

Urban Parks
Management
in New Jersey
August 2009



Practices for Newark's Riverfront



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About RPA

Regional Plan Association (RPA) is an independent, not-for-profit regional planning organization that improves the quality of life and the economic competitiveness of the 31-county New York-New Jersey-Connecticut region through research, planning, and advocacy. For more than 80 years, RPA has been shaping transportation systems, protecting open spaces, and promoting better community design for the region's continued growth. We anticipate the challenges the region will face in the years to come, and we mobilize the region's civic, business, and government sectors to take action. www.rpa.org

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Executive Summary

The City of Newark is committed to creating attractive new waterfront parks and public spaces along the Passaic River. This open space will take advantage of the riverfront as one of the city's gateways while providing an important amenity for existing and prospective new residents and businesses. Newark has only 2.9 acres of open space per 1,000 residents, ranking at the bottom of all major American cities. By addressing this deficit and creating a green armature connecting neighborhoods along the Passaic, the new waterfront park will improve the quality of life for Newark residents and demonstrate the commitment of the City to a more sustainable future.

The recently adopted Master Plan Re-examination Report by the City of Newark's Central Planning Board identified strategies for providing adequate and accessible parks and recreation. These are guided by the interconnected goals of ensuring that all Newark residents live within a 10-minute radius of safe and attractive parks and recreation, and also making the Passaic River a regional asset through a continuous, redeveloped Passaic Riverfront for the benefit of Newarkers and visitors.

Other publications have examined the management models of parks in the New York Region and the nation, but there is a lack of information regarding urban parks management in New Jersey specifically. This report aims to fill that void by developing a series of case studies that reflect how parks are managed in the State to identify practices for the stewardship of a future Newark riverfront park. This park is being planned and designed and land acquisition has started for sections of the future open space. In this context, the case studies presented here will aid in identifying options available to establishing the park management structure including the likely costs and revenues for operations and ownership. Knowledge about management structures of parks in New Jersey will allow the future Newark riverfront to build on past experience.

First, the report identifies and documents management models used in comparable parks in New Jersey to benchmark the ownership and management arrangements from which the Newark riverfront can benefit. Second, we have assessed the approximate estimates of the management tasks and yearly costs for the parks and public spaces. These estimates are based on assessing comparable costs for recurring and non-recurring maintenance, security, programming, and administration. Third, we have identified possible revenue sources including possibilities for recapturing the value increment created by parks and profiling the role of conservancies or non-profit groups. Finally we describe alternatives for the stewardship of the parks and public spaces.

Based on the parks case studies examined it is evident that park administration varies greatly throughout the State thus providing an array of options in the ultimate funding of all park features and activities. Between Federal, State, County,

and local parks, New Jersey has a tremendous amount of parkland. Parks throughout the state contain a broad range of features from natural lands to designed landscape areas embedded deep in the urban landscape. Though there are several ownership structures throughout the New Jersey park system, most parks in the State are owned by their host municipalities. However, as the size of the parks increases they are more likely to be owned and operated by the County governments.

Based on the case studies presented we estimate that on average the parks surveyed spend about \$450,000 a year in non-recurring maintenance capital replacement expenses or between \$100,000 and \$1,000,000 per year. Per acre costs are an average of \$70,000 per acre for the case studies ranging between a thousand dollars to \$400,000. Data available for all parks managed by Essex County are representative of costs for older parks that require more capital replacement. These average approximately \$1,000,000 per park per year or between \$70,000 and \$6,000,000. Per acre costs for Essex County Parks average \$12,000 in a range between \$2,000 and \$20,000.

Previous research conducted by RPA established that parks in New York City averaged about \$4,000,000 in recurring cost for maintenance and operation for an average of \$135,000 per acre. The New Jersey case studies reflect the use and cost drivers outside New York City (and Manhattan specifically) show that the Garden State spends an average of \$1,200,000 ranging from a couple thousand dollars to \$6,000,000 in maintenance and operation with a cost per acre of \$10,000 in the \$2,000 to \$50,000 range. The difference in costs reflects the market and other factors that affect costs generally in urban New Jersey including quality or special landscaping and design, higher use rates by a denser environment and labor and other costs that are higher in New York City.

Contributions through conservancies and partnerships are an important source of revenue and stewardship of these public spaces. A park in the Newark riverfront would operate in a city where there is already a supportive network of organizations for two of the parks profiled in this report. These include the Branch Brook Park Alliance (BBPA) with revenue in 2007 of \$912,171 and expenses of \$590,492 and the Weequahic Park Association (WPA) with revenue of \$180,453 and expenses of \$163,784 for 2007. Another non-profit group for a park profiled in the case studies is Friends of Liberty State Park (FOLSP) with \$68,916 in revenue and \$64,533 in expenses. These organizations are non-profit community partnerships that supplement the services provided by local government.

The review of potential ownership and management structures helps to inform the identification of stakeholders and their commitment for the successful care of the new public spaces. Through the analysis provided in this report RPA has determined operational strategies that we hope will guide the evaluation and implementation of riverfront stewardship. This identification of park management options based on practices in New Jersey's urban areas stops short of engaging government entities and residents as we expect the master plan and acquisition plans by the City and the Trust for Public Land respectively to promote these dialogues. Nevertheless we point to several issues that should be considered in developing a Newark riverfront stewardship framework:

- All but one of New Jersey's urban parks, including waterfront spaces are owned by public entities, including State, County and Municipalities;
- These publicly owned public parks are managed by the same governmental entities that own them, creating a combined ownership and management structure;
- All parks get funded through the general budget or through appropriations from the same ownership and management entities that control them;
- Parks that complement their financing through conservancies or other non-profit groups enjoy better stewardship and active use and programming;
- Parks also benefit from a positive and coordinated relation to neighboring private land owners by sharing priorities based on mutual interest in the quality of the public spaces;
- Design of urban New Jersey parks varies greatly and care should be given to the balance between active and passive recreation and other uses such as retail, marinas or other attractions.

With these practices in mind we envision a Newark riverfront that is publicly owned and managed by a government entity -either County or City- and that it is funded through that entity's budget. We also expect that as plans for the riverfront materialize, Newark residents and land owners will be engaged in a stewardship process that complements the obligations of the public sector.



New Jersey's Urban Parks Case Studies

Other publications have examined the management models of parks in the New York Region and the nation, but there is a dearth of information regarding urban parks management in New Jersey. This report fills that void by developing case studies that show how parks are managed in the State to identify practices for the stewardship of a future Newark riverfront park. This park is in the planning and design stage. Land acquisition has started for sections of the future open space. In this context the case studies presented here will point to options for the appropriate park management structure including likely revenues and costs related to its ownership and maintenance. Knowledge about management structures of successful parks in New Jersey will allow the future Newark riverfront to build on the experience of other urban areas.

A Newark Riverfront Park

The City of Newark is committed to creating new waterfront parks and public spaces along the Passaic River. This open space will revitalize the riverfront as one of the city's major gateways while providing an important amenity for existing and future residents and businesses. Newark has only 2.9 acres of open space per 1,000 residents, ranking at the bottom of major American cities. The new waterfront park will address this deficit and create an armature connecting neighborhoods along the Passaic.

The recently adopted Master Plan Re-examination Report by the City of Newark Central Planning Board identifies strategies for providing adequate and accessible parks and recreation. These strategies address the City's stated goals to ensure that all Newark residents live within a 10- minute walk of safe and attractive parks and to make the Passaic River a regional asset.

With these goals in mind, the Report has set clear objectives:

- Develop at least 25 acres of riverfront open space, drawing 150,000 annual visitors to new riverfront parks and attractions by 2025
- Ensure public access to the riverfront from all parts of the City by 2025
- Connect the riverfront to all Newark neighborhoods
- Create places defined by strong and distinctive character and
- Coordinate regional improvements in transportation, access and environmental quality with other municipalities along the Passaic River.

Although the park is in its planning stages there are a couple of key factors that need to be taken into account when designing the open space because they have a direct impact on both capital and management costs. The first is that due to the tidal wave, the water in the lower Passaic River by Newark has elevated salt content, which makes it highly corrosive. The second factor is the presence of chemical pollutants that will need to be remediated and will affect all landscaping and plantings.

RPA believes that a discussion of management structures for maintenance and operation of similar parks will help insure the park's success as a public amenity. By documenting practices of parks in urban areas in New Jersey we anticipate to lay the foundation for participation of the City, County and State and the residents and property owners in the stewardship of this new public space.

PARK NAME	CITY	ACREAGE	RECURRING		NON-RECURRING		ADMINISTRATIVE
			COSTS	PER ACRE	COSTS	PER ACRE	
Branch Brook	Newark	359.72	\$836,290	\$2,325	\$418,146	\$1,162	General Parks Budget
Cadwalader Park	Trenton	97.00	\$805,405	\$8,303	\$703,410	\$7,252	\$200,000
Liberty State Park	Jersey City	1200.00	\$6,000,000	\$5,000	Operating Budget	Operating Budget	\$4,000,000
Morristown Green	Morristown	2.50	\$125,000	\$50,000	\$1,000,000	\$400,000	Volunteers
Palmer Square	Princeton Borough	0.74	\$2,470	\$3,338	\$1,324	\$1,789	General Parks Budget
Wiggins Park & Marina	Camden	51.22	\$202,722	\$3,958	\$135,084	\$2,637	\$67,639
Weequahic Park	Newark	311.33	\$723,790	\$2,325	\$361,896	\$1,162	General Parks Budget

Case Studies

The following case studies document a series of parks in New Jersey that responded to our inquiries about their management. We developed these case studies by identifying several aspects of the parks including location on a waterfront, size in acres, ownership, entity responsible for management and operations, park finance sources, the location in the State, the type of amenities in the parks and finally the cost per acre for capital replacement and cost of operating the public space. We will look in more detail at the factors that affect the operating budgets in the next section of this report.



BRANCH BROOK PARK

Waterfront: Lake

Size: 359.72 Acres

Ownership: Essex County Parks Department

Management/Operations: Essex County Parks Department

Maintenance Funding: County Budget of

approximately 7 Million for all Essex Parks

Location: North Ward, Newark, Essex County, NJ

Amenities: Hardscape, natural areas, large lake,

ponds, stream, a prized collection of cherry trees

Approximate capital cost per acre for previous year: \$1,162

Approximate operation cost per acre/yearly: \$ 2,325

Previously a swamp used for both drinking water and other services, Branch Brook Park was established through land acquisitions and donations in the late 1800s and early 1900s. The construction process converted the reservoir and swamp into a large lake and the park was designed into its current form with the Branch Brook running through the center of its long rectangular shape. Today, the park contains many features such as ball fields, playgrounds, walking paths, and tennis courts among other facilities. The park also contains a large number of mature cherry trees which are the focal point of the annual Cherry Blossom Festival. Other programming events include concerts, a 10K race, fishing derby and other cultural events. Programming for the park is funded through a general programming appropriation in the Essex County Parks budget and is supplemented through the Branch Brook Park Alliance. Maintenance activities consist predominantly in mowing and lawn care, paving and construction.



CADWALADER PARK

Waterfront: Delaware & Raritan Canal

Size: 97 Acres

Management/Operations: City of Trenton Parks Department

Maintenance Funding: City of Trenton general parks budget

Location: City of Trenton, Mercer County, NJ

Amenities: Lawn, gardens, pavilion,
sports fields, zoo, museum

Approximate capital cost per acre for previous year: \$7,252

Approximate operation cost per acre/yearly: \$ 8,303

Designed by Frederick Law Olmstead, Cadwalader Park is a 97 acre park located in Northwestern Trenton. The park is owned and operated by the City of Trenton and funding for maintenance comes from an approximate \$2 million general appropriation for city parks. Maintenance of the park does not involve the use of chemical fertilizers due to the parks close proximity to the Delaware River and the Delaware and Raritan Canal. The park's nearly 100-year-old stormwater system drains directly into the river. The Park is fully landscaped consisting of a lawn, ball fields, a pavilion, and tennis courts. Additionally, the park has a small zoo adjacent to a historic mansion. The City is actively seeking to close the zoo due to funding constraints; the museum housed within the mansion remains open to the public. Additional programming in the park includes sports activities funded through user groups and the City's Recreation Department and the Cultural Division. These activities include art museum events, tennis and basket ball sports events and concerts. Maintenance consists of mowing, leaf and snow removal, building maintenance, ball field irrigation and tennis facility maintenance.



LIBERTY STATE PARK

Waterfront: Upper New York Bay

Size: 1,200 Acres

Ownership: State of New Jersey

Management/Operations: New Jersey

Department of Environmental Protection

Maintenance Financing: Corporate Business Tax

Location: Jersey City, Hudson County, NJ

Amenities: Large water area, liberty science center,
natural area, lawn, gardens, sports fields

Approximate capital cost per acre for previous year: General operating budget

Approximate operation cost per acre/yearly: \$ 5,000

Formerly used by the Central Railroad of New Jersey to usher immigrants to their new homes throughout the country, the area now known as Liberty State Park had turned into an illegal dumping ground. Opened in 1976 as a bicentennial gift to the nation from New Jersey, and at just over 1,200 acres Liberty State Park is one of New Jersey's largest urban parks. Lying adjacent to the New Jersey Turnpike, The New York Harbor, the historic Morris Canal and only 2,000 feet from the Statue of Liberty the park is surrounded on three sides by water. The park itself also contains over 600 acres of water which is home to a 1,000 slip marina. The park's remaining area is divided into two sections. The first is a 250 acre non-public natural area that once provided a nesting area for the Northern Harrier. Second is a 400+ acre open public area that houses recreational ball fields, playgrounds, and the Liberty Science Center. The park's 6-7 million dollar budget, along with all other state parks, is funded through New Jersey's corporate business tax. Programming for the park is funded from the Park's general budget and includes activities such as the Earth Day Festival and 100-200 nature and history programs. Maintenance activities include mowing, leaf and snow removal, building and facilities maintenance and landscaping. It is a publicly owned park by the State of New Jersey operated by the NJ DEP office for State Park Service and is supported by Friends of Liberty State Park.



MORRISTOWN GREEN

Waterfront: None

Size: 2.5 Acres

Ownership: The Trustees of Morristown Green

Management/Operations: Trustees

Maintenance Financing: Endowment

Location: Morristown, Morris County, NJ

Amenities: Lawn, garden, trees

Approximate capital cost per acre for previous year: \$400,000

Approximate operation cost per acre/yearly: \$ 50,000

The Morristown Green is a privately owned 2.5 acre public space consisting of lawn and gardens and is controlled and administered by a board of thirteen trustees. The trustees of this small park are responsible for organizing and funding its maintenance through a \$3.6 million endowment as well as fund-raising events and donations. Trustees of the Green are volunteers thus administrative costs are minimal. However the trustees pay the salary of one Morristown police officer. The green itself is surrounded by streets and mixed-use buildings and is an essential part of downtown Morristown. The green has several programming events sponsored by non-trustee affiliated groups throughout the year including rallies, concerts, and other shows. Most recently the trustees made a one million dollar capital investment in the green. Maintenance is procured by contractors and gardeners, and by volunteers organized by the trustees. The bulk of the costs are focused on ongoing landscaping and lawn care for the park. Although the park is privately owned it is a publicly accessible open space.



PALMER SQUARE

Waterfront: None

Size: 0.74 Acres

Ownership: Princeton Borough

Management/Operations: Princeton

Borough Parks Department

Maintenance Funding: General operating budget

Location: Princeton Borough, Mercer County, NJ

Amenities: Lawn, gardens, hardscape

Approximate capital cost per acre for previous year: \$1,789

Approximate operation cost per acre/yearly: \$ 3,338

Constructed in 1936 this small "pocket park" is about 0.74 acres with a tree, garden and several park benches, serving as a resting or meeting place. The park is surrounded by mixed-use retail, office, and residential and lies within the heart of Downtown Princeton. It also serves as the primary downtown bus stop. Palmer Square's administration and maintenance is funded through the general parks budget of the Borough and is maintained, as all Borough parks, without the use of chemical fertilizers or weed killers. Maintenance activities include gardening, brush control, leaf raking, tree maintenance, bench painting and stone path replacement. Palmer Square is a public park and there are no government-sponsored programming activities.



WIGGINS PARK & MARINA

Waterfront: Delaware River

Size: 51.22 Acres

Ownership: Camden County, NJ

Management/Operations: Camden County, Parks and Recreation Department

Maintenance Funding: General County Parks Budget

Location: Camden, Camden County, NJ

Amenities: Lawn, gardens, promenade, 50-slip marina

Approximate capital cost per acre for previous year: \$2,637

Approximate operation cost per acre/yearly: \$ 3,958

Wiggins Park and Marina is a 51.22 acre park located on the City of Camden waterfront with spectacular views of Philadelphia. The park contains a number of gardens and a promenade through a large lawn area. The most salient feature of this park is its 50-slip marina providing boat access to the City of Camden. Slips for the marina are available on daily, monthly and seasonal rates. Electricity and fresh water are also available to boaters. The park offers several programming venues featuring concerts throughout its April 1st through October 31st season. The marina is located in the center of the Park and within close proximity to the major attractions surrounding the park including the Camden Aquarium. In addition to the gardens and promenade the park benefits from the Riverstage where many concerts take place. Wiggins Park and Marina is owned by Camden County's Parks Department and its \$202,000 operating budget is funded from the County's general parks budget. The County Parks Department is responsible for the overall maintenance of the park including landscaping and lawn care. Programming for the park is funded primarily through private organizations and sponsorships. Marina maintenance is the responsibility of contractors and seasonal employees.



WEEQUAHIC PARK

Waterfront: Lake

Size: 311.33 Acres

Management/Operations: Essex County Parks Department

Maintenance Funding: County budget of

approximately \$7 million for all Essex Parks

Location: South Ward, Newark, Essex County, NJ

Amenities: Hardscape, landscaping, large lake

Approximate Capital cost per acre for previous year: \$1,162

Approximate Operation cost per Acre/Yearly: \$ 2,325

Previously known as the Waiverly Fairgrounds, Weequahic Park is one of Olmsted's legacies to Newark. The 311.33 acre park contains several ball fields, a very large lake, and a public golf course. Programming activities encompass events such as concerts and a fishing derby. Programming in the park, including concerts and fishing is funded through a general programming appropriation from County Parks Department and is supplemented by the Weequahic Park Association. Similar to Branch Brook Park, Weequahic Park administration and maintenance is funded through the general appropriations of the Essex County Parks Department and supplemented by the Association activities and fundraising. Weequahic Park is divided by a highway and two parallel train tracks. The highway and train tracks are big obstacles to enjoying the park. There is currently no boating permitted on the lake. Maintenance activities include mowing and lawn care, paving and construction.

New Jersey's Urban Parks Estimated Maintenance Cost & Revenue

Increasing the park area in the City of Newark will present significant management and operations challenges. As we examined parks throughout the State we identified their approximate costs and found out that parks didn't vary significantly in overall cost and operation. Of those parks managed by local governments costs were spread amongst all County parks thus minimizing the estimated cost per acre. It is clear that a smaller park requiring significant management will have a higher actual cost per acre than one benefiting from economies of scale supported by a general administrative budget for a larger amount of parkland.

The dollar figures are provided as averages or ranges. They are presented here as a point of comparison to identify practices and reference on the potential costs for stewardship of the Newark riverfront. Because of the special and extraordinary needs of waterfront spaces, the cost of management and maintenance will be higher than some of the land-locked parks in the case studies. The overall design of waterfront spaces, in particular a space which goes beyond that of a "typical" park and revitalization of an area, will also require an effort to promote activities that will bring the community together in a shared stewardship of the public space.

Types of Costs

Drawing on the case studies we documented the likely maintenance costs of similar parks in New Jersey and determined the type of expenses incurred in operating open spaces in urban areas. Costs are broken down into non-recurring or capital replacement costs and recurring or maintenance and operation costs. Alternative sources of revenue to government funding are then described with special emphasis on non-profit partnerships and potential value recapture mechanisms.

Non-Recurring Maintenance

Yearly Average: \$ 450,000

Yearly Average per Acre: \$70,000

Non-recurring maintenance costs refer to expenditures applied to major repairs and items with extended lifetimes. Annual expenditures for such items vary widely depending on park age, size, design, and local weather conditions. These long-term fixed investments are required to be maintained to bring a park to an operational status. Examples of typical capital costs includes: the purchase of land and equipment, the preparation of land for use as a park, the construction of facilities and amenities such as benches, restrooms, and railings.

In parks fronting on salt water, the weather effect can be even more drastic than in land-locked parks. Salt water spray is highly corrosive and will require treatment or replacement of surfaces on a more frequent basis. Further adding to the unique non-recurring maintenance costs beyond the initial

capital investment are costs associated only with waterfront activities such as the maintenance and repair of docks, bulkheads, and relieving platforms.

Based on the case studies presented in the previous section we estimate that on average the parks surveyed spend about \$450,000 a year in non-recurring maintenance or between \$1,000 and \$1,000,000 per year. Per acre costs are an average of \$70,000 per acre for the case studies ranging between a thousand dollars to \$400,000. Data available for all parks in management by Essex County, NJ, where Newark is located, point to costs specifically related to older and larger parks that require more capital replacement at an average of approximately \$1,000,000 per park per year or between \$70,000 and \$6,000,000. Per acre costs for Essex County Parks average \$12,000 in a range between \$2,000 and \$20,000.

Recurring Maintenance:

Yearly Average: \$ 1,200,000

Yearly Average per acre: \$10,000

For purposes of this report, management costs refer to all costs associated with the ongoing operation of a park of public space. Recurring maintenance costs include the upkeep, repair, and replacement of non-capital items and everyday operations, for example cleaning, plantings, landscaping, non-managerial operations, utilities, management, and programming.

Similar to non-recurring maintenance, waterfront parks—particularly parks fronting on saltwater—require special care such as the use of saltwater tolerant plantings, power washing or the cleaning of salt covered areas. However, maintenance costs can be lowered through regular upkeep and distribution of maintenance duties across various partners including non-profit conservancies and private entities. Parks surveyed by RPA typically addressed maintenance issues through government management. For example, parks owned and operated by municipalities are typically maintained by the municipal department of public works. Similarly, parks owned and operated by Counties are typically maintained by the county Parks Department.

Previous research conducted by RPA established that parks in New York City average about \$4,000,000 in recurring cost for maintenance and operation or an average of \$135,000 per acre. The New Jersey case studies reflect the use and cost drivers outside New York. We found out that maintenance costs of urban parks in the State are about \$1,200,000 ranging from a couple thousand dollars to \$6,000,000 with an average cost per acre of \$10,000 (\$2,000 to \$50,000). The difference in costs reflects the market and other factors that affect costs generally in urban New Jersey including quality or special landscaping and design, higher use rates in a denser environment and labor and other costs that are higher in New York City.

These practices in park maintenance and operation were analyzed in some more detail to identify the factors that affect costs including administration, security and programming of the parks. Although not all parks reported on specific costs for each activity we provide here an assessment of the factors that affect the recurring expenses for these public spaces and provide a range of costs where applicable.

Administration

Yearly Range: **\$70,000 - \$4,000,000**

Yearly Range per Acre: **\$1,500 - \$3,500**

Administrative costs are expenditures applied to the management and administration of parks. This includes: salaries of park managers and supervisors, associated administrative supplies, and insurance.

Parks surveyed by RPA had widely varying administration structures and costs. It is difficult to measure the exact cost of administration since it is typically included in the general operating budget as a recurring cost. We found that typical administration of parks was overseen by the parks' owner. For example parks owned by counties are administered through their parks department.

Another cost grouped under the administrative budget is the cost of insurance. In the waterfront parks surveyed by RPA two types of insurance are of relevance. The first, general liability insurance was found to be generally non-existent in parks owned by the State, counties, and municipalities. In the case of the Morristown Green however, the trustees who administer the park free of charge carry directors/officers insurance. The second type of insurance necessary for operation of waterfront parks is marine insurance. This insurance was required to be presented by owners and operators of marine vessels utilizing the parks dock or marinas. The cost of the insurance is the responsibility of the owner of the vessel.

Security:

Range: **Generally provided by local police**

Security Costs refer to expenditures applied to the protection of the park and its users. Security for parks can range from the services of the City police to specially assigned parks police or paid private security officers. Security in any park is a determinant for its success. Families and children will not use an unsafe park will which in turn will encourage crime further. As with a city street or any other public space the most critical and perhaps the most difficult time to protect a park is when pedestrian traffic is limited such as during the evenings or in winter months. This is of particular concern if the park is exclusively surrounded by uses which will not have "eyes on the street" during off hours such as office buildings. Many smaller parks throughout the State rely on municipal police to regularly patrol parks. However larger parks such as Liberty State Park employ state park rangers to patrol the park.

Programming:

Range: **Private Funding – Operating Budget**

Park programming provides several opportunities to showcase features and bring communities together. Such programming events range from organized sports to concerts to fairs. Parks with waterfront access have a unique programming feature that should be utilized to provide water themed activities and education. Larger parks systems such as the State Park System have a programming budget for educational activities and other events. Smaller parks, however, such as those owned by municipalities and counties, rely heavily on non-profit organizations to provide programming.

Alternative Funding Sources for Urban Parks in New Jersey

As discussed above, maintenance revenue sources for urban parks in the Garden State come usually from the general operating budget of the government entities that own and that most times operate the parks under their jurisdiction. We explore here in some detail alternative funding sources for parks in New Jersey including non-profit and community partnerships and the use of value recapture mechanisms. Other sources not covered in this analysis are government programs such as Green Acres that can be tapped for maintenance and operation.

Permit or concession revenue from the sale of right to hold events or provide services, and lease revenue in the form of long term rights to use park property are other revenue sources that should be considered too as planning for the riverfront continues. This should take into account the legal basis and existing precedents in the State for revenue generating uses within open spaces and how those funds are captured as revenue.

Non-profit and Community Partnerships

Contributions through conservancies and partnerships are an important source of revenue and most importantly for stewardship of these public spaces. A park on the Newark riverfront would operate in a city where there is already a supportive network of organizations for two of the parks. These include the Branch Brook Park Alliance and the Weequahic Park Association. Another non-profit group for a park profiled in the above case studies is Friends of Liberty State Park. These organizations supplement the services provided by local government. Financial information for 2007, the latest available year, is derived from their public 990 forms. It is important to note that a single year's Form 990 provides only a snapshot in time. Financial indicators, such as the percentage spent on fundraising or on programs, are often misleading. Such indicators depend on several factors, including the age and size of an organization, as well as the field and types of programs it provides.

Branch Brook Park Alliance

2007 Revenue: **\$912,171 / \$2,536 per acre**

2007 Expenses: **\$590,492 / \$1,642 per acre**

The Branch Brook Park Alliance' (BBPA) is committed to raising awareness of the tranquility that Branch Brook Park offers to the local community as a sacred, democratic space where people from diverse backgrounds can meet on a common ground. BBPA and the Essex County Department of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs are partners in improving this oldest of Essex County's parks, the crown jewel of the first County parks system in the nation and a tourist destination for visitors from around world. BBPA is self-supporting and must raise significant monies each year to finance its operations, create landscape improvement plans, and implement capital projects and programs. In the past the Alliance has collaborated with Essex County to apply for Green Acre funds to restore some of the facilities in the park. Also of importance

is the fact that it is a partner that helps through advocacy and volunteering to help preserve and manage the park for the benefit of the larger Newark community.

Most revenue for BBPA in 2007 was received through donor advised funds as a tax-deductible contribution to the Alliance. Other revenue included government contributions of \$10,000, interest of \$5,285 and income from special events of \$202,423. Expenses for 2007 included \$388,565 in program services, \$141,757 for management and \$60,170 for fundraising.

Weequahic Park Association

2007 Revenue: **\$180,453 / \$580 per acre**

2007 Expenses: **\$163,784 / \$526 per acre**

The Weequahic Park Association (WPA) is the first park conservancy group in Essex County to enter into a Partnership Agreement with the Essex County Administration for the expressed purpose of rehabilitating the park. The agreement allows the WPA to implement capital improvements in Weequahic Park and is patterned on the successful Central Park Conservancy agreement with the City of New York. The overall mission of the WPA is the restoration, redevelopment and conservation of Weequahic Park, a landscape of great historical significance. According to the association, services offered by WPA have included administration of a \$3 million grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to restore Weequahic Lake and immediate environs, park management and maintenance community organization, park and community liaison with city, county officials and federal officials, communications via bi-monthly newsletter, organizing, promoting and executing special events for adults and youth, financing park improvement through grants, negotiated federal, state, county, city and private source funding and Park planning, including a documented 5-year master plan for the park.

The Association received \$88,248 from donor advised funds as a tax-deductible contribution and \$91,999 in program service revenue, including government fees and contracts. Expenses for 2007 included \$138,090 for programs and \$25,694 for management.

Friends of Liberty State Park

2007 Revenue: **\$68,916 / \$57 per acre**

2007 Expenses: **\$64,533 / \$54 per acre**

The Friends of Liberty State Park (FOLSP), incorporated in 1998, is an all volunteer, non-profit, organization. It is dedicated to the preservation of open space and the continued improvement of Liberty State Park. It is an Officially Recognized Friends Organization by the NJ Division of Parks and Forestry. FOLSP is dedicated to the goal of a beautiful, free and green park behind Lady Liberty. Its mission is to preserve, protect, conserve and promote Liberty State Park and it encourages public participation in park decision-making and in volunteer activities. FOLSP advocates and works for a broad range of park improvements. Its representatives serve on the Liberty State Park Planning Advisory Committee of NJDEP's

Division of Parks and Forestry. Liberty State Park is an inspiring and popular urban state park, located on the Jersey City waterfront.

FOLSP revenue for 2007 included \$51,089 in direct public support or contributions received directly from individuals or foundations and \$17,827 from income from special events. Expenses for 2007 included \$47,676 for program services, \$8,197 for management and \$8,660 for fundraising.

Real Estate Value Recapture

The fact that amenities increase the value of real estate is reflected by the markets, and acknowledged by the public and the real estate community. Parks are part of the amenities that add a premium to the residential or commercial property in their proximity. This premium is derived from the capitalization of parkland into real estate and accounts for the desirability of any parcel of real estate by virtue of views of the park or accessibility for its residents or users.

Through a literature review and previous studies, RPA has determined that value recapture as a result of park development is generally expected to be between 5% to 15% depending on the quality of the park services and upkeep, i.e. for any given property within the parks' influence between 5% and 15% of its value is attributable to the presence of the public space. For example for the market value of a \$10,000,000 residence in close proximity to a park between \$500,000 and \$1,500,000 can be attributed to the park if it is well maintained. We also identify the probable impact capitalization area of the future park in the City of Newark. This area is generally 600 feet from the water or three blocks in length landward and is considered in the literature as the area to be directly impacted by new open spaces.

Any new park on the riverfront in Newark should be expected to provide a positive impact to the adjoining real estate and careful attention should be paid to determining the appropriate taxing mechanisms to recapture the value created by the park. One tool that has the potential to provide a framework for the recapture is the Revenue Allocation District (RAD) part of the New Jersey Statutes. Further analysis is required to determine if a RAD can be implemented in the Newark riverfront including determination of the area as a redevelopment or rehabilitation district, if uses of the funds can be used for maintenance of the park and if residential areas can be taxed as part of this district. At this point in time it is premature to identify a boundary and the amount of the potential revenue recapture given that the park is being planned. Further legal and precedents research is needed to determine the use of a RAD in funding the Newark riverfront.

Toward a Newark Riverfront Stewardship Framework

In the summer of 2006, Regional Plan Association embarked on an ambitious master planning initiative for the City of Newark. Responding to the request of the recently elected new Mayor Cory Booker, we convened local partners to review the existing local, regional, state, federal, and private plans for Newark and formulate a clear and strategic vision for where the City is going under the Mayor's leadership.

A key Vision Plan recommendation is the creation of a waterfront park along Passaic River to turn the riverfront into a major gateway into the City. This initiative has been led by the City of Newark and the Trust for Public Land (TPL). They are working with stakeholders to plan, design, acquire and assemble the parcels needed to create the waterfront parks and public spaces. RPA has identified a range of practices for ownership and management structures for the public spaces, including possibilities for recapturing the values created by this green space.

Like so many other former industrial cities, Newark spent the past 50 years in economic decline, as businesses and residents left for the suburbs. The city's woes were exacerbated by its own unique issues, including the 1967 riots and a generation of corruption impeding progress. Although the city has benefited in recent years from some important new development projects and public investments, especially in the Downtown area, the new Administration and the city's community groups recognize the desperate need for a strategic investment in the waterfront. Potential maintenance and ownership, management and financing identified in the previous sections allow us to discuss the structures that will make the park and open spaces in the Passaic sustainable. These case studies point to the need of a combined strategy that could potentially need State Legislative approval, Essex County involvement, City resources and commitment of civic and nonprofit support. This needed cooperation will be the foundation for the future of the Newark riverfront.

With the City of Newark and TPL moving forward to design and acquire land for the future riverfront, plans for stewardship need to be made in order for the waterfront to be maintained with the long term goal of public accessibility and character. As the City finalizes its master planning process

for this area it will need to look not only at the open space components of the redeveloped riverfront but also at adjacent economic development and housing opportunities. The riverfront is a key underutilized asset for the city and region and its plans should reach the right balance between real estate development and potential leases that could contribute to park financing and influence the amount of park spaces. As the design process moves forward key issues that will guide any stewardship arrangement include primarily the park boundaries and how it will be planned and programmed.

Identifying potential ownership and management structures helps inform the coordination of stakeholders and needed commitment by them for the successful care of the new public spaces. Through the analysis provided in this report RPA has determined operational strategies that we hope will inform how the stewardship for the riverfront is evaluated and implemented. This identification of park management options based on New Jersey urban areas' practices stops short of recommending any specific solution as we expect the master plan and acquisition plans by the City and TPL respectively. Nevertheless we have determined several issues for consideration that will be important in developing a Newark riverfront stewardship framework:

- All but one of New Jersey's urban parks, including waterfront spaces, are owned by public entities, including State, County and Municipalities;
- These publicly owned public parks are managed by the same governmental entities that own them creating a combined ownership and management structure;
- All parks get funded through the general budget or through appropriations from the same ownership and management entities that control them;
- Parks that complement their financing through conservancies or other non-profit groups have more active stewardship, use and programming;
- Parks can also benefit from a positive and coordinated relation to private land owners adjacent to them by sharing priorities based on mutual interests in the public spaces;
- Design of urban New Jersey parks varies greatly and care should be given for the balance between active and passive recreation and other uses like real estate, marinas or other attractions.

With these guidelines in mind we envision a Newark riverfront that is publicly owned and managed by a government entity -either County or City- and that it is funded through its budget. We also expect that as plans for the riverfront materialize Newark residents and land owners will be engaged in a stewardship process that complements the obligations of the public sector.



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Regional Plan Association (RPA) is an independent regional planning organization that improves the quality of life and the economic competitiveness of the 31-county, New York-New Jersey-Connecticut region through research, planning, and advocacy. Since 1922, RPA has been shaping transportation systems, protecting open spaces, and promoting better community design for the region's continued growth. We anticipate the challenges the region will face in the years to come, and we mobilize the region's civic, business, and government sectors to take action.

RPA's current work is aimed largely at implementing the ideas put forth in the Third Regional Plan, with efforts focused in five project areas: community design, open space, transportation, workforce and the economy, and housing. For more information about Regional Plan Association, please visit our website, www.rpa.org.

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