

Joint Land Use Study

FOR AREA SURROUNDING

THE MAINE ARMY NATIONAL GUARD'S AUBURN TRAINING FACILITY

AND

MOUNT APATITE RECREATION AREA, AUBURN MAINE

Executive Summary

Joint Land Use studies (JLUS) are cooperative planning activities involving military installations, the host municipality (ies) and affected stakeholders. A JLUS is intended to reduce potential conflicts between a military installation and its host community, while still accommodating the community's preferred growth pattern and adjacent land use activities, and protecting the general public's health and safety, without compromising the operational missions of the installation and its benefits to the City. The City of Auburn in conjunction with the Maine Army National Guard (MEARNG) conducted this JLUS with a focus on MEARNG's Auburn training site and the surrounding Mount Apatite areas in order to facilitate:

- **Common Ground:** Communication among the MEARNG and the City and stakeholders is needed to promote an understanding of the economic and physical relationship between the installation and its neighbors.
- **Collaboration:** Collaborative planning among the MEARNG and the City and stakeholders is needed in order to safeguard the mission of the installation from future incompatible development and to inform the municipality's policies regarding adjacent land use activities.
- **Strategic Actions:** Strategies for reducing the impacts of incompatible activities on the community and military operations are needed as well as tools to support future compatibility.

The City of Auburn applied for and received a planning grant from the Department of Defense, Office of Economic Adjustment to identify ways to address conflicts between the Maine Army National Guard's Training Facility and the City-owned Mount Apatite recreation area including the Auburn Suburban Little League (Garfield Road) Complex that currently exists on federal land. Over the course of several months, working with a Policy Committee made up of community residents, business people and representatives of stakeholder organizations, the Integrated Planning Solutions, planners working for the City, identified numerous concerns to both the Maine Army National Guard and the community.



The Challenges:

- The ballfields at the Garfield Road Complex (GRC) are on federal land; while past authorization allowed this use, no license currently exists.
- Parking at the GRC is inadequate during certain activities and at times spills onto Garfield Road.
- The City had once committed to a land swap when the GRC was built but because of environmental monitoring needs associated with wetlands impacts and the loss of institutional memory the land swap never occurred. (In 1991 the Mount Apatite Multiple Use Recreation Plan cited the ratio for the land swap as 1:2.45)
- The City Park is made up of several parcels acquired over time. One parcel is deed restricted for recreation use only; another is restricted for public use only. These restrictions, along with physical improvements on them, affect which parcels could be considered in a land swap.
- Mount Apatite Road provides is the main access to the GRC and to the Mount Apatite recreation trails; it is also the same access used by MEARNG.

- While the City's Comprehensive Plan recommends a consolidated athletic field complex, there is no room at Mount Apatite Park's GRC to add more athletic fields and the expense to relocate the five existing fields is likely to be prohibitive in the near term.
- Any land swap at the north of the complex will require the relocation of some portions of the 5K trail unless the City is granted a current use easement by the Department of the Army (DA).
- Most recreators access the trail network by crossing the engineer training area or land navigation area of the MEARNG installation.
- Recreators are confused once in the Park and have been known to cross onto MEARNG land.
- Recreators driving to the Park have difficulty knowing which access point should be used.
- Recreators who walk to the Park must do so along the road where there are few if any shoulders, sidewalks and crosswalks.
- Mine Road has very poor sight distance and no turning area.
- Small Road access is very remote and underutilized making it vulnerable to vandalism.
- Park land extends to Hatch Road but the location of that frontage is on a hill and curve making it unsafe to park there.
- Several unmarked access points exist and cross private property to get to city land.
- Vernal pools and wetlands are located on the training site making the relocation of vehicular access and parking away from Mount Apatite Road a challenge.
- Relocated trail access on portions of the MEARNG training site will need to cross wetlands – this will require permitting and additional cost but will provide a different experience for recreators.
- An inactive small arms range will be modernized and reactivated in the future; a communications protocol is needed to inform would be land owners of this eventuality.
- Relocating an access point for the MEARNG to eliminate conflict with the GRC is expensive and considered a low priority at this time.
- There is no communications or emergency protocol between the City and MEARNG today potentially exacerbating conflict when special events by either party are planned or during an emergency.
- The Comprehensive Plan does not acknowledge the MEARNG facility nor include information about existing and future operations. Uses and intensity identified in the Comprehensive Plan for the future land use zone covering the study area are appropriate and should be maintained.



The Preferred Solutions:

- **The DA/MEARNG should**
 - Transfer the GRC's 28+/- acres to the City
 - Clearly mark its boundary and clear zone.
- **The City should**
 - Acquire the GRC provided that any Mount Apatite Park land transferred in an exchange is authorized by the DPA by easement for current use. [If the DA does not authorize current use of exchanged land in the Park, the City will limit its land swap ratio to 1:1 or re-consider the option of relocating the GRC.
 - Acquire in fee or by easement from the DA a swath of land along the southern boundary of the Auburn training site beginning at the southeastern corner and extending all the way to city land intended to mean a swath that is somewhat parallel to Minot Avenue); it should be wide enough to accommodate a trail head and multi-use path from Garfield Road to Mount Apatite Park land.
 - Install and maintain a wayfinding system on nearby streets to guide recreators to official access point(s).

- Install and maintain a wayfinding system within the Park to keep recreators from wandering into off MEARNG training areas.
 - Work with willing abutters to formalize and improve access and increase buffers. Small parking areas and appropriate signage should be added as appropriate.
 - Improve the parking area and trail head at the snowmobile club on Small Road.
 - Plan to install multi use shoulders for bicyclists and pedestrians on roads leading to official access points.
 - Plan to add sidewalks on the north side of Stevens Mill Road, the east side of Garfield Road from Minot Avenue to Stevens Mill Road and on the west side of Garfield Road from Minot Avenue to the proposed new trail access point at the southeastern corner of the DA land. The City should also plan to add and/or extend sidewalks along both sides of Minot Avenue.
 - Install crosswalks across Stevens Mill Road and across Garfield Road at Stevens Mill Road and from one side of Garfield Road to the other at the proposed new trail head at the southeastern corner of DA land.
 - Appoint the Recreation Advisory Board to oversee the implantation of the JLUS and to pursue grant opportunities.
 - Amend the Comprehensive Plan to include an inventory of the MEARNG installation; the name of the future land use zone should be changed to reflect the existence of the operation.
 - Reinstall safety signs at the quarries.
 - Review mining rules to allow for more mineral finding opportunities.
 - Negotiate a renewed short term lease for continued use of GRC until a longer term solution is in place.
 - Identify city-owned or tax acquired land nearby for use in any land swap
 - Examine public facility/land needs and holdings prior to making major public facility/land investments.
- **The City and MEARNG should work together to**
 - Develop kiosks, trail maps and web-based information about both facilities and make them available to the public.
 - Coordinate activities and emergency response protocols.
 - Host opportunities for the area neighborhood and surrounding community to learn what is new at the Park and Auburn training site.
 - Develop and undertake an aggressive public awareness and outreach program.

The Partners:

Special thanks are extended to the following for their assistance in developing this plan:

- The City of Auburn – Planning, Public Works, Engineering, Emergency Services, and Recreation Advisory Board
- The Maine Army National Guard
- The Andy Valley Sno Gypsies
- The Taylor Pond Association
- The Androscoggin Land Trust
- The Auburn Suburban Little League
- Area geologists and rock hounds
- Private residential and business property owners



To view the final recommended JLUS or for more information about this Study visit the study website at www.auburnmaine.gov/Pages/Government/Auburn-Maine-Joint-Land-Use-Study or check out the Study Facebook Page at Auburn Joint Land Use Study. The website includes information about the progress of the Study and, details about Policy Committee and community planning sessions. Readers can also offer comments on the posted materials and the final recommended plan at the website.

