

As I mentioned to the Board in my email of August 31, 2022, there have been 2 Village led Ad Hoc Committee reports on the future development of Gouveia Park: one presented in 2015, soon after the gift was made, and one presented in 2019. Although the Committees were assembled under different Village Administrations, were differently organized, and had different members, both reports came to very similar conclusions.

Both Committees felt that, to honor the spirit of the gift, which was given to the Village for the benefit of the community, Gouveia Park could best be developed as a flexible and collaborative public amenity. Both Committees enumerated multiple uses for the parkland and the residence, activities reflective of Croton's long and ongoing commitment to preserving its bountiful natural resources, its rich artistic and cultural heritage, and its history of strong public involvement in community affairs. A vision emerged of the Gouveia gift becoming an Art and Cultural Center; the Community amenity that the Village has advocated for in the many iterations of the Croton Comprehensive Plans.

In November of 2018, the Recreation Department suggested that it might be beneficial for the Department to move its Village offices and operations to the Gouveia residence. This suggestion was made to free up room in the Municipal Building to accommodate the expansion of the Croton Police Department. Although some people found this idea attractive, the DPW's estimated cost for creating infrastructure in the park, to allow for safe and proper public access to the Gouveia residence, would completely deplete the remaining balance of the million-dollar endowment which came with the gift to the Village. For me, and many others, that realization effectively shut down further discussion. Then came covid, which shut down many things. Gouveia Park has been used as a passive park in Croton's Park system ever since.

So, I am delighted to see a resurgence of interest in the use and development of the park. But whereas community gardens and pollinator pathways are natural and excellent uses for the parkland, identified by both Ad Hoc Committees, I believe we must take a holistic view of the entire Gouveia property before we start carving out parts of the parkland, and/or building permanent installations to accommodate particular park uses.

I think it would be wise at this point, to limit the use of Gouveia Park to outdoor activities that do not require permanent installations or structures, such as concerts, films, gardening workshops, teach-ins on proper and sustainable lawn care, composting, yoga classes, etc.

At the same time, the Village should be working on a Master Plan for the park's development, prepared by a site planning professional with input by the community. The Master Plan will become a dynamic instrument to balance the interests of various stakeholders against time and budget, allowing for informed, phased improvements with an eye to the whole. The Master Plan and process would consider and engage with the various populations the park will serve, the kinds of activities that would be appropriate/available, the equipment necessary to provide those activities, the amount of land each activity will require, the proper placement of the various activities, given the topography and dimensions of the land, and allow for projecting costs of different schemes. One of the most beautiful aspects of the property as it now exists is its open space and vistas. This land is ample enough to

accommodate multiple uses and maintain the lovely open space at its center, but that will require sensitive planning and commitment. To illustrate my point, Gouveia Park has a natural amphitheater which would be an ideal space for concerts, film events, and outdoor productions. We would not want to plan, or plant, anything at that location that would, at some future time, prevent the development of such an amenity, or needlessly chop up the open feel of the property. Once occupied, the flow of the land is gone. How can we provide 'just enough' accommodations to keep the park open and flexible over time?

A key factor for every scheme or set of uses is how to provide the infrastructure that will allow visitors to safely enter and exit the Park. Would repaving and widening the driveway, making it available to two-way traffic, be a better and less expensive option than creating a loop road? Are there any other possible options that could be considered?

And finally, architectural plans must be drawn up to bring the Gouveia residence into compliance with current building codes, ADA requirements, and its planned community uses; all with an eye towards maintaining the original architectural integrity of the building. The beauty of that home, as with the land, is the openness of the main level. Renovating the home will require sensitive planning and commitment as well. How can we provide 'just enough' accommodations to keep the spaces open and flexible over time?

As an aside, a powerful use for a compelling Master Plan that clearly illustrates our vision can be as an instrument in applying for grants, be they cultural, or environmental!.

Once the-Master Planning process is complete, and estimates for improvements have been obtained, the Village can determine how the remaining endowment, a workable budget, and multiple grants could be combined over time, and in phases, to give this project a real possibility for success.

Thanks for your consideration, Sherry