

Re-Purposing Assets: Examining Underutilized City Parks

The starting point...

- In 2010, DPR was charged with finding ways to reduce ongoing operations and maintenance costs
- At the same time, we have been working to determine what parks are and are not meeting our customers' needs.

We combined these goals into the questions:

“What parks in the City are not well used?”

“Should we change the use of some parks?”

“Could changing uses help with costs?”



- I. Collection of data
 - a. Determination of criteria
 - b. SOPARC counts
 - c. Title and deed searches
 - d. Current operations costs



- II. Specific site conditions
 - a. History of citizen involvement
 - b. Police reports
 - c. Proximity of other park facilities



- III. Presentation of findings to City Council
 - a. Specific site recommendations
 - b. Partnership opportunities
 - c. Estimated costs and savings

PARK USER COUNTS

- Reservation numbers from DPR's CLASS system
- Vehicle counts by traffic counter in driveways
- SOPARC (System for Observing Play and Recreation in Communities), developed by researchers at San Diego State and used in many locations for years
- Counts during May, June, September, October, 2010
- 4 staff visits per day over a two week period at each site
 - Morning (7 – 9 AM)
 - Mid-day (11:30 AM – 1:30 PM)
 - Afternoon (2 – 4 PM)
 - Evening (5 – 7:30 PM)

Parks selected for user counts

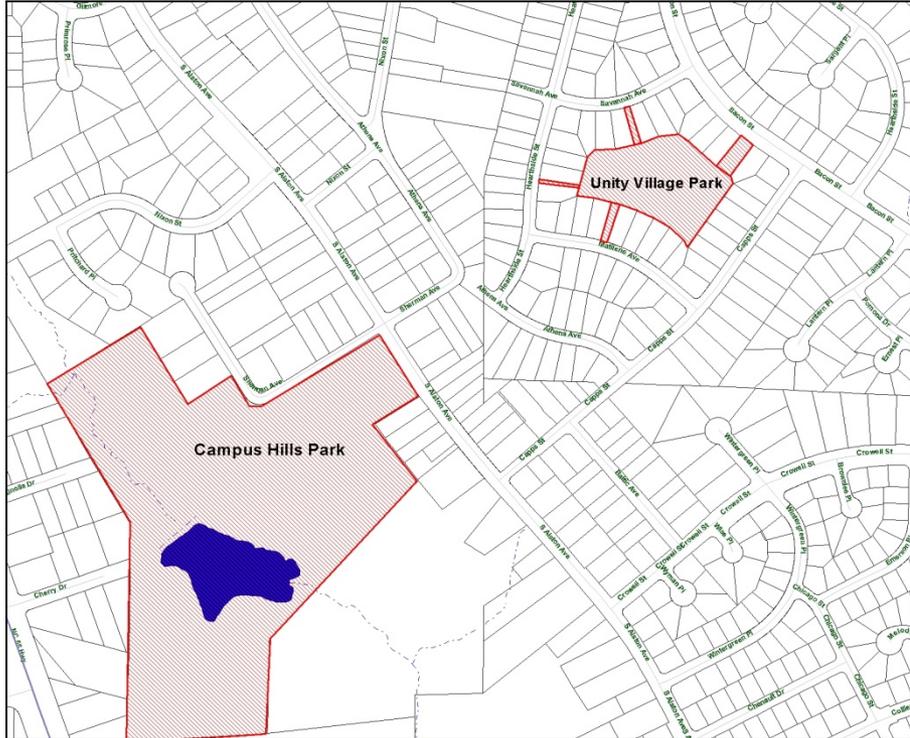
Unity Village Park	2011 Matilene Ave.
Shady Oaks Park	2400 Nebo St.
Grant St. Park	918 Grant St. and 1200 Grant St.
Rockwood Park	2310 Whitley Dr.
White Oak Park	2504 Dallas St.
Carroll St. Park	815 Carroll St.
Sandy Creek Park	3510 Sandy Creek Dr.
Oakwood Park	411 Holloway St.
Drew-Granby Park	1100 Drew St.
Rocky Creek Park	1014 N. Elizabeth St.
Birchwood Park	3105 Hursey St.
Belmont Park	2207 Sovereign St.
Lakeview Park	3500 Dearborn Dr.
Red Maple Park	3310 Hinson Dr.

- Criteria for selection:
 - ✓ DPR has very low or no user numbers for registrations of court, field, or shelter
 - ✓ Staff observed no use in initial observation visits

Park property encumbrances

- A majority of all City park properties have a deed encumbrance, some from a federal or state grant, some a restriction based on a donation
- 11 of the 15 parks in this study have an encumbrance; three have more than one kind
- It is often not cost-efficient to attempt to remove an encumbrance if the land can be re-purposed and still remain compliant to the legal restrictions

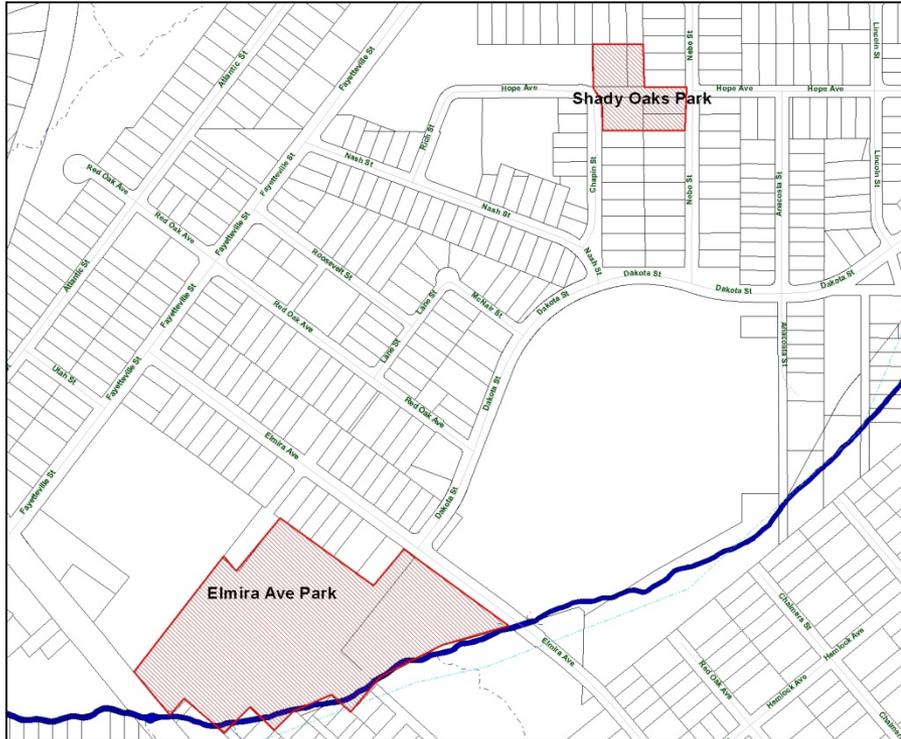
Unity Village Park



Comments: trash at basketball court and shelter suggest some use; restroom has remained closed due to vandalism

Size	3.7 acres
Acquisition	Purchased in 1970 for \$10 from Durham Homes, Inc., developer of the surrounding subdivision
Encumbrances	None known
Shelter rental, 2010	0
Field rental, 2010	N/A
Mowing cost, 2010	\$4,816
SOPARC counts, 2 week total	2
Vehicle count, 1 week total	N/A
Park adopted by citizen group	Yes, but conditions of adoption have not been met
Location	Unity Village Park to Campus Hills Park, 0.28 miles.

Shady Oaks Park



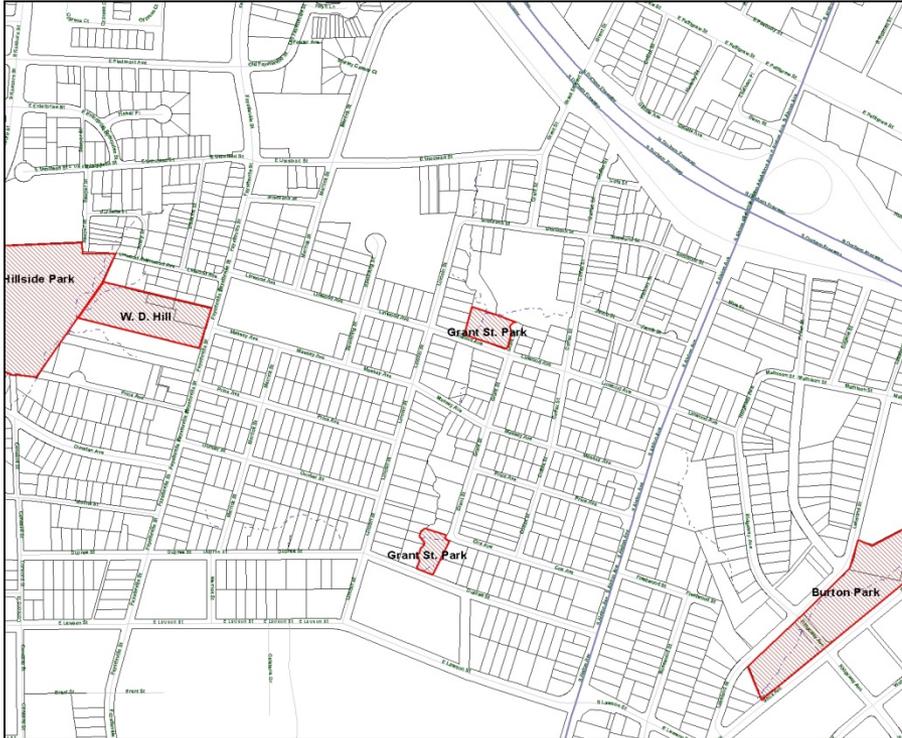
Comments: park equipment has suffered vandalism in recent years; neighbors have complained about loitering and drinking in the park

Size	1.4 acres
Acquisition	Acquired in 1976 from the Redevelopment Commission
Encumbrances	Yes, HUD
Shelter rental, 2010	N/A
Field rental, 2010	N/A
Mowing cost, 2010	\$1,848
SOPARC counts, 2 week total	8
Vehicle count, 1 week total	N/A
Park adopted by citizen group	no
Location	Park is 0.4 mile from Elmira Ave. Park.

Shady Oaks Park

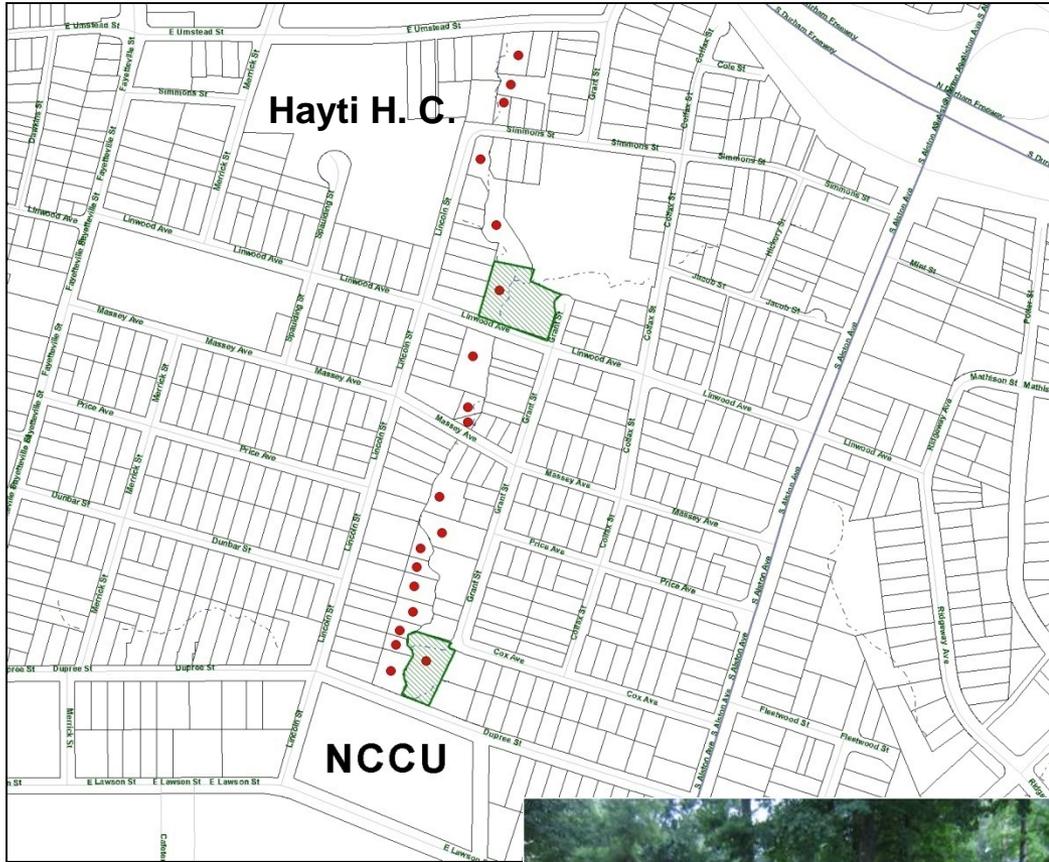


Grant Street Park



Comments: Phase 2 of the Pearsontown Trail runs between NCCU and Hayti Heritage Center and includes these parcels

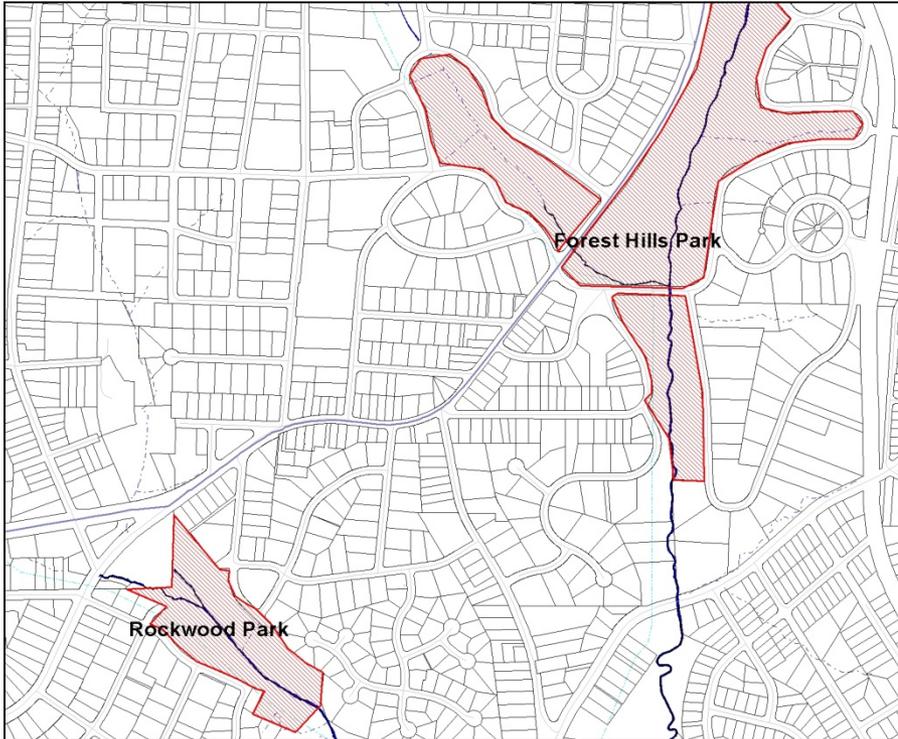
Size	6.36 acres
Acquisition	Purchased in 1975 as part of HUD initiative (OSA-72)
Encumbrances	Yes, LWCF and HUD
Shelter rental, 2010	N/A
Field rental, 2010	N/A
Mowing cost, 2010	\$2,240
SOPARC counts, 2 week total	2
Vehicle count, 1 week total	N/A
Park adopted by citizen group	no
Location	Southern parcel is 0.33 miles from Hillside Park, 0.41 miles from Burton Park Northern parcel is 0.29 miles from Hillside Park, 0.42 miles from Burton Park



Grant St. Park



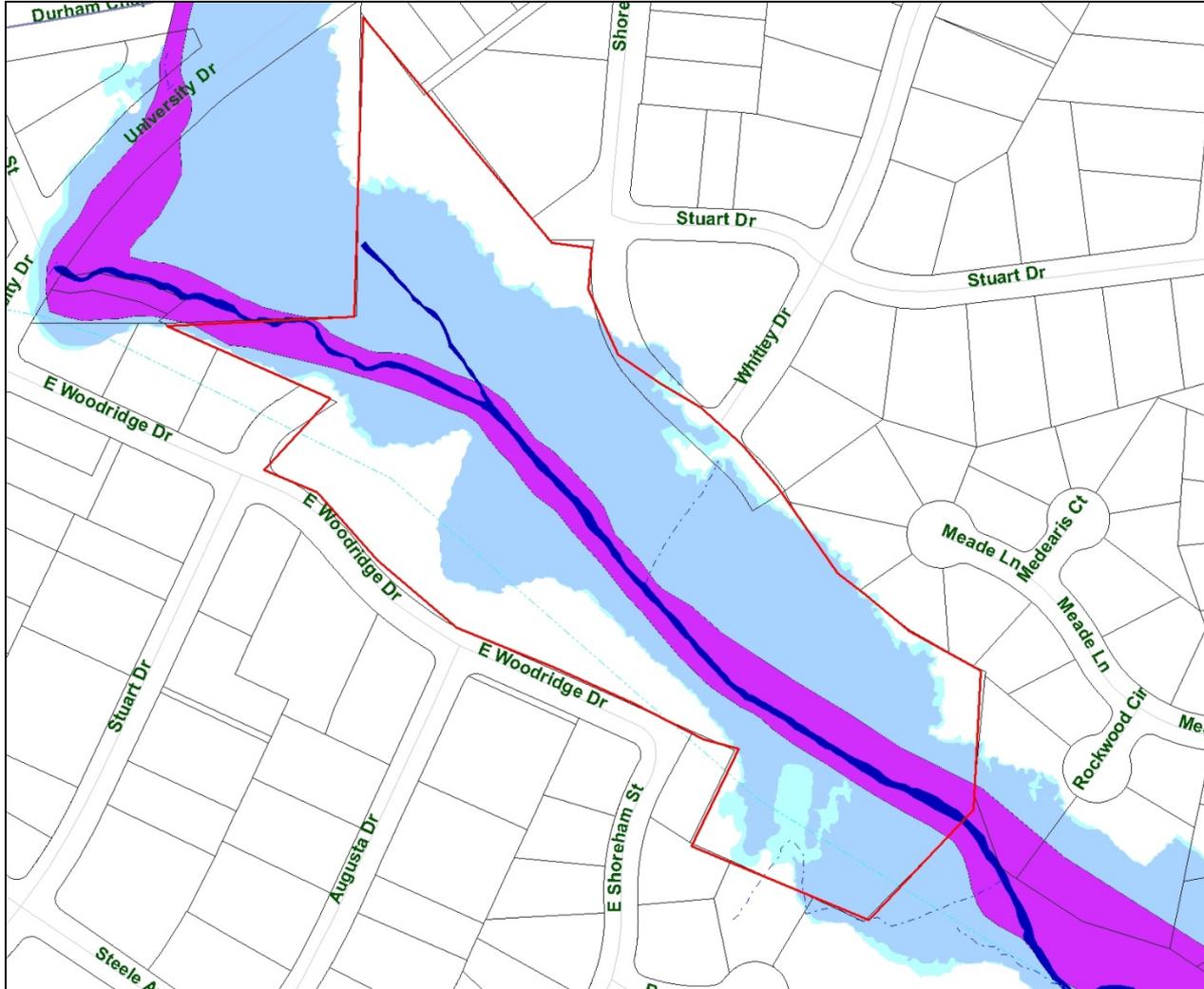
Rockwood Park



Size	12.23 acres
Acquisition	Purchased in 1962
Encumbrances	Yes, LWCF
Shelter rental, 2010	405
Field rental, 2010	N/A
Mowing cost, 2010	\$7,504
SOPARC counts, 2 week total	83
Vehicle count, 1 week total	215
Park adopted by citizen group	no
Location	0.65 miles from Forest Hills Park

Comments: park is 90% flood plain and flood way; 12 calls to police for vehicles in park after closing in 2010

Rockwood Park

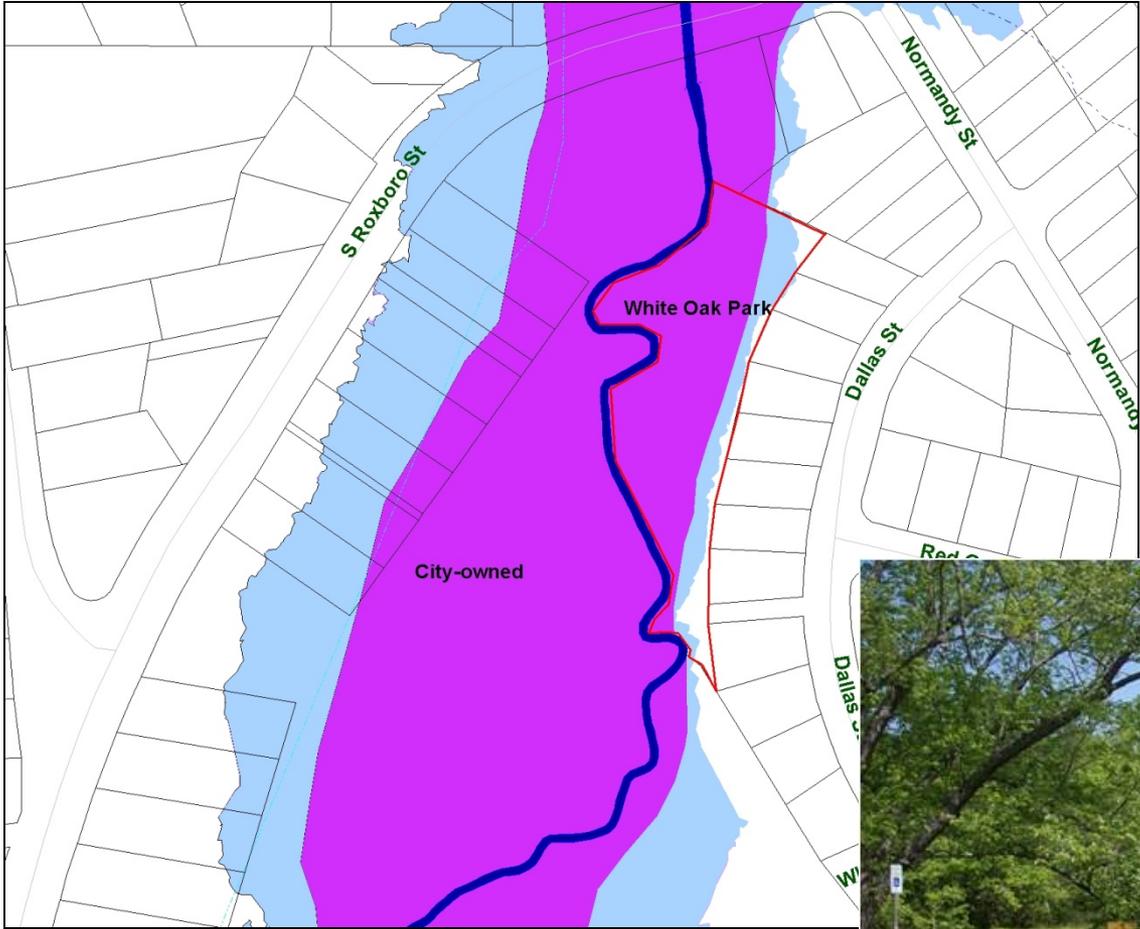


White Oak Park



Comments: park is 90% in flood way; identified in Third Fork Creek watershed study as possible BMP site

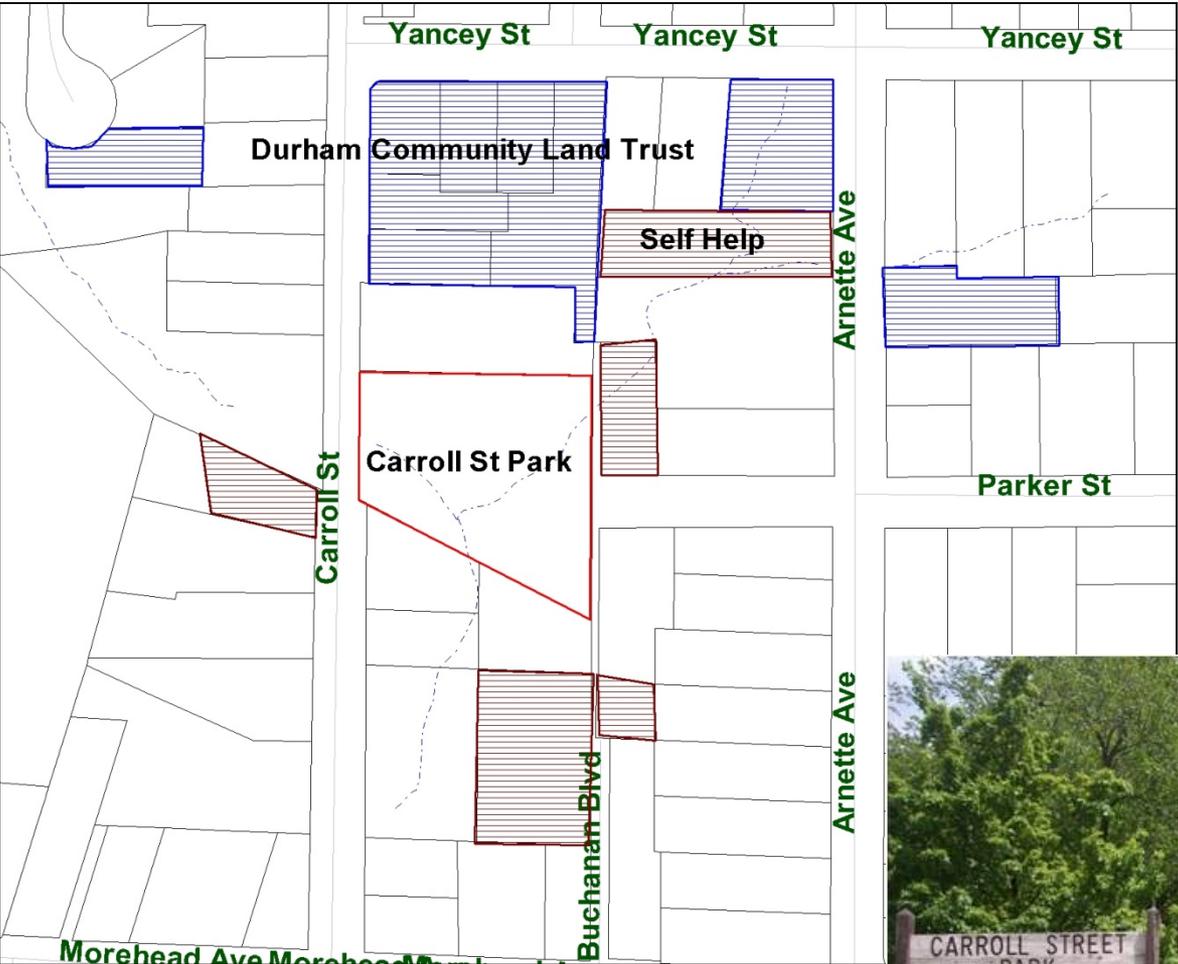
Size	2.5 acres
Acquisition	Acquired by donation from Suburban Homes & Club Blvd. Development Co. in 1950
Encumbrances	Yes, LWCF
Shelter rental, 2010	N/A
Field rental, 2010	N/A
Mowing cost, 2010	\$2,800
SOPARC counts, 2 week total	1
Vehicle count, 1 week total	N/A
Park adopted by citizen group	no
Location	0.56 miles from Forest Hills Park



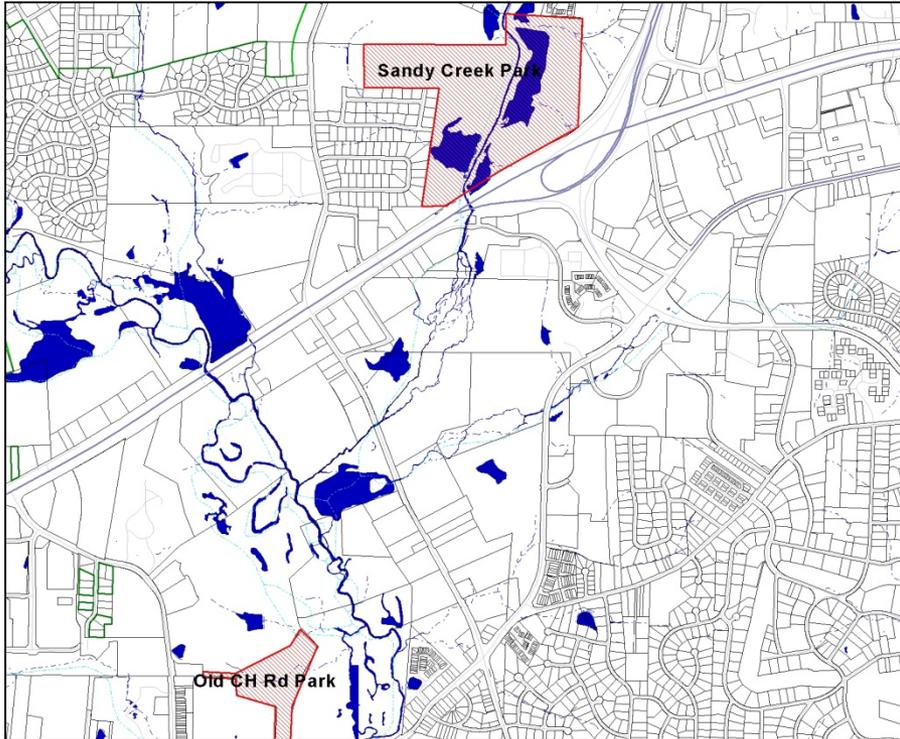
White Oak Park



Carroll St. Park



Sandy Creek Park



Comments: two state encumbrances and EEP restoration site; 50% of site in flood plain; two groups (DOST and NHCCAC) working on site improvements

Size	101.74 acres
Acquisition	Two larger parcels purchased in 1928 and 1929 (125 acres) for wastewater treatment plant (at a cost of \$16,813)
Encumbrances	Yes, PARTF and conservation easement
Shelter rental, 2010	0
Field rental, 2010	N/A
Mowing cost, 2010	\$2,158
SOPARC counts, 2 week total	16
Vehicle count, 1 week total	N/A
Park adopted by citizen group	yes
Location	Just off the split of US 15-501 into Business and By-Pass routes

**Sandy Creek
Conservation Easement**



Sandy Creek Park

NOTE:
The conservation easement boundaries and wetland restoration area are only approximations meant for illustrative purposes only.

Legend

- Sandy_Creek
- CE1
- CE2
- Wetland Restoration area
- Durham_tract

0 350 700 1,050 Feet



**EEP Restoration Project #322
Sandy Creek
Durham NC**

wpsugg - nov2009

Oakwood Park



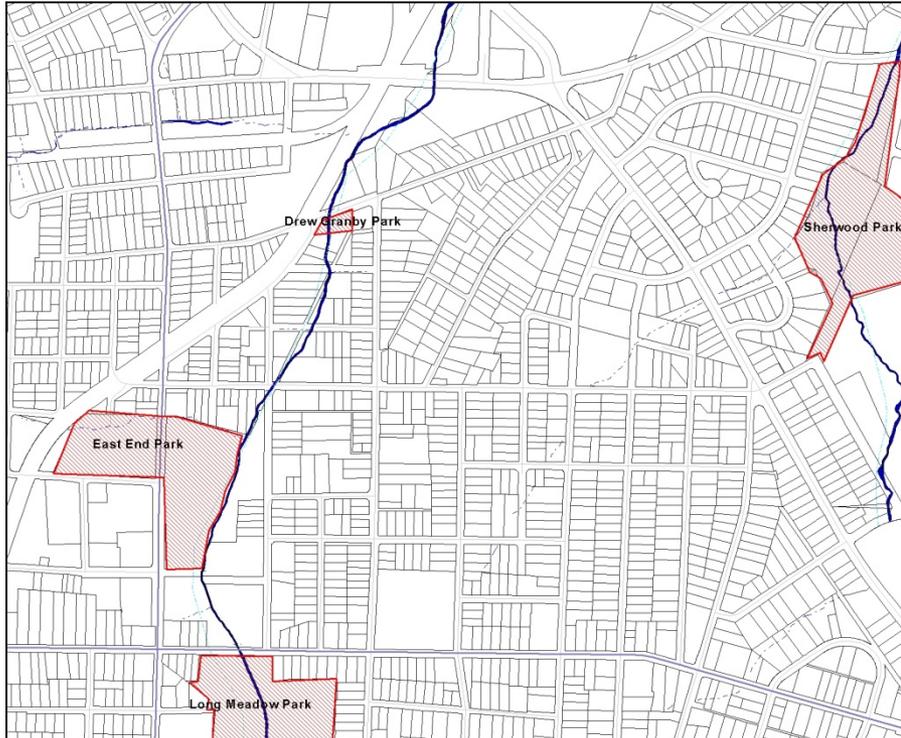
Comments: 7 police calls in 2010, most for suspected drug use; gang graffiti; park recently adopted by Cleveland-Holloway neighborhood, 2 community workdays held

Size	1.2 acres
Acquisition	Land from Redevelopment Commission; NCR 26A4, now closed project
Encumbrances	Yes, LWCF
Shelter rental, 2010	0
Field rental, 2010	N/A
Mowing cost, 2010	\$1,680
SOPARC counts, 2 week total	20
Vehicle count, 1 week total	N/A
Park adopted by citizen group	yes
Location	0.49 miles from East End Park

Oakwood Park



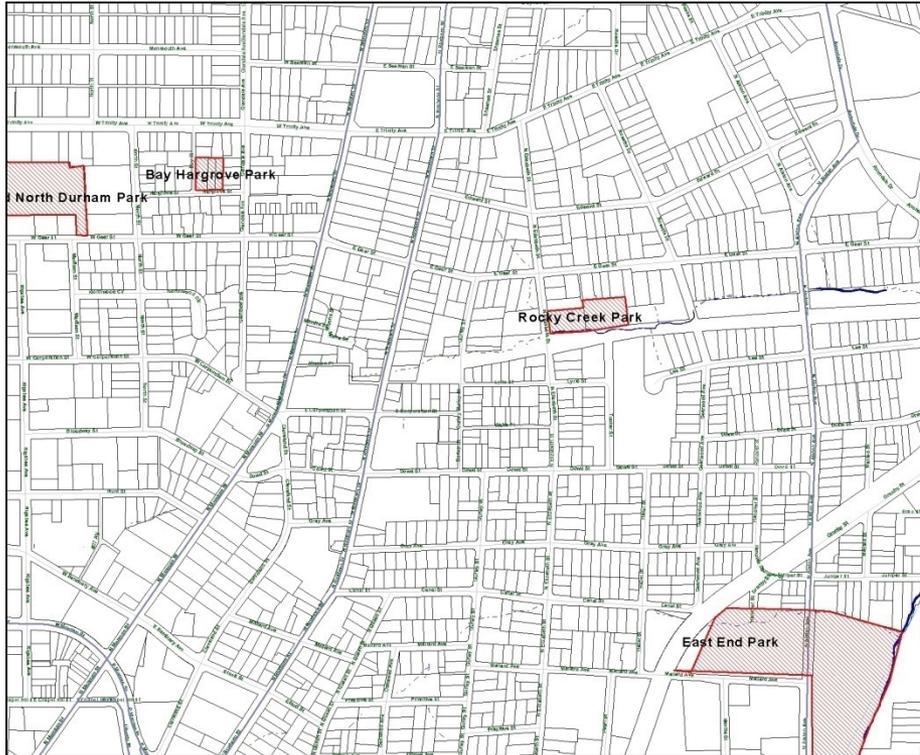
Drew-Granby Park



Comments: neighbors claim “no one” uses this park, despite some evidence of use (trash in cans)

Size	0.44 acres
Acquisition	Donation from Durham Housing Authority (owner of adjoining developed parcel) in 1961
Encumbrances	Yes, LWCF
Shelter rental, 2010	N/A
Field rental, 2010	N/A
Mowing cost, 2010	\$1,176
SOPARC counts, 2 week total	0
Vehicle count, 1 week total	N/A
Park adopted by citizen group	no
Location	0.38 miles from East End Park, 0.55 miles from Sherwood Park

Rocky Creek Park



Comments: location next to possible future trail, location in high density neighborhood

Size	1.37
Acquisition	In 1970 and 1974, one lot by condemnation
Encumbrances	Yes, HUD
Shelter rental, 2010	N/A
Field rental, 2010	N/A
Mowing cost, 2010	\$1,680
SOPARC counts, 2 week total	9
Vehicle count, 1 week total	N/A
Park adopted by citizen group	no
Location	0.44 miles from East End Park

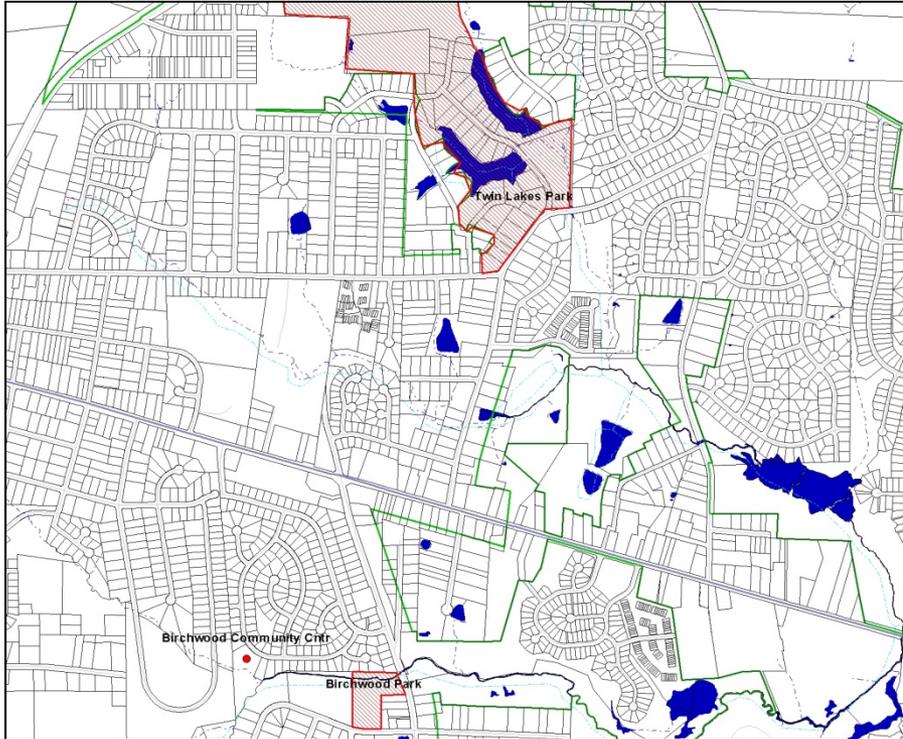
Drew Granby Park



Rocky Creek Park

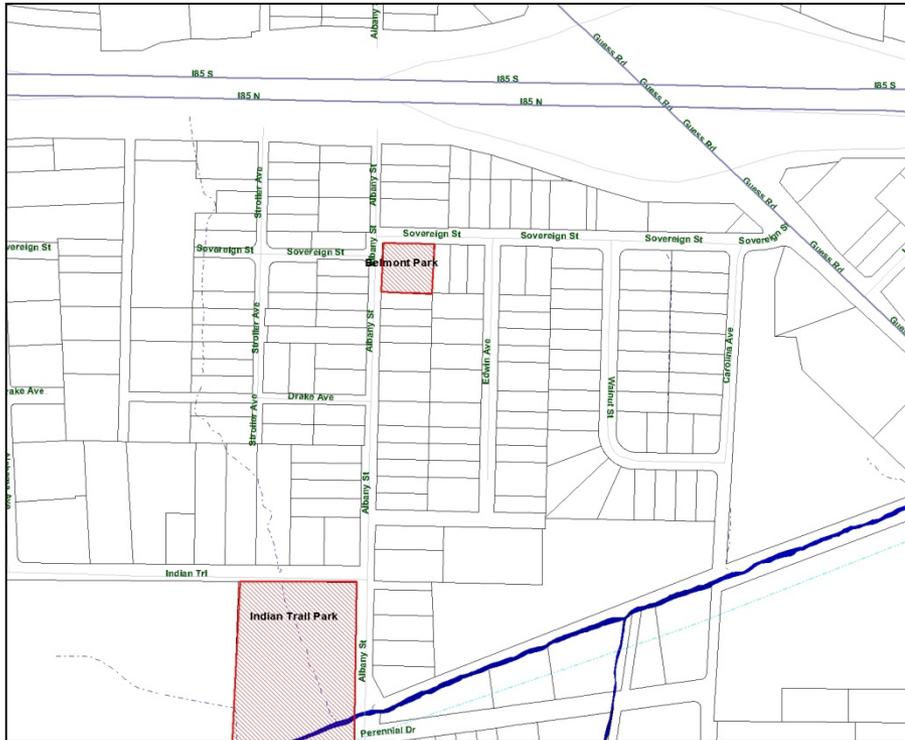


Birchwood Park



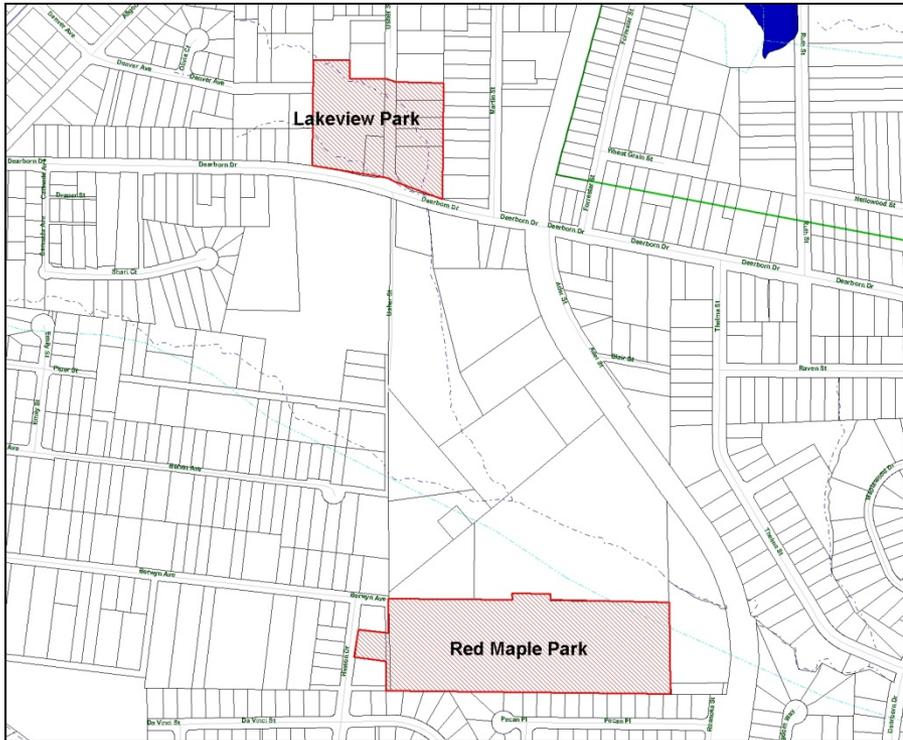
Size	4.9 acres
Acquisition	Purchased in 1976 for \$15,000
Encumbrances	None known
Shelter rental, 2010	N/A
Field rental, 2010	N/A
Mowing cost, 2010	\$2,052
SOPARC counts, 2 week total	5
Vehicle count, 1 week total	N/A
Park adopted by citizen group	no
Location	1.05 miles from Twin Lakes Park

Belmont Park



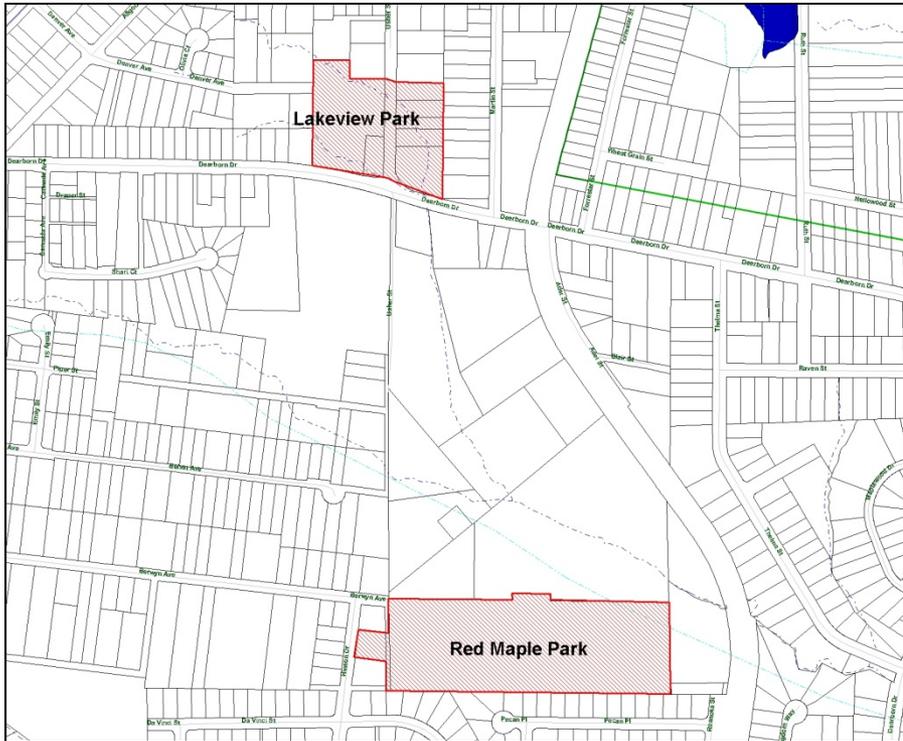
Size	0.49 acres
Acquisition	Purchased in 1964 for \$896
Encumbrances	None known, power easement across property
Shelter rental, 2010	N/A
Field rental, 2010	N/A
Mowing cost, 2010	\$696
SOPARC counts, 2 week total	1
Vehicle count, 1 week total	N/A
Park adopted by citizen group	no
Location	0.20 miles from Indian Trail Park

Lakeview Park



Size	5.87 acres
Acquisition	Lots purchased in 1972 with HUD funding, part of Open Space Land Program – Northeastern Durham (NC OSA-34) , total cost \$20,000
Encumbrances	Yes, LWCF and HUD
Shelter rental, 2010	0
Field rental, 2010	3,308 (not used except as back-up site)
Mowing cost, 2010	\$1,240
SOPARC counts, 2 week total	7
Vehicle count, 1 week total	153
Park adopted by citizen group	no
Location	0.43 miles to Red Maple Park

Red Maple Park



Size	11.25
Acquisition	Purchased in 1975 for \$38,000
Encumbrances	Yes, LWCF [BOR 37-00356 (F3)]
Shelter rental, 2010	0
Field rental, 2010	0
Mowing cost, 2010	\$1,912
SOPARC counts, 2 week total	8
Vehicle count, 1 week total	99
Park adopted by citizen group	no
Location	0.43 miles to Lakeview Park

So, in answer to our initial questions, we have made these plans...

- No effort to remove HUD or LWCF encumbrances from these sites at this time
- Work to find management partnerships to reduce costs: Unity Village and Carroll St.
- Remove playground equipment, keep park for passive uses: Shady Oaks, Grant St., Drew Granby, Belmont – reduce mowing
- Remove equipment and retrofit with nature trail and Storm Water BMP: White Oak

Plans for specific sites (cont)

- No action warranted at this time: Oakwood, Sandy Creek, Rockwood
- Consider future expenditures for improvements to increase functionality: Rocky Creek, Lakeview
- Lease to urban agriculture organization: Birchwood, Red Maple – other sites or parts of sites as warranted



Durham Central Park

Leigh Farm Park, October 2010

Urban Agriculture

DPR already has partnerships with several local garden/agriculture groups and has others who want to do more work City parks



“Natural Environmental and Ecological Management (NEEM), a sustainable urban agriculture organization in Durham, NC, seeks summer intern(s) to work...” (ad from March, 2010)

Orchard Park – July, 2010



"South Eastern Efforts Developing Sustainable Spaces, Inc. (SEEDS) is a non-profit urban gardening and community building organization based in Durham, NC. SEEDS was created to challenge and support neighborhood residents, community activists, city government and corporations by bringing community groups together to transform vacant land into productive, community-controlled spaces."

"If we had our way, every street corner would be brightened by overhanging fruit. Every kid could pluck berries from the schoolyard as they play. Parking lots would be orchards. And every neighborhood would be alive with neighbors talking to each other as they tend their community garden." (Bountiful Backyards)

		Estimated one-time cost	Estimated savings per year
Unity Village	No action unless some local agency/organization wishes to lease it	-----	-----
Shady Oaks	Remove equipment, replace with picnic table, reduce mowed area	\$6,000	\$950.00 per year
Grant St.	Remove remaining equipment, reduce mowed areas	\$500	\$2,300.00 per year
Rockwood	No action	---	---
White Oak	Remove equipment and paved surface, add short nature trail (to meet requirements)–turn over to Storm Water for management	\$3,000	\$3000.00 per year
Carroll St.	Work on finding some local agency/organization take over, otherwise simply reduce mowed area	\$500	\$1500.00 per year
Sandy Creek	No action	-----	-----
Oakwood	No action	-----	-----
Drew Granby	Remove all equipment except tables, reduce mowed area	\$3000	\$600.00 per year
Rocky Creek	No action, except possibly to INCREASE use	-----	-----
Birchwood	Lease to urban agriculture organization	\$1,000	\$3000.00 per year
Belmont	Remove equipment, reduce mowed area	\$500	\$800.00 per year
Lakeview	No action, except possibly to INCREASE use and thus lower need for police presence	-----	-----
Red Maple	Lease to urban agriculture organization	\$4500	\$6000.00 per year
	TOTALS	\$19,000 one time cost	\$18,150 per year