

GENESEE
VALLEY
PARK
WEST



MASTER PLAN

01

INTRODUCTION
& SUMMARY

2015



City of Rochester

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INTRODUCTION & SUMMARY





INTRODUCTION & SUMMARY

Introduction

The Genesee Valley Park West Master Plan is a long-range vision for transforming the City-managed portion of Genesee Valley Park on the western side of the Genesee River. The plan is guided by 21st century recreation shifts as well as Frederick Law Olmsted's original 1890 vision for the park as a whole – that being a place where users can experience the pastoral tranquility of the river plain with few man-made interruptions.

Olmsted's choice of this land to serve as a place for respite among nature was supremely deliberate. When given the opportunity to design Rochester's much-celebrated Highland Park he first suggested the work be given to someone else, preferring the pastoral opportunities presented by this site along the Genesee River. Even today, Genesee Valley Park remains the only portion of publicly owned riverfront in Rochester that allows for serene enjoyment of a bucolic and leisurely river landscape. The other public riverfront is Seneca Park to the north, having an intensely contrasting effect as a dramatic and picturesque ravine meant to inspire awe and exhilaration.

However, since its establishment the western side of Genesee Valley Park has always served important infrastructure-intensive recreational needs that often contradicted Olmsted's vision. These needs continue to transform based on ever-changing recreational desires. This long-range master plan continues to provide and enhance these community services while rehabilitating Olmsted's original vision. It does this by removing barriers and reconsidering the spatial organization of a park no longer constricted by a railroad corridor. The reorganized recreational assets focus on serving as a multi-modal crossroads of land and water trails, embrace the recreational shift towards community-based health and wellness services, and strive to provide higher quality, multi-generational, and multi-purpose recreational opportunities.

Context of the Park & Neighborhood

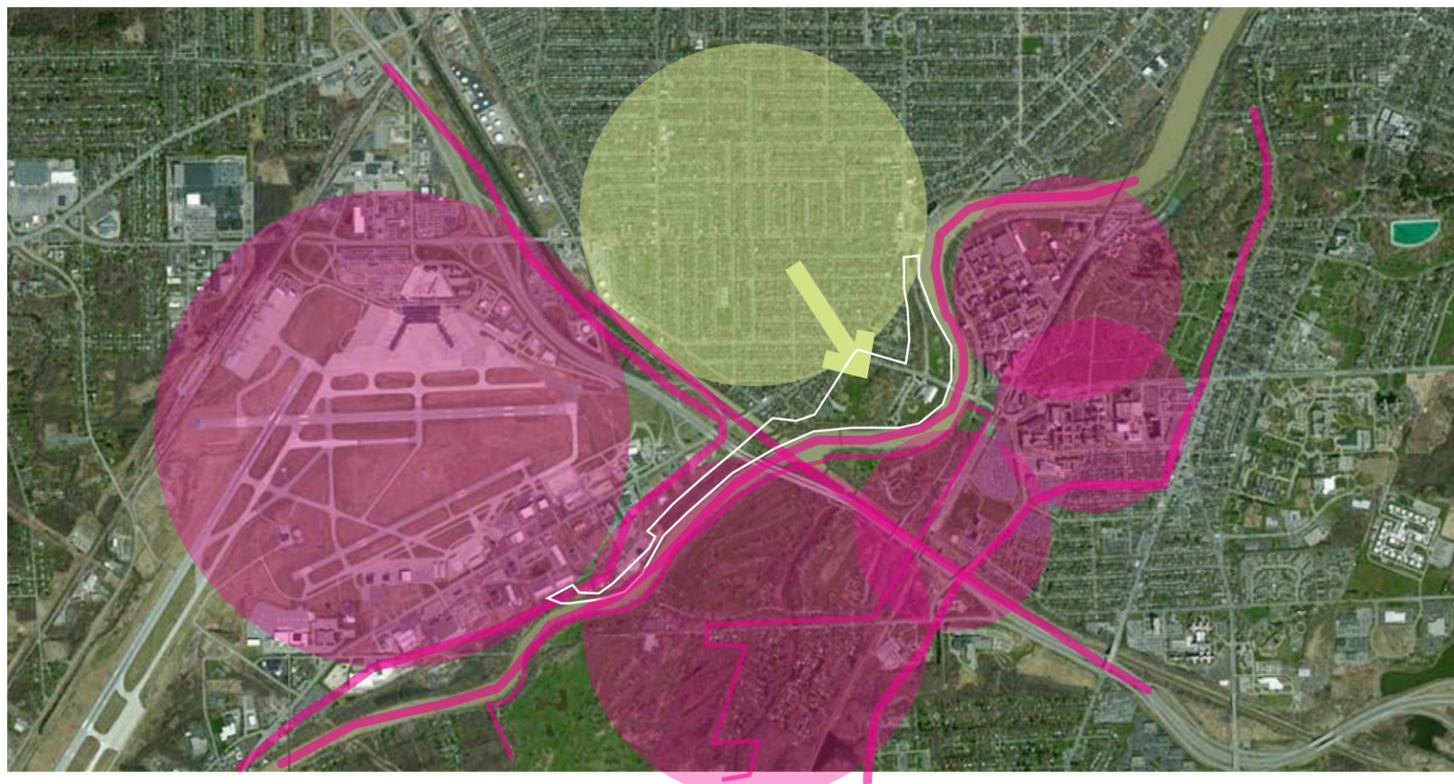
As a whole, the full Genesee Valley Park (east and west) contains over 800-acres of woodland, pastoral riverfront greensward and a substantial diversity recreational opportunities. At the intersection of five different Monroe County towns and cities, the park serves an important role to both nearby Rochester neighborhoods and the region as an active and passive recreational park. Despite the adjacency to so many towns, the existing land uses that surround that park – particularly the Genesee Valley Park West – are almost completely industrial, institutional, and often unsuited as a meaningful compatible land uses next to such an extensive urban oasis.

The most important connection to human-scaled neighborhood exists at the park's northwest corner with the vibrant 19th Ward Neighborhood. In many ways, the 19th Ward (and the Plymouth-Exchange) neighborhood have a distinctive advantage over many areas in the city – being so close to the multitude of recreation resources offered by GVPW. However, the remaining surrounding land uses are enormous barriers to connectivity and inhibit the park's use and potential. Based on these circumstances, the resulting master plan is a balance of rehabilitating the parks most significant asset (the riverfront), providing regionally important recreational amenities, and ensuring meaningful access and opportunity for all park users.

Genesee Valley Park West also serves as a critically important regional multi-use trails hub. The park is the location where three major statewide and regional land trails converge, including the 400+ mile Canalway Trail, the City's Riverway Trail, and the Genesee Valley Greenway Trail which will ultimately continue into northern Pennsylvania. Water trails are also an important part of hub, including navigable portions of the Genesee River, the Erie/Barge Canal and several popular kayak tributaries, such as Black Creek. As regional trails and alternative transportation opportunities continue to become an increasingly important and popular service for the region the role that Genesee Valley Park West



PRESERVING THE PUBLIC EXPERIENCE OF THE GENESEE RIVER (1900)



LAND USE BARRIERS: A REGIONAL PARK WITH AN IMPORTANT NEIGHBOR

plays as a hub will continue to expand. The master plan includes both a significant hierarchy of trails and external connection as well as important recommendations on making sure these connections are meaningful, understandable and user-friendly.

Finally, future implementation decisions during the next few decades should give thoughtful consideration to issues of safety and perceptions of safety – for both park users and nearby residents. The 19th Ward Neighborhood (and adjacent areas such as Plymouth-Exchange) stand to benefit most from enhancements to the Park, particularly considering the demographics of these neighborhoods are known to be some of the heaviest public park users. However, perceptions of safety (crime is substantially lower than neighborhood outsiders perceive it to be) inhibit the diverse use of the park that is necessary for high-quality, healthy and sustainable facilities. One overarching goal of this master plan is to understand the physical carrying capacity of the park landscape and redefine the recreation program within that capacity to meet modern needs. The master plan's outcome is a focus quality recreation experiences over quantity. Such a significant enhancement to park facilities will result in broad enrichment of the neighborhood and increase the diversity of users that is essential for long term sustainability.

For a detailed inventory and analysis of the park's context, adjacent neighborhoods and development initiatives, see master plan module #2, "Background and Context."

21st Century Recreational Needs

Trends in recreation and associated facilities and infrastructure requirements persistently change. Meeting these changing demands is a recurrent challenge for recreation program agencies as well as capital improvement campaigns. However, the broader long-term

recreation trends are much clearer than simply knowing when to provide tennis courts or basketball courts. Currently, this long-term trend is a strong tack toward comprehensive community health and wellness, which in itself, is a direct public response to a sea-change in healthcare process and exponentially rising costs over the last few decades.

Along with this health and wellness trend is an imminent change in primary sources of funding for community recreation services; more public-private partnerships, more direct links to the healthcare sector (both providers and insurers), more public incentives for programs with community fitness and wellness results, more corporate and employer involvement in community recreation, and a technology sector with an increasingly data-driven focus on increasing both personal fitness and more healthy community lifestyles. Simply, the trend is for community wellness and recreation services to displace a portion of the traditional healthcare system, along with related funding, as the most effective source of preventative care.

More than 28% of New Yorkers over the age of 5 are considered "totally inactive." Physical activity rates have been directly correlated to healthcare spending, where the most active states continually have the lowest per capita healthcare costs. Compounding this healthcare predicament, particularly in the neighborhoods surrounding Genesee Valley Park West, are elements of economic inequality. This inequality is a major factor in causing unequal access to recreation services, an extreme disconnect with nature, and provides for disproportionate health and wellness opportunities, which in turn, results in more inactive lifestyles, obesity, poor nutrition, and compounds the trend of general inactivity.

Individual recreation preferences align with these wellness trends. The master plan findings indicate that in the last decade there has been a general increase in outdoor recreation overall but a national decline in organized sports. Specific gains over the last decade include exercise walking, hiking, kayaking, running/jogging, tennis, while significant reductions were seen in golf, softball, swimming, volleyball and moderate reductions in baseball and basketball.



RECREATION SERVICES AS PREVENTATIVE CARE
DC Scores, Youth Soccer



DEMAND FOR HIGHER QUALITY FACILITIES
Genesee Valley Park West



DEMAND FOR INDOOR AQUATIC FACILITIES
Bucks County Aquatic Center, MD



SPORTS TOURISM & EVENTS
Flower City Challenge, GVPW



EXISTING BOAT HOUSE (FORMER MAINTENANCE BUILDINGS)



OLMSTED'S RIVER PLAIN

These trends are linked to reduced family leisure time and resources, resulting in families and individuals looking for more informal “anytime” recreational experiences. Facilitating these “anytime” recreational opportunities is especially important for lower-income households who have substantially less leisure resources, time, and whose employment schedule may not permit ongoing recreational commitments. Fundamentally, modern recreation facilities need to accommodate ever increasing amount of spontaneous family and individual opportunities for a wider range of users.

Rowing programs have also seen a steady increase in participation with at least 12 local rowing clubs forming over the last 15 years. As the Genesee River has become internationally appreciated through the Head of the Genesee Regatta there has been increased pressure for boathouse real-estate along its shores. Five new boathouses have been developed within the region over the last 15 years and there continues to be pressure for more storage and amenities that support this growing sport.

The current boathouse within Genesee Valley Park does not meet the demands of this growth or the current tenant (The Genesee Waterways Center), nor was the facility originally designed for boathouse use. The current facilities are repurposed maintenance buildings and include ad-hoc storage solutions. The City has recognized the need to provide a community boathouse as a recreational amenity. The master plan includes the development of preliminary floor/space planning and architectural concepts for a new boathouse.

The goal of the master plan is to ensure that the planned park facilities align with these expected trends and changes. A reorganized and upgraded Genesee Valley Park West will utilize its unique location and character to make it one of the most memorable and meaningful recreational experiences in the region.

For a detailed inventory and analysis of health and wellness as the predominant trend, local and national trends, and a distance-index of active recreation facilities in Rochester, see master plan module #2, “Background and Context.”

The Historic Designed Landscape

Designed by Frederick Law Olmsted in the late 1880s, Genesee Valley Park has been defined as one of the world’s six great pastoral Olmsted parks and is a critical component of the broader Olmsted-designed park system in Rochester. Rochester is one of only four cities in world with a complete park system designed by Olmsted Sr., the renowned 19th century landscape architect, journalist, social critic and public administrator.

Genesee Valley Park was designed by Olmsted as a refuge from the hectic City and the most meaningful and tranquil connection to the Genesee River within the City of Rochester. The park was intended to provide City residents the ability to remove themselves from the stresses of urban life and find respite and peacefulness within the designed “natural” landscape along the river. Though recreational demands have changed over the last century, Olmsted’s original park vision remains as the overall design intent: To provide high quality recreational opportunities in a character setting where users can experience the pastoral tranquility of the Genesee River.

A substantial component of this master plan was the development of a Cultural Landscape Report that traced and documented the original park design and changes over time in order to better understand the park, its use and how to rehabilitate the critical and recognizable aspects of Olmsted’s design. The findings of the Cultural Landscape Report resulted in the recommendation of an overall strategy of “rehabilitating” the historic landscape. When thoughtfully planned, this strategy makes it possible to incorporate compatible recreational uses while preserving (or in this case, reclaiming) particular features that convey the parks historical and cultural value. The findings also identify and make recommendations on preserving the remaining and significant historic park features, notably the “Olmsted bridges,” remnants of the Genesee Valley Canal, and the substantial quantity of historic trees.

As a historic landscape, the master plan intent is not to “mothball” the existing park and preserve it as-is, but rather, to introduce new and exciting recreational opportunities while reorganizing infrastructure to better reveal its historical cultural importance to the community. Careful planning and restructuring of the park’s recreation and circulation program has allowed for high-quality recreational opportunities in a remarkable world-class setting. This is a recognition that the site’s topographic and landscape character may not support every possible recreation feature and opportunity. But the result is a sensitive incorporation of desired recreational amenities and a sincere focus on quality over quantity.

The complete Cultural Landscape Report for Genesee Valley Park West, including a detailed account of its development and change over time, is included in master plan module #3, The Historic Landscape.

11 Guiding Principles

The project committee determined these eleven principles as being critical to the future success of the park. They represent broad themes, incorporate existing constraints and opportunities, and provided essential guidance in the development of the final park master plan.

1. Park features and infrastructure should contribute to and enhance the park’s role as a multi-modal crossroads.
2. Rethink spatial organization of park features that are no longer constrained by past limitations.
3. Renew park ties with its significant history and re-establish visual ties between east and west.
4. Modernize building facilities to meet current and future recreation needs.
5. Re-prioritize and enhance sports fields, playgrounds and picnic areas.
6. Establish a local benchmark of how park land should

interface with the river, include green infrastructure and enhance the ecological recreation experience.

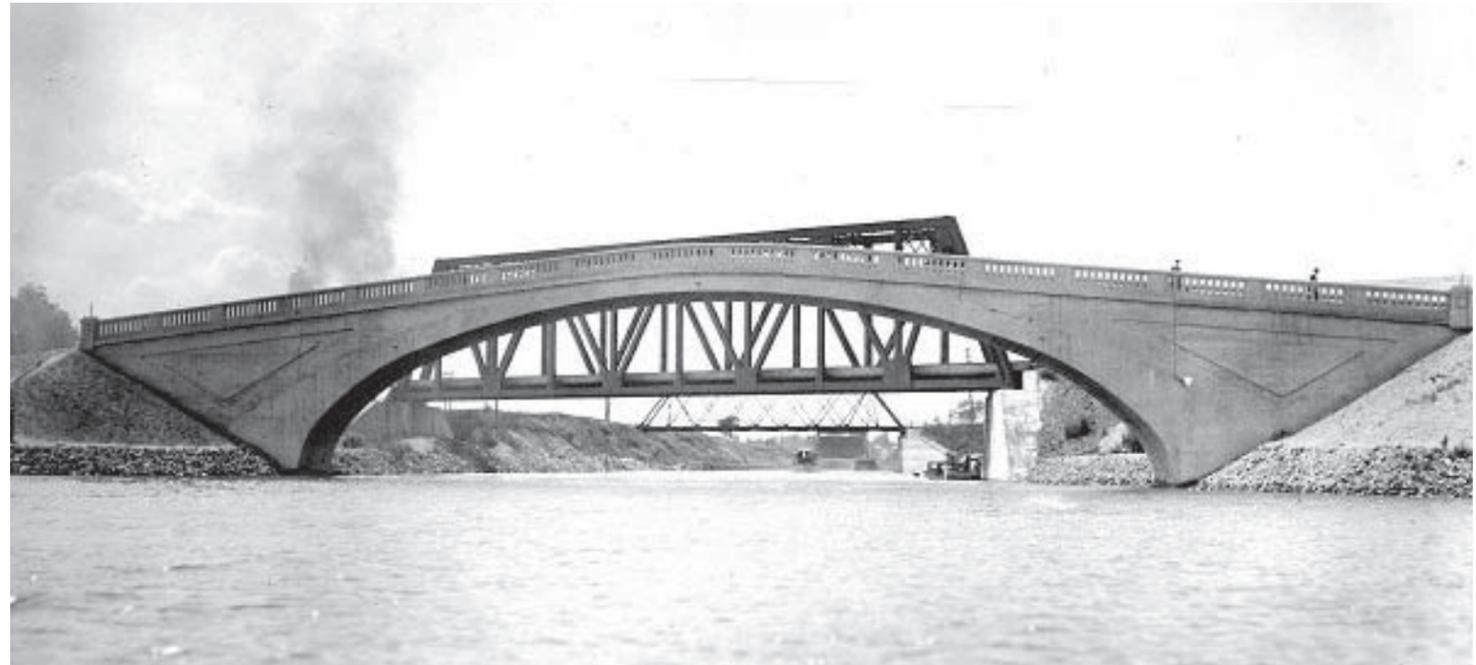
7. Plan circulation and facilities infrastructure to promote both the neighborhood and the regional draw.
8. Respond to the growing health care and fitness crisis by focusing on wellness and developing new public-private partnerships.
9. Plan facilities and programming to accommodate multi-generational, multi-purpose, and long-term recreation trends.
10. Focus on exceptional experience and attraction to the park over perceived demand and recreation “standards”.
11. Limit and Mitigate Physical and Visual Impacts from Adjacent Development and Non-Park Infrastructure

A detailed review of the intent and purpose behind each of these guiding principles, along with Project Advisory Committee and public meeting program development outcomes, can be reviewed within master plan module #5, Program, Guiding Principles and Recommendations.

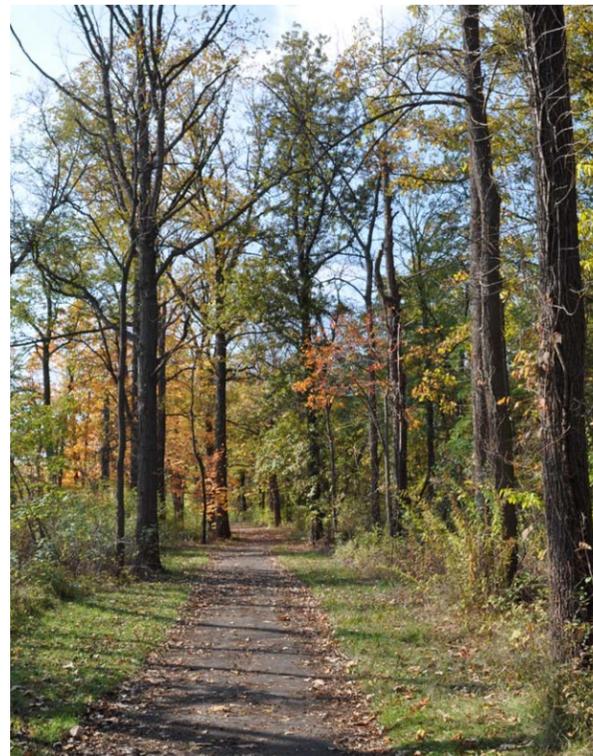
The Master Plan

Taking into account these trends and goals, the master plan for Genesee Valley Park is a comprehensive and extensive long-range vision. It is expected that such a transformation will take 30 years to complete. Some implementation projects may be completed in the near-term based on pressures and available funding. Others will necessitate a substantial investment of resources over a longer period of time or dictate that prior investments (such as the new ice-rink flooring) be exhausted of their value.

- Some of the plan’s essential program elements, which are described and illustrated in master plan module #7, “Final Master Plan,” include:



THE “OLMSTED” BIRDGE: AN ICON OF THE ROCHESTER PARK SYSTEM IN NEED OF REHABILITATION



PRESERVING A RANGE OF EXPERIENCES
Naturalistic Area South of Barge Canal



NEED FOR HOLISTIC CIRCULATION SOLUTIONS
The Results of Vehicles Driving into Lawn and Tree Grove Areas for Picnics



THE MASTER PLAN

01



Key

- Preserved Historic Tree (>80 years old)
- Individual Trees (non-historic <80 years old) or naturalized woodland areas
- Proposed Buildings / Park Structures
- Vehicular Parkway / Circulation Route
- Playground Areas
- Active Recreation Fields / Courts (see individual labels)
- Turf and Passive Park Use Areas
- Pedestrian and Multi-use Trail Network

See module #7: The Master Plan for more detailed descriptions and information regarding the long term park vision.



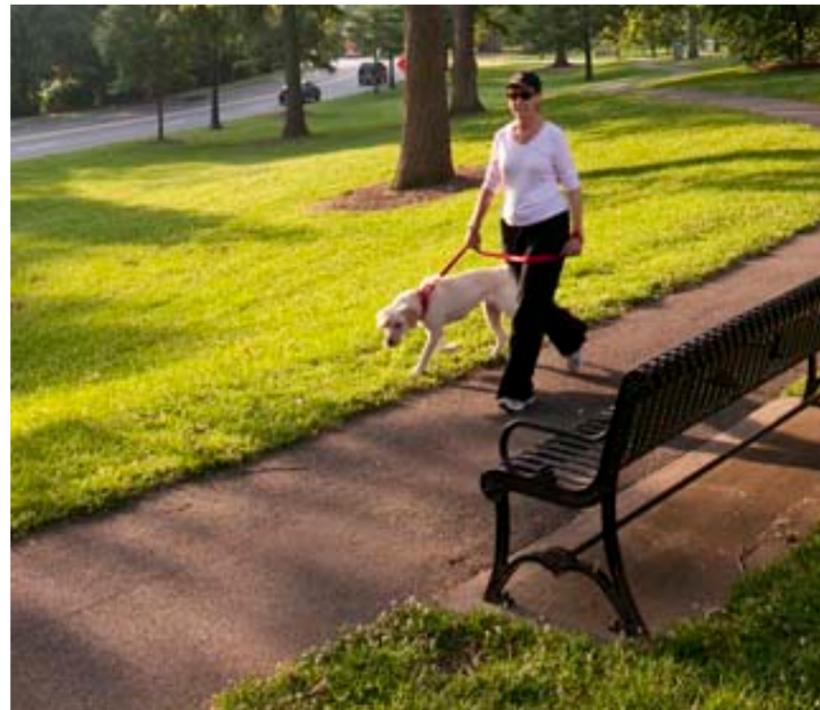
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- A focus on holistically-designed mobility and circulation, both pedestrian and vehicular, which allows better and more direct parking and access to recreational features within the park.
- A spatial reorganization and replacement of needed park facilities that includes the long-term removal of the existing pool and ice-rink buildings and the future development of a Community Wellness and Aquatics Center north of Elmwood Avenue.
- The removal of the existing maintenance and storage structures currently being used as a boathouse and the development of a new community boathouse near the current location. The new boathouse concept proposes to take advantage of existing topography and the park's reorganized circulation to better serve users and reduce its visual impact on the riverfront.
- A long-term recommendation that the Public Safety Training Facility be relocated out of the park to eliminate known safety risks to park and regional trail uses and allow for future expansion of more infrastructure intensive recreational facilities.
- The replacement of the existing Field House along Genesee Street Extension with a new, more modern and comfortable facility that is pulled away from the neighborhood slightly, has dedicated parking, and includes concessions and public bathrooms.
- A reassessment of softball, baseball and little league field needs, resulting in fewer but higher quality facilities that can be used for longer periods throughout the year. This includes the relocation of a full side baseball field with support amenities (warmup area, dugouts, etc.) near the proposed new field house, concessions and bathrooms, as well as the relocation of little league fields to the open and dry greensward south of Elmwood Avenue.
- The proposed new addition of rentable picnic pavilions, basketball courts, and a larger regional destination-scaled playground with a "natural play" theme that promotes environmental literacy and

- blends traditional playground features with natural materials.
- The replacement of the existing neighborhood-scale playground near Genesee Street Extension with a new playground specifically designed to serve the adjacent neighborhood.
- The replacement of existing damaged tennis courts near the Genesee Street Extension-side of the park with eight new tennis courts.
- Preservation of the naturalistic wooded areas south of the Barge Canal, including remnants of the former Genesee Valley Canal prism, combined with limited mobility and recreational trails enhancements, termed the "Wooded Mile," meant to encourage year-round cardiovascular activities in a natural setting.
- The historically sensitive reconstruction of the "Olmsted bridge" crossing the Barge Canal which provides access between park areas north and south, unprecedented views of the river/canal convergence, and serves as the most significant remaining contributing feature of the Olmsted designed park. The bridge also functions as a recognized visual icon of both the entire parks system and the City in general.
- The preservation of significant historic (and non-historic) trees throughout the park, many of which date to the founding of the park in 1880 and earlier, that serve as critically defining features and experience of the park's landscape.



COMMUNITY BOATHOUSE & WATERSPORTS CENTER CONCEPT DESIGN



SIMPLICITY OF THE PASTORAL LANDSCAPE
Oak Grove Restoration, Linear Park Alliance, Atlanta



UNIQUE NEW RECREATIONAL EXPERIENCES
Governors Island, Liggett Play Area, West 8



ARCHITECTURAL PRECEDENT FOR FUTURE WELLNESS AND AQUATICS CENTER
Whistler Public Library, British Columbia, HCMA Architecture + Design

Anticipated Costs

The proposed long term rehabilitation of Genesee Valley Park West will require a significant investment of resources over the next 30-years. While following through on creating new public-private partnerships centered on health and wellness can provide a considerable amount funding, a significant proportion of these capital improvement costs must ultimately be borne by the community and other federal or state funding sources.

Based on Rough Order of Magnitude Cost Estimates developed as part of this master plan, the overall rehabilitation, including all costs, is estimated to be \$93 million over the next 30 years. While this cost may seem daunting there is demand for additional parks and recreation spending in the community. Of the 100 largest cities in the United States the median total parks and recreation expenditure in 2011 was \$84.00 per resident. Rochester's 2011 expenditures were \$56.00 per resident, \$28 dollars lower than the median. While the difference of \$28.00 could not be wholly invested in capital projects alone, it does equate to more than \$5.8 million per year of additional funding for parks and recreation in the community – just to bring Rochester up the National median.

As the City and region recaptures its economic footing with new employment, investment in new and high-tech industries, and gains or more successfully retains an increasingly young and sophisticated workforce with more choices on where to live, both the business community and the workforce will demand better and higher quality recreational opportunities to sustain Rochester as a competitive urban center. Nevertheless, it is clear that funding sources must be numerous and varied, as no single public entity could take on the complete long-term rehabilitation costs for the park. This master plan is about identifying and laying the framework for what is important about Genesee Valley Park West and what sort of exceptional recreational opportunities the park can best provide given the ability to do so. It will facilitate the pursuit of funding as a key part of the City's agenda for improving this local, state and nationally significant recreational asset.

Rehabilitation Cost by Phase

Phase 1 // 0-5 Years:	\$0 (underway)
The 'Ante-Room' / Brooks Landing Improvements	
Phase 2 // 5-10 Years:	\$8.8 M
Park Drive, Playground, Courts	
Phase 3 // 10-15 Years:	\$21.5 M
Community Boathouse and Watersports Area	
Phase 4 // 15-20 Years:	\$5.6 M
Baseball Field, Field House, South Trail Area	
Phase 5 // 20-25 Years:	\$3.5 M
Riverfront Greensward (entry, little-league, multi-use field)	
Phase 6 // 25-30 Years:	\$53.8 M
Wellness and Aquatics Center	

GENESEEE VALLEY PARK WEST

30-YEAR TOTAL: \$93.2 M



PHASE 1 0-5 Years	PHASE 2 5-10 Years	PHASE 3 10-15 Years
PHASE 4 15-20 Years	PHASE 5 20-25 Years	PHASE 6 25-30 Years

THE 30-YEAR VISION: MASTER PLAN PHASING