

**Recreation and Agricultural Citizens Committee (RACC)
Town of Rush, New York**



***Rush Riverside
Former Division for Youth (DFY) and BOCES Land Parcels
315 Acres by the Genesee River***

***Citizens Committee Final Report
To Rush Town Board and Community***

June 7, 2016

Citizens Committee Members

Ted Strang, Marianne Rizzo
Cecil Palmer, Philip T. Daggar
Jim Smith, Kathryn Hankins

Opening Statement

The committee has worked carefully and diligently to develop and present this report to the Rush Town Board and community. The work has been both challenging and rewarding. The former Division for Youth and BOCES properties were given to the Town of Rush to use as a park and recreational center for the enjoyment and benefit of residents of our community and visitors to our region. This land has 165 years of history as public land. This remarkable property has more than 315 acres of natural beauty, and has wetlands; grasslands; a beautiful drumlin; more than 40 acres of forests; farmland, and more than a mile of riverfront on the Genesee River, and former farm and school buildings. This report is a comprehensive review of potential uses that will protect and preserve the property and not increase the tax burden for residents.

The committee's overarching suggestion is to restore, protect and preserve the land; to develop a trail system and natural landscape and wildlife habitat park on the former Division for Youth and BOCES properties. With this natural setting, the committee suggests a range of low-environmental impact uses for the land and buildings. The wide range of suggested uses align to a common vision that celebrates the history of the land as a home and school for youth; builds upon the Town of Rush's treasured small town rural heritage and history; and incorporates active family farm activities as a unique way for people of all ages and abilities to connect to nature, relax, and promote their physical and emotional health and wellness.

The suggested activities together create a unique forest, and riverfront park and recreation center where visitors can relax, learn, and enjoy. The former BOCES campus buildings and roadways can be a setting for a rural, nature-based recreation center, and become a well-respected partner with the long-established NY Transportation Museum and Rochester and Genesee Valley Railroad Museums. There are many effective ways to increase public access, ensure public safety, and restore the land and buildings. It is important to recognize the significant tax dollars have been spent by state and local school districts to improve and maintain this land and buildings. This history of public investment can best be protected by keeping the land and buildings open to the public. The committee recommends a fiscally conservative approach to protect both the land and taxpayers.

Another important consideration for the committee was that the land is located in a residential neighborhood. All suggested activities do not alter the character of this beautiful section of town. All activities are designed to strengthen the neighborhood and not be disruptive to the peace and serenity of the area. Promoting the start of a non-profit foundation to manage the activities of the park can protect taxpayers and ensure continuity between town administrations.

One of the suggestions is for a new citizens committee to be recruited and empowered to continue the work of this citizens' committee. There is a need for a volunteer citizens committee that is authorized to assist the Town Board to conduct and provide needed oversight and risk management of activities on the property, and ensure all activities are safe, appropriate and benefit the community, taxpayers, and protect the land.

The committee hopes that this report will ensure long-term stability and sustainability for the property and promote increased interest and support by volunteers.

Acknowledgements

Many people have contributed to the work of the committee including:

Jerry W. Horton, Chairperson 2012-2013.
Ethan Crist, committee member, 2012-2013
Christine Sheffer, committee member, 2012-2013
Kathryn Steiner, Board liaison, 2012- 2015
Richard Anderson, former Town Supervisor, 2012-2014
Cathleen Frank, Town Supervisor
Gerald Kusse, Board liaison 2016
Mark David, Highway Supervisor
Pat Stevens, Recreation Supervisor

Committee Expertise

Committee members offered a wide range of professional work experience and expertise including: property, building, and risk management; restoration of old buildings; renovation cost estimates; accessibility and Americans with Disabilities Act requirements; land use laws and regulations; knowledge and experience with commercial farming; land use and best practices for agriculture and watershed management; grant writing and fundraising; volunteer coordination; non-profit management; and education, marketing and promotion. Committee members together represented more than 100 years of living in Rush. They offered both their personal perspective on what this land means to them personally, as well as for their family, their neighbors, and friends.

Timeline Citizens' Committee

January 2012	Town resolution to form Citizens Committee.
August 2012	Resolution #130-2012. Members announced. Jerry Horton appointed chair
October 2012	First meeting held.
June 2013	Clean-up day organized successfully.
July 2013	Strategic Plan developed and presented to Town Board.
August 2013 – July 2014	Chairperson unable to schedule meetings. Committee meetings are not held for approximately a year. Committee members continue to do their research. Chairperson resigns.
August 2014	Committee regroups. No chair is appointed by Town Board. Committee members agree to use a consensus model or “Leading by Convening” approach. Regular scheduled meetings with consistent attendance of members
Fall 2014	Trails restored with leadership of committee member, Philip T. Daggar, Mark David, Highway Supervisor, and Town Highway Department. Trail signage plan developed. No hunting monitored. Tours for Conservation Board and residents.
February 2015	Progress report presented to Town Board.
April 27, 2016	Committee presentation to Town Board and public.
May 18, 2016	Written Report Presented to Town Board for review and feedback.
May 25, 2016	Open discussion to respond to questions from Town Board.
June 8, 2016	Committee report submitted as requested.

Town Board Resolution #130-2012, August 22, 2012

“Adoption of Recreational and Agricultural Use Citizens Committee – Supervisor Anderson along with the Town Board has received 8 submissions from Rush residents to be included on the Recreational and Agricultural Use Citizens Committee (RACC).

The Committee’s mission is to provide suggestions to the Board for the uses of the BOCES property located at 6565 East Henrietta Road and the Division of Youth property located at 375 Rush Scottsville Road. The Committee will include Ted Strang, Marianne Rizzo, Philip Dagggar, Kathryn Hankins, Cecil Palmer, Jim Smith, Ethan Crist, Christine Sheffer and Jerry Horton with Jerry Horton as chair of the committee.

Resolution #130-2012

Councilwoman Sluberski moved to create a Recreational and Agricultural Use Citizens Committee comprised of Ted Strang, Marianne Rizzo, Philp Dagggar, Kathryn Hankins, Cecil Palmer, Jim Smith, Ethan Crist, Christine Sheffer and Jerry Horton with Jerry Horton as chair of the committee for the sole purposes of acting as an advisory committee to the town on uses of both 6565 East River Road, Rush and 375 Rush-Scottsville Road. Councilwoman Steiner seconded the motion. Roll: Councilwoman Sluberski aye; Councilwoman Steiner aye; Councilman Woolaver aye; Supervisor Anderson aye; Motion Carried.”

Committee’s Vision

To preserve and protect the land and buildings on the property for the enjoyment of the residents of our community. The committee’s vision evolved to include recreational opportunities not only for our residents but also for visitors to our town.

Objectives of the Committee in developing suggestions for recreational uses:

- Safeguard and preserve the gift of property for future generations.
- Serve as advocates for the community to protect the land that was given to our community by the State of New York for generations to come.
- Support our community’s vision and protect the character of our rural community.
- Safeguard the land and its natural resources, wildlife, and open space.
- Promote and support activities that connect and support local farmers, such as garden-crop farms, Community Sustainable Agriculture (CSA), and engage children and youth in learning more about the food they eat. (e.g. NYS Agriculture and Markets farm to school initiative).
- Align recreational activities to our town’s historical rural heritage; understand and appreciate the challenges and benefits of *historical “old fashioned” non-commercial* farm techniques that were used to raise fruits, vegetables and legumes.
- Identify uses that support the resurgence of interest in eating healthy foods; promote local produce, NYS specialty crops, and gardening. (Healthy People 2020, NYS Department of Health Improvement Plan 2013-2018)

- Promote and increase access to outdoor activities, health, fitness, exercise, and education in a fun, relaxing, recreational format that is accessible and safe for people of all ages and abilities.
- Increase opportunities to connect with nature to improve physical and emotional health and fitness.
- Promote interactive art, cultural, and educational activities through recreational activities such as outdoor photography, crafts, outdoor art classes, rural history, experiential farm activities, and gardening.
- Promote safe outdoor recreational activities for all sectors of our community. As needed, develop special recreational activities that are designed to meet targeted needs, and reach out and engage young children, youth, seniors and families.
- Suggest uses that align to the history of the property, our town's rural character, our town's comprehensive plan and Farmland Protection Plan. Partner with area farmers to develop recreation uses for the fields, open space and grass areas on the property that will actively engage participants of all ages and abilities.
- Advise town on necessary maintenance, safety and security for buildings and property. Identify potential start-up costs, and ongoing maintenance and security concerns for various activities.

Access to Healthy Food

Since the committee started its work, the interest in healthy food is an area that continues to expand in our region, state and nation. There is a growing understanding that nutrition, exercise and stress management can help in the prevention and management of chronic illness such as obesity, diabetes, and heart disease. Municipal recreation centers, through grants and partnerships, with entities such as the NYS Department of Health (DOH) and NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets, can work together to address chronic health care conditions, and promote a healthy lifestyle that includes nutrition, exercise and stress management.

As one example, this is a link to the background information on the statewide Healthy Food initiatives: (<http://www.agriculture.ny.gov/AP/APHealthyFoods.html>)

“One of the most important things we can do is provide healthy food to New Yorkers. Promoting access to healthy, locally-grown food in traditionally underserved urban communities is a priority for Governor Cuomo and the Department. Following are some of the major initiatives the Department administers to provide consumers access to locally produced healthy food.”

These programs are intended to bring together producers and consumers. They include programs such as: Farmers' Markets, Farmers' Market Nutrition Programs, Training Webinars, Fresh Connect, and Farm to School. These new opportunities are initiatives that are expected to continue to grow and offer the town opportunities for both funding and community-based partnerships. We have many local farmers who are actively engaged in growing and selling healthy food. A few examples are: Chase Farms, Werner Farms, Lehigh Valley Outpost, and Gro-Moore Farms.

The suggestions contained in this report reinforce committee standards:

- The land has unique features, and a rich history as an educational and agricultural setting for youth. This is a legacy that is well worth protecting and safeguarding for generations to come.
- There are already enough “manicured” parks in this region (Mendon Ponds, Highland Park, and Genesee Valley Park). Creating a natural habitat reserve that includes forest, wetlands, pasture, grass fields and riverbank is a unique asset to the community and region. There are models for the town board to achieve this goal.
- One mile of Genesee River front puts us “on the map”, and offers our community an opportunity to partner with other communities bordering the Genesee River from Pennsylvania to Lake Ontario.
- There are potential community-based collaboration partners. One example is Genesee River Watch, (<http://www.geneseeriverwatch.org/index.php/genesee-river>).
- Opportunities for funding may increase if the town identifies and supports uses for the property that align to the goals of regional, state, and national partners that are involved in protecting open space, and restoration of rivers and Great Lakes Basin.
- Potential funding sources will depend on what uses the town board decides to support. A beginning list of available funding and partner resources are listed in the Resource section. There are many established funding sources that support park, recreation, outdoor activities, art and culture, and many activities may attract both public and private supporters.

Land Use Restrictions

There are land use restrictions on both parcels. The committee’s suggestions align with these restrictions. Also, the committee has attempted to identify suggestions that are compatible with each other, and focus on relaxation, enjoyment, nature, outdoor activities and exercise.

The committee has included agricultural recreation activities that are compatible and supportive of the health and wellness of all children and adults, of all abilities, and activities where participants can be actively involved and engaged. The other area of recreational activities are arts and crafts, and educational and cultural programs that can be conducted inside or outside and incorporate nature.

The definition of ancillary (Web definition) is “providing necessary support to the primary activities or operation of the organization, institution, industry or system.”

The NYS Office of General Services (OGS) is clarifying the meaning of the land use restriction “park and recreation”; “ancillary uses”; as well as the provisions of the “reverter clause” for both properties. The Town Board is waiting for the state’s response.

The committee suggests that all property uses be recreational in nature and designed to provide public access, with recreation activities accessible to people of all abilities.

There are many appropriate no cost or low cost uses that can be identified that do not conflict with these restrictions.

Prior town boards and the town attorney said that the land and buildings cannot be sold or leased for any other purposes. (Town Board Minutes 2/8/12)

The NYS Parkland Alienation laws may also apply. NYS public land used for park and recreation, regardless of whether the land is a designated park, appear to be covered under these regulations. These rules would require pre-approval for any commercial activities, including timbering and farm leases from the NYS Legislature.

This manual identifies the restrictions and approval process:

<http://www.nysparks.com/publications/documents/AlienationHandbook.pdf>

Description, History of Acquisition and Legal Restrictions on Use of Land Description of Land Parcels



Parcel #1 is 100.5 acres, referred to as the former Division for Youth (DFY) property. This parcel was transferred from the NYS Office of General Services (OGS) February 25, 2010 (Book of Patents, No. 113 page 17).

- This land was farmed when it was owned by the Division for Youth, and when it was transferred to the Town of Rush. It is unknown what farming practices were used during this time period.
- Located between Genesee River and Railroad Museum on Route 251, Rush-Scottsville Road. There are an estimated 1600-2000 feet bordering the Genesee River (This is a section of the more than 1 mile bordering the Genesee River for the total property).

- The Rush Town Board passed the resolution October 8, 2008 requesting the transfer and conveyance of the premises for “park and recreational purposes”.
- There is a “reverter clause” that means the NYS OGS could go to court to take the land back if it is not used appropriately.
- No buildings are on the property.
- The land is located in a floodplain. Land has been underwater many times in its history. A stream runs through the property. The stream is bordered by wetland trees.
- There are approximately 54 acres in 4 fields designed using best management practices to reduce run-off into the Genesee River Land. The lots are separated by border/buffers for drainage designed to slow down sediment and non-point pollution in the river.
- This 4 lot configuration has been in place since at least 1990 based on maps from Monroe County Soil and Water.
- There is large wood lot on the property that contains maples and other mature hardwoods. It was estimated that more than 2000 trees have been counted in the area of the four lots. It is suggested that a detailed inventory be conducted to verify the number and condition of trees and species. This could be accomplished with the assistance of community volunteers.
- The committee suggests that the wooded areas and river and stream borders continue to be maintained and enhanced, and where possible, restored to a more natural state. The borders between the four fields, the stream and river border should be expanded. The Monroe County Soil and Water report recommended maintaining stream and river borders of 35 feet. The current recommendation by the NYS Department of Conservation is to expand river borders to 100 feet. This expanded border would accommodate the development of the suggested river trail walk.
- Another suggestion is that a natural landscape trail be developed with the expanded river, stream and field borders that will attract visitors coming to the Genesee Valley Railroad Museum, and connect with the existing trails.
- It is suggested that the field areas that have not been cultivated remain uncultivated, and converted to recreational and farm activities that do not use pesticides. As an example, a field could be designed for farm activities that support public-private partnerships that allow residents to volunteer and actively participate in the farming activities.
- Grants are available from the NYS Department of Agriculture and would promote School to Farm, specialty crops, and sustainability that engages area colleges such as Rochester Institute of Technology, and Cornell University.



Parcel #2 is 215.73 acres, referred to as the former Monroe County Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES #1) property

- BOCES # 1 purchased this parcel from OGS in 1995. In 2011 BOCES transferred the property to the Town of Rush.
- The acquisition agreement states that the Letters of Patent would be revised from “education use” to **“park and recreation and ancillary uses.”**
- The NY Transportation Museum has been located on this property for more than 40 years. They have a lease with the Town.
- This parcel has 10 additional potentially usable buildings.
- There are currently two fields totaling approximately 46 acres that are being cultivated on this property. The committee requested that dates for application of any chemicals and pesticides be provided to the town in an attempt to reduce the potential negative impact on visitors.

Leases of Fields for Commercial Row Crops

From the beginning, the goals of the committee have been to investigate potential recreation uses that will benefit the community and the region. The proposed uses of the property are inextricably linked to the ability to provide safe access to the property and to the ability to use the various land areas and buildings.

The committee has consistently expressed to the Town Board their serious concerns about probable risks to visitors’ safety and potentially dangerous conditions that currently exist on the property. Commercial leases and other incompatible uses do not fit with the diverse children, youth, adults and seniors who visit the property. At the

same time, these potential health concerns and hazards are easily remedied to allow full safe access to the property.

Before the citizens' committee started their work, the Rush Town Board approved a competitive bidding process of approximately 100 acres for commercial row crop farming; and an additional 16 acres for cattle grazing. The current five year leases, 2012 to 2017, are for field row crops for two parcels, one for 41.1 acres and one for 58.7 acres; approximately \$19,000 has been budgeted each year in the Town General Fund. Cattle grazing was awarded for 16 acres at \$25/acre for 7-14 animals depending on the season.

The committee's experience over the past five years indicates that these farm leases have impaired the development of recreational uses. These commercial farming activities have reduced public access to the land. These leases were expected to end February 2017. As a result, the committee focused its attention on opening the trails, signage, and promoting plans to protect the buildings.

The current town supervisor has been negotiating a new seven year lease proposal with one selected commercial farmer. The new proposal is for the former Division for Youth parcel, and includes expanding the size of the fields for commercial row-crops, removing hundreds of trees; and installing drain tiles to increase yields and mitigate the natural ponding on the land.

Pesticides

The use of pesticides has been an ongoing concern by many residents, and was raised as a concern to the Town Board before the current land leases were bid out to area farmers. The Town Board assured that the land would be safe and that pesticides would be "environmentally friendly" The concerns on runoff and pesticides are also included in the Monroe County Soil and Water report.

Having parklands that are open to the public may not be compatible with commercial farming and may create an unacceptable level of exposure to potential liability for the town. Since the town would still be the land owner, and be earning revenue from this farming, if pesticides are being used this may add to the potential liability exposure for the town. The town may need to be prepared to be responsible for maintaining Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) on all chemicals being used on the property. The town may also be responsible for providing necessary information requested by doctors, hospitals, and other health care providers for children and adults who are exposed to chemicals and may have an allergic or negative reaction. The question must be raised and answered, "How will the town alert the public to possible exposure to these chemicals."

There are pesticides that are known as "Neonicotinoids" that are very toxic to pollinators, bees, and butterflies. The health of honey bees and the loss of colonies is a very serious situation and studies have shown that these pesticides may be reducing the resistance in bees to parasites and mites. There are other farm chemicals that have an effect on the health of bees as well.

This proposed lease would mean that many of the proposed land-use activities that the committee has researched and is suggesting, would not be possible. The proposed

land lease proposal and renovation of the fields to increase crop yields will result in the loss of public access to this parcel for another 7 years; result in irreversible damage to the natural habitat for birds, geese, bees, and other wildlife; cause increased harm to the Genesee River from non-point pollution; and damage forever the natural landscape, natural ponding, streams and ponding, and destroy the protective forest borders and stream buffers on this parcel.

The committee suggests that the town board reconsider the lease proposal, and allow only recreational agricultural activities that are community-based, and will restore the fields and soil, and allow the land to recover.

The committee worked together to define the meaning and scope of “recreational agricultural activities”. This category of recreational uses can honor our town’s rural heritage, and offer activities that can be safely done by children and adults of all abilities, where there is minimal to no risk to health and safety. The committee has identified many suitable and compatible activities in this category, and there are many models and examples in NYS and across the nation.

This would be a first step to transition to a natural landscape community farm and garden area. There are many examples of community park farms that engage the community in farm-related projects and encourage visitors of all ages and abilities to be actively involved. These purposes have been identified by the committee, and can be further explored.

All agricultural activities should align and support the spirit and intent of the land-use restrictions, and be recreational and support educational, health and wellness, and relaxation goals. Many public parks can be used as examples.

Alternative Farm Uses to Commercial Farm Leases include:

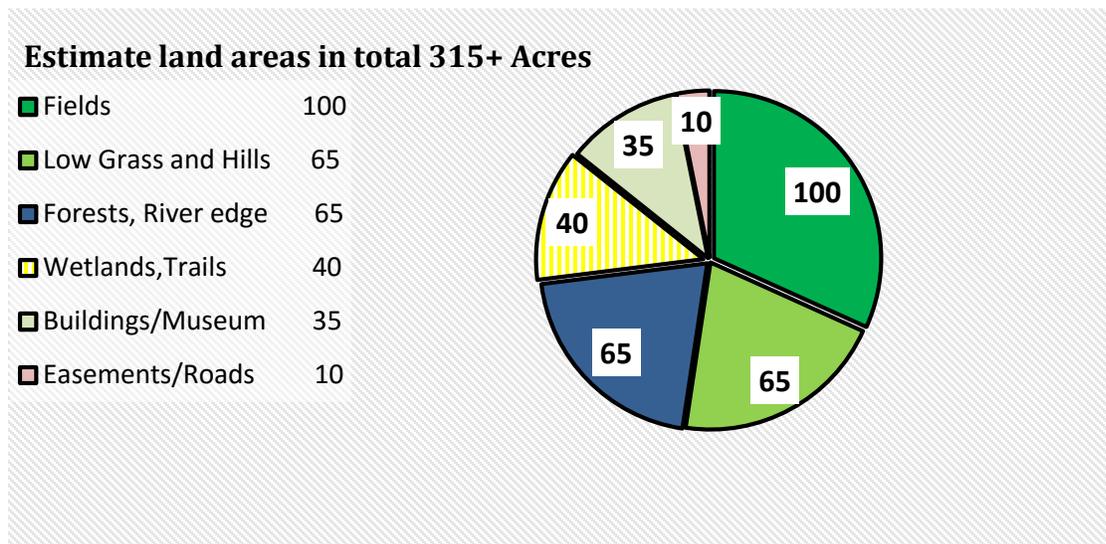
Many of these suggestions require partnerships with a private, community-based non-profit foundation, and/or non-profit partners such as the museums, or businesses.

A suggestion for consideration is for the town to work together with a private, non-profit foundation similar to the Henrietta Foundation or the Oatka Creek Watershed Committee. A non-profit foundation or organization would provide an opportunity to ensure activities depend on volunteers and do not depend on increased government supports and taxpayer dollars.

Ideas for fundraising activities include:

- “Family Tree”: This could include activities that would be “memory walks” that mix genealogy, history and nature.
- Memorial and Honor Tree Walkway Program: Donations are made to plant trees, place benches or memorial stones or pavers. As an example, for the Henrietta Foundation, the minimum donations for a memorial tree is \$375 and for a bench dedication is \$425.
- Private donations, sponsors, and grants
- Business and fraternal organizations donations and sponsors for special events.

- Partnerships with non-profits that promote health and wellness and community awareness (e.g. Alzheimer's, Diabetes, Hypertension, Cancer, Heart, Kidney Diseases, Autism)
- Unique fundraising events that mix the unique features of the land, recreation, outdoors, and fun such as geocaching, scavenger hunts, garden parties, and other events for new projects.
- Memorable Signature Annual Events: History Days, Old Car Fairs, Flea Markets and other single day events supported by neighbors that do not jeopardize the land areas, or disrupt or alter the character of the neighborhood, but can bring in funds and sponsors for maintenance operations.



Funding Available to support land and building repairs

In the fall of 2015 the committee was informed by the Town Board Liaison that the funds raised by leasing the property have been set aside and are available to rehabilitate the property. The amount in the fund is approximately \$80,000.

The committee has suggested to the town board that these available funds be used to repair the roofs and for the necessary clean up and removal of hazards in and around the buildings. These needed repairs to the roofs and clean-up of the interior and exterior of the buildings, and landscape, are to ensure safety, control attracting unwanted pests (rodents, bee hives) and make the property more attractive to public visitors and volunteer groups. The priority to remove hazards and any toxins, including lead and mold, continues to be suggested as the first priority.

Limitations on public uses

- Currently there is no public drinking water, sewer or septic systems.

- Phase 1 and Phase 2 SEQR reviews done at time of transfer. During these reviews, it was identified that there were archeological sensitive areas, environmentally sensitive areas such as wetlands, drumlins, riverfront bank and buffers, and forests.

Reports studied included:

- **Monroe County Soil and Water Management Report** provided a land use management plan. Recommendations included maintaining a 35 foot buffer for all streams and riverfront property for farmland; and monitoring of pesticide use to avoid non-point source pollution of the Genesee River.
- **Forest Management Report:** It is suggested that a new review be requested to support the goal of a natural habitat. A citizens committee or foundation could also be involved. This current report was framed and requested to support a tree harvesting plan in order to generate funds, rather than a request to develop a nature preserve.

The report describes the stands of hardwoods that are growing on the property.

Stand #1 – 23 acres, Northern hardwood stand contains sugar maple, black walnut, hickory, beech, red oak, tulip poplar and basswood, with a small percentage of other hardwoods.

Stand #2- 10 acres: This hardwood stand contains black walnut, red oak, hickory, sugar maple and a mix of other hardwoods.

Stand #3 – 4 acres. This small stand is low and wet and contains ash, soft maple and cottonwood with a few other hardwood species. No management is required in this stand.

Stand #4 – 11 acres. This area was observed and was not walked through. It appears to be a small spruce plantation. The topography is steep and care should be taken to avoid erosion.

- **Clough Harbour Building Condition Report:** This report appears to support the previous findings and recommendations presented to the Town Board in 2013 and 2014. The report supports the committee's ongoing safety concerns, and need for ongoing risk management.

These reports are available in the Appendix.

Historical Uses

There are more than 200 acres of open space, fields and wetlands. The land has a rich history where youth, area educators and non-profit professionals actively engaged in leadership and team-building retreats (rope courses). Historically, residents often used the area for hiking, horseback riding, and scouting activities. The committee suggests that all of these activities should be continued and expanded.

Current Property Maintenance

The Rush Highway Department staff are currently responsible for the maintenance; repair and improvements to the trails on the site. They have been responsible for snow removal, removal of dead trees, and for putting out the No Hunting Signs each fall as

hunting season begins. BOCES #1 Landscaping students continue to provide the maintenance of, mowing, of the grass areas around all facilities. Their equipment is stored on site. A partnership to explore more ways to enlist students to be involved in landscaping activities should be considered.

Overview of Committee Activities

Committee activities, working with town administration and the highway department, included:

- Walking trails developed. Tours offered.
- A detailed review of all BOCES buildings was conducted and a “do no harm” plan presented to stop the deterioration of roofs and building structures within the limited \$10,000 budget.
- Risk Management: Committee members actively investigated and presented concerns and solutions about the land and buildings on the former BOCES property. The town board was alerted on a regular basis to serious health, safety, security concerns. Examples include hunting, unauthorized youth after hours, barb wire, electric fence, over-turned school bus and car.
- The committee members worked diligently to increase ways to ensure safe access to the property. Suggestions were offered on viable passive recreation activities that could be offered without risk.
- Investigate uses of the land and buildings
- Identify criteria to assess the pros and cons of any suggested use. This criteria includes: current and projected community need: conformance with deed restrictions; alignment with the agreed upon goals, feasibility, duplication, expected utilization by residents, cost of renovation and operational and maintenance, impact on neighborhood and community, and liability for the town board and taxpayers.
- Introduce the land to residents, Rotary Club, and others interested in potential partnerships.
- Clean-up days.

Desired Outcomes:

- Land restored to a more natural state to help maintain and promote improved habitats for indigenous birds, fowl, butterflies, insects, and all wildlife.
- Maintain forests in natural habitat, with as little interference as possible to ensure public safety and safe recreational use for the museums and railroad.
- Complete the work required to safeguard the buildings, including roof repairs, removal of hazardous materials, lead abatement, and removal of all material.
- Maintenance of exterior of all buildings for pest management.
- Institute an effective risk management system that can help to prevent problems, remove risks, reduce town liability, and protect visitors of all ages who visit the property,

Suggestions are based on the following assumptions:

- **Implement a Prevention, Risk and Pest Management Plan** that preserves natural habitats, and uses high standards for public safety: e.g. identify invasive species; dead or fallen trees; erosion; security issues; and needed building repairs. (e.g. trails, signs,)
- **Use existing models and best-practices to restore and safeguard land features, and watershed.** Eliminate non-point pollution of the Genesee River. Use non-toxic, natural solutions designed to preserve natural habitats.
- **No pesticides, commercial crop farming, or dumping.**
- **A private non-profit foundation be started to** raise supplemental funds to support restoration and special projects. NYS towns cannot legally engage in fundraising activities. The committee does not believe that the management and support of the park should be the responsibility of only our town government; and that a private foundation would generate both volunteers and funds, and ensure that park activities are not an unfair burden for town employees and taxpayers.
- **There are many potential volunteers and community-based partners if the parcels are protected as a park.**
- **Volunteers** assist in beautification and maintenance activities.



Suggestions

1. Designate Property as a Natural Habitat Forest Park and Recreation Center

Reasons include:

- Protects the land for future generations.
- Supports the goals and restrictions imposed by the state on the land.
- Establishes a commitment. Prompts development of a master plan that engages many stakeholders.
- Increases opportunities for regional promotions, and partnerships with other Genesee River parks from Pennsylvania to Lake Ontario.
- Increase opportunities for grants and public support at a regional, state, and federal level from a wide range of agencies.
- Ensures future is not negatively impacted by different town board administrations with changing visions and priorities.
- Strengthens partnership with the Town Highway Department.
- Promotes greater stability of the residential neighborhood.

2. Establish a Natural Habitat Preserve

- Land Areas impacted: Forests, Wetlands, River bed fields, Riverfront, Grasslands.
- A haven for birds and wildlife.
- A place where visitors can view a natural setting that has not been damaged by people, and where animals live and thrive.

3. Preserve and Restore Natural Forest Areas.

- **Remove only specific trees or fallen trees** that pose a risk to the railroad tracks, the trail and visitors. Maintain public safety. Keep forests as natural as possible to protect habitats of birds and wildlife.
- There is a utility easement that is maintained that serves as a fire prevention access. The potential for a forest fire in this area is very low. If we were to experience in the future a severe drought, it could be important to increase the monitoring of the forests, and post new warnings about the use of matches or fire.
- **The NYS Forestry Department's proposed** management plan should be designed to support a nature reserve. The NYS DEC has guidelines that can help to establish a natural forest habitat.
- **A team (e.g. citizen volunteers or volunteers from the proposed private foundation)** can be trained to work together as consultants to protect against

unwarranted and unnecessary tree removal. There is a need for knowledgeable and committed citizens to maintain a nature preserve; and ensure commercial interests and money-making goals do not prevail.

- **Minimal removal of trees and limited pruning.** A do no harm policy should be in place, and a set of very conservative criteria developed and specific written reasons cited, with a sign off by the town board before any trees are removed.
4. **Protect former DFY land and connect and integrate this parcel with the former BOCES parcel as one parkland:**
- **Create a riverfront natural landscape design.** Include nature trails to introduce residents to land. Plant trees, bushes, and possibly woody crops. Hazelnut trees and other indigenous trees are readily available. A partnership with the Monroe Cooperative Extension and the Arbor Day Foundation can help in implementing this suggestion.
 - **Establish a riverfront walking trail that can be accessed from the curb-side of Route 251 and the Rochester and Genesee Valley Railroad Museum, and connects with the current trails.**
 - **Implement best practices for riverbed restoration** (*Dept. of Environmental Conservation, Environmental Protection Agency and Mon. Co. Soil and Water*)
 - **Maintain wetlands on land.** Allow natural ponding to reduce non-point source pollution to the Genesee River. Restore fields with grass and clovers.
 - **Maintain the four fields and tree borders in place to protect Genesee River.**
 - **Expand river border buffer to at least 100 feet.** Leave current trees and growth. Plant new hardwoods trees to expand border. (*Stroud Center*)
 - **Reduce run-off and non-point source pollution.** End use of pesticides, herbicides and insecticides.

5. **Enhance trails and paths to include fields, wetlands.**

The trails and walking paths provide a valued low-environmental impact and effective opportunity for residents to improve their health and wellbeing. With the leadership of committee member, Philip T. Daggar, and Mark David and the Town of Rush Highway Department staff, the reopening of the trails was accomplished. The Highway Department has been able to schedule the development and ongoing maintenance of the paths into their work schedule without an increase cost to taxpayers.

The trails have been open since the fall of 2014. The signs were installed in the fall of 2015. Tours of the trails consistently express their awe at this special and unique parkland. The committee wanted to start to open the land to the public. Reopening the former trails was a first step in helping citizens gain access to this beautiful land.

Suggestions include:

- Trail Head to connect with Lehigh Valley and Genesee Valley Trail.
- Create look-outs, and look-up spots on the trail.
- Protect and preserve land: wildlife, bird sanctuary, prohibit hunting, snowmobiles, ATVs, unauthorized uses.
- Model evidence-based practices to protect the Genesee River: Adhere to strict environmental, best management practices; protect soil; buffers to reduce loss of phosphates, non-point pollution, and sediment run-off to river.
- Maintain and enhance trails for hiking and horseback riding.
- Restore grassland and wetland areas. Remove and restore any remaining dumping areas.
- Increase access to scouts, volunteer clean-up days, tours, and outreach activities and events.
- Increase strategies for enforcement of prohibited activities.
- Reject proposals that do not support park and recreation activities, and could result in loss of natural setting. Commercial farming and pesticides are not compatible with recreation activities. Especially for young children and seniors.

Usability Improvements for trail system:**A. Expand Way-Finding System:**

- Add Trailhead Kiosk(s), Add rustic-style kiosk information centers at main trail head and other entry points
 - Roofed structure (see photos of sample structures)
 - Bulletin board
 - Sign in
 - Rules
 - Maps
 - Event listings
 - Built in benches
- Special condition warnings: i.e. insects, wet areas.

B. Make scenic area “destinations” along trail system

- Destination 1: “White Cabin Overlook”, a scenic view of the river among large trees.
 - Clean up remaining debris and overgrowth.
 - Add simple picnic shelter with 1-2 tables
- Destination 2: “Fallen Lean-to Overlook”, An elevated view of the two river bends (formerly a campsite with a lean-to shelter)
 - Clean up debris from dismantled lean-to cabin.
 - Clean up overgrowth.
 - Add simple picnic shelter with 1-2 tables
- Destination 3:

C. Make scenic area “destinations” along trail system

- Destination 3: “Old Orchard Trail Clearing”, An open, grassy clearing at the south end of Old Orchard Trail - Add simple picnic shelter with 1-2 tables
- Destination 4. A marker for the grove of beech trees on Daggar’s Trail, Riverside, North of Middle Area

D. Repair/rebuild bridges on trails.

- “Creek Crossing Bridge”: Rail road tie footbridge that has washed out.
- “Foot Bridge”: Originally built to support trucks, tractors, etc. This bridge is in need of structural repair. If repaired to its original structural strength, it would allow for access by maintenance vehicles as well as foot traffic.

6. Strengthen Partnership with NY Transportation Museum and Rochester and Genesee Valley Railroad Museum.

- The museums are “anchors” to the property and connect the DFY and BOCES properties. They are important assets to our community. Public and private partnerships with both organizations will benefit both our community and region.
- The NY Transportation Museum is a model non-profit partner and compatible with the purpose of the property.
- Develop a long term “forever” lease agreement to support the museum, located on site for more than 40 years. (e.g. include a reverter clause if they moved). This could give the museum more stability when they apply for grants and capital campaigns.
- Develop an agreement to use their parking lot, water, bathroom facilities for special events.
- Develop a public-private agreement to strengthen and increase public use and promotion of both properties.
- Coordinate special events to introduce the museum and the walking trails.
- Recruit community volunteers to support activities in both areas.
- Coordinate and support grants for building improvements.

NYS Transportation Museum

- Founded in 1975 – last year celebrated their 40th year anniversary.
- More than 5000 visitors each year.
- More than 2 miles of track connecting with the Rochester & Genesee Valley Railroad Museum located on Rte. 251 at the Southwest end of the Rush Riverside Reserve.

- NYS Transportation Museum offers the reserve a parking lot, an accessible bathroom facility with a septic system, and drinking water from a well that is tested as required by Monroe County Department of Health.
- Visitors to the museum are able to access Rush Genesee Riverside Refuge/Reserve trails from museum.
- The opportunities for additional partnerships should be considered.

Rochester & Genesee Valley Railroad Museum

- The railroad tracks go from the NYS Transportation Museum to the Railroad Museum.
- Both museums are “anchors” to the property, and offer many opportunities for private-public partnerships, regional grant initiatives that would strengthen tourism and development of both of these enterprises.

7. Suggestions of Passive Recreation Activities include:

- Year-around hikes and guided tours.
- Identify great spots for photographers, bird watchers, wildlife, great trees.
- Invite to high school and college faculty/students to study wetland habitats, watersheds, environment, ecology, landscape design, and sustainability.
- Practice for Cross Country Race Teams.
- Flying kites, picnicking, picking-drying wildflowers.
- Snowshoe, Cross-country skiing,
- Biking Club Place to meet.



8. Agricultural Recreation Use

All committee members are advocates who support area farmers, and highly value our town's long-standing commitment to farming, and our small town, rural heritage. Residents in Rush are proud of their rural heritage and are very supportive of area farmers. The Town board, with support from residents, passed the Farmland Protection Plan in 2012.

The committee supports recreational/agricultural uses that are in alignment with the primary uses for the land and meet the requirements of the land gift restrictions that ensure full public access, park and recreation, and access to people of all ages and abilities.

Suggestions for Agriculture-Recreation Uses include:

- Haven for Bees - native wild flowers --
- Maple Syrup Tapping Recreation and History Program (40 trees counted)
- Agritourism Activities such as the Fall Festival
- Memorial Tree Park (oaks, maples)
- Community Sustainable Agriculture (CSA). 5- 10 acre can serve 250 full share CSA members. While many Rush residents are active gardeners, others, especially seniors, can no longer engage in this activity. A partnership with Food Link could be a successful partner for the region.
- Specialty Crops in partnership with area farmers;
- Native Perennial Gardens; Historical crop gardens (models available)
- Natural Landscape Gardens
- Fruit trees and berry bushes, and other perennials (e.g. asparagus)
- Herb garden – nature classes on drying, using herbs, teas, benefits of herbs
- Birds, bees, plants – Nature Photography (i.e. Mendon is famous for a field of sunflowers planted at Route 64 and Stone Rd. – hundreds visit each fall)
- Outdoor Courses on Permaculture -- agriculture and social design principles centered on utilizing patterns and features of natural ecosystems.
- Natural Landscape Architecture: classes to learn more about how to design healthy habitats for wildlife, watersheds, soil health, and river walkways.
- Farm Sanctuary to rescue abused, abandoned, or injured farm animals and horses. (Model, Farm Sanctuary in Watkins Glen,www.farmsanctuary.org)
- Sanctuary for hurt wild animals that cannot return to the wild.(model: Wild Things Sanctuary, www.wildthingssanctuary.org)
- Agritourism activities: Farmers' Market, Children and family programs.
- Area High School and College Connections: Outdoor courses in sustainability, environment, health and wellness, and nature

- Plant 25 hardwood trees on East River Road frontage to continue to beautify and complement the existing trees, and give the River Road an inviting and majestic entrance.

9. Suggestion for uses for former BOCES buildings

Each building has many potential uses. The cost for renovations and utility infrastructure would be significant expenses. The committee suggests an evaluation process based on a framework that includes a detailed needs assessment, and evaluation of expected utilization and duplication.

The process also needs to include an analysis of both short and long-term costs. It is suggested that all decisions made in developing these buildings be based on the concepts of cost-benefit, utilization and duplication. All other decisions about the uses for each building would derive from this analysis.

It is also important to assess what is already available in the town, as well as in the surrounding areas (Henrietta, Avon, Scottsville, Honeoye Falls, Mendon).

If the town supports the development of a non-profit foundation to support the development of the property, the potential uses for the buildings will be expanded.

- Building descriptions were done in 2013.
- “Do No Harm” Maintenance Proposals were submitted in March 2013 and September 2014.
- Clough Harbour submitted a formal report on buildings in 2016.
- Focus proposals on repairing roofs. Consider metal roofs. Retain style of farm buildings (e.g. red paint).
- Abate lead so volunteers of all ages can safely work near buildings.
- Clean up buildings and remove any hazards for visitors to safely tour.
- Exterior repairs and landscaping around buildings.
- Beautification of paths from building to building with indigenous, perennial plantings.
- Both barns need roof repairs.
- Barns are attractive and promote a rural farming landscape.
- All uses should be compatible with public park and recreation uses.
- Children and youth recreation programs and services require protection and separation from commercial and non-authorized activities where individuals who have not passed police checks may be participating.
- Buildings may require extensive costs to renovate depending on the use, and/or expensive to maintain.
- Each building has many potential uses that have been identified.

- Each use could be evaluated based on a framework that includes taxpayer costs, staff impact, impact on the neighborhood, resident support, needs assessment, utilization, and duplication.

There are many possible non-profit social, recreation, and educational uses for buildings. The ten buildings, with one of many possible uses are as follows:

1. *“World of Work Cottage”* The building has a former kitchen, and many activity rooms. Possible use as a senior center.
2. *Livestock Barn* (currently being used for Cattle): Needs repairs. Could be part of a sanctuary for abandoned and hurt animals.
3. *Mechanics Shop*: Currently the small building is used for training by the Rush Fire Department.
4. *Tractor Shed*: Storage for BOCES Landscaping Program.
5. *Greenhouse/Carpenters Shop*: This building is currently leased. Could be used for new plants and recreational activities.
6. *Arena*: This building is in very good shape, and has a wide range of uses, including special recreational events
7. *Horse Stable* (capacity 10-12 horses): Therapeutic riding, possible partnership with Rochester City Equestrian Patrol.
8. *Blacksmith Shop*: Potential historical recreation activities/
9. *“Administration Offices”* North Building: Has a former apartment. Could be a multi-purpose building and activity center
10. *Log Cabin Retreat*: For use by Scouts, 4H, Youth Leadership, Hikers

General Suggestions:

1. Funding to support property development, maintenance, and operations should come from a share of property taxes raised to support activities and projects related to parks and recreation, history and seniors.
2. If there is a foundation fundraising through special events, foundation non-profit grant-development, public-private partnerships through the NYS Parks and Recreation gateway; and ventures such as the memorial park, and animal refuge; non-commercial farming initiatives such as hay, specialty crops, and farm studies; and short term rentals and partnerships with non-profits, and educational institutions.
3. Prohibit all activities that are incompatible with park and recreation activities as identified and established by New York State guidelines for appropriate use of public lands, parks, and open space.

Further support of this position include:

- The zoning of the property is educational and past uses have had a low-impact on the community and have not compromised the character of the residential neighborhood.
 - While commercial activities, including commercial farming and private profit making small businesses, may bring in rental income, they also prohibit the use of the land in ways that will benefit the public. They should be prohibited in order to ensure the safety of the public and safeguard the land, and maintain the zoning and character of the residential community.
 - By prohibiting profit making commercial companies, including commercial farming operations, the town can establish and maintain proper oversight and control of all operations; maintain a vigorous risk management approach, and greatly reduce the risk of liability for residents and visitors. This will increase safety, and reduce costs of maintenance and operations.
 - This will safeguard residents, visitors, and taxpayers.
4. Prohibit commercial farming activities compromise the use of the land, especially for children, seniors, and people with disabilities.
 5. No long-term leases for commercial profit. While leasing the land for profit would be considered inappropriate under the NYS principles of parkland alienation, the Town Board has considered leasing the land a number of times, and entered into five year leases with commercial farmers from 2012-2017. This raises the concern that these restrictions may not be known or are being overlooked.
 6. Prohibit the Fire Department from using the site for any training and storage activities that negatively impacts the visual integrity or safety of visitors on the property, such as the overturned school bus.
 7. Serious considerations should be given to allowing the management and oversight of the land and buildings on the property to be provided by a non-profit, community volunteer, non-partisan board.
 - A volunteer board would help protect tax-payers and promote community interest and support.
 - A non-profit organization would allow for more opportunities for grants and limit the need for public taxpayer support for this property.
 - A non-profit would limit the need for taxpayer funded activities, and the growth of government services for the property.
 - A volunteer board could partner directly with the NYS Transportation Museum, the Library and History Office to develop programs and activities for the community.
 8. No activities should result in damage to the environment, fields, wetlands, wildlife.
 9. No animals should be raised for slaughter on the property.
 10. No pesticides, herbicides, insecticides or toxins should be allowed on the property.

11. All lead based paint should be removed prior to volunteers being recruited for buildings.
12. There should be a referendum on expenditures or grants before funds are authorized by the Town Board to further develop the property.
13. Strong partnership with the NYS Transportation Museum and Railroad Museum.
14. Commitment to keep all land and buildings open to citizens and developed to support educational and recreational activities.
15. All recreation and education activities and programs are required to be accessible for people with disabilities as required under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

The following activities should be encouraged:

- Improve the fitness, health and well-being of Rush residents.
- Encourage low-impact outdoor activities including photography, nature walks, gardening, and tree planting.
- Encourage and promote the full recreational and educational use of the land,
- Protect the wildlife and unique environmental features of the parcel; and
- Increase the appreciation of nature; and
- Support the recognition of our history as a small town, rural, agricultural community.
- Strengthen and expand the partnerships with the NYS Transportation Museum, and NYS Railroad Museum, recognizing the museums as valued assets and tourist attractions to our town and region.
- Recognize the important role to safeguard the Genesee River from pollutants.
- Partner with other non-profits and communities that are actively supporting the protection of the Genesee River.

Action Steps:

- Promote and support only recreation and education activities that are designed to serve our town's residents and visitors.
- Establish and publish a defined set of criteria that will support only activities that make a "low-environmental impact" and that promote health and wellness, and physical fitness of residents.
- Remove or abate all lead-based paint, asbestos, and other environmental toxins that could have a detrimental impact on visitors to the property.
- Prohibit the use of all harmful, toxic, and known carcinogenic substances on the property including agricultural supplements, insecticides, pesticides, herbicides.

- Promote education, recreation and appropriate agriculture and land-use activities that result in an increased understanding and appreciation of our town's rural, small town, and agricultural history.
- Develop a standing advisory committee of citizens who can serve as advisors and support the appropriate use and development of the property.
- Limit the use of the property to recreation, education, and non-commercial farming.
- Support rental of the property only for non-profit, non-commercial activities. All activities should be compatible with the character of the neighborhood, and enhance, protect, and preserve the quality of life and property values of the nearby residential neighbors.
- All proposed activities considered should meet stringent criteria that has been reviewed and supported by neighbors.
- Work in partnership area farmers to identify crops and projects that are compatible with the goals of the community (e.g. NYS Specialty crops).
- Work in partnership with area animal protection groups and wildlife refuges.
- Maintain a high level of safety and security of the property. Establish and implement an ongoing risk-management review of the property.
- Build the use of the property into the town's comprehensive plan.
- Keep trails open for residents.
- Organize and implement active volunteers for new clean-up days.
- Work in partnership with the NYS Transportation Museum.

Other suggestions, or additional information for consideration:

- New sites for recreational programs for non-profit community-based programs. Rental of buildings to only non-profits for short-term programs and services.
- Senior Center (there are more than 1100 seniors over 55 in our community): Education, Recreation, Home Livability, Art Studio and Arts and Crafts Center for Seniors; Day Social Programs; Balance and Mobility; Aging In Place, Fall Prevention, Special Classes and Workshops for Seniors and Families
- Center for 4-H Club, Youth Leadership, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts; activities to support Eagle Scout
- College interns to support a wide range of activities on the site from area colleges and universities (RIT, MCC, Roberts Wesleyan, UofR, Nazareth, St. John Fisher, Geneseo, and Cornell and Keuka extension (education, business, environment, sustainability)
- Relocating the Sheriff's Equestrian Patrol to the site.
- Working with Cornell Monroe County Cooperative Extension to offer some of their informational activities on site.

- Work with Monroe County Farm Bureau to support activities.
- Outdoor Recreational Activities including: Hiking trails, Cross Country Skiing. Snowshoeing, Bird watching
- Setting up a Forest Area and Animal Habitat Preserve
- Family Center, including a Picnic area, Educational Activities on Farming, Wildlife.
- Investigate the creation of a Town of Rush North Rush Preserve Land District to protect the parcel, and develop a fund-account for the Preserve. The working committee would evolve to be a working board.
- Investigate the creation of a nonprofit organization, Rush Foundation, or “Friends of Rush Riverside Lands” to actively engage in fundraising and volunteer activities to support the programs and services that are developed.
- Sponsor and conduct activities and events that increase knowledge and raise awareness of the opportunities available to visit the land, including specific outreach to children and youth and their families through our K-12 schools; and to seniors to provide opportunities to volunteer and support our fundraising ideas.
- Create an effective partnership with current public and private groups and organizations that support the recreation and education activities in our community. Groups include the Monroe County Cooperative Extension Program; the Boys and Girls Scouts; the 4-H Club; Lions and Rotary Clubs; the Farm Bureau, the US Department of Agriculture; the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation; the Monroe County Soil and Water; the US Department of Soil and Water...
- Work with farmers currently renting the property to implement best practices and reduce excessive nutrients and soil erosion that enters the streams and results in unnatural weed growth, and that could be dangerous to the health and safety of unknowing residents and visitors.
- Signage: Post restrictions and warnings regarding any risks and dangers to visitors. .
 - Watch for any Invasive Species: Investigate and if necessary, remove invasive species.
 - Develop four-season projects designed to engage residents in recreational activities.
 - Engage all homeowners and businesses to become contributing members in both in time and money to support the committee’s work and to carry out the wide range of needed clean-up, trail blazing, and planting projects.
 - Strengthen communications and adhere to a common mission of protecting and conserving the land and resources.
 - Develop an effective partnership and recruit volunteers, businesses, residents, community organizations and funders to actively participate in projects and activities. Develop special effort to recruit youth and seniors.

- Research and raise awareness of the importance of all appropriate environmental laws, public policies, and funding to support programs, projects and grants that are available to support the property.

Suggestions for name:

- Do not name the park in honor of a person.
- Highlight the Genesee River
- Rush Riverside Refuge was endorsed by all members of the committee.
- The name suggested by the committee was the Genesee River Reserve,
- One of our suggestions is that the property become a designated park. If that occurred, the name could include park, such as the Genesee Riverside Park or Rush Riverside Park.

Key Suggestions from 2015 Report for Next Steps:

1. Protect and preserve land: wildlife, bird sanctuary.
2. Prohibit hunting, snowmobiles, ATVs, guns, and unauthorized use.
3. Open from sunrise to sunset.
4. End lease for field crops in 2017. Limit number of animals grazing based on Monroe County Soil and Water recommended best practices.
5. Implement best management practices to protect soil, wetland, stream and river borders. Currently listed as 35 feet from Monroe County Soil and Water, the current standards are 100 feet buffers to rivers, creeks and streams. 100 foot buffers allow for walking paths to be developed between the four fields on the former DFY land parcel, and would provide a buffer on the former BOCES property that would allow for new tree plantings to beautify the site. These efforts would help to reduce loss of nutrients, pesticides in soil, non-point pollution, and sediment run-off into the river.
6. Prohibit commercial farming and the use of pesticides, herbicides and insecticides.
7. Restore grassland and wetland areas (remove dumping areas). Remove tree stands.
8. Coordinate volunteer clean-up days, tours and outreach activities and events.
9. Maintain and improve signage system. Reinforce Do's and Don'ts in newsletters, kiosks, and signs
10. Implement strategies for enforcement of prohibited activities.
11. Reject all proposals for use of the property that do not support recreational use that is safe, educational, healthy or could damage or result in the loss of natural setting (e.g. in 2012 there was a request to lease land for Summer Playground for seasonal trailers.)

Suggestions to transition to Action Plans:

- Resolve legal issues for property transfers and funds received from leases.
- **Recruit new Citizens' Committee** authorized to provide ongoing guidance, expertise, and active involvement in planning and implementing a wide range of activities that support development in accordance with an approved master plan endorsed by citizens. *This is important regardless of whether the Town Board decides to eventually support and work together with a non-profit, non-partisan community-based private Foundation for management of park activities.*
- Engage all members of the community. Provide safe public access to all areas.
- Refashion this report to become a Master Plan.
- Maintain natural habitats. Property is divided into distinct sections with unique land features, wildlife habitats, and flora. Develop and implement beautification and restoration plans on successful models.
- Ensure best-management practices. Adhere to well-established standards and guidelines for riverbed stabilization, and forests.
- Continue to research regional and statewide grants and public-private partnerships.
- Create smaller natural land-area sections to further identify unique land features, wildlife habitats, flora, beautification plans, use plans, and restoration or renovation depending on location and conditions found.
- Outreach to various groups to seek their input and ideas on potential recreational uses of the property for their various constituencies and members. These groups own boards, departments and Rush residents, and existing groups, including the Rush Seniors, Veterans, Lions Club, Recreation and Highway Departments, Library, Assessment, Conservation, Planning and Zoning boards, Rush Town Historian, area employers, local farmers, and faith based groups.
- Analyze demographics, projected growth needs for next 3-5 years.
- Analyze current town building use (town hall, pavilion, library, Fire Department pavilion and meeting room) and faith based meeting room sites. Do we need more event space? If there is no need, one suggestion is to rent to non-profit programs and services to ensure compatibility with recreational activities (e.g. police checks).

Activity Charts: Many recreation activities have been identified that are compatible, low-cost, and provide family and community engagement activities. The recreational uses have been put into categories: agricultural, educational, historical, cultural, health, nature, farming and rural life. **The committee did not have the time to complete these charts, and are included in the report to provide a starting point.**

Trails for Exercise, Relaxation, Fun, Nature and Health and Wellness

Idea	Benefits	Land Areas	Providers	Resources	Cost to Town	Audience	Constraints, Risks, Possible Negative Impacts or concerns
Hiking Trails	Wide range of benefits	All	Highway Dept. Volunteers	http://nysparks.com/recreation/trails/steward-plans.aspx	Minimal/no additional cost – build into Highway Schedule	All ages	Low - Safety Concerns
Horseback Riding Trails Therapeutic Riding	Exercise	Horse Barn/Trails	Many area stables; partnership with non-profits		Minimal, Scheduling may be needed		Low - Competition between hikers and equestrians – clean the trails, scheduling to ensure safety if trails are used
Geo-caching	Fun, Nature, Relaxation	Trails Only	Scouts, Clubs	DEC-Geocaching Guide	Minimal/no Schedule	All ages Geo-cachers	Low – potential damage to natural refuge – DEC guidelines and coordinator
Ropes Course	Leadership						
Events with Transportation Museum Activities	Increase access						
Snow-shoeing							
Bird Watching			Audubon Society				

Agricultural Recreational Uses for property

Idea	Benefits	Land Areas	Providers	Resources	Cost to Town	Audience	Constraints, Risks, Possible Negative Impacts or concerns
Bee Keeping	Nature, Pollination of Fields	DFY Land	Local Beekeepers Volunteers		No/minimal	All	Soil analysis to ensure bee safety.
Hay/Clover Fields	Nature, Restore Soil	100 acres fields	Local Farmers	Monroe County Soil and Water	No/possible income	Local farmers	Temporary lease
Wildflower Fields	Nature, Butterflies, Photography,	Fields	Volunteers	Local vendors – indigenous species	No/possible income from local artisans	All	Care to ensure indigenous flowers only. Control, and care not to compete with other uses. Part of a master plan.
Maple Syrup		40 trees	Recruit local pros/volunteer		No/possible income	All	
Rent-a-Goat		Grazing fields	Local farmer		No/possible income	Families	
Community Gardens		Fields	CSAs				
Landscape Gardens	Nature, Riverfront	DFY Land	Garden Clubs, Volunteers,				
Specialty Crops	Economic Growth	100 acres of fields					
Agricultural, Livestock and Horse Events		Arena	Area Equestrians				

Sports and Exercise to support health, recreation and leisure time activities.

Idea	Benefits	Land Areas	Providers	Resources/Examples	Cost to Town	Audience	Constraints, Risks, Possible Negative Impacts or concerns
Bicycle Clubs	Exercise and Recreation	Parking	Rochester Bicycle Club	http://www.meetup.com/Rochester-Bicycling-Club-Rochester-NY/	No/potential source of volunteers	Clubs	
Exercise Spots on Trails	Exercise and Recreation	Trails	Health Clubs				
Volleyball Courts	Exercise and Recreation	Fields	On your own				
Tennis Courts	Exercise and Recreation	Fields	On your own				
Horseshoe, Bocce Pitts	Exercise and Recreation	Fields	On your own				
Playground	Exercise and Recreation	Fields	On your own				
Outdoor Exercise Programs	Exercise and Recreation	Fields	Recreation Dept.				
Cross Country Skiing	Exercise and Recreation	Trails	On your own				

Another category would be fund-raising activities if a private foundation is launched. These activities would require a community foundation since towns are not allowed to engage in fundraising.

Idea	Benefits	Areas	Providers	Resources	Cost to Town	Audience	Comments Constraints, Risks, Possible Negative Impacts or concerns
Memorial Tree Garden	Supports families.	Fields	Foundation, Volunteer	Many models	Income/\$250-\$1000 tree	All	Low risk. Requires coordination, and volunteers to care for garden
Fundraising Events	Brings Community together	All			No, support management and renovations of lands	All	Low risk. Reduces cost to taxpayers
Community Flea Market		Former BOCES					
Food Court Farmers Market Special events	Local Farmers	Former BOCES	Local Farmers	Many models			Special event, not weekly Needs coordinator – not in town center – don't want to compete
Fall Festival, Hometown Days Activities		Former BOCES					Access to bathrooms
Benches		All			Income #250-\$2000		

Academic and Youth Recreational and Leadership Programs

Idea	Benefits	Areas	Providers	Resources	Cost to Town	Audience	Constraints, Risks, Possible Negative Impacts or concerns
After-school programs		All	School districts, non-profits,		Fee for Service	Children and Families	Safety concerns. Risk Management. Police checks. Coordination
Activities for Scouts		All	Scouts				Safety concerns. Risk Management. Police checks. Coordination
Inclusive Recreational Opportunities		All	Non-profits				Safety concerns. Risk Management. Police checks. Coordination
Leadership and Team building Courses (Rope)		Trails					Safety concerns. Risk Management. Police checks. Coordination
4-H Activities, Preparation for the County and State Fair.		Fields, Arena					Safety concerns. Risk Management. Police checks. Coordination

Historical Recreation Activities

Idea	Benefits	Land Areas	Providers	Resources	Cost to Town	Audience	Constraints, Risks, Possible Negative Impacts or concerns
Old-fashioned farm days	History, Appreciation for rural history,	Fields	Local family farmers, Historian	Many models	Sponsors—town would not be expected to be primary lead	Region-wide	Complement/not compete, coordinate with Genesee Valley Country Museum.
Historical Society	Appreciate our town's heritage	Building	Local families, Historian, volunteers	Many models	Minimal costs	Adults	
Exhibits of Historical Items	Appreciate our history	Building or Tent		Many examples from past – Historical Displays --		All ages	
Story Time	Increase early literacy; Farm to School	Building or Tent	Library Local volunteer story tellers			Young children and families	Easy activity to conduct.

Health and Nutrition based Recreation Activities

Idea	Benefits	Land Areas	Providers	Resources	Cost to Town	Audience	Constraints, Risks, Possible Negative Impacts or concerns
Old-fashioned farm days	History, Appreciation for Food	Fields	Area Farmers. CSA, Volunteers		No/	All	
Yoga/Tai Chi		Building area, Arena					Space – no bathrooms
Plant-based nutrition	Health, Intro to Vegetables	Fields		Rochester Lifestyle Medicine,			
Herb Gardens	Converting fields	Fields					
Cultivate Fruit Trees and Berries		Fields - Cultivation	NYS Ag&Mkt Specialty Crops/Area Farmers	Many examples	Low/Partnership with Farmers and Volunteers; Grants available for specialty crops		Grant writing – recruiting volunteers could be helpful to reduce time and cost.
Tree Planting and other Beautification Projects	Nature	All	Monroe County Cooperative Extension				

Arts and Cultural Recreation Activities

Idea	Benefits	Land Areas	Providers	Resources	Cost to Town	Audience	Constraints, Risks, Possible Negative Impacts or concerns
Outdoor Art Classes	Social, recreation		Volunteers – residents with talent			All	
Photography	Social, recreation					All	
Theatre	Social, recreation					All	
Poetry and Reading	Social, recreation					All	
Music Concerts	Social, recreation					All	

Specialty Groups, Fraternal Groups, Meeting and Event Space

Idea	Benefits	Land Areas	Providers	Resources	Cost to Town	Audience	Constraints, Risks, Possible Negative Impacts or concerns
Senior Center	Provide a center	#1 or #9 Building	Seniors	Many examples	Grant, Possible fundraising	1000+ Seniors	Cost of Renovations, Maintenance, Needs Assessment, Transportation
Dog Park							
Lions Club							
Rotary Club							
Library Events							
Nature Playscapes for pre-school and young children	Early Education, Exercise	BOCES					
Garden and Horticulture Clubs							

References and Resources

Pesticides and Impact on People, Bees and Wildlife:

<http://rochesterenvironment.com/pesticides.htm>

NYS Pesticide Program: <http://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/8532.html> This is a NYS DEC Q&A series is designed to provide information on Pesticide Program subjects of interest to the public and the regulated community. The Q&A cover a range of subjects, such as pesticide product labels, commercial lawn applications, certified applicators, and many more topics.

Judy Braiman: [Use of Pesticides in Public Areas Exposes Rochester Area Residents to Toxic Chemicals](#) Rochester, June 17, 2014 – While pesticides were banned from New York State schools in 2010, local governments continue to use toxic chemicals for cosmetic purposes. Empire State Consumer Project has published its 2014 Government Pesticide Survey, which highlights the hazards of common pesticides used on local government properties. These include cancer, reproductive harm, organ and nervous system damage, birth defects, and danger to animals and the environment. “Weed-free landscaping is a thing of the past. As research continues to show the toxicity of pesticides to humans, animals, and the environment, and organic gardening practices have proven effective, we must change our vision of what constitutes a beautiful lawn,” says Judy Braiman, president of Empire State Consumer Project. “Town, village and county parks, office complexes, and roadways are a few of the properties that seek to ‘beautify’ their grounds while exposing the public to toxic chemicals and polluting the environment. Some communities report using no pesticides – If these communities can do it, they all can.” Braiman adds, “Consumers, employees, and neighboring residents have no say about the pesticides they are exposed to while visiting or living near these locations. Recent applications, even when posted with signs, cannot be avoided altogether. Pesticide drift caused by wind and runoff from rain extends the reach of the toxics well beyond their intended targets. Pesticide runoff pollutes our waterways, including local lakes and bays we all use for recreation and many municipalities use as their source of drinking water.” (June 17, 2014) [Empire State Consumer Project, Inc.](#) [more on [Pesticides](#) in our area]

The following resources are available regarding pesticides and their negative impact on bees, butterflies, and other pollinators: Independent Science News New York State Governor Andrew Cuomo, “Bees and Pollinator Task Force” <https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-cuomo-announces-taskforce-develop-pollinator-protection-plan-protect-new-yorks>,

Eco Watch: National Task Force on Bee Pollinators, <http://ecowatch.com/2014/06/23/obama-task-force-protect-honey-bees-pollinators/>

Resources for Parks and Use of Public Land:

NYS Parkland Alienation: <http://www.nysparks.com/publications/documents/AlienationHandbook.pdf>

Statewide Plans for reference for developing a comprehensive plan that aligns to state goals and objectives.

- [Signed Findings and Adoption Statement \(pdf\)](#)
- [2014-2019 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan \(pdf\)](#)
- [2014-2019 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan Appendices \(pdf\)](#)
- [2014 SCORP Public Webinar Presentation 02/04/2014 \(pdf\)](#)

Statewide Trails Plan: [Executive Summary \(pdf\)](#) and [2010 Statewide Trails Plan](#)

New York State Open Space Plan: [2014 Draft Open Space Conservation Plan](#)

Finger Lakes Institute, Hobart, William & Smith Colleges, Geneva 315-781-4390 | fli@hws.edu

Trust for Public Land, <http://www.tpl.org/services>, Assistance in developing parks and recreation

Resources for Grant Development:

NYS Parks and Recreation: <http://www.ny.gov/services/culture-recreation>

Livable Communities:

Outdoor Recreation: https://outdoorindustry.org/pdf/OIA_OutdoorRecEconomyReport2012.pdf

NYS Parks, Recreation and Historical Preservation, <http://nysparks.com/grants/> A matching grant program for the acquisition, development and planning of parks and recreational facilities to preserve, rehabilitate or restore lands, waters or structures for park, recreation or conservation purposes and for structural assessments and/or planning for such projects. Funds may be awarded to municipalities or not-for-profits with an ownership interest, for indoor or outdoor projects and must reflect the priorities established in the [NY Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan \(SCORP\)](#).

NYS Health Improvement Plan: https://www.health.ny.gov/prevention/prevention_agenda/2013-2017/

NYS Department of Agriculture Specialty Crops: <http://www.agriculture.ny.gov/AP/slide/SpecialtyCrop.html>

Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Act of 1965, <http://www.ecivis.com/grants/parks-and-recreation-grants.html>,
Development of public outdoor recreation areas and facilities.

Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance (RTCA) Program, <https://www.nps.gov/orgs/rtca/index.htm>, supports
community-led natural resource conservation and outdoor recreation projects

National Wildlife Refuge Friends Grant Program, <http://www.nfwf.org>, \$1,500-\$15,000

Wild Ones: Lorrie Otto Seeds for Education (SFE) Fund, http://www.grantsforteachers.net/other-grants/The_Lorrie_Otto_Seeds_for_Education_Grant_Program/grantdetails_185.aspx \$100-\$500 small grants for
teachers

National Park Service, <https://www.nps.gov/nts/>

National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, <http://www.nfwf.org/whatwedo/programs/Pages/home.aspx>

NYS Parks and Recreation, <http://www.nysparks.com/>

Arbor Day Foundation, www.arborday.org