



Closed pedestrian bridge



Excessive pedestrian paths



Serious drainage problems



Signage and wayfinding

Before developing a set of recommendations for the Park's future, we assessed the physical condition of the Park. This review of the Park's status is based on a number of different sources.

DATA SOURCES, PHYSICAL CONDITIONS & ASSESSMENTS

Data Sources

GIS DATA

This data was provided by the NYC Department of Parks and Recreation. It was created as part of the grant by the J.M. Kaplan Fund. The GIS data provided a basis for all of our mapping efforts in this study. Despite its limitations, it has been a powerful tool, both as a source of information and as a vehicle for coordinating our results. A data map of the GIS information can be found in the appendix.

Results of the Community and Stakeholder Questionnaires

Over 1000 surveys were sent to stakeholders in FMCP. Although the number of surveys returned was too low to glean any meaningful statistical information the surveys were useful on two levels. Internal consistencies in the survey questions yielded useful insight into the users' habits. For example, living over a mile from the Park strongly correlated to driving. Even more useful were the comments written on the surveys we received. Many Park users have strong opinions about the Park.

Field Observations by the Design Team

The core design team visited the Park repeatedly over a two-year period. We visited the Park during all seasons, and we made numerous visits accompanied by members of the consultant team. Each season and each consultant brought a new dimension to our understanding of the Park.

Conversations with Constituent Institutions

The design team met with or spoke to core constituents at two stakeholders' meetings and in individual forums.

Review of Other Source Material

We reviewed previous planning efforts, reports on the Park's infrastructure, current planning documents and other historical sources. This included documents prepared as part of the 1988 Plan.



Physical Conditions & Assessments

Flat Topography

The Park's flat topography combined with underlying geological and hydrological conditions has resulted in serious drainage problems in various areas of the Park, some of which hamper use by Park visitors.

DPR has made some effort to address these problems in the Core Area, but the changes have little effect on the aesthetic qualities of the Park as a landscape.

Hardscape

The excessive areas of hard surfaces, especially in the Core area, designed to handle massive crowds during the Worlds Fairs, are redundant, inappropriate and contribute to drainage problems.

Access & Circulation

Flushing Meadows Corona Park is 1,255 acres of parkland located roughly in the middle of a 10-mile long chain of parks near the geographic center of New York City. It is served from all directions via highways, commuter trains, subways and buses. The Park is accessible by foot along sections of its perimeter; however, it is cut off from its surrounding neighborhoods at other sections.

Access for both pedestrians and vehicles from surrounding streets and highways is limited and hard to decipher. Circulation within the Park is confusing. The size of the Park, the distribution of activities and the long distance from public transportation make circulation by foot problematic and create obstacles to effective shuttle bus operation.

Parking

Parking during peak use periods – especially during the US Open and Mets games – has a major negative impact on the Park. One of our recommended immediate actions on page 31 is a comprehensive traffic and parking study. This study would necessarily entail a detailed survey of existing parking by a traffic planning expert.

Wayfinding & Lighting

Signage for both pedestrians and vehicles is inadequate or non-existent.

Lighting is ineffective in supporting the level of program that exists on the site or in establishing a feeling of safety within the Park.

Maintenance

Many structures left over from the World's Fairs are in poor repair. Some are of questionable value to the Park, including the Boathouse, the New York State Pavilion, various comfort stations, the Fountain of the Planets and several smaller fountains.

Land Management

Storm run off from adjacent highways and inherent soil conditions in the original lake bottom have led to serious eutrophication of the two lakes.

Invasive plant and animal species are a persistent problem in the lakes and wetlands.

Noise

The Park has been plagued by noise problems since its creation and these problems have only worsened over time with increases in air traffic from La Guardia and vehicular traffic on surrounding highways. In its 1988 report the Tschumi team noted that measured noise near the Lake area were between 70 and 75 dBA, "which is above typical noise level ordinances", and that measured peak noise from planes was 90 to 100 dBA. Near the Park edges traffic noise measured approximately 75 dBA.

The Parks Department has obtained some relief from the FAA during major public events through rerouting of planes during take off and landing, but this is not always feasible due to weather and/or air traffic conditions.

Organizational / Institutional Conditions:

- REVENUE AND EXPENSES

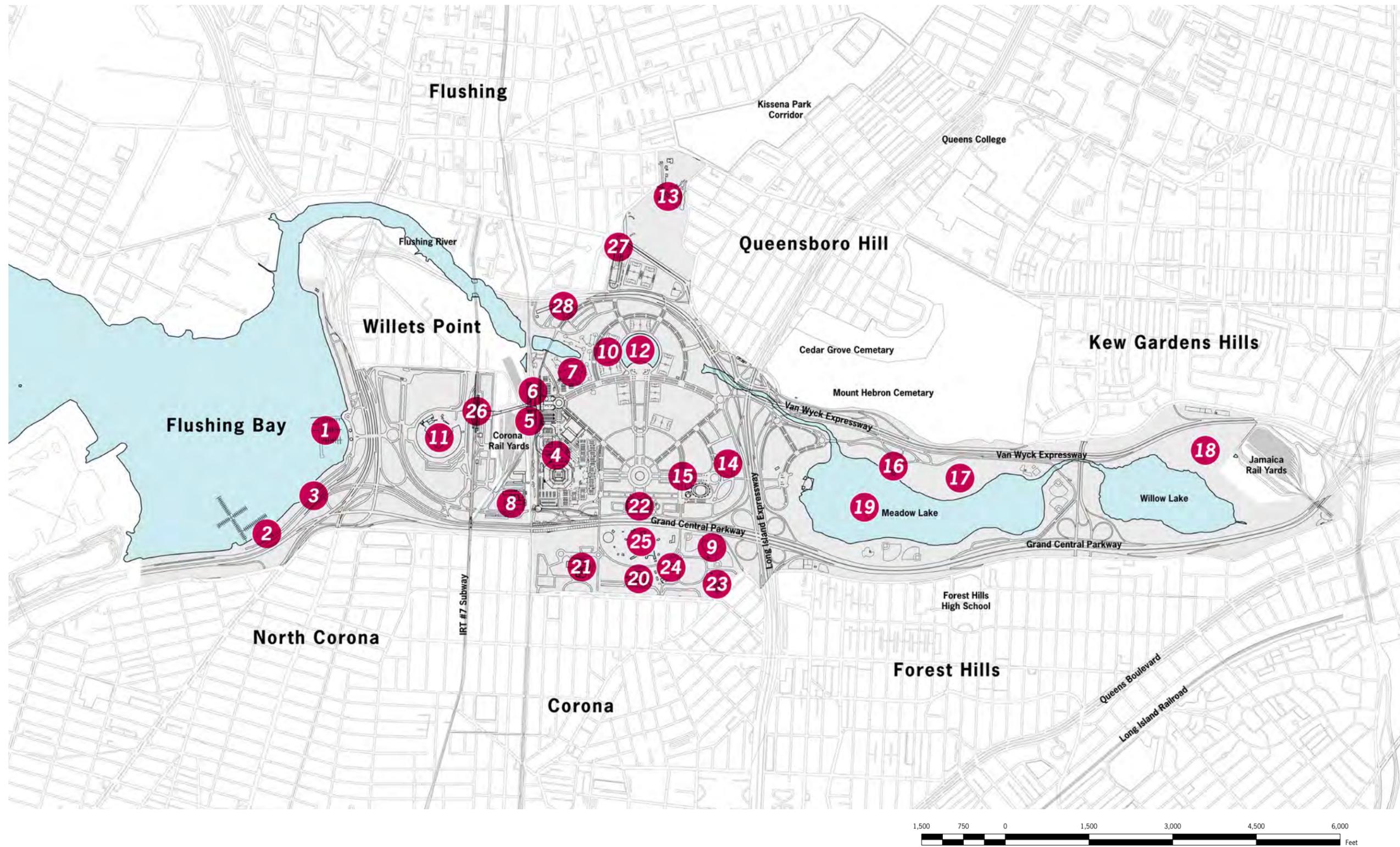
Finally, one of the important issues facing Flushing Meadows Corona Park is the fact that most revenue generated in the Park from concessions, stadiums and special events do not stay in the Park but go to the General Fund. These concessions and stadiums generate additional traffic and usage in the Park which result in an added burden to the Park's maintenance operations. The baseline budget for the Park along with the OTPS budget and overtime reimbursements for events meet the essential needs of the Park. However additional funds would be helpful to meet the ever increasing number of people visiting this important regional destination Park and to raise the level of maintenance, amenities and horticultural arrangements.

- ORGANIZATION

Unlike several of the City's other large parks, Flushing Meadows Corona Park is administered directly by the NYC Department of Parks & Recreation. The office is assisted in fund raising and outreach by the Unisphere, Inc. In addition the Flushing Meadows Corona Park Conservancy and several other self-organized groups have formed independently to support the Park.

The Park's Administrator maintains a system of communication with the Park's various institutions. Monthly meetings are held to review ongoing issues and to iron out potential conflicts between the many activities within the Park.

We suggest that other mechanisms exist elsewhere in the City parks system which might be adopted by the Park to increase revenue and to improve the Park as a whole. For example, an existing (or newly established) conservancy could bid on concessions for event parking, food sales or other revenue-generating activities which could then directly benefit the Park rather than being diverted to private businesses and the City's general revenue fund.



Existing Site Map

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



Existing Park uses are varied and diverse, including spectator and participatory sports, transportation facilities, cultural institutions, recreational, and passive uses. Principal facilities and structures are described below.

1 Marina and Winter Boat Storages

World's Fair Marina, having recently restored all Pier I slips, offers over 300 recreational boating slips, including space for transient boaters as well as winter storage. The marina has a ferry landing, 10 commercial berths, gas dock, free pump-out station, snack shop and free power boat and kayak launch. The Parks Department is exploring the restoration of Pier II at the marina in an effort to meet the increasing demand for recreational boating in New York City waters.

2 World's Fair Marina Restaurant

A restaurant fronting on Flushing Bay within the Marina. It serves continental cuisine for lunch, dinner, and Sunday brunch. It also includes a catering hall.

3 Waterfront Promenade

Approximately 2 miles long. It has been restored as a pedestrian promenade, with kiosks, stretching from LaGuardia Airport to the Flushing River.

4 USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center (NTC)

Relocated to the Park from the West Side Tennis Club, the new complex holds the annual U.S. Open Tournament. Facilities include the new Arthur Ashe stadium, Louis Armstrong stadium, 27 outdoor courts and 9 temporary indoor courts with bubble structures on-site. The new Indoor Tennis Center will be a state-of-the-art classic, with 12 in-door courts, an expanded fitness center, a full-service Pro Shop, and space for the US Open Gallery. Annual events held at the USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center, besides the US Open, include the Mayor's Cup high school tennis championships and the Jana Hunsaker Memorial Wheelchair Tennis Tournament.

5 Long Island Rail Road Station

On the Port Washington Branch; operates during major events at Shea Stadium and the USTA/National Tennis Center.

6 Passerelle Building

The building includes offices for the REACH program - Recreation, Athletics, Education, and Creative Art for the Handicapped, PEP (Parks Enforcement Patrol) offices, Public Bathrooms, Parks Academy, City Parks Foundation (tennis, golf, and seniors programs) and the Queens Recreation Permits divisions.

7 Pitch & Putt Golf Course

Approximately 15-acre golf putting range; the only facility of its type in the City.

8 Olmsted Center

New York City Parks Department Capital Projects, Design, and Construction Headquarters.

9 Baseball/Softball Fields

Seven ball fields available for use by Park permit.

10 Soccer Fields

Nine fields available for use by Park permit.

11 Shea Stadium

Home of the New York Mets baseball team, it seats 57,333. Its parking lots are operated by a concession; those near the IRT subway are used for park-and-ride commuters on weekdays. Citi Field, soon to replace Shea, will have a capacity of 45,000.

12 Fountain of the Planets

Terminus of Fountain of the Fairs (the Park's main east-west axis), the Fountain is part of the Flushing River. It is a major Park focal point and potentially the largest fountain in New York City. The Fountain is currently not in operation.

13 Queens Botanical Garden

39 acres, including formal Gardens on Main Street and an Arboretum at the entry to the Kissena Corridor Park; free to the public. A new Horticulture/Maintenance Building; a Visitor & Administration Building designed to a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) platinum rating, and new sustainable landscapes was completed in Sept. 2007.

14 Vatican Exedra

Marker on the site of the 1964 World's Fair's Vatican Pavilion where Pope John XXIII visited.

15 Queens Theatre in the Park & New York State Pavilion

Queens Theatre in the Park - originally part of the New York State Pavilion of 1964. A new addition is soon to be completed with a new 75-seat cabaret performance space with a full service cafe and kitchen facility, a dramatic 3,000 square foot lobby/reception area, visitor amenities, and improved accessibility.

New York State Pavilion - Designed by Philip Johnson for the 1964 World's Fair, its two major components are a large oval arena with a terrazzo map of the State on the floor of the open center (the original translucent plexiglass roof was removed), and a tripartite cylindrical observation platform tower (the tallest structure in the Park). It is not currently in use. See our commentary in the Visions and Goals section of this report.

16 The Boathouse

This facility on Meadow Lake is used as a club house and workshop by TASCA, ROW NY and the Hong Kong Dragon Boat Festival. The building next door is a boat and bike concession.

17 Model Plane Field

Located on the east side of Meadow Lake, the field requires a Park permit for plane operators.

18 Willow Lake Natural Area

Undeveloped area used for passive recreation and bird watching; it has become a major bird habitat. The creek and lake front area have been designated a freshwater wetland by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation.

19 Meadow Lake

Two and one half miles in circumference, and the largest lake in the metropolitan

area, this shallow lake is used for sailing and boating. The adjacent shoreline is used for jogging, picnicking, and bicycling.

20 Terrace on the Park

Private caterer housed in the Port Authority Heliport and "Top of the Fair" Restaurant of the 1964 World's Fair. Today it is a private catering hall with a ballroom and a penthouse suite featuring an outdoor reception chapel area in a garden setting.

21 New York Hall of Science

Unique in New York, the museum houses "hands-on" exhibits on science and technology, classroom and lab facilities, multi-media library, snack automat, and gift shop. The museum received 374,000 visitors last year. Major spaces of the 1964 World's Fair building remain.

22 The Queens Museum

Occupies the northern half of New York City's 1939 World's Fair building. It presents fine arts exhibitions, and holds workshops, films and lectures. The City Panorama model of New York City from the 1964 World's Fair is housed in this building. Renovation plans are underway which will incorporate the space taken up by the Ice Skating Rink which is moving to new quarters for the 2008 - 2009 seasons.

23 Playground For All Children (Barrier Free Playground)

A three and one half acre landscaped playground accessible to both able-bodied and physically challenged children.

24 The Carousel

Impeccably restored by Carlos Colon (who also restored the Central Park Carousel); includes a food and trinkets concession. Open all year.

25 Queens Zoo

Created in 1967 and managed by the Wildlife Conservation Society, ten acres of open-air animal habitats includes a recently renovated aviary in a Buckminster Fuller geodesic dome that was Great Britain's Pavilion in the 1964 World's Fair and a separate Children's farm. A new jaguar exhibit is planned for construction in the next two to three years.

26 IRT Subway Station

The subway station on the IRT #7 line at Willets Point/Shea Stadium operates daily.

27 Fowler Avenue Recreation Center

The recently completed facility was built with DEP mitigation funds. There will be a variety of sports for the youth, adults, and seniors. The recreation center will have after school, track, dance and fitness programs for all ages. There will be a Computer Resource Center with both free and instructional time slots. There are racquet ball courts, an open fitness track, and adaptable sport and fitness opportunities.

28 New Pool and Ice Rink

An Olympic size pool and ice rink in a state-of-the-art building.