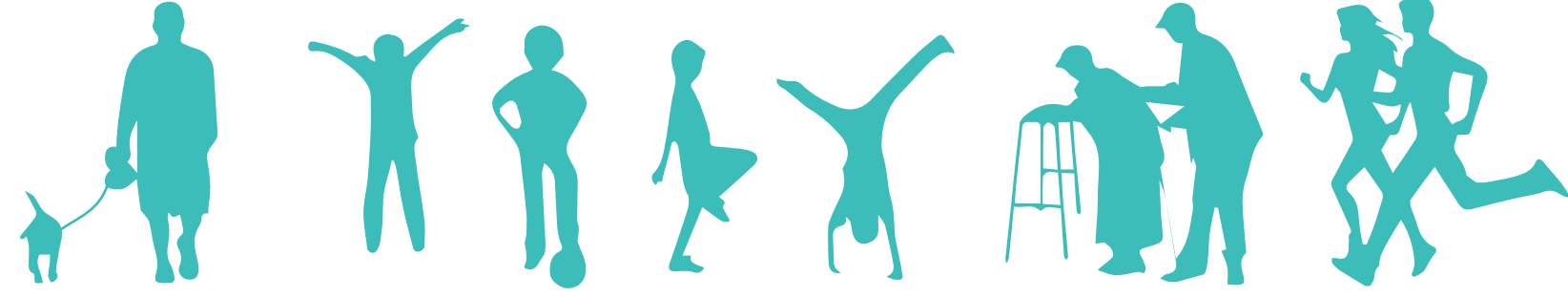


# HEALTHIER NEW BRUNSWICK

## New Downtown Park: Healthy Options for Use & Access

**Project Team:**  
Eric Zimmerman  
Jacob Labutka  
Jennifer Buison  
Megan Loeb  
Deanna Moran  
Whitney Miller



**2015** Fall Studio

**RUTGERS**  
Edward J. Bloustein School  
of Planning and Public Policy

### Objectives

1. Assess baseline conditions and potential health benefits
2. Identify challenges and opportunities for the new downtown park
3. Evaluate how the city can maximize use and health benefits through linkages & access, park features, and programming

### Background

The Wolfson Parking Deck, one of the oldest parking decks in New Brunswick, is slated for demolition. The current need for open space downtown led the to the City’s proposal for a pocket park on the site.

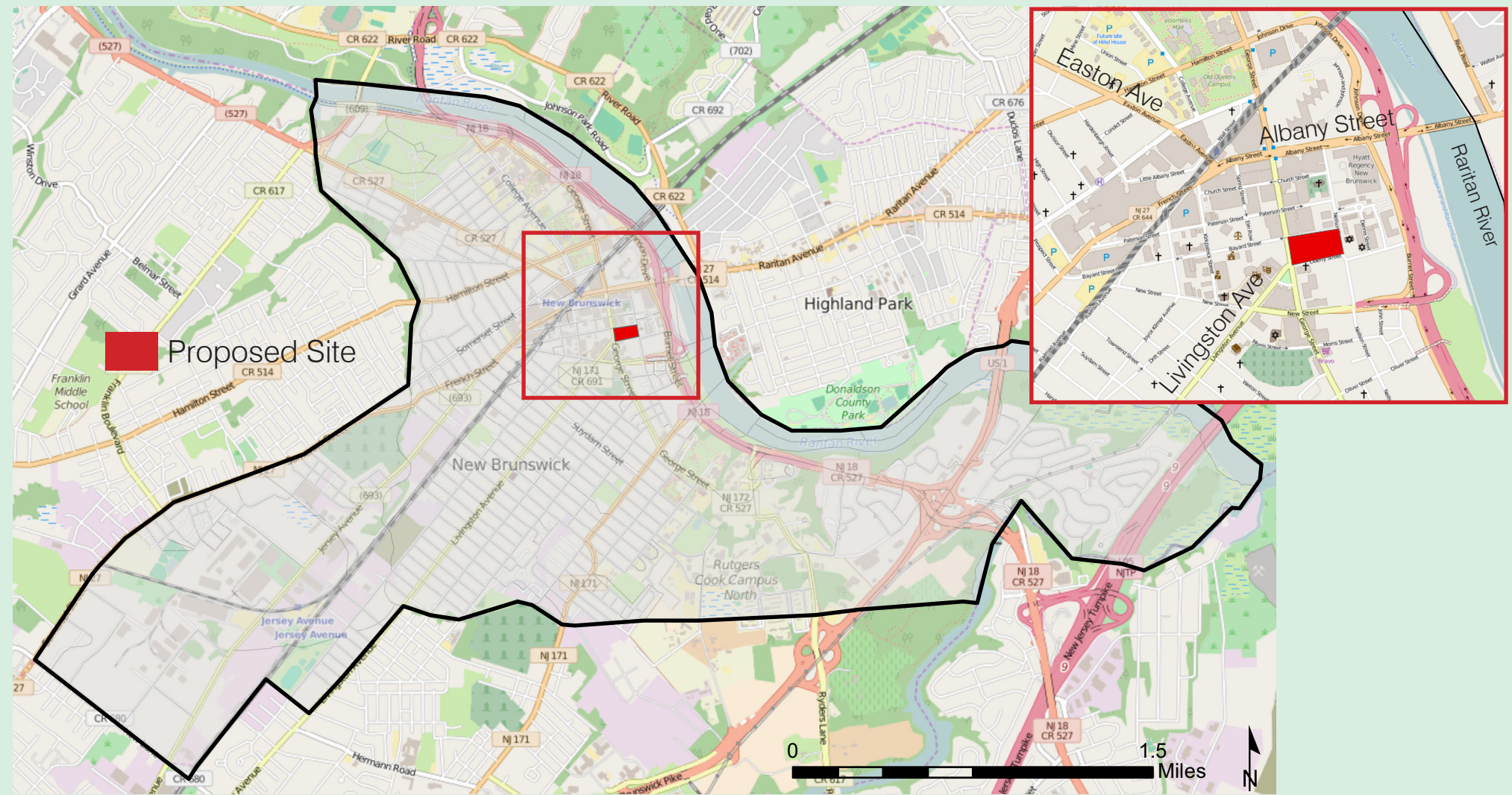
#### Wolfson Parking Deck



Neilson Street between New and George Streets



Bayard Street between Neilson and George Streets



- 1.12 Acre site, located in Downtown/City Market District
- Close to commercial corridor, adjacent residential

### Select Recommendations

A full list of recommendations from this analysis can be found in the accompanying report.

1. Address pedestrian safety issues and prioritize street infrastructure improvements in high-access areas and underserved areas
2. Redesign or update existing wayfinding system to direct visitors to park spaces including new downtown pocket park
3. Engage stakeholders and residents early on in the park design process
4. Consider featuring a combination of five park uses on the site: event/staging, dog park, playground, seating, and a water feature
5. Develop programming based on the health needs of the identified park user groups, especially underserved populations
6. Explore partnering with local organizations and Rutgers University to further develop and expand park programming

### Baseline Conditions

Two geographies analyzed: (1) New Brunswick City and (2) the “study area” as determined by the studio team (18 block radius)

#### Major findings with health implications include:

City-wide there is an abundance of public park space, but there is limited park space in the downtown.

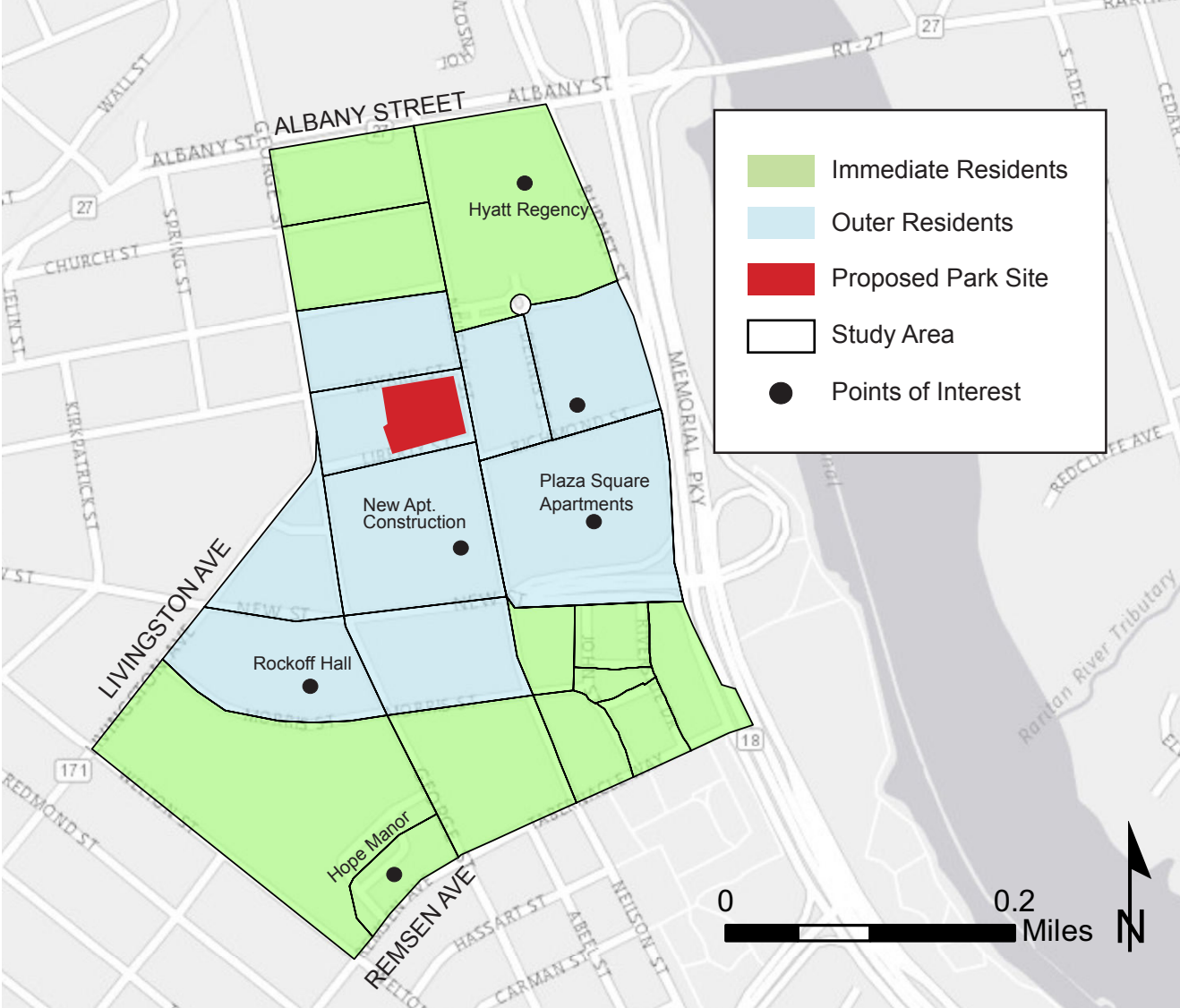
The parks in closet proximity to downtown (Boyd and Monument Square) are not fulfilling the current need because of access issues and size.

City-wide there are large populations of children (5 and under), Hispanics, and residents with a primary language other than English.

Within the study area there are more Seniors (64 and over), and less Hispanics and children than city-wide.

On average, the study area has a higher income than city-wide, but the southern portion of the study area was lower income and had lower rates of health coverage (15-30% uninsured vs. under 15%).

#### Study Area & Location-based Users



Sources: Google Maps 2010, New Jersey Geographic Information Network, United States Census Bureau

#### Five Key User Groups in study area:

(1) immediate residents, (2) outer residents, (3) daytime users, (4) children, (5) seniors.

Immediate residents are primarily young adults, White, Non-Hispanic, and non-family households.

Outer residents are primarily Hispanics, family households, and have more children than immediate residents.

### Healthy Park Features and Elements

Based on a literature review of the health benefits of various park features and elements, and with guidance from the identified park user groups and study area demographics, the following are recommended:

#### Park Features

Uses & Programming	Potential Benefits	Potential Issues
Childrens Play Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Physical activity</li><li>• Cognitive learning</li><li>• Motor skills development</li><li>• Reduced aggression</li><li>• Reduced stormwater runoff</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Increased play injuries</li><li>• Exposure to vehicle emissions</li><li>• Exposure to heavy traffic</li></ul>
Dog Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Physical activity</li><li>• Decreased depression</li><li>• Decreased stress</li><li>• Decreased social isolation</li><li>• Increased social cohesion</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Dog excrement - sanitation</li><li>• Injuries (dog bites)</li></ul>
Water Feature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Air filtration</li><li>• More meaningful social interaction</li><li>• Decreased stress</li><li>• Decreased mental fatigue</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sanitation</li></ul>
Staging/Event Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Physical activity</li><li>• Healthy food options</li><li>• Decreased depression</li><li>• Decreased stress</li><li>• Cognitive learning</li><li>• Reduced stormwater runoff</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Noise pollution</li><li>• Liter</li><li>• Crowding</li></ul>
Seating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cognitive learning</li><li>• Decreased depression</li><li>• Decreased stress</li><li>• Decreased social isolation</li><li>• Increased social cohesion</li><li>• Mental stimulation</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Liter</li><li>• Pests</li><li>• Loitering</li></ul>

#### Park Elements

Elements	Potential Health Benefits
Fencing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Mental recharge</li><li>• Feeling safe and secure</li></ul>
Seating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Physical activity</li><li>• Physical relaxation</li><li>• Mental relaxation</li><li>• Feelings of seclusion</li><li>• Decreased social isolation</li></ul>
Shading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Decreased heat-related illnesses</li><li>• Feelings of seclusion</li><li>• Mental recharge</li><li>• Improved air quality</li><li>• Reduced stormwater runoff</li></ul>
Lighting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Increased public safety</li><li>• Feeling secure</li></ul>
Sanitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reduced potential for poor water quality</li><li>• Reduced potential for soil contamination</li></ul>

### Linkages & Access

Awalkabilityassessmentwasconductedbasedonfieldworkandsupplemented by city-wide crash data to identify areas with poor street infrastructure and pedestrian safety challenges.

#### Major findings with health implications include:

Poor street infrastructure corresponds with per capita income, lower income areas having worse conditions.

Outer residents will likely have greater difficulty accessing the park than immediate residents.

A higher proportion of outer residents are children, minorities, and low income residents.

Access issues among outer residents could discourage park use by the most vulnerable populations in the study, who are more likely to be impacted by health disparities.

Nearly 10% of all city residents live within a 10 min walk of the site and nearly 50% live within a 20 minute walk, but there is limited wayfinding downtown that would help residents or visitors find the site.

Pedestrian safety does not appear to be an issues directly around the site but may be an issue for daytime users coming from the commercial corridor.

