

Walnut Creek Wetland Park Master Plan

Raleigh, North Carolina



Ecological expertise helps ensure that City goals and publicly-generated ideas for education, resource protection, and recreation are incorporated into the master plan for an ecologically and socially significant urban wetland park.

Located southeast of downtown Raleigh on a 49-acre site between the Little Rock Creek and Walnut Creek Greenways, Walnut Creek Wetland Park is comprised of marsh forest landscapes and the floodplain of Walnut Creek. With a mission to raise awareness of the importance of wetlands for clean water, habitat, and recreation, the park serves as an important community hub and a valued resource for education and recreation.

The City of Raleigh Parks and Recreation Department sought a master planning team to help them achieve

their 25-year vision of an expanded Walnut Creek Wetland Center—“an equitably accessible destination focused on conserving biodiversity, offering learning and social engagement opportunities, and celebrating arts and cultural heritage.” As a key member of the selected master planning team led by Alta Planning and Design, Biohabitats contributed the development of a 10-year master plan and five-year action plan for Walnut Creek Wetland Park.

The park is located at the midpoint of a watershed that drains 50-square miles

of one of the most developed and urbanized areas of North Carolina. It provides an important habitat patch and link between the Walnut Creek Bottomlands (downstream) and the Lake Raleigh Hardwood Forest (upstream), both identified by the North Carolina Natural Heritage Program as Significant Natural Areas. Walnut Creek, a tributary of the Neuse River, flows through south Raleigh and the city of Cary.

As ecological consultant/specialist, Biohabitats provided the technical services to accomplish protection, education, and recreation goals established by the City and the many stakeholder organizations that participated in a public planning process. Biohabitats helped ensure that the master plan for the park grounds incorporated

environmental sensitivity for the large floodplain wetland areas and uplands of the site.

Biohabitats performed a wetland and stream delineation on the site, which contains over 22 acres of jurisdictional wetlands and over 5,000 feet of jurisdictional stream channel. Biohabitats also teamed with Dr. Alexander Krings of N.C. State University to conduct a vegetation survey, which included a description of the existence and extent of invasive species within the site. The vegetation survey of the property yielded 213 total species—37 trees, 15 shrubs, 22 vines, and 139 herbaceous species.

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