

Springside Park Master Plan



**Springside Park:
A Natural Park. An Educational Park. A Community Park.**

The vision for Springside Park is to continue to retain the current overall character of the park and maintain a balance of mixed complementary usages, improve infrastructure and enhance its educational benefit, safety and accessibility for all.

Major Components

- Development of the Springside Natural Park Center
- Restoration of Springside Pond
- Landscape & Access Improvement
- Expanded Educational & Agricultural Infrastructure

Summary

The enclosed draft of the Springside Park Master Plan represents a complete interpretive profile, needs assessment and action plan for the management and improvement of Springside Park. It was developed through an 18 month process conducted by a special planning committee through the Springside Park Conservancy, an incorporated coalition of park stakeholder organizations, in cooperation with the Office of Community Development, and in consultation with numerous local organizations and a broad sample of park users, neighbors, and various experts.

From extensive community input and a complete review of abundant studies, planning memorandum and historical documentation, the SPC has generated an updated profile of the park's resources, challenges, and needs. This document looks at the park's geography, history, patterns of use, benefits and context within the community.

The plan interprets the park as a mixed used ecosystem that simultaneously: A) offers one of the premiere locations in the city for traditional athletic activities and a wide variety of other recreational activities B) supports a thriving infrastructure of agricultural and educational programming, C) has a high level of private stewardship participation from multiple organizations, and D) provides a major local venue for outdoor performance and cultural programming. Themes of *preserving of the park's current natural character, improving community access and utilization, and a focus on horticulture and life science education* are echoed throughout the plan.

5 Year Action Plan

Phase 1 - FY17-18

Phase 2 - FY19-20

Phase 3 -FY21

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Part One

Purpose of the Plan

In September 2013, all organizations actively involved in programs and developments at Springside Park were invited to a conference to discuss issues of mutual concern and planning for the future of the park. At this time, several organizations determined to convene a new ad hoc committee of representatives from their officers under the umbrella of the Springside Park Conservancy, a nonprofit incorporation whose governing body now includes members of the Friends of Springside, Vincent J. Hebert Arboretum, Morningside Neighborhood Initiative and Springside Greenhouse Group, with the Ward 1 City Councilor as an Advisory Member and Parks & Open Space Manager as advisory members. This document represents the culmination of their work.

The purpose of this Master Plan is to:

- Provide an update on the status of open space and recreation resources at Springside Park
- Report and summarize public opinion concerning these issues
- Establish updated goals, objectives and plans for future action at the park.

The plan incorporates substantial input from the Committee's regular meetings and public input from public surveys and extensive outreach to park users over an eighteen month period. The Committee believes the present plan will help guide the City's future efforts to maintain and preserve the parks recreational and open space resources effectively. Such efforts are critical given the vital importance of the park's unique natural character to the City's economy and quality of life. The Plan is intended as a resource document and does not include or imply authority or funding for actions, but represents an advisory compilation of relevant information and input as required. This Plan is designed to reflect the preponderant desire of the City's residents to ensure that current Springside Park open space and recreation areas will be maintained and further enhanced as needed, a view supported by many. The plan is also designed to inform the Parks Commission of the residents' concerns and perceived needs of the community.

Context of the Plan

Pittsfield's local open space and park system is comprised of 272 parcels representing over seventy land holdings and totaling 6,247.50 acres. Approximately half of the property (656 acres) is deeded to the Department of Parks and Recreation / Parks Commission with another 1,249.93 acres of City parkland under general City or miscellaneous title. The remainders are conservation lands and water supply protection areas (382.46 acres) and school grounds (233.40 acres). In addition, there are approximately 14.08 acres owned by the Town of Richmond, 2,329.52 acres of State-owned land and 2,038.11 acres of private and quasi-public owned recreation and open space lands.

The 2010 Census lists Pittsfield at a population of 44,737, and in 2013 the Federal Census Bureau estimated that population at 44,057. According to census data, the Morningside Neighborhood trails behind the City significantly in terms of owner occupancy, household income, poverty rate, and median home value. It has twice as many renters as the rest of the city and more than twice the overall city poverty rate. 25% of Morningside residents live below the federal poverty line, while the citywide average is 10%.

Taking into consideration the large population served, as well as the disadvantages of many neighborhood children in the vicinity, it is all the more important for Pittsfield to have a strategic, ambitious, and clearly enunciated action plan for the preservation, improvement and ongoing management of this important open space area.

An Overview of the Park

Springside Park is the largest park within Pittsfield, Massachusetts, the largest city in Berkshire County. The Park is a 237.5-acre passive recreation open space situated in the northern end of the City of Pittsfield, approximately two miles from the Lanesborough-Pittsfield line. In the distance, mountain ranges surround the park. To the east are Day and Tully Mountains traversed by the Appalachian National Scenic Trail. The October Mountain State Forest and Taconic Range lie respectively to the south and west. To the north rises Mount Greylock, the highest peak in Massachusetts. This location, at the heart of the Berkshire Mountains, adds significantly to the beauty of the City of Pittsfield, and to its largest public park, Springside.

Due to its location, prominence, and broad expanse of territory, Springside Park serves a large population of residents in addition to tourist visitors hailing from around the world. While located primarily in Ward 1, due to its direct adjacency to the Morningside Neighborhood, it is the primary open space serving residents of this heavily populous neighborhood.

Master Plan Origins

In 1939 a master plan for a then 125 acres Springside Park was commissioned by Parks Director Henry Watson and drawn up by the National Recreation Association. It encompassed playgrounds, foot paths, wading pools at the pond, picnic areas, ball fields, a small petting zoo and a 9 hole golf course. A subsequent refined Master Plan developed in 1957 under Vincent Hebert, who served as director from 1950 to 1990, envisioned Springside as being a premiere destination park for Pittsfield. Placing increased emphasis on "the primarily natural landscape" of the park, this plan called for the expansion of existing garden programs and the development of a natural arboretum on the premises. It replaced the previous zoo that closed in 1947 with an expanded Petting Zoo and Trailside Museum for nature workshops. It also included a day camp area for additional youth nature activities, enhanced picnic areas, and the previously proposed 9-hole golf course.

A 1964 edition further codified this plan into ten components: improvement of circulation and parking, the arboretum, two playground type areas, the zoo and trailside museum, the day camp, the golf course, picnic centers, athletic fields, and the park's entrances and frontage areas. At the time the total cost for implementation was estimated at around \$400,000, but that estimate increased to half a million by the end of the decade, during which time some work on features of the plan (playgrounds, zoo, ball fields and road work) was implemented.

Springside Park Trail Map



A Brief History of the Park

The name “Springside” for this geographic area dates back to at least the mid 19th century, and refers to the small hillside natural springs which feed its waterways.

Abraham Burbank built Elmhurst (now known as Springside House) originally as a private residence, sometime between 1856 and 1860. Designed primarily in the Italianate style, the Springside House, which was unusually complex in form and massing, sits on the hill above what today is known as North Street in Pittsfield.

Originally fertile farmland, the site of present day Springside Park has long been considered an area of great natural beauty. The “Springside Hotel” formerly located near the corner of North & Abbott St was a popular tourist destination, and another was proposed near the site of Springside pond in the 1890s.

In 1910, Kelton B. Miller, a former Pittsfield mayor and the editor of the *Berkshire Evening Eagle*, and his wife Eva, donated 10 acres of land in the vicinity of Elmhurst for use as a public park, which then became Abbott Park. By 1919, with the donation of additional land and the sale of some existing lots, the park had increased in size to 15.5 acres and by then was called Springside Park.

Early descriptions and images of Springside Park depict a small but thriving open space popular for picnics, ice skating on the pond, and a small playground. Later the first of two petting zoos would be established, and was ultimately closed in the late 1930s for lack of funds.

In 1939, an additional 74 acres making up the former Stevens estate including the Elmhurst manor, was purchased and donated by Donald and Lawrence Miller. As a condition of the donation, the city acquired the abutting 36 acre Pierce property.

Subsequently, the Park Commission authorized caretaker Harry J. Watson to renovate what was now known as Springside House for use by clubs and community organizations and in 1941 it was opened for public use. Four of the first floor rooms were renovated for meetings, parties and other adult activities on a seasonal basis.

In 1945, a small observatory was established on the hill to the east of the Springside House, equipped with professional quality telescopes on a seasonal basis.

Between 1941 and 1955 gifts and purchases of additional acreage added to the size of the Park.

In 1954 the city bought 38 acres from Hillcrest Hospital at the price of \$16,000, in replacement for thirty park acres taken out for construction of North (Reid) Junior High. In 1954, Springside House was remodeled and became the office and headquarters of the Pittsfield Dept. of Parks and Recreation.

In 1955 the park further enlarged with the purchase of a 58-acre tract at the price of \$6,500. In that same year D.B. Miller also gave a 5-acre lot to the City of Pittsfield. In 1964 the City of Pittsfield added a 30-acre tract on Benedict Road.

Following the completion of an updated Master Plan in 1965 several new developments of the land occurred over the course of the late 1960s.

A new petting zoo opened in the summer of 1967. Recurring incidents of vandalism over the following 16 years, combined with budgetary shortages, lead to the zoo's closure in the Spring of 1984.

The current North Little League facilities were constructed along with a new basketball court on Springside Avenue, as was the North Playground adjacent to the former zoo. This period also saw the first planning and planting for an arboretum at Springside, and a boom for the early Greenhouse organization.

By the beginning of the 1970s the approximately 240 acre Springside was the largest park in the city and the center of operations for Pittsfield's still growing system of city parks.

Two decades of rising misuse and receding budgets took a toll on maintaining the large heavily forested property, and the city arrived at a crossroads of decision on whether to maintain the majority of Springside Park in its natural state, or entertain an alternate proposal to convert a majority of the property into a commercial golf course.

In response to the golf course proposal, petitions, letters and widespread organizing took place in favor of preserving and restoring the park in its natural state. A number of park neighbors established the Friends of Springside Park, and over the Spring and Summer of 1990, four major clean up days were held removing an estimated ten tons of accumulated trash and dumping.

Also in the 1990s, efforts renewed to cultivate an arboretum within the park, first in cooperation with Pittsfield Beautiful and then under the auspices of its own nonprofit organization, the Vincent J. Hebert Arboretum. Since that time the arboretum has planted a range of specimen trees, several landscaped gardens, a Daffodil Hill and Lilac Walk in the area surrounding the Springside House.

In 2007, the Department of Community Services/Parks and Recreation was officially removed from the city code. In July of that year James McGrath, the Director of Community Services, was relocated to City Hall and given his current title of Park, Open Space, and Natural Resource Program Manager. Park maintenance administration, now Buildings and Grounds Maintenance, was moved to the Building Maintenance Department. Park recreation was moved to the Community Development Department, leaving the Springside House vacant except for VistaCorp volunteers which occupied the rear apartment until 2012.

In recent years, the park has seen an increase in utilization, and is heavily frequented for children's play, hiking, dog walking, sports, environmental education activities, mountain biking, picnics, yoga classes, concerts and much more.

Today, Springside Park, is the city's largest park and a number one recreational attraction for the populous Morningside neighborhood. The entire property came to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2008.

Current and Historical Use of the Park

In addition to the aforementioned organizations working in the park, the park is also used by a variety of parties for educational, cultural and recreational purposes. Berkshire Community College, the Pittsfield school system, Berkshire Museum, Berkshire Natural Resources Council, Hoffman Bird Club, among other institutions all conduct natural educational programming on a recurring basis at Springside. Music and theatre performance, along with mountain biking events, yoga classes, and other organized outdoor activities have also become popular. The most popular use of the park remains walking and hiking among the park's varied terrain.

Gardening and horticultural developments have been ongoing in the park since the 1950s, under the auspices of the Berkshire Museum Gardening Club. In the late 1960s, the current Springside Greenhouse Group was formed and began operating out of the greenhouse facilities at the park. The club, which currently numbers over 80 members, rents these structures from the city for an annual fee, and since 1995 has held an exceedingly popular plant sale on the weekend of Mother's Day, along with lectures and other programs throughout the year. Around the same time, in response to declining budgets and resultant declining park conditions, volunteer park advocates began to coalesce into a grass roots association to help maintain and preserve the park, later incorporating as a 401 nonprofit known as the Friends of Springside Park.

Planning for what is now the Vincent J. Hebert Arboretum began in 1963, with a plan commissioned by the city recommending cultivation and labeling of 338 species and varieties of plant life. While significant progress was made in planting activities over the following decades, in 1990 Hebert put forth a request from the parks commission to Pittsfield Beautiful to take on further implementation. An advisory committee was later formed, and real developmental planning began in 1997 with a planning study developed through collaboration of Pittsfield Beautiful, the City of Pittsfield, the Department of Environmental Management, and the Northeast Center for Urban and Community Forestry from UMASS/Amherst.

The 118 page plan that emerged in 1998 more comprehensively examined an arboretum's needs and educational mission, and includes recommended schematics for cultivation of a groomed landscape on a forty acre area of the park and a series of recommendations for how the newly formed Arboretum organization should provide educational programming throughout the rest of the park as part of its mission, in cooperation with the city. Three subsequent examinations by forestry experts and landscape design consultants further developed plans for the VJHA's design, planting and educational priorities throughout the park.

More horticultural activity was later added in the form of raised bed demonstration gardens established near the Springside House by the Western Mass Master Gardeners Association, who hold several workshops there each year.

In 2006, a new state of the art handicapped accessible playground was installed in the southeast corner of the park on Springside Avenue with about \$381,000 raised from local businesses and donors over a four year period by the Rotary Club of Pittsfield.

In 2011, a dilapidated warming house by the pond area was demolished and replaced with an open pavilion structure donated by the Morningside Neighborhood Initiative.

This area is also home to the Donald Gleason North Little League field, constructed in 1968 and renovated in the 1980s, that hosts league activity from May – August each year.

In 2002, the 6 acre Gerald Doyle Memorial Softball Complex was installed in the northeast corner of the park on Benedict Road. It has since hosted several Babe Ruth World Series events, along with smaller regional tournaments drawing thousands of out of state players to the complex. In 2013, substantial upgrades were made to its lighting system.

Planning and Public Involvement Process

- Online surveys
- Questionnaire at park events
- Park commission input
- Public input meeting(s)

Current Planning Issues

Environmental

- Erosion off of trails
- Invasive plants
- Degraded pond

Cultural

- ATVs, snowmobiles, car access into interior of park
- Illegal encampments, fires
- Dumping
- Off leash dog walking
- Encroachment on park boundaries
- Restrooms near greenhouse not adequate for need, HC accessibility

Management

- Lack of dedicated maintenance by City
- Trail conditions and upkeep
- Park maintenance HQ unsightly and possibly polluting
- Inadequate and problematic park entrances and frontage areas
- Limited access to natural areas for mobility challenged

Part Two

A New Vision

Springside Park: A Natural Park. An Educational Park. A Community Park.

“The vision for Springside Park is to continue to retain the current overall character of the park and maintain a balance of mixed complementary usages, improve infrastructure and enhance its educational benefit, safety and accessibility for all.”

Guiding Principles Moving Forward*

- Any park plan should as a fundamental prerequisite reaffirm this stated purpose: *That the area of land known as Springside Park be perpetually maintained as a public park, be preserved, be reasonably improved upon as necessary, and be expanded upon as possible as understood in the acceptance of the grants of this property to the city.* Furthermore:
- That the majority of the park acreage be preserved substantially untouched in its current natural character, with an emphasis on providing well marked trail systems, increased interpretive signage, and measures for increasing accessibility to more natural areas.
- That the planning, operation and supervision of Springside Park function to maintain a mixed-use recreational ecosystem which supports a delicate balance of natural and educational programming, community social and cultural usage, and existing developed athletic and recreational facilities.
- That the City collaborate actively with a variety of community institutions to further highlight, and expedite improvement to or replacement of, park infrastructure supporting those educational, agricultural, natural and historic aspects of the park which have lagged behind in development to its athletic aspects.
- That the planning and preservation of Springside Park occur in open cooperation between the City of Pittsfield and the public that uses it, and that any planning efforts, new development, or proposed major new activity or usage be carefully considered in a transparent and comprehensive process that includes review by the Springside Park Conservancy

**See Appendix 1, Source Materials for Guiding Principles*

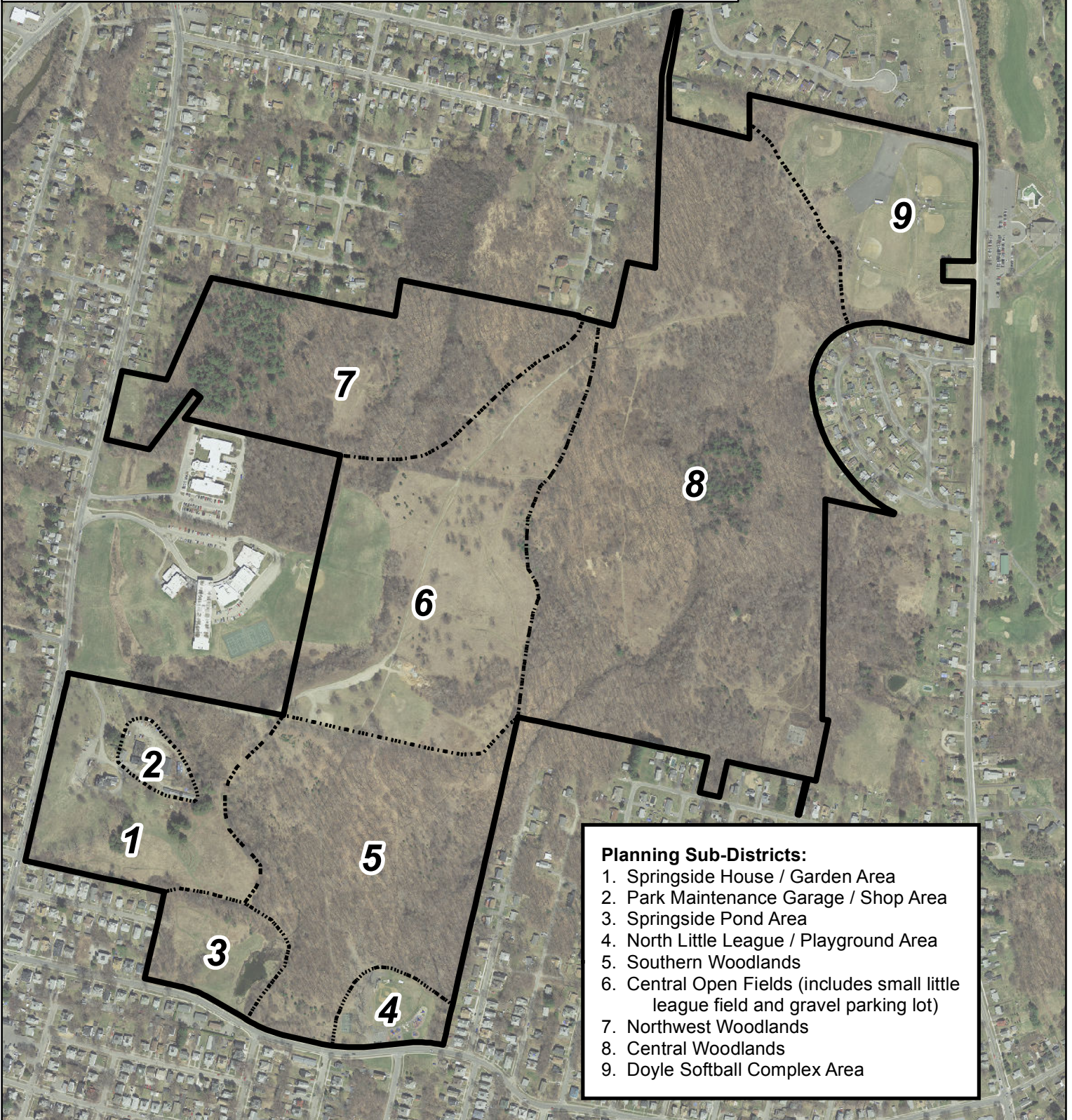
Recommendations by Planning Sector

	Planning Sector	Acreage
1	Springside House / gardens area	19.9
2	Park Maintenance garage / shop area	2.2
3	Springside Pond area	6.9
4	North LL / playground area	4.0
5	Southern woodlands	34.5
6	Central open fields	40.7
7	Northwest woodlands	30.5
8	Central woodlands	86.4
9	Doyle Softball complex area	18.6



Springside Park

Planning Sub-Districts



Key to Sector Recommendations

- A. Management issues
- B. Capital projects
- C. Minor capital & maintenance projects
- D. Private opportunities- projects achievable through volunteer auspices and/or private donation
- E. Further exploration needed/ Oversight issues

Phases by year:

P1A [FY17]

P1B [FY18]

P2A [FY19]

P2B [FY20]

P3 [FY21]

P4 [POST-2021]

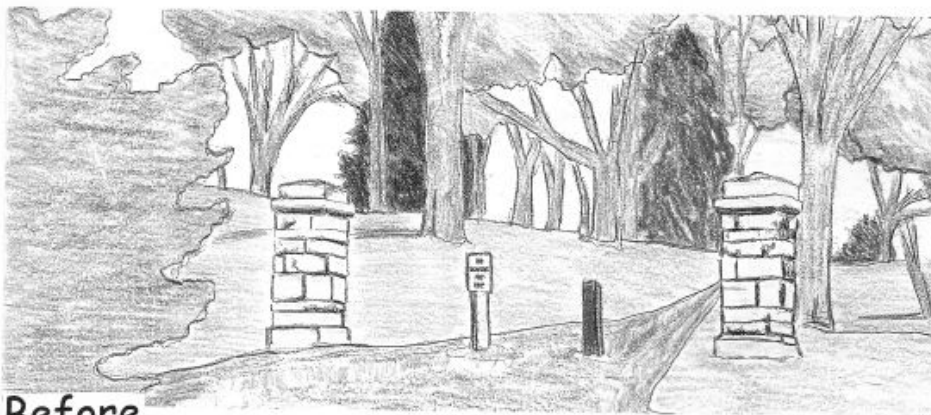
Planning Area #1: Springside House / Gardens Area

The former Elmhurst estate, this area includes the Springside House and surrounding lawns and gardens/ This historic piece of property consists of a highly cultivated landscape that includes the park's North St frontage and entrance, multiple gardens, and array of intentionally planted native trees. Long a focal point of horticultural activity, this area is largely maintained in partnership with the Hebert Arboretum, Western Mass. Master Gardeners Association, and RSVP.

1. Springside House - see Appendix 2: Springside House Guidelines for Reuse; Springside Natural Park Center Redevelopment Proposal [B, P1 & P2]

2. Lower Entry & original Elmhurst driveway

The historic entry way to Springside House and Stephens' estate is currently obscured and hampered by an extraneous, solitary asphalt parking space on the corner of Springside Park property currently being utilized daily by the neighboring household despite a no-parking sign. This asphalt space should be removed. Analysis by the Conway School of Landscape Design recommends that this area be re-landscaped to make a more attractive pedestrian walkway with a median of plantings between and slightly in front of the entry way pillars, as shown in graphic. This is one possible way to achieve an agreed upon desire to reclaim this area as a noteworthy and utilized pedestrian entrance to the park [C, P1B].



Before



After

The silver maples lining the former Elm driveway are in serious decline and should be replaced with a more suitable tree. (Elms are recommended) [C, PH3]

3. Roadside Frontage

Frontage vegetation along most of the Route 7 face of Springside Park is overgrown, unhealthy and unsightly. It greatly obscures all view to the park and to Springside House, while providing little benefit. Multiple possible approaches to restructuring this frontage area are suggested, including the removal of all but select trees to establish a continuous landscape for the entire the main entrance area, to an intensive pruning

of shrubby trees and removal of underbrush. There is general agreement that at a minimum, some clearing of entangled underbrush and invasive species should be undertaken. [C, PH1B]

Any future possibility of an extension of the North Street sidewalk in front of Springside Park to Reid Middle School is deemed desirable. [E]

4. Main Entrance

Garden- The garden surrounding entryway sign is problematic, and poses an obstacle to easily updating changing sign messages. A redesign of the area is underway. [D, P1A]

Signage- The sign is dated and somewhat ineffective, members are agreeable to looking at some possible designs and quotes for new entryway signage. [D, PH1A]

The Conway School study recommends the possibility of a decorative archway opening to a walkway up to the Springside House from the North Street entryway in addition to and roughly parallel to the automotive driveway. This concept has merit and should be more closely examined. It has been suggested that this could be duplicated with an aesthetically similar archway at the lower pedestrian entrance that would create heightened landscape continuity on North Street. [E, P2]

5. 1st Kiosk

The wooden kiosk at entry to main parking area is structurally in good shape, but under-utilized and in need of re-working and staining. The Committee suggests a large laminated or vinyl printed color map of the park for the unused front side of kiosk, and the message “Welcome to Springside” emblazoned on the front facing roof trim above it. The under-side of the kiosk is already equipped with simple hooks and should be examined for how best it can be used for displaying banners promoting upcoming events and sponsors. [A, P1A]

The white 4-way kiosk nearest the Springside House needs repair, including broken and missing glass doors for some of the panels. It is wired for lighting, we need details on what's required to have it operational. It has not been used in recent years, but the keys to it were recently located. [C, P1A]

6. The area opposite the 1st kiosk

The side of the driveway, adjacent to the vacant garage building, is a good location for additional planting. Rhododendrons were planted in recent years and have done well, more could be added. [D, P2A]

7. Daffodil Hill

Recommend more regular mowing of field when daffodils not in bloom (post April/early May through fall). [A, ongoing]

8. Parking Lot

There has been universal agreement in input from SPC members, park event organizers, attendees and the public in general that the bright pink Artabout stage should be relocated from the main parking lot directly in front of the historic Springside House to some more suitable location. During

Shakespeare in the Park the stage was stored in the area of the maintenance buildings and did not appear to present a disruption, but was highly advantageous to parking, access and visibility. This has been consistently echoed in consultant studies for more than 15 years. [A, P1A]

9. Fountain Needs Repair

The fountain in the gardens needs to be completely rewired for operation [D, P1]

10. Additional input from the Western Mass Master Gardener's Association:

Every effort should be made to preserve garden landscaping installed around Springside by WMMGA.

Planning Area #2: Secondary Park Buildings

This area contains the other supporting structures adjacent to the Springside House, including the shop, storage areas and parking for park grounds staff, the greenhouse complex and some restroom facilities.

1. Buildings outlying the Springside House

The SPC recommends the City look seriously at the long term disposition of the use of buildings outlying Springside House with the consideration of whether the current usage of this area for grounds and maintenance operations is ideal or whether these operations could be relocated to a more suitable site. The long term planning and development of visitor friendly activity at the Springside House could be greatly enhanced by the availability of these facilities for continued growth of a campus atmosphere for a Springside Natural Park Center, as recommended by the Springside Park Conservancy in the attached proposal, which is strongly favored by the city's recent feasibility study for the house. [A+ E, P2/3]

In the absence of such changes, the SPC recommends at a minimum that fencing or creative landscaping be installed to obscure these areas from general view, and this area aesthetically detracts from an otherwise pristine and attractive part of the park. [C, P2]

2. Flood Lights

Fix the flood lights in the back of the Barn and Parks Maintenance office for improved security and safety. The lights are burned out in this area which is used for parking by members of the greenhouse group and others. [C, P1]

3. Road Barrier

Consider a barrier on the road leading to the North Playground (former zoo area) with signage no entry after dusk. [E]

4. Exterior Building Maintenance

Refurbish buildings with some painting and carpentry work. [C, P2]

5. Greenhouse Maintenance [C + D, P1]

The greenhouse has some needed maintenance and repair as follows:

- The siding on the office/meeting room area is in need of replacement (T1-11) to repair the sign area above the door.
- The west side of the building is rotting at the base of the building. It appears that the sill plate is compromised showing signs of rot and needs replacement. A formal estimate from a professional builder would be in order to get a more exact evaluation and estimate of repair costs.
- The gutter near the main entrance door needs straightening and possible refastening
- The gutter over the main entrance door needs a downspout to keep the water from doing damage to the roof

6. Area around the torn down buildings

The area around the torn down buildings: The dumping of debris from parks and other areas should be eliminated as it detracts from the park's beauty and is not compatible with showing the beauty of the grounds in this area of the park. [A, P1A]

7. North Playground access road

Road leading to the North Playground from North St is in poor condition and in need of reconstruction. [B, P1]

Planning Area #3: Springside Pond

The oldest part of the park, this parcel is the original piece of property donated in 1910, consisting of the main pond and surrounding open space. The pond is bounded on both sides by rising embankments, tiered slopes of maintained grass on the west, rocky forested incline on the eastern side. One of the park's two brooks feeds into the pond at its northern edge. Sector 3 is ringed by treeline along the majority of its perimeter except for the southern edge which abuts Springside Ave.

1. Mow Abbott Street Field

The SPC recommends resuming mowing of the field at the end of Abbot Street so as to provide a greater aesthetic/landscaping continuity with the rest of this sector. This would offer greater enjoyment of this area for picnics and recreational play as well as offering greater historic authenticity in what is the oldest and most visually recognizable (as seen in many old postcards) part of the park. The SPC suggests remaining open to any future proposals for creative landscaping design proposals for this Abbot Field area that may come forth in the future, provided general consensus and Parks Commission approval. [A, P1A]

2. Continue mowing Sector 3

Continued regular mowing of the grass in Sector 3 is highly desirable and enhances the overall aesthetic of this area. [A]

3. Clear North stream undergrowth

Natural Spring upstream from the pond- recommend working with volunteer organizations to clear out the undergrowth regularly to keep it flowing and looking nice. [D, P1A]

4. Trail Naming and Signs

Name trails in the park and provide signage with some basic directions leading to other park areas and adjacent streets such as Springside Avenue, Springside House, North Street, etc. Historic signage could be included in section 3 indicating that the section near Springside Avenue and indicate the previous name as Abbot Park which was short-lived name for Springside Park. [D, P1B]

5. See-Saw

Remove and/or replace the old see-saw with some other playground amenity or put a bench in its place – the current see-saw frame is an eye sore [C, P1B]

6. Pavilion

Recommendation for security & maintenance at the pavilion – need to develop some lighting, possibly solar lighting, to make it visible and regular clean-up [E + C, P1B]

7. Parking at the Pond

Recommend a cut-in for parking for 2-3 cars or larger at this Springside Avenue location near the pond. [C, P2A]

8. Pond Restoration

Based on considerable public input and a review of past planning research, the SPC recommends pursuing a careful restoration of the pond in the interest of park enhancement and improving city water runoff issues. [Planning P1A, Restoration P2]

Planning Area #4: North Little League / playground area

Rotary Park is a kid friendly play area located in the Southeast section of Springside Park at the corner of Brown Street and Springside Ave. The little league baseball field is located in this section along with a basketball court. There is a concession stand and a picnic area near the entrance and next to the playground. The playground was constructed and is maintained by the Pittsfield Rotary Club. There is a parking lot at the entrance just off of Springside Ave that can accommodate about 16 vehicles. Parking is also available along the gravel drive towards the ballfield.

1. Trash cans

Need additional trash cans near the basketball court and signage encouraging help to keep the area litter free. [A, P1A]

2. Upper parking lot

Clean-up the upper parking lot above the ball field and keep dumping out. [D]

3. Security General suggestions for park gate security and locking gates at various entry points. These items posed a great deal of problems such as locking, unlocking gates when necessary and the added responsibility this poses to the City manpower. [E]

4. Baseball field

The ball field and playground appear to be kept up pretty well by users of these facilities so no suggestions were made other than number one. Though, the parking for the baseball field should be

formalized through construction of a new lot. This area is often congested with cars and there is little organization to how they should be parking. [North Little League leadership should be engaged regularly to solicit their complete input regarding this area] [E]

Planning Area #5: Southern Woodlands

The entirety of section 5 is mixed hardwood forest, walking trails and has a path large enough for a vehicle traveling up through the middle from the upper dirt parking lot by the little league field to between the old zoo and the softball field. The border starts in the south at Springside Avenue starting east of the pond and ending at the entrance for the basketball and little league fields, the border then excludes the little league field and continues north to the end of Brown Street where a sharp turn to the west leads to the cement blocks on the main path behind the old zoo. The western border winds along a small stream.

1. Stevens Pond area

Stevens Pond area behind or below the Greenhouse – as opposed to the lower pond, this older pond area has elapsed much more significantly from its original state. The SPC recommends allowing this area continue to recede naturally. [A]

2. Trail improvements

Improvements are needed to existing trails in this area, as is improved signage. The city should work closely with park organizations to help develop new trail marker as well as educational signage. One major concern that trail erosion is occurring in many areas. [A+D, ongoing]

4. Indian Rocks

The “Indian Rocks” area is no longer visible and clearing some of the area to promote visibility will be a positive step in reducing misuse of this area. [E]

5. Trails

The long term development of a boardwalk plank trail in two phases- Phase 1: Leading down from trailhead behind Greenhouse to circle the wetlands area of former Stevens Pond; Phase 2: continue the walkway down from Steven’s wetland, meandering along stream to the lower pond. [B, P2; Planning: P1B]

6. Signage

Create signage to promote ease of use and knowledge of what part of the park one is occupying. Signage directing one to various other areas of the park. A wooden map of the park at the pond's gazebo, Springside House and the North Playground would add to ease of use. [C, P1B]

Planning Area #6: Central fields

The central open fields section includes a small softball field with a gravel parking lot, an artery gravel/ dirt fire road, and fields of wild grass and flowers that have walking paths mowed through them periodically through the summer. “Indian rock” is in the upper field, an outcropping of white

rock nearly 6 feet high and 4 feet wide that provides a view of the park. The borders are held tightly to the fields and directly at the forest line and the wooded path that leads to the Doyle Softball Complex.

1. North Playground

- The caterpillar climber and the snail climber are sturdy and well-loved fixtures and should be retained for as many years as possible.
- Swings are needed on the 3rd, unused swing set which is in good condition though out of use due to lack of swings for several years. [A, P1A]
- The slide is in poor condition and will eventually become a safety issue [C, P2]
- Further recommendations- if/as playground equipment is removed/replaced in this area in the future, there be some review as to if/how to replace it with new fixtures and what kind, between the city and SPC, including what physical play equipment is most relevant to today's youth. [E]

2. Seating

Additional benches and/or picnic table(s) for picnicking and promoting family use [A, P1A]

3. Bluebird houses

Refurbish and replace bluebird houses in the Chestnut field area [D, P1A]

4. Restriction signs

Signage: "Keep out" unauthorized vehicular traffic "No Dumping" [A, P1]

5. Invasive species mitigation

Removal of invasive species: Bishops Grout weed, Bittersweet, honeysuckle, winged Euonymus (burning bush), Norway Maple, Japanese Bayberry [D, ongoing]

6. Remove city maintenance piles

The mulch and sand piles kept in this area for city maintenance use are entirely inappropriate for this area. [A, P1A]

7. American Chestnut seed farm

The American Chestnut seed farm is an important new addition to the park which is exemplary of the kind of projects consistent with the vision and guiding principles for the park, and should be highlighted in the park's educational programming, signage, maps, brochures etc [A+D, ongoing]

This wide open sector is the spatial center of the park, with some dozen trail heads off its perimeter leading out to all other areas of the park. It is integral to several types of common park activity hiking, cycling, dog walking, clean ups, and some educational events. It is prime for a combination of light recreational (already provided), along with (needed) focused agricultural opportunities and picnic/scenic stopping point activity.

General note- Every effort should be made to strike the term 'zoo' from use in referring to this area in the master plan and any other publications or publicity. There has not been a petting zoo at

Springside Park for 31 years and this is extremely confusing to anyone who was born or moved to Pittsfield less than 30 years ago.

Alternately, the playground there has traditionally often been known as 'North Playground' as it is the northernmost playground and adjacent to the former "North Middle School" - recommend adopting this terminology officially.

*Note, there were actually two petting zoos in different places at Springside Park, one which closed in 1947 and one which closed in 1984. Historical signage at these locations would be an ideal addition. [E]

Planning Area #7: Northwest Woodlands

The northwest section of Springside Park, section seven is perhaps the least visited. It contains several hydrological features, and some of the paths are susceptible to being covered in water. It is a heavily forested area. In some parts the boundary with abutters isn't always clear. Putting an access driveway from North Street just north of Mt. Greylock Extended Care Facility, with a modest parking area just of the street, might be a good way to increase public utilization and enjoyment of this section of the park. Perhaps walkways on small supports would be a good way to keep some of the more regularly flooded sections of path accessible, especially where there are ponds along the trail. Invasive species removal (primarily honeysuckle, but probably others) will be another project.

1. Trailhead

It is possible to create an additional entrance to the park on the portion of Sector 7 that abuts Route 7, just north of Greylock Nursing Home. Most people do not know this is part of park property. The woodlands in this area are underutilized. A new trail should be created leading from the open parcel by North Street leading into the woods to connect with the trails in this area. [E, P2]

-Create a small parking area on the south side of the open field there (closest to the nursing home driveway, with signage for Springside Park. [E, P2]

2. Signage

– interpretive, location and general informational signage for various points in section 2 including one at the vernal pool [At such time as this may be certified as a vernal pool] [D,P2]

3. Trail maintenance

Level out artificial mounds originally created by ATV riders/dirt bikers. [C/D, P2]

4. Reclaim park encroachments Explore where park encroachments have been ongoing and address. [A, P1]

Planning Area #8: Central Woodlands

The area is comprised of largely wooded forest and encircles, at its center, several acres of very tall mature pines. Sub-section 8 is bisected by a southerly flowing stream that rises significantly in the summer months creating a swampy marsh near the pines. The mature pines comprise approximately one tenth of the land area and appear majestic and cathedral-like creating an area fully forested year-round. The area is frequented by hikers, joggers, dog walkers, and area residents. In the winter, shoe shoeing and cross country skiers are sometimes present. In addition to the hiking trails, the area contains a dirt road that runs from the softball complex downhill in a southwesterly direction through sub-district six to the former zoo and out to the main park entrance on North Street. Near the Broadview Terrace entrance is a large cement water reservoir that is mostly subterranean but rises 20-25 feet above ground with a flat cement cover, constructed as a water suppression system for the former GE plant that was located downhill from this area.

1. Park Expansion

Sector 8 has the highest potential of any sector for future land acquisition to expand Springside Park. Additional open space and woodland between the old G.E. cistern and Broadview Terrace and Benedict Road is privately owned but unused and would make a great addition to the park. An open field just off Broadview Terrace would make an excellent entrance area should this land be acquired by the city at a future date. A trail could be created running up from this field to the area by the old cistern. [E, P3]

2. Foot bridges [D, P1]

- Bridge at lower Brook where there is now a pallet being used as a makeshift bridge should have a more permanent replacement foot bridge.
- Another bridge should be placed at the end of upper Brown Street to cross the brook at that location leading to the North Playground area
- The bridge at “the Pines area” has a good bridge that cover three quarters of the way over the brook and needs the other quarter added to make the bridge complete.

3. Invasive species removal

Consider eventual removal of Norway Maples from “The Pines Area” they are an invasive species [E, P4]

4. Dark Pines

Interpretive signage in the "Dark Pines" area [much of which is actually hemlock] noting the difference in forestation compared to the area on the other side of the stream. [D, P1B]

5. Access road maintenance

Consider repair of roadway with some fill gravel [E, P4]

6. Enforce ATV ban

ATV traffic is severely rutting the ground along the walking paths and elsewhere in the park, causing major drainage problems and swampy pathways. [A, P1]

7. Cistern

- The roof of the small concrete pump house/ entrance area near the rear (Broadview Terrace side) of the old cistern has eroded considerably in recent years, and has become large enough for a youth or small adult to gain entrance to this dangerous area. This was patched with plywood in Dec. 2012 but later removed by vandals. A more permanent sealing off is needed. [C, P1A]
- Signage explaining the history of this strange structure is needed, this is of great curiosity to park users. [D, P1B]

Planning Area #9: Doyle Softball Complex

The Gerald S. Doyle Sr. Memorial Complex, home to the Pittsfield Girls Softball program, features 4 regulation softball fields, 2 with stadium lights for night games and a full service concession building. This complex hosted the 2014 Babe Ruth 16U World Series. The complex is located at 503 Benedict Road across from the Berkshire Hills Country Club. Pittsfield reconstructed the municipal water tower next to the fields. Standing on the fields, one notices the beautiful surrounding Berkshire hills, with Bousquet Ski Area to the south and Mount Greylock to the North West.

1. Communication with facility user organizations

Consult with Babe Ruth Pittsfield Girls Softball League periodically to stay updated as to the issues and needs of their facilities. [E]

2. Security

Consider a gate to block traffic beyond the ball fields [E, P1B]

3. Development

This area has been the focus of the largest influx of public funding to any part of the park in recent years. More investments are needed throughout the remaining majority of park acreage before further enhancements to Sector 9 are considered.

Implementation Strategy and Phasing

The present and future of Springside Park in the 21st century depends upon an ongoing public private collaboration in its stewardship. For decades the city has worked in conjunction with several established private nonprofits and resident groups to maintain and develop Springside Park.

The following steps are recommended for implementation of the Springside Park Master Plan in a spirit of full cooperation between the City of Pittsfield and the broad stakeholder constituency of the park-using public.

- That the Office of Community Development include as an insert or appendix the Springside Park Master Plan to the City-wide Open Spaces Master Plan, and that aspects of that plan pertaining to Springside reflect the input and guidelines developed
- That in the event of any proposed new project or activity outside of that already outlined in the Master Plan, that would significantly alter the landscape or usage of any part of Springside Park, the SPC be notified and offered an opportunity to review and offer comment on behalf of its member constituencies prior to any approval by the city.
- That a representative(s) of the SPC meet annually with the Park Commissioners to review the overall state of the park in conjunction with the master plan.
- That a report be given to the mayor annually on the state of the park and progress in implementation of the master plan.
- That the SPC continue to communicate and meet regularly with the Parks & Open Spaces Manager and other city staff as advisable.
- That a seat shall continue to be open on the SPC steering committee for the sitting Ward 1 City Councilor, now and in the future.*
- That the SPC steering committee shall continue to be open to representatives of any local group, club, or organization who makes use of or has an interest in Springside Park.*
- That the City and Springside Park Conservancy begin to explore future ways to potentially develop a more formal working agreement in the coming years.
- That the Springside Park Master Plan undergo a complete review and assessment in 2021, and be updated as needed through a similar collaborative committee process with public stakeholders.

**As incorporated into the organizational language of Springside Park Conservancy, Inc.*

General Phasing Schedule for Implementation of Master Plan

Phase 1 : Immediate and Interim Projects

Phase 2 : Medium term Projects

Phase 3 : Long Term Projects

Phase 1

A. Spring 2016- Summer 2017 [FY17]

B. Summer 2017 -Summer 2018 [FY18]

Phase 2

A. [FY 19]

B. [FY2020]

Phase 3

FY21 and Beyond [Master Plan assessment Jan-May 2021]

Appendix Supplement #1

Guiding Principles- Explanations & Supporting Materials /

Kelton Miller deeded the original Springside Park land in the explicit understanding of that it remain a public park. “That the City of Pittsfield acquire, and add to the above described parcel and maintain as a public park forever... [list of lots]That the city shall reasonably improve upon the granted premises... and shall forever maintain the granted tract [& additions] for the use and enjoyment of the public as is usual with lands of this character.”

The Miller family has several times since reiterated its position that the existing property remain public park land and not be used for other purposes.* Furthermore, consistent support for this has been seen from a majority of the Pittsfield public throughout the park's history.**

The 1957 Master Plan for Springside developed by the city identified Springside as a unique property among its parks that offered potential for “activities not feasible or available in any of the other park properties,” and one which offered an environment apt for purposes more diverse than just playgrounds and athletic fields, though these form important components to the overall park.

Another key component identified in that Master Plan was a focus on the combination of horticulture and natural education, stating that it was highly advisable that one city park should have an emphasis on this, and this usage is highly appropriate at Springside. Parks Superintendent Vincent Hebert indicated that an envisioned Arboretum of indigenous trees and other plants and various display gardens would enhance the existing landscape while not interfering with other enjoyment of the park.

Since that time (see Context of the Plan) Springside Park has become a mixed used ecosystem that simultaneously offers one of the premiere locations in the city for traditional athletic activities and a wide variety of other recreational activities, while supporting a thriving infrastructure of agricultural and educational programming that currently includes participation by at least a dozen organizations, and providing a major venue for outdoor performance and cultural programming.

Informational Resources

- Original Deed, 1910
- 1957 Master Plan
- 1990 Parks Commission request to Pittsfield Beautiful
- SPC Mission Statement
- Historic & Current uses of the plan (see: “Context of the Plan”)
- Additional Research Data
- Public input

Official Documents -Relevant Excerpts [examples]:

Original Deed, 1910, Kelton Miller

“...That the City of Pittsfield acquire, and add to the above described parcel and maintain as a public park forever... [list of lots]That the city shall reasonably improve upon the granted premises... and

shall forever maintain the granted tract [& additions] for the use and enjoyment of the public as is usual with lands of this character.”

Springside Park Master Plan, 1957

“While Pittsfield has a number of important parks in Pittsfield, there is not one single area that could be considered a park in the generally accepted meaning of the word.... The City needs one large area that can be devoted for activities not feasible or available in any of the other park properties. At least one park in every city should have a horticultural interest, and this is highly appropriate at Springside.”

Project request by V. Hebert on behalf of the Pittsfield Parks Commission to Pittsfield Beautiful:

“[City of Pittsfield proposes] the continued development, promotion and maintenance of the arboretum in Springside Park, which is one of the oldest parks in the city with great potentialities because of its central location, its size, its wooded sections, irregular topography and large open spaces.”

SPC Mission Statement

“To restore, manage and preserve Springside Park in partnership with the public, for the enjoyment of present and future generations. To maintain integrity of the border and designated activities in Springside Park, to define suitable usage of the park attributes in accordance with the expressed intent of original donors. To assist potential and current users of Springside Park and proposed developers of specific projects to enhance the maintainability and function of the park with the City.”

Appendix II: SPRINGSIDE HOUSE

Recommended General Guidelines For Reuse of Springside House Submitted to the City of Pittsfield, Office of Community Development By the Springside Park Conservancy – March, 2014

The Springside Conservancy is a coalition of institutions that have for several decades operated out of or are involved in the ongoing activity and stewardship of Springside Park, including the Hebert Arboretum, Springside Greenhouse Group, the Friends of Springside, and Morningside Initiative.

These volunteer organizations have worked for many years supporting activities which enhance the park and serve the community. Collectively contributing many thousands of hours in services ranging from maintaining and physically improving the park to providing educational and cultural programs for the public. These organizations have a keen perspective on the importance of this building to the park and the parks unique importance to Pittsfield

Therefore, we urge that the planned redevelopment of Springside House take into consideration the following criteria.

Any proposed reuse should:

- **acknowledge the building's historical character and unique location within Pittsfield's largest (250 acre) destination natural park**
- **be compatible with existing patterns of activity at the park, established park programming, uses, partnerships and consistent with the vision and concepts established in the forthcoming Springside Park Master Plan.**
- **have a purpose that provides some unique benefit to the community as related to Springside Park**
- **should consider the versatility of the existing structure, and where possible provide for mixed use, multi-use, or some range of compatible usages for providing maximum community benefit and long term financial sustainability of the reuse.**

The Springside Natural Park Center A Proposal for Redevelopment & Reuse of the Historic Springside House as an Educational Visitors Center

Summary

The specialized historic usage and unique location of the building within Pittsfield's largest park land, and its conjoined Historic Registry status with Springside Park, suggest a use for the facility that is related to and compatible with the overall character, community vision, and forthcoming Master Plan for the park.

By synthesizing recommendations from years of planning assessments and previous public input into a model for new partnership and collaborations in the form of a multi-use educational visitors center, this proposed reuse offers a conceptual plan that offers a feasible, fundable, and sustainable purpose for this important building that is compatible with the current usage and programming in adjacent areas of the park while substantially enhancing the community.

A Natural Park Center

The existing structural attributes of the building as it has been developed, and its historic usage suggest the feasibility of the house as a multi-faceted hub that can accommodate several integrated agencies and uses tied to its unique site location within the city's largest park.

A properly renovated Springside House could accommodate all of the following features/usages, in an collaborative multi-use configuration that would amplify the effectiveness of its components, as an integrated Pittsfield parks visitor and natural educational center.

- An ideal location for local Visitors Center auspices currently located at the Intermodal Transportation Center to be based at a destination park
- Classroom and meeting spaces for local educational and community programs, especially as a complement to outdoor environmental learning and/or cultural activities conducted in the park
- Office or workspace areas providing a presence for local ecological educational organizations including those already conducting extensive outdoor learning programs at Springside, whose presence would enhance visitor experience and community benefit, as a centralized resource hub of environmental STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering & Math) education available to students of all levels.
- Room and wall space featuring artifacts & memorabilia from Pittsfield history, particularly the substantial collection of outdoor recreation and parks history preserved from the house's own legacy.
- Social gathering space complementary to outdoor recreational, cultural and community events

History & Former Usage

Springside House was built as a private residence, "Elmhurst," between 1856 and 1860 by Abraham Burbank. It was sold to the Davol family, who owned it from 1872 to 1904, renovating and adding to the house and constructing the adjacent barn. From 1904 to 1933 it served as a summer residence for

the Stevens family. In 1910, Kelton B. Miller donated 10 acres of land in the vicinity of Elmhurst for use as a public park, which then became Abbott Park. By 1919, with the donation of additional land

and the sale of some existing lots, the park had increased in size to 15.5 acres and was renamed Springside Park. In 1938, Kelton Millers sons Donald B. and Lawrence K. purchased the 75 acre Stevens estate and donated the house and land for the enlargement of Springside Park.

The Park Commission authorized caretaker Harry J. Watson to renovate what was now known as Springside House for use by clubs and community organizations and in 1941 it was opened for public use. Four of the first floor rooms were renovated for meetings, parties and other adult activities on a seasonal basis. Between 1941 and 1955 gifts of additional acreage added to the size of the Park. As the park grew, so did the administrative needs. In 1954, Springside House was remodeled again and became the office and headquarters of the Pittsfield Dept. of Parks and Recreation. While hosting these operations over the next half century, other organizations also utilized or rented space in the building at different times in conjunction with park services, including Pittsfield Civil Defense as well as the Winter Carnival Committee and numerous athletic leagues and recreational groups from around the city. The Hebert Arboretum and Berkshire Conservation District also had recent office spaces, and meetings of bodies such as the Parks Commission and Conservation Commission were held there.

In 2007, the Department of Community Services/Parks and Recreation was officially removed from the city code. In July of that year James McGrath, the Director of Community Services, was relocated to City Hall and given his current title of Park, Open Space, and Natural Resource Program Manager. Park maintenance administration, now Buildings and Grounds Maintenance, was moved to the Building Maintenance Department. Park recreation was moved to the Community Development Department. The principal Springside building has been generally unused since July, 2007, and is currently primarily for storage. The eastern half of the building has an apartment (2 floors) that housed AmeriCorps VISTA Volunteers from 2009 to 2012. Most recently, the main portion of the house was re-opened to the public in Summer 2013 for several showings of a historical exhibit consisting of two open rooms displaying a small sampling of the extensive collections of photos, documents, artifacts and memorabilia from a century of Pittsfield parks history currently stored at the house.

Relationship to the Park

In addition to being an active venue for athletic, recreational and social events, Springside Park has also become a hub of ecological education and outdoor learning activity, particularly in the acreage immediately surrounding the Springside House.

Since at least the time of the Stevens estate, the area near the house has boasted celebrated gardens of different kinds. A 1957 park plan by the city called for the establishment of an arboretum at Springside, a task that was finally begun by the nonprofit Vincent J. Arboretum in the 1990s, and has expanded to include a host of educational programming throughout all of Springside Park. In 1969, a gardening club known as the Springside Greenhouse Group began operating out of an adjacent greenhouse. This facility has grown significantly and the group remains active there today with over 80 members. Over the 1970s and 80s, another nonprofit organization, the Friends of Springside Park, emerged and became incorporated, for the purpose of helping to preserve and maintain the park while providing land stewardship education for future generations. More recently, the Western Massachusetts Master Gardeners Association, a nonprofit which evolved out of a Umass program in 1989, has installed additional demonstration gardens near the house, and provides workshop there

throughout three seasons. In addition to these four organizations actively involved in offering a diversity of ecological and agricultural educational programming, several other organizations have recently utilized Springside Park for educational programming: Berkshire Natural Resources Council, the Hoffman Bird Club, the Berkshire Museum, and hundreds of students in school groups from elementary to college levels.

This area in Springside Park is also an active hub for cultural and social events, including annual concerts, performances, gatherings and other community activities.

Past Study Recommendations

Several studies by outside consulting parties in developing the Hebert Arboretum's working Master Plan include recommendations for usage of the Springside House

A 1998 Arboretum Master Plan report for the produced by Brian Gibbons on funding from the Department of Environmental Management, the Northeast Center for Urban and Community Forestry, and Pittsfield Beautiful Inc, notes the building's "Springside House is currently the head quarters for the Pittsfield Department of Parks and Recreation. The House is essentially the center of the Arboretum and would make an ideal visitors center offering tourist information for the City of Pittsfield. The public could enjoy the wonderfully developed grounds while learning what more there is to do around Pittsfield and the rest of the Berkshire. Additionally, other arboreta offer resources to the public... suggestions include a library, a herbarium, or a restaurant."

A 2000 study by the Conway School of Design also proposes a role of the Springside House as a welcoming gateway to the park where a visitors center for the surrounding Arboretum would coexist with the existing Parks Department operations then quartered there.

"Once people enter the Springside House, they are greeted by volunteers who give out Arboretum maps, direct them to classes and workshops, or tell them a little history of Springside House and the grounds. The information desk may also have books for sale and items pertaining to the education and enjoyment of the Arboretum. The south door leads people to a path which connects to the concert and social area."

Springside House & Park - Higher Education Collaboration Concept Paper -

Developed by the city in 2010, envisioned the building as an educational partnership to complement the park's growing role as a hub of ecological learning.

"The City of Pittsfield proposes to renovate the Springside House and utilize its 237 acre Park and Arboretum to provide a variety of environmental education and professional development workshops

for the regions secondary and post -secondary educators. In addition, the City proposes to partner with Berkshire Community College and Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts, and other community-based agencies to offer environmental stewardship opportunities for students throughout Berkshire County.

"A partnership with the Springside House and Park could provide complementary out-of-classroom learning experiences for BCC students and faculty as well as professional development opportunities. ... Collaborating with the Springside House and Park would allow BCC students the opportunity to participate in community service projects and co-curricular activities that supplement their classroom experience. In addition, the site could serve as a center for environmental education training and

professional development opportunities for elementary school teachers throughout Berkshire County.”

The educational partnership concept has been circulated since 2011 and received some interest from local educational institutions, most notably BCC. Since school groups from elementary to college level, as well as several other educational institutions, use the park regularly throughout the year for field trips, outdoor laboratory experiences and other natural and ecological education, having some form of indoor facilities on site to complement this outdoor use would be ideal.”

Input from Park Organizations

At meetings throughout 2012-2013, the board of directors of the Vincent J. Arboretum repeatedly indicated a desire for the reuse of the house as some type of educational center or tourist destination, and a ideally a reuse that is relevant to the Arboretum, which immediately surrounds the house. An opportunity for offices for Springside (Conservancy) organizations, educational technology and classroom spaces in such close proximity to the diverse lands of the park is seen as highly desirable.

In 2013 Annual Meeting, the Friends of Springside Park endorsed a motion to advocate for a reuse of the house for “educational, cultural or historical purposes consistent with its location in the park.” This was further established by a vote on March 15, 2014 to endorse the Springside Park Conservancy committee's recommended guidelines for reuse.

Over several months of meetings, the suggestion of a visitors center or other visitor-friendly hub was seen as desirable, in addition to space for educational activities related to the park environment. A member of the Springside Greenhouse Group involved in the Pittsfield Visitors Center noted that visitor traffic to that facility had dwindled to 25% of its previous rate following a move from the Colonial Theatre to the Intermodal Transportation Center. Location of visitor center facilities at an actual destination would be ideal for tourism, and attract new visitors to the park. It was noted that the configuration of the building has in the past accommodated multiple uses, and a traditional visitors center could easily occupy a portion of the building while leaving ample rooms and spaces for other activities, which could be enhanced by the day to day presence of visitors center facilities and in turn provide additional interest and draw for visitors.

Synthesis

The model of an integrated Springside Natural Park Center would provide an ideal role for the house as part of a visitor friendly, educational campus area that includes an Arboretum, greenhouse facilities, demonstration gardens and hundreds of adjacent acres of diverse ecosystems within Pittsfield's largest park and downtown natural preserve.

By providing a thematic multi-use center that draws upon the existing free resource of multiple organizations already currently engaged in providing a range of STEM educational programming at Springside Park, as well as extensive recreational and cultural events held on the grounds, Pittsfield can create a facility that will be a unique draw for visitors celebrating the community's proud parks history and modern outdoors tourism offerings, while simultaneously providing a tremendous benefit to the community by connecting academic learning with hands on opportunities to study botany, agriculture, forestry, zoology, and numerous other disciplines of naturalist education.

In a manner reminiscent to the way in which the Lichtenstein Center at the more southern end of downtown is a portal to all cultural and artistic offerings in the community for both tourists and residents alike, as well as an incubator for related projects and organizations, and as the renovated 1Berkshire historic fire station building is a portal and incubator facility for all manner of economic development, the Springside Center could be a beacon for all things “Nature,” as Pittsfield continues to grow into an increasingly green, agricultural, environmentally-aware community with expanding opportunities for both STEM education and outdoor recreation.

Potential Partners In Redevelopment for this Reuse

Public & Educational: Office of Community Development/Parks Commission; Pittsfield Tourism Commission & RSVP (Pittsfield Visitors Center); Berkshire Community College; Pittsfield Public Schools

Park organizations: Springside Greenhouse Association, Vincent J. Hebert Arboretum, Western Mass. Master Gardeners Association, Friends of Springside Park, Morningside Neighborhood Initiative

Potential Additional Partners :

- Berkshire Environmental Action Team
- Berkshire Historical Society
- Berkshire Natural Resources Council
- Berkshire Museum
- Berkshire Visitors Bureau
- Gardens of the Berkshires
- Hoffman Bird Club
- Pittsfield Beautiful
- Pittsfield Agricultural Commission
- Pittsfield Historical Commission
- Pittsfield Tree Watch
- Tyler Street Business Group

Potential Avenues of Funding – Categories:

- STEM Educational
- Historic Preservation
- Public Parks
- Regional Tourism