

Summarization Document

November 12, 2015

The following document summarizes key actions taken by the Citizen Planning Committee (CPC) throughout the Wooten Meadow Park Master Plan process. This document also provides an overview of the CPC recommendations for review and consideration by the public, the Parks, Recreation, and Greenway Advisory Board, and the Raleigh City Council.

CPC MEETINGS #1, #2, AND #3 + PUBLIC WORKSHOP #1

The CPC attended several visioning and value-making sessions early in the process. These were facilitated exercises led by the design team. Values for park planning and development were vetted and confirmed by the public during Public Workshop #1. The higher priority values have been discussed at various times throughout the project and have been used to evaluate conceptual designs throughout the process. The highest priority values of this process, are as follows:

- Nature
- Preservation
- Education
- Passive Recreation
- Aesthetically Pleasing
- Safety
- Quiet
- Play

PUBLIC WORKSHOP #2 + CPC MEETINGS #4 AND #5

At Public Workshop #2, three concepts were evaluated by the public and then by the CPC. Those concepts varied in form and content. Each attempted to show distinctly different levels of such things as: active park programmed spaces; pedestrian circulation routes; disturbed area; preserved area; structure locations; vehicular access configuration; and pedestrian access configuration.

At this workshop and at the immediately-following CPC meeting, a clear preference emerged to limit direct pedestrian access to the Brookhaven neighborhood, limit active recreation programming, and preserve much of the site for interacting with the natural environment. The interaction with nature was to be achieved through walking area, passive recreation opportunities, learning

areas, and natural play elements. 46 questionnaires were received by meeting attendees answering a variety of questions about preferences.

For a four week period after Public Workshop #2, the three concepts were posted on-line (MySidewalk forum) for Raleigh Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources Department. That online survey generated nearly 50 respondents (in addition to the original 46 received at Public Workshop #2)– many of which agreed with the initial feedback received at the workshop – supporting trails, walking, natural learning, etc. However, there was more support for additional recreation activities – such as consideration of more open lawn areas, dog park areas, a community garden, and more defined play areas.

CPC MEETING #6 DECISIONS

The design team, with input from City staff, created a consolidated concept that attempted to take all of the input from the online surveys and the workshop. The CPC evaluated this concept during CPC Meeting #6. Focus of the review was on actual program elements and their alignment with the values identified earlier in the master planning process. It was determined by the CPC that the following program elements did not align with the park's values:

- Active recreation courts
- Organized field sport play areas
- Dog Park area (voted on directly at this meeting)
- Large Shade Shelter – any shade structure containing more than 6 picnic tables (voted on directly at this meeting)
- Large parking area (larger than 30 parking spaces)
- Pre-determined Community Garden (there would be a 'flex space' area if a community group worked with City on a viable garden approach with a sustainable management plan.)

CPC MEETING #7 DECISIONS

Through diligent reflective work and with active participation of public attendees, the CPC continued to resolve issues related to park elements and locations. At CPC meeting #7, the following design criteria for park elements was discussed and decided upon by the CPC:

- Restroom structure
 - Small restroom with 2 toilets/stalls and a sink per male and female 'side'
 - Nearest edge of the restroom structure is to be located no closer than 125' from any property line
 - Farthest corner of the restroom is to be located no further than 150' from a drive-able fire lane
 - Natural design and material characteristics for the restroom facility
 - Similar size to restroom at new 'prototype' recently built at Optimist Park (approximately 500 s.f.)

- Open Lawn (Mowed Turf) areas
 - A significant area of mowed turf is to be focused as open lawn area – with close proximity to the natural themed play area and swing area to provide for a variety of passive recreation and play-focused activities to occur in a common vicinity
- Parking Area
 - No more than 30 parking spaces
 - Place parking spaces and associated pavement away from eastern property boundary as much as possible
- Constructed Wetlands
 - Creation of educational signage illustrating the benefits of this ecosystem enhancement
 - Creation of an educational gathering spot for small groups learning within 75' of constructed wetlands – preferably with a shade component
 - Creation of benches and/or seating on a wetland walk/boardwalk to create a unique park experience – preferably with a shade component
- Pathway system
 - Ensure a separate greenway path from the main park path
 - Pathways to be paved within park – except for areas in forest where natural materials (stones, gravels, mulches)
 - Pathways to create looped system for variety of pathway experiences

PUBLIC WORKSHOP #8 AND CPC MEETING #8 PRELIMINARY DECISIONS

Public Workshop #3 was held to review the consolidated concept plan. Feedback forms were collected at that workshop. 48 responses were received. Feedback showed that, in general, the public liked the consolidated concept plan. Nearly 70% of respondents stated that the park's concept met the needs and interests of community members living within one-mile of the park. Approximately 81% of respondents stated that the park design incorporated all of the prioritized values listed above.

Yet, there were still public concerns about the limited level of 'activity' planned for the park. Several committee members noted the community interest in more active play spaces/elements. There was discussion too on the proposed natural play area functionality and location, possibly too far from the main parking and proposed restroom area.

As part of the dialogue at CPC Meeting #8, the following concept plan decisions were made and supported by the CPC:

- Acceptance of four or five educational nodes/learning stations within the park – to highlight various areas of the park site – such as the historic dam area, wetlands area, Hare Snipe Creek area (x2), forest canopy

- Extending the paved greenway southerly to two more sanitary sewer manholes running parallel to Hare Snipe Creek, and then turning back 'into' the site to create an additional looped path system to further activate the forest area with potential users
- Altering the name and definition of the Natural Play and Learning Area to be 'Nature Themed Play Area' with the following design criteria:
 - Will engage the pine forest landscape and forest canopy area near the low stone wall for exploratory play for children of all ages, yet primarily geared towards the ages of 5-12
 - Will consider using natural themed play equipment that is provided by national playground suppliers in addition to more 'found' natural elements such as timbers, logs, mud, and stones
 - The space will be compliant with applicable access regulations
 - The space will be located with an entrance abutting the proposed Open Lawn area to ensure good lines of sight between these spaces
 - Invasive plant management should begin to occur as soon as possible to assist in preparing this area of the park for this play space, regardless of the play area implementation phase

CPC Meeting #8 continued longer than expected. In fact, it ended due to the building being closed at 9pm. CPC members expressed a desire to further discuss issues before taking a consensus vote on the plan. To keep the scheduled public hearing on November 12th, the CPC members agreed to meeting one-week later to *continue CPC Meeting #8* – on October 26, 2015. All members present at CPC Meeting #8 attended the extension of CPC Meeting #8.

As part of the facilitated dialogue at the extension of CPC Meeting #8, the following additional concept plan decisions and design criteria were set and supported by the CPC:

- Swing Area
 - Locate generally halfway between restrooms and Nature Themed Play Area.
 - Locate on a secondary pathway – not primary pathway for park
 - Total square footage of this play area is not to exceed 1,200 s.f.
 - Vertical edge of swing structure to be no closer than 125' from eastern property line
 - Do not locate within the existing 100-year floodplain
- Small Shade Structure
 - Locate generally halfway between restrooms and Nature Themed Play Area.
 - Total square footage of this covered roof is not to exceed 200 s.f.
 - Vertical edge of shade structure to be no closer than 125' from eastern property line
 - Do not locate within the existing 100-year floodplain

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- Located within close proximity to the proposed swing play area, constructed wetland, and display garden area – for multi-function use as a small shade spot for those users
- Do not provide electricity to this structure – thus possibly negating the possibility of amplified music
- Display Garden/Learning Landscape
 - Locate no closer than 125' from eastern property line
- Additional Planting Along Eastern Property Boundary Near 'Activity Zones'
 - For the first 7 properties (south from Millbrook) abutting the eastern property boundary – the master plan is to note the need for providing naturalized planting (a mix of evergreens, understory trees, shade trees, native shrubs) in this area to provide a vegetated screen to provide additional privacy. City and neighbors to consult and collaboratively create planting scheme during construction documentation phases to ensure that additional privacy occurs from current conditions.
- Open Lawn (Mowed Turf) areas
 - Open Lawn (Mowed Turf) is defined as the following:
 - A consistently managed turf area
 - Consisting of one of the following turf grasses: Fescue, Bermuda, Zoysia, or Centipede
 - A larger turf area within the park would be defined as follows:
 - No larger than 23,000 square feet
 - Shaped in a non-rectilinear form (similar to what is shown on the concept plan) to discourage organized field activity play
 - This area is to be sloped 2%-4% in grade
 - Any other turf areas within the park would be defined as follows:
 - Is not larger than 7,000 square feet
 - Shaped in a non-rectilinear forms (similar to what is shown on the concept plan) to discourage organized field activity play
 - This area is to be sloped 2%-4% in grade

It should also be noted that the following park management recommendations came forth from this CPC and should be taken into consideration for park staff:

- A policy ensuring that no organized or programmed athletic events occur on this site (ball sports specifically)
- A policy seeking to limit the amplification of music within this park – for programmed or un-programmed activities

At the end of the extended CPC Meeting #8, there was a CONSENSUS SEEKING VOTE taken by the CPC. There were 13 members in attendance. Using the following voting criteria, from the City of Raleigh's Public Participation Policy for Park Planning, votes were cast:

Each individual member voted as below by holding up their fingers to note their 'score':

1. **Endorsement** – CPC member full supports it **(5 VOTES)**
2. **Endorsement with minor point of contention** – Basically, CPC member likes it **(3 VOTES)**
3. **Agreement with minor reservations** – CPC member can live with it **(4 VOTES)**
4. **Stand aside with major reservations** – CPC member has a formal disagreement, but will not block or hold up the proposal/provision **(0 VOTES)**
5. **Block** – CPC member will not support the proposed plan **(1 VOTE)**

Therefore, the CPC presents the Wooten Meadow Park Master Plan WITHOUT CONSENSUS. One member voted to block the plan.

Committee Member Findings:

A. *The comments in support of the master plan are summarized as follows:*

#1 Votes:

- Felt strongly that it is a simple design that enhances the park's features - without stressing any particular aspect - protects and looks to improve the park ecosystem, seeks to prompt curiosity and provide education - while strengthening the greenway system, adding to the places where people can play or sit quietly in a natural setting - and protects the privacy and safety of adjacent neighborhoods.
- This plan fairly incorporates the community values of nature, preservation, education, passive recreation, aesthetically pleasing, safety, quiet, and play--in that order. The park is odd in shape, being so narrow and long, and has the added constraints of being largely in the 100-year floodplain. Much of the park is being preserved in a more natural state, while even restoring and creating a wetland area and combating invasive species, which will address nature, preservation, education, and being aesthetically pleasing. Most of the park is geared towards passive recreation, in the form of trails and boardwalks, educational nodes, and seating with shade components. Play has been incorporated in a nature-themed play area, in the woods, where it addresses the values of nature, education, aesthetically pleasing, quiet, and play. The grass lawn area is of modest size and a shape that will draw play of a smaller, looser, and thus, quieter nature, as opposed to a field the size for athletic programming. This design is the best design that takes into consideration the juxtaposition of quiet and play.

#2 Votes:

- Support it but still has some concerns over the noise; good compromise overall.
- Overwhelming in support of the design but there are some other spaces that would allow for more features closer to the bathroom such as shade structure or playground. Support what is there, but would still like to see more.
- Would like to see the swing set on the west side of the infinity shaped turf area.

#3 Votes:

- Felt there should have been more things in the plan, but it was a compromise. As the voting structure states, this CPC member can live with it.
- Two groups needed to compromise; felt that this was a compromise. If had gone more one or the other – activated vs. passive/less activated, it would not have succeeded.
- I would like to reiterate that this was a compromise plan, and that more or less active space would not have been accepted by the CPC.
- Many of those that wanted more 'features' were those who came late in the planning process and were therefore not fully aware of the unique and challenging characteristics of this spot (flood-zone, noise problems due to the topography of this park which led to over a decade of complaints by the neighbors to the city,) and of the access to many of the requested features at multiple parks within a 5-mile radius.
- Do not want to repeat the problems of the past and create a nuisance to the neighbors, which then leads to a nuisance to the city.
- My primary reservation related to this plan is the location of the swing area and shade structure. The survey results from Public Meeting 3 strongly suggested that the swing area and shade structure be moved to the natural play area. I do not feel that the public's wishes have been met with the placement of these items on the east side of the property. It will be inconvenient (in this location instead of the natural play area) for families with multiple children of varying ages.
- Concerned about the inclusion of man-made play structures that appeared to be minimally supported by the CPC – felt forced based on one CPC member and significant public input from one CPC meeting. Felt that the CPC had already agreed that the only man-made 'play' equipment in the park would be a set of 4 swings. Also, concerned that there was no criteria built into the document related to size and/or number of play structures.
- Want to ensure that park design and park management measures are taken (grading techniques, minor obstructions such as boulders, etc.) to prevent organized sporting events from taking place in the open lawn area. Ultimately those measures don't seem to be firmly included in the final plan. There was also no firm commitment to prevent any 'amplified noise' from being allowed in the park.

B. The comments not in support of the master plan are summarized as follows:

#5 Votes:

- I was representing a number of neighbors who wanted only trails and boardwalks with educational signage and shelters. They wanted a more passive park, wildlife and ecosystem focused - not necessarily play. I felt that to support them, I needed to register the vote of 5. Our primary concern is over noise. The size and location of the mowed turf creates potential for excessive noise. That area is an amphitheater, so noise carries to our yards and houses. As a resident of this area, I have lived through the noise for many years and suffered experiences of inadequate policing to control it. We are now being asked to live with this situation again.

PHASING RECOMMENDATIONS

As part of feedback gathered at CPC Meeting #7, Public Workshop #3, and CPC Meeting #8, the CPC reviewed possible phasing scenarios and prioritization opportunities. Public input gathered specifically at Public Workshop #3, asserted trails as the main priority of the park. The design team facilitated discussion at CPC Meetings #7 and #8 about construction methodologies, budget implications, and park master plan values.

At the end of the extended CPC Meeting #8, there was a CONSENSUS SEEKING VOTE #2 by the CPC – ON PHASING RECOMMENDATIONS. There were 13 members in attendance. Using the following voting criteria, from the City of Raleigh’s Public Participation Policy for Park Planning, votes were cast:

Each individual member voted as below by holding up their fingers to note their ‘score’:

1. **Endorsement** – CPC member full supports it **(5 VOTES)**
2. **Endorsement with minor point of contention** – Basically, CPC member likes it **(6 VOTES)**
3. **Agreement with minor reservations** – CPC member can live with it **(2 VOTES)**
4. **Stand aside with major reservations** – CPC member has a formal disagreement, but will not block or hold up the proposal/provision **(0 VOTES)**
5. **Block** – CPC member will not support the proposed plan **(0 VOTE)**

Therefore, the CPC presents Wooten Meadow Park Master Plan PHASING RECOMMENDATIONS WITH CONSENSUS.

These are the phasing priorities that were approved by the CPC:

A. Primary Priorities (AS A CLUSTER – NOT IN RANKING PRIORITY EXCEPT FOR TRAILS AS NOTED BELOW):

- Trails (noted as #1 Priority for CPC and Public)
 - Paved
 - With Learning Nodes/Educational Spots where possible
 - ½ mile loop of trails

- Benches/Trash Receptacles
- Earthworks/Infrastructure for Constructed Wetland
- Improved Parking Area including:
 - Entry Plaza
 - Pedestrian Connections to Millbrook Road
 - Infrastructure for Future Restroom
- Invasive Plant Management, to begin preparation of the Play areas
- Meadow/Improved Landscape for 'front' of park
- Open Lawn/Mowed Turf Area

B. Secondary Priorities (in no priority order-only alphabetical):

- Boardwalk/Wetland Walk for Constructed Wetlands
- Greenway Connection Trail, west of Wetland and south of park areas
- Natural Material Pathways
- Play Areas –Swing Area and Natural-Themed Play Area
- Restroom
- Second Paved Loop approved in meeting #8
- Small Shade Structure

Committee Member Findings:

#1 Votes:

- Due to the shape of the park, it makes sense to develop it from front (by Millbrook Road) to back. The trails are highest on the community's priority list, and should be put in first. Play was not as high of a community value, and logistically cannot be added until invasive species and the areas at the front of the park are completed. In a perfect world, we could do it all at once, but if priorities must be made and phases developed, this is the most in-line with the community's values and priorities, as we were given through our open houses, workshops, and online comments.

#2 Votes:

- There was no mention of protective plantings along the park borders in Phase 1 to protect the neighbors from visibility and noise.