

APPENDIX D

Landscape Architect's Report for
**The Great Lawn and North Green Buffer:
Guidelines and Considerations for Future Renovation**

Hudson Heritage Project

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: 1943 and 1956 Aerial Photo of the H.R. State Hospital for the Insane at Poughkeepsie, NY

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Appendix C: Contour Map of the H.R. State Hospital for the Insane at Poughkeepsie, NY

1.0 PROJECT INTRODUCTION

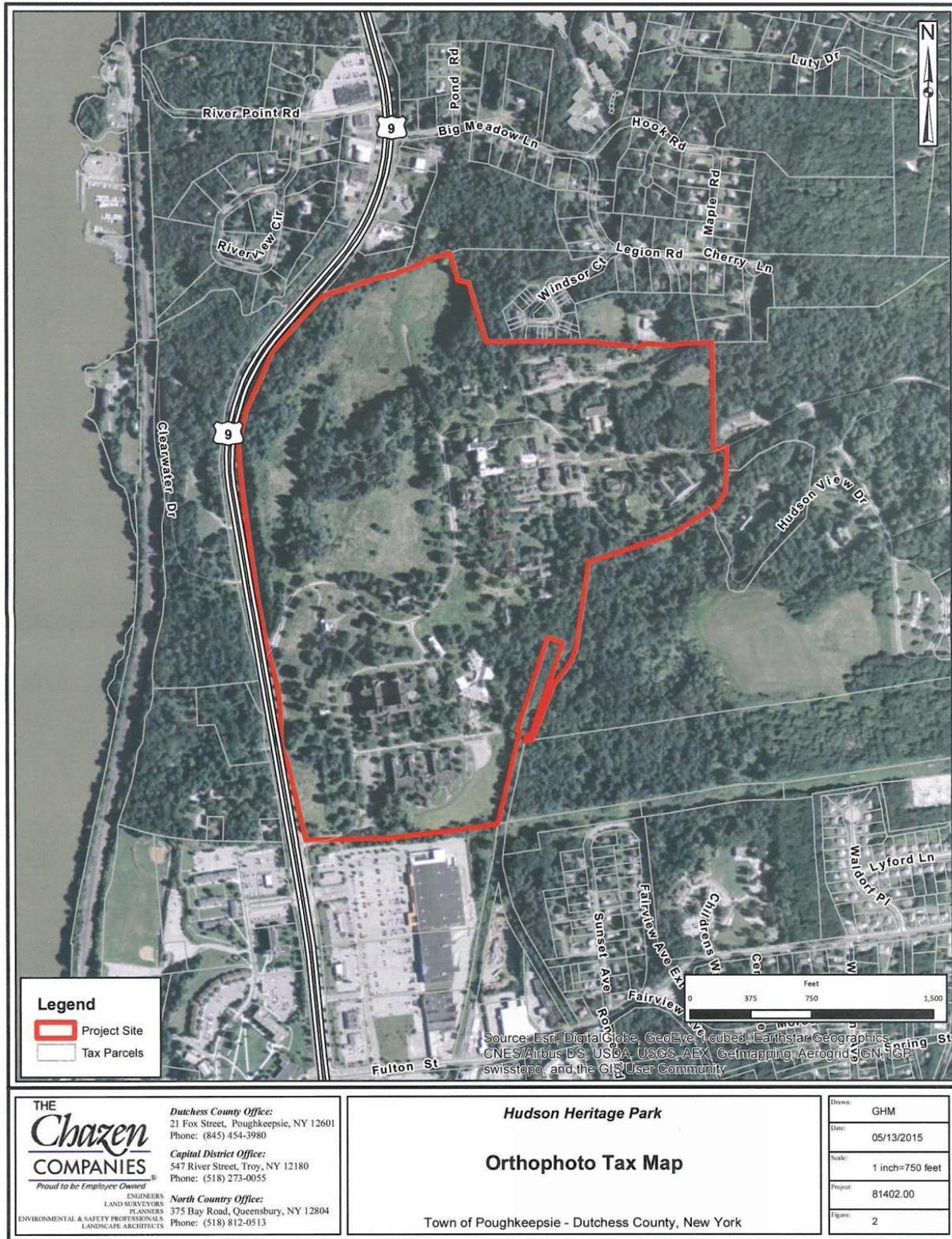
The former Hudson River Psychiatric Center, also known as the Hudson River State Hospital, Hudson Heritage Park or the Hudson River Asylum for the Insane, is located along Route 9 in Dutchess County in the Town of Poughkeepsie, New York. It was operated as a psychiatric facility for adults by the New York State Office of Mental Health from 1871 until its closure in 2001. Since then it has fallen into a state of neglect and disrepair.

The Hudson River State Hospital was established in 1866 and followed the Kirkbride Plan, a theory of mental institution design that was based on a philosophy that privacy, space, fresh air and sunlight would speed a patient's recovery. This led to a hospital design that had long rambling wings with rooms on either side of a central hall which overlooked a highly improved and tastefully ornamented landscape.

The main hospital building is notable for its High Victorian Gothic style and was designed by English architect Frederick Clarke Withers in 1867. Calvert Vaux and Frederick Law Olmsted, designers for New York Central Park, were then commissioned to design the surrounding landscape. According to Hudson River State Hospital Preservation Blog, the hospital itself was to be surrounded by sprawling grounds, lavish garden, lush fields, ponds, and an extensive network of patient walkways. The plans were approved shortly after submittal.

The facility was intended to be completed quickly, but went far over its original schedule and budget and remained under construction for almost 25 years after it first opened. A century later, it was slowly closed down as its services were needed less and less. On May 31, 2007, lightning struck the sprawling south wing, causing one of the most severe fires in Dutchess County's history, and a large portion of the wing was severely damaged. The 156 acre property was sold to the current owner, EFG/DRA Heritage, LLC in November 2013.

Today, the former hospital site is being planned for adaptive reuse. The new plan for the property is proposed to be built over an approximate 8-year period, and includes the Great Lawn renovation, North Green revitalization, as well as residential and commercial mixed use. The former main hospital building will be repurposed as a boutique hotel, overlooking the revitalized Great Lawn area.



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Figure 1.1 Hudson River Psychiatric Center Location Map

2.0 SITE HISTORY

19th Century

New York opened its first state run institution for the mentally ill in 1843. By the time of the Civil War, the institution was reaching its capacity. In 1866, a five member board of commissioners was tasked with finding a site for a second hospital between NYC and Albany. A year later, they had temporarily secured 296-acres of land overlooking the Hudson River north of Poughkeepsie, and were pleased to report that the land would be offered as a gift to the state by the citizens of Dutchess County. In 1867, the Governor accepted the land, and appointed nine prominent business men to form the Board of Managers.

The Board selected architect Frederick Clarke Withers to design the new hospital building, as well as Calvert Vaux and Frederick Law Olmsted to design the grounds. The main hospital buildings were located on a slope which extended to the banks of the Hudson River affording a variety of beautiful vistas. Based a New York Times article published on December 26, 1872, "The surrounding land was undulating and partly wooded, and know for the picturesque views of the Hudson River. The view in all directions, most especially the view up river, was the most beautiful and the most extensive - a very valuable element in selecting a location for a residence of the insane. At the time, a patient did not want to come at all, but glad that she did, for she can sit at the window all day and enjoy the fresh air and beautiful scenery."



Figure 2.1 **Hudson River State Hospital for the Insane, Poughkeepsie, Dutchess County, New York**
Source: 1871 Harper's Magazine, Drawn by Withers

Instead of hiring a General Contractor to construct the hospital, the Board decided to hire local craftsmen, stone cutters, iron workers, and builders to take on the task. The construction began in 1868, and opened on October 18, 1871 as the Hudson River State Hospital for the Insane, admitting the facility its first 40 patients. Construction continued for addition buildings until 1895, at which time funding ran out. Therefore the hospital's original master plan was never fully completed.

20th Century

With additional funding, new buildings were constructed throughout the first part of the 20th century, as recorded in old aerial photos (See **Appendix A**). As late as 1952 the institution was treating as many as 6,000 patients. However, with changes happening in the treatment of mental illness, the need for large-scale facilities dwindled as new methods of treatment allowed more patients to not require institutionalization. By the late 1970s the hospital administration decided to shut down the two main wings of the Kirkbride building, and in 1994 the Hudson River State Hospital consolidated with another psychiatric center and closed the main campus. The Kirkbride building was finally closed in 2001.

By the mid-20th century, the once beautiful Great Lawn in front of the Kirkbride building was converted to a golf course; many years later it fell into disrepair and has become neglected and over grown since.

21st Century

In 2005, the Empire State Development Corporation sold 156 acres of land including the Kirkbride building to Hudson Heritage, LLC for redevelopment. That same year, the Town of Poughkeepsie imposed a moratorium on new construction while it adjusted its zoning to deal with its redevelopment. Hudson Heritage was seeking to have a "historic revitalization district" created for the property that would help spur its economic development. Unfortunately, on May 31, 2007 lightning struck the sprawling south wing, and a major portion of the wing was severely damaged. Hudson Heritage, LLC sold the property to CPC Resources, a subsidiary of the New York City based Community Preservation Corporation, in May 2012, and a year later, the property was sold to the current owner.

The public remembrance of the Great Lawn has faded, as it has been left unattended for decades. The once attractive scenery is now filled with overgrown shrubs, weeds, and grasses. The extensive walkways were either removed during the golf course transformation period or have been completely taken over by the overgrown plants. (See **Appendix B** for most recent aerial photo of the site). Unattended deciduous and coniferous trees have obstructed previously picturesque views. We have endeavored to try to locate the original landscape plans. So far, the oldest plans that can be located were drawn by Landscape Architect Saint D. Backus, dated May 1867, while working for Vaux and Olmsted at the time (See **Appendix C**). However, these plans are too faded to be of use.

3.0 SITE ANALYSIS

The hospital site is located on Route 9 on the Poughkeepsie-Hyde Park Town line, along the banks of the Hudson River, but for the most part lacks a direct river view because it has become overgrown. The Kirkbride building sits atop a hill that runs from east to west, and extends to the edge of US Route 9. Looking at existing survey data, there is 100± feet of elevation difference from the top of the slope to the edge of the road. Paved roads and pathways have been slowly dismantled by weeds, grasses and time. A majority of the trees, shrubs, and lawn areas have overgrown after being neglected for decades and the beautiful scenery is no longer evident. By the mid-20th century, the Great Lawn was unfortunately converted to a golf course and information is lacking on its plan. (See views 1-5 below and Figure 3.1 for View Location Map)



View 1: Looking up the hill to the main administration building.

Today, the main building needs an extensive amount of renovation, and sadly a majority of the windows are broken or gone. The remaining desirable existing trees in front of the building need to be pruned and understory plants removed. The Great Lawn needs to be mowed, and undesirable shrubs removed from the lawn areas. In general, the existing unhealthy, damaged and shabby trees should be removed.



View 2: Looking down the south side of the Great Lawn.

The gentle slope with mature trees along the perimeter of the space would be ideal as a public green space. A few small deciduous trees could be removed to free up the view corridor. Several big deciduous trees that are still in decent shape should remain onsite as they would add some historical character. The Great Lawn needs to be mowed or reseeded to bring back the "Pastoral" style landscape.



View 3: Looking down the slope.

Remnant utility poles exist and should be removed. Big coniferous trees need to be removed to open up the view down the slope to create the sense of an open field. Understory planting, pasture weeds, and grasses are taking over and growing wild, they will need to be removed or cleaned up.



View 4: Pathway in the woods.

The paved pathway is now covered with grass. Trees and shrubs are overgrown and needed to be pruned or removed.



View 5: Looking down the slope.

Direct views of the Hudson River cannot be seen from the Great Lawn because of intensive vegetation, however the view of the Shawangunk Mountains are a beautiful backdrop for the Great Lawn. The existing topography should remain with minor grade adjustments for walkways, and use new arrangements of trees and understory plantings to define the space.

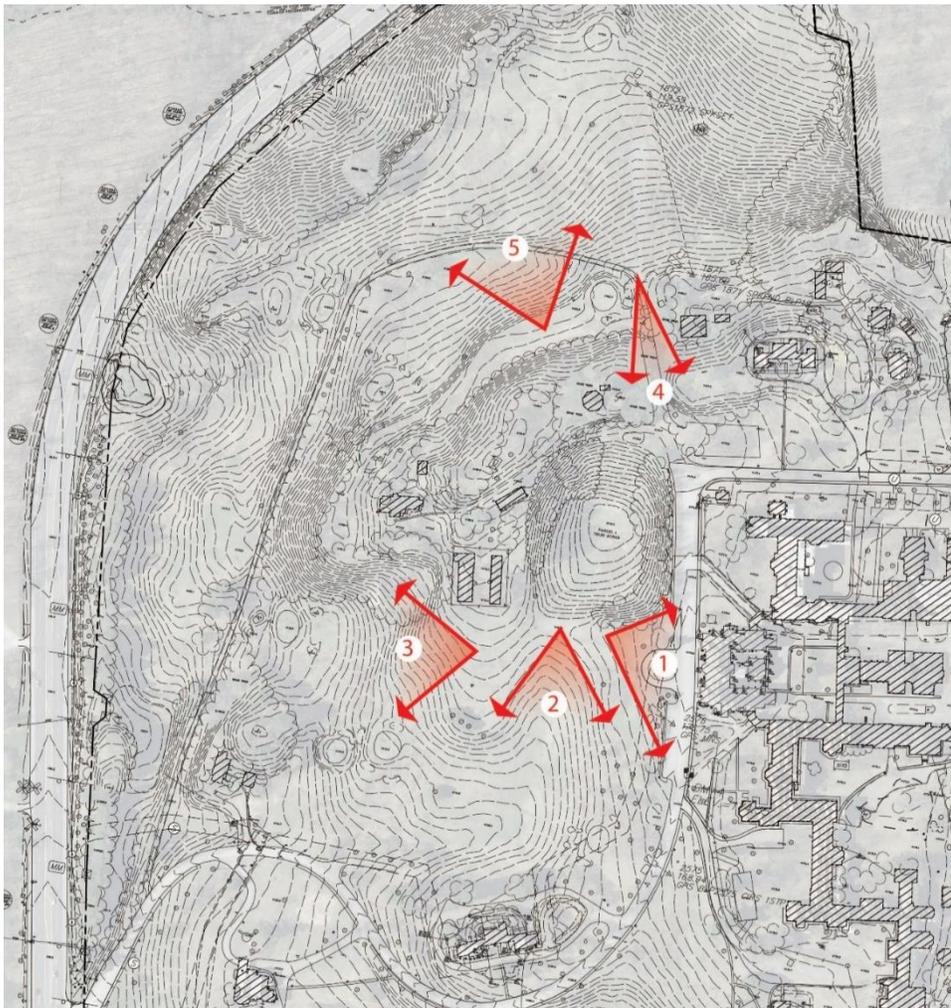


Figure 3.1 Existing View Location Map

4.0 DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS FOR FUTURE GREAT LAWN AND NORTH GREEN RENOVATIONS

4.1 Design Concepts and Principles to Consider

Landscape Architect Saint D. Backus designed the landscape for the state hospital while employed at Olmsted, Vaux & Co. He created an environment that reflected the Kirkbride theory of treating people with open space, fresh air and sunlight that would speed their recovery.

Olmsted believed that the landscape design should take advantage of the unique characteristics of a site, and acknowledge its surrounding environment to keep the landscape experience smooth and natural. All design elements should be made subordinate to an overarching design purpose. Plant materials should thrive, but non-invasive, while decorative planting arrangements should be avoided. Furthermore, the design should allow for long-term maintenance and ensure the realization and perpetuation of the design intent. The site composition should imperceptibly direct movement through the landscape in order to avoid impact between different kinds of traffic.

Together Calvert Vaux and Fredrick Law Olmstead collaborated on dozens of parks, parkways and planned neighborhoods across the country. Olmsted believed that natural surroundings had a subconscious effect on viewers, and his designs avoided hard edges and embraced a constant opening up of new views as the user moved through the space. These are the principles and goals which now guide us in our designs for the Great Lawn and North Green renovations.

4.2 Potential Design Components

Fredrick Law Olmstead's design principles should be applied to the future restoration of the Great Lawn and other open space features on the Site, to the extent practicable. Potential landscape and design features to consider are reviewed here.

Pedestrian nodal gathering areas should provide access to the lawn area, and multiple pedestrian pathways should introduce into the green space, connecting the site from the north to the east side. Hard edges should be avoided throughout the design, and native plants should be utilized for reforestation purposes. Groups of tree plantings might be arranged to define spaces, and create new views as users move through the landscape. To take advantage of the existing topography, the Great Lawn should be designated as a managed, open green space for the public, to provide a scenic location for users to relax on the grass and enjoy the natural setting.

4.3 Future Great Lawn Restoration

The existing Great Lawn is approximately 18 acres in size. In the future restoration, it should serve primarily as an open, green space to provide a natural environment for passive recreation. The space can easily accommodate meandering pathways with gentle slopes, framing tree groupings and landscaping.

4.4 North Green Buffer

Compared to the Great Lawn, the North Green should provide a more intimate space for the leisurely appreciation of nature. The 25-acre space sits on the fabric of the old golf course. The North Green buffer should include a rich mix of plant material, appear pastoral in nature, and be colorful during each season. Wildflower/meadow fields, for example, require low maintenance and add a natural feel to the landscape experience. Pathways and mowed spaces could lead to new vistas that open up as one moves through the space, with the surrounding mountain views becoming the edge of the North Green.

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