



TOWN OF KNIGHTDALE

LAND MANAGEMENT PLAN
MINGO CREEK MITIGATION PARCEL

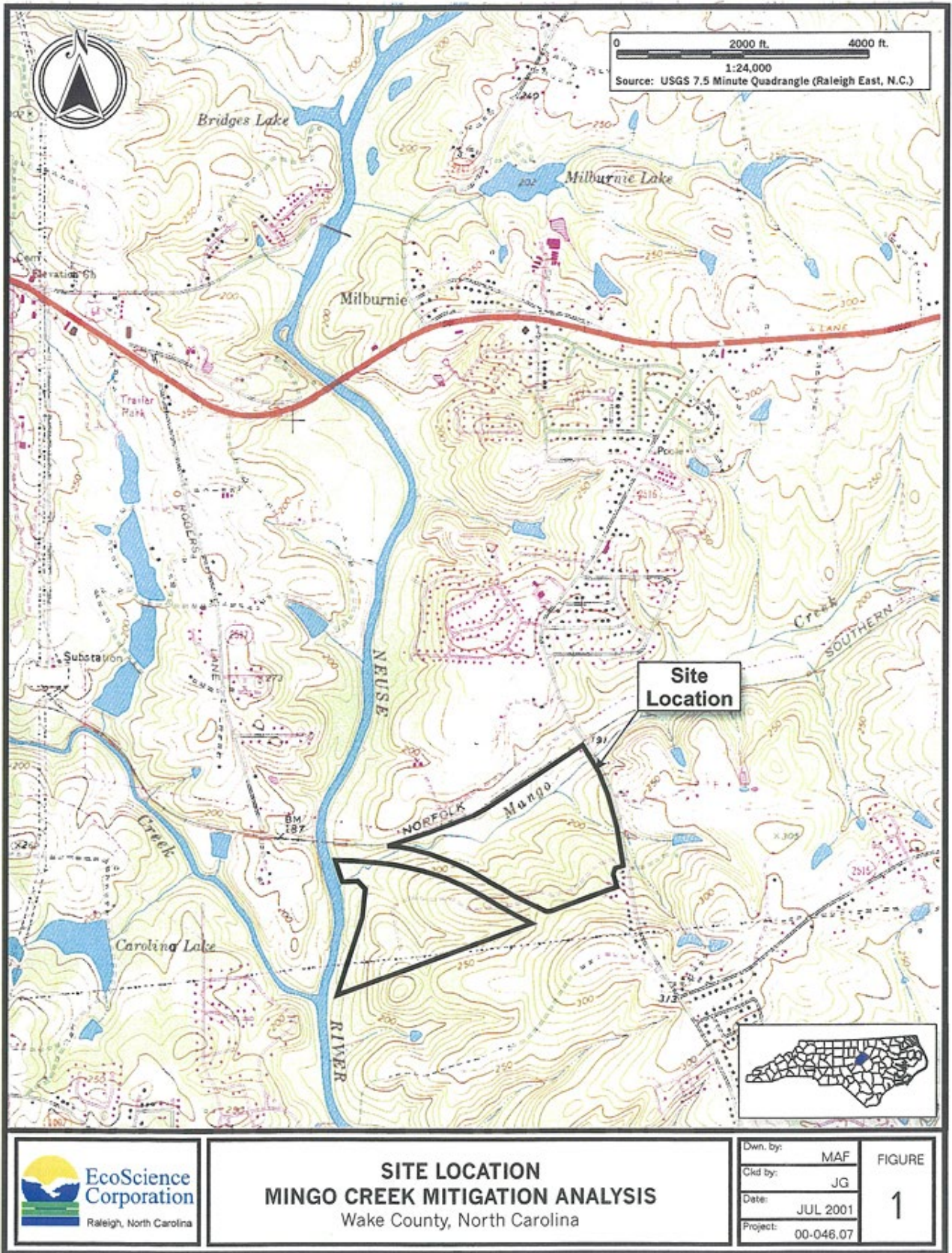
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PREPARED FOR:
North Carolina Department of
Transportation

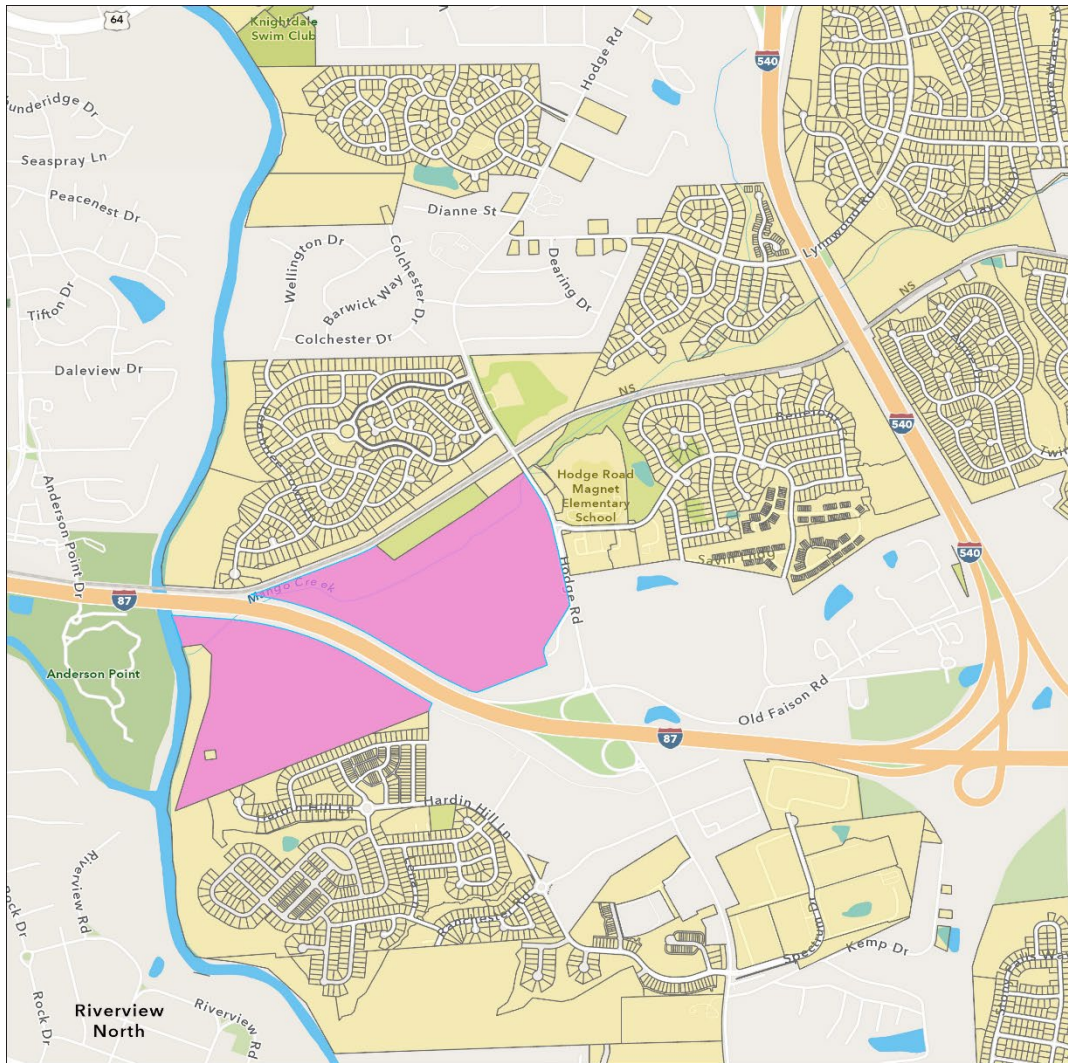
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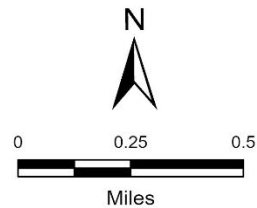
INTRODUCTION

As part of the North Carolina Department of Transportation’s (NCDOT) mitigation obligations for the construction of I-87 (U.S. Highway 64 Bypass) south of Knightdale, the preservation of approximately 205 acres of wetlands, associated buffers and adjacent uplands at the confluence of Mingo Creek and the Neuse River was undertaken. With the construction of the I-87 (U.S. Highway 64 Bypass) completed, the 205-acre mitigation parcel has been divided into two parcels – one north of I-87 and one to the south of I-87 as seen below (*in pink*).



NCDOT Hazard Mitigation Land

- Knightdale Parcels
- NCDOT Mitigation Land



Today the two parcels comprise approximately 191.09 acres (PIN 1733963420) – 107 acres in the north parcel and 84 acres in the south parcel. They are bounded generally on the west by the Neuse River and its associated floodway, on the north by the Norfolk-Southern railroad, on the east by Hodge Road (SR 2516) and on the south by new neighborhood developments, Stone River and Cheswick, leading to Poole Road (SR 1007).

On March 17, 2025, the Town of Knightdale sent a letter of interest in programming the I-87 mitigation land for passive recreation opportunities. The site was protected as a portion of the construction of the former US 64 Knightdale Bypass. The Restoration and Conservation Management Plan for the Mingo Creek Mitigation Site (September 2001), served as its guiding preservation document. The Knightdale Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan (March 2022) identifies this site as a priority to ensure future geographic equity for leisure activities. The Shift Knightdale Comprehensive Transportation Plan (November 2022) subsequently identifies this site as a critical, future greenway connector. Finally, the Town Council committed to exploring the feasibility of a passive recreation facility on this parcel as one of our community’s Strategic Goals & Priorities. The Town recognizes that a mitigation site is intended to preserve the natural environment, and that invasive development is not appropriate. Our primary goal is to install natural greenway trails on this site. By successfully doing so, the Town would have a key pedestrian connection on the east side of the Neuse River serving as an expansion of the Capital Area Greenway System with proximity to Anderson Point Park.

The Town of Knightdale and the NCDOT have worked together to improve this plan to benefit the goals of both organizations: *Preserving the mitigation site while creating a passive educational park*. NCDOT staff provided comments on a previously submitted version of this plan on June 16, 2025. After the Town of Knightdale replied with comments and additional questions, further clarification was made by NCDOT on July 17, 2025. This version of the Land Management Plan was revised based on those discussions and a September 9, 2025, site visit.



KNIGHTDALE STRATEGIC PLAN

North Carolina state law charges the Council with the responsibility to adopt policies that set the general direction of the Town. Strategic planning provides clarity, direction, and focus, with a forward-looking emphasis. These beneficial areas are crucial to high-growth environments. Our strategic plan clearly communicates the message of “who we are and what we want our Town to be in the future.” The strategic plan identifies organizational priorities and subsequent objectives to successfully meet these goals.

The purpose of the Knightdale Strategic Plan is to:

1. Set the focus for the Town (establish priorities)
2. Define the Town’s actions and investments; and
3. Direct the achievement of short-term and long-term goals

The Knightdale Strategic Plan will be used to:

1. Focus the Town’s organizational efforts and resources
2. Set priorities for annual retreats and staff work plans
3. Evaluate progress toward achieving its vision
4. Assess/adjust the Town’s direction in response to our changing environment
5. Serve as a decision-making filter for the consideration of legislative actions

The Knightdale Strategic Plan provides the framework for the activities and operations that are performed by all Town Departments. The sections below provide an overview of the plan including the Town’s core values, vision and mission statements, and areas of focus with defined objectives. Finally, the plan outlines implementation strategies and responsibilities. These pieces together provide the overall framework for the direction of the Town of Knightdale moving forward for the betterment of future generations.

The resulting Knightdale Strategic Plan outlines five primary Focus Areas. These areas represent the foundational elements that all stakeholders identified as crucial for our community’s successful development. Each Focus Area was further defined to include primary objectives. These objectives are activities to ensure successful achievement of the broader focus areas.



Safe



Connected &
Inclusive



Sustainable



Active & Healthy



Organizational
Excellence

The Strategic Focus Areas of *Connected & Inclusive*, *Sustainable*, and *Active & Healthy* show strong alignment with this proposed park facility. Below we will discuss those three Focus Areas and how they specifically connect to this proposed plan by relating objectives directly from the Strategic Plan.

Focus Area: Connected & Inclusive

Knightdale actively pursues balanced growth with exceptional design to maintain its small town feel and appearance. Through the creation of unique community spaces and a welcoming environment for entrepreneurs and small businesses, we are creating a connected and inclusive town.

What it means to us...

A Connected Knightdale is a community where we know our neighbors. It is recognizing that our connectivity to one another serves as the foundation of what makes Knightdale a special place. We are connected in the manner in which we embrace technology and through our proximity to the Triangle region. An Inclusive Knightdale is a community where our residents feel safe, respected, and comfortable.

How this Focus Area connects...

- Build on our “Start Something” identity
- Augment our small-town feel and appearance through the creation of unique spaces as we grow
- Stay connected to our historical roots with an inclusive outlook for our future
- Offer a diversity of quality community events
- Embrace opportunities for physical connectivity through the transportation network
- Ensure multimodal transportation choices to connect to the region
- Advocate for quality educational opportunities

Focus Area: Sustainable

Knightdale promotes the stewardship of its environment, the resiliency of its resources, and the maintenance of a financially sustainable government.

What it means to us...

A Sustainable Knightdale is a community with a healthy environment and a strong economy that is focused on the well-being of its citizens. Our community will endure overtime, ensuring prosperity for future generations.

How this Focus Area connects...

- Endeavor to preserve and protect our environmental resources
- Execute the KnightdaleNext V.2 Comprehensive Plan

Focus Area: Active & Healthy

Knightdale brings people together and boasts happy residents by promoting and sustaining a high quality of life and providing recreation and leisure activities to meet diverse interests.

What it means to us...

An Active and Healthy Knightdale embraces opportunities to make it easier for citizens to live healthy lives. We provide opportunities for people to be physically active and socially engaged as part of their daily routine, improving physical and mental health. We strive to allow our citizens to age in place and remain all their lives in a Knightdale that reflects their changing lifestyles and changing physical capabilities.

How this Focus Area connects...

- Recognize that regular physical activity directly contributes to improved mental health and better overall health and wellbeing
- Offer a variety of health, fitness, and cultural opportunities to meet the needs of a diverse population
- Encourage non-vehicular transportation
- Recognize cultural, social, and economic value of public art



STRATEGIC GOALS & PRIORITIES

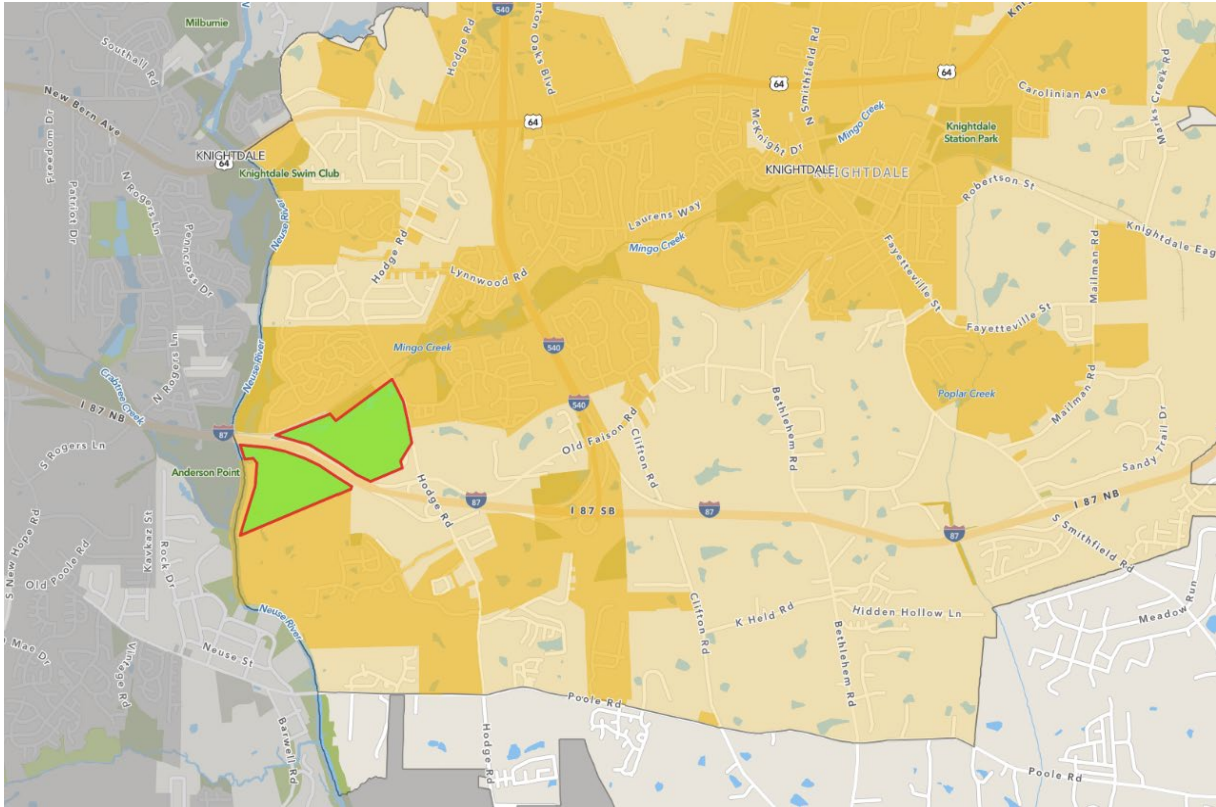
The idea of an educational park in this location is not a new concept. The Town of Knightdale has consistently included this in its plans for the past two decades. The Town Council has identified this as a priority as seen in our Strategic Goal documents with a goal of moving forward on this project by FY26:

Explore Feasibility of Developing Major Passive Park Facility – Hodge Road at I-87	Development Services Recreation Finance	Yes	No	FY2026
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore partnership opportunities with NCDOT and other applicable stakeholders 				

BACKGROUND AND GOALS OF TOWN OWNERSHIP AND STEWARDSHIP

Within its *Restoration and Conservation Management Plan* (09/2001), the NCDOT identified the following benefits of this site:

1. On-site mitigation for streams and vegetated wetlands
2. Water quality enhancement in an intensely developing watershed
3. Water quality functions in the sensitive Neuse River Basin and located in proximity to the main stem
4. Opportunity to preserve existing mature forest riparian buffer in the Neuse River Basin
5. Opportunity to maintain and extend buffers beyond regulated limits
6. Preservation of established mature plant communities in unique proximity to each other
7. Provide aquatic and terrestrial wildlife habitat/corridor in a suburbanizing area
8. Opportunity to enhance and continue greenway trails and open space
9. Opportunity for recreation and public education in a diverse wetland/upland complex



Knightdale Planning Limits in light yellow; Corporate Limits in dark yellow; NCDOT mitigation parcel in green with red border

As Knightdale Boulevard at the Neuse River had long been the western gateway to the Town of Knightdale for the traveling public, I-87 at the Neuse River is now the prominent western gateway to the Town.

While many state and federal highways are maintained at minimum levels, the Town of Knightdale stepped up years ago to take over maintenance of Knightdale Boulevard (U.S. Highway 64 Business) in an effort to enhance the landscape of the road corridor, provide for a more enjoyable driving experience and indicate one's arrival into the Town. While the Bypass is a limited-access freeway, the Town has been looking for an obviously different yet similar opportunity to ensure a naturally enhanced western gateway prior to one's arrival at a potentially busy Hodge Road interchange.

While sharing all nine of the goals previously identified by NCDOT, the Town feels it can further maximize the benefits listed in numbers 4, 6, 7, 8 and 9 through the establishment of a low-intensity-use environmental education park.

ALIGNMENT WITH OTHER PLANS

The Town of Knightdale relies on planning to efficiently and effectively meet the needs of its citizens. Knightdale’s plans and policies are extensive with several themes emerging that aid in developing recommendations for a multimodal transportation network: Prioritizing local roadway extension projects and multimodal projects that increase connectivity; Prioritizing intersection crossing projects to mitigate the impact to walking and biking; Exploring transit and bicycle/pedestrian projects to reduce overall demand for single-occupancy vehicle travel on major arterials; and Screening all transportation projects for those with the potential to impact natural systems or features. A potential park on the NCDOT Mitigation Land would strongly align with our planning documents.

KnightdaleNEXT V.2 Comprehensive Plan (07/2024):

The KnightdaleNext V.2 Comprehensive Plan was developed to guide future growth, conservation, and development decisions throughout the community in the face of new pressures and realities not contemplated in 2018 [the last major plan update]. It presents community vision and guiding principles, best practices, mapped frameworks, a series of illustrative drawings, specific policies and recommendations, and an implementation plan. The document builds upon the information included in the 2018 version of the comprehensive plan, and provides greater focus and clarity related to community character, quality development, and preferred growth areas expected for the planning area. It moves the community closer to “intended outcomes”, “greater predictability”, and “coordinated efforts” for the future. Patience may be needed for some aspects of the plan to become reality as it sets a long-term vision for conservation and development over an extended period of time. One of the components of this plan is *Preserved Open Space*.

Preserved Open Space may be used for passive or active purposes. More passive areas are represented by undisturbed or undeveloped land protected from future subdivision or development by federal, state, county, or town entities; by homeowner associations; or by other public, private, or nonprofit organizations. The areas may be preserved because of their outstanding natural beauty, environmental sensitivity, stormwater management benefits, historic or cultural significance, viewsheds, floodways or floodplains, or the protection of wildlife management areas. Examples of passive open spaces in the planning area may include, but are not limited to, floodplains, preservation or conservation easements, natural parks or preserves, or cemeteries. Growth and development in these areas is prohibited to the extent controlled by town government rules and policies. Infrastructure investments in these areas should be limited to items that safeguard the community’s health, safety, or welfare



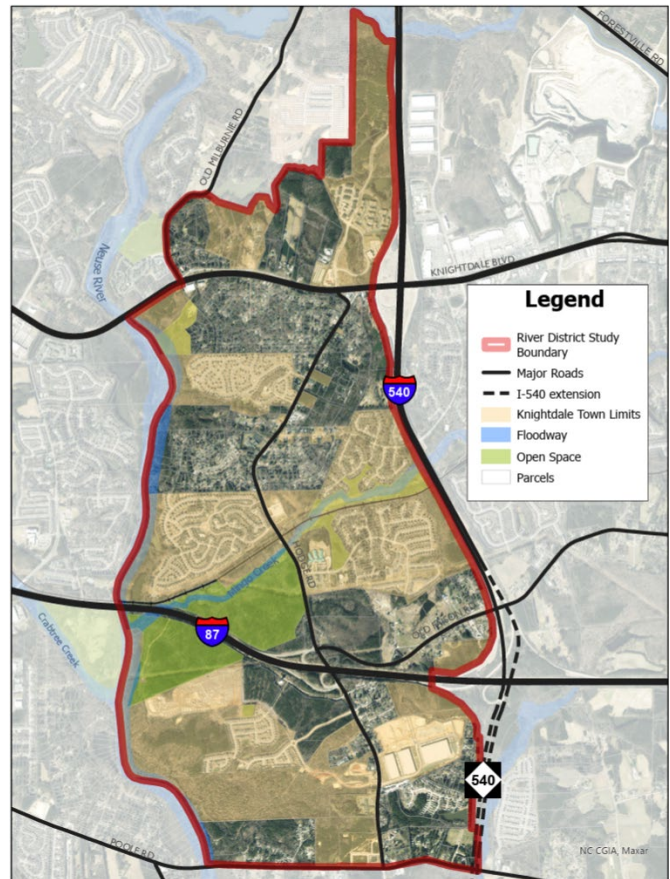
with the exception of above or below ground infrastructure that connects one or more primary, secondary, or target growth areas on the map (e.g., a water or sewer main, major road, or greenway).

River District Small Area Plan (07/2023):

The purpose of the River District Small Area Plan is to establish a vision and provide guidance for future zoning, development, and capital projects that will enhance the character of the identified corridor and its identity as a center of outdoor recreation and natural beauty. Small area plans are a way to take a closer look at areas of particular importance to the Town and examine existing conditions, Town trends, and best practices to arrive at a specific vision with detailed goals, policies, and guidelines for the area under study. Small area plans are intended to provide more detail than the Town’s Comprehensive Plan, KnightdaleNext V.2, and they address an area’s unique needs and opportunities.

The River District covers approximately 2,600 acres (4 square miles) along the western jurisdictional boundary of Knightdale. It includes several established residential developments, with single family detached homes making up the majority of the residential properties within the district. Some parcels are already zoned *Open Space Preserve* including Panther Rock Park, NCDOT Mitigation Land, Knightdale Swim Club and Mingo Creek Trail.

The River District Plan recommended that the Town of Knightdale should continue conversations with NCDOT, Wake County and the NC Department of Natural and Cultural Resources on converting the 191-acre NCDOT mitigation property to a regional or state park. The property’s location is across from Anderson Point Park which creates the opportunity for a greenway bridge to connect them.



Comprehensive Transportation Plan (11/2022):

The Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP) builds on the efforts of Knightdale’s previous planning efforts. At its best, a multimodal transportation system supports broader community goals for its present and future growth, facilitates a stronger economy and a greater quality of living through improved mobility, increasing access to jobs, community services, commercial destinations and natural resources. The CTP is multimodal, addressing all modes of transportation in Knightdale including motor vehicles, walking, biking, and transit, and examines the impacts of development sites to transportation infrastructure. Evaluating all modes uniformly will establish a future transportation network that is more comprehensive and balanced. Since funding is limited, Knightdale faces difficult choices among competing needs to prioritize among many needed improvements. Today, this means a heavy priority on improving safety and connectivity, boosting transit ridership and expansion of the bicycle and pedestrian network. In the future, priorities will likely shift to system maintenance and alternative modes of transportation as many widening projects are completed. Most importantly, this Plan will assist in securing funding for these transportation projects from federal, state and local transportation partners, like the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT), Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO), GoTriangle, and GoRaleigh.

Comprehensive Parks & Recreation Master Plan (03/2022):

Parks and recreation are an integral piece of any community. They provide people with high quality of life standards that include health and wellness benefits, the opportunity for leisure, and the ability to connect with other people and the surrounding natural resources. It is commonly accepted that physical activity through recreation activities and park use improves one’s overall mental and physical health. The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) states that “the nation’s public parks and recreation are leaders in improving the overall health and wellness of the nation. They Knightdale Station Park, Knightdale are essential partners in combating some of the most complicated challenges our country faces – poor nutrition, hunger, obesity, and physical inactivity. Park and recreation agencies effectively improve health outcomes and thus should be supported through national and community level funding and policies that enable them to continue to expand their efforts in making a positive change in the health and wellness of our nation.”

The Town of Knightdale provides public recreation to its citizens as a means of supporting a high quality of life. Studies have shown that quality of life is very important to residents and visitors. Extensive research also demonstrates the positive economic impact of recreation, parks, and tourism on local economies. Lively programs and events also have a major impact on community economic development and a sense of unity within a community. Knightdale has the potential to attract new residents and businesses eager to experience the quality of life the Town provides.

Geographic equity of park access is an important consideration to provide short distance

access and service to all Knightdale residents. An analysis of recreation service areas can be used to make land acquisition recommendations for both current and future needs. Future park site acquisitions should be balanced and proportional to service populations in all areas of the Town. A proposed Future Service Map can be found on the next page.

In addition to the future service map, the Comprehensive Parks & Recreation Master Plan contains a list of *Goals & Recommendations* that includes the following two items related to this potential park facility:

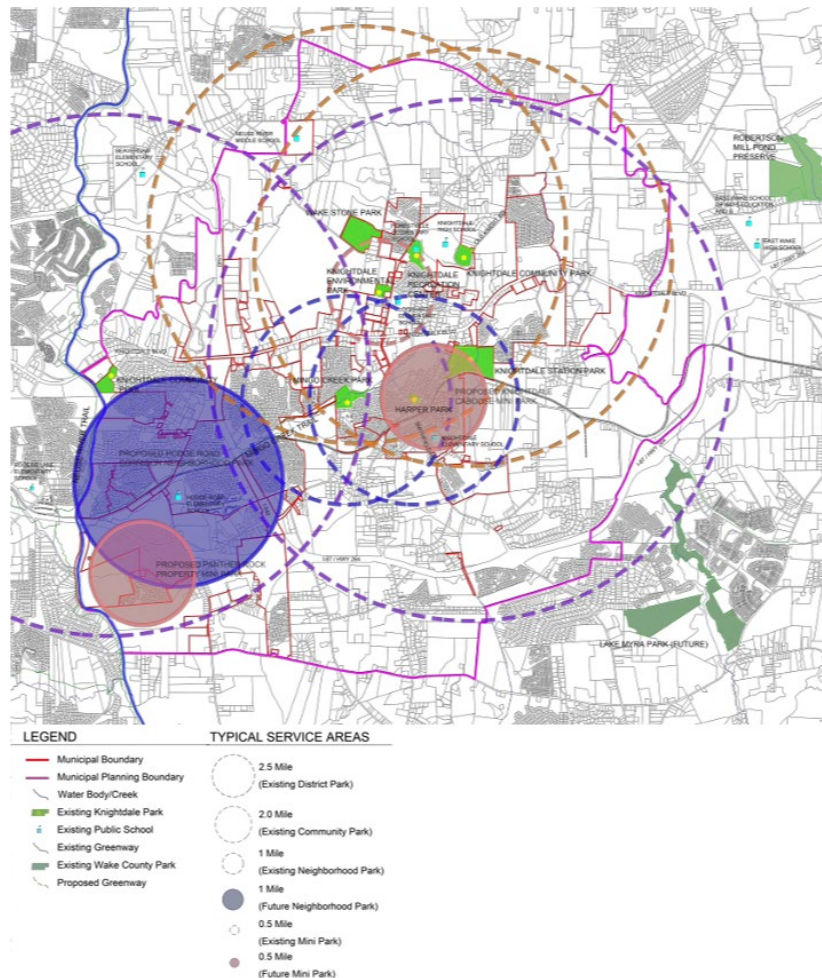
2022-2026

- Develop a park master plan for a future neighborhood park in the southwest part of the Town

2027-2032

- Construct new neighborhood park near Hodge Road corridor

FUTURE KNIGHTDALE PARK MAP



ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION PARK

Throughout the Town’s discussions with the NCDOT, the Town has indicated its desire to develop an environmental education park on the west side of the jurisdiction. The educational opportunities will not only be beneficial to residents of the Town and the areas nearby but could be a valuable resource to teachers and students at the adjacent Hodge Road Elementary School. The Town could identify flora and fauna native to the site and develop educational signage as it has done in the Knightdale Environmental Park, located adjacent to Knightdale Town Hall.



Example of educational sign used at Knightdale Environmental Park

The Town understands, appreciates and respects the purpose of this property as a wetland mitigation site and the need to keep any improvements and disturbance to a minimum. As such, the Town is proposing a system of natural greenways/paths through both parcels that will highlight the diverse upland and wetland ecosystems, plant species and wildlife for educational purposes.

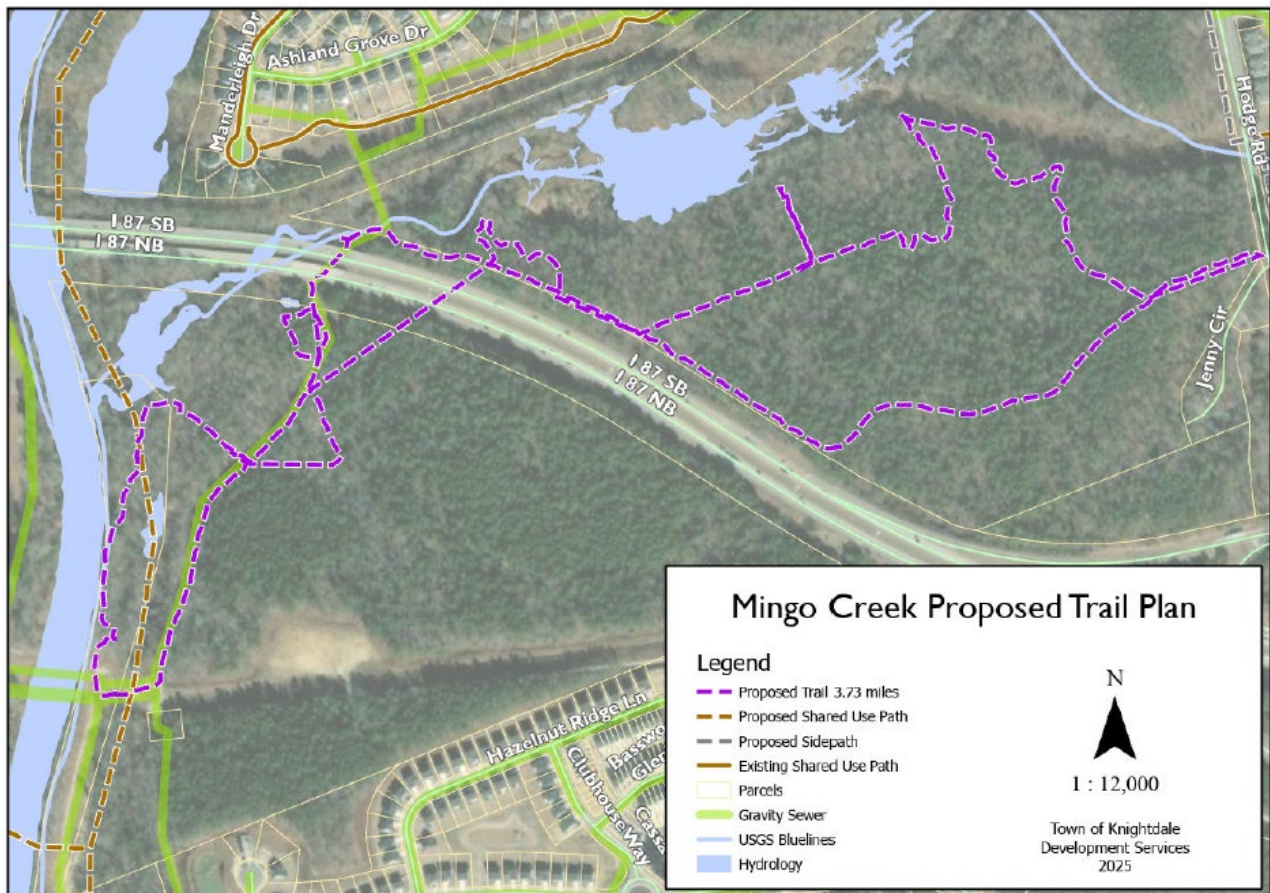
During “construction”, all trails will be cleared to a width between four (4) and six (6) feet and a height of eight (8) feet. In all areas, including buffer zones, hand clearing methods will be used. This includes the use of hand-held chainsaws, pruning shears and small stump grinders. Trail maintenance will consist of annual hand clearing to prevent unwanted growth within the trail corridor and to clear occasional storm debris. The Town of Knightdale will be responsible for the litter control/site maintenance. Staff will be checking the park no less than weekly for litter/debris.

Directional signage is typically used at trailheads to identify the trailhead and the trails found there, along with destinations accessed by these trails and the distances to the destinations. Signs will be used at system trail junctions to identify each trail by name and

indicate its direction and associated distances. Additionally, the NCDOT and Town of Knightdale have concerns that users of the trail system could potentially go off the established trail system and trespass into other areas of the site. In order to encourage pedestrians to stay on marked paths and not stray into sensitive areas of the park, signage will be placed along all trails and the entrance of the park. The Town of Knightdale will actively monitor the area for any actions along the trail system that could potentially impact the mitigation values of the site. As a part of the monitoring, we will inspect the park for vehicle and foot trespass, dumping, hunting, and other non-permitted access/uses.

Natural Trail System

Throughout the Town’s discussions with the NCDOT, both parties have agreed to reduce any potential impact on the current ecological features of the parcels. All proposed stream crossings previously approved by NCDOT officials in 2009 have been removed from this proposal. The trail mapped below uses established pathways to reduce the amount of vegetation that will be required to be removed/trimmed. Prior to finalizing the trails, a new wetlands delineation will be conducted, and proposed trails may be shifted to avoid these critical protected areas. This will minimize the impact to area streams and potential erosion in the area.



The Town proposes approximately 19,694 feet (3.73 miles) of trails utilizing existing paths and easements. The trails incorporate a scenic vista (30 square feet) from a rock outcropping at which visitors may view the protected wetlands along Mingo Creek. The 30 square foot scenic vista exists partially on an existing easement for power lines. Only trees less than 2-inch caliper will be cleared in the remainder of the area, and wood post fencing will be installed to keep people a safe distance from the edge of the bluff.

A trail head would need to be established along the southern edge of the parcel connecting to future development to the south, and/or established along the eastern edge, connecting to Hodge Road. All trailheads will have some form of control to limit access to pedestrian traffic.

The Town views the lowland trails planned for the northern portion of the parcel as a critical element for being able to accomplish goals 8 and 9 as noted on page 9 of this plan. The proposed trail on southern parcel offers an opportunity to provide education concerning streams and other natural features of the area and is in a strategic position to help the Town achieve a goal of creating a new greenway, parallel to the Neuse River greenway on the west side of the river. The northern portion of the parcel provides an opportunity to educate the public about wetlands while viewing them from a safe and environmentally appropriate distance. These trails provide immediate education possibilities for the adjacent Hodge Road Elementary School and would connect the trail system to the only currently available off-site parking area, located at the elementary school.



CONCLUSION

The mitigation parcel presents a significant opportunity for the North Carolina Department of Transportation and the Town of Knightdale to further environmental stewardship and public education. This property, originally designated for wetland mitigation, has evolved into an invaluable resource for both conservation and community engagement. The Town’s thoughtful management and dedication to enhancing the natural landscape will not only preserve vital ecosystems within the sensitive Neuse River Basin but foster public understanding of these areas through the development of a low-intensity-use environmental education park.

The proposed greenway trails will provide opportunities for educational experiences, especially in the wetlands of the northern parcel, while the southern parcel offers insight into stream and upland ecosystems. These trails, designed with careful consideration of the surrounding environment, will offer accessible, safe, and sustainable spaces for both residents and visitors to explore, learn, and appreciate the local flora, fauna, and ecological functions of the region.

Importantly, the Town of Knightdale’s commitment to preserving natural spaces extends beyond this project. Over the years, the Town has consistently demonstrated its dedication to environmental protection and sustainable development, as evidenced by numerous initiatives aimed at enhancing green spaces, improving water quality, and providing recreational opportunities. This environmental education park will add to the Town’s ongoing efforts, aligning with its broader vision for a greener, more sustainable future. Through careful planning, collaboration with state agencies, and a focus on preserving the integrity of the land, the Town is not only honoring the original goals set forth by NCDOT but also ensuring that the legacy of this property benefits generations to come. The environmental education park will serve as a valuable resource for the Knightdale community, helping foster a deeper connection to the environment and an appreciation for the natural beauty of the Neuse River corridor.





Hodge Road water tower



Geese taking flight from the Mingo Creek wetlands



Town staff marking the location of potential trails on the southern portion of the parcel

