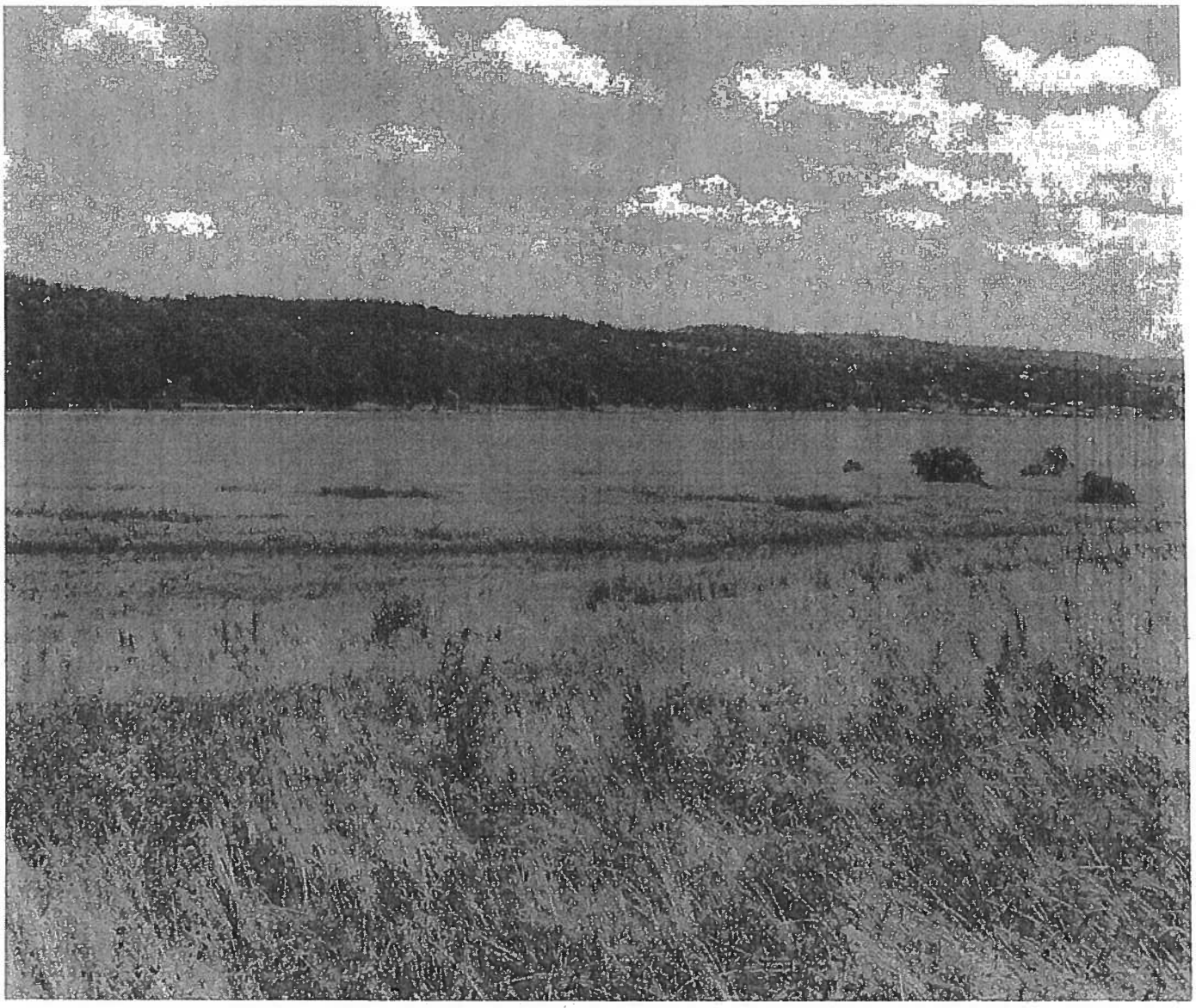
PARKS

WESTCHESTER COUNTY

# Phase II Master Plan Executive Summary



**Prepared for the Westchester County Board of Legislators**

**November 25, 2002**

The second phase of the Westchester County Parks Master Plan builds upon the recommendations put forth in Phase I. This two-part Plan's ultimate purpose is to be a dynamic document that guides the County well into this new century. The primary purpose of the Phase II study is to develop specific solutions to immediate needs and outline a long-range plan and policy for future open space recreational needs. Phase I achieved the following:

- The preparation of a comprehensive physical inventory and operations analysis of all existing facilities;
- The establishment of benchmark criteria for county level facilities to see how Westchester County compares to other similar counties;
- The identification of short-term needs and long-term options and priorities for the Department=s future operation of its parklands;
- The analysis of present and future operating and capital budgets; and
- The development of a conceptual Master Plan incorporating input from civic leaders, municipal parks officials and planning professionals.

The Phase I Report concluded with a summary of specific courses of action identified as "Next Steps" to direct the Phase II portion of the work. These recommendations are based on projections of future demographics, growth patterns and revenue projections. The recommendations also take into consideration the inherent tensions and balances existing between the competing priorities of active recreation and conservation/preservation values. The recommendations support and direct the future development and management of both preservation and recreational land uses.

Based on the results of Phase I Master Plan, meetings and discussions with representatives of the WCPRC, the County's goals and objectives for this Phase II project include:

- Provision of adequate facilities County-wide in both the short and long term with physical park improvements including park facilities and buildings;
- Increased vigilance to historic and environmental conservation issues;
- Master Plan's capability of supporting the implementation of the WCPRC's Open Space Policies;
- Identification of potential locations and the development of conceptual recommendations for additional County-operated swimming and golfing facilities;
- Development of conceptual recommendations for the inclusion of a water park/aquatic center facility at the Playland Park complex that provides the swimming population of lower Westchester County with a desirable, state-of-the-art facility harmonious with its historic context and,
- Development of individual master plans for the Bronx River Parkway Reservation, Kensico Dam Plaza, Mountain Lakes Park, Kingsland Point Park and Sprain Ridge Park.

## The Results and Recommendations of the Phase II Study

### Swimming Study

- Purpose -

In addition to the planned reconfiguration of the Playland and Willson's Woods' pool facilities, the purpose of the study was to find a location for a new aquatic center, preferably south of I-287. Working with the previous program for an aquatic facility at Saxon Woods and the feasibility of one at Willson's Woods, Phase II investigated the area and facility requirements for a new aquatic center based on component square footage of both indoor and outdoor facilities, mechanical and environmental systems, utilities, access, parking and bus transit links derived from a national overview of comparable facility types. Other existing Westchester County private and public swimming pools were analyzed for their potential conversion to an aquatic center as well as private aquatic parks for potential conversion to public use. Suitable site location parameters and characteristics were established for a new facility. These included: ten acres minimum area, close proximity to mass transit adequate parking and slopes less than 10%.

The Phase II Study then investigated three existing Westchester County parks for their suitability for a new aquatic center within their boundaries: Tibbetts Brook Park, Glen Island and Ridge Road Park. Ridge Road Park was ultimately rejected as a possible location as the size of the proposed facility had significant adverse impacts on adjacent roads, housing and woodlands. A concept proposed for Glen Island's facility was significantly reduced and squeezed into the southwest corner of the park adjacent to the bathhouse and mini-golf course so as to keep all proposed development out of the littoral zone along with minimizing impacts on the symmetrical lawn entry to the bath house and beach.

- Recommendations -
  - Only Tibbetts Brook Park was found to be suitable for the development of a new aquatic center facility.

## Golf Study

- Purpose -

The purpose of the Phase II Golf Study was to identify potential locations for a new, full-sized Westchester County Parks operated golf facility. Working with the previously developed golf programs for Hudson Hills and the expansion of Mohansic, the Phase II study prepared a comprehensive program of golf course requirements for both a regulation 18 hole course and a 9-hole executive-style course. The program included acreage requirements, location criteria, infrastructure requirements (water supply, irrigation, storm drainage, etc.), mitigation for potential environmental impacts (sediment, fertilizer and run-off control, etc.), archeological/historical disruption, access, parking, support facilities (clubhouse, maintenance facilities etc.) and new concepts in golf course layout, teaching techniques (practice holes, greens, driving ranges, etc.). The area and site requirements criteria included:

-18 hole regulation course: 150 acres (minimum), 175 acres preferred
-executive style course: 80 acres (minimum)
-par 3 course: 40 acres (+/-)
-long axis oriented north-south
-pitch and putt: 7-8 acres
-gently rolling topography
-access to potable water supply

The need for an additional golfing facility was well established in the Phase I Report. It noted that numerous previous studies indicated that Westchester County needs additional public golf facilities to accommodate over 400,000 unplayed golf rounds/year; that existing County courses have reached their peak utilization; and, the County needs to accommodate senior play and the demand for practice facilities. The previous studies included:

A Survey of Golfers Who Use the Public Courses of Westchester County: *prepared by the Public Opinion Learning Laboratory of Westchester Community College; sponsored by Westchester County under the program of the State University of New York (1990).*

Report of the Real Estate Work Group Subcommittee on Golf Courses to the County Executive, Executive Summary. *(1994).*

Golf Market Analysis Update for Westchester County Department of Parks, Recreation and Conservation, *prepared by NGF Consulting, Inc., for Westchester County (1995).*

Three options were investigated. These were: build a new course on a new site, acquire an existing golf facility and renovate it for County use or, add a golf facility to an existing Westchester County park that may or may not currently offer golf. Working with the Westchester County Planning Office and their real estate data base, Phase II evaluated available private and public open space in South and Central Westchester County (including existing clubs with acquisition potential) as well as County parks for course potential/course expansion utilizing the programmatic criteria and site conditions, land uses, adjacencies, archeological/historical and environmental considerations.

Westchester County's Real Estate and Planning Departments' database did not indicate a suitable site that was available that met the necessary criteria. Additionally, an out-of-county search was conducted and while a suitable site was identified, it was decided that it was not a feasible idea for the County to develop a property outside Westchester.

- Recommendations -
  - Purchase Loch Ledge. Convert the existing substandard 18 hole course into a regulation size 9 hole course, driving range and teaching facility;
  - Add 9 holes to Mohansic Park in the least environmentally sensitive area.

## Playland

- Purpose - Evaluate the existing pool facility for its redevelopment potential into an aquatic center to better serve a broader user group mix.

- Issues -
  - Historic - Playland is listed on the National Register of Historic Places
  - Internal circulation - Simplify and provide clear routes for both vehicles (cars & buses) and pedestrians
  - Pool replacement - Existing pool leaks and filtration system is in poor condition
  - Accommodate - The proposed Children's Museum in the bathhouse

- Recommendations -
  - Replace existing pool with a new, appropriately sized aquatic center that is sensitive to Playland's historic character. The new aquatic center's components could include:
    - a multi-use pool
    - a zero depth entry
    - a six lane lap pool for competition events
    - a kiddie drop slide
    - a spray deck
    - a lazy river
    - an activity pool
  - Renovate the existing bathhouse, concession and changing rooms. Accommodate the proposed Children's Museum.

## Kingsland Point Park

- Purpose - Develop a Master Plan that addresses a range of bathhouse and lighthouse reuse options and other future overall park site improvements.

- Tasks -
  - Perform a comprehensive conditions analysis of the bathhouse, lighthouse and beach waterfront area.
  - Develop reuse options for the bathhouse and lighthouse along with a park site master plan that can be phased in as the GM property's redevelopment plan becomes clearer as to site plan and adjacent land use options.
- Recommendations -
  - Upgrade park entrance;
  - Establish river walk along entire shoreline. Link with former GM Property;
  - Shoreline restoration and beach expansion for Hudson River swimming;
  - Upgrade pedestrian and vehicular circulation paths;
  - Reuse options for the bathhouse:
    1) Develop facilities to permit special community events;
    2) Renovate 2nd floor for administration and maintenance staff use;
    3) Expand kayak/canoe concession space;
    4) Provide year round comfort station facility;
  - Recommendations for the historic Tarrytown Lighthouse:
    1) Institute an ongoing maintenance program;
    2) Develop a strategic historic restoration plan;
    3) Reuse Option A: Lighthouse Lodge - A facility for overnight visits of school age children;
    4) Reuse Option B: Lighthouse Museum - A facility featuring the Hudson River and its natural and maritime history;
    5) Reuse Option C: Hudson River Ecosystem Study Center

## Mountain Lakes Park

- Purpose - Develop a Master Plan that reprograms and reinvigorates an underused seasonal day and overnight camping facility while preserving its rustic character.

- Tasks -

- Perform a comprehensive conditions analysis of all 110 existing camp buildings.
- Develop program elements for:
  - Day and Sleep Away Camp for county-wide Lessee's use;
  - Short-stay Overnight Public Camping;
  - Day Park Users;
  - Ecological Preservation.
- Recommendations -
  - Develop site into two concurrent operations (Hemlock Lake and Spruce Lake)
    - Hemlock Lake Camp:
      - Day camp and longer term group camp facility with main lodges, secondary lodge and multi-use pavilions.
    - Spruce Lake Camp:
      - Public park uses with day and over night facilities (i.e. new cabins, lean-to's, main lodge and tent camping sites.

## Bronx River Parkway Reservation

- Purpose - Develop a Master Plan that includes the extension of the bikeway/walkway, additional landscaping, streetscape, signage opportunities and potential adaptive reuses for the two original gas station buildings.

- Tasks -
  - Perform inventory and analysis of existing conditions and functions;
  - Develop recommendations in conjunction with the on-going programs of the Bronx River Parkway Reservation Corridor Management Plan and the Bronx River Parkway Reservation Conservancy;
  - Develop reuse options for the two gas station buildings.

- Recommendations -
  - Stabilize shorelines and stream banks with riparian vegetation and bioengineering methods;
  - Remove vines and non-native invasive species and open up the river's edge for viewing;
  - Install native plant material appropriate to present maintenance practices;
  - Create a GIS map of all easements, town and county jurisdictions and responsibilities for ownership, maintenance and license agreements;
  - Perform a Phase 1A archaeological report at all sensitive locations;
  - Perform a pathway location study to connect the southern portion of the current pathway with the Oak Street loop section and connections to the Bronx;
  - Perform an in-depth study of all lighting for the entire roadway. If lighting is recommended, use with historically appropriate lighting standards representative of the era in which the parkway was constructed;
  - Replace guide rails and Jersey-shape barriers with more contextually sensitive style barrier alternatives;
  - Where possible, retain and respect the original parkway design concepts;
  - Provide consistent historically sensitive crosswalk treatments and signage at all pathway

and local roadway intersections;
- perform a comprehensive signage program study;
- Install additional historically appropriate benches throughout the pathway system.

## Sprain Ridge Park

- Purpose - Develop a Master Plan that includes improved trail linkages, pedestrian and vehicular circulation, trails, picnicking and playground rehabilitation and recommendations for the rehabilitation and/or upgrade/expansion of the aquatic and food concession facilities.

- Tasks -
  - Perform a functional needs analysis of the bath house, trails and park and pool entrance areas.

- Recommendations
  - Reconfigure the entrance road and pool drop-off area;
  - Renovate the existing bath house, concession and changing rooms;
  - Provide improved park perimeter and trail access security measures to prevent unauthorized park entry;
  - Provide adequate signage for bikeway connection to the South County Trailway;
  - Reconfigure food concession area to serve both pool and park users;
  - Renovate the existing bathhouse, concession and changing rooms;
  - Rebuild spray pool facilities - install children's aquatic playground.

## Kensico Dam Plaza

- Purpose - Develop a Master Plan that includes the rehabilitation of the colonnade structure, the rehabilitation and/or expansion of the park center building to accommodate large-scale County events and a variety of other new functions.

- Tasks -
  - Perform a functional needs and physical conditions analysis of the existing park building, trails, dam plaza and park entrance areas.

- Recommendations
  - Reconstruct inner path around reflecting pool;
  - Rehabilitate and expand existing park building;
  - Create a major Kensico Dam Plaza entry at intersection with the Bronx River Parkway and its bike path;
  - Augment existing plantings at allee and increase plantings around lawn areas;
  - Enhance views to the dam;
  - Stabilize side slopes flanking the dam;
  - Add drainage improvements;
  - Develop a turf management plan.

## Next Steps

- Present Phase II Recommendations at a Public Info Meeting
- Develop Order-of-Magnitude Cost Estimates by Facility
- Finalize Phase II Report
- Capital Project Requests to implement recommendations by WCPRC

Working with the Westchester County Planning Office and their real estate data base, Phase II reviewed available private and public open space in South and Central Westchester County for potential aquatic center sites evaluating them against the programmatic and the site criteria, land uses, adjacencies, archeological/historical significance and environmental criteria previously identified. The Westchester County Planning Office's real estate data base did not indicate a suitable site that met the necessary criteria.