**Text

Description automatically generatedCan you create a visual presentation that we can use to will engage park users and neighborhood residents to better promote and influence the City of Rochester to commit resources to a long-term improvement plan for Cobbs Hill Park?**

Cobbs Hill Park, the only major park still under city control is extensively used by residents from all over the city and surrounding suburbs. What we now know as Cobbs Hill Park appears to have been initiated in 1904 by the purchase of the top of Cobbs Hill, a prominence beside what had been a quarry, for use as a second city water reservoir. It is named after Edna Cobb, who had previously owned the land. In 1905 or 1908 (documents vary as to the date), George Eastman donated an additional 15 acres of land. His donation came with the caveat that the City of Rochester acquire the adjoining Eastern Widewaters tract that had once been part of the Erie Canal. Public donations ($35,625.00), the City of Rochester ($5,625.00), and other donations of small parcels of land combined to make up the current total of 61.5 acres for reservoir and park.

The park is spatially divided into multiple different use areas, and separate entrances lead to different parks of the park. It is, for example, divided by Norris Drive, which separates the Widewaters section, comprising Lake Riley, the field that surrounds it, Lake Riley Lodge, the ball fields and dog park from the rest of the park. Immediately S. of Norris Drive are the basketball courts, children’s playground and MVP Health exercise areas, while further south along the base of Cobbs Hill are tennis courts. The reservoir is best accessed from an entry off Monroe Avenue. Washington Grove isn’t contiguous with the rest of the park.

Cobbs Hill Park suffers from a lack attention and the lack of an articulated vision for its future. It is under attack and will continue degrade if not better attended to. Planning options continually to be further constrained as time goes by, and the parks quality and positive impact diminish. Cobbs Hill Park can, on the other hand, play a significant role in serving our entire population and attracting residents to our city. The following is a partial list of issues that we consider need to be addressed.

* There is no overall integration of separate parts of Cobbs Hill Park. It is, in many ways, multiple disconnected parks, without adequate paths or connections between them. The park requires a comprehensive people circulation system.
* There is no way-finding system within the park, nor signage on park history or vegetation interpretation.
* Trees on the reservoir slopes, at its northern edge, and the pinetum between it and Washington Grove, all aspects of the reservoir’s original design, are aging out, and there are no plans for their replacement.
* Invasive Norway Maples on the northern end of the reservoir (relics of a plantation that was intended for replanting elsewhere) and on its slopes, planted before they were recognized as such, negatively affect native species.
* Swallowwort (dog-strangling vine), which aggressively chokes out desirable species, interferes with forest regeneration, and toxic to livestock, deer and monarch butterfly larvae**,** is invading the slopes of Cobbs Hill.
* Lake Riley suffers from eutrophication, largely from drainage of nutrients from dog and geese feces, and fertilizers, directly into the pond. It lacks a vegetative barrier to filter out excess nutrients. It is unimaginatively shaped, lacks surrounding greenery (originally omitted to limit leaves on the skating pond), and lacks a surrounding walking path.
* The area between Lake Riley and the highway lacks greenery – additional trees and shrubs would further limit the visual impact of, and noise from, the highway.
* The southwest corner of the park (at Monroe and Culver) is treed but those trees are being overcome by Swallowwort, has no designated paths through it, is little used, and requires redesign.
* There are no spaces in the park that promote small group interaction; no gazebos or sets of chairs that face each other.
* There have been attacks on park land, exemplified by Rochester Management Inc.’s proposal to build multi-story apartments and town houses with the land the currently houses Cobbs Hill Village.
* A section of the park is used to store leaves from the city fall leaf pickup.
* The city has staff who care for parks, but this appears to be limited to mowing, and there is no parks department formally charged with advocating for its maintenance and development.

We would like a visual presentation, and perhaps suggestions for a strategy for engaging potentially interested citizens in pressing for a comprehensive plan for Cobbs Hill Park offers engagement in the planning process to representatives from all park user groups.