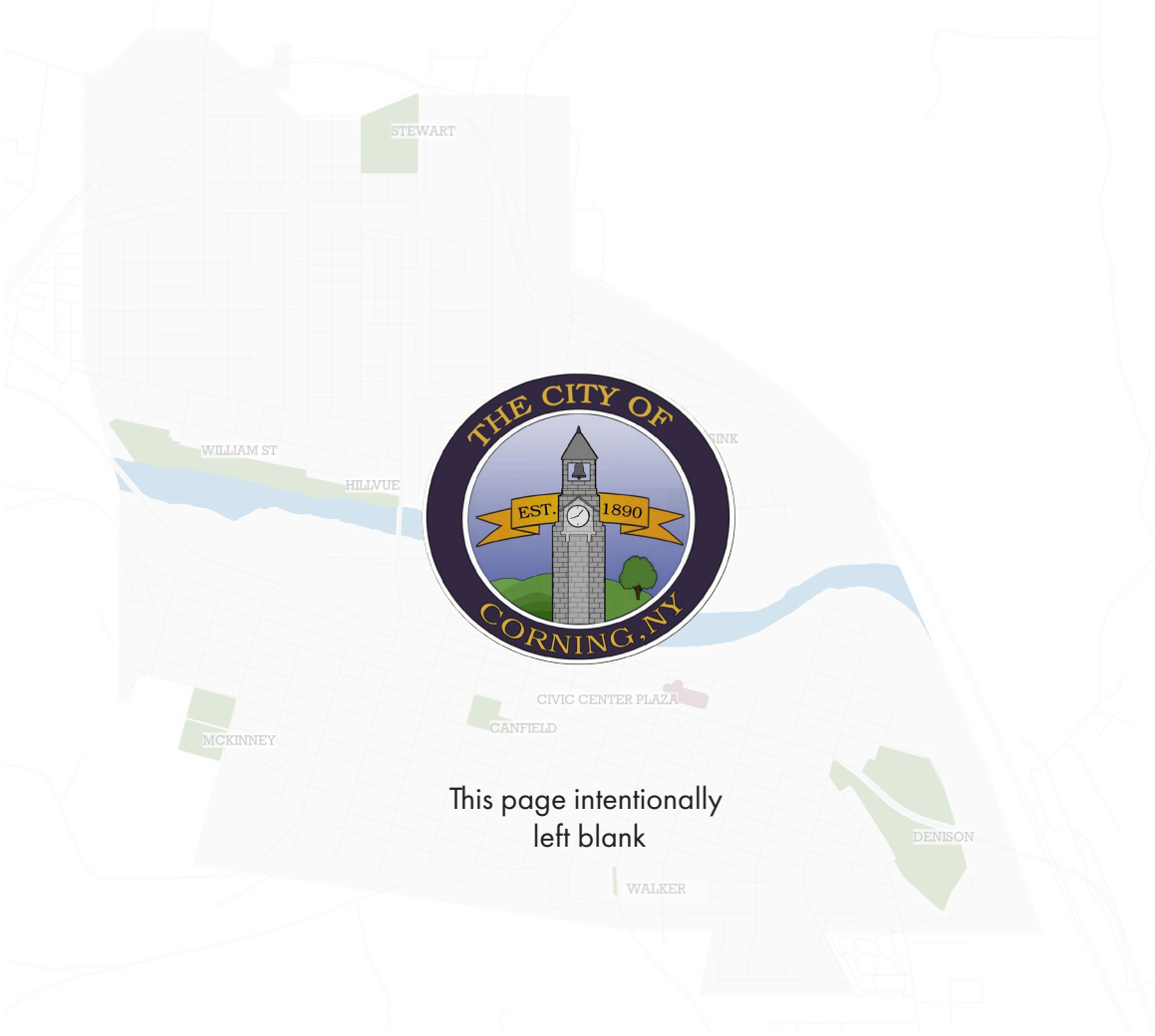
PARKS STRATEGY

FINAL REPORT

SEPTEMBER 2020

Barton & Loguidice



This page intentionally
left blank

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

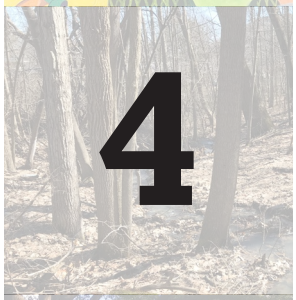
1.1 PROJECT OVERVIEW 06
1.2 BENEFITS OF PARKS SYSTEMS 10
1.3 COMMUNITY OVERVIEW 14
1.4 RELEVANT RECENT PLANNING EFFORTS 18

EXISTING CONDITIONS

2.1 PARKS SYSTEM 22
2.2 INDIVIDUAL PARKS 36

OBJECTIVES

SUSTAINABLE 60
CONNECTED 60
ECONOMICAL 60
BALANCED 60
EQUITABLE 60

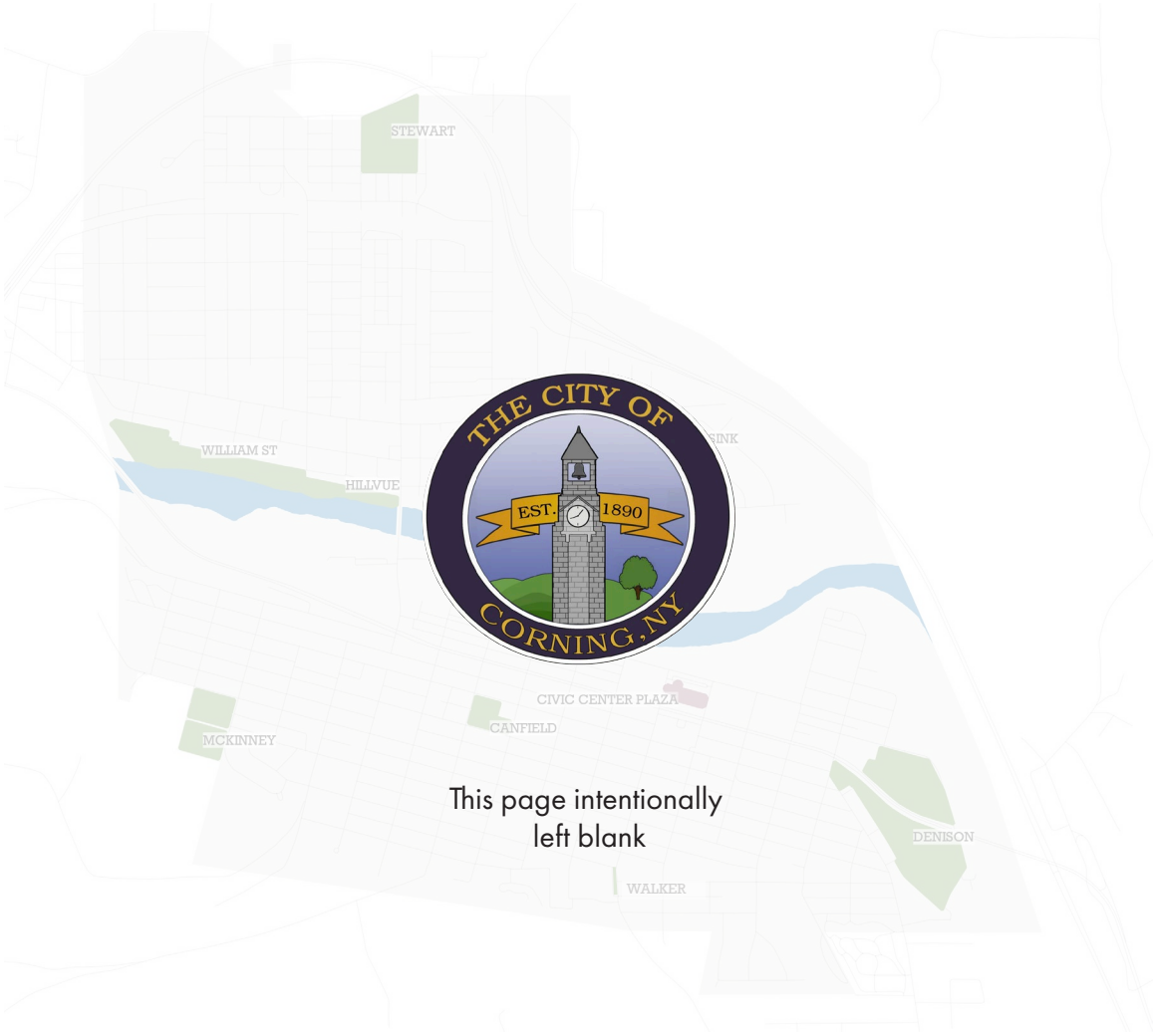


RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 PARKS SYSTEM RECOMMENDATIONS 64
4.2 PARKS AMENITY RECOMMENDATIONS 76
4.3 INDIVIDUAL PARKS RECOMMENDATIONS 94

NEXT STEPS

5.1 IMPLEMENTATION 108
5.2 FUNDING 110
5.3 FOLLOW-ON ACTIVITIES 120



This page intentionally
left blank

INTRODUCTION

1.1 PROJECT OVERVIEW
1.2 BENEFITS OF PARKS SYSTEMS
1.3 COMMUNITY OVERVIEW
1.4 RELEVANT RECENT PLANS

1.1 PROJECT OVERVIEW

PROJECT PURPOSE

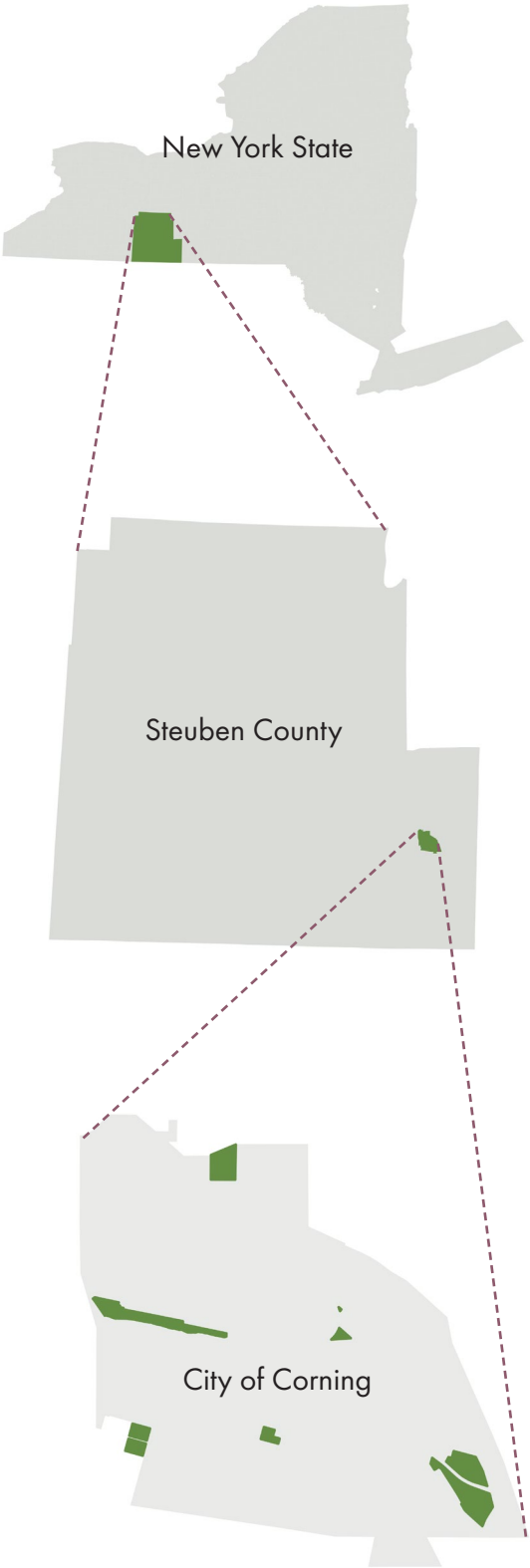
This strategy proposes a comprehensive vision for enhancing the City of Corning's robust parks system, including its aquatic facilities, trail connections, and the Civic Center Plaza. Developed in collaboration between the City of Corning Staff, the Parks Improvement Committee, and Barton & Loguidice, the Strategy is designed to reflect the wide variety of roles that parks systems must serve in the 21st Century, including supporting physical and mental health, enhancing social equity, preserving community heritage, and promoting environmental sustainability and resiliency. Specifically, the Parks Strategy provides a catalogue of detailed recommendations and funding strategies that will help guide future facility, amenity, and policy improvements to the nine parks owned by the City of Corning, as well as Civic Center Plaza.

PROJECT LOCATION

The City of Corning is a regional urban center in the southern tier of New York State, located along the Chemung River in southeastern Steuben County. With a population of 11,183 persons spread over 3.2 square miles, the City is a densely-developed, walkable community with significant cultural, economic, and environmental heritage and influence. The City is immediately surrounded by the Town of Corning, and is one of several small urban areas within the Chemung River Valley, including Painted Post, Riverside, and Erwin to the west and South Corning, Big Flats, and Elmira to the east. Regionally, the City of Corning is situated at the southern end of the Finger Lakes region, and is near the northernmost edge of the Allegheny Mountains.

PROJECT PROCESS

The Parks Strategy has been developed over an eighteen-month process that has included a detailed inventory and analysis of existing conditions, an extensive community engagement and outreach process, and significant research into local, regional, and national best practices for parks systems. The diagram at the bottom of the following page illustrates the project process, which approximately corresponds to the organization of the chapters within this plan.



COMMUNITY INPUT: The following pages contain an overview of the variety of methods of community engagement that were utilized throughout the development of this plan. These include public open houses, a community-wide survey, parks committee meetings, and eight stakeholder focus groups. Additional information about community input is integrated throughout this document; information gathered from the survey is typically shown in separate survey information 'call-out' boxes to highlight key findings.

INVENTORY & ANALYSIS OF EXISTING CONDITIONS: **Chapter 2** contains a detailed overview of the existing conditions within Corning City Parks. Section 2.1 includes system-wide findings, and Section 2.2 highlights key existing conditions at each city-owned park. Features inventoried for each park include: location and size, historical information, environmental considerations, accessibility and connectivity, and recreational amenities.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES: **Chapter 3** highlights project objectives, which have been developed based on a synthesis of community and staff input, and the analysis of existing conditions. Specifically, the objectives promote a parks system that is sustainable, connected, economical, well-balanced, and equitable. These objectives provide the foundation for the recommendations described in the following chapter.

BEST PRACTICES: Information about national, regional, and local best practices for parks systems is integrated throughout the report. An overview of the key benefits of parks systems is in **Section 1.2**, and provides the context for comprehensive approach of this report; precedent best practice projects are referenced throughout.

RECOMMENDATIONS: **Chapter 4** contains facility, programmatic, and policy recommendations for Corning City Parks. This chapter is designed to serve as a catalogue of potential projects, providing a foundation for future improvements when funding, time, and other resources become available. The recommendations are organized in a similar manner to Chapter 2, with separate sections for parks system recommendations, amenity recommendations, and park-specific recommendations. Each improvement includes a diagram illustrating the degree to which it corresponds with the project objectives described in the previous chapter.

NEXT STEPS: **Chapter 5** includes a variety of information related to the eventual implementation of the recommendations. This chapter details private, state, and federal funding sources, as well as additional information about facility design, permitting, construction, and other steps towards implementation. Section 5.3: Follow-On Activities, summarizes potential future plans, designs, and programs that were identified throughout this project, but were not within the scope.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

An extensive community engagement process has directly guided the development of this Parks Strategy. Community input has been gathered through three methods: a recreational demand survey, public meetings, and stakeholder meetings, each of which are described below. While the information gathered through the engagement process is cited throughout the report, please refer to Appendix A: Community Engagement for more detailed summaries of each method of engagement.

COMMUNITY RECREATIONAL DEMAND SURVEY

A 24-question online recreational demand survey was available digitally on the City of Corning's website from March 21st, 2019 through August 31st, 2019. Information about the survey was distributed via newsletters, mailings, posters, websites, and 'business cards,' and the survey itself was also printed out for those without access to computers. Overall, 686 people responded to the survey, with a 100% completion rate; of those respondents, over 67% lived within the City of Corning, and nearly all were between 20 and 79 years old, though many reported living with children. The questions on the survey were in a variety of formats, including matrices, rankings, single-choice answers, and open-ended questions. All applicable questions also had opportunities for 'write-in' responses. Generally, the survey was structured to gain community input on the following six categories, with 3-5 questions per each topic:

- Community Benefits of Parks Systems
- Existing Conditions of Corning City Parks
- Awareness, Use, & Accessibility of the Corning City Parks System
- Preferred Types of Active & Passive Recreation
- Opportunities to Improve the Corning City Parks System
- Demographic Information of Respondents

PUBLIC OPEN HOUSES

Public Open House #1

An estimated 90 community members attended the first Public Open House, which was held from 6:00 PM - 8:30 PM on August 20th, 2019 at the Corning-Painted Post School District Cafeteria. From 6:00-6:45PM, Barton & Loguidice presented the project purpose and initial findings, and the City of Corning showcased initial ideas for low-cost improvement concepts. The remainder of the meeting was held in an 'open house' format with comment cards, poster boards, and interactive preference boards spread throughout the room. In addition to general comments, attendees were specifically asked to provide input on the following topics:

- Awareness & Use of the Corning Parks System
- Community Benefits of Parks Systems
- Connectivity & Accessibility of the Corning Parks System
- A Potential Dog Park
- Sports Courts & Fields
- Pools & Aquatic Facilities
- Improvements to the Entire Parks System
- Park-Specific, Low-Cost Improvements

Public Open House #2

An estimated 108 community members viewed the second Public Open House, which was held as a pre-recorded informational presentation hosted on the B&L Community Forum youtube channel, open from August 7th, 2020 through August 23rd, 2020. During the presentation, Barton & Loguidice re-introduced the project, and presented system, amenity, and individual park recommendations. 75 responses were collected in a short post-presentation survey. In addition to general comments, attendees were specifically asked to provide input on the following topics:

- A Potential Dog Park
- Sports Courts & Fields
- Pools & Aquatic Facilities
- Skateboard Facilities
- Improvements to the Entire Parks System

COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS

Throughout the project, 'focus group' meetings on the following topics were held to gain an in-depth understanding of the needs and opportunities of specific user groups, organizations, and issues related to the Corning City Parks System. Much of the information gathered during these focus groups sessions is detailed in Chapter 4: Recommendations.

- Sports Courts & Fields (August 20th, 2019)
- Trails, Connectivity, and Accessibility (August 20th, 2019)
- Pools & Aquatic Facilities (August 20th, 2019)
- Dog Park (August 20th, 2019)
- Skate Parks (November 19th, 2019)
- Historic Preservation (November 20th, 2019)
- Sustainability (November 20th, 2019)
- Civic Center Plaza & Public Art (November 20th, 2019)

PUBLIC OPEN HOUSE #1

PREFERENCE BOARD

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

1.2 BENEFITS OF PARKS SYSTEMS

For centuries, parks systems have served multifaceted roles for communities and their residents, providing space for socialization and exercise, preserving environmental and historical assets, and enhancing aesthetic and economic values. With ever-growing health, social, and environmental concerns in the 21st Century, harnessing these benefits is more important than ever. This section details a selection of the measurable and intangible impacts that parks systems can have on their communities.

PHYSICAL HEALTH BENEFITS

With over 60% of adults in the United States classified as overweight or obese, promoting physical exercise is crucial for ensuring a community's health. By providing open space and opportunities for exercise, parks have significant physical health benefits for people of all ages. Particularly when located within walking distance of residences, workplaces, and key destinations, parks can help promote regular exercise, which in turn reduces the occurrence of health risks such as arthritis, diabetes, high blood pressure, and heart issues. Studies have also shown that access to parks and recreational programming is particularly essential for promoting the health of two vulnerable user groups: children and elderly.

MENTAL HEALTH BENEFITS

By providing access to natural environments and opportunities for exercise, parks and open space can have significant benefits for mental health. Physical activity produces important psychological benefits, relieving symptoms of depression and anxiety, improving mood, and enhancing feelings of well-being. Access to green space and natural environments improves cognitive functioning, impulse control, resilience to stressful events, and decreases the frequency of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Together, these benefits result in measurably enhanced mental health for residents who live in close proximity to a park.

The presence of a nearby park produces the same collective mental health benefits for a community as a decrease in the unemployment rate by 2% does (2018).

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT BENEFITS

Access to parks is correlated to a wide variety of benefits for children, including enhanced cognitive ability, reductions in crime and delinquency, and promoted feelings of autonomy, self-confidence, and optimism. Parks systems and recreational programs are an investment in a community's youth, building a foundation for the aforementioned physical and mental health benefits at a younger age. Additionally, play is proven to be a critical element in a child's future success, as it helps to develop muscle strength, coordination, communication skills, and reasoning abilities.

Evaporation from a single tree can produce the cooling effect of ten room-size air conditioners operating 24 hours per day. One tree can also generate over $30,000 worth of oxygen, produce $60,000 in air pollution control, recycle $35,000 worth of water, and control $30,000 worth of soil erosion (2013).

SOCIAL BENEFITS

Parks play important roles in enhancing social cohesion and promoting social equity and inclusion. By providing informal open space and recreational programming, parks enable community members to gather and form connections, promoting general senses of belonging and community. Additionally, when designed through a community-involved process, parks can promote feelings of community ownership and stewardship, furthering these bonds. Parks are also essential for improving social equity, by offering quality amenities and gathering space for all community members, regardless of income, race, or ethnicity. Altogether, parks systems enhance a community's 'social capital' – its network of connections between all residents – creating a more inclusive, cohesive, and involved citizenship.

ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS

Through open space, green infrastructure, and a variety of trees and plantings, parks are essential to preserving the environmental health and resiliency of a community. Environmental benefits of parks include: reduction of the urban heat island effect, flood risk mitigation through stormwater management, water quality enhancements through absorption of nutrients in soil infiltration, and air quality improvements through a reduction of carbon. With expected increased frequency of serious storm events, these benefits will become essential for communities, particularly those located along key inland waterways. Promoting active means of accessing parks such as walking or bicycling also leads to a reduction in vehicular emissions, decreasing the amount of greenhouse gases.

HISTORICAL & CONSERVATION BENEFITS

Parks can help preserve and protect key historical buildings, landscapes, and cultural sites. Additionally, many parks are integral parts of a community's historical development, and have served important social, environmental, and economic roles for centuries. Preservation, restoration, and rehabilitation of key elements, as well as interpretive signage, can ensure key landscapes remain for future generations, and can help community members learn about their histories in an immediate setting.

ECONOMIC BENEFITS

Parks have a variety of significant direct and indirect economic benefits for a community, as they both generate income and prevent future expenses. In terms of revenue generation, parks can provide revenue sources through hosting events and can increase property values of nearby homes, thereby increasing property taxes as well. A robust parks system can also enhance the quality of life and sense of place for a community, helping to generate tourism and potentially draw additional businesses and residents to an area, as physically active employees are often more productive, concentrated, and happier. Additionally, parks can generate investment of time and money from local residents through volunteering and stewardship, uncovering a 'hidden' reserve of labor.

Parks can have an even greater positive economic impact by reducing the costs of future health and environmental issues. Currently, the direct and indirect costs associated with treating obesity-related health issues is estimated at nearly $150 billion, a number that is only expected to increase. Environmentally, the costs associated with water purification and responses to serious climate events are equally significant, and can be reduced through investment in parks and urban forests. Overall, by investing a small fraction of those costs into parks systems up front, communities can help proactively address future significant funding concerns.

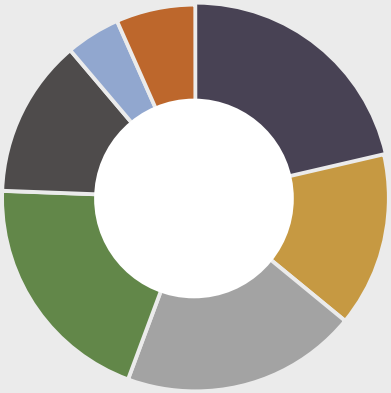
$

A case study on the Dallas, TX regional parks system indicated that parks have a 7:1 return on investment, including revenue creation, generated community labor, and preventative costs. Trails specifically had a nearly 50:1 return on investment (2016).

Investing in parks systems is one of the most transformative and cost-effective measures that a community can pursue. From individual to community to national levels, parks provide a plethora of co-benefits that can enhance quality of life, personal health, and environmental sustainability. The recommendations within this Parks Strategy firmly recognize these multi-faceted benefits, and reflect a comprehensive approach to Parks planning.

CORNING SURVEY DATA: BENEFITS OF PARKS

Respondents indicated strong community interest in parks systems that create a **variety of benefits** for visitors and residents:

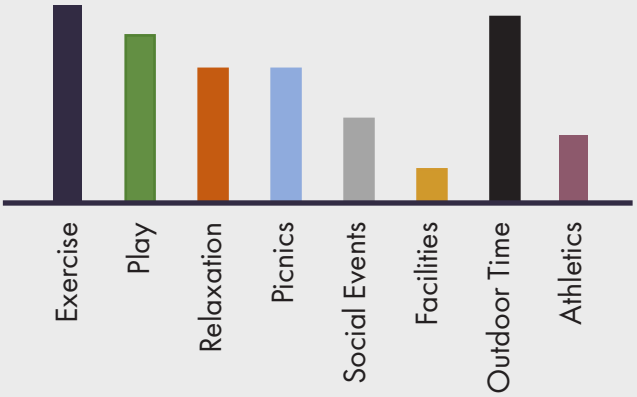


Most important benefits of parks:

- Physical Health
- Mental Health
- Social Equity & Socialization
- Youth Development
- Environmental
- Historical & Conservation
- Economics

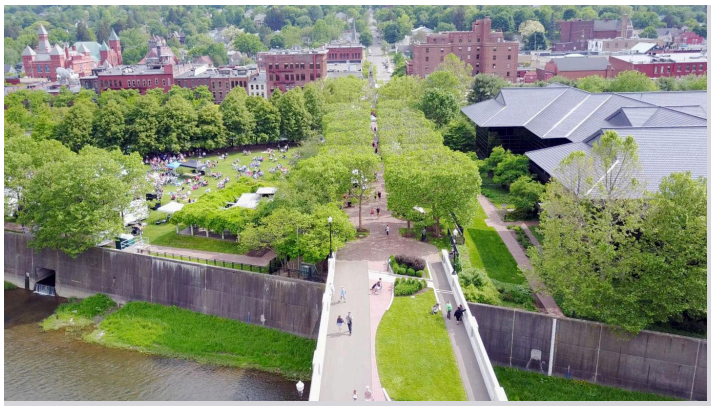
73% of respondents believe that parks, recreation, and open space are **very important** to the quality of life in Corning.

Respondents noted that they use the parks system for a **mixture** of uses, indicating a need for a parks system that provides equal spaces for leisure, organized activities, green space, play areas, and social events.



1.3 COMMUNITY OVERVIEW

The City of Corning includes a bustling downtown district along the south side of the Chemung River, and residential areas on both sides of the river. Key destinations such as the Rockwell Museum and the Corning Museum of Glass draw visitors from across the world, and an abundance of shops, parks, and pathways provide amenities for residents and visitors alike.



CENTER WAY PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE

ROCKWELL MUSEUM

OVERVIEW OF DOWNTOWN CORNING

CENTER WAY SQUARE

MARKET STREET BUSINESSES

CORNING MUSEUM OF GLASS

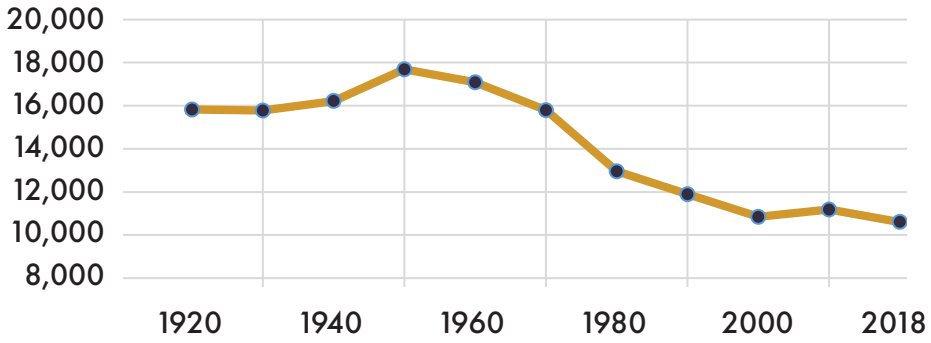
DEMOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW

The following pages provide a brief overview of demographic data and trends for the City of Corning and its surrounding areas. The data shown here has impacted the recommendations described in Chapter 4 of this report, ensuring that the improvements will equitably cater to all residents both currently and in the future. In general, high-quality public amenities such as parks systems can significantly help retain existing residents and draw potential future residents.

POPULATION

The City of Corning's population peaked in 1950, and steadily declined throughout the rest of the 20th Century. Since 2000, however, the population has leveled off at just over 10,000, with slight periods of growth, indicating increased interest in living and working in Corning, particularly when compared to similar communities in the Upstate New York region.

Population of the City of Corning (by Year)
(2010 US Census)



RACE & ETHNICITY

91% of the residents of the City of Corning identified as white in the 2010 Census. In addition to the races detailed below, the US Census also stated that 2.4% of residents of all races identified as Latino or Hispanic.

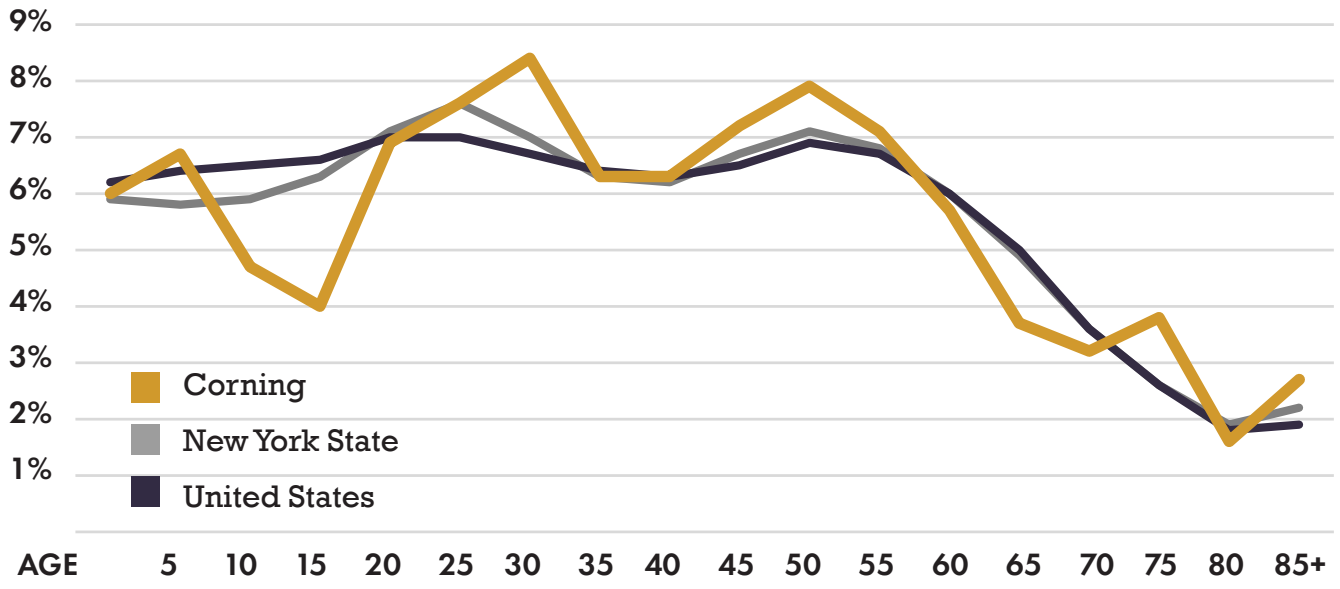
- White or Caucasian
- Black or African American
- Asian
- Two or More Races
- American Indian or Other

(2010 US Census)

AGES OF RESIDENTS (by Percent)

(2017 American Community Survey [ACS] Estimates)

Corning differs significantly from national and statewide averages in several key age segments. Most notably, the City has relatively fewer children and teenagers, but has relatively more residents between the ages of 25 and 34, and between the ages of 40 and 54.



HOUSING

(2014 Housing Strategy)

According to the 2014 Corning Housing Strategy, an emphasis on improving neighborhood amenities, such as parks, can help spur block-by-block revitalization of the City's aging housing stock

Median Year of a House Built in the City of Corning:

1939

Median Year of a House Built in the United States:

1976

RESIDENT ACCESS TO VEHICLES

(2017 ACS Estimates)

Over 14% of Corning households do not have access to a vehicle, making accessing amenities like City Parks more difficult. An additional 47% of households only have access to one vehicle, which also creates accessibility issues for families when the only car is in use by a family member. Emphasizing bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure is key to promoting accessibility to parks for all residents.

725 *households have access to* **[0]** *Vehicles*

2,427 *households have access to* **[1]** *Vehicle*

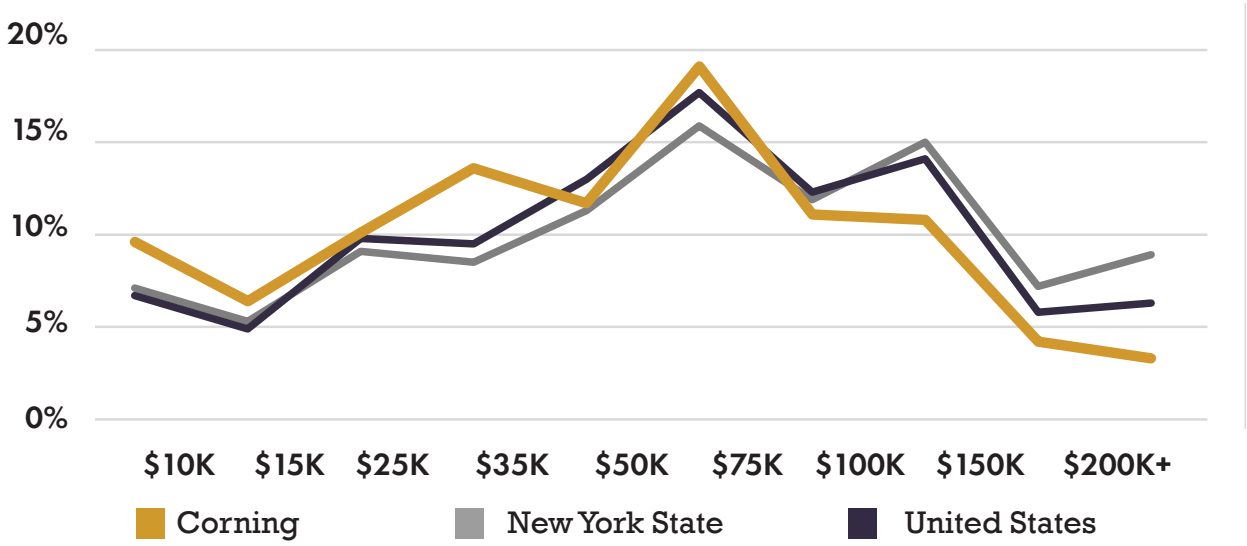
1,587 *households have access to* **[2]** *Vehicles*

439 *households have access to* **[3]** *Vehicles*

RESIDENT INCOME

(2017 ACS Estimates)

Relative to statewide and national income trends, Corning has a slightly higher proportion of residents who make $75,000/year or less. However, in comparison to similarly-sized cities and towns in the same upstate New York region, the City of Corning has more residents who make $75,000/year or more.



RESIDENT EMPLOYMENT BY SECTOR

(2017 ACS Estimates)

The presence of the world headquarters of Corning, Inc. contributes to the high quantity of management, business, science, and art workers who live in the City of Corning. Over 1,000 people work at this facility, which is located in the heart of downtown on the south side of the Chemung River. Other key employers within the City of Corning include Wegmans, the Corning Credit Union, and shops along Market Street in the Gaffer District.

The significant amount of employment opportunities within the City of Corning creates a unique economic statistic: according to 2017 ACS statistics, the City is actually home to slightly more jobs than residents. Enhancements to community amenities like parks and trails may help encourage more of the people who work in Corning to live there as well.

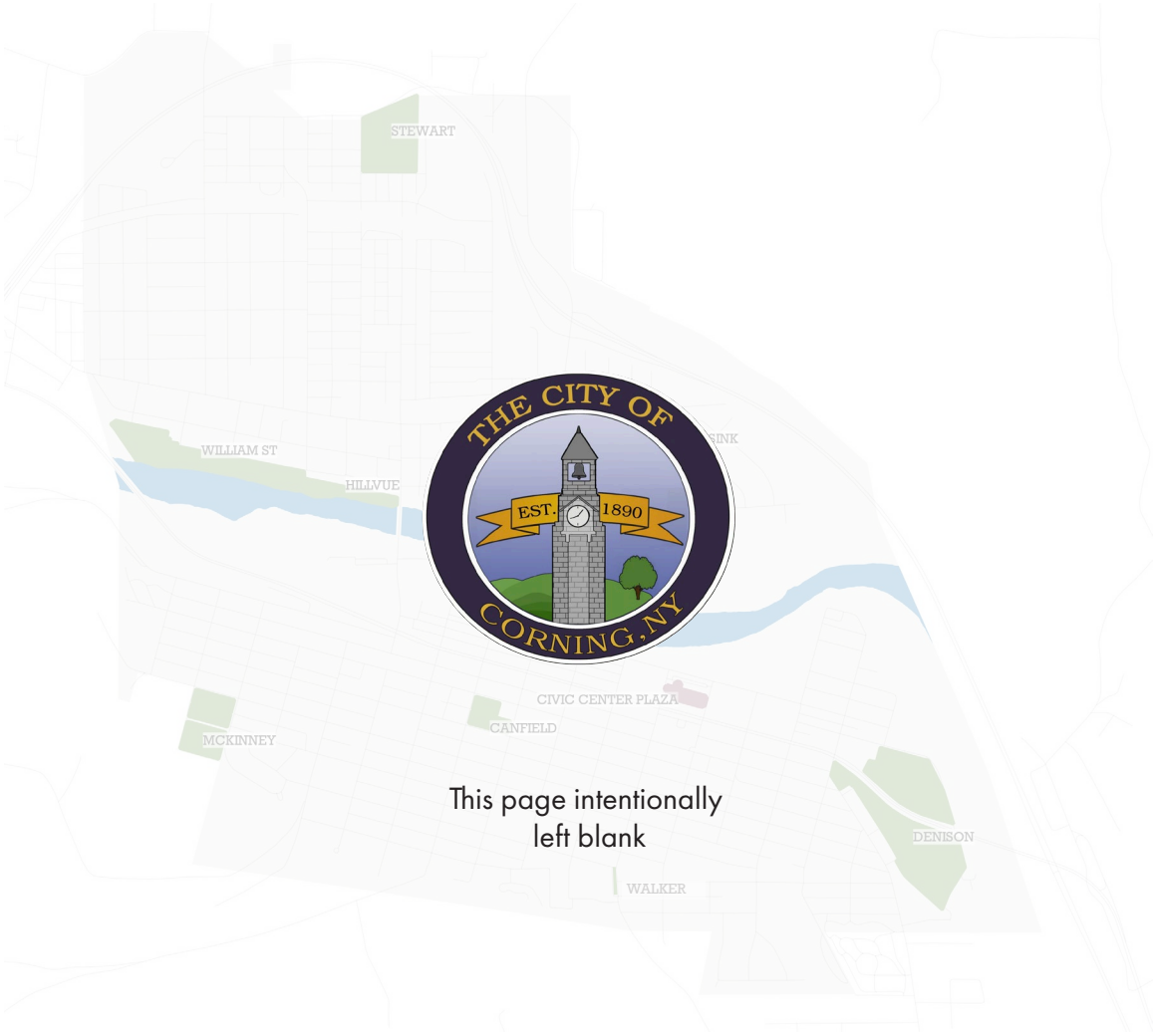
- Management, Business, Science, Art
- Sales & Office
- Service Occupations
- Natural Resources & Construction
- Production & Transportation

1.4 RELEVANT RECENT PLANNING EFFORTS

The extensive collection of planning documents that the City of Corning has commissioned has resulted in a firm foundation for comprehensive parks planning. Many of the recommendations within this plan are based upon the findings within the plans listed below.

YEAR	TITLE	AUTHOR(S)	KEY TAKEAWAYS
2018	**City of Corning Economic Development Strategic Plan**	TIP Strategies	• Details current & future economic trends • Discusses enhancing 'quality of place' through diversifying amenities • Mentions utilization of waterfront, development of new multimodal paths, enhanced wayfinding, and potential implementation of splash pad as strategies for increasing tourism & luring future residents
2017	**City Municipal Aquatic Facilities Evaluation Report**	Barton and Loguidice	• Discusses maintenance & upkeep issues related to City-owned pools • Gives recommendations and cost estimates for alternatives related to eliminating pools and/or implementing splash pads
2017	**Steuben County Transportation Study**	Southern Tier Central Planning	• Highlights issues with current transportation systems, namely related to plethora of providers • Details existing public transit user groups, stating that 50% of users do not have access to vehicles
2014	**Residential Housing Improvement Study for City of Corning**	Fairweather Consulting	• Outlines current and future housing trends • Identifies typical desires of growing market segment groups • Highlights importance of creating cohesive neighborhoods and streets, which can be built around amenities

YEAR	TITLE	AUTHOR(S)	KEY TAKEAWAYS
2014	**Steuben County Economic Development Plan**	Steuben Cty. Industrial Development Agency	• Discusses benefits of waterfront development • Details importance of creating a high quality of life to attract businesses and talent
2011	**Southeast Steuben County River Vision Project**	Southern Tier Central Planning	• Discusses history of support for enhanced access to Chemung River • Details regulatory measures related to levee and Chemung River • Outlines detailed proposals for trail networks, boat launches, and recreational areas along River
2008	**City of Corning Centerway Bridge Restoration Project**	Fisher Associates	• Includes designs for construction of historic Centerway Bridge, which were completed after 2010 • Outlines trail system near Chemung River related to safe routes to school
2002	**City of Corning Comprehensive Plan**	River Street Planning & Development	• Identifies relationships between parks and surrounding neighborhoods • Recommends parks, trails, and streetscape enhancements
2001	**Visual Survey of Conditions of City Owned Parks**	Synthesis Architects	• Highlights strategies for improving maintenance of parks system • Discusses specific parks improvements to several parks
1999	**City of Corning Northside Walking Trail**	Hunt Engineers	• Creates design for proposed loop walking trail to link public spaces on north side of City
1994	**Historic Landscape Report: Denison and Canfield Parks**	Market Square Restoration Agency	• Traces historic development of Canfield Park, beginning in 1835, and Denison Park, beginning in 1906.
1988	**Master Plan for Recreation**	Citizen's Advisory Committee	• Surveys parks conditions & use • Recommends improvements to facilities based on usage trends & best practices



This page intentionally
left blank

EXISTING CONDITIONS

2.1 PARKS SYSTEM **2.2** INDIVIDUAL PARKS

2.1 PARKS SYSTEM OVERVIEW

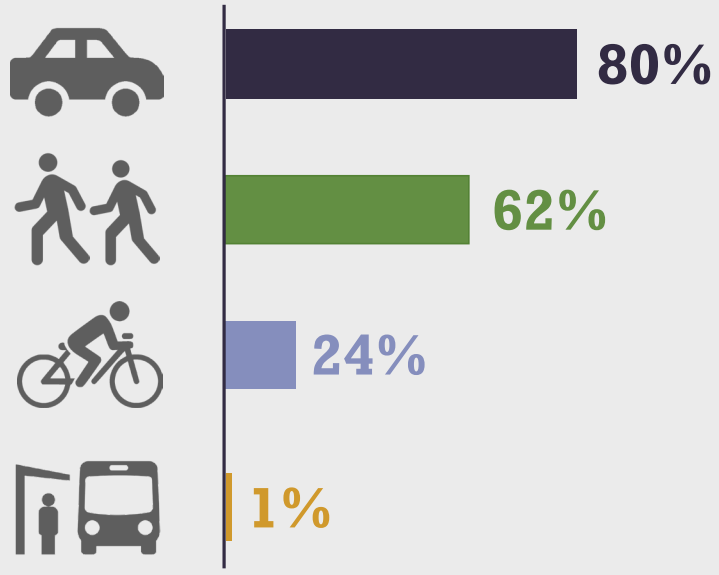
The City of Corning has nine City-owned parks, ranging from 32-acre Denison Park to 0.2-acre Walker Park. As shown on Figure 1: Parks System Overview, the parks total 86.9 acres of land, a significant amount of parkland for a city of 3.2 square miles. This section provides an overview of how the parks function as a system, highlighting connectivity, general amenities, community usage trends, existing maintenance practices, and other, non-city owned recreational amenities in and around Corning.

CONNECTIVITY & ACCESS

Connectivity and access refers to the ways in which community members can move to, from, and between parks. Robust networks for pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and other modes of transit enable and encourage a variety of users for the parks system, enhancing social equity.

PARK LOCATIONS: As shown on the following figures, Corning City Parks are well-dispersed throughout the City; they are evenly distributed between the north and south side of the Chemung River, and are typically located at least one mile apart from each other. This spacing, along with the fact that most parks are located along pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly streets (lower-volume, residential roads in neighborhoods), contributes to the high amount of Corning residents who report typically bicycling or walking to parks.

CORNING SURVEY DATA: PARKS ACCESS

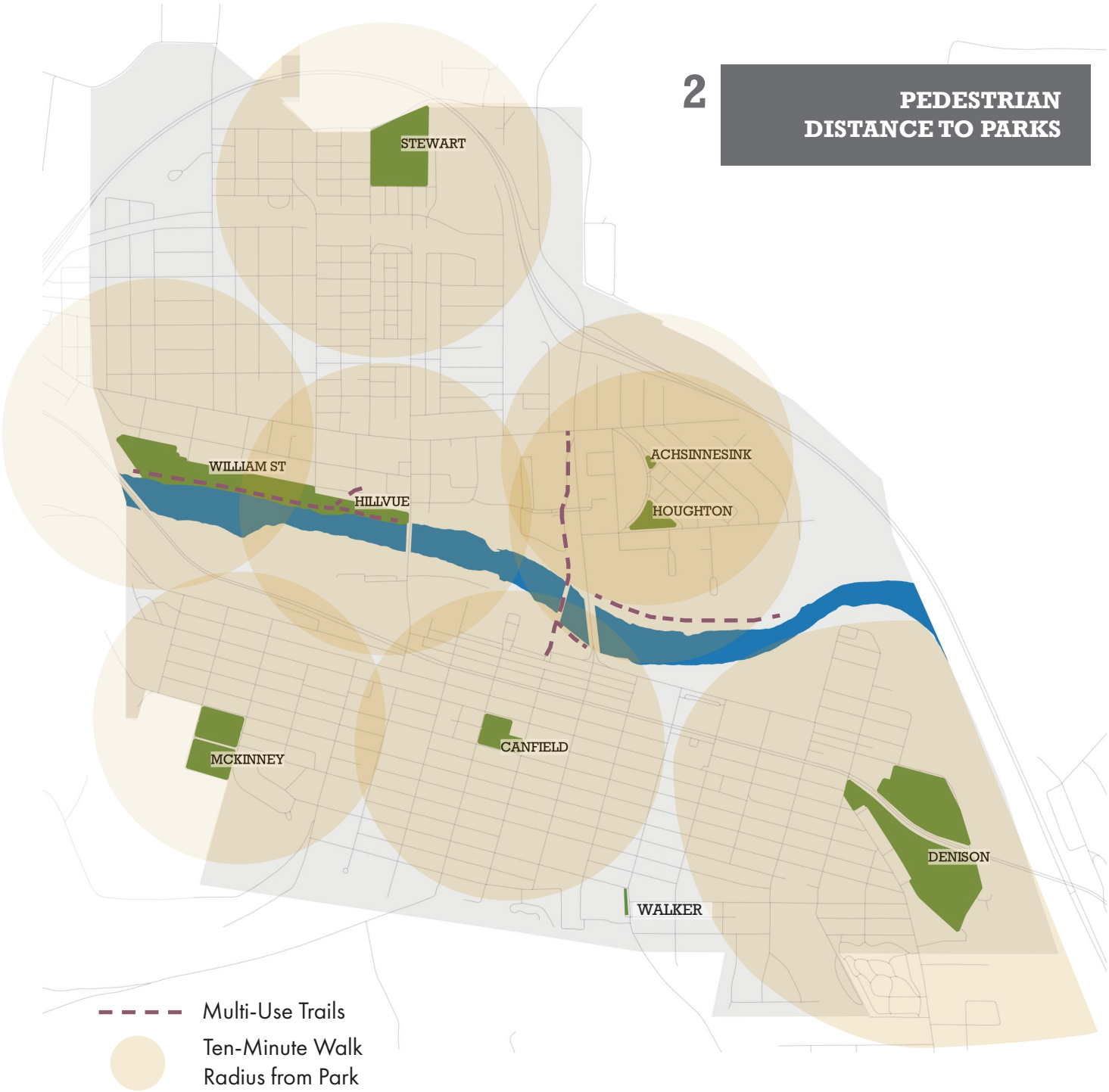


A very significant amount of respondents indicate that they regularly use **active transportation** (bicycling , walking, running, or skateboarding) to access the Corning City Parks. Respondents who identified as City residents had even higher active transportation use rates.

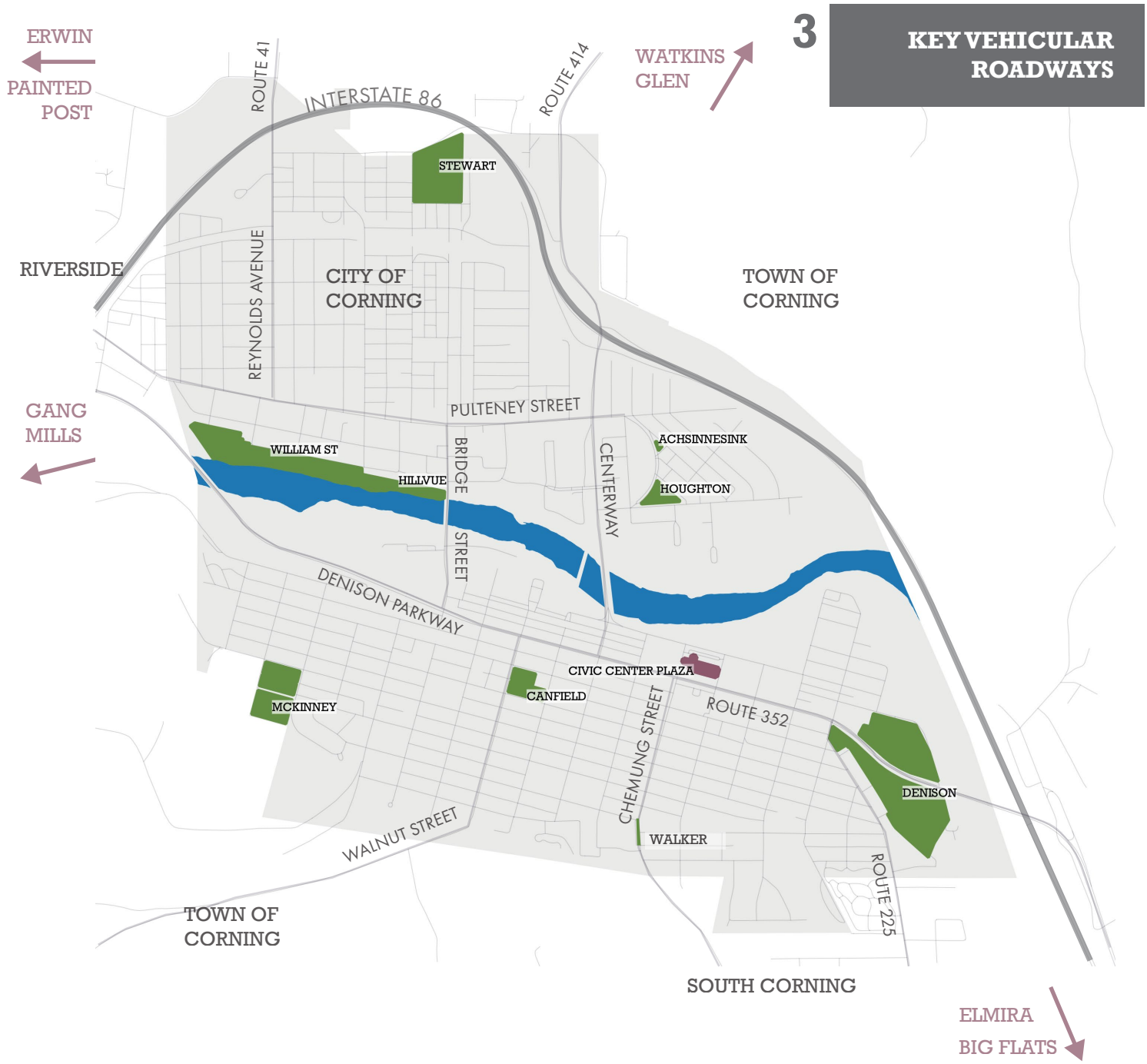
1 PARKS SYSTEM OVERVIEW

ACREAGE

Achsinnesink Memorial Park 0.28	Denison Park 32.0	Houghton Park 1.9	Stewart Park 12.5	William Street Park 20.0
Canfield Park 3.1	Hillvue Park 9.13	McKinney Park 7.8	Walker Park 0.19	**Total:** **86.9**



MULTIMODAL ACCESS: The above figure illustrates an approximate 10-minute walk radius around each main city-owned park, a distance that is nationally used as a benchmark for understanding pedestrian connectivity to parks. As shown on this figure, over 90% of Corning residents live within this 10-minute radius to at least one park, an excellent mark for any community. Along the river, there are also several formal and informal shared use paths, including a trail along the riverfront levee in Hillvue and William Street Parks, and pathways on both sides of the pedestrian Centerway Bridge, all of which further promote multimodal access.



VEHICULAR ACCESS: The significant topographical changes within the City of Corning create a barrier for many pedestrians and bicyclists to access parks, particularly McKinney, Canfield, and Stewart Parks, which are located on hillsides. For this reason and others, many residents frequently drive to parks, utilizing either on-street parking or dedicated parking lots. Figure 3: Key Vehicular Roadways illustrates main vehicular thoroughfares in and around Corning; as shown, the majority of parks are located nearby, though not adjacent to, these main roadways.

CONNECTIVITY TO DESTINATIONS: As illustrated on Figure 4: Community Assets and Destinations, many parks are located adjacent to key destinations within the community. All public and private schools are located within 0.5 miles of a park, while the YMCA, Senior Center, and Fire Department are all located less than 0.2 miles from a park. Additionally, the Southeast Steuben County Library and the Government Buildings are located on Civic Center Plaza. Several of the parks are also nearby key tourist destinations such as the Market Street Commercial District, Corning Museum of Glass, and Rockwell Museum, including Canfield, Houghton, and Denison Parks. For additional information on Non-City owned green spaces, please refer to the end of this chapter.

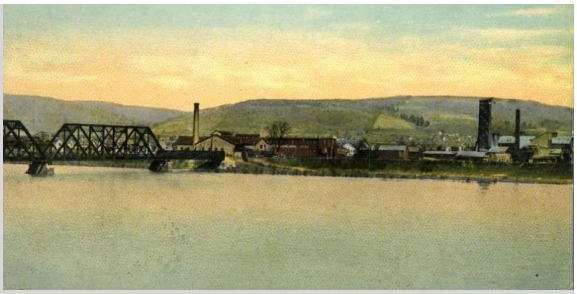
ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS:

FLOODING: Corning's location along the Chemung River makes the community prone to significant flooding, particularly in spring when melting snow drains down steep hillsides into the river. In 1972, the most significant flood in recent memory struck the City, with water levels reaching over 12 feet in many areas near the river. For this reason, the entire City is protected by a levee structure on both sides of the river that is designed and maintained by the Army Corps of Engineers. This levee runs adjacent to three Corning City Parks: Denison on the south side, and Hillvue and William Street on the north side.

WATER QUALITY: Though the Chemung River is not recognized as a threatened waterbody, several key lakes and rivers within the Finger Lakes Region of upstate New York have been recently identified as such, including nearby Seneca Lake and Canandaigua Lake. With increasing pollution due to farming and unfiltered stormwater runoff, the waterbodies are becoming increasingly unsafe to swim in. While not found in Corning, the increasing frequency of Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) and other regional threats to water quality can impact the availability of summer recreation areas and parkland for safe use.

CONTAMINATION: Several Corning City Parks are recognized as potential hazardous waste sites, due to dumping as late as the early twentieth century. On the north side, Stewart Park, William Street Park, and Hillvue Park have potential contaminants; on the south side, McKinney Park and the south end of Denison Park have potential contaminants. Efforts for identification and remediation are ongoing, and are being pursued by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation in partnership with the City of Corning and other relevant stakeholders.

CHEMUNG RIVER (2010s)



CHEMUNG RIVER (1900s)

AMENITIES:

The City of Corning parks system offers a balance of unprogrammed and programmed spaces, with woods, a pond, and open fields complemented by a variety of built amenities. The matrix on pages 28-29 provides an overview of the amenities and facilities located within each park:

4 COMMUNITY ASSETS & DESTINATIONS

NON-CITY OWNED GREEN SPACES

1 Centerway Bridge
2 Centennial Park
3 Buechner Park
4 Fallbrook Park
5 Mt. Hope Cemetery

SCHOOLS

6 Winfield Elementary
7 Hugh Gregg Elementary
8 Corning-Painted Post HS
9 Corning Christian Academy
10 All Saints Academy
11 Carder Elementary
12 Alternative School for M&S
13 Severn Elementary

COMMUNITY SERVICES

14 Senior Center
15 YMCA
16 Fire Department
17 Southeast Steuben Co. Library
18 Government Buildings
19 Veterans of Foreign Wars

DESTINATIONS

20 Museum of Glass
21 Market Street
22 Rockwell Museum

BUSINESSES

23 Corning, Inc. Headquarters
24 Wegmans

AMENITY MATRIX

PARK NAME	PAVILION	PLAYGROUND	WALKING TRAILS	OPEN SPACE	RECTANGLE FIELD	BASKETBALL COURT
Canfield Park			1			
Civic Center Plaza						
Denison Park	3	1	1	+	1	2
Hillvue Park	1	1	1			
Houghton Park	1	1		+		
McKinney Park	2	1		+	2	1
Stewart Park	1	1	1	+	1	1
William St. Park	1		1	+		1
Mini-Parks (Walker & Achsinnesink)						
TOTALS	9	5	5	5	4	5

DIAMOND OR BACKSTOP	TENNIS COURT	POOL	DISC GOLF COURSE	SKATE PARK	HORSESHOE COURT	VOLLEYBALL COURT	ICE RINK
							1
4	2	1	1	1	2	1	
1	2						
1	3	1					
					12		
6	7	2	1	1	14	1	1

PARKS USAGE:

In general, the Corning City Parks system is well-utilized by community members and visitors of all ages. For youth, the City offers a robust set of recreational programs that are typically well-attended. There are also a large number of groups and organizations who utilize the parks for regular events, including many of the stakeholder groups listed on page 2 of this document. Based on survey responses, the parks are also heavily utilized by recreational walkers and joggers, and for passive recreation such as wildlife watching, reading, and photography. The graphics on the following page provide a summary of the typical usage patterns for the parks based on survey responses.

MAINTENANCE & CONDITION:

The City of Corning utilizes a number of dedicated staff to maintain the parks system. However, the City has recently had to reduce the amount of staff and time hours that can be put towards the parks, necessitating a prioritization on efficiency and maximized resources. There are also community members involved in maintaining several of the parks, as organized groups such as the Disc Golf Club have taken ownership of keeping selected areas in Denison Park in clean condition.

As shown below, community members have generally indicated that the parks system is kept in fair condition and feels safe, and only a few have noted that concerns over condition or safety inhibit the amount that they currently utilize the parks. Facilities in general seem to be well maintained, but tend to be outdated.

CORNING SURVEY DATA: PARKS CONDITIONS EVALUATION

49%

of respondents believe that the **condition and cleanliness** of the parks are good or excellent

60%

of respondents believe that **perceptions of safety** within the parks system are good or excellent

64%

of respondents believe that there is always or usually enough **parking** within the parks system

35%

of respondents indicated that the **condition** of the parks system is a barrier to increased usage.

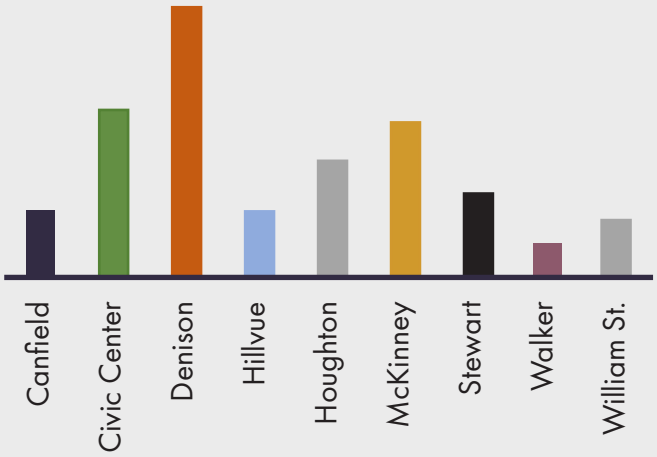
11%

of respondents indicated that a perceived **lack of safety** is a barrier to increased usage.

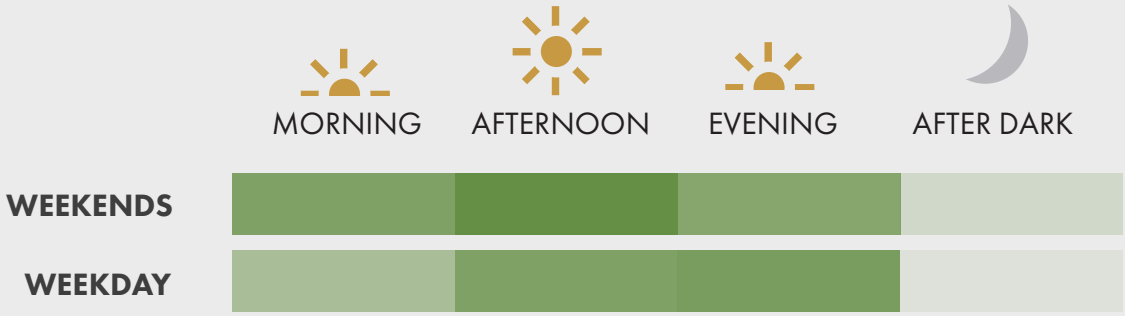
37%

of respondents indicated that a perceived **lack of available time** is a barrier to increased usage of the parks system.

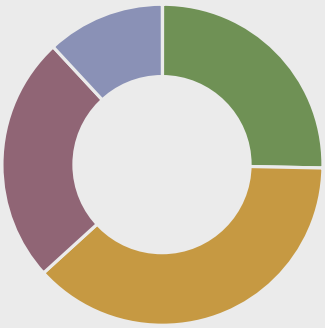
CORNING SURVEY DATA: PARKS USAGE

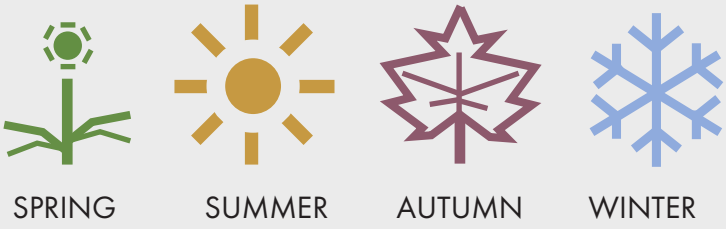


According to survey respondents, **Denison Park** is used nearly twice as much as the next City-owned public spaces are, which include Civic Center Plaza and McKinney Park. Of the parks over 1 acre, William Street, Hillvue, and Canfield are used the least by survey respondents.



Parks are used most on weekend mornings and afternoons and weekday evenings.



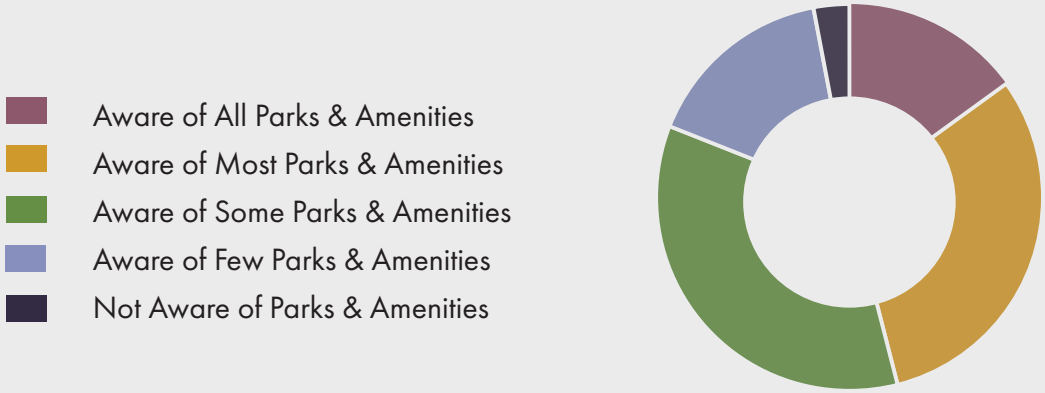


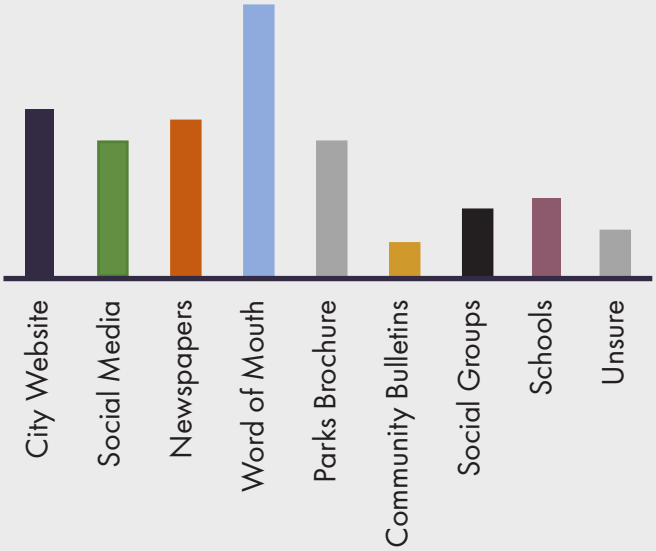
Roughly 3/8 of the parks usage occurs during **summer**, with 1/4 of usage in spring and 1/4 in autumn.

AWARENESS & SIGNAGE

The City shares information about the parks system through a variety of methods, including a recreational programming brochure and additional flyers and printed media. However, as shown below, the majority of community members hear about information related to the city parks through 'word-of-mouth,' instead of through any one other medium. Currently, community members must register for programs and reserve facilities in-person or via mail, though the City is in the process of rolling out a digital platform that will enable coordinated email outreach and online registration.

CORNING SURVEY DATA: PARKS AWARENESS





Survey respondents indicated that they **receive information** about Corning Parks from a wide variety of sources. The fact that 'Word-of-Mouth' is by far the most common form of gathering information suggests a lack of a centralized location for sharing information related to the parks system.

16% of respondents indicated that a **lack of awareness** of park facilities and programming reduces their use of Corning City Parks.

MOST PARKS IN THE CITY SYSTEM HAVE CUSTOM WELCOME SIGNS WITH STANDARD FONTS AND THE CITY OF CORNING'S LOGO.

POLICY & REGULATIONS

The following section summarizes all code and zoning measures relevant to the Corning City Parks System and the Parks Strategy. In general, the existing documents outline actions that are prohibited within public areas, which includes the parks system.

City Code Chapter: CHAPTER TITLE

» **62-5: ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES** No one shall be permitted to serve or consume alcoholic beverages on City of Corning premises, unless an application has been filed and approved by the City of Corning Parks and Recreation Department.

» **68-5: ANIMALS** Dogs may not run at large upon any public property, including parks. They must be accompanied by an adult or minor who is able to restrain and control the dog on a leash. The dog owner, or person in charge of the dog, must remove all waste left by the dog.

» **126-2: LITTER** No person shall litter in the park, except in public receptacles, and in such a manner that the waste will not be scattered throughout the park or street. If public receptacles are not available, all litter shall be carried from the park by the person responsible for its presence.

» **150-1: DEFINITION OF PARKS & RECREATION AREAS** A park, playground, recreation center or any other area in the City of Corning, New York, owned or used by said city, and devoted to active or passive recreation.

» **150-2: HOURS OF OPERATION** Parks are closed to the public between 10:00PM and sunrise.

» **150-4: PROHIBITED OPERATIONS** Vehicles and bicycles are not allowed on park lands, except where established roadways traverse lands.

» **150-7: POSSESSION OF FIREARMS** No person shall willingly possess any weapon capable of firing a shot capable of causing injury or death in any designated park or recreational area.

» **184-4: SKATEBOARDS, SKATES, AND BICYCLES** Bicycles, skateboards, and in-line skates may not be used (except on designated trails) near the Downtown District on parking lots, sidewalks, parking garages, and all other municipally owned lots. This area is bounded by Columbia Street, Denison Parkway, Centerway Bridge, East Pulteney Street, Wallace Street, the Chemung River, and Bridge Street.

» **194: SPECIAL EVENTS (utilizing city-owned parks or plazas)** Permission to hold a special event may be granted only by the City Council, subject to approval by the Director of Public Safety or his/her designee, with view to prevention of undue noises, prevention of fire hazards and to protect public safety, health and welfare.

NON-CITY OWNED RECREATIONAL AMENITIES

The following parks, recreational centers, and trails were identified as places where Corning residents typically recreate. This data was collected through the Community Survey, Public Open House #1, and stakeholder input. Many of these facilities are shown on Figure 4: Community Assets & Destinations on page 27.

PARKS WITHIN THE CITY OF CORNING:

» **Fallbrook Park:** Located along the south bank of the Chemung River near Civic Center Plaza, Fallbrook Park is frequently used for recreational walking or jogging.

» **Thomas Buechner Park:** Located across the street from the Rockwell Museum along Denison Avenue, Thomas Buechner Park is a small, formally-designed park that features several seating areas.

» **Centennial Park:** Located adjacent to Market Street, the Centerway Bridge, and the headquarters of Corning, Incorporated, Centennial Park is frequently used for passive recreation and summer events.

» **Centerway Bridge:** Formerly used by vehicular traffic, the Centerway Bridge was transformed in 2013 into a pedestrian connection between downtown Corning and the Corning Museum of Glass. Located adjacent to Centennial Park, the bridge crosses the Chemung River and features landscaped areas, seating, a wildlife signage trail, and a painted maze. The Centerway Bridge is a City-owned facility.

OTHER FACILITIES WITHIN THE CITY OF CORNING

» **YMCA:** Located along Center Way on the north side of the Chemung River, the Corning Community YMCA features amenities including an indoor pool, gymnasium, indoor track, a squash court, racquetball courts, a fitness center, an outdoor basketball court, an outdoor playground, and two outdoor tennis courts. Usage of the facilities is restricted to their members. According to information from staff members, the YMCA is currently fully utilizing all of its amenities, and often has competing interests for usage of space.

» **Corning-Painted Post School District:** Located on the north bank of the Chemung River, the school district currently features amenities including a turf field with surrounding track, two grass rectangular fields, a baseball diamond, a softball diamond, six tennis courts, an indoor pool, and an indoor gymnasium. In 2018, the district unveiled plans to modify vehicular circulation at the school, which will provide space for additional tennis courts. Community members are allowed to utilize certain school facilities when they are not in use by students.

» **Fields at Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW):** Located on the north end of the City, near Stewart Park, the 'Cinderella' fields at the VFW are utilized frequently for softball leagues.

CORNING YMCA

FALLBROOK PARK

THOMAS BUECHNER PARK

SURVEY DATA: USE OF OTHER PARKS & RECREATION FACILITIES

67% of respondents use local **State Parks**

42% of respondents use **Regional Parks**

51% of respondents use **Centennial Park**

40% of respondents use **Fallbrook Park**

43% of respondents use facilities at the **Corning-Painted Post School District**

7% of respondents use **Thomas Buechner Park**

PARKS & RECREATIONAL AREAS OUTSIDE OF CITY OF CORNING

- **Municipal Parks** Village of Painted Post Parks (Craig Park, including dog park; Hodgman Park; Kinsella Park); Town of Erwin Parks; City of Elmira Parks; Town of Big Flats Parks; Village of Horseheads Parks; Village of Riverside Parks; Town of Chemung Parks; Town of Erin Parks.
- **Additional Recreational Attractions:** Corning Country Club (Town of Corning): Located just over a mile south of the City of Corning, Corning Country Club features an 18-hole golf course, two tennis courts, and a pool; Corning Community College Field.
- **Regional Parks & Land:** Spencer Crest Nature Center, Finger Lakes Land Trust (Houghton Preserve), Tanglewood Nature Center, Seneca Lake, Keuka Lake.
- **State Parks:** Chimney Bluffs, Watkins Glen, Toughgannock Falls, Letchworth.
- **State Forests:** Erwin Hollow, Erwin Mountain, West Hill, Sugar Hill State Forest.
- **Multi-Use Trails:** Finger Lakes Trail, Catherine Valley Trail, Crystal Hills Trail.

2.2 INDIVIDUAL PARKS

This section provides information on each park within the City Parks System, as well as Civic Center Plaza. The following information is included for each park: Location & Land Use, Historical Information, Environmental Considerations, Access, and Specific Amenities.

ACHSINNESSINK MEMORIAL

CANFIELD

DENISON

HILLVUE

HOUGHTON

MCKINNEY

STEWART

WILLIAM STREET

WALKER

CIVIC CENTER PLAZA

ACHSINNESINK MEMORIAL PARK

Located just north of Houghton Park, Achsinnesink Memorial Park honors the heritage of local Native Americans with an engraved memorial. At 0.3 acres, Achsinnesink Memorial is the second-smallest Corning City Park.

LOCATION & LAND USE

Achsinnesink Memorial Park is located in the triangular plot between Houghton Circle, Pershing Street, and Belleau Street. It is surrounded by a residential area.

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

In 1996, the existing Achsinnesink Monument was dedicated to honor the Native American village of Achsinnesink. According to the Crooked Lake Review, the name means 'stone on stone' and refers to the columns of layered rock that once were located north of the City of Corning.

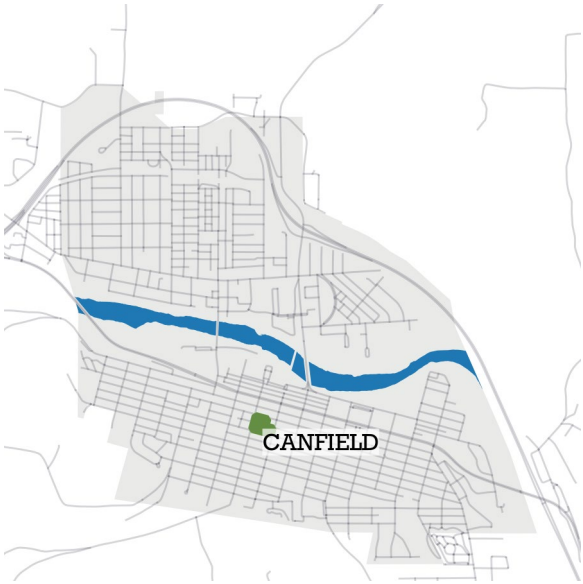
ACCESS

While all surrounding streets have sidewalks, there are no designated crosswalks between these sidewalks and Achsinnesink Memorial Park. Vehicles can park along adjacent streets to access the park.

Though Achsinnesink Memorial Park is rarely utilized by community members on a day-to-day basis, dozens of residents attend organized ceremonies.

CANFIELD PARK

Canfield Park is the oldest park within the City Parks System, and still retains much of its historic character, with formal pathways, plantings, and seating with views of Downtown Corning and the Chemung River Valley.



LOCATION & LAND USE

Located several blocks south of Downtown, Canfield Park is 3.1 acres and comprises the majority of the City block between First, Second, Pine, and Walnut Streets. The park is surrounded primarily by single family housing, though the Academy Place Apartments, completed in 2017, are located two blocks to the south of the park.

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A 1994 Historic Landscape Report details the historic evolution of Denison and Canfield Parks; while a summary is included in this Parks Strategy, please note that the full document, along with all other historic resources utilized in this report, is included in Appendix B: Historical Resources.

Initially designated as a public square adjacent to the Courthouse, 'Court House Park' was designed in 1905 by City Engineer Robert Canfield. Influenced by the City Beautiful Movement, the initial plans are formal in nature and included a central plaza and bandstand surrounded by paths, shade trees, park benches, and grass plots, and two smaller plazas to the southeast of the main plaza. Over the past century, though the edges of the formal paths and plazas have become less noticeable, the general shape and configuration of the park has largely remained the same. Consequently, Canfield Park is historically significant and meets two criteria for inclusion on the National Register, as it illustrates the role of open space in the development of Corning and embodies the characteristics of the public square, a distinct landscape typology. According to the Historic Landscape Report, the Park's period of significance lies between 1835 and 1912; the integrity of existing and proposed features within Canfield Park should therefore be based upon the design during that period.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

- **Topography:** Canfield Park is located on a hill with grades ranging from 6% – 43% throughout, according to the Historic Landscape Report.
- **Drainage:** According to City Staff, in the past, the pipe system underneath the park did not adequately handle runoff. Consequently, the stone dust path that connects to the northwest end of the park often washes out, with stone scattering into the sidewalk. These drainage issues are being addressed by City Staff.

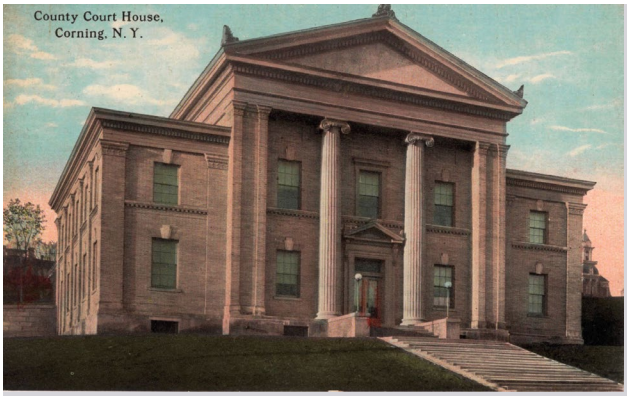
ACCESS

Vehicular parallel parking is located along the four streets that border the park; according to the community survey, this parking is generally sufficient. Formal stone dust pathways wind throughout the park, leading to a central gathering space. However, the topographical profile of the park significantly limits pedestrian accessibility, particularly for residents with mobility challenges.

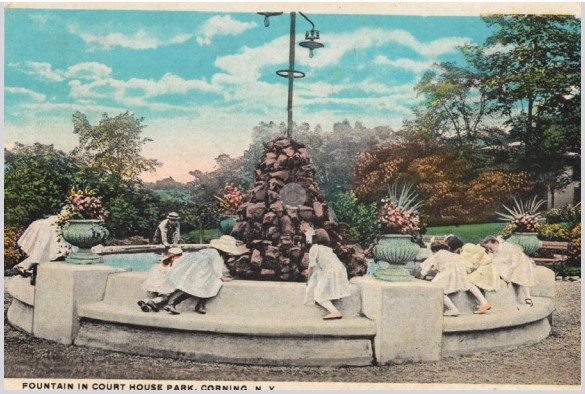
AMENITIES

- **Seating:** Several benches are located around the central gathering space within the park, with northward-facing views.
- **Walking Trails:** There is currently a network of walking trails throughout the park that reflect the historic design. These trails were recently reconstructed using stone dust after previously being grass-covered.

Canfield Park is typically used by neighborhood residents for passive recreation and walking.



COURTHOUSE ON NORTH SIDE OF PARK



OLD FOUNTAIN IN CENTER OF PARK

Collection of Dr. Edward Mainzer, Corning, NY

WALKING TRAIL

WELCOME SIGN

WALKING TRAIL & LOOP

DENISON PARK

At 32 acres, Denison Park is the largest park within the City of Corning Parks System. With a wide variety of amenities including a pool, pond, disc golf course, sports courts and fields, and pavilions, Denison Park is also the most frequently utilized City Park.

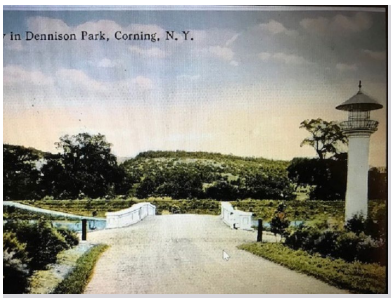
LOCATION

Located along the southwestern border of the City, Denison Park is bordered by residential neighborhoods to the west and the Chemung River to the east; the park is split into northern and southern sections by New York State Route 352, an elevated highway that spans the Chemung River to connect the City of Corning with municipalities to the east. The southern section of Denison park is also adjacent to a Wastewater Treatment Plant.

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Designed by noted landscape architect Harold Caparn on the site of an old swamp, Denison Park first opened to public use in 1909. Through funding primarily from the Denison Family, various amenities were added to the park in the early 20th Century, including baseball diamonds, ball fields, a lake, and a public swimming pool, and the park became a cultural and recreational destination. In 1947, State Route 352 was re-routed through the center of Denison Park, bisecting the park into its current north and south segments, and rearranging the organization of the park's amenities and circulation patterns. Due to these significant alterations, Denison Park is not able to convey its historical significance; however, several of the features from the initial designs still remain in the park, including:

- **Concrete Bridge:** The existing concrete bridge was designed by City Engineer Robert Canfield in 1910.
- **Memorial Gate:** Designed in 1919 by Buffalo architect James Walker, the post-and-lintel gate was initially constructed at the main entrance on Conhocton Street. After the park was bisected, the gateway was moved to a site along Park Avenue, though the structure itself was not modified.
- **Lighthouse:** Referred to as the 'tower' in the 1994 Historic Landscape Report, little is known about the lighthouse that once existed adjacent to the Concrete Bridge. As illustrated by the accompanying figure, the lighthouse once had a metal basket with an overhanging roof, though it is no longer extant.
- **Memorial Garden Fountain:** Initially constructed in 1912, the fountain once had a basin with four vertical plaques; today, only the surrounding seating area remains.
- **Concession Stand:** Initially constructed in the 1920s, the concession stand was moved to its current location near the Denison Park pool between 1947-1972.



LIGHTHOUSE

CONCESSION STAND

MEMORIAL GATE

From recreation to relaxation, Denison Park is utilized for a variety of purposes throughout all four seasons. In addition to the users discussed below, residents often use the park to walk dogs, play mobile games, and relax in the open space.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

- **Topography:** The majority of the park is fairly flat, with man-made hills for State Route 352 and the levees along the Chemung River.
- **Pond:** Until recently, runoff from the cooling tanks at Guthrie Memorial Hospital provided inflow to the Denison Park Pond; however, since the closure of the hospital in 2018, the lack of inflow has led to occasional circulation issues and stagnant water.
- **Trees:** Denison Park has a wide variety of healthy tree species, some of which have been recently planted by the Disc Golf Club.
- **Drainage:** Throughout the majority of the park, drainage is sufficient. However, several areas on the south side of the park, particularly near the bathrooms, occasionally accumulate standing water.
- **Wastewater Treatment Plant:** During the summers, the adjacent plant produces odors that can blow into Denison Park, an issue raised by several community members. Some odor control measures have been implemented to address this issue.

ACCESS

The Park is accessible to all modes of transit, with multi-use pathways and a 'loop' roadway. Several areas are designated for approximately 20 parking spaces, and community input suggests that these facilities are sufficient, though vehicles do occasionally park on the grass during busier summer events. However, the mid-century reconfiguration around State Route 352 diminished the cohesiveness of the Park's layout, leading to an environment without wayfinding cues that can be confusing for pedestrians and cyclists to navigate. Additionally, the north and south sides of the park are connected only by two underpasses below State Route 352: a narrow, pedestrian underpass near the northwest edge, and a wider, vehicular underpass near the Chemung River.

AMENITIES

- **Disc Golf:** An 18-hole disc golf course with baskets and concrete tee pads winds throughout the grassy and moderately wooded areas of the park. As the only disc golf facility within a 25 mile radius, the course is frequently used throughout all four seasons. The 'Corning Twenty Percenters,' a local disc golf association with over 100 members, sponsors weekly leagues and maintains the course. However, due to the limited available space within the current configuration in Denison Park, the disc golf course has several 'crossing fairways,' and often conflicts with other amenities.
- **Pool:** The Denison Park Pool complex is one of two current aquatic facilities within the City Parks System, and is heavily utilized by residents both from the City of Corning and nearby municipalities; City-sponsored and private organizations also hold daily or weekly swimming programs at the pool. The current complex was constructed in 1972, and consists of a large outdoor pool with an estimated surface area of 4,850 square feet; though the pool has a diving area and a shallow area, it lacks an intermediate depth of 3-4'. A small wading pool is also located at the north end of the complex, along with three separate masonry buildings that house two pool mechanical rooms, restrooms, changing areas, lockers, office space, and a small concession stand. According to the 2017 Facilities Evaluation Report, the pools are in fair condition, with minor cracks and heaving within the concrete decking, and small areas of deterioration within the shallow end of the pool; several of these issues have since been addressed by City staff.
- **Tennis Courts** (2): Located on the north side of the park, these courts are in fair condition but are not frequently used.
- **Basketball Courts** (2): Located on the north side of the park, the courts are in fair condition, but are only moderately used.
- **Pavilions** (3): Located on both sides of the park, all three pavilions are frequently utilized for weddings, ceremonies, and other events. On summer weekends, the pavilions must be reserved through the City Recreation Department. However, City staff has stated that trash in pavilions is often not picked-up, though park users are legally expected to dispose of all waste after events.

- **Volleyball Court** (1): Located on the north side of the park, the existing sand volleyball court is in moderate condition, and is not frequently used.
- **Horseshoe Pits** (2): The existing horseshoe pits are in fair condition, and are occasionally used during events.
- **Fitness Trail**: Installed in the early 2010s, the trail includes several workout stations spread throughout the park. The stations are in good condition, and utilized frequently.
- **Rectangular Field:** Located on the north side of the park, the rectangular field is used primarily by soccer and lacrosse groups, including summer leagues and the Corning Christian Academy. The field must be reserved through the City Recreation Department.
- **Softball – Baseball Backstop**: Located adjacent to the rectangular field, the existing backstop is not frequently used.

SKATE PARK

DISC GOLF TEE MARKER

DISC GOLF KIOSK

- **Baseball Diamonds** (3): Located south of Denison Park Pond, these baseball diamonds were added to the park in the late 20th century. These fields have not been frequently utilized since the City of Corning's Little League merged with Painted Post's Little League; games are now held at fields in Painted Post.
- **Skate Park**: Located at the north end of the park, the existing skate park is in poor condition and is rarely utilized. Uneven pavement and steep ramps make the facility dangerous to use.
- **Playground**: Located in the south end of the park, the playground is frequently used, though the condition of several of its components appear to be deteriorating.
- **Gazebo:** Located adjacent to the pond, a small gazebo is utilized often for events
- **Concession Stand Building:** Located on the south end of the park, the old Concession Stand is not currently utilized. However, functional utility lines still connect to the building, and the City has begun preparing the building to be used to sell prepacked ice cream products.
- **Restrooms:** The restroom facilities are located in the south end of the park, and are open seasonally. When open, they are frequently utilized.
- **Lighting:** The majority of lighting within Denison Park has been decommissioned, including lighting in the underpasses below State Route 352.

OLD RESTROOM

WALKING PATH

VIEW TOWARDS GATE

FITNESS TRAIL

FITNESS TRAIL

GAZEBO

» **Public Art:** Around 2010, the Alley Art Project, a program led by the Rockwell Museum and High School Learning Center that engages youth to create public art, painted a mural on the larger underpass below State Route 352. Since the mural has been completed, the amount of graffiti on and near this underpass has been significantly reduced.

» **Additional Amenities & Fixtures:** A fence bordering both sides of State Route 352 is falling over in several areas. There is also an old restroom that is used for storage near the existing bathroom.

PUBLIC ART MURAL UNDER BRIDGE

HILLVUE PARK

Adjacent to William St. Park, 9.1 acre Hillvue Park stretches east-west along the north side of the Chemung River. Along with a pavilion, the park primarily features open space, and connects to the levee-top trail.

LOCATION & LAND USE

Hillvue Park is located along Hillvue Street, and is surrounded by William St. Park to the west, a residential neighborhood to the north, commercial development to the east, and the Chemung River to the south. The Corning Senior Center is located adjacent to the park to the east, and is connected via a walking path.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

The NYS Department of Environment Conservation has identified this location as a potential hazardous waste disposal site and is taking the lead on the soil investigation.

- **Topography:** The majority of Hillvue Park is significantly sloped due to the levee that runs along its south edge.
- **Levee**: The levee, which was constructed after the Flood of 1972, is routinely checked by the Army Corps of Engineers for structural integrity.

ACCESS

A sidewalk runs the length of the park, and connects to Hillvue Street via two curb ramps. Pedestrians can also access the park via the levee-top trail, which runs along the south edge of the park. Vehicles can park alongside Hillvue Street.

AMENITIES

- **Pavilion:** A smaller pavilion is located in the center of the park, and is in fair condition. While it is located adjacent to the sidewalk, it is roughly one foot above the sidewalk and is not ADA accessible.
- **Play Area:** Four separate play structures, including slides and swings, are located west of the pavilion. All are in good condition, and are occasionally utilized.
- **Bathrooms**: Bathroom facilities are located adjacent to the pavilion, and are open seasonally.
- **Sprinkler System:** A sprinkler system was once used for recreational purposes. However, due to the deteriorating condition of the underground pipes, the sprinkler is no longer used.

Hillvue Park is utilized primarily by recreational walkers and neighborhood residents.

UPPER PAVILION

SIDEWALK

LEVEE-TOP TRAIL

HOUGHTON PARK

With open space and several smaller amenities, 1.9-acre Houghton Park is a smaller but well-utilized City Park on the north side of the Chemung River.

LOCATION & LAND USE

Houghton Park is located in the triangular plot between Corning Boulevard, Sims Avenue, and Houghton Circle. Though it is surrounded by residences immediately on all sides, it is only a few blocks away from the Corning-Painted Post School District, the Corning Fire Department, and mixed-use development along Center Way, which includes the Corning YMCA, medical offices, and the Corning Museum of Glass.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

- **Topography**: The Park is nearly flat throughout.
- **Drainage:** After heavier rain events, there are issues with standing water throughout the Park.

ACCESS

While the surrounding streets all have sidewalks, there are no designated crosswalks to access Houghton Park. Though vehicles can park along Sims Avenue, community members have noted that this is insufficient during busier times, as vehicles often park on the grass in Houghton Park.

AMENITIES

- **Pavilion:** A small pavilion on the western side of the park is occasionally utilized.
- **Playground:** Located nearby the pavilion, the small playground is in good condition and is moderately used.

EAST SIDE OF PARK

WELCOME SIGN

PLAYGROUND

Houghton Park is typically utilized by neighborhood residents for both active and passive recreation.

PLAYGROUND

SWING SET

PAVILION

MCKINNEY PARK

Located at the southeast corner of the City, 7.8 acre McKinney Park is one of the most frequently utilized parks within Corning's Parks System. It primarily consists of open space and recreational amenities, as well as 1.5 acres of woodland around the southeast border of the park.

LOCATION & LAND USE

McKinney Park is located along West 3rd Street, Fox Street, and Highland Drive. It is surrounded by single-family residential homes to the east and north, and woodland to the west and south.

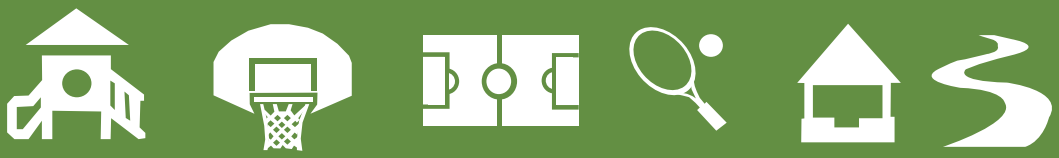
ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

The NYS Department of Environment Conservation has identified this location as a potential hazardous waste disposal site and is taking the lead on the soil investigation.

- **Topography:** The majority of McKinney Park is flat, with slight slopes near the wooded areas along the south side.
- **Soil:** At shallow depths, there is contaminated soil throughout the grassy areas of the Park.
- **Drainage**: There are occasional drainage issues throughout the park, with the rectangular fields often flooding after heavy storm events.

ACCESS

The Park can be accessed by pedestrians and cyclists from the streets to the south and east; however, there are currently no marked crosswalks along any of these streets. Though there is a small parking lot off of Fox Street with approximately 10 spaces, many vehicles park along Highland Drive during athletic events, causing minor damage to the grass.



AMENITIES

- **Rectangular Field:** The field can be reserved through the City Recreation Department, and is typically heavily utilized by organized groups such as the Chemung Valley Soccer Association (CVSA). Several of these groups identified issues with a lack of drainage and uneven field conditions.
- **Basketball Court** (1): The existing court is in poor condition, and is rarely utilized.
- **Tennis Courts** (2): The existing courts are in poor condition, and are rarely used for tennis. However, they are occasionally used as a 'dog park,' and as a play area.
- **Playground**: The existing playground is occasionally utilized and is in fair condition. Because the playground cannot be deeply anchored into the contaminated soil, it occasionally shifts and breaks.
- **Old Bathroom:** The old bathroom structure is currently not utilized.
- **Lighting:** All lighting in McKinney Park has been decommissioned.

McKinney Park is typically utilized by neighborhood residents and members of organized athletics.

LOOKING WEST

BASKETBALL COURT

WEST EDGE OF PARK

SWING SET

PLAYGROUND

MULTI-USE FIELD

STEWART PARK

With a variety of amenities and open space, 12.5-acre Stewart Park is one of the largest and most frequently utilized Corning City Parks.

LOCATION & LAND USE

Stewart Park is located at the north end of the City, between Sly Avenue Extension, Thorn Street, and Winfield Street. It is surrounded by the Stewart Park Apartments to the east, and residential neighborhoods to the south and west.

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

According to The Leader, the area where Stewart Park currently exists has been used as parkland since the 1920s, when the land was deeded to the City of Corning from the Stewart Family. Amenities including playgrounds, baseball diamonds, and picnic areas were gradually added, and the first swimming pool was constructed in the mid-late 20th Century.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

The NYS Department of Environment Conservation has identified this location as a potential hazardous waste disposal site and is taking the lead on the soil investigation.

- **Topography:** The majority of Stewart Park is slightly sloped from north to south, with the northern end at a greater elevation.
- **Soil:** According to City staff, there are concerns about the presence of contaminated soil throughout Stewart Park.
- **Drainage:** According to the 2017 Facilities Evaluation Report, the lawn areas around the Stewart Park Pool are frequently saturated even during dry summer months, indicating potential soil stability and groundwater issues.

ACCESS

A network of pedestrian paths connect various amenities within Stewart Park; however, no paths connect to sidewalks on adjacent streets. A paved parking lot that can hold an estimated 40 vehicles is located on the western edge of the park, and is accessible via Sly Avenue Extension.

AMENITIES

- **Pool:** The existing pool complex is located in the center of the park, and is frequently used by neighborhood residents and youth programs when open. The pool complex consists of one large L-shaped swimming pool with a shallow end and a diving area, along with two separate buildings that house restrooms, changing areas, lockers, storage, office space, and a small concession stand. In 2017, the Facilities Evaluation Report found the pool to be in fair condition, with numerous issues including cracks, heaving, and leaking; numerous compliance and drainage issues were also identified for the buildings within the complex. In 2019, however, ongoing maintenance issues did not permit the pool to be opened for community use.

Stewart Park is frequently utilized by both neighborhood residents and organized leagues and programs.

- **Rectangular Field:** Located north of the pool, the rectangular field is frequently used for organized athletics, including soccer and rugby.
- **Playground:** There are several play facilities located south of the Pool that are frequently utilized by neighborhood residents.
- **Basketball Court** (1): Located south of the pool, the basketball court is in fair condition, and is moderately used.
- **Tennis Courts (**3): Located adjacent to the basketball court, the tennis courts are in poor condition, and are rarely utilized as intended. They are occasionally utilized for other activities, including teaching children to ride bicycles and letting dogs run around in a fenced area.
- **Pavilion:** There is a small pavilion located in the south-west corner of the Park that is often utilized.
- **Lighting**: The majority of lighting fixtures within Stewart Park have been decommissioned.

PAVILION

PLAYGROUND

POOL COMPLEX

WILLIAM STREET PARK

Adjacent to Hillvue Park, 20-acre William St. Park stretches east-west along the north bank of the Chemung River. While the park features several recreational amenities, it is currently underutilized due to a lack of awareness and the deteriorating conditions of key facilities.

LOCATION & LAND USE

William St. Park is bordered by the Chemung River to the south and west, residential neighborhoods to the north, and Hillvue Park to the east. To the north, it is surrounded by single-family residential areas and small commercial development along State Route 415, which is two blocks away.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

The NYS Department of Environment Conservation has identified this location as a potential hazardous waste disposal site and is taking the lead on the soil investigation.

- **Topography:** The park is generally flat, with the 10-15′ high levee running along its southern edge.
- **Levee:** The levee was initially constructed between 1907 and 1910 to prevent the Chemung River from flooding the City yearly. It was further modified after the Flood of 1972, is regularly checked by the Army Corps of Engineers for structural integrity.

ACCESSIBILITY

William St. Park is accessible for pedestrians via three routes: along Hillvue St, Goff St, and the informal levee-top multi-use trail, which turns into a walking trail that borders the westernmost edge of the park. Vehicles can also access the park from both Hillvue St and Goff St, with small parking areas at each entrance.

.

AMENITIES

- **Pavilion:** The pavilion can be reserved through the Recreation Department, and is in good condition.
- **Basketball Court (1):** The basketball court is currently rarely used, and is in poor condition.
- **Playground (1):** There is a small, plastic playground that is currently utilized occasionally. It is in good condition.
- **Walking Trail:** As mentioned above, the levee-top trail connects to a walking trail that loops around the western edge of the park. This trail is in fair condition, and is occasionally utilized.
- **Horseshoe Pits (12):** Located at the northwestern corner of the park, the horseshoe pits are minimally used.
- **Bathroom:** Located in the center of the park, the bathroom facilities are in fair condition.

Though William Street Park is not used as frequently as other parks, the adjacent levee-top trail is often utilized by dog walkers and joggers.

WELCOME SIGN

LEVEE TRAIL

TOWARDS BASKETBALL COURT

PLAYGROUND

OPEN SPACE

PLAYGROUND & RESTROOM

CIVIC CENTER PLAZA

Located between key municipal and community buildings on the south side of the Chemung River, Civic Center Plaza features a covered outdoor ice rink, which is frequently utilized during winter months.

LOCATION & LAND USE

Civic Center Plaza is located between a network of buildings, which house the City of Corning Municipal Offices, the Southeast Steuben County Public Library, the United Way, the US Social Security Administration, the City of Corning Police Department, and additional offices. A walkway connects the plaza to the end of Market Street, located three blocks west of the plaza.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

- **Surfaces:** Surfaces within Civic Center Plaza are primarily brick and concrete.
- **Topography**: Civic Center Plaza consists of two primary tiers: the higher tier, which is level with all building entrances, is approximately 5′ above the lower tier, which is level with the ice rink surface. A centrally located ramp connects the two levels.
- **Drainage:** After moderate to heavy storm events, groundwater drains into the basement of the Library, which is the built area with the lowest elevation around the plaza.

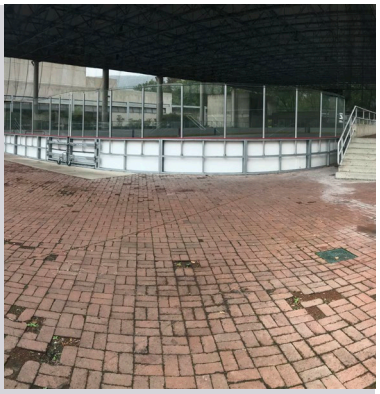
ACCESSIBILITY

The entirety of Civic Center Plaza is accessible to pedestrians. While both adjacent parking lots are restricted to permit parking, visitors can park one block away in several parking lots north of Tioga Avenue.

AMENITIES

- **Ice Rink:** The ice rink is located in the center of the plaza, and it well-utilized during the winter. Though it is covered by a roof, the rink has open sides.
- **Seating:** Several benches and tables are located west of the ice rink, and are occasionally used by residents and employees in nearby buildings.

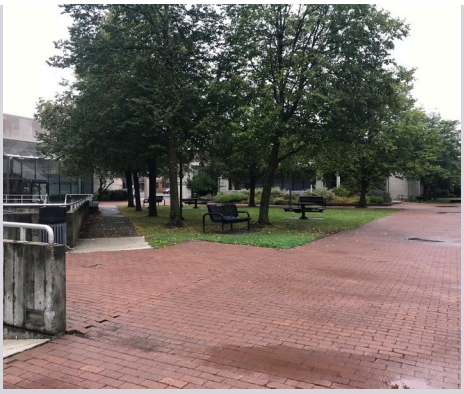
PANORAMA OF PLAZA, RINK, STAIRS, AND SURROUNDING BUILDINGS



RINK

The Plaza is frequently utilized during the winter for ice skating. During other seasons, it is occasionally used for events and programming sponsored by the City of Corning and the Library.

LOOKING SOUTH FROM RINK

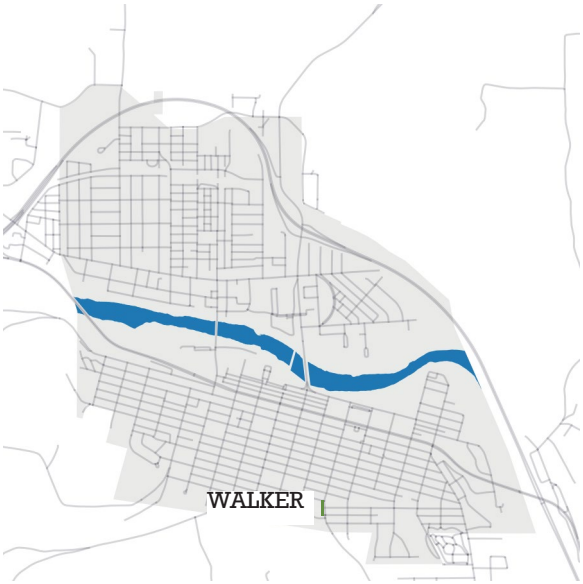


SITTING AREA

LOWER AREA OF PLAZA

MINI-PARK: WALKER PARK

At 0.2 acres, Walker Park is the smallest Corning City Park, and is located on the southern edge of the City.



LOCATION & LAND USE

Shaped like an oval, Walker Park is located along Chemung Avenue between East Fifth Street and High Road. It is surrounded by residential neighborhoods.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

- **Topography:** Walker Park is significantly sloped, with the southern end at a higher elevation than the northern end.
- **Trees:** Several small trees have been recently planted in the park.

ACCESS

The Park is not accessible from nearby sidewalks, and vehicles must park along adjacent roadways.

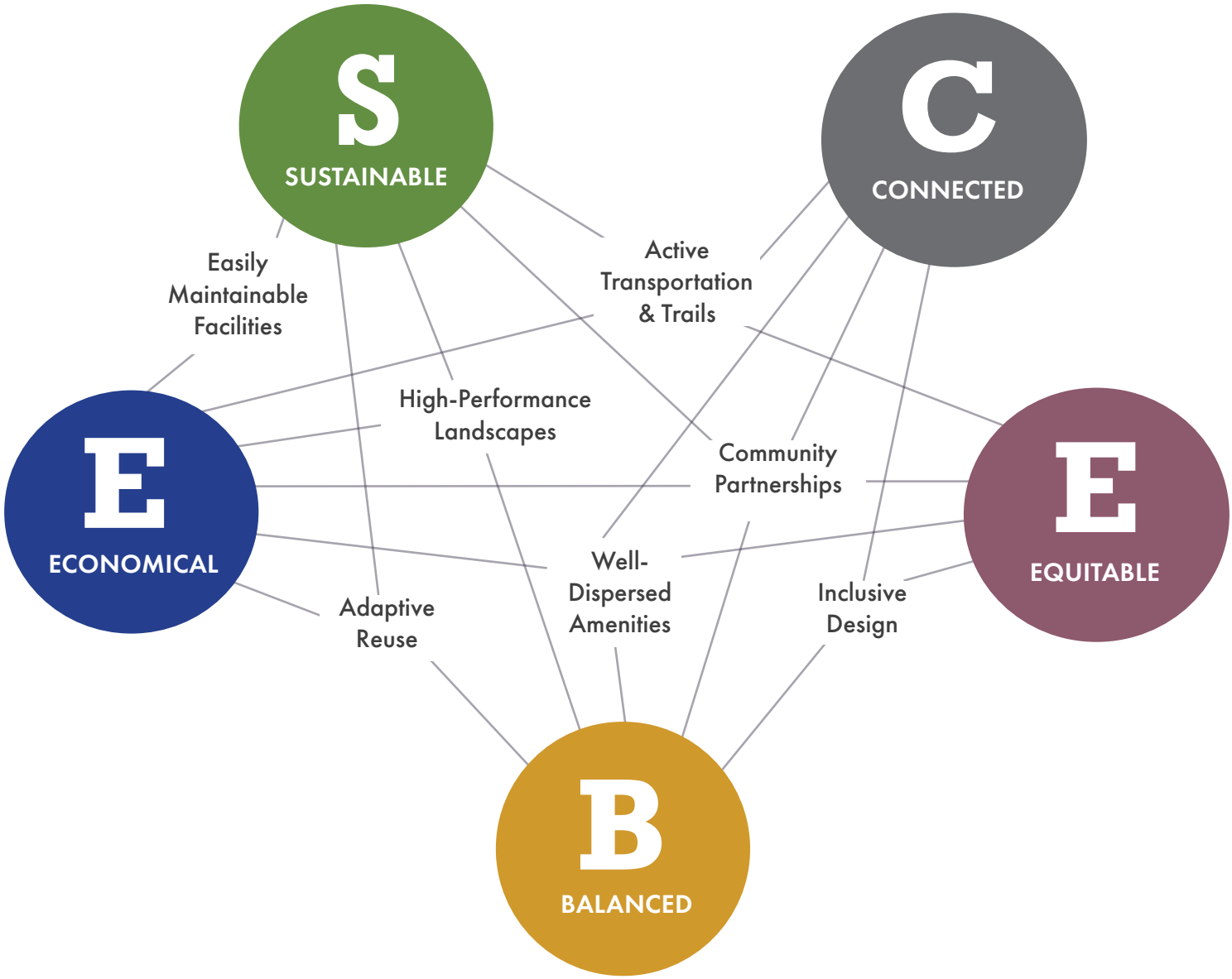
Walker Park is infrequently used, though it provides a visual enhancement for passing pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

SUSTAINABLE CONNECTED ECONOMICAL BALANCED EQUITABLE

3.1 PROJECT OBJECTIVES

As discussed in the previous chapter, the City of Corning has a robust parks system that is frequently utilized by community members. The five objectives in this chapter seek to guide enhancements to the parks system in a manner consistent with community and city goals. In general, these have been developed to reflect input gathered from City residents, staff, and stakeholders, and will enable the city to maximize its existing resources by directing them towards projects that satisfy multiple objectives. As shown in the diagram below, these objectives are inherently connected and complementary, as enhancements to sustainability, for instance, can also offer equity, connectivity, and economic benefits. The following page further expands upon each of these objectives.



A **Sustainable** Parks System responds to local and global environmental stresses through promoting biodiversity, reducing pollution, and offering opportunities to engage with - and learn from - natural systems. With increasing risks to water quality and air quality, rising temperatures, and significant weather events, the City of Corning parks system must enhance its community's stability, sustainability, and resiliency.

A **Connected** Parks System creates a network that encourages community members to safely move between facilities using a diverse range of transportation options. The City of Corning parks system should be as well-connected as possible, both between each park, and between parks and key community destinations and neighborhoods, encouraging residents to maximize use of the facilities.

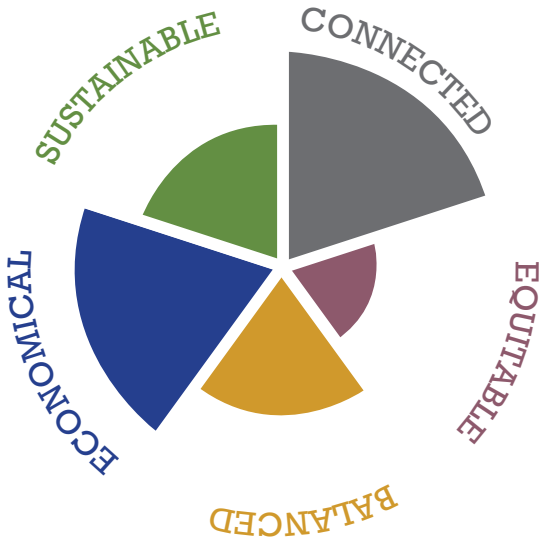
An **Economical** Parks System maximizes the impact of its existing resources, adaptively reimagines underutilized amenities, and minimizes maintenance requirements. To maximize benefits, all decisions related to the City of Corning parks system must leverage available funding sources, carefully consider both short- and long-term costs, creatively utilize community engagement, and strive to reuse existing facilities whenever possible.

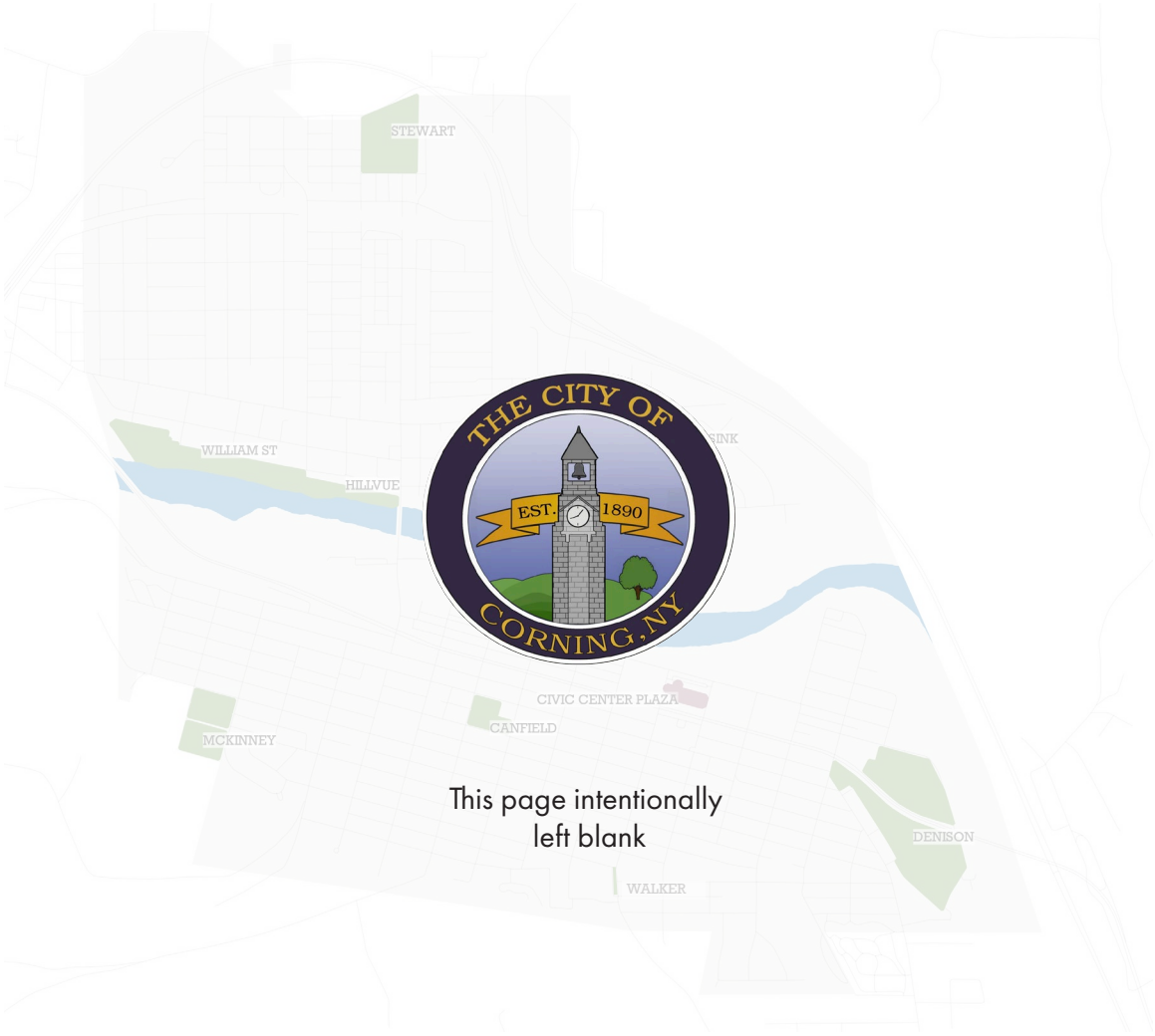
A **Balanced** Parks System provides a variety of amenities, enabling community members to utilize parks for recreational, social, historical, educational, and environmental purposes. The City of Corning parks system should incorporate a combination of open and programmed spaces, and seek to provide appropriate amenities for all user groups and interests. A balanced park system is also extremely well-utilized, as it offers something for all community members.

An **Equitable** Parks System distributes amenities throughout the City, making them accessible to those with various mobility needs and demographic backgrounds. To promote social equity, the City of Corning parks system should have key amenities accessible to all, either by spreading amenities throughout all key parks or by providing means of safe transportation to amenities that are located at only one or two locations. The parks system must also have a robust emphasis on accessibility, with ADA-compliant pathways, features, and access points, and also focus on promoting safety for all through high-quality facilities and removal of unsafe features.

OBJECTIVES 'MATRIX'

Throughout Chapter 4, the diagram shown to the right accompanies each recommendation, illustrating the degree to which the improvement correlates to the five project objectives. The ratings are estimates, and are based on previous experience with similar recommended projects and/or policies. The further out that the semi-circle reaches, the greater the recommendation fulfills the objective; for instance, in the sample graphic to the right, the proposed recommendation significantly satisfies the "connected" and "economical" objectives, partially satisfies the "sustainable" and "balanced" objectives, and does not significantly satisfy the "equitable" objective. Please note that these ratings are not intended to prioritize any one project over another, but instead to highlight the ways in which each project corresponds to the goals of this Parks Strategy.





This page intentionally
left blank

RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 PARKS SYSTEM **4.2** AMENITIES **4.3** INDIVIDUAL PARKS

4.1 PARKS SYSTEM RECOMMENDATIONS

As a high-level comprehensive plan, this Parks Strategy contains a variety of recommendations that will collectively serve as a blueprint for enhancing the City of Corning Parks System over a 20-25 year timeframe. Within this chapter, the recommendations are split into three sections: **4.1 Parks System Recommendations,** which addresses awareness, accessibility, connectivity, environmental sustainability, policies, and maintenance for the network of all nine City Parks; **4.2 Amenity Recommendations,** which proposes enhancements to, or additions of, specific features and facilities within the parks system, such as sports courts, aquatics, community spaces, and fields; and **4.3 Individual Parks Recommendations,** which discusses park-specific improvement opportunities for all nine parks, as well as Civic Center Plaza. For reference, all Parks System and Amenity Recommendations that may apply to each individual park are also listed under each respective park's heading in Section 5.3. Please note that these recommendations primarily focus on facility and policy improvements, as the City of Corning is not presently seeking explicit recommendations for programs.

This chapter is organized in this manner to serve as a 'catalogue' of projects, enabling the City to potentially implement each recommendation when time, funding, community support, and staff are available. Each recommendation in this section is also accompanied by the 'Objective Matrix' discussed in the previous chapter, to illustrate the degrees to which each recommendation furthers each objective. In general, the recommendations within this chapter vary greatly, from potential multi-million dollar facility enhancements and renovations to small-scale, low-cost improvements that require little more than staff or community member time. For additional information about funding and implementation of each recommendation, please refer to Chapter 5: Next Steps, which includes discussion of implementation steps, funding strategies, governmental and private funding sources, and additional follow-up activities.

AWARENESS

Based on information gathered in the development of this project, many community members are not fully aware of the available amenities, facilities, and programs within the Corning City Parks system. For instance, at Public Open House #1, over 20% of attendees were not aware of all nine City parks, and many of those who were aware of parks often did not know about all of the amenities within each. This is likely due to the lack of a single platform where residents can find out all information related to the parks system; in fact, respondents to the community survey indicated that they hear about updates to the parks system more through informal 'word-of-mouth' than through any designated platform.

» **Create a 'one-stop-shop' webpage on the City of Corning website for all parks-related information.** The City staff maintains a website for City-run programs and events. This page should include: a listing of all recreational programs; a link to a page for program registration and facility reservations; a printable map of the parks system; an inventory of all amenities at each park (see next recommendation for additional information); a platform for maintenance-related plans and updates. This webpage will enable enhanced communication between City staff and residents, providing the City with a means of reaching all community members.

» **Create a parks 'matrix' that lists all available facilities within each park.** This matrix can be based on the diagram on page 28-29 of this report, and will further enable community members to know about available amenities their parks system offers. It should be posted on the City webpage, and should also be available as a print-friendly version, so that it can be placed in key locations around the City.

» **Design a parks map that can be displayed digitally and on signage.** This map can be developed in coordination with the wayfinding system recommended in the 'Connectivity' section of this chapter, and can help orient residents and visitors to the location of each park. These maps can be displayed at each park within the system, as well as at key locations throughout the community, such as museums, grocery stores, and other public spaces. These maps can also highlight safe and convenient routes between parks for motorists, bicyclists, pedestrians, and other modes of transit.

REFERENCE PROJECT

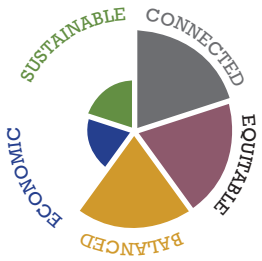
The **City of Mill Creek, Washington** has a graphically simple parks map, accompanied by a website with basic information about all city parks. With 12 parks, the Mill Creek system is quite comparable to the City of Corning Parks System.

https://www.cityofmillcreek.com/city_government/communications___marketing/recreation/parks_and_trails

ACCESSIBILITY

The City of Corning has recently made several efforts towards enhancing accessibility within the parks system, including construction of new pathways and the installation of an accessible swing in Stewart Park. The presence of accessible equipment and pathways are essential for promoting use of the parks system by community members of all ages and mobility levels.

» **Design all new and retrofitted pathways within the parks system to adhere to the guidelines set forth by the Americans with Disability Act (ADA).** Wherever possible, these pathways should: be constructed from firm, stable, and slip-resistant materials; have vertical discontinuities ('lips') less than ¼"; minimize sharp horizontal turns; reduce the amount of open drainage or sewer grates; be at least 6 feet in width; minimize grade (slope) to the greatest extent allowable by topography; and have smooth transitions to key destinations such as parking lots, sidewalks, and facilities. All pathways should also be designed to connect key amenities within parks to enable maximum use by those with mobility challenges.



» **Continue considering accessibility when designing all new facilities, structures, and other amenities.** The existing accessible swing in Stewart Park serves as an excellent example of incorporating accessible designs into new or retrofitted amenities or facilities. The City should continue to utilize this approach when designing new and updating existing facilities, particularly those that cater to all levels of mobility. Examples of future accessible amenities may include pavilions, playgrounds, aquatic facilities, concession stands, and other built facilities. The guidelines set forth by the United States Access Board should serve as base guidelines for all accessibility enhancements within the Corning Parks system.

REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

The 2010 **Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines** (ADAAG) contain updated information related to accessibility and recreation. The following links provide access to the ADAAG, and the bottom link connects to a National Recreation & Park Association article detailing strategies for integrating accessibility into parks.

» https://www.access-board.gov/guidelines-and-standards/buildings-and-sites/about-the-ada-standards/background/adaag

» https://www.access-board.gov/guidelines-and-standards/buildings-and-sites/about-the-ada-standards/background/ada-accessibility-guidelines-for-recreation-facilities

» https://www.nrpa.org/parks-recreation-magazine/2016/august/recreation-and-the-americans-with-disabilities-act/

CONNECTIVITY & ACCESS

Connections between parks, between parks and community destinations, and between parks and their surrounding neighborhoods are essential for promoting increased usage of the parks system. Promoting connectivity must be developed through a variety of approaches, including physical improvements, such as on-road pedestrian and bicycle facilities, as well as wayfinding, mapping, and other enhancements. The following recommendations seek to build upon the existing pedestrian, bicyclist, and automobile infrastructure that is described in Chapter 2.

» **Formalize pathway(s) along the Chemung River.** There are currently several informal trails along the Chemung River, including a paved levee-top section along William Street and Hillvue Parks, as well as an informal path on the river floodplain. The community has long supported the creation of formalized trails along the Chemung River; the 2010 Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan for Corning and several adjacent communities focused primarily on outlining proposed locations for potential waterfront paths. This support is ongoing, as evidenced by 98% of attendees at Public Open House #1 indicating that they would like to see such a trail constructed.

However, the process towards further implementation of any trail must recognize the ecological, structural, economic, legal, and recreational factors that are integral to the project, and must carefully balance the considerations of several stakeholders, many of whom have been engaged in the development of this plan. These stakeholders include: the City of Corning; the New York State Department of Conservation (DEC); the Army Corps of Engineers; Southern Tier Central Planning, who authored the 2010 LWRP document; and the Friends of the Chemung River, a group with experience creating river-side trails in nearby communities. Specifically, the following considerations must be carefully examined while developing a riverside trail(s):

- Public safety concerns regarding access to open water, frequent and rapid flooding along the river, and insufficient access for emergency vehicles.
- Structural integrity of the levee, which was constructed in the 1900s to protect life and property within the City of Corning and adjacent communities.
- Access management restrictions during flood events, ensuring that residents stay away from the floodplain during all potentially dangerous circumstances.
- Maintenance plans for all new features, including responsible entities, maintenance techniques and procedures, and frequency of maintenance.
- Liability agreements, ensuring that all users are safe and that all entities are not held responsible for events or behavior beyond their control.
- Surface treatments that allow for appropriate accessibility, water and ice drainage, and maintain structural integrity.

As a high-level comprehensive plan, this Parks Strategy does not provide detailed plans for the construction of any riverside trail; however, the following section outlines a process for the design and implementation of two types of trails along the Chemung River within the City of Corning: a formalized, levee-top trail, and an informal mowed pathway along the floodplain. Though the processes for designing the trails are described separately below, the ultimate implementation of both trails would create a balanced system that would enable access to the riverfront for all mobility levels during all weather events and seasons. With significant demonstrated community support, this Parks Strategy strongly recommends the implementation of trails along the river, so long as they fully accommodate the above structural, legal, access management, and mainte-

nance considerations. This network of trails along the river would not only enhance community access to the waterfront, but would also directly improve connectivity to three key City Parks: William Street, Hillvue, and Denison.

DESIGN 1 NEXT STEPS: INFORMAL, NATURALIZED TRAIL WITHIN FLOOD CONTROL PROPERTY

1. Establish additional contact with NYSDEC to discuss requirements in **Part 501: Use of Flood Control Lands** of the Resource Management Services regulations.
2. Develop concept design for location(s) of informal trails based on requirements in Part 501.
3. Identify all access points and appropriate methods for restricting access during dangerous events.
4. Develop a maintenance plan and draft agreement, including frequency, required tools, access, persons or groups, and types of maintenance.
5. Discuss strategies for reducing liability and develop draft agreement between City, NYSDEC, and other relevant entities.
6. Identify strategy for improving habitat along the river, including riparian enhancements and promotion of biodiversity.
7. Develop signage that both educates and restricts improper and unsafe use of the pathway(s).
8. Review draft designs with all relevant stakeholders, including NYSDEC and Army Corps of Engineers.
9. Finalize designs based on stakeholder and community feedback.
10. Seek appropriate funding sources (please refer to Chapter 5 for additional detail)

DESIGN 2 NEXT STEPS: FORMALIZED, ACCESSIBLE LEVEE-TOP TRAIL

1. Establish additional contact with NYSDEC to discuss requirements in **Part 501: Use of Flood Control Lands** of the Resource Management Services regulations.
2. Perform structural analysis of existing levee with certified engineer.
3. Perform materials analysis to identify permeable pavements that can protect levee from unintended erosion through uncontrolled foot traffic.
4. Develop concept design for trails based on previous information gathered.
5. Identify all access points and appropriate methods for restricting access during dangerous events; also identify opportunities for ADA accessibility.
6. Develop a maintenance plan and draft agreement, including frequency, required tools, access, persons or groups, and types of maintenance.
7. Discuss strategies for reducing liability and develop draft agreement between City, NYSDEC, and other relevant entities.
8. Develop signage that both educates and restricts improper and unsafe use of the pathway(s).
9. Review draft designs with all relevant stakeholders, including NYSDEC and Army Corps of Engineers.
10. Finalize designs based on stakeholder and community feedback.
11. Seek appropriate funding sources (please refer to Chapter 5 for additional detail)

REFERENCE PROJECT

The Susquehanna Greenway Trails System in the Wyoming & Capital Regions of Pennsylvania includes several levee-top trails that have been constructed without compromising liability or structural integrity. The trails are managed in part by a not-for-profit organization, and connect to a series of greenways throughout the region. For additional information, please reference the following link: https://www.susquehannagreenway.org/trails.

» **Create 'Amenity Trails' within the parks system.** Amenity trails refer to themed facilities, signage, and features that are spread between parks, encouraging residents and visitors to move throughout the parks system to fully utilize the trails. These trails can cater to all ages, and offer opportunities to promote key aspects of the community's identity, such as sustainability, diversity, and history. Specifically, the following amenity trails have been identified during the development of the parks strategy as potential assets: Historic Trail, with information on the history of each park; Sculpture Trail, with work by local and regional artists; Birding Trail, highlighting local birds; Cherry Blossom Trail, with cherry blossom trees; and Fitness Trail, with fitness equipment (such as the existing fitness facilities in Denison Park) spread throughout the parks system. It is recommended that the City implement these trails throughout the parks system.

» **Promote multimodal connectivity between parks.** Ensuring that residents using all modes of transit can safely and conveniently access the parks system is an integral part of enhancing Corning City Parks. With nearly all residents located within a 10-Minute walk to parks, the system already accommodates a diversity of transportation options. For bicyclists, pedestrians, joggers, skateboarders, and roller skaters, this connectivity would be further enhanced through the implementation of facilities designated for 'active transportation.' These facilities can include additional sidewalks, dedicated bicycle lanes on roadways, off-road pathways, bicycle parking, and crosswalks at appropriate locations. Wherever possible, the City should implement any of these facilities near parks to enhance safety and accessibility. In addition, the City should strongly consider the development of an "Active Transportation" or "Multimodal Accessibility" Plan to complement the efforts in this Parks Strategy, building upon previous trail studies to ensure that parks can be easily accessed by all; this is discussed additionally in Section 5.3: Follow-On Activities.

» **Develop a parks wayfinding system.** Wayfinding systems seek to guide users towards key destinations through a series of environmental cues, such as signage or markings. The development of a wayfinding system that links all Corning parks together would encourage both residents and visitors to utilize the parks system fully, and direct pedestrians, bicyclists, and joggers to the safest routes between parks. As shown on page 33, each park within the City already has well-designed welcome signage; these designs can be used as the basis for the development of the wayfinding system. Additionally, this wayfinding system can complement the Map recommendation in the 'Awareness' section of this Chapter, further enhancing awareness and promoting safe access to the parks system.

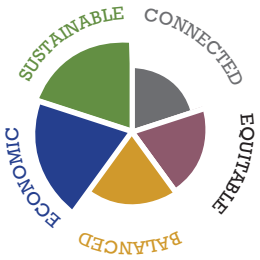
REFERENCE PROJECT

The City of Adelaide, Australia, designed a simple, straightforward wayfinding system to help connect pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists to their parks and recreational areas. The City of Corning could develop a similarly simply design based on the graphics of the parks welcome signs.

ENVIRONMENTAL

Over the past decade, the City of Corning has made significant efforts to enhance the sustainability of the community, including implementation of LED lighting fixtures, upcycled materials, environmentally-friendly cleaning materials, as well as the establishment of a sustainability camp for children. As the largest green spaces within the community, the City parks system represents an opportunity to build upon these efforts and significantly enhance the environmental sustainability and resiliency of Corning. Specifically, the parks system can play a large role in combatting urban heat island effect, enhancing air quality and water quality, and preparing the community to respond adequately to significant climate-related events.

» **Establish a reforesting initiative.** With a typical planting cost of $300-$600, a single tree can return up to $90,000 of direct benefits – in addition to aesthetic, social, and natural enhancements – to a community. These benefits include: a reduction in stormwater runoff, as trees absorb the first 30% of precipitation through their leaf system; a decrease in temperature by 5-15 Degrees Fahrenheit for areas and buildings underneath tree canopies during summers; a reduction in harm from vehicular emissions such as carbon monoxide and particulate matter; a decrease in the levels of stress for those who spend time in treed areas; and an increase in the economic values of surrounding businesses and homes. The City of Corning in conjunction with the Department of Public Works should formally establish a reforesting initiative that begins with the parks system and branches out into other public areas within the community, including streets, plazas, and multi-use pathways. This initiative should include recommendations for the planting of particular types of native tree species, and establish a baseline that every tree removed from parks or public areas must be replaced with at least one tree of similar scale and location.



» **Conduct a tree inventory at all parks.** Currently, the parks within the City of Corning include a variety of tree species, at varying levels of health. A formalized tree inventory will enable the Parks and Recreation Department to better analyze the health of each species, understanding which types of trees are most suitable for various locations. This inventory should include, at a baseline level, a list of tree species, locations, observed health, and any additional known information about planting years and historic intentions. This recommendation can be coupled with the 'reforesting initiative,' providing a foundation for a successful City Parks tree program that harvests the benefits of urban forests.

» **Establish Green Infrastructure practices whenever possible within parks system.** Green Infrastructure (GI) refers to stormwater management practices that enable surface runoff to infiltrate into the ground, where it can be naturally treated before flowing into waterbodies. In areas such as the Finger Lakes Region, with increasing levels of water pollution, Green Infrastructure practices are essential for promoting environmental health, community resiliency, and access to waterbodies for recreational use. Wherever possible, the following types of Green Infrastructure practices should be considered for implementation within the Corning City Parks system:

» **Permeable Pavement:** Permeable pavement functions like conventional asphalt, yet enables stormwater to infiltrate into the ground at far higher rates. Whenever parking areas, paved pathways, or other hardscape elements are added or replaced within Corning City Parks, permeable pavements should be strongly considered.

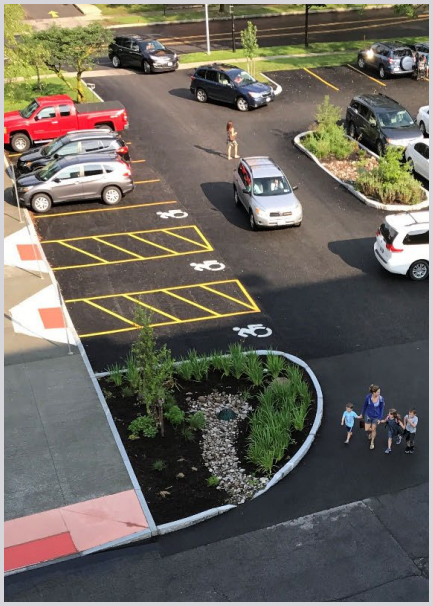
» **Bioretention Areas:** Bioretention areas are high performance landscapes that serve functional and aesthetic purposes. They filter stormwater that otherwise may flow directly into culverts, drains, pipes, and eventually waterbodies without being treated. Wherever feasible, bioretention areas should be strongly considered for implementation in the Corning City Parks system. Potential locations for implementation include areas with current drainage or ponding issues, as well as locations adjacent to paved surfaces such as parking lots or paved pathways.

» **Rainwater Harvest and Reuse:** Rainwater harvest and reuse systems utilize runoff from built structures to irrigate stormwater planters, bioretention areas, and other landscaped areas. These systems can allow water to directly flow from the rooftops into the gardens, or can harvest and retain the water in larger cisterns, which are recommended if water volume from a roof is significant. On any current or proposed buildings within the Parks System, the City should consider implementing rainwater harvest and reuse systems. An engineering feasibility assessment would be required for installation.

REFERENCE PROJECT

The Monroe Avenue Green Street Retrofit in Brighton, NY, implemented Green Infrastructure elements as part of a multimodal streetscape enhancement. Roadside bioretention areas treat roadway runoff, improve visual quality, and provide a buffer between vehicles and pedestrians. The City of Corning could implement similar designs at the edges of multiple parks.

REFERENCE PROJECT



The Rochester Museum & Science Center Regional Green Infrastructure Showcase in Rochester, NY, contains a wide variety of Green Infrastructure practices funded through New York State's Green Innovation Grant Program. Permeable pavement is utilized for parking, and excess runoff is treated through bioretention areas and rain gardens. Additionally, rainwater that falls onto the learning pavilion (above) is harvested and reused in the landscape. The entire landscape engages the community through interactive elements (below) and monitoring practices, which measure the effectiveness of the green infrastructure elements. These best practices could be implemented in a variety of facility, access, and play elements within the Corning City Parks System.

» **Enhance wildlife habitats throughout the parks system:** Enhancing wildlife habitat is key to conserving native flora, fauna, and ecological processes, and enhancing biodiversity. In general, habitat enhancement is accomplished through improving access to cover (shelter), food, and water for particular species, and successful projects typically employ a systems-based approach, enhancing habitats for a variety of animals whose survival is interrelated. Throughout the development of this Parks Strategy, community members frequently expressed support for habitat areas for bats, bees and other pollinators, butterflies, and ospreys. When possible, the City of Corning should partner with local wildlife groups, schools, and specialists to implement wildlife habitat areas through the City Parks system. These will not only improve the resiliency of species and natural systems, but also provide spaces for interested students and community members to study and observe various species.

» **Continue coordination of soil contamination studies with NYSDEC:** As stated in Chapter 2, many Corning City Parks are potential or confirmed hazardous waste sites. While it is NYSDEC's jurisdiction to perform contamination studies and recommend potential remediation strategies, the City of Corning should encourage the contamination studies to be performed in the near future, to clearly understand potential issues that will affect the design and enhancements to the parks. If contaminants are discovered, the City will coordinate with DEC to remediate as soon as possible.

MAINTENANCE & POLICY

Throughout the development of this Parks Strategy, community members often expressed a desire to ensure that existing facilities are in good condition before creating additional facilities. With budget considerations placing constraints on existing staff time and capabilities, the following recommendations in this section and throughout the rest of the report seek to address maintenance in an innovative manner. When implemented, these recommendations will enable existing maintenance staff to spend additional time maintaining and enhancing existing facilities, and provide time for maintaining other recommendations proposed in this Parks Strategy.

» **Implement a 'Carry-in, Carry-out' policy for Corning City Parks.** Currently, City of Corning Parks and Recreation staff spend at least 20 hours per week cleaning waste from the City Parks, which is left both in designated waste receptacles and throughout the parks in pavilions and other structures. Implementing a 'Carry-in, Carry-out' policy encourages residents and visitors to the parks to remove their own waste from the parks system, and significantly reduces workload for the City staff. This recommendation is increasingly being implemented by parks under a variety of jurisdictions, including New York State Parks, many rails-to-trails projects, and City of Ithaca Parks. If necessary, the City could initially develop this policy through a pilot program at one or more City Parks to determine feasibility and educate residents on the importance of removing their own waste.

» **Advocate for a 'Tobacco-Free' policy for Corning City Parks**. As of 2016, more than 1,200 municipalities have instituted a smoke-free policy in their parks systems, ranging from large cities like Boston, MA, and Houston, TX, to smaller towns and cities across the country. In both the community survey and at Public Open House #1 for this project, several residents indicated a strong preference for cigarette-free, cigar-free, and other electronic smoking devices-free policies in City Parks. By reduction of smoking in the parks, Corning can illustrate a commitment to ensuring access to clean, fresh air for all citizens and also promote environmental sustainability and air quality. Most importantly, instituting a tobacco-free policy ensures that no park visitors are exposed to secondhand smoke, which currently affects over two out of every five children in the United States (CDC, 2012). By implementing this policy, the City of Corning can demonstrate a commitment to the health of its environment and citizens, both currently and in the future.

» **Develop formalized agreements and maintenance policies with community groups.** Currently, several community groups are directly involved in the maintenance and upkeep of areas within Corning City Parks, including the Disc Golf Club, Scouts of America, the Sister Cities Association, and private residents. By formalizing agreements with these groups, the City can further decrease its maintenance workload, while simultaneously encouraging community involvement and stewardship within the parks. Additional groups that may be able to provide maintenance for parks includes the Gaffer District, Lions, Rotary Club, Garden Club, the Crystal City Parks Foundation, the Youth Center, and the Salvation Army After School Foundation. The City could also explore supporting the development of a new not-for-profit maintenance organization to help formalize agreements.

» **Develop Design Guidelines for the Corning City Parks system.** Design Guidelines can ensure that all parks facilities and appropriate amenities are constructed and maintained in ways that complement surroundings, preserve history, and ensure accessibility for all. In particular, design standards for parks facilities should take into consideration the following elements: building styles that complement surrounding neighborhoods and structures, detailing and materials that align with established historic standards, entrances and circulation paths that satisfy or exceed ADA standards, and designs that are easily conducive to maintenance. Design standards can also be formalized for playgrounds and other active elements, emphasizing safety along with materiality and accessibility. Finally, design standards can also be established for wayfinding and signage, clearly establishing a 'parks identity' that can translate to the website design as well. Overall, implementing Design Standards enables the City of Corning to formalize many of the recommendations in this report, providing a blueprint that guides future development.

4.2 PARKS AMENITY RECOMMENDATIONS

This section contains recommendations for individual amenity types (such as tennis courts, pools, etc.) that are meant to apply to the entire parks system. These amenity recommendations are designed to be implemented individually or in conjunction with several other proposed improvements. For this reason, many of the following recommendations overlap with one another; for instance, one recommendation may propose decommissioning and reusing a facility type, and a following recommendation may propose a particular way to reuse that facility. This is intentional, and is designed to provide specific guidance for each type of amenity without explicitly tying it to other facilities or recommendations. This enables the City to have flexibility when implementing each proposed improvement, responding to constantly changing community needs and funding opportunities.

FIELDS & COURSES

» **Improve condition of existing rectangular fields.** Currently, there are rectangular fields at Denison, McKinney, and Stewart Parks that are used by a variety of leagues and organizations. These fields must be reserved for use through the City of Corning. According to input from organizations such as the Chemung Valley Soccer Association (CVSA) and the Corning Rugby Club, uneven surfaces and ponding on these fields limits their availability and occasionally leads to injuries for players. When feasible, the City of Corning should improve the conditions of these fields through aeration, drainage reconstruction, and repairing divots and dips; any improvements, however, should be done in coordination with soil contamination testing and necessary remediation. The City of Corning should also consider slightly re-aligning the existing fields on a regular basis to spread 'wear-and-tear' out across the grass. Overall, community input at Public Open House indicated that this recommendation is the most popular athletic improvement for the Parks System; similarly, 27% of Community Survey respondents indicated a preference for updating the fields.

» **Construct additional multi-use field when feasible.** Input from both Corning City Parks maintenance staff and community members indicated that the existing fields are often used to capacity, and that field reservations for high-use times are often booked months in advance. Adding another multi-use rectangular field would alleviate some of this demand, and could be used for rugby, soccer, lacrosse, ultimate Frisbee, and other field sports. Community input at Public Open House #1 also indicated support for this recommendation; 30% of Community Survey respondents similarly indicated support. This recommendation will also help create an additional source of revenue for the City, by providing more opportunities for field reservations. The location for additional multi-use fields would be coordinated with the Parks and Recreation Department.

» **Remove unused backstops throughout parks.** There are currently pitching mounds and/or backstops without bases or infield dirt in several Corning City Parks, including Denison, Stewart, and McKinney. With softball fields available for use at the Crystal City Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW),

three youth fields at the south end of Denison Park, and a baseball and softball field at the Corning-Painted Post School District, these backstops and mounds in the parks are rarely used. This lack of use is also due to a moderate-low level of interest from Corning residents, as input from the Community Survey and Public Open House #1 indicated a relatively low interest in baseball and softball. Additionally, all of these mounds and backstops are adjacent to rectangular fields, posing potential injury risk to players who are not expecting elevation changes. When feasible, the City of Corning should remove these mounds and backstops, providing additional space for other athletic facilities.

» **Redesign disc golf course in available space.** Disc golf is one of the fastest growing sports in America, and the increasing use of the Denison Park disc golf course is indicative of this growth. However, with crossing fairways and several conflict points between disc golf and other facilities, such as fields, backstops, and the skate park, the presence of additional players can create a higher risk of conflicts. With additional space available at the south end of the park, near the unused baseball-softball diamonds, there is an opportunity to redesign the disc golf course to reduce the amount of conflicts. The City of Corning should collaborate with the local disc golf club, the Twenty Percenters, to develop a redesigned course that enhances both the safety and the design quality of the course. With available funding, the Twenty Percenters have indicated a strong interest in developing this redesign; community input at Public Open House #1 also indicated support for this redesign, as attendees ranked it as the 4th-most preferred athletic facility improvement.

» **Install additional disc golf baskets throughout parks system.** There is also an opportunity to install disc golf baskets at other parks throughout Corning. With increasing amounts of players, additional baskets will provide places for residents to learn and practice playing without going to the full 18-hole course. Standalone baskets also offer an opportunity for regular players to practice their 'short game,' and even two or three baskets can serve as 'mini-courses' for players to learn and practice on. When feasible, the City of Corning should consider adding 1-3 baskets in various parks, concentrating particularly on underutilized areas without potential conflicting uses. Installing these through a partnership with the Twenty Percenters is recommended.

DISC GOLF IN CORNING CONTINUES TO GROW IN POPULARITY. *Photos courtesy of The Leader.*

COURTS & HARDSCAPES

» **Enhance selected existing basketball courts.** Both survey respondents and attendees to Public Open House #1 indicated a high level of interest in basketball, with the sport ranking behind only soccer in popularity. However, several of the existing basketball courts within the parks are in moderate-to-poor condition, with cracked pavement and faded lines. The City of Corning should select three to four courts to prioritize repairing and maintaining, and explore alternate uses for the other courts (please refer to below recommendation). At Public House #1, community members indicated the highest preference for repairing and continuing to maintain the existing courts at Denison Park and Stewart Park.

» **Adaptively reuse selected basketball courts.** As discussed in the above recommendation, the basketball courts at several Corning City Parks, including McKinney, William Street, and Stewart, have pavement condition issues. With limited maintenance funds, it is recommended that the City prioritize the repair of selected courts, and explore adaptive reuse of others. The City should explore reusing one or two courts for a variety of activities, including skate park areas, pickleball courts, and event spaces, potentially opening up alternative sources of funding for repair of the courts. At Public Open House #1, community members indicated the least amount of interest for repairing William Street and McKinney Park basketball courts, indicating possibilities for adaptive reuse of these courts. At these locations, the City could also consider keeping basketball hoops at one end of the courts, creating 'half-court' basketball areas, while reusing the other sides of the courts for skate parks, event spaces, or pickleball courts.

» **Adaptively reuse selected tennis courts.** Most of the tennis courts within the Corning City Parks system are not well-utilized, for a variety of reasons: the Corning-Painted Post School District has courts that are open for public use; amongst survey respondents and attendees to Public Open House #1, there is a relative lack of community interest in the sport (more community members indicated an interest in reducing courts than fixing courts at Public Open House #1); and the pavement of courts at McKinney and Stewart Parks is not in good condition. With additional tennis courts planned for construction at the School District in the near future, the City should strongly consider finding alternative uses for the tennis courts within the parks system. At Denison Park, the City should partner with local pickleball groups (see following recommendation) to transition the courts into multi-use spaces for a variety of racket sports. At Stewart and McKinney Parks, the City should consider adaptive reuse of the courts, with similar activities as mentioned in the above recommendation; for instance, the courts could be used for a pickleball facility, skate park, event space, or play area, as discussed in following recommendations. However, the City should pursue a formalized agreement with the Corning-Painted Post School District to ensure that community members regularly have access to the school tennis courts before implementing these recommendations.

» **Install pickleball courts in parks system.** A combination of tennis, badminton, and table tennis played by two to four people, pickleball is one of the fastest-growing sports in the United States. In and around Corning, the sport is quickly becoming a favorite for all ages, particularly adults and seniors; for instance, the 501(c)(3) Pickleball Association of Twin Tiers was formed in 2018, and already has over 100 members. However, there are currently no pickleball courts within the City Parks system, and the only courts in the City of Corning are located at the YMCA, which requires an annual or daily fee to play, and often has limited availability due to conflicting uses. To provide free, outdoor spaces to play, the City should consider implementing pickleball courts in the parks system. While only 14% of respondents to the Community Survey indicated that they would use pickleball courts, attendees at Public Open House #1 indicated that pickleball courts were by far the most desired amenity that did not currently exist in the City Parks system. This suggests a small but highly interested group of players whom the City should partner with to implement pickleball courts throughout the parks. According to the Pickleball Association of Twin Tiers, courts should be implemented where possible in groups of four or more, to facilitate social interaction and provide space for leagues. At 22′ x 40′, two pickleball courts can typically fit in the space of one tennis court, meaning that 4-6 pickleball courts each could be implemented on the tennis court complexes in Denison, McKinney, or Stewart Parks. The City could also initially pursue this recommendation through a pilot program, by painting pickleball court lines on existing tennis courts before fully committing to creating pickleball courts. Ultimately, however, if significant demand is shown for pickleball, the City should fully convert selected tennis courts for pickleball use by installing proper nets, addressing any pavement concerns, and painting proper lines.

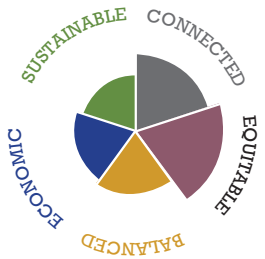
REFERENCE PROJECT

After their school district opened tennis courts, the three public courts in the **City of Greenville, MI,** were seldom used. The City utilized grant money from a foundation to refinish the courts and transition them into six pickleball facilities.

» **Remove existing skateboard facility.** The existing skate park in Denison Park is currently the only designated location for skateboarding in Corning City Parks. However, with deteriorating pavement condition, ridges and 'lips,' and steep features, the skate park is rarely used and poses a significant liability and safety risk for the City of Corning and its residents. In conjunction with the following recommendations, the City should pursue necessary steps to remove this facility.

» **Install small skateboard features throughout parks system.** Skateboarding offers an opportunity for individuals and groups, particularly young adults, to creatively participate in an active lifestyle. However, a lack of adequate skateboard facilities within the Corning City Parks limits the amount of opportunities for skateboarders to safely practice and build a sense of community. To address this, the City of Corning should develop a phased plan for implementing attractive, safe skateboarding facilities throughout the parks system, beginning with installation of small facilities throughout the parks system. With underutilized hardscapes in William Street Park (basketball court), Civic Center Plaza, Stewart Park (tennis courts), and McKinney Park (tennis and basketball courts), the City should consider installing features such as small ramps, benches, pipes, and slight slopes on these surfaces to encourage skateboarding. This approach has several benefits: it will reactivate underutilized spaces; it will encourage skaters to utilize several of the existing parks, potentially encouraging bicycling or walking between the parks; it will help build a sense of community for skateboarders; it will be highly affordable (the City could even re-purpose several older or unused flat benches, pipes, or other materials to use on the existing courts); and it will be low-maintenance. These 'skate-friendly' areas could also be delineated from other uses by installation of exposed aggregate pavement or other uneven surfaces that inhibit skateboarding. Overall, this recommendation is supported by input from the community survey, when 28% of respondents indicated a preference for new or enhanced skate facilities. Throughout the implementation of these skateboarding recommendations, the City should work closely with local skateboarders and designers to foster a sense of community and involvement.

» **Create larger skate parks throughout parks system.** If the initial small-scale skateboarding facilities are well-utilized, the City should then pursue development of larger, dedicated skateboarding facilities at one or more parks. These facilities should be safe, attractive, and fun and should include more developed features such as bowls and half-pipes. Typically, these higher-level skate facilities are far more expensive, but are frequently funded through general governmental and dedicated skateboarding grants. When designing these facilities, the City should also consider ongoing maintenance costs, which typically can reach up to half of the cost of building after 20-30 years. These skate parks could also be developed in conjunction with other creative play facilities, such as bouldering or climbing walls, to create small activity centers and encourage a sense of community. As with previous skateboarding recommendations, these facilities should be developed in conjunction with local skateboarders and designers. Additional design guidance can be found here: https://publicskateparkguide.org/.



WINTER ACTIVITIES

» **Continue promoting spaces for outdoor winter activities.** In the Community Survey, 37% of respondents indicated that they would like additional winter amenities in the parks system. These amenities can include places for cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and sledding, among others. This recommendation can be implemented through a variety of strategies, including additional programming and group events, maintenance of cross-country skiing trails throughout the parks, and establishment of connected trails between each park, such as the riverside trail along the levee.

AQUATICS

There are currently four public or non-profit pools within the City of Corning: at Stewart Park, Denison Park, the YMCA, and the Corning-Painted Post School District. While all community members can access the Denison Park and Stewart Park pools during open hours in the summers, only members can access the YMCA pool, and the School District pool is only open to the public during certain times when it's not in use by the students. The pools are one of the most popular recreational amenities in Corning, utilized by all ages of community members as well as various youth groups, including Kids Adventure Club, Corning Youth Group (Family Service Center), and Amy's Sunshine Program. As part of this Parks Strategy, all of these groups were engaged, and unanimously agreed that visits to the pool are the most popular activity for children of all ages in their programs. Overall, the recommendations in this section have been significantly informed by the Municipal Facilities Evaluation report completed in 2017. Two options were encountered during this study, but the City should pursue further resolution of this issue through specifically focused engagement as a community.

» **Continue enhancing Denison Park Pool.** With increasing water quality issues threatening the use of natural waterbodies for swimming, pools are an increasingly essential community amenity, both for providing general recreational opportunities and for teaching all residents how to swim. To ensure that the Corning Parks System fulfills this need, the City should continue building upon recent improvements to the Denison Park Pool. These recommended improvements include, but are not limited to, additional enhancements to the pool building, and installation of an intermediate depth area where children between the ages of 5 and 8 years old can learn to swim. This recommendation is supported by Community Survey input, which indicated that 67% of respondents are in favor of updates to the pool. Two options were encountered during this study, but the City should pursue further resolution of this issue through specifically focused engagement as a community.

» **Phase out Stewart Park Pool.** The Stewart Park Pool has been plagued by longstanding soil stability and maintenance issues, and was unable to be opened for public use during 2019 due to ongoing maintenance. With maintenance costs only expected to increase with deteriorating conditions, the City should strongly consider phasing out Stewart Park Pool and redirecting the staff time and expenses it would have demanded to additional aquatic enhancements. This recommendation aligns with the 2017 Municipal Facilities Evaluation, which indicated that the pool will not be functional without wholesale, costly renovations. However, it is strongly suggested that this recommendation only be implemented in conjunction with the following recommendations for alternative aquatic facilities or enhanced connectivity to the Denison Park Pool for Corning residents who live north of the Chemung River.

» **Consider splash pad at Stewart Park.** An increasingly-popular aquatic feature, splash pads (also known as spray parks) are surface level water features that shower, spray, mist, and shoot streams of water at users. To enhance safety, splash pads are typically constructed with non-slip surfaces, and use water that is treated to the same quality level as water in swimming pools. With little-to-no standing water and minimal below-ground construction, splash pads are typically less expensive to build, and – particularly without the need for lifeguards – far less expensive to maintain and operate than pools are. While the fountain in Centennial Park is often utilized as an informal splash pad, there are currently no formal splash pads in the Corning area, and implementing one within the City Parks System would both diversify the City's aquatic facilities and provide a possible alternative aquatic facility for the Stewart Park Pool. When feasible, the City should consider designing and constructing a splash pad in Stewart Park, utilizing best practices for developing a sustainable, enjoyable, and safe facility. In particular, the splash pad design should consider opportunities for directing the runoff into green infrastructure and planting areas. Overall, this recommendation aligns with the 2017 Municipal Facilities Evaluation, and received support at Public Open House #1, where 60% of attendees indicated a preference for removing one pool and implementing a splash pad.

REFERENCE PROJECTS

Centennial Splash Pad (below), in Centennial, CO, is an excellent example of integrating a variety of water features and seating elements into a splash pad.

While significantly larger and more expensive than what is recommended in Corning, the **Water Lab Play Area** on Pier 6 at Brooklyn Bridge Park (right three images) illustrates the benefits of integrating water play with other play elements, such as games, sandboxes, and seating areas. Many of the elements in this design were repurposed from other areas of the city.

» **Explore methods for enhancing connectivity and use of existing pools.** With the recommended closure of Stewart Park Pool, it is essential to guarantee that all residents – particularly those on the north side of the City – have access to the three remaining pools in Corning. This recommendation will require significant innovation and collaboration, but is essential for ensuring social equity for all. As part of this effort, the City should continue partnering with the School District to confirm and publicize all open hours at the School Pool. Additionally, the City should strongly consider partnering to develop a summer parks shuttle to Denison Park, and having the shuttle service be paid for by an outside organization. This recommendation can be further explored as part of the upcoming Transportation Study that will reorganize the public transportation system within Corning and the surrounding municipalities.

PLAY

The importance of play in a child's development cannot be overstated: by empowering children to move freely, it fosters independence and creativity, promotes coordination and mobility, and encourages outdoor exercise. In the short term, play is an essential tool for helping children enjoy themselves. In the long term, play has been routinely been correlated with traits essential for success in school and the workplace, promoting cognitive, psychological, and physical health and well-being.

» **Implement nature play elements.** In order for children to harness the multitude of benefits related to play, the play environments themselves must facilitate creativity, expression, and connection to nature. In contrast to typical playgrounds that prioritize safety over design quality, nature play elements encourage children to interact in an unscripted manner with free-form, natural features such as boulders, fallen trees, plants, or small water features. The advantages of installing nature play elements within the City of Corning are significant:

1. Nature play elements invite children to utilize their imagination and creativity, gaining the full cognitive and physical benefits of play.
2. Nature play areas can adaptively reuse fallen trees, rocks, and other natural features that are already found within the parks, significantly cutting the cost of construction.
3. Nature play areas enable children and adults to directly engage with natural elements, helping to develop a preliminary understanding of natural processes.
4. Nature play areas can be designed through a collaborative process involving parks staff, designers, and local residents and children, fostering a sense of ownership and stewardship amongst community members.
5. Nature play areas are typically easy to maintain, and can be simply altered to incorporate additional features or remove undesired elements.
6. Nature play areas typically do not require subsurface foundations, saving construction costs and not disturbing potentially contaminated soils.
7. Nature play areas complement existing playgrounds and swing sets by offering an alternative means for play.

Wherever possible, the City of Corning should implement nature play areas throughout the parks system through a collaborative effort between City Staff and residents. During design, the City should always utilize common-sense design standards to increase safety and reduce risk, such as providing limited fall heights, establishing clear zones, incorporating grass or other soft materials at ground level, and using rot-resistant species. Within each park, nature play areas can be spread throughout to encourage children to run or walk between them. This recommendation is strongly supported by input from the Community Survey, where 56% of respondents indicated a preference for enhanced play elements within the City of Corning.

REFERENCE PROJECT

Children who play regularly in natural environments show more advanced motor fitness, including coordination, balance and agility, and are sick less often. Nature also buffers the impact of life's stresses on children and helps them deal with adversity; the greater the amount of nature exposure, the greater the benefits. (Wells & Evans, 2003; Grahn, et al., 1997; Fjortoft& Sageie, 2001)

The Lilac Adventure Zone in Highland Park in Rochester, NY, encourages unscripted, free play for children at a nature play area. All materials were repurposed through efforts of the Monroe County Parks Department and the design team. Seating areas, small pavilions, and permeable pavement complement the nature play area. Since implementation, the Adventure Zone has been a highly popular community destination.

» **Continue auditing and maintenance of existing playgrounds.** Currently, the existing metal playgrounds, swing sets, and play equipment within the City of Corning parks are primarily in good-to-moderate condition, and are frequently utilized as essential components for promoting play and exercise. In conjunction with the development of playground design standards (as recommended in Section 4.1), these playgrounds are annually audited for safety and condition. In addition to regular maintenance, the City should regularly improve the existing playgrounds when possible, and continue to be vigilant in removing any unsafe facility. When making enhancements, the City should also strongly consider accessibility for children and supervising adults, in conjunction with the larger initiative for enhancing accessibility. This recommendation was also highly supported in the Community Survey and Public Open House #1.

» **Implement elements that reflect a 'play everywhere' philosophy.** The 'play everywhere' philosophy encourages creative design that incorporates play into everyday activities in often unconventional ways. This philosophy also supports integration of play elements that feature educational components. The City of Corning should consider utilizing this philosophy to develop innovative play spaces, including the following opportunities:

1. Kids Bike Park: Kids Bike Parks are small plazas with painted lines to mimic traditional road striping, including bike lanes, crosswalks, stop lines, and signage. These are both enjoyable and educational, as young children can safely learn to bike while understanding the rules of the road. In Corning, a Kids Bike Park could be implemented on an unused tennis or basketball court, adaptively reusing existing space. Maintenance cost typically includes maintaining pavement condition and road striping. A Kids Bike Park was the second-most popular potential improvement listed at Public Open House #1.
2. Music park: Music parks include large-scale musical instruments that provide an acoustic element to play areas. Example musical instruments include bells, xylophones, and percussion, and can be constructed from a variety of materials. The City could consider adding musical elements to various current and proposed play areas to complement other features.
3. Multi-use adventure area: Play areas with a variety of elements help encourage children and teenagers to gather together, and play for longer durations. When implementing all of the play-related recommendations in this report, the City of Corning should strive to find compatible and complementary uses of spaces. For instance, the City could implement a multi-use adventure area that includes nature play, skateboarding, bouldering, climbing walls, and additional features, creating a more dynamic space.
4. Safety village: A 'safety village' allows firefighters, police, and emergency workers to teach children the basics of safe lifestyles and how to react in emergency situations. A safety village could be implemented within the City parks in conjunction with the Kids Bike Park to allow for future programming.

REFERENCE PROJECTS

A Kids Bike Park in Seattle, WA, provides a space for children (and adults) to simultaneously learn how to ride their bikes and understand the rules of the road. This bike park was built on an underutilized surface, and is now a popular destination.

A Safety Village in Northampton, MA, features a small-scale replica of the town, providing emergency services personnel opportunities to teach children about safety. The town also serves as an open playground where children can 'move around town.'

ADDITIONAL ACTIVE RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

» **Walking trails in all parks.** A recent study commissioned by the National Recreation and Park Association noted that implementing walking trails loops in neighborhood parks increased usage of the parks by up to 80%, by far the most significant improvement for any particular amenity. This data aligns with information gathered during the Corning Community Survey, which indicated that 'walking' and 'dog walking' constitute the most frequent recreational activity for respondents. Currently, there are extensive walking trails in Denison and Canfield Parks, and segments of multi-use trails in Hillvue, McKinney, Stewart, and William Street Parks. Wherever feasible, the City of Corning should implement or complete multi-use trail loops in each park, focusing on providing a variety of accessibility levels, surfaces, and surroundings on the trails.

» **Implement 'flight center' in selected location.** With a rich history in aviation, the City of Corning has expressed interest in developing a flight center for model rockets, kites, drones, and other model aircraft in the parks system. This facility would require a small platform and surrounding open space without any nearby utility lines or private properties. At Public Open House #1, attendees expressed moderate support for this recommendation, as it ranked as the ninth-most popular improvement concept. The City should partner with local and regional aeronautics groups to develop programming for this 'flight center,' and should also clearly outline rules for maintaining the safety and privacy of other parks users with respect to flying objects and drones.

» **Implement additional fitness stations.** Several fitness stations were recently installed in Denison Park, and have been well-utilized. With fitness walking and jogging noted as some of the most popular recreational activities by Community Survey respondents, the City of Corning should install additional fitness stations throughout the parks system. These will encourage residents of all neighborhoods to adopt a more active lifestyle, and enable walkers and joggers to complement their cardiovascular exercise through stretching and strengthening. Additionally, by installing fitness stations throughout the parks system, the City can encourage users to walk, jog, or bike between parks, creating a 'fitness trail' throughout the City.

» **Consider creating a designated area for lawn games.** Currently, the two horseshoe pits in Denison Park are moderately used, and the surrounding open space is occasionally used for other lawn games. The City should consider designating an area for lawn games either around the existing horseshoe pits, or near pavilions and gathering spaces in other parks, and providing 'lawn game' equipment for rental. Suggested games that the City could offer for rental include croquet, bocce, kan-jam, and cornhole. In the Community Survey, 16% of respondents indicated an interest in additional lawn games, showing only moderate support for this recommendation. However, as a low-cost idea, the City should consider conducting a pilot program for implementing this recommendation, and could cater specifically to large groups who are also renting pavilions or event space.

BUILT FACILITIES

» **Provide sanitary restroom facilities to greatest extent possible.** Currently, there are restroom facilities in several parks, including Denison, Stewart, and William Street Parks. However, 'brick and mortar' bathroom facilities are typically highly expensive to maintain due to older materials and occasional vandalism, and as a result, several of these facilities in Corning City Parks are not regularly open and are in deteriorating condition. The condition of these facilities are of significant concern to many Corning residents; for instance, 84% of respondents to the Community Survey indicated a preference for 'new or enhanced' restroom facilities, and improving restroom facilities was by far the most-supported system-wide improvement at Public Open House #1. This conflict between extensive maintenance time and effort, improper use, and a community desire for clean restroom facilities is a common issue for parks and recreation systems across the country.

Given the high level of investment required to improve facilities, and the high level of concern amongst community members, it is recommended that the City of Corning develop a restroom management plan that establishes clear criteria for evaluating, improving, decommissioning, and establishing alternative restroom facilities. When developing this plan, the City should consult with precedent studies from several cities of various scales, including the City of Durham, NC (https://www.dprplaymore.org/DocumentCenter/View/77/Going-Public-an-Assessment-of-Restroom-Facilities-PDF), and Denver, CO, which both have excellent criteria. In general, the City of Corning should base decisions related to restrooms on the following guidelines:

1. Ensure that any existing brick-and-mortar restroom facilities are functional; if facilities are unusable, there should be immediate plans to either improve or remove them, using remediation techniques if necessary.
2. Establish, publicize, and adhere to restroom opening hours, specifying times of day and seasons.
3. Establish clear criteria for potential implementation of portable toilets in various parks; these criteria can be based on expected use, events, locations, and other factors.
4. Experiment with alternative and innovative strategies for minimizing maintenance of facilities, including solar-powered technology, remote-activated locks, self-activated sinks, and modern materials.

Ultimately, the restrooms within City parks are a clear priority for community members, and the City of Corning should clearly demonstrate a willingness to establish sanitary restroom facilities at all parks with appropriate need. Development of a restroom management plan will respond to this demand, and help establish clear criteria for restroom improvement, maintenance, and removal in manners that reflect needs of City Staff and community members.

» **Establish additional seating and picnic areas.** Seating and picnic areas serve as informal gathering and relaxing spaces within parks, providing space for planned and unplanned interaction, as well as spending time alone. Based on input from the Community Survey and City Staff, seating and picnic areas within the parks are frequently utilized for passive recreation. In locations with significant views, landmarks, or frequent gatherings, the City should install additional seating and picnic areas for community use. This recommendation is supported by input from the Community Survey, in which 56% of respondents indicated a preference for new or upgraded seating.

» **Enhance and maintain existing pavilions throughout parks systems.** Currently, the nine pavilions within the City Parks system are frequently used, and can be reserved during peak times through the City. In addition to continued maintenance, the City should consider potential enhancements to the facilities, including netting that prohibits bird nesting in the rafters. The City could also enhance the appearance of the pavilions by including signage and providing park wayfinding maps (recommended in Section 4.1). Overall, community support for pavilion enhancements is mixed; 55% of survey respondents indicated a preference for improvements, yet this recommendation was the least popular system-wide improvement at Public Open House #1.

OPEN SPACE & PASSIVE RECREATION

» **Preserve unprogrammed open space.** With an increased emphasis on designated facilities and programmed space, it is essential to recognize that open space itself is one of the most important amenities that a parks system can offer. In addition to facilitating the environmental benefits afforded by trees and permeable surfaces, open spaces provide a respite from an increasingly urbanized, indoor lifestyle, and can serve as flexible spaces for unscripted play, stretching, yoga, or similar activities. Currently, there are open, unprogrammed spaces in nearly all Corning City Parks, and the City should continually emphasize their importance when weighing potential improvements to the parks system. This recommendation is strongly supported by information from the Community Survey, where respondents frequently mentioned the value of open spaces when asked to describe the importance of parks.

» **Consider designating quiet areas for relaxation.** In conjunction with the above recommendation, the City should consistently prioritize the creation and preservation of quiet spaces within the parks system that are conducive to reading, photography, and other forms of relaxation. The City could also designate specific locations as quiet relaxation spaces, and provide additional seating to facilitate activities such as reading, writing, and photography. In general, these locations should be away from larger fields, pools, or roadways, and could include sound-canceling features such as trees, water elements, and other plantings. This recommendation is also supported by input in the Community Survey, where residents frequently mentioned the value of preserving quiet spaces in the parks system. These quiet areas could also feature an outdoor library or book 'drop box' to encourage sharing of resources and promote literacy. The large pavilion in Hillvue Park could be renovated for this purpose.

REFERENCE PROJECT

The Library Woods in Knox Farm State Park in East Aurora, NY, provide a quiet place for reading. A take-and-leave library allows community members to share books.

COMMUNITY AMENITIES

» **Establish a community garden.** By providing land for growing fruits, vegetables, and other edible plants, community gardens foster senses of community stewardship, promote healthy eating, and activate previously underutilized spaces. Particularly in cities, where private yard space for gardens is not accessible to all, community gardens can help promote social equity as well. By partnering with local residents and non-for-profit groups, the City of Corning should consider establishing a community garden within the parks system; by promoting healthy eating, a community garden could help the parks system address both key components of healthy living: active lifestyles and nutritious diets. When evaluating locations for a community garden, the City should ensure that the site(s) receives at least six hours of sunshine per day, is relatively flat, has a local source of water, and is in a location easily accessible by interested parties. This recommendation is supported by input from the Community Survey, when 34% of respondents stated that they would utilize a community garden, making it one of the most-preferred improvements. If feasible, the City should encourage the development of a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization to help implement and maintain the community garden, and could also partner with local grocery stores to secure funding or maintenance assistance.

REFERENCE PROJECT

Community Garden in Ithaca, NY, is operated by a not-for-profit organization and encourages residents to grow their own edible and non-edible plants. Located in a neighborhood relatively far away from local grocery stores, the community garden helps increase access to healthy food for all residents, enhancing food security. For additional information: http://ithacacommunitygardens.org/about-us

Potential dog park design in Corning.

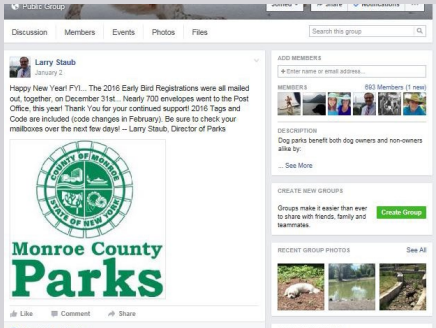
» **Collaborate to establish a Dog Park.** Dog Parks are typically fenced-in areas where dogs can exercise and play off-leash while being supervised by their owners. Often, dog parks can also provide opportunities for informal socialization between dog owners. To mitigate concerns with noise, maintenance, and safety, dog parks must be carefully designed and monitored to promote safe use. Throughout the development of this Parks Strategy, many community members expressed strong opinions about implementation of a dog park; ultimately, 75% of attendees at Public Meeting #1 indicated support for a dog park, and this recommendation was the second most-popular non-existing amenity in the Community Survey, with 36% of respondents indicating that they would routinely utilize a dog park. Based on this information, it is recommended that the City of Corning provide space for a dog park within the City Parks system, and support the establishment of a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) group to oversee development, operation and maintenance of the facility. When evaluating the design and location of the dog park, the following guidelines should be considered:

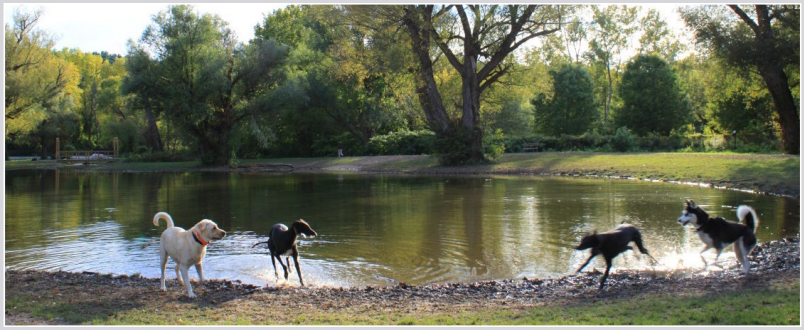
1. Implement the dog park at a centrally-located facility to maximize accessibility and use;
2. Locate dog park away from residences to reduce noise for residents, implementing sound-canceling features such as trees and other plantings if necessary;
3. Locate dog park in currently underutilized space within parks; areas with steeper topography and trees can become assets for dog parks;
4. Coordinate with local law enforcement to address concerns;
5. Require small yearly maintenance and upkeep fee to become 'member' of dog park;
6. Require proof of vaccination for 'member' dogs;
7. Partner with local hotels to provide visitors free access to dog park with proof of vaccination;
8. Design separate areas for larger and smaller dogs;
9. Include clear signage expressing rules and regulations of the dog park, including cleanup of waste.

Due to the strong opinions expressed by community members, the City should partner closely with the not-for-profit organization to carefully develop a plan for implementing the dog park. This should include clear criteria for selecting site(s), incorporating features, and a formalized maintenance and liability plan. Ultimately, the City should also carefully incorporate updated best practices to create a safe, accessible, and well-utilized dog park that respects its surroundings.

REFERENCE PROJECT

The **Dog Parks in Monroe County, NY,** exhibit many best practice elements for dog park design. They are located in previously underutilized areas, provide ample space for dogs to run off-leash, include seating and socialization spaces for dog owners, have dog washing stations, and have separated areas for larger and smaller dogs to increase safety. There is also a county-wide dog park page on Facebook that allows community members to self-monitor and update information about the dog parks. Members must show proof of dog vaccination and pay a small annual maintenance fee for use.





» **Continue implementing Public Art throughout parks system.** In a community with an artistic history as rich as Corning's, public art should be an integral part of the parks system and Civic Center Plaza. After the success of the Denison Park Bridge mural, the City should continue collaborating with the Rockwell Museum, the City's Public Art Committee, the Alley Art Project, and other local artists and organizations to support a robust public arts program. In general, the City should encourage a broad approach to public art, recognizing its opportunities to complement and integrate history, environmental elements, educational features, and even exercise amenities. While more specific public art projects are included in the following Section 4.3: Individual Parks Improvements, the City should consider collaborating to develop a 'Public Art Vision' for the entire Parks System, encouraging both permanent, temporary, and kinetic installations that complement the City's environmental, aesthetic, and cultural heritage.

REFERENCE PROJECT

This stained glass art by Nancy Gong at the **Rochester Museum & Science Center** merges public art with education. The glass artwork illustrates the role of surrounding Green Infrastructure practices within the water cycle.

4.3 INDIVIDUAL PARKS RECOMMENDATIONS

This section includes specific recommendations for each park. In addition, any system-wide or amenity recommendations discussed in Sections 4.1 and 4.2 that may be relevant to each individual park are included for reference.

CANFIELD PARK

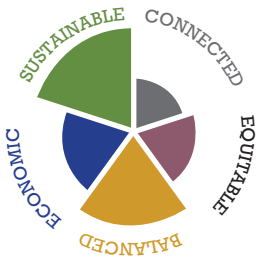
VISION

Enhance historic integrity of City's landmark park through clearly articulated maintenance approach.

RELEVANT SYSTEM-WIDE RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Create historic wayfinding/informational trail
- Continue enhancements to walking trails
- Install additional seating and picnic areas in historically accurate manner

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS



- **Clearly articulate an approach to maintaining historic integrity.** Canfield Park was deeded to the City of Corning with particular guidelines and limitations regarding its design and usage, including standards for vegetation, pruning, erosion management, and compatible uses. The 1994 Historic Landscapes Report details the ongoing maintenance and design practices that have impacted Canfield Park, noting that (as of 1994), the park maintains "high historic integrity of location and setting, partial integrity of design, materials, and feeling, and overall partial integrity to the period of significance," which is stated as 1835-1912. The report indicates that, due to this level of integrity, the Park meets two of the four criterion for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places: Criterion A in the area of Community Planning and Development for illustrating the role of open space in the development of Corning; and Criterion C in the area of Landscape Architecture for embodying the characteristics of the public square, a distinct landscape typology. In 1998, Canfield Park was included in the designation of the Southside Historic District on the National Register of Historic Places, an area which encompasses over 600 buildings between State Route 17, Chemung Street, Spencer Hill, and Washington Street. If interest is demonstrated, it is recommended that the City consider partnering with the Corning Historic Preservation Committee to pursue individual designation of Canfield Park on the National Register of Historic Places.

In addition to potentially pursuing this designation, it is strongly recommended that the City adopt a formalized approach to maintaining the demonstrated historic integrity and character of Canfield Park. When considering treatments to historic landscapes and properties, the National Park Service's Secretary of the Interior Guidelines recommend one of four alternatives: Preservation, which sustains currently existing characteristics; Rehabilitation, which prioritizes repair, alterations, and additions in addition to preservation; Restoration, which depicts the form, features, and character of particular periods; and Reconstruction, which employs new construction to replicate the appearance of a landscape or building that no longer exists. Given the existing conditions of Canfield Park, it is recommended that the City decide between the Preservation and Rehabilitation approaches. For reference, the 1994 Historic Landscapes Report preliminarily recommended Preservation, while noting that the City's approach aligned more with Rehabilitation. When considering each of these approaches, the City should carefully follow the following guidance, from the 2017 Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties (https://www.nps.gov/tps/standards/treatment-guidelines-2017.pdf):

> **Preservation** (beginning on page 27 of the linked document) is defined as the act of process of applying measures necessary to sustain the existing form, integrity, and materials of an historic property. Work, including preliminary measures to protect and stabilize the property, generally focuses upon the ongoing maintenance and repair of historic materials and features rather than extensive replacement and new construction. Preservation is an appropriate treatment when the objective is to retain the property as it currently exists, including original historic materials as well as later changes and additions. Protection, maintenance, and repair are emphasized while replacement is not preferred.
>
> **Rehabilitation** (beginning on page 75 of the linked document) is defined as the act of process of making possible a compatible use for a property through repair, alterations, and additions while preserving those portions or features which convey its historical, cultural, or architectural values. In Rehabilitation, historic building materials and character-defining features are protected and maintained as they are in the Preservation treatment. However, greater latitude is given to replace extensive deteriorated, damaged, or missing features using either the same material or compatible substitute materials. Protection of existing features is prioritized, with repair and replacement only recommended if other treatments are not feasible.

It is recommended that the City also partner with the Corning Historic Preservation Committee to carefully determine the proposed approach. Once an approach is determined, however, it is strongly recommended to clearly publicize and formalize this approach, to ensure that it will consistently guide the future design, maintenance, and usage of the park. Most importantly, either of these approaches will significantly ensure that Canfield Park maintains its historic character and significance for future generations.

» **Replace old fountain with new planting design.** As stated in the Historic Landscape Report, a 25' diameter concrete fountain was once located within the southern central plaza in Canfield Park. The fountain featured terra cotta flower vases, sandstone boulders, and lighting, and served as a formal gathering space. Depending on the determined approach in the above recommendation, the City could consider reconstructing this structure with modifications to enhance sustainability and social space. While re-creating a water feature is likely cost-prohibitive, the 'fountain' could feature green infrastructure practices, natural materials, and seating areas, and could serve its initial purpose as a place for gathering. The 'fountain' could also be complemented with historically-sensitive lighting to provide a visual focal point during evenings. If implemented, this design should carefully reference the Historic Landscape Report to reflect the materials, composition, and construction techniques of the original fountain.

DENISON PARK

VISION

Phased revitalization to embrace role as flagship park.

RELEVANT SYSTEM-WIDE RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Consider pathways along Chemung River
- Implement multimodal improvements, including bicycle parking and crosswalks
- Include wildlife habitats
- Study for potential soil contamination (at south end of park)
- Improve condition of rectangular fields
- Remove unused backstop
- Redesign disc golf course
- Enhance selected basketball courts
- Adaptively reuse selected tennis courts
- Install pickleball courts
- Remove existing skateboard facility
- Install small skateboard features
- Promote winter activities
- Continue enhancing Denison Park Pool
- Implement nature play
- Continue auditing and maintaining existing playground
- Consider designated area for lawn games
- Provide sanitary restroom facilities
- Enhance existing pavilions
- Preserve unprogrammed open space
- Establish a community garden
- Continue implementing public art

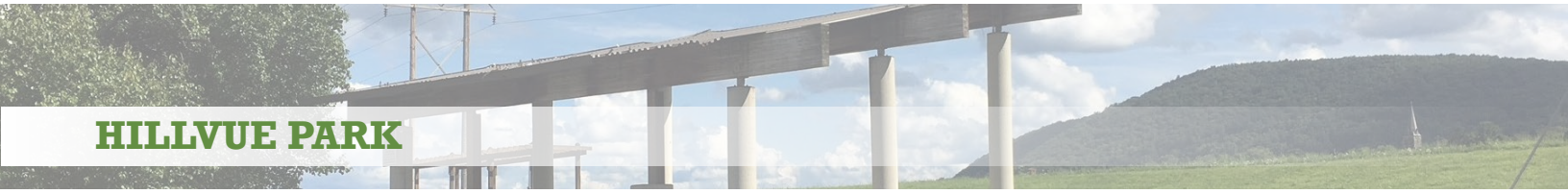
SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Resolve pond circulation issues.** With the lack of outflow from the recently-closed Guthrie Memorial Hospital, the pond currently experiences standing water and a lower water level than normal. This creates both an undesirable aesthetic and occasionally results in unpleasant smells. It is recommended that the City perform an engineering study to specifically identify issues related to the flow and circulation of the pond, particularly focusing on creating additional inflow into the pond. Restoration of the pond should include green infrastructure practices to enhance water quality, habitat value, and 4-season visual appeal.

- **Restore and reuse concession stand.** The concession stand on the west side of the park is currently boarded up and not utilized, but still has working utilities. It is recommended that the City consider re-opening this structure for use as a concession stand. This is a relatively low-cost improvement that will both offer an additional amenity to park users and provide an additional source of income through sales. The City could consider staffing this concession stand with City staff or outside vendors; if successful, the City could also explore the possibility of implementing concession areas in other main parks.

» **Historic restoration of the lighthouse structure.** As discussed in Chapter 2, the base of the 'lighthouse' structure near the Concrete Bridge is still standing, though it lacks the top 'light' fixture. As a component of the drainage infrastructure within the park, the base of the lighthouse must remain. Historic restoration is recommended. However, this structure provides a unique opportunity for reuse and decoration through incorporation of public art. The City should consider collaborating with the Public Art Committee to develop a public art request for proposals that seeks to creatively repurpose the lighthouse, perhaps including the initial ideas of 'glass' and 'optics' to reflect the original design of the lighthouse.

» **Restore Memorial Gate.** Currently, the Memorial Gate is in fair condition, but has evidence of both structural and visual deterioration. It is strongly recommended that the City take the necessary steps to preserving and/or restoring the structure, which include pursuing a grant to develop a historic structures report, and hiring a masonry specialist to specifically identify structural considerations. As a key historic and aesthetic amenity, the Memorial Gate has an important role in the parks system, serving as the gateway to the City's largest park, and should be maintained as such for future generations.



HILLVUE PARK

VISION

Gently enhance peaceful, riverside park that caters to neighborhood.

RELEVANT SYSTEM-WIDE RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Construct pathways along Chemung River
- Implement multimodal improvements, such as bicycle parking
- Include wildlife habitats
- Implement nature play
- Continue auditing and maintenance of existing playgrounds
- Maintain and enhance existing pavilions
- Consider designating quiet areas for relaxation, with potential outdoor library
- Develop a Cherry Blossom Trail

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

» **Consider revitalizing sprinkler feature.** With the recommended closure of Stewart Park Pool, it is recommended that the City pursue use of smaller aquatic facilities. If feasible, the City should consider reutilizing the sprinkler system in Hillvue Park as a low-cost opportunity for children to play during warmer months.

HOUGHTON PARK

VISION

Minor amenity and accessibility enhancements to neighborhood park.

RELEVANT SYSTEM-WIDE RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Enhance multimodal connectivity through bike parking and pedestrian facilities
- Reforesting initiative
- Install green infrastructure
- Install small skateboard features
- Implement nature play
- Continue auditing and maintaining playgrounds
- Develop walking trail
- Install fitness stations
- Provide lawn games
- Preserve unprogrammed open space
- Consider establishing community garden

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Design parking enhancements along Sims Avenue.** In the Community Survey and at Public Open House #1, community members indicated a perceived lack of vehicular parking at Houghton Park during events. It is recommended that the City explore the addition of designated vehicular parking areas along the east side of the Park to reduce on-street parking. If implemented, the City should strongly consider utilizing Green Infrastructure practices such as permeable pavement and bioretention areas to alleviate drainage concerns and enhance water quality.

MCKINNEY PARK

VISION

Re-envision park through Master Plan with new, reused, and enhanced facilities.

RELEVANT SYSTEM-WIDE RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Promote multimodal connectivity through crosswalks and bicycle parking
- Reforesting initiative
- Implement green infrastructure
- Design wildlife habitats
- Perform soil contamination study
- Improve rectangular field condition
- Remove unused backstops
- Install additional disc golf baskets
- Enhance or explore adaptive reuse for basketball court
- Adaptively reuse tennis courts
- Install small skateboard features on tennis court
- Create larger skate parks throughout parks system
- Implement nature play
- Continue auditing and maintaining existing playgrounds
- Consider Kids Bike Park
- Complete walking trail throughout park
- Implement Fitness stations
- Ensure sanitary restroom facilities
- Restore or replace existing pavilions
- Designate quiet areas for relaxation
- Consider Dog Park

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Design wooded nature trail on southwest corner of park.** Though there are numerous nature trails in the surrounding municipalities and forests, there are currently no nature trails within the City of Corning. As the only City Park with a wooded area, McKinney Park represents the best opportunity for offering this amenity. When feasible, the City should strongly consider constructing a Nature Trail loop in this section of the park, connecting to the existing asphalt path within the park. To maximize the benefits of this design, the pathway should incorporate permeable pavement, ample educational signage, features that discourage illegitimate uses, and accessible sections if possible. This recommendation is strongly recommended, as it maximizes use of existing property, encourages additional use, provides a new amenity to the parks system, and connects residents to natural environments. Input from the Community Survey indicated that 78% of respondents would regularly utilize a nature trail within the parks system, making this recommendation by far the most popular amongst respondents.

» **Remove old bathroom facility.** In general, removing old and underutilized structures is an essential strategy for enhancing the perception of the parks system. The existing bathroom facility in McKinney Park has not been in use for several years, due to vandalism, utility issues, and potentially harmful materials. It is the opinion of the City that these issues have rendered the facility beyond the point of repair. When possible, the City should remove this structure, performing all necessary remediation for potentially hazardous materials.

» **Evaluate parking enhancements along the edges of the park.** Similar to Houghton Park, many residents are forced to park along the streets adjacent to McKinney Park during larger events. With low curbs, vehicles are often parked partially on the grass, which damages the condition of the turf. To remediate this, the City should consider installing at-grade parking surfaces along the edges of the park to provide designated parking during peak use times. As discussed previously, these parking areas should be designed with green infrastructure components such as permeable pavements and bioretention areas.

» **Implement nature play area(s).** While nature play is recommended throughout the parks system, McKinney Park is particularly appropriate for its implementation. Along with the proposed nature trail, the nature play area could emphasize the park's connection to the wooded areas, and help develop the park's identity; additionally, excess materials from the trail construction could be utilized to develop part of the nature play area. A nature play area is also appropriate for McKinney Park due to the known soil contaminants, since it would not require below-ground foundations.

» **Develop Master Plan.** The various individual and system-wide recommendations have the opportunity to significantly transform McKinney Park. To ensure that this transformation is performed in a context-sensitive manner, it is recommended that the City develop a master plan for McKinney Park, either by City staff or in collaboration with an outside consultant. This master plan would help establish the park's identity, serving as a detailed guide for the restoration, removal, or adaptive reuse of the existing facilities and for the implementation of nature trails, nature play areas, and other new amenities.

STEWART PARK

VISION

Re-energize park by creating dynamic, multi-use spaces and signature amenities.

RELEVANT SYSTEM-WIDE RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Enhance multimodal connectivity through bike parking and crosswalks
- Reforesting initiative
- Design wildlife habitats
- Perform soil contamination study
- Enhance rectangular fields
- Consider additional multi-use field
- Consider additional disc golf baskets
- Enhance basketball court
- Adaptively reuse of tennis courts
- Remove unused backstops
- Consider installing pickleball courts
- Design small skateboard features
- Include larger skate park
- Encourage sledding and winter activities
- Phase out Stewart Park Pool
- Implement splash pad
- Implement nature Play
- Continue maintenance and auditing of existing playgrounds
- Consider Kids Bike Park and Safety Village
- Consider music park
- Create multi-use adventure area
- Complete walking trail loop
- Consider Flight center
- Implement fitness stations
- Provide lawn games
- Ensure sanitary restroom facilities
- Maintain existing pavilions
- Preserve open space
- Consider community garden
- Consider Dog Park
- Implement Public Art
- Consider incorporating flight center

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Incorporate full-length multi-use field.** The Corning Rugby Club, a growing 501(c)(3) club with over seventy participants, utilizes the Stewart Park field north of the Pool facility for rugby practices. However, without a full-length rugby field (210′ by 360′), the Club must use fields in Gang Mills, Campbell, or Corning Community College for official games. Currently, the field in Stewart Park is nearly large enough, and with the recommended removal of the backstop and mound, will be sufficient for games. However, the north-east edge of this field will be adjacent to a minor hill, which the City should consider grading to ensure the safety of all players. Additionally, by re-grading this small section of hill, the field will become wide enough for use as a full-length soccer field, at (225′ by 360′), encouraging additional multi-use space. This improvement aligns with the amenity recommendations to increase athletic field space throughout the parks system.

- **Restripe parking lot.** The existing parking lot on the west side of Stewart Park is typically fully utilized during larger events. However, with faded pavement markings, vehicles often park haphazardly. By restriping the parking lot, the City can maximize the amount of vehicles that park within the available space, enhancing vehicular accessibility to the park.

WILLIAM STREET PARK

VISION

Wholesale revitalization of park through encouragement of legitimate user groups.

RELEVANT SYSTEM-WIDE RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Formalize pathways along Chemung River
- Promote multimodal connectivity through bike parking
- Implement wildlife habitats
- Perform soil contamination study
- Consider additional disc golf baskets
- Adaptively reuse selected basketball courts
- Install small skateboard features
- Create larger skate park
- Implement nature play
- Continue maintenance of existing playgrounds
- Implement fitness stations
- Ensure sanitary restrooms
- Enhance and maintain pavilion
- Designate areas for quiet relaxation
- Consider Dog Park

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Remove horseshoe pits.** The 12 sets of horseshoe pits at the northwest corner of the park are in poor condition and are not utilized. It is recommended that the City remove these facilities when feasible, to help promote the perception of Corning City Parks as clean and well-utilized. This area could be reused for additional parking, skatepark facility, or other recommended amenity improvement.

- **Enhance nature trail at southwest edge of park.** In conjunction with the system-wide recommendation to enhance the pathways along the Chemung River, the existing pathway that connects the levee-top trail to the horseshoe pit area in William Street Park should be reconstructed and improved. This will both enhance connectivity and encourage more legitimate users in the park, which will help discourage undesired uses. If possible, this path should be constructed to be ADA accessible and incorporate permeable pavements.

WALKER PARK

VISION

Aesthetic enhancements for passing motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians.

RELEVANT SYSTEM-WIDE RECOMMENDATION:

» Incorporate public art sculptures

ACHSINNESSINK MEMORIAL PARK

VISION

Encourage honoring of park's heritage and monument.

RELEVANT SYSTEM-WIDE RECOMMENDATIONS:

» Multimodal enhancements such as crosswalk to promote awareness of monument.

» New seating to encourage recognition of monument and allow for passive recreation.

CIVIC CENTER PLAZA

VISION

Develop master plan to create enlivened, accessible four-season gathering space for community.

RELEVANT SYSTEM-WIDE RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Promote multimodal connectivity through bicycle parking
- Urban forestry enhancements
- Install green infrastructure
- Consider pickleball courts
- Implement small skateboard features
- Promote outdoor winter recreation
- Encourage 'play everywhere' features
- Incorporate fitness stations
- Add seating
- Incorporate public art

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Create Public Art Park.** As a central location with governmental, social, cultural, historical, and environmental roles, Civic Center Plaza is an ideal location for a highly-visible Public Art Park. The City should partner with the Public Art Committee and other local organizations to promote all types of public art, including permanent, temporary, and kinetic. As discussed in Section 4.2: Amenity Improvements, Public Art should be considered in a broad sense, and seek to incorporate educational, functional, and athletic elements where possible to create a more dynamic atmosphere. Solar-powered lighting and acoustic elements could also be encouraged in art elements.

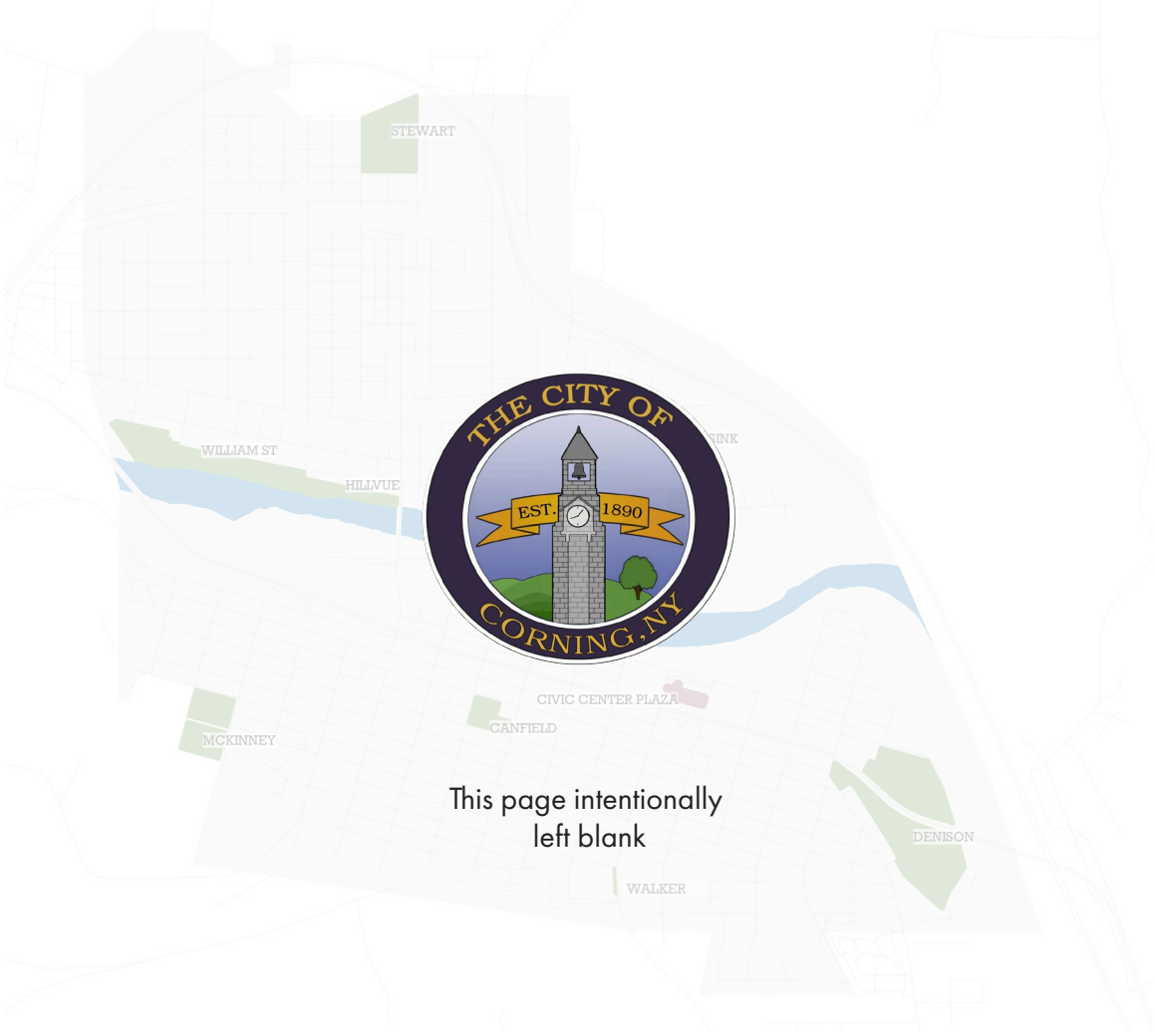
- **Resolve drainage issues.** Located on the north edge of Civic Center Plaza, the Southeast Steuben County Library currently experiences significant flooding in the basement during large storm events. To remedy this, the City should conduct a formal study to specify drainage issues, and respond accordingly. Where possible, green infrastructure elements should be incorporated to help reduce surface runoff and treat water.

- **Consider off-season uses for rink.** As the largest outdoor covered space in the City, the Ice Rink in Civic Center Plaza is a significant community asset that should be heavily utilized during all four seasons. If necessary, surface and structural improvements should be performed to facilitate off-season use. Specifically, the City should consider encouraging activities such as rollerskating and pickleball, along with events that take advantage of the plaza's proximity to the library, as discussed in the following recommendation. Accordingly, it is also recommended that the rink be maintained as a covered outdoor facility, as

this enables: increased connection to the outdoors for users during all seasons; use for outdoor activities during summers; reduced operating costs of heating and cooling a facility; and an enhanced connection to the rest of Civic Center Plaza.

» **Develop events series with partners.** With proximity to the library, governmental center, Fallbrook Park, and Market Street, Civic Center Plaza is also an ideal location for regularly-scheduled events. These events may include a public speaker series, dances in the rink, concerts, reading and educational events for children, and other innovative programs, and should take advantage of the WiFi connection that is available throughout the plaza. In developing this recommendation, the City should work closely with stakeholders including the Library, Alley Art Project, School District, Music Groups, and other local organizations.

» **Create Revitalization Plan for Civic Center Plaza.** With such a diversity of options for enhancement in Civic Center Plaza, it is recommended that the City complete a formalized comprehensive plan for the plaza's revitalization. This could be completed by City staff or an outside consultant, but should heavily involve input from all relevant stakeholders, including the Library, Recreation Department, all adjacent businesses, and the Public Art Committee. When developed, this master plan should take into consideration all of the above recommendations, as well as applicable system-wide improvements, strongly emphasizing four-season use of the space. Ultimately, this recommendation will help the City transform the plaza into an enlivened central gathering space that serves as an extension of the Market Street pedestrian streetscape.



This page intentionally
left blank