PROJECT APPLICATION FORM

Applicants:	Acton Health Department Acton Recreation Department Acton Natural Resources Department	**Submission Date:**	10/27/06

Applicant's Address, Phone Number and Email

472 Main Street, Acton, MA 01720
(978) 264-9634
breagor@acton-ma.gov

Purpose (Please select all that apply)

- o Open Space
- o Community Housing
- o Historic Preservation
- • Recreation

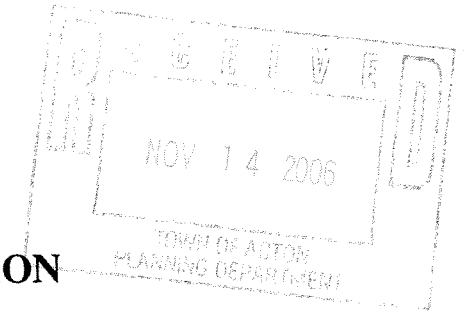
Town Committee (if applicable):	Board of Selectmen
Project Name:	NARA Master Plan
Project Location/ Address:	25 Ledge Rock Way, Acton, MA 01720
Amount Requested:	Not to Exceed **$ 50,000**

Project Summary: In the space below, provide a brief summary of the project.

Since 2000, the North Acton Recreation Area (NARA) has defined its role as the crown jewel in Acton's menu of active and passive recreation facilities. This proposal seeks to build on that foundation by funding the development and authoring of a comprehensive Master Plan for the future development of the facility, and surrounding open space. This plan will provide an assessment of the existing facilities, a review of current stakeholder opinions about the future of NARA, and, finally, a menu of options available to Acton for future enhancement of the park's facilities.

Estimated Date for Commencement of Project: July 1, 2007

Estimated Date for Completion of Project: June 30, 2008



INTERDEPARTMENTAL COMMUNICATION

Acton Board of Health - Telephone 978-264-9634 - Fax 978-264-9630

October 27, 2006

TO: Don Johnson, Town Manager

FROM: Brent Reagor, Deputy Health Director
Tom Tidman, Natural Resources Administrator
Cathy Fochtman, Recreation Director

SUBJECT: NARA Master Plan Development
Community Preservation Plan Submittal

Attached with this memo please find a submittal for the development of a Master Plan for NARA to the Community Preservation Committee. Within the submittal, you will find a Project Application Form, Narrative, and Itemized Scope. In addition, a copy of a similar proposal for a project in Amherst and Bedford, New Hampshire, including scope and costs, is attached.

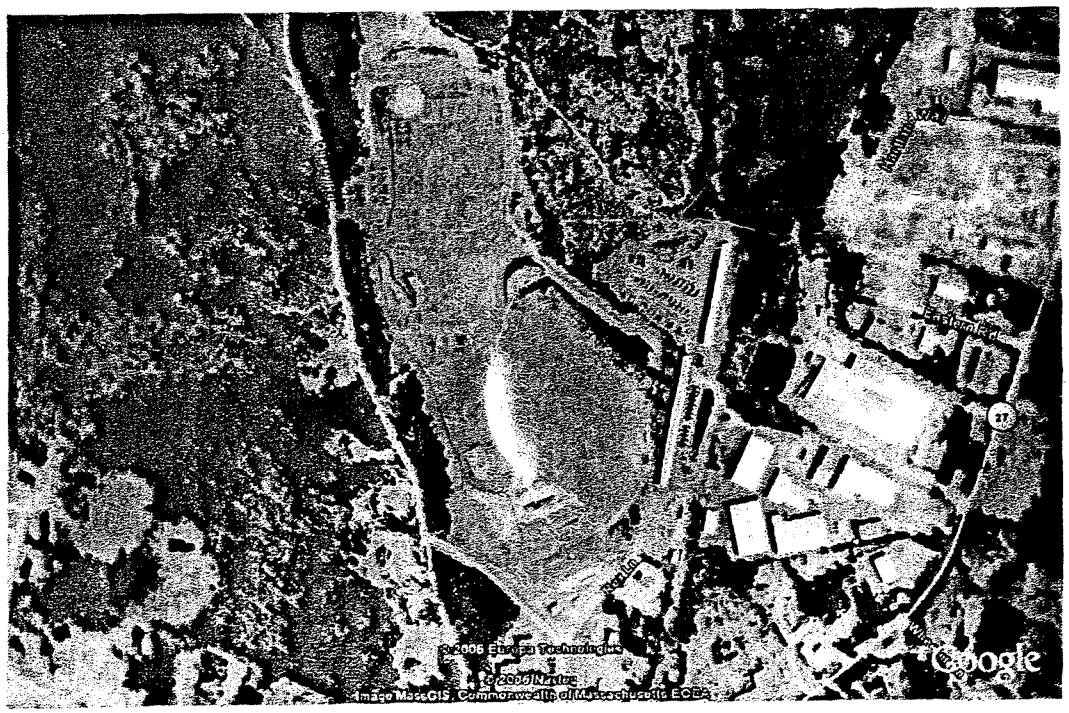
Narrative
Proposal for NARA Master Plan Development

INTRODUCTION

NARA is the cornerstone of the active and passive recreation facilities in Acton. Identified as a key component of the Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP), this facility is in its youth as the premier recreational facility in Acton, and throughout the northwest suburbs. The OSRP identifies the development of NARA as a key component to providing a broad range of recreational activities to all citizens of Acton. While some specific development recommendations are cited within the OSRP, no comprehensive visioning effort, including all potential stakeholders has been undertaken to date in regards to NARA's future. This proposal seeks to undertake that visioning effort.

Located at 25 Ledge Rock Way, Assessor's Parcel Map C-5, Lot 18; NARA is comprised of approximately 40 acres of dedicated recreation space. This multi-purpose facility, opened in the year 2000, showcases the depth and breadth of available recreation activities in Acton. These include:

- 9 acre swimming pond with 500' of bathing beach
- Walking paths with connections to other Town of Acton trail networks
- Multi-use sports fields
- Amphitheater with audio-visual concert support capabilities
- Bath house with snack bar



SCOPE

The development of a Master Plan for NARA will require input from a broad range of stakeholders, ranging from the Recreation Commission, to Town staff, to park users, to Board and Committee members. It is imperative that the final product reflect the desires of the community, while at the same time providing an economically and physically implementable vision. In order to produce a viable plan, this proposal seeks funding to contract with a professional firm, experienced in recreational facility planning to fully engage the process at the appropriate levels. Based upon review of similar projects the scope would include the following:

- Start-up meeting with project coordinators
- Background information gathering by consultant
- Stakeholder input meeting(s)
- Preparation of three (or more) master plan drafts
- Presentation of drafts at stakeholder input meeting
- Preparation of final master plan draft
- Final presentation of master plan at public meeting
- Delivery of written master plan with implementation information

It is expected that this project would take 6-9 months to complete.

PROJECTED COSTS

• Start-up meetings with project coordinators	**$3,000**
• Background information gathering by consultant	**$8,000**
• Stakeholder input meetings	**$8,000**
• Preparation of three (or more) master plan drafts	**$8,000**
• Presentation of drafts at stakeholder input meeting	**$5,000**
• Preparation of final master plan draft	**$6,000**
• Final presentation of master plan at public meeting	**$5,000**
• Delivery of written master plan with implementation information	**$7,000**
TOTAL PROJECTED COSTS	**$50,000**

These costs are based upon a similar project which was conducted for the Towns of Amherst and Bedford New Hampshire in 2002, and have been adjusted to accommodate increases in consulting costs, inflation, and the consumer price index. The costs have also been adjusted to account for differences between the New Hampshire project and NARA. A copy of the New Hampshire proposal, which includes the scope and projected costs, is attached to this application.

IMPACT

The development of a Master Plan for NARA will significantly increase public awareness of the current and potential recreational opportunities provided by the Town at the facility. Through the stakeholder engagement process, relevant Town staff and Board members will be able to interact directly with regular users of the facility, leading to the potential development of new programs, or the tailoring of existing programs.

In addition, the surrounding open space parcels will be reviewed for their potential acquisition to enhance future active and passive recreational opportunities; along with a review of the anticipated impacts of the proposed Bruce Freeman Rail Trail, which will be in close proximity to the facility.

Once complete, the NARA Master Plan will present a vision, shared by a diverse grouping of park users, Town Board members, Town staff, regulators, and residents, which when implemented will allow the directed development of the facility into the premier community recreational facility in the Metrowest.

Project Understanding

Successful development of a master plan for the diverse interests of both Bedford and Amherst requires a process that is based on an open communication and design process. Before reaching consensus on a plan, there must be agreement and understanding of the planning and design criteria. Planning and design criteria are not just limited to physical features and programmed activities. They must also include social, political, natural, economic and legal parameters. Another key to project success is active listening and seeking out areas of agreement early-on in the planning process. An early focus on commonalities will make the areas of disagreement easier to deal with.

The Joppa Hill Farm site is a regional resource representing both a place and a time in the history of New Hampshire. The rich variety of natural resources is the site's greatest asset and its greatest challenge. The successful plan should respect and incorporate sensitive areas of the site while also celebrating them. Active and passive recreation can be designed and programmed to co-exist and the property seems to have the land to accommodate both.

Project Approach

Our eight-step approach for developing a master plan that will satisfy the needs of both Bedford and Amherst is very simple and is one that we have used successfully for more than 25 years with similar projects. It is based on Stephen Covey's principle, "First seek to understand, and then be understood."

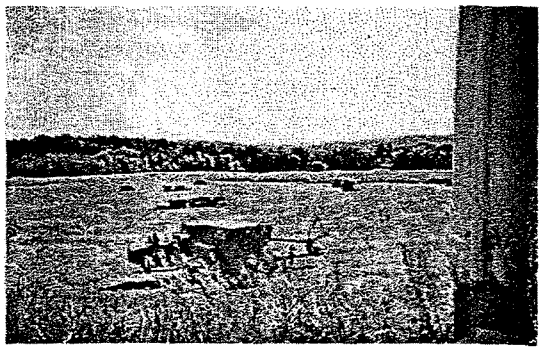
First, we will organize and facilitate a start-up meeting. At this meeting, the project team will meet stakeholder representatives and make sure that everyone understands what we are planning and when it will be done. We will also gather all of the property information. Most importantly, we will have a chance to meet folks who care very much about the land. Following the start-up meeting, we will schedule a series of interviews with stakeholder group leaders to discuss their individual needs.

Second, using the previously prepared base mapping information, we will gather scientific, anecdotal and historical information about the land. This information will be compiled in a presentation format that will be easily understood.

Third, we will organize and facilitate a two-part meeting with the stakeholders. In the first half of the meeting, we will share our findings and also inquire as to any omissions. For the second half, we will facilitate a highly structured brain-storming and heart-storming session. The goal will be to elicit both objective and subjective ideas, programs and feelings about the property. This information will be recorded and will serve as the basis for the site programming.

Fourth, following the meeting, members of the project team will prepare three alternative master plans for the site. Each of the plans will be based on our inventory and analysis findings, anecdotal and scientific evidence.

Fifth, the plans will be presented at a second two-part meeting. In the first half of the meeting, the project team will present all three plans to the stakeholders. Then the participants will be divided into three groups where they will have an opportunity to comment on each of the plans in detail. Comments and suggestions will be recorded.



Sixth, based on the comments and suggestions, the project team will prepare a (preferred) final master plan based on one, or a combination of the three alternative plans.

Seventh, the final master plan will be presented at the third and final public meeting.

Eighth, after the presentation, the project team will prepare a three-ring binder that will document the entire planning, design and communication process. The guide will be easy to read and will outline **SMART** (specific, measurable, attainable, results oriented and time bound) goals for implementation.

Since our founding in 1955, we have worked with hundreds of communities in New England. We understand New Englander's reverence for the land and their need to have a voice in what goes on around them. We are passionate about our work and bring a sense of excitement and urgency to every project that we work on.

Scope of Services

Task One: Start-up Meeting

The project team will organize and facilitate a project start-up meeting. It is anticipated that representatives from the Amherst and Bedford Conservation Commissions, the Bedford Parks and Recreation Department, the Lakewood Educational Farm youth sports leagues, civic groups and other interested organizations would be invited to attend. The purpose of the meeting will be to:

- Introduce the project team to key stakeholders
- Review the scope of services and proposed schedule
- Identify project "sacred cows"
- Gather previously prepared maps, reports and studies
- Create a contact and distribution list for project information

All of the project's stakeholders will be able to contact us directly through e-mail or by calling toll free: 1-800-206-PLAN.

Following the meeting project team members will be available to conduct individual interviews with stakeholders or public officials. Meeting notes will be distributed to all present with 24 hours by e-mail or postal service.

Task Two: Site and Buildings Inventory and Analysis

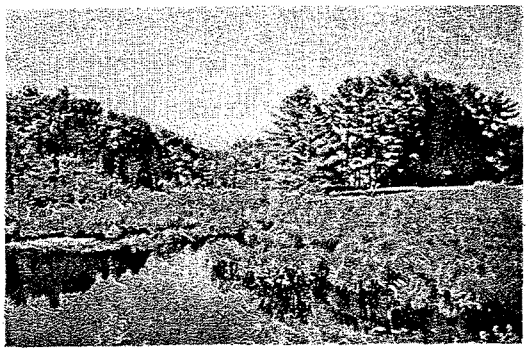
Using existing base mapping and other information, the project team will prepare an inventory and analysis of the site and buildings. Based on field observations and available data, the site and building inventory and analysis will address the following criteria:

- Primary and secondary agricultural soils
- Surface hydrology – streams, ponds and wetlands
- Primary and secondary forestry soils
- Slope and elevation
- View sheds, view corridors and scenic vistas
- Existing circulation and access
- Historical, cultural and archeological areas
- Vegetation massing and spatial context
- Wildlife and fisheries habitat
- Endangered flora and fauna
- Micro-climatic conditions, aspect, predominant winds
- Architectural capability and adaptability for re-use

The inventory and analysis findings will consist of illustrative and written materials. All drawings and exhibits will be produced in both electronic and paper copies. All work products will also be duplicated in a Power Point presentation format.

Task Three: Presentation of Findings

Prior to the presentation meeting, we will assist both communities and the stakeholders in publicizing the meeting and securing appropriate meeting spaces. Assistance could include: press releases, posters, web page information, handouts etc. The project team will organize and facilitate a public meeting to review Task One findings and review the previously established program elements. The meeting will be divided into three parts. Hard copy displays of the site and building inventory and analysis will be posted around the meeting space. After the stakeholders have viewed the displays, the project team will present a Power Point presentation describing the findings. Experts in the required disciplines will be available to respond to comments and answer questions. After a short break for refreshments, the project team will lead a discussion to review and refine the program established for the farm. Notes from the meeting will be distributed to leaders of the stakeholder groups for distribution.



Task Four: Net Usable Land Area, Management Units and Programming

The Site and Building Inventory and Analysis information will be combined into management units. The management units will identify and highlight combinations of natural features that make particular areas of the farm unique – requiring different design, management and conservation practices. This information will be used to match the program with the most sustainable areas.

Based on the public meeting and interviews with the stakeholders, the project team will prepare a written summary of the program, including physical, seasonal and other planning and design criteria. It is anticipated that program elements may include:

- An education farm
- Preservation and productive use of prime agricultural and forestry soils
- Passive open space and protection of fragile areas
- Sports fields
- Hiking, walking, cross country skiing and equestrian trails and paths
- Special events areas for farmer's markets, performances, shows and exhibits
- View-shed protection and enhancement
- Conservation and interpretive areas and exhibits

The net usable land area, management unit mapping will consist of illustrative and written materials. All drawings and exhibits will be produced in both electronic and paper copies. All work products will also be duplicated in a Power Point presentation format.

Task Five: Development of Alternatives

Based on the information gathered in Tasks One through Four the project team will prepare three alternative master plans. The plans will illustrate the following:

- Road network and parking
- An education farm
- Preservation and productive use of prime agricultural and forestry soils
- Passive open space and protection of fragile areas
- Sports fields
- Hiking, walking, cross country ski and equestrian trails and paths
- Special events areas for farmer's markets, performances, shows and exhibits
- View-shed protection and enhancement
- Conservation and interpretive areas and exhibits
- Other elements as required

The development alternatives will consist of illustrative and written materials. All drawings and exhibits will be produced in both electronic and paper copies. All work products will also be duplicated in a Power Point presentation format.

Task Six: Presentation of Alternatives

Prior to the presentation meeting we will assist both communities and the stakeholders in publicizing the meeting and securing appropriate meeting space. Assistance could include press releases, posters, web page information, handouts etc. The project team will organize and facilitate a public meeting to review the alternative master plans. As each of the participants enters the meeting space, they will be given a color coded package of materials. The meeting will be divided into three parts. Hard copy displays of the master plans will be posted around the meeting space. After the stakeholders have viewed the displays project team will present a Power Point presentation describing each of the alternative plans. Experts in the required disciplines will be available to respond to comments and answer questions. After a short break for refreshments, the project team will break the participants into three groups based on the color of their informational packets. Each of the groups will review each alternative plan in detail for 30 minutes and then they will review another plan and so on. Notes from each of the discussion groups will be given to leaders of the stakeholder groups for distribution.

Task Seven: Preferred Master Plan, Phasing and Cost Estimates

Based on the public meetings, interviews with stakeholder groups and other information the project team will prepare the final or preferred master plan. The plan will illustrate the following elements, if deemed appropriate:

- Road network and parking
- An education farm
- Preservation and productive use of prime agricultural and forestry soils
- Passive open space and protection of fragile areas
- Sports fields
- Hiking, walking, cross country ski and equestrian trails and paths
- Special events areas for farmer's markets, performances, shows and exhibits
- View-shed protection and enhancement
- Conservation and interpretive areas and exhibits
- Other elements as required

Accompanying the master plan will be a phasing plan and preliminary cost estimate. The information will be appropriate for planning purposes, grants and fund raising. All drawings and exhibits will be produced in both electronic and paper copies. All work products will also be duplicated in a Power Point presentation format.

Task Eight: Presentation of Preferred Master Plan

Prior to the presentation meeting we will assist both communities and the stakeholders in publicizing the meeting and securing appropriate meeting space. Assistance could include press releases, posters, web page information, handouts etc. The project team will make a final public presentation of the findings and recommendations to the Bedford Town Council. The presentation will be in a Power Point presentation format. In addition, exhibits will be mounted on rigid boards for display purposes.

Following the presentation of the preferred master plan the project team will prepare a final report to include text and graphics, in both paper and electronic format.

Project Schedule

Task One:	**Start-up Meeting**	July 31, 2002
Task Two:	**Site Inventory and Analysis**	August 14, 2002
Task Three:	**Presentation of Findings**	August 15, 2002
Task Four:	**Net Usable Land Area, Management Units & Programming**	August 28, 2002
Task Five:	**Development of Alternatives**	September18, 2002
Task Six:	**Presentation of Alternatives**	September 19, 2002
Task Seven:	**Preferred Master Plan, Phasing and Cost Estimates**	October 16, 2002
Task Eight:	**Presentation of Preferred Master Plan**	October 24, 2002
	Delivery of Final Report	October 31,2002

Professional Fees

Task One:	**Start-up Meeting**	$ 1,500.00
Task Two:	**Site Inventory and Analysis**	$ 5,000.00
Task Three:	**Presentation of Findings**	$ 4,000.00
Task Four:	**Net Usable Land Area, Management Units & Programming**	$ 3,000.00
Task Five:	**Development of Alternatives**	$ 5,000.00
Task Six:	**Presentation of Alternatives**	$ 4,000.00
Task Seven:	**Preferred Master Plan, Phasing and Cost Estimates**	$ 5,000.00
Task Eight:	Presentation of Preferred Master Plan	$ 4,000.00
Total Estimated Fee for Labor and Materials		$ 31,500.00