

Masthope
A Vision for the Future
Strategic Planning
Adopted – November 16, 2013

Masthope Community Property Owners Council
Northeastern Pennsylvania



In short, strategic planning is a disciplined effort to produce fundamental decisions and actions that shape and guide what an organization is, what it does and why it does it, with a focus on the future.

John M. Bryson
Professor of Planning and Public Affairs
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The purpose isn't to produce a
Plan, but to produce results!

Masthope Is Very Special
Planning for a Great Future

Masthope Community Property Owners Council

Strategic Plan

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Brief History of Masthope

Covenants for Masthope Rapids were filed by Karl Hope in 1974 and development of the Community began. The first meeting of the Masthope POC took place on March 23, 1977. Covenants for the Falling Waters at Masthope were filed by Karl Hope in 1978. The central water and sewer systems were started in 1979 ending the use of sewage holding tanks.

Karl Hope passed in 1980 and his passing started more than a decade of developer changes that threatened the long term survival of Masthope as a Planned Community. Finally in 1989 the POC was recognized by the developer as the Property Owners Association for Masthope and the POC started to manage the administration of the Protective Covenants/Deed Restrictions.

By July 1990 the POC had gained control, but not ownership, of everything in Masthope. Included were the control of funds and a lease for a POC Office. After three long years of negotiations, the POC purchased all of the amenities in Masthope, including the crown jewel, the Ski Mountain. The next seven years were still difficult, but Masthope truly turned the corner in 2000 and started moving in a positive direction. The outlook for the future of Masthope has gotten brighter each year since the community turned that corner.

Along the way the Lodge burned down on March 31, 2005. Through the skilled management of the POC and Recreation Management the Lodge that Property Owners enjoy today opened less than nine months after the fire. An almost impossible task.

Those enjoying the Masthope Community of the present and future owe a debt of gratitude to the Community Volunteers that persevered during very difficult times and to the long term partnership with Recreation Management.

Function of a Strategic Plan

A strategic plan is certainly more than simply a “wish list.” But it is equally not a prescription of what the Association *must* do, or a fixed timetable of dates, events and funding. Those are the responsibility of the entities that make definitive plans for the Association- the professional management, the appropriate committees, the governing Board and ultimately the Members. What the strategic plan attempts to do- in the words of Professor Bryson- is to provide a process, “a disciplined effort to produce fundamental decisions and actions,” by defining those items and goals to which the Association should devote serious consideration in order to fulfill its mission, and to set out both the assets the Association can utilize and the challenges it will face as it conducts that consideration. In other words, it’s objective is to facilitate decisions, not prejudge them.

The plan should become a working document to guide the Association. Recommended actions will ultimately be expanded and criteria to measure the accomplishment level of the goals will be developed.

The goal of the Strategic Plan is to provide a roadmap to the future that permits the Association to be more proactive and more efficient. The Strategic Plan will chart the course for Masthope reflecting the needs, desires and aspirations of the Masthope Property Owners and guests so necessary to the future success of the association.

Masthope Community Property Owners Council

Mission Statement

Masthope Mountain Community is a private, four season, family-oriented, recreational community. We are dedicated to maintaining our current wide range of high quality amenities, and responsible planning for those future amenities which will enhance our property values and overall quality of life on the mountain. We are committed to protecting the natural beauty of our mountain and pledge to carefully manage its finances and operations so we may deliver the highest level of services to our Members and their Families. We embrace the diversity and contributions of all our Members and will treat the safety and welfare of our Members as a priority.

The Masthope Strategic Plan

It is important that a strategic plan is based on a value system and that the supporting planning process is sustainable. The Community's vision statements capture the values important to our Members and are shown below. The planning process is designed to provide sustainability.

Our Values

Accountability/Ethical Behavior. As Committees, Boards and Staff Members, we are responsible to the Association's Membership for all of our actions. We are guided by standards of honesty, objectivity and integrity. We conduct Association business and make decisions consistently in the best interest of our Members.

Excellence. We provide Members with high quality services and are responsive to their needs. We treat Members and guests with respect, dignity, courtesy and in a professional manner.

Financial Responsibility. We are good stewards of the financial resources entrusted to the Association by its Membership. We constantly seek to find better, more efficient and cost-effective ways to conduct our business, so lifestyle and property values are enhanced.

Leadership. We strongly encourage our Members to participate and have a voice in the life of their Association and the larger Community. The Association plays a proactive role in determining the future of the Masthope Community and the larger Community outside of Masthope. We work in partnership and collaboration with other groups to shape and guide this future.

Secure Environment. We are driven to protect and enhance the natural environment that makes Masthope such a special place. Living in balanced harmony with wildlife enriches Members' quality of life.

Our Vision

The Masthope Community was created as a haven for its Members. The Association is second to none in our purpose to offer an extraordinary array of experiences, in our commitment to the highest level of Member services and in our willingness to recognize our Staff Members as one of the most valuable assets within the Association. Our allegiance to those basic elements will ensure long term success for our Members and Staff Members.

Masthope's natural beauty, strong sense of community, friendly and involved Members, excellent facilities, amenities and services, solid financial situation and increasing property values make it an excellent place to live and invest. The Association is committed to the preservation and active stewardship of the Community's natural resources so that it remains recognized as a special place; indeed a place like no other.

Long Range Facilities Planning

Strategic Goal

Monitor Community facilities and improve and expand facilities as needed to accommodate changes in the use, size and demographics of the Membership. Develop programs and amenities that will create a high desire on the part of teens and preteens to be at Masthope.

Discussion:

From the creation of Masthope, the facilities have been a major factor for attracting new Property Owners. Over the years the programming of these facilities has added an additional component to the “draw”. If the community is going to continue to attract families to Masthope, it is imperative that teenagers and pre-teenagers find it highly desirable to spend their vacation periods and leisure time at Masthope. In order to meet the recreational, social and essential service needs of the Members, the Association needs to continue to focus on a Long Range Facilities Master Plan Goal as well as the other goals identified in the Strategic Plan. The Long Range Facilities Master Plan is attached to this plan as “Appendix B”.

Recommended Considerations:

- Top of the Mountain. There are an extensive number of facilities at and around the Ski Lodge. A Master Plan needs to be considered for this area in order to determine how the ultimate build out should take place at that location.
- Pool Facility. Consider expansion of seating areas. Investigate a larger/expanded pool or an additional pool and water related facilities for this location.
- Shale Pit. Serious consideration must be given as to how the Community can best utilize this resource in the future.
- Multi-Purpose Facility. A new Multi-Purpose Facility needs to be considered that might include the relocation and expansion of the fitness center, an indoor/outdoor pool (including spray park and slides), an indoor multi-purpose space, an outdoor pavilion capable of also being used for ice skating and a multi-purpose sports field.
- Equestrian Trail System. Expansion and improvements to the equestrian trail system.
- Lake. Land acquisition for greater lake access along with additional parking.
- Office. An expansion of the office needs to be considered.
- ATVs, UTVs and Golf Carts. With the number of all-terrain vehicles, utility terrain vehicles and golf carts being utilized in Masthope, the Community needs to consider the development of a training facility and course for these vehicles.
- The community needs to seek teen input through a survey and/or Teen Advisory Committee.

Note: While the Long Range Facilities Master Plan has quite a number of enhancement items listed, above are the nine areas identified as needing special attention.

Financial Considerations

Strategic Goal

Recommend actions that will serve to continue to strengthen the financial position of the Masthope Community Property Owners Council without placing financial stress on our Members

Discussion:

In order to survive and prosper as a Planned Community, Masthope must continue to strengthen and stabilize its financial position.

Recommended Action:

- The Association needs to budget the funds required to have a Reserve Study developed by a specialist in that field.
- Once a Reserve Study is developed for Masthope, a plan will need to be developed on how to fund the Reserves going forward.
- Consider the creation of a Capital Enhancement Fund and an Annual Capital Enhancement Assessment to support the Capital Enhancement Fund.
- Develop a five year operating and capital budget.
- The Association's use of technology (software in particular) needs to be studied and updated in order to create efficiencies and improve service levels offered Property Owners.
- Search for new ways to generate revenue for the Property Owners Council.

Amenities Available to the Public

Strategic Goal

Develop a plan to better promote the Masthope amenities that are available for use by the public.

Discussion:

Masthope has three unique amenities that have a business component by being available to the public. These amenities are the ski area, the restaurant and the convenience store. Masthope should attempt to maximize the business component of these amenities in order to financially benefit the Association by limiting the subsidy these amenities require in order to be available for the residents of Masthope. The balance of the amenities should remain for the use of Members only.

Recommended Action:

- Develop a plan to better inform a target market within 15 miles of Masthope that these Top of the Mountain amenities are available to the public. Include a plan for utilizing email and social media.
- Develop a plan and program to target other Planned Communities within 15 miles of Masthope, informing them that they can take advantage of these amenities to meet their social, recreational and essential services needs.
- Develop a plan specifically for advertising the restaurant to a target market that doesn't have easy access to the Hawley or Milford Areas.
- Explore options to enhance off-season use of the ski area with particular emphasis on the Spring and Fall seasons.

Relationship with Neighboring Communities

Strategic Goal

Develop a plan to strengthen the Community's relationship with other Planned Communities within 15 miles of Masthope.

Discussion:

Developing and strengthening the Community's relationship with neighboring planned communities provides multiple opportunities. A united front when negotiating with the Township provides strength and leverage. Sharing ideas, success stories and failures can reduce work and costs on projects. Communities can also benefit from a security perspective, as many times issues of vandalism and burglary overlap communities. A better relationship with neighboring communities opens the door for promoting the Masthope amenities that are available for use by the public.

Recommended Action:

- Invite Managers and Board Members from other Planned Communities within 15 miles of Masthope to an introductory luncheon. This could expand to regular meetings to share ideas, challenges and solutions and would serve as a means of introducing the Masthope bar and restaurant to neighboring communities who might not be familiar with them.
- Consider offering promotions as a means of encouraging outside usage of those amenities available for use by the public.

Marketing

Strategic Goal

Develop a marketing plan based on what attracts New Members to Masthope and how New Members can be recruited.

Discussion:

The continued operation, growth and financial stability of the Masthope Community is dependent on maintaining a strong real estate market. Attracting young families, in particular, will provide new vitality for the Community. Masthope primarily draws Members from the Northern New Jersey and New York Metropolitan Area. It is important to understand what attracts New Members to Masthope, how to inform prospective buyers about the unique benefit of Masthope and how to influence them to purchase and participate in the Community. The Masthope Community needs to determine its “brand” and strive to continually promote this brand. Otherwise outside forces may determine the brand.

Recommended Action:

- Create a Membership/Marketing Committee to study and coordinate the Marketing of Masthope.
- Piggyback on the marketing of the Ski Area as a means of marketing the Masthope Community.
- Consider the creation of a Membership/Marketing Position to be the liaison to the Membership/Marketing Committee and handle the website, newsletter and related membership/marketing duties for Masthope. This position would also be tasked with overseeing communications with Property Owners in order to maximize the use of email and social media to promote events and to assure the accuracy, completeness and professional quality of those communications.
- Study the creation of a Referral Program to encourage existing Property Owners to actively promote Masthope with their family, friends and colleagues.
- Encourage action by local and nearby Real Estate Professionals to further promote the purchase of properties at Masthope.
- Consider establishing signage in the area of Woodloch Resort as a means of informing the substantial number of visitors to Woodloch that Masthope exists and is only a short distance from Woodloch.
- Take steps to maximize email and social media as key promotional tools for marketing Masthope.

Land/Property Inventory and Use

Strategic Goal

Develop an inventory of all unimproved property owned by the Association and make recommendations on how the Association should plan for this land for the future. Monitor the availability of lands immediately adjacent to Masthope and in the general vicinity of Masthope and be aware of and consider opportunities to enhance the assets and amenities of the Association.

Discussion:

The Association holds title to a substantial amount of unimproved property within the Masthope Community. It is important to the long term planning process for the Association to develop a comprehensive inventory of that property and to assess the potential use for that property.

Although the Association has limited financial resources for the purchase of additional land, it is possible that there will be opportunities to acquire properties that would enhance the amenities, protect the Association's environment or offer additional benefits to Members. The Association should be aware of and responsibly consider any such opportunities.

Recommended Action:

- Develop a comprehensive inventory of all unimproved properties owned by the Association.
- Assess the potential future use of these properties in five categories:
 1. Required in the future for potential expansion of current amenities
 2. Required in the future for potential addition of amenities
 3. Required in the future as open space
 4. Required in the future as buffer land
 5. Excess to the Association's needs; should be considered for sale to adjacent Property Owners
- Monitor closely the condition, use and availability of properties nearby or bordering Masthope and evaluate the cost, financing and potential benefits of acquiring them.

Community Governance and Management

Strategic Goal

Recommended actions that will serve to strengthen the Community Governance System and Management of the Masthope Community Property Owners Council.

Discussion:

In order to continue to be successful as a Planned Community, Masthope must have a Board and Committee System led by competent and caring volunteer Property Owners and a Management Team up to the challenging task of operating the Community on a day-to-day basis.

Recommended Action:

- Establish a longer-term management contract/commitment in order that the Manager/Management Team and the Masthope Community POC can develop long term plans with additional confidence in the continuity of management for the Community.
- Ensure that the Manager/Management Team are capable of successfully managing the Community in the short and long term. Ensure that there will be a strong Management presence during each of the four seasons and in particular during the summer and winter seasons.
- Reach out to the Membership and seek input as to whether Members would be willing to act as a consultant, professional ear, trainer, etc. Request them to define their areas of expertise, amount of time he/she would be available, etc. Develop a database of this information for future reference.
- Place additional importance on Committees and make them more effective by communicating clearly the responsibilities and mission of each Committee. Provide all Committees with easy access to the information they need to accomplish their tasks. Increase the level of communication, interaction and involvement between the Committees and Board of Directors. View Committees as partners with the Board of Directors.
- Establish the Strategic Planning Committee as a standing committee. Develop a mission for the Committee including list of tasks and deadlines for completion. Keep the Committee at maximum strength by appointing Members willing to give the time and effort necessary to meeting the demands of the Committee.
- Establish a Nominating Committee to recruit a new group of Community Volunteers to serve the Association Board and Committees that is representative of POA Membership
- Develop a Board Manual
- Establish a Board Orientation Program for all Board Members at the start of each new Board year that would include the Board setting goals for the Community for the next year.

Control of Westcolang Lake

Strategic Goal

To establish a legal and recognized governing structure for the ownership and use of Westcolang Lake

Discussion:

The use of Westcolang Lake is a risk management challenge. The Masthope Community needs to take the lead to drive the establishment of a legal and recognized governing structure for the ownership and use of Westcolang Lake, which would include a uniform set of rules and regulations dealing with lake safety and a means of enforcement.

Recommended Action:

- Budget money to support this goal.
- Retain an Attorney to drive the process.
- Commission a title search to determine the actual ownership of Westcolang Lake.
- Approach Fawn Lake in an attempt to get their buy-in to the process.
- Approach the property owners that live in the village area in an attempt to get representatives of their group to participate in the process.
- Attempt to negotiate a governing structure for the ownership and operation of Westcolang Lake.
- Be prepared to go to court in the event an agreement cannot be reached with the concerned parties.
- Develop a means of enforcing a uniform set of rules and regulations dealing with lake safety.

Appendix A

Masthope Strategic Planning Process

Strengths and Assets:

- Amenity Package (Member Only)
 - Court Sports
 - Fitness Center
 - Lake
 - Lodge
 - Playgrounds
 - Pool
 - River and River Park
 - Stables
- Amenity Package (Business Component/Available to Public)
 - Marketplace
 - Restaurant
 - Ski Area
- Proactive Board
- Active Committee System
- Generator at Lodge/Red Cross Shelter
- Limited Foreclosures
- Location
- Lots Owned by Association
- Maintenance Department
- Management Team
- Members
- Pristine and uncrowned areas
- Reasonable real estate taxes
- Recreation Activities Program
- Security
- Stable Real Estate Values
- Utility Owned Sewer and Water (versus individual systems)
- Environmental and Architectural Controls

Challenges:

- Access Control Points at Amenities
- Amenity ID Program
- ATV, UTV and Golf Cart Usage
- Board Continuity
- Broken Watercraft Due to Overuse and Abuse
- Cash Controls
- Committees
- Communication
- Conflict Between Full Time and Part Time Residents
- Better Balance Needed with Wildlife (Deer, Bear, etc.)
- Drainage System
- Economy
- Equestrian Trails
- Generation Gap Amongst Members
- Global Warming Impact on Skiing
- Inconsistent Enforcement of Rules
- Lack of Additional Revenue Generators
- Lack of a Sufficient Capital Reserve Replacement Fund
- Lack of Membership Participation
- Lack of Planning
- Lack of Trails
- Lake
- Location of Compactor
- Location of Maintenance Facility
- Multiple Sets of Covenants
- Need to Grow the Amenity Package
- Possible Drilling for Marcellus Shale
- Rental Program
- Restaurant Approach Lighting
- Restaurant Operation
- Restaurant Parking
- Rumor Mill
- Staffing
- Township and State Control of Access Roads
- Transition if Current Management Team Leaves
- Wild Cat Population

Appendix B

Masthope Long Range Facilities Master Plan

(Updated August 8, 2013)

Amenities with a Business Component (open to the public):

- Explore options for closer parking for the restaurant
- Consider developing a pick-up area for takeout for the restaurant
- Install better lighting for paths to restaurant
- Consider developing a covered walkway from parking to restaurant
- Consider developing areas for additional ski lockers including seasonal lockers
- Consider developing an overall plan for the Mountain Amenity Area

Lake:

- Acquire additional land
- Consider developing additional beach and lake access
- Consider developing additional parking
- Consider reconfiguring the boat ramp area to maximize space
- Relocate the Boat Ramp Sign- in shed for better monitoring of the entire boat ramp area.

Security:

- Consider the installation of security cameras at all amenity areas
- Consider the installation of security cameras at all entrances to the Community

Pool Complex:

- Consider expansion of seating areas
- Investigate larger/expanded pool or an additional pool and water related facilities for this location

Maintenance:

- Consider relocation of all but ski area maintenance in order to provide additional parking at the Mountain Amenity Area
- Consider relocating the compactor

Administration:

- Consider increasing the size of the Administrative Office
- Improve access control at all amenities
- Develop a system of stored value cards as a means of reducing the need to carry and account for cash
- Explore using Property Owners picture passes as a stored value card. Goal would be a one card system.
- Explore improvements in the Community's use of technology, in particular software.

New Recreation Complex:

- Consider an indoor pool complex
- Consider an outdoor pool complex with spray park and slides
- Explore moving and expanding the fitness facility
- Consider a large outdoor pavilion that can be flooded for ice skating in the winter
- Consider a multi-purpose sports field
- Consider an indoor multi-purpose space capable of accommodating a basketball/volleyball court.
- Consider an indoor playground
- Consider a Teen Lounge/Gaming Room
- Consider two bowling lanes
- Consider indoor racquet ball/handball court

General:

- Improve community drainage system
- Improve equestrian trail system
- Consider an ATV training facility and course
- Consider cross country skiing and snow shoe trails
- Consider hiking and biking trails

Other Considerations:

- Batting cages
- Indoor shooting range
- Additional outdoor tennis courts
- Additional outdoor basketball courts
- Handball Racquetball courts
- Laser Tag Equipment
- Game Room
- Indoor and Outdoor Miniature Golf
- Zip Line
- Ropes Course
- Paintball Facility
- Skateboard Park
- Climbing Wall
- Storage for watercraft, trailers, etc.