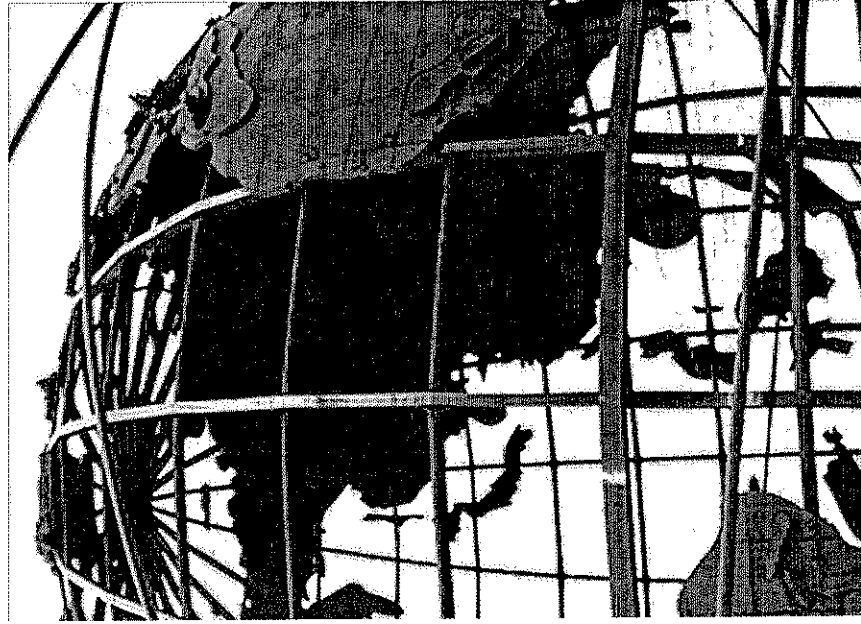


An aerial, black and white photograph of a park area. A multi-lane road curves through the center of the image. To the right of the road, there are several large, rectangular buildings with flat roofs, possibly industrial or commercial structures. The surrounding area is a mix of open fields and some smaller structures. The overall scene is captured from a high angle, providing a clear view of the layout and infrastructure.

Flushing Meadows Corona Park

Strategic Framework Plan



Unisphere - FMCP

Flushing Meadows Corona Park : Strategic Framework Plan

Prepared for:

The New York City Department of Parks and Recreation

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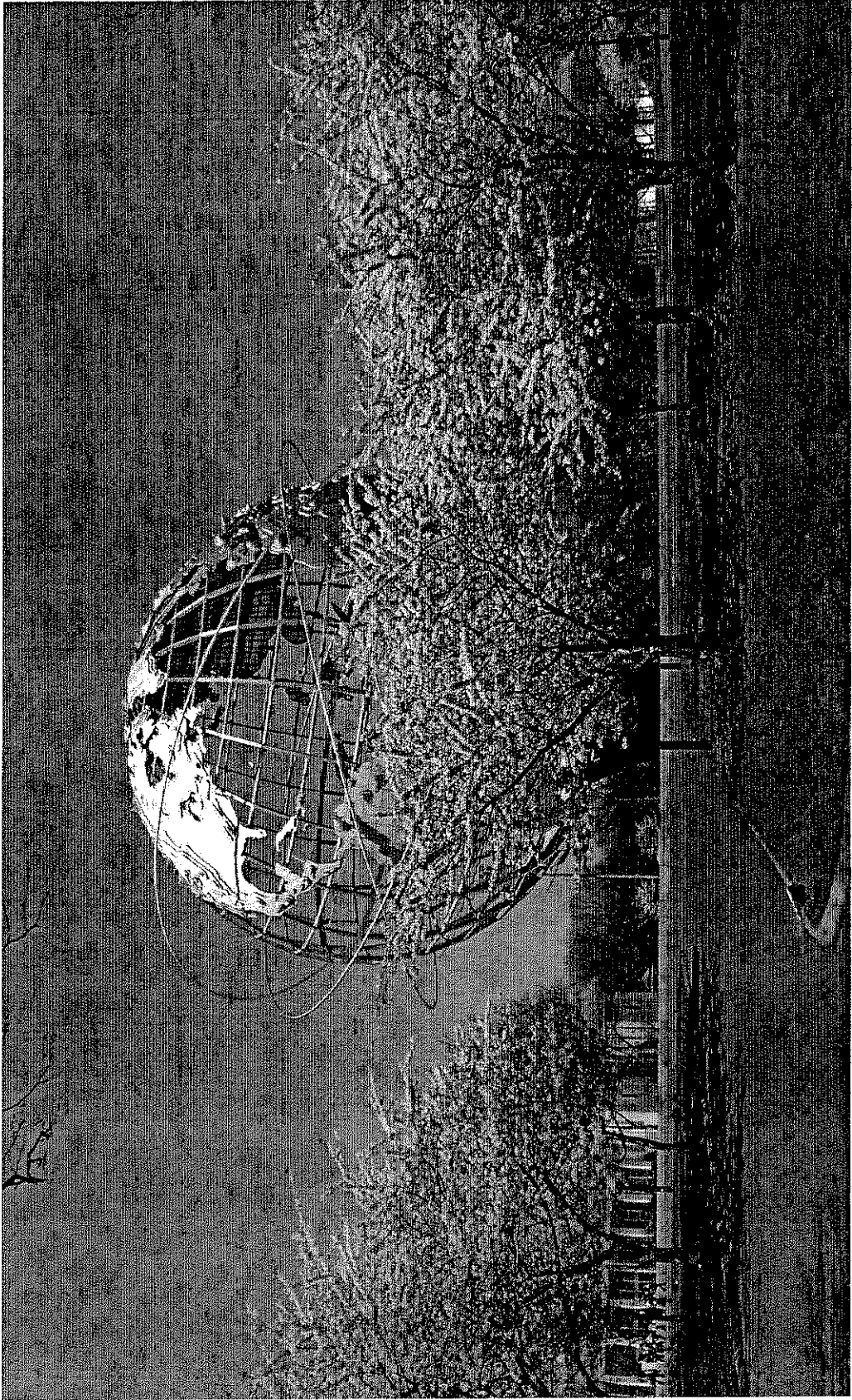
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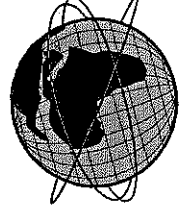
Flushing Meadows Corona Park Strategic Framework Plan



Screenshot of Unisphere in Spring

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Flushing Meadows Corona Park Strategic Framework Plan
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Serving a large and diverse group of users, Flushing Meadows Corona Park (FMCP) is a public open space on a grand scale. The Park is an incredible resource with many remarkable assets, but it has not realized its potential in many respects.

INTRODUCTION

The Strategic Framework Plan, initiated by Parks in 2004, was funded by a grant from the J.M. Kaplan Fund as it supports the mission of the Migrations Program to improve "social, economic, and cultural opportunities for immigrant communities". The Plan is intended to help FMCP achieve its full potential by establishing a long term vision, a basis for decisions about the Park's management and the allocation of attention and resources for the coming years.

The Park has been the subject of a number of planning efforts since its creation in 1939. The most recent study, "The 1988 Plan," was undertaken nearly twenty years ago by the Flushing Meadows Corona Park Corporation, which hired a team including: architects, Bernard Tschumi and Skidmore Owings & Merrill and landscape architect, Nicholas Quennell to develop a Master Plan.

The 1988 Plan went largely unrealized and unheeded, but since then, the Park has seen remarkable growth which will continue into the next several years:

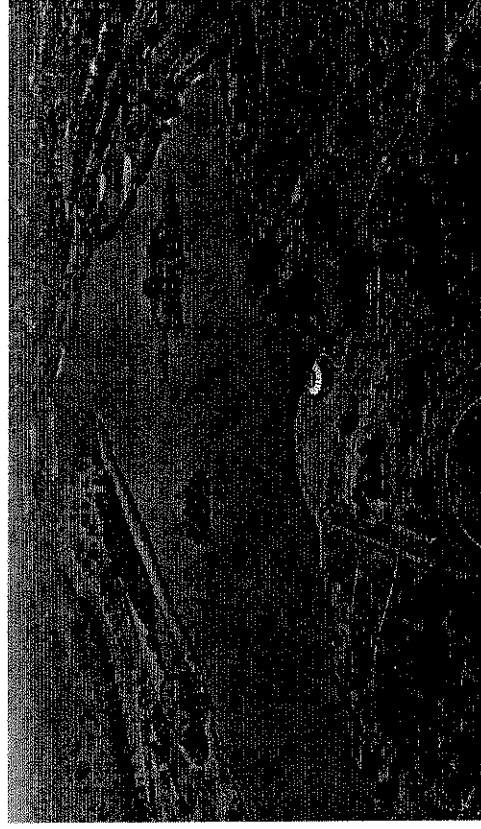
- The Hall of Science has been greatly expanded
- A new Recreation Center was built
- A new Pool and Ice Rink was built
- A major renovation of the Queens Museum is planned
- A major renovation of Queens Theater in the Park is underway with an expected completion in the Fall, 2008
- New exhibits at the Queens Zoo are planned
- Citi Field will replace Shea Stadium
- Proposed reconstruction of the Roosevelt Avenue Bridge

The realignment of the LIE, Grand Central Parkway and Van Wyck Expressway and the planned development of the Willets Point industrial area will significantly impact the Park. They offer opportunities to develop a cohesive sense of place and identity for the Park, if coordinated in a timely fashion.

With this knowledge New York City Department of Parks & Recreation (DPR) asked the planning team to help them integrate these somewhat disparate efforts into a coherent vision for Flushing Meadows Corona Park and to provide a framework for defining future capital spending and planning.



Aerial Photograph of FMCP ca. 2006. Credit: DOIIT, NYC MAP-2006 Series



Reconfigured and Restored Lakes and a Re-envisioned World's Fair Core



Flushing Meadows Corona Park Strategic Framework Plan
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This is not a Master Plan in the conventional sense; it is a set of guiding principles elaborating a new vision and direction for the Park's future. Incorporating input from DPR, the Park's various stakeholders and the FMCP community, we have re-imagined the Park on a grand scale and described a plan of action for the immediate and long term future.

GOALS OF THE STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK PLAN

The Strategic Framework Plan will be used as a guide to help the Parks Department to see every action and every project in FMCP as part of a larger vision. By establishing a clear set of goals for the future, the Plan will end the current system of ad hoc patches and fixes, where money is spent and projects are undertaken without an understanding of the long-term implications for the Park as a whole.

The Strategic Framework Plan will also be a useful fundraising tool. The Parks Department will use the document to convince potential donors that small projects and large projects alike will have long lasting and far reaching effects on the Park and will contribute to its transformation into a destination park for the 21st Century.

Since its original transformation from an ash dump to the memorable 1939 World's Fairs and its subsequent reuse for the 1964 Fair, the Park has been at once the largest, most heavily used park in the Borough, the home for a multitude of uses too unwieldy for the other parks.

Today the Park is heavily used both by residents of Queens for passive and active recreation and by visitors from far and wide, drawn by major sporting events and by the Park's iconic World's Fair remnants and existing cultural institutions.

At the heart of the Plan is the goal of making Flushing Meadows Corona Park the Park of the Future: the premiere example of Mayor Bloomberg's PlanNYC initiative to make the City more sustainable and environmentally responsive. The Park would become a laboratory for sustainable design where professionals could undertake serious research and where the public could come to learn about sustainability.

The report presents three "Big Idea" proposals for implementation in the near future.

ONE : Re-envision the World's Fair Core

Under the first proposal the core area between the Long Island Railroad and the Long Island Expressway will be re-envisioned as both a celebration of the best of the two World's Fairs, and a new, greener landscape with more varied topography, less paved surface and a new public gathering space on the site of the now dysfunctional Fountain of the Planets. As a key element to this plan, the Flushing River will be reopened along the Core's eastern edge to create a continuous ribbon of water through the Park.

Iconic elements of the World's Fair such as the Unisphere, the Queens Museum and Theater in the Park and the New York State Pavilion, will be retained and restored to define the Park's importance as a cultural destination.

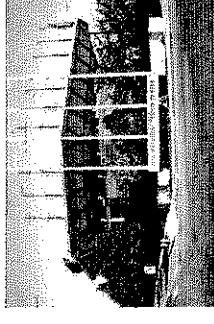
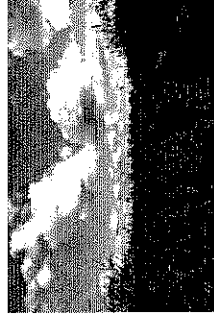
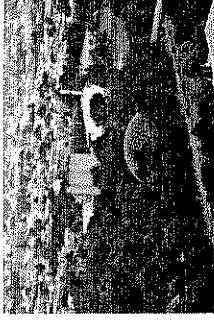
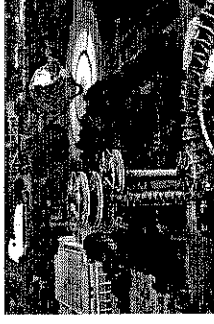
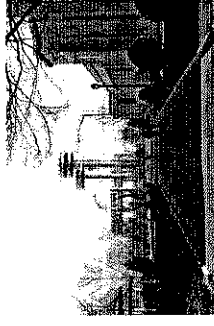
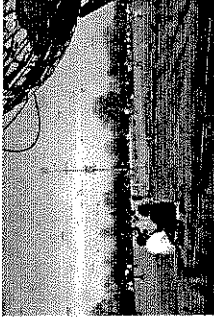
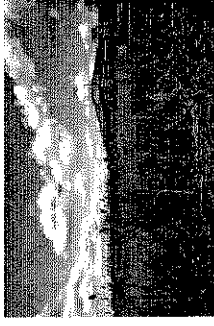
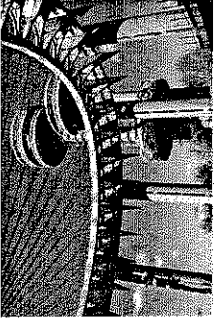
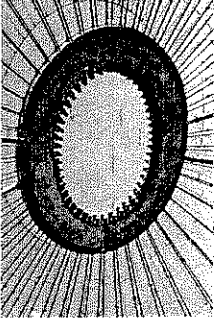
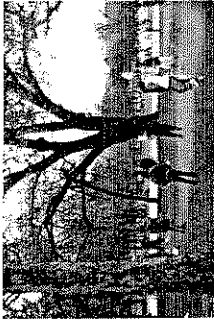
TWO : Reconfigure & Restore the Lakes

Under the second proposal both Meadow and Willow Lakes will be restored and reconfigured to improve their roles as natural and recreational resources, to create more diverse natural habitat areas and, in the case of Meadow Lake, to provide more usable parkland on its periphery.

THREE : Reconnect the Park to the Neighborhood and City

The third proposal addresses the need for better access to and within the Park - a problem that has long frustrated many of the Park's users. Access to the Park will be improved for the surrounding neighborhoods and visitors through improved signage, circulation and parking. Within the Park, a planned corridor of activities will locate greater programmatic density along well defined routes to create a more vibrant park experience and make feasible alternative ways of getting around the Park.

The Plan also identifies needs for further technical study, crucial for understanding the true breadth of any sustainable restoration effort. These include studies of the Park's lakes and drainage systems, a detailed traffic study to ensure improved access to surrounding neighborhoods and a comprehensive plan for signage, wayfinding and lighting. In addition, suggestions are included for a number of innovative ways in which the Park could become a demonstration project of environmental sustainability, to establish its reputation as a true Park of the Future.



Snapshots of FMCP taken throughout the study



This book is the synthesis of a series of design charrettes, close dialogue with stakeholders and prolonged data collection continuing throughout the entire process.

METHODOLOGY

This study emerged from a four step process, described below, which combined the gathering and assembly of basic data about the Park, dialogue with Park users, a series of design charrettes involving the various disciplines representing the Design Team and advisors, and subsequent synthesis of the results into a clear and cohesive vision for the future of the Park.

The design charrettes created a dialogue involving the entire design team. At intervals this work was presented to the stakeholders within the Parks Department, representatives of the various institutions in the Park and other members of the FMCP community. We recognized early on that Flushing Meadows Corona Park is an important resource for the large and multi-cultural population in the communities which surround it as well as for millions of visitors from the region.

Data Collection

In order to imagine the Park in the future we needed to understand its history and its present. We gathered historical and technical information from a variety of sources to understand the Park and collected a large amount of source data, which are summarized below. A detailed physical analysis was generated by DPR's GIS Mapping Unit. (See separate list of GIS data mapping in the Appendix.)

- The consultants' field observations supplemented by data from the Planning Team's resource consultants which provide a broad background of the Park's physical condition and infrastructural systems.
- Information gathered through a series of questionnaires which were sent out to local Park users, DPR staff and the Park's many institutions, the Stakeholders' meetings, and interviews with individuals involved in the Park's day to day management.
- Data from other groups and agencies working in and around the Park.
- In addition to these current sources, we reviewed data generated by the Tschumi Plan. This data, which is extremely well documented, covers all the areas of concern with which we are faced today and, while certain significant elements have been modified or removed in the intervening nineteen years, much of the most critical information is still applicable today and provides a valuable base line from which to look at the Park's condition today.
- The data have been used to identify both specific problems affecting the management and use of the Park as well as opportunities for the future. Problems identified through the basic GIS data and field research as well as from questionnaire responses are addressed as well as physical problems such as drainage and circulation.

Stakeholder and Community Dialogue

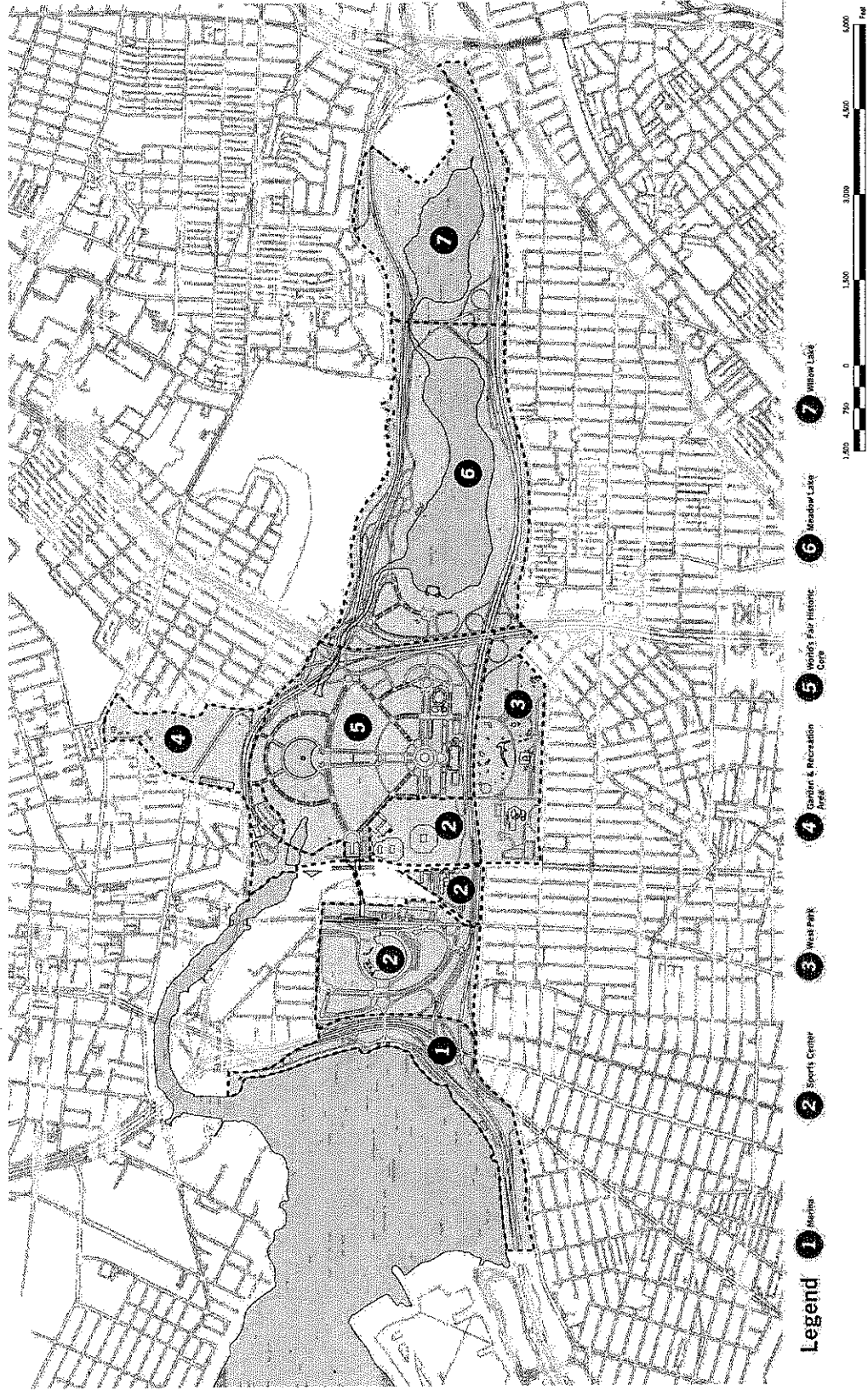
We listened to stakeholders and community members both internal and external to the Park and discussed our ideas and impressions with them.

Design Charrettes

We orchestrated periods of intense discussion and design with and without external specialty sub-consultants.

Synthesis

The formulation of the results of the design charrettes into a clear and cohesive vision for the future of the Park.



Base map: GIS map taken from 2004 FIMCP Restoration Framework Plan funded by J.M. Kaplan Fund and NYC DPR

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To spend any time in Flushing Meadows Corona Park is to realize that it is not one park; it is many. If one spends enough time in the Park, one can describe precisely the character of these sub-parks and quantify them. There are seven.

SEVEN ZONES

1

Marina

The former World's Fair Marina is a marine park and promenade along the Flushing Bay. The promenade was redone as recently as 2001 with money from the DEP. The Marina provides 1.4 miles of waterfront access including areas for strolling, sitting and biking. The Marina is unlike much of the rest of the Park in character, and it is a reminder of the all-encompassing nature of the Fairs.

2

Sport Center

The Sports Center encompasses two major professional sports venues: Citi Field/Shea Stadium and the USTA National tennis center. The gravitational pull of these two facilities is enormous, and this area of the Park extends its influence out into the rest of the Park unlike any of the other areas.

3

West Park

West Park is separated from the western edge of the World's Fair Area by the Grand Central Parkway. Although it is connected via two bridges which cross over the GCP, the West Park is functionally separate. Despite being the smallest zone, the West Park contains two of the Park's most dynamic facilities: the NY Hall of Science and the Queens Zoo. It is also the only area of the Park with a truly porous relationship to its surrounding communities.

4

Recreation & Garden Botanical Area

The organized, activity filled "backyard" of FMCP is the recreation and Garden Botanical Area. This area is located to the north and east of the Core area. Although one can pass under the raised Van Wyck Expressway, it is still a significant boundary. With the new Rec Center and the Pool and Rink, this is the most rapidly changing area of the Park. As downtown Flushing and Willets Point develop, this area will be very heavily used. This area has the most potential to develop a porous relationship with surrounding residents like the West Park.

5

Historic World's Fair Core Area

What many people think of when they think of Flushing Meadows Corona Park is the historic World's Fair Core Area. Presided over by the Unisphere and the New York State Pavilion, this area is the spiritual center of the Park. The Queens Museum of Art, keeper of the World's Fair history is the only major cultural institution in

the Core area. Although there are several heavily used soccer fields, the Core area is still dominated by the formal geometry of the path system left over from the Fairs and subsequently modified innumerable times.

6

Meadow Lake

The Park's active lake is Meadow Lake. The paths around the lake are used heavily by joggers and cyclists. The lake itself is used for sailing and rowing. To the south and west, baseball fields surround the lake. There are also areas for picnicking, including areas where grilling is allowed.

7

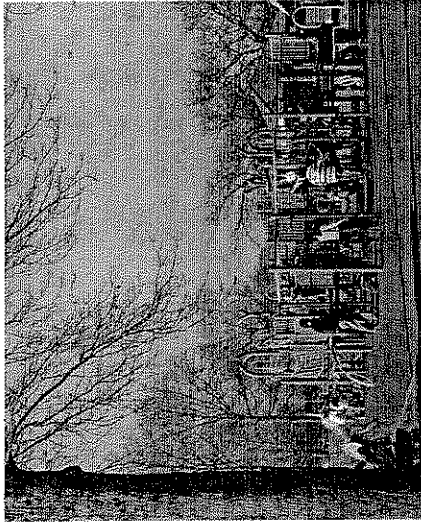
Willow Lake

The Park's only nature preserve is Willow Lake. It is currently only open by appointment, but there are plans in the works to make this area more accessible to all New Yorkers, who would like to experience a working wetland.

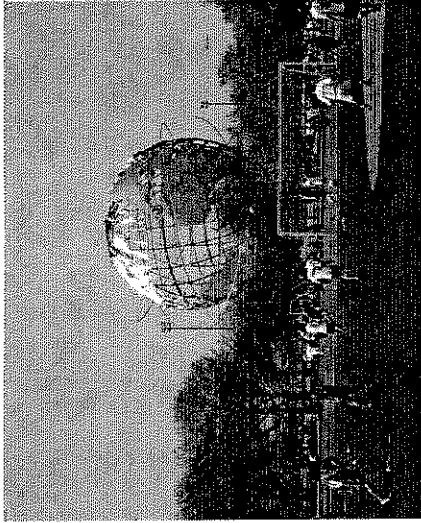
Queens is the City's largest and most diverse borough. It contains many different cultural and ethnic enclaves side by side. FMCP mirrors this diversity; this is one of its greatest assets. To recognize that the Park has seven distinct zones does not preclude an overall identity for FMCP. In fact, the best way to unify FMCP into a single and cohesive whole is to ensure that each of the seven regions or Zones is uniquely fit to serve its individual purpose. By amplifying the best aspects of each of the seven zones and, most critically, providing appropriate connections between them, we establish FMCP as one park with many qualities.

It is neither essential nor possible to connect every zone to every other zone. Calibrating the connections between zones to link compatible activities and create a continuous experience is an important goal for the Park as a whole. We describe a strategy in the section, "Ecology of Activity." There are, of course, significant barriers to easy travel in the Park. Several of these problems and potential solutions are addressed in the consultants' memoranda included in the Appendix. They include: better signage; more clearly defined path systems; location of activities -new or relocated- on well defined routes; new modes of transportation such as water bus, shuttle bus or bicycle.

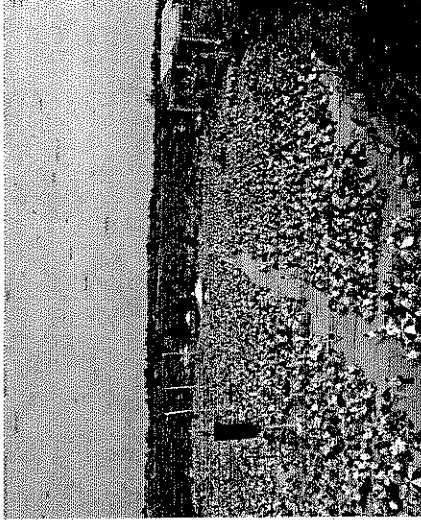
One of the respondents to our questionnaire characterized the Park quite elegantly. "Flushing Meadows," she said, "is a place that engenders diversity and understanding by providing a space for activities, organizations and institutions, which allow Park users to expand their cultural knowledge and understanding of their neighbors." Each of the seven areas contributes to this definition in a slightly different way.



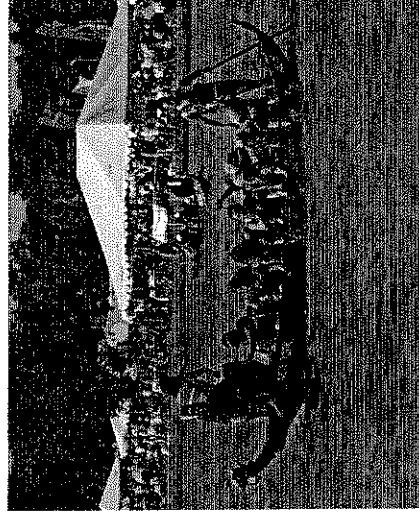
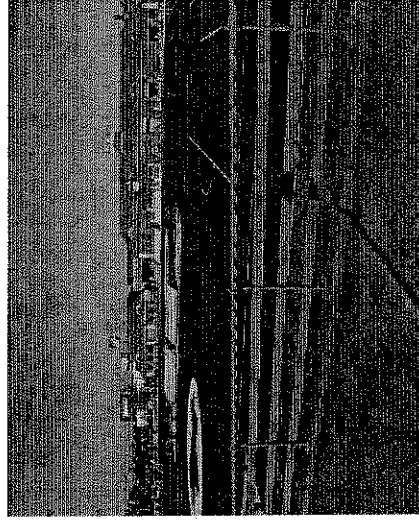
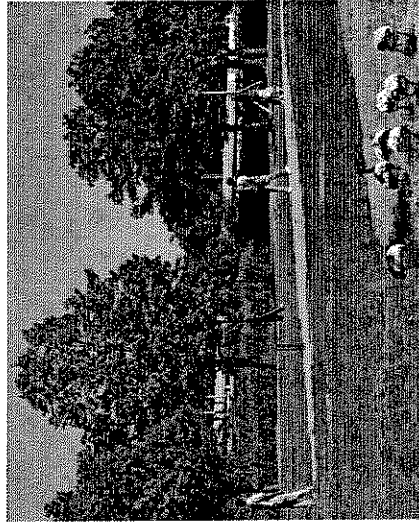
Neighborhood Park



Regional Park
&
Cultural Campus



Large Event Space





Because of its location in the heart of Queens, its proximity to highways and mass transit and its sheer size, the Park functions at three very different scales of activity. The three major modes of operation for Flushing Meadows Corona Park are: Neighborhood Park, Regional Park and Large Event Space. They are more intertwined than might be apparent.

THREE MAJOR MODES

Neighborhood Park

For many people who live close to the Park, FMCP is their local neighborhood park: it is where their children play, where they picnic and where they go to exercise or to escape the heat.

Regional Park

Users who do not necessarily live close to the Park are drawn to it as a Regional Park. In FMCP they participate in sports leagues with park users from other communities. They visit the cultural institutions, take advantage of some of the other facilities that are available only in a park of its size and scale such as the new pool and ice rink. The Park's role as a Regional Park is, of course, magnified by the presence of its two major sports facilities – Shea (Citi Field) Stadium and theUSTA.

Large Event Space

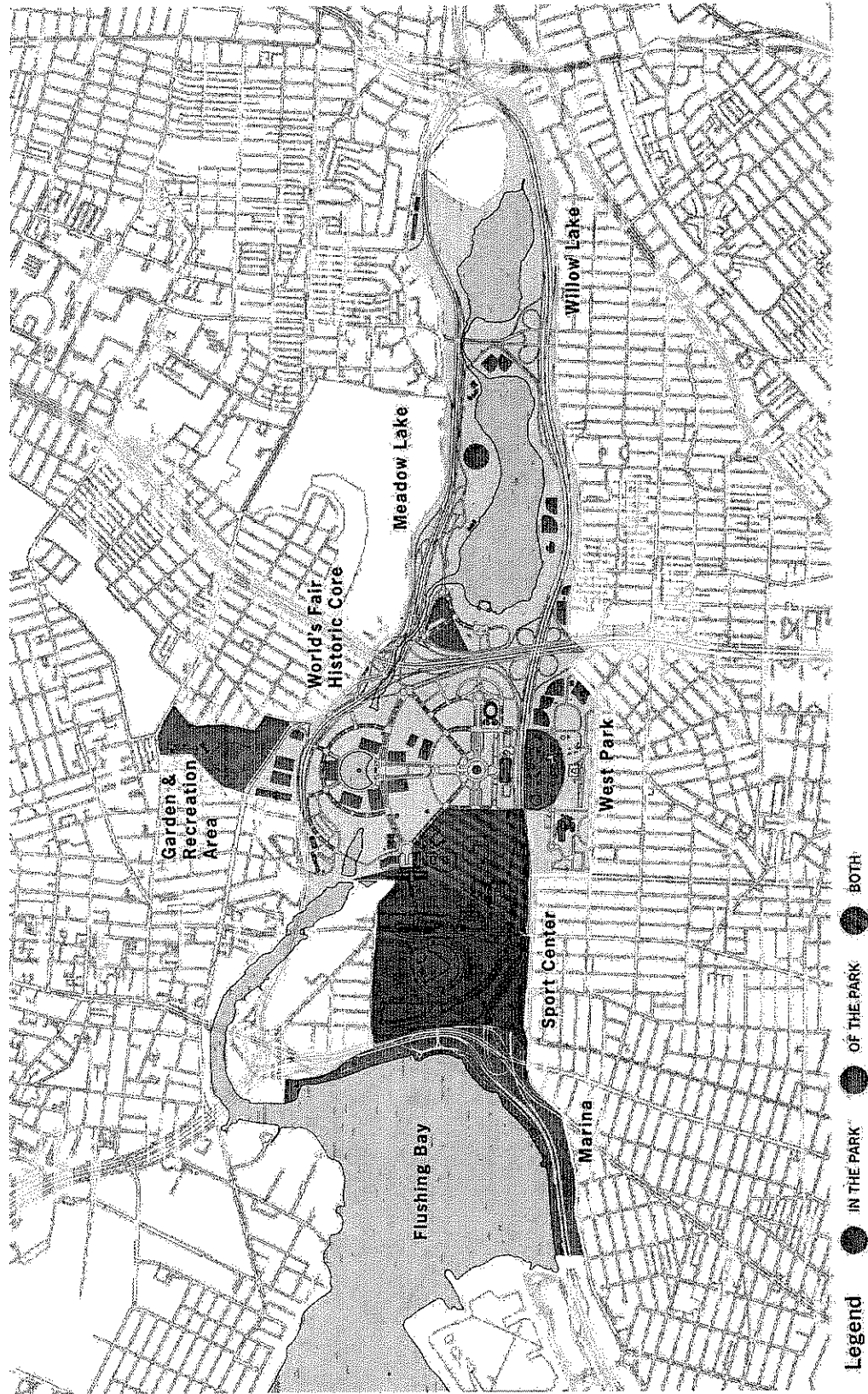
FMCP is the one of the preeminent sites in the City for large events. From outdoor concerts to the myriad cultural festivals that take place each summer, FMCP regularly hosts events which can draw upwards of 150,000 people. The US Open and the Mets regularly draw large crowds to the Park in the Spring, Summer and Fall.

Many local users for whom the Park is a Neighborhood Park provide the base constituents for the ethnic festivals which draw users from much greater distances to the Park's current Large Gathering Space. Similarly, the large events in the Park are key to establishing FMCP as a Regional Park with amenities unavailable in smaller parks.

As one of the most heavily used parks in the City, FMCP is filled to capacity on a typical summer weekend. Its seven playgrounds, seven ball fields and nine soccer fields serve both neighborhood and regional residents. Many of the Park's users come from Queens' residential neighborhoods including the six surrounding Community Boards. Other Park users come from elsewhere in Queens, other boroughs or even as far away as Long Island and Westchester.

While these three modes are a great asset to the Park, they also present many challenges. Conflicts arise from difficulty in managing the balance among the three modes. Some areas of the Park are easily accessed from surrounding neighborhoods while many areas are not. Some amenities, which would draw Park users from great distances, are located far from public transportation.

As the Park is transformed for the 21st Century, great care must be taken to maintain the balance of the three modes and the connections among the seven zones. We address this idea on page 27 as part of our "Ecology of Activity." Proposed changes and amenities must be considered in terms of their appropriateness for all three of these modes. Even on days in which there are festivals or other events at FMCP, the Park must be available for local users to stroll and for sports leagues to practice and compete.



Base map: GIS map taken from 2004 FMCP Restoration Framework Plan funded by J.M. Kaplan Fund and NYC DPR

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We developed the concept “In the Park & Of the Park” as a way of thinking about the Park’s uses and institutions in terms of the overall identity of Flushing Meadows Corona Park. We call those things which actively contribute to the Park, “Of the Park.” We use “In the Park” to describe those elements, which sit on land inside the administrative boundaries of FMCP but could, in truth, be anywhere. We believe that many of the aspects we classify as “In the Park” could be made to be “Of the Park.”

IN THE PARK & OF THE PARK

We intend the construct of “In the Park & Of the Park” to be a test for future uses which we cannot anticipate and which may be proposed for the Park. We believe that every aspect of Flushing Meadows Corona Park should contribute to the overall sense of place. The majority of the infrastructure and the institutions in the Park do. They are in dialogue with the Park as a whole. Indeed, it is the strong sense of place at FMCP that makes those aspects of the Park which are incongruous or hermetically cut-off from the rest of the Park more conspicuous.

In the Park

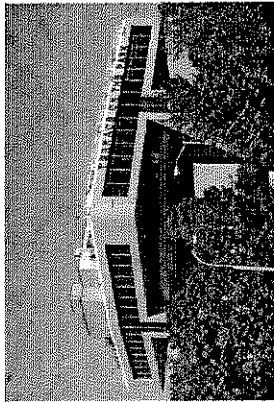
These institutions include: Terrace on the Park, Citi Field, the National Tennis Center and the Olmsted Center itself. At their best, these institutions offer little to the Park. Terrace on the Park, for example, would work equally well if it were in another location. The Olmsted Center, which serves all boroughs as the Department’s principle design and construction office would better serve the Park and the City if it were relocated elsewhere in a sustainable, modern facility.

At their worst, these institutions cause harm to Flushing Meadows Corona Park as a whole. Citi Field and, to a lesser extent, USTA/NTC are the most incompatible uses due to their huge demand for parking and the spill-over effect on surrounding neighborhoods, especially when their schedules overlap. Like Shea, the USTA/NTC brings large crowds for the brief period of the US Open. Unlike Citi Field, the USTA/NTC does offer real benefits when its tennis courts are made available to Park users.

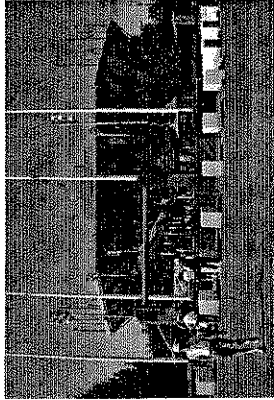
On the other hand, these institutions add luster to the Park’s image and could, potentially, provide much-needed revenue to support its operation. Furthermore they both draw large numbers of visitors to the Park at times bringing FMCP into the national and international spotlight.

Of the Park

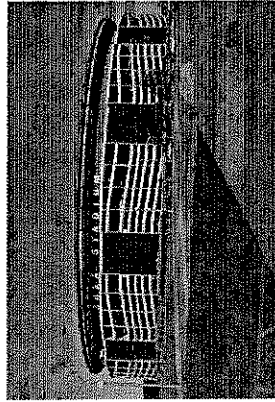
These institutions include the Hall of Science, The Queens Museum, The Queens Zoo, The Queens Botanical Garden and Queens Theatre In the Park. All of these institutions have their own agendas and constituencies, but they are still important members of the Park community, and their visitors often come to more than one institution or event.



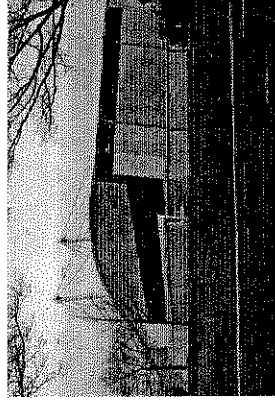
Terrace on the Park



National Tennis Center



Shea Stadium



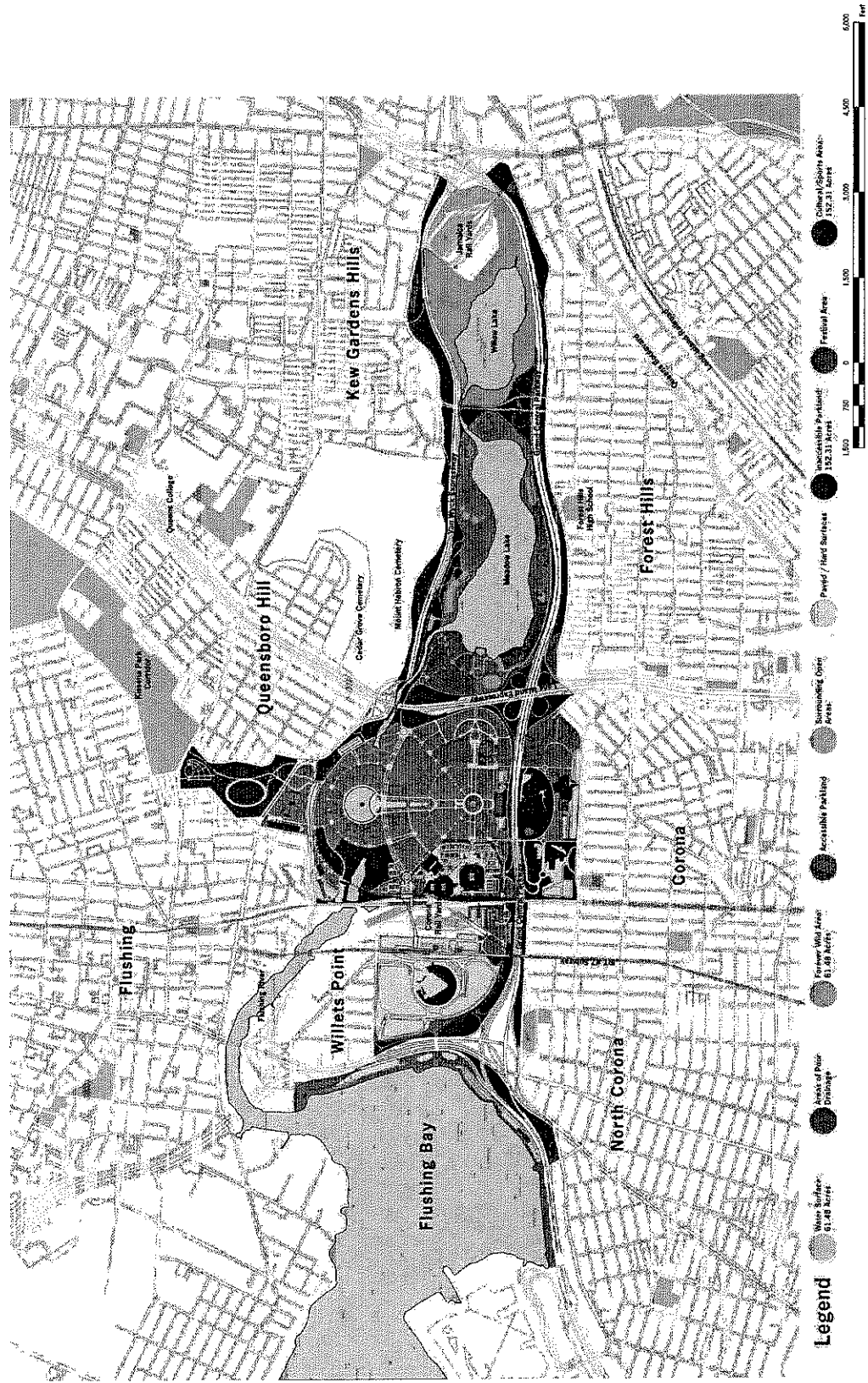
New Pool and Ice Rink



Olmsted Center



Queens Zoo



Flushing Meadows Corona Park Strategic Framework Plan
 Quennell Rothschild & Partners | Smith-Miller + Hawkinson Architects

Base map: GIS map taken from 2004 FMCP Restoration Framework Plan (funded by J.M. Kaplan Fund and NYC DPR)

Land Use in the Park



By understanding the active and passive areas of the Park as a single ecology, we can make the Park more suitable for both. Activity will become more intense and more accessible. At the same time, Park users will have a richer and more varied experience of nature. The Park will become safer, a tranquil respite from the city.

ECOLOGY OF ACTIVITY

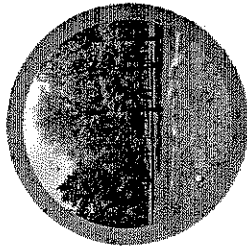
A big part of the popular appeal of Flushing Meadows Corona Park is the wealth and diversity of programs existing within its borders. We have already described both the three major modes of use and the seven zones of activity in the Park.

Today, the Park is heir to its history both as an urban fairground and as a massive experiment in re-naturalized landscape. One of the great paradoxes of FMCP is that despite all of this activity, the Park can feel, at times, vacant and flat. The Park contains two massive lakes, yet, although the Willow Lake area is currently a restricted access nature preserve, one is hardly aware of this important aspect of the Park. Very little of the Park gives the user any sense of being in close contact with nature. The institutions are separated from one another by great distances, and the unprogrammed interstitial areas are largely undifferentiated. These areas of passive or unspecified program are where visitors create their own experience of FMCP. They are a part of the ecology of activity in FMCP, and they are particularly important to the Park.

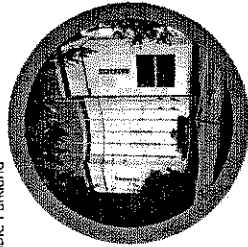
We see these paradoxes as fundamentally related. The reason that FMCP with all of its activity can feel vacant is that program has not been thoughtfully distributed through the Park. To understand this phenomenon we thought of FMCP in terms of an Ecology of Activity. By that, we mean that program is always thought of in relationship to surrounding programs, to circulation and to lack of program.

Parks are often understood either as a picturesque Olmstedian ideal or as a kind of communal backyard for active recreation. FMCP is large enough that these two very different ideas of "park" can exist simultaneously. Indeed, it is so large that they must both exist to support each other. This symbiosis can only happen where active and passive zones are considered part of a continuum. Areas of intense program actively create spaces where landscape can intervene. Water, plants, and new topography carve out new spaces where activity can be concentrated, making it more accessible and more intense. Specifically, we propose creating corridors of program to link the seven zones to one another by connecting Park activities at each of the three scales (or modes). Programmed space would be concentrated strategically to allow for larger swathes of unprogrammed "natural spaces."

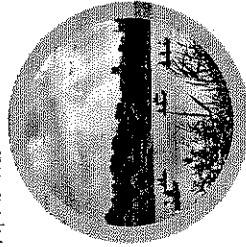
By recalibrating the relationship between programmed experience and unprogrammed naturalized areas, we would make the Park more vital as a place. Active recreation would become more active and passive recreation would be given more space to establish itself as a place where New Yorkers could experience the Environment. At the same time, the Park would rediscover its purpose as the Park of the Future. It would serve as a vital laboratory and place of discovery and experiment.



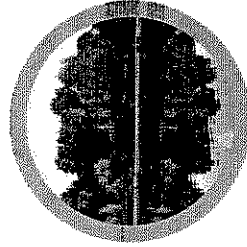
Accessible Parkland



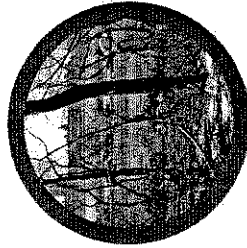
Cultural/Sports Areas



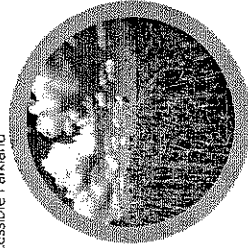
Water



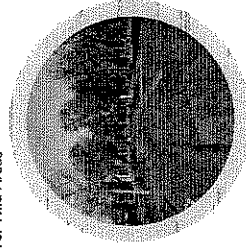
Surrounding Parkland



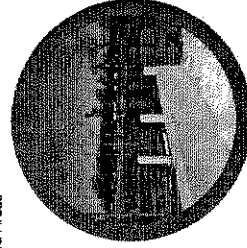
Inaccessible Parkland



Forever Wild Areas



Paved Areas



Major Areas of Poor Drainage