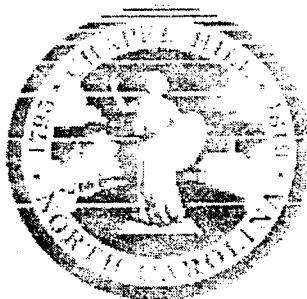


# TOWN OF CHAPEL HILL

## PARKS AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN

Adopted May 29, 2002

Prepared For:  
The Town of Chapel Hill, North Carolina



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The areas with the highest percentage of undeveloped land are located in the northwest and southern portions of the Town's planning jurisdiction. Those areas that have the fewest acres of undeveloped or underdeveloped land are in the central and eastern portions of the Town.

Because the Town is fast approaching build-out capacity, it is essential that the Town act quickly to secure any land needed for future parks.

## **Existing Facility Inventory**

Recreation facilities are presented based on their ownership and facility type. Refer to Table 2-1 "Chapel Hill Park and Recreation Facility Inventory" (for information on the number of individual amenities such as fields, courts, etc.)

The public sites listed include Town sites, school facilities, and other facilities. For the most part, all of the listed sites are open to public use with the exception of the university sites. The Town of Chapel Hill has over 400 acres of open space and parkland.

Many of the park sites have undeveloped areas that provide needed open space for Town residents. However, in order to address the facility needs identified in this report the Town would have to either acquire additional parkland or develop the open space portions of some parks.

## **Community Needs Assessment**

### **Community Input**

Community needs for new recreation and park facilities were determined by using various techniques: advisory committee review, focus group interviews, public forum input, review of acceptable park planning standards and a review of state and national trend assessments.

Focus group interviews were held from September 24-26, 2000 with seven separate groups. Public information meetings/forums were held on September 27, 2000 and January 18, 2001. The January meeting was held to solicit more public comment on recreational needs and to present the preliminary recommendations of the plan.

Written comments from Town citizens or groups were received and incorporated into the public involvement process.

Community input information presented from the process has been included in Appendix C. The information was organized into four categories—facility statements, program statements, policy statements, or funding statements. It is important to note that the statements are not listed in order of priority.

The participants identified many needs and concerns; however the following is a summary of the major themes found in the community input needs assessment:

- Build more facilities especially pools, athletic fields, indoor multi-purpose space, gymnasiums and facilities targeted for seniors.
- Improve existing sites and facilities.
- Continue the greenways program.
- Improve the variety of programming and outreach efforts (kids at risk, special populations, and transportation).
- Improve promotion and awareness of programs.
- Make access to registration more user friendly (more than one location, web access etc.)

**Table 3-4  
Chapel Hill  
Public Recreation Facilities Needs Analysis**

FACILITY TYPE	YEAR AND POPULATION					
	Population	2000	2005	2011	Existing	2011 Need
	48,715	52,480	56,336			
<b>Fields</b>						
Adult Baseball		2	3	3	2 <sup>1</sup>	1
Baseball/Softball		12	13	14	11 <sup>1</sup>	3
Athletic/Soccer		16	17	19	12 <sup>2</sup>	7
<b>Courts</b>						
Basketball		10	10	11	23 (10/13)	0
Tennis		24	26	28	33 <sup>1</sup>	0
Volleyball		10	10	11	2	9
Racquetball		5	5	6	-	6
Shuffleboard		10	10	11	-	11
Horseshoe		24	26	28	-	28
<b>Outdoor Areas</b>						
Picnic Shelters		19	21	23	8	15
Playground Areas		32	35	38	20 <sup>1</sup>	18
Trails (miles)						
-Hiking/Nature/Fitness/Jogging		15	16	17	7	10
Tracks		2	3	3	3 <sup>1</sup>	0
Archery/Shooting Area		1	1	1	-	1
Amphitheater/Outdoor Stage		2	3	3	1	2
<b>Specialized</b>						
Rec./Community Center w/gym		2	2	2	2	0
Rec. Neighborhood Center w/o gym		5	5	6	-	6
Swimming Pool (25m/25yd)		5	5	6	2/1	2
Swimming Pool (50m)		1	1	1	-	-
Golf Course		2	2	2	2 <sup>3</sup>	0
Bicycling route		24	26	28	25+ <sup>4</sup>	3

<sup>1</sup> Includes school facilities (outdoor/indoor)  
<sup>2</sup> Includes schools sites and Rainbow soccer fields  
<sup>3</sup> Privately owned open to the public  
<sup>4</sup> Bicycle routes include signed routes along roadways

**These standards are for the entire community some additional facilities may be necessary to serve neighborhoods or geographical areas of the town.**

Existing neighborhood park sites will require improvements and renovations to accommodate and enhance future use. The most apparent need at the existing parks is to expand and improve play fields, restrooms, picnic facilities and play equipment areas. Regardless of the suggested improvement, site plans should be prepared for any major park change or renovation and the public should be involved with the development process.

**Mini-Parks**

Mini parks vary in character from urban to natural. Standards from the needs assessment identify the need for approximately 9-10 acres of mini-park land (±10 sites) by the year 2011. A variety of lands or facilities typically contain mini-parks. The Master Plan has not identified individual sites for these parks, but recommends using existing natural areas and open space within developed areas. Another method of acquiring sites is to use abandoned lots or condemned sites, as they become available. Mini-parks should be approximately one to four acres in size. A menu of recreation facilities that may be found in a mini-park includes play equipment, a court game, picnic facilities, and sitting areas. As a general rule, the park should be designed to meet the needs of a specific user group or activity. The most apparent need in Chapel Hill appears to be additional play equipment areas and picnic facilities (tables, benches etc.)

**Special Use Parks and Facilities**

**Recreation Centers and Gymnasiums**

Recreation centers are multi-purpose facilities serving a variety of needs such as sports programs, cultural and art programs, senior activities, day camps, and special events. Chapel Hill currently has recreation buildings at Hargraves Park and Community Center Park. The Town also leases a gymnasium and arts facility at Lincoln Center from the school system. The existing facilities are very limited in their ability to accommodate simultaneous programs or activities. They also limit the number of programs the Town can offer. Therefore, it is recommended that larger recreation centers be developed to accommodate more programs and activities and allow the Department to schedule simultaneous activities at an individual site. Additionally, the existing facilities should be renovated to improve their appearance and usefulness.

All new building improvements should incorporate design elements that provide an appealing environment for the user. Spaces should be open and well lighted to provide a positive image for the Department and the community.

This report recommends that the Town develop two new community centers, at least one of which should be a large multi-purpose recreation center.

**Community Center (Estes Drive):** The center should be renovated to provide for improved use. Many of the improvements are necessary to maintain existing operations. In addition, minor expansion to common use areas such as meeting rooms, changing areas, storage areas, and lobby space would improve the facilities ability to accommodate more programs (see Chapter Four, Recommended Improvements and Renovations to Existing Facilities).

**Hargraves Center/AD Clarke Pool:** These existing facilities should be renovated to provide for improved use. Many of the improvements to the Hargraves Center building are necessary to maintain existing operations. In addition, minor expansion to common use areas such as meeting rooms, changing areas, storage areas, and lobby space would

improve the ability of each facility to accommodate more programs (see Recommended Improvements and Renovations to Existing Facilities within this chapter).

**Homestead Park Recreation Center/Aquatics Facility:** Develop a 40,000 – 50,000 SF multipurpose facility at Homestead Park that includes gymnasium space, meeting/instruction rooms, childcare facilities, changing areas, reception space, a multi-tank aquatics facility, and possibly department offices. The aquatic facility should be able to accommodate recreational/leisure swimmers, instructional programs, therapeutic programs and competitive swimming. The center should be developed in phases with the first phase providing for the aquatic needs.

**Lincoln Center (gymnasium and arts center):** The Town's lease with the school system for this facility expires in 2007. The Town should renegotiate this lease to continue using the gymnasium and arts center. If the lease cannot be renewed the Town must find other locations for providing an arts facility and gymnasium.

**Southern Community Park Recreation Center:** Build a 25,000-30,000 SF multipurpose facility at Southern Community Park that includes gymnasium space, staff offices, meeting rooms, instruction rooms, art facilities, childcare facilities, changing facilities and reception space. The center could also accommodate an adjacent outdoor leisure pool.

### **Greenways/Bikeway**

The Town of Chapel Hill has an approved Greenways Master Plan that provides direction for future improvements and operational policies. The plan identifies greenway corridors throughout the Town to create a network of trails that would total approximately 28-miles in length. Existing recreational trails (paved and unpaved) account for approximately six-miles of greenway.

This Master Plan recommends that:

- The Town continue to aggressively pursue the recommendations of the 1998, *Chapel Hill Greenways Comprehensive Master Plan*.
- A minimum of 6-7 miles of new trail should be developed by 2011.
- During the planning period an emphasis should be placed on development of paths and trails already identified in the *Chapel Hill Greenways Comprehensive Master Plan* that would connect with future greenway trails proposed by other providers in the area such as UNC, Carrboro, Orange County or Durham.
- The Town should continue to seek funding from NCDOT administered sources such as TEA-21, NC-Trail Fund, Bikeway Funds, and Enhancement Project Funds, as well as Clean Water Fund Grant projects, and FEMA land acquisition projects.
- UNC should be approached as a partner for developing trails and a cooperative agreement (letter of understanding) should be developed to facilitate the process.
- The current Greenways Master Plan should be amended to delete the recommended eastern access to the Merritt Pasture open space.