

## **Alternatives Analysis**

This Article 97 land disposition request concerns a 1.65-acre parcel of land owned by the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, located entirely within the bounds of Holyoke's historic Anniversary Hill Park (MBP 145-00-092). I write respectfully on behalf of the city to request a transfer of ownership back to the care and control of the Holyoke Parks Department under the provisions of MGL Chapter 45 §3.

The City of Holyoke deeded this parcel to the Commonwealth in 1967 for the purpose of creating an outdoor swimming pool, funded by an early Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) grant and constructed from 1968-1969. The Commonwealth closed the pool in 1990 and demolished and backfilled it in 1993. The property, now covered by early succession deciduous forest, was never deeded back to the City and remains under the ownership of DCR to the present day.

The City of Holyoke, in partnership with Kestrel Land Trust and other stakeholder partners, is in the process of major renovations to Anniversary Hill Park, including the restoration of historic CCC-era stone infrastructure. The former pool area is situated within a critical section of the park and we want very much to reincorporate this parcel into the overall improvements. The City intends to keep this land under Article 97 protection and maintain it as a public park space in perpetuity.

The City of Holyoke and its partner Kestrel Land Trust held a series of public workshops, surveys, and presentations between 2021-2023 to gauge public interest in the restoration of the park and assess priorities. The responses reflected overwhelming enthusiasm in favor of the project and provided a variety of suggestions related to security, recreational amenities, and improvements to the stone structures and trail network. Incorporating this parcel and several other privately owned inholdings is an important step towards realizing these improvements.

Because the parcel in question is an inholding surrounded by existing forested parkland and there is no change in use proposed, there are no clear alternatives to the requested action, other than for DCR to maintain ownership and coordinate management and improvement activities with the city. Minimally, the City wishes to remove the invasive plant species that have taken over the parcel in the aftermath of filling in the former pool almost 35 years ago, as it is adjacent to the newly completed accessible trail that provides access to Scott Tower from a new parking area to the north of the park on Overlook Drive. These efforts will be much more efficient and effective if the land is returned to municipal control and is incorporated into the larger schedule of trail and amenity improvements.