



PARKS, OPEN SPACES & ENVIRONMENTAL FEATURES PLAN

Parks, open spaces, and environmental features play a vital role in shaping Hudson's quality of life. Parks provide opportunities for social activity, physical exercise, and interaction with nature. The presence of rivers, forests, open spaces, and streams strengthens biodiversity, beautifies the landscape, and supports healthy lifestyles.

The Parks, Open Space, & Environmental Features Plan presents policies and recommendations which seek to preserve and protect important and sensitive environmental features and to ensure Hudson residents continue to enjoy excellent parks, open space, and recreation opportunities. The Plan's analysis and recommendations cover:

- **Parks & Recreation**, which are spaces with maintained infrastructure such as paths or playgrounds that promote exercise and activity and are open to the public. This includes outdoor parks, athletic fields, golf courses, and indoor recreation facilities.
- **Open Spaces**, which are outdoor natural areas. They are not vacant or undeveloped; their primary purpose is either active or passive natural use. Open spaces may include a forested area behind a development, a property with a conservation easement placed on it, green space between subdivisions, or undevelopable property due to flooding or wetlands.
- **Environmental Features**, which include rivers, streams, floodplain, natural habitats, soils, wetlands, and other environmental assets and characteristics.

GOAL & OBJECTIVES

Preserve and enhance an integrated network of parks, open spaces, and trails that strengthen the quality of life, protect the environment, and improve community health.

- Plan and budget for improvements to existing parks, and update the 2000 Parks Master Plan.
- Recognizing that many residents desire a Community Recreation Center, consider the feasibility, cost of construction, and required financing (construction and operation) of a Community Recreation Center that could serve all residents.
- Support Summit County Metro Parks as it continues to develop additional park space within Hudson, such as TenBroeck Metro Park and Maple Grove Metro Park.
- Work to establish Hudson as a regional recreation destination.
- Identify locations for new neighborhood or pocket parks.
- Explore ways to strengthen programs for the community's youth and senior citizens at parks, at the Barlow Community Center, and at identified common spaces.
- Continue to require parkland dedication or a "Funds-In-Lieu-of-Parks Fund" contribution for all new residential developments.
- Encourage or require private park or open space dedications within large industrial or commercial developments for employee usage.
- Work with neighboring municipalities and Summit County to develop regional trail connections, such as the Veterans Trail, that can increase connectivity both within Hudson and the greater region.
- Establish local trails or pathways between subdivisions that can increase access to parks, schools, Downtown, and open space and reduce the need to walk or bike along busier roadways.
- Support the mission of the Western Reserve Land Conservancy and the usage of conservation easements to prevent development of environmentally sensitive and rural areas.
- Minimize development impacts on natural features such as wetlands, ponds, and mature trees, where applicable.
- As development and redevelopment occurs, incrementally bury overhead utility lines to avoid potential conflicts with trees as they grow and mature.
- Evaluate changes to development regulations based on recommendations included in the Brandywine Creek Watershed Plan, such as establishing steep slope protections, developing a mitigation plan for wetland and riparian impacts, permitting flexible development by right, and implementing a low impact development ordinance.
- Work with regional and local partners to preserve, protect the function of, and prevent contamination of the four watersheds in which Hudson is located.
- Minimize localized flooding in neighborhoods and commercial areas through investment in local detention facilities, green infrastructure, and traditional stormwater systems and watershed management.
- Work toward maintaining a tree canopy of 40% of the area of the City, as recommended by the Tree Commission.

EXISTING PARKS & RECREATION FACILITIES

Name	Operator	Functional Classification	Service Area Classification	Pavilion	Sports Area or Fields	Size (Acres)
Barlow Farm Park	City of Hudson	Active Park	Community	Y	Y	60 acres
Bicentennial Woods Park	City of Hudson	Limited Use	Neighborhood	N	N	33 acres
Boston Mills Park	City of Hudson	Limited Use	Neighborhood	N	N	8 acres
Cascade Park	City of Hudson	Mixed-Use	Community	Y	Y	75 acres
Colony Park	City of Hudson	Mixed-Use	Neighborhood	Y	Y	34 acres
Darrow Park	City of Hudson	Mixed-Use	Community	N	N	63 acres
DiNovi Park	City of Hudson	Limited Use	Neighborhood	N	N	6 acres
Doc's Woods Park	City of Hudson	Limited Use	Community	N	N	59 acres
Ellsworth Meadows Golf Course	City of Hudson	Golf Course	Other	Y	N/A	163 acres
High Point Park	City of Hudson	Limited Use	Community	N	N	52 acres
Hudson Country Club	Private	Golf Course	Other	N/A	N/A	204 acres
Hudson Springs Park	City of Hudson	Mixed-Use	Community	Y	Y	260 acres
Lake Forest Country Club	Private	Golf Course	Other	N/A	N/A	145 acres
McLaren Woods Park	City of Hudson	Limited Use	Neighborhood	N	N	27 acres
Maple Grove Park	City of Hudson	Limited Use	Community	N	N	100 acres
Middleton Park	City of Hudson	Mixed-Use	Neighborhood	Y	Y	9 acres
Oak Grove Park	City of Hudson	Active	Community	Y	Y	30 acres
Robinson Field Park	City of Hudson	Limited Use	Community	N	N	31 acres
Trumbull Woods Park	City of Hudson	Limited Use	Neighborhood	N	N	18 acres
Veterans Way Park	City of Hudson	Mixed-Use	Community	Y	Y	38 acres
Wildlife Woods Park	City of Hudson	Limited Use	Community	N	N	58 acres
Wood Hollow Metro Park	Summit County	Limited Use	Community	Y	N	150 acres

Total Acreage: 1,623 acres

PARKS & RECREATION

As of 2015, Hudson contains nineteen park sites, eighteen of which are operated by the City of Hudson and one by Summit County, and three golf courses, one operated by the City of Hudson and two by private owners. Collectively, these facilities provide more than 1,600 acres of green space for outdoor activities.

Each park has been classified by the City into one of three categories by the City according to its usage:

- **Active parks** are parkland where there is a concentration of facilities for organized recreational facilities;
- **Mixed use parks** are parkland providing a blend of both active recreation opportunities as well as preserved open space; and
- **Limited use parks** are environmentally sensitive and protected areas with trails and hiking.

PARKLAND EVALUATION

The National Recreation Park Association (NRPA) is the recognized authority for parks and recreational planning in the United States. The NRPA provides an extensive list of standards for local parks and recreation planning. These standards serve as a "baseline," recognizing that individual communities must respond to demographic changes, land use context, funding for maintenance and installation, and other factors. The NRPA recommends that individual communities establish their own standards for local application. Within the NRPA standards, there are two major categories: population-based standards and service area/geography-based standards.



POPULATION BASED STANDARDS

The NRPA recommends a standard of 10 acres of parkland for every 1,000 residents. Their standard does not include parks of regional or state significance, nor does it include public school properties or golf courses. Based on this calculation, Hudson exceeds the national standard by nearly 1,000 acres of parkland. However, it is important to note that much of Hudson's parkland includes passive natural space.

SERVICE AREA STANDARDS

Park and recreation master plans typically utilize service area standards to analyze the location of parks and recreation facilities. The NRPA provides suggested service standards for neighborhood parks and community-wide facilities. These standards should be used to assess the effectiveness of Hudson's parks and identified underserved areas.

The consulting team has classified all of Hudson's parks as either neighborhood or community parks. The service areas of each park are shown on the accompanying map to depict which areas are served or not served by the existing park systems. Residential areas, sidewalks, and trails are also included to depict connectivity issues between residential areas and parks.

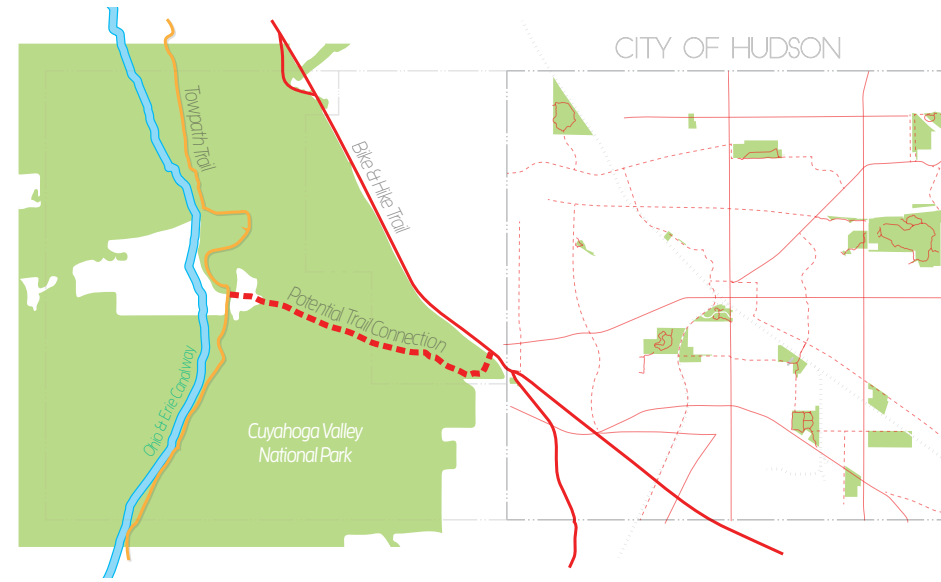
- **Neighborhood Parks** are the basic unit of the park system and serve as the recreational and social focus of the neighborhood. They generally range from 5 acres to 30 acres in size. The NRPA recommends that each resident have access to a neighborhood park within ½ mile of their home. This reflects an average walk time of 10 minutes. Within this area, uninterrupted and fully accessible pedestrian infrastructure should be provided. Examples of a Neighborhood Park include Middleton Park and Boston Mills Park.
- **Community Parks** serve both local neighborhoods as well as larger populations that drive to the park. They serve a larger geographic area and often have facilities such as ball fields or trails, and can offer recreational opportunities beyond what is available in neighborhood parks. The NRPA recommends a range of service standards for different community parks and facilities typically varying between one and two miles. Examples of a Community Park include Oak Grove Park and Hudson Springs Park.

PUBLIC PARKLAND DEDICATION & FUNDS-IN-LIEU-OF-PARKS FUND

Section 1207.05 of the City's Land Development Code requires a minimum dedication of 10 acres of community parkland, 6 acres of passive open space, and 3 acres of neighborhood parks per 1,000 residents within any new residential subdivision. Developers may also instead pay into a Funds-In-Lieu-of-Parks Fund. The owner of the development is responsible for maintenance unless dedicated to a public entity.

NEW COUNTY PARKS

The City Parks Department does not plan on adding any new parkland or facilities at this time. However, two new parks are being planned by Summit County: Maple Grove Metro Park, a new regional park totaling an estimated 250 acres along Hines Hill Road, and TenBroeck Metro Park, a new regional park totaling 137 acres split between Hudson and Streetsboro in the northeast part of the city. The City should support Metro Parks in the development of these two new parks, including coordinating necessary infrastructure and utility improvements and providing trails and walkways connecting residents to the parks.



TOWPATH TRAIL

While not directly accessible at present from Hudson, the Towpath Trail (roughly 3 miles west of city limits) is a prominent regional draw. The 85 mile trail runs through the heart of the Ohio and Erie Canalway, hugging the Cuyahoga River and providing stunning views for cyclists and pedestrians. Summit County has recommended creation of a new trail ("Gateway Trail") connecting the Bike and Hike Trail and the Towpath Trail. If completed, it would provide Hudson residents direct access to hundreds of miles of new trails throughout the region.

CONCLUSIONS

From a quantity perspective, Hudson contains an abundance of parkland. More than 19 parks provide a blend of active and passive recreation opportunities for the city's residents and regional visitors. Additionally, most residential lots are a half-acre or larger, meaning that children often have ample space at home to play outdoors.

At the same time, the city has a very limited supply of small neighborhood parks that can serve as structured play spaces for children, with basketball courts or playgrounds. Most parks operate more like open spaces and preservation areas than active play areas, and some are challenging to access on foot or bike from residential areas. The City should work with neighborhood groups and community leaders to identify locations for new neighborhood or pocket parks which could meet this need for more localized parks, as well as continue to implement sidewalk and trail improvements that can connect residential areas to existing parks. As the City's most recent Parks and Recreation Master Plan dates back to 2000, the City should evaluate investing in an update to the plan.

COMMUNITY RECREATION CENTER

Throughout the outreach process, residents passionately advocated for the development of a community recreation or aquatic center. At present, the city does not have any centralized public location for such activities. However, there are privately-owned fitness, wellness, and recreation facilities in the City. While Hudson City Schools and Western Reserve Academy operate such facilities, they are not open to the general public. Barlow Community Center only offers meeting space and does not have any recreational offerings. The City may wish to thoroughly evaluate the feasibility and cost of constructing a Community Recreation Center that would serve all residents and help increase the attractiveness of living and working in Hudson.

LOCAL & REGIONAL TRAILS

Hudson's existing trail network consists of the Summit County Bike and Hike Trail running through the southwest corner of the community, as well as a series of smaller trails within city parks that span from 1/6th of a mile to 2 miles in length. The Bike and Hike Trail is a "rails to trails" conversion and its 34 miles of trail links to the Cleveland Metroparks Trail in the north at the Cuyahoga County line.

Hudson has an established trails network, but many opportunities for expansion exist -- both internally as well as externally to a regional system spanning the greater Cleveland and Akron regions. Expansion will not only increase resident quality of life, reduce traffic congestion, and encourage healthy lifestyles, but also better link residents and non-residents alike to important Hudson assets such as Downtown Hudson. For more information on trail expansions, please see **Chapter 7: Transportation & Mobility Plan**.

HUDSON AS A RECREATIONAL DESTINATION

Hudson offers more than 1,600 acres of parkland, lakes, ponds, forests, and open space, as well as miles of local and regional trails. If the proposed trails recommended in **Chapter 7: Transportation & Mobility Plan** are implemented by the City and other regional partners, Downtown Hudson would be connected with Downtowns in Cleveland and Akron. In particular, proximity to the neighboring 33,000 acre Cuyahoga Valley National Park is a huge asset that should be further capitalized on. National Geographic describes the park as:

"Secluded trails through rugged gorges that seem far removed from civilization; vistas of tree-covered hills where the urban world is out of sight; marshes where beaver, herons, and wood ducks thrive."

Crisscrossed by roads and freeways, encompassing towns, private attractions, and city parks, Cuyahoga Valley is hardly comparable to the vast western wilderness parks—a circumstance that leads to even more surprises. Visitors can ride a scenic railroad, hear a symphony concert, attend an art exhibit, play golf, or, in winter, zoom down snowy ski slopes."

— National Geographic

Coupled with a historic downtown, "small town" charm, and high quality Western Reserve style architecture, Hudson has the opportunity to be a regional destination for recreational tourism and weekend get-aways. The City should leverage recreational assets through marketing and branding efforts and recognize the benefit to residents and tourists alike in strengthening its recreational reputation.



PRESERVATION OF GREEN SPACE

Hudson's greenspaces, including forests, environmental features, and open spaces, play an integral role in sustaining a healthy ecosystem and providing an attractive landscape as well as flood mitigation. The City's Land Development Code uses a variety of regulations to protect, sustain, and enhance Hudson's natural environment. Other ways in which the City and residents can protect Hudson's open spaces include conservation easements, low impact development, open space dedication requirements, and support for agricultural heritage.

OPEN SPACE DEDICATION REQUIREMENTS

Section I207.05 of the City's Land Development Code requires a minimum of 6 acres of passive open space per 1,000 residents of any new residential development. The City should continue to require passive open space dedication requirements to protect and provide open space. If development starts to pick up at a pace that concerns the community, the City may consider increasing the minimum requirement.

WESTERN RESERVE LAND CONSERVANCY & CONSERVATION EASEMENTS

The Western Reserve Land Conservancy is a nonprofit dedicated to preserving the natural resources of northern Ohio. They work with landowners, communities, government agencies, park systems, and other nonprofits to permanently protect natural areas and farmland.

Their primary tool for preservation is the conservation easement, which allows property owners to transfer their development rights, and permanently preserve their land without surrendering ownership. This protection remains with the land, even if it is sold. Once a property is permanently preserved with a conservation easement, the land conservancy ensures it remains protected. The City should support the mission of the Western Reserve Land Conservancy and the usage of conservation easements, and work with property owners to prevent development of environmentally sensitive and rural areas.

LOW IMPACT DEVELOPMENT

New residential development may encroach on environmentally sensitive areas, particularly in areas designated as Low Density or Moderate Density character areas in the Land Use and Development Plan. The City should develop low impact development regulations and utilize design review to provide developers with the flexibility to cluster residential development in certain portions of a site, thereby leaving larger contiguous areas of stream buffers, wetlands, tree stands, and other assets undisturbed. For more information, please see **Chapter 5: Land Use & Development Plan**.

AGRICULTURAL HERITAGE & LOCAL FOOD PRODUCTION

Several parcels within Hudson are used for low-scale agricultural production. Farming and rural character are an important piece of Hudson's history. The City should prevent the premature conversion of agricultural land, recognizing it contributes to a visually diverse landscape and encourages local food production. Opportunities to safeguard and promote agricultural land and heritage should also be encouraged, including for educational programming (e.g. Case-Barlow Farm) as well as for entertainment and recreation (e.g. pumpkin patches, hay rides, fall festivals, etc.).

PARKS & RECREATION PLAN

Parks play a vital role in shaping Hudson's quality of life, providing opportunities for social activity, physical exercise, and interaction with nature. This chapter presents policies and recommendations that help ensure Hudson residents continue to enjoy excellent parks and recreation services. This map depicts the City's 24 parks and golf courses, trails, residential areas, and park service areas (either 0.5 miles or 1.0 mile, depending on classification). This analysis helps determine what residential areas need better park access and also visually communicates how existing and proposed parks and trails interact with one another and how they support the city's neighborhoods.

MAP KEY

- Parks
- Golf Course
- Park Service Areas
- Residential Areas
- Existing Trails
- Proposed Trails

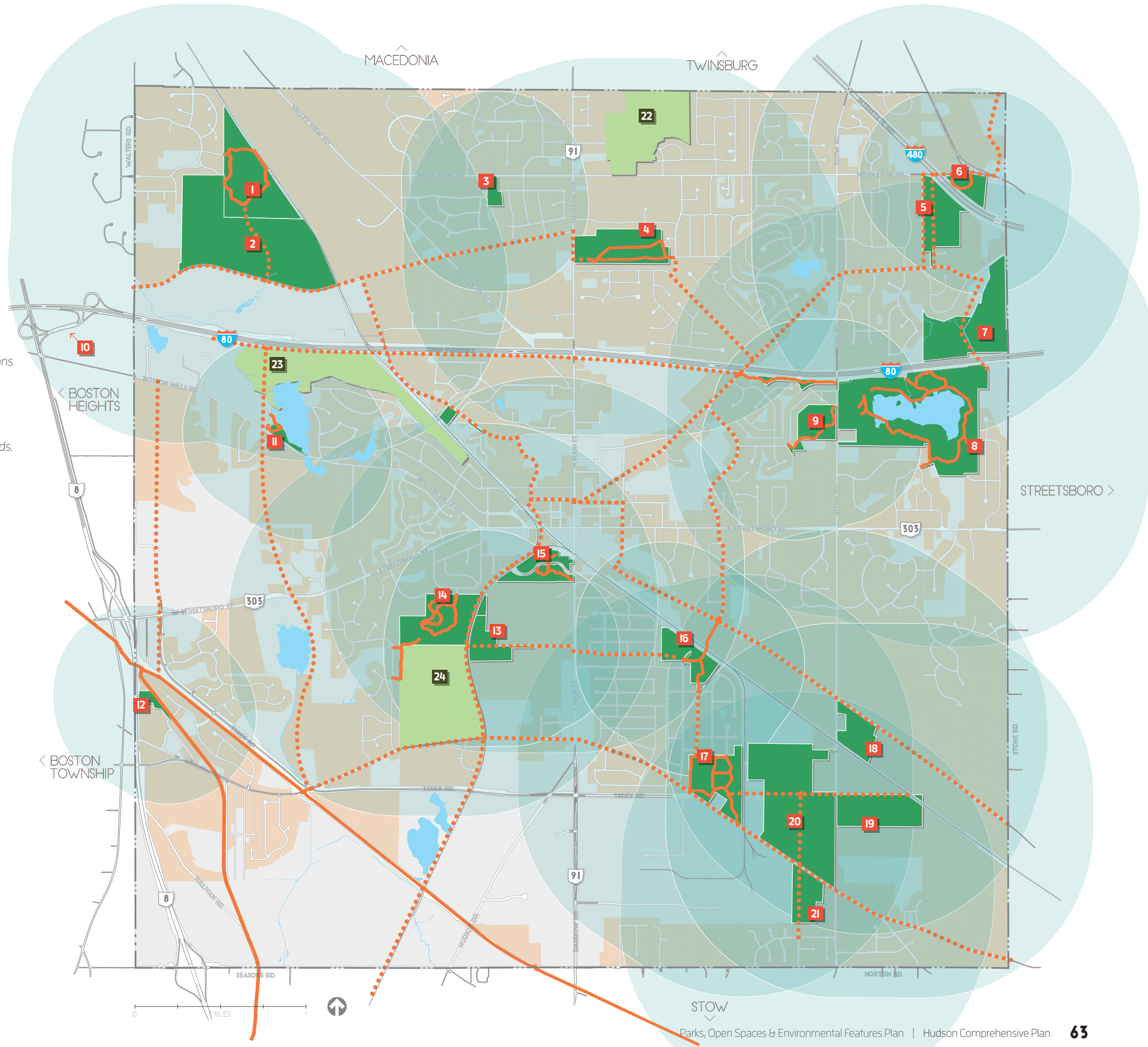
Parks

- | | | |
|--|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1 Maple Grove Park | 8 Hudson Springs Park | 16 Colony Park |
| 2 Maple Grove Metro Park (Proposed) | 9 Bicentennial Woods | 17 Barlow Farm Park |
| 3 Middleton Park | 10 Wildlife Woods | 18 Robinson Field Park |
| 4 Darrow Park | 11 Boston Mills Park | 19 Doc's Woods Park |
| 5 Trumbull Woods Park | 12 DiNovi Park | 20 Wood Hollow Metro |
| 6 High Point Park | 13 MacLaren Woods | 21 Oak Grove Park |
| 7 Tenbroeck Metro Park (Proposed) | 14 Cascade Park | |
| | 15 Veterans Way Park | |

Golf Courses

- | | | |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|---|
| 22 Hudson Country Club | 23 Lake Forest Country Club | 24 Ellsworth Meadows Golf Course |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|---|

Note: Trails along streets within existing neighborhoods should be developed as a traditional sidewalk for pedestrian use with on-road enhancements for bicycle use. Additionally, the two proposed trails on the west side of Hudson that are not within an existing right-of-way are general representations and are within the general vicinity of the proposed trail.





PROTECTION & ENHANCEMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL FEATURES

WATERSHEDS & WETLANDS

The quality of the watershed and the water system in and around Hudson greatly affects the natural environment and public health. A watershed is an area of land where all above-ground and sub-surface water drains to a single point. Hudson is split between four watersheds: Brandywine Creek in the northwest, Tinkers Creek in the northeast, Mud Brook in the south, and Fish Creek in the extreme southeast. Natural features such as soils, slopes, waterways, floodplains, wetlands, forests, and riparian zones all influence the health of the watershed and its impact on groundwater recharge.

Wetlands are lands inundated or saturated with water at a frequency and duration sufficient to support vegetation and animals adapted for life in such conditions. Examples include marshes, bogs, and swamps. If properly maintained, they can filter water of impurities, recycle nutrients, capture rainwater, and provide a habitat for wildlife. Hudson's wetlands are mostly found on the far eastern and western parts of the city, although wetlands are scattered throughout the city core.

The 2013 Brandywine Creek Watershed Plan authored by the Ohio Balanced Growth Initiative evaluated Hudson's ordinances for incorporation of best practices in watershed and wetland preservation and enhancement. Hudson's existing regulations met the majority of the Plan's suggested parameters, however, the Plan recommended that the City:

- Consider the usage of flexible development "by right";
- Develop a low impact development ordinance;
- Develop a mitigation plan for wetland and riparian impacts; and
- Require protection of steep slopes.

In addition to implementing these changes, the City should work with regional and local partners to develop regional approaches to prevent watershed contamination.

FLOODPLAINS

Floodplains are any areas of land that are susceptible to being overcome from floodwaters in the event of a 100-year flood. In other words, during any given year, there is a 1% chance that the area will be flooded. The City's floodplain is mostly concentrated on the western side of the city, between I-80 in the north and city limits in the south.

Development is not permitted without a special development permit issued by the City's Floodplain Administrator. The City should continue to restrict development in floodplains. All undeveloped or vacant properties located within a floodplain were designated as open space within the Land Use Plan.

TREE CANOPIES

Tree canopies, or the city's tree cover, act as an urban forest and help shield direct sunlight, absorb rainwater, and improve air quality. Trees also increase quality of life by beautifying the streetscape. Hudson's tree canopy is well-preserved, even in the face of development.

Continued preservation of open space, incorporation of mature trees within new developments, and healthy maintenance of the existing street tree network will all continue to protect and preserve Hudson's tree canopy. Additionally, as development and redevelopment occurs, the City should incrementally bury overhead utility lines to avoid potential conflicts with trees as they grow and mature.

OPEN SPACE & ENVIRONMENTAL FEATURES PLAN

Hudson's open spaces and environmental features play an integral role in sustaining a healthy ecosystem and providing a beautiful landscape. They also contribute greatly to flood mitigation and the absorption of rainwater. This chapter seeks to preserve and protect open space, as well as important and sensitive environmental features. Important recommendations include utilizing low impact development, conservation easements, and open space dedication requirements; restricting development on floodplains and wetlands; incorporating mature trees into new developments; and working with regional partners to protect Hudson's four watersheds from contamination.

- MAP KEY**
- Parks & Open Space
 - Wetlands
 - Streams, Rivers, & Waterways
 - 100 Year Floodplain
 - Riparian Setbacks
 - 500 Year Floodplain



Hudson Tree Canopy
 Generalized Tree Canopy
 Street Trees

