



Mendota County Park

MASTER PLAN

Dane County, Wisconsin

October 19th, 2016



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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1-Public Input Summary

2-Preferred Alternative Master Plan Graphic

3-Proposed Channel Retaining Wall Cross Section

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Mendota County Park is located in the Town of Westport just east of the City of Middleton. The vision for Mendota County Park began in June of 1951, with the purchase of seven acres of land approved by the Dane County Board. This park is unique to Dane County Parks in its urban setting, but still offers open space within walking distance to a large population of Dane County residents that may not otherwise have their own recreation space or backyards.

Perhaps one of the greatest attributes of Mendota County Park is the public access it affords to Lake Mendota. Located at the park are a swimming beach, small watercraft boat landing, and 5 boat camping sites. Mendota County Park is used extensively by ice anglers for lake access in the winter and by a variety of water recreation enthusiasts during the spring and summer.

This Master Plan process evaluated existing conditions of the Mendota County Park planning area and incorporated public, stakeholder, and staff input to create the recommendations found within this report. The planning process included an interactive website and series of public information, local unit of government, and stakeholder meetings from October of 2015 through October of 2016. In addition, staff from Public Health Madison & Dane County assisted with further outreach efforts to the community and surrounding area. Based on the public input process, the following vision statement was prepared for Mendota County Park:

Mendota County Park will remain a rural character park that emphasizes passive recreation uses and quiet areas to escape the surrounding urban environment. Provision of internal pathways and reorganizing the parking layout will provide for better circulation of users, greater accessibility and improved treatment of storm water runoff. Education opportunities include history of Lake Mendota, importance and function of groundwater springs and pre-settlement Native American inhabitation. Facility upgrades, particularly the campground, are necessary to meet public expectations and provide a safe park environment. Improving and expanding multi age playground areas are a priority, with an emphasis on natural, creative play elements. Regional connectivity to surrounding parks and trails will improve awareness and appreciation of the park. Additional and enhanced opportunities for informal rest areas in the park, particularly along the shoreline are critical to the urban escape nature of this park.

Major plan recommendations include:

PARKING AND PATHWAY IMPROVEMENTS

- A paved trail system throughout the park with fitness nodes.
- Relocating existing trailer and visitor parking spaces more centrally within the park to improve accessibility and storm water runoff treatment.
- Retaining a traffic engineer to investigate possible pedestrian access improvements to the park.

CAMPGROUND

- Flush toilet near campground.
- Remodel 4 RV sites to “pull through” design and add 5 rustic tent sites.

LAKE MENDOTA SHORELINE & CHANNEL

- Add breakwall and pier to ramp.
- Add demonstration spring and educational signage to beach area.
- Add firepit and hammock posts to shoreline zone.
- Replace park shelter with timber frame shelter.
- Replace channel retaining wall and walkway.

PARK AMENITIES

- Replace un-numbered shelter with same size timber frame shelter/labyrinth.
- Add dry sediment removal basin east of volleyball court.
- Add additional natural playground areas.
- Consider art in park options.

REGIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- “Water Walk” trail connection to Pheasant Branch Conservancy
- Future bicycle pedestrian ferry to downtown Madison.
- Multi-use trail connections to North Mendota Trail and Middleton trail network.

Additional detailed construction drawings and planning will still need to be completed for many of the recommendations found within this plan. As the park and recreation use continue to grow over the next 5-10 years, the plan should be revisited and amended as necessary to reflect current recreation trends and natural resource preservation needs.



II. PROPERTY BACKGROUND

Historically, lands surrounding what is now Mendota County Park were first occupied by Native Americans, likely attracted to the area for the multiple waterways and rolling hillsides more than 1000 years ago. Located just west of the park at 3119 Waconia Lane in Middleton is the historic site of an early trading post originally owned and operated by Wallis Rowan, then sold to Michel St. Cyr. The trading post was open from 1832 to 1837. In addition to trade, the post served as a hotel for travelers to stay in for two dollars a night after being purchased by St. Cyr.

Mendota County Park originated in 1951 with County Board approval for the purchase of 7 acres of land on the north shore of Lake Mendota. In 1962, the park grew by another 3.5 acres before reaching the current 19 acre size by 1969.

Camping became extremely popular at this park in the 1960's and at times the entire park was overtaken by campers. Mendota County Park was one of the original 'Caretaker Parks' with a residential home located on site that provided housing for a full time park maintenance person until 1970. In the 1970's the campground was reduced to thirty camp sites. A 1975 dredging project in the lagoon to the east of the park made 5 overnight boat camping sites on Lake Mendota a possibility.

During the 1990's the existing beach was relocated to the current location and the lagoon was dredged again. In the mid 1990's, a subcommittee was established with representation from the County Board, Town of Westport and City of Middleton to discuss the future of the park. Main topics of discussion were the possibility of transferring the park to the City of Middleton, and eliminating camping at the park. Neither would come to fruition, the Town of Westport strongly felt the park should remain under County ownership and the County citing it offered the only camping opportunity on Lake Mendota. In 2003 the playground was updated through a generous donation by neighborhood residents.

The tennis courts were removed in 2014 due to declining use and ongoing water damage. In 2016, a beach restoration project was completed that included installation of a water filtration system that greatly improves water quality during the summer months. The campground continues to be very popular and has the second highest occupancy rate in the Dane County Park system. Perhaps the highest seasonal use of the park is in the winter for ice fishing access to Lake Mendota.

III. PLANNING PROCESS AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SUMMARY

The master planning process began with a public kick off meeting held at the Town of Westport in November of 2015. Following the kick off meeting, Dane County Parks planning staff met with the City of Middleton, the Town of Westport, the Dane County Park Commission, neighboring property owners and Public Health Madison and Dane County staff to gather input and ideas for the master plan. A follow up public information meeting was held at the Peace Thru Christ Lutheran Church and School adjacent to the park in August of 2016 to present draft plan recommendations being considered for inclusion in the plan.

Notifications of public information meetings were sent to all landowners adjacent to the planning area boundary and press releases were printed in the Middleton newspaper. Dane County Parks also created a website for the master planning process that included all project information and an online feedback form. In addition, staff from Public Health Madison & Dane County assisted with further outreach efforts to the community and surrounding area.

The following hope/concern/comment themes were heard throughout the public input process:

- Interest maintaining the rural, non-urban feel of the park.
- Support for creating regional connections to other parks and trails.
- Importance of improving bicycle/pedestrian access to the park from the surrounding neighborhood.
- Support for addition of off road walking trails in the park.
- Need for additional and natural playground areas.
- Concerns regarding stormwater runoff from park onto neighboring properties.

A summary staff and stakeholder input heard during the planning process is presented under Attachment 1.



IV. RESOURCE INVENTORY & ANALYSIS

TOPOGRAPHY

The majority of the topography within Mendota County Park is extremely flat with the exception of a gentle hill on the west side of the park that could afford a view of the lake with minimal tree clearing.



Opportunities:

- Wide open views, self surveillance
- Ease of creating accessible facilities

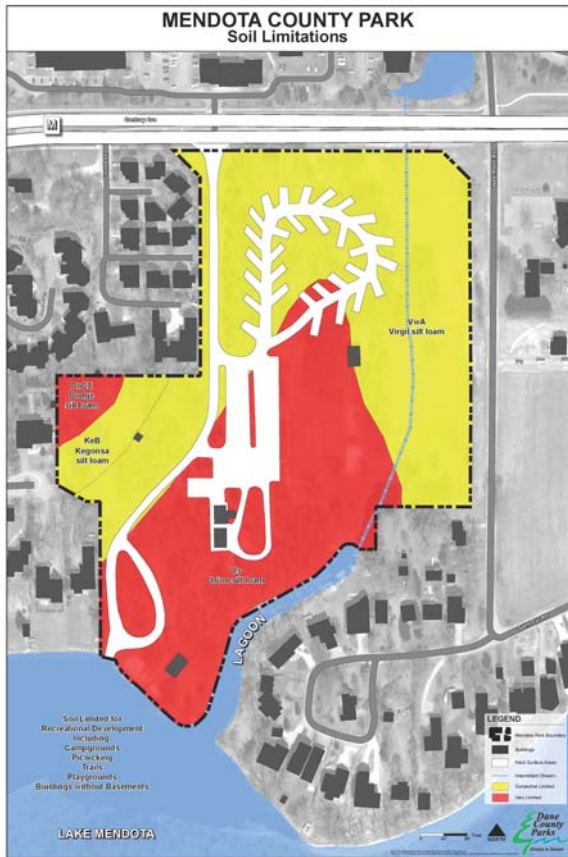
Constraints:

- Challenge to properly drain stormwater runoff



SOILS

The majority of the soils in the park has relatively shallow depths to the water table and is poorly drained.



Opportunities:

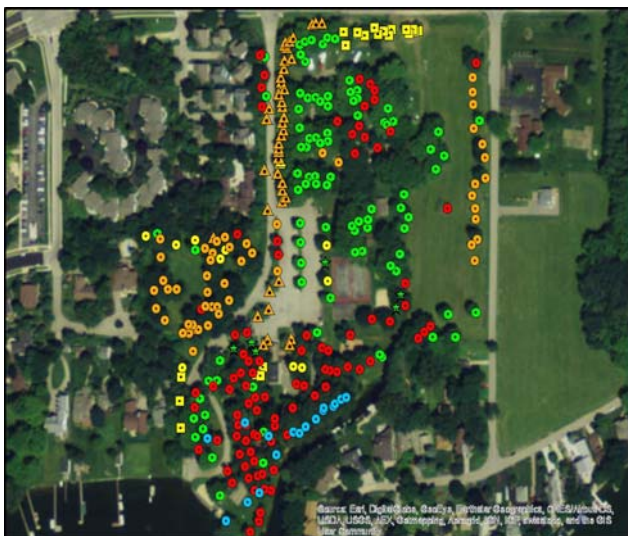
- May be opportunities to expand the existing lagoon further into the park.
- Creating wetland buffer zones for stormwater runoff.

Constraints:

- Buildings and other park infrastructure projects must be designed to withstand hydric conditions.
- Natural surface paths/lawn maintenance issues.

VEGETATION

The trees of Mendota County Park consist primarily of ash (red dots), silver maple (green dots) and cottonwood (blue dots). Emerald Ash Borer will result in removal of a large number of ash trees, replace with diverse lowland species.



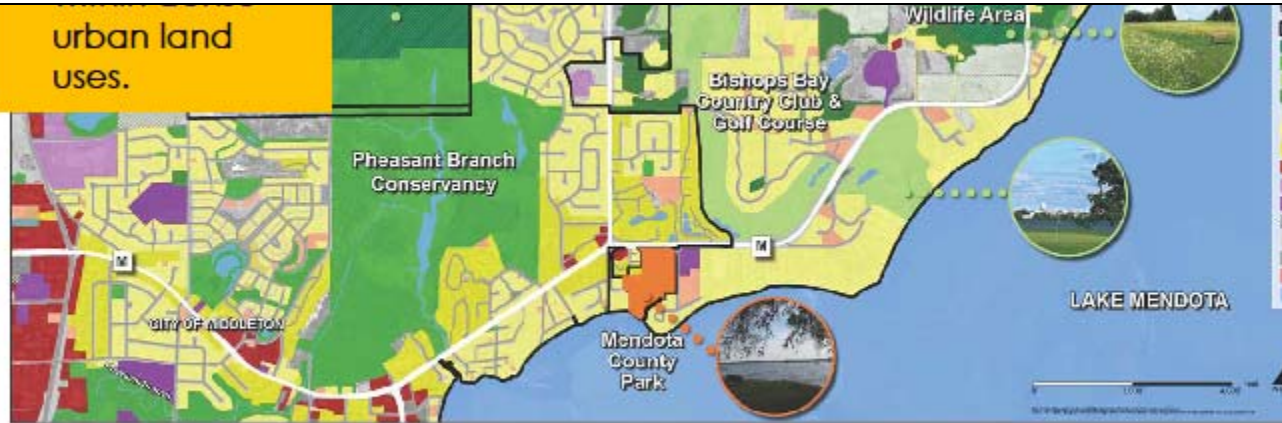
Opportunities:

- Reuse harvested ash/cottonwood trees for park infrastructure building and playground materials.
- Provide open area for reconfiguring parking lots.

Constraints:

- Labor intensive ash removal.

- Park is isolated within dense



Opportunities:

- Public water and park access in close proximity to many homes.
- Potential connections to other public lands and trails.

Constraints:

- Proximity of adjacent homes to park.
- Park is isolated within dense urban land uses.

Surrounding Land Use

MENDOTA COUNTY PARK
Surrounding Land Use & Existing Public Lands



TRANSPORTATION

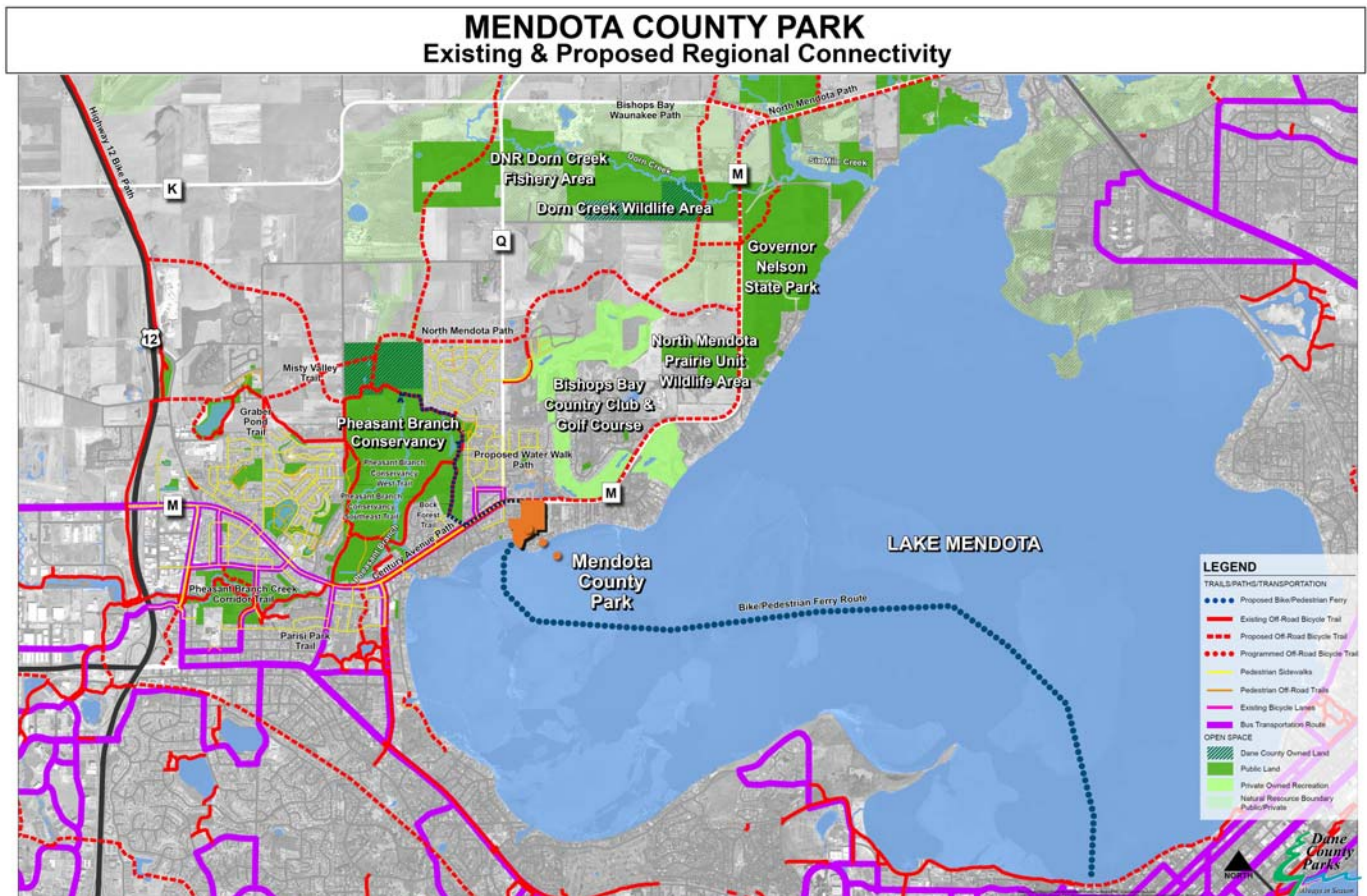
Access to Mendota County Park is primarily limited to motorized vehicles and foot due to the adjacent CTH M on the north boundary of the park and lack of bicycle/pedestrian crossing improvements. The City of Middleton has been actively planning and developing a comprehensive off road multi use trail network that should eventually connect to Mendota County Park. The Dane County Parks and Open Space Plan identifies a proposed trail connection from Mendota County Park to Governor Nelson State Park and beyond. There is also a recommendation for a future bicycle pedestrian ferry that would provide service from the park to the downtown isthmus area.

Opportunities:

- Provide signed “Water Walk” on existing sidewalks/paths to spring at Pheasant Branch Conservancy.
- Provide connectivity to other trail networks.
- Retaining a traffic engineer to investigate possible pedestrian access improvements to the park.

Constraints:

- CTH M limits non-motorized access to the park.
- Lack of pier and suitable non-campsite mooring areas limit boat access to park.



VI. PLANNING PURPOSE

The original and only planning for Mendota County Park was completed in the mid 1970's. Most of the existing park facilities have become dated and in need of repair or replacement. Surrounding land uses, recreation trends and general use of the park has changed greatly since the original park plans were drafted.

The purpose of this plan is to create a long term vision for the park through a consensus building process that will guide future use, facility development and land management while balancing resource protection with public access.

VII. PARK VISION STATEMENT

Mendota County Park will remain a rural character park that emphasizes passive recreation uses and quiet areas to escape the surrounding urban environment. Provision of internal pathways and reorganizing the parking layout will provide for better circulation of users, greater accessibility and improved treatment of storm water runoff. Education opportunities include history of Lake Mendota, importance and function of groundwater springs and pre-settlement Native American inhabitation. Facility upgrades, particularly the campground, are necessary to meet public expectations and provide a safe park environment. Improving and expanding multi age playground areas are a priority, with an emphasis on natural, creative play elements. Regional connectivity to surrounding parks and trails will improve awareness and appreciation of the park. Continued and enhanced opportunities for informal rest areas in the park, particularly along the shoreline are critical to the urban escape nature of this park.



VIII. MASTER PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

The following plan recommendations are also presented graphically on the preferred alternative master plan exhibits at the end of the document.

Major plan recommendations include:

PARKING AND PATHWAY IMPROVEMENTS

- Paved trail system through the park to improve safety and access.
- Relocating existing trailer and visitor parking spaces more centrally within the park to improve accessibility and storm water runoff treatment.
- Retaining a traffic engineer to investigate possible pedestrian access improvements to the park.

CAMPGROUND

- Addition of water sources throughout campground.
- Relocated campground host site.
- Flush toilet near campground.
- Remodel 4 RV sites to “pull through” design.
- Add 5 rustic tent sites.
- Improve vegetative screening surrounding campground.

LAKE MENDOTA SHORELINE & CHANNEL

- Add breakwall and pier to ramp.
- Add demonstration spring and educational signage to beach area.
- Add firepit and hammock posts to shoreline zone.
- Add canoe/kayak racks.
- Replace park shelter with timber frame shelter.
- Replace channel retaining wall. See attached cross section.

PARK AMENITIES

- Replace un-numbered shelter with same size timber frame shelter.
- Add grass paver labyrinth to un-numbered shelter.
- Add dry sediment removal basin east of volleyball court.
- Add additional natural playground areas.
- Add non-reservable picnic opportunities.
- Consider art in park options.
- Add fitness stations to internal pathway system.

REGIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- “Water Walk” trail connection to Pheasant Branch Conservancy
- Future bicycle pedestrian ferry to downtown Madison.
- Multi-use trail connection to North Mendota Trail and Middleton trail network.

Additional detailed construction drawings and planning will still need to be completed for many of the recommendations found within this plan. As the park and recreation use continue to grow over the next 5-10 years, the plan should be revisited and amended as necessary to reflect current recreation trends and natural resource preservation needs.

IX. FUTURE BOUNDARY ADJUSTMENTS

Consider partnering with the Town of Westport and/or City of Middleton on acquiring open space parcels east of park and south of Peace Thru Christ Lutheran Church for development of a regional storm water treatment basin.

X. ACTION PLAN

The action plan identifies major capital park improvement and planning projects to be carried out over the next 10 years and beyond. Items prioritized as “immediate” could occur within 1-3 years, “pending” within 3-5 years and “future” could occur within 5-7 years or as necessary milestones are realized. All estimated costs are general and should be revised after detailed plans and specifications are completed for each project. **Actual implementation schedule may vary and is dependent on when funding becomes available.**

TASK	PRIORITY	RESPONSIBLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION	PROJECT SCOPE	COMMENTS/COST
Planning, Design, Engineering, Cost Estimates and Permits for Channel Wall Replacements.	Immediate	Consultant/DCP	Site development, waterway permits and cost estimates for proposed sea wall replacement.	Estimated Cost: \$15,000
Replace Sea Wall and Retaining Wall at Channel.	Immediate	DCP/Contracted(?)	Limited removal of cottonwood trees, replace existing retaining wall and sea wall. Replace existing crushed stone path with concrete, add boat tie down cleats.	Estimated Cost: Pending completion of cost estimate and construction approach.
Install paved internal path within park with fitness stations.	Immediate	Contracted	Install 6' wide paved walking paths/fitness nodes.	Estimated Cost: \$50,000
Retaining a traffic engineer to investigate possible pedestrian access improvements to the park.	Immediate	Consultant	Coordinate with Dane County Highway/City of Middleton	Estimated Cost: Pending design solutions.
Planning, Design, Engineering, Cost Estimates and Permits for parking reorganization.	Immediate	DCP/Consultant	DCP finalizes concept site development plan, Consultant prepares final construction documents/permits/cost estimates.	Estimated Cost: \$60,000
Construct Natural Playground Area of Harvested Cottonwood Trees	Immediate	Consultant/HCN	Hire playground consultant to design/construct natural playscapes that utilize harvested Cottonwood/Ash Trees.	Estimated Cost: \$40,000

TASK	PRIORITY	RESPONSIBLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION	PROJECT SCOPE	COMMENTS/ COST
Relocate existing trailer/vehicle parking toward shelter more centrally within park.	Pending	Contracted	Remove pavement at existing parking lot, construct proposed parking areas. Add storm water management features.	Estimated Cost: \$200,000 *Pending completion of cost estimate.
Construct dry sediment removal basin.	Pending	LWRD/Consultant/Contracted	Hire Consultant to prepare plans/permits with LWRD oversight, contract installation.	Estimated Cost: \$120,000
Replace un-numbered shelter, add labyrinth.	Pending	PW/Contracted	Remove existing shelter, replace with timber frame of same size, add labyrinth constructed of pavers set in lawn.	Estimated Cost: \$130,000* Includes \$30,000 design cost.
Add demonstration spring, "Water Walk" and educational signage to beach.	Pending	LWRD/DCP	Create spring, water play area at beach, work with PBC and Middleton on wayfinding "Water Walk."	Estimated Cost: \$40,000
Add floating pier to boat ramp.	Pending	DCP	Add floating pier to launch area.	Estimated Cost: \$35,000
Replace Shelter 1 with Timber Frame Shelter and add Shoreline Firepit.	Pending	Contracted	Remove existing shelter and slab. Construct timber frame shelter with local materials, firepit.	Estimate Cost: \$200,000
Planning, Design, Engineering, Cost Estimates and Permits for Flush Toilet at Campground	Pending	Consultant	Construction/bid documents, permits, approvals for prefab restroom building.	Estimated Cost: \$30,000
Construct flush toilet near campground.	Pending	Contracted	Prefabricated restroom building similar in character to beach filtration building.	Estimated Cost: \$60,000
Remodel 4 RV sites and add 5 rustic camp sites.	Pending	DCP	Construct road/camp site improvements per master plan.	Estimated Cost: \$25,000
Planning break wall at beach/boat ramp.	Future	Consultant	Planning, Permits, Construction Documents	Estimated Cost: \$50,000
Implement regional bicycle pedestrian ferry.	Future	Contracted	Pontoon boat with bike racks.	Estimated Cost: Unknown.

XI. SUMMARY

Mendota County Park is located amidst a very rapidly growing residential region of Dane County that will undoubtedly result in higher use as awareness of the park continues to increase. Future planned trail and park facility program areas within this master plan strive to maintain balance between public use and preservation of the rural character and nature of this park. Maintaining this rural character was a primary planning objective and achieved through conservative future recommendations that relate to improving park function and passive recreation uses.

This master plan is meant to serve as a guide for future acquisition and phased development of the park. Additional detailed construction drawings and planning will still need to be prepared for many of the recommendations found within this plan. As the park and recreation use continue to grow over the next 5-10 years, the plan should be revisited and amended as necessary to address changing adjacent land uses and current recreation trends.

