

Village of Downs - Kickapoo Park Business Plan

Purpose

This business plan is to outline the mission, business objectives, and various phases of development for the Kickapoo Park.

Village of Downs Parks Mission

To maintain community parks and hold recreational activities which enriches the quality of life for residents and visitors alike, and preserves it for future generations.

Village of Downs Parks

The Village of Downs Parks Committee has these parks under its management: Dooley, McManus, and Kickapoo. These parks are in varying maturity in the amenities that are provided to the Village of Downs and its visitors.

- Dooley Park is the main park providing an enclosed pavilion for rent, a Youth Center that is leased as a day care during the day time hours, multiple basketball courts, a sand volleyball court that is available in the warm weather months, a Veteran's Garden corner, swing set and major playground, as well as a gazebo, various picnic areas with benches, tables, and charcoal grills. Major community events that are held in this park include Easter Egg Hunt, Car Show, Community Breakfasts, Fourth of July celebrations, Halloween, and Christmas Lighting and Gingerbread Village. This park was partially donated by Nellie Dooley and the rest of the park was purchased by the Village of Downs in the 1960's.
- McManus Park is located at the corner of Main and Seminary and is a park that has a flag pole, picnic table, and bench, with a small area for gatherings. This park was donated by the Ed McManus family in 1997.
- Kickapoo Park is 32 acres located between Seminary Street and 2000 East Road on the south side of the Kickapoo Creek and north edge of the village of Downs. This property was purchased in 1993. It has not been developed due to the impending government regulations surrounding the development of the Downs Sewer System. As the Downs Sewer System completes, this park has plans to be developed based in part on the construction to lay sewer pipes will result in an established trail path.

Village of Downs Community Input

On August 31, 2010, a town meeting was held to gather ideas to incorporate into this Kickapoo Park Development plan. As a result of that meeting, this business plan has been developed for guiding the development of the Kickapoo Park for the next 10 year time frame of 2011 through 2020, which will be guided through various Community Interest Meetings.

Kickapoo Park Objectives

These objectives will guide the development and maintenance of the Kickapoo Park.

1. Recognize that recreation and green space is the best measure of a park's contribution to society by preserving significant natural areas for wildlife habitat and public use.
2. Continually improve the value of the parks that serve our residents and visitors by promoting health, fitness, and personal safety and well-being.
3. Enhance the village's air and water quality that supports an ecologically sustainable park area through partnership with interested community members and other organizations with common interests.
4. Connect our communities with a trail and green ways in the Kickapoo Park for non-motorized vehicles.

Community Benefits

National research shows that walking trails and green ways provide countless benefits to the community around them. In Central Illinois alone, there are several walking trails that are considered assets to their communities: Constitution Trail, IL Route 66 Trail, Weldon Springs State Park and the trails at Moraine View State Park. All of these trails provide a recreational area for people while maintaining and supporting the natural environment around them.

People who spend time enjoying the trail will appreciate the beauty of the park and want to help preserve and protect it in the future, **which includes endangered species**. Communities that have installed trails in low-use areas have found the higher visibility and use by local residents decreased illegal and troublesome activity.

In addition to providing a recreational area for its citizens, parks and green ways provide an economic benefit to their community. Data supports the fact that property values increase in areas that lie in close proximity to green ways and trails. Nature enthusiasts from the entire area will have the opportunity to come and enjoy the nature trail and patronize our local businesses. Successful trails and green ways also make the community more marketable to businesses and home buyers.

Trails promote physical activity, fitness and health. They provide the opportunity for safe, regular physical activity within walking distance of a majority of the Village. The entire family from children to adults, parents and grandparents can spend time together improving their physical health and enjoying our beautiful scenery around Kickapoo Creek.

Having a natural and well-maintained trail will improve opportunities for:

- "Outdoor" classrooms for learning and community service
- Teaching respect and stewardship of the natural environment
- Quality time for families in a safe and free manner
- Recreational use and educational access to Kickapoo Creek
- Enhanced property values of local properties
- Preserving culturally and historically valuable areas
- Reduce crime and illegal activity through regular use and high visibility of users
- Encourage opportunities to meet and interact with neighbors

Kickapoo Park Management and Restoration Study

A botany and passive recreation study, as well as a bird report, were prepared in 2008 by Illinois State University representatives. The study found high quality bottom land forest with a diverse herbaceous and tree layer, as well as a good habitat for wildlife. This reports suggested to mitigate damage/disturbance caused by the sewer line installation and to maintain diversity of canopy and herbaceous layer, restore the composition of the tree canopy to that of a high quality floodplain forests and/or historic vegetation, as well as maintain and improve the breeding bird populations to contribute to an area of nature study and passive recreation purposes. Copies of these studies are available upon request.

Phased Development of Kickapoo Park

The development of the park will take place over the course of five years and will not begin until the essential sewer system construction and hookup has begun. Each phase represents at least a year to complete the development work.

- Phase 0 – Planning for the park includes several public interest meetings to gather community input on the business plan for the park, park signage is posted at each entrance to designate the Park name and rules, place fences up to limit foot traffic while construction of the sewer system is in progress, and investigate any grants that could be used to fund the project past Phase 1.
- Phase 1 – Establish walking trails through the park using the sewer pipe construction areas and provide an aerial map that shows the park landmarks, trails, and adjacent neighborhoods. These trails will utilize the path that has been developed as a result of laying the sewer system piping and will be covered in wood chips. Initial parking for visitors will be established at each park entrance. There continues to be some concern about the entrance for parking being close to the corner and safety for entering and exiting the park. Sidewalks could be placed leading from the town to the park to reduce the amount of local citizens driving to the park. Conduct quarterly public interest meetings to review plans and progress of Phase 1. Submit grant requests for Phase 2 and beyond park enhancements.

Additional considerations for Phase 1 include:

1. Parking materials will need to be considered so that this does not become an issue of ongoing maintenance. There was discussion about recycling roads that are being resurfaced.
 2. Consideration will need to be given that maintenance and repair of the manholes for the sewer system will require trucks to navigate the trail. If there is any pavement that is installed as a trail for handicaps, the trucks would drive the need for thicker pavement. This item was addressed on 3/3/2011 at the Village Trustee meeting by the sewer contract engineers and it is not an issue as the trucks will not need to drive on the trail, if this is ever paved.
- Phase 2 – Provide information on health, fitness and personal well-being at signs posted at each entrance. This information could include time it would take to complete a hike, how many calories would be burned, how many steps you would complete, along with a “difficulty” rating. Continue to monitor the objectives being met in the park,

including any additional wet lands or erosion and potential solutions for trails in these areas through a volunteer engineer or university contacts. Conduct quarterly public interest meetings to review plans and progress of Phase 2 and any additional amenities. Solicit for sponsor of tree and plant signage to identify species and identify volunteer organizations to provide their expertise for accuracy in this identification. Seek partnerships with school, scouting or other community organizations for implementing any additional amenities.

- Phase 3 - Conduct quarterly public interest meetings to review plans and progress of Phase 3 including any additional amenities (that may include trails for bicycles and frisbee golf areas) and wetlands or erosion changes in the terrain and make plans accordingly through a volunteer engineer or a university contact.
- Phase 4 – Pending results from Phase 3, establish any additional amenities in the park and add these updates to the existing aerial map. Assess long-term stewardship of the trails and determine any potential solutions. Conduct quarterly public interest meetings to review plans and progress of Phase 4.
- Phase 5 – Continue ongoing monitoring and determine any additional wet lands or erosion and potential solutions for trails in these areas through a volunteer engineer or University contact. Conduct quarterly public interest meetings to review plans and progress of Phase 5.

Communications

Based on the initial public interest meeting and research on other communities initiating this type of project, it is recommended to have a regular public interest meeting to share the plans and progress of this overall plan to ensure there is awareness and understanding of the Village plans to improve the Kickapoo Park area. The Village Monthly Newsletter, Downs Park Facebook group site, and the local papers of LeRoy and The Pantagraph will be the primary sources for communications.

Liability Insurance

Based on this property being part of the Village of Downs, there is liability insurance already in place for this park. Any changes to the park will be reviewed to understand if there are additional changes that need to be covered under the Village of Downs insurance policy and its coverages/limits.

Federal, State, and Local Laws and Regulations

All federal, state, county and local laws will apply with this park. This will include amenities that should be provided, such as American Disabilities Act (ADA) provisions. Park rules will be established that do not conflict or add to these laws.

Funding

There has been some initial investigation on Illinois Department of Natural Resources grants, which has a Park and Recreation Facility Construction (PARC) offering that looks very promising to pursue. This additional funding needs to have Phase 0 completed and Phase 1 in progress. It also is dependent on having specific permits in place, as well as financing

coordination through the Village accounts.

For the park to pursue any grants to be written to acquire government funds require this business plan to be approved and the information that is provided does meet the needs of the grant writing. These items need to be secured prior to pursuing those grants:

- Confirm deeds to the land are in the Village of Down's possession.
- Acquire all permits for entering Phase 1 of the development plan.

This phased approach is how the walking Constitution Trail in Bloomington were planned and implemented, as well as funded through the same type of grants that the committee has investigated.

Sub-Committee

It is also recommended to have a sub-committee that reports to the Park Committee drive out the plans with the Park Committee chair providing leadership from the Downs Board. It is suggested to have members from the community join the committee to assist with this plan.

Plan Changes

This plan will be finalized in a Public Interest meeting scheduled for January 25, 2011 and presented at the February 2011 Village Board meeting for approval. Once the plan is approved, any changes to this plan will follow the Open Meetings Act and be stewarded by the Village of Downs Park Committee to conduct additional Public Interest meetings and then approved by the Village Board.

References:

1. Baurer, Jonathan and Mullarkey, Alicia. Management Plan for Downs Forest, a Bottomland Forest in Central Illinios. 2008 Illinois State University. pg. 1-17.
2. Capparella, Angelo. Downs Kickapoo Park Bird Observation. June 30, 2007 and June 10, 2008. pg. 1-3.

Appendix A – Phase Development Details

- **Phase 0 Development** began in August 2010 with the Downs Dooley Park Committee beginning to understand the timeframe and village sewer construction plans. The plan was approved as a final draft on Mar 22, 2011 by the Park Committee and the Village of Downs Trustees on Mar 3, 2011. These approvals completed Phase 0 work.
 - Planning for the park included an August 31, 2010 Public Interest meeting to Village citizen feedback and suggestions for the business plan for the Kickapoo Park.
 - During August 2010, park signs were posted at each entrance to designate the Park name and rules. This included placing fences up to limit foot traffic while construction of the sewer system is in progress.
 - During November 2010, several Park committee members, Angie McLaughlin and Leigh Hayes investigated Federal grants that could be used to fund the project past Phase 1.
 - During November 2010, December 2010, and January 2011, the business plan was published in the Village Newsletter to share the details of this plan with citizens.
 - On January 25, 2011, a second Public Interest meeting was held to present the Kickapoo Park Business Plan and gain any feedback or input.
 - Two government agencies were identified as needing further investigation on possible permits in Mar 2011: Illinois Environmental Protection Agency and Illinois Department of Natural Resources. This will be work completed in Phase 1.
 - On March 3, 2011, the finalized Kickapoo Park Business Plan was presented to the Village of Downs Trustees for their review and input, as well as approval of the plan contingent on the Park Committee voting to approve the final Business plan, which occurred on Mar 22, 2011.
 - The Village of Downs Trustees would like to have an update on each Phase of Development and they will approve each phase based on the Park Committee's approval. This will be a Best Practice that the Downs Park Committee will adopt as the Kickapoo Park Business Plan continues implementation.
 - All plan items identified for Phase 0 is completed as of March 22, 2011 and the Downs Park Committee will focus their planning with Phase 1 Development.

- **Phase 1 Development** will begin in April 2011 as the Downs Park Committee plans the timeframe to complete this work:
 - Contact the government agencies of Illinois Environmental Protection Agency and Illinois Department of Natural Resources.
 - Initial contact was made with IDNR and IEPA, which pre-packaged IDNR permits appear to apply with Item 3 on page 2 and Special Conditions on page 3 of the IDNR, Office of Water Resources Statewide Permit No. 6 – Minor, Non-obstructive Floodway Construction Activities and no signatures are needed with this permit. If anyone has questions, they can contact Rob Giesing at the IDNR office of Water Resources at (217)785-1661.
 - IEPA has provided that the Village Sewer Construction projects are covering the needed permits, as well as the IDNR OWR Statewide Permit No. 6.
 - An additional Federal agency, Corp of Engineers has been identified as needing

to provide input to this topic and several attempts for contact have been made as of April 18, 2011.

- Through the various conversations, McLean County Building and Zoning, Phil Dick Acting Director, was contacted. A county permit is not needed. Phil is interested in receiving regular updates on the progress with the development of this park and when it is open to the public. This information will be used to update the Regional Planning, which this Park is not listed anywhere. Darrell from Phil's office provided a tutorial of the GIS website for McLean County (www.mccjis.org), which is used to show the geographic boundaries of the county (parcels, properties, recreational areas, etc...). The Dooley Park is listed, but not the McManus or Kickapoo Park.
- Establish walking trails through the park using the sewer pipe construction areas through the McLean County Geographic Information Systems maps.
- Provide this aerial map in a brochure form to identify the park landmarks, trails, and adjacent neighborhoods for viewing and using to navigate the walking trails. This aerial map can be made available on our Facebook Group site and other web addresses as appropriate.
- These trails will utilize the path that has been developed as a result of laying the sewer system piping and will be covered in wood chips. A tentative work day is scheduled for Sat, June 11, 2011. A resource for wood chips will need to be identified and funds provided.
- Initial parking for visitors will be established at each park entrance through investigating property that is located near the 2000 East Road entrance based on the McLean County ruling of the Seminary Street entrance is not possible based on the close location of the intersection with Route 150. There continues to be some concern about the entrance for parking being close to the corner and safety for entering and exiting the park.
- Sidewalks could be placed leading from the town to the park to reduce the amount of local citizens driving to the park and need to be investigated through the Motor Fuel Tax meeting.
- Conduct quarterly public interest meetings which could be held in May and then shared with the Village Trustees in the June meeting to review plans and progress of Phase 1. Submit grant requests for Phase 2 and beyond park enhancements.
- Schedule time with the Village Trustees to review the completion of Phase 1 work and review the Phase 2 Plan.