

Working with Municipal Parks for Access to Equestrian Facilities– Part 2, An Illustration of Park Master Plans

by Denise Y. O'Meara, Director of Education- Equine Land Conservation Resource
November 2018

Working with Municipal Parks for Access to Equestrian Facilities– Part 1, Park Master Plans, discusses community comprehensive plans, master plans specifically for parks and park systems, trails and other amenities, and the process and need for both. To access Part 1, [click here](#).

Examples of Equestrian Park Facility Master Planning

Many consultants across the country specialize in equine facility and trail master planning, design and construction. Here are some master planning examples that have broad experience in this area, along with stories of projects they have completed. **Note: ELCR does not endorse any designer, architect, landscape architect, planner, engineer or other professional/firm involved in master planning, but rather offers information regarding the specific projects shown within this article. The reader should, as such, use their own discretion in assessing the value of the work done by designers referenced in this article.*

At Lynn Long Planning and Design, Lynn and her firm's staff each have personal experience using the public equestrian facilities that they design. That experience, along with their knowledge of the horse community, helps them to deliver what the equine community needs. They consider how an equestrian facility accommodates the multiple events that it hosts and how those events change over the years. An equestrian facility also needs to accommodate the overall community by allowing for many other uses, balancing the cost with income from a variety of uses. Lynn's firm considers budget, user needs, aesthetics and safety as cornerstones of design. The firm works with architects, engineers, landscape architects and many other professionals, along with the project stakeholders and leaders, holding multiple public workshops and carefully analyzing public input.



River Ranch Park Equestrian Center, Williamson County, Texas, Conceptual Plan

River Ranch Park Equestrian Center in Williamson County, Texas. LLPD is the design leader for a new, yet unbuilt, 1000 acre park with an equestrian area to include an outdoor arena, covered arena, trails and horse camping areas. The firm utilized an 'evidence-based' matrix of facilities and ancillary items wanted by the community to establish the elements that would be added to the park in a series of phases.



Murrieta Equestrian Park in Murrieta, California

Lynn's company partnered with Landscape Architects RJM to design a new Equestrian Events Park for the City of Murrieta, refurbishing the historic, mid-century thoroughbred facility, Murrieta Stud Farm. The community desired keeping the "historic farm character in a versatile and park-like horse show facility for introductory to regional level events". The master plan identifies each element including parking, vehicular and pedestrian/horse circulation, structures and arenas, shade structures and trees, and stormwater infiltration features.

These and other projects may be viewed here: www.lynnlongplanninganddesign.com

Lessons Learned Along the Way

When we interviewed Ms. Long for this article, she wanted to bring to the forefront some important *lessons learned* through her design and consulting experiences.

1. It is important to work with team members that have a good understanding of both their own areas of expertise and the needs of the equestrian world.
2. When creating overall designs and cost proposals, it's a good idea to present the best alternative but have a lower cost alternative in your 'back pocket'. This is especially important with public entities, as public funds can quickly become unavailable.

3. Equestrians need to find a common language with architects, engineers, landscape architects and other professionals.
4. Because public equestrian venues need to at least break even if not yield some profit, they must be open to a variety of uses and events, and a balance of facility size and budget is needed.
5. A horse advisory group is needed for public facilities. Park guidelines must be established by people knowledgeable about the needs of equestrians by removing barriers to facilities access, such as proximity for trucks/trailer circulation to stable entrances.
6. For private horse parks, the owner/managers create their own guidelines. There is often a gap in communication between equestrians and public facility managers.

Union County NJ – Watchung Stables Feasibility Study and Improvement Plans

Watchung Stables in Union County, New Jersey, is a nearly 100-year-old equestrian facility, both owned and managed by the municipal parks department. There are, however, several partnership organizations that help to provide continued success and upgrades to the facility when needed.

Through a partnership between the Open Space, Recreation and Historic Preservation Trust Fund and the Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders, the Fund assists in ensuring that the Board's policies of conserving open space, providing recreational opportunities, and preserving historic sites are carried out. The Fund advises the Freeholder Board, thus keeping the Watchung Stable facility in good order.



Other partnerships with Union County parks include Watchung Stables Auxiliary, Watchung Jr. Hunt Club, and Watchung Riding and Driving Club, which do fundraising and program assistance.



In 2012 a feasibility study was performed for Watchung Stables by Mareth Advisors. This study and its conclusions helped to bring clarity to the then current state of the Stables as a business and as a historic emblem of the community. An excellent example of a feasibility study for an existing public equine facility, the conclusion section, beginning on page 84 of the study, will help the reader to understand its importance: <http://unionnj.net/Final%20Report%202013%20Watchung%20Stables.pdf>.

A 2015 update plan called for: Construction of a heated indoor ring; renovation/construction of several outdoor riding rings and paddocks; new surfaces, fencing, and landscaping; and installation of new barn doors.

For additional information, visit: <http://ucnj.org/press-releases/public-info/2015/10/26/watchung-stables-expansion-begins/>

JBSA /Sam Houston Park, San Antonio, TX.



In a somewhat unique partnership between the City of San Antonio's Parks and Recreation Department and nearby Joint Base San Antonio (JBSA) military base, segments of the Salado Creek Greenway Trail, a National Recreation Trail (NRT) and part of the Howard W. Peek Greenway Trail System, were extended through the base to complete the full 15 miles. Additional plans include a new equestrian facility.

The Salado Creek Greenway Trail is the only greenway trail in Texas to receive the NRT designation in 2018 and is part of the 65-mile Howard W. Peek Greenway Trail System. The primary goal for the trail system is to create a loop trail around San Antonio which serves the recreational, health and wellbeing needs for a variety of trail users. This system also seeks to preserve waterways and natural areas.

The multi-use trail system was initiated by the Mayor's Office, City Council and other community members, and funded with a voter-approved, 1/8 cent sales taxes, a practice which has continued through today for expansion and maintenance.

Equestrian Facility Plan: The Parks and Recreation/JBSA collaboration has resulted in a plan to develop new equestrian facilities at JBSA-Fort Sam Houston, as existing facilities are demolished to make way for the trail corridor. It will include a new barn, 30 to 40 paddocks and the connecting trail, which may be used by the community and service members.

To learn more about the progress of the trail system, visit www.saparksandrec.com, or email Ashley Alvarez: Ashley.alvarez@sanantonio.gov.

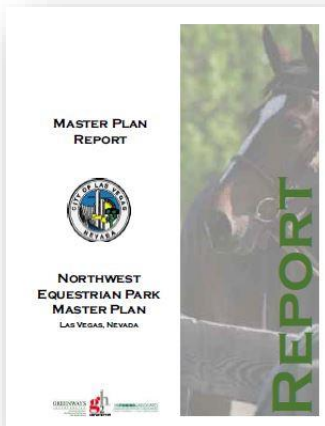
Want to Follow an Equestrian Master Plan in Progress?



Alpharetta, Georgia is in the process of working with consultants Jacobs, Inc., to create a long overdue renovation master plan for Wills Park and its equestrian center. The master planning contract has been approved by the City of Alpharetta for \$129,863. What will they be getting for this fee? Check out the Scope of Work here: <https://on-ajc.com/2pIFsj1>. You'll be able to see what a Scope of Work looks like and what items are included. This format is typically included within a Request for Proposals (RFP) or Request for Qualifications (RFQ). For additional information, visit: Alpharetta Recreation & Parks, www.alpharetta.ga.us/recreation.

A Listing of Park/Equestrian Master Plan Examples

California Equestrian Park & Event Center – This extremely thorough master plan describes the economics, elements, partnerships, educational programming and funding for a new equestrian facility in Sonoma Co., CA. Go to: <http://www.cepec.us/eventsfacilities.htm>, then click on the Master Plan cover to download. Produced by BWM Group and partners.



Northwest Equestrian Park Master Plan, Las Vegas, Nevada

Created in the early 2000's, this master plan also includes feasibility information. Found to be wanted by the community and of good potential market value, the Plan was put on hold due to the economic downturn. The Plan, done by GH2 Architects, Greenways INC and JW Zuzino & Assoc's, to be completed in phases, remains viable as local government seeks funding. You will be interested in seeing the advanced set of design drawings included in the plan. Visit: <https://bit.ly/2NyD9lv>



Garey Park Equestrian Center, Photo Courtesy Georgetown Parks, Georgetown, TX

Garey Park, Georgetown Texas

This comprehensive master plan lays out the 525 acres of property donated to the community, specifically for park facilities that would fit a variety of human needs, by Jack and Cammy Garey, along with \$5 million to start planning and development. The Jack Garey Equestrian Facility is part of this beautifully illustrated master plan, done by BWM Group and partners. See pages 24, 25 and 41.

For more information, Visit:

<https://parks.georgetown.org/gareypark/about/garey-park-master-plan/>

Additional Master plan reports and drawings may be found in ***Working with Municipal Parks for Access to Equestrian Facilities– Part 1, The Master Plan.*** To access Part 1, [click here.](#)

Conclusion

Many communities will advocate for and plan equestrian facilities within their public parks, but at a smaller scale than most of the facilities shown above. Though budgets may be smaller and financing slower to achieve, the actions and tenets for master planning remain the same.

- Advocacy is more effective through organizations.
- An understanding and ability to communicate the value of horse facilities and trails to the community is essential.
- Developing a knowledge base concerning the hiring and contracting of professionals is necessary, as is the formation of partnerships with public land managers and other user groups.
- The master planning process, once you get there, will provide a solid framework for the equestrian elements, programs and implementation that your community will need to move forward successfully.
- Once master planning is complete, don't walk away. Your organization can accomplish much by monitoring continuation of planning and implementation of plans, to be sure that your equine community is getting what it needs, and what was agreed upon during planning.

About the Equine Land Conservation Resource (ELCR): *The Equine Land Conservation Resource is the only national not-for-profit organization advancing the conservation of land for horse-related activity. ELCR serves as an information resource and clearinghouse for land and horse owners on issues related to equine land conservation, land use planning, land stewardship/best management practices, trails, liability and equine economic development. For more information about the ELCR visit our website at www.elcr.org or call (859)455-8383.*