

PLACES



Parks



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Volume 15, Number 3

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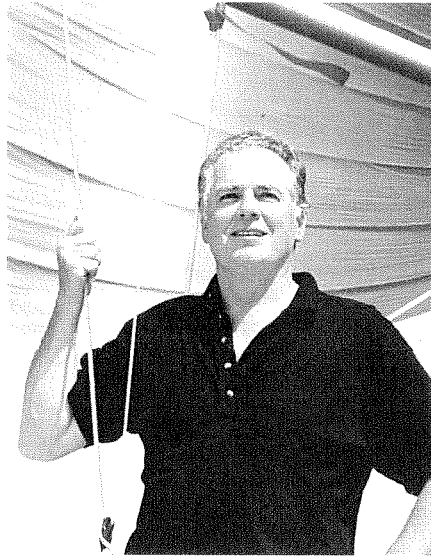
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In the fall of 1989 we published Volume 6, Number 1 of *Places*, on “The Future of Urban Open Spaces.” It was the first issue of the magazine published under the direction of James Fulton — a fine issue, sparkling with a new cover design, a revised layout, and reinvigorated content. At the time, Jim made the continuation of *Places* possible not only through his wisdom and experience in publishing and through the contributions of staff from his design office, Fulton & Partners, and from *ID* magazine, but through the adoption of our goals as a mission for the Design History Foundation, which he chaired.

It has been a splendid period in the life of this journal, and we have all gained enormously from his steady vision and graceful, generous administration. As a friend and colleague he was incomparable — steady, always positive, always attentive; calm and directed. Working with Jim also brought us to Pratt Institute, and the development of an enduring relationship with that fine institution. For nearly thirty-five years Jim served on Pratt’s Board of Trustees, many of them as Chair. He was recently honored with its Rowena Reed Kostellow award.

Some time ago, Jim turned the active role of publisher of *Places* over to others, but he continued to lead the Design History Foundation. In that role, he formed the spine of our organization, providing support, encouragement, and decisive guidance whenever we needed him . . . which was often. It is with utter grief that we must now report his passing. He died April 29, 2003, in Charlestown, RI, in the house that he built so that he and his wife, Priscilla Lambert, could live by the shore.

We dedicate the journal to his vision, and to the memory of his grace.

Contributors

Robin F. Bachin is the Charlton W. Tebeau Assistant Professor of History at the University of Miami, Florida. She is the author of *Building the South Side: Urban Space and Civic Culture in Chicago 1890-1919* (University of Chicago Press, forthcoming).

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Richard M. Daley was elected Mayor of the City of Chicago April 4, 1989.

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Enrique Peñalosa was Mayor of Bogotá from January 1, 1997, to December 31, 2000.

Cervin Robinson is the photography editor of *Places*. He is the author with Joel Herschman of *Architecture Transformed: A History of the Photography of Buildings from 1839 to the Present* [Architectural League of New York and MIT Press, 1987].

Will Rogers is President of the Trust for Public Land, a national land conservation organization with headquarters in San Francisco. Before joining TPL in 1991, he worked as an urban real estate developer, and prior to that was a commercial beekeeper.

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150 Years of Central Park

1850

1853 : New York State passes the Central Park Act authorizing the acquisition of land between Fifth and Eighth Avenues, from 59th to 106th Street.

1856 : The City of New York acquires the site and adopts a plan by Egbert Viele, who had been hired as Chief Engineer of the Park.

1857 : Frederick Law Olmsted is hired as Superintendent of the Park. Following criticism of Viele's plan, the city announces a competition for the design of the park. (1)

Olmsted is approached by architect Calvert Vaux to collaborate on a design, and their submission, titled the "Greensward," is selected as the winning entry.

1860

1862 : The park's first privately-funded concert is sponsored by the city's railway companies to boost ridership.

1863 : The park is extended through purchase of the rocky, essentially undevelopable land from 106th to 110th Streets.

1864 : Sheep arrive in the sheep meadow. The sheep graze on the lawn until 1934 when they are evicted and moved to Prospect Park in Brooklyn. (2)

1865 : Olmsted and Vaux are hired to design Prospect Park in Brooklyn, their first major city park commission since Central Park.

1868 : Olmsted and Vaux complete work on Brooklyn's Prospect Park, and begin an era of collaboration on city parks across the country. (3)

1869 : The first cultural institution to be located in the park, the Museum of Natural History, opens in the basement of the Arsenal at 66th Street and Fifth Avenue.

1870

1873 : The construction of Central Park is completed to 110th Street.

The park's perimeter wall is completed.

1877 : The Museum of Natural History moves to its present location on the west side of park, at 77th Street and Central Park West.

1880

1880 : The Metropolitan Museum of Art opens in Central Park at 82nd Street and Fifth Avenue.

1890

1892 : A harbinger of preservation battles to come: a "race track" for light carriages, planned for the west side of the park, is defeated on the basis that it is inconsistent with the park's purpose and character.

1898 : The Central Park Conservatory opens at Fifth Avenue and 104th Street. (6)

1899 : First permit is granted for an automobile to drive through Central Park.

1900

1908 : Romeo and Juliet, produced by the Vitagraph Company of America, is the first motion picture shot in Central Park. (7)

1910

1919 : U.S. Weather Bureau moves its data station to Belvedere Castle. (8)

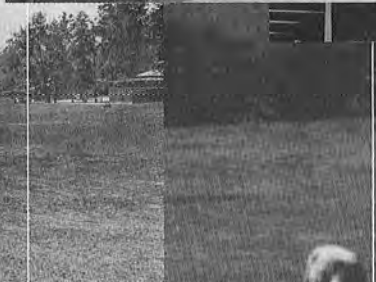
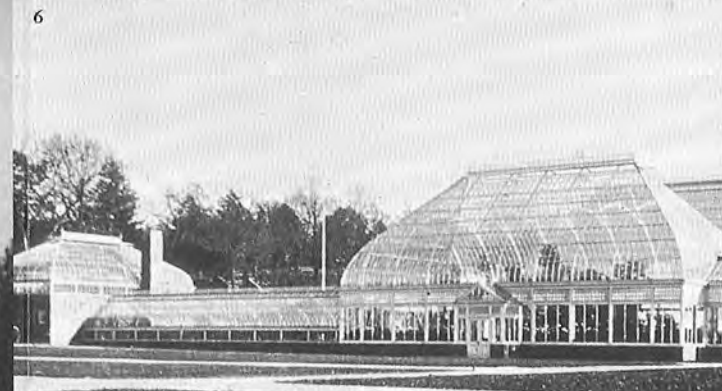
1920

1925 : A sculpture is commissioned to honor Balto, a sled dog, who was part of a team that traveled through an Alaskan blizzard to deliver an antitoxin needed to halt a diphtheria epidemic—an episode that riveted New Yorkers. Balto is the most requested statue in Central Park. (9)

1926 : Heckscher Playground, the park's first, opens. (10)



6



1930

1931 : The Reservoir is drained, and controversy grows over use the site.

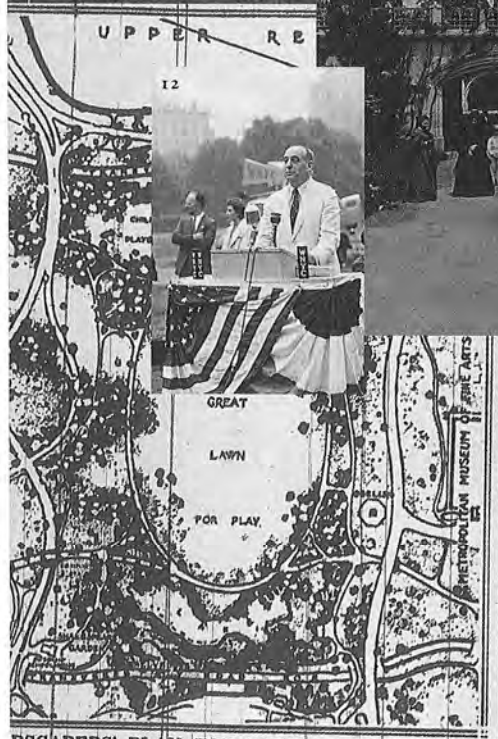
1934 : Robert Moses is appointed Parks Commissioner. Moses adopts the ASLA's Great Lawn design. (12)

Sheep are evicted from sheep meadow to Prospect Park in Brooklyn.

1936 : Robert Moses builds twenty playgrounds around the perimeter of Central Park.

1937 : The Great Lawn is built. 13

The Conservatory Garden is completed following the demolition of the Conservatory in 1934.



1940

1940 : Marble Arch and other notable park landmarks are destroyed in an effort to make the park more accessible to automobiles. (13)

1949 : Kate Wollman donates \$600,000 to build a skating rink in the park. Wollman Rink opens in 1950, one of the first examples of a donor attaching their name to a facility. (14)

1950

1956 : Plans for a parking lot next to Tavern on the Green are protested by angry mothers who stand in front of the bulldozers with their baby carriages. "The Battle of Central Park," covered widely in the press, ultimately forces a concession from Moses and marks the beginning of the end of his reign.

1959 : An Alice in Wonderland sculpture is commissioned by philanthropist George Delacorte. (15)

1960

1960 : The U.S. Weather Service, which had occupied Belvedere Castle since 1919, leaves the Castle. Vandals move in. (16)

1962 : New York Philharmonic Orchestra performs first concert on Central Park's Sheep Meadow.

1965 : In the wake of the destruction of New York's Penn Station, Central Park is declared a National Historic Landmark.

1967 : Anti-war march on the United Nations, led by Dr. Martin Luther King, begins in Central Park.

1966 : Mayor John Lindsay closes the park drives to automobile traffic on weekends, beginning a policy of limiting car traffic in the park that continues today.

1967 : Barbra Streisand concert, the first large popular concert in the park, is aired on television on September 16, 1968, as "A Happening in Central Park."

1969 : The Moon landing is televised on the Sheep Meadow.

1970

1970 : New York City's first marathon is held in Central Park. For the first six years, the marathon is run entirely in the park. It is extended throughout the five boroughs in 1976 for the U.S. bicentennial. (17)

1976 : Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan declares Central Park a "national disgrace" and proposes that it be taken over by the National Park Service.

1974 : Central Park is declared a Scenic Landmark by the City of New York.

1979 : James Taylor concert draws thousands to the Sheep Meadow. Portions of the proceeds are donated to a revitalization fund.

1980

1980 : The Central Park Conservancy is founded, and Elizabeth Barlow Rogers is appointed the first administrator of Central Park. (19)

John Lennon is killed in front of his apartment building, The Dakota, on Central Park West at 72nd Street. Yoko Ono makes a gift to the Conservancy for the creation of Strawberry Fields, across from the Dakota, in his memory. (20)

1981 : The Sheep Meadow, the first major landscape reconstructed by the Conservancy, reopens. (21)

Simon and Garfunkel reunion concert in Central Park draws approximately 500,000.

1982 : Two million people descend upon the park to protest nuclear power in the largest demonstration in American history.

1989 : The Conservancy receives a gift of \$17 million, the largest gift ever made to a municipal park, which comes with the condition that it be matched by both the Conservancy and the city. 20

1990

1992 : Red tail hawks build a nest and mate in Central Park.

1993 : The Charles A. Dana Discovery Center opens, signifying a commitment to equal investment in the northern portion of the park and partnership with the Harlem community. (22)

1998 : The Conservancy signs a management contract with the city, formalizing its role and responsibility as steward of the park. (23)

Photo credits

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2, 4, 5, 6, 13 — Herbert Mitchell Collection.

3 — Prospect Park Archive.

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9, 16, 17, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24 — Sara Cedar Miller, Central Park Conservancy.

10, 12, 14 — New York City Parks Photo Archive.

15 — Project for Public Spaces.

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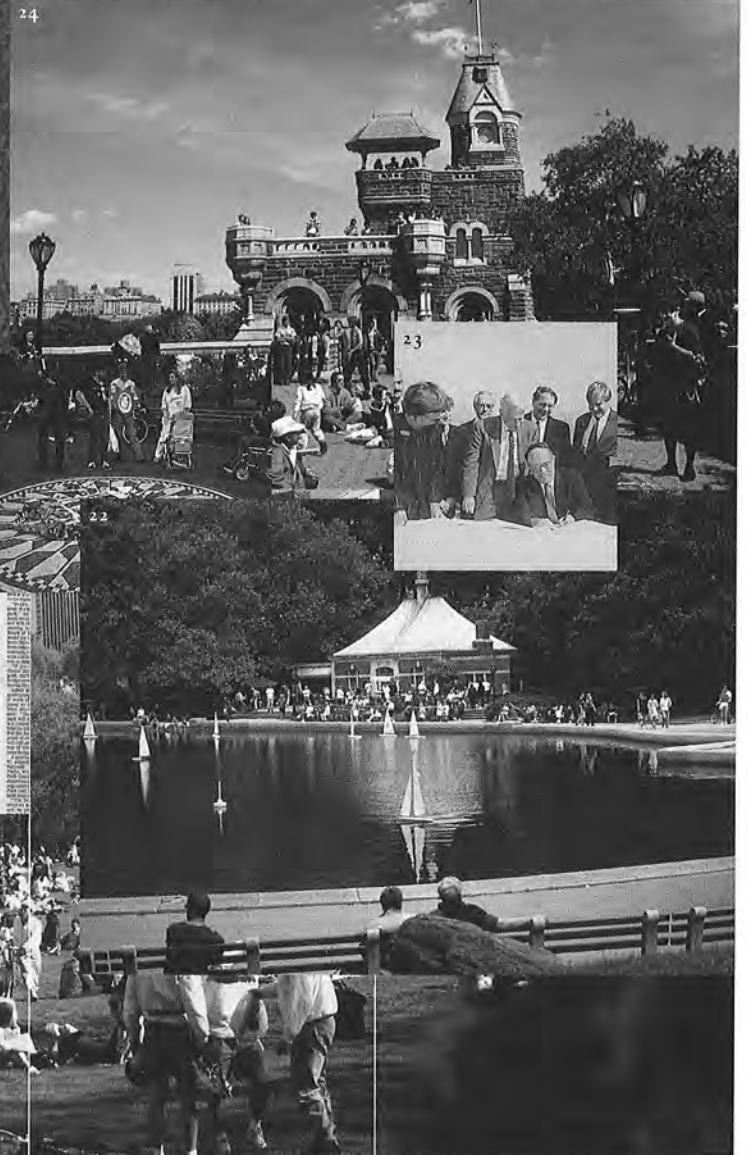
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22



GSA's Security Strategy

The process we follow with any one of our client agencies is, first of all, to conduct a security assessment or to determine the level of threat that applies to a given building. This is based on several factors, the most important of which is the number of federal employees in the building. If there are more than 450 employees, then in most cases it is rated at security level four or higher.

In addition, if an agency is a very high-visibility law enforcement related organization, such as the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (which was the target in Oklahoma City), it could also be level of security four even if there were less than 450 employees at the site.

Then we assess the kinds of threats that are presented at each individual building. For example, if a building faces a long street that ends at a T-intersection just in front of it, then the risk of a vehicle bomb coming down that long street and building up a head of steam and ramming into the building is higher than if the building were on the corner of a four-way intersection.

Once we complete that assessment, we take three different types of measures. If it's an existing building, we limit ourselves to two issues. One is operational. We want to monitor access to the building, put in magnetometers, X-ray machines, security guards, maybe television cameras. We might, if there is public parking, inspect the undercarriages of cars entering the garage.

The second is perimeter security. What we were trying to do, before NCPC moved forward with this plan, was to articulate the value of trying to find architecturally compatible perimeter security to install on our around our buildings. Obviously,



that's expensive. It depends on appropriations, and we cannot always move as fast as we would like. In the interim, we may have to install less attractive, temporary barriers.

Finally, if we are undertaking a major renovation of an existing building, or constructing a new building from scratch, we could engage in activities like building hardening, protecting against progressive collapse, or reglazing the windows so they don't shatter and send shards of glass flying into the building.

Now there is the problem of security creep. We've been doing this since 1995, but until Sept. 11 some agencies did not take security issues that seriously. Now employees say, "Well, the people next door have barriers, why don't we have barriers?" even though we might conclude that a building has no threat from a vehicle bomb and doesn't need barriers. Bat-

tles sometimes arise between agencies and GSA about whether an agency needs the security it claims it needs.

The most significant aspect of the NCPC plan is that it deals with the already-built environment. That is where you have problems that are not amenable to new construction achieving the perimeter security requirements, unless you're narrowing the street, widening the sidewalk, things of that sort. You have to make do with less than our guidelines would suggest. So how do you make do in an attractive way? That's the question the plan tries to answer.

—Michael S. McGill

Michael S. McGill is a senior project manager for the GSA Public Buildings Service in the National Capital Region, and is the GSA Administrator's representative to the NCPC.



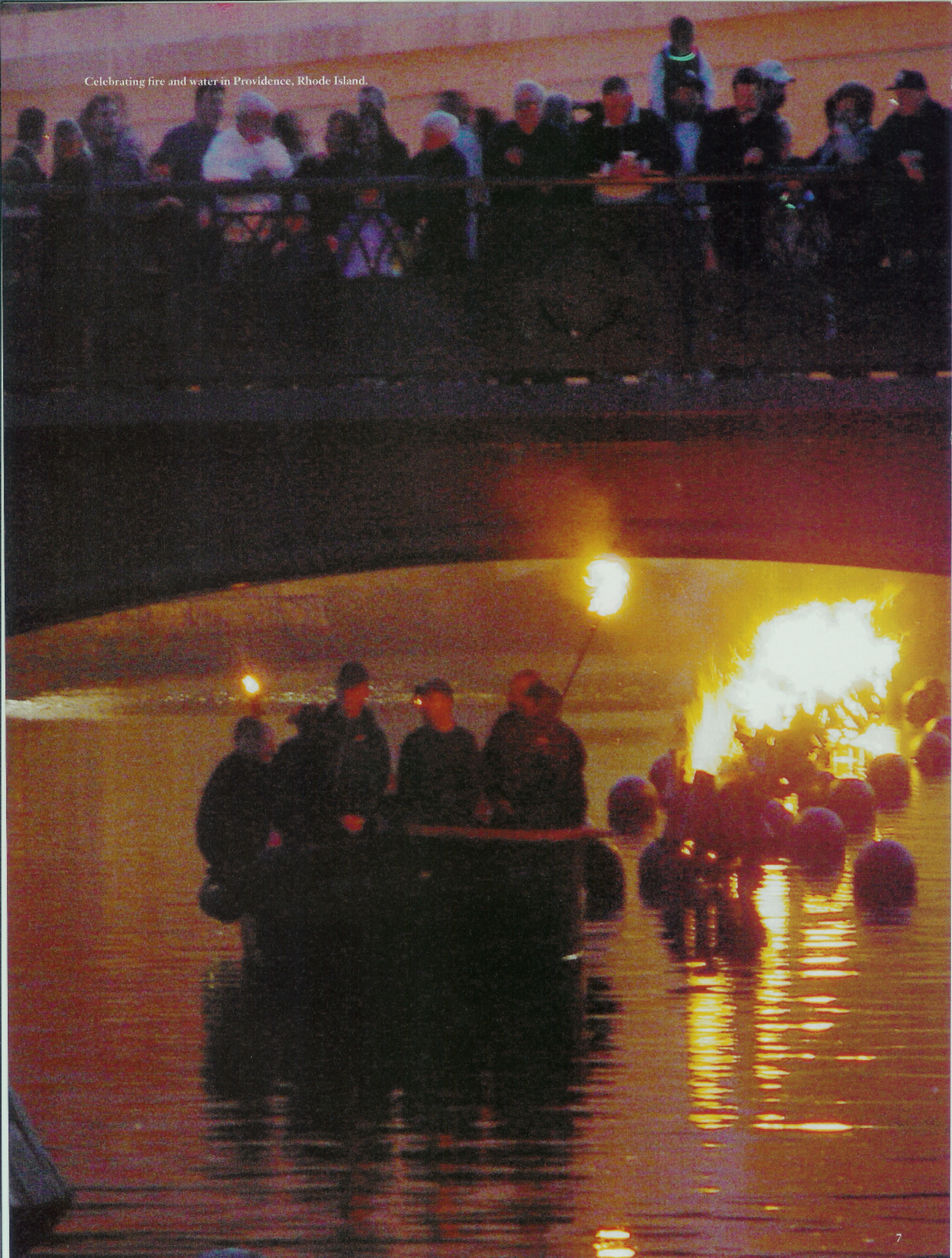
Relaxing in the Luxembourg Gardens, Paris, France.



Guitar playing in Washington Square Park, New York.



Celebrating fire and water in Providence, Rhode Island.



Performing at the Autumn Fest, Columbus, Ohio.

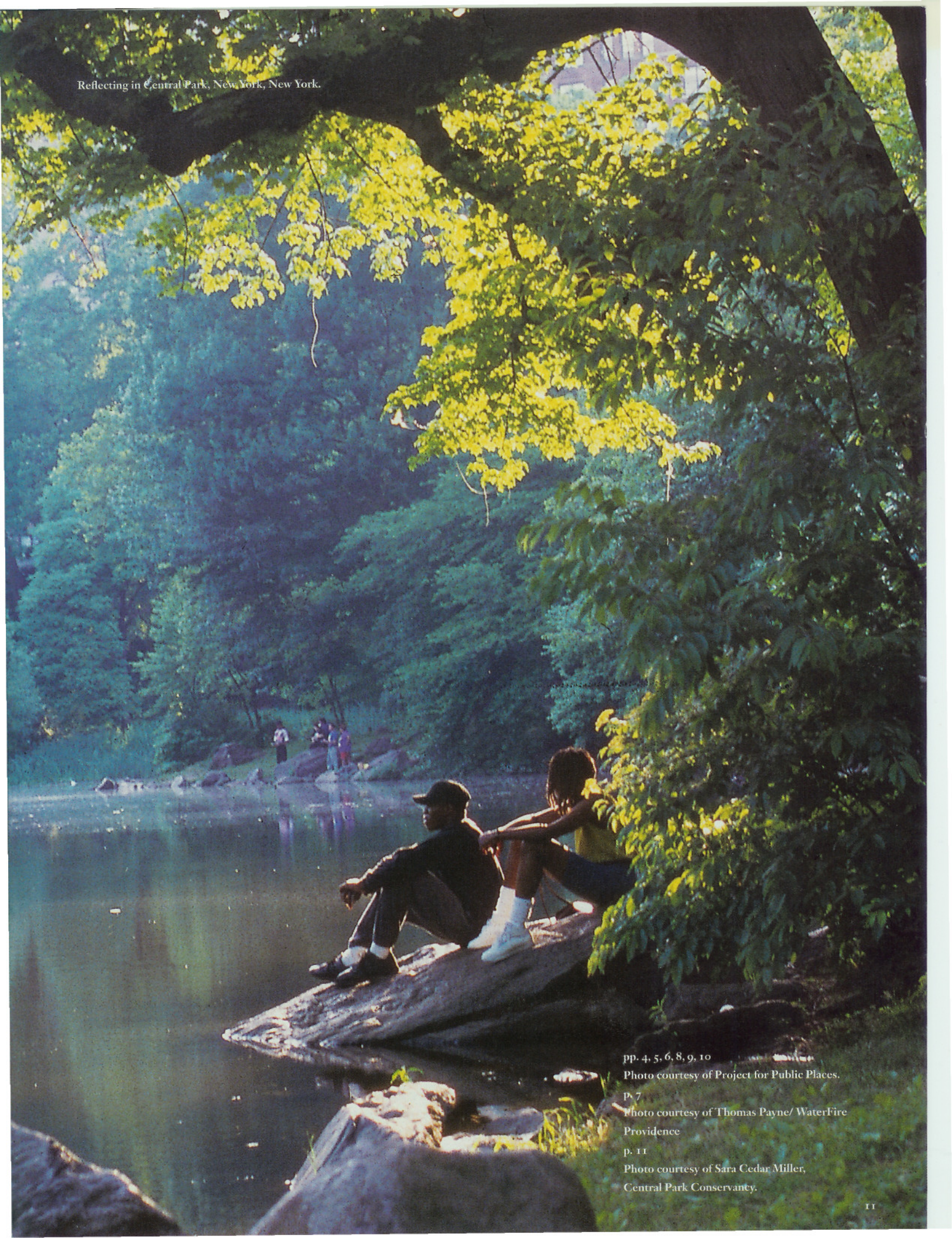


Full-size chess playing in Stockholm, Sweden.



Discussing in Playa Reyes, Seville, Spain.





Reflecting in Central Park, New York, New York.

pp. 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10

Photo courtesy of Project for Public Places.

p. 7

Photo courtesy of Thomas Payne/ WaterFire
Providence

p. 11

Photo courtesy of Sara Cedar Miller,
Central Park Conservancy.

Cultivating Unity: The Changing Role of Parks in Urban America

Robin F. Bachin

An urban park is useful in proportion as it is rural. The real, the only reason why a great park should be made, is to bring the country into the town, and make it possible for the inhabitants of crowded cities to enjoy the calm and restfulness which only a rural landscape and rural surroundings can give . . . all other objects must, in a great park, be subordinated to the one central, controlling idea of rural repose, which space alone can give.

—Charles Sprague Sargent, 1888¹

Charles Sprague Sargent's vision for the value of urban parks reflected some of the guiding principles that shaped park development in America in the middle of the nineteenth century. He highlighted the strong connection in American life between nature, quiet reflection, and civic virtue. The agrarian origins of the nation meant that American leaders, most notably Thomas Jefferson, linked a rural landscape with the very foundations of republicanism and democracy. According to Jefferson, political autonomy and concern for the public good emerged from the process of working the land and being an independent landowner. Therefore, a decentralized agrarian nation composed of yeoman farmers represented the best hope for fostering a virtuous republic. Yet while these agrarian ideals often translated into an anti-urban sensibility, they more often led to the integration of natural elements into town and city development.²

Indeed, America's earliest commercial centers incorporated open spaces into their plans. The squares of Savannah and Philadelphia, for example, provided sites for public gathering, and became places of social as well as commercial interaction among colonial-era residents. The Boston Common began as a pasture for sheep and cows in the seventeenth century, and soon became a site for militia drills, baseball games, open-air meetings, and festivals. The designation of these spaces as "parks" only appeared in the nineteenth century, with the new movement to design such public areas in a "natural" manner. As a model for such new urban parks, American landscape gardeners looked to the precedent of the British pastoral landscape, which was carefully designed to showcase "the natural" and to disguise the human role in shaping it. American parks, then, brought together the tradition of formal landscape design with the recognition of open spaces as sites of public gathering and recreation.³

A significant number of factors that shaped nineteenth-century park design also inform current discussions about American parks. For the last 150 years, park planners and advocates have highlighted a variety of functions parks could serve in shaping urban landscapes. These include

parks as an antidote to urban ills; parks as places of active recreation; parks as vehicles for promoting public health and sanitation; and parks as regional commodities and sites of shared civic identity. While the language used to discuss the significance of parks in American cities has changed over time, many of the conceptual issues and challenges park designers face have remained remarkably the same.

This article explores the history of urban park development in America to understand the foundations of park planning, but also to suggest ways that historical precedent might inform contemporary practice. By understanding the value planners and advocates have associated with urban parks in the past, today's park planners and civic activists may find strategies and goals that resonate with current audiences, politicians, and civic boosters.

Parks as Antidote to Urban Ills

The widespread development of urban parks in America in the middle of the nineteenth century reflected the nation's changing ideas about nature. The notion of the naturalist landscape as the basis for American park design, advocated by prominent park planners such as Andrew Jackson Downing and Frederick Law Olmsted, emerged at a time when many Americans were calling into question the meaning of nature and its function in American history. On the East Coast at least, rural life became romanticized in the middle of the nineteenth century in part because it was disappearing. With the growth of commercial farming, the rise of a market economy, and the movement from farm to factory, agriculture was losing its place as the defining feature of the American economy and culture. There was also the sense that the frontier as a defining feature of American life was "closing."⁴

With nature no longer associated with hard work and farming, it became romanticized as a lost world of republican values. Landscape painting became a dominant art form in this period, reflecting this nostalgia for a lost world. Painters like Thomas Cole celebrated "rural nature" as "an unfailing fountain of intellectual enjoyment where all may drink & be awakened to a deeper feeling of the works of genius & a deeper perception of the beauty of our existence."⁵

By the 1860s and 1870s many Americans began to see nature and the city not as antithetical to one another, but rather as complementary features of what historian David Schuyler has called a "new urban landscape." Park promoters, physicians, religious leaders, and social reformers

Opposite: Serenity and tranquility in urban parks. Washington Park in Chicago in the late nineteenth century. Photo courtesy of the Chicago Park District.



saw the benefits of combining the morality and spiritual uplift they associated with nature, and the refining influence of cultural institutions in cities. Urban parks would serve as an antidote to the disorder and materialism of city life. These reformers, then, drew a strong connection between morality, social order, and the physical shape of the city.

Many park proponents envisioned the park as the complete antithesis of the city, highlighting nature and subordinating the manmade to fully achieve moral and spiritual harmony with nature. Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux's Central Park in New York City was the first major attempt to bring the natural landscape into the city and remove the "contaminating" influences of the urban environment. Olmsted and Vaux's Greensward Plan brought a piece of the country into the city to serve the spiritual and psychological needs of city residents. In doing so, it made use of such design devices as extensive lagoons, curvilinear paths, and native shrubbery and tree plantings.

Olmsted wrote that the beauty of the park "should be the beauty of the fields, the meadow, the prairie, of the green pastures and the still waters. What we want to gain is tranquillity [sic] and rest to the mind."⁶ Yet untamed nature did not represent Olmsted's vision of the proper design for urban parks. Instead, he argued that nature had to be carefully constructed in order to foster the experience of tranquillity. Olmsted believed in "the restorative

qualities of nature" to bring about this social order and harmony. For Olmsted, the "contemplation of natural scenes of an impressive character" helped overcome the stresses of modern city life.⁷ Where the grid plan of New York was designed for efficiency and commercial growth, the curvilinear paths of Central Park shaped places for quiet contemplation and reflection. Simply by experiencing the order and tranquility of properly designed parks, argued park proponents, city residents would ascribe to an urban vision of civility that transcended the immediate park experience.⁸

Parks as Sites of Active Recreation

Yet quiet contemplation was not the only feature of urban park development. Many critics of large urban parks argued that these spaces did not serve the explicit needs of local communities and neighborhoods. Residents of crowded wards wanted public parks and playgrounds to meet their social and recreational needs, as well as to provide open spaces to relieve overcrowding and unhealthful conditions. Critics also argued that sites for active recreation, especially for children, were essential features of cities. Chicago reformer Jane Addams captured this concern with recreational play space when she touted the achievements of the playground movement at the turn of the century:



If there is to be any conflict as to which use shall be made of the land, there is no doubt at all in my mind that it should be decided in favor of the playgrounds. The adults can get almost as much good out of playgrounds as the children, while the children cannot get the good from the parks. If the grass and trees are to be carefully preserved the children must still be made to play in the streets.⁹

Addams explicitly rejected Sargent's notion that urban parks necessarily should be rural and promote quiet contemplation. Instead, her call for playgrounds reflected a growing movement among urban reformers to recognize the benefits of strenuous activity. Psychologist G. Stanley Hall, who linked the importance of play to advances in social psychology, was extremely influential in the playground movement. His recapitulation theory stressed the role of play in childhood development, arguing that as people advance through stages of life, they recapitulate the evolutionary development of the species. In this regard, play enabled children to replicate precivilized activities that aided cognitive development and moral character formation.

Other reformers highlighted the importance of play in the lives of children from the perspective of concerns over delinquency. Many playground advocates like Hall equated "wholesome" recreation with outdoor activity, especially in park spaces overseen by trained supervisors who helped

structure the experience. By providing parks and playgrounds, cities could combat the lure of "illicit" entertainment and counter the spread of juvenile delinquency.¹⁰ According to one politician, establishing "that environment which produces sound bodies and clean habits" would solve "the crime problem which confronts every large city."¹¹

Of course, the design of neighborhood parks differed significantly from that of large-scale parks. Neighborhood parks typically were rectangular, working with the existing plat plan of the city rather than subverting it. Because they were designed to promote active recreation rather than quiet contemplation, they usually featured symmetrical plans that differentiated the functions of each section from the others. Many small urban parks included swimming pools, wading pools, outdoor play apparatus, and large playing fields. They often also included a fieldhouse, composed of separate men's and women's gymnasias, reading rooms, a library, and a community meeting hall. Such buildings highlighted the larger civic role these parks were intended to play in bringing neighborhood residents together for shared activity and dialogue. Like earlier advocates, then, those who promoted small neighborhood parks saw parks as arenas of civic engagement; they just

Above: Neighborhood parks as sites of active recreation. Mark White Square, Chicago, circa 1910. Photo courtesy of the Chicago Park District.

differed in their views of how to promote that engagement, and what the best design options were for facilitating it.¹²

Parks, Sanitation, and Public Health

Scientific problem-solving also played a role in shaping the movement for parks in urban America. By the turn of the twentieth century, reformers and park advocates highlighted how parks might alleviate conditions of overcrowding, lack of ventilation, and improper sanitation that plagued urban America. This emphasis on reshaping the urban environment as a means of improving sanitary as well as social conditions resulted from the emergence of ecology as a science. Chemist Ellen Swallow Richards, among others, helped shape the notion of “human ecology,” which linked conditions faced by humans to their natural surroundings. Richards connected the study of human environments directly to efforts to improve sanitary conditions in cities. And she called for “municipal housekeeping” as a vehicle for urban residents, especially women, to promote sanitation in the city by cleaning streets, managing garbage and waste, alleviating the smoke nuisance, and promoting park development.¹³

The emerging field of sociology went even further by highlighting how changes in the urban environment could foster broader social reform. Sociologists believed that by scientifically observing urban life, they could understand the social, economic, and cultural factors shaping society, and formulate methods for social improvement. Progressive-era social scientists and urban reformers used density studies, crime statistics, and mortality assessments to identify the locations of the worst urban conditions. By mapping the physical geography of the city, reformers could identify areas of “pathology” and attempt to ameliorate their problems through management of the urban environment. Physicians, sociologists and politicians saw parks as one antidote to unhealthful cities. If parks served as the “lungs of the city,” investment in more such spaces throughout the city could improve the health of urban inhabitants.¹⁴

Moreover, many landscape designers linked the promotion of natural resource conservation directly with the promotion of parks in cities. Jens Jensen, for example, recognized the toll rapid urban growth was taking on the land and called for efforts to preserve it. Through these efforts to preserve the native forests and vegetation in developing urban areas, Jensen and other conservationists hoped to teach Americans to appreciate their regional landscapes. Urban park designers were also attracted to some of the ideas of forester Bernhard Fernow and conservationist George Perkins Marsh, who argued

that natural areas should be preserved for future generations, not exploited for the immediate gain of the few.¹⁵

Parks as Regional Commodities and Sites of Shared Civic Identity

In the first decades of the twentieth century park development also flourished in urban America as a way to sell cities. The rise of the City Beautiful movement at the turn of the century illustrated how commercial interests and civic concerns could go hand in hand. Municipal governments increasingly worked with merchants clubs and local improvement organizations to introduce comprehensive beautification plans on a regional scale. According to architect and planner Daniel Burnham, “Beauty has always paid better than any other commodity and always will.”¹⁶ For Burnham, beauty and financial prosperity were intimately linked. Beautifying American cities, argued Burnham, would attract visitors, promote the efficient flow of goods, and enhance the civic life of the city.

Parks were an essential feature of these beautification projects. Public parks became icons of cities, imprinting them with physical spaces that reflected the unique environmental and naturalistic features purported to connect the culture of a city to its locale. Parks fostered a sense of place and left indelible marks on visitors, who took away with them a lasting image of distinct urban environments. Well-designed parks became regional commodities that promoted tourism and economic growth by virtue of the unique qualities they contributed to the urban landscape. Boston’s Emerald Necklace, the Benjamin Franklin Parkway in Philadelphia, the Mall in Washington, D.C.: these are all spaces that help define and give shape to their respective cities. World-class public parks came to be seen as a reflection of civic-mindedness and a testament to the degree to which a city valued the public good.

The process of setting aside park spaces in cities historically has reflected the provision civic leaders made for shared gathering and social interaction among residents. According to many advocates, the park was a site where boundaries separating groups could be erased. Coming together for shared experiences, whether quiet contemplation, recreational activity, or large public festivals, allowed a city’s population to see itself as united, to have a shared vision of civic identity. Frederick Law Olmsted, for example, believed parks could be places that fostered interaction among various classes of urban dwellers. This is why the promenade was such a central feature in all of his designs:



[The promenade] is an open-air gathering for the purpose of easy, friendly, unceremonious greetings, for the enjoyment of change of scene, of cheerful and exhilarating sights and sounds, and of various good cheer; to which the people of a town, of all classes, harmoniously resort on equal terms, as to all common property.¹⁷

Here, the inequalities so glaring in other parts of the city could fade away. The park provided a shared leisure space around which a vision of urban order and harmony could be structured.¹⁸

While Olmsted's view represented an idealized and hierarchical notion of how parks function, it nonetheless suggested important ways in which parks could foster a sense of shared civic identity by bringing people together in a central public space. This shared civic space allowed different ethnic groups to make use of local parks to express their heritage and traditions, but it also offered a place in which ethnic difference could be overcome. Daniel Burnham made this point to a group of businessmen in Chicago in the 1890s. "When a citizen is made to feel the beauty of nature," he argued, "when he is lifted up by her to any degree above the usual life of his thoughts and feelings, the state of which he is a part is benefited thereby. [Park planning] goes a long step toward cementing together the heterogeneous elements of our population."¹⁹

Burnham, like Olmsted, focused on the goal of unity as a central function of parks in cities. More recently, park

planners and urban activists have highlighted the recognition and celebration of diversity that urban parks make possible. In cities across the country, a variety of groups have used public parks to stage parades, heritage celebrations, rallies, and protests as a means of expressing their sense of ethnic, racial, religious, and sexual identity. Of course, park spaces (along with other sites of urban congregation such as public transit and marketplaces) have also become contested areas, where ethnic and racial tension may spark conflict and violence. Yet the ideal is that public parkland has made it possible for diverse groups within a city to lay common claim to land invested with civic symbolism. Creating and maintaining parks as essential features of the urban landscape not only added naturalistic and aesthetic dimensions to urban America, park planning also signaled the importance of shaping spaces of civic interaction that had the potential to transcend class, ethnic, and racial difference.

Trends Today

All of these aspects of park history are relevant to current discussions about the future of urban parks in America. They can be places of serene natural beauty; sources for improving public health, recreation opportunities, and

Above: Qi Kung and tai chi on the Mall in Washington, D.C., 1999.

Photo by author.

fitness; world-class attractions imprinting cities with distinctive signatures; and great civic spaces fostering shared community interaction and public engagement among the rich ethnic cultures that shape our cities. Yet park planners, designers, and grassroots advocates face difficult hurdles in preserving, restoring, and shaping urban parks.

While some cities, such as Boston, San Francisco, Portland, and Milwaukee, have invested in large-scale park planning projects, many more have witnessed the erosion of fiscal support for the maintenance, preservation, and creation of public parks.²⁰ Moreover, some city residents (as others have through history) today find their access to so-called public parks severely restricted. The creation of “bum-proof” benches designed to keep the homeless from sleeping in parks, increased surveillance using remote technologies, and the development of private parks in gated communities have all forced park advocates and urban planners to address the changing relationship between parks and public space.

As urban growth and commercial development continue to put pressure on public resources in American communities, politicians, commercial leaders, and civic boosters might do well to look back at the park planning that took place 150 years ago and consider all it has done to enhance our national landscape, sense of place, and commitment to civic engagement.

Notes

1. Charles Sprague Sargent, “Prospect Park,” *Garden and Forest* 1 (July 4, 1888), pp. 217–18. Sargent was the director of Harvard University’s Arnold Arboretum and one of the founders, along with Frederick Law Olmsted, of *Garden and Forest* magazine.
2. Thomas Jefferson, “Notes on the State of Virginia,” in Merrill D. Peterson, ed., *The Portable Thomas Jefferson* (New York: Viking Press, 195), p. 217.
3. For further discussion of the formal and vernacular traditions of parks, see John Brinckerhoff Jackson, “The Origins of Parks,” in *Discovering the Vernacular Landscape* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), pp. 127–30.
4. See Frederick Jackson Turner, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History,” in *The Frontier in American History* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1920).
5. Thomas Cole, as quoted in David Schuyler, *The New Urban Landscape: The Redefinition of City Form in Nineteenth-Century America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), p. 32.
6. Frederick Law Olmsted, “Public Parks and the Enlargement of Towns,” *Journal of Social Science*, no. 3 (1871), p. 23.
7. Quoted in Anne Whiston Spirn, “Constructing Nature: The Legacy of Frederick Law Olmsted,” in William Cronon, ed., *Uncommon Ground: Retinking the Human Place in Nature* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1996), p. 93.
8. For further discussion of Victorian notions of park design and moral uplift, see Thomas Bender, *Toward an Urban Vision: Ideas and Institutions in Nineteenth-Century America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975); Paul Boyer, *Urban Masses and Moral Order in America, 1820–1920* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978); Galen Cranz, *The Politics of Park Design* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1982); Roy Rosenzweig and Elizabeth Blackmar, *The Park and the People: A History of Central Park* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992); Schuyler, *The New Urban Landscape*; and David M. Scobey, *Empire City: The Making and Meaning of the New York City Landscape* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press 2002).
9. *Chicago Record-Herald*, June 1, 1902, Lincoln Park Commission Newspaper Clippings, Chicago Park District Special Collections.
10. Sophonisba P. Breckenridge and Edith Abbott, *The Delinquent Child and the Home* (New York: Charities Publication Committee, 1912), p. 157.
11. Galesburg, Illinois *Register*, July 27, 1903. South Park District Clipping Files, Chicago Park District Special Collections.
12. For further discussion of small parks as sites of active recreation and civic engagement, see Rosenzweig and Blackmar, *The Park and the People*; and Robin F. Bachin, *Building the South Side: Urban Space and Civic Culture in Chicago, 1890–1919* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, forthcoming).
13. See David Lowenthal, *George Perkins Marsh, Prophet of Conservation* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000); Carolyn Merchant, *The Columbia Guide to American Environmental History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002); John Opie, *Nature’s Nation: An Environmental History of the United States* (Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace, 1998); and Ted Steinberg, *Down to Earth: Nature’s Role in American History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).
14. John H. Rauch, *Public Parks: Their Effect Upon the Moral, Physical, and Sanitary Condition of the Inhabitants of Large Cities; With Special Reference to Chicago* (Chicago: S.C. Griggs, 1869), p. 6.
15. Robert E. Grese, *Jens Jensen: Maker of Natural Parks and Gardens* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992).
16. Daniel H. Burnham, “The Commercial Value of Beauty,” reprinted in Charles Moore, *Daniel H. Burnham: Architect, Planner of Cities* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1968), pp. 101–2.
17. Olmsted, Vaux and Company, *Preliminary Report Upon the Proposed Suburban Village of Riverside, near Chicago* (New York: Sutton, Browne, 1868), p. 12.
18. See David Scobey, “Anatomy of the Promenade: The Politics of Bourgeois Sociability in Nineteenth-Century New York,” *Social History* 17 (May 1992), 203–27.
19. Quoted in Daniel H. Burnham and Edward H. Bennett, *Plan of Chicago* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1993 [1909]).
20. For further discussion of current efforts at park planning and its role in enhancing urban environments, see Arnold R. Alanen and Robert Z. Melnick, eds., *Preserving Cultural Landscapes in America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000); Paul S. Grogan and Tony Proscio, *Comeback Cities: A Blueprint for Urban Neighborhood Revival* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2000); and Richard Moe and Carter Wilkie, *Changing Places: Rebuilding Community in the Age of Sprawl* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1997).

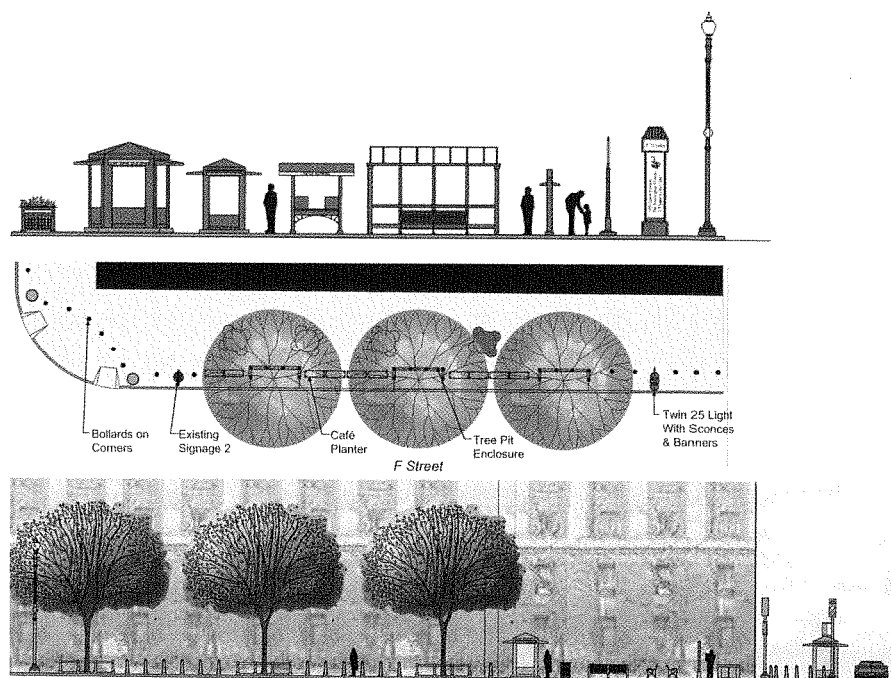
Security Design: From Streetscape to the Bigger Picture

Everybody seems to have security envy these days; the level of security your agency or building receives has come to be a status symbol.

I do applaud the Urban Design and Security Plan, because NCPC and its design consultants have taken an extraordinary step forward in addressing a fundamental issue in the nation's capital. This should be the place that reflects democracy, it should be beautiful and open. So it is that much more sad and pathetic when, with every security alert, more and more barriers and bollards come out. Nothing is temporary, I've learned; everything winds up being permanent, and these devices mar the landscape.

Having said that, many of the challenges we face in the city's Office of Planning start where the study leaves off. The study is concerned about zones three to five; well, what happens in zones one and two? The challenges we face include setback issues, parking and vehicular access. Downtown, and in the other neighborhoods in which the federal government is looking to site its facilities, these issues have a profound impact on the life of the city, its streets, its vibrancy.

Of course, we would like to have beautiful streets and beautiful building perimeters. But if you don't have transparency and ground-floor retail, if you have to close streets that approach your building, if you have to have setbacks of fifty feet or more, if you are restricted in the kinds of uses you have in buildings, then this starts to affect what your city is like. We have to get into the issue of the building itself, and not let more and more security requirements lead us to point where the fundamental form of the city is distorted.



We see this tension every day in the District. We want to keep agency headquarters and the federal presence in our city; it has been an important source of employment and economic stimulus. At the same time we're seeing more and more restrictions coming in place that could be inimical to that goal.

This is particularly true as the federal government has sited new buildings in emerging areas of the city, along our waterfront or adjacent to downtown, places where we want to grow. Those projects can be catalysts, but as the federal government starts to impose stricter and stricter security requirements, it starts to close itself off. Its buildings are becoming internally, rather than externally, focused in terms of how they relate to other buildings, to the area in which it they are located, to the District.

The federal Department of Transportation headquarters is an interesting example. It is a major headquarters that will relocate to an emerging area of our city, the South-

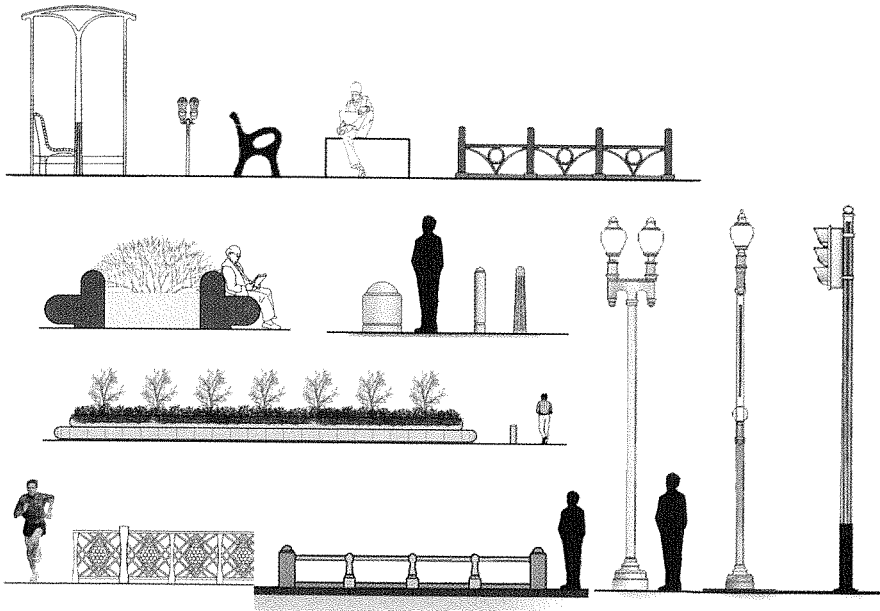
east waterfront. It could have a very catalytic effect in that area. Before Sept. 11, it looked like there would be an opportunity to have retail on the ground floor of the building, to have a street come through for vehicular access, and for openness in terms of the ground floor, so it really would fit into the district. These ideas have been clamped down more and more, with restrictions on vehicular access and retail.

We're seeing this not only with federal buildings, but also with major private institutions that feel threatened, for whatever reason, and feel that they need to emulate federal security requirements. In many cases, this becomes a nonconversation. It becomes an expert opinion that is

Above: Proposed streetscape, with street trees and hardened streetscape elements.

Opposite: Elements that could seamlessly incorporate building perimeter security into a beautifully designed streetscape.

All graphics courtesy of National Capital Planning Commission.



irrefutable and non-negotiable; that you would challenge this is to suggest, in some way, that you are insensitive or unpatriotic.

Nevertheless, we have to open up this box, because it is a box that is no longer as contained as it may have once been, and it's going to have a profound effect on the cityscape. Cities are going to have to gear up for this, learn about the issues and work with the federal government to find solutions so that we're not shutting down the city at the same time we are trying to be a democratic society. I'm grateful that the National Capital Planning Commission has started to challenge these basic assumptions. This study takes a great step forward, but we can't be satisfied.

— Andrew Altman

Andrew Altman is executive director of the Washington, D.C., Office of Planning.

Gallagher: Should we be trying to keep these headquarters in the city? What are the challenges you face with new headquarters projects?

Altman: Throughout the history of Washington, after the British attack in 1814, after the Civil War, during the Cold War, there was an impulse for decentralization. The cry would be: "We have to move out of Washington! We have to leave the city, move federal buildings out, relocate somewhere in the Midwest!" You are seeing that impulse today. "Here's the threat, the District isn't safe, we have to move further out." And today we have the added complication that suburban vacancy rates are very high, which means they're attractive as well, so you can have your security and your economics work together.

My response is that we shouldn't throw in the towel. To admit defeat at this point, to say yes, just move out, would be the wrong message. Just as other waves of this phenomenon have come and gone, we need to face this and find a more creative response.

My advice is, don't accept everything you hear as fact. Challenge what you hear, even if it comes from the GSA or the NCPC. There are arguments now being made in the guise of security, and we just have to challenge that. I'm convinced these issues can be reconciled in the city; the NCPC plan deals with reconciling one set of issues, and there is clearly another set of issues we have to deal with. Ultimately, these concerns are reconcilable. They are not an excuse to leave the city, particularly as you have strong executive orders that say federal buildings should try to locate in central cities.

Make sure, whatever you do, that it is reversible. Don't build permanently closed buildings and permanently closed districts. You have to take a longer view than the immediate security issue before you. Buildings should not be designed in a way that precludes the possibility of having retail in the long run, or transparency, or open parking. Don't allow streets of the grid to be closed, even if they don't have vehicular access for the time being. We have to make sure that we don't do permanent damage to the urban environment.

Be proactive. You need to think through, if you're trying to attract a federal building, or the expansion of federal facilities, what is your plan? What is it that you want to see in these particular areas? That gives you the ammunition to say: "Here's what we want in this area. You're a part of a district, you don't sit in a vacuum. This is what we're trying to create, how can you be a part of it?" Get on top of that now, don't wait for it to hit you over the head.

McGill: For the Department of Transportation headquarters, which Andy referenced, you can argue that the glass is either half empty or half full. The building is going into the Southeast Federal Center (SEFC),

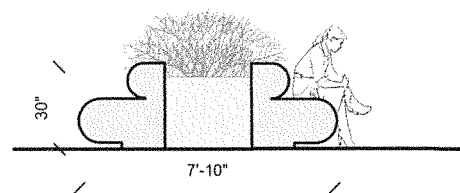
a 55-acre site that has been dormant for the last thirty-six years. Right now, all the streets in that area are closed to the general public. There's a brick wall, about eight feet high, that stretches along the entire length of the SEFC, as well as the Navy Yard next door. (See "Catalyzing a Waterfront Neighborhood," *Places* 13:3) We're going to open up the SEFC. We're going to extend the borders of downtown Washington by putting DOT there, then develop the remaining 44 acres as a mixed-use project, which is innovative for us. Instead of being a federal enclave, as a GSA plan in called for in 1992, it's going to be a mixed-use development that will connect to the waterfront, open the street and tear down that wall.

This is a "build-to-suit" leased building, and DOT has its requirements. The agency is willing to reopen the segment of Third Street that passes through their site, but close it to vehicular traffic; it could be opened to traffic in the future. The developer, the JBG Companies, is building the ground floor so retail space can be added later, should that be allowed.

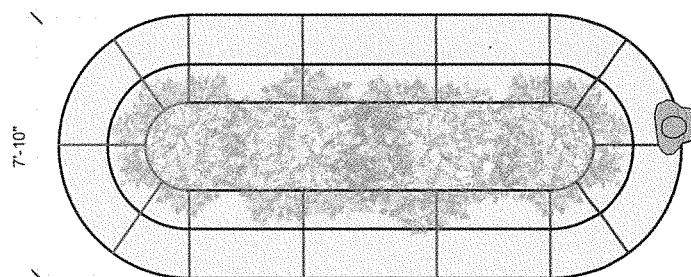
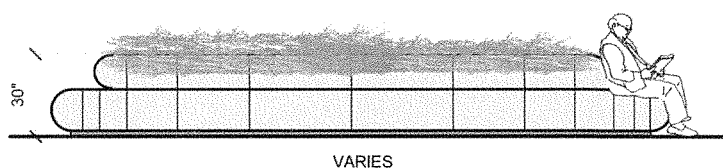
There are certain places right now where we can't do everything, given the threat environment in which we live. But we can try to make what we do reversible, or so attractive that it's not a negative influence.

Krieger: This is coming, not just to public buildings but also to private buildings, and cities should be aware of that before trying to approve, on a building-by-building basis, curbside measures that will hardly aggrandize the street environment.

In fact, as we look around the country, particularly at iconic or prominent buildings, the private sector is acting more quickly than the federal government, and it is acting with fewer of these insights.



PLANTING DESIGNED FOR SEASONAL CHANGE AND COLOR
CUBIC STONE OR PRE-CAST CONCRETE



And it is saying, you can't stop us, because it's a matter of life and death.

When city agencies are confronted with an owner wanting to do this around an office building, they must have a response that prevents the most uninteresting cheap, inexpensive, common barrier to be put up around a building. Cities have to think about developing their own strategies or guidelines about how the private sector, mostly in downtown areas, will achieve security measures.

Question from the floor: Have you looked at what cities abroad are doing? What lessons can we learn from them?

Krieger: One of the lessons that's not often talked about is that you can overdo it. Where do you stop securing yourself in the public environment? If

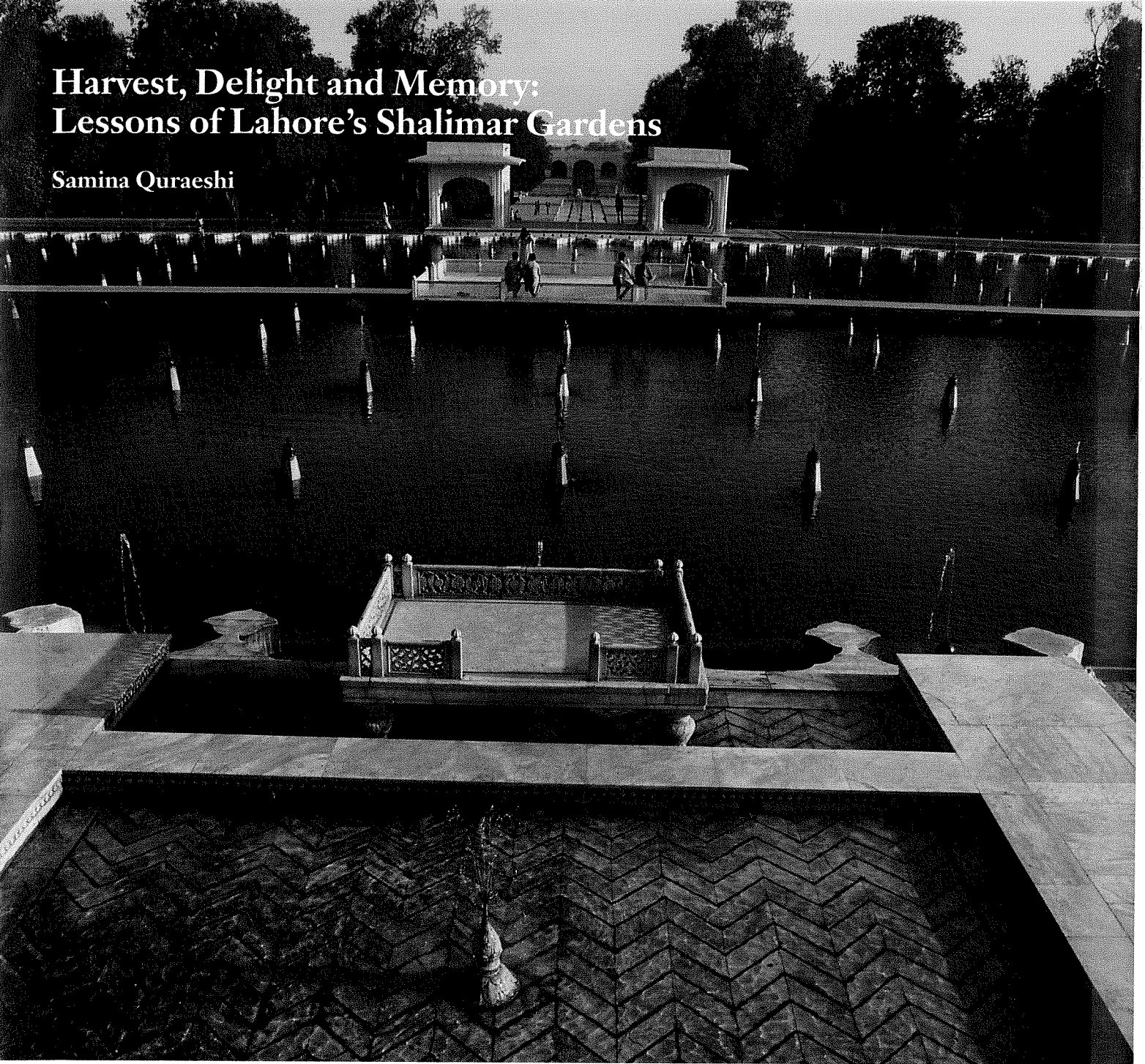
you secure all your public buildings, buses get bombed, or other places get bombed. The threat simply shifts.

McGill: We have chosen very consciously, across the country, since 1995, that we are going to secure individual buildings. We are not trying what they are doing in London, which has established "secure perimeter areas" inside of which you don't need to defend individual buildings. From a city-planning perspective, taking this approach and the added benefits it offers, such as reducing traffic congestion, might in the long run be a more intriguing idea, though in the present political climate it would be impossible to achieve.

Above: Detail of planter streetscape element. Graphic courtesy of National Capital Planning Commission.

Harvest, Delight and Memory: Lessons of Lahore's Shalimar Gardens

Samina Quraeshi



To Plato's axiom "Philosophy is born of wonder — about our place in the cosmos, about the ground of our relation to nature," Robert Harrison has responded: "human beings, unlike other living species, live not in nature but in their relation to nature. Even the belief that we are a part of nature is a mode of relating to it."¹ Throughout history, such self-awareness has led philosophers to separate "the natural" from "the social." And today such a binary is central to disciplines ranging from genetics to landscape architecture.

As we try to understand the role and place of urban parks in contemporary society, we must come to terms with such ways of thinking. In particular, we must understand the implications of the distinction between "city" and "country" that has long served as a crucial extension of the social/natural divide.

Across the world, art and literature have played an important role in mythologizing this city/country dichotomy. But nowhere is this more evident than in America, where our national mythology is founded on romanticization of the frontier and lionization of its settlers as pioneers of freedom and Manifest Destiny. The other side of such a morality of place, of course, is a mistrust of cities as the loci of sin, corruption and excess. Best known among those who have held such views was Thomas Jefferson, a gardener par excellence, who went so far as to characterize cities as "sores on the body politic."²

Above: Water flow provides a main theme within all Mughal gardens. View of the great basin with its central platform on Shalimar's second level. Photo by Richard Shepard.

Inasmuch as the social world of human kind is constantly urbanizing, however, other moral values have attached to the city/country dichotomy. Early-twentieth-century European Modernism, for example, celebrated the city as the repository of knowledge, and disparaged the country as a reserve of unchanging tradition. Even in America, Frederick Law Olmsted, designer of New York's Central Park, acknowledged that "in all our modern civilization, as in that of the ancients, there is a strong drift townward," and rejected the opinion that this "drift" was symptomatic of "moral epidemic."³ Instead, this seminal figure in American landscape architecture chose to focus on the "intimate connection . . . between the growth of towns and the dying out of slavery and feudal customs, of priestcraft and government by divine right, the multiplication of books, newspapers, schools and other means of popular education."⁴

Clearly, thinking about the meaning and design of urban parks lies directly in the path of such views about city and country as opposite poles of human experience. And in this regard, we would be correct to ask: What are we trying to achieve by bringing little bits of manmade "nature" into our cities? In answering this question, we should no doubt heed urbanists like Jane Jacobs, who cautioned, "City parks are not abstractions, or automatic repositories of virtue or uplift, any more than sidewalks are abstractions."⁵ Yet we should also examine why, as human beings, we feel compelled to locate a sense of virtue and uplift in manmade "natural" environments. We should further recognize that societies have often tried to locate the foundations of their cultural development in the refinement of a "proper" relationship to nature.

In America, the idea that urban parks may inspire spiritual repose and renewal is often misunderstood as involving a nostalgic desire to insert facsimiles of rural life in the midst of metropolitan bustle. This view may derive in large measure from a particularly American interpretation of the distinction between city and countryside. However, such a position fails to engage many of the themes that have governed the design of great parks through history. That these themes are timeless and open is evident in the continued vitality of these places.

Indeed, the park designs of the ancients were often based not on abstractions, but on literal, yet evocative, expressions of nature's real uses. Reconnecting nature to its social applications can likewise inform the spirit of park design today. To learn from the many ways residents of a city actually use their parks does not preclude a park's ability to represent more symbolic design themes. On the contrary, as the case of Lahore's Shalimar Gardens shows,

connecting use with symbol can be a powerful, and lasting, method of allowing a park design to continue to reflect the disparate and evolving needs of a populace. Only a varied environment has the capacity to sustain meaningful use by a diverse population over time. And in my memories, Shalimar was always a prime example of how best to interlace diversity of use with the resonance of symbol.

The Mughal Tradition

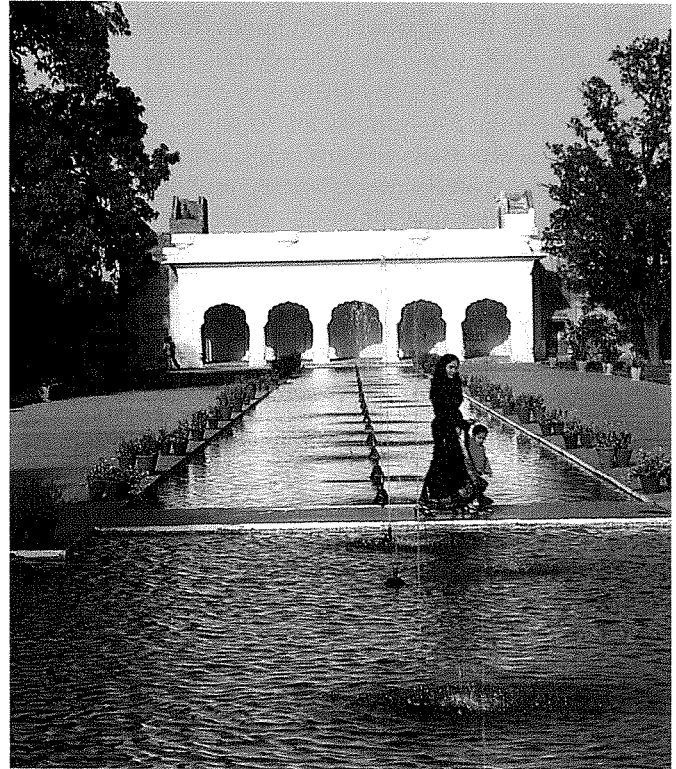
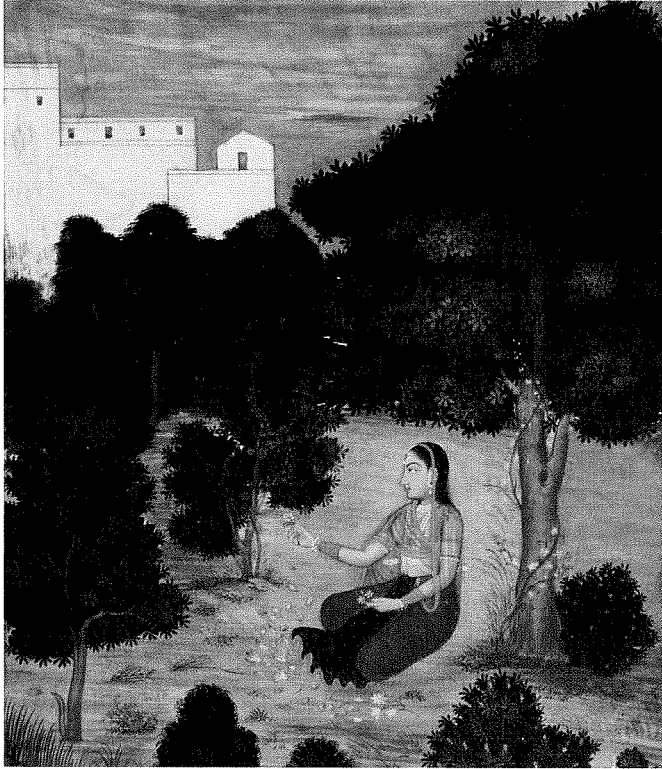
When I was young, I conceived of Pakistan as a desert on the sea. Then, as I grew up, my home city of Karachi was transformed before my eyes from a fishing village to a bustling metropolis. But the cultural capital of Pakistan has always been farther up the Indus Valley, in the city of Lahore. And Lahore is, above all, a city of gardens.

The story of Lahore's gardens is intertwined with that of the great Mughal emperors of what is today northern India and Pakistan. These rulers were heirs to a tradition of garden-building that originated with their Persian ancestors. Over the centuries, Cyrus's "gardens of paradise" were reinterpreted by succeeding Sajavid and Timurid dynasties in such Central Asian cities as Samarkand and Kabul. The tradition finally arrived in the Indus Valley in 1526 with Babur, the first Mughal emperor.

Eventually, Babur was followed by his son Humayun, his grandson Akbar, and three more generations of rulers: Jehangir, Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb. And as the size of their courts and the extent of their power increased, so did the sophistication of their gardens. According to Milo Beach:

The construction of gardens on a large scale began with the coming of Emperor Akbar to power, and particularly between 1584–98 when he made Lahore the capital of his empire. . . . All important nobles of the Mughal empire, serving in whatever region, built pleasure gardens and fruit gardens in all directions. . . . Babur was also a talented designer who built numerous gardens inspired by his love for the lush and beautiful cities of Samarkand and Herat. Babur's last and most important conquest was Hindustan, and one of his first acts, when he arrived on the subcontinent to stay in 1526, was to construct gardens; he sought thereby to make "that charmless and disorderly Hind [India]" (as he himself described it) more like home. Eventually the image of the garden became all-pervasive in the Mughal world.⁶

Within an Islamic worldview, the principles of Mughal garden design were based on the image of paradise as promised in the Koran, which consisted of several terraces, each more splendid than the last. It was believed that



earthly gardens could provide both a foretaste of such paradise and a respite from the harsh realities of life. Their central dynamic element was normally a channeling of water through various levels of pools, waterfalls and fountains. Other typical elements included a geometrically ordered layout of plantings, gates and paths, and massive walls to provide a sense of peace, keep out marauders, and protect the garden from hot winds and blowing sand.

Granted, gardens, and especially the fountains that were their centerpieces, were symbols of wealth, meant to demonstrate control of that most precious of desert commodities, water. But this was largely a byproduct of the politics of the time. The cultural impetus behind Mughal park-building was one of spiritual rejuvenation.

As a designer, I look for themes to illuminate my designs through reference to relevant contexts, images and ideas. And with regard to the gardens of Lahore, I have identified three most prominently: harvest, desire and memory.

When the gardens of Lahore were first created they were intended to serve both as places of harvest (“fruit gardens” and orchards) and personal delight (“pleasure gardens”). The theme of harvest connected powerfully with a people who had migrated to the area from desert steppes, and for whom irrigation and agriculture were a divine wonder. Likewise, delight was closely associated with the

shade such places provided from the harsh sun of the Punjab plains. Eternal respite from heat and work was also a central promise in the Koran, and such a motif was continually reinforced in park designs.

A sense of memory can be considered as contextualizing these other themes. In the case of Babur, gardens served the nostalgic purpose of honoring memory, reminding him of the more fertile land from whence he came (present-day Uzbekistan).

In America today such ways of thinking are often absent from our understanding of urban parks. If we strain, we can still see how concepts such as harvest, delight and memory may survive from previous times. But they no longer serve as organizational strategies. For example, in the twenty-odd years I lived in Boston, I was often struck by the fact that Olmsted’s grand design for the city’s parks was referred to as “The Emerald Necklace.” What could provide a more direct reference to the capacity of parks to

Above left: A visitor to Shalimar as portrayed in a Mughal Miniature. Courtesy of the British Library.

Above right: Shallow pools have provided inspiration and cooled visitors to Shalimar for centuries. View from the garden’s first level. Photo by Samina Quraeshi.

Opposite: Bridges and pathways allow both participation and repose. View from the waterfall between Shalimar’s first and second levels. Photo by Samina Quraeshi.



adorn a city than an image of jewelry? Yet I soon learned that, despite Olmsted's own interest in a range of emotional and aesthetic responses to imagery (responses that he compared to an appreciation for music), this metaphor was more one of spatial arrangement than aesthetic decoration.⁷

In America, we tend to frame our discussion of parks according to health and economic concerns. By contrast, the kind of recreation envisioned by the great parks and gardens of Lahore was one that could inform the life of the spirit, evoking such powerful imagery as the oasis — and ultimately, the divine.

A Design on Three Levels

One of the greatest of the Mughal gardens was Shalimar, constructed in 1634 by the Emperor Shah Jahan to serve as a place of refreshment and amusement for the royal family. The project was the combined work of Mulla Ala-ul-Mulk and Ali Mardan Khan, a brilliant canal engineer. It is traditionally reported to have taken one year, five months, and four days to complete. Traditional reports also relate that on a date carefully selected as auspicious, the emperor lifted his eyes to a miracle — a fantastic display of technological wizardry and aesthetic marvel.

When originally built, Shalimar consisted of 80 acres

of exquisite gardens, arbors, waterways and pools, enclosed in a high wall of red sandstone with white marble inlay. Its layout took the form of three great terraces, each twelve feet higher than the last, the entire space divided down the center by the Shah Nahar, or Royal Canal. The canal was Ali Mardan Khan's masterwork. The engineer had brought the water for it in from Madhupur, and it flowed down from the top of the garden over the three terraces, a drop of some forty feet. Amazingly, at each level the water was maintained at precisely the desired height. Even more amazingly, the waterworks were so sensitive that when additional flow was let in at the top, all four hundred and fifty of the gardens' fountains flowed at once.

The gardens themselves took the form of a glorious green tapestry of walks and promenades, flowering bushes, fruit trees, pools and fountains, pavilions of white marble and red sandstone, and summer houses of agate — all protected by a high wall with five tall towers. After the hot, dusty trip to the site, the contrast between its cool green beauty and the burning Punjab plain must have been staggering.

The entrance to these royal pleasure grounds was on the lowest level. This was planted with avenues of magnificent fruit trees — mangoes, peaches, apricots, pears, almonds, pomegranates, quince, mulberries, lemons and oranges —

and visitors were encouraged to pick and eat as much as they pleased. From here, raised brick walkways, or *khayabans*, led upward to the second level, which was dominated by the heavy perfume of roses, planted there in profusion. Otherwise, the emphasis on the second level was on providing shade, and its walkways and *khayabans* were framed by rows of cypress, poplar, and plane trees. In the center of this terrace, the Royal Canal emptied into an enormous marble basin, from which more than a hundred water jets threw up a glittering, cooling mist. Although this level was much smaller than the other two, this magnificent main reservoir created the illusion of great space.

Together, the first two levels were known as the Faiz Bakhsh, meaning “Bestower of Plenty.” Above, Shalimar’s third level was known as the Farah Bakhsh, “Bestower of Pleasure.” Only the most trusted courtiers were allowed to accompany the royal family to Shalimar, but even they were normally forbidden to ascend to this highest terrace. Instead, visitors had to content themselves with casting cautious, eager glances up to the carved marble screens which set it off from the world below — and avoiding the warning glances of its eunuch guards.

Only flowers were planted on the third level: a fragrant profusion of roses, irises, cyclamen, crown imperials, lilies, pinks, narcissus, jasmine, lilacs and lotus. On visits to the garden, the emperor would make his residence there. And when he was not accompanied by his wives, he might entertain guests in a spectacular marble pavilion that was open on all sides and cooled by a series of fountains. From behind its white pillars the emperor and his guests could gaze down to the fountains, marble pools, and splashing, sparkling water below.

The flow of water was a main theme of Shalimar. From a marble reservoir in the center of the emperor’s terrace, a waterfall spilled through a carved screen into a pond on the level below. And after passing through the central reservoir there, it spilled over a second fall into a pool at the bottom of the garden.

On its way from one level to the next, the water tumbled over inclined planes of white marble called *chadars*. Carved into delicate curves, chutes, ripples and scallops, these were designed to break the flowing water into a cool spray and create a pleasing noise — hence their name, which means “shawl.” Behind the cascading water the garden designers located niches known as *chini-khanas*, to hold golden vases of fresh flowers during the day and candles at night.

An Enduring Spell

A visitor to Shalimar once remarked, “outside all is glare and dust; within all is green foliage, white marble, cool

reservoir, and rippling cascade.”

One of the most famous visitors was Zeb-un-Nisa, the daughter of Aurangzeb. A talented poet, she spent as much time as possible at Shalimar. There, surrounded by other princesses and her own handmaids, this dreamy, intense artist wandered along the *khayabans*, finding endless inspiration in the beauty around her. Once, seated by the waterfall among her light-hearted, chattering companions, she is said to have startled — and moved — them all with this mystical piece:

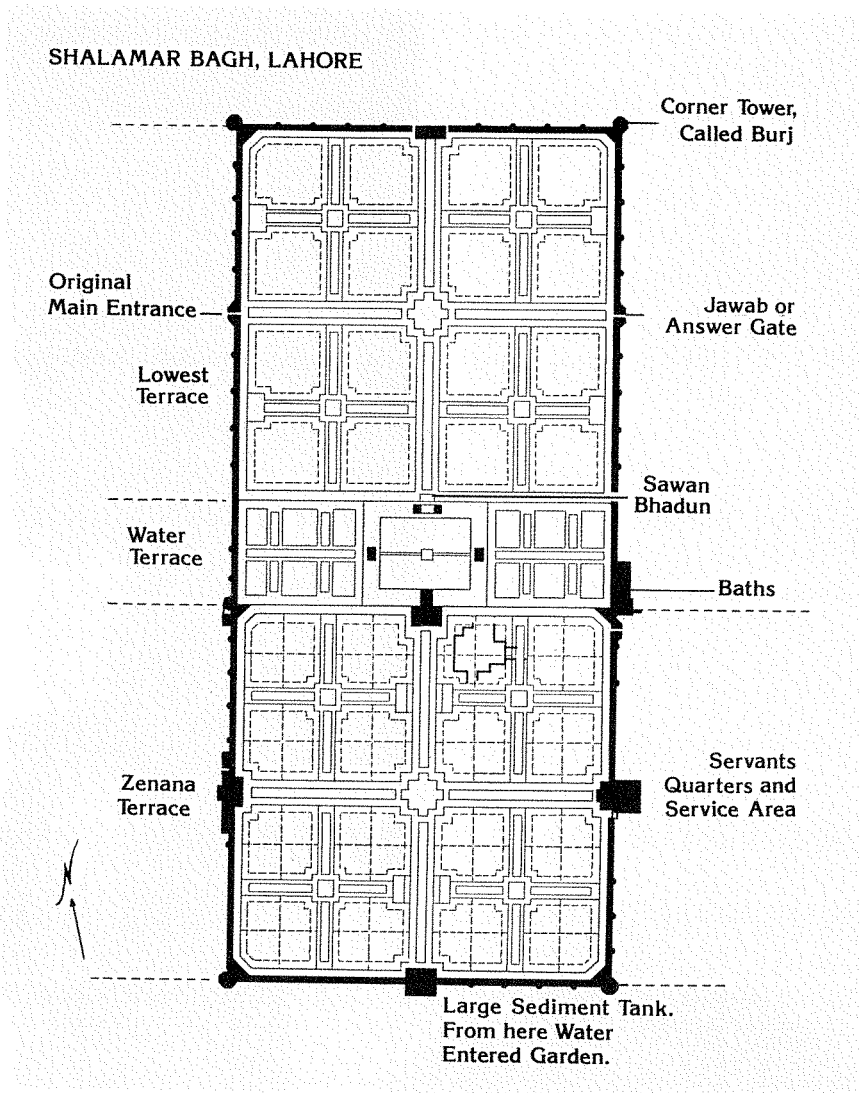
*Ob waterfall! For whose sake art thou weeping?
In whose sorrowful recollection hast thou wrinkled thy brows?
What pain was it that impelled thee, like myself,
the whole night,
To strike thy head against stone and to shed tears?*

Shalimar literally means “House of Joy,” and the passing centuries have done little to dispel its atmosphere of peace and happiness. I can still remember how, as a child wandering there, I felt deeply connected with history and with the sense of magic that inspired its design. Moving around the huge square pool on its second level, I could imagine musicians sitting on the white marble platform in the center playing ragas in the moonlight.

Shalimar succeeds as part of a living tradition because it is still able to evoke the themes it was designed to express: its trees still bear fruit; their shade still provides shelter from the sun; and as a sanctuary of natural beauty, it still brings to mind the previous generations who have experienced its delights. I often think of it as embodying a sense of past, present and future — the past in its mature trees; the present in its world of sensual pleasures (its fragrances, sounds and textures); and the future in its promise of attainment in heaven.

The park continues to reinforce these ideas because it demands use by the citizens. One of the loveliest festivals of Lahore is Mela Chiragon, the “Festival of Lamps.” This is held on the last Saturday in March and the following Sunday. At this time, Shalimar’s pavilions are outlined with glittering colored lights, an echo of former times when the entire garden would be illuminated with colored paper lanterns, scented candles would be placed in the niches behind waterfalls, and fireworks would light up the sky.

That Shalimar can continue to allow such rich interpretations is due to its natural evolution of use. People no longer come to Shalimar specifically to pick fruit. But the presence of fruit-bearing trees still reminds them of this basic function of plant life. Its sensory experiences no longer contrast with the sere Punjab plains. Yet its ordered



abundance of water, trees, marble and grass is just as apt as a refuge in a modern city. Today the theme of memory also plays itself out in a different way. No longer a royal enclave, Shalimar connects modern city dwellers to their cultural roots — both through decorative elements illustrative of Mughal history and design features that have retained their meanings after many generations.

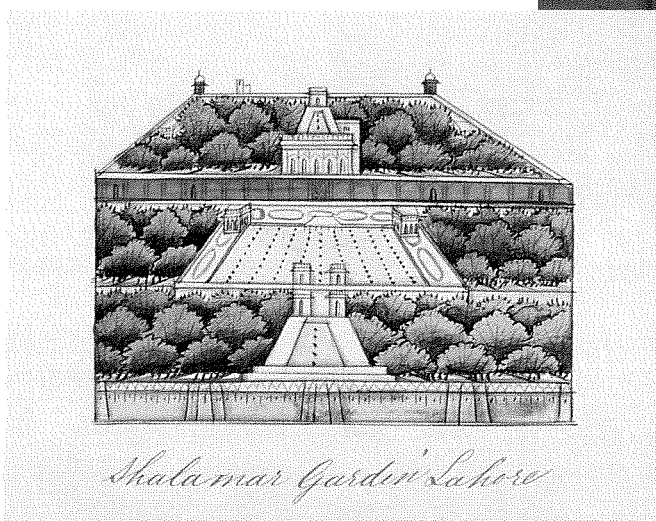
Today the garden's spell remains as potent as when it moved royal princesses to tears and poetry. To express the divine with constant reference to the current needs of human life and the history of human culture is truly to inform the life of the spirit. These are goals we should try to rediscover in the design of our urban parks today.

Above: Plan of Shalimar (the third, most exclusive, terrace is at the bottom). Mughal garden designers took pride in their mastery of geometry, architectural detail, hydraulics, and botany.

Notes

Parts of this article first appeared as a chapter in my book *Labore: The City Within* (Singapore: Concept Media, 1988), pp. 225-47.

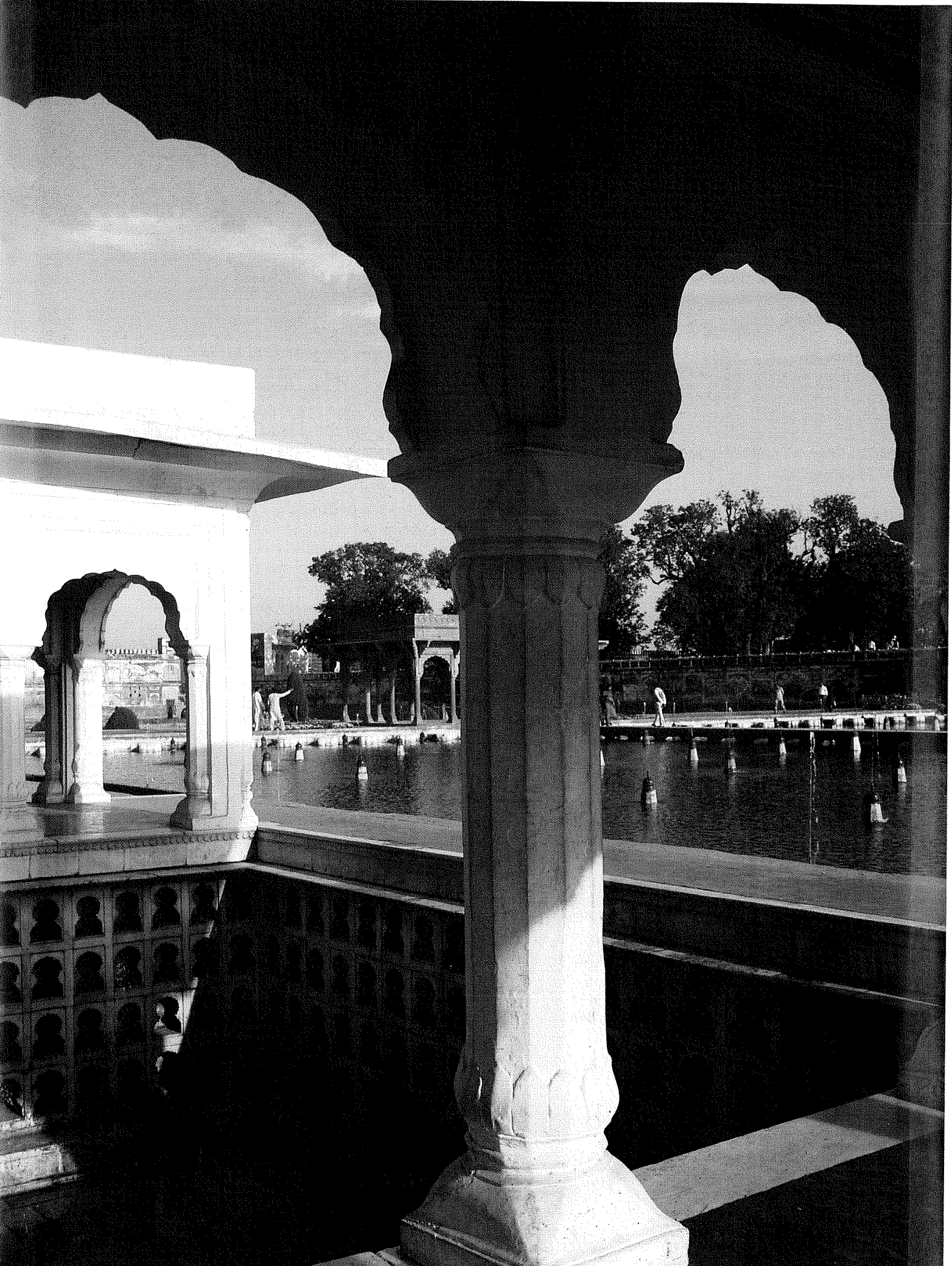
1. Robert Harrison, "Towards a Philosophy of Nature," in William Cronon, ed., *Uncommon Ground* (New York: Norton, 1995), p. 426.
2. John Brinckerhoff Jackson, "Jefferson, Thoreau and After," *Landscape* (Winter 1965-66), p. 1.
3. Frederick Law Olmsted, "Public Parks and the Enlargement of Towns," in S.B. Sutton, ed., *Civilizing American Cities* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1971), pp. 52-99.
4. Ibid.
5. Jane Jacobs, "The Uses of Neighborhood Parks," in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Random House, 1961), pp. 116-45.
6. Dr. Milo Beach, as quoted at www.mughalgardens.org.
7. See especially Frederick Law Olmsted, "Seventh Annual Report of the Board of Commissioners of the Department of Parks for . . . Boston . . ." (1881), in S.B. Sutton, ed., *Civilizing American Cities* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1971).



Left: A British colonial officer's drawing of Shalimar.
Courtesy of the British Library.

Right: The name Shalimar has been variously interpreted as "Abode of Bliss" or "Light of the Moon." Now the most common translation is "House of Joy." View from between Shalimar's first and second levels: when in full operation, water cascades in front of the lotus-shaped niches, which hold flowers by day and candles at night. Photo by Richard Shepard.





Revitalizing Chicago Through Parks and Public Spaces

Richard M. Daley

People sometimes think of steakhouses and smoky bars when they think of Chicago — and we do have them. We also have elevated trains that show up all the time in movies and on television. We have plenty of factories and railroads and hard-working people who are responsible for our nickname, “the city of big shoulders.”

But there is a softer side of Chicago. It is reflected in projects as small as the window boxes on City Hall and the playlots in our neighborhoods, and as large as our new Millennium Park, which is being built over downtown railroad tracks at a cost of more than \$300 million, most of it from the private sector.

Come to Chicago and you will see flowers and shrubs in the street medians, not just downtown, but in the neighborhoods as well. This is a result of our Landscape Ordinance, which requires developers of everything from office buildings to parking lots to install and maintain landscaping around their property and on the public way.

You will see neighborhood fountains. We have built and renovated a dozen of them, including one that was 117 years old. Besides being beautiful, fountains are natural gathering places, and they cool off a public space during hot summer days.

You will see more trees than you expected. We have planted more than 300,000 since I became mayor in 1989, to beautify the city and reduce noise, air pollution, and summer heat. On top of City Hall, there is a rooftop garden, containing 20,000 plants of more than 150 species. Because green roofs are cooler than dark roofs, we expect to save \$4,000 a year in heating bills, and we hope to inspire the owners of private buildings to build their own gardens.

Trees, flowers, parks, attractive open spaces: these things are contagious. When people experience them, they want more of them. And they are willing to pay for these places, because they know they are getting something for their money. I believe that cities that pay real attention to quality of life will be those that thrive.

Part of this is psychological. Cities are vibrant and exciting, but they also can be overwhelming and intimidating. Parks soften the rough edges of a city, calm your nerves, make you feel a little more in control of things. They are also the essential building blocks of strong neighborhoods.

Over the last fifty years many Chicago neighborhoods lost their cohesion as families moved to the suburbs. I am convinced that the main reason for this flight was the decline of the city's public schools. That is why the education of our children is my number-one priority, central to everything else we are trying to accomplish in Chicago:

creating jobs, reducing crime, attracting industry and ending poverty.

As the schools lost their effectiveness as community anchors, the same thing happened to neighborhood parks, libraries, and other public spaces. People stopped using them, and the city stopped taking care of them. Or maybe people stopped using them because the city stopped taking care of them. It was a downward spiral.

Government cannot expect people to take care of their property unless government takes care of its property. How can people believe we value education if we allow our schools to deteriorate? How can people believe we value neighborhoods if we allow our parks to deteriorate?

Now we are rebuilding these community anchors. Since 1996 we have spent some \$600 million on capital improvements to city parks, including fieldhouse repairs, skate parks, playgrounds, water parks, batting cages, beach improvements, lagoon rehabilitation, and junior golf courses. We've made our parks safer, as well.

Besides rebuilding schools, parks and libraries, we are getting administrators in charge of these facilities to work together on programs, especially on summer and after-school programs involving learning and recreation. For example, we have a program called After School Matters, which offers courses in the arts, technology, and sports to thousands of youngsters. This program links each of twenty-four high schools with a nearby park and library. Some of the students learn computer skills and Web-page design at the library. Others go to the parks to train for jobs as summer camp counselors, lifeguards, scorekeepers, and coaches at public parks and private athletic clubs.

Finding New Park Space

Improving parks and their programs is one thing. Adding new parkland is more difficult because Chicago, like many other older cities, has been fully developed for many years. Chicago has less parkland per capita than most other big cities, so we are trying to acquire new parkland any way we can, in big tracts and small.

One of our most successful efforts has been our “campus park” program. Some time ago, the people in charge of the Chicago Public Schools decided to pave over most schoolyards with black asphalt. It must have seemed like a good idea at the time, but it does not make for very attractive or usable space. We are tearing out the asphalt; planting grass, trees and shrubbery; adding benches and playground equipment when appropriate; and turning these areas into campus parks.

School children use these spaces on weekdays, and neighborhood residents use them in the evenings and on



weekends. This has brought community residents closer to the schools, both literally and figuratively, and that is vitally important when you are trying to generate support for public schools. We have already built one hundred campus parks, which added well over two hundred acres of open space, and we will complete twenty more campus parks by next spring.

Another program is called NeighborSpace. It is designed to help turn vacant lots and river edges into small parks and gardens. Many of these lots were tax-delinquent, or were taken over by the city after being abandoned by their owners. Since its inception, NeighborSpace has responded to the needs of many communities throughout Chicago. Currently, NeighborSpace is working with thirty-nine community groups to preserve and protect these unique community-managed open spaces, and is looking to establish another twenty in the near future.

Obviously, we cannot expect the Chicago Park District to manage all these little spaces. So we created a not-for-

profit corporation to take them over, add improvements such as fencing and running water, and provide liability insurance to community groups that manage them. So far, this program has acquired 21 acres of underutilized property and converted it into 72 community gardens and parks.

We have a long-range program to turn the Chicago River into Chicago's second shoreline, by acquiring land for nature trails, fishing areas, canoe launches, and other recreational assets. We've already acquired thirty acres of public open space along the river, and are working on more. In 1998 the city began requiring all new riverfront developments to be set back thirty feet from the river and to have a landscaped public path. Since then, through 36 private river developments, we have created more than seven miles of riverwalk.

Above: A riverwalk is becoming Chicago's "second shoreline." Photo courtesy of Chicago Mayor's office.



We are also preserving Chicago's native landscape through our largest park project, the Calumet Open Space Reserve: 4,000 acres of prairies, wetlands and forests, surrounded by an equal amount of industrial land on Chicago's far southeast side. About 1,200 acres already is publicly owned. The city and the state intend to acquire and clean up 2,600 acres. The first parcel, 117 acres, is being donated by the Belt Railway of Chicago as part of a mitigation requirement for filling wetlands in its suburban rail yard.

Whenever possible, we try to create parkland on the site of new developments. Not far from the Calumet Reserve the Ford Motor Company is building a new factory on a large brownfield site between two inland lakes. It will be surrounded with native plants, and an existing ditch will be turned into a meandering stream. Downtown, six acres of parkland and a new school are being created as part of the Illinois Center development.

We are doing all these things for the people of Chicago, not just to attract tourists or conventioners or suburbanites or new businesses. The nice thing is, if you improve

the quality of life for the people who live in your city, you will end up attracting new people and new employers. If you offer the quality of life that people desire, they will want to live in your city. It's as simple as that.

Getting Agencies in Gear

I am often asked to provide advice on how to transfer some of Chicago's successful programs to other cities. I am reluctant to do that, because every city is organized differently and has different financial and political considerations to deal with. So I prefer to make some fairly general recommendations.

First, as should be obvious by now, I believe you have to take a holistic approach. The programs I've described involve at least twelve city departments and agencies. Some of them are directly under the mayor's control; others are governed by separate boards. No department is concerned exclusively with quality of life and attractive public spaces — so all of them have to be. And it is the mayor's responsibility to keep them on the same page.

One of my strategies is to put talented generalists in charge of the agencies that deal most directly with quality-of-life matters. I wholeheartedly agree with the following statement from the 2000 Project for Public Spaces handbook *How To Turn a Place Around*:

The professionals responsible for activities that directly impact public spaces — such as planning, traffic and transit, recreation and education — have roles that are peripheral to those spaces.

Top left: Aside from helping green the city, a new City Hall roof garden is expected to save \$4,000 a year in heating bills. Photo courtesy of Chicago Mayor's office.

Top right: Congress Street median. Photo courtesy of Chicago Mayor's office.

Bottom left: Businesses will pay for flowers and landscaping in commercial areas. Photo courtesy of Chicago Mayor's office.

Bottom right: Bus-stop planters calm nerves in a hectic city environment. Photo courtesy of Chicago Mayor's office.

Therefore, when an idea stretches beyond the reach of an organization, people are often told, "It can't be done." But . . . often what they really mean is: "We've never done things that way before."

That describes my experience, in attempting to reform the Chicago Public Schools and the Chicago Park District. So I put outsiders in charge of both agencies. I named my budget director to head the school system. His successor has a degree in sociology from Harvard, but is not a professional educator. The current Park District Superintendent was formerly Deputy Commissioner of the city's Department of Planning and Development. The true professionals at both the Park District and the Chicago Public Schools strongly embraced our reforms. Many of them had been waiting for leaders who were willing to think outside the box.

The Park District's costs kept going up, but service wasn't improving. So we privatized a great many functions, ranging from parking to garbage collection, reducing the public payroll from 4,100 to less than 3,000. We shifted power from the downtown bureaucracy to the individual park managers, and insisted that they work with members of the community to create the programs people wanted.

This seems like something that should happen automatically, but we all know it doesn't. Too many administrators ask, "How will this program affect my department?" rather than, "How will this program improve the quality of life of the people in my City?" Our Campus Park program required ongoing cooperation and funding from the Chicago Park District, the Chicago Public Schools, and the city, each of which has its own governing board and its own bureaucracy. It worked because all the agencies were willing to view it as more than a school program and more than a park program. It was a people program.

I expect this kind of thinking from all my department heads. My Transportation Commissioner is responsible for street construction and repair, but the purpose of his job is not to run as many cars and trucks through the city as fast as possible. He's concerned, like everyone else, with quality of life. So the city's Department of Transportation is an active participant in our Greenstreets program, which works with the private sector, the state transportation department, the U.S. Forest Service, and the Morton Arboretum to bring more trees, plants, window boxes, and hanging baskets into the city.

It can be very difficult to get government agencies to set aside their turf battles and work together for the common good. But it can be done, if you can get the public behind you. All the programs I've been talking about have great

public support in Chicago. People want attractive, livable neighborhoods, with good parks and comfortable public spaces. They want those of us in government to provide them, and they don't have time to deal with arbitrary governmental divisions.

Footing the Bills

You're probably wondering, how do we pay for all of this? Fortunately, the Chicago Park District is comparatively well funded. It has its own governing board with the authority to levy taxes and create its own budget. The District also receives a lot of user fees — from the Bears and other groups that rent Soldier Field, from boaters who rent dock space, and from gourmet restaurants in the parks.

We've been able to tap a number of other private sources for help. The Cubs, White Sox, and Bulls have donated millions toward ball fields, batting machines, and basketball courts. Businesses and merchants associations often pay for flowers and landscaping in commercial areas. After all, their businesses benefit.

Like the suburbs, Chicago has imposed impact fees for park funding. They've raised \$10 million since 1998. Chicago's parks have benefited from the generous support of foundations, most notably the Wallace Fund, which contributed almost \$2 million toward the Garfield Park Conservatory, its children's garden, and other projects. The money was donated not to the Park District but ten community-based groups, furthering the public-private partnerships that are so necessary for successful parks. And it leveraged another \$4 million of public and private support.

We have received substantial private-sector contributions toward our 25-acre Millennium Park in downtown Chicago, just north of the Art Institute. About two-thirds of the cost will be financed through the parking garage, and the rest through private donations. So far, individuals and companies have pledged \$120 million, and we expect between \$25 million and \$30 million more. Chicago is fortunate to have such a public-spirited business community, but yours may be just as generous. It can't hurt to ask.

We believe our efforts to make Chicago attractive and livable are generating a big return on investment. That return can't always be measured in dollars and cents, but it helps build community pride, spirit and confidence.

This article is based on excerpts from Mayor Richard M. Daley's address to the "Great Parks, Great Cities" conference, July 31, 2001.

Parks for Livable Cities: Lessons from a Radical Mayor

Enrique Peñalosa



God made us walking animals: pedestrians. Just as a fish needs to swim, a bird to fly, a deer to run, we need to walk — not in order to survive, but to be happy. A bird can survive inside a small cage and even bear descendants, but one suspects the bird would be happier flying free. Likewise, we can survive inside an apartment all our lives, but we are happier if we can walk and run as we wish.

The importance of public pedestrian spaces in our cities cannot be measured. We cannot prove mathematically that wider sidewalks, pedestrian streets, and more or better parks make people happier — much less measure how much happier. However, if we reflect, we will realize that most things that are important in life — friendship, beauty, love and loyalty — cannot be measured. Parks and other pedestrian places are essential to happiness in our cities.

Today, cities in the Third World are continuing to grow at astonishing rates. Most will more than double their built area during the next fifty years so that by 2015 there will be some twenty-two megacities of more than ten million inhabitants in Third World countries. Considering their global impact, one would think environmental sustainability and quality of life would be major concerns in such places. Yet, pressed with everyday urgencies, Third World cities have shown little creativity in these areas.

As Mayor of Bogotá, Colombia, a city of seven million inhabitants, I was convinced of the importance of parks in addressing this issue. During my administration, which ended December 31, 2000, we invested in water and sewerage supply, schools and libraries, housing for the poor, and transportation systems. But beyond education, we didn't have a higher priority than public spaces. Pedestrian streets, sidewalks, greenways, bicycle paths, metropolitan parks, neighborhood parks, and plazas — altogether my administration set out to create or rehabilitate more than 1,300 parks. We envisioned these as places of respect for the more vulnerable of society's members: the poor, the old, and children. Most of all, our development model was to give priority to children and public space — and to restrict private car use.

Some time ago I was impressed by a documentary about herons in a Brazilian wetland. As child herons were learning to fly, some would fall in the water, where crocodiles promptly devoured them. As I was feeling sympathetic toward the herons, I realized the children in cities faced

Above: Parks are important to a democratic society because they are one of the few places where people meet as equals. Photo courtesy Project for Public Spaces.

a similar predicament. As they leave their homes, they risk being run over by a car. This is not theory. Thousands of children the world over are killed by cars every year. City children grow up in fear of cars as children of the Middle Ages once feared wolves.

And yet, as mayor, I was almost impeached for trying to remove cars from sidewalks, which car-owners had illegally appropriated for parking. I faced enormous resistance when I took down fences that illegally enclosed parkland for private use in some neighborhoods. I was even sued for trying to build greenways that would connect lower-income neighborhoods with upper-income areas.

Parks and Social Equality

Parks play many nonobvious roles in constructing a society. However, one of the most important is to make cities more egalitarian. In the U.S. Declaration of Independence, we find some principles expressed marvelously: “We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness. . . .”

Much of the world has accepted that the best economic system is some form of capitalism: that is, all people are better off if most of society’s resources are managed through private property. Yet, if we truly believe in a society of equals, we must have a few minimum conditions. In other words, a minimum of public goods must be available to all citizens on equal conditions if society is to hold together and advance toward happiness. I am speaking here not of equality of income, but equality of dignity, equality and quality of life — equality in the pursuit of human development and happiness.

At first, it may seem that in Third World cities, with so many unmet needs, parks would be a frivolity. But in practice, where citizens lack so much in terms of amenities and consumption, it is quicker and more effective to elevate the quality of life through public goods such as parks, than by increasing people’s incomes. It is impossible to provide every citizen with consumer goods and services; it is possible to give them excellent schools, libraries, sidewalks and parks.

Parks and other public pedestrian spaces are critical if we desire to make Third World societies more equal. Indeed, it is during leisure time that income differences in our cities are felt most acutely. Higher-income people can drive to the countryside, or go to clubs and restaurants. But for the poor, the main alternatives to television take place in the public realm. For this reason, high-quality public space in general, and parks in particular, are

evidence of true democracy at work.

Even looking at such public spaces may provide satisfaction. As Mayor of Bogotá, I was lucky to have a window overlooking the Plaza de Bolívar, our country’s historical central square. I would get up from my desk dozens of times a day and look through the window, and it never ceased to soothe me, to give me joy. Children running after the doves, a couple having their picture taken with the cathedral in the background — even when the rain poured down and the square was empty, there was magic. At a profound level, looking at a pedestrian space is looking at land fertile for human life.

Following this philosophy, our work in Bogotá included efforts to improve the public realm in marginal neighborhoods through citizen involvement. We planted 100,000 trees, created a new bus-based transit system, and turned a deteriorated downtown avenue into a dynamic public space. My idea for a car-free day was widely supported. And through a referendum, people adopted a yearly car-free day. They even voted, from 2015 on, to restrict all car circulation throughout the city during rush hours.

The Human Benefits of Parks

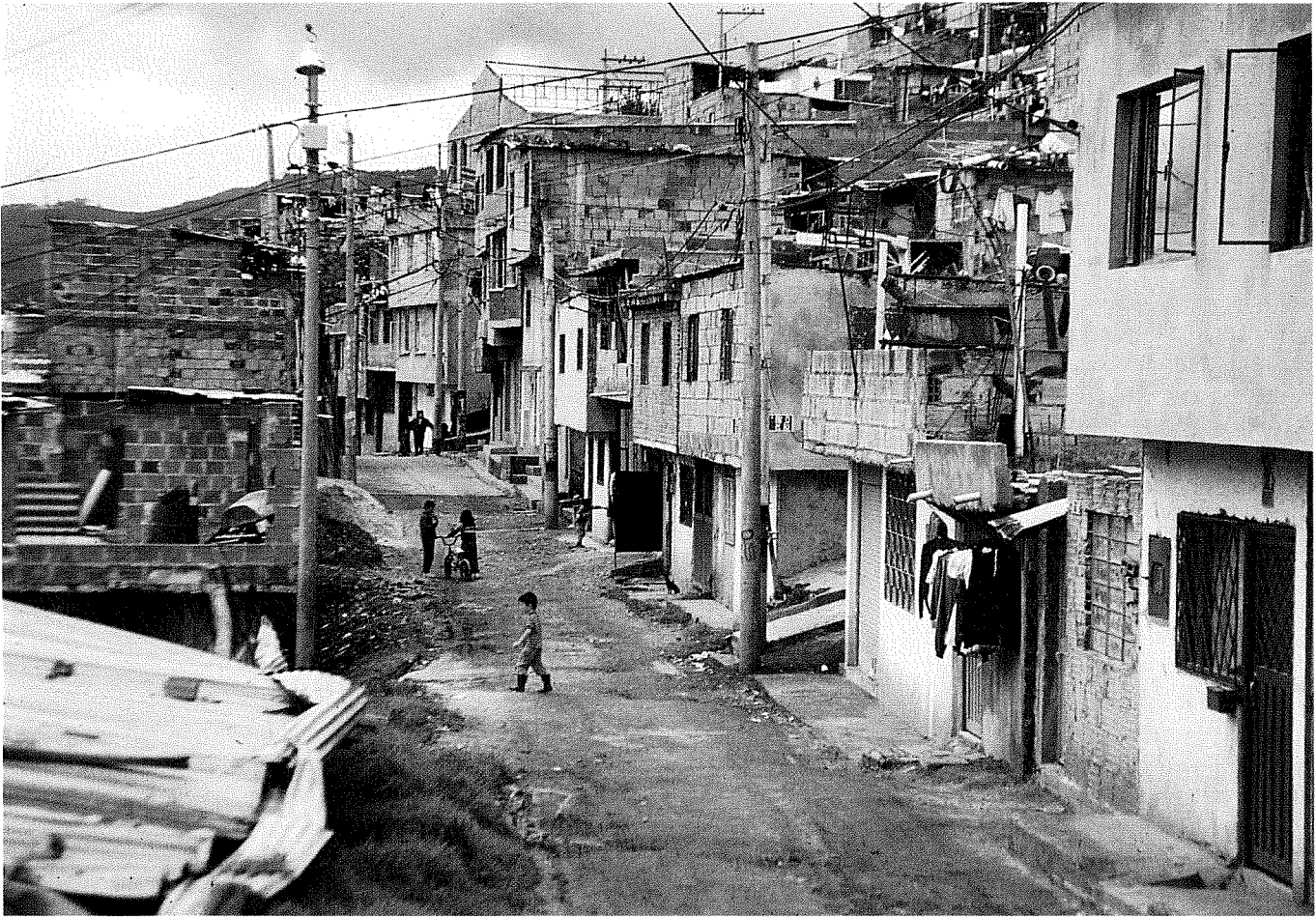
Parks serve human needs that are difficult to quantify. For example, human beings need to be with others, even with strangers. That is why crowded restaurants are more attractive than empty ones; why people like going to the beach rather than sunbathing on a terrace; why people prefer attending a concert to watching a DVD at home. Parks are valued as places to be with other people.

The evidence is all around: children often prefer neighborhood parks to large, beautiful suburban gardens. And Jan Gehl, a Danish urban expert, has found that the benches most people refer are not those facing most idyllic vistas, but those that most people walk by.

Parks are also important to a democratic society because they are one of the few places where people meet as equals. The CEO perhaps meets the janitor in the workplace — but from his position of power. Parks integrate people from different social and economic backgrounds, and people from different communities.

Of course, it is good for us park lovers to see any resource go to parks. But my experience has also led me to distrust schemes to funnel private funds to parks. I fear the effect of a growing reliance on private money. One ends up with perfect parks in richer areas and substandard situations in poorer areas. Why not let road maintenance — not parks — depend on private contributions and organizational schemes?

Parks are different from other public goods in that they



are valued in and of themselves, not simply as a means to an end. A road is valuable as a means for moving from one place to another — losing use of it, or having it riddled with potholes, produces dissatisfaction. But a normally functioning road system does not produce any special satisfaction. Parks are almost the opposite. When people don't have parks, they may not be conscious they are missing anything important. But a high-quality park provides countless satisfactions; and, marvelously, the pleasure derived from such a place does not wear away with time.

For example, in one of Bogotá's poorest sectors we built a 17-kilometer-long, 15-meter-wide pedestrian street. As it was located near the edge of the city, only minor demolitions were required. Lined with trees, benches and lamps, with a bike path on it, the Porvenir promenade, as it came to be called, has already changed the quality of life for 800,000 people. Tens of thousands of people walk there daily — to the library, to school, to the bus station, or nowhere in particular. They ride bicycles; they meet their neighbors.

What is remarkable is that in the area of the Porvenir almost all the streets are unpaved. Traditional logic dictated that we should use any available resources to pave some of these. But parked and moving vehicles would soon have occupied all this new paved space to the exclusion of all other users. And this would have changed little about the way people could live in this part of the city. Instead, the promenade was a large investment that served to remind us of something very obvious yet usually ignored: that the city is not for vehicles, but for children and the elderly, for families and neighbors — for people. It was an investment in human dignity, in a sense of belonging, in community building. Motor vehicle roads will be paved someday anyway. For now, the priority is to build a new and better way of living.

Contact with Nature

Public space is a precious, minute piece of the planet where human beings are entitled to wander freely. Yet in most Third World cities it is brutally encroached upon, mainly for parking cars. This has the effect of reducing its potential as living space for those who need it most. In developing countries, the authorities complacently overlook the trespass of motor vehicles, even on sidewalks, because it is the upper classes that benefit. Those who lose out are mainly the weaker, poorer members of society.

I must emphasize that wanting the poor to improve their state is often different than wanting people to be equal. In Third World cities, most upper-class people want the poor to be better off, but not equal. I also have

a Labrador dog I love very much. I feed her and take her to a good veterinarian. When my family and I moved to the U.S., we brought Dorotea Peñalosa with us. And all that is fine — as long as Dorotea does not feel she can sit at the table with us.

But, after all, the same is true in the U.S. A few years ago, a judge ruled that a beach park which the high-income city of Greenwich, Connecticut, had kept gated for the exclusive use of its residents, had to be opened to the general public. I am certain that most Greenwich residents wanted the poor to be happy; they just didn't want them to share their beach. Millions of people live within a few miles of Long Island Sound. But if they have no access to it, they might as well live a thousand miles away.

Clearly, nobody should be excluded from visiting unique natural resources such as coastlines, riverbanks and mountains. These are God's gift to mankind. Yet, even in the U.S., this is a battle that never goes away. Just last year a federal District Court ruled that legislation creating the California Coastal Commission, which oversees public access to California's thousand-mile coastline, was unconstitutional.

There is without a doubt a basic human need to have contact with nature — to see a few trees, some birds, a butterfly. For Americans, coming from a culture where parks have been profoundly important, it is difficult to imagine growing up in a city of several million inhabitants without the possibility of going to the countryside. Yet this is the reality for many people in cities in developing nations. A park is the closest many of them may get to nature. The effect is particularly telling in the lives of children.

At this time, my country is being ravaged by violence. But I am certain that if our children were happier we would be well advanced toward a solution. I have no doubt that parks are an important step toward a more convivial, constructive, and civilized urban future.

Opposite top: A lack of parks means many of the unimproved streets in a city like Bogotá must double as places for play. When resources are expended to improve them, they are only usurped by vehicles, to the exclusion of all other users. Photo courtesy Project for Public Spaces.

Opposite bottom: New public spaces, both downtown and in residential neighborhoods, dramatically improve the livability of a city like Bogotá. Photo courtesy Project for Public Spaces.

Beyond Nomenclature: Urban Parks for Cultural Diversity

Walter J. Hood, Jr.

Park planning and design should respond to social circumstance and place. Unfortunately, park designs too often are driven by a park nomenclature that does not represent community needs.

Where did this current restrictive language come from? One source has clearly been public bureaucracies. City and county parks departments understand playfields, playgrounds, and open areas composed of grass and trees. Such park types offer the security of clear, definable landscapes and programs. But such archetypes rarely deliver the truly joyful, inclusive and multifunctional spaces communities need or desire. And in their own participation in park planning, communities are often corralled by established conceptual language in ways that impede their ability to think creatively about the kinds of spaces that might better suit them.

Interestingly, such standardization has little to do with the great diversity of public spaces in the American tradition. Elements of the park, plaza, square, garden and street are commingled in the American landscape in ways that are rarely governed by any particular structure or set of rules. The current standardization of parks also runs counter to the historic role of the American park as a setting for ethnic

and cultural diversity. Simply reproducing standard physical qualities and programmatic concerns does little to further the development of a diverse public realm.

At the same time, it is a paradox that no matter how small or physically complex, parks are considered acceptable ways to provide recreational infrastructure, solve social and cultural issues, and promote environmental equity. And yet their formal and physical qualities, and their ability to shape cities and neighborhoods, are rarely considered — if they are considered at all.

Our response has been to try to open a dialogue of actual needs and desires with residents of urban neighborhoods. The intent is to break through the standard nomenclature around the topic of parks to create more complicated, representative spaces that are particular to a place, its situation, and history. In our designs we have tried to develop a more critical understanding of place and the social forces that act on the public landscape. The result is often what we call “hybrid landscapes,” since they are often formed as collages of familiar, physical components derived from various landscapes. We have provisionally called the three designs on these pages the “yard-park,” the “garden-park,” and the “plaza-park.”



Garden-Park: Jackson, Wyoming

The motivation for this park was the construction of a new Jackson Center for the Arts on an adjacent high school site. In the course of our analysis, we found that a number of parks within walking distance duplicated the use and service of the existing park on the site, and all were underutilized. We reviewed various scenarios that addressed a need for new outdoor performance areas and leisure and garden space, and we proposed a program to allow shared use of the park by the Center and nearby residents.

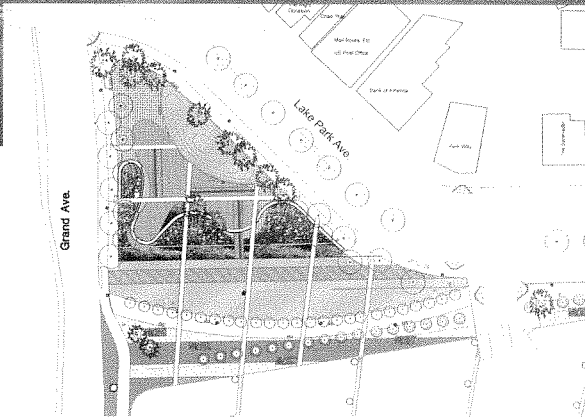
Within this proposed hybrid space, a variety of geologic materials will create textured surfaces to accommodate performances and community events. Cobble rock will be reused from the existing park as seeded paving and undulating planting beds that will also reinforce the site's

edges and entry. Meanwhile, local stone will be used for smoothly paved plinths to provide areas for performance and for gathering at a fire circle. Crushed granite will define circulation routes and reinforce previous desire lines. And to create spatial effects, a series of walls will rise from the ground to become long benches, while in other places gabion baskets will be used to define spaces for intimate or large-scale gathering.

Proposed plantings will be local flora, including cottonwoods and aspens, arranged to create bosques along the street and in the park's interior. Low plants will alternate with rock in the gabion boxes and at ground level. Lawn will be retained in the center of the park, providing areas for sitting, pick-up soccer matches, and other leisure activities.



Left: New park in Jackson, Wyoming, combines use by nearby residents with performances of the Center for the Arts.



Plaza-Park, Oakland, California

This one-acre parcel has a long and complicated history. Originally, it was part of a tidal wetland. Then, as the city developed, it was filled and evolved into a park, squeezed between city streets and an elevated freeway. At one point, a fountain was built at its center, leading to its name, “Splash Pad.” But the fountain quickly fell into disrepair and ceased to attract use.

The community process for redesign suggested two principal scenarios: a plaza, featuring an open paved space with a new fountain at its center and a large digital screen to project community messages and images along the adjoining freeway; and a “riparian” park that would restore some of the site’s former natural qualities.

The hybrid design blends these two strategies. It proposes that a pathway system connect to existing parking beneath the freeway, and that a street which once provided

through-circulation for cars will be dedicated to pedestrians and host a Saturday-morning farmer’s market. Meanwhile, an area at the park’s center will be planted with wetland species; a community garden will also capitalize on the site’s high water table; and lawns at opposite ends of the space will afford places of relief from the street and freeway. To recall the park’s name and history of use, a paved area tracing the form of the old Splash Pad fountain will connect the main streetcorner to the park’s center, and a seat wall will make the form of the old fountain visible. Finally, the design proposes that the wall culminate in a new fountain composed of small weep holes dripping into a pool, around which are set stainless steel panels bearing the names of local business and residents who contribute to building the new fountain.

Above: Site of existing Splash Pad Park, Oakland, Calif.

Below: Plan for new plaza-park on the site.



Yard-Park: Oakland, California

The site of this design is a deteriorated mini-park, known officially as Bertha Port Park, originally developed out of three residential lots at the end of a narrow block. The redesign largely revolved around the desire of a nearby Head Start program for outdoor play space for its 45 children. But the design also had to allow for more flexible neighborhood use around the park edges.

Through a collaborative process involving city officials, the designer, and the community, new scenarios were built up around such notions as a garden, a wood, and a “yard.” The final hybrid design is based around a number of multifunctional landscape features that offer the potential for overlapping use. Three primary spaces were created which utilize changes in physical material, site objects, and earth forms.

The design proposes that site objects include a 3-foot-wide, 40-foot long seat wall cast from black integral-color concrete. Along its length, the wall serves simultaneously as an edge to a planted street promenade, a water feature (a hydrant feeds a runnel along the its base), and a chalk-board (which the water can be used to clean). Low steel fencing and a planting of giant bamboo create an edge to the interior children’s play “yard,” while three grassy land-forms overlap into it, creating a contrasting sense of overall spatial complexity. The third space is a lawn, defined at one edge by seasonal planting, and at the other by a barbecue drum patterned on homemade front-yard barbecue pits, which provides both a sculptural form and a focus for community gathering.

Top: Site of existing Bertha Port Park, Oakland, Calif.

Bottom left: Photograph of model of new yard-park design.

Reimagining the Los Angeles River as a Linear Park

Will Rogers



Perhaps no park-imagining effort in the U.S. today is as audacious as that to turn the Los Angeles River into a greenway. From its source in the San Fernando Valley, the river flows fifty-one miles through thirteen communities to the Pacific Ocean at Long Beach. For much of this journey it has been reduced to a concrete ditch, running with treated sewage, fenced off from the city, littered with rusting shopping carts and trash.

For railroads the L.A. River channel has provided an efficient track corridor; for nearby businesses it has been a dump; for hotrodders it has served as a drag strip; and for Hollywood it has offered a convenient film set for chase scenes and sci-fi showdowns. In the 1980s one legislator even proposed converting the river to an expressway during dry months to relieve traffic congestion.

Today, even those who understand that a river once flowed through Los Angeles — indeed, that a river was once its reason for being — have a hard time imagining anything natural there. But why not try to reimagine such a damaged urban landscape as a linear park, especially when it has been reimaged so many times before?

In 1769 explorer Juan Crespi described what would come to be known as the Los Angeles River as a “good sized, full flowing river,” and he wrote of building an agricultural pueblo along its banks. For the next 150 years the river did water the region’s crops and support its stupendous growth. But diversions for homes and agriculture eventually dried up its flow, while during winter storms it continued to flood, changing course in ways that made city-building difficult.

To remedy such unpredictability, early in the twentieth century engineers began imagining the L.A. River as a concrete flood-control channel. When city fathers bought into their vision, they added wire fencing to keep the concrete ditch safe from intruders.

Not everyone has imagined the river this way. Perhaps most famously, in the late 1920s the urban designers Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., and Harland Bartholomew calculated that less than half a percent of the city south of the

Above: An L.A. River park could be a tremendous asset for a park-starved region.
Photo by Matt O'Brien (courtesy of the Trust for Public Lands).



Santa Monica Mountains had been set aside as parkland. As part of their plan to increase park coverage to 7.5 percent, they proposed parkways wide enough to absorb seasonal floods along 17.6 miles of the L.A. River — reducing the need for more concrete, while producing “a sense of spaciousness and seclusion.”¹

L.A.’s failure to adopt the Olmsted-Bartholomew plan was not due to any weakness of vision; instead, it was doomed by the kind of practical concerns that often impede greatness. Most notable were complicated jurisdictional issues and an anticipated price tag of \$230 million — equal to the entire L.A. city budget for 1930, one of the first years of the Great Depression.

It wasn’t until after World War II that L.A. was again ready to plan new parks. But by then a new regional boom was consuming land that might otherwise have been used. And thousands of people had already settled where the river’s braided channels had once roamed.

Now comes the latest reimagining. In 1985 writer and performance artist Lewis MacAdams founded the Friends of the Los Angeles River. And as the decade of the 1990s

unfolded, a cacophony of voices urged everything from the river’s “restoration” to something more like a “re-engineering” — reestablishing a more natural look along certain stretches of the river while providing recreation and outdoor access for a park-starved city.

The 1990s also saw creation of a 642-page L.A. County Master Plan, filled with ideas for riverside parks, trails, landscaping and recreation — and containing the proposal for a 51-mile Los Angeles River Greenway. Just as importantly, the county and state passed a series of measures to help fund the trails and parks. Partnerships were also forged between community groups, government agencies, and nonprofits to do the hard work of coordinating funding, negotiating transactions, remediating contamination, getting spaces designed and built, and planning for stewardship.

This is where the conservation organization I work for comes in. At the Trust for Public Land, we help communities create visions of the possible. We often start with improbable — even impossible — ideas. But then we help imagine the possible: the exact shape of a vision; where the money will come from, or how it may be raised; how land may be pieced together; how partnerships can overcome political obstacles; how diverse neighborhoods can become more unified by creating public parks.

To date, the Trust has helped create — or is helping to create — a half-dozen parks along the L.A. River: in Elysian Valley, where the river runs free of concrete and a bike trail and walkway thread along its banks; in Maywood, where new space along the river may double the amount of parkland in an otherwise parks-poor community; and in Bell Gardens, where a park will serve as a gateway to a river bikeway. Near downtown Los Angeles the Trust recently helped acquire a 32-acre former riverside railyard for the city’s first state park.

Who is to say a Los Angeles River Greenway is impossible if we tackle it one park at a time? If we are successful, the payoff will be great. Extra parkland will be a wonderful asset to the most crowded portions of the city. And, of course, it might help create links among the region’s diverse communities and neighborhoods.

Finally, other, less tangible benefits may also accrue from the effort. In accomplishing “impossible” visions, communities often internalize notions of hope and possibility. Parks born of such a vision are possibility made manifest — possibility you can walk on.

Notes

1. See Greg Hise and William Deverell, *Eden by Design: The 1930 Olmsted-Bartholomew Plan for the Los Angeles Region* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

Crissy Field: A New Model for Managing Urban Parklands

Michael Boland



San Francisco's new Crissy Field is a transformed landscape that has as much to do with the future of urban parks as it does with its natural beauty or long history of human use.

Several years in the making, the 100-acre site on San Francisco Bay that was once part of the Presidio army base now boasts a restored salt marsh and sand dunes, a heavily used pedestrian shoreline promenade, cleaned beaches, and a 28-acre greensward on the site of an historic military airfield. But perhaps more importantly, Crissy Field exemplifies several maturing trends in urban park design and how these can be woven together to produce a comprehensive new model for creating and sustaining urban parklands.

As befits its natural qualities and complex history, the central theme today at the Crissy Field is one of layering. In particular, it is an interplay between things "wild" and "urban" that gives it a special character. This is a truly dramatic landscape that brings together many conflicting forces. And everywhere there are views — wild, long, intimate, active, solitary — often heightened or framed

by contrasts with the surrounding urban fabric.

Until the mid-nineteenth century Crissy Field was occupied by sand dunes and salt marshes. Filling began in the 1870s and was completed in time for the area to become part of the grounds on which the Panama Pacific Exhibition was staged in 1915. Then, when the exhibition came down, the site was transformed into the first military airfield on the West Coast. Thus it was that when the National Parks Service inherited the site in 1974, 70 of its acres were covered with asphalt and hard-packed dirt, while rubble lined much of its 6,000-foot shoreline.

Today, in many ways, the Crissy Field site has come full circle, as the Park Service and its nonprofit partner, the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy, have restored many of its former natural qualities. Yet the National Park Service has also struck a delicate balance between its mandate to preserve natural and cultural resources and its desire to encourage public use and enjoyment.

Signs of the multivalent character of this new park are everywhere. For example, new landforms have been sculpted out of excavated earth and recycled rubble for



use as viewing platforms, amphitheaters, and wind-protected picnic spots. Most prominently, the new West Bluff picnic area is now formed so that it slopes dramatically toward views of San Francisco Bay and the city skyline.

Meanwhile, at East Beach, rubble has been removed to expand the beach and restore the natural process of dune formation. A new marsh channel has also been dredged, and a new seawall has been constructed to protect a shoreline promenade. The result is an area that can comfortably accommodate a diverse mix of activities. Small children play in the marsh channel's relatively calm water. Board sailors flock to the beach to access the nearby waters of the Golden Gate, a world-class venue for their sport. Pets and their owners frolic on the beach. And the simple concrete seawall plays host to all manner of play, rest, and picnicking.

Perhaps most tellingly, the restored tidal marsh serves all at once as a wildlife habitat, an educational facility, a scenic attraction, a recreational resource, a "sacred place," and an ongoing scientific experiment.

Sustainable design practices were a major feature of

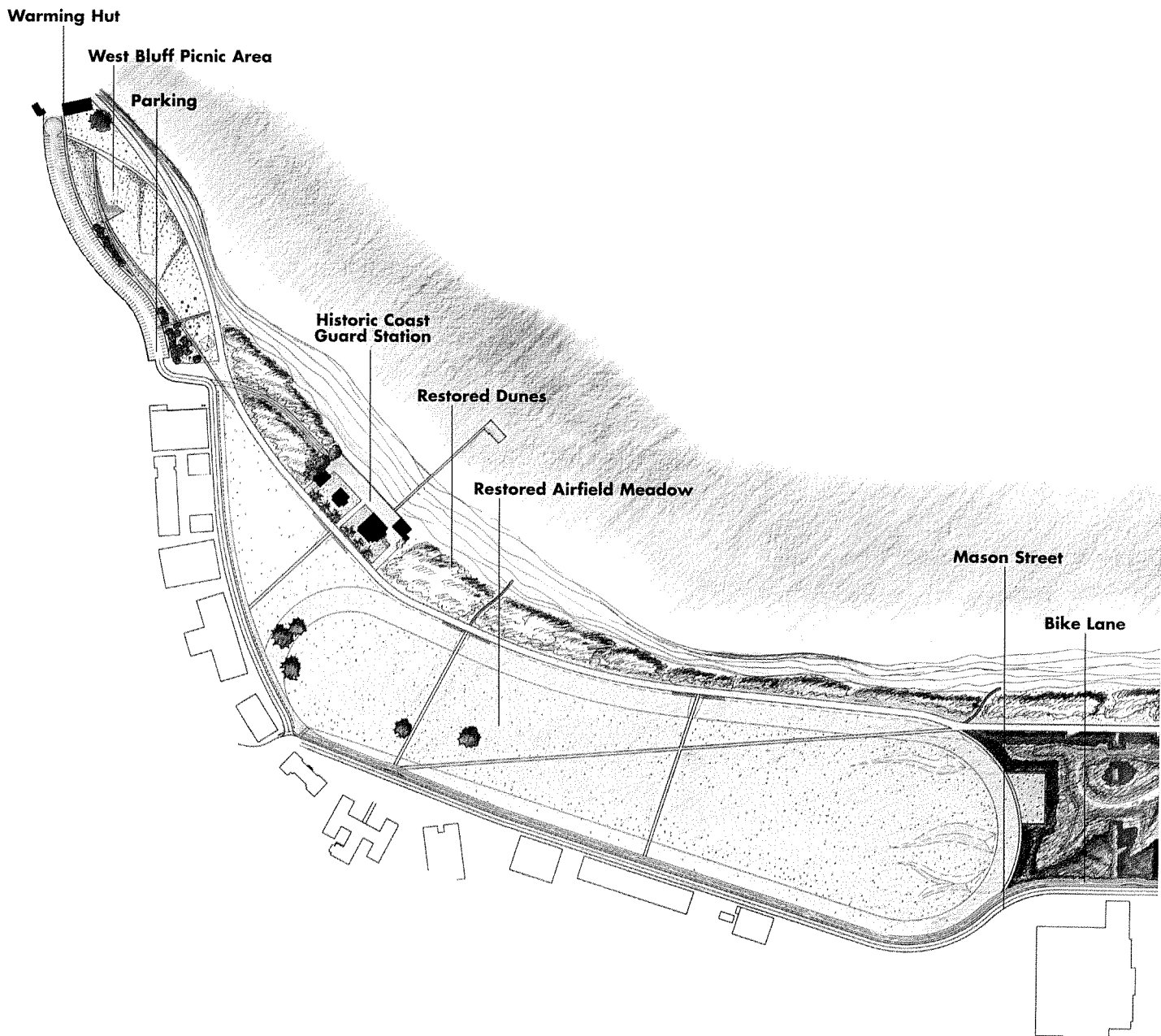
the Crissy project. Instead of being trucked away and dumped offsite, soil excavated during construction of the tidal marsh was used to elevate the historic airfield. Tons of rubble removed from the beach were also ground up and used as underlayment for landscape features. And existing asphalt was crushed and reused as structural fill and the base beneath new pathways and parking lots.

In terms of planting, the preeminent goal was to establish a more sustainable and self-perpetuating landscape. Thus, most plant types selected were native to the area,

Opposite: Crissy Field was dedicated on May 6, 2001. The opening day festivities drew more than 75,000 people. Photo courtesy of the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy.

Top: Native grasses and fill excavated during creation of the tidal marsh were used to restore the historic 28-acre Crissy airfield. View east toward downtown San Francisco. Photo by Michael Boland.

Bottom: Plantings at Crissy Field focus on the sculptural and spatial qualities of plant communities rather than the aesthetic characteristics of individual plants. Variation, contrast and pattern will emerge as a byproduct of natural processes and human use. Photo by Michael Boland.

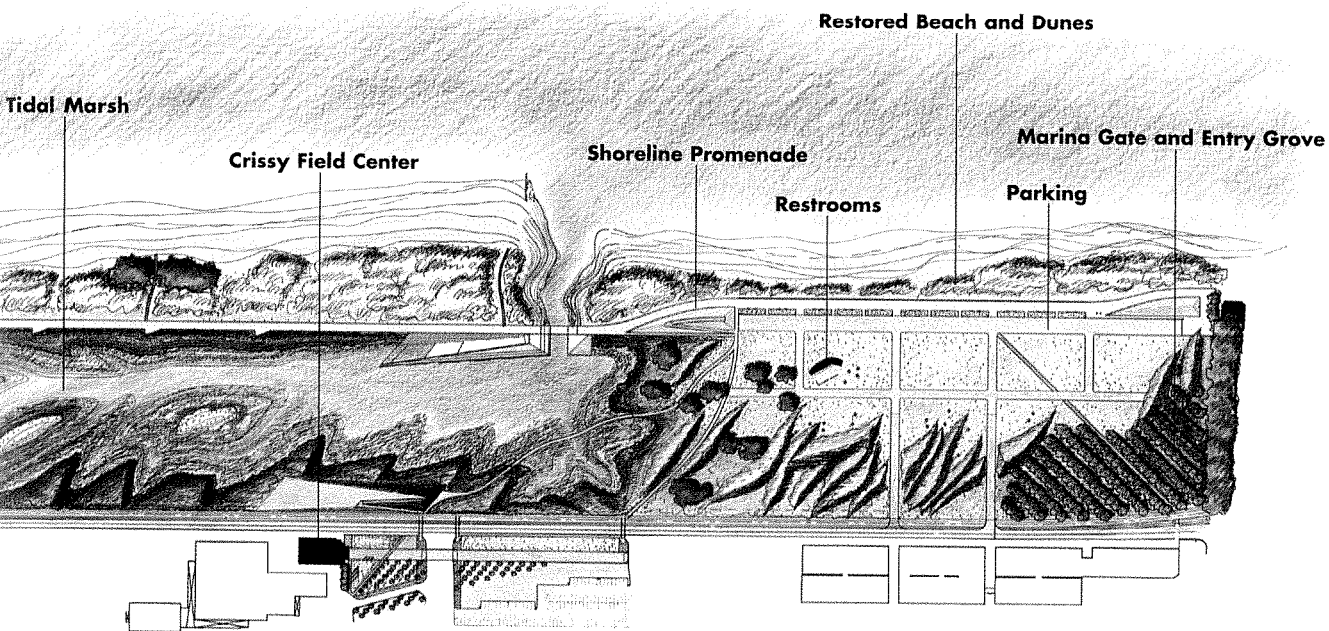


often propagated from locally collected seeds and cuttings. Native turf grasses were also chosen to tolerate harsher conditions and minimize pesticide applications.

The new Crissy Field also provides clues about a new role for landscape design and designers. In some locations, such as the entry grove and West Bluff area, the Hargreaves Associates site plan was precise and fixed. But in other areas, like the marsh, dunes, and East Beach seawall, the design was deliberately open and evolutionary. In part, this lack of specificity was determined by the inherent difficulties of the project. Designers had to work with a harsh, windswept site. They were charged with “restoring” a natural marsh and dune system that had been all but obliterated. And their ideas were often carried out employing the labor of thousands of community volunteers.

Given such realities, conventional grading and planting plans were often not an option. Instead, they decided on a “template” approach. Thus, the marsh was over-excavated and allowed to backfill naturally with sediment, creating its own channels. Cordgrass and other native species were planted in various locations and allowed to establish themselves where ecological conditions were right. And instead of building sand dunes, rubble was removed from the shore to free up blowing sand, which was then allowed to accrete naturally around newly planted beach sandwort and sand verbenas.

Throughout design and construction, the Crissy Field effort also sought to establish a new standard for community engagement. More than one hundred public and community meetings were held, and leaders of underserved



communities were encouraged to propose strategies for diversifying public use. One particularly successful outcome of this effort has been the new Crissy Field Center, which today hosts community events and programs for thousands of Bay Area students.

Individual citizens have also played an important role, helping to restore Crissy's tidal marsh and dunes, collect seeds, and assist in the propagation, planting, and weeding of native plants. Today, such individuals continue in a stewardship role, helping to monitor and protect the native plantings. An AmeriCorps program has also been developed to help young adults develop leadership skills through management of the volunteer effort.

Finally, the nonprofit Parks Conservancy funded this entire effort with contributions from private donors. And

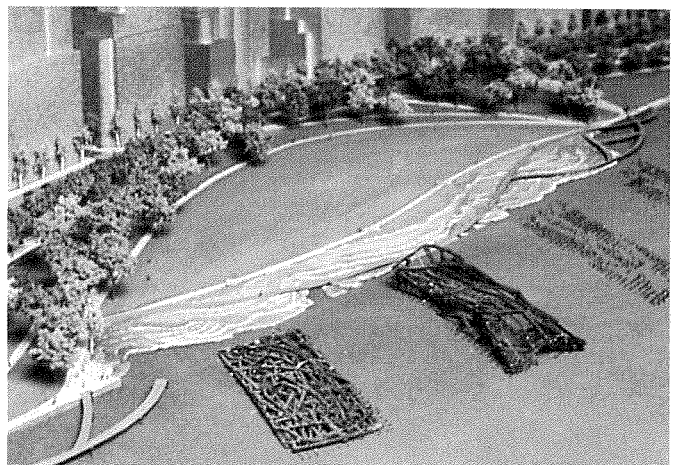
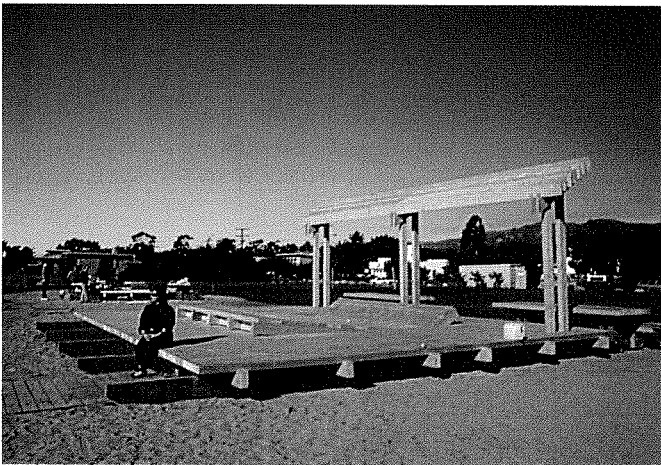
it has managed the planning, design, and construction of the project in partnership with the Parks Service. Without this partnership between the Parks Service, the nonprofit Conservancy, and thousands of volunteers, it would never have been possible to complete the successful transformation of this dramatic urban shoreline.

Above: The Crissy Field site plan.

Courtesy of the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy.

The Ecological Park as an Emerging Type

Galen Cranz and Michael Boland



Each generation has its own set of ideas about how parks can help cities, their own experience in putting these ideas into practice, and their own frustrations and victories with those models. Reflecting this view, in the 1982 book *The Politics of Park Design* Galen Cranz developed four ideal types to describe changes in urban parks over the last 150 years.¹ Her typology included consideration of both the shifting social purposes that parks have been imagined to address and corresponding variations in designed form. The four types of parks were the Pleasure Ground (1850–1900), the Reform Park (1900–1930), the Recreation Facility (1930–1965), and the Open Space System (1965–?).

Today, we find ourselves reevaluating conventional ideas about nature, shifting away from a model that opposes nature and culture toward a one that conceives of humans as a part of an integrated ecological whole. In the design professions this new orientation has brought a surge of concern for what has come to be known as “sustainable development” and “ecological design.” In terms of urban

park design, we believe this shift has brought us to the verge of a new era.

Can parks help create more ecologically balanced and sustainable cities? The prior history of urban parks reveals concern with social problems and with the idea of nature.

Top left: Turf greenswards in Louisville’s Summit Field were replanted with native prairie grasses to reduce runoff and increase the ecological health of the landscape. Only paths are mown to delineate how visitors should move through the space. Photo courtesy of Andropogon Associates, Ltd.

Top right: Alan Sonfist’s “Time Landscape” in lower Manhattan treats secondary plant succession as an art piece. Photo by Michael Boland.

Bottom left: Viewing platforms with built-in lounge chairs in Santa Barbara, Calif., entice those who want to watch the sunset away from the cliff edge, protecting it from erosion. Photo by Galen Cranz.

Bottom right: Model of an ecological park design proposed in 1991 as part of New York City’s Riverside South development. The design was the work of a group of four artists (Mary Miss, Joyce Kozloff, Mel Chin and Fred Wilson), selected to work with the development team. Photo by Galen Cranz.

But parks have never been purpose-built based on overt concern for ecological fitness. However, the present conflation of ecological and social concerns may be changing all that. A new urban park type, based on providing solutions to ecological problems and expressions of the human relationship to nature, beckons.

Past Park Models

If a new park type lies in our urban future, how will it reflect the ongoing evolution of American attitudes toward such issues as nature, health and recreation? The first urban park model identified in *The Politics of Park Design* was the Pleasure Ground. Roughly speaking, its era of popularity spanned from 1850 to 1900. The Pleasure Ground was typically a large park located on the edge of a city. It followed a pastoral ideal, with its buildings clearly subordinate to landscape values. This is the kind of park we associate with Frederick Law Olmsted, and its purpose was to simulate nature or the countryside; but this was not supposed to be “wild” nature. Rather, its design encouraged a certain kind of mental appreciation of the landscape, which is sometimes mistaken as its “passive” component. A better word might be “contemplative.” As sports became increasingly popular, these parks also became more actively programmed.

Pleasure Grounds presented a number of problems for the next generation of park designers. Most importantly, because they were usually located on the edges of cities, the working class never got to use them. For about ten years at the end of the nineteenth century, therefore, an effort was made to translate the landscaping principles of the Pleasure Ground to smaller parks closer to the tenement districts where working people lived. But this movement didn’t last long, and its reform energy soon merged with that of playground advocates. The result was the Reform Park, which provided recreation and socialization space for adults and special play environments for children. Such parks were small, symmetrically planned, and offered little illusion of countryside or nature. Their principal architectural innovation was the fieldhouse, which was meant to provide a clubhouse of sorts for the working class.

In 1930 a new era was ushered in when Robert Moses was appointed Commissioner of New York City’s Parks Department. Moses claimed “We’ll make no more absurd claims about what can be accomplished with parks, but rather, fulfill the mandate to provide recreational service.” His programs typified the third era, from 1930 to 1965 — that of the Recreational Facility. To justify their expenditures, earlier park planners had enumerated all the things that were being accomplished in parks — reducing class

conflict, socializing immigrants, stopping the spread of disease, and educating people. For Moses, parks were a recognized governmental service needing no justification. The emphasis instead turned to establishing government norms and extending service to the suburbs and urban areas that hadn’t yet received a standard of treatment.

As it did in many other areas of American life and culture, the mid-1960s saw another major shift in park design. In particular, recreation came to be seen as something that could take place anywhere — in the street, on a rooftop, at a waterfront, along an abandoned railway line, or in a more traditional plaza or park. In defiance of previous notions of government standardization, a more artistic, participatory sensibility emerged, prompting a closer tie between park programming and popular culture. As a result of these changes of view, parks came to be conceived as a network of disparate, public-serving, participatory facilities. Thus was born the fourth American parks model identified by Cranz — what she called the Open Space System.

Research Reveals a Change

Historically, American urban park models have lasted thirty to fifty years. Since well more than thirty years have elapsed since the emergence of the Open Space model, one might suspect the time is ripe for a change. Based on this assumption, in 1997-98 we began to investigate whether a shift in park design might actually already be occurring. The initial work took place in a Graham Foundation-funded graduate seminar at the University of California, Berkeley, aimed at “Defining the Sustainable Park.” We began by analyzing the parks published in a number of prominent landscape publications over the previous twenty years, attempting to determine whether a discernable shift was taking place in the philosophical underpinnings, ideological claims, and problem-solving goals of park planners. If so, we believed that the processes of institutionalization by park departments and evaluation of the social and ecological effectiveness of new practices would most likely follow.²

Our analysis eventually indicated that examples of all four past park models had been published during the preceding twenty years. Pleasure grounds (22 percent) and open space systems (43 percent) predominated. Interestingly, we found that the second largest number of parks (24 percent) fit into a new fifth category, which we tentatively identified as “ecological.” These parks had several traits not characteristic of the previous four types, including the use of native plants, restoration of streams or other natural features, integration of “appropriate” technologies or infrastructure, recycling, community-based

stewardship, and restoration of wildlife habitat and native plant communities.

We further discovered that most (91 percent) of the parks exhibiting such traits had been published after 1991. This was significant to us, since these innovations were coming twenty-six years after the shift to the Open Space ideology. We therefore predicted that the Ecological Park model was likely to be widely adopted by municipal park departments by 2015. As if to bear out this prediction, we have observed over the last few years a significant drop in the number of new pleasure grounds as the number of ecological parks has increased.³

What will the new urban Ecological Park be like? Our research to date indicates that these parks will differ from their predecessors in four important ways that have less to do with how such parks look than how they perform. First, such parks will become more efficient and self-sufficient with regard to material resources. Second, as they are integrated into the surrounding urban fabric, they will play a role in solving larger urban problems. Third, they will model new standards for ecological aesthetics and management. And fourth, they will employ new formal and aesthetic qualities, both in terms of landscape and architectural forms and in terms of their relationship to city around them.

Our research indicates that attributes of the fifth urban parks model clearly set it apart from previous models. And in the following section we will attempt to describe how some of these might work together on the ground. Like its predecessors, the Ecological Park envisioned here is an ideal type. It represents a summary and collation of features of ecological parks we have studied, and it embodies qualities that have yet to be built into parks but which are implicit in ecological theories. No one park will have all of these qualities and features; neither is this intended as an exhaustive description. It is offered here to provide a glimpse of what the future may hold.

Features of an Ecological Park

The Ecological Park could be anywhere — of any shape, any size. Organizing geometries may be rectilinear, curvilinear or naturalistic since it is not its look that matters so much as its biological functioning. At its best, each park connects fragments of open space into a comprehensive network, both to increase human well-being and benefit natural systems. The Ecological Park strives to realize an older vision of the city as a garden, blurring the distinction between the two. Yet it also employs the most up-to-date methods to minimize such impacts of city life as urban runoff, air pollution, and traffic noise. Through the design

of healthier open spaces, it echoes the nineteenth-century notion of parks as the “lungs of the city.”

Ecological parks aim at self-sufficiency. Plantings rely on native and/or regionally appropriate species to reduce the need for human intervention. Exotic species are avoided, and turf is planted and managed to suit the site and social circumstance. Open meadows that function primarily as a visual resource are planted with a mix of native grasses and allowed to grow to full height. Even pathways and fields that are heavily used are only mowed to 5–7 inches, although judicious mowing at the edges of meadows allows visitors to appreciate how they represent a desired effect rather than a lack of maintenance. Sheep are reintroduced to do the mowing where practical, and when the herd needs to be thinned, some of them may be shared at community barbecues. Flowers are sometimes medicinal herbs. They provide habitat for birds, bees and insects — even when purely ornamental from a human point of view.

Compost is an important part of the Ecological Park. Indeed, it is elevated to the status of an aesthetic, as environmental artists work with maintenance departments to develop fascinating patterns for managing the piles of organic matter that come from park leaf and branch debris. These in turn provide subject matter for fine-art photographers. Park compost is also used to amend impoverished urban soils in community gardens and in mini-farms designed to employ members of the urban underclass. Local youth are trained to operate volunteer programs in these community gardens and to assist in the maintenance of the park at large.

Stormwater and graywater generated in the park and surrounding areas is collected, stored and cleaned in flow forms and ponds. Water-loving plants there support animal life — including amphibians like frogs, whose future might otherwise be endangered. Sometimes fountains express the joyful final stages of water purification.

Buildings in the Ecological Park are carefully sited to be close to mass transit and bike routes. They are built of recycled or less energy-intensive materials, and make use of solar heating and natural cooling and ventilation. They use composting toilets and rely on natural day-lighting inside. Their restaurants serve organic produce from the park's own vegetable gardens. Swimming pools use the latest nontoxic chemical disinfectants. They are heated with solar energy and constructed of flycrete (a less energy-intensive alternative to regular concrete).

Parking lots are minimum, but where they are necessary, they are paved with permeable materials, such as open pavers that allow grass and plants to grow through in honeycomb patterns. Permeable blacktop lets rain sink

into the ground without running off. Pathways for foot traffic are differentiated, but favor softer, more organic materials (crushed gravel being preferable to cement, for example). The center of a pathway may be paved to accommodate roller skating, bicycling, and wheelchairs, but its edges may use combinations of crushed gravel, wood timbers, or chips for aesthetic and kinesthetic benefit.

Fencing is used more to regulate the flow of traffic than to keep people out. In order to enhance their “come hither” message, fences are planted with beautiful vines, which may produce food, herbs or flowers. Fence materials such as metals, post-consumer plastics, bamboo, and wood are evaluated based on long-term environmental costs.

Night lighting is minimal, powered by solar collectors and wind generators (adapted to keep birds from flying into them). The feral cat population is strictly controlled to protect birds and other wildlife.

Benches and play equipment use more body-conscious design than has been the case to date in American public places. Perches and lounge chairs replace traditional park benches. The landscape is designed to encourage people to use their whole bodies rather than just their eyes. Cognitive scientists and movement artists work together to create self-revealing experiences and demonstration projects.

There is continued attention to fitness and sports, contemplation and appreciation of nature, community building and celebration, culture and art in the Ecological Park. But these things are pursued with a new sense of multiple benefits and broadened scope. The science and art of landscape development is better understood by the public through education programs and community-based stewardship.

In general, the community plays an expanded role in the management and evolution of the park, breaking down traditional barriers between expert bureaucrats and citizens. The financial and practical aspects of horticulture and ecological restoration are based on science, expressed artistically, with citizens benefiting as participants, volunteers, or employees.

An Emerging Vision

Taken to its logical extreme of “city as park,” could the Ecological Park model ultimately mean the end of the discrete urban park we have known these last 150 years? How do we distinguish urban parks from other types of green urban open spaces — stormwater retention basins, bikeways, continuous suburban corporate landscapes, and the like? Any discussion of urban parks raises definitional problems beyond the scope of this article. Nevertheless, we believe a fundamental shift is underway in the social goals

and forms of urban parks. A new, fifth model, the Ecological Park, is emerging.

Nevertheless, if a new ecological model of parks is now developing, so, too, is our understanding of such places. We have tried here to be comprehensive in our thinking, but we do not presume to have arrived at an exhaustive list of characteristics. Rather, we hope to “en-courage” conversation and reflection. And we invite others to add to our list of characteristics, and to reorganize them as they feel inspired and/or compelled. Most of all, in the years to come we hope to witness the continuing evolution of these ideas on the ground.

Notes

1. Galen Cranz, *The Politics of Park Design: A History of Urban Parks in America* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1982).
2. We should note that these principles have not emerged simply in response to larger social forces. Many park planners and landscape architects have been proactive in shaping the broader scientific and artistic values of sustainable design practice.
3. The more detailed findings of our research are contained in a longer paper, “Defining the Ecological Park” (under review with *Landscape*). That paper also includes more detail on how such parks perform, and provides specific examples from some of the parks we have studied.

New York's Central Park: A Retrospective



The 150th Anniversary of Central Park comes at an opportune moment. One hundred and fifty years ago the idea of Central Park was derided as a boondoggle. Yet, through the civic leadership of William Cullen Bryant and Andrew Jackson Downing, and capitalizing on the holistic vision of designers Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux, Central Park eventually became one of the most renowned parks in the world. And over the years Central Park has inspired the creation of hundreds, if not thousands, of other urban parks.

Today parks are again rising to the forefront of a movement to build livable cities. In June 2003 New York City will host "Great Parks/Great Cities: Celebrating 150 Years of Central Park," an international conference for those who care about urban parks and their role in contemporary life. At the conference, Central Park's immense achievements and influential history will serve as a starting point for discussions about current trends in design and management of urban parks, and an exchange of lessons on these topics from around the world. This special section of *Places*, incorporating an illustrated timeline of Central Park, is intended to help inform that discussion and honor the role of this great park in the life of New York City.

"Great Parks/Great Cities: Celebrating 150 Years of Central Park" is jointly organized by the Central Park Conservancy, the Project for Public Spaces, City of New York/Parks & Recreation, City Parks Alliance, City Parks Foundation, Cityscape Institute, New Yorkers for Parks, and the Prospect Park Alliance.



NOOK IN
CENTRAL PARK
NEW YORK

Central Park, New York.
Aerial View.



ILL. POST-
CO., N. Y.



The Terrace and Bethesda Fountain, Central Park, New York City.



The Mall Central Park. New York.

The Invisible Park: Revitalizing the Ten Invisible Landscapes

Steve Coleman

When I was growing up outside of New York City, I heard all about Central Park before ever going inside. From fiction I learned that it could be an enchanting place, as when Stuart Little dramatically steered his model boat to victory on the sailing pond. From old paintings I learned that it had once been a place of dream-like beauty. From movies I learned that it was a place of romance. Yet I also learned from newspapers and television that it was a bad place, filled with muggers. And the leaders of school trips to the Museum of Natural History told us that no one in his right mind would ever go there. Later, when I moved to New York City and began to explore the park on my own, my experience of it was shaped by these mythic qualities — its romance, forgotten dreams, mystery and intrigue, and also its looming danger.

Although I seldom get a chance to visit Central Park now, my sense of its invisible qualities has only grown richer and more powerful with time, built on hundreds of memories of its stunning renaissance. Thus, when a neighborhood boy's murder sparked us to form the Friends of Meridian Hill Park in Washington, D.C., in 1990, it was to Central Park that we turned for inspiration. Beginning with our efforts to rescue and revitalize Meridian Hill/Malcolm X Park after years of crime and neglect, the Friends has now expanded into an award-winning citywide alliance of grassroots parks partnerships called Washington Parks & People. Taking on some of the most

crime-ridden, abandoned, and seemingly hopeless green spaces in the nation's capital, our goal is to cut crime by more than 90 percent and transform negative, empty spaces into positive, life-filled places.

Washington Parks & People's special focus today is the city's longest municipal park, Watts Branch. Few people realize that this stream valley that sweeps down into the Anacostia River is home to the longest-established urban African-American population. And a generation after its transfer from national to local stewardship, its signature park had become one of the city's most forgotten public spaces. When we began an intensive revitalization effort there in April 2001, most people said our task was hopeless. Yet, drawing on its invisible strengths, Watts Branch Park is already coming back to life in hundreds of ways. Today, it represents the city's broadest community park revitalization effort, involving nearly 10,000 volunteers and hundreds of public and private agencies, led by D.C. Parks and Recreation.

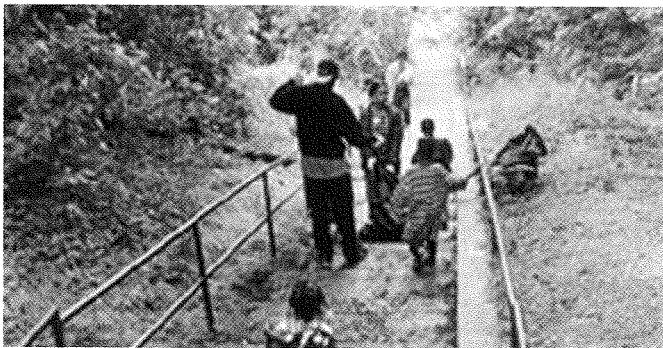
Much of Parks & People's success at such once-notorious parks such as Watts Branch and Meridian Hill has stemmed from our desire to pay as much attention to "invisible" landscapes as visible ones. We have found that effective and lasting revitalization depends on understanding and advancing the following defining features of urban parks.

I. The Landscape of Memory

History neither began nor ended with the designed landscape. Making the historic landscape resonate more universally for diverse non-users calls for broadened interpretive programs about the many pasts of the land. There are many stories that may be used as the basis for such programs: a park's enduring geological and natural character; its history of settlement before it became a park; oral histories, photographic displays, and retrospectives of people's experiences in it; recognition of important individuals who have played leadership roles; historic links between surrounding communities and the park; and explanations of how Native American, African, Asian, Latin, and European traditions and rituals are embodied in the evolution of its design and use.

Top: This overgrown hillside in Watts Branch Park was transformed from a frequent scene of violence into the Marvin Gaye Amphitheater. Photo by Cindy Godden.

Bottom: Children can be a great resource for turning a park around. Adults may become reinvolved when they see what children are able to accomplish. Photo of neighborhood children along the Watts Branch trail by Cindy Godden.



The most important interpretations of the past sometimes come from longtime park users. At Meridian Hill, a policeman who grew up around the corner and once got into trouble playing in its fountains told school groups how a horse-drawn watermelon cart used to stop there on hot summer afternoons. A former drug dealer who devoted the last years of his life to curbing violence explained how the police and community cracked an unsolved murder case there. And a Baptist minister who came to the park's Overlook regularly for fifty years opened people's eyes to gentle, watchful stories of its bird life.

Institutional resources can also be important. While some initially doubted that a blighted place such as Watts Branch Park might have significant heritage, the D.C. Heritage Tourism Coalition is now helping with a broad-based effort to document its history. A major new greenway connection is also being planned to the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail.

II. The Landscape of Myth and Meaning

Perceptions of parks become reality. At places like Watts Branch and Meridian Hill, it took mountains of publicity about the eradication of crime, coupled with intensive programming, to bring people back. But turning a park's image and reputation around may not only reshape daily visitor use but also affect trends in nearby neighborhood investment, and lead to increases in public funding for planning, housing, community facilities and programs, transit, economic development, and a broader green infrastructure.

As a means of revitalization, there are numerous myths from a range of cultures that parks can tie into: the Pueblo, the Commons, the Village Green, the Piazza, the City Beautiful, the Emerald City, the Potowmack (gathering site), the Sacred Place, the Garden of Eden, the Secret Garden, the Enchanted Forest, the Tree of Life, the Fountain of Youth, the Zone of Peace. Yet equally important are local meanings that people draw from a park.

For decades, Meridian Hill's dramatic formal landscape had seemed aristocratic and removed from the concerns of most of its neighbors. But this began to change when the Friends of Meridian Hill adopted the motto "A Park for All People." We pointed out that what made Meridian Hill great was how it took design ideas from private gardens around the world and incorporated them into a multicultural public space. Similarly, we stood Meridian Hill's horrendous reputation as Washington's single most violent national park on its head by ensuring that every positive development there received media coverage, building different myths and meanings for it.

III. The Landscape of Imagination, Possibility, and Play

People come to urban parks with simple needs: rest, relaxation, recreation, and respite from the city around them. Good parks meet these needs, but they also respond to deeper yearnings, giving us ideas, hope, and a sense of possibility in our lives and communities. Successful parks offer far more than pretty things to look at: they are places where we show people that our dreams can come true. Created out of leaps of faith that often defy conventional wisdom (even Olmsted scoffed at the feasibility of creating San Francisco's Golden Gate Park on an expanse of windswept dunes), parks broaden our capacity to imagine and create a better future.

The key is often encouraging a rich variety of experiences. Meridian Hill was originally designed with such "pageantry" in mind. But when we began our work there, the original vision had been forgotten, and fear had replaced fun. Today a sense of wonder and surprise has regained its place. Children studying the wind stare in amazement at the long, twisting journey of soap bubbles as they blow off the hilltop. A fascinated homeless man, himself elaborately dressed, watches a costumed septuagenarian simultaneously dance and recite poems in five languages. Older park "alumni" — urban refugees, returning after a generation — are stunned to hear music floating across the park on summer evenings. People can once again fall in love, holding hands in places that were previously ruled by fear.

Inspiring people to believe in their dreams for parks, especially in unjustly forgotten communities, may begin with simple steps that transform the way they are perceived. Children can lead the way. Two years ago, at a time when most adults had given up on it, we asked the children of Watts Branch Park to share their dreams for the park. Today they are helping implement a ten-point action plan that is once again allowing adults to see the park's possibilities. Youth have led the way in park plantings, fairs, talent shows, parades, mural painting, service projects, classes, markets, and other programs. Against the odds, Watts Branch is emerging as a place where dreams come true.

IV. The Landscape of Hospitality

Long before and ever since Mr. and Mrs. Mallard struggled to find a safe place to nest (in Robert McCloskey's immortal children's tale *Make Way for Ducklings*), non-users of parks have stayed away because they did not feel at home. The far-reaching revival of hospitality called for by the theologian Henry Nouwen and others is especially relevant to the challenge of revitalizing urban parks.



The tests for hospitality in a space are straightforward. Are there indications along a park's boundary, such as banners and other signage, that outsiders are welcome? Is a park linked to its surrounding communities through greenway or streetscape connections? Is a park easily accessible to children, pedestrians, disabled people, bicyclists, and transit riders? Are the connections from the surrounding neighborhood planned with appropriate signage, crosswalks, and traffic lighting? Are entrances well placed, lit, and maintained? Are lines of sight open so that people feel sufficiently safe and enticed to venture in? Do activity nodes connect to nearby neighborhoods in ways that encourage involvement? Do people from different cultures and backgrounds feel welcome? Are they informed how their diverse needs, comforts and interests will be met? Are park users treated with dignity by ensuring that there are good places to sit, rest, get a drink, eat, and go to the bathroom? Is this a place where strangers will be made to feel at home? Are people made to feel that their enjoyment of nature and each other is a park's paramount experience?

V. The Landscape of Freedom

Community public places are the soul of a free society. It is perhaps no accident that the American Revolution began on a village green. Yet, some managers of historic park landscapes have attempted to severely constrain public use of these places in the name of preservation. Concerns about crime have also led to measures to restrict use. But these approaches often backfire by alienating the

very people for whom the landscapes were designed and who could best watch over them. With such innocent users driven off, many historic urban landscapes have been abandoned or taken over by criminal users. By contrast, creative park managers are finding ways to encourage innocent uses that actually help free parks from fear, violence, disruption, pollution, and decay.

Appropriate rules to protect our resources and basic respect for others are important, but good parks, more than anywhere else in a city, are places where we may be ourselves. Inside a good park, we feel free to run, play, frolic, love, laugh, cry, sing, mourn, celebrate, protest, honor the Earth, be alone, give a speech, paint a picture, dance, worship, perform a ritual, wear a strange costume, or do whatever suits our fancy.

On the same "play mall" at Meridian Hill where ball-playing and kite-flying were once banned by park managers (but where the city's largest open-air drug market flourished), Sunday afternoons now produce Breughel-like tableaux of people engaged in a multitude of activities. Meanwhile, in Meridian Hill's quieter niches, made safe by the throngs of people using the rest of the park, more solitary visitors are free to picnic, sunbathe, smell the flowers, kiss, read, write, meditate and nap — uses unthinkable thirteen years ago.

Above: Through their own initiative, the members of D.C. Park Savers have once again become heroes in their communities. Photo by Scott Lewins, Washington Parks & People.

Emphasizing freedom is especially vital in reaching out to multicultural neighborhoods where many come from places and times that were not free. One must appeal both to immigrants who may have come to the U.S. to escape oppression, and to African Americans whose grandparents and great-grandparents were so recently brought here against their will.

Violence poses special challenges to freedom in parks, both because fear closes down public places and because many traditional crime-fighting measures inhibit free use of space. In the wake of last year's sniper shootings, many Washington-area parks suspended their outdoor programming. Yet this was when we most needed parks to be free and alive with people looking out for each other. Even with massive increases in police budgets, vast sections of parkland will often be unpatrolled. Countering violence and building peace fundamentally depend on people getting to know each other, bridging differences, and establishing a sense of community in public places.

VI. The Landscape of Community

A good park must have a culture and spirit where one feels comfortable speaking to "strangers." Community is talked about a great deal, but far too few people really experience it, or understand how to build and protect it. A generation of community-illiterate Americans has been instructed to avoid venturing into inner-city parks, going outdoors in the evening, loitering, or speaking to strangers — yet these can be the very best ways to discover and build community.

Urban parks are vital to community-building because they are one of the few places where people from different backgrounds can come together in peace to meet, play, and learn from one another. As anyone knows who has attended an evening performance in a park, there is no more magical feeling of community bonding than being part of an audience serenaded together through sunset into early evening. At such a time we give ourselves permission to "loiter" long enough to connect to a place. Perhaps under these circumstances we may even break the cardinal prohibition against greeting strangers.

Washington Parks & People would not exist today if the initial night crime patrols we started at Meridian Hill had not been based on greeting everyone we met there. The first night, the first person we said hello to was a teacher and minister who became our founding chair. Simply getting to know people in a park and its surrounding communities helps build concentric circles of community: family, friends, culture, organizations, neighborhoods, city, region, national origin, and world.

Today, our commitment to community outreach takes a wide variety of forms: T-shirts, flyers, banners, walks, festivals, promotional campaigns, press coverage, and strategic alliances with hundreds of cultural, environmental, and community-service and -development organizations. But our initial message — a little corny perhaps, but powerful nonetheless — is the same: "hello."

VII. The Landscape of Cultural Expression and Understanding

There is no substitute in park management for organizing activities across cultural boundaries. Such activities bring us together to celebrate the differences that make us special. Washington Parks & People has adapted Native American, African American, Latin American, and pagan European rituals to seasonal celebrations. We have helped build regular diverse uses of the parks that link the landscape to people's lives through such activities as Latino and Caribbean soccer games, African drumming circles, Mexican and Indochinese dance practices, and morning Tai Chi classes.

We have nurtured broad religious support and involvement, including Baptist, Buddhist, Catholic, Muslim, Eritrean, Evangelical, Jewish, Lutheran, Quaker, Unitarian, and tribal spiritual ceremonies. We have partnered with hundreds of arts, culture, youth, social service, and community institutions to help them use parks as extensions of their facilities. And we have brought tens of thousands of new users into parks — many initially quite nervous — for such activities as volunteer gardening and service programs, jogging, picnics, singles events, and dog-walking groups.

Free "pageantry" is another tool we have used to make parks come alive. At Meridian Hill, our efforts have included more than one hundred concerts honoring "Worlds Coming Together at the Parks," cross-cultural and youth theater (inspired by the Living Stage and Cornerstone Theater Companies), dance performances led by the Liz Lerman Dance Exchange, ceremonies honoring multicultural heroes, poetry from many cultures, African-American Civil War reenactments, Native American sunrise services, Lights of Hope fountain lighting, school graduations, weddings and memorial services, model boat regattas, and life-size chess tournaments. We even celebrated Joan of Arc's 580th birthday with the ghost of the Saint arriving in armor on horseback, along with a young girl portraying a modern-day Joan of Arc — Linda Brown, the seven-year-old whose courage led to the 1954 Brown vs. Board of Education desegregation ruling.

In the center of the most violent zone of Watts Branch



Top: Success restoring the visible, formal landscape of Meridian Hill has relied on understanding the park's invisible landscapes. Photo courtesy Project for Public Spaces.

Bottom: The “play mall” at Meridian Hill Park, where managers once banned such valuable community-building activities as pickup soccer matches. Photo by Andrew Wiley-Schwartz, Project for Public Spaces.

Park, we transformed a forbidding, overgrown hillside into the Marvin Gaye Amphitheater. After volunteers cleaned away the debris and weeds, teens made a sign, and flyers went up announcing a talent show. On the appointed day, all it took was an open microphone to make a dream of thirty years standing come true.

VIII. The Landscape of Learning and Enrichment

Frederick Law Olmsted understood the power of urban parks to enrich the lives of park users through a broad range of informal and programmed experiences. The National Park Service, the Student Conservation Association, AmeriCorps, city school systems, and community programs such as D.C.'s Robert Lederer Youth Gardens and Environmental Education Center have all developed useful models of parks as classrooms, laboratories, and places for service learning.

At Watts Branch, a site formerly known as "Needle Park" has been replaced by a center of youth education and programming called "Heritage Park." Here classes and groups of all kinds come to hear trained Urban Park Rangers and other community storytellers conduct daily tours.

In addition, community-development corporations and other agencies are now developing job-training programs in parks, and even exploring innovative programs for park concessions and related enterprises. Such organizations are clearly striving to make the park experience relevant to the needs of surrounding communities. Without sacrificing the historic integrity of parks, an important challenge today is to find ways for urban parks to serve as economic engines for depressed inner-city areas. In this way, increased public investment in parks can be justified as promoting broader community goals of safety, pride, revitalization and reinvestment.

Last summer at Watts Branch, on the former site of a major heroin market, a group called the Natural Leaders launched a new kind of market — a farm stand to sell produce grown in the park's youth garden. The farm stand helped drive drug dealers from the park and enrich life in a community that had not had a produce market in decades.

Possibilities abound in the parks for lifelong learning and enrichment. At Watts Branch, ex-offenders are learning job and life skills, working in a landscape restoration team they call D.C. Park Savers. Such older men are once again heroes and mentors in a community that needs both.

IX. The Landscape of Sustainability and Livability

Parks of all sizes provide a vital link between inner-city residents and the Earth. This connection is important for

advancing the sustainability, livability, and environmental justice of surrounding communities. Ecological restoration, resource economics, air and water quality, non-automotive greenway links, accessibility to active living, anti-sprawl measures, safety, and cultural vitality are key standards for identifying great places to live in the twenty-first century.

Parks are positioned at the center of all of these considerations. In a listing of the most livable cities in America, *Money* magazine used clean air, cultural institutions, and parks as evaluation screens. On the basis of these screens, it rated Washington, D.C., the most livable large metropolitan area on the East Coast.

Increasingly, there is evidence that our survival depends on parks. Statistics from the Centers for Disease Control show a direct link between poorer inner-city communities and inactivity. If parks are made welcoming and safe, people living nearby may be able to increase their level of activity and avoid obesity and other health problems. More broadly, deeper daily connections to the Earth remind people how all life is sustained and made worth living.

X. The Landscape of Stewardship and Stakeholdership

*Whose woods these are I do not know
His house is in the village though.*

The "owners" of parks can no longer be like the unseen landholder of Robert Frost's poem. Public agencies and communities must work hand-in-hand as true co-owners of parks. Few people would dispute that the long-term future of parks depends on new and lasting roles for the public in planning, protection, programming, and philanthropy. Neighbors must become not merely involved, but invested in real opportunities to contribute to the lasting future of our parks.

Across the nation and around the world, we must ensure sound long-term financing and management of our parklands. But park leaders must also recognize that they are no longer merely agency managers or stewards of historic monuments. They are builders of major institutions that depend on and contribute to every aspect of community life. Like the plants and animals we nurture in the physical landscape, we must find ways to give new life every day to the dreams and invisible landscapes that make these places special and help sustain us. In so doing, we will set the stage for a physical landscape imbued with meaning and significance for generations to come.

“Deputizing” the Streetscape

The National Capital Urban Design and Security Plan is based upon a very simple idea: integrate the street improvements that cities and property owners already make with the measures that security officials are seeking. That way, cities are not trying to accomplish two things with two separate budgets over time, and we can eliminate the ad-hoc systems of barriers you see in cities everywhere.

The question is, can security and streetscape be combined in some fashion? Can you harden, or “deputize,” street elements like benches and planters, light poles and newsstands, information kiosks, so they both provide a measure of curbside security and continue to do what they’ve already done, which is to enliven the character of the street?

GSA’s guidelines for security define six zones of concern. The first two, which deal with improving a building so it can withstand attack, are not a concern of this study. We are essentially dealing with zones three,

four and five — the parking lane, the sidewalk, and the building setback, if there is one. Obviously, the deeper the setback, the better it is from a blast standpoint. But deep setbacks create the problematic condition of buildings that are not very good from an urban standpoint. That’s a challenge for GSA as it develops new buildings and has to address these new setback requirements.

The task forced wanted to come up with a strategy for central Washington, a “kit of parts” of elements that might be designed, with a little more cost, to provide security and avoid the proliferation of Jersey barriers. We looked at ordinary components of the streetscape that are sometimes thought of as embellishments but could also be components of security — benches, lampposts, planter walls, wastepaper containers, newspaper boxes, and so on. This could include trees, by the way, if they are of a certain caliper.

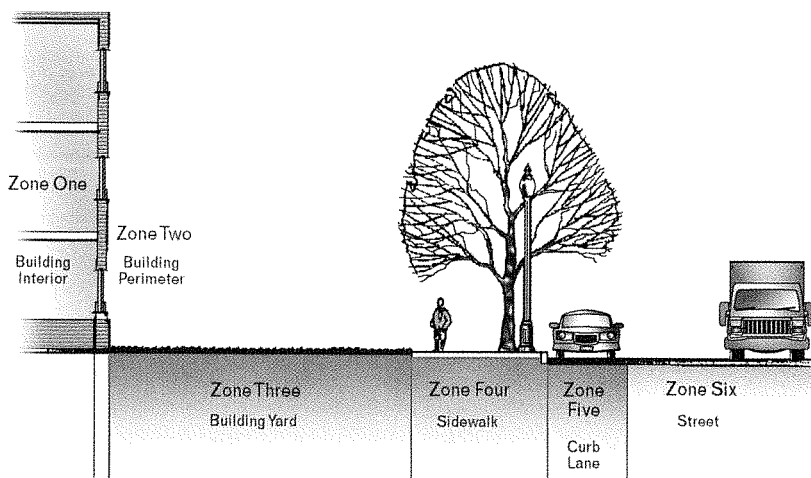
Can we deputize all of these elements? Can we design components that would be part of making our

street environment more gracious, while providing security?

The greatest challenge is not the monumental core, but downtown. What you want to avoid is each building doing its own thing. You would like to establish certain corridors in the city along which you create a more continuous streetscape, just as you would if you were doing an ordinary street project, but in this case you are trying to incorporate security as well. The point is not to work building by building, but block by block, not only to provide security but also to enhance the street environment.

— Alex Krieger

Alex Krieger is chair of the Department of Urban Design and Planning at the Harvard School of Design, and principal in Chan Krieger Associates.



Left: Security zones established by GSA.

Opposite top: Ad-hoc security streetscape, West End, Washington, D.C.

Opposite bottom: Detail of proposed perimeter fence streetscape element.

All photos and graphics courtesy of National Capital Planning Commission.

The Garden of Hua Mei

Andrew Wiley-Schwartz



From their apartment on the second floor, Federico Savini and Anna Magenta would look out the window into New York City's Sara Delano Roosevelt Park and watch. At first, it was the Dominican kids playing baseball in the old wading pool. Then the Dominicans showed the Chinese kids how to play baseball, and then there were teams. In the mornings, older Chinese men would come with their songbirds and put the cages in the central area where shrubs and plants had given way to dirt and garbage. In the evenings, the heroin dealers and their customers would take over. All day long, homeless men traded places and slept on the benches along the park's perimeter.

Sara Delano Roosevelt Park is a long, narrow, Depression-era park on New York City's Lower East Side. It was built on the site of some of the city's most notorious tenement slums to bring light, air and recreation to this overcrowded, multicultural, often contested neighborhood. Some blocks were renovated in the early 1990s, but Savini and Magenta's block remained neglected, dirty and unfriendly.

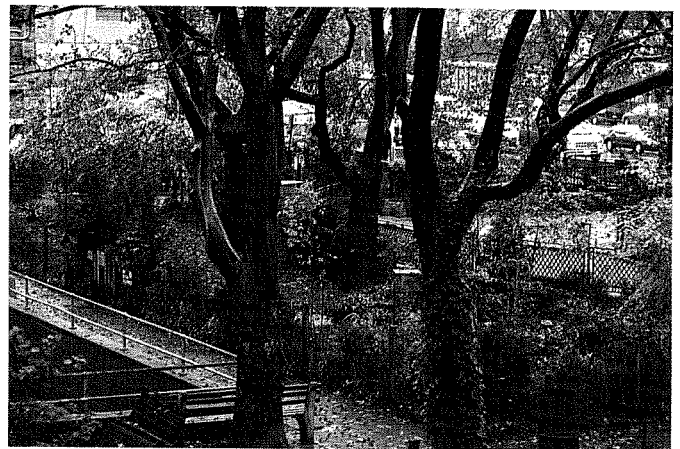
In the summer of 1995, Savini, a photographer, and Magenta, a filmmaker, decided to stop watching and do something. They approached the local community board and obtained permission to do landscaping work on the park's border gardens. Resourcefulness was key to getting

anything done. They obtained leftover fencing materials from a nearby improvement project. When several river birch trees were torn out of Central Park to make way for the infamous Pocohantas launch celebration, Savini provided them with a new home.

On her visits to the park each morning to water the thirsty birches, Magenta got to know the men sleeping on the benches. "They were actually the police of the park," she said. "They would yell at the dealers to keep them away from the garden." The outspoken Magenta had several confrontations herself with the drug dealers and addicts, who were angry they might no longer be allowed to congregate there.

Savini and Magenta were soon joined in the garden by neighbors and the local children. "We wouldn't have had a chance of surviving if [the kids] hadn't helped," said Magenta, who noted that while their labor was useful, their stewardship was essential. As more community members joined, "it [became] like a happening," said Magenta. "It's not about being in control and dominating, it's about looking at what people are doing and helping them do it."

Savini began thinking about the central garden area where the Chinese men had been bringing their birds every morning to sing. The birds were a special kind of thrush known in Chinese as *hua mei*. "I had my eye on



them because they were in the space that I really wanted to be working in, and I wanted to work with them to improve it," she said.

One day, while she was planting small evergreen trees, one of the men approached and asked if she would build a garden for their birds. He explained that if the birds were surrounded by low, lush plants, they would feel more at home and sing more sweetly. "It was the chance I had been waiting for," she said.

In the spring of 1995, the group, aided by a \$1,750 grant from the Trust for Public Land (and officially organized as the Forsythe Street Garden Conservancy), built the bird garden with the help of neighborhood children. Today the garden takes the form of a semicircular area of about 2,000 sq.ft., dense with stone paths, boulders, lush perennials, and small native and Asiatic shrubs, particularly berry-producing plants that attract wild birds. Posts made from old plumbing pipes and planted with clematis vines accommodate the bird cages. A paved area in front of the garden is used for morning *tai chi*.

In nice weather the garden may be filled with as many as thirty singing birds, along with the men that own them and other residents. The singing nearly drowns out the rumble of traffic on busy Delancey Street, and the dense foliage provides visual protection for the birds and the watchers. As the garden's reputation has grown, people bring their *hua mei* from miles away; one participant regularly drives three hours from Albany. Magenta and Savini believe they have the only garden in the country dedicated to *hua mei*.

Today, the garden is maintained by volunteers, including school groups, teens from a transitional facility, and others referred by New York Cares, a citywide nonprofit agency. Less receptive to the group's work has been the Parks Department, with whom park volunteers have feuded over everything from "official" vehicle parking in the play area to a proposed dog run. (Magenta opposed the dog run because she believed the park's flexible design should accommodate many constituencies, not just one).

Savini looks out his window at a progression of activities in the block-long space. It continues to amaze him even after years of watching. A day-care group comes in the morning, then Chinese ballet and fan dancing. Theater, *tai chi* and badminton clubs, along with baseball and casual play are all in evidence — one activity flowing into the next with little or no conflict. The garden has even become a regular stop on official walking tours of the Lower East Side.

This article was adapted from a previous case study of the park which appeared on the Project for Public Spaces Website: www.pps.org.

Opposite: Hua mei birds nestle in their cages among shrubs.

Top left: The garden after its cleaning, but before its renovation.

Top right: The garden from the same view as left, but one year after renovations.

Bottom left: Every morning Chinese men from all over the region bring their birds to the garden.

Bottom right: The hua mei, a kind of thrush, sings beautifully, but only under the care of a knowing owner.

Photos courtesy Federico Savini.

Once in a Blue Moon

Donlyn Lyndon

The Piazza Bucintoro at the Lido in Venice, Italy, may best be considered as an extraordinary park pavilion. It is a place of public use located at the intersection of the famous Lido beach with a wide, grand avenue leading across the island from the Venice lagoon to the sands of the Adriatic shore. It's an intricate structure of steel and stucco and paths that offers many things. It is a landmark, a fantasy, a pair of gardens, a platform for performances, an outlook, and a threshold to the beach. It sits at the site of the legendary Blue Moon, a free-spirited jazz nightclub destroyed out of spite by the Nazis when they abandoned their occupation of Venice at the end of World War II.

The piazza is a place to gather, a place to be alone among others; a place to soak in the sun, a place to rest in the shade; a place for watching and a place to be on display. It can be a place of resort, and a place of reflection; a place to dance, and a place to clap. It will let you preen across platforms, nestle against walls, burrow into the sand, and spiral into the sky. The way that it has been designed encourages you to move through, over, under, and around its various elements — and yet those elements are distinct enough to serve as nodal points for both personal and collective memories.

The many opportunities that this place affords, and its capacity to garner memories both result from the inventive and disciplined geometric investigations that its architect, Giancarlo De Carlo, has used to govern its design. De Carlo, one of the leading architects of Italy, may be best known in the U.S. for decades of work in the hilltown of Urbino. There, his overall urban plan guided preservation of the city's important historic qualities, while his designs for brick and concrete buildings, admirably suited to

their sites, allowed expansion of its university — both within and outside the ancient city walls. At the Lido, the challenge, and the vocabulary used, are much different. Here, De Carlo's use of multiple overlapping geometric figures, and a web of interlocking steel members has allowed the design to absorb and integrate an array of different conditions and requirements.

At its core the project is a network of differing paths, each affording choices of outlook, shade, and enclosure. The paths require varying degrees of effort in movement, and they offer many different prospects for meeting other people who may also be using the buildings, terraces, and beach. By choosing among these paths and combining them, people may construct differing itineraries for encounter and experience — depending on their moods, purposes, and physical conditions.

The itineraries that are constructed through places, and the sequences of views and encounters they involve, fill the vessels of the mind with daily content. In Venice, intricate, unfolding paths, which lace between buildings, along canals, over bridges, and through the open *campi*, sew the fabric of the city into a place of perpetual discovery. Here, in the midst of the much more conventionally structured Lido, the forms are very different. But the diversity, complexity, and episodic quality of the experiences that this single work of public architecture affords are comparably engaging.

Take for example several possible choices of itinerary:

- People reaching the site by walking north along the beachfront avenue may choose to go down a ramped passage and around the side of the building directly to the beach. Alternatively, they may proceed

a little farther north to descend gentle steps to the shelter of a broad circular porch, fronted by the stucco walls of the main restaurant, bar, and service building, and then pass through a surprising slot, and out, between wood stages, to the beach.

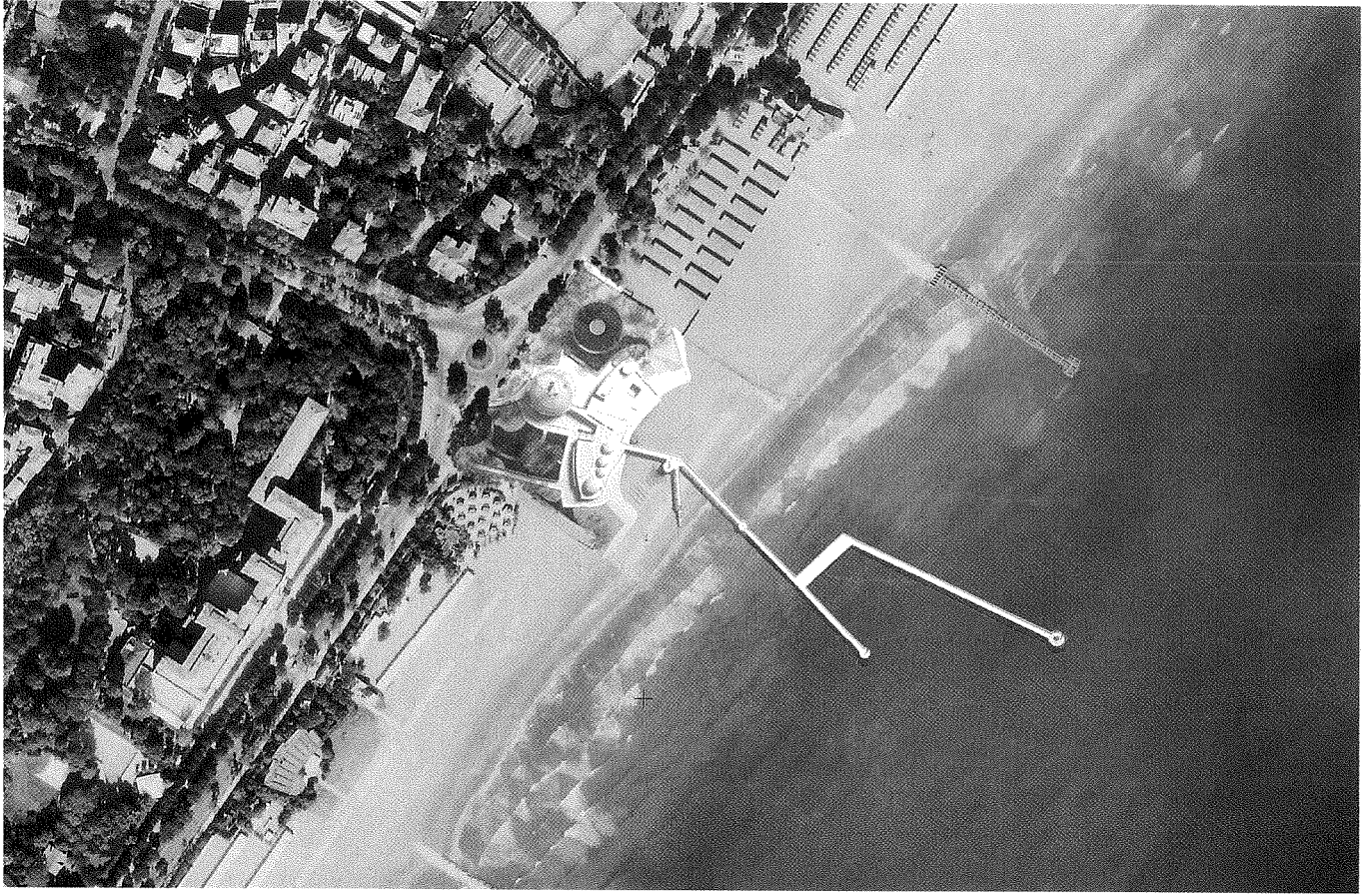
- Or, from the street, they might climb a narrow set of stairs to the top of the circular raised wooden platform from which they can view the broad surroundings (and be seen from afar, as though on a stage). They might then cross over a bridge to the roof terraces of the main building — there to linger in the sun or proceed out along a raised platform toward the sea. Along the way they may decide either to remain on the elevated lookout scanning the beach, or descend sharply onto the sand, perhaps to duck into the shade of the main structure.
- Less beach-inclined visitors will be able to move to either side of the circular platform/porch structure and find places to sit in a garden on long concrete benches amongst vegetation, the dappled shade of trees, and a fountain. Later, they may choose to enter the restaurant or peruse the scene from one of the domed bar spaces in the softly colored stucco interior, or simply stroll among the row of columns outside, that forms the sea side of the building.
- Or a visitor may choose to do all of the above.

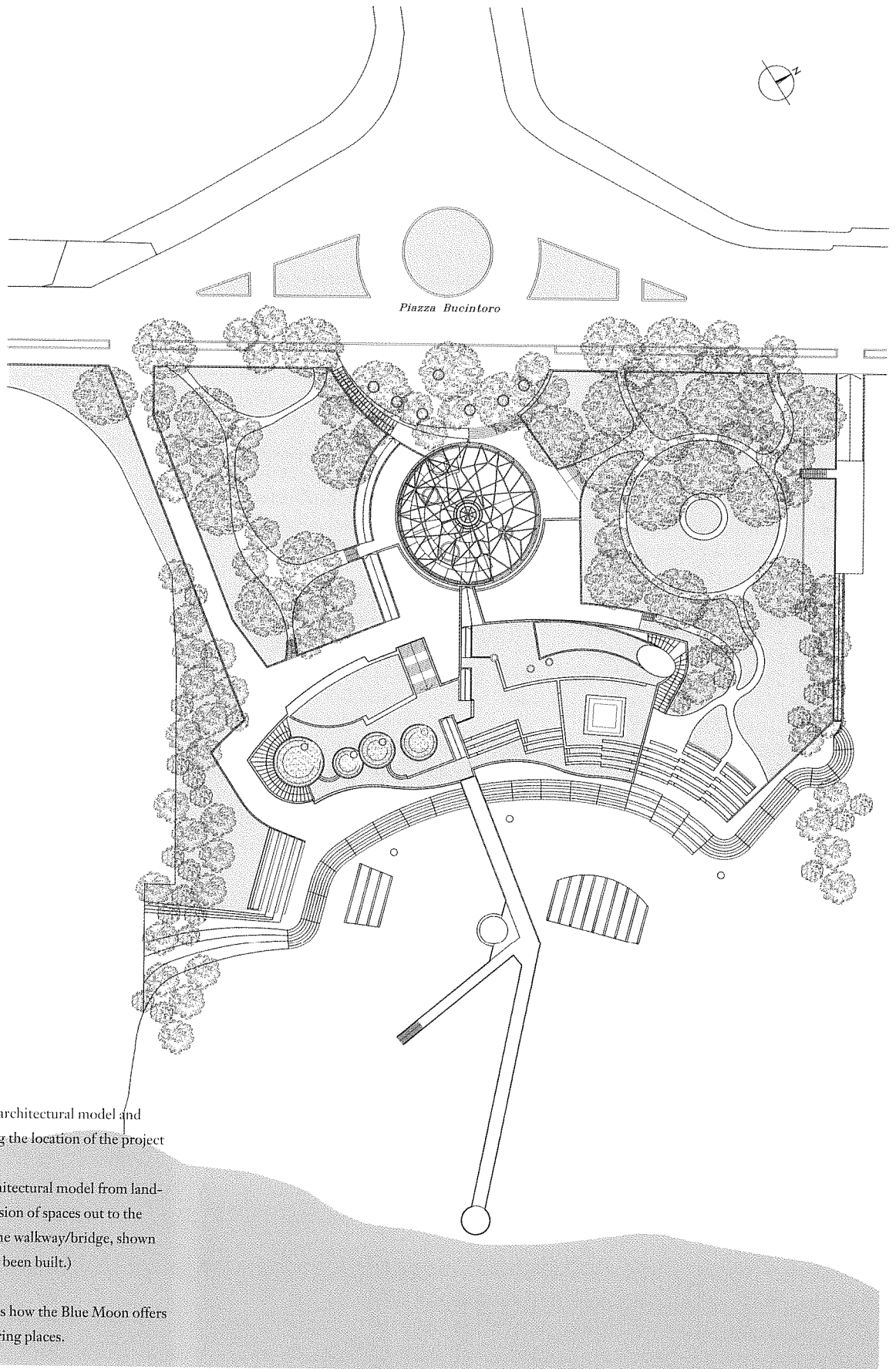
Each person who moves through, observes, or participates in the experience of this architecture will, of course, bring his or her own

Above: View along walkway/bridge to sea.

Below: View from lower level up through wooden platform to dome and stair.







Left top: Collage view of architectural model and aerial photograph, showing the location of the project in the Lido of Venice.

Left bottom: View of architectural model from landward, showing the progression of spaces out to the beach. (The extension of the walkway/bridge, shown in both images, has not yet been built.)

Above: The site plan shows how the Blue Moon offers numerous paths and gathering places.

expectations and associations to it. Each will therefore take away a different experience of the place. Yet their responses, though individualized, will be prompted by the structure that has been established — by the nature of the movements in which they are engaged, the character of the scenes which unfold, the presence of the people and things they encounter, the nature of the forms and relationships to which they are invited to give their attention, and the varying qualities of light and air in which all is immersed.

This is an architecture that is richly participatory. It goes beyond simply meeting expectations and proffering a range of immediate physical experiences and social encounters. It offers as well the prospects of reflection and association. And it affords opportunities to make connections to a larger order in the community, to the history and ecology of the territory, and to the imaginative attention of the people who use it.

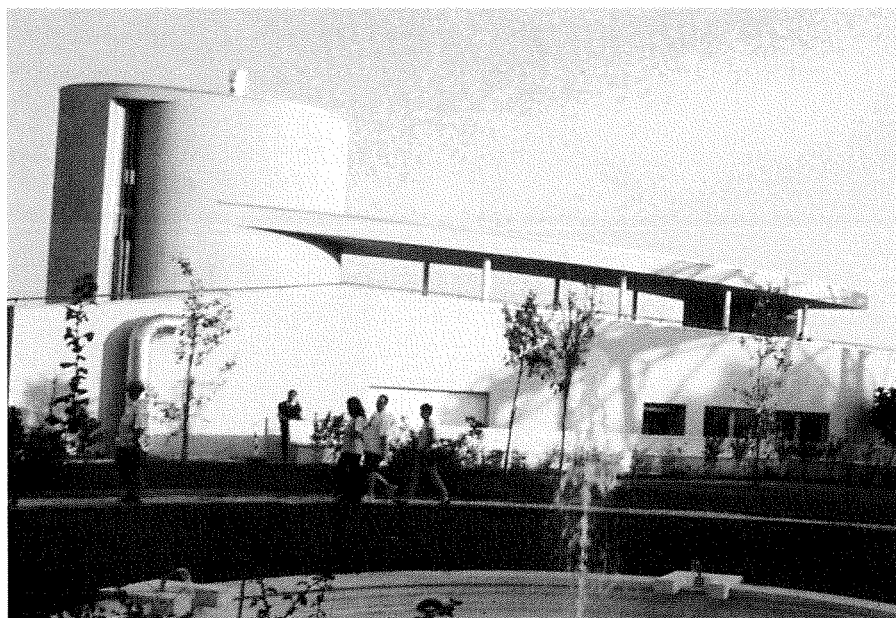
The structure that marks all this in the larger landscape is an unusual dome constructed of steel framing that is irregularly placed and

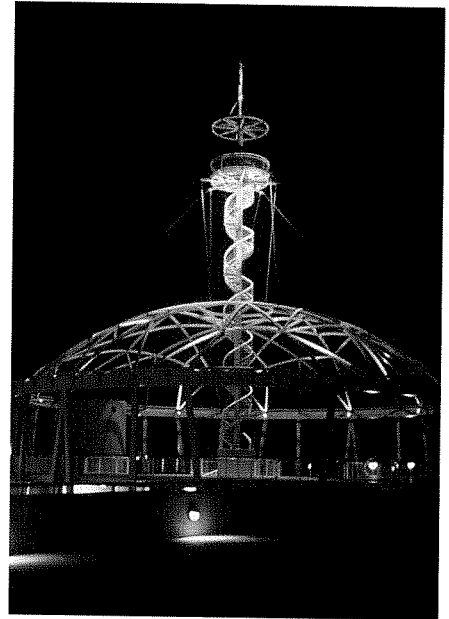
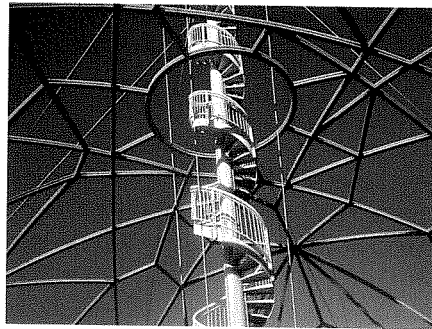
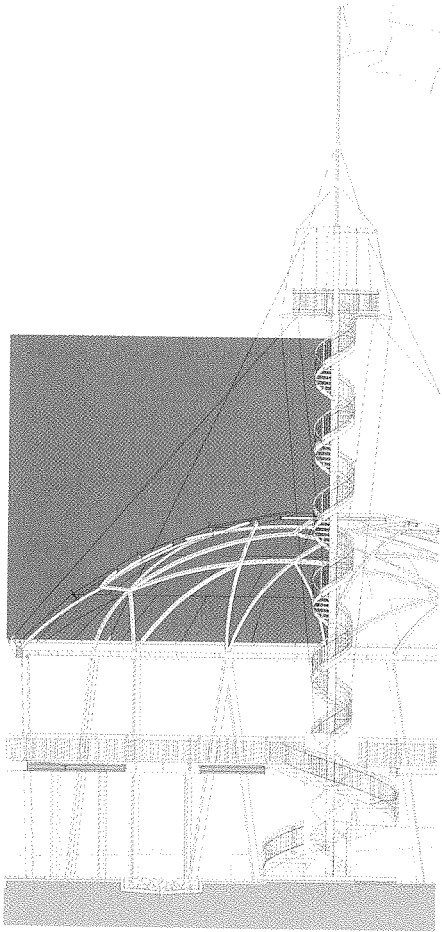
somewhat inexplicable. The dome is partially supported by a central mast, with cables tying elements together. Here, De Carlo has bypassed the simplified patterns of order that have enabled generations of designers to grasp control of the forces of gravity. Instead, he has capitalized on the computer's ability to sort through a larger set of factors in determining a pattern for load distribution that brings other considerations to bear. Thus, the form of the dome still carries conventional landmark qualities, but the stability of perception that a domical form generally affords — appearing the same from all angles — is replaced by more ephemeral qualities.

Plans call for the dome to be partially skinned with wood lattice so that its surface will appear incomplete, with light filtered through to the spaces below. In addition, the dome's structural members take surprising angles, relating more to the bent trunks of surrounding wind-swept trees than to the geometrically calibrated and rectified traditions that are more familiar in buildings. This is

a form full of surprises, one that engages the interest of passers-by with patterns and shadows that shift according to viewpoint and time of day.

Those who enjoy puzzling about buildings and studying their forms will recognize a semblance of the traditional domes surmounting public places; and for the small, delicately tiled domes on the roof they may imagine sources in North Africa (or on the roof of the grand exotic hotel distantly visible down the beach). But they may also see, along with some Italian commentators, that the mast rising through the platform and dome carries recollections of the great sailing vessels that created the wealth and culture of Venice. Moreover, if they are familiar with De Carlo's eloquent talks and writings, they may see hints, in the complex geometry and stair winding up through it, of the angled, spiraling framework of Tatlin's Tower — the stunning revolutionary image created in the Russia of 1919 — an image intended to signal the promise of fresh ways of thinking for a society based on benefits for all.





This design by De Carlo, which has come to be known by the name of its antecedent, the Blue Moon, is a lesson in what architecture can give to place. It has things happening above, below, around the corner, and in the mind — and it makes them securely a part of the site. It amplifies the ability of this location to support the life experiences of many people with varying interests, associations and expectations, yet it binds their disparate encounters together through the magnetism of a distinct

and memorable structure; a place that is figuratively spinning at the intersection of sea, sand and city.

All site photographs are by Lou Embo and Francesco Calzolaio. Photography of model by Andrea Martiradonna. The associated architect was Antonio Troisi. All images are courtesy of Studio De Carlo, Milan, Italy.

Opposite left: From the street, the forms and structures of the Blue Moon invite exploration.

Opposite right: The walkway bridges land and sea.

Above: Detailed views of framework dome, spiral stair, and mast.

**U.S. General Services
Administration,
Urban Development**

Rethinking Fortress Federalism

The following discussion took place at the conference session, "Security and Design in the Nation's Capital," held March 30, 2003, at the American Planning Association's national conference in Denver.

The National Capital Urban Design and Security Plan

People and places all over the world were greatly affected by September 11, but some places were virtually transformed, physically, psychologically and economically. One of those places is Washington, D.C., whose design is specifically intended to reflect an open, free and democratic society.

The impact of security measures on the District were apparent long before Sept. 11. When Pennsylvania Avenue was closed to traffic after the Oklahoma City bombing, it created a dead space at the very place where the President's house faces an open, public street.

Since Sept. 11, we have seen more and more makeshift security measures that compromise the beauty of monumental Washington. These fortifications communicate fear and entrenchment, and they undermine the principles of an open and democratic society.

Security design issues are not unique to the nation's capital, and Jersey barriers are no more attractive in your cities than they are in Washington. Most of you are also struggling to provide security that doesn't sap the life and beauty of your communities.

Two years ago the National Capital Planning Commission established an interagency security task force to evaluate the impact of increasing security measures on Washington's monumental core. One of its key recommendations was to call for a comprehensive plan that would integrate perimeter security into the monumental fabric of historic Washington.

The underlying premise of the plan is that it is possible to have both good security and good urban design. The

objective of our plan is to improve the function and the appearance of the monumental core, integrating perimeter security into attractive streetscapes and beautiful landscapes, and to coordinate the design and installation of these security measures. This means providing security around buildings and monuments, and expanding the palette of street furnishings and landscape treatments that can be used for security.

As far as we know, this is the first plan to address this problem in a comprehensive way. We don't think for a moment that we have the last word on this. Rather, we have opened the discussion about how to achieve an appropriate balance between providing security and sustaining livable communities.

We hope this discussion will involve planners and policymakers, designers and developers who are confronting these security issues. This conversation should go on for some time because it is necessary for communities to establish common, civic values that reflect our expectations of urban centers and our understanding of what constitutes a democratic society.

— Patricia Gallagher

Patricia Gallagher is executive director of the National Capital Planning Commission.



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Creating Great Urban Parks



We believe that urban parks can and should evolve from their current, primarily recreational role, to serve as important catalysts for community development and enhancement. Parks have the potential to be an essential component in transforming and enriching our cities. A park and its surrounding area can be thought of not only as a place to understand and relate to nature, but also as a place for social and cultural exchange. A park can be a place that is alive and teeming with entrepreneurial activities such as markets; recreational activities such as children playing or people skating; casual activities such as walking and jogging; or as a setting for art and community events.

For many years, and in many cities throughout the world, parks have played a pivotal role in shaping communities. The first formal “parks,” such as Central Park in New York City, were created in the nineteenth century to be passive and beautiful, in contrast to the dense, dirty reality of urban life. The Sailboat Pond in Central Park is a good example of a successful place create in this tradition. It

was designed to be both a park destination and a place to enjoy nature.

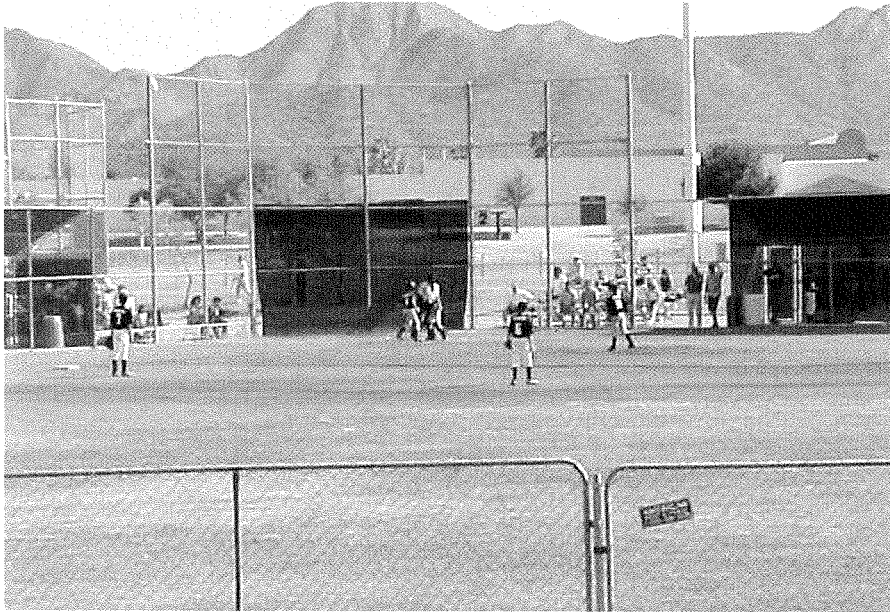
More recently, parks have come to be thought of as only one part of a larger system of open spaces that also includes town squares, plazas, greenways, and a variety of other types of spaces. In fact, the term “open space system” is often used to describe everything in a city that is not a building or a road. Such a view suggests a wide range of benefits that parks can provide. Yet most cities have not yet realized the benefits of quality public spaces and public life. And many have not even begun to explore the role that parks can play in revitalizing communities.

Many of today’s urban parks provide space for few activities other than traditional forms of recreation. Neither do they make much effort to attract people such as seniors or children, or people who are just looking for a good place to sit or walk on a daily basis. Sometimes, they don’t even include sidewalks or places of

Above: Laguna Beach, California.

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shade — or places where one might buy a sandwich or cup of coffee. The danger here is that when there are too few reasons for people to go to parks, fewer people use them, and they cease to be valued.

We have found that two important factors are involved in creating parks that are important community places. The first is determining whether a park is a successful “place.” A good place provides a range of things to do — a multitude of activities for different age groups and types of people (activity and use). It is also easy to get to and connected to the surrounding community (accessibility). It is safe, clean and attractive, and there should be places to sit (comfort and image). Most importantly, it is a place to meet people, an integral part of community life (sociability).

The second important factor involves process. The first step here is to understand community concerns, but one should also observe how a park is used and measure people’s perceptions of it. Lastly, one should determine how the assets of the community can be used to develop a plan

and program for the park. If all these steps are completed successfully, a positive community vision for the new park will emerge.

Of course, the final and essential step is to do something: to make changes, to experiment and evaluate how changes have affected use.

What follows are a few examples of parks that have become catalysts in the transformation of urban areas.

Union Square Park, New York City

At one time Union Square Park was a hub for hotels, theaters and fashion, and a center of political debate among labor unionists, communists, anarchists, and socialists. Yet by the early 1970s the area surrounding the park had become run-down, and the park itself had come to be perceived as dangerous. However, in recent years the park has been renovated based on its historic design.

As part of this effort, a business improvement district was developed in the area around the park. A farmer’s market and seasonal Christmas market were also established in the parking lots at its north and west ends.

The park, the market, and the surrounding areas have since flourished. The market in particular now attracts many people, provides entrepreneurial opportunities, and gives the community a valuable connection to the farms and land surrounding the city.

Laguna Beach, California

A linear park and walkway are now located between the Pacific Coast Highway and the Pacific Ocean in downtown Laguna Beach, California. These spaces provide a range of facilities: courts for small-sided sports such as basketball, climbing structures for children, seating and game areas, a boardwalk for strolling, a cafe, and extensive flower beds and landscape displays. The park is considered a major asset to the community.

San Bernadino, California

Until recently, the heart of San Bernadino consisted of a large parking lot in front of City Hall, surrounded by streets with fast-moving traffic. In an attempt to bring people back downtown, a central square has now been built that includes a lawn surrounded by a trellis, a walkway and seating areas, and a bus stop. Through the addition of angled parking on the streets around the park, traffic has also been slowed, and the park has become more accessible to its surrounding areas.

Unique to the creation of this park was the idea that the planning and programming of the new park would come directly from the community. To accomplish this, the city and the downtown business association asked all nonprofit associations interested in using the park to contact them. They received many letters and calls in return, and today a tent is located at one end of the square, in which weddings, holiday performances, and fashion shows are held. In addition,



communities — as economic incubators, as environmental centers, as places of social interaction. Parks can be important institutions where residents can share heritage and learn about each other. And they can simply be places for people to go for a stroll, to take a break from their hectic daily lives.

—Fred Kent and Kathy Madden



there are several different types of markets around the park's perimeter. Today this space is functioning as a successful central square for the people of San Bernadino.

Today, some cities are beginning to see that parks can contribute significantly to the quality of life for their residents. By integrating parks into the cultural lives of neighborhoods,

and by giving responsibility for maintenance, new programs, and (in some cases) design to communities themselves, there has been a renewal of interest in parks in places where they were previously thought to be impossible.

To create great parks and great cities we have to take the next step: to create parks that belong to their com-

Opposite : Ballfield near Scottsdale, Arizona.

Top: Union Square Green Market, New York City.

Bottom: Flower vendors in Union Square, New York City.

Photos courtesy Project for Public Spaces.

Parks as Places: What's on Our Bookshelves

What makes a park a beloved place in a community? At Project for Public Spaces we have spent twenty-eight years watching, researching and listening to communities, and helping guide them through the visioning and design process. And over the years we have sifted through many books in search of answers and techniques. As anyone knows who has visited our offices, our bookshelves are stocked with volumes on what makes a place great.

How does one get a handle on all this material? Is there an essential reading list of material on great parks? One way to approach this question may be to identify critical attributes that most active, social places share, and then sort through some of the best writing in each area.

At PPS we have identified four key attributes of successful parks. A good park place provides a range of things to do (“uses and activities”). It must be easy to get to and connected to the surrounding community (“access and linkages”). It must be safe, clean, and attractive (“comfort and image”). And, perhaps, most important, it must be a place to meet other people (“sociability”). These four characteristics provide a useful lens through which to examine some of the most important writing on parks.

Activities and Uses

“City parks are not abstractions,” wrote Jane Jacobs in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (Vintage, 1961). “They mean nothing divorced from their practical tangible uses, and hence they mean nothing divorced from the tangible effects on them — for good or for ill — of the city districts and uses touching them.”

Jacobs’s famous book calls out the dynamic that still befuddles communities, city planners, and designers. No two parks should be alike, because no

two neighborhoods are exactly alike. What types of activities make parks community magnets? One way to identify these activities is to use an asset map. This tool, developed by John McNight and John P. Kretzmann of Northwestern University, and elucidated in their *Building Community from the Inside Out* (ACTA Publications, 1997) surveys a community based on its strengths and abilities. Artists, gardeners, and other community “assets” can then be mustered for the cause. Chess groups, music groups, or any of the myriad community organizations, small or large, can find a home within a park, when the redevelopment or design process acts to include them from the beginning.

Addressing uses in this way is in direct contrast to typical “recreation” model of building tennis courts and basketball hoops and expecting people to come to them. In his book *A Sense of Place, A Sense of Time* (Yale, 1996), J.B. Jackson attributes the loss of community in America to the decline of park use. With more people seeking recreational activities in malls and sports arenas — self-contained structures, largely privately owned with ties only to their neighboring parking lots — parks have been left behind. Tapping into community assets can be part of the solution, showing that parks offer a community-inspired and very public alternative to these more private, and expensive models.

In addition, clustering uses and edge activities is equally important. When a park provides a place for people to ice skate and also an area nearby where people can sit and talk, get warm, and get something to eat or drink, its chances of becoming a good place are increased, simply because there are numerous things to do. A good place should be regularly available so that people can rely on

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it when the chatting whim strikes. *The Great Good Place* by Ray Oldenburg (Marlow and Co., 1999) identifies neighborhood spots that act as the glue of their communities, drawing people to them for companionship and relaxation. Examples might be a neighborhood bocce court, a corner bar, a coffeehouse, or a playground — all are places characterized by popular informality. Lyn Lofland's *The Public Realm* (Aldine De Gruyter, 1998) helps to explain why people use some public open spaces while avoiding others.

Comfort and Image

Good details can tantalize — they signal that someone took the time and energy to design amenities that welcome, intrigue, or help. Two books in particular are packed with thoughtful design ideas and design guidelines. They are *City Comforts: How to Build an Urban Village* (City Comforts Press, 1995) by planner/developer David Sucher; and *People Places: Design Guidelines for Urban Open Spaces* (Wiley, 1997), edited by Clare Cooper Marcus and Carolyn Francis. Both include advice on designing such things as community bulletin boards, restrooms, shade trees, child-friendly niches, and bike racks.

Another classic in this field is *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces* (PPS, 1980) by urbanologist William Whyte. Among other things, Whyte talks about the importance of movable seating. When two thousand movable chairs were scattered on the lawn of Bryant Park, it helped transformed that once-notorious space on New York's 42nd Street into a one of Midtown's most popular outdoor hangouts. As Whyte noted long ago, "People like to sit where there are places to sit."

Access and Linkage

A good place is easy to see and easy to get to — people want to see that there is something to do, that others have been successfully enticed to enter. On the other hand, if a park is not visible from the street or the street is too dangerous for older people and children to cross, the park won't be used. The more successful a place is, the more the success will feed upon itself. Sometimes, if a place is really good, people will walk through it even if they were headed somewhere else. Tony Hiss's *The Experience of Place* (Vintage, 1991) explores how people look ahead to orient themselves: "We let the layout of a place give us an advance reading on such things as whether we can linger there or need to keep on moving."

Transit and access became a major preoccupation with park planners in the nineteenth century, as street car lines, trolleys and parkways were developed to facilitate the movement of people into parks, but the best way to arrive at a park is on foot. Olmsted designed entire systems of parkways in Brooklyn and Buffalo to lead people to his regional parks. For smaller parks, proximity is everything. In *A Pattern Language* (Oxford, 1977) Christopher Alexander notes, "The only people who make full, daily use of parks are those who live less than three minutes from them. The other people in a city who live more than three minutes away, don't need parks any less; but distance discourages use and so they are unable to nourish themselves, as they need to do."

Sociability

A sociable place is one where people want to go to observe the passing scene, meet friends, and celebrate interaction with a wide range of people that are different from themselves. Their users can anticipate

lively conversations with the "regulars," "characters," and other neighbors. According to Ray Oldenburg, in good places every person is known for their social self, not as an employee or family member — roles, he says, that can make people feel like they are in straightjackets from which they long to escape. A good place also encourages people to "sit and set a spell." Being able to sit, converse or just look at passersby is key.

"People come where people are" says an old Scandinavian proverb quoted by Jan Gehl in his classic *Life Between Buildings* (Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1987). Gehl's meticulous study of Copenhagen reveals a love for the exacting practice of people watching in public spaces. Gehl's long-term research on Copenhagen's walking streets and squares is brought up to date in his more recent *Public Spaces Public Life* (Danish Architectural Press, 1996).

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the promenades of seaside resorts and beaches such as Coney Island in Brooklyn, NY, and Hoboken, NJ, were lined with popular attractions such as food sellers, shooting matches, and horseshoe pitching. This focus on social and recreational activities and amusement in parks was supplanted by the great picturesque parks designed by Frederick Law Olmsted and others that still frame what people think of as parks. Cranz, whose *The Politics of Park Design* (MIT Press, 1982) has set the stage for all studies of American parks, wrote that park officials in the nineteenth century discouraged loud activities in favor of leisurely strolls and appreciation of the beauties of nature. Cranz notes that Olmsted discouraged many active uses and actively fought against flower gardens, because, he felt, they showed too obviously the "hand of man."

However, Olmsted's intention was not, as many people think, to create vast, seemingly empty, pastoral landscapes. He saw parks as essential democratic tools, helping to bring people together on equal terms. In an 1870 essay, Olmsted wrote, "Men must come together, and must be seen coming together, in carriages, on horseback and on foot, and the course of animated life must in itself be made an attractive and diverting spectacle." See *Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted*, Supplementary Series, Vol. I (Johns Hopkins, 1997).

General Sources

There are some sources that do not fit into these categories neatly, yet belong on the bookshelf of every informed practitioner.

One key factor working in virtually every successful park in the U.S. is the active backing of an interested community — whether this be a loosely affiliated group of volunteers or an organized nonprofit conservancy of gardeners, programming specialists, and administrators. *Public Parks, Private Partners* (PPS, 2000) is a study of the range of parks organizations now operating in the U.S. It describes what roles they play in their locale, and what relationships they have to pertinent city and regional administrations.

Probably the most successful example of a nonprofit organization rising to the task of managing a park effectively, is New York's Central Park Conservancy. Elizabeth Barlow Rogers' *Rebuilding Central Park: A Management and Restoration Plan* (MIT Press, 1987), is part philosophy, part planning, and well worth reading.

Public Space (Cambridge University Press, 1992) by architect Stephen Carr, landscape architect Mark Francis, environmental psychologist Leanne Rivlin and planner Andrew

Stone provides a comprehensive view of what makes good public spaces including parks, streets and squares. They outline three dimensions required for successful open spaces — needs, rights and meanings, and suggest through several case studies approaches for improved design and management. Another good general resource is *Urban Parks and Open Space* (ULI, 1999) edited by Alexander Garvin and Gayle Berens. This documents innovative success stories in urban park management and fundraising around the country. For example, it provides insight into the success of Post Office Square in Boston and Bryant Park in New York. The book lends credence to an important adage at PPS that "the success of any public space is 80 percent management." *Community Open Spaces* (Island Press, 1984) by Mark Francis, Lisa Cashdan, and Lynn Paxson examines the role of community management and control in making successful open spaces.

The only survey of city park systems, in terms of acreage and dollars allocated, is Peter Harnik's *Inside City Parks* (ULI, 1999). This is a useful touchstone for anyone wondering whether their city is up to par. Finally, I should mention our own *How to Turn a Place Around* (PPS, 2000). This publication discusses many important aspects of the management, community involvement, design and organization that can be used to create active, lively public spaces. For those in need of further material, both PPS's Urban Parks Institute and APA's City Parks Forum (www.planning.org/cpf) have more comprehensive bibliographies on line.

—Andrew Wiley-Schwartz

A Matter of Priorities: New Urbanism and Community Life

Emily Talen

Recent scholarship in *Places* (Michael Brill, “Problems with Mistaking Community Life for Public Life,” vol. 14, no. 2, 2001; Clare Cooper Marcus, “Shared Outdoor Space and community Life,” vol. 15, no. 2, 2003) has raised some important concerns about the ability of designers to affect social phenomena like “community.” I feel, however, that some important issues have been left out, and that a full accounting of the ironies and ambiguities involved is crucial.

First, it is curious (to say the least) that these articles fault New Urbanists for failing to consider the idea of “community life” in their designs, when this is precisely the principle on which they have been most severely criticized.¹ Essentially, the New Urbanist idea of designing neighborhoods in order to promote a “sense of community” has been attacked on the grounds that it is simplistic, nostalgic, and even dangerous. David Harvey has perhaps best summed up this line of thinking in his article “New Urbanism and the Communitarian Trap,” when he wrote, “‘Community’ has ever been one of the key sites of social control and surveillance bordering on overt social repression.”²

Such a critique of the notion that it is possible to design for community has been around for almost as long as there have been proposals to do it.³ Irregardless, such proposals form a strong part of the New Urbanist lineage. And the primary antecedent of New Urbanism – the garden city – was strongly influenced by the idea that there was an intrinsic relationship between design and community. While reading a recent survey by Mervyn Miller of the designs of early garden cities, it struck me how much these designs aimed at “communal life,” and how clearly their two-dimensional designs revealed this

intention.⁴ For example, the designs of Raymond Unwin, the singularly most important figure in New Urbanist history, are full of what Cooper Marcus has called “shared outdoor spaces.” Specifically, one could point to his 1899 “Plan of village green”; his 1898 “Quadrangles of cooperative dwellings for a Yorkshire town”; and his 1909 “Definitive’ layout of ‘the Artisans’ Quarter’.” But virtually all garden city designs, from Hampstead Garden Suburb to Radburn and beyond, have relied on shared outdoor spaces in their effort to promote neighborliness.

This is well known. The question is, why would New Urbanists seemingly abandon one of the most important components of garden city design, a lineage to which they readily subscribe? The answer is that they haven’t. Rather, their priorities are such that communal space does not take precedence in their designs over issues of connectivity, integration, and urban diversity.

Urbanism Comes First

The greatest concern of New Urbanism is urbanism — the maintenance and nurturing of quality urban environments that are generally compact, walkable, and mixed in use. In some instances, communal, shared outdoor space supports that goal; but in other instances, it does not.

I am sure there are plenty of examples of shared spaces that New Urbanists readily admire. But it is difficult to avoid observing that places which feature communal, semi-private space have traditionally been more suburban than urban in nature. Moreover, not all communal spaces are benign. In fact, they have often been more about homogeneity and inward-looking design intended for the promotion of exclusive enclaves, than about integrated, diverse elements that work to

foster quality urbanism.

This does not always have to be the case — as Cooper Marcus shows; but it often is. No doubt, New Urbanists have also at times applied their criteria too vigorously. But, in my opinion, they are justified in their attempt to focus on the promotion of urbanism as a first priority.

What the focus on urbanism means is that New Urbanists are more concerned with the provision of a quality public realm than with the creation of private or semi-private communal space. Furthermore, there may be some justification for assuming that over-attention to private space may undermine this objective. Indeed, some advocates of communal space seem to write off public places as if they could not possibly serve the goals of social interaction — and, eventually, community building. This would seem indicative of a ready abandonment of public space (as if it were eternally doomed to being unsafe and poorly designed for community life).

While less-than-public spaces for local community groups can be wonderful, this does not preclude the possibility that truly public spaces can be equally so. But, given the state of public space in America, it is difficult not to be at least somewhat concerned that a focus on communal space would lessen the focus on the public realm.

What would be the effect on public space if every residential development demanded its own private communal outdoor room? Perhaps we can debate which type of space is in a greater state of neglect, and deserving of more attention.

Much Research Has Been Done

There is another irony about designing for community: the tendency for some designers to seemingly ignore existing literature on the relationship between the physical

environment and social life, while at the same time calling for more research on the topic. As a professor of urban and regional planning, I strongly support a vigorous research agenda — but only when the research that exists has been absorbed.

To be fair, I don't really know if important studies by Kasarda and Janowitz, Michelson, Ahlbrandt, McMillan and Chavis, and Chavis and Wandersman, among many others, on the relationship between physical environments and community or social life have been taken into account by those who call for more research.⁵ Perhaps they have been. But it would certainly be helpful if calls for new research could tie into these existing studies. In the end, however, I think it is safe to say that designers could do a better job of assimilating research that comes mainly out of sociology.

One important outcome of this existing literature is that it indicates how ambiguous the relationship between design and community may be. For example, it points to the need to distinguish between designing for community life that is *already* there, and designing in order to nurture a sense of community that is currently *not* there. In other words is design an independent, explanatory variable that can engender community in some form? Or is it a dependent variable that responds to extant community life, like that seen among cohousers?

In the latter context, design may clearly be a matter of responding to self-selection. Groups of residents in cohousing situations — or even those who choose to live in a place like Celebration, Florida — are likely those who are most predisposed to the idea of community life, and therefore most likely to actively seek it out. Because of their attentiveness, they gravitate

toward settings they believe are nurturing of a particular type of communal environment.

Examples of this tendency are pervasive. Thus, Klaus compared the communal tendencies of residents of Forest Hills Gardens, planned in 1909, with the same ideals found in the residents of Celebration.⁶ Both groups saw themselves, at least initially, as pioneers looking for a way to nurture the communitarian spirit. They were, in other words, predisposed. The fact that communities with shared spaces exist — or are being built to satisfy this need — is therefore very important. Advocates of the need for more communal space are likely responding to a perceived mismatch between the demand for such spaces and the existing supply.

However, the assertion that design is an explanatory variable that *creates* a sense of community in residents who are not self-selected or predisposed is very different — and much more difficult to support.

As a start, it is necessary to account for a variety of social realities that seem to work against the idea. Examples include the following: the complex meaning of the term “community” itself; the fact that some aspects of community life are coercive and socially undesirable; the strong sense of community that is known to exist in seemingly placeless domains; the documentation that localized interaction is not a requirement for building a sense of community; the knowledge that neighborhood units do not coincide with geographies of social interaction; and the evidence that people have been known to resist designing for social interaction.

These complexities are not anecdotal, but have been established based on a great deal of research conducted over many decades.⁷ At the very least, designers intent on designing

for community need to take these “downsides” into account.

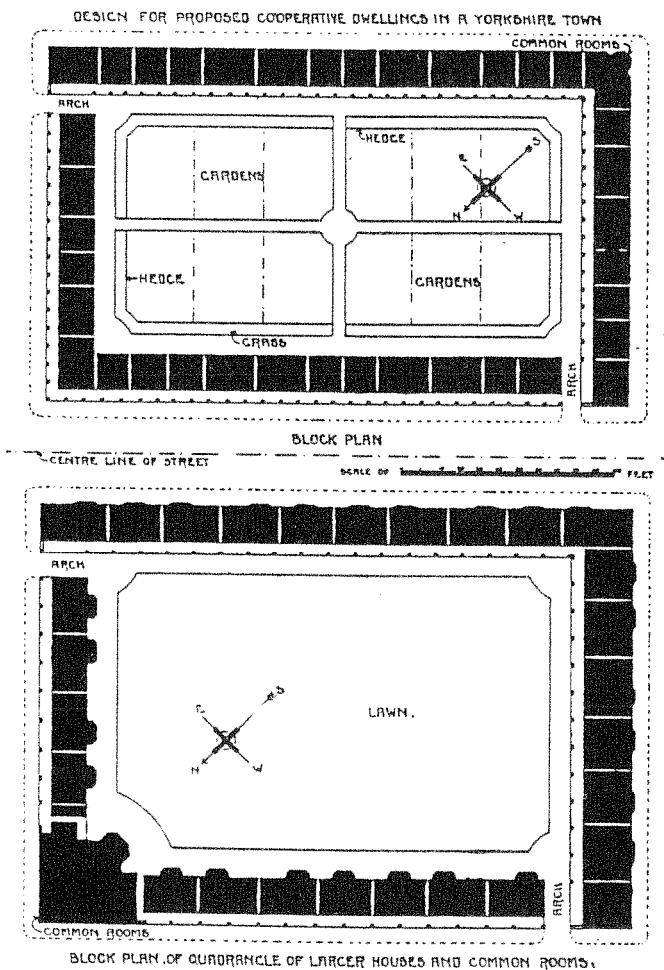
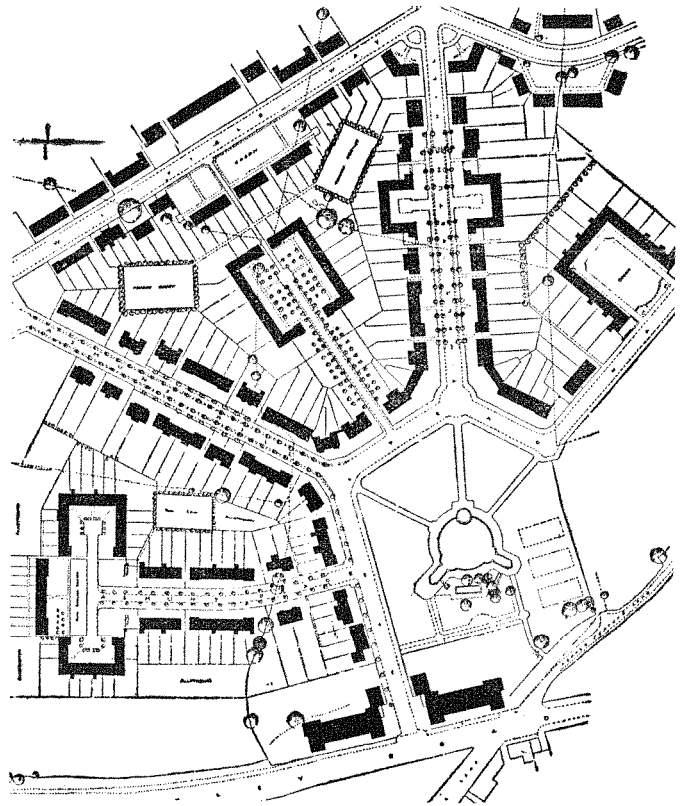
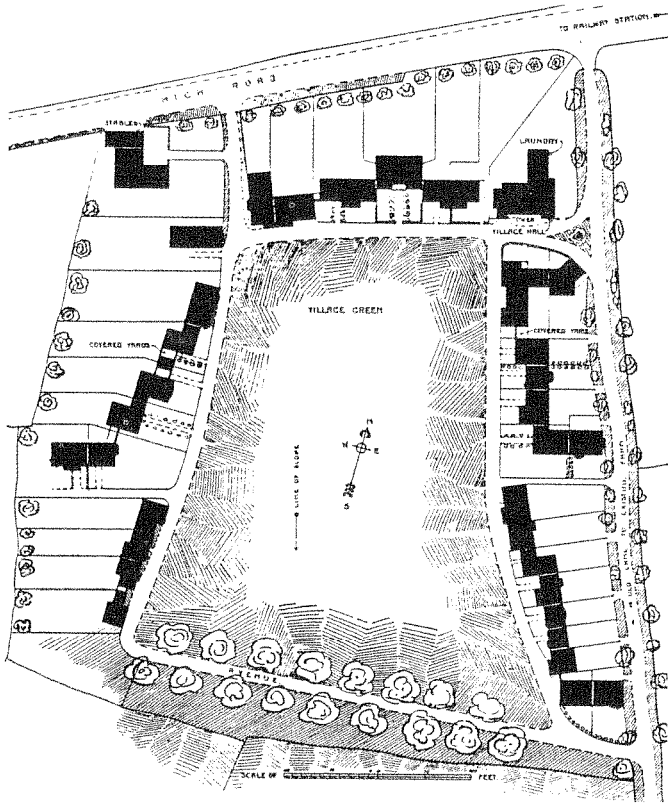
The Power of Quality Design

All of this could seem hopelessly negative if it weren't for the fact that quality urban design and planning rests on something other than the elusive notion of community. I can not speak for other New Urbanists on this point, but in my view the principles of New Urbanism are based on something much less ambiguous — the need to support communities that are diverse, interconnected, walkable, and service-oriented.

Rather than the need to foster community as an end goal, the highest priority in my view is the need to promote urbanism through the provision of services, facilities, public spaces, public transit, and all the other functions of daily life that the human habitat needs — in relatively close proximity — in order to sustain itself. This is a socially responsive approach, but it does not necessarily require the nurturing of specific kinds of social relationships (like community). It requires design skill and knowledge of human behavior, but not necessarily a focus on social life.

In this regard, I would like to draw a connection here to what Gerda Wekerle wrote more than twenty years ago in “From Refuge to Service Center: Neighborhoods that Support Women.”⁸ She argued that the social life of neighborhoods was being overemphasized in lieu of the more basic, service-oriented needs of residents. This is still a relevant critique.

Perhaps there could be some common ground, or some stimulation of common commitment, if we look for ways in which the two conceptions overlap — where, for those bent on using community as a basis of good design or for those more focused on quality urbanism as a first priority,



Top left: Plan of a Village Green, c. 1899, by Raymond Unwin. Originally published in *The Art of Building a Home*, 1901. Source: Mervyn Miller, "The Origins of the Garden City Residential Neighborhood," in Kermit C. Parsons and David Schuyler, eds., *From Garden City to Green City* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002). According to Miller: "This informal open-ended grouping became an element of identity within larger schemes and was most completely realized at Westholm, Letchworth, in 1906" (p. 106).

Top right: Quadrangles of cooperative dwellings for a Yorkshire town, c. 1898, designed by Raymond Unwin, as illustrated in *The Art of Building a Home*, 1901. Source: Mervyn Miller, "The Origins of the Garden City Residential Neighborhood," in Kermit C. Parsons and David Schuyler, eds., *From Garden City to Green City* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002).

Bottom left: 'Definitive' layout of "the Artisans' Quarter," by Raymond Unwin. Originally published in *Town Planning in Practice*, 1909. Source: Mervyn Miller, "The Origins of the Garden City Residential Neighborhood," in Kermit C. Parsons and David Schuyler, eds., *From Garden City to Green City* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002). According to Miller: "Groupings . . . were arranged to encourage neighborliness" (p. 116).

the goals of community-building and quality urbanism are mutually supportive. The list of important communal spaces can readily include facilities and services of all kinds. That this overlap is fundamental to the sustenance of good urbanism is a view that precedes New Urbanism by at least a couple of millennia.

Notes

1. See the following summaries: Ivonne Audirac and Anne H. Shermeyen, "An Evaluation of Neotraditional Design's Social Prescription: Postmodern Placebo or Remedy for Social Malaise?" *Journal of Planning Education and Research* 13 (1994), pp. 161-73; and Emily Talen, "The Problem with Community in Planning," *Journal of Planning Literature*, vol. 15 no. 2 (2000), pp. 171-83.

2. David Harvey, "The New Urbanism and the Communitarian Trap," *Harvard Design Magazine*, Winter/Spring 1997, p. 69.

3. For a review, see Tridib Banerjee and William C. Baer, *Beyond the Neighborhood Unit: Residential Environments and Public Policy* (New York: Plenum Press, 1984).

4. Mervyn Miller, "The Origins of the Garden City Residential Neighborhood," in Kermit C. Parsons and David Schuyler, eds., *From Garden City to Green City* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), pp. 99-130.

5. John D. Kasarda and Morris Janowitz, "Community Attachment in Mass Society," *American Sociological Review* 39 (1974), pp. 328-39; William H. Michelson, *Environmental Choice, Human Behavior, and Residential Satisfaction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977); Roger S. Ahlbrandt, Jr., *Neighborhoods, People, and Community* (New York: Plenum Press, 1984); and

David M. Chavis and Abraham Wandersman, "Sense of Community in the Urban Environment: A Catalyst for Participation and Community Development," *American Journal of Community Psychology*, vol. 18, no. 1 (1990), pp. 55-81.

6. Susan L. Klaus, *A Modern Arcadia: Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. & the Plan for Forest Hills Gardens* (Amherst, Mass.: University of Massachusetts Press, 2002).

7. Some of these are reviewed in Emily Talen, "Can Sense of Community be Built? An Assessment of the Social Doctrine of New Urbanism," *Urban Studies*, vol. 36, no. 8 (1999), pp. 1361-79.

8. Gerda R. Wekerle, "From Refuge to Service Center: Neighborhoods that Support Women," *Sociological Focus*, vol. 18, no. 2 (1985), pp. 79-95.

Clare Cooper Marcus responds:

Emily Talen raises some important points. I will attempt to comment on some of them.

In my article, I was not trying to suggest that the New Urbanists are ignorant of their forebears (Unwin, etc.), but that they have laid too much attention on public as opposed to community space. There is reasonable evidence to suggest that residential interaction — an important component of a sense of community — is facilitated by a site plan which creates a venue for chance encounters. One such venue is the type of shared outdoor space defined and described in my paper.

Social interaction in such spaces especially serves the needs of our most environmentally vulnerable citizens (children, parents of young children, the elderly, and low-income families),

for whom a walk to a public park or plaza may not be desirable, or even possible. By focusing almost exclusively on the public realm, the New Urbanists are ignoring the recreational and social needs of important sectors of society.

I am not suggesting that every residential development provide "its own private communal outdoor room," but that we consider a reasonable mix of private and communal space and note the important difference between them. As to which kind of space is "in a greater state of neglect," I would suggest we look at which kind of *life* is in a greater state of neglect, and take heed of the late Mike Brill's plea that it is community rather than public life which is deserving of our attention. The argument that territorially based communities are no longer relevant does not apply to children, the elderly, and the poor.

I concur with Talen that people moving into cohousing or developments such as Village Homes are probably predisposed to community life. Such people exist, and we should aim to meet their needs, as well as those who prefer to spend time in fully public space. Ideally, planning goals should aim at maximizing choice, providing opportunities for those seeking community life as well as those seeking public life — and everyone in between.

Reimagining Places: Parks

We turn in this issue to thinking again about parks, places that are fixtures in our understanding of cities, but which too frequently elude our attention. Samina Quraeshi, as Guest Editor, has worked with the Project for Public Places to construct an issue that brings to light the ingenuity and stewardship that have made great parks part of our lives, and which seeks to reveal important prospects for reimagining their forms and place in society.

Many of the authors in this issue instinctively call forth childhood recollections of distinct places; moments that have been inscribed in their understandings — waiting, like delicate stone carvings, to be revealed by rubbing; moments that, when shared, help us discern potential and see beyond the confines of the immediate. What does a place do for us? What does it mean? What about it has penetrated into our consciousness, and what has seeped into our daily lives and given them structure?

The first step in reimagining a place is to be alert to its cadences, to listen to the beat of the lives that course through it. Places have an underlying structure that sets a rhythm and pace of encounter, that modulates the ways in which we relate to each other and to elements of the world. Cities are built upon such structures — patterns of thought and action translated into earthly bricks and mortar, or steel and glass that challenge the sky; into sparkling lights and hidden channels, clusters of vegetation and towering branches; into surfaces that are banked, leveled and smoothed for action. Parks are similarly founded — usually understood as green and unencumbered, nature pictorialized and furnished, places of both refuge and assembly.

The second step in reimagining is to unsettle assumptions, to challenge the certainties surrounding a place — or the ways we inhabit it. What have our understandings been built on? How did we win them/receive them/have them thrust upon us? What more can we hear if we turn our attention another way, filter our perceptions through different veils, encounter a place in unexpected ways? How do our perceptions change if we give a place sustained and loving care — or if, perhaps, we upset it completely? Parks are vessels that may be filled with many meanings.

Why do we need to “reimagine” places in this way? What may be gained? Unavoidably over time, certain of our understandings slip and adjust, migrating unwittingly, while others gradually become mute, subsumed in routine expectation. But Good Places — even “a Great Good Place” like Central Park — can survive and expand in our lives and minds because imaginative people continually freshen our understanding of them.

Accordingly, this issue of *Places* poses three sources of inspiration: the transformation of ill-used or neglected spaces, the continued American search for an inclusive democracy of culture and use, and a new and serious engagement with ecology. In illustrating these themes, the stories that follow tell often of redemption by persistence. But they also tell of the fruits of rich reimagining, of crafting places that defy presumption and stereotype, and which reach into the store of evolving cultural patterns.

The smallest of places — even the most unlikely preserve that extends a natural strand through the city — bears the capacity for recreation and/or solace, even glory. There are many such stories waiting to be fashioned, inscriptions waiting to be revealed, places deserving of fresh imagination and care.

