

# The City of New Brunswick Municipal Public Access Plan



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Approval of this plan does not eliminate the need for any Federal, State, County or municipal permits, certifications, authorizations or other approvals that may be required by the Applicant, nor shall the approval of this plan obligate the Department to issue any permits, certifications, authorizations or other approvals required for any project described in this plan.

## Contents

Introduction.....	1
Authority for Municipal Public Access Plans .....	2
State of New Jersey Public Access Goals .....	3
I.    City of New Brunswick Public Access Vision .....	4
A.    Overview of Municipality .....	4
1.    Municipal Description.....	4
2.    Public Access Description .....	5
B.    Municipal Public Access Goals and Objectives .....	7
1.    Vision and Planning Goals for the City of New Brunswick .....	7
2.    Elements .....	8
II.   Existing Public Access.....	11
A.    Public Access Locations .....	11
B.    Improved Public Access Locations.....	23
C.    Limitations to Public Access .....	25
1.    Temporary Restrictions .....	26
2.    Permanent Restrictions .....	30
III.  Community Needs Assessment.....	31
Steering Committee and Public Meetings .....	32
Surveys.....	33
Studies .....	35
IV.   Implementation Plan .....	39
A.    Priorities .....	39
1.    Maintain Existing Public Access.....	40
2.    Planned Enhancement to Public Access Locations and/or Facilities.....	42
3.    Other.....	43
B.    Preservation of Public Access Locations.....	44
C.    Signage .....	44
D.    Proposed Access Improvements and Facilities .....	45
E.    Municipal Tools for Implementation.....	46
F.    Implementation.....	46
G.    Army Corps of Engineers Requirements for Shore Protection Projects.....	46
V.    Resolution of Incorporation .....	46
Citations and Resources .....	47
Appendix 1 - Model Resolution for Incorporating MPAP into Master Plan .....	50
Appendix 2 - Maps and Table .....	51

## Introduction

The intent of this document is to provide a comprehensive public access plan for the City of New Brunswick which lays out their vision for providing access to tidal waters and shorelines within the municipal boundary. This Municipal Public Access Plan (MPAP) was developed in accordance with Coastal Zone Management (CZM) Rules and in collaboration with the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP), and has been approved by the NJDEP. The development and implementation of this MPAP supports the policy of local determination of public access locations and facilities, while safeguarding regulatory flexibility and potential funding opportunities for the City of New Brunswick.

Public rights of access to and use of the tidal shorelines and waters, including the ocean, bays, and tidal rivers, in New Jersey are founded in the Public Trust Doctrine. First set by the Roman Emperor Justinian around A.D. 500 as part of Roman civil law, the Public Trust Doctrine establishes the public's right to full use of the seashore as declared in the following quotation from Book II of the Institutes of Justinian:

*By the law of nature these things are common to all mankind – the air, running water, the sea, and consequently the shores of the sea. No one, therefore, is forbidden to approach the seashore, provided that he respects habitations, monuments, and the buildings, which are not, like the sea, subject only to the law of nations.*

Influenced by Roman civil law, the tenets of public trust were maintained through English common Law and adopted by the original thirteen colonies. Following the American Revolution, the royal right to tidelands was vested to the thirteen new states, then to each subsequent state, and has remained a part of public policy into the present time. Through various judicial decisions, the right of use upheld by the Public Trust Doctrine has been incorporated into many state constitutions and statutes, allowing the public the right to all lands, water and resources held in the public trust by the state, including those in New Jersey.

The NJDEP adopted new rules governing public access on November 5, 2012 that enable municipalities to develop and adopt MPAPs to govern public access within their municipality. This MPAP consists of an inventory of public access locations, plus plans to preserve and enhance access based on community needs and State standards.

On October 1, 2014, representatives from the City of New Brunswick met with NJDEP staff to begin the public access planning process. A stakeholder team was convened to address

both the MPAP and the associated Coastal Vulnerability Assessment and consisted of members of the NJDEP, numerous city stakeholders including the Mayor’s Office, the city’s Department of Planning, Community and Economic Development, the Environmental Commission, the Planning Board, City Market, New Brunswick Development Corporation (DEVCO), Public Works Department, and stakeholders from outside the city including the Middlesex County Office of Planning, Middlesex Office of Emergency Management, staff from Rutgers’ Bloustein School and other Raritan basin stakeholders. The team reviewed existing public access along the Raritan River and Lawrence Brook borders of the city, and reviewed concepts for expanded or improved public access in the area. This plan is the result of those meetings and discussions. The Plan was presented to the New Brunswick City Council and was approved for submission to the NJDEP on November 1, 2017. The MPAP was incorporated into the Master Plan by vote of the Planning Board on November 18, 2019, as memorialized on December 9, 2019. The city will continue to work with NJDEP to obtain Department approval of the MPAP. All public access decisions made within the City of New Brunswick will be consistent with this plan.

### Authority for Municipal Public Access Plans

The authority for a municipality to develop a MPAP is derived from the CZM Rules. The premise of the authorization of Municipal Public Access Plans is that public access to tidal waters is fundamentally linked to local conditions. Municipalities have a better awareness and are more responsive to these conditions than a broader State “one size fits all” mandated public access plan.

The voluntary development of a MPAP by the City of New Brunswick enables the municipality to better plan, implement, maintain, and improve the provision of public access for its residents and visitors. The MPAP will be incorporated into the municipality’s Master Plan, in accordance with the Municipal Land Use Law (N.J.S.A 40:55D). The MPAP, as an official component of the municipal Master Plan, informs and/or identifies public access requirements associated with any proposed development or redevelopment project.

Upon approval of the MPAP by the Department and incorporation into the Master Plan, the City of New Brunswick will be responsible for ensuring that public access to tidal waterways along the municipality’s shorelines is provided in accordance to this plan. For each new public access project, the City of New Brunswick will provide NJDEP with a letter confirming its consistency with this MPAP. Any permit issued by the NJDEP will reflect this and ensure that public access requirements are satisfied in accordance to this plan.

Per CZM Rules, the City of New Brunswick is required to submit a progress report on plan implementation to NJDEP within five (5) years from date of plan adoption. The Department of Planning, Community and Economic Development will oversee and coordinate the progress report filing efforts.

The sections of this plan as indicated below are prescribed by CZM Rules adopted by NJDEP.

### State of New Jersey Public Access Goals

Through the New Jersey CZM Rules, the State of New Jersey establishes a broad set of coastal protection goals, including the following specifically addressing public access:

- Effectively manage ocean and estuarine resources through sustainable recreational and commercial fisheries, as well as through the safe and environmentally sound use of coastal waters and beaches.
- Provide meaningful public access to and use of tidal waterways and their shores.
- Preserve public trust rights to tidal waterways and their shores.
- Preserve and enhance views of the coastal landscape to enrich aesthetic and cultural values and vital communities.
- Enhance public access by promoting adequate affordable public facilities and services.
- Create and enhance opportunities for public access to tidal waterways and their shores, on a non-discriminatory basis.
- Maintain all existing public access to, and along tidal waterways and their shores.
- Provide opportunities for public access to tidal waterways and their shores through new development.
- Provide public access that does not create conditions that may be reasonably expected to endanger public health and safety, damage the environment, or create significant homeland security vulnerability.

The City of New Brunswick's MPAP embraces and reflects these goals and will help preserve, protect, and enhance the public's ability to access the Public Trust lands that surround the city.

## I. City of New Brunswick Public Access Vision

### A. Overview of Municipality

#### 1. Municipal Description

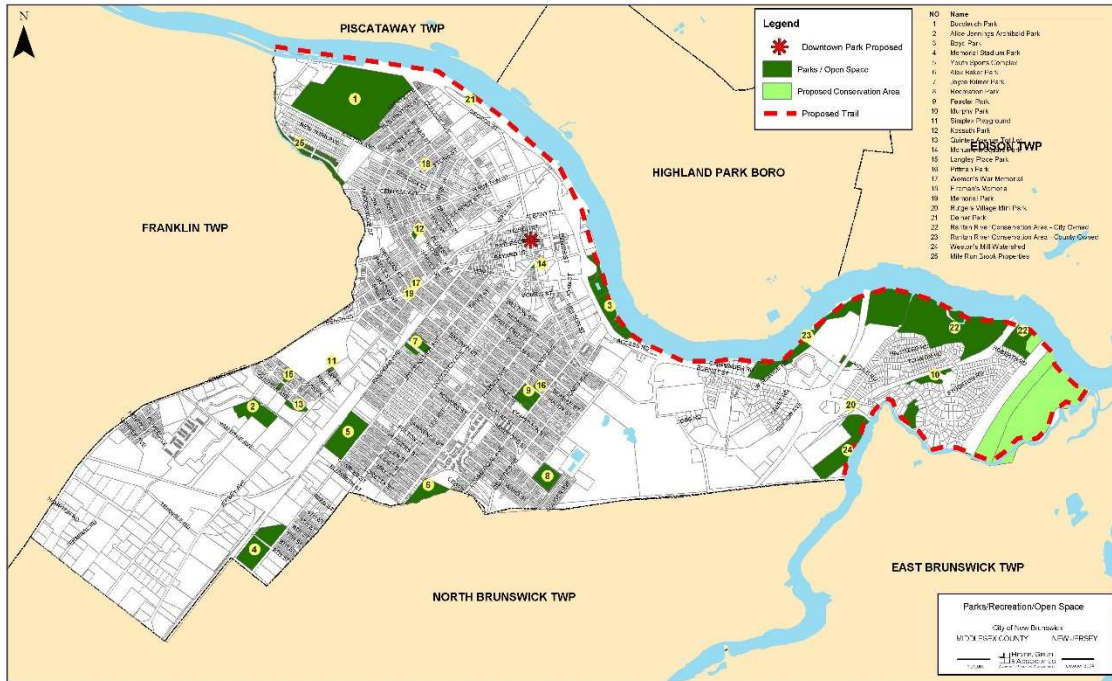
Located in east central New Jersey in Middlesex County, the City of New Brunswick is an urban community of approximately 55,181 people (2010 US Census) with a population density of approximately 14.89 people per acre. New Brunswick is diverse with a population breakdown of approximately 45% white, 16% Black or African American, 1% Native American, 8% Asian and 30% from other or mixed races. Hispanics or Latinos of any race account for approximately 50% of the population.

Major employers in the city include Rutgers University, Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital, St. Peter's University Hospital, Johnson & Johnson, County of Middlesex, and OHM Labs (Ranbaxy), raising the city's daytime population to 70,221. Rutgers' New Brunswick student population numbers 40,434, while faculty and staff number 5,527. In addition, cultural activities in the city attract 400,000 patrons annually to cultural and theatre events (New Brunswick 2013).

New Brunswick was designated a Transit Village in 2005, with a walkscore of 90. It is easily accessible by mass transportation including 90 trains daily by Amtrak and NJ Transit, five bus routes through the city, two commuter bus routes, and Rutgers Campus buses that connect the New Brunswick campus with Piscataway and North Brunswick (New Brunswick 2013).

Many areas of the city are zoned for high-density, mixed use development, and current development plans reinforce the Transit Village focus. According to the New Brunswick Master Plan, the city is nearly fully developed with limited available vacant and developable land. Opportunities for further growth will be through redevelopment, rehabilitation and adaptive re-use of existing buildings with limited in-fill. Other remaining open space is wetlands, woodlands, and/or floodplains (New Brunswick 2004).

New Brunswick's 5.79 square miles of land area, or approximately 3705 acres, includes 272 acres of parks, recreation areas and open space (including playgrounds, passive areas, athletic fields, facilities, lawns, and gardens). The entire north border of the city – approximately 4.5 miles in length – is bounded by the Raritan River and is tidally influenced along its entire length. The eastern border of the municipality is bounded by the Lawrence Brook and is tidally influenced up to the Westons Mill Pond Dam. In 1999, two city parks, Boyd Park and Alice Jennings Archibald Park, were selected for National Awards (City of New Brunswick Website, Parks & Gardens).



New Brunswick Parks and Open Space

## 2. Public Access Description

Public access for residents and visitors to the City of New Brunswick is provided by the State of New Jersey, the City of New Brunswick, Middlesex County, and Rutgers University and consists of a variety of access points and facilities that extend from the tidal reach of the Raritan River at the city’s northwestern-most boundary to the tidal reach of the Lawrence Brook at Westons Mill Pond Dams along the city’s southeastern edge.

In the strictest sense of public access – where you can physically touch the water – public access is fairly limited and mostly restricted to a short section of the D&R Canal, sections of Boyd Park, unimproved access in the conservation areas, and unimproved access at Westons Mill Pond. Existing public access areas and their amenities are:

- A short section of the D&R Canal, the Route 18 Trench Bikeway and Boyd Park offer several miles of linear bikeway/footpaths
- Boyd Park includes access for fishing, birdwatching, a concrete boat launch, restrooms and portable toilets, parking, picnic tables, picnic pavilions, benches, seasonal day-time boat dock, playgrounds, an historic canal and lock, historic and informative signage, and a festival/concert area with an amphitheater

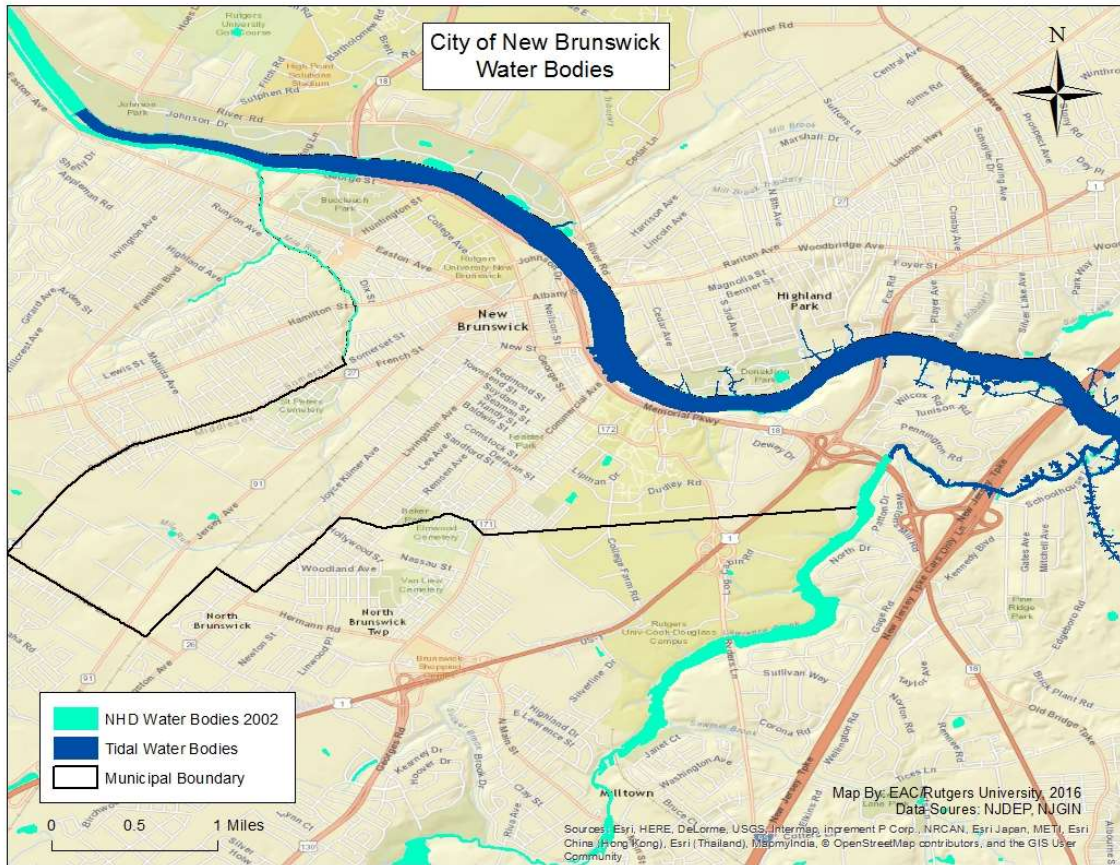
- Unimproved conservation areas offer bird watching, views of the river and some shoreline fishing opportunities
- Westons Mill Pond offers fishing and limited boating with access to a human-powered or electric motor boat launch just outside of the New Brunswick city boundary in East Brunswick

A more detailed description of the amenities associated with each area of public access are noted in the Existing Public Access section below.

The majority of the land along the Raritan and Lawrence Brook through New Brunswick is protected by zoning for waterfront conservation consistent with the city's long term efforts to protect open space and to provide passive public access in New Brunswick. This designation does not, however, ensure public access in perpetuity. Listing these properties in the city's Recreational and Open Space Inventory (ROSI) or adopting more stringent measures such as a conservation easement or restriction will permanently preserve access and ensure that the city meets requirements for public access in accordance with CZM Rules. Part of the waterfront conservation area is characterized by steep slopes (greater than 10% grade) down to the river – effectively limiting development along the shoreline. But the ability to walk along the Raritan and Lawrence Brook and to view the water is possible (if not presently practicable) along most of the riparian boundary of the city.

Public access in the city has been the topic of several studies and projects in the recent past including a 2011 study by The Trust for Public Land, discussions of public access as a component of the 2016 New Brunswick Blueprint for Health, the very recent development of a new Parks and Gardens Commission, application through the State for this MPAP grant, as well as an analysis by Rutgers of the MPAP as part of their new Health Impact Assessment program. The city continues to explore enhancements to public access discussed in these studies/projects. (See Section III. Community Needs Assessment for more information.)

The overall goal of this MPAP is to establish the City of New Brunswick's plan to maintain and enhance all existing public access locations to and along tidal waterways and their shores.



**New Brunswick Water Bodies (including tidal)**

The above map shows all the tidal waterways within the municipality (see also larger scale map in Appendix 2).

## B. Municipal Public Access Goals and Objectives

As part of the planning process, this MPAP has been reviewed and is consistent with the following goals, elements, and policies established in the City of New Brunswick’s 2004 Master Plan and subsequent 2011 Master Plan Reexamination Report:

### 1. Vision and Planning Goals for the City of New Brunswick

The Vision and Planning Goals Element of the Master Plan provides twelve specific visions for a transformed New Brunswick with four of them generally relevant to public access objectives put forth in other Master Plan elements. They envision a city...

Where New Brunswick’s parks and open spaces provide a wide range of recreation opportunities for all of the city’s residents;

Where access to and within the city is improved with improved ... pedestrian and bicycle routes ...;

Where the city's planning efforts are well-coordinated with, and enhance and support the planning efforts of its public and private partners; and

Where the city continually seeks to improve the quality of life of its residents.

## 2. Elements

### Land Use Plan Element

Per the Master Plan, the Land Use Plan Element provides a long-range policy guide for development of the city and supports the zoning ordinance by giving explanations and rationale for land use decisions. The listed land use most pertinent to this MPAP is *Parks, Recreation and Open Space* that includes riverside parks Buccleuch and Boyd, and riparian open space lands including the Raritan River Conservation area.

Recommendations included in the Land Use Plan Element that are consistent with discussions of the MPAP stakeholder team and the MPAP are that the city should:

- Continue to work with Rutgers in order to ensure that the University's facility planning and other planning efforts are in line with city planning objectives, and vice-versa,
- Retain the pastoral setting of the Westons Mill Pond area and ensure that development in this area minimizes disturbances to environmentally sensitive lands and preserves as much woodland as possible,
- Retain all existing open spaces, park and recreational areas of the city, specifically the Raritan River Conservation Area located in the northeasterly portion of the city, as well as Buccleuch Park and Boyd Park,
- Retain the conservation district zoning in areas of the city currently located in the WC Waterfront Conservation District and extend that district to cover Boyd Park,
- Protect, preserve and conserve environmentally sensitive areas, particularly the city's waterfront, wetlands, floodplains, streams, steep sloped areas and ravines, and forested areas in balance with the city's economic development efforts,
- Protect and preserve historically significant structures, districts and areas in balance with the city's economic development efforts, and
- Bring activity to the riverfront and connect the waterfront to the city's downtown and the rest of the city.

### Circulation Plan Element

While the majority of the Circulation Plan Element addresses public transportation and automobile traffic, due to the constraints of city buildout and congested roadways, foot- and bike paths are an important component of the city's circulation planning. Identified in the Circulation Plan Element are recommendations for improvements to the Route 18 Trench Bikepath and creation of improved bicycle circulation between the College Avenue and Cook/Douglass Campuses.

The Route 18 Trench Bikepath that stretches along the banks of the Raritan River between the John Lynch Bridge (Route 18/Raritan River crossing) and Route 27/Albany Street was also referenced in the Middlesex County Bicycle Pedestrian Plan as the recommended route through the area to avoid heavy traffic on George Street. Planned improvements to the Route 18 Trench Bikepath as identified in the Circulation Plan Element will address numerous safety and security concerns and will include additional ingress and egress points, improved lighting and a wider path with overlooks or rest areas.

Between the time of the 2004 Master Plan and the 2011 Reexamination Report, numerous pedestrian/cyclist access improvements to the Route 18 crossings into Boyd Park were made. The 2011 Report, however, recommended that further improvements were needed to address pedestrian and bicycle safety at some crossings.

### Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan Element

The majority of land along the Raritan River and the Lawrence Brook in the City of New Brunswick is already designated as parks, recreation and open space. Recommendations in this Master Plan Element for the tidal/riparian zones in the municipality are primarily focused on improved maintenance and improved access to existing lands.

Recommendations are to:

- Continue efforts to permanently protect environmentally sensitive lands,
- Expand the Raritan River Conservation area to environmentally sensitive areas along the Raritan River and Lawrence Brook),
- Encourage bus routing to maximize access to parks and recreation facilities,
- Coordinate and collaborate with non-profit institutions, Rutgers University and governmental agencies (including Middlesex County) to partner on park and recreation plans that address joint needs, increase public access opportunities, and potentially reduce funding burdens, and
- Establish a linear open space network along the south bank of the Raritan River that includes Boyd Park and the Raritan River Conservation Area and establish a linear open space area along the Lawrence Brook (consistent with recommendations in the Circulation Plan Element for improved pedestrian and

bicycle circulation and other initiatives to improve regional open space and trail way linkages). This recommendation was reiterated in the 2011 Reexamination Report.

#### Community Facilities Plan Element

The Community Facilities Plan Element lists an inventory of existing community facilities and identifies the city departments that provide services to the public including the Division of Parks (under the Department of Public Works) that is responsible for maintenance of all city parks, playgrounds, passive areas, athletic fields, facilities, lawns and gardens, and the Division of Recreation (under the Department of Social Services) that is responsible for all recreational programming including seasonal events such as the Raritan River Festival and Summer Concert Series in Boyd Park.

Relevant recommendations in this Element are for: (1) the city to continue to evaluate and respond to changes in the character of the community and changing needs and interests for access to recreation; and (2) reinforcement of the recommendation to collaborate with area stakeholders, such as Rutgers and the County, to share facilities and reduce financial burden in meeting residents' needs.

In addition to those goals inherent in the above recommendations and outlined within the Master Plan, and inherent in the three State required goals below (#1 through 3), the City of New Brunswick establishes the following as goals specifically for public access:

1. All existing public access shall be maintained to the maximum extent practicable
2. Maintain safe and adequate access locations for fishing
3. Provide clear informative signage for access locations
4. Incorporate resiliency in all MPAP components
5. Work with partners to expand public access programming and improve amenities to increase usage of public access areas
6. Work with partners to provide a continuous safe and enjoyable linear public access from Landing Lane Bridge to Westons Mill Pond Dam
7. Work with Rutgers and Middlesex County to resolve pedestrian and bicycle access safety issues

## II. Existing Public Access

### A. Public Access Locations

The riparian boundary of New Brunswick from the northwest city boundary along the Raritan River to the southeast city edge bordering Westons Mill Pond is rich in public access opportunities and connects with other public access trails and corridors that expand and enhance public access for many New Jersey residents. Public access at the northwest edge of the city connects to two important greenways -- the East Coast Greenway section between Camden/Trenton and New York, and the nationally historic Delaware and Raritan (D&R) Canal that stretches across New Jersey to the Delaware River and provides over 60 miles of hiking and biking trails as well as canoe and kayaking pleasure. The southeastern corner of New Brunswick is graced by the Westons Mill Pond, and the Helyar Woods section of Rutgers Gardens with opportunities to follow trails into Rutgers Gardens to explore those environs or to follow the Lawrence Brook upstream to Farrington Lake.

The following is a description of existing and promising public access in New Brunswick starting upstream where the Raritan leaves Franklin Township and traveling along the riparian edge of the city from the D&R Canal Towpath to Helyar Woods. Each section includes a description of the public access points, existing conditions, amenities, limitations to access, and prospective improvements where applicable. Zoning or other protective measures for the site are also noted. The Map IDs next to the name correspond with the numbers indicated on *Map 2 - City of New Brunswick Public Access Points* in Appendix 2 with any sub-letter referring to specific egress points for a linear public access feature such as exits to a bikeway. For example, Map IDs for the Route 18 Trench Bikeway that are indicated as 3a (the north entrance), 3b (Deiner Park stairway), and 3c (Albany Street entrance).

Approximate latitude and longitude coordinates are provided for existing or potential public access points and are marked as utilized, un-utilized, or restricted. Utilized indicates the location is used by the public and provides official or unofficial public access. Un-utilized indicates the location contains no improvements and receives little or no use by the public. Restricted indicates the location poses known or likely public health and safety or environmental damage concerns or where access is presently not feasible.

See also Table 1 in Appendix 2.

Delaware and Raritan Canal State Park Trail

Map ID #1

Utilized – (at Landing Lane Bridge): Lat 40.508002, Long -74.464077

From 1834 to present day, New Brunswick has derived benefit from the D&R Canal. At its start, the D&R supported the commerce and industry of goods transported along the canal from the Delaware River to New Brunswick and then out onto the Raritan River where larger ships could work the Raritan’s tides to reach New York and New Jersey markets beyond Raritan Bay. Though no longer carrying goods, the canal continues to benefit the city as one of its primary water supplies.



The section of the canal and towpath between the Franklin Township line and Landing Lane Bridge is an active part of the historic D&R Canal State Park and is overseen by the D&R Canal Commission. Walkers, bikers, canoeists and kayakers can traverse the canal and path from here to Trenton and on up the Delaware River.

The portion of the canal between Landing Lane Bridge and the John A. Lynch Sr. Memorial Bridge (Route 18) is maintained by the city’s Parks Division and is minimally used by local residents and fishermen as it dead-ends at the large spillway adjacent to the city’s main water intake. Public access is restricted here by the spillway and water utility structures. A portion of the remainder of the canal going south has been buried under Route 18 and the Route 18 Trench Bikeway but the canal appears again in Boyd Park. Further discussion about the canal can be found in those report sections below.

For those wishing to explore the sections of the canal abutting Landing Lane Bridge, parking is in nearby Buccleuch Park or a short walk along a protected walkway/bikeway on the Landing Lane Bridge to public parking at Johnson Park in Piscataway.

The area north of Landing Lane Bridge is zoned C-R, Corporate Retreat. This area is also in Review Zone of the D&R Canal Commission for water supply protection purposes. The area south of Landing Lane Bridge is zoned WC, Waterfront Conservation.

## Buccleuch Park

Map ID #2

Utilized – (at north entrance on George Street): Lat 40.507284, Long -74.461201

Although this 78-acre park doesn't directly touch the Raritan, it is listed in the MPAP because it provides the nearest public parking and restroom facilities to other MPAP resources such as the Landing Lane entrance to the D&R Canal, north entrance to the Route 18 Trench Bikeway, and the south entrance to the bike path across the Raritan River on the John A. Lynch Memorial Bridge (Route 18). In addition, Buccleuch (pronounced "Bugle-low")



offers a variety of amenities including athletic fields for baseball, softball, tennis, soccer, cricket and basketball, a 1.5 mile fitness loop, playground, and seasonal sledding, and historic sites. The park was mentioned in public access sessions for the opportunity to coordinate parks programming to draw new users to the adjacent public access points.

The park is zoned WC, Waterfront Conservation.

## Route 18 Trench Bikeway

Map ID #3a to 3c

Utilized – (at Buccleuch Park off George Street): Lat 40.506827, Long -74.456953

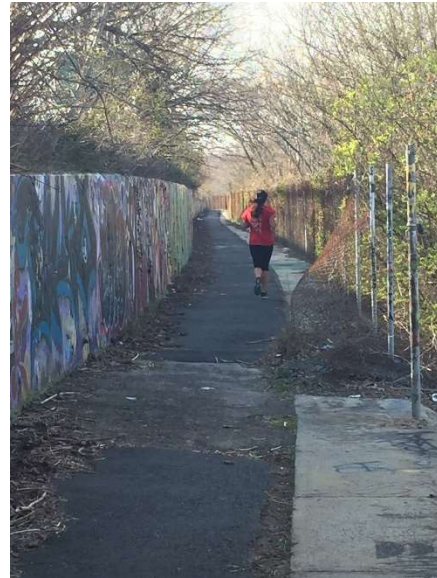
Un-utilized – (Deiner Park entrance at top of stairs): Lat 40.505335, Long -74.449628

Utilized – (at Boyd Park entrance under Albany Street): Lat 40.496842, Long -74.439315

In the 1980s, expansion of Route 18 from Albany Street north into Piscataway essentially buried a section of the D&R Canal between Albany Street and Buccleuch Park, disrupting access to the Raritan along this stretch. At the time of the expansion, the New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) constructed a bikeway that ran between the highway and the Raritan River. The bikeway is a 1.4 mile long narrow blacktop path with a tall chain link fence on the river side and a sometimes high concrete wall on the Route 18 side. There are three unmarked entrances to the bikeway: (a) on the north side of the John Lynch Bridge at Buccleuch Park; (b) a gated (presently locked for safety concerns) entrance at the top of stairs at the back of Deiner Park that is behind the Rutgers Student Activities Center, and (c) through a tunnel under Albany Street/Route 27 at the northern end of Boyd Park. The bikeway is poorly maintained with extensive trash and weeds along its length. Public input deems the bikeway to be unsafe since it is narrow, has limited egress, poor sightlines, extensive trash and graffiti, and occasionally homeless encampments in woodier sections. Also, though there are no documented colonies along the bikeway, the area is designated potential habitat for Indiana bats and long-eared bats,

both protected species in New Jersey. Any maintenance or improvements to the bikeway would need to comply with applicable regulations under the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife (NJDFW) and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS).

Rutgers University has proposed a new vision for this bikeway in its Facilities Master Plan for 2030 where the bikeway entrances are enhanced, the entrance from Deiner Park is improved and reopened, and the bikeway is widened with an improved interface with the Raritan – similar in concept to the Schuylkill Banks Boardwalk in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Rutgers vision for the bikeway would also provide a connection across the Raritan to Piscataway via a pedestrian and bicycle bridge, further improving public access.



Middlesex County is also interested in this bikeway as an off-road alternate route for the East Coast/Middlesex Greenway connections through the area.

The bikeway area is zoned WC, Waterfront Conservation.

#### Deiner Park

Map ID #4

Utilized – (at Rutgers Student Activities Center): Lat 40.505269, Long -74.449805

Deiner Park was built in 1980 by the NJDOT on top of Route 18 as it passes below Rutgers University between Huntington Street and Bishop Place. Named for journalist Frank Deiner Sr., the park was once the site of Rutgers' annual spring Deinerfest and later the Rutgersfest. The 3.8 acre park was originally maintained by the City of New Brunswick but is now controlled by Rutgers University. The park offers tennis courts, picnic tables, basketball courts, views of the Raritan River, and access to the Route 18 Trench Bikeway through a gated (and presently locked) entrance to a bridge walkway over Route 18 to stairs that lead down to the bikeway along the river. The main entrance to Deiner Park is off of George Street between Hardenburgh Hall and Campbell Hall near the Student Activities Center.

Rutgers has proposed improvements to this park in its Facilities Master Plan for 2030 that addresses access issues both from George Street and the Route 18 Trench Bikeway as well as improvements to park amenities.

The park is zoned IN-1, Education Institutional.

## Boyd Park

Map ID #5a to 5d

Utilized – (parking to The Landing off Route 18N): Lat 40.494981, Long -74.439100

Utilized – (pedestrian entrance at New Street): Lat 40.493023, Long -74.437598

Utilized – (pedestrian entrance at Commercial Ave): Lat 40.489828, Long -74.436820

Utilized – (entrance off NJ 18 Service Road): Lat 40.488310, Long -74.434986

This mile long riparian park encompasses approximately 20 acres of open green space from Route 27/Albany Street to just beyond the Rutgers Boathouse south of Commercial Avenue and is bounded on the west by Route 18 and on the east by remnants of the D&R Canal and by the Raritan River. The park was named for publisher Elmer B. Boyd of the New Brunswick *Daily Home News*. The park won a national award following extensive renovations in 1999. The park also has historic signage to inform visitors of the role the Raritan River and the canals played in the development of the City of New Brunswick. The park is ADA compliant. Amenities include picnic pavilions, benches, playgrounds, a concrete boat ramp, comfortable paved walking and biking paths, and restroom facilities both as portable toilets and as public restrooms (that are open concurrent with programming at the amphitheater) near the amphitheater at Commercial Avenue.



The park is ADA compliant. Amenities include picnic pavilions, benches, playgrounds, a concrete boat ramp, comfortable paved walking and biking paths, and restroom facilities both as portable toilets and as public restrooms (that are open concurrent with programming at the amphitheater) near the amphitheater at Commercial Avenue.

Boyd Park is the site of several festivals and music series/concerts including the city's 4<sup>th</sup> of July celebration, a variety of ethnic festivals, and the Raritan River Festival. City Market Inc., the City of New Brunswick's Recreation Division, and New Brunswick Cultural Center collaborate on park programming.

A significant feature of Boyd Park is the terminus section of the D&R Canal. Historic canal components at Boyd Park include a three-quarter mile long tow path, relatively intact canal, historic swing bridge and the original terminus lock as the D&R Canal reaches the Raritan River. There is no interpretive signage at the locks nor are other canal components effectively promoted as assets of the park. Several footbridges cross the D&R Canal to the cinder/gravel path on the historic towpath. The canal has a cobbled overflow to the Raritan River south of Albany Street, and due to the Route 18 construction over the section of the canal north of Boyd Park, there is no flow-through to provide flushing of the water in the canal. Water quality in the canal remnant is, therefore, poor and the canal is partially silted in. Access to the river side of the lock is restricted by a fence. A rusted bulk head protects the lock from storm surge and was also intended to

control the water level in the canal. The canal and locks were damaged in recent storms and the tide gates don't properly operate. In their current degraded state, the canal and associated amenities detract from Boyd Park's appeal.

Boyd Park provides access to several other public access features. The Route 18 Trench Bikeway (see above) is accessed through a tunnel under Route 27/Albany Street at the north end of Boyd Park; the entrance to the Middlesex County Landing floating boat dock (see below) is via a footbridge below the New Street pedestrian entrance to Boyd Park, and the Rutgers Boathouse (see below) is just south of the D&R terminus locks at the New Jersey 18 Service Road entrance to the park off of Route 18 North.

Park amenities are somewhat concentrated in the southern end of the park. Complaints during public engagement were that most seating is in the pavilion area south of Rutgers Boathouse and benches are not more available throughout the park. Also, picnic areas are not scattered around the park but are also concentrated below Rutgers Boathouse and no barbecue facilities are available.



Swimming is not permitted in the park, but fishing is available along the canal path in the northern and central portions of the park and along the bulk-headed and fenced river's edge south of Rutgers Boathouse.

The majority of the park is zoned WC, Waterfront Conservation, however, the area between Albany and New Streets and bounded by Route 18 and the D&R Canal is zoned R-7, Apartment Residential. This area was once the site of the former police station, which was relocated after repeat flooding at this location. A portion of this area is utilized for public access and includes parking, a portable toilet and the dock attendant's shed for the New Brunswick Landings floating docks. This parcel also includes an extension of the D&R Canal path via two foot bridges as the path detours around a spillway in the canal path that floods during moderate to high water events. Public access to the Landings and from the Route 18 Trench Bikeway into Boyd Park could be impeded if this land is developed as zoned. If developed as zoned, a conservation easement should be included to preserve access.

## New Brunswick Landing

Map ID #6

Utilized – (for dock entrance): Lat 40.494324, Long -74.437818

New Brunswick Landing is a seasonal floating dock on the Raritan River that is maintained and operated by the Middlesex County Parks System. The 24 slip dock in Boyd Park near New Street, is open seven days a week from late May until mid-September and can accommodate boats up to 45 feet in length with a minimum depth of six feet at low tide. There are no docking charges. The Landing offers closed circuit cameras and dock attendants to watch over vessels during daylight operating hours. No overnight docking is permitted. The docks are designed to respond to the Raritan's tides and downstream flows, and during the Landing's operating season, the County maintains channel buoys along the eleven nautical miles from the Landing out to Raritan Bay. The docks are a five to ten minute walk to downtown New Brunswick. There is a paved parking area near the Landing that is accessed off of Route 18 North just after the New Street exit and before the Route 27/Highland Park exit. There is an ADA accessible portable toilet by the parking lot. There is no boat ramp here, but there is a boat ramp at the southern end of the park (see Boyd Park description).

The County website indicates that the docks close in mid-September, but they usually stay open until the end of September to accommodate the Raritan River Festival (held at Boyd Park) that is usually the fourth Sunday in September. Discussions during the MPAP public component noted that the Landing is presently underutilized. It was surmised that the lack of advertising, lack of programming ties to activities in New Brunswick or activities at Boyd Park and/or lack of coordination with Rutgers events (such as the potential for "sailgate" parties before Scarlet Knight home games) were part of the concern. Also noted were the lack of supplies for fishermen who might otherwise stop there. It's important to note that fishing is not permitted from the Landing, but fisherman frequently boat in the area or fish from the adjacent shores.



New Brunswick's Special Improvement District, established in the late 1980s, extends into Boyd Park at the Landing. See Boyd Park (above) for further zoning and overlay information.

### Rutgers Boathouse

Map ID #7

Un-utilized\* – (main entrance): Lat 40.488117, Long -74.433965

Built in 1950 through a gift of the Class of 1914, the Rutgers Boathouse is owned and operated by Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey. The building was expanded in 1961 and extensively remodeled in 2010. It consists of three bays, locker rooms, a training room and coaches' offices. The crew and sailing teams operate from this location and the facility is open to Rutgers students for lessons or team sports. Presently the boathouse and associated docks and launch areas are for the sole use of Rutgers Athletics.

Rutgers Facilities Master Plan 2030 envisions expansion of boathouse and surrounding amenities to include a larger boat launching dock and addition of a second level to the boathouse that could accommodate event space for the university. (p183) Whether these improvements would be open to area residents and therefore improve public access for New Brunswick will require further discussions and collaboration with Rutgers.

There are several opportunities for enhanced public access at this site. Rutgers' Marine & Coastal Sciences program out of the School of Environmental and Biological Sciences is in the process of building a new research vessel that will be docked at the Rutgers Boathouse and will be used to enhance academic programming as an interactive and interdisciplinary field laboratory and classroom. Discussions with affiliated Rutgers' faculty and staff indicate that they may eventually partner with area schools for public education/STEM education programs utilizing this field laboratory. We also had exploratory discussions with recreation personnel about the potential for public access from the boathouse that could include water safety programs, special sail days, and canoe and kayak rentals from or near this location. These potential public access opportunities merit further investigation.

The area is zoned WC, Waterfront Conservation.

\*Though Rutgers actively uses this facility, the location is marked as Un-utilized since the access point is limited to Rutgers affiliates and is not presently open to the public.

### Carpender Road

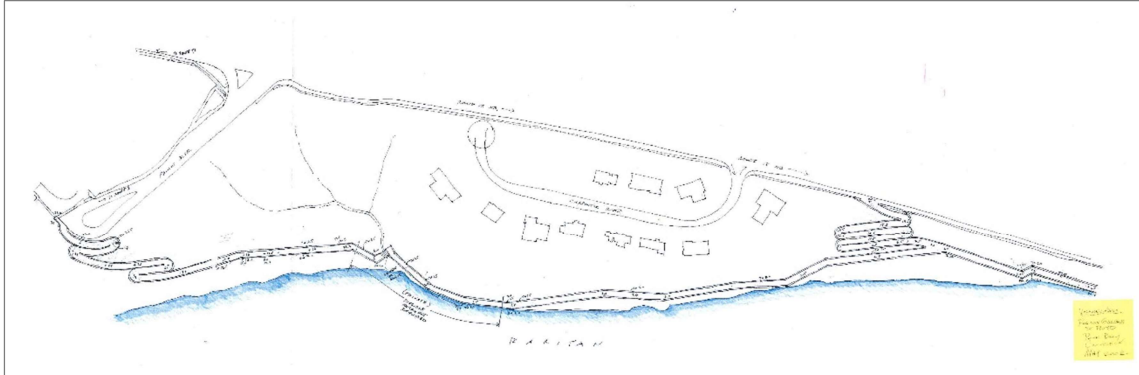
Map ID #8

Restricted – (Raritan shore south of residential area): Lat 40.486784, Long -74.423860

There is no improved public access along the next half mile stretch of the Raritan River from the south end of Boyd Park to the south end of Carpender Road. This is in part because of steep terrain, and in part because access to the area is through private residential holdings.

Participants in the public meetings indicated that one can presently traverse this area by scrambling through tree roots and along the muddy banks, though this appears

improbable except at extreme low tide (based on a tour of the area from the water). This informal path would be inaccessible during moderate or higher flows of the Raritan.



During the redesign of Boyd Park in 2002, NJDOT consultants Vollmer Associates did a quick concept plan of a path that would run along the Raritan shore from Boyd Park to Paulus Boulevard below the Carpender Road area. The path had egress points at the south end of Boyd Park, up a switchback to Route 18 just north of Carpender Road, and via another switchback to Paulus Boulevard. Notes on the plan indicated that part of the path was on private land and would require an easement.

The area is zoned R-2, Single-family Residential.

#### Raritan River Conservation Area – County Owned

Map ID #9a & 9b

Restricted – (northwest of property at Route 18): Lat 40.485668, Long -74.424096

Un-utilized – (corner of AMC Loews parking lot Route 1): Lat 40.489860, Long -74.414086

Middlesex County owns the 20.73 acre parcel of land along the Raritan from the south end of Carpender Road to Route 1. The area is not easily accessed – in part because of steep terrain, and in part because access to the area is through private residential or commercial holdings. An easement in the southeast corner of the parcel abuts Route 18 between the pedestrian overpass and Paulus Boulevard but is blocked by a high wall.

Participants in the MPAP public access sessions gained access to the south end of this property through the corner of the Loews AMC parking lot near the Route 1 overpass. They gained access by clambering down the under-bridge embankment to an abandoned road that travelled a short distance north into the conservation area.

The area is zoned WC, Waterfront Conservation and is further restricted by steep slope development requirements and riparian setbacks

Raritan River Conservation Area – City Owned

Map ID #10a to 10c

Un-utilized – (gated egress off Regency Manor Dr): Lat 40.489746, Long -74.412981

Restricted – (conservation easement at Tunison Road): Lat 40.487364, Long -74.407026

Utilized – (path intersect w/PSEG maintenance road): Lat 40.488506, Long -74.400954

Below the Rutgers Village section of New Brunswick is a large tract of conservation land owned by the City of New Brunswick. The land is unimproved with no official access points. Participants at the public meetings were able to gain access to the area under the Route 1 overpass as described



above. Once under the Route 1 bridge, there are remnants of a paved road along the bottom of the escarpment southeast to the PSEG service road that follows the high tension lines from Tunison Road to where they cross the Raritan just north of the Turnpike. This abandoned road was once reached via Regency Manor Drive in the Raritan Crossing Apartment complex, but the access is now gated and locked. Another potential access point to this area is via an easement between Wilcox Road and Bowser Road that abuts Tunison Road in Raritan Village. Access at Tunison Road would require negotiating a steep bank down to the abandoned road along the river.

The walk along the road is easy and pleasant and shaded in most sections by mature trees, but views to the river are obscured by huge stands of phragmites.

The city also owns conservation land on the south side of the New Jersey Turnpike at the confluence of the Raritan and Lawrence Brook. Access here is restricted by the Turnpike which bisects the conservation land. We did not attempt to traverse this area and didn't determine if access could be secured under the turnpike overpass. We note, however, that the city's Parks/Recreation/Open Space map indicates the proposed trail extends under the turnpike bridge at the Raritan River and continues along the riparian boundary through this conservation area and then under the turnpike bridge at the Lawrence Brook.

There is a cleared pipeline right of way through the conservation area east of and parallel to the turnpike running from the Raritan to the Lawrence Brook. It is mentioned here as a potential pathway through this area if access under the turnpike can be secured and permission for use from the pipeline is granted.

The area is zoned WC, Waterfront Conservation.

[Rutgers Village](#)

Map ID #11

Un-utilized – (east edge of Village at Lawrence Brook): Lat 40.480640, Long -74.405052

There is no improved public access along the Lawrence Brook from the turnpike crossing to the bridge at Burnet Street near the Water Utility at Westons Mill Pond Dam. This is a residential area with property lines extending to the water's edge.

The area is zoned R-2, Single-Family Residential.

[Westons Mill Pond Conservation Area and the Weston Mill Pond](#)

Map ID #12

Un-utilized – (for entrance to path beside water utility at dam): Lat 40.483568, Long -74.412870

Westons Mill Pond Conservation Area is located on the western shore of the Westons Mill Pond from the south side of Route 18 to the city boundary with North Brunswick.



The pond is formed behind two dams. The 309 foot long Westons Mill Pond Dam is a mostly stone masonry gravity dam constructed in 1888 that marks the present-day tidal reach of the Lawrence Brook; the Westons Mill Arch Dam, a short distance upstream, is a 248 foot long concrete arch dam constructed in 1919. The pond encompasses approximately 92 acres and serves as water supply for the City of New Brunswick under the control of the New Brunswick Water Utility.

The pond encompasses approximately 92 acres and serves as water supply for the City of New Brunswick under the control of the New Brunswick Water Utility.

The upper portion of the pond is a popular spot for kayaks and canoes; only human powered vessels and electric motor boats are permitted. Jersey Shore Sea Kayak Association includes a brief description of the passage along the pond and the portage around the dams to continue down the Lawrence Brook to the Raritan. Boat access is via a car top boat launch at Ryders Lane in East Brunswick. Parking for the launch is a small dirt lot with no facilities. The launch area is dirt and rocks. There is also an informal launch on the New Brunswick side of the arch dam from a path that enters from Burnet Street next to the Water Utility facility. This launch area would require portage over approximately 900 feet from Burnet Street. There is no designated parking or signage for this informal launch.

Fishing posts on NJFishing.com and AnglerWeb.com note the presence of pickerel (*Esox niger*), largemouth bass (*Micropterus salmoides*), bluegill (*Lepomis macrochirus*), black

crappie (*Pomoxis nigromaculatus*), yellow perch (*Perca flavescens*), muskellunge (*Esox masquinongy x Esox lucius*), sunfish (*Lepomis spp.*), catfish (*Ictalurus spp.*) and carp (*Cyprinus carpio*). The New Jersey Division of Fish, Game and Wildlife has periodically stocked the pond with channel catfish and tiger muskellunge.

Prior to the installation of the Westons Mill Pond Dam, migratory fish including the anadromous blueback herring (*Alosa aestivalis*), alewife (*Alosa pseudoharengus*) and American shad (*Alosa sapidissima*), and the catadromous American eel (*Anguilla rostrata*) utilized the Lawrence Brook habitats in their life cycle. While the dams cannot be removed since the ponds supply water for New Brunswick, a recent study by Princeton Hydro LLC (2013) explored the feasibility of installing fish ladders to open an additional three miles of stream habitat above the dams to migratory fish. Preliminary findings are that the proposed fish ladders would enable target fish passage. Further investigation is needed to identify potential funding partners, confirm regulatory requirements, and ensure continued safe water supplies for the city in concert with adequate flows for fish passage. Discussion from the MPAP public meetings encouraged utilizing the fish ladders (once built) for educational purposes and to look at the ladders as an additional public access site with appropriate educational signage and possible educational programming to complement the resource.

Unmarked trails wander through the woods on the west shore of the Pond and connect with trails to Helyar Woods in Rutgers Gardens (see below).

The area is zoned WC, Waterfront Conservation.

#### [Helyar Woods & Rutgers Gardens](#)

Map ID #13

Utilized – (trail entrance from Helyar Woods to Westons Mill Pond): Lat 40.477665, Long -74.415313

Though no longer technically part of the tidal zone of the Lawrence Brook because of the Westons Mill Pond Dam that stops the tidal flows, Helyar Woods at Rutgers Gardens marks the southeastern-most edge of riparian access for the City of New Brunswick. Named for Rutgers' Professor Frank G. Helyar, this 70-acre woods abuts Rutgers Gardens and the Westons Mill Pond and includes 2.5 miles of easy trails through predominately beech, oak and maple woods. Access to the pond is unimproved and the trails are not well marked. Access to the pond trail is through Rutgers Gardens where parking is available and from behind the water utility at the pond dam. Helyar Woods and Rutgers Gardens are owned by Rutgers University.

Rutgers University is presently developing a new facilities master plan for Rutgers Gardens that may include improved public access through the Gardens and a trail that

better connects Rutgers Gardens to other city and university access points including Westons Mill Pond.

## B. Improved Public Access Locations

*Map 3 – City of New Brunswick Public Access Points with Handicapped Accessibility*, provides an inventory of the preferred, existing and proposed, public access locations that provide access to public trust lands and waters. See Table 1 which provides detailed information on each location. Both may be found in Appendix 2.

Detailed descriptions of the improved public access locations are noted above in Section II.A – Public Access Locations. Noted here are specifics related to existing signage, parking, handicap accessibility, restrooms/toilet facilities and other amenities.

### Delaware and Raritan Canal State Park Trail

Map ID #1

The D&R Canal State Park Trail starts on the west side of Landing Lane Bridge with a dead-end section leading east to the water utility pump station and spillway. There is no road-side signage for the canal entrance nor is there any signage to indicate that the spur leading to the east is a dead-end. A cobbled canal overflow section of the trail just west of this entrance may impede handicapped accessibility to the canal trail from here.

There are approximately nine parking spaces in an unmarked lot on the southeast corner of George Street and Landing Lane. Curb cuts and crossing signals allow access to the path entrance from the corner lot. Parking is also available across Landing Lane Bridge in Johnson Park (grove 5).

There is no signage for the canal entrance at either of the parking lots. There is also no signage giving directions to other nearby public access points such as the Route 18 Trench Bikeway.

There are restrooms/toilets across the river in Johnson Park or in nearby Buccleuch Park.

### Route 18 Trench Bikeway

Map ID #3a to 3c

There is no signage to indicate the entrances to the Route 18 Trench Bikeway or what to expect once you are on the trail such as how long it is, how far to the next exit, or directions to parking, restrooms, or other nearby public access points such as the D&R Canal State Park Trail.

Parking for the bikeway would be in Buccleuch Park or in the lot adjacent to the New Brunswick Landing at Boyd Park.

The bikeway has handicapped accessibility concerns. The north entrance to the bikeway, near the New Brunswick side of the Lynch Memorial Bridge Pedestrian and Bikeway, is

adjacent to a pedestrian crossing of George Street at the foot of a set of stairs from Buccleuch Park. There are no curb cuts at this crossing. About a half mile down the trail, the Deiner Park egress from the bikeway is up a long flight of stairs and over Route 18 via a bridge to a (locked) gated entrance that is at grade with Deiner Park. The south entrance to the bikeway is at grade from stairs and ramps off Albany Street or from Boyd Park.

There are no restrooms or toilets available for the bikeway. The nearest facilities are in Johnson Park (see D&R Canal above), in Buccleuch Park, or near the New Brunswick Landing in Boyd Park (see below).

### Boyd Park

[Map ID #5a to 5d](#)

Directional signage for Boyd Park is fairly limited. There is a green park sign on the NJ 18 Service Road with an arrow directing traffic to the south entrance of the park (nearest George Street) and there is a brown park sign with an arrow to the New Brunswick Landing Boat Docks at the north end of the park off the NJ 18 Service Road. There are no signs from downtown New Brunswick indicating pedestrian entrances to the park at New Street or Commercial Avenue. Once across Route 18 at Commercial Avenue, there is a large arched entrance for Boyd Park near the amphitheater. Within the park, there are numerous interpretive signs that describe, among other things, the history, planning concepts, ecology and recreation of the area. There are no signs in the park to direct park-goers to other nearby public access points such as the Landing or the Route 18 Trench Bikeway.

Parking is fairly limited within the park. There are 47 parking spots available at the southern end of the park off of the New Jersey 18 Service Road entrance; 34 spots are in the lot behind the amphitheater and 13 spots are below Rutgers Boathouse. There is also room for approximately three cars with boat trailers at the top of the boat ramp in that same area. Designated parking at the north end of the park is off of the NJ 18 Service Road north of New Street at the New Brunswick Landing (10 spots) with possible overflow parking in a graveled area to the north of that entrance. There is also ample public parking for the park across Route 18 in downtown New Brunswick either on the street or in nearby lots/garages (hourly or day rates apply at most). There are no signs at the garages or lots to indicate proximity to the park, nor are there signs in the park to direct visitors to additional parking areas.

Walkways into the park from downtown New Brunswick (across Route 18) are handicapped accessible with crossing signals and ADA curb cuts at all four main entrances. Paths within the park are a combination of concrete, asphalt and crushed stone and are generally well maintained and accessible.

The northern end of the park is fairly unstructured open space with only a portable toilet and a few park benches near the New Street pedestrian entrance at the New Brunswick Landing Boat Dock. Most other amenities are in the southern portions of the park below Commercial Avenue. There you will find flexible entertainment and festival space including stadium seating, a stage, concession area, restrooms (open during park functions), portable toilets, parking, and a playground with concrete benches and a picnic table. This part of the park also contains the historic terminal lock for the D&R Canal, though it is presently in disrepair and lacks any interpretive signage.

Just below the amphitheater area is a fenced off section containing the Rutgers Boathouse facility and below that is the remaining section of Boyd Park. Access to the lower section of the park is along a sidewalk between the Boathouse and the access drive or through a fenced path through the Boathouse site. The lower section of the park contains a portable toilet, two picnic pavilions with picnic tables, a playground, numerous benches, bicycle racks, a concrete boat launch, and parking as noted above.

#### [New Brunswick Landing](#)

[Map ID #6](#)

A brown park sign indicating the New Brunswick Landing Boat Dock is posted near the driveway to the parking area off of the NJ 18 Service Road between New and Albany Streets. At the main path to the Landing, there is an interpretive sign that describes the Riverfront Plan Concept and showing how convenient the Landing is to downtown New Brunswick and other nearby river destinations. Other signage at the Landing indicates no swimming or fishing from the docks. There is no signage to direct visitors to other parts of Boyd Park or to other nearby public access such as the Route 18 Trench Bikeway.

Ten parking spots are available near the dock tenders shack at the end of the access road from the NJ 18 Service Road. There is no boat launch access at this location. Overflow parking may be available in an unmarked gravel and dirt area just north of the main road entrance.

The boat dock access ramps and pathways have appropriate curb cuts and are accessible, though parts of the paths are crushed packed stone.

There is an ADA accessible portable toilet off of the parking area near the dock tender's shack.

### [C. Limitations to Public Access](#)

Public enjoyment of some of New Brunswick's public access areas is constrained by temporary or more permanent restrictions. Temporary restrictions impede active use and include lack of or restricted parking, inadequate signage, lack of restrooms, excessive noise, unpleasant environmental conditions, safety concerns, etc. Permanent restrictions

are related to zoning, physical constraints and other impediments that would require potentially significant resources to circumvent. The following sections describe temporary and permanent restrictions for public access in the City of New Brunswick.

### 1. Temporary Restrictions

Restrictions noted for the following public access points are ultimately resolvable. They include: lack of amenities, such as seating and picnic facilities that would attract users; lack of parking; poor or no signage; trash or under-maintained features, such as path lighting and overgrown vegetation; perceived or actual safety concerns; and seasonal or hourly use restrictions.

#### Delaware and Raritan Canal State Park Trail

The portion of the canal heading south from Landing Lane Bridge dead-ends at the large spillway adjacent to the city's main water intake. Public access is restricted here by the spillway and water utility structures. There is no signage at the Landing Lane entrance to this spur to indicate that it is not a through path. At best, this is inconvenient to trail users; at worst, it could be dangerous if users needed to quickly exit the path for safety reasons. The city should coordinate with the D&R Canal State Park to place signage at this entrance to indicate it is a dead-end until further improvements can be made.

The next section of the canal going south has been buried under Route 18 and the Route 18 Trench Bikeway but appears again in Boyd Park. Rutgers University, in its Facilities Master Plan for 2030, has proposed installing either a boardwalk similar to Philadelphia's Schuylkill Banks Boardwalk or, more recently, a cantilevered platform off the existing bikeway that would link this section of the canal with the remaining canal towpath in Boyd Park.

#### Route 18 Trench Bikeway

As previously noted, the 1.4 mile long bikeway is bounded on the river side by a tall chain link fence, and on the landward side by the embankment for busy Route 18. There is a gated entrance to the Route 18 Trench Bikeway at the back of Deiner Park behind Rutgers' Hardenburgh and Campbell Halls off of George Street. This entrance, at the top of pedestrian bridge and stairs that leads down to the bikeway, is presently locked and poses a potential hazard for visitors needing emergency egress from the bikeway. Other exits from the bikeway are 0.6 miles to the north, or 0.8 miles to the south.

This limited egress coupled with restricted sightlines, the narrow path, graffiti, periodically overgrown vegetation and seasonal homeless encampments along the route cause users and potential users of the bikeway to perceive it as unsafe.

In its 2030 Facilities Master Plan, Rutgers has proposed rebuilding the bikeway by constructing a boardwalk in the Raritan River – similar to Philadelphia’s Schuylkill Banks Boardwalk – that reconnects the D&R Canal Trail through this area and to the remnants of the canal towpath in Boyd Park. (See discussion in Section III. Community Needs Assessment: Studies). Rutgers is also exploring a cantilevered platform off of the existing bikeway that may have fewer ecological impacts. Designs for the new path are for a wider, more open walkway/bikeway, and would have a new open access to Deiner Park that would also connect to a new pedestrian and bicycle crossing of the Raritan River into Piscataway. Reconnecting the bikeway to the D&R Canal Trail and with a Raritan crossing into Piscataway would likely increase the number of visitors to Boyd Park and possibly bring more visitors into downtown New Brunswick.

### Boyd Park

Community needs assessment captured concerns that the park is underutilized and not the gem of downtown New Brunswick that it could be. Despite recent park improvements, it is perceived as poorly accessible by area residents and faces several restrictions that inhibit more active use of the park including a dearth of parking, lack of signage to direct visitors to the park, limited amenities, degraded features, and seasonal/periodic flooding.

Paved parking spaces at Boyd Park are limited to 57 cars. Though additional parking is available across Route 18 in the city, it is not marked for proximity to the park. Also, picnickers or families with small children are not likely to carry their supplies along the long pedestrian access roads across Route 18 and then through the park to the designated picnic areas. For example, the distance from the corner of Commercial Avenue and Neilson Street to the first picnic pavilion near the boat launch is approximately 0.5 miles (following ADA pathways); from New Street and Neilson Street, the distance to the picnic pavilion is 0.75 miles.

These crossings, though recently improved, are still perceived to be dangerous as there are no barriers between the pedestrian walkways and traffic exiting and entering Route 18 via Commercial Avenue and New Street – the main pedestrian entrances to the park. Further, there is no signage at the city-side entrance to these access roads indicating that they provide park access.

Comments about park amenities during the community needs assessment indicated a demand for more picnic areas possibly with barbecue stations and more benches throughout the park. Presently, picnic tables and pavilions are only available below Commercial Avenue near the Rutgers Boathouse, and there are no barbecue stations.

Also, there are only two benches near the New Street entrance to the park with all other seating south of the amphitheater.

One of the more significant concerns for Boyd Park is that the river periodically inundates the park. Part of the natural floodplain of the Raritan, Boyd Park floods at extreme high tides, during storm surges, and during high precipitation events in the upland regions of the river basin. Sandy storm surge and significant down basin flooding from Irene has damaged some of the park infrastructure. Also, lighting fixtures along the towpath that were vandalized and further damaged in subsequent floods have not been repaired and lend to the general sense of disrepair and resulting unsafe feeling for sections of the park.



A further area that detracts from enjoyable use of the park is the condition of the remaining section of the D&R canal. The section within Boyd Park is cut off from the feeder canals and receives only limited flushing from Raritan overflows or rain events. The water in the canal, therefore, has poor flows and so gets stagnant and fills with trash. Several different entities including co-LAB Arts, Rutgers University, and the D&R Canal Watch (informally) have proposed new concept plans for revitalizing Boyd Park's riparian zone and merit further investigation (See Section III. Studies.)

#### [New Brunswick Landing Boat Dock](#)

The Landing Boat Dock is a seasonal fixture in the Raritan. Annually, Middlesex County Parks Department installs the docks and channel markers in late May and removes them in late September. The boat dock season officially runs from Memorial Day to Labor Day, but the docks are often reopened for the Raritan River Festival on the fourth Sunday in September. In season, the docks are open from noon to 8:00 pm weekdays and from noon to 10:00 pm on weekends.

The docks are underutilized. Participants in the community needs assessments thought the poor use of the facility was in part due to lack of park programming or ties to area events as well as the lack of marina-type amenities, such as a bait shop, fuel and water supply, and boat launch. The nearest launch is in the south end of Boyd Park about a half mile away, and the nearest marina is in Edison – a little more than one nautical mile downstream and across the river.

### [Carpender Road](#)

Lack of existing connections and steep embankments behind the houses on Carpendar Road and off of Paulus Boulevard and Chester Circle restrict direct access to the river in this section of the city's riparian zone. As noted in Section II.A. above, during the redesign of Boyd Park in 2002, NJDOT consultants Vollmer Associates did a quick concept plan of a path that would run along the Raritan shore from Boyd Park to Paulus Boulevard through the Carpendar Road area. The path had egress points at the south end of Boyd Park, up a switchback to Route 18 just north of Carpendar Road, and via another switchback to Paulus Boulevard. Notes on the plan indicated that part of the path was on private land and would require an easement.

Should easements be secured, the path should be designed for resiliency to high flows associated with storm events and would require installation of appropriate signage. Parking and other amenities would (most likely) not be available at this otherwise residential access point.

### [Raritan River Conservation Areas – City and County](#)

The primary restrictions for the county and city conservation areas are the lack of improved access points and no linkages to other public access in the city. A potential public access point off of Regency Center Drive is gated and locked, as is potential egress from the south portion of the area off of the PSEG service road just north of the NJ Turnpike (see comments under Section II.A. above). Of course, there are also no designated parking areas, signage, maps, or associated amenities such as benches or toilets provided in the conservation areas; these should be considered as plans for opening a path through the conservation areas are developed.

The conservation areas are in the flood plain of the Raritan and would be inundated during high flow and some high tide events. Further, in large portions of these conservation areas, views of and access to the river are obscured by thick stands of phragmites. Public access improvement in the conservation land should address restoration of this habitat and ensure consideration for resiliency.

### [Westons Mill Pond Conservation Area and the Weston Mill Pond](#)

There is no signage at the Westons Mill Pond to indicate public access, but there is unimproved access on the north side of the water utility facility adjacent to the Westons Mill Pond Dam. The unmarked trail off of Burnet Street is initially grass and quickly degrades to dirt with a short concrete section under Route 18 to a wire reinforced cobbled stream crossing before reaching the Westons Mill Arch Dam. There is an informal pull out here for portage around the dams. The dirt trail continues south along the shore of the pond and connects with paths to Helyar Woods and Rutgers Gardens beyond.

Use of this site is further restricted by a lack of designated parking. There is evidence that the ponds periodically flood and the sometimes steep dirt paths (between the dams and Rutgers Gardens) would be difficult in wet conditions.

#### [Helyar Woods & Rutgers Gardens](#)

The Rutgers research and display gardens offer unimproved access to the shores of Westons Mill Pond. Mown grass and dirt paths lead from a small paved parking area and an adjacent overflow field parking area at the back of the Log Cabin approximately 0.75 miles through woods and fields to Burnet Street south of Tunison Road. These paths, some very informal, follow the north shore of the pond with numerous off-trail paths down to the water's edge. The trails would be difficult in wet weather and there is evidence that parts of the trail are periodically flooded especially where it passes under Route 18 between the upper and lower dams. The New Brunswick end of the trail is on the north side of the city's water utility facility near the Engine Company 2 Fire Station. There is no designated parking at the New Brunswick end of the trail. There is a NJ Transit bus stop across from the fire station. Rutgers Gardens closes at dusk.

Rutgers University is presently revising the Master Plan for Rutgers Gardens and Helyar Woods that will likely include increased access and better connections to Rutgers Cook Campus across Route 1. Collaboration with Rutgers to consider better linear access between the Gardens, Woods, and the Westons Mills Pond would further the city's and the university's public access goals.

## [2. Permanent Restrictions](#)

Sections of New Brunswick's riparian zone that will not be available for public access in the foreseeable future are the conservation area east of the New Jersey Turnpike at the confluence of the Lawrence Brook and Raritan River, and the Rutgers Village residential area along the Lawrence Brook between the New Jersey Turnpike and Route 18 North. Specific restrictions for these areas are noted below.

In consideration of the restrictions to securing access under the Turnpike and through the Rutgers Village properties the city might explore securing passage along the high tension line right of way from the county and city conservation areas connecting through Murphy Park to the Westons Mill Pond dams. The high tension line right of way joins Burnet Street only 300 feet from the informal access point for the Westons Mill Pond at the water utility facility. Should public access to the conservation area at the confluence be secured in the future, it could be connected to improved public access points in the conservation area west of the turnpike or to Westons Mill Pond as a spur or loop trail.

#### Raritan River Conservation Area – City Owned

The New Jersey Turnpike poses a significant barrier for access to the new conservation area at the confluence of the Lawrence Brook and Raritan River. A fenced access road from the south bound lanes crosses under Route 95 on the Raritan River side of the parcel. Depending on grade and distance from that road to the river shore, it may be possible to pass under the turnpike parallel to that road. No such road exists on the Lawrence Brook crossing for I-95 and access is further restricted there by the adjacent private residences on the west side of the turnpike (see below).

#### Rutgers Village

While Parks/Recreation/Open Space plans show a proposed trail along the Lawrence Brook through this area, in reality the trail would be in city residents' back yards. This area is zoned residential and properties back up to the river with no easements leading to the shores of the Lawrence Brook. Passage through this area would require securing over a half mile of linear easement or installation of an equally long boardwalk.

#### Westons Mill Pond Conservation Area and the Weston Mill Pond

Westons Mill Pond supplies water to the City of New Brunswick. No swimming is permitted. No gas powered motors are permitted.

### III. Community Needs Assessment

Community needs assessment for this MPAP took a variety of forms including: soliciting input during public meetings of area stakeholders; review of public access surveys done specifically for this project and for other related projects; review of previous studies and reports on public access in the area; phone interviews, and review of potential public access projects as presented by regional stakeholders to the MPAP steering committee at public meetings. The public outreach process has facilitated and encouraged dialog on public access among diverse constituents. Representatives from the following were included in some aspect of the community needs assessment:

- Center for Advanced Infrastructure & Transportation, Rutgers
- City of New Brunswick City Market
- City of New Brunswick Department of Planning, Community and Economic Development
- City of New Brunswick Department of Social Services
- City of New Brunswick Development Corporation
- City of New Brunswick Engineering
- City of New Brunswick Environmental Commission
- City of New Brunswick Fire Department/OEM
- City of New Brunswick Parks Division

City of New Brunswick Public Works Department  
City of New Brunswick Water Utility  
coLAB Arts  
Delaware and Raritan Canal Commission  
Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy, Rutgers  
Facilities and Capital Planning, Rutgers  
Lawrence Brook Watershed Partnership  
Lower Raritan Watershed Partnership  
Marine & Coastal Sciences, Rutgers  
Middlesex County HAZMAT Planning  
Middlesex County Improvement Authority  
Middlesex County Office of Planning  
Middlesex County Parks  
New Brunswick Cultural Center  
New Jersey Water Supply Authority, Watershed Protection Program  
New York-New Jersey Harbor and Estuary Program  
Parking and Transportation, Rutgers  
Raritan Riverkeeper  
Recreation, Rutgers

Numerous other entities were invited but did not attend. This list does not reflect participation in the process by private citizens or through online surveys.

The community needs assessment methods and results are described in the following sections.

### [Steering Committee and Public Meetings](#)

The MPAP was done in conjunction with a Coastal Vulnerability Assessment (CVA). We utilized the same steering committee for both the MPAP and CVA, and we also opened the MPAP meetings to area stakeholders and interested residents. Steering committee members included city personnel from Engineering, Planning, Fire/OEM, Parks and Development; members of the Environmental Commission; City Market; representatives from Middlesex County including the Improvement Authority, Planning and emergency personnel; representatives from the New Jersey Water Supply Authority; and Rutgers staff conducting the plan development. Interested others who attended the public meetings included representatives from Rutgers' Facilities and Capital Planning, Recreation, Parking and Transportation, and several faculty and staff from various Rutgers schools; as well as representatives from local non-profit groups such as the Raritan Riverkeeper, the NY-NJ Harbor & Estuary Program, coLAB Arts, Lawrence Brook

Watershed Partnership, and the Lower Raritan Watershed Partnership. Meetings usually had a presentation followed by discussion and plan input. A total of six meetings were held as well as one field trip to the conservation areas.

### Surveys

We conducted an electronic survey to assist with the needs assessment for the MPAP and also reviewed the results of other recent surveys in the area that had a New Brunswick public access component.

#### *New Brunswick Public Access Survey*

The New Brunswick Public Access research study was conducted on behalf of the City of New Brunswick for this MPAP and for an associated Health Impact Assessment by the Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy at Rutgers University in the spring of 2016. The purpose of the research was to determine the public's needs and concerns as they relate to access to and use of the parks and public spaces adjacent to the Raritan River and the Lawrence Brook in New Brunswick and the public's understanding of how climate change may impact the river and surrounding areas. The Institutional Review Board-certified survey was anonymous and voluntary and was available on-line in English and Spanish. Links to the survey were distributed via email to representatives of local stakeholder organizations who pushed the survey to their membership. One hundred and thirteen surveys were completed. The 50-question survey was designed to take between five and ten minutes to complete. It focused primarily on awareness and use of Buccluech Park, Boyd Park, and Deiner Park and the three conservation areas – two along the Raritan (city and county owned) and one at Westons Mill Pond. In general, respondents indicated that they would use the three parks more if: there were more special events (71.8%); they were safer and easier to get to by foot or bicycle (55.7%); they offered canoe, kayak or paddleboarding rentals (71.6%); or they were cleaner and better maintained (64.7%). When asked about damage associated with flooding, 72.2% of respondents thought Boyd Park should be redesigned to be more resilient to storm damage, 75.3% thought restored wetlands would help control flood waters, and 64.4% wanted to see the terminal lock on the D&R Canal in Boyd Park restored. Participants were also asked if they would like to see improvements at the Westons Mill Pond to aid in fish migration and 87.7% of respondents said yes.

Survey questions related to health and economic impacts will be further reviewed as part of the associated Health Impact Assessment (see *Rapid Health Impact Assessment: New Brunswick Municipal Public Access Plan* under Studies below).

*MyCampus Findings: Connecting Rutgers to the Region, the Raritan and the Community*

The MyCampus Findings survey was a two part interactive mapping and text-based survey designed to capture input from faculty, staff and students that would help inform Rutgers facilities master planning processes. Over 5,500 people participated in the New Brunswick portion of the survey (surveys were also conducted for Camden and Newark). The survey solicited input on, among other things, recreational facilities and opportunities and open space. Some of the comments collected on the interactive mapping portion of the survey for recreation and open space related to public access issues included: the D&R “towpath is great for running, biking. Wish it were easier to park nearby”; Boyd Park is “my favorite place to run! I sometimes go as far as Busch and Livingston. More connecting footpaths are required between all the campuses!”; and, Boyd Park is “surprisingly quiet”. A primary conclusion of the survey was that opportunities for better open spaces and connectivity exist at all locations (campus centers in New Brunswick/Piscataway) and that connections to the Ecological Preserve and the Raritan are also desirable.

*Improving Student Health through Active Recreation in Campus Design*

In the Spring of 2015, a public health intern with the Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy conducted a series of interviews, student engagement sessions and a survey to capture student opinions on recreation in campus design (Patel and Lowrie, 2015). Among other things, this project explored what outdoor activities were preferred by young adults and perceived obstacles to active outdoor recreation as well as reactions to Rutgers’ concept plans for revitalizing Deiner Park and the Raritan River Boardwalk and pedestrian/bicycle bridge to Piscataway. Of students surveyed, 61.9% said they would most likely or definitely use the proposed walking path and bridge across the Raritan. When asked if the walking paths or availability of kayak/canoe rentals would increase their participation in physical activities: 73.8% indicated they might or definitely would participate more in kayaking/canoeing; 90.4% said they might or definitely would participate more in walking for leisure; 88.7% said they might or definitely would walk more for exercise; 82.5% might or would jog more; and between 63 and 65% said they might or would bicycle more for leisure or exercise if the paths were built. A variety of factors were deemed somewhat or very important in influencing students’ decisions to use the new paths and included: that they are clean and well-maintained (82.5% somewhat or very important), that they are lighted (81%), that they lead to places with activities or programs (73%), the paths are patrolled by officers (74.2%), the paths are free of homeless or vagrants (82.6%) and that they could get to class faster [on the paths] than using the buses (82.5%). Safety, crime and weather (cold in winter) were the biggest concerns with using the proposed paths.

## Studies

### *The Park System of New Brunswick, New Jersey: Findings and Recommendations*

In its 2011 *Findings and Recommendations* report, The Trust for Public Land (TPL) under a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation reviewed parks, open space and recreation strategies city-wide and made recommendations for improving and better utilizing these assets in New Brunswick's "ongoing revitalization efforts ... to further 'brand' and sell the city as a great place to live, work, and visit." (p3) The report noted that New Brunswick had more public space on a per-capita basis than some of its neighboring municipalities, but that the quality, layout and amenities were somewhat lacking. In particular, the report noted that "the outstanding resource of the Raritan River is not fully capitalized" (p4) and that there are "still key opportunities where New Brunswick could score greater success by linking parks and, especially, by reestablishing an intimate relationship between the city and the Raritan River." (p4) TPL noted that the city could benefit from coordination and collaboration with area stakeholders such as Rutgers University, the Robert Wood Johnson Medical complex, the Johnson & Johnson Company, Middlesex County, and the Delaware and Raritan Canal State Park to more fully maximize park system benefits. They also suggested that the, "city would benefit by going beyond a physical parks plan to a set of programmatic activities that promote a theme and a marketing strategy" (p4) and recommended that an "aggressive marketing campaign to promote use of the river could result in the need for increased access points. Moreover, there is no pedestrian or bicycle connection between New Brunswick and the Delaware and Raritan State Park's canal trail." (p5) The report culminated in ten key recommendations including new local and regional collaborations, realigning the parks and recreation departments, programmatic changes, and developing new or refocusing existing planning and implementation entities to spearhead specific efforts such as improving human and economic connections between the river and the downtown core.

### *Rutgers 2030: Rutgers University Physical Master Plan, Volume 1: New Brunswick*

This master plan addresses changes to the physical campuses in New Brunswick that will support strategic changes within and between Rutgers University New Brunswick area campuses over the coming decades. An important aspect of the university's physical master planning was to consider Rutgers as more than an amalgam of buildings and structures and to instead focus on its large scale infrastructure and physical systems. In particular, the plan looks at Rutgers New Brunswick "as a natural ecosystem centered on the Raritan River, and traced how future development could enhance and reinforce that ecosystem." (p1) Among other aspects, the plan addresses transportation, health and



Rutgers Concept Plan for Improved River Access

wellness and recreation, as well as stewardship and sustainability. Rutgers plan explores enhanced bicycle and pedestrian access between the Livingston and College Avenue campuses via a new bike/footbridge across the Raritan that connects to paths through the Rutgers Ecological Preserve to the Livingston and Busch campuses in Piscataway. The plan proposes reconnecting Rutgers to the Raritan via a walkway “along the New Brunswick side of the River and connecting the College Avenue and Douglass, [which] would be accessible from new and restored stairs and ramps from the river’s bluff, and will revive town, campus, and river connections severed by Route 18.” (p20) “Extending from this new bridge is a boardwalk running along the Raritan River, connecting the Delaware and Raritan (D&R) canal and trail network at the north end of College Avenue to Boyd Park and the Rutgers Boathouse at Douglass. This boardwalk increases access to the river and connects two disconnected recreational areas within New Brunswick.” (p117) Improvements to Deiner Park outlined in the plan include:

...linking it directly to both George Street and the new quadrangle [near the new transit hub] where a pavilion is proposed to provide shelter and meeting place, with an outdoor terrace with views of the river. ... A new stair and ramp between the park and the river will provide access to the park from the east, and connect the park to the rest of the network of parks along the river, and to the DNR canal. ... Rutgers 2030 envisions a boardwalk along the west river edge to provide safe and enjoyable pedestrian and bicycle access along the river, with areas of seating and activity along the boardwalk. The boardwalk is connected to the proposed pedestrian and bicycle bridge across the Raritan. The proposed bridge provides access to Johnson Park from College Avenue, and extends north to the Livingston. (p153)

[An improved pedestrian network will be achieved through]: ... connection from the proposed [College Avenue] quadrangle at the site of Records Hall eastward, towards Deiner Park and to a proposed pedestrian and bicycle bridge across the Raritan River. This proposed bridge provides a connection to a proposed boardwalk along the Raritan River between the DNR Canal and Boyd Park. This pedestrian bridge is a central element to connecting College Avenue with Piscataway through Johnson Park and northwards to the Ecological Preserve, forming a recreation axis extending north to the Livingston.” (p157)

Phasing of Rutgers 2030 proposed elements begins with feasibility studies and design work for the pedestrian bridge over Raritan River in Phase 1 (2015 to 2019) with construction pending permits and funding in later phases. (p303) Work on the Raritan River Boardwalk would be in Phase 4 (2030 and beyond) with planning/feasibility likely in earlier phases. “This boardwalk serves to improve access to the river, connect riverfront parks and the DNR canal to its north, the Rutgers Boathouse at Boyd Park to the south. The boardwalk is also connected to the proposed Pedestrian and Bicycle Bridge extending across the Raritan River.” (p307) Recommended next steps include further studies and will require participation from key stakeholders including the Coast Guard, SHPO, and Raritan River communities in order to properly assess the probability of constructing in the river.” (p309)

#### *Fish Ladder Feasibility Study*

On behalf of the Lawrence Brook Watershed Partnership, Princeton Hydro LLC (2013) conducted a preliminary study to determine the feasibility of utilizing fish ladders to restore fish passage above the dams at the Westons Mill Pond on the Lawrence Brook. These dams limit the natural tidal flow of the Lawrence Brook and restrict the passage of migratory fish to the brook’s upper reaches. Restoring connectivity and habitat for migratory fish is consistent with the Hudson-Raritan Estuary Comprehensive Restoration Plan (US Army Corp, 2009). The study determined that, despite water supply withdrawals, fish passage using Denil-style fishways should permit passage by river herring, American Shad and American eel.

A presentation by Kate Boicourt of the NY-NJ Harbor & Estuary Program at one of the MPAP public meetings elicited favorable reactions to the plans. Participants voiced a positive response and interest in the plan as potentially providing additional public access through expanded fisheries and depending on the fish ladder construction, could also encourage public stewardship and environmental education. An example of this is public viewing areas at fish ladders and/or the installation of interpretive signage.

The fish ladder construction and maintenance would require collaboration among state, federal and local partners. Plan recommendations included working with the city to determine the feasibility of utility adjustments to ensure adequate flow for effective fish ladder operation, further analyzing upstream habitat, establishing a maintenance partnership, seeking funds for implementation and maintenance/management, and working with partners to develop educational aspects of fish passage. Also discussed in the MPAP public meetings was the possibility of partnering with Rutgers for better access through Rutgers Gardens as well as for educational programming and research that could ensure partnership for ongoing support/maintenance of the fish ladders.

### *Room for the River*

Rail→Arts→River is a landscape and community engagement concept that “champions urban arts and riverfront recapture, focusing on communities dynamically connected to the Raritan River and New Jersey Transit’s commuter rail line.” (LRWP website) Originally a joint project of coLAB Arts and



the Lower Raritan Watershed Partnership, the concept is evolving to encompass municipalities along the Lower Raritan Watershed – including New Brunswick – with the intent to raise awareness to the river and to address stormwater runoff through creative/artistic solutions. Proponents of the project presented their concept plan to the MPAP Steering Committee during one of the public meetings. The concept plan included signage and wayfinding ideas for the waterfront as well as floodplain restoration in Boyd Park that allowed room for the river to flood while preserving public enjoyment of this tidal park’s amenities.

### *Rapid Health Impact Assessment: New Brunswick Municipal Public Access Plan*

The New Brunswick Municipal Public Access Plan is presently the subject of a “desktop” Health Impact Assessment (HIA) conducted by the Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Policy (Lowrie, 2016). An HIA is a tool that evaluates potential health impacts of planning and decision-making about projects and policies, with the overall aim to create conditions that encourage and support the protection and improvement of people’s health and wellbeing. The HIA of the MPAP will be completed in September 2017 and will consider the impacts of the MPAP recommendations on community health in the areas of physical activity, safety (crime and accidents), social cohesion, and local economic

activity. It will include specific recommendations related to maximizing the health outcomes associated with public access to the Raritan River and minimizing any potential public health concerns.

#### *Building a Culture of Health in the City of New Brunswick*

A network of partners throughout New Brunswick recently completed an 18 month planning process to enhance health and wellness in the City of New Brunswick resulting in a comprehensive, multi-year plan called a “Blueprint for Action.” The Blueprint recognizes the tremendous value that access to recreational opportunities contributes to health and wellness. More specifically, the Blueprint acknowledges that research suggests that increasing physical activity levels requires more than messaging and understanding – more specifically it requires a commitment to creating healthy, active communities that include recreation and sports facilities, parks and trails that are well designed, safe, functional and inviting. The public health literature also indicates that improved infrastructure will increase physical activity in communities while addressing critical health challenges like overweight, obesity, asthma, and stress, improving quality of life while simultaneously strengthening the community. Among the many objectives within the Blueprint, are ones that strive to ensure that more New Brunswick residents will have access to free, clean and safe spaces for physical activity within walking distance of their homes.

A key strategy within the Blueprint is the development of a strategic plan for public spaces and parks in New Brunswick to facilitate maximum availability and accessibility to these amenities for New Brunswick residents.

## IV. Implementation Plan

The City of New Brunswick has created an Implementation Plan composed of Priorities, Preservation of Public Access Locations, Signage, Proposed Access Improvements and Facilities, and Municipal Tools for Implementation as described in the following section:

Timeline for development of improvements is contingent on further development of plans, including engineering of various components of walkways and connector paths. Implementation is also dependent on local, county, State or other regulatory approvals, market conditions and funding, and collaboration/cooperation of various partners.

### A. Priorities

The City of New Brunswick’s priorities are foremost to preserve and maintain existing public access, to increase awareness and usage of public access by city residents, and to work with area partners to expand public access into conservation areas and to develop

linkages and connections to facilitate enjoyable use of these areas. The current priorities include:

### 1. Maintain Existing Public Access

The city's Department of Planning, Community and Economic Development in collaboration with the New Brunswick Environmental Commission will continue to work with the city's Parks and Gardens Commission, Parks Division, Recreation Division, City Market, Middlesex County, NJDOT, Rutgers University and other area stakeholders including public-private partnerships and governing authorities to preserve and maintain existing public access locations at the D&R Canal Trail near Landing Lane, the Route 18 Trench Bikeway, Boyd Park and the New Brunswick Landing boat dock. Their combined efforts will ensure that existing public access points along the waterfront are safe and accessible by residents and visitors.

Further all maintenance and improvements to public access areas in New Brunswick will be accomplished respective of coastal vulnerability concerns and associated impacts on city property, public access assets and the health and safety of city residents, work force, and visitors.

#### Delaware and Raritan Canal State Park Trail

This short spur of the D&R Canal in New Brunswick lacks adequate signage to direct potential users to area parking, facilities and directions to other city public assets, as well as to indicate that the section going south from Landing Lane is presently a dead end.

Ongoing maintenance of the D&R Canal spur will be conducted by the city Parks Division.

#### Route 18 Trench Bikeway

Until the proposed Raritan River Boardwalk is developed and built, the existing Route 18 Trench Bikeway requires maintenance and improvements as follows:

- Work with Rutgers to open access from Deiner Park for safe egress from the bikeway and improve use
- Work with the NJDOT to manage vegetation, graffiti and trash along the length of the bikeway to enhance views of the river
- Work with local NGOs such as the Lower Raritan Watershed Partnership or the Central Jersey Stream Team to do periodic cleanups of the river banks on the Raritan side of the bikeway fence
- Install signage at entrances to the bikeway with information about length and egress and directions to other public assets
- Ensure adequate and well-maintained lighting at the Albany Street end of park and as needed throughout the bikeway

- Improve access to the bikeway entrance from Buccleuch to ensure safe crossing of George Street (presently no curb cut or crossing signal)

Ongoing maintenance of the Route 18 Trench Bikeway is presently within the jurisdiction of the NJDOT. Further, the bikeway is designated as potential habitat for Indiana bats and long-eared bats, which are protected species. Any tree or brush work or significant capital improvements would need to comply with applicable NJDFW and USFWS regulations. The city's Department of Planning, Community and Economic Development in collaboration with the city's Parks and Gardens Commission and New Brunswick Environmental Commission will work with the NJDOT and other stakeholders, including applicable state and federal entities, to ensure maintenance improvements are addressed.

#### Boyd Park

Boyd Park will also enjoy improvements once the Raritan River Boardwalk is designed and constructed. In the interim, the city's Department of Planning, Community and Economic Development in collaboration with the Parks and Gardens Commission and the New Brunswick Environmental Commission will work with relevant stakeholders and public-private partnerships to ensure more enjoyable use of the park by area residents and visitors by:

- Managing and replacing vegetation as needed to enhance views of the river
- Emptying trash cans and clearing vegetation to improve sightlines and aesthetics along canal paths
- Installing more benches along paths especially in the New Street end of park
- Installing fishing line disposal containers
- Installing picnic tables at the northern end of the park near New Street and investigate placement of additional pavilions and barbecue stations in the park
- Improving awareness of Boyd Park from downtown New Brunswick by installing directional signage at the city side of entrances and entrance ramps at Albany Street, New Street, Commercial Avenue, and George Street, as well as at other locations such as near restaurants and theaters and the train station
- Improving access to parking through placement of signage within the park to nearby parking amenities, by expanding available parking in the north end of the park, and by signing public parking facilities in downtown New Brunswick for their proximity to Boyd Park entrances
- Repairing and/or replacing lighting along the towpath
- Working with the D&R Canal Commission, the D&R Canal Watch and others to restore the terminus canal lock and improve educational/historical signage
- Continuing to maintain paths throughout the park

Ongoing maintenance of Boyd Park will be conducted by the city Parks Division. The city's Department of Planning, Community and Economic Development in collaboration with the city Parks and Gardens Commission and the Environmental Commission will work with the Parks Division and other stakeholders to ensure maintenance improvements are addressed.

#### [New Brunswick Landing Boat Dock](#)

The New Brunswick Landings are an asset to aid in redevelopment of downtown New Brunswick and to help reconnect the downtown core to the Raritan River waterfront. As such, the Department of Planning, Community and Economic Development in collaboration with the Parks and Gardens Commission and the Environmental Commission will work with the county as well as engage other stakeholders such as the university and area boating enthusiasts to increase usage of the Landings boat dock. Further, the city will:

- Work with the county to continue to maintain the docks and channel markers and as feasible expand the season to accommodate boat passenger access to the park, university events, and downtown activities
- Install signage to other nearby public access and directions to the boat launch in the southern end of Boyd Park

Ongoing maintenance of the Landing boat dock and surrounding grounds will be coordinated by Middlesex County Parks. The Department of Planning, Community and Economic Development with the city Parks and Gardens Commission and Environmental Commission will work with Middlesex County to ensure maintenance improvements are addressed.

## [2. Planned Enhancement to Public Access Locations and/or Facilities](#)

The Municipal Public Access Plan process, in conjunction with other community planning efforts as outlined in the Community Needs Assessment section of this report, reaffirmed the city's plans to provide access to the conservation areas and to enhance access to Westons Mill Pond and to work with university, county, public-private partnerships and other area stakeholders to develop linkages between its public access holdings for the further benefit of residents and visitors. The city intends to:

- Work with the county and other area stakeholders to develop access points into and trails through the conservation areas east from Boyd Park to the confluence of the Lawrence Brook and Raritan Rivers. It is expected that these will be improved to facilitate access but will have few amenities other than trails, signage

- (directional as well as interpretive) and associated parking. Enhancement plans will also include maintenance programs.
- Work with Rutgers, public-private partnerships and other stakeholders to develop the proposed Raritan River Boardwalk to enhance/replace the Route 18 Bikeway, to improve access to the waterfront from Deiner Park, and to reconnect the D&R Canal State Park Trail to Boyd Park
  - Work with Rutgers, public-private partnerships and other stakeholders to develop the proposed Raritan River pedestrian/bikeway bridge across the Raritan River to Piscataway
  - Work with partners to enhance access to Westons Mill Pond for boating, hiking and fishing commensurate with the pond's function as a municipal water supply. Enhancements will include improved public access, signage, associated parking, improved boat launch, and seating
  - To further its conservation goals, the city will also work with area stakeholders to advance designs to install fish ladders at Westons Mill Pond dams and to pursue opportunities for public education through interpretive signage related to fish migration and habitat preservation and through possible partnership with Rutgers on public STEM education programming

Enhancements to existing locations such as a linkage trail through the conservation areas, the proposed Raritan River Boardwalk, and the proposed Pedestrian/Bicycle Bridge are in concept phases. It is anticipated that the plans will be developed over the next several years. Contingent on funding, the conservation area trail could be implemented in one to three years. Rutgers has proposed implementing the Pedestrian/Bicycle Bridge within the next five years, while work on the Raritan River Boardwalk is presently proposed for ten to fifteen years – through some plan proponents would like to see implementation advanced more quickly.

### 3. Other

There are several other unimproved or restricted access points along the city's waterfront that are not in the public domain and will require further investigation and stakeholder collaboration to ensure public access for the future. These are residentially zoned areas at Carpender Road and Rutgers Village, and the area immediately around the water utility at Westons Mill Pond that is zoned Educational Institutional.

Commensurate with goals outlined in the city's Master Plan (Parks, Recreation and Open Space Element and Circulation Plan Element) the city will continue to explore ways to

ensure linkages to other nearby public access areas with the goal of establishing a public access trail along the entire riparian border of the city from Franklin Township to North Brunswick – ultimately linking the D&R Canal on its northwest boundary with Westons Mill Pond on its southeast boundary. To that end, the city will continue to explore options to facilitate public access through Carpender Road and Rutgers Village and will also collaborate with Rutgers and other stakeholders to improve access to Westons Mill Pond and to improve public access linkages through Rutgers Gardens and Helyar Woods. Likewise, the Westons Mill Pond fish ladder requires further study to ensure its feasibility and will require partnership with numerous external stakeholders to implement.

It is anticipated that further study on these proposed public access locations will continue in the next two to three years with potential realization of the concepts in ten years.

## B. Preservation of Public Access Locations

The majority of New Brunswick’s public access areas are zoned W-C, Waterfront Conservation District. Per the zoning regulations, the intent and purpose of the Waterfront Conservation District is to “recognize the particular environmental features of land area which lies between the waterfronts of the Raritan River and Lawrence Brook and the uplands adjacent to Route 18, Route 1 and the New Jersey Turnpike, while providing the opportunity for reasonable, environmentally sensitive development which maximizes waterfront views and allows public access to the waterfront.” The Waterfront Conservation District designation does not, however, ensure public access as required under CZM Rules. Under CZM Rules, public access locations need to be preserved either through inclusion in the city’s ROSI or through the use of conservation easements or restrictions. It is recommended that the city adopt one or more of these more stringent measures of protection to ensure public access in perpetuity.

In addition, the D&R towpath, Boyd Park, Buccleuch Park, the city and county conservation areas and the Westons Mill watershed are listed on the Green Acres Recreation and Open Space Inventory.

## C. Signage

The community needs assessment recommended a number of improvements to public access signage as discussed more fully in Section II above. The city recognizes its obligation under CZM Rules to provide adequate signage to public access in the municipality. The city further recognizes the benefit to its residents and visitors that expanded signage can provide including interpretive/educational signage and directions to associated amenities such as parking, restrooms, or other nearby public access points. The Department of Planning, Community and Economic Development in conjunction with the Parks and Gardens Commission and Environmental Commission will collaborate with

appropriate stakeholders including the Parks Division, the Recreation Division, City Market, DEVCO, the D&R Canal State Park, Rutgers University, and public-private partnerships among others to develop and implement a comprehensive signage campaign for public access throughout the city.

#### D. Proposed Access Improvements and Facilities

As described in Section II, the City of New Brunswick is exploring the following new access improvements and facilities:

##### [Raritan River Boardwalk and Pedestrian/Bicycle Bridge to Piscataway](#)

Rutgers, in its Facilities Master Plan for 2030 has proposed a plan to replace the Route 18 Trench Bikeway and to reconnect the D&R Canal towpath to Boyd Park via a boardwalk. The boardwalk is similar in concept to Philadelphia's Schuylkill Banks Boardwalk. Rutgers is also considering a cantilevered platform built off the existing bikeway that may have fewer ecological impacts. Concept designs for this walkway also include construction of and connections to a pedestrian/bicycle bridge connecting New Brunswick to Piscataway in the area of the Student Activities building on George Street near Deiner Park. The boardwalk design may include enhanced or restored wetlands in the Raritan River floodplain between boardwalk sections and the city's river shoreline. Enhancements to these wetlands and floodplains were also explored in the Rail→Arts→River concept component for *Room for the River* by the Lower Raritan Watershed Partnership and coLAB Arts. Both concepts are described in Section III. Community Needs Assessments, under Studies.

##### [Raritan River Conservation Trail](#)

Referenced in several elements of the city's Master Plan, and prominent in its Parks, Recreation and Open Space maps, the city is committed to opening access to the conservation areas for passive enjoyment. Improvements will include developing access points, installation of signage, and development of maintenance and monitoring plans to ensure the trails are well maintained. The conservation areas are within the Raritan's floodplain. As such, the trail designs and access plans will need to accommodate periodic inundation. Access to the conservation lands will require collaboration among the city, Middlesex County, and potentially with area residents and businesses.

##### [Westons Mill Pond Fish Ladders and Expanded Pond Access](#)

The fish ladder feasibility study conducted by Princeton Hydro LLC on behalf of the Lawrence Brook Watershed Partnership identified a new opportunity for public access at the Westons Mill Pond through expanded fisheries and opportunities for public stewardship and environmental education. The fish ladder construction and maintenance would require collaboration among state, federal and local partners. Plan

recommendations included working with the city to determine the feasibility of utility adjustments to ensure adequate flow for effective fish ladder operation, further analyzing upstream habitat, establishing a maintenance partnership, seeking funds for implementation and maintenance/management, and working with partners to develop educational aspects of fish passage. Also discussed in the MPAP public meetings was the possibility of partnering with Rutgers for better access through Rutgers Gardens as well as for educational programming and research that could ensure partnership for ongoing support/maintenance of the fish ladders.

### E. Municipal Tools for Implementation

As the MPAP is intended to be part of the City of New Brunswick's Master Plan, the city's Department of Planning, Community and Economic Development will be primarily responsible for implementing the MPAP. In addition, the city has recently appointed a new Parks and Gardens Commission that will be working closely with the Mayor's Office, the Parks Division, the Recreation Division, the Environmental Commission, and with other city entities, public-private partnerships and area public access stakeholders to support the Department in ensuring comprehensive tools for the maintenance, enhancement and development of public access locations.

### F. Implementation

The city's Department of Planning, Community and Economic Development will work with the recently appointed Parks and Gardens Commission, the Environmental Commission and other city entities and regional stakeholders to continue to maintain and improve existing public access locations and facilities with on-going maintenance provided by the Parks Division. The implementation schedule for expansion of existing facilities and new public sites or linkages is dependent on final design and approval of concepts, availability of funding, and securing appropriate permits.

### G. Army Corps of Engineers Requirements for Shore Protection Projects

The City of New Brunswick will work with all appropriate agencies including the ACOE to ensure its plans for public access improvements meet all requirements.

## V. Resolution of Incorporation

The City of New Brunswick has approved a resolution for the incorporation of the MPAP. See Appendix 1 for the **draft** resolution.

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## Appendix 1 - Model Resolution for Incorporating MPAP into Master Plan

Resolution # \_\_\_\_\_

Title: A RESOLUTION APPROVING THE MUNICIPAL PUBLIC ACCESS PLAN

WHEREAS, the City of New Brunswick Municipal Public Access Plan was submitted to the Planning Board and reviewed at the regular meeting of **{date}**, and

WHEREAS, the governing body has approved the plan as submitted,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Planning Board of the City of New Brunswick, the “City of New Brunswick Municipal Public Access Plan,” a copy of which is attached, is hereby approved.

FURTHER RESOLVED a copy of the plan shall be sent to the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection for review and approval in accordance with N.J.A.C.7.7 and 7.7E.

I hereby certify the foregoing to be a resolution adopted by the Planning Board at a meeting held on **{date}**.

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City Clerk

## Appendix 2 - Maps and Table

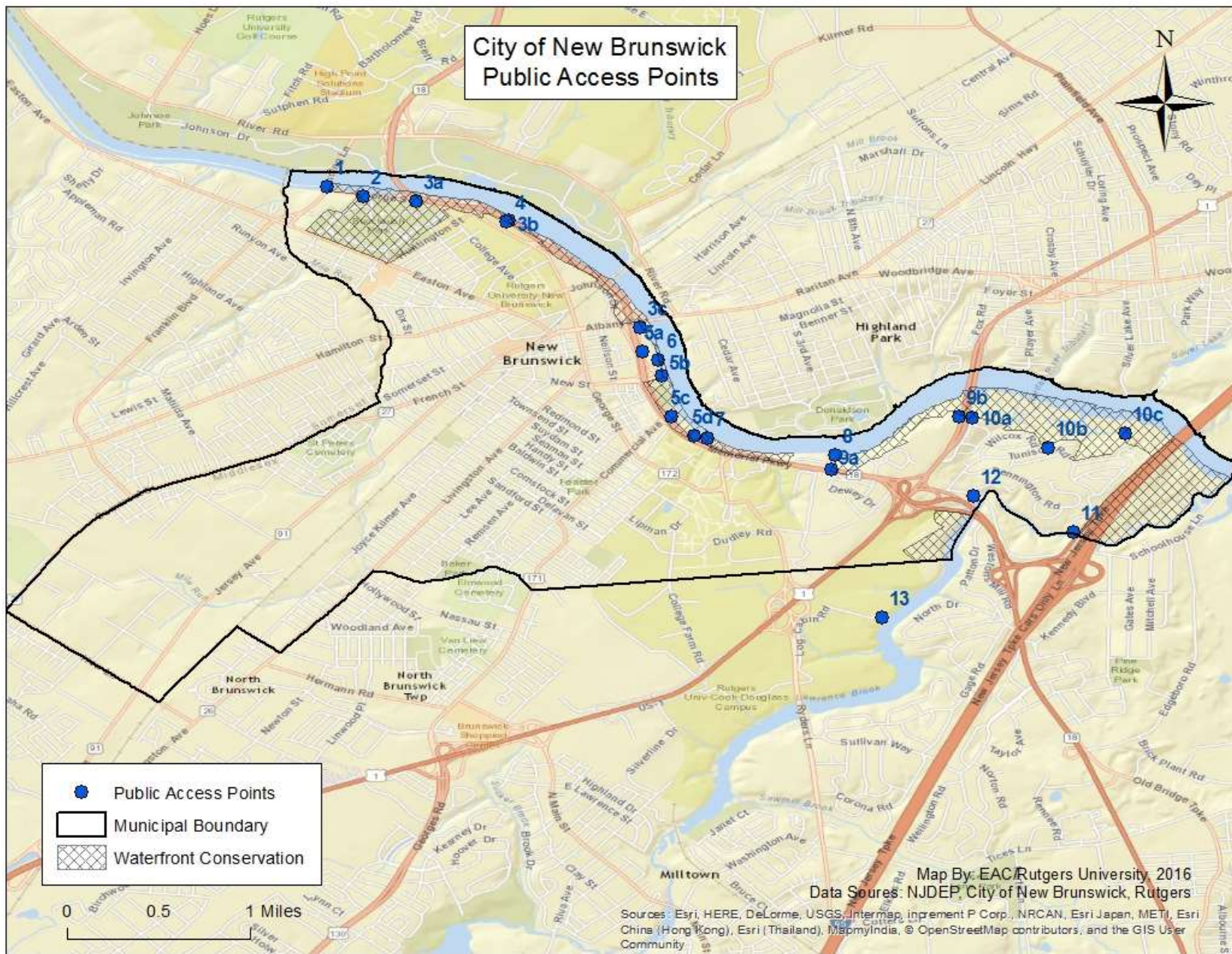
***Map 1 – City of New Brunswick Waterbodies (including tidal waters)***

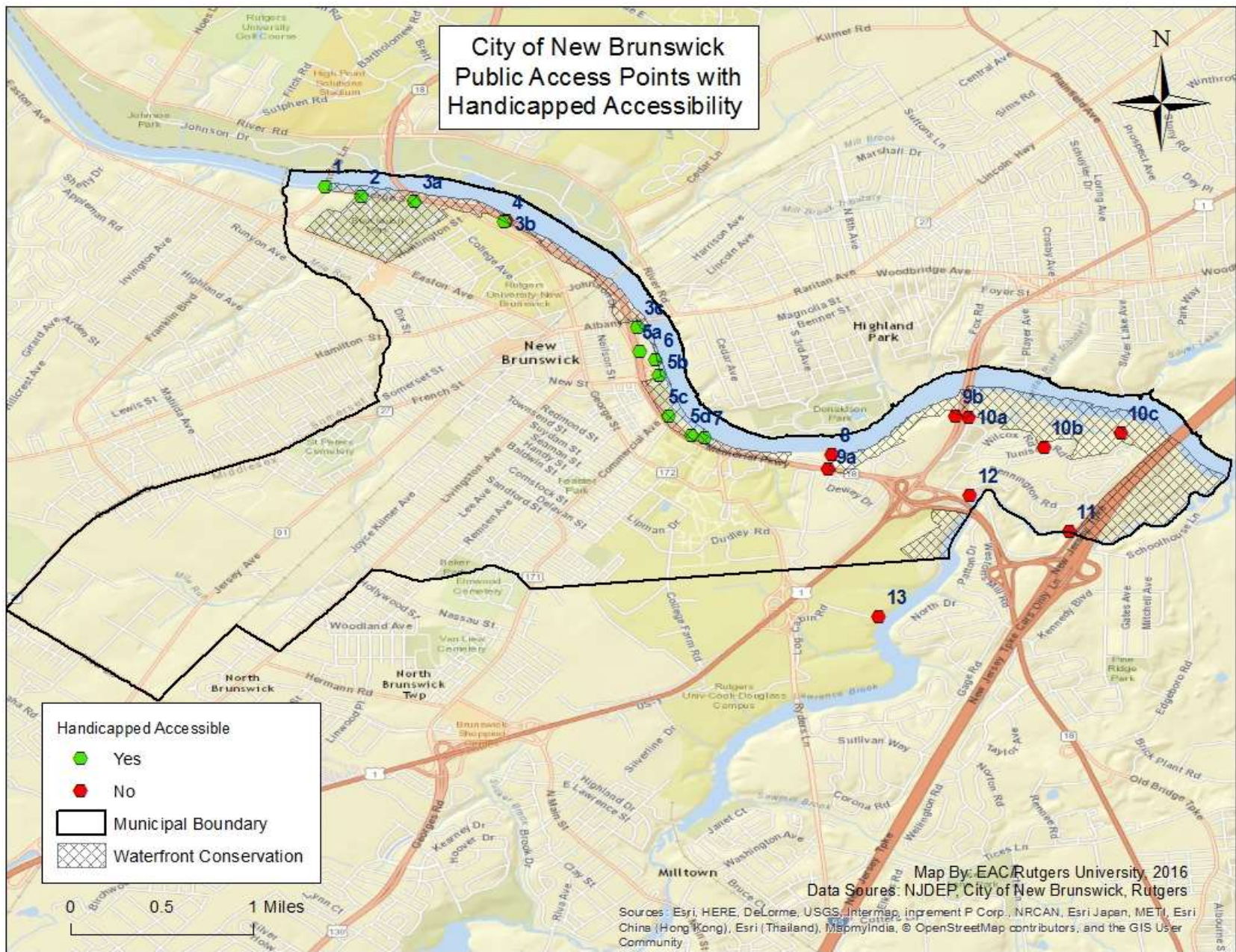
***Map 2 – City of New Brunswick Public Access Points***

***Map 3 – City of New Brunswick Public Access Points with Handicapped Accessibility***

***Table 1 – City of New Brunswick Public Access Location Amenities***







**Table 1 – City of New Brunswick Public Access Location Amenities**

ID	SIGNS	PARKING	NUM_ PARKING	STREET	BADGE	SWIM- MING	FISHING	SURFING	PLAY- GRD	PARK	PIER	BOAT- LNCH	MARINA	FOOD_ DRINK	REST- RM	SEATS	H_ C	SHORE- LINE	ACCESS_ TYPE
1	Yes	Yes	9	south end of Landing Lane Bridge	No	No	Unrestrict	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	River	Physical
2	Yes	No Fee	throughout	George Street east of Landing Lane	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	River	Visual
3a	No	No		George Street east of Landing Lane	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	River	Visual
3b	No	No		stairway to Deiner Park	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	River	Visual
3c	No	No		west end of Albany Street Bridge	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	River	Visual
4	Yes	No		George Street at Rutgers Parking Lot 20	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	River	Visual
5a	Yes	No		west end of Albany Street Bridge	No	No	Unrestrict	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	River	Physical
5b	Yes	No Fee	10	New Street and Route 18	No	No	Unrestrict	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	River	Physical
5c	Yes	No		Commercial Street and Route 18	No	No	Unrestrict	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	River	Physical
5d	Yes	No Fee	47	NJ 18 Service Road southeast of Commercial Avenue	No	No	Unrestrict	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	River	Physical
6	Yes	No Fee	10	NJ 18 Service Road north of New Street	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	River	Physical
7	Yes	No Fee		NJ 18 Service Road southeast of Commercial Avenue	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	River	Physical
8	No	No		Carpender Road	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	River	Visual
9	No	No		NJ 18 Service Road	No	No	Unrestrict	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	River	Physical
10	No	No		Regency Manor Drive	No	No	Unrestrict	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	River	Physical
11	No	No		Burnett Street at Lawrence Brook	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	River	Visual
12	No	No		Burnett Street near Edgebrook Road	No	No	Unrestrict	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	Pond	Physical
13	Yes	No Fee		Ryders Lane	No	No	Unrestrict	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Pond	Physical

This imbedded Excel spread sheet should be used for the table described in Section II (Existing Public Access). The title of each column should not be changed. The information about each public access location should be filled in using one of the options listed. This table will also be used to populate the information for each public access location in GIS. Additional information about each public access location can be included in the narrative portion of Section II. Please contact DEP with any questions or concerns about these options.

City of New Brunswick Municipal Public Access Plan

SIGNS: Does the location provide signage identifying the location as a point of public access? Yes/No

PARKING: Is there parking, and if so, is there a charge? Charge = there is a charge for public parking; No Charge = there is no charge for public parking; No = no public parking provided

AMT: How many parking spots are available? Provide a number

STREET: At what street end is the public access located? For parallel access, cross streets can be provided. Examples: 1<sup>st</sup> St; Ocean Ave/3<sup>rd</sup>; 45<sup>th</sup> St

BADGE: Are there times when a badge is required to use this location? Yes/No

SWIMMING: Can you swim at this location? Guard= a guard is provided at times; At Own Risk= No guard is provided; No= Swimming is not allowed

FISHING and SURFING: Is fishing/surfing allowed at this location? Unrestricted= Fishing/surfing is allowed at all times with no restrictions; Restricted= There exists a form of restriction of fishing/surfing, examples include time of day, seasonally, etc. These restrictions should be discussed in the Section II, C. (Limitations to Public Access).

PLAYGRD, PARK, PIER, BOATLNCH, MARINA, FOOD\_DRINK, RESTRMS, SEATS: Does this location include these amenities? Yes/No

H\_C: Is this location handicap accessible? (Not necessarily ADA Compliant) Yes/No. The type of accessibility should be expanded upon in Section II, B (Improved Public Access Locations).

SHORELINE: What shoreline does this location inhabit? The Beach, Bay, or River?

TYPE: Describe the type of access-physical, visual only, water