

Public Input Session Sagamore Creek Land

Draft Final Report and Master Plan

Mayor's Blue Ribbon Committee Sagamore Creek Land
November 15, 2015



Sagamore Creek Master Plan
Final Report
Mayor's Blue Ribbon Committee
on
Sagamore Creek Land



Councilor Eric Spear, Chair and Council Representative
Councilor Chris Dwyer, Council Representative
John Mikolajcyk, Resident Representative
Alison Pyott, Resident Representative
Lennie Mullaney, School Board Representative
Kory Sirmaian, Recreation Board Representative
Allison Tanner, Conservation Commission Representative
David Moore, City Manager's Designee, Ex-officio

November 10, 2015

Tonight's Presentation

- Vision
- Committee's Charge & Membership
- Committee's Process
- Public Input, Participation, and
Communication
- Key Considerations
- Existing Uses vs. Proposed Uses
- Recommended Master Plan Elements



Vision

The Sagamore Creek Land is a unique and valuable community resource that should be conserved and made accessible to all in a balanced manner that promotes waterfront access, protection of invaluable natural features, and permits recreation opportunities that complement one another and which are sensitive to the overall vision of preserving the site's character.

- adopted by Portsmouth City Council June 1, 2015

Committee Charge & Membership

- To create a plan for public usage of the city-owned Sagamore Creek Land
- Why?
- Membership includes:
 - Eric Spear, City Councilor and Chair
 - Chris Dwyer, City Councilor
 - John Mikolajcyk, Resident
 - Alison Pyott, Resident
 - Lennie Mullaney, School Board Representative
 - Kory Sirmaian, Recreation Board Representative
 - Allison Tanner, Conservation Commission Representative
 - Ex-officio, City Manager or his designee (non-voting)

Committee's Process

- site's past usage
- natural resource values
- past use as a landfill and landfill cap reuses
- previous plans and studies associated with the parcel
- Met School Board, Recreation Board, Sustainability Committee, and Conservation Commission Representatives
- Held May Public Input Session on Draft Vision & Guidelines
- Conducted site walk, met with City staff, researched similar natural areas
- Formulated a Master Plan & Report
- More detail on process can be found on report pages 3 - 4.



Public Input, Participation, and Communication

- Website for Committee presentations, reports reviewed, meeting dates and other information
- Recreation Board, Conservation Commission, School Board, and Sustainability Committee Joint Meeting
- Public Input Meeting – May 7th – over 20 speakers
- Web Comment Form – over 27 comments received
- Public Comments at each public meeting
- Public Input Meeting – November 15th

Key Considerations in Developing Plan

1. Coordination with Department of Environmental Services

1. Existing closed landfill and groundwater permit monitoring
2. Current site features and configuration are required by the plan
3. Changes will need to be approved
4. Proposed changes are in keeping with Vision AND ensure integrity of the cap.

2. Stewardship and Promotion of Passive Recreation Assets

1. Prevention of overuse
2. Network of passive recreation facilities
3. Plans for managing these sites (as new assets come on board).

3. Recreation Fields



Comparison of Amenities

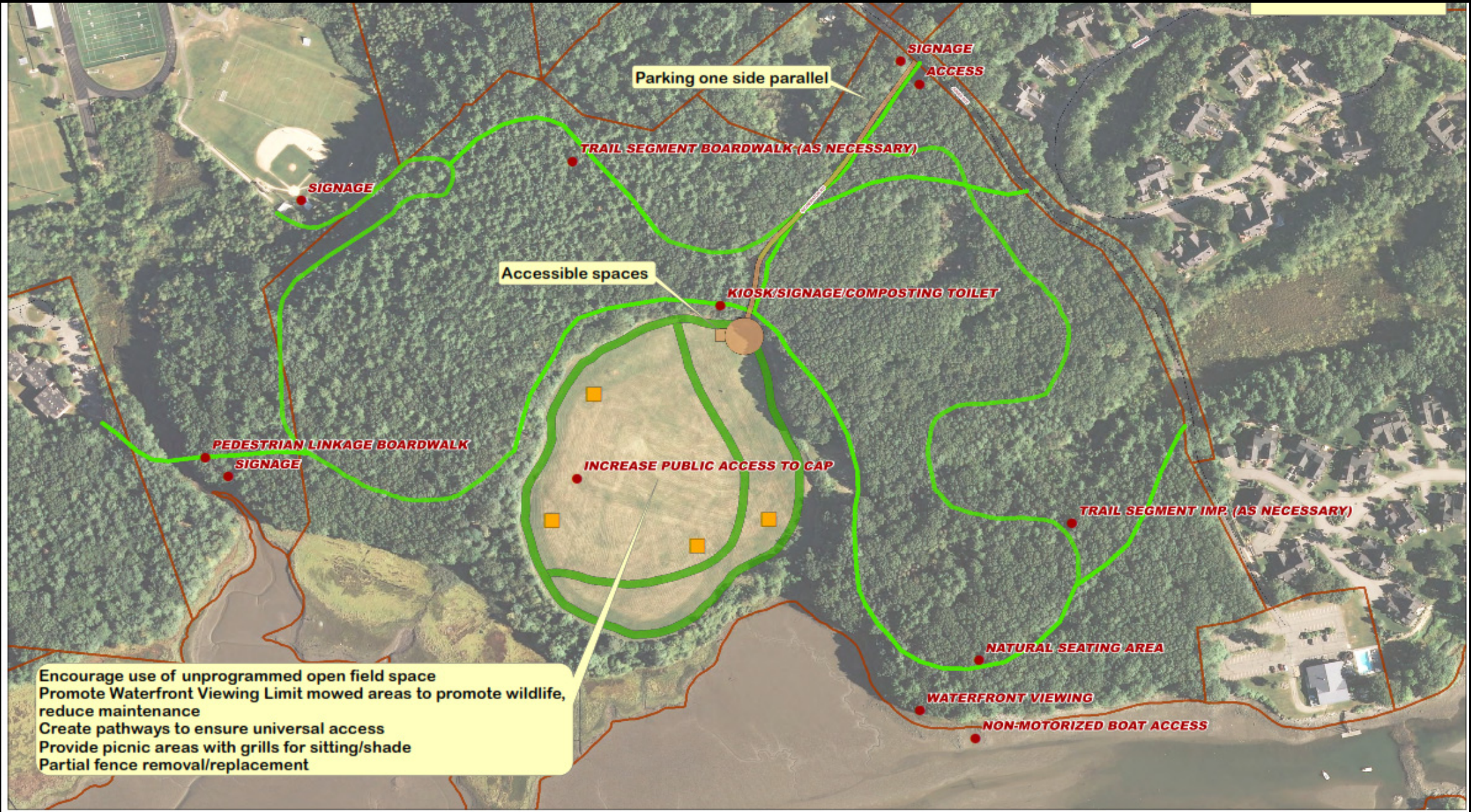
Existing

- Walking Trails
- Cross Country Trails
- Informal access to open field
- Informal, unsafe parking area
- Access to waterfront

Proposed Master Plan

- Walking Trails
- Cross Country Trails
- Formal access to open field
- Formal, more safe vehicular access using existing roadway
- Formal access to waterfront, protecting natural areas and sensitive flora.
- Signage indicating public space
- Additional waterfront views and accessible trail system on top of cap.
- Composting toilet
- Interpretative markers

Recommended Master Plan



Parking one side parallel

SIGNAGE
ACCESS

TRAIL SEGMENT BOARDWALK (AS NECESSARY)

SIGNAGE

Accessible spaces

KIOSK/SIGNAGE/COMPOSTING TOILET

PEDESTRIAN LINKAGE BOARDWALK
SIGNAGE

INCREASE PUBLIC ACCESS TO CAP

TRAIL SEGMENT IMP. (AS NECESSARY)

NATURAL SEATING AREA

WATERFRONT VIEWING

NON-MOTORIZED BOAT ACCESS

Encourage use of unprogrammed open field space
Promote Waterfront Viewing Limit mowed areas to promote wildlife, reduce maintenance
Create pathways to ensure universal access
Provide picnic areas with grills for sitting/shade
Partial fence removal/replacement

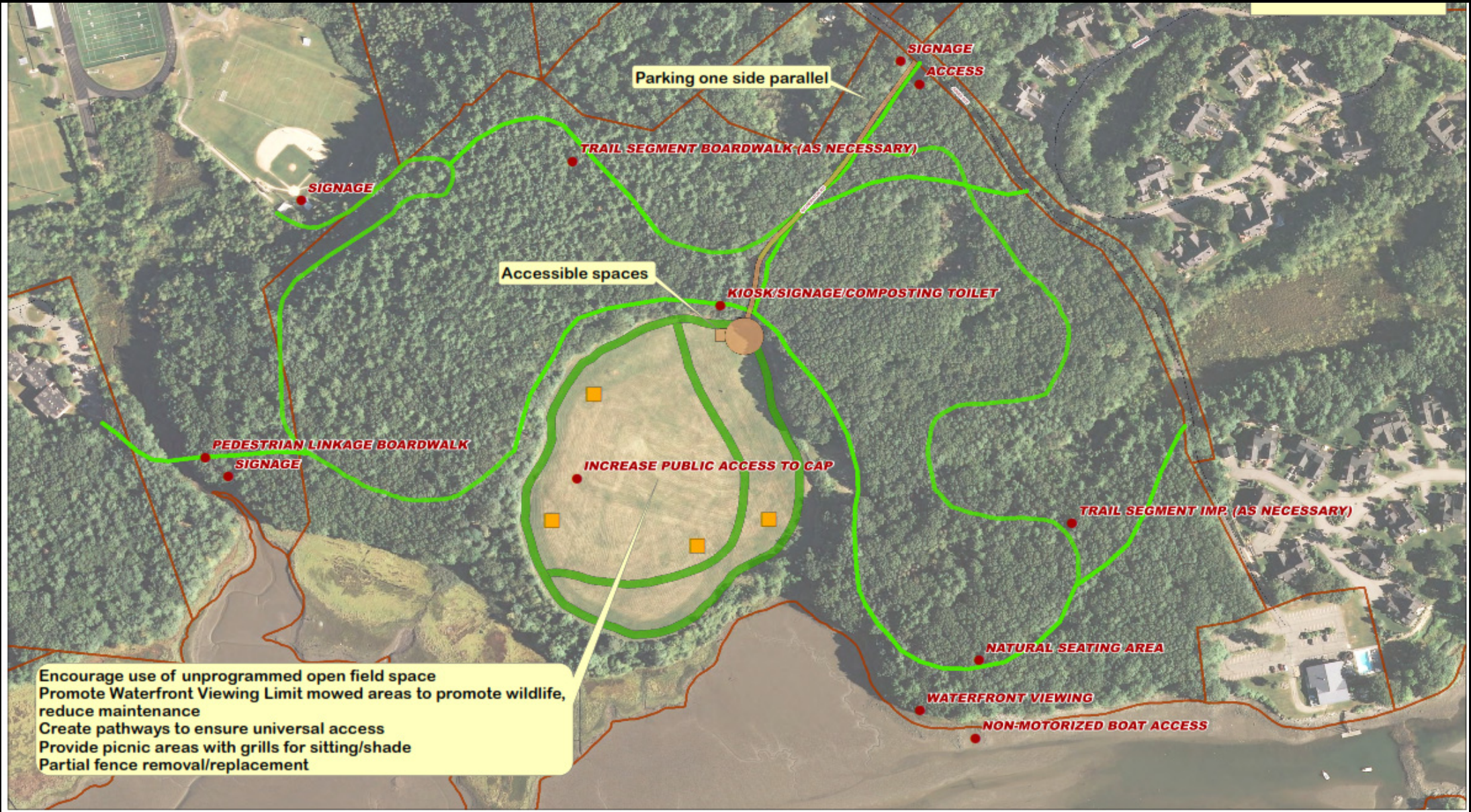
1. **Signage.** Perhaps one of the most common observations heard by the Committee has been the need to make sure this valuable public asset is signed in a manner that invites use by the public. One resident reported not knowing the resource was available during the entire tenure of her residency in the Jones Avenue neighborhood. As a result, the Committee has recommended creating a more welcoming frontage by removing the locked fence at the entrance at Jones Avenue and adding signage, which identifies the parcel as being publicly-owned and welcoming to visitation by the public.



Figure 1 This signage from Peirce Island is in keeping with the style of signage recommended the site.



Figure 2 A kiosk like this one may be appropriate to orient visitors and provide information.



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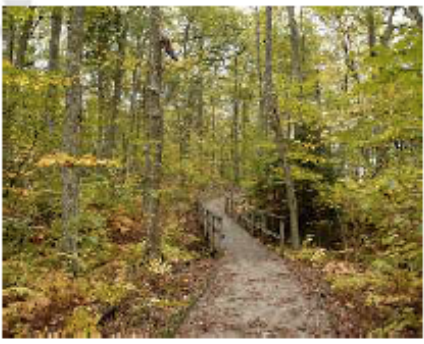
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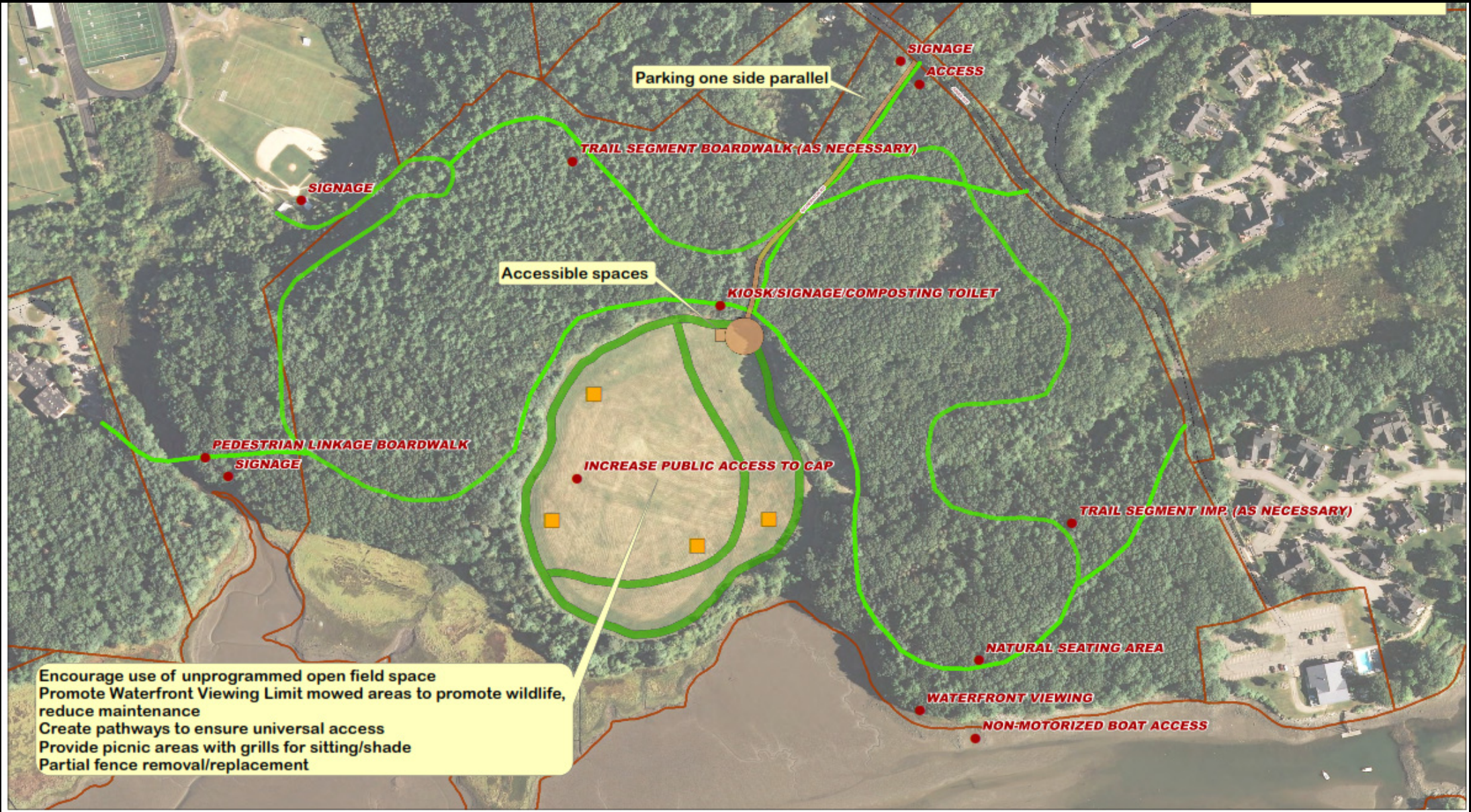
2. **Improve Existing Pedestrian Linkages.** In keeping with the stated goals of the City's Master Plan and Bike and Pedestrian Plan, the Committee has recommended maximizing the connections this parcel already has to adjacent parcels and uses including residential areas along the Route 1 corridor, the Jones Avenue neighborhood, the High School, and Sagamore Creek. In one location, this will required the construction of a boardwalk to navigate a wet area between the Sagamore Creek Land and Winchester Place apartments.



Figure 2 The City's Bike-Ped Plan shows the Sagamore Creek Parcel in relationship to the Urban Forestry Center and other bike and pedestrian connections.



Figures 3 and 5 Show an example of a boardwalk feature over a wet area or depression that is recommended to better link an abutting property to the site.



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3. **Creation of On-site Parking.** The Committee is recommending an on-site parking area be created in order to ensure residents of all abilities are able to access both the wooded and open portions of the site. Presently, only haphazard and informal parking is available for users at the site outside of the fence at Jones Avenue; it is not accessible and can accommodate few vehicles.

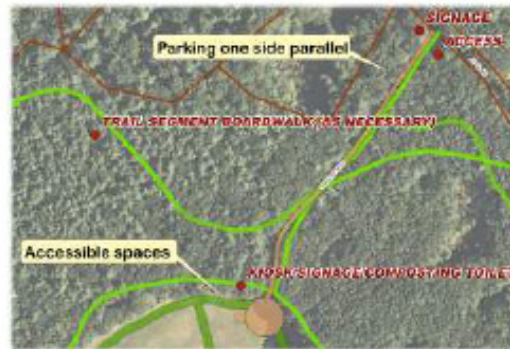
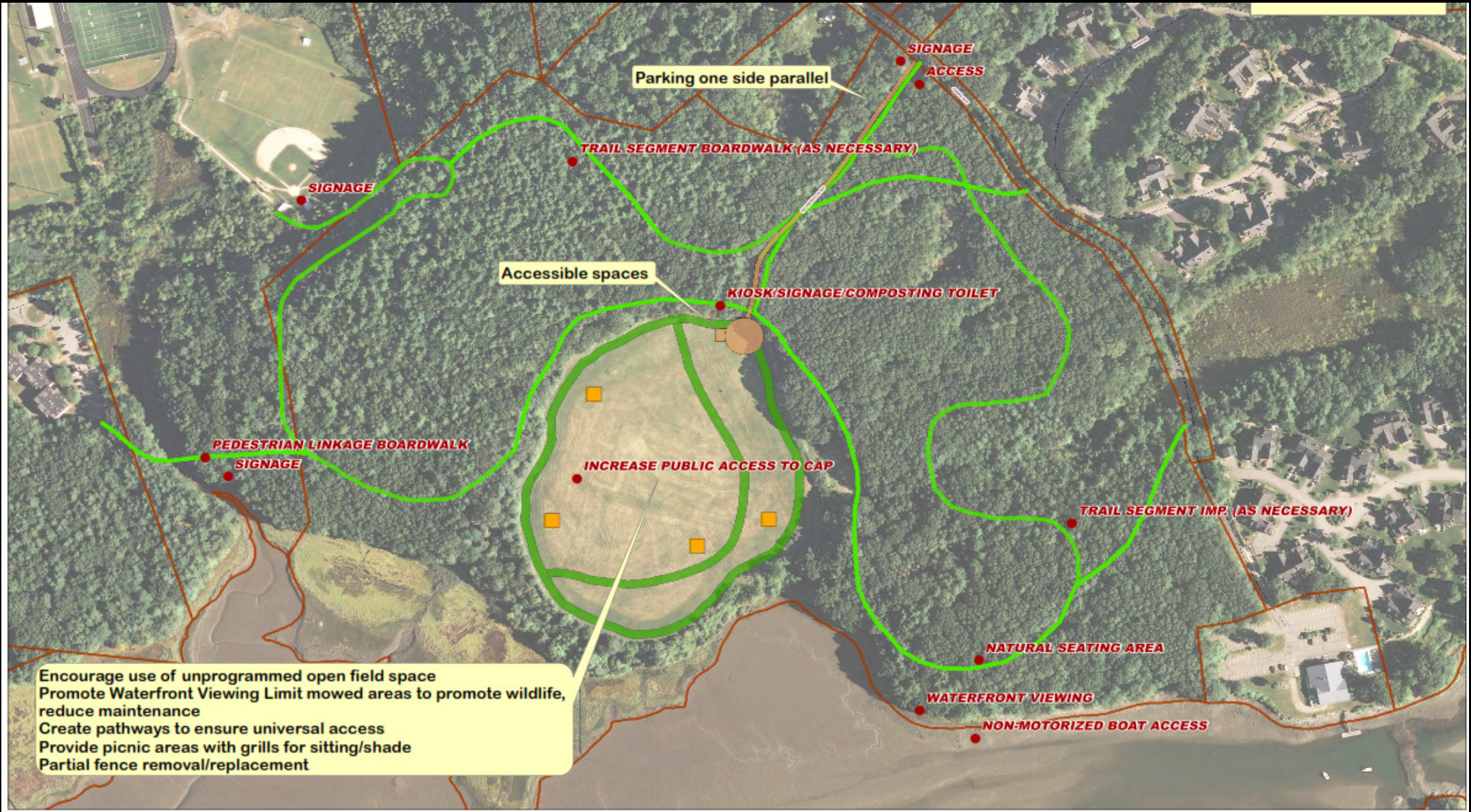


Figure 6 This detail from the Master Plan in the Appendix shows how the parking will be along the existing roadway into the site, with a turnaround (circle) near the cap. This provides non-intrusive parking and access to the cap for people of all abilities.



Figure 7 This picture shows the current condition outside the locked gate at Jones Avenue. Not many cars can be accommodated; the parking is unorganized, and potentially unsafe.

After much deliberation and input, the Committee is recommending a configuration for providing parking, which will have the smallest environmental and aesthetic impact on the site. This recommended improvement utilizes the existing roadway into the site, provides parallel parking on one side (to accommodate approximately 30 vehicles, and creates a turnaround at its terminus along with accessible spaces. Alternative options for creating parking for vehicles would require widening the existing roadway into the site thereby impacting wetlands and requiring tree removal. The recommended scenario utilizes the existing roadway and creates a turnaround area at the current opening at the end of the roadway at the cap. As part of this recommendation, the Committee is recommending no additional permeable pavements be utilized and, where possible, reduce the existing paved area to benefit both the adjacent wetlands (including vernal pools) as well as promote the natural undeveloped nature of the site.



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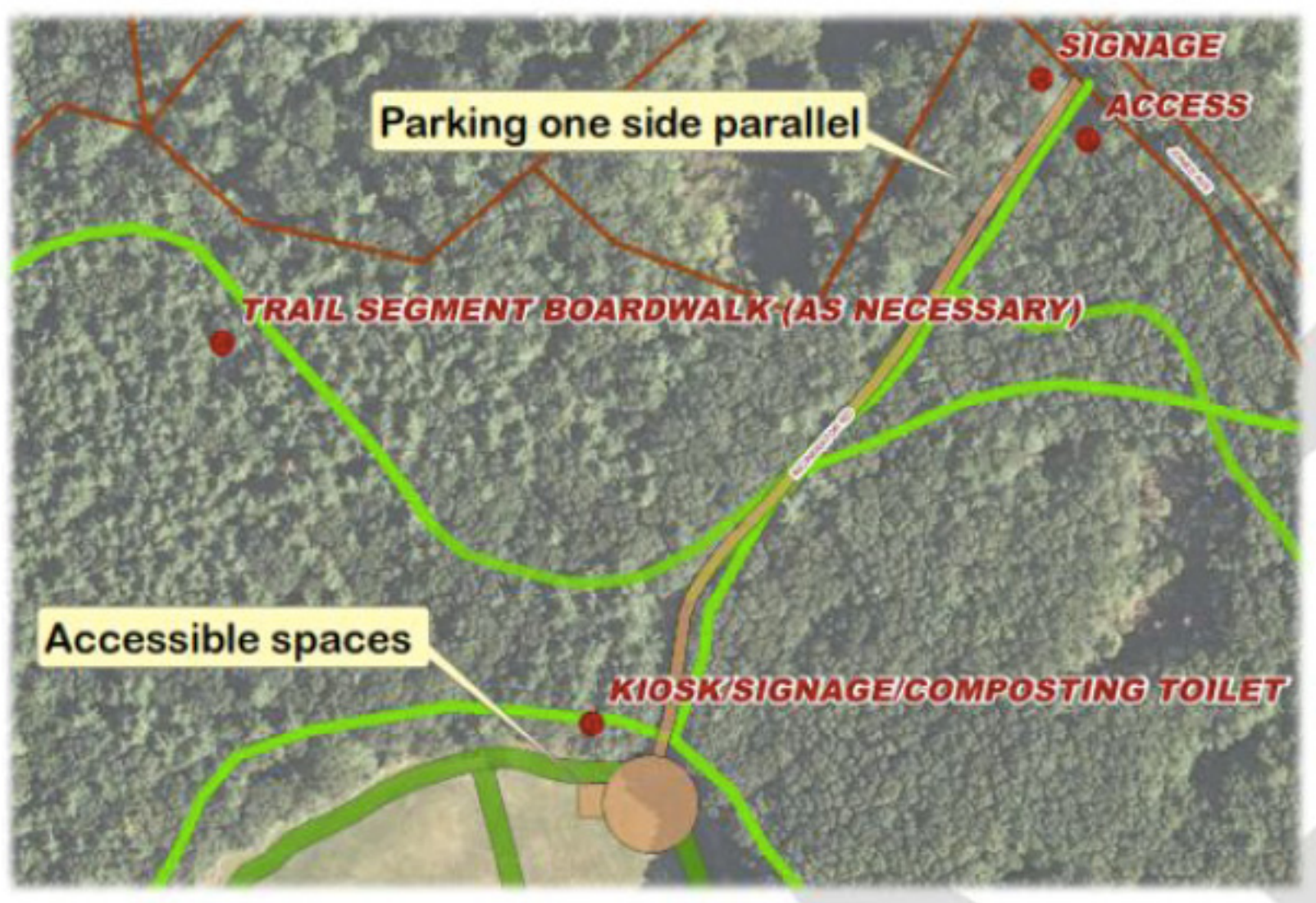
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4. Promote Access to the Landfill Cap Open Space.

A major underutilized portion of the parcel is the landfill cap, which lies elevated in the middle of the parcel at the edge of Sagamore Creek. This green space may be the only undeveloped and unprogrammed open field space of its size owned by the City. This open field space with no trees is ideal for walking and waterfront viewing, bird watching, kite flying, cross-country skiing, picnicking and other unorganized passive activities enjoyed by a wide cross-section of our community of all abilities. Recommended improvements are intended to maximize the flexibility and availability of this open space for the many possible activities and promoting use by people of all abilities while maintaining the high value of this meadow-like area as nesting habitat for many bird species. With these uses and values in mind the Committee is recommending the following improvements to the cap:



Figure 4 This detail from the master plan shows an accessible trail system, mowed areas around the landfill cap's border, and potential locations for picnic tables.

- a. Create an accessible trail system from the parking area to the waterfront portion. This area would be made accessible by a paved path and mowed edges. The Public Works Department current mows the capped area twice a year. With this improvement, additional mowing would be needed around the trail system.
- b. Increase public access to the cap by reducing the linear feet of fencing along its perimeter. A chain link fence surrounds the open field space of the cap; removal of significant portions of this fence would promote public use and reduce structures in this area. Fencing will need to remain in areas where there are steep grades (such as that portion along the waterfront) and in certain areas of the cap system. Where fencing is required to remain, some alternative to chain link fencing might be introduced which better compliments the property.

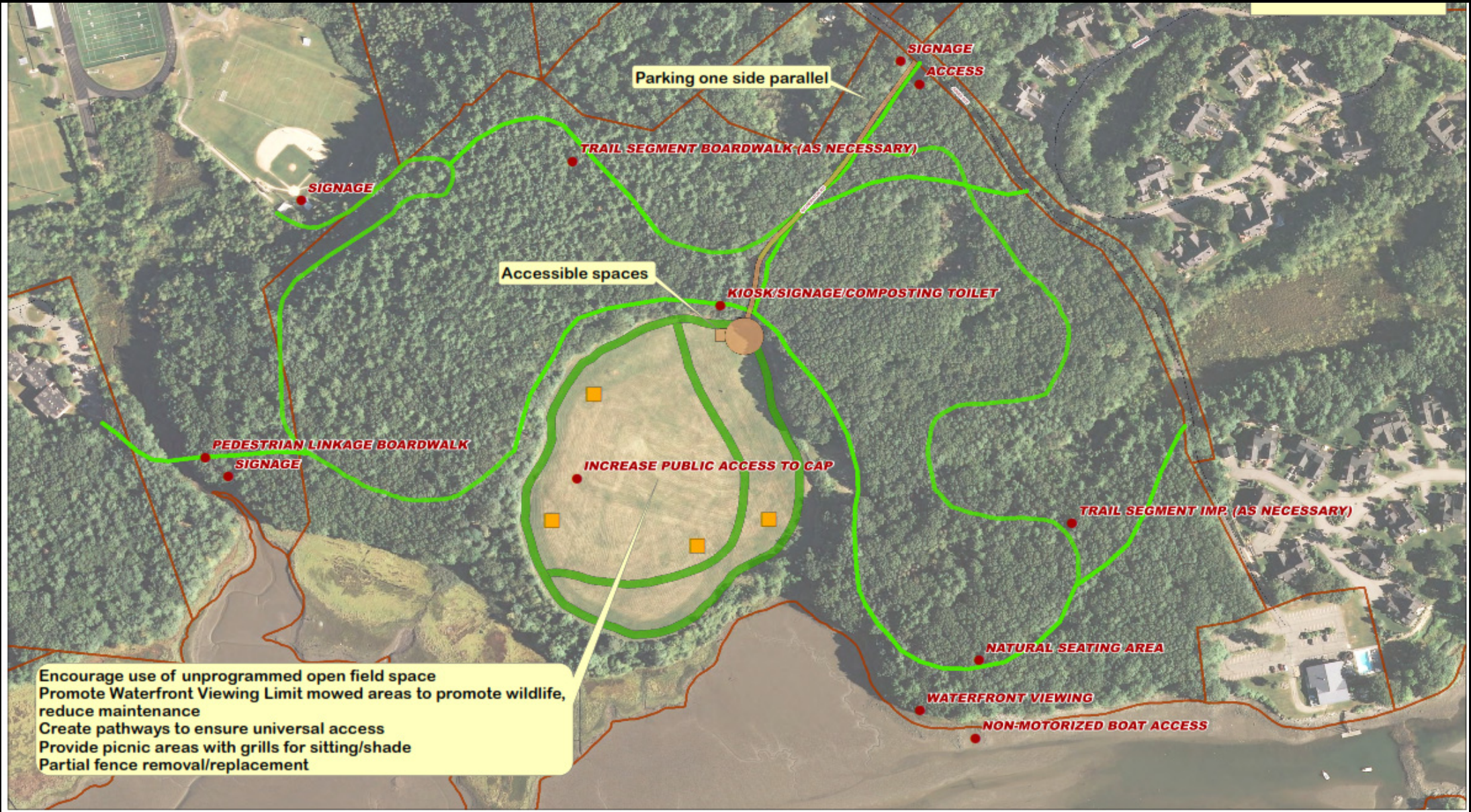
5. **Waterfront Access & Viewing.** Creating waterfront viewing opportunities to improve access to the waterfront is a major priority and recommendation in this final report. This recommendation includes the potential future inclusion of a canoe-kayak dock facility for use by non-motorized watercraft. This canoe-kayak dock is not a high priority due to the tidal nature of Sagamore Creek and the inaccessibility of the access point during significant portions of the day. This feature is designed to be accessible via the water as opposed to promoting the portage of canoes and kayaks from the parking area.



Figure 6 This detail from the Master Plan in Appendix A, shows recommended locations of waterfront features to ensure public access to the waterfront.



Figure 5 These two examples of waterfront structures are envisioned to provide meaningful public access to the waterfront at the parcels shoreline along Sagamore Creek



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6. **Interpretative Signage.** The Sagamore Creek parcel has the potential to be an opportunity to encourage conservation, promote sustainability, encourage scientific discovery (through existing School programs), and educate residents about the City's past strategies for managing solid waste through this landfill site.



Figure 7 This is an example of Interpretative signage in a wooded area.

Some examples of interpretative marker content might include:

- the presence of Native Americans in Portsmouth;
- Landfill Practices of the 19th and 20th Centuries
- Vernal Pool Habitats
- Invasive Species Management
- Gulf of Maine Tidal Marsh
- Geologic Sagamore Creek

7. **Toilet Facilities.** Like many other recreational spaces in the City, the Sagamore Creek parcel is recommended to have a toilet facility. The Committee believes it would be appropriate to have a composting toilet on site, which could also serve as a potential educational opportunity.

Figure 8 A compostable toilet facility at the site is envisioned to both provide a needed service at a recreational area of this type and may also be an educational opportunity. This one is located at Cathedral Ledge State Park in New Hampshire.



8. **Improvement to Existing Trails.** The Sagamore Creek Land already has a series of well-developed, maintained, and used trails. In addition to use by the Cross Country program at Portsmouth High School for both competition and practice, the trails are used by the general public. While no trail expansion is recommended as part of this plan, the Master Plan does note the need to continue to care for the trails in a manner that encourages users to stay on the trails avoiding sensitive wetland (vernal pools) and flora habitat. This might include improving drainage in certain areas or board walking trail sections in particular need of protection. Consultations with the Cross Country program confirmed that no proposal in the Master Plan presents conflicts with the program.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MASTER PLAN

According to the City Charter, the City Manager is responsible for managing City-owned property and the day-to-day operations of the City government. This plan and report is designed to layout the community's vision and desired improvements for the parcel. The overall vision for the parcel will not be achieved in a year or even two years, but over a longer time horizon. We hope that, by defining the big picture, the City Manager and City staff, with support of the City Council will find ways to sequence these improvements that make sense and that best leverages investment of local tax dollars with other sources of funding. The following are potential strategies and opportunities for carrying out these improvements.

1. **Regular funding through the Capital Improvement Program (CIP).** Identification of specific elements of this master plan should be completed through the City's CIP plan. Regular and predictable levels of investment will help staff plan projects in the future.
2. **Conservation Fund.** The City's conservation fund has been identified as a resource in the Capital Improvement Plan for implementation of this plan. As many of the improvements envisioned include conservation related strategies and measures, additional use of this resource may be appropriate.
3. **Use of Volunteers.** Each year, many businesses, civic groups, and individuals work with the various departments including the Department of Public Works to carry out useful projects throughout the City. Many items in the Master Plan can be carried out in coordination with these groups, including invasive species management, trail maintenance and improvements, and general clean-ups and other maintenance activities.
4. **Coordination with Boards and Commissions.** The Sagamore Creek Land is valued and used by many people in our community. Likewise, several City Boards and commissions are stakeholders when it comes to the various uses of the parcel, these include the Conservation Commission (planning for stewardship of undeveloped public lands, valuable wetlands and management of invasive species); Recreation Board (recreation programs); Sustainability Committee (natural resource protection and learning environment); and School Board (educational programs and cross country program).
5. **Grants and Donations.** Wherever possible opportunities to further leverage local tax dollars and volunteer hours should be used in furthering progress on the Master Plan.

Public Input Session

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