

Parks With Purpose Community Task Force Newsletter and Meeting Summary

June 3, 2019 Meeting | Norman and Betty Camp Education Center

May meeting participants: Claire Cooney(The Conservation Fund or TCF), Kristi Moyer(City of Raleigh Parks or COR), Alison (COR), Amin Davis (PEJ), Shannon Lee (TCF), Elijah McClain (Neighborhood Ecology Corps or NEC), Mikiyah McClain (NEC), Heather Dutra (COR Stormwater), Randy Senzig (CHER/NEC), Stacie Hagwood (COR Parks), Eric Butler (Shaw), Jemonde Taylor (St. Ambrose), David Proper (TCF), Frances Carmichael (Biltmore Hills), Claudia Graham (Biltmore Hills),, Sarah Shefte (NC State University or NCSU), Louie Rivers (NCSU), Christy Perrin (Water Resources Research Institute), Amy Farinelli (COR Stormwater)

Task Force Actions and Decisions

- Host an event at the Bailey Dr Green space to “activate” it (bring people to use it)
 - An event planning committee formed and has been meeting via phone calls
 - **Saturday, Sept. 7 is “Meet the Bailey Drive Greenspace” event**
- NC DOT stormwater project search- if there’s any feedback on where they should look for projects to reduce stormwater running off of roads, let Christy or Louie know.
- The team would like to share info with CACs (event, watershed tool, NCDOT efforts).
- **Next Task Force meeting is Monday, Aug 19th at 5:30 at the Park. We hope to have proposals from landscape architects to share and discuss by then.**

Parks with Purpose Team Updates

- Walnut Creek Watershed Action Team, coordinated by Amin Davis, NC Division of Water Resources, has had four meetings, most recently July 9. Town of Cary, COR, NCSU, NCDOT are creating an online watershed action planning tool with water quality information, watershed improvement projects, stories. It will be a clearinghouse of information within the watershed, and a basis for writing grants for projects. Contact Amin amin.davis@ncdenr.gov more information.

Meeting Summary

City of Raleigh efforts at Walnut Creek Wetland Park and specifically on Bailey Drive Greenspace site

Kristi Moyer gave a presentation to update what the Parks Dept. is doing at the Walnut Creek Wetland Park. There is a desire to provide transparency about what they’re doing, provide a foundation for ideas and collaboration, and make sure efforts are replicated. She shared a map that showed the site next to Bailey Drive, which has both FEMA floodplain, and floodway. In the FEMA floodway, a “no-rise” infrastructure is required, meaning that anything put/built on that land cannot impede water flow at all. This is not required in the floodplain area, which is less likely to experience flooding. The locations of floodway (more restrictive) and floodplain dictate

what can be built- for example, boardwalk in the floodway cannot have a railing or fence that could trap debris. Kristi shared a schematic design for the Walnut Creek Wetland Park Improvement Plan that has been created by their consultant, Alta, with bond funds. Some points about the plan:

- Includes an accessible boardwalk off the west deck of the center into the park and across Little Rock Creek (cost-\$600k), and educational platform off of the greenway behind the center to be constructed with bond funds.
- Nature playscape design near the Center- design to be created in partnership with PEJ and NCSU Natural Learning Initiative (funding from PEJ for design, no construction funds are earmarked yet)
- The boardwalk and platform construction will start in 2020

Parks staff wanted to provide some foundations for park improvements for the area south of Walnut Creek once they realized the Task Force was prioritizing this area for their project, even though that area had not been prioritized for the City's bond funding. This included:

- Constructing a bridge across Walnut Creek may not be feasible due to ecological and financial impacts, so alternatives were looked at for providing access to the park from Rochester Heights.
- An alternative is connecting Bailey Drive to State St. through a trail on the property. They asked Alta to analyze a 4 foot wide boardwalk that would cross wetlands to allow access to Walnut Creek from Bailey Dr, and a 4 foot wide natural surface, or mulch, trail (which could be built at minimal cost with volunteers)
- stairs to connect people from the south side of the creek up to State St.
- The city committed \$60,000 towards schematic design for these alternatives, to happen while Alta is doing schematic design projects.
- The Task Force can use the schematic design for those two park elements (boardwalk section and stairs) and modeling required for it within their plan, but they do not have to.

Some expressed concern proposed south side improvements are not quite on-message. This includes natural instead of asphalt/paved paths as possibly being less valuable of an amenity being provided. Do natural paths give impression that somebody cared, but just a little? Concerns were also expressed that yet again the City of Raleigh is neglecting the neighborhoods south of Walnut Creek because the bond money/available funds were allocated to be spent north of the creek (only a small amount of Bond funds to be used for the South side) Some questions/comments from Task Force members:

- Are shredded bark paths the only ones possible on the site?
 - Paving is not allowed in the floodway. It is possible in the floodplain. It would have higher environmental and financial costs.
 - Most of the green area (on the map) did not have standing water during recent wet times.
 - Mulched trails are used at many parks (Durant Park for ex), this wouldn't be the only one
- Can there be ADA accessible boardwalk?

- It's possible to make the boardwalk across the wetlands ADA accessible, but Alta would have to re-run the model. The intent of that particular trail is not be ADA accessible, but to put the ADA access near the Norman and Betty Camp center.
- If we were creative and courageous, we would be putting bond money towards something physical south of the creek.
 - Stacie: I hear you and hope I can convince you how important the south side is to me. The optics look bad. And unfortunately a lot of the bond money went into design/planning fees and concept development, leaving less than desired for site development. We will write grants to provide park infrastructure adjacent to Rochester Heights and Biltmore Hills.

The City's Park improvement plan project schedule is as follows:

- April 13, 2019: schematic design public workshop
- May 16, 2019: presentation of schematic design to the parks, recreation and greenway advisory board
- Through spring 2020: design and permitting
- Spring 2020-fall 2020: bidding, bid award, and construction

Potential park elements

A list of potential park elements identified by NCSU design students were presented in a matrix as requested by the Task Force at their last meeting. "Play" was discussed, including how to encourage nature play, versus "play structures". Play structures are what you see on playgrounds- when you install that equipment there is regulations around it. but also, a "play" area really entices people to parks. Some concern was expressed that there are plenty of play spaces and that our park should focus on education and nature. It was reiterated that our park should serve adults in addition to children and provide learning opportunities for all. Some explained that to them "play" means using the imagination to engage young children in nature, to spark their interest and get them comfortable in nature. This is a type of environmental education. The site can have natural elements that draw children (and adults) to it but are not called a play structure. Participants decided they did not need to prioritize park elements, but should provide all the elements to the Landscape Architect for designing alternatives that include as many as is feasible. These include:

Art (sculpture)	Picnic area
Boardwalk	Rain garden
Educational signs/kiosks	Seating
Marked road crossing	Shelter
Meadow (grasses/flowers)	Terraced amphitheater
Mural/expression tunnel	Trees
Natural play area	Walkway
Outdoor classroom	Picnic area

Activating the Bailey Drive Green space

Shannon suggested hosting a community event(s) to raise awareness of the Parks with Purpose project and Bailey Drive site. Concern was raised about how we could get more community members involved, and that we need to respect the input that we've gotten over the past year from the people that have been committed to coming to meetings. The purpose of outreach would be to allow people the opportunity to provide their feedback to schematic designs, particularly segments of the community from whom we haven't heard. We would not create a new vision for the site.

Some outreach ideas to be explored included yard signs that say something like "I support the Bailey St Greenspace" and/or a "coming soon" billboard for the site. The group decided to plan an introductory event on the site to activate it as community space. They agreed to form a planning committee with a goal of late summer for the event.

Collaborating with City of Raleigh commissions

Claire Cooney and David Proper from the Conservation Fund met with the Raleigh Appearance Commission to share the Parks with Purpose project. The commission has \$10,000 in their budget to use on projects. Some ideas for supporting the Walnut Creek Wetland Park and this effort included educational signage about the project on Bailey Drive, street crossing markings, and benches. They had some funds left to be spent by June 30 and found that could be easily used for benches in the park in such short turnaround. They may be able to support funding something in next years budget on the south side of the Park. Individuals may also be able to lend pro bono design expertise. Other citizen committees with whom we may be able to collaborate include the Bike-Pedestrian Commission and the Public Art Commission.

Next steps:

The Conservation Fund will meet with City of Raleigh to discuss what this partnership will look like and what a service agreement might include so that we can work on this land.

An RFP for a consultant to create alternative schematic designs will be created and issued. We hope to have somebody selected by the August 19 meeting. One possibility is to review and decide up on a design in time to have construction of a phase one at the same time that the City of Raleigh constructs the improvements on the north side of the creek (2020). That would help to leverage funds and reduce costs.

- Since we have already gone through the visioning process and have many materials from meeting summaries and NCSU designs, the landscape architect team (and perhaps anyone else getting newly involved) should review our materials before coming to meetings with schematics.

(Post-meeting update- the RFP was issued on July 19 with an August 16 deadline. The aim will be to share the proposals or summary of proposals received with the group).

NC Department of Transportation stormwater efforts

The NCDOT is required by the EPA Clean Water Act Phase II Stormwater Rules to identify places where they can reduce stormwater runoff impacts to water bodies. Christy and Louie have spoken with Andy McDaniel, NCDOT, about the public interest in locating projects that reduce stormwater runoff in the Walnut Creek watershed, in particular upstream of the Walnut Creek Wetlands and communities nearby. NCDOT is developing a new process to identify stormwater projects that includes a GIS analysis followed by field visits. They offered to pilot the new process in the Walnut Creek Watershed. If there are any particular places of concern that they should look at, they can include that. Let Christy or Louie know of these places as soon as possible.

- Garner Road crossing was mentioned.
- This info should be shared with CACs. We need to ask Andy for more information to do so (a script?), as our conversations were casual and we're not sure of the official description or how they want broader input for the effort.

The next meeting will be held Monday, August 19 at 5:30PM
at the Walnut Creek Wetland Park
950 Peterson st, Raleigh, NC 27610

For information about the Parks with Purpose Community Task Force or Walnut Creek Wetland Community Partnership, contact Christy Perrin at Christy_perrin@ncsu.edu or 919-513-1152 or Louie Rivers at livers@ncsu.edu