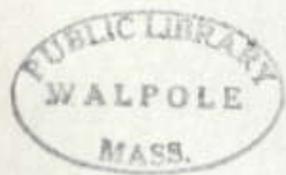
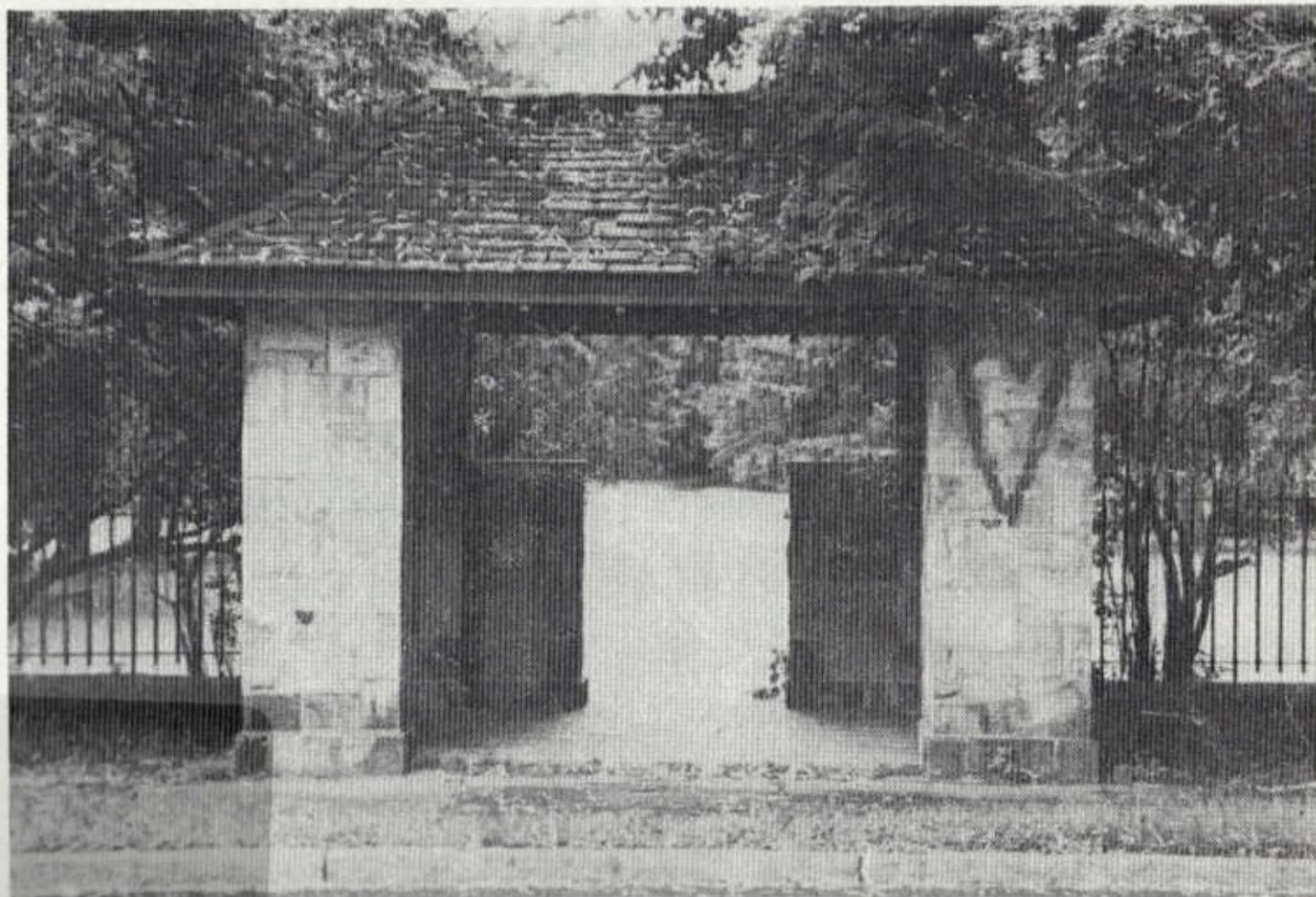


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# Renewing FRANCIS WILLIAM PARK



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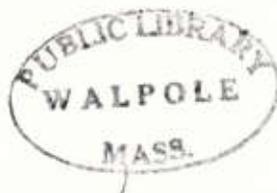
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A Master Scheme and Design Guidelines  
for the  
Management

of  
**FRANCIS WILLIAM PARK**  
East Walpole, Massachusetts



Prepared for the Park Trustees  
by  
The Conway School of Landscape Design  
Karen Bess • Andrea Horan • Laura Stack

June, 1989

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The design team would like to thank the many people who generously contributed their knowledge, time and energy to this project.

We are grateful for the enthusiasm and assistance of all who are involved with Francis William Park, especially Mr. David Bird who initiated this project and provided his excellent support throughout. The park advisory council members are to be thanked and congratulated for their efforts: Anne Bird, Beverly Clarke, Jean LeVangie, Russell McNeil, Joyce Smith, Joanne Sprague, Robert Walter, Betty Anne Wissman and Douglas Wynne. Roger and Libby Pero gave us information and hospitality. Andy Anderson made us feel at home in the office, and we couldn't have made it without the Bird Park Cafe.

Thanks are due to the many people who contributed their time and expertise to this project: Shary Page Berg, Jeannine Furrer, Paul Goguen, Doug Landry, Karen Tiede, Liz Vizza and Geraldine Weinstein.

A special thanks to Walter, Donald and Randy for the quality of their comments and attention.

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# **INTRODUCTION**

**Client Aim**  
**Project Purpose**  
**Town Context**  
**Neighborhood Context**  
**History of the Town and Park**

Francis William Park is a 89-acre, private park located in East Walpole, Massachusetts. It was established in 1927 by Anna and Charles Sumner Bird Sr. for the benefit of the people of Walpole and in memory of their son Francis William Bird.

The park was created to preserve and enhance the open space in a rapidly growing town for the enjoyment and well being of the townspeople. This special place is the product of the combined vision of landscape architect John Nolen and the generosity of the Bird family. The quality of its structures, the careful contrasts in its topography and the principles which guided the park's development all reflect foresight and thoughtfulness.

Today, Francis William Park is showing signs of age, abuse and neglect in both its natural and built features. In February of 1989, the park trustees requested that the Conway School of Landscape Design undertake a study which would help them to revitalize the park, reverse the trend of decay and increase public use and awareness. The 10-week study is part of an ongoing design effort which will culminate in a detailed, comprehensive master plan in the coming years.

## **CLIENT AIM**

The long-term aim of the trustees of Francis William Park is to restore the park to a vital, meaningful role within the community.

## **PROJECT PURPOSE**

This project's purpose is to assist with the park trustees' aim by providing:

- a strong foundation of information concerning existing park conditions,

- a vision for the park's future,

- design principles and recommendations to guide management decisions, and

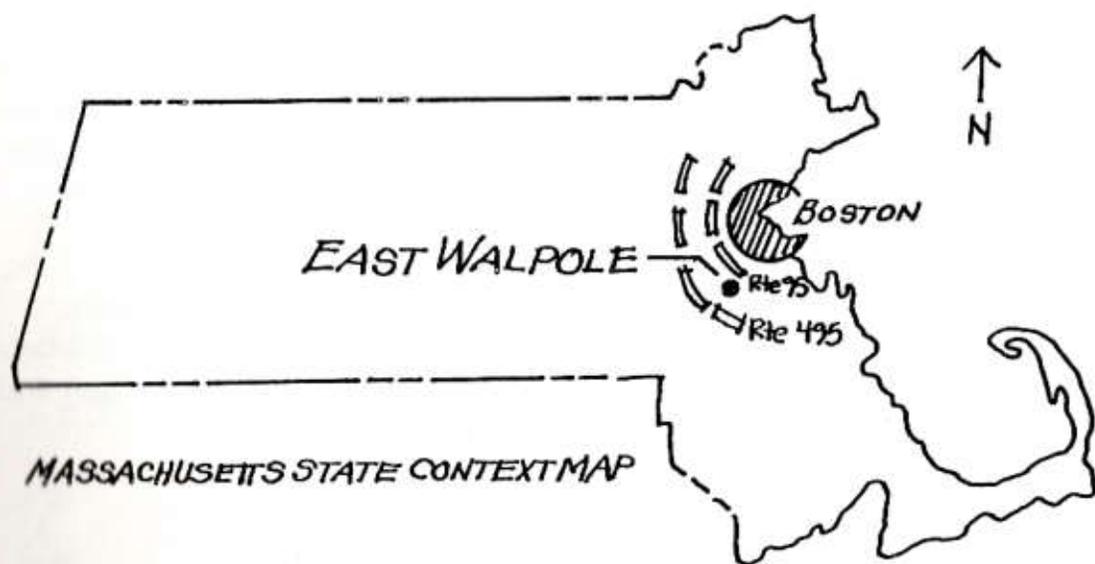
- a master scheme which is a general interpretation of how the principles and guidelines might be implemented.

The master scheme is not intended to be a detailed design plan; rather, it makes broad recommendations.

## TOWN CONTEXT

When Francis William Park was designed in the 1920's, the town of Walpole still had large, undeveloped tracts of land. Nonetheless, Charles Sumner Bird Sr. and John Nolen recognized the positive influence nature has on human existence and the viability of communities. They realized the importance of setting aside land for future generations. Needs they saw are even more evident today as Walpole faces ever-increasing development pressures.

East Walpole, a village within the town of Walpole, is located 19 miles from Boston and 26 miles from Providence, Rhode Island. The village is situated along the banks of the Neponset River which flows north to Boston Harbor. Once the river provided power for industry and a link to Boston. Today major highways such as Routes 95 and 495 surrounding Walpole channel travellers to near and far destinations.



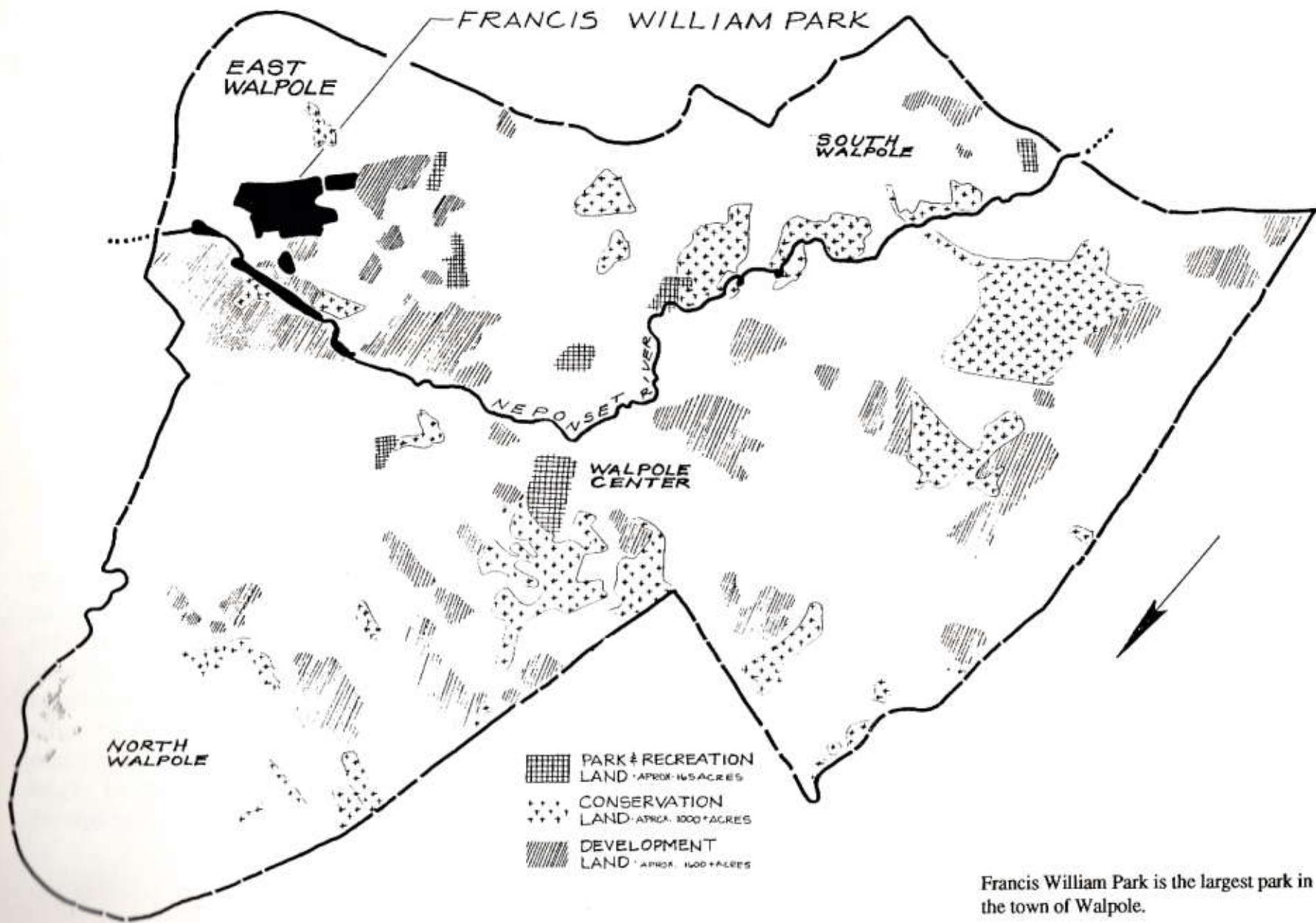
East Walpole: from industrial boomtown to Boston bedroom community.

Walpole is a changing town. It began as an agricultural community and grew into a milltown during the 1800's. Over the past 25 years key industries have dissolved or moved away from the town. The town's manufacturing-based economy is changing as more people commute to jobs in the larger Boston metropolitan area.

As Boston expands, Walpole is ripe for increased residential development and tracts of land are being scooped up. While the average price of a home in Walpole is significantly lower than many in adjoining communities, real estate prices in Walpole have been rising rapidly.

This diagram shows land being developed in Walpole in relation to town-owned recreation and conservation lands. Francis William Park is the largest park in all of Walpole. The town owns approximately 165 acres of recreation land. These lands are unevenly distributed throughout the town, are often associated with schools and geared toward particular age groups. The town also owns nearly 1000 acres of conservation land including the first town forest to be established in this country. These conservation lands are used for hiking, cross-country skiing and wildlife observation, and are distributed mainly outside of East Walpole. Development is occurring throughout the town, and is particularly concentrated in East Walpole around Francis William Park. The amount of development combined with the amount and distribution of town-owned recreation space means that Francis William Park can anticipate increased use.

Transition within the community means change in the profile of park users. Originally, Francis William Park was designed for use by millworkers. Today, the stresses of daily living take new forms, yet the need to sustain a connection with the natural world is undeniable.

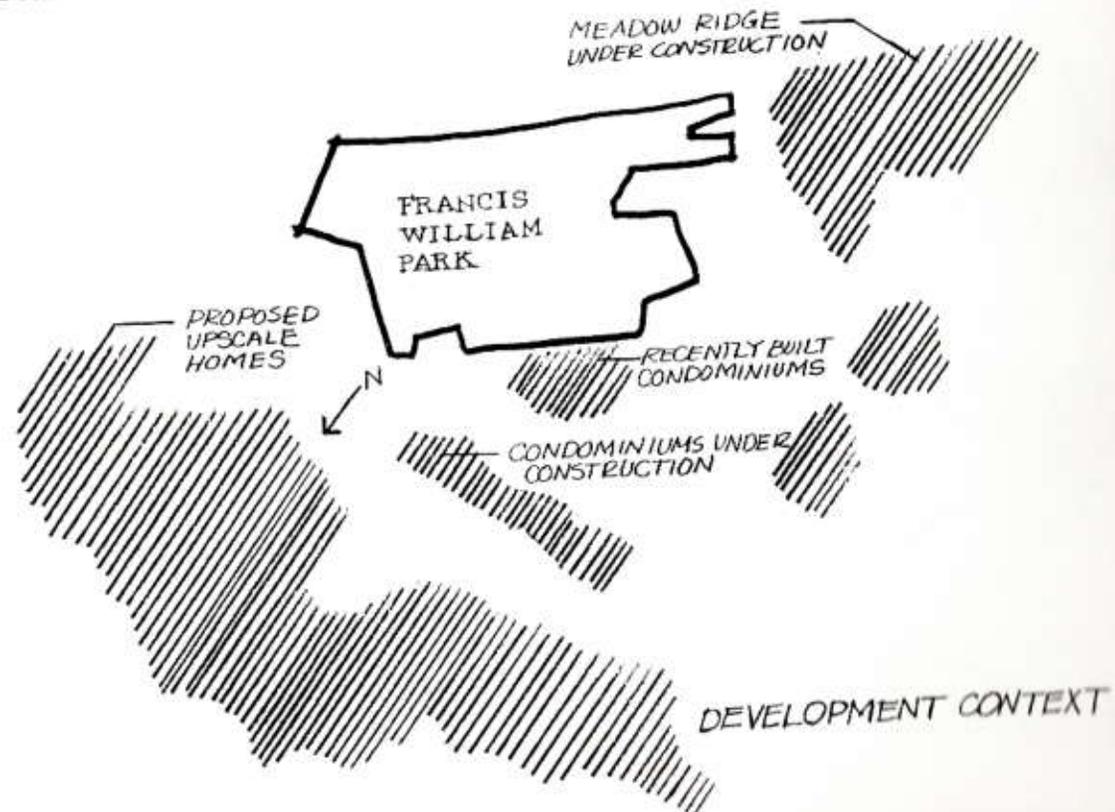


Francis William Park is the largest park in the town of Walpole.

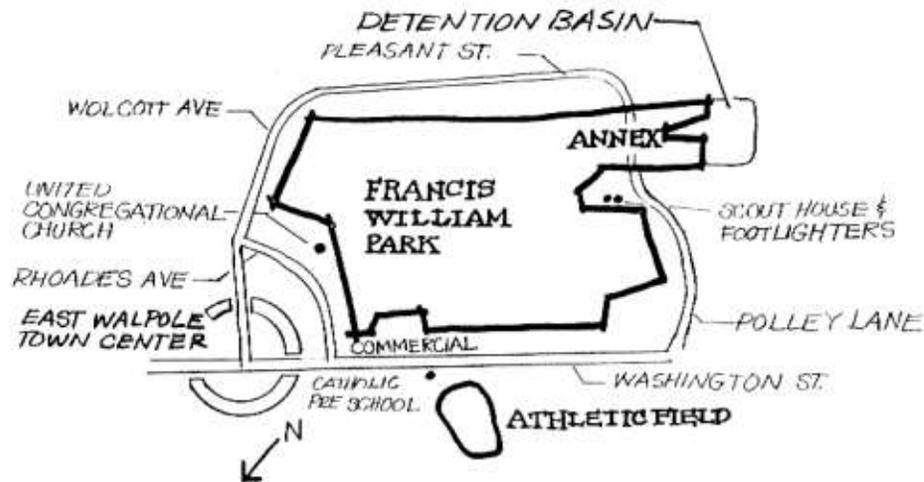
## NEIGHBORHOOD CONTEXT

East Walpole is the oldest and most densely populated section of town. Residential neighborhoods surround three-fourths of Francis William Park with one-fourth bordered by a small commercial strip on the park's western edge. Significant development is occurring within a half mile radius of the park. To the north, 25 single family homes and 70 condominium units are under construction, and 100 upscale homes are proposed for a hillside above the Neponset River. Across Washington Street, near the park's main gate, a school and playground were recently converted into over 100 condominium units. The Meadow Ridge subdivision, under construction south of the park, will contain 90 upscale single family homes. A large detention basin, built in conjunction with this development, drains into Francis William Park.

One-fifth of the development in Walpole is occurring within a half mile of Francis William Park.

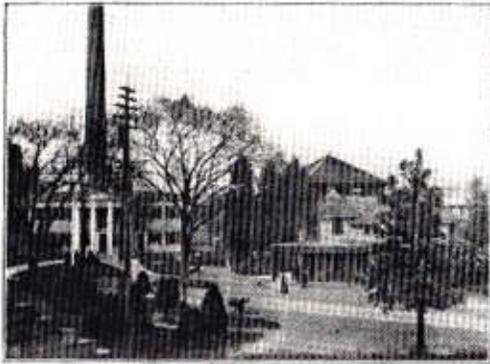


A mix of homes, small businesses and community groups surrounds the park.



### NEIGHBORHOOD CONTEXT

Several organizations are located near the park and make use of its resources. The park and the Congregational Church on Rhoades Avenue have a reciprocal relationship whereby they share a common parking lot, the Park Advisory Council uses the church for meetings and the congregation holds picnics in the park. Children come for play and outdoor classes from the nearby daycare center at St. Mary's Church. A Girl Scout center north of the park uses it informally for environmental education. The Footlighters, a local theater group, also has its building at the park's edge. Park management could involve and serve these and other community groups to a greater extent.

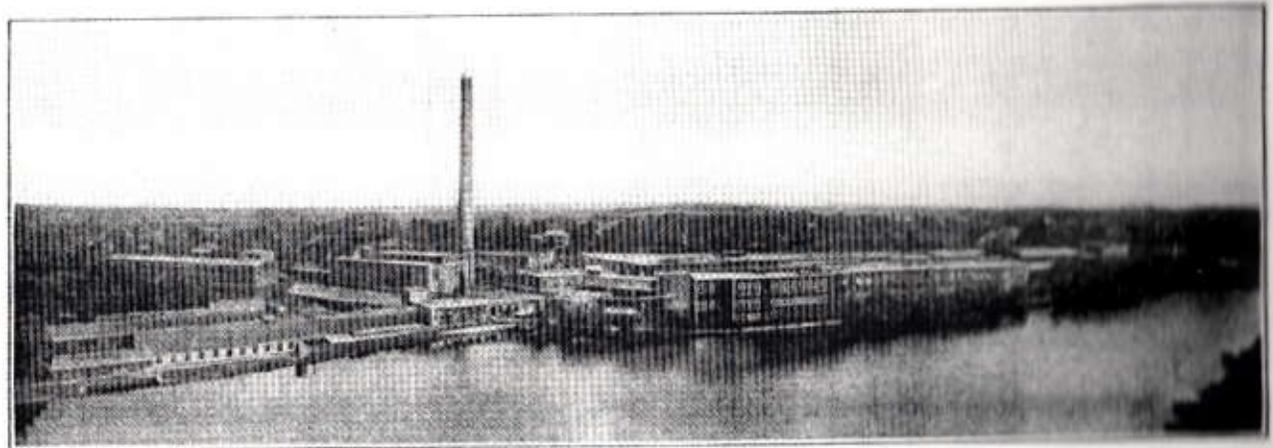


Historic town center of East Walpole located one block north of Francis William Park.

## HISTORY OF THE TOWN AND PARK

The character of Walpole began to change rapidly after the turn of the century when waves of immigrants from Boston seeking employment in the mills increased the foreign-born population by 249% between 1900 and 1910. Housing was in short supply and town resources were strained, especially in the more industrial section of East Walpole. The Walpole Town Planning Committee was appointed by vote of the citizens in 1913 to study existing conditions and needs, and make recommendations for the town's future growth.

The work of this small planning committee was thorough and far reaching in a time when the study and practice of town planning in this country were very new. John Nolen, the noted landscape architect, town planner and author from Cambridge, Massachusetts, was hired by the committee to assist in its efforts to plan wisely for the future. The planning committee chairperson, Charles Sumner Bird Jr. based his 1917 book titled Town Planning for Small Communities on Walpole's example, and its Town Plan became a model for other communities across the country.



Mills of Bird and Son, paper manufacturers in East Walpole, Massachusetts.

A decade later, in East Walpole, Francis William Park was created and endowed for the people of Walpole by Anna and Charles Sumner Bird Sr. in memory of their oldest son Francis William Bird. Francis was a Harvard law graduate who held various political offices in New York state, owned and published the Boston Record, and returned to join the family mill business in 1918-the same year that he died unexpectedly of pneumonia at the age of 37.

John Nolen was invited back to town to design the Bird memorial park. Nolen had designed several park systems but was most renowned as a planner of towns and cities. Like his predecessor, Frederick Law Olmsted, Nolen was an ardent, articulate social reformer who believed that parks and open space were essential to the health and wholeness of people living in cities. Park design of this era was strongly influenced by the naturalistic design of parks and estates in England and was a direct response to the crowding and congestion of cities. Parks were intended to imitate nature's gifts of respite.

Francis William Park was designed by John Nolen to reflect "the New England meadows and hillsides at their best." The original design plan dated 1927 describes the park as "a sequestered breathing place in the heart of East Walpole...70 acres of gently rolling terrain...a combination of broad, sun-swept meadow lands, speckled shadowed glades, higher tree-screened knolls for the lover of shade, the whole set to the music of the babbling stream." Numerous articles written by Nolen provide additional indications of the founder's aim and the park's early character.

Every aspect of the park's design was carefully studied and guided by certain purposes and principles. In addition to being a natural retreat, John Nolen and Charles Sumner Bird intended the park to provide opportunities for unstructured recreation, community gatherings and education. The park's character was meant to express restfulness, dignity and simplicity. Landscape elements and special features were designed to provide contrasts and diversity within the park environment. The park was to be a unified, integrated whole.



John Nolen, landscape architect and town planner, encouraged towns to set aside parkland for future generations.

# **SITE CHARACTER**

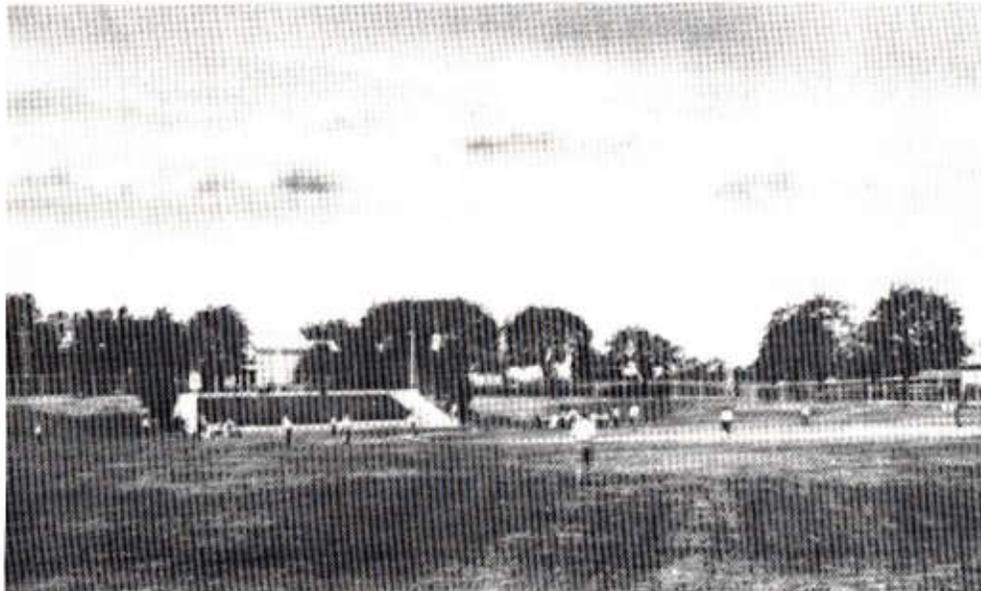
**Original Design  
Changes Over Time  
Summary and Comparison**



## **SITE CHARACTER: Original Design**

The site selected for the park was originally 70 acres, located one block from the center of East Walpole. It was described by Nolen as a refuse area for the homes and businesses whose backyards abutted the property, with a stream and some scattered woods as the only assets for building a park. A marshy area or pond existed along the northern boundary at Wolcott Avenue.

In order to “preserve the restfulness and perfection of the park,” a state-of-the-art, 7-acre athletic field was created simultaneously in the next block for large-scale, organized sports. A regulation baseball field, a running track and space for soccer were provided, as well as a grandstand for 500 spectators. Competitive team sports did not occur in Francis William Park.

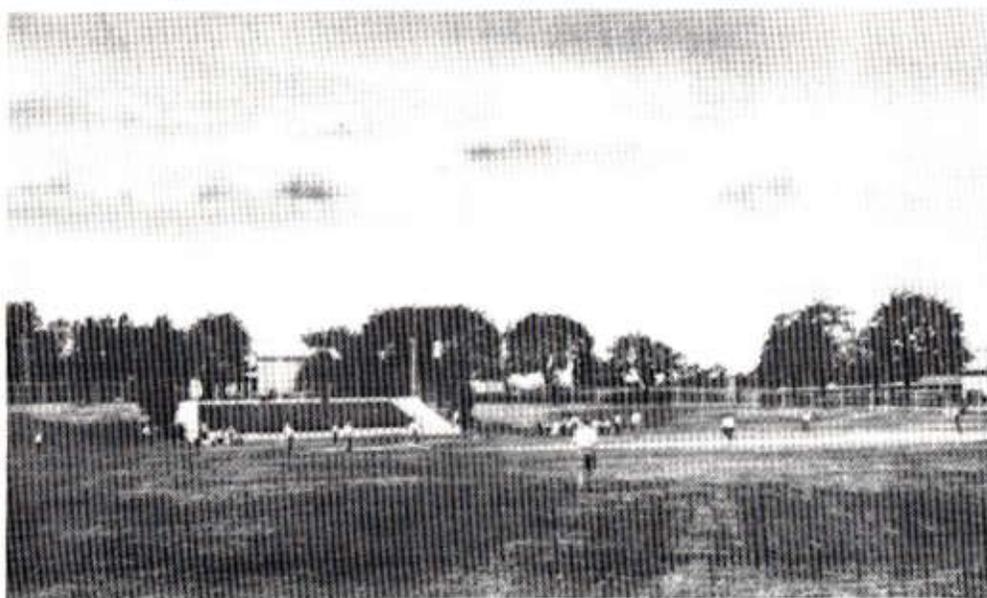


Bird Athletic Field: created in 1927 to accommodate large-scale organized sports.

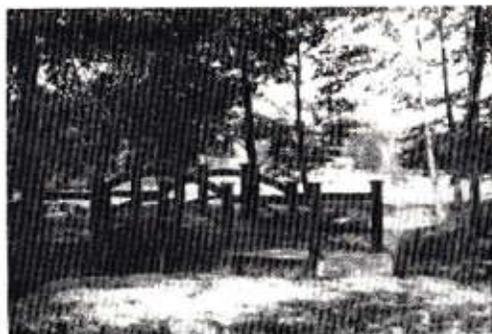
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Bird Athletic Field: created in 1927 to accommodate large-scale organized sports.

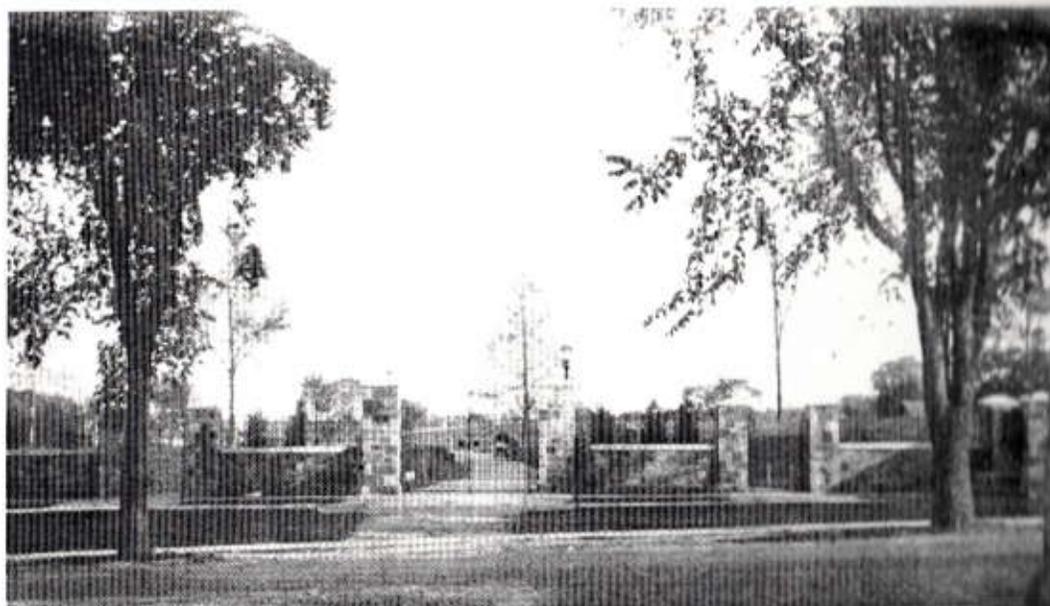


Wooden bridge in the woods south of the spruce room.

### Structures

In 1927, a generous use of structures and building materials contributed to the park's distinctive aesthetic quality. Wrought-iron fencing along the park perimeter, and twelve stone gateways gave the park a prominent and protected appearance. Memorial Gate, at Washington Street, marked the main entry with "warm hued granite," iron grills and concrete benches. Other gates of significance included the Pergola Gate at the corner of Washington Street and Rhoades Avenue, and the Shelter Gate at Wolcott Avenue.

The pathways and bridges within the park served to link and unify its parts. The paths extended for a total of three miles, ranged from 4-5 feet wide and consisted of two types: crushed stone and a blond, patterned concrete called "granolithic." Pathways followed streams closely, where possible, and a total of eleven bridges brought park-goers in frequent contact with the water. Each bridge was unique, embodying seven styles of architecture and various materials including brick, iron, concrete, rustic stone, seam-faced granite, Japanese wood and "modern" wood.



Memorial Gate marks the main entry to the park at Washington Street.

These lovely structures were “planted as to emphasize their individual type in harmony with the natural surroundings.”

The major buildings were located in the park interior and were intended to be focal points of activity. The Bath House, nestled into a slope of evergreens adjacent to the bathing pool, was constructed of seam-faced granite and hammered Simbroco trimmings topped with a cupola and clock. Over 200 bathers were accommodated with dressing rooms and toilets in two open-air wings, and the central section contained a lobby and central office. On the other side of the slope, near the Vista, an open-air theatre within a natural amphitheater was surrounded by mature trees. The Music Court provided seating for 300 as well as lighting, stage equipment, dressing rooms and toilets.

### **Other Facilities**

Other park facilities included tennis courts, which were screened from view and clustered in two areas at the park’s outer edges. Seven paved courts were located adjacent to the Vista along the eastern park boundary and two courts were tucked into a room of spruce trees along Wolcott Avenue. Two play areas for children were included in the original design: a play lawn semi-enclosed by trees north of the tennis courts and a playground with “well-selected mechanical apparatus” in the woods west of the Music Court. This playground was specially placed in a “natural, open bowl...to protect the children from general interference with other activities.”

Nolen does not include the details of park furnishings in his plans or writings; however, old photographs and remnants found in the park provide some evidence. Elegant, cast-iron light standards graced the entries, pathways, and special features; a few of them still stand, hidden by overgrown vegetation. Many of the concrete park benches in the park today may be original. They are simple forms, both with and without backs. Two other kinds of benches were recently found in the woods near the maintenance garage. One is massive, with thick, 8-foot-long wooden slats and a heavy iron base. The other is also of wood and iron, shorter in length, lighter in weight and more ornate.

Original light standards along park pathways.



### Landscape Composition

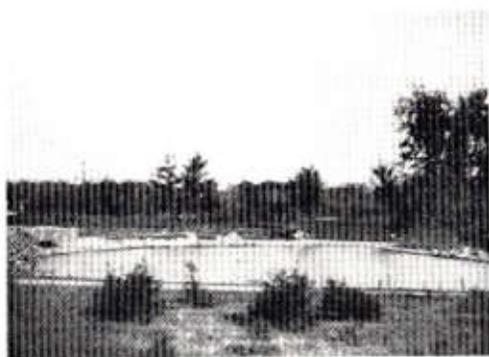
Nolen worked sensitively with the subtlety of the park's landforms. His scheme concentrated groves of trees on hillsides to dramatize their height. Pathways were designed to parallel the gentle contours. The highest point of the park was highlighted with a 40-foot flagpole. Bowl-shaped depressions were used for activities requiring focused attention, such as in the amphitheater and nearby playground.

Meadows and open spaces of all sizes were scattered throughout the park in the original design. Small, semi-enclosed clearings opened out onto larger ones creating a rich hierarchy of open spaces. The 6-acre Longmeadow in the park's northeast corner was skirted on three sides by pathways and streams. This large meadow opened gradually into a slightly smaller meadow called the Vista. The long, expansive views through this extended meadow corridor were key features of Nolen's design. The Sunset Glade, in a woodland clearing between the Music Court and Bath House, gently sloped to the west and offered sunset views.

The relatively even distribution of meadows throughout the park was intended to bring light, views, and an open quality to the woodlands. Existing mature tree stands, in 1927, consisted primarily of maple, oak, pine and hemlock, and were concentrated in the southwest corner near the Bath House and Music Court. This existing woodland became a picnic grove and was "cleared of undesirable undergrowth...but otherwise [is to] remain pleasantly rough in character."

Within the first two years of the park's development 30 large trees and many smaller trees and shrubs were brought into the park. Many of these, especially the evergreens, were used to screen the roads, adjacent properties, and tennis courts. Specimen trees were planted singly and in groves in the central parkland, and some of these trees were labelled for horticultural education. A long row of "irregularly picturesque willows" overhung the northern edge of the Willow Pond, and flowering trees and meadow grasses were planned for the pond's southerly slope.

New plantings on the gentle slopes surrounding the Bathing Pool.



## Water Features

Nolen saw great opportunities in the small stream running through the park. He planned a "thorough cleaning and some changes in course." Specifically, small dams and spillways were built to create two pools in contrast to the life and movement of the stream. The concrete-lined Bathing Pool was "naturalistic in treatment," floored with sand and lined with boulders to imitate the seashore which most townspeople could not afford to visit. The 20,000-square-foot pool varied in depth from 6 inches to 6 feet deep at the dam. An ornamental fountain of brass frogs and splashing children made the pool the liveliest spot in the park.



The Bathing Pool was once the center of the neighborhood activity.



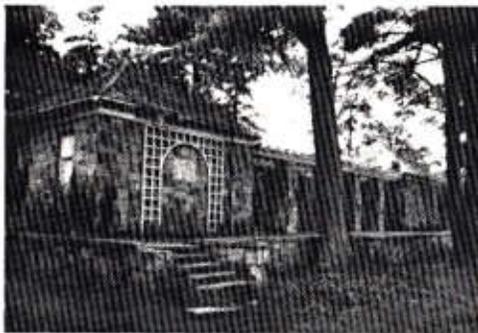
The romantic setting of the Willow Pond.

The tranquil setting of the Willow Pond offered a more relaxing visual experience of water. Willows and other plantings screened the pond on all sides, creating a quiet, intimate space and white swans helped to set the scene. Beyond this pond, the stream meandered in and out of the woods converging with two other tributaries in the northeast corner of the park before leaving the property under Wolcott Avenue.

## **SITE CHARACTER: Change Over Time**

Today, the character of Francis William Park is largely intact; however, the 62-year-old park is aging and has been neglected. Changes have been made to the original design and it is possible that Nolen's plans were never fully implemented. More research is necessary to compare the details of his original design to the park as it was built and modified over time.

In the 1930's a parcel of land south of the park was purchased by the park trustees. This long, narrow annex is bisected by Polley Lane and has never been integrated into the main body of the park. There is, however, a strong visual connection—the open meadow of the Vista is aligned with the tree-lined open space of the annex corridor. The 3-acre tip of the annex was recently sold to accommodate the construction of a huge detention basin. Currently, the annex is a staging area for heavy equipment and fill. The detention basin presents a mixed bag of blessings and threats to the park. Park users will have access to the basin which provides a view of Boston and a large, flat, open space with potential for active recreation. The basin will also have a significant effect on the drainage patterns within the park. (see Drainage Analysis)



The Music Court today, as seen from the soccer field.

### **Structures**

The park's granolithic paths, stone gateways and wrought-iron fencing are generally in good condition and these remain a strong structuring element in the park. In contrast, the main buildings are the most visible examples of deterioration in the park. The decline of these structures is due to vandalism and a lack of regular maintenance. When the Bath House burned about 20 years ago, arson was suspected. Since then the charred skeleton of the building has advertised neglect and disrespect of the park. Two decades of youth have adopted it as a party hangout and decorated it with graffiti. The Music Court was the site of regular concerts and plays programmed by park management before World War II. Now it is abandoned and in disrepair.

Five of the eleven bridges in the park have been significantly altered, abused or destroyed. Some damage is due to weathering, vandalism and graffiti; other damage may be attributed to flooding. Three bridges have been patched and repaired with iron pipe and slats of wood and have lost their distinctive qualities over the years. Two bridges and their connecting pathways are almost completely hidden by overgrown vegetation in the north woods.

### **Other Facilities**

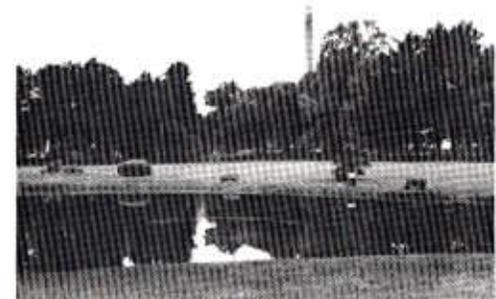
Four tennis courts adjacent to the Vista are well used. Two additional courts in this location were recently covered in asphalt for roller skating. A 10-foot chain link fence surrounding the courts is in disrepair and is a dominant visual feature in the Vista. The two courts in the spruce room no longer exist.

Two playgrounds have been added to the park over time and appear to be moderately well used. They consist of traditional equipment and are located in the Wolcott side yard and at the edge of the Vista next to the tennis courts. Both playgrounds are shaded throughout most of the day, and may not be inviting during the cooler months. An old swingset among saplings and shrubs is the only sign of the original playground in the woods behind the Music Court.

Site furnishings no longer complement the park's character. The concrete benches in the park are scattered haphazardly in some areas and their condition and height from the ground varies. The brightly colored 50-gallon trash receptacles are functional but distracting and inappropriate for a park setting.

The quality of park maintenance has recently improved; however, the physical presence of maintenance facilities and activities is unnecessarily obtrusive. A large debris pile where stumps and branches have been dumped for years is highly visible. Deep ruts criss-cross the hillside leading to this pile, and tire tracks are visible along certain pedestrian paths. Heavy equipment has been observed in use near the Willow Pond and in other areas during times of high activity.

Benches and trash receptacles scattered randomly around the Willow Pond.

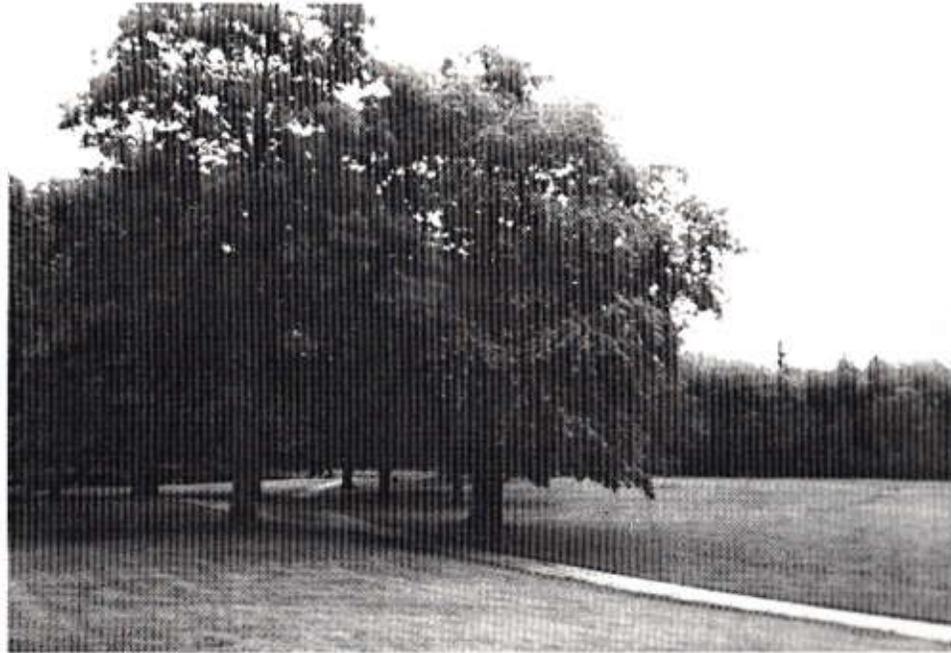


### **Landscape Composition**

The mature stands of pine, hemlock, beech and other specimens in the park today provide it with great stature, beauty and a sense of permanence. Nolen's concept of accentuating the topography by clustering trees on the knolls has been realized, particularly around the bathing pool and in the beech grove on the low knoll. The fine specimens in the central core of the parkland give it the distinctive character of an arboretum or English deer park.

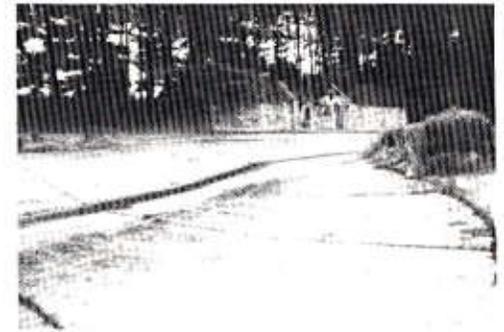
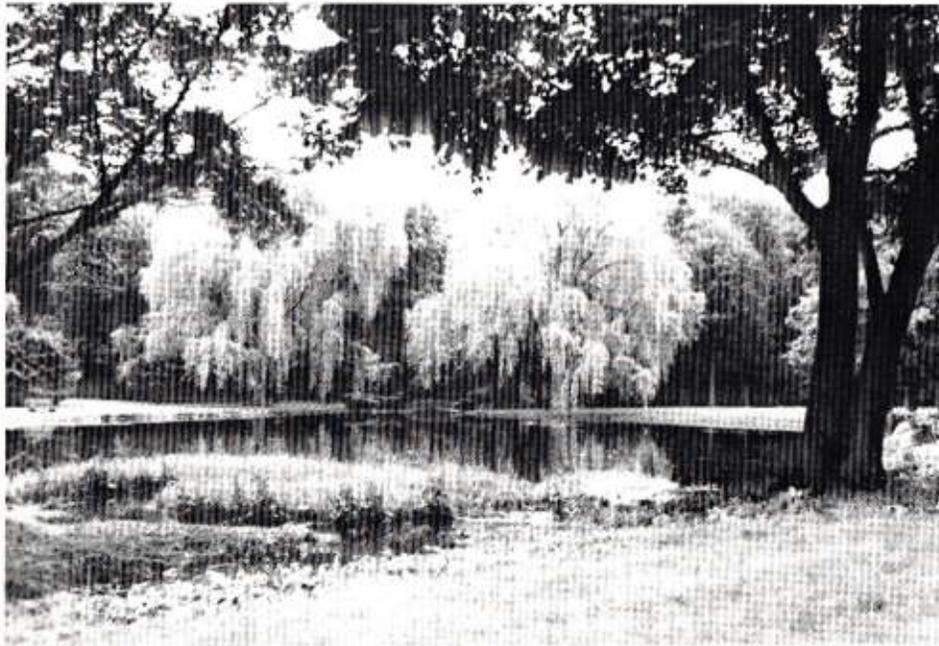
The current relationship between open space and woodland provides the most striking contrast to the original design. The wooded areas now exist in two separate, distinct regions, claiming approximately half of the park's acreage. These areas, which were once more open and accessible for play and picnicking, are now densely vegetated, dark and more welcoming to wildlife than to people. A broad band of open space cuts through the center of the park separating the woodlands. Current use of the park is centered in these open areas, particularly in the flat expanses suited to more active games and sports. The relationship of open meadow to woodland has become increasingly uniform over time.

Pathways skirt the open interior of the parkland.



## Water Features

Water has played a central role in the character and life of the park, and in recent decades the ecology of the streams and ponds has changed. As development has increased in the surrounding community, the flow and configuration of the waterways has been degraded by stormwater runoff. The bathing pool, which attracted hundreds of children and families to the park in its earlier days, was closed in the 1960's due to the decline in water quality and rising public health standards. This pool area, with its low water levels, weedy perimeter and abandoned Bath House is an extreme eyesore. The two remaining willows along with the ducks and carp in the Willow Pond still provide a pleasant setting; however, the pond's health is definitely threatened by siltation and stagnation. The "music of the babbling streams" described by John Nolen has been muffled due to dredging and a decrease in water flow.

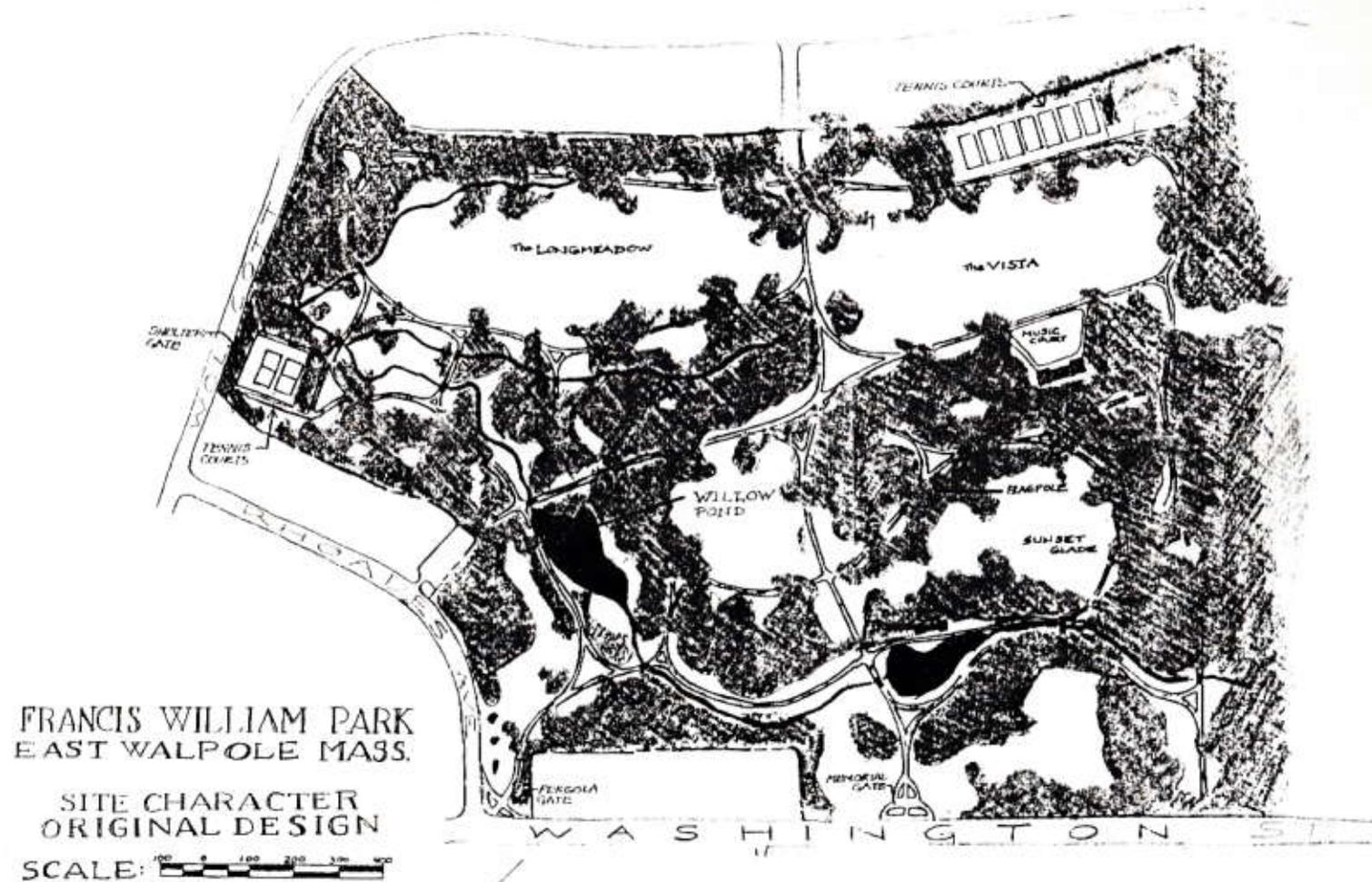


The bath house and bathing pool in the shadow of tall evergreens.

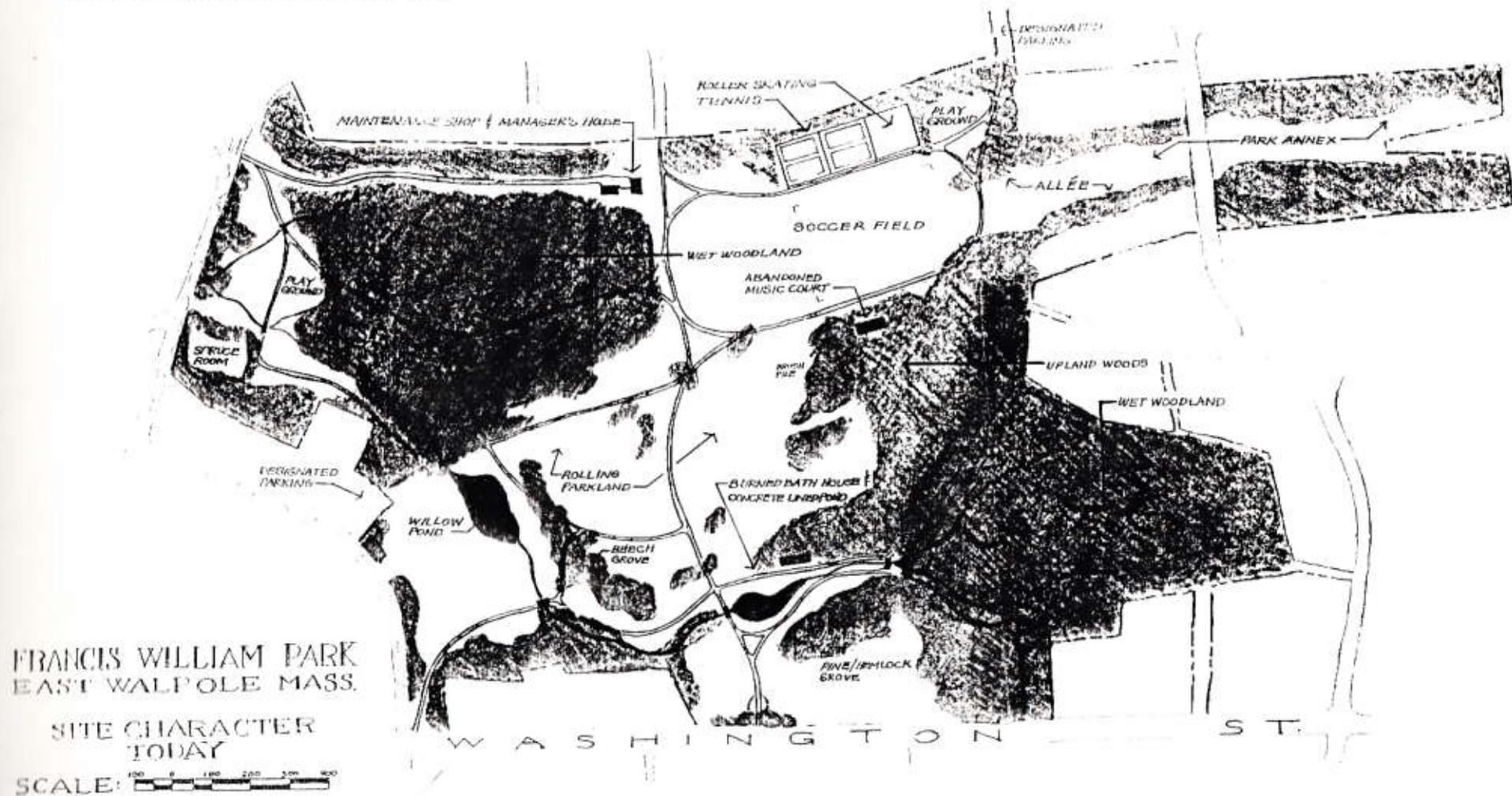
Sediment slowly fills in the Willow Pond.

## SITE CHARACTER: Summary and Comparison

Francis William Park was designed to provide a rich diversity of experiences within a green, pastoral retreat apart from an industrial environment. In the early decades the park structures were handsome and highly visible, well used and a source of pride for the community. Water flowed freely in the park and delighted all the senses. Park management was active and attentive to the needs of users. The park was the center stage for community life.



The past 60 years have brought many changes to the community and the park environment. Use of the park has shifted away from the woodlands and key built features into the open spaces. The careful contrasts and relationships among landscape features have, in some cases, been lost. Changing patterns of vegetation, hydrology and use all demand greater skill and attention from park management. Though the park is magnificent in many ways, its role and identity in the community have been obscured.



# **SITE ANALYSIS STUDIES**

**Introduction**

**Slopes**

**Soils**

**Drainage**

**Vegetation**

**Views**

**Use**

**Circulation**

**Parking**

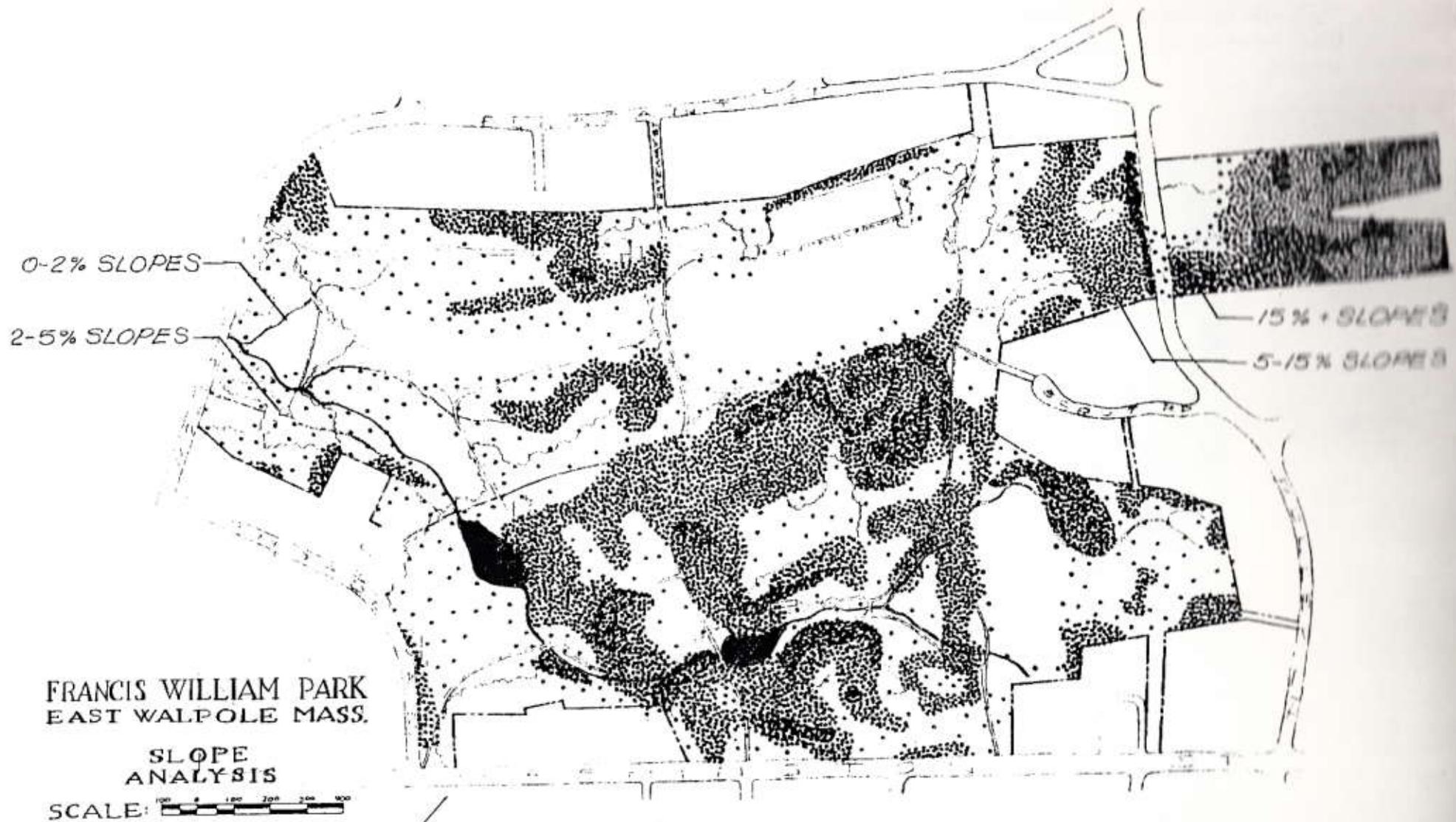
## **SITE ANALYSIS: Introduction**

The following site analysis studies provide a broad understanding of each analysis topic and lay the groundwork for further investigation. The conclusions drawn from these studies guided the development of the design principles and the master scheme.



Knowledge of existing conditions is necessary to sustain the park for future generations.

GENTLE TOPOGRAPHY OFFERS LEVEL LAND FOR  
PLAY & HILLS FOR VIEWS.



## **SLOPES ANALYSIS**

Topography in the park is divided into four slope categories ranging from 0-15+%. Almost 25% of the park is relatively flat with 0-2% slopes. Another 35% of the park is almost as level with 2-5% slopes. The remaining 40% of the park consists of gently rolling 5-15+% slopes. Movement throughout the park is constrained only by areas that are extremely wet.

### **Observations**

Flat areas of 0-2% slopes include areas that are poorly drained and susceptible to flooding.

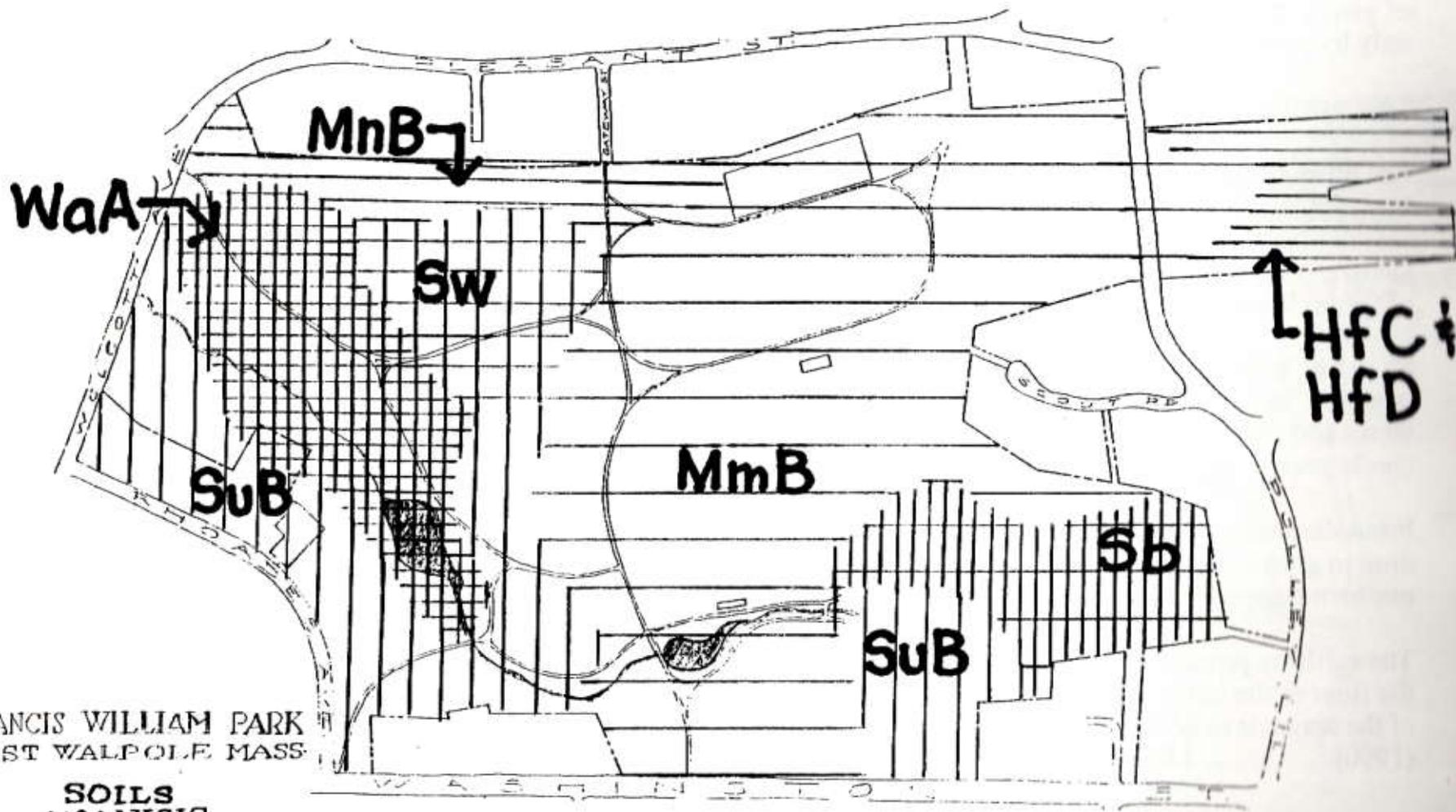
Generally level areas of 2-5% slopes are along the northern and western perimeters of the park and include the street entries to the north, east and west.

Slopes of 5-15+% occur in the central portion of the park and in the annex with scattered, isolated spots in excess of 15%. The higher elevations offer panoramic views and interior views of activities in the park. The small depressions on the knolls provide private, protected areas.

From the southernmost tip to the end of the annex, there is an approximate 40 foot drop in grade, with an additional 40 foot drop in the main body of the park to its northern edge at Wolcott Avenue, totalling an 80 foot change in elevation.

The spillway proposed for the detention basin will have side slopes of 40-50% with the floor of the basin less than 1%. The existing mountain of fill on the southern tip of the annex is to be removed and regraded with a completion date within one year (1990).

WELL DRAINED SOILS IN CENTRAL SWATH ARE FLANKED BY BANDS OF WET SOILS ALONG STREAMS.



FRANCIS WILLIAM PARK  
EAST WALPOLE MASS

SOILS  
ANALYSIS

SCALE: 

## **SOILS ANALYSIS**

The soils analysis will help guide recommendations for plantings, erosion control and the ability of soils to support structures. The best soils are contained within the central portion and along 50% of the periphery of the park. However, significant portions of the park, in the northeast and southwest, are constrained because of wet, poorly drained soils. The pH of the park soils ranges from 3.6 to 7.3.

### **Observations**

Merrimac soils (MmB, Mn B) cover half the site, primarily in the central and southern portions of the park. These soils are well drained and droughty with very few limitations except for waste disposal.

Slight erosion is occurring on the steeper slopes where Merrimac soils occur.

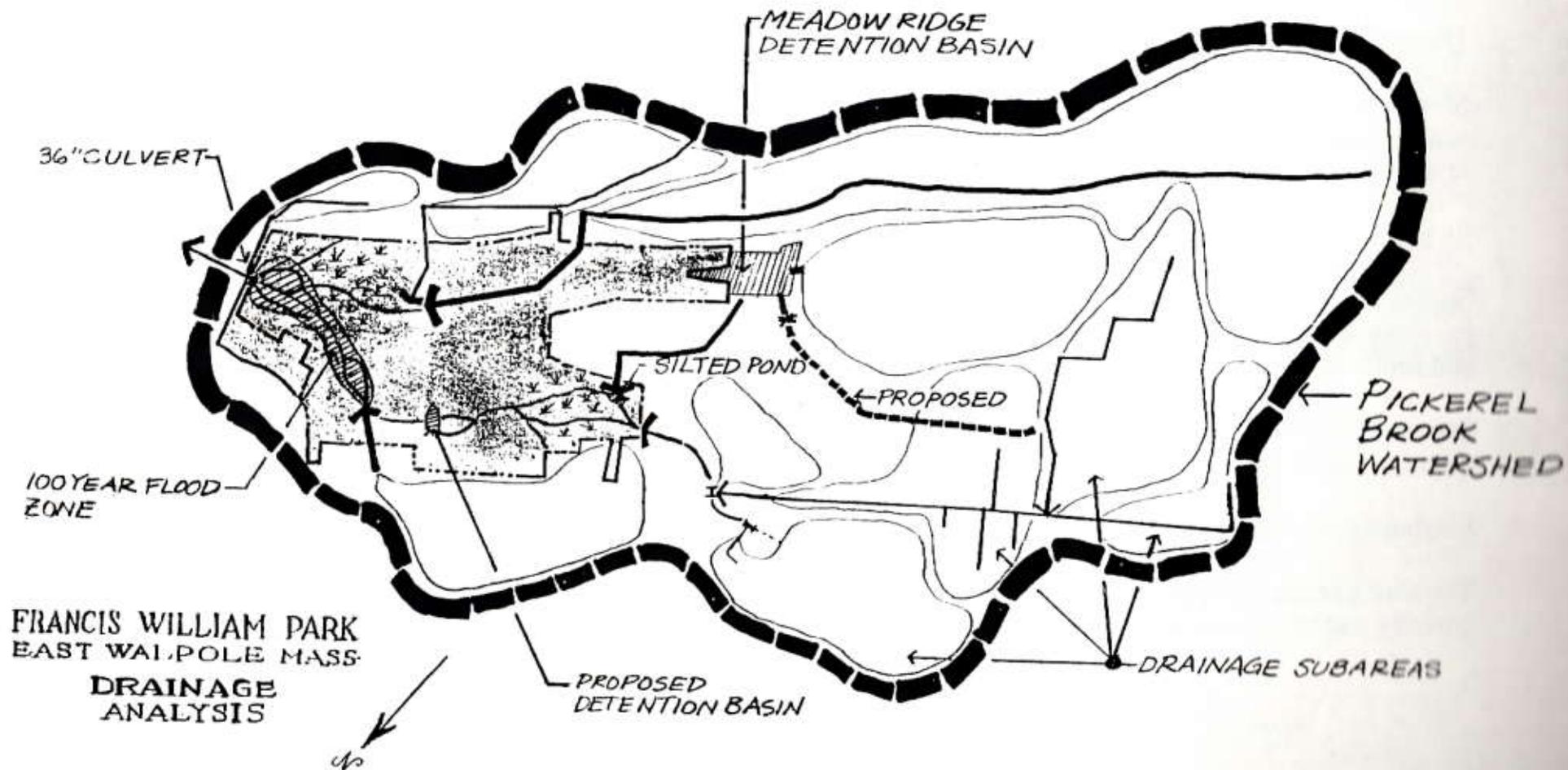
Sudbury soils (SuB) occur in the northwest and southwest corners of the park and are moderately well drained. These soils have moderate constraints for building and septic limitations due to varying degrees of wetness.

Swansea and Walpole soils (Sw, WaA) cover the northeast portion of the park, and are very poorly drained with severe limitations because of wetness.

Scarboro soils (Sb) are very wet and occur where the Pickerel Brook enters the park.

The annex south of Polley Lane contains Hinckley soils (HfD, HfC) which are gravelly and have a rapid rate of permeability.

DEVELOPMENT PRESSURES PROFOUNDLY IMPACT  
PARK HYDROLOGY.



## DRAINAGE ANALYSIS

Francis William Park is the receiving body for stormwater runoff from the surrounding 537-acre Pickerel Brook watershed. Development upstream of the park has had a profound impact on its waterways by increasing peak waterflow, the volume of runoff and flooding within and around the park. The quality of water has been diminished and streamflow during dry weather has decreased. Additional impacts to stream hydrology caused by urbanization can include changes to stream configuration and the degradation of aquatic ecosystems.

The town of Walpole has commissioned several studies of the watershed in response to flooding problems. One of the most comprehensive studies was done by Camp, Dresser and McKee engineers in 1978. This study recommended that a series of detention basins be built within the system to control the release of stormwater. A large detention basin is currently under construction as part of the Meadow Ridge subdivision. The basin receives water from a portion of the lands upstream and discharges into a silted pond within Francis William Park behind the Footlighter's building. An additional detention basin proposed for a location within the park near the bathing pool has not yet been built and there are no immediate plans for its construction. The Meadow Ridge basin will help to control stormwater; however, significant portions of the watershed will continue to drain into the park unchecked.

Drainage within the watershed will affect park planning and requires active attention by the park's administration. Key issues include:

- The influence and control of **water quality** flowing through the park.
- The result of and response to **siltation** of the ponds and streams.
- The effect and amount of increasing **wetlands** within the park.
- The control of occasional **flooding**.

## Observations

Park waterways constitute key natural features and are essential ingredients of the park's character.

The Pickerel Brook watershed is comprised of 13 drainage subareas which feed into the park. The brook meanders in a south to north direction and is joined by tributaries before leaving the park through a 36" culvert.

Future development within the watershed will increase drainage pressures in the park.

Park waterways already show the effects of urbanization. Streambanks are eroding, ponds are silting in and there are signs of decreased water quality.

The park contains significant amounts of wetland which is subject to the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act - 310 CMR 10:00.

The 3-acre detention basin south of the park empties into Frances William Park.



## VEGETATION ANALYSIS

Vegetation in the park falls into three major categories: woodland, wetland and open parkland. The central portion of the park is open parkland and consists of grass covering level and rolling terrain with single specimens and groves of trees. The two woodlands include uplands with mature, high canopy trees and low wet woods with mature trees, dense understory and shrub layers.

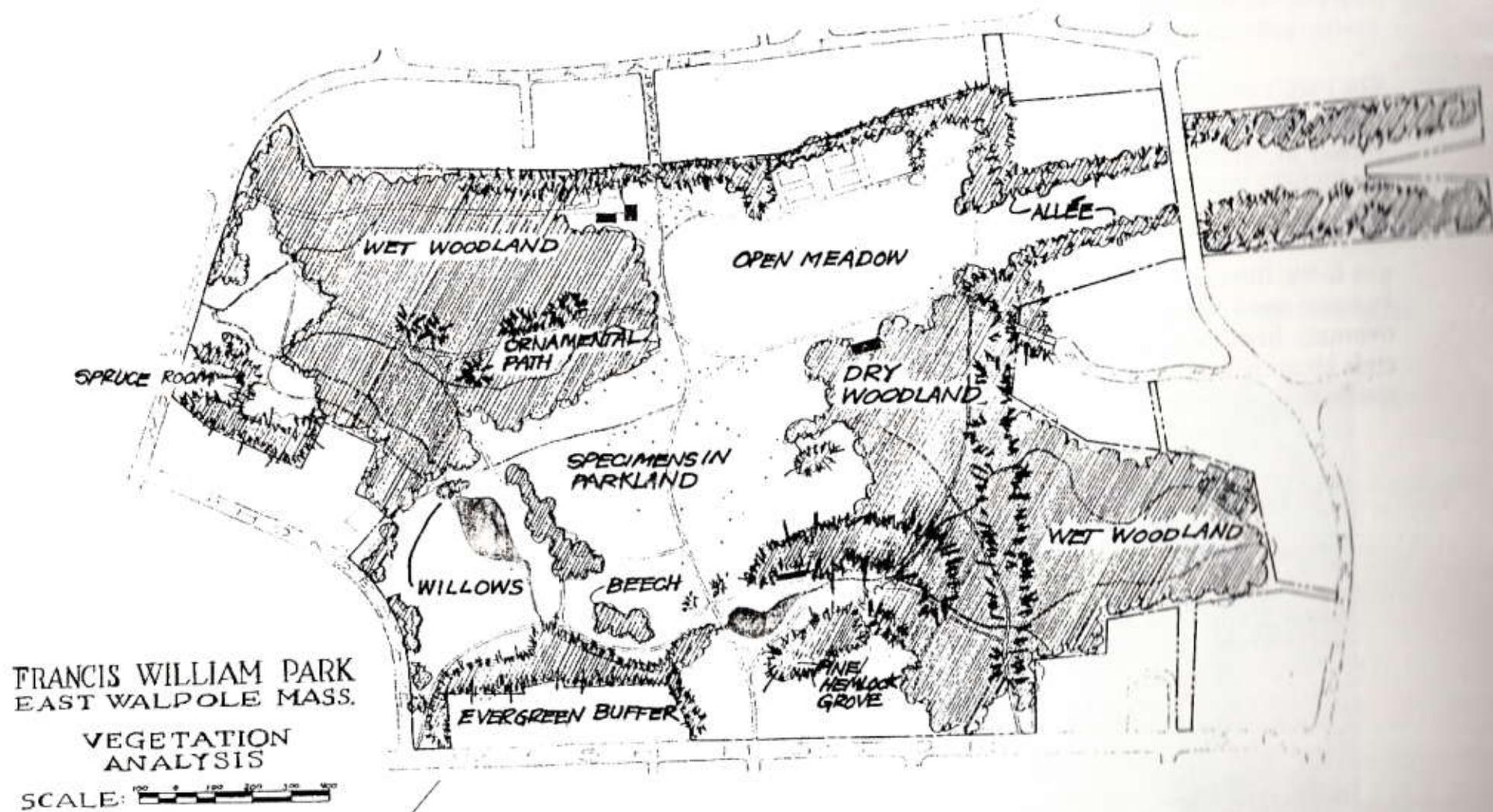
The park's vegetation is one of its strongest assets. Majestic groves of single species, such as Norway Spruce, Willow and Beech contribute to the park's character. A variety of excellent tree specimens create an arboretum image for the park but may not be fully appreciated by the public.

Vegetative communities are changing over time and need to be managed with an eye to the future. Currently no plant inventory or records of management exist. In some areas turf quality is poor because of wet or droughty soils, flooding and overuse. In other areas the expanse of turf seems monotonous. Open lawn often ends abruptly at woodland edges creating an unnaturally harsh contrast. Wetland species and areas appear to be increasing within the park.



Dense wetland vegetation of the north woods.

TWO WOODLANDS CONTAINING LARGE WETLANDS  
BORDER THE CENTRAL OPEN PARKLAND.



## Observations

Mature canopy woodlands with a dense sapling shrub layer cover 50% of the park. The middle story between the shrub and canopy levels is largely missing.

Ponds and streams lack natural vegetated borders for wildlife habitat.

Exotic plant species, such as barberry, honeysuckle and multiflora rose are invading and threatening the health of the native woodlands within the park.

Large amounts of poison ivy border the woodland paths.

Plantings frame key views and entries at several points within the Vista, along the Beech allee in the park annex and at the entrance on Gateway Street.

Mature plantings, particularly evergreens along the park perimeter, are sparse with high canopies and no longer screen the surrounding neighborhood.

Woodland paths are crowded with vegetation; dense saplings block interior views.

Some existing plantings are sparse, overgrown or excessively pruned, particularly at the Main Entry and at several bridges.

## VIEWS ANALYSIS

Originally the park was intended to be almost completely screened from the surrounding neighborhood by a thick, primarily evergreen buffer. The entrances were to provide narrow peeks into the restful retreat. While walking inside the park, the viewer was to experience a range of scenes, from detailed foreground views of pathway plantings to long panoramic views from the knolls to the meadows. Views were intended to unfold gradually, with enticing glimpses of what lay ahead. A long, filtered view stretched the length of the park from the Longmeadow to the Vista, accentuating the grand scale of the park. Small pockets of open space within the woodland edges offered intimate spaces with views opening out into the surrounding sunny meadows. Streams and structures were highly visible throughout the park.

Today, there is no longer a continuous, effective vegetative buffer around the park. Within the park, the current condition and distribution of woodland and open space provides two basic types of views: close, limited views within the woods and expansive views through the open parkland which reveal everything at once. The streams and several bridges are hidden by dense vegetation. Since the Longmeadow has grown up into woods, the long view within the park has shifted to the south, now extending from the Vista to the park annex and across Polley Lane to the construction site of the detention basin. The mound of dirt, which will form the spillway, now offers a lookout view to Boston on the horizon. Future plans for this area will effect the quality of views within the park.

### **Observations: Views into the park from...**

#### **Washington Street:**

- clear but short range views into the "front lawn" with a solid backdrop of evergreens.

Memorial Gate:

- plantings partially block view into the park.

Rhoades Avenue:

- long-range views to the willow pond and central glade under the high canopy of mature trees at the park perimeter.

Wolcott Avenue:

- filtered, short-range views of the stream, playground and woods are seen through the mature trees with high canopies on the park border.

Gateway Street:

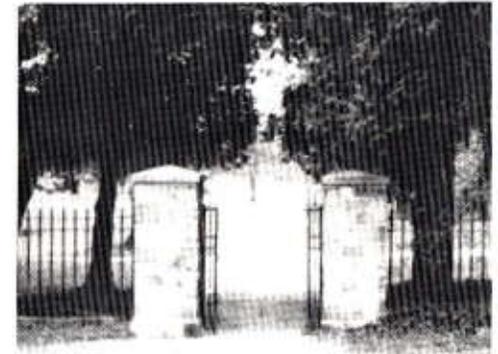
- a welcoming, framed view of the park and its inviting pathways.

Polley Lane:

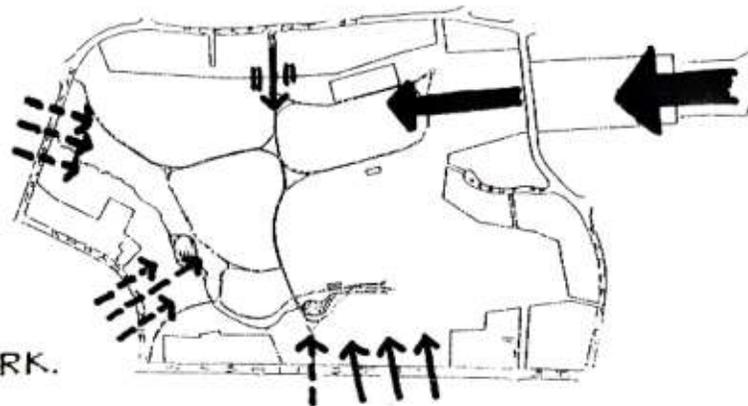
- expansive, long-range view into the park interior, through the Annex and the Vista to the edge of the North Woods. Passing vehicles are provided a brief, refreshing glance of the park.

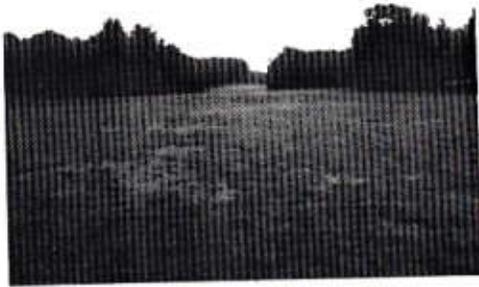
The annex:

- panoramic view over the park with Boston to the north.



VIEWS INTO THE PARK.





The long view from the soccer field south to the park annex and detention basin.

## Observations: Views within the park from...

### Soccer Field:

- long view down the allee, across Polley Lane, to construction fill.
- tennis courts are prominent with unsightly chain-link fence.
- manager's complex imposes on the naturalistic setting.
- a solid north woods offer a dark, hard edge, that limits views into woodland.
- long view through the park interior to the Willow Pond beyond.

### Tall Knoll:

- views to the surrounding commercial district and busy traffic on Washington Street are intrusive.
- the old mill smokestacks on the horizon are a reminder of the town's history.
- views to the activities and landscape of the central rolling hills, the Vista and the north woods.

### Low Knoll:

- sweeping views include: the bathing pool area to the south, the Willow Pond to the north and the gentle hills backed by the woodlands to the east.

### Rhododendron Path:

- a dramatic unfolding of the long view within the Vista when emerging from the dense north woods.

## USE ANALYSIS

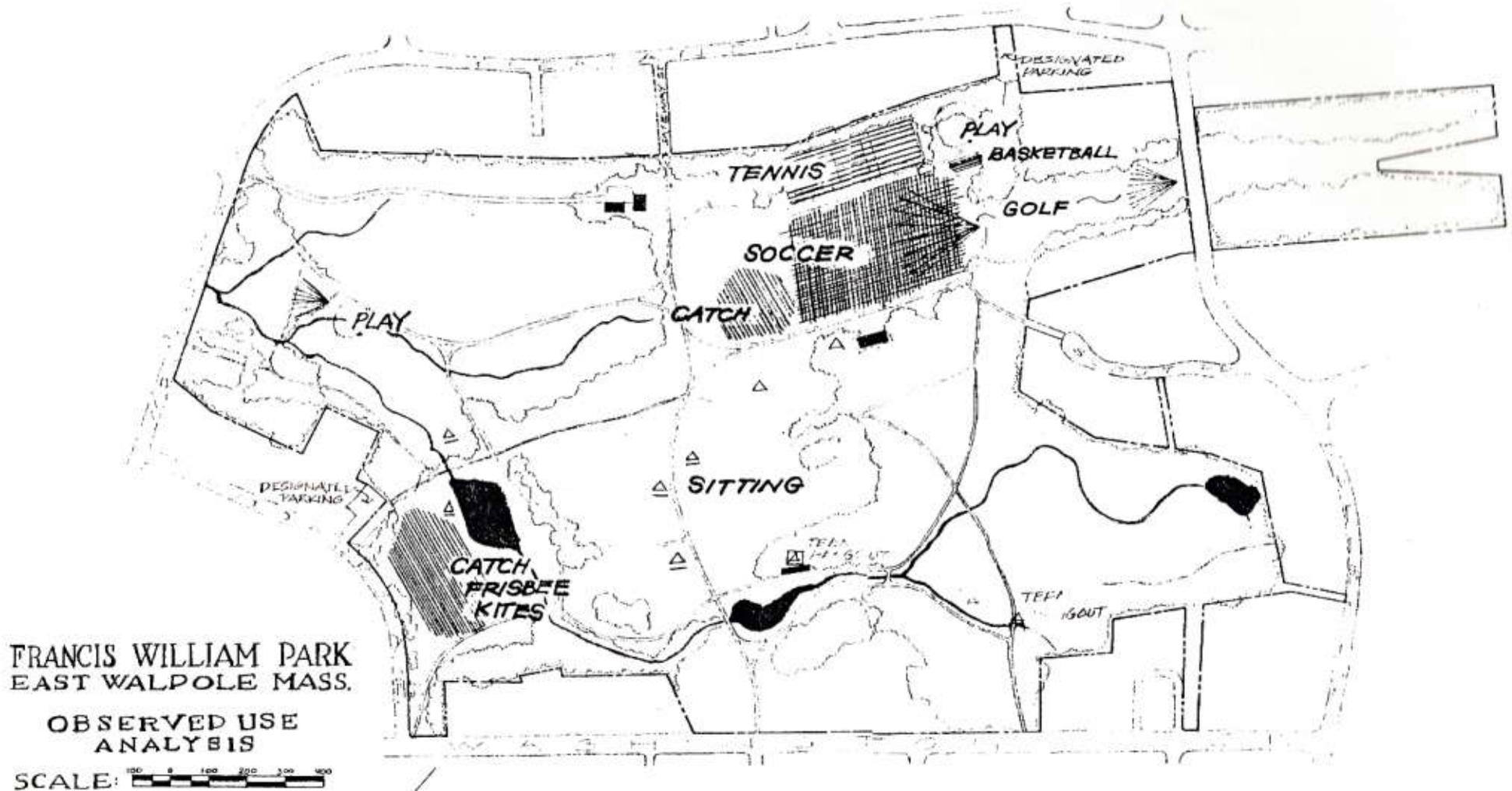
This analysis is based on three days of observations in the park. Further detailed analysis is necessary to provide information on: daily and seasonal use patterns, existing use conditions, the number and age of park users and the types of activities and their locations. Additional issues to be explored include the existing trends for child and adult recreation and the relationship between Francis William Park and town-owned recreational facilities.

Today the terms "passive" and "active" do not clearly distinguish between different recreational activities. A clearer definition of the types of acceptable activities in the park must be established. The Francis William Park Trust clearly states that all active sports will occur outside the park and the Bird Athletic Field was established to meet these needs. The demand for playing fields has increased beyond the space that this athletic field can offer and soccer has been allowed within Francis William Park. A growing conflict exists between the increased pressures of organized team sports and the town's need to provide more adult recreational areas for spontaneous and restful activities.

Soccer is currently the only organized sport within the park. The Walpole Youth Soccer League has been using the park for daily practices and weekly competitions for about eight years. Six to eight-year-old children use four fields for daily practices from 4:00 until 7:00 P.M., and games are scheduled on Saturdays from 9:00 A.M. until 3:00 P.M. Soccer occupies park fields 21 daylight hours per week. The soccer league budgets monies for field maintenance, but the park has been reimbursed for only fertilizer and seed.

Soccer brings life and activity to the park but presents difficult problems. Over 250 kids and their families benefit from the use of park fields. Further analysis must consider turf damage, crowding, noise and parking congestion. Park leadership should evaluate carefully their responsibility regarding the tenets of the park trust and set guidelines to protect their best interests.

TWO AREAS OF CONCENTRATED USE OCCUR IN LEVEL OPEN SPACES NEAR DESIGNATED PARKING.



The park serves a wide age range of people from dawn to dusk, but the dominant age groups included middle aged adults and pre-school children with adults. The variety of observed uses serve the following functions: retreat, refreshment, meeting place, social gathering, play, exercise, entertainment and education. The uses observed include: joggers and individuals exercising their pets as early as 6:30 in the morning, adults with their toddlers in strollers, neighborhood children gathering to play catch, basketball, street hockey and tennis in the afternoon, a number of people sitting on benches, bridges and in the grass and teenagers gathered in the burned bath house and at the stone bridge in the woodland.

### **Observations**

Park serves expanding array of multiple uses.

Park serves a wide age range of people; limited activities for the elderly.

Activity is concentrated in areas of the park near designated parking.

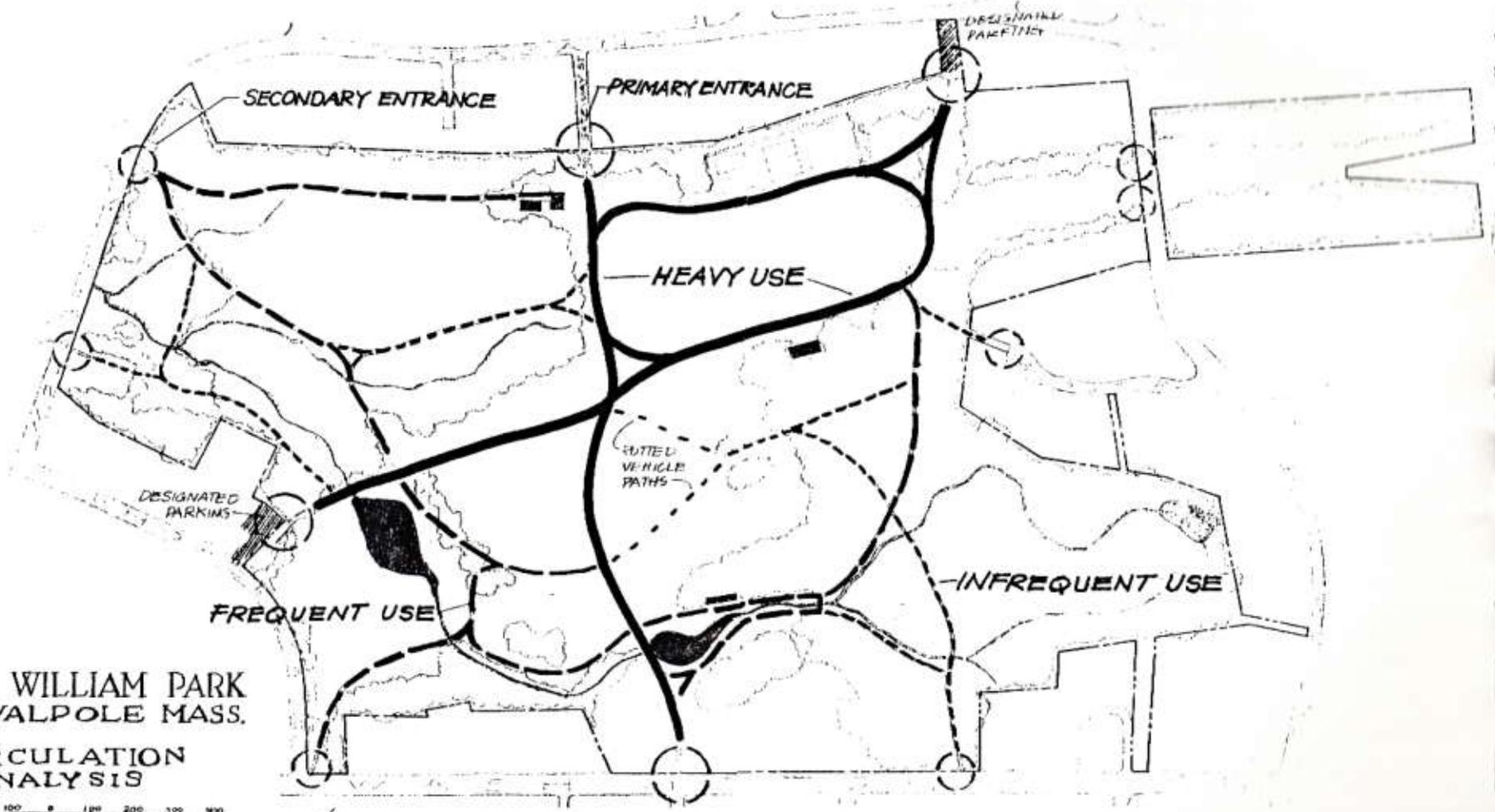
Portions of the park are underused and could serve increased numbers of users.

Soccer games and practices limit other uses from occurring in the Vista.

Families gather at the Willow Pond's edge.



*MOST FREQUENTLY USED PATHS ARE IN OPEN  
PARKLAND & LINKED TO PRIMARY ENTRANCES.*



FRANCIS WILLIAM PARK  
EAST WALPOLE MASS.

CIRCULATION  
ANALYSIS

SCALE: 

## CIRCULATION ANALYSIS

The park's pathway system is an important structuring element; the existing alignment and configuration works with little evidence of shortcuts or new trails. The network of sinuous paths loops through most areas of the park and links to the town street system. Main paths form a north-south and east-west axis. Secondary paths often follow streams, and numerous trails wind through the woodlands. The most frequently used paths are in open areas and the woodland paths are used less often. Today there are five types of path materials in the park compared to the two recommended in the original design.

### Observations

Construction materials for the pathways consist of: patterned concrete, concrete, asphalt, cinder and dirt. Widths of the paths are 3 to 8 feet.

The main body of the park is not linked by a path system to the annex.

Few repairs are needed on existing paths to fix heaved or eroded areas.

Some woodland paths are crowded by dense thickets, poison ivy, logs and debris.

The paths around the Vista and the Willow Pond are too narrow to accommodate current use, such as joggers and strollers.

Paths are not designed to accommodate vehicles; rutting and erosion along paved and unpaved pathways is caused by frequent vehicle travel.

Many secondary pathways are muddy and uneven.

## **PARKING ANALYSIS**

Of all the issues involved in successfully adapting an historic park to modern needs, parking is one of the most difficult, pivotal problems to be resolved. Francis William Park was designed as a park for people, not automobiles. The absence of pavement and cars makes the park a restful retreat and this should not be taken for granted. When the park was designed in 1927, the automobile was not yet the dominant means of transportation. Today, more people live near the park, more people come to the park in cars and this is likely to continue.

Ideally parks would be well distributed throughout the community to absorb the needs of a growing population and the town should be striving to protect and expand its park system. Undisturbed land is becoming an increasingly rare and valuable asset and it would be a mistake to degrade resources such as Francis William Park by allowing the encroachment of automobiles.

### **Observations**

A major pathway links two designated parking areas: the Pleasant Street lot allows parking for approximately 14 cars and the church lot on Rhoades Avenue offers approximately 25 parking spaces.

The park is bounded by residential roads which allow street parking, except near major intersections and on Rhoades Avenue. Parking along Washington Street is restricted to certain hours and days throughout the week.

Parking is limited, congested, and unsafe at times of peak park use and during major scheduled events such as soccer, causing ill will among abutting neighbors.

## Questions for Consideration

Parking is a complex issue that needs further study and analysis. Questions to be answered include:

What is the current designated and off-street parking capacity for parking in the immediate vicinity of the park?

How many spaces are required for current activities such as soccer?

What land exists adjacent to the park that could be used for parking?

How is the park linked to the public transportation system and how could this be improved?

Which events are appropriate for future programming and how many people will these events draw? What is the maximum number of spaces that will be needed? When and how often will the most spaces be needed?

If new parking areas are to be created, how could these areas serve more than one function during off-peak parking times?

Could a parking area be built to minimize environmental impacts, using permeable paving, grasscrete, etc.?

How far are people willing to walk from their cars to the park?

Are street parking laws in the vicinity of the park being sufficiently enforced?

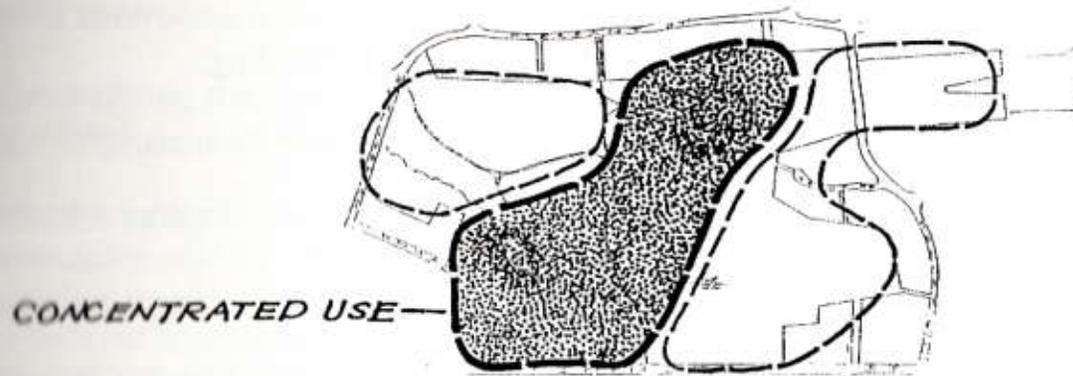
Are there other parking pressures in the neighborhood contributing to the problem?  
Could the town provide additional parking in this neighborhood?

# **SITE ANALYSIS INTERPRETATION**

**Summary  
Recommendations**

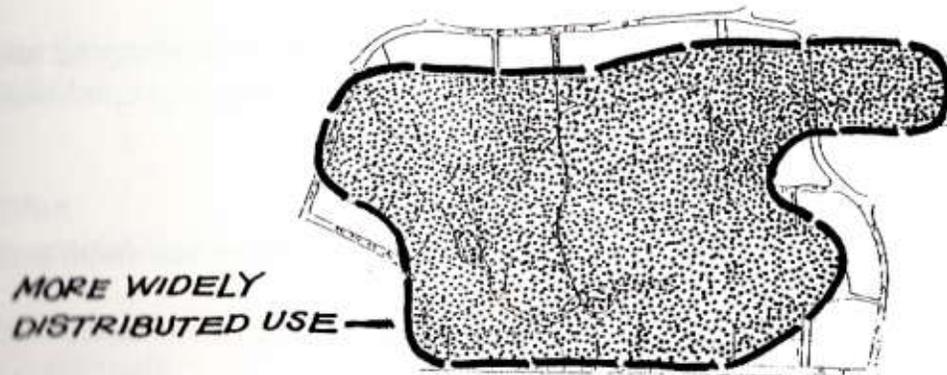
## SITE ANALYSIS: Summary

Site analyses revealed a recurring pattern within the park. A central swath of open parkland bisects the park into three zones. The central section is well travelled and most intensively used. Two under-utilized woodland areas, which contain large wetlands, flank the open center.



EXISTING PATTERN

In order to realize the potential of the park, all its parts must be integrated into a cohesive whole. A new pattern is needed which will distribute resources and activity throughout the park.



PROPOSED PATTERN

## **SITE ANALYSIS: Recommendations**

The following recommendations are based on the results of site analysis. For convenience they are listed here under individual analysis topics. They are also incorporated in the Principles for Management section of this report.

### **Slopes**

Avoid building structures in low, wet areas susceptible to flooding.

Use the grade changes as buffers and transitions between activity areas.

Exaggerate subtle topography with vegetation.

Consider depressions on sides of knolls as areas for quiet, more intimate activities such as reading, sunning and picnicking.

Celebrate and enhance the high points as vantage points for the park.

### **Soils**

Limit more active uses and building construction to lands covered with Merrimac and Sudbury soils.

Discourage intensive use of steeper slopes to avoid erosion. This may be accomplished by planting trees and/or groundcover tolerant of sandy, dry conditions.

Plant appropriate wetland species in wet, mucky soils.

Ensure that the steep slopes in the annex, south of Polley Lane, are stabilized to prevent erosion.

### **Drainage**

Determine the impact stormwater is having on the park's hydrology and wetland ecology.

Seek ways to channel water around the park to other water bodies.

Increase the detention and/or retention of water upstream and outside the park to further control the release of stormwater runoff.

Avoid building structures on lands subject to flooding or in the path of the emergency spillway.

Make the wetlands a key feature of the park by building interpretive displays, encouraging wildlife, etc.

Enhance the natural pollutant cleansing and detaining qualities of wetlands by replacing invasive, exotic plants with a variety of native wetland species.

Institute a management program which is consistent with the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act.

Determine the park's legal rights with respect to receiving stormwater and develop policies for same.

Delineate the park's wetlands and determine their past, present and potential future functions.

### **Vegetation**

Manage special landscape features to assure their presence for future generations.

Establish sound forest management practices to encourage suitable second-generation growth.

Maintain the diversity of wetland flora and fauna within the park—slow the succession of wet meadows or shrub swamps to wet woods within the north woodland.

Establish vegetative borders along ponds and streams to attract wildlife, stabilize banks and enhance aesthetics.

Plant wildflowers and meadow grasses in areas where turf quality is poor and in areas that do not require frequent mowing such as along the woodland edges, in small pockets of open space, on steeper slopes and in wetlands.

Remove invasive, exotic plant species and encourage native vegetation.

Control poison ivy along the edges of woodland paths.

Plant loose clumps of trees at the woodland edges to soften the transition between lawn and woods.

New planting plans are appropriate for the Main Entry, the Willow Pond, Bathing Pool, and the Spruce Room.

Plant new screens and understory plants to block undesirable views from and within the park.

Identify plants with labels for public education.

Make certain all new plants are suited to microclimate conditions including soil, sun, shade.

Use soil survey information to guide new plantings.

Leave some dead trees within the woodlands for wildlife habitat.

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Use soil survey information to guide new plantings.

Leave some dead trees within the woodlands for wildlife habitat.

## Views

Create a diversity of views within the park. Open up views into and within the woodlands and provide access to streams through selective removal of undergrowth.

Preserve some limited views into the park along the "front lawn" on Washington Street and along Rhoades and Wolcott Avenues.

Screen undesirable views within the park with planted buffers including the surrounding commercial and high traffic areas, the tennis courts, manager's complex and church parking lot.

Preserve and enhance the long view within the Vista by working with McNeil and Associates on landscape plans for the annex and spillway to assure an appropriate focal point for this long view.

Take advantage of the view of Boston from the annex by working with McNeil and associates to create an overlook.

Utilize opportunities in the park to create pockets of open space with intimate views such as the bowl-shaped depressions and nooks within the woodland edge.

## Use

Maintain a diversity of recreational activities within the park ensuring their compatibility.

Reinstate the cultural and social activities and events that are an historic component of the park's intended use.

Provide recreational activities and interests for all ages.

Distribute park use to include a wider portion of the park.

Establish park policies to limit and phase out soccer within the park.

### **Circulation**

Maintain the basic alignment and configuration of pathways. Expansion and repair of the system should relate to patterns of use, the topographic features and the town street system.

Define a hierarchy of materials and widths for path systems based on frequency and intensity of use. Consider reducing the number of path materials for greater consistency and cost efficiency:

- A) Heavy use            8 feet wide
- B) Frequent use        6 feet wide
- C) Infrequent use      2-3 feet wide
- D) Vehicular use      10-12 feet wide

- 1) Patterned concrete
- 2) Stone dust
- 3) Mulch
- 4) Asphalt

Consider a phased program for repairing and upgrading pathway system.

Define and consolidate vehicular routes within the park.

Consider using smaller, light-weight, quiet vehicles when possible for maintenance circulation through the park.

Widen and make uniform the path around the Vista, and extend path along the north side of the Willow Pond.

Ensure safe access for pedestrians and vehicles along the park perimeter.

Link annex with defined pathway system. Consider safety measures for crossing traffic on Polley Lane. Provide a defined, inviting entry at the southern boundary of the park.

Selectively remove encroaching vegetation, poison ivy and all barriers within 5 feet of major woodland paths.

Provide points of interest and rest stops along woodland paths to invite more park users.

Topdress secondary paths with cinders or stonedust to dry up and level paths.  
Upgrade dirt-worn paths.

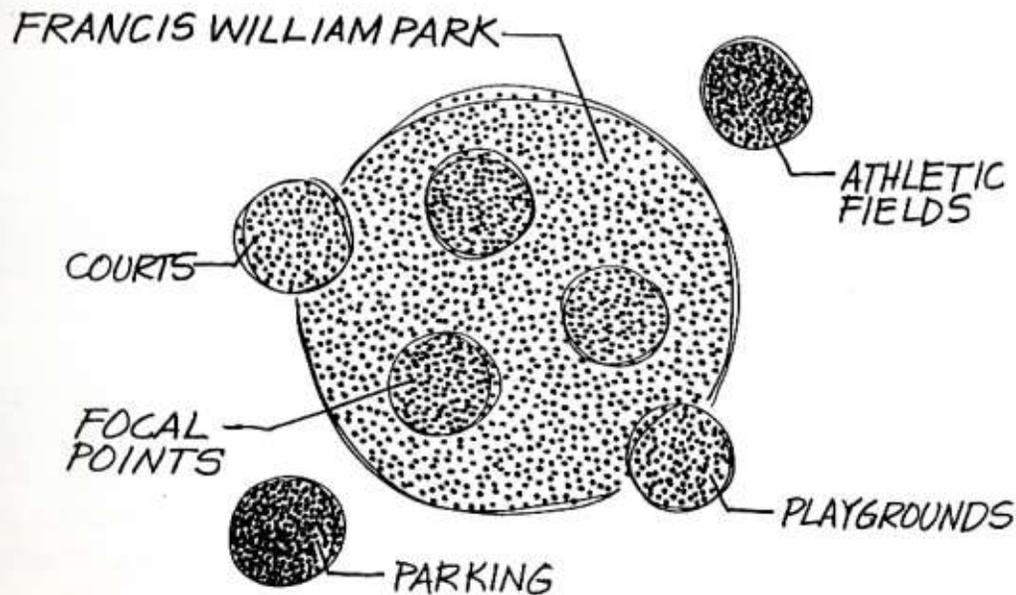
# **PARK DESIGN**

**The Concept  
The Master Scheme**

## PARK DESIGN CONCEPT

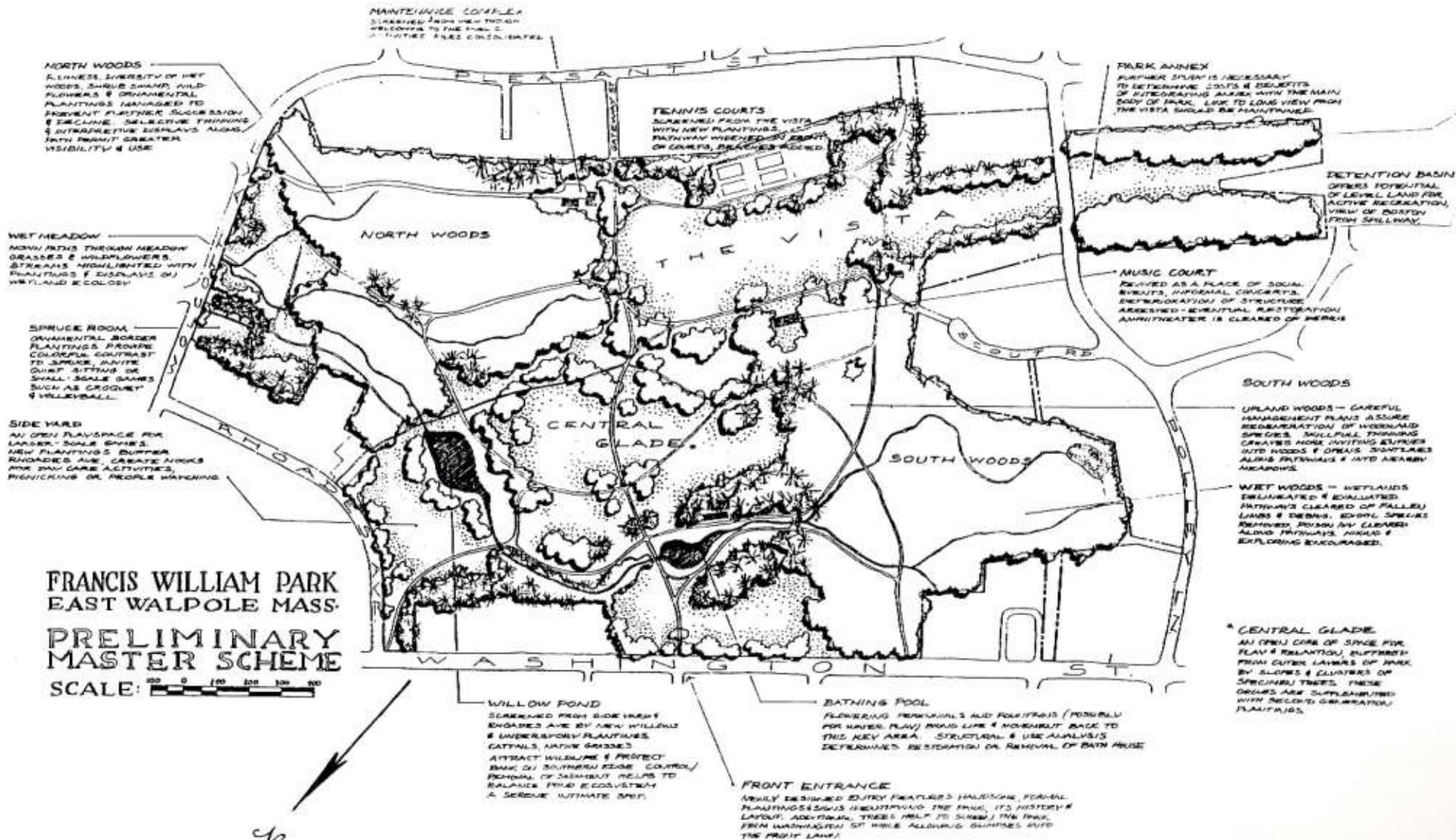
The concept for Francis William Park is a unifying idea which expresses the essence of the design principles and is the structure behind the master scheme.

The concept embodies elements of both the original design and the needs of park users today. The park's founders envisioned it to be a restful retreat in an industrial setting. The current concept is that the park be a protected greenspace with a periphery of more active use. The quiet, central portion of the park would invite picnicking, sunning and small gatherings. Three focal points, the Willow Pond, Music Court and Bathing Pool attract people into the heart of the park. More disruptive activities such as parking, sports, and playgrounds now generally occur along the park edge. This existing pattern would be maintained with additional active uses added to the park's edge. This concept accommodates recreational needs and leaves nature as the setting for relaxation, play, community interaction and education.



Keep intensive uses at park periphery.

# HISTORIC PARK OF RICH NATURAL BEAUTY & DIVERSE ACTIVITIES IS SKILLFULLY RESTORED & MANAGED FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS



## **MASTER SCHEME**

The Francis William Park master scheme is based on the site analysis recommendations and concept. It is intended to paint a picture, using broad strokes, suggesting changes and improvements within the park as a whole. The master scheme is to be used in later projects as more detailed plans for the park are drawn. The scheme is a preliminary plan meant to be used in conjunction with the principles and recommendations section of this report which provides the most complete guide for further park planning.

### **Front Entrance**

In the scheme, new plantings along the Washington Street boundary buffer the park's front lawn from the neighborhood and traffic while allowing some views into the park. Pruning is carried out correctly and only when necessary, without radical disfiguring of trees and shrubs. A (future) planting plan has a grander scale than currently exists; it and improved maintenance upgrade the park's image.

A redesigned front courtyard at the entrance can accommodate parking perpendicular to Washington Street. A sign on the gate announces the park's identity. Benches provided inside the gate can be used by people waiting to meet friends or get a ride home. Inside the gate simple, graphic displays orient users to park history and layout. The park's "front lawn" remains well-maintained open space.

### **Bathing Pool and Bath House**

Further structural and potential use analysis of these key elements are crucial to determine the most appropriate and affordable changes. The burned Bath House is to be renovated or removed after detailed structural analysis determines the feasibility and expense of improvements. Ideas to consider for a renovated Bath House include use as a picnic pavilion, concession stand, restroom, changing rooms or display area. Immediate and continuous attention to cleaning up graffiti, brush and litter in the bath house area will send a message that the park is entering a new era of concern and management.

The bathing pool becomes a visually appealing and active water feature, either an ornamental pond with a fountain and water lilies, or a fountain play area where kids splash in the water spray. The latter option will require substantial redesign of the bathing pool to divert the Pickerel Brook under a level surface containing drains and sprays that recirculate city water. Surface fountains reduce or eliminate the liability associated with swimming pools. Colorful, perennial flowers, shrubs and bulbs planted among the boulders soften the water's edge and bring people back to this area. Detailed use analysis will help determine which option to choose for the Bath House and bathing pool.

### **Central Glade**

The central core of the park is envisioned as open, rolling parkland buffered from the outer layers of the park by slopes and plantings. Groves of mature specimen trees scattered throughout the glade are supplemented by young plantings to ensure that groves remain key features in the future. Care is taken in locating new plantings so they will not interrupt important views. New plantings at path intersections would create transition zones and ideally are in groves which withstand stress better than single specimens. Cluster plantings are less likely to be trampled or mown than single trees and have greater visual effect. The beech grove on the low knoll is an excellent model for group plantings. When siting new groves, special attention must be given to the effect on the entire glade. According to the scheme ideas, the park's glade continues to be used for picnicking, strolling, relaxing and free play.

### **High Knoll**

This open, highly visible focal point within the park should be inviting and well-maintained. The brush pile currently located within a depression on the knoll has been removed. Future debris piles are out of site within the maintenance complex. Ruts have been repaired and reseeded and vehicle movement is restricted on these erodible slopes. Currently, the combination of steep slopes and highly permeable soils has left the knoll susceptible to summer grass burn and erosion. New trees, groundcover and a reduced mowing schedule help the soils to retain moisture and stabilize slopes as well.

As the highest point in the main body of the park, this knoll offers a vantage for enjoying the landscape and activities in the lower meadows. Views of Washington Street are screened. Along the knoll new clusters of trees link the north and south woods and create a transition zone between the Vista and the Central Glade.

### **Willow Pond**

The Willow Pond is already one of the most scenic and popular spots in the park. Parents and toddlers admire the ducks and young professionals gather near it for lunch. In order to maintain and enhance this popular feature, both its health and aesthetic qualities must be addressed. (The pond is filling in at an unnatural rate and it will be necessary to carefully and regularly remove sedimentation. Long term solutions need to be planned for improving incoming water quality.) The Willow Pond area needs further definition and protection from the more active spaces which surround it. North of the pond the scheme suggests new plantings, and an extended path contributes to stronger definition and completes the circulation loop around the pond. The steep southern bank of the pond requires stabilization; willows, cattails and native grasses can add visual interest and attract wildlife.

### **Side Yard**

According to scheme ideas, the "side yard" of Rhoades Avenue remains an open play room used for a variety of activities including kite flying, frisbee, and picnicking. The high canopy trees which line the road and the park's western border have new understory plantings to screen out the commercial district, traffic and neighborhood.

A small toddlers' playground is suggested for the nook next to the hemlocks along the western border. The location, sheltered by the mature trees, enjoys partial sun. It is conveniently near the church, daycare center and nearby designated parking yet set apart from the active play and sports in the open space.

### **Wet Meadow**

Currently this parcel of land is subject to yearly flooding and mown grass stands survive with mixed success. In the scheme, the lowlying floodplain along Wolcott

Avenue is managed and interpreted as a wet meadow. The three streams which converge in this floodplain are highlighted and celebrated. Meadow grasses and wetland species are allowed to grow to a height of approximately 1 1/2 to 3 feet and contribute rich diversity and texture. People meander through on mown paths, picnic and birdwatch in intimate clearings. Parents watch their children on the playground or teach them about wetland ecology using the interpretive displays. The stream banks are cleared of debris and stabilized with wetland plants. The culvert along Wolcott Avenue is clean and functioning smoothly.

### **Spruce Room**

Lines of Norway Spruce form an outdoor room along the park's northern boundary. Ornamental flowering shrubs and perennials along the borders can make this space inviting and help buffer Wolcott Avenue. Second generation plantings, carefully placed, are suggested to supplement the existing spruce trees. The Shelter Gate is clean and an added step provides an easier transition from the gate to the spruce room. Suggested uses for the spruce room include gathering, sitting and small-scale sports such as volleyball and lawn bowling.

### **North Woods**

The scheme envisions north woods which are managed to preserve and enhance the abundant diversity of wetlands, shrub swamp, wildflowers and ornamental specimens. The streams, pathways and three bridges are accessible and well maintained. The setting's visual and educational value is identified in creative displays which explain wetland ecology, plant and wildlife species.

In the interior of the woods, south of the wet meadow, a large marshy clearing already exists, bordered by a high canopy of trees filled with shrubs and other plants. Broad ideas for change include opening views of the marsh from woodland paths, particularly where two mature, carefully pruned spruce trees frame the view from a well-placed bench. Differing levels of vegetation combine with water to make this an ideal spot for birdwatching. Skilled management prevents the succession of the shrub swamp into woodland and maintains a balanced environment for wildlife.

The woodland path north of the Vista is planned to remain a rich horticultural area. Existing plants are brought back to peak health and new plants established. Lush, diverse borders of ornamental trees, shrubs, perennials and groundcovers flank the pathways, allowing occasional views into the deeper woods. At places where the path closely parallels the stream, particular care is taken to maintain the stream's visual quality. Culverts which discharge into the brook at the southern end of the wood are repaired, the stream banks are cleaned and stabilized, and a small sitting area is provided.

### **The Vista**

The Vista should be retained as an open, flat play area with long, sweeping views. It is important that soccer occur on a much more limited schedule and gradually be phased out as the Walpole Soccer League finds other play fields, allowing for a greater variety of activity in this space. Turf worn by overuse is brought back into good condition. The looped pathway is made uniform to accommodate walkers and joggers. An irregular woodland edge breaks up the Vista's monotony and defined boundaries.

### **Tennis Courts**

The tennis courts along the park's eastern border are envisioned as very well maintained and screened from the Vista. The concrete path in front of the courts is widened and brought out slightly into the Vista to separate circulation from the court entrances. This change allows more room for plantings which will screen the courts and for benches placed for viewing tennis or games in the Vista.

The skating rink, as envisioned, continues to be actively used by young people for street hockey, roller skating and skate boards. The fence has been repaired and the graffiti-covered backboard removed.

### **Music Court**

The Music Court can offer the ideal setting for the types of community and cultural events the park seeks to encourage. Plans should be made to restore and revive its

use for informal gatherings and concerts; full-scale programming may be phased in. The natural amphitheater, when cleared of debris, poison ivy and understory growth, can be used in the near future by groups such as the Girl Scouts. Large trees that obstruct views may need to be removed when and if large-scale performances are planned.

Further analysis of the handsome Music Court is needed to determine what restoration would involve and how much it would cost. Whether to include restrooms in the Music Court, or any park structure, is a decision that should be weighed carefully. Bathrooms are a welcome feature for people attending events, but require supervision and add maintenance duties. Alternatives include the use of portable toilets for special occasions and limiting hours for use of existing restrooms.

### **Manager's Complex**

In the scheme, the manager's complex on the park's eastern border is consolidated and screened to minimize its presence in the park and provide privacy for the manager's family. Space is created in the rear of the complex for activities such as brush chipping and storage of nursery stock. Existing trees in the vicinity of the Gateway Street entrance are augmented to provide additional screening and to break winter winds blowing through the Vista.

Consideration should be given to the necessary balance between the manager's need for both contact with day-to-day park activities and for private living space. The identity and function of the complex should be made clear (by bollards or signs) while its visual presence is subdued. Restrooms near or in the maintenance complex can serve employees and park users and be more easily supervised.

### **South Woods**

The south woods comprises two distinct areas: the wet woodland in the southwest corner of the park and the upland woods in the central hilly section. All the park's woodlands constitute an important ecological and educational resource and efforts should be made to ensure their health and to encourage public use and enjoyment. It is critically important that all woodlands should be managed in accordance with a

comprehensive plan requiring joint efforts of a landscape architect, forester and an arborist. After their work divides the forest into management zones a cycle of thinning can be established to encourage woodland regeneration.

The paths within the woodland, as envisioned, would exhibit a distinct hierarchy consistent with an overall circulation scheme. Paths which are more frequently used are wider and have more durable surface cover. On either side of the paths, eye-level vegetation is sensitively cut back to a distance of five feet. Sightlines are opened up from the paths into the woods and surrounding meadows by thinning trees selectively. Rustic benches are provided for resting or observing nature. In the south woods, the collapsed bridge has been repaired to increase circulation. The old playground site is cleared and used for picnics or Girl Scout gatherings.

The wet character of the north woods makes it less accessible by foot but conducive to visual enjoyment and environmental education, whereas the south woods is more appropriate for hiking, exploring and creative play.

### **The Annex and Detention Basin**

The park annex has never been fully integrated into the main body of the park. It holds the potential for many valuable uses and provides an important view corridor for the park, extending from the Vista to the detention spillway. This view must be considered when planning the future of the annex.

The current, ongoing construction of the detention basin presents park leadership with the opportunity to decide the relationship of the annex to the rest of the park. The final form and appearance of the detention basin and spillway will greatly affect the park and immediate study is necessary to assess their potential functions. If the annex becomes actively used it will be important to link it with pathways to the park's main body. Possible uses include (but are not limited to) active recreation and a viewing spot looking north to Boston.

The detention basin is not owned by the park but is accessible to park users. The basin offers a large, level space which could be used for sports such as softball and

soccer. Although the detention basin may not be dry enough for use all of the time, it provides an opportunity in a town where playing fields are scarce. Making decisions about the future of the basin should be a priority since its construction is almost complete. Once it has been landscaped it may be difficult or expensive to convert to a playing field. If the basin is used for recreation, parking will be needed.

# **PARK POLICIES**

**The Original Design Principles  
Principles for Today  
Guidelines for Park Management**

## THE ORIGINAL DESIGN PRINCIPLES

Francis William Park is a place of unique aesthetic and environmental character. The park is a centerpiece of the quality of life in Walpole, and enriches the lives of all who use the park. It is also an important landmark, significant to local history as well as the history of landscape architecture and park design in this country.

The park environment and character have, however, declined in recent decades and will continue to deteriorate unless vision, special skills and cooperation are employed in the park's management.

The following principles and recommendations are intended to provide a sound framework for park restoration and management efforts. They will require review and fine-tuning by park leadership, and should be evaluated periodically in light of changes in the park environment and in the town as a whole.

Francis William Park's distinctive qualities are the result of the vision and foresight inherent in the original design of the park. In order to preserve and enhance the integrity of the park as created in 1925, the original design principles must be respected and are listed next.



## *Original Design Principles*

*The Park's character reflects...*

*New England hills and meadows at their best,  
a rich diversity of experience, and  
qualities of restfulness, unity and simplicity.*

*The Park's purposes are...*

*contact with nature,  
unstructured recreation,  
social and cultural gatherings, and  
education.*

The original design intentions are woven into the overall principles and recommendations for management that follow. For convenience, the majority of these recommendations are also listed under individual site analyses.

## **PRINCIPLES FOR TODAY**

### **Park Environment and Character**

The park is to be a restful retreat.

The park provides a rich diversity of experiences with carefully combined open spaces, woodlands, water features and topography.

A balanced, healthy environment is fundamental to the future and well-being of the park and the entire community.

The park's unique qualities provide an educational resource for the community.

### **Park Use**

The park is a place for people of all ages.

All park zones and features shall be linked and accessible.

The park is to be a place of diverse activity, while maintaining an overall atmosphere of tranquility.

### **Park Management**

Park maintenance and management shall be orchestrated according to consistent policies, standards, and an overall plan of action.

Park management shall combine efficient day-to-day operations with far-sighted planning for the future.

## **GUIDELINES FOR PARK MANAGEMENT**

### **Park Environment and Character**

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**Principle:** The park is to be a restful retreat.

**Objective:** Entrances from the street into the park are distinct transition zones, defining the park and connecting it to its surroundings.

**Recommendations:**

- Buffer entry zones from adjacent properties at Shelter Gate and Pleasant Street parking lot.
- Provide ample gate widths, of at least 3 feet, for flow of pedestrian traffic at Pleasant Street parking lot, Polley Lane and Scout Road entrances.
- Connect interior pathways to exterior walks and roadways with complementary materials.
- Distinguish character/identity of entrance zones through a variety of plantings, views, changes in path direction, and contrast between light and dark.

**Objective:** Existing mature vegetation is supplemented with understory plantings to screen park boundaries.

**Objective:** Intimate, enclosed spaces are found throughout the park.

**Recommendations**

- Clear pockets of open space within woodland areas.
- Create irregular woodland edges by extending plantings into open spaces or thinning existing woodland.
- Provide benches in protected niches for viewing and resting.
- Use existing topography (such as knolls and depressions) to establish private areas.

**Objective:** Large-scale team sports occur in park in selected areas at limited times, so as not to discourage or disturb other activities.

**Objective:** Maintenance facilities, equipment and activities disrupt park use and atmosphere as little as possible.

**Recommendations**

- \* Consolidate maintenance storage facilities in less visible and low-use areas—within manager's complex if possible. Remove debris piles from open parkland.
- \* Minimize view of manager's complex from within the park with buffer plantings.
- \* Consider painting these structures a neutral color.
- \* Noisy and disruptive maintenance activities should be scheduled during times of infrequent use, whenever possible.
- \* Trash receptacles should be uniform and inconspicuous.

**Principle:** The park provides a rich diversity of experiences with carefully combined open spaces, woodlands, water features and topography.

**Objective:** There are a full range of water features in the park, from running brooks to still ponds, wetlands and splashing fountains.

**Recommendations**

- \* Make streams more visible and accessible by selectively thinning vegetation along streambanks, building a boardwalk, and repairing bridges.
- \* Clean up debris along streams and screen dredged sections.
- \* Install plantings to highlight water edges, provide wildlife habitat, and protect steep banks.
- \* Celebrate wetlands as key features of park through interpretive displays
- \* Restore and build fountains for water play and visual appeal.

**Objective:** Open spaces and woodland are scattered and intertwined throughout the park.

**Objective:** There are a diversity of views into and within the park.

### **Recommendations**

- Preserve and enhance the long view in the Vista.
- Work with McNeil and Associates on landscape plans for annex and spillway to assure pleasant focal point of long view to the south.
- Create irregular woodland edge near Rhododendron path north of the Vista, allowing views and light to penetrate woodland entrance. This effect may be created by extending understory plantings south into the Vista and selectively clearing dense vegetation near the path.
- Take advantage of view to Boston from spillway area in annex—investigate possibility of creating an overlook accessible to park users.
- Preserve some filtered views into park near main entrance on Washington Street and from surrounding residential streets.
- Preserve open, expansive view into park from Polley Lane.
- Selectively thin in woodland areas adjacent to paths to open sight lines into the woods and surrounding meadows. Hire a landscape architect and arborist to mark trees for removal.
- Preserve existing long views within the Central Glade by limiting additional plantings to identified groves of trees.
- Evaluate views within the Music Court and amphitheater to ensure visibility during performances.

**Principle:** A balanced, healthy environment is fundamental to the future and well-being of the park and the entire community.

**Objective:** Quality and quantity of water within park streams, ponds, and wetlands is sufficient to maintain a diversity of plant and wildlife species. Flow of water through park approximates that of a natural system.

### **Recommendations**

- Test water quality in the park.
- Determine water quality standards and test to monitor quality.
- Determine measures to improve quality of water entering park. Hire a hydrologist/engineer to study watershed system and effects of storm-water runoff on park ecosystem. Make recommendations to mitigate these effects.
- Determine park's legal rights with respect to receiving storm water and set policy in regard to this issue.
- Form a subcommittee to work with town officials and others to find alternatives to present system, i.e., reduce volume of runoff entering park or channel around park.
- Clean and maintain all clogged drains within park.

**Objective:** Wetlands, streams and ponds within the park are key features, functioning healthily.

### **Recommendations**

- Delineate the variety of wetlands; determine their current and potential functions.
- Replace exotic plant species with native vegetation to preserve and enhance native diversity.
- Stabilize streambanks with natural materials where erosion occurs.
- Maintain Willow Pond in a steady state—prevent pond stagnation by periodic and careful removal of silt.
- Provide educational information/displays to interpret the variety of flora and fauna species and successional stages of wetland development within the park.

**Objective:** Vegetation within the park is thriving, appropriate to park character and site conditions, and managed to encourage the continuation of key landscape features.

### **Recommendations**

- Remove invasive exotic plants such as Japanese honeysuckle, Japanese barberry, Multiflora rose, and Japanese knotweed.
- Plan for future of key landscape features such as pine and hemlock stands near bath house, and beech groves in open parkland which have mature or overmature trees by encouraging regeneration and/or by planting replacement trees.
- Manage woodland to enhance diversity of species and natural stratification of canopy, understory, shrub and ground layers, and to allow for reproductive continuity of forest community.
- Implement management plan for woodland areas of park. Divide forest into sections and establish cycle of thinning.
- Establish planting list of species appropriate to park's character and site conditions.
- Where possible, new plantings should connect to existing plantings to minimize likelihood of disturbance from trampling or mowing.
- Plant in island groupings vs. single specimens for ease of maintenance.
- Establish hierarchy of mowing regimes; areas used for active play or sports need to be mowed more frequently than hillsides. Gradually change seed mix to include clover, yarrow and coreopsis on appropriate areas for added color and texture.
- Consider planting steeper slopes in central portion of park with ground cover that can tolerate dry, sandy conditions and prevent erosion.

**Principle:** The park's unique qualities provide an educational resource for the community.

**Objective:** Significant features in the park's built and natural environments are interpreted for park visitors through clear, creative signs and displays.

### **Recommendations**

- Label specimen trees with common and botanical names.
- Label species of horticultural interest in selected areas where ornamental

plantings are appropriate, i.e., at the Main Entry on Washington Street, the Spruce Room at Wolcott Avenue.

- Educate the public about the special characteristics, functions, and species of wetlands by creating interpretive displays throughout the wetlands in the northeast portion of the park.

- Provide historical information about design, use and construction of park structures such as bridges, Music Court, Bath House.

- Display information on the history, design and layout of the park at or near the Main Entry.

- Provide simple signs identifying the park at major entries.

**Objective:** An Education Committee of the Park Advisory Council coordinates and oversees educational programming within the park.

#### **Recommendations**

- Plan activities and programs in cooperation with interested groups including Boy and Girl Scouts, Day Care Programs, Footlighter's and other local conservation and recreation organizations.

- Arrange special educational programs on aesthetic and/or ecological aspects of the park through area institutions such as Garden In The Woods, Harvard University, local colleges or vocational schools.

- Incorporate learning opportunities whenever possible into special park events, i.e., volunteer work days, fun days.

- Develop educational tools such as slide shows, newsletters and fact sheets.

- Explore other successful models of environmental education within parks, such as those at Prospect Park and Central Park in New York City.

## Park Use

**Principle:** The park is a place for people of all ages.

**Objective:** Park activities, facilities, and features are accessible and inviting to all people.

### **Recommendations**

- Determine current and future recreational needs of all age groups in the town.
- Cooperate and coordinate with Town of Walpole and other organizations concerned with recreational needs.
- Evaluate the use and facilities of the park in relation to user needs.
- Create opportunities and areas for use by all ages.

**Principle:** All park zones and features shall be linked and accessible.

**Objective:** Existing alignment, configuration, and location of pedestrian paths is retained. Expansion of pathway system relates to topographic features, i.e. streams, knolls.

**Objective:** Paths and roadways are safe and well-maintained.

### **Recommendations**

- Ensure safe street crossing along park perimeters.
- Upgrade dirt-worn paths.
- Repair unsafe paths that have heaved and are eroded.
- Joints and changes of material to be level, i.e. bridges, entry to Rhododendron path, entry to woods near picnic shelter.

**Objective:** Woodland paths are free of obstructions and are regularly used.

### **Recommendations**

- Selectively thin 5 feet of brush and debris on both sides of path to increase visibility.
- Establish a hierarchy of paths inviting and directing movement through the woods.
- Create transition zones to link woodlands to open space.

**Objective:** Path system provides convenient access to streets and points outside the park.

### **Recommendations**

- Expand path system to include annex south of Polley Lane.

**Objective:** Paths and roadway exhibit distinct hierarchy according to use. Hierarchy expressed through path width and material. (See guidelines in Circulation Analysis.)

**Objective:** Vehicular circulation is limited and defined within the park.

### **Recommendations**

- Continue policy of restricting public vehicle access within the park.
- Vehicular access on paths to be limited.
- Discourage/prohibit vehicle circulation over steep slopes to prevent erosion and soil loss.

**Principle:** The park is to be a place of diverse activity, while maintaining an overall atmosphere of tranquility.

**Objective:** There are locations appropriate for sitting, picnicking and other stationary activities throughout the park.

### **Recommendations**

- Provide benches with protected backs, i.e. plantings, slope, woodland edge.
- Place benches strategically in park for privacy in quiet, remote and/or slightly removed spots or to take advantage of views.
- Position benches in partly enclosed nooks with view to larger open spaces.
- Encourage social gathering by placing benches in clusters in close proximity to pathways or major features.
- Maintain areas for sunning, picnicking, etc. on knolls and depressions.
- Provide trash receptacles near popular picnicking spots.

**Objective:** Numerous linear activities occur simultaneously and harmoniously within the park and are linked to city grid system.

### **Recommendations**

- Widen and relocate path along tennis court to alleviate congestion.
- Encourage walking clubs, fun runs and other groups which combine exercise and social interaction.
- Upgrade type A & B pathways to accommodate variety of linear activities which would potentially conflict on narrow paths.
- Ensure that all park entrances have curb cuts at adjacent streets for bicyclists and the handicapped.

**Objective:** The park has a variety of enclosed and semi-enclosed outdoor rooms for specialized and multiple uses.

### **Recommendations**

- In Central Glade of park, cluster plants to define space for free play and relaxation.
- Treat open space along Wolcott Avenue as an interpretive wet meadow with possible pocket for play and group games.
- Encourage small group sports such as volleyball and plant ornamental borders

in the Spruce Room.

- Screen the Willow Pond with plantings on the north side to enhance its tranquil setting.
- Consider the Rhoades Avenue section of the park as a game room. Provide additional screening along the avenue and a playground nestled beside the western border.
- Upgrade plantings at the Main Entry and along Washington Street to create a more formal focal point and buffered “front yard.”

**Objective:** The park provides both structured and unstructured play areas for children—preschool and up.

#### **Recommendations**

- Locations for play areas should be partially bounded for screening and protection, provide sun and shade, be convenient to parking and paths, and on relatively level slopes.
- Upgrade play structures by increasing variety of activities and quality of equipment.
- Design play areas with naturalistic theme to integrate with site and encourage children to interact with landscape as play space, i.e., use of natural materials, sand boxes.
- Provide benches for parental supervision.

**Objective:** Large-scale, scheduled sports occur within the park on a limited basis, or are excluded to minimize interference with other uses.

#### **Recommendations**

- Develop plan/policy to phase out or limit such sports and encourage the town to find additional facilities.
- Consider Meadow Ridge detention basin as area for competitive sports.
- Redesign detention basin landscape plan to accommodate playfields if possible.
- Initiate program to re-establish vegetation and/or turf in over-used, compacted play fields.

**Principle: The park is a stage for social and cultural events.**

**Objective:** The park is full of opportunities for social activities/gatherings.

**Recommendations**

- Encourage activities such as kite-flying contests, company picnics, and Easter egg hunts.
- Consider Music Court and amphitheater as location for social gatherings.
- Consider bathing pool area as potential location for social focus. Possible ideas include; fountain for water play, perennial flower borders, or a lilypond.
- Create activities for teens to increase involvement and responsibility toward the park and consider providing them with a special place in the park.
- Promote and support group use, such as boy and girl scouts and walking clubs.

**Objective:** The park is programmed with a variety of cultural events.

**Recommendations**

- Form a programming committee to schedule events and serve as a link with community groups.
- Publish and advertise calendar of events.
- Upgrade facilities to house such events, i.e. Music Court, restrooms and additional parking.

**Park Management**

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**Principle: Park maintenance and management shall be orchestrated according to consistent policies, standards, and an overall plan of action.**

**Objective:** Park policies are determined concerning safety, park hours, activities, use limitations and fees.

**Objective:** Park adheres to consistent standards regarding park furnishings, restoration of structures, water quality, etc.

**Objective:** Principles, objectives and policies for park management are evaluated and revised, if necessary, on an annual basis by the Park Trustees, Advisory Council, Park Manager. Consultants may be necessary to update the master scheme.

**Principle: Park management shall combine efficient day-to-day operations with far-sighted planning for the future.**

**Objective:** Effective, responsive park leadership is the result of defined roles and close cooperation between park trustees, concerned citizens and hired staff and consultants.

### **Recommendations**

- Park Trustees hold ultimate responsibility for park finances, management direction and assure that policies and actions respect tenets of the park trust as much as possible.
- Park Advisory Council oversees long-range planning, coordinates programming activities with park manager, and provides an intimate link with park users, town government and other bodies.
- Committees of the Council should be established as follows:
  - Finances/Fundraising
  - Administration (Policies, Personnel, By-Laws)
  - Public Relations (Signs, Slide shows, Press Releases)
  - Environment (Vegetation Management, Landscape Design, Drainage)
  - Programming and Events (Educational, Cultural, Fairs, Fun Days)
  - Recreation (Sports, Games, Playgrounds)
  - Facilities (Structures, Pathways, Furnishings)
- Roles and responsibilities of committees should be defined and chairpersons elected to at least two year terms. Membership in the Advisory Council or

Friends-of-the-Park group should be defined and active participation in committee work encouraged.

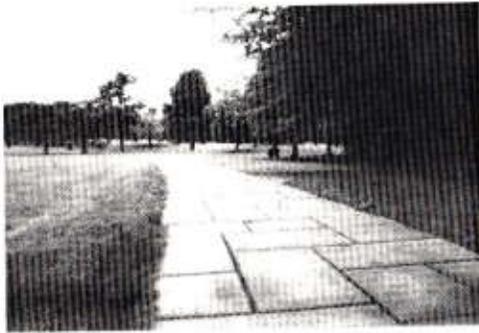
- Park Manager directs maintenance and operations according to park policies and standards, and supervises the work of park employees, contractors and volunteers. Serves as an ex-officio member of the Advisory Council.

- Develop job descriptions for all staff members.

- Conduct a workshop in strategic planning and resource development for council members and park manager.

- Evaluate/nominate park for designation as an historic landscape in the National Register of Historic Places.

# CONCLUSION



The forests, fields, rolling hills, streams and structures of Francis William Park give it a distinctive character. At the same time, the park, its users and the neighborhoods that surround it have become intermeshed in the tapestry of community life. The park was designed for people and built upon the premise that nature must be a component in the ecology of human existence.

The park has been through a period of decline and neglect but its value is unquestionable. It continues to be an open green space where people can nourish their spirits and bodies, where children play together and all ages can gather. The park also possesses local and national historic significance.

Use of the park and community interest are on the rise. Park leadership will be challenged to sustain the momentum generated by this project. Commitment, hard work and funding are needed to restore this resource. The park's unique status as privately owned land placed in trust for the community must be made clear so that people will respect and contribute to its restoration.

Much of Francis William Park's present value can be attributed to the clear vision of its founders. The work of this ten-week project has been directed toward discovering the park's original design intent and evaluating it in relation to current needs and the park's physical condition. We found that the original premises are even more valid today than they were 60 years ago, given the greater density of development and population in the town. Adaptations are necessary, however, to align the park's design with ecological and community change.

The principles and objectives outlined in this report build from and supplement the original intent and are applied to specific zones or problems within the park. The expression of these principles differs from John Nolen's plan in five main ways. First, this design stresses the need for a strong management plan to insure the park's future. Second, it responds to transition in the park's environment by suggesting that ecosystems be identified and highlighted for educational use. Third, it addresses the changes that park structures and features have undergone by posing new alternatives for study. Fourth, this design evaluates lands which have been added

to the park since its inception. Finally, this project has attempted to accommodate a growing population and evolving user needs.

### **Steps Toward a Comprehensive Master Plan**

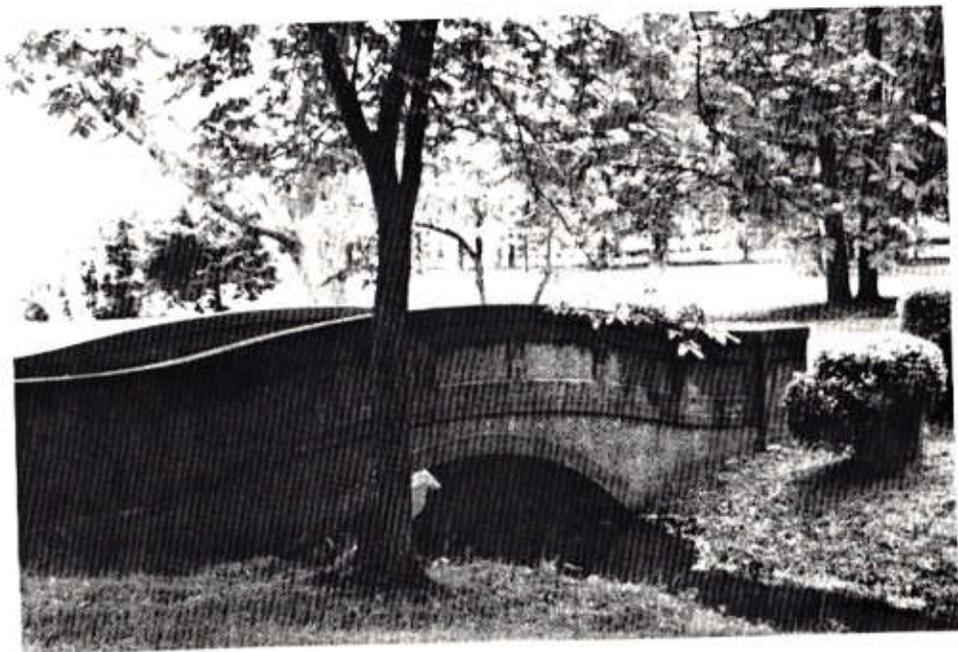
A master plan for Francis William Park should include the next logical steps:

- More detailed use analysis, including user surveys.
- Design solutions for specific park areas such as the Bath House, the park annex, Music Court, and Memorial Gate.
- A complete inventory and analysis of park structures.
- A delineation of parking needs in relation to current and future use.
- A more comprehensive understanding of the park's ecosystems.
- Establishment of management zones within the park.
- Evaluation of the park budget in relation to proposed restoration and management plans.

### **Priorities for Park Leadership**

During the interim period, before the master plan is complete, important decisions and actions need to occur. These include:

- Increasing the organizational capacity of park administration to carry forward the research, planning and implementation identified in this report.
- Determining budgetary and fundraising needs.
- Establishing stronger links with community organizations and town officials.
- Deciding the best ways to channel increasing community involvement and interest.
- Ensuring that ongoing projects such as the evaluation of park hydrology and wetlands are actively pursued.
- Following up with McNeil and Associates' plans for completing the detention basis and spillway.
- Making arrangements for detailed analysis of the Bath House and Music Court.
- Continuing efforts to increase public awareness of the park's identity and resources, including nomination of the park to the National Register of Historic Places.



# APPENDICES

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25 May 1989

Karen Bess  
Andrea Horan  
Laura Stack  
Conway School of Landscape Design  
Delabarre Avenue  
Conway, MA 01341

Re: Francis William Park, East Walpole, Massachusetts

Dear Karen, Andrea and Laura:

I enjoyed meeting with you last week and visiting Francis William Park. Enclosed are several things I promised to send you and a few thoughts on the park.

#### HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

National Register Bulletin 18 should provide you with a basic framework for evaluating historical significance and integrity. Based on what I know, Francis William Park appears significant as an example of the work of John Nolen, as an example of naturalistic park design in the 1920's, and as a private park, which is a relatively unusual phenomenon. Although some of the details have been lost, the overall structure and organization of the park is intact and it retains a fair amount of integrity. It would be useful to know to what extent the details of the park (planting, structures, ponds, etc) were worked out by John Nolen. Did I mention Wave Hill as a resource? They are a centralized clearing house for information on historic landscapes and might be able to tell you more about where information on Nolen can be found and who is doing research on him.

## DESIGN

In dealing with a historic landscape such as Francis William Park, you need to balance the needs of current users with historical values and my sense was that you were on the right track with this. It is important as you proceed with your own designs to have a good understanding of Nolen's design intent so you can recreate some of the more subtle features of the park, such as vistas and key plantings which might otherwise be lost.

## MANAGEMENT

Overall, Francis William Park seems to be moving in a good direction with the appointment of an advisory committee and the hiring of a new park manager. Planning may be just the catalyst needed to focus community attention and support for the park. Communication and coordination will be critical now that more players are involved.

Once a design direction has been established, it would be appropriate to evaluate maintenance practices and, in consultation with Roger, to establish an annual maintenance program. The map that I showed you is a useful format for developing park management zones, but of course the system would have to be adapted to the particular needs of Francis William Park.

Enclosed are some sample worksheets from the Maintenance Operations Plan that I did for the Boston Parks and Recreation Department. The general intent of the plan was to establish priorities for projects undertaken during the course of the year, to provide a framework for the many groups working in the parks, and to assure that activities undertaken by individual groups were coordinated and carefully planned so they would neither conflict nor place too heavy a burden on park managers. Cleaning up after volunteers can be especially frustrating and counter productive.

Good luck with your project. Let me know if you have any additional questions or if I can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,



Shary Page Berg

Enclosures

## Advisory committee maps plans

# Changes in store for Bird Park

by Robin Anderson

Francis William Park in East Walpole is being gently formed for the future by an advisory committee, David Bird and a new caretaker with an eye for details.

Residents can get a glimpse of that future at a meeting planned for June 15 at the Union Congregational Church next to the park, according to Beverly Clarke, vice chairman of the Francis William Park Advisory Committee.

Students of the Conway School of Landscape and Design will be giving a presentation based on a study they have taken of the park's past, its contours, uses and possibilities, according to Clarke.

The committee received unexpected assistance with the repair of one foot bridge in the park. Boy Scout Chris Fenner of Walpole approached the group with a plan to refurbish the bridge and help with the cleanup of a playground as an Eagle Scout project. He has spent more than 100 hours on the service project, along with help from other Boy Scouts and a few adults.

"Those residents who want to know about the past and future of Bird Park could come and listen to them," Clarke said.

The committee, formed in 1987, was put together by Bird, who approached Clarke and other Walpole residents about joining the council.

The group meets once a month. It consists of Anne Bird (David Bird's cousin), chairman Russell McNeil, Clarke, Jean Levangie, Betty Wissman, Douglas Winne, Robert Walters, Joyce Smith and Joanne Sprague.

David Bird, as individual trustee; Roger Pero, the park's caretaker; and a representative from Boston Safe Deposit and Trust, which serves as corporate trustee, also attend the meetings in which the park is being shaped.

The park, more commonly known as Bird Park, was created in 1925 by Charles Sumner Bird and Anna Child Bird as a memorial to their eldest son who died at age 37. A trust was then established to oversee the 89-acre park to control policy and the budget.

Clarke said the first meetings of

the committee were spent reminiscing about what the park meant to the members, and sharing ideas on individual visions of the future.

The Conway students gave a presentation to the committee last month which included a discussion on the original covenant, structures and the way the park has been changed by such features as wetlands. The three graduate students are also scheduled to present a five-year plan to the committee.

Clarke said the committee has talked about park use by different groups, and has "questioned whether it should be a structured use," such as for soccer. At one point, she said, a group of men decided to play their soccer games in the park and had to be asked to leave.

Pero is the one overseeing the park, having been hired in March as the agent and manager for the parcel. Clarke said one of Pero's first actions was to cut down trees which have been neglected, which she said drew comments from residents who

were concerned about the process.

Clarke said the committee is pleased with Pero and his wife Libby, who take the time to walk through the park and greet people. "It is very nice to have a presence, somebody who enjoys what he is doing," she said.

Another presence which will be felt in the park is a security force which will be making sweeps of the property, according to Clarke.

She said one action taken by the committee and Pero - locking up the tennis courts on the private property - led to neighbors using cutters to get into play, and another couple broke down the fence to get onto the court. "Most people assume it is public property."

The park "has a long way to go," according to Clarke. The committee is concerned with structures that are disintegrating, and plants that have invaded the park and have gained a foothold, along with other signs of disrepair.

Costs for maintenance and upkeep are paid through a trust fund, and Clarke called them priorities. Structures such as the music court and bath house, which "need work," have to wait for repairs.

Clarke called the hiring of the park manager "the first stage of regeneration." For the future, the committee is open to suggestions from residents, which is why they are encouraging residents to attend the meeting on June 15.

## RESOURCE ORGANIZATIONS FOR LANDSCAPE PRESERVATION

Alliance for Historic Landscape Preservation  
82 Wall Street, Suite 1105  
New York, NY 10005  
*Membership organization with annual conference.*

American Society of Landscape Architects  
Committee on Historic Preservation  
1733 Connecticut Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20009  
202-466-7730  
*Committee has informal newsletter, organizes periodic training courses.*

Catalog of Landscape Records in the United States  
Wave Hill  
675 West 252nd Street  
Bronx, NY 104711  
212-549-3200  
*Maintains listing of sources for landscape records.*

National Association for Olmsted Parks  
5010 Wisconsin Ave NW, Room 308  
Washington, DC 20016  
202-362-9511  
*Membership organization with periodic conferences and workshops.*

National Park Service  
National Register Programs  
P.O. Box 37127  
Washington, DC 20013-7127  
202-343-9536  
*Source for technical information and guidelines for preservation.*

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