

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In January 2003, a student design team from the Conway School of Landscape Design was contracted by the Town of Bethel, Connecticut to do a land-use feasibility study for the Terre Haute property and the contiguous reservoir lands. By developing and adopting a land-use study for Terre Haute, the town of Bethel can gain a better understanding of its resources and make better informed decisions that will ensure long-term viability for Terre Haute. The following document can be used as a decision-making tool for the town. Based upon the findings from the various sources, areas most suitable for development, recreation, and preservation have been identified.

The student design team has compiled information, conducted analyses, and documented information regarding Terre Haute and contiguous lands of the Town of Bethel. Various resources used include the Bethel Plan of Development, GIS maps from HVCEO, the Soils Survey of Fairfield County, and Bethel and Danbury Zoning by-laws among others. Several informational interviews were conducted with individuals and state agencies such as the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection and local organizations including the Economic Development Commission, Bethel's Recreation and Parks Department, the Golf Authority, and PATH. Two public information meetings provided valuable information, knowledge, feedback, and opinions from citizens.

Criteria developed for the final concepts arise from environmental analysis, social analysis, and public input. The environmental analysis indicates that the site is highly constrained for modification due to shallow soils, steep slopes, and waterways and wetlands; the social analysis reveals that Bethel has many recreational playing fields and hard courts, has little dedicated open space, and that Terre Haute and the Francis J. Clarke Industrial Park can have mutual economic benefits; and public knowledge and opinions have indicated that the Town of Bethel would like to balance economic development of the industrial park, prevent residential development from occurring on Terre Haute, and preserve parts of Terre Haute.

From this assessment, two concepts were developed. The Gateway to Recreation concept expands passive recreation, geared towards a variety of users, by providing a marked and well-developed trail system that can link into the recreation corridor in Danbury and Redding, better defined access trailheads, and a nature education trail and picnic area on Bethel-owned lands to the north of the industrial park.

The Clarke Park Connection concept takes into consideration Bethel's Economic Development Commission's (EDC) goal to expand the industrial park and the opportunities that Terre Haute provides for passive recreation.

Expansion of the industrial park could potentially take place at the south end of Trowbridge Drive where access and services are available and environmental constraints are fewer. In addition, a trail system links the industrial park providing benefits for Clarke Park employees and Bethel residents. This would serve to strengthen the beneficial relationship between Terre Haute and the Francis J. Clarke Industrial Park.

Conservation options provide additional opportunities for dedicated open space while fulfilling Bethel's financial needs. Selling conservation easements or selling outright all or portions of Terre Haute to conservation organizations or agencies would provide funds that could go towards purchasing additional areas for active recreation more suitable and closer to the town center.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to express our appreciation to the many individuals whose time, energy, and knowledge were important to the completion of the Terre Haute project.

Special thanks to the residents and multiple organizations of Bethel for their thoughts and insights and for allowing us to be part of the process; Judy Novacheck, First Selectman; Betty Brosius, Town Planner; George Blake, HVCEO GIS Manager, as well as the First Selectman's office staff.

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