



oak mountain park



carroll county, georgia

University of Georgia • College of Environment and Design • Public Service and Outreach • July 2003

The Carrollton Report

Executive Summary
the design charrette

Summer 2003

The Carrollton Report

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The Rolling Hills Resource Conservation and Development Council invited the University of Georgia's College of Environment and Design, Office of Public Service & Outreach to conduct a design charrette for Carroll County. Funding from the Georgia Forestry Commission's Urban and Community Forestry Program made this collaborative effort possible.



Introduction

The Rolling Hills Resource Conservation and Development Council invited the University of Georgia's Office of Public Service and Outreach to conduct a design charrette for a passive recreation park on the site of the former Oak Mountain Academy. On Monday, July 7th, 2003, a group of students and faculty met with local community leaders to discuss possibilities for the site and to begin work on a design proposal. Representatives from the Resource Conservation and Development Council, Georgia Forestry Commission, Soil Conservation Service, historic preservation groups, Carrollton Tomorrow, Carrollton Parks and Recreation, Division of Community Affairs, Oak Mountain Academy Alumni and the Carrollton Garden Club participated in the process.

The property consists of about seventy-five acres on each side of Stripling Chapel Road, which will become a passive recreation park for Carroll County. On the southern portion of the property is a pastoral hillside that provides beautiful views of distant hills. The northern portion of the property consists of two newer non-contributing school structures and the historic Folds House. Throughout the charrette the UGA team learned about the history of the former Oak Mountain Academy and the land. Participants discussed visions for the Folds House and felt that it could play a vital role in the future park. The history of the land is one that has seen school children playing in the woods and fields. Once a year skies were filled with kites as older children taught younger children about the science of flight. The land has also undergone an intensive environmental cleanup to remove toxic elements in the soil that were previously dumped on the site. During this process soils were tested and removed, pavement was removed and monitoring systems were installed. It was a process that severely disturbed the land in order to repair it. As part of the charrette the UGA team toured the property and was able see first-hand the character and condition of the land. Future plans for the realigning Stripling Chapel Road will again disturb the ground. Additionally, the team took time to read over much of the environmental assessment that documents the cleanup and the deed restrictions, which govern how the county may use the land. Through this process the UGA team began developing a vision for transforming the old Oak Mountain Academy into the new Oak Mountain Park.

The recommendations for the Oak Mountain site are summarized in this report. The suggestions of charrette participants, deed restrictions, history of the site and the experience of the UGA team influenced the outcome of this report. Additionally, the Georgia Model Urban Forest Book, published by the Georgia Forestry Commission provided guiding principles for our design recommendations. The vision for the development of the Oak Mountain Park expressed in this report is CONCEPTUAL in nature. The UGA team has already taken into consideration plans from the Department of Transportation for changes to Stripling Chapel Road and Georgia 16. It is likely that further changes to the roads may occur as the Department of Transportation finalizes their plans. When unexpected changes arise, we encourage you to use this report as your guide for making thoughtful decisions.

The UGA team would like to thank Cindy Haygood of the Rolling Hills Resource Conservation and Development Council for inviting the Office of Public Service and Outreach to conduct the design charrette and for her help in making the UGA team feel at home. Special thanks goes to the Georgia Forestry Commission for providing the funding and guidance that made it possible for us to work in Carroll County. Finally, we would like to thank the charrette participants. The insights from the community make it possible for us to fully understand the importance of the site. The stories, photographs, and dreams shared with the UGA team were invaluable in developing a concept for the park.

Concept

The charrette process revealed the need for a design that would be sensitive to the condition of the land and one that would improve connectivity. The extensive environmental repair that has taken place on the property has left a fragile site. Deed restrictions prevent the construction of new buildings or recreational activities that would disturb the land. Invasive exotic species have made their way throughout the forest floor and canopy. Extensive erosion can be seen on both sides of the property. Based on these observations the UGA team began working with the understanding that the first objective of the design would be to develop a plan that would “heal the land.”

The second principle that guided decisions of the UGA team was the concept of connectivity. Charrette participants discussed the need for developing a connection between the community and park. One way for developing this connection is through the programming of the house. The house could be used for events such as receptions or weddings and offices, and in this way would begin to create new stories and memories that contribute to the history of Carrollton. A second way for developing connectivity is through physical connections to the park. Developing physical access to the baseball park on Georgia 16 could be achieved by acquiring an undeveloped piece of land that separates the two parks. Finally, improving connectivity within the park is addressed in the design. Currently the two pieces of the property feel as though they are two independent and separate pieces of property. Through the use of trails and other design elements the UGA team sought to create one unified park. Methods for improving these connections and for healing the land are explained more fully in the following recommendations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The history of the land dictates that the development of the park is done sensitively. The land has been cleaned and healed in a scientific sense, but it is still in need of visual, physical and ecological healing. The recommendations for the development of Oak Mountain Park are based on many considerations. In this report the recommendations are grouped into two categories: Healing the Land and Improving Connectivity.

Healing the Land

Minimizing Land Disturbance

Utilizing the road that runs past the blue classroom building, as the main drive through the park, will minimize any impact that would be caused by relocating circulation patterns. This road would exist for maintenance and for the preparation of park activities but gates would remain closed so that the park road does not become cut-through for vehicle traffic. Allowing the road that runs past the gymnasium to return to a natural state will help to visually heal the land and could reduce erosion. Keeping parking spaces at the periphery of the park will minimize traffic disturbances inside the park and create a more peaceful experience for park users. In accordance with the deed restrictions and in an effort to prevent further disruption to the park, the UGA team is recommending that no new buildings be constructed on the site. In order to minimize the repairs needed to reconnect disrupted utilities, it is recommended that these repairs be limited to the Folds House and Cottage. Renovating and using the cottage as restroom facilities for park users would eliminate the need to construct new buildings. If a more centrally located restroom is desired this could be located near the roadside parking and constructed as part of the plans to realign Stripling Chapel Road. Elimination of the gymnasium and blue classroom building is needed to minimize the visual distraction they create. The creative reuse of the foundations for picnic areas and theatrical performances would lessen the impact of removing the buildings completely and would provide opportunities for park users to utilize these spaces on a daily basis.

Visual Healing

It is aesthetically important to have a sense of architectural unity of buildings within the park. Upon entrance, the park visitor should be greeted with a landscape that compliments the historic qualities of the Folds House. Currently, the colosseum is the first building that a visitor encounters. Unfortunately, this large aluminum structure interrupts the flow and integrity of the park. Its location on top of a hill is a focal point and detracts from the aesthetic experience. Secondly, the blue classroom building is similarly out of place within the beauty of this landscape. Neither of these buildings is being used to capacity and the current uses (maintenance storage, theatre set storage) can be better served in areas outside of the park. Removal of the colosseum is highest priority because it is the first visual impression of the park. However, it is understandable if the transition becomes a phased operation. The function of the colosseum, storage for the theatre groups, should be moved to the blue classroom building until a better place can be found. The goal, however, will be to eventually create an un-interrupted visual flow that cannot be achieved with the current intrusion caused by these buildings.

Scenic Enhancements

The function of the chain link fencing is no longer necessary. Instead, the fencing interrupts the continuity of the landscapes and gives park visitors a sense of unnecessary boundaries. Fences around the former playground, tennis courts, and along Stripling Chapel Road should be the first fences removed. Flexibility exists in making decisions about whether to keep or remove fences that border adjacent neighborhoods. However,

eliminating fencing will remove visual impediments and create a friendlier public space. Likewise, the realignment of the road provides the opportunity to bury the power lines on Stripling Chapel Road. This will help provide a visually uninterrupted landscape.

Remove Tennis Courts

Due to lack of maintenance and use, the tennis courts are irreparable. Weeds grow through cracks in the courts and resurfacing has not occurred in years. Removal of the courts would be better than decades of maintenance on non-contributing features. The requirement that the park be developed for passive recreation will make tennis courts out of place in any park redesign. If the courts are needed in order to provide an impermeable “cap” for the soils below, then it is recommended that courts be regularly maintained and repaired to keep them impermeable. To make them less obtrusive it is recommended that the courts be resurfaced using earth-tone colors instead of traditional green and red. Nets and fences should be removed to provide an uninterrupted view across the site.

Erosion Control and Stormwater Management

Removal of vegetation, paved surfaces, and topsoil occurred during the mitigation process. Although such measures were necessary to ensure the safety of the site, the resulting erosion caused by stormwater poses a significant environmental and aesthetic problem.

On the south side of the site, significant vegetation has been removed and a series of check dams and retention areas have been installed to control the flow of stormwater from terrace to terrace. Recent heavy rains have caused the collapse of one of these dams. The capacity of all the retention areas and dams should be reevaluated in light of this failure. Broken dams should be repaired and stabilized without the use of unsightly plastic lining and riprap fill. Retention areas should also be enhanced with native vegetation, which tolerates both dry and wet conditions. Shrubs and trees should be planted to slow water down and soften the “engineered edges” of the dams and retention areas.

The open and pastoral character of this side of the park is visually appealing and enhances the view of the forest and distant mountains. Unfortunately, this lack of vegetation combined with poor soil and sloping topography causes significant problems when heavy rains occur. The character and resulting view can be maintained, however, by encouraging native grasses and meadow flowers through planting and natural succession. Reducing mowing to two or three times a year will encourage natural re-vegetation, stabilize slopes and slow rainwater, while maintaining the site’s open character.

On the north side of the site, mitigation measures included the removal of all paved surfaces and the contaminated soil underneath. Crush-run gravel was then used to pave the roads and parking area. Significant erosion has occurred along these roadways. The current solution to the problem includes a combination of riprap fill in eroded areas, riprap check dams and plastic erosion control fabric, as well as vegetated swales. The

appearance of these applications is messy and incomplete although understandably necessary as emergency repair. The techniques appear to be only moderately successful, with erosion continuing to present both an environmental and visual problem.

Suggestions for improving the visual appearance and function of swales:

1. Vegetate swales using long grasses and plants tolerant of wet and dry conditions. Vegetated swales are constructed open-channel drainage ways used to convey stormwater runoff. Vegetated swales are often used as an alternative to, or an enhancement of, traditional storm sewer pipes. Advantages of this method are that they do not pond water for a long period of time and will induce infiltration. Vegetated swales generally have a trapezoidal or parabolic shape with relatively flat side slopes. Individual vegetated swales generally treat small drainage areas (five acres or less).
2. Use smaller stones in the swale runnel and vegetate the banks with plants tolerant of wet and dry conditions.
3. When using large riprap check dams, vegetate in and among the rocks with plants tolerant of wet and dry conditions.
4. Avoid the haphazard "thrown" appearance of riprap on slopes.
5. Avoid the use of plastic sheeting on the surface of swales.
6. Investigate the use of Rain Gardens or bio-retention areas on problem areas.

A rain garden is a depression that functions as a miniature wetland. These landscaped areas, typically planted with wildflowers and other native vegetation, replace sections of lawn and provide a place for stormwater to infiltrate. Compared to a patch of conventional lawn, a rain garden allows approximately 30% more water to soak into the ground.

Removal of Invasive Exotics Plants

Many plants that are enjoyable in gardens become threats to the ecological integrity of forest systems when they leave the garden and enter the woods. Plants such as Vinca, Wisteria and English Ivy can be found in the woods of the Oak Mountain site. These plants grow up trees and spread across the forest floor. In doing this they create dense mats of vegetation, which crowd out the native species that would normally occupy these areas. The removal of Wisteria has already begun and should continue. The removal of other invasive exotic species should begin as part of a plan that returns native plant species to the woods.

Reintroduction of Native Plants

The possibility of and desire to use the Oak Mountain site as location for transplanting native plants rescued from other sites was a topic of discussion during the charrette. This

idea is an important element in the process of healing the land and restoring biological diversity. In addition to reintroducing native plants the addition of larger canopy trees will be needed in several areas. With the reconfiguration of Stripling Chapel Road a linear scar will remain where the road used to be. Immediate planting of this area with native grasses and canopy trees should be a priority. These trees will help rejoin the severed forest and reduce erosion. Also, the addition of large canopy trees throughout the property should be done to give linear field edges a natural flow and to create areas of sun and shade for the walking trail. Below is a list of possible plants that should be used to help resolve erosion issues.

Plant List for Oak Mountain Park, Swale Enhancement

Sunny Sites:

Butterfly Weed (*Aesclepias tuberosa*)
Black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*)
Joe Pye Weed (*Eupatorium fistulosum*)
Soft Rush (*Juncus effusus*)
Great Blue Lobelia (*Lobelia siphilitica*)
Switchgrass (*Panicum virginianum*)
Big bluestem (*Andropogon gerardii*)
Marsh marigold (*Caltha palustris*)
Turtlehead (*Chelone glabra*)
Buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*)
Dogwood (*Cornus florida*)

Shady Sites:

Cardinal Flower (*Lobelia cardinalis*)
Caterpillar Sedge (*Carex crinita*)
Virginia Bluebells (*Mertensia virginica*)
Sensitive Fern (*Onoclea sensibilis*)
Wild Geranium (*Geranium maculatum*)
Alumroot (*Heuchera richardsonii*)
Wild Columbine (*Aquilegia canadensis*)

Oak Mountain Park Ponds

Two ponds exist on the Oak Mountain Park property. The pond on the north side is located behind the Folds House and represents a significant aesthetic and environmental resource. A trail leads to the pond, which is fed by a spring and is connected to a wetland and stream. This resource should be considered a priority when evaluating proposals from the DOT for road widening projects. If protected, this pond and its associated spring, wetland, and stream will play a critical role in the ecological and heritage education programming proposed for the site. The existing trail system can be extended to include a perimeter trail with appropriate signage highlighting the native plants and

animals, which inhabit the site. Additionally, the ponds can help contribute to a sensual experience for trail users from frogs, birds, and other wildlife attracted to the ponds.

The second pond is on the south side of the property and abuts the Oak Mountain Park residential development. This pond is also spring fed, but is smaller than the northern pond. Currently, the aesthetic appearance of this pond is less pleasing than the pond on the north side of the property. The water level in the pond has been lowered in order to prevent the possibility of a dam failure and to reduce impacts on the adjacent neighborhood. Thick vegetation has rapidly colonized the banks, making it difficult to see the pond or to walk to the waters edge. A trail which sweeps the northern edge of the pond and which includes a platform that allows the visitor to view the surface of the water and surrounding vegetation will create opportunities for viewing local birdlife. To minimize any impacts on the pond a trail system should not include a pathway across the dam. Vegetation, which will shield the visitors' view of the fence and adjacent backyards and homes, should be encouraged if not planted. Maintenance of the pond should include trimming of vegetation along the dam, but vegetation along the shore of the pond should be maintained to inhibit erosion.

Changes to Roadways

Changes in the road configuration will leave a scar down through the middle section of the northern part of the property. Replanting of this area should occur immediately to begin the process of healing the scar. Two under-road passageways are recommended in order to make the park continuous and safe. The first would join two sections of trail together and provide park users with an interrupted walking experience. The second passageway is located near the parking areas. This allows visitors to park on either side of the road and to safely use either side of the park without having to cross through the traffic on Stripling Chapel Road.

Landscape Improvements

A plan has been developed for improvements to the planting design around the Folds House. Much of the vegetation is overgrown and obscures views of and from the house. As depicted in the drawings the character of Fold's House would be improved with the replacement of much of the original vegetation. Specific recommendations for landscape improvements include:

- Remove all shrubs except azaleas, camellias, and boxwoods.
- Replace removed shrubs with azaleas, boxwoods, tea olives, and camellias as indicated on the plan.
- Remove all wisteria, mimosa, English ivy, and yucca
- Preserve historic dogwoods
- Remove the gazebo
- Restore historic boxwood gardens
- Restore of complete brick walkway system
- Extend walkways around western end of house
- Remove river birch

Improving Connectivity

Improving connectivity within the park, the community and adjacent properties were considerations that the UGA team addressed in the design of the Oak Mountain Park.

Community Connections

Charrette discussions indicated a need for the new park to become an integrated part of community life. One way to achieve this objective is through programmatic elements. The rehabilitation of the Folds House offers multiple opportunities to connect with the community.

The historic Folds House is an extraordinary asset for Oak Mountain Park. Built in 1948 by Atlanta architect Clement Ford for Vernon and Inez Folds, the house was their private residence until 1964 when the property was occupied by Oak Mountain Academy. The Folds House served as the headmaster's house as well as offices, classrooms and library until the Academy moved to a new location in 1997. It is easy to see how the deceptively large building could house so many functions. The house's size and layout can continue to be accommodating for many groups and functions. With partners such as the Rolling Hills Resource Conservation and Development Council, Georgia Forestry Commission, City of Carrollton, Carroll County Parks and Recreation Department, the Carroll County Historical Society, the Native Plant Rescue Team, the Master Gardener Association, Keep America Beautiful and many Oak Mountain Academy alumni interested in showcasing the history and beauty of the property, the house can be well staffed and well cared for by many occupants once again.

The house, the cottage and the historic formal planted grounds surrounding them are an excellent contrast to the open, rolling hills and peripheral forests of the Park. The House will surely be a showplace for many community events. With good management of the House, it can serve for community non-profit offices as well as rental facilities for weddings, reunions, fundraisers and other social events.

The House and grounds also offers a scenic backdrop for passive uses of the Park by the county's citizens. The shaded area around the cottage and the open lawn adjacent to it can serve as a very desirable picnic spot for families with its intimate scale and view of the Folds House. Park tables and benches should be chosen for comfort and design, and should be placed so as to offer shade to their users and good views of the park. Sturdily constructed wooden picnic tables and Adirondack chairs would be good choices. Lighting should be chosen to compliment the design of the house, yet should not be so plentiful as to detract from the natural landscape. The half of the Park, which includes the amphitheatre and the Folds House should have pole lighting for pedestrian safety during evening functions. The other half of the Park is more passive and will be predominately used during the daytime. Its more natural landscape should include low ground level lighting to illuminate the trails at night so as not to take away from the view within the Park.

In addition to creating new connections with the community, existing connections should not be forgotten. The connection of the park with the Encore Theatre Company can be an integral part of the park's future. This group currently leases the gymnasium for set building purposes. Although the design team did not see a future for the gymnasium in the park design it did see a future for the Encore Theatre Company. The sloping topography inspired a design for a hillside amphitheatre that will make the park a resource for community theatre and concerts. The UGA team envisioned theatre patrons relaxing on the hillside as actors and musicians performed with the forest as a natural backdrop.

Physical Connections with the Community

Charrette participants discussed options for connecting the Oak Mountain Park with a nearby county park that offers active recreation opportunities. An undeveloped piece of land connects the two parks and the county is encouraged to pursue options for acquiring and using this land to create a trail between the two parks. Additionally, the county needs to solicit input from surrounding neighborhoods to see if residents would enjoy access to the park through trailheads that utilize existing utility right-of-ways in their neighborhoods.

Connections within the Park

The location of Stripling Chapel Road through the middle of the park presents a challenge for creating a park that functions and feels like one unified park rather than two adjacent parks. The elimination of fencing along Stripling Chapel Road will help eliminate visual barriers between the two halves of the park. A network of pathways that loops through and connects both portions of the property will further help unify the park. The paths will connect the two sides of the property and bring users through meadows and woods, to points with scenic views, and to the historic Folds House. As part of the road realignment, the construction of a pathway under the road is recommended to provide a safe connection for pedestrians wishing to utilize the whole park. Parking on either side of the road will allow easy access to both sections of the park and will help tie the property together. Through the development of these physical and community connections the park can become an enjoyable and inviting place for residents and visitors to Carroll County.

Conclusions

Carroll County has a unique opportunity to create a park dedicated to passive recreation. The land for the park is rich with history and already has many fond memories associated with it. When complete, the park will become a destination for walking, community gatherings, theatre performances, summer concerts and environmental education. The Folds House can also become a home for community groups and a museum that celebrates the history of Carrollton.

In this report we have recommended a number of changes to create a vibrant park for Carroll County and its visitors. The changes we have recommended heal the land and

improve connections. Large-scale changes, such as the removal of the gymnasium and blue classroom building were given great thought and debate. However, after considering the lifespan of these building, the long-term efforts that would be required to maintain them in perpetuity, and the overall goal of creating a scenic park that is peaceful and inviting it was decided that these structures must be removed. Together the large and small scale changes we have recommended are intended to improve the character of the site and create a park that the residents of Carroll County will value as a community resource.

Appendix One

AMPHITHEATRE CONSTRUCTION INFORMATION

<http://www.mauiararts.org/abtech.html#back>

STAGE INFORMATION:

Stage Canopy:

The stage area is covered by a 66'W x 32'D white free standing structure. The structure has a peak roof, with a center height of 21', coming down to 12' on the ends. There are side flaps that can be closed on three sides, in the event of inclement weather. The tent protects the stage from most weather conditions, however the stage is usually in direct sunlight from around noon until around 6:00 PM. The canopy is erected on a concrete slab that is approx. 2' higher than the lawn seating area. For structural reasons, nothing can be hung from the tent. Please see drawing for additional dimensions.

Staging:

The concrete slab that serves as the basic foundation is approximately 2' higher than the lawn seating area. A portable 2' stage is then erected on top of the slab, making the final stage height approximately 4' higher than the lawn. The portable stage is manufactured by Stage Right Corporation, and consists of 4" x 4" x 8' decks on top of heavy duty "Z" type legs. Dimensions are 36' Wide x 24' Deep. The stage is carpeted with a gray industrial style carpet, is skirted, and has the appropriate stair units available. On stage risers are available upon request.

Offstage areas don't need any staging, and can be set-up directly on the slab, 2' lower than the main stage. Front of house area is 100' dead center, and is built on an as needed basis, but generally works out to a 12'W x 8'D x 1'H platform for sound, and an 8'x 8' for lights. Spots can be placed on slightly higher platforms, or scaffolding can be brought in for an additional cost. A FOH tent is optional.

Sound wings are generally 12' to 16'W x 4'H x 8'D, depending on the sound companies' cabinets.

LIGHTING:

As mentioned before, MACC contracts all shows with local vendors. Lighting rigs are built on a per plot basis, however there are severe limitations. Because the stage is under a low canopy, trim heights can be a problem. Front trusses can be 40' & fully loaded to the capacities of the ground support equipment. The front truss is actually outside the tent, so trim heights can be maximized, however final trim height between the bottom of a can, and the deck is usually around 12'. The upstage truss is more of a problem, because it needs to be inside the tent. The optimal configuration is a very short (12' to 16') truss or pipe with under hung rows of lamps. The wider the truss, the lower the truss. Designs that incorporate side trees, or floor lights may up the lamp count more efficiently. Be aware that most shows end up with around 60 lamps. Certainly more can be done, but big rigs are costly, and don't fit very well anyway.

BACKDROPS:

Cyds, painted drops, screens, or other full size backdrops should be left in the shop. Don't even try it. The potentially windy environment, coupled with the fact that no load can be

added to the tent, make it a difficult and unsafe proposition. However, the tent is completely white, and used properly, with the right lighting and a little creativity, can be attractive.

SOUND:

There are a few good local sound companies in the state. There is an S4 system, a V-DOSC system, an EAW 850 rig and some Showco equipment available. Most are capable of any size production, and can supply backline equipment as needed. For smaller shows, smaller systems are available. Set-up is straight forward. FOH & wings are discussed in "staging" above. Underground conduits for pulling snakes are in place. There is a 105dB (A Weighted), per five minute average, sound limit at the console. Measurements are taken, and printed out for inspection at sound check.

POWER:

Power is good & clean. There is a 400 amp 3 phase lighting disconnect, and a 200 amp 3 phase isolated ground disconnect. Both panels are located about 20' from the upstage left corner of the tent. All connections are large camlock style. Connections need to be made by a house electrician. There is no shore power, but if you can get your bus here, we'll hook it up.

BARRICADES:

When a barricade is required, it is constructed of freestanding wooden 4'H x 8'W panels. There is enough room between the barricade and the concrete slab for pit security. When no front barricade is required, barricade material begins at the downstage edges of the tent, and wrap around the wings to the upstage, leaving the front of the stage open.

DRESSING ROOMS:

Dressing rooms, production office, & hospitality are all located in the lobby areas of an adjacent theater. The upstairs lobby is normally dedicated as the band "dressing room" furnished with couches, tables, chairs, etc., and is one large area. There are large clean private bathrooms, and a view of the amphitheater, and the surrounding mountains. The area is clean and air conditioned. There are showers in the building, however, they do not adjoin the dressing room area. This area is easily secured by backstage security personnel.



oak mountain park



Oak Mountain Pond
 Historic Folds House
 Folds House Parking
 Historic Folds Cottage
 (Future Restroom Area)
 Amphitheater

Hiking/Walking Trails
 (Associated with Pond)
 Open Recreation Area
 Current Location of Tennis Courts
 Proposed Roadway for Vehicular Access
 to North and South Sides (with Parking)
 Scenic/Picnic Overlook Area
 South Side Pond
 Nature/Hiking Trails

Stripling Chapel Road



existing

The Resource Conservation and Development Council invited the University of Georgia's Office of Public Service and Outreach (School of Environmental Design) to conduct a design charrette to provide design ideas for a passive recreation park on the site of the former Oak Mountain Academy. On Monday July seventh a group of students and faculty met with local community leaders to discuss possibilities for the site and to begin work on a design proposal. Representatives from the Resource Conservation and Development Council, Georgia Forestry Commission, Soil Conservation Service, historic preservation groups, Carrollton Tomorrow, Carrollton Parks and Recreation, Division of Community Affairs, alumni from Oak Mountain Academy and the Carrollton Garden Club participated in the process.

The property consists of about seventy-five acres on each side of Stripling Chapel Road, which will become a passive recreation park for Carroll County. On the southern portion of the property is a pastoral hillside that provides beautiful views of distant hills. The northern portion of the property consists of two newer non-contributing school structures and the historic Folds House. Throughout the charrette the UGA team learned about the history of the former Oak Mountain Academy and the land. Participants discussed visions for the Folds House and felt that it could play a vital role in the future park. The history of the land is one that has seen school children playing in the woods and fields. Once a year skies were filled with kites as older children taught younger children about the science of flight. The land has also undergone an intensive environmental cleanup to remove toxic elements in the soil that were previously dumped on the site. During this process soils were tested and removed, pavement was ripped up and monitoring systems were installed. It was a process that severely disturbed the land in order to repair it. Future plans for the realigning Stripling Chapel Road will again disturb the land. As part of the charrette the UGA team toured the property and was able to see first-hand the character and condition of the land. Additionally, the team took time to read over much of the environmental assessment that documents the clean up and the deed restrictions, which govern how the county may use the land. Through this process the UGA team began developing a vision for transforming the old Oak Mountain Academy into the new Oak Mountain Park.

proposed



healing the land @

oak mountain park

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Minimizing Disturbance

Utilizing an existing road through the park will minimize any impact that would be caused by redeveloping circulation. Allowing the second road to return to a natural state will help to visually heal the land and could reduce erosion control. Keeping parking spaces at the periphery of the park will minimize traffic disturbances through the park and create a more peaceful experience for park users. The road through the park would remain for maintenance and for preparation of park activities but gates would remain closed so that the park road does not become cut through for vehicle traffic. In accordance with the deed restrictions and in an effort to prevent further disruption to the park the UGA team is recommending that no new buildings be constructed on the site. In order to minimize the repairs needed to reconnect disrupted utilities it is recommended that these repairs be limited to the Folds House and Cottage. Renovating and using the cottage as restroom for park users would eliminate the need to construct new buildings. If a more centrally located restroom is desired this could be located near the roadside parking and constructed as part of the plans to realign Stripling Chapel Road. Eliminating the gymnasium and blue building is needed to minimize the visual distraction they create. The creative reuse of the foundations for picnic areas and theatrical performances would lessen the impact of removing the buildings completely and would provide opportunities for park users to utilize these spaces on a daily basis.



proposed amphitheater



existing gymnasium

proposed

AMPHITHEATER



The concrete slab of the classroom building would serve well as an outdoor performance space in the park. With an active community theater group and a beautiful outdoor setting, an amphitheater would be an asset to both the site and the cultural programs of

Carroll County. The topography of the land directly east of the classroom building slopes naturally towards the building and could be easily adapted to tiered lawn seating - depending on the amount of grading that is needed or could be accomplished given current environmental restrictions.

The proposed design uses the topography of the site to incorporate seating into the hill and take advantage of the views and sunsets over the classroom building site. The tiers would allow for picnic blanket-style seating yet provide a clear view of the stage for all patrons.

Trees should be planted as shown to create a shade canopy for the seating area. They can be limbed up just enough to provide an unobstructed view of the stage. Trees should also be planted at the back of the slab stage to provide more of a backdrop for performances. As with most amphitheatres, the view itself could serve as the only backdrop, or a specific backdrop could also be constructed, as shown. "Backstage" "green room" and "dressing room" areas could easily be constructed through the use of large tents, which could be incorporated into the backdrop itself or be erected off to the side, as shown.

Visual Healing

It is aesthetically important to have a sense of architectural unity of buildings within the park. Upon entrance, the park visitor should be greeted with a landscape that compliments the historic qualities of the Folds House. Currently, the Coliseum (gymnasium) is the first building that a visitor encounters. Unfortunately, this large aluminum structure interrupts the flow and integrity of the park. Its location on top of a hill is a focal point and detracts from the aesthetic experience. Secondly, the blue Classroom building is similarly out of place within the beauty of the landscape. Neither of these buildings is being used to capacity and their current uses (maintenance storage, theatre set storage) can be better served in areas outside of the park. Removal of the coliseum is highest priority because it is the first visual impression of the park. However, it is understandable if the transition becomes a phased operation. Moving the function of the coliseum to the blue classroom until a better place can be found is acceptable. The goal, however, will be to eventually create an un-interrupted flow that cannot be achieved with the current location of these buildings.

Scenic Enhancements

The function of the chain link fencing is no longer necessary. Instead, the fencing interrupts the flow of the landscapes and gives park visitors a sense of unnecessary boundaries. Fences around the former playground, tennis courts, and along Stripling Chapel Road should be the first fences removed. Flexibility exists in making decisions about whether to keep or remove fences that border on adjacent neighborhoods. However, eliminating fencing is needed in order to remove visual impediments. Likewise, the realignment of the road provides the opportunity to bury the power lines on Stripling Chapel Road. This will help provide a visually uninterrupted scenic landscape.



existing classroom site



Folds House @

oak mountain park

Concept

The charrette processes revealed the need for a design that would be sensitive to the condition of the land and one that would improve connectivity. The extensive environmental repair that has taken place on the property has left a fragile site. Deed restrictions prevent the construction of new buildings or recreational activities that would disturb the land. Invasive exotic species have made their way throughout the forest floor and canopy. Extensive erosion can be seen on both sides of the property. Based on these observations the UGA team began working with the understanding that the first objective of the design would be to develop a plan that would "heal the land."



Landscape Improvements

A plan has been developed for improvements to the planting design around the Folds House. Much of the vegetation is overgrown and obscures views of and from the house. As depicted in the drawings the character of Folds House would be improved with replacement of much of the existing vegetation.





oak mountain park

Oak Mountain Park Erosion Prevention Strategies



Suggestions for improving the visual appearance and function of swales:

1. **Vegetated Swales** using long grasses and plants tolerant of wet and dry conditions (**location A**).



Vegetated swales are constructed open-channel drainageways used to convey stormwater runoff. Vegetated swales are often used as an alternative to, or an enhancement of, traditional storm sewer pipes. Advantages of this method are that they do not pond water for a long period of time and will induce infiltration. Vegetated swales generally have a trapezoidal or parabolic shape with relatively flat side slopes. Individual vegetated swales generally treat small drainage areas (five acres or less).

2. Use smaller stone in the swale runnel and vegetate the banks with plants tolerant of wet and dry conditions (**location B**).
3. When using large rip-rap check dams, vegetate in and among the rocks with plants tolerant of wet and dry conditions (**location C**).

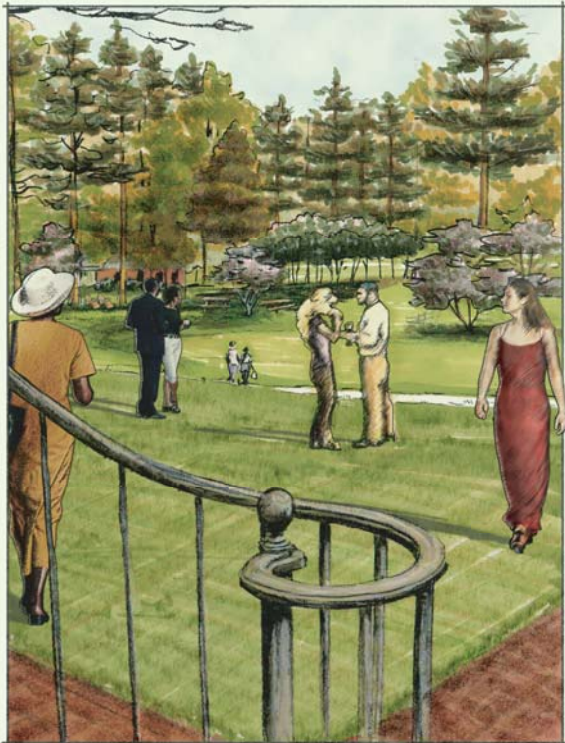
4. Avoid the haphazard "thrown" appearance of rip rap on slopes (**location D**).
5. Avoid the use of plastic sheeting on the surface of swales (**location E**).
6. Investigate the use of **Rain Gardens** or bio-retention areas on problem areas (**Locations F**).



A rain garden is a depression that functions as a miniature wetland. These landscaped areas, typically planted with wildflowers and other native vegetation, replace sections of lawn and provide a place for stormwater to infiltrate. Compared to a patch of conventional lawn, a rain garden allows approximately 30% more water to soak into the ground.



oak mountain park



The historic Folds House can serve as the backdrop for many social functions, as well as office space for various community groups to share.

The House and grounds also offers a scenic backdrop for passive uses of the Park by the county's citizens. The shaded area around the cottage and the open lawn adjacent to it can serve as a very desirable picnic spot for families with its intimate scale and view of the Folds House. Park tables and benches should be chosen for comfort and design, and should be placed so as to offer shade to their users and good views of the park. Sturdily constructed wooden picnic tables and Adirondack chairs would be good choices. Lighting should be chosen to compliment the design of the house, yet should not be so plentiful as to detract from the natural landscape. The half of the Park which includes the amphitheatre and the Folds House should have pole lighting for pedestrian safety during evening functions. The other half of the Park is more passive and will be predominately used during the daytime. Its more natural landscape should include low ground level lighting to illuminate the trails at night so as not to take away from the view within the Park.

Programmatic Uses for the Folds House and Grounds

The historic Folds House is an extraordinary asset for Oak Mountain Park. Built in 1948 by Atlanta architect Clement Ford for Vernon and Inez Folds, the house was their private residence until 1964 when the property was occupied by Oak Mountain Academy. The Folds House served as the headmaster's house as well as offices, classrooms and library until the Academy moved to a new location in 1997. It is easy to see how the deceptively large building could house so many functions. The house's size and layout can continue to be accommodating for many group and functions. With partners such as the City of Carrollton, Carroll County Parks and Recreation Department, the Carroll County Historical Society, the Native Plant Rescue Team, the Master Gardener Association, Keep America Beautiful and many Oak Mountain Academy alumni interested in showcasing the history and beauty of the property, the house can be well staffed and well cared for by many occupants once again.

The house, the cottage and the historic formal planted grounds surrounding them are an excellent contrast to the open, rolling hills and peripheral forests of the Park. The House will surely be a showplace for many community events. With good management of the House, it can serve for community non-profit offices as well as rental facilities for weddings, reunions, fundraisers and other social events.



The area around the Folds cottage would make an appealing picnic space with shady spots under the pine trees and dogwoods and an open lawn for enjoying the sun.