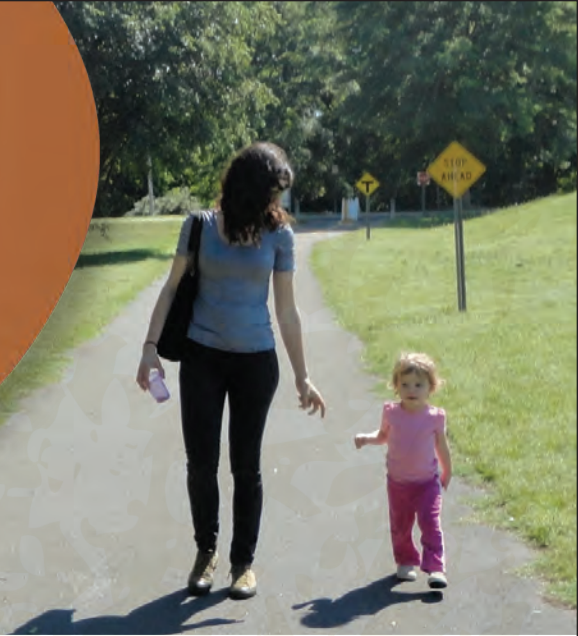


*Part 6*



# Implementation



## IMPLEMENTATION POLICIES

### MESHING OF GOALS: LAND & TRAILS

The Chapel Hill greenways program has two ambitious goals. First, the program would preserve an extensive network of open spaces. Second, the program would provide walking and bicycling trails within some of these linear open spaces.

The public perception of a greenways program is often that of a trail building effort only. In Chapel Hill, the Town Council appointed the Greenways Commission to work toward achieving the above goals which encompass the preservation of land, water, quality of life, wildlife, and the charm of Chapel Hill as a community that lives well with the natural environment.

Trail building and land acquisition are inherently interrelated. Without adequate land, trails cannot be built. However land that deserves protection of important ecosystems may not be the best land for recreational trails. Trail building is an exciting aspect of the greenways program, and is one that requires coordination with a variety of goals set forth by the Council. Further, the greenways program will find itself in perennial competition for allocation of funds needed for park land, athletic fields and other public purposes.

### REGIONAL AND LOCAL COORDINATION

The Chapel Hill greenways program has an additional goal of integrating the greenway system into those of neighboring municipalities and regional entities, as well as relevant local agencies. Several important local and regional partnerships are described below.

### Triangle Greenway Council

This private, non-profit organization is promoting the concept of a regional trail network throughout the Triangle. The system would link the various trail systems of each governmental jurisdiction in order to generate trail interconnectivity in the region. The Council secures land, builds trails, and coordinates its efforts with various greenway agencies. Chapel Hill is an integral part of this proposed trail network.

### Connections with Town Alternative Transportation Plans

As additional land in Chapel Hill is pressured by residential and commercial growth, transportation rights-of-way are expanded to accommodate road widenings and extensions, and formerly “leftover” tracts of land within subdivisions are developed, the use of sidewalks, bicycle lanes and dedicated paths as part of the overall greenway system will become increasingly important.

The role of sidewalks and bikeways as interconnecting routes within the greenway system cannot be overstated. Providing useful links of neighborhoods to parks, other neighborhoods, schools and public buildings, these connectors are fundamental to providing pedestrian and bicycle access throughout Town. The acquisition of greenway easements and construction of sidewalk and other connector paths should be closely coordinated among Town departments.

Chapel Hill produced its first Bikeway Plan in 1977 and has since developed roadside bike paths and bike lanes. The first off-road bicycle path in Chapel Hill was built parallel to Fordham Boulevard near the Rainbow Soccer fields. Phase I of the Bolin Creek Greenway, created the first multi-use, combined bicycle and pedestrian greenway in Town. Existing

bikeways have been mapped in relationship with the Town's existing and planned greenways.

In 1993, Chapel Hill, as part of the Durham-Chapel Hill-Carrboro Metropolitan Planning Organization, adopted "The Regional Bicycle Plan for Durham and Orange Counties". The plan presented options for bicycle connector routes throughout the area, including urban and rural bicycle routes. Connections from Chapel Hill to Durham, Research Triangle Park and Hillsborough were proposed utilizing a combination of roadside bicycle lanes and off-road bicycle paths.

Several major trails within the Chapel Hill greenways system are planned for pedestrian as well as off-road bicycle use. Potential connections with the planned Booker Creek Greenway as well as the continued development of the Bolin Creek Greenway create the most immediate opportunities for the Town greenway system to link with Town and regional bicycle planning initiatives.

There are several specific linkages which may potentially increase connectivity among the Town's greenways and bikeways. Future off-road pedestrian/bike paths along NC 54 could provide valuable connections between the proposed Little Creek Greenway and proposed Durham trails. (See Figure 19). Continued development of Town bikeways could present additional alternative transportation options.

The Town adopted a Bicycle and Pedestrian Action Plan in 2004 as part of the Town's Comprehensive Plan that presents a comprehensive look at non-motorized transportation in Town. The plan includes an overview of the greenway system as well as sidewalks and bicycle facilities. It is the Town's chief planning document for non-motorized vehicle transportation.

#### **Cooperation with the University of North Carolina**

The largest single landowner within the Chapel Hill planning district is the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The University controls significant landholdings along the proposed Horace Williams Trail, Bolin Creek, Booker Creek, Morgan Creek, Chapel Creek, and Meeting of the Waters Creek corridors. Because of the tremendous amount of land involved, a complete, town-wide trail system requires cooperation with the University.

The University has already directly cooperated with the Town on one trail project, allowing the Town to construct a bridge and a short boardwalk for the Battle Branch Trail within Battle Park.

Carolina North is proposed to be a mix of University academic and support facilities. This property appears to be the most significant University tract in relation to the construction of a unified and contiguous trail system. Failure to provide trails across this large and vital property would result in a severed transportation system. The University has provided a trail connection across this property for the Horace Williams Trail in its plan for Carolina North, which allows a trail of about 9 miles in length to be built in order to link almost all of Chapel Hill from the Millhouse Road/I-40 intersection to Pinehurst Drive.

Battle Park currently contains the Battle Branch Trail, a class 3 trail that has served the area for over 40 years. The trail currently requires capital renovation at a minimum. In 2011, the Town replaced one of the three old boardwalk bridge structures. The other two should be replaced as soon as possible. Discussions have also addressed the possibility of paving the trail to serve as a transportation link to the UNC campus. The Town and the University are the two landowners that share the Battle Branch Trail. A cooperative effort should be made to first determine the level of improvements that would be suitable. Once the level of desired improvements is agreed upon the two entities should then develop a joint plan to implement improvements.

The Mason Farm property is planned to remain primarily as a biological preserve. If opportunities for trail development arise the Town should work with the University to implement trail development to serve non-motorized vehicle transportation needs.

#### **Triangle Land Conservancy**

The Triangle Land Conservancy is an active land trust that has preserved thousands of acres of land throughout the central area of North Carolina. The organization's work that most closely touches the goals of the Town of Chapel Hill is located along New Hope Creek. The Triangle Land Conservancy has preserved several key tracts of land that are crucial to implementation of the New Hope Corridor Open Space Master Plan. The Town should use every opportunity to work with the Conservancy on current and future projects of mutual interest.

#### **Botanical Garden Foundation**

The Foundation acquires and manages sensitive properties, primarily along Morgan Creek and its tributaries. The Foundation also holds a conservation easement on 92 acres of Town property referred to as the Morgan Creek Preserve. The Town and Foundation maintain a cooperative relationship intended to promote the preservation of lands in

Town, but especially along Morgan Creek.

## **LAND ACQUISITION PROCEDURES AND POLICIES**

A consistent approach to the acquisition of public land and easements is important for the creation and preservation of greenway corridors and connectors and the creation of urban trails. The Town should be prepared to sustain a long-range land acquisition program until the goals of the greenway program have been met.

In its efforts to acquire land and easements for greenways, open space, and trail building, the Town must deal with land availability, high land costs, and competitive bidding with private developers. Chapel Hill has one of the most expensive real estate markets in North Carolina. Land in Chapel Hill tends to be in high demand for private development, which results in premium real estate prices. These high prices tend to remain elevated even during periods of relative recession.

The Town's ability to compete for land depends on its ability to raise or maintain the cash reserves necessary to purchase key parcels of land as they come on the real estate market. If cash reserves earmarked for the purchase of land are low, the Town may not have the financial means to purchase land at the critical moment that it is available for sale. In such a case, the land may be lost to private development.

Substantial tracts of land and easements are needed to complete the greenways system. While outright purchase is the only practical method for the acquisition of some lands, many other acquisition options exist. It is fortunate that the very types of lands that are important for greenways and trail development are often considered marginal or unusable for private development. Lands needed for the Town's greenways system may be located in the Resource Conservation District (RCD), or on steep slopes. Such lands may on occasion constitute a tax burden to some landowners. The Town may take advantage of this situation by the use of alternate land acquisition methods that could benefit the Town and the private landowner. Several important acquisition methods are listed in Appendix B: Financing the Greenways Program. Additional federal, state, local, and private sources are also provided in this appendix.

## **IMPLEMENTATION OBJECTIVES**

This report continues to recommend the acquisition of 38 total miles of linear open space. The recreational

uses proposed for the greenway corridors identified in this report are bicycle and pedestrian activity. Over 28 miles of the Town's greenway corridors are suitable for development of paved or unpaved trails.

A variety of trail types are proposed to suit specific recreational or transportive priorities and specific site conditions. Trails may range from natural surface foot paths and boardwalks- utilized to negotiate sensitive or difficult site conditions- to paved pedestrian and bicycle trails offering maximum recreational and transportive uses.

## **PROJECTS TO BE COMPLETED WITHIN 5 YEARS**

- **Battle Branch Trail** - Replace all bridges and boardwalks on Town property installed prior to 2011. See page 36.
- **Bolin Creek Trail, Phase III** - Extend the trail from Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. to Umstead Park. See page 35.
- **Bolin Creek Trail** - Build a flight of stairs from the trail to the north side of Franklin Street.
- **Bolin Creek Trail** - Renovate the existing trail from Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. to Dickerson Court. See page 35.
- **Bolin Creek Trail, Phase IV** - Secure funding and begin planning and permitting this phase for a trail extension from Umstead Park to Carolina North. See page 34.
- **Campus to Campus Bicycle Route** - Select and build a first phase. See page 33.
- **Fan Branch Trail, Phase III (or Morgan Creek Trail Phase II)** - Complete the section from Culbreth Road to the Morgan Creek Trail. See page 66.
- **Dry Creek Trail** - Secure funding and begin the planning and permitting to pave a portion of the existing natural surface trail from Perry Creek Road to Erwin Road. See page 48.
- **Horace Williams Trail (Carolina North)** - Build a natural surface trail from Homestead Road to the Town's Operation Center using mostly volunteer labor. Build paved trail from Homestead Road to Municipal Drive. See page 54.
- **Tanyard Branch Trail, Phase 1** - Design and build a paved greenway trail from Cotton Street to Jay Street, with the assistance of the Chapel Hill/ Carrboro City Schools. See page 29.
- **Morgan Creek Trail, Phase II** - Secure funding and begin the planning and permitting phase for a trail extension from the western end of the Morgan Creek Trail to Smith Level Road. See page 34.

## **PROJECTS TO BE COMPLETED WITHIN 10**

### **YEARS**

- **Dry Creek Trail** - Build a paved trail from Perry Creek Road to Erwin Road. See page 54.
- **Campus to Campus Bicycle Route** – Select and construct a second phase. See page 66.
- **Morgan Creek Trail, Phase II** - Extend the trail from the western end of the Morgan Creek Trail to Smith Level Road. See page 47.
- **Bolin Creek Trail, Phase IV** - Extend the trail to Carolina North. See page 33.

## **PROJECTS TO BE COMPLETED WITHIN 20**

### **YEARS**

- **Campus to Campus Bicycle Route** - Complete the project. See page 66.
- **Horace Williams Trail** - Build a paved trail from Homestead Road to the Town's Operation Center. See page 29.

### **CONSTRUCTION COSTS AND THE ECONOMIC RECESSION**

The effects of the recession on the construction industry have created a volatile market for investors, owners, and contractors due to many factors. Increases in raw material costs, dwindling supplier availability, and a greater concentration of expertise force many contractors to cut profit margins. There are fewer projects available in both the public and private sectors, due to the country's financial crisis that has dried up lending for commercial real estate and the collapse of a housing bubble that has seen foreclosures skyrocket as housing prices fall.

Current conditions in the recessionary economy present opportunities for owners to achieve a higher value for construction costs due to contractors having to diversify in sector type and location. The current low cost of construction is worth taking advantage

of, as long as there is understanding that the building trade is similarly absorbing economic impacts to survive. While costs of construction may continue to decline, quality of the finished product is not always guaranteed. Quality bid documentation has never been more critical during these times. Owners need to evaluate the benefit of low cost construction against the potential of poor quality work, badly managed projects, and project delays – and closely monitor progress. As the economy springs back, an expected rise in costs will be about 3% per year, a typical trend in the industry.

**CURRENT FUNDING FOR GREENWAYS**

The following chart summarizes the specific funding amounts available for the greenways program over the next few years. Table 6.1 shows available funds by project.

**TABLE 6.1  
ANTICIPATED GREENWAYS/OPEN SPACE  
PROGRAM FUNDS BY PROJECT**

<b>PROJECT</b>	<b>SOURCE</b>	<b>AMOUNT</b>
<b>Fan Branch Trail Phase 3*</b>	MPO	\$1,410,000
	2003 Parks Bond	\$560,000
	<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,970,000</b>
<b>Bolin Creek Trails Stairs and Renovation</b>	MPO	\$20,000
	Friends of Chapel Hill Parks Grants	\$253,560
	<b>Total</b>	<b>\$273,560</b>
<b>Bolin Creek Trail Phase 3</b>	2003 Parks Bond	\$2,489,000
<b>Battle Branch Trail Boardwalk Renovation</b>	Capital Improvements Program (CIP)	\$80,000

\*Also referred to as Morgan Creek Trail, Phase 2

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