

# MASTER PLAN

## INDIAN HILL PARK

Ararat Street - Worcester, Massachusetts



Prepared for:  
CITY OF WORCESTER DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS AND PARKS  
PARKS, RECREATION AND CEMETARY DIVISION  
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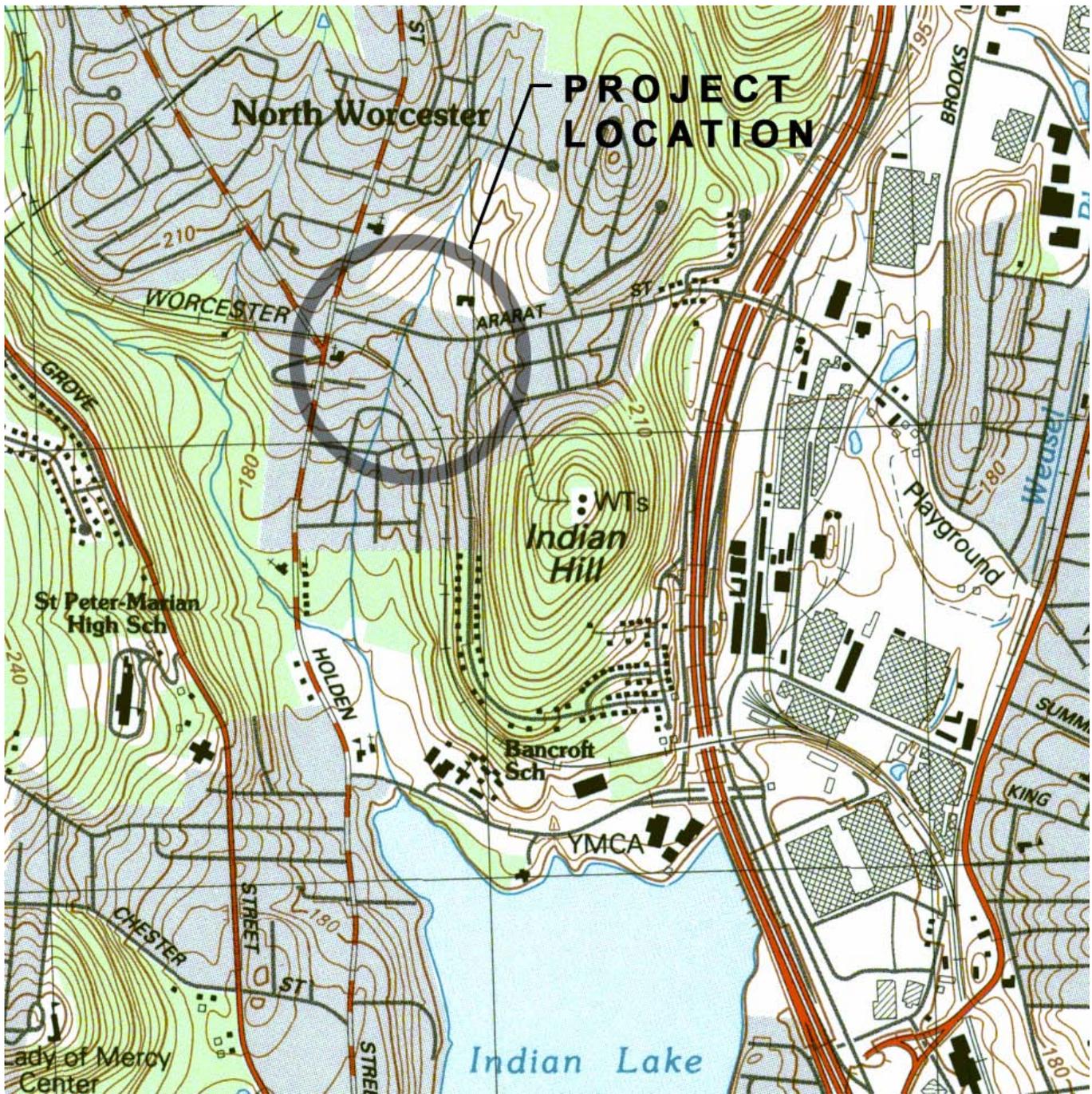
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NORTH

**Site Locus Map**

*Note: Map source is United States Geologic Survey*

## **Acknowledgments**

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### Additional Acknowledgments:

Faith Woods, long-time resident of the Indian Hill neighborhood, for supplying critical historical information on the Indian Hill School, the surrounding neighborhood and Indian Hill Park.

Worcester Historical Museum for also provided invaluable assistance in development of the historical information summarized in the Master Plan

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## Appreciation and Dedication

We are grateful to the residents of the City of Worcester, especially those residing in the neighborhoods surrounding Indian Hill Park, for providing guidance in the development of this Master Plan. Attendance and thoughtful discussion during the community meetings provided a wealth of insight. The hopes, concerns, needs and ideas of area residents, other park users, and City officials have been summarized and addressed in this document. Recommendations have been crafted with the aim of improving open space and recreational opportunities for residents of the City, while improving the quality of life for those residents that live in close proximity to the Park.

We wish to express our appreciation to members of the Worcester City Council, Worcester Statehouse Delegation, Worcester City Manager's Office, Worcester Department of Public Works and Parks, Greendale Youth Flag Football, Joseph Schwartz Little League Baseball, and other committed public and private citizens that contributed to development of this Master Plan. Additionally, we extend particular appreciation to Saint George's Church and the Greendale Branch YMCA for providing facilities for the community meetings.

It's been obvious since the master planning process began, that Indian Hill Park represents the direct product of countless hours of volunteer efforts on the part of area citizens. Examples of these efforts include the time donated to create the existing memorial, to construct the concession stand, and to manage the various youth recreation activities that occur within the Park. This master plan is dedicated to this on-going spirit of civic involvement.



*View of Indian Hill looking southeast across the Park*

## Introduction

During the spring of 2006, the City of Worcester Department of Public Works and Parks engaged Meridian Associates, Inc. (Meridian) and commenced the process of working with community stakeholders to develop this Master Plan for the redesign and redevelopment of Indian Hill Park. Meridian completed an existing conditions survey of the 4± acre parcel and performed research to understand the Park's current development constraints, its neighborhood context and possible opportunities for redevelopment. Three community meetings were held to invite public comment and participation in the master planning process.

The initial meeting was held on August 2, 2006 to discuss the planning process and to encourage programming ideas from those in attendance. At the second public meeting on November 6, 2006, the initial Concept Plan was presented and favorably received. Following this second meeting, the Concept Plan was refined into the DRAFT Master Plan and presented during the third public meeting that was held on February 15, 2007.

The final DRAFT Master Plan is to be presented to the Worcester Parks and Recreation Commission at a public hearing on March 22, 2007. This final DRAFT Master Plan embodies the desires of the majority of those participating in the public process to achieve the following objectives:

- Strike a new relationship between the Park and the abutting School site to the east.

*Recognize that the historical relationship with the former Indian Hill/Worcester North Public School, when the Park was part of the School grounds and intimately connected with school recess and athletic activities, etc., is no longer the case. Moving past the recent period of difficult relations with the former neighbor, and welcoming a new potential landowner, all parties look forward to better days for the Park. For long-term viability, the Park should function without any critical dependency on the school property abutting to the east. As such, parking for Park users must be provided within City-owned lands, either within the Park proper or as on-street parking along Ararat Street.*

- Provide improved facilities for year-round passive and active recreation and the enjoyment of green space, for the benefit of residential abutters, youth sports leagues and residents of the City at large, including all age groups and those with disabilities.

*Craft a Master Plan for the Park that continues many of the passive and active recreational activities now enjoyed (walking, jogging, baseball, t-ball, tag football and frisbee golf), adds new parking areas for visitors, strengthens the Park's connection with the surrounding community trail networks, enhances the over-all aesthetics of the site, and expands or improves facilities in a generally modest manner.*

- Encourage the continued participation of youth sports groups, neighbors, land trusts, and citizens at large, in partnership with City Departments, in the on-going stewardship and maintenance of the Park.



## Master Plan Background and Neighborhood Context

The Master Plan focuses on Indian Hill Park, a 4± acre parcel (Site) owned by the City of Worcester. The Park had been part of a larger parcel that included the North Worcester Public School. The developed areas of the Park served as the schoolyard for recess periods, gym classes, and after-school athletic activities until the School was closed by the City a number of years ago.

A summary time-line of key historical events associated with the Park, the School and the Indian Hill neighborhood is summarized as follows:

- 1741 – William Thaxter purchased property erected home on Brattle St. (farmed property now known as Indian Hill Park) (home still erect and on the NHRP).
- 1871 – Bridge underpass erected by Railroad to allow property owner Libbey access to farm fields (Indian Hill Park).
- 1893 – North Worcester Schoolhouse (old building) erected.
- 1902 – Theodore Roosevelt visited the Indian Hill community.
- 1910 – Phase I completed – New North Worcester Schoolhouse.
- 1913 – Grosvenor Atterbury, Architect planned and built Indian Hill community.
- 1914 – Norton Agricultural Society established the Norton Farm on the former Libbey Farm (Indian Hill Park) for Norton employees/residents of North Village.
- 1915 – 1920 The first of Norton Village homes erected (now know as Indian Hill).
- 1916 – 09/01 President Theodore Roosevelt visited community and planted a Pin Oak Tree at Roosevelt Place on Indian Hill. At the time, Mr. Roosevelt was interested in the industrial housing problem and came to see the Village that was beginning to be known nationally as an ideal housing development for the accommodations of workmen’s families.
- 1923 – Phase II completed – New North Worcester Schoolhouse.
- 1924 – Boy Scouts planted 5,000 trees on the east side of Indian Hill.
- 1945 – 10/28 Dedication of Indian Hill Honor Roll, World War II Memorial dedicated to the sons and daughters of the neighborhood.
- 1952 – Norton Company deeded 4.28 acres of land to City of Worcester.
- 1967 – Area youths killed in fire on Indian Hill Road.
- 1980 – Fuller & Delano Co., Architects for school (listed on the National Historical Register). Architects for the New North Worcester School.
- 1980 - Indian Hill-North Village (properties along Ararat St and Delaval, Heroult, Marconi, Watt and Westinghouse Rds (110 acres, 93 bldgs) #80000510)).
- 1981 – City sold school as surplus to Salter School, and retained remaining 4.28 acres.
- 1982 – Indian Hill Road made public.
- 2005 – City transferred 4.28-acre park site from jurisdiction of the City Manager to the care, custody, management and control of the Department of Public Works and Parks, to be used for park and playground purposes.

The present-day neighborhoods surrounding the Site take a lively interest in the Park. The Park serves multiple neighborhoods as well as citywide residents. In general terms, there are discernable neighborhoods to the north and east of the Park. The rail line, owned by the Boston, Barre, & Gardner Railroad Corporation (BB & G Railroad) and abutting the southern limit of the Park, effectively divides the eastern neighborhoods (along Indian Hill Road, Marconi Road, Ararat Street and Westinghouse Parkway) from the residential neighborhoods to the southwest (along Stetson Road, Darnell Road, Brookhaven Road, and Brattle Street). The Westinghouse Parkway block is listed in the National Registry of Historic Places.



*Aerial photo of Indian Hill Park and surrounding neighborhoods*

There is an existing pedestrian underpass at the eastern end of Stetson Road adjacent to the southern limit of the Park. This underpass allows pedestrian passage under the railroad tracks east to west/west to east. This is an important underpass in terms of supporting the broader trail network in this part of the City. Currently, the condition of this underpass is generally over-grown, dark, and uninviting.



*Existing RR underpass at south end of Park*

At the intersection of Brattle Street, Holden Street, and the railroad crossing, exists a small collection of commercial shops (food and conveniences), which announce entry to residential neighborhoods north of the tracks along Brattle and Holden Streets. The direct abutters to the park are relatively few, (five in total), including: The Campus Realty Group, Inc. to the east, which owns the former School building, one residential property to the east (N/F Ford), the BB & G Railroad to the south, one residential property to the west (N/F Torres), and the City-owned Ararat Street along the northern edge of the Park. Along the north side of Ararat Street, directly across the street from the Park, are eight residential neighbors, each with unobstructed views directly into the Park.



*View of residences across Ararat Street looking north from the Park*



*View looking west along Ararat Street*

The Park is home to a memorial that honors five teenagers that perished approximately 40 years ago in a cabin fire at the top of Indian Hill. The memorial reflects the loss suffered by many neighbors to the Park and offers an opportunity for reflection.



*View of existing memorial*

The current day recreational facilities within the park include a small baseball field and a smaller T-ball field. The fields share a common grassy outfield. Neither is in very good condition. Also sharing the common grass outfield is small football field, devoted to flag/touch football. East of the football field is a concession stand.



*View looking east of the larger baseball field*



*Flag football game being played on the common outfield area of the ball fields*

Volunteers built the concession stand in the Park a few years ago. It provides various facilities to the Park visitors during active recreational periods. The structure reflects the civic dedication to community life on the part of Park neighbors as well as residents of the City.



*View of the concession stand looking east from the outfield area*



*The concession stand open for business during fall activities in the Park*

Taken together, the historical background and community context of the present-day Indian Hill Park is a story that suggests better days gone past, while persisting in the belief of a better future. This Master Plan has been developed to serve as a tool to guide the community toward a brighter future for the Park and future generations of patrons.

## **Community Participation**

As part of this Master Planning process, a series of community meetings were held to discuss the future for the Park. Highlights of these meetings are summarized below.

### **Public Meeting # 1 – August 2, 2006, 6:30 PM**

#### **Location - St. George Church on Brattle Street**

City Staff gave introductions, outlined the Master Planning process, and touched on potential funding opportunities. About three dozen attendees enjoyed meeting outdoors (due to a power outage) and discussing their desires, hopes, and questions about the Park and the neighboring School site located east of the Park. An aerial photograph of the site and its context, along with the Existing Conditions Plan of Indian Hill Park were presented, and used to highlight the current-day physical conditions of the site.

Participants generally voiced desires that the following Park improvements be considered:

- Generally maintain and continue the recreational uses that the Park has historically supported, namely: baseball/t-ball, flag/touch football, concession stand, memorial, walking.
- Keep the Park green. Yes, additional off-street parking is needed and desired, but don't add so much parking that the site loses its value as green open space.
- The Park and the surrounding neighborhood are very historic; do something with the Park that is educational and commemorates the area's history.
- Have historic light poles for pedestrian park lighting.
- Add parking, playground for kids ages 2-12, consider adding basketball.
- Consider including a skate park, to get teenagers off busy area streets.
- Include facilities or areas within the Park that support active as well as passive forms of recreation.
- Widen and improve the walking track.
- Consider coordination of Park access points with connections to broader trails throughout this part of the City.
- Ararat Street is a busy street; sidewalk along Ararat Street needs improvement and should be coordinated with Park access.
- Add fencing or wooden guardrail along eastern property line.
- Picnic tables and benches would be nice to include.

The recent history involving the old School property to the east of the Park was also discussed. It was hoped that improvements to the Park would help integrate the entire area back into the surrounding neighborhood.

**Public Meeting # 2 – November 6, 2006, 6:30 PM**  
**Location - Greendale Branch YMCA on Shore Drive**

City staff opened the meeting, provided introductions, and gave a brief over-view of the Concept Master Plan. Landscape Architect Jeff Richards, of Meridian, provided additional elaboration on the proposed plan. The following summary highlights critical components of the Concept Plan:

- Continuation of active and passive recreational uses (baseball, t-ball, flag/touch football, and walking track), and improvement to each of these fields and features;
- Creation of a single-entry/exit drive off Ararat Street, leading to an “arrival area” with “drop off”, which separates the vehicular uses to the west from the pedestrian only, park recreation facilities to the east.
- Addition of 47 new parking spaces within the west end of the park and a new access drive to the football concession stand with 2 dedicated handicapped parking spaces and seating wall.
- A small skate park feature.
- Small playground, a rain pavilion, expanded walkways and pedestrian access points, benches, and picnic tables.
- Shade trees, street trees and screening buffer along the west property line and a guardrail along the eastern property line.

Meeting participants discussed the proposed plan, raised questions, and debated relative priorities. Overall, the consensus of the attendees was that they liked the proposed plan. A few questions were raised and a handful of refinements were suggested as follows:

- Could a half-court or full court basketball court be added?
- Should the entry drive curb radii be made larger?
- Is the juxtaposition of the playground, (for young age groups) at some distance from the T-ball field (also for younger age kids) fair to a parent trying to shuffle between the two areas of the Park?
- If the upper parking area was full of cars, could a turn-around be added so drivers wouldn't have to back out of the upper lot?

City Councilor Geoff Smith brought attendees up to date on the negotiations relative to the former school property. It was announced that the City had been making good progress, and it looked like a new tenant might be negotiating a lease-to-buy contract with the current landowner. The perspective tenant may be interested in operating the site as a school for autistic children and is considering an opening in the Fall of 2007. All in attendance greeted this news with great enthusiasm.

**Public Meeting # 3 – February 15, 2007, 7:15 PM**  
**Location - Greendale Branch YMCA on Shore Drive**

In this third public meeting, after viewing scale mock-ups of how a full-court or half-court basketball element might be added, it was decided by attendees that the full-court option should be pursued. Other plan refinements including the addition of signs and educational kiosk/sign were also accepted.

Councilors Smith and Rosen provided further updates on the adjacent school negotiations. It looks like the perspective tenant for the former school is going to be the new neighbor to the Park. This new tenant is expected to have relatively modest parking needs and a program that may be a good fit with the Park and the surrounding neighborhood. All concerned regards this favorably.

The meeting was concluded with the recognition that the Indian Hill Master Plan next goes to the Parks and Recreation Commission for their formal review.

## **Existing Park Conditions and Site Analysis**

### **Existing Facilities**

The Park includes a non-regulation sized baseball field, and a T-ball field. These fields share common outfield space. Also over-lapping a portion of the outfield is an area dedicated to flag/touch football, in a half-length football field arrangement. Local sports leagues use each of these three recreational fields on a regular basis during their respective sports seasons. Generally, the grass fields, stone dust infields, backstops, bleachers, and the stonedust walking track around the sports fields are run down and in poor condition.

Except for some temporary parking in the northwest edge of the Park, there is no dedicated park parking areas. When the sports activities are in full swing, park patrons heavily utilize the parallel parking spaces along Ararat Street.

At the eastern side of the half football field, a concession stand exists. It serves refreshments during select activities and contains a single bathroom.

### **Vegetation**

The eastern half of the park is open and devoted to the ball fields. The western half of the park, and a swath along the rail line to the south, is wooded. Generally the trees in the park are deciduous and consist of medium-aged to mature Norway Maples, White Ash, Locust, and Black Cherry. The condition of the few existing mature trees along Ararat Street is marginal. Scrub and sapling growth exists along the eastern edge adjacent to the former school property.

## **Topography**

Within the eastern half of the Park, the site topography is generally level in support of the baseball activities. Grades drop down steeply to the south adjacent to the railroad corridor. Within the western half of the Park, there is a low point that collects surface runoff from the site. From this central low point, the site slopes upward to the west and northerly toward Ararat Street.

## **Soils**

Based on the USDA Soil Survey of Worcester County, (Northeastern Part), the site consists primarily of Udorthents, smoothed soil types. Udorthents exist in areas formed by excavation and/or filling for non-farm projects such as athletic fields and highways. These soil types are very deep, nearly level to steep, and excessively drained to moderately well drained. A small portion of the site along Ararat Street is classified as Woodbridge Fine Sandy Loam, with gentle 0 – 8% slopes. This soil type is characteristically very stony.

## **Hydrology**

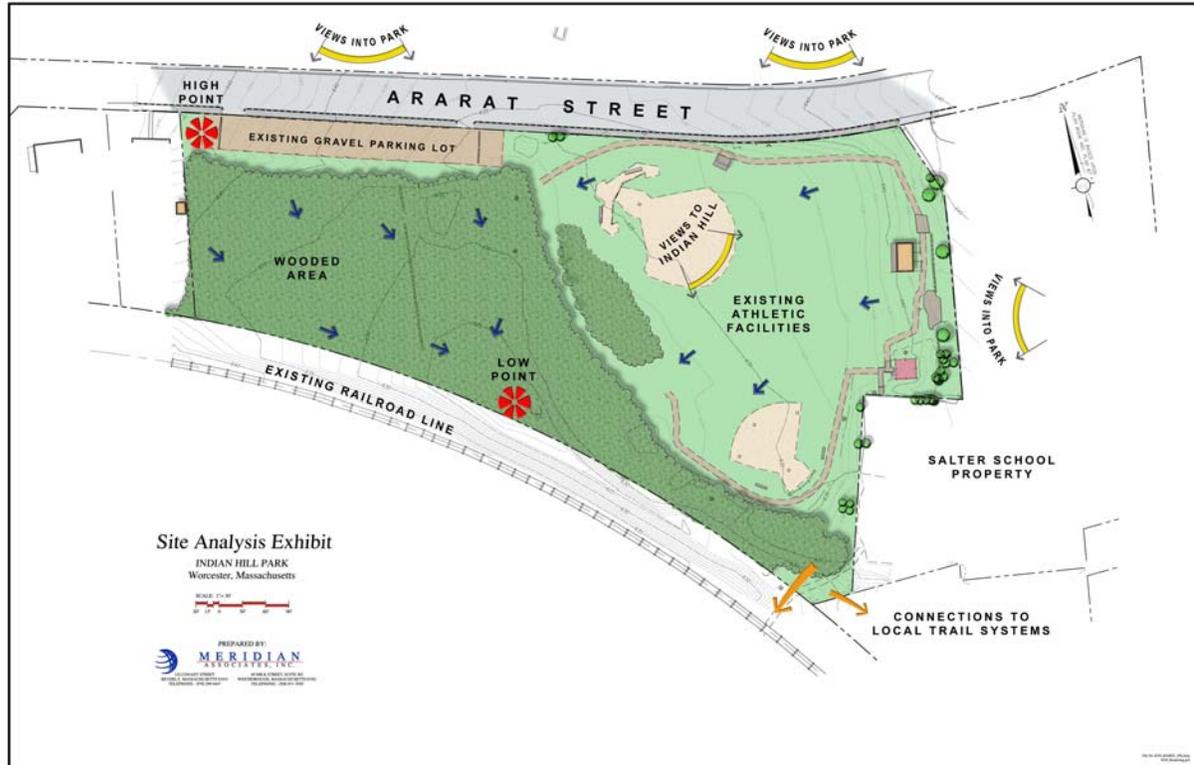
Up until the early 1900's, and the construction of the North Worcester Public School and associated playing fields, there had been a stream flowing from north to south, thru the central portion of the Park. This stream is present to the north of Ararat Street; it's flows are directed into a 60 inch diameter concrete culvert which runs under the central part of the Park and delivers stream-flow to points south. Generally the site drainage flows to the central low point near the southern boundary of the park, where it enters the culvert through a drain inlet.

## **Utilities**

A major drain line and a sewer line run thru the central and southern portions of the Park. Each of these utilities is located within utility easements, which preclude construction of permanent facilities within portions of the Park. Electric, water, and sewer lateral connections come into the Park to service the concession stand.

## Site Analysis

The following graphic represents our analysis of the existing site conditions. It allows us to understand the opportunities for and constraints to redevelopment of the site and forms the basis of master planning work completed for the Park.



*Site Analysis Plan*

## Goals and Objectives

Based upon community comments, from neighborhood residents and elected officials, and direction provided by City Administration members relative to the City's park development and maintenance standards, the following goals and objectives have been established for the renovation of Indian Hill Park:

### 1. Maintain past Park uses and add a few new uses and facilities.

- Continue the passive and active recreational activities that have occurred within the Park in the past (baseball, T-Ball, touch/flag football, walking), and expand the range of recreational opportunities (add basketball court, playground, rain pavilion, picnic table and benches).

- Construct 46± new parking spaces within the Park for visitors: including 2 handicap accessible spaces adjacent to the concession stand and 44 new spaces within a new on-site parking area to the west.

## **2. Upgrade existing facilities.**

- Make modest improvements to the ball fields, replace backstops, replace fencing, and upgrade the walking track.
- Improve walking path connection with the railroad underpass; coordinate park upgrades and construction with improvement of the Ararat Street sidewalk.

## **3. Encourage continued participation of youth sports groups, neighbors and citizens at large, in partnership with City Departments.**

## **4. Include elements that commemorate the history of the Park and surrounding neighborhood.**

## **5. Design for low maintenance.**

## **6. Provide barrier-free access for all users.**

# **Proposed Master Plan**

The proposed master plan for Indian Hill Park seeks to build on and continue the accomplishments of the past, honor those that have made the Park what it is today, and chart a course for modest improvement, revitalization, and expansion of the Park facilities. The plan recognizes that the Park reflects the special history of the surrounding neighborhoods, the former Indian Hill/ North Worcester Public School in particular, and functions as setting for healthy community life for many Worcester residents.

Let's "play ball", as in continuing baseball, T-ball, and flag/touch football; and let's add basketball into the mix of the park's active recreational offerings. And let's improve the walking track, add a playground for youngsters, picnic tables for young and old, and support park access for all patrons, agile and challenged alike.

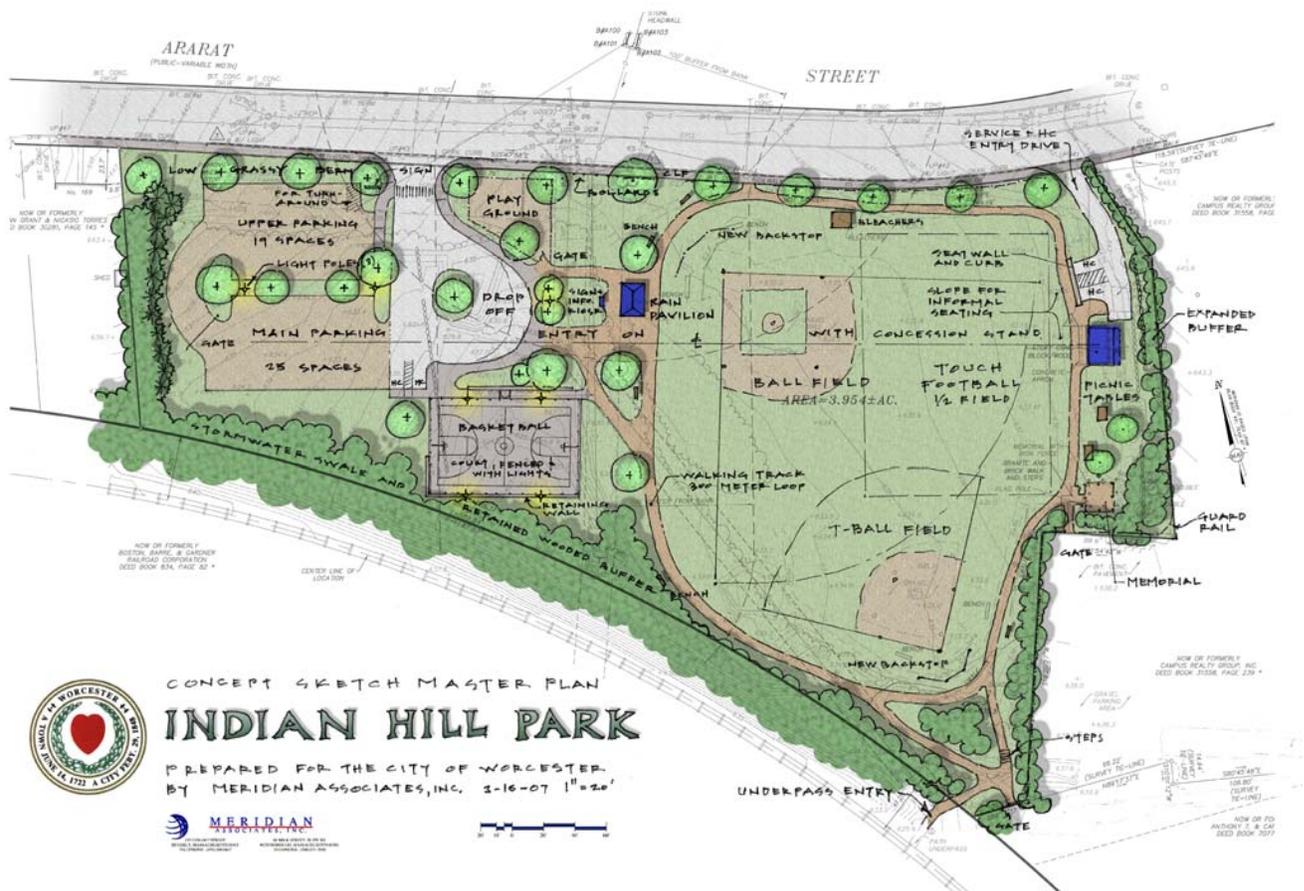
In that the automobile is both a curse and a necessity, expand off-street parking for Park visitors, but put new parking at the western end of the Park, removed from the heart of the park dedicated to pedestrian-safe, passive and active recreational activities, and let's add parking in a manner that still keeps the Park predominantly as a "green space".

Arrival to the Park is important to be conscious of, as an intentionally sequenced component in the proposed plan. The rush of modern living seems to require that parents be able to drop off kids, zoom to the hardware store and be back to the field by the second half. Consequently, the plan includes a central drop-off circle. From the drop-off, the league Mom/Dad/grandparent/neighbor can then go run errands or park the car.

From the central arrival circle, the pedestrian entry to the park proper is flanked by new recreational offerings of playground on the left and basketball court on the right. One encounters park/historical interpretative information and the rain pavilion along the walk to the ball fields. For those not arriving to the Park via automobile, but on foot, a multiplicity of access provisions are recommended, with upgrade of the Ararat Street sidewalk and sidewalk entries, enhanced connections with the school to the east, and improved paths to and from the railroad underpass at the south.

Avoidance of (future) conflicts with existing drainage and sewer line easements, which cross the center of the Park, have been recognized in the plan as key design constraints. Consequently, no permanent park improvements (playground, basketball court, retaining wall, sign, rain pavilion, or shade tree) are located within either of these utility easements. If, for example, the drain line needs to be dug up in the future, then the cost to replace the disturbed landscape is relatively minimal, since the easement areas in the proposed plan are to be largely grass turf or pedestrian paths.

The following graphic represents the Master Plan for redevelopment of Indian Hill Park.



*Indian Hill Park Master Plan Exhibit*





*Phase 2 – East “Half” of the Park*

## Estimated Construction Costs

### PHASE I - THE WEST 'HALF' OF THE PARK

<b>Entry Drive, Drop-off and Entry Paths</b>	184,000
<b>Stormwater Management System</b>	92,000
<b>Main and Upper Parking Lots</b>	318,000
<b>Playground</b>	92,000
<b>Basketball Court</b>	208,000
(Includes retaining wall, finished court, fencing & lighting)	
Phase I subtotal	<b>894,000</b>

### PHASE II – THE EAST 'HALF' OF THE PARK

<b>Baseball, Football and T-Ball Fields Renovation</b>	307,000
(Includes backstops and irrigation)	
<b>Walkway And Walking Track</b>	58,000
<b>Service Drive to Concession Stand</b>	61,000
(Includes seat wall and 2 HC parking spaces)	
<b>Rain Pavilion</b>	77,000
<b>Miscellaneous Improvements</b>	66,000
(Includes kiosk, signage, benches, bleachers and picnic tables)	
<b>5 % inflation</b>	28,000
Phase II subtotal	<b>597,000</b>

**TOTAL CONSTRUCTION ESTIMATE: \$1.49 MILLION**

## **Implementation Phasing**

From a construction perspective, it makes the most sense to build this project from the bottom up. As such, the ‘bottom of the project’ centers on the construction of the stormwater management components, namely the construction of drainage controls next to the proposed basketball court and down-gradient of the propose parking area. The most cost-effective approach may involve using on-site soil cut from the upper parking lot, to use in the filling associated with the construction of the basketball court and the arrival circle. With these factors in mind, the following construction phasing sequence is recommended:

### **Phase I**

- Site preparation for western half of site; install erosion control measures; clear & grub.
- Construct stormwater basin below basketball court & retaining wall for basketball court;
- Cut upper parking lot area; utilize acceptable cut earth materials for fill at basketball court.
- Construct upper and main parking areas, arrival drop off circle, and entry paths.
- Throughout Phase I, continue use of existing recreational fields to east.

### **Phase II**

- Upgrade recreational fields and surrounding facilities in eastern half of the Park.
- Construct rain pavilion, informational/historical signs/kiosk, and playground.

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Master Plan Approved by  
**Worcester Parks and  
Recreation Commission**

**03-22-07**

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Master Plan Approved by  
**Worcester City Council**

**07-17-07**

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