ELLIS ACRES MEMORIAL PARK
DILLWIN, VA

CONCEPTUAL MASTER PLAN
PREPARED FOR
ELLIS ACRES MEMORIAL PARK, INC.

community design
assistance center
College of Architecture and Urban Studies
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
The Community Design Assistance Center (CDAC) is an outreach center of the College of Architecture and Urban Studies and Virginia Tech that assists communities, neighborhood groups and non-profit organizations in improving the natural and built environments through design, planning, and research. Through the integration of the learning and working environment, the Center will execute projects that link instruction and research and share its knowledge base with the general public.

Community Design Assistance Center
101 South Main Street, Suite 2
Blacksburg, VA 24061
P: 540-231-5644
F: 540-231-6089
http://cdac.arch.vt.edu
PROJECT TEAM

CDAC

Elizabeth Gilboy, Director
Kim Steika, Landscape Architecture Project Coordinator
Lauren Doran, MLA, Landscape Architecture Intern
Yining Xu, Student Designer, Landscape Architecture Graduate Student

Virginia Tech Graduate Landscape Architecture Studio

Wendy Jacobson.............................................Associate Professor, Landscape Architecture Department
Christine Calorusso........................................PhD Candidate, Environmental Design and Planning
Sruthi Atmakur................................................Masters Student, Landscape Architecture
Naixuan Gan....................................................Masters Student, Landscape Architecture
Melissa Philen................................................Masters Student, Landscape Architecture
Andrea Smith................................................Masters Student, Landscape Architecture
Yining Xu.....................................................Masters Student, Landscape Architecture

Funding for this project was provided by the USDA Forest Service
Urban and Community Forestry Program
The Project Team would like to thank the following community members for their participation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marcellus Bartee</td>
<td>Martha Louis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary Bartee</td>
<td>McNeal Opie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helen D. Fauntleroy-Branch</td>
<td>Trevon Opie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard Carey</td>
<td>Janie M. Osborne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karl Carter</td>
<td>Bernice Peaks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebecca Carter</td>
<td>Samuel Ranson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarence L. Davis</td>
<td>Gearld D. Reid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harriett Y. Davis</td>
<td>Jacqueline R. Reid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bruce Davis</td>
<td>Faye Schumaker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donna Davis</td>
<td>Gearldine Scruggs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gladys Lewis Dean</td>
<td>Mary Etta Brown-Shelton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patricia S. Dean</td>
<td>Harvey Shelton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John W. Dean</td>
<td>Rosa V. Shelton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edna Allen Dean</td>
<td>William L. Shelton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allen Gooden Jr.</td>
<td>Ruth Spencer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walter Gray</td>
<td>Joanne Taji</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruby Gray</td>
<td>Edmonia Toney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary Hickman</td>
<td>J. Ervin and Betty J. Toney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marie Flowers</td>
<td>Samuel E. Trent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carl James</td>
<td>Linda Trent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edith James</td>
<td>Elizabeth H. Washington</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrew Johnson</td>
<td>Taryn Webb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peggy Johnson</td>
<td>Charles W. White Sr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruby Johnson</td>
<td>Margaret C. White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tana Knott</td>
<td>Joyce Wilson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alan Leatherwood</td>
<td>Ethel A Woodson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emmitt Lewis Jr.</td>
<td>George E. Woodson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jean Lewis</td>
<td>Elaine Zaffino</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dorthy Lipscomb</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A special thank you to:

Wilbert M. Dean
and
Diane Holman James
for all the work they put into preparing for each meeting
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Project Description</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal and Objectives</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site Inventory and Analysis</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 31st: Initial Community Meeting</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design Charette</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 14th: Studio Presentation and Community Feedback</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDAC Design Process</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preliminary Design Concept A</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preliminary Design Concept B</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 26th: CDAC Presentation and Community Feedback</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Master Plan</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 30th: CDAC Presentation and Community Feedback</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The proposed Ellis Acres Memorial Park is to be located on Camden St. in Dillwyn, VA on the site of the former Buckingham Training School and Stephen J. Ellis Elementary School. As the location of the Buckingham Training School, 1924-1953, the first African American high school in Buckingham County, this is a site of historical significance. The community based non-profit organization, Ellis Acres Memorial Park, Inc., formed in 2007 with the primary goals of creating a vision for and building this park. The Town of Dillwyn currently owns the property and supports the intentions of Ellis Acres Memorial Park, Inc. The non-profit is interested in renovating the remaining building on site to serve as a community building. Among other things, it would house an historical exhibition and offer community meeting space, while creating a community park on the surrounding 9.25 acre site.

In order to start the design process and raise the necessary funds Ellis Acres Memorial Park, Inc. approached the Community Design Assistance Center (CDAC) to provide a conceptual master plan for the park. This project was funded through a grant from the Virginia Department of Forestry’s Urban and Community Forestry Program. CDAC worked in collaboration with Professor Wendy Jacobson’s Graduate Landscape Architecture Studio, Ellis Acres Memorial Park, Inc. and interested community members to create a conceptual design and report.

The process began as a design charette in Professor Jacobson’s Graduate Landscape Architecture Studio. The students researched African American history and education in Buckingham County, prepared base maps, conducted a site analysis, and analyzed the context of the site. The initial site visit and a community meeting were held on August 31st. The CDAC team and the studio group were introduced to the memories and place attachment of the site through the stories of the community members who had attended or taught at the schools. Following this visit, the studio students began an intensive design process which resulted in five design concepts to present to the community. The community gathered again on September 14th to hear about and respond to these design concepts. Based on the five student concepts and community feedback, the CDAC team created two cohesive design concepts. These concepts were presented to the community on October 26th. The community feedback was directed toward making decisions to inform the design of final master plan. The final conceptual design was completed and presented to the community on November 30th. This report is a compilation of all of the ideas and information generated throughout the duration of the project.

COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA

Buckingham County is located in the central part of the Commonwealth of Virginia.

ELLIS ACRES MEMORIAL PARK
Above: Buckingham County is situated in the heart of Central, VA adjacent to both Albermarle and Prince Edward Counties.

Right: The Town of Dillwyn is located on US Route 15 in Buckingham County.

The Ellis Acres Memorial Park site is located on Camden St. in Dillwyn. It is in close proximity to Main St. An unused spur of the CSX Railroad connects the eastern edge of the site to Main St.
GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

The goals and objectives for creating Ellis Acres Memorial Park as gleaned from Ellis Acres Memorial Park, Inc. and the community members in attendance of the initial August 31st meeting are as follows:

To create a community park that:
• Celebrates the past and looks toward the future
• Offers recreation opportunities for all ages and a pleasant outdoor environment for all Buckingham residents
• Provides an outdoor venue for events and entertainment, such as weddings, concerts and family reunions
• Connects to downtown Dillwyn
• Draws tourists and visitors
• Incorporates the concepts of sustainable design
The Graduate Landscape Architecture Studio class worked in collaboration with the CDAC team to compile materials to begin the site inventory and analysis. A base map of the site was created prior to the August 31st site visit. On site the studio group and the CDAC team took photographs of and located key features on the base map. From this information a more accurate base map documenting the existing site conditions was created from which a site analysis could be completed.

From the site analysis a set of design opportunities and constraints arose:

- The footprint of the former school building is an important site feature and design opportunity. A portion of the foundation’s original location is still evident. The footprint provides an opportunity to celebrate the history of the site.
- Topography on the site is both an opportunity and a constraint. The highest point on the site is the location of the footprint of the former school building and steep topography currently separates the building footprint from a level field area. These features could be taken advantage of in the site design. The topography also limits where design features such as recreation fields, basketball courts or parking could be located. As an interesting feature on the site, the existing topography should be worked with and taken advantage of in the site design.
- There is an existing building on site which is slated for renovation as a community center and historical exhibition space. The park design should respond to this desire. The structure and materials of this building should be considered in the site design.
- There are currently two drainage swales on the site. These swales and the increased drainage that will result from increased impervious surfaces must be considered in the site design.
- Much of the site is currently covered by a woodland canopy. There is brushy undergrowth throughout, but there are many thriving native tree species such as oaks, maples, tulip trees and dogwoods. The established woodland is an important feature as it provides habitat and filters and absorbs rainwater. There are also several interesting habitats within the woodland such as the areas with large fern growth and the riparian buffer along the creek. These valuable features should be retained and the community should be given an opportunity to experience them.
- An easement with overhead power lines runs through part of the site. While the short line that connects to the building could be placed underground, the main easement is a constraint that must be considered in the design process. There are also several existing lights on the site which could be removed.
- There are two creeks on the site which should be protected as well a made visible.
- To the east of the building footprint there are several large mature oak trees. These trees should be retained and worked into the site design.
- Also to the east of the building footprint, a well and the remains of a naturalized garden were discovered. These historical features should be retained and celebrated.

Analysis drawings prepared by Professor Wendy Jacobson’s design studio can be found in the Design Charette section of the report, in the 11x17 pull-out that accompanies the description of each student’s design concept (pages 9-18).
Panorama from existing entrance on Camden Street.

View from top of hill looking north toward Hancock Street.

Oaks and historical elements, clockwise from top left: Irises, well, slate roof tile, Oak 1, Oak 2, building remains.

Elements and structure of existing building on site.
On Friday August 31st, 2007 the CDAC team and the Graduate Landscape Architecture Studio met with Ellis Acres Memorial Park, Inc. and interested community members at the town hall in Dillwyn, VA. The community members shared their memories as both teachers and students on the Ellis Acres site as well as their visions for the future park.

Highlights of memories shared of Buckingham Training School and Stephen J. Ellis Elementary School include:

- Many former students emphasized the important roles that teachers played in their lives.
- Life lessons were taught on top of the standard curriculum; students were taught respect, morals, discipline, to believe in one’s self and to stand up and face adversity.
- Many classes were offered including chemistry, biology, math, Latin and typing.
- The flat grassy area was used as a field for athletic events.
- The Buckingham Training School was the first African American high school in Buckingham County. It was not built by the county, but rather by the African American community. The county government would not allow it to be called a high school.
- Many community members remember the struggle for African American education and the value placed on education by their parents.
- Many former students had to walk far distances to get to school, even young children. For a period of time the white school buses would not transport black students.
- The conditions at the school were tough as there were no custodians or cooks. The work of putting the coal in the stove, cleaning and cooking fell to the teachers and students.

Ideas for the future park:

- A celebration of teachers on site
- Identify trees and flowers on site
- Include a exhibit area/community building as part of the complex: history, environmental (flora/fauna); construct it so that it is energy-efficient ~ teach youth a conservation ethic
- Add plant material that can be used as a teaching tool
- Putt-putt course or driving range
- Tennis court
- Hard surface for skating
- Tie the park to Main Street – it could be the beginning or end point for parades and other events (Christmas parade, Buckingham Days (spring fair), Train rides (spring, summer and fall))
- Talk with youth and make them part of the master planning/construction process
- Place to exhibit art work (inside and out); there is an art council in Buckingham Courthouse
- Sculptural element – maybe a sculpture of Stephen Ellis with children
- Some of the youth have expressed interest in basketball court, swimming pool, bowling and a skate park
- Amphitheater
- Picnic shelters

Wilbert Dean shares his experiences at the Buckingham Training School.
Following the initial meeting and site visit, Wendy Jacobson’s Graduate Landscape Architecture Studio embarked on an intensive two week design charrette. Building upon the information gathered on site and the stories shared by the community, the students worked to understand the site physically as well as historically and emotionally. The results of this intensive design exercise were five conceptual designs for Ellis Acres Memorial Park. Each design is shaped by the physical attributes of the site as well as the memories and ideas shared in the initial community meeting.

The students presented their preliminary drawings to the CDAC Team for review on September 10th. Here Yining Xu describes her design concept.
The key objectives of the Empowerment through Education design concept were to celebrate the history and achievements of African American education, to preserve the memories of the site and to create opportunities for new memories and future growth of the site. The concept has four major components:

- The Historic Core is the heart of the site. This space is entered through an amphitheatre designed to also serve as a set of memorial steps which represent both the long walk to school encountered by many students at Buckingham Training School as well as more abstractly the difficult struggle for equal education for African Americans. At the top of the steps the footprint of the building has been designed as a memorial garden space. At the other side of the garden is the renovated building with an open meadow beyond.

- The second component on the site is the parking lot and playground. This would be the point of entry for visitors and is connected to the historic core via a tree lined path.

- A multi-purpose playing field is to be located between the parking and the historic core.

- The last component is the woodland area. This will include walking trails, an educational wetland and picnic pavilions.
EMPOWERMENT THROUGH EDUCATION

phases

topography

views

attributes

native plantings

Whispering spring

picnic pavilion

meadow walk

Whispering Spring with check dams
**DESIGN CONCEPT 2: CONNECTING THE LAYERS OF THE PAST AND FUTURE**

The Connecting the Layers of the Past and Future design concept looks at the site as a series of layers; past and future. It seeks to find a unifying layer to create a cohesive sense of place that will grow and change with time, while preserving the history of the site. As such, in this design it becomes important to preserve and celebrate the existing features on the site such as topography, vegetation and the remains of structures. The design also calls for creating new recreation opportunities in the park such as tennis and basketball. The existing building would be renovated and extended into the landscape through the addition of decks. An amphitheatre would provide a new event space in the community. Walking paths, picnic pavilions and a stream side terrace would all pull visitors into the woodland area.
The client portrays the need to express the site as a space that acts as both, a RECREATIONAL & an EDUCATIONAL space.
The key objectives of the Front Yard, Back Yard Memorial Park design concept are to create a space that brings the community together, is a landmark for the town, remembers and celebrates African American education and the important roles of teachers and provides opportunities for recreation and community gathering. The idea of a memorial space with a front yard and a back yard provides a structural layout for the design. The memorial space is at the center of the site both physically and psychologically. This space is a sculptural piece constructed in the footprint of the former school building. In the front yard area is a large open lawn edged with ornamental plants. With a stage at one end, this space could be used for outdoor events such as weddings, music performances or craft fairs. Behind the memorial sculpture is the renovated building and beyond this one enters the backyard area. In this more private space the playground and picnic pavilions are located. The wooded area beyond the backyard contains a walking path which brings visitors on a woodland walk by the stream. To the north of the front yard and separated by terraced seating is a recreation area with a multipurpose field, restrooms, concessions, a tennis court and a skating rink.
In the Gateway Memorial Park design concept an axis is created that provides a sequence of entry and experience for the visitor. This sequence starts with a large gateway at the park entrance. This gateway could be a place where teachers’ names are inscribed or some aspect of the history of the site is remembered. The gateway frames the view through the park as well as creating a threshold experience. Once through the gateway, the visitor enters an open lawn space. At the top of this field is the outline of a structure with crape myrtles planted at the corners. This is all that remains of the building that once stood here. Behind this memorial space is the renovated building. Following this axis, the visitor follows the path further into the park and comes across some brick seating areas. The bricks here could be inscribed with the names of donors to the park, thus recalling the Pennies for Bricks program. The axis ends with a constructed pond at the confluence of the two creeks. Paths wind through the woodland area with openings in the canopy for picnic areas. Just north of the entrance is a recreation zone with basketball, tennis and a small field.
The key design objectives of the Sustainable Education Park concept are to create a park that celebrates the agricultural heritage of the region, offers opportunities for environmental education, engages the entire community and is a sustainable landscape. All aspects of the design incorporate the principles of sustainable design; water is slowed down and captured for reuse on the site, native and drought tolerant plants are selected, existing vegetation is preserved and the building would be renovated using sustainable materials and to energy efficient standards. The agricultural past would be celebrated through community garden plots and an orchard on site. The sustainable design elements and the agricultural elements along with the existing habitats on site would provide environmental education opportunities. As a park for the entire community, the design also includes recreational opportunities and civic gathering spaces.
INSIGHTS FROM THE COMMUNITY MEETING:

The Buckingham Training School taught the youth the importance of education, social skills, and the beauty of nature, community, and teamwork. Memorable moments include: learning about animals, nature hikes, and painting. These experiences led to a sense of community and teamwork. Suggestions for how the park could best foster these experiences include:

- Enhancing outdoor spaces
- Creating community gardens
- Establishing a community center
- Implementing a community-based mentorship program

PROPOSED SITE DESIGN

OPPORTUNITY BASED ON SITE’S CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS

- Views of agricultural landscape are pleasant and present a sense of place to visitors.
- Surrounded by views of water treatment facilities, providing opportunities for educational purposes.
- Connectivity to community centers is essential to support the community’s well-being.
- Accessibility to water bodies and green spaces offers a natural opportunity to enjoy the outdoors.
- The site’s adjacency to the community center offers a unique opportunity to integrate natural elements with community activities.

KEY DESIGN OBJECTIVES

- Sustainable Landscape (Landscape)
- Provide nature-based experiences to individuals and communities.
- Incorporate natural elements such as water features, native plants, and seating areas.
- Enhance accessibility and connectivity to surrounding areas.

- Interpretive (Interpretation)
- Embed educational content within the park’s design to promote learning and engagement.
- Incorporate interactive elements such as signage, nature trails, and thematic installations.

- Educational (Education)
- Offer opportunities for formal and informal learning experiences.
- Create educational programs and workshops to engage the community.

- Convivial (Social)
- Foster social interactions and community engagement.
- Create spaces for gatherings, picnics, and social events.

SITPLAN

- Revierell Ellis Memorial Park
- Sustainable
- Interpretable
- Educational
- Convivial

Buckingham Training School

Ellis Acres Memorial Park

18
On September 14th, the CDAC Team and Graduate Landscape Architecture Studio traveled back to Dillwyn to present the results of the design charrette. The students each presented their design concept and then the floor was opened for discussion and feedback from Ellis Acres Memorial Park, Inc. and the community members in attendance. From this discussion the CDAC team compiled a list of community preferences for the next iteration of the site design:

- ADA accessibility for the site is important
- Memorial concept preferences included:
  - Steps
  - Gateway
  - Outline of old school structure
  - Etching the teachers names into a permanent structure
  - Sculpture of Mr. Ellis or others
- Include picnic pavilions near the playground areas
- Add space for bus parking and drop-off
- Include amphitheater or event space with covered structure
- Fruit trees and other elements that celebrate agricultural heritage/pride in place are important
- Include elements that the youth of the community would like to see (skate park, basketball court, etc.)
- Opportunities for outdoor education and demonstrations of conservation and sustainability in the site design
  - Opportunities to access and interact with water on the site
  - Plant identification
  - Gardens/plantings with botanical value (natives, historically important species, etc).
- Places to exhibit art work
- Connect the park to Main Street
After the September 14th meeting in Dillwyn, the CDAC Team reviewed the student design concepts in light of the comments made by the community. The strengths and weaknesses of each design were analyzed and categorized. The most compelling features of the five student designs were then distilled into two design concept options for Ellis Acres Memorial Park.
Ellis Acres Memorial Park:  
A Sculptural Landscape  
Giving Form to the Past, Shaping the Future  

In the past, the schools and teachers on the Ellis Acres Memorial Park site provided formative experiences for the children who attended them. This site helped shape the people they would become, and now as some of these same community members come forward to create a park on this site, the site once again provides an opportunity to shape the future of this community. This design concept takes the site as ground for a sculptural intervention into the layers of history to create a park for the future. Each element was considered from a sculptural perspective, from the memorial structure to the playground.

The features of this design concept fall into three categories:

- **Core Memorial Space**
  - Memorial structure
  - Renovated building
- **Secondary Core-Embracing Spaces**
  - Memorial steps
  - Historically interpretive playground
  - Historic elements trail
- **Tertiary Activity Spaces**
  - Parking
  - Bio-infiltration
  - Terraced grass seating
  - Open recreation area
  - Trails
  - Picnic pavilions
  - Stream observation
  - Potential trail connection to downtown via unused rail spur

These features are structured on-site according to the design concept. The core memorial space has the most direct link to the history of the site, the secondary core-embracing spaces build on and incorporate the history of the site and the tertiary activity spaces look to the future. All of these spaces will provide formative experiences for future generations using and enjoying the park.

Topography is central to this design concept. At the peak and core of the site, the memorial structure is located within the footprint of the old school house. Surrounding, but a step down from the core, are elements which embrace and build upon the historic past while shaping the future such as the playground and the memorial steps. Stepping down further from the peak, places for activities such as walking and playing sports have been sculpted into the site. The concept emphasizes the grade changes which delineate the different areas of use and interpretation.
PRELIMINARY DESIGN CONCEPT A

ELLIS ACRES MEMORIAL PARK
A SCULPTURAL LANDSCAPE
Giving Form to the Past, Shaping the Future

MEMORIAL STEPS AND STRUCTURE
PLAYGROUND
PICNIC PAVILION
SKATE PARK

This drawing is conceptually and was prepared to show approximate location and arrangement of site features. It is subject to change and is not intended to replace the use of contract documents. The client should consult with appropriate professionals before any construction or site work is undertaken. The Community Design Assistance Center is not responsible for the interpretation or use of this drawing.
Ellis Acres Memorial Garden Park:
Outdoor Learning and Recreation in Buckingham County

The Buckingham Training School taught the youth the importance of education, family, friendship, and community. Students and teachers explored the woods, the creek, and enjoyed their time at the Buckingham Training School for many years. Building upon this legacy of education, Ellis Acres Memorial Park is designed as a learning landscape focused on outdoor education. As such, the design incorporates garden space and makes reference to the region’s agricultural context through the use of fruit trees.

The key components of this design are as follows:

- This landscape will embrace the history and memories associated with this site through designed garden spaces such as a garden within the footprint of the old school building. Using plants to outline the shape of the old school building will provide a pleasant garden space for weddings or other events.
- The park will also become a large outdoor classroom, teaching future generations about sustainability and the environment.
- At the entrance of the park, there will be a gateway with an allee of fruit trees on either side. This gateway will serve as a threshold experience which leads the visitor into the memorial garden. The material of the gateway could be material from the site, such as slate or brick. The gateway could provide a place to memorialize the teachers who taught at the schools on this site.
- The playground, the orchard along the front entrance, the wetland along the creek and the garden in the brick seating area will all provide outdoor educational experiences.
On October 26th the CDAC Team returned to Dillwyn to present two refined design concepts. The meeting was held in the evening to allow school children and their parents to attend and inform the design process. Community members in attendance provided feedback and CDAC used these suggestions to refine the concepts into a single final design. Suggestions included:

- Youth expressed interest in a skate park and basketball court
- Keep the playground near parking
- Separate the tot lot from the older children’s playground
- Create a seating area which allows for views of all play areas
- Design an interactive water feature for children since there is no local pool
- Incorporate educational elements into the playground
- Create a park that serves as a field trip location for local schools
- Allow for additional parking
- Fence the perimeter of the park, except along Camden Road at the front of the site
- Locate restrooms centrally
- Include memorial steps and a covered memorial structure
- Incorporate the idea of sculptural picnic pavilions
Based on the preferences expressed at the community meeting, the CDAC Team chose to work with Preliminary Concept A to refine it into a final master plan for Ellis Acres Memorial Park. The final plan is based on the same design concept as Preliminary Concept A (page 21) with some layout modifications to address the community feedback received at the October 26th meeting. The modifications to the plan are as follows:

- The recreation area has been programmed: a basketball court and skate park have been sited along with space for potential skate park expansion.
- The play areas for different age groups have been separated.
- A seating area between the two playgrounds allows parents to view children in both areas.
- A perimeter fence has been located along the edges other than Camden Road.
- Two additional parking spaces have been added.

For the Final Master Plan, the design features have been worked out in greater detail. Following are illustrations and explanations of the major site features.

The Core Memorial Space will contain both the Memorial Structure as well as the renovated building, which would house historical exhibition and community gathering spaces.

The Memorial Structure is the centerpiece of the park. The footprint of the former school building is defined with a low stone wall and a hedge just behind it. There is a covered space to be used for events such as weddings, concerts or plays as well as an arbor and open patio space. The two sides of the building contain open roofed garden rooms with living walls, formal plantings, benches, and features such as fountains or sculptures. The partial walls of the covered structure would be made of relief sculptures of people or events associated with the history of this site. The materials and form of the Memorial Structure should play off of the form and materials of the remaining building on site. Wood, vines, and slate are all materials found on-site which could be incorporated into the design.

The renovation design of the existing building should be integrated into the park master plan design. It is suggested that the building expand into the landscape with the addition of a large wrap around deck or porch.
The Secondary Core-Embracing Spaces will contain the Memorial Steps, the Historic Elements Trail, and the Playground.

The Memorial Steps are the main entry into the site. They represent the struggle for equal education for African Americans in this country as well as the long walks many students were required to make to get to school. The steps offer a threshold experience as the visitor climbs them to arrive at the Memorial Structure. The risers of the steps offer a place to memorialize the teachers so important in the memories of this site. Names and quotes could be inscribed on these steps and would be seen by visitors as they pull into the parking lot. An adjoining ramp allows all visitors to experience the same entry sequence and threshold experience.

The Historic Elements Trail is a short connector trail that brings the visitor through an area which contains an old well, the remains of an old garden where irises and yucca plants still grow and the remnants of another structure. This trail would reveal some of the history of the site to this visitor in a less formal manner than the memorial spaces. There is the possibility that more historical elements will be unearthed in the process of constructing this park. If these items must be displaced and are deemed appropriate, they could also be located along this path or in the community building.

The Playground encompasses a large area with a small playground for young children and a larger area for older children. These two spaces are divided by curved seating areas which allow parents to watch children playing in both areas. The playground spaces incorporate both historical and educational elements. These spaces will be sculpted into the site using landforms and they will be less programmed than traditional playground designs. For the younger children, the play structures would incorporate forms and educational elements from the natural world such as leaf shaped tunnels or a flower measuring wall. In the older children’s play area the historical elements found on the site would be integrated into the design. A play well could serve as a water feature or as a sandbox element. Slate walls would be reminiscent of old chalkboards and would allow the children space to express themselves. The playground design is very important as this site feature will shape and influence future generations of Buckingham residents.
The Tertiary Activity Spaces will include picnic pavilions, terraced grass seating, recreation space, restrooms, trails, a stream observation boardwalk, a potential trail connection to downtown, parking and bio-infiltration.

There are picnic pavilions located adjacent to the playground as well as tucked back into the woods along the trails. The three pavilions surrounding the playground would provide nice spaces for events with children such as birthday parties or family cookouts. There is one along an ADA trail in close proximity to the building as well as handicapped parking. This pavilion would meet the needs of a group with elderly or physically challenged guests. Another is located off of a trail deeper into the park. This space would provide a private gathering space as well as serve as an outdoor classroom. The design of the picnic pavilions offers an interesting design opportunity. It is suggested that instead of purchasing prefabricated shelters, Ellis Acres Memorial Park, Inc. could engage an architecture class or set of students in a design-build exercise to create unique site-specific shelters.

Terraced grass seating has been designed to take up the grade change from the parking lot down to the recreation space. A grass path cuts through the terraces bringing the visitor down into the recreation space. The seating provides a nice place for spectators to sit and watch the events below.
The recreation space has been programmed to include a basketball court and a skate park. The suggested minimum size for a skate park is 10,000 square feet which is the space currently allotted in the design. An area for future expansion of the skate park has also been demarcated. It is recommended that a permanent concrete skate park be designed and installed. The specific components requested by the youth in attendance of the community meeting were a grind pipe, half pipe, pyramid, and fun box. For safety reasons the skate park should be fenced and have one entrance where the rules are posted. The park should also be designed to accommodate skaters of various skill levels as well as rollerblades. More information on skate park design considerations has been included in the appendix.

Restroom facilities have been located between the recreation space and the playground to accommodate all park users. The structure has also been sited in such a way to block views of the overhead power line corridor.

Within the park there is approximately half a mile of trail length. These trails include formal paved sidewalks in the core memorial space, ADA accessible unpaved trails and running or hiking trails. The ADA trail could be designed as a botanical trail with labeled trees and plants. Along one of the hiking trails a boardwalk has been designed to allow visitors close contact with the stream without causing damage and erosion. There is also the possibility that a trail could be constructed within the park to connect to a future greenway designed to make use of an old rail spur which connects to Main Street.

Finally, parking has been designed to be both convenient to all the park amenities as well as bring the visitor into the site following a sequence of entry. The memorial structure would be visible as the visitor approaches and as they pull in and park at the foot of a small planted hillside, the memorial steps and their inscriptions become the focus. No matter where the visitor goes from the parking lot, it has been made clear that the memorial core is an important and valuable space. The parking lot has also been designed to deal with the excess storm water created by the impervious surface by draining it into vegetated infiltration basins. An access drive and additional parking spaces have been located next to the existing structure. A pull through area at the entrance would allow for bus drop off and parking. In the case of a large event on the site, additional parking could be provided downtown with a shuttle bus service to bring visitors to the park. The total number of parking spaces provided in the conceptual design for the site is 17 regular parking spaces and 2 handicapped parking spaces.
On November 30th the CDAC team returned to Dillwyn for the final presentation of the completed master plan. The final design was well received by both community members and representatives of the Town of Dillwyn. One final request called for incorporating a tennis court into the final design. The drawing below illustrates the possible location of a tennis court in the recreation area between the basketball court and the skate park.

Meeting attendees listening to the final presentation.

An illustration of a tennis court sited in the recreation area. The tennis court would limit the available space for future skate park expansion.
Ellis Acres Memorial Park, Inc. is now situated in a position to actively seek funding for their new park. With the plans and report prepared by CDAC the design process is well on its way. The site, with its rich history, varied physical features, and proximity to downtown Dillwyn, will prove to be an invaluable gem for the community. The passion, organization, commitment, and momentum of the Ellis Acres Memorial Park, Inc. organization will provide the park with what will be required to see this project through to completion.
APPENDIX

Potential Funding Sources........................................................................................................A1
Skate Park Design Resources.................................................................................................A2
Soil Survey...............................................................................................................................A3

Schools in Buckingham County
  Current Schools..................................................................................................................A4
  African-American Schools.....................................................................................................A5
  Teacher Lists from the African-American Schools..............................................................A6
Potential Funding Sources

Potential funding sources and resources for Ellis Acres Memorial Park, Inc.

Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation
Land and Water Conservation Funding
• Park is in the VA Outdoors Plan so it is eligible
• Proposals due in April and November
http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/recreational_planning/vof.shtml

Virginia African American heritage Program
• A program of Virginia Foundation for the Humanities
• Rosenwald School Grants
• May be eligible for a grant relating to African American Heritage or history
http://www.aaheritageva.org/
http://www.virginiafoundation.org/

Transportation Enhancements Funding
• May offer funding for a Rails to Trails connection

National Park Service
Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program
• May offer free assistance for a Rails to Trails effort
http://www.nps.gov/rtca

Virginia Department of Forestry
National Urban and Community Forestry Program
http://treelink.org/nucfac/

The Grantsmanship Center
Virginia Community Foundations
• Lists foundations that give grants
http://www.tgci.com/grants/Virginia/community.asp

Federal Grants
There are over 1,000 grant programs offered by all Federal grant-making agencies.
http://www.grants.gov

A Proposal Writing Short Course
http://fdncenter.org/learn/shortcourse/prop1.html

Civil Rights in Education Heritage Trail
It was suggested at a community meeting that this site might be eligible to be put on the trail.

The Civil Rights in Education Heritage Trail tour was established by Old Dominion Resource Conservation & Development Council.
http://olddominionrcd.org/

The trail is managed by Virginia’s Retreat, a tourism marketing consortium comprised of the counties of Amelia, Appomattox, Brunswick, Buckingham, Charlotte, Cumberland, Dinwiddie, Halifax, Lunenburg, Mecklenburg, Nottoway and Prince Edward and the City of Petersburg.
http://www.varetreat.com/index.asp
Skate Park Design Resources

There are three options for skate park design; there are portable wooden ramps, metal modular ramps and permanent concrete skate parks. These options range in price from $20,000-$200,000. While it is the most expensive option, it is recommended that the skate park on site be made of concrete instead of wood or metal ramps. This will cut down on noise as well as add durability. It is however important that all options are considered, thus an article from Landscape Architecture Magazine explaining the three options has been included.

If a concrete skate park is the chosen option, it is highly recommended that industry professionals be hired for the design and construction of the skate park. A resource to refer to when the process of designing a skate park begins is: www.skateparkguide.com
Buckingham County, Virginia (VA029)

The soil survey on www.va.nrcs.usda.gov had no soil data available for Buckingham County, VA, as indicated in the “Soil Data Available from Web Soil Survey” pane in the “Area of Interest Properties” panel.
SCHOOLS IN BUCKINGHAM COUNTY

Current schools and addresses in the Town of Dillwyn and Buckingham County:

Buckingham County School
Board Office
P. O. Box 24
15595 W. James Anderson Road
Buckingham, VA 23921

Buckingham County High School
HC-02 Box 376
78 Knights Road
Buckingham, VA 23921

Buckingham County Middle School
HC-02 Box 374-A
1184 High School Road
Buckingham, VA 23921

Buckingham Primary School
HC-02 Box 375
77 Buckingham Primary Road
Buckingham, VA 23921

Dillwyn Primary School
Rt. 1 Box 310
52 Dillwyn Primary Road
Dillwyn, VA 23936

Dillwyn Elementary School
Rt. 1 Box 310
40 Frank Harris Road
Dillwyn, VA 23936

Gold Hill Elementary School
59 Gold Hill Elementary Road
Rt. 1 Box 173-A
New Canton, VA 23123
Memorandum for Record: African American Schools in Buckingham County

Below are the small elementary schools of Buckingham County from 1924 until 1964. Some schools consisted of one room with one teacher instructing grades one through seven. A few schools had two teachers to teach the seven grades. A fewer number of schools had three and four rooms with three or four teachers or principal/teacher to teach the seven grades.

The schools were:
1. Cedar Elementary School
2. Carter’s Field Elementary School
3. Chestnut Grove Elementary School
4. Diana Mills Elementary School
5. Fork Union Elementary School
6. Gannaway Elementary School
7. George Washington Carver Elementary School
8. Liberty Elementary School
9. Mourner’s Valley Elementary School
10. Oak Grove Elementary School
11. Red Bottom Elementary School
12. Ridgeway Elementary School
13. Salem Elementary School
14. Saratoga Elementary School
15. Slate River Elementary School
16. Deep Bottom Elementary School
17. Saint Joy Elementary School
18. Tongue Quarter Elementary School
19. Union Grove Elementary School
20. Warminster Elementary School
21. Zion Grove Elementary School

A small number of students from these schools completing the seventh grade attended Buckingham Training School [1923 – 1954]. The Training School Structure was converted to Stephen J. Ellis Elementary School in 1954. Some of the one room schools were closed, and students were diverted to Stephen J. Ellis Elementary School. All of these schools then became feeder schools for high school students attending Carter G. Woodson High School [1954 -1964]. When the school system was integrated all of these schools were closed, except the high school which was renamed and became an elementary school.
Teachers at the African American Schools in Buckingham County:

Individuals that served as principal or principal/teacher and taught grades eight through 11 at Buckingham Training School are as follows:
1. Reverend Bolling, Richmond Virginia, principal/teacher, 1924-1925, grades 8-11; his two students were Georgia Ann Morgan [Robinson] and Burton Ellis [Rev Stephen J. Ellis niece and son].
2. Thomas Dabney, Richmond Virginia, principal/teacher, 1925-1929, grades 8-11, his seven students were Gertrude Onion, Inez Lyles [Kerr], Beatrice Payne, Althea Benford, Richard Peagram [Petersburg, VA.], Georgia Ann Morgan, and Irene Jones.
3. George Benford, principal/teacher, 1929-1930, grades 8-11, his three students were Georgia Ann Morgan, Irene Jones, and Richard Peagram.
5. Samuel E. Smith, principal/teacher, 1943-1944, ninth grade.

Individuals that taught at the Stephen J. Ellis Elementary School [1954-1964] are identified below.

Individuals that served as teachers and taught one to four grade levels ranging first grade to 11th grade at the Buckingham Training School are cited below.