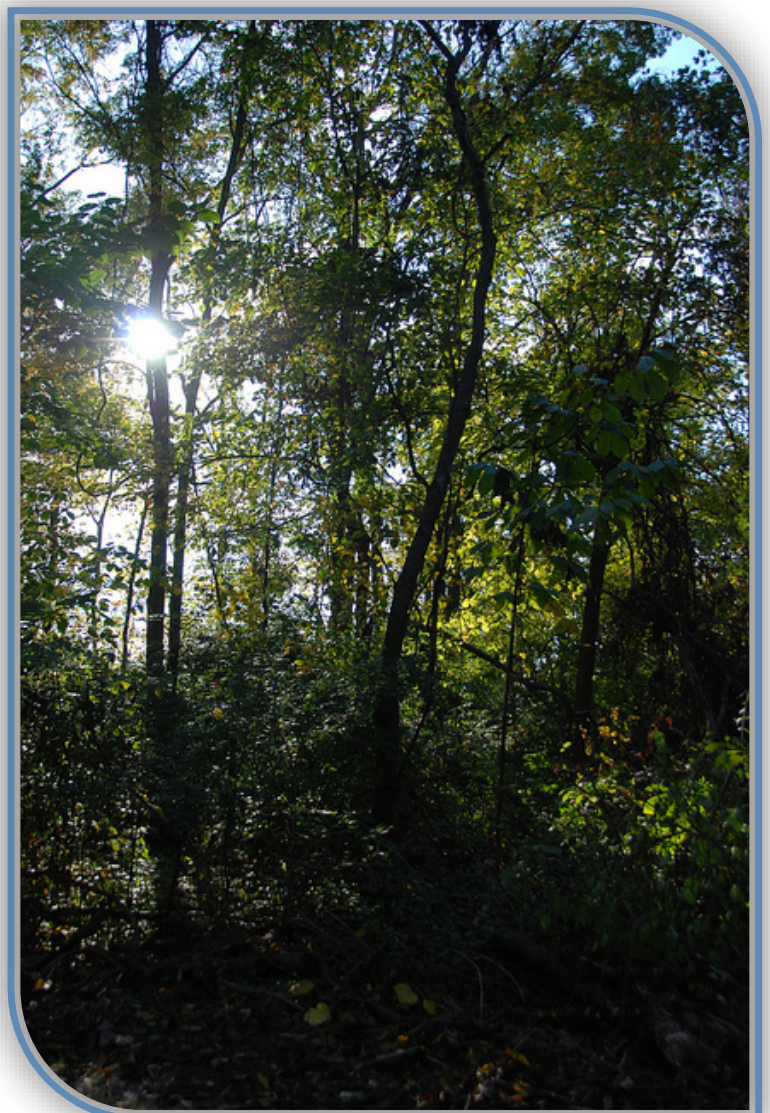




Five Rivers MetroParks

Medlar MetroPark Master Plan

2018



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SECTION 1: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

In 2016, Five Rivers MetroParks (FRMP) completed a [Comprehensive Master Plan](#) (CMP) to guide the agency for the next ten years. The plan included extensive public feedback from intercept and online surveys, focus groups, public meetings, individual interviews with community leaders and a formal statistically valid survey. Studies were conducted to benchmark FRMP to other outstanding park agencies across the country. The resulting plan included several tools to guide FRMP including new park typology, level of service standards, and a detailed implementation plan. A primary recommendation in the CMP implementation plan was to update or develop new master plans for each MetroPark.



In 2016, FRMP began developing site plans for several parks and conservation areas as the first step in developing full, ten-year park master plans for each location. These plans ensure the organization's three pillars, conservation, education and recreation, were foregrounded and interconnected. To support the planning process, a comprehensive set of [Planning Guidelines](#) were developed to help ensure the integration of the three pillars. The park master plans consist of several components that will guide planning and implementation of the parks' functions:

- Conservation, maintenance, programming, interpretation, and business planning
- Capital investment and phasing
- Operational impacts and budgets

1.2 MASTER PLANNING PROCESS

Development of the Medlar MetroPark Master Plan began with the development of the site plan. A Core Team of about 15 FRMP employees whose work is key to the success of the park was formed to provide direct input to the process. A landscape architectural firm, ALTA Planning and Design's Phoenixville, Pennsylvania office with experience in park planning was selected to lead the effort. A full two-day work session with these two groups gathered input from staff, volunteers, and the public and key stakeholders and visited key areas to gain a detailed understanding of the park. Two public meetings were held during the two-day session to gather input and understand the needs of park users.

From this two-day work session, the consultant developed a park program which would drive the evolution of the site plan. After input on the program from the Core Team, the consultant prepared a series of site plan alternatives to explore how the program elements could be incorporated into the park. The core team evaluated the alternatives and provided direction to the consultant toward a preferred site plan. This preferred site plan was reviewed by the core team and the public and revised to reflect their comments, and a cost estimate was developed.



As part of the master planning process and in conjunction with the site plan development, a variety of other plans for Medlar MetroPark were developed or updated: conservation, interpretation, programming, business, philanthropy and land protection plans. These five plans along with the planning guidelines provide comprehensive guidance in the evolution of the parks. Referencing those plans and the CMP, staff identified a list of priority capital projects for the next ten-year period. Staff then developed the

operational costs and revenue estimates for those priority projects to reflect the comprehensive resources required to implement the plans' recommendations. This information will be incorporated into the agency's Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) along with capital projects for other parks to chart a course of continual evolution of the parks towards meeting the community's needs and desires.

This ten-year park master plan will be reviewed and updated in five years. After ten years, FRMP will determine whether a new park master plan is needed or a second update to this plan will be adequate to provide direction for the park's future.

1.3 MAJOR RECOMMENDATIONS

Several components of the [site plan](#) (See Appendix 4.7 for the complete site plan) include projects that respond to some of the highest priorities in the CMP, including taking care of existing assets, providing basic amenities, and increasing trail and nature play opportunities :

- Based on public and staff input, the new park name will become Medlar MetroPark.
- Establish two connected park sections including East and West Parks with the East Park being the primary use area and primary front door of the park.
- Improve day use areas at both east and west park entries which include basic amenities for park users.
- Develop a comprehensive network of stacked loop trails throughout the park to complement the existing paved trail in order to provide a variety of trail experiences to park users.

Major Recommendations:

The site plan includes several components of the long-term vision for the park. FRMP should constantly work towards exploring opportunities to evolve toward these concepts as part of the capital projects that are implemented.

- Renovate and activate the Rice House and the area around it to provide meeting space and trail user support services such as restrooms.
- Create major use areas including shelters, restrooms, parking and nature play at both the east and west ends of the park.
- Stabilize and enhance the existing canal aqueduct and develop a unique nature play area.
- Utilize the hillside at the west end of the park to develop an active play and fitness area with ground slides and boulder steps and climbing areas.
- Enhance the paved trail to include fitness and mountain bike skills nodes along the trail.
- Renovate the existing barn located on the west end of the park property to provide a rentable facility.

- Create outdoor classroom opportunities and nature play at the east end of the park to connect to Medlar View Elementary.

Other Notable Projects

The plan also makes recommendations to explore additional improvements for the park including:

- Work with local jurisdictions to enhance pedestrian crossings at Miamisburg-Springboro Pike, Medlar Road and Cincinnati Pike.
- Develop primitive through camping at the west end of the park.
- Install public art throughout the park.



SECTION 2: THE PLAN

2.1 PARK POSITION DESCRIPTIONS

Medlar MetroPark (currently known as the Medlar Conservation Area) is a planned park addition to the FRMP system that currently offers a paved trail, the Great-Little Trail (also known as Medlar Bikeway) that connects to the Great Miami Bikeway, with a parking lot and trail head. Medlar's 389 acres was assembled in an effort to protect open space and provide future parkland in an anticipated growth area of southern Montgomery County ahead of the construction on the Austin Road interchange at Interstate 75. The land was protected through several purchases of agricultural land and wooded hillside starting on the Miamisburg Plateau descending to Dayton Cincinnati Pike along the Great Miami River. The site is bisected by Medlar Road. The eastern, upper half of the property is relatively flat and is anchored by the former residential home known as the Rice house at the corner of Miamisburg-Springboro Road and Medlar Road, across from Medlar Elementary School, and includes wetlands that were constructed as a mitigation project. The western portion of the property offers a rich, wooded hillside before flattening out into floodplain and includes a fishing pond, barn, and the remnant of an aqueduct on the Miami and Eric Canal.



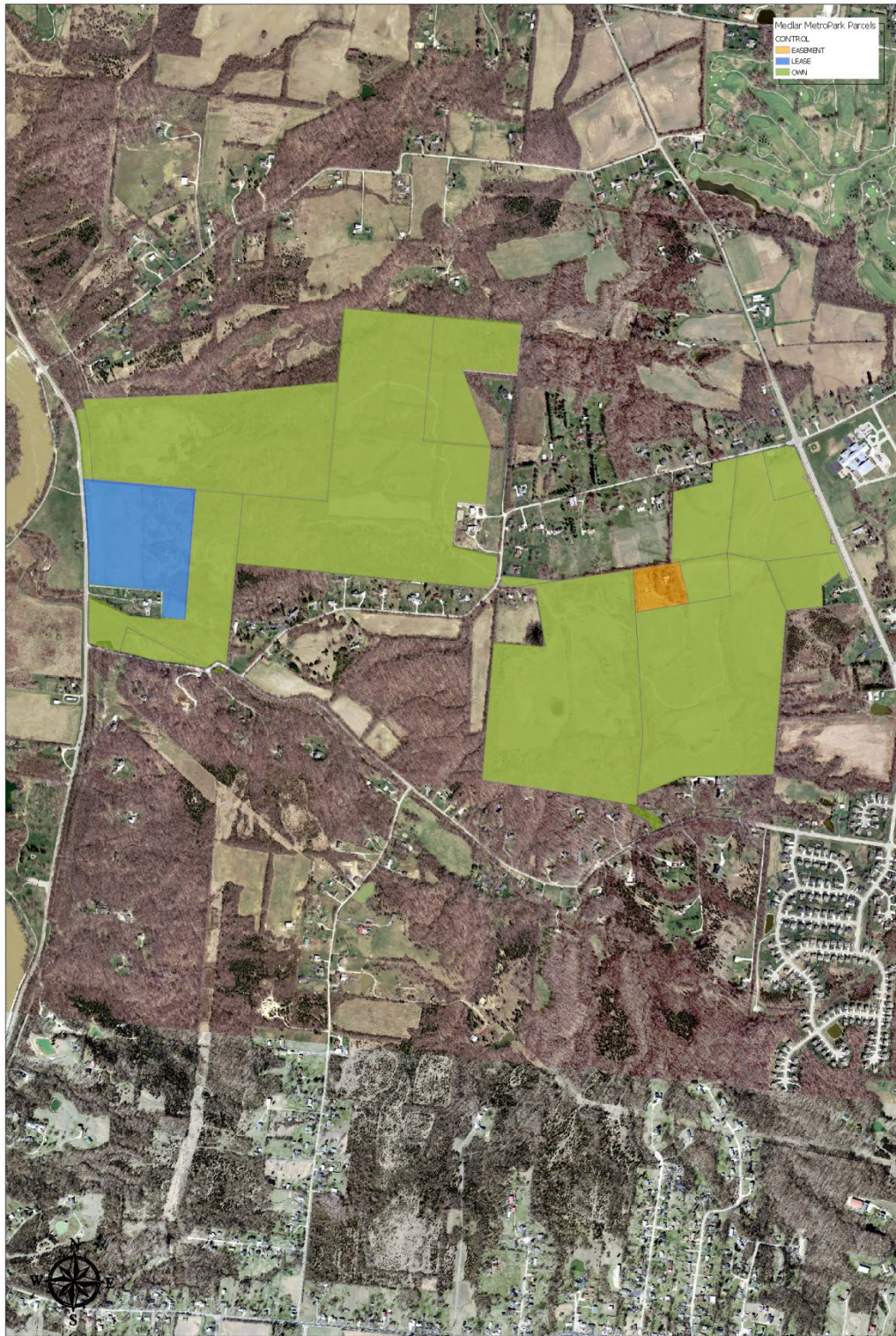
Though the area immediately around the site remains largely undeveloped, land to the east has experienced significant commercial and office growth since the construction of the interchange. Zoning for Miami Township reflects continued expansion of development, including potential residential development in the area east of the site. Current large populations in the surrounding area exist largely to the north in Miamisburg, to the west in Miami Township, as well as in Franklin and Springboro to the south in Warren County. Though zoning immediately around the site remains agricultural, Medlar area has the potential to be surrounded by a dense housing and development. In contrast, west of the site is buffered by Miami Township owned, Crains Run Park located adjacent to the Great Miami River.

Medlar MetroPark, when developed, will be classified as a nature park based on the typology system established in the FRMP 2016 Comprehensive Master Plan (CMP). The classification reflects the future blend of ecosystem services and the natural setting with human services. The park will offer fewer amenities and have less human activity per acre than the more concentrated community parks. Public and staff input that guided the development of the site plan emphasized taking advantage of the great educational opportunities provided by combination of diverse habitats and the elementary school across the road, the existing paved trail in the park and the additional natural surface trails that could diverge from there, and day use opportunities such as picnicking, hiking, and wildlife observation for the anticipated dense population surrounding the park. Considering more destination level activities, staff and the consultants focused on the existing barn as a potential event venue and to opportunity to develop an extensive nature play site using the natural terrain at the west end of the site.

FRMP's core interpretive storylines relevant to Medlar MetroPark are that active conservation efforts protect land for future generations and that each park within the FRMP system tells a story from the past. Specific to the Medlar site is the theme that the land is always changing from prehistory dwellers to a transportation hub to farmland, and now, through active conservation, the site is returning to wetlands, open meadows, forests, and prairies to immerse us in nature in our developing world.



Medlar MetroPark will offer significant natural open spaces in the midst of what is predicted to be an area densely populated with office, commercial, and residential properties, thus offering a nearby respite and connection to nature for significant numbers of people through picnicking, hiking, cycling, and wildlife exploration. The density of that constituency suggests that such destination amenities such as an event venue, nature play area, and education facility, buoyed by the adjacent elementary school. Medlar's identity in the FRMP system will emerge as a park that provides nearby nature to a heavily developed area of the county with a variety of amenities to suit many interests.



Medlar MetroPark

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2.2 PARK HISTORY

Medlar MetroPark, also in the past referred to as the Crains Run area draws its historical significance from the Great Miami River. From as far back as 1000 B.C., this area of Montgomery County shows evidence of man's activity directly or indirectly related to the river. Just north of the future MetroPark site is an Adena culture burial mound (largest in Ohio) from between 1000 B.C. and 700 A.D. These groups founded small villages in the area in order to raise simple crops and hunt game that flourished along the river. Later, Native Americans utilized the river for transportation and fishing, hunted game and established lookouts and fortifications on the high grounds adjoining the river valley. More recently (1700's) the Miami tribes inhabited the area hunting, fishing and clearing wooded areas to raise corn and beans. Even today, on the high ground of Shephard Road, there are visible remains of a Miami fortification, a reminder of the conflict between Native Americans and the early settlers throughout Ohio.

By 1800, some of the Native Americans had moved west into Indiana and the area of what is now Miami Township began to be settled. Stockades however, continued to be built for protection against Native American attacks. "Hole's Station", what is now Miamisburg, was one such stockade. It became a terminus for trails and paths winding through the dense forests of the area, and a center for river travel and shipping. By 1818, flat boats were carrying cargo to the Mississippi and on to New Orleans. Later, steamboats provided transportation on the river.

As early as 1795, a road had been laid out along the east bank of the river between Fort Hamilton and the mouth of Mad River. For many years, common road wagons carried merchandise to and from Cincinnati. By 1829, the Miami and Erie Canal was opened between Dayton and Cincinnati carrying passengers and freight and relieving the burden on the mud roads. Remains of locks and aque-duct structures can still be observed along the dry canal bed, including an aqueduct structure located on the northwest corner of Medlar MetroPark.



In 1840, the old road along the river was reconstructed as the Great Miami Turnpike running stages and omnibus lines from Dayton to Cincinnati. Then in 1872, running parallel to the Pike, the Cleveland, Columbus, Cincinnati and St. Louis Railroad was opened. Sometime later, a traction line operating from Cincinnati to Dayton was added along the east side of the river paralleling the canal, Pike and Railroad.

With the success and speed of the rail systems, the canal and the turnpike were soon considered obsolete. Even though the last boat was not removed until 1910, the canal had by then been defunct for many years.

The tremendous flooding of the Miami River in 1913 washed out the railroad and when it was rebuilt it was relocated on the west side of the river.

Today Dayton-Cincinnati Pike follows the route of the Great Turnpike as the only reminder of the transportation network that gave impetus to the development of the area surrounding the Medlar property.

In 1975, Five Rivers MetroParks, then known as the Montgomery County Park District, acquired a little over 73 acres from Marvin and Rose Davis. Additional acquisitions were made over the years including a new conservation easement which was donated in 1995, by the Rice Family. This donation was a direct result of conversations with Jean Woodhull who had recently donated a conservation easement on her family farm in Preble County. The 104 acres known as Melochris Meadows, immediately adjacent to the Davis property, would be permanently protected from the high pressure of developers in the area. The Rice Family, including Gwen and her son Chris and daughter in law Jackie also agreed that upon the passing of Gwen, the land would be transferred to FRMP. The property was transferred to FRMP in 2009, including the circa 1860 farmhouse.

Long range studies of the area were completed in the 1970s and in 1995 and included nearly 2,000 acres. The study narrowed the area to be protected to an area that is similar to what is today the current boundary of Medlar MetroPark and the area owned by Miamisburg and 34 acres of Crains Run Park owned by Miami Township on the west side of Dayton Cincinnati Pike and adjacent to the Great Miami River.



In 2013, construction began on a paved bike trail through the park as a part of a Deed of Easement between FRMP and Montgomery County Transportation Improvement District. This would become the first leg of what would be called Medlar Bikeway and also known as the Great Little Trail which will eventually connect the Great Miami and Little Miami River regional trails. Wetland mitigation areas were also established on the property during this same time period. In 2015, an additional section of trail was completed from Medlar MetroPark to the Byers Road Trail and to a new bike hub in the Austin Landing Development. Currently, this section of trail is 7 miles long and terminates in Robert F. Mays Park in Washington Township.

2.3 SITE PLANNING PROCESS

FRMP has established a [site planning process](#), and that process was used to develop this site plan for Medlar MetroPark (the “park”). FRMP retained the services of Alta Planning and Design of Phoenixville, PA to develop the site plan. The firm began the process as of KMS Design and was acquired by Alta Planning and Design midway through the project. A core team of key, cross-agency staff was established to guide the plan throughout the process. The core team participated with the consultant in a two-day kick off process to provide orientation and input and continued to be closely engaged throughout the development of the plan, providing feedback at each key decision point and engaging individually as various issues and opportunities arose that pertained to their work responsibilities. Core team members also gathered feedback from other staff, and additional staff members directly associated with the park had an opportunity to provide their ideas, insight and issues.

The public had several opportunities to provide input into the development of the site plan. Two public open houses were conducted during the two-day kickoff session where attendees were able to talk to staff and the consultant team. Intercept surveys were provided to meeting attendees and were online for those who were not able to attend. An additional public meeting was held to present the pre-final concept plan and gather feedback. Stakeholders and attendees from the first open house were sent direct invitations to attend or to comment about the plans online.



FRMP also engaged key stakeholders in the project to collect input and feedback. Stakeholders included the neighboring jurisdictions of Miamisburg and Miami Township and the Miamisburg School District. These meetings provided insight to the context around the park, identified opportunities and issues, and explored future partnerships.

Data and Analysis Summary

Two previous master plan studies for the Medlar MetroPark area, then referred to as Crains Run Reserve, were completed, the first was by James H Bassett of Lima, Ohio which was completed in the 1970's (no date on the plan), and a more recent study completed in November 1995 by Design Enterprise Limited of Dayton, Ohio. Key recommendations of the later plan included the following:

- Acquire land both east and west of the currently owned 73 acres (Completed and Ongoing)
- Interpret the historic canal features (Not Completed)
- Create day use picnic and access at the east and west ends of the park off of Medlar Road and Dayton Cincinnati Pike (Not Completed)
- Develop a trail system throughout the park including connecting to the bikeway along the Great Miami River. (Paved Trail Completed)

2017 Park Master Plan Input Summary

During the two-day kick off process, several key high-level issues and ideas were raised that were considered throughout the planning process:



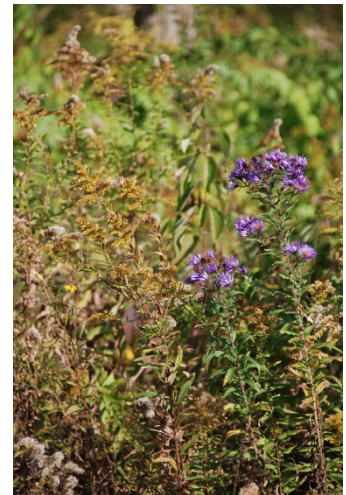
- Develop a more extensive trail system in the park, including natural surface trails
- Consider equestrian trails in the park
- Consider mountain biking in the park
- Utilize the Rice House and old barn for re-use and programming
- Maintain the quiet and serene atmosphere of the park
- Consider traffic conflict and growing use on the existing bike trail
- Need restroom facilities

Site Plan Program

The site plan program was developed from all the input gathered from the public, stakeholders and staff along with the physical data and analysis. The program provides a guiding framework and a set of overarching goals which should be met in the final site plan and ultimately the park master plan. The following highlights provide an overview of the park program that guided the development of the site plan.

Program Elements are grouped by use type:

- Hiking
 - Nature and hiking trails are the highest Park and Recreation Facilities priority for FRMP park users based on data collected from the CMP survey results. Trails also ranked first in all five major age segments listed in the CMP. The diverse topographic experiences at Medlar MetroPark offer varying levels of difficulty for hikers of all skill levels. Trails could be classified by skill level, ADA accessibility, signage, surface or otherwise.
- Birding
 - The planned edge/thicket ecologies on the site (34 acres planned, according to the current [Natural Areas Management Guide](#)), offer exceptional habitat for birds and mammals. According to submitted observations, 50 bird species have been encountered at the Medlar property. The recording of this data not only depicts the variety of species but proves that the site is actively used by birders. The grassland located on the western end of the site, between the Great Miami River and Dayton Cincinnati Pike, is an exceptional habitat for rare bird species. The introduction of bird-themed trails equipped with bird blinds, and a safe pedestrian crossing to the grasslands by the river could enhance the experiences of bird watchers.
 - The 2016 CMP statistically valid community survey results related to “Most Important Park and Recreation Facilities”, ranked wildlife/wetlands/observation areas 9th as compared to other facilities (CMP pg. 37).



- Fishing

- Whether in the pond, or in the Great Miami River, the Medlar MetroPark property can provide multiple fishing recreation areas. ADA access to both of these fishing areas will be explored through design. Educational spaces could offer the possibility for fishing courses offered to residents.
- Fishing areas ranked 7th as most important as compared to other facilities (CMP pg. 37) from the 2016 survey results.



- Picnicking

- Picnicking, whether in a quiet, shady spot off of a trail, or in a shelter away from the elements, providing visitors a place to eat. Introduction of food options at the park could promote picnicking. Retail and tech businesses in the nearby I-75 corridor are only a five- minute drive from Medlar and added picnic areas may draw professionals to take their lunch break in nature. Shelters serve as a valuable amenity and draw park users for family barbeques and birthday parties. Nearby grills, play structures, horseshoe pits, flexible lawn space and restrooms create a desirable environment for picnics.
- Survey results from the CMP rank picnic areas and shelters 4th overall as a most important park and recreation facility. The survey respondents for this project ranked picnic shelters as the 2nd most important feature to add immediately behind additional trails.



- Cycling

- Cyclists of all skill-levels can ride from Miamisburg, Miami Township, Dayton or Cincinnati on the area's paved trails. Medlar is a crucial link in the regional trail network and is an easy ride from Miamisburg, Austin Landing, and the developing residential neighborhoods in the area. Located 15 miles from Dayton, and 42 miles from Cincinnati, Medlar is an important part of the connection of the Great Miami and Little Miami Rivers, and the site is becoming an important destination for cyclists. Facilities should be designed to meet the needs of both touring and recreational cyclists.



- Separate mountain biking trails will be explored, but due to the habitat restrictions and overall size of the park, only skill features along the main paved trail are included in the site plan.
- Paved biking trails are the 2nd ranked FRMP amenity (pg. 37 CMP) based upon survey results from the 2016 CMP.

- Camping

- The site could accommodate both front and back country camping, but the real opportunity is to create a unique thru-camping experience. Whether hikers, paddlers, or cyclists, the western end of the site closest to the Great Miami River could best accommodate this. Although there are many other opportunities to camp within the FRMP system, the site's location could prove to be a sought after thru-camping destination. A 1 hour 15-minute ride from Dayton, this site is at an optimal location for a weekend cycling trip. The closest campground along the Great Miami River Trail is 20 miles to the south.

- Tent Camping Areas were ranked 18th out of 25 FRMP most important facilities (pg. 37 CMP).



- Boating

- While there are no paddling opportunities within Medlar MetroPark, the site should be connected directly to the river just across Cincinnati Dayton Pike. Improvement of the portage located at RM (River Mile) 63.5 could enhance the Great Miami River Trail experience, and Medlar MetroPark would act as a natural destination/rest point for paddlers. As a result of Dayton Power & Light vacating its coal plant across the river, the low dam could be modified for safe passage. The existing boat ramp at neighboring Crain's Run Park is already an easy access for users of the river and Medlar. The lands owned by Miami Township would help to build the connection of Medlar MetroPark to the Great Miami River, as well as the 16.58-acre parcel owned by the City of Miamisburg that contains the final leg of the Great-Little Trail where it connects to the Great Miami River Trail.
- Water trails are ranked 15th out of 25 park and recreation facilities as most important in the CMP survey (pg. 37) and are an important feature for Nature MetroParks.

- Fitness Programs
 - The eastern end of the property offers outstanding opportunity for instructor led group fitness activities that put low levels of stress on site ecology (yoga, Tai Chi...). The possibility for designed, flexible lawn spaces for these activities can offer unique experiences for sunrise/set fitness. In the event of inclement weather, a shelter or indoor classroom space could be used if available. With the introduction of soft surface trails, individual users will have the opportunity for trail running on the site's exceptional topography. Simple, unobtrusive fitness stations could be created along the Great-Little Trail (Medlar Bikeway) in mowed areas near the parking area, and street crossings where they would have minimal impact on site ecology and design.
 - In the CMP survey results (pg. 40) fitness programs and events ranked 3rd overall as "Most Important Parks and Recreation Programs".
- Geocaching
 - With the addition of hiking trails at Medlar MetroPark, this site will be an excellent fit for the FRMP geocaching system. The addition of this low impact, minimal cost activity will be able to introduce users to the park and be a great resource to display the various site ecologies, and interpretive elements.
- Winter Sports
 - Installation of trails at the eastern end of the park site will provide snowshoeing and cross-country skiing experiences. If weather conditions are right, the pond could offer ice fishing and skating opportunities. The hill at the western end of the site also offers opportunity for sledding.



- Nature Play
 - The close proximity to Medlar View Elementary School and nearby housing subdivisions makes the park site an optimal location for a nature play area. A required element in the Nature Park Typology, the possible addition of an Education Center, makes Medlar MetroPark an outstanding site for new nature play locations. Due to the distance from dense populations, the play area should be well designed in order to draw children and parents back regularly. Nature play areas should provide a gateway into the rest of the park for free range play. Rotating seasonal elements should be considered to offer new experiences to the play space. These spaces should be in close proximity to water, restroom parking and shelter amenities.
 - The CMP survey results for “Most Important Parks and Recreation Facilities,” (pg. 37) ranked playgrounds as 5th overall. In other surveys of citizens, play areas for children also ranked in the top 5 most important park and recreation features.

- Conservation Education
 - Medlar MetroPark is an excellent environment to foster stewardship and create lifetime conservationists and park users. The park with its ecological sensitivity and diversity offers prime learning environments for FRMP's Conservation Kids program. These unique environments can serve as outdoor learning experience where users of all ages can study ecological sciences in structured classes or through independent study. Medlar will serve as a great venue for park users to learn, practice, and live the FRMP ecological values.

- Nature and Outdoor Education
 - Medlar MetroPark offers an opportunity for nature education for all ages, and skill levels. There is an opportunity for education about outdoor skills (orienteering, first aid) and nature (edible, poisonous plant identification, bird identification). Connections could be made with the nearby elementary schools, to use Medlar as an outdoor classroom for science classes, or ecology-based afterschool programs.
 - Nature education programs are ranked 6th overall in the "Most Important Park and Recreation Programs" rankings identified in the CMP survey (pg. 40).

- Cultural Resources
 - The aqueduct and canal ruins offer an excellent opportunity to tell the story of Transportation along the Great Miami, and history of agriculture and industry in the Miami Valley. Historians could offer classes and workshops in the historic Rice house or the barn on the western end of the site.
 - Living History programs are listed as 8th in the "Most Important Park and Recreation Programs" rankings identified in the CMP survey (pg. 40).



- Art and Photography
 - The views and varying habitats at Medlar MetroPark create an outstanding backdrop for photography and nature-based artwork. Courses could be offered year-round for many styles of art and photography for all skill levels. Users could take classes on wildlife photography, or landscape watercolor. Medlar could also act as a canvas for permanent or temporary art installations. An interpretive sculpture trail winding throughout the wildflower prairie could create spectacular year-round interest.
- Events
 - Introduction of reservable shelters, a renovation of the existing barn and house each offer opportunities for events of varying sizes (up to 150 people). There is a possibility for theater and music performances, weddings and other small receptions. The park could possibly serve as a starting/finish line for 5/10k race events, that would have low impact on the site's ecology/facilities.
 - Festivals/large community special events are ranked 1st and music and performances are ranked 2nd as the "Most Important Park and Recreation Programs" in the CMP survey results (pg. 40).



Two program types received during the input and planning process were explored and were determined to not be compatible with the proposed site plan.

- Equestrian
 - Inclusion of equestrian trails at Medlar MetroPark has been requested by local equestrians during public input meetings and surveys. While FRMP understands the value of providing equestrian facilities, it also desires to provide high quality experiences to all visitors. Due to sensitive natural features, mitigation areas and active reforestation areas, developing an equestrian trail system at Medlar is not feasible. In addition, due to the size of the park, it is not possible to develop trails that meet equestrian trail standards or offer an appropriate length for equestrian users to justify trailering horses to the site. There are four MetroParks within a 15-30 minute drive of Medlar MetroPark that offer Bridle trails.

- Mountain Biking
 - Separate mountain biking trails were explored, but due to the habitat restrictions and overall size of the park, only skill features along the main paved trail are recommended for consideration at this MetroPark. The extensive wetland and mitigation areas in the east end of the park also contributed to this decision.



2.4 CONSERVATION PLAN

Based on the [Natural Areas Management Guide](#), a series of park-specific goals have been developed as a part of the site planning process. These goals should be used as a guide during the implementation of the plan to minimize impacts to sensitive habitats and the wildlife that depend on these special places. The activation of spaces within natural areas that have not before been promoted for public use will require thorough assessment and a thoughtful approach to minimize impacts.

This site is home to FRMP's largest reforestation effort in the district. Approximately 30,000 trees and shrubs have been planted there in recent years. Medlar contains mature upland forests, young forests, edge/thicket, prairies, meadows, wetlands, and historic remnants of the Miami-Erie Canals, and a scenic hilltop vista. Black bear, bald eagle, and occasionally bobcat have been observed at Medlar.

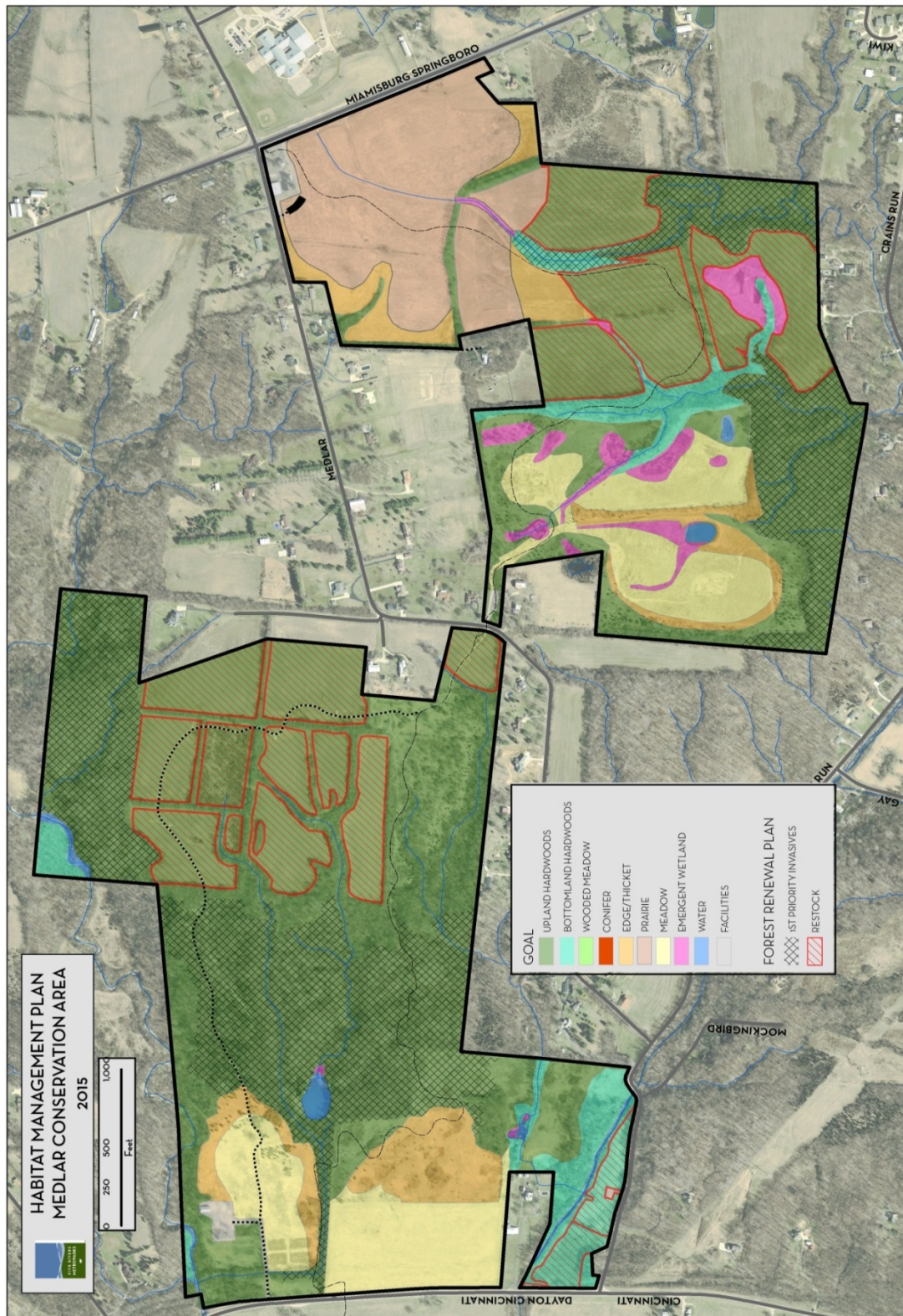
There is a large planted prairie near the parking area and several smaller prairies that can be viewed along much of the paved trail system. Several constructed and natural wetlands offer unique habitat to a host of sensitive species indicative to those areas.

Conservation goals for the site plan include the following:

- Protect the existing mature woodlands throughout the park. Manage honeysuckle and other invasive species in all habitats as designated
- Permit natural succession to occur in designated areas to maximize forest size and minimize edge effects within large tracts. Reintroduction and planting of native mast species in designated areas to augment succession and ensure a diverse future forest.
- Protect and manage the existing tallgrass prairie to reflect a southwest Ohio prairie remnant.
- Maintain sufficient edge/thicket habitat, a transitional habitat important to many types of wildlife. Reintroduce a variety of native shrubs in designated areas to promote the re-establishment of these species.
- Manage meadows to maximize habitat for grassland nesting birds and the continuation of grassland ecological processes
- Manage special habitats such as ponds and wetlands to benefit wildlife that is dependent on these habitats.

- Protect and restore the remnants of the Miami-Erie Canal.
- Design and maintain trails to maintain the integrity of the managed habitats while maximizing the user experience.





2.5 INTERPRETIVE PLAN

Currently, the Medlar property is a 389-acre Conservation Area with tracts of land acquired from 1995 with a conservation easement of 105 acres Mrs. Gwen Rice. From 2008 – 2012 Clean Ohio Green Space grant funds purchased the remaining acres. As a result of a Deed of Easement Agreement between FRMP and the Montgomery County Transportation Improvement District, a paved, 2.25-mile paved trail and parking lot was constructed on the property and opened in 2013. The land contains habitats of mature upland forest, young forest, extensive tree planting efforts in former crop fields, a large planted prairie, meadows, created wetlands, historic remnants of the Miami-Erie Canal, and scenic hilltop vista known as Eagle Hill Overlook. Following the completion of the 2016 CMP, the park typology classifies the Medlar park location as a Nature MetroPark.

Audience

After site visits and discussions with FRMP staff and stakeholders, the following “Falk Visitor Types” identifies current and potential audiences, as well as activity which are defined below:

- Explorers—motivated by personal curiosity (i.e. browsers)
- Facilitators—motivated by other people and their needs (i.e. a parent bringing a child)
- Experience-Seekers—motivated by the desire to see and experience a place (i.e. tourists)
- Professional/Hobbyists—motivated by specific knowledge-related goals (i.e. a scholar researching a specific topic)
- Rechargers—motivated by a desire for a contemplative or restorative experience

Audience Current and Potential

Rechargers
Facilitators
Explorers
Experience Seekers

User Groups Current and Potential

Cyclist
Walkers
Dog Walkers
Bird Watchers
Families Nature Inquiry
Fishing
Camping
Hiking

Intended Visitor Experience for Medlar

- Visitor experience provided for all visitor types and activities is nature immersion in Ohio habitats (wetlands, prairie, woods, ponds, meadows) and experiencing some of the best old growth forest in FRMP's inventory
- Due to the many high-quality habitats and old growth forests, bat and stream mitigation areas on site, the park lends itself to focus on natural resources of the site.
- Maslow's basic needs are met – restrooms, water fountains, changing area, picnic/shelter area.
- Picnic and shelter facilities provide an experience where visitors are still immersed in nature; i.e. the primary focus on incorporating nature.

FRMP System-Wide Themes/Storylines

An interpretive theme is the overarching message. It is more detailed than a broad topic; it is a complete thought in one to two complete sentences. The theme may be used verbatim in signage or verbally in talks, or it may be unspoken but guide the general feel the project aims to have for the visitor experience on site. A theme will help answer the "so what?" – "the moral of the story." Themes connect tangibles: those things you can touch, see, feel, smell, and taste with intangibles, and those things that are symbolic or metaphoric

Theme: A succinct, central message about a topic of interest that a communicator wants to get across to an audience. (Ham, 2013)

StoryLine: Part of the Thematic Hierarchy-Theme-Sub-theme-storyline, Storylines are the details of the interpretive content.

Central Themes:

Each park within FRMP system tells a story from the past.

Protect natural areas, parks and river corridors, and promote the conservation and use of these lands and waterways for the ongoing benefit of the people of the region.

Themes for the Park:

- The land at Medlar is always changing from prehistory dwellers, to transportation hub, farmland, and now through active conservation returning to wetlands, open meadows, forests, and prairies to immerse us in nature in our developing world.

Sub-themes:

- Active conservation manages land to remove invasive species, for reforestation and to restore prairies and wetlands, protecting this site for future generations.
- Habitat management benefits both humans and wildlife
- Bat habitat mitigation
- Wetland management
- Human recreational benefits, activities and respite.
- Flora and fauna focus
- Site history – 1829 aqueduct, road built to connect to Cincinnati inner urban areas
- Pre-history dwellers – (recommend further research on whether there is a connection between Medlar and the Hopewell people)

Storylines specific to site:

- Site preserves/protects nature and provides an opportunity for people from surrounding area to connect to nature as the remaining lands are becoming highly developed.
- Transportation hub and the remaining aqueduct on site
- Several habitats and returning species

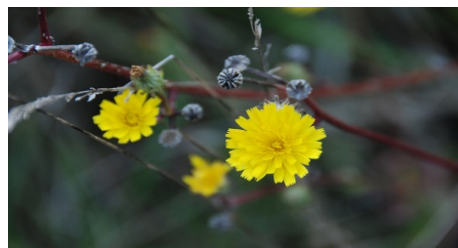
Other opportunities to connect to agency-wide themes:

- We can all take part in conservation

Interpretive Media Recommendations

Personal programs by topic:

- Teacher field school
- Older active adults
- Nature education for youth and adults
- Cycling and hiking
- Backpacking
- Camping



Non-personal Interpretation:

- Kiosks (2 orientation and welcome trailhead)

Wayside self-guided (signs, Audionetics, apps):

- Birding
- Trails
- Gardens
- Wetlands
- Underlook/overlook viewing scope
- Nature Play

Wayside exhibits:

- Rice House
- Miami-Eric Canal
- Transportation
- Habitats-forest, pollinator, wetland
- Rain Garden



2.6 PROGRAMMING PLAN

Current Programming

Medlar has not been programmed by FRMP while designated as a Conservation Area. Two interpretive kiosks have been installed to welcome and orient visitors; one at the parking lot on the east side of the park and one at the bike trail entrance on the west side of the park.

Aspirational Programming

Impact of the Improvements: Provide standard park amenities for Medlar's re-designation as a Nature MetroPark, based on the typology system established in the CMP. This will expand the already popular paved trail and provide opportunities for visitors and program participants to connect to the many cultural, educational, natural and recreational resources found in the park.

Programming Goals:

- Build comfort in the park and routinely visit as part of an active, healthy lifestyle
- Develop a sense of place and personal connection with nature
- Understand conservation processes for restoring and maintaining habitats
- Actively participate in activities that foster and build an appreciation for biodiversity

As programming and interpretive efforts and resources are developed, activation of the amenities and creating a recreational and educational use culture in the park, whether through interpretation, programming, or independent use, will be the primary goal. The combination of diverse habitats and the proximity of the local elementary school across the road along with the existing paved trail in the park provide an opportunity to engage new audiences in connecting to nature through programs and interpretive experiences.

Targeted programs will be identified during the design phase of the park development when input from the community will be gathered. Some programs to be considered are listed below. See also program projections found in Section 3.4 Programming and Interpretation of the implementation plan.



Audiences

Youth & Teens

Ambassador Animal Outreach program can be offered to all classes at Medlar Elementary across from the park to provide a welcome to the park message and encouragement to connect to nature there as well as care for nature.

Current forest restoration efforts, wetland restoration, and diverse habitats along with proposed amenities will make the park an ideal outdoor lab for yearlong inquiry projects by the Miamisburg High School Environmental Education class.

Environmental Education programs for schools will allow seventh grade students to explore Ohio Learning Standards in Earth's hydrologic cycle and water quality.

Interpretive loop trails, shelters and restrooms will provide necessary amenities for guided school programs.

Family

Improved fishing access and nearby shelters can provide opportunities for programs, such as Passport to Fishing, Family Fishing Day and Father Daughter/Mother Son Fishing Day programs. The CMP recognized the need to find creative ways to attract children and parents to the parks to engage in a more active lifestyle.

The large shelter and/or front country camping area creates the opportunity to experience family camping programming like the Great American Campout.

Adults

Front country campsites and the access to the paved trail network would allow the opportunity to offer bicycle touring could highlight the primitive trailside campsites. The front country campsites and the natural surface trails also could create the opportunity to offer backpacking programs which also could highlight the primitive trailside campsites.

Fly Fishing would provide skill development and access to equipment for participants new to fly fishing.

The rich birding experience and the paved trail will provide ideal conditions for birding programs targeted at adults over 55 years. The 2016 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation, there are around 17 million people who watch birds out in the wild, and 45 percent of them are age 55 or older. The Institute on Aging recommends birdwatching for older adults to reconnect with nature and their health. Active older adult programs ranked 4th and birding programs ranked 14th in the CMP survey results related to “Most Important Parks and Recreation Programming (CMP pg. 40).

Multiple Audiences

The topographical advantages of Medlar MetroPark offer the opportunity to provide programming such as land navigation, which is a map and compass class and Leave Not Trace workshops.

Programming such as kayak river trips and youth kayak camps could begin from Medlar with development of the land adjacent to the Great Miami River which has paddling access. Outdoor adventure, recreation/education day camps are ranked 10th in the CMP survey results related to “Most Important Parks and Recreation Programming (CMP pg. 40).

Loop trails will provide access to diverse habitats and geologic and cultural features for naturalists led guided walks. Nature education programs ranked 6th survey results related to “Most Important Parks and Recreation Programming (CMP pg. 40).

Rice House improvements could provide classroom space for outdoor recreation programs, such as backpacking bicycle touring, paddlesports, bicycle maintenance, wilderness medicine and birding basics classes.

Self-directed opportunities, such as a focus on the trails as a healthy heart use for families and/or individuals of all ages.

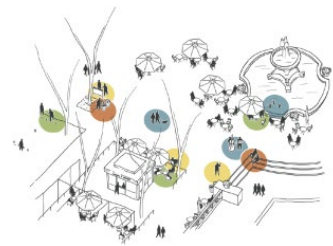


2.7 SITE PLAN

Medlar MetroPark has two main use areas which will help organize and orient visitors to an array of opportunities available for them to explore. The Medlar East Use Area, which includes the existing parking lot, paved bike trail and Rice House, is the front door to the park where new visitors will experience the park for the first time. As park users become familiar with the park, visits can begin at other use areas where basic amenities and unique and varied activities are provided. These use areas will be connected by park trails, allowing users to create diverse experiences each time they visit. The use areas for the park have been redefined to include the following:

- Medlar East
- Medlar West

A second important factor driving the development of this and all MetroParks site plans is the Power of 10+, a concept, developed by Projects for Public Spaces, to evaluate and facilitate place making at multiple scales. Places thrive when users have a range of reasons—ten or more—to be there. These might include a place to sit, playgrounds to enjoy, art to touch, music to hear, food to eat, history to experience, and people to meet. Ideally, some of these activities will be unique to that particular place, reflecting the culture and history of the surrounding community. The following activities were identified in the planning process as appropriate for this park:



Place

10+ THINGS TO DO,
LAYERED TO CREATE SYNERGY

- | | |
|--------------------|--------------------------|
| • Nature Play | • Fitness |
| • Picnicking | • Hiking/Walking |
| • Cycling | • Fishing |
| • Events | • Art and Photography |
| • Nature Education | • Conservation Education |
| • Birding | • Geocaching |
| • Winter Sports | • Camping |

Key Site Plan Recommendations

With a foundation of the two concepts described above, key site plan recommendations were developed. Many of these recommendations have resulted in specific projects that are prioritized for the capital improvement plan in Section 3.2. The full [site plan](#) provides significant detail not provided here.

Medlar MetroPark consists of two large tracts of land, bisected by Medlar Road, in Miamisburg. For organization, and orientation purposes, the two parts of the park will be referred to as Medlar East, and Medlar West. The two halves, joined by connected by the Great-Little Trail (Medlar Bikeway), rely on this existing trail as a spine of activity and as a source of connection to surrounding communities and recreation areas. This narrative will describe proposed improvements and how these improvements address the desires of park users.

Medlar East Recommendations

This portion of the park is bound by Miamisburg – Springboro Pike, to the east, Medlar Road to the north and west, and adjoining residential parcels to the north and south. Medlar East contains the Rice House (as it's known to local residents), and large aluminum structure currently used for storage. Restoration efforts to the historic farm fields have been on-going.

The existing parking lot and entrance to the park will remain, with an expansion of the parking area to include an additional 45 parking spaces with a raingarden island to mitigate the additional impervious coverage created by the expanded parking facility. This raingarden will also function as an opportunity for environmental education, about water quality and the hydrologic cycle. The expanded parking area is knit into a large complex of amenities. Medlar East integrates the existing infrastructure of the Rice House and the Great-Little Trail (also known as Medlar Bikeway) into this cluster of facilities.

- **Improve the Day Use Area**

- Renovate Rice House (if architectural evaluation warrants adaptive reuse of the structure)
- Construct Reservable Shelters (2 medium, 1 large) [Events]
- Construct large nature play area including:
 - Earthen play
 - Willow tunnel
 - Balance logs
 - Climbing cairn
 - Close access to water
- Create flexible lawn space [Events, Fitness Programs]

- Construct restrooms
- Create flexible patio space (adjacent to house)
- Create fence and perennial border along Medlar Road and Miamisburg-Springboro Pike
- **Enhance the Crossing at Miamisburg – Springboro Pike**
 - Develop pedestrian friendly crossing facilities at the intersection of Miamisburg-Springboro Pike and Medlar to promote safe crossings between Medlar View Elementary School and the MetroPark along the current alignment of the Great Little Trail (also known as Medlar Bikeway).
- **Develop the environmental education nodes and trails located just to the south of the Rice House. This network of educational elements includes:**
 - A half mile loop paved trail (asphalt) [Hiking]
 - Wetland fore bays to collect storm water from the east
 - Raingarden with interpretive areas, water quality testing points [Nature/Outdoor Education]
 - Curvilinear earthen mound with shade trees to the south of the raingarden.
 - Three interpretive stations [Nature/Outdoor Education]
 - Nearly one-mile natural surface trail leading from educational trail, through wetland mitigation areas, to the Great-Little Trail (Medlar Bikeway), with three interpretive stations, through various landscape typologies. [Conservation Education]
- **Develop a system of trails and interpretive elements directly to the south of the enhanced parking area. This system includes:**
 - Nearly a half milestone surface loop trail around a pollinator prairie with two interpretive stations [Birding/ Conservation Education]
 - Removed hedgerows to enhance the view from the rice house area and along the Great-Little Trail (currently known as Medlar Bikeway)

- An additional .48-mile trail through prairie at the southern end of pollinator loop trail, that contains ephemeral artwork installations and a climbing cairn [Art/Photography]
- **Add features to the Great-Little Trail (also known as Medlar Bikeway) including:**
 - Mountain bike skills stations and fitness stations which are constructed from natural materials and utilize current phone and handheld media technologies. [Cycling/Fitness]
- **Improve the Medlar Road Crossing**
 - Site distance is a challenge for the Medlar Road Crossing. Enhanced pavement markings, rapid flashing beacon and showy landscape plantings will help to slow vehicular movement and facilitate safe bicycle and pedestrian crossing.
 - Develop a bus pick-up area at the western side of Medlar Road at the Medlar Road Crossing area to pick up visiting school children, and any also serve for volunteer parking.



Medlar West Recommendations

This portion of the park is bound by Dayton-Cincinnati Pike, to the west, Medlar Road to the south and east, and adjoining residential parcels to the south. Medlar West contains the old barn which is a remnant of the farmstead located at the west end of the property and the remnants of the Miami Erie Canal and associated aqueduct.

With ongoing reforestation efforts, and sensitive mature woodland areas, the majority of improvements to Medlar West are clustered at the western end of the park, along Dayton-Cincinnati Pike. The main improvements in this part of the park are a network of natural surface trails through reforestation areas [Hiking, Birding, Geocaching], and existing woodlands that highlight the rich topography. Located along the trails are different types of destinations to draw visitors into the interior of the site. Nature play nodes, of varying size, interpretive stations describing the ecologies and opportunities for natural exploration are also proposed.

- **Add features to the Great-Little Trail (Medlar Bikeway) Including:**
 - Fitness stations which are constructed from natural materials and utilize current phone and handheld media technologies. [Fitness]
- **Develop a series of loop trails leading through the reforestation areas and woodland including: [Conservation Education]**
 - Four small nature play areas
 - A wooden deck “underlook” to highlight the Shepards Run ravine
 - A natural arboretum trail, .54 miles in length [Outdoor Education/ Geocaching]
 - A bridge path overlooking a ravine leading to the pond
- **Develop fitness trails, enhancements and large play structures on the hillside below Eagle View to highlight views to the river and the riverside ecology including:**
 - A monolithic stair-climb to offer exercise and imaginative play spaces [nature play/fitness]
 - Embankment slides (three), for play and exercise.

- A large boulder climbing cairn, at the highest point along this portion of paved trail, for views to the river.
- A stone surfaced pedestrian path stacked alongside of the paved trail to offer separation for visitors to the Stair climb and embankment slides, and access to viewing platforms perched atop of the Hill. At the base of the embankment slides and stair climb the trail loops back around to connect with the existing paved trail.
- Utilize Eagle Overlook Hill as a sledding hill during winter months [Winter Sports]
- **Enhance the grassland habitat at the west end of the site including**
 - A trail loop and viewing node
- **Develop the Medlar West Day Use Area including:**
 - A boulevard entrance to the area, and the shared driveway for the maintenance facility, parking area, restored barn [Events/Education].
 - 1-acre maintenance facility to serve Medlar MetroPark, screened by mounds, walls and vegetation
 - Path and exhibit to highlight historic canal and aqueduct.
 - Restored Barn for classes and events, with nearby restroom facility.
 - Large Creek nature play area, where children can interact directly with the creek while learning about the site's unique transportation history and aqueduct structure [nature play/education]
 - 55-car main parking lot (with accessible parking)
 - A large lawn space, with large earthen mounds with tunnels, rock scrambles, and artwork [events, picnicking/art/nature play]
 - Three shelters one large and two medium [events, picnicking]
 - A climbing cairn to serve as a focal point as visitors enter the site [events, picnicking/art/nature play].

- A second parking area (30 cars) along the driveway, to serve the barn and lawn areas.
- Restroom facilities
- **Improve Native Habitats and access including:**
 - Develop the wildflower prairie separating the lawn area from the existing woodland.
 - Develop a trail around the wildflower prairie which leads to the existing pond
 - Enhance the existing pond to ensure a sustainable fishery
 - Develop an accessible trail and deck around the pond which will serve as a multi-season destination [Fishing/Ice Fishing].
- **Develop Camping and Connection to the Regional Trail System Including:**
 - Three wooded, primitive campsites near the wildflower prairie
 - Promote and anticipate growth in bike-based through-camping due to development of long regional bike routes, these campsites will offer a great location with easy access to the Great Miami River Recreation Trail and the Great Little Trail (Medlar Bikeway) [Camping/Cycling].
- **Enhance the Crossing at Cincinnati-Dayton Pike**
 - Develop pedestrian friendly crossing facilities at the current crossing location at Cincinnati-Dayton Pike to promote safe crossings between the Great Miami Recreation Trail and the Great Little Trail (Medlar Bikeway).

Short Term Recommendations

Some recommendations could be achieved at a relatively low-cost using staff resources:

- Nature play elements along paved bike trail
- Develop trails master plan and natural surface trails
- Stabilize the canal aqueduct by removing vegetation and redirecting stream flow
- Improve fishing access to pond
- Construct natural material fitness stations along the paved trail
- Construct mountain biking skills features along paved trail

Level of Service Amenities

- The following amenities outlined in the CMP are included in the site plan:
 - (1) Reservable Picnic Shelters (Small 1-25)
 - (3) Reservable Picnic Shelters (Medium 26-50)
 - (1) Reservable Picnic Shelters (Large 51-100)
 - (0) Outdoor Pavilions (100+)
 - (5) Nature Play Playgrounds
 - (1.07) Paved Trails (Miles)
 - (3.04) Soft/ Non Paved Trails (Miles)
 - (3.75) Nature/ Hiking/ Backpacking Trails (Miles)
 - (0) Equine Trails (Miles)
 - (0) Mountain Bike Trails (Miles)

2.8 LAND PROTECTION PLAN

FRMP's [Land Protection Plan \(link once LPP is done\)](#) identifies priorities for land protection based on criteria addressing conservation, the park, and the user. Many land protection priorities for Medlar MetroPark focus on park criteria, particularly completing the park's natural boundaries and conservation principles. Specific recommendations regarding land protection to achieve park needs and associated attainment strategies are listed below:

- Explore opportunities to place conservation easements or acquire wooded parcels adjacent to the current park property. There are significant high-quality wooded parcels which should be protected from future development and logging. Wooded properties are located on the western side of Medlar East and the north side of Medlar West.
- Look for opportunities to protect the stretches of Shephard Run Creek which runs along the north side and on Medlar West.
- Continue to work with Montgomery County Environmental Services to ensure protection and conservation of the grassland areas located on the future well field property on the west side of Cincinnati-Dayton Pike.
- Explore opportunities to acquire inholdings inside of Medlar West.
- Work with land-owners at the Medlar Road crossing to create a wider strip of park land through long term acquisition.
- Most of the surrounding residential properties are not creating significant impacts to the park and therefore do not need to be considered a high priority for acquisition. Favorable opportunities to expand park borders to a natural boundary should be explored.

The benefits that the Medlar MetroPark's diverse habitats will provide to the region are greatly improved by the surrounding connections to woodlands and the Great Miami River Corridor. Efforts need to continue to protect neighboring grassland and woodland areas to ensure the long-term health of the area.



SECTION 2: THE PLAN

2.1 PARK POSITION DESCRIPTIONS

Medlar MetroPark (currently known as the Medlar Conservation Area) is a planned park addition to the FRMP system that currently offers a paved trail, the Great-Little Trail (also known as Medlar Bikeway) that connects to the Great Miami Bikeway, with a parking lot and trail head. Medlar's 389 acres was assembled in an effort to protect open space and provide future parkland in an anticipated growth area of southern Montgomery County ahead of the construction on the Austin Road interchange at Interstate 75. The land was protected through several purchases of agricultural land and wooded hillside starting on the Miamisburg Plateau descending to Dayton Cincinnati Pike along the Great Miami River. The site is bisected by Medlar Road. The eastern, upper half of the property is relatively flat and is anchored by the former residential home known as the Rice house at the corner of Miamisburg-Springboro Road and Medlar Road, across from Medlar Elementary School, and includes wetlands that were constructed as a mitigation project. The western portion of the property offers a rich, wooded hillside before flattening out into floodplain and includes a fishing pond, barn, and the remnant of an aqueduct on the Miami and Eric Canal.



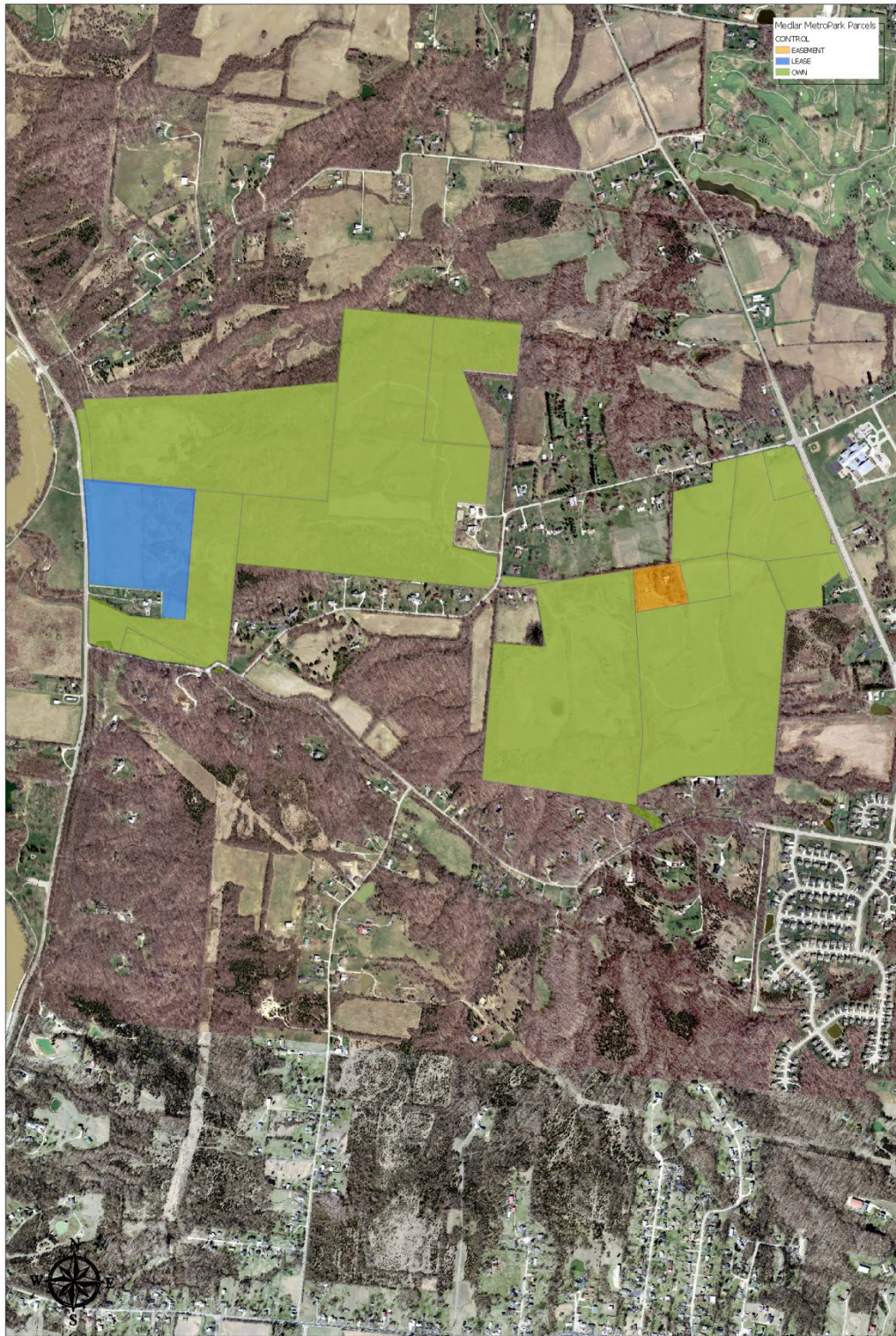
Though the area immediately around the site remains largely undeveloped, land to the east has experienced significant commercial and office growth since the construction of the interchange. Zoning for Miami Township reflects continued expansion of development, including potential residential development in the area east of the site. Current large populations in the surrounding area exist largely to the north in Miamisburg, to the west in Miami Township, as well as in Franklin and Springboro to the south in Warren County. Though zoning immediately around the site remains agricultural, Medlar area has the potential to be surrounded by a dense housing and development. In contrast, west of the site is buffered by Miami Township owned, Crains Run Park located adjacent to the Great Miami River.

Medlar MetroPark, when developed, will be classified as a nature park based on the typology system established in the FRMP 2016 Comprehensive Master Plan (CMP). The classification reflects the future blend of ecosystem services and the natural setting with human services. The park will offer fewer amenities and have less human activity per acre than the more concentrated community parks. Public and staff input that guided the development of the site plan emphasized taking advantage of the great educational opportunities provided by combination of diverse habitats and the elementary school across the road, the existing paved trail in the park and the additional natural surface trails that could diverge from there, and day use opportunities such as picnicking, hiking, and wildlife observation for the anticipated dense population surrounding the park. Considering more destination level activities, staff and the consultants focused on the existing barn as a potential event venue and to opportunity to develop an extensive nature play site using the natural terrain at the west end of the site.

FRMP's core interpretive storylines relevant to Medlar MetroPark are that active conservation efforts protect land for future generations and that each park within the FRMP system tells a story from the past. Specific to the Medlar site is the theme that the land is always changing from prehistory dwellers to a transportation hub to farmland, and now, through active conservation, the site is returning to wetlands, open meadows, forests, and prairies to immerse us in nature in our developing world.



Medlar MetroPark will offer significant natural open spaces in the midst of what is predicted to be an area densely populated with office, commercial, and residential properties, thus offering a nearby respite and connection to nature for significant numbers of people through picnicking, hiking, cycling, and wildlife exploration. The density of that constituency suggests that such destination amenities such as an event venue, nature play area, and education facility, buoyed by the adjacent elementary school. Medlar's identity in the FRMP system will emerge as a park that provides nearby nature to a heavily developed area of the county with a variety of amenities to suit many interests.



Medlar MetroPark

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2.2 PARK HISTORY

Medlar MetroPark, also in the past referred to as the Crains Run area draws its historical significance from the Great Miami River. From as far back as 1000 B.C., this area of Montgomery County shows evidence of man's activity directly or indirectly related to the river. Just north of the future MetroPark site is an Adena culture burial mound (largest in Ohio) from between 1000 B.C. and 700 A.D. These groups founded small villages in the area in order to raise simple crops and hunt game that flourished along the river. Later, Native Americans utilized the river for transportation and fishing, hunted game and established lookouts and fortifications on the high grounds adjoining the river valley. More recently (1700's) the Miami tribes inhabited the area hunting, fishing and clearing wooded areas to raise corn and beans. Even today, on the high ground of Shephard Road, there are visible remains of a Miami fortification, a reminder of the conflict between Native Americans and the early settlers throughout Ohio.

By 1800, some of the Native Americans had moved west into Indiana and the area of what is now Miami Township began to be settled. Stockades however, continued to be built for protection against Native American attacks. "Hole's Station", what is now Miamisburg, was one such stockade. It became a terminus for trails and paths winding through the dense forests of the area, and a center for river travel and shipping. By 1818, flat boats were carrying cargo to the Mississippi and on to New Orleans. Later, steamboats provided transportation on the river.

As early as 1795, a road had been laid out along the east bank of the river between Fort Hamilton and the mouth of Mad River. For many years, common road wagons carried merchandise to and from Cincinnati. By 1829, the Miami and Erie Canal was opened between Dayton and Cincinnati carrying passengers and freight and relieving the burden on the mud roads. Remains of locks and aqueduct structures can still be observed along the dry canal bed, including an aqueduct structure located on the northwest corner of Medlar MetroPark.



In 1840, the old road along the river was reconstructed as the Great Miami Turnpike running stages and omnibus lines from Dayton to Cincinnati. Then in 1872, running parallel to the Pike, the Cleveland, Columbus, Cincinnati and St. Louis Railroad was opened. Sometime later, a traction line operating from Cincinnati to Dayton was added along the east side of the river paralleling the canal, Pike and Railroad.

With the success and speed of the rail systems, the canal and the turnpike were soon considered obsolete. Even though the last boat was not removed until 1910, the canal had by then been defunct for many years.

The tremendous flooding of the Miami River in 1913 washed out the railroad and when it was rebuilt it was relocated on the west side of the river.

Today Dayton-Cincinnati Pike follows the route of the Great Turnpike as the only reminder of the transportation network that gave impetus to the development of the area surrounding the Medlar property.

In 1975, Five Rivers MetroParks, then known as the Montgomery County Park District, acquired a little over 73 acres from Marvin and Rose Davis. Additional acquisitions were made over the years including a new conservation easement which was donated in 1995, by the Rice Family. This donation was a direct result of conversations with Jean Woodhull who had recently donated a conservation easement on her family farm in Preble County. The 104 acres known as Melochris Meadows, immediately adjacent to the Davis property, would be permanently protected from the high pressure of developers in the area. The Rice Family, including Gwen and her son Chris and daughter in law Jackie also agreed that upon the passing of Gwen, the land would be transferred to FRMP. The property was transferred to FRMP in 2009, including the circa 1860 farmhouse.

Long range studies of the area were completed in the 1970s and in 1995 and included nearly 2,000 acres. The study narrowed the area to be protected to an area that is similar to what is today the current boundary of Medlar MetroPark and the area owned by Miamisburg and 34 acres of Crains Run Park owned by Miami Township on the west side of Dayton Cincinnati Pike and adjacent to the Great Miami River.



In 2013, construction began on a paved bike trail through the park as a part of a Deed of Easement between FRMP and Montgomery County Transportation Improvement District. This would become the first leg of what would be called Medlar Bikeway and also known as the Great Little Trail which will eventually connect the Great Miami and Little Miami River regional trails. Wetland mitigation areas were also established on the property during this same time period. In 2015, an additional section of trail was completed from Medlar MetroPark to the Byers Road Trail and to a new bike hub in the Austin Landing Development. Currently, this section of trail is 7 miles long and terminates in Robert F. Mays Park in Washington Township.

2.3 SITE PLANNING PROCESS

FRMP has established a [site planning process](#), and that process was used to develop this site plan for Medlar MetroPark (the “park”). FRMP retained the services of Alta Planning and Design of Phoenixville, PA to develop the site plan. The firm began the process as of KMS Design and was acquired by Alta Planning and Design midway through the project. A core team of key, cross-agency staff was established to guide the plan throughout the process. The core team participated with the consultant in a two-day kick off process to provide orientation and input and continued to be closely engaged throughout the development of the plan, providing feedback at each key decision point and engaging individually as various issues and opportunities arose that pertained to their work responsibilities. Core team members also gathered feedback from other staff, and additional staff members directly associated with the park had an opportunity to provide their ideas, insight and issues.

The public had several opportunities to provide input into the development of the site plan. Two public open houses were conducted during the two-day kickoff session where attendees were able to talk to staff and the consultant team. Intercept surveys were provided to meeting attendees and were online for those who were not able to attend. An additional public meeting was held to present the pre-final concept plan and gather feedback. Stakeholders and attendees from the first open house were sent direct invitations to attend or to comment about the plans online.



FRMP also engaged key stakeholders in the project to collect input and feedback. Stakeholders included the neighboring jurisdictions of Miamisburg and Miami Township and the Miamisburg School District. These meetings provided insight to the context around the park, identified opportunities and issues, and explored future partnerships.

Data and Analysis Summary

Two previous master plan studies for the Medlar MetroPark area, then referred to as Crains Run Reserve, were completed, the first was by James H Bassett of Lima, Ohio which was completed in the 1970's (no date on the plan), and a more recent study completed in November 1995 by Design Enterprise Limited of Dayton, Ohio. Key recommendations of the later plan included the following:

- Acquire land both east and west of the currently owned 73 acres (Completed and Ongoing)
- Interpret the historic canal features (Not Completed)
- Create day use picnic and access at the east and west ends of the park off of Medlar Road and Dayton Cincinnati Pike (Not Completed)
- Develop a trail system throughout the park including connecting to the bikeway along the Great Miami River. (Paved Trail Completed)

2017 Park Master Plan Input Summary

During the two-day kick off process, several key high-level issues and ideas were raised that were considered throughout the planning process:



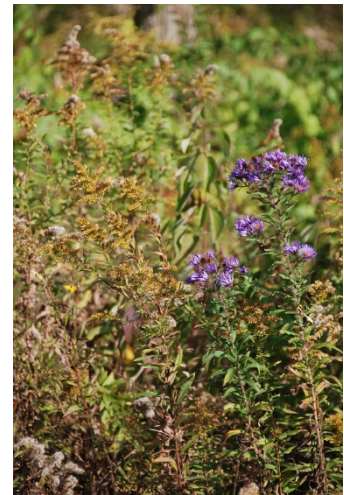
- Develop a more extensive trail system in the park, including natural surface trails
- Consider equestrian trails in the park
- Consider mountain biking in the park
- Utilize the Rice House and old barn for re-use and programming
- Maintain the quiet and serene atmosphere of the park
- Consider traffic conflict and growing use on the existing bike trail
- Need restroom facilities

Site Plan Program

The site plan program was developed from all the input gathered from the public, stakeholders and staff along with the physical data and analysis. The program provides a guiding framework and a set of overarching goals which should be met in the final site plan and ultimately the park master plan. The following highlights provide an overview of the park program that guided the development of the site plan.

Program Elements are grouped by use type:

- Hiking
 - Nature and hiking trails are the highest Park and Recreation Facilities priority for FRMP park users based on data collected from the CMP survey results. Trails also ranked first in all five major age segments listed in the CMP. The diverse topographic experiences at Medlar MetroPark offer varying levels of difficulty for hikers of all skill levels. Trails could be classified by skill level, ADA accessibility, signage, surface or otherwise.
- Birding
 - The planned edge/thicket ecologies on the site (34 acres planned, according to the current [Natural Areas Management Guide](#)), offer exceptional habitat for birds and mammals. According to submitted observations, 50 bird species have been encountered at the Medlar property. The recording of this data not only depicts the variety of species but proves that the site is actively used by birders. The grassland located on the western end of the site, between the Great Miami River and Dayton Cincinnati Pike, is an exceptional habitat for rare bird species. The introduction of bird-themed trails equipped with bird blinds, and a safe pedestrian crossing to the grasslands by the river could enhance the experiences of bird watchers.
 - The 2016 CMP statistically valid community survey results related to “Most Important Park and Recreation Facilities”, ranked wildlife/wetlands/observation areas 9th as compared to other facilities (CMP pg. 37).



- Fishing

- Whether in the pond, or in the Great Miami River, the Medlar MetroPark property can provide multiple fishing recreation areas. ADA access to both of these fishing areas will be explored through design. Educational spaces could offer the possibility for fishing courses offered to residents.
- Fishing areas ranked 7th as most important as compared to other facilities (CMP pg. 37) from the 2016 survey results.



- Picnicking

- Picnicking, whether in a quiet, shady spot off of a trail, or in a shelter away from the elements, providing visitors a place to eat. Introduction of food options at the park could promote picnicking. Retail and tech businesses in the nearby I-75 corridor are only a five- minute drive from Medlar and added picnic areas may draw professionals to take their lunch break in nature. Shelters serve as a valuable amenity and draw park users for family barbeques and birthday parties. Nearby grills, play structures, horseshoe pits, flexible lawn space and restrooms create a desirable environment for picnics.
- Survey results from the CMP rank picnic areas and shelters 4th overall as a most important park and recreation facility. The survey respondents for this project ranked picnic shelters as the 2nd most important feature to add immediately behind additional trails.



- Cycling

- Cyclists of all skill-levels can ride from Miamisburg, Miami Township, Dayton or Cincinnati on the area's paved trails. Medlar is a crucial link in the regional trail network and is an easy ride from Miamisburg, Austin Landing, and the developing residential neighborhoods in the area. Located 15 miles from Dayton, and 42 miles from Cincinnati, Medlar is an important part of the connection of the Great Miami and Little Miami Rivers, and the site is becoming an important destination for cyclists. Facilities should be designed to meet the needs of both touring and recreational cyclists.



- Separate mountain biking trails will be explored, but due to the habitat restrictions and overall size of the park, only skill features along the main paved trail are included in the site plan.
- Paved biking trails are the 2nd ranked FRMP amenity (pg. 37 CMP) based upon survey results from the 2016 CMP.

- Camping

- The site could accommodate both front and back country camping, but the real opportunity is to create a unique thru-camping experience. Whether hikers, paddlers, or cyclists, the western end of the site closest to the Great Miami River could best accommodate this. Although there are many other opportunities to camp within the FRMP system, the site's location could prove to be a sought after thru-camping destination. A 1 hour 15-minute ride from Dayton, this site is at an optimal location for a weekend cycling trip. The closest campground along the Great Miami River Trail is 20 miles to the south.

- Tent Camping Areas were ranked 18th out of 25 FRMP most important facilities (pg. 37 CMP).



- Boating

- While there are no paddling opportunities within Medlar MetroPark, the site should be connected directly to the river just across Cincinnati Dayton Pike. Improvement of the portage located at RM (River Mile) 63.5 could enhance the Great Miami River Trail experience, and Medlar MetroPark would act as a natural destination/rest point for paddlers. As a result of Dayton Power & Light vacating its coal plant across the river, the low dam could be modified for safe passage. The existing boat ramp at neighboring Crain's Run Park is already an easy access for users of the river and Medlar. The lands owned by Miami Township would help to build the connection of Medlar MetroPark to the Great Miami River, as well as the 16.58-acre parcel owned by the City of Miamisburg that contains the final leg of the Great-Little Trail where it connects to the Great Miami River Trail.
- Water trails are ranked 15th out of 25 park and recreation facilities as most important in the CMP survey (pg. 37) and are an important feature for Nature MetroParks.

- Fitness Programs
 - The eastern end of the property offers outstanding opportunity for instructor led group fitness activities that put low levels of stress on site ecology (yoga, Tai Chi...). The possibility for designed, flexible lawn spaces for these activities can offer unique experiences for sunrise/set fitness. In the event of inclement weather, a shelter or indoor classroom space could be used if available. With the introduction of soft surface trails, individual users will have the opportunity for trail running on the site's exceptional topography. Simple, unobtrusive fitness stations could be created along the Great-Little Trail (Medlar Bikeway) in mowed areas near the parking area, and street crossings where they would have minimal impact on site ecology and design.
 - In the CMP survey results (pg. 40) fitness programs and events ranked 3rd overall as "Most Important Parks and Recreation Programs".
- Geocaching
 - With the addition of hiking trails at Medlar MetroPark, this site will be an excellent fit for the FRMP geocaching system. The addition of this low impact, minimal cost activity will be able to introduce users to the park and be a great resource to display the various site ecologies, and interpretive elements.
- Winter Sports
 - Installation of trails at the eastern end of the park site will provide snowshoeing and cross-country skiing experiences. If weather conditions are right, the pond could offer ice fishing and skating opportunities. The hill at the western end of the site also offers opportunity for sledding.



- Nature Play
 - The close proximity to Medlar View Elementary School and nearby housing subdivisions makes the park site an optimal location for a nature play area. A required element in the Nature Park Typology, the possible addition of an Education Center, makes Medlar MetroPark an outstanding site for new nature play locations. Due to the distance from dense populations, the play area should be well designed in order to draw children and parents back regularly. Nature play areas should provide a gateway into the rest of the park for free range play. Rotating seasonal elements should be considered to offer new experiences to the play space. These spaces should be in close proximity to water, restroom parking and shelter amenities.
 - The CMP survey results for “Most Important Parks and Recreation Facilities,” (pg. 37) ranked playgrounds as 5th overall. In other surveys of citizens, play areas for children also ranked in the top 5 most important park and recreation features.

- Conservation Education
 - Medlar MetroPark is an excellent environment to foster stewardship and create lifetime conservationists and park users. The park with its ecological sensitivity and diversity offers prime learning environments for FRMP's Conservation Kids program. These unique environments can serve as outdoor learning experience where users of all ages can study ecological sciences in structured classes or through independent study. Medlar will serve as a great venue for park users to learn, practice, and live the FRMP ecological values.

- Nature and Outdoor Education
 - Medlar MetroPark offers an opportunity for nature education for all ages, and skill levels. There is an opportunity for education about outdoor skills (orienteering, first aid) and nature (edible, poisonous plant identification, bird identification). Connections could be made with the nearby elementary schools, to use Medlar as an outdoor classroom for science classes, or ecology-based afterschool programs.
 - Nature education programs are ranked 6th overall in the "Most Important Park and Recreation Programs" rankings identified in the CMP survey (pg. 40).

- Cultural Resources
 - The aqueduct and canal ruins offer an excellent opportunity to tell the story of Transportation along the Great Miami, and history of agriculture and industry in the Miami Valley. Historians could offer classes and workshops in the historic Rice house or the barn on the western end of the site.
 - Living History programs are listed as 8th in the "Most Important Park and Recreation Programs" rankings identified in the CMP survey (pg. 40).



- Art and Photography
 - The views and varying habitats at Medlar MetroPark create an outstanding backdrop for photography and nature-based artwork. Courses could be offered year-round for many styles of art and photography for all skill levels. Users could take classes on wildlife photography, or landscape watercolor. Medlar could also act as a canvas for permanent or temporary art installations. An interpretive sculpture trail winding throughout the wildflower prairie could create spectacular year-round interest.
- Events
 - Introduction of reservable shelters, a renovation of the existing barn and house each offer opportunities for events of varying sizes (up to 150 people). There is a possibility for theater and music performances, weddings and other small receptions. The park could possibly serve as a starting/finish line for 5/10k race events, that would have low impact on the site's ecology/facilities.
 - Festivals/large community special events are ranked 1st and music and performances are ranked 2nd as the "Most Important Park and Recreation Programs" in the CMP survey results (pg. 40).



Two program types received during the input and planning process were explored and were determined to not be compatible with the proposed site plan.

- Equestrian
 - Inclusion of equestrian trails at Medlar MetroPark has been requested by local equestrians during public input meetings and surveys. While FRMP understands the value of providing equestrian facilities, it also desires to provide high quality experiences to all visitors. Due to sensitive natural features, mitigation areas and active reforestation areas, developing an equestrian trail system at Medlar is not feasible. In addition, due to the size of the park, it is not possible to develop trails that meet equestrian trail standards or offer an appropriate length for equestrian users to justify trailering horses to the site. There are four MetroParks within a 15-30 minute drive of Medlar MetroPark that offer Bridle trails.

- Mountain Biking
 - Separate mountain biking trails were explored, but due to the habitat restrictions and overall size of the park, only skill features along the main paved trail are recommended for consideration at this MetroPark. The extensive wetland and mitigation areas in the east end of the park also contributed to this decision.



2.4 CONSERVATION PLAN

Based on the [Natural Areas Management Guide](#), a series of park-specific goals have been developed as a part of the site planning process. These goals should be used as a guide during the implementation of the plan to minimize impacts to sensitive habitats and the wildlife that depend on these special places. The activation of spaces within natural areas that have not before been promoted for public use will require thorough assessment and a thoughtful approach to minimize impacts.

This site is home to FRMP's largest reforestation effort in the district. Approximately 30,000 trees and shrubs have been planted there in recent years. Medlar contains mature upland forests, young forests, edge/thicket, prairies, meadows, wetlands, and historic remnants of the Miami-Erie Canals, and a scenic hilltop vista. Black bear, bald eagle, and occasionally bobcat have been observed at Medlar.

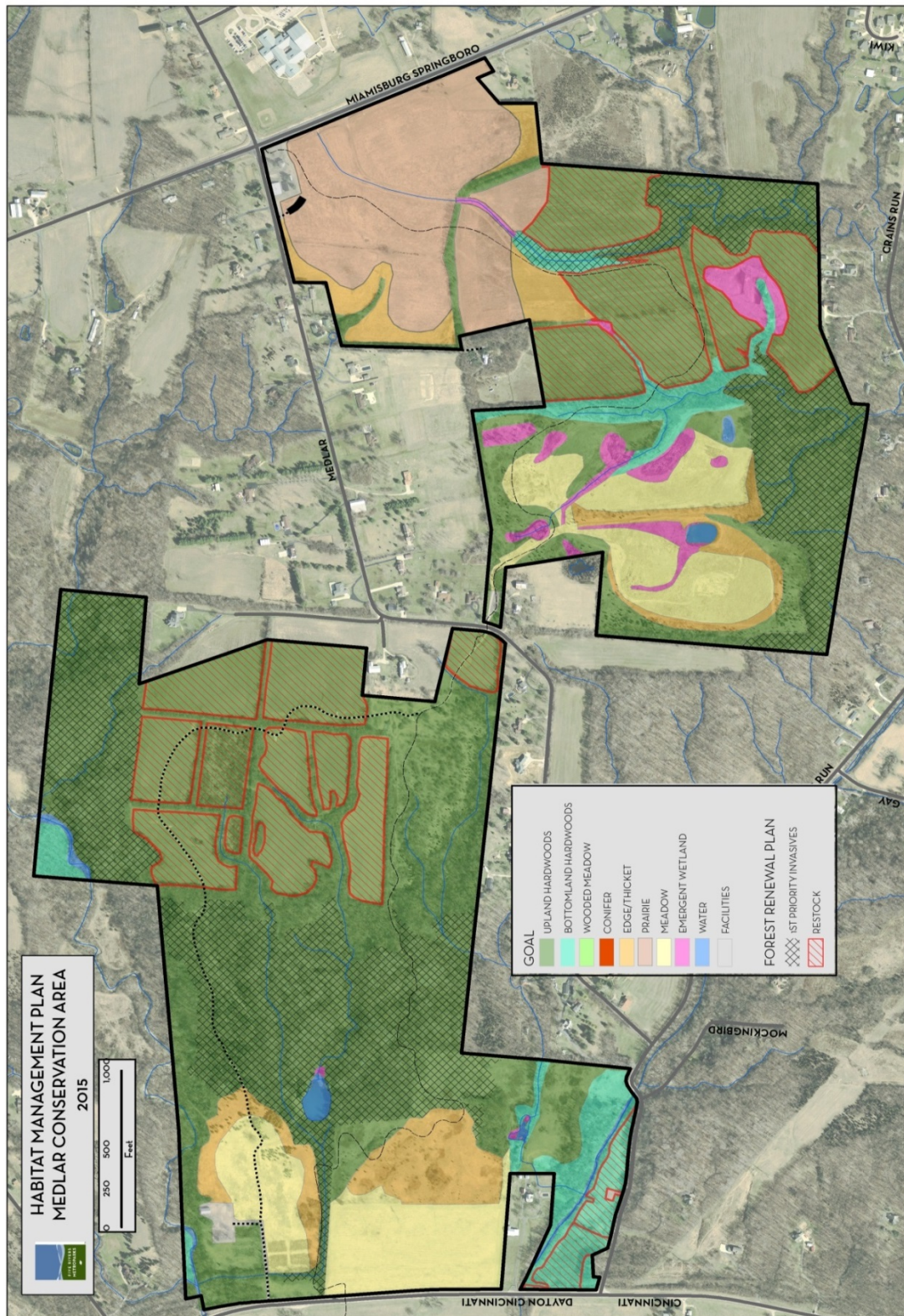
There is a large planted prairie near the parking area and several smaller prairies that can be viewed along much of the paved trail system. Several constructed and natural wetlands offer unique habitat to a host of sensitive species indicative to those areas.

Conservation goals for the site plan include the following:

- Protect the existing mature woodlands throughout the park. Manage honeysuckle and other invasive species in all habitats as designated
- Permit natural succession to occur in designated areas to maximize forest size and minimize edge effects within large tracts. Reintroduction and planting of native mast species in designated areas to augment succession and ensure a diverse future forest.
- Protect and manage the existing tallgrass prairie to reflect a southwest Ohio prairie remnant.
- Maintain sufficient edge/thicket habitat, a transitional habitat important to many types of wildlife. Reintroduce a variety of native shrubs in designated areas to promote the re-establishment of these species.
- Manage meadows to maximize habitat for grassland nesting birds and the continuation of grassland ecological processes
- Manage special habitats such as ponds and wetlands to benefit wildlife that is dependent on these habitats.

- Protect and restore the remnants of the Miami-Erie Canal.
- Design and maintain trails to maintain the integrity of the managed habitats while maximizing the user experience.





2.5 INTERPRETIVE PLAN

Currently, the Medlar property is a 389-acre Conservation Area with tracts of land acquired from 1995 with a conservation easement of 105 acres Mrs. Gwen Rice. From 2008 – 2012 Clean Ohio Green Space grant funds purchased the remaining acres. As a result of a Deed of Easement Agreement between FRMP and the Montgomery County Transportation Improvement District, a paved, 2.25-mile paved trail and parking lot was constructed on the property and opened in 2013. The land contains habitats of mature upland forest, young forest, extensive tree planting efforts in former crop fields, a large planted prairie, meadows, created wetlands, historic remnants of the Miami-Erie Canal, and scenic hilltop vista known as Eagle Hill Overlook. Following the completion of the 2016 CMP, the park typology classifies the Medlar park location as a Nature MetroPark.

Audience

After site visits and discussions with FRMP staff and stakeholders, the following “Falk Visitor Types” identifies current and potential audiences, as well as activity which are defined below:

- Explorers—motivated by personal curiosity (i.e. browsers)
- Facilitators—motivated by other people and their needs (i.e. a parent bringing a child)
- Experience-Seekers—motivated by the desire to see and experience a place (i.e. tourists)
- Professional/Hobbyists—motivated by specific knowledge-related goals (i.e. a scholar researching a specific topic)
- Rechargers—motivated by a desire for a contemplative or restorative experience

Audience Current and Potential

Rechargers
Facilitators
Explorers
Experience Seekers

User Groups Current and Potential

Cyclist
Walkers
Dog Walkers
Bird Watchers
Families Nature Inquiry
Fishing
Camping
Hiking

Intended Visitor Experience for Medlar

- Visitor experience provided for all visitor types and activities is nature immersion in Ohio habitats (wetlands, prairie, woods, ponds, meadows) and experiencing some of the best old growth forest in FRMP's inventory
- Due to the many high-quality habitats and old growth forests, bat and stream mitigation areas on site, the park lends itself to focus on natural resources of the site.
- Maslow's basic needs are met – restrooms, water fountains, changing area, picnic/shelter area.
- Picnic and shelter facilities provide an experience where visitors are still immersed in nature; i.e. the primary focus on incorporating nature.

FRMP System-Wide Themes/Storylines

An interpretive theme is the overarching message. It is more detailed than a broad topic; it is a complete thought in one to two complete sentences. The theme may be used verbatim in signage or verbally in talks, or it may be unspoken but guide the general feel the project aims to have for the visitor experience on site. A theme will help answer the "so what?" – "the moral of the story." Themes connect tangibles: those things you can touch, see, feel, smell, and taste with intangibles, and those things that are symbolic or metaphoric

Theme: A succinct, central message about a topic of interest that a communicator wants to get across to an audience. (Ham, 2013)

StoryLine: Part of the Thematic Hierarchy-Theme-Sub-theme-storyline, Storylines are the details of the interpretive content.

Central Themes:

Each park within FRMP system tells a story from the past.

Protect natural areas, parks and river corridors, and promote the conservation and use of these lands and waterways for the ongoing benefit of the people of the region.

Themes for the Park:

- The land at Medlar is always changing from prehistory dwellers, to transportation hub, farmland, and now through active conservation returning to wetlands, open meadows, forests, and prairies to immerse us in nature in our developing world.

Sub-themes:

- Active conservation manages land to remove invasive species, for reforestation and to restore prairies and wetlands, protecting this site for future generations.
- Habitat management benefits both humans and wildlife
- Bat habitat mitigation
- Wetland management
- Human recreational benefits, activities and respite.
- Flora and fauna focus
- Site history – 1829 aqueduct, road built to connect to Cincinnati inner urban areas
- Pre-history dwellers – (recommend further research on whether there is a connection between Medlar and the Hopewell people)

Storylines specific to site:

- Site preserves/protects nature and provides an opportunity for people from surrounding area to connect to nature as the remaining lands are becoming highly developed.
- Transportation hub and the remaining aqueduct on site
- Several habitats and returning species

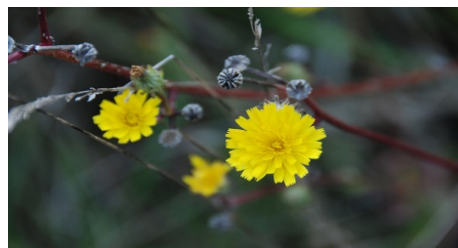
Other opportunities to connect to agency-wide themes:

- We can all take part in conservation

Interpretive Media Recommendations

Personal programs by topic:

- Teacher field school
- Older active adults
- Nature education for youth and adults
- Cycling and hiking
- Backpacking
- Camping



Non-personal Interpretation:

- Kiosks (2 orientation and welcome trailhead)

Wayside self-guided (signs, Audionetics, apps):

- Birding
- Trails
- Gardens
- Wetlands
- Underlook/overlook viewing scope
- Nature Play

Wayside exhibits:

- Rice House
- Miami-Eric Canal
- Transportation
- Habitats-forest, pollinator, wetland
- Rain Garden



2.6 PROGRAMMING PLAN

Current Programming

Medlar has not been programmed by FRMP while designated as a Conservation Area. Two interpretive kiosks have been installed to welcome and orient visitors; one at the parking lot on the east side of the park and one at the bike trail entrance on the west side of the park.

Aspirational Programming

Impact of the Improvements: Provide standard park amenities for Medlar's re-designation as a Nature MetroPark, based on the typology system established in the CMP. This will expand the already popular paved trail and provide opportunities for visitors and program participants to connect to the many cultural, educational, natural and recreational resources found in the park.

Programming Goals:

- Build comfort in the park and routinely visit as part of an active, healthy lifestyle
- Develop a sense of place and personal connection with nature
- Understand conservation processes for restoring and maintaining habitats
- Actively participate in activities that foster and build an appreciation for biodiversity

As programming and interpretive efforts and resources are developed, activation of the amenities and creating a recreational and educational use culture in the park, whether through interpretation, programming, or independent use, will be the primary goal. The combination of diverse habitats and the proximity of the local elementary school across the road along with the existing paved trail in the park provide an opportunity to engage new audiences in connecting to nature through programs and interpretive experiences.

Targeted programs will be identified during the design phase of the park development when input from the community will be gathered. Some programs to be considered are listed below. See also program projections found in Section 3.4 Programming and Interpretation of the implementation plan.



Audiences

Youth & Teens

Ambassador Animal Outreach program can be offered to all classes at Medlar Elementary across from the park to provide a welcome to the park message and encouragement to connect to nature there as well as care for nature.

Current forest restoration efforts, wetland restoration, and diverse habitats along with proposed amenities will make the park an ideal outdoor lab for yearlong inquiry projects by the Miamisburg High School Environmental Education class.

Environmental Education programs for schools will allow seventh grade students to explore Ohio Learning Standards in Earth's hydrologic cycle and water quality.

Interpretive loop trails, shelters and restrooms will provide necessary amenities for guided school programs.

Family

Improved fishing access and nearby shelters can provide opportunities for programs, such as Passport to Fishing, Family Fishing Day and Father Daughter/Mother Son Fishing Day programs. The CMP recognized the need to find creative ways to attract children and parents to the parks to engage in a more active lifestyle.

The large shelter and/or front country camping area creates the opportunity to experience family camping programming like the Great American Campout.

Adults

Front country campsites and the access to the paved trail network would allow the opportunity to offer bicycle touring could highlight the primitive trailside campsites. The front country campsites and the natural surface trails also could create the opportunity to offer backpacking programs which also could highlight the primitive trailside campsites.

Fly Fishing would provide skill development and access to equipment for participants new to fly fishing.

The rich birding experience and the paved trail will provide ideal conditions for birding programs targeted at adults over 55 years. The 2016 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation, there are around 17 million people who watch birds out in the wild, and 45 percent of them are age 55 or older. The Institute on Aging recommends birdwatching for older adults to reconnect with nature and their health. Active older adult programs ranked 4th and birding programs ranked 14th in the CMP survey results related to “Most Important Parks and Recreation Programming (CMP pg. 40).

Multiple Audiences

The topographical advantages of Medlar MetroPark offer the opportunity to provide programming such as land navigation, which is a map and compass class and Leave Not Trace workshops.

Programming such as kayak river trips and youth kayak camps could begin from Medlar with development of the land adjacent to the Great Miami River which has paddling access. Outdoor adventure, recreation/education day camps are ranked 10th in the CMP survey results related to “Most Important Parks and Recreation Programming (CMP pg. 40).

Loop trails will provide access to diverse habitats and geologic and cultural features for naturalists led guided walks. Nature education programs ranked 6th survey results related to “Most Important Parks and Recreation Programming (CMP pg. 40).

Rice House improvements could provide classroom space for outdoor recreation programs, such as backpacking bicycle touring, paddlesports, bicycle maintenance, wilderness medicine and birding basics classes.

Self-directed opportunities, such as a focus on the trails as a healthy heart use for families and/or individuals of all ages.



2.7 SITE PLAN

Medlar MetroPark has two main use areas which will help organize and orient visitors to an array of opportunities available for them to explore. The Medlar East Use Area, which includes the existing parking lot, paved bike trail and Rice House, is the front door to the park where new visitors will experience the park for the first time. As park users become familiar with the park, visits can begin at other use areas where basic amenities and unique and varied activities are provided. These use areas will be connected by park trails, allowing users to create diverse experiences each time they visit. The use areas for the park have been redefined to include the following:

- Medlar East
- Medlar West

A second important factor driving the development of this and all MetroParks site plans is the Power of 10+, a concept, developed by Projects for Public Spaces, to evaluate and facilitate place making at multiple scales. Places thrive when users have a range of reasons—ten or more—to be there. These might include a place to sit, playgrounds to enjoy, art to touch, music to hear, food to eat, history to experience, and people to meet. Ideally, some of these activities will be unique to that particular place, reflecting the culture and history of the surrounding community. The following activities were identified in the planning process as appropriate for this park:



- Nature Play
- Picnicking
- Cycling
- Events
- Nature Education
- Birding
- Winter Sports
- Fitness
- Hiking/Walking
- Fishing
- Art and Photography
- Conservation Education
- Geocaching
- Camping

Key Site Plan Recommendations

With a foundation of the two concepts described above, key site plan recommendations were developed. Many of these recommendations have resulted in specific projects that are prioritized for the capital improvement plan in Section 3.2. The full [site plan](#) provides significant detail not provided here.

Medlar MetroPark consists of two large tracts of land, bisected by Medlar Road, in Miamisburg. For organization, and orientation purposes, the two parts of the park will be referred to as Medlar East, and Medlar West. The two halves, joined by connected by the Great-Little Trail (Medlar Bikeway), rely on this existing trail as a spine of activity and as a source of connection to surrounding communities and recreation areas. This narrative will describe proposed improvements and how these improvements address the desires of park users.

Medlar East Recommendations

This portion of the park is bound by Miamisburg – Springboro Pike, to the east, Medlar Road to the north and west, and adjoining residential parcels to the north and south. Medlar East contains the Rice House (as it's known to local residents), and large aluminum structure currently used for storage. Restoration efforts to the historic farm fields have been on-going.

The existing parking lot and entrance to the park will remain, with an expansion of the parking area to include an additional 45 parking spaces with a raingarden island to mitigate the additional impervious coverage created by the expanded parking facility. This raingarden will also function as an opportunity for environmental education, about water quality and the hydrologic cycle. The expanded parking area is knit into a large complex of amenities. Medlar East integrates the existing infrastructure of the Rice House and the Great-Little Trail (also known as Medlar Bikeway) into this cluster of facilities.

- **Improve the Day Use Area**

- Renovate Rice House (if architectural evaluation warrants adaptive reuse of the structure)
- Construct Reservable Shelters (2 medium, 1 large) [Events]
- Construct large nature play area including:
 - Earthen play
 - Willow tunnel
 - Balance logs
 - Climbing cairn
 - Close access to water
- Create flexible lawn space [Events, Fitness Programs]

- Construct restrooms
- Create flexible patio space (adjacent to house)
- Create fence and perennial border along Medlar Road and Miamisburg-Springboro Pike
- **Enhance the Crossing at Miamisburg – Springboro Pike**
 - Develop pedestrian friendly crossing facilities at the intersection of Miamisburg-Springboro Pike and Medlar to promote safe crossings between Medlar View Elementary School and the MetroPark along the current alignment of the Great Little Trail (also known as Medlar Bikeway).
- **Develop the environmental education nodes and trails located just to the south of the Rice House. This network of educational elements includes:**
 - A half mile loop paved trail (asphalt) [Hiking]
 - Wetland fore bays to collect storm water from the east
 - Raingarden with interpretive areas, water quality testing points [Nature/Outdoor Education]
 - Curvilinear earthen mound with shade trees to the south of the raingarden.
 - Three interpretive stations [Nature/Outdoor Education]
 - Nearly one-mile natural surface trail leading from educational trail, through wetland mitigation areas, to the Great-Little Trail (Medlar Bikeway), with three interpretive stations, through various landscape typologies. [Conservation Education]
- **Develop a system of trails and interpretive elements directly to the south of the enhanced parking area. This system includes:**
 - Nearly a half milestone surface loop trail around a pollinator prairie with two interpretive stations [Birding/ Conservation Education]
 - Removed hedgerows to enhance the view from the rice house area and along the Great-Little Trail (currently known as Medlar Bikeway)

- An additional .48-mile trail through prairie at the southern end of pollinator loop trail, that contains ephemeral artwork installations and a climbing cairn [Art/Photography]
- **Add features to the Great-Little Trail (also known as Medlar Bikeway) including:**
 - Mountain bike skills stations and fitness stations which are constructed from natural materials and utilize current phone and handheld media technologies. [Cycling/Fitness]
- **Improve the Medlar Road Crossing**
 - Site distance is a challenge for the Medlar Road Crossing. Enhanced pavement markings, rapid flashing beacon and showy landscape plantings will help to slow vehicular movement and facilitate safe bicycle and pedestrian crossing.
 - Develop a bus pick-up area at the western side of Medlar Road at the Medlar Road Crossing area to pick up visiting school children, and any also serve for volunteer parking.



Medlar West Recommendations

This portion of the park is bound by Dayton-Cincinnati Pike, to the west, Medlar Road to the south and east, and adjoining residential parcels to the south. Medlar West contains the old barn which is a remnant of the farmstead located at the west end of the property and the remnants of the Miami Erie Canal and associated aqueduct.

With ongoing reforestation efforts, and sensitive mature woodland areas, the majority of improvements to Medlar West are clustered at the western end of the park, along Dayton-Cincinnati Pike. The main improvements in this part of the park are a network of natural surface trails through reforestation areas [Hiking, Birding, Geocaching], and existing woodlands that highlight the rich topography. Located along the trails are different types of destinations to draw visitors into the interior of the site. Nature play nodes, of varying size, interpretive stations describing the ecologies and opportunities for natural exploration are also proposed.

- **Add features to the Great-Little Trail (Medlar Bikeway) Including:**
 - Fitness stations which are constructed from natural materials and utilize current phone and handheld media technologies. [Fitness]
- **Develop a series of loop trails leading through the reforestation areas and woodland including: [Conservation Education]**
 - Four small nature play areas
 - A wooden deck “underlook” to highlight the Shepards Run ravine
 - A natural arboretum trail, .54 miles in length [Outdoor Education/ Geocaching]
 - A bridge path overlooking a ravine leading to the pond
- **Develop fitness trails, enhancements and large play structures on the hillside below Eagle View to highlight views to the river and the riverside ecology including:**
 - A monolithic stair-climb to offer exercise and imaginative play spaces [nature play/fitness]
 - Embankment slides (three), for play and exercise.

- A large boulder climbing cairn, at the highest point along this portion of paved trail, for views to the river.
- A stone surfaced pedestrian path stacked alongside of the paved trail to offer separation for visitors to the Stair climb and embankment slides, and access to viewing platforms perched atop of the Hill. At the base of the embankment slides and stair climb the trail loops back around to connect with the existing paved trail.
- Utilize Eagle Overlook Hill as a sledding hill during winter months [Winter Sports]
- **Enhance the grassland habitat at the west end of the site including**
 - A trail loop and viewing node
- **Develop the Medlar West Day Use Area including:**
 - A boulevard entrance to the area, and the shared driveway for the maintenance facility, parking area, restored barn [Events/Education].
 - 1-acre maintenance facility to serve Medlar MetroPark, screened by mounds, walls and vegetation
 - Path and exhibit to highlight historic canal and aqueduct.
 - Restored Barn for classes and events, with nearby restroom facility.
 - Large Creek nature play area, where children can interact directly with the creek while learning about the site's unique transportation history and aqueduct structure [nature play/education]
 - 55-car main parking lot (with accessible parking)
 - A large lawn space, with large earthen mounds with tunnels, rock scrambles, and artwork [events, picnicking/art/nature play]
 - Three shelters one large and two medium [events, picnicking]
 - A climbing cairn to serve as a focal point as visitors enter the site [events, picnicking/art/nature play].

- A second parking area (30 cars) along the driveway, to serve the barn and lawn areas.
- Restroom facilities
- **Improve Native Habitats and access including:**
 - Develop the wildflower prairie separating the lawn area from the existing woodland.
 - Develop a trail around the wildflower prairie which leads to the existing pond
 - Enhance the existing pond to ensure a sustainable fishery
 - Develop an accessible trail and deck around the pond which will serve as a multi-season destination [Fishing/Ice Fishing].
- **Develop Camping and Connection to the Regional Trail System Including:**
 - Three wooded, primitive campsites near the wildflower prairie
 - Promote and anticipate growth in bike-based through-camping due to development of long regional bike routes, these campsites will offer a great location with easy access to the Great Miami River Recreation Trail and the Great Little Trail (Medlar Bikeway) [Camping/Cycling].
- **Enhance the Crossing at Cincinnati-Dayton Pike**
 - Develop pedestrian friendly crossing facilities at the current crossing location at Cincinnati-Dayton Pike to promote safe crossings between the Great Miami Recreation Trail and the Great Little Trail (Medlar Bikeway).

Short Term Recommendations

Some recommendations could be achieved at a relatively low-cost using staff resources:

- Nature play elements along paved bike trail
- Develop trails master plan and natural surface trails
- Stabilize the canal aqueduct by removing vegetation and redirecting stream flow
- Improve fishing access to pond
- Construct natural material fitness stations along the paved trail
- Construct mountain biking skills features along paved trail

Level of Service Amenities

- The following amenities outlined in the CMP are included in the site plan:
 - (1) Reservable Picnic Shelters (Small 1-25)
 - (3) Reservable Picnic Shelters (Medium 26-50)
 - (1) Reservable Picnic Shelters (Large 51-100)
 - (0) Outdoor Pavilions (100+)
 - (5) Nature Play Playgrounds
 - (1.07) Paved Trails (Miles)
 - (3.04) Soft/ Non Paved Trails (Miles)
 - (3.75) Nature/ Hiking/ Backpacking Trails (Miles)
 - (0) Equine Trails (Miles)
 - (0) Mountain Bike Trails (Miles)

2.8 LAND PROTECTION PLAN

FRMP's [Land Protection Plan \(link once LPP is done\)](#) identifies priorities for land protection based on criteria addressing conservation, the park, and the user. Many land protection priorities for Medlar MetroPark focus on park criteria, particularly completing the park's natural boundaries and conservation principles. Specific recommendations regarding land protection to achieve park needs and associated attainment strategies are listed below:

- Explore opportunities to place conservation easements or acquire wooded parcels adjacent to the current park property. There are significant high-quality wooded parcels which should be protected from future development and logging. Wooded properties are located on the western side of Medlar East and the north side of Medlar West.
- Look for opportunities to protect the stretches of Shephard Run Creek which runs along the north side and on Medlar West.
- Continue to work with Montgomery County Environmental Services to ensure protection and conservation of the grassland areas located on the future well field property on the west side of Cincinnati-Dayton Pike.
- Explore opportunities to acquire inholdings inside of Medlar West.
- Work with land-owners at the Medlar Road crossing to create a wider strip of park land through long term acquisition.
- Most of the surrounding residential properties are not creating significant impacts to the park and therefore do not need to be considered a high priority for acquisition. Favorable opportunities to expand park borders to a natural boundary should be explored.

The benefits that the Medlar MetroPark's diverse habitats will provide to the region are greatly improved by the surrounding connections to woodlands and the Great Miami River Corridor. Efforts need to continue to protect neighboring grassland and woodland areas to ensure the long-term health of the area.

