

NISSEQUOGUE RIVER STATE PARK DRAFT MASTER PLAN

Summary of Public Comments and Questions from the
Public Information Meeting held Via Zoom on February 3rd, 2021

Andrew Cuomo
Governor

Erik Kulleseid
Commissioner
Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation



**Parks, Recreation
and Historic Preservation**

Introduction

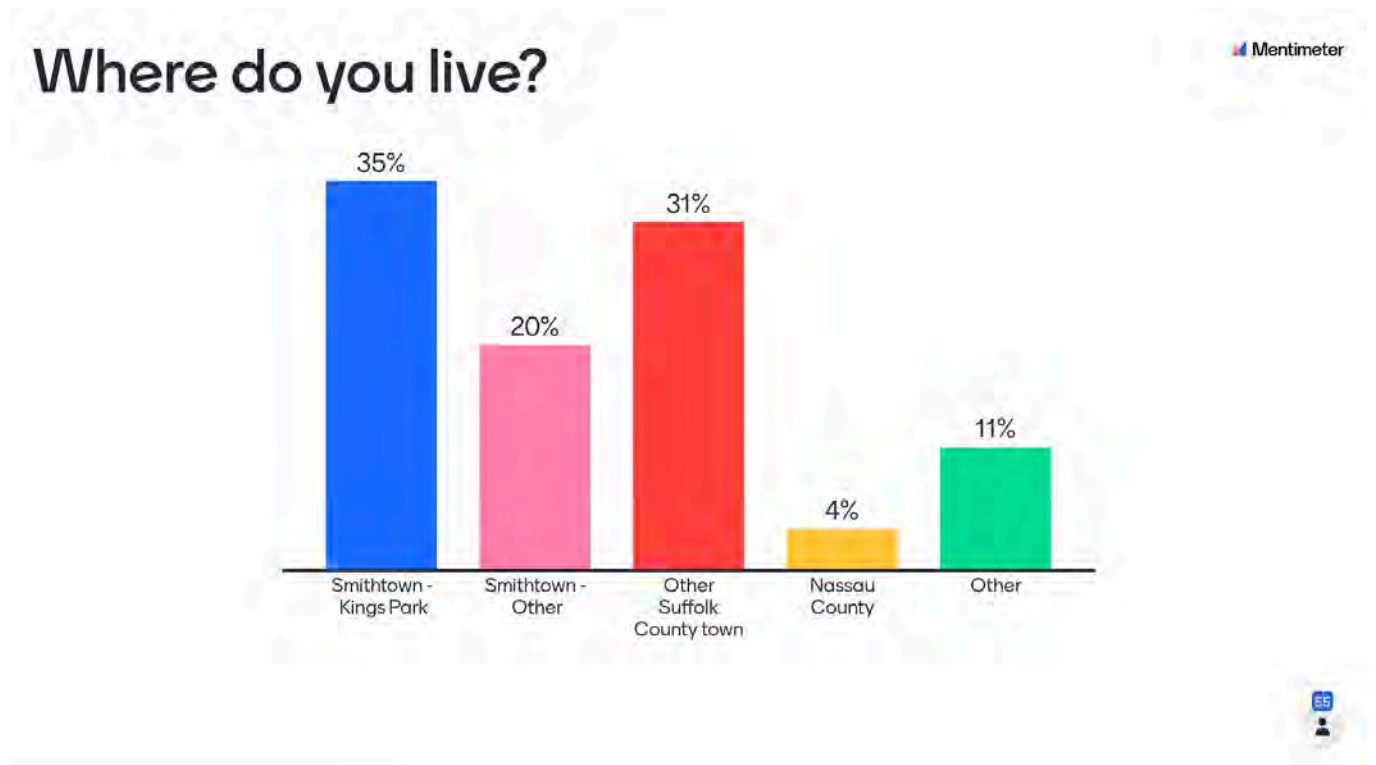
New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) is preparing a master plan for Nissequogue River State Park (NRSP). As part of the public outreach process, OPRHP conducted a public information meeting over Zoom on February 3rd, 2021 to share information about the scope of the project and early analysis of the existing conditions and uses of the site. Over 130 viewers attended the meeting (including project staff).

This document is a summary of responses to live Mentimeter polling conducted during the overview presentation, as well as questions received during the Q&A portion of the meeting and in the two-week comment period that followed.

Responses to live polling are presented in order of questions asked. Questions listed are organized alphabetically by topic with no indication of prioritization. Similar questions were consolidated.

Mentimeter Polling Results

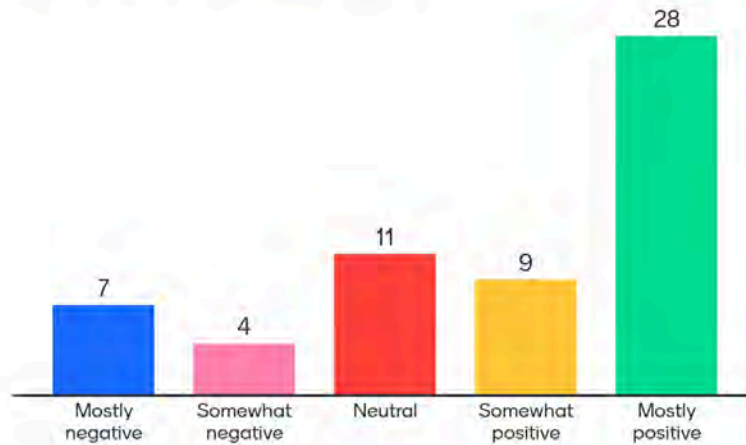
Question 1 (55 total responses)



Question 4 (59 total responses)

My connection to the remaining buildings of the former King's Park Psychiatric Center is...

Mentimeter

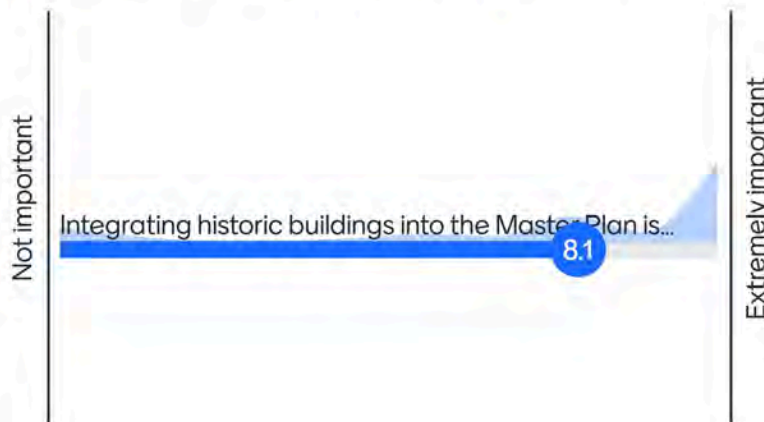


59

Question 5 (65 total responses)

How important is integrating historic buildings into the Master Plan for Nissequogue River State Park?

Mentimeter



65

Nissequogue River State Park – Master Plan
Summary of Comments



What is your vision for the future of Nissequogue River State Park?

Mentimeter

preserved to the extent possible, inclusive of historic buildings and scenery	Open space on the north and east, developed on the west and south	A resort where people can come and stay overnight and provide tax revenue
Preserve the buildings. Don't let the state put this place to waste like every other state hospital.	Nature first and foremost.	A community/family based destination for learning, exploring and recreation
Preserve historic	a destination for camping, hiking, urban exploring, and mountain biking trails	Preserve all the buildings. Don't let the

63



What is your vision for the future of Nissequogue River State Park?

Mentimeter

A place to recreate and observe wildlife	a place to explore the natural beauty of the north shore with opportunities for community cultural and sporting events.	Interactive amenities.
Natural preservation	Native plants, botanical garden. Wildlife preserve.	
Scenic and welcoming. Not just baseball and soccer fields. A lot of open space and trails	Keep it natural, a respite from the world	The park as an asset to the kings Park downtown. Not only in terms of access to nature but potential for affordable housing in an
	Preserve all some of the buildings. Don't let the	

63

Nissequogue River State Park – Master Plan
Summary of Comments

Question 6 (continued)



What is your vision for the future of Nissequogue River State Park?

Mentimeter

- Possibly debris from demolished buildings can be used for ski trails
- I would love to see the park as a place that shows echos of our past, but also preserve the nature.
- A permanent peaceful outdoor space
- Bike Trail System connecting to surrounding parks
- I want to see Camping, preserve 93, family activity's
- Preserving the historic character an buildings
- Arboretum, cultural center, educational use, natural escape, safe
- A destination place for families
- Camping and hiking. More water front access.

63



What is your vision for the future of Nissequogue River State Park?

Mentimeter

- I would like to see the buildings refurbished into lodging for campers. I would also like a museum with the history of KPPC.
- To integrate the history of Smithtown, KPPC and the community
- Preserved and space for activities. Equestrian, camping .
- I would like to see the buildings either knocked down or reused, but no longer abandoned and neglected.
- An open space with community gardens, access for paddleboarding and kayaking, and natural indigenous trees
- great place to spend the day
- Connected to sunken meadow
- Preserve and create

63

Nissequogue River State Park – Master Plan
Summary of Comments

Question 6 (continued)



What is your vision for the future of Nissequogue River State Park?

Mentimeter

- Accessible action spots with art theater science sectors
- North end kept just for birding. Dog rules ENFORCED. Butterfly gardens.
- Hiking biking youth camping
- popular destination, family friendly, biking, hiking, kayaking
- design for walking
- Get rid of the ugly buildings makes great place to come hike/bike.
- Open and multi use.
- Historical support as a background with excellent public spaces and neighborhood use spaces in buildings
- community friendly, hiking paths, historical and museum, preservation of the area to be used by people for

63



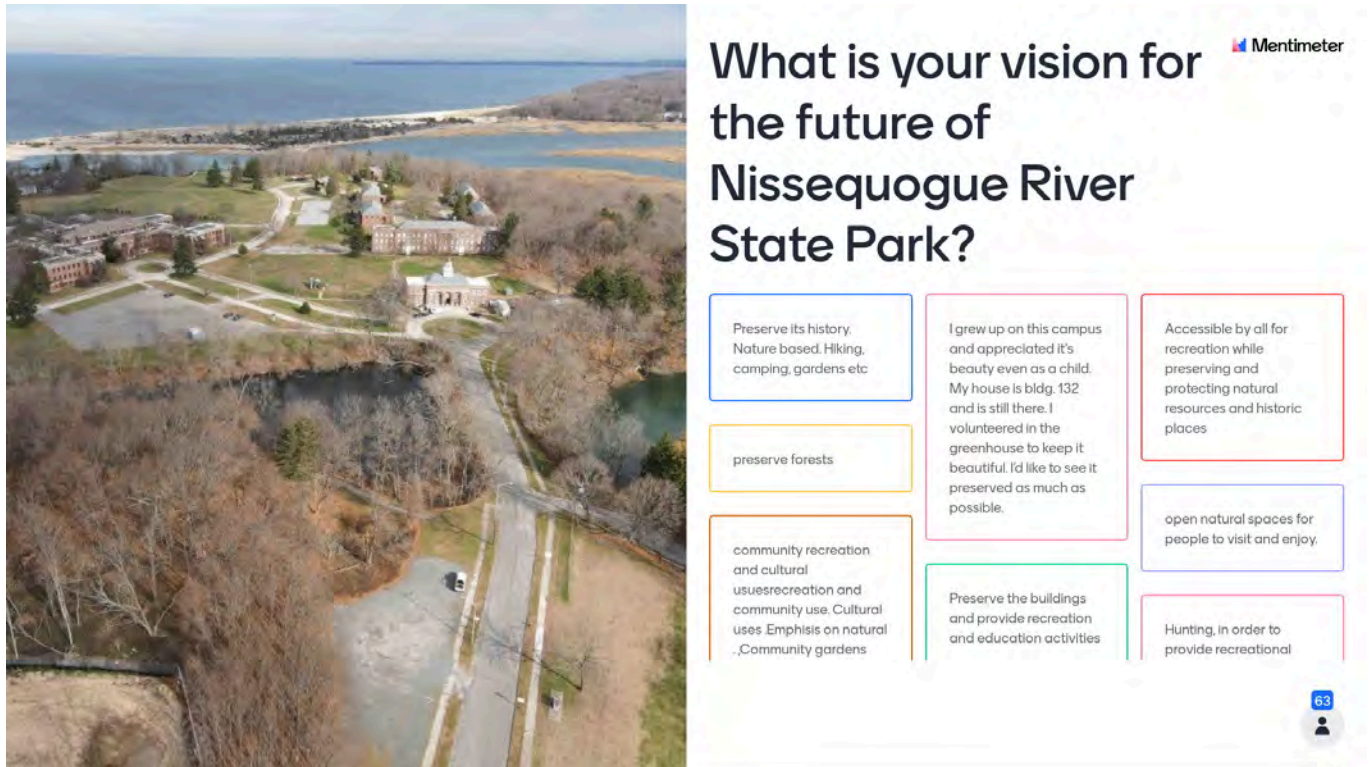
What is your vision for the future of Nissequogue River State Park?

Mentimeter

- Preserve the history of the former state hospital and utilize the site as a source of education and inclusive community building
- Save the buildings!!!!!!
- A place that honors and respects the thousands of people Institutionalized there over its 100+ years and the surrounding community who supported it.
- Save the buildings for educational purposes
- I see historic buildings that are useful with recreation and beatfully preserved environment.
- Preserve natural beauty amid historical surroundings, keep it natural
- A hunting location for deer
- The marina site is the location of Nessaquake Indian sites

63

Question 6 (continued)



Question 6: What is your vision for the future of Nissequogue River State Park? (Complete list of responses*)

**Comments below are written by participating members of the public, and were not corrected for spelling, grammar, or punctuation.*

- A community/family based destination for learning, exploring and recreation
- A place to explore the natural beauty of the north shore with opportunities for community cultural and sporting events.
- A place to recreate and observe wildlife
- Preserved to the extent possible, inclusive of historic buildings and scenery
- Preserve all some of the buildings. Don't let the state put this place to waste like they have with all the other state hospitals. Focus on historical preservation rather than other stuff that other parks already have.
- The park as an asset to the kings Park downtown. Not only in terms of access to nature but potential for affordable housing in an area where young people cannot afford to stay.
- Native plants, botanical garden. Wildlife preserve.
- Keep it natural, a respite from the world

Nissequogue River State Park – Master Plan
Summary of Comments

- Possibly debris from demolished buildings can be used for ski trails
- A destination for camping, hiking, urban exploring, and mountain biking trails
- Preserve the buildings. Don't let the state put this place to waste like every other state hospital.
- Open space on the north and east, developed on the west and south
- Preserve historic buildings and end offensive vandalism such as slurs.
- Preserve all the buildings. Don't let the state put these buildings go to waste
- Scenic and welcoming. Not just baseball and soccer fields. A lot of open space and trails
- A resort where people can come and stay overnight and provide tax revenue
- Nature first and foremost.
- Interactive amenities.
- Natural preservation
- I want to see Camping, preserve 93, family activity's
- I grew up on this campus and appreciated it's beauty even as a child. My house is bldg. 132 and is still there. I volunteered in the greenhouse to keep it beautiful. I'd like to see it preserved as much as possible.
- Camping and hiking. More water front access.
- Great place to spend the day
- Bike Trail System connecting to surrounding parks
- North end kept just for birding. Dog rules ENFORCED. Butterfly gardens.
- Preserved, open space, protect hard woods, protect wildlife!
- Accessible by all for recreation while preserving and protecting natural resources and historic places
- Accessible action spots with art theater science sectors
- I would love to see the park as a place that shows echos of our past, but also preserve the nature.
- Arboretum, cultural center, educational use, natural escape, safe
- I would like to see the buildings refurbished into lodging for campers. I would also like a museum with the history of KPPC.
- A place that honors and respects the thousands of people institutionalized there over its 100+ years and the surrounding community who supported it
- Preserve and create more nature
- Preserving the historic character an buildings
- Preserve forests
- A destination place for families

Nissequogue River State Park – Master Plan
Summary of Comments

- Community friendly, hiking paths, historical and museum, preservation of the area to be used by people for recreation
- I would like to see the buildings either knocked down or reused, but no longer abandoned and neglected.
- Design for walking
- Park trails and field preservation, security is important and a must
- Historical support as a background with excellent public spaces and neighborhood use spaces in buildings
- Hiking biking youth camping
- Get rid of the ugly buildings makes great place to come hike/bike.
- A permanent peaceful outdoor space
- Preserve natural beauty amid historical surroundings, keep it natural
- Open and multi use.
- Connected to sunken meadow
- I see historic buildings that are useful with recreation and beautifully preserved environment.
- To integrate the history of Smithtown, KPPC and the community
- open natural spaces for people to visit and enjoy.
- Park should provide recreational opportunities needed by the public while preserving all remaining woodlands
- Preserved and space for activities. Equestrian, camping ,
- "community recreation and cultural uses
- Recreation and community use. Cultural uses .Emphasis on natural . ,Community gardens"
- Preserve its history. Nature based. Hiking, camping, gardens etc
- Save the buildings for educational purposes
- Popular destination , family friendly, biking, hiking, kayaking
- Preserve the history of the former state hospital and utilize the site as a source of education and inclusive community building
- An open space with community gardens, access for paddleboarding and kayaking, and natural indigenous trees
- Save the buildings !!!!!
- The marina site is the location of Nessaquake Indian sites
- A hunting location for deer
- Preserve the buildings and provide recreation and education activities
- Hunting, in order to provide recreational activities and control local deer population

Q&A Session Question and Responses

Children’s Recreational Resources

How can special needs children be accommodated at Nissequogue River State Park?

The project team is interested in including a playground and other amenities for special needs children at the park, as providing opportunities for children of all ages and abilities to play is a goal of the master plan. A precedent for this type of amenity is at Letchworth State Park, which has a trail designed for autistic visitors.

Are there plans for activities or amenities for older children or adolescents?

The project team recognizes the need for amenities for this age group; planning the park for visitors of all ages is a central project goal.

Community Engagement

How will the Native American community be engaged in the planning process?

The Long Island regional office and the project team has initiated engagement with the Indian Nations of Long Island. The Long Island regional office has sent them written letters and emails inviting them to participate in the planning process, and has received written comments in response. The Long Island regional office and the team has also offered to meet with them separately to discuss the project. Indian Nation consultation will continue throughout the planning process.

Will former patients and their families be engaged in the planning process?

The project team recognizes the importance of engaging former residents or employees of Kings Park Psychiatric Center in the planning process to meaningfully commemorate the history of the institution. The team will consider an approach to engaging these individuals, such as a focus group, that will allow them to share ideas about how to program the park.

How can I be involved in the focus group sessions?

Please contact the project team via email at NissequogueRiver.Plan@parks.ny.gov to be involved in focus group discussions, which will be scheduled for early spring 2021, or indicate your interest when responding to the recreational needs assessment survey (open through February 17, 2021).

Has the project team been actively communicating with the private residential community surrounding the park?

The invitation to this project meeting was distributed as widely as possible; if members of the public know additional community members are interested in participating in the planning process, the project team encourages all in attendance to share information about this project and encourage others to take the online survey.

How do I stay up to date on the development of this master plan?

Interested members of the public can sign up to attend focus group discussions by indicating their interest on the online recreational needs assessment survey or contacting the project team at nissequogueriver.plan@parks.ny.gov. Members of the public are also welcomed to submit questions or share ideas using this email address. Additionally, future reports and meeting information will be posted on the OPRHP website: <https://parks.ny.gov/inside-our-agency/master-plans.aspx>

Cultural Programming

Will the small children's museum inside the veteran's hospital be preserved?

While the project team is unsure of which building or museum this question refers to specifically, a children's museum will be considered as a possible use for the site's existing historic buildings during the master planning process.

Will there be a history museum at the park honoring the site's indigenous history?

The project team will consider this suggestion, as well as other museum-related suggestions, as a possible way to activate one or more of the historic buildings on site.

Can the Pilgrim Psychiatric Center's artifacts be placed in the administration building here to enrich visitors' experience?

If a museum is found to be an appropriate and desirable feature for the site, specifics relating to museum contents would be determined during a later phase. However, the project team will keep this request in mind.

Will there be a history museum at the park honoring the site's indigenous history?

The project team will consider this suggestion, as well as other museum-related suggestions, as a possible way to activate one or more of the historic buildings on site.

Can a working community farm or garden be included at the park?

Yes, the project team will consider this as a potential site program or amenity.

DEC Marine Resources Building

What impact will the DEC office have on NRSP?

Construction is ongoing for the new NYS DEC Marine Resources facility, which is located within NRSP. The project team will study the site's projected impact on vehicular circulation at the park as well as how park users interface with the building. Once construction is complete and the building is occupied, expanded programs and services will be available on site that are organized by DEC in partnership with OPRHP. DEC staff will also have an expanded presence on site, including at the marina, which will help bolster site security measures on site.

Ecology and Wildlife

How will the deer population be managed at the park? Will hunting be allowed?

Deer populations are managed by NYS DEC; NYS OPRHP has active deer management programs throughout the Long Island region. Some State Parks in Long Island allow deer hunting; hunting will be considered during the master planning process, and a site-appropriate deer population management strategy will be incorporated into the master planning process.

Is it possible to reestablish an Atlantic white cedar grove along the Nissequogue River?

The project team will evaluate the potential for reforestation, including potential sites for reestablishment of species including Atlantic white cedar, during the master planning process.

Are you aware of the open space covenants placed on the property by Governor Pataki that preserves existing woodlands?

The project team is reviewing all existing easements and conservation areas on the property; the project team is not immediately aware of a park-wide easement on the woodlands.

Will the master plan consider a dog run or designated off-leash area to minimize disturbance the park's more sensitive sites, such as the bird conservation area?

Yes, the project team will consider how to best accommodate dogs on the site to minimize disturbance of birds and other park inhabitants or visitors.

How can parkland help support declining pollinator and insect populations?

Ensuring that the park provides valuable habitat for all native species is an important component of the master planning process. Some of the park's valuable habitat is fragmented or contains invasive species. The master planning process will include a holistic review of the park's planting opportunities and how to connect valuable habitats to those in surrounding open spaces in the community so these habitats can thrive.

Historic Buildings

Is the nomination for the Kings Park Psychiatric Center to the National Register of Historic Places still for a district? Why are demolitions being considered as voids in the district?

The district does currently remain eligible; nothing has changed at this time. The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) is working with the consultant team to evaluate the condition of the historic buildings, as well as which buildings have been removed. Voids have occurred over the course of the district's period of significance, and it is presently unclear whether the district remains a historic district as a complex or whether there are pockets of integrity because of changes over time. The project team is using the existing resource evaluation as a benchmark against which they will measure their findings. The survey findings may result in a different determination of the district's eligibility. Buildings that have been demolished since OPRHP has had jurisdiction over the property have gone through the NYS Section 14.09 regulatory process administered by SHPO, which treats properties that are deemed eligible with the same review standards as listed properties, including review of alternatives to demolition and completion of mitigation measures.

Where can I access former building surveys?

[Cultural Resource Information System \(CRIS\)](#) has publicly available data, research, and other primary resources related to the site's historic buildings.

What is the condition of building 93?

As part of the inventory process, the consultant team is performing a high-level assessment of the historic buildings on site to evaluate their conditions, including the building envelope, roof, masonry, and fenestration. An evaluation of building 93 will be summarized in the conditions assessment, which will be made publicly available. In addition to the conditions of the buildings, the size and context of all buildings will be considered when evaluating the feasibility for reuse of each. The project team will consider all of the above factors when performing the feasibility assessment.

What is planned on the second floor of the administration building?

The building is undergoing interior renovations and will function as a visitors' center in the future. Programming can be partially determined during the master planning process. Please note that on the second floor there will be conference rooms as well as the NRSP Foundation's office. On the first floor to the left, there will be a children's room as well as a history room to be furnished by the Kings Park Heritage Museum.

Nissequogue River State Park – Master Plan
Summary of Comments

Will York Hall be preserved? Could it be a theater?

York Hall has been identified as a building of particular significance to the surrounding community, and will be considered for reuse as a theater or performance space, based on its condition and capacity.

What is being done and what will be done in the future to prevent vandalism of the historic buildings?

The park is currently patrolled 24-hours, including night watch patrols. The site will additionally benefit from the presence of NYS DEC officers affiliated with the DEC Marine Resources building. When additional park users are attracted and programming increases, trespassing and vandalism will most likely diminish considerably. The master plan will put into place a longer-term framework for addressing park security.

Will the plan recommend funding resources for future building demolitions?

Until the inventory is completed, there will be no specific plans for buildings, including for demolition. Once the inventory and evaluation of buildings is complete, the project team will develop recommendations on how to invest in the future of the buildings on site.

Is repurposing building for lodging or camping feasible?

Camping and lodging in the historic buildings can be considered as a potential use for the site if the community expresses sufficient interest in this type of use.

Could members of the public be invited to assist in preservation of single-story buildings?

Yes, this is a possibility depending on the preservation needs of the buildings. Assistance could be considered in terms of a financial donation, in-kind donations, or labor.

What will happen to sensitive patient records that may still be located within the historic hospital buildings?

OPRHP will work with the New York State Office of Mental Health to appropriately address any medical paperwork or other confidential materials that remain in the buildings.

Have you considered reusing some of the buildings as housing to bring people to the park while funding the park through leases?

Uses for mapped parkland are regulated by the state and federal government. The possibility of temporary lodging at the park will be considered during the master planning process if there is broader interest among the community in doing so.

Land Transfers and Acquisitions

Will the area around Building 1 be transferred to the State?

The parcel containing building 1 is currently under the jurisdiction of New York State Office of Mental Health; this parcel will be considered for a potential jurisdictional transfer during the master planning process.

Is it possible to acquire the property abutting the park that is currently owned by St. Johnland Nursing Center?

The St. Johnland property is located northwest of the park and borders Sunken Meadow State Park. OPRHP acknowledges that there is a great deal of interest among the community in acquiring this parcel as parkland, and will evaluate the feasibility of this acquisition during the master planning process.

Maintenance and Operations

Will the project team add garbage cans along the boulevard?

The Long Island regional team will address this issue in the near term, prior to completion of the master plan.

Are the downed trees along St. Johnland Road within park property?

There are currently downed trees along that road that are within park property; the Long Island regional office will be following up with the tree maintenance crew to address this issue.

Planning Process, Timeline, and Funding

Will the master plan include near-term, early action projects in addition to longer term projects?

By establishing a master plan, OPRHP will be able to seek funding for implementation of capital projects at the site. Smaller near-term or “quick win” projects will be evaluated during the planning process, including temporary or pop-up programming to activate the park and build support for future planning efforts.

Are there Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) components to the master planning process?

Yes, DEI is a priority for the agency and will be a central focus of this master planning process. See for more general information on the state’s initiatives: <http://www.nysed.gov/diversity-equity-inclusion>

Nissequogue River State Park – Master Plan
Summary of Comments

Will there be a public budget for projects?

The purpose of the master planning process is to prioritize ideas from the master planning process and identify future phases of development through which selected ideas can be implemented; this may involve a preliminary order of magnitude cost estimating exercises during Phase 2 of the master planning process. This exercise will not be included in the present project phase (Phase 1).

Are budgetary constraints taken into account during the formation of the master plan? What will this project cost the residents?

The project team will begin the master planning process by identifying a broader vision for the site and thereafter breaking it down into discrete, implementable projects that support that vision. During the planning process, the project team will test the financial feasibility of these projects and establish a set of priority projects for funding.

When will the marina design be finalized, and how will it be integrated into the master plan?

The plans for the marina are still being finalized; OPRHP will conduct outreach to slip holders and the broader public to review plans prior to finalization. Once they are finalized, they will be shared more broadly and the agency will enter the project implementation funding process. The master plan team will be advised as to the development of the marina plans so they can be included in the master plan.

Site Circulation

Traffic is a major concern on site, particularly along St Johnland Road/Sunken Meadow Park Road on summer weekends and holidays. Will this be studied?

Yes, the consultant team is reviewing site traffic conditions and circulation through and around the park.

The Greenbelt trail is hiking only; can mountain biking trails be provided on site?

The project team will consider the feasibility of multiple types of trails during the master planning process, including mountain biking trails. Mountain biking enthusiasts, as well as other recreation groups, are encouraged to participate in upcoming focus group conversations.

Can the park be connected to Sunken Meadow State Park?

The project team will consider opportunities for improving the park's connection to Sunken Meadow State Park as well as the surrounding neighborhood.

Nissequogue River State Park – Master Plan Summary of Comments

Will the road by the DEC building that has been made one-way access during the past two years remain one-way?

The project team will evaluate traffic flow on all roads during the master planning process; the one-way access condition on this road relates to maintenance of underground infrastructure that the department is currently addressing.

Will the Hike and Bike trail be extended around the perimeter of the park?

Improving site circulation for pedestrians and cyclists will be an important component of the master planning process, and potential routes for loop trails will be evaluated in future phases of the planning process.

Signage about cycling located near the park entrance causes confusion about where cycling is permitted.

The regional team will endeavor to improve cyclist signage in the near term to alleviate any confusion.

Can a bike share system be accommodated between the train station and the park?

A bike share program that connects riders to further points within the park or to adjacent parks will be studied. OPRHP is considering implementing this type of program across several parks in the state.

Site History and Archaeology

Many people visit the park because of its historic character. Will the master plan include historic preservation in the park?

The project team appreciates how the history of the site is a distinguishing element of this park. Preserving the historic character will be a significant part of the master planning process.

Will the master planning team consider lining the boulevard with trees again, as it was historically when the hospital was operating?

Yes, the project team will consider lining the Kings Park Boulevard with trees.

Will the cemetery on site be disturbed as a result of the master planning process?

The master plan will not propose any changes that would lead to disturbance or development of the area where the cemetery is located. The archaeologist staffed on the project team will research the cemetery but will not conduct any excavation.

Where can I access the archeological Phase 1A report?

The Phase 1A report, which is currently still in development, will be released to the public as part of the draft Environmental Impact Statement.

Sports and Active Recreation

What other sports fields will be planned for the site?

The project team invites members of the public to complete the recreational needs assessment survey, open online from February 3rd through 17th, to help inform the project team's recommendations on the number, type, and locations of sports facilities at the park, including fields and courts.

The park is used by kayak companies. How are kayaks going to be regulated at the park?

The project team will evaluate the current kayak concession operations and kayaking regulations at the park and determine how to improve these facilities or operations in the future.

Will the permit application process for the soccer field be changing?

OPRHP currently maintains a multi-year agreement with the Kings Park Soccer Club to use the soccer fields at Tiffany Field. Most permits can be obtained through the regional office, and requests will be evaluated by the park manager to determine whether they can be accommodated. Those interested in obtaining a permit for an activity at the park may do so at <https://parks.ny.gov/documents/regions/2021PermitGuidewithRestrictions.pdf>

There are no current plans to change the permitting system relating to Kings Park Soccer Club's use of the fields.

Will a skate park be planned for this park?

The project team will consider including a skate park in the master plan, as well as other activities aimed at engaging older children and adolescents; individuals with specific ideas or requests for programs on site are encouraged to complete the online recreational needs assessment survey.