

What Camdenites Want or Need Most

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Introduction

“‘It rains on my city,’ said an eight-year-old I know, ‘but I see rainbows in the puddles.’... But you have to ask yourself: How long will this child look for rainbows?”—an eight-year old Camdenite¹

Background

Farnham Park is a city-owned park located in the Parkside community of Camden, New Jersey. At its inception, the park was integral in positively creating and reinforcing a sense of place and fostering community pride for Parkside and Camden residents. This sense of place and community pride was assuaged as the landscape of the Park was drastically altered by a 1971 hurricane (a natural system) that ruptured a dike and caused some flooding in the park and significantly neglected by the political system. Within the social system, the youth are in search of a sense of place while the adults yearn to reclaim the sense of place that has been lost.

The perturbation in the natural system occurred simultaneously with perturbations in the social and political systems. Though there is no direct causation between the 1971 hurricane and the turbulence in the city’s social system, it is clear that for this neighborhood, the natural and social systems are intricately linked. Because of the social and political systems’ turbulence that has existed in Camden since the early 1970s, the natural systems remain in a state of disarray. Natural perturbation includes the emergence of a wetland where a meadow existed. Perturbation in the political and economic systems has led to severe erosion of the Park landscape. In turn, the social system fails to use the park effectively for legal and beneficial activities.

¹ Quoted in Kozol, Jonathan. Savage Inequalities: Children in America’s Schools. New York: Harper Perrenial. 1991: 148.

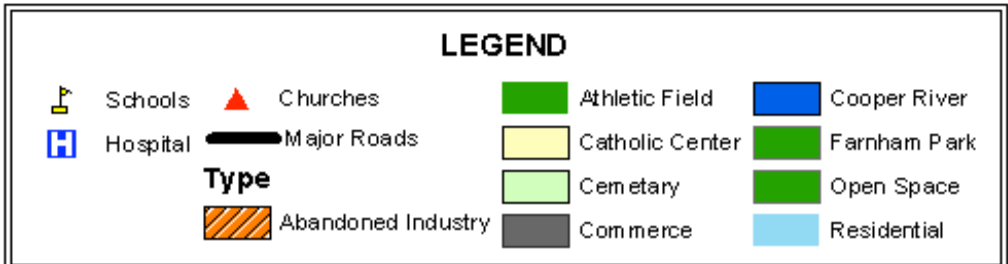
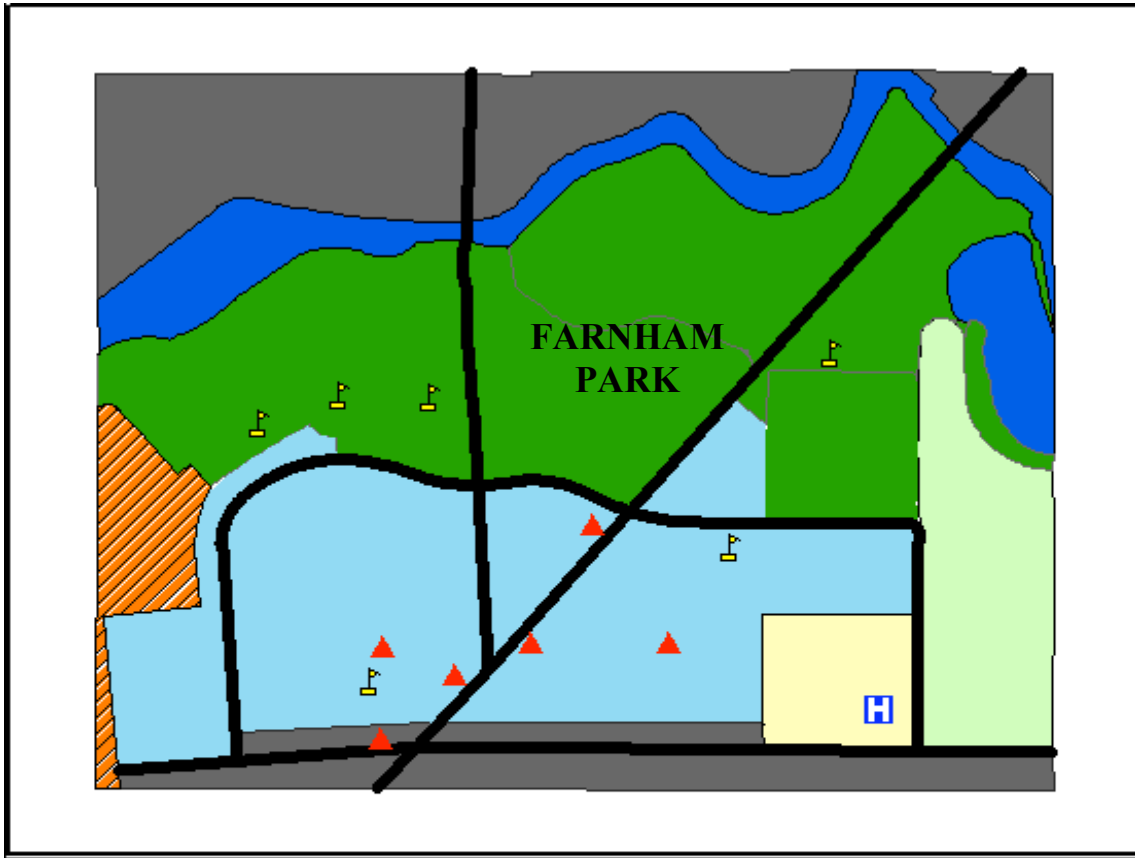


Figure 1. Map of Parkside neighborhood. Farnham Park, located centrally, is labeled. Carpenter. May 2003.

There is strain and volatility in the use of the park space just as there is strain and volatility in the social, political and economic systems. Park uses range from drug trafficking and school truancy to teens playing basketball and primary school-aged children playing on the jungle gym. Additional beneficial uses, such as canoeing and family picnicking, are constrained. The constraint and volatility do not cater the development or sustenance of a safe, friendly place. The illegal, malignant activities feed a perception of the park space as unsafe and for the older residents of the neighborhood, the conditions in and polarized and assuaged usage of this space serve as a constant reminder of what has been lost in this community over the last three decades.

Statement of Purpose

Since children are the most frequent users of the park space, I conducted an investigation with three goals surrounding youth engagement. First, I wanted to determine how engaging youth in environmental education and park rehabilitation would lead to changes in their sense of place. Second, I wanted to determine how said action resulted in an increased sense of community ownership and civic responsibility. Third, I wanted to determine the impact of youth mobilization and community service on decisions made by those who control larger decisions on the political and social landscapes.

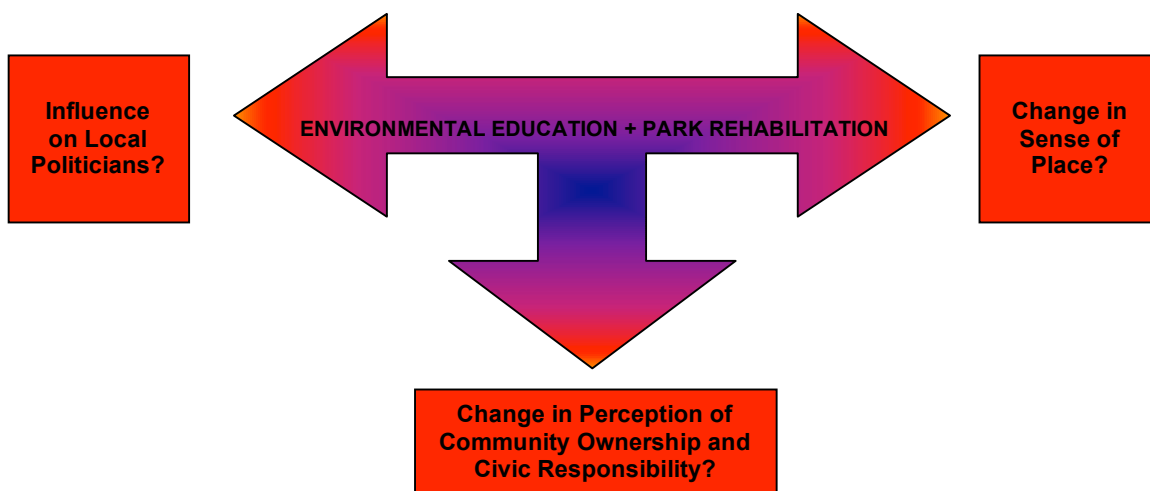


Figure 2. Graphical Representation of Statement of Purpose

The Project's Academic Framework

Defining Place. Place is determined by an interplay between human values and their natural environment. Human values include beliefs and identity.² Environment has its roots in the word *environ*, of which *en-* means “in” and *viron* which means “circle, circuit.”³ As such, natural environment refers to things that encircle or surround someone, such as land, water, flora and fauna.⁴ Merging environment and human values results in the establishment of places—points in the surroundings that bear significance to a group of people based on any combination of their beliefs and identity. Because of the merging between human values with the natural environment, place can be understood as “the physical, social, and emotional space that nurtures us as individuals and members of a community and is an animating force for civic engagement.”⁵

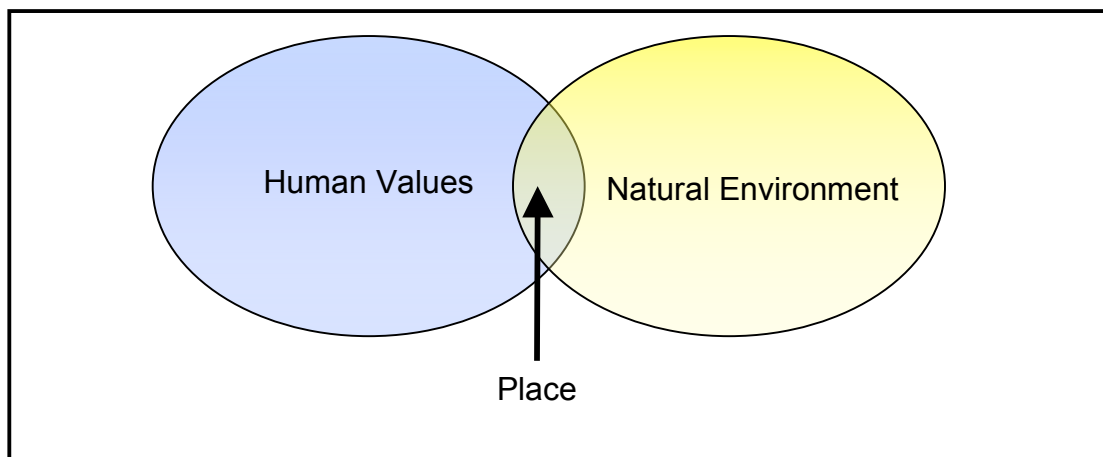


Figure 3. Place is established at the interface of the human values and the natural environment. There is a mutual exertion of influence between the environment and human values that give rise to a place. Places either bear intrinsic character or people give meaning to it, or both. Carpenter. May 2003.

² Machlis, Gary et al. “The Human Ecosystem Part I: The Human Ecosystem as an Organizing Concept in Ecosystem Management” in *Society and Natural Resources*. 1997. 10 (4): 347+.

³ Online Etymology Dictionary. Available at <http://www.etymonline.com/e2etym.htm>.

⁴ Machlis et al.

⁵ Shutkin, William A. The Land That Could Be. Cambridge: MIT Press. 2000: 140.

Alan Gussow, an artist and an environmentalist, notes that, “we are not distinct from our landscape for as we give shape to our villages and cities, these places in turn shape us. Our environment is more than a passive backdrop; it is the stage on which we move. The objects and forms on that stage shape our actions, guide our choices, restrict or enhance our freedom and in some mysterious way even predict our future.”⁶ On the contrary, when people lack a sense of place, they “are rootless and want to drift... and... lose a sense of history and a vision of a collective future.”⁷ This framework led to the first two explorations in the statement of purpose.

Defining Community/ Human Ecosystems. Wendell Berry defines community as “the commonwealth and common interests, commonly understood, of people living together in a place and wishing to do so... a locally understood interdependence of local people, local culture, local economy and local nature.”⁸ The interdependencies that establish a community require an ecosystem framework to understand the patterns and processes of a community.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Shutkin, 48.

⁸ Berry, Wendell. “Sex, Economy, Freedom, and Community” in Sex, Economy, Freedom & Community: Eight Essays. New York: Pantheon Books. 1993: 119-120.

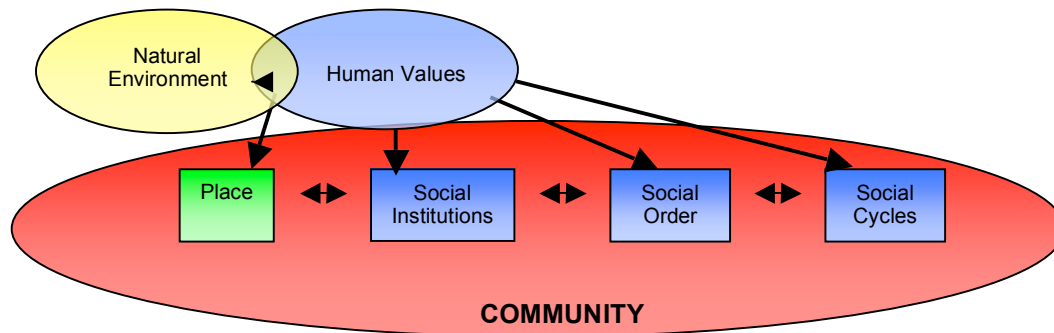


Figure 4. The components of a community. Wendell Berry notes that a community is comprised of a “placed people” (Berry, 168). As such, it is not simply the summation of the natural environment and human values, but of an established place in combination with the byproducts of human values: social institutions, social order and social cycles. Modified from Machlis et al 1997.

Since we are not simply interested in understanding relationships between species, but between biotic and abiotic systems, a systems ecology approach is needed, such as the human ecosystem approach.⁹ The human ecosystem is comprised of, “*a coherent system of biophysical and social factors capable of adaptation and sustainability over time.*”¹⁰ Three critical points can be extracted from this definition. First, because there is *coherence* between the biophysical and social factors, they influence each other. While biophysical and social factors (and their sub-factors) can be categorized as individual entities, the influence that each factor (or sub-factor) exerts causes adaptation in the other entity. Second, though the ecosystem is *capable* of sustainability over time, perturbations can be recognized and measured in the system. When finalizing the statement of purpose, interdependency in the ecosystem was measured. The selected measurement was to determine the influence of youth mobilization on decisions made by politicians. This measurement will reveal if there is possibly a lack of power in the hands of the social system when attempting to influence the political system. Such a lack would be based on a perturbation in this community’s ecosystem.

⁹ Luzadis et al. “Toward a More Integrated Ecosystem Model” in *Society and Natural Resources*. 2002. 15 (1): 89.

¹⁰ Machlis et al. Italics his.

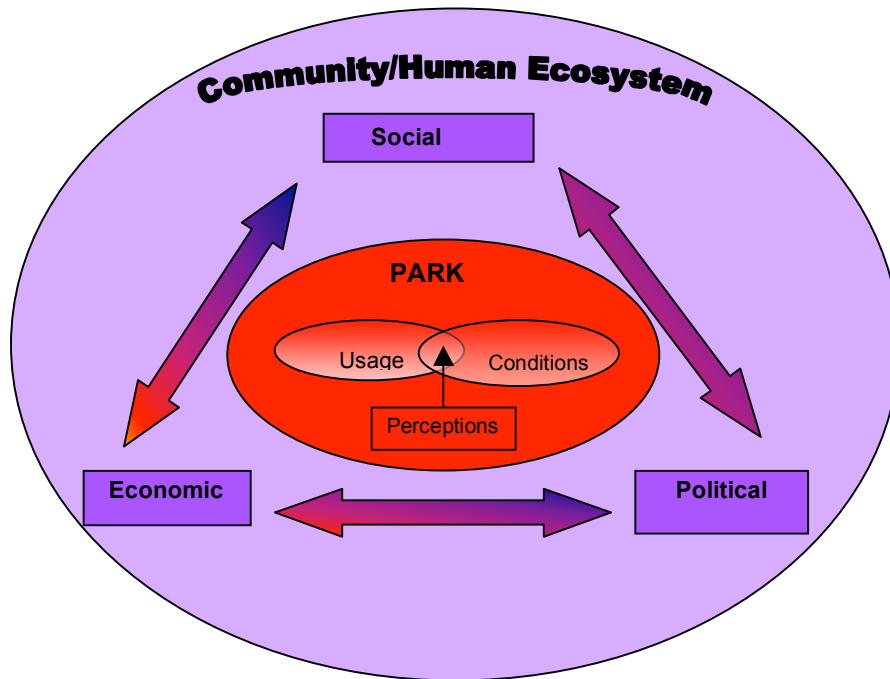


Figure 5. In a healthy ecosystem, the influence of the social, political, and economic systems will proportionally influence each other and the park space (natural system).

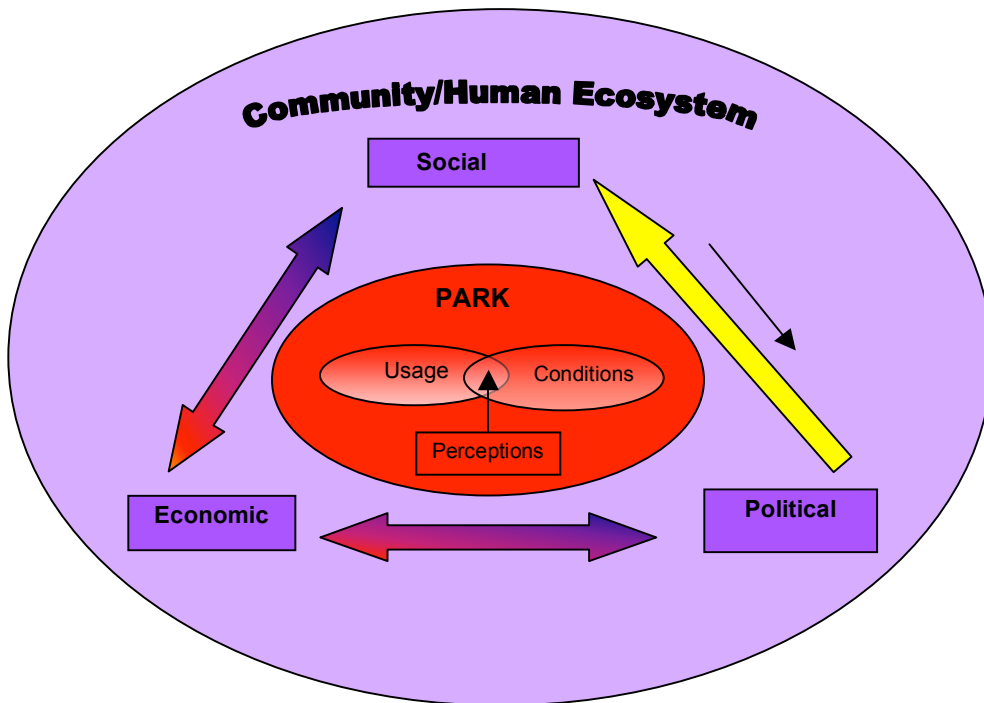


Figure 6. In a perturbed ecosystem, the influence of the social, political, and economic systems do not proportionally influence each other. In this example, the political system dominates the social system.

Outcome

This research process was challenged from its commencement and throughout the duration of my research. The conditions of the social, political and economic systems strongly limit effective youth outreach and empowerment.

Due to the impotence of the youth and the persistent usage of and conditions in the park space, I explored what needs to be in place for youth outreach and empowerment and for the rehabilitation of the park space. Park revitalization will be realized when

- The park's physical landscape is rehabilitated,
- The legal and beneficial uses do not have to compete with the illegal, malignant uses,
- The park is used as a learning space, both about the biophysical attributes, but also about the heritage that lies in the space,
- The both young and old can come together on the space and both groups see the park as healthy, viable and theirs, and
- The park once again cultivates a positive sense of place and fosters community and civic pride.

Rainbows in the Puddles

In spite of the encountered quandary, there are rainbows in the puddles. Rainbows are “sunlight spread out into its spectrum of colors and diverted to the eye of the observer by water droplets.”¹¹ Accordingly, rainbows in puddles indicate that the sun is shining, and there is hope. In Greek mythology, storms and lightning were signs that the god, Zeus, was losing his temper with humanity and throwing thunder and lightning bolts.¹² For Hebrews, thunderbolts were perceived as God shooting bows and arrows.¹³ But the rainbow is a sign that the storm is over. Rainbows at the end of a storm are a covenant that God will not give up on man, in spite of his anger. Rainbows are a sign that a situation can be overcome!

¹¹ Lynds, Beverly T. “About Rainbows.” Available at <http://www.unidata.ucar.edu/staff/blynds/rnbw.html>.

¹² Pellegrino, Friar Joe. “The Promise of the Rainbow.” Available at <http://www.st.ignatius.net/rainbow-03-09-03.html>.

¹³ Ibid.

It is uncertain how long the child will look for rainbows. But if rainbows are visible, there is a chance for recovery. Each new generation of youth in search of rainbows in the puddles provides hope in pursuing the promise. Each adult that remembers what Farnham Park was has enough resolve to recover their relationship with the Park through ecosystem rehabilitation and community revitalization. It is the sense of wonder in the youth and the nostalgia of the adult that provide the promise. The mechanism to realize ecosystem rehabilitation and community revitalization, however, has remained a challenge for over thirty years. The mechanism to rehabilitate Farnham Park, restore connections between the community and the landscape and revitalize the community will be explored in this paper.

Methodology and Observations

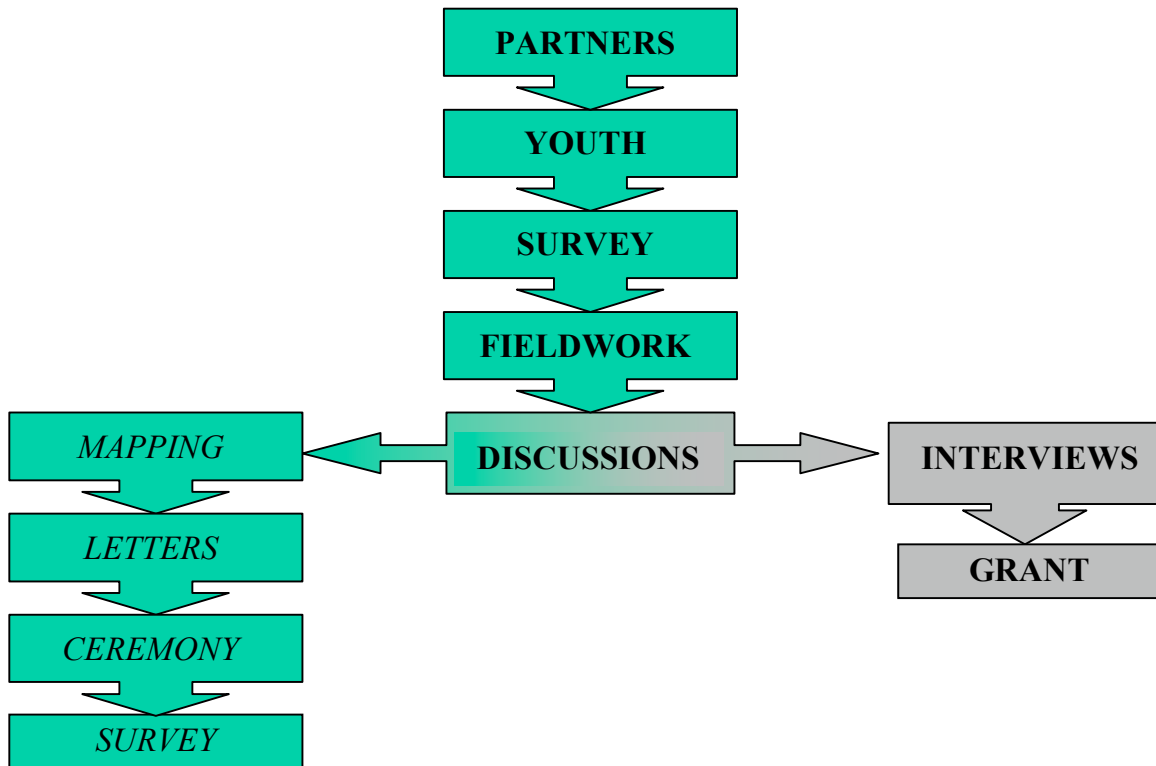


Figure 7. Project Methodology. This is a graphical representation of my methodology. The bolded green represents the planned and executed portion of the project. The italicized green indicates the anticipated, but unexecuted plan. The gray indicates the contingency plan.

Identifying Partners and a Source of Youth

I began this project by identifying partners that could serve as an audience and would have a vested interest in my results. The two groups that I identified after exploration were Parkside Business and Community in Partnership, Inc. (PBCIP) and the City of Camden Department of Recreation. Following the identification of interested groups, I then approached the City Department of Recreation as a source of youth for the experiment. The City has a number of recreation sites throughout the city during the summer located at schools, churches and community centers. In the Parkside neighborhood, there were two sites designated: Little Rock Baptist Church and Forest

Hill School. I chose Forest Hill School because of the additional resources the school has as well as its proximity to the Park.

Surveying

After selecting the group of youth, they completed a pre-survey where questions were asked regarding their civic, environmental and historical knowledge as well as questions regarding their perceptions of the park space. After the students completed the pre-survey, they played a game so that I could further assess their knowledge and observe how well they conducted teamwork.

Fieldwork

As I began my preliminary fieldwork before the youth were finished with the school year, I realized the importance of involving the police as partners in the initiative. Their presence provided further assurance of the safety of the youth in the park space. In concert with the Camden City Police Department's Community Oriented Policing Unit and the School Patrol, I took the youth out into the Park to conduct fieldwork, where they learned about the park environment and community history. The youth were also placed in groups where they researched a tree that they found intriguing. We also spent time identifying community assets as we walked through the neighborhood. Due to miscommunication between the Department of Recreation and the principal of Forest Hill School and me, the youth were unable to utilize a classroom space or the computer lab at Forest Hill School. A local church, Parkside United Methodist Church, provided their computer cluster and classroom for the youth. While the twenty-minute walk from Forest Hill School to the Church seemed like a setback, it turned out to be advantageous because I could talk to the kids about the neighborhood as we walked. The youth and I identified community institutions as indicators that the neighborhood was improving (homes with signage in preparation for rehabilitation).



Figure 8. In this photo, the youth are observing an 1897 map of the neighborhood. They are taking note of some of the changes that have occurred in the neighborhood since then, one of which is the Baird Avenue Bridge (seen in the distance). During fieldwork, the youth and I were accompanied by either a member of the Community Oriented Policing Unit or a member of the School Patrol Unit of the Camden City Police Department. Carpenter. July 2002.



Figure 9. The youth were able to select a tree that seemed most appealing to them. These three youth were interested in maple, horse chestnut and tulip, respectively. Carpenter. July 2002.

Discussions

Throughout the duration of the project, the youth discussed things that they would like to see happen differently. These simultaneous discussions happened most notably with the teenagers. It took the teens some time to interact with me. When they finally did, they wanted to go out, but they did not want to talk about the park or nature. Once we went out, however, they immediately discussed their disconcertion with the park space and the City. The kids talked about the number of unfulfilled and broken promises from before. They were just tired of it and really did not want to talk about change. The participating teens were entering the eighth grade and had already stopped looking for rainbows.

Closing of the Recreation Site

Without any advanced notice, the recreation site shut down three weeks into my research due to budgetary constraints. As the teens already anticipated, resources and activities for the youth are frequently ephemeral. This is the point that caused a major shift in my methodology. From here, I focused on interviewing, completing a grant application for Farnham Park and identifying the perturbations in this ecosystem.

Unexecuted Plan

Prior to the closing of the recreation site, there were a number of activities arranged for the youth. A professor of environmental sociology was scheduled to speak to the youth. Additionally, Rowan University, a local state college, granted their GIS lab to the youth. After completing the GIS map (several base layers were donated by the City Bureau of Parks and Open Space), the youth were going to provide their recommendations for improving the park. At this point, there would have been two weeks remaining in the recreation program. The youth would next have written letters to a local politician and to PBCIP, to inform them of the work they were doing and invite them to the program's closing ceremony to see their work. At the recreation program's closing ceremony, the youth were to present their map and their suggestions to their parents and to other invitees, such as staff and board members from PBCIP, and a local politician. Following this, the youth were scheduled to complete a post-survey that would measure what they

learned over the summer and assess their perception of the park space. Compiled with my observations, I would use the survey to answer the statement of purpose.

Contingency Plan



Figure 10. This storm water drain is exacerbating erosion on the escarpment. I submitted a grant application for the installation of a storm water drainage system on this area of the escarpment. Carpenter. August 2002.

Following the closing of the recreation site, I met with and interviewed community residents from age 13 to age 54. In addition, I interviewed the executive director of a local non-profit, the board chairman of a local non-profit, the pastor of a local church, a city council member, and a county recreation official. Also, I completed a grant application for the installation of a storm water drainage system and nature and bike trail in Farnham Park for a local non-profit, Cooper's Ferry Development Association, Inc.

The grant application was submitted to the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection's Office of Watershed Management. By completing this grant application, I was able to learn who had the competence and interest in rehabilitating Farnham Park. Further, I made utility of community meetings and the Camden Greenways Network, Inc. meetings. Finally, I canoed the Cooper River with a member of the Delaware Riverkeeper Network to further explore the biophysical assets of the Park.

Park Analysis

Introduction

Farnham Park is divided into three regions based on topography and vegetation. First, there is a flat wetland at the base of the Park that was created due to rupturing in the dike. Second, there is a steep escarpment comprised of mesophytic oak vegetation. The third area is the uplands. These three areas could provide multiple uses for the neighborhood. Due to the conditions of the park space, however, there are positive uses, negative uses and assuaged uses. The conditions and the usage influence perceptions of the Park space. For all the beauty, potential and positive uses of the park space, the negative and assuaged uses can overwhelm a full enjoyment of the park space. These images from each region of the park provide examples of the challenges, yet apparent opportunities and potential in the place.



Flooded Area/Wetland

Conditions. This section of the park, previously wetlands and artificial lakes, is subject to tidal flooding due to a dike that ruptured in several locations.



Figure 11. Facing the park, this area shows the major break in the dike that occurred in 1971. The rupture in the dike is approximately forty feet wide. Carpenter. August 2002.



Figure 12. Facing the park, this area shows a smaller break in the dike. This rupture is about five feet wide. Carpenter. August 2002.



Figure 13. Though suffering from neglect and some pollution, wildlife can be found in the area. Cooper River invites bird species including the Great Blue Heron, Belted Kingfishers, Banks Swallows, Canada Geese and Great White Egrets. Marine life includes shad, blue-back river herring and freshwater clams. There is no existing mechanism to enjoy this biodiversity because there is neither clear, safe access to this area of the park nor capacity to canoe the watershed. Carpenter. February 2002.



Figure 14. Once an edifice used for picnicking and socializing, with a beautiful view of the meadow, this edifice now stands in ruins in the flooded area of Farnham Park. Carpenter. August 2002.

Existing and Potential Usage. Due to the conditions and potential usage, this area can be classified as assuaged. In past decades, dumping was a severe problem, but continued neglect has led to decreased ease of access, which has in turn reduced dumping. Though there is a large scale of damage in this area, there is a great amount of potential that exists for positive community activity. Establishing canoeing trips along the Cooper River, with this pavilion as a launching point, would be a great source of environmental education about floral and faunal species, urban runoff and urban design.

Perception. The area is perceived as derelict, unsafe and unclean. The residents that remember the beauty of the former meadowlands and artificial lakes see this area as a reminder of what has been lost in the neighborhood over the last three decades. Because of the lack of access to the space and lack of environmental knowledge, beneficial activities such as a canoeing launching point are currently unrealized.



Escarpment

Conditions. This area of the park has a small range of vegetation, including *Fagus grandifolia* (American Beech), *Carya glabra* (Pignut Hickory) and *Sassafras albidum* (Sassafras). This hillside was formerly an area of the park that provided nature trails and a scenic view of the meadow. Currently, this area is plagued with signs of neglect and abandonment.



Figure 15. This abandoned car can be found along the nature trail on the park's escarpment. Carpenter. February 2002.



Figure 16. As one walks along the nature trail, they would encounter this breakage in the path. Carpenter. August 2002.



Figure 17. This area of severe erosion can be found perpendicular to a nature trail in the park (see previous figure). The broken concrete pathway in the eroded area is the nature trail. Towards the center of the photo, a picnic table is visible which serves as a makeshift bridge for the wanderers in this area of the park. Carpenter. February 2002.

Existing and Potential Usage. Because there is easier access, compared to the flooded area, and poor maintenance in this area, there is a higher propensity to witnessing malignant activities. The density of the vegetation hides the homeless, persons engaged sexual activity, drug abuse, murders and other crimes.¹⁴ Potential positive uses of this area would be the establishment of a bike trail at the base of the escarpment that could connect to the greenways network. Another positive use would be the clearing and repairing of the nature trail.

Perception. This area is perceived as derelict, unsafe and unclean. Residents are familiar with the area being used for negative uses. Coupled with the density and the disheveled vegetation, this area is perceived as unsafe. Images such as the personal belongings of a student along a nature trail do not leave the impression that the few wanderers to this area will be safe.



Figure 18. Someone's personal belongings were found along a trail on the escarpment. This scenario indicates that someone was probably being chased or at least in a very uncomfortable position. Carpenter. February 2002.

¹⁴ Interviews with residents. August 2002.



Upland

Condition. This area of the park provides a great deal of diversity in vegetation, including *Pinus strobus* (Eastern White Pine), *Liriodendron tulipifera* (Tulip Poplar) and *Aesculus hippocastanum* (Horse Chestnut). There are a number of amenities provided, including a fitness spray pool, basketball courts and playground equipment. At the same time, there are some areas that show signs of neglect.



Figure 19. This water fountain is in the same condition as all water fountains in the park. None of them work. Carpenter. February 2002.



Figure 20. This playground equipment is one of the best used and most popular features in the park. It even drew this young user out in the winter. Carpenter. February 2002.



Figure 21. The fitness equipment in the park was installed in the 1980s. Antiquated and dilapidated, this park is not equipped to provide adequate avenues for this form of recreational leisure. The litter shows that this is an area popular with youth for drinking, smoking and hanging out. Carpenter. August 2002.



Figure 22. From a distance, this pavilion looks like a welcoming landmark. Carpenter. February 2002.



Figure 23. A closer examination reveals that the pavilion is dilapidated. Carpenter. February 2002.

Existing and Potential Usage. This area of the park provides the easiest access and experiences the most frequent use. Because this area of the park is easily accessible, it

provides the greatest usage to the community. Mostly used by youth, the place is a site of drug trafficking, truancy, teenage mothers meeting and supervising their children, children using the spray pools and teens playing basketball. During the summer, there is also sporadic usage by summer recreational programs. The cycle of usage surrounding this space is strongly influenced by the academic year cycle. Drug trafficking and truancy are most pervasive during the school year and the early summer. By the time summer is in full swing, the park space is safer. While some of these uses are positive, others severely constrain positive, effective use of the place.

Perception. Residents' perceptions about this area vary. During interviews, some residents were fully aware of the spectrum of negligent and beneficial activities on the park space. Others were not sure of park uses and speculated about the safety of the area. Others perceived the area as safe, but not clean. Still, there were members that perceived the area as unsafe, unclean and unpleasant. Even for the users of the park space, their feelings are dichotomized. The use of the space is constrained. The services provided are fair.

Camden's History: From Ferry Suburb to Industrial Center

Camden's appeal and subsequent growth lied in its biophysical attributes and location. Camden provided critical biophysical accesses to its inhabitants: water for transportation, food and agriculture; fertile land; and dense vegetation stands for energy and other staples. Coupled with these biophysical amenities was the proximity of Camden to Philadelphia, which in the seventeenth century, was the second largest city in North America. Due to Camden's proximity and natural resources, Philadelphians saw Camden as a pleasant place to live as well as a transportation milieu between Philadelphia and South Jersey. These two attributes were critical to Camden's growth and development.

Camden and Philadelphia were two isolated patches until ferry service was initiated on the Delaware River. With the arrival of ferry service, the Delaware River served as a corridor between the two isolated patches, and Philadelphia businessmen quickly viewed Camden as easily accessible. The establishment of this corridor established Camden's reputation as a transportation nexus between Philadelphia and South Jersey. Ferries transported goods and people alike across the nearly two-mile stretch of the Delaware River from Philadelphia to Camden. Once goods arrived in Camden, stagecoaches transported those goods to South Jersey's largest towns and rural communities. Historian Spencer Crew notes that stage lines from Camden to South Jersey combined to make a major transportation corridor in the seventeenth century: "the stage lines and the ferry service made Camden the focal point in a transportation network linking South Jersey and Philadelphia."¹⁵ Because of this, Camden was an attraction for businessmen.

¹⁵ Crew, Spencer R. Black Life in Secondary Cities: A Comparative Analysis of the Black Communities of Camden and Elizabeth, N.J., 1860-1920. New York: Garland Publishing. 1993: 22.

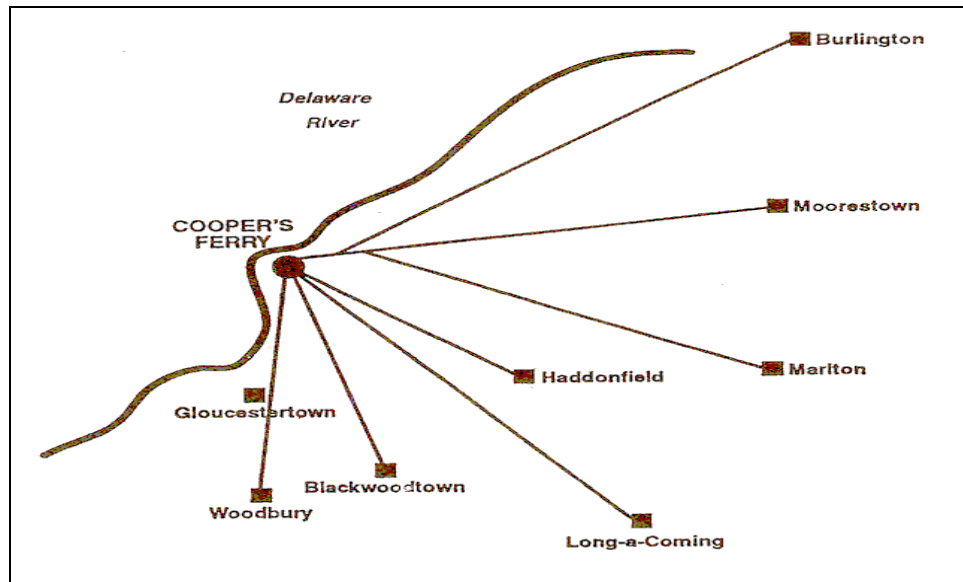


Figure 24. Camden (Cooper’s Ferry) was a transportation nexus between Philadelphia and the towns of South Jersey. The establishment of these corridors led to Camden’s importance in the nineteenth century. Cammarota, 33.

By the nineteenth century, the Camden and Amboy Railroad arrived in Camden, linking Philadelphia, Camden, North Jersey and New York. This transportation network was a key part in Camden’s establishment as an industrial center.

Camden’s role as a transportation corridor made the City accessible for settlement for the wandering New World arrivals and the established Philadelphia businessman alike. Camden was an attractive place to develop a neighborhood because it supplied pleasing aesthetics, maintained lower living costs than Philadelphia, and provided a high quality of life. Philip Grey, editor of a former newspaper, *Camden Mail*, editorialized that Camden provided, “desirable and convenient residences... pure air... and cheap rents.”¹⁶

¹⁶ Quoted in Cammarota, Anne Marie T. *Pavements in the Garden: The Suburbanization of Southern New Jersey, Adjacent to the City of Philadelphia, 1769 to the Present.* Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press. 2001: 55.

Residents settled, followed by commerce and a State Bank in 1812.¹⁷ At this time, Camden was the only place south of Trenton that had a bank.¹⁸ As Camden grew, however, it maintained its neighborhood character. Because Camden had such abundant, dense vegetation, and hence was undeveloped, the city was planned in fragments. Camden planned its neighborhoods as the demand for land grew. This piecemeal planning was coupled with annexation with surrounding towns, which eventually collectively formed the City of Camden in 1828. The resulting mosaic led to the distinction that can easily be made today in Camden's neighborhoods.

Since Camden established itself as a transportation corridor, additional fluxes entered the system that facilitated the development of communities.¹⁹ Now providing a range of services to meet the needs of a residential population, while simultaneously adjacent to one of the nation's major cities, Camden was a thriving ferry suburb.²⁰ In 1886, George Prowell, a Camden historian noted that the condition of the city was "truly wonderful. With the healthful situation, beautiful surroundings, proximity to Philadelphia, rapid development of the manufacturing interests, well-managed ferries, excellent schools, fine churches, an enterprising press, and intelligent and cultured society, Camden gives promise, within the next half century, to many times double its present population, and hold high rank among the leading cities of the Union."²¹ Prowell further asserted that the initial settlers would be proud to see the city in the condition it was in at that time:

"Could the first settlers look upon the site of the city now look upon the industry an energy that have asserted their power in the rumble of ponderous machinery, the whistle of the high-spirited iron horse, the hum and whirl of revolving wheels, the stately magnificence of some of the public institutions, the comfortable homes and beautiful streets and the improvement in the modes of life and living, they would feel gratified that their children's grandchildren and those contemporary with them are so

¹⁷ Cammarota, 57.

¹⁸ Crew, 22.

¹⁹ Allen, Timothy F.H. and T.W. Hoekstra. Toward a Unified Ecology. New York: Columbia University Press. 1992: 74.

²⁰ Cammarota, 49.

²¹ Prowell, George R. The History of Camden County, New Jersey. Philadelphia: L.J. Richards and Company. 1886: 403.

bountifully favored in this land of freedom and independence, of which they were the hardy pioneers.”²²

Over the half century from 1880 to 1930, as Prowell projected, Camden grew significantly, making it one of the nation’s largest cities.

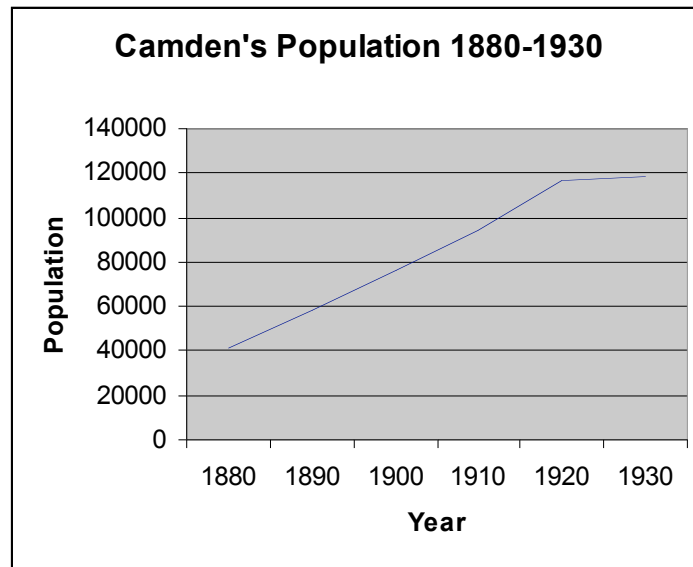


Table 1. Camden’s Population, 1880-1930. From U.S. Bureau of the Census.

Camden’s rapid growth can be attributed to a pattern that can emerge once corridors are established. Allen and Hoekstra note that when corridors serve as conduits between species and materials, “they allow the passage of signal unimpeded” from multiple sources and scales.²³ At this stage in Camden’s history, this growth was advantageous.

²² Prowell, 403.

²³ Allen and Hoekstra, 75.

History of Farnham Park and Parkside

Weary of the industrialized, noisy, crowded and polluted areas of the city, Parkside was developed around the park as the thirteenth ward of the city. The land along Cooper's Creek section of the Parkside neighborhood was so valuable that the Parkside Realty Company was established simply to determine how the land adjacent to the Creek should be developed.²⁴

At its inception in 1913, Parkside was one of Camden's most elite neighborhoods, mostly comprised of American-born Jewish professionals. By 1915, Parkside was one of Camden's most ethnically diverse neighborhoods. This diversity, however, did not incorporate interracial diversity. Parkside was comprised of upper- and middle-class German, Irish, English, Polish, and Russian Americans, including Catholics, Protestants and Jews, but not African-Americans or Latinos.²⁵ Residents of Parkside lived "in upscale brick row and single family houses on streets carved out of the former Cooper Plantation along Cooper's Creek."²⁶ Ads in newspapers were attracting residents to the beautiful rowhouses located on Park Boulevard—which was named after the park on the north end of the street. The beauty of Parkside was desired and appreciated as the waterfront and downtown became increasingly industrialized and polluted.

²⁴ Dorwart, Jeffrey M. Camden County, New Jersey: the Making of a Metropolitan Community, 1626-2000. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press. 2001: 113.

²⁵ Ibid, 112-113.

²⁶ Ibid, 113. See Figure 25.

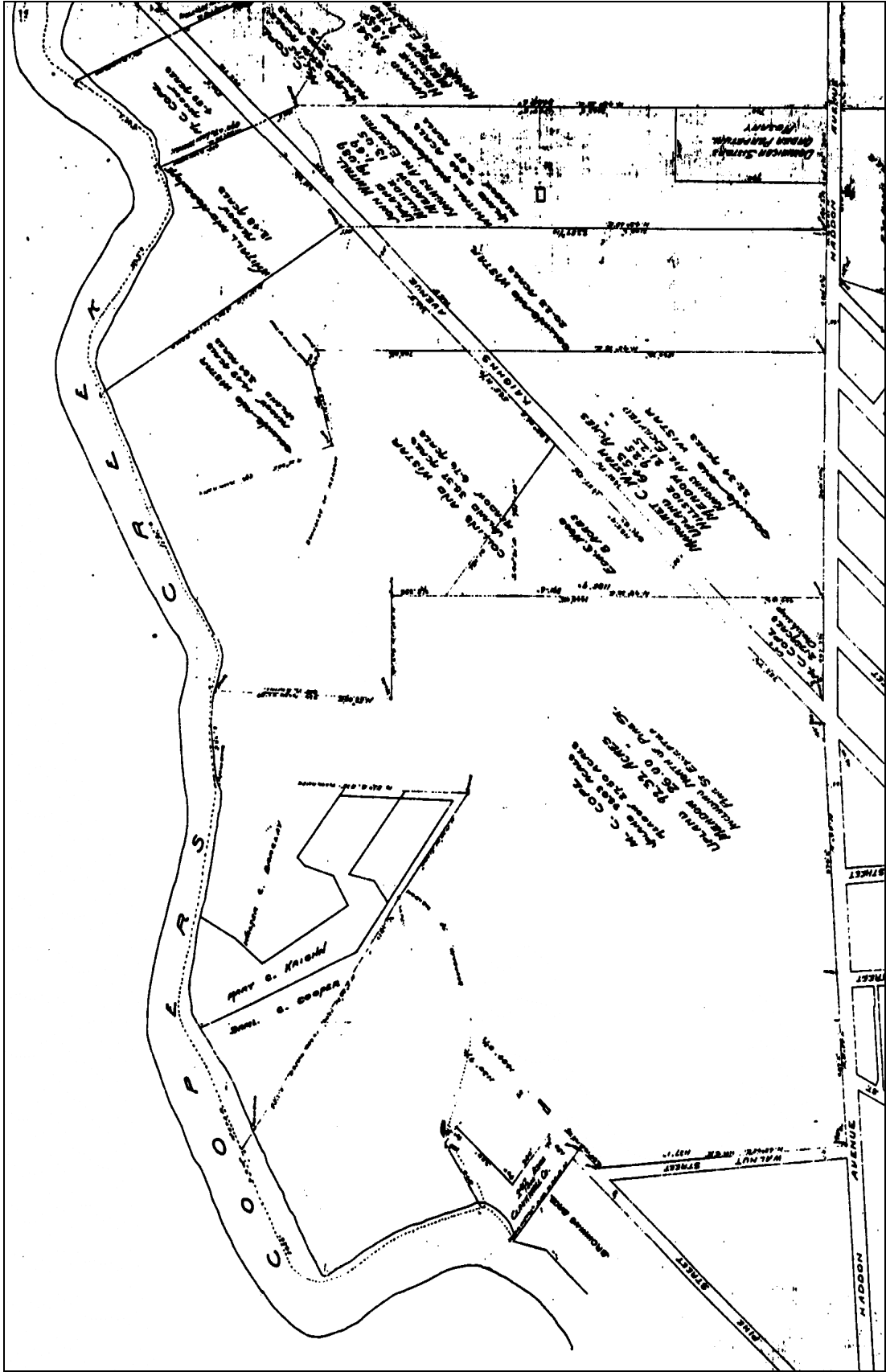


Figure 25. 1897 Map of Cooper's Plantation along the former Cooper's Creek. This land comprises the area that makes up the Parkside neighborhood today. In 1897, the land was divided into large plantations on land that was mostly upland and meadowlands. Map from City of Camden Department of Utilities.



Figure 26. This photo shows Kenwood Avenue, one of the residential streets in the neighborhood. Most of these homes are rowhouses, but several are twin houses. Carpenter. March 2003.



Figure 27. Larger single-family and twin homes are also evidenced along the major corridors of the neighborhood. Carpenter. March 2003.

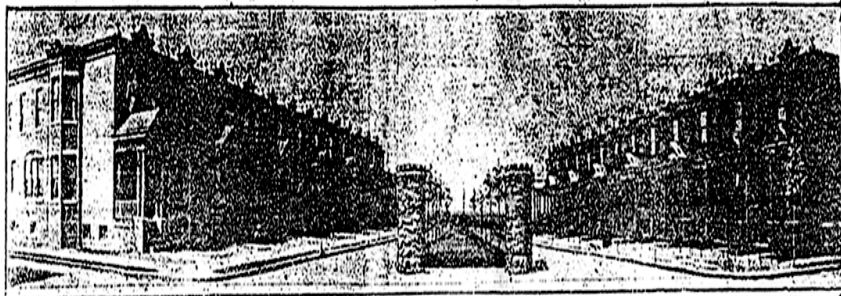


Figure 28. A single-family home across the street from Farnham Park at the corner of Park and Baird Boulevards. Carpenter. August 2002.

OPPORTUNITIES IN GOOD REAL ESTATE

Why Live on Crowded, Dusty, Noisy Streets, When

You
Can
RENT



One of these beautiful new homes on either Park Boulevard or Princess Avenue, right at the main entrance to Camden's new park! These houses have every modern convenience, the very perfection of interior finish; and instead of being obliged to live in a crowded, dusty and noisy street, you can bring the children out where they can breathe in the fresh air, play about the green grass and enjoy the healthfulness of all of Nature's attractions. The Park Boulevard is 100 feet wide, and has a beautiful green terrace running through the centre. All houses have porch fronts.

You can rent now on Park Boulevard—the Finest Street in Camden. Don't delay, but come out and get one before they're all gone.

JOHN M. KELLEY, BUILDER, OFFICES: THIRD AND MARKET STREETS, : : : OR ON PARK BOULEVARD : : :

Figure 29. A glimpse in history. This advertisement from a September 1908 edition of the *Camden Daily Courier* is advertising homes along Park Boulevard, which are located one block before Farnham Park. The text in the ad reads: “Why Live on Crowded, Dusty, Noisy Streets, when you can rent one of these beautiful new homes on either Park Boulevard or Princess Avenue right at the main entrance to Camden’s new park? These houses have every modern convenience, the very perfection of interior finish; and instead of being obliged to live in a crowded, dusty and noisy street, you can bring the children out where they can breathe in the fresh air, play about the green grass and enjoy the healthfulness of all of Nature’s attractions. The Park Boulevard is 100 feet wide, and has a beautiful green terrace running through the centre. All homes have porch fronts.” This ad shows that people were trying to move away from the hustle and bustle of the industrialized areas to neighborhoods that were cleaner, quieter and less crowded coupled with the benefits of healthful air and a park space.

In the early decades of the twentieth century, the usage for the land along Cooper's Creek was determined. The Parkside Realty Company's partners sold the property to the City of Camden for the development of an athletic field, Camden High School (1916-1918), and Forest Hill Park (1904). Forest Hill Park, whose name later became Farnham Park, was named after Levi Farnham, the city engineer, in 1927. From its establishment, Farnham Park was recognized as "a Progressive Era playground and forerunner of the Camden County park system."²⁷ Interstate and regional development also occurred adjacent to the park space that contributed to the accessibility and aesthetic charm of the space. Already existing Kaighn Avenue, which forms the southeastern border of the park, linked Parkside to surrounding suburbs. Baird Avenue linked Parkside to East Camden. The Cooper River Parkway, situated adjacent to the Cooper River, intersects Kaighn Avenue and Baird Avenue, linking Parkside to Philadelphia on the west and the suburbs towards the east.

²⁷ Dorwart, 113.

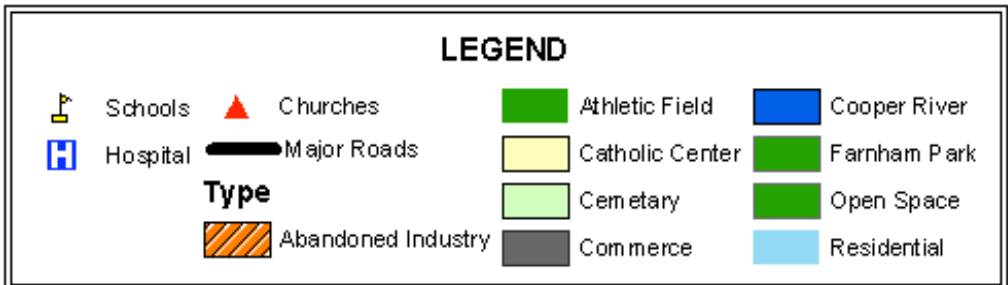
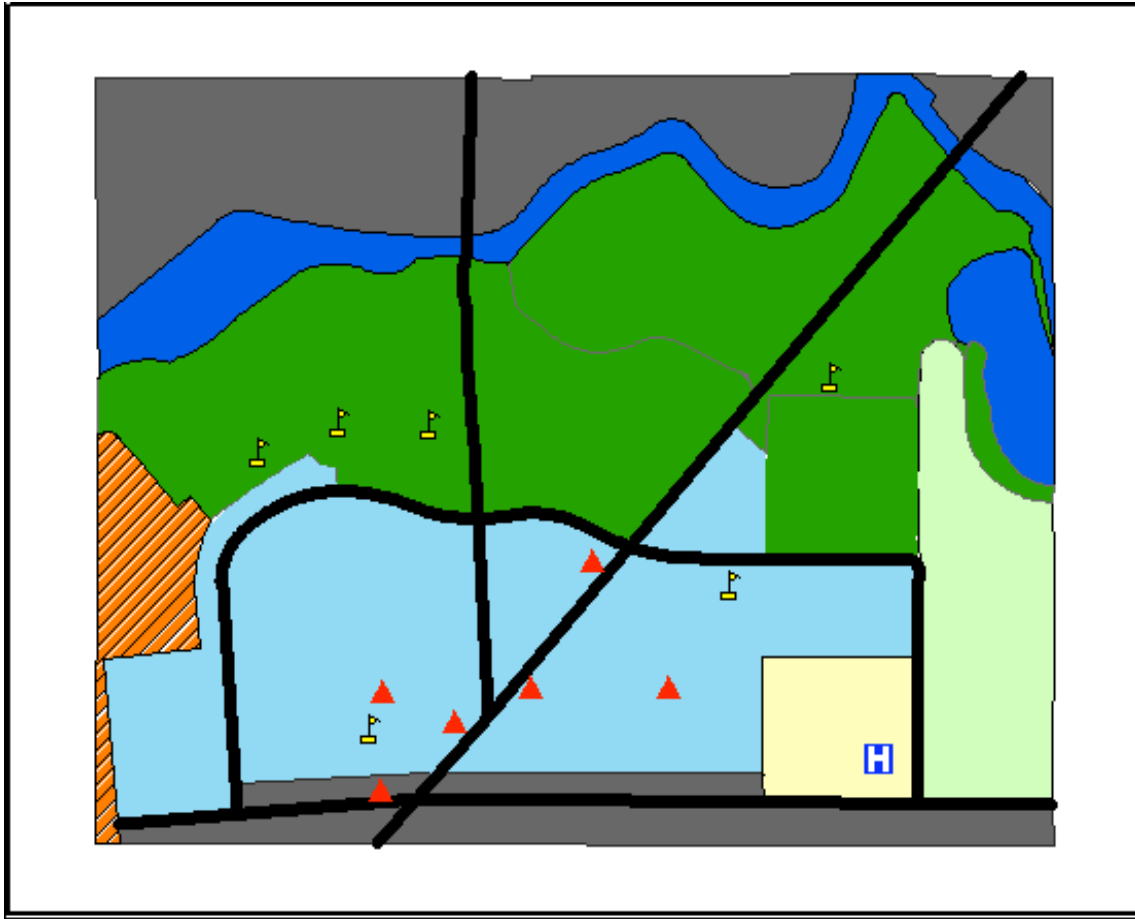


Figure 30. This map shows that there are a number of major roads that run adjacent to Farnham Park. The two major roads that cross Cooper River lead to the suburbs and the Benjamin Franklin Bridge. These roads initially provided visibility of and access to the Park. In recent decades, however, these same roads facilitated the outmigration of residents.

Camden's History: From Industrial Center Decline to Neighborhood Decline

Assuaging its importance as a transportation corridor, the Benjamin Franklin Bridge, linking South Jersey and Philadelphia via Camden, was constructed in 1926. The construction of the Bridge, commenced the factors that led to Camden's economic decline. The construction of the Bridge was coupled with the construction of highways to suburban South Jersey, including the Cooper River Parkway. Camden was no longer needed as a transportation gateway. Since many of these roads also are located adjacent to and through neighborhoods, these roads also paved the way for outmigration as early as the late 1920s. Manufacturing jobs, the city's lifeblood, began departing the city as the importance of rivers and railroad facilities decreased and that of trucks and highways increased.²⁸ Accordingly, unlike other urban centers, Camden's emigration began prior to the advent of World War II, but not on a massive scale. Though industrial decline began, the city's neighborhoods remained cohesive. By World War II, Camden once again experienced a phase of brief economic prosperity that lasted until the late 1940s.

Shortly after the close of World War II, however, Camden's industrial decline occurred on a massive scale. Ferry service terminated in 1952 as dependence on the bridge and highways increased.²⁹ Businessmen no longer had to deal with any protracted strikes from the working class because the businesses could move to the suburbs.³⁰ According to the *Courier-Post*, Camden was increasingly perceived as "a decaying nine-square mile patchwork of outmoded factories, railyards, commercial strips and working-class neighborhoods."³¹ The roads and services that for years served as a conduit were now the way out of the city.

²⁸ Riordan, Kevin, "A Saga of Urban Decay That Was No Mystery" in the *Courier-Post*. 7/7/86. 1A.

²⁹ Catlin, Robert. "Camden, New Jersey: Urban Decay and the Absence of Public-Private Partnerships" in Rebuilding Urban Neighborhoods: Achievements, Opportunities, and Limits. W. Dennis Keating and Norman Krumholz, Editors. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. 1999: 54.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Riordan, 7/7/86, 2A.

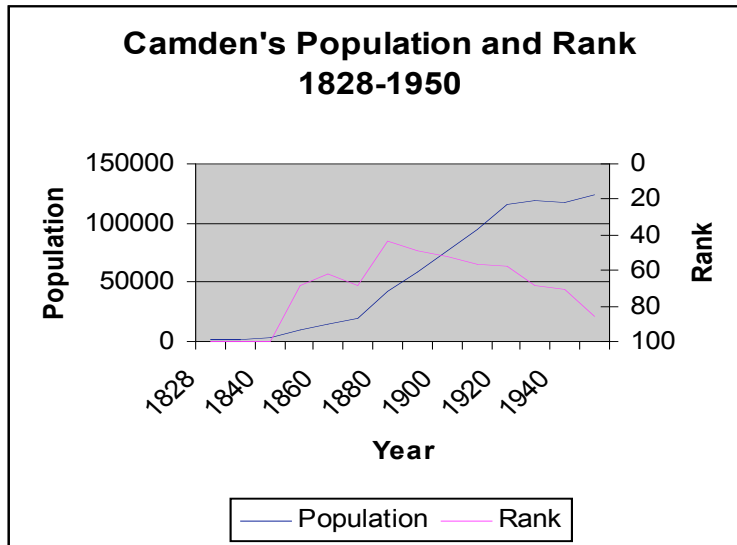


Table 2. Camden’s population grew quickly from its establishment in 1828 to the 1920s. Prior to 1840, Camden was not among the 100 largest urban centers. By 1850, Camden was ranked 68th. The railroad corridor paved the way for industry to enter the City. During the Post-Civil War years, Camden’s population grew substantially, but its growth was not rapid enough to increase in rank. As such, though Camden’s population continued increasing steadily until the 1940s, its importance as an urban center decreased steadily between 1890 and 1930, but much more dramatically after 1940. At this point, the Benjamin Franklin Bridge diminished Camden’s importance as a corridor.

Accompanying outmigration of businesses was the disintegration of long-established neighborhoods. After World War II, the federal government funded the Veteran’s Administration (VA) and the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) mortgage programs, which excluded older cities.³² In addition, Southern Blacks migrated to Camden with hope of finding employment. Historically, Camden was a city with a small, isolated African-American community; the great influx of African-Americans into all neighborhoods changed those long-established neighborhoods, thus exacerbating the outmigration of white and middle-class residents.

³² Riordan, Kevin. “Three Former Mayors Recall Turbulent Tenures” in the *Courier-Post*. 7/7/86. 6A.

Jobs diminished, middle-income residents moved and local taxes increased. Housing value began to decline in 1959.³³ By 1960, FHA, the same agency providing mortgage subsidy programs outside of the city, redlined Camden as “unacceptably risky” thus hindering investment and facilitating further decline.³⁴

Racial tensions increased as blacks and gradually, Latinos, migrated to the city. By the 1960s, race riots and sit-ins were commonplace. The mounting disconcertion of blacks and Latinos climaxed in 1971 with five days of rioting. Members of the growing Latino community were outraged by an instance of two city police officers not being suspended after brutalizing a Puerto Rican man.³⁵ During this riot, Camden’s business district and North Camden were torched. These events radically altered the socioeconomic stability and racial attitudes on a citywide scale and had a deleterious effect of the natural environment as well.

In the Parkside neighborhood, the decline manifested as well. There was a shift in values based on the influx of African-Americans. This difference is evidenced by two residents of Parkside from different decades. In both decades, the residents appreciated the park space. The difference unfolded, however, for how these two different groups of people, a sense of place was defined based on struggles or complacency within their ethnic group.

Jean Coskey, a Caucasian, notes that for her, Parkside was a wonderful place to grow up. Parkside was a “safe, friendly neighborhood where everyone knew everyone else and you didn’t have to lock your doors at night.”³⁶ When she reflected on the park, she recalls the pool, playground, tennis courts and the steep hills. She also took pleasure in the presence of the statue of Christopher Columbus.³⁷

³³Riordan, 7/7/86, 2A.

³⁴Catlin, 54.

³⁵Riordan, 7/7/86, 2A.

³⁶Coskey Family Home Site. Available at <http://coskey.net>.

³⁷Ibid.

The value of the park for Vincent Cowherd, an African-American that moved into the neighborhood in 1966 differs from Jean Coskey's. African-American youth gathered in the park for socializing, formulating ideas and held informal community meetings. For him and many other African-Americans, the sixties were revolutionary times, and the park, as he notes, "was ground zero for our cultural revolution." All the revolutionary ideas for the Parkside neighborhood and Camden schools were seeded in that Park. Also, the initial meetings of the Camden Black Panthers were held there.³⁸ For African-Americans, the presence of the Christopher Columbus statue in the park was insulting. They rallied to have the statue removed and wanted the Park renamed Marcus Garvey Park.



Figure 31. The demarcation of the Christopher Columbus statue shows that there has been an immigration of new residents to the Parkside community that have a different set of values based on their identity. Carpenter. July 2002.

³⁸ Personal Interview with Vincent Cowherd. August 2002.

In recent decades, those that have the economic status to move out of Parkside and the city have done so. Camden's social system has yet to adapt to these landscape perturbations.

Social and Economic System Profile

“A tough town, no doubt about it. The butt of jokes. Battered and decayed, welfare-dependent, drenched in poverty. Yet not a city without hope, not a city without life.”³⁹

Population

The Parkside neighborhood has witnessed a large outmigration of residents between 1990 and 2000, at a rate, which is larger than that of the City of Camden. Camden County witnessed a small growth in population while New Jersey witnessed population growth over the same time interval. This data indicates that the outmigration in Camden and most notably in Parkside, is an anomaly for Camden County and the state of New Jersey.

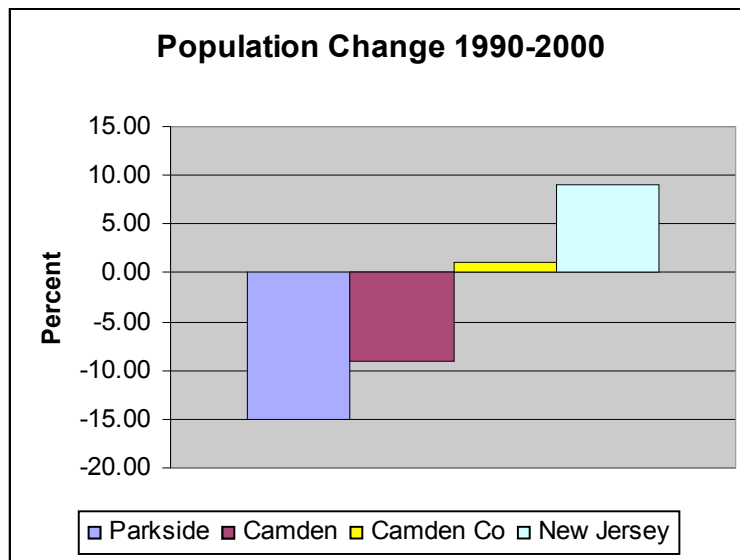


Table 3. Comparison of Population Change, 1990-2000. From U.S. Bureau of the Census.

As the population of Parkside declined, the population of males declined between 1990 and 2000. In the City of Camden, the percentage of males increased between 1990 and 2000 while remaining steady and pretty close to a 50:50 ratio of males to females on the

³⁹ Goldwyn, Ron. “A Look at the Other Side of Camden Despite City’s Reputation, Tales of Hope, Pluck, Vigor Abound” in *Philadelphia Daily News*. February 3, 1992. Purchased at <http://www.philly.com>.

county and state level. This indicates that the family unit in Parkside is likely more unstable than family units in the City of Camden, Camden County and New Jersey.

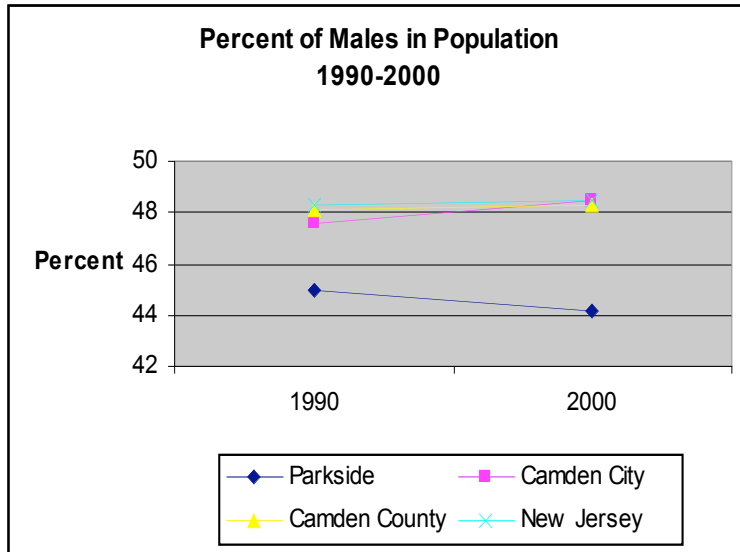


Table 4. Comparison of Percent of Males in Population, 1990-2000. From U.S. Bureau of the Census.

Another indicator of family unit instability is the number of grandparents as caregivers. In Parkside and Camden City, nearly half the grandparents are caregivers. This implies that there is some instability in the nuclear family unit that necessitates the grandparents rearing grandchildren.

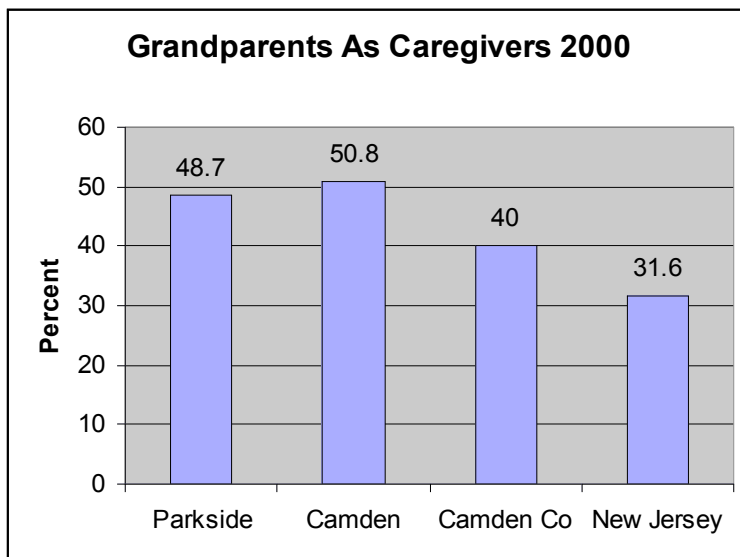


Table 5. Comparison of Grandparents as Caregivers, 2000. From U.S. Bureau of the Census.

Housing

While the vacancy rate in Camden County and New Jersey witnessed slight changes, Camden City and Parkside's vacancy rates increased substantially. The vacancy rate of both Camden and Parkside were larger than Camden County and New Jersey's vacancy rates in 1990. The disparity in 2000 is much greater, especially in Parkside. This neighborhood's vacancy rate nearly doubled between 1990 and 2000.

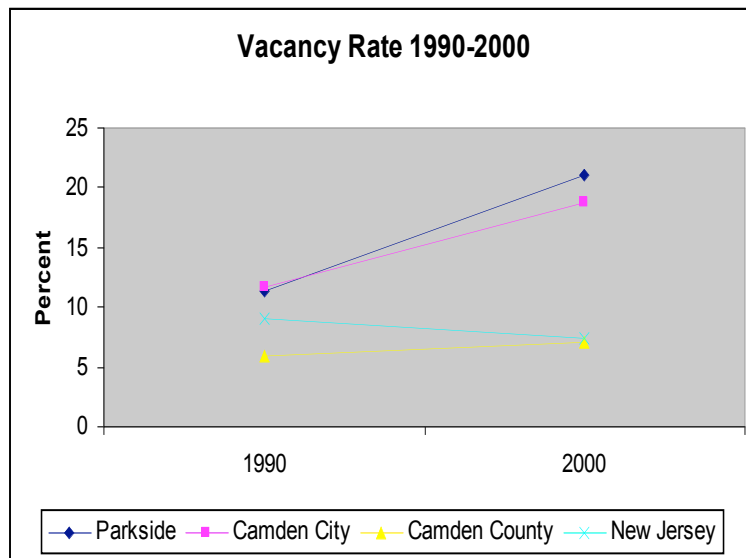


Table 6. Comparison of Vacancy Rate, 1990-2000. From U.S. Bureau of the Census.

Home ownership in Parkside is representative of statewide homeownership. The level of homeownership in the City of Camden is nearly twenty percent lower than that of any of its comparables below. The rate of homeownership in Parkside is one of the neighborhood's strongest attributes. Even with the loss of population and the increased vacancy rate, homeownership remained pretty consistent. This is a strong indicator that those who have remained in the community have a vested interest in their neighborhood and would be willing to work towards neighborhood improvement.

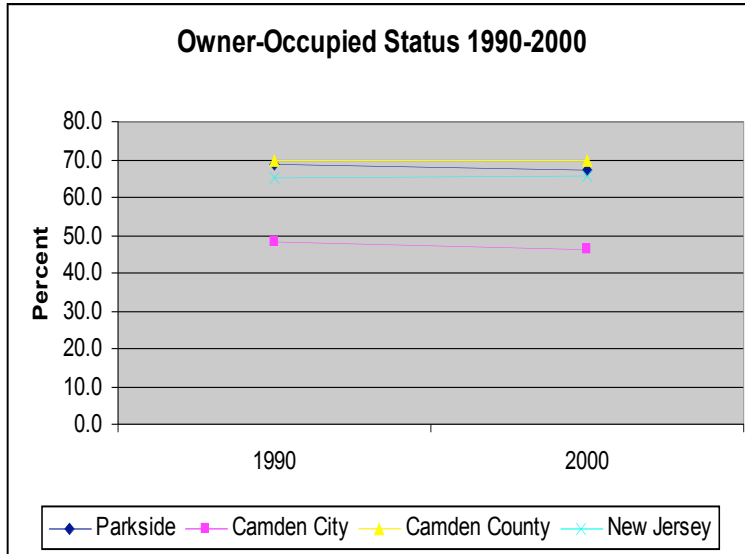


Table 7. Comparison of Owner-Occupied Status, 1990-2000.
From U.S. Bureau of the Census.

Education

The condition of schools in Camden is quite volatile. This is indicated by the high school dropout rate and the standardized test scores of students on all grade levels. As the data shows, Camden High School, which is located adjacent to Farnham Park, has a high school dropout rate that fluctuates greatly from ten to fifteen percent, but can reach levels as high as thirty-seven percent. Meanwhile, the high school dropout rate for New Jersey is consistently below five percent.

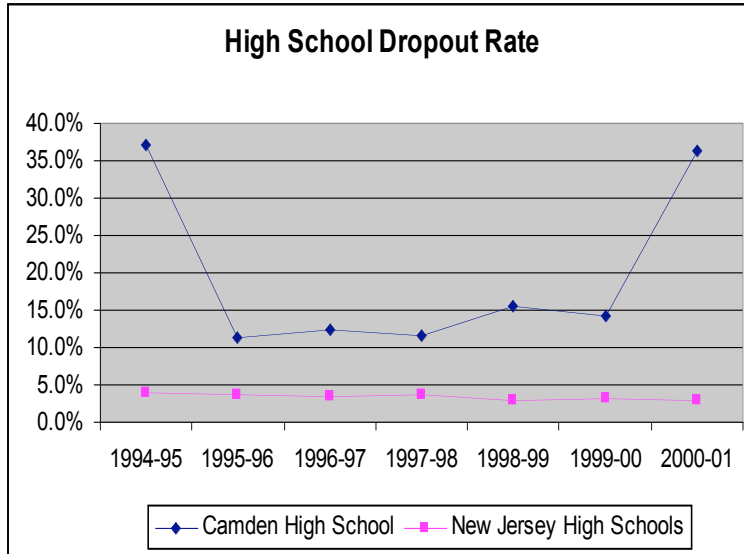


Table 8. Comparison of High School Dropout Rate, 1994-2001.
From N.J. Department of Education.

Completing a college education is an anomaly for Camden residents. The percentage of residents with college education declined between 1990 and 2000. Meanwhile, on the county and state levels, the percent of residents with at least a bachelor’s degree increased. The percent of residents that have completed college on the county and state levels is nearly three to four times greater than what Camden residents have obtained.

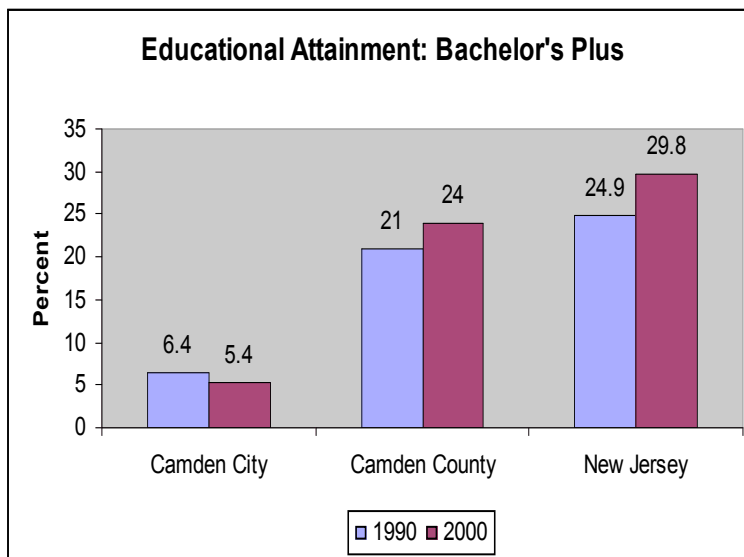


Table 9. Comparison of Educational Attainment: Bachelor’s Plus, 1990-2000. From U.S. Bureau of the Census.

Not only is volatility evident in high school dropout rates, but also, it is apparent on an elementary school level. Parkside Elementary is one of the two elementary schools in the neighborhood.

	Parkside	State	Parkside	State	Parkside	State
	Language	Language	Math	Math	Science	Science
98-99	11.3	62.8	7.3	65.8	50	89.7
99-00	0	61.1	4.3	71.4	15.6	89.6
00-01	33.3	85.3	25	71.3	61.1	90.5

Table 10. Comparison of Standardized Test Score Results, 1998-2001. From N.J. Department of Education.

This lack of resilience and poor performance on standardized testing indicates perturbation in this level of the community ecosystem. Standardized test scores demonstrate that most of the time, Camden schools substantially underperform when compared to the State’s average. Parkside Elementary School consistently underperforms and at best, the performance of the students is volatile. In the 1999-2000 academic year for example, 100 percent of the students failed the language portion of the exam.

Health

The infant mortality rate in Camden is nearly four times higher than the infant mortality rate for New Jersey. The County rate is slightly worse than the State. While as an independent indicator, infant mortality rate is unstable, a triangulation of indicators would permit a hypothesis that Camden residents undergo more stress than most county and state residents, which is a factor that contributes to infant mortality rate.

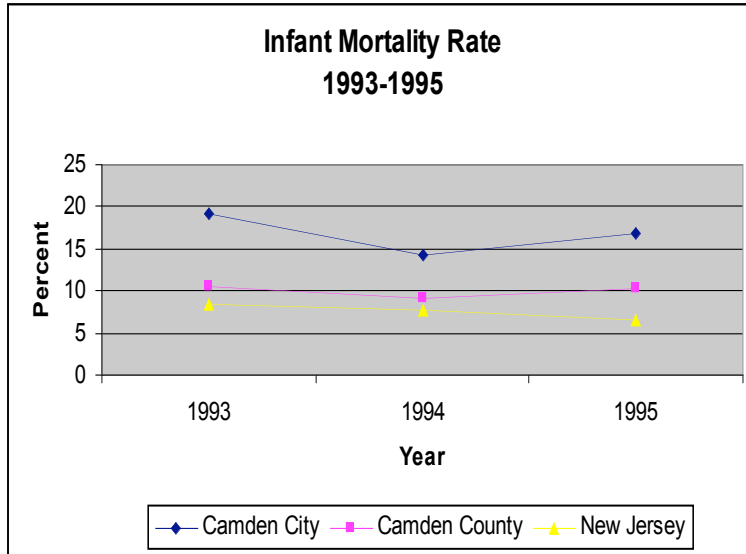


Table 11. Comparison of Infant Mortality Rate, 1993-1995. From Southern New Jersey Perinatal Cooperative.

Coupled with a high infant mortality rate is a high percentage of births to teens. Nearly thirty percent of births in the City of Camden are to teens in comparison to nearly ten percent on the county and state level. This high percentage of births to teens in the City of Camden contributes to broken family units and a large number of female heads of household.

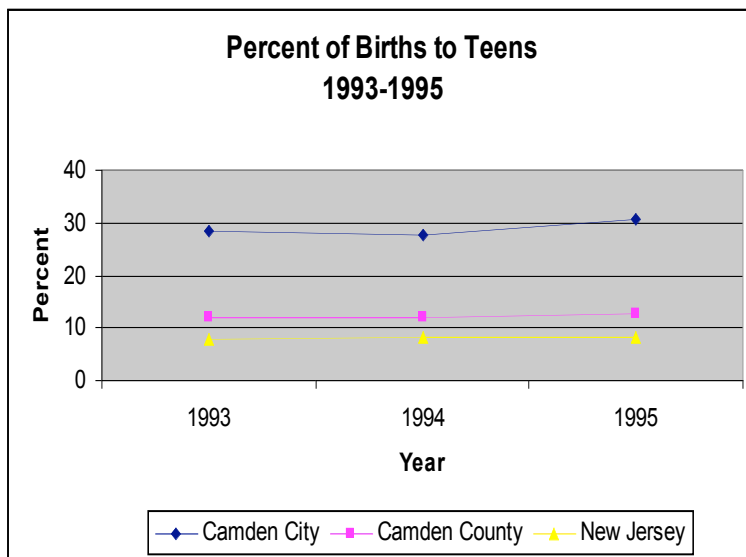


Table 12. Comparison of Percent of Births to Teens, 1993-1995. From New Jersey Health Statistics.

Economics

Parkside’s poverty increased slightly between 1990 and 2000, as did the poverty rate for Camden County and New Jersey. Although Camden’s poverty rate slightly decreased over the same time interval, it remains over five times higher than New Jersey’s poverty rate. Parkside’s poverty rate is nearly four times higher than New Jersey’s poverty rate.

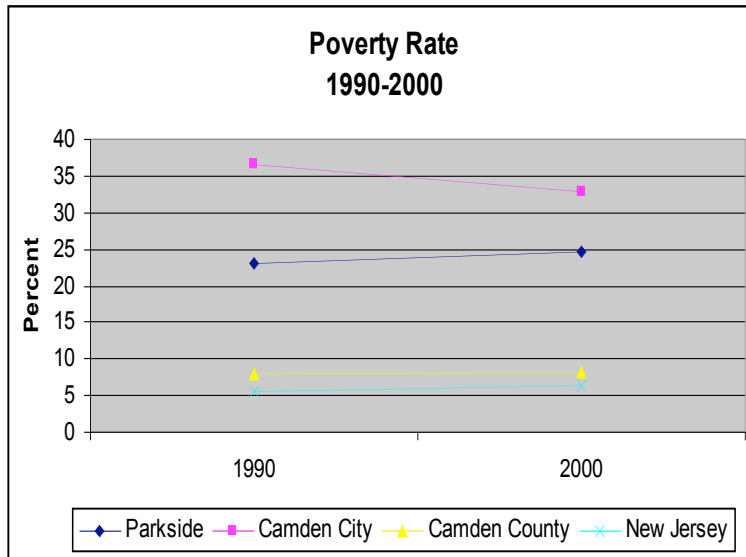


Table 13. Comparison of Poverty Rates, 1990-2000. From U.S. Bureau of the Census.

Though both Parkside and Camden witnessed a higher decline in unemployment than that witnessed on the county and state level, the unemployment level remains disparately high. Parkside’s unemployment rate was higher than Camden’s unemployment rate in 2000.

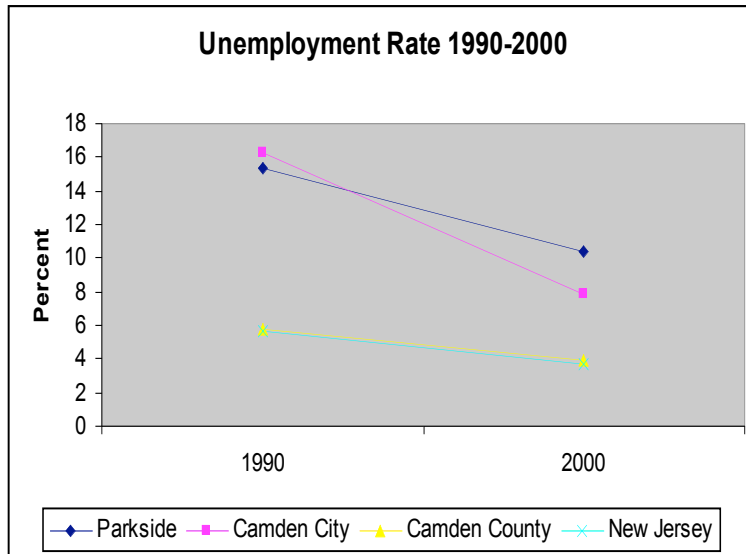


Table 14. Comparison of Unemployment Rates, 1990-2000.
From U.S. Bureau of the Census.

What the Statistics Tell Us

In Parkside’s social system, there were a number of shifts that occurred between 1990 and 2000. There was a substantial decline in population, leading to increased home vacancy. Those that are able to move out leave poorer residents behind. This would explain the increased poverty rate. The nuclear family is increasingly unstable, births to teens are prevalent, infant mortality rate is high, school performance is poor and volatile, and unemployment is high. In spite of a large range of demographics that do not appear in the neighborhood’s favor, one of the most telling demographics is the homeownership rate.

The high, consistent homeownership rate is a key indicator that Parkside social system has a chance to recover. The residents that remained after the population decline were homeowners, and because they are homeowners, they are willing to invest in improving the community’s vitality. One of the areas where the homeowners could contribute most is on the rehabilitation of the park space.

The Political System

Introduction

Camden's political system has been perturbed by changing landscape patterns and community demographic shifts just as the social and economic systems. Coupled with these perturbations has been corruption and incompetence in the political system. Three of the last six mayors have been indicted of federal crimes while positive initiatives across these six administrations have failed to trickle down to the community social systems. These last six mayoral administrations are highlighted below:

Angelo Errichetti (1973-1981)

With the great racial tensions, Errichetti recognized the need for reconciliation between the racial groups. In realizing the increased political power of the black community, Errichetti brought several black leaders into city government. Errichetti credited his administration "with smoothing differences and building a working relationship between the rapidly diminishing white power structure and the black and Hispanic communities, which by then was the majority of the city's population."⁴⁰ It was Errichetti's administration that "laid the groundwork—the 1977 master plan, the securing of federal monies for the long-planned transportation terminal."⁴¹ It is only within the last five years that a new master plan has been established in the city. The transportation terminal, providing regional bus service and local train service is located in downtown Camden. Errichetti was re-elected. During his second mayoral administration, however, things began to decline.

In 1980, Mayor Errichetti was indicted with charges of bribery and conspiracy for his participation in promising to introduce private immigration bills, enabling some Arab businessmen to remain in the United States, along with other favors, for money.⁴² Errichetti was convicted of bribery and conspiracy, fined \$40,000 and sentenced to six

⁴⁰ Riordan, 7/7/86, 2A.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Babcock, Charles R. "Rep. Myers Is Indicted in Abscam Case" in *The Washington Post*. May 28, 1980. A1.; Fried, Joseph P. "Abscam Trial Defendant Says He Was Told of the Passing of \$100,000" in *The New York Times*. August 15, 1980. B6. Both available at <http://www.lexis-nexis.com>.

years in prison in August 1980, but only served 32 months of his sentence.⁴³ Four months after his release, he was interviewed and realized that his case and incarceration slowed down the progress of key city initiatives. Among those, he advocated for and allocated \$1 million for the VA Hospital to be cited in the city. He indicated that, “had the VA hospital come in, the ancillary things that would have come (from) it were unreal. When my troubles beset me, less-hearted people let (the VA hospital) slide. I was very upset about that.”⁴⁴ Coupled with this loss was Camden’s loss of power as the county seat. Jeffrey Dorwart notes that Errichetti’s downfall, “meant, in many ways, the end of the city’s political domination of Camden County. Never again would the city be the center of county politics.”⁴⁵ Now, the county’s power and economy no longer lies in the city, but in the surrounding suburbs of Cherry Hill, Gloucester, and Voorhees Townships.⁴⁶

Melvin Primas (1981-1989)

As a long-term Camden resident and a former member of Errichetti’s cabinet, Melvin Primas was well informed about the social, economic and political climate of the city. The tenure of Primas, the city’s first African-American mayor, was plagued with challenges and setbacks. First, the population of the city continued to decline and reached its lowest since 1900; second, only 10,000 manufacturing jobs remained, in comparison to 45,000 in 1960 and 22,000 in 1970; third, the unemployment rate was twice the national average; moreover, nearly fifty percent of the city’s residents lived below the poverty line.⁴⁷

In addition to the local-based challenges, there were challenges on a national and state level. The 1980s brought a shift from a manufacturing-based to a service-based economy. Camden’s infrastructure did not support and Camden’s reputation did not promote the re-emergence of service-based industries. The city had not lost its image as

⁴³ Thornton, Mary. “U.S. Sues Abscam Defendants To Get Back Its Bribery Outlays” in *The Washington Post*. 9/18/81. A12; Gargan, Edward A. “Kenneth MacDonald, Ex-Member of New Jersey Casino Commission” in *The New York Times*. 4/19/82. B6. Both available at <http://www.lexis-nexis.com>.

⁴⁴ Qtd in Riordan, 7/7/86, 6A.

⁴⁵ Dorwart, 156.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 157.

⁴⁷ Catlin, 57.

a declining manufacturing center. Camden's conditions were only exacerbated by Reagan administration policies that reduced the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) budget by 80% in the 1980s.⁴⁸ In addition to the strain caused by a shift in the economy and federal priorities, the State's agenda exacerbated Camden's conditions. Former Governor Thomas Kean forced Camden to accept three major detrimental projects that other municipalities in fiscally stronger conditions would not take. First, Camden cited a 600-bed maximum security prison on the Camden Waterfront. This assuaged interest in waterfront development from potential private sector companies. Second, Camden upgraded the city's sewage treatment plant to accommodate 55 million gallons of waste daily from all of Camden County's residents, which replaced forty-six local sewage treatment plants cited throughout Camden County. Third, Camden accepted a solid waste facility that burned trash from all of Camden County's suburban communities.⁴⁹

While met with these challenges and setbacks, there were some positive influences as well. The Kean administration brought some strong assets to the Camden as well. First, Camden's first formal public-private partnership was established with the creation of the Cooper's Ferry Development Corporation. Cooper's Ferry attracted the State Aquarium, later named after Governor Kean, to Camden's waterfront. Additional development along the waterfront included a new marina, a parking garage and an outdoor entertainment facility.⁵⁰ While this growth was an asset to the city, all these projects were limited to the waterfront and generated very little tax ratables to the city's declining economic tax base.

Though his tenure was plagued with difficulties, Primas was elected for three terms. About six months after the inauguration of his third term, newly elected Governor Florio appointed Mayor Primas as the Commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs.

⁴⁸ Catlin, 57.

⁴⁹ Ibid, 58.

⁵⁰ Ibid, 58.

Aaron Thompson (1989-1993)

After Melvin Primas was appointed to be the Commissioner of the Department of Community Affairs, Aaron Thompson was elected by the city council to serve as the interim mayor.⁵¹ Thompson had only been on city council for one year when he was selected by the council to be the interim mayor.

As Thompson began his administration, he was dealing with a city that had a greater amount of the budget dedicated to covering unpaid taxes than for the full cost of city services.⁵² Since there was not a wage tax program, the only source of tax money was from municipal property tax. Overall, his administration had some triumphs and setbacks. The triumphs included the opening of the New Jersey State Aquarium, a successful anti-arson effort following a destructive “Mischief Night”, the announcement of plans for an amphitheater at the waterfront—the first private investment on the waterfront in recent decades, the start of a community policing program, the appointment of a new tax collector to clean up the tax office, and keeping Campbell’s Soup headquarters in the city. Some of his setbacks were a record number of 51 murders in 1992, the proliferation of drugs, gangs and violence, feuding between city police and the county sheriff’s department, increasing grassroots discontent with city government, as well as the worst “Mischief Night” vandalism ever seen in Camden.⁵³ Thompson, however, was not re-elected for mayor. Dr. Arnold Webster, the former superintendent of schools, superseded him.

Dr. Arnold Webster (1993-1997)

From 1987 until his mayoral election, Dr. Arnold Webster was the superintendent of Camden City Schools. When Dr. Webster retired from the Camden City School system, he earned an annual pension of \$65,000. As he departed, he wrote himself a check for \$83,000 in unused vacation pay. Although there was nothing illegal about writing the check, it questioned his integrity and concern about the school system that was

⁵¹ Associated Press. “Councilman is Camden’s Interim Mayor” in the *Philadelphia Inquirer*. 1/18/90. 20.

⁵² Ott, Dwight and W.R. Macklin. “What Tax Deadbeats Cost Camden: The ’93 Budget Includes More for Delinquent Taxes Than For Services” in the *Philadelphia Inquirer*. 10/5/92. S01.

⁵³ Ott, Dwight. “Camden Mayor Girding for Battle: ‘I’m Like David Against Goliath,’ Said Aaron Thompson” in the *Philadelphia Inquirer*. 2/16/93. S01.

performing pretty poorly. During Dr. Webster's tenure, the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs cracked down on fiscal mismanagement in 1996. The Department released "a 300-page audit that accused city government of mishandling its finances."⁵⁴ At the same time, a local non-profit, the Camden Churches Organization for People, attacked the city leadership as well for "failing to develop a list of almost 4,000 vacant houses, many of which were not even boarded up."⁵⁵ During his tenure as mayor, he did not perform the services needed. Instead, during his tenure massive fiscal mismanagement was unveiled. Though all of the fiscal mismanagement did not begin with his administration, the money that entered the city during his administration was not used effectively. For example, five census tracts in Camden were submitted jointly with the City of Philadelphia for Empowerment Zone designation. But after successfully selected as an Empowerment Zone, Philadelphia's Empowerment Zone was praised while Camden's future as a city with Empowerment Zone neighborhoods was threatened.⁵⁶ Due to the overall massive fiscal mismanagement, the State provided Webster with some options for receiving the anticipated influx of State aid. Webster did not succumb, however, and received less aid than expected; this was coupled with increased resolve of former Governor Christine Todd Whitman to form a fiscal oversight board to monitor Camden's spending on a more rigorous level.⁵⁷ On top of this, the streets of Camden were not safe. In 1995, there were 60 homicides in the city. This was the highest per capita homicide rate in the nation.⁵⁸ Webster's tenure as mayor ended with real disappointment because the expectation was for great performance from him.

After Webster left office, there was the unresolved issue of paying himself off upon leaving the superintendency. In spite this action, he was still received as a civil servant that dedicated many years of public service. By 1999, Webster pled guilty to illegally taking \$20,000 from the Board of Education's funds.⁵⁹ Due to his age and his ailing health, he was sentenced to six months house arrest, three years of probation, restitution

⁵⁴ Catlin, 61.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Lowe, Herbert. "An Embattled Mayor Takes on His Critics" in the *Philadelphia Inquirer*. 5/6/97. B1. Purchased at <http://www.philly.com>.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ginsberg, Thomas. "Webster Pleads Guilty to Fraud" in the *Philadelphia Inquirer*. 4/21/99. B01.

costs of \$20,000, and a fine of \$1,000.⁶⁰ Further, the State Attorney General's office has "forever... [disqualified him] from holding any public office or position of honor, trust, or profit under the government of [New Jersey] or any of its administrative or political subdivisions."⁶¹ Due to this infarction, Webster's name is not only tarnished in the State, but also, his reputation in the community is tarnished as well.

Milton Milan (1997-2001)

A South Camden native, Milton Milan was the first Latino mayor of the City. As a former Marine and in his leadership as President of City Council, Milton Milan was hailed as someone that could bring sustained change to the city. While he was celebrating his victory as Camden's first Latino mayor, however, a law enforcement task force was investigating his involvement in a 1988 drug-related homicide in South Camden; these investigations meant little to Camden's residents because Milan presented himself as an individual of integrity that could bring sustained revitalization to the city.⁶²

There were a series of advancements in the city that occurred under Milan's administration. Some businesses decided to settle in the city, waterfront development was progressing and Admiral Wilson Boulevard, major highway strip well known for prostitution and armed robberies, was slated for cleanup.⁶³ The State was making efforts to gain local control, but Milan successfully maintained management responsibility.⁶⁴ Camden was beginning to show signs of recovery! In the middle of seeing progress in city government, things immediately changed.

Search warrants were issued seeking evidence of extortion, fraud in public property, mail fraud, tax fraud, conspiracy and interstate transportation in aid of racketeering.⁶⁵ Even

⁶⁰ Ott, Dwight. "Webster Avoids Jail for Taking Camden Funds: The Former Mayor Got House Arrest and Probation for Paying Himself \$20,000" in the *Philadelphia Inquirer*. 8/12/99. B01.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Lowe, Herbert. "Camden Elects Milan as Mayor" in the *Philadelphia Inquirer*. May 14, 1997. A1. Purchased at <http://www.philly.com>.

⁶³ Ott, Dwight and J.A. Gambardello. "Mayor's Troubles Put Camden On the Spot" in the *Philadelphia Inquirer*. 8/29/99. B02.

⁶⁴ Ott, Dwight. "Feisty Faison Battles for Camden Home Rule" in *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. July 1, 2001. B1.

⁶⁵ Ott and Gambardello, B02.

since his return to the city from the Marines, an FBI informant disclosed that Milan taught him how to sell drugs.⁶⁶ Once FBI investigators began fully exploring Milan's case, they realized that his days of growing up in South Camden, where rumor had it that he may have been an accessory to a drug-related homicide, were connected to even deeper ties including drug trafficking, ties to Philadelphia and South Jersey crime families, and corruption in the Camden Police Department and Camden's politics.⁶⁷ This case revealed, "the tangle of corruption that has helped make Camden one of the country's most dangerous cities..."⁶⁸ Milan was finally charged with 14 of 18 accounts of bribery, fraud and racketeering and is currently serving a seven-year sentence in federal prison. Following his imprisonment, then City Council President Gwendolyn Faison was appointed the interim mayor.

Gwendolyn Faison (2001-present)

Gwendolyn Faison, appointed interim may at age 76, had long been involved in politics, having served sixteen years as a councilwoman, including a tenure as a committeewoman during the Errichetti administration. While many perceive that her energy and ambition is great, moving too fast on some of her initiatives, involving the wrong people, could prove detrimental to her efforts.⁶⁹ Still, much of the Milan administration's corruption is becoming evident. Consequent to the conditions of the city and the legacy of poor leadership, the State has fully moved forward in its initiative to take control of the city government.

Conclusion

Because of the corruption and inefficient mayoral administrations, the political system is decaying. As such, the political system has failed to respond to the needs of the social system because the most critical changes needed in the City must happen on a

⁶⁶ Peterson, Iver. "A Mayor's Fateful Journey from Camden's Streets to Jail: Caught Up in the City's Tangle of Corruption" in *The New York Times*. January 3, 2001. B1. Available at <http://web.lexis-nexis.com>.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ott, Dwight. "Feisty Faison Battles for Camden Home Rule."

neighborhood scale. The political system has yet to focus revitalization efforts in the neighborhoods.

Rainbows in the Puddles

Poet and author Gary Snyder declares “of all the memberships we identify ourselves by (racial, ethnic, sexual, national, class, age, religious, occupational), the one that is most forgotten, and that has the greatest potential for healing, is place.”⁷⁰ As such, in order to see community revitalization and ecosystem rehabilitation, we must return to linking the two systems that defined place: the values of the local social system and the natural environment (the natural system). This leaves two questions to be answered. First, what designs can be implemented to improve the space? Second, how will the rehabilitation of the park space be achieved?

What Designs Can Be Implemented to Improve the Space?

After maintaining the positive uses of the space, such as basketball and utilizing the playground equipment by young children, efforts should be made towards enhancing the assuaged uses. By targeting some of the assuaged uses, the negative uses will decline. Below are suggestions for each region of the park:

Flooded Area/Wetland. After conducting river cleanup and rehabilitating the pavilion in the flooded area, this area should be opened for canoeing. The rehabilitated pavilion could serve as a launching site. Canoeing along the Cooper River provides a large amount of exposure to plant, bird, and marine biodiversity. Additionally, with these natural resources juxtaposed to urban development, opening up this area for canoeing could be an incredible resource of understanding ecosystem dynamics in an urban setting.

Escarpment. There are three key changes that should happen in this section. First, the eroded areas should be stabilized. This stabilization will emerge with the installation and maintenance of a storm water drainage system coupled with planting to stabilize the bank. Second, I would clean up the nature trails. Instead of utilizing impervious concrete for the paths, however, a material that is semi-pervious should be used. This nature trail should provide some signage and trail demarcation, but not so much that one feels like the space is too rigidly defined. There should be some structure, but also the opportunity

⁷⁰ Qtd in Shutkin, 140.

for one to stimulate their sense of wonder, creativity and awe independent of guided signage. Third, as proposed by the Camden Greenways Working Group, Inc. and Cooper's Ferry Development Association, Inc., a bike trail and nature path could be established at the base of the escarpment. This would connect the park to a regional greenway corridor, inviting some of the traffic that has been lost.

Uplands. There are three broad categories of improvements that should occur in this section of the park. First, basic infrastructural improvements and changes should be provided. For instance, all of the water fountains in the park need to undergo repair. Moreover, no additional non-adaptable fixtures, such as the Christopher Columbus statue, should be permitted in the park space. Due to the organic and local nature of the park, such fixtures in the space cannot adapt to the changes in the fluxes of the community ecosystem. Secondly, attempts should be made to broaden the clientele and design spaces that cater multiple uses. There should be activities catered towards seniors. Similarly, there should be some planning or design element that incorporates family use of the space. This could be achieved through allowing seniors or mixed-age groups to do some gardening. Renovating the pavilion, providing picnic tables and grills for cookouts are some possibilities. Third, spaces should be redesigned to foster positive community interaction between various segments of the population. This summer, one teenager recommended placing marble-like checkers/chess game boards in the park.

How Will the Rehabilitation of the Park Space Be Achieved?

The system that will lead the rehabilitation of Farnham Park will be a neighborhood-scale social group that can operate without dependency on the city's political system. During the fieldwork, I tried to tap into the social system via the political system. If the political system remains in turbulence, the momentum of the social system should be buffered by the labor and resource capital built within the social system. As such, a community-based organization should be formed, or the mission and capital of an existing non-profit such as PBCIP should be expanded. It is critical that some community-based institution must be labeled as the lead, responsible party. After this community institution has built or expanded its labor and resource capital, they can forge partnerships with other

community institutions within the local social system and eventually, with the political system.

First things first. Identify labor capital. In identifying labor capital, there should be stronger intergenerational connections within the community. At community meetings, no youth are present. Youth input should be sought and incorporated as much as the input of adults and senior citizens. By working collaboratively, incredible intergenerational synergy could be birthed and changes in the neighborhood and park space would happen more rapidly. The youth will contribute their sense of wonder. Rachel Carson notes that, “a child’s world is fresh and new and beautiful, full of wonder and excitement.”⁷¹ To keep this sense of wonder alive, Carson suggests that, “he [or she] needs the companionship of at least one adult who can share it, rediscovering with him the joy, excitement and mystery of the world we live in.”⁷² This can be achieved through intergenerational connections on the neighborhood level. Much of labor capital can be identified through existing community institutions.

Second, working with existing community institutions is important. When surveying the neighborhood, the following were the most prevalent community institutions identified:

TYPE	QUANTITY
Fast Food/Local Restaurant	13
Church	6
Barbershop/Beauty Salon	6
Bar/Liquor Store	5
School	5
Auto Shop and Service	4
Cleaners/Tailor	3
Dentist	2
Discount Household and Beauty	2
Florist	2
Laundromat	2
Loans/Check Cashing	2
Records	2

Table 15. Frequency Distribution of Most Common Community Institutions.

⁷¹ Carson, Rachel. The Sense of Wonder. New York: Harper and Row. 1965: 42.

⁷² Ibid, 45.

Fast Food/Local Restaurants and Other Such Institutions

Fast food and local restaurants are the most dominant community institution. Some of these entities already post flyers announcing community events. These businesses could continue to be helpful in this capacity. In the future, these restaurants may have interest in setting up food kiosks along the main corridor of the park or providing gift certificates or discounts in partnership with a community group focused on rehabilitating the park space. Other such institutions that may advertise, donate items or provide gift certificates include the cleaners/tailors, discount household and beauty stores, and the record stores.

Churches

There are a series of reasons that the church is a critical community institution. On a national scale, “churches are the country’s biggest source of volunteers, way ahead of workplaces, schools or colleges, fraternal groups, and other civic institutions.”⁷³ DiIulio notes that in inner-city black churches, in particular, congregations “are leveraging several times their weight in community service.”⁷⁴ This trend can be seen nationwide. Reverend Harold Dean Trulear of Philadelphia asserts that in Metropolitan New York alone, “more than a thousand churches... are doing some type of youth and community outreach ministry, and several new and revitalized networks of churches are doing the same in Metropolitan Philadelphia.”⁷⁵ Further, DiIulio notes that, “eighty-five percent of black churches in Atlanta... are engaged in some type of outreach program beyond religious services to their congregations.”⁷⁶ These two examples indicate that the community development initiatives are widespread.

Not only are churches leaders in volunteerism, but also, many denominations are some of the least discriminating settings for performing service based on income, class, and gender lines. Verba et al note that in the church, “the exercise of civic skills is not a

⁷³ DiIulio, J.J. “The Church and the Civil Society Sector” in *The Brookings Review*. Fall 1997: 31.

⁷⁴ Ibid, 30.

⁷⁵ Qtd in DiIulio, 28.

⁷⁶ DiIulio, 30.

function of a difference in overall educational level.”⁷⁷ Verba et al indicate that, “opportunities for the exercise of skills are apportioned much more democratically in church, with the result that someone with a job demanding minimal training that is religiously active is likely to have more chance to develop skills at church than on the job.”⁷⁸ One reason given for this is because “religious activity has the potential to act as a compensatory factor for participation, partially offsetting the impact of socioeconomic advantage.”⁷⁹ Indeed, participation in churches creates avenues for skill building and for the otherwise disempowered to develop influence. Verba et al’s work also indicates that, “there is no systematic relationship between family income and the exercise of civic skills in church.”⁸⁰ In fact, “participation in religious institutions is much less structured by income, race, or ethnicity than is political activity. Belonging to a church is even less stratified by income than is having a job.”⁸¹ Finally, “among church members, there is only a minimal gender gap in the exercise of civic skills... [and] African-Americans practice, on average, somewhat more skills in church than Anglo-Whites.”⁸²

In addition, this is an asset because churches are a space where people across socioeconomic statuses gather. Hence, professionals can often bring their expertise, community members can bring their knowledge and understanding of the community, and the two can work together to support each other and the community.

Churches still present in urban neighborhoods have demonstrated a commitment to the community. Halpern notes that churches “struggled to play a role” in alleviating community decline.⁸³ Because the church has remained in the community, it is an institution that residents trust, whether or not they are members. For those that do attend, church is cathartic. Clark asserts that churches “provide an opportunity for their

⁷⁷ Verba, Sidney et al. Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. 1995: 324.

⁷⁸ Verba et al, 519.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Verba et al, 318.

⁸¹ Ibid, 317.

⁸² Ibid, 318.

⁸³ Halpern, Robert. Rebuilding the Inner City: A History of Neighborhood Initiatives to Address Poverty in the United States. New York: Columbia University Press, 1995: 164.

followers to ‘let off steam,’ to seek release for emotions.’⁸⁴ Churches also provide social and recreational activities. Accordingly, Clark notes that the Black church “is a social and recreational club and a haven of comfort.”⁸⁵ As a social and recreational locale, this is a place where community members interact, discuss concerns, and develop ideas to address their concerns. These factors combine to make the church a critical community institution.

Another asset of the church is monetary. Church members give money to the church for its maintenance and operations. This is a funding source mainly comprised of funds from the members and the money is used to advance the issues of concern to citizens. The monetary stability of churches has enabled them to serve in a leadership capacity in communities.⁸⁶

Churches are one of the most dominant institutions in the Parkside neighborhood. The six churches in the neighborhood have a long tenure and have memberships that are pretty steady. The churches are also engaged, in varying degrees, in community outreach and community revitalization initiatives. One church, First Refuge Baptist Church, is the standing host of PBCIP’s monthly community meeting. Parkside United Methodist Church has community outreach ranging from male and female mentoring programs, after school programs, a Golden Age Club (for senior citizens), a series of youth programming, and annually sponsors a community health fair. Two neighborhood churches, Parkside United Methodist Church and Little Rock Baptist Church, hosted youth daily summer programs as well as Vacation Bible School in their space. The Pastors of Parkside United Methodist Church and First Refuge Baptist Church, who have been pastors at their churches for nearly thirty years and forty years, respectively, know the neighborhood very well and their doors are open to serve the community. Both these pastors are also very involved in the local community non-profit organization, PBCIP.

⁸⁴ Clark, Kenneth B. Dark Ghetto: Dilemmas of Social Power. New York: Harper and Row. 1967: 174.

⁸⁵ Ibid, 174-5.

⁸⁶ Clark, 180.

In partnering to rehabilitate Farnham Park, churches could provide volunteers, funding and conduct programs on the Park space. This past summer, Mt. Olivet Seventh Day Adventist Church held a summer camp meeting in the Park space. The community benefits from the church's involvement because the church could provide volunteers and resources (not always monetary, per se, but even providing meals for those that are involved in a Saturday afternoon cleanup). The church benefits from their community involvement because they can gain more members as well as utilize the park space for their programming.

Barbershops and Beauty Salons

Barbershops and beauty salons are important institutions in the Black community. These are usually gendered places for social gathering across generations and classes. These are places where issues are discussed, advice is shared and lessons are taught. In America, barbershops and beauty salons have been institutionalized in Black culture since slavery. During slavery, "some slaves became proficient in European beauty care techniques by serving as barbers or beauticians for their owners, and some free blacks in both the North and the South made their living as hairdressers for white customers."⁸⁷ Since this beautification was something done for slave owners, the institution of hair care services carried over following Emancipation. Robinson notes that, "black women... owned their own beauty shops by the 1870s, and by 1885 there were 500 black barbers in Philadelphia alone."⁸⁸ Over the years, their importance in the Black community continued to grow.

Barbershops and beauty salons provide a cosmetic service as well as a space for interaction. Robinson asserts that, "barber shops and beauty parlors provided a place for people to gather and talk, sharing political insights, town gossip, and whatever else may be on their minds."⁸⁹ One man, Gregory Moore, indicates that "whether you are male or

⁸⁷ Robinson, Lisa Clayton. "Hair and Beauty Culture." Available at http://www.africana.com/archive/articles/tt_356.asp.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

female, the barber shop/beauty salon is the place to get caught up on your community and what is going on in people's heads this time of the week."⁹⁰ Moore continues, saying that "the barbershop is usually the place where you can get a haircut and catch old friends, but for the Black community it is something more. It is one of the last vestiges where one can not only socialize but also comment on the community events and come away with a feeling of fulfillment."⁹¹ In addition to social interactions, ages and classes are represented at the barbershop and beauty salon in usually a gender-specific activity. Because of this, beauty salons and barbershops provided opportunity for gendered bonding.⁹² Further, barbershops and beauty salons help bridge class isolation that exists in many urban neighborhoods today. Robinson notes that, "despite the economic depression in many black neighborhoods, hair salons remain among the most successful black businesses in most cities, and even African Americans who have moved to predominantly white suburbs often return to black urban neighborhoods to get their hair done. Once there, the salon provides them with welcome reconnections to the black community."⁹³ In all the aforementioned ways, barbershops and beauty parlors are important institutions in the community, providing a unique, yet critical social function.

In Parkside, barbershops are one of the most dominant institutions in the neighborhood. While the population of men is declining in the neighborhood, you are sure to find young black men in the barbershop. This is a resource that can be taken advantage of in terms of advertising community cleanups, events, and a place to learn about community sentiments among men.

Schools

Schools are critical stakeholders in achieving the restoration of Farnham Park. Though many of the problems with usage seen in the park are correlated with schools, many of the opportunities to realize restoration in the park space will occur in the schools as well.

⁹⁰ Moore, Gregory. "Barbershops and Sports." Available at <http://www.kccall.com/News/2002/0621/Sports/073.html>.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Robinson.

⁹³ Robinson.

Some of the most negligent uses of the park occur in the age group of school-aged children. Many infractions occur in the park space during the academic year and during the time that school is in session. During the academic year, there is active drug trafficking in the park space. Those trafficking drugs are high school aged youth. Also, lots of the traffic for the drug purchasing occurs during the school day. The park is an opportunistic location due to the proximity of major city roads as well as to students in Hatch Middle School and Camden High School. In addition to drug trafficking, another major issue in the park is the truancy. Many children leave Camden High School and come directly across the street into the park space, sometimes playing basketball, but other times also just hanging out in an area that is relatively a little more secluded.

The truancy cycle ends as the school year ends, of course. At the same time, the drug trafficking in the Park terminates as the school year closes out. Clearly, there is a link between activity in the park and the school year cycle. Additionally, conditions in the school, because of conditions in the community at large, end up manifesting in the Park space. There is clearly a problem with the youth—their preparation, their education, their ambitions and their dreams. Considering these factors, the local schools would be critical stakeholders in the revitalization of Farnham Park.

While the school has a substantial role to play in partnership with other institutions and the family structure, the schools can also serve as a vehicle to radically change the use of the park space. The park is an incredible source of environmental education. The youth, at all grade levels, could learn about types of trees, biodiversity, community history and sense of place all from that park space. With the three areas of the park, upland, escarpment and wetland, as well as being situated along Cooper River, there is substantial opportunity to learn about different types of vegetation, different types of species that live in different areas, learn about the Cooper River, and simultaneously learn about community history from the park space, since the park is filled with stories of community history and significance and importance in establishing a sense of place.

Along with the educational assets, the youth would also augment their environmental value system. They could also potentially raise their civic awareness and sense of civic responsibility. They could also gain a sense for some of the positive assets that the park space provides as well as feel empowered to improve the park space. The involvement of the schools is critical to the park's success.

Though the school system is in a state of dysfunction and volatility at the moment, the engagement of schools can still happen with a few interested educators.

Partnering With the Political System

Before a community-based social system partners with the political system, it is critical that they have spent some time developing their labor and resource capital so that they can exert influence and control. For as Wendell Berry notes, "...a community must... be so far as possible the cause of its own changes; it must change in response to its own changing needs and local circumstances, not in response to motives, powers, or fashions coming from elsewhere."⁹⁴ While partnerships should not be formed just for the sake of partnerships, the capacity to work comprehensively can produce synergy if centered on complementary needs and assets.

⁹⁴ Berry, 150.

Conclusion

The current usage of and conditions in Farnham Park are not optimal. The park cultivates a strong sense of place amongst the community. Efforts to rehabilitate the park could be effectively undertaken by the mobilization and empowerment of the community-based social system. Through community leadership, all of the following can be achieved:

- The park's physical landscape can be rehabilitated,
- The legal and beneficial uses will supersede illegal, malignant uses,
- The park can be a learning space, both about the biophysical attributes, but also about the heritage that lies in the space,
- The both young and old can come together on the space and both groups see the park as healthy, viable and theirs, and
- The park can once again cultivate a positive sense of place and fosters community and civic pride.

EPILOGUE

***“...But after pouring rain,
We know that the sun will shine again.
The sun will shine again.
This is not the way it will end.
The sun will shine again....”
–Kayla Parker***

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