

# **EXPANDING RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES:**

*A. THE IRONBOUND COMMUNITY RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE PLAN*

*B. Phase I Report: Analysis and Recommendations*

**Prepared For**

**The Ironbound Community Corporation, the Community Planning Steering Committee, and all those in the Ironbound concerned about the community's recreation opportunities and health.**

**Prepared By**

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**May, 2002**

## **PREFACE & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The Ironbound Community Recreation and Open Space Plan is an initiative that began at the community level with individuals deeply concerned about the lack of recreational opportunities for residents of the Ironbound. Spurred by the community, the Ironbound Community Corporation (ICC) solicited funds from foundations to analyze the current situation and prepare recommendations and a plan of action for the future. With funding in place, ICC contracted with Wallace, Roberts, & Todd, Landscape Architects, to prepare a concept plan for enhanced open space and recreation in the Ironbound.

Particular thanks go to our funders, The Schumann Fund and The Fund for New Jersey, for their generous support, and to the excellent, dedicated staff of Wallace, Roberts & Todd, particularly Mami Hara and Ignacio Bunster-Ossa, who have been a pleasure to work with.

Special thanks goes to three people who helped comprise our in-house team, provided their expertise, time, and energy as if they lived in the Ironbound, and without whom this project would not have been possible:

- **Elizabeth Johnson**, recreation specialist, formerly of the John S. Watson Institute for Public Policy and now Chief Operating Officer of Isles, Inc in Trenton. Liz was instrumental in helping to get this initiative off the ground and in the development of the strategic thinking behind the plan.
- **Alan Mallach**, professional planner, formerly the Director of Housing and Economic Development for the City of Trenton and now a planning consultant. Alan has been Ironbound's planning guru, always helping us to take our community visions one step further and then translating them into the technically appropriate language and framework.
- **Martha Lamar**, professional planner and consultant. Beyond contributing her expertise on a daily basis, Martha has provided the project management that has kept the project on its ever-urgent timeline. Her coordination, guidance, and writing skills are largely responsible for our achieving our final product, Phase I Report on the Ironbound Community Recreation and Open Space Plan..

Members of the Ironbound Planning Steering Committee and the Open Space Advisory Committee, listed below, generously contributed their talents and valuable time to this project. The Steering Committee, created prior to our funding, has worked not only on the Ironbound Community Master Plan and this Recreation and Open Space initiative, but also on the community's organizing efforts to protect itself from development proposals that have threatened the little land available for new schools and parks. Large numbers of community people attended recreation forums and responded to surveys to help define the problems, needs, and priorities for recreation in the community, making important contributions to this report. We offer our deepest thanks to all those involved.

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\* Organizations are mentioned for identification purposes only.

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# **EXPANDING RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES: THE IRONBOUND COMMUNITY RECREATION & OPEN SPACE PLAN**

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **Introduction:**

Adequate green open space and recreation facilities are major factors in assuring a community is a vital and healthy place to live. Unfortunately, the Ironbound community in Newark is seriously deprived of both, with less than 25 acres of usable parkland for a population of over 50,000 (0.5 acres per 1,000 residents). As the population continues to grow substantially each year, the existing city parks continue to decline, some to the point of abandonment, and no new parks or open spaces have been added for decades. Recreational opportunities are shrinking, and the social and health costs to the community are profound. In seeking ways to improve these conditions, the community has raised funds and is working to develop the Ironbound Community Recreation and Open Space Plan. The first phase of the Plan described here, comprising analysis and recommendations, is the groundwork for building the public and private partnerships and the long-term implementation strategies needed to create a better, healthier future for the Ironbound.

### **Principles:**

To guide the development of this preliminary effort, the community established the following fundamental principles:

- Reasonable access to sufficient, dedicated parkland and a wide variety of recreational activities must be assured to residents of all ages throughout the community; and
- Children growing up in the Ironbound must have sufficient opportunities for physical activities upon uncontaminated recreation sites to allow for their healthy development.

While these are modest principles, almost taken for granted in many communities, their realization in this community will require significant collaborative effort and commitment.

### **Recommendations:**

The community's primary strategies center upon acquisition and development of key sites, obtaining maximum benefit from the existing parks through improved facilities, programming, security, and maintenance, and upon enhancement of the streetscape network. Key recommendations include: (1) development of the entire Passaic River waterfront as a park, from Raymond Boulevard to the River and from Penn Station to Chapel Street; (2) creation of a network of well-planted pedestrian corridors linking parks, playgrounds, and other amenities and assuring safe and pleasant walking in the community; (3) acquisition of additional sites for parks and playgrounds particularly in under-served areas; (4) maximizing the recreational elements of proposed new schools; and (5) remediation, re-construction, and improvements to the Ironbound Recreation Center, Hayes Pool Park, and other city parks.

If all the recommendations for parkland acquisition and remediation were achieved, about 60-70 new acres would be added, 34 of them on the waterfront, creating a total of 104-114 acres of parkland in Ironbound. While this is still only a fraction of recommended park standards, it would represent a major improvement for Ironbound residents. The community looks forward to working with all interested parties to achieve its vision of adequate, accessible, and safe parks.

# **EXPANDING RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES: IRONBOUND COMMUNITY RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE PLAN**

## **Phase I Report: Analysis and Recommendations**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Over the past three years members of the Ironbound community have been working together on two major neighborhood planning initiatives: the Ironbound Community Master Plan and the Ironbound Recreation and Open Space Plan. Both efforts seek to prevent the ongoing erosion of the quality of life in the community caused by overdevelopment, inadequate and deteriorating community facilities, and environmental pollution. The Community Master Plan sets direction and standards for future development in the Ironbound, designed to preserve and protect the unique character of the community with its low-scale, pedestrian oriented residential areas and thriving commercial streets. The Recreation and Open Space Plan analyzes the serious deficiencies in recreational opportunities for Ironbound residents and recommends strategies to improve conditions. The essential feature of the Open Space Plan is a system of parks and playgrounds connected by a network of green, pedestrian corridors. Its centerpiece is an extended new park along the Passaic waterfront offering a variety of opportunities for active and passive recreation and educational and cultural activities. The following report is divided into four sections: (1) Background, Principles and Strategies; (2) Community Recreation Needs; (3) Key Recommendations of the Plan; and (4) Implementation Priorities.

### **1. BACKGROUND, PRINCIPLES, AND STRATEGIES**

The Ironbound is one of the most under-served communities in the country in terms of the amount and quality of open space available to its residents. An old industrial neighborhood, Ironbound grew without adequate reservation of open space, and the recreation needs of the community's 50,000+ residents have now so far outgrown existing supply that the community lags abysmally behind accepted open space standards. The situation steadily worsens as the population continues to expand, existing parks deteriorate, some to the point of abandonment, and opportunities for new parks diminish as heavy development pressures consume remaining available sites. The environmental injustice borne by the community is further exacerbated by the well-documented, extremely high levels of pollution throughout the neighborhood.

The social, health and safety costs of these environmental inequities to the community are profound. The impacts to the community's health in terms of asthma, obesity and children's growth rates have been documented in studies conducted by Cornell University, Rutgers University and the Ironbound Community Corporation. Disharmony over the inadequate and sometimes questionably managed recreational resources is pervasive. Most disturbing is the increasing transience of the community's population as many families, who can afford to move out, are seeking adequate schools, recreation, and other services elsewhere.

**Principles:**

In light of these conditions, two fundamental principles have been established, based upon the expressed desires of the community:

- Reasonable access to sufficient, dedicated parkland and a wide variety of recreational activities at appropriate levels of service must be assured to residents of all ages throughout the community; and
- Children growing up in the Ironbound must have sufficient opportunities for physical activities upon uncontaminated recreation sites to allow for their healthy development.

**Strategies:**

The recreation planning efforts focus upon strategies which are possible within the existing context. They include:

- Creating a system of parks and playgrounds connected by a network of pedestrian-friendly green corridors.
- Developing a continuous waterfront park along the Passaic River as part of the Ironbound, City and County park systems of sufficient width and amenity to allow for an array of recreation opportunities.
- Enhancing the plan's green corridors with safe street crossings, landscaping, trees, public art and places to sit.
- Increasing the number of dedicated recreation areas.
- Improving existing parks through efficient park design.
- Making maximum use of limited park areas through efficient park management and coordinated recreation programming.
- Improving air quality through extensive tree planting, planted buffers and encouragement of pedestrian circulation.
- Providing adequate playgrounds for the nine new public schools that are to be built within the Ironbound.

**2. COMMUNITY RECREATION NEEDS**

The recreational needs of the community has been determined in a number of ways: through many community meetings, surveys, and assessments; through review of published standards and levels of service in comparable communities; observation of current use; and evaluation of recent pressures for change.

**Open Space Comparisons, Standards, and Guidelines**

In comparison to both published guidelines and the level of recreation service in other comparable communities, Ironbound is under-served in terms of both dedicated park area and facilities of all categories. Currently the Ironbound has 24.81 usable acres of parks for more than 50,000 residents, over 10,000 of whom are children. If all existing park areas were open and functioning, the Ironbound would have 44 acres of parkland. (Please see summary chart of existing Ironbound parks on page 9.) The standards of the National Recreation and Park Association for a community of this size recommend 325 – 500 acres of parks. These same standards call for 6.5 – 10 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents, whereas in dismal contrast,

Ironbound’s current ratio is .50 acres, one-half an acre, per 1,000 residents. The City of Newark overall has 3.69 acres of parks per 1,000 residents, revealing how deprived the Ironbound is compared with the rest of the City. By this measure alone, an additional 150 acres of parkland would be needed in Ironbound to bring it up to the same level as the City. But Newark’s parkland resources are well below national averages and areas of comparable density. New York City, for example, has 7.17 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents, which is about average among larger U.S. cities.

The table below delineates national standards for some types of recreational facilities and compares the standard for 50,000 people against what exists in Ironbound. The quality and condition of the existing Ironbound facilities are not evaluated in this table. It should be noted that, given the high percentage of Portuguese, Spanish and Latino residents within the Ironbound, the demand for soccer fields would exceed the national standard (5), by at least twice as much. Soccer may be Ironbound’s most popular sport, but currently only one regulation soccer field is available, the “B” field at the Recreation Center, and because of its astro-turf surface, can only be used by high school students and adults. A junior field has recently been restored at Independence Park, and there is one high-school sized regulation soccer field at Riverbank Park, but it is currently under re-construction.

<b>National Standard</b>	<b>Ironbound</b>
25 Tennis Courts	2 Tennis Courts (closed)
10 Baseball Fields	4 Baseball Fields (1 closed)
10 Softball Fields	1 Softball Field
5 Soccer Fields	2 Soccer Fields (1 closed)
10 Basketball Courts	5 Basketball Courts (2 closed)
2.5 Pools	1 Pool (Outdoor)
2.5 Football Fields	0 Football Fields

- NRPA, the National Recreation and Park Association, National Parkland Standards.

Further, Ironbound residents are constrained in their access to sports activities outside the Ironbound due to the lack of safe, non-motorized access (walkways, bikeways) to parks outside the Ironbound. In most cases, if Ironbound children want to participate in sports, parents must drive them to parks and facilities outside the neighborhood.

**Needs expressed by the community**

There is wide recognition in Ironbound of the neighborhood’s considerable deficiency of recreational opportunities for families, children and seniors. In Recreation Roundtables held in 1997 and 2001 and in many other community meetings over the years, residents have expressed the need for a wide variety of activities that are either unavailable or are only available to a very limited number of people. Following are partial lists of the kinds of recreational activities, both active and passive, that the community believes are essential:

Active Recreation Facilities:

- More Soccer Fields – at least 10 soccer fields are desired: two regulation-sized fields exist, but one of them is closed.
- Swimming Pools

(The outdoor pool at Hayes Park is the only pool in the community but it is in need of significant repair. The indoor pool slated for the City's Community Recreation Center is 13 years behind schedule.) Residents would like year round usage of pools and aquatic programs for all age groups. The community has expressed interest in a facility at the proposed East Side High that would be available to the community when not in use for school programs.

- **Softball Fields and Volleyball Courts**  
There is one field primarily dedicated to girls' softball and there should be many more. There are three volleyball courts, one at Independence Park, one at Riverbank Park (closed), and one that is part of the renovated "B" field. Volleyball is an extremely popular sport, and many more courts are desired.
- **Football Fields**  
None exists in Ironbound. The high school football team practices on the "B" field, but this is a regulation soccer field, not a football field.

#### Passive Recreation

- Safe pedestrian ways, bike ways and street crossings throughout the community
- Lawn areas for passive use and picnic areas
- Benches
- Community gardens

#### Other desired facilities and programs

- Bike and rollerblading paths along routes of least conflict with vehicular circulation, i.e. along the river
- Tot lots and small play areas
- Environmental education
- Recreation and cultural programs including chess, table tennis, teen programs, theatre, ceramics, photography, art, music
- A large scale indoor recreation facility similar to Elizabeth Rex Plex with hockey, soccer, basketball and other sports
- Private development of bowling alleys, if feasible

#### **Management, maintenance, and communication**

- Well maintained, fully lit, safe and secure parks
- Coordination and communication between groups using public facilities in applying for permits, maintaining facilities, and running recreation programs
- A central recreation programs and activities information center and an annual recreation brochure and calendar

### **3. KEY RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE PLAN**

Review of vacant and available sites in the Ironbound reveals insufficient areas within the neighborhood for the creation of even a small percentage of the open space called for in the needs analysis and in resident program desires. The Plan recommendations focus upon acquisition of key sites, maximum use of existing recreation areas and streets, and incorporation

of proposed new school sites into the open space system. This section of the Ironbound Recreation and Open Space Plan is composed of analysis and recommendations in five key theme areas: (A) Potential New Parks, (B) Existing Parks, (C) Streetscapes, (D) New Schools and Recreation, and (E) General Programming and Management of Recreational Activities.

**A. Potential New Open Space & Parks** (See concept plan map at the front of the report.)

The Passaic River Waterfront

The Passaic River is one of Newark's most valuable, but underutilized, natural resources. Significant visual and physical barriers have prevented Newark's residents and visitors from realizing the full potential of this resource. The waterfront represents a prime opportunity for a significant recreational amenity to be created, benefiting the Ironbound, the City, and the region. The conceptual plan for the Ironbound portion of the waterfront opens up the entire area from Raymond Boulevard to the river and from Penn Station to Chapel Street for active and passive recreation and cultural and educational activities. It will expand upon the Minish Park river walk to be constructed by the Corps of Engineers and the planned County park, Riverfront Park, to create accessible open spaces, trails, and diverse recreation activities on the river. The Plan recommends a wide river walk that will run the full length of the waterfront park, designed to accommodate walkers, joggers, bikers and rollerbladers. It is hoped that eventually this waterfront trail system will become a connective link to other parks, such as Branch Brook Park and perhaps be included as part of the National Park Service's Liberty Trail, extending all the way to the Delaware Water Gap.

The concept for the proposed waterfront park comprises three major program zones as indicated in the plan below. From the west, they are:

- (1) 'Gateway Park' Environmental and Cultural Program Area, which will combine an environmental education center and a Newark History and Culture Center to trace the history of the City, --the arts, its industrial era, the Morris Canal, the inventors and inventions, and the generations of immigrants that formed it,-- and public plazas, gardens, and a theatre barge, serving community residents, downtown office workers, and visitors to Newark;
- (2) Passive Recreation and Environmental Program Area, including the proposed wetlands preservation area in the Corps of Engineers plan and walking, picnicking, and sitting areas; and
- (3) Active Recreation Program Area, including and expanding upon Essex County's proposed Riverfront Park. The parcels surrounding the Riverview Terrace housing site would provide sufficient area for the development of additional athletic fields (as many as four soccer fields and perhaps also a baseball diamond), a boat launch, parking areas, as well as buffers for the housing complex. This set of parcels along with those required by the County for Riverfront Park is considered a priority for acquisition.

Resolution of complex acquisition, management and programming issues will be critical to the successful development of this vision for the waterfront. (See map on next page.)

Potential Interior Park Sites in the Neighborhood (See the concept plan map at the front of the report.)

There are very few vacant sites suitable for park development within this densely built-up neighborhood. It is recommended that as potential sites become available over time, parks and other recreation opportunities be developed to allow each resident to reach passive and active recreation within a five minute walk of their home. This recommended minimum radius is appropriate given the population density of Ironbound (32 persons per acre for the entire neighborhood including industrial areas and significantly highly within residential areas.) This approach is particularly needed on the western side of the community between Railroad Avenue and Pacific Street and between New York Avenue and Johnson Street where new high-density development is being constructed without any provisions for play areas.

The primary interior parcels identified for potential new park development include:

- The section of the abandoned New York Central Railroad right-of-way extending across Block 2487 and then between Fillmore and Ferry Streets, as indicated in the *Priority Opportunities Map* at the end of the report. Part of the right-of-way is adjacent to the Ironbound Recreation Center and to the Newark School District's primary site for the proposed new High School. The right-of-way provides a significant opportunity to enhance programs at both the Recreation Center and at the new High School and to create a significant open space connection to Riverbank Park.
- The closed playground at the intersection of Market and Mott Streets, currently owned by the Newark School District. The site is sufficiently large to contain toddler and older children's play equipment, seating areas, and tree plantings. The site should be retained as open space, and the specific site program identified through City and community coordination.
- The vacant lot off Market Street between Jefferson and Congress Streets, a portion of which is a segment of the old New York Central Railroad right-of-way.
- The vacant, city-owned site between Miller and Wright Streets on Avenue B, recommended for an indoor recreational facility.
- The vacant city-owned lot (Block 1146, Lot 17) located between South and Thomas streets, one block away from the South Street School for use by the neighborhood and the school.
- Almost every vacant parcel on the western side of the community has been approved for development. Because of the high-density development that is occurring without open space provision, the area is particularly under-served. The search should continue for appropriate recreation sites in this area.

**B. Existing Parks** (See concept plan map at the front of the report.)

### Riverbank Park and Independence Park

Of the existing parks in the neighborhood, the two County owned and managed parks, Riverbank Park and Independence Park, both over 10 acres, have the greatest potential for providing recreation. Riverbank Park, however, is currently closed and undergoing rehabilitation. It is not certain when it will re-open. Independence Park has been under construction for the past year and has re-opened in the spring of 2002. Both parks, when open, are heavily used, and there is often friction over use of the limited number of playing fields and courts.

**Recommendation: The community feels strongly that the hours of park services (open bathrooms and security) should be extended in both parks to allow for more continuous use and that there should be better coordination of programming for the playing fields and better oversight of the permitting system. In addition, the heavy use of the parks requires a high level of maintenance.**

### The Ironbound Recreation Center

The Ironbound Recreation Center was developed by the City in the years between 1967 and 1970 on a 10-acre site formerly owned by the Celanese Corporation. The "Rec Center" included two playing fields, the "A" field and the "B" field, a stadium, and the Recreation Center building with an ice rink. In the early 1980's contamination was discovered in the playing fields and the stadium was found to be structurally unsafe. The playing fields and the stadium were closed and, except for the recently re-opened "B" field, have remained closed for more than 20 years.

Later an aquatic center was planned for the site. A much beloved year-around pool facility, called the Wilson Avenue Bath House, was demolished by the City in 1986, in spite of protests by the community. Condominiums were built on the site, and a new aquatic center was promised as part of the Ironbound Recreation Center. However, as soon as construction started at the new site, phenol and other contaminants were discovered. Construction was halted in 1987 and has not resumed.

**Recommendation: Municipal remediation of these contaminated sites and construction/re-construction of these facilities, the "A" field, the stadium, and the aquatic center, at the Ironbound Recreation Center should be carried out as soon as possible.**

As mentioned, the only operating field at the 'Rec Center' is the recently remediated "B" field, used primarily by three organized sports groups: high school football, youth baseball (teenage), and youth soccer (teenage). In the limited times that the field is not being used by these sports groups, it is open to the public, but only by permit.

The situation within the Recreation Center building typifies the competition for recreation facilities and resulting tensions. The Recreation Center building houses an ice rink (the only one in the City of Newark), which is used for general skating and by the East Side High School hockey team. In recent years, the City allowed a private group to install a hard floor for indoor soccer to be used once the ice was removed in the spring. But the result has been that the season for ice-skating and hockey has been cut back so there will be more time for

soccer. Thus for the last part of the season, the High School hockey team has no place to practice and must play all its games away. There are other contentious issues, such as the practice by private sports organizations of charging fees to parents to watch their children play games in this public facility.

**Recommendation: Improve management policies for municipal recreation facilities and strengthen oversight of private entities managing programs in public facilities to insure the programs are managed fairly and responsibly.**

Chestnut Street Little League Field

The Chestnut Street Little League Field is owned by the City, but used exclusively by the Ironbound Little League that maintains it well. Therefore, the plan makes no recommendations for this park.

Hennessey Park

Hennessey Park is a half-acre, city-owned parcel intended for use as a playground. It is completely devoid of play structures, equipment or usable landscape. No residents have been observed within the parcel during the study period. A new design was prepared several years ago for the City, and on April 13, 2002 a groundbreaking took place and bulldozers cleared the site.

**Recommendation: Complete the re-construction and landscaping of this neighborhood playground.**

Hayes Pool and Park

Hayes Pool and Park, if rehabilitated and well-programmed, could provide a significant resource for the community and its sub-neighborhood, which is particularly under-served due to its distance from other parks. The pool, the park grounds and the park building are in poor condition, the pool dangerously so. Most of the attractive art deco style park building is closed to public use. Sufficient area exists within the four-acre park to provide additional toddler and children play areas, a picnic and seating area, and a small amount of parking.

**Recommendation: Rehabilitation and intensive programming of the park building and design and rehabilitation of the landscape and pool should be carried out as soon as possible. Care should be take to preserve the mature sycamores on the site, as they, along with the park building, provide the primary character and positive quality of the park. (Please see Appendix 1. for sketch plan of recommended improvements to Hayes Pool and Park.)**

Mother Cabrini Park and Peter Francisco Park

This pair of park triangles adjacent to Penn Station, act more as visual thresholds between the station and the neighborhood than as recreational amenities. Mother Cabrini is fenced off from use and Peter Francisco is underutilized as well.

**Recommendation: The design and use of both parks should be studied further.**

Summary of Existing Ironbound Parks:

The table below provides brief descriptions of the existing parks within Ironbound. As can be seen, several of the facilities are either fully closed, partially closed or in disrepair. Although there are 44 acres of dedicated park within the neighborhood, less than 25 acres are currently in use for 50,000+ residents. Given the extremely low amount of dedicated recreation area, all the existing parks and recreation facilities in Ironbound should be brought into good condition and effectively managed and maintained by their respective owners, the County of Essex and the City of Newark. The assistance of volunteer organizations, like the Friends of Riverbank Park, willing to help with maintenance and programming, should be encouraged at all the parks.

**Existing Ironbound Parks - Summary**

Name	Acres	Usable Acres	Ownership	Comments
Independence Park	12.7	12.7	County	2 Little League fields, 1 girls' softball field, bandstand, small playground, small soccer field, 2 basketball courts, in-line skating, 2 buildings— community/senior activities & restrooms. <i>Park re-construction is almost complete.</i>
Riverbank Park Riverbank North	10.8 2.9	0 2.9	County	<i>Park is completely closed for re-construction of athletic fields.</i> When open, will have baseball diamond with grandstand, regulation soccer field, small multi-purpose field, 1 basketball court, 2 tennis courts, playground, track, and 3 structures: grandstand with locker rooms and bathrooms, field house, & children's pavilion.

Ironbound Recreation Center	10.87	3.21	City	Much of this park not in use. Closed: Stadium/Grandstand, 'A' Field, & Aquatic Center. Open: 'B' Field (by permit), Recreation Center Building—ice rink & indoor soccer (by permit). <b>Rehabilitation of stadium, Field 'A' and aquatic center recommended.</b>
Chestnut St. Little League Field	1.24	1.24	City	Baseball field and small building with concessions and meeting space. (Run, maintained and used exclusively by Ironbound Little League.)
Hennessey Park	.52	0	City	Was renovated in 1980 as neighborhood playground and has fallen into disrepair with dangerous, jagged concrete and no equipment. A new design has been proposed and recently the site has been cleared.
Hayes Pool & Park	4.28	4.28	City	Pool, circular path around pool, 2 buildings, mostly boarded, with small part open for lockers & bathrooms. <b>Rehabilitation and intensive programming of the park buildings and redesign and rehabilitation of the landscape and pool are recommended.</b>
Peter Francisco Park	.455	.455	City	Statue. Site for occasional community events. <b>Redesign recommended.</b>
Mother Cabrini Park	.248	0	City	Completely fenced & unusable. <b>Redesign recommended.</b>
<b>Total Acres</b>	<b>44.01</b>	<b>24.81</b>		

### C. Streetscapes

Several factors contribute to the importance of enhanced programming and design of the streetscapes in Ironbound. Those factors include:

- The Ironbound and the Ferry Street area are major destinations for visitors to Newark, and the quality of connections between Penn Station, the Central Business District, other neighborhoods and the primary activity zones within Ironbound are significant to the economic and social activity of the City.
- Raymond Boulevard, in particular among Ironbound streets, acts as a primary entrance corridor into the City of Newark and its importance as a visual threshold should be acknowledged in further planning and design efforts to make it into a true boulevard with extensive tree planting.
- The heavy degree of air-borne pollutants from industry, traffic and trucking within and surrounding the neighborhood indicates the need for significant addition of trees and buffer planting.
- The lack of sufficient existing and potential parkland for social opportunities and public experience reinforces the need for and the importance of street activity.
- The quality of connections between residents and resources, such as schools, parks, cultural centers and businesses, within the neighborhood requires substantial improvement.

Opportunity themes for streetscape improvements are identified as: Special Commercial Corridors, Primary Entrance Thresholds, Primary ‘Green’ Corridors, Secondary ‘Green’ Corridors, Filter Plantings, Temporary Street Closures, Bikeway and Pedestrian Trail Opportunities. Please see Appendix 2. for an illustrated plan for streetscape improvements to a major corridor in Ironbound. Other illustrated plans and descriptions for these corridors are available on request.

#### Special Commercial Corridors

Ferry Street, from Penn Station to Freeman Street, is a commercially and socially vibrant, physically heterogeneous corridor that acts as the major visitor destination within the neighborhood. Cars are always tightly parked along Ferry and circulation is extremely congested. For this reason, any plans for bicycle lanes along Ferry should be reconsidered. The desires of businesses along Ferry for streetscape improvements should be given serious consideration, possibly through a planning forum if there is demand.

#### Entrance Thresholds

Three significant entrance points into the Ironbound should be further studied and improved to enhance the connectivity and to create a positive impression of entering a distinctive neighborhood. These are the intersection of Raymond, Market and Ferry Streets with Penn Station / NJRR Avenue; (2) Raymond Boulevard for its whole length; and (3) the Delancy Street entrance from Routes 1/9,

#### Primary ‘Green’ Corridors

Corridors that play a primary role in the circulation system, that connect significant resources, and that significantly affect the image of the neighborhood include Raymond Boulevard, Market Street, Chestnut Street, Van Buren Street and Somme Street. Study of potential for and design for closely spaced trees, corner ‘bump-outs’, furnishings, pedestrian scale lighting, specially paved cross-walks and accessible corners, public art, threshold elements, and appropriate signage programs should be conducted and implemented.

#### Secondary ‘Green’ Corridors

Other important corridors that connect significant resources include Pacific, Jefferson, New York, and Komorn Streets and Wilson Avenue. Accessibility and additional planting, including trees and possibly, planted vine screens for covering or softening visual gaps in the street frontage, are of primary importance along these streets.

#### ‘Filter’ Plantings

Closely spaced tree plantings and buffer planting beds where possible are recommended along all corridors defining the Ironbound Master Plan industrial zone edge. Several streets define the edge; among them are Emmet, Rome and Foundry Streets.

#### Temporary Street Closures

Temporary, regular street closures are suggested as an avenue for enhancing recreation opportunities within the neighborhood. Street games, roller hockey, block parties, festivals

and informal gatherings are some of the possible uses for closed streets. Streets that are not critical for normal weekend and holiday vehicular circulation such as small residential streets and streets adjacent to schools should be considered. Residents, by block, should agree to park elsewhere and coordinate deliveries appropriately. As an initial measure, streets could be closed with removable barricades; more permanent infrastructure such as bollards that accommodate chains, benches and additional lighting could be explored if closings prove to be successful and regular. The potential for weekend and holiday closings should be pursued in recreation forums, block meetings and school meetings. Proposals should then be coordinated with City Streets and Police departments.

#### Bikeway and Pedestrian Trail Opportunities

The plan's proposed waterfront trail extending from Chapel Street to Penn Station and, it is hoped, eventually connecting to Branch Brook Park is the most significant trail opportunity identified. The trail could serve as the Newark leg of the proposed, regional Liberty Trail. The relatively narrow widths of Ironbound streets coupled with high vehicular circulation and parking demand may complicate planning for dedicated on-street bike lanes. The feasibility of bicycle and pedestrian trails should also be considered for NJRR Ave., the abandoned rail loop within the northeastern industrial area between Blanchard Ave. and Chapel Street, and the abandoned rail line north of the Ironbound Recreation Center.

#### **D. New Schools and Open Space Opportunities**

Every effort has been made to avoid making proposals for new parks on parcels that may be desired for new school sites. Not one of the existing schools within Ironbound has an adequate playground. In most cases former playgrounds have been taken over for teacher parking, leaving only a small patches of blacktop for outdoor activities. It is hoped that as the nine new schools are designed and built, they will have sufficient play areas, including plantings, play equipment, and spaces suitable for students of different ages. It is also hoped that the new playgrounds will be available to the community after school hours and thus contribute to the overall Ironbound open space system

Diverse standards in Britain and the United States indicate that roughly 70 acres of playing fields would be appropriate at the new schools for the neighborhood's school population. While it is hoped that the proposed East Side High School site of almost 15 acres can be acquired by the School District, it is understood that the needed acreage may not be available for the all the proposed schools. Thus the Plan must focus upon obtaining maximum recreation value from the sites selected.

Other densely developed urban areas in the country share the problem of meeting education and recreation program needs within constrained sites. A series of pertinent precedents from the California Space-Saver Program for new, compact urban schools include the International Elementary School in Long Beach and The Mendez Fundamental Intermediate School in Santa Ana. Both schools negotiate small sites with difficult surrounding uses into effective facilities that meet program needs through stacking playgrounds and sports fields above classrooms, offices and parking. The Space-Saver program should soon provide several more good examples for the development of schools within the Ironbound. In New York

City, constraints on land acquisition for new public schools have led to the development of innovative solutions for community recreation on constrained and awkward sites. The New York public school system has found that well considered design can overcome problems it has historically associated with rooftop recreation. Both P.S. 268 on Jamaica Avenue in Queens and Sunset Park School and Library in Brooklyn are designed to have rooftop playgrounds and /or recreation on mid-level decks.

Intensive programming of facilities that are created will extend the range of their benefit to the community. Continued and expanded cooperation between agencies operating local parks, school administrators and recreation program organizers will also expand the level of service. The Boston Schoolyard Initiative provides an excellent model of such cooperation.

Provision of recreation may be made a priority over parking for staff if remote parking for school staff and shuttles from off-site parking areas can be developed.

### **E. General Management and Programming For Parks**

Resolution of the many management and programming issues identified in community meetings will require extensive coordination between City and County agencies, private program managers, and representatives of the Ironbound community. A coordinated delivery approach for recreation services, expansion of park security and extension of daily and seasonal hours of services and maintenance would enhance the neighborhood's level of recreation service and use. Employment of City and County park maintenance and security staff dedicated solely to each of Newark's neighborhoods, including Ironbound, is strongly suggested. Dedicated, full-time positions and funding commitments for neighborhood park maintenance and regular, organized community volunteering will potentially leverage capital improvements. Applications for funding for park acquisition and improvements would be strengthened by demonstration of public commitment to maintenance. Employment of a recreation manager for the Ironbound, responsible for coordinating recreation programs, volunteers, and publicizing of programs is also recommended.

## **4. IMPLEMENTATION PRIORITIES**

With support, Ironbound may survive and thrive as one of Newark's primary cultural and commercial assets and as a unique and vibrant community offering a high quality of life to its residents. Among needed supportive interventions, recreation and open space investments are essential to enhancing the community's quality of life. This first phase of the Recreation and Open Space Plan describes the community's recreation needs and the immediate opportunities, challenges and strategies. Several stages of planning and coordination remain which will enrich both the community's vision and its ability to implement it. The interest, advice, and sponsorship of relevant City of Newark, Essex County, State, and federal agencies, as well as regional non-profits and businesses will be sought in the coming months and years. Therefore, the following implementation priorities are focused upon immediate planning and coordination steps.

1. Adoption by the City of the Ironbound Community Master Plan (ICMP).  
The ICMP incorporates the concepts of the Ironbound Recreation and Open Space Plan and seeks to preserve a number of sites for future open space, including the lands along the Passaic waterfront from Penn Station to Chapel Street.
2. Continuation of work with the City of Newark, Essex County, the State of New Jersey (DEP) and the federal government (Corps of Engineers), the business community, and conservation groups to move toward full implementation of Recreation and Open Space concepts.
  - Submit Recreation and Open Space Plan to the Essex County Open Space Commission for consideration for inclusion in the County Open Space Master Plan.
  - Work with the City to insure timely remediation and re-construction of facilities at the Ironbound Recreation Center.
  - Raise funds needed to develop an Implementation Plan.
3. Development of an Implementation Plan defining the next steps needed for the full realization of the Recreation and Open Space Plan:
  - Estimate costs for acquisition and development of new sites, as well as costs to upgrade older deteriorated sites. Cost estimates for acquisition will require contacts with owners, appraisals, and informal surveys and inquiries, while estimates for development and re-development will require preliminary design work.
  - Determine available resources: Studies will be made to determine the community's eligibility for park acquisition, and park and streetscape development, potential avenues for area-wide financing which could include joint grant applications, special taxes, etc., and ways to develop closer ties with potential funding and programming partners.
  - Set priorities and timetable for acquisition and development based on need and funding availability.
  - Develop an overall park management plan, encompassing ownership and management by different public and private entities, and including both new parks and existing parks. The studies for the park management plan will address management and maintenance needs, costs, and potential long term resources.
  - Recommend ways to establish a centralized and easily accessible source of information about recreational programming, so all community residents can be well-informed about what activities are available. Find a way to fund this resource permanently.
4. Preparation of funding proposals, financial packages and strategies based upon priorities established, to raise funds for acquisition/leasing and development of certain priority

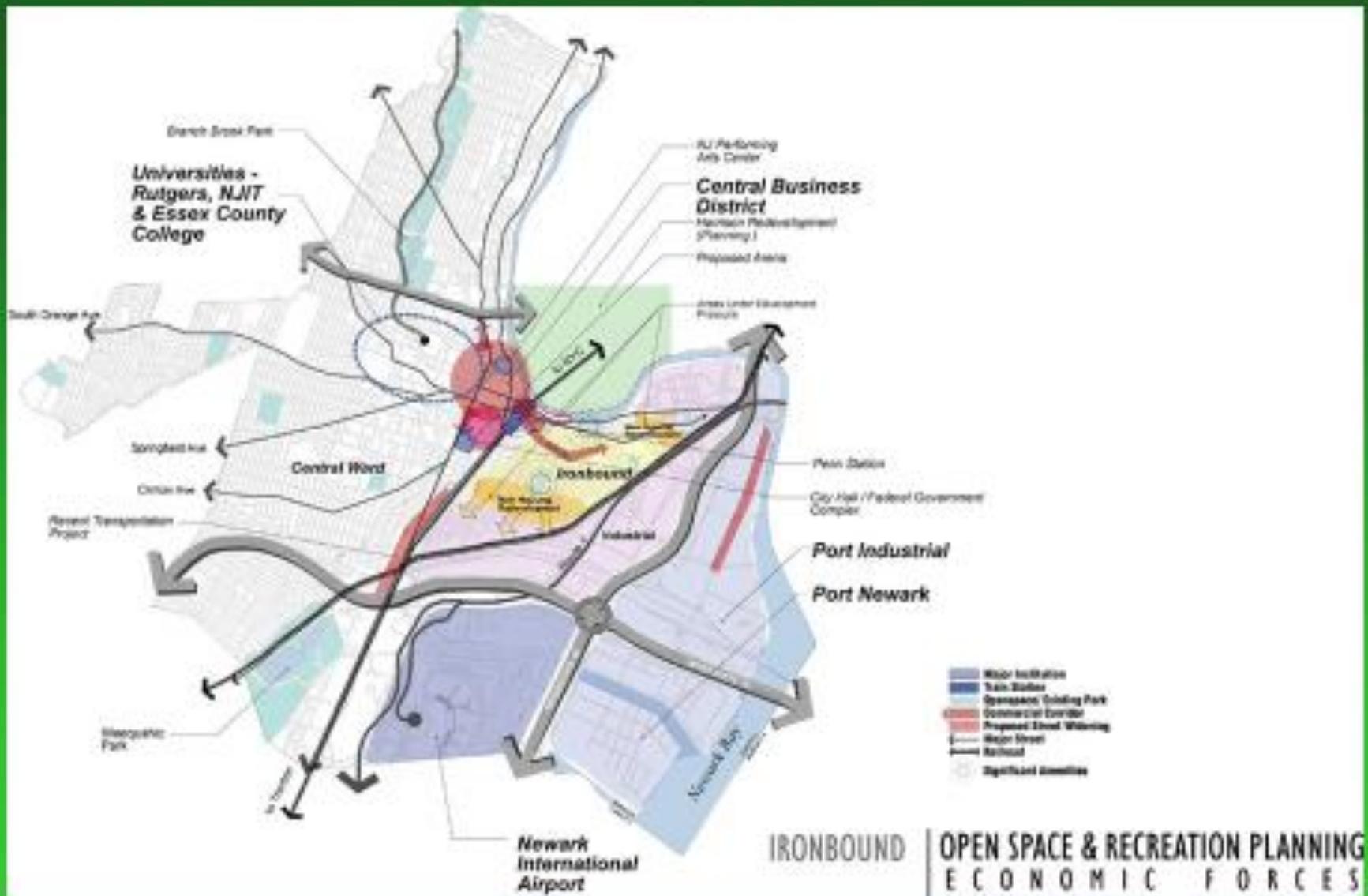
sites, such as the properties around Riverview Terrace, the Market and Mott Street playground, the city-owned site at Wright and Miller Streets and Avenue B.

5. Establishment of a working partnership with the Newark School District and the City of Newark to focus on the selection of sites and the planning and design of new schools, to insure the development of adequate and well-programmed recreation facilities.
6. Encouragement of the development of private recreational facilities, such as a year around Olympic training facility for ice-skating and hockey, bowling lanes, and/or a large-scale fitness center whose agreements include assistance with funding for public recreation within the neighborhood. Work with the City on this project and assist with site analysis and marketing studies if appropriate.

# **APPENDICES**

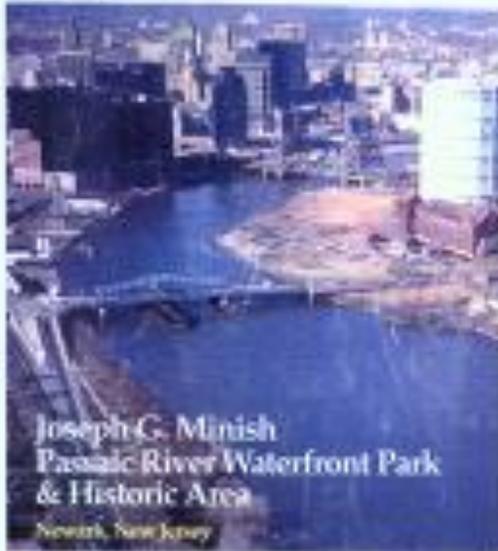
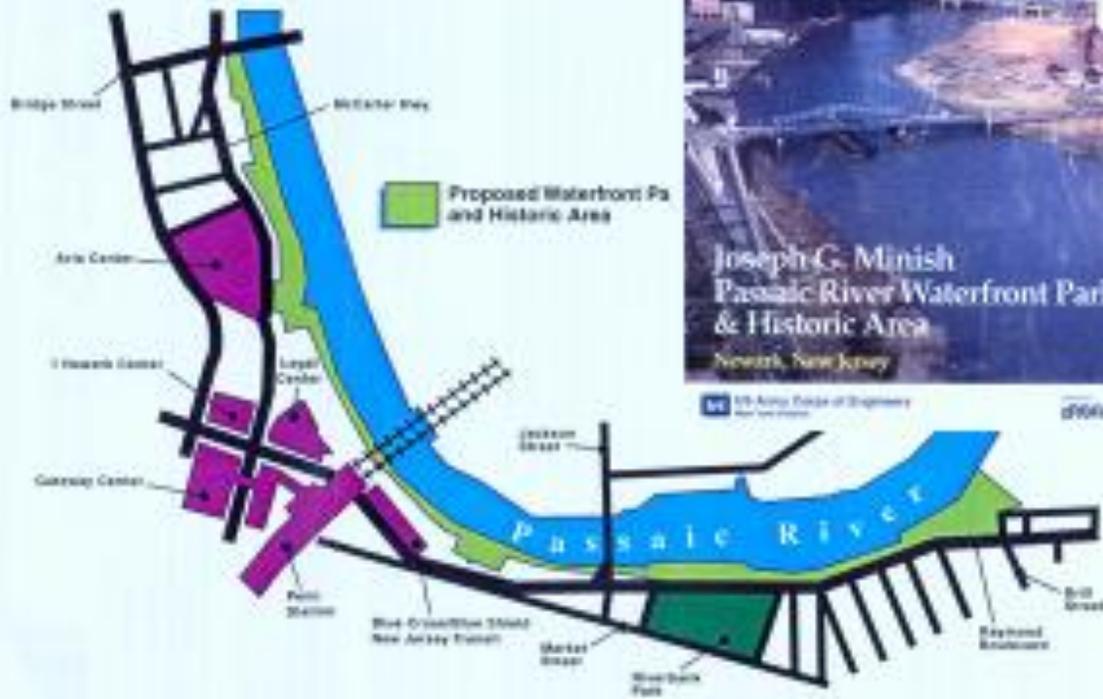


# Economic Forces Influencing the Ironbound

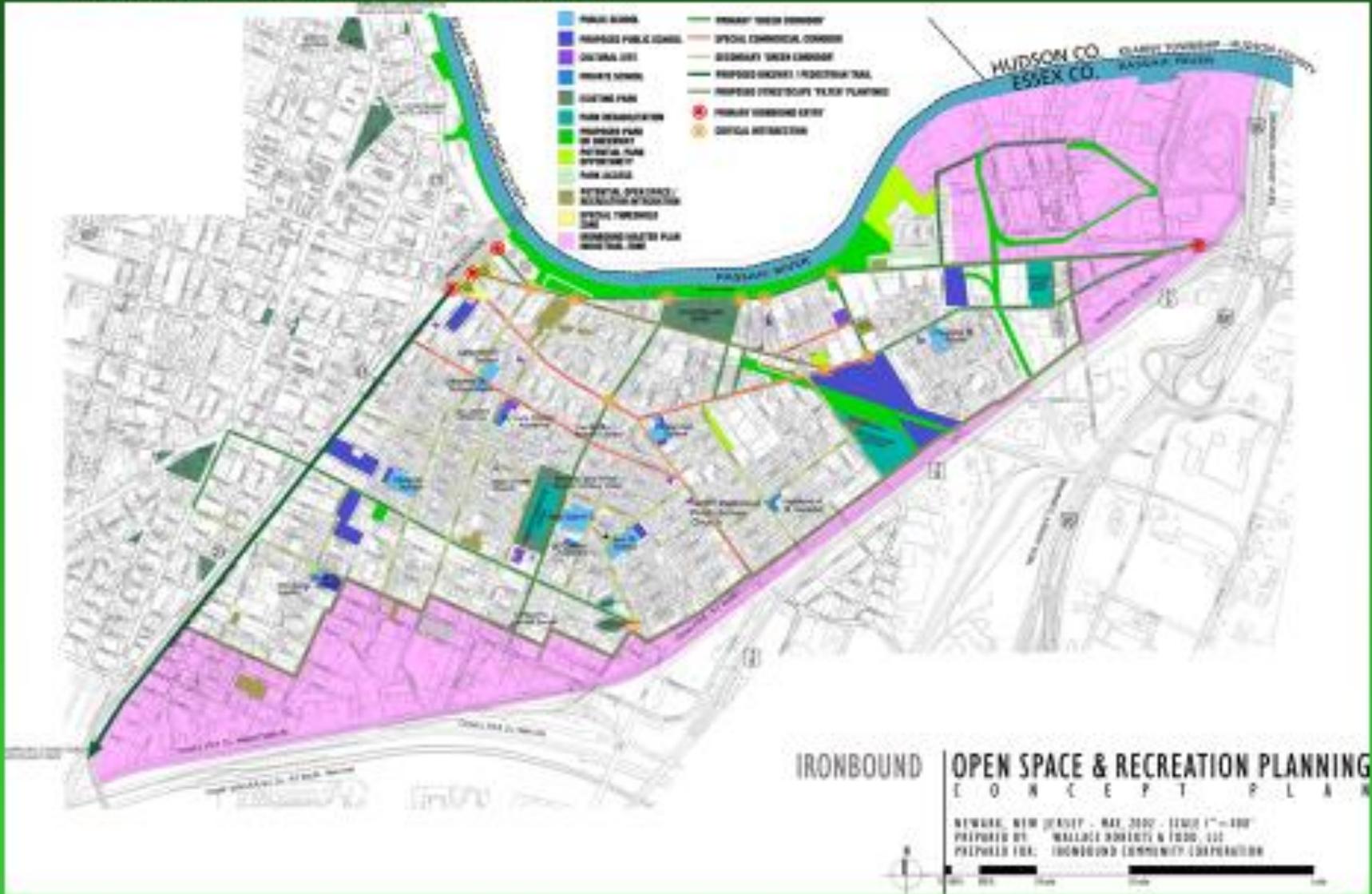


# Passaic River Waterfront

## Joseph G. Minish Passaic River Waterfront Park and Historic Area, Newark



# DRAFT CONCEPT PLAN





# Recreation Facility Inventory

RIVERBANK PARK  
SOUTH-10.3 ACRE NORTH-2.9 ACRE



Facility Name	Address	Capacity	Hours	Notes
Senior Center for Ironbound and Girls	1000 10th St	100	10am-6pm	Open to all ages
Riverbank Park	10th St	1000	7am-7pm	Open to all ages
Passaic River	Passaic River	N/A	N/A	N/A

