

Summary and update from Mary Bridgers' Park Wetland Workshop Held March 14, 2007

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Thank you to everyone who attended the second community workshop held on March 14 at New Hanover High School. The second workshop provided an opportunity for the community to review two new potential designs for the wetland, and to provide feedback about how these designs meet local interests.

The project, funded by an EPA water quality improvement grant and cost sharing that is provided by the City of Wilmington, NC State University, and UNC-Wilmington, has 3 objectives: 1) reduce stormwater runoff pollution by installing Best Management Practice (BMP) throughout the watershed; 2) engage neighborhoods in outreach activities to help install BMPs; and 3) monitor the effect of these activities on Burnt Mill Creek.

The project team proposed one of the BMPs, a stormwater wetland, for an area within Mary Bridgers' Park.

Dave Mayes, City of Wilmington Stormwater Services, responded to citizens questions raised at the last workshop, regarding the intended use of Mary Bridgers' Park and any future plans. Because of the proximity to the creek, the City views this area as green space that is not intended for active recreational use. Its purpose is to provide natural functions (for example as acting as floodplain to dissipate the energy of water after large storms). The City realizes that citizens use it for activities, however, so the project team has incorporated concerns about pedestrian access into revised designs.

Jason Wright, the project engineer from the NCSU Dept. of Biological and Agricultural Engineering, presented two new draft concept plans of the proposed wetland for discussion. The wetland is intended to capture and treat stormwater runoff from a 5.5 acre area around Grace Street. It would treat runoff from a 1- 1.5 inch storm, a common storm event. The size of the wetland will need to be one quarter of an acre to treat the runoff, regardless of the shape and location that is chosen. Storms larger than this would be routed through the wetland into Burnt Mill Creek, through a new discharge outlet.

Large maps of the two designs, and a sketch created by Lara Berkely, B+O:design studio, were posted for view-

ing. The first design, called a pocket wetland, showed separate small pockets of wetland with grassed areas in between, to allow for walking around them.

The second design, a linear wetland, showed one long wetland area, with a pedestrian bridge for access across. Both designs were situated more horizontal than perpendicular to the creek (the original design presented at the first workshop was more perpendicular to the creek than horizontal).

Some trees would be planted- along the sides in order to minimize shade over the wetland area. Sunny, shallow areas provide optimal bacteria removal. This is necessary since fecal coliform bacteria is a problem pollutant for Burnt Mill Creek.

Participants discussed the following:

Space required

The pocket wetland would require more park space, but the amount of earth disturbed would be similar for both wetlands.

Water Quality

Similar benefits in reducing pollutants from stormwater runoff would be realized by both designs.

Wildlife Habitat

Both designs would add similar wildlife habitat. Participants noted that many birds already frequent the area (hawks, owls, herons), since there is a wetland across Princess Place. A diversity of vegetation in the wetland would provide for the best wildlife habitat.

Security

A participant noted that the pocket wetland would provide additional hiding places, reducing security.

Maintenance

The pocket design would require mowing in between the pockets to maintain accessibility. The pocket design would require 2 additional outlet control structures, increasing likelihood for issues. The City would maintain the wetland regardless of design.

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Recreation

No organized sports would be impacted, since there are none at this park. Passive recreation, including walking and bird-watching, may be improved.

Aesthetics

Participants agreed that the pedestrian bridge and wetland would improve the aesthetics of the park. They asked if a bench or sculpture could be provided. The community may want to see if PED ART, a local organization for public art, can provide assistance. Their contact info was found on the web after the meeting:

www.pedestrianart.com.

PED ART c/o Tabularasa

19 South 16th Street

Wilmington, NC 28401

director@tabularasa-nc.org phone: 910.251.9296

Wetland Construction & Planting Schedule:

Participants decided that the linear design is most feasible. The City of Wilmington Stormwater Services staff will construct the site, with a scheduled May 7 start date. Construction will take about a week, if weather is good and all goes smoothly. Neighbors should expect

to see earth-moving equipment on the site during this time.

A community planting event is scheduled for immediately following construction, for:

Saturday, May 12

Start time is 9:30 a.m., and will go until finished.

Participants should bring gloves and water. They can bring their own shovel if it is convenient, although many will be provided.

If rain or other events delay construction, the community planting event will be moved to Saturday, May 19.

Please contact Christy Perrin at Christy_perrin@ncsu.edu or (919) 515-4542 if you plan on joining us for planting. You are welcome to show up unannounced, but we'd like to be able to contact you in case we need to postpone to May 19.

A pedestrian bridge and educational signage will be created and installed after the wetland has been completed and planted. A pet waste station will also be located nearby.



view from end of Grace Street, looking down towards Chestnut Street

The Proposed Wetland at Mary Bridgers' Park, rendered by Lara Berkley, B+O: design studio