

Master Plan for Shoelace Park on the Bronx River Greenway

LEGEND

Park Area	Path Allowing Boat Launch Access	Nature Trail	Comfort Station/Parks Structure
Bronx River	Bikeway Connection	Pastoral Lawn	Visual / Physical Access to Water
100-Year Floodplain	Greenway	Vegetation Restoration Area	Stormwater BMPs
Existing Tree	Greenway Extension (Short Term)	Play Area	Fitness Station
Path	Greenway Extension (Long-Term)		

Program Strategies

Programming, defined as the active and passive ways that people use the park, is designed to draw the community into the park and strengthen the connections with the Bronx River and local history. Program elements will be site specific, celebrating the unique qualities of the site and working to build an identity for the park that celebrates its particular history and assets. To accomplish this, many recommendations are structural and represent changes to the existing organization of the park. Integrating park features with the Bronx River ecologies will strengthen the connections between the natural systems of the area and the day-to-day lives of the people that use the park.

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Improve Access to New Program Elements and Move Inappropriate Structures Out of the Floodplain

Moving program elements, such as playgrounds, to higher topographic elevations closer to park entrances improves community access, particularly for those in wheelchairs or pushing strollers. Moving these facilities closer to the street and residential areas also provides a greater sense of safety. At key park entrances at 211th Street, 219th Street, and 222nd Street, multi-use event areas and seating clusters will draw people in to the site. These areas are designed for flexible programming, and will be available for community groups to program with events, such as music performances, markets, theater, and festivals. These spaces open up the opportunity for community groups to fully use their park to serve their needs.

With forty percent of the park within the 100-year floodplain, the park must be able to withstand periodic inundation during major storm events. Moving existing structures that are currently in the floodplain uphill (including both of the playgrounds and their comfort stations) will save reoccurring infrastructure repair costs associated with flood damage. Constructed decades ago, the two comfort stations at 219th Street and 227th Street now require routine investment to repair sewage pumps that regularly fail. Moving these structures uphill will obviate the need for these pumps altogether and provide additional safety and security for these facilities, reducing vandalism. The playground near 219th Street will be converted to informal play fields, which can infiltrate water during storm events. A storage structure located within the floodplain in Fort Knox West will be removed and replaced with a new structure located further to the north, out of the floodplain. All new structural amenities for the park are located at higher elevations out of the floodplain.

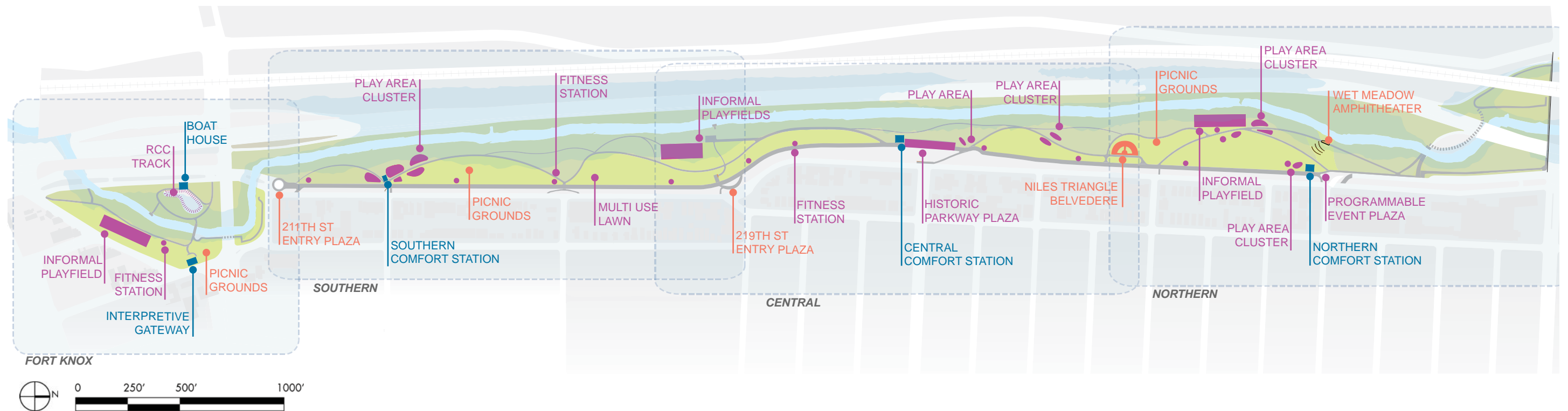
Create Diverse Programming

Shoelace Park will have a wide range of activities to appeal to many user groups, with the existing program supplemented by new types of activities. The mix of program will include active and passive recreation, recreational opportunities that are fixed (like playgrounds) and those that can be used in ways determined by the park visitor (such as multi-use plazas and informal play fields). Three new comfort stations will be added to the park. Two of the three will replace existing stations that will ultimately be removed.



Southern Play Area Cluster at the *Promenade*

A new group of play areas will be located at a gently sloping lawn near the *Promenade* across from the 213th Street entrance. One of three new comfort stations will be located in close proximity to the play areas and *Promenade*. These ADA accessible amenities will provide an exciting new cluster of activities just south of a large Pastoral lawn area and near the southern entrance to Shoelace Park at 211th Street. They will be easily reached from neighborhoods near the south end of the park and are within a five minute walk from mass transit stops on Gun Hill Road.



Create a “Node” System of Program

Existing program and activities on site will be redistributed and new elements will be grouped and distributed equitably throughout the linear park. New areas of program will act as nodes, drawing visitors to those locations. Concentrating gathering spaces toward the park entrances eases access and preserves areas closer to the river for more continuous zones of vegetation to filter stormwater before it reaches the river. The secondary benefit of these habitats near the river is the creation of a passive program for park users, allowing visitors to appreciate wildlife and native plantings.

This cluster approach to program is also carried out in the play areas. The existing park has two large playground areas enclosed by high fencing. The master plan creates multiple small playground locations, sometimes clustered together, increasing the diversity of play experience. The new playgrounds are located close to park entrances, improving access, and are in close visual proximity to each other and to comfort stations. This allows supervising adults to be close to children and amenities. The central play area, however, is able to be located closer to the river by reusing an elevated level area currently occupied by the bocce courts. Likewise, in the northern section of the park, a secondary play area cluster is located in close proximity to the informal playfield to create a synergistic relationship between contiguous active recreation features.

Engage the Bronx River and Local History

Specific program elements will reinforce the importance of the river in the landscape by incorporating views, improving access and providing gathering spaces near the water’s edge. Once at the water, park amenities, such as amphitheater spaces, wildlife appreciation zones, and boat launches celebrate the Bronx River.

Historic interpretive elements are located throughout the park to further reinforce the unique qualities of Shoelace Park. The park features that will reveal the history of the site include the interpretive gateway at Fort Knox East that highlights previous uses at the nineteenth-century Tapestry Works, a footbridge connecting the two sides of Fort Knox in the approximate location of a historic bridge, the restoration and continued management of a viewshed at Niles Triangle Belvedere, and the conservation of the full width of the original Bronx River Parkway road-bed at the 222nd Street plaza. These program elements offer educational opportunities that can be linked with local school curricula, interpretive signage, or virtual tours.

These sites and program elements that reference the site’s ecology and history are also potential sites for public art, as recommended in the *Bronx River Greenway Plan, Guidelines for Art*.

Program and Recreational Resources

Legend

- Project Boundary
- Bronx River
- 100 Yr. Floodline
- Geographic Program Zone
- Active Recreation
- Passive Recreation
- Comfort Station / Node Structure
- Fitness Station



Existing boat Launch at 219th Street



Remote Control Car Enthusiast



Existing Basketball Courts

Active Recreation Program Elements

Play Areas

New play areas will be intimate spaces that cultivate imaginative play for children. The play areas should be integrated within the park's natural features, for example using existing trees and topography to create playground form. Low fencing (42" height) and low planting around the play area perimeter will create a soft transition from the play area to the rest of the park. Designed to form clusters, each small area will be suitable for different age ranges and will relate to each other. At Fort Knox East, a themed play area will relate directly to park history. At Fort Knox West, a raised playground area will be built at street level adjacent to Bronx Boulevard to better serve families and children who come to the park with remote control racecar track users. Play equipment shall comply with universal design standards and gates in play area enclosures will use "H" latches. The use of accessible play equipment (compliant with standards set by the American with Disabilities Act or ADA), including zero G swings, should be equitably distributed throughout the various play areas within the park.

The Promenade

On the route of the historic Bronx River Parkway and bordered by a signature row of majestic Oak trees, a revitalized *Promenade* will be developed as a multi-use path with clearly demarcated lanes for cyclists and walkers. The *Promenade* plays an important programmatic role in Shoelace Park as a site for active recreation and the location for fitness stations, play areas and comfort stations, as well as a site for stormwater management Best Management Practices (BMPs).

Informal Play Fields

Informal play fields will be developed within the floodplain on the flat sites of the existing playgrounds at 219th and 227th Streets providing flexible active space for play of football, soccer and other sports on non-regulation sized fields. The existing informal soccer field at Fort Knox East will remain.

Hillside Sledding

In winter months, areas of the pastoral lawns throughout the park can be used for sledding.

Basketball Courts

Existing basketball courts at 219th Street will be maintained.

Fitness Stations

A series of ten fitness stations will be distributed along the *Promenade*. A percentage of this equipment will be available for those with special needs (the elderly and/or disabled) and will be equitably distributed through the park. The ADA compliant exercise equipment shall meet universal design standards with specific equipment mounted no higher than 45".

Boat Launches (219th Street, Fort Knox West)

Boat launches at 219th Street and Fort Knox West allow access to the water for canoeing, kayaking and other types of boating. There is also a boat storage facility at Fort Knox West. The plan recommends demolishing the existing structure and building an improved one out of the floodplain and closer to Gun Hill Road.

Remote Control Racecar Track

The existing remote control racecar track will be maintained at Fort Knox Park due to the strong supporters that use the park area. Improvements to the track will be co-sponsored by the Racing Club of New York City Association (RCNYC). The redesign of the track will be integrated with comprehensive site improvements to the west side of Fort Knox. The development of a new track design should consider the following strategies to minimize the ecological impact of development within the floodplain:

- Offsetting the addition of an impervious paved track surface by removing the existing underutilized adjacent paved plaza area (also within the floodplain)
- Utilizing drainage improvements with increased storage capacity, such as French drains, that capture stormwater and slow the rate of runoff and maximum infiltration
- Configure all built structures (track drivers stand, bleachers) to avoid critical root zones of existing mature trees
- Design the proposed New York City Department of Parks & Recreation boat storage structure so that it's roof can also serve as the driver's stand accessible from the street level at Bronx Boulevard (refer to facing page for more information)
- Establish a (non-accessible) zone of native plantings within the adjacent riparian area to further treat and slow stormwater runoff as it flows toward the river from the track



Passive Recreation Program Elements and Park Features

Multi-use Event Plaza

A new multi-use plaza located at 222nd Street will compliment existing entry plazas at 211th Street and 219th Street. These plazas will provide key linkages to the community and access points to Shoelace Park. They will be open paved plazas, ready to accommodate a wide range of community-driven programming and special events.

Comfort Stations and Storage Structures

Two existing comfort stations and one storage structure will be removed from the floodplain. To replace these amenities, three new comfort stations will be constructed at higher elevations within the park. The comfort stations will be distributed evenly throughout the linear site – one to service the southern part at E. 211th Street (including Fort Knox Park), one in the middle at 222nd Street, and one to the northern part of the park at 228th Street. The southern comfort station will be designed to provide storage for the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation. The middle comfort station shown above may also incorporate a concession stand for use during events in the adjacent plaza.

The possibility to incorporate other activities that will help activate the plaza, including bike rentals and movable seating, should be further explored when designing the middle comfort station structure. The new storage structure at Fort Knox West will be used to house boats and kayaks for use at the nearby boat launch and will be accessible to authorized vehicles. The roof of this structure will be accessible to pedestrians from the adjacent sidewalk and will serve as a driver's stand for the adjacent racetrack.

Seating

Benches will be located primarily along the *Promenade* and *Park Walks*. Groupings of benches should be located approximately every 250 linear feet on the western side of the *Promenade*. *Park Walk* seating should be located to take advantage of favorable views. Additional seating will be provided at plazas, park entrances, and play areas. Paved open spaces should provide a variety of seating opportunities to accommodate wheelchair users and strollers. Additional seating clusters will be located at park entrance plazas at 211th Street, 219th Street, and 222nd Street.

Multi-use Events Plaza at 222nd Street

A grand plaza located near the center of the park (at the bottom of the seating lawn at the 222nd Street entrance) will be transformed into a new multi-use events plaza, suitable for concerts, outdoor festivals and large community gatherings. This two-hundred and fifty foot long plaza will serve as an interpretive element by maintaining the width of the original historic Bronx River Parkway that once was located in the same location. A new comfort station will be located at the southern end of the plaza and serves as an additional amenity during programmed events.

Amphitheater

An amphitheater and river's edge boardwalk will create a new destination in the northern part of the park proximate to Public School 103. The site will be integrated with a tiered stormwater management feature, providing additional educational and ecological value.



River Overlooks

The master plan arrangement of program and reconfiguration of paths takes care to preserve open views to the water and to design the sequences to arrive there. Five locations along the water will be managed to preserve open views, in addition to overlooks at the two existing boat launches. Additionally, the existing bridge at 230th Street has a wonderful view looking south. A new pedestrian bridge connecting Fort Knox East and Fort Knox West will also offer an overlook to the river.

Pastoral Lawns

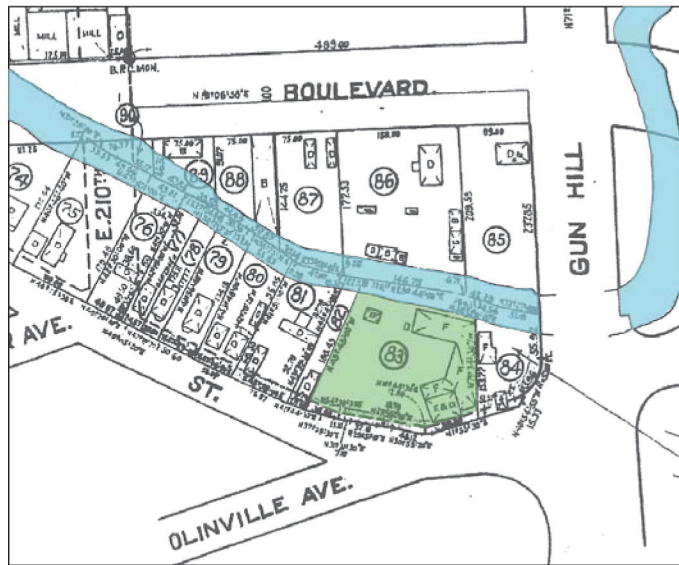
The pastoral landscape that was created for the Bronx River Parkway at the turn of the 20th century remains the dominant existing landscape in the park. The master plan maintains four main areas of pastoral lawn with mature trees in order to preserve this landscape type. This landscape type works best with passive recreation – picnicking, reading and relaxing on the open lawns.

BBQ Stations and Picnic Tables

To facilitate picnicking on the pastoral lawns, two areas of picnic tables and BBQ stations will be strategically located just south of 216th Street and at 226th Street to provide equal access to visitors from the southern and northern portions of the nearby neighborhood.

Lighting

In accordance with the *Bronx River Greenway Design Guidelines*, the Candela pole-mounted light fixture will be adopted for use throughout the park and will replace the existing cobra-head pole-mounted fixtures on the western side of the *Promenade*. Additional lighting will be concentrated near park entrances and around play areas in higher elevations. Further photometric studies will be necessary to determine the exact location of the proposed new lights.



The green shaded parcel shows the Baumgarten property on the east bank of the Bronx River.



A new gateway into Fort Knox West will “trace” the historic structure that was home to the Tapestry Works mill during the early twentieth century.

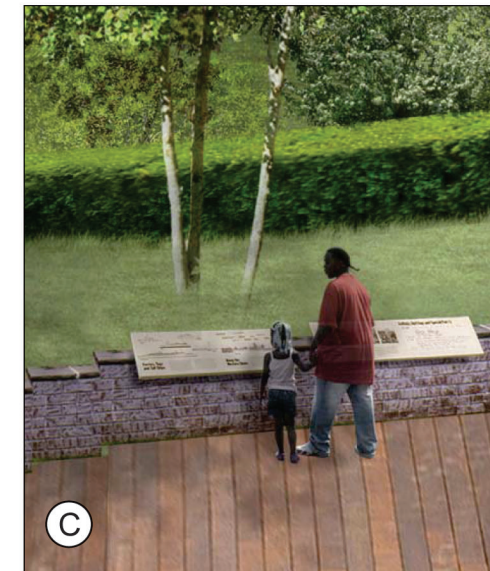
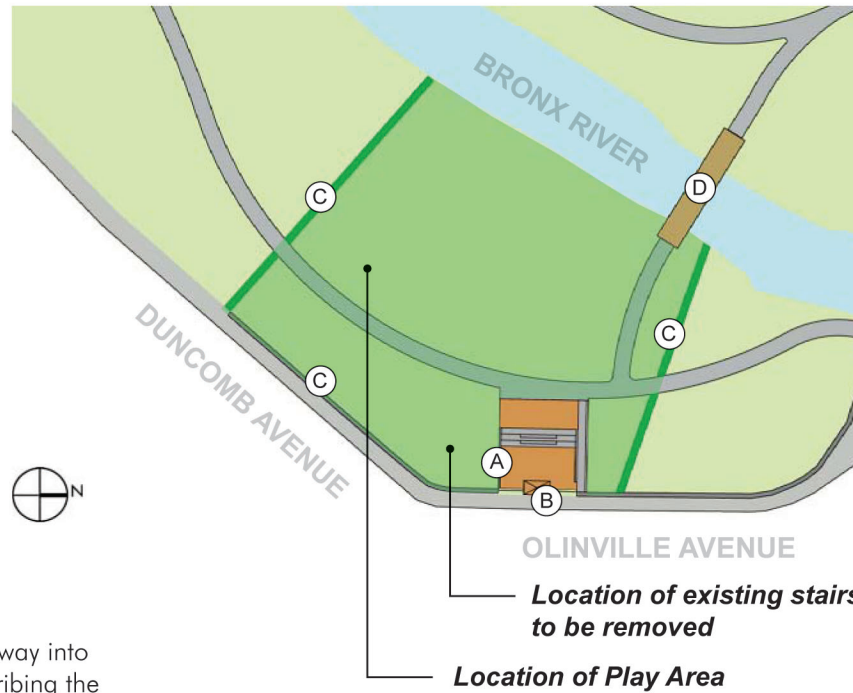
Interpretive Gateway

The new park entrance at Fort Knox East will act as an interpretive gateway into the park. It will feature a storyboard or other interpretive elements describing the historic Tapestry Mill that thrived on this site in the early twentieth century. As described in the Historical Context section of the master plan, the site was owned by Emilie Baumgarten and has a rich history as the first tapestry mill in the United States.

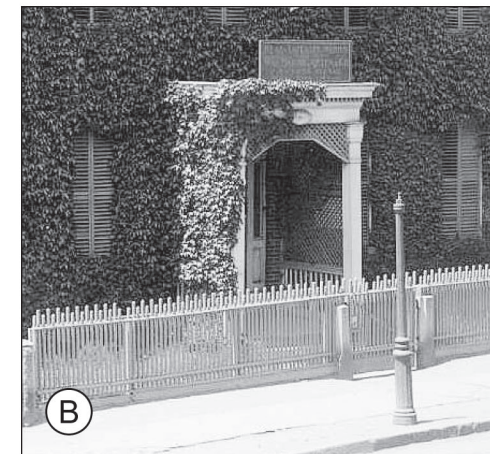
The play area located near the gateway will be designed using custom elements that reinforce the history of the site. Information presented at the stone monument previously located at the site (now in disrepair) can be re-envisioned as part of the new, highly visible entrance landscape.



A new pedestrian bridge will connect the east and west sides of Fort Knox and will recall the bridges that were previously in this location.



Hedges will “trace” the historic boundary of the Emilie Baumgarten property at the northern and southern edges. A new fence along the eastern edge will signal the start of the gateway site from nearby intersections. The fence will be designed to reflect the qualities of the Baumgarten property fence. Interpretive signs will explain the site’s history.



Visitors will enter the park through an interpretive “front door” and cross the footprint of the historic building. This entry will be designed with an ADA accessible ramp, replacing the existing steps at the corner of Duncomb Avenue and Olinville Avenue.