

written by PETER HARNIK

NEWARK, NEW JERSEY

An Open Space Analysis



THE TRUST *for* PUBLIC LAND

CONSERVING LAND FOR PEOPLE

THE TRUST FOR PUBLIC LAND is a national conservation organization that conserves land for people to enjoy as parks, community gardens, rural lands, and natural lands, ensuring livable communities for generations to come.

TPL's Parks for People Initiative works in cities across America to ensure that everyone—in particular, every child—enjoys access to a park, playground, or open space.

Parks are essential to the health of individuals and communities. They offer recreation and renewal, promote exercise, reduce crime, revitalize neighborhoods, protect the environment, and bring communities together.

In Newark, the Trust for Public Land has already invested \$2.5 million in neighborhood playgrounds. TPL partnered with the city to achieve an award of nearly \$1.2 million from the National Park Service Urban Parks and Recreation Recovery Program and the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection Green Acres program to redevelop Mildred Helms Park. TPL has also received grants and Green Acres funding to develop Nat Turner Park.

Parks for People-Newark is a response to the overwhelming need for additional safe parks and playgrounds in the neighborhoods of New Jersey's largest city, particularly those most under-served by the traditional park system.

Author Peter Harnik is director of the Trust for Public Land's Center for City Park Excellence. He has spoken widely on city park policy and politics and is author of two books, *Inside City Parks* and *The Excellent City Park System*, and a contributor to a third, *Urban Parks and Open Space*.

Cover Images: Left: Nat Turner Park (Central Ward), before. Photo by: Simone Mangili. Right: McKinley Elementary School Playground (Central Ward) groundbreaking, December 2002. Photo by: Manuel Lebrón

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St. Columba Peace Playground (East Ward). Photo by: Simon Benepè

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Introduction

Newark, NJ, one of America's most venerable cities, is on a significant economic rebound after years of decline. For this momentum to last, the city must rebuild much of its infrastructure, including its park system, which at one time made headlines but has since fallen far behind expected urban norms. This document looks at the state of the city's park system, political factors influencing its trajectory, and opportunities that could be explored in the future.

Newark has had a turbulent history and has been in reputed decline for many years. But the revivals of such once-pilloried places as Pittsburgh, Cleveland, and Chattanooga, and such once-battered neighborhoods as Philadelphia's Society Hill, Washington's Georgetown, and New York's Chelsea, prove that stereotypes can be challenged and failures can be reversed. And the central role that open space has played in the revitalization of these important places cannot be overlooked. Newark is home to outstanding location and transportation resources that are reasserting their pull, and a critical mass of educational and cultural facilities that are generating energy. Moreover, the city is benefiting from some strategic assistance from the state under Governor Jim McGreevey's smart growth policy, which emphasizes urban renewal over rural exploitation. In fact, for the first time since the Great Depression, significant renewal is underway in Newark.

Naturally, 60 years of decline—climaxing with the racial upheavals of the 1960s—have left the

city's infrastructure battered. Streets need to be repaved, sewers upgraded, public buildings renovated, schools constructed, libraries fixed. On the "green" side, Newark's parks, the problems are at least as severe. The two outstanding Olmstedian creations, Branch Brook Park and Weequahic Park, need millions of dollars in upgrades; in addition, the system as a whole—small, fragmented, inequitably distributed and underfunded—could use reconceptualization and significant reinvestment.

History

The third oldest major city in the country (after New York and Boston), Newark was formed by disgruntled Puritans from Connecticut who set out to form a "New Ark" on the "Pesayak" River. Because of its location near New York City, and particularly after the completion of the Morris Canal in 1831, the city developed rapidly into New Jersey's prime metropolis. From its earliest days Newark had pockets of open space: both Military Park and a plaza for a public market (later named Washington Park) were established in 1667. Other fragments were set aside beginning in 1696. However, as the city grew, parkland did

NEW PARKS FOR NEWARK?

Among the most promising areas for new parks in Newark are:

- *The Passaic Riverfront, particularly in the Ironbound and through the Central and North wards.*
- *The Second River, connecting Branch Brook Park with the Passaic River.*
- *A corridor through the South, West and Central wards that could provide a greenway connection between Branch Brook and Weequahic parks.*
- *A corridor alongside the Northeast Corridor rail line that could provide a trail from Weequahic Park to the Passaic River.*
- *Citywide, new neighborhood parks and playgrounds as seeds for revitalization.*

TABLE I.

Park Spending Per Resident, Major Cities

City	Dollars Spent Per Resident* (2001)
Seattle	\$214
San Jose	\$185
Denver	\$170
Minneapolis	\$164
Washington, D.C.	\$155
Cincinnati	\$132
Chicago	\$131
Kansas City, Mo.	\$122
Las Vegas	\$122
Virginia Beach	\$121
Phoenix	\$120
Sacramento	\$109
Honolulu	\$107
Long Beach	\$103
Portland, Ore.	\$99
Tampa	\$98
Mesa	\$92
Atlanta	\$88
San Diego	\$83
Austin	\$79
Tucson	\$75
Oakland	\$73
Columbus	\$72
Colorado Springs	\$69
Fort Worth	\$67
Cleveland	\$64
Boston	\$58
San Antonio	\$54
New York	\$54
Milwaukee/Milwaukee County	\$54
Charlotte/Mecklenburg	\$52
Nashville/Davidson	\$52
Philadelphia	\$50
Miami	\$49
Oklahoma City	\$48
Fresno	\$47
Dallas	\$45
Arlington, Tex.	\$44
New Orleans	\$43
Baltimore	\$42
Memphis	\$42
Louisville/Jefferson	\$42
Los Angeles	\$37
Newark	\$35
Toledo	\$34
Houston	\$33
Indianapolis	\$32
Jacksonville	\$28
St. Louis	\$6
Average	\$80

* Spending includes both operating and capital dollars.

not keep pace, and in 1867 the entire county of Essex had only 25 acres of public open space.

By the end of the 19th century, the city parks movement that was electrifying the country reached Newark. In fact, the enthusiasm was

so great that civic leaders in Newark and surrounding Essex County instituted the nation's very first countywide park system and hired the famous landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted to plan it. Although never fully realized, the plan did result in the creation of two major county parks within the city limits: Weequahic and Branch Brook parks were extraordinary parcels of land upon which the Olmsted firm worked its magic—so much so that they have survived as beloved spaces for Newarkers for more than a century.

In describing Weequahic reservation in 1898, the Essex County Board of Park Commissioners said:

"Its principal topographical feature is a marsh, formerly salt but now fresh, with a brook, fed by springs, flowing through it...The marsh is beautifully environed with uplands, partly gently sloping, open farming land, but mostly rather steep, wooded banks. At the end of the open upland nearest the city we propose a meadow or playstead, containing twenty-three acres...This will be the most popular, and as an investment for public health and amusement, the most valuable part of the park."

The 360-acre Branch Brook Park is famous for its four-mile park loop roadway, romantic lake and streams, huge northern division meadow, the walled remains of the original Newark Reservoir, stunning views of massive Sacred Heart Cathedral, and 2,000 flowering cherry trees (a larger number than at Tidal Basin in Washington, D.C.) that attract 10,000 viewers per day for the Cherry Blossom Festival.

Despite the excellence of Branch Brook and Weequahic, the City of Newark did not develop a complete citywide park system. For one thing, in the early 20th century the city became focused on zoning to encourage more commer-

Table 2.
*Acres of Parkland per 1000 Residents
Selected High-Density Cities*

City	Population	Park Acreage	Acres per 1000 Residents
Minneapolis	383,000	5,694	14.9
Washington, D.C.	572,000	7,576	13.2
Oakland	399,000	3,822	9.6
Boston	589,000	5,451	9.3
Baltimore	651,000	5,749	8.8
Los Angeles	3,695,000	30,134	8.2
San Francisco	777,000	5,916	7.6
Philadelphia	1,518,000	10,621	7.0
Camden, N.J.	80,000	507	6.3
Long Beach	462,000	2,792	6.0
New York	8,008,000	36,646	4.6
Chicago	2,896,000	11,676	4.0
Miami	362,000	1,138	3.1
Newark	274,000	803	2.9 ◀
<i>Average</i>			7.5

and Boston). However, it has fewer acres of parkland per resident than any of the 55 biggest cities in the nation: only 2.9 acres per 1000 residents (see Table 2). Measured another way, only 5.3 percent of the city's area is devoted to parks—less than all but one of the high-population-density cities in the country (see Table 3).

It is hard to overstate Newark's dearth of park acreage and facilities. Besides the two big ones, there are five medium-size parks operated by



Maple Avenue School Playground (South Ward). Photo by: Robert Cadena

cial and industrial uses. Also, by failing to incorporate Military, Washington, Lincoln, and the other small parks into the Essex County system, the city developed a two-tier park system that became more and more unbalanced as city finances deteriorated after the 1930s. Moreover, because park oversight was split between the county and the city, neither entity accepted responsibility for the strengths and weaknesses of the Newark park network and how the populace was being served.

Newark's Parks Today

Today, Newark has a total of 803 acres of parkland—742 acres operated by the Essex County Department of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs and 61 acres run by the Newark Department of Neighborhood and Recreational Services. Total spending by the two agencies on city parks was an estimated \$9.6 million in 2001, or only \$35 per resident—far below the national big-city average of \$80¹ (see Table 1).

Even with its population loss, Newark is densely settled; in fact, it is today the fifth most densely populated large city in the United States (after New York, San Francisco, Chicago,

Essex County and 55 very small spaces (10 acres down to the size of a house lot or less) run by the city. (Many of these are, in fact, traffic triangles and medians.) Even counting a hypothetical quarter-mile radius around each small park and half-mile radius around the big parks, large numbers of Newarkers are not close to greenspace. The situation is particularly dire for children: 34 percent of Newark's children under age 14 do not live within one-quarter mile of any parkland at all, and a cursory look at the location of the city's 51 day care

TABLE 3.
*Parkland as Percent of City Area
Selected High-Density Cities*

City	Area (acres)	Parkland (acres)	Percent Parkland
San Francisco	29,884	5,916	19.8%
Washington, D.C.	39,297	7,576	19.3%
New York	194,115	36,646	18.9%
Boston	30,992	5,451	17.6%
Minneapolis	35,130	5,694	16.2%
Philadelphia	86,456	10,621	12.3%
Baltimore	51,714	5,749	11.1%
Oakland	35,875	3,822	10.7%
Los Angeles	300,201	30,134	10.0%
Camden, N.J.	5,632	507	9.0%
Long Beach	32,281	2,792	8.6%
Chicago	145,362	11,676	8.0%
Newark	15,232	803	5.3% ◀
Miami	22,830	1,138	5.0%
<i>Average</i>			12.2%

centers reveals that many of them are too far from open space to make park visits feasible (see Map 1, page 5). The situation is particularly dire in the South, Central and West wards. All in all, the 1990 Master Plan states that Newark is short about 750 acres in neighborhood open space, with the least-served communities being Ironbound, Clinton Hill, Weequahic, Broadway, and Springfield-Belmont-West Side (see Map 4, page 9).

The litany of parks and park facilities that have been closed and lost is disheartening. Playgrounds in parks are also remarkably scarce, with each one serving an average of 27,000 people, compared to a national big-city average

of about 6,400² (see Table 4, this page). Even given Newark's large amount of vacant land potentially available, the creation of community gardens hasn't generated the widespread interest seen in New York and Philadelphia.

Of course, good things *are* happening and investments are being made. The city has been awarded nearly \$1.2 million from the National Park Service Urban Parks and Recreation Recovery Program and the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection Green Acres program to redevelop Mildred Helms Park. Weequahic Park is benefiting from \$3 million of U.S. Environmental Protection Agency funds. Nat Turner Park, which is undeveloped and next to a brown-

field, could benefit from \$900,000 in Green Acres funding and, when it's completed and opened, will be used jointly by three schools and the neighborhood. Jesse Allen Park, near a demolished public housing site, was awarded a \$277,500 grant by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The National Football League recently awarded a \$100,000 grant to refurbish the locker room and other facilities at West Side Park. And, probably most significant, in 1998, the voters of Essex County approved a property surtax that generates \$4.5 million per year for open space acquisition and preservation.

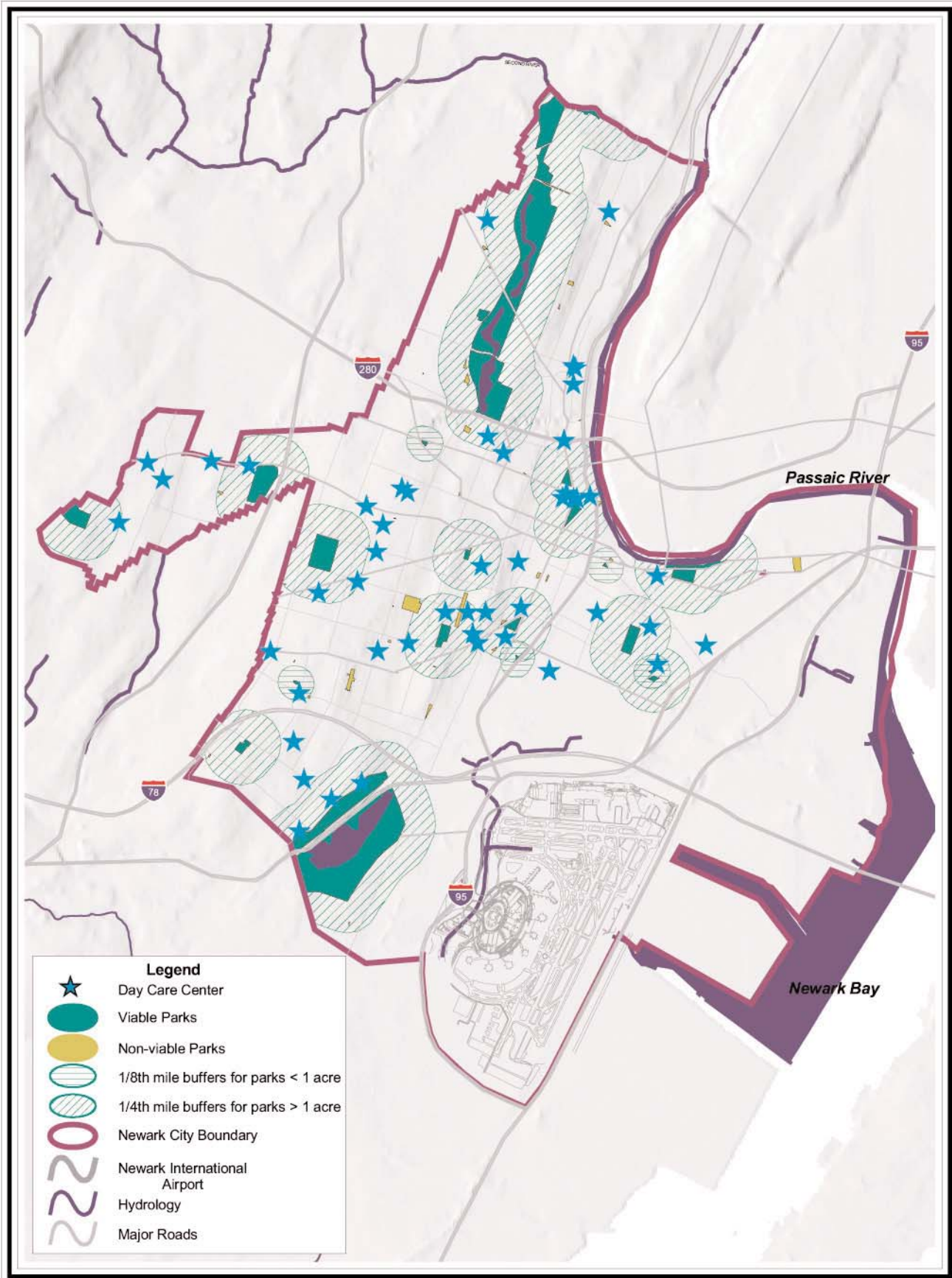
Despite the gains, Newark continues to have major

TABLE 4.
Park Playgrounds and Residents, Major Cities

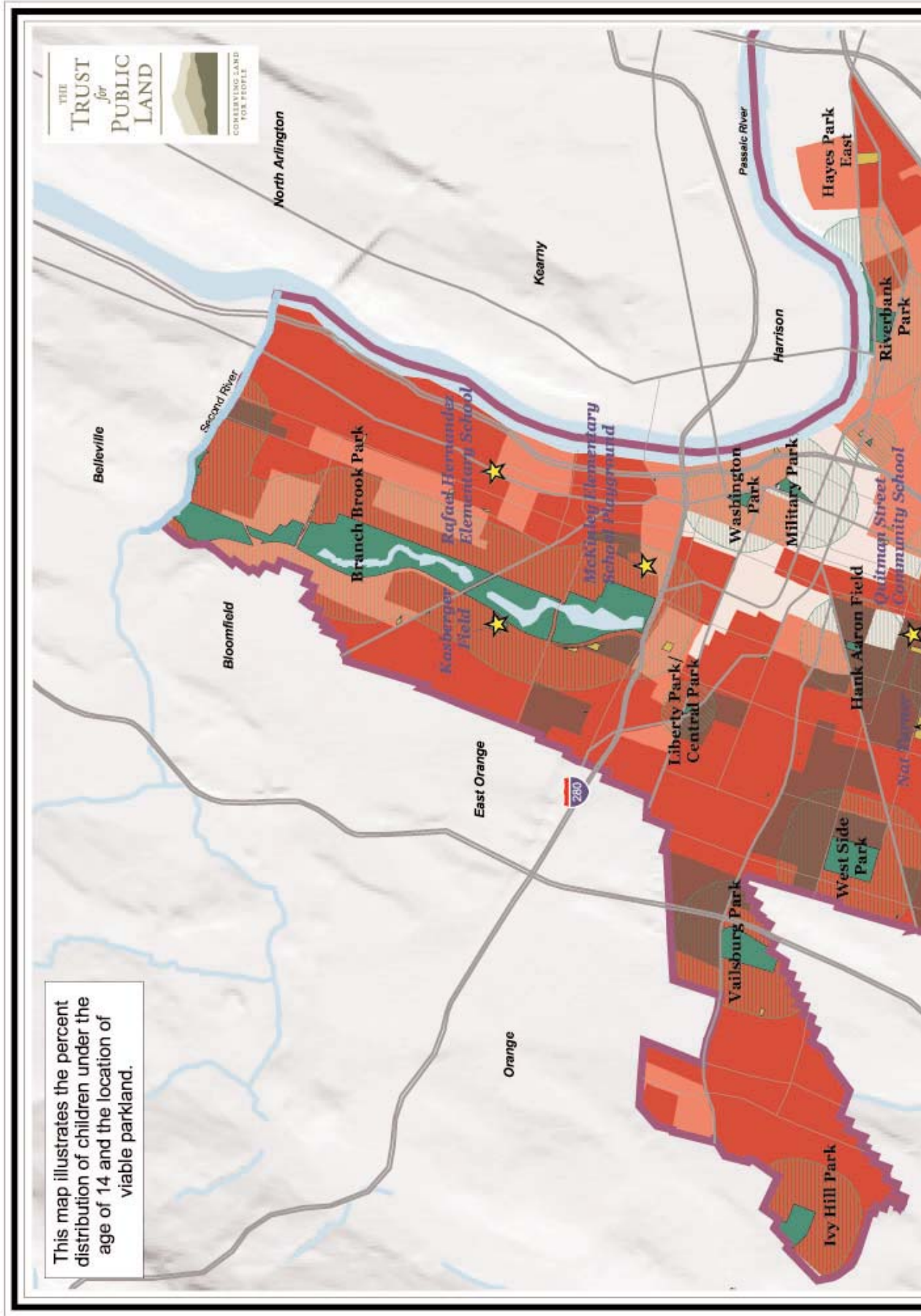
CITY	NUMBER OF PLAYGROUNDS	PLAYGROUNDS PER 1000 RESIDENTS	NUMBER OF RESIDENTS PER PLAYGROUND
Cincinnati	108	0.33	3,065
Minneapolis	108	0.28	3,546
Atlanta	109	0.26	3,817
Austin	156	0.24	4,212
Jacksonville	170	0.23	4,329
Tulsa	92	0.23	4,272
Cleveland	110	0.23	4,345
Tampa	68	0.22	4,456
San Francisco	162	0.21	4,796
Baltimore	129	0.2	5,047
Kansas City, Mo.	86	0.19	5,140
Wichita	67	0.19	5,134
Chicago	504	0.17	5,746
Indianapolis	116	0.15	6,828
Dallas	183	0.15	6,497
Nashville/Davidson County	74	0.13	7,703
Houston	250	0.13	7,816
Arlington, Tex.	39	0.12	8,538
New York	958	0.12	8,359
Washington, D.C.	71	0.12	8,056
Long Beach	52	0.11	8,885
Los Angeles	372	0.1	9,933
Charlotte/Mecklenburg County	68	0.1	10,221
Phoenix	100	0.08	13,210
Newark	10*	0.04	27,400 ◀
<i>Average (not incl. Newark)</i>		0.18	6,415

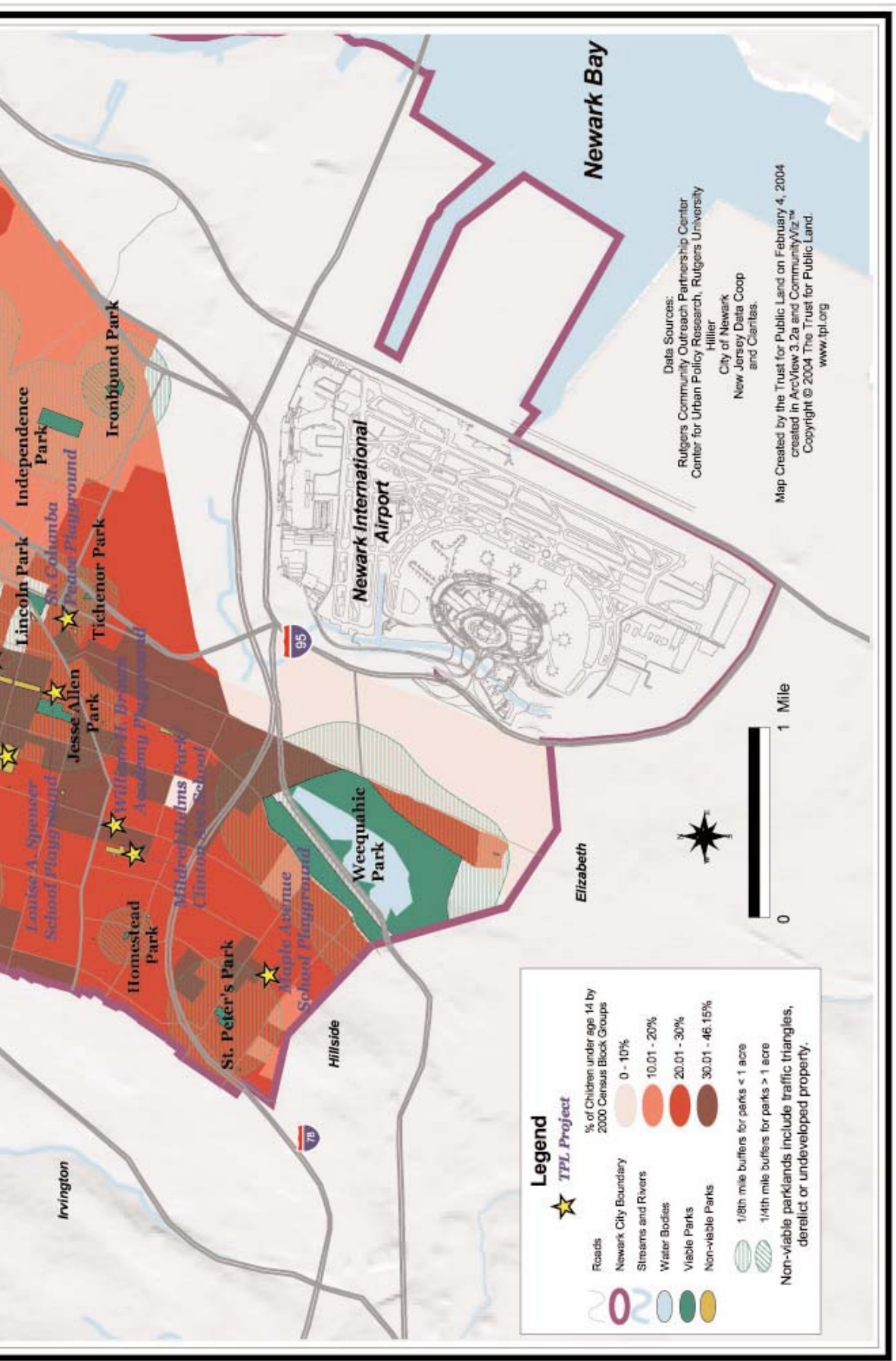
* Only park playgrounds are included in table. Every city has additional playground facilities on school properties, operated by the education department.

Map 1: Park Access: Residents' and Day Care Providers' Proximity to Parks



Map 2: Children and Parks





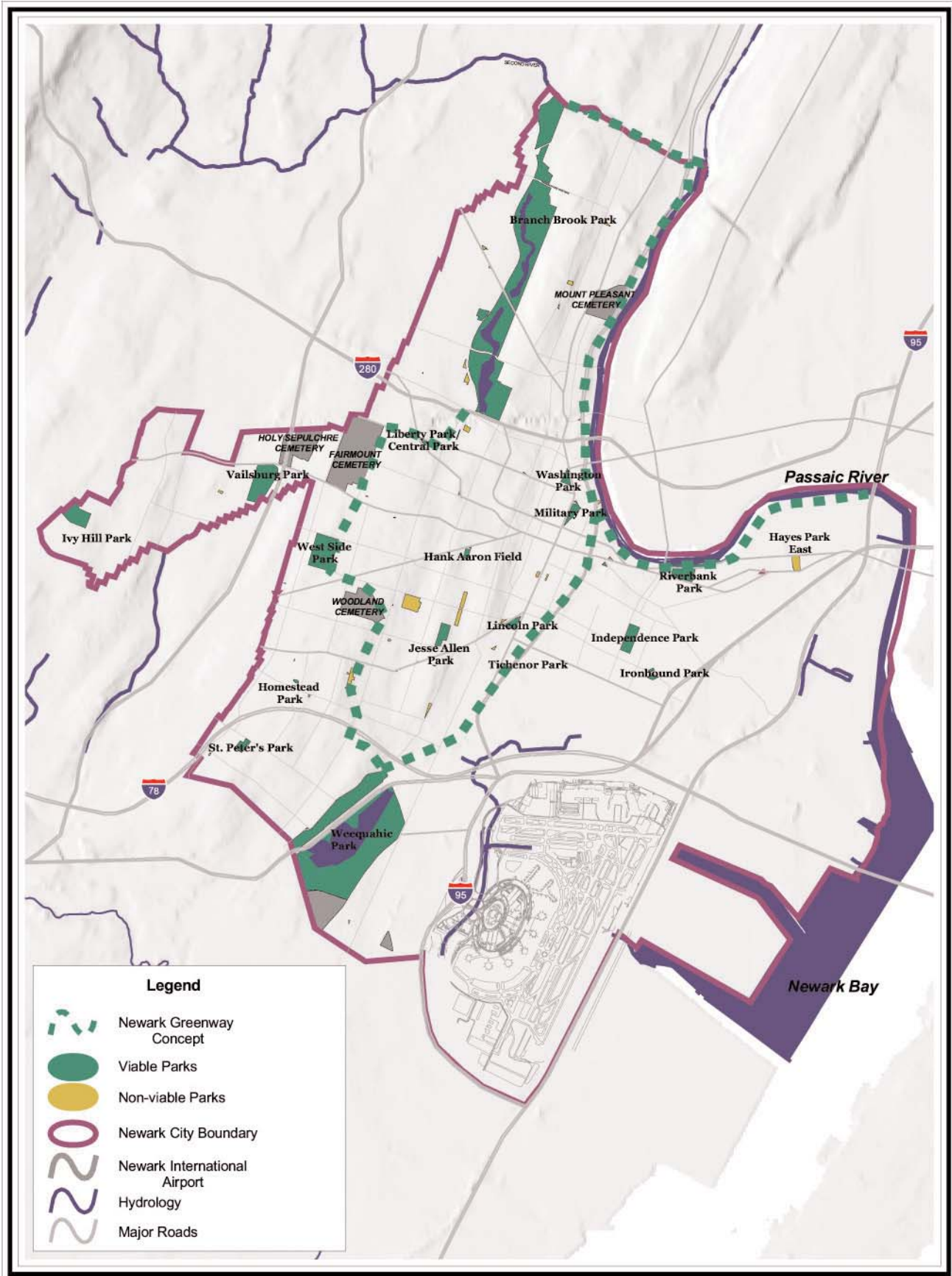
Legend
TPL Project

- ★ 2000 Census Block Groups
- % of Children under age 14 by 2000 Census Block Groups
 - 0 - 10%
 - 10.01 - 20%
 - 20.01 - 30%
 - 30.01 - 46.15%
- Roads
- Newark City Boundary
- Streams and Rivers
- Water Bodies
- Viable Parks
- Non-viable Parks
- 1/8th mile buffers for parks < 1 acre
- 1/4th mile buffers for parks > 1 acre
- Non-viable parklands include traffic triangles, derelict or undeveloped property.

Data Sources:
 Rutgers Community Outreach Partnership Center
 Center for Urban Policy Research, Rutgers University
 Hillier
 City of Newark
 New Jersey Data Coop
 and Claritas.

Map Created by the Trust for Public Land on February 4, 2004
 created in ArcView 3.2a and CommunityWiz™
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Map 3: Linking Parks: Conceptual Newark Greenway Route



parkland and park funding needs. The city is also in need of greater park and open space leadership from both the political and the private sectors.

Newark Mayor Sharpe James has been in office for a quarter-century and is also a New Jersey state senator. While James has presided over the beginning of the city's renaissance, with the

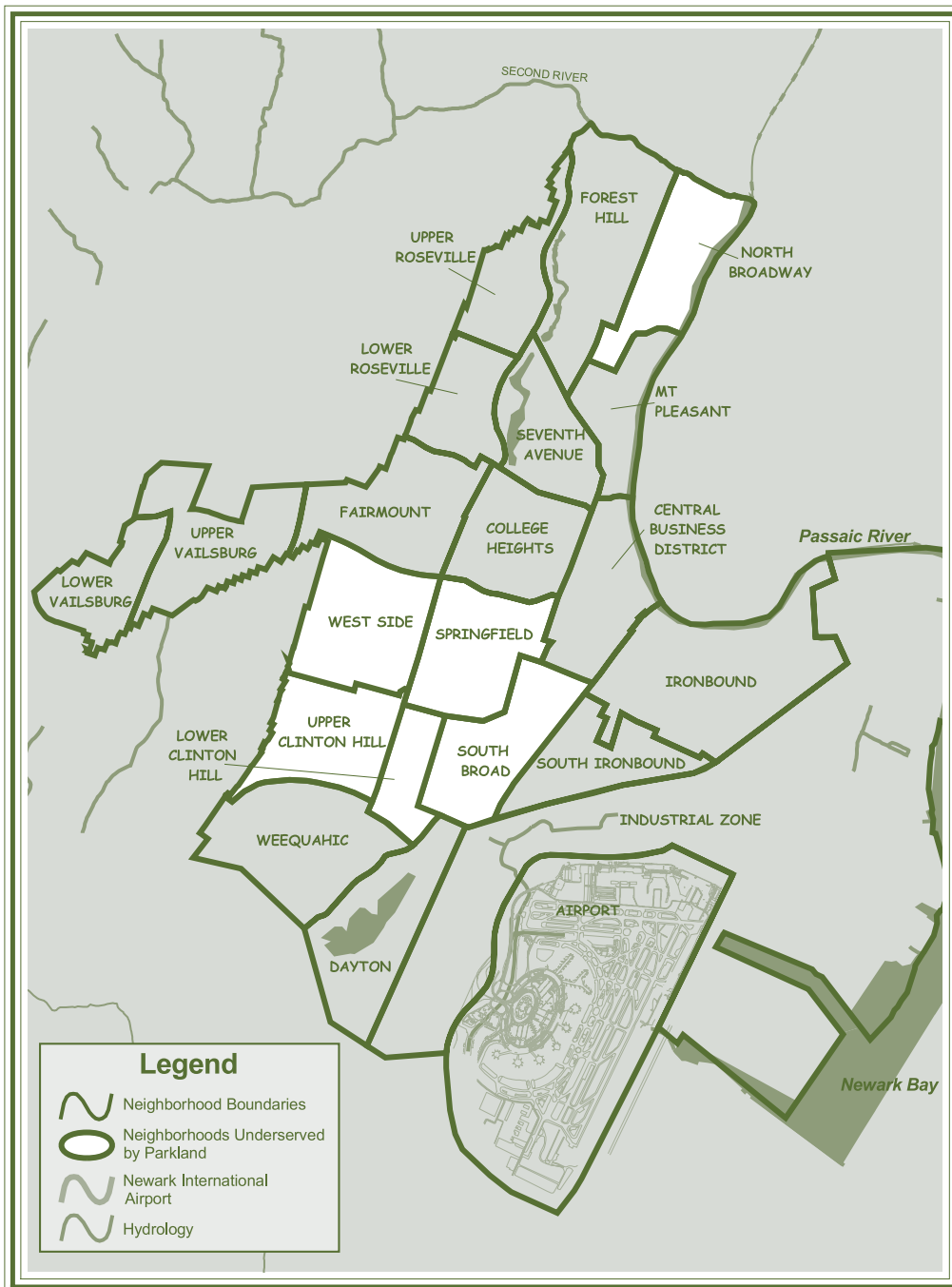
opening of the successful New Jersey Performing Arts Center (1997) and Riverfront Stadium (1999) for the minor league Newark Bears baseball team, parks have not been at the top of his priority list. This is not surprising, since the major parks are the responsibility of Essex County rather than the city.

James's position on parks is mirrored by many



William H. Brown Academy Playground (South Ward). Photo by: Ken Sherman

Map 4: Park-Poor Newark Neighborhoods





St. Columba Peace Playground (East Ward). Photo by: Robert Cadena

residents who feel that Newark's other pressing problems should be dealt with first. However, in other cities, park improvement efforts have often turned out to be seeds that grow into rebuilt communities.

As a matter of fact, one example of a park leading a community's revitalization is right in Newark—in the South Ward, where the dynamic Weequahic Park Association has spent 10 years turning around a rundown park and using it as a springboard for broader community development. Another standout is the Ironbound neighborhood—a vibrant and densely populated section, tightly hemmed by railroad tracks and the Passaic River—which is particularly short on playing fields or even snippets of un-built land sometimes called “urban breathing space.” Residents of the Ironbound are fired up about the need for parks.

The most significant park in the Ironbound is Riverbank Park, owned and operated by Essex County. Riverbank was the site of a major battle over the location of a new minor league baseball stadium, with the mayor and the former executive of Essex County in favor, and the Ironbound Community Corporation opposed. Ultimately the Ironbound Community Corporation won, and the stadium was moved a mile upstream. The park was saved, but in the process heavy metal residues were discovered on the site and it was closed for remediation. (In Phase I Remediation, the contractor mistakenly brought in fill that was itself contaminated, but the city did a second remediation and the beautifully upgraded park officially reopened in November 2003.) As evidence of the Ironbound's level of community organization, the park's support organization, Friends of Riverbank Park, stayed in existence and continued to be the leading advocate for the park

even during the period the park was closed.

In dollar terms, by far the largest driver that could impact open space planning in Newark is the 1998 legal decision in the so-called “Abbott” case governing school construction. Because of the decision, Newark will receive a total of \$1.6 billion in school construction funds to bring the district up to conformity with those in the rest of the state. (Twelve other districts will also receive Abbott funds.) The bulk of the money, of course, will just cover the cost of constructing and renovating buildings and, unfortunately, various restrictions on the funding prevent its use for outdoor recreational spaces. With the implementation of the ruling now in its early stages, several communities are beginning to voice dismay over the fact that the new facilities being designed lack adequate outdoor spaces. It is possible that by involving constituents for parks in this huge planning process and by leveraging other funding sources, some creative strategies for developing outdoor spaces that serve both school and neighborhood needs could arise.

On the flip side, the push to find sites for new schools is a concern for parks in neighborhoods where land is scarce. Already in some cases, parks are being targeted as sites for new school facilities, a trend that would only aggravate the parks situation in Newark.

Creating a Better Open Space Network

Despite the challenges, Newark has many opportunities to create a better open space network. Most notable is the confluence of large tracts of vacant land with an economy that is reviving and expanding. Like an infusion of sunlight and rain upon a barren field that has been fertilized and seeded, the result could be an economic rebound that could generate enough wealth and energy for new parks—if

they are planned for properly.

The two most fruitful areas for this greening are along the Passaic River and through the Central Ward, west of downtown. The Passaic is a woefully underused resource that could become the city's "front porch" and also serve as the focal point of an expanded Newark park system—similar to what's been done with such far-flung waterways as the South Platte River in Denver and the Woonasquetucket River in Providence. Although the 6.6 miles of the Passaic within the city limits of Newark have historically been ignored, the New Jersey Performing Arts Center and other institutions have recently begun focusing on this stretch, promoting not only shoreline parks with pedestrian access over Route 21, but also a new environmental education center on a refurbished ferry to be docked near Penn Station. They are also discussing the construction of a new rowing center.

With the progress that's been made cleaning up the Passaic's pollution, the new attention to its possibilities, and with the Army Corps of Engineers rebuilding the bulkheads between the Stickel Bridge (I-280) and Riverbank Park, the Passaic's time may finally be at hand.

The bulkhead project is a three-phase, \$75-million project. Phase I involves shoring up the riverbanks; Phase II will build a walkway; and Phase III will construct Joseph Minish Park, two miles long, from I-280 to Brill Street. Fashioned by the Army Corps, it will be a city park, although it has not been decided who will operate it. East of there, further downstream, there is a proposal to create a new Essex County park for active recreation called Riverfront Park. Beyond that, in the highly industrial neighborhood near the New Jersey Turnpike,

there is a desire to install at least a narrow strip for walking and cycling. It is unclear who would maintain it and whether the strip would be purchased or consist only of an easement. Conceivably, the entire greenspace along the waterfront could become an Essex County park or even a New Jersey state park. (There are only two urban state parks in New Jersey, Liberty State Park and the Delaware and Raritan Canal State Park, but there is a newfound interest in developing others, particularly along rivers.)

There is another important park connector opportunity along the Passaic River, on the far north side of town, where a stream known as Second River flows into the Passaic. Much of the Second River corridor is green and environmentally attractive (which is appropriate since it forms the northern boundary of Branch Brook Park and is owned by the Essex County Parks Department), but the last 2,000 linear feet, between Broadway and the Passaic, are not passable. Acquiring this land and adding it to the Essex County park system would provide a valuable link between Branch Brook Park and the river.

The Central Ward—the section of Newark most impacted by the pivotal 1967 riot and the subsequent exodus from the city—has large tracts of vacant and abandoned properties. It also sits between the two great Olmsted creations, Weequahic Park and Branch Brook Park. Connecting these 700 acres of greenery is a concept that goes back 100 years. In the early 20th century, John C. Olmsted proposed a parkway system for Essex County that included a "Weequahic Parkway" running up to Branch Brook. Today the city is talking of a "Newark Greenway Project" in the vicinity of West Side Park that would involve traffic-calming,



*McKinley Elementary School Playground (Central Ward), participatory design.
Photo by: Yola Monakhov*



The Central Ward's McKinley Elementary School Playground, before and after renovation. Photos by: Manuel Lebron (top), Clark Jones (bottom).

streetscape improvements, and bike lanes. While now envisioned purely as an on-road system oriented toward bicycles, it conceivably could be routed along and through the green spaces of Woodland Cemetery, West Side Park, and Fairmount Cemetery. (In addition, the Greater Newark Conservancy is constructing an environmental education center at the intersection of Springfield Avenue and Prince Street, which could make an ideal “hub” for a greenway vision.) Alternatively, the link could go the “long way,” using Belleville Park, Second River, a Passaic River Greenway, and a trail alongside the Amtrak corridor through Ironbound. The latter concept is in the Ironbound master plan put together by the Wallace Roberts Todd planning firm (see Map 3, page 8).

There is a third possible way of connecting Branch Brook and Weequahic parks—not geographically, but politically. Each of these two special parks has its own support conservancy—the Branch Brook Park Alliance and Weequahic Park Association. By combining forces, the sum could be greater than the parts. Together these groups, plus the Trust for Public Land and perhaps several other organizations, could develop a leveraged marketing effort that would promote (1) the existing parks, (2) a future connecting greenway system that links the parks to the Passaic River, and (3) a revitalized Newark generally.

Conclusion

When it comes to parks, Newark has two overriding challenges. On the macro level, the city has no master plan for increasing its park acreage, making needed capital improvements, and working out a joint park management agreement with Essex County. On the micro level, there is a widespread lack of public confidence that any individual park project can be brought to successful completion.

The Trust for Public Land proposes a three-point plan to help overcome these challenges:

I. PROMOTE BALANCED DEVELOPMENT IN THE CITY'S NEIGHBORHOODS

On the neighborhood level, Newark needs to fix existing parks and strategically create new ones in underserved areas. This job will require the collective work of many institutions. TPL is committed to helping, and it plans to raise and spend approximately \$10 million to build or reconstruct community parks including Mildred Helms Park in the South Ward, Nat Turner Park in the Central Ward, and Kasberger Field and Rafael Hernandez School Playground in the North Ward. (This will compliment and expand the seven playground projects, totaling \$2.5 million, that TPL has completed at six school sites.) By the end of the project, TPL will have added almost 20 acres of high-quality outdoor recreational land in neighborhoods.

2. BUILD A CONSTITUENCY FOR OPEN SPACE

The need for an open space master plan that functions as part of the overall city planning process is more critical than ever. Equally important is the need for an organizational structure within the city that supports building and sustaining a parks system and a collaboration between the city and county that would result in information sharing, economies of scale in maintenance, and improved programming. In this effort, the Trust for Public Land proposes: 1) to assemble a broad cross section of leaders from public agencies, corporations, foundations, and private nonprofits in a facilitated roundtable discussion that will focus on developing a set of shared values and objectives surrounding open space, and 2) to create and implement a marketing campaign with Newark's outdoor recreational needs and opportunities as the centerpiece.

3. DEVELOP GREENWAYS TO CONNECT NEWARK'S ISOLATED GEMS

Now is the time to optimize Newark's existing resources—the Passaic River, Weequahic and Branch Brook parks, the cemeteries, the Second River—by establishing a comprehensive greenway system. The Trust for Public Land's role in accomplishing this would be: 1) to assist with land acquisition for parks, 2) to feature Newark's environmental assets in a marketing campaign, 3) to continue to mobilize public and private financial resources around the parks and open space issues in Newark, and 4) to continue to forge innovative partnerships with public land stewards that can be replicated by others to augment Newark's open space resources.

The Trust for Public Land has long been deeply involved in Newark and is highly committed to working in the city. TPL accomplishments include staging participatory playground design processes that engage students, teachers, administrators and community members; developing six community playgrounds; and infusing \$2.5 million in new capital investment into economically disenfranchised neighborhoods. The impact is being felt: TPL's completed projects already serve more than one in seven New Yorkers—over 41,000 people, more than 10,000 of whom are children under the age of 14.³

Other organizations are also laboring hard on such issues as housing, retail, employment, culture and more. Some initiatives have borne fruit, and others have failed. Now is the time for these fragmented efforts to be pulled together so that the synergy helps them all. To augment the city government's planning process, the private, nonprofit community should stimulate this important conversation about the physical design of Newark.

For many people Newark is already a desirable place to live, work, and socialize. With judicious investment, it could better serve and attract many more. That investment should include a much-improved system of parks, playgrounds, recreation centers, community gardens, and passive open space. The Trust for Public Land fully recognizes that this course of action will be neither quick nor inexpensive, but it is essential for a successful city and TPL is committed to sticking with this effort—and helping to fund it—over the long haul.

Endnotes:

1. Both agencies have larger mandates. Essex County Department of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs also operates thousands of acres of parkland outside the city of Newark. Newark Department of Neighborhood and Recreational Services is a large agency with such divergent responsibilities as public works, sanitation and code enforcement. The budget estimate is solely for the two agencies' work on parks within the city of Newark.
2. This counts only playgrounds in parks; every city has additional playgrounds in schoolyards, but that data is not available.
3. Figures are calculated based on a service area of one-quarter mile from each park.



The North Ward's Louise A. Spencer School Playground, before and after renovation. Photos by: Eric Leshinsky.

THE
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for
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LAND



The Trust for Public Land
New Jersey Field Office
20 Community Place, 2nd Floor
Morristown, NJ 07960
(973) 292-1100, Fax (973) 292-6272
www.tpl.org

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