

# **Composite Countywide Plan For Parks and Trails**

*(Town of Carrboro, Town of Chapel Hill, Town of Hillsborough,  
City of Mebane, Orange County)*

## **I. Introduction / Rationale**

Park and open space planning for the municipal and County governments within the 400-square mile area of Orange County has been ongoing for a number of years, but the last decade has seen renewed emphasis on park services. In some ways, the existence of Duke Forest and the Eno River State Park met some of the needs for area residents for hiking and picnicking over the past 30-50 years, but with the growth of population and the need for facilities for active and low-impact recreation, new parks were a service greatly desired by County and Town residents.

As is the case in most states, town governments were first to venture into the provision of local parks, with Chapel Hill opening Umstead Park in the 1960's and Cedar Falls Park in the 1970's. Carrboro constructed and opened Wilson Park in 1977. Mebane constructed Lake Michael, on the Orange County side of Mebane, in 1953, and in 1981 opened a 200-acre park at the lake. Orange County came to the provision of parks somewhat later, with some facilities at Fairview constructed in the early 1980's. In 1988, Orange County adopted a Parks Plan, but it would be 11 years before Efland-Cheeks Park would open in 1999. Hillsborough does not currently have a parks system, but is on the verge of creating one with the planned opening of the RiverWalk and other parks in the next few years.

The period of the late 1990's was, in many ways, a turning point for parks in the areas of park planning, land acquisition and construction. A series of reports on the coordination of park planning and the status of recreation programs and facilities led to the Joint Master Recreation and Parks Work Group report, completed in 1999. One of the recommendations of that report was the formation of an Intergovernmental Parks (IP) Work Group to serve as a vehicle for communication and collaboration between the jurisdictions. Town and County bond issues paved the way for new park construction in many of the jurisdictions.

## **II. Coordination**

The purpose of this document and maps is to provide for the five jurisdictions a single source that can be used by policy makers, staffs and other interested groups to review all of the different parks and park plans at the same time.

It is envisioned that this document will enable the local governments and other park and open space partners in future decision-making to more readily identify gaps in coverage and opportunities for new parks, and to avoid the possible duplication of multiple planned parks in similar service areas. It also would be of use to the public to see the status of park planning across the five jurisdictional boundaries of the County.

In 2005, as the IP Work Group was reconstituted, the need for this "umbrella" document that pulled together all of the existing park plans into one source was identified, and the elected boards from each of the jurisdictions authorized the creation of this Composite Countywide Parks Plan. In late 2005 and into 2006, the IP Work Group worked with staff to create this document.

### III. Status of Park Plans

As noted above, each of the jurisdictions has a long history of parks and open space planning. Orange County adopted its parks plan (Recreation and Parks Element of the Comprehensive Plan) in 1988. Chapel Hill's first parks plan was adopted in 2002, Carrboro had a parks component for its northern transition area in 1989, and the Town's first adopted parks plan was approved in 1994.

Although many parks plan have been on the books for years, opportunities to construct the parks have been limited, but became more numerous since approval of County and Town of Chapel Hill parks bonds in 1996, 1997, 2001 and 2003.

The following table outlines the status of parks plans in each jurisdiction.

<b>Jurisdiction</b>	<b>Parks Plan Adopted?</b>	<b>Year Adopted</b>	<b>Acreage of Current Parks*</b>	<b>Other Related Plans</b>
Carrboro	Yes	1994	80 acres	Update to plan underway, Northern Transition Area Plan
Chapel Hill	Yes	2002	255 acres	Greenways Master Plan. Land Use Plan
Hillsborough	No	----	28 acres	Vision 2010 Plan
Mebane	No	----	141 acres	
Orange County	Yes	1988 (update 2006107)	359 acres	Lands Legacy Plan, Comprehensive Plan, Joint Master Recreation and Parks report
			863 acres	

\* - Parks open and/or underway

The Town of Carrboro is currently in the midst of updating their 1994 plan, and this update is expected to be completed later in 2006. Orange County is also planning a short-term Parks Plan Addendum in fall 2006, as an interim measure until the Parks Element of the Comprehensive Plan can be updated in full at a later date.

## **IV. The Jurisdictional Parks Plans and Facility Summaries**

As noted above, each jurisdiction within Orange County has its own parks, both current and future. The following section provides a thumbnail outline of each facility, separated into current parks and planned future facilities'.

### **A. Town of Carrboro**

The Town of Carrboro is currently in the midst of preparing a Parks Plan. All park facilities (unless noted) are open from 7:00am until dark, except for lighted facilities, which close at 11pm.

#### **Existing Facilities**

##### Henry Anderson III Community Park

55 acres. 302 Hwy. 54 West, 1/4 mile west of the 541 Old Fayetteville Road intersection). Baseball/softball fields (4 lighted), one multi-purpose field, basketball courts (lighted), volleyball court, tennis courts (2), horseshoe pits, fishing pond, play equipment, trail (.4mile), fenced dog park, picnic tables and grills, picnic shelter, and rest rooms.

##### Baldwin Park

2.5 acres. 400 Broad Street. A neighborhood mini-park on Broad Street. Play equipment, multi - purpose field, grill, basketball goal, and pavilion.

##### Brewer's Lane Mini-Park

1 acre. 102 Hargraves Street, Brewer's Lane  
Open space and basketball court.

##### Carrboro Elementary School Park

3 acres. 400 Shelton Street Note: weekday hours are 3pm - dark  
Play equipment, basketball court, picnic tables, youth baseball field, track (dirt), and open play areas.

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<sup>1</sup> This report is focused on local parks and trails and public open spaces. Other open space lands may not be incorporated into this document.

#### Century Center

7,200 square feet of public space, 100 N. Greensboro Street. Four small meeting rooms, one multi-purpose hall, handicap lift, Cybrary, and fully equipped kitchen.

#### Simpson Street Mini-Park

1 acre. 301 Simpson Street. Picnic table, open space. New play equipment, spring 2006.

#### Smith Soccer Field

2 acres. 1709 High School Road

A joint project of the Town of Carrboro, Orange County and the Chapel Hill-Carrboro Schools. Open play hours: Monday-Friday 4pm-10pm. This lighted field may be reserved by groups. Please call 918-7364 for more information.

#### Town Commons Play Area and Pavilions

1.7 acres. 301 West Main Street at the Carrboro Town Hall

Play equipment for ages 2-5 and open space play area, two large pavilions and a bandstand.

#### Wilson Park

8.5 acres. 101 Williams Street (off North Greensboro St.)

Play equipment, youth baseball field, tennis courts (4 lighted), picnic tables and grills, picnic shelter and rest rooms

### **Planned Future Facilities**

#### Adams Tract

27.286 acres. 207 Estes Drive

Open Space, future trail system. Land management plan in process.

#### Martin Luther King, Jr. Park

10.16 acres. 1120 Hillsborough Road. A park master plan has been developed and approved by the Board of Aldermen.

## **B. Town of Chapel Hill**

### **Existing Facilities**

#### Burlington Park

Ephesus Church Road. Facilities include: play area and picnic facilities.

#### Cedar Falls Park

66.5-acres, located on Weaver Dairy Road across from East Chapel Hill High School. Facilities include: 6 tennis courts, play area, picnic facilities, 4 softball/baseball fields, and about 1.5 miles of natural surface trails.

#### Community Center Park

12.8-acres, located at 120 South Estes Drive. Facilities include: gymnasium, meeting room, indoor pool, climbing wall, playground, picnic facilities, outdoor basketball court, volleyball, and rose garden. The park serves as the trailhead for the 1.5 mile natural surface Battle Branch Trail and the 1.5 mile paved Bolin Creek Trail.

#### Ephesus Park

10-acres, located on Ephesus Church Road adjacent to Ephesus School. Facilities include: 6 tennis courts and 1 softball/baseball field (shared use with School)

#### Hargraves Park

6.8-acres, located at 216 North Roberson Street. Facilities include: softball/baseball field, gymnasium, meeting rooms, community center building, outdoor pool, playground, picnic facilities and shelter, 3 tennis courts, and outdoor basketball court.

#### Homestead Park

40-acres, access is from the eastern end of Homestead Road. Facilities include: 2 athletic fields, 2 baseball/softball fields, playground, picnic facilities and shelter, play area, outdoor basketball court, dog park, skate park and batting cages.

#### Jones Park

10-acres, located off of Purefoy Road. Facilities include: play area and picnic facilities.

#### Lincoln Center

Located at 750 South Merritt Mill Road. Facilities include: gymnasium and art studio.

#### Meadowmont Park

68.7-acres, located on Meadowmont Lane adjacent to Rashkis School. Facilities include: gymnasium (shared use with School), 2 athletic fields, pond, and trails. Serves as a trail head for the 1 mile long paved Meadowmont Trail

#### Open Space Acquisitions

The Town owns about 726 acres of open space including the Merritt Pasture. The Town has extensive holdings along Bolin, Booker, Dry, and

Morgan Creeks. In addition the town has protected substantial acreage along tributaries such as Battle Branch and Tanyard Branch.

## **Trails**

### Battle Branch Trail

1.5 Mile natural surface trail that connects Community Center Park and the UNC campus near Forest Theater.

### Bolin Creek Trail

1.5 Mile paved trail that connects Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd and Community Center Park.

### Dry Creek Trail

1.25 Mile natural surface trail that connects East Chapel Hill High School and Erwin Road.

### Fan Branch Trail

1.2 Mile paved trail that connects Culbreth Road and the Southern Community Park site near Scroggs School.

### Lower Booker Creek Trail

.85 Mile paved trail that connects Eastgate Shopping Center and Booker Creek Road.

### Meadowmont Trail

1 Mile paved trail that connects the west side of NC 54 with the Rashkis School site

### Meadowmont Nature Trails

.5 Mile natural surface trail that connects Rashkis School site with Lancaster Drive

### Pritchard Park Nature Trail

1 Mile natural surface loop trail along the circumference of the future park site

### North Forest Hills Park

9.4-acres, Collum Road. Facilities include: play area, picnic facilities and shelter, and an outdoor basketball court.

### Oakwood Park

Located on Oakwood Drive. Facilities include: 1 tennis court, play area, and picnic facilities.

### Umstead Park

19.5-acres, Umstead Drive. Facilities include: 1 tennis court, play area, picnic facilities and shelter, youth baseball field, outdoor basketball court, and volleyball. The park serves as a trailhead for the .4 mile natural surface Tanyard Branch Trail.

### Westwood Park

Located Westwood Street. Facilities include: play area

## **Planned Future Facilities**

### Dry Creek Park

32-acre site, future access anticipated from Erwin Road. To be operated by Chapel Hill Parks and Recreation Department.

Most of the site anticipated to remain open space. Facilities could include: picnic facilities and shelter, play area, outdoor basketball court, dog park, trails, and other facilities approved by the Council. No funding available. No schedule for development.

### Homestead Park Aquatic Center

27,000 square foot building with 2 pools, locker rooms, lobby, classroom, and offices. Construction anticipated in late 2006.

### Future Trails

#### Bolin Creek Trail (Extension)

The Town is currently studying a possible extension of the trail from Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd to Carrboro and Seawell School Road.

#### Dry Creek Trail (Extension)

The Town is studying a possible paved extension of the trail from Perry Creek Road to Eastowne.

#### Fan Branch Trail (Extension)

The Town is currently studying a possible extension of the trail through the Southern Community Park site.

#### Lower Booker Creek Trail (Extension)

The Town anticipates the extension of the trail through the Elliott Road Shopping Center to Fordham Boulevard.

#### Morgan Creek Trail

The Town is currently in the planning process for a 1 mile long paved trail from Culbreth Road to the west side of Smith Level Road.

### Southern Community Park

70-acres, access is from Dogwood Acres Drive and Southern Park and Ride Lot. To be operated by Chapel Hill Parks and Recreation Department. Jointly funded by Orange County and Chapel Hill.

First phase of development is anticipated to begin in 2006, opening in 2007. First phase will not be known until bid opening in early 2006. Total

buildout facilities to include: 3 athletic fields, 1 baseball/softball field, picnic facilities and shelter, play area, outdoor basketball courts, in line hockey court, meadow area, dog park, trails, and disk golf course.



## **C. Town of Hillsborough**

### **Existing Facilities**

#### **Murray Street Park**

Murray Street Park is a neighborhood park, serving the West Hillsborough neighborhood. It is about one acre in size and located at the corner of Murray and Eno Streets. There are various pieces of play equipment, such as swings, a chinning bar and climbing equipment. There are also benches and a wooden bridge, which crosses a small stream.

### **Proposed Future Facilities**

#### **Cates Creek Greenway / Waterstone Linear Park**

Cates Creek Greenway is a planned multi-use paved trail that provides an alternative connection to central Hillsborough from neighborhoods south of Interstate 85. Cates Creek flows from the southwest to the northeast through the southern part of Hillsborough and has the potential to tie-in to an eastern extension of Riverwalk.

The central part of the Cates Creek Greenway will be constructed by the Waterstone development as part of a linear park in the residential portion of the development. Continuing to the northeast, the Creek encounters both the railroad and Interstate 85, which will be the two primary barriers. Access under Interstate 85 is critical to the usefulness of this route for both transportation and recreational purposes. Designated open space, in a combination of ownerships, exists on both sides of Interstate 85 and will facilitate greenway construction.

#### **Hillsborough Heights Park**

This is a proposed neighborhood park on Terrell Road in the Hillsborough Heights neighborhood. The Hillsborough Parks and Recreation has met with neighbors, who have asked for a neighborhood-gathering place as well as a spot for younger children to play. It will contain picnic tables, barbeque grills and a large piece of play equipment. There will also be benches and some newly planted shade trees.

#### **Riverwalk**

Riverwalk is a planned multi-use paved trail connecting three publicly owned properties in Hillsborough. The Feasibility Study prepared in 2001-2002 describes a 1.6-mile trail beginning at the Orange County Courthouse and running west to town-owned Gold Park, and continuing to the State Natural Area on Oconeechee Mountain. The recommended route includes two bridges.

Orange County's proposed RiverPark makes a natural starting point for Riverwalk. Gold Park, a 22-acre site owned by the Town, will use Riverwalk as its primary access. The property has limited road access, but will be accessible to pedestrians with a covered walkway under the railroad trestle at the Eno River. Occoneechee State Natural Area offers visitors a look at flora and fauna more common in the mountainous parts of the state. Gold Park will contain a ball field, picnic area and other improvements.

#### Turnip Patch Park

Turnip Patch Park has been proposed as a public/private partnership between the Town of Hillsborough and Turnip Patch Park, Inc., a group of interested neighbors. It will be built on a town-owned lot bordered by West King Street, South Occoneechee Street and West Margaret Lane in the Historic District. It has been conceived as a park for 2 to 5 year olds and will contain age-appropriate play equipment. There will also be a bridge across the stream that runs through the park.

#### Waterstone Community Park

Planned 10-acre community park at the western trailhead of Cates Creek Greenway. The facility is proposed in 2 phases, with the Waterstone developer designing and constructing Phase 1 to include a soccer field and playground. The second phase will be constructed by the town using plans provided by the Waterstone developer. This will initially act as the western terminus of the Cates Creek Greenway, although further extension to the west is possible.

### **D. Mebane (Orange County portion)**

#### Lake Michael Park

Lake Michael Park is located one mile east of Mebane in Orange County on Lebanon Road. It is a 59-acre lake with two piers, with fishing. The park area has 200 acres with nature trails, picnic areas, restroom facilities, boat rental, tot play area, 3 large covered shelters and 1 small covered shelter.

Expansion of the park to include a new dock and other amenities is planned.

## **E. Orange County**

### **Existing Facilities**

#### **Central Recreation Center and Park**

Outdoor facilities at Queen and Hassell Streets in Hillsborough, include a multi-purpose field, childrens playground (5-12, ADA accessible) picnic area and parking. The recreation center includes meeting/activity rooms and a gymnasium.

#### **Efland-Cheeks Park**

Located just off US 70 West in Efland and Cheeks Township, the 11-acre Efland-Cheeks Park is co-located with Efland-Cheeks Elementary School and features a lighted multi-purpose field, two picnic shelters, a playground, a community center, two lighted basketball courts and nature trails (to be constructed in 2006).

#### **Fairview Park**

Fairview Park is located in the Fairview community in northern Hillsborough on Rainey Street. A youth baseball field, picnic area and playground currently exist, with future facilities to be constructed as part of Phase II (design underway).

#### **Little River Regional Park and Natural Area**

Created in conjunction with Durham County, this 391-acre site straddles the county line in northeastern Orange County on Guess Road, and includes 7 miles of hiking trails, a playground, and two picnic shelters. An ADA loop trail, 7 miles of mountain bike trails, refurbished farm buildings, and planned horse trails. The park also protects a natural heritage corridor along the Little River.

#### **Northern Park**

Co-located with the Northern Human Services Center on NC 86 seven miles north of Hillsborough, Northern Park currently features a lighted baseball/softball field along with a gymnasium, playgrounds, meeting rooms, and art and pottery rooms in the Center. A master plan has been approved for the remainder of the park (see below).

#### **Open Space Acquisitions**

The County has acquired 502 acres of land for open space purposes, including the protection of natural areas and nature preserves and future trails, such as New Hope Preserve, Seven-Mile Creek Preserve and McGowan Creek Preserve.

#### **Skills Development Center Pocket Park**

Located at 503 West Franklin Street in Chapel Hill.

#### Smith Playing Fields

Joint project with Carrboro, CHCCS and UNC – see listed under Carrboro above.

#### Southern Human Services Center

Nature trails at this site on Homestead Road in Chapel Hill wind around the Center and adjoining ridge.

### **Proposed Future Facilities**

#### Adams Tract

In conjunction with Carrboro - see listed under Carrboro above.

#### Bolin Creek Trail, Phase III

In conjunction with the Town of Chapel Hill – listed under Chapel Hill projects.

#### Fairview Park, Phase II

The Master Plan design is currently underway, in conjunction with the Town of Hillsborough, for the park and public campus (Public Works facilities for County and Town, other structures).

#### Homestead Park Aquatic Center

In conjunction with the Town of Chapel Hill – listed under Chapel Hill projects above.

#### New Hope Park at Blackwood Farm

152-acres, located at New Hope Church Road and NC 86. Master plan design to begin in 2006

#### New Hope Preserve

31 acres to date. A preserve along New Hope Creek that will feature a trail connecting to Durham County trails, along with other low impact recreation uses, is envisioned for this area. To be created in conjunction with Durham County and City, Town of Chapel Hill and TLC.

#### Northern Park

The 48-acre site that currently houses the Northern Human Services Center and existing facilities listed above will have two additional baseball/softball fields and one multi-purpose field, along with a picnic shelter/restrooms, basketball and volleyball courts, horseshoes, a walking track and nature trails. Construction may begin in 2007. Other facilities would be built in a future phase.

#### RiverPark

This six-acre open area between the Orange County Courthouse and the Eno River in downtown Hillsborough will include trails, benches and picnic tables, a performance stage, and public market (farmer's market). It is adjacent to the Stillhouse Creek Stream Restoration Project currently underway, which will feature trail connections and environmental education signage.

#### Twin Creeks District Park (and Educational Campus)

This 96-acre park along Old 86 north of Carrboro will be co-located with a 97-acre schools campus. The first phase of the park will include a picnic shelter, meadow and nature trail, and two full-size soccer fields. The full park will eventually feature four full-size soccer fields, two baseball/softball fields, tennis courts, basketball courts, a street hockey court, hiking trails, two playgrounds and a water playground, fishing, three picnic shelters, concession area, croquet and senior activities area, and use of the old farmstead buildings for activities as yet undetermined.

#### West Ten Soccer Center

Co-located with the new Gravelly Hill Middle School in western Orange County, this soccer complex will feature five full size soccer fields (including one championship field) and a practice field, along with concession area.

#### *Pending Master Plans*

#### Millhouse Road Park

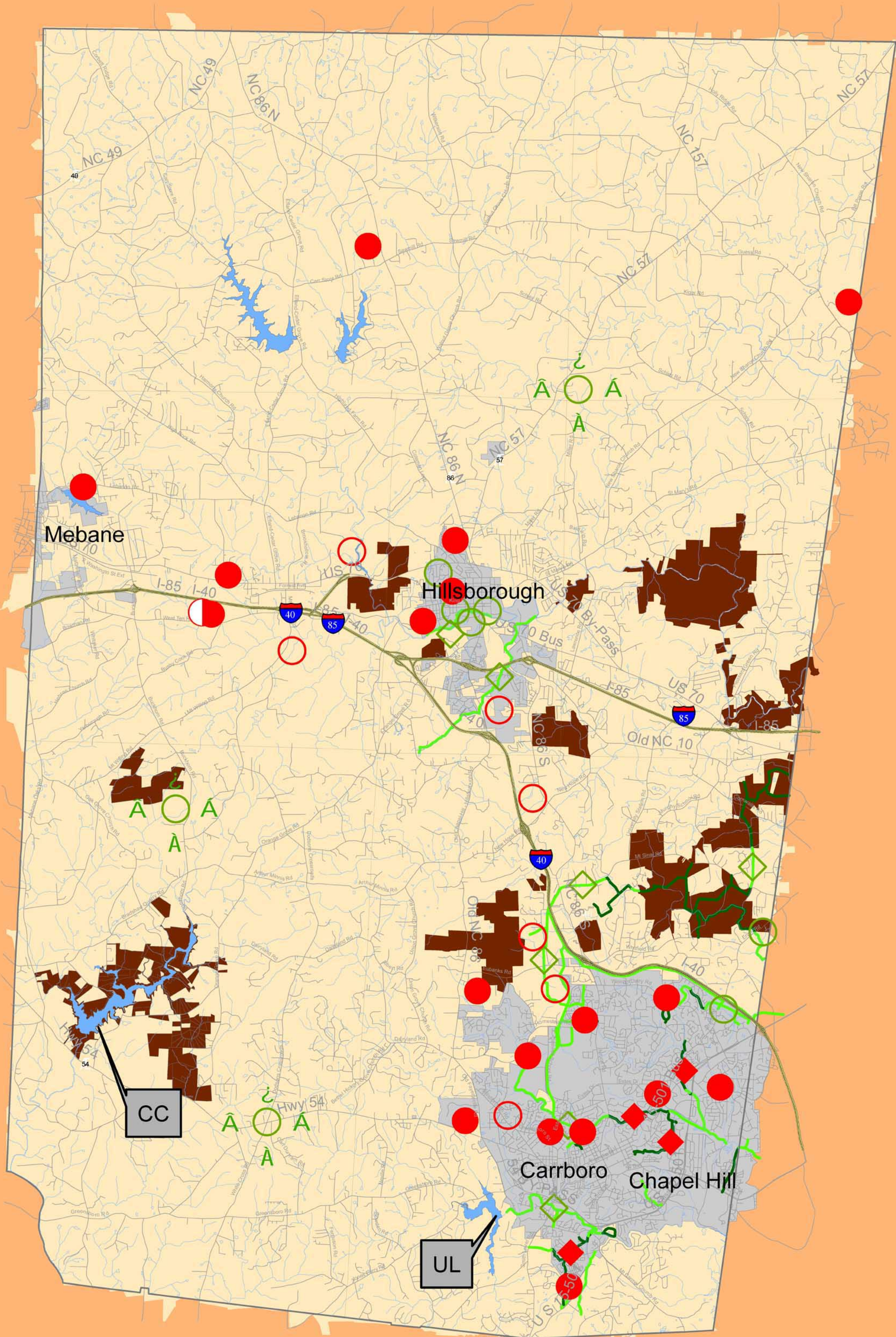
69-acres adjoining Duke Forest on Millhouse Road north of Chapel Hill. Master plan design TBA.

#### Upper Eno Preserve Public Access Areas

A future nature preserve (352 acres acquired to date) located west and southwest of Hillsborough; public access areas for trails and low impact recreation are tentatively planned for two or more locations (Seven-Mile Creek, McGowan Creek).

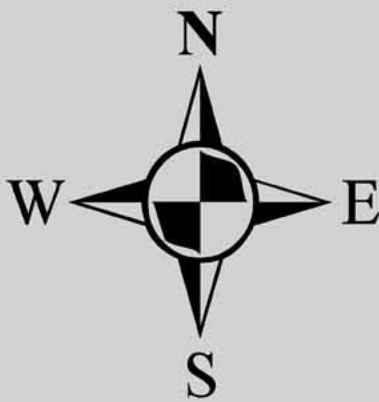


# Composite Countywide Plan for Parks & Trails/ Protected Lands within Orange County



## Legend

- Existing Trails
- Proposed Trails
- Proposed Parks
- Planned Parks
- Existing Parks



1 0.5 0 1 2 Miles

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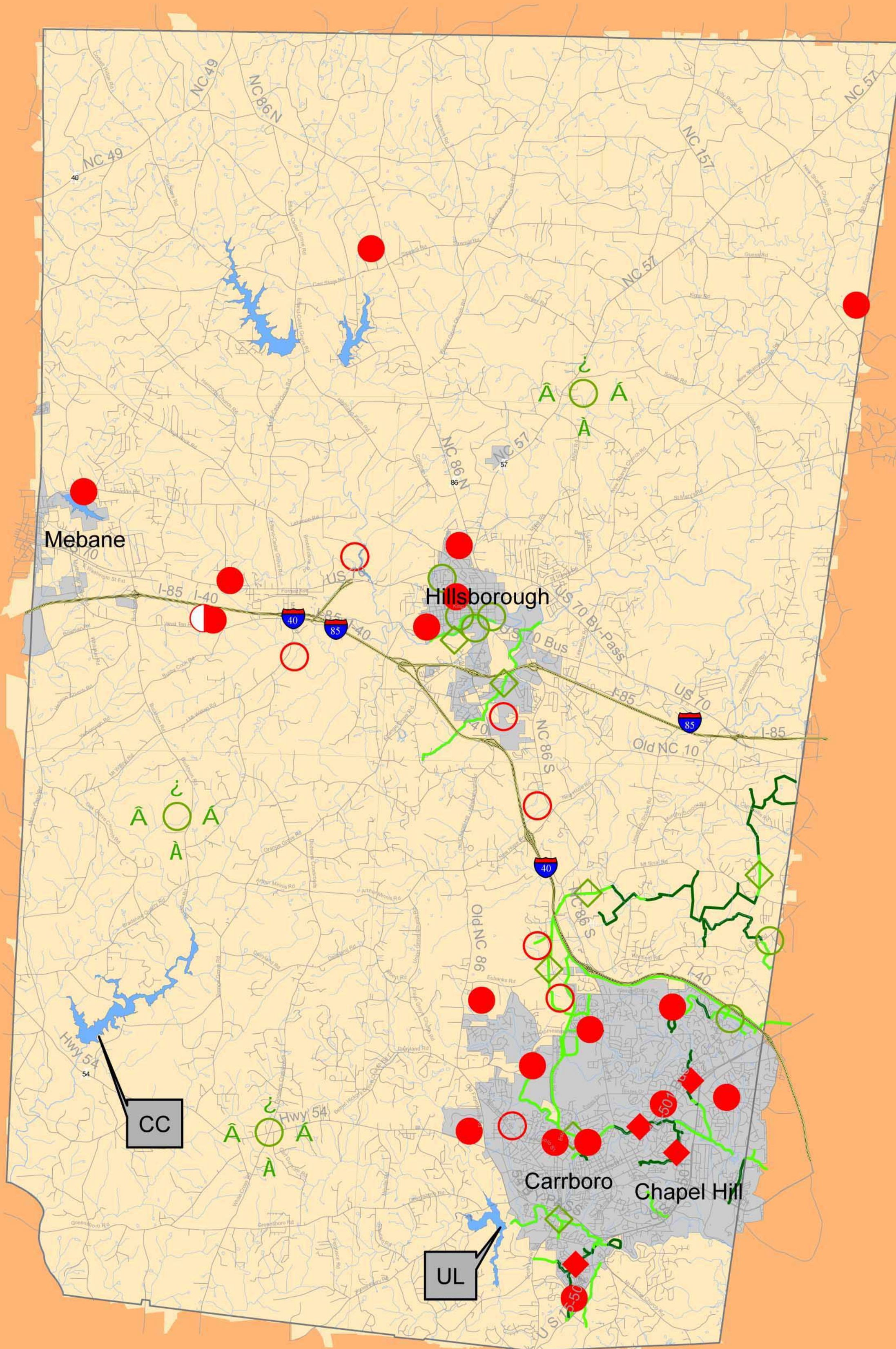
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Orange County, NC  
Environmental and Resource  
Conservation Department  
306-A Revere Road  
Hillsborough, NC 27278  
PH (919) 245-2590  
Adopted February 22, 2006  
March 2, 2006\BYoung



# Composite Countywide Plan for Parks and Trails

## Existing & Proposed, February 2006



### Legend

- ◆ Existing Trails
- ◇ Proposed Trails
- Proposed Parks
- Planned Parks
- Existing Parks



1 0.5 0 1 2 Miles

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## **VIII. Conclusion**

- A. The purpose of this document and maps is to provide for the five jurisdictions a single source that can be used by policy makers, staffs and other interested groups to review all of the different parks and park plans at the same time.

It is recommended that the governing boards of the five jurisdictions adopt the Composite Countywide Plan for Parks and Trails as a planning reference document, to be used as needed when planning for future parks and trails.

- B. While this document presents an important snapshot of parks and trails at this point in time, new parks and trails will be built and the information in the report will require updating. A database of park facilities was created as part of the 1999 Joint Master Recreation and Parks report, and this database is updated annually by the Orange County ERCD.

It is recommended that this report should also be reviewed on a regular basis and updated every two years, to add the results of any new jurisdictional park planning and new collaborative opportunities undertaken by the respective boards. The Parks and Recreation Directors from the five jurisdictions could provide an update at the end of the calendar year (odd years, beginning in 2007) and convey this information to the County ERCD, as the keeper of the document.