



Flushing Meadows Corona Park

Strategic Framework Plan



Unisphere - FMCP

Flushing Meadows Corona Park : Strategic Framework Plan

Prepared for:

The New York City Department of Parks and Recreation

Adrian Benepe, Commissioner
Dorothy Lewandowski, Queens Borough Commissioner
Estelle Cooper, Assistant Commissioner, Queens Parks &
Flushing Meadows Corona Park Administrator

Prepared by:

Quennell Rothschild & Partners, LLP

Landscape Architecture, Architecture & Planning
118 West 22nd Street
New York, NY 10011
212.929.3330
www.qrpartners.com

Smith-Miller + Hawkinson Architects

305 Canal Street
New York, NY 11101
212.966.3875
www.smharch.com

Resource Consultants:

Transportation Planning:

Georges Jacquemart, BFJ Planning

Environmental Graphics & Way Finding:

Anthony Russell, russelldesign

Water Resource Management:

Thomas Cahill, Cahill Associates Environmental Consultants

Water Quality Expert:

John Roebig, HDR/LMS

Lighting:

Linnaea Tillett, Tillett Lighting Design Inc.

Sustainability:

Lauren Yarmuth, YRG Sustainability Consultants

This report was made possible by a generous grant from the J.M. Kaplan Fund.

Flushing Meadows Corona Park

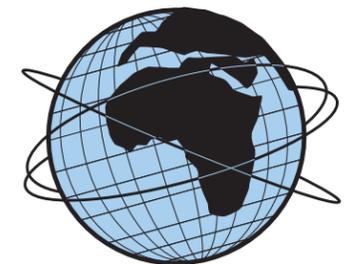
Strategic Framework Plan



Snapshot of Unisphere in Spring

Contents:

Introduction	7
Goals of the Strategic Framework Plan	9
Methodology	11
Site Analysis	12
Data Sources, Physical Assessment & Existing Conditions	12
Conceptual Framework	17
The Park of the Future : Then & Now	17
Conceptual Framework	19
Seven Zones	21
Three Major Modes	23
In the Park & Of the Park	25
An Ecology of Activity	27
Vision & Goals	29
Immediate Actions	31
Re-envision the World's Fair Core	33
Reconfigure & Restore the Lakes	37
Reconnect the Park to the Neighborhood & City	39
Sustainability & the Park	43
Long Term Vision	45
Appendix	
History of the Site	51
Consultants' Reports	55
Cost Estimate	69
Stakeholders & Other Meetings	73
Questionnaires & Surveys	79
NYDPR Data	87
GIS Restoration Framework Plan & Summary	91







Aerial Photograph of FMCP ca. 2006. Credit: DOITT, NYCMAP-2006 Series

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

INTRODUCTION

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

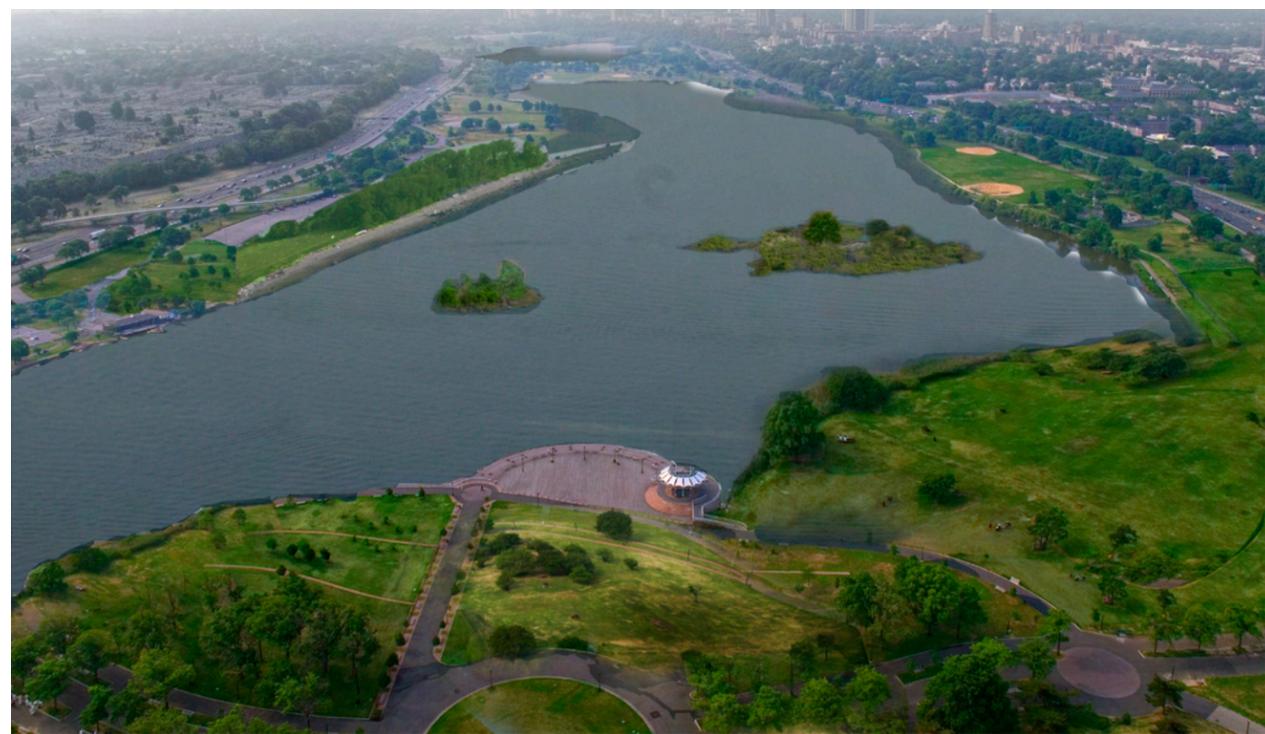
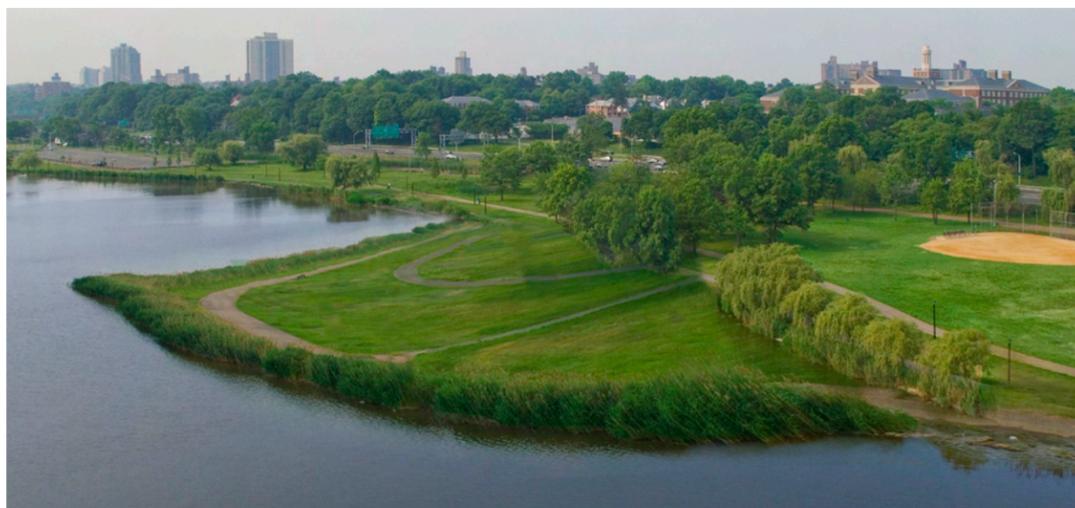
The Park has been the subject of a number of planning efforts since its creation in 1939. The most recent study, “The 1988 Plan,” was undertaken nearly twenty years ago by the Flushing Meadows Corona Park Corporation, which hired a team including: architects, Bernard Tschumi and Skidmore Owings & Merrill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

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

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

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

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



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



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

GOALS OF THE STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK PLAN

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

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

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

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

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

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

ONE : Re-envision the World's Fair Core

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

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

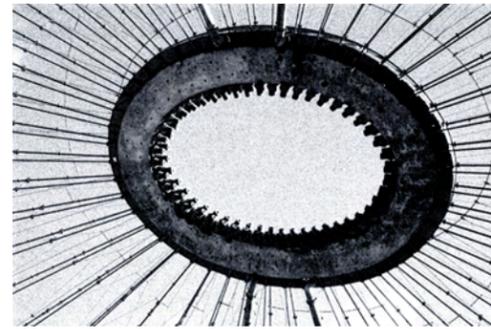
TWO : Reconfigure & Restore the Lakes

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

THREE : Reconnect the Park to the Neighborhood and City

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

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



Snapshots of FMCP taken throughout the study



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

METHODOLOGY

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

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

Data Collection

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

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

Stakeholder and Community Dialogue

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

Design Charrettes

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

Synthesis

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