Historic Town of Hyde Park
Recreational Trails & Community Recreation Conceptual Master Plan
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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I. Introduction

The Hyde Park Trails and Community Recreation Master Plan is a project funded by the New York State Quality Communities Program. The purpose of the project was to study how to link Federal, State, County, and Town Parks along with other public open spaces and schools to create a contiguous trail system within the Town of Hyde Park and connect to the Hyde Park Heritage Greenway Trail. The study also identified large privately owned parcels and proposed development projects currently seeking Town approvals as potential linkages.

After going through an RFP process, the Town retained the firm of IQ Landscape Architects to perform the planning and design services necessary to complete the Master Plan. Base mapping was created largely utilizing the extensive Dutchess County GIS database. Previous recreation and open space studies prepared by the Town relevant to the Trails Master Plan were also initially reviewed. Extensive field reconnaissance and photographic documentation of existing conditions was undertaken to supplement the GIS data and aerial photographs.

The consultant then met with several Town groups and committees to identify opportunities and constraints outlined during the site analysis phase and to establish goals and objectives for the project.

Initial concepts analyzed opportunities for trail connections to the Hudson River along riparian sections of an existing stream as well as numerous parks, preserves, schools, and the Central Business District. A presentation to the public was made by the Town and its consultant. Comments were received during the meeting and recorded, providing valuable community insight.

After incorporating several of the comments made at the public workshop and evaluating alternative concepts, a final Conceptual Trail Plan was developed and presented at the following public presentation. The plan established a hierarchy of trail systems and bike routes within the Town, as well as significant connections to surrounding Towns and regional trails. Complementing the Conceptual Trail Plan was a study addressing a safe route to schools program. Detailed plans outlined opportunities for creating walkable routes to schools in the Town by introducing sidewalks and by identifying existing conflicts particularly at intersections.

In summary, the Hyde Park Trails and Community Recreation Master Plan along with other recreational and land preservation initiatives will give the Town a framework to create a comprehensive trailway implementation strategy for the future, connecting many of the wonderful and unique cultural, recreational, and natural resources the Town of Hyde Park possesses.
A. Goals and Objectives

Within the Town of Hyde Park, many trails exist and include a well organized system totaling approximately fourteen (14) miles. Many of the trails are self-contained loops within the Town’s parks and nature preserves with well-identified access points and trail heads. Others are more contiguous and linear including the Heritage Greenway incorporating an east-west connection linking the FDR National Historic Site and the Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site known as “Val-Kill”. The Town and members of the Hyde Park Trail Partnership, a volunteer group, have worked for several decades constructing and maintaining these trails and along with the Dutchess County Department of Health, has rewarded those who have walked the Town’s designated trails with merit patches to encourage and foster healthy activities.

This Trails study is meant to reinforce this commitment by the Town of Hyde Park to promote health, fitness and wellness by identifying opportunities for creating a comprehensive town-wide trail and pedestrian network connecting many of the Town’s valuable recreational, cultural and environmental assets. The goals and objectives for the trail study are summarized as follows:

1. Establish a contiguous trail corridor which links existing Federal, State, County and Town Parks and preserves
2. Identify all publicly owned open spaces and corridors and incorporate them into proposed trail system to the greatest extent possible.
3. Identify significant privately owned parcels and proposed subdivisions and development which offer opportunities for trail linkages.
4. Locate the trail corridors and/or secondary trail spurs near existing Town Commercial centers, historic sites, cultural resources and parks, to provide connectivity and access to these sites.
5. Indicate opportunities to improve and encourage “walkable” routes to schools within the Town.
6. Minimize the need to utilize existing roadways as part of the trail system in order to create “greenway” connections. Establish these roadways as potential bikeways, where shoulders allow.
7. The Trail Study be consistent with the Town’s recommendations for improvements to its existing park system recently developed by the Hyde Park Recreation Commission
8. Identify how a comprehensive Town-wide trail system is linked to regional and Country trails and future initiatives.

B. Trail Planning Process

The process of studying trail corridor connections began with extensive base data collection. GIS technology supplied by Dutchess County was used to map existing natural features (wetlands, steep slopes), document land use, and to identify parcel ownership. Proposed developments and subdivisions before the Town for approval were supplied to the consultant and identified as opportunities for trail connections and recreational uses. A suitability analysis was developed to identify the opportunities and constraints of possible trail corridor connections. Field reconnaissance was performed and photo-documented by the project team to supplement the GIS mapping. Meetings were held with key public stakeholders to ensure the potential trail connections studied were consistent with the overall open space and recreational opportunities identified by each group.
C. Public Outreach

Public outreach was a major and effective component of the planning process. IQ Landscape Architects acted as Project Facilitators developing public strategies, publicity and presentations of the materials during the preliminary design phases.

Two public informational meetings were held at the Hyde Park Town Hall. During these sessions public input was valuable in creating a community supported Trails Plan.

During the first scoping session (6/30/08), GIS data and site analysis information was presented along with some of the opportunities and constraints identified during the analysis phase.

Preliminary concepts and alternatives were then presented to the public. The audience was then dispersed to tables into small “break-out” discussion groups, each table facilitated by the Consultant, or Town Staff. Comments from each group were presented and recorded. Some of the key issues brought up that evening including the following:

- Pedestrian safety along route 9
  - Signalized pedestrian crossings
  - Controlling speed limits
  - Enforcement of Yield to pedestrians
- Create fitness trails at school sites
- Create pedestrian crossings at schools
- Utilize Gilbert Recreational Center for trails-connect to trail network
- Designate walking village area and central parking area
- Integrate areas utilized by townspeople into trail plan
  - Entrance to Winnabee Nature Preserve currently used for lawn bowling
  - Create walkway in area behind restaurants on Rt. 9
- Add pedestrian crossing on East Market St. to connect Pinewoods Park and Hackett Hill Park
- Improve access to Winnabee Nature Preserve
- Enhance trail lighting and signage at trail heads
- Improve connection to trails from local businesses
- Create neighborhood loops
- Define trails as linear parks
- Create connection between top cottage and Greensfield Park
- Incorporate river access points into Hudson River Greenway Water Trail Route
- Restore or create new rail crossings as needed
- Connect brass anchor to Quiet Cove
- Evaluate condition of bridge rail crossing at Vanderbilt Mansion
- Bike Route Safety
- Designate areas for motorized vehicle use
- Identify horse riding and dog walking trails
- Trail usage statistics

As a follow up, a second public informational meeting was held (7/30/08). At that time, a Final Conceptual Trails Plan was presented along with detailed diagrams which addressed issues related to safe routes to schools. Additional comments were received from the public and the plans were subsequently circulated to Town Staff and stakeholders for final review.
II. Existing Conditions

Environmental

Using GIS technology, environmental features within the Town were mapped and analyzed. These include wetlands, water bodies, flood plans and steep slopes. (Figure 1)

Land Use/Open Space

Landscape use was documented for the Trail Study (Figure 2). Areas of major use classifications are noted as well as nodes of higher commercial development, vacant lands and residential density. The information was beneficial in identifying open space linkage opportunities and in assessing development patterns. Also, of importance was the delineation of large parcels of undeveloped private open space as well as several new proposed developments east of Route 9G, an area that is already under served with few parks and recreational facilities (Figure 3).
Figure 3.

Legend
LandUseHydePark
- Agricultural
- Water Land
- W/H. Forested Conservation Lands & Public Parks
- Commercial Services
- Recreation & Entertainment
- Public Services
- Residential: Unclassified
- Governmental
- Industrial

TOWN OF HYDE PARK
LAND USE CLASSIFICATION

PREPARED FOR:
TOWN OF HYDE PARK
PARKS AND RECREATION
TRAILS MASTER PLAN STUDY

Interactive Design
Landmark Graphics
10/02/2005

96
Field Reconnaissance/Site Photographs

Field reconnaissance, along with photo documentation of existing conditions was a key component of the data collection and site analysis phase of the project. The process allowed the consultant, town staff and the public to better understand site specific conditions and helped to create images which define the unique character of the Town. The following are selected photos throughout the Town at key roadways, nodes, open spaces, and crossroads. (Pages 9-15)

Large intersections with no designated crosswalks

Tight, narrow and often very winding rural roads with limited site distances leave little room for adding sidewalks

Room for bike lane (Rt 9G)

Upgraded, more consistent directional and interpretive signage should be provided throughout the Town

Room for bike lane (Rt 9)
Rt 9 Crossing at N. Cross Rd. Intersection

Utility easement section along Rt. 9

Rt. 9 crossing at Vanderbilt Mansion NHS exit

View East at Rt 9 Crossing to East Market St.

Rt 9 Road Crossing at the Anderson School

Rt 9 Crossing new Norris Mills State Park Entrance
View East along Vanderbilt Lane

Intersection at Rt 9 and Pinewoods Rd.

View East further along East Market St.

View West on West Market St.

Utility Corridor Typical View South from Cross Rd.

View of Crum Elbow Creek Riparian Corridor along Rt 9G
Existing Pedestrian Crossing at Rt 9G and Valkill Park Rd.

Existing parks with playgrounds and recreational amenities need better linkages/trails to tie opportunities together throughout the Town.

Entire neighborhoods without any sidewalks or rural trail connections.

No crosswalks and/or sidewalks at school entrances.
F.D.R. High School, Road Crossings along S. Cross Rd.

Rt. 9G Crossing at Ralph R. Smith Elementary School

Rt 9G Crossing at Haviland Jr. High School

North Park Elementary School Entrance from Rt 9G

F.D.R. High School; Road Crossings along S. Cross Rd.

View South from North Park Elementary School
III. Conceptual Trail Plan

Preliminary Concepts

The first phase of the planning and design process included documenting the already extensive Hyde Park Trail system. Using GIS data, other opportunities for connecting were investigated. Other corridors included a utility easement and stream running north-south and parallel to Route 9G. A waterline easement immediately adjacent to Route 9 in the Northwest quadrant of Town potentially allows for an upland connection between the Vanderbilt site and Norrie-Mills State Park.

It was obvious from the overlaying the base data that the Town lacked strong east-west trail connections. In order to create these linkages and minimize using streets and roadway shoulders as footpaths, large privately owned vacant parcels were incorporated and identified as open space opportunities for future trail development. It was also apparent that the Town east of 9G lacked significant recreational facilities. The preliminary concept incorporated the newly proposed Regional Center as a hub not only connecting recreational trails and historic sites, but the commercial business district of the hamlet center, just north of the hub. The preliminary Conceptual Plan (Figure 4) was presented at the first community forum and generated much discussion as previously noted.

Final Plan

1. Trail Plan

The Final Trails Plan was developed after considerable input from Town sources, the public, and input from a variety of stakeholders such as the National Park Service, Dutchess County and Scenic Hudson. (Figure 5). Key points and issues discussed during the public informational meetings were incorporated into the Plan. Site plans for proposed subdivisions particularly located in the northern section of Town were integrated into the base map as contiguous open space opportunities creating east-west corridor connections.

Linkages to key nodes along the Hudson River are called out as trail spurs off the Heritage Greenway. Intersections were identified where potential conflicts could occur with heavy vehicular traffic. Improvements such as crosswalks and signalization are recommended at these areas.

Certain roadways were identified as potential Bicycle Routes (Figure 6) based on their wide pavement widths, shoulders and connections to parks within the Town and regional trails. In some instances, where the widths are constricted and visually obscured, signage as well as clearly posted reduced speed limits will create a safer ‘shared’ roadway for bicyclists. After the Preliminary Plan was presented, additional field reconnaissance was performed to verify the feasibility of some of the proposed trail routes. Adjustments were made to the Final Plan. One example was initially considering the streams riparian corridor as a north-south trail connector. Once visually examined on-site, it was apparent some of the stream abutted several backyards. Subsequently, some of the proposed trail section in the Final Plan connects with a utility corridor and Route 9G.

Also incorporated into the Final Plan were little known, and in some cases, isolated parcels of land publicly owned. Some private landowners also embracing the concept of a comprehensive trails plan offered use of their property (i.e. horse farm/quarry).

2. Destination Nodes

As mentioned, Hyde Park is rich in cultural and recreational resources. One of the goals of the Trails Study was to identify these significant landmarks and to link them in a coherent, comprehensive system of trails and bicycle routes (Figure 7): The plan identifies primary east-west and north-south routes as well as several loop connections.

Since tourism plays a large part of Hyde Park’s local economy, there should be a strong physical connection between the proposed Regional Transportation Center and other destinations, including the Hyde Park Business District. Safe and pedestrian-friendly trail and walkways connections, along with interpretive centers and a way-finding system are recommended.

3. Schools and Recreational Spaces

The Study also looked at areas surrounding existing schools within the Town of Hyde Park (Figure 8) and their proximity to existing and proposed trails. What was noted by viewing aerial photographs and field reconnaissance was that although many of the schools were located in dense residential neighborhoods, there were little or no provisions for safe access (sidewalks, crosswalks, signalization) other than by automobile or bus. By recognizing this need as part of an overall comprehensive Trails and Recreation Plan, it is possible the Town may secure funding through grants (Safe Routes to Schools) to improve intersections, create safe crossings, and sidewalks and to facilitate and encourage alternative, (i.e. walking, bicycling) healthier ways of access to schools.

Such a program would also expand the accessibility of recreational facilities, since many of the public schools have ball fields used by the broader community.
Figure 7.
AERIAL PHOTOGRAPH
SCHOOLS AND RECREATIONAL SPACES-DETAIL
TOWN OF HYDE PARK
PREPARED FOR:
TOWN OF HYDE PARK
PARKS AND RECREATION TRAILS MASTER PLAN STUDY

Legend
- Parking Trailhead
- Beach trail
EXISTING TRAILS
- Recommended Primary Route
- Recommended Secondary Route
PROPOSED TRAILS
- National Historic Site Walk
- Heritage Greenway Conceptual Route
- Paper Routes from 1939 USGS Map
- Flood Plain Corridor
- Open Space Corridor
- Utility Corridor
- New Development Trails
- Schools

1/2 Mile Radius School Zone
Parks and Recreational Spaces

TOWN OF HYDE PARK
AERIAL PHOTOGRAPH
SCHOOLS AND RECREATIONAL SPACES-DETAIL

Figure 8.
IV. Recommendations

In addition to the completion of a comprehensive town-wide Conceptual Trails Plan, several recommendations are provided below to implement the plan. Some are very site-specific and project oriented, while others are more policy oriented strategies, related to long term planning goals.

Project Specific Recommendations

- Provide pedestrian bridge connecting Hacket Hill Park to Pinewoods Park
- Create new or reinforce existing river access points along the Hudson River Greenway Trail
- Rehabilitate existing rail bridge crossings
- Institute bikeway routes along roadways where feasible (reinforce safety with colored coded lanes, signage and posted speed limits). Create rest stops with bike racks
- Identify allowable trail users (i.e. dog walking, horseback riding, mountain bikes)
- Create more pedestrian-friendly environments at high trafficked zones and intersections. (i.e. crosswalks, bulb-outs, traffic calming measures)
- Designate trail crossings at roadways with signage and markings
- Implement a way finding system for the trails connected with an interpretive center at the propose Regional Center Hub. Integrate information kiosks, signage and brochures and maps.
- Construct sidewalks in the hamlet center business district along Route 9 and in residential neighborhoods within ½ mile of schools.
- Construct trails to be handicapped accessible using stable pavement materials and maintaining the gradient of trails at standard thresholds.
- Add small identifiable parking areas with way-finding signage at selected gateways.
- Continue to make physical improvements to Town's Park System (see Appendix __). These parks are an integral part of the Conceptual Trails Plan and many require various levels of upgrades.

Long Range Planning Recommendations

- Negotiate trail usage agreements for trail construction within utility easements.
- Acquire parcels of undeveloped vacant or agricultural lands which are integral to creating a contiguous town-wide trail system (establish a land trust)
- Acquire parcels of undeveloped vacant lands to be dedicated as parkland or preserves in the eastern section of Town
- Work with surrounding towns and with Dutchess County to link the towns' trails with regional initiatives such as the Dutchess County Rail Trail.
- Improve or construct trails where “paper” roads and driveways are roads noted on historic 1939 USGS map (private lands)
- Implement trails with private developer funds on subdivisions seeking approval from the Town Planning Board