

# Parks with Purpose Community Task Force Newsletter and Meeting Summary

December 17, 2018 Meeting | Norman and Betty Camp Education Center

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**Participants of December Meeting:** Frances Carmichael, Stacie Hagwood, Claudia Graham, Stacia Turner, Claire Cooney, Bettie Thompson, Bill Flournoy, Jemonde Taylor, Wayne Shore, Kofi Boone, Kevin Boyer, Carson B. Winya, Christy Perrin, Louie Rivers, Sarah Shefte, Kristi Moyer, Randy Senzig and NEC students Dominique, Mikiya McClain, Elijah McClain.

## Task Force Actions and Decisions:

- The Task Force will engage with Kofi Boone's NCSU Landscape Architecture Studio and Environmental Justice and Design students from January- April.
- Agreement to think through and continue the public versus private land discussion
- Next meeting: **January 14 from 5:30-8:30pm at the Norman and Betty Camp Education Center.** Purpose will be to kick-off engagement with the Landscape Architecture students and discuss a draft outreach/communication plan.

## Parks with Purpose Team Updates:

- A timeline based on the year 2 contract with The Conservation Fund was shared. Milestones include reaching out into Rochester Heights and Biltmore Hills to inform and seek feedback about this project in Feb/March, holding a public event to get feedback on ideas in late March, selecting a project(s) for implementation by April, and professional design of a site plan for the site in spring/summer.
- A draft map of the Task Force's top priority potential projects was created for us by Conservation Fund staff- this is attached.
- Racial Equity Training Opportunity -- a number of workshops are offered in January and February. Contact Christy if you are interested in going to one.
- An informal "Walnut Creek Watershed Team" has met a few times in the last year or so to share individual actions and start developing on online map-based watershed plan. Their next meeting is January 25 from 1-3 pm Archdale Building. Amin Davis, Division of Water Resources, (and PEJ) is coordinating. Let one of us know if you would like to join.



## Meeting Summary

### Collaboration with NCSU Design Students

Kofi Boone, NCSU professor of landscape architecture who worked with Dr. Camp, talk to the group about a possible collaboration between the Parks with Purpose group and NCSU design students. He discussed the ways that our project ideas can be translated by landscape architecture -- for example, when he sees “gathering space,” he thinks “places to sit,” “a way to get there” and “shady.” Visualizing possible ideas through perspective drawings and site maps can help the Task Force make decisions on how to move forward. Resulting plans and drawings can also help with fundraising.

Kofi emphasized that his students are not yet professional landscape architects but are passionate and highly capable of translating ideas into tools to help make decisions. He teaches two spring classes that could work with the group -- one is a design studio and the other is a class about incorporating environmental justice in design. The design studio students would develop plans and drawings to share with the Task Force in March.

**Landscape Architecture** is architecture that is not the building- it's about the site and how you use the land. Kofi focuses on the use of resilient design and teaching contemporary best practices. Resiliency of designs around water is important here.

Task Force members discussed with Kofi the opportunity to engage students to inform their decision about working with the class. Discussion points included:

- the students involved should watch the Partners for Environmental Justice documentary to help them understand some of what's been going on in the community.
- students should be invited to a meeting to discuss collaboration priorities.
- Some wondered about the logistics of having students involved mandatorily through a class. Kofi's suggested the students could create visuals, facilitate community interactions as needed in the design process, and create materials for community members to review and offer feedback.
- With students coming from other states and countries, and have not spent time in southeast Raleigh, some community members may be uncomfortable. Kofi responded that since many landscape architects are not from the communities in which they work, every individual in the position has to develop an understanding, a sense of empathy and a relationship with the communities in which they work. It is important is to match the technical skills of the designer with the local vision of the community.
- Which of the Task Force's project ideas would the students would work on? The group has not yet decided on specific ideas/locations. Kofi said that ideas on the

list such as “potential outdoor gathering,” “access to park” and other similar concepts are closest in line with what the students focus on. He thinks that it would be best to have an early conversation with the students about understanding community priorities.

Once people were through asking questions, a 5-finger vote was taken to gauge the group’s comfort and consensus level with engaging NCSU design students to work on the project.

**Question: “How do you feel about working with the design classes on conceptual design and outreach techniques?”**

1 finger raised (I like it): 3 votes

2 fingers raised (basically, I like it): 7 votes

3 fingers raised (I can live with it): 0 votes

4 fingers raised (I don’t like this but I don’t want to hold up the group): 0 votes

5 fingers raised (I won’t support the proposal): 0 votes

**Since a consensus was reached as defined in the group’s charter, the decision is to engage NCSU design students.**

### **Funding Discussions**

Some concern was expressed about proceeding with ideas that may exceed the funding that the project currently has. Shouldn’t our prioritization process include costs, and how do we get costs? Kofi pointed out that it can be hard to know how much something will cost until it has been designed, so this is a productive step toward estimating costs. To get cost estimates, you need to know spaces, dimensions, and materials. A participant discussed how breaking big projects into smaller pieces and still moving forward with them is helpful for getting started and showing others that a project is happening. Then public or private funders can more easily decide whether to fund a project and how much funding the project would require. This process can result in a suite of potential projects that could be ready for future grant opportunities and implementation

Somebody wondered if it was a waste of students’ time to create conceptual and design plans for certain project ideas that are unlikely to happen. Kofi responded that since students are involved in projects such as these for the learning experience and most of what they design in school won’t ever be built, it is an opportunity for professional growth. Students want to get involved with real projects and communities, so a community-based project like this one is more real to them than many of the projects they create during their time in school. Students are taught to communicate to communities carefully and effectively so that people understand that what they see in project design models may not resemble the final product. Even for projects that don’t

happen, the process of thinking through these ideas as a community is still productive so that they may be built with other grants.

Finally, the group will need to engage a professional Landscape Architect soon to help shape the ideas, and start creating professional designs after the students have presented their work and the Task Force has decided upon ideas for immediate implementation.

### **Public Versus Private Property Discussion**

Since the topic had come up in previous meetings, Christy and Louie invited discussion about the pros and cons of spending this grant money on City of Raleigh property versus Wake County property or private property (such as St. Ambrose Church property). Many high priority projects have been identified on city land. Participants recognized it is important to have these discussions and understand the perspectives so that the project can be implemented thoughtfully. Participants shared the following perspectives:

- Ownership relates to park maintenance -who will implement and fund the maintenance is dependent on the ownership of the land.
- SE Raleigh residents have felt left behind by the City, based on past treatment and many planning efforts that have not seen results on the ground. They may wonder why should we give private grant funds such as these to the city for something that the city should do with public funds?
- Relationships between the city and SE Raleigh, and NC State University and SE Raleigh have been historically extractive relationships. For example, university researchers have entered into communities, taken what they need to publish research papers and then leave. These actions have created an underlying distrust of residents with the city and NC State. Residents may feel wary of the city and university's actions.
- After Hurricane Fran in 1999, City of Raleigh proposed a flood tax in Rochester Heights. This is part of the history of non-equal treatment.
- The city has implementation plans for the Walnut Creek Wetland Park- don't duplicate the work already being funded.
- Spending the money on school property makes sense because creating a positive learning environment for children is one of the most important aspects of community building.
- Regardless of where the money comes from, the community has the money now and should use it to build something impactful.

The group continued the discussion past the meeting end time. They agreed to keep thinking about and discussing these important issues.

## Reaching out to additional parties

Christy and Louie updated the group on their meeting with the NC Department of Transportation (NCDOT). Andy McDaniel, NCDOT Hydraulics, said they would be willing to come to a meeting if the group is interested. NCDOT is required to do stormwater retrofits to mitigate the runoff coming off of NCDOT infrastructure, which could be relevant to Biltmore Hills and Rochester Heights because of the proximity of I-40 to the communities. Some think it could be productive to have an NCDOT representative come to a meeting to raise awareness of community needs.

David Proper is setting up a meeting with County Commissioner Sig Hutchinson to discuss Wake County's interest in the greenway system through the community, and how this may relate to the Parks with Purpose efforts.

## NEC Student Tour of NCSU

The NEC students present at the meeting gave an update on the tour they took of NCSU in November. They went to the creek and measured water levels, discussed the ways in which parking lots and other impervious surfaces on campus interact with

floodplains, and heard from a former Peace Corps member about her experience. The students went to Louie's class and learned about how global migration is influenced by climate change. Louie expressed that the NCSU College of Natural Resources lacks diversity so he was excited to have a diverse group of young students gaining interest in the college.



### ENVIRONMENTAL FIRST YEAR PROGRAM

The Environmental First Year (ENVFY) program welcomed its first cohort of 80 students in August 2017. A collaboration between the College of Natural Resources, the College of Sciences and the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, ENVFY students complete a full first-year curriculum, including an ENV 101 course that allows them to explore different environmental degree programs and career paths.

*In their recent 2018 Sustainability Report, NC State University included this photo of PWP Task Force member Father Jemonde Taylor speaking with NCSU environmental students at the St. Ambrose Church rain garden.*

# Walnut Creek Wetland Community Partnership Priority Projects

