

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Conservation values should be the primary guiding principles when making decisions that affect this property. This land was originally acquired to protect the City of Bayfield from flooding, a goal which is as important today as it was 50 years ago, if not more. Protection of the steep slopes and sensitive soil areas is still critical for flood control. As much as possible, the land should be left in its natural state, and additional acreage acquired to enhance and extend the area protected.
2. Recreational uses should be the primary focus of development. Public input, gathered through a community survey and design workshop, overwhelmingly favors the continuation of recreation on this land over other possible uses.
3. The West Side of the Big Ravine should be reserved for silent (non-vehicular) sports, including nature appreciation, athletic facilities and outdoor education. The existing trails should be connected, if possible, to the Nature Trail at the bottom of the ravine and to the trails on the East Side.
4. The East Side of the Big Ravine should preserve the snowmobile trail and develop a network of trails for hiking, snowshoeing and skiing comparable to those across the ravine, and look for ways to connect those trail networks together.
5. The Regional Context of this land should always be kept in mind. Planning in and around the area should be done in cooperation with the Town and County of Bayfield, trails should be connected with existing larger systems in the area, and public access should be provided from a number of locations.

HISTORY

The 120 acres of land that is the subject of this report is located at the top of the large ravine behind the school, and was purchased by the City of Bayfield in the 1950s to serve as watershed protection against floods like the one which devastated the downtown in 1942. It was annexed to the city in 1992, and remains zoned for forestry. Current uses include a soccer field, boat cradle storage, and hiking trails on the west side of the ravine; the snowmobile trail runs along the east side of the ravine. In 1997 the property was evaluated by the USDA's District Soil Conservationist, Thomas Cogger, who noted that the area is made up of highly fragile soil areas which are subject to erosion, and recommended that it be managed for watershed protection, low impact recreational uses (citing the opportunity to develop a hiking/nature trail system to complement the trails that already exist) and forest products; he also noted that "unplanned housing developments, road building and similar developments that alter a watershed's hydrology could have significant adverse down-stream impacts at Bayfield." In 2000, the 120-Acre Planning Committee was created, and began its study of the area.

120-ACRE PLANNING COMMITTEE

In the fall of 2000, the City Council authorized the Mayor of Bayfield, Larry MacDonald, to form the 120-Acre Planning Committee to study the area, identify possible uses for the property and ways of implementing them. The committee's recommendations would be submitted to the Comprehensive Plan Task Force for incorporation into the City of Bayfield's Comprehensive Plan in the fall of 2001. Members of the committee were Andy Falconer-Brown and Nan Fey (co-chairs), Larry MacDonald (Mayor), Jill Wolf-Rennicke (City Council), Ruth Oppedahl (Bayfield Regional Conservancy), Arnold Marten, and Orvin Clark. The committee met every two weeks from October of 2000 through May of 2001 in the Bayfield Carnegie Library; all meetings were public, and notice was provided according to the Wisconsin Open Meetings statutes. Guests were invited to speak to the committee including representatives of the City's Department of Public Works (Mike Bonney and Tom Kovachevich), Parking Committee (Ted Gephart), and the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (Tom Cogger and Gary Haughn). The committee also relied on public input gathered through the Community Survey conducted in January and the Community Visioning Workshop held in March of 2001. After eight months of study, the 120-Acre Planning Committee submitted this report in May of 2001. It was approved by the City Council on _____.

ADJACENT LANDS

The 120-acre property is made up of three forty-acre parcels, and looks on a map like a quarter-mile section missing its northwest corner. The 120-acre area is surrounded by:

Bayfield School To the south and east of the 120-acres lie the grounds of the Bayfield School. The school is built on the western edge of the large ravine, north of Rice Avenue.

Clark Property Along the power line, which is the southern boundary of the 120-acres, lies over 40 acres of undeveloped land that belongs to James and Orvin Clark. Their parcels extend from what would be Sixth Street on the east to the boundary of the city cemetery on the west, and Washington Avenue on the south. This property is being planned for residential development in the near future which could include a "green belt" connecting with the city's land.

Lands to the West On the western side of Martin Road, along the southwest 40-acre parcel, are orchards owned by James Erickson. The 40-acre parcel to the northwest, which would make up the rest of the quarter-mile section, belongs to Martin Peterson.

Big Ravine The large ravine extends from downtown Bayfield, trending northwest, to Olson Road in the orchards, a distance of approximately 2.5 miles. Its watershed includes an area of over 1000 acres on the top of the peninsula. A nature trail extends one-quarter mile along the streambed starting from Washington Avenue.

Lands to the North The land north of the northeast section of the 120-acres is privately owned and lies to the east of the large ravine. North of the Peterson property is the last steep segment of the ravine which is owned by James Erickson.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Conservation values should be primary.

The 120-acres was originally acquired to provide flood protection for the City of Bayfield, and has been left mostly in its natural state, zoned for forestry. The land is still needed for this purpose, but greater protection can be achieved by more particular zoning, cooperative agreements and other land use tools. Possible bases for additional protection would be its steep slopes and sensitive soils and its role in flood protection, its forests, its wildlife habitat, and appropriate uses. The City of Bayfield should take a stewardship role in safeguarding this land, which could be accomplished with conservancy easements as well as zoning. The city should develop partnerships with the Town of Bayfield for extending protection to lands in the watershed beyond the 120-acres, encompassing the rest of the large ravine. The Peterson property to the northwest was recommended for protection by the 1997 report on sensitive soils, and the city has adopted this goal in both its Outdoor Recreation Plan and Comprehensive Plan. The Bayfield Regional Conservancy, the local land trust, has purchased an option on this property, and has one year in which to make the necessary financial arrangements to purchase the land. Acquiring this parcel and keeping it for public purposes will allow for additional protection of the ravine and its western edge, and the extension of the recreational trail systems which originate on the properties to the south.

Development should be primarily for recreational uses.

The results of the community survey conducted in February, and the design workshop (charette) in March of 2001, overwhelmingly support recreational development of the 120-acres. Responses receiving the most support on the survey included "it should not be developed", "natural area with recreational trails", "outdoor classroom for environmental education", and "public park". Most of the comments received during the planning workshop were things like "trails, trails and more trails", "keep it wild", and "expand the athletic facilities, but not a lot."

There are limitations on construction development on this land. The old landfill on the west side of the large ravine, at the top of the Old Dump Road is covered by a clay cap to seal in its contents, and even the planting of trees in the vicinity must be cleared in advance with the DNR. It will not be possible to sink footings for any substantial construction in this area or drill wells within 1200 feet of the landfill area. The large ravine itself is also unsuitable for construction; both its steep slopes and edges must be preserved. On the East side of the large ravine, in the flatter area near Olson Road, there may be an opportunity for a small number of homes, but no city services extend to the area at the present time.

Recommended Uses on the Western Side of the Ravine.

1. Continue the development of athletic facilities. Both the community and school would benefit from a full-sized soccer field which could host regional competitions. To accomplish this, additional topsoil will be needed, and the location of the field may need to be shifted farther to the west to take advantage of flatter ground. A forestry inventory should be completed before any trees are cleared, and the community should be notified of the project in advance to avoid confusion about the purpose of the clearing. Any re-planting of trees, below the eastern edge of the soccer field, will have to be approved by the DNR. It might also be possible to develop a regulation size running track around the perimeter of the soccer field, but this idea needs more investigation. The Technical Education classes have offered to move a shed which they have built up to the soccer field for storage of equipment. Amenities for fans could be developed including seating, concession, toilets and parking. This parking could be made available for downtown events, with a shuttle bus to take people to and from the cruise boats or Apple Fest, for example. To free additional space in this flat area, the city should explore alternate sites for boat cradle storage.

2. Support school uses of the property. The school intends to utilize the natural areas of the 120-acres for science, physical education and other class activities, thereby adding an outdoor classroom to its facilities. It has also been suggested that a ropes course be developed for team-building within the community, and possibly for use by other groups who would welcome an opportunity for this stress-challenge activity.

3. Develop silent sports trails. There is already a network of trails that has been established by hikers, skiers and snowshoers over the years. This trail system should be mapped and evaluated; there may be trails that should no longer be used, trails which should be relocated, as well as areas where there is a need for trails. Different activities require different types of trails, e.g. ski trails must be somewhat straighter than snowshoe trails, skate-skiing and sled dog trails must be wider, and questions of what uses can be successfully mixed on the trails need to be considered. During this trail evaluation process, trash should be removed from the area, and a plan developed to manage drainage. Bridges and/or boardwalks may be needed. Scenic overlooks should be identified, and a plan developed for their management (e.g. possible selective cutting of trees to preserve views).

4. Post this area as limited to non-vehicular use. It is against City of Bayfield ordinances to operate an ATV or snowmobile on municipal property between April 1st and November 1st. During the winter, these vehicles are allowed only on designated trails, and there are no such trails on the West side of the Big Ravine. The issue of whether or not to permit mountain bikes in this area will need to be determined, weighing issues of access, safety, trail condition and damage. At the present time, there is no ordinance governing the use of mountain bikes on undeveloped city land. It may be appropriate to allow mountain bikes on the dirt roads in this area, but not the trails.

5. Produce maps and signs for the trails. At designated trailheads (e.g. near baseball field, soccer field, reservoir and Olson Road), signs should be posted showing the trail routes and allowed uses. Dogs should be allowed off-leash, under voice control of their owners. Signs should remind dog-owners of these responsibilities, as well as the need to pick up after their dogs on the trail. Trail maps and descriptions could also be provided at the Chamber of Commerce. Signs should be limited on the trails to preserve the nature experience of users.

6. Look for opportunities to create a wider system of trails. Connect trails from the west side to the Ravine Nature Trail and trails on the east side. The Clark property should retain a natural buffer along the powerline on its shared border with the 120-acres, and the existing hiking trails along Sweeny Avenue and north of the reservoir. Extend the Nature Trail as far up the large ravine as possible, with the goal of reaching Olson Road.

7. Explore acquisition of the next ravine parcels. The two 40-acre parcels north of the soccer field have been recommended for conservation by the 1997 soil conservation study and the City of Bayfield's Outdoor Recreation Plan. This committee also recommends that this goal be included in the City of Bayfield's Comprehensive Plan.

8. Expansion of the city cemetery does not appear to be feasible using land in the 120-acres. The city's property along the eastern border of the cemetery is very steep north of the powerline (along the southern extension of Martin Road). South of the powerline, the land belongs to the Clarks.

9. Explore the potential for limited residential development, with a strong preference for affordable housing. It is possible that there is room for a small number of houses along the power line. The presence of the old landfill and sensitive soils may limit building opportunities in this area, so this possibility will need careful study and long-range planning. The committee identified the following important questions that should be answered to the satisfaction of the city's Plan Commission before any development is approved in this area and under what conditions:

- a) Location and number of proposed housing sites.
- b) Other sites identified for affordable housing in the city.
- c) Exact location and extent of the landfill and its clay cap.
- d) Possible health risks of living near the landfill.
- e) Precise limitations placed on activities that can be conducted on the landfill area itself and how far around the landfill other restrictions might apply.
- f) Recommendation of the DNR based on available information and answers to questions (c), (d), and (e) above.

- g) Recommendation of the NRCS based on soil and slope analysis of the area proposed for housing sites.
- h) How city services would be connected to the proposed sites, and the relationship of this to the development of the Clark property.
- i) What the road connections would look like, and whether the lot/block plat system would be preserved.
- j) Whether a water tower would be necessary (to support the development).

Recommended Uses on the Eastern Side of the Ravine.

1. Develop silent sport trails. At the present time, there do not appear to be any well-established footpaths in this section of the 120-acre property. The area should be surveyed, mapped and evaluated for possible routes of hiking, snowshoeing and cross-country skiing trails, as well as for overlooks where benches might be placed.

2. Preserve snowmobile trail. The snowmobile trail along the eastern side of the Big Ravine connects to a county-wide system of trails, and provides access into the City of Bayfield. Owners of property along the trail have granted easements for this use, and this use only, during the winter months. This trail is not part of any official ATV trail system, and the city's ordinances prohibit use of ATVs during the period of April 1 through November 1 every year. Signs should be posted to clarify this situation for users.

3. Develop a route for public access from downtown onto the 120-acres. At the present time, there is no permission for people who are not riding snowmobiles to access this public land from downtown. The snowmobile route is only open during the winter months, and then only to snowmobiles. The possibility of allowing silent sport uses of the snowmobile trail in the summer months might be worth exploring; the trail is currently being used by some local residents for hiking, dog walking and mountain biking, and it is unlikely that these uses cause damage to the snowmobile trail.

4. Locate an access point at the northeast corner from Olson/Lampa Road. There is no marked access to the City of Bayfield's property here. The Town of Bayfield should be consulted about how to provide public access from this corner.

5. Explore the potential for limited residential development, with a strong preference for affordable housing. It is possible that there is room for a small number of houses on the flatter portion of this parcel, well away from the edge of the ravine. There are currently no city services that reach this area, however, and there may be sensitive soils which limit building opportunities, so this possibility will need careful study and

long-range planning. The committee identified the following important questions that should be answered to the satisfaction of the city's Plan Commission before any development is approved in this area and under what conditions:

- a) Location and number of proposed housing sites.
- b) Other sites identified for affordable housing in the City.
- c) Recommendation of the NRCS based on soil and slope analysis of the area proposed for housing sites.
- d) How city services would be connected to the proposed sites.
- e) What the road connections would look like.
- f) Whether a water tower would be necessary (to support the development).

The Big Picture.

1. Think regionally. It is important to think regionally when considering options for this land. The large ravine drains more than 1000 acres of the surrounding land. Development of impervious surfaces on these upland acres within the watershed will change the characteristics of the run-off as well as its amount, and the control of development in these areas lies outside the jurisdiction of the City of Bayfield. Cooperation with the Town and the County is very important, and all efforts should be made to establish a good working relationship and some standards for development in the area, e.g. requiring hydrologic studies of the effects of proposed projects before approval is given. Development upstream could have drastic effects downstream in the City of Bayfield.

2. Network the trails. The trails on the 120-acres should be connected to other trails in the area wherever possible. In the City of Bayfield, the Brownstone Trail is already in place along the old railroad corridor south of downtown. There is talk of developing a similar trail to the north, connecting to the Dalrymple Campground. These trails should be shown on maps with the trails in Ravine Park, along with whatever connections can be made at the upper end of the ravine.

3. Develop a management plan. This report contains recommendations and ideas for many aspects of the 120-acre property, and should serve as a guide for decision-making. A separate management plan should be developed as soon as possible to identify priorities, specify goals, and describe how and when those goals will be met.

4. Provide more public access. Road access to these recreation areas may need to be developed further, both for the convenience of the public and for the use of emergency services should they ever be required. At the present time, the only way to drive into the 120-acre property is on the Old Dump Road, and it is not open during the winter. When the Clark property is being developed, this road will probably be upgraded and may provide a year-round connection to the athletic facilities at the top of the hill. It might also be possible to upgrade Martin Road, which is now dirt and is only plowed as far as the Peterson family residences, and extend it to reach the soccer field from the north. This would provide easier access for those coming from the orchard side of the peninsula, saving them the trip into Bayfield in order to get to the athletic facilities. Perhaps, if these two roads were linked together at the soccer field parking area, the Old Dump Road could become the southern extension of Martin Road. Parking is available at the baseball diamond and a major trail begins at the corner of right field. Access, and a small amount of parking, is available at the City of Bayfield's water reservoir and provides access to existing trails that go north from there. As mentioned above, an access point to the east side could be developed on Olson Road with cooperation from the Town of Bayfield.

Attachments

Committee's Meeting Minutes and Agendas

Update May 2001 – April 2004

Maps - topographic, plat, North West Regional Planning Commission charette and land use maps, GPS trails, fragile soils, watershed, town land use plan, comprehensive plan maps.

Photos (including aerial)

NRCS Soil Report by Thomas Cogger (1997)

DNR Grant for Peterson Property Acquisition by Bayfield Regional Conservancy

City of Bayfield Park Plan (2001)

Community Survey Results

Charette Comments

Letters – Cemetery and Housing

Trail Design/Maintenance Resources