

Emerson Park Master Plan

Summary of Public Input through May 12, 2014

A public participation meeting was held at the Emerson Pavilion on Wednesday, April 23, 2014. More than 50 members of the public attended the meeting.

Staff from the Cayuga County Department of Planning and Economic Development as well as Cayuga County Parks and Trails presented a background on the park and the master plan update, and led breakout focus groups to discuss particular issues related to the future of the park.

Following the public participation meeting, the planning department received additional comments by phone, email, and the web. Below is a compilation of all comments received at the April 23 public participation meeting and afterward through May 12, 2014.

Access and Circulation

Visitor Access

- Create a more inviting entrance - something that says “welcome.”
- Create a major “entry statement” structure at the main entrance of the Park.
- Provide an additional entrance on the west side of the Park.
- Provide access for pedestrians and vehicles to the parcel north of White Bridge Rd.
- Open the gates to the existing access on the south side of White Bridge Rd near the boat launch more often.
- Make the park more inviting from the lake and increase access to the park via the lake.
- Create an area where boats can tie up temporarily for free.
- Bring back the access and parking lot on White Bridge Road (south side of road between gas station/traffic circle and the bridge over the Outlet). They provided convenient free access to good fishing spots on the outlet channels.
- Do not place any parking or development along White Bridge Road (south side of road between gas station/traffic circle and the bridge over the Outlet) as this would block views of the lake from the roadway for visitors and residents.
- Widen the access roads into the Park to make turns easier for larger vehicles.
- Organize a scheduled trolley service to and from downtown Auburn.

Additional comments from the Public

- *Current access is generally sufficient. Boat launch provides access from the water. Entrances at east and west sides of park provide car access from these directions.*

- *Access to the west end of the park has gotten easier now that Owasco Paddles can charge directly for parking. Cars no longer have to go around to the main (east) entrance to get a parking pass first.*
- *Large events (e.g. Fourth of July, Tomato Fest) are handled well with shuttles from the High School parking lots.*
- *To people from out of town, the view of the Park from outside makes it look like a prison camp with gates, fences, inmates working, and everything painted green and white.*

Signage and Wayfinding

- Improve the directional signage in the Park. By the time you see the sign telling you where to turn to get to something, you are almost past it.
- Install signage prohibiting parents from dropping off their children for little league at the roadside instead of driving into the park.
- Install maps and kiosks at various locations around the Park to show how big the Park really is and to provide more information about the park's features and amenities and how to get to them.
- Offer paper maps of the Park at the gate.
- Consider creating a mobile application providing information about Park features and amenities.
- Install signs marking the entrances to the canoe and kayak launches. This would increase use of these lesser-known facilities.
- Install signs in downtown Auburn providing directions to the Park. Many visitors in downtown Auburn do not know where Emerson Park is.

Parking

- Provide an additional parking area on the west side of the Park.
- Need more parking spaces near major event centers in the park.
- County residents should not have to pay for parking. Issue season parking passes to Cayuga County residents with their property tax receipts.
- Fee for parking not generally an issue or a deterrent from coming to the park, but more effort should be made to make parking fees included in event ticket prices and little league registration fees.
- Provide Auburn hotel guests with a one-time parking voucher.
- Look for alternative ways to raise revenue other than the parking fee.
- Add valet service at the pavilion and theater for events. There is not enough parking close enough to these two event centers.

Additional comments from the Public

- *The amount of parking is generally adequate.*

Internal Circulation

- Construct an arched walkway bridge starting from either side of the gas station on White Bridge Road over the channel onto Deauville Island; Be careful to design it so that boats can pass under it.
- Construct a pedestrian bridge over White Bridge Road west of the Outlet.
- Construct a pedestrian bridge over the channel where the seawall begins.
- Create a drop-off area (not a parking area) close to the shoreline for people who cannot walk long distances or for picnickers to unload.
- Open the gates on White Bridge Road near the boat launch regularly after events (and especially after large events such as the 4th of July) to prevent backups and delays for visitors attempting to exit.
- Security and parking staff should stay until the end of evening events to direct traffic.
- Widen the exit road toward East Lake Road (State Route 38A). Some of the delays in exiting after events is caused by cars forming only one line. The road is striped and marked for two lanes but the width of road is narrow and cars often do not form two lanes.
- The current Park property should be sold to private developers of park and recreational uses and facilities. Develop a road through the park and further subdivide the property to facilitate such development if necessary.

Destinations

Food and Dining

- Provide more options for food and dining from hot dog stands to casual cafes and bakeries and upscale restaurants; Dining opportunities that are not tied to particular events should be available to the public year round. Some casual options should be located near the lakeshore or on Deauville Island and made accessible by boat.
- Enter into long term lease arrangements with the operators of the kind of food trucks that are growing in popularity in certain areas of the country.
- Lease one or more spaces along the channel for casual dining establishments.
- Provide dinner boat cruises on the lake.

Hotel

- Promote the private development of a large scale hotel and conference center to generate revenue and offset the costs of the park operations. A restaurant and waterpark could also be included.

- Promote the private development of a small scale, inn style hotel of approximately 40 rooms for Pavilion wedding guests. It could contain a restaurant that serves only breakfast so that the Pavilion wouldn't lose lunch and dinner business. The facility should not include conference space since that can be provided by the Pavilion. The hotel should be sited and designed to "fit in" with the overall setting of the park. Refer to the Inn of Geneva and Geneva on the Lake as examples.
- For any hotel project, the County should retain ownership of the property.
- Do not develop a hotel at the Park. Whatever land it takes up would make the most desirable section of the Park available only to hotel guests.
- A hotel should not be located on Deauville Island or anywhere south of White Bridge Road / West of the Inlet as this would block lake views.
- A hotel should be considered on the County park property north of White Bridge Rd. between Lake Ave. and the Inlet. This location will not block views of the lake and allow boating access to the lake via dock slips along the inlet; A hotel at this location would allow the County to subdivide the parcel off from the rest of the Park and sell it directly to the developer.
- An alternative location for a Park hotel would be on the Park lands west of Rte. 38 and south of the Ag Museum (Frisbee Golf Course location); this would also not block views of the lake.

Swimming

- Provide better access to the water for swimming; Dredge a portion of the swimming area to make it deeper and more attractive for use by adults.
- Construct a pool to provide swimming opportunities for adults as well as children.
- Fix the muck problem in the swimming area or switch the location of the swimming area with the boat anchoring area so that it is on the other side of the channel near the island bathrooms.
- Life guards on duty more hours during the peak swimming season.

Entertainment

- Host concerts at the Pavilion.
- Promote and develop facilities for fun activities such as concerts, dances and other types of entertainment; Construct an amphitheater or band shelter.
- Develop a waterpark (also consider a "spray park" similar to one now in Geneva).
- Develop a penny arcade.
- Build a major attraction like a Ferris wheel or roller coaster
- Provide boat rides.

Boardwalk

- Develop a boardwalk accompanied by casual dining establishments, gift shops, and other family-friendly amusements like there once were on Deauville Island.

Restrooms

- Provide bath house/restroom facilities near the swimming area like there once was.
- Provide restroom facilities in the northwest part of the Park, across White Bridge Road.

Veterans' Memorial

- Establish a Vietnam veterans' memorial with a parking area south of White Bridge Rd. The area would contain benches and gardens, and would be used for quiet reflection and relaxation.

Dog Park

- Create a dog park with a fenced, leash-off dog run on the north side of White Bridge Road near the traffic circle.
- The Town of Fleming does not support the creation of a dog park in the Fleming portion of the Park.

Camping

- Establish a camping area including an RV park.

Fishing Tournaments

- Seek participation of local businesses such as Bass Pro Shops in sponsoring fishing tournaments on Owasco Lake; Provide concessions at Emerson Park for the participants.

General Improvements

- Clean up the brush and grade/drain the area north of White Bridge Road that was filled with debris from the redevelopment of Auburn. This is necessary in order for the County to find out what it actually has to work with there.
- Update the shelters on Deauville Island by installing or upgrading electrical service.
- Install tables and benches and a shade shelter close to the swimming area.
- Create an enhanced picnic area near the boat launch to make it convenient for people to spend time at the park even after they are done on the water.

Environmental Improvements

- A foundation goal for all aspects of Emerson Park improvements or new development should be Environmental Stewardship and Public Education, especially regarding strategies to improve and protect water quality and natural resources in general.
- Construct parking lot improvements that catch and filter storm water runoff before it is released back into water bodies such as the Owasco River channel or the lake by using bio-swales, native plant communities, pervious pavement, and bio-filter systems.

- Install stream bank stabilization and natural planting buffers along the numerous streams running through the park and into the lake

Design Standards

- Establish a design and development review process which places a high priority on the aesthetic quality of all improvements and protects views of the Lake.

Walkways and Trails

- Establish a more comprehensive system of paths designed to accommodate pedestrians, bicycles, and rollerblades. This system could incorporate a lakeshore walkway or “promenade.” Site various landscape plantings, sculptures, opportunities for activity (such as volleyball nets), outdoor entertainment areas, seating/eating areas, and other points of interest along the redesigned walkway system.
- Establish nature trails in the area north of White Bridge Road.

Winter Activities

- Encourage year round use by providing for winter activities such as ice skating, ice fishing, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, etc.

Playground

- Update the playground and improve it by providing areas for adults to sit.
- Provide playground areas and equipment designed for seniors as well as handicapped adults and children.

Bird Watching

- Promote bird watching; Construct platforms for nesting ospreys; Prohibit bird hunting.

Additional comments from the Public

- *The park should feel less exclusive. It is currently too exclusive – used mainly for events, plays and little league.*
- *There is nowhere to eat or get food unless you are attending a wedding or are invited to a private party at a pavilion.*
- *Need to increase private investment.*
- *The Park should attract more people in their 20s.*