

01 THE PRELIMINARY MASTER PLAN

GENESEE VALLEY PARK WEST MASTER PLAN



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 design 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 public respite among nature was supremely deliberate. When given the opportunity to design the 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 Genesee River landscape. The other public riverfront is Seneca Park, 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. 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.

Future Parkland / Active Recreation Areas (Chili)

These large former industrial parcels within the Town of Chili should be cooperatively developed between the municipalities. New park facilities would provide additional high-infrastructure recreational needs without visually impacting the sensitive riverfront landscape. The parcels also allow for substantial vehicular access and would provide a "gateway" to park lands south of the Canal.

Future Parkland / Boathouse Area (Chili)

This New York State-owned parcel of land in the Town of Chili is cut-off from the urban fabric and is best suited for parkland and canal-front uses. Potential boathouse expansion areas (with canal docks) or other active recreation opportunities (BMX course) will provide much-needed activity in this area. All existing Canalway Trail connections through this parcel should be sensitively maintained and enhanced.

Open Railroad Bridge for Accessibility

The historic Pennsylvania Railroad bridge should be rehabilitated and opened to pedestrian / trail traffic. The bridge is an important cultural relic and could serve as an handicapped accessible route over the canal. (The Olmsted bridge is not "accessible" by modern ADA standards.)

Future Relocation of Police and Fire Training Facility

To eliminate safety risks to park users, the police and fire training facility should be relocated from the park in the long term. The resulting riverfront parkland would be available for future boathouse expansions, additional active recreation fields, or other large structures that cannot be accommodated within the park area near Elmwood Avenue, such as an indoor ice arena.

The "Wooded Mile," Seasonal Trail Expansion

The existing trail through the wooded portion of the park south of the Canal should be enhanced to provide more varied landscape interest and complete a measured and marked loop of approximately 1 mile to encourage independent cardiovascular activities such as leisure walking, jogging, cross-country skiing. The trail loop should take more advantage of river views and remnants of the former Genesee Valley Canal.

Realignment of Trail Along Existing Training Facility

In the short term, prior to the training facility being relocated out of the parkland, the riverfront trail segment abutting the facility should be relocated towards the river edge where possible. This will allow more direct contact with the river edge and provide enough room for a naturalistic wooded buffer to be developed between the training facility and the trail.

The Genesee Valley Greenway Trail

The existing connection to the Genesee Valley Greenway (GVG) at the south end of the park should be maintained and improved where possible, including wayfinding enhancements for through-trail users. The GVG provides a direct link to the proposed north-south Triple Divide trail, which reaches well into Pennsylvania and ultimately connecting to the 365-mile Canal Trail system right here in Genesee Valley Park West,

I-390 Overpass Landscape Treatment

A specialized mass-landscape treatment should be developed for the parkland area below the I-390 overpass. The treatment should provide seasonal visual interest, limit off-trail pedestrian movement, and otherwise bring an artistic presence to the area. Trails under the overpass should also be consolidated to minimize safety issues from overhead debris.

Reconstruction of Historic Olmsted Bridges

The series of bridges designed by the Olmsted firm that cross the canal are an icon of Rochester's world-class park system. The bridges, including the single bridge on the west side of the park, are in need of repair. As the only surviving constructed feature from the Park's historic Period of Significance, these bridges should be fully reconstructed or rehabilitated using National Park Service preservation treatment standards.

KEY

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



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City of Rochester

This document was prepared for the New York State Department of State with funds provided under Title 11 of the Environmental Protection Fund Act.

April 2015

SEE CONNECTING PLAN SHEET

Reconstructed Tennis Courts (8 Courts)

The tennis court area should be fully reconstructed and incorporated into the broader park rehabilitation. Access is provided from the internal Parkway drive and adjacent parking lot.

Basketball Courts (2)

Two outdoor basketball courts should be developed within this active recreation zone. The courts are located in a visible location with direct access to the Parkway drive and the nearby parking lot.

Field House, Concessions, and Public Rest-rooms

A modern and small scale multi-use building should replace the existing Field House. The building should serve programmed recreation needs, as a rentable community-event space, a concessions area, and as public rest-rooms for park users.

Neighborhood Playground

A neighborhood-scale playground is proposed within proximity to the new Field House, parking area, and baseball field. The playground provides a small area for younger children to play while older children participate in organized sports. The playground also had direct visual and pedestrian access from the surrounding neighborhood fabric.

Baseball Field

A full-sized baseball field, including dugouts, small bleachers, and a warm-up / practice space should be developed to support league and local high-school games. A visually sensitive synthetic turf should be explored as a field medium to allow a significantly longer season of use.



Picnic Pavilions (4)

Small-scale rentable picnic pavilions should be provided for family events and general park use. The pavilions should be aesthetically compatible with the park's Period of Significance and be directly accessible from adjacent parking areas.

Pedestrian Safety

A robust series of pedestrian safety improvements should be developed for the 3-way intersection of Elmwood Avenue, Genesee Street and Scottsville Road. This intersection serves as the most direct link to residential areas surrounding the park. Safe pedestrian access should be prioritized over vehicular convenience. Interventions may include all-way traffic stops, the design of landscaped pedestrian islands, pavement materials changes, etc.

Knoll-Top Area / Historic Tree Grove

The significant quantity and diversity of historic tree specimens (many dating prior to 1880) should be preserved as a critical defining feature of the park landscape. Minimal interventions should be undertaken in this area, limited to pathway realignment, soil invigoration and drainage improvements, or other activities necessary to preserve the health and visual appeal of the trees.

Neighborhood Access

Trail improvements to the parkland should include those identified within the "Brooks Landing Phase 2" project as important links to the adjacent neighborhood.

Vehicular Access

Southbound (one-way) vehicular access from the nearby hotel parking lot, as identified within the "Brooks Landing Phase 2" project, will remain.

Passive Riverfront Area

A passive riverfront parkland area, accessible by trail and nearby vehicular circulation routes, is recommended for the lands directly north of the Wellness Center and pool. The riverfront area will preserve open views to the water and protect large historic trees.

Outdoor Pool & Amenities

An outdoor pool is proposed as part of the Community Wellness and Aquatics Center. The pool will be smaller than the existing GVPW pool but will include amenities such as canopied/shaded seating, pool side tables and dining, sunbathing deck and other desirable features.



Community Wellness & Aquatics Center

A Community Wellness and Aquatics Center is proposed to replace the existing Ice Arena and pool building. The Center will focus on providing multi-generational wellness services, including:

- Indoor 4-Season Spray Park
- Indoor Current/Therapy Pool
- Gymnasium and Fitness Center
- Indoor Running/Walking Track
- Computer Lab / Classroom Space
- Concessions / Riverfront Patio Space
- Community Health Services

The Parkway Drive

Prior parkland acquisitions (circa 1905) and interventions, including the previous park Master Plan (1973), were all developed when an active railroad corridor bisected the park. The result was a constrained approach to linking disparate park areas and activities. The result included park users driving vehicles onto lawns and through the landscape. The master plan proposes to rethink connections between various park areas and to the community as a whole now that the railroad is removed. The long term plan is to incorporate a small, low-speed "parkway" that meanders through the landscape, connecting disparate recreational features, small convenient parking areas, providing meaningful access for the community beyond.

Larger Under-Bridge Land Connection

Any future bridge reconstruction should include an effort to expand the width of the land / trail connection between the north and south park areas. This can be accomplished by pushing the bridge abutment further west and allowing more direct visual and physical access.

Reclaiming Frederick Law Olmsted's Park Vision

The overall master plan's recreational reorganization serves to open up visual connections between the east and west sides of Genesee Valley Park. It strives to remove visual barriers and relocate or replace incompatible architectural features. The result is a publicly accessible rehabilitation of the pastoral tranquility of the Genesee River along this stretch of parkland.

Riverfront Little League & Multi-use Fields

Little league fields (and an associated multi-use field) for youth baseball or other compatible actives have been relocated to the premier riverfront location within Genesee Valley Park. The goal is to provide a charmingly unique and convenient location for children to learn to play baseball that is unmatched in environmental attractiveness. This relocation also allows the lowest visual impact recreational amenities to utilize the park area that is most sensitive to visual disruption.

Natural Playground Area

Complementing the smaller neighborhood scale playground within the park is a larger "natural play" area that will provide healthy active recreational (physical and mental) opportunities for kids of all ages. The natural playground is a uniquely designed play environment that blends traditional playground amenities with natural materials such as wood, logs, native vegetation, boulders, dirt, sand, lawn, environmental art, textured pathways, and creatively designed hills and landforms. The playground serves as an open-ended play space, allowing kids to freely and safely explore the "natural" environment in ways that traditional engineered plastic or fiberglass playgrounds cannot accommodate.

Boathouse & Water Sports Center

The existing maintenance garages that have been used as a boathouse for several decades will be replaced with a more sensitively designed boathouse and water sports center. The concept building design proposes to allow a smaller and more visually appealing facade to border the river front, while more utilitarian aspects (including boat bays and a generous staging area) of the building tilt away from the river, being screened from overall riverfront views.

Along with essential rowing and water sports support facilities, the building will include a sizable rentable community event space for weddings or other large events that takes advantage of one of the most serene views of the Genesee River. The building will also support flourishing sports tourism needs for local, regional and

national rowing, triathlon or other competition events. A concept design for the Boathouse has been developed as part of this Master Plan process. The facility is designed to include:

- Public boat livery (kayak and canoe rental)
- Public bike rental (summer), XC-Ski rental (winter)
- 7 boat bays with area for future bay expansion
- A climate-controlled repair bay
- Locker rooms with shower facilities
- Rowing fitness center
- Rowing / water sports support offices
- Small retail / concessions space
- Riverfront community lobby / fireplace
- Meeting rooms
- Kitchen / food event prep room
- Reception space with riverfront balcony

