

# *"Discovering Collingswood"*

A Master Plan for the Borough of Collingswood

## Recreation Plan Element

JUNE 1999

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A Master Plan for the Borough of Collingswood

## Recreation Plan Element

Prepared for:

Borough of Collingswood Planning Board as part of the Community's Master Plan Analysis

Prepared By:

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June, 1999

(The original of this report has been signed and sealed in accordance with the law)

PPK No. 2800.00

**COLLINGSWOOD MASTER PLAN  
RECREATION PLAN ELEMENT**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The recreational needs of the Borough of Collingswood residents are served by a network of strategically placed facilities that are located throughout the community. These facilities are well maintained and sufficiently meet the current needs of the community. However, the facilities can be maximized and upgraded to meet growing needs of the residents through continued maintenance, minor and major improvements, expanded programming, and cooperation of municipal and outside organizations.

The facilities located within the Borough are as follows:

**1. Knights Park**

A facility of 61.44 acres that is privately endowed as open space for the use and benefit of Collingswood residents. This facility is an urban park with a wide range of recreational functions including formal recreational fields, picnic areas, and walking paths. However, it is not being used to its potential.

Suggested improvements to the park include the following:

- Creation of a multi-use fitness trail
- Initiation of family commemorative and business sponsorship areas
- Implementation of an environmental interpretive signage program
- Wetlands habitat enhancement
- Upgrade of recreation fields and completion of a recreation space plan
- Creation of a learning center
- Placement and nurturing of themed gardens and natural landscapes
- Creation of a community garden program
- Expansion of the lake and implementation of related programs
- Provision of a festival area

**2. Roberts Pool**

A facility that is at its peak usage during the summer months when residents use its outdoor swimming facilities as a community pool. Its continued maintenance and upkeep are important since such facilities are expensive to maintain. Therefore, annual upgrades and long range facility improvements are recommended for this site.

3. **Elementary School Playgrounds**

These play areas form the network of neighborhood recreational facilities in this traditionally designed community. Although for the most part they are well maintained, they offer an opportunity to be further enhanced through creative design and concepts. The following recommendations should be implemented in conjunction and with the assistance of neighborhood residents, school board and community representatives:

- Supplement existing play equipment with newer, colorful modular play structures
- Development of an accessibility program to include specific hours of operation, a resident card program, and a community monitoring program
- Creation of neighborhood recreation associations
- Expansion or creation of picnic facilities at all school sites

4. **Cooper River and Newton Creek Parks**

The Camden County Park Commission controls these two river park systems. These parks form a natural greenbelt around the Borough along the subject watercourses. The Cooper River Park hosts a private yacht club and the Newton Creek has improved portions for active use. However, for the most part these facilities are predominantly passive. The Borough should maintain dialogue with the County to ensure te coordinated use of these facilities.

**COLLINGSWOOD MASTER PLAN  
RECREATION PLAN ELEMENT**

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

	<u>PAGE</u>
I. Introduction .....	1
II. Inventory .....	3
A. Knight Park .....	3
B. Roberts Park .....	6
C. School Facilities .....	8
1. Garfield Elementary .....	8
2. Tatem Elementary .....	9
3. Sharp Elementary .....	10
4. Zane-North Elementary School .....	11
5. Newbie Elementary .....	12
6. Collingswood Middle School / Collingswood High School .....	14
D. Cooper River Park .....	16
E. Newton Creek / Newton Lake Park .....	16
III. Condition and Adequacy of Recreational Facilities .....	17
A. Knight Park .....	17
1. Playing Fields .....	17
2. The Playground Facility .....	18
3. Walking / Circulation Trail .....	18
4. Pavilion and Picnic Grove Area .....	19
5. Gazebo / Concert Area .....	19
6. Parking .....	19
B. Roberts Pool .....	20
C. School Facilities .....	20
1. Elementary Schools .....	20
2. Middle School / High School Campus .....	21
IV. Recommendations .....	22
A. Knight Park .....	22
1. Fitness Trail .....	22
2. Family Commemorative & Business Sponsorship Areas .....	23
3. Environmental Interpretive Signage .....	23
4. Wetlands Habitat Enhancement .....	24
5. Recreation / High School Ball Fields .....	24
6. Learning Center .....	24
7. Themed Gardens / Natural Landscapes .....	25
8. Community Gardens .....	26
9. Lake Expansion .....	26
10. Festival Area .....	29
11. Miscellaneous .....	29
B. Roberts Pool Area .....	33
C. School Facilities .....	33
1. Elementary Schools .....	33
2. Middle School / High School Campus .....	34
D. Miscellaneous .....	35

**COLLINGSWOOD MASTER PLAN  
RECREATION PLAN ELEMENT**

**LIST OF FIGURES**

<u>FIGURE</u>	<u>TITLE</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
Rec-1	Community Facilities and Recreation Plan .....	2
Rec-2	Caretaker's House, Knight Park .....	4
Rec-3	Playground, Knight Park .....	4
Rec-4	Collingswood Little League Field, Knight Park .....	5
Rec-5	Gazebo / Concert Area, Knight Park .....	5
Rec-6	Roberts Pool .....	7
Rec-7	Sand Volleyball Court Playground at Roberts Pool .....	7
Rec-8	Garfield Elementary School Playground .....	9
Rec-9	Tatem Elementary School Playground .....	10
Rec-10	Sharp Elementary School Playground .....	11
Rec-11	Zane-North Elementary School Playground .....	12
Rec-12	Newbie Elementary School Playground .....	13
Rec-13	Newbie Elementary School Basketball Court .....	13
Rec-14	Collingswood High School Football Stadium .....	14
Rec-15	Tennis Courts at Collingswood High School .....	15
Rec-16	Roller Hockey Rink .....	16
Rec-17	The Lake at Knight Park .....	27
Rec-18	Fishing and Boating on the Lake in Knight Park .....	28
Rec-19	Boating on the Lake in Knight Park .....	28
Rec-20	Knight Park Concept Plan A .....	30
Rec-21	Knight Park Concept Plan B .....	31
Rec-22	Knight Park Concept Plan C .....	32
Rec-23	Public Works Site Recreation Area .....	37
Rec-24	Alternative Public Work Site / Recreation Area .....	38

**COLLINGSWOOD MASTER PLAN  
RECREATION PLAN ELEMENT**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

The location and effectiveness of recreation and open space opportunities have a significant impact on the form and function of a municipality. These spaces and opportunities also help to improve the local quality of life and environment. The purpose of this element of the Master Plan is to identify the type, location, and condition of recreational facilities in the Borough of Collingswood and to provide recommendations for improvements to existing facilities and the development of new recreational and open space opportunities.

Figure REC-1 identifies the recreational facilities located in the Borough of Collingswood.

Information provided in this section was taken from surveys, personal interviews, and field observations. The staff of the Collingswood Recreation Department provided a tour of the recreation facilities in the Borough and a detailed inventory of recreation programs and amenities. Their help was greatly appreciated.

**FIGURE REC-1**

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**COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND RECREATION PLAN**



## II. RECREATIONAL FACILITIES INVENTORY

The locations of all Collingswood's recreational facilities are presented on the map designated REC-1. This includes Knight Park, Roberts Pool, the local schools which serve as neighborhood recreational opportunities and the two Camden County Parks located along the Newton Creek / Lake and the Cooper River. The following is an inventory of the elements found at each facility.

### A. KNIGHT PARK

As seen from figure REC-1, the largest open space in Collingswood is Knight Park. This land was donated in 1893 by the executors of E.C. Knight to a group of Trustees to be used for a public park. Since that date, Knight Park has been used for the recreational enjoyment of all Collingswood residents.

The park is over 61.44 acres in size and contains the following amenities, which can be seen in Figures REC-2 through REC-5:

- Circulation path (cars may drive on this to access the park facilities)
- Lake
- House and garage (serves as the caretaker's residence)
- Multi-purpose fields (soccer, lacrosse, field hockey, softball, t-ball, and little league)
- Monuments
- Play ground, including the Michael Landon Tree House
- Gazebo / band area (for summer night concerts), and
- Parking for the park and Middle/High school.

The majority of the time, however, the park is used for passive recreation. Concern has been expressed by the residents to better utilize the land in Knight Park for additional active recreational and educational uses.

Friends of Knight Park is a volunteer organization which has been formed to provide the Board of Trustees of Knight Park with professional technical assistance to protect and preserve the park. Beginning in 1997, this group held a series of public meetings to gather input for the eventual redesign of Knight Park. The three community goals that have developed from their work include:

- Balance active and passive uses
- Preserve and enhance the beauty of the park
- Incorporate educational programs and volunteer organizations

New ideas and recommendations for Knight Park are being incorporated into this Recreation Plan Element of the Master Plan in the section specific to Knight Park.

**FIGURE REC-2**

**CARETAKER'S HOUSE, KNIGHT PARK  
COLLINGSWOOD, NEW JERSEY**



SOURCE: PETER P. KARABASHIAN ASSOCIATES, INC., AUGUST 1998

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*The Caretaker's House is a focal point of the Browning Avenue entrance to Knight Park. Recommendations for this area include either renovations to this facility or the construction of a new facility to serve as a Learning Center for park visitors.*

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**FIGURE REC-3**

**PLAYGROUND, KNIGHT PARK  
COLLINGSWOOD, NEW JERSEY**



SOURCE: PETER P. KARABASHIAN ASSOCIATES, INC., AUGUST 1998

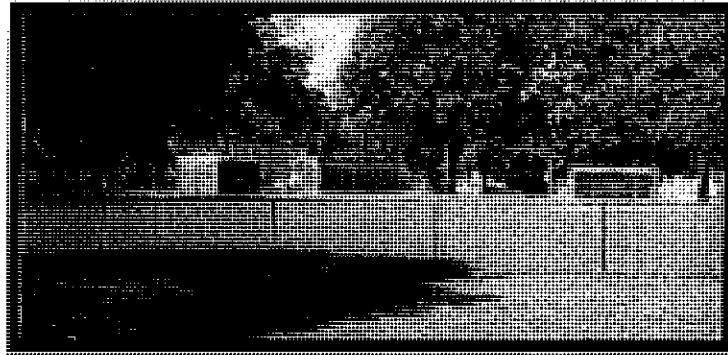
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*The Michael Landon Treehouse (shown here on the left) is a recent donation from the Landon Family, who are from Collingswood.*

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**FIGURE REC- 4**

**COLLINGSWOOD LITTLE LEAGUE FIELD, KNIGHT PARK  
COLLINGSWOOD, NEW JERSEY**



SOURCE: PETER P. KARABASHIAN ASSOCIATES, INC., AUGUST 1998

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*Collingswood Little League, which operates and maintains this field, is a separate organization not affiliated with the Borough's recreation department.*

---

**FIGURE REC-5**

**GAZEBO / CONCERT AREA, KNIGHT PARK  
COLLINGSWOOD, NEW JERSEY**



SOURCE: PETER P. KARABASHIAN ASSOCIATES, INC., OCTOBER 1997

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*The gazebo is the site of Wednesday night summer concerts. It has also been the site for a number of weddings and other celebrations by residents and non-residents.*

---

**B. ROBERTS POOL AREA**

Roberts Pool, located between North Vineyard Blvd. and Hillcrest Avenue, near the Cooper River, is the only public swimming facility in Collingswood. The pool area, as seen in Figures REC-6 and REC-7, includes the following:

- 25 meter pool
- 50 meter pool
- Baby pool
- Playground
- Sandbox
- Sand volleyball court
- Picnic area
- Snack bar

The pool is open to residents of Collingswood generally from the first weekend in June through Labor Day. Pool tags are required and can be purchased at City Hall and other locations throughout the season.

Collingswood Swim Team, a member of the Suburban Swim League, practices and competes at Roberts Pool. A senior citizen swim hour is held every day prior to the regular opening. Also, swim lessons are offered for toddlers and children throughout the summer months. Volleyball classes, organized by Collingswood Recreation, are also held at the Roberts Pool area.

Upgrades to the Roberts Park facility are scheduled to take place in the Spring of 1999. These upgrades will include the resurfacing of the pools, upgrade of the bathrooms and concession stand, as well as the addition of new playground equipment and additional fencing.

**FIGURE REC- 6**

**ROBERTS POOL**  
*BOROUGH OF COLLINGSWOOD, NEW JERSEY*



SOURCE: PETER P. KARABASHIAN ASSOCIATES, INC., MARCH 1998

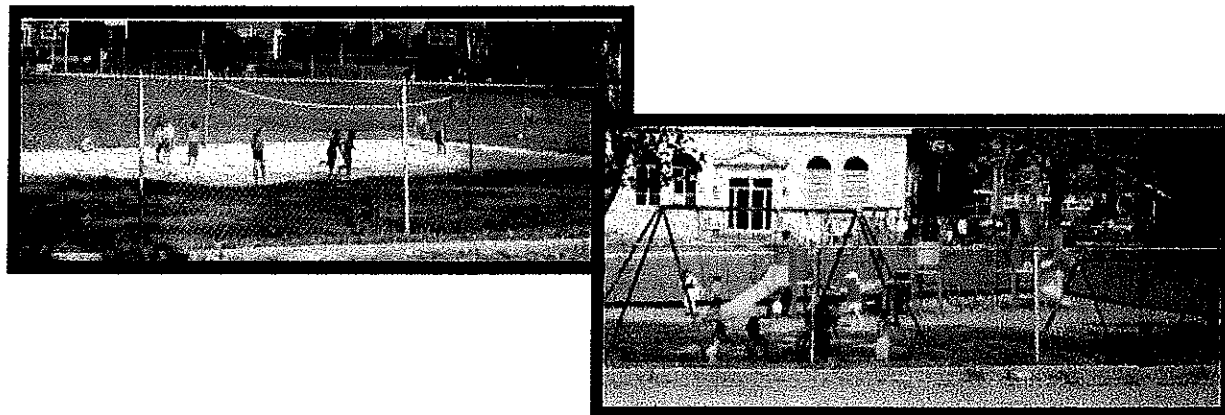
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*The swimming area, Roberts Pool, located between North Vineyard Boulevard and Hillcrest Avenue, is the only municipal-owned and operated recreation facility.*

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**FIGURE REC- 7**

**SAND VOLLEYBALL COURT AND PLAYGROUND AT ROBERTS POOL**  
*BOROUGH OF COLLINGSWOOD, NEW JERSEY*



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*The swimming recreational amenities at Roberts Pool are heavily utilized during the summer months. They provide a popular summer alternative to the other recreational opportunities at Knight Park and school yard playgrounds.*

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SOURCE: PETER P. KARABASHIAN ASSOCIATES, INC., AUGUST 1998

C.

## SCHOOL FACILITIES

All of Collingswood's elementary schools and the Middle/High School have recreation facilities which are maintained by the school district and open to the residents of Collingswood. This is a cost effective way to provide such facilities. The schools are located in residential neighborhoods, which makes them a very convenient and centrally located place within the community for families and children to gather and play. Many of the programs run by the recreation department take place in one of these facilities.

Recreation facilities in school yards are limited to residents of Collingswood. In order to enforce this code, school playgrounds are at times locked during periods of low attendance. It is recommended that neighborhood citizens be organized to:

- Develop a program to manage these playgrounds, particularly during summer and off-school hour use periods.
- Encourage neighborhood organizations to use the recreational facilities and develop a responsible "use and lock" program.
- Encourage upgrades and inclusion of creative learning equipment, sculptures, interpretive historic photos and plaques, sitting areas for parents, etc.
- These recommendations can be carried out by responsible neighborhood groups or informally organized neighbors.

The recommendations which follow this inventory suggest the school sites become more active recreational opportunities for neighborhood children.

### 1. Garfield Elementary - Haddon Avenue

The Garfield Elementary school playground, as seen in Figure REC-8, has a metal swing set frame to the side of the yard, which holds four swings. A series of natural colored, climbing structures to the rear of the yard are constructed of metal, wood, and tires. This play area is wood-chipped for the children's safety.

The playground itself is an asphalt yard with a large map of the United States and painted circles for dodge ball and other games. Basketball hoops and backboards are provided as well.

FIGURE REC-8

**GARFIELD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PLAYGROUND**  
*COLLINGSWOOD, NEW JERSEY*



SOURCE: PETER P. KARABASHIAN ASSOCIATES, INC., AUGUST 1998

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*Garfield Elementary School playground provides a swing set with four (4) swings and five (5) climbing structures.*

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2. Tatem Elementary - Corner of Lincoln and Cedar Avenues

The Tatem Elementary school playground, as seen in Figure REC-9, is one of the smaller school facilities. The wood-chipped play area has a large climbing structure constructed of wood, metal, and plastic in bright primary colors. The swing set is a metal frame structure holding four swings. The playground itself is asphalt paved. Basketball hoops and backboards are also provided.

During the summer months, Tatem is used to host the Recreation Department's Summer Playground, which is similar to a half day summer camp.

**FIGURE REC-9**

**TATEM ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PLAYGROUND  
COLLINGSWOOD, NEW JERSEY**



SOURCE: PETER P. KARABASHIAN ASSOCIATES, INC., AUGUST 1998

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*New playground equipment at Tatem Elementary School allows for varied recreational opportunities which include games such as tic-tac-toe.*

---

**3. Sharp Elementary - Corner of Comly and Magill Avenues**

The Sharp Elementary School playground, as seen in Figure REC-10, has a wood-chipped and grassed play area with one swing set, which holds four swings and an intricate climbing structure. Both structures are constructed of metal and painted primary red and blue.

The asphalt playground is large with a series of painted circles and basketball backboards and hoops. Also found in the playground are a number of picnic tables available to students to eat their lunch or sit and play games.

During the summer months, Sharp School is also used to host the Recreation Department's Summer Playground, which is similar to a half day summer camp

As a neighborhood playground, it is recommended that improvements be based upon citizen input and involvement as previously stated.



FIGURE REC-10

**SHARP ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PLAYGROUND**  
*COLLINGSWOOD, NEW JERSEY*



SOURCE: PETER P. KARABASHIAN ASSOCIATES, INC., AUGUST 1998

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*The Sharp Elementary School playground contains play equipment, a picnic table area, and a large asphalt court area for basketball, dodge ball, and other sports.*

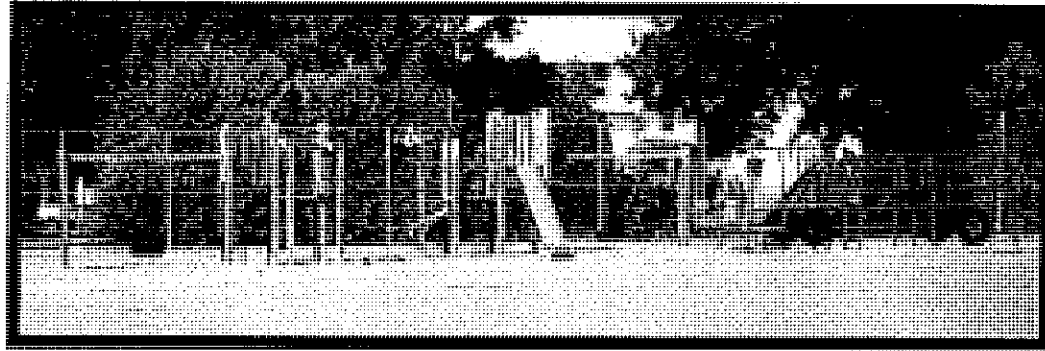
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4. Zane - North Elementary - Lees Avenue

The Zane-North Elementary School has a very large playground, only a portion of which can be seen in Figure REC-11. In addition to the wood and metal climbing and play equipment in the wood-chipped play area, the school has an asphalt playground with two large painted circles and a full basketball court. A large map of the United States can also be found adjacent to the play area. It is this type of creative learning experience that should be designed into these facilities.

**FIGURE REC-11**

**ZANE-NORTH ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PLAYGROUND  
COLLINGSWOOD, NEW JERSEY**



SOURCE: PETER P. KARABASHIAN ASSOCIATES, INC., AUGUST 1998

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*The Zane-North Elementary school playground has a limited amount of play equipment, although the yard itself is expansive.*

---

5. Newbie Elementary - Browning Avenue

The Newbie Elementary School has a split playground area, which can be seen in Figures REC-12 and REC-13. The play area is wood-chipped and has a metal frame swing set, two slides, and a metal climbing structure. Although freshly painted in primary colors, the play area facilities are older in comparison to the other elementary schools.

The asphalt playground is very large and contains a full basketball court as well as a number of painted courts and circles.

**FIGURE REC-12**

**NEWBIE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PLAYGROUND**  
*COLLINGSWOOD, NEW JERSEY*



SOURCE: PETER P. KARABASHIAN ASSOCIATES, INC., AUGUST 1998

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*Newbie Elementary School play area is small and provides simple recreational opportunities, such as slides, swings, and a set of monkey bars.*

---

**FIGURE REC-13**

**NEWBIE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL BASKETBALL COURT**  
*COLLINGSWOOD, NEW JERSEY*



SOURCE: PETER P. KARABASHIAN ASSOCIATES, INC., AUGUST 1998

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*Newbie Elementary also has a well-maintained basketball court and paved playground area.*

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6. Collingswood Middle School / Collingswood High School

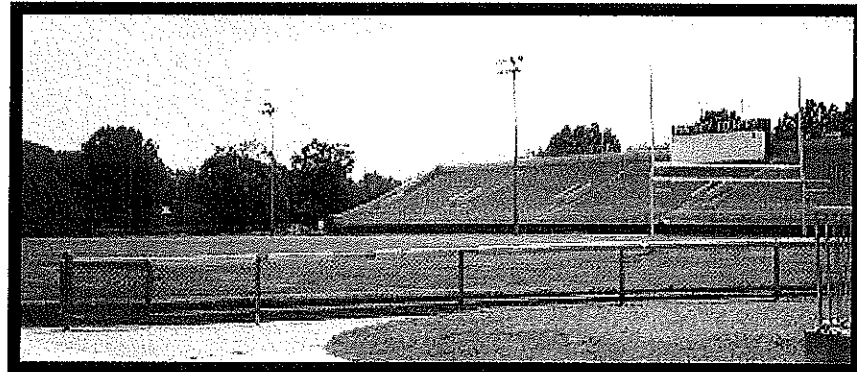
The high school / middle school campus contains a number of multi-purpose fields as well as the football stadium, track, tennis courts, basketball courts, roller hockey rink and archery pit. These facilities host many of the school's and the community's recreational activities and events throughout the year. The facilities can be seen in Figures REC-14 through REC-16.

The middle school gymnasium, Ben Mark Gym, is used by the recreation department for aerobics, beginner golf class, youth wrestling, and winter basketball for both boys and girls. It is used throughout the school year by student sports.

The multi-purpose fields behind the middle and high schools are used by the recreation department for soccer, field hockey, and softball. The fields are used by the students for varsity softball, football practice, and soccer. The stadium, shown in Figure REC-14, is used for football as well as track events.

**FIGURE REC-14**

**COLLINGSWOOD HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL STADIUM  
COLLINGSWOOD, NEW JERSEY**



SOURCE: PETER P. KARABASHIAN ASSOCIATES, INC., AUGUST 1998

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*The football stadium, referred to as 'Panther Country', is the site of all home football games and track meets.*

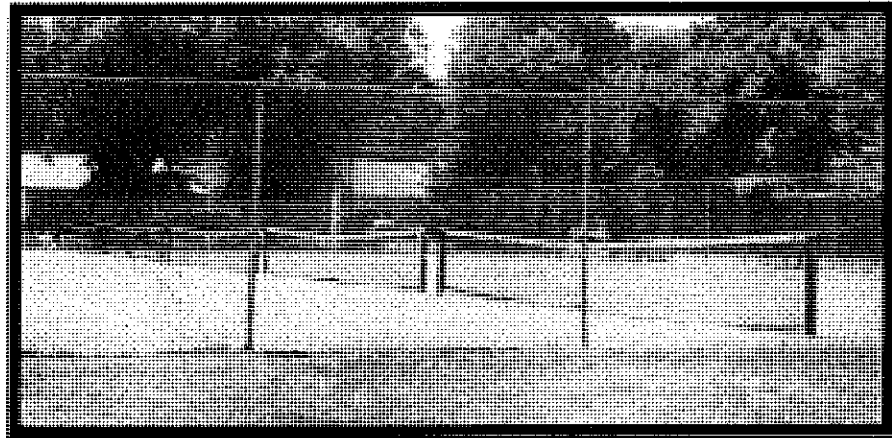
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The seven (7) tennis courts found on the high/middle school campus are the only tennis facilities in the Borough. These courts, as seen in Figure REC-15, are used by the recreation department and the school for matches, lessons and practice. A wall ball area is provided for practice. The basketball courts are used for summer league play. The archery area is also used for lessons by the recreation department.

Collectively, the Middle and High School facilities are used to support both the physical education and recreational needs of the Borough's student and citizen population.

**FIGURE REC-15**

**TENNIS COURTS AT COLLINGSWOOD HIGH SCHOOL  
COLLINGSWOOD, NEW JERSEY**



SOURCE: PETER P. KARABASHIAN ASSOCIATES, INC., AUGUST 1998

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*The tennis courts found on the school's campus are the only tennis facilities in the Borough*

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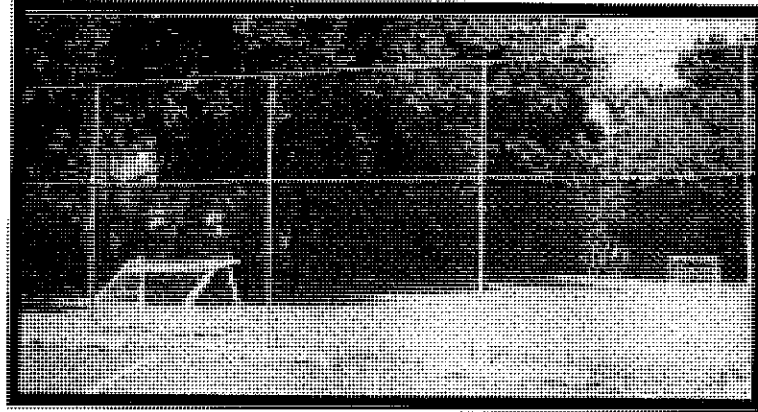
The roller hockey rink, as seen in Figure REC-16, is located behind the tennis courts. Although there is no organized league play, residents can use the rink for pick-up games or practice. The rink is small and in need of repair. Some residents have mentioned an interest in creating a full-size hockey rink to be used as part of an organized hockey program.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Observation summarized from comments made in "Discovering Collingswood - Borough of Collingswood Community Survey Report," dated June 1998.

FIGURE REC-16

ROLLER HOCKEY RINK  
COLLINGSWOOD, NEW JERSEY



SOURCE: PETER P. KARABASHIAN ASSOCIATES, INC., AUGUST 1998

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*The Hockey Rink, located on the Middle/High School campus, is in need of major repair and upgrade. Given the potential recreational value of this facility, upgrading it is recommended.*

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D. COOPER RIVER PARK

The Cooper River Park is maintained by the Camden County Park and Recreation Department. The park has a jogging path and a small boat launch. The Camden County Heritage and Cultural Commission are also housed at this location. Also located in the park is the Armitage Pavilion and McAlley ballfield. The Yacht Club is located at the water's edge but is privately leased and not part of the County system.

E. NEWTON CREEK / NEWTON LAKE PARK

The park area surrounding the Newton Creek and Lake has recently been modified to include new facilities and improvements. New lights have been added to the pathway, the matrimony gardens have been installed, and the new sand volleyball court has been built. The parking lots and the Lees Avenue pier have been renovated and the playground has been rebuilt. The Lees Avenue shelter and other picnic areas are still located in the park

Both the Cooper River and Newton Creek Park systems provide a natural greenbelt surrounding the edges of the Borough. Both offer an excellent opportunity for environmental interpretive signage, wildlife enhancement projects and similar activities.

### III. CONDITION AND ADEQUACY OF RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

The majority of the recreational facilities found in Collingswood are in good to excellent condition. Very few are in poor condition. However, not all the facilities can handle the current use nor are they adequate to meet the growing demands placed on them by the residents of Collingswood. The following outline describes the specific recreational areas, their quality and the capacity of the facilities to meet current and future demands of the residents..

#### A. KNIGHT PARK

Knight Park is a unique park of 61.44 acres located in the heart of the Borough. It is a facility that is owned privately and managed by a Board of Trustees which allows the Borough to use it as the hub of its recreational facilities. Although it is currently used primarily for team sports sponsored by the Board of Education or existing leagues, it also serves as a recreational resource for walking, jogging, biking, casual play, concerts, etc. Even with these uses, the park's potential is not maximized. The following description identifies the various uses in the park and the subsequent recommendations will provide insight as to how to derive additional recreational value from this unique and wonderful resource.

##### 1. Playing Fields

The multi-purpose ball fields are in good condition. Because of the frequent use from season-to-season, it is difficult to seed and grow grass on certain fields. This problem is further compounded because the high school varsity baseball field is prone to flooding, especially in the spring months during baseball season. Approximately half of the home games were canceled last year due to flooding<sup>2</sup>

The recreation department is at capacity with the number of fields provided. Additional leagues, teams, or sports would require different time schedules and additional field space. Specific space planning would need to be completed to determine the adequacy of Knight Park serving all the future field needs. The high/middle school campus would need to serve as a sister facility, sharing the burden placed on the fields at the park. Also, the high school field hockey / lacrosse field may be used in the off-season as multi-purpose field for additional recreation space if scheduling allows.

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<sup>2</sup>A preliminary review of aerial photos shows that the fields may have been built over old watercourses.

The Little League fields are in excellent condition but are scheduled and maintained separately from the remainder of the Park and recreation department.

## 2. The Playground Facility

As indicated in the *Community Survey*, residents are interested in utilizing the park to its fullest extent. The playground is one of the facilities that can be expanded to provide more creative play opportunities.

The playground facility is well maintained and was recently upgraded with the addition of the Michael Landon Tree House.

There is concern about unlawful use of facilities after hours. Therefore, the playground has been designed as a basic facility without many elaborate climbing structures or enclosed play units. As such, the facilities remain sufficient for the residents of the community who come to the park to picnic and use these facilities.<sup>3</sup> Some minor upgrades can be made by adding more creative play, exercise and similar equipment.

## 3. Walking / Circulation Trail

The circulation trail at Knight Park is inadequate. This trail which is used as a drive for automobiles to access all portions of the park also serves as a walking trail and bike path.

Parking for the park and the high/middle school campus is also provided along this path. The combination of movements and the two-way traffic flow creates a hazardous and inconvenient situation for all park users.

The trail itself, paved with asphalt and concrete, is in poor condition. Potholes and uneven pavement exist throughout the park.

The pedestrian bridge over the pond is in good condition and is adequate to serve the circulation flow in that area.

Recommendations for the trail include: separating the bike/ped flow from the automobile flow, restricting automobile access through the

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<sup>3</sup>Playgrounds in the neighborhood schools serve a more direct recreational role for neighborhood residents while Knight Park provides playground facilities as an adjunct to other neighborhood recreational facilities.



park, and paving a lined, multi-use fitness trail for pedestrians, cyclists, and rollerbladers. Signage marking the variety of uses permitted would be mandatory.

4. Pavilion and Picnic Grove Area

The pavilion and picnic grove areas are well-maintained and in good condition. Because it is the only large covered facility in the Borough, the pavilion is frequently rented for events and gatherings.<sup>4</sup> An additional pavilion may be needed in the future, should the demand for more formal Borough-wide events increase.

5. Gazebo / Concert Area

The gazebo and concert area is in fair condition. The gazebo currently requires a fresh coat of paint and some minor repairs to the support rails along the outer edge of the structure. The area surrounding the gazebo is void of landscaping and very flat which does not provide an aesthetic setting for the performance area.

Aside from minor repairs and maintenance, recommendations include increasing the slope of the area through berms and other fill techniques to create an amphitheater-type setting. In addition, increase the decorative vegetation around the area to create a focal point within the park.

An increase in the size and improvement of the architectural style of the gazebo should also be evaluated.

6. Parking

On an average day, parking within the park is adequate. But on a day when recreation department, high school and middle school events are taking place, parking is almost impossible to find. Knight Park currently provides parking along the circulation path. On-street parking also provides some parallel spaces. The high school parking is limited for faculty and staff.

Parking is a major issue and needs to be addressed jointly with the school district, a major user of the Park's parking capacity.

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<sup>4</sup>There is currently no fee for the 'rental' of any of the facilities in Knight Park. A permit application is filed but no cost is associated with the agreement. Clean up, maintenance and similar costs are fees that are normally charged in other communities. This situation is discussed in the recommendations.

B. ROBERTS POOL

The Roberts Pool area is an excellent summer seasonal facility. Field observation during both open and closed seasons, reflected a well-maintained and clean facility. The pool is large enough to meet the needs of the Borough residents and is a popular gathering place in the summer. The pool area also has play areas (sand box, volleyball court, and playground) that are well-utilized when the pool is open during the summer season.

Continued maintenance and possible limitation of use of this facility to residents with a charge for non-residents is a recommendation for this important facility.

C. SCHOOL FACILITIES

1. Elementary Schools

In general, the elementary school facilities are in very good condition and well maintained. These school facilities, centrally located in the middle of residential neighborhoods, are excellent play and gathering areas for families. As such, they provide a number of recreation opportunities for all children. A program should be initiated to assure that neighborhood play areas in school facilities are open and available. In some communities keys are assigned to responsible citizens and/or groups to "open and close" fenced playgrounds at designated times. This system provides controlled access as well as security.

Many of the play area facilities are brightly colored and all provide slides, swings, and climbing structures. The court areas are well paved and provide opportunities for street/roller hockey, basketball, and other court sports. Once again, accessibility to these sites is a major constraint and needs to be addressed through creative alternatives.

The system of neighborhood playgrounds associated with the elementary schools is a classic and desirable design attribute of neighborhood planning. As such, these playgrounds should not only be viewed as recreational resources for the school system, but also for the neighborhood as well.

By working with individual neighborhood groups, citizens, or PTA's, these facilities should be evaluated to be personalized to individual neighborhood and school needs.

Creative alternatives can be developed by developing play areas that have an educational, physical as well as a social value. Such elements may include maps of the Borough or neighborhood painted on the play surface, or painted surface games such as, but not limited to, hopscotch and other similar games. Identifying trees, placing bird houses and erecting whirligigs, are examples of features that extend the interest of a play facility beyond the classic concepts of "swings, slides and basketball."

Recreating a neighborhood / school playground can be a rewarding social experience that can lead to customized play facilities envisioned by the residents. To achieve such a "make over" of these facilities, meetings should be organized with neighborhood groups to develop "design-build" concepts for each facility. Once this is accomplished, then budgets, fund-raisers and grants can be sought for implementation of the concepts.

## 2. Middle School / High School Campus

The high school / middle school campus facilities are also well-maintained and in good condition, with the exception of the roller hockey area. The fields are mowed and lined regularly. The tennis and basketball courts are well maintained and the nets and surfaces are in good condition. In contrast to the rest of the area, the roller hockey facilities need upgrading. It is recommended that the facility be fully assessed and be scheduled for improvement.

#### IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

As stated previously, the recreation facilities in Collingswood are in good condition, and with few exceptions, they fulfill the current needs of the residents. However, this section describes the specific actions, improvements, or programming needed to meet the future demands and increase the potential use of each recreation site. The recommendations are based on the goals and objectives, community input, and the inventory and analysis of each facility.

##### A. KNIGHT PARK

The strategic location and large size<sup>5</sup> of Knight Park make it a community focal point in Collingswood. Currently, Knight Park has only a few of its acres dedicated to active recreation. The passive recreational areas are primarily open fields of grass that do not enhance the potential of the facility. The majority of the Borough's recreational programs and playground activities take place in Knight Park or on the school properties. The recommendations below incorporate a series of themes that promote environmental education, wetlands preservation, habitat enhancement, recreational opportunities, and open space preservation into a recreation plan aimed at creating an enjoyable network of recreational pockets throughout the park. The various concept plans, which incorporate some to all of these recommendations, are included in this report as Figures REC-20 through REC-22.

It is important to note that the park is still owned and operated by the Trustees of Knight Park. The Trustees have arrangements with the school district and the Borough for maintenance and use but they are the sole decision makers for procedures and improvements. Recommendations in this document, supported by the Borough, will need to be presented and approved by the Board of Trustees for Knight Park prior to implementation.

##### 1. Fitness Trail

The current path at Knight Park allows walkers and joggers an opportunity to exercise in a park setting while allowing automobiles to access all points throughout the park. The path has substantial potential as a major destination point for citizens of Collingswood if it can be separated from vehicular circulation turned into a recreational opportunity for all members of the community. To this end, automobile traffic should be restricted from circulating throughout the park. A wider, paved, and lined, multi-use trail for bicyclists, rollerbladers, walkers, and joggers should be created which would allow for various

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<sup>5</sup>Knight Park is 61.44 acres.

movements to take place along the same trail. Fitness stations located along the path would create additional recreational opportunities. Improvements such as benches and water fountains add to the desirability of a fitness trail. These rest facilities should be located frequently along the trail in dedication and garden areas. These treatments are not only functional, they create additional landscaped focal points.

## 2. Family Commemorative and Business Sponsorship Areas

Funding for park improvements can be obtained from a variety of sources. One of these funding sources are commemorative and sponsorship areas. For example, new benches, water fountains, and railings added along the walking trail could be purchased and donated by a family, groups or businesses. In return, a plaque is placed on the new amenity mentioning the family name or requested dedication. The same can be applied to new playground equipment, shelters, and swings.

Another method of establishing sponsorship of improvements is by designing specialty landscaped areas that would enhance sections of the park. Plant materials and flowers, or funds to support such plantings, can be donated to establish a garden or landscaped area. Again, the sponsor would be mentioned on a plaque or similar monument.

## 3. Environmental Interpretive Signage

Many of the different species of plants and animal life found throughout the state live in Knight Park. A program of interpretive signage could be implemented to identify the special habitats found in the urban environment of Collingswood and provide scientific and other information on the species that live here. Currently, small plaques have been placed on some of the larger species of trees to identify the common names. A consistent sign type with simple information, located throughout the entire park system is suggested to identify what animal and plant species live in the park and how they and we relate to one another in the broader ecosystem.

Signs should be worded and sized to be understood by both children and adults. Corporate sponsorship would pay for the construction and installation of the signs and allow the information to be changed periodically.

4. Wetlands Habitat Enhancement

Wetlands play a very important role in the New Jersey ecosystem. Certain plant and animal species can only be found in this type of environment. Due to the strict regulations placed on building in wetlands, developers are willing to pay a high price for the mitigation credits associated with dedicated, preserved wetlands.

Further study, outside the scope of this report, should focus on creating a wetlands area of three (3) to five (5) acres on site from which mitigation rights could be sold. This income would be placed into the trust fund for future park improvements.

Even if a wetlands mitigation area is not initiated, a wetlands area should be developed on a smaller scale for wildlife habitat and educational purposes. The value of wetlands and their preservation can then be shared with future generations.

5. Recreation / High School Ball Fields

The ball fields and active recreation fields should be preserved and enhanced. These fields provide the children and adults of Collingswood an opportunity to participate in league sports as well as organized events.

It is recommended that a recreation space plan be completed with the middle / high school campus to insure that the present and future needs of the residents are adequately served. Some of the items the recreation plan should consider are the rotation of fields for seeding, the addition of new fields and/or sports, and the overall improvement of the facilities.

6. Learning Center

The existing house in Knight Park is occupied by a caretaker for the park. It is recommended that a portion of the house be converted into a learning center and meeting facility for events such as class trips, nature walks, meetings, weddings, and tours. If a conversion is not feasible, the construction of an additional facility for these uses should be examined in this area.

It is also recommended that the dumpsters and compost area to the rear of the home be screened from the remainder of the park. The house should be landscaped with native plants to blend with the existing vegetation found in the park.

The compost area could be used to educate homeowners about the importance of recycling and composting. The landscaping around the house can be used to demonstrate planting, weeding, maintenance, and pruning techniques.

If architecturally possible, consideration should be given to creating a second level residence for the caretaker or another supporting residence adjacent to the existing building.

## 7. Themed Gardens / Natural Landscapes

By planting different varieties of plants, trees, and flowers, it is possible to attract a specific type of wildlife. Habitat planting creates a special environment for the attractions of birds, animals and insects. In southern New Jersey such plantings can attract a wide range of wildlife including monarch butterflies, hummingbirds and finches, and racoons and chipmunks.

Another method of habitat enhancement is the return to natural landscapes. Natural landscapes occur when the native plants of the area are allowed to thrive with minimal maintenance and disturbance. This creates an outdoor laboratory for studying nature. It allows for a transition between recreational uses and a quiet area for passive recreational uses.

As indicated in the tree inventory of Knight Park, there are some significant specimens located throughout the park. Themed gardens, such as a shade garden, deciduous tree garden or a wildlife garden, are wonderful areas to enhance the existing tree cover and can be used for passive recreation including picnics, reading, bird watching, and photography.

The themed gardens allow citizens the opportunity to view different species of trees, plants, and flowers and learn the benefits of planting each. Flower gardens create beautiful backdrops for the park's other activities. It is also provides another educational opportunity for children and adults.

The habitat enhancement and themed garden programs would work well with the interpretive signage. The outdoor landscape is a perfect area to teach children about biology, ecology, botany, and hydrology, all within the easy walking distance afforded by in a neighborhood park.

8. Community Gardens

A community garden is neighborhood open space which is maintained by and for the members of the community. The community garden would allow citizens of Collingswood to rent plots in Knight Park, plant their flowers or vegetables, weed and maintain the garden, and harvest their produce.

This program not only allows an individual to grow their own food but creates a sense of community pride by bringing people together for a common goal. The program builds the sense of community and creates a special area of the park for education, agricultural programs, and social interaction.

9. Lake Expansion

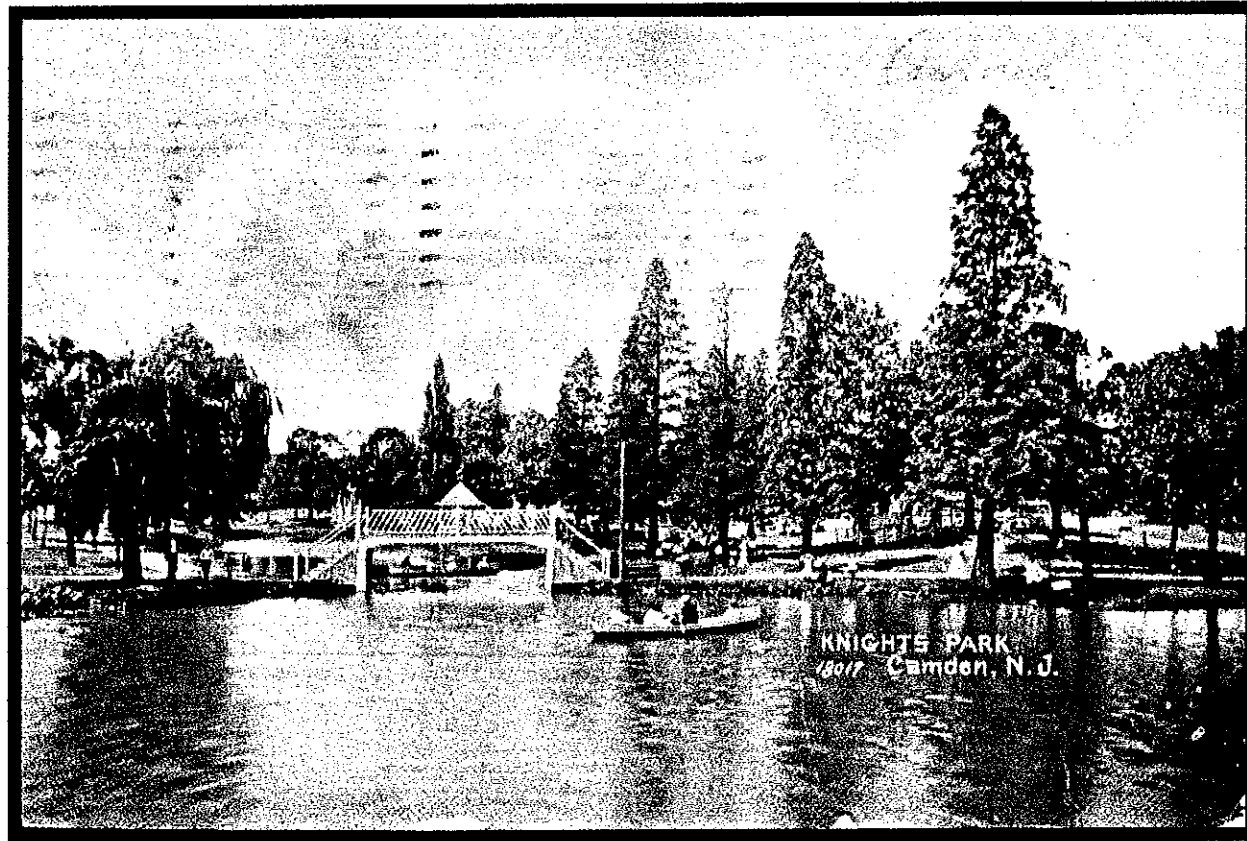
Recreational opportunities for the Knight Park lake can be expanded to include such activities as fishing and boating. Although the lake is not very large, a limited number of small canoes and paddle boats could be rented on an hourly basis in the summer. Ideally, this would be initiated by a private vendor licensed by the Trustees and Borough. The pond could be stocked with different types of fish (bass, sunfish and catfish). Dock fishing would be allowed at certain times.

This recommendation is based on historic uses of Knight Park. In the early part of this century, people could be seen fishing in and canoeing on the lake. The pictures included as Figures REC-17 through REC-19 are taken from postcards sent from 1906-1911. The lake was larger and used much more actively than it is today.



FIGURE REC-17

**THE LAKE AT KNIGHT PARK  
COLLINGSWOOD, NEW JERSEY**



Source: Collingswood Historic Society  
Post Card, postmarked 1907

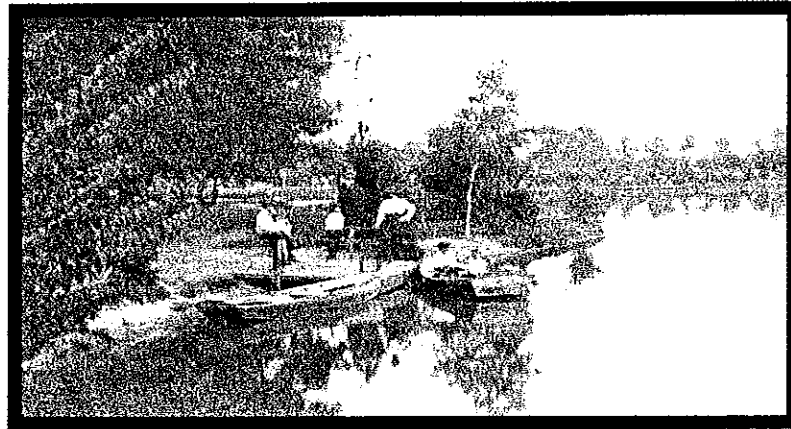
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*In the early part of the century, the Knight Park lake was used for recreational activities.*

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**FIGURE REC-18**

**FISHING AND BOATING ON THE LAKE IN KNIGHT PARK  
COLLINGSWOOD, NEW JERSEY**



Source: Collingswood Historic Society  
Post Card, postmarked 1906

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*Boating and fishing were popular activities at Knight Park in the early 1900's.*

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**FIGURE REC-19**

**BOATING ON THE LAKE IN KNIGHT PARK  
COLLINGSWOOD, NEW JERSEY**



Source: Collingswood Historic Society  
Post Card, postmarked 1911

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*Knight Park, then and now, has beautiful trees which frame the background to the Lake*

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10. Festival Area

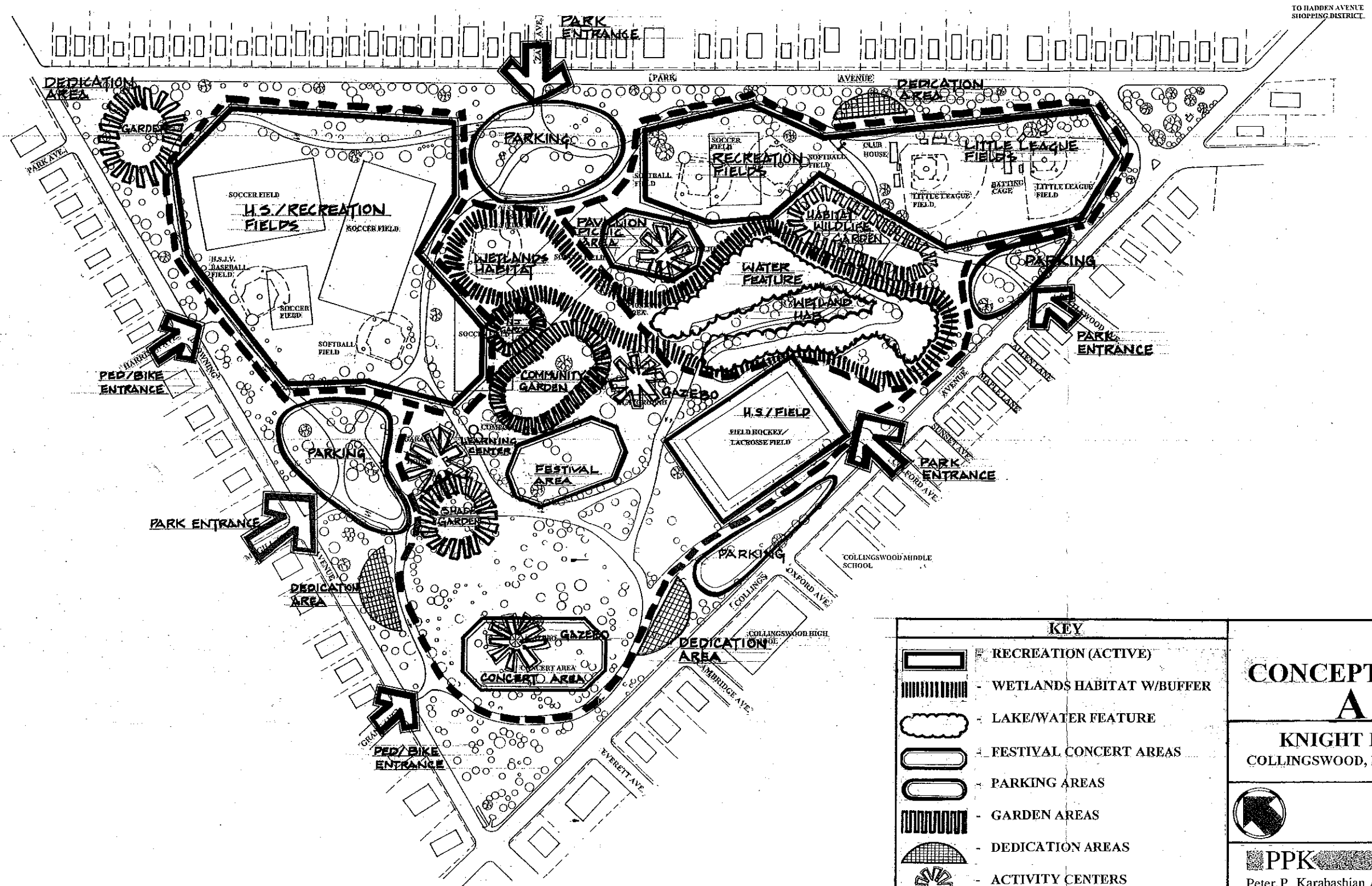
The park is a perfect location for Borough residents to hold community activities such as a festival, family reunion, or church picnic. By setting aside an area where a shelter /pavilion could be built or tents can be erected, private and public functions could take place. It is recommended that this area be located near the existing house. Utilities, such as water and electricity are already provided to the house and would be required for the festival area.

Rental fees should be collected for the use of a pavilion, the house, or tent area. These fees would be additional funding for park improvements, maintenance, and future events. Such functions should be limited to the residents of the Borough.

11. Miscellaneous

General suggestions and recommendations for the Park include:

- Further study into the fee structure for permitting / rental and use of the Park.
- Reduction of interior park circulation for automobiles and the creation of additional parking opportunities within and immediately outside the Park.
- Posted and enforced hours of operation to prevent unlawful use after hours.
- A joint parking study with the school district to provide parking off-site.

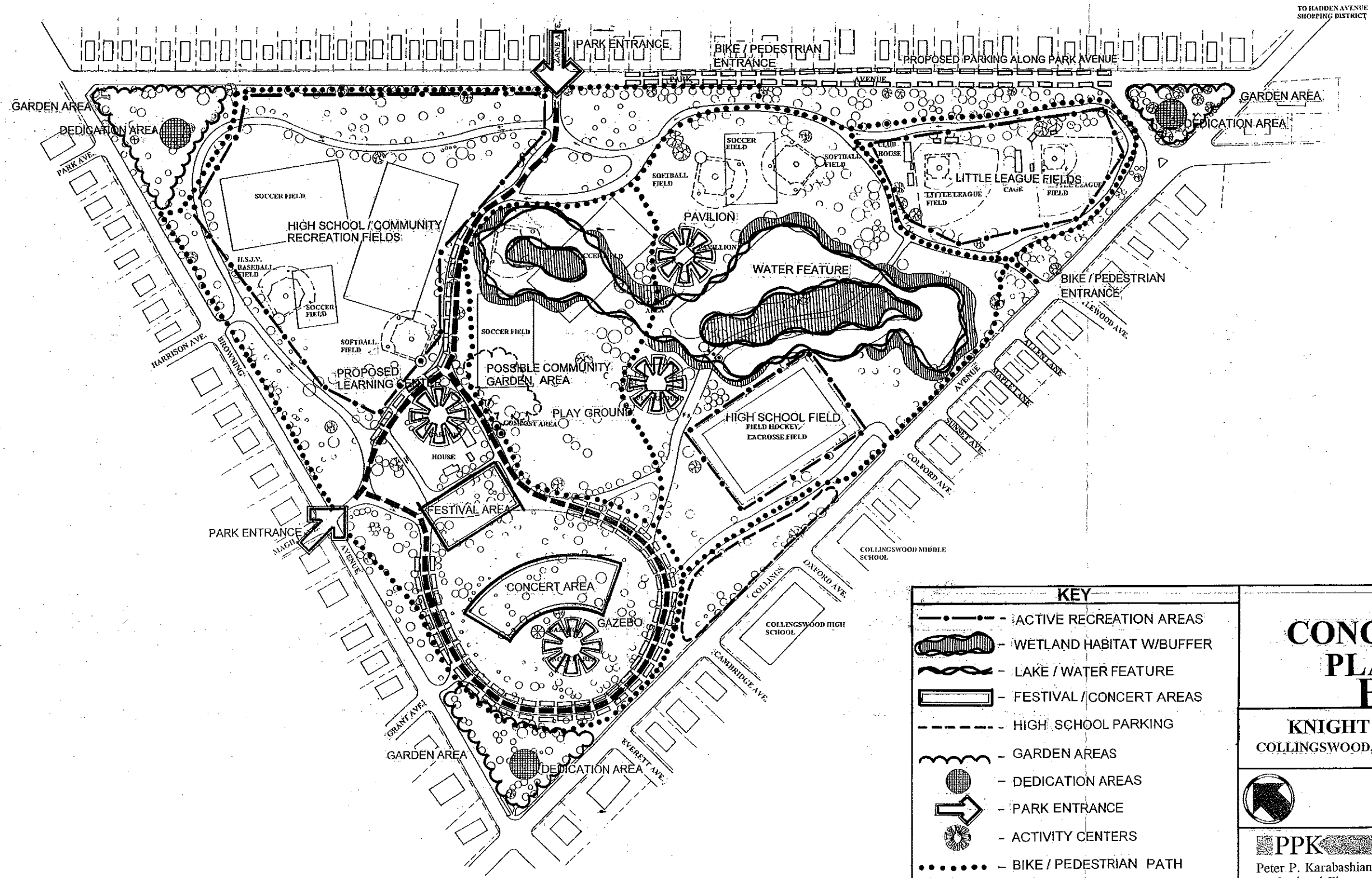


KEY	
	RECREATION (ACTIVE)
	WETLANDS HABITAT W/BUFFER
	LAKE/WATER FEATURE
	FESTIVAL CONCERT AREAS
	PARKING AREAS
	GARDEN AREAS
	DEDICATION AREAS
	ACTIVITY CENTERS
	MULTI/USE PAVED FITNESS TRAIL
	PARK ENTRANCE

**CONCEPT PLAN**  
**A**  
**KNIGHT PARK**  
 COLLINGSWOOD, NEW JERSEY



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KEY	
	ACTIVE RECREATION AREAS
	WETLAND HABITAT W/BUFFER
	LAKE / WATER FEATURE
	FESTIVAL / CONCERT AREAS
	HIGH SCHOOL PARKING
	GARDEN AREAS
	DEDICATION AREAS
	PARK ENTRANCE
	ACTIVITY CENTERS
	BIKE / PEDESTRIAN PATH
	VEHICULAR ACCESS
	PARALLEL PARKING AREAS

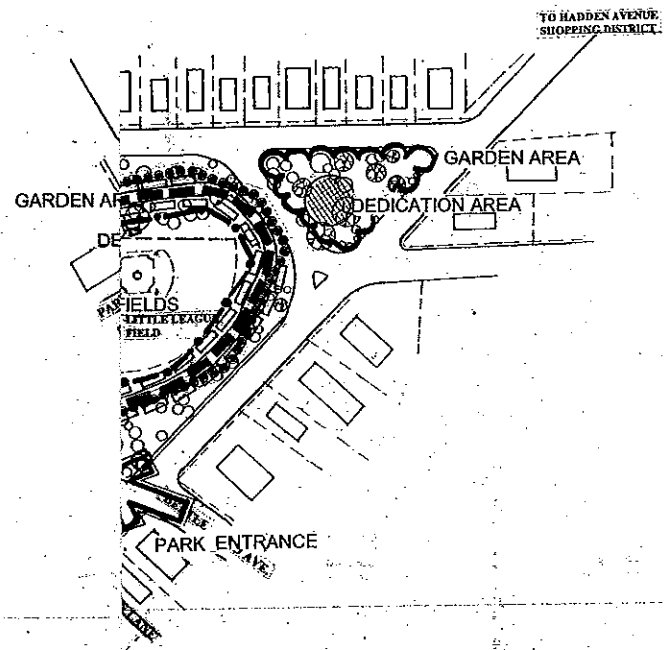
**CONCEPT PLAN B**

**KNIGHT PARK**  
COLLINGSWOOD, NEW JERSEY




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**KEY**

- IVE RECREATION AREAS
- LAND, HABITAT W/BUFFER
- E / WATER FEATURE
- ITIVAL / CONCERT AREAS
- H SCHOOL PARKING AREA
- RDEN AREAS
- ICATION AREAS
- K ENTRANCE
- IVITY CENTERS
- E / PEDESTRIAN PATH
- ICULAR ACCESS
- SSIBLE PARKING SCHEMES

**CONCEPT  
PLAN  
C**

**KNIGHT PARK**  
COLLINGSWOOD, NEW JERSEY



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**B. ROBERTS POOL AREA**

The Roberts Pool area is the only recreational facility within the municipality that is both owned and operated by the Borough. It is a successful, clean, and well-maintained facility. Recommendations for this area are limited to maintenance and upgrade of facilities over time. As a community facility with limited capacity, residents should be given first priority for its use. If the facility ever reaches capacity, consideration should be given to limiting the park to residents only.

**C. SCHOOL FACILITIES**

As stated throughout the Master Plan, the neighborhood elementary school sites serve as focal points within each of the communities. Because the Borough only has two major recreational sites, the schools serve a major role in providing recreation to the citizens. For the elementary schools, as well as the High and Middle Schools, recommendations have been made toward the upgrade and improvement of the current facilities. They are:

**1. Elementary Schools**

- (a) Every playground has remnants of the old iron-bar type of equipment. While some of the equipment may meet the needs of the students, supplementing the equipment with newer, brightly colored pieces will provide the necessary upgrade to serve as an attractive and safe place for parents to take children after school hours.

The addition of new playground equipment is a wonderful, neighborhood project. This allows families from the area to purchase portions of the playground equipment, such as a swing, slide, or other equipment and then be involved in the improvements of the playground itself. For example, a day is selected for the playground to be built and volunteers from the community register to help at different times. This allows the playground to actually become a project of the community in which they can have pride. It creates a sense of ownership and community spirit while benefitting the local school and establishing strong neighborhood values.

- (b) Accessibility has been mentioned throughout this report as a major problem in the utilization of the local playgrounds as neighborhood recreation areas. While issues with safety and insurance, as well as unauthorized use by non-residents, may

exist, measures can be taken to allow use and enjoyment by Collingswood residents:

- Create and post convenient hours of operation for neighborhood school facilities, collectively agreed upon by participating groups.
  - Create a resident key card system which allows for the facilities to be opened during the posted hours.
  - Create positions for high school students or senior citizens to monitor the playgrounds during posted hours. This would involve checking resident ID, opening and closing facility, and monitoring activities.
- (c) The creation of neighborhood recreation associations as part of the school board / recreation department would allow for the individual neighborhoods to address the issues facing each area. These neighborhood associations could be responsible for supporting the facilities as well as helping to sponsor the implementation of new facilities.
- (d) Sharp Elementary has a number of picnic tables available to the students and faculty but the other schools have only one or two tables, if any. It is recommended that the picnic / outdoor table area be expanded or included at each of the schools. This area provides a passive recreation opportunity for students, parents, and teachers.

## 2. Middle School / High School Campus

The Middle School / High School campus is a major recreation facility for the residents of Collingswood. Currently, the only tennis and roller hockey facilities located in the Borough are on this campus. Although the facilities are well-maintained, they are utilized year-round and are in need of some improvements.

- (a) The current roller hockey rink needs to be upgraded. The facility is undersized and the nets and goal posts are broken. A new facility is recommended and a location should be determined. In the interim, the existing facility should be repaved and lined, re-fenced, new goals and nets should be installed and the area should be marked and signed with hours and rules of play.
- (b) A comprehensive recreation space plan needs to be completed for the entire campus as well as the recreational areas of



Knight Park. This plan should consider all the available field space as well as a possible redesign of the field layouts in Knight Park. School and recreation schedules need to be determined. This may or may not allow for the expansion of the current Borough recreation program to include new sports or an increase in the age groups eligible for play. Complete coordination between the Borough's Recreational goals and those of the Board of Education must be undertaken.

(c) Parking, which serves not only students and faculty during the day, but recreational programs at night, is a major problem on the campus. A limited number of spaces are available at the rear of the schools. The remainder of the parking occurs in Knight Park or on-street. This creates a problem for users of Knight Park as well as the residents surrounding the campus. It is suggested that the school and Knight Park undertake a joint parking study to address the issue. Solutions may include:

- Evaluate the reasonableness of acquiring land to build a parking lot near the school facility.
- Limit the number of parking passes issued to students.
- The use of shared satellite parking in nearby areas particularly near the Downtown area with a shuttle service.
- Work to achieve an agreement with surrounding business owners, churches, and schools to provide parking during off-peak hours for those utilizing the recreational facilities.

#### D. MISCELLANEOUS

In general, the recreation program for Collingswood is very successful and well managed. The following are suggestions to maintain the same level of service and increase the potential for the citizens.

1. Examine the current structure of the recreation department. New staff is recommended to assist the director with advertising and promotion of the Borough's recreation programs. Separate directors for the schools and the recreation department may be needed in the future as the recreation program continues to grow and expand to include different sporting events and activities.

2. Fee structures throughout the community need to be examined. This includes not only Knight Park but the local facilities as well. Currently there is no fee to utilize the facilities, with the exception of Roberts Pool. Rental fees for private use are commonplace in other communities. Also, people from other communities may be charged a fee to utilize Borough facilities.
3. The Borough currently owns a parcel on the west side of Collingswood which served as the old sewer treatment facility and currently serves as a water treatment facility. It has been recommended that a portion of this site be considered for recreational purposes. In the community facilities section of the Master Plan it has been recommended that this site be used for the relocation of the public works facility. An alternative to this plan, included as REC-23 and REC-24, show potential space for a recreational facility to be included on the site as well as on an adjacent property. This may be the ideal location for the roller hockey rink which is recommended or for additional field space to serve the recreation needs of the West Collingswood population.
4. The downtown area, although currently void of recreational uses, can incorporate urban open space concepts through the development of fountains and other focal points (ie. Town center) between existing buildings or in newly created areas. These small green areas can be utilized for a variety of outdoor activities for music, art, and a general gathering space for shoppers.
5. The Borough should create incentives to bring recreational opportunities as an attraction to the downtown area. Recreational activities that support a downtown area include facilities such as: children's museums, small aquarium, hands-on craft shops (pottery, weaving, woodworking, etc.). In many instances creative retailing can be combined with recreational activities. The aquarium can sell fish and supplies. The potter can sell pottery supplies and provide custom pottery, and the children's museum can sell educational toys. The combinations are endless and warrant careful evaluation from a recreational as well as an economic point of view.

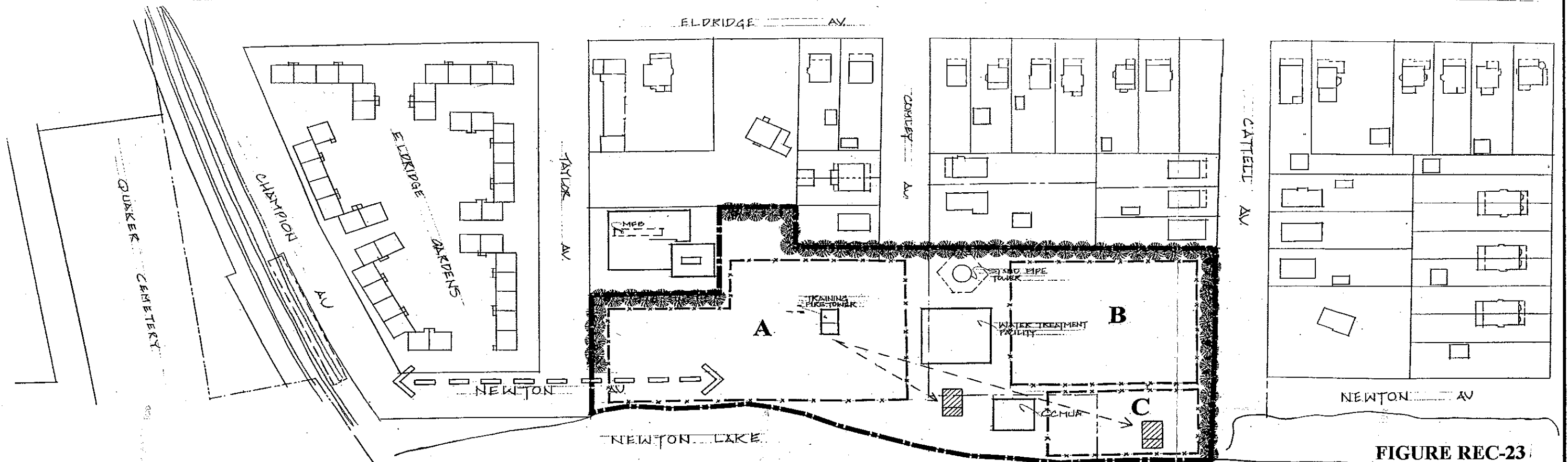
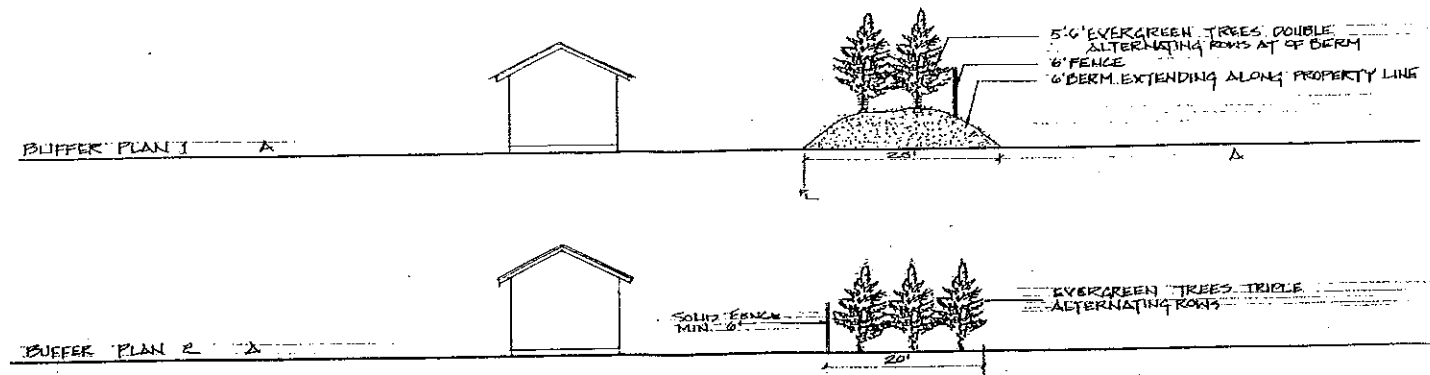


FIGURE REC-23  
Figure CF-8A

	PROJECT SITE
	EXISTING BUILDINGS
	BUFFER
	SITE ACCESS
	ESTIMATED AREAS AVAILABLE FOR USE
	ALTERNATE LOCATION FOR FIRE TOWER

CONCEPTUAL LAYOUT OF  
PUBLIC WORKS SITE  
BOROUGH OF COLLINGSWOOD  
CAMDEN COUNTY, NEW JERSEY



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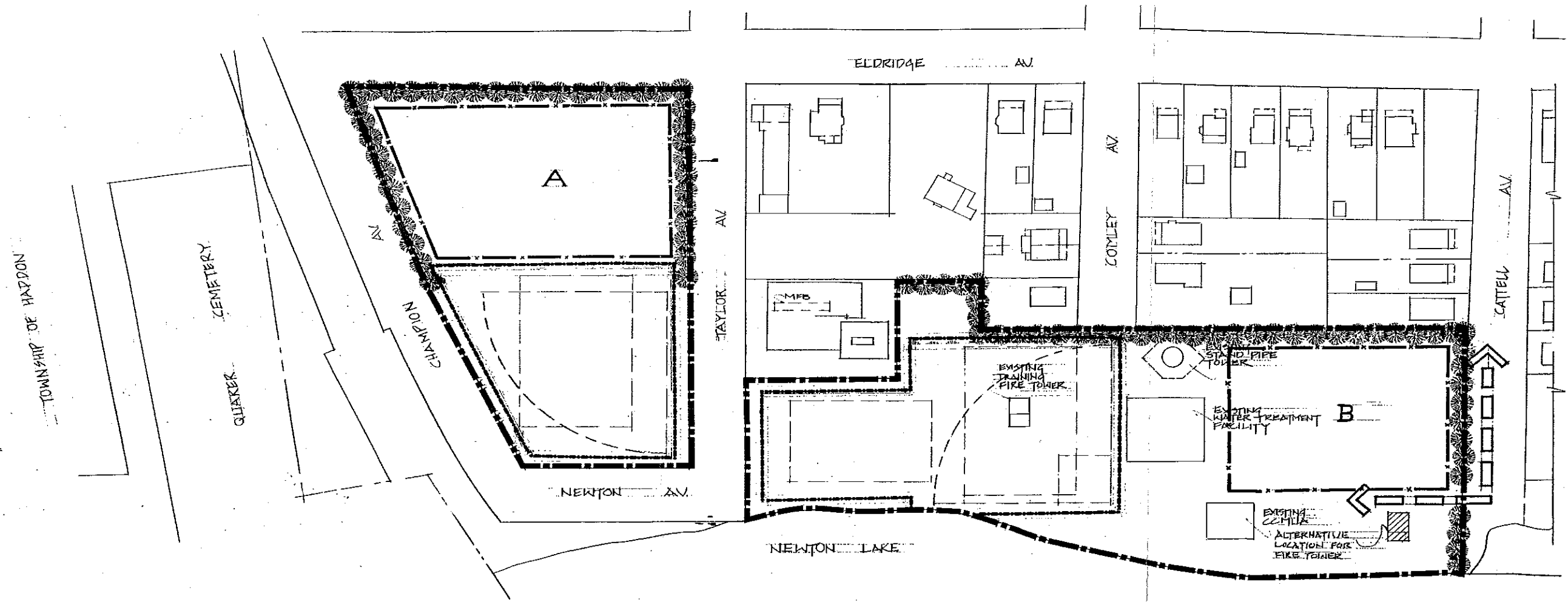


FIGURE REC-24

Figure CF-8B

KEY	
	PROJECT SITE
	EXISTING BUILDINGS
	BUFFER
	SITE ACCESS
	ESTIMATED AREAS AVAILABLE FOR USE
	RECREATION AREAS

ALTERNATIVE CONCEPTUAL LAYOUT OF PUBLIC WORKS SITE AND RECREATION FACILITY  
 BOROUGH OF COLLINGSWOOD  
 CAMDEN COUNTY, NEW JERSEY

REV:  
 DATE:  
 SCALE: 1" = 50'

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