

INTRODUCTION

The 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 Parks Master Plan seeks to preserve and develop this image. It takes the recreational and park facilities, the open space preserves, and the network of trails, and creates an integrated city-wide system. Parks in Hudson will become a community focus and act as a guardian of the 'quality of life' for all residents.



The Master Plan develops an overall policy for park system open space, land use, preservation, development and expansion. It also addresses the human linkages between the parks, neighborhoods, and town center, and the connectivity required for the enhancement and preservation of ecological systems and wildlife habitats.

The Master Plan provides the HPB with a long-range guide to accomplish the following:

- Enhance existing parks and recreation facilities to accommodate the needs and interests of all age groups within the City of Hudson.
- Identify specific land area requirements and sites for acquisition to accommodate future demand for parks and recreational facilities.
- Recognize lands with sensitive environmental attributes, and preservation areas needed to protect wetlands, natural drainage ways, unique natural areas, and wildlife habitat.
- Coordinate linkages between the City of Hudson, its neighborhoods, parks, and facilities provided by agencies serving the larger regional population like the Metroparks and CVNRA.
- Recommend options to enhance the operation, maintenance and overall administration of parks, recreation facilities and programs and preservation areas to better serve the needs of the community.
- Provide an implementation plan that prioritizes proposed improvements and identifies new funding sources.

THE MASTER PLAN AND PROCESS

The Hudson Park Board (HPB) was formed in 1959 by the Hudson Township Trustees in response to the 58-acre donation of land known as Wildlife Park. Today, the HPB is appointed by the Hudson City Council. The board governs the park system and has jurisdiction over 1100 acres of land divided into 19 individual parks. The HPB undertook the development of a Master Plan late in the spring of 1999. The need for the plan was recognized and acted upon as the result of a number of factors, the most prominent being the increased acreage of HPB lands following the passage of the 1997 Land Levy. Additionally, in the last few decades the City of Hudson has experienced an expanding population, that has placed pressures on open space and created changing needs in recreation.

The Master Plan's goals were developed to be consistent with the mission of the HPB. In addition, "The City of Hudson Comprehensive Plan", the area's history, local ecology, and the "Hudson Recreation Needs Assessment Survey" were all given careful consideration during goal definition.

Throughout the planning process the mission of the HPB was viewed as the guiding principle for the process. The mission is to *"acquire park land and to provide the citizens of Hudson with a park system for the conservation, preservation and enjoyment of their natural environment and to facilitate the usage of the pavilions, trails, playgrounds, fields, lake and other aspects of park land."*

Another major influence came from the 1995 "City of Hudson Comprehensive Plan." This plan was the first study to examine the newly created City of Hudson incorporating previous township lands into a single, much larger community. The "Comprehensive Plan" process involved many citizens and HPB members, and the Policy on Recreation, Open Space and Environmental Integrity, which became a corner stone in this parks master planning process.

Hudson is a community conscious of its history. Since 1957 the actions of the HPB have set a direction and influenced the physical development of the park system. An historian was contracted to investigate and document this history. The new Master Plan is respectful of the HPB's actions to date and seeks to carry many of their intentions into the future.

The preservation of ecologically important lands has long been an emphasis of the HPB. To better understand the larger picture, an investigation into the natural systems within the city limits and their role in the region was conducted. This research built upon the "City of Hudson Sensitive Lands Study", and the interests and goals of the Hudson Land Conservancy. Additionally, the watershed and habitat information for the region was taken into account. The role of the parks are changing in many communities, and to obtain statistically valid analysis of the needs and desires of the Hudson community, a mail and telephone survey was conducted during the first several months of

the planning process. This survey was funded 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 for communities similar to Hudson in size and character. This information was incorporated throughout the planning process.

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 widespread support and to confirm data and assumptions, each step of the process invited public input and review. For example, focus groups were used in developing the survey questions, and the park inventory and field investigations included public participants. Formalized input was obtained during a series of open houses. The first open house furnished the data collected through research in the field and from the survey. The second meeting presented three conceptual alternatives for the overall park system master plan. These options varied from a concept maximizing recreational development to a system where each quadrant of the city had parks containing all levels of development. The last open house presented a hybrid concept containing elements of many of the alternatives from the previous meeting.

The HPB and the City of Hudson oversaw the entire process to create a plan that is informed, workable and sensitive to long term concerns and aspirations.



THE VISION

The Hudson parks are an integral component in the identity and image of the City of Hudson. The goals of the “Hudson Parks Master Plan” are predicated on this role, and seek to create a framework to guide park use, expansion, connectivity, and image for the enjoyment and betterment of the community. This framework translates the mission of the HPB, the policy of the “City of Hudson Comprehensive Plan,” and the desires of the residents into a physical identity for the park system.

MASTER PLANNING CONCEPTS

The Master Plan seeks to develop a cohesive open space, park and trail system. Building on the ideas presented in the “City of Hudson Comprehensive Plan,” the “Hudson Parks Master Plan” sees the preservation and enhancement of the areas rural character and small town atmosphere as its larger goals. The “Hudson Parks Master Plan” first establishes 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. To promote community connectivity, the *Hudson Trail Network* has been designed and prioritized for implementation and construction. To achieve a cohesive image for the system, all of the elements must be developed under a common set of *Guidelines*. These guidelines address both the design details for the parks and trails, and the policies which govern them.



Open Space Template



Park Use Designation

OPEN SPACE TEMPLATE

The City of Hudson comprises about 25 square miles divided north from south by the Ohio Turnpike. The traditional village lies near the center of the square, with neighborhoods and activity nodes dispersed throughout. The Open Space Template seeks to integrate the city and to provide a framework for open space expansion and connectivity. The system is based on two overlaid diagrams. The patterns of human habitation and desire lines, and the naturally occurring watershed drainage patterns existing in Hudson.



Hudson has the benefit of extensive park land acquired over the last half century, which meet many of the communities needs for respite and recreation. However, the 1999 survey conducted to assess park and recreational needs of the community placed a high priority on the non-vehicular movement of residents between neighborhoods, the village center, and the parks. The connectivity diagram shows these desire lines as spines radiating out from the traditional village center and a loop around the center offering a second level of connection.

The natural beauty of Hudson, created by the streams, creeks and expanses of wetlands, provide the area with a rich tapestry of vegetation and wildlife. These same features weave connected greenway corridors throughout the community and connect Hudson with the surrounding region. The greenway corridor diagram shows the watershed watercourses, which are rich in environmental value should become a high priority for park system acquisition.

Connectivity and natural corridors comprise the overlaying framework of the Open Space Template. Over time it will establish a park system that acts as a mediator between the needs of the built and natural environments. As the city grows and new park lands and trails are added, each property can be evaluated against the long-term goal of achieving this system.



Open Space Template

-  Watercourses
-  Existing Parks