

## **HAMMOND'S CONNECTION AT THE DAIRY FARM MASTER PLAN**

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Human & Rohde's task was to develop a conceptual plan that would accommodate the desired elements on the site by maximizing the relationship between uses and minimizing impacts to the adjacent properties and sensitive areas of the site. The initial plan was based on the findings of the Site Analysis, Land Bay Map, and the list of desired program elements described in the previous section. Following the Advisory Committee's review of the conceptual plan, revisions were presented until the Committee reached consensus on a Preliminary Master Plan.

The Preliminary Master Plan centered on the County's vision for good stewardship of the Dairy Farm.

- Preserve the property in its agricultural and rural nature;
- Provide the public opportunities to reconnect with the land; and
- Manage a sustainable crop and livestock farming operation.

Gardens would be a major feature of Hammond's Connection. Agricultural gardens would include orchard trees, vegetables, berry patches, and herb gardens. Heritage gardens would highlight plants important to Native American cultures as well as plants associated with the history of the Hammond family's use of the land. Community Garden plots would allow citizens to grow their own vegetables, fruit, and flowers. Natural gardens would highlight native plants. Formal gardens would provide a contrasting feature for the less structured gardens.

Another significant component will be the extensive areas of habitat restoration, including reforestation of 34 acres of streams and steep slopes, restoration of more than 5,000 linear feet of stream, and creation of a 15-acre meadow.

Park amenities would include picnic pavilions, a small playground, and overlooks to view wildlife and the farm. Natural surface hiking trails would wind throughout Hammond's Connection for public enjoyment, education, and recreation. A paved hike / bike trail would travel through the site and link to the South Shore Trail.

The Preliminary Master Plan was presented at a public meeting on February 18, 2009. Public comments on the Plan and its park uses and conceptual design were accepted by the Department of Recreation and Parks through March 18, 2009. The Plan was well received with 30 total comments submitted: 19 citizens favored the plan; three favored the plan but were opposed to trails in Odenton Natural Area, music, and vinyl fencing; five opposed the plan because of the lack of equestrian use and financial cost to the county; and three were non-committal. Anne Arundel County accepted the Preliminary Master Plan approved by the Advisory Committee as the "Hammond's Connection at the Dairy Farm Master Plan" summarized in this report (Inset C).

## **Public Access to Hammond's Connection**

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The Master Plan proposes the entrance to Hammond's Connection via Dairy Farm Road through the current egress-only drive (Figure 6). This entrance would be shared with the tenant farmer and provide access to the Village. The entrance would be improved to allow one ingress lane, two egress lanes, and an area for a gatehouse. The reconfigured entrance would allow for additional parking at the Village area. A parking area for approximately 28 vehicles across Dairy Farm Road from the new entrance would accommodate users of existing and future nature trails in Odenton Natural Area. A pedestrian crossing signal would be necessary for pedestrians to cross Dairy Farm Road.

The Master Plan also calls for a connection to the South Shore Trail which follows the old alignment of the WB & A Railroad. This hike / bike trail would be located one block northeast of Route 175 (Annapolis Road) traveling along Maple Road, the northeast boundary of the Dairy Farm. A pedestrian crossing signal would be necessary to cross Route 175. The hike / bike trail would pass through the Village area and parallel the farm lane to Hammond's Connection. The four miles of hike / bike trail would wind through Hammond's Connection linking the different use areas and amenities. It would loop on itself forming shorter routes for people of different abilities and interests. This trail would be 10 feet wide, suitable for hikers and bikers, and separated from the vehicle travel lanes. Fences would separate the access road and the hike / bike trail from the working farm fields.

The access road to the 140-acre parcel of Hammond's Connection would be the widened and improved existing gravel lane. The main parking area, designed with 126 spaces, would be located off this access road (Figure 7). The access road would pass in front of the cemetery and homestead site. A second parking area for approximately 43 vehicles would be located near the cemetery and serve the proposed Visitors' / Interpretation Center (Figure 8). A new road off the access road would be located west of the cemetery and homestead and connect to the existing gravel lane leading to Towser's Branch. This new road would provide an additional 42 roadside parking spaces for visitors to the theme gardens, labyrinth, and meadow. The existing gravel lane leading to Towser's Branch would be improved, terminating in a cul-de-sac containing approximately 28 parking spaces, and provide access to the wildlife viewing areas and trails adjacent to Towser's Branch (Figure 9). A third parking lot for approximately 43 vehicles would be placed midway down the lane. A total of 310 parking spaces would be available throughout the 176-acre site.

Depending on location, the surface treatment of the roads, parking areas, and hike / bike trail would be a combination of asphalt, stone dust, pervious pavers, or boardwalk. Natural surface foot paths would lead from parking areas and meander through the gardens and reforestation areas. The exact location and distance of these paths would be designed as the gardens develop.

## **Community Gardens and Themed Display Gardens**

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Approximately 96 community garden plots would be located on the highest area of the site adjacent to Dairy Farm Road (Figure 7). The Advisory Committee recommended that the community garden plots be organic. Each 20-foot by 30-foot garden plot would have access to a hose bib and plot-side parking. A small pavilion and restrooms would be available for the gardeners. An apiary would be located west of the gardens on the forest edge. Vehicular access for maintenance of the beehives would be provided.

A prominent feature of Hammond's Connection would be the themed display gardens located throughout the park. These gardens would be functional and educational as well as aesthetically pleasing. Each garden could be considered a "room" of the park, providing a unique park experience. The use of native plants would be encouraged. Plantings could be shaped and designed to frame the views of the stream, wetland, or meadow enticing visitors to explore these places. The trails, paths, and walkways would be integrated into the garden themes, connecting the different garden rooms, and providing transitions for the various theme gardens. Sculptures, benches, water features, pavilions, and other structures could be incorporated into the garden designs. Each garden could be designed with an interpretive theme and generally fall within one of three categories: agricultural, formal, or natural.

Agricultural gardens would be related to crops, food production, and plants important for human use. An orchard along the access road would provide a transition from the working farm to Hammond's Connection (Figure 7). The approximately one-half acre orchard would be planted with Asian pears, crabapples, sour cherries, and walnuts. Apple trees were not recommended as they are susceptible to damage from deer. Other agricultural gardens could focus on bio-fuel production and kitchen gardens. Specialty gardens could highlight herbs, fruit, fibers, dyes, and medicinal plants. The woods edge would be a natural location for berry brambles and fruit bearing shrubs.

The formal gardens would provide a structured setting. Evergreen trees could be planted to separate the different gardens and create private spaces for peaceful enjoyment. A terraced garden could step down the slope from the cemetery. Other gardens would be similar to those present on the Hammond estate in the 1800s. A labyrinth would provide an area for quiet contemplation (Figure 8). Landscaping around the parking lots, pavilions, and other structures would enhance the park and create a balance between buildings, themed display gardens, and restoration projects.

Gardens closer to the stream, wetlands, and wooded slopes could have a more naturalistic design to harmonize with the natural habitats found on site. Native plantings would be required in these areas and replicate the stages of natural habitat succession. Natural gardens should reflect the diversity of habitat restoration projects on site. The stormwater management systems would emulate natural stream and wetland characteristics.

## **Habitat Restoration**

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The Master Plan provides many opportunities for habitat restoration including stream restoration, wetland creation, reforestation, and meadow management. Hammond's Connection, an agricultural setting with steep slopes adjacent to a stream, would provide an ideal setting to demonstrate ecologically sensitive development. The habitat restoration projects, aside from creating a better environment, would offer public educational and interpretive opportunities. Hammond's Connection should become an example of low-impact development practices.

It was important to the Advisory Committee that any activity on the Dairy Farm results in the improvement of water quality of Towser's Branch. Stormwater conveyance systems would allow for water from the roadways and parking lots to slowly infiltrate into the soils instead of running down the slopes (Figure 7). The water would flow through the ground and seep into the wetlands, where impurities would be filtered and transformed before entering the stream. This slow movement of water through the soils would result in better water quality and healthier streams. Stream restoration projects would further improve the water quality of Towser's Branch and the Patuxent River (Figure 9).

The stormwater conveyance systems would become living laboratories for developing environmentally sound stormwater management techniques and providing educational experiences on water quality and stream ecology. Some stormwater systems would be designed for aesthetics as well as functionality.

The existing wooded areas would be supplemented with additional reforestation. A 300-foot buffer of trees would be established along the stream. A mix of native deciduous and evergreen trees would be planted throughout 30 acres of the park to provide wildlife habitat. Reforestation on the steep slopes would complement the stormwater conveyance systems. Trees would buffer the different use areas creating "rooms" in the park. Reforestation areas would buffer the park from the roadway.

A meadow area would abut the working farm to the south creating a natural transition from the park into the farm fields (Figure 9). The meadow should be a minimum of 15 acres in size to support grassland wildlife. Other open areas throughout the site could be managed as meadows surrounded by native shrubs and understory trees. These areas would be mowed on a yearly schedule to encourage the growth of native wildflowers and grasses.

## **Public Amenities**

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The Master Plan provides many public amenities found within other County regional parks. Two pavilions, each able to accommodate 96 people, would be located at the main parking area (Figure 7) and the parking area off the gravel lane leading to Towser's Branch (Figure 8). A third smaller pavilion would be provided for community garden use (Figure 7). Restroom facilities would be provided near each pavilion.

A proposed Visitors' / Interpretation Center would be located adjacent to the Hammond Cemetery (Figure 8). This facility would be an information center for park visitors and headquarters for park staff. Artifacts found on the property could be displayed to interpret the history of the Hammond's family, as well as African American and Native American history of the site. The view of the farm fields from the cemetery and home site should be maintained. Storyboards around the home site could highlight the archaeology of the Dairy Farm. Park amenities located near the homestead and cemetery would harmonize with the tranquility and history of these special places. The existing gravel pit would remain for farm lane maintenance and to provide learning opportunities (Figure 9).

The main parking lot would provide access to some of the amenities including a playground with age-appropriate features for children 2-5 years and 5-12 years and a barn relocated from off-site (Figure 7). The grassy slope west of the main parking lot could be maintained for sledding in the winter (Figure 8). Benches and picnic tables would be located throughout the park and adjacent to the hike / bike trail. Wildlife viewing platforms would overlook Towser's Branch (Figure 9). A boardwalk would traverse the created wetland located at the confluence of the demonstration water quality system and Towser's Branch.

Storyboards and interpretive stations would be installed along the trails and within the gardens and habitat restoration areas.

Buildings and other structures would be designed using "green" technology which would include pervious surface materials, green roofs, and solar panels.

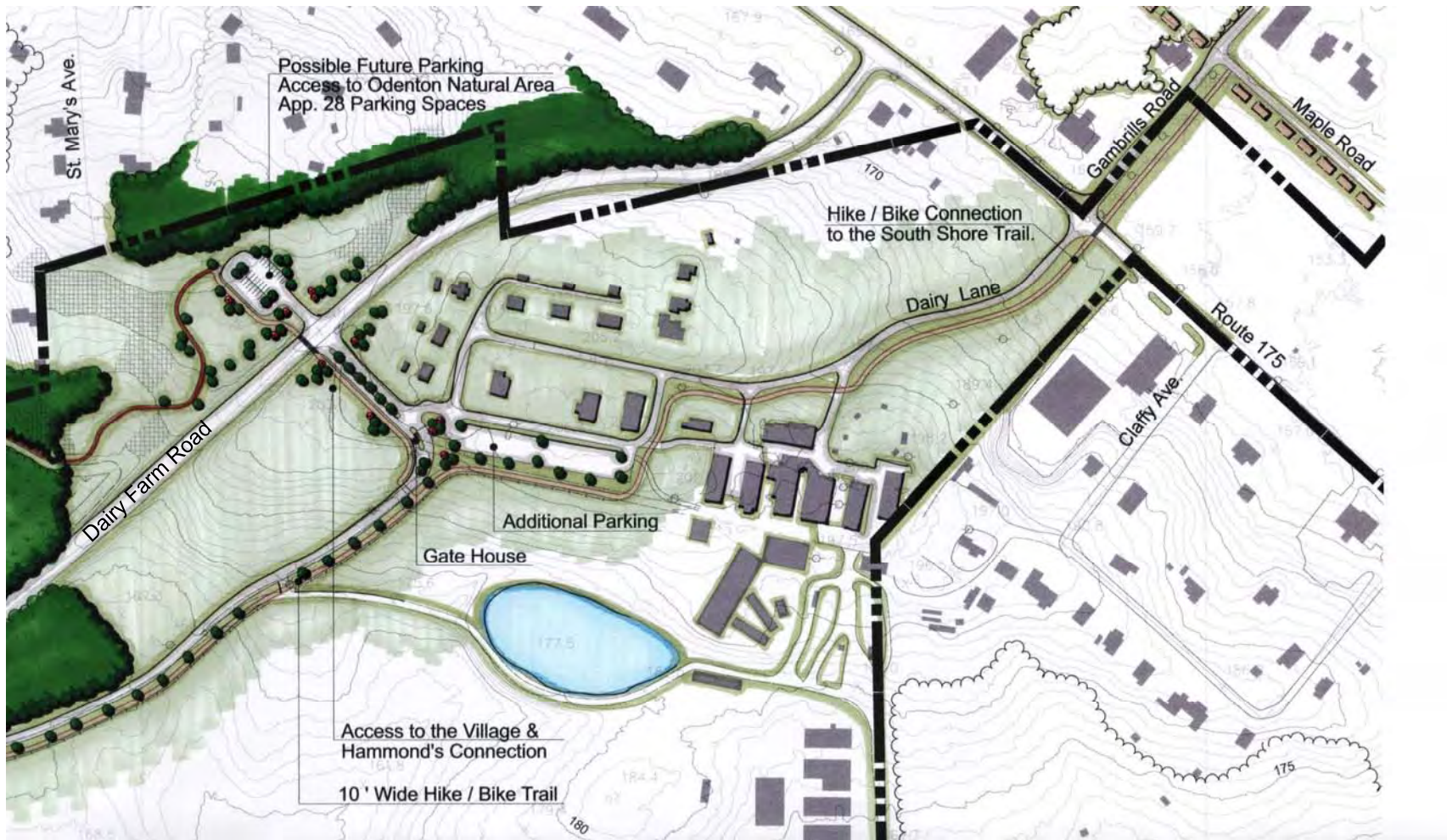


Figure 6. Proposed public access to Hammond's Connection and the Village. Cars would enter via Dairy Farm Road while bicyclists and hikers would enter from either Dairy Farm Road or the South Shore Trail.



Figure 7. Proposed community garden plots, orchard, playground, main parking lot, and other park amenities. The Master Plan includes reforestation of a 300-foot buffer to protect Towser's Branch.

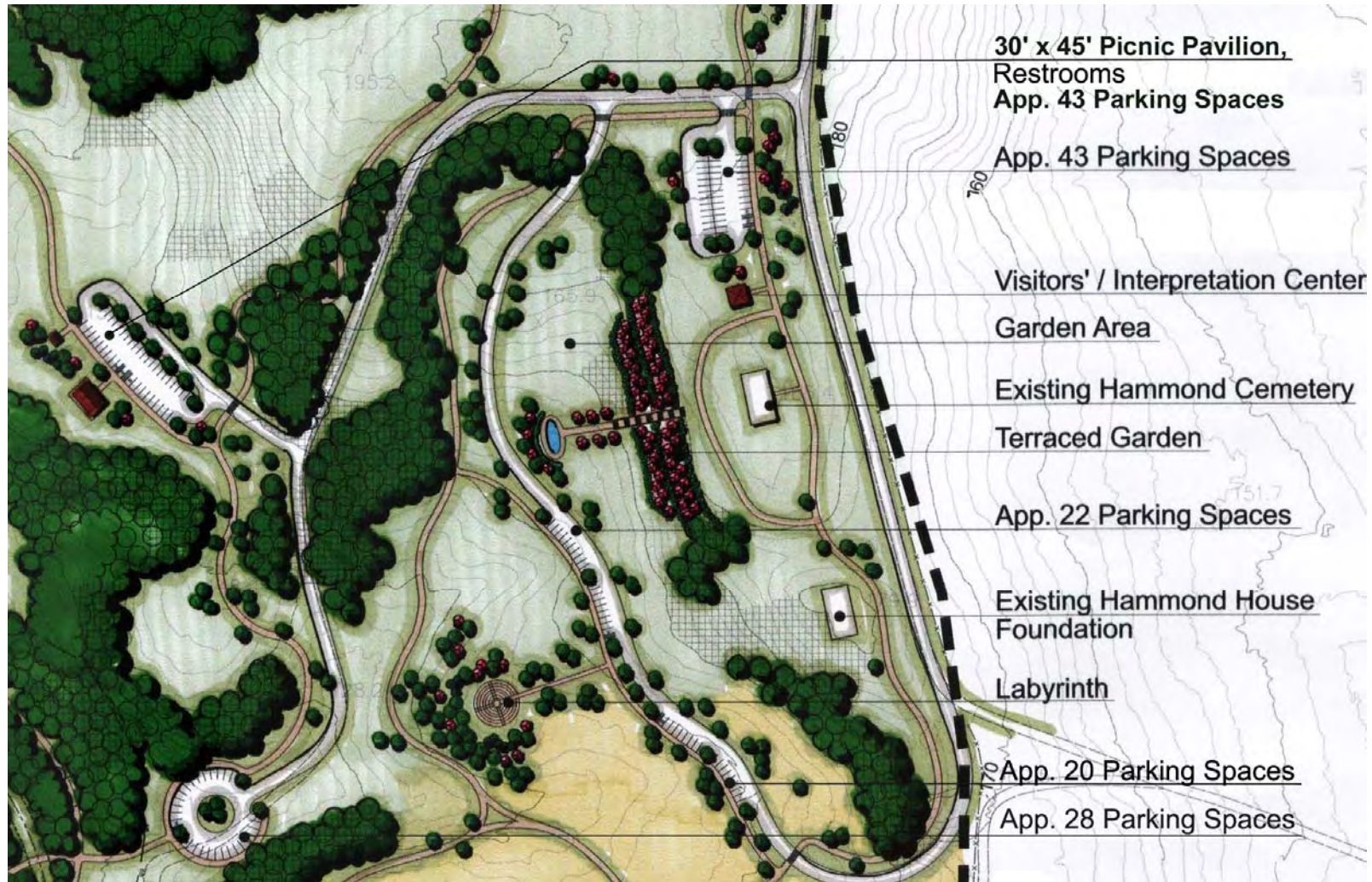


Figure 8. Proposed uses around the Hammond Cemetery highlight the archeology and history of the site, offer a meditative labyrinth, and provide parking access to natural areas. The hike / bike trail continues to wind through Hammond's Connection.

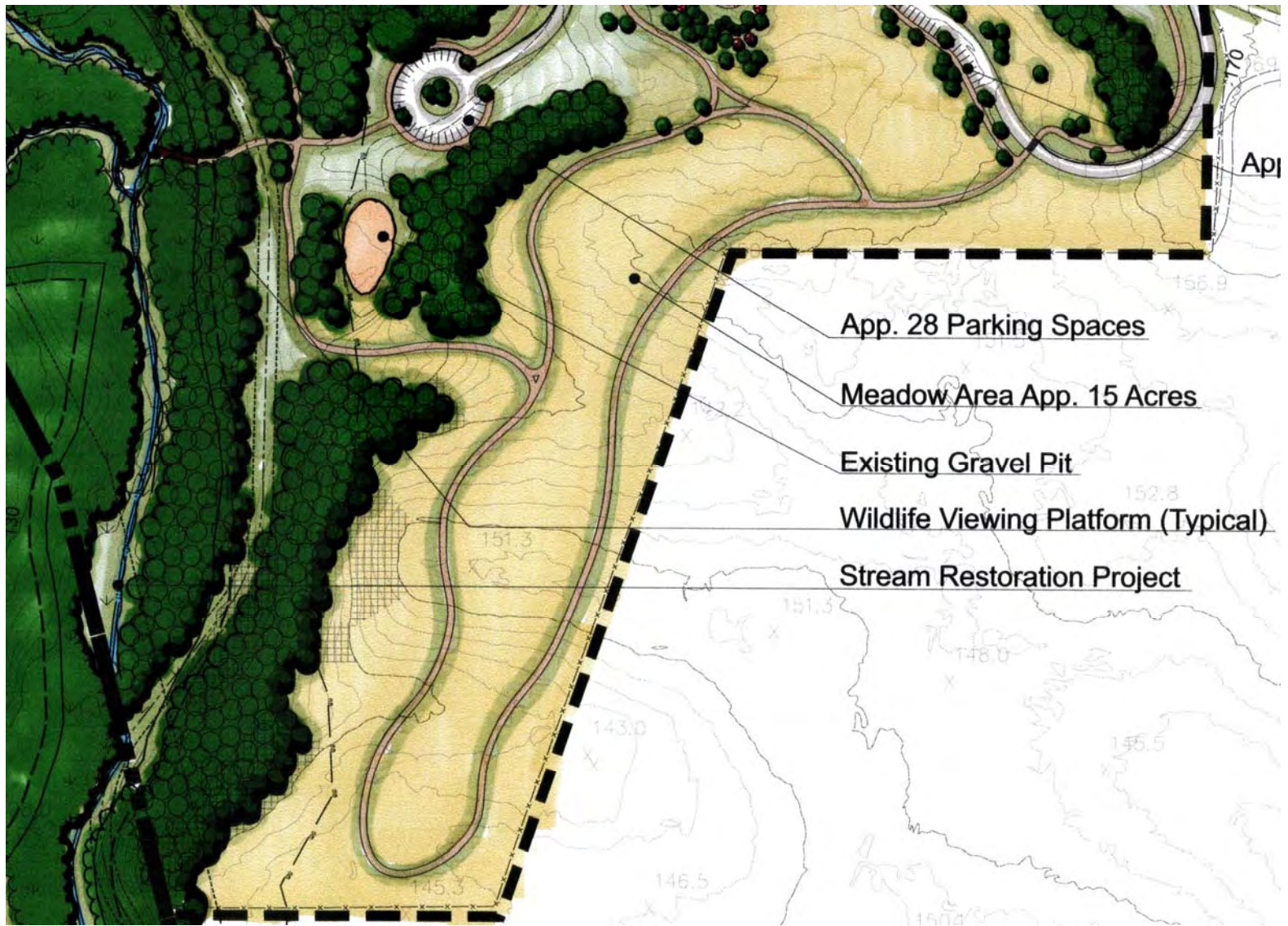


Figure 9. The Master Plan includes a meadow area, reforestation, and stream restoration and wildlife viewing platforms. The gravel pit would be used for farm lane maintenance and educational opportunities.