

**Sunset Beach Park Master Plan
Public Workshop
August 2, 2012
Location: Town Hall
Time: 4pm - 8pm**

The Workshop format focused on a sequence of interactive “stations”. Each station provided a unique opportunity for eliciting comment and input from the participants. The stations were also organized to create an atmosphere maximizing dialogue among the participants and with the Withers & Ravenel staff. Exhibits displayed at the stations provided project context and site awareness.

The participants were greeted at a Welcome Station. Following sign-in, Withers & Ravenel staff shared quick fact sheets about the project and provided direction on the sequence and format of the stations.

The workshop provided four (4) different stations, or opportunities, for public input.

1. Facilitated Discussion
2. Image Preference Ranking
3. Mapping
4. Comment Cards

A description of each station’s purpose, activity, and public input results are included in the following pages.

Facilitated Discussion Station

Purpose of Activity:

- Create interactive communication among participants
- Provide an opportunity for participants to talk with each other about their ideas for the park site.

Description of Activity

The participants participated in a small group discussion with a Withers & Ravenel staff serving as facilitator.

Suggested Talking Points were posted:

- What are some of your favorite parks? What do you like about them?
- What elements did you particularly like or use at these parks?
- What would you like to do at the Sunset Beach Town Park?
- What would make you want to bring a visitor to this park?
- What parks do you currently use in the area? Why?
- Is there anything you do NOT think this park should be used for?
- Any additional comments?

“Ground Rules” to a productive discussion were posted:

- Everyone has a right to speak.
- Listen actively -- respect others when they are talking
- Speak from your own experience instead of generalizing ("I" instead of "they," "we," and "you").
- Do not be afraid to respectfully challenge one another by asking questions, but refrain from personal attacks -- focus on ideas. Direct challenging comments or questions to the facilitator or the entire group, not an individual.
- Participate to the fullest of your ability -- community growth depends on the inclusion of every individual voice.
- No more than one person should speak at the same time.

While the facilitator initiated discussions with the initial group of participants utilizing the suggested talking points, the participants directed the conversation. Comments were collected on flip charts and posted for the subsequent groups to view.

The facilitator added an asterisk (*) by a posted comment each time that another participant made the same, or very similar, comment.

All comments with asterisks were typed in a word document as they appeared on the flip charts.

Compiled Notes from all of the Facilitated Discussions

- Need restrooms
- Trails, benches, green space
- Pad on site built by land owner (Mannon Gove) building first bridge (historic)
- Large adult swings overlooking waterway
- Tables (eating, checkers)
- Tree Preservation
- Town Hall more appropriate location for Veteran's Memorial
- Natural as possible
- Trails as access to destinations within park
- ADA considerations
- Turf areas
- Use natural grasses and plants
- Include bandshell
- Allow golf cart access on streets around park to get to park
- Include kayak/canoe access
- More kid fishing area
- Allow community events
- Provide scout project opportunities
- Restrooms as only structure
- ****Retain trees—get arborist's opinion, retain mass
- Open and passive
- Open play, multi-use area
- *Close at dusk
- No camping
- Kayak launch closer to state boat launch
- Benches, gazebo near Veteran's Memorial
- *Winding river amenity area
- Drinking water fountains
- *Turtle friendly lighting
- *More parking for townspeople
- Shelter on existing concrete pad
- No grills
- *****Veteran's Memorial (smaller)
- ****Trails (ADA accessible, concerns with impervious materials), benches (Memorial opportunity), swings, picnic tables, drinking fountains, garbage cans (recycle)
- *Parking
- **Restrooms (arch character consistent with setting)
- *Crabbing, fishing, kayaking (activities that fit the setting)
- **Tree preservation (additional plantings)
- ****Peaceful, quiet
- ***No bandshell
- *Remain natural
- **Turf

- Increase dock/pier area
- Gazebos
- Educational opportunities
- Grills
- *Binocular stations along marsh
- West Palm Downtown Park: benches, chess/checkers, fountain (interactive)
- ****Trails, benches, picnic tables
- *Enjoy wildlife and views of water
- ***Preserve trees
- **Canoe/kayak launch
- No asphalt parking lot
- Vereen Gardens (boardwalks)
- **Southport Park—big, adult oriented swings on waterway
- Locate utilities at Twin Lakes
- **Town gathering spot—elec hook ups
- Brunswick and Shallotte Nature Park—canoe launch
- *Town focal point
- No taxpayer funded Veteran's Memorial

Image Preference Ranking Station

Purpose of Activity

- Stimulate ideas and discussion among participants through the presentation of visual images.
- Provide a format for participants to prioritize potential park elements.

Description of Activity

Several boards with images of facilities/amenities were posted in category groups based upon facilities/activities included in the public input survey:

- Outdoor Theater/Performance Space
- Playground
- Water Related Activities (Fishing, Canoe/Kayak launch)
- Trails/Paths
- Group gathering space (picnic shelters, outdoor classroom, etc.)
- Open Free Play Space (Frisbee, blanket on lawn, etc.)
- Festival/Event space (tents on paving, on lawn, farmer's market, etc.)
- Exercise Stations

Participants were given dots (3) and asked to place them next to their top choices by category.

(Note: Following completion of the activity by the first group, a participant requested that 1. participants have the leeway to place their dots directly on photos vs the category and 2. a choice option for "no development." These options were included for the remaining of the meeting and are reported in the results.)

Image Preference Results

The numbers provided next to the category represents the total number of stickers placed in the category group. The numbers in parentheses below the category represent the number of dots on specific images within the category, and are included in the total.

Trails and Paths	42
(4 – path along water)	
(2 – trail through woods with dog walker)	
(1 comment – “gravel only”)	
Water Related Activities	35
(6 – boardwalk)	
(4 – kayaks in water)	
(4 – launch ramps)	
Outdoor Gathering Space	22
(8 – individual picnic table)	
(1 – bridge and gazebo)	
(1 – basic picnic shelter on slab w/ 4 tables)	
Leave As Is; Do Nothing	19
(5 participants – all 3 dots)	
(4 participants – 1 dot)	
Open Play Space	10
(3 – open area with trees)	
Amphitheater/Performance	4
(1– stone terraces with trees)	
Playground	1
Festival/Event Space	1
(Arts Festival)	
Exercise Station	1
(pull up – push up bars along trail)	

Mapping Station

Purpose of Activity

- Create an understanding and awareness of the technical opportunities and constraints of the park site.
- Provide a hands-on, site specific design workshop for the participants.

Description of Activity

- The participants were given an 11x17 base map showing the park boundaries and other significant features. The base map included a symbol legend to guide the participants as they worked through design scenarios.
- Sitting around a table, the participants drew or wrote on their base maps their vision for the park site.
- The participants were instructed to either work on their map individually or team with other participants to create a map.
- A "Fly-Through" video of the aerial was played on the TV to help orient the participants.
- A large aerial of the site with site photos was displayed on the table at the station for reference.

Mapping Results

A total of 40 maps were submitted. The results were compiled by counting both words and drawings illustrating the facilities/activities included in the legend plus other facilities/activities, not included in the legend, but illustrated or written by participants. All comments written on the maps were also transcribed.

Outdoor Theatre/Performance 3

Playground Space 3

Water Activities 22

Trails/Paths 30

Group Gathering Space 16

Includes:

1 with electricity

1 Gazebo; scattered table & chairs

1 Pavilion with Picnic Tables

1 Showing 1 cluster of picnic tables

3 Showing 2 clusters of Picnic Tables

1 Utilize existing pad with shade structure; picnic benches throughout; a few grills

1 Picnic Area

1 Shelter/Benches

3 with Scattered Picnic Tables

3 using Map Legend

Open Free Space 11

Event/Festival Space 1

Exercise Station 3

Other:

View/viewing area (3)

Restrooms (4)

Parking (7)

Entrance

Sidewalk

Benches (17)

Swings (adult) (6)

Gliders

Misting

Interactive Fountain

Horseshoes and Bocci

Veterans Memorial (5)

Fenced Dog Area (small dogs and large dogs)

Comments:

Trees

Keep all Trees

Don't hurt the trees; get an arborist to check them out and save as many as possible

Keep trees and add trees in open areas

Don't remove any trees

Keep trees

Keep all trees

No trees taken down

Keep trees in open areas

Don't hurt Trees; Get an arborist to check them out to save as many as possible

Water Activities

Work with state to allow kayak/canoe access from boat launch across street; parking is required

Expand floating dock

Do not increase size of pier

Kayak launching?

Canoe kayak launch in appropriate location

Expand dock for added fishing

No dock to launch from, Use state

Kayak launch on sandy area

Keep dock

Enlarge dock

Dock not as a launch - more multiuse

Crabbing/fishing

Preservation

Walking Trails and Benches Only (2)

Natural Open Spaces

Leave area "as-is"! No more wasted tax money!

Absolutely minimum of any development! Keep it clean - ongoing maintenance

Minimal development; No structures

Leave natural

Please leave this park as totally undeveloped as possible

Trail Comments

Minimal Natural Paths only to provide access to water

Trail paths in shady areas

Winding, natural plants with benches

Important

Walking path with dedicated benches

Boardwalk along water front

Open Free Space

Green space!!!

Important

Major

Sod

Other Comments

Enhance plant life and nature color.... plants/flowers

"bubblers"

Add plantings - local varieties

Don't add any features or plants which are not natural and native to the area

Restrooms like at the beach

Adult swings - lots of these

Swings for adults facing water

Swings for viewing intercoastal

No dogs

No BBQ Grills

Change from 55 mph to 35 mph (roadway speed limit)

Look at Winding River Waterfront Park

Utilize existing pad for shade structure

Comment Cards

Purpose of Activity

- Offer the participants the opportunity to include any additional comments.

Description of Activity

Blank index cards along with writing pens were available on a table. Participants placed comment cards in a comment card box.

Comments Received

- I'm very happy to see the open methodology being used to capture the thoughts of the town. I feel very comfortable that the wishes of the town will be respected.
- No VA Memorial→put at Town Hall. Simple Paths. Benches. No activities that would draw large crowds (and require parking—example amphitheatre/arts)
- #1 priority is Veteran's Memorial
- No amphitheatre, no pavement, no large groups (no parking)
- No amphitheatre/stage, no playground equipment (slides, swings, gym), no exercise stations, no public restrooms like at beach, no Veteran's Memorial, very limited parking, no BBQ grills. Yes walking path, yes benches.
- Leave park "as-is". Don't waste any additional tax money which is better spent on other town "needs".
- This entire process is biased toward development of an urban park, which is both not needed and inappropriate for Sunset Beach. The administration and council should have worked through the park design either before or immediately after purchase of the property.
- Let the citizens of Sunset utilize this space in a low impact facility. Walking, sitting, viewing, visiting, and gathering with neighbors, to enjoy the outside.
- I believe the park should be left in its natural state as much as possible. As it is now, it is a great place to view deer, wading birds and other wildlife. I would hate to see that disrupted. I'd like to see hiking trails and a few benches and picnic tables, but no grills. Perhaps 2 or 3 swings like they have in Vereen Park over looking the intercostals would be nice. I would also like to see a non-motorized boat launch.
- Thanks for listening to us and giving us a chance to express our issues.
- Please make sure that the park is designed to improve the quality of life here in Sunset Beach. You should use the land to remain beautiful and develop around the natural beauty.
- Open/passive, park benches, gravel trails only, no taxpayer money on War Memorial, no restrooms, no structures, no additional boat docks
- Thank you for your thoughtful approach to giving everyone a platform for input. Comments—sod in select areas.

- We can't satisfy all the ideas. The focus in my view is how to utilize the land to facilitate "green space" and allow for Sunset Beach to be able to set itself apart from the other towns in the area. No trees should fall! A gazebo is a necessity for some of the weather we have and it should have seating. Water fountains are a must!
- Canoe/Kayak Launch Comments: The ability to launch a canoe or kayak from the park would be a great addition to our town and provide non-motorized boaters convenient access to our waterways. A well designed paddling launch facility could be a feature attracting paddlers to visit our town and patronize local businesses (lodging, restaurants, etc.). Engaging experienced paddlers in the design will help ensure the launch is well thought out. The park's location is subject to tides that creates some issues for building a launch facility. At low tides the ground is muddy (could be knee deep) and oyster beds are revealed. Oyster beds are hazards—their shells are razor sharp and can injure people walking over them or falling into them. The existing dock at the park is useful to power boats, but far too high for canoes and kayaks. Even if the dock could be lowered to suit canoes it would still be too high for all but well experienced kayakers. Fortunately Brunswick County built a paddling launch facility in Brunswick Nature Park that is useful in thinking out what might be built. It is on Town Creek, a tributary of the Cape Fear River and Town Creek is tidal at that location. Attached are photos of what the county installed. The photos show how the dock can rise and fall with the tide and how the paddlers roll down an incline to the water. Upon their return they use the low handrails to pull themselves back up onto the dock. One can launch and return from this facility without ever having to deal with muddy ground or the hazards of oyster beds. There may well be other ways to design a launch facility, but they must overcome the low tide issues of mud and oyster beds. If the existing dock is to remain as is then power boats parking there will be present use conflicts for canoe/kayak launches if that location is intended to be used for paddle craft. Paddle craft only launch and return—they do not "park" and occupy the launch area for extended periods. Power boats "parking" could very well render the launch area useless for paddlers unless there is a clear physical separation of the differing uses.