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Durham Comprehensive Plan

Chapter 10 Parks and Recreation Element

Durham City-County Planning Department

The Durham Comprehensive Plan

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Parks and Recreation



*Summary of Issues
Goal 10.1, Park,
Recreation
Facilities, Trails
and Greenways*

Parks, recreation and open space are essential elements to a community’s quality of life. A well-planned program of parks, recreation programs and open space will enrich people’s lives and will help to attract new residents and businesses by positively impacting tourism, real estate values and land development patterns. The Parks and Recreation Element identifies strategies for the provision of adequate parks, greenways and recreation facilities designed to meet the needs of Durham’s diverse and growing population. A system of parks, greenways and open space also provides many environmental benefits that are essential to the health of the community.

Summary of Issues

- 1. Parks.** Durham will need to acquire additional land resources for the development of future park and recreation facilities to meet the demands and needs of an ever growing and diverse population. It is estimated that the population of Durham will increase by 70,000-100,000 in the next twenty years. That growth rate will reflect an increasing need for park and recreation facilities. The public will expect a system of parks, greenways, trails, recreation centers and programs that reflect the community desires and expectations of quality.
- 2. Funding.** Durham will need to identify funding strategies to provide the means to acquire future parkland, develop facilities and to upgrade and improve existing facilities. The City must identify additional funding sources to provide relief to traditional tax based sources and to build public support to finance the Master Plan. Development of partnerships with other local, state, federal agencies, non-profit groups and commercial providers of recreation will be crucial in identifying future funding.
- 3. Maintenance.** The City parks and recreation facilities are currently not maintained at the desired levels to promote use, safety and visitor appreciation. The City must establish minimum maintenance standards for all parks, recreation facilities, trails and greenways and open space areas. The City should develop park standards to include development, signage, and facility standards. These standards will provide a guide for determining what appropriate land areas are needed for certain facilities and what

type of parks and facilities are needed to support future populations.

4. **Safety.** Currently park users have reported that they do not feel safe in our parks and recreation facilities. The City should increase its police presence at all facilities, events and greenways to instill that sense of safety. Improved maintenance of facilities will also increase the public perception of cared for and maintained parks. Incorporation of volunteer park watch type programs can instill a sense of “ownership” that will dissuade undesirable activities.
5. **Greenways and Trails.** The City must continue its program of providing a comprehensive system of accessible, safe, and convenient greenways and trails. This greenway system must be a joint program of many departments to identify lands that serve multiple functions for transportation, connectivity, and storm-water control.

Goal 10.1, Parks, Recreational Facilities, Trails and Greenways

Provide a system of parks, recreational facilities, and greenways that meets the needs of Durham’s growing and diverse population.

Objective 10.1.1. Parks and Recreation Level of Service Standards

Establish level of service standards for the provision of parks and recreation facilities to meet expressed community desires.

Policy 10.1.1a. Parks and Recreation Level of Service Standards, City. The level of service standards indicated below in Table 10-1, Parks and Recreation Level of Service Standards, shall be established as targets that the City shall strive towards in order to provide optimum access to recreational opportunities in the Durham community. The City Parks and Recreation Department shall review the level of service standards at regular intervals to ensure that they address community desires for parks and recreation facilities.

Policy 10.1.1b. Parks and Recreation Level of Service Standards, County. The County shall continue to provide passive nature-based recreational opportunities, including trails and resource-oriented parks, on County-owned sites.

Table 10-1, Parks and Recreation Level of Service Standards		
Type of Facility	Level of Service Standard	Facility Needs By 2010
Adult baseball fields (lighted)	1 per 20,000 people	12 fields
Youth baseball/adult softball	1 per 5,000 people	46 fields
Ball fields (soccer and football)	1 per 5,000 people	46 fields
Basketball courts	1 per 5,000 people	46 courts
Tennis courts	1 per 2,000 people	115 courts
Picnic tables	1 per 125 people	1,842 tables
Picnic shelters	1 per 2,000 people	115 shelters
Playgrounds	1 per 1,000 people	230 playgrounds
Trails	0.4 mile per 1,000 people	92 miles
Recreation Centers, with gym	1 per 25,000 people	9 centers
Swimming pools	1 per 20,000 people	12 pools
Golf courses, 18-hole	1 per 50,000 people	5 courses
Open Space/Park Lands	16 acres per 1,000 people	3,680 acres
Dog Parks	1 per 50,000 people	5 parks
Skateboard Parks	1 per 100,000 people	2 parks

Note: Assumes 2010 population of 230,284 people. Provision of any of these facilities by the private sector may supplement public sector facilities.

Objective 10.1.2. Existing Park and Recreation Facilities

Upgrade existing park and recreation facilities to improve their safety, accessibility, and functionality, and provide a higher level of maintenance for all park facilities.

Policy 10.1.2a. Capital Improvements Program, Existing Park Deficiencies. In the programming of capital facilities for parks, the City Parks and Recreation Department shall give priority to existing deficiencies.

Policy 10.1.2b. Coordination of City Parks Maintenance. The City Parks and Recreation Department and the City General Services Department shall develop more effective communications and use of resources in order to improve maintenance of City parks.

Policy 10.1.2c. City Parks Maintenance Standards. The City Parks and Recreation Department shall work collaboratively with the City General Services Department to establish minimum standards for maintenance of park and recreation facilities. These standards shall ensure that Durham citizens enjoy safe, well-maintained and aesthetically pleasing facilities. They shall include minimum standards for response times for maintenance requests, an effective request procedure, maintenance inspections, and

maintenance frequencies of parks, community centers, greenway trails and special use facilities.

Policy 10.1.2d. City Adopt-a-Park and Adopt-a-Trail Programs. The City Parks and Recreation Department shall continue and expand its voluntary Adopt-a-Park and Adopt-a-Trail Programs to invite citizen participation and ownership in park and recreation facility care and maintenance. Coordination of these programs shall include both the City General Services Department and the Durham Police Department.

Policy 10.1.2e. Collaboration with Neighborhoods. City Parks and Recreation Department shall work collaboratively with neighborhoods and non-profits to identify and manage appropriate areas within parks for nature study, wildlife habitat, and observation.

Objective 10.1.3. New Park and Recreation Facilities

Ensure comprehensive park and recreational services and leisure opportunities for all of Durham's citizens by implementing parks and recreation and greenways facilities plans and by providing adequate funding to ensure comprehensive recreational and leisure opportunities for all of Durham's citizens.

Policy 10.1.3a. New Park Facility Priorities. The City Parks and Recreation Department shall annually report on their efforts to identify locations for new and expanded parks, greenways, and community centers in relation to population concentrations and existing facilities, both public and private.

Policy 10.1.3b. Co-Location for New Park Facilities. In the programming of capital facilities for new park facilities, the City Parks and Recreation Department shall fully explore, and wherever possible, utilize opportunities for co-location of parks facilities with other public uses, especially schools.

Policy 10.1.3c. Co-Location for New Park Facilities in Relation to Private Development. The City Parks and Recreation Department shall actively look for co-location opportunities with private developments, such as large shopping centers, offices or mixed use projects, where the City may acquire the advantages of shared parking or unique public spaces for all citizens.

Policy 10.1.3d. Parks and Recreation Funding. The City Parks and Recreation Department and the County Engineering Department shall identify all available funding sources to provide for adequate facilities, operations and recreational opportunities to supplement traditional funding sources. The City Parks and Recreation Department and County Engineering Department shall seek available grant funding from local, State and Federal agencies and from non-profit foundations, and shall investigate partnerships with other departments and agencies to identify funding sources. The City Parks and Recreation Department shall continue to support the newly chartered Durham Parks Foundation to assist the

City in several types of fundraising activities including individual gifts to endowments for grant funding.

Policy 10.1.3e. Urban Parks. In recognition of the importance of urban parks and public open spaces in the Downtown, Compact Neighborhood, and Urban Tiers, the City Parks and Recreation Department shall look for opportunities to provide these amenities in a public setting, rather than relying on privately provided space in the areas, in order to protect their urban character.

Policy 10.1.3f. Trails and Greenways. The City Parks and Recreation Department, in conjunction with the City General Services Department, shall continue its development of the trails and greenways system to provide for a comprehensive system of greenway corridors throughout Durham in order to provide passive recreation, transportation, connectivity, and protection of linear stream-based corridors, and associated wildlife habitat. The trails and greenways system shall link residential areas, schools, parks, institutions, shopping centers, and other greenway corridors.

Policy 10.1.3g. Budgeting Parks Maintenance Costs. The City Budget and Management Services Department shall, upon approval of parks and recreation capital projects, automatically add the appropriate maintenance costs into the General Services Department operations budget as requested by the Department and approved by City Council beginning in the year the project is expected to begin operation.

Policy 10.1.3h. Park Improvement Districts. The City Budget and Management Services and Parks and Recreation Departments shall research the possible establishment of Park Improvement Districts as voluntary tax assessment districts providing a dedicated revenue stream to fund improvements in individual parks. The Park Improvement Districts shall be voluntary and neighborhood-controlled and -managed, with City oversight of fiscal practices.

Objective 10.1.4. Parks and Recreation Long Range Planning

Ensure comprehensive park and recreational services and leisure opportunities for all of Durham's citizens by developing an ongoing planning process that includes updates of the park and recreation plans and public participation.

Policy 10.1.4a. Parks and Recreation Master Plan. In order to coordinate the Durham Comprehensive Plan with long range parks and recreation planning, the City and County hereby adopt and include by reference in the Durham Comprehensive Plan the "Durham Parks and Recreation Master Plan, 2003-2013" (as may be amended from time to time).

Policy 10.1.4b. Durham Trails and Greenways Master Plan. In order to coordinate the Durham Comprehensive Plan with long range trails and greenways planning, the City and County hereby

adopt and include by reference in the Durham Comprehensive Plan the “Durham Trails and Greenways Master Plan, 2001” (as may be amended from time to time). (See Policy 8.1.4a, Durham Trails and Greenways Master Plan.)

Policy 10.1.4c. Durham Trails and Greenways Master Plan Update. The City Parks and Recreation Department and the City-County Planning Department shall update the “Durham Trails and Greenways Master Plan” to reflect current conditions and to identify future needs for trails and greenways throughout the City and County, where appropriate. The Master Plan shall include level of service standards for trails and greenways and shall be updated with community input and intergovernmental coordination.

Policy 10.1.4d. New Hope Creek Corridor Open Space Master Plan. In order to coordinate the Durham Comprehensive Plan with open space planning, the City and County hereby adopt and include by reference in the Durham Comprehensive Plan the “New Hope Creek Corridor Open Space Master Plan, April 1991” (as may be amended from time to time). (See Policy 7.2.2c, New Hope Creek Corridor Open Space Plan.)

Policy 10.1.4e. Little River Corridor Open Space Plan. In order to coordinate the Durham Comprehensive Plan with open space planning, the City and County hereby adopt and include by reference in the Durham Comprehensive Plan the “Little River Corridor Open Space Master Plan, 2001” (as may be amended from time to time). (See Policy 7.2.2d, Little River Corridor Open Space Plan.)

Policy 10.1.4f. Lick Creek and Little Lick Creek Open Space Master Plan. The City-County Planning Department, in cooperation with the City Parks and Recreation Department and the County Engineering Department, beginning in 2004 shall prepare an open space plan for the Lick Creek and Little Lick Creek areas in eastern Durham. Upon completion of this open space plan, the City and County shall amend the Durham Comprehensive Plan to incorporate the open space plan.

Policy 10.1.4g. Flat River Open Space Master Plan. The City-County Planning Department, in cooperation with the County Engineering Department, shall prepare an open space plan for the Flat River basin areas in northern Durham. Upon completion of this open space plan, the City and County shall amend the Durham Comprehensive Plan to incorporate the open space plan.

Policy 10.1.4h. Parks and Open Space Plan Implementation. The City-County Planning Department and other City and County departments shall use the parks and open space plans when evaluating new development and may require that new development provide land in conformance with those plans. (See Map 10-1, Park Search Areas.)

Policy 10.1.4i. Park Dedication Requirements. Through the Unified Development Ordinance, require that new residential development within the City and County provide recreation facilities within the development that are accessible to residents and visible from the street to encourage its utilization.

Policy 10.1.4j. City Parks and Recreation Impact Fees. The City Parks and Recreation Department shall work with the City Budget and Management Services Department and the City-County Planning Department to determine if the current impact fee methodology and impact fee zones are appropriate to the current levels of service standards and population distributions.

Policy 10.1.4k. Public Participation in Parks Planning. The City and County shall provide parks and recreation planning processes that include public participation by providing the opportunity for public involvement on the long range plan updates, park facility development, and recreation and leisure services activities. The City and County shall offer the opportunity for citizens to serve on various advisory groups, including, but not limited to the Recreation Advisory Committee, the Durham Open Space and Trails Commission, the Bike and Pedestrian Advisory Commission, the Lyon Park Advisory Board, the New Hope Creek Corridor Advisory Committee, and the Durham Arts Council.

Objective 10.1.5. Partnerships and Intergovernmental Cooperation

Coordinate and communicate with all providers of parks, recreation facilities, and open space including local, State, and Federal agencies and the private sector to ensure that the needs of the community are met in the most cost efficient and beneficial manner.

Policy 10.1.5a. Parks and Durham Public Schools. The City Parks and Recreation Department and the County Engineering Department shall develop a partnership with the Durham Public Schools Board to establish a system of School Parks that assist in the provision of active facilities, cultural education and life enrichment programs. This partnership shall enable City and County agencies to make the best use of available and existing facilities and make them available for the most public use consistent with the agencies' basic mission.

Policy 10.1.5b. Parks and Recreation Interlocal Agreements. The City Parks and Recreation Department and the County Engineering Department shall investigate and expand interlocal agreements with other local, State and Federal parks and recreation providers in Durham. The Departments shall establish joint-use agreements with private and non-profit providers of recreation activities and facilities to make those more available to the public.

Policy 10.1.5c. Partnership with the Durham Convention and Visitors Bureau. The City Parks and Recreation Department shall investigate establishing a partnership with the Durham Convention

and Visitors Bureau (DCVB) to identify programs and activities where the DCVB can help support the Department's goals and mission.

Objective 10.1.6. Public Outreach and Community Education

Implement a public outreach and community education program with materials to inform citizens about the benefits of a comprehensive parks and recreation program.

Policy 10.1.6a. Parks and Recreation Marketing Plan. The City Parks and Recreation Department and the County Engineering Department shall develop a comprehensive marketing plan that provides citizens with information on parks, greenways, recreation programs and other services in Durham. This information shall be disseminated by means such as newsletters, program brochures, enhanced web site presence, and other media information.

Policy 10.1.6b. Parks and Recreation Public Outreach. The City Parks and Recreation Department shall continue to dedicate staff to serve as liaison with the local community, including the local Latino/Hispanic community, to improve involvement and participation from this growing population group.

Revision History

- a. Deleted Policy 10.1.3i, Southwest Durham County Park, which referenced County development of a park, by City Council on September 5, 2006 and by the Board of Commissioners on August 28, 2006.
- b. Policy 10.1.3g, Budgeting Parks Maintenance Costs, amended to add "as requested by the Department and approved by City Council" to the sentence about parks maintenance costs and the General Services Department budget, by City Council on September 5, 2006 and by the Board of Commissioners on August 28, 2006.



