

Community Preservation Act Committee- Proposal Request Form for FY 2020

Project Title: Mill River Recreation Area—New Basketball Courts, Playground and Pavilion

CPA funding category: Check all that apply

<input type="checkbox"/>	Community Housing
<input type="checkbox"/>	Open Space
<input type="checkbox"/>	Historic Preservation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Recreation

Amount of CPA Funds Requested: \$ 260,374

Submitting Entity: Town of Amherst

Contact Person: Barbara Bilz, Director of LSSE

Phone: (413) 259 - 3103

Email: bilzb@amherstma.gov

Please complete this form in its entirety and include the following in your proposal.

Overview of Proposal: Please describe your project and your feasibility analysis

In recent years the Town has started to modernize recreation areas—active and passive—with updated facilities and equipment, improved access, and amenities identified by the community. The Mill River Recreation Area, the gateway site for the most popular conservation & recreation greenway in Amherst, has benefitted from improvements in the last 5 years, including a PARC grant to update the pool area. Although these projects addressed immediate needs and concerns, they did not follow a comprehensive plan for modernizing the playgrounds and picnic areas, and integrating accessibility into the park. The current project includes a concept master plan that organizes the formal active recreation areas to bring new life to the site, which anchors the western end of the greenway that includes the Mill River, Puffer’s Pond, and Cushman Brook.

The Town applied for a 2-year design/build PARC grant to develop a master plan to modernize the features that need significant capital investment and to incorporate accessibility and community priorities into the park. The project is divided into 2 construction phases, and the Town has applied for funds for design and construction of Phase 1. Phase 1 includes new basketball courts, playground, sitting areas, small pavilion, shade trees and site amenities. Phase 2 would include a new picnic area, a second pavilion, outdoor plaza, and additional amenities. Phase 1 is the focus because these features need to be replaced. The basketball courts and playground are in such deteriorated condition that they are almost unusable. The Town’s Leisure Services and Supplement Education Department (LSSE), which oversees various athletic and educational programs in Amherst, has received CPA funds and local capital funds to help resurface the basketball courts as part of this project. The benches around the basketball courts are original to the park. The pavilion and playgrounds are not accessible and cannot be reached along a continuous surface; there are steps or grade change to use these amenities. Users also complain about the lack of shade, seating opportunities, and picnic areas. The modernization project addresses these community concerns.

Describe how your request meets the CPA criteria:

1. Description of funding needed, including:

- a. Documentation of cost estimates, budget
- b. Other sources of funding, e.g., grants, self-funding, fund-raising
- c. Timeline on how CPA funds would be spent, including over multiple years

The preliminary concept master plan and cost estimate has been developed by the Berkshire Design Group. This local firm has considerable experience designing playgrounds and has worked with staff to try and meet the various needs of the

community. The Town worked with the Berkshire Design Group to keep project costs at approximately \$750,000, with the expectation that the Town would receive the maximum PARC grant award of \$400,000. The preliminary budget is estimated to be \$760,374, with \$100,000 of CPA funds already approved for improvements to the basketball courts.

As a 2-year grant, the Town would finalize designs and specifications by June 30, 2019, and then complete construction by June 30, 2020. Although most of the funds would be spent in outward fiscal years, the PARC grant program requires that communities allocate the full project cost upfront.

2. Urgency of the Project, if any.

The Mill River Recreation Area was developed over 40 years ago (with LWCF funding) and while it has been updated and maintained, needs significant capital improvements to the basketball courts, playgrounds, pavilion/picnic areas, and walkways. The current pavilion and playground are not accessible, and the play equipment is rusted and starting to break and fail. If built today, the playground would not meet current safety codes. The basketball courts are cracked and the benches and backboards are original to the park, and are well beyond the point of simple maintenance—they need to be replaced. There are very few places to sit and enjoy the play areas or to picnic, and there is very limited shade. See attached images of existing conditions.

As is the case with many communities, the recreational infrastructure has reached an age where regular maintenance is not enough to keep it safe or useable. Making significant improvements to the Mill River Recreation Area is a necessary step to keep it a fun, functioning park for families and the community.

3. Estimated timeline from receipt of funds to Project completion.

The project would be completed in two phases, with planning and design completed by June 30, 2019 and construction completed the following year by June 30, 2020. The PARC grant program establishes a rigorous schedule that they expect grantees to follow with very little exceptions.

4. Acquisition or preservation of threatened resources.

The Mill River Recreation Area serves both a very populated North Amherst neighborhood with a large Environmental Justice population (see attached map), and all of Amherst as it has 1 of 2 outdoor pools, outdoor tennis and basketball courts, a few picnic areas, access to the Mill River and formal little league fields. The park has been a very important recreational asset to the Town that continues to see high use and demand, and which needs significant upgrades to continue serving the community as it has for nearly 40 years.

5. Population(s) to be served by the Project.

All residents of Amherst, particularly of North Amherst, and residents from regional communities, use the mill River Recreation Area.

The park is used year-round, from informal gatherings to pavilion rentals that include birthday parties, school groups and classes, and special events. The proximity of the park to the Mill River and adjacent conservation areas, and to the nearby EJ neighborhoods, makes the Mill River Recreation Area a gateway location to the outdoor amenities offered in North Amherst. The park is close to local bus stops and public transportation, and is within ½ mile of one of the most densely populated neighborhoods in town (see maps). The planned improvements have responded to community priorities identified through the 2017 Open Space and Recreation Plan, and to comments received by the Town from the many programs and activities that use the park, including through the Town's LSSE Department that administers athletic programs, youth programs, and summer camps.

6. How will the CPA investment in your property, facility or project be maintained over time?

The Mill River Recreation Area will be maintained by the Town, through seasonal and annual maintenance, and through volunteer efforts coordinated by Department of Public Works (DPW), LSSE, and the programs that use the park. The Tree & Grounds Division of DPW is responsible for the maintenance and care of all the towns' parks, commons, athletic fields, cemeteries and public shade trees. An example of volunteerism is Mass Impact Day—each year in the fall, UMass students help with seasonal maintenance through this event. This past year they helped weed and spread mulch on the playground. The Friends of Amherst Recreation is a private local organization that often helps the Town's LSSE Department coordinate and fundraise for events, and they will be a partner with the modernization of the Mill River Recreation Area.

7. Which relevant Town committees and/or commissions are you working with?

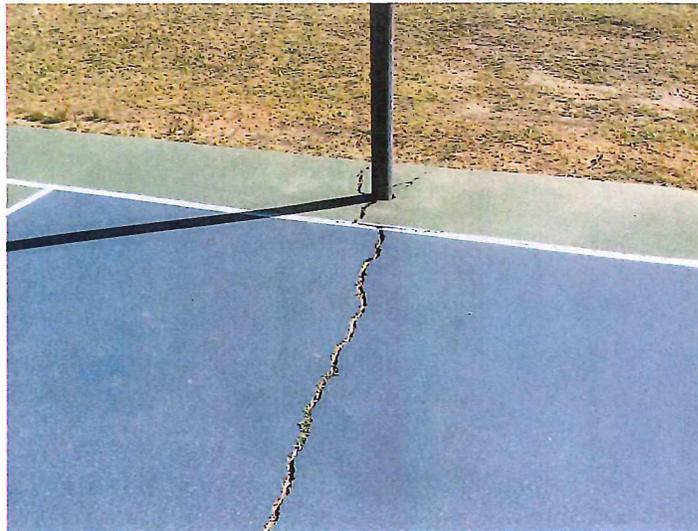
The concept plans for the Mill River Recreation Area Park have been reviewed by the LSSE Commission. If the Town is awarded a PARC grant, the design process would involve additional community meetings and formal review the Planning Board, Conservation Commission, Design Review Board and the Disability Access Advisory Committee.

8. Other information regarding the Project deemed necessary for CPAC.

Mill River Recreation Area—Existing Conditions



Narrow walkway leading to playground and current sloped walkway from parking lot that is not ADA compliant



Cracked surface on basketball courts



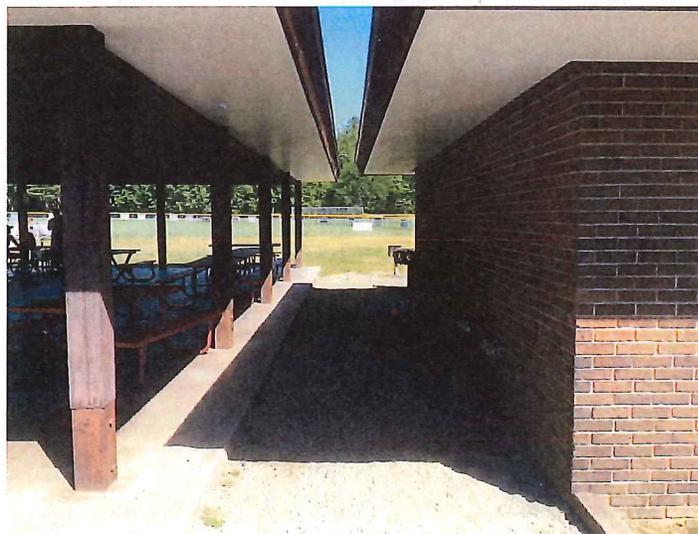
Nearly 40 year old benches along the basketball courts



Existing entrance to the basketball courts



Shade pavilion that is not accessible



Awkward space between pavilion and storage shed

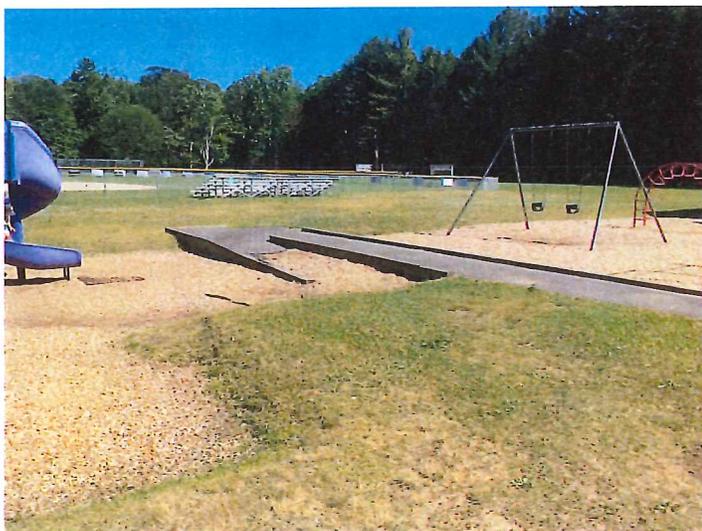
Mill River Recreation Area—Existing Conditions



Small picnic area behind storage shed



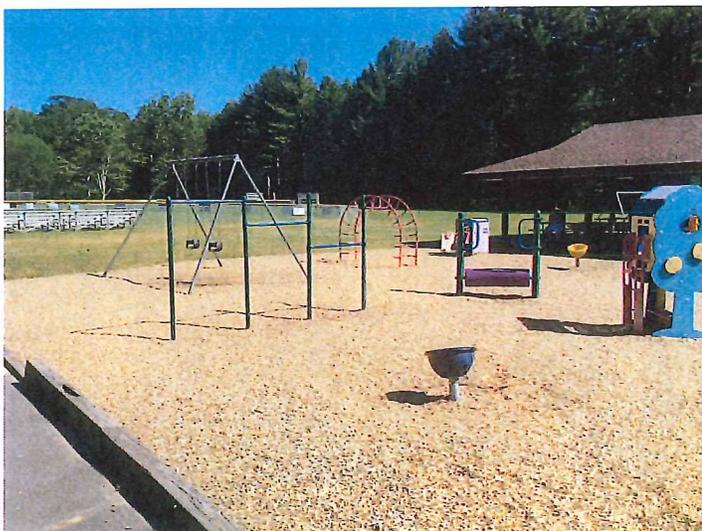
Walkway to playgrounds that do not meet current ADA standards



Walkway to playgrounds and wood chip surface that is difficult to maintain



Existing equipment



Existing equipment



HP parking space and sign

Mill River Recreation Area FY19 PARC Grant

Town of Amherst



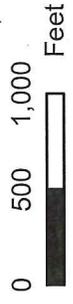
Neighborhood Context

Legend

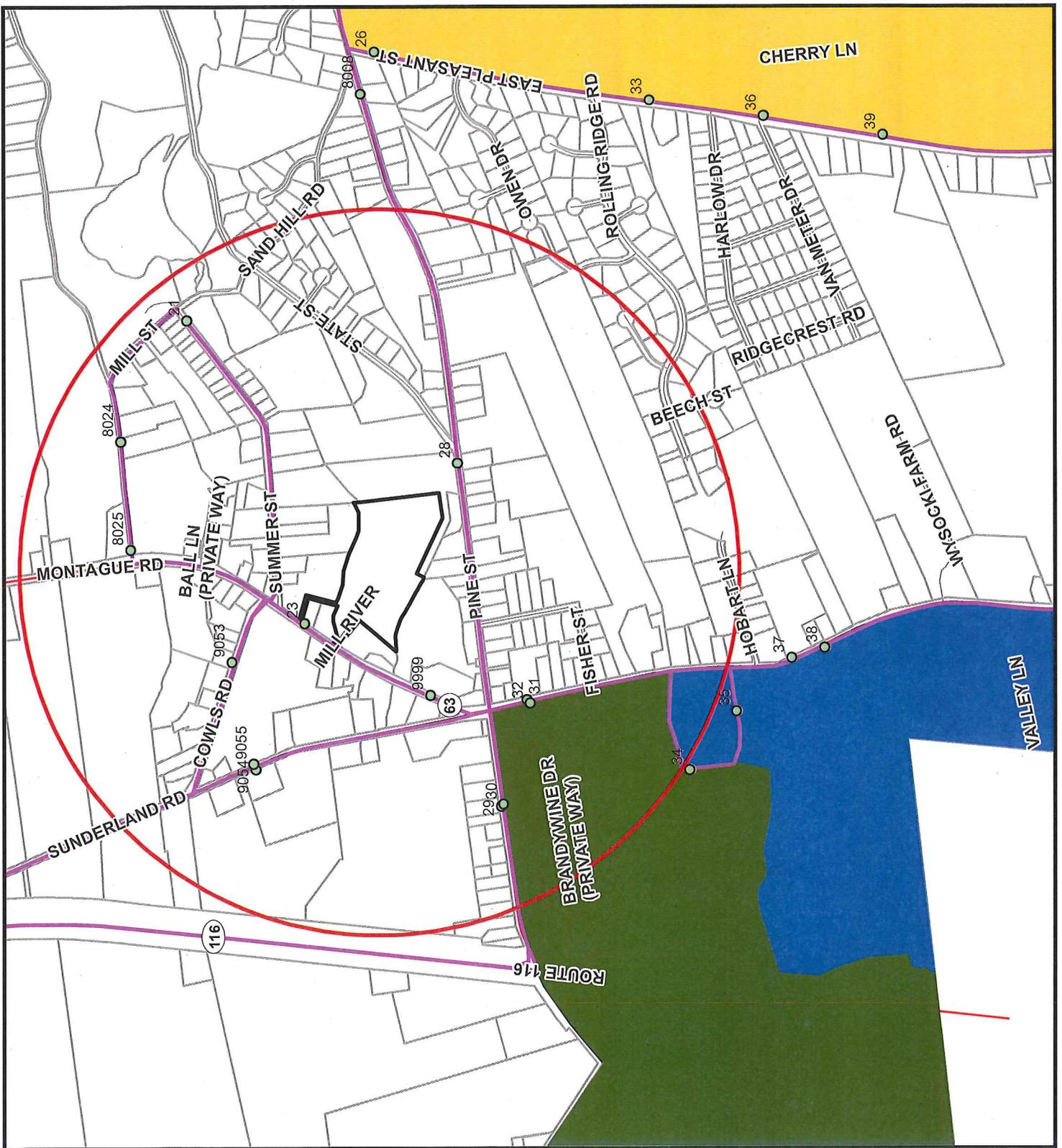
-  Property
-  1/2 Mile Radius
-  Bus Routes
-  Bus Stops

2010 EJ Populations

-  Minority
-  Minority & Income
-  Minority, Income & English Isolation



1 inch = 1,000 feet



Mill River Recreation Area FY19 PARC Grant

Town of Amherst



Basemap

Legend



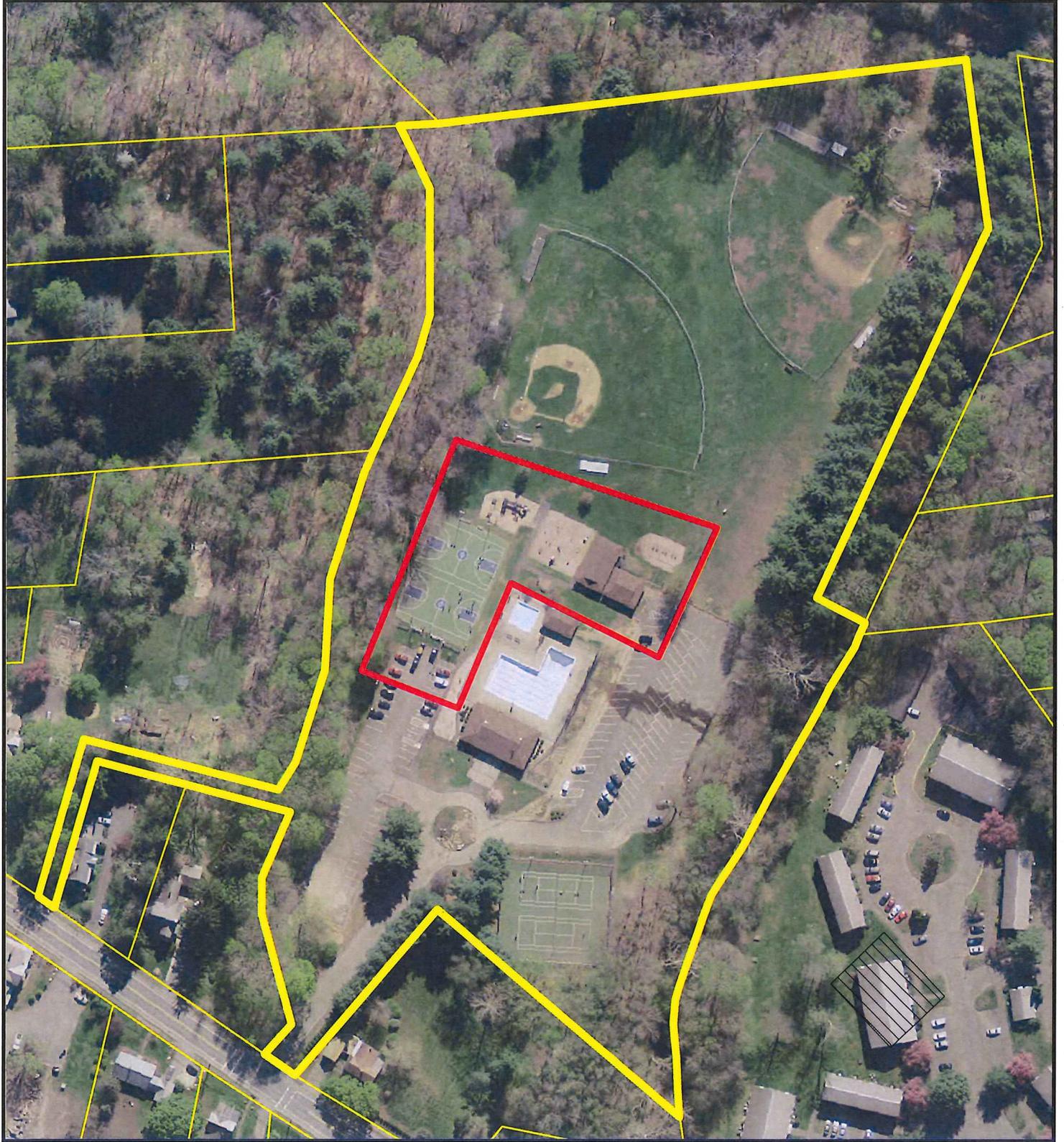
Property



Focus Area



1 inch = 150 feet



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MILL RIVER RECREATION AREA
 AMHERST, MA

MASTER PLAN
 PARK IMPROVEMENT



DATE:	JULY 18, 2015
SCALE:	1" = 20'
DRAWN BY:	ML
CHECKED BY:	
PROJECT NUMBER:	
SHEET NUMBER:	L-1



Phase I

HALF BASKETBALL COURT

SHADE PAVILION

30' TALL SAFETY NET

PLAYGROUND
5-12 YR OLDS

SCREEN PLANTING

EXISTING PAVILION

PLAYGROUND W/ BLIND
2-5 YR OLDS

ARRIVAL PLAZA

PICNIC AREA

TWO BASKETBALL COURTS

SAFETY/RESERVATIVE RAILING

ARRIVAL PLAZA
RECONFIGURED PARKING

SHADE TREE, TYP

EXISTING PARK
POOL BLUFFS

EXIST.
BLUFFS

MILL RIVER PARK