

# COOKSON FIELD

## MASTER PLAN

FALL 2004



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City of Worcester Parks, Recreation and Cemetery Department



**COOKSON FIELD**  
**MASTER PLAN**

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## **Acknowledgements**

We gratefully recognize the administration, faculty, and students of the College of the Holy Cross for their generosity and assistance in support of this project.

We also wish to thank the College Hill Civic Association and community representatives for their interest and input throughout the master planning process.



*View along the Clay Street corridor and former trolley line*

## **Introduction**

On July 11, 2001, the City of Worcester Parks, Recreation & Cemetery Department, in a cooperative effort with the College of Holy Cross, issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) for the preparation of a comprehensive Master Plan for the Cookson Field property. In response to this RFP, Weston & Sampson Engineers, Inc. (WSE) was retained to undertake this plan.

Over the course of six months, representatives of the Parks Department and WSE developed preliminary and conceptual master plans, which were generated in response to the needs and desires of neighborhood property abutters, the College of Holy Cross, and other representatives of the general public, as expressed at a series of public informational meetings.

The final Master Plan, presented to the Worcester Parks, Recreation & Cemetery Department during January 2002, reflects the desire of nearly all participants to enhance the site's many beautiful natural features and develop the site mainly for passive recreational opportunities with limited vehicular access. This document represents the culmination of the master planning process. A narrative and graphic depiction of the final Master Plan with relevant sections dedicated to identifying the costs associated with various improvements, potential phasing scenarios, and an implementation strategy appear later within this report.

As the pursuit of adequate funding for implementation of the Master Plan will be of paramount concern, it was decided to focus our attention on entities that are interested in promoting open space, passive recreational opportunities, and environmental education. Potential granting agencies, non-profit entities and other sources of capital dollars or in-kind services are identified in the Funding Section of this plan. Descriptions of potential improvements that provide opportunities for passive recreation, the maintenance of good health and environmental interpretation of the site are also included later in the document.

## **Background**

Cookson Field is a large open-space and recreation area located within the College Hill residential neighborhood in south central Worcester, near Holy Cross College and the Auburn border. The park site, which comprises some 26.5 acres (according to City records), was purchased by the City of Worcester on June 3, 1936 from real estate developer, Herbert E. Howe, and named for Mayor Walter Cookson, who died in office on June 11, 1936, in Cleveland, Ohio.

No true comprehensive design has ever been completed for the park. In 1936, the Works Progress Administration (WPA) performed a site clean-up to improve the landscape and use of the park. Thereafter, on-site amenities were added only as funding became available. Since its purchase, park features have included a Little League field with backstop, formalized woodland paths, wooden benches, picnic areas with fireplaces, a swingset and sand box.

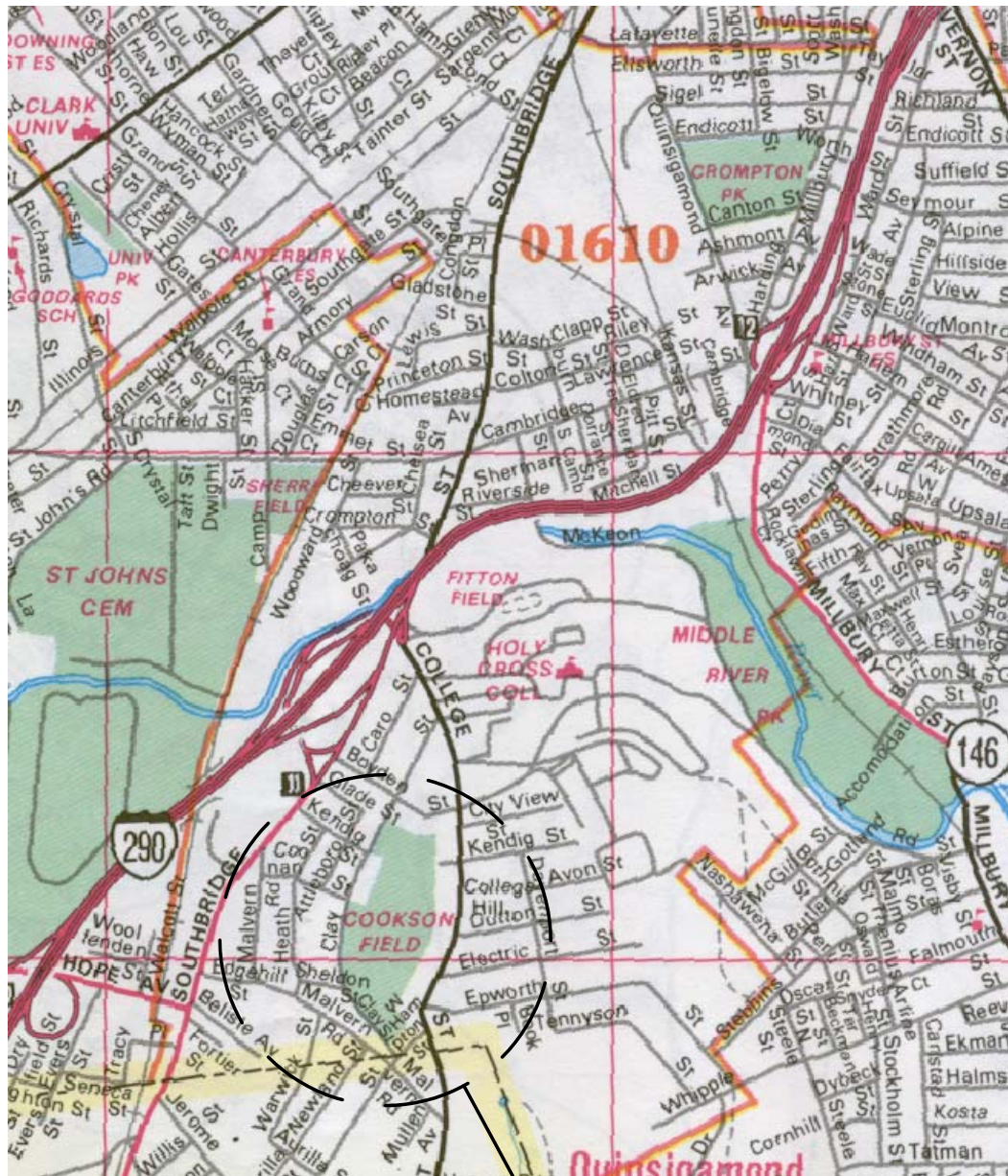


# City of Worcester

Parks, Recreation and Cemetery Department

## COOKSON FIELD MASTER PLAN

LOCUS PLAN



PROJECT SITE

PLAN A

**Weston & Sampson**  
ENGINEERS, INC.

100 Foxborough Boulevard  
Foxborough, MA 02035

Documentation for Cookson Field is limited, with the exception of the City’s Open Space Plans, which, in 1981 stated that the facility was largely undeveloped, lacked suitable access and contained amenities in poor condition. By the mid-1980’s the Little League field was in such poor condition that play was suspended. The field, like other areas of the park, has since further deteriorated, becoming overgrown and unusable.

**Vision Statement**

At the beginning of the process, the Parks Department articulated several simple and straightforward goals for the Master Plan as follows:

- Reestablish Cookson Field as an attractive and safe passive recreational facility that meets both neighborhood and City-wide interests and needs.
- Provide universal, barrier-free access to as much of the park as environmentally practical and to all primary facilities.
- Propose amenities that are durable, long-lasting and economically feasible that may be undertaken through a combination of capital improvement funds and in-kind/volunteer services and donations.
- Develop a plan that recognizes the site as an important recreational outlet for residents of the neighborhood and the City and that is sensitive to site ecology and wildlife habitat, neighborhood needs, security, environmental constraints and historical interpretations..

**Community Participation**

In order to develop a master plan that met the recreational needs of Worcester residents, the Parks Department and WSE conducted a series of meetings, both formal and informal, to present ideas and receive community input. Over the course of four months, the Parks Department and WSE representatives met with residential and institutional abutters, as well as other interested parties to present concept plans for the property, receive comments, and address their concerns.

<i>Schedule of Meetings for Public Input</i>		
<i>Date</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Meeting Participants</i>
April 4, 2001	College Hill Civic Association	Public Meeting to establish Preliminary Goals and Objectives
September 5, 2001	College Hill Civic Association	Public Meeting to present Preliminary Master Plan
September 12, 2001	Senior Center	Access Board Meeting to present Preliminary Master Plan
October 10, 2001	Holy Cross College	Public Meeting to present Refined Master Plan Concepts
January, 2002		Public Meeting to present Final Master Plan



## Existing Conditions

During the early stages of the project, representatives of WSE gathered all available mapping and reports to supplement the master planning efforts. GIS mapping of the site was provided by the City and aerial photography was obtained for the development of all plans and drawings. In addition to planning studies undertaken by the City, reports prepared by Holy Cross students and faculty were made available and have contributed to the nature of the recommended improvements contained later in this document.

WSE representatives also undertook a considerable amount of field reconnaissance work to better understand all of the physical characteristics of the land and the condition of the remaining man-made facilities at the property. The following is summary of our findings.

### Topography

Situated on the western slope of College Hill, the site contains only limited areas of gently sloping or nearly flat terrain. These include the former Cookson Ballfield and playground areas, hillcrests, and a few small glades found within the heavily forested site.

Most of the site is either moderately or steeply sloped, and unsuitable for major recreational development. Previous incursions have exacerbated erosive conditions, which must be addressed to ensure viability of future site use. Accordingly, remediation measures will be required to stabilize disturbed slope areas, especially along the unpaved portion of Kendig Street, which crosses the site.

Despite inherent constraints for major development, the site does provide opportunities for enhanced expansion of existing paths, drives and other trails at reasonable costs, with little required grading and with great potential for handicapped accessibility throughout. Perched at the crest of College Hill, rock outcrop clearings offer excellent views of Hope Cemetery and surrounding parts of the City.



### Soils

With the exception of the former ballfield area, soils are a Chatfield-Hollis-Rock outcrop complex, which is characterized by moderately deep and shallow, well drained or excessively drained soils found on hills and ridges with slopes between 15 to 25 percent. Extensive, massive ledge outcroppings, which serve to enhance the park's scenic quality, are indicative of this soil type and are clearly visible across the site. The rock outcrop, slope, and depth to bedrock are the main constraints to intensive site development. The complex is suited to trees, but little else.

Chatfield soils typically have a 3-inch depth topsoil layer, which consists of extremely stony, fine sandy loam. The subsoil is 27 inches thick and consists of loam, gravelly loam, and gravelly sandy loam. Depth to bedrock ranges from 20 to 40 inches, typically 30 inches.

Hollis soils typically have a 4-inch depth topsoil layer, which consists of extremely stony, fine sandy loam. The subsoil is 13 inches thick and consists of fine sandy loam, sandy loam, and gravelly loam. Depth to bedrock ranges from 10 to 20 inches, typically 17 inches.



Permeability of the Chatfield-Hollis-Rock outcrop complex is moderate or moderately rapid throughout. Available water capacity is moderate in the Chatfield soils and very low in the Hollis soils. Reaction in both soils ranges from very strongly through moderately acidic.

Ballfield area soils are classified as a smoothed Urthodent complex, which is characteristic of areas formed by excavation or filling of areas for athletic fields, highway medians and landscaped areas. Typically, soils of this type consist of fine sandy loams.

### **Vegetation and Wildlife**

Nearly all of the site has been left undeveloped and is heavily wooded, mostly characterized by naturalized stands of Oak-Hickory forest, which cover the park's western slope aspect. Associate plant community members found on-site include Sugar Maple, White Pine, Black Cherry, Sassafras, Birch, and American Ash.

Shrubs include Chokeberry, Dogwood, Viburnum and Summersweet. Extensive thickets of Lowbush Blueberry dominate the groundcover in many areas across the site. Lady Slippers (a protected species within the Commonwealth), various ferns, and mosses are found throughout gladed areas. The former Little League field, blanketed in tall grasses is slowly reverting to forest. The infield, with little organic matter present, exhibits poor quality noxious weed growth indicative of distressed urban settings. With few development incursions, the site is largely ecologically intact and relatively few exotic invasive plant species were identified on-site.



Accordingly, the undisturbed isolated site represents an urban oasis and provides an exceptionally high quality habitat for wildlife (i.e., birds, insects, and small mammals). Opportunities abound for casual observance of the pastoral scenic quality or in-situ academic research of ecological systems and environmental education.



## **Historical Attributes**

Historical inhabitation of the area by the Pakachoag Indians has been previously documented. An interpretive marker to this effect is found at the corner of Southbridge and Malvern Streets.

## **Site Utilities**

On-site utilities are nearly non-existent and limited to abutting properties, with the exception of overhead electric service wires, which cut through the site within an easement located along a portion of the unpaved, rutted, and steeply sloping section of Kendig Street. (Kendig Street dead ends to the east and west of the property and appears as a paper street within the park proper.)

To eliminate visual aesthetic incongruity and more fully appreciate Cookson Field's quality as a diverse scenic natural setting, consideration should be given toward eliminating or burying these overhead utilities below ground under future improvement programs.

## **Abutters and the Neighborhood Community**

The site is located within the densely populated College Hill residential neighborhood and lies immediately southwest of the College of Holy Cross. Largely enveloped by numerous residential abutters that line the north, east, and west perimeters of the property, housing in this area is mostly comprised of mixed single and multifamily residential units.

Situated near the northeastern corner of the site, the College Hill Civic Association serves as a gathering place for area residents for social events and a platform to voice neighborhood concerns.

To the west of the site, a number of landlocked parcels that line paper streets have been left undeveloped and constitute part of the park's 'extensional landscape'. Potential acquisition of these parcels should be explored to preserve the area as open space, consolidated as part of Cookson Field, and remove the possibility of future residential development.

## **Access and Circulation**

The property is accessible by dead end streets including Clay Street to the north and south, Kendig Street to the east and west, Coonan Street to the east, and Dutton Street to the west. Vehicular use of the site is not allowed and the community has expressed a keen interest in continuing to limit vehicular access to the site. With no formal parking provisions for park patrons driving to the site, access by the general public is very limited and difficult. For use of the property, visitors currently park on-street along (southern) Clay Street and (upper) Kendig Street, near the College Hill Civic Association.



Numerous paper-street right of ways were platted out across the site and accepted by the City prior to the City's purchase of the Cookson Field property. With the exception of the central portions of Clay Street and Kendig Street that cross the park, most have never been cleared. Barricaded by jersey barriers, Clay Street, which was once used for a trolley line, terminates at the northern and southern ends of the park and is now a wide unpaved tree-lined path, which forms the park's north-south main axis. Farther down slope, a non-contiguous Heath Street dead ends at the northern and southern edge of the park, whereupon it becomes forest. Similarly, Kendig Street is interrupted as it cuts through the park, terminating at both its east and west ends, and degenerates into a steeply inclined rutted dirt path.



The park lacks any sort of amenities at current site entrances. Gateways and new park signage that identify the site as a park and open space property, as well as improved parking amenities for those individuals driving to the site, would greatly increase the number of park users. Additionally, provisions for service and emergency vehicle access must be included to facilitate park maintenance and ensure park users' safety.

Large segments of the park are inaccessible via either formal or informal pathway networks, much of the existing pathway system is overgrown, and new universally accessible pathways are needed to allow people to view interesting parts of the site, especially along the northernmost and southern perimeters of the property.



## Recreational Uses

At present, the Cookson Field property offers only limited passive recreational opportunities, which primarily consist of hiking and jogging the numerous trails that traverse the site. Notwithstanding, few residents of Worcester or even the College Hill neighborhood ever visit the park – overall awareness of the park needs substantial improvement among residents beyond the impression of a small littered and unimproved tract of woods on the hill. Remnants of old picnic fireplaces and bench stanchions offer indications of the site’s historic uses, but their deteriorated state underscores the park’s current condition.



Existing trails offer various levels of difficulty. Most trails (none of which contain formal surfacing) are not handicapped accessible. Many paths require rehabilitation as they have become overgrown and are uneven, rocky and rutted. New trails following existing contour lines would greatly enhance universal accessibility and provide additional linkages to specific areas and greater recreational opportunities.



At the former Cookson Ballfield, the backstop has rusted and fallen into disrepair; the field area has reverted to tall grasses. Restoration of the cleared area as a wildflower meadow would increase the site’s scenic beauty and habitat viability.



At the play area, which is located near the park’s south Clay Street entrance the existing swingset is worn and rusted, the ground surface is hard, and is not safe. The concrete sandbox is weed infested and no longer useable. Former uses reconsidered, with its high canopy of trees, relatively gentle slope and proximity to the main Clay Street path, the existing playground site offers great possibilities as a picnic area.



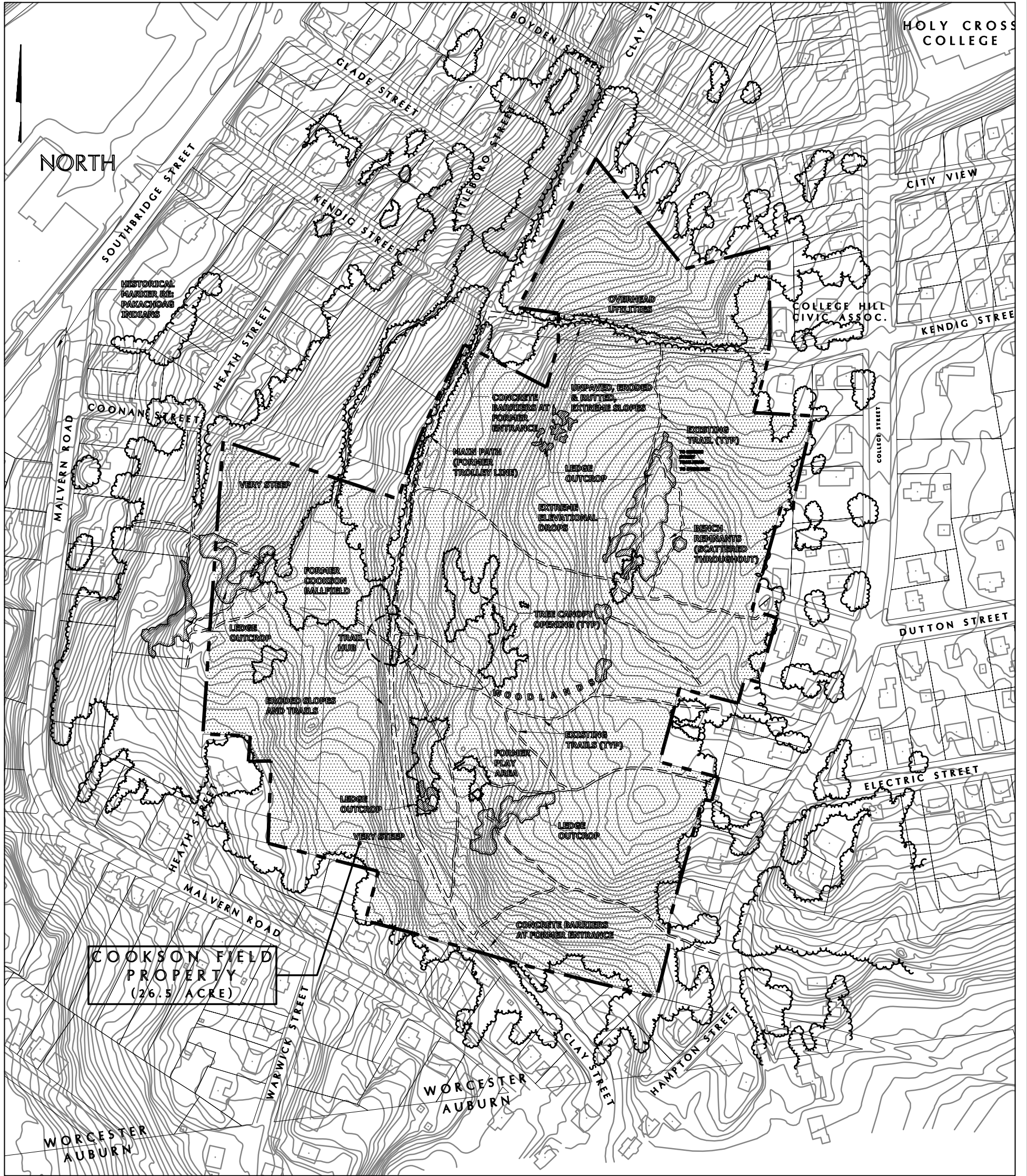
# City of Worcester

Parks, Recreation and Cemetery Department



## COOKSON FIELD MASTER PLAN

### EXISTING CONDITIONS AND SITE ASSESSMENT PLAN



**COOKSON FIELD PROPERTY**  
(26.5 ACRE)



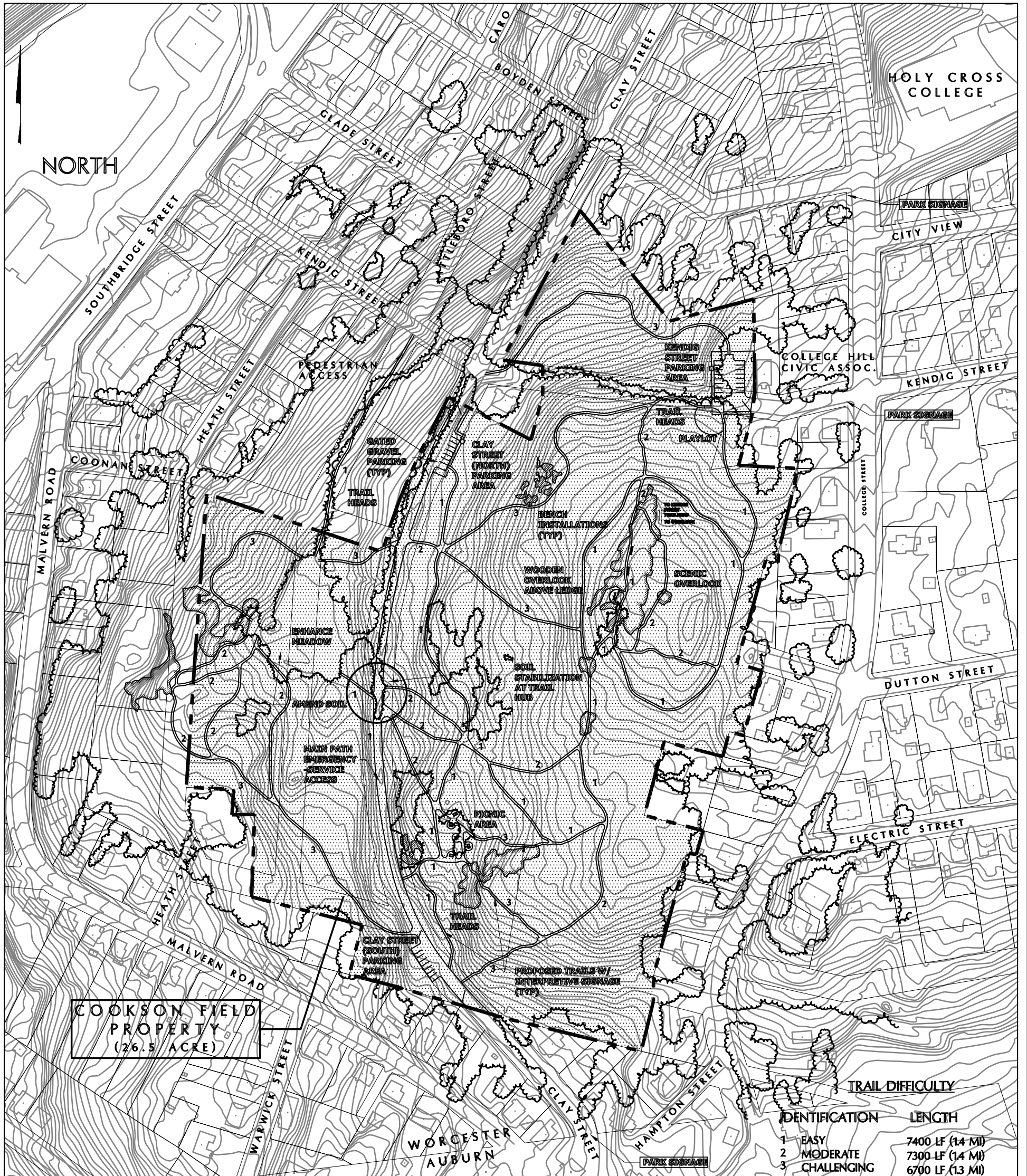
**PLAN B**





## COOKSON FIELD MASTER PLAN

MASTER PLAN



NORTH

COOKSON FIELD PROPERTY  
(26.5 ACRE)



PLAN C



## **The Master Plan – General Themes for Improvement**

Early in the planning process, a series of goals that related specifically to the design of the final Master Plan was identified that would result in the creation of an important park and open space property that met the expressed needs of the College Hill community, Holy Cross College, and the City of Worcester. The goals appear below.

- Design an attractive, ecologically sensitive park setting that improves the quality of life for Worcester residents and enhances the scenic and economic values of abutter and neighborhood properties.
- Revitalize existing trails, establish new pathways, and provide passive recreation opportunities that incorporate universally accessible features and facilities that accommodate neighborhood and City-wide recreation needs.
- Provide vehicular site access and parking opportunities that are sensitive to the needs of abutters and neighborhood residents, and limit impacts to the open space of the property.
- Provide logical pedestrian links between the park and the adjacent College Hill neighborhood.
- Provide a park setting that can be maintained in a natural state that minimizes environmental impact and requires limited financial expenditure for upkeep and operation.

Simply put, it became the basic desire of the City of Worcester Parks Department to transform what many consider an abandoned, derelict site into an exceptionally beautiful and memorable passive recreation park. The receipt of community support at public meetings, hearings, and other related forums confirmed this desire.

With this basic goal in mind, we established a general scope of site improvements for consideration. The scope is basic in that it identifies typical park type amenities including meandering pathways, meadows, benches, overlooks, and other features that allow for the creation of a property that is easily recognizable as a park. The range of improvements identified is subject to change and refinement as specific implementation plans are undertaken.

### **Park Entrance Improvements, Drives and Parking Area Development**

As the Master Plan drawing indicates on the following page, there are many opportunities to dramatically enhance the visibility of the property and the arrival experience of park users through the installation of new trailheads, drives, “pocket” parking areas, appropriate fencing, and signage.

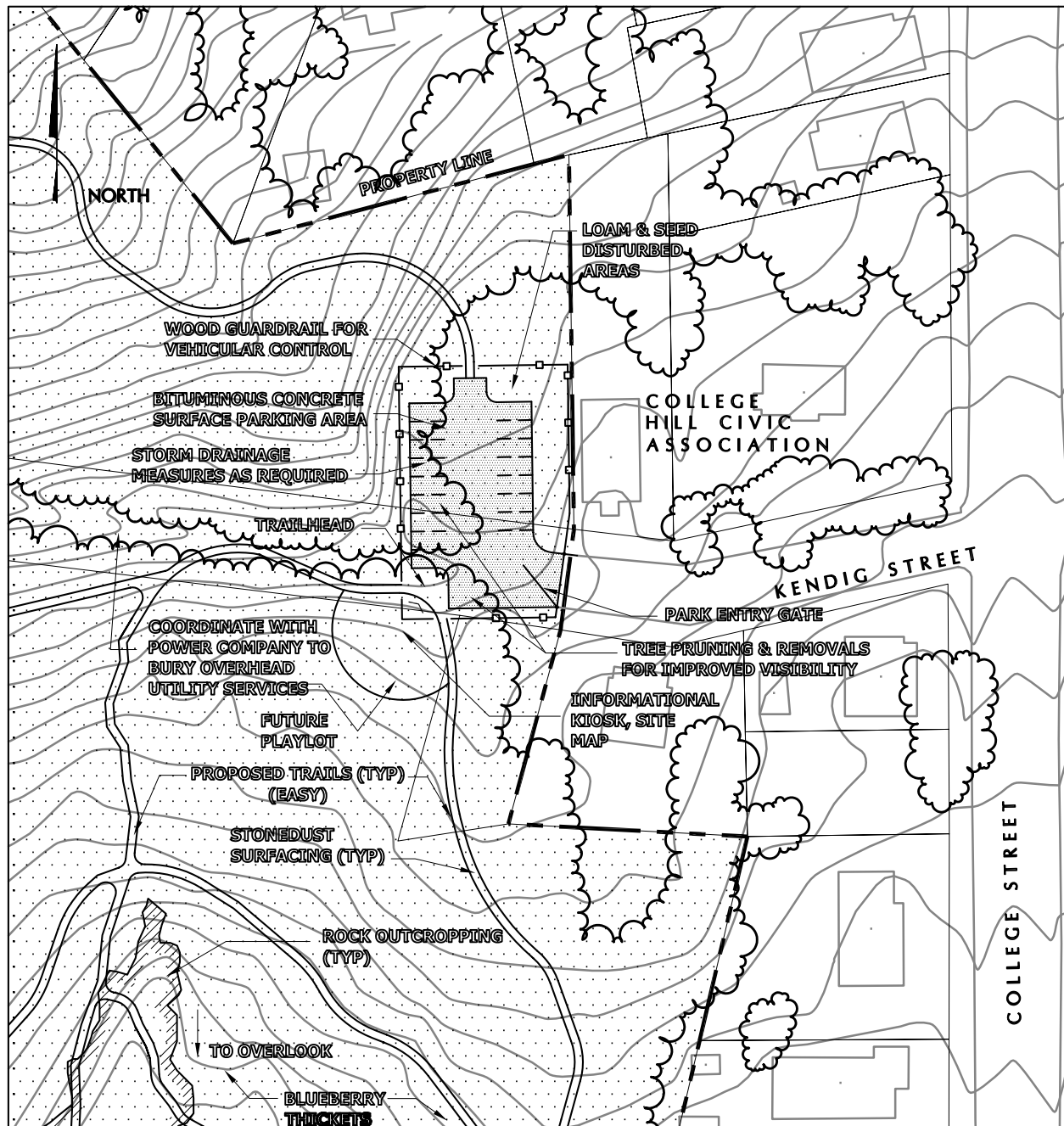
# City of Worcester

Parks, Recreation and Cemetery Department



## COOKSON FIELD MASTER PLAN

### KENDIG STREET PARKING AREA & TRAILHEAD



ENLARGEMENT PLAN A

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It became apparent during the master planning process that limited accommodations in the form of park drives and parking areas was supported by meeting attendees and would be necessary to accommodate visitors from other parts of the City, as well as emergency and park maintenance vehicles. To this end, a series of vehicular drives and small parking areas, located along the park perimeter, is proposed to provide enhanced, limited, and controlled park access, to minimize impact of vehicular traffic, and to maximize the extent of contiguous undeveloped open space. To accomplish this, the status of ownership of dead end streets and the former Clay Street trolley line, which was questioned in the public meeting process must be confirmed prior to design and implementation of certain parking area/entrance improvements. The following summary presents the primary vehicular features proposed for the property:

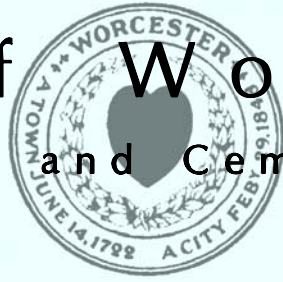
- The primary park entrance and parking area is proposed in the northeast corner of the site, near the College Hill Civic Association, at the end of the western portion of Kendig Street. It is important to note that this unpaved and unimproved area is presently used by most park visitors, and although the College Hill Civic Association also makes use of the area, no formal agreement exists with the City. City representatives have expressed a willingness to continue the sharing of the improved parking area, which will be situated entirely within the confines of the Cookson Field property. (Refer to Plan Enlargement A.)
- A second small parking area is indicated near the southern perimeter of the property, with access from the southern part of Clay Street.
- The third parking area is proposed along the northwestern edge of the property, with access from the northern part of Clay Street. (Refer to Plan Enlargement B.)
- Parking drives and parking areas will be gated to control the penetration of unauthorized vehicles into the site. Within the two parking areas at the north and south ends of Clay Street, service gates will provide access for emergency and maintenance vehicles.

Specific improvements related to parking area developments are presented in the following section, but in general, amenities are desired to be park-like with appropriate styles of lighting, signage, fencing and gates, and pedestrian connections. Appropriate landscape screening will also be installed to provide a visual buffer between abutters and proposed park drives and entrances. Overhead electrical wires and utility poles along the unpaved portion of Kendig Street must be placed below ground in order to be eligible for Division of Conservation Services funding, which will cover the costs for placing overhead utilities below ground.

If security lighting systems can not be afforded at the time of park drive and parking area installations, empty conduit systems should be placed, with the wiring systems to be pulled through, and above ground features (light fixtures, posts and bases) installed, at a later date as funding becomes available.

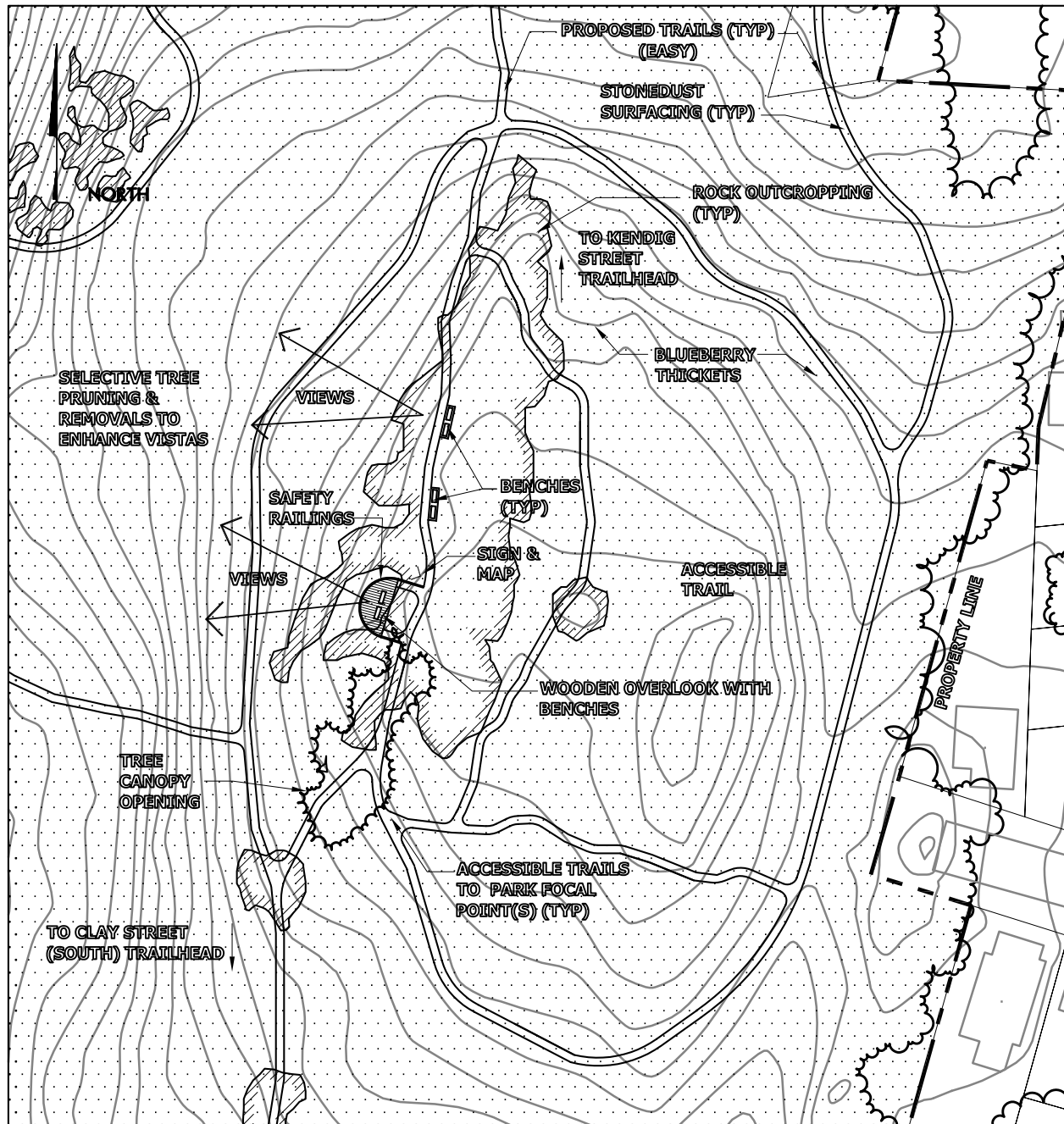
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Parks, Recreation and Cemetery Department



## COOKSON FIELD MASTER PLAN

### SCENIC OVERLOOK



ENLARGEMENT PLAN B

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## Trail and Pathway Development

As the most important park activity will relate to traversing the myriad of new and existing trails on foot, considerable attention must be paid to the design and development of these features. Trails identified on the Master Plan are both new and existing, although many of the existing trails are to be refurbished and will provide connections between parking areas, park destinations, and specific areas of interest.

Across the site, new and refurbished trails will encompass approximately 4 miles and will offer varying degrees of difficulty. Due to rock outcroppings and the extreme sloping nature of the site, not all trails can be made handicapped accessible. Still, it is intended that path development be guided toward providing universally accessible routes to all site features, and facilities.

<i>Pathway Identification</i>	<i>Length</i>
1 Easy	7400 linear feet (1.4 miles)
2 Moderate	7300 linear feet (1.4 miles)
3 Challenging	6700 linear feet (1.3 miles)

Typical park nature/woodland trails are intended to be a maximum of 6' wide and a minimum of 3' wide. Trails will follow a meandering alignment to create ever-changing views and added interest for users. Clay Street will be made universally accessible and maintained as a wide thoroughfare/promenade that will also serve as an emergency/service access route.

## Overlooks

To capitalize on the site's expansive views of the adjacent hills and the Leesville Pond - Middle River Valley, a series of wooden overlooks is proposed. These would be located at key sites along the ledge-outcropped, military crest of the property and would enable universal access and appreciation by all park visitors of the commanding views. (Refer to Plan Enlargement C for the location of the primary overlook.)

## Site Features and Furnishings

It is anticipated that typical types of site furnishings will be selected during implementation of the first phase of site improvements. It will be important to designate standards for benches, picnic tables, signage, fencing, structures, and other related furnishings, and to hold to these styles on all future projects. A consistent theme that easily identifies and defines Cookson Field will thereupon result.

Site furnishings should be compatible in style with the rustic nature of the property and selected based on a variety of factors including cost, durability, and ease of repair. (The City may have established furnishing types at other similar properties that are appropriate for use at Cookson Field.)

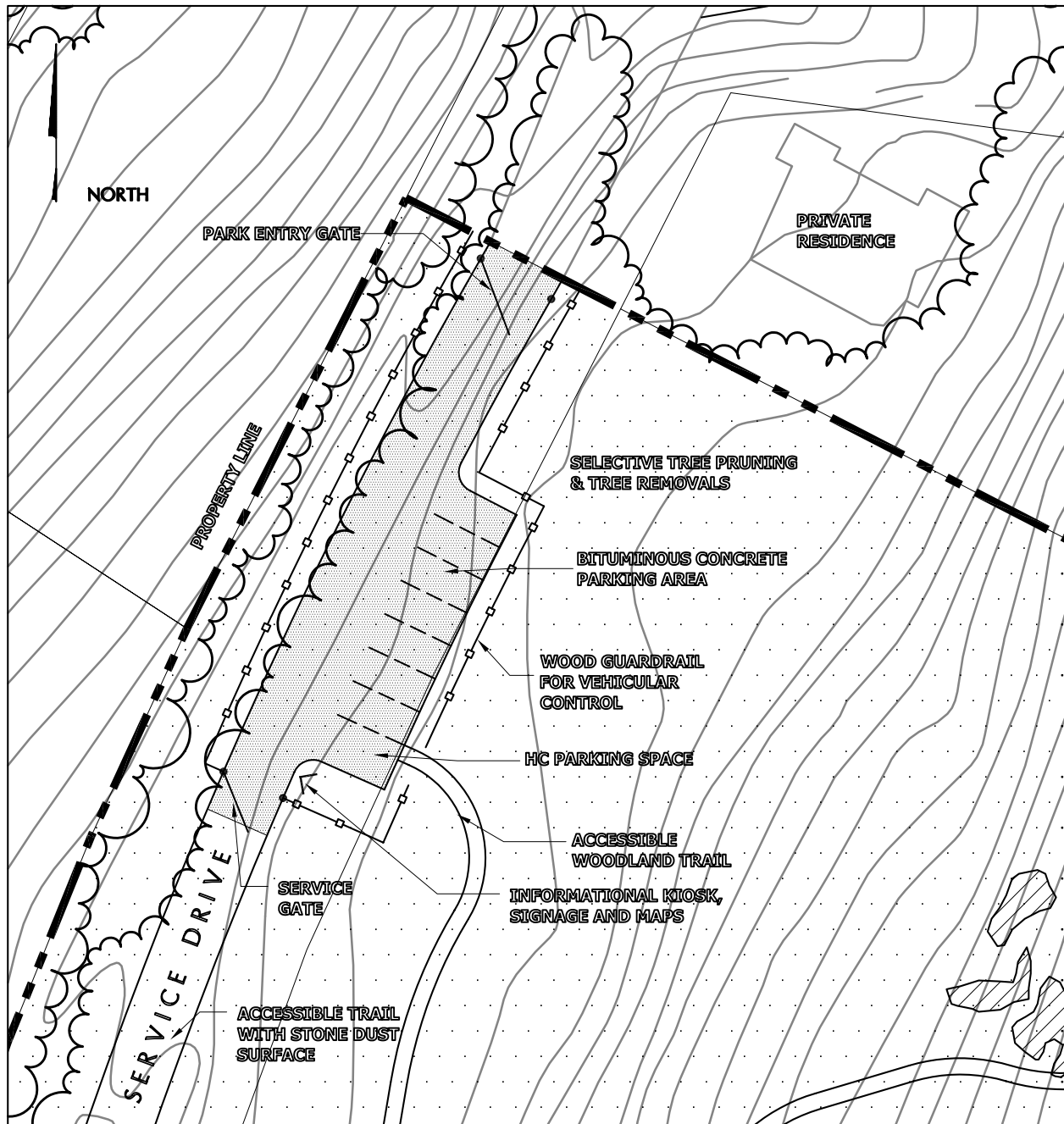
# City of Worcester

Parks, Recreation and Cemetery Department



## COOKSON FIELD MASTER PLAN

### CLAY STREET (NORTH) PARKING AREA & TRAILHEAD



ENLARGEMENT PLAN C

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## **Playground**

A small playground area is proposed at the terminus of western Kendig Street, near the College Hill Civic Association. The play area will be located near the proposed main site entrance and parking area to offer additional recreational opportunities for area children. Play equipment will be state of the art and will comply with ADA accessibility guidelines.

There was considerable community support for this undertaking. As funding is secured, area residents should be engaged in the actual final design and construction of the playground.

## **Ecological Site Restoration**

A major component of the Master Plan includes the restoration of the existing natural landscape, stabilization of eroded slopes and other areas of disturbance, as well as upgrading existing soils to permit suitable growth of native vegetation. Exotic invasive, non-indigenous plant species will be eliminated from the site. The former ballfield will be converted to a native grass and wildflower meadow, which will provide habitat to support a greater diversity of wildlife, dramatically enhance the scenic qualities of the site, and require minimal maintenance with only annual or biannual cutting.

## **Historic and Environmental Presentations**

Another priority related to improving both recreational and educational opportunities at the site relates to the establishment of narrative and graphic depictions that present the site's unique resources.

Prior to the Colonial period, the area within the vicinity of Cookson Field is known to have been inhabited by Pakachoag Indians. Interpretive signage documenting artifactual evidence and the historical importance of the area to the tribe would be of great interest to many park users.

Similarly, many of the site's natural and ecologically sensitive attributes can be articulated as part of an educational outreach program for the benefit of the entire community. Further, the environmental and historical interpretive information that is presented becomes attractive for educators seeking an opportunity to teach school children in a scenic and ecologically diverse landscape.

## **Acquisition of Additional Parcels and Elimination of Paper-Street Right of Ways**

In the course of the public meeting process, a number of residents expressed a desire for the City to acquire additional undeveloped land to the west of the Cookson Field property to increase the size of the property and remove the potential for development of these parcels. Constrained by the extent of ledge, soils and steeply sloping terrain, these parcels are not readily conducive to development. Moreover, development is very likely undesirable, as the City's infrastructure (water, sewer, roadway) is quite limited in this area.

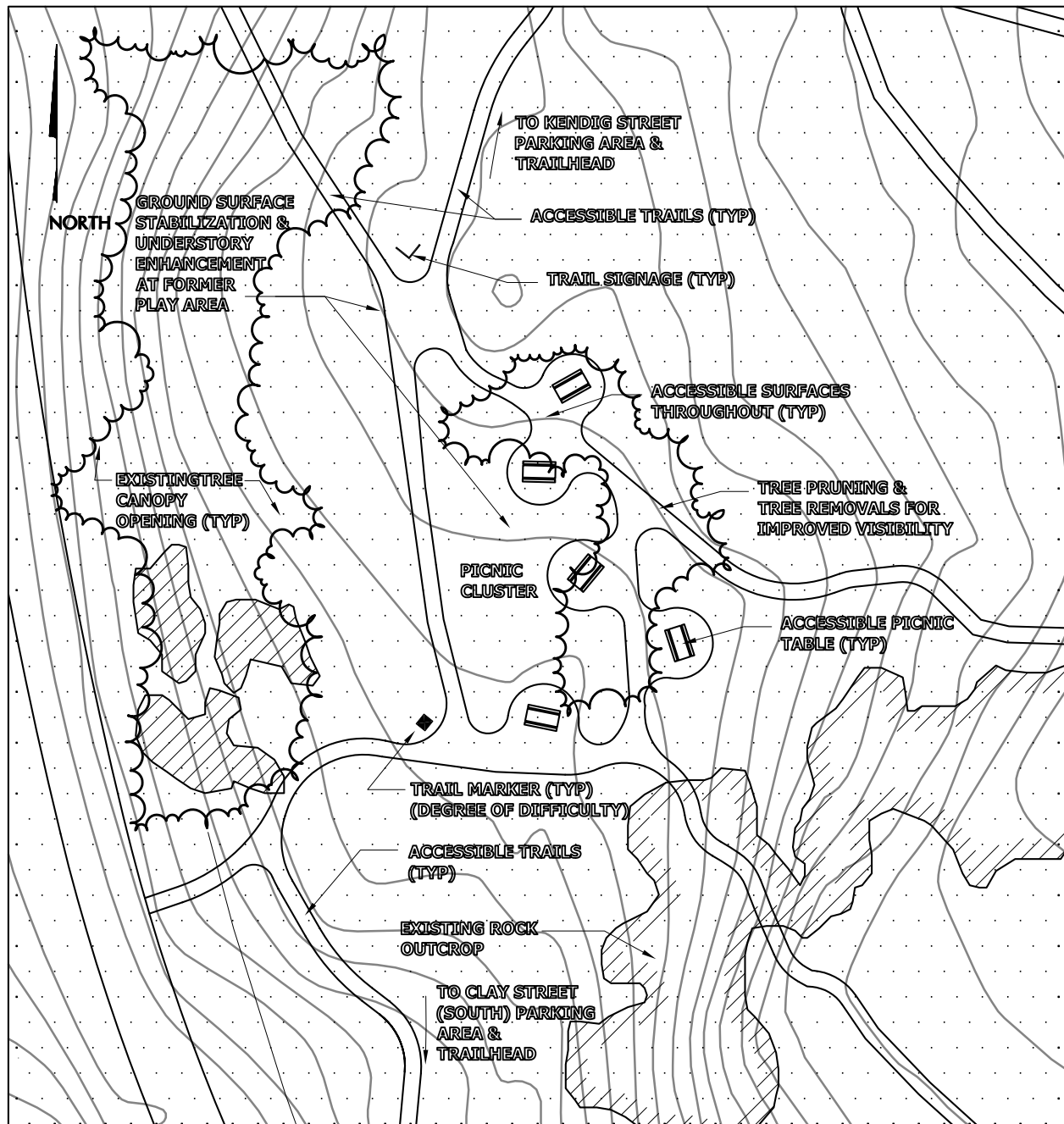
# City of Worcester

Parks, Recreation and Cemetery Department



## COOKSON FIELD MASTER PLAN

### PICNIC AREA AT FORMER PLAYLOT



ENLARGEMENT PLAN D

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ENGINEERS, INC.

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Foxborough, MA 02035

Seven of the parcels in question are essentially landlocked and comprise approximately 3 acres. If these parcels were to be acquired by the City, an additional 1.5 acres of undeveloped paper-street right of ways could be eliminated, whereupon the entire 4.5 acres could then be consolidated as part of the Cookson Field property. City Council Representatives have expressed interest in pursuing the issue of land acquisition in the Cookson Field vicinity.

## **The Master Plan – Specific Site Improvements**

The following outline identifies many of the specific work efforts that need to be undertaken to transform the property into a site that is viewed and identified as an important open-space park. Please refer to the previously presented Master Plan drawing for the entire property and to the plan enlargements identifying proposals for Park Entrance developments at Kendig Street and Clay Street, Overlook Enhancements, and Picnic Area Improvements. Note that the following specific improvements are presented generally by the category or type of work, and not necessarily according to priority or geographic location within the site.

### **Demolition and Site Preparation**

1. Slope stabilization measures and placement of loam borrow at certain locations throughout the park areas that are presently eroded and contain little or no organic matter
2. Removal of chain-link fence backstop and related appurtenances at the former ballfield
3. Removal of other miscellaneous site features and park remnants that are no longer functioning or desired
4. Litter and debris removal
5. Removal of hazardous trees, thinning and pruning of other trees to remain
6. Removal of non-indigenous exotic invasive plant species
7. Clearing/widening existing paths
8. Pursue the relocation of above ground utilities to off-site or below ground

### **Park Entrances, Drives and Parking Areas**

1. Park signage (“Welcome to Cookson Field”, site and trail maps, and other pertinent site information, including that which urges users to respect the park, to leave with everything they have brought, and to take nothing they did not bring)
2. New bituminous concrete drives and parking areas including curbing, security lighting, storm drainage, signage and related amenities
3. Vehicular access gates and bollards
4. Wood guardrail or other suitable park style fencing for vehicular control
5. Service/emergency access gates at Clay Street parking areas
6. Native deciduous and evergreen tree buffer plantings along abutter property lines
7. Installation of pedestrian trailheads to connect to park facilities



### **Park Trail Installations**

1. Rehabilitate, restore and regrade existing trails as needed to accommodate universal access
2. Clear new trails to link park facilities and destinations
3. Install shredded wood/bark or stonedust surfacing at trails
4. Park benches and trash receptacles at select locations
5. Trail markers and directional signage throughout using color coded markings to designate easy, moderate and challenging routes

### **Scenic Overlook**

1. Wood deck overlooks
2. Park benches and trash receptacles
3. Interpretive signage
4. Linkage to trail system

### **Play Area (Western Kendig Street)**

1. Play equipment with age appropriate signage
2. Resilient surfacing
3. Park benches and trash receptacles
4. Site sensitive low maintenance landscaping

### **Picnic Area**

1. Accessible surfaces
2. Picnic tables and trash receptacles

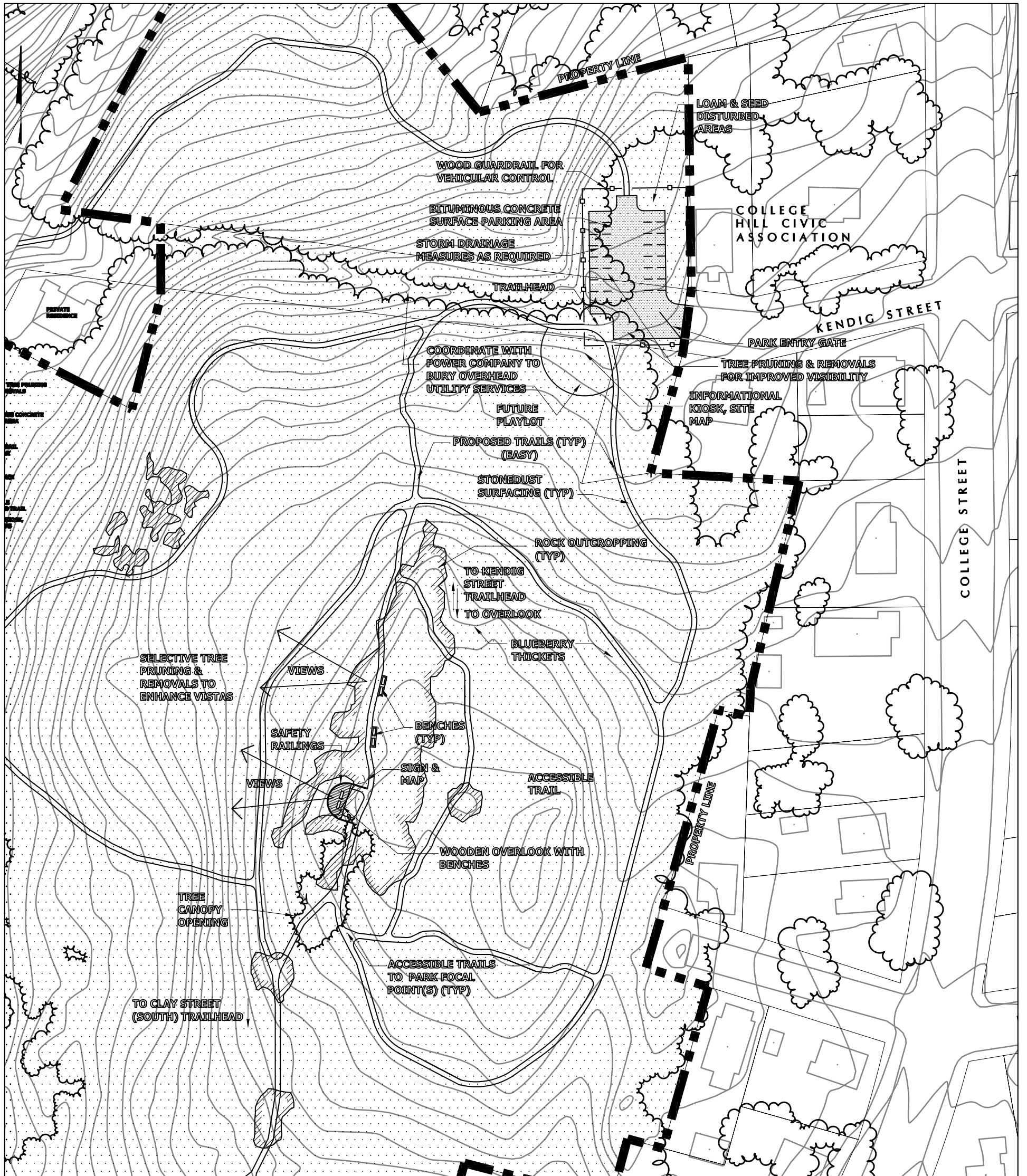
### **Landscape/Environmental Restorations**

1. Native grass and wildflower meadow establishment at the former ballfield
2. Restoration of areas of erosion and other disturbance
3. Installation of bird houses and other “Audubon-style” amenities for wildlife habitat enhancement



# COOKSON FIELD MASTER PLAN

## PHASE I IMPROVEMENTS



ENLARGEMENT PLAN E

## **Funding Opportunities**

There are many potential sources of funding that can be pursued in order to offset the costs of future improvements to Cookson Field. Funding through various public entities and non-profit foundations and institutions may range considerably in value. In general, improvements to the site are to be undertaken according to a schedule that relates specifically to the availability of financial resources from public and private interests.

For consideration, a number of potential funding sources have been identified. Many of the governmental sources possess impressive legacies related to the funding of park improvement programs, but competition for these awards is known to be highly competitive and intense.

As not all potential funding avenues have been confirmed or identified, the following list is preliminary.

### **Corporate Contributions, Partnerships, and Parks Department Assistance**

The most likely way to achieve larger capital expenditures (e.g., the children's playground, the picnic area, or a site wide mapping and signage program) at the Cookson Field property is through the pursuit of corporate contributions. The City has been successful raising funds in this manner at other park and open space properties.

Partnerships can also play an important role in the overall plan to improve, manage and maintain Cookson Field. As an example, Holy Cross has already proven to be an important partner through the generous funding of this master planning document. During initial meetings, College officials and students have expressed a strong desire to participate in the upkeep and management of the property.

Although further conversations will be required, assistance from the College community has been discussed as follows:

- Potential use of College maintenance personnel and equipment for various work efforts
- Major park clean-up days with large groups of students as part of the "Holy Cross Cares" community outreach program
- Potential opening/closing of park gates by Holy Cross personnel
- Potential shared stewardship of the property in conjunction with the City of Worcester Parks, Recreation and Cemetery Department to assist with the management and maintenance of the property and to maintain a certain vigilance in protecting the site



The City Parks Department has also successfully partnered with the Massachusetts Audubon Society. Such a relationship at Cookson Field would be ideal in order to promote and enhance the site's unique environmental features and to create and forge an educational/awareness program for City school children.

The Parks Department also possess many in-house capabilities relating to parks construction and management. As funding, material, equipment and human resources permit, typically limited improvement efforts can be planned and undertaken. The removal of dead or diseased trees, pruning of healthy trees, and the installation of benches, trash receptacles, fencing, signage, or a small run of masonry wall are examples of the types of enhancements that can be provided.

The Parks Department and other City Departments, such as the DPW, receive annual quotations for a variety of public improvements that can be ordered on an as-needed basis. The installation of fencing, bituminous concrete pavements, and curbing are examples. As deemed appropriate, ordering work through this method could be used to compliment or support other improvements that are accomplished through other means.

#### **Commonwealth of Massachusetts - Division of Conservation Services (DCS)**

This state agency has funded hundreds of park, open space and recreation projects throughout Massachusetts over the past several decades. Each June, the agency receives applications from municipalities for improvements to parks, playgrounds, athletic facilities or assistance in the acquisition of open space properties. DCS administers several programs including the "***Self-help***" program, which generally funds acquisitions and limited enhancements to open space properties. The funds for acquisitions are designed to protect natural resources by eliminating threatened development. The "***Urban Self-help***" program typically funds the renovation of parks and playgrounds in larger communities with limited outlets for recreation. Demographics play a role in the grant award process. Communities that are more urban in nature with high percentages of low-income residents tend to fair better in the decision-making process as compared to smaller communities with fewer low-income residents.

DCS also receives Federal Land and Water Conservation Funds for distribution to communities that are considering park improvements or land acquisitions as described above. The allocation for Massachusetts for the upcoming year has not been determined, although the funds, when available, will be used to supplement both the Self-help and Urban Self-help programs.

As the State's fiscal condition is highly questionable this year, funding through any of the above referenced programs is unknown.

## **Community Development Block Grants**

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds, originating from the Federal Government, are frequently used by municipalities to fund park improvements at properties located within targeted areas and for improvements at other park facilities that enhance handicapped accessibility and remove physical barriers or impediments to park users. It has not been confirmed if Cookson Field is located within a target area. Notwithstanding, in accordance with the Master Plan, the improved park will provide important recreational opportunities to all Worcester residents including the aged and the disabled. As a result, there may be some potential for offsetting the costs of certain park improvements with CDBG funds.

## Implementation Strategy and Phasing

In order to accomplish the extent of improvements identified in the previous sections of the Master Plan, it will be necessary to breakdown the full scope of work into a number of capital construction phases. By default, the range of work is prioritized during this process with the most desirable and logical improvements to be implemented during the earlier phases. Some work efforts (such as community clean up and trash removal days) are anticipated to be on going and therefore independent of a particular capital improvement phase. These types of efforts are intended to be undertaken as volunteer forces are organized or as funds/materials/equipment becomes available for such undertakings.

The phasing of capital improvements is intended to be somewhat fluid with the potential for continued refinement and modification as further design is undertaken and actual improvements are explored in greater detail by the Parks Department. For consideration, a Phase 1, 2 and 3 program has been initially established. Each of the programs can be adapted to meet City and Department budgetary factors.

*Note that dates have not been assigned to the particular phases listed below, as work should proceed based on the availability of funding.* Notwithstanding, it is hoped that most improvements can be undertaken within a four to six year period in order to avoid a loss of momentum and to ensure continued support from the community. Ultimately, the realization of Cookson Field as a vital and viable City park and open space property with unique opportunities for passive recreational pursuits is entirely dependent upon community support and acceptance.

<i>Cookson Field Improvement Programs</i>	
<i>Phase</i>	<i>General Scope of Improvements</i>
Phase 1	High visibility, high priority improvements such as Kendig Street parking area, park signage, trailheads, trail improvements, ADA compliance, furnishings and interpretive signage.
Phase 2	Scenic overlook at park focal point, playground, landscaping at high visibility areas, additional trail development and site furnishings
Phase 3	Final trail enhancements and expansions, signage, secondary parking and entrance improvements, erosion and slope stabilization, meadow establishment at former field and other related site furnishings/enhancements

To further articulate the scope of the first round of improvements, please refer to the chart below and to Enlargement Plan E. If the full improvement program is implemented within, or close to, the four to six year timeline, the end result will be the creation of a remarkable park and open space property that is the pride and joy of the neighborhood and the entire City of Worcester. It is important to note that corporate sponsors and other interested donors could reduce the capital costs of a particular implementation program through the contributions of labor, materials and/or equipment.



*Cookson Field  
Potential Improvement Programs Phases 1, 2 & 3*

<b>Work Description</b>	<b>Budget Cost</b>
<b><u>PHASE 1</u></b>	
<b>Kendig Parking Area</b>	
Park signage (at College Street)	\$ 5,000
Asphalt driveway (Kendig St.) from College St.	\$ 12,000
Asphalt sidewalk (Kendig St.) from College St.	\$ 3,000
Granite curb along sidewalk (Kendig St.) from College St.	\$ 8,000
Pkg. area pavement/line painting	\$ 20,000
Pkg. area gravel base and preparation	\$ 10,000
Pkg. area lighting	\$ 16,000
Asphalt berm (sloped edge)	\$ 2,000
Storm drainage	\$ 10,000
Service gate (Double)	\$ 10,000
Wood rail fence	\$ 14,000
Wood rail fence at Kendig Street	\$ 8,000
Landscaping/restoration	\$ 5,000
Soft Costs (*)	<u>\$ 34,440</u>
Subtotal	\$ 157,440
<b>Trail System Improvements</b>	
Trailhead kiosk (1)	\$ 8,000
Trail markers/signage (8)	\$ 4,000
Tree pruning removals (3 person crew/5 days)	\$ 5,000
Trail improvements (approx. 7,000 L.F.)	\$ 35,000
Bench installations (4)	\$ 8,000
Other site restoration efforts	\$ 8,000
Soft Costs (*)	<u>\$ 19,040</u>
Subtotal	\$ 87,040
<b>Grand Total Phase 1</b>	<b>\$ 244,480</b>
<b><u>PHASE 2</u></b>	
Children's playground	\$ 50,000
Wooden overlook at park focal point	\$ 40,000
Tree pruning and removals (3 person crew/5 days)	\$ 5,000
Trail improvements (approx. 7,000 L.F.)	\$ 35,000
Other related site improvements (benches, signage...)	\$ 20,000
Soft Costs (*)	<u>\$ 42,000</u>
<b>Grand Total Phase 2</b>	<b>\$ 192,000</b>

<b><u>PHASE 3</u></b>	
Pocket parking areas (2)	\$ 40,000
Park entrance improvements (signage, fencing, pathway connections)	\$ 16,000
Tree pruning and removals (3 person crew/5 days)	\$ 5,000
Trail improvements (approx. 7,400 L.F.)	\$ 37,000
Former field landscape restoration	\$ 20,000
Other related site improvements (benches, signage...)	\$ 16,000
Soft Costs (*)	<u>\$ 37,520</u>
<b>Grand Total Phase 3</b>	<b>\$ 171,520</b>
<b>Grand Total All Three Phases</b>	<b>\$ 608,000</b>

(\*) Soft Costs equal approximately 28% of the total construction cost and typically include engineering and project management services, construction contingency, printing and advertising and other efforts associated with the implementation of a project.

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