

Stewart Park Rehabilitation Action Plan



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Prepared by:
Rick Manning, ASLA
Cayuga Waterfront Trail Initiative Program Coordinator

Prepared for:
**City of Ithaca, Strategic Tourism Planning Board, and
Tompkins County Chamber of Commerce Foundation**

STEWART PARK REHABILITATION ACTION PLAN

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Steering Committee

Scott Wiggins, Strategic Tourism Planning Board
Mary Tomlan, City of Ithaca Common Council
Jennifer Dotson, City of Ithaca Common Council
Leslie Chatterton, City of Ithaca Department of Planning and Development
JoAnn Cornish, City of Ithaca Department of Planning and Development
Suzanne Vandemark, City of Ithaca Parks Commission
Steve Hunt, Tompkins County Chamber of Commerce
Herb Dwyer, Tompkins County Chamber of Commerce
Doug Levine, Tompkins County Chamber of Commerce
Rick Manning, Project Coordinator

Stakeholder Committee

Mayor Carolyn Peterson, City of Ithaca
JoAnn Cornish, City of Ithaca Department of Planning and Development
Leslie Chatterton, City of Ithaca Department of Planning and Development
Mary Tomlan, City of Ithaca Common Council
Dan Mitchell, Ithaca Beer Company
Rob Licht, Artist/Designer
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Chapter One

Executive Summary



View of Renwick Park from the Water Tower – 1890's



Swimming in Cayuga Lake at Stewart Park – 1950's

Renwick Park was developed in the 1890's by the Ithaca Street Railway as a recreational destination for city residents and visitors. The City of Ithaca, under Mayor Edwin Stewart, purchased the park in 1921, creating Ithaca's first waterfront public park. Today, many long-time Ithaca residents vividly and fondly remember the park from their childhoods in the 1940's, 1950's and early 1960's, when they could swim, picnic and play away their summer days and nights. More than 100 years after its founding, most City residents and park visitors agree that Stewart Park is in need of rehabilitation.

The Tompkins County Chamber of Commerce Foundation's Cayuga Waterfront Trail Initiative received a grant in 2008 from the Strategic Tourism Planning Board to prepare the Stewart Park Rehabilitation Action Plan. Project goals are to:

1. Develop a prioritized action plan of park rehabilitation and enhancement projects that will lead to the rehabilitation of Stewart Park.
2. Explore long-term park and trail management strategies for our waterfront, focusing on the development of a 'friends of Stewart Park and the Waterfront Trail' organization.

The preparation of the Stewart Park Rehabilitation Action Plan (SPRAP) was overseen by a Steering Committee comprised of City of Ithaca representatives from Common Council, Board of Public Works, Parks Commission and Planning Department staff, Chamber of Commerce, and the Strategic Tourism Planning Board. A group of more than 30 stakeholders participated in two meetings, providing their ideas and visions for the park. Finally more than 120 members of the public participated in two public meetings. We learned how important Stewart Park is to our community and its residents, heard many great stories about the park, and were told, in no uncertain terms, not to alter the fundamental character of the park.

The Stewart Park Rehabilitation Action Plan report presents many projects that, if implemented in a timely manner, will lead to the rehabilitation of Stewart Park during the next decade. It describes issues that are important to understand and consider when implementing rehabilitation projects. This report is not a park master plan – it does not present an overall physical design for the park. Furthermore, not all park facilities are addressed in this report. Funding was not adequate for such a comprehensive study and the process was always intended to focus on critical projects and park needs.



Two Stakeholder Committee meetings were held at the Tompkins County Chamber of Commerce Conference Room to share ideas, projects, opportunities and concerns about Stewart Park.

Principles that have guided the review and consideration of park projects include the following:

- ✓ Do no harm.
- ✓ Rehabilitate and/or restore historic park buildings considering both historic preservation guidelines and energy conservation and production opportunities.
- ✓ Improve accessibility in landscape and park buildings.
- ✓ Improve and 'green' park maintenance practices.
- ✓ Ensure that proposed park improvements are environmentally sustainable, well designed, and where appropriate involve Ithaca's arts community in the design and decision making process.
- ✓ Consider lake water quality when planning park rehabilitation projects.
- ✓ Educate visitors and park users about the park's natural and cultural history.
- ✓ Develop a park rehabilitation partnership - a 'friends of the park' organization - that can oversee project implementation and park management.
- ✓ Begin park rehabilitation with smaller, and less costly volunteer projects to create early successes and build momentum to implement larger rehabilitation projects.

KEY PARK REHABILITATION PROJECTS AND ISSUES

Following are projects that are critical to the success of the Stewart Park rehabilitation effort. Some of these projects are short-term projects that should be completed by 2011. Others could take a decade or more, but if completed will add great value to the park.

- Complete **Phase 3 of the Cayuga Waterfront Trail** linking Stewart Park to the Ithaca Farmers Market, the Youth Bureau and the County Visitor Center.
- Complete **painting and minor repairs to the exterior of the historic pavilions** at the historic heart of the park (Large Pavilion and DPW/Wharton Pavilion).
- Complete at least the first two phases of the **Cascadilla Boathouse Restoration** to make building functional for the Cascadilla Boat Club and for special event usage.
- Develop **All Children's Playground and Spray Play Area** (fully accessible and integrated for kids of all abilities).
- Construct **Ithaca Motion Picture Project** in former Wharton studio pavilion.
- Construct **Performance Pier** and begin lake edge enhancement.
- Improve the pavilion parking lot by incorporating **CWT Stewart Park Trailhead**, installing attractive permeable pavement that can be used for parking or as a plaza and seating area for special event. Develop interpretive materials on park natural and cultural history to be incorporated into the trailhead design.
- **Improve and "green" park landscape maintenance practices**, including reduction of mowing along creek and lake edges and in other less intensively used areas. Advocate for increased park

- maintenance staff and park planting budget.
- Renovate the **Memorial Flagpole Garden** which was designed to honor Mayor Edwin Stewart led the City's effort to purchase and create Ithaca's first waterfront public park.
- Create and fundraise for a **Park Landscape Improvement Program** to implement small landscaping projects in the park.
- Work with Water Resources Council, Floating Classroom, Community Science Institute, and the City develop an affordable and informative approach to **monitoring lake water quality at Stewart Park** and in adjacent streams/drainageways. Plan for park projects that enhance lake, creek, and adjacent drainageway water quality.
- **Monitor dredging plans** to help prevent negative impacts to park and to create opportunities for park improvements with dredge spoil materials.
- Develop a **'bird-friendly' Stewart Park Initiative** to enhance habitat, provide educational information to park users, and improve bird watching opportunities. Review all projects for their impact on this important bird area. Develop strategy for addressing Canada Geese population, including the excrement on land and impact on lake water quality (nutrient loading and pathogens).

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

Park rehabilitation projects are organized into the following categories and time frames. Items 1 and 2 are summarized below. All 6 items are described in Chapter 4: Implementation Strategies and Priorities.

1. Summary of 2009 Projects and Planning Initiatives
2. 2010 Short-Term Projects and Planning Initiatives
3. Short-Term Maintenance and Construction Projects (2010 – 2011);
4. Short-Term Planning and Fundraising Initiatives (2010 – 2011);
5. Mid-Term Park Rehabilitation Projects (2012 – 2014); and,
6. Long-Term Park Rehabilitation Projects (2015 – 2018 and beyond).

1. Summary of 2009 Projects and Planning Initiatives

Following is a summary of 2009 volunteer efforts and planning/fundraising initiatives that were led by CWTI, the City, The Ithaca Beer Company, Ithaca Rotary Club, Tommy Mann, Norm Pure and the Ithaca Motion Picture Project (IMPP):

- Conducted spring cleanup on March 28, 2009.
- Organized volunteer workday, with Ithaca Beer Company and Norm Pure, to complete south elevation of the Large Pavilion.
- Organized a series of volunteer workdays to prepare and paint the DPW Pavilion. The north, east and south elevations are nearly completed. This effort was led by Tommy Mann, with CWTI and IMPP assistance.
- Received \$1,000 grant from Ithaca Rotary Club to prepare architectural feasibility study for a permanent carousel building. Study was completed by Claudia Brenner Architects and presented to Parks Commission in November. The study suggests that a permanent building may be too large and expensive to be feasible and that the City should consider either purchasing a tent to provide winter cover or continue to take carousel down during winter months. Improved winter storage space should be developed.
- The City, with CWTI's assistance, submitted a \$360,000 NY State Environmental Protection Fund grant for funding to design and construct the Stewart Park Performance Pier and Trailhead Plaza. Grant selections are to be announced in early 2010.
- Schematic plans for the Renovation of the Memorial Flagpole Garden were prepared. A grant for renovation was submitted to the Ithaca Garden Club. The grant was not selected for funding at this time.
- Submit draft Tourism Capital Grant Feasibility Study grant submission to the Strategic Tourism Planning Board for architectural study on Stewart Park buildings and structures including the Cascadilla Boathouse, Large Pavilion, Tea Pavilion, Concession Building, new Park Maintenance Building, All Children's Playground, Memorial Flagpole Garden, and, possibly, the Wharton Studio

- Building.
- Rick Manning, CWTI Program Coordinator, submitted a grant to the New York State Council on the Arts through the Community Arts Partnership for detailed design work on the Stewart Park Performance Pier and Trailhead Plaza and for the Environmental Sculpture Trail. The grant was recommended for funding but is pending state budget approval.
- Secured the assistance of two Cornell Johnson School of Management Park Fellows to help develop plans for a Friends organization.
- This report, the Stewart Park Rehabilitation Action Plan, was completed in August 2009, approved by Steering Committee in November 2009, and updated in December 2009.

2. 2010 Short-Term Projects and Planning Initiatives

The following are some of the proposed 2010 park maintenance and rehabilitation projects and planning/fundraising initiatives. See Chapter 3 for project by project implementation activities and Chapter 4 for a more comprehensive list.

Projects Underway

- Finalize plans and begin construction of Cayuga Waterfront Trail Phase 3 in Stewart Park. Construction is scheduled to be completed in 2010.
- Submit STPB Tourism Capital Feasibility Grant application in January for architectural study described above.

Planned 2010 Projects

- Spring Waterfront Cleanup will include Stewart Park in March 2010.
- Remove all movable concrete curb stops along park roads.
- Develop fundraising campaign for CWT Stewart Park Trailhead/Pavilion Parking Lot renovation.
- Complete exterior painting and needed repairs to Large Pavilion.
- Complete exterior painting and needed repairs to DPW Pavilion.
- Begin volunteer preparation, priming and painting of Cascadilla Boathouse.
- Develop fundraising campaign for Stewart Park Playground, including All Children's Playground and Spray Play area.
- Resubmit grant (if requested) for Memorial Flagpole Garden to Ithaca Garden Club after more detailed design plans and estimates are developed.
- Develop more detailed designs and estimates for the Performance Pier, Trailhead Plaza and the Sculpture Trail.
- Make substantial progress towards the development of a Friends of Stewart Park and Waterfront Trail non-profit organization.
- Advocate for reorganization and an increase in City park maintenance staff and budget.

FRIENDS OF STEWART PARK AND THE WATERFRONT TRAIL

It is clear from the experience of many other communities that maintaining a vibrant park and trail system requires a partnership between the public and private sectors. The Tompkins County Chamber of Commerce Foundation's Cayuga Waterfront Trail Initiative (CWTI) has been successfully working with the City of Ithaca to plan and fundraise for the development of the Cayuga Waterfront Trail. During the next two years, an independent, tax-exempt 501c3 organization should be incorporated to continue the successful public-private partnership that has grown from the Waterfront Trail project and the volunteer efforts to rehabilitate Stewart Park. Representatives from the SPRAP Steering and Stakeholder Committees will be holding regular meetings throughout 2010 to plan for the incorporation of the Friends organization and for many of the 2010 short term project.



Chapter Two

Introduction, Project Goals & Background

INTRODUCTION

Renwick Park was developed in the 1890's by the Ithaca Street Railway as a recreational destination for city residents and area visitors. By 1895, two central pavilions, a water tower and bandstand, and an 880' long pier for steamboats, were completed. A year later, the Cascadilla Boathouse was constructed at the northwest corner of the park, along Fall Creek. For more than a decade, Renwick Park thrived with hundreds of visitors enjoying summer evening musical performances and day time amusements. However, as automobiles increased in popularity and trolley ridership decreased, the park's popularity diminished. From 1914 to 1919, the Wharton Brothers used the former dance pavilion and much of the park as a silent film studio while allowing the public to continue using the park. The City of Ithaca, under the leadership of Mayor Edwin Stewart, purchased the park in 1921, creating Ithaca's first waterfront public park. Improvements were made throughout the 1920's and the park was dedicated in his honor shortly after his death in 1927. A master plan for the park was completed in 1934 and many additional improvements were made to the park at this time by the Works Progress Administration (WPA).

Stewart Park is Ithaca's most historic and revered waterfront park. Many older Ithacans fondly remember swimming, picnicking, and listening to music in the Park during the 1940's, 1950's and 1960's. Now, more than 100 years after its founding, most Ithacans agree that Stewart Park is in need of rehabilitation.



Cascadilla Boathouse and Renwick Pier during 1890's.

To help address this need, the Cayuga Waterfront Trail Initiative received a \$15,000 Tourism Capital Grant Feasibility Study grant from the Strategic Tourism Planning Board (STPB) in 2008 to prepare the Stewart Park Rehabilitation Action Plan (SPRAP). SPRAP engaged the Ithaca community in a process to help create a new vision for Stewart Park so that it can once again become a source of civic pride for residents and an attractive waterfront destination for visitors. Project goals are to:

1. Develop a prioritized action plan of park rehabilitation and enhancements projects that will lead to the rehabilitation of Stewart Park, so that it once again becomes a source of pride and enjoyment for residents and a key component of our region's tourism infrastructure;
2. Explore long-term park and trail management strategies for our waterfront focusing on the development of a 'friends of Stewart Park and the Waterfront Trail' that would continue the successful public-private partnership involving the City, the Chamber of Commerce and the community that has led to development of the Cayuga Waterfront Trail.

STEWART PARK REHABILITATION ACTION PLAN

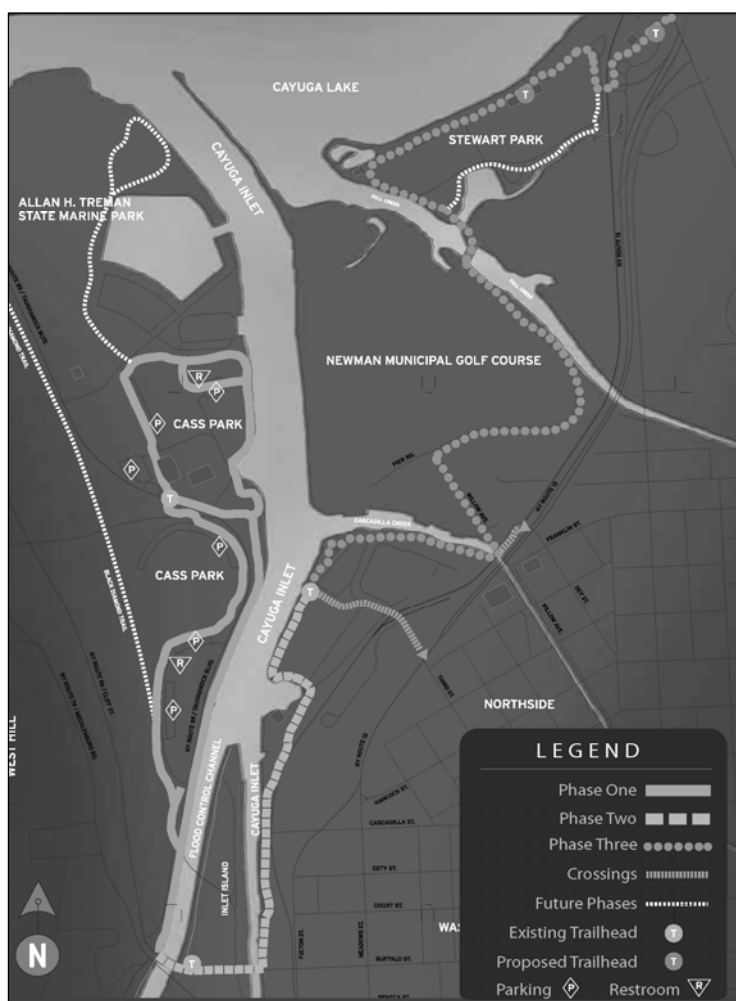
Many Stewart Park initiatives had begun before the SPRAP process was conceived. These include the recently installed Youth Bureau Pier for small boat launching, Phase 3 of the Cayuga Waterfront Trail (2010 construction), Large Pavilion improvements (supported by the Ithaca Beer Company and hundreds of volunteers), and exterior painting and preparation of the Cascadilla Boathouse's second story windows and veranda (began in April under the City's leadership with Cornell Historic Preservation Program student assistance). Planning for other park initiatives, such as the Ithaca Motion Picture Project in the former Wharton Studio building and the Performance Pier were also underway prior to the SPRAP process.

Park improvements that are implemented as a result of this plan will enhance the experience for existing park users and make the park more inviting to other residents and visitors. While the park is now primarily used for passive recreational activities, it has successfully hosted large musical performances and festivals throughout its 100 year history as a private and a publicly-owned park. The park's lakeside setting and its location on the Cayuga Lake Scenic Byway, in the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor and adjacent to the Tompkins County Visitor Center, all contribute to making Stewart Park a key element of our region's tourism infrastructure.

WHY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE INVOLVEMENT?

Stewart Park was developed by two private institutions in the 1890's. As described above, the Ithaca Street Railway developed Renwick Park to create a destination and increase ridership while the Cascadilla School constructed the Cascadilla Boathouse to enhance its rowing program and position as preparatory school for Cornell University, a national rowing powerhouse at that time. The park was purchased and opened as a public park in the 1920's under the leadership of Mayor Stewart, for whom the park was named after his death. Thus the notion of a public-private partnership in this rehabilitation effort has deep roots in the park's own history.

The Tompkins County Chamber of Commerce Foundation's Cayuga Waterfront Trail Initiative (CWTI) has led a successful planning and fundraising effort that has resulted in raising nearly \$3 million of government (Federal, State and City) and private matching funds for Cayuga Waterfront Trail development. The public-private partnership model established for the Cayuga Waterfront Trail can be effective in implementing the Stewart Park rehabilitation process described in this report.

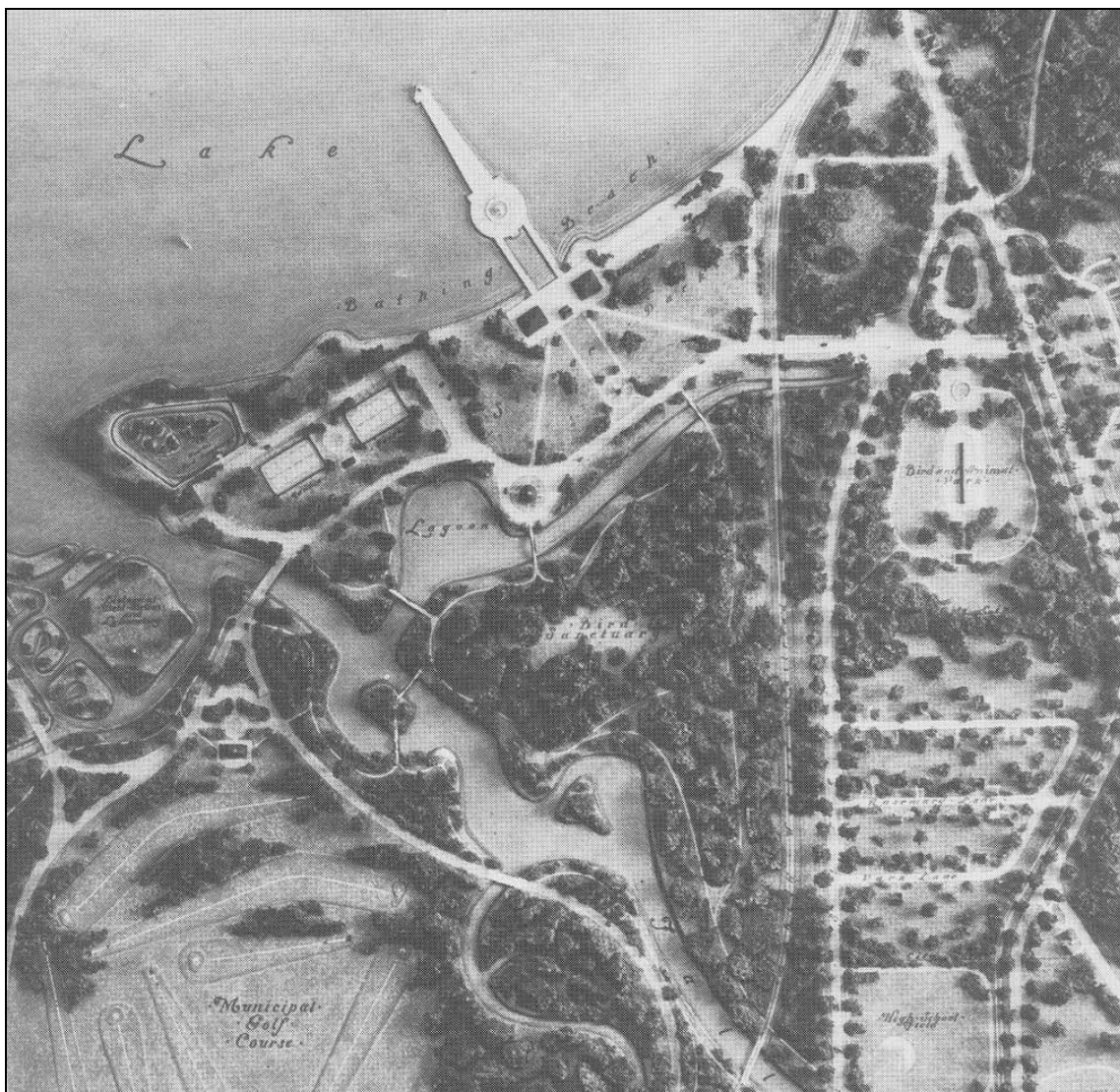


Cayuga Waterfront Trail Phases

TIMELINE OF PARK DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING INITIATIVES

This report does not provide a comprehensive history of the park. See appendices for detailed historical information about the park. Following is a brief summary and timeline of previous park planning and improvement efforts.

- 1890's – Cascadilla Boathouse constructed by the Cascadilla School. Renwick Park developed by the Ithaca Street Railway.
- 1910's – Wharton Brothers develop silent film studio in the former dance pavilion. Cayuga Bird Club and City create Renwick Woods (Fuentes Bird Sanctuary).
- 1920's – City, under the leadership of Mayor Stewart, purchases park.
- 1930's – Stewart Park Master plan is prepared. Stewart Park roads, landscape and much of Newman Golf course's design were constructed during this period by Civilian Conservation Corps.
- 1960's – Lakefront willows planted where lakeshore was extended with Route 13 fill materials. Public swimming ends.
- 1980's – Three Stewart Park plans were prepared during this period.
- 1990's – Tompkins County Waterfront Plan and Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan both included ideas for Stewart Park improvement, including the Performance Pier, the Cayuga Waterfront Trail, and lakeshore improvements.



1934 Stewart Park Master Plan

PROJECT ORGANIZATION AND METHODOLOGY

The Stewart Park Rehabilitation Action Plan was structured to encourage active participation by stakeholders and the public, while providing oversight by a Steering Committee with representatives from the City of Ithaca (park owner), Tompkins County Chamber of Commerce Foundation (recipient of grant), and Strategic Tourism Board (funding agency). This group is responsible for recommending the adoption of the plan by other City bodies and boards. The Steering Committee met regularly before and after both the Stakeholder Committee and the public meetings to review project recommendations and progress.

Individuals and organizations with an interest in the park were invited to attend two Stakeholder Committee meetings held in June and October of 2008 (see list of participants above in acknowledgements). At the first meeting, attendees were invited to share their visions for the park and concerns about projects and implementing park improvements. The second stakeholder committee meeting involved a detailed discussion and review of projects and priorities.

Two public meetings were conducted during the course of the project. The first, held in July 2008 at the Large Pavilion in Stewart Park, was attended by approximately 75 people. They shared their memories of swimming and playing in the park and their ideas for enhancing the park. Some of the key themes were to 'do no harm' to the existing character of the park, to improve maintenance of park buildings and landscape, and explore the feasibility of bringing swimming back to the park. The second meeting was held in February 2009 at the Tompkins County Public Library with approximately 40 members of the public in attendance. In addition, more than 150 surveys were completed by meeting attendees and by members of the public.

REHABILITATION PRINCIPLES

Some guiding principles that emerged during the preparation of the Stewart Park Rehabilitation Action Plan are:

1. ***Do no harm.*** We have heard over and over again how fond Ithacans are of the park and of the site. While many agree that the park and its facilities are in need of rehabilitation, virtually all would like the existing park character and history to be respected.
2. ***Rehabilitate and/or restore historic park buildings.*** Park buildings are in poor condition and not always functioning at their highest and best use. Buildings should be painted (including repairs and preparation), and renovated or restored to optimize their use and to enhance the overall appearance of the park. Historic preservation guidelines should be carefully followed.
3. ***Improve accessibility in landscape and park buildings.*** The Waterfront Trail will be a significant improvement for mobility-impaired park users and provide a needed facility for pedestrians and other users. Accessibility improvements to the park's historic buildings should also be improved as building projects are undertaken.
4. ***Consider lake water quality when planning park rehabilitation projects.*** All projects and practices should be reviewed to determine their impact on lake water quality.
5. ***Improve and 'green' park maintenance.*** One of the main comments in public surveys about the park was related to the need for improved park maintenance. This can be achieved by a combination of increased City staff (currently the park is maintained by one full time staff member with limited seasonal assistance) and increased assistance by volunteers and work study students.
6. ***Make environmentally sustainable and well-designed park improvements.*** Improvements to park buildings should be energy efficient and eligible for LEED certification. Opportunities for energy production should be considered, including wind and solar. Landscape improvements should reflect current best practices as described in the ASLA Sustainable Sites Initiative and/or Audubon International certification programs. Ecologically-based landscape improvements can include reduced mowing to lower emissions, discourage geese grazing, and enhance habitat, new plantings that enhance biodiversity and park aesthetics, and improved stormwater management practices.

7. **Educate visitors about the park's natural and cultural history.** Provide interpretive information about the site's natural history and importance for birding, and its cultural history as a private trolley park, silent film studio, bird sanctuary and public park.
8. **Develop park rehabilitation partnership.** Park improvements should be economically sustainable which will require a vibrant partnership between the city, chamber and the community. Begin with the modest, low-cost and volunteer activities such as painting and planting that are now underway. Early project successes will help in the development of a non-profit 'friends' organization to help the City with fundraising and maintenance.

A PLAN FOR REHABILITATION ACTION

This Rehabilitation Action Plan is not a true park master plan. This is, in part, because previous master planning efforts have led to few measurable park improvements. In addition a park master plan for Stewart Park would likely cost in excess of \$50,000 in design fees, an amount of money that is currently not available. This planning process has resulted in a list of rehabilitation projects and principles that focus on improving and updating existing facilities. It aims to implement some of the projects that have been studied in previous park studies and plans. The Steering Committee is confident that this incremental approach can lead to early successes that will make it possible to implement at least some of the long-term projects described in this report.

STEWART PARK REHABILITATION ACTION PLAN

Chapter Three

Park Rehabilitation Projects and Issues

This Chapter describes in some detail eleven park rehabilitation projects that have emerged as key projects during the course of the SPRAP planning projects. They are:

1. Cayuga Waterfront Trail – Phase 3
2. Stewart Park Trailhead for Waterfront Trail
3. Stewart Park Performance Pier
4. Large Pavilion
5. Wharton Studio Motion Picture Center
6. Memorial Flagpole Garden
7. All Children's Playground and Spray Play Area
8. Carousel Pavilion
9. Cascadilla Boathouse
10. Park Roads and Parking
11. Park Landscape

Other projects described briefly include the Small Pavilion, Bocce Courts, and the Concession Building.

Three long-term park management issues that can have a significant impact on the park are discussed in some detail. These include:

- Water Quality and Swimming
- Birding and creating a more bird-friendly park
- Dredging



Volunteers scraping and removing vines in preparation for painting the DPW Pavilion, the former Wharton Studios, on Saturday, May 9.

KEY PROJECT #1: CAYUGA WATERFRONT TRAIL - PHASE 3



PROJECT DESCRIPTION: Phase 3 of the Cayuga Waterfront Trail will link the Ithaca Farmers Market to Stewart Park and the County Visitor Center. Construction is scheduled to begin next spring and should be completed in 2010. The trail will be located along Fall Creek and along the lake edge of the main parking areas to create a link from the suspension bridges to the Ithaca Youth Bureau and the Chamber of Commerce/Visitor Center. Funding has been secured to construct this project. Funds for the trailhead, benches and other enhancements will be raised by CWTI during 2010.

In the future a loop trail should be completed in the park, similar to the 2 mile loop in Cass Park to enhance the accessibility of the park and open up new views and experiences for park visitors and trail users. A section of the proposed trail (along southern/Fuertes edge between the existing pedestrian suspension bridge at the southwest corner and the main entry) has been informally designated as the 'Stewart Park Sculpture Trail'. The trail in this area of the park passes along the edge of the Lagoon and the Bird Sanctuary is considered a viable area for sculpture and environmental art installations.



Before (left) and after (right) images of proposed Cayuga Waterfront Trail along north edge of western parking area. Trail to be developed within footprint of existing parking area. Brick shoulder shown will be replaced by a 5' bioswale.

STEWART PARK REHABILITATION ACTION PLAN



Before (left) and after (right) images of proposed Cayuga Waterfront Trail along north edge of eastern parking area. Trail to be constructed 10' north of existing parking area, separated by a grass shoulder/bioswale.

PROJECT PARTNERS: City of Ithaca, Cayuga Waterfront Trail Initiative (Tompkins County Chamber of Commerce Foundation), and Community Arts Partnership.

IMPLEMENTATION STEPS AND TIMELINES:

1. ST – 2009 and 2010: Construct Waterfront Trail – Phase 3 (by City of Ithaca).
2. ST – 2010 and 2011: Fundraise for Stewart Sculpture Trail
3. ST/MT - 2010 to 2014: Ongoing fundraising for and installation of trail enhancements including overlooks, benches, interpretive panels, sculptures, etc.
4. MT - 2012 to 2014: Complete Stewart Park Trail loop by constructing the 'sculpture trail' section.



Sketch Plan of the proposed Stewart Park Sculpture Trail from the CWT Phase 3 Feasibility Study.

KEY PROJECT #2: STEWART PARK TRAILHEAD FOR THE WATERFRONT TRAIL



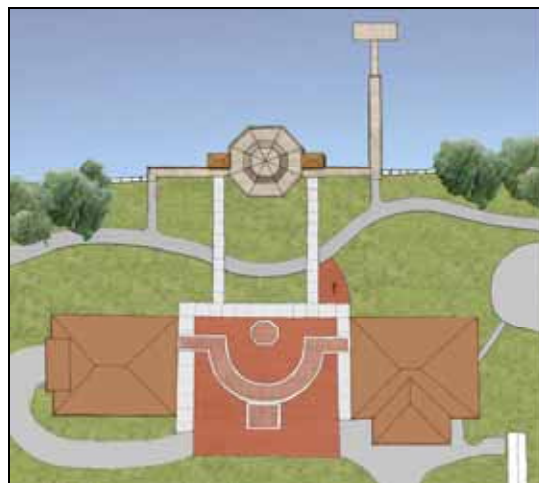
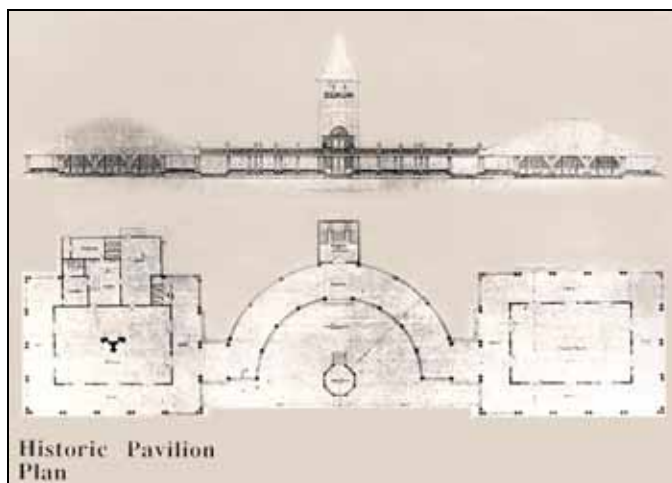
PROJECT DESCRIPTION: In Stewart Park the CWT Phase 3 trailhead is to be located at the parking area between the two pavilions, south of the Cayuga Lake shoreline and the proposed Performance Pier. Parking and vehicular access will continue to be required in this area to service the pavilions. However a more attractive and permeable surfacing material can be installed to accommodate parking or to function as a trailhead and plaza for special events and performances. Vehicular access to the plaza area can be restricted or limited during special events. The permeable pavement would eliminate stormwater runoff from the lot draining directly into Cayuga Lake, as is currently occurring.



CWT's Stewart Park Trailhead is to be located at the parking area between the historic park pavilions. It is to be funded, at least in part, by donations of Stepping Stones as done successfully at other CWT trailheads.

STEWART PARK REHABILITATION ACTION PLAN

The successful CWTI Stepping Stone program can be used to help fund the construction of the plaza trailhead. Other elements that are typically incorporated into CWT trailhead, such as benches, bicycle parking, maps and interpretive panels will be included, but will be designed to be compatible with the historic park pavilions. The use of the trailhead funding mechanism to renovate and 'green' the parking area between the plaza presents an opportunity for the Waterfront Trail to make a contribution towards the park rehabilitation effort, helping improve one of the key areas in the park. The Legacy Foundation of Tompkins County has already awarded a \$10,000 matching grant to provide 1 to 1 matches for stepping stone donors at the Stewart Park Trailhead. In addition CWTI and the City submitted a \$360,000 grant for New York State Environmental Protection Fund support for both the Stewart Park Performance Pier and the Trailhead Plaza. Grants will likely be awarded in early 2010.



Renwick Park was constructed with a water tower and a bandstand between the pavilions. The loggia, connecting the pavilions to the watertower, shown in the historic plan on the left, was never constructed. The concept plan on right proposes to recreate this historic plan in a brick paving pattern in the parking plaza/trailhead area.

PROJECT PARTNERS: City of Ithaca and the Cayuga Waterfront Trail Initiative.

IMPLEMENTATION STEPS AND TIMELINES:

1. ST – 2010: Develop detailed designs and cost estimate for trailhead and present trailhead design plans to the City Parks Commission, CWT Client Committee, and the City Planning Board for site plan approval.
2. ST – 2010: Begin stepping stone fundraising campaign to raise needed trailhead construction funds. Find a sponsor(s) in \$10,000 to \$25,000 donation range to supplement stepping stone donations.
3. ST – 2010/2011: Construct trailhead plaza during or soon after phase 3 trail construction.



Hundreds of community members have supported the development of trailheads at Cass Park, Inlet Island and the Ithaca Farmers Market (shown above). This fundraising method can be successfully used at the Stewart Park trailhead.

KEY PROJECT #3: STEWART PARK PERFORMANCE PIER



PROJECT DESCRIPTION: A pier has been located in the vicinity of the pavilion complex on and off throughout the park's history. The 1934 Stewart Park Master Plan showed an elegant pier centered on the park pavilions. The 1987 Stewart Park Preservation Plan and the 1997 Tompkins County Waterfront Plan both showed plans and sketches for a pier located in this area. The Waterfront Plan described it as a performance pier where the lake would provide the backdrop for musical and other performances, both large and small. Seating for small performances could be accommodated on the lawn between the parking area and the proposed pier. Seating for large performances could spill into the parking lot between the pavilions and possibly even into the lawn area between the pavilions and the Memorial Flagpole. In 2007 the Cayuga Waterfront Trail Initiative worked with the City of Ithaca to submit a State Park Development grant application for the Stewart Park Performance Pier. The City requested \$160,000 of state funding to be matched by the City's boat launch pier, City force account labor, and a Chamber of Commerce Foundation pledge to raise \$50,000 towards the required financial match. The \$320,000 project was not funded at that time. However the City constructed a small boat launch pier at the Large Pavilion for use by the Stewart Park Day Camp and other car top launch users. As described above, a grant for \$360,000 was resubmitted in September of this year for both the Performance Pier and the Trailhead Plaza. Grant awards should be announced early in 2010.

During the preparation of the Stewart Park Rehabilitation Action Plan, a small meeting of potential stakeholders, including the Ithaca Festival, Grassroots Festival, Community Arts Partnership, TC Chamber of Commerce and the Cayuga Waterfront Trail Initiative met to discuss the project feasibility and benefits. A follow-up, on site meeting was held with Rick Manning, Jordan Puryear (Grassroots Festival Technical Director) and Alan Vogel (Grassroots volunteer and builder of the Grandstand Stage at Trumansburg Fairgrounds). Mr. Puryear confirmed that the performance pier concept and location were both desirable and technically feasible with a capable design and engineering study. Other locations for large festival performances were also looked at in the park. The large field between the tennis courts and the Boathouse was deemed as suitable for very large performances with up to 5,000 attendees and a stage facing southeast and located in the northwest corner of the field, in front of the historic boathouse. A restored boathouse could provide staging space and electrical power.

STEWART PARK REHABILITATION ACTION PLAN



The pavilion area in Stewart Park has hosted well-attended performances since the 1890's. Evening performances by the Paddy Conway Concert Band at the park bandstand were very popular summer events. The Tompkins County Waterfront Plan first suggested that a performance pier be considered at the lake edge near the pavilions.

PROJECT PARTNERS: City of Ithaca, Ithaca Festival, Cayuga Waterfront Trail Initiative, Tompkins County Chamber of Commerce Foundation, Grassroots Festival, and the Community Arts Partnership.

IMPLEMENTATION STEPS AND TIMELINES:

1. ST - 2010: Develop detailed design for the performance pier in 2010 with NYSCA support.
2. ST/MT - 2010 to 2014: If grant is awarded, finalize design, acquire needed permits and approvals and construct pier. If grant is not awarded, consider other possible funding sources or a dramatically scaled back lake edge treatment that included removal of the concrete ramp.



The concrete swimming ramp (upper left) collects considerable debris, making the area at the pavilions one of the least attractive areas along the lake edge. The sketch above (by John Dean) illustrates the concept of a small performance pier and brick plaza trailhead at the historic park pavilions. The Ithaca Festival has numerous performance stages on Sunday afternoon, as shown on left.



KEY PROJECT #4: LARGE PAVILION



PROJECT DESCRIPTION: The Large Pavilion is used throughout the summer to host the Ithaca Youth Bureau's Stewart Park Day Camp and is rented on most weekends and evenings during the summer months for special events. The building, while still heavily used, is in need of major renovations. In 2008, the Ithaca Beer Company (IBC), with proceeds from Brewfest (a popular craft brewed beer tasting event held in and around the Pavilion), led a volunteer effort to prepare and paint the exterior of the Large Pavilion. Hundreds of volunteers participated in series of painting days. In June of 2009 IBC and Norm Pure, with other volunteers, completed exterior renovations to the back side (south) of the building. Remaining exterior improvements include replacing some column bases around the buildings veranda and restoring or replacing the 14 sets of swinging double doors that form the north, east and west elevations of the building.

Inside the pavilion, the bathrooms are in need of updating to meet ADA requirements and to enhance their attractiveness and utility. To continue the process of building rehabilitation, an historic analysis of the building should be prepared to determine appropriate rehabilitation guidelines.



Ithaca Journal article from July 2, 2008.



A small group of volunteers, led by Norm Pure and Dan Mitchell (upper right) worked on the back of the Large Pavilion on June 15, 2009, tearing off a back entry (upper left), repairing shingles, building steps and painting the trim and siding.

PROJECT PARTNERS: City of Ithaca, Ithaca Beer Company, Brewfest, and Pure Perspectives.

IMPLEMENTATION STEPS AND TIMELINES:

1. ST - 2010: Complete exterior preparation and painting. Funding and volunteer coordination by Ithaca Beer Company, Norm Pure and CWTI.
2. ST – 2010: Find finding for and conduct architectural study to determine needed improvements to restore building, improve bathrooms, replace exterior doors, etc. Architect should be familiar with historic restoration guidelines and best practices or consult with historic preservation specialist. Develop cost estimates for restoration projects identified in the study. Create a fundraising campaign to raise funds for pavilion restoration.
3. ST/MT - 2010 to 2012: Replace Exterior Doors. 14 at \$1,500 or more each for materials only.
4. MT – 2012 to 2014: Bathroom renovation and other needed interior improvements.
5. MT – 2012 to 2014: Concrete porch cleaning and staining.
6. LT – 2015 to 2018: Energy and sustainability initiatives could include solar panels on southern face of the very expansive roof structure.

KEY PROJECT #5: WHARTON STUDIO MOTION PICTURE CENTER IN WEST PAVILION



PROJECT DESCRIPTION: The Ithaca Motion Picture Project (IMPP) is a not-for-profit, tax-exempt organization whose mission is the rehabilitation of the Wharton Studio building where, in the early years of the 20th century, over 100 silent films were directed and produced by filmmaking brothers Theodore and Leopold Wharton and other filmmakers. The Whartons came to Ithaca initially to shoot a football game for Cornell, but became so enamored of the area's natural beauty and bustling town, that they decided to stay and make films here. The region and city offered numerous opportunities for interesting film locations such as the Stewart Avenue bridge from which both trolley cars and actresses were dangled. Several silent screen stars - Irene Castle, Pearl White and Lionel Barrymore (Drew Barrymore's great-grandfather), to name a few - lived in Ithaca while working in the Whartons' films.

IMPP is hoping to transform the building into a regional motion picture center with exhibits on the history of silent film in the region, educational programs, lectures and workshops pertaining to motion pictures from 100 years ago to the present. The Wharton Studio would not only attract residents interested in their local history, but also students, tourists and scholars with an interest in early filmmaking and this unique and historic studio. IMPP is collaborating with a number of local educational, historical, and cultural organizations such as Cornell University (including, Cornell Cinema and the Sigma Chi fraternity), Ithaca College, Historic Ithaca, The History Center, the Chamber of Commerce and The State Theatre. They are working with the City of Ithaca and Tompkins County to lease the historic Wharton Studio building, which is currently being used as a storage and maintenance facility for the Department of Public Works and Ithaca Youth Bureau.



Volunteers replacing broken windows with wood to be painted as trompe l'oeil windows.

STEWART PARK REHABILITATION ACTION PLAN

PROJECT PARTNERS: City of Ithaca, Ithaca Motion Picture Project, Historic Ithaca, Ithaca College, Cornell University, and CWTI.

IMPLEMENTATION STEPS AND TIMELINES:

1. ST – 2010: Complete volunteer painting effort by fixing trim on north faux windows and painting the west elevation of the building.
2. ST – 2010: Negotiate an agreement with City for long-term future use of pavilion by IMPP.
3. ST – 2010/2011: Seek funding for an architectural study of both a new storage building and IMPP pavilion rehabilitation plans to provide conceptual designs and cost estimates for Film Center construction (by IMPP)
4. MT – 2012 to 2014: Write grant(s) and conduct fundraising campaign for needed building construction and renovations (by IMPP)
5. MT – 2012 to 2014: Build new storage building for DPW and IYB materials currently stored in pavilion and boathouse.
6. MT/LT – 2012 to 2018: Renovate pavilion to create IMPP Film Center.
7. LT – 2015 to 2018: Energy and sustainability initiatives (panels on southern face of roof, etc.)

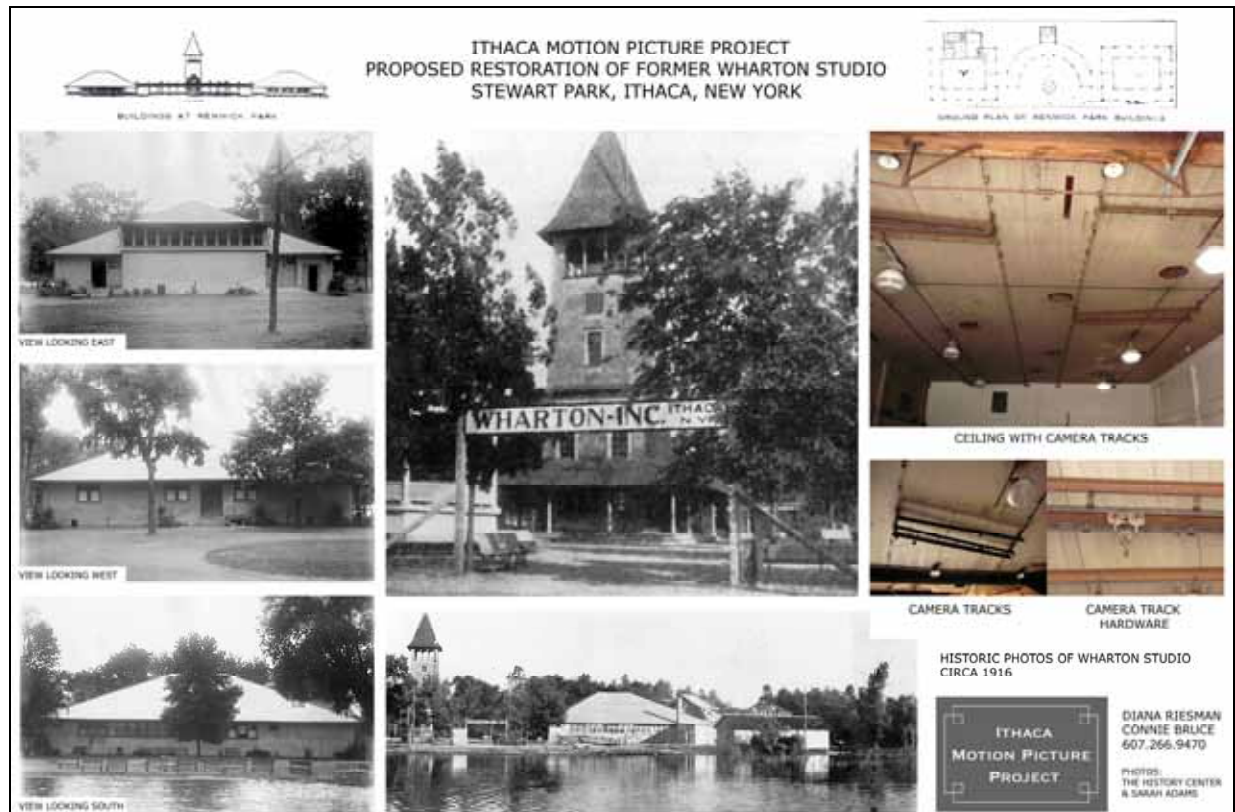


Image board of the Wharton Studio prepared by the Ithaca Motion Picture Project.

KEY PROJECT #6: MEMORIAL FLAGPOLE GARDEN



PROJECT DESCRIPTION: The flagpole was constructed as a memorial to Mayor Stewart who led the City's effort to purchase the park and create its first significant public waterfront park. In the 1930's, as shown in the aerial photo below, the Mayor Stewart Memorial Flagpole Garden was an integral part of the park design, linked to the pavilion and tower complex by a formal pathway network. This garden and path network fell into disrepair during the ensuing years. In the 1980's, the current garden was created by the City's DPW staff. This garden has now also fallen into disrepair. Steps, wall and plantings are all in poor condition and are unattractive. The Mayor Stewart Memorial Flagpole Garden should be renovated as it is a critical element of the park's formal core and will complement efforts, described above, to rehabilitate the pavilion area in the park. CWTI submitted a funding request to the Ithaca Garden Club for garden renovation. The grant was not funded as IGC wanted a more detailed design and planting proposal.



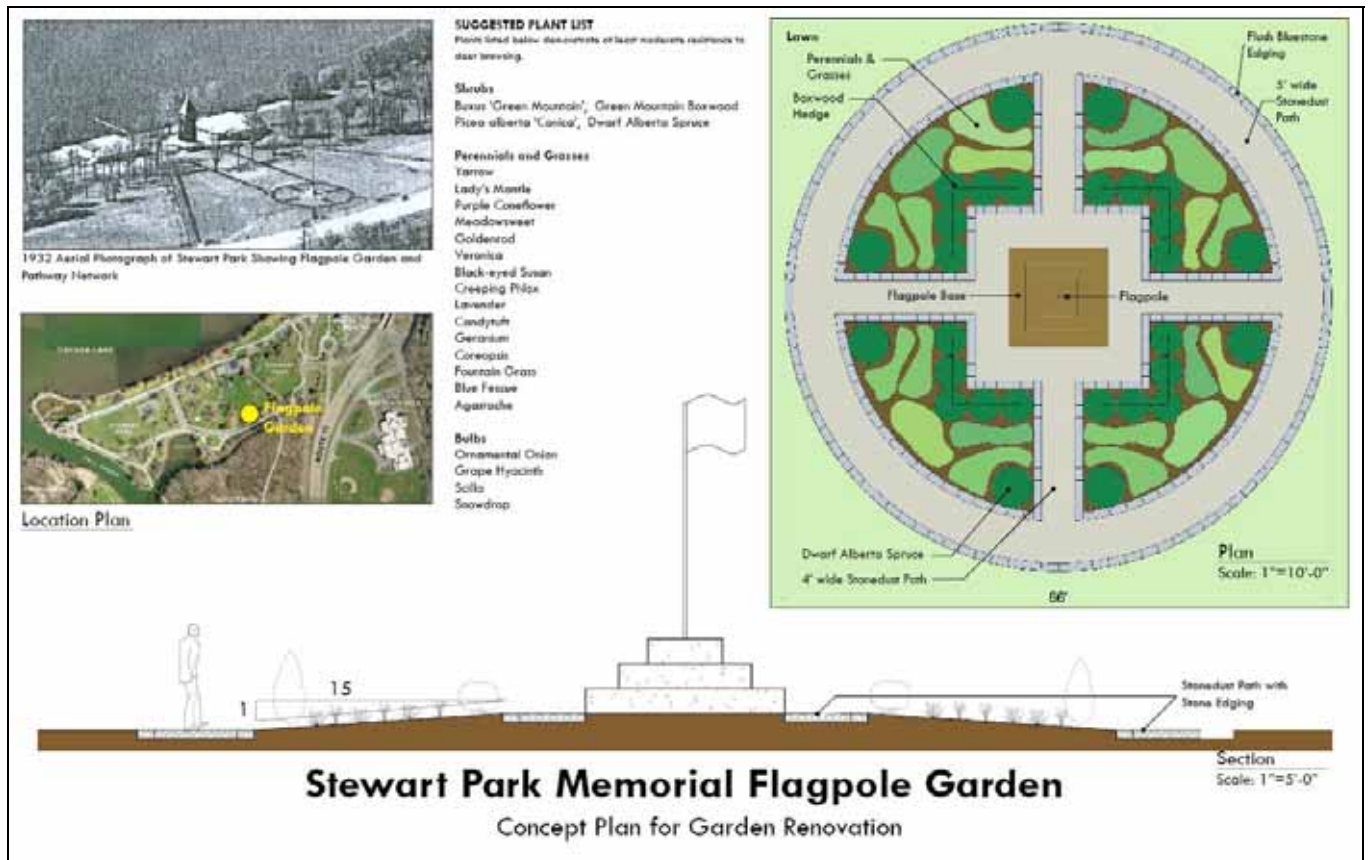
*Left: 1932 aerial photograph showing flagpole area linked to pavilion complex by a formal network of walkways.
Right: The existing flagpole garden was constructed in the late 1980's and is now overgrown and in poor condition.*

STEWART PARK REHABILITATION ACTION PLAN

PROJECT PARTNERS: CWTI, Ithaca Garden Club (possible).

IMPLEMENTATION STEPS AND TIMELINES:

1. ST – 2010: Prepare planting plan and detailed design for Memorial Flagpole Garden with NYSCA grant support. Resubmit grant to Ithaca Garden Club, if invited.
2. ST – 2010: If funded, demolition by City; Garden installation with combination of professional contractors, City crews and volunteers. If not funded consider alternative funding or a volunteer effort.



Concept Plan for Memorial Flagpole Garden Renovation by CWTI (not to scale)

KEY PROJECT #7: ALL CHILDREN'S PLAYGROUND AND SPRAY PLAY AREA



PROJECT DESCRIPTION: Stewart Park's is one of Ithaca's most popular play areas and children's play is one of the more important functions of the park. The park has a large play area with mixture of new and old playground equipment loosely grouped in a large lawn area located southwest of the historic pavilions. While the older play structures have some nostalgic charm, many do not meet current safety standards and should be removed. The City, as funding allows, is incrementally replacing old equipment with new manufactured play structures that are code compliant.



Older Stewart Park play equipment

Currently there is a NYSEG owned overhead electrical transmission line that runs directly through the playground area. This presents an immediate danger to playground users due to the adjacency of playground equipment. Storm events can take down limbs of shade trees in playground area and these can in turn bring down live transmission lines. This situation must be addressed by either burying or relocated transmission lines or by moving play equipment. NYSEG representatives have recently indicated that line relocation or burial is a multi-million project and that no funding is available for such a project.



Left: Current spray play area in Stewart Park. Right: New spray play area in Central Park.

In 2008 a network of accessible, stone dust pathways was added to link parking areas to the Small Pavilion, play structures and the restrooms. The existing spray pool, while functional, does not capture the full potential of spray play opportunities currently available and is not fully accessible. A modern and sophisticated spray pool could go a long way towards satisfying the public's desire for swimming in the park. Anecdotal evidence from Seneca Lake State Park, where a new facility was recently installed, suggests that most children prefer playing in the new spray play facility over swimming in Seneca Lake!

All Children's Playground

All playgrounds installed today are required to meet the ADA Guidelines for play areas. This code, however, requires only a minimum level of accessibility. At the other end of the spectrum are therapeutic play areas with many adaptive features that meet the specific needs of children with disabilities. What these concepts fail to provide is a place for children of all ability levels to gather and play together. Whether they are siblings, classmates or friends, each child is presented with challenges appropriate to their needs in an un-segregated setting. During the SPRAP planning process, this idea to develop Ithaca's most accessible playground facility in Stewart Park, an 'all children's playground', was discussed by stakeholder committee participants.

Hybrid Playground Designs

Typically there are two options for community-built play environments. The first is to have volunteers build the entire structure, components and all, from basic building materials (the 'Leathers' playground approach). These projects are highly customized and often quite fanciful in design. However, they require hundreds of volunteers for week-long build events, the play equipment does not have safety certification or warranty protection, and they are high maintenance structures. The second option is to work with volunteers to assemble play equipment manufactured in a factory and shipped to the site. These playgrounds, while attractive, are less customized and don't make as strong a connection to the volunteers and their community. They do, however, provide superb play components that are safety certified and protected with manufacturer's warranties. A hybrid playground combines the best of these approaches. It uses manufactured play components like climbers, slides and bridges and combines them with a custom site-built feature that reflects a unique aspect of the community.

The Stewart Park All Children's Playground

Parkitects (a local playground design company represented on the Stakeholder Committee by Steve and Diane Lauzun) and John Dean Designs prepared a concept plan for the Stewart Park All Children's Playground that incorporates both all children's and hybrid playground concepts. The playground is divided into separate areas for pre-school and school-age children as required by code. Accessibility is provided by a ramped entry into the school-age structure and transfer points into both structures. Accessible wood fiber surfacing is used throughout the play area with a super accessible path of durable carpet surfacing connecting key elements of the school-age area.



Sketch of design concept for All Children's Playground and Spray Play facility (by Parkitects and John Dean).

The design concept is centered on recreating the historic cluster of pavilions and tower that once featured prominently at the park. Each play area has a large square roof to reflect the two pavilions and in the center is a custom community-built tower. Visitors approach the playground on a pathway resembling the historic train track and ending in a train play structure for the toddlers. Turning off the track is the boardwalk leading to the tower. From the tower one can step down into the pre-school area, take the ramp into the big kids area or continue down the boardwalk into the future home of the Lakefront Spraypark.

This sketch shows the new play area located between the Small Pavilion (at left in sketch) and the DPW Pavilion. At its August meeting held in Stewart Park, the Parks Commission considered the location of this facility and of a new carousel pavilion, and decided that both should be located away from the lake edge and further to the south, near the park road as shown in the location plan above. Construction of a new All Children's Playground would allow for the removal of old play equipment that does not meet current safety standards and is in close proximity to the overhead utility lines.

PROJECT PARTNERS: City of Ithaca, Ithaca Youth Bureau, Parkitects and Dean Design, and the Franciska Racker Centers (not confirmed). Other partners to be identified.

IMPLEMENTATION STEPS AND TIMELINES:

1. ST – 2010: Request written response from NYSEG on their ability or willingness to relocate or bury overhead utility lines that pass through playground. Research how this situation evolved over time to help assign responsibility and liability.
2. ST – 2010: Expand fibar (playground surfacing) fall zones for existing play structures that do not meet current safety standards. Assess which pieces of equipment can remain and which should be removed for safety and code compliance reasons (see playground safety inspection report prepared by Parkitects in appendices).
3. ST – 2010: Develop design for new proposed location and a fundraising campaign for All Children's Playground to raise construction funds. If successful, construct first phase of this playground area in 2011.
4. ST/MT – 2011 to 2014: Continue fundraising campaign and begin construction of All Children's Playground. Assess existing equipment and remove equipment that is non-compliant or that has lesser play value than new equipment.

KEY PROJECT #8: CAROUSEL PAVILION



PROJECT DESCRIPTION: Currently, the carousel is set up by DPW crews for the summer season and taken down before winter to prevent vandalism and damage from exposure to winter weather. The process of seasonally putting the carousel up and down twice a year is labor intensive and causes some wear and tear on the carousel structure. Construction or installation of a permanent carousel pavilion to house the carousel has been discussed for many years as a way to save labor cost and reduce wear and tear on the structure. It could also extend the season of use well into the shoulder seasons.

The Ithaca Rotary Club recently funded an architectural study by Claudia Brenner Architects in the playground area to study the feasibility and cost of constructing such a building. The study was completed and presented to the Ithaca Parks Commission in November. The architects found that a carousel building would be too expensive and too large to be feasible in the park, particularly given all of the other important needs in the park. They suggest that the City explore the use of a seasonal tent for winter protection or just continue winter storage of the carousel. As designs for a new park storage building are developed, space for carousel components should be included in the building program.



Left: Existing carousel in Stewart Park. Right: Historic carousel in Broome County in permanent structure.

PROJECT PARTNERS: City of Ithaca and the Ithaca Rotary Club.

KEY PROJECT #9: CASCADILLA BOATHOUSE



PROJECT DESCRIPTION: The Cascadilla School Boathouse, built in 1894-96, is an architecturally and historically significant building on the Historic Register and representative of a late-nineteenth century collegiate boathouse building type. The boathouse is a lovely shingle style structure that was developed by the Cascadilla School to serve its student athletes. The building was constructed not only to store rowing shells, but also to provide a club-like atmosphere for other recreational and social activities. The original interior had an assembly room, a committee room and an observation tower. By the turn of the 19th century, the building interior was remodeled to include a gymnasium, a game room and a reading room.

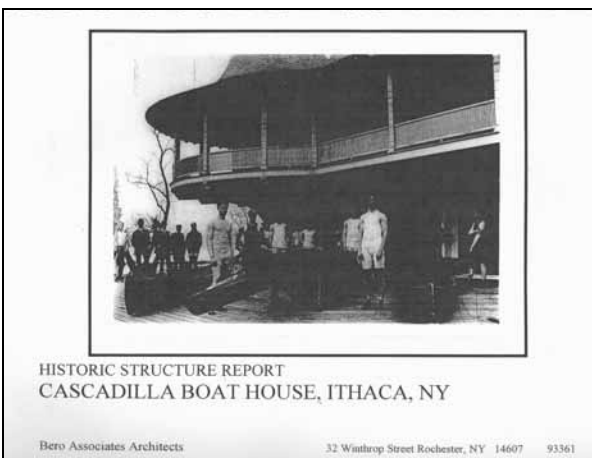


Left: The Boathouse in its prime during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Right: Boathouse today.

The boathouse was abandoned until, in the mid 1980's, the Cascadilla Boat Club was formed and requested to the City that it be allowed to use the building to house its fledgling program. Since that time, the Boat Club has trained hundreds of high school students and adults to row recreationally and competitively. Just last summer, two CBC graduates won Olympic Gold Medals - Caryn Davies on the USA women's eight and Andrew Byrnes on the Canadian Men's eight.

The City received a New York State Environmental Protection Fund grant to stabilize the boathouse structure in the mid-1990's. In 1999, the City hired Bero Associates to prepare an Historic Structures Report on the Cascadilla Boathouse. The report, completed in October 2000 outlines the historic significance of the building, documents the existing building condition, and describes adaptive reuse and

restoration recommendations for the building. City and Cornell Historic Preservation Program began cleanup and priming the second story veranda and windows last spring.



*Left: An Historic Structure Report was completed in 2000 by Bero Associates for the City.
Right: The old gymnasium on the second floor would be an excellent space for dances or special events.*

Currently the Cascadilla Boat Club has an interest in additional building upgrades that will enhance the facility for supporting their community rowing program. Attendees at the public meeting discussed the opportunity of using the 2nd floor for community dances. The City has also discussed the possible use of this second floor space for rentals for special events and community gatherings.

Proceeding with building adaptive reuse and restoration will begin with the preparation of an architectural study, resulting in construction documents for all phases of the projects. The process for building restoration is likely to occur in 3 phases (to be verified when architectural study is prepared):

- **Phase 1:** Open the 2nd floor for indoor workout space by CBC athletes in bad weather and shoulder seasons. This will require an additional 2nd floor exit and electrical service to allow limited, supervised occupancy.
- **Phase 2:** Clean and renovate the 2nd floor eastern office spaces for use by Cascadilla Boat Club and other groups, the addition of a 2nd story accessible restroom, and renovations to the northeast entrance and hallway area to the 2nd floor. The Boathouse would be an excellent location for a Friends of Stewart Park organization, discussed later in this report. Fire rated separations between floors and rooms and/or installation of a sprinkler system will likely be required as well as the addition of some of the 2nd story veranda and doors.
- **Phase 3:** Complete building restoration including constructing the veranda wrapping the building and the 3 story tower on the northwest corner of the structure.

Bank erosion of Fall Creek has progressed at approximately 8"-12" per year. The north shoreline of the creek was stabilized from the inlet downstream of the footbridge to about the end of the Park circular road. The remaining distance to the Cascadilla Boathouse and the point has been eroding at a significant rate. In 2004, two mature willow trees fell into the creek due to erosion of their root systems. In 2005, the electrical pole that had been on solid land was moved inland out of the water. There is now only about 10" of bank remaining between the pole and the creek. At this rate the access road to the boathouse could be dangerously eroded within two years.



STEWART PARK REHABILITATION ACTION PLAN

PROJECT PARTNERS: City of Ithaca, Cascadilla Boat Club, Cornell Historic Preservation Program, a coalition of Ithaca dance organizations, and Historic Ithaca.

IMPLEMENTATION STEPS AND TIMELINES:

1. ST – 2010: Continue painting and preparation begun in 2008 by the Cornell Historic Preservation Program. Volunteers, and possibly summer work study students, will be needed for this effort.
2. ST – 2010: Short-term site improvements include placing asphalt grindings at the foot of the boat bay wooden aprons to prevent erosion that causes unsure footing for boathouse users and stabilizing the erosion along the Fall Creek streambank at southwest building corner.
3. ST – 2010: Secure funding for architectural study to prepare programming studies, code review, architectural drawings and cost estimates for phase 1 and 2 building renovations and for building restoration.
4. ST – 2010/2011: Develop a fundraising campaign for boathouse restoration. Consider involving Olympic Gold Medalists Davies and Byrnes as campaign leaders. Identify grant opportunities and submit grant applications for construction funding.
5. MT – 2012 to 2014: Implement phase 1 and 2 boathouse renovations to make the upstairs accessible for CBC and special event use.
6. MT – 2012 to 2014: Plan for an implement landscape, pedestrian access and parking improvements for the Boathouse site.
7. LT – 2015 to 2018: Boathouse Restoration (Phase 3)
8. LT – 2015 to 2018: Swan Pond wetland restoration.



During the late summer of 2008, the Cascadilla Boat Club held a ceremony to honor two former Ithacans and CBC alumni, both of whom won Olympic Gold Medals in 2008. Andrew Byrnes(left) participated on the Canadian Men's eight and Caryn Davies (middle) on the USA women's eight are being introduced by CBC Vice-President Bruce Fabens (right).

KEY PROJECT #10: PARK ROADS AND PARKING

Generally the park road network will remain in the same location with few changes proposed. The parking supply is adequate for most park days and functions. It is clear from previous park planning projects, that the community is not interested in changing the basic design of the road network or in adding new parking areas.

Historically, the majority of the park roads and parking areas were curbed with an attractive Medina sandstone curbing set in a concrete gutter. While much of this still curbing still remains, it has been removed in many places and replaced by freestanding, white-painted concrete curb stops. These are spaced along the pavement edge of roadways and parking areas. They are highly visible, unattractive, and importantly do not restrict parking on the park lawn during special events. These curb stops should be removed. Experience in Cass Park suggests that cars can park on grass shoulders without causing significant damage to the grass, particularly when the shoulder is dry and well drained. During special events, the City should require festival organizers to hire parking attendants to ensure that parking regulations and agreements are enforced.



Left: Freestanding curb stops are unsightly and not effective. They should be removed. Right: Parking areas and the road currently drain directly into Cayuga Lake or Fall Creek or they don't drain efficiently.

The Cayuga Waterfront Trail will make some changes to the one-way loop road at the west end of the park. Perpendicular parking that overlooks Cayuga Lake will be shifted back, away from the lake to provide space within the current road footprint to construct the trail. There will still be adequate space remaining for a one-way travel lane and perpendicular parking spaces with a lake view. On the section of the road along Fall Creek, perpendicular parking will be removed and the trail constructed in its place. The large parking area and turnaround at the east end of the park should be reconfigured as per recommendations in the CWT Phase 3 Feasibility Study to reduce the amount of paved, impervious surface while retaining the existing parking supply.

Park roads and parking areas should not be drained directly into Cayuga Lake, as is currently the case. Runoff should be directed to rain gardens or bioswale infiltration areas. Where large parking areas are being repaved, such as between the historic park pavilions, permeable pavement should be considered.

IMPLEMENTATION STEPS AND TIMELINES:

1. ST – 2010: Remove all freestanding, white painted curb stops from the park.
2. ST - 2010: Construct bioswales along the main east and west perpendicular parking areas when developing the Cayuga Waterfront Trail.
3. ST – 2010 to 2011: Remove pavement and reconfigure parking area at east end of park road.
4. ST – 2011: Develop permeable parking trailhead plaza between the historic pavilions.
5. MT – 2012 to 2014: Develop design plans to restrict parking on lawn at the Lagoon Circle to reestablish lawn and develop a vegetation buffer between the road and the Lagoon waterway. This can be coordinated with the development of the Sculpture Trail section of the Waterfront Trail.

KEY PROJECT #11: PARK LANDSCAPE

Stewart Park has many spectacular old shade trees. Most are native floodplain species and in good condition. These shade trees set in broad expansive lawn areas, along with lovely views of the lake, are the defining features of the park for many users. However, many park shrubs, hedges and furnishings are randomly located and poorly maintained, detracting from the park's overall image. This report does not develop detailed recommendations for landscape planting and maintenance. A **Park Landscape Improvement Program** should be developed to provide funding and the impetus to address many of the park landscape needs. These landscape needs include:

- Conduct a shrub by shrub assessment to determine which should be pruned or removed. Remaining shrubs should be mulched individually or in groups. New shrub species should be identified.
- Key areas for new perennial and ornamental grass plantings should be identified.
- Planting at the main park entrance should be reconsidered. Pruning and removal of shrubs in poor condition would open up lake views and enhance the public's first impressions of the park.
- Develop a policy for reducing mowing of lawns in areas where not used for active recreation or picnicking. This would enhance bird habitat, reduce mowing expenses and greenhouse gas emissions, and be aesthetically pleasing, if done prudently and artistically.
- Develop strategies and designs for stabilizing the Cayuga Lake and Fall Creek edges. A prototype section could be implemented if the Performance Pier grant is funded.
- Parks Commission and Board of Public Works should consider reviewing and possible adoption of Audubon International standards for ecological landscape management, or other comparable set of standards that can provide goals and guidelines for enhancing management practices.



*Left: Large floodplain, shade trees in lawn are an important defining feature of Stewart Park.
Right: Overgrown shrubs at park entry are unsightly and block views of lake from the entry drive.*

IMPLEMENTATION STEPS AND TIMELINES:

1. ST – 2010: Consider reducing mowing in areas of the park that are not intensively used or that are buffer lands for streams, waterways or natural areas.
2. ST – 2010: Stabilize edge of Fall Creek adjacent to Cascadilla Boathouse.
3. ST – 2010: Establish a Park Landscape Improvement Program fund for implementing small landscape projects such as entry improvements, pruning and mulching around existing trees, shrubs and beds, removal of selected unattractive and overgrown shrubs, etc. Many of these projects could be done with Cornell summer interns and work study students and volunteers, with careful supervision of City staff or CWTI Coordinator.
4. MT – 2012 to 2014: Install prototypical lake edge stabilization and naturalization design adjacent to proposed performance pier. If approach is successful, fundraise to extend treatment along the lake edge.
5. MT & LT– 2012 to 2018: Continue Park Landscape Improvement Program as funding allows.

Other Park Rehabilitation Projects

SMALL PAVILION (TEA PAVILION)

This facility is rented for small parties and receptions and used by parents of children playing in the playground area. Within the past 5 – 7 years, the Small Pavilion was painted by a Leadership Tompkins class. Within another 5 years, this structure should be repainted.



BOCCE COURTS



Bocce Courts were constructed as a private initiative by the Special Olympics and are a great addition to the park. Some of the more active bocce players have suggested that a roof over the courts would increase use and allow for league play with other regional bocce clubs. This issue will be considered if an architectural study, discussed above, is conducted. This study will consider the location and architectural design of a roof structure for either these two existing courts, or for a new set of courts in another location within the Park.

CONCESSION BUILDING

Providing food for park users and visitors will greatly enhance the park. The concession building has been closed for more than 10 years and is now in poor condition. Visually the contemporary building does not match the historic park architecture. Its location serves the playground and carousel area, while overlooking the more formal lawn area to the north. Most project steering committee and Parks Commission members recommend the building be demolished. If it remains, finding the funding needed to renovate the building and make it functional for food service will be challenging. Two alternative locations for the concession building have been discussed. The Ithaca Motion Picture Project has expressed an interest in running a café out of the Film Museum. While they envision this café to be a higher-end food service than a typical park concession operation, it may be possible to serve the food and drink needs of all park patrons from this café. Another option being discussed is to incorporate the concession function into a proposed permanent carousel building. Implementation steps include finding funds for park architectural study to evaluate the condition of the concession and viability/cost of rehabilitation versus demolition. Concession plans should be advanced by including the program into either IMPP plans or into the design of the carousel building.



Left: Existing Carousel building. Right: Food cart in Central Park.

There are many park landscapes and structures that are not addressed in this study. These include the Swan Pond, the Lagoon, the tennis courts, and the storage buildings near the carousel. As park rehabilitation work continues, these and other projects should be considered.

Key Park Rehabilitation Issues

Following are critical park rehabilitation issues that must be addressed over the long term in any comprehensive park enhancement effort.

WATER QUALITY IMPROVEMENT AND SWIMMING

BACKGROUND: Stewart Park has never been an ideal setting for swimming. Without the wetlands that were filled to develop downtown Ithaca, a shallow, mucky shelf formed with sediments from Six-Mile Creek, the Cayuga Inlet, and Fall Creek extending more than a quarter mile from the shore of Stewart Park before dropping off to a typical lake depth of three hundred or more feet. Murky, sediment-laden creek waters continue this natural process of deposition that has been exacerbated by agricultural and urban development upstream. If left unchecked, this process would likely result in the development of cattail marsh and swamp forests like those found in Ithaca before it was settled in the early 19th century. The ongoing deposition of creek sediments is why dredging the Cayuga Inlet is needed every 10 to 20 years - to keep the channel open for navigation and flood control purposes. To make matters worse, the coriolis effect in the northern hemisphere causes a counter-clockwise swirling of creek waters that causes them to turn east as they pass the lighthouse pier, then slow down due to the shallow lake depth, and deposit sediments off of the Stewart Park shore. On top of this ongoing sediment deposition, the prevailing northerly winds continually blow debris and aquatic vegetation in a southerly direction, where they accumulate at the shore of Stewart Park. The noxious smell of decomposing lake vegetation along the Stewart Park shoreline often makes it unpleasant in the park during the hot summer months.



Swimming in the shallow waters of Cayuga Lake was never optimum, but it was always popular.

Despite this nearly perfect storm of complications, swimming once was a very popular activity at Stewart Park for many years and continues to be of great interest to the public. The 1934 Stewart Park master plan showed a grand pier that extended hundreds of feet into the lake with swimming beaches on both sides and even a small swimming pool built into the pier. While the pier was never constructed as designed, swimming was accommodated at this time and continuing into the 1960's. A wide and gently-sloped concrete ramp, still in existence today, was constructed in the 1950's to define the designated swimming

area and make it easier to enter the water. In its heyday the Stewart Park swimming area had two large slides, two wooden rafts for diving, a large L-shaped pier and life guard towers, some hundreds of feet into the lake waters. Swimmers could walk hundreds of yards from the concrete ramp and still only be up to their waist. Some reported wading nearly $\frac{1}{4}$ of a mile out into the lake before the shelf ended and the waters quickly deepened. Young swimmers recall sinking to their knees in the mucky lake bottom.

While swimming was popular, it was conducted under less than optimum health and safety conditions. According to Tompkins County Health Department records, two drowning incidents, one in 1961 and a second in 1964, led to the County shutting down swimming at the park. In 1964, an adolescent boy drowned and it took authorities 3 days of dragging the shallow lake bottom to find the body. Murky waters were blamed for the difficulty in finding the body and ultimately were the cause for closing the beach later that same year. County Health Department officials at the time were becoming increasingly concerned about pollution from the city's previous wastewater treatment plant, which treated wastewater far below today's standards. But ultimately poor water clarity is what brought swimming to an end in the park.

The 1984 Stewart Park Master Plan studied the swimming issue in some depth and made numerous recommendations that, if pursued, could have led to reinstating swimming in the park. Some of the recommendations outlined in the plan included:

- Create an elongated peninsula off of the existing point at the boathouse that would form an eastern edge to Fall Creek along the Lighthouse Pier and force sediment-laden creek waters further north and away from the shores of Stewart Park. Computer models were prepared by Charles Trautman (see 1984 report in appendix) that indicated a peninsula may help to mitigate, though not completely solve the turbidity problem.
- Construct a diked and enclosed swimming area along the shoreline with a gravel bottom. This idea seemed to be the most feasible way to create a swimming area in the park at the time.
- Demolish the existing concrete swimming ramp and restore the lake edge to a condition similar to other areas in the park. This is to prevent the constant accumulation of weeds that occurs in this area and to make this central park area more attractive.
- Construct an island some 300' north of the former swimming area (off of main pavilions) to prevent debris and vegetation from accumulating along the shoreline.

The 1984 plan was never adopted due to some controversial recommendations to remove the lakeshore willows and reconfigure parking areas. Thus, none of the swimming-related recommendations were implemented. A followup plan, 1987 Stewart Park Preservation Goals and Guidelines, did not recommend that swimming be reinstated, instead advocating for the construction of a municipal pier and some gravel beach areas for sunbathing along the lake shore. In 1994, Mayor Benjamin Nichols created a planning committee to explore the swimming issue, but the idea was abandoned after only one meeting due to its high anticipated cost. Yet this issue is still rates very highly on park users' short list of desired park improvements. In letters to the editor, project surveys and at a Stewart Park public meeting last July, many residents shared their fond memories of, and their strong desire to reinstate, swimming at Stewart Park.

The first step in understanding the feasibility of returning swimming to Stewart Park is to determine if the existing lake water quality conditions would allow swimming to be approved by the Tompkins County Health Department (TCHD). TCHD is responsible for reviewing swimming beach applications, following the guidelines outlined in the New York State Sanitary Code, Subpart 6-2: Bathing Beaches. In a meeting conducted during this Stewart Park planning process, TCHD outlined the following health and safety issues that would likely arise in an effort to bring swimming back to Stewart Park:

- **Water Clarity:** Suspended silt in Six Mile Creek, the Cayuga Inlet and Fall Creek all create turbid water conditions at the Stewart Park lakeshore.
- **Mucky Lake Bottom:** This suspended silt settles in the park lakeshore creating a mucky substrate on the lake bottom.
- **Pathogens:** Due to stormwater discharges, high concentration of waterfowl, and discharges from the

two wastewater treatment facilities there is potential for fecal coliform and total coliform to exceed permitted limits.

To reinstate swimming at Stewart Park, the City would need to conduct the following tests and meet the conditions outlined in the New York State Sanitary Code:

- 6-2.19 (3.6) – The results of at least one set of bacterial samples, ph tests, and turbidity tests must be submitted for each week during an 8 week period. At least 1 of these 8 sets shall include a set of samples taken after a heavy rain for a continuous 5-day period.
- 6-2.19 (4.6) – The bottom of the beach up to a water depth of 6 feet shall consist of sand, pea gravel, or other similar granular material.
- 6-2.19 (4.10) – No wastewater discharges from sewage treatment plants, combined sewers, or other sources shall be permitted within 750 feet of a bathing beach.
- 6-2.19 (4.11.3) – It shall be possible to see an 8 inch black and white disk (secchi disk) in 4 feet of water. Clarity tests should be performed at a 4 foot depth in the bathing area at a minimum of 3 different locations.

To evaluate whether Stewart Park meets requirements for a bathing beach, the Tompkins County Health Department would require that the City of Ithaca submit an approval plan prepared by a NYS licensed design professional demonstrating compliance with the NYS Sanitary Code requirements. These include not only meeting water quality and clarity conditions outlined above, but also a plan showing numerous infrastructure elements including float lines to delineate the perimeter, shallow and deep zones of the swimming area, proper signage, lifeguards and supervision, parking, bathrooms, and garbage disposal plans. An annual operating permit would also be required by the Health Department. Since a 1988 revision to the NYS Sanitary Code, no new beaches have been permitted in the Finger Lakes region. However, swimming does still occur at the south end of Seneca Lake in Watkins Glen's Klute Park, The swimming area at Klute Park is very shallow and vegetation is raked and removed from the shore on a daily basis.

Since the mid-1990's, water quality issues in Cayuga Lake have come into focus. During the past 10 years, extensive data on lake water quality has been collected and analyzed. An overall assessment of lake water quality is beyond the scope of this report but can be found in the Preliminary Characterization of the Cayuga Lake Watershed, available at area libraries and <http://cayugawatershed.org>.

RECOMMENDATIONS: Bringing swimming back to Stewart Park is consistently rated at or near the top of the public's list of desired park improvements. A first step in studying the feasibility of swimming at Stewart Park is to collect and analyze existing water quality data to determine if swimming could be allowed under current state regulations. If not, proposals will focus on increasing the understanding of lake and stream water quality in the immediate vicinity of the park and on developing park projects that can improve water quality in the southern shelf of the lake and in the drainageway/tributaries that pass through the park. If it appears that current water quality conditions would meet state requirements to allow swimming, then the City will have to determine if it wants to prepare the needed plans and permit applications, and make needed park infrastructure improvements, to bring swimming back to the park. Even if lake water quality conditions would allow swimming, this report will suggest that it be a long-term project due to the considerable cost involved in its implementation. Following are specific recommendations related to water quality understanding, improvement and swimming:

- **Collect and analyze existing lake water quality data for the southern shelf of Cayuga Lake at Stewart Park.** The Water Resources Council's Water Quality Committee, with representation from the Tompkins County Health Department, Community Science Institute, Floating Classroom, Cayuga Lake Watershed Network and others, should collect and analyze existing data with regards to Health Department regulations to see if there is sufficient data to determine whether swimming could be permitted at Stewart Park, given current water quality conditions. If insufficient data is available, outline additional testing that would be required to make this determination and develop an implementation strategy to get this testing done within one to two years.

- **Study, design and implement park projects that enhance lake water quality.** Addressing the larger watershed management issues related to lake water quality is beyond the scope of this report. However, park landscape management practices, may in a small way contribute to the water quality in the southern shelf. For instance recent data collected by the Community Science Institute suggests that the two small tributaries that pass through Stewart Park, one between the Visitor Center and the Youth Bureau, the other between Fuertes Bird Sanctuary and the park that drains into the 'lagoon', have consistently elevated phosphorus levels and may be responsible for the majority of the phosphorus loading in the immediate park area and the southern shelf of the lake. These tributaries carry storm drainage from Route 13 and Cayuga Heights roadways and may also have elevated coliform and pathogen levels. Supplemental data on stream flow is needed to fully understand and quantify the impacts. Currently, Stewart Park's parking area runoff is piped directly into Cayuga Lake. While this may be a minor impact, it certainly does not represent a best management practice and should be addressed as changes are made in the park.
- **Understand the impacts of Canada Geese population in Stewart Park on lake water quality and develop better management approaches.** In the early 1900s, the giant Canada Goose was nearly driven extinct. A program of introductions and translocations was aimed at re-establishing this subspecies to its former range along the east coast. The effort was tremendously successful, and resulted in large non-migrating flocks, as evidenced by the resident population at the southern end of Cayuga Lake. It is likely that the current population of Geese has rebounded to its historical level. In surveys conducted as part of this project, goose excrement accumulation on the lawns of Stewart Park was one of the most common complaints of respondents. In other Finger Lakes communities, swimming beaches have been shut down by county health department officials due to elevated fecal coliform levels caused by goose excrement. Given the importance of Stewart Parking for birding, and the protected status of the Canada Goose under the Federal Migratory Bird Act of 1918 Act, appropriate management strategies should be developed that address the land and water quality issues, while respecting the importance of this population to the place. Some ideas to explore and/or implement include: Reduce mown lawn area in the park, particularly along the edges of the lake and waterways; Develop an educational program that encourages the public to not feed waterfowl; Advocate that the City purchase a Goose Goo Gone or comparable sweeping equipment pickup goose poop in park lawn areas; and, Consider other strategies to mitigate the impacts of the Canada Geese population.
- **Manage aquatic vegetation and debris accumulation on lakeshore of Stewart Park.** Develop a policy for managing weed and debris accumulation at lake edge of park that respects park users and while continuing the benefits of vegetation mats for the resident and migrant bird populations. Equipment to physically cut and remove weeds could be purchased or leased from other communities if a program of selective weed removal were deemed appropriate. These materials are excellent for composting. Meet with Robert Johnson from the Cornell Ponds and Bin Zhu from the Finger Lakes Institute, both of whom have extensive information on Cayuga Lake and other Finger Lake's weed population and possible management strategies.
- **Improve stormwater management in the park.** Capture and filter runoff from existing parking areas in the park. Create bioswales and rain gardens along or adjacent to parking or paved areas to capture and treat runoff.
- **Develop a state of the art, all children's spray play facility.** Seneca Lake State Park has found that kids rarely choose to swim in Seneca Lake now that the new spray play facility has been developed. While this might be viewed as unnatural, even unfortunate, in fact this may be a better alternative for kids and for the environment. A spray facility can be made accessible for all children. It is designed to be on demand, so only spraying when in use. It could be tied to the city's sanitary sewer system, minimizing lake water impacts and likelihood of pathogen problems that sometimes occur when water is recirculated. And, if it replaces lake swimming, it eliminates regular dredging and required modifications to the lake edge (both of which may not be allowed by DEC), allowing the lake to remain in a more natural condition. (Note that County Health Department approval is required for spray parks that recirculate water due to concerns about pathogens).

- **Explore opportunities presented by dredging Cayuga Inlet and adjacent areas.** Consider how dredging activities and disposal of the dredging spoils could be used to enhance lake water quality such as through edge improvement or creating a peninsula along Fall Creek and Lighthouse Pier at west end of Stewart Park. DEC has stated that this will be considered only if other options for dewatering and disposal on land are deemed unfeasible.
- **Establish shoreline buffers of low woody vegetation** that will reduce Canada geese activities on the lawn areas, reduce erosion, reduce nutrient loading, add wildlife habitat, frame views and mask unsightly views, and support efforts riparian buffer efforts underway through the Tompkins County Planning Department

PROJECT PARTNERS: City of Ithaca, Water Resources Council, Tompkins County Department of Health, Community Science Institute, Floating Classroom, Sciencenter, Ithaca Youth Bureau, Cornell Lab of Ornithology, and Cornell University.

IMPLEMENTATION STEPS AND TIMELINES:

1. ST – 2010: Request that the Water Resources Council's Water Quality Committee take on project to assess existing data to determine if adequate to assess whether lake water at Stewart Park meets Health Department standards. Collect additional data if needed. Assess existing data on the two tributaries described above and determine additional information that is needed (likely on stream flow rates). Study and develop mitigation strategies for tributaries including creating wetlands, bioretention swales, etc.
2. ST – 2010: Consider establishing, signing, educating the public about, and enforcing a 'no feeding the waterfowl' program.
3. ST – 2010: During waterfront trail development process, create bioswales and rain gardens along trail and between parking areas and lake to capture and treat runoff from paved parking areas and roadways.
4. ST – 2010: Modify mowing patterns to selectively plant shrubs and allow long grass areas along lake and creek edges to discourage Canada Geese from feeding on lawns and to encourage stormwater infiltration.
5. ST – 2010: Monitor dredging process to take advantage of potential opportunities for park improvement.
6. ST – 2010 to 2011: Develop strategies for and begin to fundraise for improving the water quality of park drainageway streams (streams that feed lagoon and pass between the Visitor Center and the Ithaca Youth Bureau).
7. MT – 2012 to 2014: Budget for, or find funding for, a goose goo gone tractor attachment (\$12,000 to 15,000).
8. MT to LT – 2012 to 2018: Implement mitigation strategies for tributary water quality improvements.
9. MT to LT – 2012 to 2018: Implement aquatic vegetation control program, if deemed appropriate and feasible.

FOR MORE INFORMATION: For more information on the water quality of Cayuga Lake, visit the following resources on the web:

- Cayuga Lake Watershed Network <http://www.cayugalake.org/resources/index.php>
- Community Science Institute <http://www.communityscience.org>
- Finger Lakes Institute <http://fli.hws.edu>

BIRDS AND BIRDING IN THE STEWART PARK AREA

OVERVIEW OF BIRD SPECIES FOUND IN THE STEWART PARK AREA (Written by Matthew Medler, Cayuga Bird Club):



Strategically located at the south end of Cayuga Lake, Stewart Park is arguably the premier birding spot in the Ithaca area, and one of the best sites for finding birds in the entire Cayuga Lake Basin. From a birding standpoint, Stewart Park has it all--an expansive view of the lake to scan for ducks, geese, and other waterbirds; a convenient spot to look for migrant songbirds; and a patch of bottomland forest that hosts a nice collection of breeding birds.

The main attraction at Stewart Park is its extensive access to Cayuga Lake, stretching from the southeast corner of the lake westward to the mouth of Fall Creek. During the winter months, there can be huge concentrations of diving ducks at the south end of Cayuga Lake, often just north of the ice sheet that develops as temperatures drop. On the 2001 Ithaca Christmas Bird Count, an amazing 13,000+ Redhead were estimated to be in this area, along with 8,000 Canvasback. Smaller numbers of Greater Scaup and Lesser Scaup can usually be found in these massive *Aythya* flocks, and there are often a few dabbling ducks like American Wigeon, Gadwall, and Northern Pintail on the periphery of such congregations. In some winters, these huge rafts of ducks are absent from the Stewart Park area, but even then there are plenty of other birds to be seen. Scores of both Common Mergansers and Common Goldeneye can usually be found offshore from the ice edge, and there are always plenty of Canada Geese in the area. Careful scanning through the thousands of Canada Geese could yield a "Richardson's" Cackling Goose, a small goose that was recently split from the larger Canada Geese. It should be noted that while most species of waterfowl here are identifiable solely with binoculars, a good spotting scope can make watching ducks, geese, and other waterbirds at Stewart Park a much more enjoyable experience.

The ice edge at Stewart Park also hosts substantial numbers of gulls during the winter months, with Ring-billed Gull, Herring Gull, and Great Black-backed Gull predominating. Though hardly common, Lesser Black-backed Gull is being seen with increasing regularity, and a persistent observer is likely to also see at least one Iceland Gull or Glaucous Gull during the course of the winter. With the abundance of waterfowl and gulls at Stewart Park during the wintertime, it is only natural that birds of prey are also drawn to the area. Two of the true success stories of the Endangered Species Act--Bald Eagle and Peregrine Falcon--are now uncommon winter visitors to Stewart Park. They can sometimes be found standing on the ice edge, feeding on prey, or perched in one of the large dead trees along the mouth of Fall Creek.

With the arrival of warmer temperatures in mid to late March come the first spring migrants to Stewart Park: Green-winged Teal, Northern Pintail, American Wigeon, Ring-necked Duck, Hooded Merganser, and Wood Duck are all likely to be seen on the lake at this time, often with a few Tree Swallows flying overhead. Along the shoreline, American Pipits can sometimes be found working through the debris that accumulates as the lake thaws. The start of April brings more new species to the area, with Blue-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler, Bufflehead, and scaup joining the mix of migrant waterfowl on the water. In the air, an Osprey might be seen cruising over shallow water looking for fish, and a few Barn Swallows are likely to have joined the larger numbers of Tree Swallows. Bonaparte's Gulls also begin to make appearances at this time, but they usually don't linger long, stopping only briefly before resuming their northbound migration.

During the course of April, an incredible diversity of waterbirds can be seen at Stewart Park. In addition to the species listed above, Common Loon, Horned Grebe, Pied-billed Grebe, Double-crested Cormorant, Red-breasted Merganser, and Ruddy Duck are all birds that one can expect to see here during the month. Other species, such as Red-throated Loon, Red-necked Grebe, Long-tailed Duck, and White-winged Scoter, are all possibilities at Stewart Park during spring migration, but might not be seen every year. When these species do occur here, it is often only briefly, for a day or less. The same can be said for both Common Tern and Forster's Tern; in late April and early May, individuals of both species are occasionally found offshore from Stewart Park, resting on a buoy or piece of driftwood for a short time before continuing northward.

By late April, songbird migration is also starting to pick up, with warblers and other Neotropical migrants arriving in the Basin. While not generally thought of as a destination for finding landbirds, Stewart Park does offer the Swan Pen as a mini-hotspot for seeing migrants. Located by the western edge of the park, adjacent to the Cascadilla Boathouse, Fall Creek, and the lake, the Swan Pen is an artificial pond that formerly hosted a pair of Mute Swans. A small trail around the perimeter of the Swan Pen can be easily navigated in 5-10 minutes when not birding, but the walk can take significantly longer when good numbers of birds are present. This area seems to be a good spot for seeing particular migrant species, especially Palm Warbler, Northern Waterthrush, Blackpoll Warbler, Yellow Warbler, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Warbling Vireo, and White-crowned Sparrow. Some of the Yellow Warblers stay and breed in the willows along the Swan Pen, and it appears that a pair of Eastern Kingbirds also nests in the area. After completing the walk around the Swan Pen, it is always worthwhile to look across Fall Creek and scan the dead trees along its edge; during migration, one of these snags might serve as a perch for a Merlin, Osprey, or Black-crowned Night-Heron. In the summer months, search the same area for Green Heron skulking along the water's edge.

Following Fall Creek upstream away from the Swan Pen, one will soon come to a green footbridge that crosses over a small lagoon and enters a tract of mature bottomland forest. This is the home of the Fuertes Bird Sanctuary, named after famed bird artist Louis Agassiz Fuertes following his untimely death in 1927. Fuertes was the first president of the Cayuga Bird Club, and it is the club that is responsible for the upkeep of the sanctuary. In recent years, birders have visited this area, also referred to as the Renwick Sanctuary, primarily to view nesting Great Horned Owls. This species begins breeding in January, and can be located in the Fuertes Sanctuary by scanning large cavities or the tops of broken-off trees for the head (or at least "horns") of an incubating owl.

The Fuertes Sanctuary is rarely birded during spring migration, but sightings of Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Blue-headed Vireo, and Palm Warbler during a single late April visit are suggestive of the potential to see migrants here. During the breeding season, the forest is home to a suite of breeding birds that includes Red-bellied Woodpecker, Great Crested Flycatcher, Warbling Vireo, Yellow-throated Vireo, Tufted Titmouse, Carolina Wren, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Wood Thrush, American Redstart, and Scarlet Tanager. The large sycamores and cottonwoods in the sanctuary also provide nesting opportunities for a variety of cavity-nesting birds, ranging from Hooded Merganser to Pileated Woodpecker to European Starling. One of the drawbacks of birding in the Fuertes Sanctuary is that as a floodplain forest, it can sometimes be flooded during the springtime, rendering the trails inaccessible. And, as a fairly secluded area along the

edge of a city park, the sanctuary has been reported to be the site of some unsavory or illegal human activities in the past. As a result, birders are encouraged to visit the sanctuary only during daylight hours.

Back in Stewart Park, the birding can be a bit slow during the summertime. This can be a good time to look (and listen) for one of the park's signature birds--Fish Crow. Although this species is sometimes found in other parts of Ithaca, it is most reliably found along the lake edge at Stewart Park. Listen for Fish Crow's nasal call to help distinguish it from the larger American Crow. Northern Mockingbird is another uncommon Basin breeder that can be found year-round at Stewart Park; listen for this more accomplished vocalist immediately upon entering the park from Rt. 13. When visiting Stewart Park during the summer months, also be sure to keep an eye out for rare visitors like Cattle Egret and Snowy Egret, both of which have occurred in the park in the past.

In October, migrant waterfowl begin to appear at Stewart Park again. All of the species listed as spring migrants above can also be expected during the fall. Three additional species--Brant, Surf Scoter, and Black Scoter--are much more likely to be seen at the south end of Cayuga Lake during fall migration. Even then, though, these species are not always easily observed. While Brant can sometimes be seen resting on the lake (or feeding on the grass at Stewart Park), a more common sight of this species is that of a shifting flock flying south over the lake, gradually gaining altitude to fly over Stewart Park, and continuing southward. Scoters, on the other hand, are usually found on the lake, and sometimes remain in the area for several days. However, they are often found far out on the lake, making identification to species difficult even with a spotting scope. A combination of persistence, a spotting scope, and good luck is usually needed to get satisfying looks at any of the three species of scoters at Stewart Park. These species, together with Long-tailed Duck and Red-necked Grebe, are often better seen from nearby East Shore Park.

In addition to hosting an excellent diversity of common birds, Stewart Park has been the site of some of the most exciting discoveries of rare birds in Cayuga Lake Basin history. The following rarities have all been seen at Stewart Park just since 2000: Little Gull (April 2000, May 2002, and Jan. 2003); Sabine's Gull (Oct. 2000); Laughing Gull (Dec. 2000 and Sept. 2002); Eared Grebe (April 2001); New York State's second record of Long-billed Murrelet (Dec. 2001), Northern Gannet (Dec. 2001 and Dec. 2003); Arctic Tern, Red Phalarope, Wilson's Storm-Petrel, and Parasitic Jaeger (all in Sept. 2003, following Hurricane Isabel); Greater White-fronted Goose (two in Nov. 2003); Audubon's Warbler (Oct. 2004); and the Basin's first-ever Cave Swallows (Nov. 2004). Standing at the south end of Cayuga Lake, there is the sense that almost any bird, whether common or rare, could be found in the Stewart Park area.

Although described in the Ithaca Lighthouse Jetty account, the Jetty Woods can also be visited during a trip to Stewart Park. To reach the Jetty Woods from the park, take the footbridge over the lagoon, into the Fuertes Sanctuary. Follow a trail along Fall Creek and then cross the creek on another footbridge. Being careful not to disturb any golfers present, walk westward along the perimeter of the Newman Golf Course until reaching the edge of the Jetty Woods.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: Given that Stewart Park in one of our region's premier birding areas, it is critical the park rehabilitation projects do no harm to, or enhance, current habitat and bird watching opportunities. Following are some of the recommended projects that can enhance bird habitat and public education about birds and birdwatching:

- Develop interpretive materials, including kiosk(s), panels and brochures.
- Consider impact on waterfowl as plans are developed to manage lake weeds and improve and stabilize the lakeshore of Stewart Park
- Park vegetation management strategies and planting guidelines should be developed to ensure that impacts to the bird population is considered in all planting and management decisions.
- Improve access to and maintenance of Fuertes Bird Sanctuary. Maintain paths to be open and clear of fallen trees, rehabilitate existing concrete entry arch (donated by the Cayuga Bird Club in the 1920's), and creating a more visible entrance into the Sanctuary from Stewart Park with interpretive materials.

STEWART PARK REHABILITATION ACTION PLAN

Consider improving entrance to Sanctuary and Stewart Park from Ithaca High School under Route 13 and railroad bridges.

- Develop a strategy to manage Canada Goose population and clean goose excrement from park lawns.
- Explore opportunities for enhancing bird habitat by creating wetlands at the edge of Stewart Park with dredge spoils.

PROJECT PARTNERS: City of Ithaca Natural Areas and Parks Commissions, Cayuga Bird Club, Cornell Lab of Ornithology, and Finger Lakes Native Plants Society.



Left: The Cayuga Bird Club built this entry arch in the 1920's and it is still extant. Right: Artist simulation of recreating this entry arch off to the Bird Sanctuary from Stewart Park (by Rob Licht).

IMPLEMENTATION STEPS AND TIMELINES:

1. ST – 2010/2011: Form a 'Bird-Friendly' Stewart Park task force to discuss issues and importance related to the park, birds and bird watching. This can include monitoring the dredging project to determine if there are opportunities for enhancing bird habitat through creation of wetlands off of the shore of Stewart Park.
2. ST – 2010/2011: Seek grant funding for educational materials (brochures and interpretive panels) to be placed along the Cayuga Waterfront Trail.
3. ST/MT – 2010 to 2014: Seek funding for a Goose Goo Gone or other comparable tractor attachment to clean goose excrement from park lawns. Develop other management strategies for the park and adjacent areas to reduce goose population with the objectives to enhance lake water quality and clean up the park landscape.
4. MT – 2012 to 2014: Develop a fund for projects and plantings that enhance bird habitat and promote birdwatching.

DREDGING

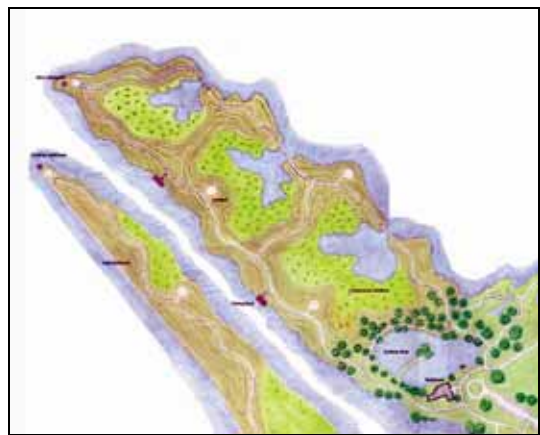
BACKGROUND: The City of Ithaca is on the New York State Canal System and is an important port area for both Cayuga Lake and the Erie Canal System. The Cayuga Inlet was last dredged in 1981. Dredge spoil materials were deposited on Treman State Marine Park, north of the marina area, and used to extend the park northward and create landforms and grassland areas that now provide important bird habitat and lake viewing areas. The City of Ithaca and the New York State Canal Corporation have been working for more than 10 years to find a new dredge spoil site(s) so that much needed dredging operations can be completed. This has proven to be a slow and challenging process due to the intensive development of the land adjacent to Ithaca's waterways.

In 2008, the City hired a consultant team lead by Ecologic to lead the process of site selection and environmental review of possible dredge spoil sites. Currently Treman State Marine Park, Cass Park, Newman Golf Course and Stewart Park are being evaluated as possible sites. In addition, using the spoil materials to create man-made wetlands in the lake off of Stewart Park, Treman Park and along the Inlet to replace eroded lands are also being studied.

Creating a peninsula of land and/or wetlands off of the west end of the park as a northward extension of the Swan Pond was recommended in the 1984 park plan. This could provide a needed site for dredge spoils, provide excellent hiking, birdwatching and fishing access, and help to push stream sediments further north in the lake, away from the shore of Stewart Park. SPRAP recommends that the feasibility of the idea be fully explored during the course of the dredging study, as it appears to be one of the, if not the, best dredge site options available at this time. Filling open water is viewed as a last resort by NYSDEC due to its impact on fish habitat. However, it may be the only viable option.

Preliminary site selection information should be made available by the consultant team in May 2009. Actual dredging can begin once a site is selected and could begin in 2009 or 2010.

FOR MORE INFORMATION: For more information on the dredging project visit www.ecologicllc.com/ithacadredging.html



*Left: 1936 aerial photo of Stewart Park showing lagoon area in front of park loop road and tennis courts.
Right: Sketch Plan by Cornell Landscape Architecture student Fred Cowett of Stewart Park wetlands created in lake to north of the boathouse and Swan Pond area.*

STEWART PARK REHABILITATION ACTION PLAN

CHAPTER 4**Implementation Sequence**

Park rehabilitation projects are categorized along the following implementation sequence:

1. Summary of 2009 Projects and Planning Initiatives
2. 2010 Short-Term Projects and Planning Initiatives
3. Short-Term Maintenance and Construction Projects (2010 – 2011);
4. Short-Term Planning and Fundraising Initiatives (2010 – 2011);
5. Mid-Term Park Rehabilitation Projects (2012 – 2014); and,
6. Long-Term Park Rehabilitation Projects (2015 – 2018 and beyond).

The following list of projects and planning initiatives is a selected list of the items listed in Chapter 3. Note that the Author and the Steering Committee do not anticipate that all of these projects will necessarily be implemented in the time frame shown below. Implementation is dependant on project partners and champions taking initiative and on funding opportunities. Obviously, the state of the economy has a significant bearing on implementation. The implementation sequence is intended to layout the steps needed for each project to be pursued. And this report is intended to be a 'living document' that will be periodically updated, as was done in December 2009.

1. Summary of 2009 Projects and Planning Initiatives

The following are proposed 2010 park maintenance and rehabilitation projects and planning initiatives. Some have been completed, some are underway, and others are planned for 2009 implementation:

- Conducted spring cleanup on March 28, 2009.
- Organized volunteer workday, with Ithaca Beer Company, to complete south elevation of the Large Pavilion.
- Organized a series of volunteer workdays to prepare and paint the DPW Pavilion. The north, east and south elevations are nearly completed.
- Received \$1,000 grant from Ithaca Rotary Club to prepare architectural feasibility study for a permanent carousel building. Study was completed by Claudia Brenner Architects and presented to Parks Commission in November. The study suggests that a permanent building may be too large and expensive to be feasible and that the City should consider either purchasing a tent to provide winter cover or continue to take carousel down during winter months. Improved winter storage space should be developed.
- The City, with CWTI's assistance, submitted a \$360,000 NY State Environmental Protection Fund grant for funding to design and construct the Stewart Park Performance Pier and Trailhead Plaza. Grant selections are to be announced in early 2010.
- Schematic plans for the Renovation of the Memorial Flagpole Garden were prepared. A grant for renovation was submitted to the Ithaca Garden Club. The grant was not selected for funding.
- Submit draft Tourism Capital Grant Feasibility Study grant submission to the Strategic Tourism Planning Board for architectural study on Stewart Park buildings and structures including the Cascadilla Boathouse, Large Pavilion, Tea Pavilion, Concession Building, new Park Maintenance Building, All Children's Playground, Memorial Flagpole Garden, and, possibly, the Wharton Studio Building.
- Rick Manning, CWTI Program Coordinator, submitted a grant to the New York State Council on the Arts through the Community Arts Partnership for detailed design work on the Stewart Park Performance Pier and Trailhead Plaza and for the Environmental Sculpture Trail. The grant was recommended for funding but is pending state budget approval.
- Secured the assistance of two Cornell Johnson School of Management Park Fellows to help develop plans for a Friends organization.
- This report, the Stewart Park Rehabilitation Action Plan, was completed in August 2009, approved by Steering Committee in November 2009, and updated in December 2009.

2. 2010 and 2011 Short-Term Projects and Planning Initiatives

Projects Underway

- Finalize plans and begin construction of Cayuga Waterfront Trail Phase 3 in Stewart Park. Construction is scheduled to be completed in 2010.
- Submit STPB Tourism Capital Feasibility Grant application for architectural study described above.

Volunteer and Small Maintenance Projects

- Spring Waterfront Cleanup will include Stewart Park in March 2010.
- Complete exterior painting and needed repairs to Large Pavilion.
- Complete exterior painting and needed repairs to DPW Pavilion.
- Begin exterior painting at Cascadilla Boathouse.
- Remove all movable concrete curb stops along park roads.

Design Projects

- Develop design and cost estimate for Performance Pier and Trailhead Plaza.
- Develop design and cost estimate for Memorial Flagpole Garden.
- Develop design and cost estimate for Sculpture Trail.
- Develop design and cost estimate for All Children's Playground.
- Develop designs and estimates for the rehabilitation or restoration of park buildings.

Fundraising

- Develop fundraising campaign for CWT Stewart Park Trailhead/Pavilion Parking Lot renovation.
- Develop fundraising campaign for Stewart Park Playground, including All Children's Playground and Spray Play area.
- Resubmit grant (if requested) for Memorial Flagpole Garden to Ithaca Garden Club after more detailed design plans and estimates are developed.
- Develop Park Landscape Improvement Program and implement small projects as funding allows, such as entry improvements, pruning and mulching around existing trees, shrubs and beds, removal of selected unattractive and overgrown shrubs, etc.
- Find funding for architectural study of the Ithaca Motion Picture Project (IMPP) Film Museum and for storage building for materials displaced by museum (by IMPP). IMPP to develop a capital campaign to raise needed funds for building renovations and programming.
- Develop campaign for Cascadilla Boathouse Restoration Fund, possibly with Olympic gold-medal winners as campaign leaders.
- Develop a 'bird-friendly park' fundraising campaign for landscape improvements, interpretive panels and other educational materials regarding birding opportunities and improving bird habitat in the greater park landscape.
- Develop fundraising campaign and/or write a grant for the Sculpture Trail and for other opportunities to incorporate art, sculpture, and unique furnishings into the park rehabilitation effort.

Construction Projects

- Construct CWT Trailhead/Permeable Pavement Plaza between historic park pavilions.
- Construct Performance Pier and begin park/lake edge restoration (if grant application is successful).
- Make needed improvements to Boathouse to allow for Cascadilla Boat Club to train on second floor during inclement weather and shoulder seasons.
- Renovate Memorial Flagpole Garden.
- Construct Sculpture Trail to complete the Stewart Park loop trail.

Miscellaneous

- Develop a park water quality improvement task force to coordinate and advocate for ongoing water quality testing of Cayuga Lake, Fall Creek, the lagoon feeder stream, and the drainageway between Chamber of Commerce and Ithaca Youth Bureau. Look for funding opportunities to pre-treat stormwater runoff in the Lagoon and Chamber drainageways, both of which are rich in phosphorous

- and other nutrients.
- Reduce mowing along lake edge, bird sanctuary edge, and other areas not intensively used for ball games or picnicking activities.
- Make substantial progress towards the development of a Friends of Stewart Park and Waterfront Trail non-profit organization.
- Advocate for reorganization and an increase in City park maintenance staff and budget.

3. Mid-Term Park Rehabilitation Projects – 2012 to 2014

The following mid-term projects will require considerable funding to be raised prior to construction implementation:

- Cascadilla Boathouse: Make needed improvements to open second floor for special event rentals, dances, and offices. These include new bathroom and second egress (either temporary stair or more permanent, historic stair at NW building corner). Make landscape, pedestrian entry and parking improvements.
- Construct storage building for IYB and DPW materials and supplies.
- Convert DPW/West pavilion to the Ithaca Motion Picture Project's Film Museum (this project could be a long-term project depending on the success of fundraising efforts by IMPP).
- Complete Large Pavilion bathroom renovation.
- Complete Waterfront Trail loop by developing the Art Trail.
- Fundraise for and implement water quality treatments for stormwater drainageway between Chamber and IYB and between Stewart Park and Fuertes.
- Continue lake edge stabilization and enhancement
- Construct phase 2 of All-Children's Playground improvements.
- Construct permanent Carousel Structure.

4. Long-Term Park Rehabilitation Projects – 2015 to 2018

The following long-term projects will require considerable funding prior to construction:

- Cascadilla Boathouse Restoration – restore veranda and complete interior restoration. Continue exterior landscape improvements to immediate surrounds and Swan Pond marsh restoration project.
- Construct Spray Play adjacent to All Children's playground.
- Complete lake edge stabilization and enhancement.
- Install wind generating sculptures and other energy production devices and conservation approaches.
- Monitor water quality improvements that would allow lake swimming to return to Stewart Park. Assess infrastructure needs, cost and impact on other city facilities (i.e. Cass Park Pool) of reinstating swimming to the park.

CHAPTER 5

Future Park Maintenance and Management Partnership

Since 2001, the Tompkins County Chamber of Commerce Foundation's Cayuga Waterfront Trail Initiative (CWTI) has partnered with the City to raise over \$3 million for the construction of the Cayuga Waterfront Trail and for numerous trail-related enhancements to the Waterfront Trail corridor. In addition, CWTI has coordinated trail maintenance by volunteers, summer interns and work study students, to assist the City in maintaining the trail in Cass Park and phase 2 trailheads on Inlet Island and at the Farmers Market. During the next two to three years while Phases 2 and 3 are being constructed, the Cayuga Waterfront Trail Initiative will be continuing in the following roles:

- Assist the City of Ithaca in maintaining constructed sections of the trail (Phase 1 two-mile loop trail in Cass Park and Phase 2 trailheads at Inlet Island and the Farmers Market);
- Enhancing the existing trail by continuing to promote, fundraise for and coordinate the construction and installation of benches and other trail furnishings (including bike racks, a bulletin board and a birding kiosk);
- Fundraising for the development of Phases 2 and 3 of the trail, in particular for trailheads and trail furnishings;
- Initiating and coordinating special projects, such as the Stewart Park Rehabilitation Action Plan or the Newman Golf Course Master Plan; and
- Work with interested citizens and organizations on the development of a 'Friends of the Cayuga Waterfront Trail and Stewart Park' that can continue to work with the City on fundraising and maintenance activities for the trail and for Stewart Park. The Cayuga Waterfront Trail Initiative was founded to plan and fundraise for the Cayuga Waterfront Trail and was never envisioned as an ongoing program of the Tompkins County Chamber of Commerce Foundation.

It is clear from the experience of many other communities that maintaining a vibrant park and trail system requires a partnership between the public and private sectors. In New York City, non-profit organizations have led the restoration of existing parks (Central Park Conservancy) and the creation of new linear parks (Friends of the High Line). In Austin, Texas the Austin Parks Foundation works closely with the City's Parks and Recreation Department to maintain existing facilities and to fundraise for system enhancements. Here in Ithaca, there is great interest in creating a 'Friends of Stewart Park and the Waterfront Trail' organization to work with the City of Ithaca to maintain and enhance Stewart Park and the Cayuga Waterfront Trail.

After the trail is completed in 2011, an independent, non-profit 'Friends of Stewart Park and the Cayuga Waterfront Trail' should be in place to continue to work with the City in maintaining, programming and continuing to develop this network of waterfront parks, trails, open spaces, natural areas and destinations. Two Park Fellows, Andrew Herr and Ashish Gambir, from the Cornell Johnson School of Management did preliminary research on this organization and their materials are included in the appendices. New Park Fellows, Paul Schutzman and Kelly Moy are now following up during the 2009-2010 academic year to develop a business and marketing plan for the organization and assist in the incorporation effort.

Given the likely completion of the Cayuga Waterfront Trail in 2010 – 2011 and the anticipated ongoing improvements to Stewart Park, the City should evaluate its internal organization and staffing for managing its parks and trails. Clearly, Stewart Park is understaffed and underfunded which has led to deferred maintenance of park buildings and facilities. The Waterfront Trail much of which will be located outside of City Park Land will present maintenance challenges for the City. Consideration should be given to developing a more clear and consistent management structure for the City's two major waterfront parks – Cass Park and Stewart Park and for the Waterfront Trail. The upcoming preparation of a City Comprehensive Plan may provide an opportunity for considering the roles of the Ithaca Youth Bureau and Department of Public Works in maintaining and operating the City's waterfront park system.

STEWART PARK REHABILITATION ACTION PLAN



Volunteers have been working in Stewart Park painting and repairing the pavilions and cleaning up during the past two years. The Central Park Conservancy works with New York City to rejuvenate Central Park and the High Line recently opened in Manhattan thanks in large part to the efforts of the Friends of the High Line.