Introduction

The following drawings and slides depict various options that may be considered as part of the Mt. Lebanon Parks Master Plan project, which is designed to preserve and enhance Mt. Lebanon’s municipal parks. Many of these drawings and slides were presented to the public for discussion at a May 7, 2003, meeting at the Recreation Center. The meeting was the second public forum for the project and was a chance for LaQuatra Bonci Associates, the planning firm hired to facilitate the plan, to share their preliminary recommendations as to how the parks might be able to better serve the various needs of the public. This meeting was not a final presentation but rather an opportunity for the public to comment and help shape the plans for each of the parks.

Drawings for all parks were displayed throughout the room on May 7; however, in the interest of time only six parks were formally presented. After the formal presentation, everyone who attended was invited to examine the drawings, ask questions and write comments about what they saw. All of the parks are shown here, not necessarily in the same order they were presented at the meeting.

LaQuatra Bonci is working closely on this project with a steering committee composed of all five Mt. Lebanon Commissioners, some Mt. Lebanon staff members and a representative of the Parks Advisory Board. We look forward to your comments about these drawings, which are suggestions at this point, not final plans. Please let us know what you like or what you don’t like about the suggestions. We want to ensure that when final recommendations are made, everyone has had an opportunity to be heard.
Here are some questions and comments that were made during the meeting, along with LaQuatra Bonci Associates responses:

1. Please consider enhancing the bocce courts in Mt. Lebanon Park. They are not just for older folks but for everyone. They are free and would enhance the park. The suggestions for Mt. Lebanon Park include a second bocce court with new sidewalks and benches. Given its use and current location, it seemed logical to enhance that facility.

2. You talked about the park system, in what ways are you planning to integrate the parks into the whole system, with biking or hiking trails?
Not with bike trails. Given the topography and density of Mt. Lebanon that would be difficult. The parks would be part of the system by having consistent elements (signs, entry features, benches, pavilions…) so they began to look like “Mt. Lebanon Parks”. We have tried to better connect each park to the streets and neighborhoods that surround them.

3. You spoke of the problem in County Club Park where balls roll down the hill. That issue occurs in other parks as well, can an aesthetic fence be part of the plan?
Yes, this issue occurs more often than just County Club Park. Simple things like a black fence will disappear into the landscape.

4. Eliminating the baseball field in Sunset Hills Park (Brafferton) would be a huge mistake. That is the only field big enough for older kids. Loosing it would destroy the baseball program.
Thank you. This is why these drawings are suggestions. We need to know things like that.
5. The proposed amphitheater in Mt. Lebanon Park is very close to the property line. Has consideration been given to sound and the affect on neighbors?
Yes. That is why the alternative plan was developed. The alternative plan rotates the amphitheater into the park hillside, hopefully to dissipate some of the sound.

6. Don’t write-off Bird Park with another nature study. The lower area is P-2 zoning and could become something else.
We did not mean to imply that we were writing-off Bird Park. In fact the opposite approach is our intention. If people value the woodlands and natural qualities, then those are the features that should be preserved and enhanced. To effectively enhance the woodlands, more information is necessary to make appropriate recommendations. This is beyond what we can do in this study. To be accurate, only the area around the soccer field is P-2, the rest of Bird Park is P-1.

7. The drawings that show the utility lines in the parks are informative. Has there been any discussion with Public Works about when some of these lines will be re-built? And I always thought we should buy the vacant Rite-Aid and build a field.
We don’t know about the Rite-Aid, but we have been and will continue discussing with Public Works their plans for sewer and utility work within the projects.

8. Could a pond be created at the lowest end of the stream in Bird Park?
Those are the kinds of things the Natural Areas Study would help determine.
9. I’d love to see a skateboard park (Mt. Lebanon Park), but don’t remove a tennis court and build a parking lot at the Tennis Center. It will only be used by people going to the pool! This comment is regarding the suggestion in Mt. Lebanon Park to possibly remove a tennis court and construct a parking lot and drop-off for the Tennis Center. Another suggestion is to construct a skateboard park behind the current basketball courts in Mt. Lebanon Park.

10. You should make a distinction between dated and unsafe play equipment. The park playgrounds don’t all have to look the same.
There are suggestions that were mentioned about varying the design, layout or color of playgrounds to fit the character of the individual parks.

11. In some of the other passive parks like Robb Hollow and Twin Hills, are you planning to keep them more passive or will activities be moved from the active parks to the natural parks?
Many of the comments we heard about those parks were similar to what we heard for Bird Park, so a Natural Areas study should investigate those parks as well. The current suggestions do not change the passive quality of these parks.

12. Are you leaning toward any one park for an off-leash area for dogs?
Not any one park in particular. We have not been able to come up with a place that we feel confident about yet. That is one of the reasons for this meeting, to discuss the possibilities. We will eventually recommend a place, and also recommend that it is installed temporarily to see how it works.
13. Will maintenance be part of the plan? Maintenance should be done in an environmentally sensitive manner especially around water and children. 
   *Maintenance is always part of our thought process, especially how we can ease the maintenance burden on Public Works. We will continue to talk with them.*

14. Will there be cost estimates developed for these proposals? 
   Yes, *cost estimates are being developed.*

15. Has there been any thought to hours or times of day when dogs can run off-leash in some of the parks?  
   *This is a physical master plan and we are not going to recommend policy changes. That will need to come from Mt. Lebanon.*

16. Are there considerations for bringing water and drinking fountains to some of the neighborhood parks? 
   *We are looking into that possibility, because many people have suggested it. This needs to be carefully thought-out as to where water lines exist and how difficult fountains will be to maintain.*

17. What is the next step in this process?  
   *We are now developing cost estimates for the suggestions. We will also make the drawings available (on the web site) so we can get comments additional comments from residents. In the fall we will come back with more definitive recommendations. This is not the last time you will get a chance to see these materials.*
Master Plan
for
Mt. Lebanon’s Parks
The purpose of this project is to enhance the recreational opportunities and green spaces within Mt. Lebanon’s municipal parks to better serve residents.

To improve the Mt. Lebanon Park System, a design will be created for each of the thirteen parks. The designs shall be consistent with the recommendations of the Comprehensive Recreation, Park and Open Space Plan (CRP), will take into consideration the special opportunities and limitations of each park, and will reflect community consensus and municipal cost/maintenance issues.
What is a Master Plan?

Comprehensive study of all aspects of each park

Strategies for enhancements to each, to better serve residents

Guideline - sets direction for improvements - look into the future

Flexible recommendations to accommodate future needs

Consensus that recommendations are appropriate
Goals of the Master Plan

Create a unified park system with consistent, inter-connected elements

Enhance each park's special qualities

Utilize space efficiently to achieve balance

Accommodate current demands and provide flexibility for future

Protect, preserve and enhance natural resources

Develop short and long-term implementation strategies

Consider maintenance
Types of Suggestions

Recommendations to enhance the Park System
How to make the parks work together better

Individual Park Enhancements
Projects or tasks that renew the special qualities of each park
Types of Parks

Passive Park District (P-1)
Open space, natural study area, plant & wildlife sanctuary, walking trails, picnic facilities, play space

Diversified Park District (P-2)
All of the above, plus indoor/outdoor courts, play fields, golf course, swimming pool, indoor community meeting rooms, picnic facilities, camping facilities.

Conservation District
To preserve municipally owned lands, where appropriate, for green space. No listing of what can/cannot be provided.
Basis for Suggestions

Community Input
1st Public Meeting, Focus Groups, Interviews, Letters/calls/email, tonight…

Steering Committee

LaQuatra Bonci Associates Professional Experience
Other master plans, National Standards, importance of good design…

Special Qualities of Each Park
What is the character? What do people value? How is this park used?
Physical limitations: size of property, topography, trees…

Comprehensive Recreation, Park and Open Space Plan (2001)
Comprehensive Recreation Plan

Most playground equipment needs repaired/replaced (2-33 thru 2-39)

Few parks have accessible walkways (2-33 thru 2-39)

Balance the amount of active vs. passive recreation areas (3-10)

Protect natural resources (3-10), undertake a Natural Areas Study (4-16)

Exercise area for dogs (3-11)

Create additional sports fields / improve drainage on existing fields (3-11 & 4-64)

Create additional recreational opportunities (pavilions, open lawn…3-11 & 4-64)

Develop trails and signage (3-11 & 4-64)
What is a Park System?

Collection of Parks that work together

Share facilities to eliminate duplication

Evenly distribute facilities - Everything does not have to occur in every park

Balance: Active vs. Passive and Green vs. Built
Throughout the system and within each park

Connections, to the greatest extent possible
New connections, public sidewalks, creating loops or circuits within parks, identifying park entries
What we heard about this System

Park System is not very well known to all residents

Park System should provide a variety of uses for all age groups and families

The current Park System lacks:
- Accessible play equipment
- Sports Fields
- Place for dogs

People appreciate the “green” quality of the parks (trees, woodlands, nature)

Walking and jogging are some of the most common activities

Common Complaints: minor maintenance, over-use, lack of trails
Qualities of Current System

Diverse collection of parks
13 study + Pine Cone + PA Boulevard + Clearview Common = 16 totaling 180 acres

Commitment from Commissioners
Comprehensive Recreation Plan, Master Plan, Steering Committee…

Recreation Department – Variety of programs

Department of Public Works – Dedicated and responsive

Parks Advisory Board

Neighborhood Groups
Nature Conservancy, Youth Sports Alliance, Friends of Country Club Park…

Cooperative field maintenance agreement between
School District and Municipality
Suggestions to Improve the System

1. Increase awareness among residents about the Park System
Ways to Improve the System

1. Increase awareness among residents about the Park System
2. Consistently identify the parks
LaQuatra Bonci Associates

Current Signs
Ways to Improve the System

1. Increase awareness among residents about the Park System
2. Consistently identify the parks
3. Develop palette of standard details to be used throughout system
Existing Pavilion

Slightly Modified Pavilion – Create a Mt. Lebanon standard pavilion
Consistent Details ~ Trails
Williamsburg Park

Quiet neighborhood park
Play equipment is dated
Sledding in winter
Courts in good shape
Invisible from street
Great for picnics and parties
Lacks level lawn area
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Williamsburg Park ~ Scheme Two
Brafferton – Sunset Hills Park

Baseball field is in poor shape (slope)
Surrounded by wooded, steep slopes
Parking is an issue during games
Lack of good entry or sign
Few amenities to serve neighborhood
Steep entry path
Nice secluded setting
Sunset Hills Park ~ Issues & Opportunities
Sunset Hills Park ~ Scheme Two
Many of the comments we heard for Bird, Twin Hills, Robb Hollow and Hoodridge Parks were similar and dealt with the great value many people placed on the woodlands, streams, trails and natural features. For this reason, the initial suggestion for these four parks is the undertaking of a **Natural Areas Study**. This was recommended in the Comprehensive Park, Recreation and Open Space Plan, and potential projects from that study (illustrated using examples from Bird Park) are illustrated in the slides that follow.
Bird Park

Steep, Wooded natural place
Used for walking and jogging
Don’t touch it!
“Escape” from dense neighborhoods
Loved to death
Soccer field is heavily used
Issues with erosion & trail use
Used by Schools, Boy Scouts
Educational Mission
Canopy

Understory

Shrub/Herbaceous Layer

Groundplane

Leaf Litter Layer

Soil

Underlying Geology

Breaks or Gaps in the Canopy

Bird Park ~ Woodland Conditions
Suggested Restoration Effort – Woodland Edge (Eco-tone)
Suggested Restoration Effort – Parking Lot

Details and photographs courtesy of Biohabitats, Inc.
Natural Areas Study

Set a framework for the preservation and enhancement of natural systems

In-depth scientific analysis of existing conditions
   Flora and Fauna
   Soils and Geology
   Hydrology

Develop projects to renew natural areas (not just woodlands)

Develop sustainable maintenance practices

State-of-the-art restoration techniques and invasive removal strategies

Establish guidelines for planting (use of natives vs. exotic plants)

Training and Education of Volunteers and Public Works staff
Twin Hills Park

Beautiful and wooded
Unspoiled by development
Steep
Only one public access point
Surrounded by private property
Located in Scott Township
Erosion and invasive species
Great place to get away
Twin Hills Park ~ Issues and Opportunities
Robb Hollow Park

- Steep and wooded
- Public Works facility
- Limited public access
- County road widening project
- Stream valley being filled-in
- Rental property in current use
- Topography limits use

What can be done with it?
Hoodridge Park

Unknown to residents
Steep wooded valley
Public access is limited to walkway
Utility lines throughout site
Land-locked by private property
What can be done with it?
Conservation District is not part of park
Healthy woodlands in select locations
Hoodridge Park ~ Issues and Opportunities
Country Club Park

- Heavily used by neighborhood kids
- Swings and play equipment
- Woodlot is used informally
- Need a place for parents to sit
- Court only has one basketball hoop
- Toys roll down slope
- Sandbox is nice but attracts animals
Country Club Park ~ Scheme One
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Country Club Park ~ Scheme Two
Church Place Park

Heavily used by neighborhood kids
Lawn is as important as equipment
Equipment in deep shade – damp
Difficult to maintain
Steep slopes on both sides
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Church Place Park ~ Cross Section

Prune Lower Limbs of Trees

Parking Lot

Dense Evergreen Groundcover on Slope

Re-grade Slope

New play equipment that takes advantage of grade change and provides activities for a variety of age groups
Mt. Lebanon Park

Place where everything occurs
Everyone uses it & everybody drives
Pavilions need electric/water service
Access to pavilions limits use
Parking difficult during multiple events
Some play equipment in poor shape
Lacking trails and pathways
Entry sign is almost invisible
Provide variety for all residents
Mt. Lebanon Park ~ Diagram
Mt. Lebanon Park ~ Parking and Entry Drive
Mt. Lebanon Park ~ Amphitheaters and Pavilion
Rockwood Park

Nice neighborhood park
Steeply sloping terrain
Who uses the two parking lots?
The basketball court is unsafe
Play equipment is dated
Pavilion is small
Lacks level area for neighborhood use
Highland Terrace Park

Very steep topography
Play equipment and court on opposite sides of the road
Invisible when driving by
Equipment is not kid-friendly
Difficult to maintain
Access through neighbors property
Meadowcroft Park

Lighted courts are heavily used
Deteriorating fences and paving
Lacks handicap accessibility
Baseball field is school property
Parking lot must remain for residents
Trees are nice and hide the courts well
Iroquois Park

Nice neighborhood park
Unknown to those outside neighborhood
Scattered, dated play equipment
Lack of level areas for neighborhood use
Walkway to Galleria
Stream valley is under-utilized
Basketball court is well hidden
Many large mature trees
Dogs in the Parks

Need to set criteria for location(s):
- Needs parking area
- Not compromise a current use

Establish rules for use
Determine maintenance requirements
Installed on a temporary basis
Allow for public comment

Single large location
vs.
Multiple Small locations

Examples: Off-leash Dog Runs in Frick Park
Athletic Fields

Field needs we heard about:
(3) Rectangular Fields
(3) Baseball/Softball Fields

That goal cannot be met within these parks

Alternative Strategies for Additional Field Space

Pursue acquisition of additional property for field complex
Or
Partner with School District to improve School District fields with synthetic surface
Ecology of the Parks

Enhance and create healthy woodlands

Create non-existent habitats such as meadows

Natural Areas Study

Should provide valuable knowledge and thus influence projects throughout the system

Streambank restoration

Woodland edges