



MEMORANDUM

Town of Nags Head

Planning & Development Department

To: Planning Board
From: Michael Zehner, Director of Planning & Development
Date: July 15, 2021
Subject: Whalebone Park - Phase 1 Project

As was discussed with the Board at the August 2021 meeting, Staff is in the early stages of developing a scope for a project to investigate the potential need to renovate and/or make improvements to Whalebone Park ("Park"). This project would serve as a continued implementation of the Town's *Comprehensive Plan* ([LINK](#)), *Town of Nags Head Parks and Recreation Plan* ([LINK](#)), and the *Nags Head Pedestrian Plan* ([LINK](#)), but recognizes that the facilities are in need of maintenance and/or upgrade, and that opportunities for additional amenities may exist.

Similar to an onsite meeting that Staff held with members of the Committee for Arts & Culture, Staff would also like to arrange for an onsite meeting with members of the Planning Board to help inform the scope for the project. For example, beyond physical improvements or changes, much of the discussion with the Committee for Arts & Culture members included the potential opportunity to improve the Park through programming and events, as well as the need to explore issues and opportunities in the vicinity of the Park, beyond the Park's boundaries, that may affect the use of the Park and conversely may allow the Park to serve as a bigger asset to the Whalebone Junction area. Ideally, Planning Board members would be prepared to discuss their availability to meet on-site in the first or second week of August.

For consideration, the *Comprehensive Plan*, *Parks and Recreation Plan*, and *Pedestrian Plan* discuss the following with respect to the Park:

Comprehensive Plan

- PR-5c: Conduct an assessment of existing parks and recreational facilities and identify opportunities to incorporate other recreational or site amenities such as horseshoe pits, corn hole, bocce areas, picnic tables, grills, bike racks, trash/recycling containers, water (shower facilities or water fountains), and wifi where appropriate. This is including but not limited to Satterfield Landing Park, Whalebone Park, and Town Park.

Parks and Recreation Plan

- Continue construction of multi use trail along NC158 with pedestrian and bicyclist safety as priority, working toward connections to Whalebone Park/Whalebone Junction.

- Develop pedestrian and multi-use trail system throughout area of Whalebone District and including crosswalk at Gull Street and 158 that connects the new Whalebone Park, Jennette's Pier, the entrance to the National Park, and shopping and restaurant destinations. This area should be priority focus area of the Pedestrian Plan and should include connections with proposed sound side boardwalk.
- Insert low-cost recreational facilities - such as horse shoe pits, corn hole and bocce areas, picnic tables, grills, and grassy open areas within Whalebone Park and other parks.
- Whalebone Park Development - With the development of Jennette's Pier and the potential of development at Windmill Point, the center area of Nags Head around "Whalebone Junction" promises to be an increasing center of activity. The Town is therefore constructing a new park between US Highway 158 and the Beach Road near Jennette's Pier. The design of this park will include pedestrian and bicycle connections, public parking, picnic areas, and other recreational elements. The Committee recommends particularly that a playground should include shade and be designed to provide a place for families with small children to get away from the beach. The Town Board of Commissioners has allocated funding for construction of this project, has received assistance from the Tourism Board and is seeking grant assistance from the North Carolina Parks and Recreation Trust Fund towards park construction.
- WHALEBONE PARK - In 2008, the Town purchased the 1.31 acre Whalebone park property to maintain it as a recreational area. Whalebone Park will be enhanced by The North Carolina Aquarium at Jeannette's Pier project on the East side of Virginia Dare Trail. The proposed project will feature recreational open space areas which include volleyball net, a bocce ball and horseshoe court as well as a picnic pavilion, children's playground and park benches. The Whalebone Park project will also link to the North Carolina Mountains to Sea Trail which stretches from Clingman's Dome in the Great Smokey Mountains National Park to Jockey's Ridge State Park in Nags Head.

Pedestrian Plan

- Need new sidewalk along south side of Gulf Stream from Old Oregon Inlet Rd to NPS Info Center, and from Jennette's Pier/Whalebone Park to NPS Info Center (west and north side of NC 12. Need new crossing facilities at this intersection to accommodate this route.
- Ongoing projects: In the spring of 2012, the Town started construction of "Whalebone Park", across from Jennette's Pier, to provide public parking, picnic areas and playgrounds creating even more activity in the area. The Town has submitted a request for funding through the SPOT 3.0 prioritization process to the NCDOT to construct 1,700 linear feet of sidewalk on the west side of Beach Road/NC 12 and to relocate and improve the crosswalk near Jennette's Pier. The Town would like to focus particularly on providing pedestrian facilities in this area so that the entire "Whalebone District" is a walkable area in which key

destinations (Jeanette's Pier, Whalebone Park, restaurants and lodging) are connected and accessible.

- Trail Cutsheet F: US 158/NC 12 (Gull to Whalebone Park & NPS Info Center)
 - Distance: 3,200 ft / 0.61 mi
 - Planning-Level Cost Estimate: \$303,000*
 - Why It's Important:
 - Part of the Albemarle RPO's 2014 SPOT Safety Project List
 - Recommended in the 2012 Parks & Recreation Plan
 - Connects near Jennette's Pier & Aquarium
 - Connects to Whalebone Park & Cape Hatteras National Seashore
 - Connects to the National Park Service Information Center
 - Connects to a major shopping center