

TOWN OF HILLSBOROUGH

Cates Creek Park Master Plan



Adopted August 2018

Updated April 2022

Background

Cates Creek Park is a 17 acre community park located at 1445 Cates Creek Parkway in Hillsborough. Park amenities include restroom facilities, playground, multi-use field with soccer goals, and picnic tables. The park was built as part of the Waterstone development. Waterstone is a mixed-use development covering 337 acres in Hillsborough. Waterstone includes single-family neighborhoods, townhomes, apartments, a preschool, a community college and a hospital. Additional parcels are available in Waterstone for retail and office uses. The development was approved by the town in 2004. As one of the conditions on the approval the town required the developer to build a community park that would be dedicated to the town upon completion. Original plans for the park included two phases of development. The first phase was for active recreation and designed to meet the conditions of development approval. It included the multi-use field, restroom, parking area, and playground. Phase 2 included a pavilion, and additional trails and picnic areas in the wooded area of the park. The original park development plans are shown on the following pages.

Development of the Park

Cates Creek Park was dedicated to the town and opened to the public for use in spring 2016. Almost immediately the town began making improvements. Trees were added around the perimeter of the playground and the parking lot islands. Several sections of failing concrete were removed from the play area and the play surfacing was replaced with engineered wood fiber. Hillsborough Tree Board and Public Space Division worked in partnership with the Stormwater and Environmental Services Division to replace a 100-foot length of stone-lined stormwater swale that was adjacent to the playground with a linear pollinator garden. Perforated pipe was laid in the swale and surrounded by gravel. Sand and topsoil were mixed together to create engineered soil which was laid above the pipe. The area was planted with native pollinator-friendly plants.

Additionally, the parking lot drainage was improved. Stormwater runoff had been eroding the bank at the rear of the parking lot, bypassing the stormwater control measure and emptying directly into a stream that runs to Cates Creek. A catch basin was added and piped to the stormwater control measure behind the restroom. Curbing was added at the back of the parking lot to prevent water runoff and erosion on the bank.

Existing Conditions

Cates Creek Park is owned and maintained by the Town of Hillsborough. It is primarily used by neighborhood children and families. The Little School, a local day care and pre-school in Waterstone, also uses the park regularly. The Parks and Recreation Board hosted a public meeting to discuss the conditions of the park and develop recommendations for the Master Plan. Board members offered the following comments about the existing condition and facilities at the park

- The wooded area of the park is underutilized.
- Neighbors use the multi-use field for exercising their dogs.
- The picnic area is small.
- Erosion is occurring on the hills beside the entrance to the park.
- The entrance is stark and unwelcoming.
- There is no space for children to ride bicycles or scooters.
- There are no trails or walking paths.
- There are no bicycle racks.
- There is no recycling container.
- The pollinator garden is a major attraction and improvement from the original rip-rap stormwater swale.
- There are bare spots on the field in front of the soccer goals.
- The field is not programmed and seems to be a lot of space that is underutilized.
- Cates Creek is located in the back of the park but has no access.
- Informal trails have been made in the wooded area.

Original plans for the park and pictures of existing conditions are shown on the following pages.

Photographs of existing conditions at Cates Creek Park



Entrance to Cates Creek Park



Eroding slope at entrance to Cates Creek Park



Multi-use field



Compacted ground in front of soccer goals



Underutilized area southeast of multi-use field



Eroding slope beside multi-use field



Playground, pollinator garden and restroom



Stormwater retrofit linear pollinator garden



Playground



Picnic tables at restroom building



Stormwater Control Measure



Stormwater Control Measure



Informal entrance to wooded area of park



Informal trails



Creek in wooded area of park



Informal trails



Cates Creek and wetland



Wooded area

Master Plan Priorities

In 2018, 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 Cates Creek Park. The Parks and Recreation Board held three public meetings to solicit public input. Several residents and neighbors shared ideas for the park at the meetings and with staff via email. The Parks and Recreation Board reviewed comments submitted and made the following recommendations which are intended to guide future spending decisions.

Recommendations

- Maintain the existing playground equipment and park amenities in safe and working order
- Utilize universal design principles for all new park features
- Add landscaping to the entrance of the park (ex: native grasses)
- Add trees and landscaping around the play area (ex: Basswood, Serviceberry, Itea Virginica)
- Cease mowing operations on the slopes at the entrance of the park and plant native grasses and wildflowers
- Cease mowing operations on the slope beside the soccer field and plant native grasses and wildflowers
- Protect Cates Creek and the wetland areas
- Create a safe access to view the wetland area
- Add a multiuse trail system in the wooded area of the park. Trails should have firm and stable surfacing.
- Add benches along the trails and throughout the park
- Remove stone in stormwater swale and plant a pollinator-friendly rain garden
- Expand pollinator and wildlife habitat throughout the park
- Add recycling containers
- Add interpretive signs with topics such as green infrastructure and wildlife and habitat protection
- Add a paved pedestrian entrance from Cates Creek Parkway, north of the roundabout
- Add a paved trail around the multi-use field
- Add a skate spot and amenities for preteens and teens
- Consider adding covered picnic pavilions or several picnic areas throughout park
- Consider adding exercise equipment along the future trail system
- Consider adding natural play features in appropriate locations
- Consider opportunities for educational partnerships
- Consider adding public art to the park

If at some point in the future the town determines that the size of the field can be reduced, the following facilities should be considered for the field area:

- Short disc golf practice baskets
- Volleyball court (sand)
- Basketball court
- Community garden
- Dog Park (with shade and two fenced in areas)

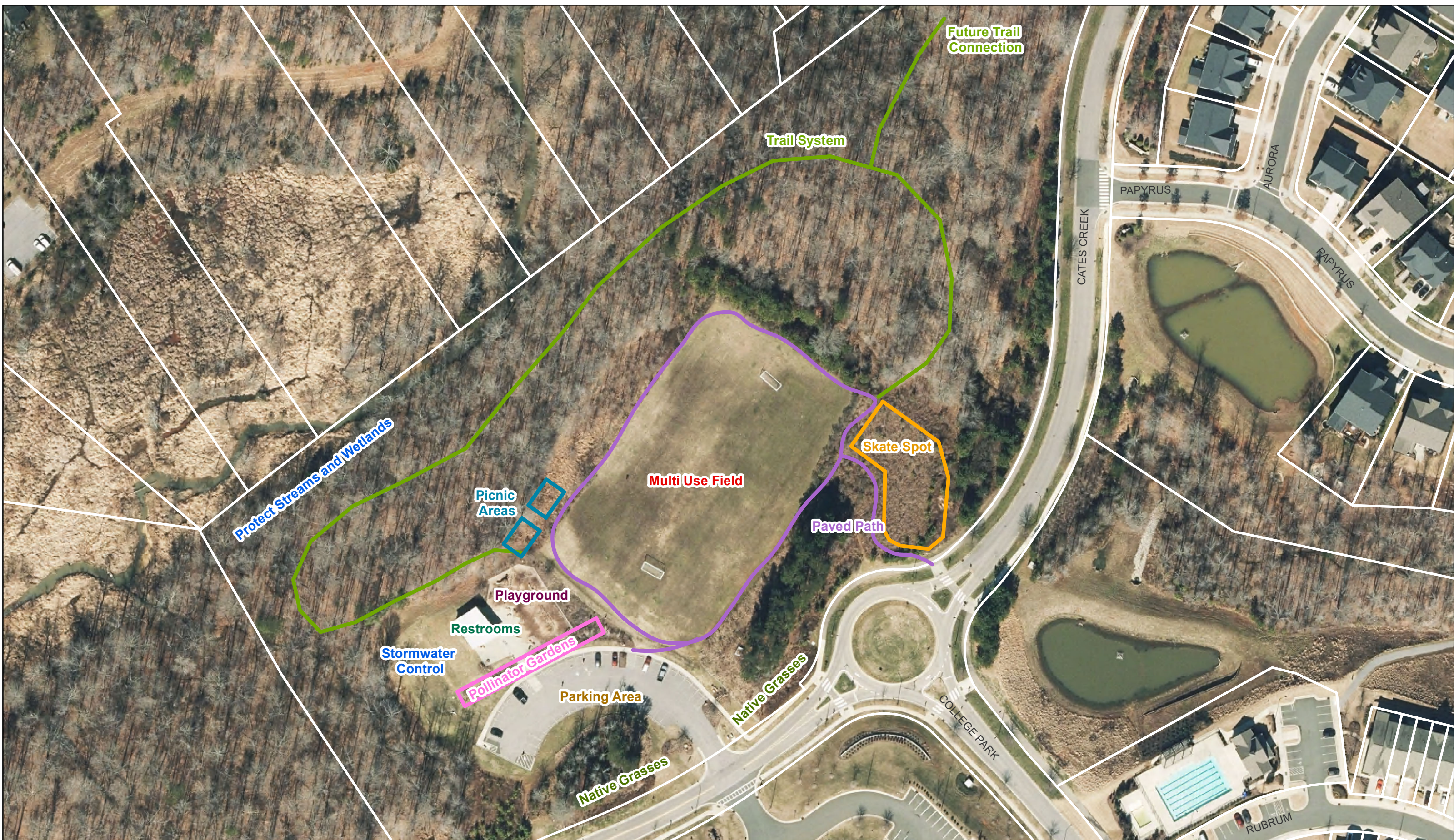
Priorities

The Parks and Recreation Board reviewed the recommended improvements and set the following priorities:

- Add recycling containers
- Stabilize eroding soil on slopes by ceasing mowing operations and planting native grasses and groundcovers
- Add a skate spot and amenities for preteens and teens
- Add a paved pedestrian entrance from Cates Creek Parkway
- Add covered picnic pavilions or several picnic areas throughout park
- Add a trail system in the wooded area of the park
- Add a community dog park

The following page includes a rendering showing that recommended location for improvements. The rendering is meant as a guide for planning purposes. Exact locations and alignments for any future improvements will be studied at that time.

It is advised that this plan is updated every three to five years.



Cates Creek Park Master Plan Rendering

