

MASTER PLAN SUMMARY

Introduction

The “Hudson Parks Master Plan” promotes the mission of the Hudson Park Board (HPB) and seeks to create a greater sense of place and identity for Hudson residents. Where the 1995 “Comprehensive Plan” envisions Hudson as the embodiment of rural/small town characteristics within a major metropolitan region, the “Hudson Parks Master Plan” seeks to preserve and develop this image. It combines the recreational and park facilities, the open space preserves, and the network of trails, and creates an integrated city-wide system. The Hudson parks will become a community focus and act as a guardian of the ‘quality of life’ for all residents.

The goals of the “Hudson Parks Master Plan” were developed to further the Hudson Parks’ role as an integral component in the identity and image of the City of Hudson. The Master Plan seeks to create a framework to guide park use, expansion, connectivity, and image for the betterment of the community. These goals incorporate the mission of the Hudson Park Board, the policy of the “Comprehensive Plan,” and the desire of the residents, and develop a physical identity for the park system.

The Process

The development of the Master Plan was the result of a lengthy process. Phase One of the project was concerned with data collection, and a comprehensive base of information allowed the plan to develop on solid footing. An important component of this was the mail and telephone survey conducted during the first several months. Funding for it was provided by the Hudson School District, the current recreational program provider, and the HPB. The results of the survey were compared with national averages for recreational facilities in communities similar to Hudson in size and character. Data on the physical nature of the park lands was collected using the Sensitive Lands Mapping previously prepared for Hudson, data from the Hudson Land Conservancy, the Metroparks GIS, Summit County digital mapping and airphotos, AMATS regional planning documents and extensive field investigation. To insure a plan that looked not only to the immediate concerns and conditions, an historian investigated the history of the parks and contributed insight into the city’s development. Throughout the entire process, public participation and input was sought. Informational open houses were held to solicit reactions and confirm trends.

The Concept

The Master Plan seeks to develop a cohesive open space, park and trail system. The first step in achieving this goal is to establish a template for open space based on the natural system connectivity occurring in the Hudson watersheds and the human connectivity desired between activity nodes and neighborhoods throughout the community. Within this template for open space, three concepts emerge as guiding principles of this system, park use and expansion, connectivity, and image. These areas address the detail and development of the overall system.

Park Use Designation and Expansion - investigates the existing land holdings and how they should be developed and expanded in the future. In addition, the plan promotes centralization for a majority of the active recreational uses, and the decentralization of mixed-use parks and preserved open space. Each park is reviewed for its role for the future.

The Master Plan breaks the Hudson parks into three categories including active use, mixed use, and limited use.

Active Use – those park lands where there is a concentration of facilities for organized recreational activities. The primary concept underlying the active use parks is to designate Barlow Farm Park as the primary provider of organized recreational facilities in the parks system. Building on this concept, it is recommended that other recreational-intensive parks be clustered near it to capitalize on shared facilities like parking, concessions and toilet facilities. The existing parks included in this category are; Barlow Farm Park, Oak Grove Park (formally Barlow Park), Robinson Field, Ellsworth Meadows and the associated Trebo Property.

Mixed Use – park lands serving adjacent neighborhoods, which may include existing organized recreational areas, playgrounds and openspace. Many parks within the current Hudson system contain facilities that fall into several use categories. These Mixed use parks are dispersed throughout the city and meet many of the surrounding neighborhood's recreational needs. The need for mixed use parks will continue to grow with each new residential unit built in Hudson. Parks in this category include Hudson Springs Park, Cascade Park, Darrow Road Park, Middleton Park, the Boyd property, Colony Park, the Witt property and Stow-Middleton Park.

Limited Use or Preservation – park lands comprised of environmentally sensitive lands, mature stands of trees, wetlands or wildlife habitats. These environmentally unique areas are set aside as preserved open space. Throughout the history of the HPB, a strong emphasis has been placed on preserving open space. To continue upon that tradition, holdings that are environmentally sensitive or serve as im-

portant wildlife habitat should remain undisturbed. The sensitive nature of the limited use lands will permit trails only where intrusion can be managed. An added benefit of having these preserves is that they can help meet the environmental education needs of the community through access to viable ecosystems. This educational component is key, as educating future generations on the importance of viable ecosystems, will ensure community commitment to these preserves. Those areas protected by the Hudson Parks are Bicentennial Woods, Boston Mills Park, Doc's Woods, MacLaren Woods, Trumbull Woods, and the first Hudson Park - Wildlife Park.

The Hudson Trail Network has been developed to promote community connectivity. Hudson is composed of the historic village and surrounding township. The 1994 consolidation into a single city brought together two entities, each with its own distinct image and character. The weaving together and connectivity of the entire city is a goal of the Master Plan. The Hudson Trail Network is seen as the thread that will bind together a cohesive community, and link it with the surrounding region.

The trails will be built over time and a system of prioritizing has been developed with each set of new links expanding the previous network. The priority 1 trails will extend from the village center to the corners of the community. Priority 2 trails link the parks to one another and link into the original framework laid down by the priority 1 system. Neighborhood trails, and connectors to surrounding communities have a priority 3 status.

The Guidelines have been designed to achieve a cohesive image for the entire Hudson Park system. These guidelines address both the design details for the parks and trails, and the policies which govern them.

The Hudson Parks Master Plan is an overall framework for the parks system and recognizes that its development will occur over time. The design guidelines ensure that each improvement made to an existing facility or new acquisition, contributes to the creation of a cohesive system of parks and trails serving all residents, while preserving delicate ecosystems.



The Plan

The Master Plan provides a long term vision for the future growth and enhancement of the Hudson park system. It is designed as a working document, which should be referenced frequently by Park Board members, the park department staff and city planners.

Keys to the success of the plan include:

- Annual review by Park Board members, in advance of the annual budget process
- Collaboration with other entities such as city council, city planners, developers, MPC, CVNRA, Summit County Metroparks and other organizations and surrounding communities
- Development of a long-term funding and implementation plan
 - Active solicitation of funding alternatives
 - Development of grant writing expertise via internal or external sources
 - Acquisition strategy for acquiring future park properties
- Communication with the citizens of Hudson.
 - Publicity to notify citizens and organizations of the plan
 - Ongoing citizen input
 - Planned citizen solicitation at periodic intervals to update the survey findings
- Active involvement in planning for future city projects such as Village South and the new library.

