

## Eastfield Regional Park Master Plan Public Meeting Summaries

Mecklenburg County Parks and Recreation hosted two public workshops on Thursday, August 19<sup>th</sup> 2021, at noon and 6:00 pm. The presentation content was the same and is captured in the 12:00 pm summary. The questions posed and answered during each session follow. View the entire presentation at <https://publicinput.com/Eastfield>.

**Presenters/ Team members:** Bert Lynn, Brian Bennett, Katie Lloyd, Darneka Waters (Meck County Park and Recreation); Adeline Lerner, Emily McCoy, Tedd Duncan, Urey Zhuang, Jackie Turner, Dean McKenzie (Design Workshop consulting team)

12:00pm, August 19, 2021

Approximately 60 attendees

### Introduction and Background

- Bert Lynn, Park Planning Director, welcomed everyone and introduced the project team
- Adeline explained the Zoom rules and how anyone can access previous materials after the meeting. Adeline then recapped the programming exercise from the June 10<sup>th</sup> session and shared the top choices which included: adventure course, nature trails, nature play, and bike facilities
- Jackie provided a brief summary of the community engagement, “what we heard” over the last two months from 399 online survey participants, three focus groups, and 90+ casual engagements at popup events
- Based on input, the team had identified several user types ranging from Explorers and adventurers, seniors, and more
- Adeline described the site context or existing conditions that influenced the design of the park, some of which are
  - Forest cover
  - Ephemeral streams
  - Greatest biodiversity and most dramatic terrain in northeast corner
  - Remnants of an agricultural homestead
- These factors listed above and others resulted in a suitability or buildable area map which helped locate some recreational elements and structures which rely on stable soils

### Two Design Concepts

The design concepts developed for the site reflected public input, site characteristics, history, aesthetics and the environment. They are further explained in the section below.

1. **Concept A:** Nature-based and immersive experience; low impact, low activation and less vehicular access
2. **Concept B:** Action, Fitness; medium impact, medium high activation with more vehicular access

#### Concept A – Meck Wander

- Fewer site impacts and amenities, preserves 100’ wide tree buffer on perimeter
- Enhances biodiversity and preservation of the existing natural resources

- Incorporates recommendations from Huntersville Parks and Recreation Plans
- Community hub is tucked into the woods near the old homestead
- Universally designed trails with 80% having “easy” rating
- The architecture for the structures at the hub (larger event spaces) and nodes (smaller activity spaces, trail head, nature blind) complements the overall use of the park. The “tree house” structures are immersed in nature which blurs the lines between inside and outside
- Nature play

#### Concept B: Meck Trek

- Decentralized parking, more structures and more active amenities
- Also preserve up to 100’ buffer
- Features (hub, dog park, fitness loops) which are located closer to Eastfield Road for a “front porch” feel
- Architecture provides for more learning spaces in the hub that is accessible and welcoming. The nodes are still integrated into trail systems
- Cross-country bike circuit in northwestern portion of the site where there is less sensitive natural area

Adeline summarized the presentation and asked three questions in an interactive poll.

**Question 1:** Which concept to you prefer?

**Most preferred:** Concept B. Overall a fairly even tally of 30, 36, 32 percent for Concepts A, B, and C (hybrid of A and B), respectively

**Question 2:** Architectural preferences

**Most preferred:** Community tree house scheme

**Question 3:** Which are the two most important elements for the first phase of the park?

**Most preferred:** the canopy walk and nature trails. Least preferred was play area

#### **Responses to questions from the public**

- Traffic impacts on Eastfield Road? – Staff will coordinate with NCDOT, Town of Huntersville, City of Charlotte, and all other applicable jurisdictions. Eastfield is a state road. An analysis will consider the new development occurring in the area.
- Safety features at the park? – General signage on site will provide warning signs about activities allowed and encourages users to hike in groups. Wayfinding signage enables users to identify where they are, and staff works with first responders to access specific locations. Operations staff will come daily for maintenance and park rangers will patrol along with off duty police officers.
- Bike lane on Eastfield? – project team will study this and coordinate with Town of Huntersville, City of Charlotte, and NCDOT.
- How many miles of bike trails are there?
  - Meck Wander - 1.15 miles for pump track and 2-2 ½ miles for family/ multi-use trail

- Meck Trek - Pump track likely will have constructed features, multi-use trail, plus a 1.2-mile cross-country trail
- LEED certified buildings? – the County no longer pursues LEED certification but follows the principles and protocols to achieve energy efficient structures as well as efficient, functional, and diverse landscapes.
- Has funding been established for long-term structural and trail maintenance? – the County has funding allocated for the long-term maintenance and operation of all of its facilities. In addition, we will be looking to partner with organizations that can both help with design and be instrumental in construction and maintenance, particularly for bike facilities.
- Disc golf? – the activity was discussed early in the project but is not as desirable a use at this park based on public input. Also, there are six-disc golf courses within six miles of the site.
- Will there be Parks staff on site? - Regular staffing has not been decided but will be based on the programs implemented in the first phase. If not staff in Phase I, there is the possibility for remote events conducted by existing staff.
- What does each concept cost? - Cost differences between the concepts are not yet known. The designers will prepare an estimate of probable construction costs as part of the master plan. \$5 million is available for Phase 1, including preparation of the master plan and design drawings.
- Timing of construction? - Master plan approval in December will be followed by construction documents. A 12 to 18-month construction period is anticipated, so an opening may be 3 years.

The poll questions are on the site until September 10. Check out the views from the on-site wildlife cameras.

6:00 pm August 19, 2021

Approximately 44 attendees

The presentation was the same as described for the noon workshop. The results of the poll and the questions and answers from the second workshop are below.

**Question 1:** Which concept to you prefer?

**Most preferred:** Nearly a 3-way tie with Meck Trek with 1 vote more than the others

**Question 2:** Architectural preferences

**Most preferred:** Community tree house scheme. Same preference as the 12:00 pm workshop

**Question 3:** Which are the two most important elements for the first phase of the park?

**Most preferred:** Nature trails, canopy walk. These were the same responses as the first session but the order was reversed

**Responses to questions from the public**

- Birds, rabbits and other wildlife concern? – the park design will work with the features of the site and the topography resulting in lower impacts and amenities which support wildlife and opportunity for wildlife viewing by the public

- On site security for walking alone? – the County will have the same approach as other greenways – recommend not walking alone, good wayfinding and “you are here” location markers. Park Rangers will monitor the facility and also work with local police and hired off duty officers to provide security monitoring. The majority of crime tends to be vehicle break ins
- Will bikes be allowed on both fitness and nature trails? – the design may classify uses for certain trails and provide non-multiuse surface
- Can the County leverage the utility easement to connect to other areas – Duke Energy has changed their policy and allows uses in easements; maybe for parking, dog park, etc. The design team is actively engaged in coordinating park design with Duke Energy.
- Will the park trails make connections to other area trails – yes
- Will you limit traffic through the Skybrook neighborhood? – the team is designing pedestrian and bicycle connections; the County does not anticipate people from outside the neighborhood coming into it to access park
- Sidewalks and bike lanes on Eastfield Road? – Will coordinate with NCDOT, City of Charlotte, and Town of Huntersville on traffic impacts and determine what roadway improvements may be necessary.
- How was the property purchased? Was it part of Wallace Farm? – Purchased in 2000. Team has reached out to the Wallace family to find out more about the history and its former operations.
- Will there be strike proofing for birds in the area? The architect will explore all technology available to help protect birds and other wildlife from negative impact due to buildings and other structures