

# TOWN OF HILLSBOROUGH

## Exchange Park Master Plan



Exchange Park Play Areas (June 2019)

Adopted January 21, 2020

## **Background**

Located in Hillsborough at 331 Exchange Park Lane, Exchange Park is a privately owned park consisting of two parcels totaling 15.9 acres. The developed parcel, on the east side of the stream, is 6.8 acres and the undeveloped parcel, on the west side of the stream, is 9.1 acres. The developed property includes the building for the Exchange Club, which owns the park, ballfields that are leased by Hillsborough Youth Athletic Association (HYAA), two gravel parking areas and open grounds with play equipment. The park is open to the public during daylight hours. Amenities include playground equipment for ages 2-5 years old, swings, and a picnic shelter with tables. The undeveloped parcel is located across the stream and includes wooded land and steep topography.

## **History of the Hillsborough Exchange Club**

The Hillsboro Exchange Club Inc. was chartered June 19, 1947. The club first met at the Colonial Inn in downtown Hillsborough. The club was very active in community improvement projects with a primary focus of reaching disadvantaged youth. In the early years, club members worked to improve athletic facilities at Orange High School. The club was registered with the N.C. Secretary of State in 1949. The name was changed to the Exchange Club of Hillsborough in 2015.

## **History of Exchange Park**

The club purchased land from "Windy Bill" Ray and the park property was deeded to the club on May 4, 1955 by Mr. and Mrs. Ira Ray and Mrs. Walter Faribault. In 1960, the park officially opened to the public. Amenities included picnic shelters and a mini golf course. In 1968, the baseball field was added, and HYAA began using the field for practice and games in the 1969 baseball season. Over the years, many community fundraisers and social events took place in the park. Over time, the park facilities deteriorated and repairs were needed. In 2018, the restroom building received a new roof; and in 2019 the picnic shelter was replaced. Beginning in 2017, the Town of Hillsborough has given funds to the Exchange Club each year for maintenance and improvements at the park. The town gave \$1,450 per year in fiscal years 2017-2019 and \$7,500 for Fiscal Year 2020. These funds are offered as part of the community reinvestment program.

## **Existing Conditions**

There is interest by Hillsborough Parks and Recreation Board for the town to lease the park from the Exchange Club to provide additional recreational opportunities to area youth. This objective aligns well with the Exchange Club mission. To develop a vision for the park, the Parks and Recreation Board worked with Exchange Club board members to develop a master plan. In 2019, the Parks and Recreation Board hosted a series of public meetings to identify issues and to develop recommendations for the park. Comments from the discussion included the following observations about current conditions at the park:

- The majority of park users are parents with young children.
- Sometimes the park is used by school-age kids and teenagers.
- The picnic areas are regularly used for group gatherings.
- HYAA leases the baseball fields, and often families use the playground during games.
- There has been recent significant flooding in the park.
- The play equipment is outdated and deteriorating.
- The upper parking area is poorly laid out.
- Parking is a problem within the park and along the road, especially during baseball practice and games.
- The existing restrooms are not handicap accessible.
- The play areas are not easily accessible due to steep grades and aging infrastructure.
- There is a creek and multiple underground utilities that run through the park.
- The park needs updated play equipment and new features that encourage more use.
- Neighbors would like to see a fence installed between the park and adjacent residential properties.

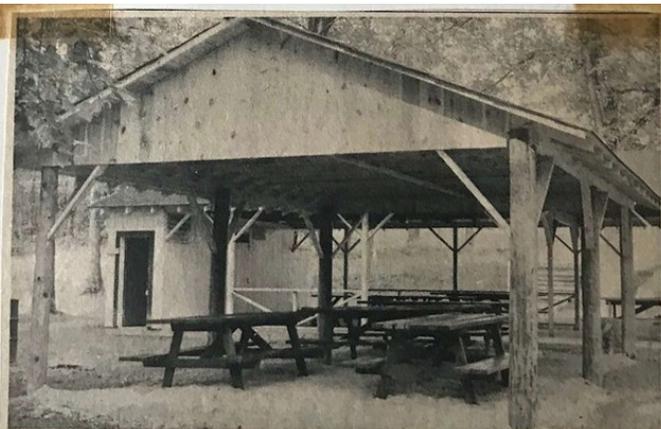
The following section includes historical pictures of Exchange Park.



Ca. 1958



Ca. 1958



*New picnic shelter at park*

A new picnic shelter has been added this year to the facilities of the Exchange Club Park in Hillsborough. The shelter was built due to the large demand for picnics by large groups during the summer season. Photo by Gee Coleman.

Ca. 1960



FORE!—Coy Wilkins of the Hillsborough Exchange Club practices his golf game to get in good form for tonight's tournament among the club's members. A qualifying round was played

two weeks ago to determine pairings for tonight's event. The match will be held on the Exchange Club's newly renovated miniature golf course.

News Photo by Sipe

Ca. 1968



NEW BALL PARK—Tommy Leonard is shown here with his son, Craig, staking out the new Little League Ball field being constructed by the Exchange Club at the Club's Park. Leonard stated that the field would be seeded as soon as rain was assured. The lighting and fencing will follow soon thereafter, with everything to be ready to play the 1969 season here.

Ca. 1968

Additional historical pictures of Exchange Park.



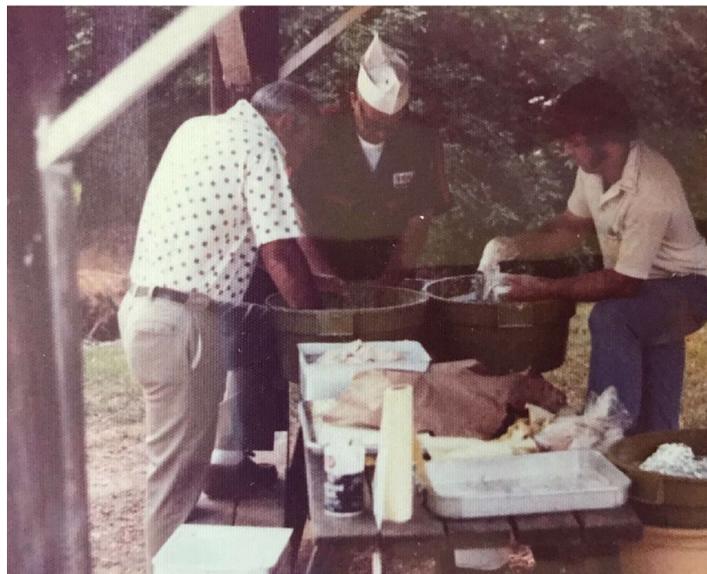
Ca. 1970s social event at picnic shelter



Ca. 1970s mobile concession stand



Ca. 1970s social event at picnic shelter



Ca. 1970s fish fry



Ca. 1970s fish fry



Ca. 1970s fish fry

The following section includes pictures documenting existing conditions at Exchange Park (2019).



View of play area



Stormwater ditch along Exchange Park Lane



Upper parking area



Play area at center of park



Play area and open space



Topography near upper parking area

Additional pictures of existing conditions at Exchange Park (2019).



Access stairs to picnic shelter from upper parking area



Topography near building



Play equipment



Play area near back of park



Play area near back of park



Play equipment near back of park

Additional pictures documenting existing conditions at Exchange Park (2019).



Manholes at rear of park



Stormwater culvert under railroad



Lower parking area near baseball field



Open space beyond lower parking area



Open space and mature trees at center of park



Single lane trestle on Exchange Park Lane

## **Site Constraints**

Exchange Park has numerous constraints on development. First, the portion of the property includes the ballfield and lower parking area are currently leased by HYAA. Any improvements to those areas must be agreeable to HYAA. Leases may need to be modified for future development. The site constraints are outlined below and are shown on the Site Constraint Map.

### Zoning

Exchange Park is zoned Office Institutional (OI) There are 20-foot front, side and rear setbacks. The following list includes the buffers for Exchange Park, which are also shown on the Site Constraints Map.

- 20-foot Type A Buffer along Exchange Park Lane.
- 100-foot Type C Buffer adjacent to railroad corridor.
- 40-foot Type B Buffer adjacent to properties zoned Agricultural Residential (AR) and Residential 20 (R20).
- 20-foot Type A Buffer adjacent to Residential 10 (R10), General Industrial (GI), and General Commercial (GC).

### Buffer Definitions

- Type A Buffer includes intermittent plantings or visual obstruction from the ground to a height of at least 15 feet.
- Type B Buffer is a visual barrier from the ground to a height of 6 feet, intermittent visual obstruction to a height of at least 20 feet.
- Type C Buffer includes complete visual separation from the ground to a height of 10 feet at plant maturity and opaque year-round.

### Stream Buffers

A 50-foot buffer must be observed on either side of the stream that crosses the Exchange Park property. The measurement is taken from the top of bank. The area within the stream buffer shall remain undisturbed with the exception of permitted uses and activities.

### Utilities

There are underground sewer lines and stormwater pipes in Exchange Park. The approximate locations are shown on the Site Constraints Map. These utilities must be located and utility easement areas shall not be disturbed by development unless permits are granted.

## **Skatepark**

In 2016, the Parks and Recreation Board received a petition signed by over 150 community members requesting a skatepark be built in Hillsborough. The board studied ten potential sites, including Exchange Park and ranked them according to the following properties:

- Proximity to public transportation.
- Expansion potential.
- Parking availability.
- Proximity to other park resources and amenities.
- Pedestrian/bicycle access.
- Visibility.
- Neighborhood impacts.
- Spectator accommodation.
- Community benefit.
- Proximity to first aid/emergency services.
- Proximity to businesses and other services.

Exchange Park ranked the highest of all sites studied. As a result, this master plan includes skatepark as the primary recreational resource at Exchange Park. It was the need for a safe and accessible skatepark for community youth that spurred interest from the Parks and Recreation Board in the development of Exchange Park as a public resource. Providing a safe area for youth, especially teens, to gather and recreate has been identified by the Parks and Recreation Board as a top priority.

## Master Plan Recommendations

In 2019, the Parks and Recreation Board and Hillsborough Tree Board, in coordination with the town public space and stormwater divisions, developed a list of recommended improvements for Exchange Park. The process involved a series of public meetings held at the Hillsborough Town Hall Annex Board Meeting Room. Neighbors of the park were contacted via direct mail, and three press releases were sent to the general public advertising the meeting topics and times. The recommendations are detailed in this master plan and are intended to guide future spending decisions if the town becomes involved in the ownership and maintenance of Exchange Park.

## Site Layout Recommendations

The following section includes recommendations for the organization of the Exchange Park property and amenities therein. Key priorities are identified later in this plan. These recommendations are shown on the Site Layout Map.

- Provide recreational equipment and opportunities specifically designed for older children and teens.
- Provide gathering areas or “chill spots”.
- Provide a skatepark dedicated for skateboard use.
- Provide swings for all ages and abilities (include accessible swings).
- Provide natural play areas.
- Provide disc golf practice baskets.
- Provide natural surface trails on the undeveloped parcel for hiking or biking.
- Provide a footbridge across the stream for access to the natural trails area.
- Provide accessible restrooms with water fountains and spigot.
- Provide shaded picnic facilities.
- Improve lower parking area for shared use between park and ballfield users.
- Remove upper parking area for skatepark.
- Provide access to storage building for Exchange Club.
- Protect existing trees and replace any trees that must be removed for construction purposes.
- Improve stormwater system through use of green infrastructure.
- Provide landscaping and gardens that are helpful to wildlife and pollinators.
- Provide amenities (benches, trash/recycling containers, dog waste containers etc.).
- Provide opportunities for public art and interactive art.
- Provide privacy fencing for adjacent properties as desired by neighbors.
- Provide sufficient site lighting for safety and security.
- Provide site signage consistent with town’s wayfinding and interpretive signage programs.

## Site Connectivity Recommendations

Exchange Park is centrally located but is not accessible by sidewalk or greenway. The single lane trestle located on Exchange Park Lane between the park and downtown presents the most significant obstacle to pedestrian and bicycle connectivity. The trestle is not scheduled for replacement in the near future; but when it is replaced, adequate space for pedestrian and bicycle passage should be incorporated into the design. The Hillsborough Community Connectivity Plan shows recommendations for sidewalk and greenway connections to Exchange Park Lane; but if the park is developed, the plan should be updated to show this area as a key destination. Pedestrian and bicycle improvements not only provide access to the park but also help complete the pedestrian network by providing safe routes between neighborhoods on the south side of the Eno River to key commercial and service areas.

The following section includes recommendations for connecting Exchange Park to key area destinations. These recommendations are also included in the Site Connectivity Map.

- Provide pedestrian and bicycle connectivity to downtown.
- Provide pedestrian and bicycle connectivity to greenway system.
- Provide pedestrian and bicycle connectivity to future train station site and Collins Ridge neighborhood.
- Explore options to improve pedestrian and bicycle safety under single-lane trestle on Exchange Park Lane.
- Update Community Connectivity Plan to reflect high level of importance for pedestrian and bicycle connectivity between Exchange Park and area neighborhoods and destinations.

## **Key Priorities**

The Parks and Recreation Board evaluated the list of recommendations to determine an order for implementation. The board agreed that providing accessible parking and restrooms should be the first objective as existing parking and restrooms are not accessible and are in need of replacement and upfit. The following list is intended to inform spending decisions when funding is available.

1. Improve lower parking area.
2. Provide privacy fencing for neighbors.
3. Provide accessible restrooms.
4. Make necessary stormwater improvements.
5. Design and build skatepark.
6. Provide accessible walkways to park amenities.
7. Install new inclusive play equipment.
8. Provide gathering spaces or “chill spots”.
9. Provide connectivity to key destinations.
10. Make other recommended improvements as funding is available.

## **Next Steps**

If the Town of Hillsborough decides to pursue a lease arrangement for Exchange Park, more detailed plans should be developed to guide site development. This master plan is intended to serve as a conceptual plan but changes to the plan are expected during design and engineering for park improvements. The layout of recommended site features should be investigated further and are subject to change. Additional input from stakeholders and the public should be solicited during plan development.

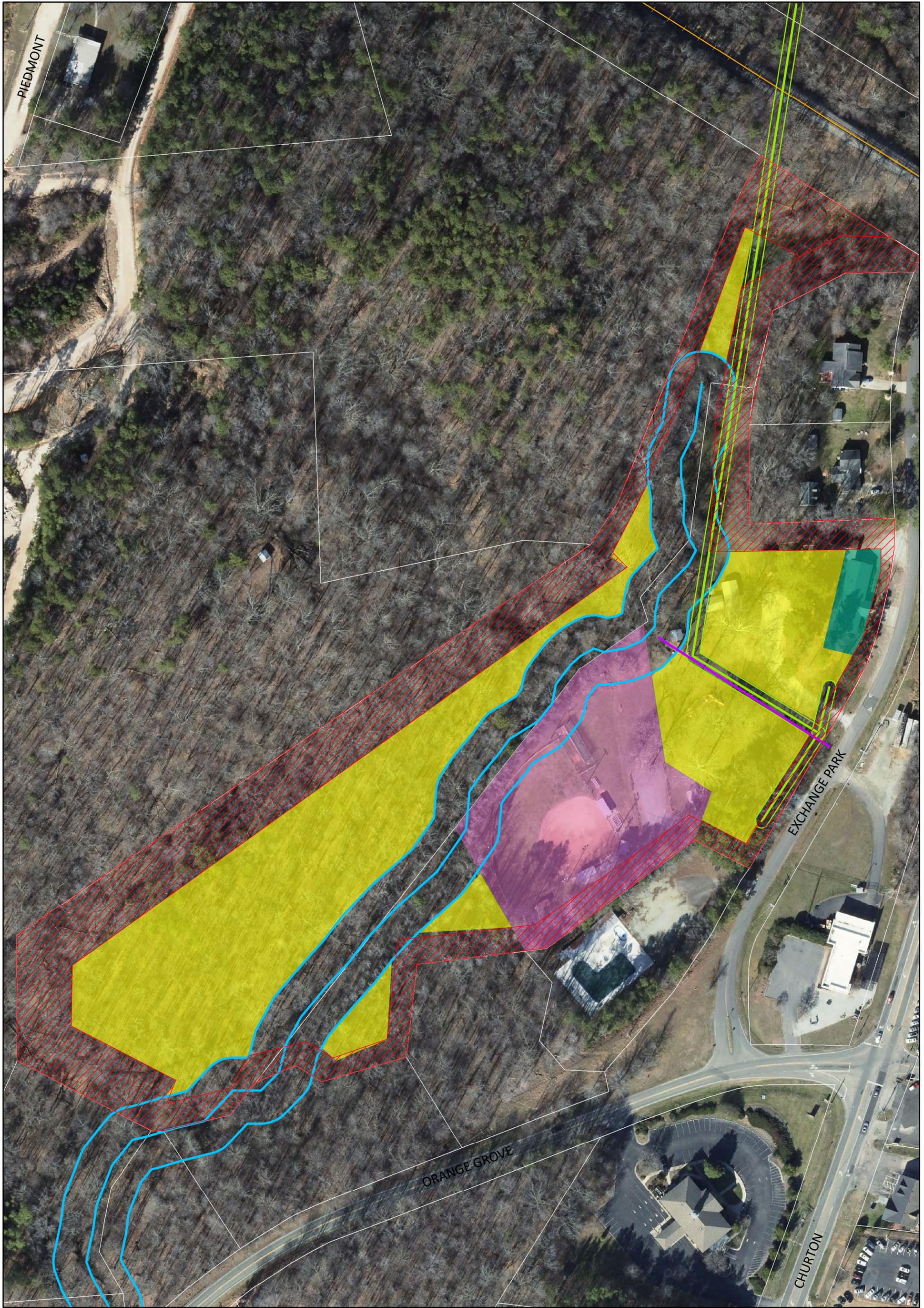
## **Maps**

The following pages include three maps showing the site constraints, the conceptual site layout, and site connectivity recommendations at Exchange Park.

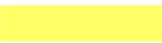
## **Potential Site Amenities**

Following the maps are images of park amenities similar to ideas and themes desired for Exchange Park.

To keep this plan relevant, it should be updated every three to five years.



### Site Constraints

- |   |                        |   |                            |   |                 |   |               |
|---|------------------------|---|----------------------------|---|-----------------|---|---------------|
|  | Exchange Club Building |  | Zoning Setbacks            |  | Stormwater Pipe |  | Stream Buffer |
|  | HYAA Leased Area       |  | Buildable Area (5.6 acres) |  | Sewer Easement  |  | NC Railroad   |





Trails

Chill Spot

Skate Park

Stormwater BMP

Accesible Walkway

Restroom

Swings

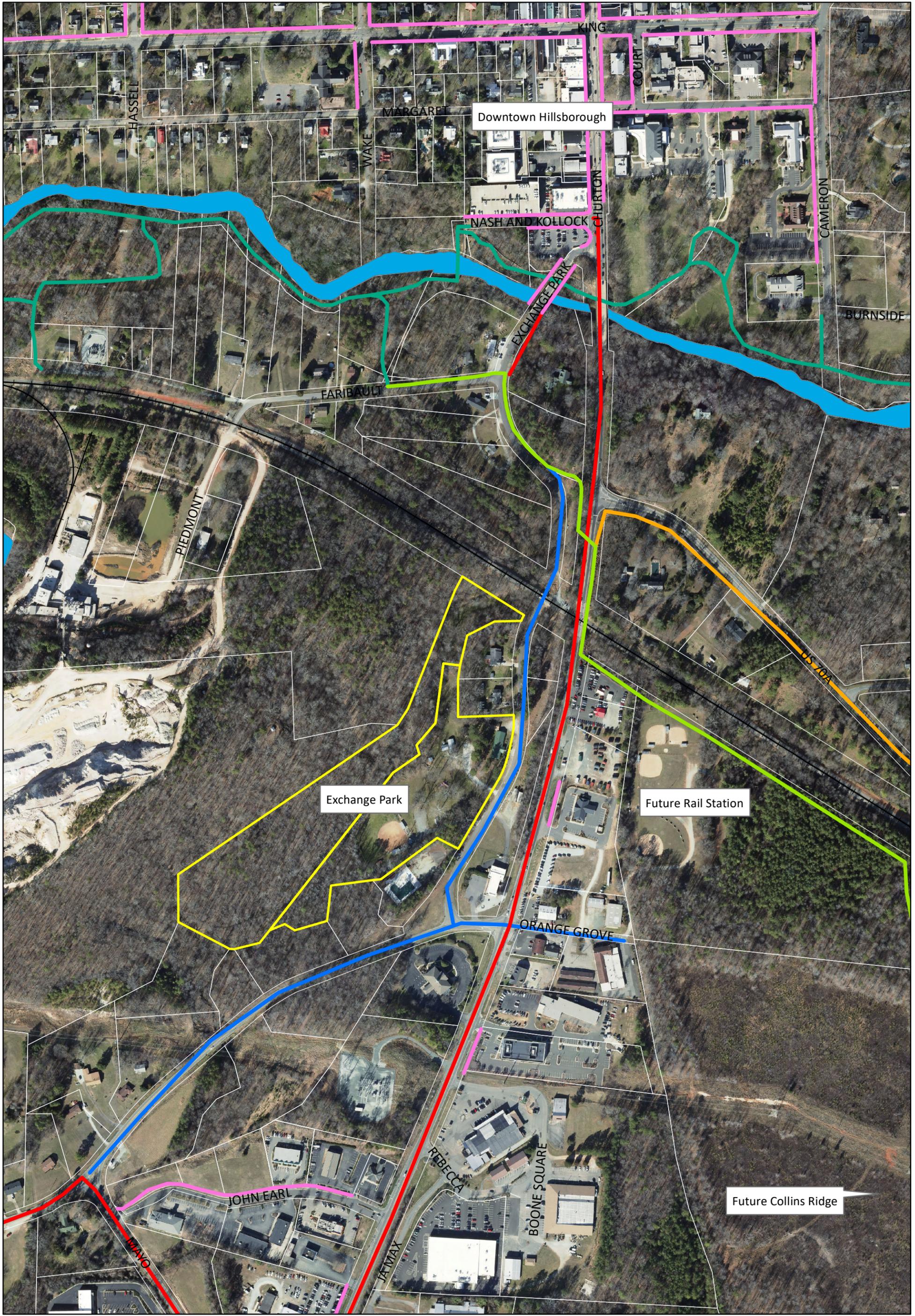
Picnic Shelter

Expanded Parking

EXCHANGE PARK

Site Layout





### Site Connectivity

- Existing Sidewalks
- High Priority Sidewalks
- Low Priority Sidewalks
- Orange County Sidewalks Recommendations
- Riverwalk Greenway
- Future Greenway Recommendations
- Exchange Club Property
- +— NC Railroad
- Eno River



Examples of potential site amenities:



Skatepark



Disc golf practice basket



Hammocks



Web swings



Free expression wall



Mountain bike trails



Accessible public restrooms



Picnic shelters

Additional examples of potential site amenities:



Little library for teens



Games area



Small group study areas



Natural play equipment



Solar-powered charging station



Slackline



Small performance stage