Citizen Planning Committee Meeting #2

**WCWP Past, Present and Future**

Walnut Creek Wetland Park Master Plan
July 24, 2017
Tonight’s Meeting Agenda

- **Recap Meeting #1**
  - Vote on Charter
  - Vote on Draft Vision Statement

- **Past:** History of PEJ (Frank McKay) + Previous Plan Highlights (Amin Davis)

- **Present:** Existing Conditions + Opportunities and Constraints

- **Future:** Park Elements (Group Activity)

- **Wrap-Up + Next Steps**
Walnut Creek Wetland Park

CPC Meeting #1 Recap
Walnut Creek Wetland Park
VISIONING EXERCISE: KEY THEMES

- Encouraging engagement
- Conservation
- Access
- Destination park
- Learning opportunities
Your Consensus Choices:

1. **Endorsement** (Member fully supports it)

2. **Endorsement with minor point of contention** (Member likes it)

3. **Agreement with minor reservation** (Formal disagreement, but will not block or hold up the proposal/provision)

4. **Stand aside with major reservations** (Formal disagreement, but will not block or hold up the proposal/provision)

5. **Block** (Member will not support the proposed plan)
Measuring Consensus:

- **Consensus** = All committee members present rate the proposal as a 1, 2, or 3
- **Consensus with Major Reservations** = All committee members present rate the proposal as a 1, 2, or 3, expect at least one Committee member rates it as a 4
- **No Consensus** = Any committee member rates the proposal as a 5
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Draft Vision Statement

VISION:
The expansion of Walnut Creek Wetland Center into an equitably accessible destination park with the focus of conserving the area’s environment and biodiversity, offer learning and social engagement opportunities for all, and celebrate arts and the cultural heritage.

OBJECTIVES:
- **Encourage** social engagement, economic development, and community pride
- **Protect, conserve, and enhance** the natural environment, biodiversity, and cultural heritage
- **Provide a range of access** for residents and visitors of all ages and abilities
- **Promote understanding**, awareness, and appreciation of the unique wetland environment
- **Support** interdisciplinary fun and academic learning opportunities through training and skills development
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Walnut Creek Wetland Park

Our Past: History of PEJ + Previous Plan Highlights
Origins of PEJ

- Formed in 1996 as Episcopalians for Environmental Justice (EE) Committee
- Committee established “Walnut Creek 2000” project
- Effort grew, became Partners for Environmental Justice (PEJ) as additional members joined
PEJ Vision and Focus

- **Restore wetland** to its former natural state prior to damage and neglect
- **Establish wetland park**
- Incorporate the wetland into the city’s **greenway system**
- Improve the quality of surrounding neighborhoods -- **address issues of flooding and trash dumping**
Partners for Environmental Justice (PEJ)

Vision: Walnut Creek Wetland Park...a “Destination Park”
Markers of Progress:

- 39 Big Sweep wetland clean-ups organized over 19 years
- 105,000 pounds of trash removed since 2006
Markers of Progress:

- Bond referendums
  - 2003 -- $2,060,000 for WCWC
  - 2014 -- $1,000,000 for WCWP
- Wetland Center opened in 2009
- Center’s programming continues to grow
- WCWP planning process
Continuing Concerns:

- Trash dumping and runoff from downtown Raleigh and Cary watersheds
- Invasive species
- Vision for local economic growth slow to progress
Missed Opportunity

• In 2005, the City of Raleigh declined to partner with National Audubon on the Walnut Creek Wetland Center project

• Planning the WCWP with strong vision and commitment important
Boston Nature Center

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Walnut Creek 2000

Walnut Creek Wetland Park Master Plan
Citizen Planning Committee (CPC) Meeting #2
July 24, 2017

Amin Davis, Partners for Environmental Justice
Walnut Creek 2000

Overview

- **Who:** Sponsored By Episcopalians for Environmental Justice > PEJ in 1997
- **What:** Project For Environmental Justice
- **Where:** Rochester Heights, St. Ambrose Episcopal Church, Fuller & Carnage Elementary Schools, Women's Correctional Center
- **Why:** Address Environmental Injustices in Rochester Heights Community
  - Trash Dumping
  - Flooding
  - Lacked Voice at City Council
Walnut Creek 2000

Goals

1. Promote environmental conservation, community beautification & civic pride for residents.

2. To increase community awareness of & involvement in environmental issues which negatively impact community.

3. Promote appreciation & love of the environment as God's Creation to be shared equitably with all living creatures.
Walnut Creek 2000

Location
Wetland Education Park

- 1998: PEJ Commissioned Dr. Robin Moore (NCSU NLI) & Four Grad Students To Develop Conceptual Park Plan

- Wetland Educational Park located along natural area between Garner Road and State Street north of Walnut Creek

- NLI: “Carefully design natural environments to maintain balance necessary for well being & healthy development of children.”

Source:
https://projects.ncsu.edu/project/ciwetlands/wc/presentation.htm
Walnut Creek 2000

Schematic Master Plan

- 30 Page comprehensive document laying out PEJ/Community’s Vision for Park Property (December 2002)

- **Schematic Plan Map** focal point of Plan

- **General Elements**: Center Building, Access Points, Outdoor Learning Centers, Trails

- **Specific Elements**: Amphitheatre, Areas (Nature Crafts, Daycamp, Native American Activity, Wetland Study Station)
Current Vision

- **Unique Destination Park**: focused on how wetlands work, Walnut Creek's natural and cultural history, conservation & protection.

- **Educational Programming** For All Ages (0-100+): natural materials, ‘loose play’ areas, NO active recreation (ballfields, ATV’s etc.)

- **Multiple Access Points** to the Creek & wetlands: Ross Andrews Trail, boardwalk & bridges, tree canopy observation platforms. Connect neighborhoods on both sides of Creek.
Current Vision (cont)

- Serve surrounding neighborhoods with expanded community gardens, cultural, activities, and be a community gathering place.

- Incorporate arts, education, and economic development in plans and programs. Example: use Park to train & employ developmentally-disabled adults in supportive work.

- Lack of consensus on reach, breadth & audience of Park (local to worldwide?)
Dismal Swamp State Park

Provides access from Park’s Visitor Center to swamp forest wetland

Boardwalk designed & constructed by Park staff
Walnut Creek 2000

Outdoor Recreation Possibilities: Wetland Boardwalk

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Walnut Creek 2000

Outdoor Recreation Possibilities: Cashie River Treehouse Village

- Town of Windsor, NC

- (2) 16x20' Treehouses w/ ‘Treezebo’ observation deck, (1) 225' Riverwalk, (2) Fishing Piers, (1) ADA boat Launch & 100lf access walkways.

- Phase I featured on Season 2 of DIY Network’s The Treehouse Guys

Source: https://www.wildcenter.org/
Walnut Creek 2000

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Outdoor Recreation Possibilities: Outdoor Classroom

- Merchants Millpond State Park
- Outdoor classroom near Park’s Visitor Center
- Overlooks historic Millpond
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Wild Center in Adirondacks (Tupper Lake, NY)

30-Foot High Elevated Platform

“Designed to transform the way we see into the natural world by offering up the perspective of the rest of nature”

Source: https://www.wildcenter.org/
Walnut Creek 2000

Late 1990's

Mid 2000's

2009
Walnut Creek Wetland Park

Our Present:
Existing Conditions
Opportunities + Constraints
Walnut Creek Wetland Park

Soils

Large area of wetland soils
Walnut Creek Wetland Park

100-Yr Floodplain

Site is almost entirely in
Walnut Creek Wetland Park

Jurisdictional Wetlands and Streams

22.9 ac wetlands
2.9 ac streams
Walnut Creek Wetland Park

Beavers!
Walnut Creek Wetland Park

Wetlands!
Flora and Fauna

Refuge in an urbanized area for:

- Bottomland Hardwood Forest-green ash, red maple dominated
- Emergent Shrub/Scrub Community- Willow, herbaceous emergent wetland plants
- Wildlife-geese, ducks, hawks, migratory songbirds, red-winged blackbirds
- Deer, raccoons, opossums, squirrels, rabbits, coyotes
- Amphibians and reptiles-turtles, frogs, snakes
Walnut Creek Wetland Park

Invasive species
OPPORTUNITIES

AND

CONSTRAINTS
Walnut Creek Wetland Park

Our Future: Defining Park Elements
Walnut Creek Wetland Park

CPC Schedule + Duration

• **Meeting #1:** June 26, 2017
• **Meeting #2:** July 24, 2017
• **Meeting #3:** August 28, 2017
• **Meeting #4:** September 18, 2017
• **Meeting #5:** October 16, 2017