

- examine the lessons and experiences of the past,
- identify current issues and challenges, and
- project community needs and desires into a vision for the future – a future that ensures a legacy of parks and public open spaces for current and future generations.

Background and Inventory – Why a New Plan

The 1988 Master Recreation and Parks Plan was Orange County's first vision for a future of park facilities and recreational opportunities, and it has served the County well. The fact that so many of its organizing concepts, goals and identified facility needs continue to be the basis of activity and policy is testament to its service.

However, there can be no question that many things have changed since 1988. New residential subdivisions, schools, population growth, interstate highways, and changes in community infrastructure are just a few of the many changed conditions from the 1988 plan. In order to accurately represent the vision for the future, plans must be updated, and goals and objectives revisited and adjusted. This plan looks to both the ideas and goals of the old plan, and the espoused community needs and interests of the present and future.

While Orange County adopted a system master plan in 1988, in reality, very little activity toward achieving the vision of that plan occurred in the first decade after its adoption. However, beginning with new planning efforts and a voter-approved bond referendum in 1997, the next 15 years would see

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the fulfillment of some of the vision from 1988 with a dramatic increase in new park facilities, acquisition of public open space for future parks and nature preserves, and increases in recreation program opportunities. Before Efland-Cheeks Park opened in 1998, Orange County operated no true parks. Only a few individual playing fields/playgrounds at County-owned sites were in use. The 1997 Parks and Open Space bond provided funds for the construction of Efland-Cheeks Park and two parks in Chapel Hill.

Armed with information and needs assessments from a series of four reports on parks and open space needs and opportunities created between 1996 and 2000, the stage was set for the single largest catalyst for creation of a parks system in the county - the County's most-aggressive effort to acquire and develop its park system – a $20 million Parks and Open Space Bond, which was approved by voters in November 2001. It is worth noting that the passage of this bond – less than two months after the shocking national tragedy of 9/11/2001 – serves as a testament to county resident's strength of commitment to parks and open space as important functions in the community.

The 2001 bond provided funding for a variety of different projects – and enabled creation of such diverse places as Cedar Grove Park, Fairview Park, Eurosport Soccer Center, the Adams Tract Preserve in Carrboro and the Homestead Aquatic Center and Southern Park in Chapel Hill.

Between 2001 and 2010, Orange County acquired 1,000 acres of future parkland, nearly erasing the 1,245 acre "parkland deficit' identified in a key 1999 report. Over that same period, six new parks were opened.

Chapter 3 of The Master Plan includes an in-depth assessment of all Orange County existing parks, recreational facilities, and future parks or nature preserve sites. More than a million visitors (many return patrons) are welcomed each year into Orange County parks, programs or facilities.

As a county with four municipalities within its borders (a very small portion of a fifth, Durham, also slices inside the County line), any planning for the future of parks and recreation needs must include a parallel view with the context of system master plans of the towns of Carrboro, Chapel Hill, Hillsborough and Mebane, and a synopsis of these community's facilities and plans is provided in Chapter 2. Fortunately, each of the jurisdictions has community master plans that are fairly recent. Through coordination efforts and multi-jurisdictional planning groups such as the Intergovernmental Parks Work Group, towns and County are more aware of each other's facilities and plans than in previous decades, and the County's new plan included here is developed with the knowledge and projected future activity from these town plans - to avoid duplication of services and offer opportunities for coordination going forward.

Inventory of Facilities & Recreation Programs/ Services

As noted, at present Orange County owns and operates six (6) parks (including the Eurosport Soccer Center) as shown in the inventory of facilities in Chapter 3. One of the parks, Little River Regional Park and Natural Area, is a unique joint venture with neighboring Durham County. Orange County operates this park owned by the two counties, which includes 391 acres in both counties, under an interlocal agreement. The County also operates and

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maintains the Jones Creek Greenway (which is also Phase I of Twin Creeks Park), and two recreation/ community centers in Hillsborough and Efland (the Central Recreation Center in Hillsborough also includes a playing field and playground). Orange County further owns an indoor sports facility in Hillsborough, the Orange County Sportsplex, which includes ice rink, swimming pools and a fitness center and is operated contractually by a management firm.

There are additional future park sites that have been acquired for future use. Two of these have had park master plans prepared (Blackwood Farm Park and Twin Creeks Park) and a master plan has also been adopted for the Hollow Rock Access Area (another joint multi-jurisdictional venture) within the larger New Hope Preserve. Another nature preserve, the Upper Eno Preserve, has substantial land acquired and informal plans for two Access Areas.

Finally, there are two additional park sites (Northeast Park and Millhouse Road Park) where parkland has been acquired, pending master plans and future construction.

As noted in the inventory, several of the existing parks also have future phases, or will need facility improvements, in the coming years.

Recreation Programs/Services

Orange County has provided local recreation programs long before the County owned and operated any parks, dating back to the 1960's. Current areas of program offerings include:

- Instructional programs
- Youth Athletic programs
- Adult Athletic programs
- Summer Enrichment programs
- Special Populations programs, and Special Events

The special events include traditional community events such as the annual Egg Hunt, Halloween Spook-tacular, Daddy-Daughter Dance and Fishing Rodeo as well as newer activities such as Movies in the Park and Earth Evening.

In 2013, there were over 4,800 participants in Orange County recreation programs and events. Most of the programs at present are targeted to children and youth (ages 5-17), as has been historically the case, although there are some adult programs and activities.

The County also offers a variety of recreation and leisure facilities that are available for reservation by the public, including community centers, picnic shelters, gymnasiums and sports playing fields. In 2013, over 2,000 reservations were scheduled for County facilities.

It is important to note that recreation offerings for seniors is not a part of this plan, and is coordinated by the Orange County Department on Aging through two existing senior centers. Orange County Sportsplex also offers a wide variety of recreation opportunities, including many options not otherwise available in the County.

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Orange County Profile

Before charting a course for the future it is always important to ground ourselves in the past and present. It is crucially-important for an effective future parks and recreation plan to understand both the nature of the resident population and the future trends that appear evident – even with the understanding that such trends and projections will change.

As of 2012, Orange County has 138,000 residents - likely 140,000 as of the writing of this plan in early 2014. Much of the county population is urban and located in southeastern Orange County. Nearly 76,000 county residents (or just under 55% of the population) live within the municipalities of Chapel Hill and Carrboro in that quadrant of the county. The Town of Hillsborough's share of the county population is 4.6% (6,271), around 1.5% of County residents (around 2,000) live inside the City of Mebane. The remaining 39% of county residents (53,751 in 2012) live outside of the municipal boundaries. There are some unique components to the County's overall population makeup. Orange County is among the most-educated counties in the nation, with almost 55% of the population over the age of 25 holding a bachelor's degree or higher. The presence of the University of North Carolina within the county infuses the local population with a high number of persons from 18-25 years of age. Orange County's median family income of $56,055 in 2011 was 22% higher than the state average. Even so, this masks another statistic of note, that almost 17% of the population resides below the federal poverty level.

Planning and identifying service areas for a county is somewhat more complicated than for distinct, defined urban areas. With the municipalities of Mebane, Chapel Hill and Carrboro having their own Parks and Recreation Departments and offering their own parks systems and recreation programs, the County's traditional service area for its parks and recreation programs has been the population of unincorporated Orange County and the town of Hillsborough. In 2012 this totaled approximately 60,000 persons combined.

The geographical breakdown of this population, as well as age, gender and racial compositions of the population may be found in Chapter 4.

Looking to the future, three different scenarios of growth have been projected for the County in the 2008-adopted Orange County Comprehensive Plan 2030. While no one knows what the future rate of increase will be, the projection model with the closest fit for the period 2008-2010 indicates that Orange County could expect (and should plan) to include 154,000 persons by the year 2020 and 173,000 persons by the plan target year 2030. This would equate to an increase of another 35,000 persons by the end of the plan timeframe.

Public Input / Community Needs Assessment

Perhaps the most important component in the new Parks and Recreation Plan 2030 was the gathering of community input. This multi-faceted process included a statistical random sample "Community Needs Assessment" survey, a follow-up online survey, a youth survey, surveys to increase minority participation, and a series of focus groups, forums, open houses and other opportunities to gauge interest and solicit feedback.

Specifically, the following public input initiatives were undertaken:

1. An informal youth survey of camps and camp counselors was conducted by a UNC graduate student in the early stages of the plan process.
2. A random-sample scientific survey of 4,100 Orange County households (paper mail survey with paid return mail, and follow-up postcard).
3. An online survey (identical to the mail survey above) publicized through email master lists and news releases.
4. Targeted paper surveys (identical to above) shared at minority events and meetings.
5. A series of focus groups on selected topics of interest with identified stakeholders.
6. Two rounds of public input sessions (Fall/Winter 2012-13 and Spring 2014).
7. A radio interview, postcards, flyers and other word-of-mouth publicity.
8. Open houses, Expos, and other informal outreach efforts in early 2014.

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The results of these efforts are shown in Chapter 6. As noted therein, the three surveys conducted (2, 3 and 4 above) have been collated to provide for a more representative and balanced assessment of the survey results (the rationale for this is explained in more detail on pages 6-2 and 6-3 of the plan).

A total of 835 persons (including a 12.5% response rate for the random-sample survey) responded to the questionnaires. Generally, the survey results indicated:

- Strong support for the types of facilities and programs, facility safety, maintenance and accessibility.
- Strong support for expanding active and low-impact recreation opportunities.
- High recognition of the role parks and rec programs play for the economy and public health.
- Moderate support for more indoor recreation or arts facilities.
- A need to create or expand trails linking areas of the county.
- The highest interest categories for future program areas are hiking, swimming and walking.
- The highest interest for future facility needs are for walking/hiking/nature trails, swimming pool and greenways.
- Preferences for funding new facilities through grants, donations, voter-approved bonds and existing taxes, and a lack of interest in funding through increasing local (non-property) taxes.

Of the 835 survey respondents:

- 31% came from unincorporated Orange County,
- 29% from Hillsborough,
- 27% from Chapel Hill,
- 7%Carrboro and
- 6% from Mebane

Focus group meetings to delve into more specifics on targeted issues were held on:

- Soccer Facilities
- Trails and Connectivity
- Public Health Benefits
- Park Facility Needs
- Recreation Programs
- Nature and Environmental Programs
- County/Town Coordination, and
- Sportsplex Coordination

Economic, Public Health and Environmental Linkages

Providing parks, open space and recreation programs is a key component in quality of life measurements for communities, and often an important fact in economic development decisions, in the health and general welfare of a community and its natural environment. To this end, research was conducted to evaluate economic, health and environmental components of parks and recreation.

A 2011 national study indicated that every $1 invested in land conservation (including parkland) returned $4 in economic value – not including potential jobs and tourism. Additional research performed for this master plan by UNC-Greensboro found that "preserving parks and recreation funds can actually reduce the need to allocate funding" for other purposes. This supports other studies that find parks "are a good financial investment for a community" – by enhancing residential property values, generating jobs and tax revenue, and attracting retiree incomes and small businesses.

Tourism, through special recreation events and sports tournaments, has also been shown to benefit from investment in parks and public open spaces. Orange County has already seen the benefits of local soccer tournaments (some of which have been shown to generate nearly $1 million in economic benefit) and their spinoff economic impact on restaurants, lodging and other segments of the economy.

Likewise, there is strong research to support the importance of parks and recreation programs on public health and quality of life. This is important to combat several national trends in public health. Seven of every 10 deaths among Americans each year result from preventable chronic diseases – diseases that would benefit from more exercise. In Orange County, 53% of adults and 33% of high school children are not within healthy weight ranges. Nationally, persons who report access to walking/jogging trails are 55% more likely to be active.

Focus groups conducted as part of the Orange County Health Department's Community Health Assessment in 2011 spoke highly of the quality of parks and open space resources, but 75% agreed that lack of access to parks and recreational opportunities is a problem in Orange County – particularly in areas outside of the towns. A number of initiatives to encourage more healthy lifestyles exist and could be enhanced through greater access to parks, and more healthy design within parks. Across the nation, dialogues on parks, public health and planning disciplines are of foremost importance.

Finally, the role that parks and public open spaces play in protecting our common natural resources is very important. Parks provide habitat for certain animal and flora species. Their natural areas help filter pollutants from streams and enhance water quality, offer wooded areas that improve air quality and provide important breaks in the impervious surfaces to lessen the effect of reflective heat and the myriad of issues caused by this increasing issue.

Parks also include not only natural resources, but cultural and archaeological resources…old buildings, roadways, burial grounds and other significant features of the county's past. There are many such examples of these features within parks in Orange County, such as Blackwood Farm Park and Eno River State Park.

Goals and Objectives

In the case of this master plan, goals and objectives have already been identified through the adopted 2030 Comprehensive Plan. These five goals, and objectives toward the goals, are listed in Chapter 10. The goals are:

"Overarching Goal: Regionally-coordinated park and recreation facilities that provide healthy opportunities for recreation and exercise for all citizens of Orange County, and that preserve important cultural and natural resources."

Goal 1: *Provide adequate parks and recreational facilities for all citizens within the county regardless of age, gender, race or disability.*

Goal 2: *Create a partnership among regional recreation providers and facility owners/managers including the appropriate co-location and sharing of school facilities that meets the County's recreation needs.*

Goal 3: *Provide recreational facilities for public use in a manner that is multi-generational and accessible to all County citizens at both the county-wide and community level.*

Goal 4: *Promote healthy lifestyles, quality of life and community building through the provision of a variety of affordable recreational facilities and choice of leisure activities, while responding to the changing needs and interests of County residents.*

Goal 5: *Ensure that park and recreational facilities are environmentally-responsible, and where cultural and natural resources and open space within these sites are protected.*

The goals and the objectives towards these ends in Chapter 10, are interwoven into the findings and recommendations of this master plan. Also within the Orange County Comprehensive Plan 2030 are eight goals in other chapters that have relationships to parks facilities and recreation programs. These goals, including such areas as energy conservation, agriculture and forestry, cultural and archaeological resources and landscapes, and sustainability and native plant species, may be found on page 7-1.

Finally, the relationship of County parks and open spaces to other regional facilities is of importance. Places like public school facilities, the State Parks (including Eno River State Park and the Mountains to Sea Trail) are critical to factor into planning for the future of Orange County's overall vision.

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Master Plan Summary and Findings

The new Master Plan to guide parks and recreation decisions through the year 2030 is a synthesis of the many reports, studies, surveys and needs assessments conducted to date and/or contained within. In review and comparison with the 1988 Master Plan, many of the same values and principles enumerated at that time remain valid in 2014. However, many conditions have changed since 1988.

- The county population has grown by 56% since 1988, and is expected to grow again by 25% by the end of this master plan period.
- The county, fueled by public support, has passed two parks and open space bonds to acquire and construct new parks and public open space, with six County parks now open, nature preserves protected, and several municipal parks funded.
- Most of the parks called for in the 1988 plan are now either built, or land has acquired for future construction.
- Recreation programs are more numerous and diverse, branching into areas barely envisioned in 1988.
- The County owns a successful indoor sports facility in the Sportsplex, and has engaged in partnerships with other recreation providers for camps, athletic leagues and other facilities.

By any measure, Orange County is in a very different place in 2014 in terms of its parks, public open space and recreational offerings. However, despite the accomplishments, many things remain to be completed – including future facilities secured but not yet constructed or opened.

At a macro level, Orange County's parks and recreation needs in 2014 as enumerated in this document are more aligned to finishing planned improvements than embarking on massive new facilities planning.

This is reflected in the assessment of park classifications, standards and service delivery in Chapter 9. Table 9-2 illustrates the nature of the park classification system that has evolved and will be needed going forward:

- School Parks – Opportunities to utilize school playing fields and facilities for public recreation at existing and future facilities.
- Community Parks – Parks generally between 40-75 acres that serve smaller sub-areas of the county and offer a mix of active and low-impact recreation needs.
- District Parks – The primary park for each of the County's four larger designated districts as identified in 1988 (Northeast, Cheeks/ Hillsborough, Bingham and Chapel Hill Township), these are usually 75-125 acres in size and also include active and low-impact recreation facilities, but also may include amphitheaters and water features, among other facilities.
- Regional Parks – Large areas of 150 acres or more that serve all or most of the County, these typically feature miles of trails of different types and have picnic areas, water features and other natural exhibits or facilities.
- Nature Preserve Access Areas – These are portions of County Nature Preserves that are or would be accessible to the public for camping, hiking, wildlife viewing and other low-impact activities. These areas are defined sites within a larger natural area, located in less-sensitive portions of large areas of natural land, where the primary purpose is to protect significant natural or cultural resources present in the area.

One of the important distinctions between a county park system and a city park system is that smaller park types – such as mini-parks or neighborhood parks – best serve and are most easily-provided by municipalities where the population density, transportation networks and public transit, water and sewer infrastructure and walking/driving time makes these smaller facilities more practical. In a large county of 400 square miles, with most of the areas of a rural nature, this plan concludes that the most effective service provision scale is to focus on district and regional parks and nature preserves. In addition, where special communities and needs exist, community parks have been provided and may be appropriate. This is, in fact, the way the County park system has evolved over the past 16 years, working in conjunction with its sister systems in the towns and with State Parks.

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The creation of the Lands Legacy Program in 2000 gave the County a mechanism to not only acquire land for future parks, but the ability to identify and work to acquire lands for future nature preserves (as well as protect riparian buffer lands, prime and threatened farmland and cultural resource lands – other focus areas for Lands Legacy). One component that is emergent in this master plan, but was identified as a priority as far back as 1999, is the role that nature preserves can play in providing not only protection for the County's most significant natural areas but also the ability for public access in proximity and on the edges of these areas. Over the past 12 years the County has worked to secure important lands within the two nature preserves, and a possible third preserve may exist (working with municipalities and UNC). With careful design and ecological sensitivity, it is possible to provide public access at these nature preserves, buffered from the most-sensitive natural segments of the site, and plans toward this end are underway.

Standards

In years past, community parks and recreation master plans would rely heavily on population-based standards to help identify the number of needed future parks and their locations. This approach has fallen from favor in the last 20 years both nationally and locally, as it often led to a mathematically-indicated park need that may or may not fit with actual community needs. For example, a formulaic calculation of the number of community parks needed based on population growth might call for parks to be built without confirmation or acknowledgement from the community about actual needs.

The current best practice in using park standards to frame park needs is to rely on a community-needs based approach. This involves many of the tools used in this plan, survey and assessment of community desires and preferences, mapping of future known facilities and transportation networks. This approach is recommended and used for this master plan. However, the mathematical population -based standards are recommended to be used periodically as a valuable benchmark or "double-check," as they may show when a certain type of park need is under-represented at a macro county-wide scale.

Similarly, defining park service areas in a rural jurisdiction is very different than in an urban setting. The master plan uses housing patterns, transportation networks, other geographical factors and awareness of the municipal park networks to identify service areas. As noted in the 1988 master plan, even a diligent set of calculations based on population, socioeconomic and transportation factors may not include intangibles that affect how residents view which parks serve their needs. In some cases, it is again community needs and preferences that are the true determining factors. The location of future parks in the 1988 plan looked at these population and transportation factors, but ultimately it was the existence of other public lands or natural features that was the real determinant for identifying the general location where district parks should be located, for example. These parks were proposed in 1988 (and later acquired between 2000 and 2007 through the Lands Legacy Program).

Maps in Chapter 9 show how a service area radius applied to existing and planned community parks and district parks would look. Once again, in a county system the awareness of and coordination with planned and existing municipal parks is a factor that helps define effective park service areas.

Findings of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan

Based on the information gathered in the master plan process, a set of 20 findings or statements was identified. These findings are shown on pages 9-13 and 9-14 of the plan and are summarized below:

- County residents overwhelmingly approve of the way parks and recreation facilities are operated and maintained, and they find them safe and easily accessible. The County's parks and recreation facilities meet a variety of needs, but maintenance and facility repairs and renovations are on the horizon.
- The County's parks program has secured parkland and constructed parks, and has built parks in low-income and/or minority communities - helping meet physical activity and social needs, both individually and in groups. Residents see County parks and recreation facilities having a positive impact on the economic, physical and mental well-being of the county, and that these parks and programs help reduce crime.
- Strong interest is indicated by residents for expanding both active recreation and low-impact recreation opportunities – especially for hiking and biking trails and a swimming pool. Residents are less sure about the need for new indoor facilities for arts/leisure activities, but do favor more indoor athletic facilities.
- Among those expressing an opinion, a significant majority of residents surveyed see a need for new athletic programs and parks, although some were unsure on this topic. The most desired program areas were for walking, hiking, biking, swimming, summer camps and yoga. The most-desired park facilities were multiple types of trails, a swimming pool and water parks.
- In funding new facilities, residents were almost universally supportive of grants and corporate donations, strongly supportive of voter-approved bonds or existing local taxes. Less support existed for user fees, and increasing local (non-property) taxes did not receive strong support.
- The County's proactive approach to parkland acquisition has enabled the acquisition of all but a few parks identified in 1988, and has plans for four new parks to be constructed on acquired sites in the coming three to nine years. In a related vein, the work toward creating and protecting nature preserves around some of the most significant natural areas in the county has created opportunities for public access and low-impact recreation at these sites.
- A number of opportunities and challenges are on the horizon for the County. Recent efforts on partnerships with other recreation providers have been successful and should be continued. Likewise, there may be unprecedented opportunities for coordination with the towns and the schools for new parks or facility use. These opportunities provide for financial as well as community-building benefits and opportunities. The continued desirability of Orange County as a place to live will result in more population, an expected additional 35,000 persons between 2012 and 2030.
- Due to the proactive steps taken, most of the projected park needs may be met by current or planned parks, although one portion of the county – Bingham Township – is as of yet unserved.

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Recommendations

Using the 20 Findings identified in the master plan, and assessing the current status of park planning via the framework of the park system as has been developed over the past 15 years, the Master Plan makes nine recommendations moving forward to the year 2030:

Recommendation 1 - Protect and Enhance Investment in Parks and Open Spaces:

The County currently operates six parks representing an investment of over $9 million, and has helped fund municipal parks by contributing over $6.5 million to these facilities. Future phases at the six open County parks are planned, and some of the facilities built will begin to age out over time. Operation and maintenance costs are ongoing and critically important to the park experience. The County should continue to protect its investment in the existing parks by funding facility replacement, future phases and operating costs.

Recommendation 2 – Build the Planned Future Parks:

Because the County has been so proactive in identifying and acquiring future park sites, several future sites have been secured for future use and these new park projects are included in the County's Capital Investment Plan. Orange County should commit to opening the planned new parks as shown in Table 10-1 within 10 years (by the year 2024), with two of the parks opened within 5 years (by 2019).

Recommendation 3 – Complete the Protection of Identified Nature Preserves and Create Access Areas and Trails Within the Preserves:

Working through the Lands Legacy program and other conservation partners, the County has three identified locations where nature preserves exist or have been started with the possibility of expansion – the Upper Eno preserve, the New Hope Preserve and the Jordan Lake Headwaters Preserve. The primary purpose of these preserves is to protect important natural lands, but opportunities exist – and should be pursued – to provide for public access on the less sensitive portions of the sites through careful site planning.

Recommendation 4 – Formalize and Build Support Structure for Multi-Partner Capital Facilities:

Over the past 16 years, the towns and County have worked together to construct a number of parks and open space areas, primarily County funding toward construction of town-owned and operated facilities. Similarly, the use of school facilities for recreation programs occurs in some locations. Greater opportunities for joint ventures appear both possible and prudent. In some cases, towns are running out of land for new parks, and the County owns parkland nearby. Design of new school facilities could occur with joint use in mind, rather than after the fact. In addition, opportunities with OWASA, state parks and the two local educational institutions (UNC and Duke) appear to exist. All of these parties have mutual interests that may be served by greater collaboration, and the time may have come to make this collaboration more formal.

Recommendation 5 – Develop a Master Plan for the Orange County segment of the Statewide Mountains-to-Sea Trail:

The Mountains to Sea Trail (MST) is part of the State Parks system and will link Clingman's Dome in the Great Smoky Mountains to Jockey's Ridge on the Outer Banks. While many portions of the trail network have been developed and are in use, the eastern Piedmont segment remains the most complicated due to the need to traverse an area without natural features (rivers) or public lands. The plan for the MST calls for it to enter Orange County at the southwest from the Haw River Trail, and connect via Hillsborough into Eno River State Park and thence to Falls Lake. The MST, which in rural areas may be only a natural path a few feet wide, contains a planned segment from OWASA-owned lands around Cane Creek Reservoir to the Upper Eno Preserve near Hillsborough. This segment will require careful planning with property owners and utilities. A master plan for the trail is needed to pinpoint the trail's path through this area. A solution should be identified (whether on private lands, public roads or some combination thereof) so that Orange County does not become the gap in the NC MST.

Recommendation 6 – Build More Trails and Connect Open Spaces:

One of the clear messages of the Community Needs Assessment surveys is that county residents want to get out into nature and walk, hike and bike more. There are several mechanisms in place that will help with this, buy virtue of building the planned future parks (see Recommendation 2). Determining a solution to the MST segment in Orange County, and providing trails at nature preserves are additional measures that are planned/proposed. Additionally, there may be ways to connect trail systems that exist in Duke Forest and Eno River State Park to town and county parks and trails. The local governments that would mutually benefit from a connected trail system should look at joint funding mechanisms.

Recommendation 7: Improve Access to Parks and Trails, and incorporate Healthy Lifestyles Design:

Over the last 15 years, most parks have been constructed with an eye to providing access to the public, and activities for individuals to develop and maintain healthy lifestyles. However, an emerging issue in the fields of public health and parks planning is the integration of these concepts at the design level – parks designed with an eye to maximize opportunities for enhancing public health. Likewise, the potential for public transportation access to County parks is a consideration, but in a rural county with a need to provide service to different portions of the county, this type of access is problematic. Working park-and-ride lots into future parks, and looking at parks as possible transit stops are two mechanisms that warrant closer examination and should be part of future planning for new parks.

Recommendation 8 – Look to Add Programs in Areas Where Residents Have Identified needs, Consider Partnerships:

Flexibility and responsiveness is critical to providing public recreation programs. Needs and interests change over time, and systems must be prepared to change with the times. While it is not practical to provide every program that is desired by members of the community, the Community Needs Assessments provide a look at current needs and desires. Follow-up surveys should be conducted to determine the depth of interest in new program areas, and at the same time, existing programs should be evaluated to see if resource allocation should be altered. The County has partnered in recent years with private non-profit recreation providers for certain programs. A "partnership template" being developed will help determine whether a partnership is desirable or warranted, and opportunities with the school systems in this area may be fruitful.

Financing and Capital Investments

As shown in Table 10-1, Orange County has positioned itself through careful and proactive planning to know what park and recreation facilities are needed, and through its Capital Investment Plan (CIP), a possible sequence of construction to fulfill the master plan outlined within these pages may be glimpsed. The funding needed for parks and recreation opportunities includes: new construction of planned parks, future phases of existing parks, replacement and repair of aging facilities, and operating and maintenance funding. Approximately $10 million in park and public open space funding is identified in the current CIP through 2018, and an additional $36 million is expected to be needed beyond 2018 to complete the vision of the park system outlined in this plan. An additional $467,000 within two years, and $923,000 in two to five years, is projected to be needed for renovations and improvements or repairs. As future financial planning is undertaken, the manner in which these needs may be funded will become more clear, as will the potential sources (including several potential grant projects).

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Recommendation 9 – Examine the Role of Community Centers in Providing Public Recreation Opportunities:

Orange County currently operates one community center (Efland-Cheeks), and is poised to own two additional centers by the end of 2015. In recent years, considerable interest has been expressed by residents in these communities about the level of service provision and operating hours for these centers, and it is expected that this issue will continue to be a challenge. The County may wish to take a comprehensive look at the current and planned future centers, the level of service that is financially and socially practical, and the role that these centers play in community life.

Issues for Further Study

As with many plans for the future, some examinations lead to more questions. The master plan identified seven "Issues for Further Study:"

1. Ultimate Level of Service (scope of the parks system)
2. Review of Land Dedication / Payment-in-Lieu Provisions
3. Coordination between Sportsplex and County Programs
4. Need for a Public Pool?
5. Timing for Future Community Needs Assessments / Master Plan
6. Artificial Turf Playing Surfaces

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Overview of Existing and Previous Plans

Background

Orange County and the Towns of Hillsborough, Chapel Hill and Carrboro have made parks and recreational facilities an important priority among local and County government services. This is exhibited by the strong interest and effort to plan for recreational amenities in the county.

There are a number of existing and previous plans and reports that support the efforts of the parks and recreation programs in Orange County, including the County's initial master plan completed in 1988 and more recent plans completed by the other local jurisdictions.

A. Master Recreation and Parks Plan for Orange County (1988)

Orange County's Master Recreation and Parks Plan called for dividing the responsibilities for providing parks among municipal and county governments, quasi-public entities (e.g., OWASA, UNC Chapel Hill), and private entities (e.g., Duke University), with public entities taking on most of the responsibility. The plan recommended cooperation among the County, the two school systems, OWASA, University of North Carolina, Duke University, and the municipalities. In 1988 recreational facilities were mainly provided by the towns of Chapel Hill and Carrboro, while the County focused on providing programs.

The 20-year master plan recommended that the County provide four types of park and recreation areas and facilities: 1) community parks, 2) district parks, 3) greenway trails, and 4) swimming pools.

- **Community Parks (4)** - should provide active and low-impact recreation opportunities for the entire family. These parks serve the more densely-populated, unincorporated areas.
- **District Parks (4)** - should be accessible to the public within a 1/2-hour drive, with same amenities found in community parks plus an indoor recreation building and a pond or lake.
- **Greenway Trails (1 per township minimum)** - should link recreational spaces with residential areas and other compatible land uses.
- **Swimming Pools (2)** - ideally these would be located at the [then] two county high schools located in Hillsborough and Chapel Hill.

The plan recommended 447 acres of community parks for Orange County by 2005, 70% (313 acres) of which was to be provided by public agencies.

The master plan called for 895 acres for district parks, 70% (626 acres) to be provided by the public sector. The master plan also noted that a regional or countywide park might become necessary by 2008, but noted that in 1988 that need was being filled by Eno River State Park and Duke Forest.

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B. Current Municipal Parks and Recreation Master Plans

Carrboro Recreation and Parks Comprehensive Master Plan (2006)

Carrboro's Recreation and Parks Comprehensive Master Plan emphasizes partnering with Chapel Hill and Orange County to help meet the needs of its residents. Homestead Pool, Southern Community Park, and the planned Twin Creek Park are examples of facilities Carrboro residents are likely to use.

Carrboro plans to acquire land to construct additional greenway trail and bikeway facilities, focusing on the Bolin Creek and Morgan Creek corridors for connecting with existing greenway segments in Chapel Hill. Carrboro also aims to link its planned trail system to a broader network of greenway trails in the Triangle region. The Town of Carrboro (in 2014) has approximately 112 acres of parks and recreation facilities and approximately three miles of bike paths and greenways.

Hillsborough Recreation and Parks Master Plan (2009)

Hillsborough's Parks and Recreation Board updated the town's Parks and Recreation Master Plan in 2006. The plan included a revised inventory of existing and proposed resources, an updated needs assessment, and recommendations for the planning of recreation facilities and resources. The master plan was updated again in 2009, taking into account additional recreational resources created since 2007, revised park districts, updated demographic information, and progress made with local and regional partnerships. The Parks and Recreation Board strives to revisit the master plan annually to make updates and recommendations to the staff and board of commissioners.

The Town of Hillsborough owns over 65 acres of community and neighborhood parks and has over 15 additional acres of parks proposed. Another four miles of greenway trails are planned. The volunteer Parks and Recreation Board makes decisions concerning its town-owned parks. Hillsborough does not have a parks and recreation department; the Planning and Public Works departments work together to maintain over 65 acres of community and neighborhood parks and recreation facilities.

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Chapel Hill Comprehensive Park Plan (2013)

The Town of Chapel Hill updated its Comprehensive Park Plan in May 2013. The master plan provides a 10-year vision (2013 – 2022), and includes a comprehensive inventory and assessment of its park system, the results of a community survey, a description of future needs for park acreage and recreation facilities, and ways the Town could interface with the other recreational providers in the community.

The Chapel Hill park system includes 14 parks on over 247 acres of developed property and 833 acres of additional public open space. Many of the parks and open spaces are connected through the Town's greenway system, which includes 13.4 miles of greenway and natural surface trails. The Town provides a wide variety of indoor recreational facilities including gymnasiums, recreation centers, indoor aquatic facilities, and an arts center.

Chapel Hill Greenway Master Plan (2013)

Chapel Hill's Greenway Master Plan prioritizes greenway section development and emphasizes regional connections in order to grow an interconnected network of greenways beyond Town limits. The plan projects an eventual trail program that will require construction of over 28 miles of both unpaved and paved trails to be used for recreation and transportation, and lists priorities for completing planned trail segments over the next 20 years.

Mebane Recreation and Parks Master Plan (2014)

The City of Mebane completed its first comprehensive recreation and parks master plan in 2014. The Town inventoried Mebane's existing parks and recreational facilities (as well as what Alamance County and local private groups offer), and determined what improvements are needed to expand current facilities and develop new ones in the next 10 years.

Current park facilities include a soccer complex, athletic fields, and tennis courts. Lake Michael is a 200-acre park located east of town limits that features boating, fishing, picnic shelters, and hiking trails.

The 2014 master plan recommended that over the next 10 years Mebane should expand the trails and ADA accessibility at Lake Michael (a regional park), develop a district park on existing land that Mebane holds on south side of the city, develop an additional community park, and establish several new neighborhood parks and mini-parks.

The master plan also recommends developing additional tennis courts, athletic fields, and playgrounds. Finally, the plan recommends that the Town address the growing interest in walking and biking trails in the community, as demonstrated by the telephone surveys and public meetings that occurred during the master planning process.

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The following is a list of other plans and reports completed during the past 20 years that support the parks and recreation programs in Orange County.

- 1991 New Hope Corridor Open Space Master Plan
- 1993 New Hope Corridor Master Plan Proposal Linking Duke Forest and Eno River State Park
- 1996 Report of Orange County's Recreation and Parks Work Group
- 1996 Payment in Lieu/Dedication Legislation and Report
- 1997 Report on Coordination of Recreation and Parks Services
- 1999 Joint Master Recreation and Parks Work Group Report
- 2000 A Lands Legacy Program for Orange County
- 2000 Joint Capital Funding for Parks Report
- 2001 A New Era for Parks
- 2005 Recreation and Parks Strategic Operations
- 2006 Carrboro Recreation and Parks Comprehensive Master Plan
- 2009 Hillsborough Recreation and Parks Master Plan
- 2013 Chapel Hill Comprehensive Park Plan and Greenway Master Plan
- 2014 City of Mebane Recreation and Parks Comprehensive Plan

A brief summary of each document and its recommendations is provided in Appendix 2-1.

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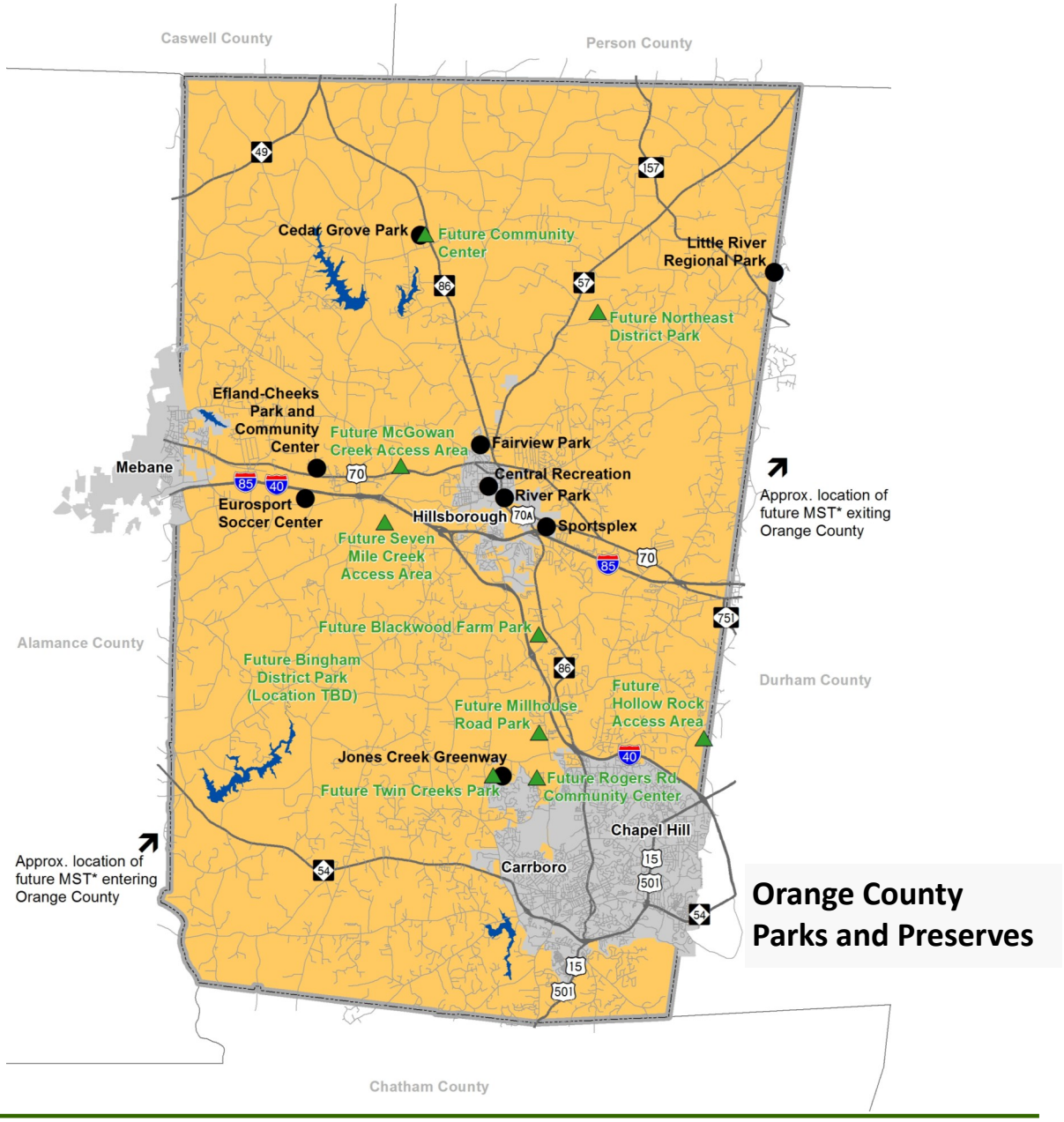
Park Inventory and Assessment

Introduction: Orange County residents and visitors have benefitted from bond referenda approved by voters in 1997 and 2001. These bonds provided $20.6 million for the purchase and preservation of land and the development of Parks, Recreation and Open Space facilities. Of this, $13.5 million was dedicated to use within Orange County jurisdiction. The remainder was provided for the municipalities. More than $2 million in grant funding has been received for Orange County and partner projects, and additional millions of dollars in funding from alternative sources have also been used. Between 2000 and 2011 the majority of this funding has been put to use in the purchase of property and the development of the properties identified on the map and described within this chapter. Efland-Cheeks and Central Recreation community centers were already in place, but improvements and expansions were made to the facilities. Currently more than 1,500 acres of publicly-held and protected land is included within the Orange County park and preserve inventory. More than one million people are welcomed each year into Orange County Parks and Recreation facilities.



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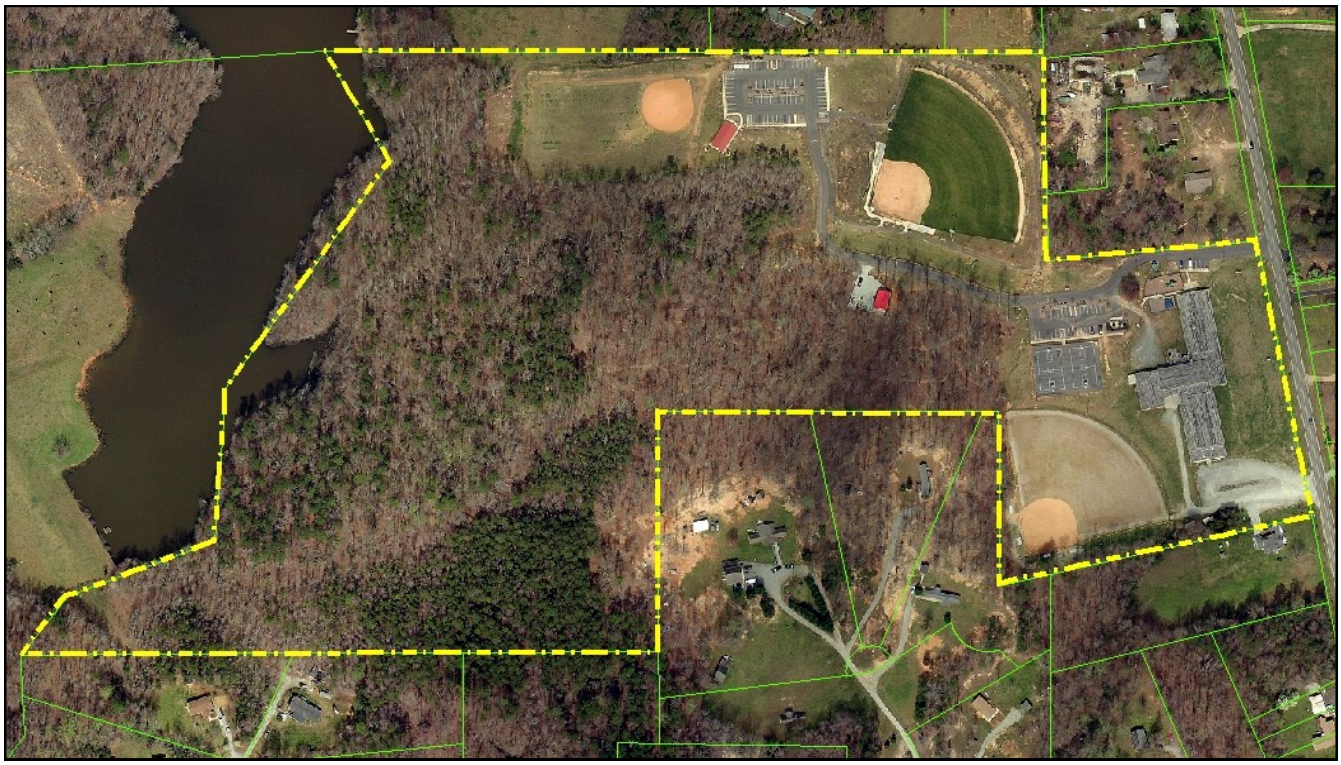
Cedar Grove Park - 5800 NC 86N, Cedar Grove



Size:
Land Area: 60 Acres
Existing Structures:
- Former School: 30,000 sq. ft.
- Picnic Shelter with Restrooms: 1,560 sq. ft.
- Maintenance Shed: 860 sq. ft.

Overview:
Orange County's 1988 Master Recreation and Parks Plan envisioned a future park co-located with the County's Northern Human Services Center on NC 86. The Center was built in the 1950s as the Cedar Grove School for African-American children, but when the school closed in 1976 it was converted to a County facility. A baseball/softball field was constructed in the 1980s for County recreation programs, and other programs took place in the building's gymnasium and classrooms. In 2001, Orange County voters approved a Parks and Open Space bond that included $1,200,000 for enlarging the park. A park master plan was adopted in 2005 and Phase 1 of the park opened in April 2009.

Location / Users:
Located in a rural area six miles north of Hillsborough, Cedar Gove Park attracts baseball and softball teams from around the region as well as day users from the nearby communities of Cedar Grove, Carr, Schley, and Caldwell.

Funding for Phase 1:
$1,200,000 County Open Space Bonds;
$500,000 NC Parks & Recreation Trust Fund
$148,000 County "Payment-in-Lieu" Funds

Types of Programs Offered:
- Baseball Leagues / practices and games
- Soft Ball Leagues / practices and games
- T-Ball Leagues / practices and games
- Softball Tournaments
- Baseball Tournaments

Reserved Facilities or Uses:
- Picnic Shelter
- Playing Fields

Special Features and Amenities:
- 2 Lighted Adult Ball Fields
- 1 Multi-Purpose/ Youth Ball Field
- 2 Lighted Basketball Courts
- 2 Playgrounds
- Picnic Shelter with Restrooms
- Paved, Lighted Walking Track (1/3 mile)
- Fishing Areas
- Hiking Trails (2 miles)

Annual visitors: 35,000— 40,000

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Cedar Grove Park - 5800 NC 86N, Cedar Grove

General Conditions and Adequacy for Intended Purpose and Uses:

•The park requires and receives a moderate level of maintenance by onsite staff.

• Some programs and facilities desired by the community could be developed with the completion of Phase 2 , and the new Community center.

Planned Future Phase:

Phase 2 of the Park as will include additional features and amenities:

- 1 Adult Ball Field
- 2 Tennis Courts
- 2 Picnic Shelters
- Extended Drive / Additional Parking
- Restroom Facility

Additional Notes:

The former school is scheduled for upgrades.

Currently a small gym, catering kitchen and meeting room, along with storage and an office are housed within. The renovated center proposal includes some of the same amenities, as well as an Internet Café, Multi-media room, Recreation room and Conference room.

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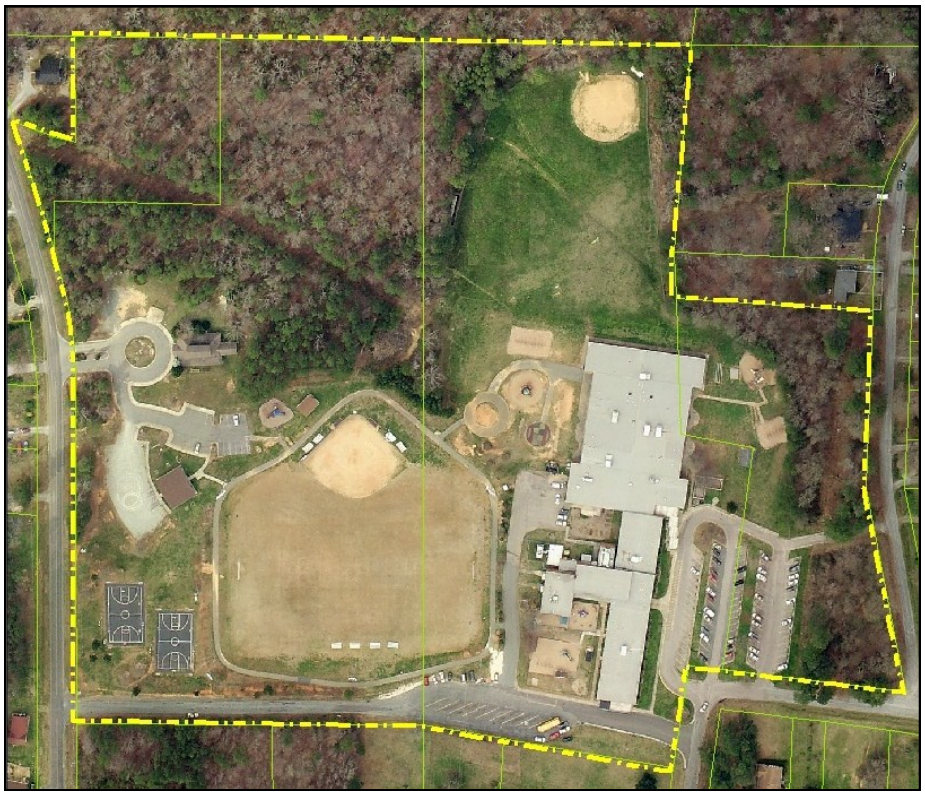
Efland-Cheeks Community/School Park - 117 Richmond Road, Efland



Size:
Land Area: 27 Acres
Existing Structures:
- Large Picnic Shelter: 2,080 sq. ft.
- Small Picnic Shelter: 600 sq. ft.
- Community Center: 3,400 sq. ft.

Funding for Phase 1:
$861,000 1996 Parks Bond
Funding for Phase 2:
$250,000 2001 Parks Bond

Special Features and Amenities:

- 1 Lighted Adult Multi-purpose Field
- 1 Youth Ball Field
- 2 Lighted Basketball Courts
- 1 Playground
- 2 Picnic Shelters
- Paved, Lighted Walking Track (1/3 mile)

Types of Programs Offered:
- Baseball, Softball and T-Ball Leagues / practices and games
- Summer Camps
- School Classes and Activities
- Football Practices and Games, Soccer pick-up play
- Indoor Classes and Programs, Special Events

Reserved Facilities or Uses:
- Picnic Shelter
- Playing Fields
- Community Center Rooms

Overview:
The Efland-Cheeks Community-School Park campus was developed in phases between 1991 and 2006. The elementary school was constructed in the late 1950s and expanded in the 1970s. Following the purchase of an adjacent parcel the Community Center was constructed in 1992. Phase 1 of the new park was completed in 2000, and consisted of a multi-purpose playing field, paved walking track, picnic shelter, two lighted basketball courts, and parking areas. Phase 2 was completed in 2006 with a playground, small picnic shelter, lighting for the ball field, and additional parking. Since then County staff developed a walking trail through the adjacent woodlands and a youth ball field north of the school.

Location / Users:
Efland-Cheeks Community–School Park is located adjacent to Efland-Cheeks Elementary School in a rural area six miles west of the Town of Hillsborough. The park is heavily used by the school and attracts mainly day users from the Efland, Mebane, Buckhorn, Cheeks and Hillsborough communities.

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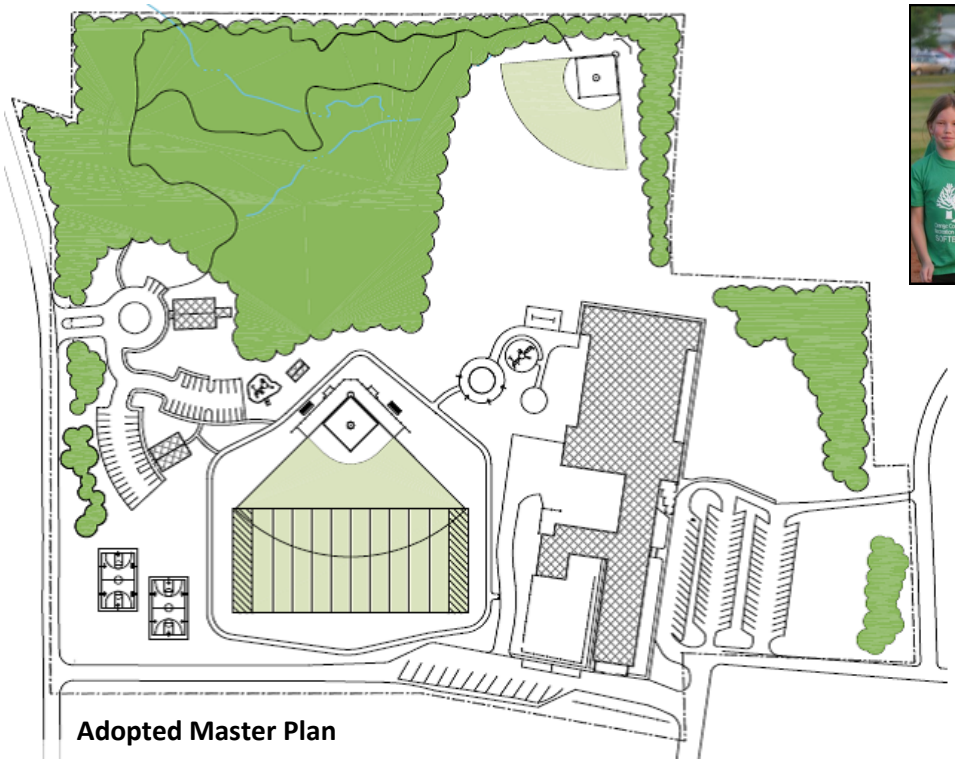
<u>Efland-Cheeks Community/School Park</u> - 117 Richmond Road, Efland



General Conditions and Adequacy for Intended Purpose and Uses:

- The park requires a moderate level of maintenance from a mobile crew.
- Structures are frequently subject to moderate to high levels of vandalism.
- Increased programming and staff presence at the community center are in the development process, as requested by leadership within the community.

Potential for Expansion:

- There has been some recent interest among officials in expansion of the community center.

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Eurosport Soccer Center - 4701 West Ten Road, Efland

Size: Land Area: 34 Acres
Existing Structures:

- Concession Stand with Restrooms; Offices and Garage: 3,280 sq. ft.
- Shade Shelter: 792 sq. ft.

Funding for Phase 1:
$2,267,000 Alternative financing
$1,350,000 2001 Soccer Superfund Bonds
$350,000 2004 2/3 Debt Reduction Bonds
$50,000 US Soccer Foundation Grant

Special Features and Amenities:

- 5 Full Size Soccer Fields (360' x 225')
- 1 Youth field (120' x 240')
- Paved Walking Track (1/2 mile)
- 1 Shade Shelter
- 1 Concession Stand with Restrooms

Types of Programs Offered:

- Soccer tournament venue, leagues, camps, games and practices
- Ultimate Frisbee Tournament venue

Tournaments hosted:

- CASL Carolina Classic Boys and Girls Soccer Showcase
- RBC Classic
- National 3 v 3 Live!
- UNC/Duke National MBA Tournament
- Spring and Fall Rec Fests
- NCSA Adult Amateur Tournament
- Southeast Regional 3 v 3 Live!
- TFDA Ultimate Frisbee Tournament
- USA Women's' Ultimate Frisbee Tournament

Annual Visitors: 65,000-70,000

Overview:
This special facility was conceived and designed to accommodate the growing need for soccer fields in Orange County. A master plan was prepared in 2004 when an opportunity arose during the planning for the adjacent middle school. Planning and pre-construction for a co-located park and school took place during 2005 and 2006. Funding to complete the project was authorized by the Board of County Commissioners in Spring 2007. Construction was completed with funding assistance from Sports Endeavors, Inc. in exchange for naming rights. The Eurosport Soccer Center opened in August 2009, and since then has been embraced by community soccer players and regional tournament organizers alike.

Location/Users:
Eurosport Soccer Center is centrally located off I-85 in the western part of the county adjacent to the Gravelly Hill Middle School. The Center hosts many regional and national tournaments, while also serving as a home base for local youth and adult clubs.

* Eurosport is a subsidiary of Sports Endeavors, Inc., headquartered in Hillsborough, NC

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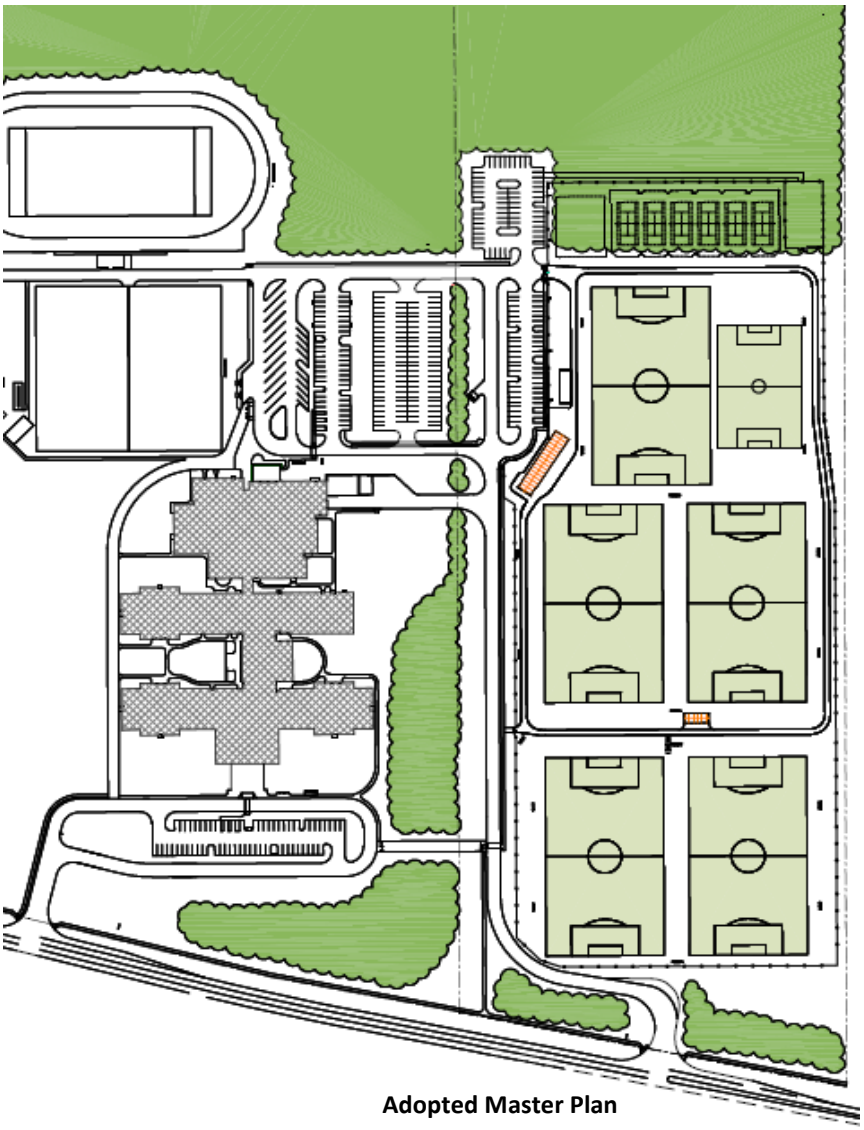
Eurosport Soccer Center - 4701 West Ten Road, Efland



Adopted Master Plan

General Conditions and Adequacy for Intended Purpose and Uses:

- The Soccer Center requires and receives a high level of maintenance by onsite staff
- Regular demand for and use of the fields is beyond normal best management practices for Bermuda grass surfaces.
- Additional fields and support facilities, as well as artificial surfaces, would address programming and usage needs.

Planned Future Phase:

Phase 2 of the Park includes the following additional features and amenities:

- 6 Tennis Courts
- Play Area

Potential for Expansion:

- There has been some recent interest in expansion of the Soccer Center.

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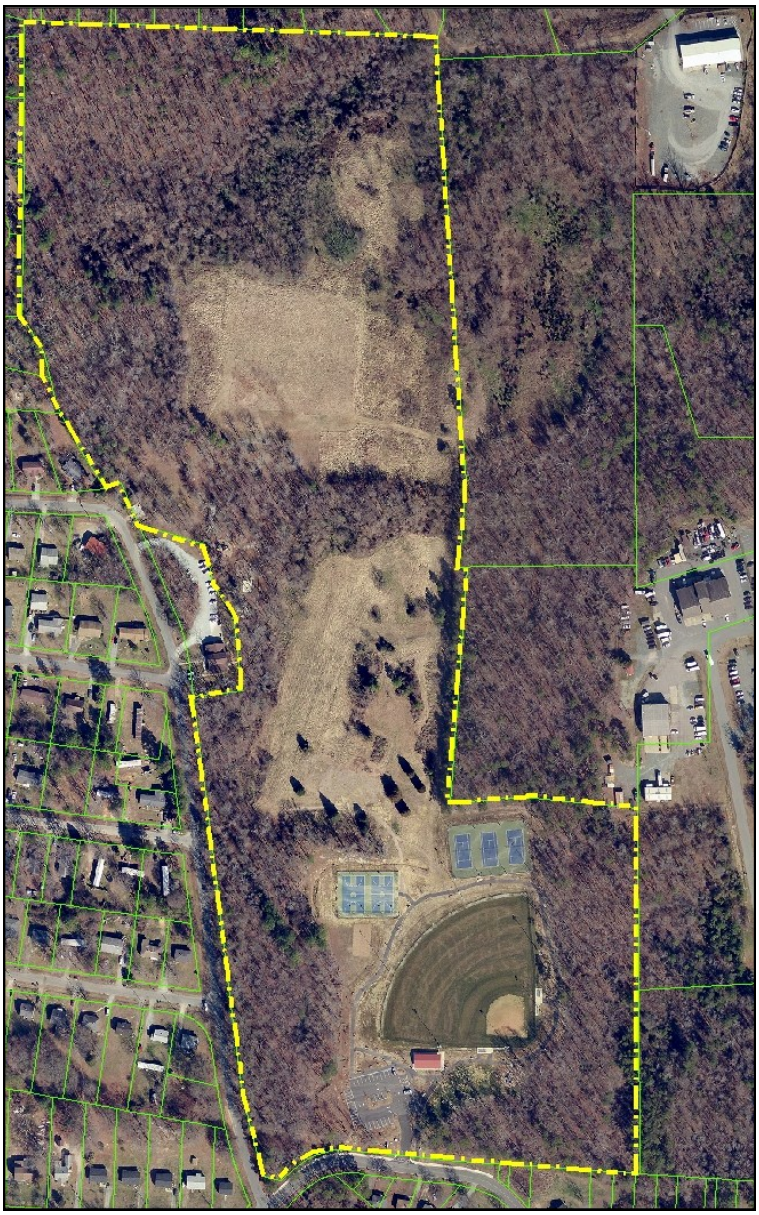
Fairview Park - 195 Torain Street, Hillsborough



Size:
Land Area: 50 Acres
Existing Structures:
- Picnic Shelter with Restrooms: 1,560 sq. ft.

Funding for Phase 1:
$850,000 County Open Space Bonds
$500,000 NC Parks & Recreation Trust Fund
$175,023 County "Payment-in-Lieu" funds

Special Features and Amenities:
- 1 Lighted, Adult Ball Field
- 3 Lighted Tennis Courts
- 2 Lighted Basketball Courts
- 2 Playgrounds
- 1 Volleyball Court
- 2 Horseshoe Pits
- Picnic Shelter with Restrooms
- Paved, lighted Walking Track (1/4 mile)
- Picnic Area

Types of Programs Offered:
- Softball and baseball games and practices
- Summer camps
- Instructional tennis programs
- Special events such as Fairview Live! and Fairview Forward
- Shelter reservations for reunions, birthday parties and holiday events

Overview:
Fairview Community Park was developed as a partnership between the County and the Town of Hillsborough. The original idea for the park was conceived in 1983 when Orange County acquired the land as part of a Northern Fairview Community Redevelopment project. A conceptual plan for a community park was completed in 1986 and was included in the County's 1988 Master Recreation and Parks Plan. Orange County developed a picnic area, playground and parking in 1990, but further construction was halted when a series of severe storms struck the area and portions of the property were used for the storage of storm debris and yard waste. The Fairview Public Campus Master Plan Committee developed a master plan in 2005. Park construction began in late 2009 and the new Fairview Park opened in June of 2011.

Location / Users:
Located in the Fairview Community within the Town of Hillsborough. Fairview Park attracts mainly day users from the adjacent community.

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Fairview Park - 195 Torain Street, Hillsborough

General Conditions and Adequacy for Intended Purpose and Uses:

- The park requires a moderate level of maintenance by a mobile crew.
- Structures are frequently subject to moderate to high levels of vandalism.
- Some of the special events are larger than anticipated and would benefit from additional parking.

Future Phase:

Phase 2 of the Park will include additional features and amenities:

- Additional Driveway and Parking
- Natural Surface Trails
- A picnic shelter near the meadow

Additional Notes:

- Fairview Park is located on property adjacent to the Hillsborough Police Substation and the Orange County Public Works properties.
- Fairview is a gated park.
- The Fairview Community Watch is active in park activities and events.

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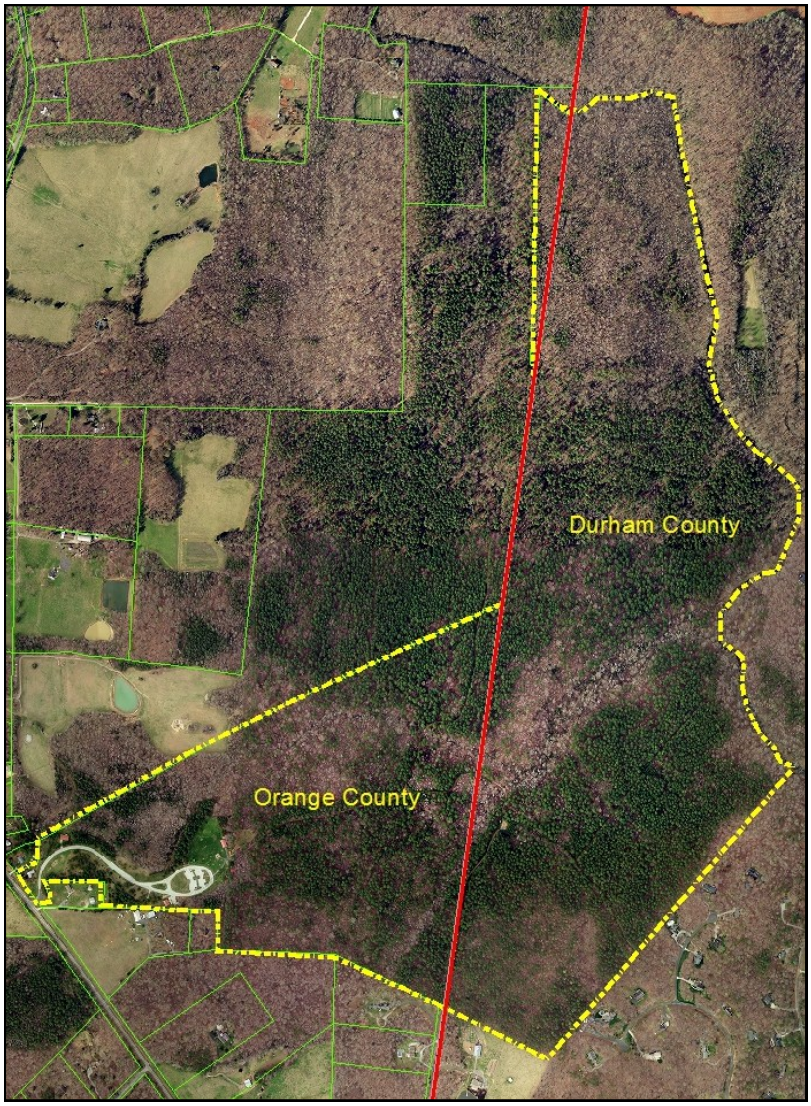
Little River Regional Park - 301 Little River Park Way, Rougemont



Size: Land Area: 391 Acres
Existing Structures:

- Large Picnic Shelter: 1,800 sq. ft.
- Small Picnic Shelter: 800 sq. ft.
- Restrooms: 560 sq. ft.
- Park Office: 900 sq. ft.
- Maintenance Shed: 360 sq. ft.
- Caretaker House: 1,980 sq. ft.
- Historic Farm House: 1,400 sq. ft.

Funding for Phase 1:
$370,000 NC Clean Water Mgmt. Trust Fund
$262,000 Land & Water Conservation Fund
$250,000 NC Parks & Recreation Trust Fund
$ 50,000 NC Recreation Trails Grant Program
$170,000 Triangle Land Conservancy and Eno River Association (joint campaign)

Special Features and Amenities:

- Large Open Field
- Picnic Shelters (2) and Restrooms
- Playground
- Walking Track (1/4 mile, paved)
- Hiking Trails (7 miles)
- Bike Trails (7 miles, single track)
- Birding Trail
- Butterfly Garden
- Group Campsite

Types of Programs Offered:

- Environmental
- Running and Biking Events

Annual Visitors: 35,000-40,000

Overview:
The Little River Regional Park and Natural Area was established through a unique partnership that resulted in the protection of 391 acres with abundant natural and cultural resources. The park provides a wide variety of outdoor recreation opportunities while protecting much of the natural and rural character of the land. The park is owned jointly by Durham and Orange counties, with portions of the property situated in both jurisdictions. Visitors can enjoy the natural beauty of the area by hiking and biking over 14 miles of trails built by volunteers and staff. Several historic structures from the former tobacco farm have been restored for use as park amenities, including a corn crib, pack house, and 1,000-stick flue-cured tobacco barn. Since the park opened in December 2004 the annual visitation has increased from 24,000 to 35,000. The park hosts the annual Little River Trail Run (7K and 10-mile races), as well as astronomy nights, bird counts, and a wide variety of environmental programs.

Location / Users:
Little River Regional Park and Natural Area straddles the Orange/Durham county line and is located approximately 12 miles northwest of the City of Durham and 10 miles northeast of Hillsborough. A park user survey conducted in 2012 found that 53% of the visitors came from Durham County and 46% from Orange County.

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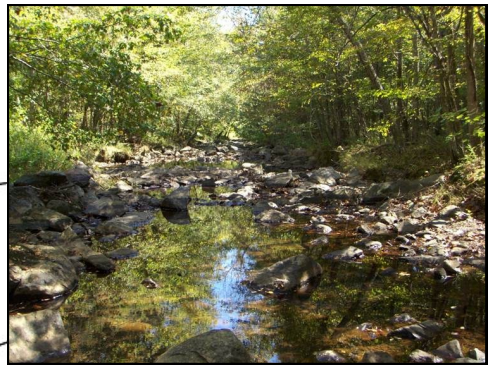
Little River Regional Park - 301 Little River Park Way, Rougemont



General Conditions and Adequacy for Intended Purpose and Uses:

- The park requires and receives a high level of maintenance by onsite staff.

Potential for Expansion:

- Additional Parking
- Additional Trails
- Updated Play Structure

Additional Notes:

- Little River Park is a gated facility.
- A caretaker who assists with park operations resides in a house within the park.

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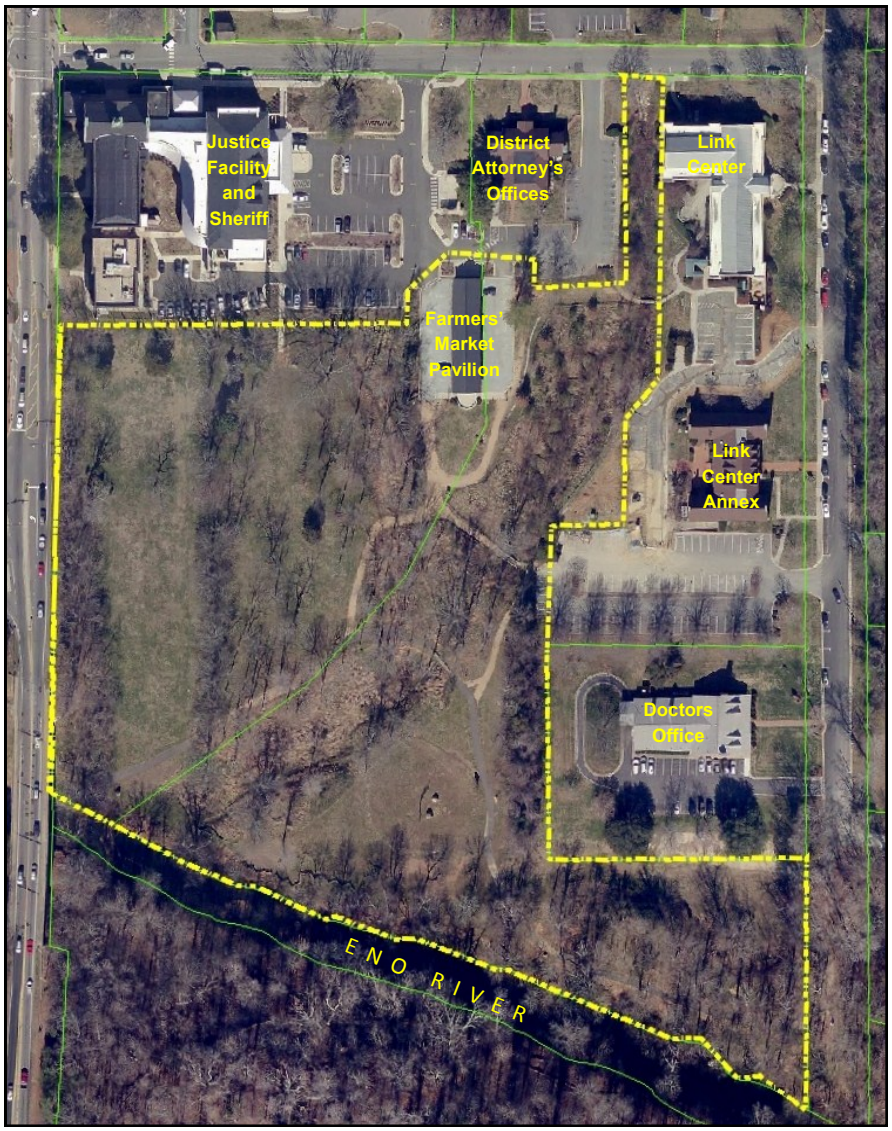
River Park - 144 E. Margaret Lane, Hillsborough



Size: Land Area: 16.3 Acres
Existing Structures:

- Picnic Shelter: 3,800 sq. ft. (Other County facilities are located adjacent to this site.)

Funding for Phase 1:
$250,000 in County General Funds and Federal Grant Funds

Special Features and Amenities:

- Picnic Shelter/ Farmers' Market
- 2 Open Fields
- Paved Walking Trail (part of Hillsborough's Riverwalk and NC Mountains-to-Sea Trail)
- Restrooms (available in nearby County facilities)

Events held here:

- Hillsborough Hogg Day
- Easter Egg Hunt
- Earth Fair
- Earth Evening
- Farmers' Market
- Movie in the Park

Overview:
River Park has long been a gathering site for public activities and special events in the heart of Hillsborough. The park is bordered by Churton Street to the west, the Eno River and Hillsborough's "Riverwalk" to the south, the Orange County Link Center and Annex to the east; and the Orange County Justice Facilities to the north. River Park features a Farmer's Market Pavilion, restrooms, parking, paved and natural surface trails, two open play fields, an Occoneechee Village exhibition, and the Stillhouse Creek restoration area. The park hosts the Eno River Farmers' Market (Saturdays), the annual Hillsborough "Hogg Day," and Orange County Earth Evening events. It has also been the site for the Orange County Jazz Festival and many Easter Egg Hunt festivities as well as hosting the movies in the park series. The Riverwalk (also part of the NC Mountains-to-Sea Trail) links River Park to many interesting natural and cultural sites located to the west and east of this location.

Location/Users:
River Park is located in downtown Hillsborough. Although centrally located for Hillsborough residents the park is used by a wide variety of county residents who attend the many different events held here.

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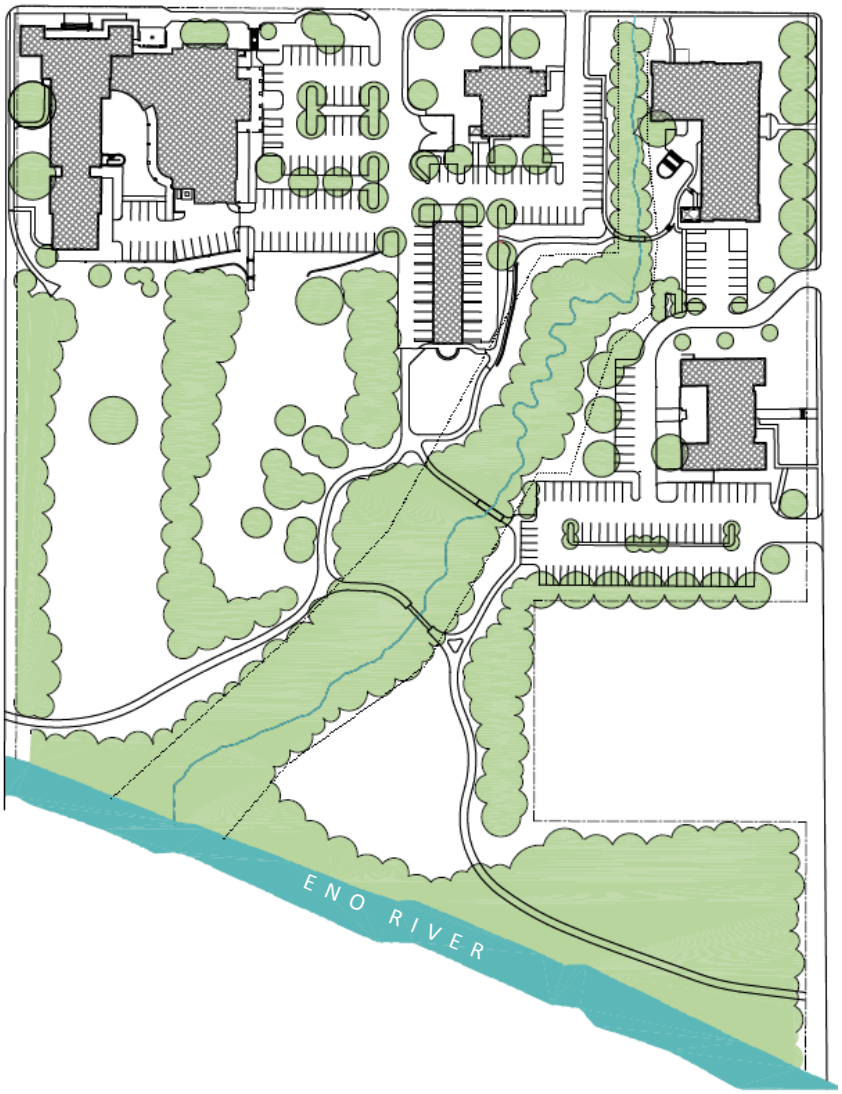
River Park - 144 E. Margaret Lane, Hillsborough



General Conditions and Adequacy for Intended Purpose and Uses:

- The park requires and receives a moderate level of maintenance by a mobile crew.

Future Phase:

Phase 2 of the Park is expected to include these additional features and amenities:

- Event/Performance Gazebo
- Fencing improvements
- Bridge and Trail improvements

Additional Notes:

- Planning is underway for a crosswalk/sidewalk connector from the west side of Churton Street into the park.

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Central Recreation Center & Park - 300 West Tryon Street, Hillsborough

Size: Land Area: 6.75 Acres
Existing Structures:
- Recreation Center; 19,000 sq. ft.

Types of Programs Offered:
- Basketball and volleyball youth and adult leagues, instructional programs and camps
- Drop-in Basketball, walking and badminton
- Music, Art , Cooking and Science Programs
- Exercise Programs
- Summer Camps
- Special Events

Reserved Facilities or Uses:
- Gymnasium
- Multi-Purpose Field
- Activity Rooms

Special Features and Amenities:
- 1 Multi-Purpose Field
- 2 Activity Rooms
- Recreation Offices
- 1 Gymnasium
- 1 Playground

Annual visitors: 30,000-35,000

Overview: Formerly part of historic Hillsborough High School, the gym building (or "annex") was built in 1957 as an additional amenity to the adjacent school building. Orange County purchased the entire parcel following the opening of the new Orange High School in 1963. Central Recreation Center was dedicated to Recreation and Parks and opened in 1975. In 2002 the building underwent renovations including HVAC upgrades, new flooring and paint. During the 2005-2008 period, upgrades were made to some offices and the restrooms. The windows and exterior doors were replaced, and other improvements were made. Central Recreation Center hosts over 4,000 participants annually in over 160 recreation programs. In 2012, 47 activity reservations were made by groups and individuals within the community, with an estimated 2,050 attendees.

General Conditions and Adequacy for Intended Purpose and Uses:
- The Center requires and receives a high level of maintenance
- The gym and activity rooms are fully scheduled with activities and programs 7 days per week. An additional, centrally-located gym or activity space would benefit the community and reduce wait listing frequency.

Potential for Expansion/Improvements:
- Bleacher replacement
- Elevator replacement
- Office and Lobby upgrades

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Proposed Cedar Grove Community Center - 5800 NC 86N, Cedar Grove
(Former Cedar Grove School)

Proposed Floor Plan

Size:
Existing School: 32,000 sq. ft.*
Proposed Community Center: approx. 10,000 sq. ft. * It Includes:
Multi-Purpose Room/ Small Gym: 3,364 sq. ft.
Meeting Rooms: 4,724 sq. ft.
Kitchen: 371 sq. ft.
Offices: 392 sq. ft.
*Approx. 22,000 sq. ft. of existing facility is planned to be minimally renovated to preserve the facility for future use/renovation.

In 2013 the Northern Human Services Center -Community Center Work Group, consisting of citizens who volunteered, were charged by the County Commissioners to work with staff and consulting architects to provide recommendations on renovation and reuse of the former center that would best serve the residents of Orange County. The Board asked that the recommendations include, but not be limited to:

- Recognition of the rich cultural and historical significance of the former Cedar Grove School;
- The content of past public input for the facility, and public comment during the Work Group's duration;
- The previous Board of County Commissioner decisions regarding the deconstruction of the classroom wings and the adaptive re-use renovation to yield an estimated 10,000 square foot community center facility on the site within a Capital Investment Plan project budget of $2,250,000;
- Physical and operational limitations to the site and the property, to include but not be limited to sanitary sewer constraints that govern the intensity of use for the facility in a manner consistent with a community center use.

Planning is underway and construction is expected to begin in 2014 with the center opening in 2015.

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Efland Cheeks Community Center - 117 Richmond Rd., Efland

Size:
Total Facility: 2,600 sq. ft.
Multi-Purpose Room: 1,200 sq. ft.
Game Room: 160 sq. ft.
Kitchen: 100 sq. ft.
Offices: 180 sq. ft.
Computer Lab: 130 sq. ft.

The Efland Cheeks Community Center was constructed and opened in 1992, before much of the park around it was completed. The Center housed a senior nutrition and activity site, community based grant offices as well as recreation programs and events for many years. Once the new Central Orange Senior Center was completed in Hillsborough, senior nutrition and programming was all centralized at that location.

In 2013, renovations and reorganization occurred, which are providing the opportunity for revitalization of the center. Beginning in the fall of 2013, drop in use was scheduled at no cost for Orange County residents throughout the week. Computers are set up with internet access, games and activities are available for children, adults and seniors.

Future Rogers Rd. Community Center—Purefoy Dr., Chapel Hill

In 2012 a multi-jurisdictional task force was formed and asked to investigate a contractual agreement with Habitat for Humanity to construct a Rogers Road Neighborhood Community Center that would serve the residents of the Rogers Road Neighborhood. The center would be owned by Habitat and leased to Rogers Eubanks Neighborhood Association (RENA) for $1 per year. The property selected for the center is located on Purefoy Dr. and owned by Orange County. Chapel Hill and Carrboro are also involved as partners in the project.

In 2013 a contractual agreement was reached which provided for operation and use of the new center by RENA. Plans and construction drawings are currently under development for the center. The planned center includes classrooms, multi-purpose rooms, a library/computer room, a food bank, and full kitchen as well as office and storage space. Construction is expected to begin in 2014.

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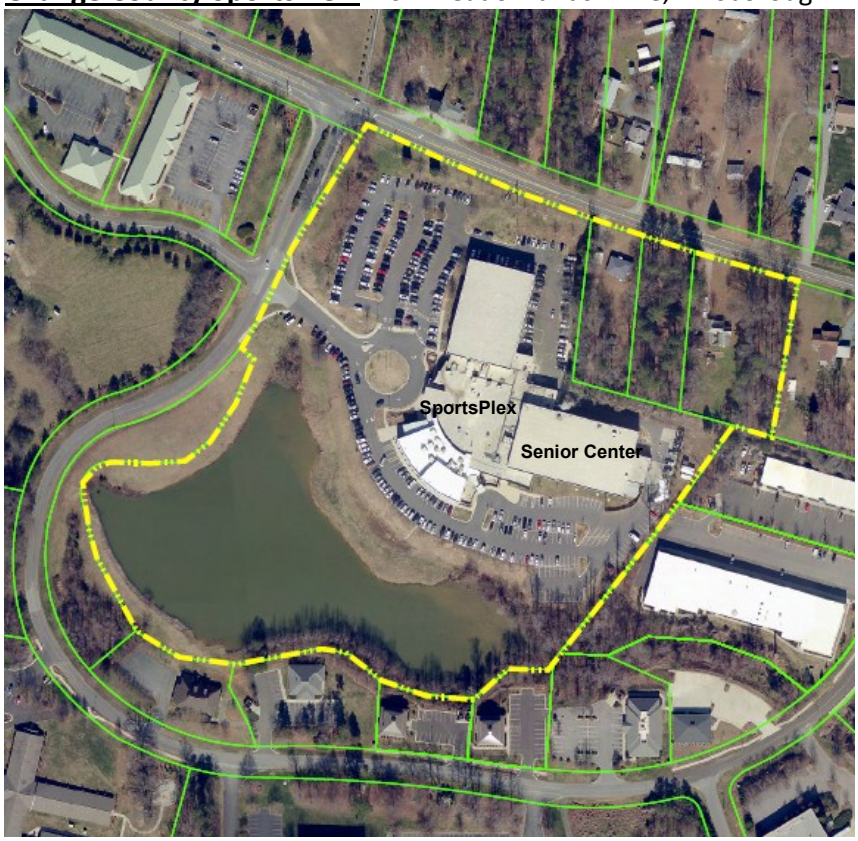
Orange County SportsPlex - 101 Meadowlands Drive, Hillsborough



Size: Land Area: 18.3 Acres
Existing Structures:
- Fitness Center; 80,900 sq. ft.

Types of Programs Offered:
- Ice Skating
- Hockey
- Swimming
- Exercise classes
- Summer Camp Programs
- After School Care
- Strength and Cardio Training

Reserved Facilities or Uses:
- Ice Rink
- Pools
- Activity Rooms

Special Features and Amenities:
- Competition Pool
- Recreational Pool (ADA)
- Baby Pool
- Ice Arena
- Fitness Center
- Concession Stand
- Senior Center (adjacent)
- Swim, Fitness, Hockey/Skating Retail

Annual Visitors: 500,000

Overview: The Orange County (Triangle) SportsPlex is one of North Carolina's largest recreational facilities. With 90,000 square feet of space, the SportsPlex is one of only two facilities in the United States to offer an ice arena, aquatics center, and fitness center all under one roof. SportsPlex is operated for the County by Recreation Partners, Inc., under a contractual agreement. The County's Central Orange Senior Center is located adjacent to the SportsPlex, providing convenient access for senior citizens.

General Conditions and Adequacy for Intended Purpose and Uses:
- The facility has undergone renovations and added spaces and rooms for additional programs and activities.
- The facility is serving record-high numbers of members and patrons, with a high level of service and expanded program offerings.

Future Phases: Substantial upgrades are planned, in three phases over the next 5 years, to add mezzanine fitness, an indoor turf field, and a basketball court. These improvements will primarily be funded by increased revenues. Additional land for parking and other uses has been acquired.

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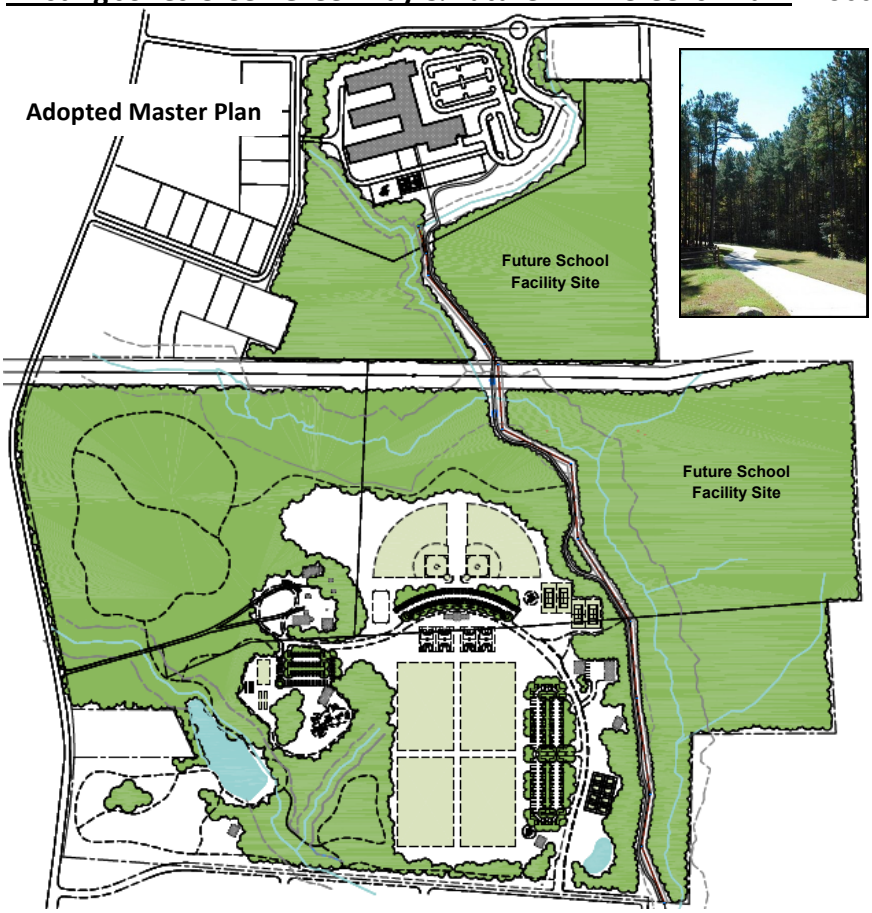
Existing Jones Creek Greenway & Future Twin Creeks* Park - 7906 Old NC 86, Chapel Hill



Size: Land Area: 193 Ac

Existing Structures:

- Farm House: 2,095 sq. ft.
- Large Barn: 5,000 sq. ft.
- Smoke House: 268 sq. ft.
- Milk House: 174 sq. ft.
- Tenant House: 172 sq. ft.
- Chicken House: 196 sq. ft.
- Granary: 1,400 sq. ft.

Current Facilities: Jones Creek Greenway: 3/4 mile portion

Planned Facilities Include:

- 4 Lighted, Full-size Soccer Fields
- 2 Lighted Baseball/Softball Fields
- 4 Lighted Tennis Courts
- 4 Lighted Basketball Courts
- 4 Picnic Shelters
- 4 Lighted Volleyball Courts
- 3 Play Areas
- 1 Spray Play Area
- 1 Lighted Roller Hockey Rink
- 2 Bocce Courts
- 3 Horseshoe Pits
- 1 Croquet Area
- Hiking Trails
- Concession Stand/Restrooms
- Parks Base/Office
- Reuse of Existing Farmstead
- Meadow with trails and pond

Priorities of the Master Plan Include:

- Provide a mix of low-impact and active recreational opportunities
- Rehabilitate the historic farmstead buildings
- Preserve natural resources
- Retain the scenic vistas

Location and proximity to the greatest number of users:

This property is a 193-acre parcel on Old Highway 86, north of the town of Carrboro. It was acquired with voter -approved bond funds in 2001 for use as an educational campus of multiple schools for the Chapel Hill-Carrboro City School system and one of four district parks to be developed by Orange County. The planned park is a balance of active and low-impact recreation. The educational campus provides for an elementary school (Morris Grove Elementary School completed 2008), a middle school and a third (undetermined) facility. In 2009, the Orange County BOCC voted in favor of revising the Twin Creeks Master Plan to include a .75-mile greenway running from the Morris Grove Elementary School to the southern boundary of the County's property. It was completed in 2011, and is now part of the Jones Creek Greenway.

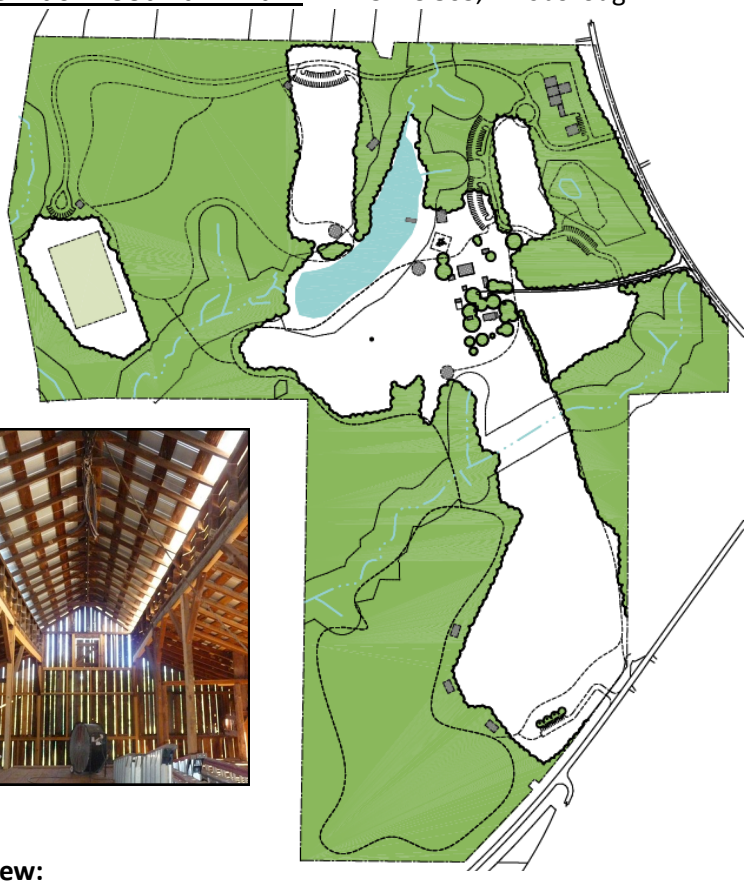
Types of programs anticipated:

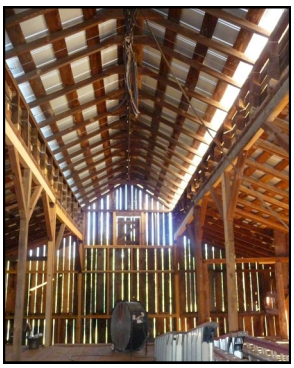
When completed, this park is expected to host numerous events and activities of all types.

Anticipated Cost: $15,000,000

* Also named "*Moniese Nomp*", which means "Twin Creeks" in the Tutelo-Saponi language; to honor the Occoneechee Native Americans who lived in this area before European settlement. It is pronounced mo-nee-**ay**-say-**nom**-p.

Future Blackwood Farm Park - 4215 NC 86S, Hillsborough





Overview:
This property was purchased by Orange County in 2001 through its Lands Legacy program. The former Blackwood family farm was acquired to protect this historic and scenic property for a future park in the New Hope/University Station area, consistent with the County's 1988 Recreation and Parks Master Plan. A master plan was developed by 14-member committee for a park that will feature low-impact recreation areas (trails, picnic areas) and retain the natural, scenic, agricultural and historic character of the former farm. The master plan was adopted by the Board of County Commissioners in March 2011.

Location and proximity to potential users:
The future park is located at the intersection of NC 86 and New Hope Church Road, midway between Hillsborough and Chapel Hill. It is also located in close proximity to New Hope Elementary School, Stanback Middle School, and the Orange County Campus of Durham Technical Community College.

Types of programs anticipated:
The proposed master plan takes a low-impact approach to address recreation, and to protect the agricultural heritage, historic resources, scenic vistas and opportunities for environmental education at the site.

Anticipated Cost: $5,800,000

Size: Land Area: 152 Acres
Existing Structures:
- ca.1827 Farm House: 1700 sq. ft.
- Chicken House: 288 sq. ft.
- Smoke House: 264 sq. ft.
- Corncrib: 256 sq. ft.
- Large Barn: 3,540 sq. ft.
- Milk House: 294 sq. ft.
- Milking Shed: 520 sq. ft.
- Garage: 792 sq. ft.

Planned Facilities Included:
- Environmental Learning Center
- Sustainable design for the property
- Reuse of the farmstead
- Agricultural demonstration areas
- Picnic Shelters
- Amphitheatre
- Community Gardens
- Playground
- Fishing Dock
- Hiking Trails & interpretive signage
- Potential Bike Trails
- Informal multi-purpose field
- Scenic Overlook
- New entrance and parking area
- Parks Operations Base and Office

Priorities of the Plan Included:
- Rehabilitate the historic farmstead
- Preservation of agricultural heritage
- Preservation of natural resources
- Retaining the scenic vistas

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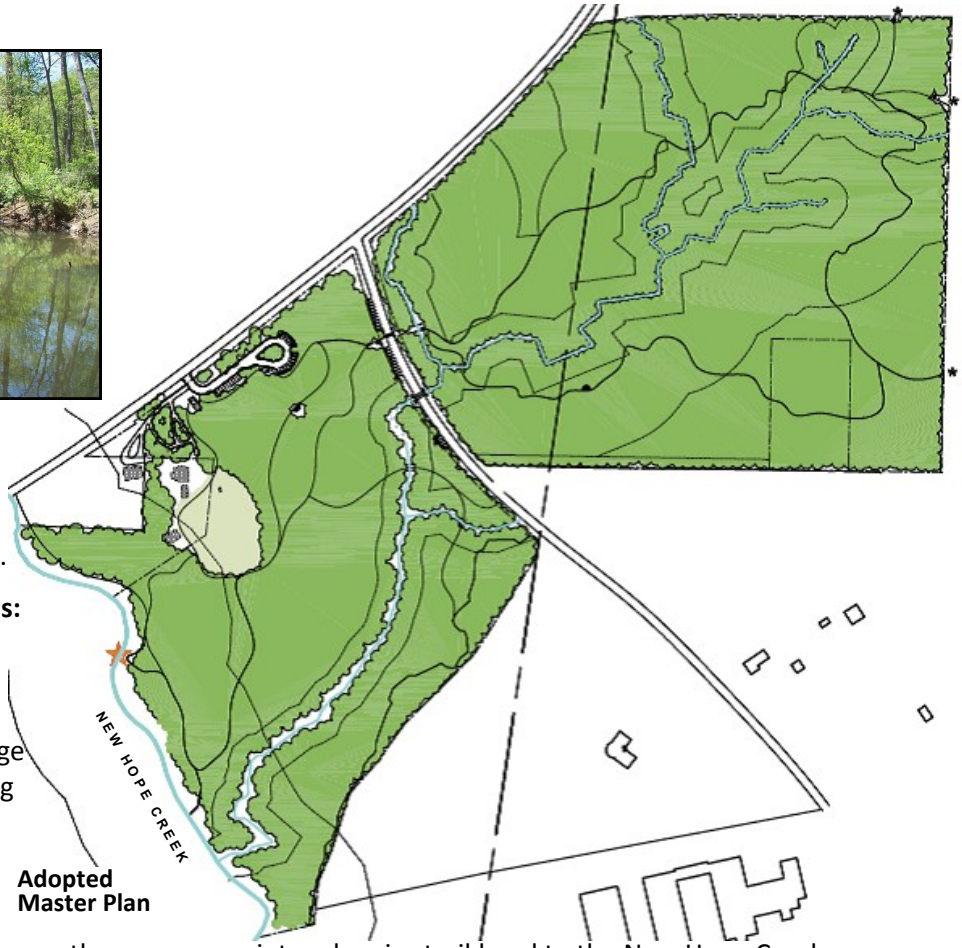
Future Hollow Rock Access Area - Pickett Road, Durham



Size: Land Area: 75 Acres
Existing Structures:
- Equipment Shed: 2,000 sq. ft.

Special Features and Amenities:
- New Hope Creek
- Hanging Rock
- Open Field
- Natural and Historical Heritage
- Trails (2 miles plus connecting offsite trails)

Overview:
This 75-acre preserve serves as a northern access point and major trail head to the New Hope Creek open space corridor, a multi-jurisdictional effort of the City of Durham, Durham County, Orange County and the Town of Chapel Hill. The trail system will link to public trails in Duke Forest, located adjacent to this site. All four jurisdictions participated in the purchase of the property, and private donations added more than $225,000, demonstrating the public's interest for this area to be preserved and developed as a trail access. The property is already highly used with informal trails, posing risk issues since the site cannot be opened and managed for public use until the installation of parking, signs, and bridges. In late 2013 the site was awarded a $200,000 RTP (Recreational Trail Program) Grant along with Durham and Orange County each pledging $ 25,000 in matching funds to construct four bridges, a parking area and install some signage. Construction is anticipated in 2015.

Location and proximity to the greatest number of users:
Ideally situated along the border of Orange and Durham counties, within 7 miles of Chapel Hill and 6 miles of downtown Durham.

Types of programs anticipated:
Environmental and Historical Heritage education.

Anticipated Cost: (Including Durham County's contribution)
Phase 1: $384,000 (Entrance Drive, Parking Area, Bridges, Signage, additional Cultural & Archeological Survey work)
Phase 2: $275,000 (Barn Renovation for Environmental Ed programs, Restroom, Bridges, Overlook Platforms)
Phase 3: $140,000 (Parking on Pickett Rd, Roadbed Top-dress, Signage)
Total = $799,000

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Upper Eno Preserve—Seven Mile Creek Access Area -2201 Moorefields Road, Hillsborough

Size: Land Area: 306 Acres

Overview: Orange County protects this large property for a future nature preserve. Some of the land was acquired by the County in the 1970s for water supply watershed protection purposes. Later additions were to establish the larger preserve for a wildlife sanctuary and low-impact public recreational uses. The property is managed by DEAPR, which is working on opening the eastern portions of the property for use beginning in late 2013. Other portions will open pending further acquisitions and facilities development.

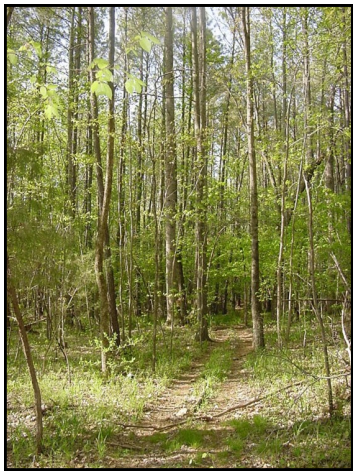
Anticipated facilities include: Parking area, hiking trails, interpretive areas, group camping (by reservation), Mountains-to-Sea Trail segment. Visitors may also want to visit the adjacent Moorefields property, which is owned and operated by the Historic Moorefields Foundation.

Location and proximity to the greatest number of users: Located about three miles southwest of Hillsborough between Mt. Willing Road and Moorefields Road (Cheeks Township). The main entrance to the site is from historic Moorefields located at 2201 Moorefields Road. The future Seven Mile Creek Preserve will attract day users primarily from central and northern Orange County, as well as through hikers on the Mountains-to-Sea Trail.

Types of programs anticipated: The preserve will be open to the public from dawn to dusk. Occasional guided tours of the natural and cultural resources will be programmed by the DEAPR staff. Some programs may be offered in conjunction with the historic Moorefields site.

Anticipated Cost: Not Known

Upper Eno Preserve -McGowan Creek Access Area - US 70 West, Hillsborough



Size: Land Area: 63 acres

Overview: Orange County acquired this property from Duke University in 2000 for a future nature preserve. The planned McGowan Creek Preserve helps to protect the Upper Eno watershed and preserves an area of open space between Hillsborough and Efland. Located at the confluence of McGowan Creek and the Eno River, the preserve will provide a natural area and low-impact recreational facilities for people to enjoy.

Funding for acquisition:

$ 148,000 from Orange County (School/Park Capital Reserve Fund)
$ 143,000 from NC Clean Water Management Trust Fund

Anticipated facilities include: The site will feature a rustic picnic area (and possible restroom facility), along with two miles of trails through a mature forest that overlooks nearby Corporation Lake.

Location and proximity to the greatest number of users: Located one mile west of Hillsborough town limits on the north side of US 70; the future McGowan Creek Preserve will attract day users from central and northern Orange County and occasional visitors enjoying a rest stop along US 70.

Types of programs anticipated: The preserve will be open to the public from dawn to dusk. Occasional guided tours of the natural and cultural resource will be programmed by the DEAPR staff.

Anticipated Cost: Not Known

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Future Northeast District Park -3981 Schley Road, Hillsborough

Size: Land Area: 143 acres

Overview: Orange County acquired this property in 2007 following an extensive search for a site that would meet the identified needs for a district park in north-central Orange County, which dates back to the 1988 Master Recreation and Parks Master Plan. This property is being "land banked" for future park development. A park master plan will be developed using a collaborative process that includes community input. The property is currently leased to a local farmer for cattle and hay production.

Anticipated facilities include: The future district park is expected to feature a combination of active and low-impact recreation, including playing fields on the open sections of the site. Much of the southern half of the property is forested and is expected to have nature trails and picnic areas. A small portion of the site (approximately 5 acres) may be suitable for co-locating a solid waste convenience center for residents in the northeast part of the county. The entrance to that center would be from Mincey Road.

Location and proximity to the greatest number of users: The property is located about five miles northeast of Hillsborough and 1/2 mile east of NC 57. The site is bounded to the north by Schley Road and to the south by Mincey Road. The area is primarily rural in character. The expected primary users will be residents of north-central Orange County.

Types of programs anticipated: Some combination of active and low-impact recreation. Specific programs will be identified with the development and adoption of a park master plan.

Anticipated Cost: Not Known

Future Millhouse Road Park - 6823 Millhouse Road, Chapel Hill

Size: Land Area: 79 acres

Overview: Orange County acquired this property in 2004 and 2007 through it's Lands Legacy Program. The property includes the former Blackwood family farmstead. The buildings are generally well preserved and have recently been up-fit for the temporary housing of the Orange County Parks Operations Base. The site is located within the Rural Buffer and is a neighbor to Duke Forest, sharing prime forest land and an identified Natural Heritage Area. The property is bounded to the east by Millhouse Rd. and the nearby Chapel Hill Town Operations Center. Large open fields and pine stands in the center of the property would be suitable for active parks and recreation facility development.

Anticipated facilities include: The future district park is expected to feature a combination of active and low-impact recreation, including lighted playing fields. Much of the western half of the property is forested and is expected to have nature trails and picnic areas. An indoor recreation center has been discussed and may be included in future planning.

Location and proximity to the greatest number of users: The property is located about one mile north of the Town of Chapel Hill and less then a 1/2 mile from I-40. The area is primarily rural in character. The expected primary users will be residents of central and southern Orange County.

Types of programs anticipated: Predominantly active recreation. Specific programs will be identified with the development and adoption of a park master plan.

Anticipated Cost: Not Known

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Recreation Programs and Services

A. Current Recreation Programs

Orange County works to provide affordable recreation programs that support community recreation needs and services for all levels of users, age groups, and user types. These programs allow members of the community to enjoy leisure opportunities with family and friends, participate in activities that enhance their way of life and create lifelong skills, health benefits and memories. As program demands change with increases in population, changes in demographics, cultural interests, and national trends, the County will continue to solicit feedback and provide the opportunity for open dialogue between members of the community, program participants and the department. This will foster the development of a wide variety of programs helping to meet the changing needs of the community.

Table 4-1: Current Programs

Instructional Programs	Ages Served	Number of Participants
Science and Environmental—Tiny Trekkers, Discovery Club, 321 Blast Off, Attracting Wildlife, etc.	3 - 12	148
Life Skills—Cooking, Babysitting Certification	6 - 13	96
Arts—Creative Arts, Budding Artists, Winter Art Explosion	4 - 12	136
Exercise—Dance, Yoga, Tai' Chi, Tai Kwon Do, Karate	6 - Over	480
Music— Guitar, Choral Instruction, Piano	7 - Over	127

Instructional programs are offered for males and females of all ages. Interest in science and environmental programs remains strong, as does enrollment in musical programs. Cooking and art classes continue to fill, especially with the youngest age groups.

Table 4-1: Current Programs (cont.)

Youth Athletic Programs	Ages Served	Number of Participants
Basketball League - Summer & Winter	5 - 15	804
Cheerleading	7 - 12	24
Golf Instruction	6 - 16	40
Lacrosse Instruction	7 - 12	15
Ready, Set, Run	8 - 12	42
Soccer League - Fall & Spring	5 - 15	716
Start Smart Sports Programs	3 - 5	183
Tennis Instruction	4 - 12	60
Volleyball League - Spring	9 - 16	94
Volleyball Instruction	7 - 12	55

The Youth Basketball Leagues have drawn heavy enrollment since the 1990s. Youth Soccer has increased in popularity each year since 2006. Coaches and Parent Training provided by staff, as well as criminal background/sexual predator checks have helped make programs both safe and fun.

Table 4-1: Current Programs (cont.)

Adult Athletic Programs	Ages Served	Number of Participants
Basketball League - Summer & Winter	16 - Over	264
Co-Rec Volleyball League - Winter	16- Over	156
Co-Rec Softball League - Fall	16- Over	48
Couch to 5K	16 - 55	19
Tennis Instruction	16 - Over	33

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Table 4-1: Current Programs (cont.)

Summer Enrichment Programs	Ages Served	Number of Participants
Arts—Piano, Dance, Ballet, Theatre, Messy Art, Creative Art, Choral, Chef, and Cooks Around the World	4 - 12	234
Science—Fizz, Muck, Bubbles & Goo, Einstein Science, Let's Build Something, Environmental, Ecology, 321 Blast Off, Little Science, Explore Outer Space, Model Building, and Intro to Lego	4 - 12	156
Sports—Soccer, Baseball, Football, Basketball, Volleyball, Olympics, Tae Kwon Do, Golf, 5K Running, Sports Sampler, Cheerleading, and Tennis.	7 - 12	455
Adventure—Teen Adventure, Preteen Adventure, Gone Fishing, Variety, and Police Academy	10 - 16	238

Table 4-1: Current Programs (cont.)

Special Populations	Ages Served	Number of Participants
Top Soccer	Ages 4 - 19	9
SP Holiday Party	All Ages	50
SP Halloween	All Ages	100
SP Talent Show	All Ages	50

Orange County Recreation Division offers personalized Inclusion Services for participants of all ages.

Orange County residents continue to demand high quality, affordable summer enrichment programs. Camp programs are designed to expose the participants to the arts, sciences, sports and adventure entertainment venues around the Triangle. Onsite camp programs are operated at the Central Recreation Center and sports field and also at Efland-Cheeks Community Center and sports field. Camp programs typically are fully enrolled, and they meet or exceed revenue projections, but they also exceed current space and staff and resources.

Table 4-1: Current Programs (cont.)

Special Events	Ages Served	Number of Participants
Egg Hunt	All Ages	1700
Fishing Rodeo	All Ages	300
Halloween Spooktacular	All Ages	1000
Santa's Calling	2 - 9	100
Movie in the Park - Fall & Spring	All Ages	700
Friday Pizza and a Movie	All Ages	60
Daddy Daughter Dance	All Ages	100
Earth Evening	All Ages	200
Rec Fest	5 - 16	4000

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B. Current Recreation Services

Table 4-2: Shows increased usage of online registration

Program Registration Trends	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009
	As of 9/15				
Recreation Division Total Enrollment	3,883	4,374	4,003	2,475	1,813
Online Registrations	1,564	1,787	317	0	0

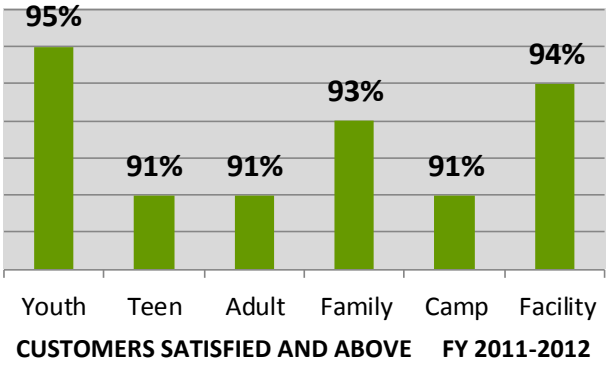
In 2011, Orange County residents were introduced to online program registrations and facility reservations via RecTrac software. Today, online enrollment represents 40% of all program registrations, providing convenience and accessibility. Total program enrollment has increased by 41% from 2009 to 2013 with the largest increases occurring in youth soccer and summer enrichment programs. Facility use reservations are shown below.

Table 4-3: Facility Reservations by type

Facility Type	Reservations	Attendance
Activity Rooms	123	3,007
Picnic Shelters	158	7,938
Gymnasiums	132	6,308
Sports Fields	822	57,199
Outdoor Tennis/Basketball	188	855

In Fiscal Year 2011-2012 over 1,000 Customer Satisfaction Evaluation Surveys were received from program participants and facility users. The evaluations were broken into six categories: youth programs, teen programs, adult programs, family programs, camps, and facilities. Satisfaction was over 90% in all categories as shown in the table below.

Table 4-4 : Customer Satisfaction



C. Other Public Parks, Recreation and Related Services Offered by Orange County

Orange County Department on Aging offers programs and services to older adults in Orange County. Programs and services are offered in two senior centers. Program areas include arts & crafts, athletics, enrichment classes, Senior Games and special events. More information about these programs may be found at the Department on Aging website: http://orangecountync.gov/aging/index.asp and the *Senior Times* publication.

The **Orange County Cooperative Extension** offers 4-H Development and Health and Nutrition training. The **Orange County Library** programs include Storytime, school-aged programs and a teen center with opportunities to be a teen volunteer. The **Health Department** covers areas such as health care/ nutrition services and health education. For more information on the Orange County Departments' programs listed above visit: http://oangecountync.gov

The **Orange County SportsPlex** is owned by Orange County while the operation of the facility is managed by a private contractor. Programs and services offered include camps, figure skating, hockey, aquatics and fitness programs. The Central Orange Senior Center located adjacent to the SportsPlex, provides convenient access for senior citizens. More information about Orange County SportsPlex may be found at: http://www.trianglesportsplex.com/

C. Other Public Parks and Recreation Services Offered in Orange County Continued

The **Town of Chapel Hill Parks & Recreation** programs and services include Aquatics, Athletics, Festivals and Events, Adapted Recreation & Inclusion and Special Olympics. The Town has many parks, greenways, and trail systems in addition to indoor and outdoor swimming pools.

For more information go to:
http://www.ci.chapel-hill.nc.us/index.aspx?page=74

Chapel Hill's Homestead Aquatic Center (above) was partially funded with $4.9 million from 2001 and 1997 Orange County alternative financing and voter-approved Parks and Open Space bonds.

The map below shows in gray, the town limits for each of the municipalities within Orange County. Each town has parks and recreation facilities and/or programs. The towns make up 61% of Orange County's total population.

The **Town of Carrboro's Department of Recreation and Parks** offers many of the same types of activities including Athletics, Special Events, Classes for Youth and Teens, Classes for Adults, Senior Programs, Hikes and Day Trips, Special Recreation and Senior Games.

Carrboro's website includes more information at: http://www.carrbororec.org

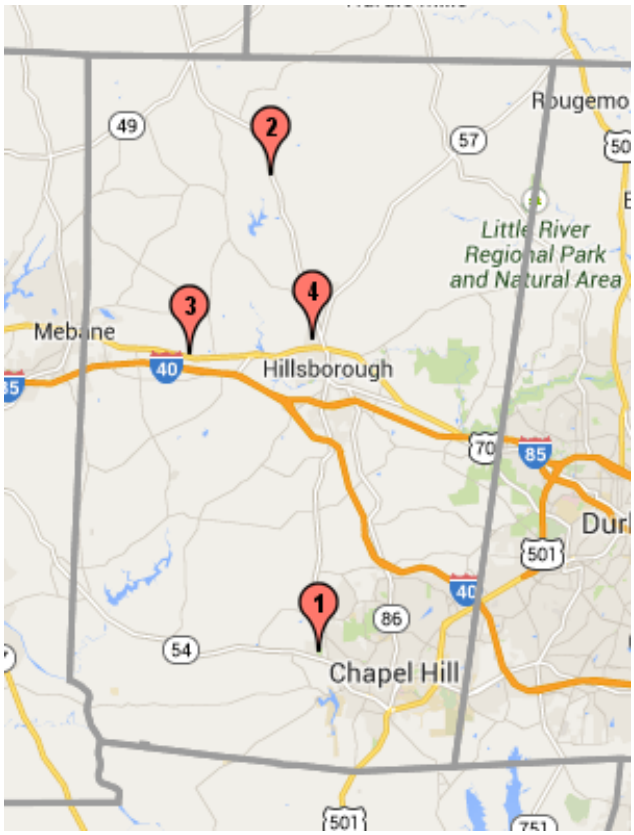
The **Town of Hillsborough** does not have a parks and recreation department but the Town operates several parks. Hillsborough relies on its volunteer Parks and Recreation Board to provide guidance on Town-owned parks. To locate Hillsborough parks visit:

http://www.ci.hillsborough.nc.us/content/parks-recreation

The **City of Mebane Parks and Recreation** offers many leisure opportunities that include Athletic Programs, Exercise Classes, Music Concerts and Special Events/Festivals. Lake Michael Park, in Mebane, is located in Orange County. To learn more about the City of Mebane Recreation and Parks visit:
http://www.cityofmebane.com/parks.asp

Map 4.1 Online Parks and Recreation Facility Locator Map

This map allows a multi-jurisdictional search for up to three park activities/amenities in the county. The interactive map includes parks/recreation facilities for the towns of Carrboro, Chapel Hill, Hillsborough, Mebane (Orange County portion) and Orange County. The map can be found at:
http//server2.co.orange.nc.us/ParkLocator/



Map 4.1 searched for facilities with:

1. Baseball / Softball fields
2. Picnic Facilities
3. Measured Walking Paths

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Demographics and Driving Factors

Background

The population of Orange County is 138,000 persons (137,941) as of July, 2012[1]. Approximately two-thirds (2/3) of the population resides within the boundaries of the municipalities of Chapel Hill (55,474 within Orange County) and Carrboro (20,433). Almost 10,000 of Chapel Hill residents are students living on-campus at the University of North Carolina (UNC).

The town of Hillsborough is home to 6,271 persons, while Mebane's population of 12,685 includes approximately 2,000 persons on the Orange County side of this city. Table 5-1 shows the relative population change by locality in the last 12 years.

Table 5-1: Orange County Population 2000 -2012

Municipality	2000	2010	2012
Orange County - Total	**115,531**	**133,801**	**137,941**
Carrboro	*16,782*	*19,582*	*20,433*
Chapel Hill (part)[2]	*46,019*	*54,397*	*55,474*
Hillsborough	*5,446*	*6,087*	*6,271*
Mebane (part)	*675*	*1,793*	*2,000*
Durham (part)	*39*	*30*	*32*
Unincorporated Orange County	**46,570**	**51,912**	**53,731**

*Around 2,950 Chapel Hill residents in 2012 live in the Durham County portion of town. Most of the residents of Mebane (12,685) and Durham (239,358) are in Alamance and Durham counties, respectively.

While the U.S. Census Bureau updated some population data for July 2012, other demographic data was not updated. For these data, the 2010 US Census remains the most-recent information. As such, the most recent population at the township level is from the 2010 Census. As shown in Table 5-2, Orange County has seven townships with widely -varying populations. The townships include populations within municipalities that lie within the township borders.

Table 5-2: Population by Townships and Municipalities within Orange County

Municipality	2010
Bingham Township	6,527
Cedar Grove Township	5,222
Chapel Hill Township[3]	87,971
Chapel Hill (part)	*54,397*
Carrboro	*19,582*
Unincorporated	*13,992*
Cheeks Township	9,313
Mebane (part)	*1,793*
Unincorporated	*7,520*
Eno Township	7,501
Hillsborough Township	13,809
Hillsborough	*6,087*
Unincorporated	*7,722*
Little River Township	3,458
Orange County - Total	**133,801**

In general terms, the population of the combined towns of Chapel Hill and Carrboro urban area (i.e., the town populations plus those persons living on the town fringes) stands at around 81,000. The Town of Hillsborough "urban area" includes approximately 10,000 persons, with another 6,000 persons living in the Efland to Mebane corridor of the county west of Hillsborough.

Approximately 41,000 persons live in the rest of "rural" Orange County. As a general benchmark, roughly half of these persons reside south of Interstate 85, and half north of this highway - that bisects the county.

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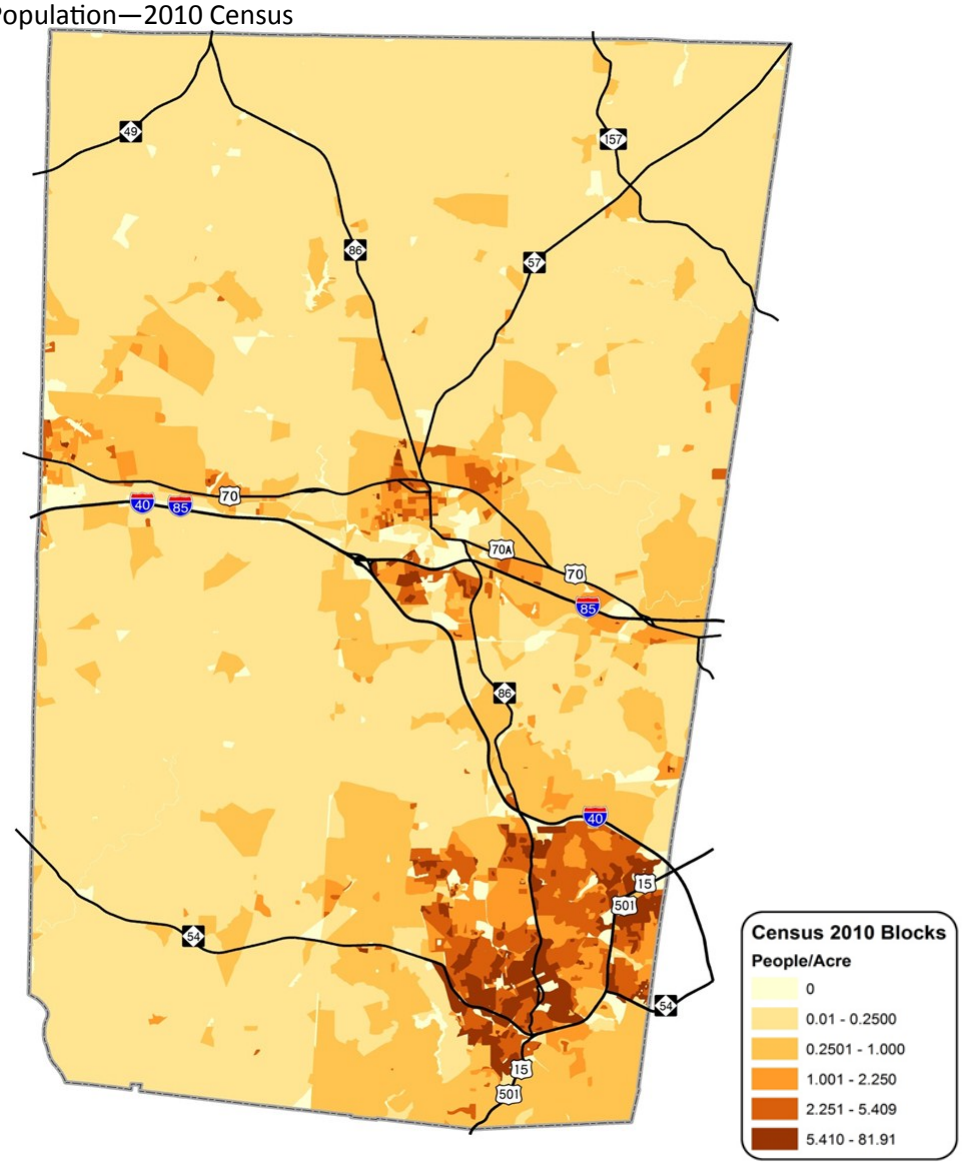
A. Population Density

The population density of the county is, as may be expected, most tightly clustered in Chapel Hill and Carrboro, and to a lesser degree, along the Hillsborough to Mebane corridor. The town of Carrboro is among the most densely-populated communities in the state.

Outside of these urban towns and suburban corridors, other areas of moderate-density suburban-type population may be found in several parts of the county:

- The triangular area between Interstate 85 and Interstate 40 in Chapel Hill and Eno townships
- Areas east and northeast of Hillsborough, including the St. Mary's Road corridor
- The area along the Durham County line north of Interstate 85,
- Areas of Bingham and Chapel Hill townships, west and northwest of Carrboro
- Areas along US 70 both east and west of Hillsborough, and
- The area south of Chapel Hill and Carrboro bordering the Chatham County line.

Map 5-1: Total Population—2010 Census



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B. Age, Gender and Racial Composition

In the 2010 Census, 52.3% of the county population was female, a number generally consistent with previous Census results from the last 30 years. This is slightly higher than the 51.3% for the entire state. This ratio of male to female holds fairly constant in the different areas of the county, with Chapel Hill slightly higher at 53.4% and Hillsborough slightly lower at 50.6%.

In terms of the age, the table below shows the breakdown of persons in 2010 in three categories :

1) Under Age 5,
2) Under Age 18, and
3) Over 65.

By comparison, the figures for the state overall are:

6.4% (Under 5),
23.4% (Under 18), and
13.8% (Over 65).

As shown below, the overall county and Town of Chapel Hill numbers are fairly consistent with each other. By contrast, the towns of Carrboro, Hillsborough and Mebane[4] are markedly younger, with a higher percentage of the population both Under 5 and Under 18. Carrboro also reflects a considerably smaller proportion of Over 65 persons.

This age group of 5-17 is the largest current service population for Orange County recreation and athletics programs. Map 5-3 shows the distribution of the percentage of persons in this age grouping (5-17) within the county. Such information will likely be of value in identifying programs and locational needs.

Maps for other age groupings are included with additional demographic information in Appendix 5.1.

Table 5-3: Population by Age Groups – 2010 Census

Age	Orange County (all)	Chapel Hill	Carrboro	Hillsborough	Mebane
Under 5	4.9%	4.2%	5.8%	7.3%	7.7%
Under 18	20.4%	17.4%	21.5%	24.0%	26.6%
Over 65	10.3%	9.2%	5.3%	12.2%	10.8%
18-65	64.4%	69.2%	67.4%	66.5%	54.9%

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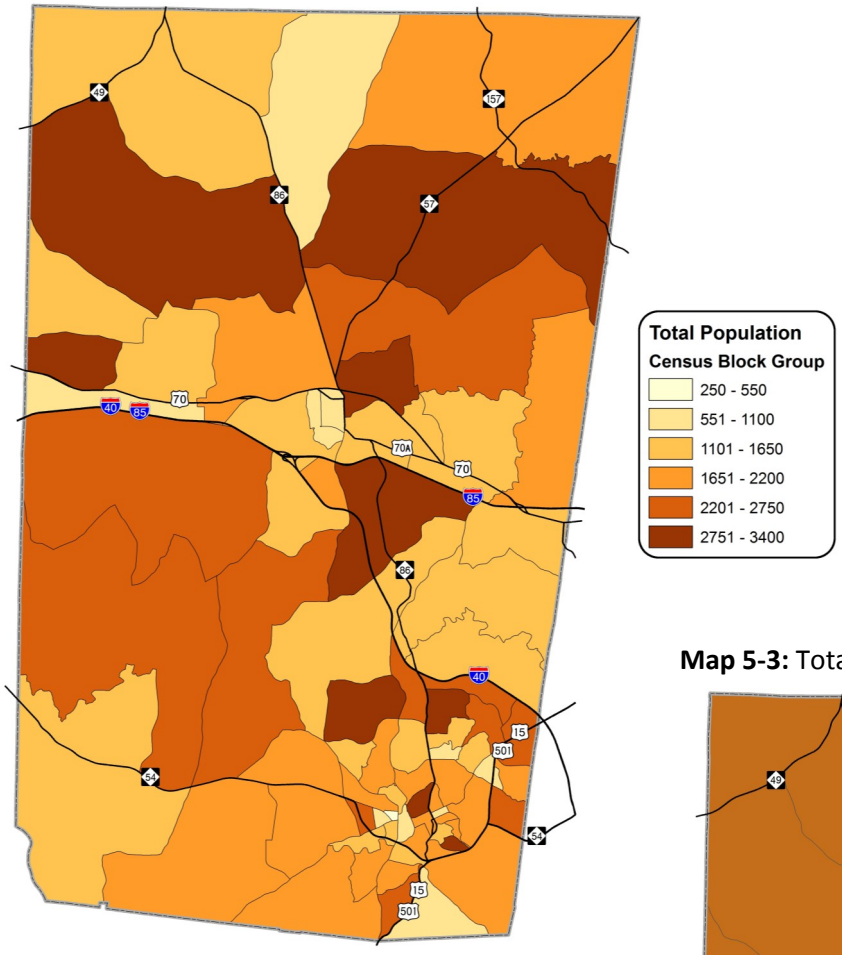
Map 5-2: Total Population -2010 Census



Map 5-3: Total Population 5-17 yrs old -2012 Census

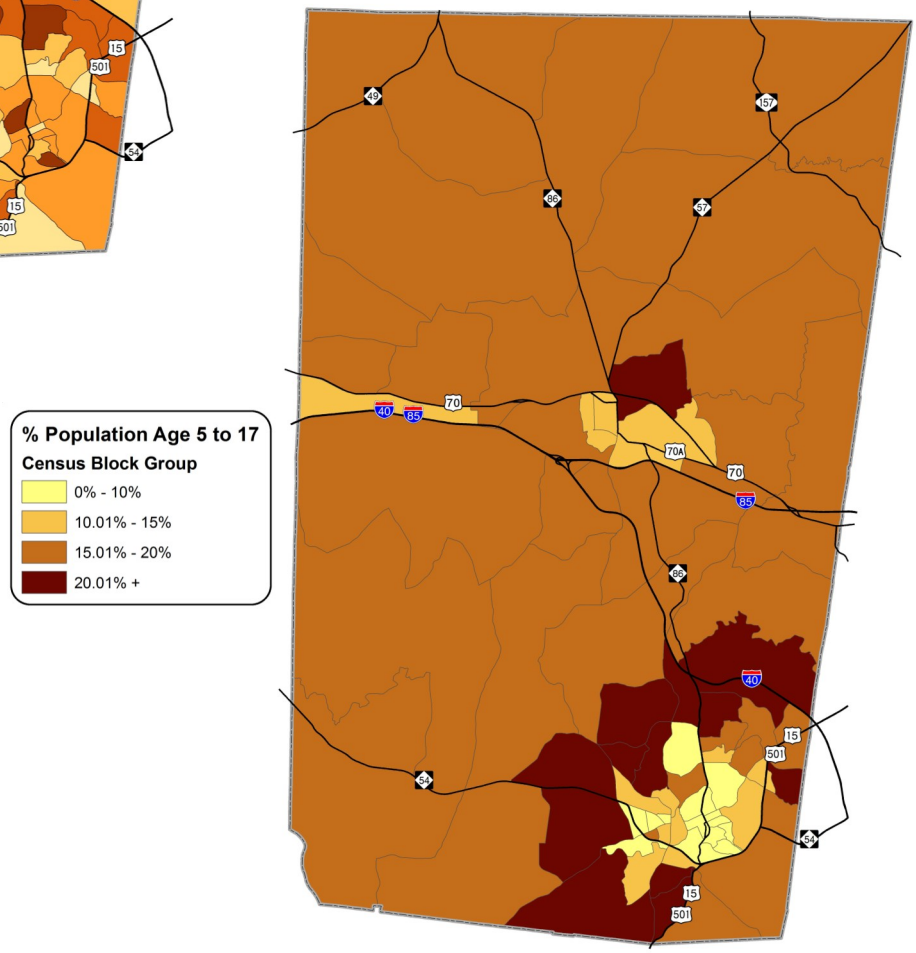


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Table 5-4: Race/Ethnic Origin – 2010 / 2012 Census Estimate

Race/Ethnicity	Orange County (2012)[6]	Chapel Hill (2010)	Carrboro (2010)	Hillsborough (2010)	Mebane (2010)
Black or African-American (alone)	12.2%	9.7%	10.1%	29.5%	20.4%
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.6%	0.3%	0.4%	0.6%	0.5%
Asian (alone)	7.3%	11.9%	8.2%	1.7%	1.2%
Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander (alone)	0.1%	0	0	0	0.1%
White (alone)	77.4%	72.8%	70.9%	62.9%	73.5%
Two or More Races	2.5%	2.7%	2.9%	2.1%	2.6%
Hispanic or Latino[7]	8.2%	6.4%	13.8%	6.6%	6.0%

B. Age, Gender and Racial Composition (cont.)

The racial and ethnic distribution of the County population has seen two important changes in the last 20 years:

- A marked growth in persons of Hispanic origin
- A marked growth in persons of Asian descent

Table 5-4 shows the racial and ethnic origin population of Orange County as of the 2012 US Census estimates (county) or the 2010 Census (towns).[5]

Comparing the 2010/2012 data to that of the 2000 Census, one sees that for Orange County as a whole, the Asian and Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander categories (previously one category in the 2000 Census) have increased from 4.1% of the population to 7.4% in only 12 years. In Chapel Hill, the Asian population has grown from 7.6% in 2000 to 11.9% in 2010 (it was 1% in 1980). The Black or African-American and White population percentages of the total population have decreased during the same timeframe.

Likewise, the number of persons of Hispanic or Latino ethnicity has grown from 4.5% of the county population in 2000, to 8.2% in 2012. It is important to note that some of the racial categories used by the Census Bureau have changed since the 2000 Census, so comparisons should be drawn carefully to make sure consistent groups are being considered.

C. Other Notable Demographic Data and Trends

Additional information may be found in Appendix 5-1. Some other items worthy of note for this plan include:

- Orange County is among the most highly-educated counties in the United States. Just under 25%, or one in four, of the county's adult residents hold a bachelor's degree or higher. When that calculation is changed to include "persons of age 25 and over between 2007-2011," the figure increases to 54.6% with a bachelor's degree or higher. While such comparative tabulations are no longer kept by the US Census Bureau, in 1990, Orange County was the 8th most-educated county in the U.S. Almost 30% of the adult population of the county has attained a graduate or professional degree (compared to 8.5% of the state's adult population).
- The County also has a higher-than-average median family income. The median household income measured from 2007-2011 in Orange County was $56,055, almost $10,000 (and 22%) higher than the state median household income of $46,291.
- However, this high median income figure masks an underlying issue - the county also has 16.9% of its persons living below the federal poverty level. It is important to note that this figure is skewed by the presence of large numbers of college students in and around UNC, but it also represents a polarized income structure within the county which includes substantial cohorts of both high income and low income persons and households.
- In 2005, private industry employed slightly over half of the Orange County population. The state government generates nearly half of the annual wages in the county, mainly due to the County's largest employers - University of North Carolina and UNC HealthCare.

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D. Population Projections to the Year 2030

In the adopted 2030 Comprehensive Plan for Orange County, Section C of the "Orange County Profile Element" contains an assessment of population projections. Several different methodologies were examined in that section, all of which yielded somewhat different projections for the future. This analysis was done prior to the existence of the 2010 U.S. Census data, so it is now possible to look at how the different methodologies performed for the first decade of 2000-2010.

Table 5-5 shows the projected population by township for Orange County in 2010, 2020 and 2030 – which is also the target date for this plan.

The methodology which most-closely matched the actual Orange County population growth through 2010 is the "average 10-year linear" projection model. This method, the "medium" set of projections among the three examined, predicted that the County would have 134,770 persons in 2010 (actual was 133,801), and predicts 154,009 for the year 2020 and 173,248 persons by the year 2030.

This data is reflected in Table 5-E (replacing the 2010 projections with actual 2010 US Census data):

Two important caveats must be added about these population projections. First, population projections are expected assumptions based on past historical trends, and may be affected by economic changes, migration and mobility, and other factors. Even though the methodology used above was the closest fit to the actual county results in 2010, it may not hold true for future decades, and as such, all projections must be used with an understanding that actual results will change. It is possible that the projected 173,248 figure for 2030 may be lower or higher depending on long-term trends and driving factors.

Table 5-5 – Orange County Population Projections 2010-2030

Township (Municipality)	2010 (US Census)	2020 Projection	2030 Projection
ORANGE COUNTY - TOTAL	**133,801**	**154,009**	**173,248**
BINGHAM TWP	**6,527**	**8,409**	**9,523**
CEDAR GROVE TWP	**5,222**	**6,694**	**7,576**
CHAPEL HILL TWP	**87,971**	**102,584**	**115,587**
Town of Chapel Hill (OC pt)	54,397	56,166	62,198
Town of Carrboro	19,582	26,048	30,681
Unincorporated	13,992	20,372	22,711
CHEEKS	**9,313**	**9,308**	**10,430**
City of Mebane (OC pt)	1,793	971	1,119
Unincorporated	7,520	8,337	9,311
ENO TWP	**7,501**	**7,734**	**8,555**
HILLSBOROUGH TWP	**13,809**	**14,679**	**16,199**
Town of Hillsborough	6,087	7,874	9,088
Unincorporated	7,722	6,807	7,114
LITTLE RIVER TWP	**3,458**	**4,601**	**5,376**

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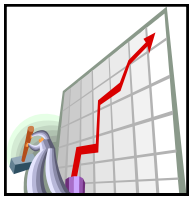
Secondly, as can be seen in table 5-5, while the projection methodology did a very good job of anticipating the total county population, this was not always the case at the township and municipality level. For example, while the projection for Chapel Hill Township as a whole was close to the mark, the breakdown between Chapel Hill, Carrboro and the unincorporated part of the township over projected the latter and under-projected the town of Chapel Hill. In Cheeks Township, annexation and more-rapid growth by the City of Mebane and in the township occurred between 2000 and 2010. Other differences of a like nature may be noted. Overall, however, the projection methodology did match closely to the actual growth of 2000-2010. Time will tell whether this growth pattern will be the best 20-year approximation of population increase.

Note – for the Town of Chapel Hill and the City of Mebane, the above numbers represent only the portions of those municipalities within Orange County.



Conclusion

Orange County, as home to the University of North Carolina and UNC Health Care with proximity to the Research Triangle Park and Duke University, continues to see positive population growth as it has for the last century, and especially the last 50 years. While growth rates have slowed somewhat in recent years with the "Great Recession" economic downturn of 2008-2010, the county continues to see population increases both within its municipalities and in the rural parts of the county. Particularly noteworthy is the current and projected future growth in the Chapel Hill/Carrboro area, the Mebane to Hillsborough (and Cheeks Township) corridor, and other locations across the county – including west of Carrboro and the I-40/I-85 "wedge" in eastern Orange. Overall, an increase of another 40,000 persons from 2010 to 2030 may be expected.

The county is seeing changes in its demographics with an influx of persons of Asian descent and of Hispanic or Latino origin – especially in the urban areas of southeastern Orange. The county is among the most-educated counties in the nation, and has a high median household income – a figure which masks significant numbers of low-income households. The major employers in the county are UNC, UNC Health Care and private industry, much of the latter of which is located outside of the county boundaries.

Note: Additional graphics, maps and end notes on Orange County demographics may be found in Appendix 5.1

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Community Needs Assessment and Public Input

Introduction

One of the most important components of a master plan is to assess how residents feel about existing services and facilities, future needs, and other important considerations.

Over the past year, County staff and UNC-Greensboro consultants worked to create a compendium of comments, remarks and opinions as part of a Community Needs Assessment or CNA. This CNA takes several forms, as will be identified and discussed below – from statistical sample surveys to informal comments and opinions expressed at community focus groups and public input sessions.

As noted in Appendix 6-1, CNA's are conducted for several reasons, including:

1. To provide county residents the opportunity to express their views regarding parks and recreation as part of community life;
2. To provide county residents the opportunity to express their views relative to satisfaction with existing park and recreations area, facilities, programs, and services;
3. To identify county residents' interest regarding the implementation of new programs and services that meet the needs of the county and respond to new trends in parks and recreation;
4. To avoid unnecessary duplication and over-provision of programs and facilities;
5. To identify county residents' interest in the development of future park and recreation areas and facilities;
6. To provide public officials with the information needed to prioritize future park and recreation area and facility development;
7. To justify capital improvements, quite often as part of a grant process;
8. To identify funding mechanisms that are acceptable for parks and recreation area and facility development; and
9. To foster ownership of park and recreation programs and facilities by county residents.

The purpose of this assessment was to determine the leisure interests and preferences of Orange County residents. The information presented herein will help to determine the interests and preferences of residents regarding recreation programs and services, and will become a key building block for the master plan recommendations for park and recreation program and facility development for Orange County.

In order to attempt to develop a robust assessment that included all components of the county population, a random-sample survey was augmented with other "Supplemental Surveys" to provide for a more comprehensive assessment.

A. CNA and Public Outreach Methods

1. Youth Survey

Young people are an important part of the constituency for parks and recreation programs, so gaining insight into their opinions is appropriate and valid.

To this end, in summer 2012, UNC Master of Public Administration intern, Renisha Howard, met with a series of County and Cooperative Extension summer camp counselors and campers to ask their thoughts about our needs and existing programs. The full report on the 2012 Youth Parks and Recreation Survey may be found as Appendix 6-2 to this document.

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The campers and their responses were broken into two categories, pre-teen (ages 7-12) and teen (13-16). In summary, the pre-teen youth listed Fairview Park among their favorite County parks, and they appreciated that park's diversity of equipment and amenities. The favorite activity among this group was basketball (many of those surveyed were in a basketball camp), followed by biking and playing on "monkey bars." Among the park improvements they would like to see, responders noted newer volleyball nets and more basketball courts at Fairview Park, and more trails at Efland-Cheeks Park. The favorite recreation programs were basketball, doll-making in arts camp, and field trips for bowling and roller skating. Their wish list for the upcoming year was more basketball scrimmages, more biking and hiking in adventure camps, and more painting and drawing in creative arts camps.

The Teen youth surveyed listed Efland-Cheeks as the County park closest to them. While many indicated they did not go to the park much, their favorite activities were swimming, playing basketball and volleyball, ping-pong and picnics. Bike trails, athletic fields and volleyball courts were the most-used park facilities in their estimation. There was little response to favorite recreation programs, except a desire for music classes at the Central Recreation Center. The facilities these young people most wanted to see repaired or built included tennis and volleyball courts, soccer fields, playgrounds and mountain bike trails.

2. Community Needs Assessment Survey

The Community Needs Assessment Survey was administered in three different manners, including a statistical random-sample survey, between October 2012 and July 2013. This multi-pronged approach was undertaken and deemed necessary due to the following factors:

As indicated below, a statistical random-sample survey was conducted and provided a valid statistical survey of community needs and interests about current and possible future parks and recreation programs and facilities. This survey yielded 520 responses. There were, however, two important shortcomings in the random-sample Community Needs Assessment survey that warranted further exploration and survey outreach:

a. Many of the households sampled were residents of the towns of Chapel Hill and Carrboro, and were largely unfamiliar with County parks and programs (since these towns offer their own programs and facilities). A follow-up attempt was deemed desirable to solicit feedback from those persons who do frequent County parks and participate in county programs.
b. The random-sample survey responses received under-represented minority groups – African-American, persons of Hispanic origin and Asians – warranting further efforts to solicit feedback from those cultural and/or ethnic communities.

The following is a brief summary of the three survey results that were eventually undertaken including the original random-sample survey.

3. Statistical Random-Sample Survey CNA

Note: The full report and results of the Community Needs Assessment statistical survey, and the survey instrument, may be found as Appendix 6-3.

In the summer and fall of 2012, Orange County staff worked with consultants from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNC-G) to develop and administer a statistical random-sample survey of 4,200 households in Orange County (approximately 10% of the total households in the county). The survey was conducted by UNC-G via US mail with postage-paid return envelopes. A follow-up postcard was sent to survey recipients that had not responded within three weeks. The surveys were collected and analyzed by the consultants in November 2012-January 2013, and the results reported and evaluated in a report received on January 31, 2013. After discussion with the consultant and among staff, the decision was made not to stratify the sample on the basis of geography (i.e., the random sampling for the surveys was of the entirety of Orange County without adjusting for residence).

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In all, a total of 520 county residents responded to the survey, which is a response rate of 12.2% and a valid statistical sample. Typical response rates for surveys of this type are approximately 10%.

The Community Needs Assessment asked 47 questions of the survey recipients, which were broken down into six areas:

a. Parks and Recreation Facility Usage
b. General Information
c. Recreation Activity Participation
d. Future Recreation Programs / Activities
e. Future Parks and Recreation Facilities
f. Financing Recreation and Park Facility Development

4. Supplemental Community Needs Assessments

As noted above, the statistical random-sample survey, while a valid statistical survey, was in need of elaboration due to high proportion of persons unfamiliar with County facilities, and under-representation of minority populations.

For example, of the surveys received via the statistical random-sample and online surveys that answered demographic questions, only 42 or 5.7% were African-American respondents. This compares to 12% of the county's total population. Thus, efforts were needed to try and add additional surveys from the African-American community to have a more representative sample.

To address these concerns, a multi-faceted approach was made for Supplemental Community Needs Assessments. These supplemental efforts attempted to solicit responses (to the same questions from the random-sample survey), via the following methods:

- An online version of the survey was created and links to the internet survey were publicized to recreation and parks mailing lists and open to the general public. This survey was also promoted via news release, social media and email[1]. This approach yielded an additional 307 responses. The results of this survey may be found in Appendix 6-4.
- A targeted survey release to Hispanic community. Sixty copies of the survey (in Spanish, with a link to an English version) with self-addressed, stamped return envelopes were distributed at El Centro Latino in Carrboro and via a summer camp for Hispanic children in Hillsborough. Surveys were also handed out at a Movie in the Park event in Efland. However, very few of these surveys have been received to date.
- Targeted surveys to African-American community. Copies of the survey with self-addressed, stamped envelopes were handed out at multiple events in Efland and Cedar Grove to a predominantly African-American audience. Thirteen additional surveys were received by this approach.
- A Focus Group is being scheduled with members of the Asian community. The results of these focus groups were not part of the survey responses, but are included in the data, findings and recommendations in the Plan. The results of these focus group conversations are included as Appendix 6-5.

Some of these outreach efforts remain underway to try and reach target response rates.

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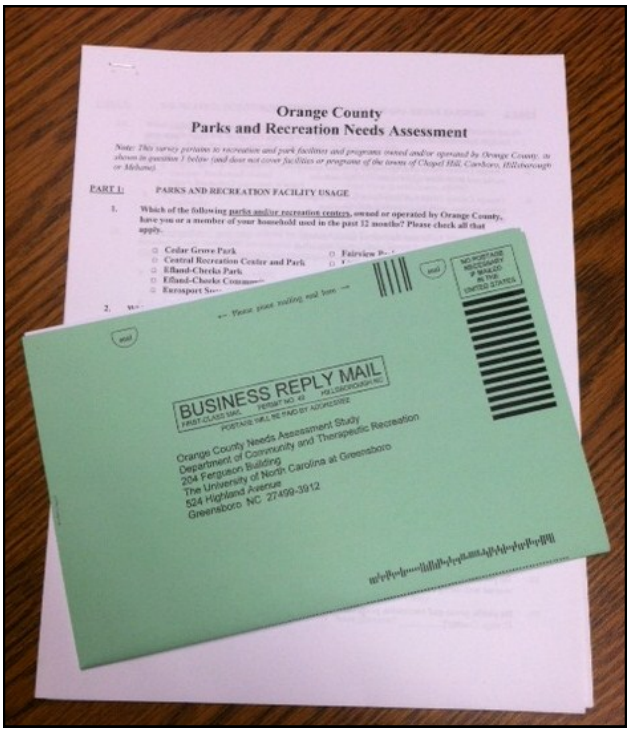
B. Comprehensive Community Needs Assessment Survey Results

The following section presents a summary of the combined survey results, totaling 835 respondents. As noted above, the individual surveys results can be found in Appendix 6-3 through 6-5:

A total of 835 Community Needs Assessment surveys were received through the statistical random sample (520), the online survey (301) and the supplemental targeted surveys for African-American and persons of Hispanic origin (14). While the means of collecting the data, and the responding populations, are different, the survey administered was identical. A comprehensive review of the combined results would be appropriate with this caveat – especially since the online survey and the statistical survey appear to have reached different component audiences within the county, both in terms of geography and in knowledge of County parks and programs. The differences in the survey cohorts is elaborated on at the conclusion of this section after the reporting of survey results.



The following section tabulates all of the responses together, for a full picture of what these two cross-sections of county residents had to say about the questions asked in our survey. NOTE: For brevity, the statistical random sample survey is abbreviated as the "SRS survey."

1. Parks and Recreation Facility Usage Questions

- The most frequently-used facility in both the random-sample and online surveys was the Triangle Sportsplex, which was visited by 46% of the respondents in the past year. Central Recreation Center was next with 28%, followed by Little River Regional Park and Natural Area (20%), Eurosport Soccer Center (19%), River Park/Farmers Market Pavilion (19%) and Cedar Grove Park (18%). These figures reflect an average of low visit rates among those in the SRS survey, and much higher rates of stops for those who took the online survey of the targeted surveys. This includes the substantial number of SRS survey respondents who were not familiar with County facilities as noted previously.
- When asked what facilities were used most-frequently, the answers were similar across the different surveys - Triangle Sportsplex, Central Recreation Center, Eurosport Soccer Center and Little River Park were the largest vote-getters in that order. Many of the responses listed more than one facility as a frequent stop.
- Forty-five percent (45%) of respondents traveled outside of Orange County to visit a park or recreation facility on either a quarterly or annual basis. Twenty-three percent (23%) indicated they never leave the county for parks and recreation facilities.

2. General Information

Surveyed households were asked about current facilities, maintenance, service provision and the impact of parks and recreation programs on health, safety and the economy. Table 6-1 on the subsequent page shows the respondent answers to these 15 questions.

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Table 6-1: General Parks and Recreation Information Questions – OVERALL RESULTS (Agree/Disagree)[3]

Statement	Strongly Agree/Agree	Strongly Disagree/Disagree	Don't Know (SRS Survey)
Orange County provides quality parks and recreation opportunities	**567 (94%)**	**34 (6%)**	**129 (125)**
Orange County needs to expand active outdoor recreation opportunities	**493 (82%)**	**108 (18%)**	**157 (139)**
Orange County needs to expand low-impact/passive outdoor recreation opportunities	**507 (79%)**	**132 (21%)**	**136 (113)**
Orange County needs to provide indoor facility for arts and leisure pursuits	**319 (58%)**	**236 (42%)**	**214 (155)**
Orange County needs to provide an indoor athletic complex	**390 (64%)**	**222 (36%)**	**154 (127)**
Orange County should expand or provide trail system linking various areas of the county	**543 (89%)**	**65 (11%)**	**117 (87)**
Orange County parks and recreation facilities are safe	**549 (94%)**	**34 (6%)**	**184 (168)**
Orange County parks and recreation facilities are well-maintained	**534 (91%)**	**55 (9%)**	**177 (168)**
Orange County parks and recreation facilities are easy to get to	**550 (86%)**	**87 (14%)**	**133 (129)**
Orange County recreation programs and events are well-run/operated	**437 (89%)**	**55 (11%)**	**275 (257)**
Orange County parks and recreation facilities are accessible for use by people with disabilities[2]	**265 (84%)**	**51 (16%)**	**459 (334)**
Orange County parks and recreation staffs are helpful and professional[2]	**471 (94%)**	**28 (6%)**	**269 (253)**
Public parks and recreation programs enhance the economic health of Orange County[4]	**344* (93%)**	**27* (7%)**	**116***
Public parks and recreation programs enhance the physical and mental well-being of Orange County residents	**652 (96%)**	**29 (4%)**	**87 (75)**
Public parks and recreation programs help reduce crime in Orange County[2]	**315 (81%)**	**75 (19%)**	**279 (269)**

*This question was inadvertently omitted from the online survey

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In looking at the sum total of all surveys received in Table 1, one of the most striking things about the responses is that the respondents in the SRS , online and targeted surveys are all fairly similar in their view of County facilities, programs and value. This is particularly noteworthy as the online survey is a younger, more Hillsborough and rural Orange County located cohort., whereas the SRS survey has a high response from urban southern Orange County, and is older in general. The SRS survey answers to each question range around 5-7 percentage points higher in the agree/strongly agree category than the online survey. (Please see Appendix 6-3 and 6-4 to compare the two survey results). The number of "Don't Know" responses is listed in the final column, and in parentheses the number of those that came from the SRS survey is shown. As can be seen, in many cases the vast majority of persons answering "Don't Know" were in the SRS survey, which further validates the previous note about respondents in these areas being less familiar with County facilities and programs since they include a majority of respondents from the towns of Chapel Hill and Carrboro.

In summary, the combined survey results shown here track with most of the "Agree/Disagree" aggregate response rates from the other individual surveys. Online survey participants were somewhat more interested in expanding active outdoor recreation opportunities and were also slightly less certain about a trail system linking various areas of the county. However, the rate of "Agree" responses stayed fairly consistent between the surveys.

A strong majority of the cumulative respondents like the quality of existing facilities, agree that more active and low-impact facilities are needed, and believe in an expanded trail system linking various areas of the county. Support for indoor facilities for arts and leisure and athletics is not as strong, but still a majority. Respondents gave very high marks for safety, maintenance, access and friendliness of staff (94% Agree/Strongly Agree). The vast majority of all respondents believe that parks and recreation programs enhance the economic health of the county, enhance physical and mental well-being and (to slightly lesser degree) reduce crime.

3. Recreation Activity Participation

In this case, over half (58%) of respondents identified athletic leagues or programs they had participated in during the previous year. Most of these were respondents to the online survey. Considerably fewer persons in the SRS survey had experience participating in a County recreation program in the past year. The most popular programs by participation in the past 12 months were:

1. Youth Soccer (35%)
2. Youth Basketball (30%)
3. Open Gym (9%)
4. Little River Trail Run (6%)
5. Volleyball (5%)

Most popular instructional programs in the online survey were Start Smart Soccer, Zumba, Tennis (both adult and youth), Golf (youth and adult) and Creative Arts. The full list and breakdown of participants may be found in Appendix 6-6.

The most popular environmental programs were the County's Earth Day event (34%), followed by Under the Stars (17%) and Tiny Trekkers (17%) programs at Little River Regional Park and Natural Area. The Little River Park Bird Counts also received 11% of the votes. In response to the question "How often do you or members of your household travel outside of Orange County to participate in recreation programs," 471 respondents (62.4%) indicated they never traveled outside of the county for programs.

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Thirteen percent (13%) travel annually to for programs, and less than 25% travel quarterly, monthly or weekly.

Respondents who had tried and been unable to participate in programs were asked about obstacles to their participation. The most common reasons were "inconvenient time/day" (33%), "not offered for the needed age group I needed" (24%) and "program was full" (15%). Only 6% of respondents had been wait-listed and unable to participate in a program.

The most popular camps participated in during the past 12 months were Basketball, Soccer, Adventure (Teen and Pre-Teen) and Creative Arts camps. The most participated in Special Events were:

1. Egg Hunt (28%)
2. Halloween Spooktacular (25%)
3. Fishing Rodeo (16%)

4. Future Recreation Programs / Activities

In the next series of questions, participants were asked to select their "Top 5" programs or activities they would like to see offered or expanded for the future. Combining all of the surveys, 775 of the 832 respondents replied and selected the following Top Ten:

1. Hiking (21%)
2. Swimming (20%)
3. Walking (20%)
4. Yoga (14%)
5. Biking (14%)
6. Summer Camps (14%)
7. Gardening (13%)
8. Tennis (12%)
9. Dog Obedience (12%)
10. Afterschool Programs (11%)

A significant number of persons were still unsure whether the county needs more recreation programs. Almost 57% said they were not sure, followed by 28% who answered "Yes" and 15% responding "No." Excluding the "Don't Know' responses, 65% answered "Yes" and 35% "No."

5. Future Parks and Recreation Facilities

This section asked those surveyed about needs for future parks and/or recreation facilities. When asked "Does Orange County need additional parks?" 36% answered "Yes," with 18% "No" and 46% "Not Sure." Among those expressing an opinion, 67% responded in the affirmative and 33% negative.

The survey also asked whether the county needed additional recreation facilities and centers. This question was inadvertently omitted from the online survey, but of the 476 other respondents who did weigh in, 24% said "Yes," 23% said "No," and 53% answered "Don't Know." Among those expressing an opinion, 52% indicated "Yes" and 48% "No."

If new facilities were to be developed, the following facilities were the highest rated – respondents were asked to pick their "Top 5" facilities desired. Ninety-four percent (94%) of respondents answered this question, and they indicated the following preferences:

1. Walking/Hiking Trails (45%)
2. Nature Trails (34%)
3. Swimming Pool (28%)
4. Greenways (28%)
5. Water Parks (22%)
6. Amphitheatre (22%)
7. Indoor Athletic Complex (18%)
8. Nature Center (14%)
9. Playgrounds (13%)
10. Tennis courts (13%)

Other facilities that got at least 10% listings include picnic areas, dog parks, performing arts studio, teen center, creative arts studio, and community centers. Of note, many of the same facilities were chosen in both the online and SRS surveys, though there is

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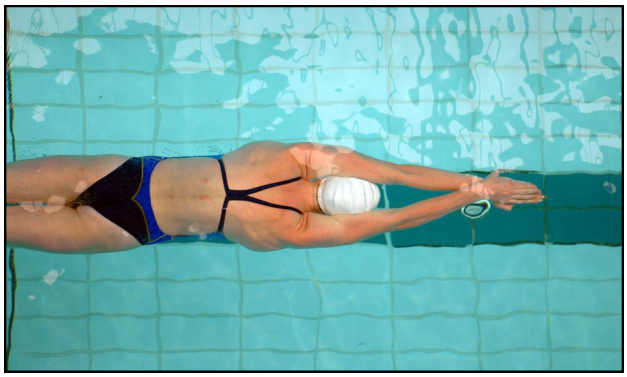
some difference in prioritization (please see Appendix 6-3 and 6-4). *A swimming pool and water parks were more-strongly supported in the online survey than in the SRS survey.*



6. Financing New Recreation and Park Facilities

The final section of the survey attempts to determine public opinion regarding different means of financing future recreation and park facility development. Participants were asked to respond whether they "strongly agree," "agree," disagree," or "strongly disagree" with the following eight approaches. As was done in the General Information section, the "agree" and "strongly agree," and "disagree" and "strongly disagree" responses have been aggregated together in the table below to indicate preferences shown:

Table 6-2: Funding Strategy Responses

Funding Strategy	Strongly Agree/ Agree	Disagree/ Strongly Disagree
"New recreation and parks facility development should be financed, at least in part by:"		
Private/corporate donations	95%	5%
State and federal grants/funds	94%	6%
Existing local taxes (other than property)	73%	27%
Voter-approved bonds	70%	30%
Existing local property taxes	70%	30%
Charging user fees (resident and non-resident)	68%	32%
Increasing local taxes (other than property)	34%	66%

The above responses are very similar across the different survey offerings. In all cases, respondents showed very strong support for state and federal grants and private donations, and moderately-strong support for existing local taxes (other than property taxes) and voter approved bonds. User fees were slightly less favorable, and there was substantial disfavor with the strategy of increasing local taxes (other than property taxes).

7. Overall Demographic Overview

When put together, the 835 surveys received showed that most respondents (75%) came from households of between two and four persons. Ten percent (10%) were in households of five persons, and 4% in homes of six or more.

In terms of age groups within households, 51% of the respondents had at least one person under and up to 12 years of age in their household, and another 23% had a person in the home aged 13-18. The largest single age cohorts identified were 36-55 years (61% of households) and 6-12 years (35%). Almost 6% of the responding households had at least one person over 76 years of age.

The vast majority of respondents owned their own residence, which held true among all of the different survey types (to varying degrees). The SRS survey was very much a survey of homeowners.

Overall, 7% of respondents were African-American, 2.5% Asian-American groups, and 2% of Hispanic origin. Eighty-five percent (85%) of the respondents were White (non-Hispanic).

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The place of residence question, answered by 767 persons, showed the mix of survey respondents geographically:

- Unincorporated Part of the County 31%
- Hillsborough 29%
- Chapel Hill 27%
- Carrboro 7%
- Mebane 6%

In terms of income level, twenty-two percent (22%) of those responding had an annual household income of $60,000 or less, 43% were in the $60,000 – $119,999 range, and 36% reported income of over $120,000 per year. At the same time, six percent (6%) had an annual income of under $30,000, and 3% reported annual income of over $300,000.

C. Consultant Recommendations – Statistical Random-Sample Survey

As a part of their review of the 520 statistical random-sample surveys, the UNC-Greensboro consultants who conducted this survey drew a number of recommendations from these findings, summarized here and shown in full at the conclusion of Appendix 6-3.

It is important to note that while these findings may have validity across all of the different survey techniques, they were written specifically to address the results of the SRS survey:

- Examine the facilities outside the county that respondents visited – what do they have that our facilities do not?
- Look at a trail system that links various areas within the county.
- The vast majority recognize that parks and recreation programs enhance physical and mental health of county residents. Make this a prominent part of marketing efforts.
- Likewise, the vast majority recognize the impact on the county's economic health from parks and recreation – conduct an economic impact study to see what parks and recreation "gives back" to the community from a fiscal perspective.
- Use the awareness of the above two benefits in branding the department.
- *Almost one-third of respondents did not know about services provided, and most did not participate in programs.* Look at the effectiveness of current marketing and promotional strategies.
- There is an opportunity to better inform county residents about what the County does, its accomplishments, and the recreation needs for the county.
- Determine additional marketing and promotional strategies for programs, parks and facilities and their benefits.
- The greatest interest for both programs and facilities was for walking/hiking/biking trails. Evaluate current trail systems and determine possibility of adding new trails.
- Seek grant funds from state and federal levels, as well as corporate donations, to help finance future facilities.
- In developing and renovating parks consider landscapes that provide large areas of open space for low-impact recreational activities. Frequently-requested characteristics included shade, picnic tables and places to walk.

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D. Focus Groups and Additional Outreach Efforts

Subject Area Focus Groups

An additional method of public outreach was the convening of eight focus groups. These groups were developed to examine, in more detail, several known topics or issues that the master plan would need to address. For these focus groups, staff contacted 8-12 representatives and/or subject matter experts for a focused 120-minute discussion. The following is a list of the focus groups and the summary of their findings. The full tabulation of comments recorded in the focus groups may be found in Appendix 6-7.

1. Soccer Facilities (January 22, 2013)

Fourteen persons attended this focus group to talk about soccer facilities. A substantial amount of time was spent on the sufficiency of soccer fields in the county and the types of facilities needed. The pros and cons of artificial turf fields was another key area of discussion. Generally, the group saw need for the creation of artificial turf fields, but felt that these would be better co-located at certain locations rather than "mixed and matched" with natural surface fields at different sites. The timing and availability of fields was another major topic of discussion. Opportunities for use of school playing fields when not in use by schools was highlighted.

In general, the group identified a need for playing fields in the late-winter and late-fall, after most fields have closed for the season. The Eurosport Soccer Center was lauded as a success, but interest in creating a like facility at the Millhouse Road site was also expressed. It was noted that Orange County, because of its location, is an ideal location for tournaments. At the same time, soccer group representatives noted the importance of having sufficient playing time for local youth programs and games, and that the interest in tournaments is balanced with this need. Corporate sponsorships were discussed and seen as ideal, but unlikely to be a major funding source. Some soccer organizations may be willing to help fund fields and improvements.

2. Trails and Connectivity (February 7, 2013)

Thirteen persons attended this session to talk about the role of trails and the connectivity among different parks, open spaces and trails.

- The group reviewed and discussed a map showing existing and planned trails and greenways in Orange County. Participants identified some public trails at Lake Michael and some of the public schools that could be added to the map and data base.
- Participants supported the development of the NC Mountains-to-Sea Trail through Orange County, and recommended running sections of the trail adjacent to roadways (outside NCDOT right of way) on an interim basis, until trail easements are se cured through interior properties.
- Participants discussed the importance of providing certain facilities/amenities to support trail users, such as parking, signage and restrooms; also trash receptacles in certain heavy-use areas only.
- Participants recommended trails be constructed using sustainable trail construction practices, and that the master plan prescribe some kind of pre ferred design standard.
- Participants expressed in interest in the County opening up some of its future park properties (currently "land banked") for some limited interim use, such as natural trails with adequate signage.

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3. Maximizing Public Health Benefits of Parks and Recreation (April 22, 2013)

Nine persons attended this session, and the primary discussion area was the important linkage between public health (e.g., childhood obesity, mental well-being) and parks and open space or programs. The group identified the need for parks to have a variety of different types of movement opportunities and flexible open space within them. The importance of connecting open spaces and parks with trails was noted.

Facility needs identified included swimming pool, walking track at Fairview Park, flexible spaces that allow children to create their own play experiences, and community gardens to help educate about local foods. Offering parks tours or open houses, and creating unstructured play opportunities were seen as keys to getting the public to use parks for healthy lifestyles. The County should also be aware of at-risk populations and try to work with the schools to promote using parks to promote childhood health.

4. Evaluating Our Park Facility Needs (April 18, 2013)

Seven persons attended this focus group meeting. Attendees indicated that they primarily visited County parks to enjoy nature, walk dogs, socialize and meet friends, and hold events. Outdoor classrooms and environmental education programs were listed as a main attraction, as well as sports and special events.

The facilities that were deemed most desirable included:

- Amphitheaters
- Hiking and biking trails
- Access to water features (ponds)
- Diverse features, with each park offering a primary theme or unique opportunities

Attendees indicated more bilingual signage was a need in the parks, and specifically cited the former Occoneechee Village at River Park as needing work. Better signage was also suggested, especially along wooded trails. The group felt that partnerships with schools, UNC and Duke should be pursued, and working with neighboring towns and counties was desirable. In terms of financing facilities, the group felt that there is an expectation that park facilities and services will be free, but understanding the many hidden costs suggested corporate sponsorships, bond referenda and fundraisers may be a good way to help fund the parks. More public awareness of what is offered in the parks was noted as a need – contact via email newsletters and social media should be used to publicize future park plans, events and features.

5. Recreation Programs – Successes and Opportunities (April 17, 2013)

Nine persons attended this focus group at the Central Recreation Center in Hillsborough, including representatives of other recreation providers and community groups. The following is a summary of the group discussion:

What are the strengths of current recreation programs and services?

- Programs are affordable
- Offer a great variety of programs
- Accessibility to locations and information
- Breadth of programs show we are responsive to community needs
- Variety Camp was great

What are the most essential recreation programs in the county?

- Youth and Teen programs
- There has been a loss of teen participation– ability to bring back programs
- Ask what services the community needs
- Don't rely on technology alone to communicate – advertise in churches
- Ongoing "after-school" activity – consistent programming

What role does recreation programming currently fill in the community?

- Leadership programs
- Programs that integrate the total family (inter-generational)
- Programs that strengthen social skills (e.g., Daddy Daughter Dance, cooking class)
- Non-sport programs for kids

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What improvements/changes would you make to current recreation programs?

- Have county and other providers of programming work together (Baseball was a success story with the sharing of fields)
- Build on organizations strengths – find ways to complement each other
- Expand camp
- Don't focus on too much at one location
- Organizations work together on offerings
- Cross publicize
- (program guides and brochures)
- Annual programs discussion between
- providers – information sharing
- Include a user friendly calendar in program guides
- Too much text can be overwhelming and scare away or make information hard to find
- It is possible to have too many programs at one time

What areas are not served?

- Use community centers more – variety of locations and community will feel ownership
- Health Issues – reach families at community centers
- Work with partners to teach at centers (e.g., Health Department, Sheriff)
- Special events at multiple locations (e.g., Movie in the Park)
- Conduct survey in the community and try new programs

Who are potential partners?

- Other County departments
- YMCA
- SportsPlex
- Get seniors involved (e.g., RSVP)

6. Nature and Environmental Programs (April 25, 2013)

Six persons attended this focus group held at Durham Technical Community College - Orange Campus. The group discussed current nature and environmental programs offered by the County (primarily at Little River Regional Park) and by the Orange Soil and Water Conservation District to the schools.

A number of different ideas for future programs and facility enhancements for nature programs were identified. These include:

- Signage identifying certain trees and flora at park sites to help educate about our native vegetation
- Produce a seasonal guide, 'What's in Bloom" about the natural features at selected parks, particularly those with substantial natural areas and open space
- Look at programs about water and wastewater for educational purposes (e.g. "Where does our water go?")
- Offer more adult programs (e.g., bird-watching, spring flora tour)
- Look for opportunities to use water features at parks for nature programs (people are drawn to water)
- Look at the possibility of creating a nature center, perhaps with a water focus (McGowan Creek Preserve was suggested as a possible site)
- Consider working with the Town of Hillsborough on programs at Gold Park, and generally collaborate with other jurisdictions and entities such as the NC Botanical Garden
- Look at having "clean-up" opportunities at parks with streams, and consider creating pro grams that teach people how to live in harmony with nature and basic skills (e.g., flint making)
- Programs on camping (e.g., learn to camp) and plants (e.g., edible plants)

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There were also a number of ideas about what a desirable nature center might entail. Participants noted the opportunities to reach out to local entrepreneurs, universities, and other partners to help build and program such a facility. Energy efficiency and renewable energy was suggested as a theme, along with water, local animals and things that appeal to children. Little River Regional Park was lauded as a good model. Finally, the group agreed that a nature center wherever located should have an environmentally-sensitive design and systems.

7. County-Town Parks and Recreation Coordination (August 21, 2013)

The directors and staff from the Parks and Recreation Departments of the towns of Carrboro, Chapel Hill, and Hillsborough met with County staff to review coordination and discuss their perspective on the County's programs and parks, and areas for possible collaboration.

As shown in Appendix 6-8, the group agreed that the other jurisdictions were appreciative of the programs that the county runs. The idea of working together to market each other's programs better was identified, and it was noted that rental fees are now the same among all of the jurisdictions for the first time.

Opportunities to pursuer more camping opportunities at County parks and preserves were noted, and the potential to work with OWASA on their recreational facilities at Cane Creek and University Lake was cited as an opportunity.

Moving forward, the group agreed that joint capital funding of new park facilities is an area for further exploration, as each jurisdiction has needs and in some cases, very little land for new parks remains in the towns. The issue of County contribution to town budgets was raised, as was promoting the ethic of parks and recreation throughout municipal and County governments.

Substantial opportunities exist to work with other departments, especially the Health Department. More effort to educate local government employees and residents about offerings and opportunities was identified as a need. The need for a tourism-based "app" or booklet about local recreational opportunities was discussed, as was the existing Interactive Parks Locator Map, an example of existing collaboration.

Updates on projects and programs in each jurisdiction were provided.

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8. SportsPlex and County Parks and Recreation (April 18, 2013)

This meeting was held with John Stock, managing partner of RP, Incorporated, the managing entity for the Triangle SportsPlex, an indoor recreation facility located in Hillsborough, and staff.

This group discussed both the Sportsplex and County current and future program and capital improvement plans. All parties agreed that there was a shared interest and ongoing opportunity to offer programs and facilities that were complementary of each other. For instance SportsPlex offers pre-school and afterschool programs and Parks and Recreation does not. The County and SportsPlex management agreed to meet periodically and keep each other abreast of any planned changes in programs and facilities and look for opportunities to continue to work together in tandem to provide service to county residents.

See appendix 6-9 for Endnotes

Linkages with 2030 Comprehensive Plan and Other County Plans

A. 2030 Orange County Comprehensive Plan

The Orange County Board of Commissioners adopted the Comprehensive Plan in November 2008. The plan will guide Orange County's growth and development through the year 2030. The document includes goals and objectives that County officials use to guide policy and funding decisions. Unlike previous County plans that focused on distinct components of county planning, the 2030 Comprehensive Plan addresses a wide range of interrelated planning areas, each dealt with in separate chapters (or "Elements"). The Parks and Recreation Element (Chapter 7 of the Comprehensive Plan) provides guidance and direction for recreation facility and park planning efforts in the unincorporated areas of Orange County. The goals and objectives serve as the foundation for establishing future parks and recreation policies and action strategies undertaken by the County, its advisory boards, and its staff. The Parks and Recreation Element identifies one overarching goal and five goals. These goals emphasize the inclusion of every county resident by recognizing and responding to the changing needs of different age groups, genders, ethnicities, and abilities.

Table 7-1: 2030 Comprehensive Plan - Parks and Recreation Element Goals and Linkages

OC Comprehensive Plan Goal	Parks and Recreation Linkage
Energy conservation, sustainable use of non-polluting renewable energy resources, efficient use of non-renewable energy resources, and clean air. **[Natural & Cultural Systems Goal 1]**	Park facility design and maintenance can support this goal by employing energy-efficiency strategies and principles in designing buildings and grounds as well as equipment use. Locating parks closer to populations or on public transit lines will reduce car trips to park facilities. Also, by creating walking trails that link communities to schools, parks, community centers and other public gathering places.
Economic viability of agriculture, forestry, and horticulture and their respective lands. **[Natural & Cultural Systems Goal 2]**	Parks and recreation planning can support these entrepreneurial activities by considering the presence of highly productive lands that support agriculture and forestry in land acquisition activities.
Infrastructure and support systems for local and regional agriculture. **[Natural & Cultural Systems Goal 3]**	Parks and recreation planning can support this goal by being aware of agricultural systems and possibly offering contracts to farmers for some maintenance of parklands.
Preservation of historic, cultural, architectural and archaeological resources, and their associated landscapes. **[Natural & Cultural Systems Goal 4]**	Park development and operations can support this goal by preserving and protecting (and when appropriate, restoring) cultural resources on parkland such as historic structures and archaeological sites.
Awareness and appreciation of the diverse cultural history and heritage of Orange County and its residents. **[Natural & Cultural Systems Goal 5]**	Park and recreation design and programming can increase public awareness of past cultural uses of the land by protecting and interpreting cultural features on parkland.
Sustainable quality and quantity of ground and surface water resources. **[Natural & Cultural Systems Goal 6]**	Parks and recreation can support this goal by employing environmentally sensitive management and design principles for turf, trails, rooftops, parking lots and other facilities that could affect water quality through impacts from stormwater runoff and groundwater infiltration. This management includes abatement or reduction of nutrient and sediment pollution as well as other ecosystem stressors such as pesticides.
A balanced and healthy diversity of native plant and animal populations. **[Natural & Cultural Systems Goal 7]**	Parkland acquisition efforts and management of dispersed recreation areas that are integrated with and aware of the coverage of ecosystem types protected in Orange County will support this goal.
Networks of protected natural, cultural, and agricultural lands. **[Natural & Cultural Systems Goal 8]**	Parkland acquisition that is integrated with regional and statewide conservation efforts of natural and cultural resources will contribute to the county goal of creating networks of protected lands.

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The plan aims to promote healthy lifestyles and improve quality of life while being sensitive to environmental and cultural amenities. Additionally, these goals outline the importance of inter-jurisdictional cooperation with entities such as schools, municipalities, non-profits, private land-owners, as well as state and federal agencies.

The Parks and Recreation Element goals and objectives complement those in the Land Use Element and the Natural and Cultural Systems Element by identifying the need to acquire and retain publicly-owned of land for parks, open space, and habitat conservation. The Parks and Recreation Element goals also link with the Services and Facilities Element goals to identify opportunities for coordination with school systems and other entities for shared use and jointly-funded projects.

Action strategies for achieving parks and recreation goals and objectives are provided in Chapter 11. The following are parks and recreation linkages to other County goals found in the Natural and Cultural Systems Element of the comprehensive plan.

B. The Nature of the County Parks System

Orange County has a variety of recreational opportunities including state and local parks as well as trails and greenways. The County and its municipalities have collaborated on recreational facility and park planning efforts to deliver regionally-coordinated services to all Orange County residents while protecting cultural and natural resources and providing safe recreational and educational opportunities.

The Orange County Department of Environment, Agriculture and Parks and Recreation manages county parks and recreation facilities bringing environmental education as well as programming in recreation and athletics to Orange County residents.

C. Town Parks and Recreation Systems

Orange County and the municipalities of Hillsborough, Mebane, Carrboro, and Chapel Hill coordinate efforts to provide a full range of recreational opportunities. The Intergovernmental Parks Work Group has facilitated inter-jurisdictional linkages by recommending a number of cooperative measures in order to minimize redundancy of recreational offerings and optimize use of recreation departments' resources. Key linkages include the Comprehensive Countywide Parks Plan, coordinating land acquisition, identifying green corridors, siting of parks and schools, and providing facilities that serve both municipal and county residents.

Highlights of cooperation include:

- Homestead Park and Aquatics Center
- Southern Community Park
- Twin Creeks (*Moniese Nomp*) Park and Educational Campus (planned)
- Smith Middle School and Cedar Falls athletic fields

Table 7-2: Parks and Recreation Planning in Orange County

Jurisdiction	Adopted Park Plan?	Year Adopted	Current Parks Acreage	Other Related Plans
Carrboro	Yes	2006	112	Morgan Creek Greenway Plan, Bolin Creek Greenway Plan
Chapel Hill	Yes	2013	350	Greenways Master Plan
Hillsborough	Yes	2009	65	Community Connectivity Plan
Mebane	No	2014	200	Lake Michael Park Master Plan, Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan
Orange County	Yes	1988	500*	Lands Legacy Plan, Joint Master Recreation & Parks Report

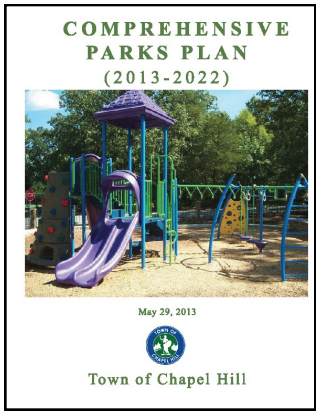
*Includes 255 acres of Little River Regional Park & Natural Area located in Durham County; managed by Orange County

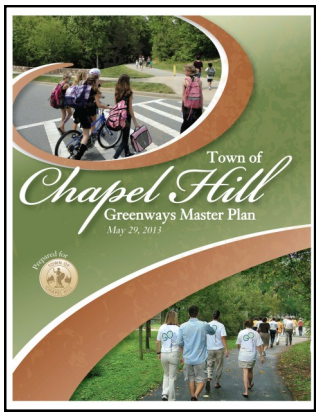
Chapel Hill

Chapel Hill's Comprehensive Park Plan (May 2013) identifies future needs for park acreage and recreation facilities, and describes how the Town could interface with the other recreational providers in the community. The plan notes that although Orange County offers a variety of parks and recreation opportunities throughout the county, there are no developed County parks serving the Chapel Hill area. The plan states that many of the residents in the underserved areas of the county utilize Town of Chapel Hill facilities to meet their recreational needs.

The plan recommends that the Town and County work together to minimize duplication and explore opportunities for joint development and use of facilities. Examples include the coordination of the trail systems and to initiate development of the County-owned parkland on Millhouse Road and Eubanks Road. The plan recommends the Town explore the possibility of forming an agreement with the County to develop a sports complex on Millhouse Road.

The plan also describes how Chapel Hill partners with Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools (via joint-use agreements) to develop outdoor and indoor facilities that serve the needs of both the schools and area residents. The plan also notes that the Town has a unique opportunity to partner with the University in providing recreation opportunities to Chapel Hill residents and students.

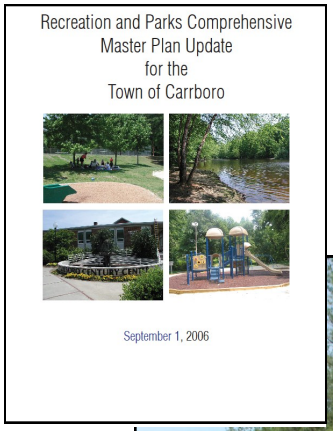




Carrboro

Carrboro's Recreation and Parks Comprehensive Master Plan (2006) emphasizes an interest in partnering with Chapel Hill and Orange County to help meet the needs of its residents. Homestead Aquatics Center, Southern Community Park, and the planned Twin Creeks (*Moniese Nomp*) Park are examples of facilities that Carrboro residents are likely to use although not operated by Town of Carrboro.

Carrboro has about 112 acres of parks and recreation facilities and three miles of greenway trails and bike paths. The Town intends to acquire land for additional greenway trails that would connect with the Bolin Creek and Morgan Creek Greenway segments developed in Chapel Hill. Moreover, Carrboro aims to link its planned trail system to a broader network of greenways in the Triangle region.



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Hillsborough

Hillsborough's Recreation and Parks Master Plan was updated in 2009. The Town's Parks and Recreation Board is responsible for implementing the master plan, including cooperating with Orange County to facilitate shared use and responsibility for publicly-owned land.

The current plan identifies the following concerns or deficiencies the Town intends to address:

- Uncertain relationship with school board for use of school property
- Town does not have a parks and recreation department
- Lack of existing town-owned and -maintained recreation facilities
- Many population groups in need of recreation facilities
- Very limited funding for recreation resources from town
- Loss of open/green space as land is developed
- No official coordination between town and county for recreational needs

Priority recommendations for Hillsborough's parks system include improving pedestrian/bicycle connectivity throughout the town to improve access to parks via sidewalks, road improvements, or greenways, consistent with Town's 2009 Community Connectivity Plan. Other recommendations involve strengthening partnerships with Orange County and coordinating with other municipalities to address regional connectivity and recreation issues.

Mebane

Mebane adopted its first comprehensive Recreation and Parks Master Plan in January 2014. The City inventoried its existing parks and recreational facilities, and determined what additions are needed to meet the expected demand over the next 10 years.

The master plan recommended collaborating with other nearby recreation providers, including Orange County, Alamance County, City of Burlington, and City of Graham. The plan also recommended strengthening the City's agreements for the joint use of school and municipal recreation facilities, and building new relationships with Alamance Community College and Alamance Regional Medical Center.

Finally, Mebane will consider developing a greenway master plan to complement the findings of the City's new Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan.

D. Public School System Fields and Facilities

The 27 public schools within Orange County's two school systems have a variety of recreational facilities including playgrounds, playing fields as well as courts and gyms. Policies indicate that organized groups may rent school facilities. There are several examples of the County co-locating recreation facilities with or adjacent to school facilities. One such example is the Efland-Cheeks Park and Community Center. This 11-acre park is co-located with Efland-Cheeks Elementary School. Facilities include picnic shelters, a multi-purpose field, a playground, a community center, trails and basketball courts. Additionally, the Eurosport Soccer Center near Efland features six lighted playing fields located next to Gravelly Hill Middle School. Finally, the future Twin Creeks (*Moniese Nomp*) Park includes a segment of the Jones Creek Greenway (completed 2011) that links the nearby residential communities to Morris Grove Elementary School and future school facilities.

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E. State Parks System

The North Carolina State Park system includes Eno River State Park, most of which is located in Orange County; the eastern portion is in Durham County. This park follows a linear park model in order to protect an important Piedmont watercourse. Its satellite park unit, Occoneechee Mountain State Natural Area, is near Hillsborough. Park facilities provide low-impact recreation opportunities such as hiking, canoeing, picnicking, and camping. The planned NC Mountains-to-Sea Trail will travel through Eno River State Park. A map showing Eno River State Park is provided as Figure 8-1.

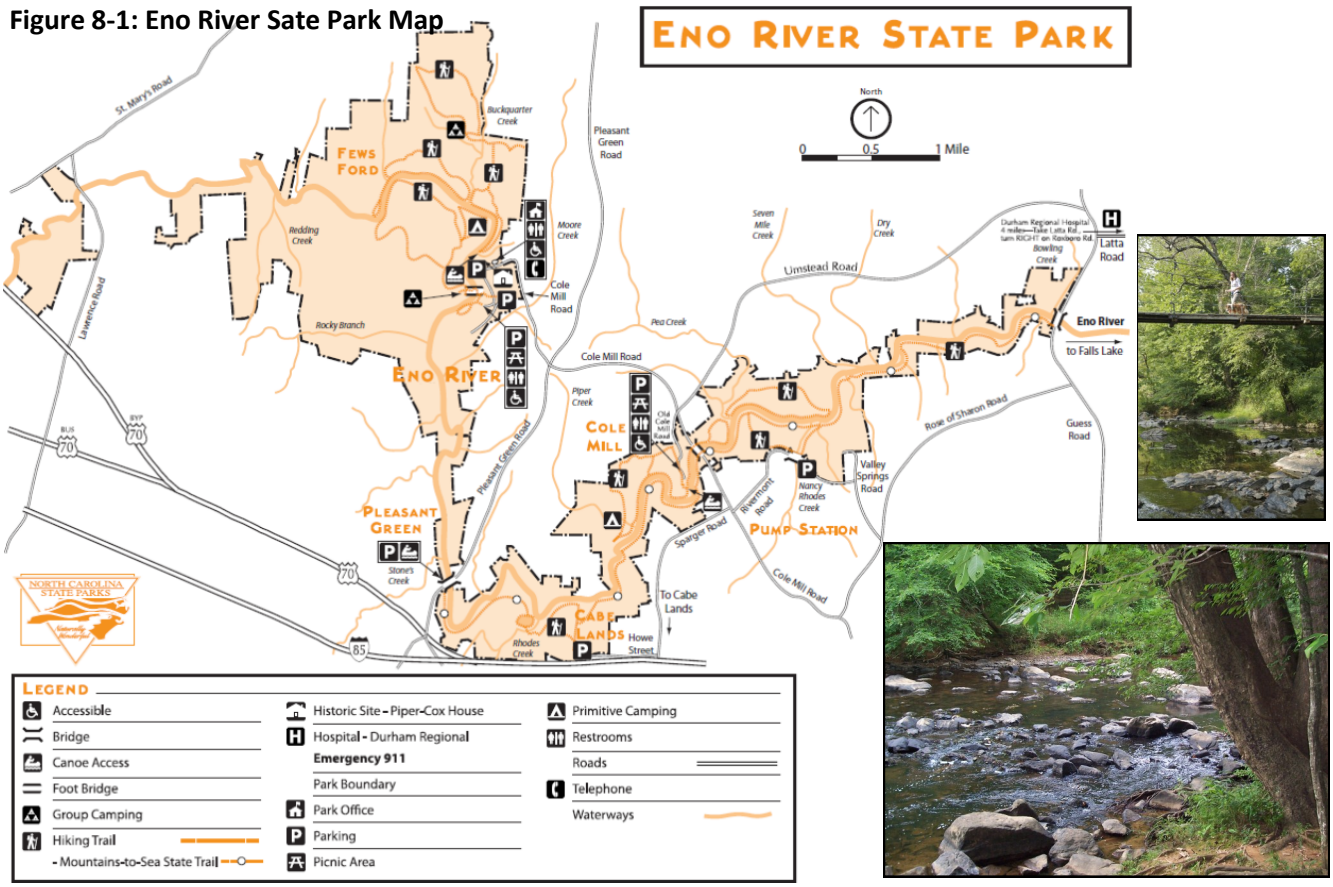
Eno River State Park

The Eno River State Park is comprised of 3,900 acres in Orange and Durham counties and includes multiple tracts of land fronting the Eno River. Approximately 75% of the park and 16 miles of trail are located within Orange County, as well as 12 primitive campsites that accommodate about 100 campers. Other activities include opportunities to hike, canoe/kayak, and fish. Interpretative programs as well as the annual Festival for the Eno (in Durham County) are among the activities visitors may enjoy at the park. Annual visitation is about 500,000.

Occoneechee Mountain State Natural Area

This area's conservation is the result of over 40 years of efforts involving Orange County, The Town of Hillsborough, The Nature Conservancy, the Eno River Association, North Carolina State Parks, and countless individuals. This satellite unit of Eno River State Park, dedicated in 1999, has several ponds as well as approximately three trail miles on 190 acres through oak forest, river habitats, and heath bluff. Current expansion plans include the acquisition of approximately 60 acres of land in order to provide greater protection of more of the regionally significant plant communities on this property. This site is located just southwest of Hillsborough's town limits.

Figure 8-1: Eno River Sate Park Map



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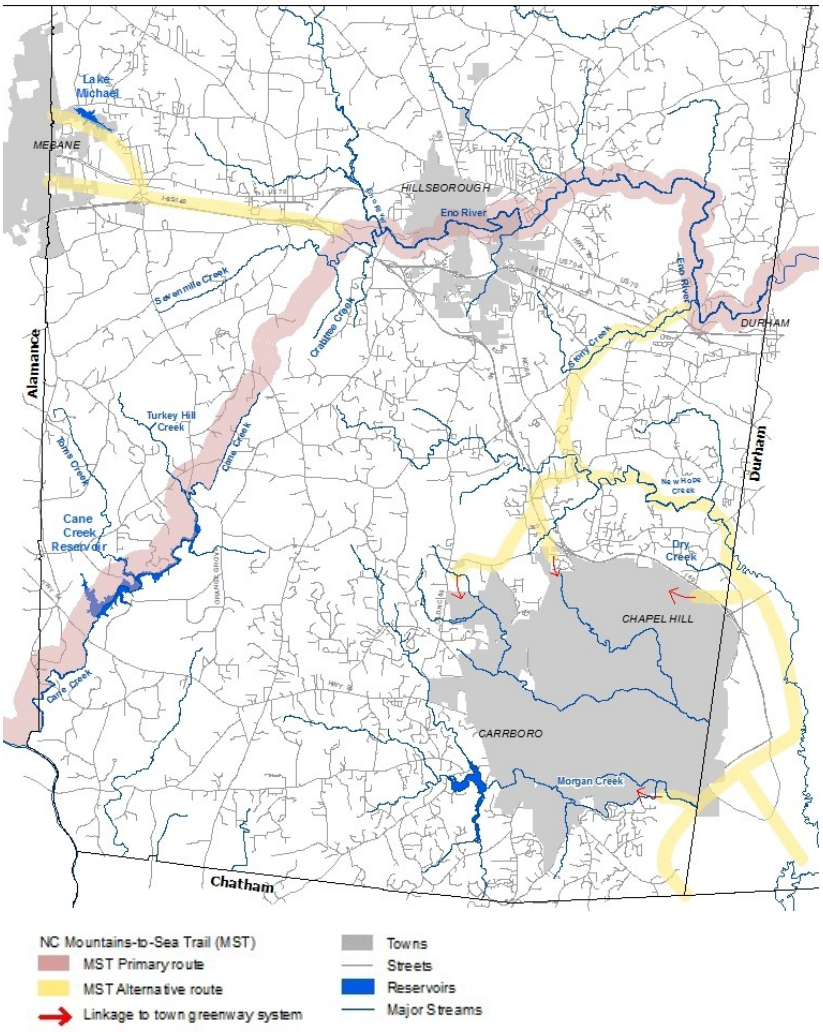
NC Mountains-to-Sea Trail (planned)

The Mountains-to-Sea Trail will link Clingman's Dome in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park to Jockey's Ridge State Park on the Outer Banks. This priority of the North Carolina State Trails Program has a planned section crossing Orange County beginning at the Haw River in the county's southwest corner. Trail plans involve paralleling Cane Creek through OWASA's Cane Creek Reservoir property and continuing on a northeasterly direction until it connects with the Occoneechee Mountain State Natural Area near Hillsborough. It will then follow the Eno River through the Town of Hillsborough's Riverwalk, private conservation lands owned by the Classical American Homes Preservation Trust, and Eno River State Park—totaling approximately 25-28 miles in Orange County. This initiative will rely on willing landowners to provide trail easements through rural and suburban settings as well as state and local government cooperation.

There will be opportunities for other public trails and greenways to link to the NC Mountains-to-Sea Trail (MST), including the Chapel Hill and Carrboro greenway systems, and the Town of Hillsborough's planned Cates Creek Greenway. A map showing the planned MST segment through Orange County and the aforementioned potential linkages is provided as Map 7-2.

Map 7-2: NC Mountains-to-Sea Trail Corridor Orange County Section



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Economic, Health and Environmental Impacts of Parks and Recreation

Background

The provision of parks and open spaces, and of recreation programs, events and opportunities, offer a variety of benefits to the health safety and general welfare of Orange County residents. Among these are benefits to the county's economy, to the overall public health, and to the local and regional natural environment. Evidence of those public benefits is described below in two papers written by consultants from the University of North Carolina – Greensboro, supplemented with complementary information received by DEAPR staff.

A. Economic Benefits of Parks, Recreation and Open Space

A 2011 study by the Trust for Public Land (TPL) determined the return on North Carolina's investment in land conservation through its four conservation trust funds. The TPL study found that every $1 invested returns $4 in economic value from the kinds of natural resource goods and services, such as water quality protection by wetlands and air pollution removal by forests. The study did not, however, include how investments in land conservation benefit the economy through jobs, taxes, tourism, and other revenue.[1]

Locally, a comprehensive review of those benefits was conducted for Orange County by a team of researchers from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Their findings, as well as the national research mentioned previously, support the idea that although county budgets need to be cut during economic downturns, "…preserving parks and recreation funds can actually reduce the need to allocate funding to other public departments."[2]

The benefits that parks, recreation, and open space have on individuals and communities are well documented. Numerous studies have examined the positive impacts that parks and recreation participation has on a person's physical and psychological health and wellbeing. In recent years, increased research has focused on the impact of parks, recreation, and open space on a community's economy. "At the bottom line, parks are a good financial investment for a community."[3]

The following are ways that parks, recreation, and open space positively benefit the economic health of our cities, states, and country.

Enhances residential property values

Research consistently shows parks have a positive impact on the value of properties located close by. Studies further demonstrate that many people will pay more for a home that is located-near a park, a nature preserve, or community open space. Economists call this influence hedonic value while real estate agents and homebuilders call it 'location, location, location.' Determining the correlation between parks and property values is not a recent phenomenon. According to a report of the American Planning Association, "From 1856 to 1873 he [Frederick Law Olmsted] tracked the value of property adjacent to Central Park, in order to justify the $13 million spent on its creation. He found that over the 17-year period there was a $209 million dollar increase in the value of property impacted by the park."[4]

Increases property tax revenues

As real property values increase, so do property taxes. This is particularly important since property taxes are the most important revenue source for many cities and counties. A study conducted in Mecklenburg County (NC) determined "that over the past four years [2007-2010] there was 3.3% 'park effect' – or an additional $8,032 in average sale value per unit due to proximity to the park. Combined, this was over $10 million. This is direct revenue generated by parks for individuals who sold homes near parks."[5] According to the National Association of Homebuilders, "parks and recreation areas may enhance the values of nearby land up to 15-20 percent."[6] This data has even greater significance considering the economic weakness of the real estate market throughout the United States during the study period. Higher property values and subsequent higher property tax revenues may help offset the need for a city or county to reduce services or increase tax rates.

Generates jobs and federal, state, and local tax revenue

The 2012 Outdoor Recreation Economy Report (commissioned by the Outdoor Industry Association) stated that "outdoor recreation is big business in this country, to the tune of: 6.1 million direct American jobs, $646 billion in direct consumer spending each year, $39.9 billion in federal tax revenue, and $39.7 billion in state/local tax revenue."[7] The same study conducted in 2006 determined that outdoor recreation added $7.5 million to North Carolina's economy. In addition, it supported 95,000 jobs, created $430 million in state tax revenue, and produced $6.1 million in retail sales and service across the state.[8] A conclusion of the research was "active outdoor recreation creates sustainable long-term economic growth and community development throughout North Carolina."[7]

Attract GRAMPIES (Growing number of Retired Active Monied People in Excellent Shape)

According to the US Census Bureau, by 2050 approximately 1 in every 4 Americans will be 65 years of age or older. Many of these older adults will be affluent due to fiscal benefits such as Social Security, pension plans, investments, and military pensions. Many are mobile and move to various locations around our country. A study of retirees conducted in 1994 found that the top three features of a community that influenced the decision to relocate were scenic beauty, recreational opportunities, and mild climate. When retirees relocate to an area they bring expendable income, increase the tax base, are "positive" taxpayers because they use fewer community services than they pay for through taxes, and often deposit significant assets into local financial institutions.

Attracts business, especially small businesses

Parks, recreation, and open space have a strong influence attracting businesses to a community. "Corporate CEOs say that employee quality of life is the third most important factor in locating a new business. Small company owners say recreation, parks, and open space are the highest priority in choosing a new location for their business."[10] According to Crompton, Love, and Moore (1997), parks, recreation, and space amenities were identified as the three most important factors that contributed to quality of life mentioned above.[11]

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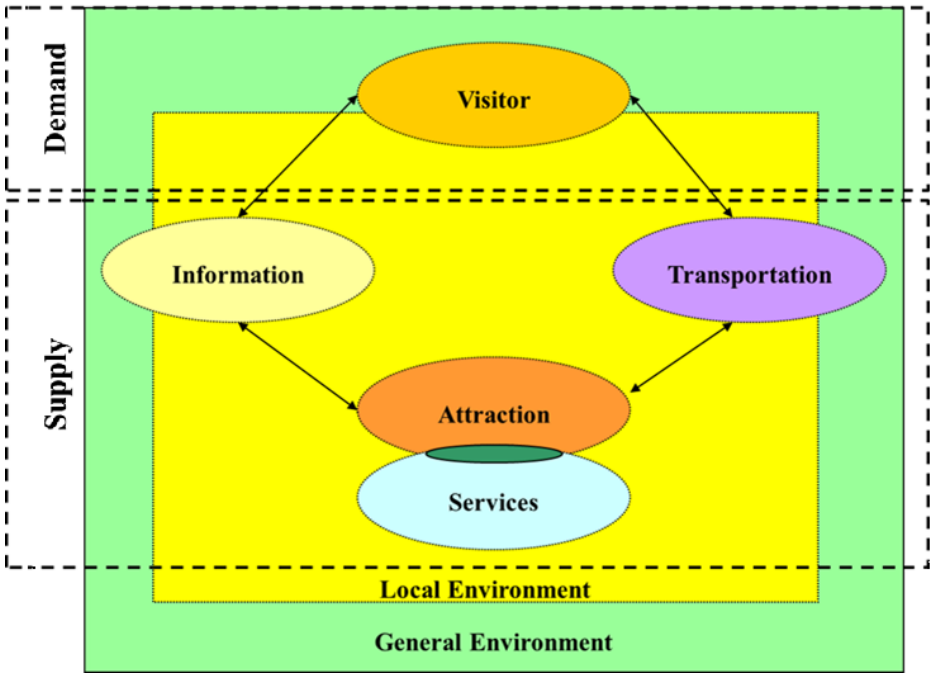
B. The Linkage of Public Parks and Recreation with Community Tourism (UNC-Greensboro)

Crompton explains that "[m]any regard tourism as a commercial phenomenon concerned with economic development that is rooted in the private domain. In contrast, parks and recreation typically is viewed as being concerned with social and resource issues and being rooted in the public domain."[12] In this light, some may not see the connection between public parks and recreation and tourism. However, there is a clear and strong relationship between public parks and recreation facilities and services with a community's tourism potential. To better understand this relationship it is important to begin by defining tourism. There is often a misconception that tourism is a simple process commonly associated with "going on vacation," "being a tourist," and "staying in a hotel." The truth is that the process is more complex, and involves much more than a person traveling. Tourism is defined as the "processes, activities, and outcomes arising from the relationship and the interactions among tourist, tourism supplies, host governments, host communities, and surrounding environments that are involved and hosting of visitors."[13]

As the definition indicates, tourism encompasses much more than the economic and financial aspect of a person traveling. Tourism is the processes and activities, the relationships and partnerships of its stakeholders, and the impacts of these processes and activities on the host community. Because of this, tourism is best understood as a system with all its components and the interaction of those components.[14 15] Figure 8-1 illustrates that tourism system has two main drivers: demand and supply. Demand is based on the visitors' demand for a leisure experience in a place that is away from their home. The supply can be broken into multiple elements that work together to provide the tourism (leisure) experience. This system also includes, but is not limited to, impacts of tourism (social and environment), spatial planning and policy development, programming of activities, the partnership development, and enhancement of the quality of life for all stakeholders.

Figure 8-1: The Tourism Destination System (modified from Gunn & Var, 2002)



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Destinations have multiple levels and types of products and services (i.e., hotels, restaurants, gas stations, attractions) that are brought together to form the overall tourism experience. Each component or element of the destination is a product in and of itself. "The attractions of a destination constitute the most powerful component of the supply side of tourism."[14] Most public parks and recreation facilities and services fall into the attraction category. Crompton (2010) explains that in many communities, most tourism attractions are developed and/or operated by the public and nonprofit agencies, many of which are parks and recreation related. Therefore, tourism in most communities is heavily reliant on public park and recreation agencies.[12]

Most of the outdoor recreation space that is utilized by tourists in the United States is owned by a governmental agency (federal, state, or local). Many of the historical and cultural attractions in a community are located at a public park or in a public facility.[15] Public parks and recreation facilities and services are a vital part of the tourism offerings in a community.

For example, athletic fields used to host tournaments will draw players and fans from areas outside the local community. Those individuals traveling to the community to play in the tournament will need basic tourism services such as lodging and restaurants. The tournament, which may be run by the local parks and recreation agency, is the attraction. The facilities (i.e., fields, locker rooms, picnic shelters) that are being used are a requirement for the tournament to be held and are also considered attractions.

One of the emerging trends for travelers is the desire to stay healthy and fit while traveling. Tourists often desire places to run, walk, bike, swim, and play. Local parks and recreation facilities provide tourists with these opportunities. It could be as simple as a tourist running on one of the local parks and recreation department's maintained trails, playing basketball at the local park, or taking part in a group exercise class. Other examples of tourists using park

and recreation facilities could include: having a picnic at a community park, attending a festival, taking a nature walk. The main difference between parks and recreation facilities that are attractions and those that are not is the manner in which they are managed. For a facility or service to truly be considered an attraction it must be managed with an understanding that tourists may use the facility and therefore policies and practices must be in place to make the tourist welcome.

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C. The Role of Parks and Recreation in Improving Public Health

Many studies over the years have indicated the strong relationship between parks and public health. Whether providing opportunities to commune with nature and meditate, or access to safe spaces for physical activity and recreation to fight childhood obesity and chronic disease, access to parks and recreation areas and programs have consistently been shown to improve quality of life and increase positive health outcomes.

Here in Orange County, well over 90% of persons responding to the Community Needs Assessment Surveys in Chapter Six agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "Public parks and recreation programs enhance the physical and mental well-being of Orange County residents."

The role of parks and recreation in improving health is especially important considering national and local trends in public health. As the following statistics illustrate, we know the burden of disease and death in the United States is due to preventable diseases resulting from physical inactivity, tobacco use, and poor diets.

- Seven out of 10 deaths among Americans each year result from preventable chronic diseases, including heart disease, cancer, and stroke.
- Nearly half of American adults suffer from at least one chronic illness.
- One in three American adults is obese-and almost one in five children.
- Arthritis is the leading cause of disability, with nearly 19 million Americans reporting activity limitations.
- Diabetes is the leading cause of kidney failure, non-traumatic lower-extremity amputations, and blindness among American adults.

In Orange County, local data reflects the national epidemic of preventable chronic disease. Fifty-three percent of adults and 33% of high school students in Orange County are not within healthy weight ranges, which increased access to park improves. Only 45% of adults and 48% of high school students meet the minimum recommended physical activity requirements.[16 17] Orange County does yet not meet the established North Carolina 2020 targets for adult exercise (60.6%) or healthy weight high school students (79.2%).

Individual Behavior versus Influential Systems

Looking at these numbers alone, it would be easy to attribute these negative health outcomes to individual choice, willpower, or lack of knowledge about healthy behaviors. However additional data on the health effects of our physical, political, and cultural surroundings provide deeper insight on how our decisions are affected by elements beyond individual control. Some national examples include:

- Seventy percent of African –American neighborhoods and 81% of Hispanic neighborhoods lack recreation facilities, compared to 38% of White neighborhoods.[18]
- People who report access to walking/jogging trails are more 55% more likely to be active.[19]
- Children living within 2/3 mile of a park with a playground can be five times more likely to have a healthy weight.[20]
- People who live within walking distance of trails, parks or stores report higher walking than those who do not.[21] But the distance matters. Forty-six percent of people are willing to walk to church or school if it is one mile away, but only 1% are willing when the distance is 3-4 miles.[22]
- Youth in neighborhoods with seven recreational facilities were 26% more likely to be active than those in areas without facilities.[23]
- The number of children who are physically active outside is 84% higher when schoolyards are kept open for public play.[24]

This clearly shows that where someone lives and what parks and recreation facilities they have access to directly affects their ability to meet physical activity guidelines and to achieve the associated positive health incomes. It is important that all residents have access to recreation and physical activity opportunities, the natural environment, health food, and healthcare.

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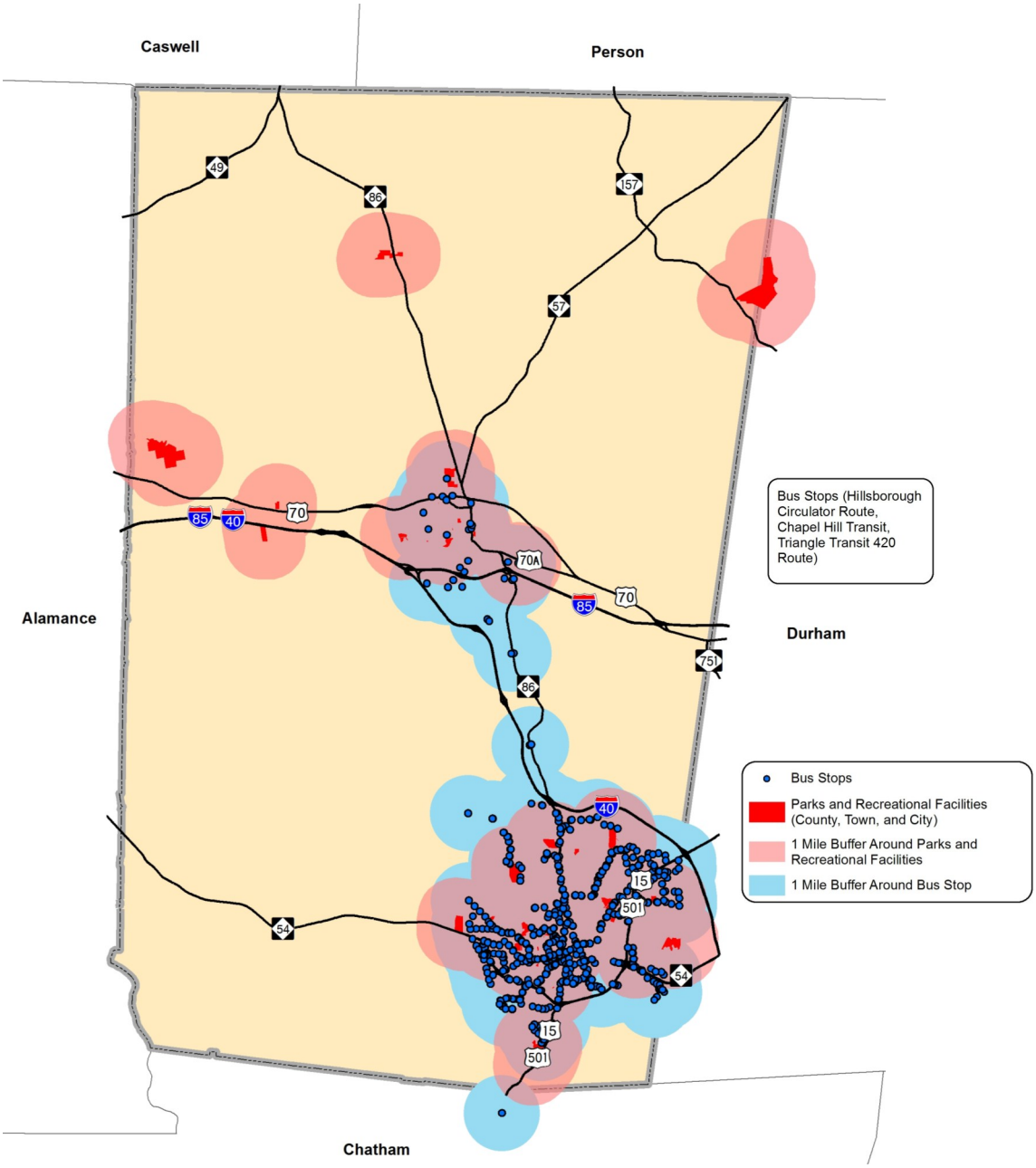
Local Experiences

The national and state data above are reflected in the everyday experiences of Orange County residents. The 2011 Orange County Community Health Assessment points out that despite the strong overall parks and recreation programs within the county there are many unmet needs. Residents were asked what they like most and least about living in the county. Of 12 topics, 17% of those surveyed mentioned transportation and the built environment infrastructure (biking lanes, complete streets, parks and recreation facilities) as an area that most needed improvement. When specifically asked whether a lack of access to parks and recreational opportunities is a problem in Orange County, 75% of those surveyed agreed. Qualitative focus groups spoke highly of the quality of these resources, but mentioned increasing access to park resources as an ongoing need, particularly urban versus rural access.

Map 8-1:



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The following are local examples of the gaps in access for Orange County residents. First, there is only one free, public swimming pool—the A.D. Clark Pool located at the Hargraves Community Center in Chapel Hill, which operates only from Memorial Day to Labor Day. Second, despite the abundance of parks in the Chapel Hill-Carrboro and Hillsborough vicinities, there is insufficient recreational space or athletic sports fields in the rural parts of the county, particularly in the southeast and northern areas. Thus, the rural populations do not have access to as many free recreational spaces as urbanites. While rural populations may have an abundance of beautiful open spaces they may lack accessibility to formal recreation areas. This lack of recreational opportunities in the northern and southwest regions of Orange County was identified in the 2011 Community Health Assessment.

Therefore, residents without the financial means to pay for unsubsidized recreation have to use free recreation opportunities, which may be difficult to access depending on their location in the county. Furthermore, most of the community centers and exercise facilities that offer physical activity classes in the county require payment, isolating indigent members of the population who may need more group encouragement to partake in physical activity.

Finally, gaps in recreation access are further compounded by lack of private and public transportation. They are limited to opportunities reachable by public transportation or personal means like walking or biking. For rural residents, public transport access to parks is, for the most part, infeasible. As one way to operationalize access, consider that 3,400 Orange County households do not have access to vehicles, with roughly 3,000 of them farther than one mile from a bus stop (which are primarily located near Chapel Hill, Carrboro and Hillsborough).25 This issue of access also highlights the increased national emphasis on incorporating parks and recreation areas into broader community changes to facilitate active transport to school, work, or community destinations. The Orange County Community Health Assessment found that during the period 2005-2009, 5.4% and 1.6% of county residents walked or biked to work, respectively.25 In Chapel Hill, 11.2% of commuters walked and in Carrboro, 3.0% walked to work. This suggests a much lower percentage of walking and cycling as active transport to desired destinations in rural Orange County, due in large part to the higher density and greater transportation infrastructure in the municipalities.

Connecting parks and recreation facilities with community efforts to increase the walkability and bikeability of Orange County will help residents' use their everyday travel to achieve their regular physical activity milestones using time they already need to devote to reaching destinations.

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Current Programming

In addition to the provision of facilities to allow opportunities for active living, parks and recreation departments play an integral role in programming for exercise and recreation. Zumba and yoga classes are among the most popular classes offered by Orange County, and survey results indicate a desire for more hiking and biking opportunities. Athletics programs teach discipline and team-building in addition to physical training.

The Orange County Health Department (OCHD), through its Healthy Carolinians of Orange County program, sponsors and promotes a number of other programs that encourage citizens to participate in physical activity and recreation, including *Eat Smart Move More* and *Preparing Lifelong Active Youth to Move More.*

Eat Smart Move More Orange County

Orange County *Preparing Lifelong Active Youth (PLAY) to Move More* is a partnership between HCOC, Orange County Schools (OCS), and UNC Campus Recreation to increase youth physical activity during afterschool. UNC Sport Club athletes visit OCS middle schools twice a month to teach youth sports related skills, and provide opportunities for structured play.

The program encourages OCS to enhance physical activity for students during after school programs. Teachers strive to dedicate at least 30 minutes of after-school time to activities that get students moving. Be Active NC trains teachers to engage students in physical activity that promotes learning and well-being of both students and teachers. Healthy Carolinians hopes to have PLAY adopted throughout the school district.

The Eat Smart Move More (ESMM) campaign asks its partner organizations to use various strategies to promote a different key ESMM health message each month to various audiences within their organizations. Individuals and families are encouraged to think differently about what they eat and how much they move.

Ensuring "Health in All Policies"

While designing parks and recreation facilities with public health in mind has been accomplished on a basic level in Orange County, it has not been fully integrated into the design process for parks in a formulaic or fundamental design tenet. There has been a national movement towards "Health in all policies." Health in all policies means that health consideration are clearly defined and addressed in all policy making and programming across sectors, and at all levels, to improve the health of all communities and people. Recently, a number of North Carolina state divisions have formally expanded their missions to include public health considerations in all programs, plans, and policies.[26]

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With the clear connections between public health and parks and recreation, it will be important that Orange County includes key public health considerations in design of parks and recreation programs, policies, or projects. A number of national and state documents provide guidance on these considerations, and outline recommended strategies and goals to increase active living in communities.[26 27]

Some of the considerations mentioned in these documents include:

1. Proximity of recreation facilities to homes, schools, or other frequented areas
2. Accessibility of recreation facilities to public transportation
3. Cost of recreational facility use
4. Safety, or perceived safety, of recreational facilities
5. Hours of operation of recreational facilities
6. Safe pedestrian/bike facilities connecting parks and recreation facilities

Inter-Disciplinary Collaboration

Similar conversations are occurring in parks and recreation, public health, and planning communities. In November 2012, an article on trends in parks and public health further noted the following[28]:

Indeed, leaders from both the public health and park and recreation fields make compelling arguments that custodians of our green spaces, trails and greenways, recreation facilities, community centers, and playgrounds hold the keys to our most widely accessible dispensary of national health solutions:
Doctors really ought to prescribe parks and public recreation programs to their patients most at risk for obesity-related illnesses.

- *Communities should seek to identify and address "recreation deserts" and connect residents with under-utilized recreational spaces through bike and walking trails.*
- *Community-led studies of public health consequences should inform and guide changes to the built environment—and parks should play key roles.*
- *Organizations chartered to fight chronic diseases should partner with the caretakers of local walking trails and greenways.*
- *And, we should all agree to keep parks tobacco-free.*

Future Opportunities for Parks and Public Health

These considerations, and the preceding discussion emphasize that access to and use of parks and recreation facilities are an integral part of an active, healthy community. Communities that support active living through parks and recreation, accessible transportation, bike and pedestrian infrastructure improvements could prevent up to 1.7 pounds of weight gain per year, lower risk of obesity by 35%, and increase life expectancy by 4 years.[29] However, the goal of such an active, healthy community and its benefits cannot be attained without collaboration from diverse community, government, and business partners. Only when these partners all recognize and strive towards active living as an integrated way of life, and not simply an individual choice to be made each day, will we achieve the health, economic, and other benefits we desire.

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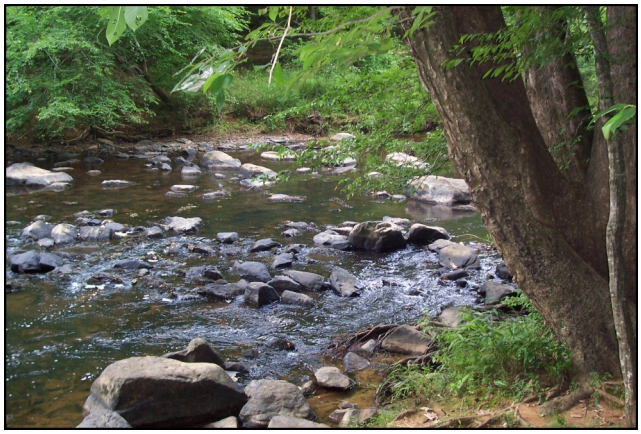
D. Parks, Recreation and the Environment

In addition to the important role parks and recreation programs play in public health, parks also are an important part of protecting our shared natural environment. Parks and open spaces constitute an important part of the county's "green infrastructure." As noted above, they help protect water resources by filtering pollutants from streams, protect air quality by offering large wooded areas that help absorb airborne pollutants, and provide important breaks in impervious surfaces and built areas to lessen the effect of reflective heat and the resultant impacts on air quality and climate.

Parks can also host a variety of flora and fauna. Most parks include undeveloped areas that surround the athletic fields, picnic shelters, parking, and other facilities. The preservation of these "green spaces" can also help protect native plant and animal species that have lost their habitat in surrounding developed areas. These areas may include nature trails or they may be set aside as natural areas with no trails or other recreational amenities. Many of the areas located inside our parks and nature preserves are recognized as significant natural heritage areas by the North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources. These special areas include unique and exemplary terrestrial and aquatic habitats that critical for supporting important animals, plants and ecosystems. As of 2009 there were 6,206 acres of Natural Heritage Areas in parks or other protected open space in Orange County.[30]



Many of our parks also include remnants of our past, such as former homesteads, old roadways, or a burial ground. These historically and culturally significant areas can add a great deal to the visitors' interest and they provide opportunities for educational programs and site interpretation. In some cases they can add to the heritage tourism in the community. Examples of parks with historically-significant amenities in Orange County include the former Patterson Mill dam in Duke Forest, the Piper-Cox House within Eno River State Park, the historic Ayr Mount property managed by Classical American Homes Preservation Trust, and the historic farmstead at Orange County Blackwood Farm.

See Appendix 8-1 for Endnotes.

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What Does It All Mean: Summary and Findings from Inventories, Research, and Input

Introduction

In the preceding chapters, we have learned about existing and previous plans for parks and recreation in Orange County; reviewed the inventory of current parks and recreation facilities, as well as planned future facilities; considered current programs and services; reviewed population estimates and projections and other demographic "driving factors"; examined the results of several distinct surveys of community needs, both statistical, online, and targeted to ethic and special populations; looked at the relationship and linkages with this plan and the County's 2030 Comprehensive Plan; and explored the impacts of parks and recreation on the county's economy, the public health and our natural and cultural environment.

Having examined the above data and information, it is now possible to begin to draw some conclusions that will help illuminate possible future needs and efforts.

In this section, we will explore the changing needs that appear to have emerged in the past 25 years, along with opportunities to meet these challenges. A look at the use of standards for future needs will also be presented, both from a population-based formula and a needs-based version from the opinions shared in the different surveys of community needs. This exercise will enable the examination of service areas and service delivery, and the potential for meeting needs both at the County level and in conjunction with other partners.

This analysis, plus all of the prior data and information presented in this plan, will enable us to draw a number of conclusions, or findings, that may help establish the plan for parks and recreation going forward to the year 2030.

A. Changing Needs and Conditions

Many things have changed with the passage of 25 years since the 1988 master plan. It would be impossible to list all changed conditions that affect the method and means of parks and recreation provisions, but some of the most relevant include:

- The county population has grown from 88,000 to 137,000 persons (56% increase).
- Orange County passed parks and open space bonds in 1997 ($6 million) and 2001 ($20 million) for acquisition of parkland and construction of parks and recreation facilities.
- Orange County opened its first park in 1998 (Efland-Cheeks Park), built with bond proceeds from the 1997 bond. Park facilities in Chapel Hill, Carrboro, Hillsborough and Mebane have also been constructed to serve those communities.
- Most of the parks and facilities called for in the 1988 Master Recreation and Parks Plan are now built or the sites secured.
- There has been a greater emphasis at the federal, State and local level on building trails and protecting identified natural areas.
- Recreation program offerings are more numerous and considerably more diverse as community needs have evolved. This is true both for Orange County and its municipalities.
- The County acquired an indoor sports facility, the Triangle SportsPlex, which includes a swimming pool, ice rink and fitness areas among other amenities.
- The County has engaged in partnerships with non-profit recreation providers for summer camps and sports leagues.
- The internet and means of electronic communication have greatly altered how people receive information about parks and recreation services.

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These changed conditions and needs, along with the community needs assessment and inventories of existing facilities and programs, are major driving factors for future parks and recreation program provision, and determinants for the nature of what the parks system both has become, and will evolve into over the coming years. All of these past and current plans and activities, and the assessment of what has changed and what community needs and priorities are, help the county determine the type and style of future parks needs and how these services should be delivered.

B Park Classifications, Standards, Service Delivery

Local, regional and state parks and recreation providers across the nation regularly engage in master planning efforts such as this one. A key question for all of these plans is – how to translate the existing facilities, prior plans and expressed community needs into a formula for determining how these needs should be met.

Historically, one of the most common methods of quantifying these needs has been through the use of park standards. As we shall see in this chapter, the very nature of that process has undergone significant change in the last 25 years, leading away from more of a community needs-based approach.

Table 9-1: below shows the park classification system from the 1988 Master Plan (found in Table 5-1 of the 1988 Plan).

Type of Park	Acreage Needs	Population Served	Service Area	Example Amenities/Facilities (designs)
Mini-Parks	Less than 1 acre	500-2,500	Sub-neighborhood	Picnic table, game tables, benches
Neighborhood Park	5-20 acres	2,000 – 8,000	¼ to ½ Mile	One ballfield, courts, picnic shelter, playground
Community Park	25-74 acres	10,000 – 50,000	1 to 2 Miles	2 ballfields, trail, courts, picnic shelter, playground, concessions, amphitheater
District Park	75-199 acres	Up to 50,000	Within 30 minute drive time	Community park plus multi-ballfield complex, trails, nature center, camping
Regional Park	200 acres +	Entire population small community	Within 60 minute drive time	Multiple trails and picnic areas, water features, boating, camping, Fishing
Unique or Special Areas	No standard	*	*	*

The basic framework of the types of parks is still valid in 2013, and consistent with the park classifications seen in other jurisdictions. However, some changes are needed for flexibility and changed in priorities, needs and existing conditions of the parks system.

Table 9-2: shows recommended changes based on the data, inventory and information gathered.

Type of Park	Acreage Needs	Population Served	Service Area	Types of facilities or amenities
School Park	As available	10,000*	School district	Playing fields, picnic shelters, trails, playgrounds, walking track
Community Park	40-75 acres	Up to 10,000	Approx. 5 mile radius	Playing fields, picnic shelters, trails, playgrounds, courts, outdoor classroom
District Park	75-125 acres	Average 30,000	10-mile radius	Community park plus multi-field complex, nature kiosk, amphitheater, water features May include a community center.
Regional Park	150 acres plus	Average 75,000	20-mile radius	Multiple trails and picnic areas, water features, boating, camping, fishing, nature center, special exhibits
Nature Preserve Access Areas	Case by case	NA	NA	Camping, hiking, wildlife viewing, exhibits.

*Based on elementary school average population in rural Orange County.

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1. A Park Classification System

In its 1988 Master Recreation and Parks Plan, Orange County set forth a framework for the type of parks that would meet community needs. While times have changed since 1988, part of this basic framework of park styles remains valid for the County, while the evolution of park design, actual park construction and operation, and the changed conditions and need since 1988 warrant the revisiting of this classification system.

One of the lessons learned since 1988 is that smaller parks are better suited to be provided by municipal or urban park systems, and are inefficient and lack economies of scale for a larger countywide scope of parks. In an urban setting, with clusters of homes close by, mini-parks and neighborhood parks serve a valuable role. These type of parks are designed for the service of close-by neighborhoods with a range of urban services and public transportation that may not exist in the rural or suburban areas of the county. As such, the County has made a conscious decision over the last 15 years to forego mini-parks and neighborhood parks, and focus on the larger community, district and regional parks where economies of scale for operation and maintenance may be expected and the rural and suburban community needs better met. In fact, the 1988 master plan, while listing these as types of parks, in Section 6 came to a similar conclusion, recommending that mini-parks and neighborhood parks be developed by the municipalities. Accordingly, no parks of this type were recommended for acquisition and construction.

Another changed situation relating to the type and style of parks and public open spaces is the County's embarkation in April, 2000 on a program to conserve important natural and cultural resource lands through the Lands Legacy program. This program has not only acquired a number of different park sites that fit into the classes listed above, but also has worked to protect important natural lands and accumulate them in nature preserves in two key areas of the county (the Upper Eno River corridor, and lower New Hope Creek). While the main focus of the nature preserve is the protection of the flora, fauna and wildlife habitat, it is possible to build in human interactions with the natural areas by working on the edges and fringes of the preserve to offer opportunities for trails, camping and wildlife viewing. To this end, a series of Public Access Areas (PAA's) are envisioned and in some cases, underway in conjunction with these nature preserves. These places should be designed with care and in harmony with the natural environment, and as such do not have specific acreage needs, service area or population standards. These would be designed on a case-by-case basis with the specific site.

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2. Review of the Use of Standards for Parks and Recreation Plans

As noted above, the use of standards to determine park and facility needs has historically been a key component of master plans, including the County's existing 1988 plan. However, thinking about the use of formulaic standards has changed in the past decades. The County's consultants from UNC-Greensboro were asked to prepare a brief on the current thinking on the use of standards for parks and recreation planning.

The following is their report on the current validity of standards for parks and recreation planning in 2013 (emphasis added).

Standards for Parks and Recreation

After a thorough review of the literature, search of the internet, and discussions with professionals and consultants in the parks and recreation field, it was concluded that national or state standards regarding program, service, facility, or area needs for parks and recreation no longer exist.

Over the past 2-3 decades it has been determined that national or even state standards do not address the unique nature of individual communities. Common practice today is for communities to develop the community-specific standards that reflect the parks and recreation needs of their residents. The following are examples of strategies that would enable the Department of Environment, Agriculture, Parks and Recreation (DEAPR) to develop community-specific standards:

Strategies to Develop Community-Specific Standards (UNC Greensboro)

- *Elicit residents' (who use County programs, services and facilities offered) input regarding their parks and recreation needs via such methods as focus groups, public hearings, and needs assessment;*
- *Elicit residents' (who do not use programs, services, facilities offered by DEAPR) input regarding their parks and recreation needs via such methods as focus groups, public hearings, and needs assessment;*
- *Prioritize residents' needs based on current/future capital and operational funding;*
- *Consult the county's mission, vision, and goals;*
- *Evaluate residents' access to parks (walking radius);*
- *Assess residents' perception of current programs, services, facilities offered by DEAPR;*
- *Appraise residents' satisfaction level with current programs, services, facilities, and areas provided by DEAPR;*
- *Calculate a user level of service for current programs, services, facilities, and areas offered by DEAPR;*
- *Identify residents' perception of programmatic and facility deficiencies;*
- *Identify DEAPR staff's perception of programmatic and facility deficiencies;*
- *Inventory current programs, services, facilities, and areas offered by DEAPR;*
- *Inventory current programs, services, facilities, and areas offered by other municipalities in Orange County;.*
- *Inventory current programs, services, facilities, and areas offered by the non-profit sector (e.g., YMCA);*
- *Inventory current programs, services, facilities, and areas offered by the commercial, for-profit sector;*
- *Inventory current programs, services, facilities, and areas offered by offered by the State of NC and US federal government;*
- *Inventory current programs, services, facilities, and areas offered by like counties (e.g. SCORP, see attached); and*
- *Examine current programs, services, facilities, and areas offered by for Class II (population 100,001 – 250,000) NRPA National Gold Medal Award winners for Excellence in Park and Recreation Management.*

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With the lack of national or state standards, and the move to community needs-based standards to recognize the unique nature and desires of individual communities, the County must attempt to determine these community needs. Fortunately, many if not most of the recommended methods for exploring these needs have been accomplished by this master plan:

- The community needs assessment (CNA) surveys (statistical random-sample, online and targeted) solicited information of many of the bullet items listed above.
- The County has an established set of goals and objectives from the 2030 Comprehensive Plan to help frame the context of future planning.
- The surveys reached both frequent users and persons who were not familiar with the County's parks and programs. They asked about satisfaction with and perceptions of current facilities and programs, and interests for the future needs.
- The County's Capital Investment Plan offers a time line and plan for future parks and nature preserve investments. (This will be explored in greater detail in Chapter XII).
- Existing facilities and programs offered by the county and other providers have been inventoried as part of this project.
- New partnerships with non-profit recreation providers have enabled an understanding of how their programs and facilities are run.

However, there are a few areas of additional research listed by the consultant that may be useful:

- Examination of programs and facilities by the State and for-profit recreation providers
- Examination of programs and facilities offered by similar counties
- Examination of programs and facilities from NRPA award-winning parks and recreation systems of a comparable size.

No NRPA award-winning systems were identified that were comparable to Orange County. Almost all systems were municipalities or large counties or regional park districts that bear little resemblance to Orange County. The following is a brief case study of a similar county and its approach to parks and recreation programs:

With the lack of national or state standards, and the move to community needs-based standards to recognize the unique nature and desires of individual communities, the County must attempt to determine these community needs. Fortunately, many if not most of the recommended methods for exploring these needs have been accomplished by this master plan:

3. Guiding Principles for the Use of Park Standards

Given the lack of a national set of standards for use but the historical practice of using this as a measuring tool for park needs, and mindful of the case studies and information gleaned from the outreach conducted as part of this plan, a set of guiding principles would be useful to govern how to use and develop standards and determine future needs. The following "Proposed Guiding Principles for Park Standards" attempts to balance the expectation of a community needs based approach with the population-based standards of the past as a check or comparative tool. It also includes the Park Classification Scheme outlined previously in this chapter.

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C. Proposed Guiding Principles for Park Standards – Orange County NC

Section I – Parks Standards

1. The use of national standards for parks and park facilities is no longer a common practice. Most communities now develop their own standards based on local needs and driving factors.

2. The County should periodically convene a series of forums to develop community-specific standards that reflect the unique needs of the county residents. These forums should occur no less that once every four years. For the purposes of this master plan, the community needs assessments, focus groups, relevant staff and deliberations of the Parks and Recreation Council and the Board of County Commissioners should determine the strategies for future facilities and programs.

3. As a county park system, certain types of parks are best provided by urban or municipal park systems. These include mini-parks (1 acre or less) or neighborhood parks (defined here as 20 acres or less). These types of parks are designed for the service or close-by neighborhoods with a range or urban services and transportation that may not exist in the rural or suburban areas of the county.

4. In keeping with established practice of the last 15 years, Orange County will seek to create the following types of parks:

   a. **School Parks** – Opportunities exist for the creation of school parks for playing fields and other open spaces at current and future Orange County Schools. The size of these parks would be variable, depending on the opportunity. The joint use of these facilities would allow for school resources and needs to be met, while also enhancing community recreation needs at publicly-funded and built playing fields and school facilities. (Efland Cheeks Park is a current example of a School Park)

   b. **Community Parks** – Parks of 40-75 acres in size which provide for the recreation and open space/ leisure needs for a defined collection of neighbor hoods, subdivisions and residential areas within a section of the County. Community Parks should generally be within a 5-mile radius of the area to be served. (Cedar Grove Park is an example of a Community Park).

   c. **District Parks** – Parks of 75-150 acres in size which provide for a wide range of recreation and open space leisure needs (or may have a specific theme of use) for a defined section of the County, In some cases, townships may be districts. District Parks should general be within a 10-mile radius for the service area, and contain a larger palette of facilities and recreation opportunities. (the future Twin Creeks Park (*Moniese Nomp)* would be an example of a District Park – and a School Park)

   d. **Regional Parks** – Parks of 150 acres or more which provide for a unique natural or low-impact orientation and nature-based outdoor activities. Regional parks serve the entire county and should be within a 20-mile radius, and may serve multiple counties as part of the potential service area, and are thus conducive to multi-jurisdictional partner ships. (Little River Regional Park and Natural Area is a Regional Park).

   e. **Nature Preserves** – In certain cases, topography, geology and hydrology may combine with identified natural areas to create opportunities for nature preserves. A nature preserve's primary focus is the protection of the natural resources present, but also allows for limited public access for low-impact recreation.

5. While community-specific needs assessment will be the driving factor in planning for future facilities and programs, the use of population-based standards is still appropriate as a "benchmark" and double-check of potential needs.

6. For purposes of standards calculation, the process should be initiated with examination of the entirety of the County with a subsequent assessment of municipal parks that exist or are planned which may help address the identified need. These existing or planned municipal parks can then be subtracted from the total county need to identify needs that remain for the County.

   Example – If Orange County calculated standards reflect a need for 1200 acres of district parks to meet the current population of the county. If approximately 600 acres of district parks exist within the towns of the county, and 400 acres exist or are planned in the County system, the need for the County parks system is 200 acres.

7. In addressing parks needs for Orange County, signify cant coordination is needed with municipal systems both in terms of calculating countywide needs, and in coordinating future plans and park development.

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Section II – Recreation Program Standards

1. Because of the variability and periodic change in community needs and desires for recreation programs, it is recommended that planning for future recreation programs be wholly accomplished via Environment, Agriculture, Parks and Recreation staff research and recommendations and periodic needs assessments of the population to determine actual desired programs.

While moving toward a more-flexible community needs-based approach, the use of the population-based formula may still offer a valuable "reality-check" or benchmark. The following example shows how a population-based standard may be used:

Example: Number of District Parks Needed (using 1988 Master Plan Standards)	
Issue: Determine how many district parks are needed for: (a) 2012 (present), and (b), the plan target year of 2030. Standard: 5 acres per 1,000 population, servicing an area between 10,000 to 50,000 persons (design population = 30,000). District parks are 81-160 acres in size (design size = 120 acres).	
Current Needs	
2012 Orange County Population: **137,941** Calculated Acres Needed for District Parks in Orange County (2012 population): 689.7 acres	
Number of District Parks based on Design Size: Number of District Parks, High End of District Park Size: Number of District Parks, Low End of District Park Size: Number of District Parks Needed, Service Area Population:	5.75 district parks 4.31 district parks 8.52 district parks 4.59 district parks
How Many Acres of Existing District Parks/Parkland?:	**Acres**
Orange County	404 acres (includes Cheeks/Hillsborough[1;] Twin Creeks Park (acquired/future); Northeast District Park (acquired/future); Millhouse Road Park (with Chapel Hill?)[2]
Chapel Hill[3]	None
Carrboro[3]	None
Mebane	None
Grand Total	404 acres
Calculated 2012 Need (Standards)	690 acres
Surplus/Deficit	**- 286 acres (or 2.38 district parks)**
Projected 2030 Needs	
2030 Orange County Population***:**173,248** Calculated Acres Needed for District Parks in Orange County (2012): 866.2 acres	
Number of Parks based on Design Size:	7.22 district parks
Number of Parks, Largest Park Size (160 ac)=	5.42 district parks
Number of Parks, Smallest Park Size (81 ac)=	10.7 district parks
Number of Parks Needed by Service Area Population	5.78 district parks
Current Need (Standards)	866 acres
Currently Existing District Park Acres (from above)	404 acres
Surplus/Deficit:	**- 462 acres (or 3.85 district parks)**
Using the same current/future land-banked sites listed above, assuming no new unplanned or not yet acquired district park sites.	

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D. Service Areas and Service Delivery

Defining service areas for parks in a county system is a bit more-complicated than for urban municipalities. With closely-packed neighborhoods and generally similar ranges of housing density, the use of driving time or distance as a service area definition is a valid determinant of what areas can reasonably be served. Many of these areas are walkable or have access to a comprehensive public transportation.

In Orange County's case, outside of the towns, population densities and the location of residential subdivisions is considerably more sporadic and less-dense. Only limited public transportation along major roadways is in existence or planned for the next 10-15 years. The road network is arterial, with side rural roads and private roads. In some parts of the county the road network is more developed and features good connections in all directions. In other areas, roadways are more dispersed and may only traverse certain directions, requiring trips tangential or away from the ultimate destination before reaching a main arterial roadway. These rural areas of the county continue to see moderate residential subdivision growth, but the areas are projected to remain rural for the plan period through 2030.

As such, a 5-mile radius from a given park site in rural Orange County may be a five minute drive for someone along an arterial roadway, or a 15-minute drive for someone who lives down a long private lane in a more sparsely-populated area. Service areas cannot easily be defined by distance, and travel time is highly variable.

In 1988, the Recreation and Parks Master Plan and subsequent reports examined to some degree transportation patterns and networks in attempting to define the four "districts" within which park needs were identified (see Map 9-1). However, as seen in Section 6 of that plan, the recommended location of the four District Parks was based primarily on existing open space and water bodies, and opportunities with public lands or other public or quasi-public open spaces. Of the four district park locations identified at that time, two were proposed to be located with new reservoirs, one near Duke Forest and the County landfill in the Eubanks Road corridor, and only one (northern Orange) in an area without public open space or State parkland nearby.

Therefore, it can be said that in the 1988 plan, opportunity and existing public lands was the ultimate driving factor in the location of district parks, and not driving time and geographic distances.

For a point of reference, however, Map 9-2 shows the location of the County's current parks and the proposed "service area" radius if this were to be the locational determinant. Map 9-3 shows these parks, plus the service areas for planned new parks in the County's Capital Investment Plan. As can be seen, there is substantial overlap using this definition, and almost all of the county is covered. Map 9-4 shows the regional park coverage, which is even more extensive.

Another very different factor that should be taken into consideration in determining the location and service areas of future facilities is one that is not physical – the desires and needs of the communities within Orange County, the opportunities to enhance public health and economic development, and the social consideration of accessibility to low-income and at-risk households. These important considerations may not easily be mapped, but they are important to the recreational, natural resource, public health and social goals of the County.

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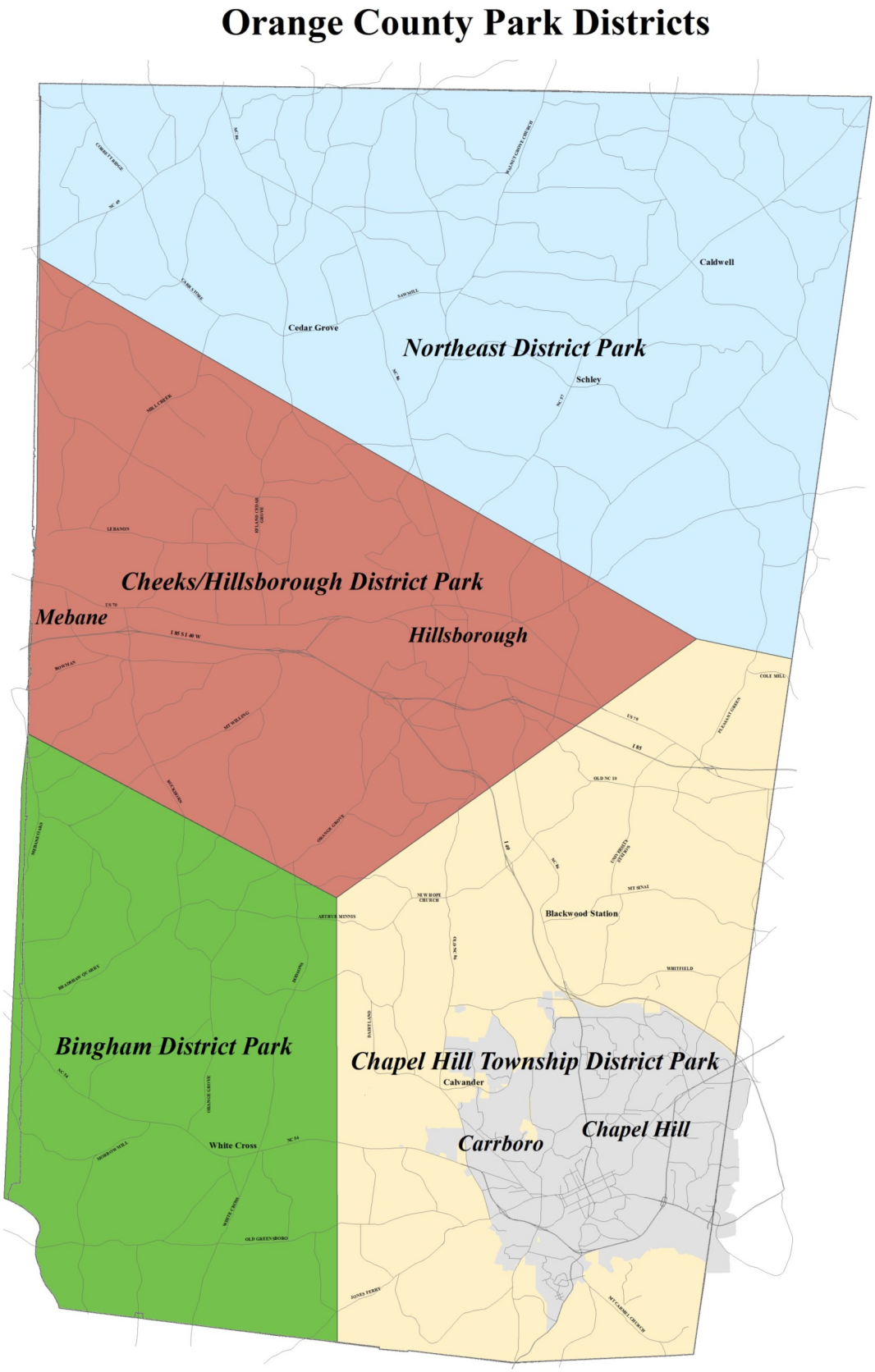
Map: 9-1 Orange County Park Districts



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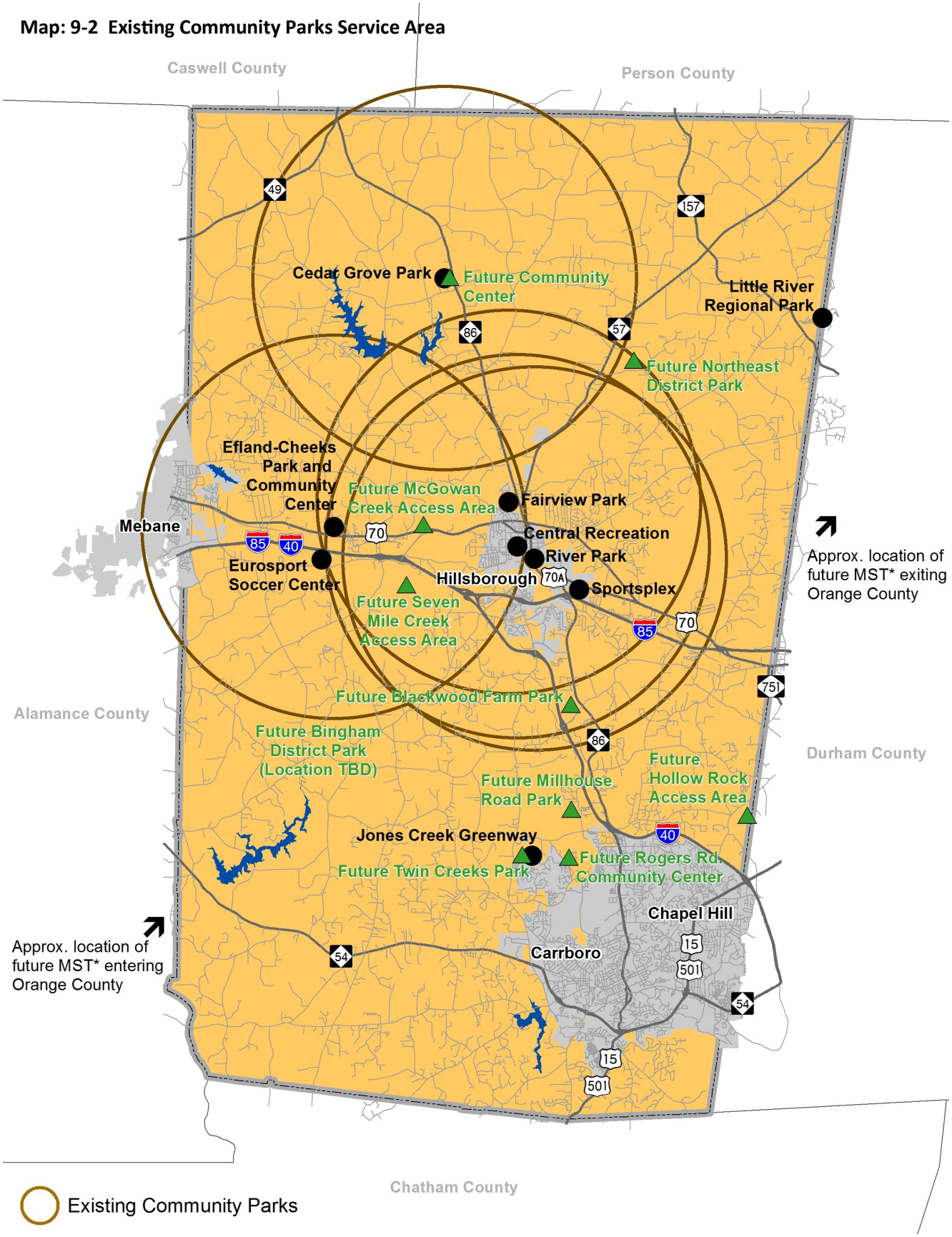
Map: 9-2 Existing Community Parks Service Area



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Map: 9-3 Existing and Future District Park Service Area

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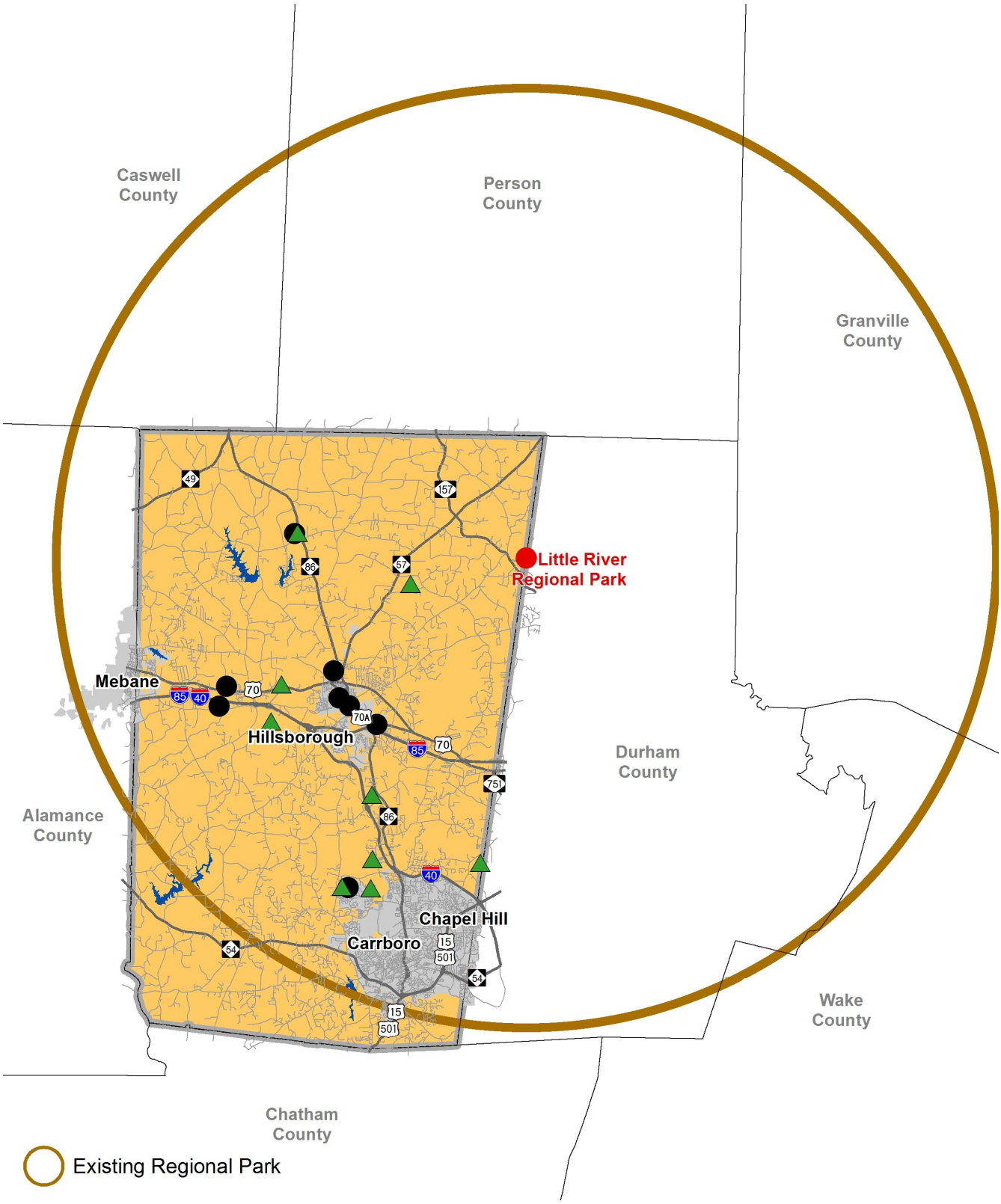
Map: 9-4 Existing Regional Parks Service Area



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3. Service Areas and Other Jurisdictions

It should be noted that careful attention and planning should be undertaken by the towns and County to ensure that overlapping service areas are not unknowingly created.

Municipal park service areas are different than those of the County due to population density, transportation networks and other factors. Ongoing coordination and communication may identify possible economies of scale and joint needs, and at the least avoid duplication of facilities.

4. The Inventory, Data and Surveys

Trying to capture a snapshot of "what it all means" is by nature a task that tends toward generalization. Some indicators are not clear. Sometimes the data and survey results appear to point in multiple directions. There are no guarantees that the projections and assumptions about future growth and driving factors will hold true. In fact, sometimes the most accurate thing that can be said is that some of these things will change. Some factors, some needs, some opportunities will morph and change in the 16-year period 2014-2030 that is the scope of this document. That is a given.

However, the purpose of the plan is to provide a sense of the most-likely needs and challenges and opportunities, based on the best available information (including the information gathered in this document).

Using all of the preceding chapters and information, one starting point toward identifying future recommendations and actions is the statement of a number of evidentiary conclusions, or "findings." These findings should be supported by the data and information in the plan, and help illuminate an important area to be addressed in the Recommendations section of this document.

The following Findings have been identified by the data, inventories and information gathered, and elaborated on by public input sessions and the deliberations of the Orange County Parks and Recreation Council and the Department of Environment, Agriculture, Parks and Recreation staff.

A. Parks and Recreation Master Plan-Findings

From the information gathered in this report and associated documents, it appears the following findings may be safely stated. These have been grouped by topical area:

Existing Parks and Recreation Facilities

1. County residents overwhelmingly approve of the way current parks and recreation facilities are operated and maintained. They feel safe in these facilities, and find them easy to get to and accessible. County staff are seen as helpful and professional.
2. In the 15 years since the County opened its first park, existing park facilities and recreation centers have been created which serve a variety of community needs - and get high marks for providing quality opportunities to recreate - but maintenance and equipment replacement needs are on the horizon for some facilities.
3. The County has successfully acquired parkland and constructed parks in low-income and minority communities over the past 15 years, providing a needed outlet for physical activity, reflection in nature and outdoor recreation that meets social, mental and physical needs f or both individuals and groups.
4. Residents strongly believe that park facilities and recreation programs
   A. Enhance economic health of Orange County;
   B. Enhance physical and mental well-being of residents, and
   C. Help reduce crime.

Future Park and Recreation Facilities

5. There is strong interest among County residents to expand both active recreation and low-impact recreation opportunities (especially including hiking, walking and biking trails, and a swimming pool).
6. Residents are less sure and largely split on whether the County should pursue indoor facilities for arts/leisure activities, but some what more in favor of additional indoor athletic facilities.

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7. Some residents are unsure about whether future athletic programs or parks are needed, but among those expressing an opinion, a significant majority favor new programs and parks.

8. The highest levels of interest in new/expanded programs are for walking, hiking, swim ming, biking, summer camps and yoga.

9. Likewise, the top choices for new parks facilities desired are walking trails, nature trails, biking trails, greenways, a swimming pool and water parks.

10. Residents are almost universally supportive of funding new parks and recreation facilities through grants and corporate donations.

11. Residents express strong support for financing future parks and recreation opportunities through voter-approved bonds or existing local taxes. There is less support for charging user fees, and increasing local taxes (other than property taxes) was not a desired solution.

12. The County has successfully acquired sites for new parks identified in the 1988 Master Plan, with the exception of the Bingham District; and four new parks are projected in the Count y's Capital Investment Plan, along with additions and improvements to existing parks.

13. The creation of nature preserves in important natural areas of the county offers an opportunity for both public access and low-impact recreation and protection of important natural and cultural resources being protected.

B. Opportunities and Challenges

14. The County has been successful in recent years in pursuing public/private or public/non-profit partnerships for new facilities, and should continue to explore these opportunities and engage where mutually-beneficial.

15. With the County having land-banked several park sites for future use, and little room for new parks inside the town borders, there may be unprecedented opportunities for partner ships between the County and towns for new park or recreation facilities.

16. There are likely also financial benefits to coordination and collaboration among the towns and County for future parks.

17. While not growing at the rate of the 1970's - 1990's, the County continues to be a very-desirable place to live with a high quality of life, and population growth is expected to continue, adding another 36,000 residents by the year 2030. These new residents will likely be split between those in the towns and those in the rural and suburban areas of the County.

18. The County's Lands Legacy Program has wiped out the parkland deficit identified in 1999, and secured a number of future park, open space and nature preserve sites at strategic locations for future needs.

19. The adopted 1988 Master Recreation and Parks Plan served the County well as a blue print for future needs, and most of the facilities and programs anticipated in that plan have been built, secured or implemented. Many of the basic philosophical and physical tenets of that plan are still valid. However, a solution to a park site for Bingham Township remains to be addressed.

20. Many opportunities for coordinated school/park planning with the school systems appear to exist.

See appendix 9-1 for Endnotes

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Goals, Objectives, and Recommendations

Introduction

The 2030 Orange County Comprehensive Plan identified a comprehensive list of goals and objectives that were adopted for Orange County's parks and recreation interests. Goals are defined as "general direction-setters" intended to express an ideal future end state for the community, such as providing adequate parks and recreation facilities for all citizens. Objectives define the intermediate steps needed to reach a particular goal.

These goals and objectives, augmented by the findings of this plan, are the basis for recommendations about the future. The following section lists the goals and objectives from the Parks and Recreation chapter (or "element") of the Comprehensive Plan, followed by a series of recommendations for the future of parks and recreation services in Orange County.

A brief assessment of the progress made toward the goals and objectives, and further "action strategies" for achieving each objective, may be found in Appendix 10-1. Those action strategies were also incorporated into the recommendations section that closes this chapter.

A. Orange County Comprehensive Plan 2030 – Parks & Recreation Goals and Objectives

(From the Orange County Comprehensive Plan 2030)

Overarching Goal: Regionally-coordinated park and recreation facilities that provide healthy opportunities for recreation and exercise for all citizens of Orange County, and that preserve important cultural and natural resources.

Goal 1: Provide adequate parks and recreational facilities for all citizens within the County, regardless of age, gender, race or disability.

Objective 1.1 - Acquire and/or retain public ownership of parks, recreation facilities, open space, and conservation areas that will serve Orange County.

Objective 1.2 - Acquire and/or retain lands suitable for siting both indoor and outdoor active recreation facilities to serve all Orange County residents.

Objective 1.3 - Develop a land use planning mechanism for securing new parks through the development approval process.

Goal 2: Create a partnership among regional recreational providers and facility owners/ managers including the appropriate co-location and sharing of school facilities that meets the County's recreation needs.

Objective 2.1 - The County will serve as the lead coordinator of regional open space and recreation facility providers in the County (including OWASA, UNC-CH, and Duke Univ.), and coordinate regional efforts including future parkland and recreation facility planning acquisitions and operations/maintenance of community, district and regional park and recreation facilities.

Objective 2.2 - Develop a methodology to be used by regional recreational providers in determining the number of recreation and park facilities needed. The agreed upon methodology should address countywide and community-specific service areas and how needs are determined within those service areas, such as linking facility needs to population growth.

Objective 2.3 - Develop a program for land dedication/ recreation payment that is effective and comprehensive.

Objective 2.4 - Establish a mechanism to promote shared use of existing public and institutional buildings and grounds for public recreation, as well as for their primary uses.

Objective 2.5 - Adopt criteria for evaluating potential land acquisitions for recreation and park facilities in cooperation with other regional park providers.

Objective 2.6 - Develop a Memorandum of Agreement among the local governments on joint capital and/or operational funding for future parks and recreational facilities.

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Goal 3: Provide recreational facilities for public use in a manner that is multi-generational and accessible to all County citizens at both the county-wide and community level.

Objective 3.1 - Locate parks and recreational facilities close to residential areas and transportation nodes, to increase public knowledge and accessibility to these facilities including alternative transportation modes.

Objective 3.2 - Implement individual park master plans.

Objective 3.3 - Create a new Parks and Recreation Facilities Master Plan Map to guide future parks planning and to help leverage outside funding.

Goal 4: Promote healthy lifestyles, quality of life and community building through the provision of a variety of affordable recreational facilities and choice of leisure activities, while responding to the changing needs and interests of County residents.

Objective 4.1 - Developers shall provide for adequate and appropriate open space suitable for active/low-impact recreation in residential developments.

Objective 4.2 - Investigate the potential for public and/or private commercial partnerships and recreational facilities needed to serve Orange County's residents.

Objective 4.3 - Work to keep recreational facilities and services affordable and sustainable to the general public.

Objective 4.4 - Periodically survey the public and conduct needs assessments on recreation services.

Goal 5: Ensure that park and recreational facilities are environmentally-responsible and are where cultural and natural resources and open space within these sites are protected.

Objective 5.1 - Locate parks and recreational facilities close to residential areas to encourage informal interaction with nature, encourage walkability, and create areas of wildlife habitat with appropriate recreational facilities within the more populated areas.

Objective 5.2 - Landscape parks and recreational facilities with native vegetation and minimize water use where practical. Prohibit the use of known invasive non-native species in County facilities, and take steps to eradicate occurrences of the same.

Objective 5.3 - Ensure public access to County-owned parks and nature preserves, but direct facilities and trails away from the most ecologically sensitive sites.

Objective 5.4 - Encourage development of a system of private open spaces and conservation areas, including nature preserves, parks, linear parks, and scenic vistas compatible with the character of Orange County.

Objective 5.5 - Develop linear parks and rustic trails in the rural buffer and explore opportunities for preservation and connectivity along other identified stream corridors.

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B. Recommendations

Having reviewed the County's goals and objectives identified in 2008 for parks and recreation, and as seen in the preceding chapters, there is strong interest in parks and public open spaces, and in recreation facilities and programs in Orange County. This interest is validated in the high park attendance and recreation program participation rates witnessed for the past decade. In addition to providing recreation opportunities, residents feel strongly that parks and recreation programs enhance the economic health of the county (93% agreement) and the physical and mental well-being of the residents (96% agreement).

Knowing all of this, how does one then plan for the future of such important components of the quality of life? Planning for the future always carries an element of risk. No one can say for certain how many residents will call Orange County home in the year 2030, what athletic programs will be in vogue, what new park facilities will be desired and needed by the populace. Developing a master plan for the next 16 years requires reliance on quality forecasting and the best available data; information and preferences shared by county residents about their desires and needs; and the flexibility to alter the course and change plans as the next two decades unfold.

Based on the information contained in this plan and in the Orange County Comprehensive Plan 2030, using data and findings gathered from a variety of sources and in a variety of ways, the following recommendations are offered to address the 20 Findings listed in Chapter 9 and the goals and objectives listed earlier in this chapter, as well as other identified needs and issues:

1. Determining When New Facilities and Programs are Needed

How does the County determine when and where new facilities are needed, with a new emphasis on community-specific standards as the major determinant, and population-based standards used only as a back-check and benchmark?

As noted in Chapter 9, community-specific standards are now recommended as the best way for counties and cities to truly determine their facility needs. To facilitate this, a set of Guiding Principles for Park Standards is suggested. These standards include the types of parks and public open spaces the County should focus on going forward. Because of this, the key to answering the question above is through more frequent check-ins with county residents on their needs and interests, matched with strategic capital and infrastructure planning (and opportunities for working with the schools, etc). A combination of community needs, population distribution and transportation helps to determine future needs. Public forums, surveys, focus groups and other techniques conducted on a regular basis (recommended every five years) should identify needs for facilities, and analytical tools via strategic and capital infrastructure plans will work in conjunction with these feedback mechanisms to explore needs and optimal locations for any future facilities.

Likewise, as the public's interest in recreation programs change over time, these feedback mechanisms will also serve to alert staff to changing conditions and the potential for changes in programing needs. Recreation staff already has a process to monitor program efficiency and satisfaction, and this will offer another tool to offer programming that meets the needs of Orange County residents.

Even with this new approach to community needs and standards, there are some existing parameters that will help the County know what types of facilities are needed and where to locate them.

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For example, the County already has four park districts that are the basic level of service provision. This district-level service model has been in place since 1988. Changing away from existing and planned district park service models would constitute a major disruption to the operation of existing parks and the planning for new ones. This district park approach is also the basis for the "land dedication/payment-in-lieu of land dedication" program that has been in place since the 1980s. Park planning, parkland acquisition and construction of new facilities in the last 15 years has been based on this premise. Most of the district park sites have been acquired and await funding for future construction. Only in the Bingham district of southwestern Orange County is there no identified and land-banked district park site, and efforts are underway to secure that location.

It is possible to realize, from prior master planning and 15 years experience in operating parks, the types of parks needed. Recognizing that there needs to be some level of flexibility to address special cases, and that some park sites warrant a different level of treatment, the five types of parks and public open spaces noted in the Guiding Principles of Chapter 9 provide a framework that is consistent with previous planning and park construction, and a filter for identifying and categorizing future needs:

- Community Parks
- District Parks
- School Parks
- Regional Parks and
- Nature Preserve (Public Access Areas)

The maps in Chapter 9 identify the locations of existing and future parks, and the service areas associated with them. It is important to note that the concept of service areas, in a county with significant rural areas, is more-accurately read as an area within which a park is considered to be well-located or "convenient." It is not the intention of this plan to imply that all areas not within a defined service area are not served. Not all areas must fall within a service area circle. To do so would require embarking on an extensive and somewhat arbitrary plan of requiring parks in outlying areas where service areas overlap and the population may be served inefficiently. Community park service areas already overlap due to community needs and existing facilities.

For example, the fact that the Cedar Grove Park service area does not capture the very northwestern-most corner of Orange County should not be read to mean that another park is needed to cover this "gap." Indeed, there is nothing magical about the five-mile community park radius that is used and mapped. County residents living six miles away can and do use the park, and still may choose to frequent any of the area parks for that matter. Similarly, an additional two-minute drive time outside of a service area circle does not constitute the need for an additional park facility (unless other community-specific factors through the master plan review process indicate otherwise). Service area boundaries are shown primarily as a way to identify the homes and residents that are within a defined distance.

Additionally, the County's four district parks, when completed, have actual districts served based on transportation and land use patterns. These do not conform to a 10-mile radius from the park location. Residents in Bingham Township may, for example, find it more convenient to visit and frequent the future Twin Creeks District Park (the Chapel Hill Township district park), and vice-versa. Service area definition is simply another tool to consider geography and immediacy, rather than the limits of residents who are served by a park. In fact, geographical service areas are better suited to municipal park planning than county park systems, as municipalities generally have more uniform levels of population density, more expansive and multi-modal transportation networks, and walkability standards making parks within fixed distances (or the elimination of service area gaps) a more valid approach to urban parks planning. For that reason, a set of countywide parks standards is not practical, but rather, coordination and consistency between the municipal and county standards is highly encouraged.

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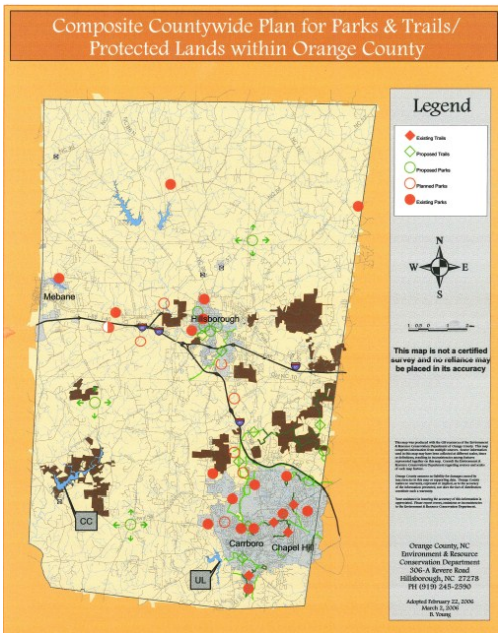
Finally, the Lands Legacy Program's criteria for parks and nature preserves, along with the guidance in the 2030 Comprehensive Plan, helps to guide future acquisitions of parks and public open space. Careful attention should continue to be paid to coordinating service areas with the towns to avoid duplication of facilities. This is an area where the Intergovernmental Parks (IP) Work Group, and the coordination of the town and county advisory boards for parks and recreation, may be of great service. The IP Work Group, to this end, created a "Composite Countywide Plan for Parks and Trails Map" that shows town and county existing and planned facilities, so that future facility planning may take into account other jurisdictional facility locations. This important map should be updated periodically and used by all jurisdictions for individual and joint planning efforts.



2. The Vision – Parks, Nature Preserves and Public Open Spaces for 2030

It is now possible to outline a vision for the County's parks and recreation system through the year 2030 based on the assessment of community needs, desires and the vision outlined in the past commitment to capital facilities, and the expressed goals and objectives of the Comprehensive Plan. This vision is illustrated in this and subsequent sections.

Recommendation #1: Protect & Enhance Our Investment in Parks and Open Spaces

Orange County, since 1998, has made a substantial investment in providing parks and public open spaces for all county residents. Facilities in excess of $9 million have been constructed at seven park locations across the county, in many cases leveraging state and federal grant funds. Another $6.5 million has been invested in municipal park projects in the towns.

Additional facilities of $14 million (including $8-10 million at Twin Creeks Park) are planned as future phases of these parks, and the County should look to build the future phases of the facilities, as reflected

in the Capital Investment Plan, to protect the investment already committed, and enhance the recreational opportunities for residents – actions that also promote economic development and help foster healthy lifestyles.

In addition, some of the facilities constructed in the 1998-2010 timeframe have begun (and will continue) to show the signs of wear and tear on existing facilities, be it playground structures or picnic shelters and restrooms, before we reach the plan year of 2030. Maintenance and replacement of dated facilities has not been an issue for Orange County due to the newness of its facilities, but this will change in the coming 10-15 years. Funding for maintenance and replacement and/or renovation of structures and facilities will be needed – as will adequate funding for park operations. Operating costs are the unseen critical need for park facilities, as without adequate operating funds, the best equipment and newest facilities will not yield the desired recreational experience for the public.

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Recommendation #2: Build the Planned Future Parks

Orange County has been very prescient in its approach to parks planning by incorporating a progressive, even visionary, component of its program – the acquisition of future park sites through the award-winning Lands Legacy Program. The foresight shown by this and previous Boards of Commissioners has likely saved millions of dollars by acquiring anticipated park sites between 2000-2005 at prices considerably less than subsequent or future market value, using both local voter-approved bond funds and leveraging state and federal grants.

Because of this foresight, the County is poised to move straight into final design and construction at five land-banked sites strategically-located across the county. The acquisition of these sites included a thorough analysis of the location for transportation, land use planning, and other factors. Funding to construct these facilities is programmed in the adopted CIP for the period 2014-2023. The 2001 Parks and Open Space Bond resulted in construction of several new parks between 2005 and 2010. The time has now come to begin to construct the other needed facilities as planned, and open these parks for the enjoyment of Orange County residents. Recognizing that the cost of opening these facilities is substantial, phasing of construction may be prudent to ensure financial sustainability in the context of the County's total capital needs. Efforts should also be made to ensure that the facilities are multi-generational in appeal, in ways that meet needs of different age and ethnic groups and also offer opportunities for community-building. Parks should also, unless specifically targeted for special use (such as soccer centers), contain a mix of active and low-impact recreation amenities. Sensitive natural and cultural areas should be protected in park design and construction (and identified by the use of biological and archaeological surveys, using where possible the volunteer services of the local experts in this field), and sustainable landscaping practices should be used during park operation. An ecologically—sensitive approach should be the guiding framework for all park designs. Many of these facilities have been identified as needed parks since 1988, and others have emerged as promising new opportunities. In some cases, there are opportunities for interlocal collaboration for park construction, such as at the future Twin Creeks Park and Millhouse Road Park. State and federal grant funds may also be available to establish certain parks.

It is suggested that Orange County commit itself to constructing and opening the new parks shown in Table 10-1 within 10 years (by the year 2024), and opening two of the parks within five years (by 2019).

Recommendation #3: Complete the Protection of Identified Nature Preserves and Create Public Access Areas and Trails

Through the Lands Legacy Program, working with a number of other conservation partners, Orange County is often predicted to be the "green" corner of the Triangle. These efforts to date by all of the conservation partners have created three locations where nature preserves either exist or have the potential to grow:

Upper Eno Preserve – along the upper segment of the Eno River and its main tributaries (such as Sevenmile Creek and McGowan Creek), in conjunction with Duke Forest, the Eno River Association and Eno River State Park;

New Hope Preserve – along the New Hope Creek corridor adjoining and in conjunction with Duke Forest, Triangle Land Conservancy, Durham County, the City of Durham and other conservation-minded neighbors (including the Hollow Rock site); and

Jordan Lake Headwaters Preserve – in the southeastern corner of the county incorporating significant natural heritage areas, the Corps of Engineers Jordan Lake gamelands, and other conservation lands owned by University of North Carolina and the Botanical Garden Foundation.

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Additional opportunities may exist over time, such as the New Hope Creek uplands, which is near the Blackwood Division of Duke Forest (and two county parks).

While the primary purpose of these nature preserves is the protection of important species of flora and fauna and surface water quality, there are ways to accomplish this priority while still managing and providing for public access. Each of these nature preserves should have designated public access areas for hiking, primitive camping and wildlife viewing, designed to minimize adverse impacts on the most-sensitive portions of the preserve. These preserves may be an excellent location for more hiking and biking trails, which were identified as a priority in the Community Needs Assessment survey. Equestrian trails may also be desirable, targeted at certain spots meeting the special needs of this recreational use.

The County should work to complete land acquisitions necessary to complete or establish these nature preserves, develop master plans for the public access areas at each location, and plan for the opening of these areas for public enjoyment. These facilities can be accomplished at very low cost, compared to active recreation facilities, and are already planned at two of the preserves listed above (New Hope and Upper Eno). The County should work with UNC and the NC Botanical Garden to ensure public access at the Jordan Lake Headwaters Preserve.

3. The Vision – We're Not an Island – the Importance of Planning and Coordinating with the Towns and Schools

Recommendation #4: Formalize and Build Support Structure for Multi-Partner Capital Facilities (with towns, school systems, other partners)

A number of opportunities appear to exist for joint efforts to acquire land and develop facilities for future parks and recreation. At a planning level, the Intergovernmental Parks Work Group provides a mechanism for the local government elected boards, staffs and advisory boards to come together quarterly to explore matters of mutual interest, and this has facilitated several joint ventures. The County has a history with its municipal partners in the funding, land acquisition, and construction of park and recreation facilities, from Homestead Park and the Homestead Aquatics Center, to the Adams Tract in Carrboro, to Southern Community Park, and the new artificial turf field at Cedar Falls Park in Chapel Hill. The County has also made a significant investment in facilities in and around Hillsborough, and provided financial assistance to Mebane for Lake Michael Park. Little River Regional Park and Natural Area and the Hollow Rock Access Area (part of the New Hope Creek Preserve) are examples of collaboration with Durham County. Orange County and Durham County have operated Little River Park (parts of which are owned by each county) for 10 years, working under an interlocal agreement. A similar arrangement is anticipated at Hollow Rock, and the potential for collaboration with the Town of Chapel Hill may exist for the proposed Millhouse Road Park.

In 2000, a "Joint Capital Funding for Parks" report was created for the Assembly of Governments, which proposed methods and roles for joint capital funding of parks facilities among the towns and counties. It is suggested that this report be reconsidered for relevance given the likely greater potential for joint projects in the future. Memoranda of understanding may be a vehicle for future joint capital funding to ensure that the needs of all jurisdictions are met.

One area of future collaboration that seems particularly well-timed is that with the school systems. As the Twin Creeks District Park and Educational Campus comes to fruition in the next 10-15 years with multiple schools co-located with a 96-acre park, opportunities for "cross-pollination" would appear to be numerous between the schools and the park.

Opportunities to work more closely with the Orange County Schools – both in the design of future schools that may be able to serve community and educational needs, and in the construction and operational sharing of recreational facilities – would greatly enhance both community recreation and school purposes. The Intergovernmental Parks Work Group's Community Use of School Facilities issue paper notes the opportunities that could be served by such cooperation. Co-location of the Eurosport Soccer Center and Gravelly Hill Middle School is one example of such a result, and collaboration on future auxiliary gymnasiums, playing fields at schools, and schools in proximity to parks (such as Blackwood Farm) are opportunities that should be seized to optimize the investment of public dollars. There may also be an opportunity for a new school park near Mebane. Notably, both school systems recently updated their facility use policies to allow more opportunity for coordinated usage for recreation purposes.

Finally, there are opportunities to work more closely with large public and private institutions, such as Orange Water and Sewer Authority (OWASA), N.C. State Parks, UNC and Duke to meet future recreation needs. Sponsorships and capital investment partnerships should also be explored with the private sector, which benefits from safe and healthy outdoor exercise and recreational areas and may be a willing partner.

The County should schedule a meeting with the other local governments within the county to discuss future joint capital funding and possible memoranda of agreement for such purposes. A similar meeting with the two school systems could identify ways of incorporating recreation needs into planning for future school projects and codifying joint facility usage arrangements (some of which already exist). Mutually-beneficial design standards for new school facilities may enable greater use by the public of these important recreational assets.

Renewal of the Orange County Conservation Alliance, an annual meeting of conservation partners including Triangle Land Conservancy, Eno River Association, Duke, UNC, Eno River State Park and OWASA, should enable coordinated future planning and the identification of joint opportunities among these agencies and institutions.

Finally, regarding collaboration with private firms, the County should complete its "partnership template" to identify mutually-beneficial partnership arrangements and use this as a tool to explore working with existing and future employers to find ways where private investment and sponsorships may help enhance recreational opportunities.

D. The Vision – Trails, Connectivity and Access

One of the stronger messages resulting from the Community Needs Assessment surveys was the desire among residents for more hiking, walking and biking trails. Nationally and locally, walking and hiking are popular modes of outdoor exercise and fitness, and biking is another popular recreational outlet as well as for meeting exercise goals. Whether they are located within a park, or for connecting parks and open spaces (also strongly supported in the surveys), residents are interested in seeing the County increase the availability and accessibility of trails.

Recommendation #5: Develop a Master Plan for the Orange County Segment of the Mountains-to-Sea Trail, and Work Towards Its Completion

The NC Mountains-to-Sea Trail (MST for short) is a part of the North Carolina State Parks system that connect Clingman's Dome at 6,643 feet along the North Carolina-Tennessee border to Jockey's Ridge State Park on the Outer Banks and Atlantic Ocean. The trail is a multi-modal route, meaning that it may be a paved greenway as it runs through an urban setting, or simply a five-foot-wide natural surface path in rural areas.

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Portions of the MST have already been built on publicly-owned lands around the state, and through the use of other trails and connecting greenways. Other segments have not been built, and this has led to the identification and promotion of alternate routes over the last 25 years - to allow hikers to traverse the state using roadways and other temporary corridors until the actual trail could be built. Many of these uncompleted segments are in the eastern Piedmont region, including Orange County.

Orange County's segment of the trail includes a planned section through Eno River State Park and the Town of Hillsborough's Riverwalk along the Eno River. This includes sections of trail through Occoneechee Mountain State Natural Area (part of Eno River State Park) and through private historic properties along the Eno River. Orange County's Upper Eno Nature Preserve is in close proximity to Occoneechee Mountain and would also host a portion of the trail. (Figure 8-2 in Chapter 8 on page 8-6 shows the planned MST corridor through Orange County.)

As shown in Figure 8-2, the remainder of the MST in Orange County is proposed for a corridor that connects the Upper Eno Preserve southwest to OWASA-owned lands at Cane Creek Reservoir before following Cane Creek to its confluence with the Haw River at the County line, connecting with Alamance County's Haw River Trail (which is also the MST). This segment may be one of the more-challenging in the state, in that it requires a way to cross from the Neuse River basin (Eno River and tributaries) into the Cape Fear River basin (Cane Creek, Haw River). As such, this section of the trail must travel "cross country," up and over the ridgeline separating these two basins, which does not have a natural feature to distinguish it. At present, this southwestern segment of the planned trail is only a one-mile-wide "swath" on a map, an uncharted section that will need clarification and refinement. The possibility of finalizing plans for this segment has generated considerable concern by some property owners in the vicinity and strong support for completing the trail by some of the trail proponents. Orange County is scheduled to undertake a master plan to identify and refine the proposed trail segment later in 2014.

The County should facilitate the creation of this segment and work diligently to undertake a thorough review of the possible routes through the corridor between the Haw River and OWASA Cane Creek lands, and between the OWASA Cane Creek lands and the Upper Eno Preserve. The master plan process should include public meetings and discussions with landowners about the realities of a natural surface path through this area, and address security and other concerns raised. The County may wish to assume trail oversight in these areas if amenable to landowners for consistency. Long-distance trails such as the MST require "way stations" or nodes along the route where some very basic level services are available (parking, signage, campsite, potable water). The County and OWASA should look at the possibility of creating such a way station at the Cane Creek and Seven Mile Creek access areas (on land owned by the two entities) and developing parking and trailheads' on a select few public roads. Since primitive camping, water and sanitation facilities are critical for hikers, the County should identify locations within County parks along the route where overnight camping is allowed.

Orange County should find a solution to the MST corridor, whether on private lands, public roads or some combination of the two – so that this important statewide recreational facility is planned and eventually constructed in harmony with nature. Orange County should not become the "gap" in the North Carolina Mountains-to-Sea Trail.

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Recommendation #6: Build More Trails, and Connect Open Spaces

As noted above, based on the results of the Community Needs Assessment surveys, Orange County residents want to get out into nature and walk, hike and bike more. Creating more trails will happen through several different methods:

- Building the future parks and future phases of existing parks, which will add significant trail loops and corridors (an estimated 10 miles of additional trails).
- Complete the Mountains-to-Sea Trail through Orange County, which will add another approximately 30 miles of trail.
- Create public access areas within the nature preserves described above.
- Look for opportunities to connect existing trails, such as connecting the trails in Duke Forest to those in Eno River State Park, connecting town greenways to county trails, and working with private developers as part of new developments.

These same methods and activities will also provide for connectivity. The Mountains-to-Sea Trail, for example, will link OWASA Cane Creek lands to the County's Upper Eno Preserve to Eno River State Park and the Hillsborough Riverwalk. The Hollow Rock Access Area will connect the New Hope Preserve to the Duke Forest trail network and to a series of trails extending south to Jordan Lake. Other efforts on short segments may be undertaken to connect the Town of Chapel Hill and Town of Carrboro greenways to Duke Forest and the New Hope trail network.

As with joint capital funding for parks, the different potential partners (local governments and quasi-public entities, institutions, trail organizations) that would benefit from enhanced trails should look at potential joint funding mechanisms for trails that cross jurisdictional boundaries to help "share the cost."

Recommendation #7: Work to Improve Access to Parks and Trails and Incorporate Healthy Lifestyles Design

As noted in Chapter 9, there is a strong relationship between parks, recreation programs and public health. Where residents live in proximity to parks and trails, personal health is improved. Transportation and income play a key role in access and thus, in maintaining a healthy lifestyle. For some residents, the ability to drive to a park or trail, or to pay for access to a program or a swimming pool is a great challenge. In the 2011 Community Health Assessment, 75% of respondents identified an apparent lack of access to parks and recreational opportunities as a problem in Orange County.

This is a challenge easily addressed in urban areas where public transportation is more readily available, and where population densities create a market for parks within walking and biking distance. Orange County's rural areas, however, are projected to remain rural into the long-term future, with the bulk of future residential development to occur in the towns and in "transition areas" with urban infrastructure near the main east-west roadways.

There are two things the County could do to improve access to parks, nature preserves and trails for all residents. The County, working in conjunction with other transportation providers, could work to improve public transportation along major roadway corridors in the rural parts of the county, with stops at current and future parks. Secondly, the County could incorporate (more formally) healthy lifestyle facility design into its park design process. Design of parks that include facilities that promote fitness already occurs on an ad hoc basis, but with emerging standards and early design intervention, more-productive facility design could be achieved by looking at public health facility design components as a regular, intrinsic part of the overall master planning process.

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5. The Vision – Recreation/Athletics Programs

Recommendation #8: Look to Add Programs in Areas Where Residents Have Identified Needs, Consider Partnerships

The County should continue to be flexible and responsive in the provision of recreation programs (which includes athletics). Part of being flexible and responsive is examining the needs identified by the Community Needs Assessment, and finding ways to offer programs if practicable from a financial and staff resource standpoint.

Residents indicated interest in learning how to hike, walk and bike, practice yoga and in swimming lessons and summer camps. The recent economic downturn has increased interest in County summer camps as a low-cost option for youth and children summer enrichment. Orange County's standard for offering programs has been to achieve 100% recovery of direct costs for youth and adult programs. If this model is continued, most of the cost for new youth/children's programs could be recovered by participant fees, but some portion (indirect costs) would continue to be subsidized, requiring additional funding but also meeting important societal and community needs.

County staff should conduct follow-up surveys to determine the depth of interest in programs identified in the Community Needs Assessment, and if sufficient participation appears likely, offer new programs. While assessing new program opportunities, staff should also evaluate existing programs and whether some of the resources allocated to low-participation programs should be redirected to new priorities.

Programs teaching hiking techniques, walking for fitness, and mountain-biking should be feasible within the current program structure. Offering swimming lessons, however, will present challenges from a facility and risk management perspective. The County should look at the potential for partnering with SportsPlex management or other local pools for swim lessons, or partner with existing organizations that already offer lessons. At present, SportsPlex offers swim lessons, but these fill up quickly due to popularity and cost more than most County programs. Surveys have also shown the desire for a public swimming pool. If an outdoor pool were constructed, this could enable more offerings for swimming lessons and water safety for those who cannot afford private lessons. Careful attention should be paid to coordinating and complementing existing organizations that offer these programs, rather than creating competition.

The County has taken positive steps toward providing complementary and not competitive programs, such as the recent partnership with Hillsborough Youth Athletic Association (HYAA) to offer youth baseball and softball, rather than offering a competing program in the same service area. Partnerships, however, must also take into consideration that the County is often the provider of services for those who cannot afford private or non-profit programs, and may play an important role in providing recreation opportunities for those who might otherwise be unable to participate. The creation of a "partnership template" would be an instructive tool to help assess potential partnerships and their benefits.

One particularly fruitful area for program collaboration appears to exist with the school systems. Efforts are currently underway to address Community Use of School Facilities for Recreation, and it is hoped that Orange County and the school systems may find – as many other counties and school systems have – ways to maximize the availability of school recreational facilities for public use. Finally, there may also exist opportunities for the County to coordinate more closely with the towns on programs going forward. Opportunities for hiking and other nature programs in conjunction with Duke Forest, Eno River State Park and other public or publicly-accessible open spaces should also be explored.

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6. The Vision – Review of Planned Financing and Capital Investments

In 2007, Orange County began including all planned park projects in its Capital Investment Plan (CIP). A CIP is a comprehensive schedule of projected capital investments, typically including non-recurring capital investments above a certain dollar threshold that requires particular attention for planning of funding and in some cases, debt issuance. It is important to note that the CIP is working document and a blue-print for the future. Actual funding appropriations are made on an annual basis as part of the annual County budget adoption. A CIP may most accurately be viewed as a schedule of funding "intentions," one that is reviewed and adjusted annually.

Orange County's CIP is a five-year plan that also identifies expected projects for as second five-year period. As of the date of this master plan, the current adopted Orange County CIP is the "FY 2013-18 Capital Investment Plan."

Due to having an existing master plan, and a Lands Legacy Program that has acquired several future park sites, almost all of the recommended parks projects in this plan are already included within the FY 2013-18 CIP. The projects have been scheduled based on a combination of the following factors:

- previously-identified need,
- the existence of a master plan for the facility,
- possible funding partners, and
- potential availability of funds (as best can be determined one to five years in advance).

Table 10-1 lists the parks and public open space projects that are part of the approved FY 2013-18 CIP (listed in alphabetical order). Table 10-2, which follows, outlines the operating and equipment costs that are associated with the same projects.

Table 10-1: Park and Public Open Space Projects – FY 2013-18 Capital Investment Plan (adopted)

Category / Project	Master Plan?	FY 2013-2018 ($)	FY 2018-beyond ($)	Total Funding ($)	Start Year	Completion Year
New Planned Parks						
Blackwood Farm Park	X	0	4,400,000	4,450,000	2013	2019
Bingham District Park		0	7,000,000	7,000,000	2019	2021
Millhouse Road Park		6,500,000	3,000,000	9,500,000	2016	2020
Northeast District Park			8,000,000	8,000,000	2020	2022
Existing Parks – Future Phases						
Cedar Grove Park – Phase II (Community Park)	X	0	1,600,000	1,600,000 (3,408,000)	2019	2021
Eurosport Soccer Center – Phase II (Soccer Complex)	X	1,600,000	4,550,000	6,150,000 (8,350,000)	2015	2021
River Park – Phase II	X	250,000	0	250,000 (300,000)	2015	2016
Twin Creeks Park - Phase II (District Park)	X	0	8,000,000	8,000,000 (11,800,000)	2018	2025
Little River Regional Park and Natural Area	X	175,000	250,000	425,000 (1,946,000)	2015	2022
Natural Preserves						
Upper Eno Nature Preserve		440,000	440,000	880,000	2015	2021
New Hope Preserve – Hollow Rock Access Area	X	550,000	165,000	640,000	2013	2022
Trails						
Mountains-to-Sea Trail		0	500,000	500,000	2018	2025
Land Acquisition						
Lands Legacy – Parks and Public Open Space Portion		1,200,000	1,000,000	4,400,000	2014	2025
TOTAL		**$10,715,000**	**$38,905,000**	**$49,620,000**		

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Table 10-2: Parks, Recreation and Public Open Space Projects – Renovation/Replacement Improvements (Through 2030) (does not include new construction costs from Table 11-1)

Project	Within 2 years	2-5 Years	5-Year Total
Existing Parks Renovations/Improvements			
Cedar Grove Park	$6,000	$150,300	$156,300
Efland Cheeks Community School Park	$31,100	$150,200	$181,300
Eurosport Soccer Center (West Ten)	$66,000	$191,500	$257,500
Fairview Park	$27,400	$100,300	$127,700
Little River Regional Park and Natural Area	$2,000	$18,500	$20,500
River Park	$200	$23,500	$23,700
Central Recreation Center and Park	$105,300	$205,000	$310,300
Existing Land Banked Properties Improvements/Repairs			
Twin Creeks (Moniese Nomp) Park	$60,000		$60,000
Blackwood Farm Park	$25,000		$25,000
Vincent Property (adj Cedar Grove Park)	$19,000		$19,000
Future Millhouse Road Park	$61,000		$61,000
Sevenmile Creek Access Area	$22,000		$22,000
Sub total	$425,000	$839,300	$1,264,300
Planning and Design for above (10%)	$42,500	$83,930	$126,430
Projected Costs for Improvements	**$467,500**	**$923,230**	$1,390,730

Figures do not include personnel, operations or equipment costs.

* - There will be replacement, repair and renovation costs in the 6-10 year timeframe as well. These estimates are more general and costs less certain due to the extended timeframe and lack of concrete estimates. A listing of these needs may be found in Appendix 10-2

Fortunately, the list of planned facilities includes all of the top priorities identified in the Community Needs Assessment, with the exception of a swimming pool. As shown in the preceding tables, significant funding will be needed over the next 10-12 years to bring the planned and needed new parks and future phases of existing parks to completion. More funds will be needed to address renovations and replacement of equipment and facilities as existing parks begin to age and facilities become worn or outdated. Additionally, the importance of the Central Recreation Center and Efland-Cheeks Community Center, and the new community centers at Cedar Grove and Rogers Road, should be factored in as these facilities are likely to see increased usage for a variety of purposes, and increased usage over time will require replacement and renovation funding. The Central Recreation Center in Hillsborough, the former gymnasium for Hillsborough High School, was built in 1957. While some upgrades have been accomplished, many more are on the horizon. Since this facility is a recreation locus in the town of Hillsborough, it may be worthwhile to examine possible joint Town/County ventures to invest in this facility.

Most of the funds for park and recreation facility construction are projected for beyond 2018. Funding from grant sources and potential partners is expected, and this would substantially lessen the County's share of this funding. Public-private partnerships and sponsorships may also offer an opportunity for leveraging private dollars to help enhance public facilities that meet interests of both the public and the private sector.

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These should be pursued aggressively. Finally, efforts are underway within the community to create a "Friends of Parks, Recreation and Open Space" group, which could play an important role in helping to fill in gaps and address smaller level funding needs – and help promote local fundraising for parks and recreation programs. The opportunity to raise funds from the community through the Orange County Community Giving Fund is another vehicle that may help shoulder some of the financial needs for parks and recreation services.

In the Community Needs Assessment, residents did not look favorably on charging user fees for parks and recreation services, and it is recommended that the current practice of the County (and the towns within Orange County) of not charging user fees for usage be retained.

Another important funding source is payment-in-lieu from new subdivisions. Shown below are the payment-in-lieu balances for the four park districts as of July 1, 2013:

Northern District Park: $62,617
Cheeks/Hillsborough District Park: $107,104
Bingham District Park: $181,108
Chapel Hill Township District Park: $125,820
Total = $539,266

G. The Importance of Operating and Maintenance Funding

Traditionally, Parks and Recreation Master Plans do not attempt to address operational costs. Creation of an operation and maintenance schedule and program requires regular review and adjustment and is not part of the scope of this plan.

However, these "O&M costs" are very real and important considerations to be aware of. Operating existing parks, and bringing online new parks, costs money. Emptying trash receptacles, replacing lights, resurfacing tennis courts, paying electrical bills and mowing soccer fields all are tasks that if not funded appropriately will greatly diminish the park experience or even make the parks unable to function.

An awareness should be developed and reflected in future County budgets that new parks will being the need for additional operating costs, and additional staffing needs. Some staffing needs, such as the need for a "trails ranger" as trails open at the nature preserves, is included in the CIP, and the CIP now includes projected operating costs associated with new facilities and improvements. Equipment, operating and future staffing needs will not be insignificant, and while increasing the enjoyment of county residents and providing positive health, societal, economic and environmental benefits, the costs of achieving these desired goals does have an associated cost to be borne.

Recommendation #9: Examine the Role of Community Centers in Providing Public Recreation Opportunities

Indoor facilities offer a wide array of options for leisure, daily life activities and self-improvement capabilities. Care should be taken to tailor the center design, and the programming opportunities, for these centers to ensure that they are serving the priority needs of the residents in the areas they serve. Centers should be flexible in design and activity, insofar as possible, to allow for changing needs and desires and interests of the community.

How the community accesses community centers, and how they can be adequately staffed with financial prudence, are topics around which a dialogue should start, with a common understanding of the needs and roles such places can provide.

Strong interest has also been expressed in having a nature center at a county park facility. This concept was included in the Blackwood Farm Park master plan, and many nature programs are also provided at Little River Park and Natural Area. The County should examine its master plans, identify what type of facility a nature center should be, and incorporate the construction of a nature center into the capital improvements plan for parks accordingly. This may be a venture where partnering with other local governments or agencies with a similar mission may be fruitful.

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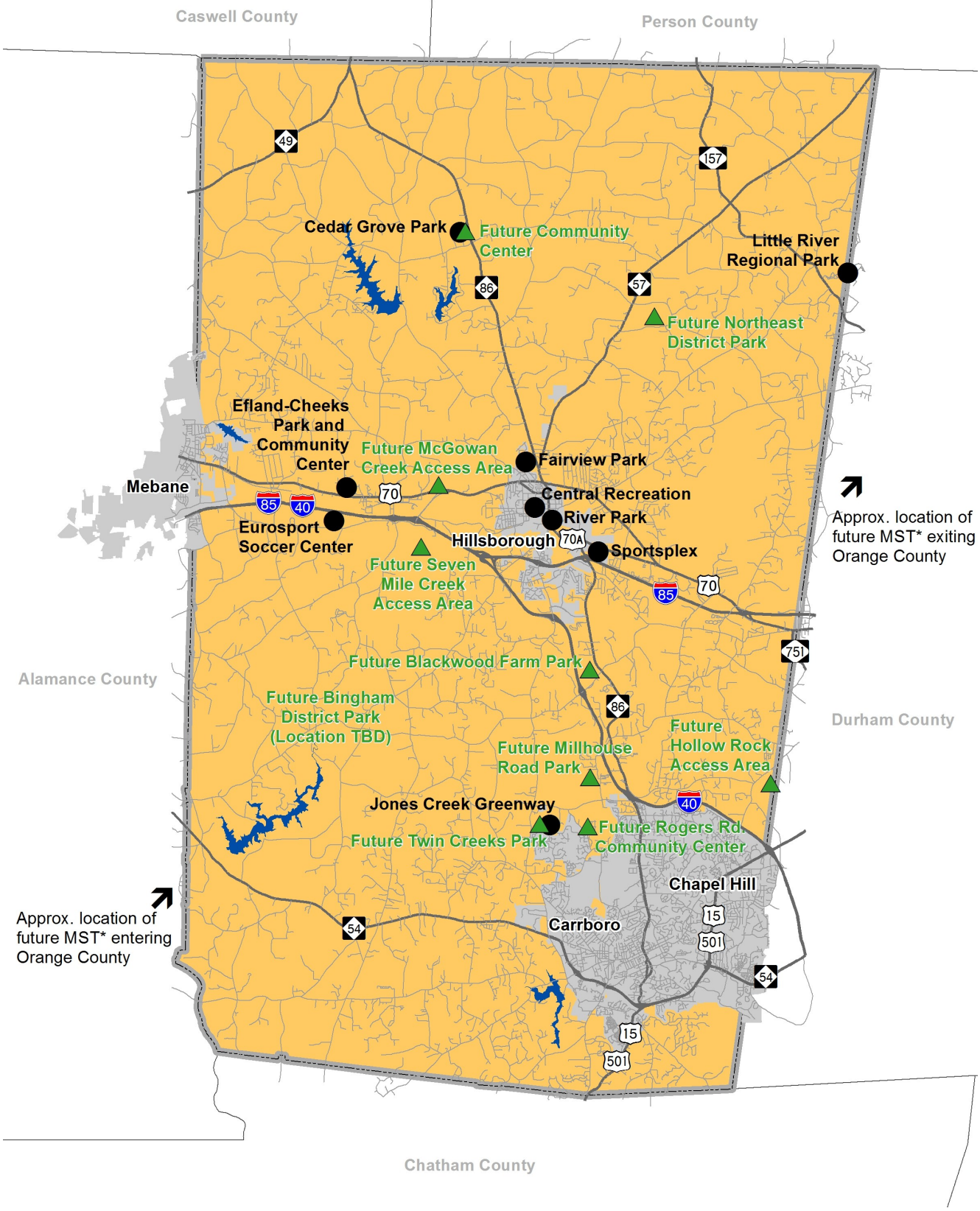
8. The Vision – The 2030 Parks and Recreation Master Plan Map



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Issues for Further Study

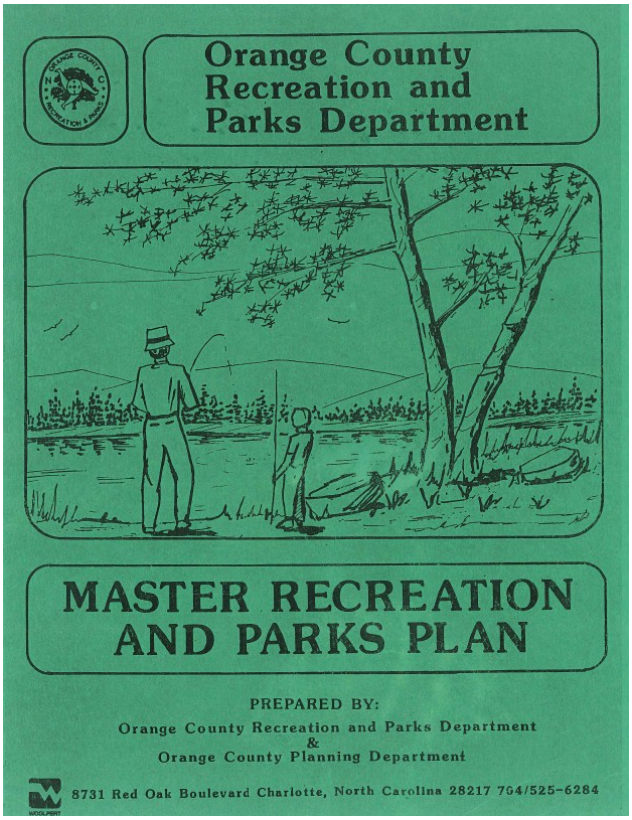
As is often the case, developing a master plan is like attempting to hit a moving target. Some issues are emerging at the time of the plan development, others require further assessment or elaboration.

This chapter addresses, in brief, seven issues that will require additional thought and consideration in coming months and years.

A. System Level of Service

This Master Plan is built around the premise of a modified community needs-based identification of future facilities and program needs, with a benchmark or back-check using population-based standards. It uses as its basis the continuation of the 1988 Plan's district park service areas – since that is the reality of how the park system (both existing parks and planned land-banked future parks) has been created. This district park basis continues to be valid both from a methodological and actual approach to defining geographical park needs.

1988 Orange County Master Recreation and Parks Plan



The plan also assumes that the parks created since 1998, and those acquired and/or planned for the future, should be focus of future attention for park needs. As time goes by, however, additional needs or opportunities may present themselves. One of the municipalities within the county may have a facility need that could be addressed through a new facility outside of the municipal boundaries, and create an opportunity for a new joint project. The construction of new schools will also present opportunities for co-locating parks and facility needs – likely at the community park level. Unlike the district parks, where there is one larger park for a defined geographic area, community parks may be constructed "as needed," and this level of park may be the type of opportunity that could arise from the scenarios identified above.

Finally, population and socioeconomic factors will change over time, which may make the case for new park facility or other recreational needs that are not present at the current time. For this reason, it is recommended that the County conduct a new Community Needs Assessment of some type and scale every five years, and that this master plan be updated every 10 years, until changed conditions warrant a completely new approach and plan. This approach will enable new emerging needs to be identified and planned for, and provide a way to accommodate new opportunities that will likely arise.

B. Subdivision Land Dedication / Payment-in-Lieu System

Orange County, similar to many local governments, has a longstanding program to require new residential subdivisions to contribute land or funds (based on a number of lots/number of acres formula) toward future parks and open space land and/or facility construction. Since at least 1985, Orange County has received land or funding toward the future park needs via this method. In addition to being a part of the County's development ordinances, local legislation also enables this tool for Orange County to help insure that new residents and development help pay

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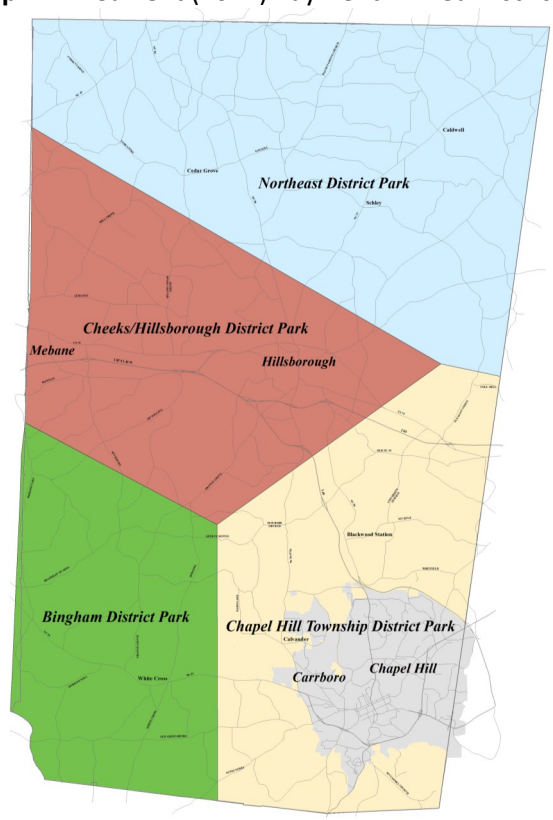
for new facilities that are related directly to the increase in persons and park needs generated by the development.

The full language of the parks and open space land dedication / payment-in-lieu system is provided as Appendix 11-1. While this system has provided important auxiliary funding to the acquisition of several park sites and the construction of a parks, one of the drawbacks of the system is that the land dedication and funding provisions remain the same as they were in the 1980s. Developers of a subdivision must provide 1/57 of an acre for each dwelling unit in the subdivision plan (1/20 of an acre in areas of floodplains and steep slopes). However, a subdivision developer may, with approval, make a payment in lieu of land dedication if there are no identified park needs on this location. In this case, the developer may make a payment equal for $422 per lot if within an identified community park service area (smaller portions of the county around community park sites), or $455 per lot if within a district park service area (all of the county).

Map 11-1: Current (2014) Payment-in-Lieu Districts



Example:
Land Dedication
10 lots: 10 x 1/57 of an acre (0.018 acre) = 0.18 acre of land dedicated for parks/open space.

Payment in Lieu of Land Dedication
10 lots: 10 x $455 = $4,550 payment in lieu

As can be seen in the example above, land dedication rates for a typical subdivision would generate small fractions of an acre in land for a park, amounts far too small to be useful for park needs by a county that focuses on district and community-scale parks. Even a 100-lot subdivision would generate by this formula only 1.8 acres of parks and open space land (or up to 5 acres if all were floodplain or steep slope land). Largely for this reason (and the fact that few developments have occurred at planned park sites), the County has chosen to accept the payment-in-lieu amount rather than try to administer hundreds of tiny park sites. By local legislation and ordinance, payment-in-lieu funds must be expended in the district in which the subdivision is located.

While the payment in lieu funds have been an important, albeit small contributor to parkland acquisition and park construction, the need for a more up-to-date approach to land dedication and payment in lieu has long been needed. Attempts to examine changes to this model were explored by 1999 or before, and an analysis was undertaken by a consultant firm in 2001.

At that time, the consultant's finding determined that the County's program for land dedication / payment-in-lieu provided insufficient support, but noted that the County's lack of existing parks created a level of service that may not warrant an increase. Knowing that the County was preparing to embark on its first attempt to build parks and create a parks system, it was recommended that this system be re-evaluated in several years when new parks were opened and the level of service increased.

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Now, in 2014, Orange County has acquired and constructed several new parks, recreation and open space facilities, as shown in this document. Other development ordinance and parks projects have commanded most of the available staff time to date, but the time may now be prescient to re-evaluate the land dedication and payment-in-lieu program. *It is recommended that the County make plans to engage consultant services to conduct a thorough analysis and recommend possible changes to the system in the next year.*

C. SportsPlex and County Programs – Coordination

The Orange County SportsPlex (previously known as the Triangle SportsPlex), as shown in Chapter 3 of this document, is an indoor athletic complex in Hillsborough owned by Orange County. The facility is co-located with the Central Orange Senior Center and features an ice rink, swimming pool, fitness centers and exercise and activity rooms, among other amenities. It is operated on the County's behalf, by Recreation Partners, Incorporated, through a contractual agreement.

In recent years, the SportsPlex has seen tremendous growth in membership, and this has occasioned the County and the management firm to plan for possible expansions to the facility. At present, a three-phase expansion is envisioned that would add:

1) A pool mezzanine with new lockers and fitness areas;
2) A building addition to house a small (95 x 165 feet) artificial turf field for indoor soccer, lacrosse and other turf sports training; and
3) A new regulation-sized basketball court for basketball and related sports.

Currently, the County and SportsPlex do not offer overlapping programming, and discussions have been held to work toward ensuring that as future expansion occurs and additional programs are offered, that SportsPlex and County programs complement each other, rather than compete with each other. This may be done through a variety of methods, such as coordinating programs by age groups, time of year, or other means.

For example, the SportsPlex might offer a program for very young children ages 2-4 to introduce soccer, and these children could then "graduate" to the County or other area soccer programs.

Regardless of the method, close coordination between the County and SportsPlex going forward would seem to be prudent, and the additional facilities (such as the new basketball court) may help alleviate space crunches at the few existing facilities. The County and SportsPlex should continue to have regular dialogue, and explore joint program opportunities and complementary programs as opportunities arise.

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D. Need for a Public Pool?

In the Community Needs Assessment, one of the desired new facilities was a "swimming pool." Currently, there are public pools operated by the Town of Chapel Hill – including the Homestead Aquatics Center funded in large measure by an Orange County bond. The Sportsplex in Hillsborough has a swimming pool, and there are a number of other private pools that allow for individual or single -usage passes. But there is no publicly-operated free to the public swimming pool outside of Chapel Hill.

It is unclear whether the survey respondents intended to show a desire for an outdoor public pool, or an indoor pool. Since indoor pools exist, it may be likely that the intention is for a public outdoor pool, but this is not known.

Public swimming pools are somewhat-expensive to operate and can require significant capital and operating costs. The County should explore further the intention and desire expressed in the survey to see what exactly is desired, and conduct a cost-benefit analysis looking at likely costs and potential users/ revenues, and then make a decision on whether to include a swimming pool as a new recreational facility for Orange County. A swimming pool could be located into the designs for one of several existing or planned future parks if desired. But more information is recommended before committing to a course of action in this area.

E. Five Year CNA's / 10 Year Update

Orange County's 1988 Recreation and Parks Master Plan has served the county well. The themes and philosophy of that plan are now ingrained in the county's method and means of providing parks and recreation, and have charted the course for future needs identification and development.

While there was never an intention to go 25 years between system master plans, that occurrence and the happy circumstance of the way the 1988 plan served the county is not one that should be expected to occur again. We live in a dynamic society, where technology and community and personal recreation interests are subject to change and need flexibility for future options and alternatives.

Especially with a community needs based system of standards and facilities, an evaluation of the preference of residents is needed on a more-frequent basis.

It is recommended that this master plan have an amendment process that allows for goals, planned facilities and programs, and other strategies and recommendations to be altered from time to time. Additionally, resident input on community needs should be solicited on a regular basis. A community needs assessment survey is recommended for every 10 years, with a statistical random-sample survey at least once in the 10-year period.

Accordingly, the system master plan should be updated to reflect changed conditions, facilities issues and new community needs identification every 10 years, in addition to any special amendments that may be needed to address immediate issues, trends or changed conditions in the interim.

F. Artificial Turf Playing Fields

Considerable time and investigation has been put into the potential for conversion of existing or creation of new playing fields with artificial turf surfaces. As of the writing of this plan, Orange County has partnered financially with the Town of Chapel Hill to open a new artificial turf field at the Town of Chapel Hill's Cedar Falls Park. There are many issues within this topic and a plethora of pros and cons to the question of artificial surface versus natural surface, too many to address in this more comprehensive document.

In general, it is recommended that Orange County look at usage, demand/activity, opportunity, locational needs and possible existing conversions, and implement one to two artificial surfaces on fields that warrant such an undertaking - and investigate over the next several years the costs and benefits of artificial surfaces with natural surfaces, before making any type of commitment to long-term changes in field management, operation, and maintenance.

Finally, additional topics that will need internal examination and planning include:

- ADA Accessibility and New Federal Standards
- Sustainable Landscaping at Parks

Conclusion

To be developed upon the conclusion of public and Board comment.

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