



Possible reconnection of the River & Lakes



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VISION & GOALS

We have noted that Flushing Meadows Corona Park has always been a Park of the Future. Since its resurrection nearly seventy years ago from thirty years' life as an ash dump, the Park has symbolized the forward-thinking view of a handful of people who recognized the need to improve the environment and to correct past mistakes. The Park's transformation into the 1939 and, later, the 1964 World's Fairs provided a frenetic, intensely programmed urban experience, at odds with the goals of a park – especially one which attempts to provide a rural experience in a heavily built up City. From the period following the World's Fairs, the Park's subsequent slide into neglect, has been recognized by the team as an opportunity to re-envision the Park as a Park of the Future. In today's terms the Park serves, not only as a memorial to its former glory but, more importantly, as an environmentally healthy, functioning landscape offering both activity and tranquility to its users.

While we were developing these ideas Mayor Bloomberg announced the City's commitment to a sustainable future with PlaNYC. The Mayor proposes a bold plan to use our land in an environmentally responsive way.

“not only by developing areas ripe for growth, but also by cleaning up brownfields so that no piece of New York City is too contaminated to be used for employment, housing, or recreation. The water along our shoreline is cleaner than it has been in generations but we want it cleaner still, so that we can fish, swim, and enjoy the rivers that have always been the City's most distinctive feature.”

We propose strategies for FMPC to play a role in the effort to make a more sustainable world.

FCMP should be at the vanguard of this sustainable future. We are proposing that the Park should not merely be sustainable; but that the Park should become a laboratory for sustainable design where professionals could undertake serious research and where the public could come to learn about sustainability, and reap the benefits of a working, healthy system.

To that end we suggest a series of goals for all new and future projects:

- A net increase in healthy, sustainable, natural areas, with a net gain in vegetation cover to encourage wildlife and improve air quality.
- Reduce rather than increase dependency on private automobile use to access the Park, and encourage walking, bicycling and the use of public transportation.
- Minimize the amount of material to be disposed of off-site, especially any materials which might be toxic.
- Reduce rather than increase energy use both in the construction process and in the final result. (Lighting

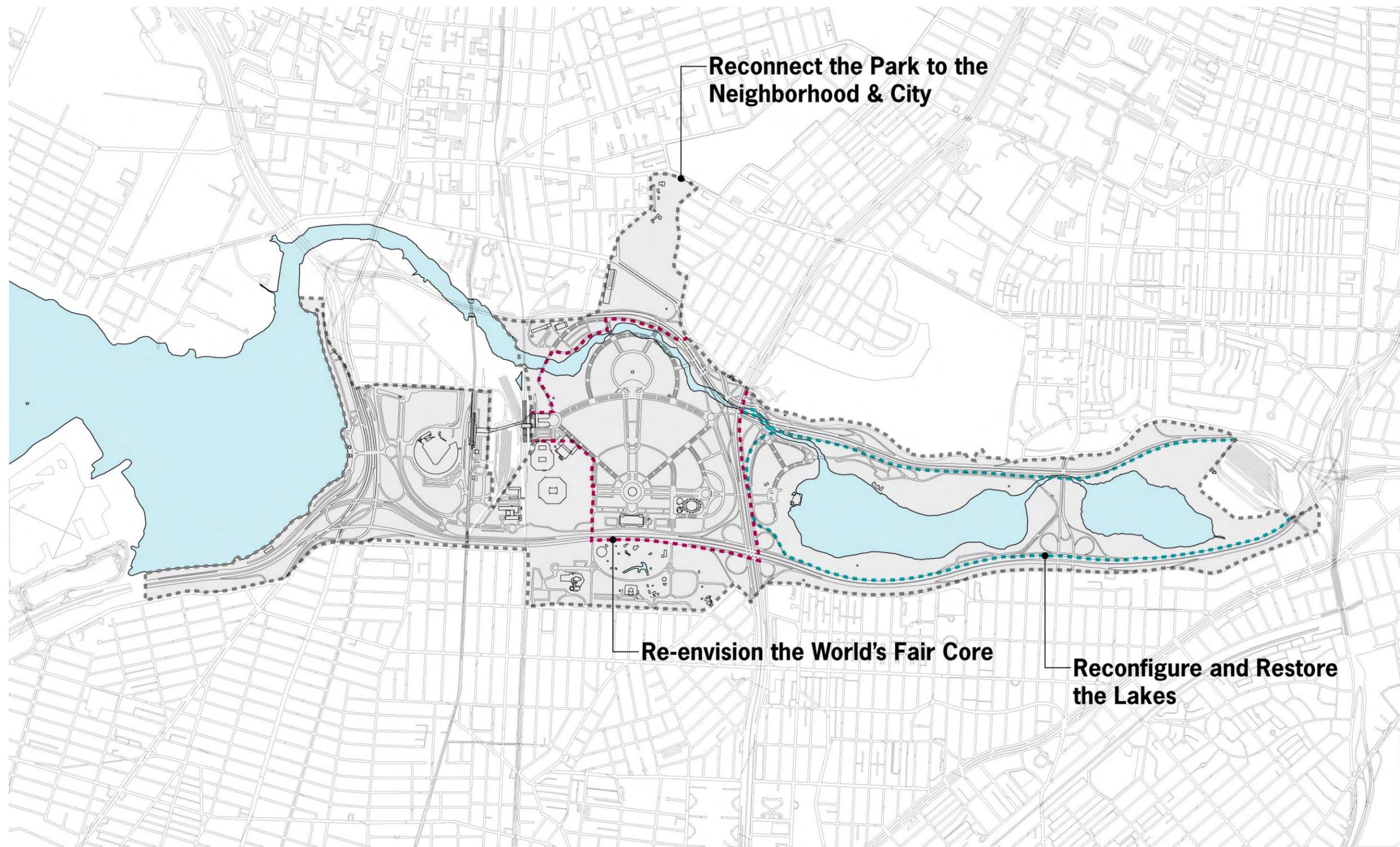
would be a good example of this).

- Reduce run-off into adjacent water bodies, especially from paved surfaces and/or fertilized landscaped areas.
- All programs should incorporate sustainable goals.

Through participation of the Park's institutions (especially The Hall of Science, the Zoo and the Botanical Garden) the Park could become a laboratory for environmental science, especially for the thousands of children who visit it each year. Many of the recommendations in this report could serve as demonstration projects for such a program.

Other goals for the Park outlined during our initial thinking included:

- Establish preeminence. This Park should be treated as one of the most important parks in the City's system, due to its size and location. At the same time, it is the heart of Queens.
- Consider new or alternative uses for existing Park structures such as the New York State Pavilion which are not currently being exploited.
- Establish the Park as a center for cultural activities. The Park should encourage cultural activities of a variety of scale and type, including performances, traveling exhibitions, temporary installations by artists, architects, and scientists, and ethnic and local festivals. These should be chosen in a coordinated way to enhance the experience of the Park.
- Address and articulate the scale of the built landscape. Within this very large Park, there exist few opportunities to experience either the grand or the intimate scale of landscape. To alleviate this problem, develop differentiated scales of open space, topography, and points of view. Consider the role of the surrounding highways, of structures within the Park (especially those which provide elevated views), and of the perceptual experience of on site circulation.
- Require Design Excellence together with innovative landscape and architectural design for all aspects of the Park.





The Strategic Framework Plan initiates a bold new direction for Flushing Meadows Corona Park. To inaugurate this change we propose that the Department of Parks & Recreation immediately undertake at least one of the following three “Big Idea” proposals.

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS

The Strategic Framework Plan initiates a bold new direction for Flushing Meadows Corona Park.

While we have stressed that the Plan is a set of guiding principles rather than a single monolithic plan and that our goal is to provide an overall, long-term vision for the Park, we have identified three projects, any one of which would have a significant impact on the Park’s image and on the way the Park serves its users. We elaborate on them in more detail in the following pages and urge the Department of Parks & Recreation to undertake at least one of them in the near future.

ONE : Re-envision the World’s Fair Core

TWO : Reconfigure & Restore the Lakes

THREE : Reconnect the Park to the Neighborhood and City

First Steps

There are four studies that should be undertaken as an essential first step before any detailed replanning of FMCP:

Comprehensive Transportation & Parking Study

Transportation is one of the most critical issues in FMCP. The surrounding neighborhoods are developing rapidly and the Park has recently added new infrastructure and amenities. Yet, way finding from the surrounding highways still makes Park access difficult. Night time Park circulation is also a big concern. Parking is one of the most highly contentious issues among survey respondents, but our information is largely anecdotal. It is critical that a detailed study be undertaken with the cooperation of the stakeholders and institutions, to understand precisely how people get to the Park and how they get around the Park. These studies will form an essential foundation in managing the deployment of program and activity throughout the Park.

Tree Survey

Trees are one of the most precious commodities in the entire Park’s system. The Department of Parks and Recreation has always taken great pains to treat them with the utmost respect. Without an accurate and

comprehensive tree survey, it is impossible to assess the feasibility or cost of any planning effort for the Park. Because so many of the Park’s trees are laid out in formal rows following existing pathways, it will be difficult to reconsider the circulation of the Park without also considering changes in the geometry of tree patterns. An accurate and comprehensive tree survey, indicating the health and condition of each tree and its potential to be moved at reasonable cost, would allow for designers to look creatively at a new geometry for the Park.

Tide Gate and Lakes Study

Several studies have been conducted of the lakes and river over the years by HDR/LMS. A summary of their findings is included in the Appendix. In order for the proposed reconfiguration of the Flushing River to be planned additional studies should be initiated to evaluate the condition and operation of the existing tide gates and the hydrological implications of opening up the river.

Drainage study

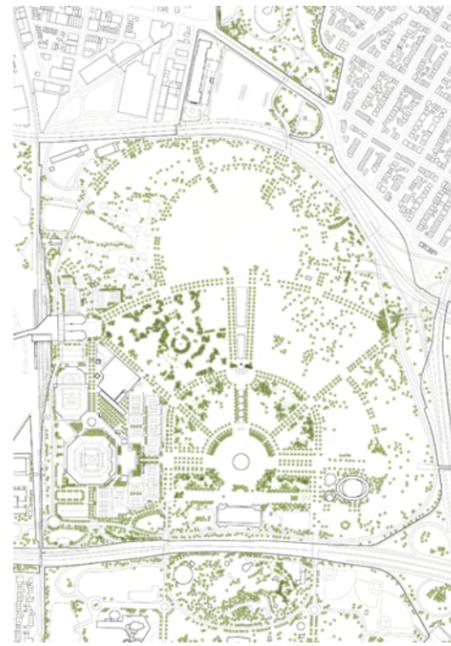
As we have stressed in this report the existing drainage within the Park presents many problems for use, management and long term health of the environment. A thorough analysis of the causes and potential solutions to this widespread problem would assist DPR in determining future uses for different zones of the Park, and the probable impact of proposed changes – especially any that modify the existing topography and drainage patterns. Our hydrological consultant, Tom Cahill, touches on these issues in his report, included in the Appendix.

The three proposals put forth in this report will be costly. Initial estimates for each one are included in the Appendix to be used as a guideline for future capital project initiatives. With these initial cost estimates, the Borough and Parks Commissioners will be able to make a compelling case for capital funds from elected officials for the re-imagining of Flushing Meadows Corona Park. Already, the Park is the site for many of the region’s largest events such as ethnic festivals and the Billy Graham Event. As the proposed plan creates an even larger festival area, these events will probably increase in number in the future. New facilities opening this year in the Park as well as expanding cultural institutions and concessions will also increase Park use as well as visibility. The increase in use will have an effect on Park infrastructure. Therefore, resources may need to be allocated from expanded cultural institutions, stadiums or special event budgets to meet this new challenge to the Park in the Future. In addition concessions in the Park should be responsible for the maintenance immediately surrounding their operation. With these resources FMCP will continue to be the premier destination and Flagship Park in Queens and a credit to the entire NYC park system.



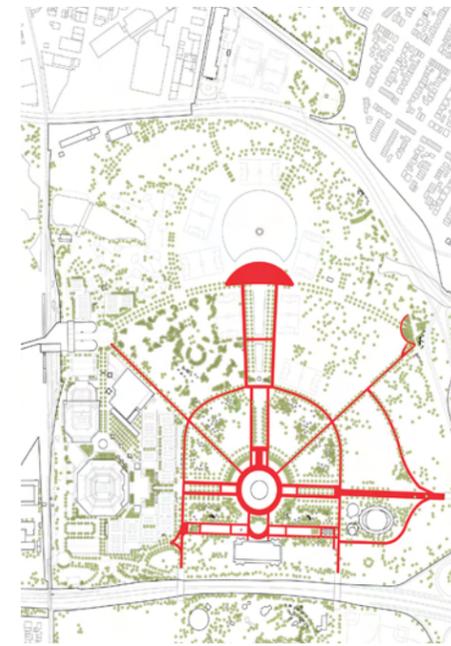
Highlights the existing path system.

Current Conditions



Even without the paths, the densely planted allées reinforce the path system.

Trees without Paths



A diagrammatic illustration of the World's Fair Core with the introduction of new festival grounds and simplification of the path system.

Reduced Paths



Proposed greening of a portion of the channel fountains leading to the new festival grounds



To initiate the project, DPR would undertake a design study of the core area to establish a clear set of goals and parameters. The reconfiguration or reduction of the path system may proceed independently of other work in the core area, but it should under no circumstances be undertaken without a clearly elaborated, long-term plan for the entire core area.

RE-ENVISION THE WORLD'S FAIR CORE

The History of Flushing Meadows Corona Park as the site of two World's Fairs is one of its greatest assets which should not be forgotten. While many of the World's Fair remaining elements within the Core Area (defined as the area of the Park bounded by the LIRR to the north and the LIE to the south) are valuable from cultural and aesthetic points of view, there are certain significant elements which hinder the Park's ability to respond to today's needs.

The duplicative system of overly-wide paths which remain from the Fairs is unfriendly to Park users and to the environment. Major built elements such as the Fountain of the Planets with the impact it has on the Flushing River, hinder the Park's healthy renaissance as a 21st Century Park.

We therefore propose a set of strategies for the Core Area which both celebrate the best of the World's Fairs' heritage while correcting some of their less desirable visual or environmental aspects. Our proposals for the World's Fair Core grew from the realization that several major components inherited from the World's Fair neither contribute to the Park as a vital, 21st Century recreational resource nor are important historical vestiges of the Park's past.

Revise the Path System

We propose reducing the number and width of paths as a significant first step in rethinking the World's Fair Core. As a sustainable strategy, this project would mitigate the paths' impact on subsurface hydrology and reduce maintenance. As a design strategy, the project would significantly improve the visual quality of the Park. Coupled with appropriate signage and way finding, simplifying the path system would reduce difficulty in navigating the Park and would increase users' understanding of the Park as a historical site.

Without the dense fabric of buildings present on the site during both the 1939 and the 1964 Fairs, the current paths make little sense. Furthermore, they do not leave the visitor with a sense of understanding about the site as a fairground. Creating a new path system with an easily comprehended geometry, anchored to specific destinations, would help resolve this problem. This system would provide an appropriate setting for the remaining buildings and monuments which are the true legacy of the fairs.

The long-term plan for reducing the path system in the core area should ultimately be phased in accordance with other long-term upgrades. An immediate action which would have a tremendously beneficial effect on the Park, would be to eliminate duplicate paths in every location where there is currently more than one parallel system. The remaining paths should be resurfaced with porous paving material to further mitigate the effect of the large areas of asphalt on groundwater.

As the grand allées are remediated, great care will need to be taken to ensure that the root systems of the perimeter trees are not damaged by the pathway removal process. After analysis of the quality, life expectancy and appearance of the trees, it may be desirable to remove or transplant some of the trees to soften the implacable rigidity of the original path geometry and allow for some topographic changes described below.

Daylighting the River

We propose demolition of the Fountain of the Planets as an essential part of this proposal. The river currently flows through the fountain via an underground culvert. By demolishing the eyesore of a fountain, which is out of scale with current uses and is not operational, we could route the river east of its original course, skirting the eastern edge of the Park close to the fountain's present location. This will allow for the creation of a vital new festival grounds space almost twice as large as the Great Lawn in Central Park. Because this area is already free from trees it would provide an ideal location for the large gatherings and festivals, which take place regularly in the Park. Such a large gathering space could accommodate variation in the topography to provide landscape variety and improved drainage.

Further design study is required to determine whether or not a portion of the channel fountains connecting the Fountain of the Planets to the Unisphere should be retained.

New Topography

As we have noted, one of the Park's most notable characteristics is its lack of topographic relief. The flat landscape exacerbates the site's inherent drainage problems and, especially in combination with the radial path system, is both disorienting and boring. The few spots where topographic relief has been introduced such as the Pitch and Putt course and in the Zoo have a dramatic effect on one's experience of the landscape, even when such relief is only a few feet.

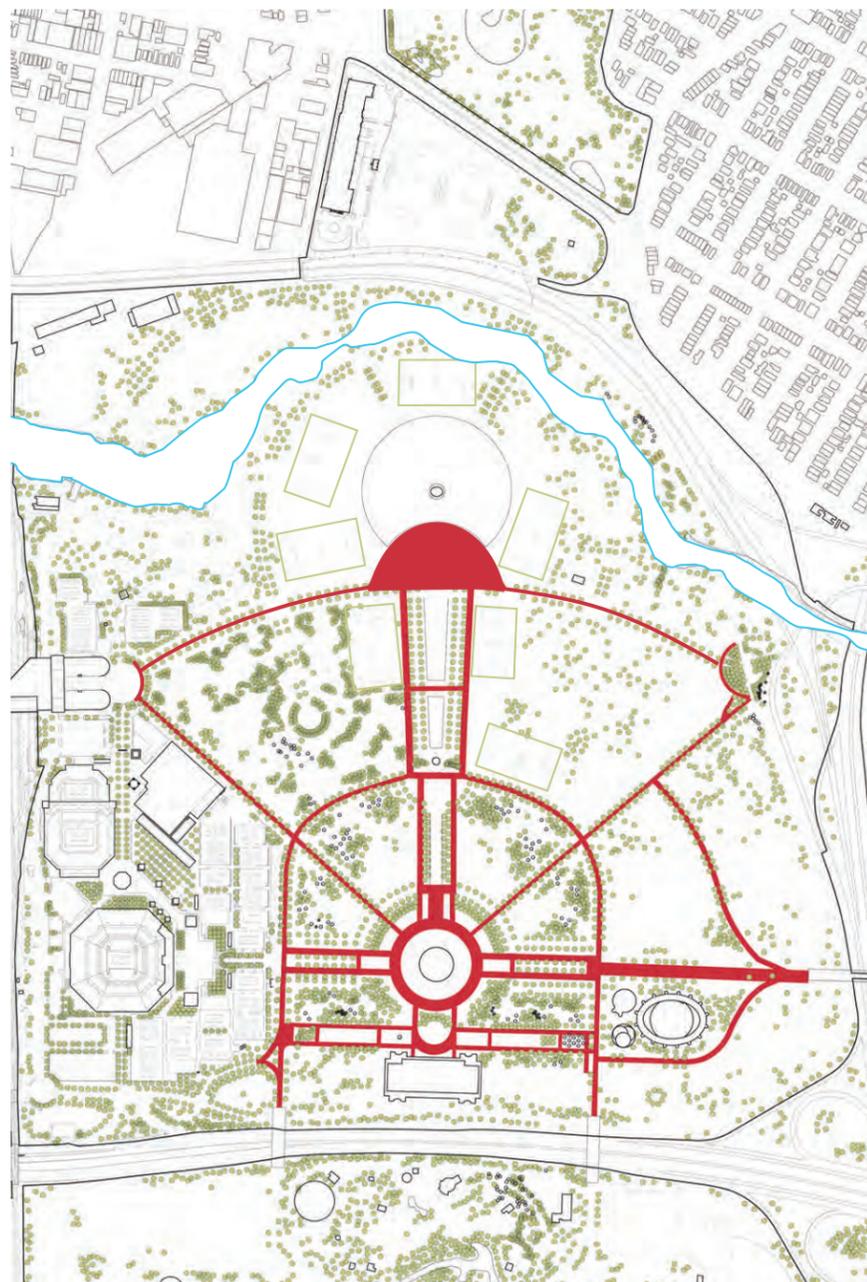
As part of the project to reconfigure the Core Area, we strongly recommend that every effort be made to introduce more changes in topography. These changes should be integrated into the existing landscape. Dredging in the lakes would provide ample material to use as fill. It should also be possible to reuse material from other parts of the site which are being demolished or excavated, providing it is environmentally acceptable to do so.



Proposed new Core Area festival grounds



The value of the NYS Pavilion as the icon for Flushing Meadows Corona Park is tremendous. Its dual role as a beacon (as seen from the Grand Central Parkway, airplanes, etc) and as a future gateway into big events is important for both branding and orientation for FMCP.



Sketch: Reconfigured World's Fair Core with large gathering space

The proposed Festival Grounds on the site of the Fountain of the Planets offers real opportunities for subtle grade changes. Even assuming that a major part of such a site should be flat, creating gentle sloped areas around its edges would provide better viewing places for large crowds while helping to ensure good drainage. Future design studies should take into consideration the current placement of the soccer fields and might also consider recollecting the Fountain of the Planets within the new grounds. This site also has advantages for access and parking as it is close to the Van Wyck Expressway, under which lie extensive parking areas, and to the new Pool building with its attendant parking.

To initiate the project, DPR should undertake a design study of the Core area, as well as a detailed evaluation of existing trees to establish a clear set of goals and parameters. The reconfiguration or reduction of the path system may proceed independently of other work in the core area, but it should under no circumstances be undertaken without a clearly elaborated, long-term plan for the entire Core area.

Buildings and Monuments

We believe that the most essential legacy of the World's Fairs are the buildings and monuments which remain. In the case of the NY State Pavilion, the situation is critical. We agree with the World Monuments Fund report that the NYS pavilion be stabilized and restored. However, none of this work makes sense without a clear idea about its role in the future conceptual framework of the Park. There has been renewed and continued interest in the NY State Pavilion; both in its architectural significance and its iconic value to the Park.

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Stabilization and Renovation

Neither stabilization nor renovation makes sense without a clear idea about programming for the NYS Pavilion. This future programming should have two scales: support for the big event and support for its use for smaller scale events and programming such as performances, festival, greenmarkets, etc. Future use of the NYS Pavilion will have to take into account support space for the Queens Theatre in the Park, and the improvement of its immediate environs.

We propose to bring this structure into the future with a new roof composed of a thin-film photovoltaic membrane. The new roof will store energy during the day and illuminate at night. In addition, demolishing the concrete block perimeter would create a sense of openness and allow clear visibility through the building. The candy striped perimeter structure was cited as being unstable in the most recent structural report and is an unnecessary obstruction for all future uses of the building.