

THE JACOB-KRANTZ PARCEL

A NEW PARK FOR WILLISTON

Since the 1980's, the Town of Williston has taken a highly proactive approach to land conservation, utilizing a comprehensive Open Space Plan and acquisition fund to carry out conservation priorities. As a result, the town has assembled a large and growing portfolio of conserved lands and path easements.

In January 2018 Lloyd Krantz and Peter Jacob donated a 29-acre parcel of open space to the town. In keeping with the Open Space Plan, the town seeks to ensure that the site is effectively managed as a conservation park accessible to the public.

A proposal is being considered that would transfer the parcel to the Winooski Valley Park District (WVPD), a regional nonprofit parks agency that has Williston and six other towns as members.

Should this transfer happen, WVPD would engage in a project to create access to the park, improve trails, signage, bridges and puncheons – all guided by a Management Plan designed to protect the natural values of the site. WVPD and the Town of Williston seek public input on this concept.



RECREATIONAL VALUES

- The parcel is located in an area that is rapidly developing and in need of accessible green space;
- The park offers a diverse landscape with ridgeline, floodplain forest, wetlands, shoreline, and tributary stream;
- The dense forested habitat is part of a riparian corridor featuring a broad variety of wildlife species;
- The public has already been using the site for informal trails and has done some maintenance over time to keep trails open;
- The park is already a 4-season destination for local walkers and birders;
- The park will serve three adjacent neighborhoods and the general public;
- There is the potential of creating a parking lot and formal trailhead to expand public access.

CONSERVATION VALUES

The Jacob-Krantz parcel has been rated as a “top priority” by the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources BioFinder system - meaning that based on a wide range of data, the conservation value of the Jacob parcel is rated at the highest level.

BioFinder is a comprehensive “mapping tool for identifying Vermont's lands and waters that support important ecosystems, natural communities, habitats, and species...highlights networks of forests, streams and other features that together create the heart and backbone of Vermont's landscape.” BioFinder takes a holistic approach to identifying the most crucial lands used by these components as they work together to create a functional system. It is available online: <http://anrmaps.vermont.gov/websites/BioFinder2016/>

PARK DEVELOPMENT SCHEDULE

The Town of Williston is working with the Winooski Valley Park District (WVPD) on a potential transfer of the parcel to WVPD. If this occurs, WVPD would:

- Take over ownership, along with park development and maintenance responsibilities;
- Provide a “reversionary clause” which would allow the town to reassume ownership if there are issues with management and/or if the Town determines that the arrangement is not working;
- take three years and approximately \$50,000 to develop the Jacob-Krantz Parcel into a public park;
- seek grant funding for park development and invest some of its capital reserves.

Should this transfer occur, a generalized schedule follows:

Year 1:

- Conduct comprehensive outreach with Williston Conservation Commission, adjacent neighborhoods, abutting landowners;
- Conduct comprehensive Natural Resource Inventory (complete);
- Contact permitting/regulatory agencies to get preliminary assessment on wetland, shoreline, zoning, cultural resource and any other requirements;
- Contact Trinity Baptist regarding potential access/parking lot on their property;
- Contact Global Foundries regarding potential access/parking lot near solar array;
- Work with Green Mountain Power on ensuring access to utility corridor is established; getting permission for shoreline access along edge of park; sharing use of their Right of Way; and potential for sharing resources during park development and future maintenance;
- Complete first draft park design and submit permitting requests to regulatory agencies;
- Establish first access, make basic trail improvements, post project signage to allow public use and build awareness of the new park and development process.

Year 2:

- Install main park entrance sign(s);
- Finalize project budget, submit application for Trails Funding and/or other sources;
- Begin fabrication of major elements (bridges, puncheons, steps) for initial access;
- Mobilize volunteers for trail projects, invasives removal;
- Initiate negotiation on potential Conservation Easement with town and land trust.

Year 3:

- Utilize Trails grant funding and/or capital funding to complete construction of parking lot(s) if easements are secured;
- Complete remaining structures and trails;
- Recruit Park Attendant from the neighborhood;
- Complete Management Plan for Park;
- If Conservation Easement obtained, record in Town records.

PARK DEVELOPMENT

WVPD would design and build a trail system that will allow for easy public access, accommodate four-season recreation, provide access to the Riverbank, and allow users to complete a loop.



A first step would be to identify and map any potential areas where access should be restricted. WVPD would work with regulators to obtain compliance and clearances for wetlands, rare and endangered species, riparian buffers, cultural resources and other potential issues.

Once a draft park design is completed, WVPD would present the plan to the Williston Conservation Commission and Selectboard for comment before submitting to the Zoning administrator for a permit.



It is anticipated that at least two bridges would be needed to cross the tributary brook - similar to structures shown here that was constructed by WVPD at Wolcott Family Natural area in Colchester.

There are also several locations where puncheons (boardwalks) might be required, as well as stairs, erosion control structures, and culverts. These would be designed to prevent erosion, protect habitat and/or endangered species.



MAPPING AND SIGNAGE

The new park would be included in WVPD's Master Map, and a trail map will be created and placed online for easy download/access. This map would be in PDF format to allow for easy production of paper maps. A signage plan will be devised and installed to provide trail maps for park users and information on park policies and rules.