

GLOUCESTER CITY MASTER PLAN
THE RECREATION, CONSERVATION, AND
COMMUNITY FACILITIES INVENTORY

In order to properly evaluate the City's current capability to serve the Recreational and other Community Facility needs of its population, a detailed inventory of all such facilities in the City was undertaken as part of the Plan preparation. This included facilities owned by the City, as well as facilities owned by others who have permitted their facilities to be used by the general public.

I. RECREATION INVENTORY

A. AN OVERVIEW OF THE CITY'S INVENTORY OF RECREATION FACILITIES

The adequacy of a municipality's recreational facilities is best evaluated on four levels:

1. The ownership pattern and the related availability of these facilities to the City's residents;
2. The geographic dispersion and relative accessibility of these facilities;
3. The size and the appropriateness of such facilities relative to the population;
4. The quality of the facilities represented at each location.

The resulting Inventory shows that Gloucester City residents have at their disposal some fourteen (14) City-owned recreation facilities; one (1) privately owned ballfield; and six (6) facilities owned by the Gloucester City School Board.

In total there are some sixty-eight (68) acres of land in the City, owned privately or publicly, which are dedicated to recreational uses. Of this total, just over 55% of the lands are City owned; 32% are owned by the School Board; and 13% are private holdings.

Geographically, the existing facilities are well dispersed, providing, with only two exceptions, excellent facility coverage to all sections of the City.

In general the size of the various City recreation facilities is adequate in light of generally accepted standards. In all cases, City-owned facilities are at least minimally equipped. However, this is not the case for School Board facilities which in most instances have little or no equipment at all.

The quality of the facilities in the City varies widely, and in general it could be said that most facilities should be upgraded in one way or another. Continuing maintenance of these facilities on a regular basis is also an area of needed improvement.

B. STANDARDS FOR RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

In the course of developing any plan it is best to have some reasonable and objective standard to adhere to for measuring the adequacy of existing facilities for planning new or replacement facilities. Generally, such standards are developed over long periods of time by government or private organizations by observing situations which appear to provide good or outstanding service to a variety of communities over a period of years.

The Urban Land Institute, a private non-profit institute dedicated to the promulgation of good land-use planning, has developed standards for recreation facilities which are shown on the following page.

NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR RECREATION FACILITIES

<u>TYPE OF RECREATIONAL ACTIVITY</u>	<u>SPACE REQUIREMENTS PER 1000 POPULATION</u>	<u>SERVICE RADIUS</u>
Children's play lots (children 5 & under)	7,000 s.f. per 100 children	1/8 - 1/4 mi.
Playground (children 5-12 years)	40,000s.f. per 100 children	1/4 - 1/2 mi.
Field play areas	1.5 acres per 1,000 pop	up to 1.5 mi.
Tennis courts	1 court per 1,500 pop	up to 1.5 mi.
Basketball courts	1 court per 2,500 people	up to 1.5 mi.
Swimming	1 outdoor pool per 1,000 pop	up to 2.0 mi.
Picnicking	4 acres per 1,000 pop	up to 2.0 mi.
Fishing, rowing, canoeing	20 acres water per 25,000 pop	3 - 10 mi.
Parking @ Rec. Sites	1 acre per 1,000 pop	N.A.

Playgrounds for 6 to 12 year olds typically include an enclosed playground equipment area for elementary school children; a turfed area for active games; a shaded area for quiet activities; a paved multi-purpose area for roller skating, dancing, hop-skotch, and games requiring specific courts such as basketball, volleyball, etc.; and an area for field games such as softball, touch football, soccer, etc. These areas frequently are included as part of an elementary school playground and may be two (2) to four (4) acres in size.

C. EVALUATING CITY FACILITIES VIA RECOGNIZED STANDARDS

The purpose of such "standards" is to act as a guide rather than as a hard and fast rule. Obviously the size, geographic layout and character of the community will have a great deal of bearing on what is appropriate, as will the amount of open land that is available to develop such facilities.

The application of these standards to the City of Gloucester's actual results from the inventory of the City Facilities shows the comparison on Table R-1.

Overall, the City appears to rate very well in relation to these standards. The categories in which the City seemed to come up short of the suggested acreage standards were the area of playgrounds for 6 to 12 year old children; playfields for team sports; and general open space area for strolling or picnicking; and fishing areas.

Within the City of Gloucester, given the age of its school facilities, the acreage is just not available for such well equipped facilities and thus the elementary schools have only minimal sized paved play areas; have no turfed play areas; with one exception (Ridgeway School) have no play equipment; no shaded areas or sitting areas; and no provision for basketball, volleyball or other court sports. Thus, the burden of providing playgrounds has fallen to the Municipal Government which also faces a problem of providing neighborhood oriented sites with acreage large enough to accommodate a playground facility as described above.

As a result, the City has wisely concentrated its efforts on a consolidated playground/playfield and playing court complex at Johnson Boulevard and Nicholson Road. This well-equipped, centralized facility is within a 3/4 mile radius of virtually all sections of the City, except those newer sections of the City east of Rts. 130 and 42.

The acreage devoted to open space and picnic area lands in the inventory falls considerably short (-32 acres) of the standard established for a city the size of Gloucester.

Geographically, the City's facilities seem to be reasonably well dispersed and provide a rather even coverage of playlots and basketball courts, in addition to the centralized Johnson Blvd. recreation facility. The two exceptions to this good geographic coverage are the Highland Park and Park Manor/Cloverdale neighborhoods on the East side of the City. Neither of these neighborhoods have a play lot within 1/4 mile of the majority of their houses.

D. FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR RECREATIONAL AND OPEN SPACE DEVELOPMENT

Planning new or upgraded facilities to meet future needs and curing present uneven levels of geographic coverage is the essential task of the Recreation Component of a Master Plan. In the preceding paragraphs a certain level of present need has been defined in order to establish what future steps might be necessary in order to meet these needs. To this, one must add those considerations related to future growth (or non-growth) or changes in the population which would impact the need for recreational facilities.

E. PROJECTED FUTURE POPULATION

As important as it is to build for present needs, it is just as important to anticipate future trends as they are likely to impact the use of existing or planned facilities.

Recreation trends are directly related to the age and relative affluence of the population. Generally, an older population may participate less in field sports but may compensate by participating more in individual oriented sports such as jogging, bicycling, tennis, birdwatching or a variety of table sports. On the other hand, teenagers and pre-teenagers are likely to widely participate in team sports. Similarly, the advent of money or the lack thereof will affect an individual's participation in certain sports such as golf, indoor tennis, and other sports with high fees or requiring costly equipment.

It is with these observations in mind that it becomes important to look at the projected changes in population by age group for Gloucester City:

<u>AGE GROUP</u>	<u>1970</u>	<u>1980</u>	<u>1990</u>	<u>% CHANGE 1970-1990</u>
0-4	1282	880	728	-0.43
5-9	1411	882	750	-0.47
10-14	1424	1063	760	-0.47
15-19	1326	1262	761	-0.43
20-24	1148	1095	817	-0.29
25-34	1554	1700	1620	0.04
35-44	1502	1264	1382	-0.08
45-54	1926	1387	1167	-0.39
54-59	852	861	766	-0.10
60-64	710	853	759	0.07
65 +	1530	1800	2027	0.32
TOTALS	14665	13047	11537	-0.21

Based on the trends observed in the above population age group projections, it would be difficult to justify any substantial expansion of the City's supply of playing fields or courts. Clearly the key age groups (under 25 yrs.) who are the most likely users of these facilities are on the decline in Gloucester City. Thus the demand for such facilities could be expected to decline proportionately.

On the other hand, the 60 plus age groups can be expected to continue to increase and thus some attention should be given to providing more recreation facilities of a passive nature to serve this group. Such an emphasis might include shaded seating areas for conversation in small vest pocket parks, the waterfront park and the Johnson Blvd. facility.

Beyond these age considerations for Facility Planning, the City should strongly consider a program of upgrading existing facilities and filling in gaps in the geographic coverage by existing facilities.

II. CONSERVATION

A. CONSERVATION OF CITY RESOURCES

The City of Gloucester is approximately 90% developed. Of that land which is undeveloped, most abuts either Newton Creek or Big Timber Creek.

The balance of the vacant land is contained in small parcels scattered throughout the community, the largest of which are under two (2) acres in size and the majority of which are less than 10,000 square feet in size.

B. GUIDELINES FOR PRESERVATION

Conservation efforts should be directed at preserving meaningful areas of open space. In terms of ecology, the main goal would be to preserve open areas along the stream valleys of Big Timber and Newton Creeks.

Stabilization of stream banks or sloped areas should be undertaken where necessary. These areas should be maintained in vegetation which aids in stabilization of the soil.

Flat open areas can be improved for recreational uses as long as vegetative cover is maintained and large areas of flood plain are not used for structures.

C. MAKING MAXIMUM USE OF THE CITY'S NATURAL ASSETS

Gloucester City came into being because of its prime location along the Delaware River, nestled between the Newton Creek on the north and the Big Timber Creek on the south. Over the years this location has served the City well, providing it with a prime source of transportation, recreation, and a base for industrial development. This valuable resource is currently under-utilized; and it would behoove the City to seriously investigate the redevelopment of these waterfront assets to incorporate a blend of recreational activities with commercial and residential uses which could capitalize on the spectacular exposure and views along the River.

D. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

In order to beautify and enhance the natural assets of the City and to provide a thorough geographic coverage to all neighborhoods for recreation and open space, the City should adopt the following goals:

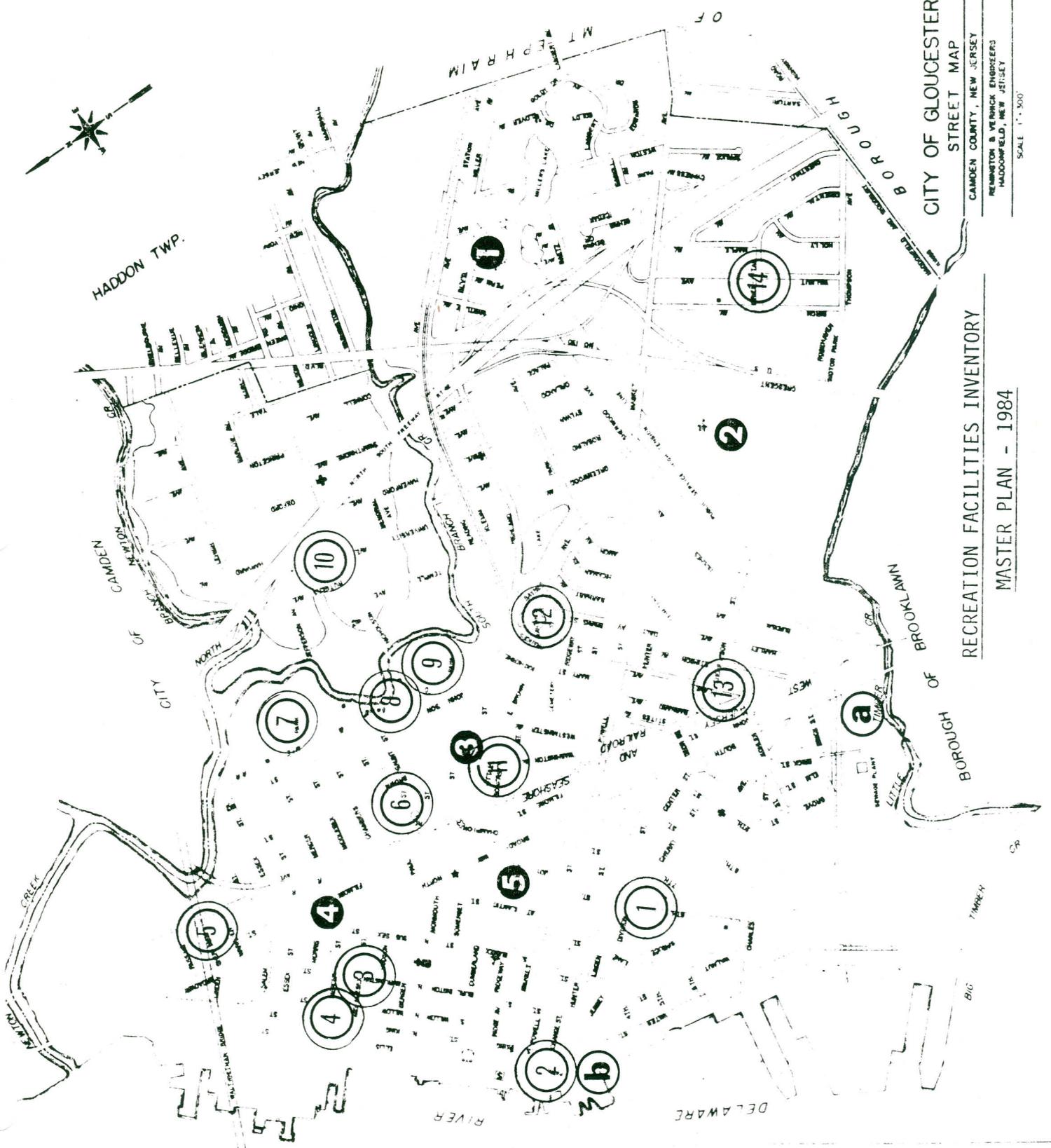
1. Land should be acquired in the vicinity of Park and Gaskill Avenues, in the Park Manor Neighborhood in order to provide a neighborhood play lot for young children.
2. Land should be acquired in the Highland Park neighborhood in a central location (vicinity of Park and Sylvan Avenues) to provide a neighborhood play lot for young children.
3. The park at King Street and New Jersey Avenue should be developed for passive recreational uses such as strolling, picnicking, sitting and watching the river traffic in order to provide facilities for the increasing elderly population and those other elements of the City's population who would enjoy a quiet place of reflection and relaxation.
4. The City should encourage the School Board to upgrade and equip their school yard play areas, particularly in areas which are not close to a City-owned facility such as at the elementary school at Cornell Avenue and Nicholson Road.
5. The City should develop a two-year improvement program for the existing City parks and recreation sites as per the recommendations for each facility in the inventory section of this report.

6. The Johnson Blvd. playground should be enhanced with more play equipment for children in the 6 to 12 year old range. This equipment might include such items as a balance beam; large play scapes; climbing poles; horizontal bars and ladder; parallel bars; large sliding board; and a senior swing set.
7. The City should investigate the acquisition of the private ballfield located at King and Jersey Aves.
8. The City should investigate the potential for making useable additional park land along the east bank of the Newton Creek (South Branch) on the opposite side from the park on Johnson Blvd.
9. In cooperation with the Borough of Brooklawn, the City should request that the State Department of Environmental Protection undertake a feasibility study for the cleanup of the mouth of Big Timber Creek, including the removal of all old pilings and the dredging of the lagoon area for use as a marina and water sports area.
10. The City should make application for the Riparian Rights related to the old piers at the King Street park so as to lay the potential groundwork for a waterfront restaurant and fishing pier at that location.
11. The City should adopt a flood plain protection ordinance;
12. The City should investigate the potential for acquiring lands for stream valley preservation along the Big Timber Creek.

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HADDON TWP.



CITY OF GLOUCESTER
STREET MAP

CAMDEN COUNTY, NEW JERSEY
REYNOLDS & VEINICK ENGINEERS
HADDONFIELD, NEW JERSEY

SCALE 1" = 500'

RECREATION FACILITIES INVENTORY

MASTER PLAN - 1984