

The Village Green - Master Plan for Grounds R...

Ashlie Mitchell

Submission Date	Apr 11, 2024 1:05 PM
Name of Initiative	The Village Green - Master Plan for Grounds Restoration Project
Contact Person	Ashlie Mitchell
Title	Executive Director
Address	PO Box 2201
City	Cashiers
State	NC
Zip Code	28717
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Organization Type	Non-Profit
Organization Tax ID	90-0947131
Time of Year of Initiative	Peak (April - November)

Describe the timing of the initiative in as much detail as possible (please list key project dates, milestones, timeframes, etc.)

The Village Green has conducted an RFP process where we approached Withers Ravenel and Equinox Environmental to produce a proposal for a Master Plan for the grounds of The Village Green. The Village Green has recently agreed to move forward with a proposal submitted by Equinox Environmental to complete a Master Plan for the Grounds Restoration Project for The Village Green.

The Village Green Physical Plant Committee will have our first meeting with Equinox on April 30th where we will conduct:

- Visioning & Goal Setting
- Review of program elements and project needs
- Review Proposed Project Timeline for each deliverable
- Identification of Stakeholders/Contact Information for Invitation to Community Input Events
- Discuss the format of the Master Plan deliverables
- Discuss what success for the master plan looks like

Subsequently there will be three further meetings, as detailed in the attached proposal (Attachment A - Equinox Environmental Master Plan Proposal) with the following deliverables:

- Community Charette
- Conceptual Plan Presentation
- Master Plan Presentation

Within the RFP, we requested that the Master Plan be completed for Board approval at the August 29th Board Meeting. This timeline will allow us to appropriately seek funding from larger funding stakeholders within Western North Carolina and the state.

Describe your initiative

The Village Green has been deemed The Heart of Cashiers and has been since three determined individuals purchased two acres at the cross-section of HWY 64 & HWY 107 in 1992. Al Balestiere, Elizabeth Lupton Davenport, and Jack Davenport bought the 2-acre property to protect the village core from development by a large hotel chain.

Since 1992, The Village Green has grown and kept the mission “to preserve and enhance the land for civic, spiritual, academic, recreational and cultural activities to maintain the quality of life for residents and visitors to the greater Cashiers area.”

Nothing has changed about the mission of protecting and enhancing our cherished green space. In fact, since 1992, The Village Green has grown from a beautiful two-acre park to over 13+ (with an additional 6.5 acres within a perpetual use easement that is undeveloped forest area at the Crossroads) acres of safe, walkable, open space that mirrors Cashiers aesthetic as a beautiful mountain village and a prime location for respite and rejuvenation.

The Village Green funds, coordinates, and executes and is the venue/location for the following major Cashiers events:

- Easter on The Green: Community Easter Egg Hunt (500+ Attendees)
- Locally Grown on The Green Farmer’s Market (Every Wednesday May 1 - October 31)
- Village Nature Series (Last Thursday of each month)
- Kids Nature Series (30 Cashiers Area Children - May - October)
- Groovin’ on The Green (Friday’s Memorial Day - Labor Day: 500 - 1,000 attendees per concert)
- Fireworks Extravaganza on The Green (4th of July Celebration: 3,000+ attendees within the park)
- Cashiers Valley Leaf Festival (3 Festival Days - 110 Vendors - 6,000+ people in attendance)
- Gobble on The Green 5K (1,800 Runners)
- Village Lights Christmas on The Green (2,000 visitors on the day after

Thanksgiving. Lights are on through February of each year!)

- Visit with Santa Claus (300 Reservations available annually)
- Mistletoe Market (20 Vendors - 2,000 visitors)

All of these programs, community events, and private events take place on our 13+ acre campus in the center of Cashiers. Every event uses water, electricity, restrooms, structures (picnic shelters, Gazebo, Common's, and Lewis Hall) as well as our vast open areas of greenspace. The Village Green is the entity solely responsible for repairs, maintenance, and operations of our grounds and facilities, and funding is provided through individual donations, community grants, carefully executed fundraising events, and regional and state grants.

All structures, and utilities, at The Village Green are between 23 - 32 years old, and have not been improved since their original installations. For these reasons, the Board of Directors of The Village Green voted to focus our attention on the need for a Grounds Restoration Project, with the first phase being engaging in a Master Plan.

The Village Green believes that investing in a comprehensive Master Plan for our privately conserved, public park is important for several reasons:

- (1) Strategic Development: Through the Master Plan, Equinox will provide The Village Green with a strategic vision for the park's development over the next five to ten years. The plan will identify goals, objectives, and priorities for improving and enhancing our facilities and amenities for all who visit.
- (2) Resource Allocation: With a master plan in place, The Village Green will be able to appropriately prioritize projects based on importance and feasibility, and will help identify specific funding resources to complete the project.
- (3) Community Engagement: Equinox has a detailed plan in place for public opportunities to engage with stakeholders, including community members, visitors, fellow nonprofits, and civic organizations. This engagement process ensures that The Village Green will grow and develop in a way that appropriately reflects the needs and desires of the community it serves.
- (4) Long-term Sustainability: A master plan considers the long-term sustainability of our 13-acre main campus, including environmental conservation, maintenance requirements, and financial viability. By engaging with Equinox, this will help to ensure that The Village Green remains functional and relevant for generations to come.

To accomplish the Grounds Restoration Project in a cohesive and fiscally responsible manner, The Village Green has accepted a proposal from Equinox Environmental, Asheville NC to create a Master Plan for the Grounds Restoration Project. The cost for the Master Plan is \$70,000.

Describe what previous experience applicant has in successful execution of similar endeavors

The Village Green has existed as The Heart of Cashiers for over 30 years now, and has experienced continuous growth and improvement since its inception in 1992. Since 1992, five large community use structures have been erected, a wetland boardwalk was built and reconstructed, six smaller structures have been created for public use, and four garden areas have been created and meticulously maintained.

Most recently, The Village Green executed the \$750,000 fundraising goal, design and build out of the new raised Boardwalk within the Wetlands of our 13-acre park. The Village Green staff oversaw the engineering, permitting, fundraising, and completed construction of the 650 linear foot raised Boardwalk. The improved Boardwalk has been featured in 6 publications and countless social media posts since its completion in October of 2023.

Also, of note, Lewis Hall was successfully completed in 2019 after a three-year fundraising and construction phase. Lewis Hall is a beautiful 5800 square foot, indoor community space that was utilized over 250 days in 2023. In total, over \$4.7 mm was raised in three years to complete Lewis Hall, and it has been worth every penny as our community members and visitors of Cashiers use it almost daily!

To assist staff with the oversight and execution of these large-scale projects The Village Green has a dedicated Board of Directors composed of 15 members, 10 of which are full-time residents of Cashiers, and 46 Committee members serving on 6 “pillar” Committees: Executive Committee, Physical Plant Committee, Finance Committee, Long-Range Strategy and Development Committee, Governance and Nominating Committee, and Community Events and Programs Committee.

Website

<https://www.villagegreencashiersnc.com/>

Social Media Channels - paste URLs below

<https://www.facebook.com/CashiersGreen/>;
<https://www.instagram.com/cashiersgreen/>

Amount of Funds Requested?

\$25,000

Date Funds Needed

May 1, 2024

Give a narrative description of how this project will increase tourism and visitation in Jackson County

The Village Green is the venue for countless community events and programs detailed above that are produced by our staff. On top of the internal programming and event schedule of The Village Green, we are also the venue for hundreds of days of third party community events such as Dia Del Los Ninos (Big Brothers Big Sisters), Cashiers Historical Society’s Designer Showhouse Vendor Village, Cashiers Benefit Antique Show, Highlands Cashiers Chamber Music Festival, Western Carolina University’s School of Stage and Screen, Cashiers Community Chorus Concerts, Oconee Bell Native Plant Society Symposium, and countless other nonprofit/community organization’s events.

While we are not applying for funding for an initiative that will directly increase tourism (i.e. an event), through funding from the Jackson County TDA to obtain a comprehensive Master Plan from a reputable planning firm like Equinox, The Village Green will improve the overall experience of visitors, tourists, and residents of the Cashiers area.

If this initiative has occurred before, what is new that differentiates it from prior years?

The Village Green has engaged in large scale construction projects as detailed above, and we will continue to follow a similar path as before where we conduct a Request for Proposals from design/architectural/engineering firms depending on the capital improvement project (in this case Equinox Environmental - Grounds Restoration), complete community forums to gather input from stakeholders of The Village Green, and present the finalized plan to the community for engagement and fundraising purposes.

A new component within the Grounds Restoration Project will be the addition of opportunities for direct community engagement through "Community Volunteer Days". These days will be filled with activities for our community members to help beautify areas within the Master Plan that we have already identified for improvement - such as beautifying garden spaces, small scale construction projects like benches and bird boxes, and small scale repairs to existing amenities like the StoryWalk and our Little Free Libraries.

The Village Green has seen how our community likes to be involved in hands-on projects, as seen in 2002 when the entire community came together for four days and built the entire playground! The Village Green is the park for the people, and we would like to re-engage our stakeholders in this way to give them ownership of these treasured spaces and amenities.

What is your advertising and marketing plan for your initiative?

The Village Green's Grounds and Playground Restoration Project will be unveiled in the April 18th issue of the Highlander, featured in the May and June issues of The Laurel, the June/July issue of The Plateau Magazine, and the June issue of NC Living.

We have a detailed social media campaign with both paid and unpaid posts (as seen in Attachment B).

The Village Green's Executive Director, Ashlie Mitchell, is scheduled for the first public/civic meeting with the Rotary Club of Cashiers Valley on May 1st. The Village Green will be on the May Cashiers Planning Council agenda unveiling the project and detailing a timeline for fundraising, community charrettes, and community work days. Ashlie will be speaking to Cedar Creek Club, Country Club of Sapphire Valley, Wade Hampton, Chattooga Club, and Trillium at their Club Members in the Community Events.

With funding support from the Jackson County Tourism Development Authority for the Master Plan, we will be able to further spread the messaging and mission of the TDA, and we will also be able to utilize these community meetings, social media posts, and print publications to further our ability to connect with stakeholders to best shape the future of The Village Green for everyone who lives in or visits the Cashiers area!

Do you agree to acknowledge the 'Jackson County TDA' in materials as required? Any releases or ad placements should have a statement that "the event was made possible, in part, by the Jackson County TDA." Print ad placements, where/when possible should include the JCTDA logo.

Yes

Total anticipated cost of initiative

70,000

Total funds your organization will provide toward total cost?

10,000

Detail funds requested from other sources and note commitments or anticipated receipt of funds from other sources

The Village Green has applied to the Jackson County Board of Commissioner 2024 Community Grant Cycle for \$35,000 in funding for the Master Plan of the Grounds Restoration Project.

The Village Green has also secured \$65,000 in funding from Board Members for the Grounds Restoration Project that we can utilize to supplement the remaining \$10,000 left for the Master Plan.

Please upload your detailed budget, including event or initiative expenses and revenue. You can attach a spreadsheet (Excel), PDF, or Word Document.



Master Plan - Grounds Restoration Proj... .pdf

76.87 KB

Anticipated Attendees from Jackson County:

20,000

Anticipated Attendees from outside Jackson County:

30,000

Anticipated overnight stays generated:

1,500

How did you determine audience/attendance numbers and where do they come from?

***Lists ways we determine attendance numbers

- Easter on The Green: Community Easter Egg Hunt (500+ Attendees) *Headcount
- Locally Grown on The Green Farmer's Market (Every Wednesday May 1 - October 31: 15-25 Vendors each Market Day) *Pre-registered vendors
- Kids Nature Series (30 Cashiers Area Children) *Pre-registered attendees
- Groovin' on The Green (Friday's Memorial Day - Labor Day: 500 - 1,000 attendees per concert) *Headcount
- Fireworks Extravaganza on The Green (4th of July Celebration: 3,000+ attendees within the park) *Headcount at each entrance to the Common's Lawn and three walk throughs within the park.
- Cashiers Valley Leaf Festival (3 Festival Days - 110 Vendors - 6,000+ people in attendance) *Daily Headcount from The Village Green booth, and dated data from Zartico Report
- Gobble on The Green 5K (1,800 Runners) *Pre-registered runners and day-of runners
- Village Lights Christmas on The Green (2,000 visitors on the day after Thanksgiving. Lights are on through February of each year!) *Gobble on the Green Registered runner count + headcount at tree lighting from three locations within TVG
- Visit with Santa Claus (300 Reservations available annually) *Pre-registration
- Mistletoe Market (20 Vendors - 2,000 visitors) *Gobble on the Green Registered runner count + headcount from Vendors

How will you measure success of your initiative?

The Village Green will measure the success of this initiative by managing the timeline of the Master Plan completion, creating community engagement, through achieving measurable marketing goals, and achieving measurable fundraising goals.

Upload any supporting documentation for your application here:



Attachment A - Village Green Master Pl... .pdf
552.14 KB



Attachment B - Social Media Post Exam... .pdf
164.29 KB

Is there anything else you'd like to add?

Thank you for your consideration of funding! We appreciate you all so very much!

Signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, loopy oval shape with a small loop at the top left and two small dots in the center.

PROGRAM/PROJECT BUDGET

<i>Enter your organization's name here:</i>	The Village Green of Cashiers
<i>Total Cost of Program/Project:</i>	\$70,000.00
<i>Total Amount Secured To-Date:</i>	\$10,000.00
<i>Timeframe during which grant funds will be spent:</i>	5/01/2024 - 12/31/2024

Please enter below the income and expenses related to the total program/project.

INCOME

Funding Sources for this Program/Project	Total Amount	Status - Pending or Committed	Explanatory Notes (Optional)
Jackson County Tourism Development Authority	\$25,000.00	Pending	
Jackson County Board of Commissioners	\$35,000.00	Pending	
INDIVIDUAL DONATIONS	\$10,000.00	Committed	
Total Income	\$70,000.00		

EXPENSES

Item	Total Cost	Amount of JCTDA Grant to be used for this item	Explanatory Notes (Optional)
Equinox Environmental - TVG Master Plan for Grounds Restoration Project	\$ 70,000.00	\$25,000.00	
Total Expenses	\$70,000.00		



EQUINOX

balance through proper planning

Proposal for The Village Green Master Plan

3/27/2024

INTRODUCTION

Equinox has been asked to provide a scope and cost for the development of a 25 -year Master Plan for The Village Green of Cashiers. We understand that The Village Green (“client”) is in need of a guiding document to direct their efforts to maintain and enhance the existing 13.2 acre park in the heart of Cashiers, NC. Equinox has been conducting master plans for parks, open space and outdoor recreation facilities throughout western North Carolina since 2000. During this time we have worked on over 65 outdoor recreation and park planning projects and over 89 greenway and trail projects. Our park projects include regional parks, state parks, community parks, and neighborhood parks- all focus on balancing natural and cultural assets with use of the land.

Scope of Services

Task 1. Project Discovery: Kick off /Data Acquisition/SiteAnalysis

The project will get started with a meeting between The Village Green personnel and Equinox to establish points of contact, share project information already collected, discuss the current program for the park, define deliverables and formatting, and establish a schedule for each of the project milestones. This assumes the Village Green will form a steering committee of key staff to help direct and provide input during the master planning process.

The kickoff meeting will include a visioning exercise with the steering committee. A survey to obtain input on the vision for the park will have been sent in advance of the meeting so there will be findings to discuss. The kickoff meeting will also include the following:

- Visioning & Goal Setting
- Review of program elements and project needs
- Review Project Schedule
- Confirm Point(s) of Contact/Communication
- Identification of Steering Committee and Stakeholders/Contact Information
- Transfer of Project Data
- Discuss the format of the Master Plan deliverable
- Discuss what success for the master plan looks like

Data Acquisition, Identification of Data Needs, and Desktop Analysis

Equinox will begin by collecting as much existing data on The Village Green (Property) as is available from all identifiable sources. We understand that certain site-specific data will be provided by The Village Green. Other data to be collected and analyzed is housed primarily in local or statewide GIS (Geographic Information Systems) databases, and can include, but is not limited to:

- Elevation, slope and topography
- Aerial photographs (current and historic)
- USGS topographic quadrangles
- National Wetland Inventory (NWI) data
- Anthropogenic data such as parcels, utilities, soils, hydrology and roads
- National Hydrography Datasets (NHD)
- NC surface water classifications
- Cultural/Archaeological resources
- Available biological surveys and biotics data

Information regarding park programming, estimated current and projected visitation of the park, and any other relevant data will also be reviewed.

Base Map & Field Preparation

Equinox will collect available data, primarily GIS, pertaining to the property in order to create a base map of the property to be used during field work.

Client shall provide any additional data that will be helpful for this process, including but not limited to: any survey, ROW delineation, utilities, and other known infrastructure.

Ordinance and Relevant Planning Effort Review

As part of our review of the site, Equinox will conduct an ordinance review to ensure that the desires for the park align with restrictions set forth by various governing agencies. Equinox will conduct a basic review of Jackson County ordinances to identify restrictions related to the development of the site. Equinox will also review any other relevant planning efforts in Jackson County or the Village of Cashiers to ensure that the Master Plan vision coincides with other plans for the area.

Field Assessment

Two (2) Equinox planning and design professionals & one (1) architect will visit the site. Utilizing the added base information, they will fine-tune the collection of opportunities, constraints, and other ground level notes. A combination of GPS waypoints, photographic documentation, and detailed field notes will be used to record conditions, and field data collected will inform later natural resource mapping efforts.

Detailed Site Inventory

Following the field assessment, Equinox will provide a detailed assessment of the current conditions of all park elements. This will include both a landscape assessment and an architectural assessment.

Landscape Features Assessment

- Document existing human modifications and other disturbances, such as structures, pathways, roads, trails, dikes and impoundments, ditches, fences, utility lines and corridors, circulation and access conditions.
- Identify structures and impervious surfaces (paved roads, concrete pads, etc.)
- Document the type and condition of any known or encountered archeological, cultural, and/or historical features (e.g. chimneys, foundations).
- Document the condition of the existing planted landscape areas.
- Roads, parking, sidewalk assessment

Architecture / Structures Assessment

As a part of the site analysis, the architects on the team will conduct an architectural and a structural assessment of all the existing structures on the Property. This will include:

- Conduct visual observations for assessment of existing structures.
- Conduct programming exercises with Equinox
 - Facilities condition assessment and recommendations with regards to code compliance and life safety.
 - Design recommendations related to energy saving and water conservation strategies.
- Provide a Structures Assessment Report/Inventory to be included in the Master Plan document with the following:
 - Existing structure inventory
 - Structural assessment
 - ADA Access assessment.

Deliverable: Site inventory and Assessment

TASK 2: Opportunities & Constraints and Concept Development

Opportunities & Constraints Mapping

Equinox will develop an opportunities and constraints map to guide planning efforts. This map will include relevant information from the data collection phase. Enacted by our interdisciplinary team, this step is a

synthesis of the existing conditions data and the site analysis that highlights opportunities and challenges across the park. The opportunities and constraints process will identify suitable areas for park improvements.

Deliverable: Opportunities & Constraints Map

Conceptual Plans

Utilizing the opportunities and constraints map, Equinox will work to develop two (2) concepts for an overall vision plan for the Village Green in the next 25 years. The concepts will include elements identified during the vision and goal setting workshop. The different conceptual plans will illustrate various approaches to maintaining existing elements of the park while introducing new amenity configurations into the future. They will be shared with the client whereupon pros and cons of the concepts will be discussed. A preferred concept will emerge from conversations with the client.

Deliverable: Two (2) Concept drawings for presentation to the client

Meeting #2: Concept review meeting with Steering Committee, virtual

TASK 3: Master Plan Document

During this task, Equinox will draft the master plan document and seek comments on the draft document. Once the draft Master Plan has been reviewed by the client, Equinox will craft a survey that can be posted Village Green on their website along with the draft Master Plan for public comment. This task will also include a client progress meeting (Meeting #3) to review the Draft Master Plan. The Master Plan Document may include some or all the following:

Draft Master Plan Document

Executive Summary-place holder (for Final Master Plan document)

- 1) Existing Conditions
- 2) Ordinance Review and Relevant Plans Summary
 - Summary of associated planning efforts
- 3) Park Master Plan
 - Vision, Goals, and Objectives
 - Recommendations for adaptive use and/or reuse of existing buildings, facilities & structures
- 4) Master Plan

- Master Plan Map (overall)
- Detailed Concept Areas
- Planning Level Cost Estimates for Park Improvements with rough order of magnitude (ROM) of cost for road or other infrastructure improvements.
- Recommendations
 - Recommendations for Phasing

Deliverable: Final Master Plan Document (pdf)

Meeting #3: Final Master Plan presentation (virtual)

Additional Services

Any service not described above will be considered an additional service. If the process requires additional services needed by the client, Equinox will obtain approval prior to commencing any work. This includes work for future phases which will be needed if the project moves forward through the construction process.

Equinox proposes contracting with you to perform the services outlined in the “scope of services.” The work will be provided for a fixed fee of \$70,000.

If the above scope of services is acceptable, Equinox will provide a contract for both parties to execute.



The Village Green.

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🎉🎉🎉 We've Got Big New 🎉🎉🎉

The Village Green will be embarking on a new Grounds and Playground Restoration Project!

Click the link below to read all about the new plans to upgrade the Village Play, create year-round public restrooms, and restore some of our most beloved gardens and structures!

Link to Highlander Article

