

Brooks Landing Public Improvements - Phase II

Cultural Resources Report, Update July 2010



Prepared for:

CITY OF ROCHESTER
30 Church Street
Rochester, New York

Prepared by:

CAROL R. JOHNSON ASSOCIATES, INC.
115 Broad Street
Boston, Massachusetts

and

FRA ENGINEERING AND ARCHITECTURE, P.C.
A TY Lin International Company
255 East Avenue
Rochester, New York



Section 1. Introduction

Background

“Genesee Valley Park” as described in the 1904 Park Commission’s The Public Parks of the City of Rochester, New York report, “with its wide and undulating meadows shut in by thick plantings which skillfully conceal the boundary limits; the broad and quiet river in perfect harmony with the long stretch of meadows through which it flows; the native forest which helps frame the beautiful picture – all combine to create a charming pastoral park. It is what its designers intended it to be – a restful place.”

Genesee Valley Park is one of three parks established by the Rochester Parks Commission, designed by Frederick Law Olmsted and part one of Olmsted’s integrated city park systems. Opened in 1888, the park is located to the southwest of downtown Rochester. This site has undergone considerable changes since its inception and, like many parks designed in the late 19th Century, only reflects its preliminary plan in some of its remaining features. The portion of the park included in this report, Brooks Landing, has always been intended for active recreation with Olmsted’s typical pastoral character lent to the circulation, planting and crafted viewsheds.

The park location was recommended by Frederick Law Olmsted - America’s premier Landscape Architect - because of its location bordering the Genesee River south of the development of 19th Century Rochester. Olmsted, in designing comprehensive city park networks, typically selected park sites that provided scenic, pastoral and dramatic opportunities. The Genesee Valley Park site was selected because of its location on the river, its open farm lands and undeveloped woodlands.

Significance

Genesee Valley Park was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2003 as a part of multiple property documentation for the entire municipal park system of the city of Rochester. It is a park with national historical significance

because of its association with Frederick Law Olmsted, its original designer, as well as his sons, Frederick Jr. and John C. Olmsted. In addition, the park’s initial plan embodies the characteristic of the pastoral park of the late 19th Century.

Definition of Project Boundaries

The portion of the park that is being studied at this time is Sub-Area I of the Brooks Landing Urban Renewal Plan. This portion of the park is on the west side of the Genesee River and is bounded as such: to the north by Brooks Avenue and South Plymouth Avenue; to the west by the residences on Grandview Terrace, Arvine Park, Oak Hill View and Arvine Heights; to the south by the Genesee Valley Park Ice Arena (across Elmwood Avenue); and to the west by the river.

Summary of Findings

Genesee Valley Park is a significant cultural resource for the City of Rochester, the State of New York and the nation due to its association with Frederick Law Olmsted and his sons, its original pastoral design and its development over a century and a half, the latter providing makes it a record of the evolution of park design in the United States.

Brooks Landing maintains many of its significant features and characteristics which lends integrity to the historic landscape. However, several changes to the 1890 design have occurred over a century due to the changes in the needs of the community and the region. Most notably, the introduction into the park of the Erie Canal and Interstate Highway 390 had hugely significant impacts on the park, including Brooks Landing, predominantly due to the rising levels of river water.

After evaluating the park’s history and its character-defining features, the recommendation is for rehabilitation of the Brooks Landing portion of the Genesee Valley Park. Treatment recommendations for each of the character-defining features are included herein. The recommendations conform to the *Secretary of the Interior’s Guidelines for Treatment of Cultural Landscapes*.

Section 2. Site History

Significant Periods of the Park's History

The park development has been broken into four significant periods of time: pre-park growth (pre-1888), Genesee Valley Park development (1888-1918), changes in the mid-Twentieth Century (1918-1939), and post-development era (1939 – current). These periods clearly define distinct phases in the park: 1888 was the year when the lands were purchased by the Rochester Parks Commission and South Park – as it was first named - was officially opened. In 1919 the relocated Erie Canal was opened slicing through the park; this division was the first significant alteration in the deteriorating Olmsted plan. While the Multiple Property Documentation Form for the National Register of Historic Places defines the period of significance for the Rochester Parks system as the years between 1811 and 1951, as this is the area of significant development for the broader park system, no major changes occurred to this portion of Genesee Valley Park after 1939, as the involvement of the United States in World War II effectively ended any improvements to park facilities.

For the purposes of this report, the period of significance is considered to be 1888 through 1939.

Pre-Park Growth: up to 1888

In 1825, the Erie Canal opened, bringing a major influx of goods and people to the area then known as the Rapids. (The area became “Rochesterville” in 1831.) A feeder canal was constructed to the east of the river circa 1838 so that riverboats could move south of the rapids. The feeder canal eventually became part of the Genesee Valley Canal, which cuts through the Brooks Landing site. The smaller canal lasted less than four decades and, when closed, was filled in and overlaid with the tracks for the Genesee Valley Canal Railroad Company. The rail line later became the Western New York and Pennsylvania Railroad Company, forming the western boundary of Genesee Valley Park.

A city plat plan from 1875 shows a number of properties in the northern portion of the Brooks Landing site, and several of these were developed as hotels.

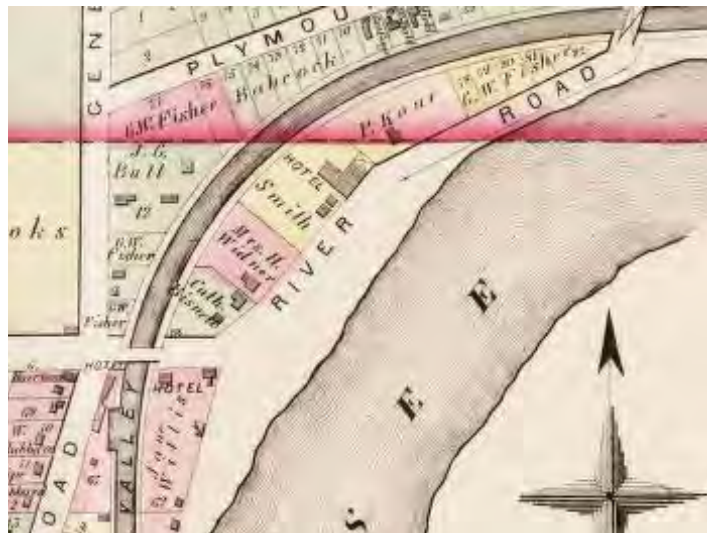


Figure 2-1. A portion of the 1875 city plat plan showing hotel development at Brooks Landing. Courtesy of the Monroe County Library.

In 1888, the Rochester Parks Commission purchased two properties for the City, and also accepted a gift of land. The parks totaled approximately 55 acres and were initially called North and South Parks, later renamed Seneca and Genesee Valley Parks, respectively. Each park was located along the Genesee River, as Frederick Law Olmsted purported the significance of the river as one of the City's greatest assets both aesthetically and as a recreational element. The donated piece of land was nearly 20 acres boarding the city reservoir and is today known as Highland Park.

Genesee Valley Park Development: 1888-1918

While it is difficult, based on the available information, to have an exact understanding of how the park was constructed, there are certain resources available that provide clarity. The document entitled *The Public Parks of the City of Rochester, New York* published circa 1904 summarizes the Park Commissioners' Reports for the development of the Rochester Park system between the years 1888 and 1904. Much of the information from this document has been included in the park timeline,

included as Appendix A. Other documents were useful for providing general information about the development of the park; however, because the information is not specific to the Brooks Landing Phase II project area, we cannot be sure of the exact location of some of the park features.



Figure 2-2. A Rochester baseball team in 1894. Courtesy of *Baseball in the 19th Century*, Rochester History.

From the Park Commissioner's Reports we can see that in 1890 the first of the baseball fields were laid out and constructed on site, to the north of Elmwood Avenue; additional ball fields were constructed the following year. Baseball became a dominant sport in the 1850s in the United States, and stayed as such until the intrusion of the Civil War.

By 1891, the park – with one of the few areas of vast open space in the city – became popular enough for the Plymouth Trolley line to lay tracks into the park, south of Elmwood Avenue and for the Western New York and Pennsylvania Railroad to start providing service to the park on weekends and holidays. (The railroad already had access to the park, effectively creating its western boundary. Indeed, trees and shrubs had been planted since 1889 in an effort to buffer the view of the rail line from inside the park.) In 1891, an old farmhouse on the property was relocated just south of the Elmwood Avenue Bridge on the western bank of the Genesee River. It was converted into a public boathouse and can be seen in historic photos of the many floods on the Genesee; it became known as the Durand Boathouse.



Figure 2-3. The Durand Boathouse, 1891. Courtesy of the Monroe County Library.

Permission was granted that year by the Rochester Parks Commission - against Frederick Law Olmsted's recommendation - for private clubs to erect boathouses on the river's edge. The first of the private boathouses was constructed in the following year by the Rochester Athletic Club; it was located to the south of Elmwood Avenue, as shown on the Plan 102 prepared in 1892 by Frederick Law Olmsted & Company. The large structure was located against Olmsted's desires. His intent was to use the portion of the park north of Elmwood Avenue for park-related structures. In a letter to the Park Commissioners from May 1892, Olmsted wrote "the Board owns land north of the bridge ample in extent for a considerable number of boat-houses. With a little care to provide room for trees among them, these houses need not be by any means an unpleasant feature as seen from the proposed parkway across the river."

Plan 102 is the most complete plan available of the Brooks Landing area of Genesee Valley Park. The plan, labeled "Plan showing proposed location of athletic grounds" was produced in 1892. The plan, while still relatively silent on details for the site north of Elmwood Avenue, contains a lot of information. This includes: a "ball ground" with trails; one boathouse within penciled potential property lines for additional boathouses; a "public boathouse" with "float"; and, a few trees all north of Elmwood Avenue. South of Elmwood Avenue included another "public athletic house" (the refectory) with a float; stairs off the road to the south side; tree massings along the river bank; "cinder race track: 1/3 mile"; and "gymnastic apparatus". The center

of the track included: "22 yard straight dash"; a fence surrounding track with trails on the outside; steps from the athletic building over the fence into the track; and, several features that were likely jumps inside the track. An additional note on the plan calls for "space for putting shot throwing hammer and other dangerous sports" to be enclosed by fence. Also shown are steps into the track over the fence and into 'dangerous' sports venue; three round dashed features, potentially other field sport venues; trails; and, an overlook at the underside of the bridge. The Rochester Athletic Club is shown with three "floats" in the river. Presumably, since the ball fields had been laid out a few years earlier, the firm didn't feel the need to depict them on this plan. Other plans show that lining the running track to the east were tennis courts.

A plan produced in 1892 (plan number 109 from the firm) is entitled "Proposed Change of Drive/ Grading Plan in Vicinity of Ball Grounds North of Elmwood Avenue". While incomplete, it shows the then existing road alignment of Plymouth Avenue and the proposal for a more meandering roadway that works within Olmsted's ideology for the pastoral landscape and crafts shifting views. This plan also shows the alignment of the "electric railway", the completed state dam and the stone retaining wall which remains visible today.

Along the west bank, a nursery was begun in 1892 with 10,000 trees and shrubs purchased for the park. This nursery was progressively thinned as plant materials were relocated throughout the developing park. Also in 1892, the ball fields within the study area were graded and a one-third mile track was constructed. The track was surfaced with cinders and gravel and was enclosed with a fence. The following year, the Refectory was opened.

In a May 20, 1892 letter from F. L. Olmsted & Co. to Arthur Seldon, Secretary of the Park Commission, the firm admitted to the Commission that they had not yet prepared a plan for the section of the park north of Elmwood Avenue. In the letter, the west side of the park was discussed:

"The irregular plot south of the Running Track would not necessarily be fenced off from the track

itself. The West side of this plot being a straight line, was intended to follow the south end of a 300-yard straight away dash course 20 feet wide. The insertion of this feature would somewhat interfere with the grading up of the outer edge of the curve of the Running track, and it may not be of sufficient use to justify this interference. We would also like to know whether it is especially desirable to have a one-fourth mile track inside of the one-third mile track. One straight side of each one coincide. The irregular plot at the south end might perhaps be reserved exclusively for some tennis courts for club members. There is, also, a question of whether it would be desirable to plant a row trees all around the Running Track for shade. The larger part of the ground within the track would have to be covered with gravel, as turf could not be maintained and the ground would be either dust or slimy and slippery, without a gravel finish. The question of the bridge from the upper floor of the Athletic Club House should be determined by the architects at once. In our opinion, it is absolutely necessary, in order to prevent interference with the convenience of the Running and Bicycle Track. For the same reason, the only entrance to the ground inside the fence enclosing the Running Track should be by means of this, or another bridge."



Figure 2-4. The Refectory in a 1912 image. Courtesy of the Rochester Museum & Science Center.

The upper floor of the Refectory was used primarily as a shelter with the lower floor providing changing rooms for men using the track. (At this time, it appears as though women's recreation activities were not so rigorous.) in addition, refreshments

were sold in the athletic building. Plumbing was installed in the following year. (A well was located on the athletic grounds in 1893).

Circulation into the park was improved; as well, "[t]he park road extending from south end of Plymouth avenue to Elmwood Avenue, was covered with brick and stone taken from the old Court House." In 1895, the track surface was improved and a second one-quarter mile track was included within the larger one. The following year saw improvements to the Refectory – inclusion of a "women's room" for both women and children; a new bicycle path beginning at the south park entrance and extending one and one-half miles through the park; and a brick utility building constructed to house the water pump. Cycling was introduced to Rochester by 1880 and gained popularity. As mentioned earlier, the track was often used for cycling as well as running.

The next few years saw little in the way of significant park improvements until two tennis courts were constructed in 1899. In the interim, park development included only tree clearing and plantings, resurfacing and expansion of the bike paths, and the maintenance and repair of existing structures. In 1902, three new boathouses were constructed on the west bank and were screened with vegetation; the YMCA built a boathouse and athletic building, located 300 feet south of the Rochester Athletic Building.



Figure 2-5. Skating in the park, 1905. Courtesy of the Rochester Museum & Science Center.

The changes to the park occurring after its initial decade of development broke from Olmsted's original vision for the park. The National Register documentation quotes from the 1911 edition of the Rochester Parks Commission report where it explains its diversion from the Olmsted plans: "[I]t has been the purpose of the Park Commission to make the parks of Rochester not simply beautiful pictures, which would serve the people in a passive way, but to make them active agencies for social service." Several sport and field additions were made to the park, though it appears as though John C. Olmsted, step-son and successor of the firm, was consulted for advice on the placement of these amenities.



Figure 2-6. The early swimming pool, 1905. Courtesy of the Rochester Public Library.

Though they were potentially already in existence in the park, the first (photographic) documentation of a swimming pool and skating rink in Genesee Valley Park is from 1905.

By 1908, a separate athletic building was constructed on site and the park as a whole had over five and a half miles of walks and three miles of drives.

Also by this time, the athletic club structure had been relocated and was supplemented with a smaller building. Stands were constructed for viewing of events.



Figure 2-7. Skating on the flooded fields in front of the refectory and boathouse. Courtesy of the Rochester Museum & Science Center.

We can see from any number of historic photographs, the frequency with which the Genesee River flooded over its banks and into the park. While these floods may have impacted the surfaces of the track and ballfields, the structural integrity of the park structures, and the health of many trees, they also provided additional opportunities for recreation. There are records of folks canoeing on the flooded athletic fields. In wintertime the flooded fields were used as a massive skating rink for all patrons – ice skating was one of the first active sports in which women participated.



Figure 2-8. Canoeing on the flooded fields behind the private club boathouses. Courtesy of the Rochester Museum & Science Center.



Figure 2-9. The Durand Boathouse in flood in 1913. The Elmwood Avenue bridge is in the background. Courtesy of Rochester Museum & Science Center.

Aerial photographs from 1918 show a temporary dam in place just south of the Elmwood Avenue Bridge; the coffer dam was constructed to allow workers dry access to the new dam location to the south of the bridge. The running track, by this time, has a long straight-away on its west edge and the trolley line loops appear to be significant circulation patterns in the park.



Figure 2-10. This aerial shows the coffer dam just south of the Elmwood Avenue bridge. On the left, the two tracks are visible south of Elmwood Avenue. Courtesy of the Monroe County Library.

Studying the available plans from the office of Frederick Law Olmsted & Company, it is clear that the Brooks Landing area (and all of the land on the west bank of the Genesee River) was always intended to be the more active portion of the park. Olmsted, in his designs for all parks, believed that separating disparate park uses would reduce conflict and make for a more restful park experience. Though the location of the track shifted from north of Elmwood Avenue to the south as the park design developed, the plans consistently included both a running track or “gymnastic grounds” and “ball grounds” where baseball fields were laid out.



Figure 2-11. A portion of Plan 102 from F.L. Olmsted & Co, 1982. Full plan is located in Appendix D. Courtesy of the Olmsted Archives.

Plan 102 from Olmsted and Company is likely the most representative drawing of how the Brooks Landing site was developed. Some discrepancies can be seen when the plan is compared with historical photographs: the public athletic house is located just to the south of the bridge as shown on the plan but the Durand boathouse is located further south of the athletic building. Figure 2-7 shows the boathouse and athletic building with the Elmwood Avenue bridge in the background; the skaters are over the running track surface.

Two plans are available from the firm during the Olmsted Brothers era (plan 151 and 188 drawn in 1910 and 1912 respectively; see Appendix D); they show proposed changes to the park due to the relocation of the Erie Canal.



Figure 2-12. A portion of Plan 188 from the Olmsted Brothers office, 1912. Full plan is located in Appendix D. Courtesy of the Olmsted Archives.

Because they post-date the initial park development, these plans give a clear view of what was actually constructed in the park. Plan 151 was created in 1910 by the Olmsted Brothers and is titled “Plan for adjustment to rise in water level”. While the intent of this drawing is to plan for the impacts created by the joining of the canal with the Genesee’s waters, it provides a more accurate idea of what was actually constructed in the Brooks Landing portion of the park, since no final drawings are available for this area. The plan shows that the Western New York and Pennsylvania Railroad was still running through the park; a portion (the end loop) of the trolley line is shown extending across Elmwood Avenue. From this plan we know that there were as many as twelve boathouses located on the bank of the Genesee north of Elmwood Avenue. This is supported by Figure 2-8. Some plants are represented on the plan, but likely the most comprehensive plan for vegetation information is the planting plan, Plan 132. South of Elmwood Avenue, the locations of the three major structures - the Refectory, the Durand boathouse and the Rochester athletic Club - are all clear. Further south, the plan also locates the swimming pool and a Y.M.C.A. building, for which there is no written reference. The location of the track is clearly represented along with bridge connection from the refectory to the inside of the track. The plan shows the alignment of South Plymouth Avenue, after the alignment change, with its gentle graceful curves.

Plan 188 was prepared two years later but reflects the same park layout. Some additional information is included, however, such as the Elmwood Avenue Street car turnaround before reaching the railroad tracks.

Changes in the Mid- 20th Century: 1918 - 1939

Transportation developments of the Twentieth Century impacted Genesee Valley Park, significantly. The most significant of which was the opening of the new route of the Erie Canal. The City hired the office of the Olmsted Brothers (Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr. retired in 1895) to study the impacts of the new canal location.

The firm produced a document entitled: *Genesee Valley Park, Rochester, NY: Report upon Proposed Adjustment and Estimated Damages in Connection with the Introduction of the State Barge Canal*, in June 1912. The report, prepared for the Board of Park Commissioners of the City, explained how the rerouting of the canal would affect the existing park, due to the new alignment effectively bisecting the park and the extensive impacts of the rising water elevation.



Figure 2-13. The joining of the relocated Erie Canal and the Genesee River, 1918. Courtesy of the Rochester Museum & Science Center.

The Olmsted Brothers suggested the necessary changes include: "The reestablishment of proper

means of communication between the severed parts of the park, together with work incidental thereto; and changes necessitated by raising the water level of the river, specifically the general treatment of low land by filling and drainage of the canal, [...] the raising of certain low roads, the treatment of the new line and level of the river shore, [and] protection against scour during floods".



Figure 2-14. The coffer dam is being threatened by flood waters and debris in 1919. Durand Boathouse in the background. Courtesy of the Rochester Museum & Science Center.

While the impacts to the park as a whole were profound, the Brooks Landing area was to be impacted solely by rising water levels. The original ballfields had to be reconstructed due to the conjoining waters of the river and the canal. The firm's recommendations included the transplanting of trees, and installation of under drains for the ballfields on low lying lands in the Brooks Landing area north of Elmwood Avenue.

The intersection of the canal raised the water level of the Genesee by twelve feet, requiring re-grading of several areas of the park, as well as the removal and protection of several existing trees. In addition, the Olmsted Brothers anticipated that at least a quarter mile of South Plymouth Avenue would be subject to flooding. The northern portion of Plymouth Ave was re-graded and raised at least four feet in grade to elevation 521. The canal was opened in its new location on May 10, 1918.

The Great Depression of the 1930s left little untouched by the national crisis. Fiscal cuts impacted the parks department greatly, but federal works programs, such as the Works Progress Administration and the Civilian Conservation Corps, were enacted to give something back to civic institutions such as Genesee Valley Park. While most of the Rochester Parks staff was eliminated, unemployed Rochester citizens were given jobs that allowed the parks to maintain their value within the City. "[M]en and women hired through these programs worked as playground supervisors, youth program coordinators, and maintenance workers, enabling at least some of the parks and playgrounds to remain open." During this period, small structures were incorporated into the parks with the federal works programs.



Figure 2-15. A portion of city plat plan from 1935 showing the park south of Elmwood Avenue and the ways that automobiles changed the park. Courtesy of Monroe County Library.

As automobiles became more accessible to the general public, parks became more accessible and more frequented; this meant that parking lots were a new essential programmatic element that needed to be included in park limits. The city plat map of 1935 shows a small parking area directly off of Elmwood at the southern entrance of the park. As the popularity of automobiles grew, parks became destinations for drives - a new way of experiencing

the parks. In turn, carriage roads were widened to accommodate greater volumes of faster moving traffic.

Other park development during this era included a refreshment stand adjacent to the new parking and a tennis court. To the north of Elmwood Avenue, the number of boathouses had been reduced to ten. Within the 'ball grounds' four tennis courts and two baseball diamonds were located.

Post-Development Era (1939 – current)

Transportation impacts are the only significant change that occurred in the park after World War II. These changes include the 1949 adjustment of South Plymouth Avenue to its modern alignment and the provision of utilities. (More recently South Plymouth Avenue was altered in its outlet connection to Brooks Avenue.) In 1977, Interstate Highway 390 was constructed just south of the barge canal, further subdividing the park. Unfortunately the same care was not given to the park as was the case with the introduction of the barge canal and the park remains substantially divided. While this intrusion did not directly alter the Brooks Landing portion of the park, it permanently changed the character of the park in general. Changes included the closing of park roads to traffic, essentially reducing them to paved trails. Large parking lots were introduced to the site at entrances. While the opening of the Interstate Highway 390 bridge over the Genesee River devastated the character of the park to the south, the intent and result was to relieve some of the traffic on Elmwood Avenue. Less traffic on Elmwood likely helped to reduce the perceived division that the street created, and also likely reduced the flow of traffic on Plymouth Ave.

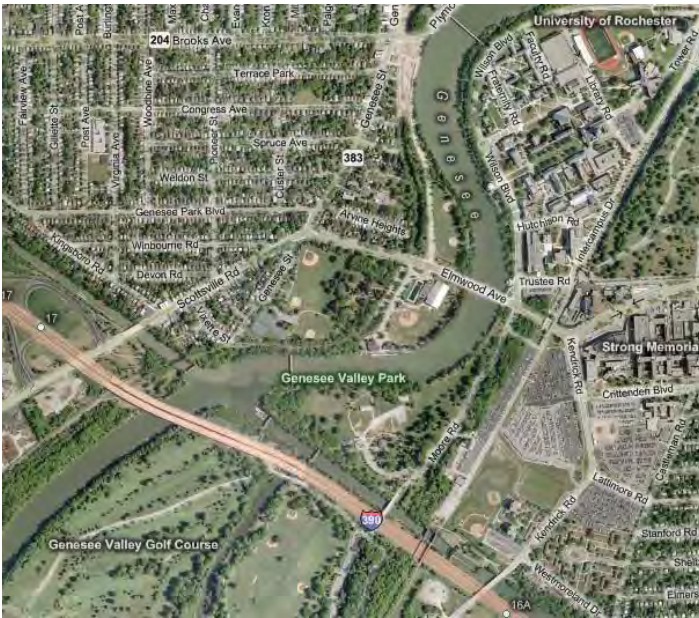


Figure 2-16. Aerial photograph showing Genesee Valley Park with the Erie Canal and Route 390 bisecting the park, May 2010. Courtesy of Bing Maps.

Recent changes to the northwestern portion of the park include the Brooks Landing Phase I development. The introduction of the hotel and its associated amenities required a taking of park land. The hotel sits at the intersection of Brooks Avenue and Genesee Street and impedes views to the river. In addition, the connection of South Plymouth Avenue across Brooks Avenue was severed so that South Plymouth now feeds directly into Brooks Avenue. The portion of South Plymouth which runs through the park from Elmwood Avenue technically has no outlet; however, an access agreement between the development and the City allows the road to empty into the hotel parking lot which connects to both South Plymouth and Genesee Street. The development includes a boat landing behind the hotel where boats can moor for short stays.

Section 3. Existing Conditions, 2010

Setting & Site Boundaries

The boundaries of the Brooks Landing Phase II project are similar to the extents of the northwest portion of Genesee Valley Park: the eastern border is the Genesee River; the western border is the 19th Ward neighborhood including Grandview Terrace, Arvine Park, Oak Hill Terrace, and Arvine Heights; to the south, the project extends across Elmwood Avenue to include the Genesee Valley Park Ice Arena; and, to the north, the project site is bordered by South Plymouth Avenue/Brooks Avenue.



Figure 3-1. Bird's-eye view of the Brooks Landing portion of Genesee Valley Park, 2010. Courtesy of Bing Maps.

One significant difference is that the northern most portion of the property has been privately developed and now is home to a four-storey hotel with affiliated parking. This development is intended to someday also have a community center, a condominium complex, and a multi-use building with restaurant and housing for University of Rochester students.



Figure 3-2. View of the new hotel constructed in Brooks Landing, facing east. The ramp of the pedestrian bridge can be seen to the far right of the photo; the park begins to the right. Courtesy of Bing Maps.

Spatial Organization

This portion of the park is organized so that the majority of the active recreation occurs in the center of the park with circulation wrapping the boundaries. Elmwood Avenue divides the park with active recreation elements on either side. Elmwood Avenue - a significant (four-lane) road - impedes easy access within the park.

South Plymouth Avenue further divides the park on the north-south axis; west of the roadway is the canal/railway path and to the east are the pedestrian paths and ballfields. In most instances, vegetation separates or borders activity areas.

Views & Vistas

Olmsted's design philosophy regarding views included three tenets: (1) screen from view any 'artificial' structure, (2) create continually shifting scenery to keep the visitor intrigued, and 3) use 'conceal and reveal' features to unify the park as a whole. In the design of this park, the Genesee River was considered the central feature.

A May 2, 1892 letter to the Park Commissioners from (from the firm) describes the intent of the scenic quality of the park. Olmsted discussed the differences between the western park divided by Elmwood Avenue: "[...] the views from the proposed parkway, from the State Dam to Elmwood Avenue Bridge, will be of a pleasant suburban

character, while south of the bridge they should be as absolutely rural as possible.” This note defines the vision and restates the recurring theme that structures should be screened from view so that the pastoral landscape is the predominant image.

Historically, the river’s edge was transparent; thus the visual connection from the park to the river was strong. Today, much of the vegetation along the river is thick with understory brush, even in wintertime. Views across the river are accessible in only a few places, but provide a broad view of the University of Rochester campus. The overlook, near the Elmwood Avenue Bridge, is one of the few places where visitors have a clear view across the river. Looking upstream (to the south), the east bank of the park is visible with its rolling turf, but only from south of the Elmwood Avenue Bridge.



Figure 3-3. Example of vegetation density along Genesee River at the northern end of Brooks Landing. Photo by CRJA.

When in the park, looking to the north, a twelve-storey senior living center intrudes on the park’s skyline. Looking south near Elmwood Avenue, the peaked roof of the Genesee Valley Park Ice Arena is just visible above the elevated street. Looking westward, the homes of the 19th Ward neighborhood, though elevated above the grade of the park and visible. The side or rear yards of many homes are visible, but mainly from the canal/railroad path. Parking areas at the new hotel at Brooks Landing and at the Genesee Valley Park Ice Arena are visible in both directions from the canal/rail bed. (For additional information, see the Visual Analysis Plan at Appendix F.)



Figure 3-4. View of Arvine Heights homes from the canal/railroad path. Photo by CRJA.

Topography & Drainage

Olmsted worked to create topography that looked naturalistic and he preferred gently rolling slopes that blended with the surrounding landscape.

Following the alignment of the Genesee River, the Brooks Landing portion of the park is segmented into three linear tiers. The upper most level of the park is the old canal and railroad bed which sits at a lower elevation than the residences to its west. The steepest of the grade changes occurs between the historic rail bed and South Plymouth Avenue where it cuts through the park. There is a smaller slope between the eastern edge of South Plymouth Avenue and the largest of the terraces in the park where the ball fields are located. The grades then drop off again to the river’s western bank.

In August of 1889 the firm wrote to C.C. Laney, the surveyor for the site who, apparently, did much of the site construction as well. This letter included instructions on the grading of the site as well as a description of the general aesthetics intended for the park. In the correspondence, the firm details the transition of the terraces on the site, specifically along roadways: “On level or nearly level ground the difference in grade between the natural surface and that of the drives and walks should be overcome by nearly level borders ten feet wide and slopes having long, varying, ogee-curved cross-sections, not steeper than then at one in ten.” The description continues: “[...] particular care should always be taken to join the new slope to the natural surface so gradually and gently that no one can tell where the junction has been made”.

Drainage appears to be a significant problem in some portions of the park. Puddling was observed in the infields of the ball fields on a day after storms and a large puddle was present on the west side of the road. (March 2010)



Figure 3-5. View from the ballfields into the residences along Grandview Terrace; drainage issues are evident in the foreground. Photo by CRJA, March 2010.

Vegetation

Consistent with Olmsted's vision for a pastoral landscape, the vegetation in Genesee Valley Park is predominantly large trees bordering and framing spaces within the park in a naturalistic manner. In the majority of the vegetated areas, understory has grown, obscuring many important views. Olmsted did use plantings to screen but, in this portion of the park, it was mainly a tool to screen the railroad tracks and boat houses from the park.

A significant grove of mature trees exists near apex of the turf area. - *more on vegetation after next site visit, including invasives, existing and health of veg* -

It appears that several of the Olmsted-era trees may still exist on site, along the canal/railroad bed, river's edge and the path that parallels the river. Many of these trees appear to still be in good health. However, a comprehensive arborist-led inventory should be completed to determine this with accuracy. Based on one planting list from the firm, original species in the park included Beech, Oaks, Birches, Honeylocust, Sweetgum, Linden, Magnolia, Maples, Sassafras, Cottonwood Hickory, Ash and

Catalpa.

Around the Elmwood Avenue Bridge the vegetation is young; nothing remains of Olmsted due to reconstruction of the existing bridge circa 1918. (For additional information, see the Clearing and Vegetation Control Plan, Appendix E.)



Figure 3-6. Some of the more mature trees on site. Photo by CRJA.

Circulation

Studying the plans of Olmsted's many and varied public parks, it is evident that the alignment of walkways and carriage drives, from circulation was meant to enhance the experience of the park. Visitors were intended to stroll on foot, or cruise in their carriages at a pace that would allow the beauty of the park to gradually unfold. Paths and drives meandered through meadows and wooded areas and around graceful topography. At that time park roads and walks were mainly gravel.

Pedestrian circulation routes are prevalent in the park. A bituminous concrete trail runs parallel to

the river to the east side and is considered part of the Genesee Riverway Trail, the Greenway Loop Trail, and the Canalway Trail. These trails connect under the Elmwood Avenue Bridge and continue along the river. This trail continues further north behind the new hotel and across the University of Rochester pedestrian bridge. The path varies from 9 feet to 14 feet wide. The alignment no longer has the graceful curves of an Olmsted pathway but, rather, cuts awkwardly along the riverbank.

In addition, concrete sidewalks line both sides of South Plymouth Avenue. These walks are 5 feet wide and are made of concrete. The sidewalk on the river side is in fairly good condition. The sidewalk on the west side of the road is in poor condition and doesn't seem to serve a purpose, as it does not provide access to any park element that the walk on the east side does.

On the southern edge, a bituminous trail connects the river's edge to the sidewalk of Elmwood Avenue; it is paralleled by a pedestrian desire line - prevalent enough to show up on aerial photographs - on angle from Elmwood Avenue bridge to the sidewalk along South Plymouth Avenue.



Figure 3-7. The historic canal/railroad path with the residences to the left and park to the right. Photo by CRJA.

The path of the former Genesee Valley Canal and the Genesee Valley Canal Railroad Company bed is still evident to the west of South Plymouth Avenue. This bed currently has a grass surface and is widely used by neighbors as a walking path.

Desire line connect to this path from the adjacent neighborhoods.



Figure 3-8. South Plymouth Road within the park, facing south. Photo by CRJA.

Vehicular circulation is predominantly kept to South Plymouth Avenue. While South Plymouth used to cut directly through the park, the recent hotel development has changed the circulation pattern; the road now connects into the parking lot of the hotel. Despite a steep incline at the end of the road, traffic moves very quickly. The road is thirty-four (34) feet wide in some places and no longer has the character of the parkway that Olmsted envisioned. South of Elmwood Avenue the park entrance is in a jug-handle form with one-way traffic that allows the park entrances to align across Elmwood Avenue.

Elmwood Avenue is a high volume four-lane roadway, recently lighted at the park entrances. Just over the river, is a signalized main entrance to University of Rochester, so traffic volumes on Elmwood are high and fast moving.

The intersection of Elmwood Avenue/South Plymouth Avenue is signalized with only one crosswalk for crossing Elmwood. With quick moving traffic, it is difficult for first visit visitors to see the entrance to this portion of the park.

A gravel maintenance road connects the ballfields to the sidewalk on South Plymouth Avenue. The drive is approximately 10 feet wide and serves no function to park visitors. Vehicle tracks that appear to be from maintenance vehicles serving the ball fields can

be seen in aerial photographs. The tracks are doing significant damage to the turf.

No parking exists within the northern portion of the site but, when the ballfields are active, visitors park along both sides of the South Plymouth Avenue. A large lot exists on the southern portion of the site, located off the jug-handle entrance. This parking mainly feeds the ice rink, swimming pool and baseball fields.

Water Features

The path of the Genesee River appears to have altered little in the century since the Olmsteds began their construction of the park. What has changed significantly is the water level due to the relocation and confluence of the Erie Canal. However, as this occurred while the Olmsted Brothers were still involved in the project, they were able to control the resulting impacts.

Structures

The Genesee Valley Sports Complex is located at 131 Elmwood Avenue where the northern portion of the track was once located. The complex includes an Olympic sized swimming pool (outdoor) and an ice arena. The parking in this part of the park has been increased substantially since 1935. Two softball fields, both oriented to the southwest, are located to the north of Elmwood Avenue.

Two softball diamonds are located in the Brooks Landing portion of the park. The ballfields have relatively new backstops and are well used. They are located in the same general location as the originals, but have a different orientation, and in fact, is the most undesirable orientation for ballfields; where home plate should be facing north-northeast, they both face toward the southwest, making it difficult for batters to see the ball during sunset hours.

An overlook exists on the river's edge just north of the Elmwood Avenue Bridge. The overlook is constructed of wood decking with two benches. The bituminous concrete path does not meet the overlook and requires a step; thus, that the overlook does not meet accessibility requirements. The decking is made of wood lumber now in a state of disrepair; it does not appear safe.



Figure 3-10. The existing overlook in the park. Photo by CRJA.



Figure 3-9. Bird's-eye view of Genesee Valley Park south of Elmwood Avenue and west of the river showing the Genesee Valley Sports Complex. Courtesy of Bing Maps.

Small-Scale Features

A WWII Memorial exists at the intersection of South Plymouth Avenue and Elmwood Street. The memorial is a classical granite monument and is planted seasonally.



Figure 3-11. World War II Memorial at the Elmwood Avenue entrance. Photo by FRA.

The Elmwood Avenue Bridge underpass has a concrete parapet which allows access around the bridge abutment. In the daytime the underpass feels safe; it is lighted for nighttime access. The bridge abutment on the north side of the bridge is in close proximity to a light pole; the clearance feels narrow and sight lines are poor.

Behind the new hotel, there is a remnant piece of wall from the Old State Dam. The wall has been rehabilitated with concrete and, where it abuts the paved trail, has a guardrail.



Figure 3-12. Elmwood Avenue bridge underpass. Photo by CRJA.

With the development of phase I of Brooks Landing and the Staybridge Suites hotel, a boat landing was constructed. The boat landing is open to the public for recreational boaters.



Figure 3-13. Brooks Landing boat docks. Photo by CRJA.

Signage in this part of the park is very limited. A variety of sign types exist marking the trails (the path along the river's edge). There is traffic signage along South Plymouth Avenue and regulatory signage at the Brooks Landing boat dock. No interpretive signage educating the visitors about park's history, the feeder canal or rail bed exists.

There are a few benches scattered around the site, but these appear to be very old and in poor condition. They are modern styles which do not enhance the Olmsted character.



Figure 3-14. Existing benches in the park. Photo by CRJA.

Section 4.

Analysis & Evaluation

Significance

After the public urban squares and Mount Hope Cemetery - Rochester's rural cemetery modeled after Mount Auburn, Seneca and Genesee Valley Parks were the first significant parks established in the city of Rochester. The National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form for the Municipal Park System of Rochester stated that Genesee Valley Park "encompassed gently rolling terrain along the Genesee River that epitomized Olmsted's ideal pastoral landscape".

Cultural landscapes are defined as "significant" based on the National Register's criteria for evaluation. These include: "(a) landscapes that are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or (b) that are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or (c) that embody distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or (d) that have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history".

Genesee Valley Park fits into two of these categories: (b) association with Frederick Law Olmsted and the Olmsted Brothers firm and (c) the park, as a whole, is a premier example of Olmsted's pastoral landscape park. In addition, the development of the park from its inception circa 1888 through the mid-to-late 20th Century, mirrors the evolution of park design in America through that time period.

Frederick Law Olmsted, the undisputed father of American landscape architecture, was the lead designer of Genesee Valley Park. When he retired in 1903, his sons, John C. and Frederick, Jr., took leadership of the Boston-based firm and eventually became nearly as renowned as their father. The fact that Genesee Valley Park was designed by both generations of Olmsteds, lends esteem to the park's

historical significance.

The Olmsted anthology *Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr.: Founder of Landscape Architecture in America* includes a quote attributed to Olmsted describing his philosophy in the design of large scale parks:

"It was, first of all, required that such parts of the site as were available and necessary to the purpose should be assigned to the occupation of elements which would compose a wood-side, screening incongruous objects without the park as much as possible from the view of observers within it. Secondly, of the remaining ground, it was required to assign as much as was available to the occupation of elements which would compose tranquil, open, pastoral scenes. Thirdly, it was required to assign all of the yet remaining ground to elements which would tend to form passages of scenery contrasting in depth of obscurity and picturesque character of detail with the softness and simplicity of the open landscape."

Genesee Valley Park articulated many of these design characteristics: development of shifting, meticulously crafted views and vistas; graceful grading of topography so as not to require much exertion by visitors (either mental or physical) with a gentle line of curves; separation of incongruent activities, especially transportation routes; the screening of architecture and other park elements so as to appear to be a part of the larger park, not features in their own right; and, the use of native plants instead of exotics with naturalistic planting plans. In terms of spatial organization, the more active elements of a park were to be kept to the periphery of the park or, more preferably, kept to small urban parks located throughout the city, as the larger more rural parks were meant to counteract urban life of the turn of the 19th Century and be restorative to mind and body. The Brooks Landing portion of Genesee Valley Park is that periphery portion of the park, separated by the Genesee River, where the active elements were located away from the rest of the more passive-oriented park.

While John C. Olmsted, actually Olmsted Senior's step-son, managed the firm, it was reported that he was "reflective of the aesthetic tenants of

his stepfather, yet responsive to the new social, economic, and political demands of twentieth-century cities". Therefore, the park landscape under his care had the same graceful, arching lines of the pastoral landscape with the features of a more active park design.

Genesee Valley Park also serves as an example of the country's park development from post-Civil War through the 21st Century. Over the decades, the park's design went through phases of being a pastoral park with curvilinear trails and meadows, a reformation era park when the focus was on using parks to neutralize the detrimental impacts that city living had on health, recreation and, lastly, a recreation-oriented park which benefitted from the public works programs enacted by Franklin D. Roosevelt. In the years after World War II, the parks in Rochester, as in many cities, rarely benefitted from an abundance of funding and were essentially maintained in their current states.

Character-Defining Features

The 2003 Cultural Resources Report for the Brooks Landing Urban Renewal Development classified the following as character-defining features (only those that occur within the current project area have been included herein): the Genesee River; South Plymouth Avenue; the path of the Genesee Valley Canal and Railroad; the Old State Dam and the feeder canal; the terraced topography of the site; the vegetation and turf areas; and, the wall segment that was a part of the Old State Dam. In addition to these features, the path that runs parallel to the river on the western riverbank and the baseball fields should be considered a character-defining feature of this portion of the park as it is a feature that has always been a part of the Olmsted plans.

Historic Integrity

The *Secretary of the Interior's Standards* define "integrity" as "the authenticity of a property's historic identity, evinced by the survival of physical characteristics that existed during the property's historic or prehistoric period." This section discusses the historic integrity of the park's character-defining

features.

Genesee River

The proximity to the Genesee River is the primary reason why this location was selected for the park. While the river continues to flow much as it has for centuries, views and access to the river from the park has decreased significantly.



Figure 4-1. The Genesee River and Genesee Valley Park from the west bank. Photo by CRJA.

South Plymouth Avenue

This roadway no longer follows its original route and has lost the character of the graceful curves. The road no longer connects to South Plymouth Avenue north of Brooks Avenue but ends in the parking lot of the new hotel. The width of the roadway, up to 34 feet, is grossly out of scale to qualify as a parkway.

Genesee Valley Canal and Railroad Path

The path of the canal and railroad is still visible and continues to be a relevant marker of the site's history. Today this serves as a walking path. While Olmsted once buffered the rail bed with tree plantings, the rail bed no longer has a conflicting use with the rest of the park.

Topography

Topography, listed in the 2003 Cultural Resources Report as the terraced feel of the park, has existed since the park's inception and subtly defines the residences from canal/railroad path from roadway from active recreation from river bank. The park's topography, in this area, remains similar to the

original grading.

Olmsted Vegetation and Turf Areas

Several large trees exist on site that likely were part of the Olmsted-era planting and, therefore, contribute to the significance of the site. The existing planting concept is true to an Olmsted planting only in limiting areas; there, a naturalistic feel is maintained. Other areas of the site planted with ornamental or specimen plantings, such as along the embankment leading down from Elmwood Avenue, do not contribute to the pastoral landscape.



Figure 4-2. The Crabapple plantings along the Elmwood Avenue slope do not fit into Olmsted's naturalistic planting scheme. Photo by CRJA.

Old State Dam Wall

Remnants of the wall remain and have been integrated into the Riverwalk project completed by the City. These wall segments lend integrity to the site as the Old State Dam wasn't removed until some time after 1918.

River's Edge Path

This pathway on the western edge of the park follows the original layout closely, although materials have changed.

Baseball Diamonds

Ballfields have always been a feature in this portion of the park, despite the fact that they currently have a different orientation and now likely require a different level of support structures (backstop, dugout fencing, etc.). Since the ballfields have been a feature of the park since its earliest design, they are contributing features to the historic landscape.



Figure 4-3. Remnant of the Old State dam wall built into the Riverwalk retaining wall behind the new hotel. Photo by CRJA.

Missing Features

None of the following features were in existence when the 2003 Cultural Resources Report was completed.

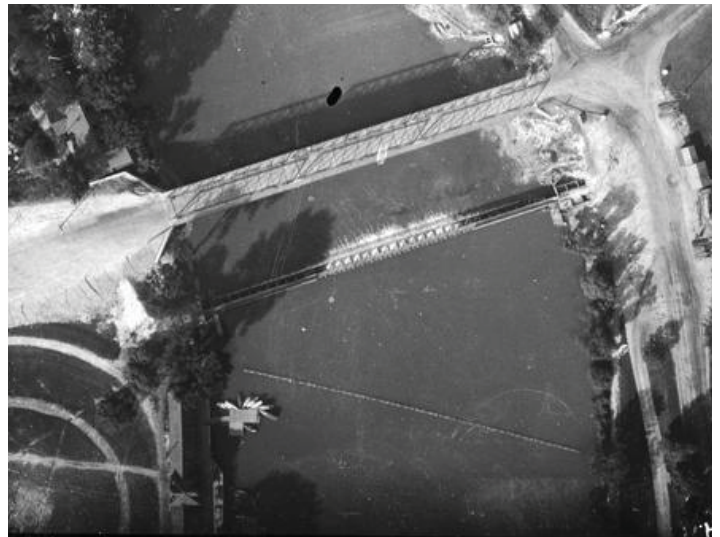


Figure 4-4. This 1918 aerial shows the old Elmwood Avenue bridge, the temporary coffer dam and to the lower left, the Durand boathouse. Photo courtesy of the Rochester Municipal Archives.

- Old State Dam, Durand Boathouse, Athletic Building and Refectory: Due to a lack of plans or photographic evidence between 1926 and the 1980s, we cannot be certain when these structures were removed. We do know that they were present at least until 1926 and survived repeated flooding and the construction of the new Elmwood Avenue Bridge circa 1918. As

mentioned above, the Old State dam was removed sometime after 1918.



Figure 4-5. The athletic building and refectory in 1915. Courtesy of the Rochester Museum & Science Center.

- Running Track: While early plans and studies (circa 1890) by the Olmsted firm showed the track being located north of Elmwood Avenue Bridge, there is no evidence that the track was ever constructed here. Rather, plans from 1892 show the track installed to the south of Elmwood Avenue and photos from track meets in 1913 show the track adjacent to the refectory and the Durand Boathouse, both of which were located to the south. The most recent photo of the early track is from 1918, although we see the 1926 photos of visitors skating in the park, which typically occurred above the track's flooded and frozen surface. A photo from 1980 suggests that the track may have been there as recently as 1980, before the ice rink was constructed.

While these features were once significant elements in the design of the park, their loss does not significantly detract from the historic landscape. The elements have been replaced by similar, more modern versions of their historic predecessors. The elements, for the most part, are dedicated to active recreation, thereby being consistent with the original design intent.



Figures 4-6. Photo from 1914 track meet at Genesee Valley Park. Courtesy of the Rochester Museum & Science Center.



Figures 4-7. Photo from 1980 shows a runner on a cinder track with the University of Rochester in the background, suggesting this is the same location as Olmsted's running track. Courtesy of the Rochester City Hall photo collection.

Section 5. Treatment Recommendations

Treatment Methodology & Alternatives

The *Secretary of the Interior's Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes* (hereafter: "the *Guidelines*") defines the four basic methods for landscape preservation. These are: preservation, rehabilitation, restoration and reconstruction. These methods of preservation are defined in the *Guidelines* as such:

Preservation is "defined as the act or process of applying measures necessary to sustain the existing form, integrity, and materials of an historic property. Work, including preliminary measures to protect and stabilize the property, generally focuses upon the on-going maintenance and repair of historic materials and features rather than extensive replacement and new construction. New exterior additions are not within the scope of this treatment; however, the limited and sensitive upgrading of mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems and other code-required work to make properties functional is appropriate within a preservation project."

Rehabilitation is "defined as the act or process of making possible a compatible use for a property through repair, alterations, and additions while preserving those portions or features which convey its historical, cultural, or architectural values."

Restoration is "defined as the act or process of accurately depicting the form, features, and character of a property as it appeared at a particular period of time by means of the removal of features from other periods in its history and reconstruction of missing features from the restoration period. The limited and sensitive upgrading of mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems and other code-required work to make properties functional is appropriate within a restoration project."

Reconstruction is "defined as the act or process

of depicting, by means of new construction, the form, features, and detailing of a non-surviving site, landscape, building, structure, or object for the purpose of replicating its appearance at a specific period of time and in its historic location."

Recommended Treatment

Based on the integrity of the Olmsted landscape within the Brooks Landing portion of Genesee Valley Park, the appropriate method for treatment is *rehabilitation*.

The 2003 Cultural Resources Report also recommended rehabilitation for the features of this portion of the park.

The *Guidelines* define ten recommendations that should be used to guide rehabilitation within a cultural landscape. They are as follows:

1. A property will be used as it was historically or be given a new use that requires minimal change to its distinctive materials, features, spaces, and spatial relationships.
2. The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces, and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.
3. Each property will be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historic development, such as adding conjectural features or elements from other historic properties, will not be undertaken.
4. Changes to a property that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.
5. Distinctive materials, features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property will be preserved.
6. Deteriorated historic features will be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature will match the old in design, color, texture, and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features will be substantiated by documentary and physical

evidence.

7. Chemical or physical treatments, if appropriate, will be undertaken using the gentlest means possible. Treatments that cause damage to historic materials will not be used.
8. Archaeological resources will be protected and preserved in place. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures will be undertaken.
9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work will be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.
10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction will be undertaken in such a manner that, if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

Treatment Goals

“The principles of [Olmsted’s] designs according to Dr. Charles Beveridge, a historian and Olmsted scholar, are – A liberal use of plantings, the creation of natural scenery and topography, provision of adequate drainage, subordination of all individual designs to the overall design, the separation of styles and uses that may conflict, the creation of plantings with indefinite boundaries that give an illustration of greater size, designing for effect: the soothing pastoral design with scattered trees and water and the picturesque design with heavy plantings of shrubs on rugged landscape.”

The rehabilitation of Genesee Valley Park should reinterpret the nature of the pastoral landscape stated above while incorporating modern needs into the park.

The treatment goals of the 2003 Cultural Resources Report which affect the current site are as follows:

- “Olmsted designed a path at this end of the park to loop back to the south. The north end of the park should have a path that loops back

to the south to Elmwood Avenue (perhaps in the footprint of the Genesee Valley Canal.”

- “[I]f a path is developed on the canal footprint, it is recommended that feeder trails connect to the residential streets to provide local pedestrian access to the park (it is recommended that such a path connection be created from Grandview Terrace per original park plans)”.

Neither of these recommendations has been incorporated to date.

Current recommendations include the following:

Genesee River

Stronger connections should be made to connect park visitors to the river. These connections should include both visual and physical connections.

- The existing overlook (not a contributing feature) should be removed and a new overlook with Olmstedian detailing should be incorporated.
- A strategic clearing plan should be developed along the bank of the Genesee River so that views are obvious and the visitor is constantly aware of the river’s presence and its significance to the park and the City.

South Plymouth Avenue

South Plymouth Avenue should be rehabilitated so that it embodies the feel of a park road in a designed pastoral landscape.

- Realign South Plymouth Avenue so that it has a gently curving alignment, similar to its original layout.
- Alter the cross-section of South Plymouth Avenue to reduce the speed of traffic on the road. Options include, but are not limited to, narrowing the road, including traffic calming methods, and/or changing pavement styles.
- Alter the cross-section of South Plymouth Avenue to give it the feel of a parkway, rather than a through-road. Options include, but are not limited to, installing a planted island, allowing

on-street parking, and/or creating bicycle lanes.

Genesee Valley Canal and Railroad Path

This path should be interpreted so that visitors to the park are aware of the history of the alignment.

- Provide a visual connection between the park and the historic canal/rail bed so that they feel as though they are part of an integrated park plan.

Olmsted Vegetation and Turf Areas

Plantings of a strictly ornamental nature should be eliminated from the park, except at specific moments where it is appropriate, such as at the World War II memorial.

- Preserve and protect any Olmsted-era trees within the park.
- Reintroduce Olmsted's ideal of the pastoral landscape to the park by framing views, screening structures, and removing trees that do not fit into the pastoral planting scheme (i.e. ornamental trees).
- Remove any hazards caused by trees in order to protect the users of the park.
- Reinforce the connection between the Genesee River and the park by opening views and reducing understory vegetation which now screens views of the river both in and out of the park.
- Remove any invasive plant material, as designated by the State of New York.

Clearing & Vegetation Control Plan: A plan has been developed to address the issues addressed herein with specific treatment methods. See Appendix B.

River's Edge Path

The river's edge path is a contributing feature which should be resurfaced to meet modern codes and regulations. This path is considered to be part of the Genesee Riverway Trail, the Greenway Loop Trail, and the Canalway Trail.

- Realign the path so that it has a gently curving

alignment, similar to its original layout.

- The material and width of the path should be studied to best suit current uses while maintaining the feel and image of a pastoral landscape.
- The path should be designed to meet accessibility codes, both federal and state level, to the greatest extent possible.

Baseball Diamonds

The ballfields contribute to the significance of the site in that they were always intended to be in the park in their current location.

- The ballfields should be re-oriented for optimal solar orientation, providing safety for players.

Views and Vistas

Olmsted's key factors in crafting views include the following: (1) screen from view any "artificial" structure or building, (2) create continually shifting "scenery" so that the park visitor is never visually bored, and (3) exploit the river as the "central and unifying factor" of the park. These factors should be reintroduced to the park.

- Reestablish Olmsted's design principles in crafting views (as defined above).
- Create visual cues to attract visitors to the park from the surrounding community.
- Define visual connections between park features.

Visual connections should be made from the river into the park, and vice versa; from the historic canal/rail bed into the park; and, enhance the visual connection into the park from surrounding neighborhoods and public spaces. Olmsted once sought to increase plantings on the eastern edge of the rail bed to screen the railway from view when inside the park. However, this should no longer be a goal in the park redevelopment; since the railway no longer exists, there are no artificial features here which interfere in the pastoral setting.

Visual Analysis Plan: A plan has been developed to address the issues discussed herein with specific treatment methods. See Appendix C.

Appendix A.

Brooks Landing Landscape Timeline for Genesee Valley Park

- 1825:** - Erie Canal opens in its entirety; Rochester population boom ensues
- 1835-1862:** - Current Elmwood Avenue Bridge area used as wintering spot for riverboats
- 1850s:** - By this time 5 hotels exist in the northern portion of what becomes Genesee Valley Park
- 1875:** - Genesee Valley Canal flows along the west side of the Genesee River where Brooks Landing is located
 - Plymouth Road ends at Genesee Street to north of river and canal
- 1882:** - Genesee Valley Canal Railroad Co., which later becomes the Pennsylvania RR Company, lays tracks on bed of old Genesee Valley Canal
- 1887:** - Rochester Common Council accepts the 19.63 acre land donation from nurserymen Ellswanger & Barry as the city's first public park lands
- 1888:** - City of Rochester establishes the Parks Commission
 - Based on the work completed for the City of Buffalo, Rochester hires Frederick Law Olmsted and Company, America's premier Landscape Architect for 3 years of design services for \$5,000
 - Rochester Parks Commission purchases two properties for parks; they eventually become GVP and Seneca Park (South Park and North Park, respectively)
 - Olmsted selected South Park site for access to river for recreation opportunity and scenic beauty
 - Elmwood Avenue Bridge constructed to cross river
 - Frederick Law Olmsted directs the planting of 10,500 shrubs and 70,000 trees in GVP
 - South Park officially opens to the public
- 1889:** - Work begins on improvements to South Park
 - Meadows were prepared for seeding and the picnic grove was thinned
 - Land along Erie Railroad is prepared for plantation planting
 - 14,000 linear feet of roadways graded
 - 10,500 shrubs planted and 10,000 willows planted
- 1890:** - 493 deciduous trees planted and 1820 evergreen trees planted in April
 - In the Fall 152 deciduous trees and shrubs planted
 - South Park land holdings increase to 269.17 acres
 - Spring and fall: 391 trees planted, some to conceal the railroad, and unseeded areas were seeded for erosion control
 - School children planted trees for Arbor Day
 - Baseball field laid out north of Elmwood Ave
- 1891:** - Park renamed Genesee Valley Park (GVP) from South Park
 - Plymouth trolley line enters the park located between canal bed and South Plymouth Avenue
 - "Western NY & PA RR run weekend and holiday excursion to the park" (Brooks Landing Urban Renewal District Cultural Resources Report, 2003)
 - "Golf course is built (east side) baseball fields are laid out and farm building is moved to the river bank and converted into a boathouse" (Brooks Landing Urban Renewal District Cultural Resources Report, 2003)
 - Farmhouse becomes converted as the "Durand Boathouse"
 - Baseball field constructed on the west bank near the entrance to the park
 - Permission given to Rochester Athletic Club and other clubs to construct boathouses
- 1892:** - 10,000 trees and shrubs bought for planting on the west side and planted in nursery rows
 - Rochester Athletic Club built a club house on west bank

- Canoe Club moved from entrance on west bank to just north of Elwood Ave and sold to club
- Fields on west side graded and 1/3-mile track laid out and surrounded by picket fence, spread with cinders and gravel
- 50 seats placed in park
- Rochester Railway Company extended Plymouth Ave trolley line to entrance of park, as far south as Elmwood Ave
- Total park expanded to 572.53 acres

1893:

- Nursery (on east side) thinned and planted on west side to hide RR tracks
- Well located on athletic grounds (4 others on site)
- Rochester Railways Co. laid tracks through park from state dam south to along Western New York & Pennsylvania Railroad which results in an increase in park visitors
- Great demand for ballfields, athletic grounds, and picnic groves
- Refectory opens

1894:

- Upper floor of athletic building used as 'shelter' and 'refectory' and lower for changing and bathing for men using track
- Right to sell refreshments in athletic building granted by the Park Commissioners
- "The park road extending from south end of Plymouth [A]venue to Elmwood [A]venue, was covered with brick and stone taken from the old Court House."
(The Public Parks of the City of Rochester, New York, 1904)
- Additional trees planted on west side to buffer railroad tracks
- Band concerts start on the east side of the park
- Refectory expands snack bar
- Second baseball diamonds and athletic building constructed

1895:

- Elevation changes on bicycle track on athletic grounds, and new cinders and clay
- 1/4-mile running track placed inside the 1/3-mile track for men
- Plumbing installed in athletic building

1896:

- Refectory building gets an addition with "women's room" for women and children
- Bicycle path built on west side of river 1-1/2 miles long connected entrance to south end of park
- Small brick house built to house water pump

1897:

- Cinder bike path (connected with Scottsville path) was given additional material and rolled

1898:

- Tree planting and moving

1899:

- Repairs to bicycle paths
- Trees removed from river banks and many in forest removed
- Bicycle path added from athletic building to Rochester Athletic Building
- Police presence instituted in parks
- Two tennis courts added to park
- "A tree-lined, two-lane parkway is proposed to circle the city. Genesee Park Boulevard is the only section actually built before the law was set aside." (Vintage Views of Rochester)

1900:

- By this time 'River Road' has been renamed 'Plymouth Road'
- Water carnivals have started
- Steps at athletic building repaired and new lockers installed
- Sprinklers installed in GVP
- Durand Manufacturing Co. is given lease to maintain livery at GVP; building relocated 200 feet south of Elmwood Avenue on west side of bridge

1901:

- "Subway" was built under RR tracks on east entrance of park

1902:

- Additional plantings installed
- Three new boathouses built on west bank
- Trees planted to hide the boathouses

- YMCA given permission to build a boathouse and athletic building 300 feet south of Rochester Athletic Club building
- 1904:** - Swimming pool opened – 50 x 100 cement structure
- 1905:** - Decision made to re-route Erie Canal out of city and through GVP
- Multiple boathouses along west bank of river
- Ice rink for skating installed in GVP
- 1906:** - GVP increases in size to 435.08 acres
- 1908:** - Athletic building constructed by this time
- Baker Farm property donates land; park increases by 120 acres to 550 total acres
- 1910:** - By this time City bounds extended to include park extents
- Flooding damages park features
- Court Street Dam built by New York State
- Level of river raised by 12 feet when joined with canal
- Land purchase increases park size to 635 acres
- 1913:** - Flood damages park features
- Track meets begin in earnest
- Stands erected for spectators to watch track meets
- 1914:** - Bandstand constructed by this time
- 1915:** - Athletic building has been moved to a new location with secondary building
- 1916:** - Flood (Durand boathouse still in place)
- 1917:** - Construction of new canal route underway
- 1918:** - 3 baseball fields laid out with one track layout and straight away
- Temporary Elmwood Dam in place (construction dam to allow workers in river bed while constructed Court Street Dam)
- Canal fully cut through park
- Tennis courts (4) on east side of river constructed
- Aerial shows no Durand boathouse but by several smaller boathouses
- 1919:** - Re-routing of Erie Canal divides park
- Flood occurs damaging park features
- 1920s:** - New pedestrian bridge construction – Olmsted Brothers' design
- Flood occurs damaging park features
- 1930s:** - "Private parcels of land (the former hotel sites) just south of the Brooks/South Plymouth intersection become dedicated parkland." (Brooks Landing Urban Renewal District Cultural Resources Report)
- 1935:** - Pennsylvania Railroad still running through GVP
- Plan kept active recreation on west bank, included baseball, tennis and swimming facilities
- 1949:** - "South Plymouth Avenue (as it exists today) is realigned and improved with utilities" (Brooks Landing Urban Renewal District Cultural Resources Report)
- 1977:** - Interstate Highway 390 is constructed and divides park. Highway bridge is located just south of the relocated barge canal
- Park roads were closed and peripheral parking created; parkways became pedestrian routes
- Trail network connected to Erie Canal Heritage Trail when completed
- 1980:** - Track still on site; cinder and stone
- 1981:** - "'Fly-over' bridge through GVP completed; completes Outer Loop. Relieves traffic pressure on Elmwood Avenue" (Brooks Landing Urban Renewal District Cultural Resources Report)
- 2003:** - Brooks Landing Urban Renewal District Cultural Resources report completed
- 2008:** - Development of Phase I of Brooks Landing Urban Renewal project completed