Franny Reese Park

Master Plan Report

Prepared for the Village of Wappingers Falls, New York

Presented September 9, 2009

FRANNY REESE MEMORIAL PARK
VILLAGE OF WAPPINGERS FALLS

Prepared by the Mayor Matt Alexander

With: West Main Street Revitalization Committee

David Miller, The LA Group

Eileen Sassmann, Leverage, Inc.,

Victor Cornelius, Endeavor, Inc.

Brendan Reich, Marist College

Franny Reese Park

Master Plan

Wappingers Falls, New York

I. Introduction

In 2000, the *Natural Resource Management Plan* for the Wappinger Creek Watershed stated one of its primary goals is, "to identify and correct the sources of nutrient and sediments to the watershed and ultimately to Wappinger Lake and to recommend management strategies to prevent and reverse the trend." The *Management Plan* states, "One of the key components of implementation…is public involvement… The watershed planning team recommends that public outreach and education be continued for a wide diversity of audiences."

In March 2001, the Poughkeepsie-Dutchess County Transportation Council produced the *Wappingers Falls Transportation Plan.* The plan notes the "poor pedestrian environment in the Village center…" This environment is very obvious on West Main Street just North of the bridge over the Wappinger Creek. At this juncture, any observer can note unsuccessful businesses, unprotected walkways and general signs of disrepair as the road and pedestrian ways wind up hill through this part of the Village. This plan notes imperative improvements be made to protect pedestrians who travel along the Wappinger Greenway Trail on West Main Street.

Also in March 2001, the Village of Wappingers Falls adopted a *Comprehensive Plan.* The plan recommends that the Village secure grants to acquire and develop parks and to improve lake access.

The *Comprehensive Plan* sought to achieve the following ***Goals***:

- Protect and enhance the character of the Village as defined by its water resources, steep slopes, trees and rich history for present and future generations to enjoy.

- Ensure that public facilities are adequate in location, capacity and design to properly serve planned development and growth of the Village.

The *Comprehensive Plan* sought to achieve the following ***Objectives***:

- Improve or develop areas with substandard conditions to enhance neighborhoods and increase appreciation of property values.
- Revitalize and expand the Central Business District in the Main Street Area to serve as the shopping, service and government center.
- Maximize the potential of unique open space and recreational opportunities presented by the Falls, Lake and Creek in the midst of the Village.
- Revitalize the Central Business District and promote tourism in the Village
- Make the downtown more inviting and livable.

The *Comprehensive Plan* also recommends the following ***Actions***:

- Identify vacant buildings and parcels for new or adaptive use to revitalize and expand the Central Business District in the Main Street area.
- Seek funds to continue the development and maintenance of the Wappinger Greenway Trail and related park development.
- Facilitate the work of the Village Economic Development Committee.
- Secure grants to prepare and implement a streetscape plan.
- Improve access to the historic, natural, cultural and business assets of the Central Business District by creating additional parking appropriately hidden and/or landscaped for residents, businesses and visitors in the Village core.

This *Comprehensive Plan* was quickly followed by a *Parks and Recreation Master Plan*, adopted in August 2001. It includes recommendations of improvements to the park at the North end of the Village. The Village implemented those improvements and the park was dedicated as the only recreational facility for the residents of the 1st Ward, which lies entirely in the Town of Poughkeepsie (Wappinger Creek is the boundary between the Towns of Poughkeepsie and Wappinger – pre-existing Village of Wappingers Falls straddles the Creek and is in both towns). However, those improvements were short-

lived. Three events changed the recreational assets of the 1st Ward. The *Homeland Security Act* required that the Village protect its Water Treatment Facility by restricting access to a Village water source. The Water Treatment Facility required that another well be drilled in the Village's only usable ball field, permanently closing the field. Lastly, the Village began construction of a new Water Treatment Facility in 2009, which required that the Village protect its wells with a radius around the entire facility. This radius of protection effectively closed the five acre waterfront park, thus blocking access to a recreational area with waterfront views from our citizens.

In 2007, the Village adopted the *Wappingers Falls Vision Plan* with the stated objective of, "promoting pedestrian access and developing environmental tourism as catalysts for Village revitalization." The plan includes a *Schematic Corridor Plan* which proposes a park with nearly 400 feet of waterfront property straddling the historic dam which created Wappinger Lake and the Creek South of the Lake descending into a magnificent gorge where European surveyors of the Village in the seventeenth century noted the great development potential and sustainability of the area as a possible Village.

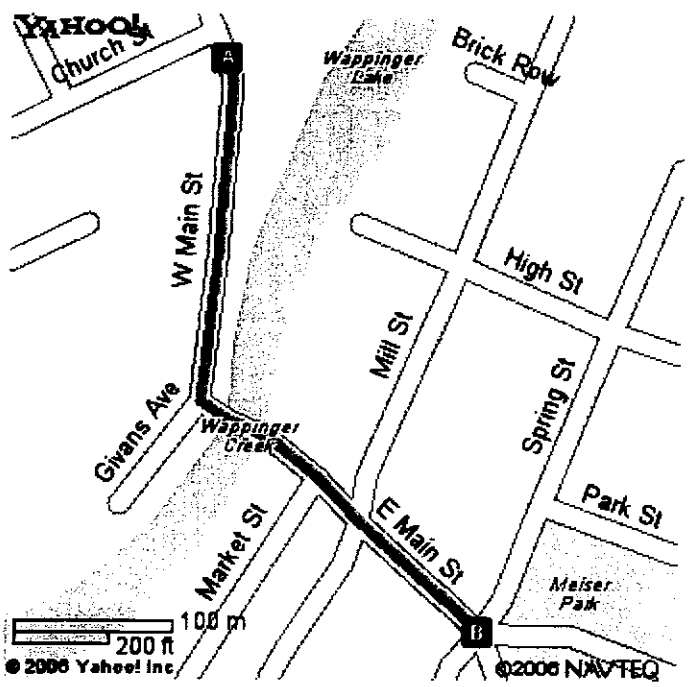
On June 11, 2008 the Village Board adopted the *West Main Street Revitalization Plan* which recommends the following:

- Provide more Green Space for the most densely populated area of the Village's Central Business District
- Provide more access to the viewshed of Wappingers Lake, Clapp Dam, Water falls, gorge and the bridge from different points along West Main Street.
- Provide pedestrian respite areas along the Eastern side of the street so that pedestrians can get away from the close proximity of vehicular traffic due to the lack of a buffer from moving cars.
- Capitalize on the Historic assets of the Village, such as the stone bridge and the dam, by providing access to them, marketing the living Industrial Heritage of the area.

II. Existing Conditions

The Background:

The proposed park area is situated on the eastern side of West Main Street, Route 9D, which travels north through the Village of Wappingers Falls. The Village is primarily working class and consists of approximately 5,000 persons in approximately 1,600 houses. It is one of the most densely populated villages in New York State and it is the second most densely populated municipality in Dutchess County. The village was settled in the 1700s and developed mainly in the mid 1800s as a mill town. The area is rich in natural beauty and historic architecture in varying of stages of renovation or disrepair.



The Geography:

At point A on the map to the left, is the entrance to the proposed park. The Central Business District has four major streets at the heart of the village. East and West Main Streets (9D) are the common points of entry. Motorists drive down hill on both Main Streets to the point where the bridge crosses Wappinger Creek through a high gorge. On the East side of the creek, Market Street extends levelly Southward, while Mill Street extends levelly Northward. The Wappinger Greenway Trail runs along the creek side of West Main Street. Point B is the Easternmost beginning of the Central Business District.

Along West Main Street, buildings are dirty, unkempt, crowded, and do not take advantage of the beautiful view of the creek, the falls, and the lake behind them. The

Wappinger Greenway Trail, a collaboration of three municipalities (Towns of Poughkeepsie and Wappinger and the Village) provides on and off-road experiences in five areas.

1. Viewshed: Wappinger Creek, Lake, Dam, Gorge, Estuary
2. Commercial opportunities: Restaurants, Antiques, Coffee Shops, etc.
3. Historic destinations: Mesier Park, Village Hall, Grinnell Library
4. Recreational opportunities: Canale, Temple, and Veteran's Fields, Reese Park, Reese Audubon Sanctuary
5. Cultural opportunities: County Players Theatre,

The Trail yields expectations of experiencing exclusive views of the natural resources while actually delivering experiences of unkempt buildings with no signs of natural beauty. Currently, the West Main Street portion of the trail fails to provide a positive experience in any of the five areas.

1. Viewshed is almost entirely blocked along West Main
2. Commercial opportunities cannot be sustained in their sites
3. Historic aspects are hidden by deterioration and ruined due to the "flight response" that the area provokes.
4. Recreational opportunities are missed because of the decaying buildings standing between the pedestrian and the creek front
5. Cultural opportunities are hard won and in fact are the only anchor of the narrow piece of trail. The Theatre has survived despite all the problems but to get the patrons to go anywhere else is nearly impossible on West Main Street.

Visibly, West Main Street has been left behind to stew in its many problems.

The Economics:

The Village is primarily a working class community with 52.3% Low to Moderate Income persons. Presently, the Central Business District is a place where mostly low income Hispanics and Caucasians live. The busy state road, traveled by over 15,000 cars a day, discourages residence by people with higher incomes. Several buildings on the

East side were renovated to attract younger people who might like living in the urban setting. This strategy has been only slightly successful.

The History:

The buildings on the hill side of West Main Street are some of the oldest in the Village. The creek side of West Main Street was developed as a result of the Village's successful fight against the rushing waters of the Wappinger Creek. Thus the buildings on this side of West Main Street are newer than most in the Central Business District. They were developed later in the 19th century when the flow of water was better controlled by the dam. They were assaulted by a few ferocious floods, most notably by the flood of 1956, which left its still visible mark on the exterior walls of a few buildings on West Main Street.

In the 1800s the Reese family owned and operated an icehouse above the Village's historic dam. The foundation of the icehouse still stands on the site of this proposed park. This family descends from the Village's founding family, the Mesiers, who developed much of the Village. In the 1970s, the property where the proposed park is sited was sold to Vincent Consentino, an Italian immigrant to the Village whose family was in the village since the 1920s. The property is now owned by Vincent Consentino's son, who has contracted to sell it to the Village.

At the top of West Main Street stands one of Wappingers Falls' three buildings to be listed separately on the National Historic Register. The Groundhog Café remains aesthetically unchanged from its original construction at the Northeastern most point of the Central Business District. It has been lovingly and carefully renovated and offers visitors a way to see inside an old Wappingers Falls mid-nineteenth century building. Across from the Café is an old brick shoemaker's store (c.1920) only about 150 square feet with a boot sign built into its roofline. This store was operated by the Consentino's. The buildings past this point, down to the bridge, are crowded together and date from

1840s to 1920s. Most buildings on the creek side have been neglected and are in varying conditions of disrepair while many on the hill have been renovated and cleaned.

The Village has signed an option to acquire land currently used as residential lots to be converted into park space along the Wappinger Creek. This will extend green space along the Wappinger Greenway Trail, affording walkers and hikers a view of the falls, the gorge, the lake and the creek. This development of green space will encourage visitors to enjoy the natural, historical and cultural assets of the Village. Plans for the park include methods of calming traffic along West Main Street to ensure that trail visitors are given a positive experience.

The proposed park contains a combined .79 acres and over 400 feet of waterfront property. The property currently has four buildings and overgrown vegetation. It has a beautiful view of the lake, the dam, the creek, and the gorge below. This property also backs up to the village owned firehouse behind it on School Street. The Village Fire Department has been asking the family to donate this property to the Village for years, so that they would be able to access the lake for water rescue. At the Northernmost point, there sits the foundation of the icehouse building and on the street front sits the shoemaker's store which would make an excellent information office for the area. There will be a parking area for visitors to the proposed park and the Wappinger Greenway Trail.

The owner has contracted to sell the property for its appraised value of $730,000. There will be opportunities to continue purchasing the multi-family properties north of this lot to increase the size of the park and parking area. The proposal is to landscape the roadside frontage with trees to provide natural traffic calming along Route 9D.

The village has already obtained a funding commitment of $196,000 from an appropriation sponsored by Congressman John Hall's office. The Village has also applied for additional funding of $600,000 from the Congressman's office. In 2008, local civic associations raised over $40,000 in donations and pledges for the purchase and

improvement of the park. There will be another fundraising benefit held in the autumn of 2009.

The Village has funded a site plan by the LA Group with pre-engineering estimates of under $1,000,000 of improvements to the property. It has completed the Environmental Review of the property, and engineering work as well.

In this proposal, the village will acquire the funds to purchase the land, raze the buildings and improve the lots for parking, and site a park near the dam. The "shoemaker's shop" will be left to be a tourist information facility.

Proposed Action

The design concept of Franny Reese Memorial Park maintains the goals of creating a community-based park, which benefits the Village in the following ways. Franny Reese Park will continue in the namesake's footsteps in creating an ecologically friendly, community based green space, which will provide an opportunity to allow the public to experience the beauty of the Hudson valley. This park will improve the current state of the land by maximizing its ecological effectiveness in protecting the Wappinger Lake area (a New York State designated Critical Environmental Area), as well as using it as an open space which will benefit the community. This new park will open up to visitors the ability to visit the living industrial heritage that is the Village of Wappingers Falls, as well as the 132 acre Wappinger Lake. The following nine points describe the key elements of Franny Reese Memorial Park.

1. **Overlook Deck and Attached Dock Space**
   The overlook deck will be accessible to all visitors to the park. A waterfront gazebo on the deck furnishes an aesthetically pleasing area for shade/shelter. The overlook deck provides an ADA accessible fishing spot for anyone wishing to use it. The dock space attached to the overlook deck allows for canoe and kayak launch as well as space for small boats to tie up.

2. **Lawn Picnic Area and Wildflower Gardens**

   The Lawn picnic area offers park goers a place to eat and recreate in close vicinity to the lake. The adjacent wildflower gardens allocate specific zones in which region-specific flowers can flourish.

3. **Terraced Amphitheater**

   The terraced amphitheater provides a gathering space with interpretive display panels, and wall seating. This allows for waterfront public concerts, like those of the County Players, a not for profit community theater group.

4. **Bituminous Pavement Walk**

   The ADA accessible walkway, overlooking the shoreline vegetation and lake provides an easy pathway to the amphitheater, picnic area, and overlook deck. Plaques stand along the walkway educating the public of the Wappingers Falls' watershed area, ecology, and environmental protection. Likewise, paved walkways will connect the park with Main Street to allow easy access to the Central Businesses District.

5. **Shoreline Vegetation**

   Selectively thin vegetation provides open water views while supporting shoreline stabilization to reduce erosion. The plaques along the path explain the use of cost-effective bioengineering at least 30 inches in height and plant bed width of 25-30 feet to discourage herbivory by geese.

6. **Overlook Plaza**

   The overlook plaza near the new parking facility will incorporate interpretive display panels and picnic areas.

7. **Parking Facilities**

   Provides necessary parking for, and walkway connections to the park and Main Street corridor. The parking area incorporates innovative storm water management systems to sustain the shoreline. The plaques along the walkway explain the technologies behind these improvements.

8. **Streetscape Improvements**

   Added street trees, period lighting, ornamental fencing, and pedestrian connections from Main Street to park and overlook help quell street noise.

9. **Adaptive Reuse of Unused Property**

Adaptive reuse of the historic Shoe Shop in town into an information/tourist center helps revitalize the character of the village. Likewise, revitalization and maintenance of the dam built by founding father, Benjamin Clapp in 1840 educate the community to the history of the town and provide a cleaner environment for the lake and park areas.

Franny Reese Park Master Plan

Action Plan Steps

Step 1) Apply for NYS Department of State LWRP funds for development – 9/16/2009

Step 2) Apply for NYS Parks Grant Funds – 9/16/2009

Step 3) Apply for Parks & Trails NY – Trail Development Assistance – 10/2/2009

Step 4) Identify private foundations for Park Development funding and apply

Step 5) Appropriation Funding for Acquisition of Park

Step 6) Finish acquisition of Park

Step 7) Begin Engineering of Park Development

Step 8) Go out to Bid for Park Development

Step 9) Begin Park Construction

VILLAGE OF WAPPINGERS FALLS
FRANNY REESE MEMORIAL PARK
PRELIMINARY COST ESTIMATE
CONCEPT PLAN 'A'

the LA group
Landscape Architecture and Engineering, PC

07/30/08

Description	Quantity	Unit	Unit Cost	Subtotal
SITE PREPARATION-PARKING AREA				
Selective Thinning & Pruning	1	LS	$5,000.00	$5,000.00
Earthwork - Rough Grading	15,500	SF	$2.00	$31,000.00
Erosion Control	0.35	AC	$9,000.00	$3,150.00
Building Demolition & Disposal (inc. utility abandonment)	1	LS	$26,500.00	$26,500.00
ROW Acquisition (building & property)				TBD
SUBTOTAL: SITE PREPARATION - PARKING AREA				**$65,650.00**
SITE IMPROVEMENTS-PARKING AREA				
Bit. P'ment (1-1/2" top, 2" binder, 12" base, p'ment markings)	1,050	SY	$35.00	$36,750.00
Granite Curb	600	LF	$35.00	$21,000.00
Concrete Walks	2,110	SF	$8.00	$16,880.00
Plaza Areas P'ment Treatments	1,970	SF	$15.00	$29,550.00
Retaining Wall	215	LF	$100.00	$21,500.00
Stormwater Management (Drainage Structures, HDPE, etc.)	1	LS	$15,000.00	$15,000.00
Ornamental Light Pole & Fixture	6	EA	$3,500.00	$21,000.00
Electrical Service	1	LS	$7,000.00	$7,000.00
Benches	4	EA	$1,500.00	$6,000.00
Picnic Tables	1	EA	$1,500.00	$1,500.00
(3) Sided Interpretive Kiosk (graphic design not incl.)	2	EA	$7,500.00	$15,000.00
Wayside Exhibit Panel (graphic design not incl.)	3	EA	$2,000.00	$6,000.00
Ornamental Fence	300	LF	$100.00	$30,000.00
Landscape Plantings	1	LS	$13,000.00	$13,000.00
Architectural Improvements - Building Adaptive Re-Use/Rehabilitation	400	SF	$100.00	$40,000.00
SUBTOTAL: SITE IMPROVEMENTS - PARKING AREA				**$280,180.00**

VILLAGE OF WAPPINGERS FALLS
FRANNY REESE MEMORIAL PARK
PRELIMINARY COST ESTIMATE
CONCEPT PLAN 'A'

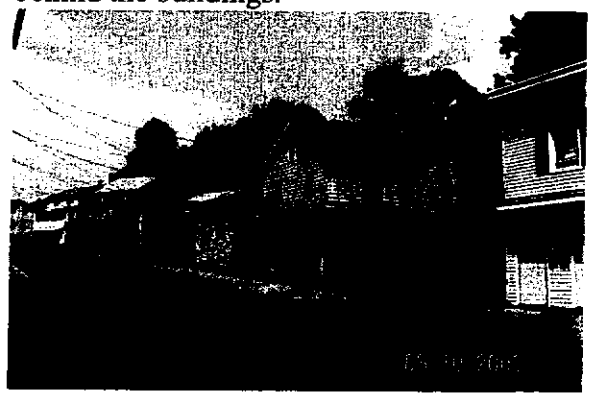
the LA group
Landscape Architecture and Engineering PC

07/30/08

Description	Quantity	Unit	Unit Cost	Subtotal
SITE PREPARATION-PARK				
Clearing & Grubbing	0.20	AC	$30,000.00	$6,000.00
Selective Thinning & Pruning	1	LS	$10,000.00	$10,000.00
Earthwork - Rough Grading	6,000	SF	$3.00	$18,000.00
Erosion Control	0.20	AC	$9,000.00	$1,800.00
SUBTOTAL: SITE PREPARATION - PARK				**$35,800.00**
SITE IMPROVEMENTS-PARK				
Stone Dust Walk (6" stone dust, geotextile)	3,775	SF	$2.50	$9,437.50
Seat Wall	135	LF	$175.00	$23,625.00
Amplitheater	1	LS	$60,000.00	$60,000.00
Stormwater Management (Area Drains, Dry Well, HDPE, etc.)	1	LS	$8,000.00	$8,000.00
Benches	2	EA	$1,500.00	$3,000.00
Picnic Tables	2	EA	$1,500.00	$3,000.00
Wayside Exhibit Panel (graphic design not incl.)	2	EA	$2,000.00	$4,000.00
Landscape Plantings	1	LS	$10,000.00	$10,000.00
Architectural Improvements - Waterfront Gazebo w/ Overlook Deck	1	LS	$75,000.00	$75,000.00
Floating Dock	1	LS	$40,000.00	$40,000.00
SUBTOTAL: SITE IMPROVEMENTS - PARK				**$236,062.50**

The Proposed Park

To the left and below are the streetside views of the proposed park property. The shoemaker's shop to the left would make an excellent tourist information office. A sign could be affixed to the structure with an arrow pointing the way to the park behind the buildings.



Below is a picture of the property as it gently slopes down to the water with the terrace of S. W. Johnson Firehouse above. The Village Fire Department has been asking the family to donate this property to the Village for years to be able to access the lake for water rescue.

Below is the view of the water from the property looking South toward the dam.

A view to the north looking up into the lake.