



# CAMDEN, NEW JERSEY

10 MINUTE WALK NATIONAL STUDY VISIT











Cooper's Poynt Waterfront Park in North Camden opened in 2017. Built on the former site of a prison, the park is a symbol of revival.







COOPER'S FERRY PARTNERSHIP

## ABOUT THE URBAN LAND INSTITUTE

The Urban Land Institute is a global, member-driven organization comprising more than 46,000 real estate and urban development professionals dedicated to advancing the Institute's mission of providing leadership in the responsible use of land and in creating and sustaining thriving communities worldwide. ULI's interdisciplinary membership represents all aspects of the industry, including developers, property owners, investors, architects, urban planners, public officials, real estate brokers, appraisers, attorneys, engineers, financiers, and academics. Established in 1936, the Institute has a presence in the Americas, Europe, and Asia Pacific regions, with members in 81 countries.

More information is available at [uli.org](https://uli.org). Follow ULI on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram.



## ABOUT 10 MINUTE WALK

Parks are essential to the physical, environmental, and economic health of people and communities. Parks help expand the economy by attracting homebuyers, tourists, and highly talented workers. They protect the environment, provide space for the enjoyment of arts and nature, and make people healthier, happier, and more connected.

Despite these known benefits, research shows that one in three Americans—more than 100 million people—do not have a park within a 10-minute walk of their home. 10 Minute Walk is a movement dedicated to improving access to safe, high-quality parks and green spaces in cities—large and small—throughout the United States. Led by The Trust for Public Land (TPL), in partnership with the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) and the Urban Land Institute and with support from The JPB Foundation, 10 Minute Walk is working to create a world in which, by 2050, all people live within a 10-minute walk of a park or green space. This partnership drives commitments from city leaders working to achieve this vision and transform their communities.

10 Minute Walk has been endorsed by nearly 300 U.S. mayors so far. ULI, TPL, and NRPA are working with partners in select cities on measurable policies and strategies to advance the 10 Minute Walk vision. Success in this work will require the expertise, creativity, and close collaboration of public- and private-sector leaders. ULI has a powerful role to play in catalyzing its members, networks, and partners around a vision of a green, sustainable, connected, and resilient future for all people.

Learn more and connect with 10 Minute Walk at [10minutewalk.org](https://10minutewalk.org).



The highlighted green area adjacent to the State Street Bridge is an ideal spot to be activated by a community garden or similar use as part of creating a welcoming pedestrian gateway to the new Cramer Hill Waterfront Park.





### SUSTAINING AND LEVERAGING CRAMER HILL WATERFRONT PARK IN CAMDEN, NEW JERSEY

The city of Camden has prioritized parks, open space, and trail connections as part of ensuring quality of life for residents, creating a culture of health, and supporting economic development. As a thriving industrial and technological hub early in the 20th century, Camden entered an extended period of decline in the mid-20th century with population decrease, industry loss, public health challenges, a failing infrastructure, a degrading environment, and a lack of opportunity. Although many of those challenges persist, Camden is prioritizing the strengthening of neighborhoods and has made measurable progress in several key areas in the five-year period between 2014 and 2019. Many leading Camden entities believe that continued investment in parks and open spaces, as part of a wider goal to maintain and improve infrastructure, will continue the positive progress.

The joint focus on open space and economic development is especially prominent in Camden's Cramer Hill community where the 2009 Cramer Hill NOW! Plan, developed by multiple local partner organizations and neighborhood residents, set forth a vision for the neighborhood's waterfront. Chief among the plan's recommendations was the remediation and transformation of the Harrison Avenue Landfill, an 86-acre space owned by the Camden Redevelopment Agency (CRA) and located between the Delaware River and the Cramer Hill community.

Many public, private, and nonprofit entities have been involved in recreating the Harrison Avenue Landfill site. In 2014, the Salvation Army established the Ray and Joan Kroc Corps Community Center on 24 acres of the former landfill. In 2016, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection's (NJDEP) Office of Natural Resource Restoration (ONRR) announced a plan to formally close the landfill, to cap it, and to design and develop a 62-acre park using \$47 million in state Natural Resource Damages settlement funds and \$22 million of the state's Hazardous Discharge Site Remediation Fund dollars. Site preparation began in 2018, and the new Cramer Hill Waterfront Park is scheduled to open in April 2021.



The study visit focused on Camden's Cramer Hill neighborhood, where the city's largest park, Cramer Hill Waterfront Park, is scheduled to open in spring 2021.





**Cramer Hill Waterfront Park  
will present an unparalleled  
opportunity for Camden residents  
to connect with the Delaware and Cooper River  
waterfronts when it comes online in 2021.”**

**SARAH BRYANT**, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY INITIATIVES, COOPER'S FERRY PARTNERSHIP



## BACKGROUND

Cramer Hill Waterfront Park is designed primarily as a passive park—a park designed mainly for informal use—with views of downtown Camden and the Philadelphia skyline, as well as access to the Delaware and Cooper Rivers. The plan calls for wetland and habitat conservation areas, a fishing pond, pedestrian pathways, and limited on-site parking. The plan includes some amenities such as a kayak launch and a playground but does not include (or includes only in limited sections of the park) other amenities such as restrooms, water fountains, or electricity and lighting.

Despite significant funding for remediation, redesign, and construction, at the time of the national study visit no identified funding had been allocated to operating the park. The adjacent pedestrian access routes (Harrison Avenue and East State Street) were subject to frequent flooding during heavy rains and were uninviting and hazardous because of high-speed vehicular traffic and a lack of roadway improvement. Just before the study visit in February 2019, a 17-year-old was struck and killed at the intersection of Harrison Avenue and East State Street.

Displacement and gentrification are also relevant concerns. Philadelphia is just west across the Delaware River, and an easy and inexpensive train connection to downtown Camden creates the possibility of Philadelphia residents relocating to Camden's cheaper real estate. ULI's national study visit experts also heard that Cramer Hill residents are concerned about displacement because of a 2003 failed but highly unpopular (with residents) redevelopment that was planned in Cramer Hill using eminent domain.

## NATIONAL STUDY VISIT PROCESS

ULI's national study visits bring volunteer experts from across the country to a city or community to provide a set of recommendations for priority areas identified by local stakeholders. Experts are identified according to areas of expertise needed by the community.

For the 10 Minute Walk national study visits, the parks departments (or similar entity) and local ULI district councils are engaged in setting priorities and planning the visit. These fast-paced, three-day study visits include a briefing to the experts about the study area and questions to be addressed, a tour of local parks and neighborhoods, a set of interviews with stakeholders, and a public presentation of recommendations. Those recommendations serve as a guide to help each city create implementable and actionable plans and priorities for the parks departments to use while moving forward.



At the time of the study visit, Cramer Hill Waterfront Park was under construction. ULI experts toured the park on foot while learning about the site's history as a former landfill and observing the placement of key planned features, proximity to residential areas, and quality of access routes.







This plan will take patience, bold leadership, and courageous decisions. It's challenging, but we feel that you are on the rise.

**You are the City Invincible,  
and you will make it happen.”**

**GLEND A HOOD**, PRESIDENT, HOOD PARTNERS LLC



## NATIONAL STUDY VISIT ASSIGNMENT

In preparation for the 2021 opening of Cramer Hill Waterfront Park, Cooper's Ferry Partnership (CFP), an established Camden-based nonprofit community and economic development corporation, has been working with stakeholders to devise a plan for park operations, maintenance, and programming. CFP was involved in the 2009 Cramer Hill NOW! plan and is the manager of 10 other park projects throughout Camden (as a result of budgetary constraints, the city of Camden does not have a parks department; parks are maintained by the Department of Public Works). In October 2019, CFP invited ULI to study the Cramer Hill Waterfront Park as part of a national study visit by 10 Minute Walk.

The study site includes the surrounding Cramer Hill neighborhood. The neighborhood is a 1.25-square-mile area defined by the Delaware River to the north, Pennsauken Township to the east, Pavonia Yards (a large railroad facility) to the south, and the Cooper River to the west. Cramer Hill has 10,645 residents (14 percent of Camden's population), the vast majority of whom are Hispanic or African American. Although somewhat isolated from the rest of Camden by the rivers and automobile-centric roads, Cramer Hill is considered one of Camden's most stable neighborhoods as measured by vacancy, income, and unemployment.

During the national study visit, the experts provided strategic guidance related to short-term park operations, maintenance, and programming; infrastructure access routes to the park; and the long-term potential for Cramer Hill Waterfront Park to contribute toward Cramer Hill's and Camden's vitality.

CFP asked the experts to consider the following study questions when framing their recommendations:

- **Short-Term Park Management and Opportunities:**  
In a city of extremely limited resources, how can the future park be maintained, operated, and programmed in a cost-effective and efficient manner while maximizing the potential benefit of the space itself? How can this work start now to be ready for the park's opening and then build into long-term management strategies? Please consider partnership and community engagement opportunities as well as marketing of the park.
- **Short-Term Infrastructure Management and Opportunities:**  
What can Camden do in the next few years to create high-quality access points to the park for residents and visitors? What mitigation strategies can be incorporated into the park or nearby access routes that would address the negative impacts of Camden's weather-related infrastructure challenges (flooding, extreme heat, etc.) and would enhance the experience of park users?
- **Long-Term Park Management and Opportunities:**  
What can Camden do now to lay the foundation for the future financial success of the park and for residents in the surrounding neighborhood? What are the policies the city should implement in the next few years to ensure that the development of Cramer Hill Waterfront Park does not spur displacement of existing residents within the surrounding neighborhood?

During the course of the study visit, which occurred October 2–4, 2019, the panel of experts toured the Cramer Hill Waterfront Park site. They conducted interviews with 45 local stakeholders, including meeting with the mayor's office, city officials, county representatives, public safety officers, private developers, local nonprofits, philanthropic organizations, local residents, and community leaders. The experts considered the information assimilated and then created the enclosed recommendations for Cooper's Ferry Partnership and other stakeholders to consider.



OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The experts felt the excitement and dedication to “Camden Rising”—a city slogan and popular vision. Observing clean sidewalks and streets, community meeting signs, and many porch decorations during the site tour, the experts noted that Cramer Hill appeared to be a stable neighborhood that inspired pride. The experts heard a story during one stakeholder’s interview that encapsulated the city’s recent progress and resilience: the stakeholder shared that hearing children playing outside during the day is a welcome recent sign of change because for years prior, schools and parents rarely let children play outside because of safety concerns.

The experts also recognized the recent significant capital investments made in Camden (including for Cramer Hill Waterfront Park), the alignment among leadership at different levels of government, and the renewed interest

in Camden from private and philanthropic sectors in the region. The experts heard many stakeholders express excitement for the new park.

However, in addition to the challenges outlined in the study questions, the experts also noted some key considerations. The chief concern is that the ownership and responsibility for Cramer Hill Waterfront Park are not clear to residents or even to the primary stakeholders involved with transforming the former landfill site. The experts also observed that the absence of a master plan for parks and open spaces in the city and county of Camden could lead to inefficiencies and missed opportunities. Another concern is the limited potential of Cramer Hill Waterfront Park—as it is currently designed—to generate significant revenue that can be used to offset operations and maintenance costs.

KEY ACTION STEPS FOR CRAMER HILL WATERFRONT PARK

Immediate action (prepark opening)	Short-term action (zero to five years)	Long-term action (five to 10 years)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Identify champion.</li><li>• Create brand.</li><li>• Refresh master planning.</li><li>• Begin park activation.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Establish and coordinate governance.</li><li>• Institute partnerships.</li><li>• Host pilot programming.</li><li>• Create physical connections.</li><li>• Begin plan implementation.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Become a neighborhood asset.</li><li>• Operate with sustainable finances.</li><li>• Offer enhanced amenities.</li><li>• Contribute to regional parks partnerships.</li></ul>





Cramer Hill Waterfront Park should be part of  
the community, **and the community  
should be part of the park.”**

**BILL MAHAR**, SENIOR ASSOCIATE, NORRIS DESIGN



## RECOMMENDATIONS

To start to address those challenges and to capitalize on the strong work of the city and its partners to date, the experts proposed a planning framework with early governance, community engagement, and marketing that occur before the park opens during “year zero.” They also proposed that solidification of a governance structure, seed funding, and pilot programming be established in the short term (zero to five years after the park opens), plus a transition to sustained operations, amenity additions, and neighborhood benefits in the long term (five to 10 years).

The experts identified four cornerstones of success toward achieving the desired catalytic progress:

- 1. Create and capitalize on brand.**
- 2. Attract and connect the region.**
- 3. Create financial opportunities and adjacencies.**
- 4. Be a model of excellence with community benefits.**

The experts’ recommendations are intended to support success in those four areas.

The Cramer Hill neighborhood is one of Camden’s most diverse and stable areas. However, it is physically isolated from the rest of Camden, so there is a significant opportunity to improve connectivity to other neighborhoods and to the new park.



ULI

## 10 MINUTE WALK PLANNING GRANTS AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

As part of 10 Minute Walk, NRPA is leading year-long engagements with park and recreation departments from cities across the United States. NRPA is providing \$40,000 grants to support local efforts to incorporate 10-minute-walk park access as a sustained planning and funding priority. Grantees, which receive technical assistance from NRPA, TPL, and ULI, will work to accomplish the following:

- Establish and analyze baseline metrics for 10-minute-walk park access and park quality, ensuring that data and analysis include underrepresented populations.
- Identify priority areas and actions on the basis of findings from assessments.
- Create equitable citywide policies that support achievement of 10-minute-walk park access.
- Incorporate 10-minute-walk park access into citywide planning documents.
- Identify funding to sustain continued investment in parks, operations, programming, and connections.



Cramer Hill Waterfront Park will provide improved riverfront access and aquatic recreation options.







Cramer Hill Waterfront Park is in a startup mode;  
**work now with a bias toward  
action so this park can grow  
into its future.”**

**ALLISON SCHAPKER**, DIRECTOR OF CAPITAL PROJECTS, FAIRMOUNT PARK CONSERVANCY



## IMMEDIATE-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

For Cramer Hill Waterfront Park to be successful in the long term, the experts recommend that governance, community outreach, branding, marketing, and prepark activation begin immediately. The goal of the preopening period is to establish a “bridge” governance structure between the immediate and the long term. Although the lack of resources is a constraint, the experts believe the preopening year (2020) can be used to test different outreach, programming, and operations or maintenance strategies so resources can be allocated most effectively once the park opens. Thus, the experts encourage Cramer Hill Waterfront Park’s champion and stakeholders to celebrate every milestone of park construction—large and small—as part of marketing, community engagement, and fundraising.

The experts believe these are the tactics to achieve immediate-term goals:

- Maintain the perspective of progress, not perfection.
- Focus on implementing quick and inexpensive programming and infrastructure components.
- Establish seed money as a step toward long-term financial sustainability.
- Create micro-benefits for the Cramer Hill community.

To carry out these tactics, the experts believe the city must accomplish the following:

- **Immediately identify a park champion.** An influential institution or individual champion needs to be identified in order to begin activating the park, to continue community engagement, and to build connections for long-term governance and funding. Cooper’s Ferry Partnership and Mayor Frank Moran are already champions of Camden and open space, and the experts believe that they are well positioned to convene anchor institutions and government stakeholders to prioritize Cramer Hill Waterfront Park. The park champion will need to advocate for Cramer Hill Waterfront Park as a critical piece of Camden’s civic infrastructure that cannot be allowed to fail. Although critical for a park champion to lead the immediate-term work to establish Cramer Hill Waterfront Park, the experts envision the process as inherently collaborative, with many stakeholders sharing responsibility for different parts of the process.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Arrange for immediate park governance to bridge immediate and long-term governance needs.**

The experts do not believe that the park champion identified for the immediate term will need to continue as the leading entity once the park opens and a longer-term governance structure is established. Rather, the park champion needs to act as a bridge between immediate- and long-term governance. The experts recommend that the identified park champion lead a multiparty Letter of Agreement outlining responsibilities for a startup term of three years. Potential stakeholders include these:

- Camden Redevelopment Agency (CRA)
- City of Camden
- Camden County
- New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP)

- **Establish a new nonprofit organization to manage Cramer Hill Waterfront Park.** Led by the park champion, a new nonprofit organization should be established using the shared resources of Cooper's Ferry Partnership. The experts envision this nonprofit as a possible Cramer Hill Waterfront Park Conservancy. The potential conservancy would sign a long-term lease with CRA for the ability to operate, program, maintain, and generate revenue from Cramer Hill Waterfront Park. A potential Conservancy Board structure could include the following:

- Cooper's Ferry Partnership chief executive officer as board president (sponsor of national study visit)
- Mayor (stakeholder of national study visit)

- County freeholder
- Corporate partners (select stakeholders identified by national study visit)
- Anchor institutions (e.g., Kroc Center, Cooper Health, Rutgers University) (stakeholders identified during the select national study visit)
- Neighborhood advisers (stakeholders of select national study visit)

- **Raise or identify seed money or accomplish both.**

Managed by the newly created nonprofit, Cramer Hill Waterfront Park will need about \$500,000 annually in funding. The experts estimate \$500,000 would cover the maintenance and required environmental remediation and monitoring costs of Cramer Hill Waterfront Park, as well as the branding, marketing, and continued community engagement. As a step toward long-term financial sustainability, the experts recommend that about one-third of the \$500,000 be obtained from corporate sponsorship, one-third from philanthropic foundations and individuals, and one-third from government. Government contributions could include:

- City of Camden project management fees paid to the managing park entity
- In-kind work from Camden County for maintenance and operations
- Contribution from the NJDEP for continued monitoring and maintenance of the landfill cap, wetlands, and shoreline
- Support for risk management and insurance from the CRA





The park opens in 2021,  
**but it needs a champion  
today.”**

**OMAR GONZALEZ**, DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS, PLANNING, AND  
DEVELOPMENT, HEMISFAIR PARK AREA REDEVELOPMENT CORPORATION





When it comes to Cramer Hill Waterfront Park,  
the brand is the story of the neighborhood.

**It's about grit, resilience,  
and neighbors.”**

**JENNIFER KANALOS**, DIRECTOR OF BOARD ADMINISTRATION,  
DETROIT ECONOMIC GROWTH CORPORATION



- **Create a compelling identity and brand.** The experts recommend immediately beginning a branding and marketing campaign to improve connection with Cramer Hill residents and to create feelings of ownership toward Cramer Hill Waterfront Park. In the long term, residents' interest in and care for the space will contribute to site security, event success, and neighborhood benefits. It will also help make Cramer Hill Waterfront Park a destination that other entities will want to financially support and will pay to use. The experts recommend capitalizing on the parks' location adjacent to the Delaware and Cooper Rivers and showcasing the river access in signage, outreach, and social media. The experts encourage the managing park entity not to feel constrained in the branding process by what is still under development; many of today's successfully branded parks and cities began their identity campaigns before key pieces of the built environment had been completed. Several specific recommendations for marketing Cramer Hill Waterfront Park and connecting with residents include the following:
  - **Install public art or share information along the construction fence or accomplish both.** Information could convey the community participation opportunities, the construction schedule, and the planned park design. The fence installations should tell the story of the Cramer Hill neighborhood and the park.
  - **Create an active social media presence.** That presence will represent Cramer Hill Waterfront Park in addition to other outreach strategies.
  - **Establish a combined welcome center and community clubhouse.** This space can have regular office hours so residents will know where to go for information and will be staffed by the identified champion. The welcome center and community clubhouse can also act as a jumping off point for tours of the site as the park develops (and is feasible with construction-related safety concerns) and for celebrations of preopening day milestones. The experts suggest that the welcome center and community clubhouse be a converted and decorated construction trailer or similar structure that is low-cost and flexible.
  - **Install neighborhood wayfinding.** Install neighborhood-inspired wayfinding to communicate that an exciting new park will be opening and to draw residents to the site. Wayfinding elements could include signs providing the distance or travel time to the park, decorative crosswalks on streets lining the park, or small but eye-catching art installations that help to create a sense of place and purpose.
  - **Install a Cramer Hill beacon.** The planned 70-foot hill near the center of the park will be a magnificent vista, and the experts believe it creates a key branding and marketing opportunity even before opening day in 2021. Installing a notable and highly visible art structure (perhaps with colorful lights so it is visible at night), even if temporary, would support wayfinding, community engagement, and branding.
- **Begin a soft opening with community-generated pilot programming.** Beginning to host events at the Cramer Hill Waterfront Park site before opening day will assist with forging community connections to the park and will start to raise the park's value. Pilot programs will enable the park's managing entity to collect lessons learned about what sorts of activities are most successful and what future improvements are the most likely to generate revenue. The experts recommend that at least some activities be community-generated. The experts recommend that the newly formed nonprofit conservancy (or a similar entity) could allocate small grants to a Neighborhood Advisory Board to encourage and make possible community-led events.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Collaborate with established Camden programming experts.** A number of entities already deliver high-quality parks programming in and around Camden. The experts recommend creating connections with those organizations so they begin to think of and use Cramer Hill Waterfront Park as a site to deliver their services. One model for inspiration to consider is Summer Free for All in Portland, Oregon. Potential Camden-area partnerships include, but are not limited to, the following:
  - The Center for Aquatic Sciences
  - The Kroc Center
  - Audubon Society
  - City and County Schools
  - Outward Bound
  - Urban Boatworks
  - Upstream Alliance
  - Petty's Island Preserve
- **Begin corporate programming partnerships.** Brand-led events and activation are opportunities for funding or revenue and for beginning to establish Cramer Hill Waterfront Park as a sought-after destination. Potential models to follow or look to for inspiration include corporate work days (for example, Detroit's General Motors' River Days and REI's volunteer work days) and the beer and boat events at Bartram's Garden, which are sponsored by several breweries during Philadelphia's Beer Week. Corporate programming should be balanced with the earlier described and recommended community uses.

## PARK GOVERNANCE AND FUNDRAISING IN DETROIT

The startup strategies and governance structure that created and continue to maintain Detroit's historic and international riverfront are a potential model for Cramer Hill Waterfront Park. Several key partners including General Motors, the city of Detroit, and the Kresge Foundation collaborated to raise funds and to found the Detroit Riverfront Conservancy as a 501(c)(3) entity.

Fundraising efforts ranged from large philanthropic and business contributions to creative one-off strategies such as offering naming rights for brick pavers. The city provided riverfront land and significant infrastructure improvements; General Motors invested an additional \$25 million into its planned renovations including building the first half-mile of RiverWalk and then donating it to the conservancy, along with cash and in-kind support; and the Kresge Foundation provided \$50 million, its largest grant ever to a single project, which launched the conservancy's efforts and attracted additional major funding from other sources. Once formed, the conservancy set a fundraising goal of \$140 million.

The conservancy, which retains the improvement, operations, maintenance, and programming responsibilities for Detroit's riverfront, is governed by a 46-person cross-sector board of directors. Key to creating a successful community asset were the cross-sector approach including anchor institutions, community partners, and government partners, as well as the multisource fundraising efforts and emphasis on reflecting Detroit's history.






**Programming makes a  
park come alive** and makes  
people feel like it belongs to them.”

**ALLISON SCHAPKER**, DIRECTOR OF CAPITAL PROJECTS, FAIRMOUNT PARK CONSERVANCY





Think of the park as an economic opportunity center, like you would a community center.

**It's not just a place to visit;  
it can be a place for the  
community to do business.”**

**ART HENDRICKS**, EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE PROGRAM MANAGER,  
KING COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND PARKS



An aerial view of the study site, including the Ray and Joan Kroc Corps Community Center (foreground), the construction area to become Cramer Hill Waterfront Park, and the North Camden and Philadelphia skylines in the background.



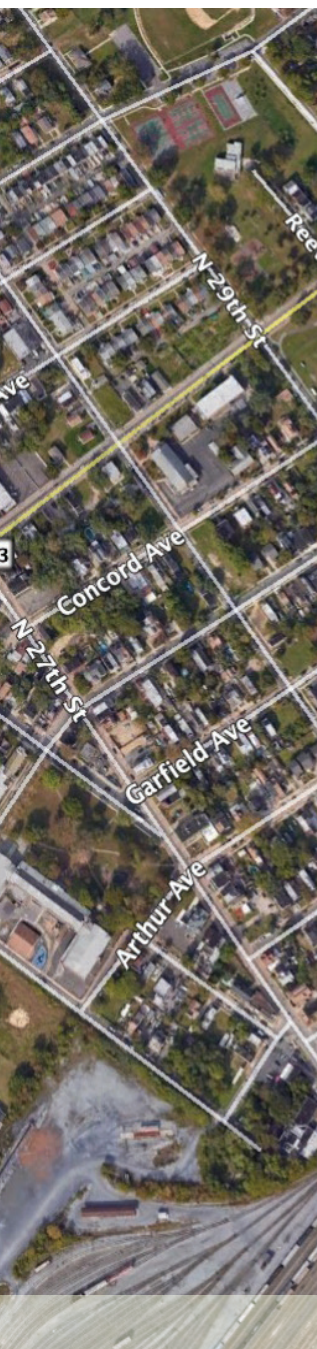
NEW JERSEY DEP



The 62-acre Cramer Hill Waterfront Park can be governed, programmed, and expanded to support Camden's progress.







GOOGLE EARTH

## SHORT-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS (ZERO TO FIVE YEARS)

When Cramer Hill Waterfront Park opens in April 2021, the experts recommend a shift from activation to establishment. During this time, the governance responsibility should shift from the identified bridge champion to the new nonprofit, conservancy-like organization. One of the new managing entity's main goals will be to diversify Cramer Hill Waterfront Park's funding sources, including beginning to consider earned-revenue opportunities.

The actions during the preparatory activation to create a feeling of connection to and ownership of the park will be critical to maintain and to continue as part of site security. The experts recommend combining safety and security strategies with economic development opportunities so that Cramer Hill Waterfront Park has both uniformed and ununiformed stewards. Similarly, it is also critical that physical connections between the park and the Cramer Hill neighborhood are established and improved during this period.


- **Improve and create welcoming access points to Cramer Hill Waterfront Park.** Ensure adequate and safe connections—particularly for pedestrian travel—and visibility to and from the park and its adjacent communities. Ideally, the streets and trails surrounding the park function as welcoming and safe “front doors” rather than as barriers. The experts recommend focusing on Harrison Avenue, East State Street, the regional Circuit Trail system, the Kroc Center, and public transit. Improved connections may include intersection improvements, wayfinding, traffic calming, and in-depth transportation analyses such as the following:
  - **Install traffic-calming measures along Harrison Avenue.** The experts observed and heard from stakeholders that Harrison Avenue is a speed trap with residences on the east side and the park to the west. In the short term, the experts recommend implementing several low-cost, high-impact strategies to naturally slow traffic by making the avenue more visually appealing (for example, planting street trees in addition to installing creative signage along the park's construction fence) and by emphasizing the existing road space that is dedicated to bicycle traffic by creating a painted bike lane.
  - **Explore future traffic-calming assistance opportunities.** The experts observed and heard from several stakeholders that active regional entities offer transportation planning grants and assistance, such as through the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC). The experts encourage the park champion or Cramer Hill Waterfront Park's eventual managing entity to actively pursue this type of opportunity in order to achieve a long-term goal of safe and complete streets leading to the park.
  - **Establish East State Street bridge as a gateway access point.** The experts observed that the East State Street pedestrian and bicycle-only bridge over the Cooper River that connects the Cramer Hill and North Camden neighborhoods is underused and is in close proximity to Cramer Hill Waterfront Park. The bridge could be activated and beautified to encourage more pedestrian visitors to Cramer Hill Waterfront Park, as well as to provide Cramer Hill residents a new Cooper River viewing point and new access to the adjacent North Camden neighborhood. Further, two underused lawn sections are directly after the bridge and traveling east toward Cramer Hill Waterfront Park; the experts believe this is an ideal spot to be activated, perhaps by a community garden or similar space.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Install pedestrian infrastructure interventions.** When the park is opened, the experts recommend continuing and expanding the wayfinding elements recommended for the immediate term. In addition to pedestrian interventions such as the painted bicycle lanes and artistic crosswalks, the experts believe that artistically designed roundabouts could help slow traffic and contribute to a positive neighborhood experience. Models to consider for inspiration include The Oval and Play Streets in Philadelphia.
- **Operate with a model of excellence to create community benefits.** Operate Cramer Hill Waterfront Park so that it is a means to economic opportunity, safety, and security for residents.
  - **Hire park rangers.** The experts recommend establishing a uniformed presence at Cramer Hill Waterfront Park once it opens to the public. Hiring park rangers from the local community will achieve multiple objectives. Park rangers literally act as patrolling boots on the ground in similar ways to police officers, deterring crime and ensuring park users adhere to park rules. Park rangers can be trained in park maintenance and can provide valuable feedback and expertise relevant to programming, marketing, community engagement, park advocacy, and long-term decision-making. Further, park rangers hired from the local community will ensure that Cramer Hill Waterfront Park is the direct source of at least some skill-building and job opportunities. Portland Parks and Recreation is one entity that has implemented this practice in more than 16 downtown city parks and has hired more than 25 park rangers to serve as goodwill ambassadors who provide information, help solve conflicts, and enforce park rules.<sup>1,2</sup>
- **Continue and expand community-led programming.** Planners can use lessons learned from the year zero pilot programs to encourage park visitation. They should continue to build activation partnerships (including with local schools) and should prioritize park events and programs that genuinely reflect Camden's unique story, neighborhood pride, and strategic location along two rivers.
- **Use Cramer Hill Waterfront Park as a community resilience asset.** The experts believe that parks and open space are assets during acute events and in times of chronic stress. Nationwide, parks are increasingly recognized as hazard mitigation strategies (for example, parks designed to retain stormwater, floodwaters, or both during extreme storms or to be cool places of refuge during extreme heat events) and as community gathering or emergency response staging areas. The city and county should evaluate Cramer Hill Waterfront Park for incorporation into emergency management plans.
- **Diversify funding and revenue sources.** The managing entity can use those funds to transition from seed money to financial stability. In addition to continuing to cultivate philanthropic and corporate grants and sponsorships, the park's managing entity should begin to consider opportunities from earned revenue (including leases, license agreements, concessions, and fees); from tax revenue (potentially special assessment revenue or from a tax increment finance [TIF] zone); and from additional government sources at the country, state, and federal levels. Government funding could continue to include grants, technical assistance, and potentially contracts (for example, fee-for-service agreements).





**Use the park as an asset for sustainability, emergency response, and community gathering spaces.**

Positive and pro-social activation of the park can bring a sense of safety and security to free police up to focus elsewhere.”

**ART HENDRICKS**, EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE PROGRAM MANAGER,  
KING COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND PARKS





NEW JERSEY DEP

## CRAMER HILL WATERFRONT PARK CONCEPTUAL PLAN



NEW JERSEY DEP

## CLIMATE-RESILIENT PARKS

Parks present an important opportunity to enhance climate and community resilience, as well as improve local quality of life, access to recreation, and public health. Parks and open spaces can mitigate stormwater and flood risks and can help manage extreme heat on a day-to-day basis. They can also double as flexible assets during times of stress by providing, for example, space to hold floodwaters; by serving as staging areas for incident response teams; and by becoming more secure community gathering spaces when other areas may be compromised.

Increasingly, parks are being designed to function as resilience hubs—sites that are created to be flexible in their design and purpose and that often have enhanced facilities in order to function each day as well as during disruptions and recoveries. In 2019, the Urban Sustainability Directors Network launched a website dedicated to sharing resources about and for the creation of resilience hubs. See [www.usdn.org/resilience-hubs.html](http://www.usdn.org/resilience-hubs.html).

The transformation of Cramer Hill Waterfront Park from a former landfill site involves shoreline protection, landfill closure, natural resource restoration, and park construction. ULI experts recommend that Camden expand the sustainable vision by exploring how the park can be used as a resilience asset.



## LONG-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS (FIVE TO 10 YEARS)

The experts believe that Cramer Hill Waterfront Park can be managed so that it becomes a neighborhood asset with sustained finances and enhanced amenities as part of a thriving regional parks system. Continuing a management plan based on national parks best practices, Cramer Hill Waterfront Park should be administered as an anchor open space in a series of citywide parks and trail connections. The master planning refresh completed in the earlier phases should guide strategic decision-making for Cramer Hill Waterfront Park and its integration into a parks network.

The city of Camden can implement a number of programs and policies to capitalize on the value of Cramer Hill Waterfront Park, to increase economic park benefits to the Cramer Hill residents, and to decrease the likelihood of displacement. Actions should focus on assisting existing residents and small businesses with maintaining or improving their properties or both, on creating jobs in the surrounding neighborhood, on strategically using vacant properties, and on considering some increased density along with a strategy for capturing and distributing that property value. Further, the experts recommend that the city consider opportunities in the neighboring Ablett Village and Centennial Village development and across the Cooper River in the North Camden neighborhood.

- **Demonstrate change.** Cramer Hill Waterfront Park is not a silver bullet that will reverse Camden's long period of decline; rather the park is a catalyst that can spur small changes that add economic and community value over time. Policies and programs that maintain, improve, and add affordable housing can support Cramer Hill residents in a similar way. The following are policy options that may help achieve those goals:

- **Residential property improvement and assistance strategies** can provide meaningful and lasting benefits for residents and can display a safe, welcoming neighborhood that supports park use. The experts recommend implementing a number of strategies to improve the residences surrounding the park, prevent displacement, and provide extra support to low-income and senior residents (as well as any other at-risk communities identified during the master planning updates). As part of a comprehensive program of community benefit work, the experts recommend considering the following options:
  - Provide low-interest loans and grants for interior home repairs or facade improvements.
  - Reassess zoning and density allowances, particularly to encourage additional affordable housing.
  - Establish mandatory affordable housing.
  - Introduce local jobs requirements.
  - Institute a real property tax freeze.
  - Allow homestead deductions.
  - Develop a vacant lot and land disposition strategy, including these potentially:
    - Consider imposing a higher tax rate on vacant property to incentivize owners to improve their properties sooner.
    - Eliminate or reduce open space requirements on some infill sites that are adjacent to or very nearby Cramer Hill Waterfront Park.
  - Create a refreshed development plan that considers the investments and changes since the 2009 Cramer Hill NOW! plan.





Nothing keeps a family in its home city like a  
**high-quality, accessible,  
and equitable park and  
good schools.”**

**CAMDEN RESIDENT**, NATIONAL STUDY VISIT STAKEHOLDER  
DURING THE FINAL PRESENTATION



- **Commercial property improvement and assistance strategies** can further Camden's economic development, can create opportunities for Cramer Hill and city residents, and can encourage paid use of the park. The experts recommend considering the following:
  - Improve commercial facades.
  - Create a Main Streets district.
  - Establish a business association or business improvement district.
  - Freeze real property taxes.
  - Fund technical assistance grants.
- **Expand the boundary.** The expansion should result in community collaboration, coordination, and value capture on a multineighborhood scale.
  - The Joint Neighborhood Development and Transportation Plan should include Cramer Hill and the adjacent North Camden neighborhood.
  - Any plan should include acquisition and disposition of underused sites.
  - A Special Assessment District should fund park operations and fund neighborhood infrastructure improvements.
- **Increase the value and desirability of Cramer Hill Waterfront Park.** In the long term, the experts believe that Cramer Hill Waterfront Park will be more successful—financially and in terms of the services and experience it can provide park users—if it is a

popular destination with revenue-generating opportunities. Key to this recommendation is the understanding that it is possible to maintain the integrity of the landfill cap while building on top of it. Further, the experts learned during the study visit process that not all of the site included in the current park design was formerly landfill; a small section along the park's southern side was adjacent to but not part of the Harrison Avenue Landfill and may present fewer construction challenges.


- **Build on top of the cap to add amenities.** The experts suggest adding an eco-pavilion that would house outdoor equipment sales and rentals, environmental education classrooms, meeting spaces, and restrooms. In addition, the experts recommend adding flexible entertainment infrastructure near the site of the planned amphitheater with security, wi-fi, and utility (water, power, and sewer) enhancements.
- **Establish a regional bicycle trail connection.** The planned Circuit Trail network is an access point and an asset for Cramer Hill Waterfront Park. The experts recommend prioritizing a connection to the trail network, which can then link Cramer Hill Waterfront Park to Camden's other green spaces as well as to open spaces and trails in other parts of New Jersey and Philadelphia. Thoughtful and community-informed design of the trail connection will ensure a continued balance of uses in Cramer Hill Waterfront Park and will mitigate stakeholder concerns about high-speed bicycles interfering with slower pedestrian enjoyment of the park.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Create water-based connections and education.**  
The Delaware and Cooper Rivers are significant and unique assets that can connect park users with attractions elsewhere in Camden and Philadelphia. The experts recommend evaluating several motorized and nonmotorized boat access options as well as multiple landing and designation sites (such as Perry's Island, marinas, commercial centers, and other parks). For hydrologic connections to be successful, the experts believe that Cramer Hill Waterfront Park's water infrastructure needs to be built concurrently with others (that is, water connections are more likely to be successful if users feel they have destination options). The experts also advise that the park balance the increased water access with appropriate levels of liability protection and water safety and swimming education.
- **Leverage public land inventory with regional parks partnerships and master planning.** The experts observed that Camden is a land-rich city with a significant amount of valuable waterfront space. They advise that Camden undertake and regularly update master plan documents that specify a vision for coordinated use of land within the city and county.
- **Develop a master plan for parks and open space.**  
The experts view Cramer Hill Waterfront Park as an anchor institution that (as in most U.S. park systems) can provide a significant proportion of revenue that is shared with other parks in the system. The experts also recognize that the city of Camden and Cooper's Ferry Partnership have brought online a number of new green and open spaces and that the entire park system will be more successful if each park space is uniquely marketed and activated as part of a whole.
- **Capture value from opportunities in the park network and on the river.** The master-planning process should ensure that there is a coordinated, balanced, and citywide beneficial use of land along the waterfront. Strategic planning can also ensure that value created along the riverfront is allocated for and distributed to parks systemwide.
- **Explore shared-space agreements.** One successful model of parks operations and activation is when several entities (typically nonprofits running community and revenue-generating programs) jointly share space at a park. The study's shared-site models can periodically evaluate if a "commons" strategy would be beneficial for Cramer Hill Waterfront Park or other locations in the Camden park system. Two examples to consider for best practices are the Discovery Center in Philadelphia and The Intertwine in Portland, Oregon.





**A passive park doesn't  
require much maintenance,**  
but small moves can make an active park  
that can fund that maintenance.”

**ROB SLOOP**, DIRECTOR OF WATERFRONT DESTINATIONS, MOFFATT & NICHOL





To maintain long-term viability,

**we have to make sure  
Cramer Hill Waterfront  
Park has value.”**

**ROB SLOOP**, DIRECTOR OF WATERFRONT DESTINATIONS, MOFFATT & NICHOL



## CAMDEN SNAPSHOT, 2019



Crime at a 50-year low

**\$3.0B**

Capital investment



Lowest average annual  
unemployment rate in 28 years

**\$106M**

Park investment



K-12 graduation rate increased from  
49% to 69% (2012-2019)



10,000 people engaged in  
Connect the Lots program



### PARK MODELS TO CONSIDER

Many parks' plans include a range of programming and provisions for community benefits including the types of low upfront cost activities, economic development, and antidisplacement strategies suggested by the ULI experts for the Cramer Hill Waterfront Park and neighborhood.

#### Programming

Examples of relevant programming models to consider include these:

- **We Walk PHL** is a free-walking group in Philadelphia that meets several times a week in various public parks during several designated eight- and six-week seasons. Launched in 2017, this is a pilot program and is currently a successful one. Three main partners collaborated to launch the program and recruit community members to lead the walks. Walks are advertised on social media as well as on the organizing partners' websites.
- **Slow Roll Detroit** is an all-levels bike ride that meets every Monday evening to enjoy a different route through Detroit. Initially a grassroots effort, the Slow Roll is operated by a nonprofit organization dedicated to

promoting cycling in partnership with the city of Detroit and the Detroit Police Department. Summertime peak rides have drawn more than 2,000 participants for a single event. In 2014, Apple famously featured Slow Roll in an iPad commercial.

- Corporate Workdays is a tried-and-true option for fundraising, activating, and maintaining parks. Fees paid by corporate partners typically cover the park or conservancy staff time and resources that are necessary to organize and execute the volunteer days.

#### Community Benefits

The Equity Plan developed for the planned 11th Street Bridge Park in Washington, D.C., includes strategies for maximizing community benefits outside the park boundaries, which is the ultimate goal for Cramer Hill Waterfront Park. The Equity Plan focuses on four key areas: workforce development, small business enterprises, housing, and arts and culture. The ULI experts recommend that the Cramer Hill Waterfront Park's managing entity evaluate what ideas from this equity plan are applicable to Camden.



### PRIORITY NEXT STEPS FOR CRAMER HILL WATERFRONT PARK

The experts agreed that the city of Camden, Camden County, Cooper's Ferry Partnership, and other partners have successfully created new parks in recent years that contribute toward Camden's goal of improving infrastructure and raising quality of life for Camden residents. The experts also observed a high level of enthusiasm for the next addition to Camden's park system, Cramer Hill Waterfront Park, and they believe that this park can be governed, programmed, and expanded to support Camden's positive progress.

The action items that ULI experts recommend here are based on best park practices from around the United States and are aligned with the feedback shared by the 45 stakeholders who participated in this national study visit. Tasked with evaluating the short-term management and infrastructure opportunities, as well as considering the long-term community benefits that Cramer Hill Waterfront Park can provide, the experts believe it is imperative that a park champion be identified as soon as possible to ensure the park's long-term success. Further, the experts encourage park stakeholders to celebrate every milestone of park establishment and to use those small victories to build on larger ones.

The experts also believe that proactive and sustained community engagement is a vital strategy for Cramer Hill Waterfront Park. Community engagement with and enjoyment of the park is a positive feedback loop. It ensures that Cramer Hill Waterfront Park is a valued community asset that can attract programming partnerships, monetary, and in-kind contributions, which will then allow for the sustained management of the park as well as creation of amenities that benefit park users. Further, community engagement is vital to ensure that current residents have and continue to control an influential voice in Camden's revitalization as it pertains to the Cramer Hill neighborhood. Community-generated programming, local hiring programs, small business support, and other recommendations included here formalize avenues by which residents can be park users as well as decision-makers.



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



COOPER'S FERRY PARTNERSHIP



COOPER'S FERRY PARTNERSHIP



COOPER'S FERRY PARTNERSHIP

Camden residents enjoy the playground equipment after a \$1.4 million renovation of Fourth and Washington Park in Camden's Lanning Square neighborhood, just south of the city center.



**ON BEHALF OF THE URBAN LAND INSTITUTE,**  
the panel of experts would like to thank Cooper's Ferry Partnership for inviting the team to Camden to examine the potential successful future and contributions of Cramer Hill Waterfront Park.

This study visit would not have been possible without the support of Mayor Frank Moran, a signatory to 10 Minute Walk. A special thank you goes to Sarah Bryant, director of community initiatives at Cooper's Ferry Partnership, for her support before and during the study visit.

The national experts would also like to thank the more than 45 residents, business and community leaders, and stakeholders from across Camden, South New Jersey, and the Philadelphia region who shared their perspectives, experiences, and insights.

Finally, ULI is grateful to The JPB Foundation for its generous support of 10 Minute Walk.

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Stuart Tomlinson, “Everyday Heroes: Portland Parks Ranger Program Soars under Vicente Harrison’s Leadership,” KATU, January 18, 2019, <https://katu.com/news/local/everyday-heroes-portland-parks-ranger-program-soars-under-vicente-harrisons-leadership>.

<sup>2</sup> City of Portland, “Portland Park Rangers,” 2019, [www.portlandoregon.gov/parks/58086](http://www.portlandoregon.gov/parks/58086).



The Ben Franklin Bridge and Philadelphia skyline as seen from Cramer Hill Waterfront Park.  
Community-generated programming and economic development programs near the park will help ensure that it becomes a genuine community space for Cramer Hill residents as well as a widely appreciated regional asset.





