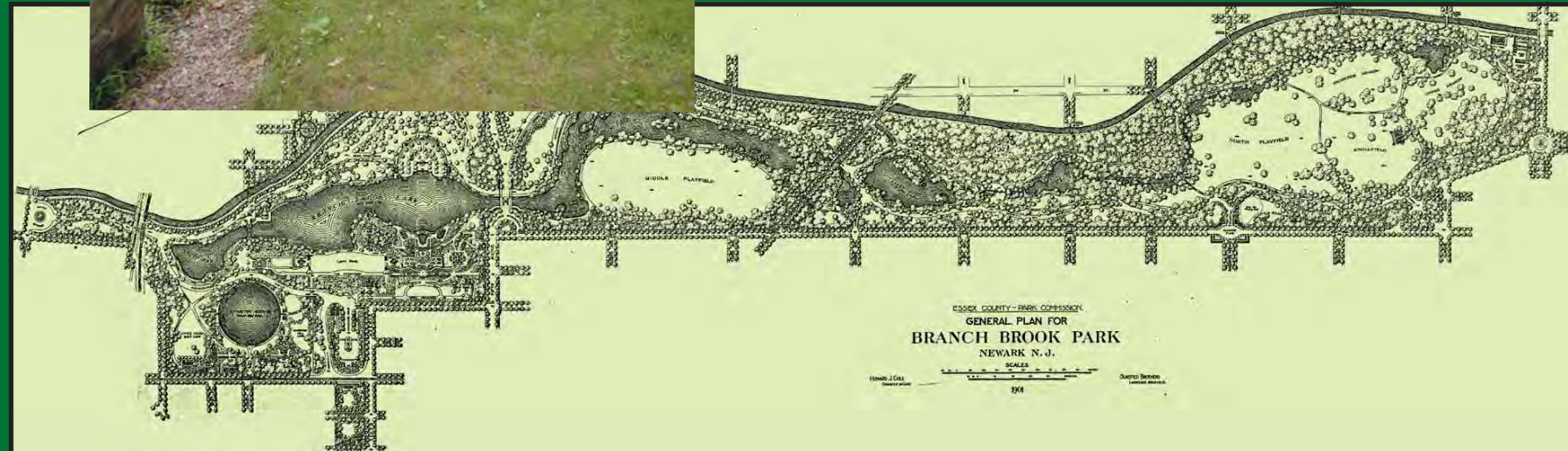


Cultural Landscape Report, Treatment, and Management Plan
for Branch Brook Park
Newark, New Jersey



Volume 1: Existing Conditions



Prepared for:

Branch Brook Park Alliance
A project of Connection-Newark
744 Broad Street, 31st Floor
Newark, New Jersey 07102

Essex County Department of Parks,
Recreation and Cultural Affairs
115 Clifton Avenue
Newark, New Jersey 07104

9 September 2002

Prepared for:

Branch Brook Park Alliance
A project of Connection-Newark
744 Broad Street, 31st Floor
Newark, New Jersey 07102

Essex County Department of Parks,
Recreation and Cultural Affairs
115 Clifton Avenue
Newark, New Jersey 07104

Prepared by:

Rhodeside & Harwell, Incorporated
Landscape Architecture & Planning
320 King Street, Suite 202
Alexandria, Virginia 22314

Professional Planning & Engineering Corporation
24 Commerce Street, Suite 1827, 18th Floor
Newark, New Jersey 07102-4054

Arleyn Levee
51 Stella Road
Belmont, Massachusetts 02178

Dr. Charles Beveridge
Department of History, The American University
4000 Brandywine Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20016

“...the central idea of a large public park is manifestly that of a work of art - of a peculiar character undoubtedly, but nevertheless designed at the outset as all other works of art are designed, with the intention of producing, through the exercise of the natural perceptions, a certain effect upon the mind and the character of those who approach it.”

*- Olmsted, Vaux & Co.
Landscape Architects*

Table of Contents

A.	Introduction	1
B.	Park Location and Context	1
C.	Edge Condition, Entrances, and Circulation	1
D.	Recreational Use Areas and Major Buildings	4
E.	Vegetation	6
F.	Surface Features	8
G.	Viewsheds	10
H.	Visual and Spatial Analysis	13
I.	Surrounding Land Use and Communities	15
J.	Community Involvement	17

List of Figures

1.	Edge Condition, Entrances, and Circulation	2
2.	Recreational Use Areas and Major Buildings	5
3.	Vegetation	7
4.	Surface Features	9
5.	Viewsheds	11
6.	Visual and Spatial Analysis	14
7.	Surrounding Land Use and Communities	16

EXISTING CONDITIONS

A. Introduction

As the first step in producing the *Cultural Landscape Report, Treatment, and Management Plan for Branch Brook Park* in Newark, New Jersey, an assessment and documentation of existing conditions in the park and surrounding neighborhoods was undertaken between February and May, 2002.

The following sections, along with Figures 1 through 7, detail this existing conditions survey by breaking the park down into the following subject areas and components: Park Location and Context; Edge Condition, Entrances, and Circulation; Recreational Use Areas and Major Buildings; Vegetation; Surface Features; Viewsheds; Visual and Spatial Analysis; and Surrounding Land Use and Communities.

This volume, *Existing Conditions*, is to be the first of five volumes that will complete the Cultural Landscape Report, Treatment, and Management Plan for the park. The other four volumes will include: *History of the Park and Critical Periods of Development* (Volume 2); *Hydrology, Utilities, Traffic, and Structures* (Volume 3); *Vegetation* (Volume 4); and the *Treatment and Management Plan* (Volume 5).

B. Park Location and Context

Branch Brook Park is located in Newark, New Jersey, approximately one mile northwest of the central business district of the city. The park is owned by Essex County, New Jersey and managed by the Essex County Department of Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Affairs. At 370 acres, Branch Brook Park is the largest park in the Essex County system, and is considered the “crown jewel” in what is the oldest county park system in the nation.

The park is bounded on the south by Interstate Highway 280, on the west by the Newark City Subway line and Franklin Avenue, and on the east by Clifton Avenue, Parker Street, and Lake Street. The northern boundary is formed by Belleville Park and the Second River, the later of which serves as the division between the City of Newark and the Town of Belleville (in Essex County). The result is that while the majority of the park lies within the City of Newark, the northernmost part of the “Extension” falls within the Town of Belleville. Belleville Park, which is also part of the Essex County park system, is being included as part of the study area for this Cultural Landscape Report.

Branch Brook Park is broken down into four main sections, or “divisions.” The Southern Division, the first area of the park to be constructed in the late 1800’s, includes the land between Interstate 280 and Park Avenue. The Middle Division encompasses the area between Park Avenue and Bloomfield Avenue, a thoroughfare that cuts diagonally (southeast to northwest) across the park. The Northern Division, which contains the largest area of land in the park, lies between Bloomfield Avenue and Heller Parkway. Finally, the park “Extension,” the last area of the park to be constructed and planted, includes the land north of Heller Parkway and east along the Second River to Broadway.



Map showing the location of Branch Brook Park within the City of Newark, and within the context of the entire Essex County Park System. (Source: *Map of Branch Brook Park and Belleville Park*, published by the Greensward Foundation, Inc., 1995).

C. Edge Condition, Entrances, and Circulation

Figure 1 depicts the basic vehicular and pedestrian circulation system that provides access into, and throughout, the park. Entrances, both formal and informal, are also shown, as are the edge conditions that define both the boundaries of the park and the accessibility of the site from surrounding neighborhoods.

The backbone of the circulation system is a series of meandering roads and paths that allow for movement through the park along its main north-south axis, and a number of bisecting east-west city streets that break the park down into its component “divisions” and provide access into the site. In the Southern, Middle, and Northern Divisions, as well as part of the Extension, the main north-south “spine” includes South Branch Brook Drive, Middle Branch Brook Drive, North Branch Brook Drive, and Brookside Drive (with North Branch Brook Drive and Brookside Drive actually allowing for circular movement around the Northern Division). The major east-west city streets that run perpendicular to this spine and provide both vehicular and pedestrian access include Park Avenue, Bloomfield Avenue, and Heller Parkway.

At the northernmost part of the Extension, the basic orientation of the park changes, with the main circulation spine

BRANCH BROOK PARK

Cultural Landscape Report
Newark, New Jersey

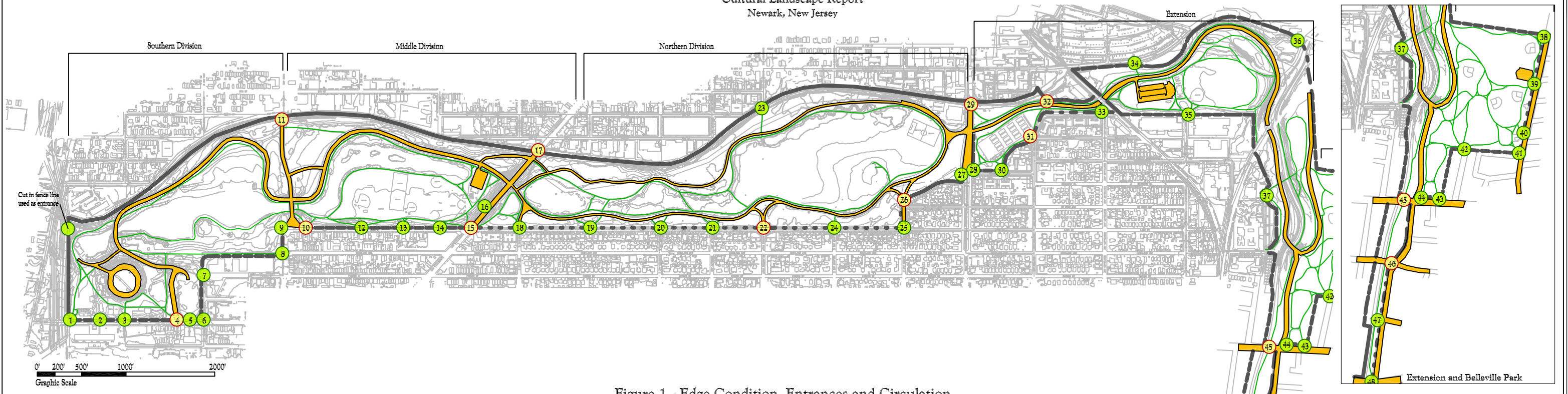


Figure 1 - Edge Condition, Entrances and Circulation

Legend

- | | | | | | | | |
|--|----------------------|--|---|--|-------------|--|-----------|
| | Pedestrian Entrances | | Pedestrian Circulation | | Walled Edge | | Open Edge |
| | Vehicular Entrances | | Vehicular Circulation and Parking Areas | | Fenced Edge | | |

- | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| 1. 8th Avenue | 7. Berringer High School | 13. Lake St. North of Field House | 19. Crossover Drive | 25. Elwood Ave | 31. Bellais Place | 37. Tiffany Boulevard | 43. Union Ave North |
| 2. Clifton Ave (Shelter Entrance) | 8. Northern Promenade | 14. Lake St. South of Bloomfield | 20. Abington Ave | 26. Degraw Ave | 32. Grafton Ave | 38. Garden Ave | 44. Union Ave South |
| 3. 7th Avenue | 9. Octagon Pavilion | 15. Bloomfield Ave East | 21. Berkeley Ave | 27. Haller Parkway Southeast | 33. Montclair Ave | 39. Park View Ave | 45. Mill Street East |
| 4. Branch Brook Parkway South | 10. Park Ave Northeast | 16. Sentors Building | 22. Ballantine Parkway | 28. Haller Parkway Northeast | 34. Franklin Ave | 40. Columbus Ave | 46. Deidge Street |
| 5. Park Offices | 11. Park Ave West | 17. Bloomfield Ave West | 23. Deavenport Ave | 29. Haller Parkway West | 35. Verona Ave | 41. Cedar Hill Ave | 47. Dow Street |
| 6. Cathedral of the Sacred Heart | 12. Field House | 18. 2nd Avenue | 24. Delavan Ave | 30. Forest Hill Parkway | 36. Mill St. West | 42. Wilson Place | 48. Washington Ave |

Sources:
Topographical Survey
R111 Field Reconnaissance



September 2002

running east-west instead of north-south. Here, Branch Brook Drive and Mill Street form this east-west spine, with Union Avenue, Bridge Street, and Broadway serving as the cross streets.

The location of pedestrian paths in the park, for the most part, mirrors the placement of roads. These paths, the majority of which are paved, are shown in green on Figure 1. In addition to following the main roads, or having been built as sidewalks along these roads, pedestrian trails allow direct access and contact with open areas, forests, water bodies, and recreation fields in the interior portions of the site. Some of these paths, including those in the Southern Division, are particularly significant because they serve as promenades along what are perhaps the most important features in the park: Branch Brook Lake, Clark’s Pond/Midwood Pool, and the Second River. Also significant is the pattern of trails that circle the Middle Playfield, North Playfield/Upper Meadow, North Visitors’ Center Ballfields, and Belleville Park. In these areas, the pedestrian paths provide a passive boundary to what are predominantly active spaces, and help to knit together these various uses (this is especially true of the paths at Belleville Park, which help create a space that is both active and passive).



Formal “Ballantine Gateway”, looking west across Lake Street at Ballantine Parkway.

east side. While there are over twenty pedestrian entrances (and six additional vehicular entrances where pedestrians can enter) on the east side between the southern end of the park and the North Visitors’ Center Ballfields, there are only six entrances on the entire west side of the park over the same distance. This disparity is due almost entirely to the presence of the Newark City Subway tracks that border the west side of the park from its southernmost end up to Heller Parkway. The railroad line creates an impermeable barrier that leaves Park Avenue



Typical pedestrian paths in the Northern Division of the park.



Pedestrian path forming a passive boundary to the Middle Playfield.



Entrance marked by a break in the fence line along Lake Street.



One of the few pedestrian entrances on the west side of the park, at Stephen Crane Village (Franklin Avenue).

Entrances to the park are specified in Figure 1, and are separated into vehicular (yellow) and pedestrian (green) points of ingress. While some of the entrances are more formal and are marked with a sign or gate, such as those at Branch Brook Parkway South (entrance #4 on Figure 1) and Ballantine Parkway (#22), others are simply characterized by a break in a wall or a fence. Almost all of the entrances, however, are formal enough that they can be identified by a paved pathway or stairs leading into the park.

Most notable in the examination of entrances, and quite evident in Figure 1, is the paucity of pedestrian entrances on the west side of the park when compared to the number on the



Vehicular entrance to the park at Branch Brook Parkway South, as viewed across Clifton Avenue.

(#11), Bloomfield Avenue (#17), Heller Parkway (#29), Grafton Avenue (#32), the pedestrian overpass at Dav- enport Avenue (#23), and the entrance off Franklin Avenue (#34) as the only means of entering the park from the west.

Entrances are not an issue in the eastern leg of the Extension and in Belleville Park. The eastern leg of the Extension is narrow enough that it can be accessed easily from Branch Brook Drive and Mill Street, and Belleville Park has adequate access from all sides (except the west side that borders Hendricks Field Golf Course). More importantly, though, the eastern leg of the Extension and Belleville Park were not designed in the same way, nor do they serve the same purpose, as the Southern, Middle, and Northern Divisions of Branch Brook Park that are bordered on both sides by dense, urban, residential neighborhoods.

Figure 1 also shows the edge conditions along the boundary of the park. The map depicts which areas are open to surrounding neighborhoods, and which areas are separated by walls or fences. Most evident is the fact that almost the entire west side of the park, besides being separated from the surrounding community by the City of Newark subway line, is cut off by a large wall adjacent to the tracks.



View west along Mill Street, showing the open nature of the Extension's eastern leg.



View southeast along 1st Street, showing the wall/fence adjacent to the City of Newark subway tracks. Academy Spires Apartments are visible in the background.



View of "English Gardens" located on the east side of Branch Brook Lake. Octagon Shelter is located to the left of the photo.

Also significant is that almost the entire east side of the Northern Division is completely open to Lake Street and the adjacent neighborhoods. Also, unlike the east side of the Middle Division where there is a steep grade change at the park edge, this area is almost entirely at-grade with the park, with only a slight downward slope into the site. The effect is that these neighborhoods look directly into the park (lending a strong visual connection), whereas those in the Middle Division tend to look over the top of it. The combination of the lack of fencing/walls and the strong visual link makes this northern area of Forest Hill feel the most intimately linked of any of the communities surrounding the park.

The largest areas used for passive recreation occur in the Southern Division, Northern Division, and Belleville Park. Popular activities include strolling, nature observation, lounging, picnicking, exercising, and taking in the views. In the Southern Division, heavily used areas include the Music Court on the west side of the lake and the large area on the east side of the lake that encompasses the Octagon shelter (both sides of the lake offer excellent views of features inside and outside the park). In the Northern Division, the entire area between North Branch Brook Drive and Brookside Drive, including the North Playfield and the Upper Meadow, is used for passive activities. Most of Belleville Park and the lower Extension are also dedicated to passive recreation; Belleville Park has an extensive network of trails and most of the Extension affords views of the Second River (many of them from above).

D. Recreational Use Areas and Major Buildings

Figure 2 outlines the most widely used features, or "use areas," in the park, including all of the buildings and structures. This map is useful in showing which areas are most heavily used, and where attention is focused in the park. Denoted in light green are the designated active recreation areas, including the entire Middle Playfields area, the North Visitors' Center ballfields, and the Belleville Park ballfields. Also included under active recreation are the Southern Division playground and basketball courts, the Heller Parkway tennis courts, and the various bocce courts and horseshoe pits spread throughout the Middle Division, Northern Division, and the Extension.



"Music Court" and landing located at the western edge of Branch Brook Lake.



Looking south across the passive Upper Meadow, which is located in the Northern Division of the park.



Panoramic view northeast across the Middle Payfield - the largest area for active recreation in Branch Brook Park.

Also evident on Figure 2 is that there are many open areas in the park that are not highlighted as passive recreation areas. These areas, for the most part, are heavily wooded, located on hillsides, located in more remote areas of the park, or are environmentally sensitive (such as margins immediately adjacent to water bodies). While these regions are not off limits to visitors, their physical characteristics or locations do not lend themselves to use by park visitors.

While all of the buildings and structures in the park are noted on Figure 2, some are more prominent or widely used than others. In the Southern Division, significant structures include the roller rink, the Octagon shelter, and

BRANCH BROOK PARK

Cultural Landscape Report
Newark, New Jersey

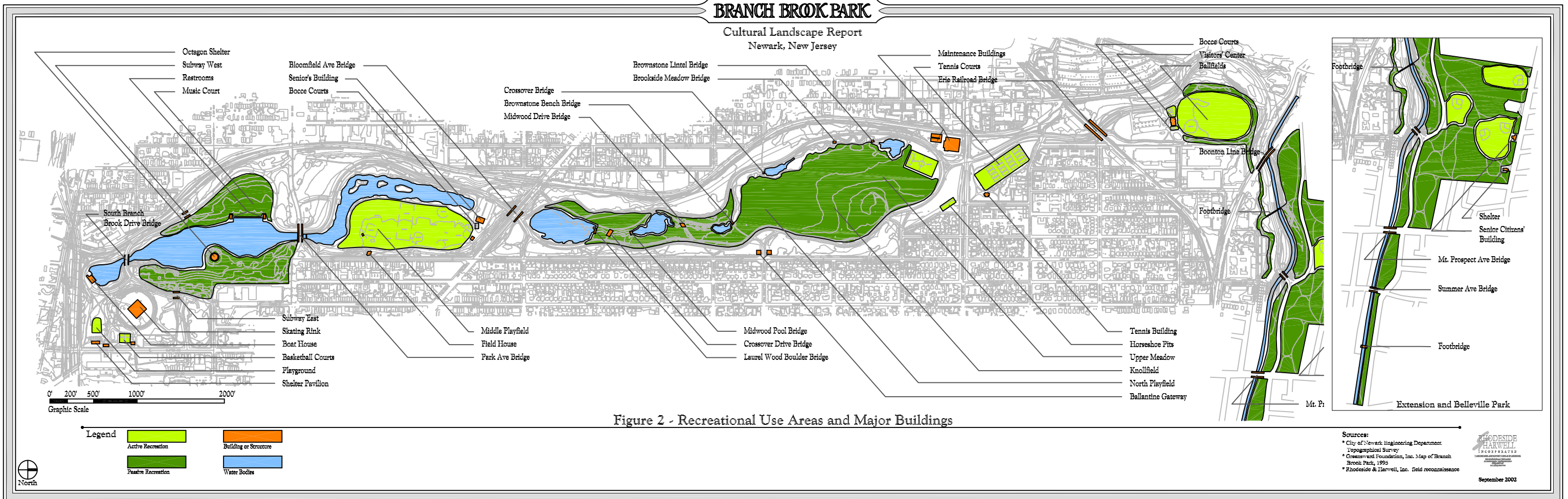


Figure 2 - Recreational Use Areas and Major Buildings

Sources:
 * City of Newark Engineering Department
 Topographical Survey
 * Crossward Foundation, Inc. Map of Branch
 Brook Park, 1995
 * Rhoadside & Harwell, Inc. field reconnaissance

**RHODESIDE
HARWELL
INCORPORATED**
 September 2002



The Octagon Shelter (southeast face).



The Boat House, looking southwest across the lake (Interstate Route 280 in background).



The Shelter Pavilion - the oldest structure in Branch Brook Park.

the boat house. The shelter pavilion in the southeast corner of the park is also notable, not because of its use, but because it is perhaps the oldest and most ornate structure in the park.

Other significant buildings in Branch Brook Park and Belleville Park include the Seniors' Building (located at the northern end of the Middle Division), the Ballantine Gateway (at the corner of Lake street and Ballantine Parkway), the Branch Brook Park Visitors' Center (north of Heller Parkway in the Extension), and the Belleville Park Senior Citizens' Building. Another important facility, the Essex County Parks Department Maintenance Yard, is located at the entrance to Northern Division off Heller Parkway.



The Seniors' Building.



Branch Brook Park Visitors' Center, looking northwest from pedestrian entrance at Verona Avenue.



Belleville Park Seniors' Building.

E. Vegetation

While there are many different species of trees, shrubs, flowers, and plants in Branch Brook Park, the types of vegetation fall into four general categories, as shown in Figure 3. The "lawn" category denotes those areas that are grassy and open, the majority of the land being free of shrubs, trees, or canopy vegetation. The "lawn and tree" category specifies those areas that are grassy, but which also have a sparse to moderate concentration of trees (or trees and shrubs) as an overstory. "Forested areas" characterizes those regions that are dense woodlands, with a canopy of trees and [in some cases] an understory of shrubs and plants. These areas have little or no grass present on the ground level. Lastly, as the title suggests, the "cherry trees" category shows the general location of these flowering trees, which are called out because they are such a specific and special feature of the park.



Mature trees bordering open lawn at the "English Gardens." View is west across Branch Brook Lake, with the Music Court in the distance.



View south across the Music Court.

In the Southern Division of the park, with Branch Brook Lake serving as the focal point, much of the vegetation is layered upon lawn areas on both the east and west sides of the lake (the Music Court and the [former] English Garden). The hillsides sloping down to these lawn areas and to the lake (from Park Avenue on the west side and Barringer High School on the east side) are a mixture of lawn and trees, as are the smaller hillsides on either side of Concourse Hill and the Roller Rink. The only forested area in the Southern Division occurs in the thin strip between South Branch Brook Drive and the Newark City Subway tracks at the western boundary of the park. Like the Southern Division, the plantings in the Middle Division focus on Branch Brook Lake. The flat lawn of the Middle Playfield occupies almost the entire east side of the lake; the slope down from Lake Avenue to the playfields is a mixture of lawn and trees. On the west side of the lake, the large hill sloping down from Park Avenue toward



Looking southeast along Branch Brook Drive in the Middle Division. A mixture of lawn and trees covers this broad slope between Branch Brook Lake and Park Avenue (the entrance to Park Avenue is visible on the left side of the photograph).

Middle Branch Brook Drive is also a mixture of lawn and trees. A similar slope, in the northwest corner of the Middle Division adjacent to Bloomfield Avenue, is likewise a combination of grass and trees. Pockets of forest surround the shores of Branch Brook Lake in the Middle Division, and a contiguous stretch of forest helps define the western boundary of the park in this region.

The Northern Division encompasses the largest acreage in the park. Again, the vegetation is layered upon Clark's Pond and the other smaller pools that are strung along the middle of the park. While almost the entire area north of Ballantine Parkway (containing the North Playfield, Knollfield, and the Upper Meadow) is open lawn, the southern area of this division is a mixture of trees and lawn. The result is that the area between Clark's Pond and

BRANCH BROOK PARK

Cultural Landscape Report
Newark, New Jersey

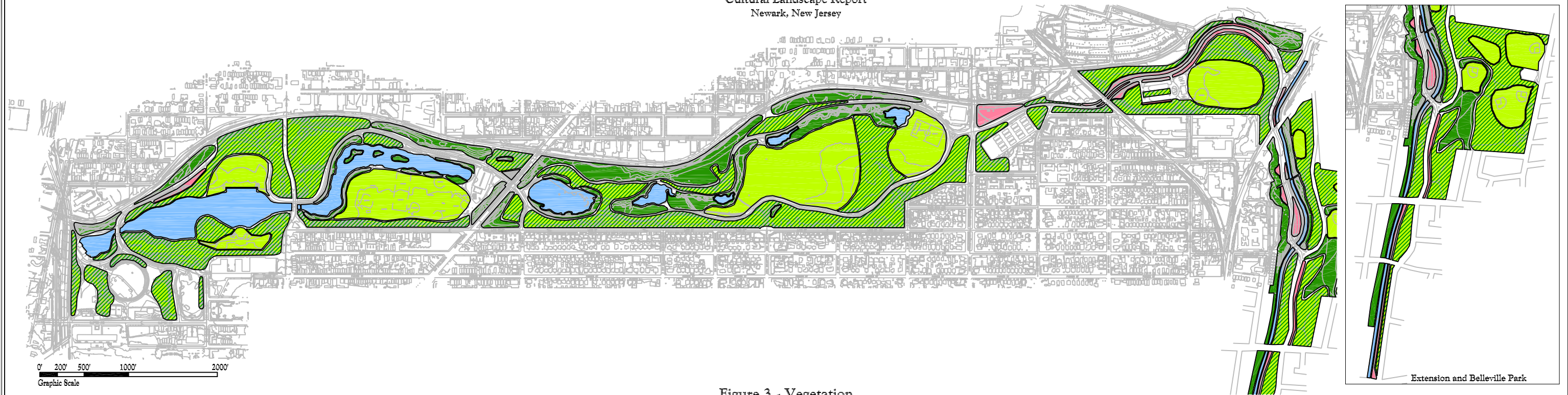


Figure 3 - Vegetation

Legend		
		
Lawn	Forested Areas	Water Bodies
		
Lawn with Trees	Cherry Trees	

Sources:
• City of Newark Engineering Department
Topographical Survey
• Rhoads & Harwell, Inc. field reconnaissance



September 2002



The North Playfield (view northwest from Branch Brook Drive toward Brookside Drive).

the North Playfield looks and feels more like a forest, with the densest areas occurring adjacent to the pools and the stream connecting them. This dense streamside forest remains constant along Brookside Drive between the Midwood Pool and the Upper Pool. The forest is reflected again on the west side of Brookside Drive, and forms the entire western boundary of the park in the Northern Division. On the eastern side of the park, a mixture of trees and lawn inhabit the gentle slope between Lake Street and North Branch Brook Drive, beginning the transition from city street to dense forest (moving toward the center of the park).

The Extension, because it is long, thin, and strung out, does not have central focus for its plantings. The northwest portion, in the vicinity of the Visitors' Center, is similar to other areas of Branch Brook



Streamside forest in the vicinity of the Midwood Pool.

Park with large trees surrounding the central ballfield and adjacent hillsides. However, in the portion of the Extension that runs east-west instead of north south, the feeling is that of a parkway rather than a park. This feeling is reflected in the vegetation, which is much more linear in nature than southern areas of the park. A mixture of lawn and trees border the road, with a thin strip of forest forming the backdrop of the park (on the south side) between the Branch Brook Drive-Mill Street intersection and Broadway (at the eastern terminus of the park). Also strung out along the road are the flowering cherry trees, which line the road, and the river, intermittently between Heller Parkway and Broadway.

Belleville Park contains a variety of vegetation types, with a mixture of lawn and trees surrounding the ballfields and a dense forested core occupying the middle and southern areas of the park. A mixture of lawn and trees also occupies the strip of land and the hillside between Belleville Park and the Second River, in the vicinity of the [former] Mill Street.

F. Surface Features

Figure 4, Surface Features, illustrates the basic landforms and water bodies at Branch Brook Park. The map shows relative elevations in the park, and identifies highlands, lowlands, and transition areas. (Transition areas are defined as those regions that are neither high nor low, and are of moderate elevation compared to areas surrounding them. Many of these areas are also hillsides, and are therefore transition areas between highlands and lowlands.). It must be kept in mind that all elevations highlighted in Figure 4 are relative elevations, and are not absolute elevations. Belleville Park (the highest site in the study area) sits at a much higher general elevation than the southern end of Branch Brook Park (the lowest part of the study area). It would therefore be too difficult to show the actual elevations for the entire study area; it is more useful to show how landforms relate in elevation to areas surrounding them.

Figure 4 also identifies the location and name of all rivers, lakes, ponds, and pools in the study area, and highlights those areas that are most environmentally sensitive.

The Southern Division of the park can be generally characterized as bowl-shaped, with transitional hillsides on both sides of Branch Brook Lake sloping down toward the water. The broad expanse of the Music Court is relatively flat and low, as is the [former] reservoir that now houses the roller skating rink. Significant highlands include Concourse Hill, one of the highest points in the park, and the



View upslope (northwest) toward the open areas of Belleville Park.



View northeast across the Southern Division, showing hillsides sloping down to the east side of Branch Brook Lake (opposite shore).

BRANCH BROOK PARK

Cultural Landscape Report
Newark, New Jersey

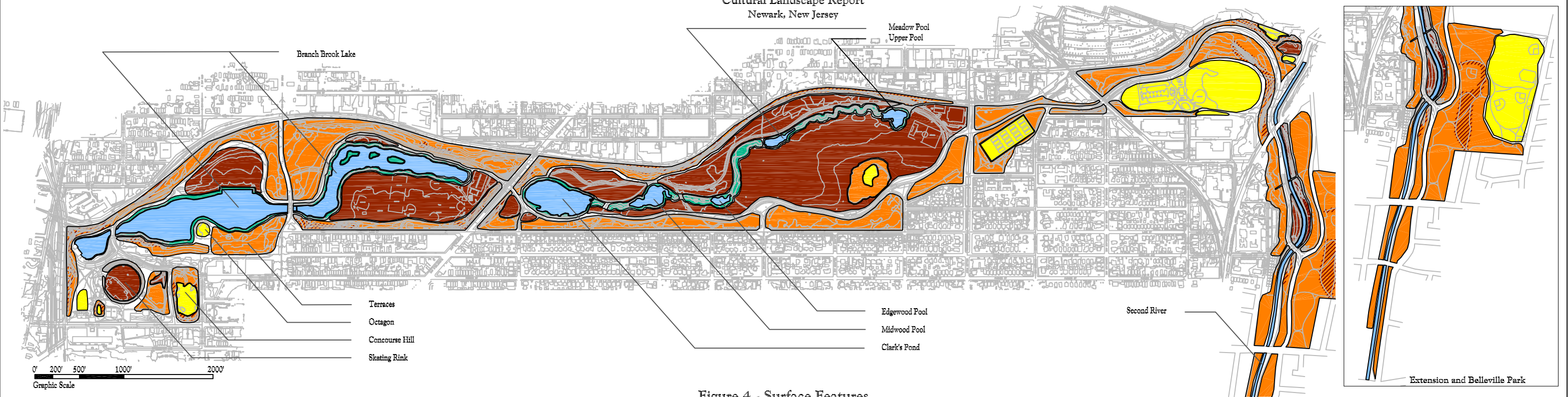


Figure 4 - Surface Features

Legend		
Water Bodies	Highlands	Transition
Environmentally Sensitive Areas	Lowlands	Steep Slopes

Sources:
 • City of Newark Engineering Department
 • Topographical Survey
 • Greenwood Foundation, Inc. Map of Branch Brook Park, 1993
 • Rhodeside & Herwell, Inc. field reconnaissance



September 2002



The Concourse, as viewed looking east toward Clifton Avenue. The Cathedral of the Sacred Heart is visible on the left side, and the roof of the Essex County Parks Department Building can be seen in the middle of the photograph.

area around the Octagon shelter.

The Middle Division can also be considered somewhat bowl-shaped, but with a broader, flatter center and steeper sides than the Southern Division. The Middle Playfield and Branch Brook Lake occupy almost the entire area of this division, with transitional hillsides sloping down from Lake Street on the east, Park Street on the south, the subway line on the west, and Bloomfield Avenue on the north. Several of these slopes, at the Lake Street-Park Avenue intersection and along the south side of Bloomfield Avenue, are quite steep.



Transitional hillside sloping down from Lake Street to the Middle Playfield (Middle Division). View is south from Bloomfield Avenue along the east side of the park.

The Northern Division is not only longer and wider than either of the two previously described divisions, it is also flatter. This is quite evident in Figure 4, which shows the extent of the flat lowland that encompasses the entire area between North Branch Brook Drive and Brookside Drive. Much of this lowland, along the streambed that connects the Upper Pool with Clark's Pond, is wooded and wet. However, while the streambed may be wet, it is no longer flowing. The Upper Pool, Meadow Pool, Edgewood Pool, Midwood Pool, and Clark's Pond all have standing water in them, and although the streambed that connects them undoubtedly flowed at one time, it has since silted in. Though the stream has silted in, this area should still be considered (along with the edges of all of the water bodies in the park) as a potential wetland and, therefore, environmentally sensitive.

Other notable features in the Northern Division include the transitional slopes along the west, south, and east sides (although the slope on the east side is much gentler than the corresponding slope in the Middle Division), and the highpoint at the location of the [former] Knollfield Shelter.

While the eastern leg of the extension is long, thin, and flat, the northwest corner has several prominent features. Travelling north along Branch Brook Drive past the Visitors' Center, the road slopes downward to reach the floodplain of the Second River. The effect of this change in elevation



Dry streambed in the vicinity of Brookside Meadow Bridge (looking north with the North Playfield visible in the background through the trees).



View from the north end of Visitors' Center Ballfields towards Branch Brook Drive, showing the change in elevation as the road slopes down to the Second River.

is that the Visitors' Center Ballfields are perched above the level of the road and the river, with a steep hillside separating the fields from the road. The other important feature in this area is Belleville Park, which is at a much higher elevation than either the road or the river. The ballfield area in Belleville Park sits at the highest elevation in the study area, and is connected to the [former] Mill Street and Branch Brook Drive by a broad hillside that slopes southward toward the river. Much of this hillside is quite steep, particularly in the area surrounding the lower ballfield (this area was once a quarry and was therefore cut into the hillside). Because of the change in elevation, the hillsides all along the south side of Belleville Park and Hendricks Field Golf Course offer excellent views of the riverbed and road below.



View of south-facing hillside connecting the ballfields at Belleville Park (to the left of photo) with Mill Street (to the right).

G. Viewsheds

Figure 5 illustrates the most prominent views in the park, which are numbered to correspond to the detailed written descriptions contained in the map legend. It is important to note that these views take in not only vistas inside the park, but also visually prominent features outside the park that can be seen from within. These prominent features are also noted on the map; while some of them are positive elements that add to the character and feeling of the park (i.e., the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart), many others can be considered as negative elements that detract from the overall appearance of the site (i.e., the Academy Spires apartment buildings in the Southern Division and the Essex County Maintenance Facility in the Northern Division).

BRANCH BROOK PARK

Cultural Landscape Report
Newark, New Jersey

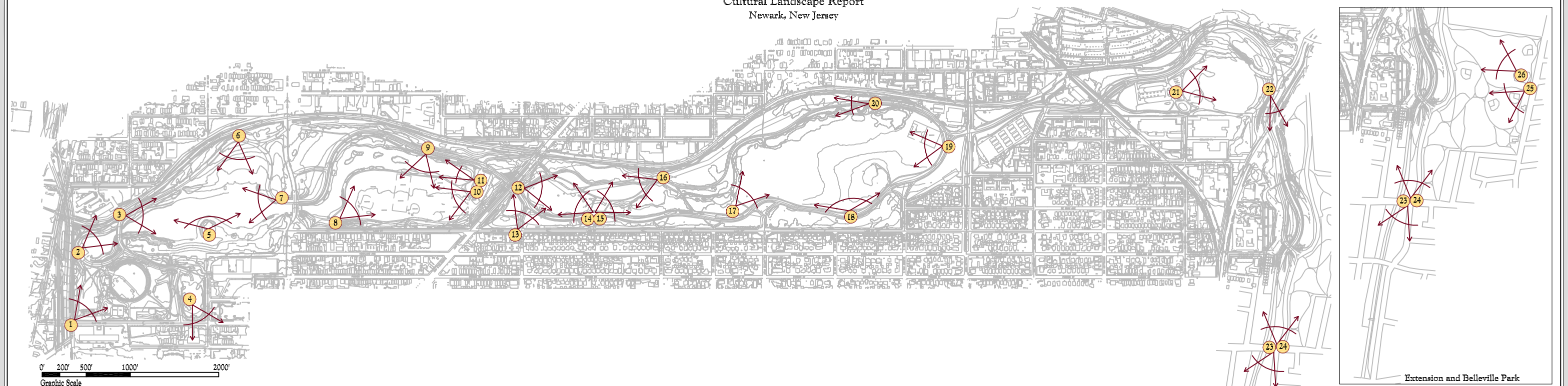
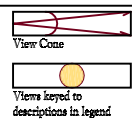


Figure 5 - Viewsheds

Legend



- | | | | | | | | |
|---|--|---|--|--|--|---|---|
| 1. Southeastern end of the park; shelter pavilion; playground. | 4. Cathedral; surrounding neighborhood; Colonnade apartment building; Manhattan skyline. | 6. Cathedral; Branch Brook Lake; Colonnade apartment building. | 8. Middle Playfield; Branch Brook Lake; trees in background; Bloomfield Ave. | 11. Branch Brook Lake; Academy Spiros apartment buildings. | 15. Laurel Wood Boulder Bridges; Crossover Drive Bridge; forest in background. | 18. Maintenance area; 10-story apartment buildings in background. | 22. Railroad bridge and down toward the Second River. |
| 2. Lower pool; South Branch Brook Drive Bridge; Academy Spiros apartment buildings. | 5. Greater than 180° view of Branch Brook Lake; Music Court; Academy Spiros apartment buildings. | 7. Lower Bridge; Octagon; Academy Spiros apartment buildings; Colonnade Apartment building. | 9. Opening at Branch Brook Lake; Middle Playfield; cathedral. | 12. Clark's Pond. | 16. Opening with lawn; Laurel Wood Boulder Bridge; Crossover Drive Bridge. | 19. Upper Meadow; Koollfield; North Playfield. | 23. Cherry tree promenade and Mill Street. |
| 3. Midlake Bridge; Branch Brook Lake; Octagon; cathedral. | | | 10. Middle Playfield; neighborhood in background; cathedral; Colonnade apartment building. | 13. 2nd Ave entrance and down into park. | 17. North Playfield; Koollfield; Upper Meadow; maintenance facility. | 20. Brookside Drive; close-in view of park and water edges. | 24. Belleville Park and Mill Street. |
| | | | | 14. Clark's Pond; Bloomfield Ave Bridge. | | 21. Expansive view of ballfields. | 25. Ballfields to tree line. |
| | | | | | | | 26. Open view of park to boundary with Hendricks Field Golf Course. |

Sources:
 • City of Newark Engineering Department
 • Topographical Survey
 • Greenward Foundation, Inc. Map of Branch Brook Park, 1995
 • Rhodside & Harwell, Inc. field reconnaissance



Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, as seen from the west side of Branch Brook Lake.



Expansive view of Branch Brook Lake in the Southern Division, looking south from the Music Court/landing.

As can be seen in Figure 5, many of the more sweeping vistas in the park (of elements both inside and outside the park) occur in the Southern Division. Most of these are long-range, distant views that take in prominent design elements such as Branch Brook Lake, the Cathedral, the Octagon, the [former] English Gardens, the Music Court, and various bridges. Also significant is the view from the concourse (#4) that offers a glimpse of the Manhattan skyline (located to the north-east of the park).



View showing the prominence of the Academy Spires Apartments in the viewshed of the Southern Division (view is from the Boathouse toward the west, with subway train visible on tracks along the edge of the park).

While the Middle Division also offers several sweeping views (of the Middle Playfield), the vistas are not nearly as dramatic, or significant, as those in the Southern Division. Because the lake meanders in this division, and is bordered by

mature vegetation and trees, the views tend to be middle-distance scenes that do not encompass the grand sweeps of the Southern Division. The exceptions to this rule are the expansive views across the



Sweeping view from South Branch Brook Drive to the east across the Music Court and Branch Brook Lake.

Middle Playfield from the north and south, as well as the views of the surrounding neighborhood and the Cathedral (from the Middle Playfield looking east).

The great expanse of the Northern Division, because of the varied nature of the water bodies and vegetation, encompasses a wide range of visual experiences. While the southern and middle portions of the Northern Division are made up of more discreet, middle and short-distance views, the



Looking south along the shore of Clark's Pond, with the Bloomfield Avenue Bridge visible in the distance.

adjacent apartment complex on North 6th Street, both of which detract significantly from the pleasant views.

open nature of the northern section provides for sweeping, long distance vistas. Unlike some of the other divisions, however, the shorter distance views in the Northern Division are some of the most important, character-defining vistas in the entire park. Of particular significance are the views of the forest, stream, and bridges in the middle of the park from both Branch Brook Drive (#15) and Brookside Drive (#16). These views, perhaps more than any others, define the natural, pastoral character that is the essence of the Northern Division. Also significant to the character of this division are the open views that take in the full expanse of the North Playfield, Brookside Meadow, and Upper Meadow (#17 - #19). It should be noted, however, that two of the most visually prominent features in this area are the Essex County Maintenance Facility and the



View northwest across Upper Meadow in the Northern Division, showing the visual prominence of the Essex County Maintenance Facility and nearby apartment buildings.



Character-defining view of the Northern Division, showing open lawn areas, pedestrian paths, and streamside forest.

While there are a number of important views in the Extension of the park, the narrow configuration of this division does not lend itself to the dramatic, wide views found in the three more southerly sections. The grade change and the overpasses along Branch Brook Drive provide the most dramatic views in this division: those of the road winding eastward along the Second River toward Mill Street (#22). Other significant vistas include open views across the ballfields at the Visitors' Center (#21) and Belleville Park (#25 and #26), as well as views east and west along Mill Street (#23 and #24). These later two vistas of the trees along Mill Street and the Second River (paralleling the road to the south), help to define the linear character of the Extension's eastern end.



View east along Mill Street in the Extension, exemplifying the narrow, linear character of this area of Branch Brook Park (Second River and cherry trees on the right).

H. Visual and Spatial Analysis

Figure 6, Visual and Spatial Analysis, explains how the park breaks down into its component areas, or parts, and how these parts relate to each other to create distinct visual spaces and experiences. In many ways, this map is a compilation of much of the information that is presented in the previous maps (vegetation, surface features, recreational use areas, edge conditions, etc.), but has been distilled down to show how these features are actually perceived by the park visitor.

Quite pronounced on Figure 6 are the dark purple lines, which represent the hard features that define the major divisions of the park, as well as the edges. These features include (from south to north): Interstate 280, the Park Avenue Bridge, the Bloomfield Avenue Bridge, and Heller Parkway. These structures, besides defining the boundaries of the actual park divisions (South, Middle, North, and Extension), also serve a visual purpose: they slice the park up into discreet visual and spatial units. Each of these "units" has a distinct character than can only be perceived from within that division. In short, these structures help create a series of smaller parks that are also part of the larger whole. Also important (and illustrated in purple) are the features along both the eastern and western edges of the park that act as physical or visual boundaries. Along the western edge, this boundary is the City of Newark subway line, which acts as a complete physical barrier, or wall, between the surrounding neighborhood and the park. Along much of the eastern edge, this barrier (which is strictly a visual demarcation), is the continuous row of buildings along Lake Street that is elevated above the level of the park.



The Bloomfield Avenue Bridge, which separates the Middle from the Northern Division (view is toward the north from the Seniors' Center).



Continuous row of multifamily housing forming a hard edge along the eastern side of the park at Lake Street.

Like the dark purple lines, the light purple strokes on the map represent hard features that section off the park. However, these light purple features



View of the circular stone wall that surrounds the roller rink - one of several features that serves to subdivide the Southern Division into discreet visual and spatial units.

are of secondary importance, and do not define the major spatial units of the park. Instead, these features (including the bridge at the southern end of Branch Brook Lake and the railroad bridges in the Extension) are of more "local" importance. They serve to break down the major divisions of the park into even smaller subsections. Serving as an example are the physical features in the Southern Division - such as the circular wall surrounding the roller rink and the steep slope on the south side of Concourse Hill - that break that division up into a series of separate spaces. These separate spaces in the park, or "visual rooms," are shown in yellow on the map. These rooms correspond to the major surface features and recreational use areas shown on the previous maps, and are representative of how the park is perceived: as a series of linked spaces that create a visual journey for the viewer. Indeed, the arrows show how these separate spaces relate, or do not relate, to each other and to their surroundings. As can be seen, many of these spaces have strong visual links between them, particularly in the Southern Division and the upper portion of the Northern Division. Not coincidentally, the spaces that relate best to the features around them are also the areas that have the most expansive views. An example of this relationship is the Octagon, which has strong visual ties to both the lake and the [former] English Gardens. It also affords one of the most spectacular views in the park, with a panoramic vista of over 180 degrees toward the south and west.



View of the "English Gardens" - a distinct space, or "outdoor room", on the east side of Branch Brook Lake.

Separate from the visual rooms, but significant to the spatial perception of the park, are the prominent individual features shown in pink on Figure 6. These are the buildings that stand out in the skyline of the park, and can be seen from great distances inside the site. With the exception of the Essex County Maintenance Facility, all of these features are located outside the park; because of their prominence,

BRANCH BROOK PARK

Cultural Landscape Report
Newark, New Jersey

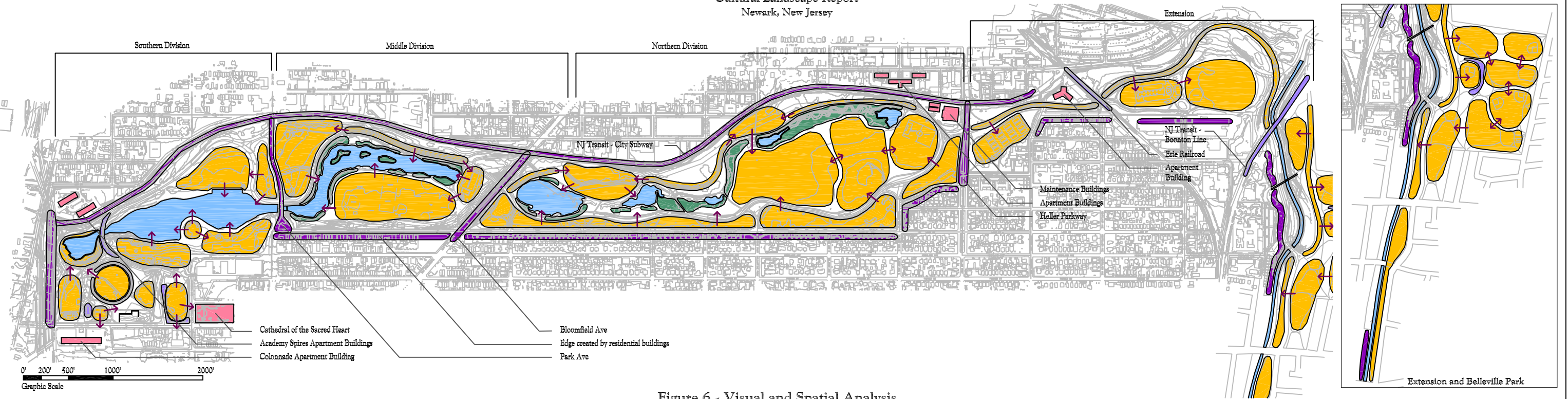



Figure 6 - Visual and Spatial Analysis

- Legend**
- Visual Rooms
 - Visual Extensions
 - Hard features defining major divisions and edges of the park
 - Hard features defining sub-sections of the park
 - Semi-transparent edges and features
 - Visually prominent features
 - Water Bodies

Sources:

- City of Newark Engineering Department Topographical Survey
- Greenstead Foundation, Inc. Map of Branch Brook Park, 1993
- Rhoadside & Harwell, Inc. field reconnaissance


 September 2002





Semi-transparent edge along the shoreline of Branch Brook Lake in the Middle Division.

however, they can all be considered to be within the viewshed of the park (see Figure 5 for an analysis of major viewsheds).

Also significant to understanding the makeup of the park are the semi-transparent edges, which are shown in green on the map. These areas, which contain shrubs, trees, or forest, play a major role in dividing the Middle and Northern Divisions of the park down the center. By allowing only filtered views across the width of the park, this line of vegetation effectively

separates these divisions into two distinct sides: east and west. The visual perception is that while the spaces in the Middle and Northern Divisions relate to the various water bodies, they are also separated from them by a screen of vegetation. This is very different from the Southern Division, which has unobstructed, long views that take in land on both sides of the lake.

I. Surrounding Land Use and Communities

Figure 7 illustrates the land uses surrounding the park, along with the names of the adjacent neighborhoods. Most evident is the fact that there is a complete range of land uses in the vicinity of the park, ranging from single family residential to industrial/warehouse. The conclusion is that because of its metropolitan setting, Branch Brook Park is part of a rich and varied urban fabric.

Perhaps most striking about land use surrounding the park, and quite evident in Figure 7, is the difference in predominant land uses between the east and west sides of the site. While the west side

of the park contains a mixture of single family residential, multifamily residential, and retail, the east side is more uniformly single family residential. This is especially true from Park Avenue northward, where the Forest Hill neighborhood is almost exclusively single family detached housing. Evident is the fact that there is no shortage of potential park users here in the Forest Hill neighborhood who - as illustrated in Figure 1 - have relatively easy access to the park through a large number of pedestrian entrances.

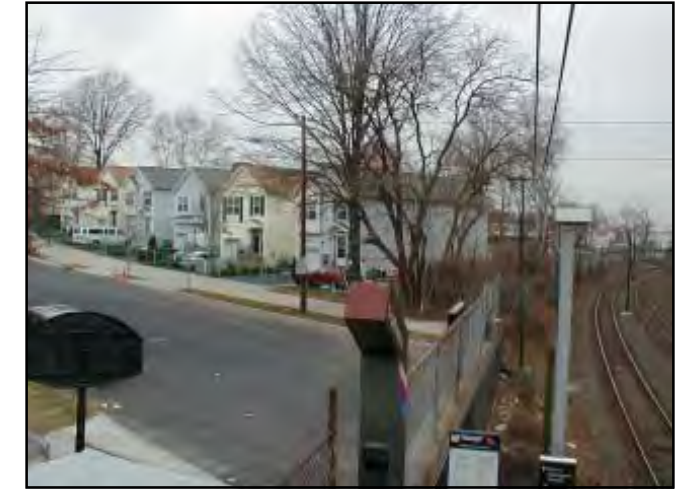


The Forest Hill neighborhood, looking eastward out of the park to Lake Street in the vicinity of Abingdon Avenue.

To the contrary, the large areas of single family, multi-family, and high-rise housing



View out of the park toward Franklin Avenue and Stephen Crane Village.



Davenport Avenue west of the park, as seen from elevated subway

in the Upper and Lower Roseville neighborhoods have very few means of accessing the park (the only pedestrian entrances are at Stephen Crane Village and Davenport Avenue). So while there is an equal, or possibly greater (because of the large amount of multi-family and high-rise housing), number of potential park users on the west side, these residents are virtually cut off from the park.

Also interesting is the fact that large multi-family high rise complexes anchor the two southern corners of Branch Brook Park. On the southwest corner are the two buildings of the Academy Spires apartment complex (which have virtually no access to the park), and on the southwest corner is the Colonnade apartment building. Undoubtedly, the choice of these locations for the apartment complexes is at least partially due to their close proximity to the park and the expansive views they afford. Apartment buildings also anchor much of the northwestern end of the park, with three large complexes/buildings located in the vicinity of Heller Parkway and Franklin Avenue.



View of Clifton Avenue and the southeast corner of the park, including the Colonnade Apartment Building (view is from the Concourse).



Apartment complexes in the vicinity of Heller Parkway (looking north along Branch Brook Drive at Grafton Avenue).

BRANCH BROOK PARK

Cultural Landscape Report
Newark, New Jersey

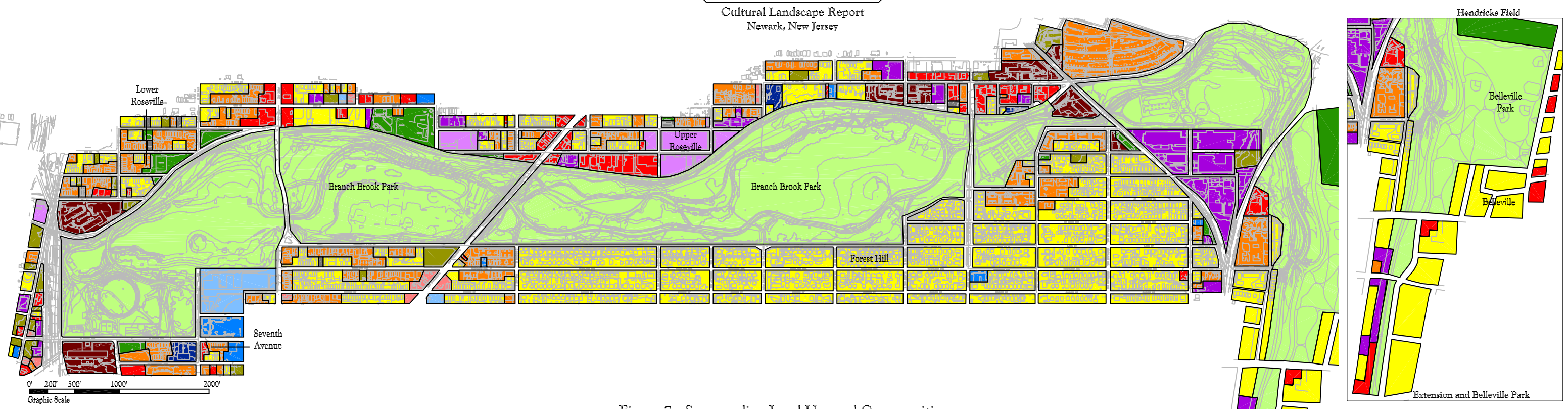


Figure 7 - Surrounding Land Use and Communities

Legend	
Single and Two Family Residential	High Rise Multi-Family
Small and Mid-Rise Multi-Family	Mixed Use: Ground Floor Retail & Residential Above
Retail	Industrial and Warehouse
Governmental, Medical and Theater	Education
Religious and Charitable	Open Space and Recreation
Vacant Building	Vacant Land
Parking	Branch Brook Park and Belleville Park

Sources:
 • City of Newark Engineering Department Topographical Survey
 • School Department, Engineers and Design Professionals, Death Land Use Map, City of Newark Master Plan, October 2001
 • Rhoadside & Harwell, Inc. field reconnaissance
 September 2002



September 2002

Other notable land uses include the large industrial/warehouse area in the northeast corner of the park (located in the V-shaped parcel of land between the two railroad lines). While some of this area has recently been converted to residential subdivision (on the north end), this area is almost exclusively automotive and other light industrial uses. Because of the presence of the New Jersey Transit line to the north and the Erie Railroad line to the south (inactive), these light industrial uses are shielded from the surrounding neighborhoods.

Belleville Park and the eastern tail of the Extension are surrounded primarily by single family residential housing that, like northern portions of Forest Hill, is more suburban in character than the southern areas of Branch Brook Park. Lastly, a long, thin band of industrial and retail uses punctuate the eastern tail of the Extension, but are separated from Mill Street and the park by the Second River.



Single-family residential housing bordering Belleville Park at Wilson Place.



Retail use (former industrial use) separated from the eastern end of the Extension by the Second River.

evening of April 16th, 2002, was attended by only a few people. The second, held on the evening of April 17th, followed a panel discussion about the park and was attended by approximately 25 people.

J. Community Involvement

Along with an understanding of the physical characteristics of the surrounding community, the project team undertook a program of community involvement to familiarize themselves with the social, economic, and cultural fabric of the neighborhoods adjacent to the park. As the first part of this outreach and involvement strategy, a series of interviews was conducted with community leaders, neighbors, and City/County agency personnel that have an interest, or direct role to play, in the welfare of Branch Brook Park. Persons interviewed included representatives of the County Administrator's office, the Essex County Department of Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Affairs, the Branch Brook Park Alliance, the Newark Preservation Landmarks Commission, the Essex County Board of Chosen Freeholders, Newark City Council, the Essex County Police Department, Rutgers University, and the New Jersey Symphony. Also interviewed were several community leaders and neighbors whose homes border the park, and County staff directly assigned to maintaining Branch Brook Park.

As a second part of the public participation strategy, the project team held two community meetings. The purpose of the meetings was to present the findings from the existing conditions analysis and to gather input from attendees regarding the function, appearance, and their personal recollections of the park (as well as their visions for the park in the future). The first meeting, held on the