



New Brunswick Parks Action Plan



Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	2
Project Partners	2
Project Staff.....	2
Executive Summary.....	3
Introduction	4
Overview of the New Brunswick Park System	5
New Brunswick Background	6
Park Assessment and Amenity Inventory	6
Inventory Methodology	6
Systemwide Observations Based on Park Assessment.....	9
Suggested Action Steps.....	10
Park Analysis	14
Individual Park Analyses	23
Map Analysis Findings.....	121
Public Input	131
Systemwide Goals and Recommendations.....	132
Future Planning Related to New Brunswick Parks	137
Next Steps and Conclusion.....	139

Online-Only Appendices:

For appendices and high resolution maps, visit <https://www.tpl.org/new-brunswick-parks-action-plan>.

Appendix A: Interview Participants, Steering Committee Participants, and Focus Group Locations

Appendix B: Relevant Documents

Appendix C: Park Rapid Assessment Tool, Protocol, and Data

Appendix D: Action Plan Matrix

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the members of the New Brunswick Parks Action Plan Steering Committee, which provided technical expertise and knowledge to help guide our planning process. In addition, we appreciate the individuals who participated in interviews and focus groups to help us better understand the current conditions of New Brunswick's park system. Many thanks are also due to the Parks and Gardens Commission, which invested considerable time in this project. Finally, we extend heartfelt thanks to Mayor James Cahill and his dedicated staff who steward the New Brunswick parks system, including the Division of Parks and the Departments of Public Works; Recreation; and Planning, Community and Economic Development. This project was made possible through funding from Johnson & Johnson.

Project Partners

This report was prepared by The Trust for Public Land in partnership with the Rutgers University Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy and Department of Landscape Architecture. The Trust for Public Land conserves land for people to enjoy as parks, gardens, and other natural places, ensuring healthy, livable communities for generations to come. Rutgers University has the threefold mission of: providing for the instructional needs of New Jersey's citizens through its undergraduate, graduate, and continuing education programs; conducting the cutting-edge research that contributes to the medical, environmental, social, and cultural well-being of the state, as well as aiding the economy and the state's businesses and industries; and performing public service in support of the needs of the citizens of the state and its local, county, and state governments.

Project Staff

Anthony Cucchi, State Director, New Jersey, The Trust for Public Land

Bob Heuer, Deputy Director, Urban GIS, The Trust for Public Land

Chrissy Pepino, Junior Project Manager, Plan Team, The Trust for Public Land

Jeanne Herb, Associate Director, Environmental Analysis and Communications Group, Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy, Rutgers University

Karen Lowrie, Deputy Associate Director, Environmental Analysis and Communications Group, Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy, Rutgers University

Wolfram Hoefler, Chair, Department of Landscape Architecture, School of Environmental and Biological Sciences, Rutgers University

Angela Johnsen, Project Assistant, Center for Urban Environmental Sustainability (CUES), Department of Landscape Architecture, School of Environmental and Biological Sciences, Rutgers University

Michael Young, Graduate Student, Department of Landscape Architecture, School of Environmental and Biological Sciences, Rutgers University

Devin Fields, Undergraduate Student, Department of Landscape Architecture, School of Environmental and Biological Sciences, Rutgers University

Executive Summary

The City of New Brunswick has long been a leader in ensuring health and wellness for its residents. Over the past three years, Mayor Cahill and city agencies have worked in partnership with a diverse group of organizations known as the Healthier New Brunswick (HNB) network to create a Blueprint for Action that outlines strategies for improving health and wellness among city residents.

Among other recommendations, the blueprint outlines approaches for increasing active living among city residents, including conducting a citywide parks assessment in order to maximize public spaces and parks to help enhance the quality of life of all New Brunswick residents. The New Brunswick Parks Action Plan is intended to fulfill the parks assessment recommendation and help guide several aspects of the management of park assets, including efforts to ensure an equitable distribution of park-planning resources for the residents of New Brunswick.

A rapid park assessment using a methodology developed by The Trust for Public Land evaluated all 16 public parks in New Brunswick to outline existing strengths and areas of opportunity to better serve New Brunswick residents. Key informant interviews were conducted with a variety of New Brunswick city staff members, community leaders, and other parties. Several focus groups were conducted with traditionally underrepresented communities to supplement existing community feedback derived from the Blueprint for Action. A project steering committee offered insights to the project staff during the course of the project. Project staff also attended three meetings with the Parks and Gardens Commission to receive input.

This report contains park-specific recommendations for each of the 16 parks, as well as systemwide park recommendations for implementation. It also provides insights to further opportunities to promote community stewardship, enhance existing park programming based on expressed interest from the community, and identify ways to maximize existing park space to better serve the community. It includes solutions that involve strengthening existing and new partnerships, leveraging current parklands, and capitalizing on existing park assets that the community already cares for and enjoys.

In sum, the City of New Brunswick is to be commended for its dedication to providing quality open space and programming for the enjoyment, health, and wellness of its residents. The distribution of parks throughout the city, the high degree of use of the system, the high quality of maintenance, the diversity of park experiences available to residents, and the current efforts to expand the park system to address city-identified areas of need all collectively demonstrate a city committed to its park system as a centerpiece of a thriving and vibrant community. A densely populated urban center with a highly diverse population, in both socioeconomic and demographic terms, New Brunswick has succeeded in ensuring that its residents have access to active and passive recreational opportunities through an expansive parks system. This plan paves the way for additional efforts to help New Brunswick create the most robust and well-used park system in New Jersey.

Introduction

The Healthier New Brunswick network has led an initiative to create a Blueprint for Action for improving health and wellness among residents. This led to a citywide parks assessment aimed at maximizing public spaces and parks for the benefit of citizens.

A key strategy within the blueprint is the development of a strategic plan for public spaces and parks to facilitate maximum availability of and accessibility to amenities for New Brunswick residents, and to enhance recreational programming in parks for residents.

A 2011 report by The Trust for Public Land found that “While the city has an impressive and comprehensive Park, Recreation, and Open Space Plan, it contains goals without specific deadlines or any action plan outlining how to reach them. While the city is making progress implementing some goals, the current comprehensive plan now needs a specific action plan that gives deadlines and divides responsibility for accomplishments between various public and private entities.”

Overall, New Brunswick’s park system is impressively expansive in comparison to other densely populated urban centers in the Northeast. In general, parks are widely distributed throughout the city; there is a diversity of recreational offerings; the parks are well-used by residents and nonresidents alike; and they are well-maintained, which is notable, given the high degree of usage. Additionally, prior to this project, the city identified specific needs within the park system and initiated two new park development projects that are currently under development: one on the site of the former Wolfson parking garage and a pocket park at the intersection of Welton Street and Joyce Kilmer Avenue. This report is intended to inform strategic planning to support further enhancements of the New Brunswick parks system.

The Action Plan is intended to inform efforts of city and county agencies and public councils and commissions as well as nonprofit and private organizations throughout the city. This process is not intended to repeat or replace previous efforts but rather to serve as an update, to more comprehensively inform strategic planning for the city’s park system, and to identify opportunities to enhance the current parks system in the future. This forward-looking, multiyear strategic plan can inform several components of the management of park assets, including: (1) development of recreational programming in parks that is responsive to the needs/preferences of city residents; (2) stewardship of existing parks and open spaces to protect city and public investments and maximize use; (3) enhancement of amenities in current parks to address the needs/preferences of local residents (for example, infrastructure to address safety concerns and to promote physical activity); and (4) identification of opportunities to create connections between existing outdoor recreational spaces to maximize access, particularly in geographic areas of greatest need within the city.

Overview of the New Brunswick Park System

The New Brunswick park system features 272 acres of parks, playgrounds, passive areas, athletic fields, facilities, lawns, and gardens. In 1999, the restoration of Boyd Park and the new development of Alice Jennings Archibald Park received national awards. The New Brunswick park system includes 16 parks: Youth Sports Complex, War Memorial Stadium, Kossuth Park, Simplex Park, Murphy Park, Feaster Park, Alec Baker Park, Pittman Park, Recreation Park, Buccleuch Park, Monument Square Park, Quentin Avenue Tot Lot, Archibald Park, Joyce Kilmer Park, Boyd Park, and Memorial Stadium. These sites represent a range of park types (signature parks, neighborhood parks, pocket parks, plaza/square, and special-use sports facilities) and recreation areas within the urban context that offer residents a variety of opportunities, from strolling along the Raritan River to playing tennis at an athletics complex. In recent years, there have been many improvements within the New Brunswick park system, including a complete redesign and renovation of Recreation Park, driven by a stakeholder engagement process. A summary of recent park improvements is shown in the table below.

Table 1. Summary of New Brunswick City Park Improvements as of 2017

Archibald Park	Pittman Park
Renovations	New LED solar lighting
New fitness stations	Recreation Park
Alec Baker Park	Complete renovation of park
Replanted trees	Gardens
New fitness stations	Multipurpose space
Resurfaced softball field	Skate park
Converted tennis court into soccer space	Road access
Joyce Kilmer Park	Gazebo
New baseball field	Swing set
New fitness stations	Splash pad
New storage and restroom building	Lighting
Feaster Park	War Memorial Stadium
New fitness stations	New turf field installation
New LED solar lighting	Renovated storage and locker room
Water service provided within community garden	Buccleuch Park
	Resurfaced track
	Converted baseball space to soccer area

New Brunswick Background

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the estimated population of New Brunswick is 56,910, with a population density of approximately 15 people per acre (2016). Residents who identify themselves as Hispanic or Latino are approximately 50 percent of the population. The population of Rutgers University campuses totals nearly 40,000 students. It is also worth noting that cultural activities and events in the city can attract about 400,000 people annually (City of New Brunswick, 2013).

New Brunswick is approximately 5.8 square miles in size, with the entire north border of the city, approximately 4.5 miles, bounded by the Raritan River. New Brunswick is considered a walkable community and is well-served by public transit, in addition to Rutgers Campus buses that connect the New Brunswick campus with Piscataway and North Brunswick (New Brunswick, 2013). According to the New Brunswick Master Plan, the city is nearly fully developed, with limited available vacant and developable land. Opportunities for further growth will be through redevelopment, rehabilitation, and adaptive reuse of existing buildings and space. Other remaining open space includes wetlands, woodlands, and or floodplains (New Brunswick 2004).

Park Assessment and Amenity Inventory

Members of the Rutgers University Department of Landscape Architecture conducted a site assessment for all 16 of New Brunswick's parks, a list that was confirmed by the superintendent of the Parks and Shade Tree Division for the City of New Brunswick.

For the park assessment, The Trust for Public Land created a Parks Rapid Assessment Tool (see Appendix C) to evaluate accessibility, active amenities, educational uses, supportive facilities, aesthetics, trails, and safety and maintenance conditions. In tandem with this assessment tool, evaluators also used GPS to record the precise public access points for all parks.

The New Brunswick Parks Action Plan is intended to provide a snapshot-in-time analysis to help assess and compare existing park quality, provide a baseline for future evaluations, inform decision-making regarding future investments, and accurately map accessibility for New Brunswick residents. This tool was created for spring and summer months to properly assess the quality of park features such as vegetation, sports fields, event spaces, and walking paths.

The Trust for Public Land understands that park quality is not solely based upon these factors and that there are other elements that could be included in a comprehensive analysis (such as park design and/or surrounding land-use conditions). However, the simplicity and affordability of the Parks Rapid Assessment Tool methodology makes it possible in the future for city agencies and/or the Parks and Gardens Commission, to repeat the assessment periodically to track progress for systemwide park improvements and park quality.

Inventory Methodology

In April and May of 2017, two Rutgers landscape architecture students who reside in New Brunswick conducted the site assessment for all 16 specified parks, using the TPL Parks Rapid Assessment Tool. Staff began with an initial four-hour calibration session conducted by a TPL representative to ensure consistent scoring among evaluators, beginning at Feaster Park. Each of the evaluators completed the evaluation and thoroughly assessed items under each category. When there was any discrepancy between evaluators at the end of the calibration, they discussed why a score was given to minimize any ambiguity. Since the

goal of the evaluation is to provide a comparison, or benchmark analysis, for future assessments, TPL and Rutgers University invited New Brunswick Parks and Gardens Commission members to participate in the evaluation tool training session, in case the commission would like to repeat the evaluations in subsequent years in order to assess progress. One commission member participated in the training and provided input to discussions about reasons for particular scores.

Following the calibration session, each of the two evaluators was assigned eight parks within the system. They assessed each of these parks using criteria divided into seven categories on the evaluation tool: park access, trails, active amenities, other recreational and educational uses, supportive facilities, safety and maintenance, and aesthetics. For each criterion, all parks had the possibility of achieving a perfect score of 5.0 on a scale of 1.0–5.0, in which:

- 5.0 = abundant, well provided, very attractive, excellent condition, no concerns, true, and other similar characterizations.
- 1.0 = scarce, very unappealing, very concerning, false, and other similar characterizations.

If a park did not have an element listed in the criteria (e.g., no drinking fountains present), it received a score of “N/A.” Additional descriptions of the Rapid Assessment Tool protocol regarding classification of parks and amenities, as provided by TPL, are included in Appendix C.

While on-site, the evaluators documented relevant, obvious (to the layperson) location-specific deficiencies, positive characteristics, or user habits that deserved to be highlighted. They also photographed relevant elements in the park that illustrated site conditions. Since the evaluation tool provides a snapshot-in-time, evaluators noted the date and time of each site visit for reference by the park department (e.g., to determine whether drinking fountains were not working before or after turning them on at the end of winter). In addition to scoring the criteria, the evaluators also recorded each apparent public access point to a park, using the ArcGIS Collector smartphone app for mapping analysis. Using these data points, TPL calculated a 10-minute walk range from each entrance (as opposed to the park’s general geographic location) that took potential barriers (e.g., rail lines) into account, thus creating a dynamic access range.



Fig. 1. With 16 parks offering a wide range of active and passive recreation opportunities, the City of New Brunswick is looking to the future. The Parks Action Plan assesses current park conditions and develops recommendations for potential enhancements (Photo: CUES).

Weighted Scoring

An average score for each of the seven criteria was calculated and then weighted as follows to yield an overall park score: safety and maintenance (x3), active amenities (x3), supportive facilities (x2), other recreational and educational facilities (x2), access (x2), aesthetics (x1), and trails (x1).

Weights were initially assigned to reflect feedback received from public outreach conducted by the Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy at Rutgers University, then later vetted by the Parks and Gardens Commission. For example, because public outreach indicated a concern within the community about park safety, each park’s average score for that category was multiplied by 3, whereas the trail quality score, which did not seem a significant priority, based on public feedback, remained the same (i.e., multiplied by 1). Thus, high or low safety scores influenced a park’s overall score more than high or low trail scores. Weighted averages from the seven categories were then added and converted back to a 1.0–5.0 scale in a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet, yielding an overall weighted park score. Raw scores from all park evaluations are in Appendix C for reference, should community needs in the future require weights that are different from those used in the 2017 evaluations.

Park Scoring

Final weighted scores for the overall condition of the parks are listed in Table 2, from highest to lowest score. Overall, evaluators agreed that the final weighted scores generally reflect the impressions they received of conditions in the parks at the time of assessment. Of the parks receiving the highest scores, Monument Square Park is a very well-maintained plaza in the heart of the downtown theater and shopping district. Recreation Park received a complete redesign in recent years, and Boyd Park and Buccleuch Park are the New Brunswick parks system’s two signature parks. Mid-scoring parks all had some great assets as well as several opportunities for improvement. The lowest-scoring parks, despite their individual assets, all had some measure of isolation or other safety concern. The weighted scores are consistent with comments made during public outreach and initial impressions gathered during the Parks and Gardens Commission inventory. Park-specific scores, assessments, and analyses are included later in this report.

Table 2. Final weighted scores the 16 New Brunswick parks, ordered highest to lowest.

Park Name	Final Weighted Score
Monument Square Park	4.75
Recreation Park	4.64
Boyd Park	4.05
Buccleuch Park	3.86
Joyce Kilmer Park	3.78
Youth Sports Complex	3.66
War Memorial Park	3.60
Memorial Stadium	3.56
Kossuth Park	3.54
Archibald Park	3.45
Pittman Park	3.39
Feaster Park	3.10
Simplex Park	2.81
Murphy Park	2.54
Quentin Avenue Tot Lot	2.23
Alec Baker Park	2.08

It is important to note, however, that the Rapid Assessment Tool and scoring process have limitations; even with public feedback guiding the weighting system, the overall scores alone do not necessarily reflect how much people use a particular park or whether they feel comfortable in it. The most notable example of this issue is War Memorial Park, which received a score of 3.60. Although this park scored well based on the safety evaluation criteria because it has many design elements conducive to safety (clear sight lines, more than one entrance, surrounding sidewalks, and such), the reality on the ground is different (see War Memorial Park Analysis). Based on the site evaluation visit, this park was found to have an

uncomfortable ambiance, dominated by two specific groups whose use of the park, in combination with the park's physical layout, discourages other users, particularly women and children, from entering it. It stands in striking contrast to Monument Square Park, which has a remarkably similar shape and surrounding traffic patterns but has a completely different ambiance and welcoming appearance.

For this reason, the daily experience of community members and their understanding of the nuances of a specific site's use patterns are a critical complement to the periodic park assessments. Informal conversations with the parks superintendent and attentive groundskeepers also revealed many insights and user dynamics, making them important partners in improving park safety and conditions.

Systemwide Observations Based on Park Assessment

During the park assessments, a number of systemwide observations were documented:

Good park distribution, with a range of recreational experiences

- The City of New Brunswick has done an admirable job of setting aside portions of land throughout the city for passive and active recreation for its residents. The park system comprises open space of varying sizes, shapes, and amenities that already offer residents a range of experiential opportunities—from birding and fishing along the Raritan River to working out and playing basketball at Feaster Park or meandering through horticultural display gardens at Buccleuch Park.
- Basic routine maintenance and investment (of varying degrees) was evident across all parks.
- Although physical conditions of the parks vary a great deal, at most parks, basic routine maintenance (regularly cutting lawns, emptying garbage receptacles, and such) is very good. In fact, in some cases, the grounds appear impeccably maintained. In addition, investments (of varying size and type) have been made in all the parks to enhance park conditions for users. For example, almost all playgrounds have relatively new play equipment.
- High use was noted at several parks, and there is good potential for more.
- Several of the parks appear to attract many park users, and even the lower-scoring parks have good potential for attracting regular and more frequent visitors.

Some evidence of sensitivity to user comfort

- In many parks, strategic placement of seating in the shade and near activity areas exemplifies sensitivity to user comfort. Similarly, main activities are often clustered, promoting ease of use, safety, and a dynamic feeling in those areas.

Diligent maintenance staff with understanding of park use nuances

- Maintenance employees encountered during the evaluations were friendly and busy at work, yet attentive to the rhythms of park use. As mentioned previously, conversations with the Parks Division indicate a clear understanding of not only the physical condition of each park but also the nuances of visitor behaviors. Nevertheless, during the process of analyzing individual parks and providing specific suggestions for their enhancement, several issues emerged across the entire park system that, if successfully addressed, would increase use, public enjoyment, and better returns on the city's park investments.

Suggested Action Steps

1. Correct specific maintenance deficits that limit use and impair visitor perception of parks.

HIGH Short-Term Priority, Quick Fix

Although lawn mowing and other basic maintenance appears to be carried out routinely, poor conditions at certain active amenities and supportive facilities (particularly swing set areas and seating) significantly detract from the overall appearance and enjoyment of some of the parks. Weeds growing through mulch and exposed filter fabric in swing wells instantly make a park look more rundown, as does broken seating, which is also uncomfortable or potentially hazardous to use. Public outreach comments also mention the need for a higher level of maintenance/repairs. Addressing this situation would result in high-impact, relatively inexpensive improvements.

Action: Invest in more frequent maintenance/repairs of active amenities and supportive facilities, perhaps in partnership with a Friends of the Parks” or “Adopt-a-Park initiative.

2. Monitor user behaviors and modify physical elements that constitute potential safety concerns.

HIGH Short-Term Priority

Alec Baker, Feaster, Joyce Kilmer, and War Memorial Parks (and, to a certain extent, Boyd Park) all had either physical elements or evidence of user behaviors that constitute potential safety concerns. This list coincides with public opinions voiced at focus groups regarding park safety. According to community feedback, some residents are going to parks outside of the city due to safety concerns in their neighborhood park. While strategic design interventions could help reduce the potential for concern at many of the sites, a periodic authority presence is needed in some of the parks.

Alec Baker Park provides an excellent example. The park feels very isolated because it lacks clear views to the street, which attracts and emboldens certain user groups who participate in undesirable behaviors. Public comment indicated a concern regarding alcohol and drug use, particularly by groups of teens. The concerns are not unfounded. One Rutgers evaluator experienced an incident with a teen swinging a baseball bat that made him and a female guest feel physically unsafe, while on a separate visit, a CUES staff member witnessed a group of teens burning objects on a wooden park table near the playground, leaving a large charred hole. On a separate occasion, simply the presence of a large group of loud young men (not threatening anyone) was enough to tip the ease and balance of the park atmosphere, injecting a certain sense of guardedness and heightened awareness of when the teens were approaching.

Although more programming and certain design strategies (such as additional and more visible entrances or the addition of highly desired amenities to draw visitors) could help encourage greater use of Baker Park to build more social control, there is a need (certainly at the beginning) for a periodic, casual authority presence to help remind wayward users that the site is monitored and not theirs to control. As one parent put it, “Parks are for everyone, and I try to live and let live, but I would feel more comfortable letting my kids play here if the police just walked through every so often to maintain a balance.” Similarly, at Joyce Kilmer Park, many of the negative behaviors that concern the public are happening in the open at this highly used park. Design interventions may not be enough to discourage the undesirable behaviors that concern parents.

In other cases, a perception of historical unsavory park behavior or uncertainty about safety does not necessarily reflect a crime problem, but the perception alone may be enough to keep some visitors from

using certain parks and areas. For example, the physical and visual isolation of the northern Boyd Park towpath from other activity areas may be enough to discourage women from walking along it, especially when all-male groups or individuals linger on the path, simply because if a problem did arise, there would be no help nearby. Thus, establishing a periodic authority presence at particular parks, along with encouraging more park visitation in all parks (through more robust programming, design interventions, and such), could help to create a climate in which all people feel safe in the parks.

Action: Establish a casual, periodic authority presence (police or park ranger walk-through) at Alec Baker, Feaster, Joyce Kilmer, Boyd, and War Memorial Parks (and others as needed) to discourage undesirable behaviors and promote a feeling of safety in the parks. This can be combined with more robust programming and specific design interventions aimed at creating a park climate in which people feel safe.

3. Address lack of awareness that may limit public use.

Short-Term Priority, Quick Fix

Public outreach comments, as well as comments by a number of residents encountered during the site evaluation process, revealed a need for better community awareness of the parks and programs at their disposal. The evaluators sometimes found it challenging to find entrances to certain parks or to know which amenities were part of the park due to lack of signage, and the New Brunswick Parks web page only highlights certain parks and programs. Adding all parks to the New Brunswick Parks web page with locations of entrances, a list of amenities indicated by universal icons, and attractive photos, would be a relatively quick step toward improving awareness of the city's parks. One solution may be using technology (such as a parks app) to provide an interactive amenity search, programming schedules and updates, and other useful information. This would be very helpful in increasing park use. City agencies have made an effort to ensure that all communication materials are available in both English and Spanish, which is critical and should be standard practice. Reaching out to community organizations to alert them to programs and opportunities is also advisable to maximize communications success.

Action: Add all parks and public bicycle paths to the New Brunswick Parks web page, with locations of entrances, lists of amenities with universal icons, and attractive photos. Reviewing all communication materials to ensure that they are available in both English and Spanish would be helpful. Identifying community-based organizations, social service providers, houses of worship, and other organizations to “get the word out” about programs and parks opportunities may also be effective.

4. Provide adequate supportive amenities to allow comfortable use.

HIGH Short-Term Priority

Not all parks have seating in shaded areas, and not all parks have unlocked restrooms, which makes it more challenging for families with children to spend extended time in the park. Although some parks, such as Murphy Park, provide shaded seating near playgrounds, many others (including Feaster Park) do not, making a visit to the park uncomfortable for parents trying to supervise children or for seniors trying to relax. Public comments also noted that the restrooms would benefit from more frequent cleaning.

Action: Provide more supportive amenities, such as unlocked restrooms (where feasible) and shaded seating, that facilitate extended family enjoyment of the parks.

5. Create unified signage to increase public awareness and contribute to a perception that the parks are cared for.

HIGH Short-Term Priority, Relatively Inexpensive

Currently, the most unifying feature of the parks is the bilingual traffic light sign reminding visitors not to litter. Unified and branded signage that identifies each park's name would help raise awareness of hidden parks, drawing more eyes into the park for social control, and would also contribute to an overall visual message that each park is cared for and monitored by the city. As budget permits and replacements become necessary, other elements of the branding strategy could be implemented.

Action: Develop a strong, updated signage and branding strategy with elements that unify the parks (signage, fixtures, etc.) across the system.

6. Protect trees from damage that endangers city investments.

Short-Term, Quick Fix

Trees in the parks exhibited damage consistent with maintenance equipment cuts, which could precipitate early tree death. Although this issue may not be on the public's radar, a relatively easy fix could help protect the city's investments so that critical funds can be invested in additional amenities and upgrades desired by the public, rather than in replacing trees that perished unnecessarily early.

Action: Train maintenance ground crews in more tree-sensitive approaches to lawn care to avoid trunk damage.

7. Provide greater internal park circulation routes and ADA access, which is lacking in some parks.

Mid-Term Priority

Path systems that connect entrances to amenities and link activity areas to each other help to draw people into underutilized spaces (especially if the paths are looped), encouraging visitors to use the whole park, thus reducing isolated pockets. Paved paths also allow access by seniors and residents with special needs. Access and circulation goes beyond paths, however. In some cases, simply providing an extra entrance to a swing set area (e.g., at Murphy Park) would go a long way toward ensuring that grandparents can easily supervise children at the park.

Action: Provide amenities that facilitate park enjoyment by visitors with special needs (ADA-accessible looped trails, inclusive playground design, and other features).

8. Enhance park aesthetics.

Mid-Term Priority, Relatively Quick Fix

Areas that lack visual interest, clear purpose, and human scale tend to become underutilized, "dead" spaces. All of the New Brunswick Parks could benefit from strategic deployment of low, colorful plantings that draw visitors into park areas. Increasing use of the parks is a key element in improving park safety, encouraging longer use. Defining family gathering spaces and providing "segmented" play areas were among the changes requested during public outreach. In addition, plantings can also help soften hard edges, enhance sensory stimulation, and increase biodiversity.

Action: Incorporate low, colorful plantings to help to draw visitors into parks by providing variation, a sense of human scale and defined space in areas dominated by expanses of grass and shade trees. Explore partnerships with garden clubs and local organizations to establish volunteer planting programs at individual parks that will enhance plantings and develop stronger volunteer support for parks.

9. Promote the arts and cultural expression in the New Brunswick park system.

Long-Term Priority, Potentially Low Cost (depending on the partnership)

New Brunswick has a wonderfully vibrant arts scene, from the Theater District and youth arts programs to the Mason Gross School of the Arts at Rutgers. Incorporating the arts into some of the parks through partnerships with local art programs could help infuse character, color, and social interaction within the parks, helping to promote safety. Public outreach comments indicated interest in seeing the arts more integrated into the park landscapes.

Action: Infuse parks with the arts, perhaps in partnership with the Rutgers’ Mason Gross School of the Arts, local theaters, other members of the local arts community, and Friends of the Parks groups. Explore partnerships with arts organizations to establish summer arts events in the larger parks.

10. Create unique and engaging identities for individual parks.

Long-Term Priority

Although the parks have different shapes, contexts, and site features (such as a bridge over a stream), most do not have a well-developed individual identity. For example, almost all of the playground equipment is of the same design and therefore does not provide an incentive to visit a specific city park. Since public comments indicated that residents are going to parks outside the city in search of new stimulation, it would be beneficial to provide a wider range of experiences within the New Brunswick park system to draw residents back to city parks and, in doing so, make them feel safer. Developing an individual plan for each park’s identity and the amenities that will support it (e.g., water features in neighborhoods with lots of children) could help guide effective use of future investments. Identity inspiration could be drawn from the surrounding community (for example, art forms that relate to local culture) or even a park’s history or namesake (such as Joyce Kilmer).

Action: Develop a distinct identity for each park, with emphasis on celebrating (or creating) unique site features to enhance user experience and offer a wider variety within the city to New Brunswick residents.



Fig. 2. Mural at Boyd Park Amphitheater (Photo: CUES).

11. Continue to incorporate sustainable practices into city parks.

Long-Term Priority

Solar lighting at parks such as Pittman Park and Feaster Park allows families to use parks after parents get out of work and improves evening safety (both actions that were requested in public outreach feedback). Other steps toward greater sustainability that should be explored include stormwater best management practices (e.g., bioswales) to capture and treat rainwater onsite as well as habitat quality enhancements (such as pollinator and bird-friendly plantings) that can simultaneously provide greater aesthetic and ecological value to the parks.

Action: Incorporate more sustainable management practices and enhancements, particularly in regards to storm water to help capture and treat it on site (e.g., rain gardens), perhaps in partnership with Rutgers University.

Park Analysis

Table 3 summarizes the main assets and opportunities for each park, while Tables 4A–4D summarize the major amenities supported by each park. More robust park-specific assessments and recommendations are included in the following sections. Each park write-up includes: a summary of observations with photos illustrating conditions in the park, a general description of each park and its context within the city, a summary of park conditions for each of the seven criteria that influenced scoring (see Appendix C for a complete list of raw scores), an analysis and recommendations for future enhancement listed by short-, mid- and long-term time frames.

Park-specific write-ups were based primarily on conditions observed during initial observation and scoring, although pertinent observations made on follow-up visits by Rutgers staff were also incorporated to help provide a fuller representation of the park and thus more useful recommendations. Comments made during public outreach were considered in forming specific recommendations for each park; where public concerns (e.g., a safety issue) were not observed during site evaluation, the recommendation was still included, noting that it was based on public comment rather than site observation. Although the order in which recommendations are eventually implemented may vary based on resource availability and scheduling, in general, park-specific recommendations were prioritized as follows:

Short-Term Recommendations:

- To complete relatively easy, important repairs (e.g., fix a broken bench) that enhance user experience and signal that this space is cared for;
- To address immediate safety concerns that keep people out of the park (e.g., walk-throughs by authority presence);
- To perform relatively inexpensive upgrades desired by the public that enhance access and experience (e.g., add a picnic table to a particular location); and
- To make decisions that could impact mid- to long-term investments (e.g., decide whether a baseball field will be converted to other recreational use).

Mid-Term Recommendations:

- To address circulation/access/maintenance issues that require moderate investment (e.g., redesign park entrances); and
- To add less imperative amenities of moderate expense (e.g., add low, colorful plantings).

Long-Term Recommendations:

- To undertake significant site alterations where needed (e.g., regrade topography that creates a potential for unsafe situations by limiting views from the street);
- To add more expensive amenities desired by the public (e.g., add splash pad);
- To take steps that are not immediately necessary but would help develop a unique identity for the park in the long term (e.g., incorporate elements that celebrate and highlight a park feature or other form of inspiration); and
- To investigate new opportunities for programming or partnerships (e.g., collaborate with Mason Gross School to incorporate art in the parks).

Note: Scores for criteria categories in this section refer to the raw scores, rather than weighted scores. Because current community input shaped the weighting system significantly and those weighting preferences may vary over time, indicating raw scores here will facilitate easy comparison during future evaluations to track progress.

Table 3. Summary of Park Main Assets and Notable Opportunities for Enhancement

PARK NAME	MAIN ASSETS	MAIN CHALLENGES	NOTABLE OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENHANCEMENT
<p>Alec Baker Park <i>Neighborhood Park</i> 7.30 acres</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nice range of activities • Playground and basketball courts heavily used • Lots of residents within walking distance • Pleasant wooded area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tucked away location makes it hard to see into park; feels isolated when not many users present • Only main entrance identified; desire paths at other points in perimeter • No clear layout & circulation • Safety concerns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance & add entrances for better access and visibility • Install exercise loops • Add water feature • Convert tennis?
<p>Archibald Park <i>Neighborhood Park</i> 10.35 acres</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Great variety of active recreation options • Wonderful wetland area • Adjacent residential & school • Restrooms • Close to Quentin Avenue Tot Lot 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some repairs needed • Entrances could use more visibility & welcoming feel • No path system throughout park to connect amenities • More shaded seating needed • Desire path by wetland 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repair pavilion roof • Enhance entrances & signage for access • Add shaded seating near sports fields/courts • Walking loop system • Wetland boardwalk • Connect to Quentin Ave Tot Lot
<p>Boyd Park <i>Signature Park</i> 20.00</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Linear park along river • Clear urban style • Amphitheater, playground, historic elements, walk/bike path • Very peaceful along river & great wildlife viewing • Good clustering of activities • Bathrooms on site 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Route 18 creates physical and perceived barrier to access • North areas (especially towpath) could use some maintenance; can feel isolated here • Interpretive signage missing or dated • Southern terminus feels like a dead end, rather than a destination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shuttle pilot project & steps to facilitate safe, comfortable access • Increase maintenance in wilder areas • Update historical signage • Add amenities like fitness circuit & programming on underutilized lawns • Incorporate vacant land (kayak rentals?) • Connect promenade to conservation lands?

PARK NAME	MAIN ASSETS	MAIN CHALLENGES	NOTABLE OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENHANCEMENT
Buccleuch Park <i>Signature Park</i> 78.12 acres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lovely, heavily used signature park • Good overall circulation and maintenance • Lots of open lawns provide flexible space for activity and events • Picnic pavilion, courts, sports fields, fitness circuit and playground very popular • So many different options in one park 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soccer field needs to be completed • Poor ADA access at entrances and to amenities • Road and path systems disconnected • Some vast lawn areas appear underutilized 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete soccer field • Provide ADA entrances and paths throughout park • Update road & improve connection to pedestrian path network • Update fitness circuit • Add splash pad • Create shaded game tables plaza • Collaborate with hospital to promote wellness in the park
Feaster Park <i>Neighborhood Park</i> 5.04 acres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Popular location in active neighborhood • Basketball courts and fitness stations heavily used • Tables & benches frequently used • Historic feature • Community garden 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topography creates whole areas unable to be seen from street and sidewalk • Playground disrepair and graffiti • More shaded seating needed, especially at playground; users moving furniture • Expanses of lawn dwarf human scale • Safety concerns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In short-term, make essential repairs • Add periodic authority presence for safety • Clarify on-street parking • In long-term, re-design park to address topography-related visibility issues • Add splash pad • Create strong physical and visual connection to adjacent Pittman Park
Joyce Kilmer Park <i>Neighborhood Park</i> 3.87 acres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heavily used • Nice variety of active and passive amenities • Location has lots of pedestrian traffic on sidewalks • Good clustering of activities • Bathrooms on site 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Groups of teens/adults and alcohol/substance abuse contribute to safety concerns • Park entrances not very visible and conducive to drawing people into the park 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add periodic authority presence for safety • Improve park entrance visibility & circulation • Add skate park & splash pad • Integrate Joyce Kilmer as unique identity inspiration

PARK NAME	MAIN ASSETS	MAIN CHALLENGES	NOTABLE OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENHANCEMENT
Kossuth Park <i>Neighborhood Park</i> 0.87 acres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nice open perimeter along quiet street welcomes visitors in Good shade trees Playground for kids Quiet ambiance in area with high population of seniors Open blacktop area has potential 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Looks a little dated Drainage issue Not much for seniors Limited facilities to support sports in an area underserved with active amenities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Turn blacktop into compact soccer space + basketball half court Investigate community playground concerns Enhance plantings Re-vamp picnic area as picnic and game table plaza
Memorial Stadium <i>Special Use Park</i> 15.00 acres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Great new field and bleachers Sports amenities very well maintained! Sidewalk along one entire side of park School & residential nearby Bathrooms on site 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Entrance does not welcome visitors in; parking is unclear High chain-link fence without softening elements makes it seem like public is not welcome at off-peak times Back areas without visibility from street can feel isolated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance entrance & clarify parking Add more shaded seating Low colorful plantings along sidewalk Stormwater best management practices Walking loop
Monument Square Park <i>Plaza/Square</i> 0.16 acres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Heavily used Site furnishings in great condition Water feature Historical features Excellent connectivity to streets Clear urban styling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some trash collecting under plants No identifying signage Park doesn't provide many new experiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remove trash under plantings Identify park name Allow more visual access to water feature Collaborate with local arts community to bring arts into the park
Murphy Park <i>Neighborhood Park</i> 3.48 acres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lovely shaded picnic near playgrounds Clustered activities Nice tennis courts & heavily used basketball courts Adjacent school helps to activate this tucked away park 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can feel isolated Only main entrance is identified, but parking is confusing Two main activity clusters not connected visually or physically; baseball field cuts park in two Solid fences of adjacent homes and dead vines on utility right-of-way make park feel forgotten 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance entrances Plantings along solid fences Convert baseball field to other use? Connect two activity areas via path More programming New amenities

PARK NAME	MAIN ASSETS	MAIN CHALLENGES	NOTABLE OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENHANCEMENT
Pittman Park <i>Pocket Park</i> 0.91 acres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Park sees fair bit of use • Impressive central tree provides focal point • Historic headstones add interesting cultural layer • Pleasant flowering trees along street • Paths in great condition • New solar lights 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No seating at all in this lovely passive use park • No link to Feaster Park to attract more through traffic • Essentially no identifying signage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add seating • Add tables for eating & games • Visually and physically link to the new Feaster Park design • Celebrate the parks out into the street • Add water feature (e.g. fountain) perhaps • Take on role of passive park while Feaster has more active recreation vibe
Quentin Avenue Tot Lot <i>Pocket Park*</i> 1.14 acres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Playground in good condition • Small open lawn offers flexible space for young children to play • Close proximity to neighborhood • Natural area provides pleasing backdrop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High chain-link fence does not feel welcoming • Entrances are not well identified nor enticing • No ADA access in park • Few supportive or active amenities • Not much color or variation for kids 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Replace high chain-link fence with low fence & plantings to welcome community in while containing children • Add signage and crosswalks at entrances • Install path, drinking fountain, portajohn • Develop connection to Archibald Park
Recreation Park <i>Neighborhood Park</i> 11.28 acres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Park sees lots of use • Only splash pad and skate park in the parks system are very popular • Open lawns provide flexible space for sports and events • ADA paths and most amenities in excellent, new condition • Clear, urban sense of style 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of shaded seating for parents at hot, busy splash pad area is summer • Vast expanses of lawn dwarf human scale • Not much promotion of park on the streets • Edges not really encouraging people into the park to utilize whole site 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add additional shaded seating around site, especially near splash pad for parents • Add low, colorful plantings to help soften and improve human scale • Celebrate the parks out into the street for greater awareness • Incorporate art to help activate park edges and draw visitors in at off-peak times

PARK NAME	MAIN ASSETS	MAIN CHALLENGES	NOTABLE OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENHANCEMENT
Simplex Park <i>Pocket Park</i> 0.34 acres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quiet park in residential neighborhood • Large playground • Basketball half court in spite of park size • Some shaded seating 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feels somewhat isolated • Needs more shaded seating • Graffiti, litter, cut fence to cemetery • Odd playground wall configuration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add identifying signage to improve visibility from street • Add shaded pavilion playground concerns • Add colorful plantings
War Memorial Park <i>Plaza/Square</i> 0.41 acres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Located in bustling commercial area with lots of pedestrian traffic • Very open lines of sight • Adds green element to the streetscape • Historic feature 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broken benches and substantial amounts of missing wall block lend a rundown appearance • Groups of male users sitting in entrances make passing through uncomfortable • No seating in center • Not much to draw visitors in • Alcohol & substance abuse sometimes; safety concerns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In short-term, make essential repairs • Add periodic authority presence for safety • In long-term, redesign plaza for access and use by wider range of population and more flexibility of space for programming
Youth Sports Complex <i>Special Use Park</i> 13.99 acres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heavily used during programmed sports • Most sports fields in good condition • Bathrooms on site • Picnic area on site • Overall good clustering of activities • Nice bridge crossing stream with wooded buffer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feels empty at off-peak hours • High chain-link fence makes it seem that public is not welcome outside of programmed events • Isolated soccer field is secluded • Gates sometimes locked & pedestrian entrances not apparent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convert a baseball diamond to soccer? • Add paths to improve circulation and ADA access • New design for isolated soccer field area • Remove perimeter fence to welcome community in off-peak hours

Table 4A–4D. Major Amenities by Park (Per Rapid Assessment Tool Criteria)

Park Name	MAJOR AMENITIES					
	Natural Area	Playground	Picnic Area	Splash Pad	Fitness Station	Skate Park
Alec Baker Park		●			●	
Archibald Park		●	●			
Boyd Park	●	●	●			
Buccleuch Park		●	●		●	
Feaster Park		●			●	
Joyce Kilmer Park		●	●		●	
Kossuth Park		●				
Memorial Stadium						
Monument Square Park						
Murphy Park		●	●		●	
Pittman Park						
Quentin Avenue Tot Lot		●				
Recreation Park		●		●	●	●
Simplex Park		●				
War Memorial Park						
Youth Sports Complex			●			

Park Name	MAJOR AMENITIES				
	Open Lawn	Water Feature	Historic Feature	Horticultural Display Garden	Community Garden
Alec Baker Park	●		●		
Archibald Park	●				
Boyd Park	●		●		
Buccleuch Park	●		●	●	
Feaster Park	●		●		●
Joyce Kilmer Park	●				
Kossuth Park					
Memorial Stadium	●				
Monument Square Park		●	●		
Murphy Park			●		
Pittman Park			●		
Quentin Avenue Tot Lot					
Recreation Park	●				●
Simplex Park					
War Memorial Park			●		
Youth Sports Complex					

	MAJOR AMENITIES				
Park Name	Performance Space	Community Center	Boat Launch	Visitor Info Booth	Athletic Field
Alec Baker Park					●
Archibald Park					●
Boyd Park	●		●		
Buccleuch Park		●			●
Feaster Park					●
Joyce Kilmer Park					●
Kossuth Park					
Memorial Stadium					●
Monument Square Park					
Murphy Park					●
Pittman Park					
Quentin Avenue Tot Lot					
Recreation Park					●
Simplex Park					●
War Memorial Park					
Youth Sports Complex				●	●

	ATHLETIC FIELDS/COURTS				
Park Name	Soccer/ Football	Baseball/ Softball	Tennis	Basketball	Volleyball
Alec Baker Park		●	●	●	
Archibald Park	●	●	●	●	
Boyd Park					
Buccleuch Park	●	●	●	●	●
Feaster Park				●	
Joyce Kilmer Park		●		●	
Kossuth Park					
Memorial Stadium	●	●	●		
Monument Square Park					
Murphy Park		●	●	●	
Pittman Park					
Quentin Avenue Tot Lot					
Recreation Park				●	
Simplex Park				●	
War Memorial Park					
Youth Sports Complex	●	●			

Individual Park Analyses

The next section of this report includes individual park analyses for the sixteen parks in New Brunswick. Each park analysis includes an inventory of amenities, a map of observations, park context, an overview of existing conditions, an analysis based on observation, and a list of recommendations.

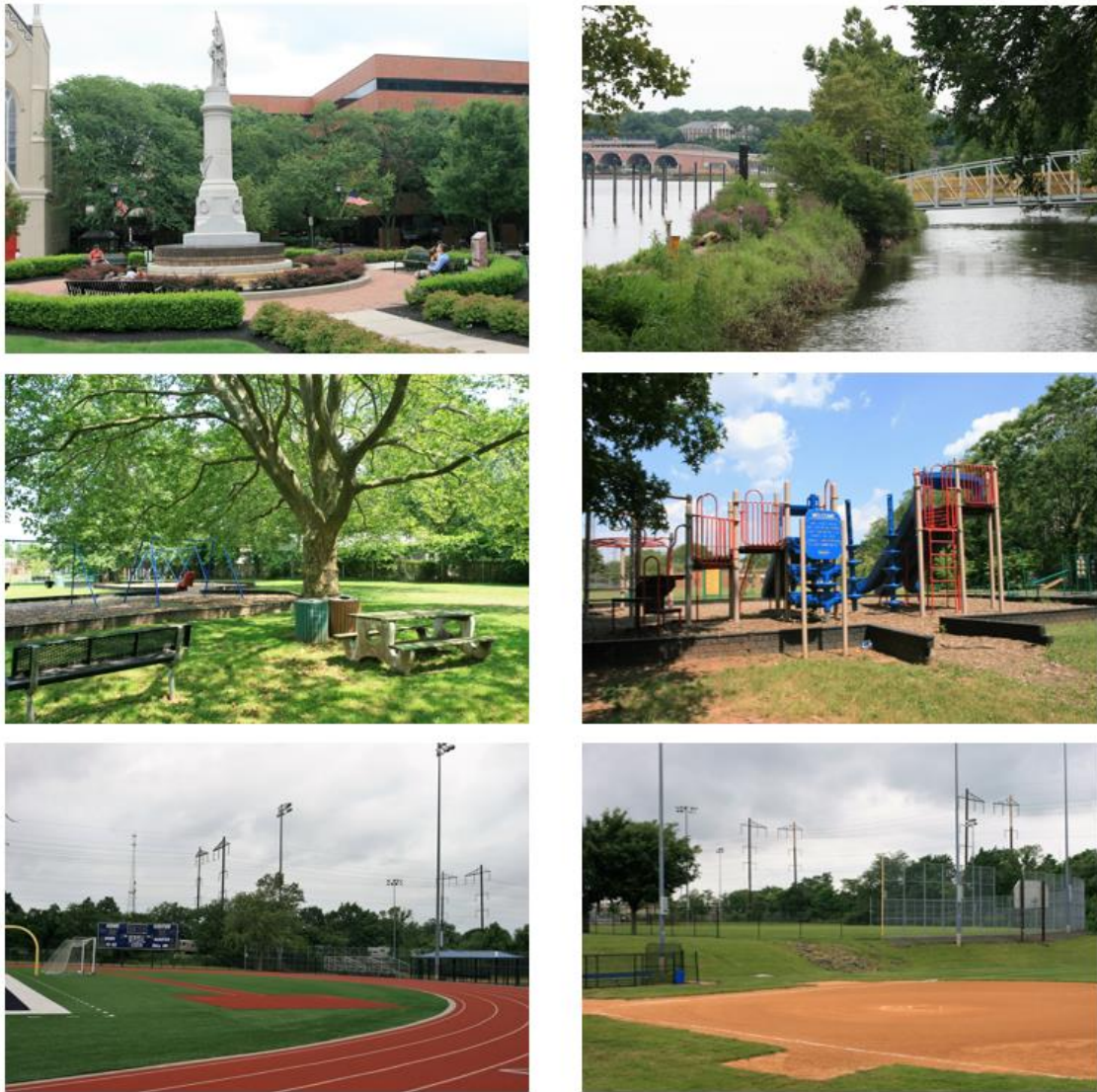
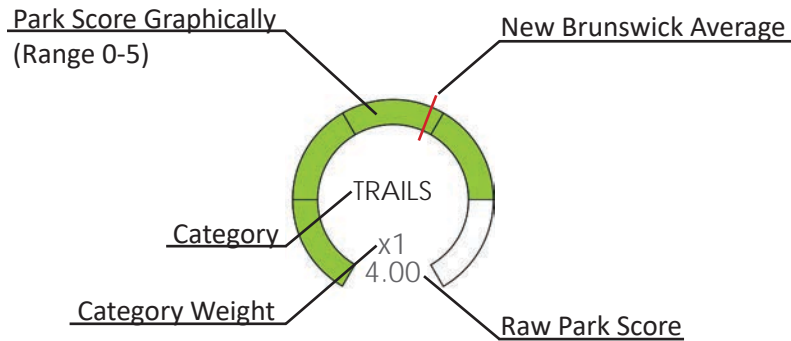


Figure 3. New Brunswick parks offer residents a range of recreational opportunities (Photos: CUES).

AMENITY ICONS



PARK SCORE DIAL



MISC. ICONS



ALEC BAKER PARK

AMENITIES



OBSERVATIONS

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| ① SIDEWALKS & BIKE LANES ALONG STREET | ① EASY TO MISS MAIN ENTRANCE |
| ② OPEN SIGHT LINES IN PARK | ② NO SIGN IDENTIFYING PARK ENTRANCE |
| ③ PLEASANT WOODED AREA WITH BIRDS | ③ NO PATH CONNECTING AMENITIES |
| ④ PORTAJOHN | ④ BASKETBALL FENCING DOWN IN PLACES |
| ⑤ PICNIC TABLES & JUMPING ROPE ON BLACKTOP | ⑤ DESIRE PATHS INTO PARK |
| ⑥ FLEXIBLE LAWN SPACE | ⑥ DAMAGED FENCING |
| ⑦ SHADED SEATING FOR PLAYGROUND PARENTS | |
| ⑧ BASKETBALL COURTS POPULAR | |

MAP OF OBSERVATIONS



CONTEXT

Located on the City's southern border with North Brunswick, Alec Baker Park is one of New Brunswick's least visible parks in spite of its 7.3 acres, tucked behind single family residential homes along Remsen Avenue between Ellen and Loretta Streets. A multi-family residential complex forms the park's northern border with a wooded stream buffer and Elmwood Cemetery composing the southern boundary. The Youth Sports Complex lies only 3 blocks northwest.

PARK DESCRIPTION

Alec Baker Park's main entrance lies on Remsen Ave near the intersection with Ellen Street. Upon entering via a straight paved path that terminates at a drinking fountain, visitors see the main activity areas: a baseball field due southeast, and to the southwest, a tennis court, playground, and fitness station. Two basketball courts and an open field are situated just south of the playground and baseball field respectively.

In contrast, the southwest portion of the park near the secondary entrance across from May Street provides a quiet, shaded environment in which to relax along the forested stream buffer. A paved maintenance road leads visitors into the park past a portajohn and dappled shade lawn to the north, and a pleasant, woodland area to the south. The road ends at a blacktop area south of the basketball courts, where families can enjoy a snack at the picnic tables or jump rope.



① ENTRANCE TO PARK



② POOR DRAINAGE



③ DOWNED TREE ON ROAD



④ MEMORIAL STONE



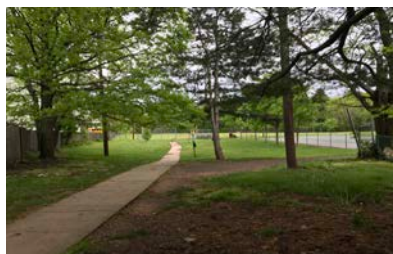
⑤ BASEBALL DIAMOND FLOODED



⑥ ENTRANCE AT DEVELOPMENT



⑦ MAINTENANCE ENTRANCE



⑧ PATH FROM ENTRANCE



⑨ NO TENNIS COURT NET/FENCE

ALEC BAKER PARK

EXISTING CONDITIONS



ACCESS

With most of the park hidden behind houses and the main entrance tucked between two adjacent homes, this park is very easy to miss. Recent landscaping and identifying signage help make the entrance more apparent, although the size and color of the sign blend in with the background landscape. Remsen Avenue has sidewalks on both sides, dedicated bike lanes, and periodic traffic-calming devices, but no crosswalk connects directly to the main entrance, which would help drivers to take notice of it. The same is true for the secondary entrance, although it does not have the benefit of landscaping and signage—just a locked chain-link gate across the access road with a small door open to let people enter. Green trees in the distance are the only indication that a park lies beyond. Along the northern border of the park, breaks in the boundary fencing evidence some foot traffic between the park and adjacent housing.

The park does not offer bike or vehicular parking, but the street provides ample room to park cars. ADA access into the park is fairly good (although one segment of sidewalk near the main entrance is quite disintegrated), but there is no path network within the park (other than some desire paths) to provide ADA circulation to or between amenities.



TRAILS

The only paved path in the park (besides the cracked and heaving access road) leads straight from the main entrance to the drinking fountain. It is very serviceable in spite of some cracking and minor heaving. The condition of the access road does not provide quality ADA circulation, but some residents do use it for walking. An old gravel path (with little remaining gravel), leads from the main entrance down toward the playground, and desire paths have developed over time between access points and amenities, indicating visitors' preferred routes.



ACTIVE RECREATION AMENITIES

On the day of evaluation, the park was still recovering from a previous rain event, with active amenities like the fitness station and baseball diamond still covered in pools of water and mud, suggesting a drainage issue. During finer weather, both of these amenities have been in decent condition, although the fitness station has no explanatory signage. The tennis courts lack a net and fencing, and portions of fencing around the highly-used basketball court have been removed or damaged. Although extensively tagged with graffiti, the playground equipment appears sound and sees a great deal of use by happy young visitors. The swings sets also appear popular.



OTHER RECREATIONAL & EDUCATIONAL USES

An open lawn in average condition provides flexible space for a wide range of programming from children's group activities to soccer practice, as well as potential neighborhood events.



SUPPORTIVE FACILITIES

The park offers a variety of benches and picnic benches, most of which are located in shade near activity areas and see a great deal of use. Visitors apparently move the picnic tables around (e.g. to the corner of the basketball courts) to achieve desired comfort and maintain proximity to children playing. The portajohn, though located away from main activity areas, does provide restroom facilities. Similarly, the drinking fountain is a nice concept, although it could use some work; the drain appears to periodically clog and water pools around the base after rain events, soaking visitors' shoes. The park's existing trash receptacles are strategically located close to high use areas. On evaluation day, the park had only a moderate amount of litter, although on a subsequent visit there was a tremendous proliferation in the park. Litter was even strewn close to partially-filled receptacles, indicating that the problem lies in user behavior rather than the number or placement of garbage cans. Bleachers by the baseball field could benefit from a little shade as they currently sit in full sun.



SAFETY & MAINTENANCE

After a rain event, drainage issues in the park make it appear in significantly worse condition than the other parks. Even during more clement weather, in spite of regular basic maintenance that occurs, this park could use a fair bit of work. The perimeter fencing has a variety of breaks or sections falling down. Similarly, the basketball courts are in good condition, but crumpled or removed sections pull its appearance down. Drainage issues around the site need remediation, and some of the young perimeter trees in the north are dead. In addition, some filter fabric is exposed in the swing set wells. On one visit, one parent wondered aloud why a large pile of mulch blocking swings had not been spread out at the time of delivery so as to not inhibit use and make the park look unkempt.

A number of the maintenance issues stem from problematic user behavior. On one visit, a CUES staff member witnessed teens burning items on a wooden table, producing a large, charred hole (and the group sauntered away leaving objects still smoldering). If fact, undesirable behavior has been a reoccurring theme at this park, both in public outreach and during evaluations, contributing to safety concerns. On top of the park's rather isolated, hidden feel, groups of teens hanging out in the park smoking and cursing (according to one parent in the park) inject an uncomfortable presence, while an evaluator and guest felt physically threatened in a bat-swinging incident. Although no evidence of alcohol or substance abuse were evident during initial evaluation, on a subsequent visit beer bottles were found under trees at the main entrance and members of the public expressed a suspicion of drug use. Given the isolation of the park, just the appearance of large groups of male teens can create a feeling of unease and imbalance in the user population without any kind of authority presence to provide reassurance.



AESTHETICS

Overall, the wooded buffer provides a pleasant green backdrop for activities and, with other users present, the park can feel like a happy community space. The mix of sun, shade, and dappled shade is particularly comfortable. The park could benefit from repairs, updated furnishings and a sense of unique identity, however.

ALEC BAKER PARK

ANALYSIS

With the lowest overall weighted score in the entire New Brunswick parks system, this underutilized park already provides a nice mix of active and passive recreation and has wonderful potential to become a thriving neighborhood hub, but faces several challenges.

The main issue is its hidden location, which reduces flow of foot traffic through the park and allows undesirable behaviors to occur unchecked, creating more work for the maintenance staff. Local awareness of the park apparently could use improvement as well; one regular park visitor stated that if more neighbors actually knew that the park existed, it would probably see more use. Finally, this park has a lot of underutilized land that could be activated through the creation of picnic areas, the addition of different play experiences, and even installation of a splash pad or water feature to make it a great destination. The neighborhood has plenty of people—the challenge is to get them into the park and have them feel safe and stimulated enough to keep coming regularly.

In the short term, initiating a casual, periodic authority presence would discourage park vandalism and help visitors feel safe, which, in combination with addressing basic repairs, would lay the groundwork for building

enough regular use to provide social control in the park. In addition, improving visibility of the Remsen Avenue entrances and creating dedicated entrances to the northern neighborhood are important steps to draw more users.

In the mid term, the park needs a master plan to guide future investments, provide more cohesion to the park's somewhat confusing layout, and determine appropriate additions. For example, the future of the tennis court should be decided, as it is underutilized in its present state. Next, walking loops should be installed to provide ADA access to amenities, encourage passive use, and draw people throughout the entirety of the site to reduce feelings of isolation. More seating clusters, play amenities, and a water feature should be installed. Since water features are scarce in the city and highly desired according to public outreach, installing one at Alec Baker Park could help visitors re-imagine the park as a destination and get them talking about it.

In the long term, a robust schedule of community events and programming would help introduce more families to the park and build a consistent user base. Strategically incorporating low, colorful plantings and public art could help infuse richness and unique character into the park experience, too.

RECOMMENDATIONS

SHORT-TERM

- 1 INITIATE CASUAL, PERIODIC AUTHORITY WALK-THROUGHS FOR SAFETY
- 2 ADDRESS BASIC REPAIRS
- 3 IMPROVE VISIBILITY OF EXISTING ENTRANCES (SIGNAGE, CROSSWALKS, ETC.)
- 4 ADD TWO ENTRANCES IN THE NORTH

MID-TERM

- 5 CREATE PARK MASTER PLAN
- 6 INSTALL WALKING LOOPS THROUGH SITE

MID-TERM (CONTINUED)

- 7 ADD CLUSTERED SEATING (E.G. PICNIC AREA)
- 8 ADD ADDITIONAL AMENITIES (GAME TABLES, OPEN FRAME PLAY HOUSE, ETC.)
- 9 INSTALL SPLASH PAD OR WATER FEATURE
- 10 ADDRESS DRAINAGE ISSUES

LONG-TERM

- 11 DEVELOP ROBUST PROGRAMMING SCHEDULE
- 12 INCORPORATE LOW, COLORFUL PLANTINGS & PUBLIC ART THROUGHOUT SITE



Improving visibility of entrances will be key to increasing use and safety at Alec Baker Park. At the main entrance, simple fixes like removing the fence for a more open feel, enhancing plantings, painting a crosswalk and updating signage would help to catch the eye of passersby.

MAP OF RECOMMENDATIONS



ARCHIBALD PARK

AMENITIES



OBSERVATIONS

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1 GOOD ACCESS FROM NEIGHBORHOOD | 1 DIFFICULT TO FIND BY CAR |
| 2 TURF WELL MAINTAINED | 2 RACQUETBALL COURT COVERED IN GRAFFITI |
| 3 WELL-USED PLAYGROUND | 3 RETAINING WALL AT ENTRANCE MISSING BRICKS |
| 4 DELIGHTFUL WETLAND AREA WITH COLOR & LIFE | 4 DRINKING FOUNTAIN DISMANTLED |
| 5 RESTROOMS BUILDING | 5 ONE BASKETBALL HOOP MISSING |
| 6 PAVILION PROVIDES PLEASANT PLACE FOR PICNICS | 6 DRAINAGE ISSUE BY TENNIS COURT ENTRANCE |
| | 7 FEELS ISOLATED |

MAP OF OBSERVATIONS



CONTEXT

With more than 10 acres and multiple sports facilities, New Brunswick's award-winning Archibald Park provides many active recreational opportunities to its surrounding community. Industrial warehouses sit along the park's southern, northern and western rims, with McKinley Community School to the west and a residential community to the northwest. The Quentin Avenue Tot Lot, another New Brunswick park that provides recreation for very young children, lies only a short distance away, separated by the border between two private warehouse properties.

PARK DESCRIPTION

Archibald Park is a very pleasant neighborhood park designed for more active recreation than passive. A baseball diamond and soccer/football field compose the majority of the park's space, complemented by two tennis courts, two handball courts, two basketball courts, and a playground (immediately adjacent to the school, but still part of the park). Restrooms, a pavilion with a picnic table, and periodic seating support comfortable use of the site. A circular paved entrance area off of Wright Place provides additional seating. In addition, a stormwater basin along the northeastern edge of the park provides a profusion of colorful wildflowers, wetland vegetation, and interesting wildlife species (birds, butterflies, etc.), although this area is not currently highlighted as a destination.



① DAMAGED PAVILION ROOF



② BASKETBALL FENCING



③ HOOP MISSING



④ BRICKWORK NEAR ENTRANCE



⑤ FIRE DAMAGED BENCH



⑥ BASEBALL FIELD DRAINS



⑦ CHAINLINK TENNIS NET



⑧ NATURALIZED AREA



⑨ GRAFFITI

ARCHIBALD PARK

EXISTING CONDITIONS



ACCESS

Access to this park can be confusing the first time. The entrance from Van Dyke Ave is poorly marked with only a small, brown sign indicating a park entrance, although the property looks like warehouses without a park in sight. Also confusing, the Van Dyke Ave parking appears to be part of the school, making it unclear whether park visitors may indeed use the lot. The entrance along Wright Place is much easier to find, although on-street parking can obscure the park name sign. This entrance seems designed to serve as the primary access point, with a paved circular area serving as a “gateway” into the park; with some seating repairs and enhanced landscaping, this little feature has the potential for a beautiful, celebratory entrance. Vehicular parking can be limited at peak use, and on-street parking along Wright Place can be packed with vehicles of local residents not using the park. Multiple bike parking facilities strategically located by activity areas facilitate easy bicycle transportation. ADA paths connect to most amenities.



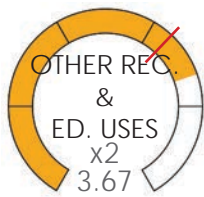
TRAILS

The paved paths at Archibald are in good condition. Path layout around the soccer/football field creates easy connection from the school to the neighborhood, providing clear sightlines for safety. The path to the baseball field stops at a dead end, however, creating an awkward terminus at one of the more secluded parts of the park. This could be remedied by continuing the path around the perimeter of the park, creating a walking circuit. An eroded desire path cuts along the northern rim of the stormwater basin, indicating that some members of the public use this route even though no formal path exists.



ACTIVE RECREATION AMENITIES

The active amenities included in the park are good, although their conditions vary. The baseball diamond is in very good condition, as are the handball courts apart from extensive graffiti on the wall. The playground also appears in fairly good condition considering the level of use it receives. The tennis courts, on the other hand, show wear and have extensive cracking, potentially needing to be resurfaced. The basketball courts have three hoops, with a fourth missing, and the surrounding fencing is down or cut in places. Turf on the soccer/football field looks a bit worn (also mentioned in public outreach) and the unpainted goal posts look very old.



OTHER RECREATIONAL & EDUCATIONAL USES

Archibald Park offers plenty of open lawn space for leisure and a pavilion with picnic space. The pavilion roof needs repairs, but still functions well and had users during the evaluation.



SUPPORTIVE FACILITIES

The park offers plenty of seating (benches and picnic tables) and trash receptacles, although more benches in shade (to comfortably watch sports) and under the pavilion would support comfortable use. Main elements that brought the score down for this category include one broken drinking fountain, the other drinking fountain turned off, and locked restrooms, which appear to only open during peak use times.



SAFETY & MAINTENANCE

Archibald Park scored below average in terms of Safety and Maintenance. On the maintenance aspect, damaged brickwork and a burned bench at the Wright Place entrance significantly impacted the score. Conditions of some of the active amenities, pavilion roof, and drinking fountain also indicate room for improvement. In addition, exposed or partially covered drainage grates near the baseball foul line could pose a potential tripping risk for players, and water repeatedly pooling around the entrance to the tennis courts is creating a muddy area.

On the safety side, most of the park feels quite safe with very clear sight lines. The area around the storm drain and back of the baseball diamond feel more like no-man's land, while the eroded desire path leading to the back corner and cut fencing near warehouses put one on heightened alert for illicit behavior. The point-to-point (rather than looped) design of the path near the baseball field does not help: first, lack of path in the east part of the park does not encourage use of this area, and second, the straight path makes it easy to predict that unsuspecting visitors will be left at a dead end in a more secluded part of the park (a potential safety hazard). Creating a path circuit around the baseball field and natural area could help activate this otherwise serene and lovely area.



AESTHETICS

While designed for function, Archibald has the potential to become a beautiful park. At present, the park's well-manicured grass and shade trees promote a feeling of relaxation, but without much visual variation. In contrast, the wetland area's color and variety of vegetation and wildlife was an exciting breathe of fresh air. Insufficient signage, and lack of coordination among site furnishings, and lack of elements to provide a distinct identity to this park contributed to a lower than average aesthetics score. The addition of low, flowering shrubs along the street and making repairs at the Wright place entrance would really enhance visitors' initial impression of the park. So would screening out the warehouses with understory shrubs and trees near the baseball diamond, creating a stimulating promenade effect and pleasant, shaded place to relax or watch games. Painting the goal posts on the soccer/football field could also add welcome color to the site and increase their visibility during games.

ARCHIBALD PARK

ANALYSIS

Archibald Park is a good shape in its current state, but could really sing with a number of simple repairs and key enhancements. During the evaluation, school was still in session and children were the primary users of the park.

In the short term, improving entrance signage, state of repair, and aesthetic value and would help direct and welcome visitors into the park. Clarifying the parking situation at the school would also help visitors and eliminate the potential for conflict. In addition, repairs to active amenities would enhance safe play, while adding shaded seating near activity areas would allow visitors to comfortably watch sports and enjoy family time. Planting shade trees along the south end of the soccer/football field where there is a grade change could help with this.

In the mid-term, creating walking loops around the baseball diamond and wetland area would help activate this secluded space with passive recreation opportunities. Installing a boardwalk and interpretive signage would really highlight the wetland area as a unique and educational feature not found in the other parks. In collaboration with

the school, the wetland could even be potentially be integrated into curriculum for more stimulating science, math, art, and writing lessons. In addition, adding a second, different type of play experience near the basketball courts would help draw more activity to that area, especially since the location of the current playground makes it look like it belongs to the school. Planting the path to the baseball field to create a stimulating promenade as described in the aesthetics section would also encourage use of the new walking circuit.

In the long term, more seasonal programming and community events at the park (movie nights, dances, etc.) could help activate the park. Also, depending on level of use, the handball courts could be replaced with a splash pad (no others nearby in the parks system) or other desired amenity. Finally, given the close proximity of the Quentin Avenue Tot Lot to Archibald Park, the City should investigate the potential for an access path between the two sites, initiating negotiations with the appropriate private landowners. This would help to create a new, convenient access point for residents in neighborhoods to the north of Archibald, and generate more foot traffic to reduce feeling of isolation in the east part of the park.

RECOMMENDATIONS

SHORT-TERM

- 1 UPDATE ENTRANCE SIGNAGE & EXPERIENCE
- 2 CLARIFY PARKING
- 3 REPAIR WRIGHT PLACE ENTRANCE AMENITIES
- 4 REPAIR AMENITIES (REPLACE HOOP, RE-TURF FIELD, ETC.)
- 5 IMPROVE SAFETY AROUND GRATES
- 6 ADD MORE SHADED SEATING NEAR ACTIVITIES
- 7 REPAIR PAVILION ROOF

MID-TERM

- 8 CREATE WALKING CIRCUIT
- 9 DEVELOP INTERPRETATIVE SIGNAGE IN WETLAND
- 10 ADD NEW PLAYGROUND
- 11 SHADE TREES ALONG SOCCER FIELD
- 12 PLANT ALONG BASEBALL PROMENADE

LONG-TERM

- 13 MORE SEASONAL PROGRAMMING/EVENTS
- 14 REPLACE HANDBALL COURTS?
- 15 EXPLORE CONNECTION TO QUENTIN AVE TOT LOT



A boardwalk with interpretive signage in the wetland area could help activate this stimulating, underutilized space.

MAP OF RECOMMENDATIONS



BOYD PARK

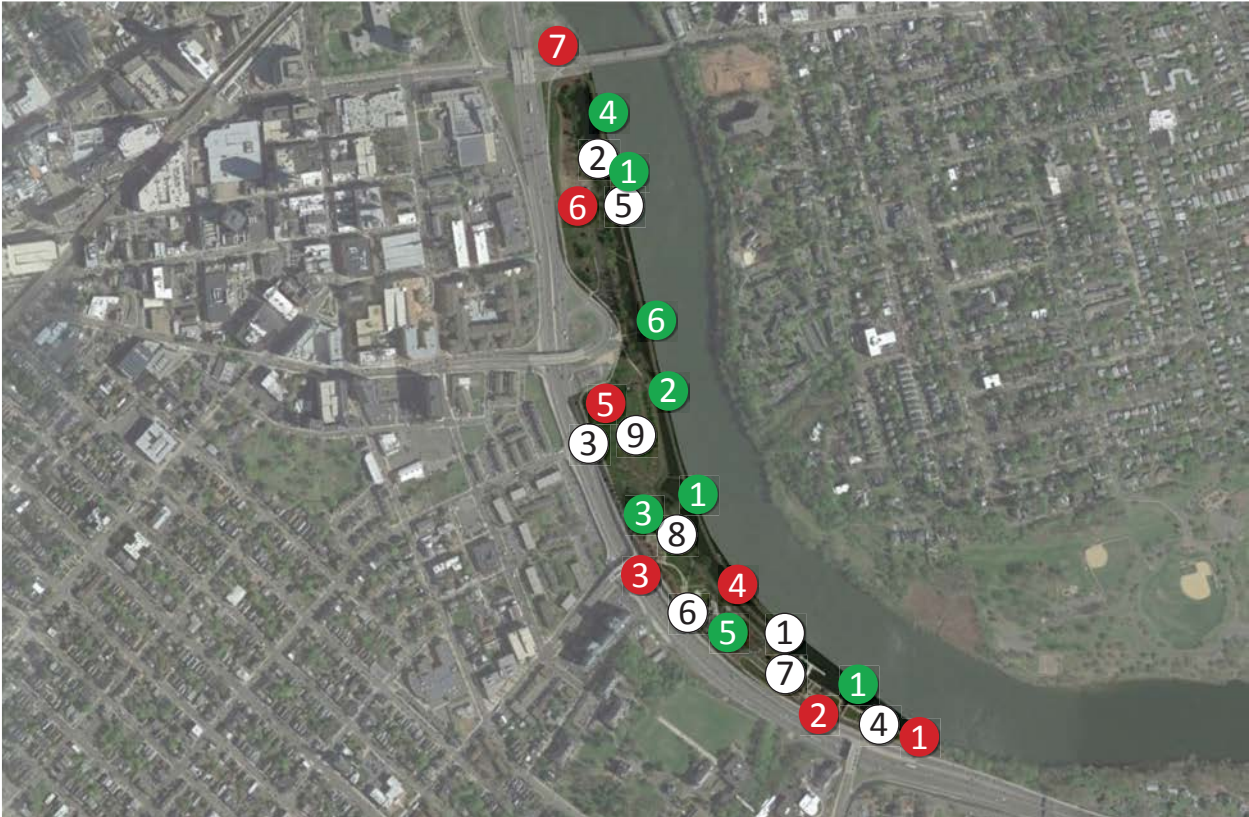
AMENITIES



OBSERVATIONS

- 1 GREAT LOCATION FOR FISHING
- 2 BIKE/WALK PATH SEES CONSISTENT USE
- 3 OPEN LAWN GREAT FOR RELAXING UNDER SHADE TREES
- 4 GREAT FOR WILDLIFE VIEWING
- 5 POPULAR ACTIVITY CLUSTER NEAR PLAYGROUND AND HISTORIC DOCKS
- 6 COLORFUL PLANTINGS AT LANDING ARE A DELIGHT!
- 1 SOUTHERN SECTION COMES ABRUPTLY TO AN END; UNSATISFYING TERMINUS AFTER LONG, HOT WALK
- 2 PLAYGROUND NOT AS VISITED; SIGNIFICANT NOISE FROM HIGHWAY; PLAYGROUND BENCHES IN FULL SUN SO PARENTS SIT UNDER PAVILION
- 3 UNCOMFORTABLE PEDESTRIAN ACCESS ALONG RT. 18
- 4 NEED NEW, CONVENIENT SIGNAGE ABOUT DOCKS
- 5 UNDERUTILIZED LAWN FEELS EMPTY
- 6 VACANT LAND LAND WITH CONSTRUCTION DEBRIS
- 7 FADED CROSSWALK; NEED BETTER LINK TO TOWN

MAP OF OBSERVATIONS



CONTEXT

One of New Brunswick's two signature parks, Boyd Park extends in long, linear fashion along the Raritan River. Busy Route 18 lies to the west of the park, while the Raritan Avenue bridge and a vacant area (formerly a police headquarters) lie to the west. A narrow forested buffer area and residential dwellings for the southwest edge. Properties in close proximity across Route 18 include university residential apartments and academic buildings, multi-family housing complexes, a variety of commercial enterprises and the Hyatt Regency New Brunswick.

PARK DESCRIPTION

The park's main entrance and parking are located off of Route 18 North between the George Street and Commercial Avenue exits. An amphitheater abuts the main parking lot, serving as a central landmark in the park with a paved, shared bike/walk path extending in both directions along the river.

Following the path to the southeast, one joins a riverfront promenade that features the historic river docks, a main playground area, the Rutgers rowing boathouse, a pavilion with lawn, the boat ramp, and then the end of the park, which is composed of a second pavilion with lawn, a playground, overflow parking and vehicle turn around area.

To the northwest of the amphitheater extends extensive lawn with scattered trees. The walk/bike path meanders along the edge of the canal past a power substation to the historic New Brunswick Landing area, composed of colorful planting beds, seating, and a bridge leading to the towpath. Further north along the path, visitors encounter the Landing parking lot, some small maintenance buildings and two more bridges providing access to the towpath. The park terminates farther north at the vacant construction yard, with the towpath and a desire path through the vacant land continuing under Raritan Avenue along the river.



① DIRTY BOAT DOCK



② DRIED POND



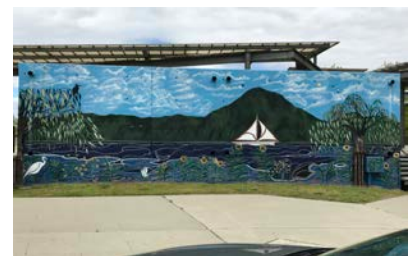
③ LACK OF GUARDRAIL ON 18



④ WIND/NOISE TUNNEL FROM 18



⑤ FISHING AREA



⑥ MURAL NEAR AMPITHEATER



⑦ RUTGERS BOATHOUSE



⑧ MAIN ENTRANCE LAWN



⑨ OPEN FIELD

BOYD PARK

EXISTING CONDITIONS



ACCESS

All but one entrance to Boyd Park involves traversing Route 18, making this park feel inconvenient to access. Vehicles can only enter at two points—the main entrance and the Landing parking lot, both of which are off of the northbound side of Route 18 making entry from the southbound side inconvenient during heavy traffic periods. Little signage along the approach to these entrances can cause new users to accidentally pass by. In addition, the park offers a number of pedestrian crossings (with sidewalks and signals) across Route 18, including a huge, ADA accessible ramp system down into the park that also supports bike transportation. Walking along the busy, noisy highway, however, feels uncomfortable. The bike/walk path within the park connects to a bike network that allows visitors to travel to/from neighborhoods across the river. Wayfinding elements do not appear to extend into the city to help draw pedestrians to the park.



TRAILS

The paved path and towpath provide wonderful opportunities to walk right along the river, enjoy wildlife and take a break from the bustle of city life. No other New Brunswick park grants this kind of access to water. The path is in very good condition with some pleasing undulations and comfortable width. The dirt towpath, on the other hand, has a rather derelict feel to it. Nevertheless, the towpath offers the most separation from the sounds of the city and facilitates very peaceful walking.



ACTIVE RECREATION AMENITIES

Clustered with the amphitheater, historic docks, and green lawn areas, the main playground has a very safe feel. The play equipment looks fairly new, though worn ground and faded signage contribute to a tired appearance. All the same, kids happily frequent this area. The playground at the south end of the park looks older and feels more secluded, as this portion of the park has less foot traffic. Sounds reverberating from highway infrastructure are quite loud here, too. Even so, this amenity does see some use, particularly if there are fishermen nearby for added interest. In addition, a boat launch near the Rutgers boathouse provides river access. Tidal debris from the litter can fill the launch, making it rather unsightly, but parks maintenance does usually keep the amount of accumulated flotsam to a minimum.



OTHER RECREATIONAL & EDUCATIONAL USES

The amphitheater has a bright, attractive mural and can accommodate large events. The amphitheater and pavilions appear in excellent condition, looking very new and clean. Open lawn areas are attractive, often with thick green grass although some yellow or bare patches are evident. Areas along the canal and towpath provide a pleasant array of vegetation, but are rather overgrown.



SUPPORTIVE FACILITIES

Open restrooms next to the amphitheater are in fine condition. Their location is convenient to the main playground and somewhat centrally located along the park’s southern spine, although ideally another restroom would service the northwestern portion of the park near New Brunswick Landing. Shaded picnic benches throughout the site are frequently utilized, providing a comfortable place for leisure. At the main playground, painted rectangular slabs simultaneously contain children, provide shaded seating for parents, and allow for the intrusion and recession of floodwater. These “benches” are heavily used, whereas the benches at the southern playground in full sun are sometimes passed over in favor of the pavilions.



SAFETY & MAINTENANCE

The overall current condition of Boyd Park is good. Park materials and furnishings are some of the best and most consistent in the parks system. The amphitheater is in great condition, as is most of the grass in the park, although the main playground surface is composed of dead grass and eroded spots, and kids slide down onto bare dirt, tree roots, and stones. In addition, educational signage about the docks presented in the main playground is not very visible to visitors strolling along the promenade, and needs updating. Similarly, some of the D&R Canal signage looks old or is missing, as are the dog waste bags from the dispenser.

At the Landing, landscaping changes from lawn and shade trees to colorful, beautifully planted beds. The landscape becomes more wild farther north, with some areas looking picturesque and others neglected (e.g. near parking lot). The overgrown, littered towpath is lined by broken lights tagged with graffiti and needs a lot of attention.

With other users present, the park feels fairly safe overall during the day. The south end can feel a little isolated if no one else is around. Meanwhile, men lingering along the narrow towpath (in small groups or alone) on the opposite end of the park can feel slightly intimidating to an unaccompanied woman given the relative isolation of that area.



AESTHETICS

Boyd Park has a very appealing, urban style and consistency of site furnishings and materials; that juxtapose nicely with the historic dock infrastructure and flowing river, providing a tremendously iconic, unique and appealing feature to the park system. The urban aesthetic is strongest in the lower portion of the park, although the promenade feels uncomfortably hardscaped on a hot, sunny day. The urban aesthetic relaxes towards the Landing, where plantings become more naturalistic and their color provides visual relief from the expanses of green lawn. This area supports a wide variety of riverine species, which infuse life along the canal and a rather dried up pond area.

The main issues that pull the aesthetic down are old educational signage, lack of maintenance along the towpath, and the vacant property near the Landing parking lot that looks like an uncomfortable no man’s land. The large expanses of lawn and the walk/bike path could benefit from some softening plants that help to define space and add a sense of human scale.

BOYD PARK

ANALYSIS

While this this signature park’s location along the river provides a unique and restful getaway from the bustle of the city, it offers great potential for increased water recreation, exercise opportunities, passive nature enjoyment, and more robust events programming. Route 18 acts as a physical and perceived barrier to convenient, comfortable access, however, in spite of multiple pedestrian access points.

Efforts to help build awareness of Boyd Park within the community should be explored, perhaps through a combination of more robust marketing, signage, sidewalk art leading across Route 18, and “introducing” residents to the park’s recreational opportunities through events. Promoting the park within university circles could encourage more students to use the park, providing more eyes in the park for safety. A periodic weekend shuttle to Boyd Park in summer months could be tested.

In the southern portion of the park, the promenade could be enhanced with some low plantings for visual interest and habitat quality. Efforts to create a sense of destination rather than dead end near the secondary playground would help. A trail along the river connecting this area to conservation land further east would create a

unique and visionary open space experience for City residents and should be explored for feasibility.

In addition, updated interpretive signage communicating the site’s engaging history could enliven the walk/ bike path, along with low plantings that enhance habitat quality for wildlife. The towpath and more wild area north of the Landing could benefit from a more maintenance to keep paths clear, minimize litter, and keep intentional planting beds neat. Periodic signage identifying wildlife or river processes could also enhance this area.

To complement more passive enjoyment of the river setting, the seemingly underutilized open lawns might attract more use with additional seating and tables, and could potentially host more small festivals, community events, and other programming for children.

Finally, efforts to incorporate the vacant land that used to house police headquarters should be exercised, as this area has wonderful potential for more amenities and would help increase perception of safety in the this area. Traffic calming measures and engaging wayfinding elements should be explored at the nearby pedestrian stairs to entice more visitors from downtown. Providing a more comfortable and apparent pedestrian connection here

RECOMMENDATIONS

SHORT-TERM

- 1 INCREASE MAINTENANCE IN NORTHERN AREA
- 2 ADDRESS MAIN PLAYGROUND SURFACE
- 3 ADD PICNIC BENCHES UNDER TREES IN LAWNS

MID-TERM

- 4 UPDATE HISTORIC & ECOLOGICAL SIGNAGE
- 5 ADD LOW PLANTINGS ALONG WALK/BIKE PATH, PAVILIONS, AND BACK OF BOATHOUSE

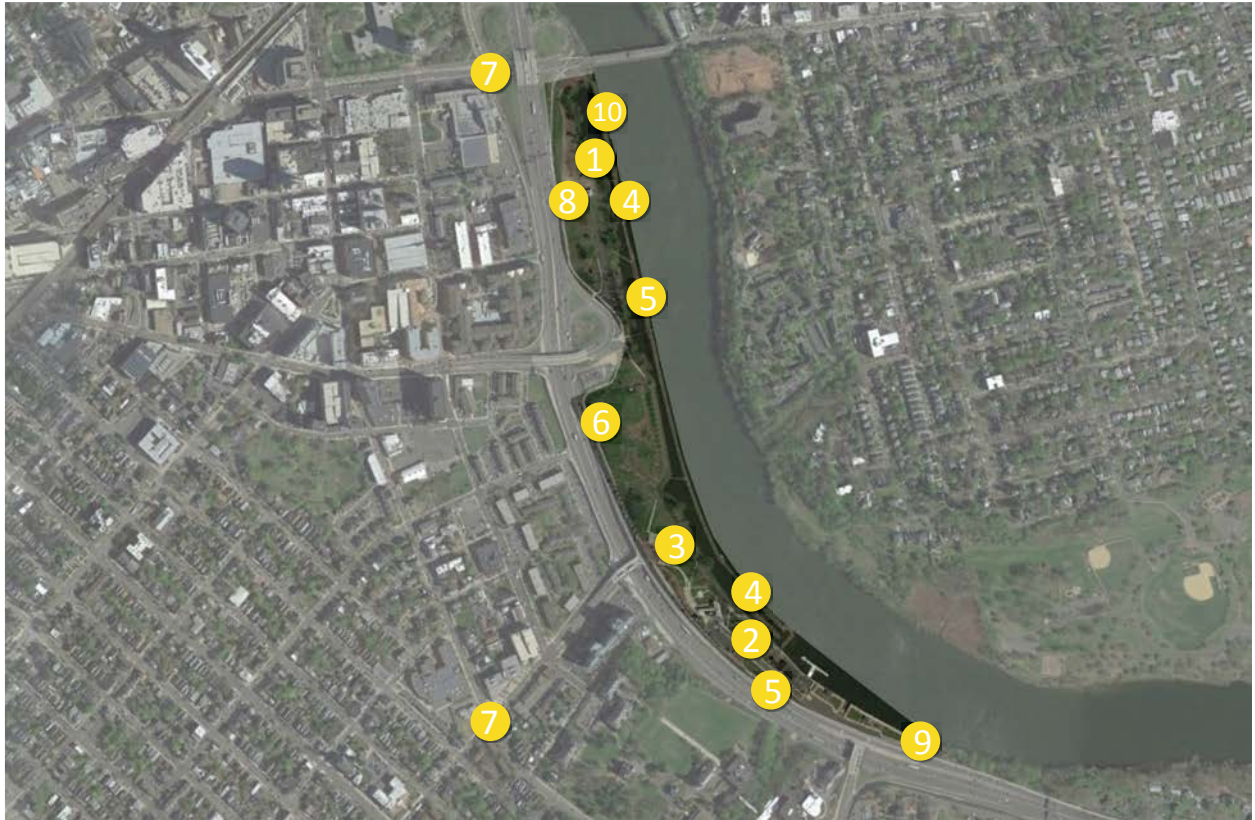
LONG-TERM

- 6 PROGRAM OPEN LAWN AREAS (ADD GUARDRAIL ALONG OPEN SECTION OF ROUTE 18?)
- 7 DEVELOP STRATEGIES FOR DRAWING PUBLIC INTO PARK; START SHUTTLE PILOT PROJECT
- 8 INCORPORATE VACANT LAND; ADD AMENITIES (E.G. KAYAK RENTAL CONCESSION?)
- 9 ACTIVATE SOUTH END OF PARK. INVESTIGATE CONNECTING TO CONSERVATION LAND. REPLACE 2ND PLAYGROUND WITH OTHER AMENITY?
- 10 DEVELOP MAINTENANCE PLAN FOR HEALTH OF CANAL/POND AS HABITAT/WILDLIFE VIEWING



Additional shaded seating facing towards the river and low, colorful plantings along the walking path.

MAP OF RECOMMENDATIONS



BUCCLEUCH PARK

AMENITIES



OBSERVATIONS

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 WELL-CONNECTED TO THE COMMUNITY 2 TURF WELL-MAINTAINED 3 SHADED PICNIC TABLES 4 LARGE PLAYGROUND 5 DISPLAY GARDEN 6 GOOD OVERALL CIRCULATION 7 GOOD HISTORICAL FEATURE 8 TENNIS COURTS IN GOOD CONDITION 9 WELL USED PAVILION 10 SENIOR CENTER | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 POOR TURF CONDITION 2 OVERGROWN GARDEN 3 SLEDDING HILL HAS CONFLICT WITH GEORGE ST. 4 DANGEROUS DESIRE PATH 5 MAINTENANCE YARD 6 SECLUDED SPACE 7 DESIRE PATH |
|---|---|

MAP OF OBSERVATIONS



CONTEXT

One of New Brunswick's two signature parks, Buccleuch Park is located just northwest of the Downtown district between two busy streets: George Street to the north and Easton Avenue to the south. Even so, the park's size provides visitors with a peaceful venue in which to play, exercise and relax away from the sounds of the city.

Open borders and close proximity to residential communities in the southeast and west have helped make this a very popular park. A senior center located on the east side of the park hosts many activities, including lawn bowling on the day of evaluation. A tall residential tower sits on the northwestern edge of the park, St. Peter's Hospital across from the main vehicular entrance, and Rutgers University's vibrant College Avenue campus to the east. Easy access to major transportation routes and a plethora of amenities make this park a favorite destination for a local and wider regional audience.

PARK DESCRIPTION

With 78+ acres, 4 baseball fields, 14 tennis courts, 2 basketball courts, a volleyball court, an extensive fitness circuit, a large playground and a soccer field in creation, Buccleuch offer a wide variety of active recreation. Expansive lawns, ample benches, shaded picnic tables, horticultural display gardens, a large picnic pavilion and a picturesque gazebo also provide visitors with ample passive recreational opportunities. Multiple vehicular access points, internal parking, paved roads and crushed stone paths allow vehicular and pedestrian circulation throughout the park to all major amenities.



① OVERGROWN GARDEN



② BROKEN URINAL



③ DISPLAY GARDEN



④ LARGE PAVILION



⑤ SWING AREA



⑥ PLAYGROUND



⑦ GAZEBO



⑧ SOCCER FIELD



⑨ SENIOR CENTER

BUCCLEUCH PARK

EXISTING CONDITIONS



ACCESS

Many visitors access Buccleuch park by car. In fact, the layout of the park with five vehicular entrances (compared to four formal pedestrian entrances), picturesque tree-lined drive, ample parking and vehicular park maps suggest an early design orientation towards leisure enjoyment via automobile. Vehicular entrances have high visibility and are conveniently placed around the park perimeter to network with surrounding circulation patterns.

The park does support heavy pedestrian activity, too, primarily on a crushed stone fitness circuit around the perimeter of the park and a path that bisects Buccleuch north-south from the entrance at Easton Avenue to Huntington Street. A 10-foot (or more) turf buffer separates the fitness circuit from the paved road. Adding ADA-accessible paths into and within the park, particularly at the main entrance across from the hospital, would allow visitors with mobility challenges to enjoy the park without navigating vehicular traffic. Similarly, adding signage directing non-vehicular visitors through the park and installing bike racks would enhance bike and pedestrian access. Bike racks would be best situated at key activity areas like the tennis courts, playground, basketball court and a couple of locations along the fitness circuit.



TRAILS

Overall, the existing trails in Buccleuch Park appear in good condition. At the north end of the park, however, pedestrians coming over from Piscataway were observed walking east along George Street without a sidewalk, creating a dangerous situation along a busy road. Adding a sidewalk there would help reduce this risk.



ACTIVE RECREATION AMENITIES

Buccleuch Park scored above average regarding active amenities with a palette of well-maintained recreational facilities to suit a wide range of interests. During the original evaluation, one baseball diamond in poor condition and lack of soccer fields in an area with high demand for this sport constituted the most glaring weaknesses. Subsequent clarification revealed the the baseball field was, in fact, being converted to soccer. Nevertheless, the soccer field needs substantial work to elevate it to the quality of the rest of the park.



OTHER RECREATIONAL & EDUCATIONAL USES

Abundant lawns offer plenty of space to lounge or play, and the picnic areas, pavilion and gazebo are in good condition. Educational and historic features throughout the park also enhance user enjoyment, particularly the horticultural display gardens at the Buccleuch Mansion Museum, which provide a unique experience not found in other New Brunswick parks.

One of the factors that brings down Buccleuch Park’s score is the abandoned ‘Edible Forest Garden’ located on the west side near Easton Ave. This space has wonderful potential and, if renovated, would help meet the community’s desire for greater access to community gardens. The antiquated fitness stations located next to the senior center also present an exciting opportunity for new amenities, such as a nice shaded plaza oriented towards table games like chess and backgammon.



SUPPORTIVE FACILITIES

In general, most of Buccleuch Park’s appeared in fairly good condition. The lack of functioning drinking fountains and a broken urinal in the restroom brought this score down the greatest, but are relatively simple fixes.



SAFETY & MAINTENANCE

In spite of its size, Buccleuch Park scored above average in terms of safety and maintenance compared to other New Brunswick Parks. A large maintenance facility on site serving as the City’s Parks & Shade Tree Department headquarters helps facilitate good routine maintenance and repairs, as well as provide additional eyes in the park. Multiple entrances, linking paths without dead ends, clustered activities and plenty of through traffic by local residents all help make Buccleuch a safer park. The open nature of the park enhances visibility and a wide variety of directional options for pedestrians make routes less predictable, also increasing safety in the park.

Aspects that brought this score down include: exits are not totally visible from within the park, a couple of spots away from activity areas that feel somewhat isolated, and limited signage with a park map to help orient and direct visitors.



AESTHETICS

Aesthetically-speaking, Buccleuch Park scored well above average compared to the rest of New Brunswick’s parks. Long, expansive, picturesque vistas contribute to a beautiful, satisfying park experience, as do the wide variety of landscapes and well-maintained vegetation. The energy of users complements the serene surroundings for an overall happy and rejuvenating ambiance.

Opportunities for aesthetic improvement chiefly lie in material choices and developing more coordination between them for a cohesive look. For example, the signage around the park does not have a unified appearance; the typefaces, layout and presentation of signs give the impression that they were made without considering existing signage. This is a common observation across the entire parks system, not just at Buccleuch Park, but if addressed, would help signal to visitors how much care and monitoring the park receives, discouraging undesirable behaviors.

BUCCLEUCH PARK

ANALYSIS

A thriving, vibrant signature park in the New Brunswick parks system, Buccleuch Park’s appearance, variety of programming, and connection with the surrounding community all reinforce how well this park functions. Summer programs use the space for day camps, baseball leagues are a common sight, and the fitness circuit receives constant use. The park attracts a broad demographic of users from varying ages, genders and ethnicities—a very good sign in a public park.

In the short-term, recommendations include making basic repairs that inhibit park use or safe access.

In keeping with public comments expressing a desire for path and road upgrades, mid-term efforts should focus on improving universal accessibility and circulation within the park. At present, the road receives regular foot traffic, but has no sidewalk (only drainage) along the sides. Based on observations, even though the pedestrian path lies only feet away from the road, without periodic connections

to the path, many visitors simply park and walk down the pavement rather than crossing the lawn to reach the path. Adding periodic connections between the path and road, as well as installing ADA accessible paths from all entrances to amenities in pleasant loops with pedestrian-friendly signage (e.g. trail/distance markers) would help balance out the park’s vehicular orientation.

Long-term recommendations include amenity enhancements mentioned in public outreach, such as updating the heavily-used fitness circuit and installing a splash pad, and adding more community events/programming that bring the diverse city residents together (e.g. family movie night in the park). Creating the game tables plaza and renovating the Edible Forest Garden area would help activate underutilized portions of the park. In addition, site furnishings should be unified as they are replaced. Finally, the proximity of St. Peter’s Hospital across from the main entrance provides a great opportunity for the Parks Department to coordinate park enhancements with public health professionals to encourage healthier activity in the New Brunswick populace.

RECOMMENDATIONS

SHORT-TERM

- 1 COMPLETE SOCCER FIELD
- 2 FIX URINAL & DRINKING FOUNTAINS
- 3 ADD BIKE RACKS NEAR ACTIVITY CLUSTERS
- 4 PAVE DESIRE PATH AT NORTH END
- 5 PAVE DESIRE PATH BY MAINTENANCE YARD

MID-TERM

- 6 PROVIDE ADA-ACCESSIBLE PATHS AT MAIN ENTRANCE AND THROUGHOUT PARK
- 7 UPDATE ROAD WITH IMPROVED CONNECTION BETWEEN ROAD AND PEDESTRIAN PATH
- 8 UNIFY SIGNAGE & PROVIDE PEDESTRIAN FRIENDLY WAYFINDING

LONG-TERM

- 9 UPDATE FITNESS CIRCUIT
- 10 EXPAND COMMUNITY EVENTS PROGRAMMING
- 11 ADD SPLASH PAD
- 12 CREATE SHADED GAME TABLES PLAZA
- 13 RENOVATE EDIBLE FOREST GARDEN AREA
- 14 UNIFY SITE FURNISHINGS AS REPLACED
- 15 COLLABORATE WITH HOSPITAL TO PROMOTE HEALTH IN THE PARKS



Community Movie Night at Buccleuch Park.

MAP OF RECOMMENDATIONS



FEASTER PARK

AMENITIES



OBSERVATIONS

- 1 PARK MUCH-USED BY LOCALS; POPULAR CASUAL MEETING PLACE BECAUSE OF SIZE & AMENITIES
- 2 BASKETBALL COURTS HEAVILY USED, ESPECIALLY BY FAMILIES
- 3 BENCHES & TABLES OFTEN USED BY VISITORS
- 4 FITNESS STATION SEES MUCH USE
- 5 COMMUNITY GARDEN MAINTAINED & SHOWS EDUCATIONAL SIGNAGE FOR PASSERSBY
- 6 VIEW OF WHOLE PARK FROM STREET
- 1 NO VIEW INTO THE PARK
- 2 VAST EXPANSES OF LAWN & TREES LACK VISUAL VARIATION AND HABITAT QUALITY
- 3 VISIBILITY INTO THE PARK ENDS GOING SOUTH ON HANDY STREET
- 4 PLAYGROUND IN POOR, UNSAFE CONDITION & LACKS SHADED SEATING FOR CAREGIVERS
- 5 FAMILIES MOVING PICNIC TABLES INTO SHADED CORNER OF COURTS SO PARENTS HAVE COMFORTABLE PLACE TO MONITOR CHILDREN

MAP OF OBSERVATIONS



CONTEXT

Situated within a mixed, small commercial and residential neighborhood, Feaster Park is bounded by busy Commercial Avenue on the southeastern side, Handy Street to the northeast and Throop Avenue to the northwest. Notable adjacent destinations include Pittman Park across Handy Street to the north and the Paul Robeson Community School to the southwest. Rutgers University Cook Campus is only two blocks east.

PARK DESCRIPTION

Paved paths connect corner to corner in both directions and a path bisects the park from southeast to northeast, forming a central intersection. Basketball courts and a playground are located in the southwest, with a community garden in the western corner, a historic plaque along the SE-NW axis by Throop Avenue, and a fitness station in the eastern portion. The rest of the park is lawn and scattered trees, with some scattered benches and picnic tables.

From Throop Ave, the ground meets sidewalk grade and progressively rises to the southeast, such that the side of the park along Commercial Ave near Baldwin Street is more than 6 feet higher than sidewalk grade, requiring steps up the hill to enter or see into the park.



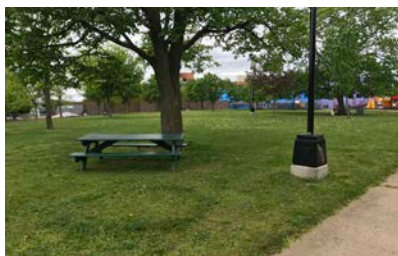
① INSIDE COMMUNITY GARDEN



② BACK OF COMMUNITY GARDEN



③ BASKETBALL COURT



④ TABLE AND GRAFFITI ON LIGHT



⑤ BROKEN BENCH



⑥ EROSION NEAR PLAYGROUND



⑦ OPEN FIELD



⑧ VANDALIZED PLAYGROUND



⑨ STREET BETWEEN TWO PARKS

FEASTER PARK

EXISTING CONDITIONS



ACCESS

The park has an open perimeter and several designated entrances, making it very accessible to cyclists and pedestrians. Overall, the entrances are located conveniently with good sidewalk and crosswalk connectivity to the surrounding neighborhood. Most entrances support ADA access, too. Vehicular parking is limited and confusing, however. A mix of free and permit-only on-street parking signs and lack of painted stalls make it unclear where visitors are welcome to park. Bike parking is not supported in spite of much bicycle traffic through the park.

In addition, the tremendous grade change from the sidewalk on Commercial Ave to the top of the hill makes it impossible to see into the park, raising a safety concern at a park that has experienced problems with undesirable behavior. Similarly, midway down Handy Street, cars and pedestrians can neither see into, nor physically access, Feaster Park. This is particularly unfortunate because it severs any visual or physical connection between Feaster Park and Pittman Park.

The community garden is the only amenity that restricts public access. This is understandable, but unfortunate as the garden plants provide color, textural variation and low plantings missing from the rest of the park.



TRAILS

The linear paths crisscrossing the park easily lead visitors to activity areas, including a temporary path to the construction zone at the school. Some sections of the paths could use replacement/repair, particularly near the school where some chunks of concrete are missing, and there is no ADA access to the playground equipment.



ACTIVE RECREATION AMENITIES

The basketball courts are heavily used and show extensive cracking could pose safety issues. The playground also sees much use, although it is in significantly worse condition. Both the playground and fitness station would benefit from facelifts. The community garden plots appear maintained and signage on the chain link fence explains best management practices to passersby. The area would have a neater appearance if signage was well-secured to the fence and hanging straight.



OTHER RECREATIONAL & EDUCATIONAL USES

Open lawns of fair condition dotted with trees constitute the bulk of Feaster Park. Although this provides opportunities for events, running off energy and perhaps some impromptu soccer practice, the lawns almost feel too expansive without

any understory plantings to improve the human scale and help delineate distinct experiential sequences.



SUPPORTIVE FACILITIES

The park offers a fairly adequate number of trash/recycling bins at convenient locations. Benches and picnic tables clustered near other amenities facilitate passive use and socialization in the park, while bleachers near the basketball courts act as convenient seating for parents supervising children.

Most of the furnishings look a bit old and worn, however, and locating more seating in the shade would make it more comfortable for families to stay for extended periods. For example, a number of parents sit on the wall surrounding the playground as it is the only shady place to keep an eye on toddlers. Also, visitors have moved a picnic table to a shady corner of the basketball court closest to the community garden to enjoy family time. Furthermore, the location of many benches in the lawn away from the paths might make it difficult for the elderly or those with mobility issues to find a shady spot to sit. The addition of restrooms would be welcome as visitors not only walk from nearby homes, but also bike from farther distances, too.



SAFETY & MAINTENANCE

The current conditions of Feaster Park leave a great deal of room for improvement. While the lawn is being mowed regularly, most of the park amenities look very old and worn or are actually broken, including the fitness station and site furnishings. The basketball courts have extensive cracks and the bleachers near them may have compromised structural support. The playground area is littered with extensive graffiti and sports a broken plastic dome that poses a real safety issue. The playground retaining wall has broken and releases sand down the hill into a path. In addition, small bits of litter has accumulated around some benches, adding to the air of neglect.

Although the grass is regularly cut, the lawns have some large patches of dead grass and evidence of overgrowth near lower edges of the park. Furthermore, some of the tree trunks have large gashes in their bark, consistent with lawn cutting equipment damage.

From a safety perspective, existing solar-powered lights help encourage better security in the evenings. Apart from a few old beer bottle caps, there was no evidence of alcohol, substance abuse or vagrancy in the park at the time of evaluation. Nevertheless, public outreach revealed significant safety concerns at this park and the parks' elevation disparity reduces surveillance from the street, which could make the difference between stopping crime and driving past it.



AESTHETICS

The park as a whole lacks any true sense of style or unique identity, with very little color and textural interest. Although the lawn and trees provide visual respite from the city hardscape, it actually feels monotonous on this scale. The appeal of multiple amenities does not make up for the poor condition many of them are in.

FEASTER PARK

ANALYSIS

Of all the New Brunswick, given current conditions and safety concerns, Feaster Park seems the most important one in need of a completely new redesign, much as Recreation Park recently received. Given the relatively high population density and number of children within close proximity, Feaster Park has the potential to play a critical role in the overall system, providing more amenities and healthy family recreational opportunities to a community that values them.

Special attention should be paid to enhancing safety while providing a rich sequence of spaces to get more eyes in the park. A clear connectivity between Feaster and Pittman Park should also become a high

priority. Feaster should receive restrooms and a splash pad, which would diminish traffic noise and cool hot visitors off, as well as active amenities like a basketball and a fitness stations that already see much use. As a complement, Pittman Park could focus on more passive recreation (see Pittman Park evaluation). The Feaster design should also address stormwater onsite and a rich palette of low, colorful plantings to add aesthetic appeal and stimulation, promote human scale, and support wildlife.

In the meantime, basic safety and maintenance issues should be resolved. Given public safety concerns, a casual, periodic police or park ranger presence should be considered. Clarifying parking and adding some low plantings would also help encourage use and signify positive change.

RECOMMENDATIONS

SHORT-TERM

- 1 FIX BROKEN PLASTIC DOME ON PLAY EQUIPMENT, COVER EXPOSED FILTER FABRIC, REALIGN THE RETAINING WALL, PAINT OVER THE GRAFFITI AND CLEAN UP THE SAND
- 2 WEED THE FITNESS STATION
- 3 FILL BASKETBALL COURTS CRACKS & ASSESS WHETHER BLEACHERS NEED REPAIR
- 4 SPRUCE UP EXISTING SITE FURNISHINGS
- 5 ADD COLORFUL PERENNIALS NEAR ENTRANCES AND HIGH USE AREAS TO INDICATE CARE AND BUILD MOMENTUM OF CHANGE
- 6 INITIATE PERIODIC CASUAL WALK-THROUGH BY AUTHORITY FIGURE(S) AT VARYING TIMES OF DAY/EVENING TO DISCOURAGE UNDESIRABLE BEHAVIOR (BASED ON COMMUNITY FEEDBACK RATHER THAN EVALUATION EXPERIENCE)

MID-TERM

- 7 ADD CLEAR STREET PARKING SIGNAGE AND PAINT AVAILABLE STALLS FOR PUBLIC USE
- 8 ROTATE INFORMATIONAL SIGNAGE AT THE COMMUNITY GARDEN FOR NEW SEASONAL INTEREST; DIMINISH BARRIER BETWEEN THE PUBLIC AND THE GARDEN BY ADDING PLANTS OUTSIDE THE FENCE PERIMETER

LONG-TERM

- 9 DEVELOP NEW SITE DESIGN FOR THE PARK, INCLUDING RE-GRADING FOR BETTER VISUAL STREET SURVEILLANCE, A RICHER EXPERIENTIAL SEQUENCING, A SPLASH PAD AND STRONG CONNECTION TO PITTMAN PARK



A proposed crosswalk across Handy Street with small colorful plantings between Feaster Park and Pittman Park.

MAP OF RECOMMENDATIONS



JOYCE KILMER PARK

AMENITIES



OBSERVATIONS

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1 GOOD SHADED PICNIC AREA | 1 BATHROOMS LOCKED |
| 2 WELL USED PAVILION | 2 DRINKING FOUNTAIN DAMAGED |
| 3 LARGE PLAYGROUND | 3 VIEWS OF RAILROAD |
| 4 COLORFUL PLANTED BORDER | 4 VIEWS OF WAREHOUSES |
| 5 BASKETBALL COURT IN GOOD CONDITION | 5 PATH DEAD ENDS |
| | 6 UNDERUTILIZED SPACE |

MAP OF OBSERVATIONS



CONTEXT

Situated in southeast of downtown New Brunswick in an active, mixed residential-small commercial neighborhood, Joyce Kilmer Park is one of New Brunswick's most-used neighborhood parks. A NJ Transit train line forms the park's northwestern spine, while an industrial enterprise forms the northeast border and multi-family homes and shops surround the park to the south, west and east across busy Joyce Kilmer Avenue.

PARK DESCRIPTION

Measuring less than 4 acres, Joyce Kilmer Park offers many passive and active recreational options in a compact package, with a baseball diamond taking up approximately half of the park footprint. In addition to baseball, the park houses a full sized basketball court, a large playground and a space with several fitness stations. Passive and supportive amenities on site include a pavilion, picnic tables sited well underneath large shade trees, benches and bleachers, a combined restroom and maintenance building with drinking fountains, some paths in the main activity area, and a small parking lot.



① LARGE PLAYGROUND



② VIEW OF WAREHOUSES



③ SHADED SEATING



④ RAILROAD BORDER



⑤ BASEBALL INFIELD

JOYCE KILMER PARK

EXISTING CONDITIONS



ACCESS

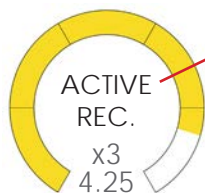
While Joyce Kilmer Park has roughly average accessibility compared to the other New Brunswick parks, there is room for improvement. On the positive side, this park provides fairly good ADA access to main amenities, has a small adjacent parking lot, and two entrances along a well-travelled street. Although vehicular parking is somewhat limited, most visitors tend to be local residents and participants in nearby summer programs.

Opportunities for enhancing access include adding bike racks to facilitate convenient bike transportation. Although well-located at corners to connect to surrounding circulation patterns, the pedestrian entrances could benefit from an archway, plants on both sides of the path with signage, or other enhancements that help provide a visual cue of what lies within. When the parking lots at the entrances are full of vehicles, obscuring views into the park, pedestrians can walk by the entry points.



TRAILS

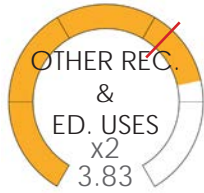
This park has two main, paved paths: one leading from the southern entrance along Joyce Kilmer Avenue to the pavilion and baseball field, and the other leading from the northern entrance to the restroom/maintenance building. Both are in good condition, but dead end at their destinations. Extending and connecting them together to create a walking loop would significantly improve site circulation, particularly for visitors with mobility challenges.



ACTIVE RECREATION AMENITIES

Joyce Kilmer scored well regarding active programming. The basketball court, playground and baseball field are all in good condition. The fitness stations are in working condition but beginning to show their age with a little rust.

Public outreach comments indicate an interest in additional active recreational experiences at this park, such as a splash pad or skate park. An underutilized space east of the baseball diamond could potentially support a linear skate park to complement the popular but very compact skate facility at Recreation Park. With a warehouse parking lot on the other side of the perimeter fence, noise from the skate jumps would not bother neighbors at this location. A small interactive water feature could potentially be added in the empty lawn area southeast of the restroom building, or a more robust splash pad installed near the playground. In either case, use of the baseball field should be monitored to determine whether that valuable real estate would be better converted to other recreational purposes.



OTHER RECREATIONAL & EDUCATIONAL USES

Shaded picnic tables and the pavilion provide good quality spaces to relax. While the baseball outfield could function as open lawn space outside of games, it feels too exposed and isolated from the rest of the park for casual lounging.



SUPPORTIVE FACILITIES

Joyce Kilmer Park offers more supportive facilities for its size than many of the other New Brunswick Parks. The presence of restrooms, plenty of trash receptacles, good provision of shaded seating, and a pavilion in good repair. During site evaluation, the restrooms were open and fairly clean, although public comments indicate that this is not always the case. In contrast, at the time of evaluation, one of the drinking fountain was noticeably damaged and the other was either turned off or broken as well.



SAFETY & MAINTENANCE

While most amenities are in fairly good repair, ensuring regular access to clean bathrooms, repairing the fountain(s) and adding a fresh coat of paint to aging benches would go a long way in encouraging comfortable recreation and reminding visitors that someone routinely cares for this park.

Joyce Kilmer Park's design already includes some excellent safety measures, such as clustering of activities and clear sight lines. Close proximity to businesses and passing traffic also contribute to a fairly safe feel near the main area, although the colorful border of plants along the street does reduce outside visual monitoring. The western bleacher area and baseball outfield can feel somewhat isolated.

The most significant factor that reduces perception of safety in the park, however, is behavior by specific user groups. On the first day of evaluation, the air smelled strongly of marijuana and evidence of blunt wrappers littered the ground. On another occasion, a sizable group of men and older teens drinking and smoking marijuana encamped in the pavilion to play table games. While they did not exhibit any menacing behavior to other park users and even exchanged polite words with the CUES staff member, their rather raucous presence dominated the park experience, almost feeling as if the park was theirs and everyone else was allowed to use other spaces.



AESTHETICS

Mature trees shading the picnic benches and happy sounds of visitors enjoying activities give Joyce Kilmer Park a very pleasant ambiance near the main activity areas. The planting bed of azaleas and other woody plants lining the road also add more color and texture than one finds in many of the other parks, too. Even so, Joyce Kilmer Park could benefit from some aesthetic enhancements. Views onto warehouses and train tracks, loud street sounds, uncoordinated signage, aging seating, and overall lack of vegetation variety around the site detract from this otherwise nice park. Furthermore, the park feels rather bland without a clear, unique identity.

JOYCE KILMER PARK

ANALYSIS

With a high number of young children and moderately high number of low income households in immediate proximity, Joyce Kilmer Park provides critical, enjoyable active and passive recreation opportunities to residents who most need them. Anecdotal evidence suggest that it is one of New Brunswick's most heavily-used parks, and during the evaluation, the park enjoyed high visitation from people eating food from nearby shops at picnic tables, locals playing dominoes in the pavilion, and day camp children filling the playground with laughter. For this reason, it is worth investing in making this park really shine.

In the short term, efforts should focus on important, simple repairs or enhancements that significantly impact park use. The future of the baseball diamond should also be determined, as this affect the park's long-term design.

In addition, the public's safety concerns about alcohol and drug use (which reportedly deters community members from using the park fully) need immediate attention. Since undesirable behaviors occur openly in the presence of many other users, the issue is better addressed by periodic, casual presence of an authority figure (i.e. police or park ranger) rather than design interventions.

More mid-term recommendations include re-designing the park entrances for higher visibility from a distance and integration with the flow of sidewalk traffic, complete with coordinated signage. Low, colorful plantings would help add cheerful visual interest and fill empty spaces (particularly near the rather bleak restroom building), contributing to a safer appearance. Additionally, installing bike racks would help support bike transportation to the park.

Notable long-term enhancement options include adding additional amenities mentioned in public outreach, such as a splash pad or skate park. Located far enough from the playground and passive areas to avoid conflicts, the empty space east of the baseball field seems ideal for a linear skate park as it would simultaneously provide

the growing skate population with a second venue, activate a lifeless area, and (with trees incorporated into the design) help screen out the view of the warehouse parking lot. A small splash pad could be installed near the playground, although the future of the baseball diamond would impact the pad's size and exact location.

In addition, creatively integrating design elements inspired by the park's namesake could help develop a more unique identity to this very special and well-loved place. Graphic references to Joyce Kilmer's poetry or inspirational quotations could be incorporated into anything from path pavements to the blank walls of the restroom building. A historic feature with interpretive signage about this famous New Brunswick resident could introduce younger generations to his life, work and sacrifice.

Finally, flowering shrubs and colorful understory plantings could help screen out the railroad and reduce sense of isolation while enhancing ecological value. Similarly, if future funding permits a second water element, a fountain or other water feature installed near the picnic tables would enhance aesthetics while helping to cancel out loud traffic noises emanating from the street.

RECOMMENDATIONS

SHORT-TERM

- 1 REPAIR DRINKING FOUNTAIN(S)
- 2 PAINT BENCHES
- 3 BEGIN CASUAL, PERIODIC POLICE/RANGER WALK-THROUGHS
- 4 KEEP RESTROOMS OPEN DURING DAYTIME & CLEAN MORE FREQUENTLY [BASED ON PUBLIC COMMENT, NOT SITE EVALUATION]
- 5 CONNECT PATHS INTO A LOOP
- 6 ASSESS LONG-TERM VIABILITY OF BASEBALL DIAMOND VS. OTHER RECREATIONAL USES

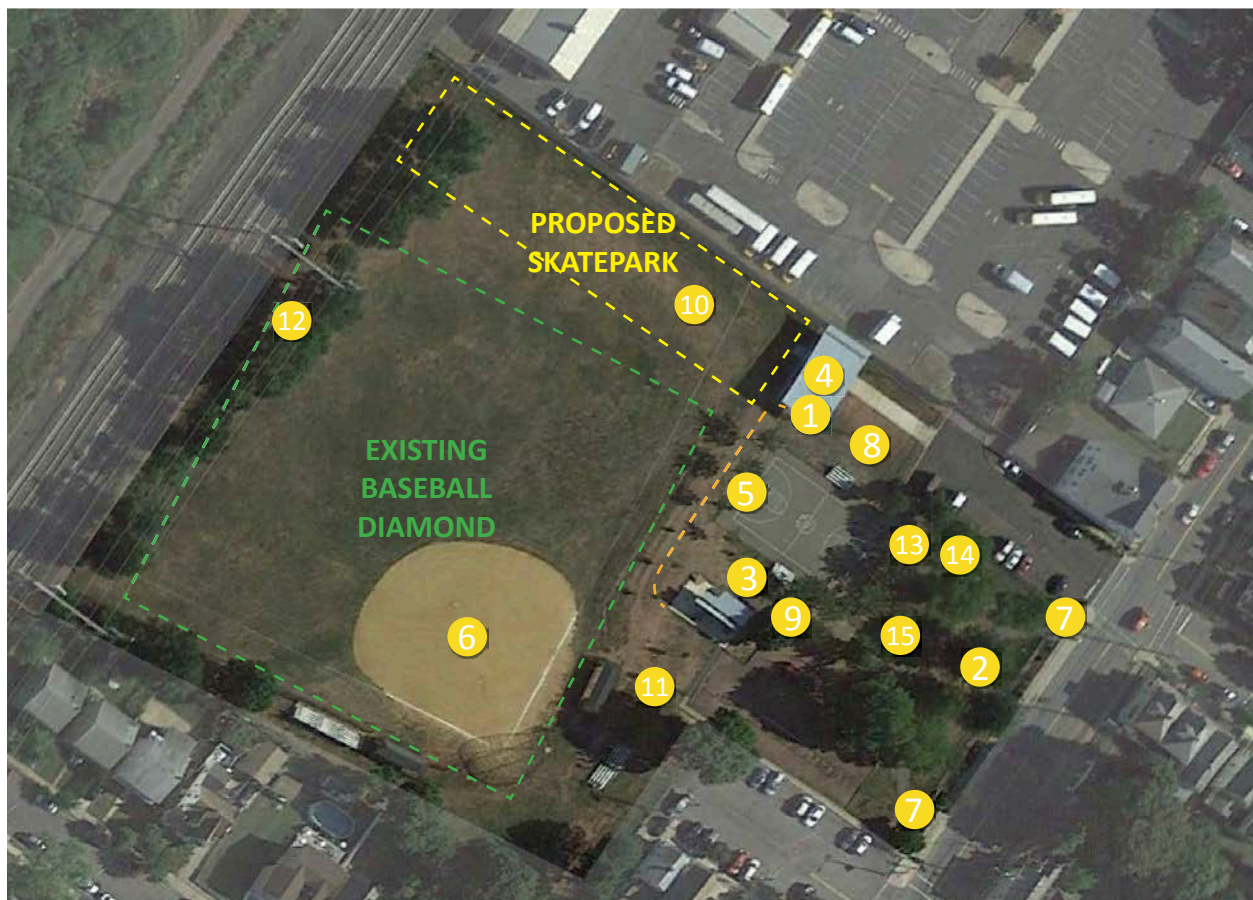
MID-TERM

- 7 RE-DESIGN PARK ENTRANCES TO INCORPORATE SIDEWALK; ADD COORDINATED SIGNAGE
- 8 ADD LOW, COLORFUL PLANTINGS
- 9 ADD BIKE RACKS

LONG-TERM

- 10 ADD LINEAR SKATE PARK
- 11 ADD SPLASH PAD
- 12 ADD FLOWERING SHRUBS & UNDERSTORY PLANTS
- 13 DEVELOP UNIQUE PARK IDENTITY, INCORPORATING JOYCE KILMER AS INSPIRATION
- 14 UPDATE AGING FITNESS STATION
- 15 ADD WATER FEATURE TO DIMINISH TRAFFIC NOISE?

MAP OF RECOMMENDATIONS



KOSSUTH PARK

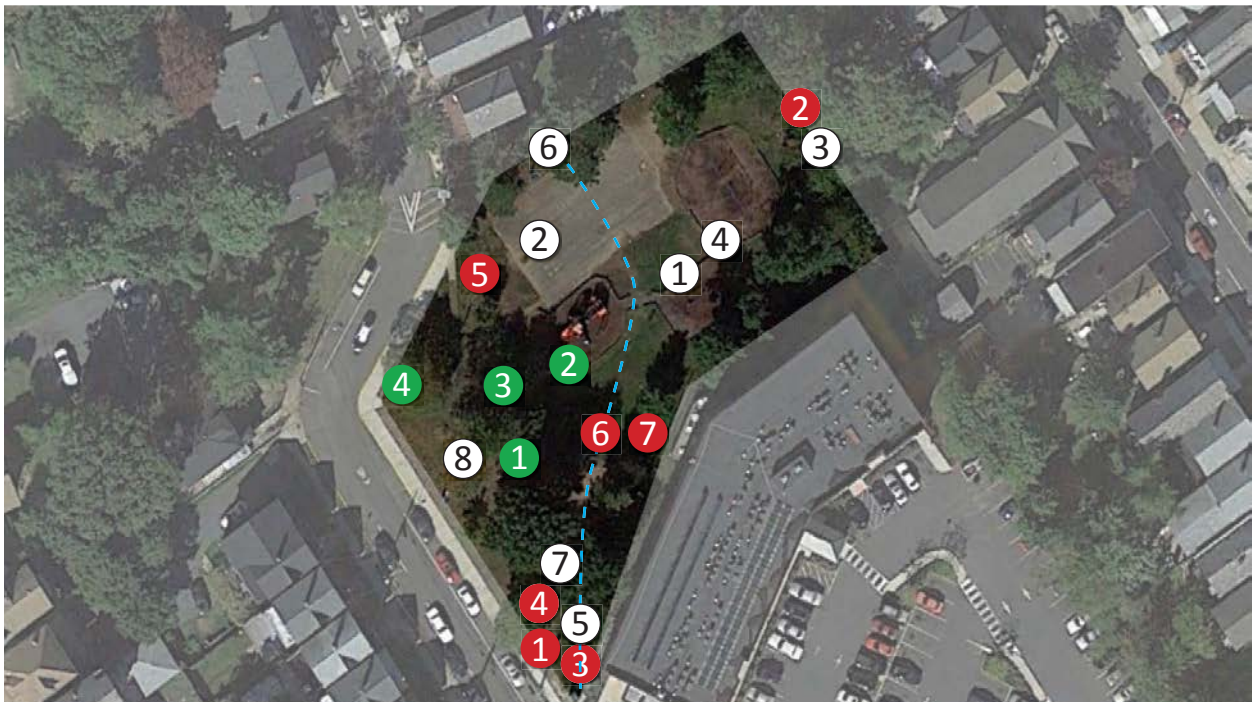
AMENITIES



OBSERVATIONS

- 1 GOOD SHADE TREES
- 2 PLAYGROUND FOR CHILDREN IN NEIGHBORHOOD
- 3 QUIET AMBIANCE IN AREA WITH LOTS OF SENIORS
- 4 OPEN PERIMETER WELCOMES VISITORS IN
- 1 WATER ENTERING THE PARK
- 2 GRAFFITI
- 3 DRINKING FOUNTAIN OFF OR BROKEN
- 4 PICNIC TABLE MISSING BENCHES
- 5 BEACH FENCING USED TO ENCLOSE SOCCER SPACE; VISITORS USING GARBAGE CANS AS SOCCER GOALS
- 6 EVIDENCE OF WATER FLOWING
- 7 WATER NOT REACHING CATCH BASIN

MAP OF OBSERVATIONS



CONTEXT

Kossuth Park is a small pocket park along a quiet portion of Harvey Street. It is located in a residential section, bounded by single and multi-family homes to the north and east, and an apartment building immediately to the south, which casts a long shadow across the park. More residential buildings sits across the street to the west.

Adjacent buildings support a relatively high population of low income seniors and adults, while a moderately high population of children under age 9 live a few blocks away. Kossuth provides the only immediate neighborhood access to active recreation, with Buccleuch Park, Joyce Kilmer Park and Simplex Park sited farther away.

PARK DESCRIPTION

Kossuth Park has an open perimeter along Harvey Street, with a wooden fence and a short portion of chainlink fence delineating the eastern and northern park boundaries respectively. Mature shade trees along the street create pleasant shade while allowing clear view into the park.

The park has a clear layout with amenities well-spaced while still providing clustered activity. A playground and blacktop where casual soccer takes place facilitate some active recreation, while lawn space and seating offer some passive use opportunities.



① TYPICAL PLAYGROUND EDGE



② GARBAGE CANS AS GOALS



③ GRAFFITI



④ LOW HANGING POWERLINE



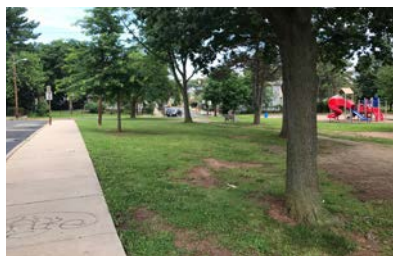
⑤ EVIDENCE OF WATER FLOW



⑥ STANDING WATER



⑦ TABLE WITHOUT BENCHES



⑧ EDGE ALONG HARVEY ST.

KOSSUTH PARK

EXISTING CONDITIONS



ACCESS

Kossuth Park’s open perimeter along a pedestrian-friendly street helped it score above average in terms of access compared to other New Brunswick parks. At present, however, no sign identifies the park name. Also, a curb cut along Harvey St. does not meet with the grade of the street and pavers in some areas are becoming uneven, limiting ADA access in an area with lots of seniors and little open space. Signage should be updated and unified with the rest of New Brunswick’s parks, paths repaired to allow ADA access, and a bike rack installed to facilitate bike transportation.



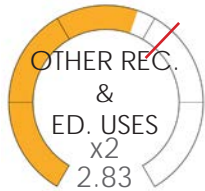
TRAILS

Given its small size, Kossuth Park does not have an extensive path system. Existing paths appear in above average condition, although some uneven pavers need to be levelled and path materials re-evaluated for the future.



ACTIVE RECREATION AMENITIES

Active recreation amenities include the playground, which shows overall good condition and some graffiti, and a flexible-use blacktop area for improvised sports play. The blacktop seems to be seeing a fair bit of soccer use, as moveable blue trash receptacles have been setup as makeshift goals. Based on current use and limited sports facilities nearby, converting the blacktop into a compact soccer space and basketball half court could enhance public recreational experience.



OTHER RECREATIONAL & EDUCATIONAL USES

At present, Kossuth Park’s passive recreational uses are limited by the condition of its amenities. Lawn space is limited to the area beneath shade trees along Harvey Street, with a large portion of grass eroded away to bare dirt from a drainage problem and other portions too small or secluded to lounge or throw a ball. The park does offer some picnic tables (though not clustered as a designated picnic area), but one table is missing benches, reducing its functionality.

A simple fix includes replacing the dysfunctional picnic table. Taking this a step further, the space underneath the shade trees could be designed as a shaded plaza space for sitting and relaxing, also providing an opportunity to improve the site’s stormwater management.



SUPPORTIVE FACILITIES

The park’s few benches and shaded picnic tables provide average seating conditions, although most benches sit in full sun during summer and one of the picnic tables is missing benches. In addition, the drinking fountain did not function on the day of evaluation.



SAFETY & MAINTENANCE

The main issues that reduced Kossuth’s safety and maintenance score lay in maintenance. On the day of evaluation, a lot of trash and debris had collected in the playground, the back fence was covered in graffiti and a picnic table was missing its benches. Furthermore, evidence of water flowing from the south (near the picnic tables) to the north before exiting beyond the blacktop has created an erosion problem in the lawn. The catch along the fence to the east does not seem to be receiving the storm water.

In terms of safety, Kossuth Park is a good example of an open park, with good sight-lines, identifiable entrances, clustered amenities and minimal secluded areas. If the maintenance items are addressed, this score would improve significantly.



AESTHETICS

The park’s open perimeter, trees and serene ambiance give it a welcoming atmosphere for both active and passive recreation. Nevertheless, the park looks a bit rundown and in need of updates, a sentiment echoed in public comment. Graffiti on the playground and perimeter fencing combine with the erosion problem, dated seating options and rudimentary blacktop area for a worn, unpolished appearance. At the same time, the park’s vegetation, while well-maintained and in good condition, is limited to a cluster of shade trees on Harvey Street.

Updates to active amenities, new signage, and consistent new site furnishings would help contribute to a more coordinated appearance. Meanwhile, adding pockets of low flowering shrubs beneath shade trees could create a truly inviting space to enter. The back fence could be planted with a perennial garden, which would create a backdrop of color for the whole park and cover the bland wooden fence.

KOSSUTH PARK

ANALYSIS

Kossuth Park is a pleasant, but underutilized small neighborhood park that, with some updates, could better supporting local residents within walking and biking distance.

In the short term, collecting trash, removing graffiti, and fixing seating and the water fountain would help signal positive change.

In addition, since recreational facilities in this neighborhood are scarce (no 10-minute walk access to basketball or soccer) and visitors already improvise in order to play soccer, the blacktop area should be re-designed for flexible casual sport use. Although no significant safety issues on the playground were observed at the time of evaluation, further inquiry should establish what makes the public feel that it is unsafe for children so the situation can be rectified. The level of demand for a dog park (also requested by some community members)

could also be investigated to see if it warrants space in such a small park.

The border along Harvey Street offers an opportunity to install a beautiful planting of dwarf shrubs that add visual interest and draw visitors in. The mature shade trees already provide the bones for such a planting. The shrubs could also help to keep soccer balls from escaping into the street, resolving a potential safety problem.

Furthermore, given the local population demographics, the park should have more passive recreation opportunities for seniors. Shaded periodic seating in sociable configurations, ADA accessible paths linking amenities, colorful plantings and game tables could all enhance the park experience. The new plaza space on the south end where the picnic benches currently are could help resolve the drainage issue on site, while also providing local residents with an outdoor space for table games or just relaxing.

RECOMMENDATIONS

SHORT-TERM

- 1 COLLECT TRASH & REMOVE GRAFFITI
- 2 REPAIR PICNIC TABLE
- 3 REPAIR DRINKING FOUNTAIN

MID-TERM

- 4 DESIGN COMPACT SOCCER SPACE
- 5 INSTALL BASKETBALL HOOP
- 6 PLANT BORDER ALONG HARVEY STREET
- 6 INVESTIGATE PLAYGROUND CONCERNS

LONG-TERM

- 8 DESIGN PLAZA SPACE
- 9 INSTALL ADA ACCESSIBLE PATHS & OTHER SENIOR-FRIENDLY AMENITIES
- 10 INSTALL PLANTING BED ALONG FENCE



Compact soccer space/basketball half-court at Kossuth Park.

MAP OF RECOMMENDATIONS



MEMORIAL STADIUM

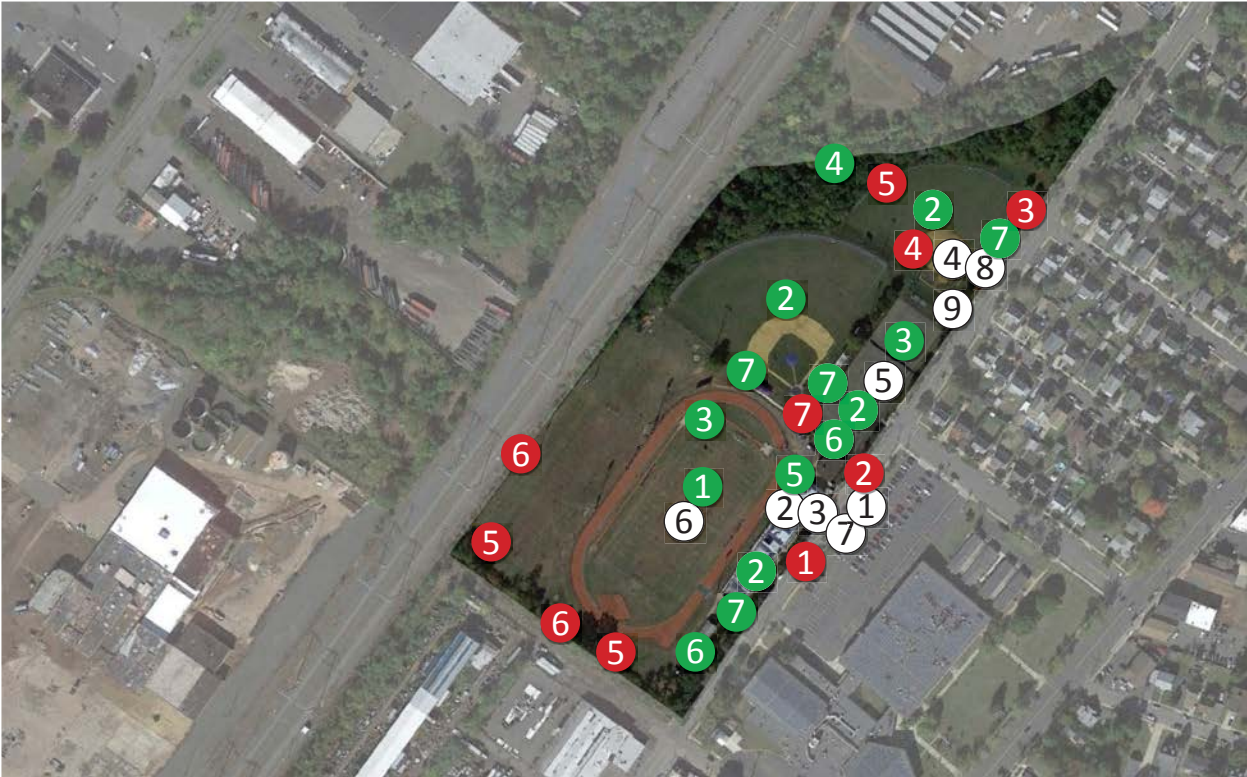
AMENITIES



OBSERVATIONS

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 TRACK/FIELD LOOKS BRAND NEW | 1 UNCLEAR PARKING |
| 2 FACILITIES IN VERY GOOD CONDITION | 2 UNDERWHELMING ENTRY EXPERIENCE |
| 3 COLORS PROMOTE SCHOOL SPIRIT | 3 SIDEWALK APPROACH LACKS VISUAL INTEREST |
| 4 NICE WOODED BUFFER | 4 NORTH AREA DISCONNECTED FROM REST OF SITE |
| 5 RESTROOMS & OTHER SUPPORTIVE AMENITIES | 5 FEELS A BIT ISOLATED |
| 6 MAINTENANCE FACILITIES | 6 PERIMETER BUFFER COULD USE ATTENTION |
| 7 SEATING NEAR ACTIVITY | 7 PICNIC TABLE NEEDS RE-PAINTING |

MAP OF OBSERVATIONS



CONTEXT

New Brunswick's premier active sports complex, Memorial Stadium lies several blocks southwest of the Youth Sports Complex (YSC) and hosts a wide array of youth and adult athletic programs and events. Like the YSC, the NJ Transit rail line forms the western boundary of the park and Joyce Kilmer Avenue the eastern. Commercial properties and a natural area buffer along Mile Run flank the park to the south and north, respectively. The New Brunswick Middle School and a residential neighborhood sit across the street to the east.

PARK DESCRIPTION

Memorial Stadium's 15 acres of active recreation amenities include a multi-sport stadium for football, soccer and track with bleacher seating for 5,000 spectators, two baseball diamonds with bleachers, six tennis courts, long jump and shot put infrastructure, and an open lawn that serves as a practice soccer/football field. The park also offers locker rooms, restrooms, drinking fountains, concession stands, and picnic tables to support lively enjoyment of park events.



① MAIN ENTRANCE



② BLEACHERS NEAR FIELD



③ BATHROOMS



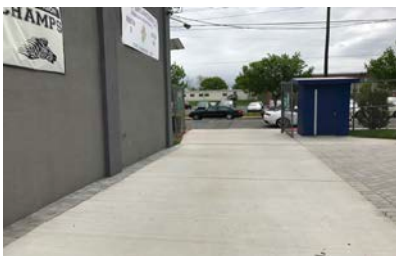
④ BASEBALL DIAMOND



⑤ TENNIS COURTS



⑥ FOOTBALL/SOCCER/TRACK FIELD



⑦ SCHOOL FROM ENTRANCE



⑧ DEAD GRASS AT DIAMOND



⑨ SIDEWALK OUTSIDE PARK

MEMORIAL STADIUM

EXISTING CONDITIONS



ACCESS

The park offers multiple secondary entrances in addition to a main entrance, all along Joyce Kilmer Avenue since none of the other edges land uses are conducive to public access. Nevertheless, some crosswalks (albeit faded) and traffic-calming devices on the street help encourage safe pedestrian access, and the chain-link perimeter fence allows passersby a view in. Only the main entrance is routinely open, however; according to a groundskeeper, the other entrances are opened depending on the season sports schedule. This keeps prepared fields from being disturbed before scheduled games/events. While the Stadium offers a number of ADA sidewalk ramps, many do not have apparent crosswalks nor ADA ramps on the opposite side of the street to facilitate safe, convenient passage. The Stadium does not offer vehicular parking on site, so without any directional signage or painted parking stalls for clarification, visitors either park on street or in the large middle school lot, although long stares from school employees can make one wonder if this is actually allowed. The Stadium offers minimal bike parking facilities.



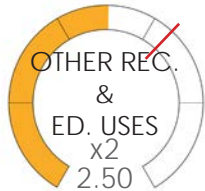
TRAILS

The park does not offer extensive paved paths, but what exists provides ADA access to most main amenities, as does ramp access in the main bleachers. The northernmost baseball diamond could use ADA access, however. There is not a path within the park connecting it to the other activity areas, giving a more isolated feel and requiring visitors in wheelchairs to exit to the street and re-enter at the main entrance in order to use the restrooms. There is also no paved path leading to the bleachers at this field—just an eroded desire path. Similarly, no path extends to the open lawn used as a practice soccer/football field.



ACTIVE RECREATION AMENITIES

The excellent condition of the sports infrastructure impresses visitors immediately, particularly the football/track/soccer field, which looks brand new. The main bleachers, tennis courts and southern baseball diamond are in very good condition, too. The northern baseball diamond does not have new materials, but still looks very well-maintained. The organization of these amenities in relation to the site’s topography does generate a sense of disconnectedness, however. The northern two tennis courts sit a few feet lower than the other four, and the northern baseball diamond lies at a much lower elevation than the other facilities at the bottom of a hill that slopes down towards the stream corridor. Without any path connecting these areas to fields near the main entrance, they seem forgotten, especially the northern baseball field.



OTHER RECREATIONAL & EDUCATIONAL USES

A large open lawn at the back of the track and football/soccer field is reportedly used primarily as a practice field. The field is in average condition and, like the northern baseball field, seems a little forgotten (without a connecting path) and isolated when not in use.



SUPPORTIVE FACILITIES

Conditions of site furnishings vary from almost new to a bit worn (picnic tables primarily), but overall facilitate fairly comfortable use of the site. Bleachers at both baseball diamonds provide seating for spectators, as do picnic benches near the upper four tennis courts, but most sit in full sun. The lower tennis courts and practice field do not have any seating for viewers. Restrooms, lockers and drinking fountains near main activity hubs help support comfortable, extended use of the site. A full maintenance building at the main entrance and small utility shed south of the track help maintenance workers keep the site looking its best.



SAFETY & MAINTENANCE

Overall this site shows excellent maintenance. Overgrown mixed vegetation along the southeast border could use a little more attention, however; the perimeter trees here are quite sparse and in decline. The turf of the lawn/practice field looks very worn, as do a large bare patch of dirt and desire path at the northern baseball field bleachers. Ornamental plantings at the front entrance are maintained, as is the grass along the sidewalks although it looks rather browned out in areas and the curbs are eroding. Existing paths could use a little weeding but are in otherwise good condition.

From a safety standpoint, the site feels rather empty at off-peak times without through-pedestrian traffic, but a good visibility to the street from most of the site and the consistent presence of friendly groundskeepers provide reassurance of safety. The only areas that seems isolated are the northern baseball outfield (in which no one would really linger for recreational purposes), and the area along the southwestern border and corner near the practice field.



AESTHETICS

The stadium area and tennis courts have the strongest sense of style, with new materials and splashes of New Brunswick High School's navy blue and white team colors. Interestingly, the main entrance and other parts of the site give a more utilitarian vibe rather than generating excitement and fully embracing school spirit. Part of the issue is lack of signage and a short entry sequence, without any lead up along the street to build awareness of the fantastic stadium facilities that lie behind the perimeter fence. Deteriorating curbs, faded crosswalks, and very poor conditions along the sidewalk on the school side of Joyce Kilmer Avenue do not help, either. Also, blank walls facing the street and disproportionately small entry plantings do nothing to indicate that something exceptional lies inside. Similarly, small pennants on walls in the entry corridor also look rather small on the large maintenance buildings walls, which could accommodate more robust statements of school spirit.

The tall chain-link fence and mostly-closed entrances do not welcome and encourage the public to walk in and explore the facilities, either, although apart from walking on the track or around the practice fields, this site does not offer passive recreational opportunities; the public is not allowed to use the fields except for scheduled events. In addition, lack of color and vegetation other than grass and some shade trees on the southbound sidewalk make the walk feel long and rather unvarying. Lack of trees behind the practice field leaves the train tracks very visible, particularly from the main bleachers, and trains passing by can be quite loud for the whole park without any real sound buffer.

MEMORIAL STADIUM

ANALYSIS

Over all, Memorial Stadium serves as an excellently maintained special use facility for a variety of programmed sports events and scheduled use. Although members of the public are welcome to casually use the tennis courts or walk on the track, sports fields are for scheduled use only and, unlike the Youth Sports Complex, this site's surrounding context, topography and organization of fields do not leave much potential for passive use of the site, nor for pass-through pedestrian traffic. Thus, it seems suitable for this property to continue as a special use sports destination, rather than convert to a more mixed passive/active use neighborhood park.

In the short term, basic vegetation maintenance, lawn enhancements, and repairs are simple fixes. Re-painting conveniently-located crosswalks, clarifying vehicular parking, and adding convenient bike parking inside the site would also help significantly facilitate multiple forms of safe transportation to this destination.

In the mid-term, high priority should go towards replacing curbs and facilitating ADA access into the site, as well as within the site via a connector path knitting the north and south portions of the park together. In addition,

more elements should be incorporated to improve the entry experience and build school spirit, such as updating welcome signage, covering blank walls, adding periodic low plantings along the fence and installing pole banners. Also in this stage, a thick vegetative border of trees and understory plants should be installed along the rail line to mitigate sound, improve visual interest and enhance habitat quality.

In the long term, to reduce sense of isolation along the southwestern border at off-peak times, the Parks Department should investigate the practicality of installing an ADA compliant walking loop around the track and practice field, perhaps with some fitness equipment, to draw more casual use to that area. Additional low, colorful plantings could be incorporated strategically into bare areas near activity hubs for color, softening hard edges and visual interest. Finally, stormwater best management practices should be incorporated to ensure field runoff does not run untreated into the adjacent stream corridor.

RECOMMENDATIONS

SHORT-TERM

- 1 RE-PAINT CROSSWALKS & CLARIFY PARKING
- 2 RE-PAINT WORN PICNIC TABLE
- 3 ADDRESS PERIMETER VEGETATION MAINTENANCE
- 4 COMPLETE NECESSARY LAWN ENHANCEMENTS
- 5 ADD BIKE PARKING

MID-TERM

- 6 REPLACE CURBS & PROVIDE ADA ACCESS ON BOTH SIDES OF STREET
- 7 DEVELOP CONNECTOR PATH

MID-TERM (CONTINUED)

- 8 ADD PLANTINGS ALONG RAIL LINE
- 9 IMPROVE ENTRY EXPERIENCE (COVER BLANK WALLS, ADD SIGNAGE, ETC.)

LONG-TERM

- 10 INVESTIGATE WALKING LOOP AROUND TRACK & PRACTICE FIELD
- 11 ADD STRATEGIC LOW PLANTINGS NEAR ACTIVITY AREAS
- 12 ADDRESS STORMWATER MANAGEMENT



Clear parking signage, apparent crosswalks with ADA access on both sides of the street, and more school spirit build anticipation in the entry sequence at Memorial Stadium. Blank building walls provide opportunities for murals or other features that generate a vibrant welcome.

MAP OF RECOMMENDATIONS



MONUMENT SQUARE PARK

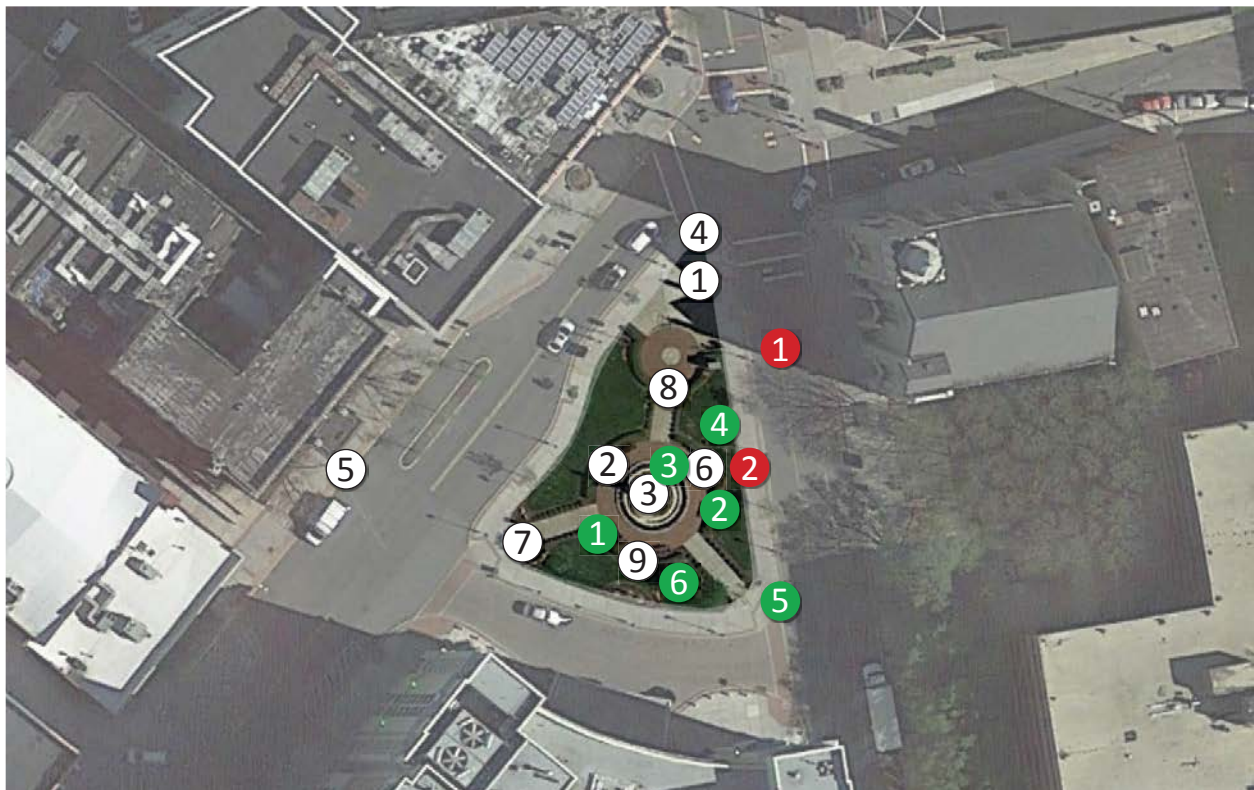
AMENITIES



OBSERVATIONS

- 1 HEAVILY-USED BY A WIDE VARIETY OF PASSING PEDESTRIANS
- 2 SITE FURNISHINGS COMFORTABLE & IN GREAT CONDITION
- 3 KIDS DABBLE HAPPILY IN WATER FEATURE
- 4 VEGETATION VERY WELL-MAINTAINED
- 5 EXCELLENT CONNECTIVITY TO NEARBY STREETS
- 6 URBAN STYLING & UNIQUE HISTORIC ELEMENTS
- 1 NOISE FROM BUSY TRAFFIC
- 2 NO SIGNAGE IDENTIFYING PARK NAME

MAP OF OBSERVATIONS



CONTEXT

Located on a triangular plaza where Livingston Avenue and George Street converge, Monument Square Park sits at the heart of New Brunswick's lively downtown theater district. Historic theaters and small, upscale restaurants across Livingston Avenue currently add vibrancy to the northwestern side of the park; the theaters are scheduled to be redeveloped with two new towers that house contemporary performing arts venues, residential living space and parking facilities. To the east across George Street sit the United Methodist Church and the Liberty Street bus stop with bustling shopping occurring farther north and south along George Street. The 4-star Heldrich hotel flanks the park's southern edge, adding an upscale feel to the location.

PARK DESCRIPTION

The park is raised above street level on the east and southeast sides by low retaining walls, meeting sidewalk grade on the west and southwest edges. A central Civil War monument rises from the center of the park featuring a water element at its base, with benches, hedges, and additional historical plaques oriented in circular fashion around. Three concrete walkways radiate from the center of the park, connecting to surrounding sidewalks and accented by colorful shrub plantings and small lawn areas with some small trees. This park also holds the New Brunswick time capsule, scheduled to be opened in 2082 on the City's 400th birthday.



① VIEW FROM GEORGE ST.



② FRANK MOLNAR HISTORIC STONE



③ MONUMENT IN PARK



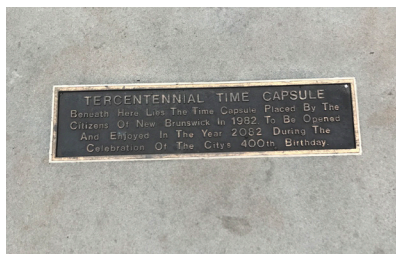
④ VIEW ONTO GEORGE ST.



⑤ VIEW FROM THEATRES



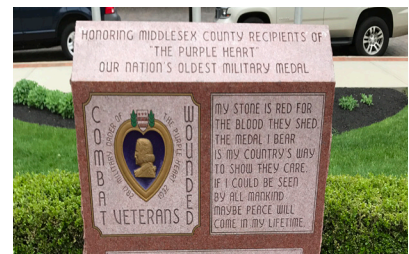
⑥ HISTORIC PLAQUE



⑦ NEW BRUNSWICK TIME CAPSULE



⑧ CLOSE-UP OF PARK



⑨ PURPLE HEART MEMORIAL

MONUMENT SQUARE PARK

EXISTING CONDITIONS



ACCESS

The park has multiple, convenient entrances that are easy to locate and facilitate flow of pedestrian traffic in this busy area, as do the comfortable and abundant surrounding crosswalks and sidewalks. Given the grade change of this compact site, only the southwest corner near the Heldrich offers ADA access; other entrance points involve stairs. The park is small enough, however, and facilitates circular circulation such that this is only a minor inconvenience.

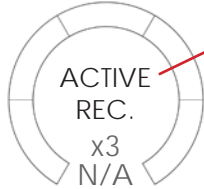
Adjacent streets offer metered vehicular parking, although it can be difficult to find an empty stall at peak times. The park functions primarily as a pass through or short stopping point for pedestrians and some cyclists, however, rather than a destination to which one drives.

Monument Square Park features minimal signage beyond the historical plaques: two signs in English with icons reminding visitors to curb their dogs and a directional signpost with names of New Brunswick's sister cities. Although the site could benefit from some identification of the park's own name, it is such a small space with clear circulation patterns that an abundance of signage would detract from aesthetic enjoyment.



TRAILS

The paved paths are in excellent condition, connect conveniently to the adjacent sidewalks, and contribute to the overall neat appearance of the park.



ACTIVE RECREATION AMENITIES

This park does not support active amenities.



OTHER RECREATIONAL & EDUCATIONAL USES

This park does not support other recreational and educational uses.



SUPPORTIVE FACILITIES

Monument Square Park hosts plenty of conveniently placed benches and trash receptacles in excellent condition. The park does not have any restrooms, but given its size and the abundance of restroom opportunities in the surrounding context, this does not pose a problem. There are no shade structures or large shade trees, although the Heldrich casts a shadow over parts of the park during the day and the water feature helps to cool the area during the summer. The sunniness of the park can actually provide a welcome change from some of the more shaded stretches of adjacent streets, particularly in winter.



SAFETY & MAINTENANCE

Monument Square Park's very good condition indicates very conscientious maintenance. Paths around and through the park are in great condition, with no cracks or weeds growing between the joints. The plantings around the plaza circle are all neatly trimmed and growing well. The historical plaques, stones, and monument are free of graffiti and weathering, while the benches are clean and shiny. The only condition that could use more attention is the presence of trash collecting under the plantings, perhaps blowing in from the street.

The park has very high visibility on all sides from surrounding sidewalks and good lighting at night, lending it a very safe feel. Busy activity in this part of town during the day and plenty of pedestrian activity at night from the hotel, theaters and restaurants also add to the feeling of good security for park users.



AESTHETICS

From the street, the greenery and color from the park's plantings are a welcome contrast from the surrounding city buildings and hardscape. The monument statue towering over the park lends a unique architectural landmark to the streetscape, and American flags flying from the lampposts add color and movement. Sitting inside the park, the monument water feature helps to dull the noise from heavy vehicular traffic (although it is still quite loud) and contributes to the feeling of a relaxing oasis in the midst of a bustling urban environs.

The character and high standards of maintenance of the Heldrich, restaurants, and other surrounding buildings, combined with the park's own neatly maintained appearance give a very positive feeling to this portion of downtown New Brunswick. Coordinating black site furnishings contribute to a sleek urban style that complements the park historic features and city streetscape.

MONUMENT SQUARE PARK

ANALYSIS

The park appears well-used by a wide variety of pedestrians from affectionate college-aged couples to moms reading with kids to retired theatergoers, most of whom are stopping for a short while on their way to and from other downtown destinations. Visitors exhibit a high degree of comfort in the park, which provides important green space in the heart of the downtown area.

Given the excellent condition and high use of the park at present, there is no need for major improvements. More attention could be paid to trash removal from plantings, and signage in some form should identify the park’s name. In addition, considering the amount of lawn and impermeable surface in the park, simple ways to enhance stormwater management onsite

(e.g. rain gardens) could potentially benefit the park and enhance habitat value while reducing input to the city sewer system.

Finally, with new arts complexes and the Mason Gross School of the Arts in immediate proximity to Monument Square Park, the city should explore a partnership with the local arts community to introduce art exhibits in the park to keep the visitor experience fresh and engaging. Temporary installations could rotate through an art space on the northwestern lawn area. One possible way to acquire rotating art exhibits at relatively low cost might be to sponsor an annual competition for Mason Gross students, having the winning piece displayed in the park for a period of time—such an arrangement could be mutually beneficial for the City and the students.

RECOMMENDATIONS

SHORT-TERM

- 1 REMOVE TRASH FROM UNDER PLANTINGS
- 2 IDENTIFY THE PARK NAME

MID-TERM

- 3 EXPLORE OPPORTUNITIES TO ENHANCE STORMWATER MANAGEMENT AND HABITAT VALUE ONSITE

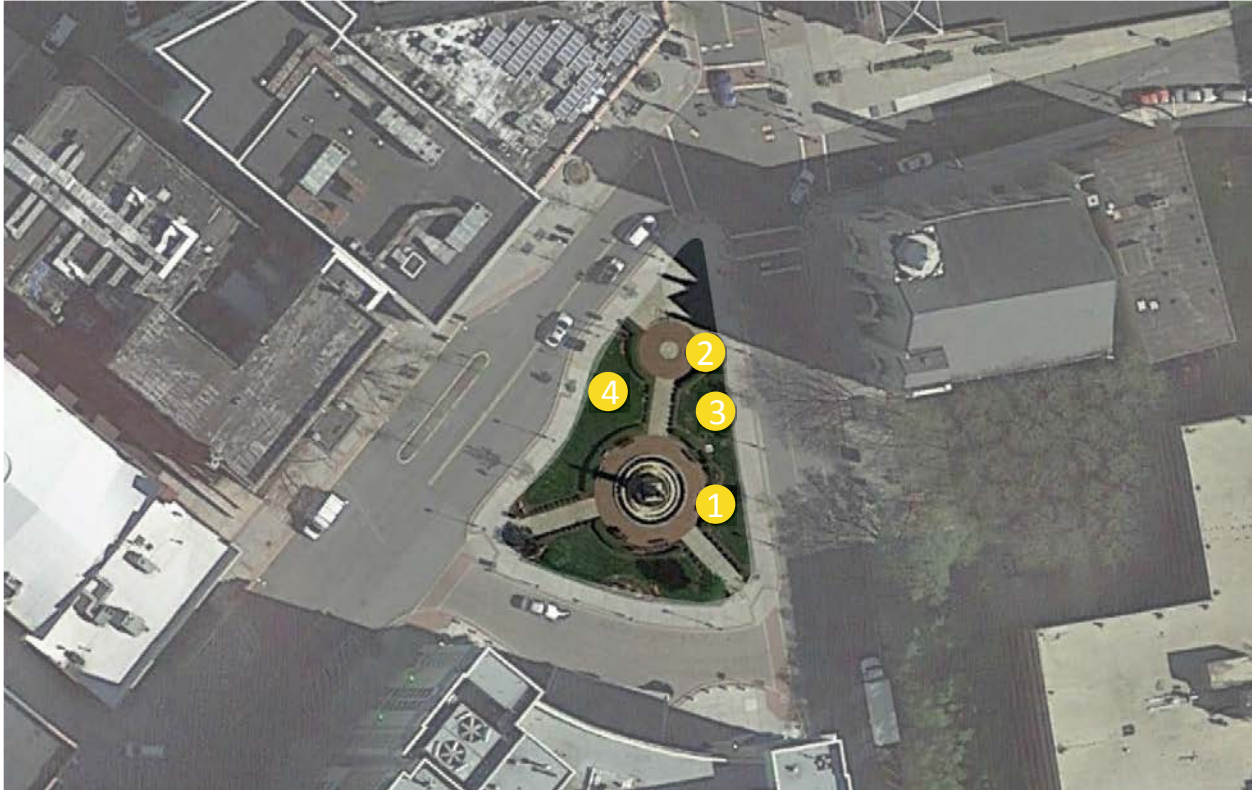
LONG-TERM

- 4 COLLABORATE WITH LOCAL ARTS COMMUNITY TO INFUSE THE PARK WITH TEMPORARY ART INSTALLATIONS



Proposed “Art Space” where local New Brunswick arts community can display temporary art to enliven the park.

MAP OF RECOMMENDATIONS



MURPHY PARK

AMENITIES



OBSERVATIONS

- 1 VERY PLEASANT SHADED PICNIC AREA
- 2 TENNIS COURTS IN VERY GOOD CONDITION
- 3 NEW PLAYGROUND EQUIPMENT
- 4 LOTS OF SWINGS
- 1 CONFUSING ENTRANCE/PARKING
- 2 WEEDS & EXPOSED FILTER FABRIC AT SWINGSSETS
- 3 OLD PLAY PANELS NOT VERY STIMULATING
- 4 WORN FITNESS STATION HAS WHEELCHAIR DIRECTIONS BUT NO ADA ACCESS; PARK FEELS VERY ISOLATED
- 5 BASEBALL DIAMOND TURNING TO LAWN; CREATES DISCONNECT BETWEEN TWO CORE ACTIVITY AREAS
- 6 CONFUSION OVER PUBLIC ACCESS TO SHARED AMENITIES
- 7 NO SIGNAGE INDICATING PARK AMENITIES FROM STREET

MAP OF OBSERVATIONS



CONTEXT

Far removed from downtown in the easternmost part of New Brunswick, Murphy Park is located in a quiet residential neighborhood bounded by Route 1 to the west, the Raritan River and conservation areas in the north, the NJ Turnpike (I-95) to the east, and Route 18 to the South. It is a long, relatively narrow park surrounded by single family homes and adjacent to the Woodrow Wilson Elementary School. The neighborhood has a high number of seniors and adults, as well as a moderately high number of young children under age 10.

PARK DESCRIPTION

Grassy open lawn punctuated periodically by utility towers in a PSE&G power line right-of-way (ROW), complete with “No Trespassing” signs, makes up the northern border of the park. A long gravel driveway follows the right-of-way well into the park past a shaded picnic area, two playgrounds and fitness area (all south of the driveway), before tapering off into bare dirt and ending near a utility tower and the baseball diamond, which separates the main park area from the school. Tennis courts, basketball courts and an additional small playground by the school parking lot on Tunison are also part of the park, although they are not particularly visible from nor physically connected to the main playground areas.



① ENTRANCE TO PARK



② HISTORIC FEATURE



③ SITE FURNISHINGS



④ DECAYING PICNIC TABLE



⑤ PLAYGROUND



⑥ ADJACENT RIGHT-OF-WAY



⑦ FITNESS STATION



⑧ SWINGSET



⑨ BROKEN WATER FOUNTAIN

MURPHY PARK

EXISTING CONDITIONS



ACCESS

Both access points into the park are confusing to new users. The main park entrance sign and gravel driveway on Pennington Road appear somewhat unexpectedly next to PSE&G utility towers and “No Trespassing” signs along the street. No signs indicate where visitors should park, so visitors only realize that they should park on the street after they drive down the driveway and find that it abruptly ends. Alternatively, visitors who know that the school is adjacent to the Murphy Park can seek access via the Tunison Road school parking lot, although no parking is allowed during school hours and no sign indicates the presence of a public park. Either way, no ADA compliant access into the park or between different amenities within the park exists. Neither Tunison Road nor Pennington Road has sidewalks to facilitate safe pedestrian passage, but the roads seem relatively quiet. Other than the bilingual no littering sign, park information signage is in English only.



TRAILS

The park does not include trails other than the gravel driveway, serves more as a service entrance for maintenance vehicles rather than for pedestrian use since it doesn’t connect amenities to each other and peters out into an eroded dirt stretch.



ACTIVE RECREATION AMENITIES

Murphy Park offers some very nice active recreation opportunities. In the main, western portion of the park, two swing areas, shaded by trees for comfort and close to seating for parents, and two playgrounds in very good condition provide play opportunities for young visitors. The only entrance to the swings, however, is located on the farthest end from the picnic area, making it inconvenient for caregivers with balance/mobility issues. A separate play area with an aged tic-tac-toe panel and other interactive panels of unclear intent probably saw more use in the past. The fitness station equipment adds more variety of experience, although it has a rather worn appearance and missing signage. Remaining signage includes directions for wheelchair use, but there is no ADA path to the equipment.

The baseball diamond, grown in with lawn, seems more oriented towards the school since a bare chain-link fence separates it from the playgrounds. In fact, a school employee informed the evaluator that the baseball diamond and all amenities near the school were not park property. The Parks Division later clarified that the two tennis courts (in good condition), two basketball courts (in average condition), and small playground (also good condition) near the school are actually park property that the school uses. Paved paths around the school facilitate better access to these amenities.



OTHER RECREATIONAL & EDUCATIONAL USES

A plaque affixed to a large boulder commemorates an historic event close enough to playground activity to be seen without posing a safety concern. An unmarked garden along the residential fences in the north does not belong to the park, while the open grassy lawns, potentially suitable for impromptu soccer or other casual recreation, are part of the utility right-of-way.



SUPPORTIVE FACILITIES

Park benches are strategically placed in shade or sun near play equipment and tables in dappled shade under mature shade trees create a very pleasant picnic area. These furnishings vary in condition, with some broken while others are in fine repair. Trash and recycling bins have been deployed near main activity areas along with an old, non-functional drinking fountain situated in the picnic area. In addition, a dog waste bag dispenser stands near the main entrance of the park, although it was not stocked with bags.



SAFETY & MAINTENANCE

Overall, the current condition of the park is better than it looks. The play equipment is fairly new, but the freestanding play panels, filter fabric showing under the swing wells and weeds growing in the swing area mulch lend an air of neglect. The fitness station shows signs of wear. The baseball field looks ripe for conversion to soccer, and a proliferation of litter near the tennis and basketball courts obscure their fairly good condition. In addition, broken furnishings reduce usability of the otherwise lovely and litter-free picnic space. Trees and the few large shrubs appear in fine condition. The fences around the bases of the utility power lines, on the other hand, are covered in masses of dead and unkempt weeds, making the structures look unsightly. The lawn areas throughout the park are neatly mowed, but have large patches of dead or dying grass.

Overall, the park feels isolated when schoolchildren are not present because there is little to no visibility into the park from the street and adjacent residential homes. The two separate amenity areas cluster activity nicely, but lack of line-of-sight makes it impossible for parents to simultaneously supervise children in both areas. There is no evidence of alcohol/substance abuse or vagrancy, but lack of lighting and lack of good visibility from the street make the park unsuitable for nighttime use.



AESTHETICS

The excellent condition of the play equipment and shady picnic grove make up Murphy Park's most attractive qualities. In spite of so many large highways in close proximity, the park has a surprisingly low level of traffic sounds and the chorus of songbirds helps breathe life into the space. Nevertheless, the park has a somewhat worn, disjointed ambiance, starting at the main entrance, which has not received any special attention to make it feel welcoming. No small shrub/herbaceous layer exists to add color, textural interest and human scale. Furthermore, the tangle of dead vines at the base of the utility towers detracts from their potential architectural interest, making the park feel even more like a forgotten space.

MURPHY PARK

ANALYSIS

In spite of its confusing, tucked-away location, Murphy Park has potential for great passive and active recreation in a neighborhood very disconnected from the rest of the parks system. The basketball courts and playgrounds see use, but the park is underutilized. The real challenge lies in pulling people into this hidden space to activate it. Routine lawn care, new play equipment, and user-sensitive positioning of site furnishings create a good framework on which to support comfortable use. With some key enhancements, this park could become a vibrant heart of its local community.

In the short-term, performing basic repairs, cleaning the waste receptacles and sitting them evenly on the ground (instead of crookedly on tree roots), cleaning up litter around amenities in the east, and neatening the swingset area would enable use and help the park appear less forgotten. Adding low, colorful plantings with updated signage at both entrances and clarifying parking at the main entrance would help welcome visitors in.

At present, the baseball field creates a disconnect between the two core activity areas. The City should assess whether the baseball field should be converted to a higher-demand use in this neighborhood (e.g. soccer). If so, the high chain-link fence between the western playgrounds and field

should be replaced with a low, planted fence/border to define the playground space without cutting off access to the east. The City should initiate a roundtable discussion with members of the neighborhood and school to determine what amenities would best serve their needs.

In the mid-term, an ADA accessible path should be installed to connect the two core activity areas and draw people through the space. Depending on the future of the baseball diamond, a walking loop around the field perimeter might be appropriate. In addition, the bare, solid fences between the park and adjacent residential properties make it feel like neighbors are turning their backs on the park, while the expanse of lawn in right-of-way reduces the sense of human scale. Adding periodic, strategic colorful plantings would help add color, visual interest, human scale, and support birds for a more lively, less secluded ambiance. Also, adding more tables to the picnic area and replacing the old play panels with a more interactive or imaginative play opportunity (e.g. open-frame house) could facilitate more family recreation in the park.

In the long-term, adding solar lighting and more seasonal programming could help enliven the park and extend hours of use. A water feature (e.g. small fountain) added near the picnic area to mitigate traffic noise and add life to the park could be beneficial, too.

RECOMMENDATIONS

SHORT-TERM

- 1 BASIC REPAIRS, PICK UP LITTER NEAR SCHOOL, CLEAN GARBAGE BINS, NEATEN SWINGSET AREA
- 2 ENHANCE ENTRANCES WITH UPDATED SIGNAGE & LOW PLANTINGS; CLARIFY PARKING
- 3 DECIDE FUTURE OF BASEBALL DIAMOND

MID-TERM

- 4 INSTALL ADA PATH TO CONNECT MAIN ACTIVITY AREAS; WALKING LOOP PERHAPS?
- 5 ADD STRATEGIC LOW PLANTINGS ALONG SOUTHERN FENCELINE & UTILITY ROW

MID-TERM (CONTINUED)

- 6 REPLACE OLD PLAY PANELS
- 7 ADD MORE TABLES TO PICNIC AREA

LONG-TERM

- 8 DEVELOP ROBUST SEASONAL PROGRAMMING (YOUTH SOCCER CAMPS, NEIGHBORHOOD MOVIE NIGHTS, ETC.)
- 9 ADD SOLAR-POWERED LIGHTING
- 10 ADD A WATER FEATURE



Enhancing the entrances with low plantings and more pedestrian-friendly walkway would help welcome visitors in. Signage should be updated and parking clarified.

MAP OF RECOMMENDATIONS



PITTMAN PARK

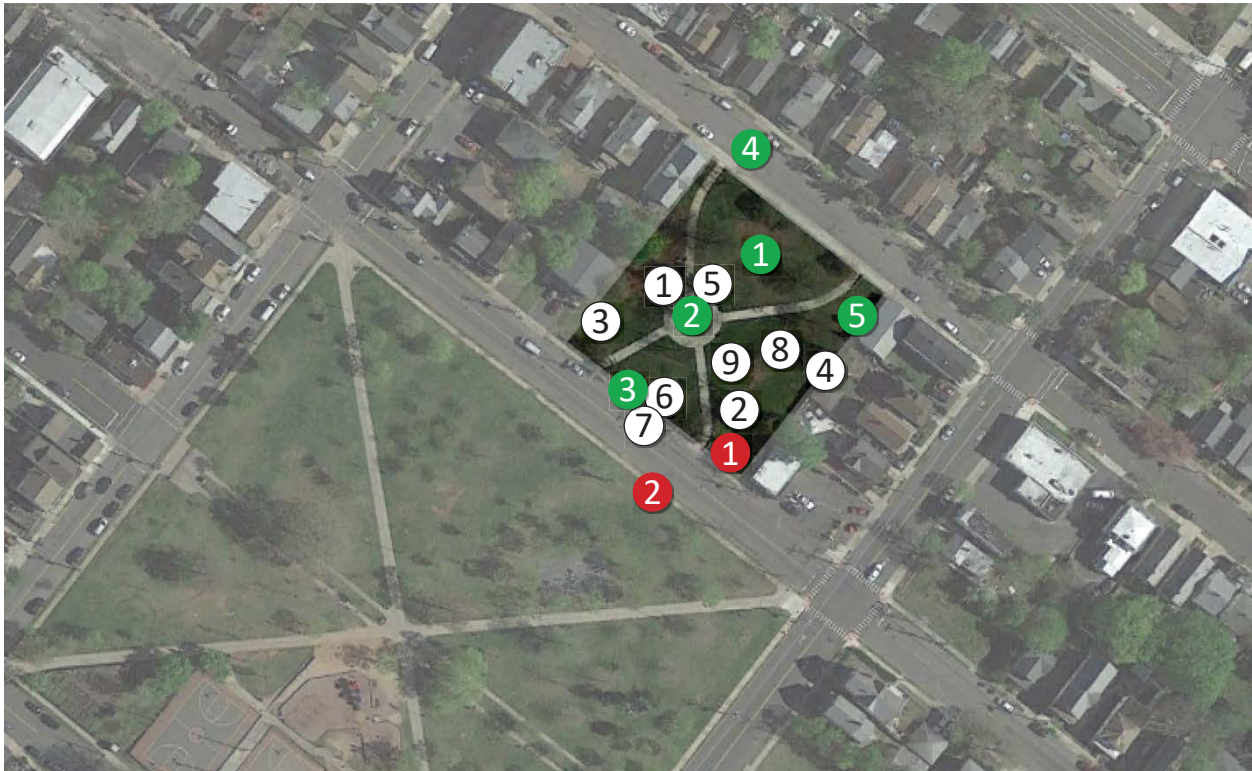
AMENITIES



OBSERVATIONS

- 1 PARK SEES A GOOD AMOUNT OF USE
- 2 IMPRESSIVE CENTRAL TREE AS FOCAL POINT WITH HISTORIC HEADSTONES
- 3 PLEASANT FLOWERING TREES ALONG WALLS
- 4 SIDEWALKS ALONG STREET FACILITATE WALKING
- 5 PATHS & LIGHTS IN VERY NEW CONDITION
- 1 NO SEATING PROVIDED, SO PEDESTRIANS SIT ON RETAINING WALLS AROUND PERIMETER
- 2 NO CONNECTION TO FEASTER PARK

MAP OF OBSERVATIONS



CONTEXT

Tucked directly northeast across Handy Street from Feaster Park, Pittman Park is a quiet pocket park bounded by residential homes on its northwest border, Seaman Street on its northeast edge, and a car repair shop and more residential properties to the southeast on Commercial Avenue. In fact, residential housing and small commercial enterprises make up most of this neighborhood south of Downtown New Brunswick.

PARK DESCRIPTION

The park itself is raised several feet above sidewalk grade, supported by low retaining wall on both Seaman and Handy Streets with weeping cherry trees (*Prunus* sp.) and boxwood (*Buxus* sp.) hedges. A mature specimen tree provides a central focal point, from which sidewalks radiate to connect to the streets in an X-shaped pattern. Historic graves form a ring around the base of the tree, with a more recent grave off to the side. Open lawn dotted with trees makes up the remainder of the park.



① CENTER CIRCLE



② EAST HANDY ST. ENTRANCE



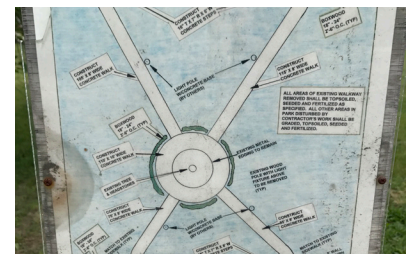
③ WEST HANDY ST. ENTRANCE



④ ADJACENT HOMES



⑤ MEMORIAL HEADSTONES



⑥ PARK ENGINEERING SIGN



⑦ ONLY SIGNAGE IN PARK



⑧ SMALL OPEN LAWN AREAS



⑨ CARVINGS IN TREE

PITTMAN PARK

EXISTING CONDITIONS



ACCESS

The park has four open entrances from the sidewalks along Seaman and Handy Streets, facilitating easy walk-through traffic patterns by local residents. One entrance on Seaman Street is ramped for ADA access whereas the others have steps. The park does not support any formal bike parking infrastructure and, similar to Feaster Park, the only vehicular parking is a mix of permit-only and free on-street parking. Since the park functions primarily as a small, quiet pass-through space for locals, limited vehicular parking does not pose a significant problem.

The park does not have any identifying signage other than an old park improvements sign from 2009 along Handy Street with an engineering blueprint of projected improvements.



TRAILS

The paths within the park are in very new condition and clean.



ACTIVE RECREATION AMENITIES

This park does not support any active amenities.



OTHER RECREATIONAL & EDUCATIONAL USES

The park does have some small open lawn areas between the paths, which are in average condition and dotted by young trees of varying health.



SUPPORTIVE FACILITIES

The park has a trash receptacle, but the presence of litter around the park suggests that it does not adequately meet user needs. This park does not offer any formal seating at all, which is very inconvenient for visitors wishing to linger for any amount of time. Instead, a fair number of pedestrians walking down the street stop to sit on the steps or on the low retaining walls in the shade of the weeping cherry trees along the perimeter of the park, particularly along Handy Street.



SAFETY & MAINTENANCE

The overall condition of Pittman Park is fairly good, thanks to some improvements in recent years. The retaining walls and paths look new, and there is no evidence of graffiti or substance abuse. The new gravesite appears regularly tended.

Many of the trees appear to be thriving, although three have died and some others are struggling or have evidence of damage from lawn equipment. Similarly, much of the grass seems healthy, but there are dead and patchy areas. The boxwood hedges along Handy Street seems rather sparse, with some plants surviving but not thriving. The fences around adjacent residential properties could use some work, as they make the nearby park areas look less appealing.

The higher elevation on the southwestern side makes it difficult for passersby on Handy Street to see into the park, however the open design of the park provides very good community surveillance from the houses across Seaman Street and adjacent residential dwellings. Solar-powered lighting enhances visibility at night.



AESTHETICS

The plantings at the Handy Street entrances really add a pleasant aesthetic to the entry experience; the weeping cherries add form and color not found in most of the other parks. The central specimen tree adds real presence to the park, serving as an appealing visual anchor from the perimeter. Upon closer inspection, the historic grave headstones arrayed around its base add another layer of interest and cultural grounding to site.

The boxwood hedge on the Feaster side will add more visual interest if it thrives well enough to fill in. The plantings along Seaman Street seem sparser and do not seem to have had the same level of attention paid to them as the Handy Street side. A sizeable stretch of eroded ground on the northwestern edge of the park really detracts from the desirability of that area. Nevertheless, the overall ambiance of the park is one of quiet serenity with a pleasant balance of sun and dappled shade.

PITTMAN PARK

ANALYSIS

This pleasant pocket park provides a quiet, restful retreat from the surrounding streetscape, while creating easier pedestrian circulation in the neighborhood. The park's edges see a fair bit of use with people sitting on the steps and retaining walls to chat in the shade, read the paper, and greet friends passing by. The central portion, however, is significantly underutilized, primarily due to the lack of seating. Nevertheless, this park has great potential for becoming a thriving passive gathering space.

Adding comfortable, strategically placed seating and tables (with some in the shade) would encourage people into the park and promote pleasant lingering. In addition, adding low, colorful plantings and possibly a water feature would add more visual appeal and ecological value to the site, helping draw

visitors in to enhance neighborhood socialization and social control for safety. Adding bike parking would help facilitate bicycle transportation, which is prevalent at Feaster.

From a maintenance perspective, the root cause of the muddy, eroded patch should be resolved and the grass re-seeded. More tree-sensitive maintenance routines would help protect trees from unnecessary damage.

Although no physical connection from Feaster Park to Pittman currently exists, a new site design at Feaster could create a linkage between the two, adding a much more dynamic, open feel to Handy Street (see Feaster Park analysis). In this case, Pittman would support more passive pursuits like reading or playing chess (given proximity to residential homes), while Feaster would accommodate more active recreation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

SHORT-TERM

- 1 ADD SEATING AND TABLES (FOR EATING, CHESS, ETC.) IN SHADY SPOTS
- 2 ADD LOW, COLORFUL PLANTINGS ALONG PATHS AND NEAR NEW SEATING
- 3 ADOPT MORE TREE-SENSITIVE MAINTENANCE ROUTINES

MID-TERM

- 4 ADDRESS THE CAUSE OF THE MUDDY PATCH AND RE-SEED THE GRASS
- 5 ADD BIKE PARKING

LONG-TERM

- 6 VISUALLY AND PHYSICALLY LINK PITTMAN PARK TO FEASTER PARK
- 7 CELEBRATE THE PARKS OUT IN THE REST OF THE STREETScape
- 8 ADD WATER FEATURE (E.G. FOUNTAIN)?



New plantings and seating around the center circle in Pittman Park.

MAP OF RECOMMENDATIONS



QUENTIN AVENUE TOT LOT

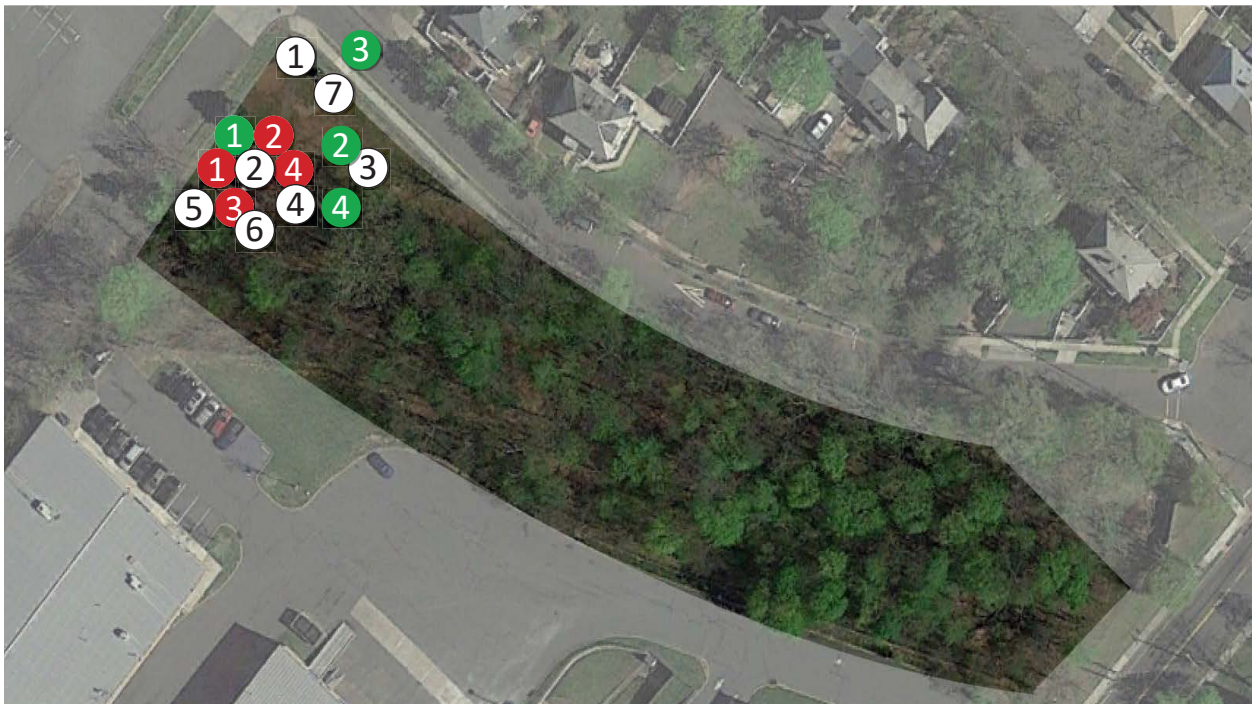
AMENITIES



OBSERVATIONS

- ① PLAYGROUND IN GOOD CONDITION
- ② SMALL OPEN LAWN OFFERS OPPORTUNITY FOR YOUNG CHILDREN TO RUN AND PLAY SPORTS
- ③ PARK IN CLOSE PROXIMITY TO NEIGHBORHOOD WITH MANY YOUNG CHILDREN
- ④ NATURAL AREA BACKDROP PROVIDES PLEASING AMBIANCE AND SPATIAL INTIMACY
- ① FILTER FABRIC EXPOSED AT PLAYGROUND
- ② DISCARDED SHOPPING IN PLAYGROUND
- ③ MATTRESS ON THE NATURAL AREA SIDE OF FENCE
- ④ SOME TRASH AND GRAFFITI

MAP OF OBSERVATIONS



CONTEXT

The Quentin Ave Tot Lot is a small pocket park located adjacent to single family homes along a relatively quiet street. To the west are views of an adjacent warehouse, while the south and east areas are wooded with stormwater catchments. While technically part of the parkland, these wooded areas are fenced for safety purposes.

With the more active recreation amenities offered at Archibald Park in close proximity, the Tot Lot functions as a quiet park for very young children to play with their caretakers.

PARK DESCRIPTION

A small triangular space fenced in on all sides, the publicly-accessible portion of the Tot Lot provides a playground and small open lawn as amenities, both of which are in good, shaded locations. Openings in a perimeter chainlink fence provide access from the street sidewalks.



① ENTRANCE



② PLAYGROUND WITH TRASH



③ SMALL OPEN LAWN



④ EXPOSED LANDSCAPE FABRIC



⑤ OPEN GATE



⑥ GRAFFITI ON SIGN



⑦ PLAY FEATURES

QUENTIN AVENUE TOT LOT

EXISTING CONDITIONS



ACCESS

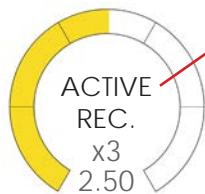
Although this park does have two convenient access points from the sidewalk, lack of designed entrances and signage identifying the site as a park contributed to this park's low access score. The lack of a path into the park makes access to amenities difficult for caretakers with strollers or mobility issues.

Painting crosswalks across Quentin Avenue to the entrances could facilitate safer pedestrian access by alerting drivers to the presence of the park. Vehicular parking is limited to street side, which local residents appear to use for non-park related purposes. The park does not support any bike parking facilities.



TRAILS

This park does not support any paved paths at present. A desire path does exist between the primary entrance and the playground.



ACTIVE RECREATION AMENITIES

This park currently provides one active amenity: the playground. While the playground equipment itself is in good condition, the play surface is not. Significant amounts of exposed filter fabric create a tripping hazard (particularly for young children, senior caregivers or pregnant women), while contributing to a neglected appearance. Freestanding play structures such as the interactive tic-tac-toe panel appear dated and of dubious recreational value, but the park has room to add more engaging pieces that promote exploration and exercise. Addressing the play surface and adding some additional play features designed for young children would go a long way in making the Tot Lot a stimulating playspace for young residents.



OTHER RECREATIONAL & EDUCATIONAL USES

The small shaded lawn does provide room for young children to run off energy (something public comment mentioned as important to city dwellers), but could benefit from additional elements that provide child scale, variation and visual stimulation. The natural area should be assessed to determine whether a small interpretive nature trail or woodland play area for children is feasible.



SUPPORTIVE FACILITIES

The park’s single bench--situated in full sun and closer to the road than the playground--does not promote comfortable lingering for children or caregivers. The park does not currently have trash receptacles or drinking fountains, either. Installing some benches facing inward along the street, a couple of picnic benches in shade near the playground, and a couple of trash receptacles would constitute a quick improvement to the park functionality.



SAFETY & MAINTENANCE

The Quentin Ave Tot Lot scored about average compared to the rest of New Brunswick parks in terms of safety and maintenance. The grass is neatly mowed. Adding some garbage receptacles would probably resolve the presence of litter, while removing graffiti and covering the filter fabric would make a big difference in the overall appearance of the playground.

The park’s open layout and proximity to residential homes across the street allows more eyes to see into the park, contributing to an overall fairly safe feel. Evidence of vagrancy behind the fence in the wooded area near the playground did reduce the safety score, however. Activating the park provides the most desirable option for discouraging vagrancy near the playground. Thinning out some of the woody vegetation there could also reduce the feeling of seclusion, if necessary.



AESTHETICS

The proximity of the Tot Lot to the natural area and the pleasant sounds emanating from it (birdsong, wind rustling leaves, etc.) are its best aesthetic aspects. Views are generally pleasing, with the exception of the chainlink fence and warehouses to the northwest. Factors that influenced such a low score in this category include the uninspiring entrances and edge conditions of the park, lack of variety and condition of vegetation, and appearance of materials.

Improving the planting design of the Tot Lot would make a tremendous difference in its overall aesthetic appeal. Replacing the high chainlink fence along the street with a low fence, a few shade trees and small flowering understory shrubs would simultaneously prevent children from running into the street while creating an inviting view both within the park and from the street. Repeating this planting along the west edge would help screen out the view of the warehouse.

QUENTIN AVENUE TOT LOT

ANALYSIS

While this park scored well below average in almost all categories compared to other New Brunswick parks, the Quentin Ave Tot Lot has tremendous potential to provide one of the most stimulating play spaces for the City's youngest residents without extraordinary investments.

The wooded buffer in the south provides a pleasing ambiance and creates an intimate feel desirable for an urban tot lot. Removing the chainlink fence and adding street-side plantings (as detail in the Aesthetics assessment) would open up the site and provide a much more welcoming sense of place. Highlighting the two entrances, developing a simple paved path between them, installing crosswalks across Quentin Avenue, and providing seating and

other supportive amenities would significantly impact access and user comfort. Adding additional play features and seasonal programming for small children would also help activate the space.

In the long-term, the Parks Department should assess the feasibility of a small woodland trail in the nature area, as well as try to coordinate public passage between the Tot Lot and Archibald Park with adjacent private landowners.

RECOMMENDATIONS

SHORT-TERM

- 1 COVER FILTER FABRIC WITH MULCH
- 2 ADD SEATING AND WASTE RECEPTABLES
- 3 REPLACE CHAINLINK FENCE WITH LOW FENCE
- 4 ADD IDENTIFYING SIGNAGE AT ENTRANCES & PAINT CROSSWALKS
- 5 LANDSCAPE LOW FENCE ALONG STREET

MID-TERM

- 6 INSTALL PATH
- 7 LANDSCAPE ALONG EAST & WEST EDGES
- 8 ADD ADDITIONAL PLAY FEATURES
- 9 ADD DRINKING FOUNTAIN

LONG-TERM

- 10 DEVELOP SEASONAL PROGRAMMING FOR YOUNG CHILDREN IN THE PARK
- 11 INVESTIGATE WOODLAND TRAIL FEASIBILITY
- 12 DEVELOP CONNECTION WITH ARCHIBALD PARK



Enhanced Tot Lot. Added trees provide shade and screen out the warehouse to the west. Low shrubs planted under trees provide color without obstructing views in from street. Benches installed under street-side shade trees and ADA accessible path help delineate the space and facilitate comfortable use.

MAP OF RECOMMENDATIONS



RECREATION PARK

AMENITIES



OBSERVATIONS

- 1 CONSISTENT USE & ENJOYMENT OF AMENITIES; FEELS VERY SAFE & WELL MAINTAINED
 - 2 SPLASH PAD AND SKATE PARK VERY POPULAR
 - 3 OPEN LAWNS OFFER FLEXIBLE SPACE FOR SPORTS AND EVENTS
 - 4 ADA PATHS & MOST AMENITIES IN EXCELLENT CONDITION
 - 5 PARK HAS CLEAR URBAN SENSE OF STYLE
- 1 OPEN LAWNS COULD USE HUMAN-SCALE EDGE DEFINITION (THEY FEEL VAST & UNDERUTILIZED WHEN EVENTS AREN'T PROGRAMMED)
 - 2 INADEQUATE SEATING & SHADE FOR PARENTS AT SPLASH PAD
 - 3 CENTRAL AREA DOMINATED BY HARDSCAPE
 - 4 PATHS AROUND LAWNS COULD BENEFIT FROM SHADE, MORE SEATING & VISUAL INTEREST
 - 5 PARK LOCATION NOT EVIDENT FROM NEARBY STREETS; PERIMETER DOESN'T ENTICE VISITORS IN
 - 6 COMMUNITY GARDEN LACKS IDENTIFYING SIGNS

MAP OF OBSERVATIONS



CONTEXT

Located near the city's southern border with North Brunswick, Recreation Park sits within a quiet residential neighborhood just a few blocks southwest of the Rutgers University Cook Campus.

PARK DESCRIPTION

The main park entrance, parking lots and skate park are located in the northern portion of the park along Sandford Street at the park's highest elevation. Down the hill, a splash pad near the restroom building functions as the heart of the park. Basketball courts and a community garden flank this central area along the western and southwestern sides respectively. Open fields for soccer make up the east and south east portions, where a walking path around the fields leads visitors through a fitness circuit. Scattered benches provide seating along the eastern and western edges. The park underwent a complete redesign in recent years, making it the newest-looking park in the city system with amenities not found in other locations.



① BASKETBALL COURTS



② PAVILION/BATHROOMS



③ NEW PLANTINGS



④ OPEN LAWN



⑤ PATH CUTS THROUGH LAWNS



⑥ COMMUNITY GARDEN



⑦ PLAYGROUND



⑧ SKATE PARK



⑨ SPLASH PAD

RECREATION PARK

EXISTING CONDITIONS



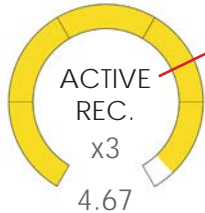
ACCESS

The park has an open perimeter along the northeast and southwest sides, providing convenient access to residents. The main entrance is fairly visible with adequate parking in the two lots. Entrances and paths provide ADA-compliant access throughout the park and sidewalks and traffic calming elements support convenient access from the surrounding neighborhood. More crosswalks at the Sandford St-Nichol Ave intersection and across Pine St could be beneficial. Bike parking infrastructure is present but could be supplemented given how many visitors travel to the park by bike.



TRAILS

The park's paved, ADA compliant paths are clean, in excellent condition, and lead visitors throughout the park to all amenities. Some long stretches of path around the lawn areas get quite hot for lack of shade (although as newly-planted trees mature this will be less of an issue), and would benefit greatly from increased visual interest and more frequent seating options (especially to accommodate seniors).



ACTIVE RECREATION AMENITIES

The park's basketball courts, fitness circuit, and community garden are in relatively new, excellent condition. The community garden could benefit from signage identifying it as such, however. The fitness equipment was pleasingly cool to the touch, in spite of its location in full sun, indicating a sensitivity to user comfort. The skate park and splash pad also appear in very good condition considering their popularity with visitors; no other park in the city offers these amenities. The open lawns, used for soccer, do not have permanent goals and thus are included under Other Recreational & Educational Uses.



OTHER RECREATIONAL & EDUCATIONAL USES

The large open lawns, suitable for soccer, other sports and community events, show signs of conscientious maintenance and appear in very good condition. These areas feel rather vast and empty for lack of users outside of programmed events, however.



SUPPORTIVE FACILITIES

The restrooms are housed in a new building, clean, fairly centrally-located and open during the daytime. Even so, supplementary portajohns may be needed to support young children playing soccer on the farthest edges of the lawns and to avoid long lines during large sporting or community events. Trash and recycling receptacles seem adequate in number, well-maintained, and strategically located throughout the park near activity areas. Two functional water fountains also appear in good repair.

Existing benches and picnic tables exhibit very good condition, are usually strategically located near activity areas and sometimes positioned comfortably in shade. The picnic table by the pull up bar is located in full sun, making it less desirable for use. The splash pad areas does not have adequate seating for parents supervising children, however. Mothers with strollers were observed pressing up against the restroom building walls in an attempt to seek a little shade, but there was not enough room for all, leaving many parents in full sun for extended periods of time. Other parents who rode bikes to the park sat on those or on the pavement. There is very little formal seating provided around the perimeter of the open lawns to encourage use of the area outside of programmed events, although a low retaining wall on the southeastern side could serve as informal seating and will receive shade as young trees mature.



SAFETY & MAINTENANCE

The overall appearance of the newly-renovated Recreation Park is excellent, with virtually all activity areas in well-maintained and in very good condition. The lawns exhibited very few dead patches. The brush along the southeastern fence line appears rather overgrown and the fence itself has some holes in areas, presumably to allow quick access from adjacent homes. The park showed no evidence of alcohol/substance abuse, vagrancy, or litter.

The open nature of the park offers very good visibility to most other portions of the park (except for the western side near the basketball courts, and the abundance of park users lends a very safe feel. Lighting for night use also appears adequate.

Path circulation is fairly understandable at a glance and facilitates movement through the park by local residents. At present, most of the day-to-day activity occurs towards the center/western parts of the park, but with added stimulation around the perimeter and lawns, the park could draw more visitors in.



AESTHETICS

Recreation Park's well-kempt appearance and newer furnishings lend it a more sophisticated sense of style than one finds in the other city parks. The pleasing range of activities (especially the unique addition of a splash pad and skate park) adds life to the relatively quiet neighborhood.

Young trees are fairly-well located and will provide distinct presence as they mature. Nevertheless, the relatively low representation of understory plants and engaging colors offers a real opportunity for aesthetic improvement. The open lawn and perimeter sidewalks in particular offer little variation, visual stimulation or sense of human scale to draw visitors along—one has to make a very conscious decision as to whether the walk is really worth it. In addition, the area around the skate park, splash pad and bathrooms has a distinctly hard feel and could benefit from some softening elements like low colorful plants or awnings. The view of the water treatment plant does not constitute the most desirable view and could be screened by trees.

RECREATION PARK

ANALYSIS

Thanks to recent renovations, regular maintenance, and desirable amenities like the splash pad flexible-use lawn areas, Recreation Park offers real benefits to its immediate neighborhood and serves as a destination for residents farther afield.

Visitors appear to frequently use and thoroughly enjoy most of the active spaces. The palpable delight of children playing in the splash pad was unmatched in the rest of the parks. Some children were observed laying on skate park infrastructure (not in use at the time) to dry in the warmth of the sun, a desire that could perhaps be accommodated in future splash pad installations at other parks. The lawns/fitness circuit area appears much less utilized on a daily basis, but probably sees heavy use during sporting events.

All in all, Recreation Park has excellent bones and with some relatively simple enhancements, could provide even greater enjoyment and value to city residents.

Providing additional supportive facilities, particularly shaded seating near the splash pad, seems the most pressing need. Low plantings that add color, human scale, and support wildlife (e.g. butterflies) would help to encourage more stimulating use of the park, too. Although many young children appeared to enjoy the park during this evaluation, public comment indicated a desire for more activities for young children (under age 14). The infusion of interactive art and other unique child-friendly amenities, particularly in less-used areas, could help add character and dimension to the park experience. Finally, adding more color and interesting features along the perimeter and sidewalks of surrounding streets could help raise awareness of the park and build anticipation to encourage off-peak use.

RECOMMENDATIONS

SHORT-TERM

- 1 ADD SHADED SEATING FOR PARENTS NEAR SPLASH PAD (POSSIBLY AN AWNING?)
- 2 ADD LOW, COLORFUL PLANTINGS ALONG PATHS (IN PERIODIC DRIFTS) AND NEAR ACTIVITY AREAS, ESPECIALLY NEAR SKATE PARK/SPLASH PAD (PERHAPS ALONG SKATE PARK FENCE AND SOME CONTAINERS NEAR THE BATHROOMS)
- 3 TRIM BRUSH ON THE SOUTHEAST FENCE LINE
- 4 ADD SIGNAGE TO COMMUNITY GARDEN

MID-TERM

- 5 ADD ANOTHER PICNIC TABLE BY BASKETBALL COURTS IN SHADE
- 6 ADD ADDITIONAL PICNIC TABLES/BENCHES IN SHADE ALONG PATH IN LAWN AREAS
- 7 PLANT TREES TO EVENTUALLY SCREEN OUT NEARBY WATER TREATMENT PLANT

LONG-TERM

- 8 INCORPORATE INTERACTIVE ART INTO THE PARK TO HELP ACTIVATE THE EDGES, ADD CHARACTER, AND DRAW PASSERBY IN
- 9 DRAW RESIDENTS INTO THE PARK BY ADDING COLOR (E.G. SIDEWALK ART), SIGNAGE, PLANTINGS, ETC. ON NEARBY STREETS & SIDEWALKS
- 10 ADDRESS CUT FENCING ALONG SOUTHEAST PERIMETER



Additional seating, shade trees and low colorful plantings would provide comfort and human scale along the path between the vast open lawns.

MAP OF RECOMMENDATIONS



SIMPLEX PARK

AMENITIES



OBSERVATIONS

- ① HALF COURT BASKETBALL
- ② LARGE PLAYGROUND
- ③ SHADED SEATING
- ① BENCHES IN FULL SUN
- ② HOLE IN FENCE TO ST. PETERS CEMETERY
- ③ DERELICT LAND
- ④ ISOLATED PARK

MAP OF OBSERVATIONS



CONTEXT

Simplex Park is a small pocket park located on the dead end of Simplex Avenue in a quiet residential neighborhood of New Brunswick. The adjacent surroundings consist of St. Peters Cemetery to the north, derelict lands to the east and residential homes to the south and west. This park is intended for the local residents, as parking is limited to street parking, which is used by adjacent homes.

PARK DESCRIPTION

The playground dominates Simplex Park, with only enough room on the east side for half court basketball. The park has an open layout, providing good sight lines from the street. Benches are arranged between the street and the playground with more seating along the cemetery fence.



① HOLE IN FENCE



② BROKEN PLAY ELEMENT



③ PLAYGROUND EQUIPMENT



④ ODD PLAYGROUND EDGING



⑤ MUGWORT IN PLAYGROUND

SIMPLEX PARK

EXISTING CONDITIONS



ACCESS

Simplex Park offers below average accessibility, lacking sidewalks and any integration into local circulation, situated as it is at a dead end. Lack of bike racks, poor ADA access to amenities and lack of identifying signage also contribute to low accessibility ratings, although able-bodied residents living nearby probably do not experience problems safely entering the park.

The issues of connecting to local circulation is not likely fixable given the park's location. Adding a sidewalk along Simplex Ave with a curb cut would improve ADA access, however, and installing a bike rack could improve bike access for nearby residents. Mounting identifying signage at the entrance could also help distinguish the park as an actual destination rather than a tucked-away space.



TRAILS

This park does not support any paths.



ACTIVE RECREATION AMENITIES

The park's playground and basketball court appear in average condition and seem to see use. The playground edging could benefit from re-orientation so that it cleanly encompasses the play equipment. Currently, it zig-zags through the playground, creating a tripping hazard and oddly-shaped pockets that make maintenance more challenging.



OTHER RECREATIONAL & EDUCATIONAL USES

This park does not support other recreational and educational uses.



SUPPORTIVE FACILITIES

For a park of its size, Simplex offers a fairly adequate number of trash receptacles and seating options. Benches along the road sit in full sun (although old imagery indicates that mature shade trees once shielded them from the sun), which is not particularly comfortable for caregivers in summer, while those along the cemetery fence have ample shade. All of the benches could benefit from a coat of paint to cover exposed rust. A drinking fountain would make a welcome addition.



SAFETY & MAINTENANCE

Basic grass maintenance appears to happen regularly, but the quality of lawn is patchy. Litter, graffiti within and outside the park, and a sizable hole in the fence (facilitating access to and from the cemetery) contribute to a run-down appearance of neglect, compounded by adjacent derelict land to the east. Heightened routine maintenance can resolve these issues, by repairing the fence such that it cannot be cut again (or alternatively, negotiating public access to the cemetery paths), and removing debris and graffiti.

The park's location away from pedestrian traffic gives a very secluded feel when no visitors are present.



AESTHETICS

Simplex Park scored well below average for aesthetics compared to the other City parks for a number of reasons. First, maintenance issues as outline above bring down the aesthetic appeal of the park. Second, the vegetation is comprised of primarily Norway Maples and turf, with little variety or sensory stimulation; adding low, colorful understory plants could help draw visitors into the space and encourage them to linger longer. Finally, the ubiquitous New Brunswick traffic light recycling poster along with a faded Simplex Park sign constitute the main signage for the park. These along, along with the rest of New Brunswick signage should be updated to provide a more contemporary, unified park branding.

SIMPLEX PARK

ANALYSIS

For a small pocket park, Simplex Park offers some fine active recreation to local resident on the playground and basketball court. Relatively simple interventions could really enhance this local park, including: repainting the benches, rearranging the edging at the playground and closing the hole in the chain-link fence (alternatively, conversations with the adjacent cemetery could explore the feasibility of allowing pedestrian walking access through the cemetery as a green connector). Installing a sidewalk along Simplex Ave could improve ADA access.

In addition, adding shade to the seating situated in full sun and low, colorful plantings would significantly improve user experience. One option would be to replace the former shade trees with new ones, although it would require time waiting for the tree to mature. Alternatively, a small picnic pavilion/shelter would provide shade and a comfortable place for families to escape the sun while enjoying snacks and leisure together.

RECOMMENDATIONS

SHORT-TERM

- 1 RE-ORIENT PLAYGROUND EDGING TO REMOVE TRIPPING HAZARD
- 2 ADDRESS HOLE IN FENCE
- 3 PAINT BENCHES & GRAFFITI

MID-TERM

- 4 IMPROVE SIGNAGE
- 5 INSTALL SIDEWALK & PATH TO AMENITIES FOR ADA ACCESS

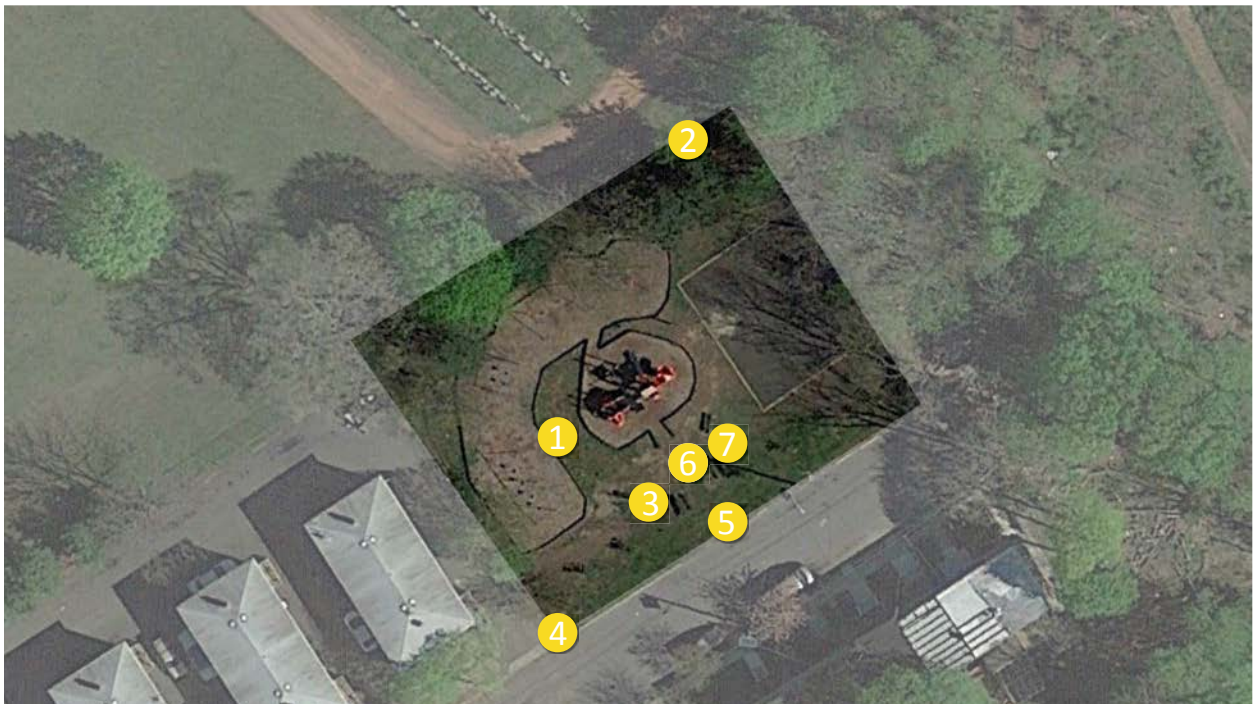
LONG-TERM

- 6 INSTALL PAVILION
- 7 PLANT LOW, COLORFUL SHRUBS NEAR SEATING AND PERIMETER AREAS



Proposed pavilion at Simplex Park.

MAP OF RECOMMENDATIONS



WAR MEMORIAL PARK

AMENITIES



OBSERVATIONS

- 1 HISTORIC MEMORIAL
- 2 COLORFUL ANNUALS AT BASE OF MEMORIAL
- 3 LOTS OF PEDESTRIANS IN BUSY COMMERCIAL DISTRICT
- 1 INTERIOR MEMORIAL SPACE UNUSED
- 2 DAMAGED BENCH
- 3 RETAINING WALL MISSING CAPS
- 4 VISITORS CONGREGATE AT ENTRANCES, MAKING THROUGH TRAFFIC UNCOMFORTABLE

MAP OF OBSERVATIONS



CONTEXT

War Memorial Park is a plaza located in between French St and Jersey Ave near the intersection with Handy and Alexander Streets in a bustling, small commercial district. Many of the adjacent businesses and restaurants reflect the area's large Latino population, while French Street headed north leads to Robert Wood Johnson Hospital facilities, the train station and downtown New Brunswick. Nearby residential areas contribute many pedestrians and cyclists to the streetscape, while vehicular traffic is composed of city residents as well as outside motorists travelling through New Brunswick.

PARK DESCRIPTION

Triangular in shape, War Memorial Park has a simple design with a circular memorial in the center transected by a path from French Street to Jersey Avenue. Retaining walls around the perimeter elevate small lawn areas above sidewalk grade, with young shade trees lining the perimeter and dotting the southern lawn. There is no formal seating within the park, only along the perimeter. Some parking is available immediately south of the park.



① WALL MISSING CAP



② WALL MISSING CAP



③ DAMAGED BENCH



④ DAMAGED BENCH



⑤ MEMORIAL SPACE

WAR MEMORIAL PARK

EXISTING CONDITIONS



ACCESS

Although sidewalks surround War Memorial Park and location makes it prime for pedestrian through traffic, the site does not facilitate flowing internal circulation patterns. The main issue is the limited number of entrances and the way small groups (usually of men) tend to casually congregate in the entrances (more frequently the southern entrance). Although the configuration of the retaining walls at the entrances creates convenient group conversation areas not found in other parts of the park, passing through the conversations poses an uncomfortable situation for other visitors, especially on occasions when said groups imbibe alcoholic beverages and sound rowdy. Thus, many pedestrians simply walk around the park. This situation could be alleviated if the plaza space was redesigned with an open layout and no formal entrance.

Faded sidewalks across high-traffic streets, along with lack of adequate multi-lingual signage and bike racks, also pulled this park's access score down. Vehicular parking is limited, but War Memorial Park was designed for local, pedestrian use.



TRAILS

Existing paths in the park are in good condition.



ACTIVE RECREATION AMENITIES

This park does not support active recreation.



OTHER RECREATIONAL & EDUCATIONAL USES

Small open lawn areas with trees do provide welcome green in the midst of the hard urban surroundings. The lawns were not designed for access and play, however, and are not especially plush to entice much use especially with so many surrounding traffic sounds. The paved area around the central monument does not provide any formal seating or particular visual engagement to invite visitors in, although the colorful annuals at the base of the monument do add a splash of color not found in most other New Brunswick parks. The small parking area in the south, initially considered an event space during the evaluation, has potential for periodic programming as a pop-up park or vendor area although it is not currently used as such.



SUPPORTIVE FACILITIES

Plenty of garbage receptacles and many benches contributed to War Memorial Park scoring above average for supportive facilities when compared with the rest of New Brunswick parks. Unfortunately, many of the benches around the park perimeter are damaged and oriented along the sidewalk looking out, which does not promote socialization within the park. In addition, the drinking fountain is missing.



SAFETY & MAINTENANCE

The above average safety & maintenance score would suggest a relatively safe and inviting appearance to this park, but the score does not accurately reflect the impression one gets on the ground. Although the vegetation is routinely maintained, annuals are neatly planted, litter is minimal and there are no accumulations of animal waste, the broken benches and copious amounts of missing wall caps give an overall appearance of real neglect compounded by evidence of vagrancy.

Similarly, although the perimeter sees much use for seating and the park offers ample sight lines, lighting, more than one entrance, no isolated places and an easily understandable layout, the park tends to have an unwelcoming vibe rooted in the populations that frequent it. Groups of day laborers use the park as a pick up location, and unemployed men use it as a hangout during the day (often clustering groups), which can be intimidating to both male and female visitors, especially when the groups of men stare at women approaching the park alone. On one occasion, a female CUES staff member was surrounded by several men insisting that she allow them to use her phone; while no physical violence was involved, the situation was distinctly unsettling. To compound the issue, although evidence of alcohol and substance abuse was minimal during the evaluation, it has been an issue on previous visits. It is unusual to see women or children entering the park, although they will sometime pause to sit on perimeter benches or wall.



AESTHETICS

Although this park scored below average in terms of aesthetics compared to the rest of New Brunswick parks, War Memorial Park does have a sizable historic feature, coordinating light fixtures along the sidewalk, green vegetation, and an engaging bustle of people along the commercial streets. The liveliness of the street does not translate into the interior of the park, however.

The broken benches and missing CMU wall blocks really pull the aesthetic quality of the park down compounded by unpleasant noise from vehicular traffic. Signage is poorly placed and not coordinated, adding to the appearance of disrepair. In addition, the vegetation is not diverse and suffers from the urban environment.

WAR MEMORIAL PARK

ANALYSIS

Although War Memorial Park sees heavy use on the perimeter, it is currently hindered by an air of great disrepair, poor circulation, few activity opportunities and user group imbalances that discourage more robust use of the interior. On the days the park was evaluated, visitors only used the perimeter with a few congregating at either entrance, but no one utilized the central plaza space. It is also interesting to note that in conversation, several local residents did not think of War Memorial as a park.

Nevertheless, War Memorial Park's location gives it wonderful potential to become a vibrant urban plaza that contributes character and rich community socialization to the French Street neighborhood, transforming into one of the City's most iconic centers.

In the short term, the City can address basic repairs to perimeter benches and walls, add some seating to the central paved area, enhance the memorial with taller colorful perennial plantings, and re-paint the crosswalks to improve functionality and signal

change. Casual, periodic walk-throughs by police or a park ranger could help discourage undesirable behaviors and provide reassuring presence. These strategies would address some community concerns regarding park maintenance and nearby alcohol consumption.

While the maintenance of War Memorial Park can be addressed easily with man-hours, the underlying social and cultural causes of this are not as easy to address and require more substantial long-term efforts to ensure that all residents feel welcome to enjoy the public open space. From a physical standpoint, redesigning the park with a more open layout and larger plaza space would resolve the issue of groups blocking entrances, draw visitors into the space, and facilitate community programming/events. Perennial beds, seating arrangements that promote sociable conversation, coordinating site furnishings and signage, art and even a water feature could all contribute to more comfortable, engaging passive recreation in the park. The following three design concepts provide a range of basic layout options that should be explored further.

RECOMMENDATIONS

SHORT-TERM

- 1 REPAIR BENCHES ALONG PERIMETER
- 2 REPAIR RETAINING WALL ALONG PERIMETER
- 3 REPAINT CROSSWALKS ON FRENCH STREET & JERSEY AVENUE
- 4 ADD TALLER, COLORFUL PERENNIALS AROUND BASE OF MEMORIAL
- 5 INITIATE CASUAL, PERIODIC WALK-THROUGHs BY POLICE OR PARK RANGER

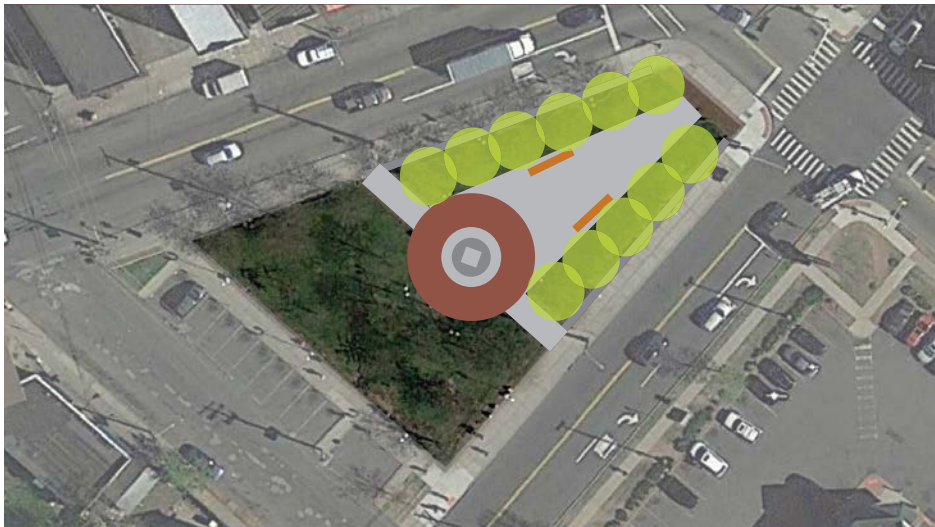
LONG-TERM

- 6 REDESIGN PLAZA



Design Concept A for War Memorial Park.

This conceptual design expands the plaza space with a completely open layout in the northern portion. This would resolve congestion at entrances by providing open seating within and still allowing open sight-lines from the street.



Design Concept B for War Memorial Park.

This conceptual design expands the plaza space to the north while retaining street trees along the perimeter for physical comfort and aesthetic pleasure while maintaining open sight-lines from the street. This layout includes entrances, which should not pose a problem if made wide enough for comfortable passage.



Design Concept C for War Memorial Park.

This conceptual design expands the plaza space to the north and has a small grove of trees clustered in the center. This concept brings the seating off the sidewalk, retains sight-lines from the street, while also providing vegetation and shade.

YOUTH SPORTS COMPLEX

AMENITIES



OBSERVATIONS

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 NICE VENUE FOR PROGRAMMED SPORTS 2 PICNIC AREA CLOSE TO RESTROOMS PROVIDES GATHERING SPACE FOR FAMILIES & TEAMS 3 BASEBALL DIAMONDS VERY WELL MAINTAINED 4 SIDEWALKS ALONG STREET FACILITATE WALKING 5 PLEASANT WOODED STREAM BUFFER 6 BRIDGE OVER STREAM ADDS NEW EXPERIENCE NOT FOUND IN MOST OTHER PARKS | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 COULD BENEFIT FROM RE-VAMPED ADDITIONAL SOCCER AREA 2 FEELS DESERTED DURING OFF-PEAK TIMES 3 LOCKED ENTRANCES MAKES PUBLIC AMENITIES SEEM PRIVATE 4 SOCCER TEAM USING BASEBALL FIELD FOR PRACTICE SPACE 5 SOME EVIDENCE OF ALCOHOL USE |
|--|--|

MAP OF OBSERVATIONS



CONTEXT

Located approximately five block north of Memorial Stadium along Joyce Kilmer Avenue and eight blocks south of Joyce Kilmer Park, the Youth Sports Complex serves as a fenced, 15-acre outdoor sports center that hosts the New Brunswick Little League and recreational soccer programs. The Complex is surrounded by railroad tracks on northwestern side, a commercial building to the northeast, residential homes east across Joyce Kilmer Avenue, and the Greater Brunswick Charter School on the southwest border.

PARK DESCRIPTION

The park has gates for vehicular access at the main entrance and overflow parking lot, while smaller, less apparent pedestrian gates near the Charter School parking lot and commercial parking lot

allow access by schoolchildren and overflow parking respectively. The northern portion of the park consists of 3 baseball diamonds oriented around a central flagpole near the picnic area, visitor center/maintenance building, and main entrance parking lot. Short, paved paths radiate from the flagpole providing access to the baseball bleachers. To the southeast lies a large soccer field that can function as two smaller soccer fields for youth games and the gated overflow parking lot. A bridge spanning Mile Run connects this overflow lot to a second, unlined soccer field in the southwest corner of the property adjacent to the Charter School pedestrian gate. A wooded natural area buffer along the Mile Run stream corridor cuts this field off from the circulation and view of the rest of the park.



① VISITOR CENTER



② BACK OF VISITOR CENTER



③ BASEBALL DIAMOND



④ CENTRAL PLAZA BETWEEN FIELDS



⑤ ENTRANCE FROM INDUSTRY



⑥ ENTRANCE TO SOCCER FIELD



⑦ VEHICULAR ENTRANCE



⑧ SMALL BASEBALL DIAMOND



⑨ PARKING LOT

YOUTH SPORTS COMPLEX

EXISTING CONDITIONS



ACCESS

Although the park has several entrances, the vehicular gates are not always open until peak use times. Gates to overflow parking are open only for scheduled events. The gate near the Charter School remains open for pedestrian use, but is not evident from the street. Overall, the fencing and gates make it seem that the general public is not welcome to use the park during off-peak hours, thus the park feels deserted much of the day and does not integrate into the circulation of the existing neighborhood. Only the main entrance has an identifying sign, which could benefit from updating. In addition, adding bike parking facilities could encourage bike transportation to this site.

The main entrance offers ADA access to the baseball diamonds, but does not facilitate convenient ADA access to either of the soccer fields since no paths extend that far into the site. In addition, with no paths within the site to connect the gated overflow lot to the main activity areas, visitors parking in handicapped spaces must go back outside the property fence line and follow Joyce Kilmer Avenue up to the main entrance to access any of the park amenities, which is inconvenient.



TRAILS

The walkways near the baseball diamonds and the bridge are in very good condition, with very few cracks and bricks at even level. However, the path leading northwest from the flagpole ends abruptly without clear reason or visual termination. Similarly, the path leading over the bridge from the gated overflow lot terminates suddenly without connecting to the path from the school at the secondary soccer field. This leaves an unsatisfying decision to either re-trace one's steps, or proceed without a path.

The abrupt end of the path near the secondary soccer field is especially unfortunate because the experience of crossing the bridge in the wooded stream corridor provides a unique experience in the park system, with much potential for an exciting moment of journey and chance to peer down at the running stream below. Making this path a fun and unexpected experience could really enhance the park and provide unique stimulation for residents.



ACTIVE RECREATION AMENITIES

The three baseball diamonds appear in very well-maintained condition with bleachers to accommodate spectators. The primary soccer field was in average condition with level, somewhat patchy grass and faded lines. The second, isolated soccer field has a neglected appearance, with old remnant goals, very patchy dry grass, and no lines. Nevertheless, this field has a large expanse of adjacent lawn with a pleasing backdrop of woods, giving the area great potential for more productive and enjoyable use.



OTHER RECREATIONAL & EDUCATIONAL USES

The picnic area showed very good condition with no litter, a fair amount of seating to accommodate visitors, and convenient proximity to the restrooms and main entrance parking. The picnic area is dominated by hardscape, however, with the main view highlighting the parking lot, which gives the space a measure of discomfort that the addition of planter boxes and colorful paint on the blank walls would easily rectify.



SUPPORTIVE FACILITIES

With the exception of the drinking fountains, which were not turned on, supportive facilities at the main activity areas of the Youth Sports Complex are in very good condition and seem adequate for the site. The secondary soccer field does not have any supportive facilities other than a small hill with a tree that could provide informal shaded seating for a small number of spectators.



SAFETY & MAINTENANCE

Overall, the Youth Sports Complex exhibits above average condition with solid routine maintenance (mowing the lawn, tending the diamonds, etc.). The main soccer field could benefit from aeration and reseeding in patchy areas. Nets were not present on the thin goal frames and faded lines could benefit from re-painting, although this might occur closer to peak summer use. The bathrooms appeared in average, very usable condition. Substantial pooling of water near the overflow lot, however, suggests a grading/drainage issue that should be addressed to facilitate use of this area and discourage the proliferation of mosquitoes. Finally, the sign at the main entrance could benefit from updating as it appeared dated and worn.

During peak sports times, an abundance of visitors make the site feel very safe. There is no significant presence of litter, evidence of vandalism or substance abuse, and activities are clustered within close proximity of each other. During off peak hours, however, unless a maintenance worker is present, the park feels unsettlingly deserted, especially where sight lines to the road are obstructed. The secondary soccer field seems too isolated for individuals to venture there alone, especially with some evidence of drinking that occurs in the forested stream buffer area (observed after the original site evaluation).



AESTHETICS

The dynamism of the park during sporting events is contagious, and the overall tranquility of the park at off-peak times offers potential for very enjoyable passive use. A thick buffer of trees screens out the railroad tracks very well, although sound from passing trains can be substantial. The overall aesthetic of the main activity areas at the Sports Complex, however, seems one of hardscape and utility. The colorful planting of the Charter School parking lot were a refreshing change from the rather unvarying expanses of lawn in the park. Adding colorful plantings to the picnic area, the flagpole, and near the main soccer field would add visual interest and definition to these spaces.

YOUTH SPORTS COMPLEX

ANALYSIS

This site has good bones and presents exciting opportunities for increased use and engaging experiences not found in other New Brunswick parks.

Given the high range of ages living in the adjacent community (children through seniors) and public concern about park safety, removing the perimeter fence and welcoming the community in to enjoy the site throughout the day could enhance public health and provide more eyes in the park to discourage undesirable activity. Additional signage, installing an ADA accessible path network that connects parking to activity areas, adding periodic shaded seating along paths, and infusing gathering areas (particularly the picnic and flagpole areas) with low, colorful plantings would all support more robust public enjoyment. Existing fences around

the baseball diamonds would discourage use of fields prepared for scheduled games.

The main soccer field could use some freshening up, and baseball diamond use should be assessed to determine if high demand for additional soccer facilities warrants converting one of the diamonds to soccer. In addition, the bridge crossing experience should be celebrated, perhaps with the inclusion of an art piece that gives a sense of discovery. The northern portion of Mile Run should be studied to assess the feasibility of installing another bridge that connects to a walk/jog loop to encourage healthy activity and improve circulation. Finally, a new design of the isolated soccer field area should focus primarily on supporting soccer recreation, with additional amenities that activate this more secluded portion of the site where safety could be a concern.

RECOMMENDATIONS

SHORT-TERM

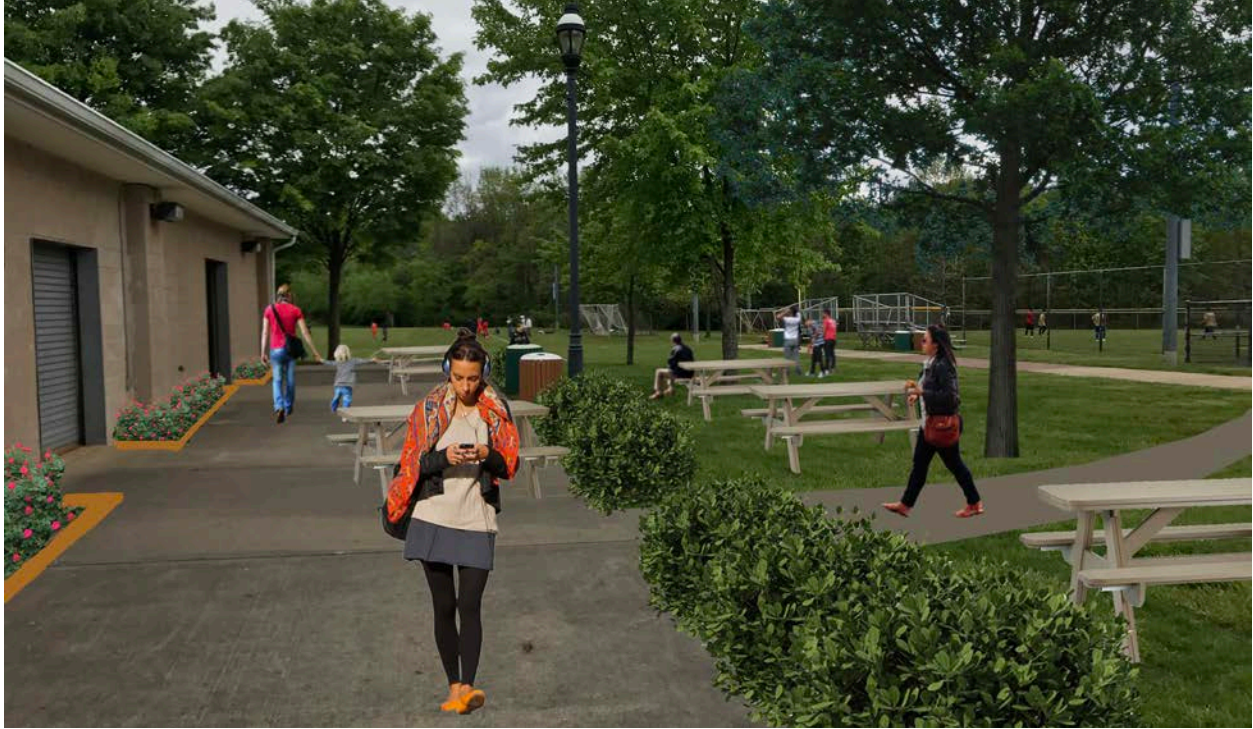
- 1 REPLACE MAIN ENTRANCE SIGN & ADD SIGNAGE AT OTHER ENTRANCES
- 2 REFRESH MAIN SOCCER FIELD TURF AND LINES
- 3 ADD LOW, COLORFUL PLANTS TO PICNIC AREA AND FLAGPOLE
- 4 CONVERT A BASEBALL DIAMOND TO SOCCER?

MID-TERM

- 5 REMOVE PERIMETER FENCING TO WELCOME COMMUNITY IN THROUGHOUT THE DAY
- 6 INSTALL ADA ACCESSIBLE PATH SYSTEM FROM PARKING LOTS TO MAIN ACTIVITY AREAS
- 7 ADD SHADED SEATING NEAR PICNIC AREA AND SOCCER FIELD (IMPORTANT FOR SENIORS ATTENDING GRANDCHILDREN'S GAMES)
- 8 ADD BIKE PARKING
- 9 ADD SEATING AROUND BASE OF FLAGPOLE
- 10 ADDRESS DRAINAGE ISSUE

LONG-TERM

- 11 INVESTIGATE FEASIBILITY A SECOND BRIDGE OVER MILE RUN TO FACILITATE A WALK/JOG LOOP CONNECTING TO OTHER PATHS
- 12 NEW DESIGN FOR THE SECONDARY SOCCER FIELD AREA THAT FACILITATES SOCCER PROGRAMMING AND CREATES A STRONG LINK TO THE ADJACENT SCHOOL
- 13 ADD UNEXPECTED FEATURE (E.G. ART PIECE) TO ENHANCE BRIDGE CROSSING EXPERIENCE



Area behind visitor center enhanced with picnic tables and low colorful plantings.

MAP OF RECOMMENDATIONS



Map Analysis Findings

The following maps were produced by The Trust for Public Land using data collected during the 2017 Parks Rapid Assessment Evaluation. These maps helped inform project recommendations by clarifying park and amenity distribution, public access to parks, and overall weighted park scores in relation to 10-minute walk dynamic service areas.

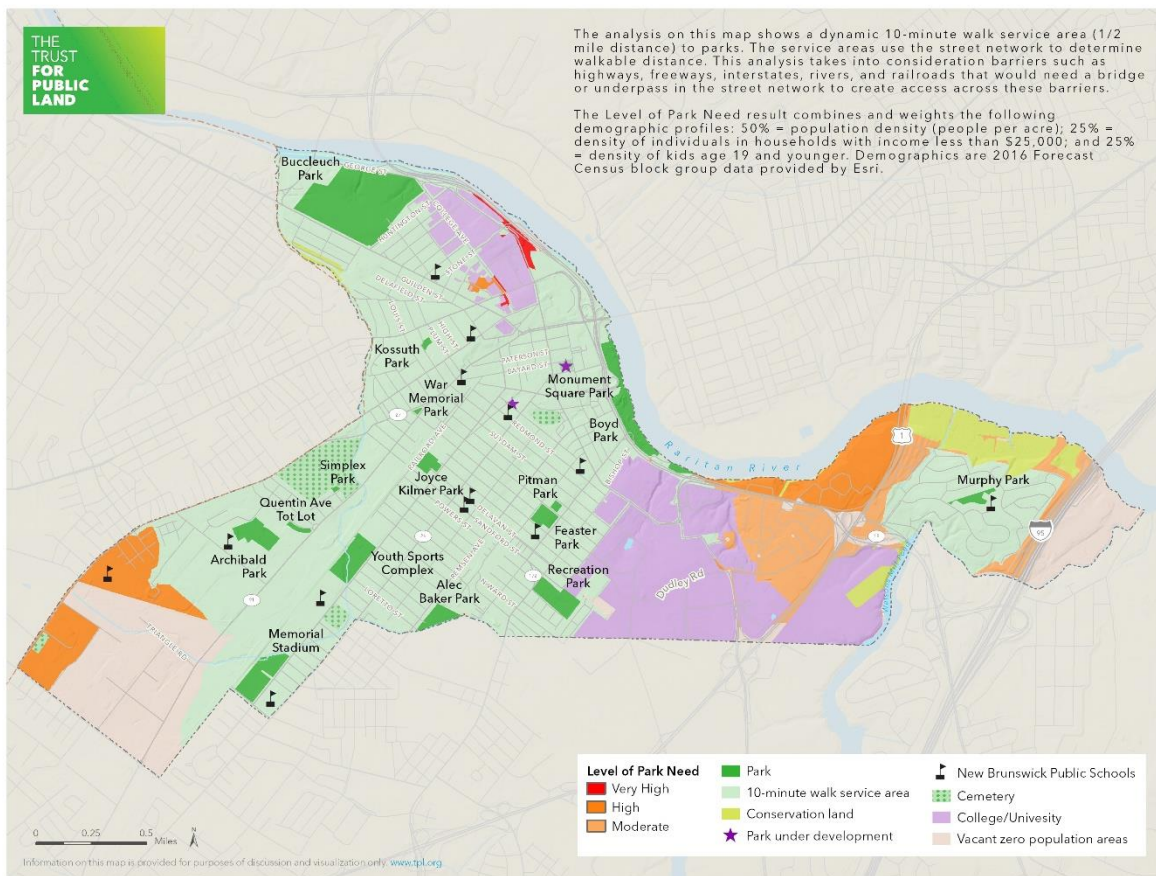


Fig. 4. Overall Park Distribution map with 10-minute walk service area. The 10-minute walk service area (1/2-mile distance) uses the street network to determine walkable distance. This analysis takes into consideration barriers such as highways, freeways, interstates, rivers, and railroads that would need a bridge or underpass in the street network to create access across these barriers.

Overall, the map analysis indicates a very favorable distribution of parkland throughout the city, except for the Raritan Gardens neighborhood in the northeast and an area in the southwest portion of the city, which do not fall within a 10-minute walk service area. The city reportedly does not anticipate developing more parkland in the southwest; warehouses and industrial properties, rather than residential neighborhoods, dominate this geographic area. Raritan Gardens does not appear to have much space available to develop as parkland, since it is hemmed in by the Raritan River and major highways.

Developing a riverfront promenade as an eastern extension of Boyd Park could, however, provide an exciting and visionary opportunity for contiguous open space along the water, connecting to plots of conservation land north of Murphy Park. This path system would not only help connect Raritan Gardens

neighborhood to the rest of the park system, but it could also provide a river recreation experience that could benefit the health and wellness of all city residents. To make this happen, the city would need to engage in conversations with Middlesex County to discuss the potential for collaborating on the project, since the County owns much of the land in question. Nevertheless, this vision, combined with the New Brunswick Municipal Public Access Plan’s recommendations for knitting together separate open spaces into a connected network (see Future Planning Related to New Brunswick Parks section), has the potential to create a vibrant river corridor, taking the city’s ongoing efforts to restore and revitalize the Raritan River shoreline to the next level. Engaging in discussions with Rutgers University as it advances implementation of its Physical Master Plan may provide a benefit to both city residents and the university community.

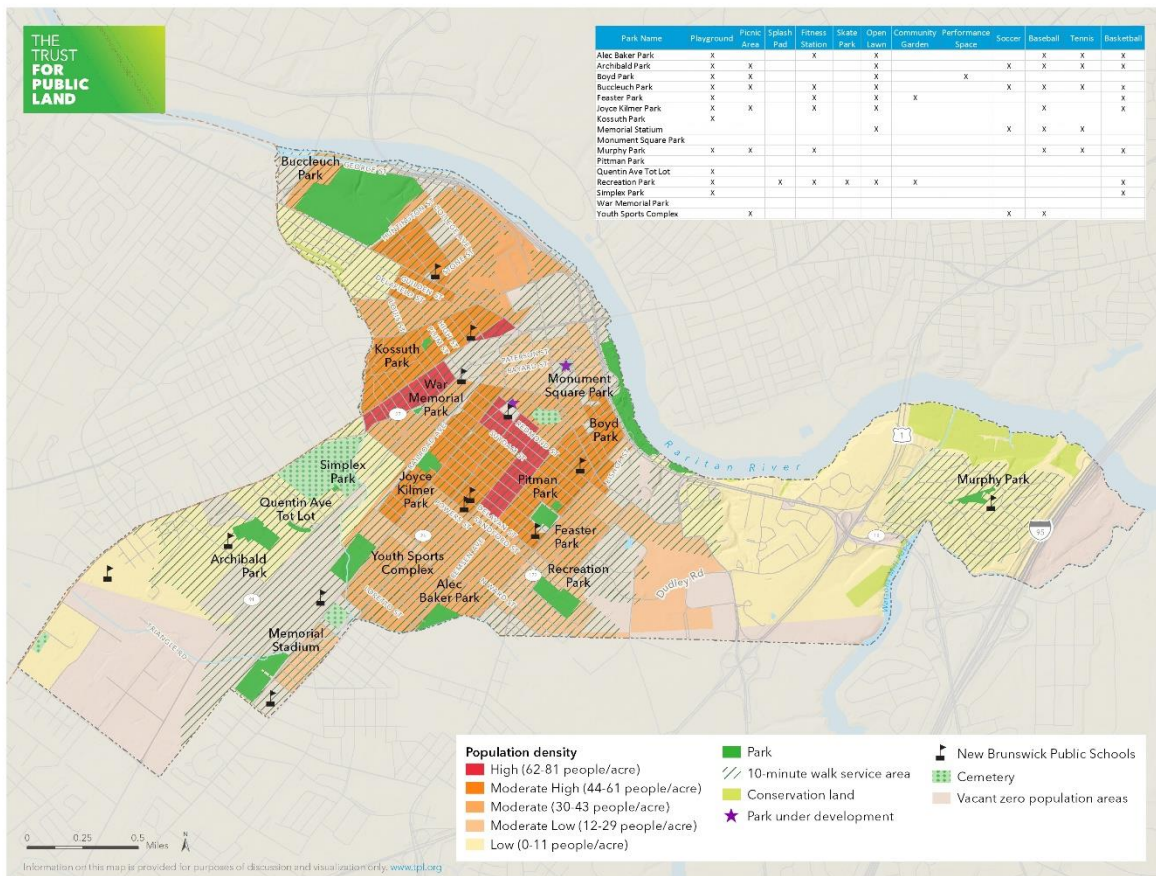


Fig. 5. Park distribution in relation to population density.

Areas with the highest population density all have access to a park within a 10-minute walk. Two areas with moderate population density lie outside of the 10-minute walk dynamic access zone but are close to recreational facilities owned by Rutgers University.

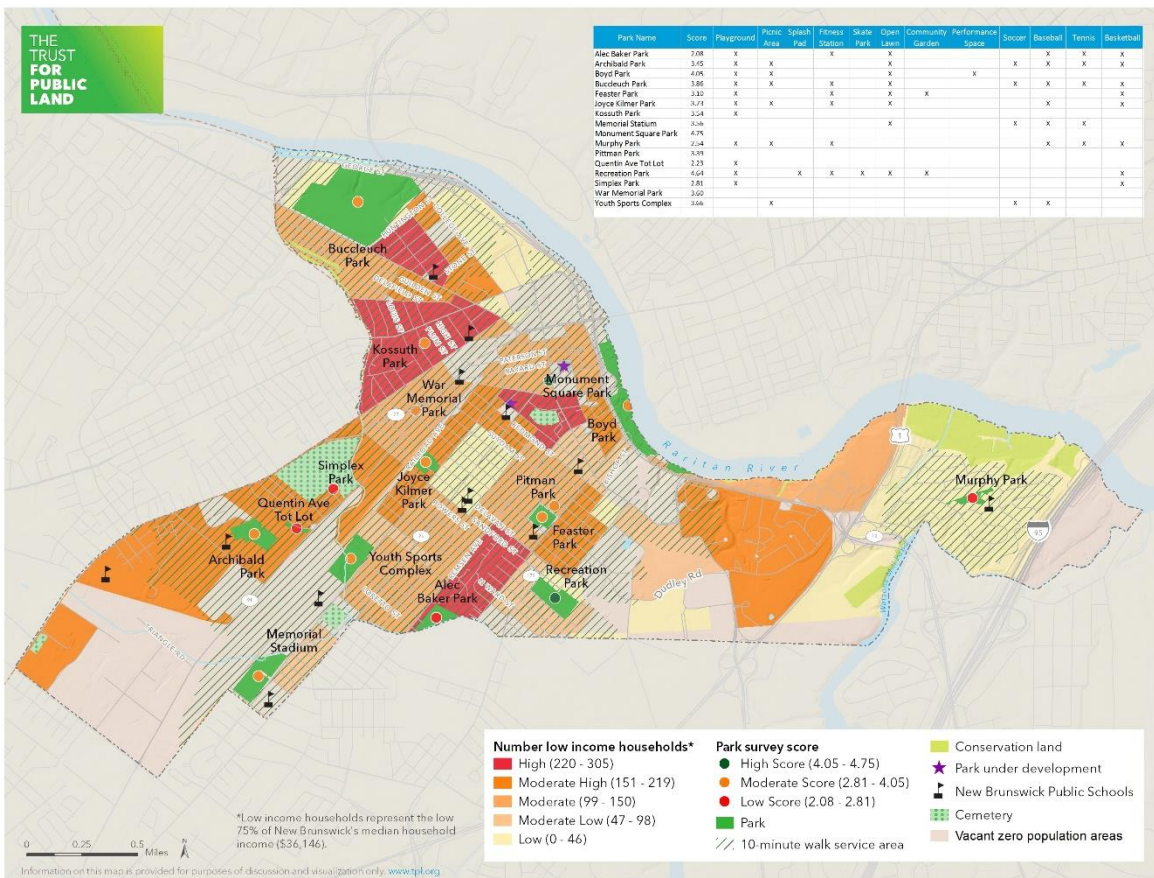


Fig. 6. Park distribution and overall park survey score in relation to low-income households.

Similarly, areas with the highest number of low-income households have parkland nearby. The fact that Alec Baker Park, which received the lowest overall park score, is adjacent to a lower-income neighborhood suggests that improvements at this park site could be particularly important. Likewise, enhancements at Kossuth Park, which received a medium score, will be important, considering that it is a small park with limited offerings but is surrounded by a high number of low-income households. Areas with a moderately high number of low-income households not within a 10-minute walk park service area include the southwest corner of New Brunswick and the residential neighborhoods close to the Sears on Route 1 South.

The two parks under development by the city will help to provide even better open-space access in the downtown area. Finding suitable land for a park in the neighborhoods near Sears presents a challenge, but it bears further investigation. The city is encouraged to be attentive to opportunities to increase open-space recreational access in this area, perhaps through creating open-space linkages, partnering with Rutgers University to enhance community use of campus open space, and exploring opportunities should the Sears Mall become available for redevelopment.

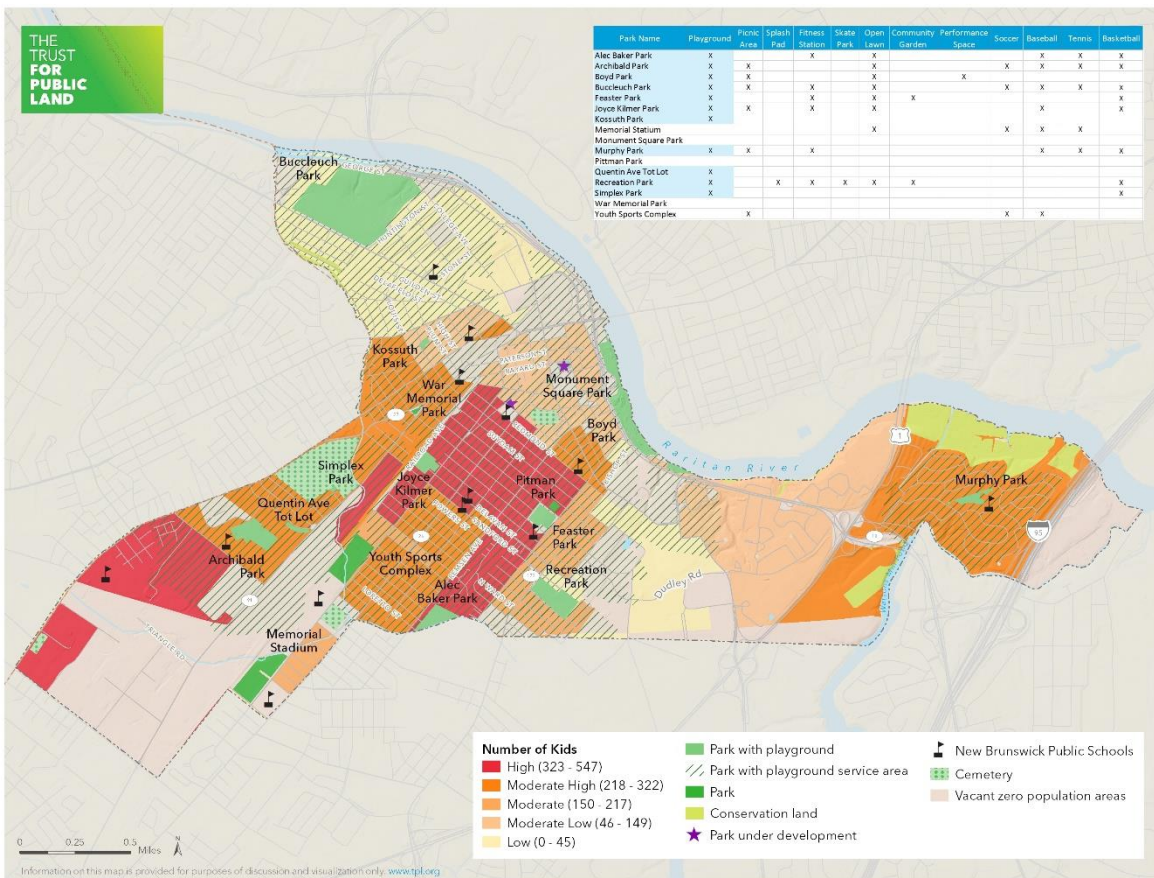


Fig. 7. Park distribution and playground service area in relation to children ages 0–9.

Most neighborhoods with a high number of children ages 0–9 do have access to a city park within a 10-minute walk. These parks include Joyce Kilmer Park, Pittman Park, Feaster Park, Alec Baker Park and, to lesser extent, Archibald Park, Quentin Avenue Tot Lot, Youth Sports Complex, War Memorial Park, Kossuth Park, Recreation Park, and Murphy Park. All these parks either currently have child recreational opportunities (such as a playground) or have recommendations to include them. The proposed Welton Street Park will also have a high number of young children in its immediate vicinity, so future designs should incorporate child-friendly amenities. Data regarding the southwest corner of the city indicates that it also has a high number of children ages 0–9.

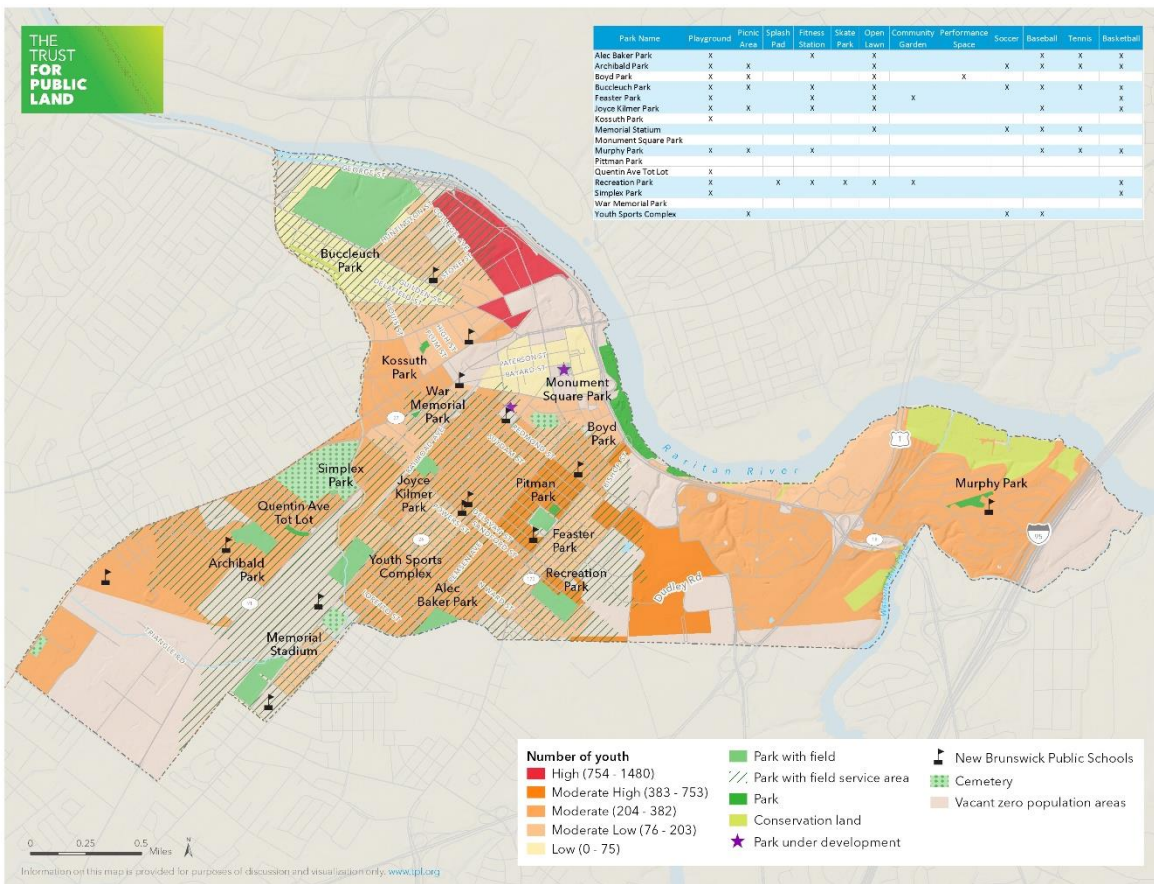


Fig. 8. Park distribution and sports field service area in relation to youth ages 10–19.

Analysis of youth populations (ages 10–19) in relation to sports field service areas indicates that most youth in the city live in walkable proximity to sports fields. University areas in the north part of city fall outside the 10-minute walk service area, as does university property around Dudley Road, although playing fields on the Cook and Douglass Campuses should lie within a very manageable distance. The city has a remarkably good distribution of sports fields in different neighborhoods, providing residents with a range of athletic options.

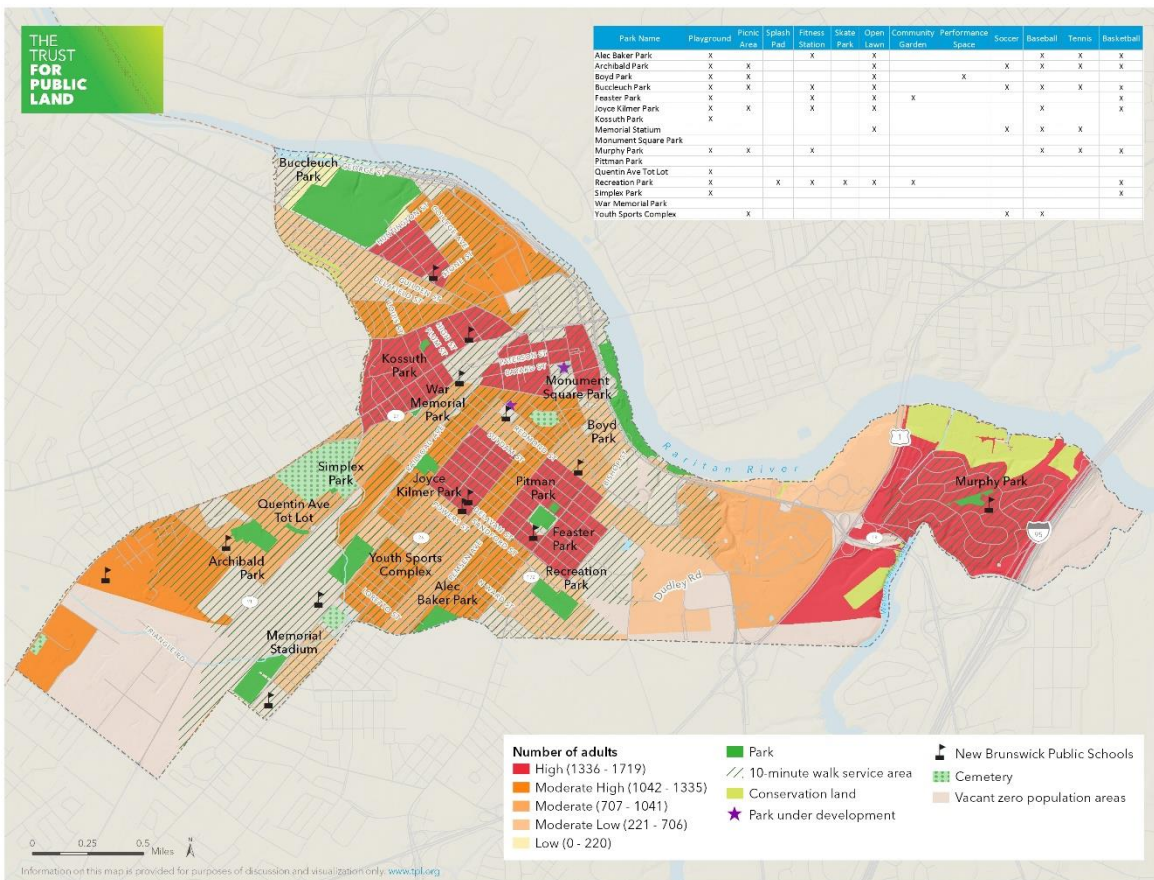


Fig. 9. Park distribution and 10-minute walk service area in relation to adults ages 20–64.

Most adult New Brunswick residents (ages 20–64) appear to live within the 10-minute walk service area, except in the southwestern area of the city, a northern area around the Voorhees Mall (mostly university property), and an area just southwest of Murphy Park. Conservation land near Davidson’s Mill Pond may have potential for providing open space to the last underserved area, although a senior parks employee suggested that, in his view, the quality of the conservation land did not hold much promise for recreation.

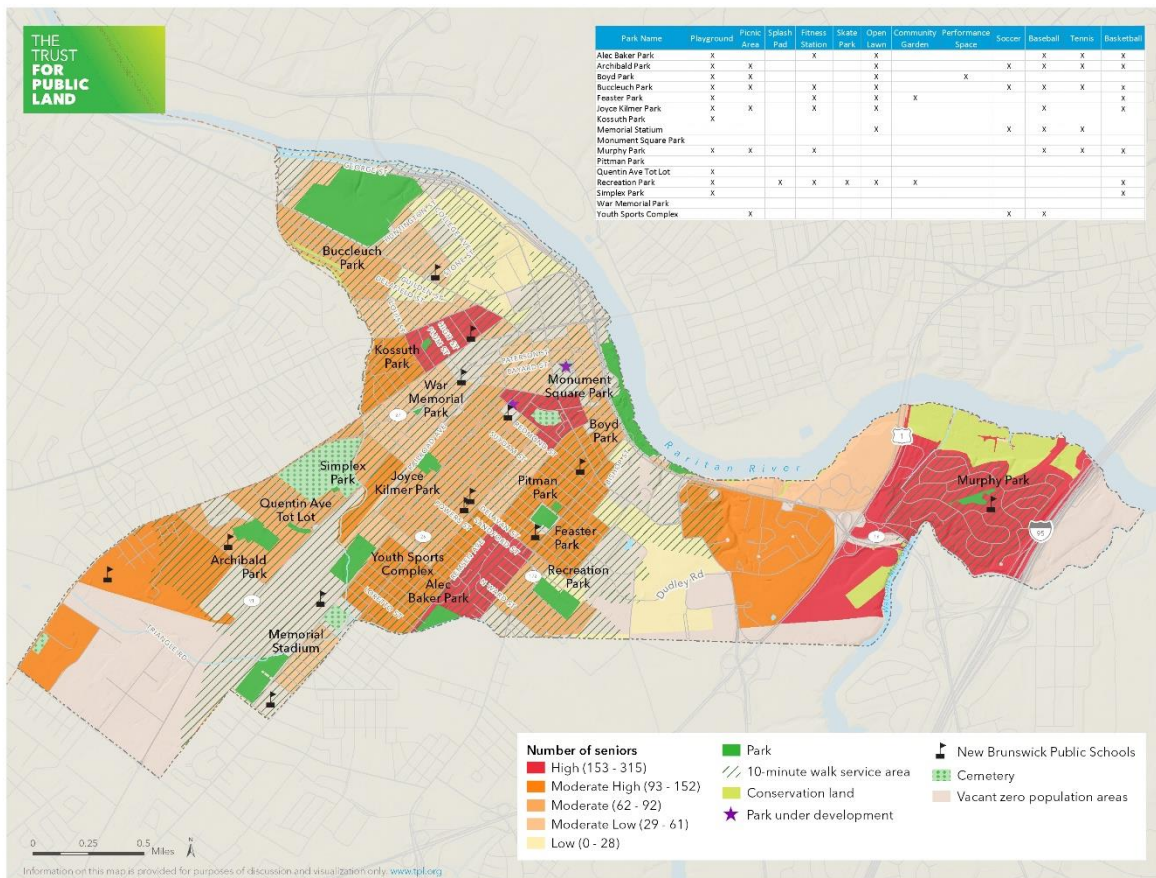


Fig. 10. Park distribution and 10-minute walk service area in relation to seniors ages 65 and older.

According to the maps, a high number of seniors (ages 65+) live near Kossuth Park, Murphy Park, Alec Baker Park, and the proposed Welton Street Park. More passive recreational opportunities and ADA access are recommended at these parks. More convenient ADA access is also needed within Bucclench Park, where there is a Senior Center. Areas with a high number of seniors that do not have 10-minute park access include the southwestern portion of the city, the neighborhood near Sears, and the area southwest of Murphy Park.

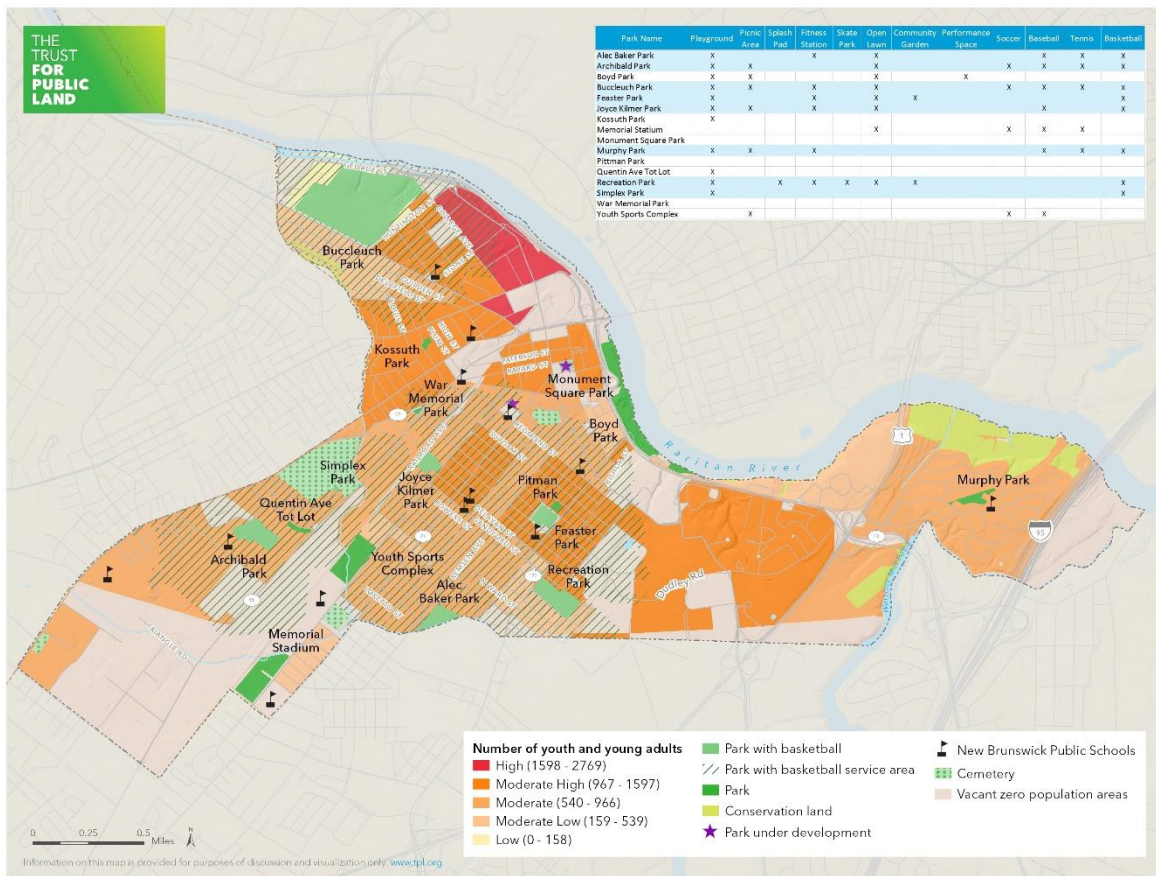


Fig. 11. 10-minute walk service area of parks with basketball courts in relation to youth/young adults ages 10–35.

Further analysis was conducted for youth/young adults (ages 10–35) for access to basketball courts and dedicated soccer fields (i.e., areas with nets and lines, not open lawn that can be used for soccer). For example, Kossuth Park has a moderately high number of youth and young adults but no formal basketball or soccer access (residents currently improvise by using movable garbage cans as goals), thus recommendations include facilitating these high-demand activities. Basketball remains popular among the youth and young adult population around Feaster and Joyce Kilmer Parks.

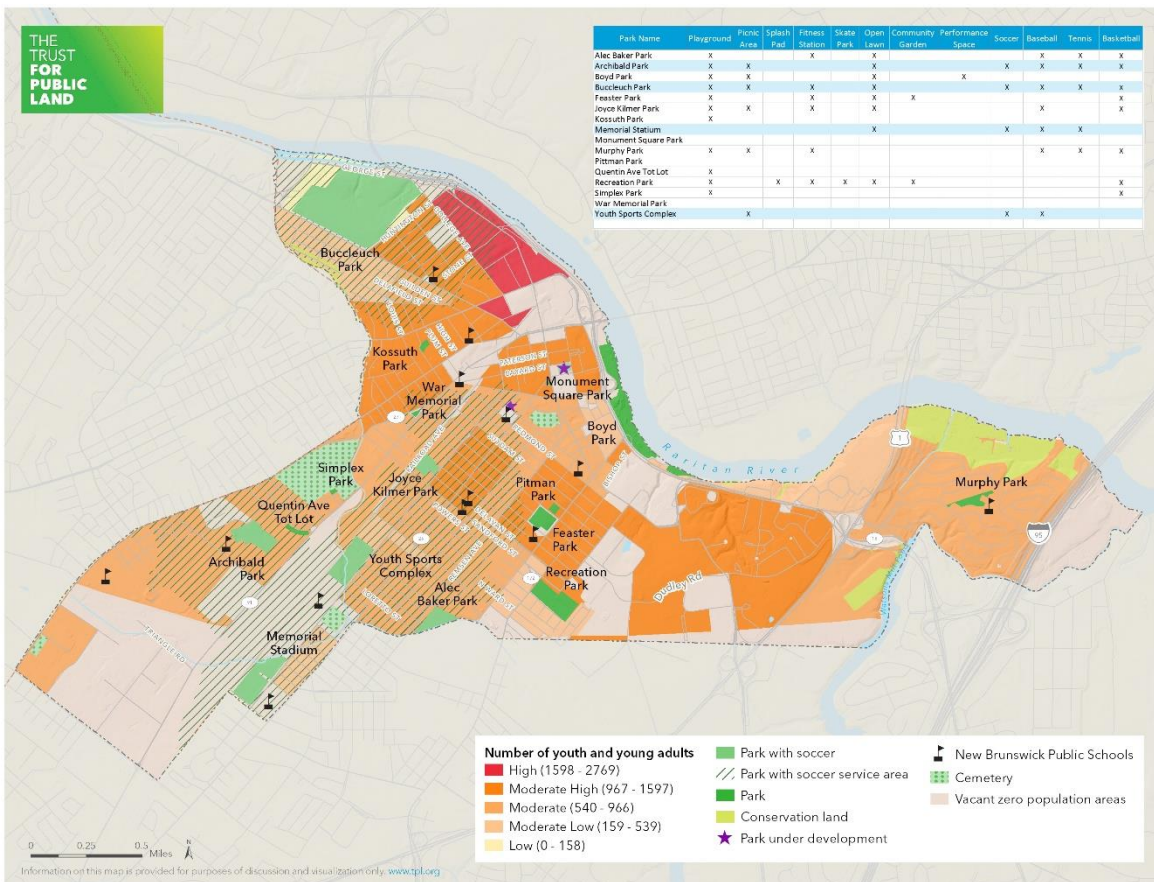


Fig. 12. 10-minute walk service area of parks with soccer fields in relation to youth/young adults ages 10–35.

Neighbors of Feaster Park do not appear to have 10-minute access to soccer on the map, but two large flexible-use fields at Recreation Park do support soccer programming (although they did not fit the criteria used to categorize soccer fields). Moderately high youth/young adult populations around Dudley Road and the Sears neighborhood appear underserved for these specific amenities, although the Dudley Road residents probably have access to university-owned facilities for these sports. It is not uncommon to see families enjoying open spaces on Cook Campus; nevertheless, it would be useful to find out more about how the non-university community views the university open space. A high population of youth and young adults in northwestern New Brunswick also falls outside of the 10-minute walk service area of soccer fields and basketball courts, although some may have access to university recreation facilities. Connections to Murphy Park from the conservation land could be explored as well.

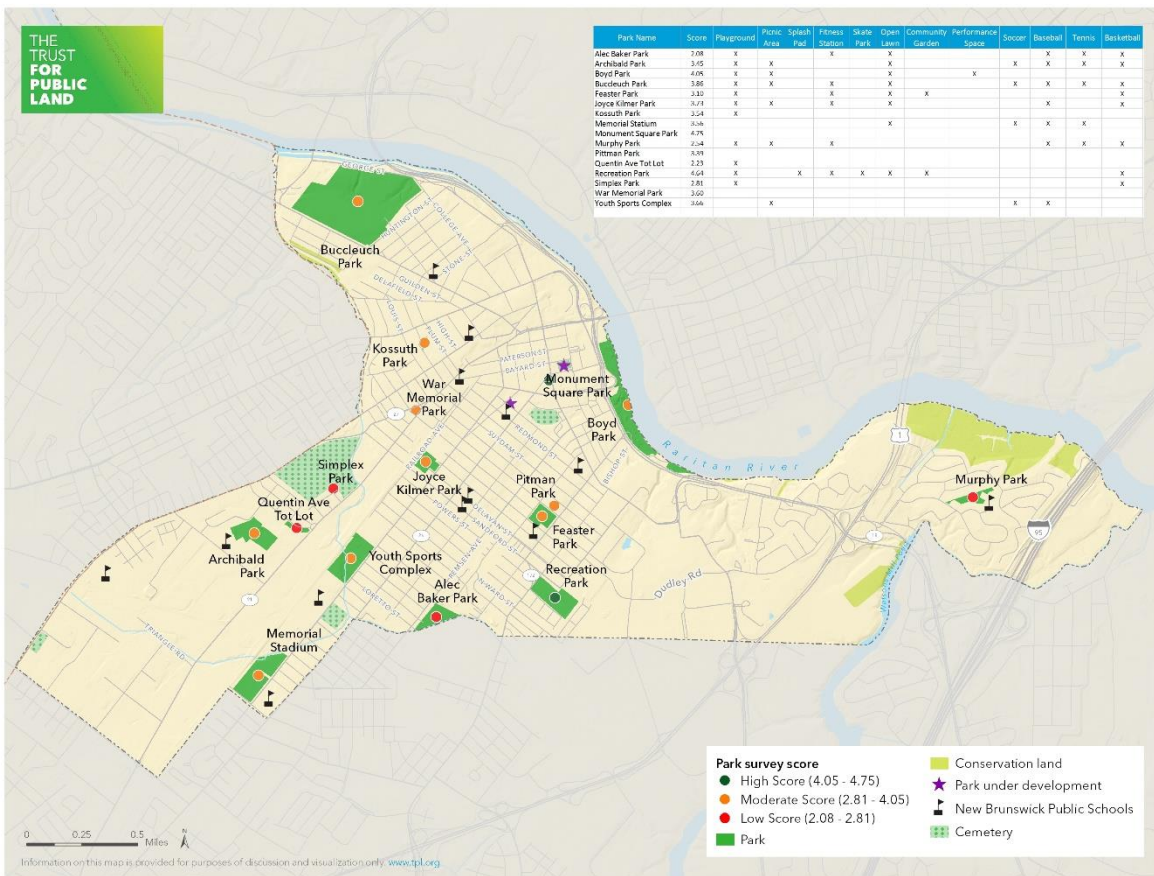


Fig. 13. Distribution of overall weighted scores and major amenities across the parks system.

In addition, analysis of park scores indicates that the highest- and lowest-scoring parks are distributed across the city, rather than isolated in certain pockets. Within each type of park (signature, neighborhood, pocket park, etc.), there was also variation in score, indicating that resource investment is not allocated to only certain types of parks. In addition to Alec Baker, parks with a moderately high number of nearby low-income households that scored low on the evaluation include Simplex Park and the Quentin Avenue Tot Lot, making it important to dedicate some key investments to those locations in order to better serve the communities that most need quality parks.

Finally, amenities distribution across the park system was quite good for playgrounds, open lawns, athletic fields, and even picnic areas. Only Recreation Park has a splash pad (in great demand by the public and immensely enjoyed by children) or a skate park; hence our recommendations to add more water features at parks throughout the system, along with the suggestion to incorporate a linear skate park at Joyce Kilmer Park to complement the compact one at Recreation Park. More parks could potentially support fitness stations and community gardens (another amenity requested by the public) although the city would need to further investigate which neighborhoods already have good community garden coverage (such as those operated by nonprofits) and areas where more gardeners would be likely to participate in such a venture.

Public Input

Public parks do not truly thrive unless the communities they support deeply connect with them and take an active role in park stewardship. Some targeted public outreach was conducted to affirm some of the insights gained from deployment of the Rapid Parks Assessment. As detailed in the Park Assessment section, public comments helped shape the weighting of scoring criteria, as well as park-specific recommendations. Input from residents regarding individual parks affirmed the outcome of the Rapid Parks Assessment and is incorporated into the individual park summaries.

During the spring of 2017, project staff interviewed 20 people representing community nonprofits, civic organizations, and city agencies. These “key informant” interviews were intended to provide context for conducting the Rapid Parks Assessment. Also, project staff held discussion groups with New Brunswick residents to confirm observations from the Rapid Parks Assessment. Informal input was also received from residents during the site evaluations in parks by project staff. The input pointed to many of the same strengths identified in the Rapid Parks Assessment, including:

- The close proximity of parks to neighborhoods, which is important, since most residents walk to parks;
- The extensive use of the parks for a variety of purposes;
- The extent to which enhanced recreational programming will benefit residents of all ages;
- The value residents receive by taking advantage of additional open spaces provided by the Rutgers University campuses.

Residents also echoed other findings of the Rapid Parks Assessment with regard to opportunities for improvement, including:

- Safety concerns and the perception of crime keep some residents away from the parks.
- Additional lighting at parks would increase use by working adults in the evenings.
- Routine maintenance, repairs, and cleaning are important to increase park use.
- Clean and open bathroom facilities and public water fountains, where feasible, would enhance the park experience. Specific additional amenities desired include more water features, family gathering spaces (tables, benches, safe open space for kids to play), “segmented” playing fields, and community gardens.

With regard to programming in parks, input from residents indicates that:

- Soccer is the highest attended recreation program, and it is generally popular and affordable.
- Residents welcome more programming and events in neighborhood parks and are willing to volunteer to organize programming activities. In particular, residents suggest that programs be developed for children ages 10–14 but also suggest that programming for adults (such as yoga, fitness, or art) should be enhanced as well.
- Residents welcome creative partnerships with local businesses, organizations, and Rutgers University to enhance programming in parks.

- There is a need to improve outreach to and awareness about existing programs, particularly with regard to the Latino community (e.g., bilingual information and signs, distributed through community organizations).

Mayor Cahill, city agencies and the New Brunswick Parks and Gardens Commission have been active in providing input and insights regarding this project. Members of the Parks and Gardens Commission provided feedback on issues commissioners have observed in the parks and also assisted in vetting the weighting of evaluation scores. At the start of this effort, the commission had just embarked upon its own evaluation of specific maintenance issues in the parks. In addition to the commission's own evaluation, this report was also informed by a project led by the Alliance for a Healthier New Brunswick in which Rutgers University students conducted observational studies in several parks. Findings from the students' study appear to be consistent with this report. A steering committee also provided valuable input for the project team during the course of the project.

While the public input derived for the purpose of this project was helpful in affirming observations and the scoring methodology, the project team recognizes that future opportunities to undertake broader engagement are available as the city and its partners move forward with implementation of this plan. Community engagement can take many forms; including seeking residents' input on park renovations, setting priorities for programming efforts, and identifying opportunities to create linkages between parks and other open spaces.

Systemwide Goals and Recommendations

GOAL: Parks need to be places where all residents feel safe and welcome.

Safety in the parks appears to be one reason that residents do not use local parks as often as they would like. Lack of awareness about parks or available programming also impedes residents' use of recreational land, as does lack of safe, convenient access to parkland. In some cases, lack of desired amenities is also an issue.

Action Item #1: Address Public Perception of Safety Concerns in the Parks

While topography and design deficits may contribute to unsafe situations in some parks, overt unsafe visitor behavior was observed in some of the parks during the evaluation process (e.g., teens lighting fires next to a playground while a small child was present). In other cases, particularly in more secluded park locations, simply the presence of large groups of rowdy individuals or homeless individuals is enough to make visitors question whether a park is safe without other users or authority figures nearby. For these reasons, the following tasks are recommended:

- Establish casual, periodic authority presence (police or park ranger walk-through) at Feaster, Alec Baker, Joyce Kilmer, War Memorial, and Boyd parks, and others as needed.
- Install lighting for evening use after work; this is particularly important for parents who cannot take children to a park during the day.
- Incorporate design principles that promote safe and increased public use.
- Develop robust and inclusive programming in all of the parks to bring more people into the parks for organized events.
- Organize and support Friends of the Parks volunteer groups to serve as neighborhood "eyes and ears" for their park.
- Improve crosswalks that lead to parks to help provide safe street crossings near park entrances.

Action Item #2: Improve Public Awareness of the Parks

It became apparent during the site inventory that a fair number of city residents are not aware of some parks within the New Brunswick parks system or do not recognize those sites as parks, in part because not all parks have identifying signage. The parks web page also lists only the “top” parks, without indicating how many other options residents have. For these reasons, the following tasks should be considered:

- Add all parks, bicycle paths, and trails to the New Brunswick Parks web page, with locations of entrances, a list of amenities with universal icons, parking locations, attractive photos, and text in both English and Spanish. In the future, a bilingual phone app with interactive amenity search, programming schedules/updates, and other useful information would be helpful.
- Reach out to local community groups (such as nonprofits, churches, cultural associations, and youth groups) and build ongoing communication with them so they can help facilitate community awareness of the parks and programming opportunities.
- Develop a strong, updated branding strategy, with elements that unify the parks (signage, fixtures, etc.) across the system. At present, the most unifying feature of the parks is the bilingual “no littering/please recycle” sign, and some parks have no identifying sign. Unified signage that identifies each park’s name should take highest priority. Wayfinding signage to help people find amenities within a park and to get from one park to another or to nearby resources should also be incorporated (e.g., signs in Boyd Park indicating that visitors are a 5-to-10-minute walk to restaurants, theater, parking, downtown, or other sites). As budget permits, other elements of the strategy could be implemented (e.g., updating waste receptacles to a unified type).

Action Item #3: Improve Public Access for Underserved Populations

Map analysis identified two geographic areas that fall outside of the 10-minute walk service area, while public outreach comments indicated that Spanish-speaking residents feel disconnected from communication about parks and programming. Thus, the following tasks should be considered:

- Establish and promote usage of public bicycle routes and walking paths to provide pedestrian connections to existing parks. Existing trails and bicycle paths should be marked with formal signage, and the location of trails should be highlighted on the city’s web page.
- Inventory streets to identify any challenges to walking to the parks (such as broken sidewalks, crosswalks in need of repainting, or inconvenient ADA crossings) that could inform city public works priorities.
- Ensure that all materials continue to be translated for Spanish-speaking residents, and enhance connections with community and neighborhood organizations to improve communication and distribution of information.
- Explore better park/trail access opportunities in the Raritan Gardens area and in southwestern New Brunswick.
- Periodically reassess needs/opportunities to amend or expand joint use agreements (with local schools, Rutgers University, etc.) to meet the outdoor recreational needs of city residents and school students.

- Assess whether enhancing public transportation to Boyd Park would help residents around the city to use the park or attend seasonal programming. For example, if residents live too far away or are too uncomfortable walking to Boyd Park, perhaps a shuttle pilot project for periodic use during summer months could be explored.

GOAL: Parks need to be enjoyable, comfortable, social places in order to nurture families, foster community building, and serve as vibrant hubs in their neighborhoods.

Site evaluations identified particular maintenance deficits in some parks that diminish the user comfort and contribute to an unkempt appearance. In addition, lack of particularly desired amenities and elements that would enhance the park experience have led to some residents searching for more desirable recreation outside the city. Some residents expressed great enjoyment of programming in the parks and would like to see more.

Action Item #1: Improve Specific Park Maintenance Deficits

While basic lawn maintenance and trash removal appeared to be carried out routinely during site evaluations, specific maintenance deficits were apparent at many parks, particularly at active amenities (e.g., swing sets) and at supportive facilities (e.g., seating). Members of the public also identified lack of restroom cleanliness as an opportunity for improvement. Addressing these issues, as well as opening clearer lines of communication to maintenance staff, could help residents become part of the solution.

- Invest in more frequent maintenance of active amenities and supportive facilities (particularly swing set areas and seating), where poor conditions can significantly detract from the overall appearance and enjoyment of the park.
- Clean the restrooms more frequently, and upgrade facilities where feasible.
- Investigate the feasibility of creating a parks hotline/app for reporting of maintenance concerns (similar to calling 511 or 311).
- Periodically update Parks Rapid Assessment process, and report findings to members of the City Council and appropriate city personnel. Going forward, there is a tremendous opportunity for a partnership between the Parks and Gardens Commission and city agencies to repeat the site evaluations using the Parks Rapid Assessment Tool to track progress over time. City parks staff and members of the Parks and Gardens Commission could collaborate on performing park inspections and explore additional opportunities to address recommendations contained in this report. For example, determining organizational leads for routine parks assessments, creation of Friends of the Parks groups, and creation of programming partnerships with arts and other organizations could help to maximize available resources.

Action Item #2: Improve the Park Experience

Some additional supportive facilities and popular amenities are likely to enhance park enjoyment. Adding these amenities over time, in conjunction with additional programming, would help to draw more

residents to the parks, creating social hubs within the urban context. In some cases, areas without clear purpose or identity could become more vibrant, useful spaces for community enjoyment through relatively simple design interventions. When undertaking a capital improvement project in a park, the city should continue its commitment to seeking community input on ideas and priorities for enhancements.

- Add restrooms and drinking fountains to more parks in convenient proximity to activity areas.
- Provide more family gathering spaces by adding more picnic tables and seating, particularly in shaded areas and near spaces where children can play.
- Provide amenities that facilitate park enjoyment by visitors with special needs (ADA-accessible entrances and pathways, inclusive playground design, etc.).
- “Activate” each park with arts, cultural, or recreational programming (e.g., concerts in the parks), working with local nonprofits and community organizations to plan and implement activities, where possible.
- Add more shade trees or shade canopy as needed for user comfort.
- Organize community meetings to seek neighborhood input before commencing significant capital projects.
- Explore partnerships with nonprofit organizations and philanthropic entities to leverage city resources for park improvement projects.
- Incorporate low, colorful plantings (perennials and annuals) in more parks to help to draw visitors into parks by providing variation, a sense of human scale, and defined spaces in areas dominated by expanses of grass and shade trees. Plantings will also help soften hard edges, enhance sensory stimulation, and increase biodiversity.
- Develop a distinct identity plan for each park, with an emphasis on celebrating (or creating) unique site features, to enhance the user experience and offer a wider variety of park experiences within the city to New Brunswick residents.
- Incorporate creative placemaking principles to foster community.
- Integrate arts in the parks to infuse character, color, and social interaction, perhaps in partnership with the Mason Gross School of the Arts at Rutgers, local theaters, and other members of the local arts community.
- Partner with schools and community organizations to create and help maintain park features and art.

GOAL: Parks need to support a wide range of passive and active recreation that meets a diversity of interests and encourages health and wellness.

The New Brunswick population is tremendously diverse in age and ethnicity, and some specific user groups have varying needs and interests, ranging from university athletes or mothers with small children to aging seniors. Differences in income level also impact park user needs. Many low-income families depend on the recreational opportunities provided in their local parks because they cannot afford to go

elsewhere for them. As the demographic makeup of the city changes over time, it is important that future enhancements incorporate the amenities and activities desired by current and future park users.

Action Item #1: Incorporate more desired amenities and activities

Providing more active recreational amenities (e.g., water elements) and activity facilities (e.g., for soccer) desired by residents is important, particularly for the healthy development of children. It is also important to consider expanding more passive recreational opportunities to provide alternative stimulation, especially for New Brunswick's senior population. Suggested tasks related to park amenities include:

- Incorporate water elements at more parks. The splash pad at Recreation Park has been very popular and serves as the only water recreation element many low-income residents can access. Buccleuch and Feaster parks appear to be prime locations for supplementary splash pads. Joyce Kilmer, Alec Baker, Murphy, and Archibald parks could all benefit from some type of water feature.
- Facilitate desired active recreation (especially soccer) through addition of fields, programming of open lawn areas, and provision of amenities that support the activity (e.g., pop-up goals).
- Facilitate more stimulating passive uses, such as chess, dominoes, wildlife viewing, multi-use tables to support game play, and so on.
- Build more community gardens in public parks. Buccleuch Park has plenty of room for a community garden, particularly near the abandoned Food Forest. The Parks and Gardens Commission should explore which locations would be most suitable for use by dedicated community groups interested in spearheading additional gardens, perhaps in partnership with the Rutgers Office of Agriculture and Urban Programs.

GOAL: Secure resources for the parks to meet the needs of today's generations and those to come.

Clearly, New Brunswick parks are a critical aspect of the quality of life in the city. Continuing to serve current populations and expand offerings for future generations will require ongoing strategic planning and allocation of limited financial and environmental resources.

Action Item #1: Improve Park Financial and Environmental Sustainability

The city has already initiated the use of solar lighting as a more sustainable way to provide an important park amenity. The Parks Department is also planning a creative pilot project in which bike-powered conveyances will be used instead of motorized maintenance vehicles for specific tasks within parks (such as garbage bag collection) in an effort to reduce environmental impact. Other cost-effective best management practices that protect the parks' natural resources should be explored. In addition, finding relatively simple ways to reduce unnecessary expenditures (e.g., early tree replacements) and forging new partnerships to provide mutually beneficial park enhancements could help the city meet the desires residents have articulated.

- Train maintenance ground crews in more tree-sensitive approaches to lawn care to protect and preserve the city's shade tree assets. Developing a partnership with the Rutgers Cooperative Extension for annual groundskeeper professional development in the latest research, best practices, pest identification, and such could also help protect the city's investments.
- Incorporate more sustainable management practices, particularly stormwater management best practices that help capture and treat storm water on site (e.g., rain gardens.) Expand use of solar lighting where practicable.
- Investigate additional community partnerships for park enhancements to offset cost of implementation (e.g., the Hyatt Hotel for northern Boyd Park signage and wayfinding in downtown, as their guests could also benefit from stronger connections to the park).

Future Planning Related to New Brunswick Parks

Plans are under way both at the city and Rutgers University that may affect future park development and connections between parks. Specifically, the City of New Brunswick is currently developing two new downtown parks, and the Rutgers University facilities master plan includes plans which, if approved and implemented, would affect Boyd Park and Buccleuch Park. These are briefly described below. We also note that the city has approved renovations to the senior center at Buccleuch Park.

City of New Brunswick – Wolfson Deck New Downtown Park (in development)

Plans are under way for a new downtown one-acre park to occupy the space of a now-demolished parking deck on Neilsen Street between Bayard and Liberty Streets. The city is exploring different park management models to operate the park, and designs are yet to be fully developed, but possible amenities include gathering or performance space, benches, gardens, water features, and a dog park. One model for park management that is under consideration is a public-private partnership model, similar to New York City's Bryant Park, with operations, concessions, and robust programming funded in part by surrounding property owners.

City of New Brunswick – Welton Street New Neighborhood Park (in development)

The city has decided to pursue the development of a pocket park on Welton Street that is intended to function more as a neighborhood park than as an amenity for downtown New Brunswick workers and businesses. The city has received responses to its RFP, which includes public outreach as part of the design phase, and it anticipates awarding a contract for design before the publication of this report.

Rutgers Facilities Master Plan 2030 - New Bikeway/Boardwalk and Pedestrian Bridge (concept, not in development)

Rutgers has proposed a plan to replace the current Route 18 Trench Bikeway and to reconnect the D&R Canal towpath to Boyd Park via a boardwalk. This plan would essentially connect Buccleuch and Boyd parks, as plans include improved access to the path from Buccleuch Park to ensure safe crossing of George Street. Concept designs for this walkway also include construction of and connections to a pedestrian/bicycle bridge connecting New Brunswick to Piscataway around the Student Activities building on George Street near Deiner Park (not city-owned).

Within Boyd Park, this plan envisions expansion of the boathouse and surrounding amenities to include a larger boat launching dock and addition of a second level to the boathouse that could accommodate event

space for the university. The boardwalk design may also include enhanced or restored wetlands/floodplains in park areas.

2017 City of New Brunswick Municipal Public Access Plan

Since Boyd Park lies directly along the Raritan River, the City of New Brunswick's comprehensive public access plan is applicable to development that occurs there. The 2017 draft City of New Brunswick Municipal Public Access Plan¹ (MPAP) lays out a vision for providing access to tidal waters and shorelines within the municipal boundary. A stated priority within the MPAP is to "ensure that existing public access points along the waterfront are safe and accessible by residents and visitors."

Findings from the Boyd Park evaluation are generally consistent with and complementary to MPAP park enhancement recommendations. The following MPAP recommendations for Boyd Park should be considered in conjunction with those from the park evaluations:

- Install fishing line disposal containers;
- Install picnic tables at the northern end of the park near New Street, and investigate placement of additional pavilions and barbecue stations in the park;
- Improve awareness of the proximity of Boyd Park to downtown New Brunswick by installing directional signage at the city side of entrances and entrance ramps at Albany Street, New Street, Commercial Avenue, and George Street, as well as at other locations, such as near restaurants, theaters, and the train station;
- Improve access to parking through placement of signage within the park indicating nearby parking amenities, by expanding available parking in the north end of the park, and by signing public parking facilities in downtown New Brunswick to indicate their proximity to Boyd Park entrances;
- Work with the D&R Canal Commission, the D&R Canal Watch, and others to restore the terminus canal lock and improve educational/historical signage;
- New Brunswick Landing Boat Dock (in Boyd Park);
- Work with the county to continue to maintain the docks and channel markers and, as feasible, expand the season to accommodate boat passenger access to the park, university events, and downtown activities;
- Install signage to other nearby public access as well as directions to the boat launch in the southern end of Boyd Park.

Recommendations from MPAP concerning areas adjacent to and connector trails from Boyd Park

- Work with the county and other area stakeholders to develop access points into and trails through the conservation areas east of Boyd Park to the confluence of Lawrence Brook and the Raritan River;

¹ The MPAP was developed in accordance with N.J.A.C. 7:7E-8.11 and in collaboration with the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP). The development and implementation of the MPAP supports the policy of local determination of public access locations and facilities, while safeguarding regulatory flexibility and potential funding opportunities for the City of New Brunswick.

- Work with Rutgers, public-private partnerships, and other stakeholders to develop the proposed Raritan River Boardwalk to enhance/replace the Route 18 Bikeway, to improve access to the waterfront from Deiner Park, and to reconnect the D&R Canal State Park Trail to Boyd Park;
- Work with Rutgers, public-private partnerships, and other stakeholders to develop the proposed Raritan River pedestrian/bikeway bridge across the Raritan River to Piscataway;
- All enhancements along the river should align with MPAP's overarching goals to ensure that all maintenance and improvements to public access are accomplished respective of coastal vulnerability concerns and associated impacts on city property, public access, and the health and safety of city residents, workforce, and visitors.

Next Steps and Conclusion

The intention of this report is to inform city agencies, elected officials, the Parks and Gardens Commission, and the many partners throughout the city of opportunities to further enhance New Brunswick's park system. Partners include nonprofit community-based organizations; academic institutions, including Rutgers University; health care providers and hospitals; businesses; and, of course, the residents of New Brunswick themselves.

This report is intended to actively support and guide next steps for implementation. It offers insights and data that can assist with:

- Establishment of priorities for community engagement and maintenance;
- Undertaking strategies to ensure safety and an improved feeling of safety in the parks;
- Branding of the parks to offer residents a variety of experiences;
- Enhancing programming within the parks and increasing public-private partnerships to do so; and
- Increasing awareness about the parks and the amenities that they have to offer.

The report also offers tools that can be used by partners throughout the city as well as city agencies and the Parks and Gardens Commission to measure and monitor the outcomes of new parks-related initiatives and to continually reassess park conditions and the needs of residents.

As mentioned previously, the New Brunswick park system offers much to be commended, including the distribution of parks throughout the city; ongoing expansion, as evidenced by two parks currently under development; generally good maintenance; extensive routine use; and a diversity of offerings. Other positive aspects include the evident commitment of city agency staff members and elected officials, appointed members of the Parks and Gardens Commission, nonprofit and business leaders in the community, and the residents themselves. Moving forward, the greatest opportunity for New Brunswick's park system is the chance to harness the energy and commitment of all those parties. By clarifying the roles of these various partners, more of the recommendations in this report can become reality.

Dialogue among these partners can help to identify roles and responsibilities regarding next steps; promoting multi-sector communication. For example, the Parks and Gardens Commission has expressed an interest in using the Parks Rapid Assessment Tool used for this project in order to assess changes and improvements in park conditions over time; however, at the same time, the city's Department of Public Works conducts an annual parks maintenance assessment.

Other recommendations in this report include:

- Planning possible linkages among open spaces and parks throughout the city;
- Building Friends of the Parks groups;
- Creating arts programming partnerships;
- Undertaking physical and operational enhancements to improve perceptions of safety;
- Branding and creation of individual park identities; and
- Investment in parks infrastructure.

All of those recommendations are important, and their benefit will be maximized by coordinated engagement among city agencies, public commissions, community organizations, private businesses, schools, and other groups. Additional benefit can be gained by ensuring that implementation of concepts in this report are undertaken in concert with planning efforts underway that will affect the city (e.g., the Rutgers master plan, etc.) and carried out in coordination with those efforts.

A strong recommendation to ensure that this report has maximum impact in guiding ongoing efforts to improve parks in New Brunswick is to convert the recommendations in this report into an implementation plan. This should be done to ensure that:

- Next steps for implementation are clearly spelled out;
- Roles and responsibilities for various partners are articulated;
- A forum is established for routine dialogue among the partners who will lead elements of the implementation plan; and
- A timeline for implementation is documented.

A suggested template for such an implementation plan is included in this report as an Appendix D.

Collaboration between the Parks and Gardens Commission and city agencies, perhaps convened by the mayor, may be the best mechanism to ensure that clear roles and responsibilities for specific implementation strategies are understood. Consultation with other community leaders and organizations that want to support specific action items can also help to jump-start park improvements. The project staff members are also available and willing to assist in efforts to implement the concepts outlined in this report.



THE
TRUST
FOR
PUBLIC
LAND

The Trust for Public Land
101 Montgomery St., Suite 900
San Francisco, CA 94104
415.495.4014

PHOTOS: FRONT, TOP: FEASTER,
BOTTOM: YSC; BACK, BOYD

tpl.org