

A RESOLUTION TO ACCEPT THE CARRBORO CULTURAL INVENTORY
REPORT – WALKING TOUR
Resolution No. 172/2007-08

WHEREAS, Darrell Butts, Lindsey Davis, John Gowan – Master of Public Administration students at UNC presented a report to the Board of Aldermen including an inventory of historical and cultural artifacts, buildings, and landmarks in Carrboro that was compiled and made into a walking tour;

WHEREAS, we appreciate the time and effort spent compiling such a report/tour; and

WHEREAS, the Board reviewed and listened to the presentation.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CARRBORO BOARD OF ALDERMEN:

Section 1. That the report is accepted and can be used as an educational tour for the Recreation and Parks Department.

Section 2. This resolution shall become effective upon adoption.

To the Department of Recreation and Parks:

The following document represents a compilation of sites, facts, and stories representative of Carrboro, North Carolina. We were assigned to produce a 'Historical Walking Tour' of Carrboro, and learned that the sites that have created the towns' unique culture were comprised of more than local architecture or places where things "used to be."

We set forth exploring the public spaces, businesses, and community involvement that has helped to make Carrboro the "Paris of the Piedmont." It is our hope that these sites will produce the walking tour the department desires. In addition, we have outlined how to expand the tour in the future or involve community groups.

We believe that this information is merely a starting point and that the community, local businesses, and town offices will involve themselves to bring this tour to its greatest potential.

Please find enclosed:

Report – a summary of our research methods

Sample Script – to be read by a walking tour guide, also summarizes historical findings

Addendums – to outline how the tour can evolve and remain sustainable

Sample Brochure- to be used by future tourists and residents

Appendix – a collection of resources researched for the project

We thank you for your time and input. We also appreciate your willingness to let us participate in this project.

Sincerely,

Darrell Butts

Lindsey Davis

John Gowan

Group Project Report

For the spring semester of 2008, our MPA team worked to inventory historical and cultural artifacts, buildings, and landmarks in Carrboro, North Carolina for the Recreation and Parks Department. Tracing Carrboro's history from a mill-town to a progressive community, the identified landmarks are prioritized and compiled into a self-guided walking tour that can be used to market Carrboro to outside visitors and educate current town citizens. To gather this information, we used existing sources, such as interviews with local historians, site visits, and academic-type research on the history of Carrboro. A final product including a presentation, completed walking tour, map, and synthesis of information will be presented to the Recreation and Parks Department by early May 2008.

The Recreation and Parks Department realizes the strong cultural and historical nature of the town and wanted an opportunity to present this history to the citizens and potential tourists. The Department possesses several historical resources including a DVD, a collection of photographs, past newspaper articles, and *A History of Carrboro 1870-1983*. These artifacts are not currently compiled in a cohesive manner. Our first task was to take inventory of existing resources and organize them. Our group contacted and collected these resources and produced a walking tour that includes the most important and publicly appealing sites.

Our final product is a brochure that allows users to take a self-guided walking tour of Carrboro. The tour highlights significant locations in the downtown area. We will present this information to the Carrboro Board of Aldermen in May 2008. This will allow us to gain experience presenting in front of a Board and present this new initiative to the Town's governing Board and receive feedback. This guide is a user-friendly and allows those previously unfamiliar with Carrboro to better understand the town and its transformation from a simple mill town to a unique and progressive city center. All of our findings will be coherently compiled for the Recreation and Parks Department to keep on file. The information will also allow Recreation and Parks to expand this program in the future.

Areas for Further Development

Several factors guided the creation of this proposed route. First, we were concerned about the safety of tour participants along the tour route. For this reason, the tour is limited to the downtown Carrboro area. We felt that the tour route should follow sidewalks when possible. For that reason, other than the tour section that follows Poplar Street to Town Hall, the self-guided tour recommends that takers remain on the “beaten path.”

The route was also designed to be simple and easy to follow. By remaining in the downtown area, we feel that anyone can complete the tour successfully without getting lost. We also recognize that our route currently does not highlight historically black neighborhoods, nor does it visit specific architectural examples of regional importance. It is for this reason that we consider our route to be a “core” route. Additional routes can be easily added to facilitate cultural celebrations, comprehensive architectural history tours and expositions of local artists. Town staff will work with members of the community to identify and incorporate other areas of cultural and historical significance to include on the tour.

Finally, we approached this tour from the mind of a first-time tourist. We hope that the route adequately showcases the variety of activities, merchants and values that call Carrboro home.

Tour Script

Welcome everyone! Today we will spend approximately one hour touring the town of Carrboro, North Carolina. Although this town grew up in the shadow of Chapel Hill, it has created its own culture and unique spirit through architectural structures, culture, and strong emphasis on community. Today we will look at landmarks that have been here for decades, we will also look at buildings and spaces that were developed more recently and play a large role in the creation of modern day Carrboro.

START:

The Century Center

We are currently standing in front of the Carrboro Century Center. The Century Center was the old Carrboro Baptist Church. It was founded in 1913, and reopened in 2001 to house town services such as the Department of Recreation and Parks, the Police Department, and the Cybrary- an electronic library. The center is a gathering space- it has several meeting rooms, a kitchen, and the Century Hall, which is used for wedding receptions, galas, and workshops. The Department of Recreation and Parks uses the available facilities to plan and implement summer camps, dance workshops, classes and sports leagues. The CDRP also prepares a monthly newsletter that updates community members on current events. The department sponsors several annual festivals like the Carrboro Music Festival, Carrboro Day, the Annual International Poetry Festival, and an annual Fourth of July celebration. CDRP also manages ten parks for the community, which include playgrounds, baseball and soccer fields, tennis courts, basketball courts, a dog park and a fishing pond.

Fitch Lumber Co.

As we walk north down Greensboro Street, we will pass a community icon. Established in 1923, Fitch Lumber is the town's oldest industry in continuous operation. The company was

initially known as Fitch-Riggs lumber, but the Fitches purchased W.T. Riggs share of the company in 1927. In 1970, all original buildings on North Greensboro Street were razed to make room for new shops and storage buildings. The early characteristics of the lumber company are most evident at the 'planing mill' on Lloyd Street, where some of the original buildings survive as private residences.

Poplar Street

As we make our way toward Carrboro Town Hall, Poplar Street takes us through the mill village. Though many homes appear to be similar, take note of how past and current owners have change the appearance of individual dwellings to give some a unique appearance. These typical mill homes are referred to as having "four rooms and a path." The path, of course, was to the outhouse. Water and sewer service arrived around 1928 to most parts of town. Typically, bathrooms were added to the rear of the home and the pipes running up exterior walls are reminders of this modernization.

Carrboro Town Hall/Carrboro Town Commons

The first public school was near the intersection of Center and Short Streets. It had a close relationship with the local churches. The first teachers were local clergy for the most part. In 1922, another school was built. This building is now Carrboro Town Hall.

The Town Commons provides a place for the Carrboro Farmers Market. The Carrboro Farmers Market opened in 1945 as the 'Farmers Exchange.' The Carrboro Farmers Market requires that everything sold must be grown or produced within 50 miles of Carrboro. You can see the market every Saturday morning and Wednesday evening from March through December. The Commons is also used for Town or cosponsored events and can be rented for other events. For example, Carrboro Day, a celebration of the town and its history, is held here each May.

Main Street

As we walk down Main Street, you will notice that the only real ‘chain’ restaurant is a Wendy’s. The current Wendy’s location is close to another landmark, **Sparrow’s Pool**. Located down Pittsboro Road, it was the only community pool in the area and was a source of entertainment for the entire town, including Chapel Hill. For a twenty-five cent admission fee, you received a swimsuit, towel and use of the dressing room.

Carrboro prominently features family run and independent businesses throughout the community. Many restaurant owners in the Chapel Hill/Carrboro area are big proponents of eating and buying local and by doing so support and sustain our local economy. ACME, along with Weaver Street Market and Panzanella, all of which we will see near the Carr Mill Mall, participate in partnerships with local nonprofits and other organizations that promote organic and locally produced foods. In the town’s past, many of the buildings on Main Street were grocery stores, hardware stores or tractor supply merchants. There were enough small, independent entrepreneurs to support the town’s needs.

Carrboro was settled around 1882. The town was first known as ‘West Of’ because of its geographical location west of Chapel Hill. Soon after, the name was changed to West End. In 1911, the name was changed again to Venable, and two years after that, the town finally changed the name to Carrboro in honor of the local mill’s owner, Julian Shakespeare Carr.

For its first fifty years, Carrboro remained a small mill town with a slow, steady pace of growth. In 1960, approximately 2000 people lived in the town. By the year 2000, however, the town's population had grown to over 16,700 residents. There was a 45 percent increase from 1990, the highest percentage increase in Orange County! Age demographics show Carrboro to be a community of graduate students, young professionals, married couples and families with an average age of 28. Carrboro is commonly referred to as the “Paris of the Piedmont” and takes pride in being known as a community rich in cultural and economic diversity.

Bike Paths

On our right hand side we're passing a section of the Carrboro Bicycle Path. Though Carrboro has free public transportation, cycling is both a preferred mode of transport and a recreational sport supported by the town. The bike trails around the town connect to statewide trails that are provided and maintained by the North Carolina Division of Bike and Pedestrian Transportation. Currently, Carrboro is working with Durham-based Greenways Incorporated to develop a comprehensive bike path plan.

Cat's Cradle

Here on our right is a landmark known to all residents- both past and present. The Cats Cradle venue was established in 1969 in Chapel Hill on Rosemary Street. In 1993 their lease ran out and they decided to give this side of town a try. In the Chapel Hill location they hosted acts like Nirvana, Pearl Jam, The Pixies, Public Enemy, The Smashing Pumpkins, and Widespread Panic, and in this location they've hosted The Dave Matthews Band, The Counting Crows, and John Mayer. Also worth noting are some local artists that made it big- like Ryan Adams, The Squirrel Nut Zippers, and Ben Folds.

The Arts Center

On our right is the Carrboro Arts Center. The Arts Center is a community gathering space that "nourishes the arts, creativity and community through education, performance and exhibition." It provides art classes, theater productions, concerts, children and family programs and gallery exhibits. It participates in the 2nd Friday Artwalk which occurs monthly, and the Center operates as a nonprofit supported in part by grants from The National Endowment for the Arts, the North Carolina Arts Council and The Orange County Arts Commission. Please take 15 minutes to look around the Arts Center and explore the current exhibit. It will give you a feeling of the current happenings of the town, the local artists, and how our community expresses itself.

15 Minute Break- Carrboro Arts Center

The Rail Depot

As we head back to the Century Center, we will pass through the heart of Carrboro. As you remember, Carrboro's first building was a train station, which you can see on our right. In 1882, the Durham-Greensboro Southern Railway line began offering service to a small, somewhat deserted area west of Chapel Hill, to accommodate travelers to and from the UNC campus. The last passenger train ran around 1935 after succumbing to the popularity of the automobile. It opened again in 1997 and is now is a family-owned railroad-themed restaurant.

Carr Mill Mall

The complex in front of us is Carr Mill Mall, one of the most historically rich buildings in the town and the source of the town's name. Back when the town was called "Venable," Tom Lloyd built a cotton mill which he named Alberta. This cotton mill was the center of town, provided jobs, and a foundation for a growing economy. Julian Carr bought the cotton mill from Lloyd in 1909 and donated electricity and streets to the community. The mill became part of the Blanche Hosiery Corporation, and then the Durham Hosiery Mills. The mill became known, affectionately, as #4. #4 first closed in 1930. In 1945, The Carrboro Woolen Mills reopened #4 and modernized its operation. During that time, this company was the main employer in Carrboro. The mill remained operational until the early 1960's. In 1975, after sitting vacant for more than 5 years, the Carrboro Board of Aldermen decided to restore the #4 mill. After two years of work and 8.5 million dollars, the mill re-opened its doors as Carr Mill Mall.

Examples of Public Art

Something worth pointing out is that large concrete lady sitting on the bench outside the mall. This is one of several concrete ladies scattered around the town. Two artists, Virginia Bullman who runs a studio in North Carolina called 'the Funky Chicken,' and LaNelle Davis named this lady "Norma Rae," after a typical mill worker taking a break. She has been here since 2001. In the artists' words, her work in the mill is represented by the institutional green work apron. Her dream is represented by her yellow dress. She is looking out away from the mill,

“determined to survive.” The artists create these sculptures to honor those women in all of our lives who feed us, clothe us and comfort us when we are down. They tend to be invisible but they hold a prominent place in the world.

The fountain in front of Weaver Street Market is the result of a community effort with local artists creating the metal sculptures and the surrounding rocks collected from Chatham County were put together by a local stonemason and other volunteers.

Weaver Street Market

We’re going to end our tour here in “Carrboro’s Front Yard,” better known as Weaver Street Market. Weaver Street Market is a community cooperative of locally grown organic produce and products. Opened in 1988 after being funded by a loan from the Self-Help Ventures Fund, a Community Development Block Grant from the Town of Carrboro, and individual community supporters, the Co-op is certainly more than just a grocery store. Town leaders were motivated to use such innovative financing by the prospect of developing a truly community-owned business.

Cooperative, eco-friendly, and local, Weaver Street Market makes substantial donations to non-profit groups that contribute to the Carrboro community. They contribute to local non-profit organizations and schools. In addition, they participate in the annual Piedmont Farm Tour, and help non-profit groups raise funds at various events. Weaver Street also has its own foundation, the Cooperative Community Fund, which gives out grants to other area organizations. The Markets’ trucks are fueled with biodiesel fuel and they organize wine shows, late night music, and host Sunday live jazz brunches from April to October and live music events on Thursday evening from late spring to early fall.

We understand that the Carrboro area continues to change economically, demographically, and architecturally. In order to account for this in our historical tour we have included several suggestions that will keep the walking tour inexpensive, sustainable, and current. This will ease the programs implementation and alterations as needed.

Advertising

We understand the production of brochures and miscellaneous costs need to be accounted for, therefore we believe the historical walking tour must be cost-efficient for the Department of Recreation and Parks. As the proposed tour becomes a reality, we propose integrating local businesses into the production through advertising. The brochure and walking guide can feature advertisements of area markets, restaurants, and stores. The Department of Recreation and Parks can charge for these advertisements to either make a profit or offset production costs. It is also possible for the brochure to include coupons or lists of restaurants in Carrboro that have won local awards or that the community has deemed notable.

Tour Guides

One of our struggles while compiling this information was the ability to make it participatory but also, we wanted conclusions that could be shared across diverse community groups. While we were eager to ask groups of long-time Carrboro residents what their favorite places were or where their memories were made in the town, it became evident that this would not be the way to create a tour that would appeal to an unpredictable and constantly changing audience. One of the solutions we have created to ease the gap between sites that were 'community-defined' verses a tour that was 'organization-defined' was to fill the role of 'tour guide' with Carrboro residents.

It is our hope that the tour guide position can be filled by volunteer Carrboro residents. These individuals can lead the walking tour using the provided script as a guide and will be able to interject personal stories along the way. This will keep the tour fresh- as each tour guide would tell new and different stories, and it would also provide a direct way for residents to give back to the town and share in the pride they feel for Carrboro.

Opportunities to perform test runs of the tour coincide with public festivals such as Carrboro Day. These events provide an opportunity to gauge interest and gather opinions of the tour route, selected sites and tour length.

Evaluation

We believe that the tour will provide short-term and long-term benefits for the town of Carrboro. If implemented, the town would immediately benefit from a new mechanism to draw tourists into the area, provide volunteer or employment opportunities for those interested in being a tour guide, and each business featured on the route of the walking tour would indirectly receive the attention of any tour participants. There are currently no hotels in the immediate Carrboro area (the closest is the Franklin Hotel located in Chapel Hill) thus, the town needs to have incentives to attract tourists that may simply be visiting the Chapel Hill area and be unfamiliar with their proximity to Carrboro and the community that exists.

As the tour continues to evolve, long-term benefits include enhanced visibility for the town and town happenings. If artist studios become a part of the tour, it is possible that local artists will receive more visibility and perhaps more business from out of town connections. The networking between visitors and town residents/businesses will increase, providing opportunities for individuals as well as town events to become more widespread and well-known. We also believe that if specific businesses are advertised or emphasized in the walking tour, those businesses will receive higher revenue from tourism dollars. Enhanced visibility will attract more walk-in customers and they can expect this to lead to higher profits.

Continued interest in the town and the achievements of the aforementioned benefits demonstrate measures of success.

Future Plans

There are several ways in which the tour can be extended. The tour can be lengthened to include the Farmer's Market, local artist studios, local farms, the university lake area, and personal residences that have significant historical meaning (the Mill Superintendent House for example). The tour can also be extended to include more than just the downtown area of Carrboro. It must be noted that although inclusion of other areas would require some sort of vehicle, perhaps creating a self-guided tour rather than a guide-led tour.