

## INTRODUCTION

The master plan for the Summerfield Athletic Park comprises of an approximately 28.6 acre "L-shaped" property that lies along the eastern margin of Highway 220 and south of Winfree Road in northwestern Guilford County. The site is made up of two parcels of land that were formerly a rural residential and agricultural use and were obtained by the Town of Summerfield for the purposes of developing the property into a public park for community recreation. The proposed park, called "Summerfield Athletic Park" will ultimately feature three baseball/softball fields with lighting and dugouts, three multi-purpose sports fields (soccer, football, lacrosse, ultimate Frisbee), two comfort stations, concession / administration building, three picnic shelters and a road and parking infrastructure adequate for large events.

## PROPERTY SELECTION PROCESS

The Town of Summerfield commissioned a Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment Survey in late 2005. The report, created by Dr. James Sellars of the University of North Carolina- Greensboro, indicated that the town was limited in facilities for active recreation and that the public indicated that it was important for the town to provide recreational opportunities. The Plan recommendations included that effort should be made to locate land appropriate for athletic facilities including "Areas and facilities recommended for inclusion in the development of an active-oriented park are: combination football/soccer fields, combination baseball/softball fields, tennis courts, basketball courts, a multiple-use court area, fitness trails, and appropriate support amenities (e.g., parking, restrooms, and concession areas)."

The Council accepted the report in March 2006 and instructed staff to review available properties for use as athletic facilities suggested in the plan. The Town Council was specifically interested in providing baseball/softball and multi-purpose fields. Over the next year, staff and the Summerfield Parks and Recreation Committee evaluated over twenty potential sites that met basic criteria or size, topography, location within the town, and willingness of property owners to sell property.

By March of 2007 three sites had been identified. After public open houses at each location the Town Council settled on the property at 5200 US Highway 220 North. The property was purchased in October 2007.

## SITE SELECTION CRITERIA

- Property is easily accessible from US Highway 220 North.
- Property is large enough to help relieve the current pressure for field space for baseball/softball and provide potential for new multi-purpose fields for other sports.
- The property does have topography (slopes) that will require significant grading to provide flat areas for fields, parking and support facilities.
- In comparison to other potential sites, there are fewer neighbors immediately adjacent to the property that would be adversely affected by park activities.

## PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The town Council determined that the oversight of the Master Plan and development of the site should be overseen by a specialized committee. Therefore, the Council created the Athletic Advisory Committee in August 2008. The Town of Summerfield selected a group of citizens to form this committee that would look into the community's recreational needs and direct the design of the park. These citizens were selected on the basis of their role in the community and their reputation as a citizen that could best represent the opinions of a larger community group or entity. The committee gathered information from other communities, athletic professionals, and members of various design and engineering professions in order to create a Master Plan that best utilized the site.

In addition, the committee invited all members of the community to view the draft plan at an open-house style meeting on November 18<sup>th</sup>, 2008 in order to gather additional input and opinion to apply to the Master Plan. Over fifty community members attended the open house and were encouraged to submit questions and comments both verbal and written. The presented plan was well received overall and the committee then presented the plan to Town Council for adoption. The council adopted the plan at its December 9<sup>th</sup>, 2008 meeting.

## PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Summerfield Athletic Park will be created to provide recreational facilities for a broad range of age groups in order to promote exercise, health, well-being and enhance the "sense of community" among the citizens of Summerfield and its environs. Proposed fields will vary in size to provide ideal playing conditions/distances for a wide range of youth and adult age groups.

In addition to playing fields, walking trails, a small playground and picnic shelters will allow park participation from citizens not involved in team sports.

## RECREATIONAL NEEDS

As with many small communities, at this time there is no Comprehensive Park System plan for Summerfield. Current Town facilities include a 50 acre park under lease from the Summerfield Community Center Inc. and Guilford County. This site includes a playground, paved and unpaved walking/biking trails, and a small amphitheater currently under construction. The site is not conducive to mass grading that would provide additional active recreational areas.

The Summerfield Elementary School includes four small baseball/softball fields that are inadequate to meet the current needs of the community. The only multipurpose field is an open field used by the school for Physical Education classes. The Summerfield Recreation Association (not affiliated with the Town) provides recreational opportunities to over 600 children on these available fields.

An indoor Gym, also located at the school, provides opportunities for youth basketball.

To identify the recreational needs of the Summerfield community, a Recreational Needs Assessment was commissioned by Dr. Sellars of UNCG. Recreational needs identified in the report include soccer fields, baseball and softball fields, walking trails, restrooms, and open space. This report was used to plan the recreational opportunities for this site.

In November of 2008, an "open-house" style meeting was organized and members of the community were invited to gather and provide input and commentary necessary to gauge the recreational needs, wishes and desires of the community. From that meeting and subsequent Committee meetings confirmed the needs of the community and that the proposed plan met those expectations.

## MASTER PLAN DESCRIPTION

The Master Plan for the Athletic Park divides the acreage into three distinct phases. Each phase provides new or enhanced recreational facilities based upon the needs of the community now and in the future.

Site access is addressed by proposing a right-in/right-out entrance to address the future widening of US Highway 220 North in this area. The initial access point will be located along the northwestern boundary of the property. Based on discussions with NCDOT access onto US Highway 220 North is allowable, but would need to include an appropriate length deceleration lane, a right-in/right-out entrance and a 4' wide concrete median in front of the entrance.

A second access point is recommended to be developed in either phase two or three. This recommended access point will align with an existing road south of the site and wrap around the existing Gas Town service station. Access from this location will provide for a full-movement intersection with both left and right turn lanes. The cost and construction of this new access point is not provided herein, but the Master Site Plan addresses this potential access by providing an appropriate connection to the site.

### Phase One

Significant grading will need to occur in order to make this site fully usable. It is proposed that all major grading work for phases one and two occur simultaneously to provide for the most efficient development of the site.

The natural topography of the site allows for an interesting layout in that as the user enters the facility the park will open in a series of vistas overlooking the multipurpose field and then opening again over the ball fields. The view of the user then shifts again as the visitor enters phase three and sees the additional fields.

Phase one provides for an access road, parking for approximately 90 cars, and development of two small (60' foot base path) baseball/soft ball fields. The fields are benched into the southeastern portion of the site. Each of the fields are proposed to be sod fields with irrigation systems, lighting, and include appropriate fencing. These two fields make up two sections of a "wagon wheel" layout of ball fields indicated on the master plan.

Phase one construction is estimated to be between 1.0 and 1.3 million dollars.

### Phase Two

The second phase of the project includes most of the new development of the site. New facilities in this phase will extend the uses of the park to a larger audience and provide additional services and facilities. It is expected that this phase will be developed soon after phase one is under construction. A detailed list of proposed facilities includes the following.

Since the park is located on a major thoroughfare that acts as the de-facto northern entrance to the town the entrance is intended to provide safe and efficient access to the site, while also announcing to any visitor that they have arrived in Summerfield. Signage and other landscape features will provide a pleasing, yet practical, low maintenance entrance using natural materials of stone and brick. Since the property is within the Scenic Corridor zoning district attention will be made to the quality and look of the final entrance layout.

Two new fields are proposed in phase two. A large multipurpose field will be built in the western portion of the property near the front entrance. This field will provide space for a variety of field sports such as soccer, lacrosse, and football. Two additional parking lots and a restroom/picnic shelter will be constructed to serve this area.

The second field is a large baseball diamond (90' foot base paths). This will be the largest field in Summerfield Athletic Park, and the only one that can accommodate boys older than 13 years old. This field will form the third quarter of the wagon wheel layout of the master plan.

Both fields will include appropriate fencing and it is proposed that these fields be lit if the construction budget can afford it.

A joint use restroom/concessions/press box facility is proposed to fill the last section of the wagon wheel layout. The nature of the site allows for this structure to be built into a hillside so that the press box area is above the restroom/concessions areas. The facility provides the central hub of activity for the entire site.

A maintenance building is also proposed to be included in phase two. This will provide storage for the variety of tools, supplies, and other materials necessary for this type of park.

Other amenities proposed in phase two include an additional picnic shelter, a 1/5 mile walking track around the multipurpose field, a playground near the ball fields, and a walking trail that follows the existing creek along the eastern property boundary. The walking trail provides access to an existing neighborhood, and may provide future access to other undeveloped properties. Additional parking will provide 60 more spaces.

Construction of phase two is estimated to be between 1.1 and 1.3 million dollars.

### Phase Three

Phase three includes two options depending upon the future needs of the community.

The Master Plan indicates two small multipurpose fields for field sports in the northeastern portion of the site. These two fields would allow for additional field space for younger children playing soccer or lacrosse.

However, if the needs of the community indicate that additional baseball/softball field space is required, then either or both of the fields could be converted into small little league fields.

In addition to the fields, phase three will include additional parking for 100 cars, restroom, and a picnic shelter to serve the new fields.

Construction of phase three is estimated to cost between 1.1 and 1.5 million dollars.