

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Village Green Metropolitan Park District (VGMPD) Master Plan Addendum

October 2025

Introduction

The Village Green Metropolitan Park District (VGMPD) developed a master plan for its 6-acre property most recently in 2022. Several environmental studies have been completed over the past three years that warrant revisions to previous master plan recommendations. A process for updating the master plan was completed in 2025 with particular focus on the natural area that comprises the northwest half of the property- the result being an addendum to the existing master plan. This document is a summary of the recent planning process and the resulting recommendations. It should be read in conjunction with two resources: a new site plan showing proposed uses and improvements and a PowerPoint presentation providing additional content- both character photos and other detailed information.

Purpose

This master plan addendum will be used by the VGMPD for decision making, identifying additional analyses of the site, further planning and design, budgeting for this analysis and design work, and as a resource when applying for grants and requesting funding to implement improvements.

Process

The VGMPD engaged a consultant, landscape architectural firm Fischer Bouma Partnership to work with a small advisory group to develop the master plan addendum. An analysis of the site was conducted, both in person and by reviewing several environmental reports that had been completed in 2023 by Peninsula Environmental Group (PEG) including a Critical Area Management Summary, Tree Risk Assessment, and an Invasive Plant Management Plan. Planning occurred during the middle of 2025 and included an advisory group work session to develop ideas. A plan was developed and presented at a public information meeting held in early October 2025 in which the plan received overwhelming support.

Defining Identity of the Place

Most special places have an identity. The VGMPD Community Center located on site has an identity- it is the heart and soul of the community and aptly named the "Village Green." The village green was historically a place for community gatherings. The larger site, including natural areas, does not currently have a clear identity- it is undefined at this point. Ideas proposed in the plan can give this place a sense of uniqueness that can be a catalyst for future improvements. This master plan proposes that the northwest half of the site be referred to as the "**Village Woods**" to complement the "Village Green." Promoting appropriate use of the natural area, making improvements to it (for people and wildlife), and facilitating ongoing stewardship will reinforce an identity. It is public, natural, open space within a growing and urbanizing community that should be protected, enhanced, and enjoyed.

Site Analysis of Existing Conditions

The Village Woods, the upper northwest half of the site, is generally "natural." It does not function optimally ecologically, but it has not been developed and has the potential to be restored to a healthier condition. The presentation, which includes site analysis boards, and the 2023 PEG reports contain detailed



information about the existing site conditions including Category III wetlands, Type F creek, regulatory buffers for both the wetlands and creek, forest canopy, vegetation, invasive species, topography, trails, access points, and other existing elements such as the community garden.

General Opportunities

General ideas for improvements that would help to reinforce the concept of the Village Woods are to restore the natural environment, promote nature-based experiences, encourage creative outdoor learning, and celebrate local nature-themed art. Specific opportunities will be the focus of this summary and provided for each of the use/improvement zones or elements summarized later in this document.

Specific Constraints

Achieving identity and a well-functioning site for people and the environment also means fixing problems on the site. These currently include:

- *Vegetation Management*- removing invasive species and planting native species. The strategy is based on the 2023 PEG report but has been refined by the volunteer vegetation management coordinator based on the practicality of access. Each improvement zone, as shown on the master plan, will have a different vegetation management strategy based on the goals for that area.
- *Stormwater Issues*- the site receives a significant amount of storm water in the watershed from both the creek and the swale on California Avenue. A stormwater analysis is recommended for the watershed to better understand what properties and conveyance systems contribute water to this site so that coordination and collaboration with properties adjacent and uphill can improve the quality and quantity of water coming on to the site.
- *Visitor Use Impacts*- as is often typical for open spaces within communities, there is the need to manage trash, vandalism, and people living in the park. Some of this can be addressed by design although most of it will need to be addressed through maintenance and management. As improvements are made to the Village Woods, there will be more use and more ownership from the community of the space. These effects often reduce the negative impacts of a less used and visible site. This will also lead to a safer (real or perceived) experience in the Village Woods.

The Master Plan

The master plan identifies zones within the Village Woods, each with proposed improvements and uses. It also identifies specific elements that could be incorporated. Many of the uses and elements are located along the “edge” between the developed lower half of the site (the Village Green) and the undeveloped upper half of the site (The Village Woods). In landscape ecology, the edge between two different landscape types contains the most diversity of plant and animal species. This is a metaphor for this location- the edge in this case has the most variety of proposed activities- it is the threshold that most people will approach and go through before entering the Village Woods. The edge would include the gateway into the forest, trails, public art, a spiral hill viewpoint feature, the community garden, a nature play area, and the existing community center itself. Once past the “edge” the three different interior zones all have an emphasis on habitat preservation and enhancement although the focus of each is slightly different. These include zones for habitat preservation, wetlands & interpretation, and restoration & recreation. The zones and elements proposed are listed below and within the presentation.



The Main Entrance

This is in a central location and would be the main “gateway” into the Village Woods. It is at the north end of the parking lot and next to the community garden. It is a place for people to meet before exploring, recreating, volunteering, or gardening. It could contain elements such as an artistic gateway feature, kiosk, art, and benches.

Paths & Access Points

The trail system was assessed and recommendations provided to improve the user experience. These included trailheads with appropriate signs at key access points onto the site. Connections to trails and sidewalks off site should be made clear for those that walk to and through the site. Loop trails can be created by connecting various dead ends for better connectivity and flow. Other rarely used dead end trails should be decommissioned. The loop trail proposed over the wetland should be a boardwalk to minimize impact over this sensitive area while providing access for all ages and abilities to education and interpretive opportunities.

Habitat Preservation

This is one of the three large zones proposed with a focus on improving habitat. There are two of these separate zones- one to the northeast and one to the southwest. There would be minimal access for people in these areas with a focus on removal of invasive species and replanting them with native species. These areas would function as an ecological “bank” with minimal impact.

Wetland & Interpretation

This is also one of the three large zones proposed with a focus on improving habitat. It is located centrally in the site and contains a large wetland. Most of this zone is within the wetland buffers. This zone provides a great opportunity for education and interpretation and would be accessed by a boardwalk to protect sensitive areas. Interpretive signs, viewpoints, and wildlife/bird blinds would be elements within this area. There is also a high restoration potential to improve habitat in this zone. Partnerships with local outdoor schools should be explored that could benefit from this setting, as well as garden clubs, nurseries, and technical school programs that focus on natural resources.

Restoration & Recreation

This is also one of the three large zones proposed with a focus on improving habitat. This zone is mainly outside of the wetland and creek regulatory buffers. It is an upland area with dense monoculture of conifer trees with very little understory vegetation. There is also restoration potential in this area which will require an assessment of the existing trees and an ecological forestry management plan created to increase forest health. PEG has been contracted for this effort and will begin the assessment this year. This area is appropriate for certain, specific nature-based recreation activities such as the ropes/adventure course. It will be at the discretion of the VGMPD Commissioners as to which activities in this area can benefit the community without having a negative impact on ecological forest management goals.

Art Walk

This is the type of setting that could benefit from displaying local, nature-based art sculptures along the trail. The plan proposes various locations along the loop trail and boardwalk where art could be displayed that highlights both the art piece itself but also the surrounding natural beauty. There could be a single, large



iconic piece of art that is permanent or several temporary pieces that are part of a rotating local competition.

Spiral Hill Viewpoint

There is an opportunity to utilize the existing mound of soil that was piled in the northeast corner of the site during construction of the community center more than a decade ago. A spiral path for accessibility and interest could be added to the top to create a more formal viewpoint destination. The slopes could be planted with a native meadow mix of wildflowers for additional interest and pollinator friendly species.

Nature Play

The nature play area would complement the existing, more traditional playground and be located closer to the Village Woods tree canopy- an appropriate setting. It would be located on the small hill area, taking advantage of the landform for slides and steps. It would contain elements of natural material such as stones, sand, logs, stumps, root wads, and other landforms to create a safe challenge for kids.

Community Garden

The existing garden is well used and well loved. Recent improvements have been made and will be ongoing. The garden should plan for expansion if necessary. It is in a great location to both promote and benefit from pollination by species that are likely to live in the adjacent natural area.

Conclusion

The master plan addendum focuses on the more “natural” open space that has been identified as the Village Woods. The emphasis for most of the area will be on habitat preservation and restoration. Human uses should be integrated into this setting in a way that is appropriate- education, interpretation, nature-based local art, walking trails, and nature-based low impact recreation. Addressing constraints identified (invasive management, stormwater issues, and visitor use impacts) will help to reinforce the identity of this place as an interesting and healthy natural oasis within the growing community of Kingston.