

City of Greensboro Steelmanman Park Master Plan— **DRAFT**

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BACKGROUND

The City of Greensboro manages over 120 facilities, including more than 85 neighborhood parks throughout the City. Each of these neighborhood parks has its own identity, but provides generally the same level of service and amenities, regardless of size or location. These parks are intended to serve the surrounding neighborhood, within 1/2 mile, and are considered “walkable” destinations. Generally the size is 5-15 acres, but many times the park is much smaller in size. These parks should serve as neighborhood hubs while providing a variety of safe, family-oriented recreational opportunities. Often the parks also serve as locations for community-wide events, such as holiday picnics, Neighborhood Night Out, etc. Park amenities generally include a playground, basketball courts, sandboxes and open space for quiet or passive activities. Parking lots, restroom facilities and picnic shelters are typically not located within neighborhood parks, and such amenities are intended to support more intense recreation activities with larger facilities.

Steelman Park is located on Highland Avenue within the Glenwood neighborhood. The park is approximately 4 acres and features a playground, sandbox, open space and basketball court. The park is bisected by two streams and has walking trails that criss-cross the park and cross the stream at three locations. A unique feature of the park is the community garden and period brick chess tables. The facility hosts a summer playground program and supports a diverse community. The Glenwood neighborhood is one of Greensboro's earliest planned neighborhoods and was first annexed into Greensboro in 1923. The diverse community has an active neighborhood association and worked in conjunction with the City's Planning and Community Development Department to develop a Neighborhood Plan aiming to stabilize, strengthen and revitalize the community. Of the issues in the Neighborhood Plan adopted in 2008, Steelman Park may play a role in addressing concerns in four areas: Transportation, Neighborhood Fabric & Culture, Public Safety, Security & Health and Parks, Recreation & Green Space.



Through meetings, emails and phone conversations, community members indicated park usage is reduced, not due to lack of amenities, but due to safety concerns. The park is bounded by two streets and has five entrances, so serves as a cut through and loitering location, increasing illicit activities and decreasing the family-oriented atmosphere of the park. Additionally the park is a few lots away from an active curb market that brings additional safety

BACKGROUND

concerns adjacent to and into park boundaries. Although the park is officially closed at dusk, the safety concerns are both daytime and nighttime concerns.

Westcott, Small & Associates, PLLC (WSAA) was selected by the City of Greensboro to provide master planning services at Steelman Park in early 2012. On September 6, 2012, WSAA and City staff meet with members of the community at a public input session to gain insight into the needs of the community for the park. At this meeting and through emails, community members identified the following improvement needs and concerns related to the park:

- Would like better lighting in park
- Garden needs maintenance
- Need more trashcans
- Would like bathrooms
- Would like shelter and grills
- Cover graffiti on playground
- Need better police presence
- Creek is dirty and stinky
- Would like stream restoration
- Need shade at playground
- Would like emergency phones
- Trails need repair
- Portions of site are poorly drained
- Need more basketball areas and fence to keep balls out of creek
- Bridges are awkward and unattractive
- Add better play equipment (climbing wall, merry-go-round)
- Construct amphitheatre
- Add more attractive and edible plantings
- Repair or remove chess table, concrete pad and sandbox
- Need to highlight neighborhood diversity
- Provide fitness component (soccer fields, volleyball area, fitness stations, obstacle course)
- Provide access to the creek
- Need a connection to the greenway
- Provide way finding signs (to Greenway)
- Develop a spray ground

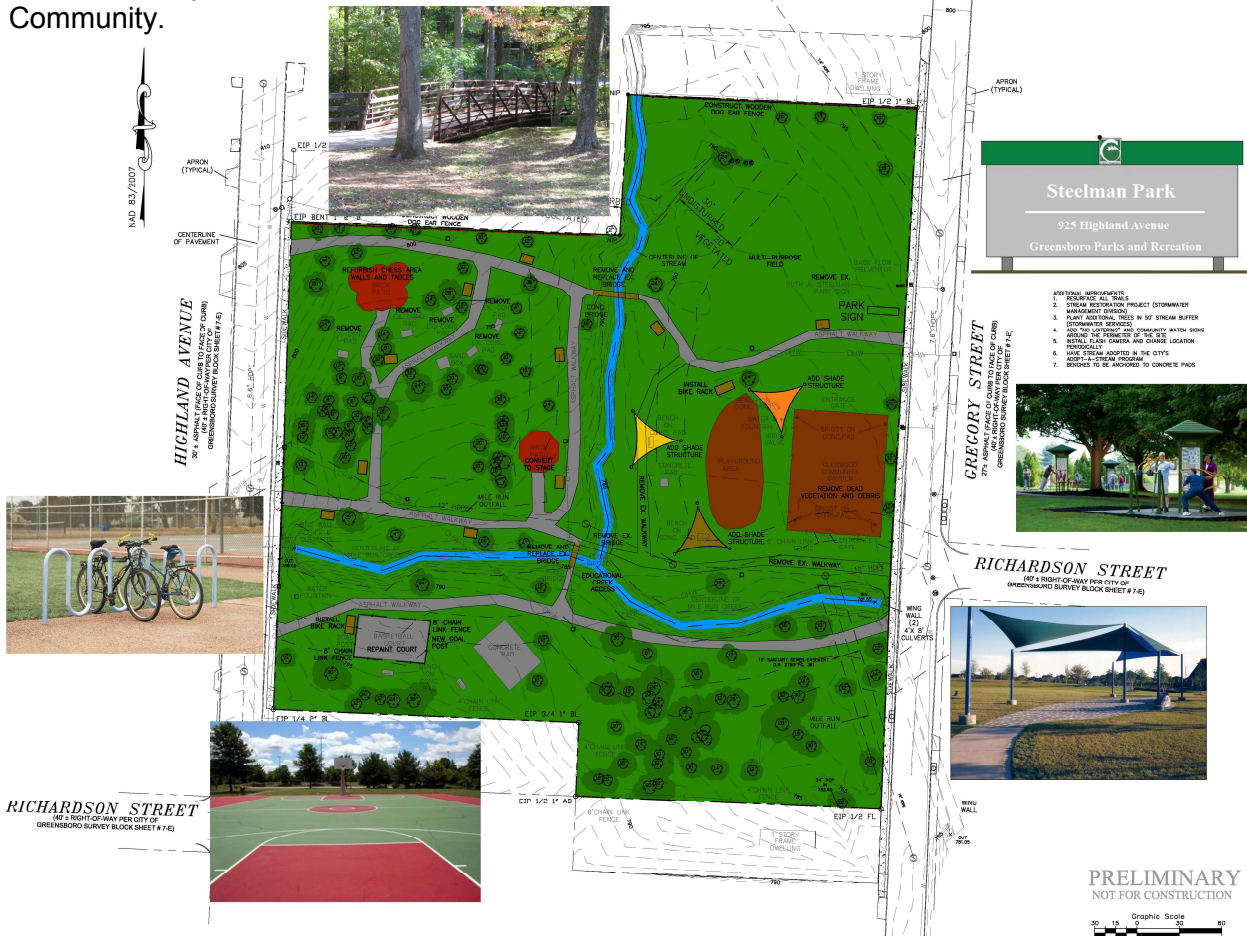
Following the public input session, WSAA met with City Staff from the Parks and Recreation, Water Resources, Transportation, Field Operations and Police Departments to determine the impact of any upcoming projects on the park and to ensure that proposed master plan elements do not conflict with the goals of other departments. Items discussed included:

- Planning and Transportation are coordinating with private developers to develop the Greenway connections and are preparing a bond request to develop linkages.
- Stormwater may participate in construction of stream restoration, buffer planting and Best Management Practices (BMP) if not required in association with development
- Police recognizes the loitering problems and supports reduction in park entrances and “no loitering” signage. Blue lights are not as effective and create a maintenance problem.
- Garden maintenance will help visibility.
- P&R replaced the play equipment in 2008 or 2009
- Reduction of basketball courts to half court is not required if neighborhood supports leaving full courts in place
- P&R policy does not support new restrooms, shelters, spray grounds, amphitheaters, water fountains or grills at neighborhood parks.
- Need better definition of park boundary and enforcement of park closure at dusk.

MASTER PLAN

Incorporating both community and staff suggestions and concerns, WSAA developed a master plan rendering for Steelman Park. The rendering was presented to the community at a second public input session on April 4, 2013. Reviews of the master plan elements were positive, with no dissenting opinions provided at the meeting. One community member provided additional feedback outside of the meeting requesting a more wholesale renovation of the park, regardless of funding, including items to set the park apart from other neighborhood parks and elements that reflect the multicultural community. At the meeting, community members did express concern with the long implementation time frame and lack of secured funding to implement plan elements. With no dissenting opinions on the master plan design provided at the community meeting, the master plan was presented and unanimously adopted by the Parks & Recreation Commission on April 10, 2013.

The adopted master plan incorporates feedback received from the neighborhood meetings and includes renovated walking trails with exercise stations, expanded basketball courts, refurbished/repared chess area, new stage, shade at playground, park signage, improvements to concrete pad, new bike racks modified drainage at multi-purpose field, proposed fencing at park boundary and landscaping along stream, replaced bridges and stream restoration. The master plan also recommends the community become involved in the "Adopt-a-Park" and "Adopt-a-Stream" programs and install "No Loitering" signs and flash cameras for added safety. Bike racks, playground equipment, signage, trashcans and fitness stations should be installed to match Parks and Recreation Department standards. The proposed stage will serve as a conduit to bring more family-oriented and multi-cultural events into the park to showcase the community and provide elements that are unique to Steelman Park and the Glenwood Community.



MASTER PLAN



STEELMAN PARK MASTER PLAN

MASTER PLAN

The current facility is generally built-out with a variety of active and passive recreation opportunities. The master plan attempts to maintain passive recreation areas and open space, while providing enhanced opportunities for active recreation and community gathering. Additionally, many elements that have fallen into disrepair will be refurbished or replaced with more desirable elements. Although the major elements of the plan should be considered long range (at least 10 years for completion), many elements can be constructed as distinct projects to allow for phased construction of the master plan. Installation of bike racks, signage, shade structures and fencing, construction of the stage and refurbishment of the chess area and basketball courts can occur at any time that funds are available. If feasible, regrading the multipurpose field to remove standing water and replacement of the bridges would occur in conjunction with the stream enhancement project, followed by demolition and resurfacing of the trails. These projects can be separated if necessary due to funding.

The most extensive project associated with the master plan is the stream enhancement project. This project would allow for stabilization of the stream banks, so the remaining trails along the stream buffer area would not be undermined in the future. The enhancement project would address some of the neighborhood concerns regarding a unsightly, dirty and smelly stream. Additionally, boulders and logs on the banks can be connected to stream bed structures to allow for access into the stream channel. These structures create natural play areas for children, expanding and enhancing the unstructured play areas within the park and allowing for additional learning opportunities. Creating better access to the stream will assist the newly formed Adopt-a-Park and Adopt-a-Stream committees in conducting regular trash pick up within the stream channel and inspecting the creek for any discharges or pollutants from upstream. New tree plantings within the stream buffer will provide natural shade for the playground and portions of the trail system.

The garden club is strong, but regular maintenance of the garden is required in order to maintain sight lines to the playground and to ensure that an atmosphere of neglect does not develop. Since there are additional community gardens within the Glenwood Community, new garden club members should be encouraged to assist in the maintenance of the garden. Garden related programming can include seed and recipe swaps, activities/plantings to showcase plants used in dishes representing the variety of ethnic backgrounds within the community and activities to draw the college students into the park (i.e. pick your own fruit, tomato giveaway).

Programming at the park should recognize the changing demographic of the area and evolve with the new and refurbished facilities. Once the chess tables are refurbished, Steelman Park will be an ideal location for a chess club to meet. The chess tables also provide an area for two people to sit and converse or to study together. Programming at this location can be led by many community groups other than Parks & Recreation and can highlight the multicultural demographic within the neighborhood and recognize the significant student population. Ideas to consider include: tutoring sessions and language sessions.

The new stage will also provide an opportunity for new elements of community gathering. This will be a place to showcase dance and musical performances as stand alone events or as a part of larger park and neighborhood events. Temporary artwork can be showcased along the newly resurfaced trails and the concrete pad can be used as secondary area to station booths or tables. The park committee should determine a theme to paint on the concrete pad, so it can be used as a play/learning area in addition to infrastructure. Ideas to consider are: four square, hop scotch, maze/labyrinth, world map or one phrase in many languages.

MASTER PLAN

Short term (1-3 years) elements of the master plan include:

- Stream enhancement
- Create natural play areas in conjunction with stream enhancement
- Activation of Adopt-a-Park and associated committee
- Activation of Adopt-a-Stream and associated committee
- Clean debris from garden
- Refurbish chess tables
- Install new park sign, wayfinding signs (greenway connections) and “no loitering” signs
- Tree plantings in stream buffer
- Incorporate new programming to utilize chess tables
- Install flash cameras

Long term (3-10+ years) elements of the master plan include:

- Regrade multipurpose field to remove standing water
- Remove trails and resurface remaining trails
- Remove and replace bridges
- Continued maintenance of garden, multipurpose fields and open space
- Installation of shade structures
- Installation of fitness stations
- Repair of basketball courts
- Installation of bike racks and benches
- Construction of stage
- Paint concrete pad
- Increased programming as park elements are revitalized

If funding is available, trails or parking improvements are suggested as items that could move from long-term to short-term construction projects. The combination of park improvements and additional programming will create more eyes on the park and users in the park, thereby creating a safer environment for unstructured activities. Increased Police presence in the area and the utilization of flash cameras should further enhance the safety of the park as the community as a whole focuses on increased safety and security.



COST ESTIMATE

Total funding required for the completion of all master plan elements is approximately \$1,000,000. In addition to possible general fund or bond funding, the City should also pursue grants and donations for specific items. Once the park has been formally adopted and a committee is active in the park, local foundations, religious institutions, boy scout troops and corporations may be solicited in order to fund smaller park projects or portions of larger projects. The Adopt-a-Park committee should develop applications for submittal for City grants such as the Neighborhood Small Projects program. Additionally, City's Stormwater Management Division should be approached to fund the stream enhancement and buffer planting projects.

A cost breakdown associated with the proposed master plan follows:

Signage	\$4,579
Fitness Stations	\$26,159
Demolish Walkways & Bridges	\$17,367
2 Prefabricated Truss Bridges	\$180,000
Resurface Trails	\$22,875
Stream Enhancement/Buffer	\$450,000
Wooden Fence	\$8,117
Stage (Uncovered)	\$9,583
Refurbish Chess Area	\$5,755
Basketball Court	\$11,478
General Clean/Grade	\$18,206
Resurface Trails	\$22,875
Sunscreens	\$14,388
Paint Concrete Slab	\$2,500

RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to begin implementing the master plan, the following steps should be taken:

- Create formal Adopt-a-Park and Adopt-a-Stream committees and establish neighborhood contacts
- Implement elements with direct safety improvements (flash cameras, no loitering signs)
- Discuss funding of stream enhancement, buffer plantings and bridge replacement Stormwater in order to maintain those elements as short-term construction items
- Encourage Adopt-a-Park committee to contact corporations and civic and religious groups for project support (painting concrete slab is a great volunteer project)
- Coordinate with GDOT for installation of wayfinding signs
- Determine level of funding available for first phase of construction
- Develop construction plans for first phase of construction
- Bid and construct Phase I improvements
- Begin grant review and preparation for additional funding
- Ensure regular meetings between Parks & Recreation Staff and Adopt-a-Park committee to align funding requests and priority projects
- Continue to review grant opportunities and capital funding requests to continue phased implementation of park elements
- Continue to discuss park safety with Police, especially as it relates to the surrounding area
- Continue to develop park programming and special events to increase park usage



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