

CAPITAL CITY PARKS GUIDE

Plans for Hartford's Regional,
Community, & Neighborhood Parks

August 2014

Steering Committee

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CITY OF HARTFORD

Mayor Pedro E. Segarra
Hartford City Council
Department of Development Services Staff and
Department of Public Works Parks Staff
Department of Families, Children, Youth and
Recreation
Hartford Police Department
Hartford Public Schools
Hartford Planning and Zoning Commission

FRIENDS OF PARKS AND PARK STAKEHOLDERS

Hartford Park and Recreation Advisory Committee
(PRAC)
Knox Park Foundation
Ancient Burying Ground Association
Bike Walk Connecticut
Bushnell Park Foundation
Connecticut Landmarks
East Coast Greenway
Ebony Horsewomen
Elizabeth Park Conservancy
Friends & Neighbors of Forster Park
Friends of Colt Park

Friends of Day Playground
Friends of Goodwin Park
Friends of Keney Park
Friends of Pope Park
Friends of Sheldon Charter Oak
Friends of Sigourney Square Park
Green Ribbon Task Force
Hartford Food System
Hartford Preservation Alliance
Keney Park Sustainability Initiative
Park River Watershed Revitalization Initiative
Riverfront Recapture

NEIGHBORHOOD GROUPS AND DOWNTOWN STAKEHOLDERS

Asylum Hill Neighborhood Association
Blue Hills NRZ
Clay Arsenal Revitalization Association
Frog Hollow NRZ
Hartford Business Improvement District (BID)
Maple Avenue Revitalization Group (MARG)
Northeast Revitalization Association
Parkville Revitalization Association
Sheldon/Charter Oak (CSS/CON)
South Downtown NRZ
South Green NRZ
South Meadows
Southend Neighborhood Revitalization Association
Southwest and Behind the Rocks
West End Civic Association

ADDITIONAL THANKS

Hartford Public Library
Hartford History Center at the Hartford Public Library
Samuel Valentin Arroyo Recreation Center at Pope
Park

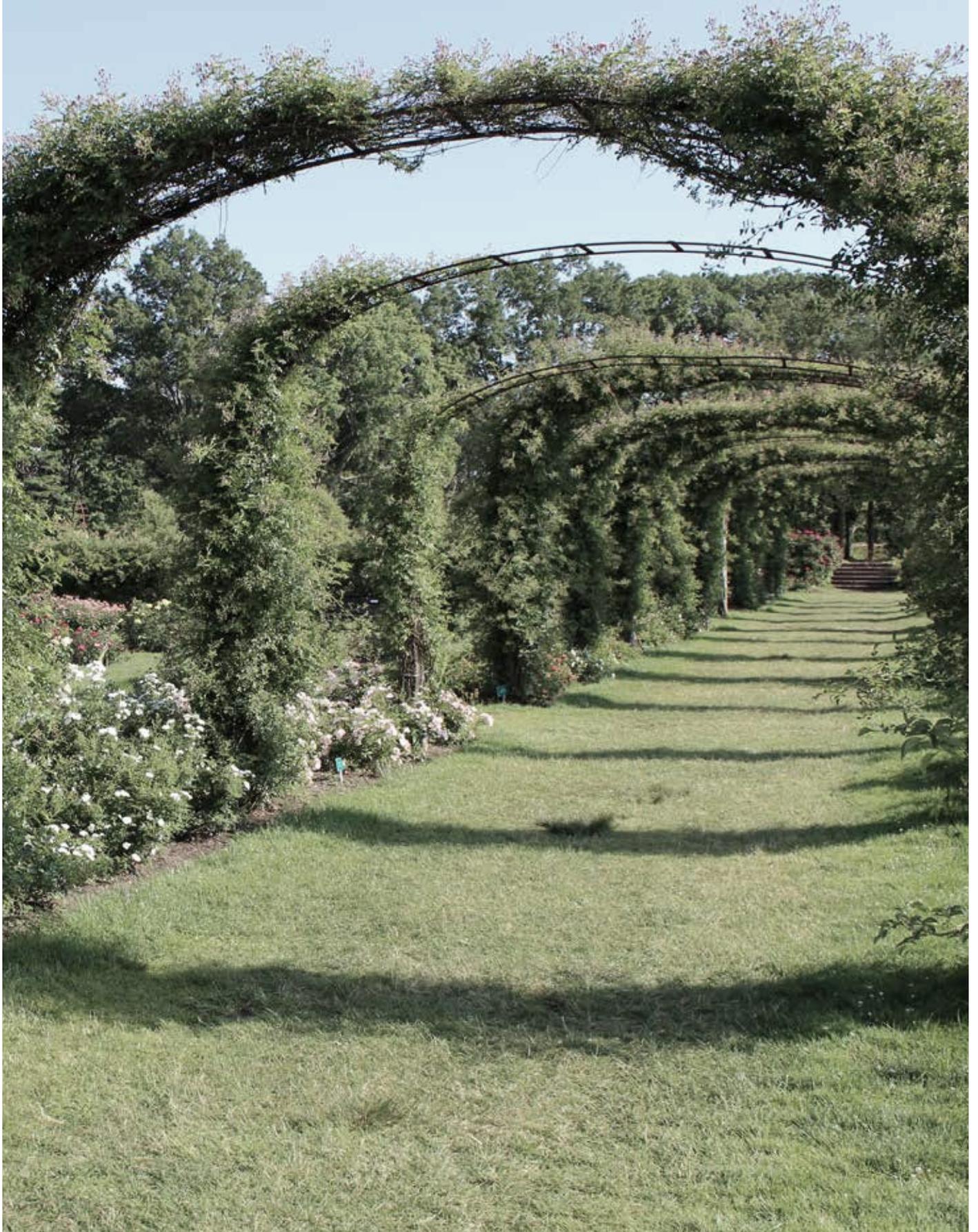
CAPITAL CITY PARKS MANUAL

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By connecting, expanding,
enhancing, and preserving
our parks and open
spaces, we are sustaining
the City's vitality for
future generations.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



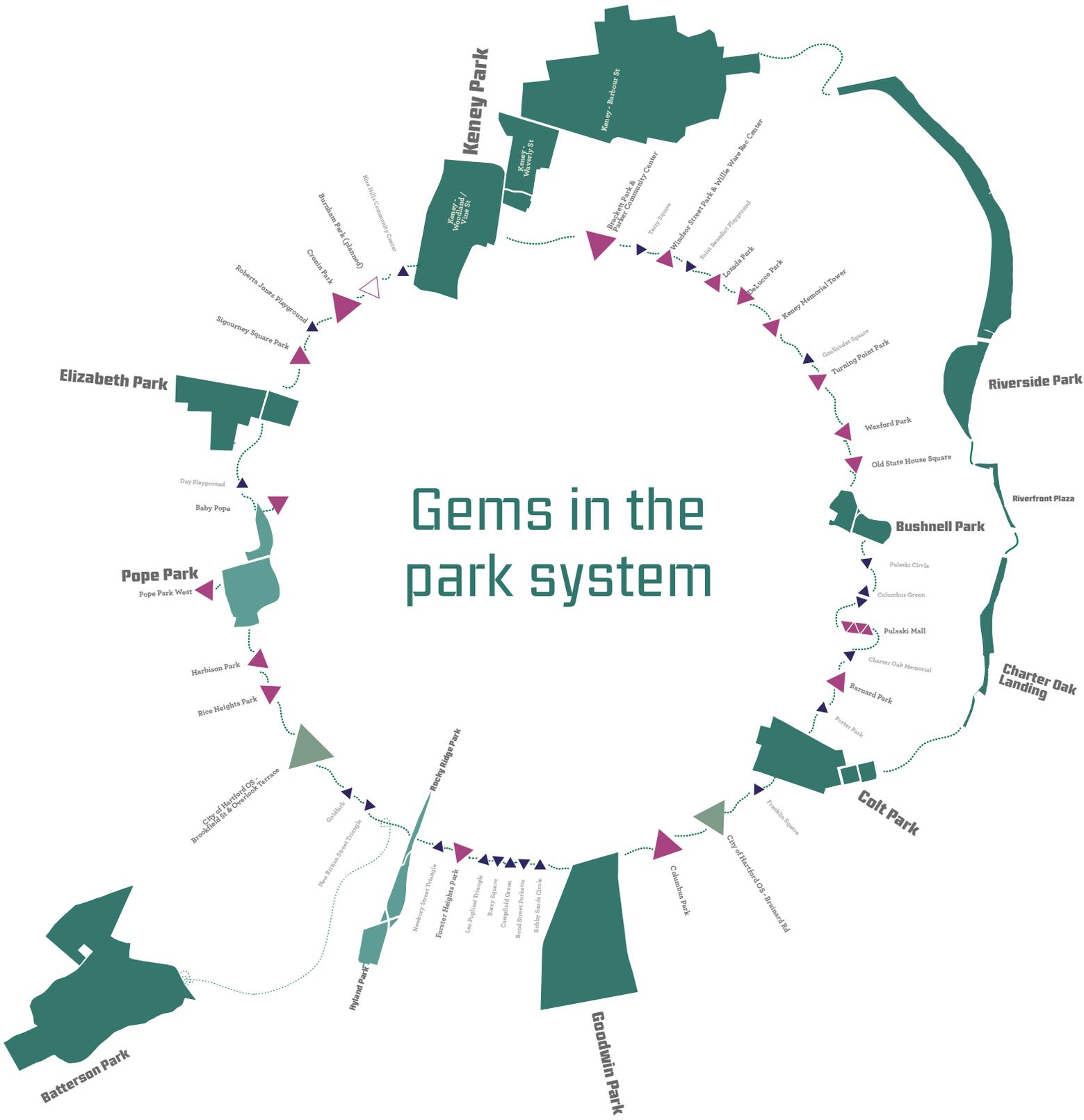
Capital City Parks Guide

The 2014 Capital City Parks Guide seeks to reposition the parks system as a connected network of high quality, diverse parks.

The City of Hartford's park system has all the ingredients to be a world class park system. With abundant acreage and a centuries-long history of park design, Hartford today benefits from a rich legacy of urban parks, ranging in size from small pocket parks to large parks that are a regional attraction for the city. Yet this abundance is also a challenge. Recent economic challenges have brought increasing difficulty for maintaining the system's vast acreage and highly utilized fields, for projecting a sense of safety to citizens, and for ensuring transparent communication of park offerings and events to the diverse community. The 2014 Capital City Parks Guide seeks to reposition the parks system as the connected network of high quality, diverse parks that was always envisioned, seeking ways to connect the parks and city, prioritize investments, and reduce maintenance burdens.

The Capital City Parks Guide is intended to provide the tools to help the city - and the community - nurture its park system over the coming decades. While the guide recommends physical design ideas, it gives equal value to strategies to foster partnerships and stewards of the system, generate revenue, and govern and sustain the plan and parks system, all with the goal of achieving more successes amid constrained resources. The responsibility for taking care of the system belongs to both the city departments and the community. This guiding document integrates all roles, in hopes that the Capital City Parks System can change existing patterns so that all are meaningful participants in the creation of a park system that honors its legacy, is safe, well-maintained, better connected, and accessible to all.

Gems in the park system



Capital City Parks Vision

Hartford’s Capital City Park System plays many roles within the city and region. Its future vision is multi-faceted and reflects the strengthening of key assets and improvements to long-flagging resources. Based on community feedback and the strength of the existing system, this guiding document is focused on three major goals, to:

1. Restore the Park System’s Legacy
2. Create a Connected System
3. Enhance the Network of Parks to Serve All Parts of the Community

These three goals will be accomplished through a systematic look at the parks system, the connective network of streets, paths, and sidewalks, and at operational and financial support.

Restore the Parks Legacy

Hartford owes its ample park acreage and promise for the future to a history of valuing urban open space. This legacy requires maintenance to protect its value. A high priority of the Parks Guide is to promote the historic nature of parks, ensuring that future improvements renew historic elements and complete connections between parks as originally envisioned.

Connected System

A connected “ring of parks” is part of the historic park vision. It is also critical to contemporary walkability and equitable access. The Parks Guide includes a

phased connectivity plan to enhance circulation within parks, create connections between parks and neighborhoods, and improve ecological links.

Community Wide Parks Network

The park system is diverse, ranging from hundreds of acres at Keney Park to small pocket parks. The Capital City Parks Vision must work for all the different park types. To clarify the future roles of each park, the Parks Guide organizes implementation by three major types:

- **City-wide Identity Parks:** Identity parks include large parks that are critical to Hartford’s historic legacy, to future revenue generation, and to staging and managing major public events. Bushnell Park, Keney Park, and Elizabeth Park are emblematic of Hartford’s identity parks, which are nurtured, revitalized, and maximized for revenue potential through this guiding document.
- **Neighborhood Parks:** Neighborhood parks provide local walkability, family amenities, and additional green space. Important projects for neighborhood parks are to reduce maintenance and create basic upgrades to amenities.
- **Other open spaces:** Beyond active parks, Hartford’s open space system also includes cemeteries, natural spaces, traffic triangles, and school yards. Collaboration and partnerships between these entities and the city will allow a more connected, robust system. Key goals are to enhance these partnerships, support ecological connections, and reduce maintenance.

Overview of the Planning Process

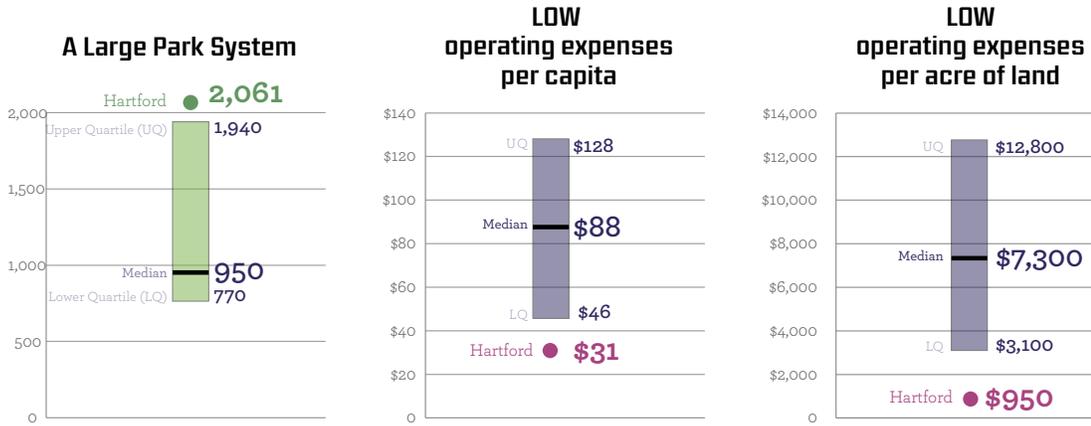
Achieving the Capital City Parks vision calls for a full team effort. To this end, the planning process included a steering committee and comprehensive outreach. The steering committee included representatives from Public Works and Development Services who met at key milestones within each phase of the process and provided guiding input. The planning process included three open, public meetings; a series of focus group discussions with the Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission (PRAC), “Friends” groups who advocate for individual parks, members of Neighborhood Revitalization Zone groups (NRZs), and other key stakeholders such as the Knox Foundation. Additional meetings were held with

City Departments, including the Board of Education, Department of Families, Youth, Children and Recreation, and Police Department. “MyHartford,” an interactive on-line survey, supplemented these in-person conversations. Throughout the conversations, improving maintenance emerged as the #1 priority for the park system. As the Parks Guide is implemented, the discussions that occurred as part of this process should continue into the future, expanding the network of partners caring for Hartford’s parks.



Participants offer ideas at the first public meeting in June 2013.

Assessing Current Needs



Data source: National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) PRORAGIS database; Hartford was compared to 28 park systems nation-wide with a population of 100,000 to 200,000

Hartford staff maintain more acres with less money than comparably sized cities.

Hartford has a diverse park system, with a particular abundance of regional parks. Overall, the system is appropriately sized for the city’s population trends; there is no need for additional acreage. As measured against national standards and peers, Hartford is doing well in the quantity of active recreation amenities. Baseball fields, basketball courts, playgrounds, swimming pools, and other amenities meet or exceed recommendations. However, the *quality* of open spaces and amenities is in need of improvement. In addition, social amenities, such as picnic shelters and casual gathering spaces, are lacking across the system.

Improved connections for bicycle and pedestrian access between parks is critical because forty percent of Hartford’s total park acreage is outside the city. Several large regional parks like Keney, Goodwin, and Elizabeth partially cross Hartford’s boundary,

and Batterson Park lies entirely in Farmington/New Britain. Access to Hartford’s largest parks is greatest in at the city’s edges, but population densities are highest in neighborhoods ringing downtown, where many residents do not own a vehicle.

Hartford’s parks provide important ecological functions as well, including protecting the city from flooding, reducing and filtering stormwater, and providing significant tree cover and habitat for wildlife. Keney, Goodwin, and Cedar Hill Cemetery in particular are home to many resident and migratory bird species in the area. The Connecticut River and North and South branches of the Park River also are important environmental corridors in the city. The concept plans and connectivity plan within the Parks Guide aim to better connect the parks and open spaces as a means to improve watershed quality.

Implementing the Vision



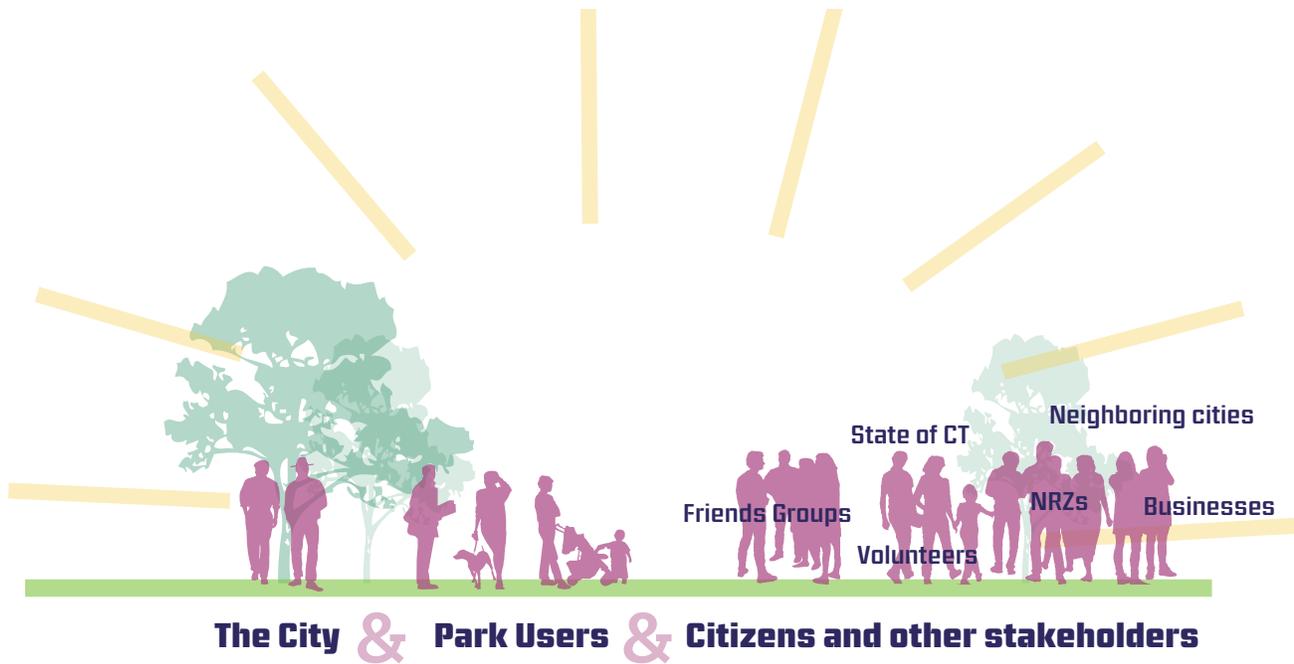
OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE

Decades of deferred maintenance and decreasing budgets have created significant challenges for Hartford's parks. These challenges have been well-documented in reports by the Trust for Public Land in 2007 and the Green Ribbon Task Force in 2011; yet, the issues persist today. Everyday maintenance is a challenge, and this is reflected in community feedback. On average, there are more than 60 acres of park space per park employee responsible for care. This is three to four times less than best practices across the county which suggest between 15 and 22 acres per staff. Fiscally, Hartford's parks operate with significantly smaller budgets than even the lowest quarter of comparable agencies nationwide. How can we restore the Capital City Parks System amidst operational and budgetary realities?

Positive changes are already underway. A Parks Maintenance Manual completed last year outlines standards, work scheduling, athletic field condition assessment, and renovation recommendations. A new position, Superintendent of the Department of Public Works, has already begun to increase training programs and reinstate standard maintenance practices that had not been done in many years. Building on this momentum, the Capitol City Parks Guide recommends growing the size of the parks work force incrementally, expanding existing partnerships, decreasing maintenance burdens through design, increasing revenue generation, and emphasizing appropriate behavior by park users.

WORKING TOGETHER FOR AN IMPROVED SYSTEM

Today, groups such as the Knox Foundation, Riverfront Recapture, and Friends Groups and



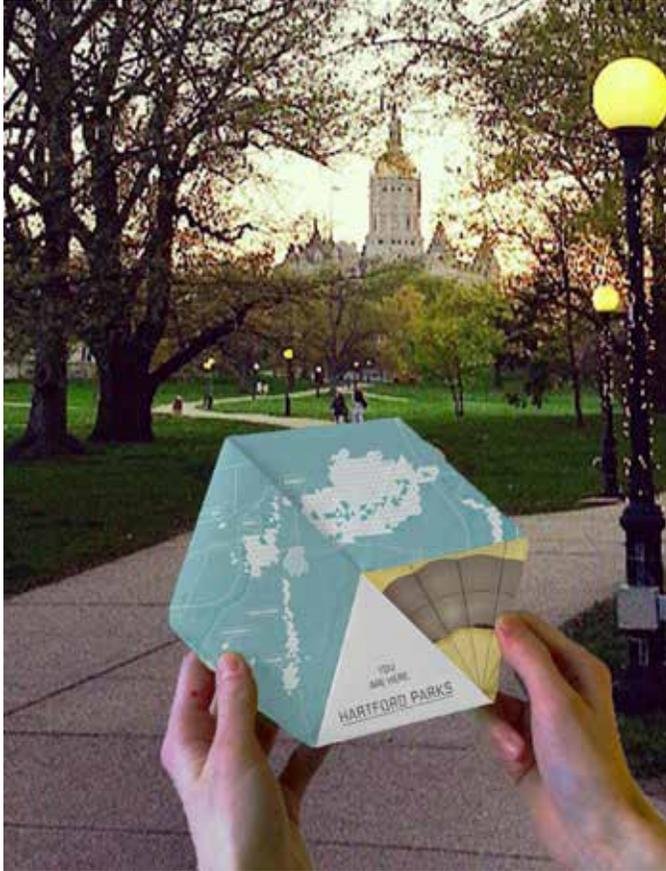
foundations contribute significantly to improvements in Hartford’s parks. To maximize and better coordinate their contributions, the city should formalize existing agreements, increase volunteer help, and expand partnerships, especially corporate support.

However, park users must also do their part to help improve Hartford’s parks. Changing the culture of park use and improving behavior will reduce additional maintenance efforts. The City will work alongside to provide rule enforcement, informational signage with a positive tone, and coordinated clean-up schedules. Despite shared tasks across multiple departments, the City of Hartford can present a single, unified point of contact for the public, improving user experience. Behind the scenes, different departments and divisions can ensure implementation of the Capital City Parks Guide, coordinate scheduling,

conduct park maintenance, organize programming, publicize events, and keep parks safe.

A FISCALLY SUSTAINABLE SYSTEM

Nationwide, cities are working to find ways to generate more revenue within parks and create a more self-sustaining system. For Hartford, a near term priority needs to be establishing more revenue-generating projects within the large “Identity Parks” of the system that can help support both those parks’ operations and other smaller parks. The City is currently undertaking a study of Hartford’s two golf courses. Golf course revenue is another opportunity for increasing operating income for the system. Revenue generation must also include a careful look at the current fee structure in Hartford’s parks. Hartford has historically not charged fees for park services or programs, such



Wayfinding and branding improvements, system maps, and color-coded bicycle routes will make the park system more accessible to all.

as summer camps and outdoor pool use. However, this is an extremely uncommon practice among peers and may not be tenable for Hartford to continue in the future. Fees can also reinforce the value of parks and programs, instituting a culture of respect and value. Scholarships, free nights, charging only non-residents, or implementing fees only for new services are options to ensure any changes in fee structure do not have the impact of excluding Hartford's residents from using the parks and services.

SPREADING THE WORD: MARKETING & BRANDING

In concert with physical upgrades, Hartford's park system is also in need of positive marketing.

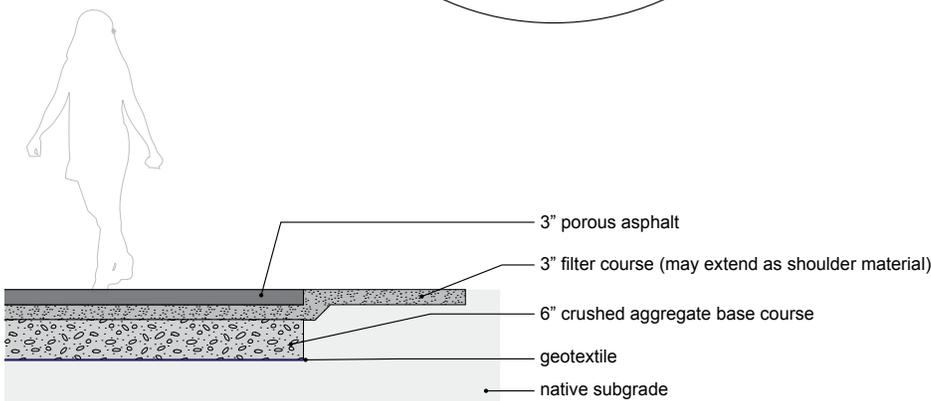
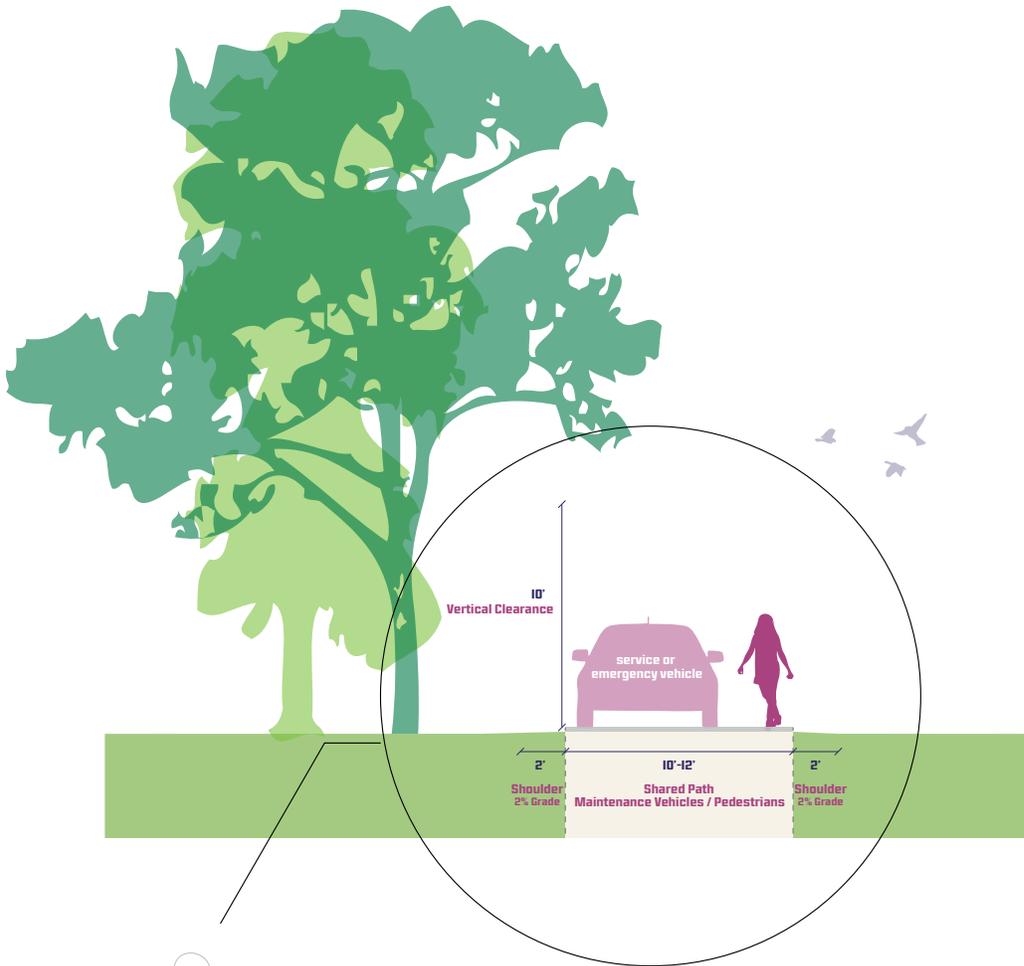
Improving perceptions will help increase park activity and contribute to an improved sense of safety at parks. With improved signage within and between parks; park system maps; a coordinated, easily accessible event calendar; and other marketing and branding efforts, the City can promote a consistent message of welcoming, safe, and attractive parks.

WHERE DO WE START?

Near-term capital projects should prioritize two goals: revenue generation as and reduction of maintenance burdens. For instance, implementing low mow zones on hillsides and in treed areas in parks throughout the system will help to reduce maintenance efforts. Other immediate improvements should include renewing and "bringing up the basics" in the parks – improving park furnishings, lighting, signage, and paths. Implementation of the connectivity plan can also begin immediately; Phase 1 includes bicycle lanes and sharrows that can be implemented now at a low cost and without significant modifications to existing traffic lanes or on-street parking. Improving bicycle and pedestrian connectivity was seen as a high priority for participants at public meetings. The city should also consider hiring a volunteer coordinator to maximize volunteer help and corporate support.

Specific projects and park-by-park improvements are outlined in more detail in the 10 year Action Plan and Park Concept Plans later in this manual. Operational recommendations are covered in the Partnerships and Governance chapters.

“Bringing Up the Basics”



Typical Porous Asphalt Detail*

Designated Service Pathways are shared-use paths designed to structurally accommodate service and emergency vehicles. Currently, vehicles drive across and park on grassy areas, damaging tree roots and creating erosion. These proposed pathways are an example of a small upgrade that will help improve parks.

* Typical detail shown. Exact design depends upon site and soil conditions, and will require geotechnical analysis.

CAPITAL CITY
PARKS GUIDE



Historic Legacy & Today's Setting

As Hartford continued to grow rapidly, nearly doubling in population from 1890 to 1900, it also prioritized expanding its park system.

Founded in 1636 on the banks of the Connecticut River, Hartford's earliest open spaces reflected practical needs of the fledgling city. The Ancient Burying Ground was created less than four years after Hartford's founding, and South Green (present day Barnard Park) was set aside in the early 1800s as a shared area for livestock grazing, a common practice in New England towns.

In the 19th century, Hartford grew rapidly and emerged as a cultural leader. The center of the insurance and arms industry and supporter of abolitionist and suffrage movements, Hartford was also on the forefront of public park thinking. Midcentury, Reverend Horace Bushnell suggested creating a new kind of public open space. Bushnell Park would be the nation's first voter-approved, publicly financed park. The city acquired a central parcel of land in the 1850s along the banks of the Park

River (then called the Little River) and hired Jacob Weidenmann to design a city park. Weidenmann's design included meandering paths, naturalistic plantings, and a series of bridges over the Park River; the main purposes of the park were formal social meetings, parading in carriages along the paths, and other passive recreation.

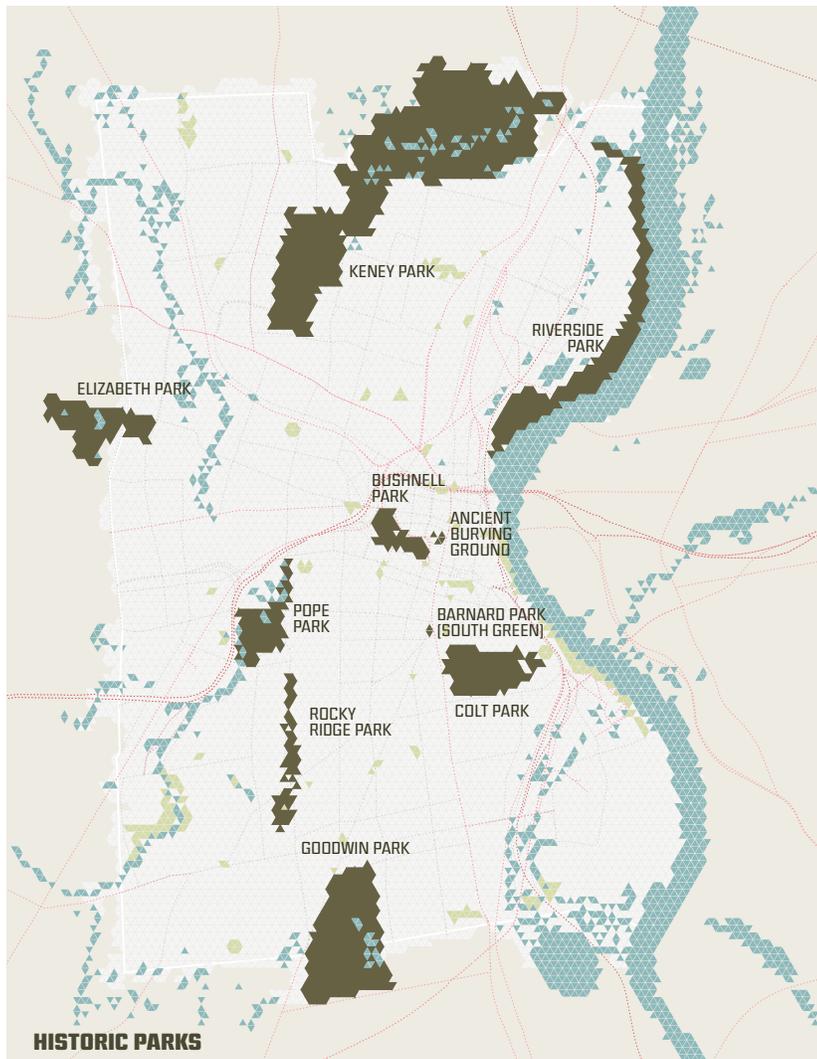
In the 1870s, Frederick Law Olmsted provided advice about the character and layout of the overall park system, planting the idea for a connected ring of parks. As Hartford continued to grow rapidly, nearly doubling in population from 1890 to 1900, it also prioritized expanding its park system. The decade from 1894-1905 were known as the "Rain of Parks" because public open space was added so plentifully during this time. Roughly 1,000 acres of new park space were added, primarily in large regional parks. Elizabeth, Pope, Keney, Goodwin, Riverside, Rocky

Ridge, and Colt all date to this era. Park designs reflected similar ideas to Bushnell – that parks were places for gathering in a naturalistic setting. Early photos show May Day celebrations with local school children in Goodwin and “calvary stunts” by mounted uniformed men surrounded by crowds of onlookers in Colt.

Frederick Law Olmsted’s influence continued through the involvement of his firm of Olmsted, Olmsted and Eliot, and later the Olmsted Brothers. The principal landscape architecture consultant in the early twentieth century, the firm was responsible for the design of many jewels in Hartford’s park system including Pope, Keney, Goodwin, and Riverside.

Park Superintendent Theodore Wirth also played an important role in the park system during this period, designing Colt, Rocky Ridge, and Elizabeth Park, including the first municipal Rose Garden in the US. The design of individual parks took precedence over the completion of the linking system of parkways, which was never completed as envisioned. Westbourne Parkway running from the southwestern corner of Keney gives a sense of the curving, tree-lined boulevards imagined for the city as a whole.

Following the “Rain of Parks,” park space in Hartford grew more slowly and incrementally. In contrast to the regional parks developed earlier, the early decades of the 1900s focused on smaller parks within walking



Historic Gems

distance of neighborhoods. Community playgrounds were a particular emphasis, with parks like George Day and Windsor St. (now home to Willie Ware Rec Center) added in the 1910s and 1920s.

The 1930s brought the Great Depression, and a surplus of inexpensive labor to help with park projects. Several large floods in the late 1930s prompted a shift in park design. The Park River was culverted through much of the city, and a more engineering focus dominated park decision-making. Economic changes in the second half of the 20th century resulted in demographic changes in the city. Population began trending downward in the 1950s, and funding for parks followed a similar trajectory. As city involvement slowed, “Friends Groups” formed to help with park maintenance, including the Friends of Elizabeth Park (today, the Elizabeth Park Conservancy) founded in 1977 and the Friends of Keney Park, founded in 1988.

The Friends Groups were (and continue to be) successful in making a difference at a few individual parks, but by 1992, the majority of the park system was in trouble. The master plan written that year concluded, “Hartford’s parks are in crisis. The decay of infrastructure, natural systems and built elements

is evident . . .” The master plan outlined a program of capital improvements totaling \$43.3 million to restore the system.

Widescale improvements were not undertaken, and in 1996, the Parks Department was abolished as an independent entity. Park maintenance was moved under the purview of the Department of Public Works (DPW), and recreation programming moved into the Department of Families, Children, Youth, and Recreation. After 1996, deferred maintenance continued to mount, and park funding and staffing continued to fall.

In the context of limited resources within the city, additional private groups continued to step forward. The renewal of the Connecticut River parks over several decades points to strategies of partnerships and revenue generation that could be replicated across the system. Riverfront Recapture was founded in 1981 and began working with the Connecticut Department of Transportation (ConnDOT) several years later to integrate riverfront access into its redesign of the I-91/I-84 interchange in downtown Hartford. Riverfront Plaza, one of the results of this partnership, was completed in 1999. 1998 marked two important milestones for Riverfront Recapture

Park uses have changed over the years. May Day celebration at Goodwin Park.



Image credit: Hartford History Center at Hartford Public Library

that demonstrated the importance of the river as a regional resource. Riverfront Recapture assumed management responsibility for the riverfront parks in both Hartford and East Hartford. In addition, the MDC, the region’s water and sewer authority, began providing day-to-day park maintenance and funding for “Riverfront Rangers” park rangers program. Since then, Riverfront Recapture has continued to expand its partnerships to support programming, capital improvements, and maintenance. Businesses, schools, City departments, and others help contribute to the parks’ success.

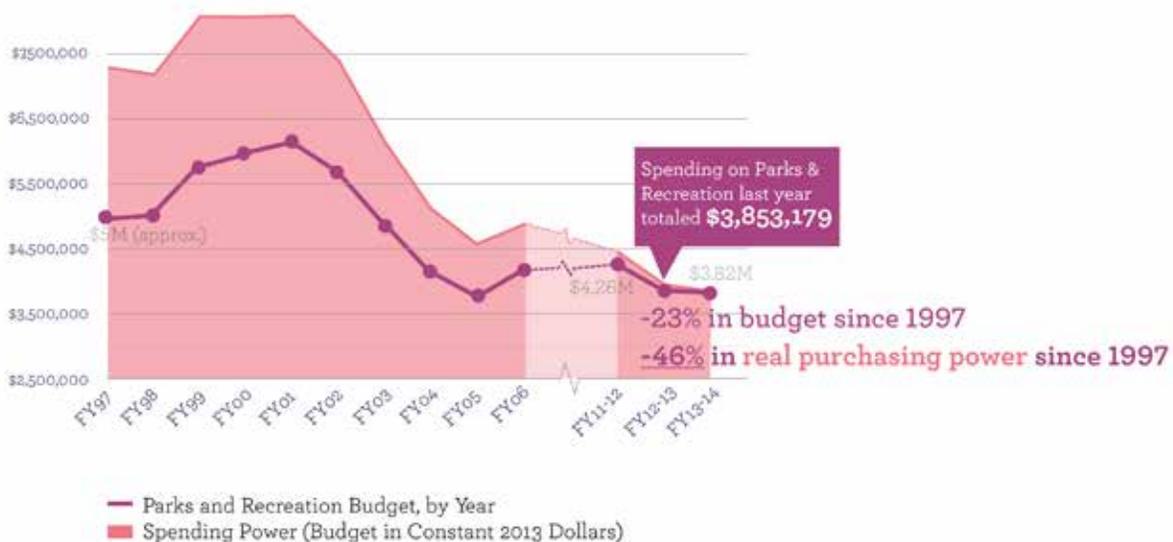
Unfortunately, little changed system-wide over the next fifteen years: reports by the Trust for Public Land in 2007 and the Green Ribbon Task Force in 2011 describe on-going, similar issues with park maintenance. “Sadly, Hartford parks have continued to decline,” writes the Green Ribbon Task Force. “The current staffing and funding levels fall significantly short of what is required to meet even the basic needs of the park system.” The report goes on to outlines

steps to improve the City’s parks and reverse the trend of decline.

Within Hartford, population has rebounded downtown over the past decade, and planned new developments could double downtown’s population within five years. Major planning efforts including iQuilt, the Intermodal Triangle Project, and Downtown North Plan have focused on improving cultural, open space, and multimodal transportation links in the heart of the city.

Today, signs of improvement in Hartford’s parks are starting to show as well, but much work still remains to be done. Significant progress has been made in some areas. The City has recently completed a Parks Maintenance Manual, which identifies standards, work scheduling, athletic field condition assessment, and renovation recommendations. Standardizing processes will help improve schedules, communication, and skillsets. A new position, Superintendent of the Department of Public

Trends in Hartford Park and Recreation Spending



Data: FY97-06 from TPL Report (2007); FY11-13 from recent budgets (?)

Works, has been dedicated to increasing training and reinstating standard maintenance practices that had not been done in many years. The City is also undertaking a separate study on golf course management.

These improvements will help address some of the maintenance issues, but without additional revenue, full renewal of Hartford's assets will be difficult. Compared to similar sized cities, Hartford's staff maintain more park acreage with significantly less funding. Improving efficiency can only go so far. Additional partnerships, formalization of existing relationships, and diverse revenue streams are urgently needed to renew Hartford's parks as a world-class system. Recent years have seen an increase in available funding for capital improvements. How can these improvements best be leveraged to create a more sustainable park system, fiscally and environmentally?

Parks Planning Context

Recent Plans

- 1992 Parks Master Plan
- 2007 Renewing a Historic Legacy (Trust for Public Land)
- 2010 "One City, One Plan"
- 2010 North Branch Park River Watershed Management Plan
- 2011 Hartford Parks Green Ribbon Task Force
- 2011 iQuilt
- various NRZ Plans

Shared Themes

- Rich historic legacy
- Maintenance
- Safety
- Need for improved connections
- Identity and wayfinding
- Departmental structure
- Multiple functions of open space, including recreation and environmental



Process & Engagement

Hartford's parks have great stewards beyond the city administration, such as Friends groups, non-profits, and advisory committees.

Improving Hartford Parks will require a team effort – from residents, to Friends Groups and other stakeholders, to the City staff. Accordingly, involving these groups in the planning process was critical. Feedback from public events and focus group meetings shaped the Parks Guide in multiple ways, ranging from overall principles, to near-term priorities, to details in the concept plans for individual parks. Overall, engagement included three public meetings, a series of focus group discussions, and meetings with City Departments, including the Board of Education and the Police Department. MyHartford, an online and paper survey distributed to the public, supplemented these in-person conversations.

In Hartford, responsibility for City parks and recreation services are shared among several departments. Public Works (DPW) is responsible for daily maintenance and capital improvements, while Development Services is managing this long term

planning and visioning process for the park system. At the same time, recreation services are handled within the Department of Families, Children Youth & Recreation. With these shared responsibilities, an interdepartmental Steering Committee was formed to manage the planning process, including representatives from Public Works and Development Services. The Steering Committee met at key milestones within each phase of the process, helping to shape the guide's ideas and the outreach strategy.

The Hartford parks also have great stewards beyond the City administration, such as Friends groups, non-profits, and advisory committees. Additional focus groups meetings were held with other stakeholders and groups, both within City administration and outside of it. These meetings helped the team understand opportunities, challenges, and what efforts were already underway in specific parks. Focus group conversations were a chance to hear more detailed

These repeating themes helped establish overall priorities and principles for the Capital City Parks Guide. In addition to these overall topics, detailed comments about specific parks or ideas were also helpful, especially in shaping park concept plans.

feedback from community members who know the parks most intimately. Focus groups included Friends Groups and Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee (PRAC) members, Neighborhood Revitalization Zone (NRZ) members, and riverfront and transportation stakeholders. The focus group meetings served a dual purpose, both to draw critical information for incorporation into the guide and to allow the disparate groups to come together, an opportunity that has not been common or formally arranged.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

Three public meetings were scheduled at key moments in the planning process to share progress with attendees and to obtain feedback. The **first meeting** in July, 2013, gave an introduction to the project and shared the findings from the Parks

Needs Assessment. Following this presentation, the 80 attendees divided up into smaller groups for discussion about connectivity, history/vision, events/programming, and park characteristics. Attendees jotted down their ideas, observations, and concerns on colorful triangles. In total, 339 notecards were collected at the meeting. Across these hundreds of comments, several themes emerged repeatedly:

- Increase publicity & marketing
- Improve basic maintenance
- Provide system-wide maps & signage
- Increase events, art, picnic opportunities, & paths, as well as information about these events
- Enhance connectivity between parks
- Think about implementation: partnerships, park rangers, and park commission



These repeating themes helped establish overall priorities and principles for the Capital City Parks Guide. In addition to these overall topics, detailed comments about specific parks or ideas were also helpful for the process, especially in shaping individual park concept plans. A complete list of feedback received at all public meetings is available in the appendix.

In October, 2013, residents returned to the Hartford Public Library for the **second public meeting**. The evening was an opportunity for the community to review the draft park vision, individual concept plans, revenue generation, and connectivity. Attendees conveyed excitement about the opportunities for improving Hartford's bicycle network as a quick win. Partnerships were another frequently discussed topic; attendees felt improving the parks needs to involve many groups, including schools and the Board of Education, volunteers, Friends Groups, the PRAC, and businesses. Many comments dealt with specific parks,

and these ideas helped in concept plan refinement. These suggestions were compared with current master plans or budgets, the existing parks inventory, and then along with feedback from Friends Groups, the PRAC, and DPW used to improve the park master plans. Golf course management and revenue potential was also mentioned several times.

Attendees braved wintry weather in early December, 2013, to attend the **final public meeting**, held in the Samuel Valentin Arroyo Recreation Center in Pope Park. The focus of this meeting was implementation: how to make the parks vision a reality. Following the meeting, attendees were asked to provide feedback by listing their top 3 priorities or writing anything that was missing. Most frequently mentioned top priorities included implementing the bicycle connectivity plan and addressing maintenance (including facility maintenance). Top priorities mentioned multiple times included marketing, programming, and expanding partnerships. Other high priorities

The survey confirmed maintenance is the #1 priority for the community. Eighty six percent of residents felt that maintenance should be a top priority for the park system over the next three to five years.

included rule enforcement, improving the health of park water bodies and ecosystems (and educating children), and improving inter-departmental coordination.

Park concept plans were finalized after examining comments about park concepts from the last public meeting and final reviews with DPW, Development Services, and Friends Groups.

MY HARTFORD: PARKS SURVEY

In addition to these structured meetings, a public survey provided additional data. The MyHartford survey was available online from July through December, 2013, and paper copies were distributed at EnvisionFest, several NRZ meetings, and throughout the community at key gathering spots. The online version also included an optional mapping component. In all, more than 250 residents participated in the survey, with significant

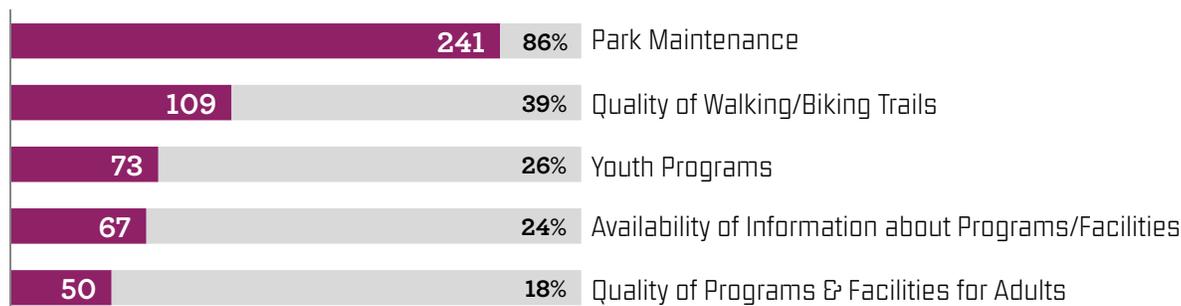
representation from Downtown and West End neighborhoods. Families with children and northern and southern neighborhoods were underrepresented in the survey, relative to Hartford’s overall population. Twenty-seven percent of respondents lived outside of Hartford, reinforcing the regional importance of Hartford’s park system, especially its large, regional parks like Bushnell and Elizabeth.

The goals of this survey were to learn about the community’s:

- Satisfaction with current park system and recreation offerings
- Barriers to park use and recreation participation
- Current park use activities
- Future priorities
- Existing conditions and ideas for specific parks (map activity)
- Circulation patterns (map activity)

Top Near-Term Priorities for Park System

Which of the following Parks and Recreation services do you believe require the most support in the next three to five years? (Top 5 shown)



Park Perceptions from MyHartford

Would love to know more about [Keney] - don't ever hear about it as a downtown employee

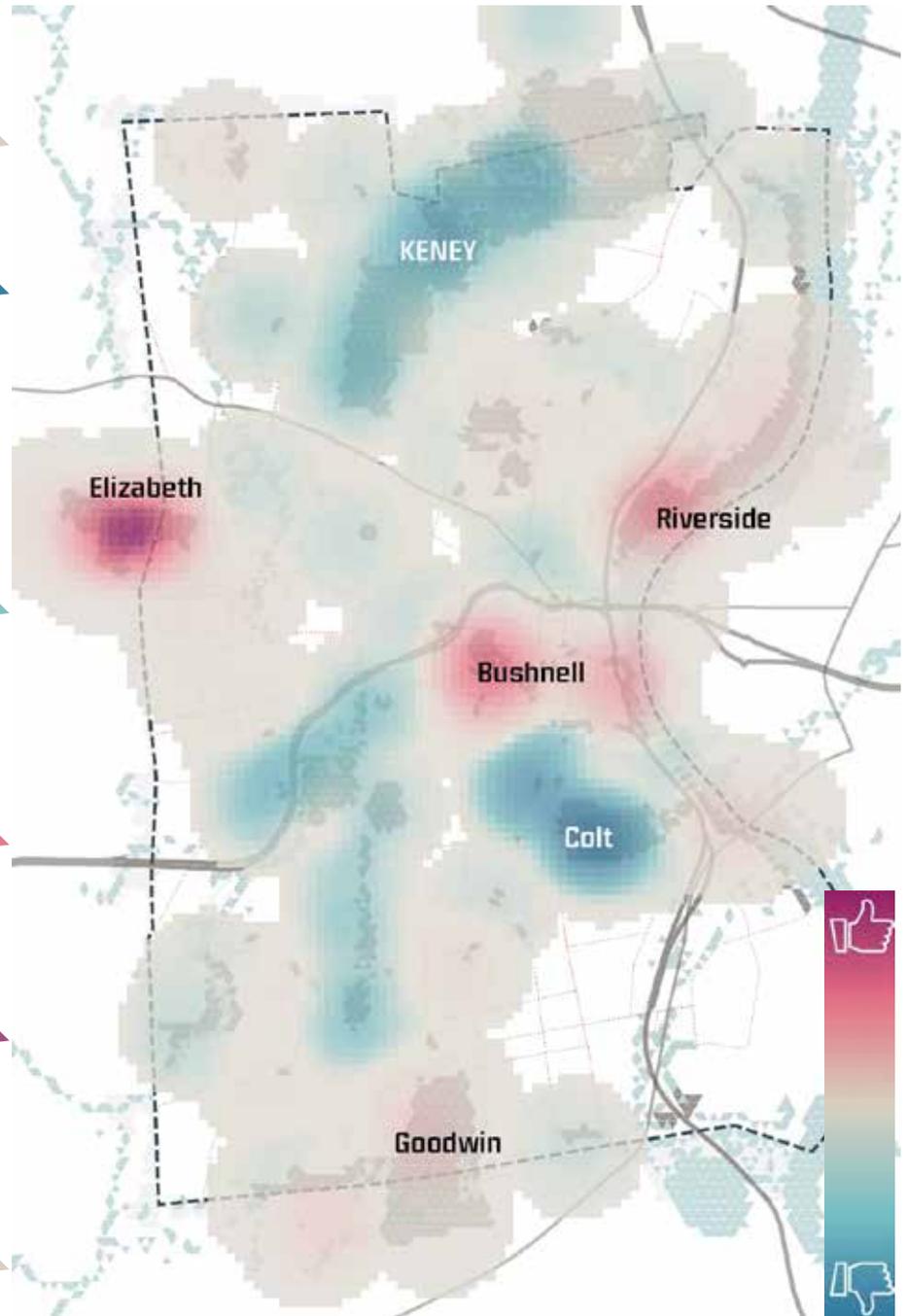
[Keney Park] has a reputation of being unsafe.

I personally do not visit [Colt] park. Locals do not speak highly to me about this park although I find a lot of young professionals from neighboring towns tend to use this space frequently to host athletic events.

The views of Downtown from [Colt] park are great. I am not sure too many people know about all the playing fields here.

Elizabeth] is a great park. Mostly because people think it's a great park.

I love [Bushnell] park but we need more litter collection and clean up. It took way too long for the pond to get fixed.



The survey confirmed maintenance is the #1 priority for the community. Eighty six percent of residents felt that maintenance should be a top priority for the park system over the next three to five years. Creation of additional walking trails was a distant second (less than 40%) Respondents enjoy visiting parks for a wide range of reasons, particularly passive recreation and community events. Walking was the top activity survey respondents enjoyed doing in parks (85%), and attending events, passive activities, and enjoying nature also ranked high. Sports and recreation were less frequently mentioned, but this may be more of a reflection of respondent demographics than city-wide demand for fewer active recreation opportunities.

For respondents who reported not participating in

recreation programs or visiting parks in the past, the most common barriers to participation were a lack of information about parks and recreation services (35%) and poor park maintenance (34%). Fees were only cited by 1% of respondents as a reason for non-participation (the least frequently selected barrier). Currently, people are most likely to hear about parks and recreation through word of mouth or the newspaper.

The mapping component of the online survey asked respondents to share their opinions about Hartford’s parks. By dragging and dropping an icon a park, respondents could show which parks they enjoyed or which ones they felt needed more attention. After an icon was dropped, respondents had the opportunity

Why haven't you participated?

If you have not participated or visited a program or park, why not? Please check all that apply.

	Percent of Respondents
I don't know what parks and recreation services are provided by the City of Hartford	35%
Parks are not well maintained	34%
Recreation programs I am interested in are not offered	23%
I don't feel safe in the parks	22%
I use other providers of park and recreation services	20%
Parks are not convenient to the location of my house	15%
I do not know where parks are located	6%
Too difficult to register for programs, events and rentals	4%
Fees are too expensive	1%
Other, please explain	20%

to write more detailed comments. The map tool also allowed people to draw how they traveled to the parks – by bicycle, car, public transit, or on foot. More than 800 separate icons and nearly 300 paths were collected in total.

Key themes that emerged from mapping comments and analysis included:

- Reputations and perception matter
- Visibility/marketing/advertising are lacking
- Safety is perceived as a major concern for several large parks in the city (especially Pope, Colt, and Keney)
- More maintenance is desired, even for parks that people generally love

The MyHartford survey results provided detailed comments, showed common mobility patterns, and revealed interesting patterns in overall park perception. When asked about the system as a whole in the survey, respondents reported moderate satisfaction with park maintenance; however, the mapping tool showed opinions about individual parks vary widely. Some parks like Elizabeth, Bushnell, and the riverfront parks are viewed positively overall by the community, although improved maintenance is needed. On the other hand, Pope, Colt, and Keney suffer from poor reputations. Not every comment about Pope, Colt, or Keney was negative, but there were significantly more comments reflecting concerns

than praising positive aspects. Comments imply that negative impressions of these parks proliferate, while positive aspects (which are very real) tend to be less well known.

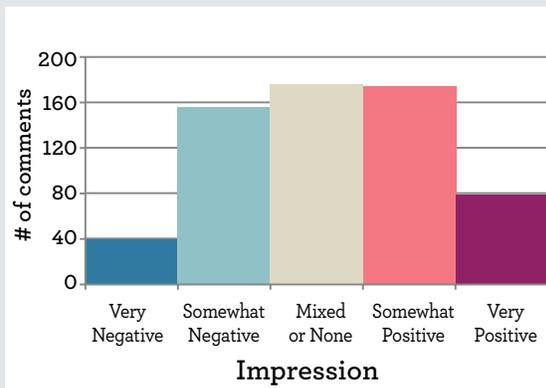
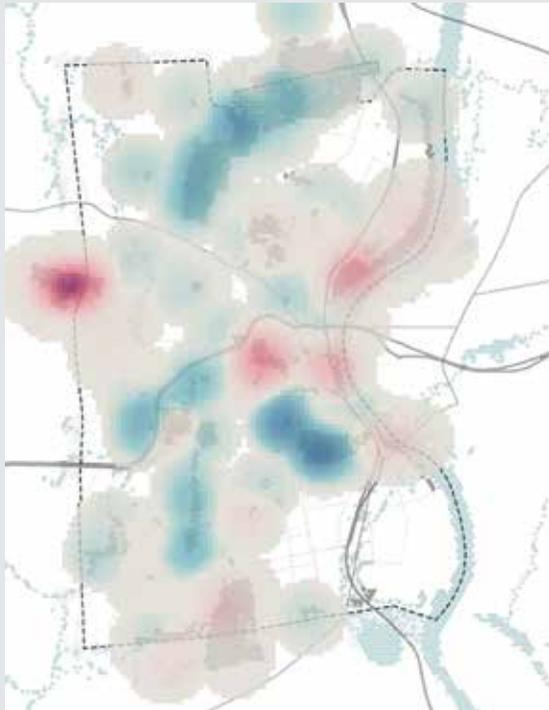
Perceptions of safety and park reputations play real roles in decisions to visit parks, especially because people most frequently hear about parks from friends and neighbors. Visibility, marketing, and advertising are lacking for most of the park system. Comments refer to several different parks as “hidden gems.”

Feedback from the survey influenced park concept plans, overall park system priorities, and other aspects of this guiding document.

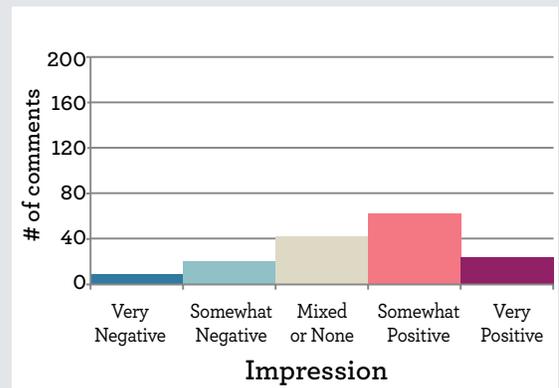
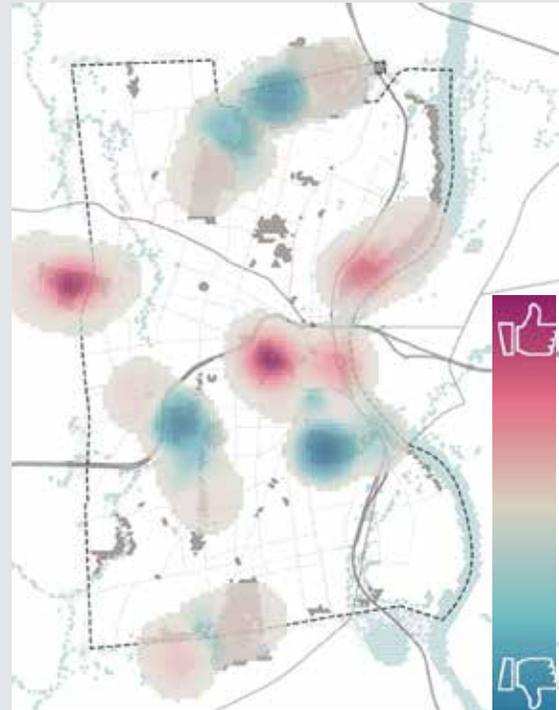
How does home location influence perceptions?

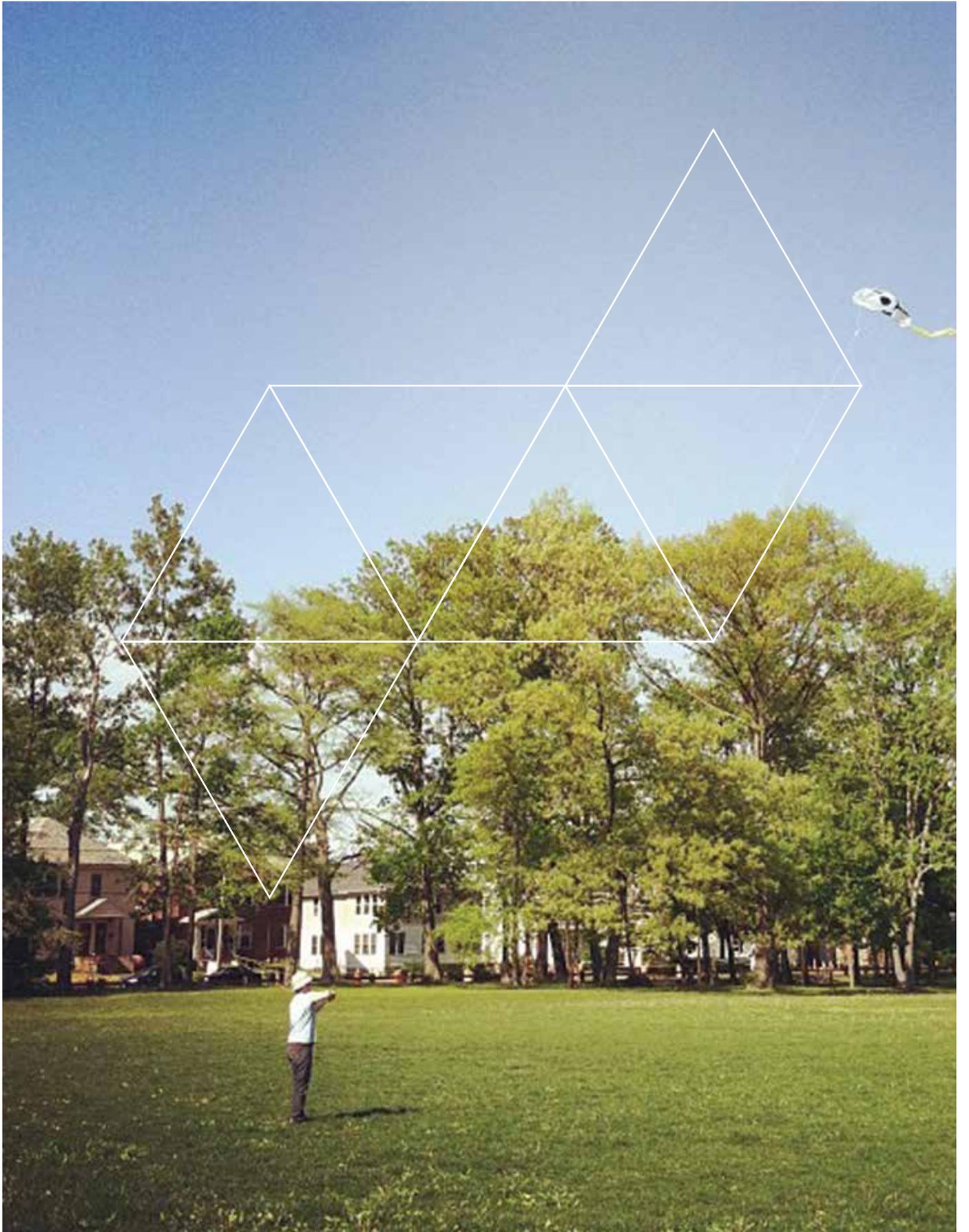
- Generally, the same parks (Elizabeth, Bushnell, and CT River Parks) are viewed well by residents and non-residents.
- Impressions by non-residents are limited to a few of the larger parks; Hartford residents unsurprisingly have more nuanced views of Hartford's park system.
- Non-residents are more likely to have positive views of Hartford's parks than Hartford residents.

Impressions by Hartford Residents



Impressions by Non-Hartford Residents





Meeting Community Needs

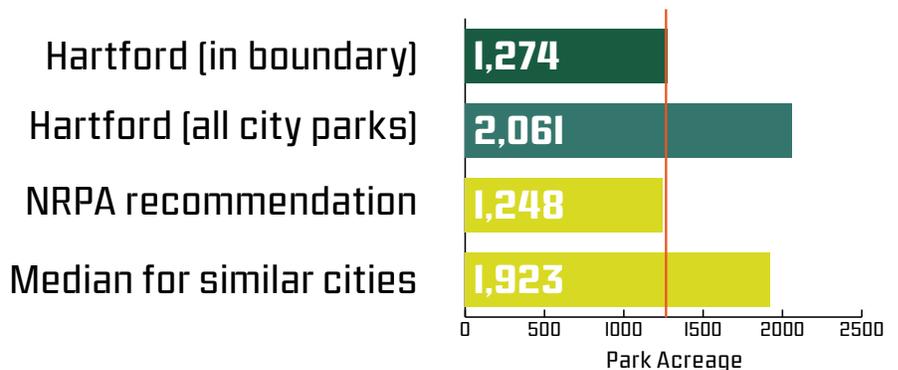
Hartford's Park System is appropriately sized for the city's population, but the quality of open spaces and amenities is in need of improvement.

The Park Needs Assessment helps identify key issues system-wide; its goal is to determine how well the current park system meets the needs of the community. The Needs Assessment asks and answers the following key questions:

- Is there enough park space overall?
- Is it distributed appropriately across the city? In different kinds of parks?
- Does the system offer the right amenities? Are these amenities functional, well-maintained, and well-distributed across the city?

OVERALL PARK SYSTEM QUALITY

The City of Hartford maintains approximately 2,000 acres of park space overall, including 1,275 within the city. Comparisons with national standards and other cities suggest that Hartford has ample park space to meet the needs of its community and to have a high quality park system. National Park and Recreation Association (NRPA) standards recommend that a city of Hartford's population should have about 1,250 acres of parks, and Hartford has 1,275 acres within its boundary alone, and operates nearly 2,000 acres. Compared to other cities, Hartford's park system is roughly average size. If population size and service



Assessment Methodology

Parks Inventory

An inventory of 2013 Parks data was created and updated through consultations with Client, site visits, GIS and other data. Includes 61 total park and open spaces, designated by Client

Parks Classification

Parks were classified into categories of mini-parks, neighborhood parks, community parks, regional parks, special use (natural areas, golf courses) parks, based on park size and utility to the community. Additional open spaces, such as urban agriculture or school yards, were mapped for future opportunities and partnership value.

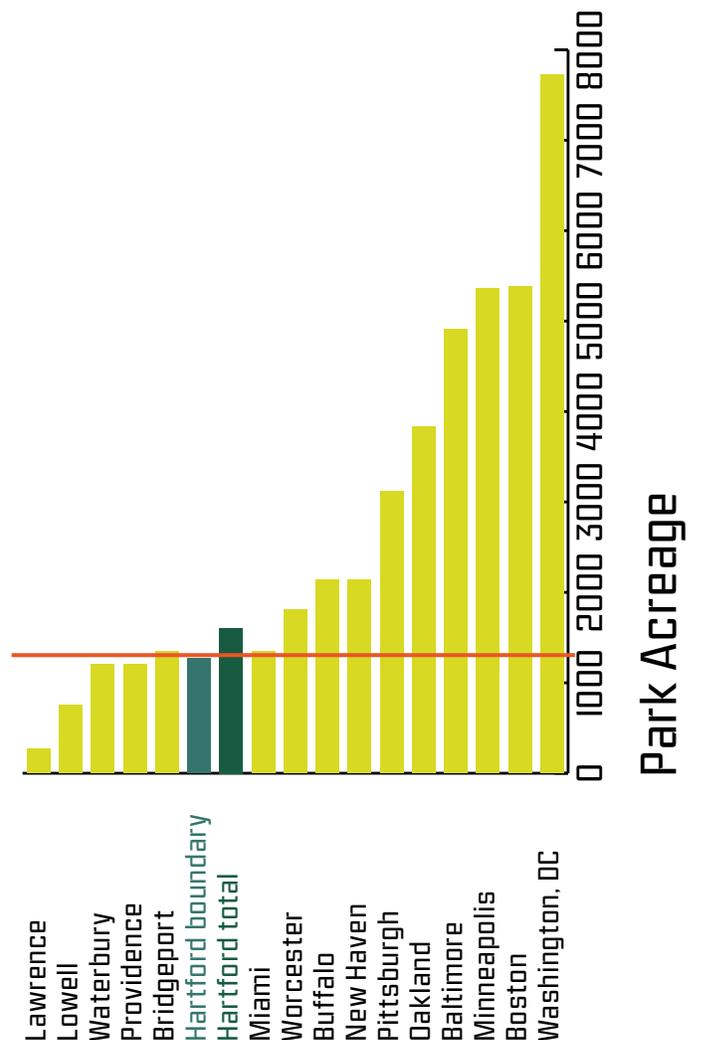
System Benchmarking

System-wide, park acreage and amount of different park types were benchmarked against peer cities (similar population) and aspirant, large systems nationally.

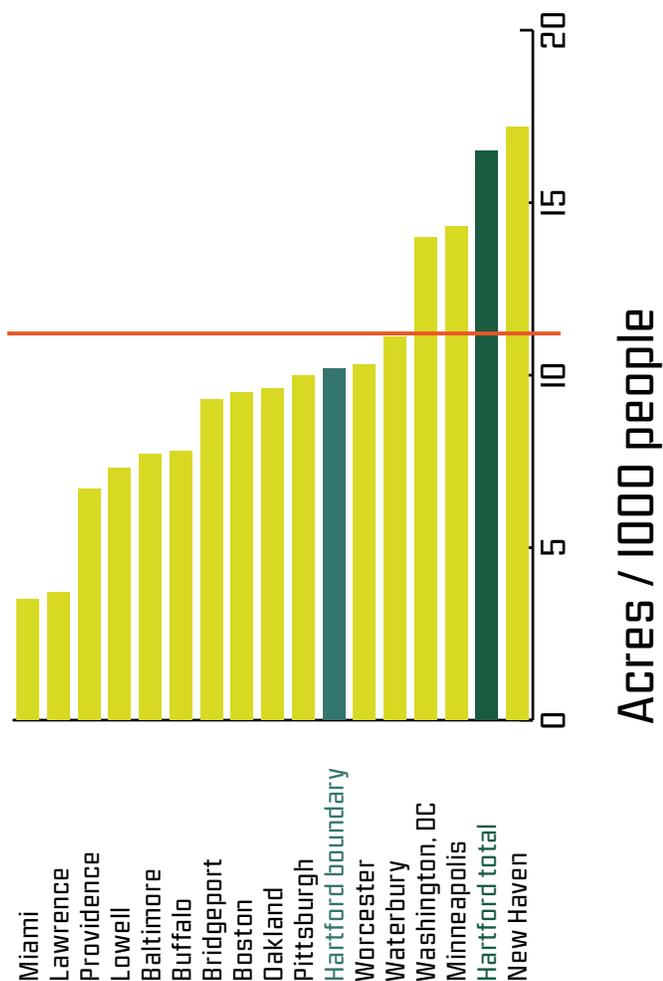
Park Assessment

Park types were compared against National Park and Recreation Association (NRPA) national standards, Park and Recreation Operating Ratio and Geographic Information System (PRORAGIS), and recommendations by consultant team to suggest achievements or deficits within the system.

Park Acreage by City



Acres/1,000 people by City

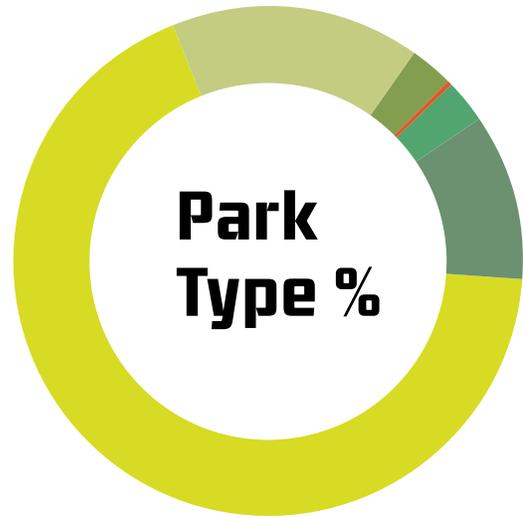


per resident is taken into account, Hartford’s total system ranks among the best in terms of park acres per thousand residents. In a comparison to peers and aspirants, Hartford ranks second to only New Haven and better than Boston, Bridgeport, and Pittsburgh.

In terms of size, Hartford is doing well. However, the distribution of the parks across – and outside – the city raises questions of access. Forty percent of Hartford’s total park acreage is outside the city. Several large regional parks like Keney, Goodwin, and Elizabeth partially cross Hartford’s boundary, and Batterson Park lies entirely in Farmington/New Britain. Access to the city’s largest parks is greatest in at the city’s edges, but population densities are highest in the neighborhoods ringing downtown. Lower rates of vehicle ownership in these neighborhoods hinder access to open space in other parts of the city by car.

TYPES OF PARKS

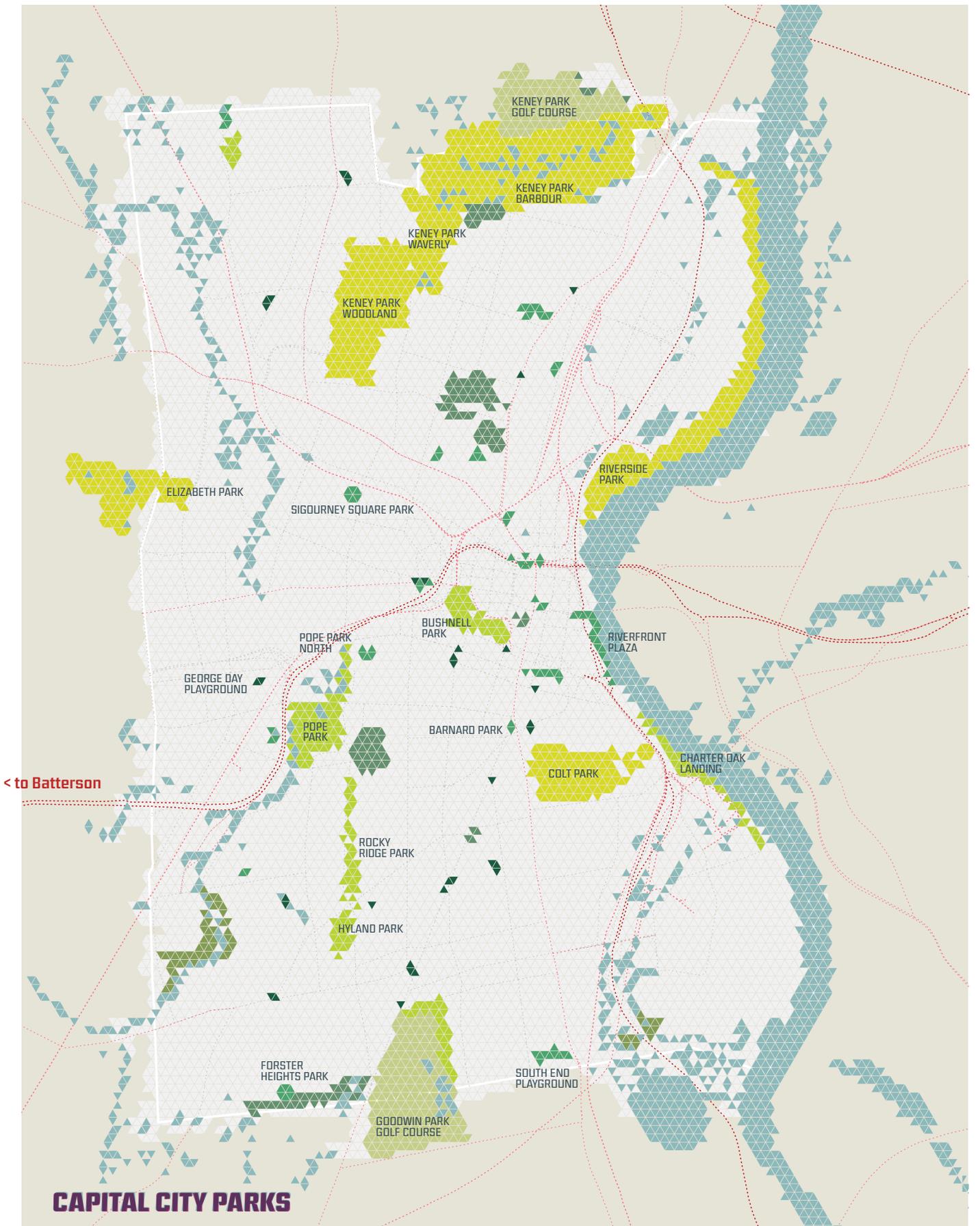
Not all acres of park are created equal; different types of parks provide different kinds of benefits to residents. Neighborhood playgrounds like Forster Heights function differently than large regional parks like Keney. Cities need to provide sufficient park acreage overall to residents, and they also need to make sure it is distributed across a range of different kinds of parks. Park types are typically divided into 5 major categories: mini-parks (<1 acre), neighborhood parks (1-10 acres), community parks (10-100 acres), regional parks (100 or more acres), and special use parks like golf courses and natural areas (any size). Park size is the primary classification method because it typically relates to park function, service radius, and amenities. National standards recommend how many acres of each type of park are needed in a city.



Not all acres of park are created equal; different types of parks provide different kinds of benefits to residents. Neighborhood playgrounds like Forster Heights function differently than large regional parks like Keney.

Regional	68%
Special Use - Golf	16%
Special Use - Natural	3%
Mini-Park	<1%
Neighborhood	3%
Community	11%





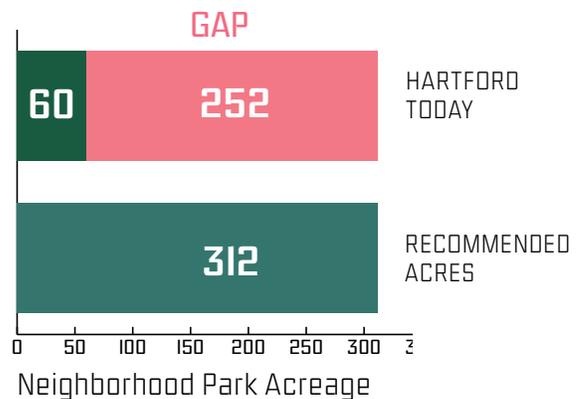
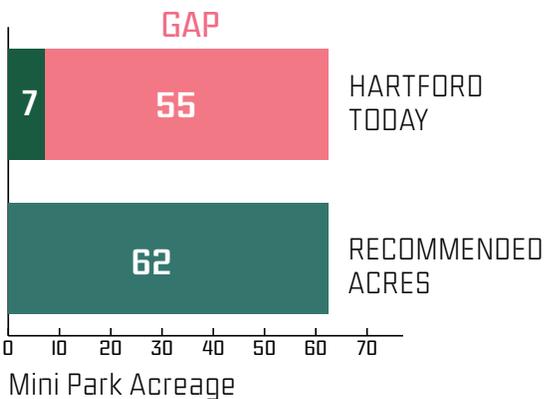
Park Types

Mini parks (1 acre or less)

- Existing: 7 acres total = 0.1 acres per 1,000 residents
- Recommended: 0.5 acres per 1,000 residents
- Address limited, unique, or isolated recreation needs
- Can complement neighborhood parks in dense, urban areas
- Amenities typically include: Tot lots, picnic tables, or passive uses (public art, gathering spaces, or overlooks)
- Distributed across city
- Highest concentration immediately south of downtown, including multiple monuments

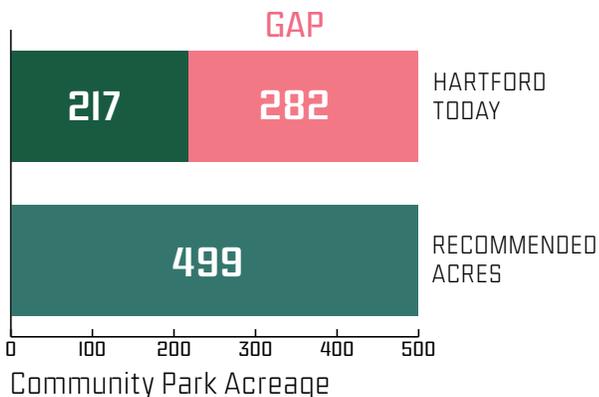
Neighborhood Parks (1-10 acres)

- Existing: 60 acres total = 0.5 acres per 1,000 residents
- Recommended: 2.5 acres per 1,000 residents
- Focal point of a neighborhood with family activities, walkable from home
- Amenities typically include: Playgrounds, picnic tables, shelters, sports courts / fields, lawns, skate parks, volleyball, horseshoe pits, bocce, restrooms
- Parks in this size in Hartford include traditional neighborhood parks, as well as historic open spaces like Pulaski Mall and Keney Memorial Tower
- Greatest concentration in central Hartford, in and around downtown
- Interstates and rail lines block access to parks from western neighborhoods, especially Parkville
- Severe shortage of neighborhood park acreage compared to national standards



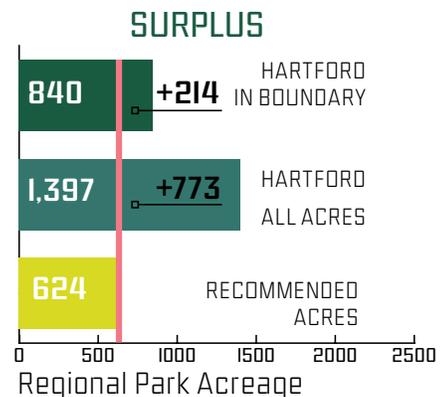
Community Parks (10-100 acres)

- Existing: 217 acres total = 1.7 acres per 1,000 residents
- Recommended: 4.0 acres per 1,000 residents
- Meet broad community recreation needs, preserve unique landscapes, and contribute to a connected system
- Amenities typically include: Maintenance areas, playgrounds, picnicking, restrooms, concession, small centers, amphitheaters, pavilions, swimming beaches and pools, water features, trails
- All community parks except Cronin Park are located south of I-84
- Only about half of recommended acreage for community parks exists
- Neighborhoods to the west lack access to community parks
- However, regional parks like Keney currently fulfill similar recreation needs to community parks and serve a more local population
- Bushnell's size places it within the community parks category, but it functions as a regional park, drawing visits from outside the city



Regional Parks (more than 100 acres)

- Existing: 840 acres in Hartford; 1,397 acres in total system = 6.7 in Hartford [11.2 total] acres per 1,000 residents
- Recommended: 4.0 acres per 1,000 residents
- Serve broad spectrum of regional recreation needs, require partnerships, and substantial funding
- Destination activities: boating, hiking, fishing, and other uses.
- Distributed at perimeter of city or beyond (Batterson)
- Hartford has a surplus of these largest parks, almost twice the recommended acreage when all parks are included; this additional acreage can help compensate for shortages of smaller parks in adjacent areas of the city
- Regional parks usually draw residents from a larger area



Special Use Parks

- Include golf courses and natural areas
- Located at northern and southern perimeter of Hartford
- Walkability is currently less important for these areas
- Golf courses are typically accessed via cars, and most natural areas are largely inaccessible

Special Use Parks In Hartford

- 150 acres in Hartford; 380 acres in total
- 1.2 [3 total] acres per 1,000 residents
- No standard for total acreage exists for these types of parks

Beyond Parks

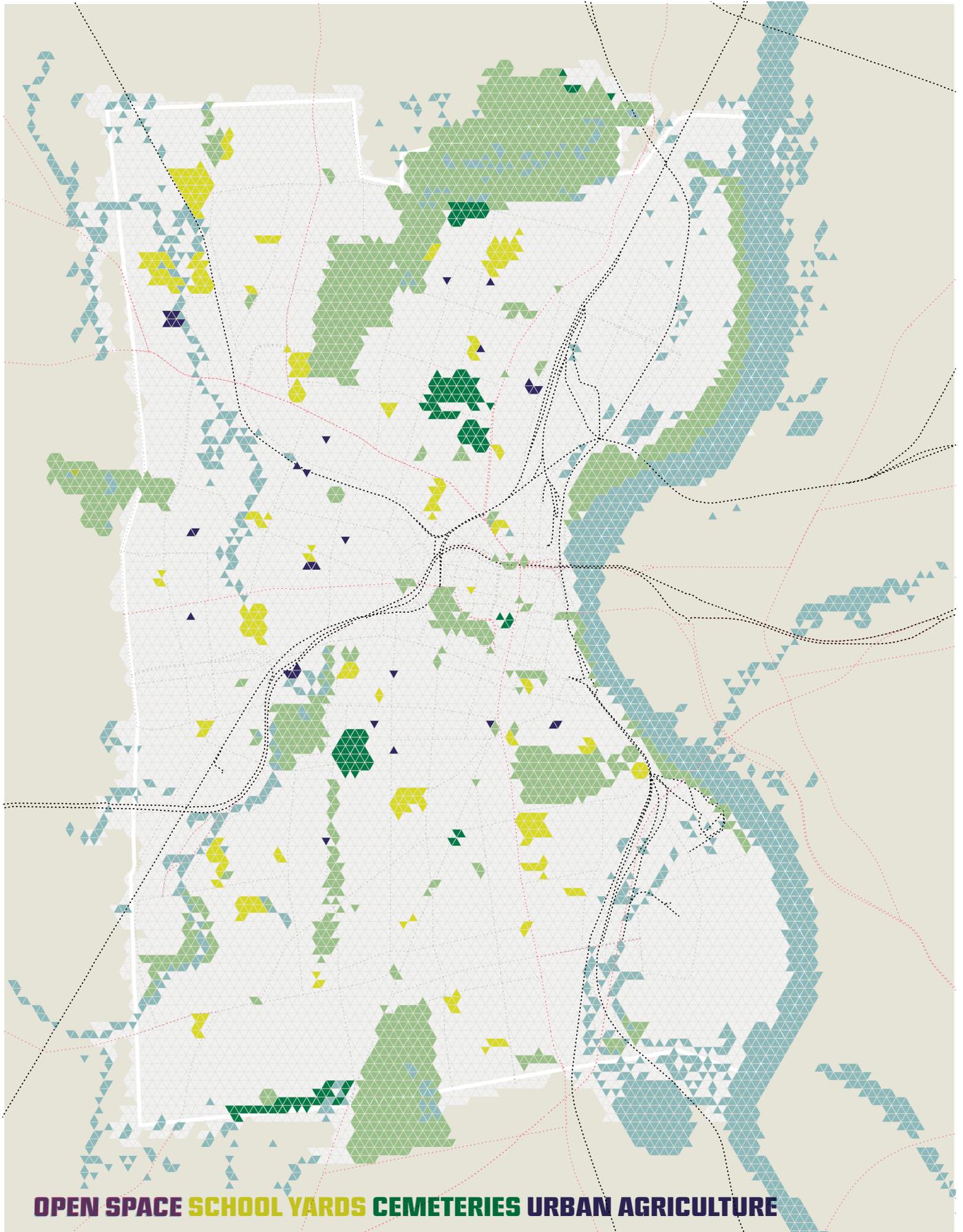
Parks are not the only “open spaces” in Hartford. School grounds, cemeteries, community gardens and other urban agriculture sites, and even some vacant lots provide important recreation, connective, ecological, and health benefits for Hartford. Together, all these open spaces can create a robust, diverse network for Hartford’s residents.

Other Types of Open Space In Hartford

- 173 acres of cemeteries
- 20+ urban agriculture sites
- 43 school grounds (K-12)

Key Park Type Findings of the Needs Assessment

- Hartford has a diverse park system, with a particular abundance of regional parks.
- Community and neighborhood parks fall below national standard recommendations, but the surplus of regional park acreage can compensate.
- Parks function differently in Hartford than is typical: Hartford has regional parks that function like community parks, and community-size parks that are regional attractions.
- Bicycle and pedestrian links are important parts of the park system, so people can access all kinds of parks and amenities.

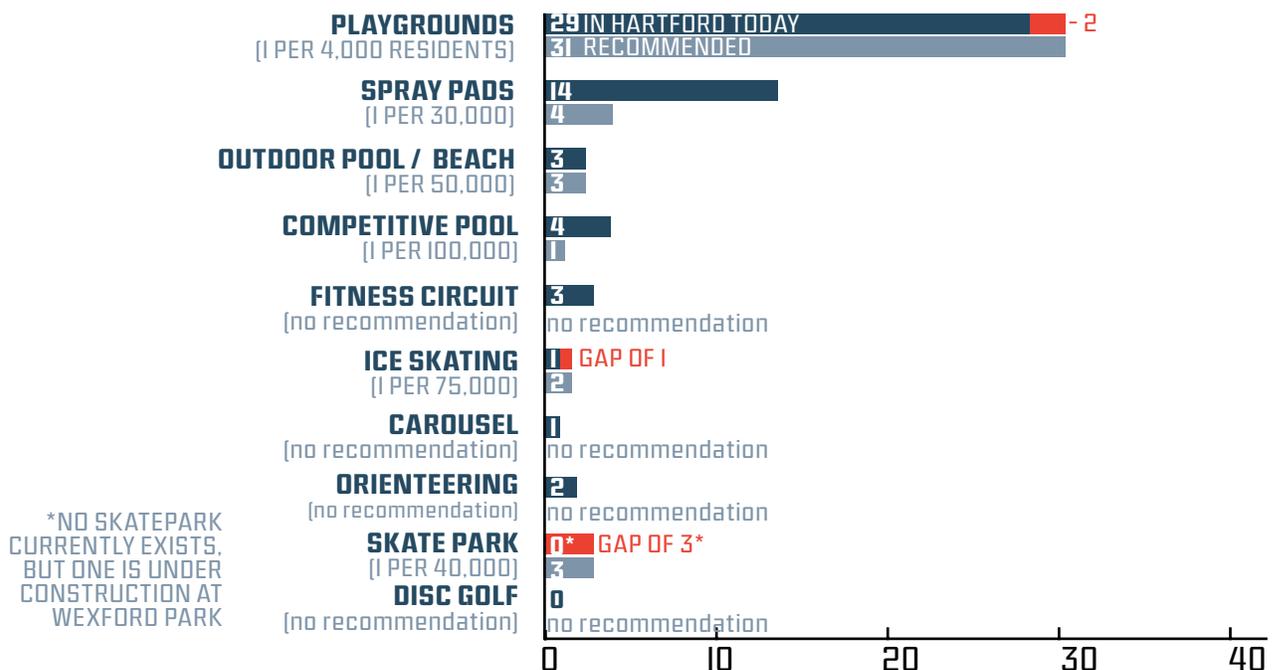


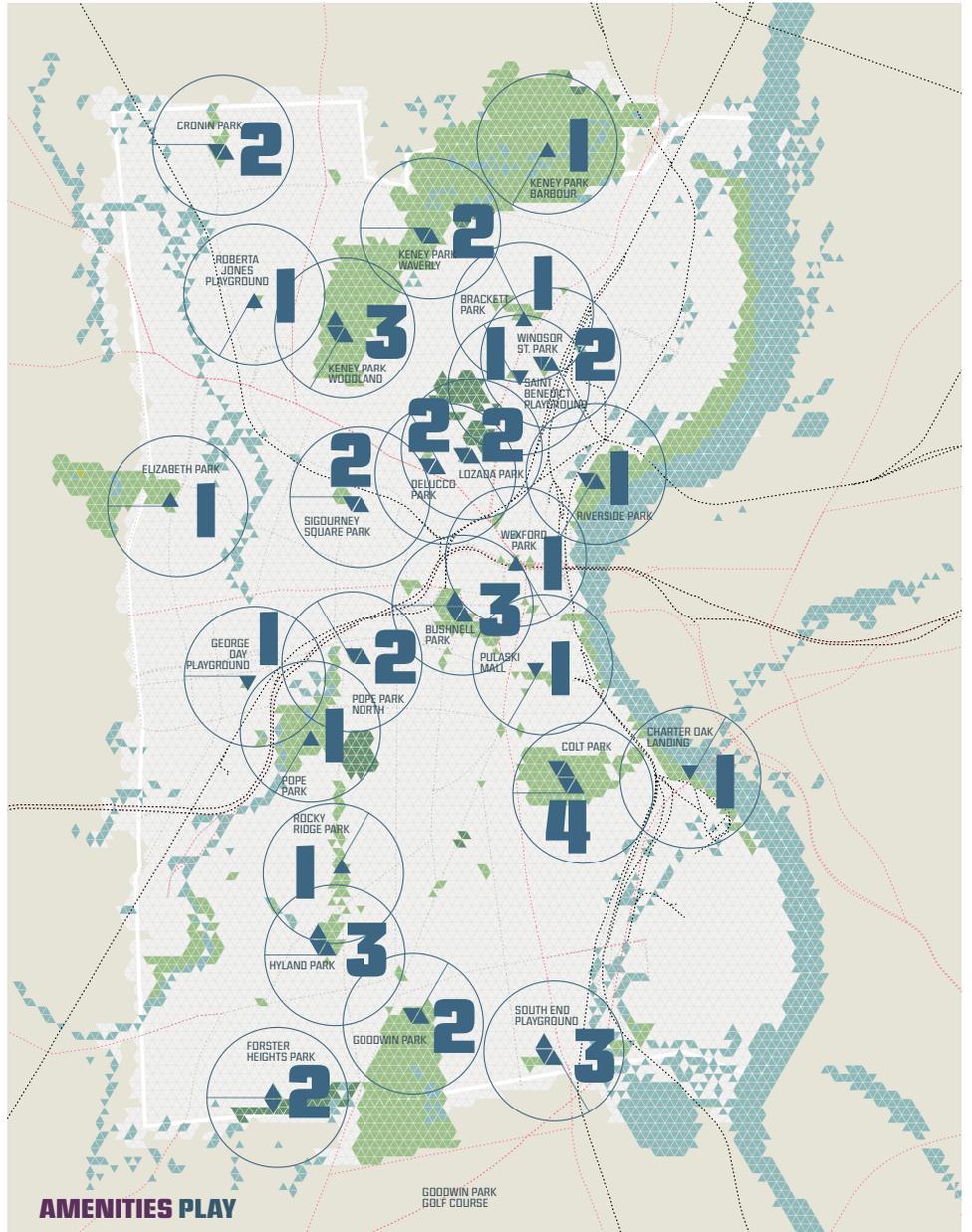
PARK SYSTEM AMENITIES

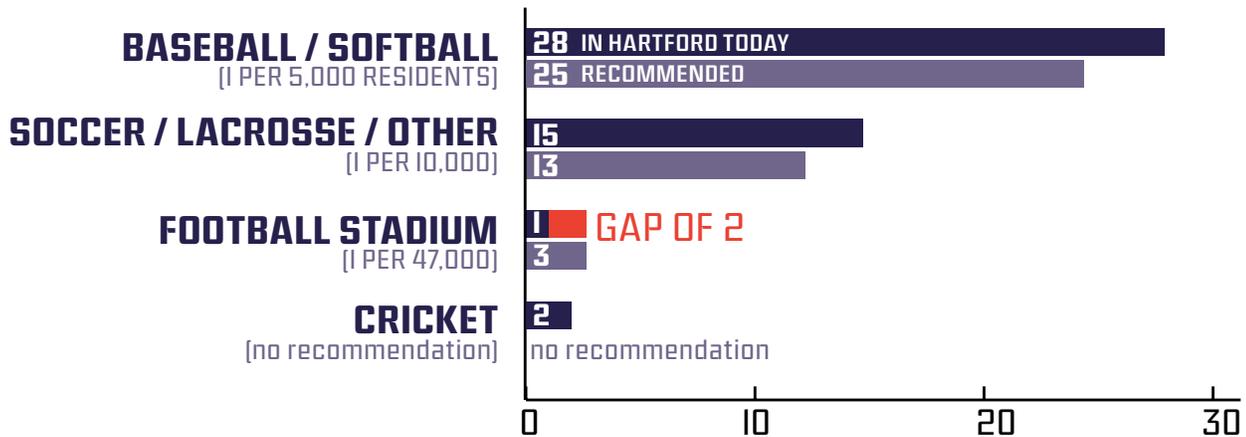
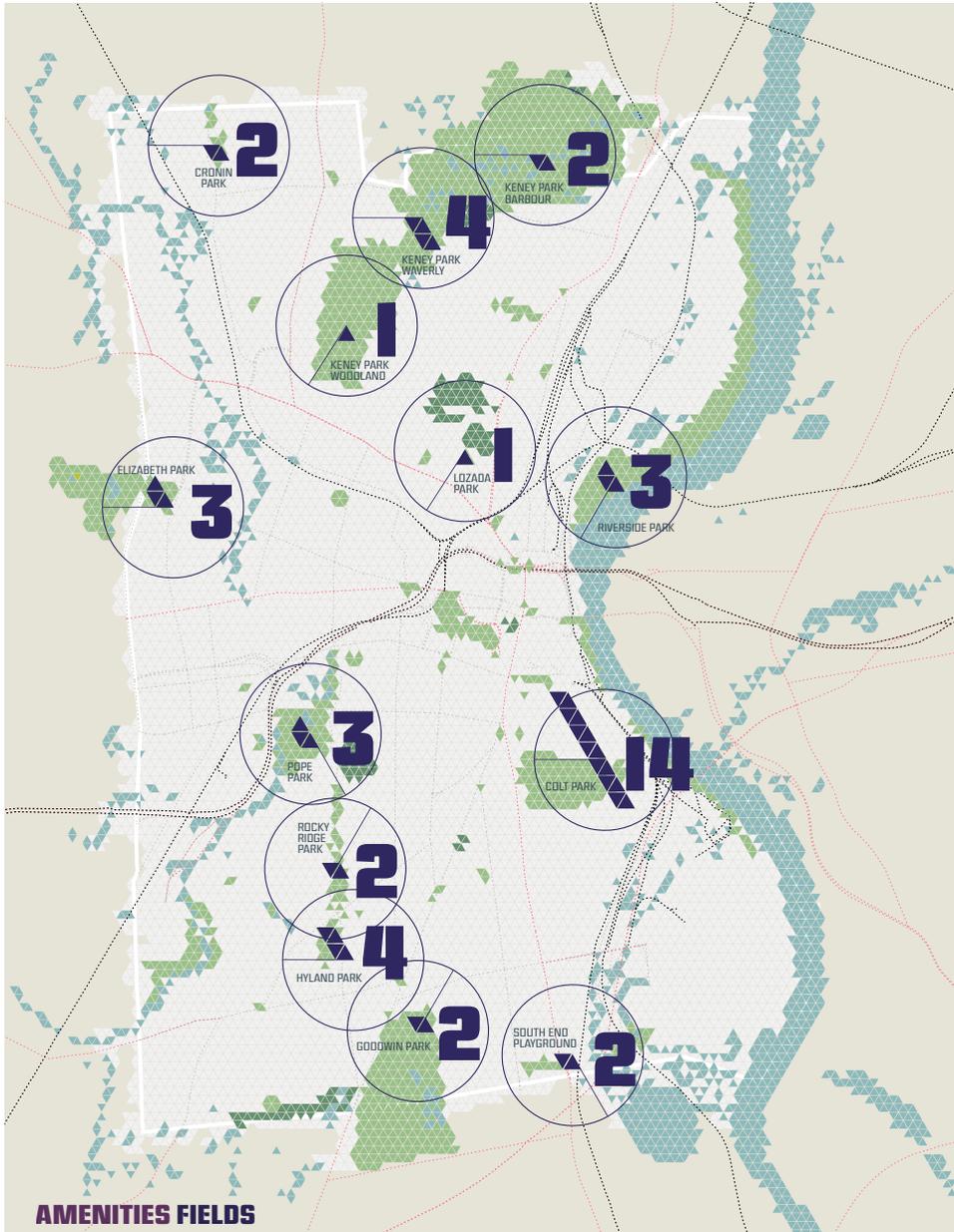
Beyond park size and location, the amenities within each park create different characteristics and inform use. For example, Colt Park is the city’s major sports fields destination, drawing users from across the city, while Lozada Park features neighborhood scale amenities for informal, flexible play. Park amenities have been evaluated by provision of play amenities, fields, courts, and leisure elements.

Play Amenities

Hartford’s parks include a wide range of play amenities like playgrounds, spray pads, pools, and even orienteering courses and a carousel. These amenities are well-distributed across the city, with the exception of a slight gap around the Barry Square neighborhood. Overall, Hartford has just under the recommended number of playgrounds, but a large surplus of spray pads. Many playgrounds and spraypads in the city, including Lozada, Keney Woodland, and Sigourney Square, have recently been renovated. Other playgrounds like Rocky Ridge, Roberta Jones, and Elizabeth (eastern portion of park) are in need of renovation and upgrading. A new skatepark currently under construction at Wexford Park will help close the current gap in this kind of activities.







Sports Fields

The majority of Hartford's sports fields are found in a few regional parks. Colt is the center of sport field opportunities in Hartford. Roughly 40% of all soccer and football fields are located in Colt. North of downtown, the majority of fields are located in Keney Park. Citywide, Hartford has about the recommended number of sport fields, although, it falls slightly below national recommendations for football stadiums. Overall, many fields are in need of improved maintenance. Mowing schedules could be improved to better align with field use, and some fields have uneven terrain. Efforts are currently underway to address some of these issues, through recent production of a system-wide maintenance guide and efforts to adjust topography in uneven field areas. Field restorations at Cronin and Keney Waverly were completed within the past year, and three durable, synthetic Cal Ripken fields are planned across the city in the near future.

Citywide, Hartford has about the recommended number of sport fields. Overall, many fields are in need of improved maintenance.



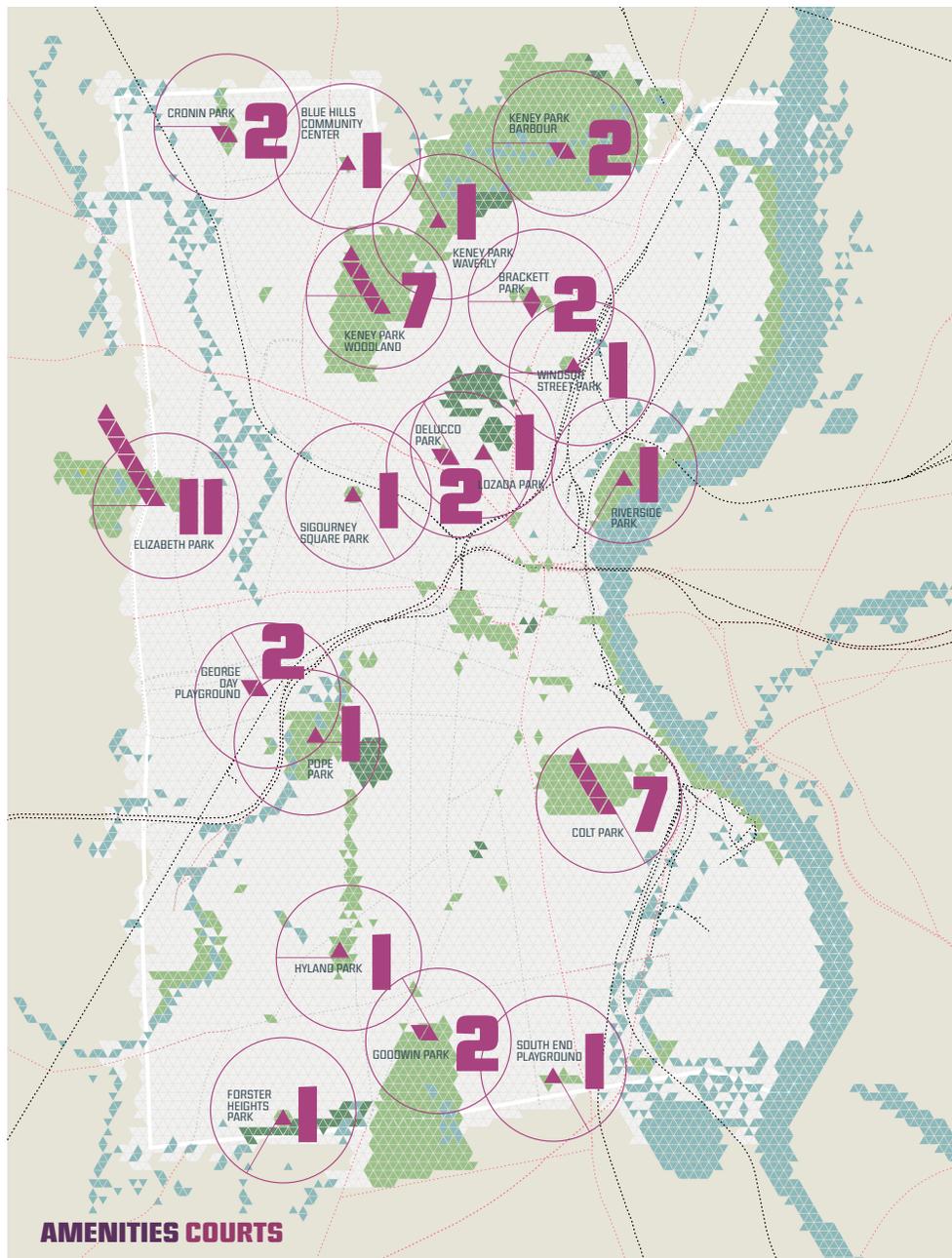
Courts

Hartford currently has 53 playable courts for basketball, handball, tennis, and volleyball. These totals exceed national recommendations for basketball and volleyball, but fall a bit short for tennis. Community feedback suggests that the gap in tennis may not be a concern for the city, and instead reflects community demands and demographics. The current tennis courts at Elizabeth, and to a lesser degree Goodwin, are well used, but there does not seem to be a demand for additional courts. For instance, anecdotal stories suggest the surface damage at Columbus Park's tennis courts resulted from neighborhood children using the courts to play soccer. This suggests a need for additional soccer space, rather than a need to repair the tennis courts for tennis playing to meet national standards.

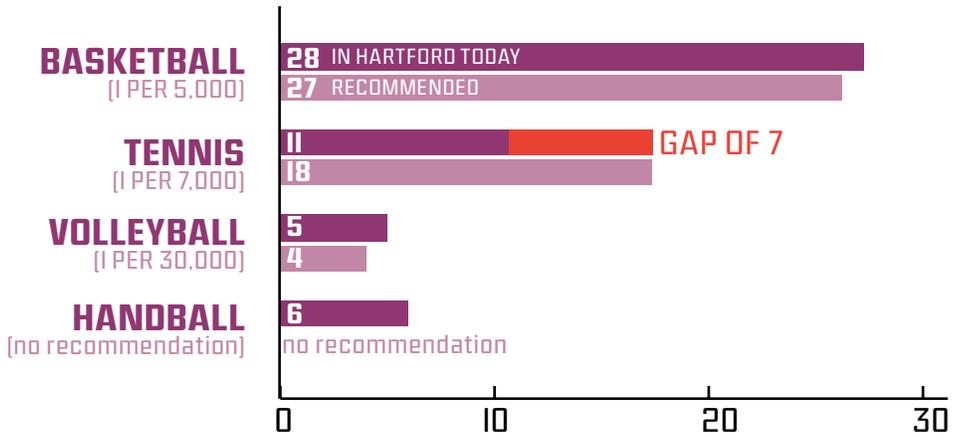
Hartford parks also include an additional 26 courts which are not usable due to missing nets or backboards. Repairing these amenities is recommended for basketball and volleyball courts where possible. National standards suggest that Hartford has approximately the right number of

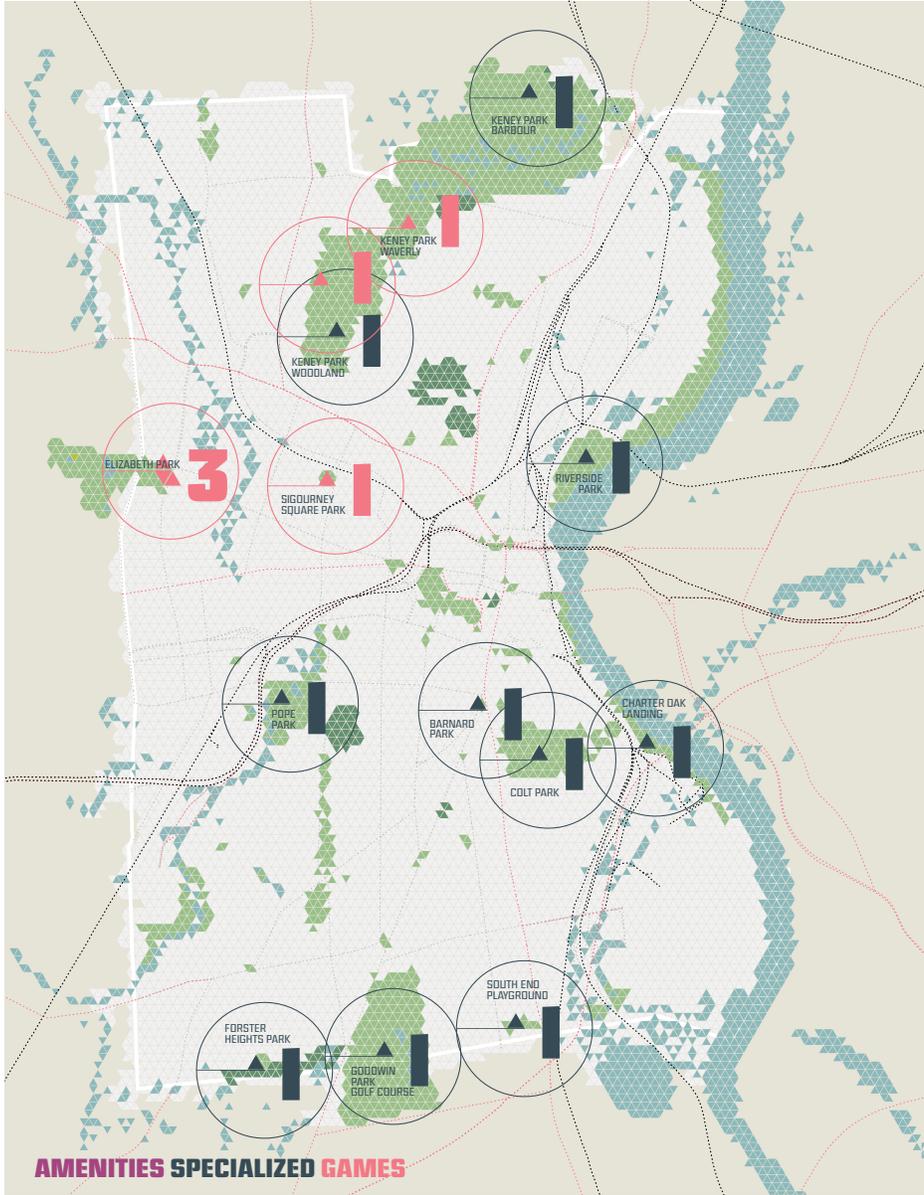
basketball courts currently (counting only usable courts), but virtually all courts appear to be heavily used, suggesting sufficient demand for repairing existing courts where possible. In this way, Hartford will exceed national standards, but meet the apparent needs and demand of its own community. However, the persistent disrepair of nearly one third of all courts reflects the daily challenges that the city faces in maintaining its own assets. Operations funding, staff levels, and high levels of use all create challenges. The addition of any future amenities should be carefully weighed against maintenance capacity. Reductions in the number of courts may be advisable if it helps to bring the current inventory into better alignment with the city's ability to maintain. To this end, DPW is currently reducing the number of courts at Day Park, Brackett Park, and Baby Pope Park. Fewer numbers of well-maintained, quality courts will meet the needs of the system better than a large quantity of difficult to maintain amenities.





AMENITIES COURTS





More amenities that allow for casual hang-out and socializing are needed in Hartford.

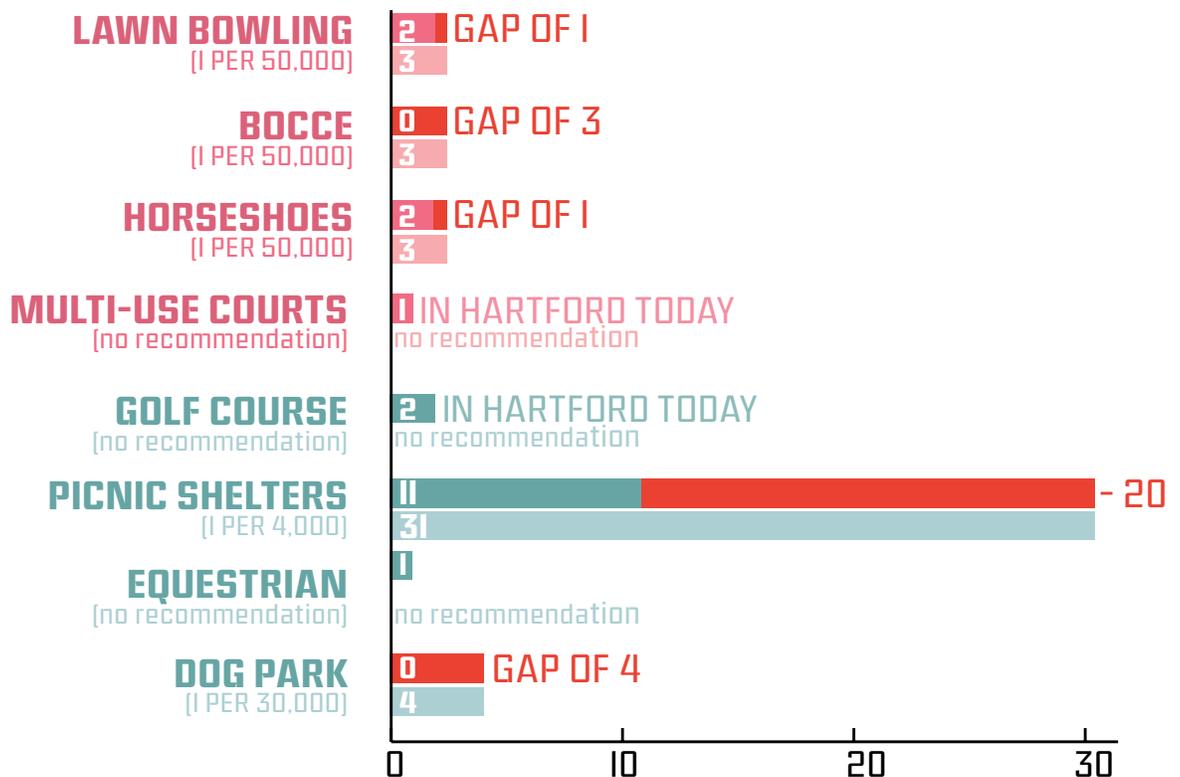


Games & Specialized Amenities

In addition to courts, fields, and play features, parks also offer opportunities for socializing and participating in specialized activities. Hartford has two golf courses and Keney Park is home to the Ebony Horsewomen, which provides unique equestrian opportunities. A specialized amenity gap in Hartford is a dog park. Hartford currently has no dog parks, but national standards would suggest several for a city of Hartford’s population. Public feedback has indicated demand for a new dog park in the area, especially in and around downtown. Thirty-three percent of survey takers say that they visit parks to walk their dogs. At the same time, other park visitors report concern with off-leash practices at some parks. A fenced dog-park

would allow dog owners a designated area for canine play. Parks that could be options for a dog park addition include Keney, Pope West, Pope - Bankside Grove, Turning Point, or Porter. Options should be vetted with multiple departments, Friends Groups, and the community to determine a suitable location.

National standards suggest more amenities that allow for casual hang-out and socializing are needed in Hartford. Many parks have at least a few picnic tables and benches, but many lack picnic pavilions. In addition, very few “game” opportunities like lawn bowling, bocce, or horseshoes currently exist in Hartford’s parks.



System-wide Findings

KEY FINDINGS OF THE NEEDS ASSESSMENT

- Tremendous opportunities for world-class; deep historic legacy + diversity of system
- Issues relate to quality rather than quantity for active amenities
- No need for additional maintained park space (not priority)
- No need for additional recreation amenities
- Need for more social spaces
- Maintenance of parks and amenities are key problems
- Importance of links – highest needs for park space in central neighborhoods, but greatest opportunities for park access on edges of city – bicycle links
- Currently, the parks assessment system does not have a clear way to measure environmental health or ecological value contributions. An assessment of the environmental role of the parks system is included in the Historic Legacy and Ecology chapter of this report.

DEMOGRAPHICS & PARK NEED

With a population of 124,867 in 2011, Hartford is Connecticut's third-largest city. It is a diverse city, in many ways. The character of neighborhoods change across the city. Denser urban communities with significant multifamily housing lie closer to downtown, and detached homes on slightly larger lots are more common at the city's north, western, and southern edges. Downtown is the densest area in terms of buildings, but it has only recently begun to grow into a significant residential area. Several thousand additional units are expected over the next decade.

Ethnic and racial diversity is high across town; 22% of residents in Hartford are foreign-born. The vast majority of foreign-born residents (72%) are from Latin America, primarily from the Caribbean but with an increasing number from South America. In addition, Hartford has a strong Puerto Rican community.

Hartford has a strong business community, including 3 Fortune 500 companies, but this corporate wealth exists in stark contrast to tight household budgets. Poverty is a significant issue in Hartford, with 33% of residents living below the poverty line. Poverty is not distributed evenly across the city; higher concentrations ring downtown. Citywide, 35% of households do not own a vehicle, and these households are also more common just outside of downtown.

Park needs vary by age group. Hartford is a very young city, with 25.8% of residents under 18, including 15.2% less than 10. High concentrations of families

with children live in the neighborhoods ringing downtown and in Parkville. In these areas, play, sports fields (including little league), court, and other active recreation amenities are important. Young adults live around Hartford’s higher education institutions, including University of Hartford and Trinity College. Much of the population growth downtown is also driven by young adults. This age group has a demand for amenities like frisbee golf, sports fields and courts, passive parks, games, and dog parks. Overall, 8.9% of residents in city are more than sixty years old. These residents need passive recreation parks with opportunities for games and benches for sitting. Parks need to be located close to homes so access is possible.

ownership rates and household incomes are also lower. These “high-need” areas in Hartford exist just beyond downtown. Fortunately, community and neighborhood parks are within convenient walking distance of many residents in these neighborhoods, but access to regional parks is more limited, with the exception of Keney in north Hartford. As a result, pedestrian and bicycle links between high need neighborhoods and regional parks with a wider range of recreation amenities are critical.

Data sources:

- Race/ethnicity & density - 2010 Census (Blocks)
- Other statistics - 2011 American Community Survey

How do these demographic characteristics influence park need? Parks are needed the most in the city’s densest neighborhoods, where car

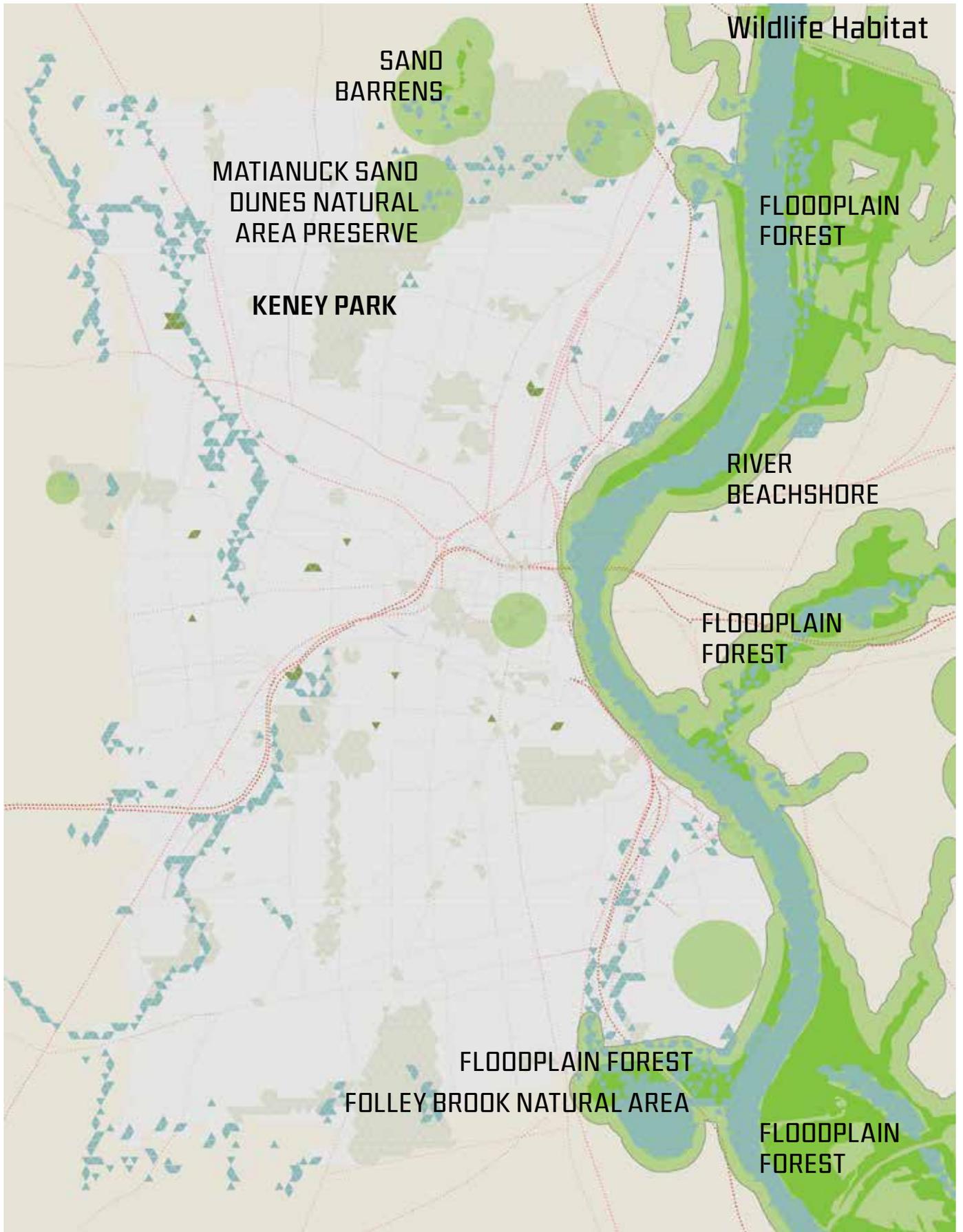
HIGH NEED AREAS



LOW INCOME

POPULATION DENSITY

LACK OF CAR ACCESS



Landscape & Ecology

In addition to recreation and relaxation opportunities provided by Hartford's parks, they also provide critical ecosystem and habitat services, fostering healthy environments and habitat for species in an urban area.

URBAN HABITAT

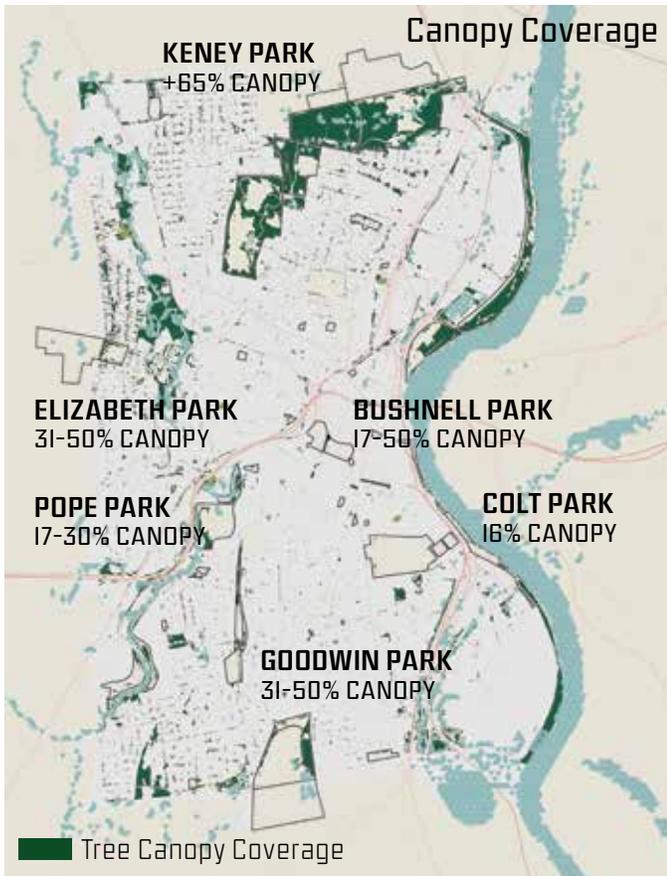
The city's critical habitats are found along the Connecticut River and also near Keney Park, highlighting that these areas are a unique natural asset with environmental significance. Hartford is home to nearly 300 resident and migratory bird species in which parks and open spaces provide significant habitat, especially Keney, Goodwin, and Cedar Hill Cemetery.

Approximately 26% of Hartford is covered by tree canopy. While this number is comparable to many other cities in the Northeast, one urban forestry study concludes that Hartford has room to increase canopy coverage to as high as 42%. Many of the parks with lower canopy numbers typically have a high

percentage of open lawns and athletic fields, however, these parks and other may still have potential to increase tree canopy cover. (Individual parks concept plans have attempted to address this.)

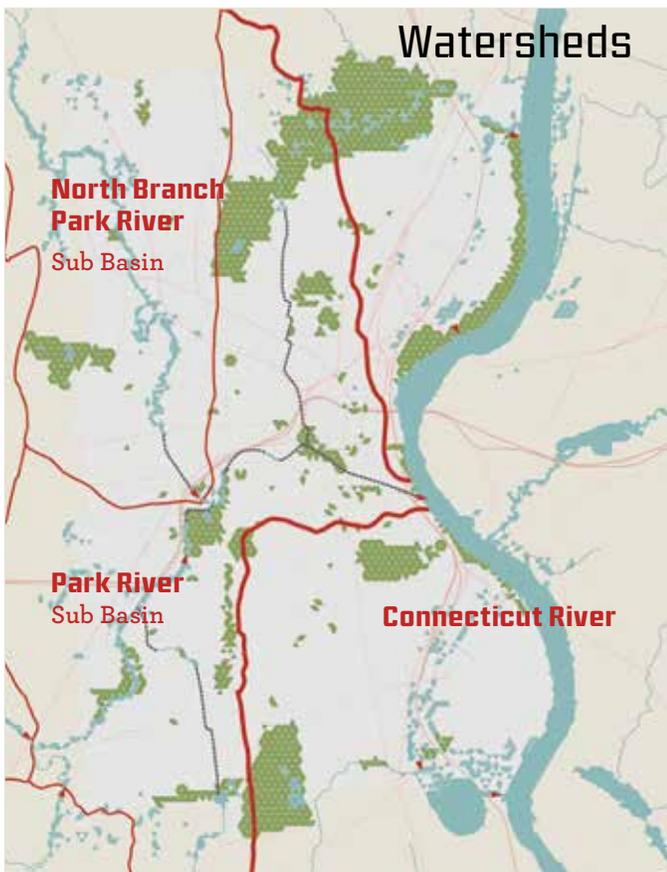
WATERSHEDS

The Connecticut River is the largest river in New England, draining 11,250 square miles. from Quebec to Long Island Sound. The Park River (a tributary of the Connecticut River), drains the western half of Hartford but has been culverted through significant portions of the city. Approximately 40% of the city is covered by impervious surfaces which contribute a significant amount of runoff, sediment, and pollutants into the Park and Connecticut River systems. Particularly in densely built, urban areas like Hartford,

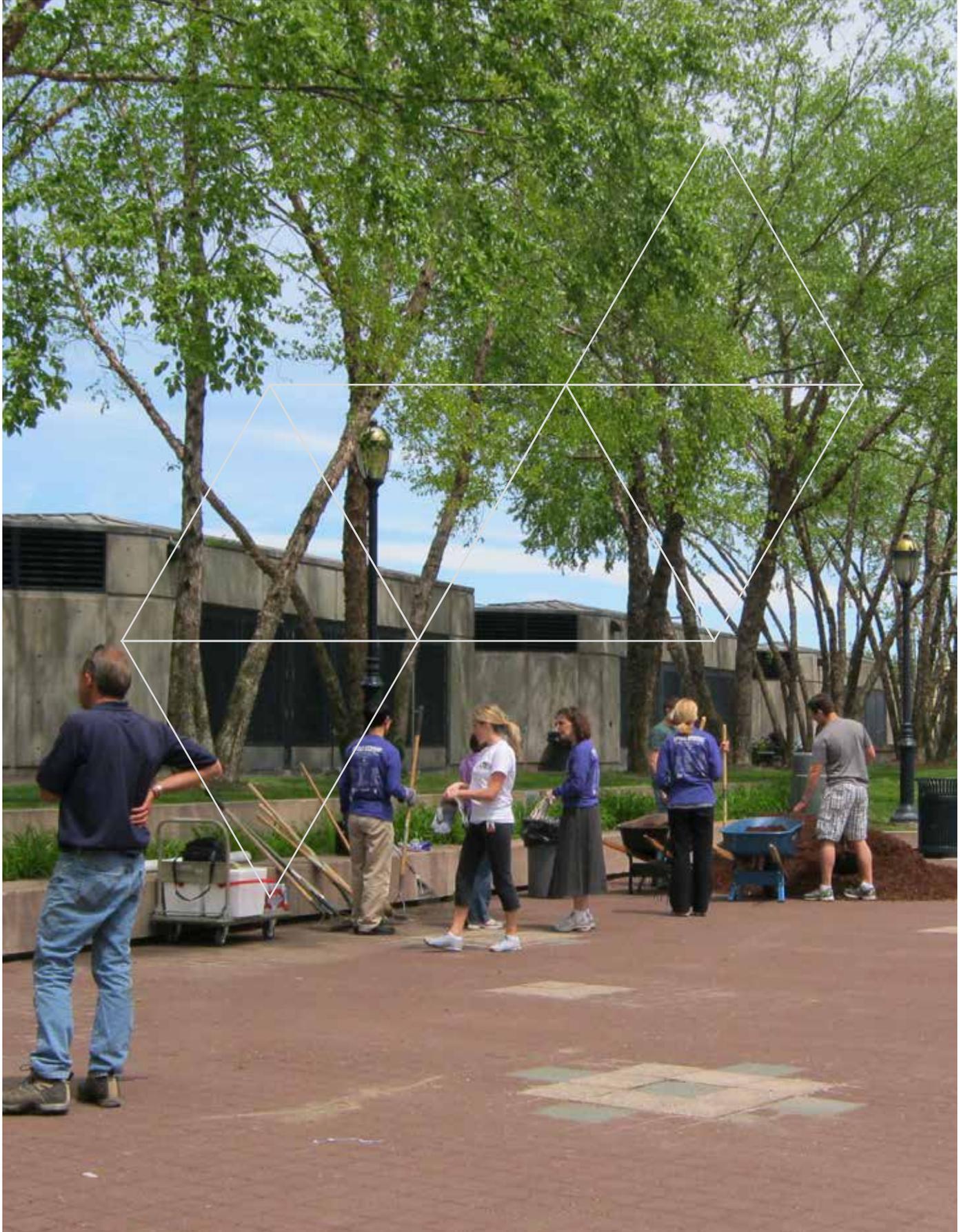


upland parks can help reduce potential flooding through strategies to help detain and infiltrate stormwater. Hartford's parks and open spaces help protect the city from flooding, reduce and filter runoff, and provide habitat for numerous common and endangered species.

Numerous Hartford parks correspond with floodplain areas along the Connecticut River and along the North and South Branches of the Park River. The North Branch Park River Watershed Management Plan, approved in July 2010, recognizes this linkage between open space and water management and seeks to protect and improve the ecological integrity of the North Branch Park River and its watershed. The concept plans and connectivity plan within the Parks Guide each also seek to find ways to connect the parks and city open spaces as means to improve watershed quality.







Partnerships

Increased collaboration among City departments, matched by expanded partnerships with Friends Groups, non-profits, the business community, and others will help improve Hartford's parks.

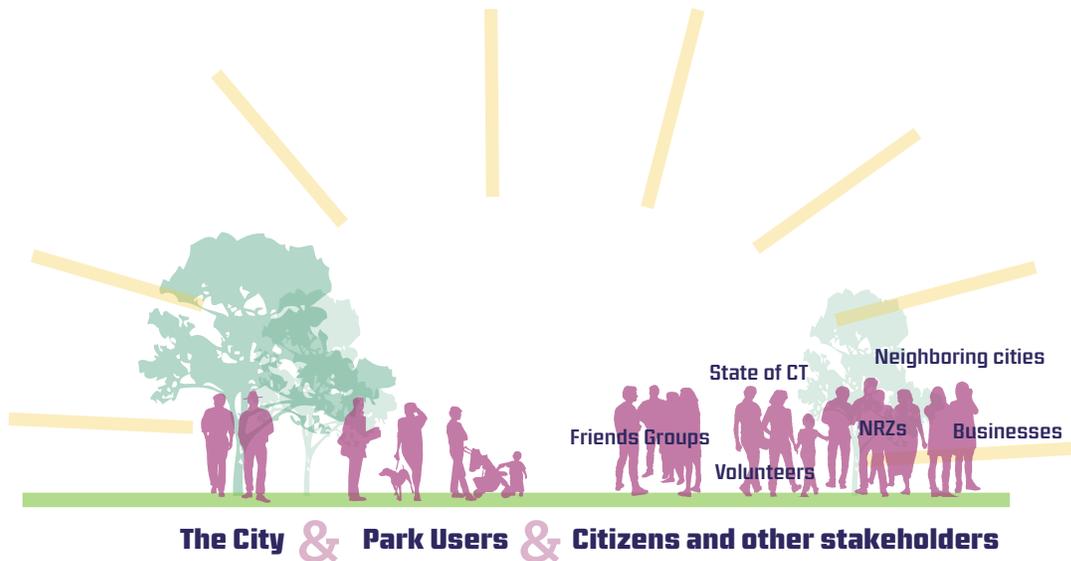
Hartford's system has the potential to be one of the best in the country, yet currently, upkeep and maintenance fails to meet residents' expectations. How do we improve all parks to create a top-notch park system? Given today's economic climate and budget challenges, the City alone cannot close the gap. It will take a team effort, with many different players, to get there. Increased collaboration among City departments, matched by expanded partnerships with Friends Groups, non-profits, the business community, and others will help improve park maintenance, programming, and image.

CITY OF HARTFORD: MULTIPLE DEPARTMENTS

First, improving collaboration begins within the City. With close collaboration, the City of Hartford can present a single, unified point of contact for the public, improving user experience. Behind the scenes, different departments and divisions can ensure implementation of the Parks Guide, coordinate scheduling, conduct park maintenance, organize programming, publicize events, and keep parks safe.

Development Services will be the central shepherd of the Capital City Parks Guide, ensuring that future capital projects reflect the priorities of the planning process, that policy changes are supported, and that future development or infrastructure plans consider the parks perspective. The Parks Guide Steering Committee brought together key representatives from City departments invested in the parks and open space system. After adoption of the Parks Guide, it is recommended that this pattern continue, with the creation of an internal Parks Leadership Group. This will be an interdepartmental group that meets regularly, such as quarterly, to discuss major issues in parks capital projects, connectivity projects, safety, management, or events. Representatives should include Development Services (including a MECA representative), Public Works, Recreation, Police, and a member of the Mayor's Office.

Given the current department structure, close coordination between the Department of Public Works (DPW) and the Recreation Division within the Department of Families, Children, Youth, and



Recreation is critical. DPW’s primary focus is the physical condition and improvements of the parks and connectivity system, while the Department of Families, Children, Youth, and Recreation’s main responsible is recreational programming.

Beyond these departments, the Board of Education is another important partner. Schools include playgrounds and fields of their own, but in many cases, schools also benefit from additional park resources. Frequently, due to land and financial restrictions, new schools are being constructed without fields of their own, so the reliance of schools on city park resources is likely to increase. Additional use places a greater strain on parks, so it is important that the Board of Education pitches in to help with maintenance at these parks. Similarly, schools provide play and sports resources of their own that can be shared with the community in off hours. Careful coordination and clear rules are required to make these partnerships successful.

Police, Development Services, and Transportation also play important roles in parks. A division of Development Services, MECA (Marketing, Events & Cultural Affairs Division) can help with programming and advertising, spreading the word about up-coming events at parks - an important service according to community feedback. Police help keep parks safe by enforcing rules and laws and creating a sense of security. Programming and increasing park users, such as by MECA or downtown events, will also help deter negative behavior. Many studies have shown that in urban areas, park security is not about limiting access, but in growing park users. Departments need to be aligned and communicating about their different roles in park security and safety.

PARTNERS FOR A REGIONAL RESOURCE

The “Capital City Parks System” is a regional resource. Parks like Bushnell and Elizabeth draw crowds from

many miles away. Elizabeth Park's famous Rose Gardens are even said to draw international visitors! Many of Hartford's largest jewels are partially within other cities, so residents in neighboring towns can also enjoy these parks conveniently. Because these parks serve multiple communities and the State of Connecticut, Hartford is in a position to draw funding and support from additional communities, organizations, or the State. Riverfront Recapture benefits from funding from the MDC (the Metropolitan District, the region's water and sewer authority). Regional funding mechanisms and statewide support should be investigated.

Minneapolis successfully lobbied for state funding for its Olmstedian park system, and today it maintains one of the most highly revered park systems in the country. In Minnesota, parks and trails of regional or statewide significance are eligible to receive funding through the Parks and Trails Legacy Grant Program. Grants support acquisition, development, improvement, and restoration projects. In Pennsylvania, the Allegheny Regional Asset District (RAD) receives half the proceeds from a 1% Allegheny County Sales and Use Tax to fund regional assets. Assets include parks, libraries, and other cultural, sport, and civic facilities and programs. RAD funds help support "regional" parks, including five within the City of Pittsburgh. Since RAD's beginning in 1995, parks have received more than \$400 mil to support repairs, safety improvements, accessibility projects, landscape renovations, and other projects.

FRIENDS GROUPS AND NRZS

More locally, Friends Groups and similar organizations are playing increasing roles in many parks. Most of Hartford's regional parks have long-established Friends Group, and similar groups for several neighborhood parks have recently formed.

Friends Groups help in many ways for parks – from day-to-day maintenance, to some improvement projects, to revenue generation, to volunteer recruiting and coordination. Friends Groups can also provide programming and help promote a positive image of the park. The Elizabeth Park Conservancy is a good example of how a Friends Group can generate revenue. The Conservancy recently entered into a contract with the City of Hartford that allows Conservancy to operate the Pond House restaurant and receive a portion of the profits. Revenue from the Pond House currently provides 50% of their annual budget, helping them have a small staff, including a fundraiser. Similarly, Riverfront Recapture excels at building partnerships with local businesses, schools, the City of Hartford, and other communities to provide programming, volunteers, and financial support. The Knox Foundation contributes in a similar way, working toward civic renewal and "greening" broadly across all of Hartford. The Foundation also has a focus on downtown improvements and a division called the Knox Parks Foundation that help its mission align closely with that of the Parks Guide. Projects include clean up days, tree plantings, plant sales and community gardens, and volunteer coordination.

The Parks Guide has benefited greatly from the

input of the Friends Groups, and the process has also provided opportunities for Friends Groups to talk with one another. Establishing a regular joint meeting among Friends Groups and the City to discuss issues and share successful strategies could help Friends Groups learn from one another, and foster coordination. Perhaps new partnerships among Friends Groups could even emerge! For neighborhood parks without Friends Groups, the City should work with the established NRZs to share some responsibilities for day-to-day general upkeep.

Hartford has a robust downtown and is an employment hub for the region, particularly in the financial services and insurance sector. The City can explore partnerships with downtown businesses to become active stewards of the parks through “adopt-a-park,” dedicated donations, or other corporate support programs. Downtown parks, such as Wexford, Pulaski, Bushnell, or Barnard, are particularly good options.

Action Steps for City:

- Hire a volunteer coordinator to:
 - Negotiate with unions to maximize volunteer potential
 - Formalize shared agreements with Friends Groups to define responsibilities
 - Develop a corporate support program

Principles for maximizing input and volunteer support:

- Make it easy to help!
- Centralize information clearly on a volunteer webpage
- Provide different options for contributions
- Offer incentives/benefits for helping
 - For example, create a corporate partner program, with different levels based on support; in return, specify benefits at each level (ex. free rental of park pavilion for an evening or free passes to local event)

With all these partners, who does what?

Roles & Responsibilities

Development Services

- Oversee implementation and shepherd the vision of the Parks Guide
- Coordinate parks with future developments
- Maintain the parks website
- Coordinate a Parks Leadership Quarterly Roundtable

MECA

- Programming, events, and marketing
- Master event calendar

DPW

- Maintenance of parks and cemeteries
- Capital improvement projects
- Coordinate with other groups and volunteers (Friends Groups, etc.)
- Field scheduling

Recreation

- Programs and fee structure

Friends Groups (or similar)

- Typically day-to-day oversight
- Basic maintenance and upkeep
- Programming
- Revenue generation
- Minor capital improvements
- Light security (“eyes on park”) – Rangers Programs (sometimes)

NRZs

- Maintenance and upkeep
- Programming
- Public outreach

Park Users

- Treat parks with respect
- Leave the parks in a better state than found
- Spread the word about Hartford’s parks – tell your friends and neighbors!

Education

- Maintenance for parks that schools use (including fields and playgrounds)

Police

- Security

CT DOT & Local Transportation Dept

- Help implement bicycle connectivity
- Improve pedestrian access to parks

Neighboring Communities

- Shared responsibility for Hartford parks in their town

State of CT

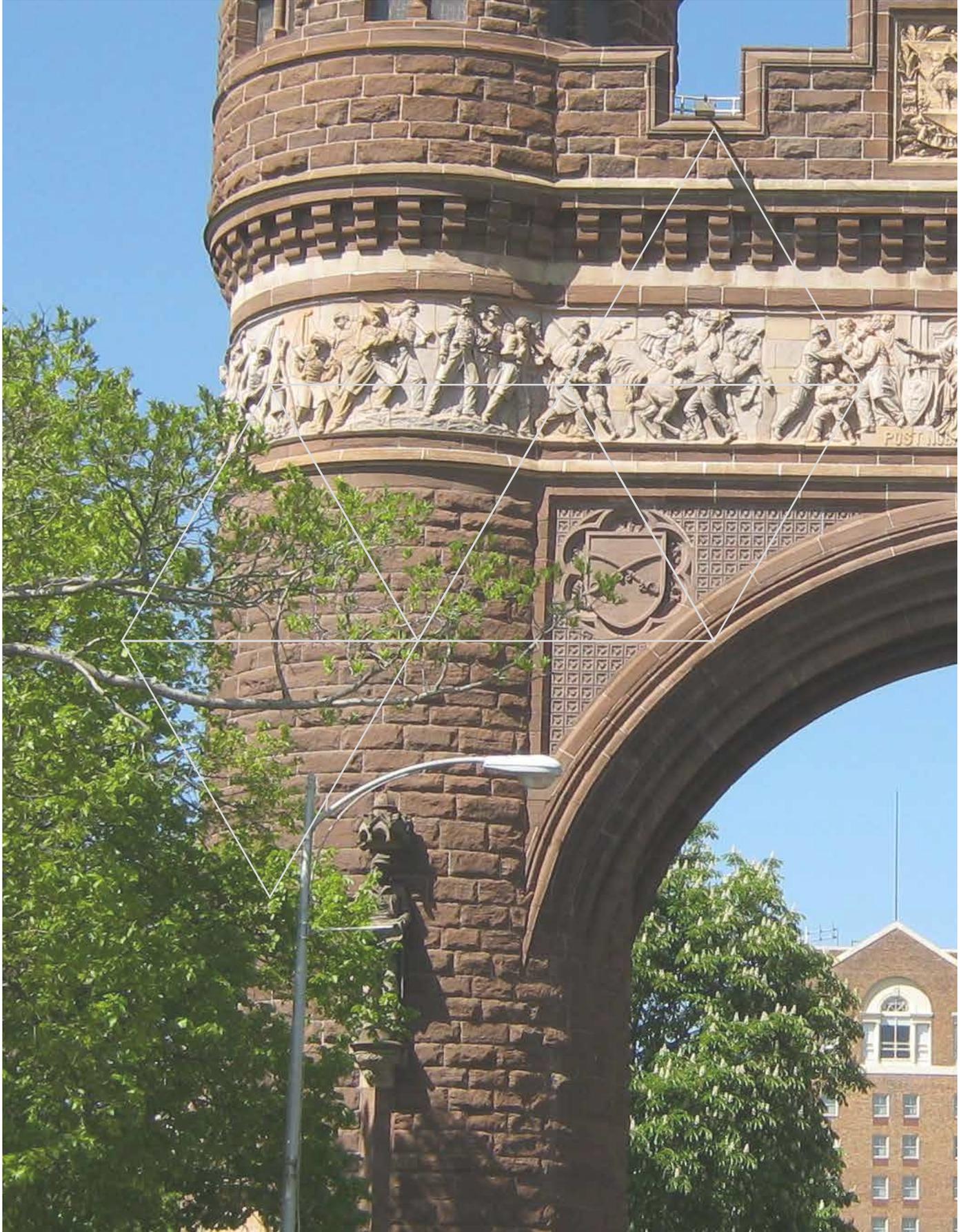
- System-wide funding (“Capital City Parks”)
- Special focus on and support for Bushnell, major riverfront infrastructure projects, and connectivity plan

Businesses/Private Sector

- Monetary donations
- In-kind donations
- Volunteers
- Rentals

Volunteers

- Clean-up, light maintenance
- Small improvement projects



Governance & Financial Sustainability

Given recent challenges for operations and funding the system, an assessment of park operations and maintenance practices was conducted as part of the Capital City Parks Guide.

PARK OPERATIONS & MAINTENANCE ASSESSMENT

Given recent challenges for operations and funding the system, an assessment of park operations and maintenance practices was conducted as part of the Parks Guide. Background research for the assessment included a review of the Trust for Public Land's 2007 report "Renewing a Historic Legacy," Mayor Segarra's 2011 Green Ribbon Task Force Report (GRTF), Parks Maintenance Manual prepared by TO Design, LLC (2013), current budget information, a review of public input comments, and a series of meetings with Parks Division and Public Works employees, as well as other City department staff. As part of the assessment, two employee focus groups were held to gain perspectives of employees working in park maintenance activities.

The Parks and Cemeteries Division is currently part of the City's Public Works Department and represents approximately 15% of the Department's General Fund budget. The Parks Division program services include the following goals:

- Park Maintenance Goal: Provide the residents of Hartford and the region with well-maintained parks, athletic fields, play areas, and playgrounds for recreation, events, and passive activities.
- Horticulture Goal: Provide residents of Hartford with high-quality seasonal landscaping and garden displays for recreational activities and scenic areas.
- Forestry: Provide residents of Hartford and the region with a healthy and safe urban forest,

The staffing and budget resource decreases have been well documented in previous reports and continue to be a major challenge for quality of the parks system.

streetscapes, and parks to enjoy.

- Cemetery Operations: Provide residents and families of Hartford with burial operations for efficient internment of deceased and to ensure appropriate landscaping for cemeteries.

The current (2013) Parks Division budget is \$1,919,225. Current there are 31 park employees.¹ Park maintenance staffing has reduced from 62 positions in 1999 to 35 in 2006. The staffing and budget resource decreases have been well documented in previous reports and continue to be a major challenge for quality of the parks system. The Green Ribbon Task Force Maintenance Subcommittee identified 22 recommendations for improvement, as follows, which – despite some progress – bear repeating today:

- Workforce staffing and resources
- Supervision: minimal level of supervision exists
- Lack of maintenance standards
- Equipment: replace current with state-of-art

technology

- Professionalism: seasoned professionals managing parks
- Urban forest: maintain, expand, and care for city’s tree canopy
- Volunteers: maximize the use of volunteers
- Maintenance deficits: conditions of poor quality and deteriorating conditions
- Staff training: skill and knowledge deficits
- Job descriptions, organizational structure: outdated descriptions
- Seasonal/contractual employees: utilize to accommodate staffing flexibility during the off-season
- Maintenance impact of new facilities needs to be considered
- Ecosystems: implementation of policies and procedures that support sustainable design practices

¹ As of May 2, 2014, including 23 park maintenance workers, 3 tree trimmers (forestry), and 5 Elizabeth Park gardeners.

- Sustainable practices
- Information systems, technology improvement
- Regional cooperation for maintenance, sharing of equipment
- Design standards: standardization of park components and amenities
- School ground maintenance: consideration for Parks to maintain school grounds
- Illegal dumping is a pervasive problem throughout the system
- Golf course management: contractors should be held to the same standards as the Parks Department as policies and procedures are

developed

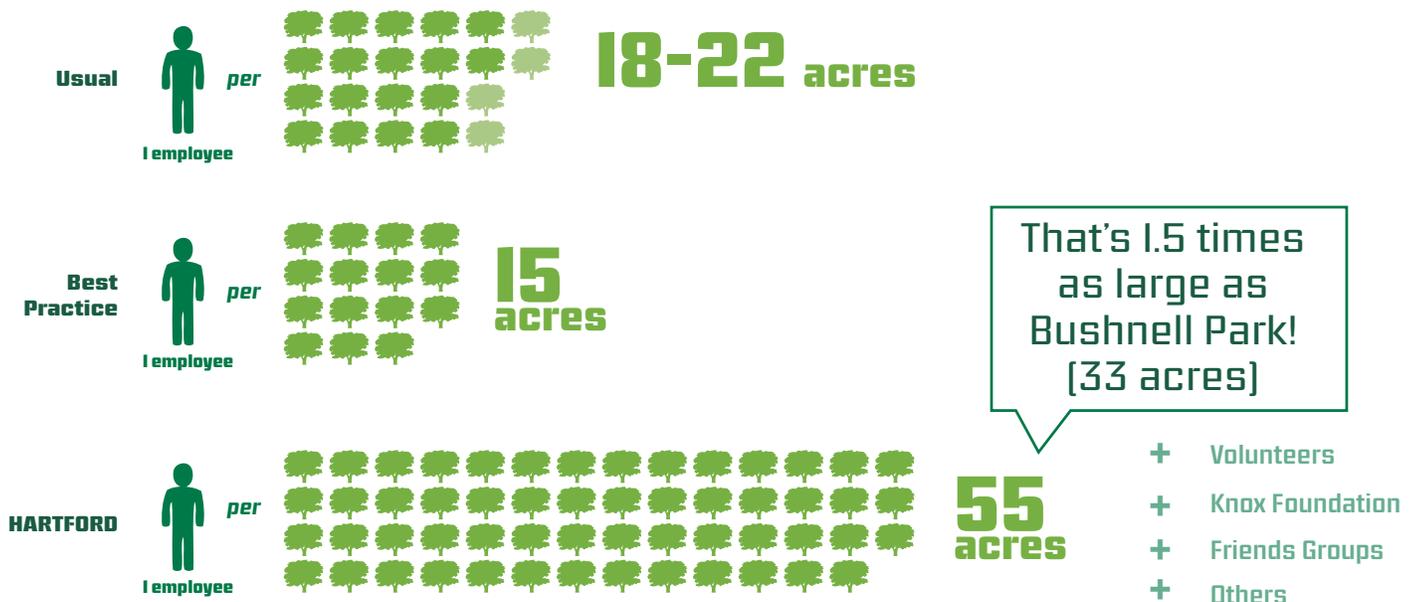
- Respecting our parks: education of users about parks as a resource
- Value of burial grounds: explore the design, construction and long-term management of high-density urban burial facilities

Operations and Management Benchmark Comparisons

The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) manages a database of information of park and recreation systems nationwide in its PRORAGIS database (Parks and Recreation Operating Ratio and Geographical Information System), which was

Maintenance Capacity

- 2,200 acres of parks and cemeteries in Hartford’s park system
- approximately 1,700 developed acres require significantly higher maintenance efforts than undeveloped areas*



* undeveloped = natural areas along South Branch of Park River and along I-91 (south edge of city); 1/2 of Batterson and 1/3 of Keney

used for the parks needs assessment and to compare operations and maintenance strategies. Hartford was reviewed within a comparative field of cities with a population of 100,000 to 200,000; Hartford's current population is 124,775. These criteria allowed the Hartford park system to be compared to 28 systems nationwide. Due to the character of the data, the New England region was under-represented. The information includes staffing and budget comparisons. One limitation of the comparisons is the exclusion of any volunteer hours. Hartford has significant volunteer help to maintain its system; however, this is not captured in peer comparisons nor is it frequently well documented.

Parks and Recreation Budget

In Hartford, Parks and Recreation operate separately from one another. Parks is part of the Public Works Department, and Recreation is part of the Department of Families, Children, Youth and Recreation. For

budget comparisons to peers, Hartford's Parks and Recreation Divisions are both included in the first comparative information. Using the FY 12-13 numbers, Parks and Recreation Divisions have a combined budget of \$3,853,179. This represents a 6.3% budget reduction in Parks and a 14% reduction in recreation from the FY 11-12 actual figures to the FY13-14 projections.

When compared to peers nationwide, Hartford's budget is significantly lower than the 28 comparable agencies. It is 48% lower than even the lower quartile of reporting agencies. This is particularly important to consider in the context of Hartford generous park acreage which is significantly higher than other reporting agencies, exceeding the number of the upper quartile of reporting agencies. Due to this, when Hartford's operating expenses per acre of land are compared to peers, the challenge becomes even more clear: Hartford's number, once again, is 232% lower than the lowest quartile of reporting agencies.

When compared to peers nationwide, Hartford's budget is significantly lower than the 28 comparable agencies

Parks Staff Recommendations

Linked directly to budget challenges, it has been well documented that staffing deficits exist. The Green Ribbon Task Force advocated for 65 positions within the Parks Division; currently there are 31.² The approximate ideal number of staff was calculated to be 68; however, there are many organizational issues to consider as well.

Department Organization

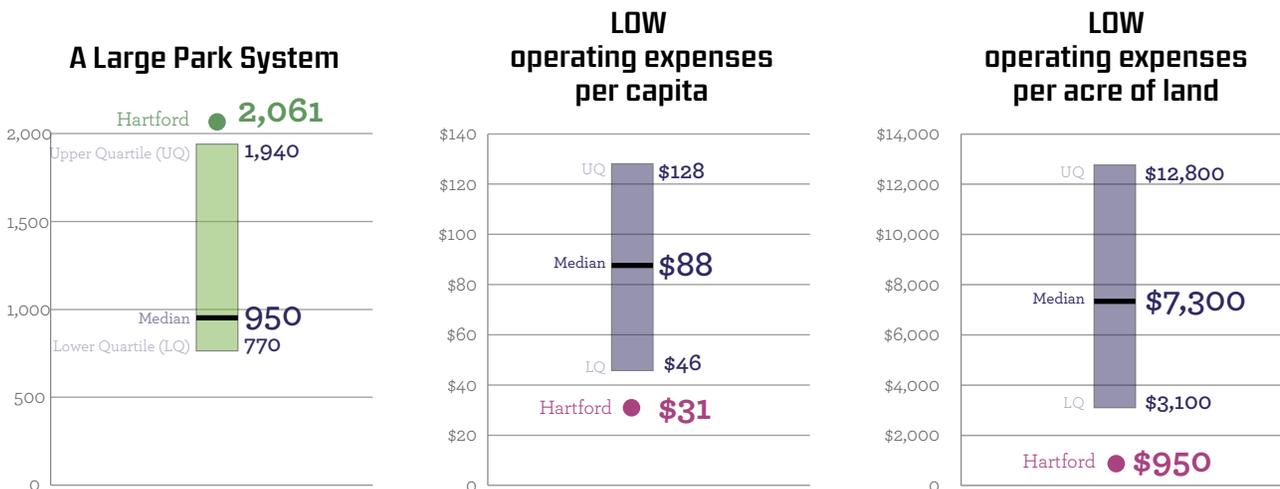
In past years and reports, there have been recommendations for a structure that includes a united parks and recreation department. The parks division has recently benefitted from the hiring of a Superintendent of Public Works and is currently restructuring in many ways. Employees reported that in the past there has been an absence of clear

² As of May 2, 2014, including 23 park maintenance workers, 3 tree trimmers (forestry), and 5 Elizabeth Park gardeners.

direction and vision for the division, including an absence of goals and objectives and methods to measure organizational performance. As changes are made, there is an opportunity to clarify the division's missions and core goals, and develop an annual work plan. With plans and schedules in place, employees will be able to become more proactive than reactive, more purposeful, and less random in day-to-day work assignments. A first step will be to develop and implement task lists for monthly, weekly, and daily tasks, as specified in the Parks Maintenance Manual.

One strategy that is currently being implemented by new leadership is to co-locate all operations under a single district. The current configuration includes an overall Parks Director with two Park Operations systems reporting to the director, one for the North district and another for the South district. Under the future single district strategy, there should be clear divisions of role and expertise to allow for skills

Hartford staff maintain more acres with less money than comparably sized cities



- Data source: National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) PRORAGIS database
- Graphs show Hartford compared to 28 systems nationwide with a population of 100,000 to 200,000

A newly developed Parks Maintenance Manual identifies standards, work scheduling, and athletic field condition assessment and renovation recommendations.

development and specialized training. The Parks Guide recommends that four areas of responsibility include: grounds, structures, athletics, and special events/projects. Currently, the Parks Division and the Recreation Division report to separate departments, however, they share overlapping responsibilities, such as league use of athletic fields. The City is centralizing all scheduling of league fields under the Public Works Department.

Community feedback suggested that special events are a popular role of the parks system. Yet, special events are also a strain on parks staff and require weekend diligence and significant clean-up. Responsibilities for a special events/projects sub-group would include special event support, trash/

garbage pick-up, and special projects. When the Parks Division is able to build itself with additional staff, there should be an effort to negotiate with the union to create staggered work shifts to ensure weekend coverage, rather than all full-time employees working Monday through Friday. In the meantime, they can supplement the work force with a seasonal weekend crew. Marketing of events should also be considered.

MAINTENANCE IMPROVEMENTS

Ongoing maintenance is a persistent challenge of the Parks Division. A newly developed Parks Maintenance Manual identifies standards, work scheduling, and athletic field condition assessment and renovation recommendations. These standards are sound and



Events like Envisionfest attract many visitors to parks, but these events can also strain park conditions and staff.

should be implemented incrementally to allow staff adjustment and system congruence. At the same time, the park concept plans support reduction of maintenance through consideration of possible low mow areas in parks system wide. Additionally, a work order system for both preventive and demand maintenance can be instituted to help prioritize tasks.

Implementation of the Parks Maintenance Manual recommendations can begin with a focus on turf management for both parks and athletic fields. If politically feasible, it would ease maintenance demand on limited staff to contract services for fertilization, pesticide application, and aeration until staff size is adequate to handle internally. Implementation can start with the following schedule:

Parks

- Aeration: Spring and Fall each year (work toward the ideal of three times a year)
- Pesticide application: once every two to three years (work toward annual application)
- Fertilization: once per year (work toward three times a year application)

Athletic Fields

- Aeration: Spring, Summer and Fall
- Pesticide application: twice a year
- Fertilization: four to five times a year
- Overseed: twice a year

Low Mow Lawns

The Parks Guide indicates areas within parks to be converted to No-mow grasses. These seed mixes, such

as Prairie Nursery's "No-Mow Lawn Mix," can greatly reduce the time spent maintaining park lawns. No-mow grasses are a blend of fescue grass varieties that, once established, grow about five inches tall. They are ideal for sunny and partial-shade sites that will receive regular activity such as picnicking and walking, but do not require grooming for sports activities. Despite their name, no-mow grasses require a single annual mowing to control weed development. Additionally, fescues have deep root systems making them more drought tolerant than other grass varieties, which reduces the need for irrigation in City parks.

Site preparation is critical to successful establishment of no-mow lawns. First, the ideal time to seed is between September 1 and November 1. Fescue grasses germinate best during these cool, damp months whereas most weeds germinate in spring. Once a site is selected the next step is to remove all existing grasses and weeds. There are four methods for removing existing vegetation:

- Smothering: Cover the site for a full year with black plastic, old carpet, plywood or a thick layer of leaves or newspapers.
- Sodcutting: Remove the top two to three inches of grass and soil using a sod-cutter. Till the site.
- Cultivating: Cultivate the site once a week for three weeks to kill the existing grasses. Cultivate once more before seeding to break up clumps.
- Herbicide: Apply Roundup to the site in either the spring or fall. Till the sod under when the grass has turned brown.

After existing grasses have been removed the site should be graded as needed. This is also the time

to add any necessary amendments such as sand to improve soil drainage. The site should be tilled and finely graded for firm seed-to-soil contact. The seed is applied using a drop seeder or by hand broadcasting. Lastly, rake the seed lightly into the tilled soil, and roll to firm it.

During the first two or three years of establishment the grasses will need addition care. This will mostly focus on controlling weed development. Additional mowing may be required to suppress weed growth until grasses are fully established. No-mow grasses should not be fertilized as this will promote weed growth.

Other methods to improve maintenance practices

Technology and up-to-date equipment should also be integrated into the Parks Division to improve maintenance practices. The Parks Division has begun to deploy iPhones to some maintenance supervisors. It should also initiate a replacement schedules for

equipment/facilities/park amenities. With this in place, they can have a clear schedule for equipment, vehicle, and amenity replacement and begin updating the infrastructure and equipment.

SUPPLEMENTING STAFF THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS

While there is a need to grow the size of the Parks Division, this will not happen overnight. Further, it is not practical for the City alone to bear all responsibility for the quality of the parks. Already, major contributions to park quality are made by groups such as the Knox Foundation, Riverfront Recapture, the many parks Friends Groups, and dedicated park foundations such as the Bushnell Foundation. However, the level and presence of this involvement varies significantly from park to park, resulting in great variation in the quality of maintenance throughout the parks system. Additionally, there are no formal mechanisms in place to regulate duties of the City in relationship



Slopes are often good candidates for low mow areas.

Hartford's unique position as a regional parks resource creates a rationale to create partnerships with neighboring jurisdictions and the State of Connecticut to coordinate with maintenance of parks that are outside of Hartford boundaries or serve a regional benefit.

to friends groups, volunteer groups, and private foundations. The Parks Guide process has set up a pattern of meetings that bring together city managers and the Friends Groups. This pattern should be institutionalized and continued, and formal agreements should be put into place with Friends Groups. These agreements can list tasks completed by Division staff and task completed by Friends Groups.

Contracting services that the City cannot complete on its own is another option to reduce burden on staff. The City should work at re-directing resources in order to gain more maintenance employees, such as contracting trash removal services and moving those existing positions to grounds maintenance positions. Additional temporary positions can also help to close the gap. Staffing resources can be augmented with the use of local college interns majoring in turf management curricula or through the hiring of park rangers. Park rangers serve a dual purpose: they will add a presence in the parks and serve a public relations role.

In addition, quantify labor dollars spent doing litter

pick-up and educate the community about the costs. Increase fines. Initiate citizen groups for all major parks for park clean up days and volunteer park watch groups. Reach out to community groups, civic, and faith-based groups to elicit volunteers.

Finally, Hartford's unique position as a regional parks resource creates a rationale to create partnerships with neighboring jurisdictions and the State of Connecticut to coordinate with maintenance of parks that are outside of Hartford boundaries or serve a regional benefit.

STAFF AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Just as important as growing the size of the staff is to nurture the skills and development of existing and future employees. Key areas to focus on include:

- Develop skills of supervisory level staff.
- Develop onboarding and ongoing training. Establish a training system based on skills and competencies needed for job classifications.
- Require specific positions to have appropriate

certifications, including pesticide application, playground, and risk management

- Document and institutionalize key processes such as athletic field maintenance, mowing, playground inspection, etc. This will result in the transfer of knowledge to new employees, and will also assist in the continued improvement of processes.

PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

In the future, it will be important to be able to measure if changes to maintenance practices and staff are having an impact on the quality of the park system and the communities. Key performance indicators should be put in place now and data collected regularly to measure and chart progress. Examples of data that could be collected include:

- Athletic field maintenance/ park user satisfaction
- Cost per acre to maintain
- Acres per full time equivalent to maintain
- Outputs such as numbers of vehicles, acres to maintain
- Cycle time for equipment/vehicle repair
- Employee retention both full time and part time
- Percentage of parks meeting inspection standards
- Internal customer satisfaction toward work order system
- Vandalism amount

Establishing good data and record-keeping practices

are critical to sustained improvements of the park system.

REVENUE AND FEES

Expanding Revenue Opportunities in Identity Parks

As municipal budgets continuously tighten, it has become increasingly important to find ways to promote self-sufficiency within the park system. A major focus of parks systems nationwide in recent years has been creative ways to increase revenue within the parks. For Hartford, a priority in the near term needs to be to establish more revenue-generating projects within the large “identity parks” of the system that can help support both those parks’ operations and other smaller parks throughout the City. This strategy is an overarching method for the system-wide Parks Guide. Each revenue generation project, however, should be planned and considered carefully. When possible, it will be advisable to include third party or partnership opportunities to reduce the addition of responsibilities to the City’s already full plate.

Hartford has several great models of this within its own system; Elizabeth Park is emblematic of the ability of a park to generate revenue and support its operations. The Pond House at Elizabeth successfully provides funding to support the full park. The Pump House in Bushnell and the Club House in Keney are existing, underutilized structures in two of Hartford’s historic, identity parks. Both of these buildings are well-located, masonry structures worth preserving

and returning to active uses that can be managed to generate revenue through the use of restaurants, rental meetings, and/or events spaces. Madison Square Park contains an example of a concession building, operated by a third-party vendor, that was used to activate the park and provide funding. After decades of decline, the Madison Square Park Conservancy formed to restore the park after decades of disinvestment. In 2004, the Shake Shack opened in a building in the park. A portion of each purchase directly benefits park maintenance and programs in the park. The building was financed and built by the Conservancy at a cost of \$750,000; it is now operated by Union Square Hospitality Group. Today, the renewed Madison Square Park sits at the center of a revitalized business district. A similar arrangement could also be considered for a renovation of either the Keney Clubhouse or the Bushnell Pump House, or for

a new concessions building at Colt Park.

Hartford can look both within its system for opportunities, and to national trends for inspiration. A national trend is to offer programming in parks such as yoga and exercise classes. This is happening already in Bushnell Park, but without revenue capture. Some systems charge instructors a percentage of gross revenues for programs. New, popular nature-based and backcountry recreation programs, kayaking or canoeing could be introduced by third party vendors in existing parks.

A great example of a third party vendor operating in a park is the Adventure Park in nearby Bridgeport, Connecticut. In July 2012, Outdoor Venture Group, LLC opened an “aerial forest park” with routes through trees in a portion of one of Bridgeport’s wooded parks.

A priority in the near term needs to be to establish more revenue-generating projects within the “Identity Parks” that can help support both those parks’ operations and other smaller parks throughout the City.

The project has brought new activity to the park and new revenue to the system. Bridgeport receives 10% of revenues; first year revenues totaled about \$800,000. Future annual revenues are expected to reach \$2.5 million. This type of project could be introduced in Keney Park at no cost to the city; in addition, the structures have low environmental impact to the park.

Communicating Value through Fees

Within Hartford, there has been a history of not charging fees for park services or programs. However, this is extremely uncommon and may not be tenable for Hartford to continue in the future. The topic of park fees was introduced at the parks guide public meetings and, in general, Hartford residents did not object to the possibility of future fees. Rather, their priority lied with finding ways to create a sustainable, high quality park system. In addition to offsetting costs, fees also help to communicate the value of the park system to its users and to Hartford residents.

We tend to culturally value things that have a clear monetary value, or price. Small fees for some services can help reinforce the value of parks and programs and promote better stewardship and care of the parks.

Other park systems have different methods to introduce fees or ensure parity and affordability across users. Scholarships and scaled options help address affordability. One way to begin might be to introduce new programs and charge fees for them, while retaining existing programs at current levels for the first phase, to test political climate and community acceptability. A challenge for Hartford is that its recreation programs are currently free to both residents of Hartford and of outside communities alike. Charging admission for non-residents is an additional scalable option.

Parks are for public benefit. Groups or organizations who operate on park lands or who physically occupy park lands should financially give back to the park



Goodwin and Keney Golf Courses are underutilized revenue opportunities.

system. For instance, a corner of Columbus Park is occupied by a parking lot for an adjacent facility; this organization should pay for its use of park. The City should work to formalize leases with any groups that physically occupy park land or private vendors who use park lands for profit (such as a privately-run group exercise class which charges participants a fee and takes place in a park).

Both of Hartford's two public golf courses, at Keney Park and Goodwin Park, are underutilized opportunities for revenue. The City is planning to invest in needed capital improvements and a new management structure over the next couple years. Investments and management are still being determined. During this transition and with newly renovated courses, it is an opportunity to revisit the fee structure as well. Some golf courses have alternate structures, such as charging by the hour, not by the round. Alternatively, the City could explore the benefits of a single fee, regardless of the number of

holes played. While the current plan is to manage the courses internally, it may ultimately be beneficial to explore partnerships. These could include partnering with a local fitness club to expand membership, working with nearby hotels to provide discounts for hotel guests, or expanding the uses to include Foot Golf³ and attract new, non-golfers to use the course.

Marketing & Branding: Spreading the Word about Hartford's Parks

In addition to physical renewing, Hartford's park system needs improved branding. Currently, many of Hartford's parks suffer from poor reputations. While maintenance and managements improvements are underway, positive marketing can help reinforce the message of transformation. Improving perceptions will help increase park activity and contribute to an improved sense of safety at parks.

While maintenance and managements improvements are underway, positive marketing can help reinforce the message of transformation.

3 FootGolf is playing golf with a soccer ball. The American FootGolf League oversees the sport.

Improving branding includes upgrading physical signage as well as marketing events. MECA,⁴ a division of Development Services, will play an important role in programming and advertising, by helping spread the word about up-coming events at parks. A coordinated event calendar is needed to publicize upcoming events, and MECA could be the coordinator of this resource.

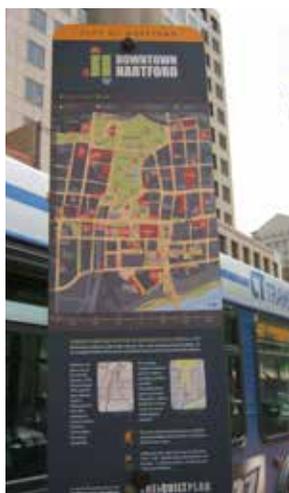
Currently, many of the special moments in Hartford's parks remain hidden to most park visitors. There is a need to share the positive stories, rich history, and memorable places in Hartford. Park system maps that call out these key locations will encourage greater exploration of parks.

Accompanying these maps, physical signage will help improve park usage. Wayfinding signage within and

between parks (along bicycle routes, for instance) will welcome pedestrians and bicyclists into parks. iQuilt signage improvements underway Downtown provide an example of consistent wayfinding signage. The Connections section of this report suggests color-coding bicycle routes to create a memorable, interesting system. Within parks, improved signage will help set the tone for appropriate behavior. Rules should be clearly posted, and the message should be framed positively. Focus on good behavior rather than listing prohibited activities.

Together, improved messaging, signage, and other marketing tactics can create a consistent, high-quality brand for a parks system that people will want to come and enjoy.

Signage, wayfinding, and maps can help visitors navigate the park system



CAPITAL CITY PARKS. GO EXPLORE.

HARTFORD



The Capital City Parks project is a multi-phase initiative to create a network of parks and green spaces throughout the city. The project is designed to provide a variety of recreational opportunities for residents of all ages and abilities. The project is also designed to improve the city's air quality and provide a natural habitat for wildlife.

HARTFORD HAS IT..

- 1. Blue Mountains
- 2. Woodlawn Park
- 3. Sunnyside Park
- 4. Lincoln Park
- 5. Riverside Park
- 6. Sunnyside Park
- 7. Sunnyside Park
- 8. Sunnyside Park
- 9. Sunnyside Park
- 10. Sunnyside Park
- 11. Sunnyside Park
- 12. Sunnyside Park
- 13. Sunnyside Park
- 14. Sunnyside Park
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- 16. Sunnyside Park
- 17. Sunnyside Park
- 18. Sunnyside Park
- 19. Sunnyside Park
- 20. Sunnyside Park

A future connections map has been created as part of this process.

Gateway Signage

Park entrances are the first impression for visitors. Signage at designated park entries plays a large part of making sure this first impression is positive. Signage should include the park name, large enough to be visible from a distance, as well as smaller, pedestrian-scale signage to explain park rules, hours, behavior, or other important information. Entrances should be welcoming for people who arrive at the park by foot or on bicycle. Signage is also a chance to demonstrate the overall Capital City Parks System identity. It should be consistent across the system, but can be adapted to special identity parks. For instance, each Identity Park could have its own application, while still feel like it's part of the same overall system. All neighborhood parks should share a similar style to signal that they are part of the overall network. The New York Park case study on the following page shows how different park identities can part of a consistent, unified overall brand.

Examples of park gateway signage around the country.



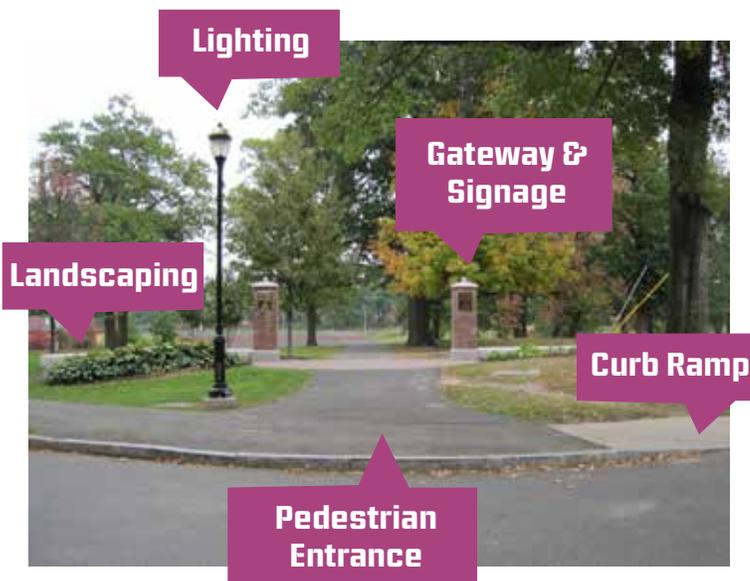
Golden Gate Park, San Francisco, CA



Millennium Park, Chicago, IL



Prospect Park, Brooklyn, NY



Successful Pedestrian Entrance: Pope Park

Signage and Branding Case Study:

New York City Parks - Rebranding and signage design by Pentagram

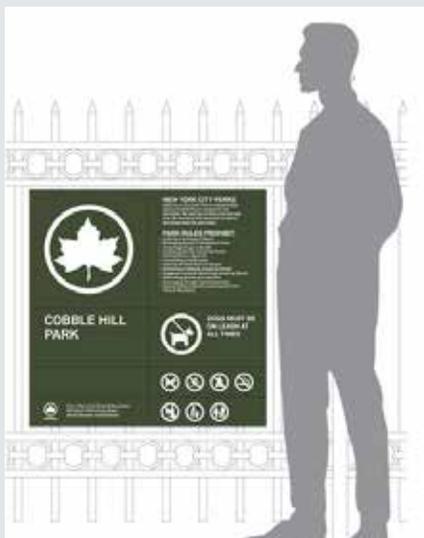


Example of an overall graphic brand and how it can be adapted for different applications and customized for special parks.

Sub-brands



Consistent Brand + Diverse Park Identities



Proposed Park Signage: Modular system, so relevant information can be included for each park. Allows for horizontal or vertical orientation. All information is presented in a similar style.



Implementation / 10 Year Action Plan

Over the next ten years, significant improvements in the Capital City Park system are achievable.

Over the next ten years, significant improvements in the Capital City Park system are achievable. This action plan details year-by-year steps for the system. Capital improvements are a significant part of this plan, but connectivity improvements and other actions are equally important.

5 principles guided the creation of this list and the prioritization over the next decade:

1. Generate return on investments
2. Protect the legacy
3. Reduce maintenance burdens
4. Improve connectivity
5. Improve safety, image, & neighborhoods

The first wave of projects can begin immediately; these are small-scale projects in Identity Parks that can begin generating revenue quickly. The first wave of neighborhood parks in the next year focuses on renewing oldest play elements and addressing safety issues across the system. While these capital improvements are underway, other critical immediate actions like hiring a grants writer and volunteer coordinator must also occur.

This sequence of Identity Park improvements in one year, followed by Neighborhood Park improvements

the following year is repeated over the next several years. The second and third Identity Park phases continues to prioritize revenue along with larger-footprint projects to upgrade park infrastructure and image. Neighborhood Park improvements focus on upgrades to active recreation parks in phase 2 and historic and passive parks in phase 3. Two demonstration environmental projects are recommended, which will reduce future maintenance burdens. All other upgrades and improvements are scheduled towards the end of the first ten years. These are “less urgent” actions that can wait a few years.

The connectivity plan is implemented in three phases over the next ten years. Phase 1 (years 1-2) focuses on bicycle lane and sharrows additions that can be implemented with only restriping (no changes to road beds); Phase 2 (years 2-3) includes additional bicycle lanes that will require slightly more effort. Phase 3 includes off-road trails and more difficult connections that will require more planning, design, and funding. Initial planning and design for high priority Phase 3 links should start now, with the bulk of construction scheduled for years 3-10. Wayfinding signage between parks should accompany connectivity improvements.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

Immediate

YEAR I

YEAR 2

Short-term

YEAR 3

YEAR 4

IDENTITY PARKS I

quick wins: revenue generation, reducing maintenance, & improving image

- > COLT 1
- > KENEY 1
- > BUSHNELL 1
- > POPE 1
- > GOLF COURSE IMPROVEMENTS - (KENEY & GOODWIN)

ON-GOING WORK BY RIVERFRONT RECAPTURE

NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS I

critical improvements to small neighborhood parks; environmental demonstrations for ecological health & reduced maintenance burdens

- > ROBERTA JONES
- > HARRIET TUBMAN
- > ROCKY RIDGE 1
- > COLUMBUS 1
- > HYLAND - CAL RIPKEN FIELD
- > BLUE HILLS
- > CHARTER OAK MEMORIAL

> OTHER: IDENTIFY DOG PARK LOCATION

> SIGNAGE IMPLEMENTATION: Undertake system-wide park signage design project. Then update all signage system-wide simultaneously and in near-term if funding permits; otherwise, update signage park-by-park concurrent with park improvements

IDENTITY II

continuing to grow revenue, improve image, upgrade basics, & expand programming

- > COLT 2
- > KENEY 2
- > BUSHNELL 2
- > GOODWIN 2
- > ELIZABETH 1
- > POPE 2

NEIGHBORHOOD II

improvements to active recreation parks

- > BRACKETT
- > COLUMBUS
- > POPE WEST
- > BOND ST.
- > ROCKY RIDGE II
- > HYLAND II
- > FORSTER HEIGHTS 1
- > NORTH BRANCH PARK RIVER
- > CRONIN
- > TURNING POINT MEADOW
- > RICE HEIGHTS WETLAND

CONNECTIVITY

CONNECTIVITY PLAN PHASE 1

PHASE 2

PHASE 3A

PHASE 3B

CRITICAL CONNECTIVITY LINKS

create safe crossings between adjacent park areas

OTHER STEPS

OTHER CRITICAL ACTIONS

build the foundation for reducing maintenance, generating revenue, and improving internal coordination

- > FORM PARK LEADERSHIP GROUP & BEGIN MEETING REGULARLY
- > HIRE GRANTS WRITER
- > HIRE VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR
- > FORMALIZE AGREEMENTS WITH FRIENDS GROUPS
- > ADJUST FEE STRUCTURE
- > IMPLEMENT LOW MOW AREAS IN APPROPRIATE AREAS IN ALL PARKS
- > CENTRALIZE SCHEDULING FOR FIELDS

- > UNDERTAKE COMPREHENSIVE STUDY TO ADDRESS WATER QUALITY IN PARKS

Mid-term
YEAR 5

YEAR 6

Long-term
YEARS 7 - 10

IDENTITY III

other improvements for image, recreation, programming, & revenue

- > COLT 3
- > KENEY 3
- > BUSHNELL 3
- > GOODWIN 3
- > BATTERSON 1
- > ELIZABETH 2

IDENTITY IV

other upgrades

- > ELIZABETH 3
- > POPE 2
- > BATTERSON 2
- > BUSHNELL 4
- > COLT 4

NEIGHBORHOOD III

improvements to historically significant parks & passive parks

- > PORTER
- > KENEY TOWER
- > BARNARD
- > PULASKI MALL

NEIGHBORHOOD IV

other upgrades

- > WILLIE WARE
- > WEXFORD
- > FORSTER HEIGHTS 2
- > DELUCCO
- > LOZADA

MID-TERM STREET IMPROVEMENTS

improve connections between parks and neighborhoods

- > CROSSWALKS, SIDEWALKS, & ENTRANCES THROUGHOUT SYSTEM (WITHIN 1/4 MILE OF PARK ENTRANCES)
- > IMPROVEMENTS TO TRAFFIC ISLANDS AND SIMILAR OPEN SPACES TO MINIMIZE MAINTENANCE NEEDS

10 YEAR ACTION PLAN

Phased Improvements by Park

Identity Parks

Colt

1 - West End activation

- Reopen circulation
- Concession stand & playground (consolidate all play equipment to west end, and install new)
- Central service path
- Low mow terrace
- Renovations of maintenance structures

2 - Sports & Circulation Upgrades throughout (*phased over 2 years to minimize disruptions to field use*)

- Improve entrances
- Upgrade both parking lots
- Dillon Stadium renovations
- Remove track
- Add outer circulation loop (shared path appropriate for service vehicles) and any other new paths
- All other field updates
- Any other basic improvements – fencing, benches, paths, security cameras, etc.
- Demo existing shade structure and replace with more appropriately scaled shade structure
- Low mow around rest of park perimeter

3 - Expanded programming & revenue

- Restore ice/roller skating rink (revenue opportunity)

4 - Historic Structures?

- Evaluate renovation of historic buildings (renovate if can generate sufficient revenue to more than cover cost of renovation)

Keney

1 - Revenue generation potential & critical improvements

- Clubhouse
- Entrances
- Tree maintenance (safety hazards)
- Low mow
- Waverly playground & court upgrades
- Golf course improvements

2 - Woods activation, recreation renewal, & phase 1 Great Park Road

- Trail improvements throughout
- Install trailheads with trail maps & parking turnouts
- AdventurePark
- Great Park Road - Vine St / Woodland Loop (in coordination with management and security improvements)
- In Woodland - any required court/field renovations, remove tennis courts and renaturalize¹
- Basic improvement (all 3 areas) – fencing, benches, paths, security cameras, etc.

3 - Upgrade rest of park circulation

- Complete Great Park Road throughout (in coordination with management and security improvements)

Goodwin

1 - Golf course upgrades & critical maintenance

- Golf course improvements
- Critical tree maintenance
- Fix any critical structural issues
- Low mow around ponds

2 - Basic Circulation Improvements

- Remove 2 gravel lots
- Entrance improvements

1 Alternatively, if demand warrants, could renovate and repair tennis courts

3 – Additional circulation & recreation improvements

- Improve park loop path
- Expand native plantings
- Renovate playground / spraypad
- Regrade fields as needed
- Any other basic improvements – fencing, benches, paths, security cameras, etc.
- All other updates

Bushnell

* Phasing could change depending on which features are implemented (future planning may result in changes, for example, to iQuilt recommendations).

1 – East End activation

- Pump House renovations as restaurant & event space
- Fix playground & water feature (turtles)
- Any other renovations in surrounding area

2 – Basic upgrades

- Upgrade paths, lighting, benches, etc. throughout

3 – Bushnell Gardens & Gold St realignment

4 – Water Element

- Add water feature that recalls historic river element
- Prioritize low maintenance / low construction cost designs with minimal mechanical systems required (best if stormwater / rain gardens that collect water when rains – sustainability feature that cleans water and doesn't require as much maintenance as other water features)

Elizabeth

1 – East End upgrades

- Playground renovations, path & entrance upgrades, basketball court renovations
- Basic improvements (east end) – fencing, benches, paths, security cameras, etc.
- Low mow

2 - Building renovations

- (Year 3 if grant successful, otherwise, shift project to “long-term”)

3- West End recreation improvements

- Resurface tennis courts, regrade baseball field
- Any necessary basic improvements (west end) – fencing, benches, paths, security cameras, etc.

Pope

1 – Baby Pope renovation

2 – Critical recreation upgrades (main park)

- Critical renovations to playgrounds, courts, and sports fields (main park)
- Low mow

3 – Implement remainder of master plan

- Demo court remnants in High Mall, nature trails in Bankside Grove
- Upgrades / renovations of remaining play, court, or sports field elements (main park)
- Any other basic improvements – fencing, benches, paths, security cameras, etc.

Batterson

1 – Revenue generation

- Renovate buildings
- Identify 3rd party vendor for park (ex. Canoe/ Kayak rental)
- Expand programming opportunities & generate revenue

2 - Trails & Buildings

- Expand nature trails throughout northwestern portion of park
- Renovate main buildings and demolish Caretaker's Cottage

Neighborhood Parks

Roberta Jones

- Upgrade playground
- Basic improvements – fencing, benches, paths, security cameras, etc.
- Low mow

Harriet Tubman

- Repair broken playground structure
- Basic improvements – fencing, benches, paths, security cameras, etc.

Rocky Ridge

1 – Play upgrades

- Playground renovation
- Convert building to open-air pavilion

2 – All other improvements

- Main ped/bike path
- Improve sports fields
- Add community garden
- Basic improvements – fencing, benches, other park paths, security cameras, etc.
- Low mow

Hyland

1 – Cal Ripken field

2 – All other improvements

- Paths throughout, including Ridge Trail
- Add basketball court (south of play area behind daycare)
- Any other field/court upgrades needed
- Basic improvements – fencing, benches, other paths, security cameras, etc.
- Low mow

Columbus

1 – Repair gate on small child play area

2 – All other improvements

- Improve central path
- Court and playground renovations
- Basic improvements – fencing, benches, paths, security cameras, etc.
- Low mow

Brackett

**ideally, pair with development on western portion; this project can be delayed to correspond with development*

- Renovations throughout, including basketball court, play, and basic improvements (fencing, benches, paths, security cameras, etc.)

Bond St.

- Add playground
- Basic improvements – fencing, benches, paths, security cameras, etc.
- Low mow

Blue Hills

Demolition should be done immediately before ready to construct new playground (avoid need to maintain large site without structure; potential for unwanted activity)

- Demo existing building
- Create neighborhood park on southern half of site
- Sell/lease northern half as development site
- Low mow

Forster Heights

1 – Basic improvements – fencing, benches, paths, security cameras, etc.; Low mow

2 – Recreation upgrades: Court, playground, & spraypad renovations

Turning Point

- Demonstration meadow with expanded forest canopy

Rice Heights

- Wetland & educational nature trail

North Branch Park River

- Educational signage
- Nature trail
- Outdoor classroom

Porter

- Vegetation improvements - plant trees around outside of loop
- Opportunities for community garden, or educational garden linked to adjacent school (or opportunity for Grow Hartford to move here if current site on Main St by Barnard becomes developed)
- Basic improvements - fencing, benches, paths, security cameras, etc.
- Low mow

Keney Tower

- Improvements TBD (currently, separate master plan process is underway for this park)
- At minimum: install historic signage at entrance, undertake any necessary structural renovations to tower, and any basic improvements - fencing, benches, paths, security cameras, etc.
- Low mow

Barnard

- Improvements throughout (paths, paving, lighting, security camera, lawn, etc.)

Pulaski Mall

- Renovate western end

Charter Oak Monument

- Study potential improvements (evaluate whether stairs or walkway improvements are needed, whether monument should be relocated, etc.)

Willie Ware

- Upgrade fence
- Any required building renovations
- Add shade around seating
- Any required basic improvements - fencing, benches, paths, security cameras, etc.
- Low mow

Wexford

- Remove planters to improve sight lines
- Demo poor condition exercise and playground equipment
- Remove graffiti in non-allowed areas and add instructional signage
- Evaluate what kinds of additional programming make sense
- Any other basic improvements - fencing, benches, paths, security cameras, etc.

Cronin

- Resurface basketball courts
- Center field improvements
- Any necessary basic improvements – fencing, benches, paths, security cameras, etc.
- Perimeter path
- Swale along eastern edge
- Low mow

Delucco

- Renovate basketball courts
- Any necessary basic improvements – fencing, benches, paths, security cameras, etc.

Lozada

- Resurface basketball court, evaluate if demand exists for 2nd
- Any necessary basic improvements – fencing, benches, paths, security cameras, etc.

NO IMPROVEMENTS SLATED WITHIN NEXT 10 YEARS / ON-GOING MAINTENANCE OR EMERGENCY REPAIRS ONLY

These parks were recently fully renovated; no additional new construction foreseen for next ten years

- Day
- Sigourney (with exception of adding sidewalk along western edge)

CONNECTIVITY CRITICAL LINKS (next chapter details connectivity plan)

- Hyland to Rocky Ridge
- Pope Park: links between 3 areas
- Elizabeth: east/west link on Prospect Ave
- Colt: Groton St. entrance

MID-TERM STREET IMPROVEMENTS

- Crosswalks, sidewalks, & entrances throughout system (within 1/4 mile of park entrances)
- Improvements to traffic islands and similar open spaces to minimize maintenance needs (see Barry Square and Campfield Green for prototypical recommendations for these kinds of spaces)

OTHER ACTION ITEMS

Dog Park

In the short-term, a location for a dog park in Hartford should be selected. Options should be vetted with multiple departments, Friends Groups, and the community to determine a suitable location. Potential options could include parks like: Keney, Pope West, Pope - Bankside Grove, Turning Point, or Porter.

Signage

If funding allows, improve signage should be installed simultaneously across the full system in the near-term. Otherwise, signage improvements could be made park-by-park, concurrent with other improvements. In the near-term, a signage design project should be undertaken.



Capitol City Connectivity Plan

Hartford has sufficient park acreage and amenities, but improved connectivity for bicyclists and pedestrians is needed.

In the late 1800s, Olmsted's vision for Hartford's Park system was not just about the parks themselves. A series of parkways connecting the parks to one another and to neighborhoods was also a key part of his idea. Olmsted's idea was passed on to the twentieth century and detailed by the Board of Park Commissioners. The 1912 General Plan illustrates the concept of the connected greenways throughout the City. Bushnell functioned as the system's central hub, with parkways radiating outwards. These radial parkways intersected with a series of concentric greenways, ringing the city at different depths. Greenways along Park River and Connecticut River complemented the "hub-and-spoke" system and added additional connectivity. Westbourne Parkway, between Albany Ave and Keney Park gives a sense of

the planned character of these roads – wide, tree-lined boulevards with central landscaped medians.

EXISTING GAPS IN CONNECTIVITY

Park system improvements, however, focused on individual parks, and the connective links were never implemented as envisioned. Today, the parks are generally well-connected via the road network in Hartford, although interstate and rail lines visually block some parks, especially Riverside and Charter Oak Landing. Connectivity by other modes of transportation is more limited. Bike and pedestrian access are especially important because a demographics analysis showed that many families in Hartford do not own a vehicle. Additionally, bike

“A system of parkways to link the city’s parks was a major objective. . . .[but] the parkway concept was most likely subordinated by the development of the parks themselves and was never fully achieved.”

1992 Parks Master Plan, page 10

and walkability is a factor in encouraging healthy neighborhoods and lifestyles.

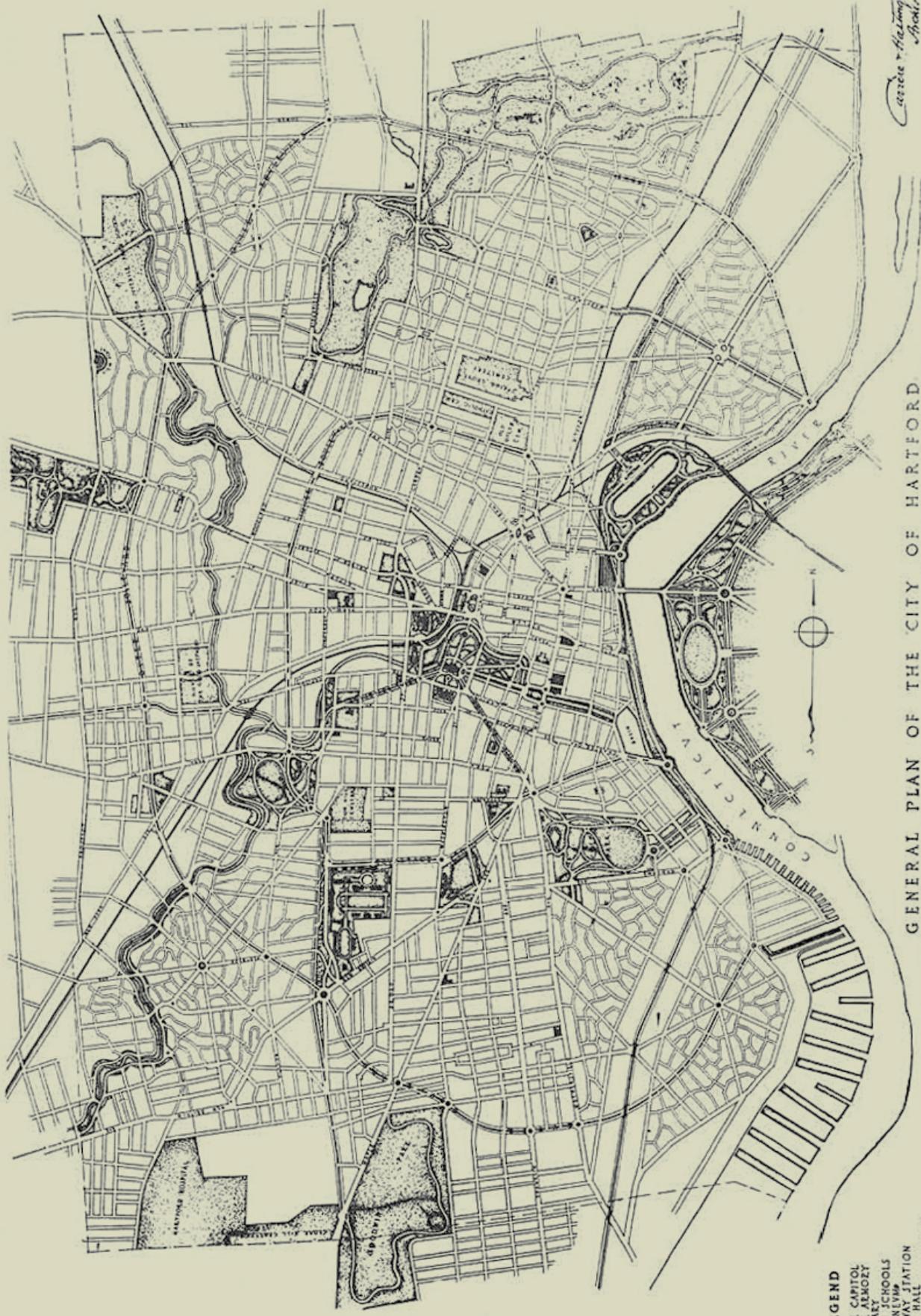
As illustrated by the needs assessment, Hartford has sufficient park acreage and amenities, but improved connectivity for bicyclists and pedestrians is needed so all residents can easily reach the resources. Access to neighborhood parks should be safe and easy by either foot or by bicycle for users of all ages. Bicycle links between the denser, central neighborhoods (where park acreage is lacking compared to other

neighborhoods) and regional parks on the edges of the city are needed as well. Additionally, many of the City’s amenities are concentrated in several large parks, such as the fields at Colt Park. Improved bike access to these resources will help to ensure equitable access to some of the more in demand amenities in the system.

The existing riverfront path along the Connecticut River is an asset, but greater trail and bike lane connectivity is needed across the system. Today,



*Cassie & Hastings
Architects*



LEGEND
THE CAPITOL
THE ALCOVEY
THE BERRY
THE SCHOOLS
THE RAILROAD STATION
THE BUS STATION
THE CITY HALL
THE MUNICIPAL BUILDING

GENERAL PLAN OF THE CITY OF HARTFORD
SHOWING PROPOSED PROGRAMME FOR DEVELOPMENT

Hartford has a few stretches of bicycle lanes, but they are scattered across the city and disconnected from one another, diminishing user experience. Sidewalks are almost always present on city streets near parks; yet, crosswalks are sometimes missing.

Connectivity within the parks is in need of improvement as well. Many pedestrian and bicycle entrances are blocked, gated, or otherwise unwelcoming. Signage is frequently lacking, overlapping, or unclear. In many instances, it is unclear to potential park visitors whether they are allowed to enter. Currently, jersey barriers are used to block entrances to vehicles, but the result is the appearance that all modes of transportation (and people) are banned. Blocked trail entrances are common, especially in Keney. Several of the larger parks have walking or hiking trails, but trail entrances often lack signage, and park trail maps are usually not available.

At the level of each individual park, many sidewalks within parks are in poor condition. Deteriorated surfaces are problems throughout the park system. Few parks have sidewalks wide enough to accommodate necessary service or emergency vehicles, so these vehicles choose their own paths across lawns and over tree roots. This behavior leads to erosion, damaged vegetation, and ruts. Multiple public comments focused on the need to eliminate driving and parking on grass in parks. Bushnell was frequently cited as a location where these kinds of activities were occurring. The lack of service roads is particularly problematic in Bushnell, where city-wide events require truck access for service.

There are many places in the city where additional connections could be created on already existing flood control land, utility easements, city- and state-owned property, and the riverfront to enhance connections.



Connectivity Community Feedback

- Create well-maintained paths with welcoming entrances
- Improve signage and create trail maps
- Reopen closed roads, especially in Keney
- Increase bicycle and public transit connections between parks
- Increase connectivity along the Connecticut and Park Rivers

MyHartford Connectivity Maps



Bicycling



Walking

Three Types of Future Connections



Connect along
the rivers



2 Connect
parks with
neighborhoods &
one another



3 Improve
connectivity
within parks

Building on the “ring of parks” as well as capitalizing on the waterfronts, the connectivity plan implements the historic idea of connectivity along Hartford’s rivers,

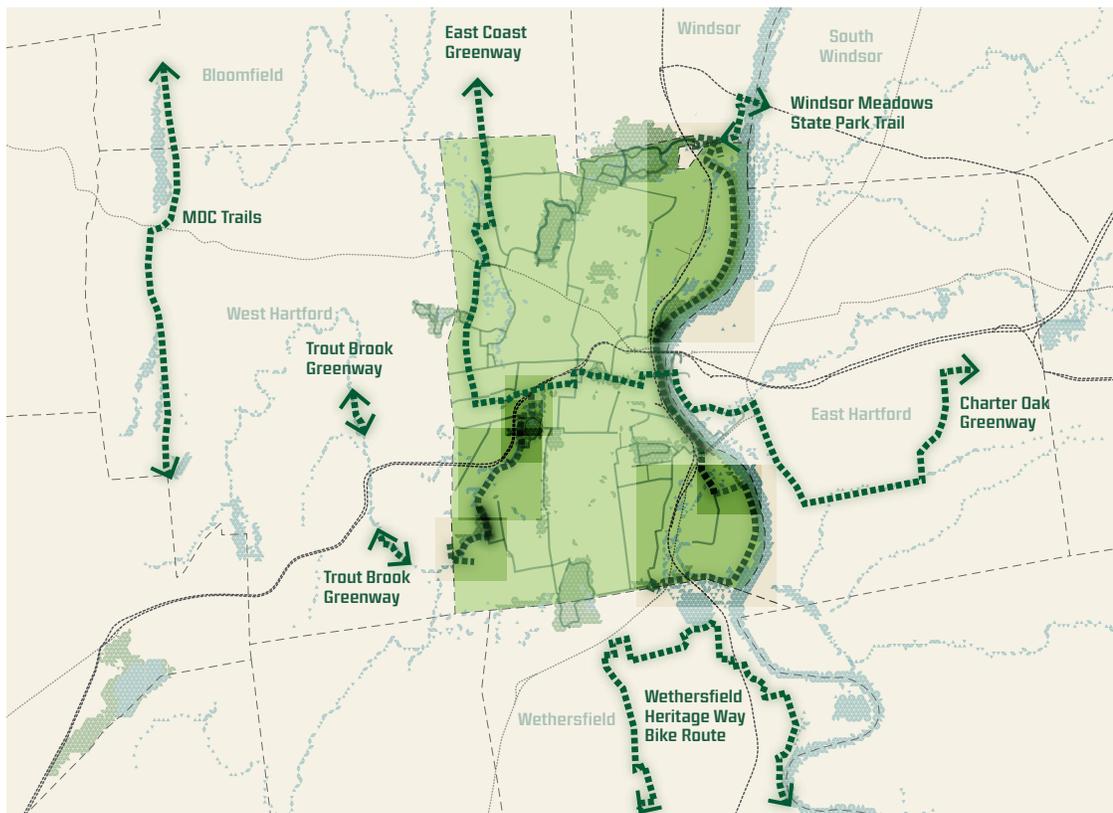
FUTURE CONNECTIVITY PLAN

Through the planning process, the future connectivity plan has generated a tremendous amount of excitement among the community. The connectivity plan unites many of the goals of the Capital City Parks Guide.

By building on the early idea of a “ring of parks” as well as capitalizing on the City’s waterfronts, the connectivity plan first and foremost implements the historic ideas of connectivity along Hartford’s rivers, the Connecticut and the Park River. To do this, the plan recommends improving and amenitizing existing trails between Charter Oak Landing and Riverfront Plaza, as well as extending the riverfront trail north and south, as allowable. This process should be

coordinated with Riverfront Recapture. Given the costs and coordination needs within a levee system, the Connecticut River trail expansions will happen slowly over time. Along the City’s other river system, the plan intends to extend and add trails along the North and South Branch of the Park River. Along the North Branch, an off-street, shared-use pathway will run next to the street.

The connectivity plan also creates connections for bikes and pedestrians between the major identity parks, as well as from the parks to the two rivers. Connections to surrounding neighborhood and nearby schools have also been considered.



Regional
Links

Park Roads

Like many historic parks, another important feature of Hartford's largest identity parks are the vehicular road systems within them. At nearly 700 acres in size with an internal golf course, Keney is exemplary of a park that requires thoughtful, pedestrian and bike friendly vehicular access within it. Elizabeth Park and Goodwin Park are also key parks for road improvements.

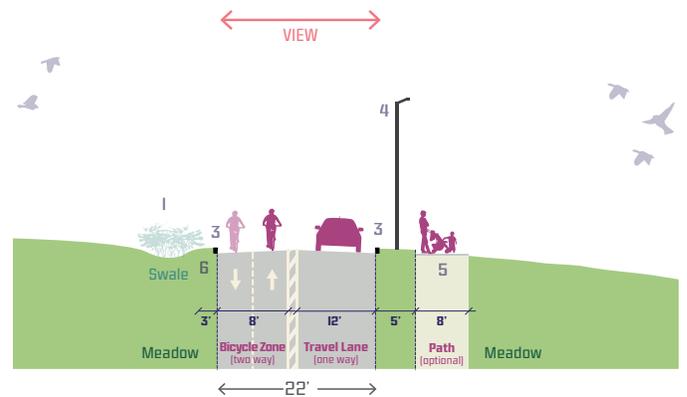
Due to recent safety concerns, many portions of Keney's internal road system have been blocked off or transformed to one-way roads. The priority for design of circulation in the parks should be to balance all users: vehicles, bicycles, and pedestrians (and in Keney, hikers and horses). Central Park in New York and Shelburne Farms in Vermont are both examples of parks in varying conditions - urban and rural - where the park roads are a gracious, additive part of the park experience.

Keney Park is large and differentiated, with distinct areas and very different road conditions. Traversed by a curvilinear road, today there is no designated space for bicyclists. Similarly, there are few designated parking spaces along the road, resulting random parking along the road that detracts from a sense of safety. Poor drainage and improper parking have both deteriorated the road edge and the adjacent vegetation.

The design of the road throughout should reflect the different conditions and the context: the presence of forested areas alongside, an open meadow condition, or a threshold between the two. In each design, dedicated space is provided for bikers, pedestrians, and vehicles, with differentiation through curbed edges. Planted swales are provided alongside to better manage stormwater run-off and improve drainage.



Forest Road



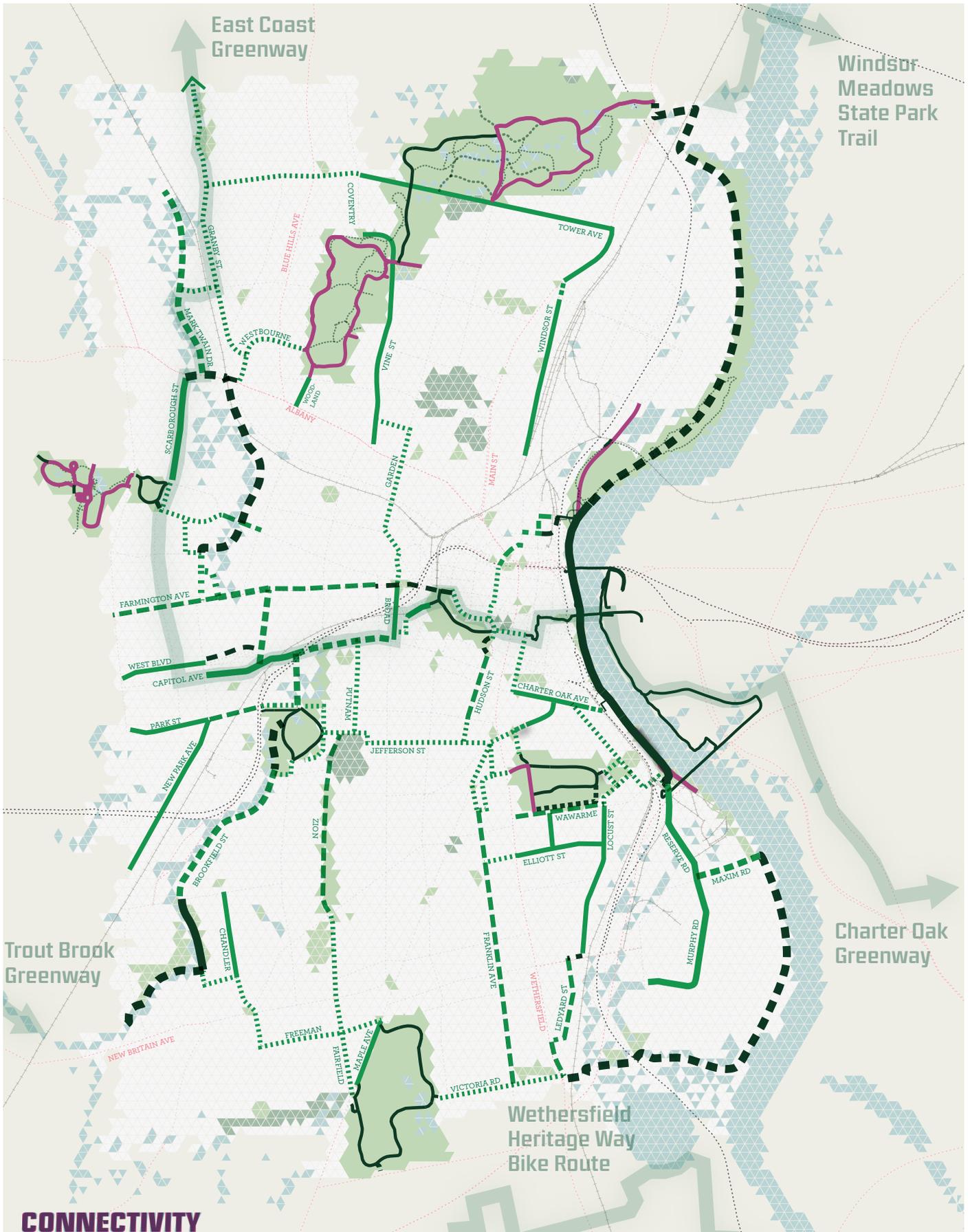
Meadow Road



Threshold Road

Park Road Characteristics

1. Swales on slopes draining toward road
2. Dense, low planting along forested edges discourage parking
3. Curbs on open edge
4. Dark sky lighting
5. Paths sited along open edge
6. Swales are set back from curb to reduce erosion behind curb



CONNECTIVITY

Connectivity Types

Given Hartford's complex, urban street system, a combination of bicycle lanes, sharrows (lane shared by cars and bicycles), and shared use pathways will all be used. (See image to left for a map of recommended lanes.)

On-street bicycle lanes allocate dedicated space within the roadway to bicyclists. They need to be clearly painted and then maintained. This allows the striping to visually narrow the travel lane thereby reducing vehicle speeds. The on-street lanes provide riding space for bicyclists by moving traffic away from edge of roadway and nearby sidewalks.

Sharrows are shared lanes between vehicles and bicyclists. Through special markings, they assist bicyclists with positioning on the roadway and alert road users of the location bicyclists are likely to occupy. The painted lanes encourage safe passing of bicyclists by motorists and reduce the incidence of wrong-way bicycling by ensuring bicyclists travel with the direction of traffic.

Legend

-  Park road
-  Park path / sidewalk
-  Shared use pathway - existing
-  Shared use pathway - proposed
-  Trail
-  Bicycle lane - existing
-  Bicycle lane - proposed
-  Sharrow - proposed
-  Entrances - major
-  Entrances - minor



Regional trail

A shared use path is physically separated from vehicular traffic by a curb, median or routing that is independent of a street network (often through open space). Typically these facilities allow for shared use by bicyclist, pedestrians and skateboarders or rollerbladers. Shared use pathways tend to be recreational in nature, although they are sometimes used for commuting and daily trips. The Riverfront trails and Keney Park trails are examples of existing shared use paths today.

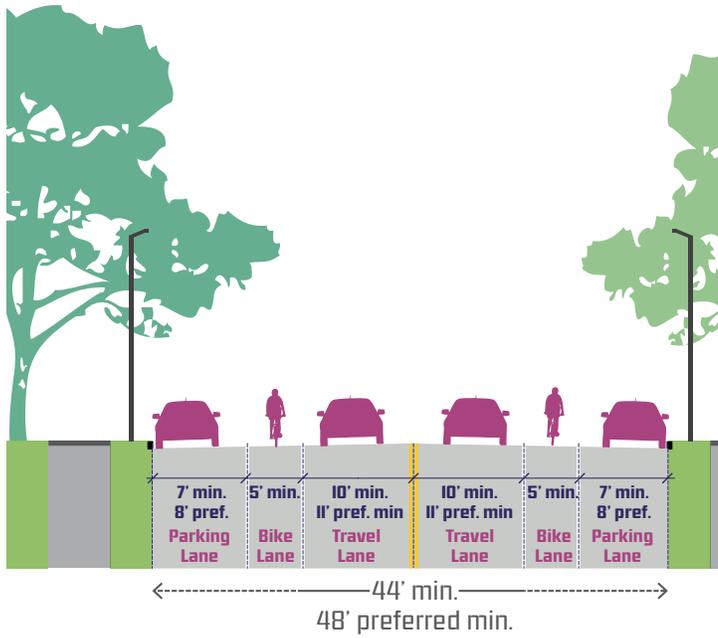


Sharrows

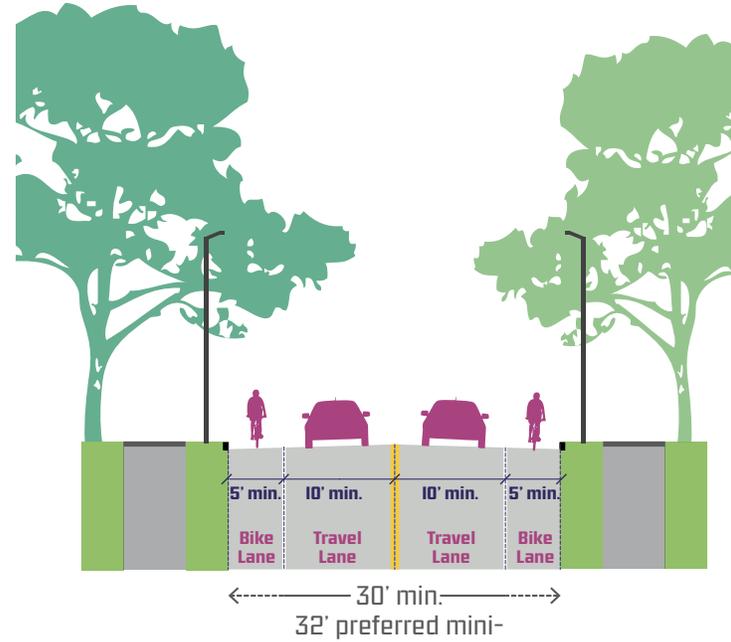


On-street bike lane

Connectivity Standards: Bicycle Lanes Integration

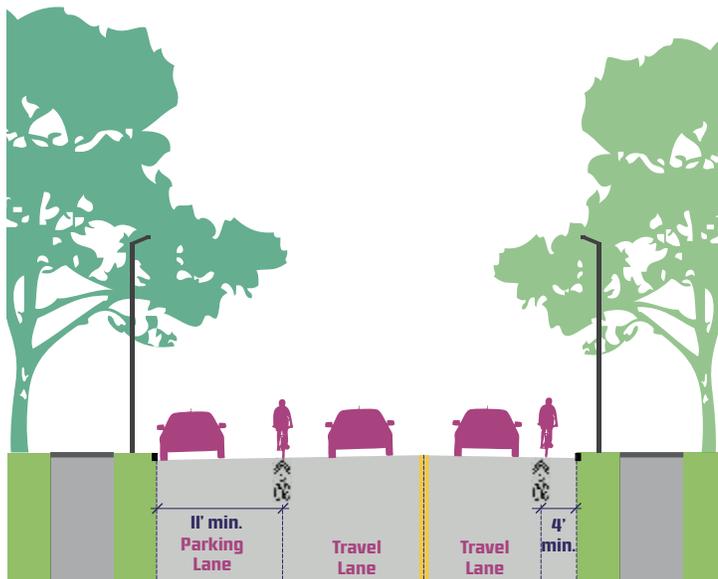


BIKE LANE: STREETS WITH ON-STREET PARKING



BIKE LANE: STREETS WITHOUT ON-STREET PARKING

On-street bike lane



Sharrow



Shared Use Path

Industry Standards for Bike Lanes

On-Street Bicycle Lanes

- Use on collector and arterial roadways, or on high volume local streets.
- 4' width w/o curb, 5' width with curb -AASHTO
- When placed adjacent to on-street parking, the left hand lane stripe (the stripe that separates the bicycle lane from the travel lane) should be a minimum of 12 feet from the curb. If parking volumes are substantial or turnover is high, such as downtown locations or streets with metered parking, increase to 13 feet so as to avoid collisions in the door zone.
- Pavement markings: 500' maximum spacing, can be used more frequently in dense urban settings. -MUTCD
- Use "Bike Lane" signage at the beginning of the lane and spaced every mile or at significant intersections.
- Bike lanes should be installed on both sides of roadway to discourage wrong direction riding.

Sharrows

- Roadway speed limit of 35 mph maximum -AASHTO
- 10,000 ADT or less preferred on roadway where shared travel lane is less than 14'
- Space sharrow pavement markings 250' or less, increase frequency of use in complex urban areas -MUTCD
- The center of sharrow marking should be located 4' from edge of roadway if no parking is present and a minimum of 11' from the edge of roadway where on-street parking is present -MUTCD
- Use "Share the Road" signage where adequate lane width exists for side-by-side auto and bicycle travel-AASHTO
- Use "Bikes May Use Full Lane" signage where lane width is inadequate for side-by-side auto and bicycle travel -AASHTO

Shared Use Pathway

- 8' wide minimum, 10-12' wide preferred
- Bi-directional travel is preferred
- Minimize roadway and driveway crossings
- Sign for permitted uses

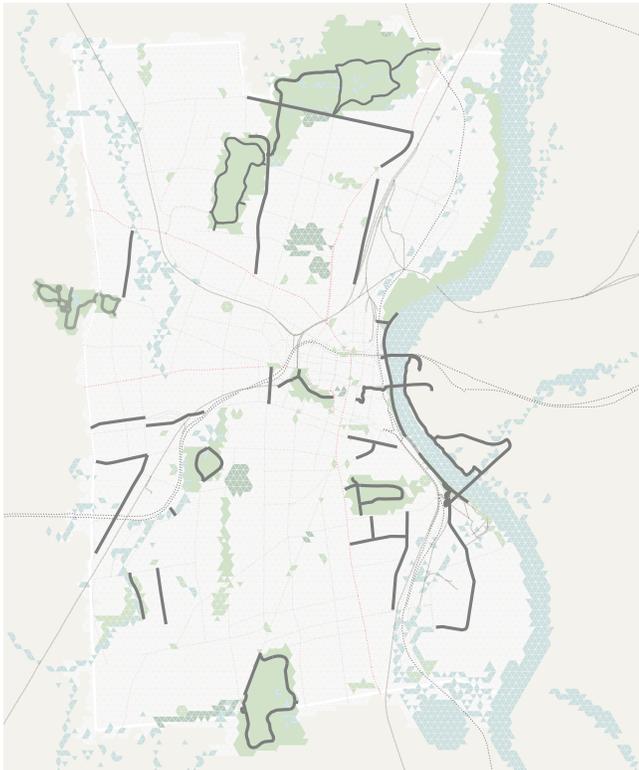
CONNECTIVITY IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

The connectivity implementation strategy has been designed to address easily implementable, low cost connections in the first phase, in order to demonstrate success. These routes do not require modifications to existing roadways or parking, and can be accomplished immediately. Middle and later phases address routes that are more complex. These routes may require modifying roadways, additional planning studies, easements, property negotiations, and more substantial construction. The Downtown North plan proposes additional connections along

Albany Ave. and better access into the riverfront trail system. These connections would be assets that would augment the system, but they are assumed to be longer-term than the 10 year routes shown in this plan.

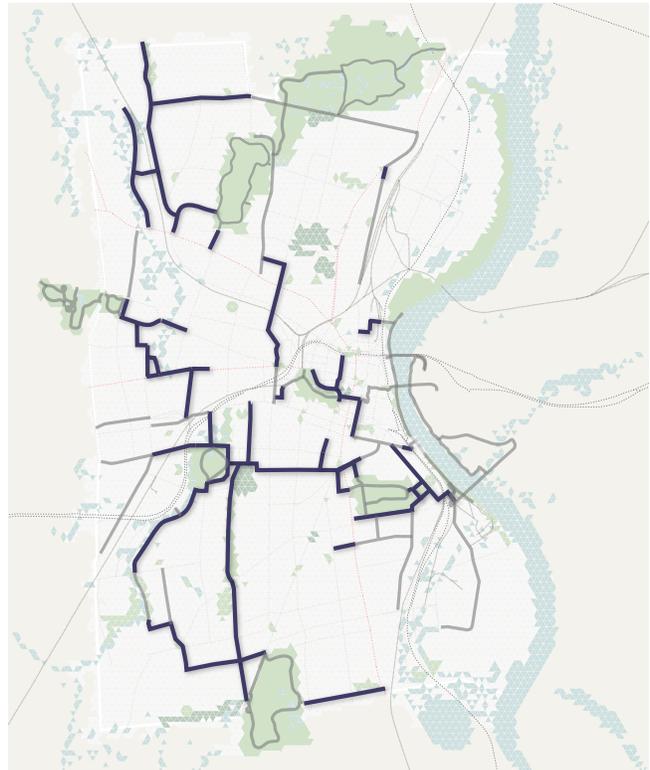


Existing Conditions



- Existing CT River loop near Downtown is an asset
- Closed roads within parks
- Blocked trails and entrances
- Entrances are not always welcoming, especially for pedestrians and bicyclists
- Existing bicycle lanes do not form a connected network

Phase I



- Routes that can be implemented in the next 1-2 years at low cost.
- Includes sharrow routes and bicycle lane routes that do not require significant modification to traffic lanes or on-street parking

Critical Long-term Implementation Steps

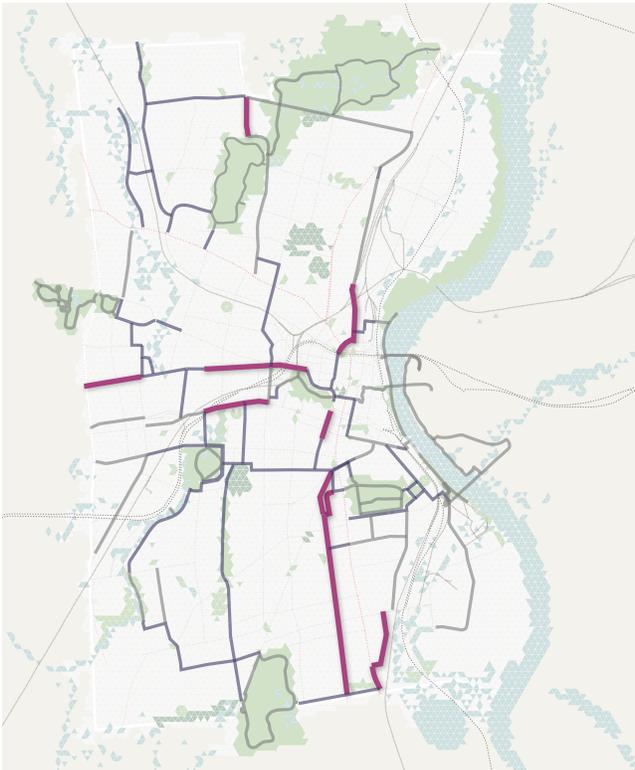
High priority phase 3 projects (critical gaps):

- Bicycle connection through Pulaski Circle
- Pathway to Riverside Park Bridge
- Riverfront connection to Charter Oak Landing
- Albany Avenue pathway
- Airport Road pathway
- Keney Park/Windsor Meadows/Riverside Park connection

Longer term phase 3 projects:

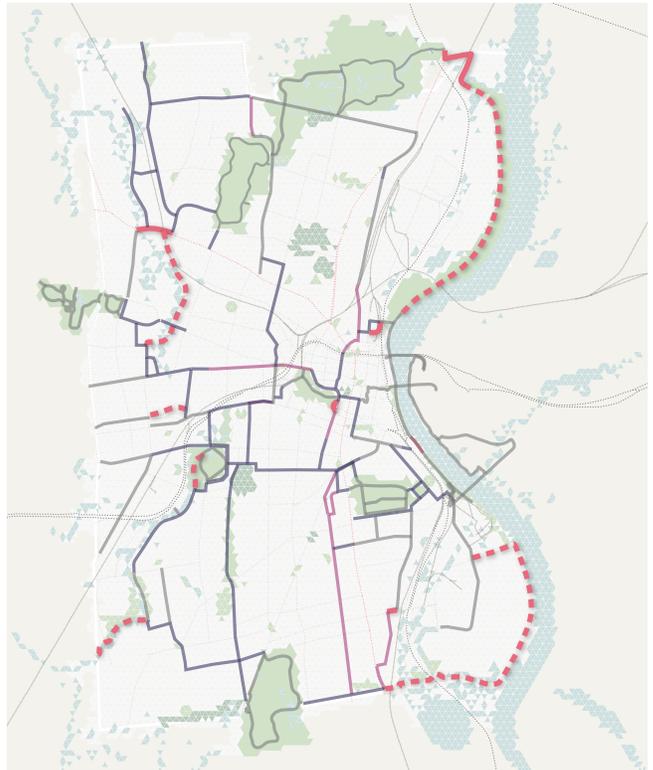
- North and South Branch Park River Trails
- South Meadows Trail
- Pope Park Trail
- Improvement of Riverside Park Trails

Phase 2



- New bicycle lanes that might require modification to traffic lanes and on-street parking
- Could be accomplished in 2 to 3 year period
- Example: Bicycle lanes on Farmington Avenue

Phase 3

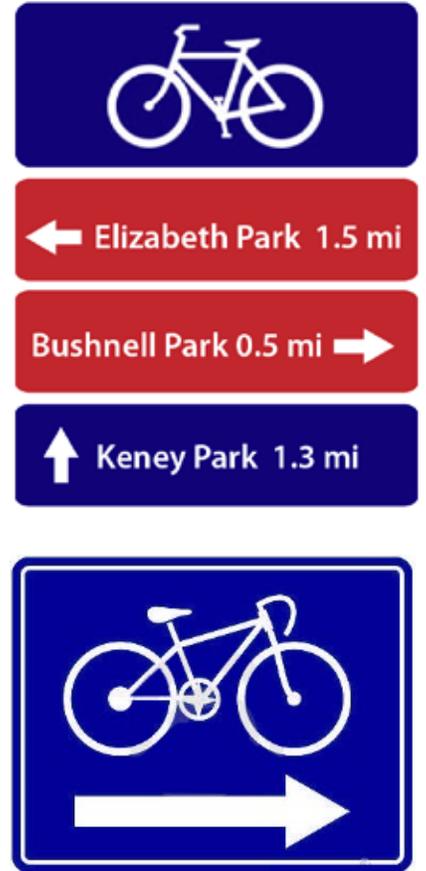


- Routes that require additional planning, design, and substantial construction
- Example: Riverfront pathway from Downtown to Charter Oak Landing
- Begin planning and design now with construction over a 3-10 year period.

CONNECTIVITY COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

Equally important to the physical implementation of the connectivity plan is the communications strategy to help the community get to know the new system. The system needs to be easy to use to novice and seasoned bikers alike. The plan recommends implementing a clear wayfinding and route system. Building on iconic subway maps in Boston or New York, Hartford future bike routes are branded by color. The system is adaptable, but suggests giving clear identity and ease of use to the green loop, the red downtown connector, and the orange or blue parallel north-south links.

This color system can be integrated into the street stripings delineating bike lanes and sharrows as well as navigational signage. Signage should give clear information about distances, destinations, park access, and accessible modes.



Integrate color route system to street implementation



Future Conceptual Plans

Hartford's park system is imagined as a connected system of individual parks; the quality and amenities in each helps create a successful system.

The Hartford park system is comprised of nearly 2,000 acres of parks, ranging in size from small pocket parks under an acre to up to approximately 680 feet at Keney Park. Many of the recommendations in this guiding document - such as departmental organization and connectivity - benefit the system as a whole. Yet, it is also important to consider the individual aspects of each park independently. While they work together to create the Capitol City Parks network, the usability and quality of each must also be measured on its own.

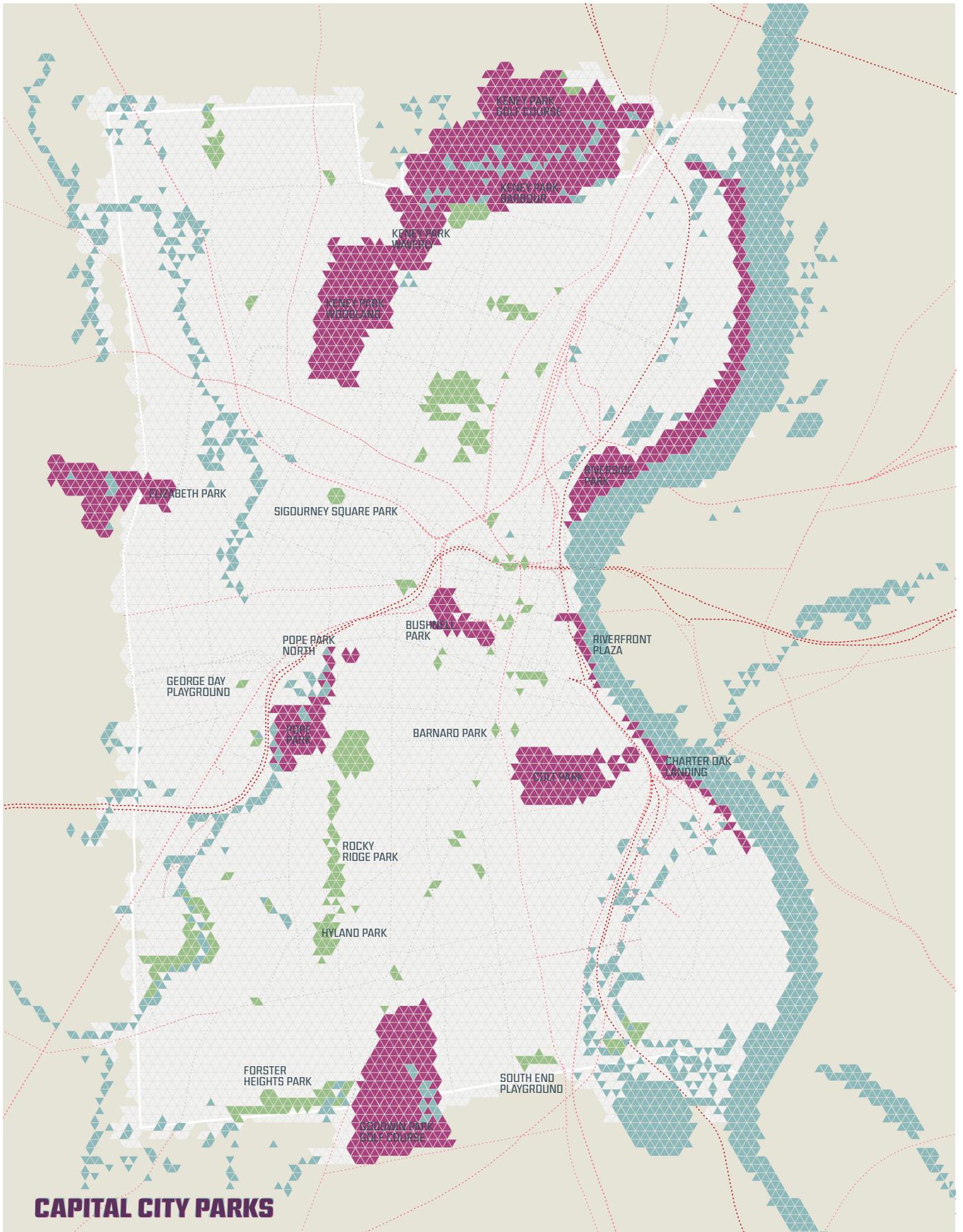
Each park has been evaluated through principles that reinforce the goals of the Parks Guide to:

- Restore historic plans
- Reduce maintenance needs
- Clarify circulation
- Create social spaces
- Improve a park's relationship to its context
- Create revenue generation opportunities (for Identity Parks)

For the purposes of future park design and implementation, the parks have been considered as "Identity Parks" and "Neighborhood Parks."

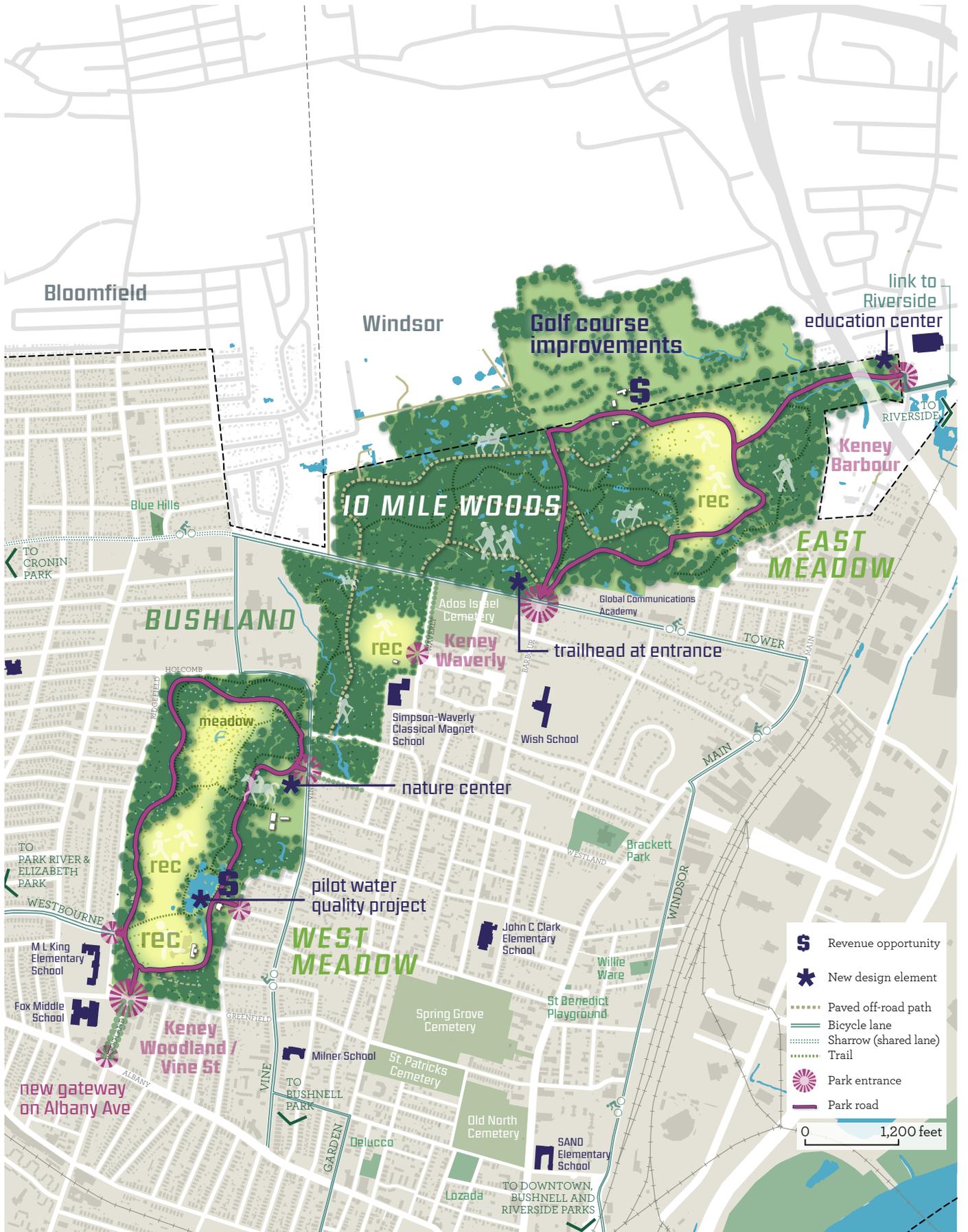
Identity parks are the major, historic parks that create identity for the overall system, host all members of the community, and have opportunities to generate revenue that can broadly benefit all parks in the system. These include existing landmarks like Bushnell or Keney Parks, as well as potential new district ideas like the Park River District. Neighborhood parks include smaller spaces that meet the needs of specific groups, such as a neighborhood, a historic site, or a small open space.

The priorities for all parks begins with the need to bring up the basics and strengthen safety. The concept plans target physical improvements that re-build the foundation: safe sidewalks and durable amenities. Identity parks have the possibility of playing a critical role providing revenue for improvements system-wide. A second priority is to implement revenue-generating investments in large parks to build funding that supports the whole system. Finally, the most important capital investments are those that are a double win, by both improving existing conditions and reducing future maintenance. Recommended standards for park furnishings and amenities are included in the technical appendix.



IDENTITY PARKS

Identity Parks are the major parks of the system, which are regional draws. They showcase the strong **historic legacy** of Hartford's park system, and today function as important **regional destinations, recreational assets, event spaces, and environmental resources**. As the foundation of the system, these parks should also **generate revenue** through concessions, rental opportunities, or specialized programs. Revenue generated from these parks will help support the system as a whole.



Bloomfield

Windsor

Golf course improvements

link to Riverside education center

Blue Hills

10 MILE WOODS

Kenyey Barbour

EAST MEADOW

BUSHLAND

Ados Israel Cemetery

Kenyey Waverly

Global Communications Academy

Wish School

Simpson-Waverly Classical Magnet School

nature center

pilot water quality project

WEST MEADOW

John C. Clark Elementary School

Willie Ware

St. Benedict Playground

Spring Grove Cemetery

St. Patricks Cemetery

Old North Cemetery

SAND Elementary School

Lozada

TO PARK RIVER & ELIZABETH PARK

WESTBOURNE

M L King Elementary School

Fox Middle School

new gateway on Albany Ave

Kenyey Woodland / Vine St

GREENFIELD

Milner School

TO BUSHNELL PARK

GARDEN

Delucco

TO DOWNTOWN, BUSHNELL AND RIVERSIDE PARKS

- Revenue opportunity
- New design element
- Paved off-road path
- Bicycle lane
- Sharrow (shared lane)
- Trail
- Park entrance
- Park road

0 1,200 feet

Keney Park Concept



Concept Principles

1. Strengthen historic legacy
2. Restore Olmsted planting strategy
3. Reestablish the loop road. Physical improvements should be made in concert with management and security improvements.
4. Improve circulation in the park for all (cars, bicyclists, horseback riders, hikers, pedestrians)
5. Make entrances welcoming
6. Expand programming that builds on park history and natural setting
7. Identify revenue opportunities
8. Link the park to surroundings

Concept Elements

1. A Great Park Road
2. Restored hiking trails with new entrance elements
3. Wayfinding signage/maps
4. Opportunities to expand Ebony Horsewomen either on or off-site, if supported by a business plan
5. Implementation of Keney Park Sustainability project & Keney Trails Project
6. Clubhouse and golf course as revenue generation opportunities; golf course improvements
7. Additional trail links to neighborhood, especially in Keney Woodland
8. Address deferred maintenance on existing amenities

CT Riverfront Parks Concept

Concept Principles

1. Build on the existing successes
2. Extend Riverfront Trail north and south
3. Increase connectivity to city

Concept Elements

1. Improve existing trail between Riverfront Plaza and Charter Oak Landing (widen area near Van Dyke Ave; extend sculpture walk south)
2. Connect Riverside to Keney, and add northern gateway at north end of Riverside Park
3. Add underpass north of Colt Park
4. Improve trail along dike in Riverside Park
5. Enhance Charter Oak Landing as a waterfront event space (while keeping current uses)
6. Extend Riverfront trail north to Windsor and south to Wethersfield

Riverfront Recapture has been leading the revitalization of the riverfront parks for several decades, through planning, fundraising, and implementation. Their work has significantly improved these parks, and the Parks Guide coordinates and supports their efforts.





1. East End Activation

- upgrade Pump House as restaurant/event space
- build new park comfort station, water play area, and ice skating rink

2. Bushnell Gardens

including new park house

3. Realigned Gold St.

4. General park improvements:

lighting, pathways, trees, furniture, wayfinding

5. Shared use service paths

6. Reestablish link to State Capitol

7. Elm Street

- enliven with food trucks and other social elements

8. Improved gateway

9. Off-street bicycle path west of Pulaski Circle provides safe

passage around traffic circle

10. Off-street bicycle path on south side of Farmington / Asylum

11. Lafayette Place improvements

12. International Art Garden

13. Cafe Lafayette

14. Water-based design element to recall historic river

15. Main St Enhancements

16. East Coast Greenway Route

Bushnell Park Concept

iQuilt & Bushnell

The concept plan for Bushnell reflects the iQuilt plan, which seeks to create a connected series of public spaces through Downtown. Concept elements shown are included within the iQuilt Plan, but future planning will determine what is implemented.

The Hartford Parks Guide recommends prioritizing the East End activation. Upgrading the Pump House will create a new revenue opportunity. Next, basic upgrades to paths, lighting, park furnishings, and other elements are suggested. Renovating the play

area is also important. Implementing low-mow on less-used slopes and treed areas will reduce maintenance needs. Widening a few key paths and making them suitable for intermittent motorized vehicular access (service and emergency vehicles only) will help reduce the occurrence of vehicles driving and parking on lawns.

Other elements of iQuilt can occur later and should keep in mind potential future maintenance money. New elements should not significantly increase the amount of maintenance required.





-  New design element
-  Revenue opportunity
-  Mowed lawn
-  Low-mow area
-  Bicycle lane
-  Sharrows (shared lane)
-  Park entrance
-  Park road
-  Major path
-  Path

Elizabeth Park Concept

Concept Principles

1. Upgrade East End
2. Improve entrances, and improve connectivity between two parts of parks
3. Reduce maintenance needs for wooded areas of park

Concept Elements

1. Renovate eastern part of park. Upgrade playground and resurface basketball courts. Improve paths and implement other basic upgrades.
2. Implement low mow around park perimeter
3. Improve pedestrian crossing on Prospect Street between parks
4. Remove invasive species

The Elizabeth Park Conservancy has been working toward its mission to preserve, restore and promote the Rose Garden and Elizabeth Park for generations to come. They are guided by a strategic plan and raise funds to support the gardens, staff, events, supplies and facility improvement through private and public fund raising efforts. This Guide supports and coordinates with their efforts, and suggests additional ways to minimize maintenance and improve the eastern part of the park.



Colt Park Concept

Concept Principles

1. Enhance sports capacity
 2. Improve opportunities for viewing, picnicking, and non-active uses
 3. Generate revenue
 4. Improve park circulation and parking lot character
 5. Improve visibility along Wethersfield Ave and neighborhood connections
1. Improve entrance for bicyclists and pedestrians
 2. Picnic table clusters
 3. Reopen vehicular access through western edge of site
 4. Active, play and fitness area: playground equipment consolidated to this end of park (near pool, spraypad, and concession stand); adult fitness equipment added
 5. Enhance connectivity from bus stop into park
 6. Concession stand with seating; Restore ice rink; Could also be kiosk park, game, and event information
 7. Green parking lot
 8. Remove track & widen existing field slightly so it can be used for soccer or football
 9. Central and perimeter shared-use service paths
 10. Central gathering plaza with picnic area
 11. Demo current shade structure and construct new one
 12. Expanding fields would allow them to be wide enough for soccer, in addition to football (gives more flexibility)
 13. Rotating the center field would be a more optimal alignment, given sun angles
 14. Evaluate and renovate maintenance buildings
 15. Court sports cluster
 16. If current practice area is desired as regulation-sized field, would need to be expanded (dashed line shows approximate size); alternatively, the practice field could remain the same size, and a few tennis courts could be added
 17. Closing this portion of Hendricxsen would allow the park to connect better with parking lot, eliminating street crossing
 18. Improve parking lot
 19. Renovate and upgrade Dillon Stadium
 20. Demo existing paved surfaces, renaturalize, and low mow
 21. Improve fence along Stonington St.



Goodwin Park Concept

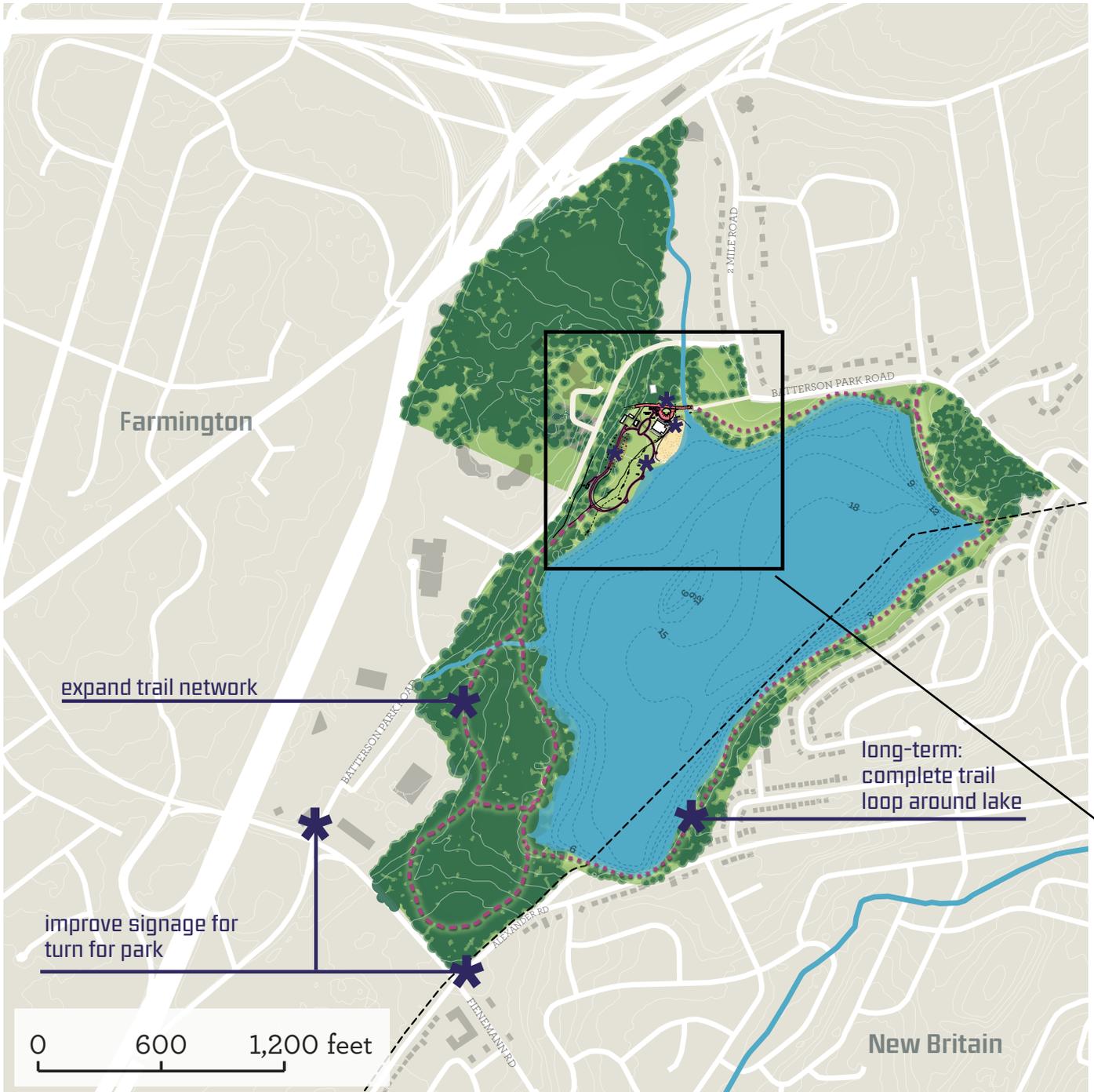
Concept Principles

1. Provide activities for non-golfers so they feel welcome throughout the park
2. Improve park circulation
3. Strengthen connections to surrounding neighborhoods
4. Improve water quality in park pond

Concept Elements

1. Re-connect the internal circulation path
2. Park loop exercise circuit: expand existing fitness trail by adding additional stations along northern portion of loop
3. Add paths to increase access from surrounding neighborhoods
4. Remove two gravel parking lots; explore opportunities for additional parking closer to pool building
5. Golf course improvements / Maximize golf course revenue





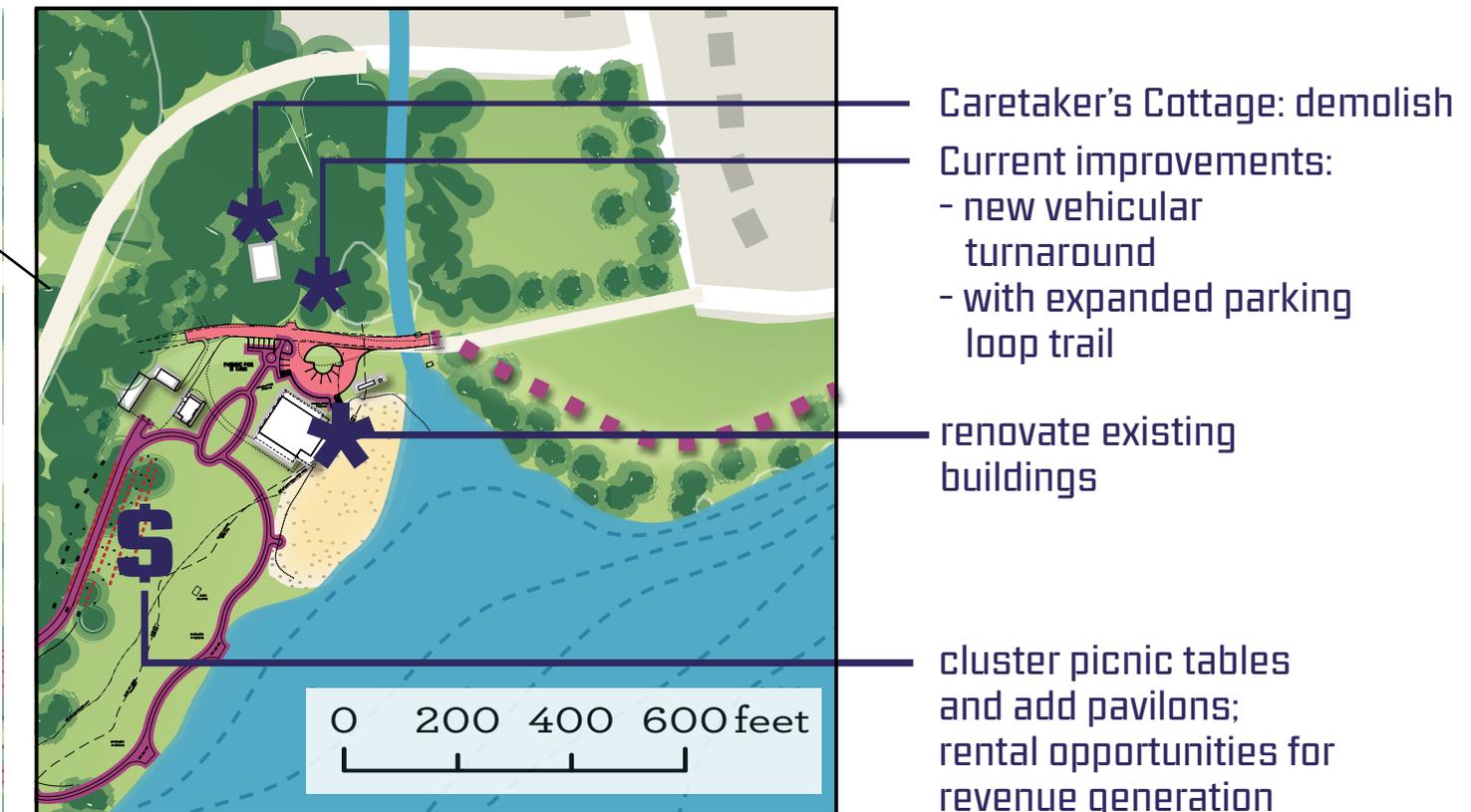
Batterson Park Concept

Concept Principles

Increase revenue generation opportunities without increasing maintenance/operational burden. Identify 3rd party vendor opportunities, and contract for parks to receive portion of revenue.

Concept Elements

1. Vendor opportunity for revenue generation and expanded programming (without additional capital spending or maintenance efforts required). (short to mid-term)
2. Renovate main buildings; demolish Caretaker's Cottage (long-term)
3. Expand trail network (long-term)



Beach Area Detail



redesign intersection to improve pedestrian safety

passive neighborhood area with playground and green infrastructure

Baby Pope

Burns School

trails in Bankside Grove

Bankside Grove

remove paved areas in high mall

low mow on slopes

buffer area around pond

low mow on slopes

renovate playground

Pope West

park river path

Pope Park South

Zion Hill Cemetery

Rocky Ridge

- ▲ Activity, art, or Station along trail
- ✱ New design element
- Gathering area
- ▬ Park river path
- ▬ Bicycle lane
- ▬ Sharrow (shared lane)
- ▬ Sidewalk
- ☼ Park entrance
- ▬ Park road
- Low-mow area

0 200 400 600 1,200 feet

Pope Park Concept

Concept Principles

1. Improve links between 3 Pope parks
2. Reconnect Pope Park to the Park River
3. Improve river and pond health

Concept Elements

1. Add trail along Park River
2. Improve or restore river channel
3. Restore historic “High Mall” area. Remove paved surfaces.
4. Add trails to Bankside Grove
5. Complete renovations at Baby Pope
6. Improve pedestrian road crossings, especially between Baby Pope and Bankside Grove
7. Low mow along slopes and throughout Bankside Grove





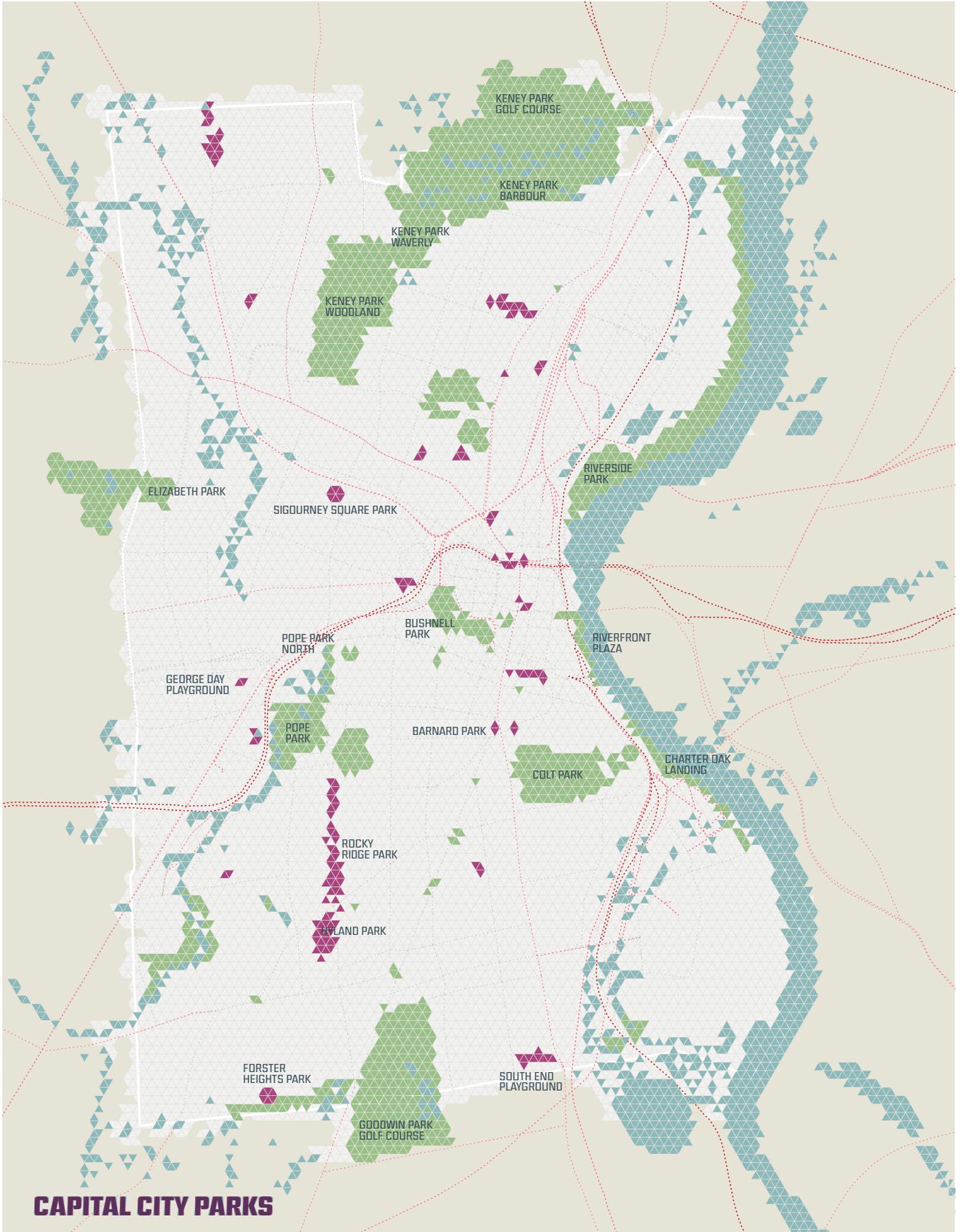
North Branch Park River District Concept

The idea of this district is to link existing parks, sports fields, and green spaces with a nature trail along the North Branch of the Park River. Educational signage and an outdoor classroom provide opportunities for students and local residents alike to learn more about the riparian ecology. The East Coast Greenway travels through the district and stays upland along the road, minimizing impacts to the river. Future development areas will bring new residents to this district and offers opportunities to improve connectivity both within the neighborhood and to the North Branch.



Cronin Park

-  new design element
-  playground
-  seating
-  low-mow area
-  existing tree
-  new tree
-  park entrance
-  path
-  bicycle lane
-  sharrow (shared lane)
-  existing crosswalk
-  new crosswalk



CAPITAL CITY PARKS

NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS

Neighborhood Parks are the smaller **community open spaces**, which provide recreation and casual gathering space for neighborhoods. **Local connectivity** is critical; all residents should have convenient access to a park whether or not they have a vehicle. Key elements of concept plans for these parks are **basic upgrades** like improved lighting, benches, and shade, as well as **reducing maintenance burdens**.

Rocky Ridge



-  new design element
-  playground
-  seating
-  low-mow area
-  existing tree
-  new tree
-  park entrance
-  path
-  bicycle lane
-  sharrow (shared lane)
-  existing crosswalk
-  new crosswalk



Hyland Park

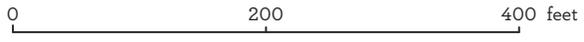


-  new design element
-  playground
-  seating
-  low-mow area
-  existing tree
-  new tree
-  park entrance
-  path
-  bicycle lane
-  sharrow (shared lane)
-  existing crosswalk
-  new crosswalk



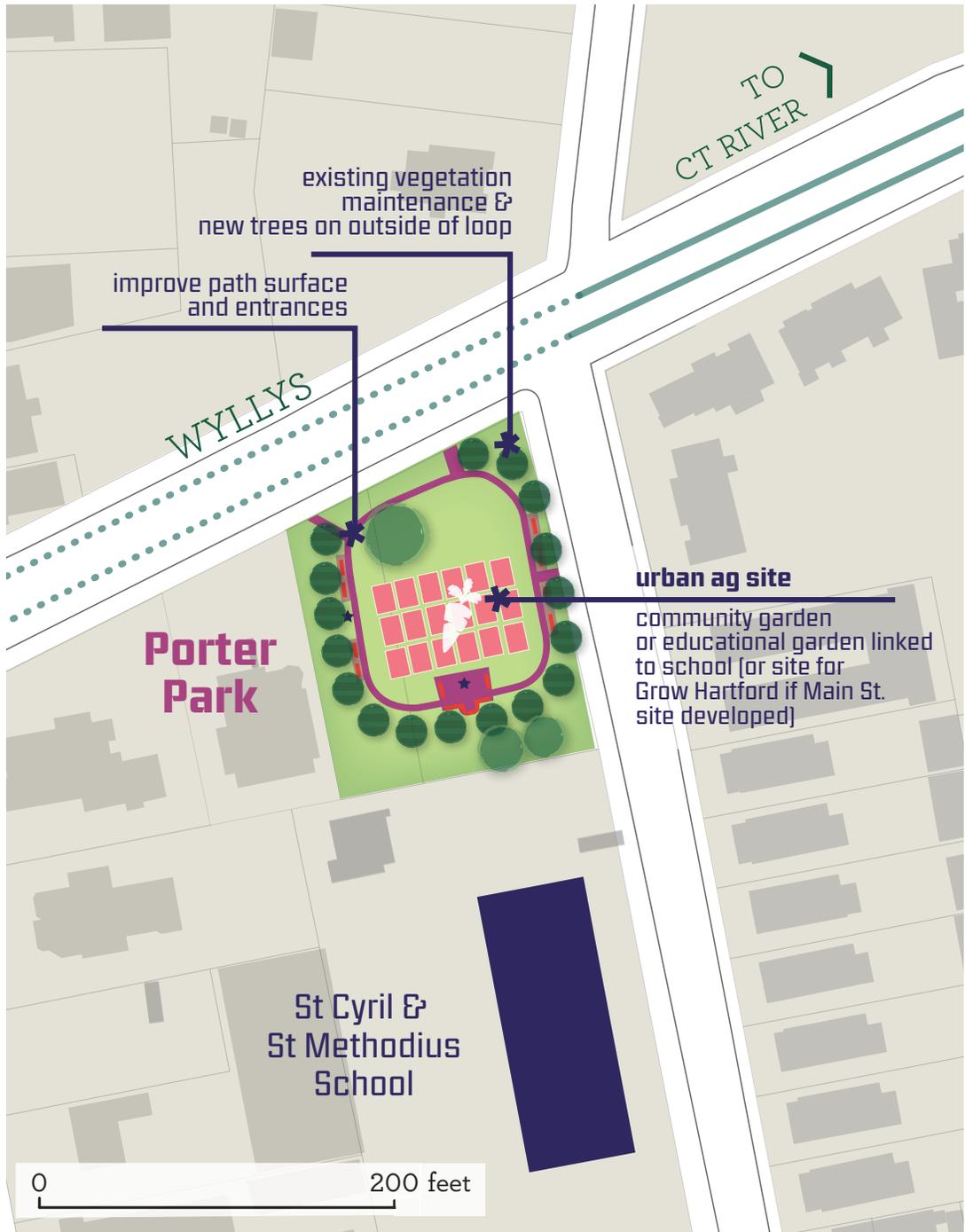


-  new design element
-  low-mow area
-  existing tree
-  new tree
-  path
-  bicycle lane
-  sharrow (shared lane)
-  existing crosswalk
-  new crosswalk



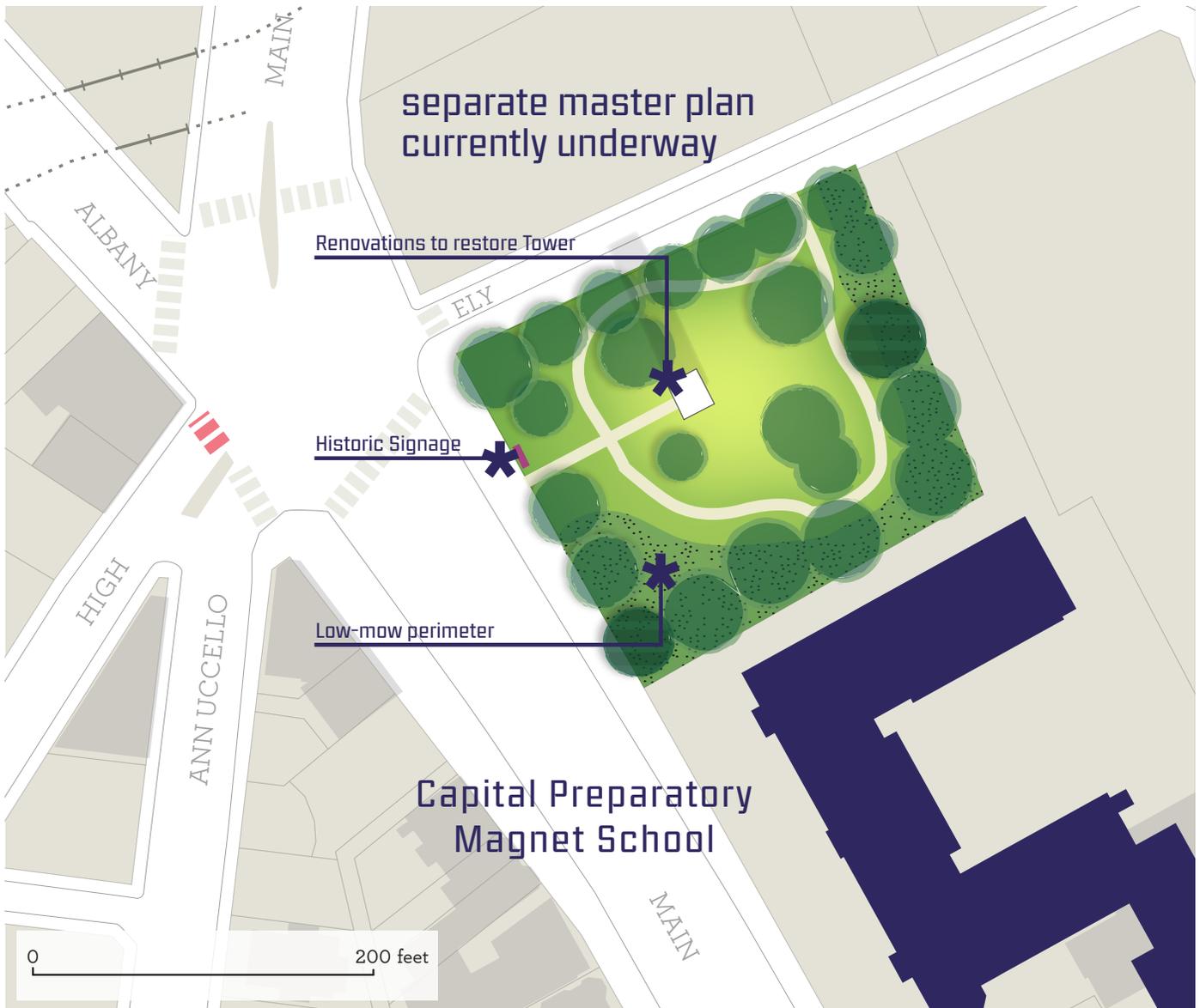
Barnard Park (South Green)





Porter Park





Keney Tower



- Improvements TBD (currently, separate master plan process is underway for this park)
- At minimum: install historic signage at entrance, undertake any necessary structural renovations to tower, and any basic improvements - fencing, benches, paths, security cameras, etc.

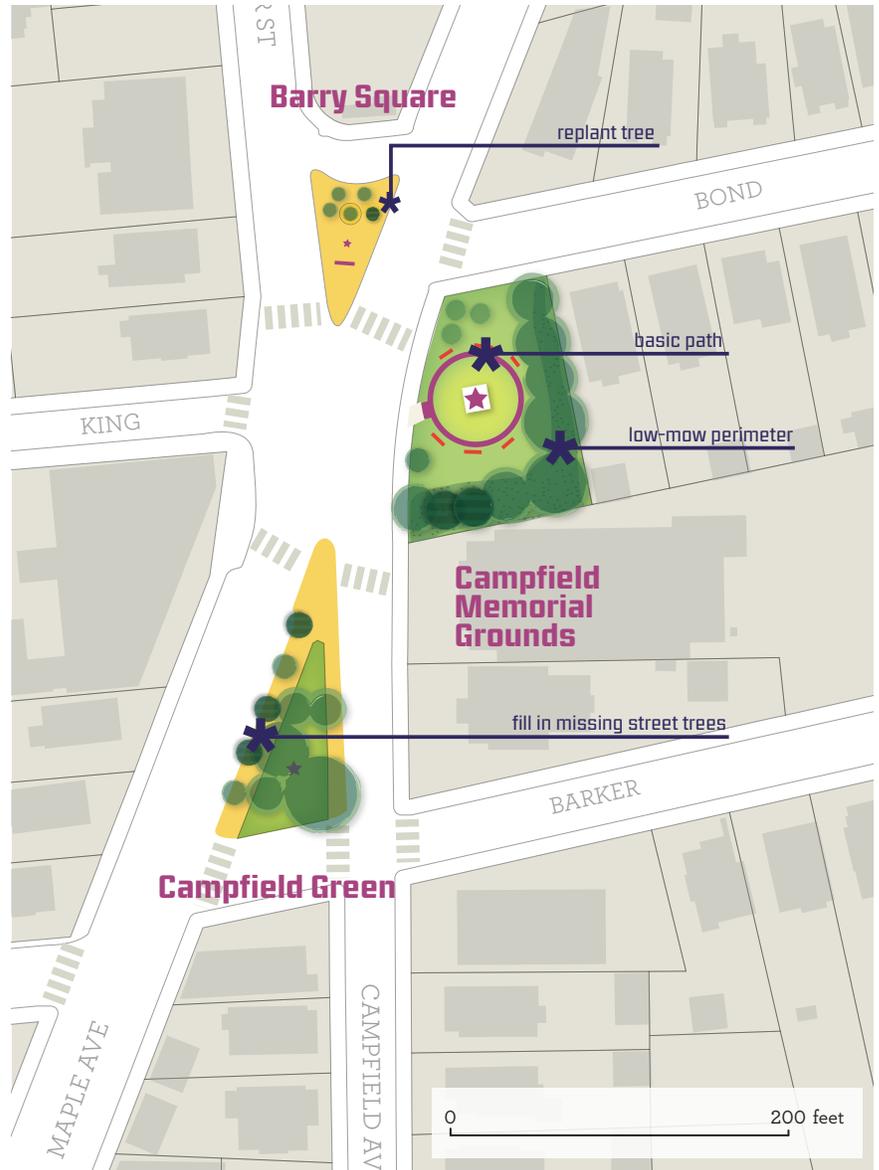
- new design element
- low-mow area
- existing tree
- new tree
- path
- bicycle lane
- sharrow (shared lane)
- existing crosswalk
- new crosswalk

Barry Square and Campfield Open Spaces are shown as prototypes for other traffic islands and mini open spaces.

These design recommendations could be applied similarly to similar spaces city-wide.

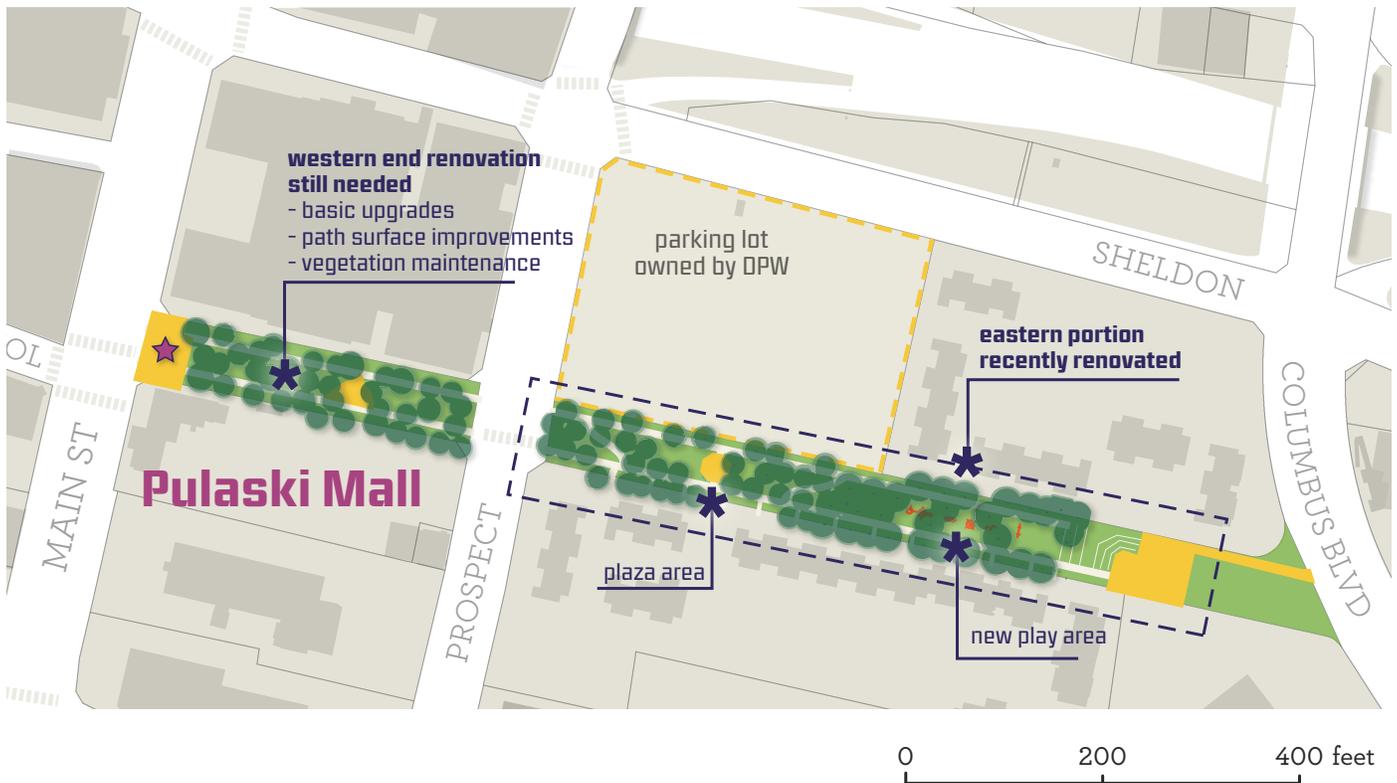
Main goals for improvements to these kinds of spaces:

- Reduce maintenance requirements
- Extend street tree canopy



Barry Square & Campfield Open Spaces





Pulaski Mall



-  new design element
-  playground
-  seating
-  low-mow area
-  existing tree
-  new tree
-  path
-  bicycle lane
-  sharrow (shared lane)
-  existing crosswalk
-  new crosswalk

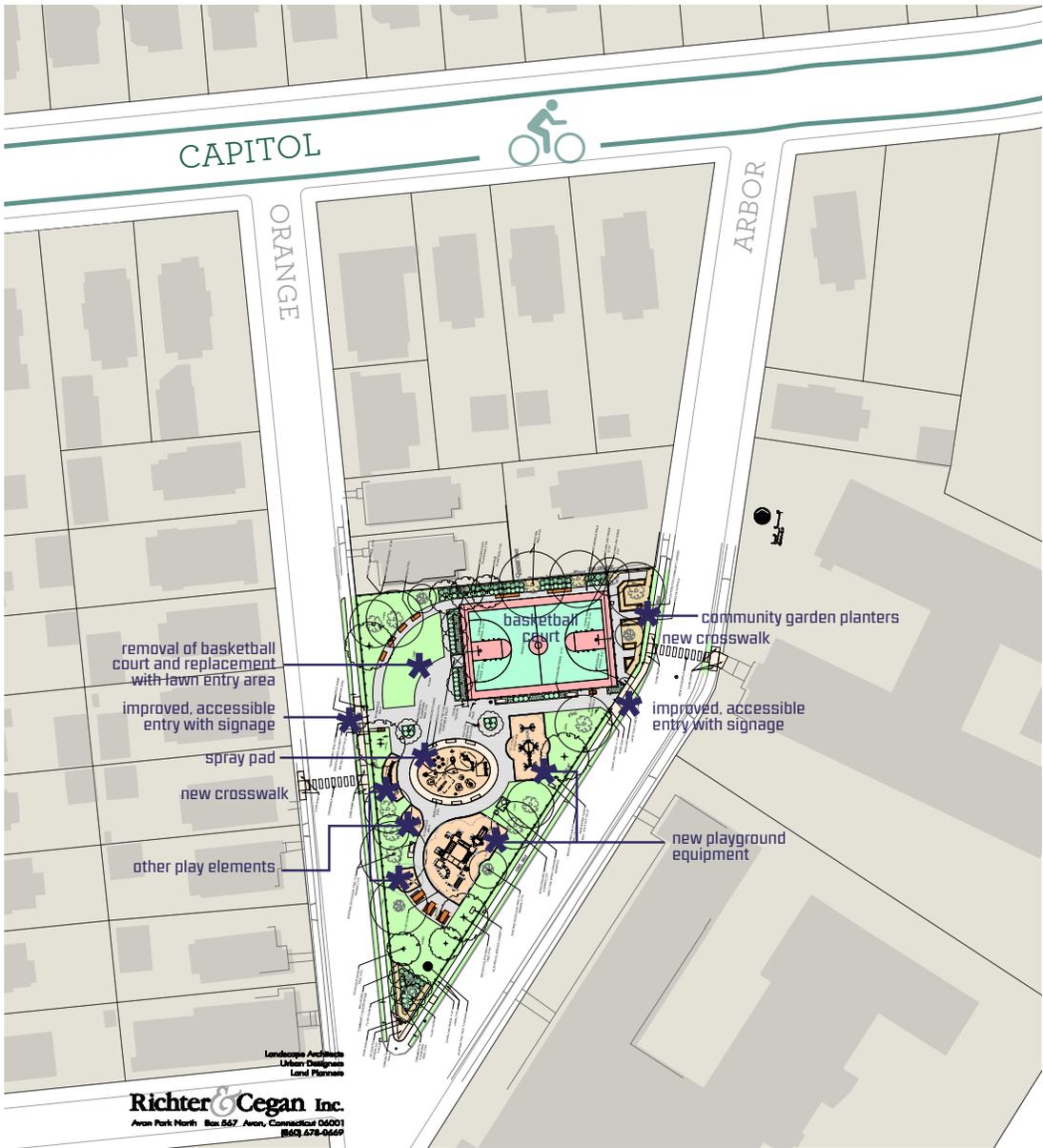


0 200 feet

Charter Oak Memorial

Study possibilities for potential improvements to this historic marker.





Day Park

-  bicycle lane
-  sharrow (shared lane)

This park was recently renovated.





Sigourney Square

- ||||| existing crosswalk
- ||||| new crosswalk

This park was recently renovated. Adding additional crosswalks at park corners and completing a perimeter sidewalk around the park are recommended to enhance neighborhood connectivity and park access.



Willie Ware Rec Center



-  new design element
-  playground
-  seating
-  low-mow area
-  existing tree
-  new tree
-  park entrance
-  path
-  bicycle lane
-  sharrow (shared lane)
-  existing crosswalk
-  new crosswalk

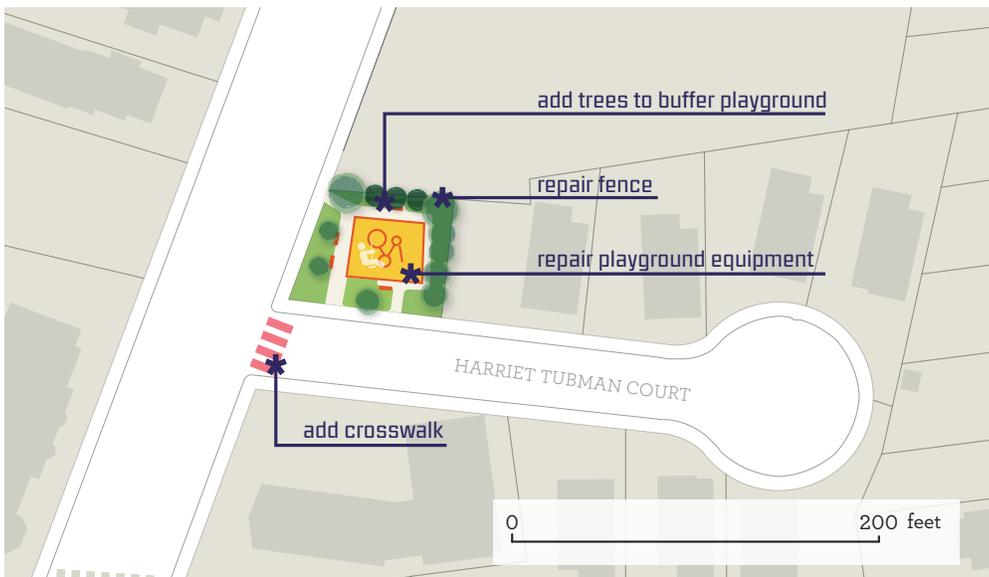


Forster Heights Playground

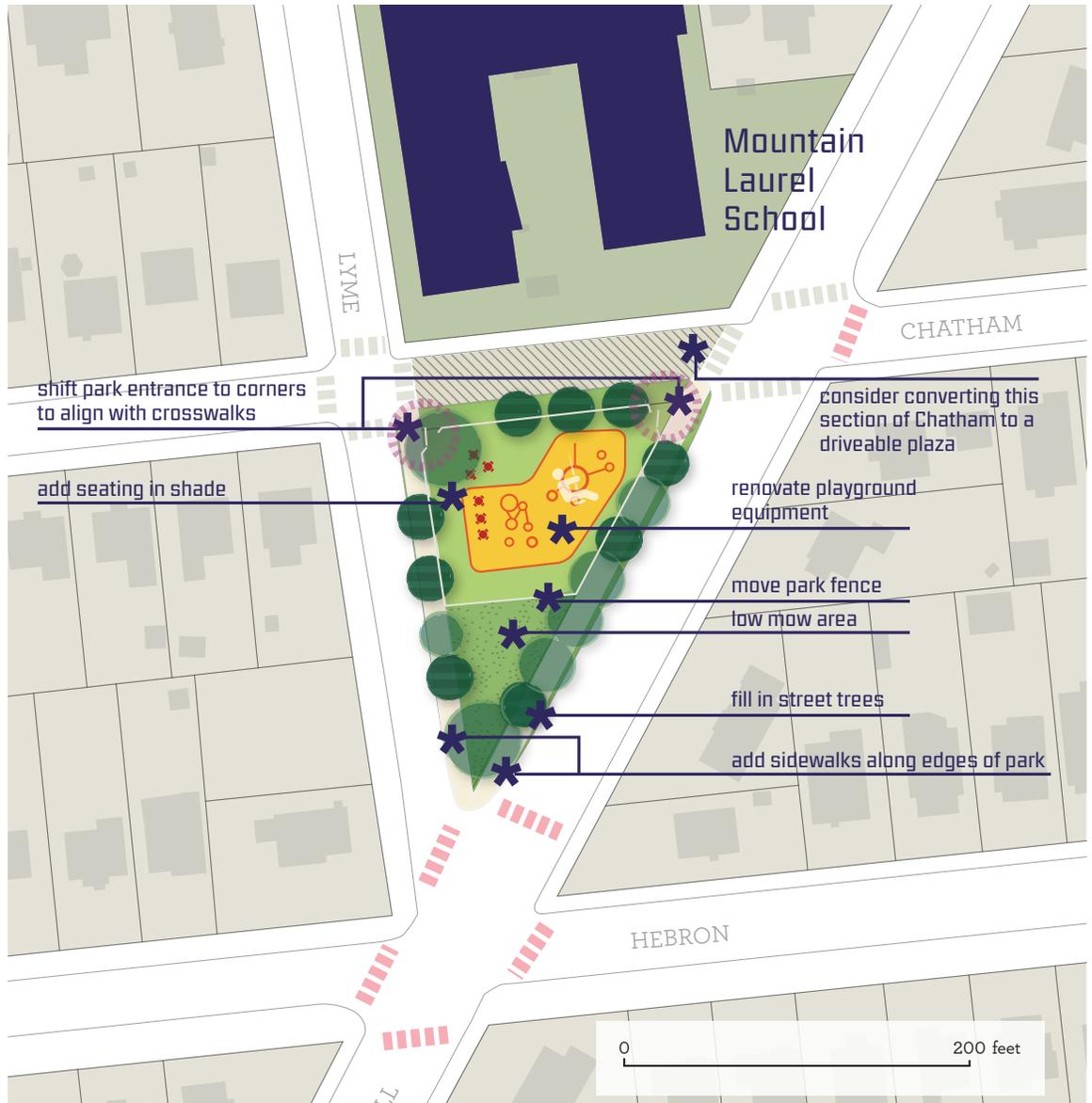




Bond St. Parkette



Harriet Tubman Playground



Roberta Jones Playground

-  new design element
-  playground
-  seating
-  low-mow area
-  existing tree
-  new tree
-  park entrance
-  path
-  bicycle lane
-  sharrow (shared lane)
-  existing crosswalk
-  new crosswalk



Columbus Park



-  new design element
-  playground
-  seating
-  low-mow area
-  existing tree
-  new tree
-  park entrance
-  path
-  bicycle lane
-  sharrows (shared lane)
-  existing crosswalk
-  new crosswalk



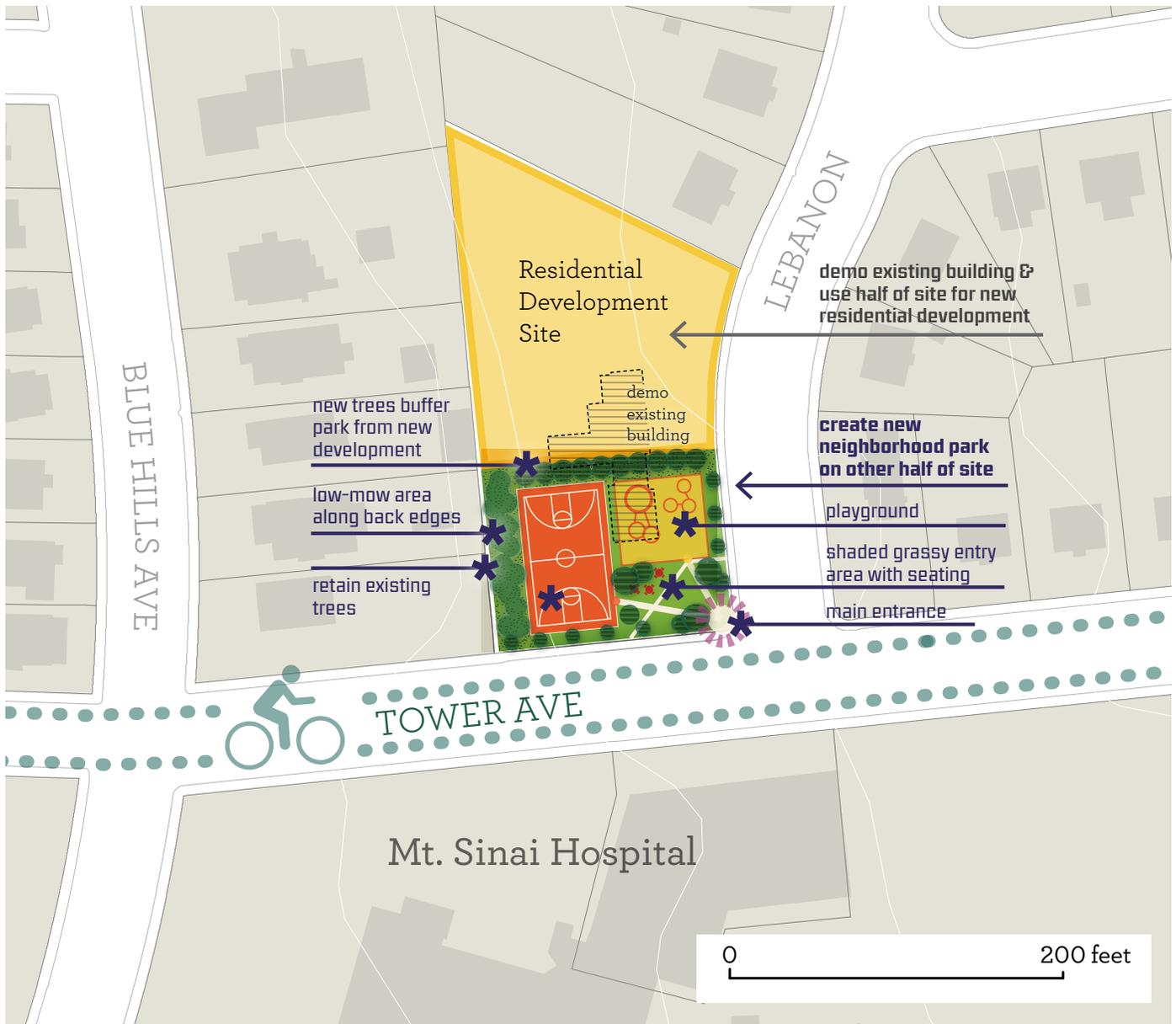
Brackett Park



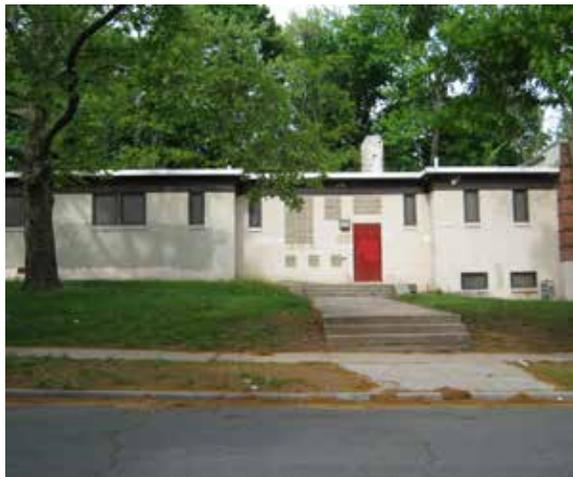


Lozada Park & Delucco Playground





-  new design element
-  playground
-  seating
-  low-mow area
-  existing tree
-  new tree
-  park entrance
-  sharrow (shared lane)



Blue Hills Playground



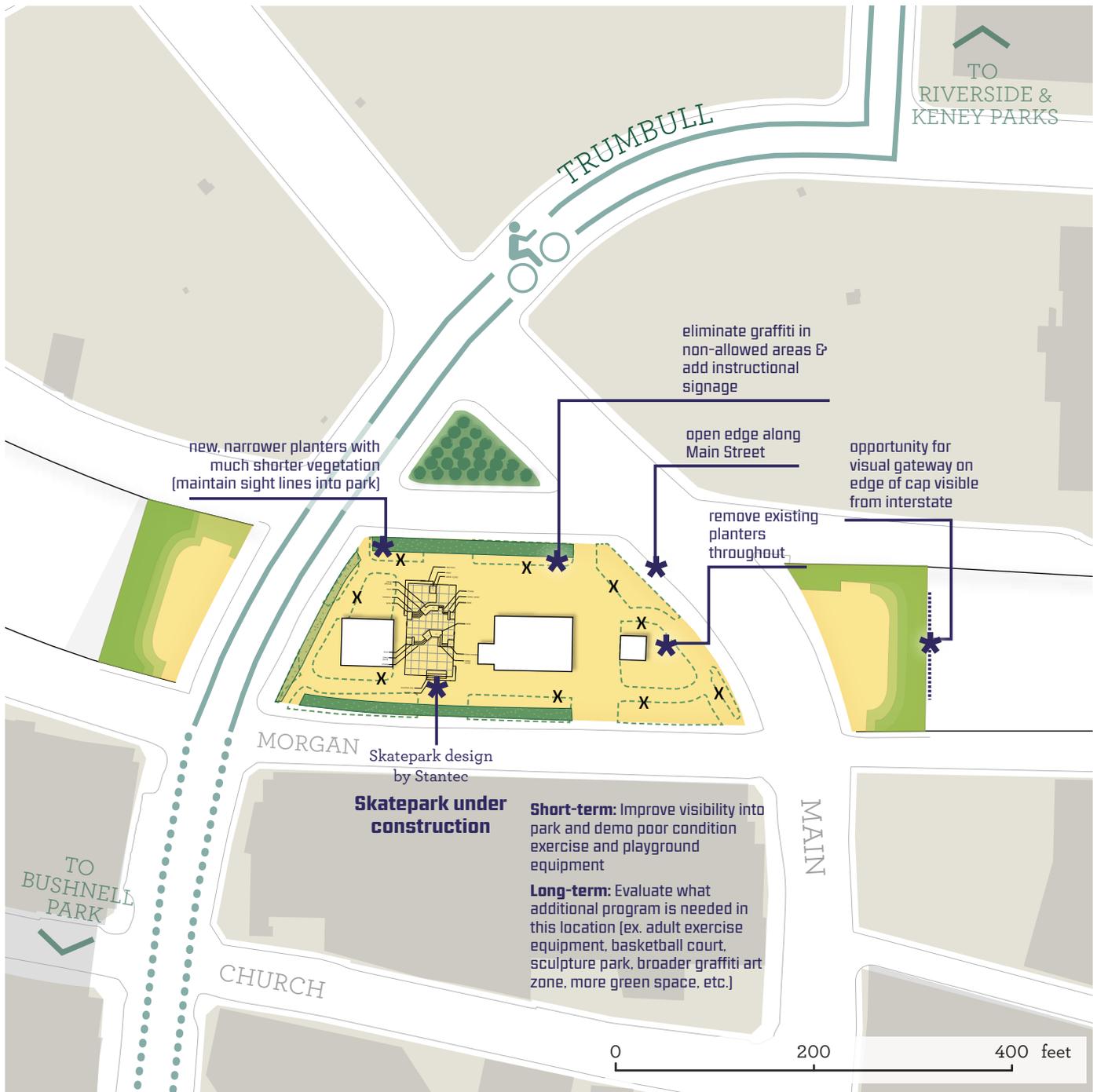
Turning Point

-  new design element
-  low-mow area
-  existing tree
-  new tree
-  bicycle lane
-  sharrow (shared lane)





Rice Heights Park



Wexford Park

-  new design element
-  bicycle lane
-  sharrow (shared lane)



