

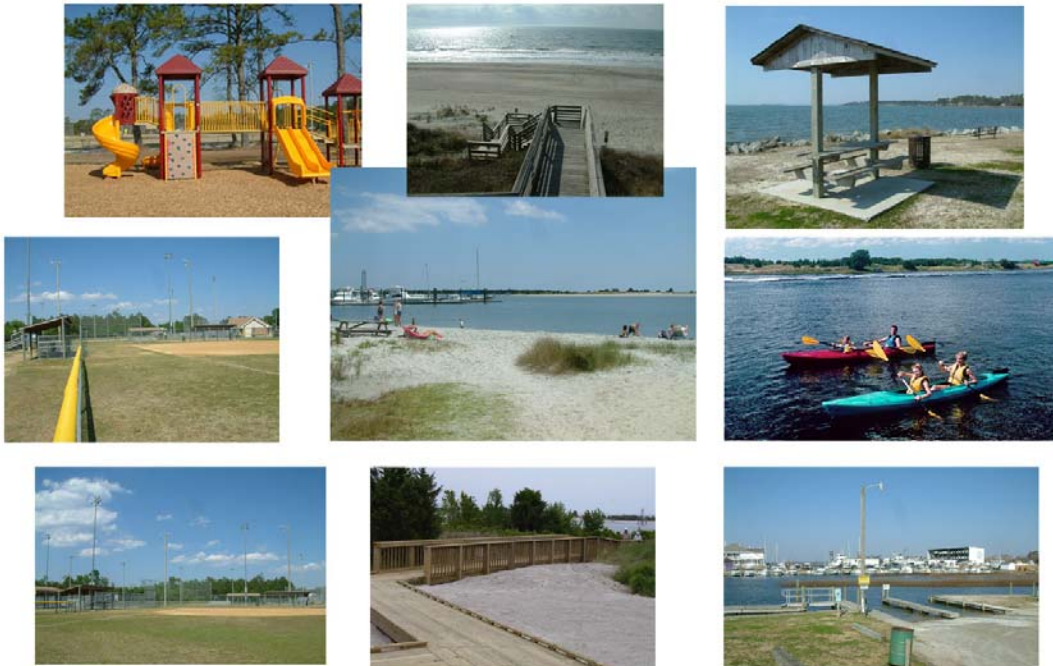
PARKS AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN AND SHORELINE ACCESS PLAN UPDATE

For Carteret County,
North Carolina

July 2006



Carteret County
North Carolina



**PREPARED FOR CARTERET COUNTY,
NORTH CAROLINA**

JULY 2006

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Section 1

Master Plan Update Purpose Statement

INTRODUCTION

The Carteret County Parks and Recreation Department and the Board of Commissioners have recognized the need to update the Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan and Shoreline Access Plan, prepared in 1999. The update shall address the needs of the citizens of Carteret County and surrounding areas as it relates to park and recreation programs and facilities offered over the next 5-10-15 years. This will be the second comprehensive plan conducted by the Parks and Recreation Department over the past 15 years.

Community recreation programs and community parks are increasing in popularity. Studies indicate that people are traveling less and discovering ways to recreate *within* their own community rather than *outside* of their community. Consequently, communities expect more from their recreation programs and community parks.

Advantages of planning for parks and recreation and water access:

- Enhances the community environment, "livability" and quality of life
- Provides opportunities for the community to gather
- Promotes community interaction
- Creates a community identity
- Preserves environmentally sensitive areas such as wetlands, woodlands, open spaces, and water courses
- Serves as a resource for ecological education

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Goals and Objectives of the Recreation Master Plan and Shoreline Access Plan Update are as follows:

1. Inventory existing parks, facilities and programs.
2. Evaluate the Carteret County Parks and Recreation Department to determine effectiveness and needs for the future.
3. Involve the community throughout the planning process including media updates.
4. Conduct public meetings throughout the county to encourage participation and shorten travel distances.
5. Provide citizen surveys at each public meeting, through a random, county wide mailing, and an online survey.
6. Address current parks and recreation, beach and water access needs, as well as plan for the future needs based on a 5-10-15 year population and county growth projections.
7. Serve as a marketing tool to educate the general public and elected officials as to the vital role parks and recreation plays in the quality of life of its citizens.
8. Serve as a management tool to promote cost effective design, development, and operation of park and recreation facilities.
9. Secure environmentally sensitive areas and preserve the community's natural resources.
10. Develop an Action Plan that will be a living document.

Section 2

Demographic and Sociological Factors of Carteret County

ECONOMY

Local employment is very diverse and ranges from professional services such as engineering, contracting, and sales; to public services such as the school system, governmental, and municipal jobs; to retail jobs such as department stores, supermarkets, and restaurants; to manufacturing jobs including foods and processing and fabrication, as well as many other categories of job types.

The top five major employers in Carteret County are:

- Carteret County Public Schools (± 1418)
- Carteret General Hospital (± 842)
- Wal-Mart (± 563)
- Atlantic Veneer (± 363)
- Carteret Community College (± 350)

Local industry should play an important role in parks and recreation by financially and socially subsidizing these programs and facilities.

The Carteret County Economic Development Council demographics information provided on their website (www.carteretedc.com) states: “Carteret County has enjoyed unemployment figures that have consistently been below both national and state levels. The labor force is consistent without seasonal fluctuation. As of 2004, 53% of the population had completed some type of higher education with nearly 27% having completed a graduate or professional degree.” According to the Carteret County Economic Development Council website, “Carteret County continues to attract employers from all segments of the workforce. Professional level jobs are on the rise as evidenced by the increase in the average salary in Carteret County.”

The County is rich with educational and employment opportunities and will most certainly add young adults to the overall population. From this perspective, the County is increasingly becoming a more attractive place for individuals, and families, as well as senior citizens and retired individuals.

Carteret County continues to experience steady growth, but explosive growth is pending. The North River Club, a new master planned residential and mixed use development could double the population of Beaufort in the next ten years. Continued growth throughout the county will inevitably challenge the Parks and Recreation Department to provide additional facilities and programs.

According to the 2005 Carteret County Economic Development Council Demographics Fact Book, the permanent population increased 9.0% between the years 1990 – 1995. Between 1995 and 2000, an estimated 3.7% growth rate occurred, and between the years 2000 to 2005, a projected growth rate of 3.8% will occur. Using an estimated growth rate of 4% per 5 years, the population between the years 2005-2020 will increase by approximately 12% more compared to today’s population. Using an estimated growth rate of 4% per 5 years, the population for the year 2020 is estimated to be 69,332. The Master Plan will address future needs using these projected numbers for the 5-10-15 year outlook.

The above projections for growth for years 2005 - 2020 are based partially on the fact that Carteret County continues to grow and is becoming a more desirable destination for year round residents. The projected increase in growth is equally represented in the seasonal population.

As the population in Eastern North Carolina and areas in and around Carteret County continue to grow, so will the number of new developments within the individual municipalities. The role of the Carteret County Parks and Recreation Department in providing adequate recreational facilities, programs and opportunities will become more demanding and important. Coordination and cooperation with the individual municipalities will be imperative to reasonably address future needs, and provide recreational opportunities throughout the County.

POPULATION AND POPULATION GROWTH/TRENDS/PROJECTIONS

The Master Plan Update is based on a planning period of five (5), ten (10), and fifteen (15) years for years 1995-2020 for the entire County. (The following information was included in the 2005 Carteret County Economic Development Council Demographics Fact Book. This data is based on actual populations and projections based on the 2000 census by US Census Bureau N C Demographics. Seasonal population estimates do not include permanent population and taken from Malcolm Pirnie Inc. and were derived from Land Use Plans.)

Carteret County year round population

| <u>1995</u> | <u>2000</u> | <u>2005(proj)</u> | <u>2010(proj)</u> | <u>2015(proj)</u> | <u>2020(proj)</u> |
|-------------|-------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| 57,248 | 59,405 | 61,636 | 63,939 | 66,026 | 67,762 |

Carteret County seasonal population

| <u>1995</u> | <u>2000</u> | <u>2005(proj)</u> | <u>2010(proj)</u> | <u>2015(proj)</u> | <u>2020(proj)</u> |
|-------------|-------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| 114,828 | 134,676 | NA | 153,708 | NA | 170,583 |

The estimated population by age for the year 2004 is as follows:

| | |
|----------------|-------|
| Under 5 years | 3,061 |
| 5 to 14 years | 6,816 |
| 15 to 19 years | 3,737 |
| 20 to 24 years | 3,326 |
| 25 to 34 years | 6,581 |
| 35 to 44 years | 8,611 |
| 45 to 54 years | 9,643 |
| 55 to 64 years | 8,354 |
| 65 to 74 years | 6,239 |
| 75 to 84 years | 3,750 |
| 85 + years | 1,233 |

These estimated numbers reveal the following age group brackets that were used in the survey and their percentage within the total county's population:

| | | |
|----------------|--------|-------|
| < 14 years | 9,877 | 16.1% |
| 15 to 19 years | 3,737 | 6.1% |
| 20 to 24 years | 3,326 | 5.4% |
| 25 to 34 years | 6,581 | 10.7% |
| 35 to 44 years | 8,611 | 14.1% |
| 45 to 54 years | 9,643 | 15.7% |
| 55 to 64 years | 8,354 | 13.5% |
| 65 + years | 11,222 | 18.4% |

This categorization identifies the largest age bracket within the County and also helps to reveal where the next shift in population, in terms of age groups, will occur. As adults age into retirement, there will be a need for additional facilities and resources that will satisfy their specific needs. Passive recreation, classroom space and senior centers are all examples of facilities that may provide needed resources.

The second largest group by percentage in the survey is the 14 years and under category which will most likely continue to expand in some areas of the County. Even if the youth populations continue to grow only in isolated pockets or individual municipalities of the County, they will certainly influence the overall expansion of parks and recreation facilities.

In “Emerging Issues of Carteret County’s Economy and Workforce – Creating a Competitive Advantage”, a presentation prepared by CSW (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce) Carteret County’s positioning in the United States, North Carolina and the Eastern Region are compared.

The population growth for the years 2000-2004 indicate Carteret County (3.3%) is well below the North Carolina average (5.8%) and the national average (4.4%), but well above the Eastern Region (0.1%). The relationship of percentages remains essentially the same for the years 2000-2009, but the percentages nearly double in each category. During this period the population growth in Carteret County is 7.9%, the Eastern Region 0.2%, North Carolina at 13.1% and 9.9% for the United States. These estimates were derived from the U.S. Census Bureau and AGS Demographics.

The 2004 Median Age in this study shows that the population in Carteret County also exceeds the Eastern Region, North Carolina and the United States. Based on data from AGS Demographics the Median Age in Carteret County in 2004 is 43.4, while the Eastern Region is 33.9, North Carolina is 36 and 36.2 in the U.S.

These numbers are provided as a means of comparison and to help identify the growth trends that will affect parks and recreation and water access facilities within Carteret County. Anticipating and continuing to monitor these changes in population will be essential if facilities and programs are to be added to address the needs of the community. In this same study, one of the most interesting graphs indicates “Growth by Age Group, 2000 to 2009.” Again Carteret County tops all of the categories in percent growth for “Adults Age 65 & Older”. The percentages of growth for this age group are nearly 25% in Carteret County, approximately 12% in the Eastern Region, and around 22% for North Carolina and 15% for the United States. In stark contrast for this same period, the percentage of growth for “Youth Ages 15 and under” in Carteret County is well below every other category. The percentage of growth for youth in these ages is negative 4%, North Carolina is more than 10% and approximately 2% nationwide.

Although the population growth for the years 2000-2009 is predicted to nearly double in Carteret County, the shift in population indicates that the senior population will account for most of this increase. This projection alone should encourage a focus on the specific needs of the senior population in Carteret County.

As populations increase, so do the demands for recreation. Today, communities promote their “quality of life” such as low crime rates, good schools and ample parks. Parks that are connected with a system of greenways encourage walking and biking to the nearest park or grocery store rather than driving. Multi-use trails satisfy citizen demands for a place to exercise and socialize as well as serve as a conduit for alternative transportation routes to work. The recent efforts of Morehead City in developing a Comprehensive Bicycle Plan should be commended and serve as a stimulus for the County and individual municipalities. As the population grows every reasonable effort should be made to plan and develop an interconnected alternative transportation system and continue to create more connectivity with existing and proposed facilities.

Section 3

Evaluation of Current and Projected Physical Factors

LOCATION AND TOPOGRAPHY

Carteret County is a large sprawling land mass of approximately 520 square miles located in the eastern portion of the state of North Carolina. The county is blessed with an abundance of natural resources and is surrounded by the Atlantic Ocean, Bogue Sound, Core Sound and Pamlico Sound. Additionally, the County also includes the Neuse River, the Newport River and the White Oak River. The geography is typical of most areas lying within eastern North Carolina including relatively flat terrain, sandy soils and adequate drainage. Due to the recent growth within the region, Carteret County has been impacted by development and sprawl.

HIGHWAYS AND ROADS

Major transportation routes include U.S Highway 70, N.C. 24, (both four lanes), N.C. 58, N.C. 101 and N.C. 12. I-40 is the closest Interstate which lies 63 miles to the southwest and I-95 is located 105 miles to the west. The transportation route makes the County and the Atlantic coast beaches a 3 hour drive from the State Capitol. The County is easily accessible and connected by the intrastate system with travel from the mountains of Western North Carolina taking about 6.5 hours.

One major transportation improvement is planned for the eastern portion of the County. This NCDOT project will include a new high rise bridge that will take through traffic around Beaufort and connect into N.C. 101 and U.S. 70. This proposed route will alleviate some of the congestion in Morehead City and Beaufort and shorten the travel times through the County, but is not expected to be in place until 2020. This project will also influence the growth on the north side of the Town of Beaufort and the County.

PROPERTY LIMITS

Other boundaries that affect planning in Carteret County include the following items:

- Municipal Limits
- Extra-Territorial Jurisdictions

As the individual municipalities grow and annex areas into their own corporate limits each of these boundary lines will be affected in some manner.

OTHER BOUNDARIES

Other boundaries include streams, rivers and lakes. These natural boundaries often define the shape of many subdivisions and other land development types. Carteret County is bounded by the Atlantic Ocean, sounds, bays, rivers and creeks.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Development within the County is also scrutinized by the North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources and Coastal Resources Commission. Enforcement of the Coastal Area Management Act requires that each of the 20 coastal counties have a local land use plan in accordance with guidelines established by the Coastal Resources Commission.

According to the CRC: “Each land-use plan includes local policies that address growth issues such as the protection of productive resources (i.e., farmland, forest resources, fisheries), desired types of economic development, natural resource protection and the reduction of storm hazards.

Once a land-use plan is certified by the CRC, the Division of Coastal Management uses the plan in making CAMA permit decisions and federal consistency determinations. Proposed projects and activities must be consistent with the policies of a local land-use plan, or DCM cannot permit a project to go forward.”

These regulations necessitate an awareness of regional planning and also require more site specific planning for any future land purchases and facility improvements. The CAMA permitting process can be lengthy and costly if not coordinated appropriately and could lead to prolonged delays in the planning process and construction implementation phases.