About ULI—the Urban Land Institute

ULI—the Urban Land Institute is a nonprofit education and research institute that is supported and directed by its members. Its mission is to provide responsible leadership in the use of land in order to enhance the total environment.

ULI sponsors education programs and forums to encourage an open international exchange of ideas and sharing of experiences; initiates research that anticipates emerging land use trends and issues and proposes creative solutions based on that research; provides advisory services; and publishes a wide variety of materials to disseminate information on land use and development. Established in 1936, the Institute today has more than 15,000 members and associates from more than 50 countries representing the entire spectrum of the land use and development disciplines.

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The Trust for Public Land (TPL) is a private, nonprofit land conservation organization that works nationwide to conserve land for people. Founded in 1972, TPL specializes in real estate, applying its expertise in planning, negotiation, public finance, and law to protect land for public use. Working with private landowners, communities, and government agencies, TPL has helped protect more than 1 million acres nationwide for people to enjoy as parks, playgrounds, community gardens, recreation areas, historic landmarks, and wilderness lands.

In 1999 TPL launched its Greenprint for Growth campaign to conserve land as a way to guide growth, protect air and water, and ensure a high quality of life in communities nationwide. Through its work in almost 30 cities, TPL is increasing awareness of the vital role of parks and open space in the quality of urban life, generating funding to create, improve, and maintain urban parks, and protecting public open spaces that preserve and celebrate a city’s unique heritage. TPL seeks to bring the best techniques of American business to bear on the unique problems of conserving open space, lending creativity and citizen involvement to the process.

William B. Rogers
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Acknowledgments

This book began back in 1996, with a remarkably simple question: What is the largest city park in the United States?

The rather astonishing difficulty of answering that query opened my eyes to the dearth of data about urban parks. Numbers that are available about national parks in every schoolchild’s almanac cannot be found anywhere for city parks—not in an almanac, not in a technical directory, not even in the Library of Congress. I realized that this lack of basic data is one reason for the underfunding and undervaluing of city parks. In modern life, things that are important are counted, things that aren’t are not. If we are to improve our cities’ parks, I believed, we need to start with better numbers.

The person who enabled this idle speculation to become a full-fledged two-year research project and who also expanded the scope of the book from mere number crunching to a much higher level of inquiry and analysis is Kathy Blaha, vice president for national programs at the Trust for Public Land (TPL). Kathy’s commitment to urban parks, her ability to synthesize disparate facts into a truly understandable message, and her unfailing willingness to talk through (and solve) every conceivable hurdle carried me past the many pitfalls that threatened the completion of this book.

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Special thanks are also due the Wallace-Reader’s Digest Funds for support of research and database development; the Graham Foundation for support of historical research and interviews; and EDAW, Inc., for helping with costs of publishing.

I owe a large debt of gratitude to the wisdom and the ideas of the 25 able members of my advisory board, who generously gave of their time and experience and played a key role in scoping the purposes and style of the book. (The full list of advisers is on page vi.) I also benefited from the writings and impressive research on city parks done by amateur historian Richard Amero, who literally blazed a trail for me to follow.

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Edith B. Harnik, who taught me about conservation,
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About the Author

Born and raised in New York City, Peter Harnik moved to Washington, D.C., where he began a 30-year career in conservation advocacy and environmental protection. A cofounder of the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy and a longtime board member of the Washington Area Bicyclist Association, Harnik has worked to create parks and trails at both the national and local levels. In 1995, he became a consultant on urban park issues to the Trust for Public Land. A 1970 graduate of The Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, he now lives with his wife and two children in Arlington, Virginia.
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THIS IS AN EXCITING and remarkable time to be designing parks for American cities. In our work as landscape architects, EDAW has witnessed the ascent of the urban park as a powerful tool for civic identity. Throughout the United States, urban parks are being recognized, at long last, as a critical part of any revitalization strategy, an impressive stimulus to development. Enlightened, savvy business people are now proponents of new parks that generate real value and civic signature. Park administrators are restoring forgotten historic parks in order to reclaim their city's grandeur. Energetic citizens are becoming park sponsors, forging new alliances between government agencies and private organizations to forward their cause. We are seeing a greater commitment to America's urban parks than we have seen for decades. New places—and new ways—for people to gather as communities are proving to be an essential foundation for stronger, more vibrant cities.

In fact, what we have seen in the last five years seems like another City Beautiful movement: in the number of parks constructed or revamped, in the substantial amount of money invested in them, and, notably, in the public's stake in the park's success as a city emblem. In the early 20th century, a similar awareness of design transformed the civic landscape of American cities. Following the World Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893, visitors—dazzled by the white neoclassical buildings and the orderly arrangement of public space and promenades—went home clamoring for parks, monuments, and boulevards that would be beautiful to behold and a credit to their towns. Are we experiencing something similar now? The statistics are convincing. In 1998, Americans passed $4 billion worth of park bonds and tax referenda. Recently, voters have been approving an incredible 70 percent of park bonds and referenda; no other ballot issue achieves even 50 percent of the vote.

Inside City Parks is not only an important marker of this phenomenon; it is certain to be instrumental in securing a better future for our parks and cities. Peter Harnik establishes the centrality of parks in what he calls the City Revival movement. Inside City Parks documents the current thinking, the prominent accomplishments, and the latest statistics; the author examines the status of American urban parks as no one has done before. In engaging form, Harnik recounts the story of contemporary park development in 25 American cities, emphasizing "the most innovative programs and initiatives." He then groups the cities by density for statistical analysis so that fair comparisons can be drawn. The 30-plus charts in this book provide much needed data that until now have been almost impossible to gather or come by—data on budgets, resource distribution, facility counts, open space, and employment. The Trust for Public Land supported Harnik's research, knowing that a shortage of quantitative analysis limits general understanding of parks and is therefore detrimental to their funding. The Trust for Public Land should be encouraged to continue to measure the economic benefits of strategic works of landscape architecture.

People often do not recognize the fact that parks are political. Parks must rank high on the political agenda in order to get the backing required. "If parks are not one of your mayor's top three issues, and they rarely are," cautions my colleague Barbara Faga, chair of the EDAW board, "then parks aren't likely to get funded." But she is quick to advise us that, "economic development tops every mayor's list. If you can
link parks and economic development in the mayor's mind, you've got it made." This is not a ruse or an angle; this can be done in good faith. Good examples abound: parks are being used as an engine of redevelopment in Boston, Seattle, San Francisco, Chicago, and Houston, as well as in Paris, Barcelona, Manchester (England), and Sydney.

Possibly the best example—certainly EDAW's favorite example—is Centennial Olympic Park in Atlanta. Conceived as the grand central space for the 1996 Summer Olympics, Centennial Olympic Park is a dynamic, interactive plaza, laced with local character and sparked by vibrant visual excitement. When the international games concluded, the park was intended to become the legacy of the Olympics for the people of Atlanta. In the early 1980s, the property value in the immediate area was $2 per square foot; it is now $150 per square foot. Executives want their corporate address at Centennial Olympic Park, which has generated a billion dollars in real estate value in Atlanta. No one expected that much. Fortunately, EDAW had established development sites and made sure that surrounding properties would have views into the park.

New and restored parks attract private sector investment by transforming neglected real estate along park boundaries into valuable property. In Louisville, Kentucky, $100 million in reinvestment followed a half-dozen park and streetscape projects, including the centerpiece Riverfront Plaza and Belvedere, designed by EDAW as a jubilant tribute to the Ohio River. In Fort Worth, Texas, to prompt commercial revitalization, EDAW is reviving the grand old street of the 1930s, Lancaster Avenue, by building on the imagery of its "Zig-Zag Moderne" and "Cowboy Moderne" architecture. In Miami Beach, the firm is glamorizing Collins Avenue by introducing a procession of shade structures designed by fashionable architects. By thus depicting Miami's chic ethos in a linear park, the city encourages developers to respond with sophisticated upgrades to the resort hotels that flank the boulevard. In Washington, D.C., the National Capital Planning Commission has produced a far-reaching plan that calls for expanding McMillan's monumental green core to provide the next urban framework, including reconnecting the city to the rivers, which were largely ignored in the 1901 plan.

We have observed that today's park proponents are alert to another economic reality: how to fund park construction and ongoing maintenance. As never before, parks must pay their own way. We have been asked to design for affordable upkeep, to create retail opportunities for revenue flow, and to help initiate tax incentive districts, business improvement districts, and other innovative strategies to get parks built and to keep them running. Inside City Parks will be valuable in these efforts, because it gives parks a higher profile among decision makers, the populace, and even park administrators themselves. Many park departments underdocument the systems in their care, which inadvertently suppresses financial support. It took 15 months of research (and thousands of phone calls) for Harnik and his team to collect these numbers and present them in usable form.

Our clients routinely compare their hometowns with others, but in a generic way. They want a marketplace like Boston's Faneuil Hall, a festival waterfront like Baltimore's Inner Harbor, or a civic icon like St. Louis's arch. But clients do not have the information that would empower them to seek true equity with competing or more prosperous cities. The citizen leader or park professional can now seize the figures in this book, go to the city council, and say, "Look at this. Look at other cities our size. Look at our rival city. Look at these affluent cities. Look what they have achieved by funding parks. If we want to get where they are—if we want to be great—we must invest in well-designed parks!"

It has taken almost 50 years to invent a new kind of park. We have been fixated on the Olmsted model—the "green lung" approach—underpinned with social theory, preserving nature in the city while redressing societal ills. We are now ushering in the "smart park," a more intensive and less pastoral park, an entertainment venue, and a magnet for activity that still abides by ecological ideals. Americans are asking their parks to be more than domesticated woodlands and meadows; people get enough isolation at the computer. They want programmed events that draw people together for stimulation; they want diversion and change, such as a farmers' market one weekend, a jazz festival the next, and a concourse of vintage cars the week after that.

What makes a park succeed? Attendance, activity, and a sense of shared ownership are what make a park effective in upgrading its surroundings. How does a park become popular? The design must have strong aesthetic appeal, and it must be flexible, accommodating the diverse programs that sustain a multiple constitu-
At Atlanta's Centennial Olympic Park, the dancing waters—the theatrical, participatory landscape—draws everyone into the fountains, and draws them back to the park again; the park has helped Atlantans to see urban parks as a positive force rather than a repository of social problems.

Preoccupied as we are with virtual realities, real place making becomes all the more pressing. The park must be right there in the rolling center of energy. One must select a significant site to begin with, then extract its meaning into physical form. Harnik's profiles bring out the individuality of each city. EDAW can attest to the enormous importance of this approach. With the homogenization of America's cityscapes and the advent of a global culture, it takes determination to maintain the distinctions that confer identity and preserve meaning. In cities like Dayton, Denver, Omaha, and Cincinnati, the desire for local identity has been voiced loudly and clearly. At design workshops and open houses, we hear from residents that they want to embrace the singular features, the particular lore, that set their city apart from the rest. We try to convey that heritage with their "narrative landscape," a way of literally or poetically expressing local history in landscape form. City dwellers want interpretation; they have chosen a hometown in part for its history, and they want to see it come alive.

A few examples can elucidate this approach. Because Chattanooga, Tennessee, is an exuberant town, Ross's Landing Park and Plaza is an exuberant tapestry: bold bands of paving and planting rarely encountered anywhere else. Within these bands are elements of local culture: a swath of green erupts into a 20-foot-high band shell, covered in trees and trailing plants to resemble the Smoky Mountains; steel rails from a train track form a musical staff with oversized notes that play the irresistible song "Chattanooga Choo-Choo" as people hop from note to note. In Louisville, Kentucky, at Riverfront Plaza and Belvedere, a statue of the city's founder, George Rogers Clark, had been shunted off in a corner of the old site; now Clark stands on the river's edge, the focus of a visual axis and a herald to park visitors. The plan gave meaning to the statue, and the statue gave meaning to the park. More popular still is the way the Ohio River and the cities along it are mapped to scale in the pavement of this dramatic overlook: as your feet follow the swath of blue, it takes you down to the Ohio River itself.

We see in narrative landscape an entrée to local ownership. There is a burgeoning repopulation of American cities. New housing types have emerged: factories, department stores, and office buildings have been converted to condominiums, live/work lofts, and cohousing facilities. Parks must advance in concert with residential growth; there will be increasing demand for what parks provide.

Finally, I join Peter Harnik in affirming the importance of strong leadership in bringing well-designed parks to fruition. EDAW's experience has shown that it usually takes two key players: a politician and the person who makes the construction happen.

We feel very fortunate to be a part of the City Revival movement, to have a hand in reestablishing the primacy of parks. My partners at EDAW tell me over and over again that they derive tremendous satisfaction from working on urban parks. They take a personal interest in the success of the project, the usefulness and pleasure the park brings to a city and its residents. They want to see the community benefit, and this is a very emotional experience.

I expect Inside City Parks to be instrumental in securing a better future for American parks. I envision the readers of this book recognizing similar challenges in other cities and seeing the potential of working together to create a national constituency. Today, federal funding for the restoration and construction of major urban parks is limited. Yet there is no organized group to promote urban parks as instruments of change, community loci, and hallmarks of cosmopolitan cities. This book can be the genesis of a network that brings national attention and political strength to the cause of urban parks.

I congratulate the Trust for Public Land and the Urban Land Institute for their vision in publishing Inside City Parks. I urge policy makers, park advocates, and forward-thinking members of the business community to read and utilize this intelligent, practical work. Readers can make the most of the best models and the hard data to inspire and guide the improvement of their cities. As they do so, they will also be building our national heritage of great urban parks.

Joe Brown, FASLA, President/CEO, EDAW, Inc

EDAW is an international landscape, architecture, and planning practice with offices on four continents.
Inside City Parks reports on the central cities of the largest metropolitan areas in the United States. All numbers and most of the narrative in the book refer only to the core cities, not to surrounding suburban towns and counties. In other words, the chapter on Seattle does not include King County, Miami does not include Miami Beach (a separate city), and Detroit does not include the regional Huron–Clinton Metroparks Authority. The purpose of this book is to provide data and information specifically on the park systems and parklands of the political jurisdictions at the heart of our biggest metropolitan areas.

In order to give a complete picture of each city’s park resources, Inside City Parks examines both the municipal park agency holdings and all the parkland located within each city—that is, parks owned or operated by county, metropolitan, or state agencies; by the National Park Service; or by specialized agencies like a convention center, a water district, or a business improvement district, if the facility is run as a public park. To get a complete picture of Los Angeles’s park resources, for instance, one must realize that the city has over 15,000 acres of open space operated by state, federal, county, and water management agencies—more land than the Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks itself operates.

It is important to note that, for all agencies profiled in this book, the amount of parkland shown is only the land within the city boundaries. Several agencies, such as Denver’s Department of Parks and Recreation, have landholdings outside the city limits, but neither these nor their expenses are counted in Inside City Parks.

To make comparisons more useful, the 25 cities have been divided into three levels of population density—high, medium, and low—based on 1990 city acreages and 1996 city population estimates. This breakdown helps compensate for the fact that a greater number of residents in low-density cities have backyards, while more residents of high-density cities have rail transit and other ways to gain access to their parks. The divisions are relative rather than absolute, and the density difference between Los Angeles (high) and Detroit (medium), for example, is minimal (although it will probably increase because Los Angeles is becoming more dense and Detroit is becoming less so). Density, of course, is a factor of both the population and the physical size of a city, if a city annexes land faster than it gains people, it will lose density even as its population increases.
Most cities have a single agency in charge of both parks and recreation. However, several cities have multiple agencies. Therefore, when individual agencies are being compared, it is important to take into account sister-agency situations found in Cincinnati (the Park Board and the Recreation Commission); Philadelphia (the Department of Recreation and the Fairmount Park Commission); Tampa (the Parks Department, the Recreation Department, and the Sports Authority); Boston (the Parks and Recreation Department and the Department of Community Centers); and Baltimore and Pittsburgh (both of which have transferred aspects of their parks program to the Department of Public Works). In addition, many of the cities have a significant amount of state, regional, county, or national parkland within the city boundaries—all of which is included in charts depicting total parkland in the city. Where possible, financial information on parklands operated by outside agencies is also included.

Not every acre classified as parkland or open space is an area with grass and trees. Every park agency owns auto storage areas, equipment garages, mulch piles, and other utilitarian facilities. Most also have buildings such as museums, planetariums, aquariums, and even stadiums. The acreage also generally includes surface water that is under the park agency's jurisdiction (or specialized situations, such as water department reservoirs within parks). City parkland and open-space acreage also include public golf courses (even where they are operated under contract by a private entity), zoos, arboretums, and botanical gardens. All this acreage (even the land underneath park buildings) has been included; it is assumed that every city has similar constraints on usable open space and that they generally cancel each other out.

Every effort was made to bring each city agency's financial numbers into conformity so that comparisons can be accurate and meaningful. Therefore, all extraneous nonpark and recreation activities—including the operation of zoos, museums, aquariums, stadiums, and cemeteries—have been deleted from agency budgets, because these big-ticket items can significantly skew the numbers. On the other hand, because virtually every agency operates golf courses, these have been left in the calculations.

The financial bottom line reached in this book is often significantly different from the agency's published bottom line. This disparity is attributable to the deletion of nonpark items in many agencies' budgets and also to the fact that Inside City Parks combines each agency's yearly operating budget and its capital budget, which most agencies report separately. For this reason, the book uses the phrase "Adjusted Park Budget." Every agency's adjusted park budget refers to actual numbers from one particular year (usually 1998–1999). Thus, the numbers are specific snapshots (not averaged over time) and may be subject to some unusual fluctuation (for example, if an extraordinary capital campaign took place that year). Because of the low inflation rate and the short time span that varies by only two or three years, it was not deemed necessary to convert dollar figures into constant dollars.

Each agency's adjusted budget is broken into two categories, revenue and expenditure. These items generally (but not always) balance each other; when they do not balance, the figure used is from the expenditure column. Revenue includes six different sources of money coming into the agency's coffers:
1. General funds: all monies that are appropriated by the city on a discretionary, year-to-year basis;
2. Dedicated taxes: all monies provided through public, city-based revenue but not voted on annually (for example, funds from the gas tax, hotel tax, or property assessment);
3. Fees retained by the agency: revenue generated by the park and recreation facilities themselves, but not counting money that reverts to the citywide general fund;
4. Grants and donations: philanthropic revenue from individuals, foundations, and corporations;
5. State and federal support: funds from contracts, grants, and appropriations received from state and federal agencies; and
6. Capital income: monies specifically earmarked for construction, acquisition, or other capital activities for that particular fiscal year (including from bonds).

Expenditure includes three categories:
1. Grounds and facilities maintenance and repair: staff time and equipment, plus a prorated share of the agency's administrative overhead, that are assigned to the agency's physical plant (including any work contracted to private organizations);
2. Recreational programming and activities: staff time and equipment, plus a prorated share of the agency's administrative overhead, that are assigned to the agency's human services tasks (including such items as summer lunch; after-school, day-care, and senior citizen programs; and any work contracted to private organizations); and
3. Capital expenditure: monies spent on construction, acquisition, or other capital activities in that fiscal year.

The statistic of dollars per acre is a hypothetical calculation of the adjusted annual budget divided by total park acreage and does not indicate the actual amount of money spent on each acre of parkland. Because of overhead, recreational programming, and other factors, the actual expenditure per acre is considerably lower.

The words “park,” “preserve,” “green space,” and “open space” are, by necessity, used somewhat loosely in this book and may sometimes refer to such diverse facilities as Tompkins Square Park has a different meaning to the apartment dwellers of lower Manhattan than Hermann Park has to Houstonians, with their backyards and trees.
passive parks, sports fields, natural reserves, formal brick squares, and even undeveloped, future parkland. Ideally, in the future, more consistent city-to-city nomenclature and record keeping will make it possible to use more precise terminology. It should also be pointed out that “green,” “greenway,” and “green space” are generic terms that are not always literally accurate; in parts of the arid West, for example, parks and open spaces are brown, golden, and other colors much of the year.

Numerical information in this book was compiled from information provided by the surveyed agencies. In some cases, such as “regional parks,” “neighborhood parks,” and “playing fields,” there is no precise definition to guarantee that all the numbers are parallel.

There is no accepted difference between the definitions of “recreation center” and “community center,” with different cities using one phrase or the other. Therefore, the words are used interchangeably in this book. Generally, centers are counted only if they include a gymnasium; smaller centers used primarily for meeting rooms are not.

All city and metropolitan area acreage figures are from the 1990 U.S. Census. All population figures are from the 1996 U.S. Census estimate. Metropolitan area population figures are from Census Bureau definitions. In the case of cities that adjoin other large cities in a Consolidated Metropolitan Statistical Area (such as New York and San Francisco), the book uses the smaller Primary Metropolitan Statistical Area to define the immediate surrounding metropolitan population.

“Publicly Owned Vacant Lots” refers to properties, generally in old, low-income neighborhoods, that have no structures still standing and whose owners have ceased paying property taxes. It does not refer to undeveloped land on the edge of still-expanding cities that is awaiting first-time development.

“N.A.” signifies “Not Available.”

“Developer Impact Fees” refers to a payment imposed by the city government on a developer and used to purchase open space for parkland. Although from city to city there is no standard form or amount for these fees, and their complexity is beyond the scope of this book, it is useful for park watchers to know which cities have such fees in their arsenal of financial resources for parks.
ONCE UPON A TIME, America had compact cities surrounded by vast, pastoral areas of fields, streams, and forests. Today, America has enormous cities surrounded by even more colossal metropolitan regions. As a result, most city dwellers now principally experience nature—or even simple open spaces—through their city's park systems. Most of us have memories about a city park—a romantic stroll, an athletic triumph, a family gathering, a clamber in a playground, a bike ride, a hike through the snow, an autumnal drive—yet the literature on these evocative places is slim. Thousands of books have been written about cities (few of them mentioning parks) and thousands have been written about natural areas and national parks (almost none of them mentioning cities), but precious little has been published about that complex amalgam, the city park. City parks are not as famous as national parks, and most of them are not kept up as well. They don’t have geysers, or underground caverns, or snowcapped mountaintops but, acre for acre...
Introduction

Acre and hour for hour, city parks are the places where Americans most often enjoy open space and outdoor recreation.

At the same time, there is not a city in the nation whose space, layout, real estate value, traffic flow, public events, and even civic culture are not significantly defined by its urban parks, plazas, squares, circles, waterfront promenades, linear greenways, civic centers, and public gardens. Instead of encircling residents as in the past, natural areas must be threaded among and between the structures and streets where urban creatures live, work, and play. For this reason, it is imperative for Americans to understand city parks—not only how much land they encompass and what they cost to operate, but also how they should be preserved and improved.

Yet very little information exists about our city parks: their locations and sizes, their geology and ecology, their histories, and the politics of their creation and utilization. Little has been written about what city parks contain, how they are used, how much is spent on them, and how many visitors they get. Even less is known about the larger issues—how much total parkland each city has, how many acres of open space per 1,000 residents, and how many dollars are spent per person or per acre.

Finally, all that information has been brought together in a book about big city parks. Parks with evocative names like Golden Gate, Mission Bay, Belle Isle, Druid Hill, Eden, and Encanto. Parks with topographical names like Piedmont, Prospect, Forest, Fairmount, and Bayfront. Parks with workaday names like City, Memorial, and Central. Parks honoring the great, such as Lincoln, Grant, Washington, Jackson, and Franklin; the rich, such as Rockefeller, Schenley, Griffith, Swope, and Hermann; and the uplifting, like Freedom, Volunteer, Friendship, and Pioneer. The book also profiles city parks that are right around the corner and down the street, as comfortable as well-worn shoes but also as special, at times, as a top hat and tails.

The urban parks partnership between the Trust for Public Land and the Urban Land Institute began in 1997, with the publication of Urban Parks and Open Space, a detailed look at 16 innovative and influential new city green spaces in the United States today. Each project was analyzed from the standpoint of both design and politics, showing the great opportunities in our metropolises as well as some of the harsh realities that urban space proponents face at every turn.

This book takes the investigation a step further. Instead of looking at single parks, the book contemplates how entire city park systems function, highlighting innovative programs and initiatives. It analyzes the link between park departments and other public agencies, and it explores the relationship of the government to the many private forces at work in the urban core. The discussion shows the public's enthusiasm for park conservancies (like the pioneering Central Park Conservancy), for business improvement districts (like New York's Bryant Park Restoration Corporation), for greenway networks (as in Houston, Indianapolis, and elsewhere), for waterfront parks (as in Pittsburgh and Portland, Oregon), for conversion of old, used brownfields into brand new parks (as in Denver and Minneapolis), and for conversion of former federal facilities into new city oases (as in Phoenix and San Francisco). The profiles demonstrate that park systems not only can be improved during economic boom times but also can be expanded during economic...
downturns. Best of all, the discussion confirms that the wonderful old city parks of the 19th century still have an enormous emotional grip on countless urban dwellers (and even former urban dwellers), so much so that restoration campaigns are able to generate enthusiasm, millions of dollars, and thousands of hours of volunteer effort.

Which comes first, the healthy city or the healthy park? Not long ago the question itself would have been laughable, since both cities and parks seemed in terminally failing health. Today, both are recovering and the question has real relevance. Attractive, safe, and usable parks bolster their neighborhoods, but cities need a strong economic base to fix (or create) those parks in the first place. That economic base is hard to attain without middle-class taxpayers, who often will not live somewhere that lacks decent parks.

More than a century ago, Frederick Law Olmsted, the great park designer and city planner known as the father of landscape architecture, found this very issue to be central to his work when he pointed out that “a park exercises a very different and much greater influence upon the progress of a city in its general structure than any other ordinary public work.” In other words, parks give a city a survival advantage. Every city, after all, is in competition with every other city, not to mention every other suburb and small town. By performing all the miraculous functions that people appreciate—cleaning the air, giving cooling shade, providing space for recreation and play, offering attractive vistas, and furnishing outdoor environmental classrooms—parks improve the quality of life in a city. Each amenity, from the job market to the housing stock to cultural opportunities to even the weather, is part of the equation people use to decide where to live. A great park system can positively tip the balance. Although not every park system is great yet, there is a growing appreciation of this goal, as evidenced by the fact that almost every city described in this book has parkland that has recently opened, is under construction, or is in the planning stages.

Introduction

Boston’s Neponset River once provided water-power for the Walter Baker Chocolate Company. Today, the river greenway provides beauty, recreation, and community value for residents of the converted factory—and for the rest of the city.


Moreover, as we’re learning, design alone is not enough; parks must also be properly managed and programmed. In fact, it turns out that things are not much different today than they were in Olmsted’s day: creating public places and keeping them in excellent condition is and has always been extraordinarily difficult. What it took in 1859 (with Central Park) and 1870 (with Golden Gate Park) is the same thing it took in 1983 (with Cullen Park in Houston), 1991 (Post Office Square in Boston), and 1999 (Friendship Trail in Tampa)—leadership and commitment. The effort requires public or private leadership that has a vision of how healthy parks can make healthy cities.

Fortunately, this book reveals that many of our biggest cities now have that leadership, from either the mayor’s office, the citizen sector, or the corporate community, and sometimes from all three. There is a “followership” as well. Most big cities have hundreds or thousands of volunteers, who are demonstrating their deep commitment to parks by doing physical labor, donating money or other goods, or giving their time and personal skills to beautify and improve one park or the entire system. As a result of this rejuvenation, parks in some cities are taking on the physical, spiritual, and economic roles that they have been unable to assume since before World War II.

The new urban vision is also playing a role on the other side of the equation—far out in the suburbs. There, some residents are beginning to recognize that large-lot, auto-dependent living has its own set of drawbacks, and as higher-income families with a variety of lifestyle choices realize that there is more than one American dream, the attraction of “green cities” is helping to provide an alternative to urban sprawl and lack of investment in city centers.
Almost exactly 100 years ago, the United States was in the midst of the City Beautiful movement, a great emotional outpouring of enthusiasm for architectural and urban planning that shaped and reshaped many of our cities—clearing tenements, opening up broad avenues and vistas, generating huge increases in parkland, and yielding monumental signature buildings. After centuries of ever more cramped and unhealthy conditions in urban agglomerations, the awesome economic power of cities had finally produced enough personal wealth to allow some people to dream of a life—a city life—that was both beautiful and urbane. The movement was potentially transforming, but it was nipped in the bud by the growth of the automobile culture and by suburbs, which dominated most of what happened for the rest of the century.

Now, 100 years later, we are in the midst of a new movement, a City Revival movement. As one indicator, the park departments themselves are trying to revive and revitalize what they have. Collectively, the 25 cities surveyed in this book spend about $1.2 billion a year on their day-to-day operations and programs. These days they are also spending just under half of that amount—a bit over $500 million in the average year—on capital construction and reconstruction. For Americans, who are generally reluctant to spend money fixing old things when they would prefer to throw them out and buy new ones, that's an impressive development.

The suburbs are by no means passé, but the pendulum is swinging back. With this trend comes a renewed appreciation of the physical location, shape, and design of our big cities—and of the parks that are so instrumental to that design. To understand where each of our big cities is going, we must know where each has come from.

Some of the facts are impressive, some are bleak. Some of the stories are heartwarming, some infuriating. Taken together, the information should help all Americans—including urban planners, park professionals, park advocates, and just plain park users—to gain new insights into the workings of the devilishly complicated public spaces called urban parks.
Part I
High-Density Cities
LIKE EVERYTHING ELSE in New York City, "larger than life" describes its park system and "clamorous" describes its park politics. When the forces align, the results are sublime; more often, dueling interests stymie each other, putting projects on hold for years or even decades.

With an astonishing 28,000 acres, the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation has as much parkland as the Los Angeles Recreation and Park Department, the Chicago Park District, and the Denver Parks and Recreation Department combined; and New York has more parks and playgrounds than any other locality. In fact, if the city's considerable state and national parkland is added in, New York is actually the "greenest" big city in the country, with fully 26.6 percent of its area blanketed by parks. (To be fair, though, much of that land is hard to reach and some is under water.) All in all, it is not an exaggeration to say that, over the past 150 years, American park policy has been consistently molded by innovations from New York.

Innovation number one is Central Park, the first major work designed by Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux and arguably the most successful city park on earth. Even though it is not the biggest park (at 840 acres it is not even the biggest one in New York), and even though Olmsted himself considered his masterpiece to be Brooklyn's Prospect Park, Central Park is the standard against which all other parks are measured.

Central Park, Manhattan's 840-acre oasis, set the standard for the pastoral urban park and still serves as a model. In the distance are the Hudson River and the Upper West Side; in the foreground is the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the park's right boundary is Fifth Avenue.
New York's network of parks and open space.

From its very inception in 1857, Central Park's magical design created real estate value for the surrounding environs and tax value for the city. Today the billion-dollar frontage along Fifth Avenue, Central Park South, Central Park West, and even Central Park North in Harlem is proof of the park's ability to attract.

For many Manhattanites, Central Park is what makes the city livable, and it is part of the reason that many wealthy New Yorkers still live in the heart of the city. In Central Park, riches are heaped upon riches. Besides two museums and a planetarium, it has the Wollman Ice Rink, a rowboat concession, a special pond for model sailboats, a romantic restaurant, and a bridle path. Shakespeare's plays and operas are regularly presented in Central Park, and superstars like Paul Simon, Aretha Franklin, and Garth Brooks periodically give concerts attended by up to three-quarters of a million people. To promote cycling and running on a massive scale, Central Park has become largely car-free (with no autos permitted between January 1 and Thanksgiving, except during weekday rush hours). The park has proven to be a financial powerhouse for the city, with promoters willing to pay for association with its ambience. In 1995, for example, the Disney Company paid $1 million for the right to premier Pocahontas on the park's Great Lawn. Even the pretzel and hot dog vendor in front of the Metropolitan Museum of Art is notable: with a permit costing almost $200,000 a year, the concession for that single pushcart is the highest-priced in the United States.

Ironically, it was the rocky and swampy terrain of central Manhattan that stymied mid-19th-century developers and left a large hole in the rectilinear development pattern of the city.
Although millions of parents have said to millions of children, “This is what New York looked like before all the buildings were here,” Central Park is, in fact, almost as artificial as Disneyland. Olmsted and Vaux employed 20,000 laborers, engineers, stonemasons, and gardeners to move 3 million cubic yards of dirt, plant 270,000 trees and shrubs, and dig six lakes.

Less than ten years later, Olmsted and Vaux were hired by the then independent city of Brooklyn to create Prospect Park, a similar tour de force so well designed that the surrounding city is not visible even from the center of the park’s vast Long Meadow. In one section, the Woodlands, a tumbling Adirondack mountain stream is re-created over the compressed distance of a quarter-mile; a tranquil lowland lake lies a few steps away. Perhaps even more breathtaking is an Olmsted idea that never came to fruition: a stately tree-lined parkway connecting Central Park and Prospect Park. (Olmsted had to settle for creating the nation’s first bicycle path, alongside Ocean Parkway.)

The impact of Central and Prospect Parks on the nation was electrifying, and Olmsted (and later his sons) was commissioned to design parks and parkways in Boston; Buffalo; Chicago; Detroit; Montreal; Seattle; Washington, D.C.; and dozens of other cities. But even heavenly creations can crumble when not maintained, and by the 1960s, both parks were in sorry physical shape and were considered dangerous. When New York plunged into a fiscal crisis in the mid-1970s, park maintenance and recreation programs were slashed (and, in fact, still have not fully returned to pre-1970 levels).

Out of the crisis arose another New York innovation: the private organization formed to support parks. Under the leadership of a dynamic landscape architect, Olmsted scholar, and well-connected park neighbor named Elizabeth Barlow Rogers, the Central Park Conservancy was formed in 1980 and quickly tapped into the commitment of the city’s park lovers. By 1999, the Conservancy was a powerhouse with a staff of 250, 1,200 volunteers, and a $65 million endowment. The group was so success-
ful in upgrading and promoting Central Park that, in 1998, the city signed a contract to pay the Conservancy to take over most of the day-to-day maintenance of the park; the Conservancy supplements the payment with privately raised funds. Soon thereafter, other city park supporters followed suit, forming a number of single-park entities—the Prospect Park Alliance, the Riverside Park Fund, Friends of Van Cortland Park, the Greenbelt Conservancy—as well as the overarching City Parks Foundation, a $6-million-a-year operation that generates and nurtures partnerships with 250 “park friends” groups and 1,800 civic and neighborhood associations.

All that activism led to another innovation: the downtown business-funded park, such as Bryant Park. Located in the heart of downtown, between Times Square and Grand Central Station, surrounded by skyscrapers, and adjacent to the New York Public Library, Bryant Park was once a fashionable place to walk, sit, watch, and be seen. By the 1960s, however, it had become a shunned, crime-ridden space well known for drug dealing. Not only was Bryant Park a depressing place for tourists and residents, but also it was depressing property values and office rents. In 1980, at the behest of the New York Public Library’s board, a young MBA named Dan Biederman created the Bryant Park Restoration Corporation—a nonprofit company funded in part by assessments on surrounding property owners—whose mission was to rebuild the park and revitalize the neighborhood. Ten years and many bruising battles later, Bryant Park was reopened, complete with a restaurant, food kiosks, spotless public restrooms, spectacular floral displays, nonstop events, and entertainment. The drug trade disappeared, and office rents in the vicinity rose 40 percent.1

If New Yorkers learned about park charm from Frederick Law Olmsted and about park funding from Betsy Rogers and Dan Biederman, they learned about park politics from Robert Moses. The city’s park commissioner from 1934 to 1960, Moses was never elected to public office, but he did more than any mayor before or since to create the physical look of New York. Early in his tenure, during the depth of the Great Depression, Moses amassed the greatest army of relief workers ever in the United States—1,800 designers and engineers, 3,900 supervisors, and 70,000 laborers—all of whom worked on parks. During his tenure, New York City added 20,000 acres of parkland, 84 miles of parkways, 658 playgrounds, 17 miles of beaches, three zoos, ten golf courses, 53 recreation centers, and 15 huge outdoor swimming pools (the first 11 of which opened on a dazzling one-per-week schedule during the oppressively hot summer of 1936). Moses decked Riverside Park over the railroad tracks and built the Henry
Hudson Parkway. He built the Belt Parkway and opened up the Brooklyn shoreline to promenaders and bicyclists. He converted a swamp and ash dump into the site of two world's fairs and ensured that the land became Flushing Meadow Park afterward.

Moses was feared more than he was loved, however, and his strong opinions and disdain for public participation brought out as many enemies as admirers. His roadways displaced thousands, and the incessant din from automobiles ruined the park experience for others. He tried to run a highway through the middle of venerable Washington Square Park (raising the ire of Greenwich Village homemaker Jane Jacobs and motivating her to write the classic The Death and Life of Great American Cities). Finally, with the construction of the Cross–Bronx Expressway and the demolition of 5,000 homes and apartments, Moses overstepped his bounds. Today, the power broker who strode over Gotham's parks like a colossus is memorialized only by a small playground next to an expressway.

The director of the New York City Parks and Recreation Department today is Commissioner Henry J. Stern, a mercurial, quick-witted, shoot-from-the-hip boss, whose 12-year tenure under two different mayors is unusual in this high-turnover city. A former city council member with a gut feeling about New Yorkers and a flair for publicity, Stern is deeply committed to parks and particularly to nature in the city (even starting a program to reintroduce dozens of species of plants and animals that had become extinct in the city). Operating within a bureaucracy famous for instilling alienation, he promotes the human touch, providing his personal E-mail address on the agency's Web site and requiring that every park have a sign that lists the name of its manager. He launched a "Greenstreets" program to convert 2,000 paved, unused street properties, such as medians and traffic triangles, into gardenlike spaces filled with trees, shrubs, and hardy ground cover, which local residents maintain. In 1999, he took that a step further and promised that the city would plant a free tree outside the house of every New York homeowner who requested one. Perhaps Stern's ultimate triumph is his ability to work with his sometimes prickly boss, Mayor Rudolph Giuliani.

Mayor Giuliani, one of a growing number of white Republicans governing multiethnic, overwhelmingly Democratic cities, has staked his reputation on reducing crime, improving the schools, and generally returning civility to New York. Because he lacks sufficient tax money to do the job publicly, Giuliani seeks private assis-

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**Adjusted Budget for Fiscal Year 1999**

- Revenue: $16,878,000
- Expenditure: $16,878,000
- Expenditure per Resident: $2

1. Acreage includes only that portion of Gateway National Recreation Area located within the city of New York.
2. Breakdown not available.

This is the tightrope that Stern walks every day, between citizens who want public land and services for their high tax payments and a mayor who is willing to sell, lease, or privatize.
Community gardens are just as important to New Yorkers as their big, famous parks. This one, on the Lower East Side of Manhattan, provides flowers, vegetables, a social gathering place, a venue for artistic expression, and a seedlot for political organizing.

almost anything for which he can find a buyer. A few examples will suffice: the charge for running the food concession in Battery Park where the tourists wait for the Statue of Liberty ferry is $733,000; the fee for operating 13 golf courses is $2.6 million; the charge for unveiling the "James Bond" model of the BMW in Central Park was $500,000; the price for creating a fancy, new, fenced-in, Jack Nicklaus–designed golf course on the site of an old garbage dump is $2 million a year for 35 years.

Counting the fees, leases, private grants, and taxpayer revenue, New York City's Parks and Recreation Department is the largest city park agency in the country; its adjusted budget for fiscal year 2000 is more than $305 million. But with per-capita expenditures of only $42 (19th highest among the municipal agencies described in this book), the New York park system is underfunded. Worse than that, according to the city's watchdog Independent Budget Office, inflation-adjusted public spending on parks dropped by 31 percent between 1987 and 1996. Even though private spending has increased, it has not filled the gap; moreover, the private spending has been concentrated in only a small number of parks. The recreation program has been hit particularly hard. Over ten years, its budget dropped 65 percent, from $20 million (inflation-adjusted) in 1987 to a paltry $7 million in 1996. And the dollar decline has translated into a precipitous cut in full-time staffing—from 4,161 employees in 1987 to 2,216 in 1996. (This hemorrhage has been partially mitigated by the use of more than 5,000 Work Experience Program [WEP] workers—unemployed persons who are required to work part-time in order to receive their welfare checks. It is estimated that, in 1996, WEP workers put in the same number of hours as 2,900 full-time park employees, although WEP jobs are limited to cleaning, litter and graffiti removal, and other nonreconstruction tasks.) Over the long term, the cut that hurt the most was the shortfall in the capital construction budget, which plummeted well below the $100 million mark for several years after the city's minirecession in 1991. The budget has bounced back, but New York's comptroller has projected that, from 1999 to 2008, only $963 million will be spent on reconstructing the parks and playgrounds, which need $2.7 billion worth of work.

Interestingly, it is not the large parks but the small ones that spur neighborhood residents to action. Community groups and block associations have rescued tiny 50-by-100-foot lots from the rubble and litter that had been burying them and converted them to community gardens and playgrounds. As in Philadelphia and elsewhere, these nuggets of green provide open space, flowers, vegetables, a social gathering place, a venue for artistic expression, and
a seed for political organizing. But unlike declining cities like Philadelphia, New York is currently experiencing an economic revival (it is one of the few Rustbelt cities gaining in population), and it is actually losing community gardens to development.

Of New York's approximately 12,000 city-owned vacant lots, about 700 have been transformed into gardens, primarily in the Bronx, Brooklyn, and Manhattan's Lower East Side. With a growing recognition that the gardens share some of the attributes of traditional parks, 36 of the best—those with stable management that are also kept unlocked for the public at least ten hours a week—have been officially placed under the purview of the park department. The others, however, after operating for years in a laissez-faire atmosphere, have suddenly become vulnerable. In 1996, the Giuliani administration began to make the gardens available for development, and during the next two years about 50 were reclaimed for low-income housing. Then, in 1998, advocates of open space learned that the city was accelerating its sale of vacant parcels, including at least 125 gardens, regardless of the intended use. Garden lovers reacted angrily, and Commissioner Stern found himself caught in the cross fire. On the one hand, some of the well-established gardens had become pillars of their communities; on the other, if temporary gardens could not be reclaimed for housing, the mayor threatened to ban any and all future gardens. In May 1999, the day before a scheduled public auction and with two lawsuits pending, the city negotiated the sale of 112 of the gardens to the Trust for Public Land and actress Bette Midler's New York Restoration Project for $4.2 million. Although those gardens were saved, many others remained threatened (and some were bulldozed a few months later).

Historically, the biggest problem for New York's parks has been the irresistible power that developers have over park planners. As far back as the early 1800s, builders thwarted numerous park proposals on land they wanted and, conversely, assigned park locations because the land could not be developed. Even the famous "vest-pocket park" program pioneered in New York in the 1960s was a compromise with developers: a builder would put in a small park among the skyscrapers in return for permission to add extra height to the new tower.

The paucity of parkland along the city's 578 miles of waterfront is particularly striking. The shoreline includes several beaches, some large riparian areas, and a few notable parks, but docks, piers, industry, and highways generally diminish or block public enjoyment of the water. Now, finally, that situation is starting to change. On the west side of Manhattan, as a result of the physical collapse of the old West Side elevated highway (after a cement truck crashed through it) and the political collapse of its proposed Westway replacement, a 6.5-mile stretch of riverfront has become available for creating the 550-acre, $300 million Hudson River Park, a public/private venture that will transform the way Manhattanites think of their island. With a wide range of activities and facilities—including golf driving, ice skating, dog runs, boat launches, ecological preserves, and beaches—the park has something for everyone. In fact, some critics claim it has too much, but creating the park is a financial juggling act that depends on leases from such money-making ventures as restaurants, health clubs, entertainment, and much more—intrusions that purists oppose and pragmatists support. In fact, it is so far from being a "normal" park that Hudson River Park (like the already-created Battery Park City parks nearby) will not be owned by the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation but rather by a special authority chartered by the state.

Other waterfront park efforts are underway in conjunction with an ambitious bikeway and greenway system that will link and encircle the city with recreation and commuting trails. The 350-mile route is being planned jointly with the city's transportation department and is funded mostly with transportation dollars. Perhaps the most notable effort is going on along the long-neglected Bronx River, where an enthusiastic combination of city, state, and federal agencies, plus dozens of neighborhood groups, is boot-
strapping a greenway in one of the city's most depressed communities. The Bronx actually has a higher proportion of parkland than any other borough in New York, but little of it is found in the impoverished South Bronx, which was famously visited—to little avail—by President Jimmy Carter as well as President Ronald Reagan. Local residents are now beginning to fix what the White House could not solve, not only with a cleaned-up river and a bike trail, but also, nearby, with one of the city's biggest and most vibrant community gardens.

The message from all these endeavors is that entrepreneurship can bring results. Using the vast swirling tides of money, development politics, shifting fashions, and advertising to eke out more land and money for parks has helped the park system in New York. Whether from penthouses overlooking Central Park or from modest homes in the South Bronx, park lovers have challenged the "it's-all-built-up" naysayers to do the seemingly impossible. For example, when megadeveloper Donald Trump horrified New Yorkers by announcing that he wanted to build a 150-story building in a former west side rail yard, the community negotiated not only a scaled-back development but also the creation of a state-of-the-art, 13-block park along the Hudson River. When the state mandated a new sewage treatment plant, the citizens of Harlem demanded a quid pro quo and got Riverbank State Park—28 acres of high-quality recreation facilities plus a view of New Jersey on top of the plant. When Prospect Park needed money, Brooklynites turned to the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Funds. When a tangle of dead-end roads and industrial plants blocked access to the Bronx River, activists found trail money at the state's Department of Transportation (even though the greenway will cost $1 million per block in some stretches).

Of course, it would be better to have an official New York City parks plan—there is none, and the entire agency has only one long-range planner—but that is not the way New York operates. In a city built by investors and financiers, even conservationists are forced to play the market aggressively.

Notes

1. For a detailed analysis of the renewal of Bryant Park, see Alexander Garvin et al., Urban Parks and Open Space (Washington, D.C.: ULI—the Urban Land Institute, 1997), p. 44.

2. For a detailed description of Hudson River Park, see Garvin, Urban Parks and Open Space, p. 116.
TAKING A 30,000-ACRE FAULT ZONE, crumple it into a hilly terrain so steep that it is barely walkable, surround the area on three sides with water, add views of craggy ridges and mighty bridges, throw in some fog rolling in from the sea, and you will get the nation's most memorable city—San Francisco. Packed with gawking tourists and passionately activist residents, San Francisco is the country's second most densely populated big city (after New York). Although the wide expanses of water provide some of the visual relief and cleaner air that other cities get from forests and meadows, in San Francisco open space is extremely valuable, and issues surrounding parks and recreation raise passions like few others do.

The primary park passion for San Franciscans is Golden Gate Park, a 1,017-acre wonderland with nine lakes and ponds, an island hillock with a magnificent view, dazzling flower gardens, an AIDS memorial grove, a Japanese tea garden, a Spanish colonial beach chalet with murals from the 1930s, a garden featuring only plants mentioned in Shakespearean plays, a herd of buffalo, two replicas of Dutch windmills, a Temple of Music bandshell, and more. Much of the fun comes from simply watching some of the 12 million strollers, runners, roller bladers, bicyclists, boat rowers, sports players, tai chi enthusiasts, mimes, acrobats, stilt walkers, and musicians who come to Golden Gate Park every year.

Golden Gate Park bears so many similarities to New York's Central Park that most people assume that it was also designed by Frederick Law Olmsted. This is almost the case, but not quite. In the 1860s, when progressive Mayor Frank McCoffin decided that San Francisco should have a grand green space, the city approached Olmsted for a concept. He drew up
a plan for a large, unique park in the southeastern part of town, but the city rejected the plan as too costly. When the less-expensive land for Golden Gate Park was acquired in 1870, the city turned to a 24-year-old engineer, William Hammond Hall, to map out the park and supervise its creation. Golden Gate Park’s location on barren, shifting sand dunes on the foggy side of the city provided major landscaping challenges (and a pessimistic site assessment by Olmsted), but Hall responded creatively by constructing serpentine roadways and envisioning planting thousands of cypress and eucalyptus trees (to lessen the impact of the winds) and acres of deep-rooted grasses to hold the sand. (His concept only worked, however, after enough clay, loam, and manure were hauled in to cover all the dunes to a depth of two and one-half feet.) Ultimately, Olmsted wrote enthusiastically of Hall’s design, and today the lush park gives no hint of its unprepossessing origins. In the final analysis, though, Olmsted’s uncanny foresight does show through: whereas the neighborhood it anchors is perfectly respectable, Golden Gate Park has never equaled Central Park as a mighty engine of growth in real estate value. San Francisco’s wealthy residents prefer to hobnob on the sunnier hilltops rather than near the chillier park.

Golden Gate Park’s golden years were during the half-century reign (1890 to 1943) of legendary Commissioner Frank McLaren, a Scottish-born horticulturist, who nurtured and defended
the park against all possible incursions (once stopping the construction of a trolley line by ordering his gardeners to work all night planting spectacular new beds of flowers and shrubs directly in the path of the rail engineers). McLaren not only raised Golden Gate Park to the level of a national icon but also built and maintained a broad community consensus on parks, enabling him to attract enough funding to create a system that today covers 11.1 percent of the city with green space, a higher percentage than that of all but six of the park agencies in the big cities. (Including the 4,277 acres of federal and state land within San Francisco pushes its "green index" to 25.4 percent, second highest after New York.) McLaren believed in the work ethic (he did not countenance his gardeners wearing jackets in the winter, declaring that if they toiled hard enough they would stay warm), and he died true to his philosophy, in his office in Golden Gate Park, at the age of 96.

Unfortunately, as in most other cities, the post-World War II period saw general park funding and maintenance drop steadily, particularly after the passage of tax-limiting Proposition 13 in 1978 and after the collapse of California's economy in the late 1980s. At the same time, as San Francisco's social problems increased after the late 1960s, more social service tasks were added to the Recreation and Park Department's agenda, including the "School's Out, Rec's In" latchkey and tutoring program, Project Insight for disabled and handicapped persons, and facilities for seniors and community organizations. For more than 50 years, San Franciscans lived off the infrastructure developed by McLaren as it deteriorated around them. Morale at San Francisco's Recreation and Park Department plummeted as its leadership adopted a "circle-the-wagons" mentality; in 1992, former General Manager Mary Burns even abolished the public information office. The department's gardening staff stopped wearing uniforms, making them a less-visible target for public criticism, but prompting complaints that park users could not tell the "workers from the bums."

By 1996, when Willie Brown, the charismatic former state assemblyman, was elected mayor, the park system had hit bottom. Playgrounds were in shambles, virtually every recreation center had a leaky roof, playing fields were potholed with ruts and bumps, tree planting had almost ground to a halt, and as many as 1,000 homeless persons had set up semipermanent encampments in various parks, particularly Golden Gate Park. Although many San Franciscans were sympathetic to their plight, the home-

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### San Francisco Recreation and Park Department

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<tr>
<th>Address</th>
<th>McLaren Lodge, 501 Stanyan Street</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zip Code</td>
<td>94117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone</td>
<td>(415) 831-2704</td>
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<td>Fax</td>
<td>(415) 831-2099</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Web Site</td>
<td><a href="http://www.parks.sfgov.org">www.parks.sfgov.org</a></td>
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#### Agency Acreage in City
- Acres per 1,000 Residents: 4.5
- Acres as Percent of City: 11.1%
- Number of Regional Parks: 0
- Number of Neighborhood Parks: 94
- Number of Recreation Centers: 17
- Number of Pools: 9
- Number of Golf Courses: 6
- Number of Tennis Courts: 153
- Number of Sports Fields: 165
- Number of Marina Slips: 681
- Number of Beaches: 0
- Miles of Bikeways/Greenways: 180
- Number of Skating Rinks: 0
- Number of Full-Time Employees: 680
- Number of Seasonal Employees: 355
- Number of Volunteers: 6,000

#### Adjusted Budget for Fiscal Year 1998-1999

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<th>Revenue Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>Dedicated Taxes*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fees Retained by Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>Private Grants and Donations</td>
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<td>State and Federal Support</td>
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<td>Total</td>
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</table>

| Expenditure per Resident | $95 |

*Note: Adjusted park budget excludes 3Com Park and the San Francisco Zoo.

*Includes $3.9 million from city hotel tax and 25-mill ($0.25 per $100) property assessment for the Open Space Program.
less trampled flowers and bushes, left behind trash (including drug paraphernalia), and sometimes intimidated park users; in one hidden vale, police found a "chop shop," where stolen bicycles were brought for stripping. (When the department attempted to enforce the curfew by reprogramming sprinkler systems to turn on in the middle of the night, vagrants countered by vandalizing the nozzles and booby-trapping the hoses with hypodermic needles.)

Mary Burns left, and Mayor Brown elevated her popular recreation director, Joel Robinson, to acting general manager. Mandated to turn the system around, Robinson initiated a major reorganization of the department and began dealing with other image problems (including requiring the staff to wear uniforms), but before he could succeed, the smoldering crisis became a conflagration—literally. In the escalating war between the homeless and the authorities, some of the campers had taken to setting fires in Golden Gate Park. In November 1997, a huge blaze erupted, requiring 70 firefighters and 12 trucks to extinguish it. Realizing that they might actually lose their great park, San Franciscans mobilized, and Mayor Brown ordered the encampments to be shut down.

Meanwhile, the park advocates were ready for action. The city’s powerful foundation community moved parks much higher on its priority list and began promoting public/private partnerships based on New York’s model. An outspoken community organizer formed a vocal new advocacy group, the Neighborhood Parks Council. Friends of Recreation and Parks, an organization that for 25 years had played a low-key support role for Golden Gate Park, redefined itself, broadened its mission, and increased its budget 30-fold between 1991 and 1999. A children’s defense group issued report cards on the quality of playgrounds.

Because the department had no strategic plan, however, the revived activism was almost more than the system could handle. Every group had a different idea of what the department was doing wrong and what it should do differently. The mayor added to the confusion by announcing a nationwide search for a new general manager, then dropping the quest and hiring one of the candidates as his personal assistant to launch an ill-defined, private-sector Park Renaissance Crusade. Citizens’ groups, increasingly frustrated, sought more park money from the board of supervisors; when that attempt failed, the groups launched an effort to change the city charter to prohibit a decrease in the Recreation and Park Department’s budget for ten years.

In addition to these controversies, the reason for the system’s deterioration was unclear. Was the department underfunded or was it operating ineffectively? Compared with other cities, San Francisco’s expenditure of $95 per resident placed the funding well above average, and its expenditure of $21,000 per park acre placed it third after Chicago and Cleveland. Pay scales also became an issue; there were reports that the average gardener and maintenance worker earned three times as much in the private sector. As for procedures, critics pointed out that, because of union and contracting rules and conflicting priorities between city agencies, the renovation of a single playground could take as long as six years. (One union rule seems to explain why few San Francisco street trees are taller than 14 feet, which is the limit under the job classification for most tree pruners; a taller tree requires a differently classified pruner.)

Everyone agreed that a large amount of money—at least $350 million—was needed to deal with deferred maintenance and crumbling facilities, but money was not the only issue. There were also issues of dogs and cars. Leashed dogs are, of course, permitted almost everywhere in San Francisco. But when the National

Golden Gate National Recreation Area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Fort Mason, Building 201</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zip Code</td>
<td>94123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone</td>
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<td>Fax</td>
<td>(415) 561-4730</td>
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<tr>
<td>Agency Acreage in City</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acreage as Percent of City</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Number of Full-Time Employees</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of Seasonal Employees</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Volunteers</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted Park Budget</td>
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Note: Acreage includes Golden Gate National Recreation Area land within the city of San Francisco only. The agency is unable to break out any other statistics by geographic region.

Adjusted Budget
(within city of San Francisco only)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Revenue</th>
<th>N.A.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expenditure</td>
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</table>
Park Service banned free-running, unleashed dogs from some of its expansive beach and bayfront areas (because of the animals' threat to certain endangered birds), some dog lovers began to shift their routines to the city's park system, where unleashed dogs happened to be illegal. Regular park users, particularly mothers of toddlers, complained, but pro-dog militants replied that they, too, were taxpayers and their dogs deserved the same rights in the park as children. The issue became more than just a personal one; with the proliferation of professional dog walkers, it also has commercial ramifications: shepherding ten or more unleashed dogs makes cleaning up their mess almost impossible and increases the potential danger to other park users. The fracas generated outrage on both sides, and Robinson responded by forming an off-leash dog task force. Parks began to be separated into dog and non-dog parks, divided by geography and by time, but the off-leash areas deteriorated through trampling and droppings, and the worst-hit communities have informally renamed some of their parks in honor of canine excrement. By mid-1999, the city had established 17 off-leash areas, some fenced and others not, and agreed to explore the addition of 21 more. Many big-city park systems are struggling with the off-leash dog issue, but San Francisco is at the forefront of the debate.

Cars were another flash point. As in Forest Park in St. Louis, Balboa Park in San Diego, and other parks, the need for parking spaces for the museums in Golden Gate Park conflicted with other park uses, particularly after bicyclists and runners succeeded in getting a one-mile stretch of John F. Kennedy Drive closed to motorized traffic on Sundays and holidays. The lack of easy car access to the DeYoung Art Museum caused the museum's trustees to consider moving to a downtown location, but San Franciscans overwhelmingly preferred to keep the museum in the park. After complex negotiations, the city agreed to let the museum construct a privately financed 1,000-car parking garage under the plaza between the DeYoung Museum and the California Academy of Sciences. In return, 1,000 surface parking spaces in Golden Gate Park will be eliminated. Environmentalists argued that the city would be better served if the $42 million cost of the garage were spent extending a light-rail line to Golden Gate Park, but everyone agrees that the plan will be good for the park itself.

An even more significant replacement of cars for open space took place on the downtown bayfront between 1991 and 1999, as the city replaced the double-deck Embarcadero Freeway with a handsome 2.5-mile urban promenade, a boulevard, a light-rail line, palm trees, and striking street art. Even though the never-completed Embarcadero had been the bane of antihighway activists since the 1950s, it had not been scheduled for demolition, and city planners struggled for years to design a pedestrian-friendly bayfront under the ugly elevated highway. Then, in 1989, the Loma Prieta earthquake accomplished what politicians had avoided, and the highway's foes rushed to show that repairing the road would be more expensive than tearing it down. Market Street has now been reconnected to the famous Ferry Building and the waterfront, and the city has even constructed the first new pier—for fishing, strolling, and touring—since the 1940s. Although not operated by the Department of Recreation and Parks, the Embarcadero Prom-
San Francisco

San Francisco enclade is an integral part of the Bayshore Trail, a 100-mile-long planned walking and bicycling route around the entire San Francisco Bay.1

The Embarcadero project signals a new vision for the San Francisco Bay shoreline. Long consigned to industrial and maritime uses, the bayfront actually has large tracts of unused and underused land ready for conversion to housing, retail establishments, trails, and parks. The first big parcel—a 303-acre abandoned Southern Pacific rail yard in Mission Bay—will be the site of all the uses listed above, plus a new, privately financed baseball stadium for the Giants, a research campus for the University of California, and 49 acres of parks and open space. South of the rail yard, the long-closed Hunter’s Point Naval Shipyard has been transferred to the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency, which plans to create some parkland along with other economic uses. On the one hand, redeveloping the bayfront is attractive in many ways, particularly because it is in the sunniest part of town; on the other hand, low-income residents south of Market Street fear that gentrification in already high-priced San Francisco will eliminate the last affordable neighborhoods in the city.

Although San Francisco has picked up almost no new city-owned parkland for more than 30 years, it has steadily gained federal parkland within city boundaries. The Presidio, the famous military base that guarded the entrance to San Francisco Bay for 218 years, has been gradually retired from service and converted to park use. First, in 1972, when the federal government established the Golden Gate National Recreation Area (not to be confused with, and not including, Golden Gate Park), the picturesque shoreline of the Presidio was transferred from the military to the National Park Service under a permanent easement. When the base was decommissioned 22 years later, the entire 1,480-acre Presidio became a national park, albeit under terms that Congress had never before stipulated for a park. The Presidio Trust Act mandates that the Presidio is to be developed as a multiuse facility that must become financially self-sustaining (through rents and leases) by the year 2013. This is the first time that a national park has been designed to include rent-paying residents, shops, and businesses, and the first instance of a park agency—in this case, the Presidio Trust—being challenged to raise money to cover all its costs (an estimated $37 million a year) or face the prospect of having its land sold off to private developers. Regardless of the controversial terms, San Franciscans are getting a park property that is virtually as large and dramatic as Golden Gate Park itself, and the city has thrown itself into planning trails, bikeways, cultural interpretation, forest management, and myriad other tasks with energy and enthusiasm.

With fully one-quarter of the city’s surface area covered by parkland, the challenge for San Franciscans is to find the public and private funds—and the shared vision—to retain the beauty of that park system and to ensure that it serves residents’ and tourists’ needs.

Note

FEW URBAN VISTAS anywhere can compare with the sight of Chicago from Lake Michigan. A massive wall of gleaming apartment buildings, punctuated by even more awesome office towers, meets the unending flat plane of blue water. Between these immutable surfaces lies a splendid skirt of greenery. Whether by car, by bicycle, by skates, or by foot, the unifying element for this tableau of architecture and water is the almost unbroken greenway from Lincoln Park on the north through Grant, Burnham, Jackson, and Rainbow Parks to Calumet Park at the extreme south. With 24 miles and 2,990 acres of shore parks, Chicago has the greenest, most accessible, and most inviting lakefront in the United States.

The many treasures along and near the lake include 31 beaches, almost 5,000 marina slips, the Lincoln Park Zoo, the bicycle and running path through Lincoln Park, Navy Pier with its trademark Ferris wheel, six museums, Jackson Park with a magical Olmstedian landscape that makes the city seem to disappear, scores of sand volleyball courts, and Washington Park, which was also designed by Olmsted with Calvert Vaux and was the first city park to feature playing fields for sports. Even private interests downtown have gotten into the spirit, creating

With 24 miles of shoreline parks totaling 2,990 acres, Chicago has the greenest, most publicly accessible, and most inviting lakefront in the United States.
a temporary golf driving range and putting green among the skyscrapers until the land can be assembled for another high-rise building.

Back in the 1880s, it was far from a foregone conclusion that Chicago would have either lakeshore parks or a "gold coast" of upscale residences along the shore. (Even today the Chicago model is the exception rather than the rule—it has not been duplicated, for instance, in Cleveland, Detroit, Milwaukee, or Toronto, all of which have relatively modest waterfront park systems.) The concept was first expounded in 1886 by the great city planner and architect, Daniel Burnham, but more than 20 years and
much bitter debate ensued before it was formally incorporated in the famous 1909 Plan for Chicago. It then took many more years of relentless lobbying by merchant A. Montgomery Ward and others for it to become a reality. In fact, the waterfront system is still being developed today, with about a half-billion dollars of repairs and improvements currently underway or planned.

Unfortunately, as one moves inland, Chicago's park resources lose their distinction. There are a few great west side spaces like Columbus Park, designed by masterful Jens Jensen, who made use of Illinois native plants and mimicked the original Illinois landscape, as well as Garfield Park, which was designed by Burnham and has the largest plant conservatory in the United States; but if one subtracts the lakefront parks (which constitute 39 percent of the system), the rest of the vast city of Chicago is served by only 4,339 acres of Chicago Park District land, less than the park system of Denver (which has less than one-fifth of the population). All in all, counting city, county, state, and federal parks, Chicago has less parkland per person than every other city profiled in this book except Miami.

Conversely, Chicago makes the most of what it has, intensively managing and using virtually every inch of land, unlike most other cities that have large tracts of undeveloped properties. In fact, with 255 recreation centers, 88 pools, and 11 ice skating rinks, plus thousands of classes, courses, and programs, the Chicago Park District spends more money per capita on its parks and recreational programs—$108 per resident—than all but three of the big cities examined. One reason the district is able to bring in and spend so much—almost $294 million in 1999—is that it is a fully freestanding entity, chartered by the state with the authority to levy taxes and determine its own budget. Although the mayor appoints its board members, the Park District is less subject to political vagaries and fiscal uncertainties than any other big-city park agency in the country (except those in Kansas City and Minneapolis, which have similar structures). For example, the Chicago Park District spends more than twice as much per resident as New York does and more than three times as much as Los Angeles.

When it comes to urban parks and civic beautification, Chicago has been enormously influential, not once but repeatedly. As host of the 1893 World Columbian Exposition, Chicago unveiled "The White City," fairgrounds created by Daniel Burnham and Frederick Law Olmsted, which offered a vision of beautiful, monumental urbanity set among parks and lagoons that instantly electrified and motivated Americans and strongly influenced park and beautification efforts in Denver, Kansas City, San Diego, Seattle, St. Louis, Washington, D.C., and many other cities.

Sixteen years later, Chicago again attracted planners' and park advocates' attention with Burnham's ambitious comprehensive plan for a green lakefront, a network of inland riverside forest preserves, and a formal boulevard system connecting the elements with civic and commercial areas. Unlike many other cities with great plans, most of this project was implemented.

Chicago's third entry into the national spotlight is occurring now. After a 20-year period of blatant mismanagement, nonperformance, and waste—including six years during which the agency was under an unprecedented court order to reduce race-based inequities—in 1993, Mayor Richard M. Daley targeted the Chicago Park District for a complete overhaul. Despite public skepticism, Daley's top lieutenant, Forrest Claypool, undertook a thorough internal analysis and a massive restructuring of the department, outsourced many of its functions to private contractors, and refocused its mission to the most important core park and recreation activities. Claypool is a lawyer, not a park professional, and his tenure was planned as only a four-year surgical strike, but in that short time the district's turnaround was astonishing. Trees, bushes, and flowers were planted; lighting was upgraded; sports fields were renovated.
ornamental fencing was erected, and projects outside the department's core mission were contracted out, including Soldier Field Stadium, Lincoln Park Zoo, boat mooring rentals, vehicle maintenance, capital construction, and more.

Staff size was reduced by 33 percent. Current efforts have prevented the threatened demolition of Garfield Park Conservatory—which had deteriorated so much that it was getting fewer than 1,000 visitors a year and $1 million worth of plants froze during the winter of 1993—and it is now being restored through a $20 million public/private renewal.

Despite the improvement, no 2,700-person bureaucracy can be fixed in only four years, and the Chicago Park District is no exception. The agency is still in serious turmoil with regular reorganizations, considerable staff turnover, and a depletion of institutional memory. For instance, after several years of success getting federal transportation grants for bikeways and other projects, the agency appeared to have lost the necessary knowledge base and received no grants at all. Claypool's successor, the Park District's first female, African American general superintendent, Carolyn Williams Meza, was herself a victim of the upheaval and lasted only one and one-half years. Nevertheless, Chicagoans are gradually regaining confidence in their park agency and seem to recognize that improvement is occurring.

The Park District's latest general superintendent, appointed in 1999, is David Doig, a 34-year-old official from the city's Planning Department. Doig's greatest challenge is to increase the gross amount of parkland in the city while maintaining and improving the facilities and programs already in place. Fortunately, he inherited the CitySpace Plan, an award-winning compilation of all Chicago's open space put together over a four-year period by the Chicago Planning Department, the Park District, and the Cook County Forest Preserve (and funded by the Chicago Community Trust). While Chicago is, of course, fully built out, the study found a surprising amount of additional available land and recommended making it usable through joint development, land recycling, and intergovernmental collaboration.

The largest available parcel is an almost one-square-mile brownfield tract on the far south lakeshore that until 1992 was the site of the USX South Works Steel Mill. If pollution and ownership problems can be resolved, the city will formulate a multipurpose development plan that includes a 123-acre park, plus housing, retail establishments, an extension of Lake Shore Drive, and possibly a marina, a museum devoted to labor history and steel making, and more. The park would add two more miles of beach, and the new section of Lake Shore Drive would take a decidedly post-
automobile-age tack. Unlike the rest of the roadway, this section would be located on the west side of the property, far from the shoreline, so as to minimize noise and pollution for nonmotorized lakefront users.

In contrast, the smallest tracts available are house-sized vacant lots scattered throughout the west, southwest, and northwest sections of Chicago. These parcels were left behind after the demolition of abandoned, tax-derelict buildings in poverty-stricken neighborhoods. Chicago has nearly 10,000 vacant lots but for years failed to take advantage of this potential open space. Finally, through the CitySpace Plan, the logjam
The Burnham Greenway, a 7.6-mile trail fashioned from an abandoned railroad corridor, connects Chicago’s south side with neighboring Calumet City. The trail also protects a remnant slice of original prairie that was never disturbed by the railroad. Chicago has hundreds of miles of unused railroad tracks, but the Burnham Greenway is the city’s first rail trail.

was broken, and a new public/private enterprise called NeighborSpace was launched in 1996 to provide permanent protection for valuable community gardening sites. Since then, Chicago has been moving into the national forefront of the community gardening movement.

NeighborSpace is technically a private, non-profit agency, but its $300,000 operating budget is derived from the Park District, the Planning Department, and the County Forest Preserve District, each paying one-third; the first board chair of the agency was the city’s planning commissioner. A three-year test project at the outset, NeighborSpace leaped into high gear, permanently protecting 52 green spaces by 1998, and was reauthorized for 20 more years. In addition to community gardens, NeighborSpace promotes small passive parks and green river edges, and it even has three planted railroad embankments. The organization seeks to own most of its properties (and even goes to auctions of tax-delinquent land to bid against private developers), but it takes on a site only if it can sign a maintenance contract with a neighborhood institution. Moreover, for each parcel, the agency requires a $5,000–$7,500 Land Stewardship Fund endowment, money that is frequently acquired from private foundations or local institutions.

The CitySpace Plan also stimulated action on a widely available resource that is severely underused in Chicago (and in virtually every other city): school yards. For decades the Park District and the Chicago Board of Education had passed each other like ships in the night, but when Mayor Daley took control of the school system in 1994, he was able to begin using the schools’ capital construction program as a vehicle to make broader improvements to the city’s neighborhoods. Called the School Parks Program, the plan is funded at $12.5 million a year and entails scraping out pavement and replacing it with grass and trees, as well as hammering out joint-use agreements between the schools and the neighborhoods. With a goal of 100 school parks in the first four years, the first significant achievement was in culturally significant Bronzeville, where a grade school, a high school, and some adjacent vacant land were pulled together into a campuslike school and park.

A number of mid-sized park efforts are also underway. Two have been created from classic brownfields, assembled for the Park District by the Trust for Public Land and the Chicago-based Openlands Project. Senka Park, opened in 1998, was a former rail yard. Southside Park, slated to open in 2002, involved the assembly of 169 separate parcels in an economically devastated Industrial area near the USX site. Another, the Burnham Greenway, is a 7.6-mile rail trail connecting Chicago’s south side with neighboring Calumet City. Even though the nation’s very first rail trail—the Illinois Prairie
Path—was created in the Chicago suburbs in 1965, and even though Chicago has hundreds of miles of unused tracks. Burnham is the first rail trail within the city itself. Initiated by the Openlands Project in 1995, the former Conrail corridor will be operated jointly by the Park District and two suburban counties when it opens in 2000.

The most exciting locus of new park activity in Chicago is found along the overworked, underappreciated Chicago River. One highlight is Canal Origins Park, site of the 1836 ground breaking for the Illinois and Michigan (I&M) Canal, the waterway that began Chicago’s rise from an obscure lakeside village into the nation’s greatest inland metropolis. Only three acres, the canal is extremely significant both historically and culturally, because it marks the city’s first effort to join the state of Illinois in creating parkland along the 97-mile I&M Canal. Other river parks have been developed in Chinatown and along the North Branch, where the investment is helping to spur a revitalization of loft buildings in an old neighborhood of brick factories.

Much of the upsurge in Chicago’s park efforts is attributable to Mayor Daley, who combines a love of trees, flowers, bicycling, and wrought-iron fences with an impeccable political bloodline (his father was mayor from 1955 to 1976, one of his brothers is currently a Cook County commissioner, and another was the U.S. secretary of commerce). Even though Chicago has long had one of the country’s most active and vocal citizens’ park advocacy groups, Friends of the Parks, the organization was unable to make much headway until Daley was elected. Established in 1975 to battle against the politicization of the system, Friends of the Parks finally finds itself cheering more often than complaining.

Nevertheless, Chicago has a steep hill to climb to reach its short-term goal of two acres of parkland per 1,000 persons in every neighborhood and its longer-term goal of five acres per person citywide. The first goal requires the development of about 100 acres per year for ten years, which in Chicago could cost as much as $200 million to $300 million on the open market. Because of a cap on its bonding authority, Park District funds will have to be supplemented by other sources—county, state, federal, and private—at much higher levels.

Of course, the city is aggressively pursuing other sources. In 1990, after conservationists protested that a massive expansion of the McCormick Place exposition center would gobble up some parkland, the city came up with an innovative plan to compensate, by relocating several lanes of Lake Shore Drive, with the Metropolitan Pier and Exposition Authority arranging to cover the $90 million cost. The plan resulted in the establishment of 16 acres of new parkland and a beautiful, car-free, museum campus in Burnham Park.

One underused park agency resource for Chicago is the Cook County Forest Preserve District. The Forest Preserve is a gigantic entity with 67,000 acres of mostly natural lands, a $128 million budget, and taxing authority in the second wealthiest county in the nation. Although 55 percent of the Forest Preserve’s income stems from Chicago residents, only 5 percent of its land—3,687 acres—is located within city limits, an inequity that has irritated some city residents for years. In reply, the Forest Preserve points out that it also has a cap on its bonding authority and claims that there is virtually no pristine land left in the city, even

### Cook County Forest Preserve District (Chicago)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Address</th>
<th>536 N. Harlem Avenue, River Forest, Illinois</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zip Code</td>
<td>60305</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone</td>
<td>(312) 261-8400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agency Acreage in City</td>
<td>3,687</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acreage as Percent of City</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acres per 1,000 Residents</td>
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### Adjusted Budget for Fiscal Year 1999

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<th>Revenue</th>
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<tr>
<td>General Funds</td>
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<td>Dedicated Taxes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fees Retained by the Agency</td>
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<td>Private Grants and Donations</td>
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<tr>
<td>State and Federal Support</td>
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<td>Capital Income</td>
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<th>Expenditure</th>
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<td>Grounds and Facilities Maintenance and Repair</td>
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<td>Recreational Programming and Activities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Capital Construction and Acquisition</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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| Expenditure per Resident                     | $7.00                                    |

Note: Adjusted budget is an estimate of expenses solely within the city of Chicago.
though the CitySpace Plan found thousands of acres of relatively undeveloped wetlands teeming with wildlife around Lake Calumet on the city's south side. Although initially resistant because of possible environmental contamination in the area, the Forest Preserve District has been feeling pressure from Mayor Daley and may ultimately increase its holdings in the city.

Daley also succeeded in requiring every new housing development or loft conversion project to include open space or a commensurate payment for the acquisition of open space elsewhere. (This open-space impact fee is expected to generate about $1.5 million a year.) Daley also convinced then Governor Jim Edgar to agree to close tiny Meigs Field Airport so that it can be converted into Northerly Island Park, as Daniel Burnham envisioned nearly a century ago. If the conversion does, in fact, occur, Northerly Island Park will become another lakefront jewel, complementing the decking of unsightly railroad tracks near Grant Park to create the new Millennium Park.

How can a city turn its parks around so dramatically? Perhaps, as Forrest Claypool put it, “It helps to have a crisis.” Or perhaps it harks back to the very motto on Chicago’s great seal: Urbs in Horto—“City in a Garden.”
IF INNOVATION WERE battery powered, Boston would be the Energizer™ bunny of American cities. Most other early U.S. settlements have, to one extent or another, reached their limits or become resistant to change, while Boston has maintained an energetic trajectory into the future. And nowhere is Boston's inventiveness more apparent than in the way the city deals with parks.

Boston gave America its first park. In fact, it was so long ago—1634—that the word itself wasn't used, and to this day the city's central green space is called the Common. It was in Boston that Frederick Law Olmsted pulled all his ideas together into the park-and-drainage masterpiece known as the Emerald Necklace. Boston began the playground movement in 1891. In addition, Boston took the idea of build-

The Boston Public Garden, dating from 1823, is a key jewel in the Emerald Necklace of parks stretching from Boston Common to Franklin Park. One reason for the Public Garden's lasting luster is the efforts of its private support and advocacy group, the Friends of the Public Garden, the oldest of 60 friends' groups active in Boston.
Boston's network of parks and open space.

...ing a park over an underground parking lot and showed that it could pay for itself. With the city's approaching quadricentennial in 2030, Boston is again innovating, with its plans for a grand new Harbor Islands park and a greenway over the top of the country's most expensive underground highway.

The unending creativity coming out of Boston is not easy to explain. Perhaps it is the result of the unusual combination of old-line preservationism with the constant influx of 130,000 college students in a pressure-cooker space smaller than the island of Martha's Vineyard. Possibly, Boston's location was so challenging that the city could survive only through constant alteration of its environment: first filling in vast areas of shallow marshland, next tackling problems of sluggish river flow and water pollution, then constructing a tangle of rail lines and roadways, and now seeking to undo the damage of those transportation corridors. Each environmental alteration resulted in different types of green spaces.

Whether or not all these factors have given Boston the country's best park system is hard to determine. Boston's bureaucratic structure is so convoluted that even figuring out the numbers—much less what they mean—is daunting. Despite its diminutive size (the third smallest city covered in this book by land area), Boston has three different agencies handling parks and recreation: Boston Department of Parks and Recreation, Boston Department of Community Centers, and the Metropolitan District Commission. In addition, the city contains land managed by the National Park Service, the state's...
Department of Environmental Management, and the city's Conservation Commission, as well as a variety of private institutions, including land trusts and even Harvard University.

Adding it all up yields impressive totals on paper. Of the eight high-density cities described in this book, Boston is second in acres of parkland per resident (after San Francisco), second in park dollars spent per resident (after Chicago), and third in park acreage as a percent of city area (after New York and San Francisco). In reality, however, the friction among so many different entities reduces the efficiency of the systems. Historically, there have been long stretches when one or more of Boston's park agencies strayed from its mission. Through much of the 19th century, the city fell far behind such park leaders as Baltimore, New York, and Philadelphia, until a burst of civic boosterism (bustressed by landscape architects Olmsted and Charles Eliot, son of the famous Harvard president) resulted in the Emerald Necklace as well as the creation of a metropolitan park district that amassed 9,200 acres by 1900. After 1930, the city's system again languished and, in fact, shrank: two of Olmsted's great small jewels were paved over, one for a highway and another for Logan Airport; and 17 acres of Franklin Park were given over for the construction of a state hospital. The situation got worse: in 1954 the Sears and Roebuck Company demanded—and got—a few acres of the Back Bay Fens in return for building a store there. Olmsted's filled-in waterway was used as a parking lot.

Even the post–Earth Day 1970s did not produce a turnaround. At one point when the Boston Parks Department relocated, almost all its records were thrown out, including documents giving the location of underground utility pipes and wires. By the mid-1980s the system was in shambles, with overflowing trash barrels, uncut grass, hoopless basketball boards, unpruned trees, burned-out field houses, glass-strewn tot lots, graffiti-covered walls, and rutted fields. Meanwhile, the city itself was sliding, as disinvestment and arson-for-hire increased the number of vacant lots to 20,000.

Saddest was the condition of 510-acre Franklin Park, generally considered one of Olmsted's three greatest artistic creations (along with Central and Prospect Parks in New York). The park is a grand assemblage of meadows, hills, woods, stone bridges, picturesque gatehouses, rustic shelters, curving roadways and paths, and occasional perfect views to the horizon—in all, a wonderful rural environment in the middle of the city. Unfortunately, in its dilapidated, under-maintained state, the park helped pull down its Roxbury neighborhood, which, in turn, made the park more dangerous and reduced its use. Franklin Park never quite reached its potential, because it was not able to compete with the Common as Bostonians' central park and central love, but the Common also went downhill. Trampled by too many big events and too little upkeep, undermined by a clumsily designed and built underground parking garage, the Common suffered: its band shell was abandoned, the skating pond became unusable, and trees and turf were dying. The other parks, from silt-choked Back Bay Fens to scores of neighborhood playgrounds, were in similar shape.

The tide was about to turn, however. Park activism had been incubating quietly among frustrated but enterprising citizens' groups, beginning with the formation of Friends of the Public Garden in 1971 and the Franklin Park Coalition in 1975. Aware that the city was unwilling or unable to save their parks for them, these groups tackled the task themselves either by raising private money or by undertaking direct physical labor, or both. The idea caught on, and within a few years, 60 or more fledgling friends' groups and community garden land trusts sprang up, as well as an umbrella entity, the Boston GreenSpace Alliance. Because of their agitation, the Boston Foundation convened a year-long series of meetings between...
Frederick Law Olmsted's Emerald Necklace was a concept, but Donna DePrisco's unique creation was real, complete with 25 karats of emeralds and five karats of diamonds. The necklace was auctioned off at the 1998 Emerald Necklace Ball for $20,000, which helped fund the restoration of Boston's original park system.

At about that time, the Parks Department brought in Justine Liff as its director of planning and development. A dynamic and upbeat manager, who had learned the ropes at the South Street Seaport in New York and Rowes Wharf in Boston, Liff brought to her work a private-sector can-do attitude that, by 1996, had propelled her to the position of commissioner. Although no public agency in Boston ever turns around quickly, Liff has succeeded in raising the profile of the Parks Department, successfully marketing it to both the corporate community (resulting in numerous new public/private partnerships) and the public (increasing usership...
and awareness). She also knows how to put the fun back in parks: in 1998, she hosted the Emerald Necklace Ball, which included auctioning off a one-of-a-kind necklace (with genuine emeralds) that brought in $20,000.

In the meantime, while park advocates were trying to save what they already had, a number of other forces were coming together to give Boston new parkland. The first was Boston's potent antihighway coalition. Ever since the Massachusetts Turnpike had ripped a gaping gash through Allston, Back Bay, and Chinatown, and Interstate 93 had erected a wall of steel and traffic between downtown Boston and the historic North End, Bostonians had sworn that they would never again allow a gigantic roadway to be built through their colonial-scale downtown streetscape. Therefore, when the next freeway was proposed, they defeated the plan and persuaded the U.S. Congress to give the city the equivalent sum—$1.4 billion—for transit. By excavating underground, the city was able to depress and cover the Amtrak line, a subway, and several commuter tracks. On top, the city constructed the 4.7-mile, 52-acre Southwest Corridor Park, a state-of-the-art walking and biking trail complete with 20 children's play areas, 10 community gardens, and scores of ball courts. What had been a dirty, noisy rail line squeezed between low-rent apartment buildings became an unparalleled amenity, adding economic, social, and environmental value to the South End.

A few miles away, Post Office Square in the heart of the financial district had a very different group of visionaries giving that same concept—underground construction—a completely different twist. Led by intrepid developer Norman Leventhal, 20 business leaders gambled private money that they could replace a neighborhood-blighting eyesore with a spectacular park and could make money doing so. Contributing and borrowing $80 million, they bought and demolished a run-down four-story parking garage, excavated an enormous hole and converted it into seven levels of automobile parking, and covered the facility with a $2 million park complete with an outdoor cafe, fountains and sculptures, granite walls, movable chairs, and 125 different species of plants, bushes, flowers, and trees. The Park at Post Office Square added only 1.7 acres to Boston's total green space, but it completely redefined the financial district and has brightened the lives of thousands of downtown workers. The 24-hour underground parking garage not only generates millions of dollars (some of which will be contributed to neighborhood parks once the loans and dividends are paid off in 2007), but also produces a stream of foot traffic that helps keep the park busy and safe.

But Southwest Corridor Park and the Park at Post Office Square were simply trial runs for the “big dig”—the $13.5 billion Central Artery Project. The largest urban highway project ever undertaken, the Central Artery is Boston's effort to undo the damage of its freeway system by putting most of it underground and deck ing it with almost $200 million worth of parks, boulevards, walkways, landscaping, and enclosed gardens. The project will result in about 150 acres of new parkland, 23 in the heart of down-
Boston's $13.5 billion Central Artery Project, nicknamed the "Big Dig," involves burying Interstate 93 under the city's central business district and replacing the old elevated highway with a landscaped boulevard and acres of parkland.

town. Among other benefits, Bostonians will finally be able to walk unimpeded to the North End, ride their bicycles along the final "lost half-mile" from the Charles River to Boston Harbor, enjoy open space and spectacular views from park-poor East Boston and Charlestown, and savor the gift of Spectacle Island.

Spectacle Island, one of more than 30 islands scattered throughout Boston Harbor, is slated to become the centerpiece of Boston's next park, the recently approved but not yet developed Boston Harbor National Park Area. Previously used for everything from harbor defenses and wastewater treatment plants to prisons, landfills, and American Indian Internment camps, the islands promise to be a significant conservation, recreation, and visual resource. Every island has a different history of uses and different remains; Spectacle Island, for instance, was the former location of a quarantine hospital, then a summer resort, then a horse-rendering plant, and now the landfill for the Central Artery excavation. When that spoil material is shaped, packed down, and seeded, the island will become the 100-acre hub of the new national park, which will include a visitor's center, a ferry dock, and a marina.

Some of the islands are already parks; others will be used totally or partly as public space after their many nonconforming, nonproductive uses are cleaned up or eliminated. The park thus created will be an archetypal Boston partnership that includes the Boston Parks and Recreation Department, the Metropolitan District Commission, the Department of Environmental Management, the National Park Service, the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority, and 30 other public and private entities.

The Boston park story goes on and on, and the system is as multilayered as any in the nation. The city has a flourishing network of community gardens, many permanently protected by neighborhood land trusts; a fund specifically devoted to the small bits of undeveloped, unprotected natural areas sprinkled through the city; and the Boston Schoolyard Initiative. In addition, Boston's "Back to the Beaches" campaign stimulates enjoyment of the city's increasingly less-polluted waterfront areas. Finally, the park system includes the new trail efforts of the Trust for Public Land and the Boston Natural Areas Fund in East Boston and alongside the Neponset River; the Massachusetts Audubon Society's effort to turn an abandoned mental hospital campus into a nature center; and the new Emerald Necklace Conservancy.
Can Bostonians keep up this level of effort? Can they deliver on so many projects? Can they cover the cost of daily maintenance and upkeep? Will the money keep flowing if the local economy cools down? There is consensus that Boston's Parks and Recreation Department is doing a better job today than it has in the past 50 years. The city has never witnessed such a cadre of support and advocacy organizations. However, given the city's erratic history with parks—today's burst of activity seems exciting partly because so little happened for so long—there is reason for concern for the future.

Boston's greatest need is more money and a more stable funding base for parks, but the politics of park funding is complicated. With the city's population representing less than 15 percent of the Boston metropolitan area, and with the state deeply involved in virtually every city project, any funding mechanism—such as a real estate transfer tax or property tax add-on—would have to be designed to acquire land regionally, not just in the city. However, the obvious existing entity authorized to acquire land—the Metropolitan District Commission—has too many political liabilities to be given more money by the legislature. Added to this is Massachusetts's almost nonexistent county system, which forces citizens to make all local decisions town by town. Finding a fair, practicable, and profitable income source is a particularly tough challenge.

Ultimately, Boston will have to negotiate a metropolitan service district with its 40-50 neighboring jurisdictions, an entity modeled on the one in Minnesota's Twin Cities, so that the region can plan, implement, and maintain big projects, such as park systems. Until that happens, Boston will have to continue to rely on the radical innovations of its young visionaries, coupled with the preservationist bent of the guardians of the city's Olmstedian heritage.

### Note

1. For a detailed description of the creation and design of the Park at Post Office Square, see Alexander Garvin et al., *Urban Parks and Open Space* (Washington, D.C.: ULI—the Urban Land Institute, 1997), p. 146.
I'd rather be here than in Philadelphia" reads the epitaph on W. C. Fields's tombstone, which only proves that the comedian never set foot in Fairmount Park. No one who has bicycled along Philadelphia's car-free West Park Drive on a crisp weekend day, relaxed for tea in the Japanese Garden, delighted at the lightbulb-outlined boathouses perched beside the Schuylkill River, or attended an outdoor concert in the natural bowl of Robin Hood Dell can forget Fairmount Park. The park has myriad other pleasures as well, including horseback riding on Forbidden Drive, whisking down the 12-foot-wide, polished wooden slide at Smith Playground, gazing at azaleas behind the art museum, and marveling at the mechanical ingenuity of the 19th-century Fairmount Water Works.

W. C. Fields apparently also never set foot in Rittenhouse Square, arguably the most successful six acres of urban green space in the country. In The Death and Life of Great American Cities, Jane Jacobs called this elegant oasis amid high rises "one of Philadelphia's greatest assets today, the center of a fashionable neighborhood—indeed the only old neighborhood in Philadelphia which is spontaneously rehabilitating its edges and extending its real estate values."

When William Penn laid out Philadelphia in 1682, he decreed his village a "green countrie
Philadelphia's network of parks and open space.

towne" and instructed his surveyor to provide one acre of open space for every five acres of development. Surprisingly, despite some stretches of dismal, gray rowhouses on almost treeless streets, Philadelphia remains a greener city than most people realize, with fully 12.4 percent of its area devoted to parkland, more than the other densely populated cities covered in this book, with the exception of Boston, New York, and San Francisco. Moreover, the city boasts an astonishingly extensive recreation program, which has more recreation centers (158) and more swimming pools (85) than any city but Chicago. In addition, the city hires 1,700 seasonal employees every summer and runs a sports league program that involves 10,000 young people.

Nevertheless, Philadelphians are facing critical challenges with the city's park and recreation system. Natural vegetation is being choked out by invasive species like knotweed, ponds are filling up with cattails and sediment, an explosion of deer is eating away the undergrowth, recreation centers have deteriorated to the point of uselessness, roadways are crumbling, some tennis courts are "BYON" (bring your own net), and staffing levels have been slashed. In addition, trees on streets are dying faster than they are being replaced, bicyclists are wrangling with motorists for more time and space on park roadways, ballfields are overbooked and overused, and commuter traffic frequently clogs West Park Drive. The easiest way to spot the distress is to look at the budget: ranked by
dolars per resident, Philadelphia spends less on parks and recreation than all but six of the cities profiled in this book.

Part of the explanation is that Philadelphia's economy has been in extremis. The city has lost more than one-quarter of its population since the 1950s, and it is overwhelmed by one of the nation's highest rates of abandoned buildings. This is a city that has been under the watchful eye of a financial control board since 1991. Although things are looking up, there is still a long way to go, and—unlike in Pittsburgh—city hall does not have a strategic plan that ties parks into the city's overall marketing and economic development picture.

Economics do not tell the whole story, however. Unlike every other municipality except Boston, Cincinnati, and Tampa, Philadelphia does not have a unified parks and recreation department. It has two unrelated agencies: the Fairmount Park Commission, an independent entity that manages 8,900 acres of parks and forests and has a mission that focuses mainly on land protection; and the Philadelphia Department of Recreation, a city agency that operates scores of recreation centers and whose mission is to serve people. To complicate matters, the Park Commission also runs some recreation centers, while the Recreation Department owns about 100 squares and parcels of parkland. Moreover, while the head of the Recreation Department is appointed by the mayor and serves on the mayoral cabinet, the Fairmount Park Commission is governed by a 17-member board of directors. (By statute, the mayor is one of the directors but not the chair, and most of the directors are appointed by a group of judges, none of whom is directly responsible to anyone in Philadelphia.)

The gulf between the two agencies is wide. Whereas most Americans automatically assume that parks and recreation go hand in hand, Philadelphians have come to believe that the same bureau cannot administer both trees and people. In fact, in the early 1990s, when the president of the city council proposed combining the agencies as part of a larger revision of the city's charter, the ensuing outcry from Fairmont's extensive support network quashed not only that idea but brought down the entire charter proposal as well. As a fallback, the two agencies agreed in principle to exchange parkland for recreation programs, but even that plan fell victim to bickering.

Understanding the split requires knowing some history. The seeds of Philadelphia's park system were sown in the 1790s, when a catastrophic epidemic of yellow fever, attributed to infested drinking supplies, killed 10,000 persons and led to a civic outcry for clean municipal water. With the town's primary waterway—the Delaware River—already polluted by commerce and industry, city leaders turned to the more pristine Schuylkill River for construction of a waterworks and a reservoir. In 1844, as growing pollution threatened the Schuylkill, the city purchased a 43-acre estate just above the water intake pipe. The land became the first parcel of Fairmount Park, which was then steadily expanded through public and private fundraising efforts. In 1867, the Fairmount Park Commission was created to care for the growing property, which soon included watershed lands on both sides of the Schuylkill as well as along sparkling Wissahickon Creek. Eventually, industry made water from the lower Schuylkill unfit to drink, but today, while the Delaware River waterfront is still almost devoid of parkland, the Schuylkill is the city's premier recreational artery, bolstered by parks along other stream valleys like Cobbs Creek and Pennypack Creek.

It is noteworthy that the Fairmount Park Commission was chartered by the state rather than by the city. Once the nation's preeminent city, by 1830 Philadelphia had fallen behind New York in population, commerce, and national leadership. Although the city continued to grow tremendously (and today is the nation's fifth most populous city), the flame of civic vitality seems to have flickered, and for more than a century Philadelphia settled into a pattern of...
I

Philadelphia

complacency tinged with governmental corruption. Progress in Philadelphia, when it came, was attributable mostly to private individuals or to the state of Pennsylvania, not to the city government's leadership. (Even under exceptionally dynamic mayors, parks sometimes suffered. Near the end of his life Mayor Richardson Dilworth, the most respected of them, admitted that the worst decision he had made was giving up 450 acres of pristine Fairmount Park forest to allow construction of the Schuylkill Expressway.)

The Fairmount Park Commission gets 80 percent of its budget from the city council but has a structure largely divorced from all other city agencies (and, fittingly, is housed far from City Hall in a gargantuan edifice left over from the 1876 Centennial Exposition). The commission's director is 30-year veteran William Mifflin, a native Philadelphian, who worked his way up through the ranks, starting as a groundskeeper in 1968. Though woefully underfunded, with millions of dollars' worth of deferred maintenance, the commission has one matchless asset: the support of 75 private friends' organizations, which, in 1998, collectively raised well over $2 million and provided more than 21,000 volunteers. In addition, over the years, lovers of Fairmount have established perpetual park trust funds with total assets of about $4 million. In 1996, in reputedly the nation's largest city park grant ever, the William Penn Foundation celebrated its 50th anniversary by awarding the commission $26.6 million to improve facilities and develop environmental education programs.

Meanwhile, the Philadelphia Recreation Department, headquartered in a center-city office building, could hardly have a more different heritage or culture. Established initially as a small program within the Welfare Department around the turn of the century, the agency was spun off as a full-fledged department only in 1952. Under the 24-year leadership of Robert Crawford, the department ballooned swiftly in staffing and in physical plant, so that by the mid-1980s it employed more staff members and operated more recreation facilities per capita than any other comparable agency in the nation. The Recreation Department was a glowing showpiece on paper, but its output and performance did not always measure up to its description. Too many centers were created as political favors to city council members, and more than a few employees landed jobs as a result of cronyism rather than merit. When

Philadelphia Department of Recreation

Address  1515 Arch Street, 10th Floor
Zip Code  19102
Telephone  (215) 683-3600
Fax  (215) 683-3599
Web Site  www.phila.gov/departments/recreation

Agency Acreage in City  1,464
Acres as Percent of City  1.7%
Acres per 1,000 Residents  1.0
Number of Recreation Centers  150
Number of Pools  82
Number of Golf Courses  0
Number of Tennis Courts  100
Number of Sports Fields  N.A.
Number of Marina Slips  0
Number of Beaches  0
Miles of Bikeways/Greenways  0
Number of Skating Rinks  5
Number of Full-Time Employees  550
Number of Seasonal Employees  1,700
Number of Volunteers  N.A.

Adjusted Budget for Fiscal Year 1998

Revenue
General Funds  $29,379,000
Dedicated Taxes  0
Fees Retained by the Agency  0
Private Grants and Donations  627,000
State and Federal Support  5,961,000
Capital Income  12,317,000
Total  $48,284,000

Expenditure
Grounds and Facilities Maintenance and Repair  $8,744,000
Recreational Programming and Activities  27,223,000
Capital Construction and Acquisition  14,288,000
Total  $50,255,000

Expenditure per Resident  $34

Note: Adjusted park budget excludes Veterans Stadium, the Mummers Museum, and the Afro-American Museum. Acreage owned does not include Camp William Penn, located in the Pocono Mountains.
the city collapsed into near-bankruptcy, the Recreation Department’s bubble burst and the staffing level plunged from 1,200 to 489.

A phoenix is slowly rising out of the ashes, however, thanks to former Mayor Ed Rendell’s choice in 1992 of Mike DiBerardinis, a dynamic and charismatic former community organizer, as commissioner of recreation, and thanks to the work of an exceptional private group, the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society. Recreation commissioner until Mayor John Street took office in January 2000, DiBerardinis was a graduate first of the rough-and-tumble politics of the near-north neighborhood of New Kensington, and then of the staff of U.S. Representative John Foglietta. The commissioner was well suited to his mission: in his younger days as a community organizer DiBerardinis once took a sledgehammer, called the press, and threatened to personally tear down a dilapidated shed that was encouraging criminal activity in his neighborhood park. (The city agreed to improve the park.) “For a city recreation department to survive today’s tough political and financial realities, it’s got to prove its value to the whole community,” DiBerardinis said. “Sports and crafts in and of themselves are not enough—the vision has to include youth intervention and crime prevention.”

To give his message reality, the department started symbolically, scrapping its old motto, “Life—Enjoy It!” for the more relevant, “Building Youth, Building Neighborhoods.” It then launched a huge after-school program, which now provides activities at 150 locations three hours a day, five days a week. Situated at recreation centers, churches, and other community facilities, the program is funded jointly by private foundations and the city, and it employs local staff members chosen by local leaders. “Starting at zero, after two years we were the biggest after-school provider in the city,” reported DiBerardinis.

Tapped by Mayor Rendell to chair a multi-agency Violence Prevention Committee, DiBerardinis landed a $10 million grant from the Philadelphia Land along the Schuylkill River was first purchased in the 1840s to protect the purity of Philadelphia’s drinking water. Today, 4,167-acre Fairmount Park—Wissahickon Valley is the city’s recreation and conservation centerpiece, the second largest municipal park in the East and the home of famed Boathouse Row, shown here.

Because Philadelphia has two different agencies for parks and recreation, the Recreation Department can focus all its efforts on a wide array of cultural, sports, arts, after-school, and violence prevention programs. Despite this strength, coordination with the Fairmount Park Commission can sometimes pose a challenge.
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to identify neighborhood leaders in low-income areas and to help forge a common youth agenda that would unite all segments of the community. His second goal was to develop better communication between the Recreation Department and the Police Department's Police Athletic League program. Unfortunately, differing cultures and expectations have hampered the success of that affiliation.

Meanwhile, a marriage that is working is the one between the Recreation Department and the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society. Growing out of a modest effort 30 years ago to encourage flower boxes and street trees in the inner city, the Society has built its Philadelphia Green program into the nation's most ambitious and successful private program to revitalize hard-hit neighborhoods through community gardening, greening, side-lot acquisition, and creation of jobs in horticulture. In communities that also contain a park (scores of which are owned but rarely tended by the Recreation Department), Philadelphia Green works to bring those spaces back to life, too. Since 1993, thanks to grants from the ubiquitous William Penn Foundation and the Pew Charitable Trust, Philadelphia Green has adopted nine parks; if more funding comes through, the group will take on all 100.

Almost everything that goes on in neighborhood-based Philadelphia plays out against a backdrop of abandoned housing. According to a 1992 study, except for northeast Philadelphia, the swank Chestnut Hill area, and Society Hill downtown, virtually every neighborhood is awash in abandoned residential buildings, deserted factories, relinquished shops, and 15,800 parcels of vacant land. The greatest challenge faced by advocates of parks and open spaces is what to do with this land. They must find a way to work with housing advocates and community development interests to turn the abandonment crisis into a sustainable city opportunity that will provide the next generation of Philadelphia residents—which the city hopes will include returnees—with a more livable city the second time around. No one anywhere in the country has found a common language between community developers and nature conservationists. But if a modern inner-city unity is possible, it is likely to be in Philadelphia, where Philadelphia Green and community groups in New Kensington and elsewhere are on the leading edge of meeting the challenge.

Because the neighborhood groups concentrate on local parks, the Fairmount Park Commission can pursue a larger-scale, if more tradi-
tional vision: turning the downtown Schuylkill River waterfront into both a showpiece for the city and a more successful entryway into Fairmount Park. Currently the Fairmount Water Works is undergoing a $22 million renovation transforming it into a promenade, museum, restaurant, and site for concerts, public festivals, and private parties. The commission is also cooperating with two private groups to bring to fruition a project that has been on the books for 30 years: the Schuylkill River Greenway, a trail that would safely carry pedestrians and bicyclists from the park to the historic downtown area, breaking through the tangle of roads and railroad tracks that has kept Philadelphians from their river. In recent years, some new interest has developed in the Delaware waterfront with the creation of Penn’s Landing, which consists of a promenade, concert bandstand, ferry dock, and restaurants.

The future of Philadelphia’s park and recreation programs is unclear. On the one hand, the city has a substantial amount of parkland and a large number of facilities—perhaps even too much land and too many facilities—and enjoys a high level of private interest and support, particularly from the foundation community, friends’ groups, and Philadelphia Green. On the other hand, the bureaucracies are not working together, and there is no effective, unified park and recreation lobbying effort before the city council. Mayor Rendell, who left office at the end of 1999, was a tireless and effective booster of Philadelphia as a city, but he did not put parks at the top of his agenda and sometimes even tended to look at them as sources of revenue rather than as green infrastructure that needs constant tending. If the new mayor, John Street, provides the leadership to pull together divergent public agencies and private advocates, Philadelphia’s system could flourish.

Notes

WHAT COULD BE more pleasurable—
on a beautiful late fall Sunday in southern Florida—than kicking off your shoes; grabbing a blanket, a frisbee, and a picnic lunch; and heading off with family and friends to a delightful outing in a neighborhood park? Isn't this what life is all about? Not in Miami. Miami has less open space than any big city in the country. Miami's 109 city parks and one county park total only 1,329 acres, or only 3.5 acres for every 1,000 residents, the lowest ratio of any city profiled in this book. If Virginia Key Park is eliminated from the list, since much of that island's public space is closed to the public, the number of acres per 1,000 persons drops to less than two.

Certain defenses can be raised. Great weather, combined with wonderful views of...
Miami's network of parks and open space.

Biscayne Bay, diminish the need for parks to provide open-space relief. Miami-Dade County does provide regional oceanfront parks not far away in Miami Beach and Key Biscayne (both separate cities) and elsewhere. Some lovely small parks exist, including Morningside (across from Miami Beach) and Kennedy (in Coconut Grove). But the less-privileged inhabitants of Miami, those who do not live in waterfront neighborhoods and do not get to travel much, have precious little parkland to choose from.

Miami is such an unusual city that many Americans might assume that it holds no lessons for the rest of the nation. Almost 60 percent of Miami's population is foreign-born, and 48 percent of Miami's adults are not citizens. Its principal language is Spanish not English. Its population density is by far the highest in the South and among the highest in the nation. With a 1996 poverty rate of 31.2 percent, the city had the lowest median household income of all U.S. cities. Adding in three authentic catastrophes—the Liberty City riot in 1980, the 100,000-refugee Mariel boatlift in 1981–1983, and Hurricane Andrew in 1992—makes the city's tribulations reach biblical proportions.

Nevertheless, Miami cannot be dismissed so easily as an aberration—the city may be a harbinger. The third youngest city in this book (see figure 9), Miami is a vibrant metropolis with an unending stream of entrepreneurial enthusiasm, a rough-and-tumble political arena,
and a land development bubble that comes roaring back each time it bursts. Miami's multilingual culture, heavily influenced by Latin American immigrants, may give a glimpse of what the future holds for many American cities.

If so, it is a cautionary tale. Between the city's financial and political troubles—it was governed by six different mayors from 1980 to 1999 and has operated under a state financial control board since December 1996—Miami's park program and budget have dropped precipitously. Lummers Park along the Miami River was closed and locked for seven years because of crime and vandalism. Of two beaches at Virginia Key, one was closed for three years and the other remains shut to the present. In 1996, after a free-spending referendum campaign, the citizenry voted to turn over prime bayfront open space to a basketball team, the Miami Heat, for the construction of a sports arena. Adjacent to the arena, Bicentennial Park, expensively contoured and created in 1976, was allowed to be converted into the site of the Miami Grand Prix for several years and was never repaired or reopened. Other officially designated city parkland has been used for a highway depot dump site, a sewage treatment plant, and a medical center.

It is not easy to understand Miami. The city is not like St. Louis or Baltimore, which have a declining population and a waning economy. Instead, Miami is booming, with more people and jobs than ever and a Biscayne Bay skyline that is starting to look like a palm-tree version of Chicago's lakefront. However, Miami has not effectively captured enough of that private wealth, and the impoverished city government (which devotes 72 percent of the municipal budget to police and firefighting services) has not been able to hold its own with the prosperous and aggressive development industry. While many cities consciously attempt to stimulate economic activity adjacent to and near parkland, the pattern in Miami has been to treat the very parkland itself as an opportunity to generate revenue. Whether for housing, a health clinic, a sports venue, an office building, or a restaurant and entertainment complex, numerous parcels have been leased to developers and removed from the rolls of free, publicly available open space, particularly along Biscayne Bay. (Besides the loss of land to the basketball arena, the owner of the Marlins baseball team is eyeing Bicentennial Park, and part of Watson Island has been leased for Parrot Jungle.)

The principal downtown oasis is Bayfront Park, but the park has been contorted beyond recognition. Like Chicago's Grant Park on Lake Michigan, 62-acre Bayfront was created artificially in 1924, when sand was dredged from Biscayne Bay and placed behind bulwarks set in the harbor. From the 1920s through the 1940s, Bayfront Park appeared on virtually every Miami postcard—a lush, romantic park with a band shell, a lovely flower garden, concerts, dancing, strolling, and sparkling views of Biscayne Bay, as well as the premier site for political rallies and civic celebrations. After World War II, reduced maintenance, a changing population, and an increase in crime ultimately left the park almost abandoned. Bayfront still retained a powerful emotional grip, but with no indigenous citizens' organization to defend it (à la New York's Central Park Conservancy), it fell victim to corporate takeovers.

The first deal was with the Rouse Company, famous for pumping life into moribund centers like it did with Faneuil Hall in Boston and Harborplace in Baltimore. Rouse leased about half of Bayfront Park (for $1 million a year) and built a restaurant and retail emporium called Bayside. In return for privatizing 31 of the most desirable waterfront acres in the state of Florida, city officials promised to use the profits to purchase an attractive and threatened hardwood hammock a few miles south. (Unfortunately, after protracted litigation against the owner, that property was lost, and the city has not acquired anything in its stead.) When even the Bayside emporium was unable to generate sufficient foot traffic and liveliness to restore a feeling of safety to the rest of the park, the

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### City Profile for Miami, Florida

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<tr>
<th>City Population (1996)</th>
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<tr>
<td>City Area in Acres (1990)</td>
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<td>Metropolitan Area Population (1996)</td>
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<td>38</td>
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<td>Total Park Acres in City</td>
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Miami Parks and Recreation Department

Address  
444 Southwest 2nd Avenue, 8th Floor
Zip Code  
33233
Telephone  
(305) 416-1230
Fax  
(305) 416-2154

Agency Acreage in City  
1.291
Acreage as Percent of City  
5.7%
Acres per 1,000 Residents  
3.5
Number of Regional Parks  
0
Number of Neighborhood Parks  
24
Number of Recreation Centers  
25
Number of Pools  
10
Number of Golf Courses  
1
Number of Tennis Courts  
51
Number of Sports Fields  
24
Number of Marina Slips  
0
Number of Beaches  
34
Miles of Bikeways/Greenways  
4
Number of Skating Rinks  
0
Number of Full-Time Employees  
200
Number of Seasonal Employees  
120
Number of Volunteers  
10

Adjusted Budget for Fiscal Year 1998–1999

Revenue

- General Funds: $9,607,000
- Dedicated Taxes: 0
- Fees Retained by the Agency: 1,746,000
- Private Grants and Donations: 0
- State and Federal Support: 472,000
- Capital Income: 1,735,000

Total: $13,560,000

Expenditure

- Grounds and Facilities Maintenance and Repair: $5,563,000
- Recreational Programming and Activities: 5,690,000
- Capital Construction and Acquisition: 1,735,000

Total: $12,988,000

Expenditure per Resident: $36

Note: Adjusted park budget includes the budget of the Bayfront Park Management Trust for the operation of Bayfront Park ($2.8 million).

City turned it over to a separate authority—the Claude and Mildred Pepper Bayfront Park Trust (Pepper, the city's beloved congressman, had landed a large federal grant for the park)—and hired famous environmental sculptor Isamu Noguchi to redesign the space completely.

Noguchi correctly convinced the city to tear down the view-blocking 1950s public library in the park, but he then proceeded to move so much dirt that the park now has hills—the city's highest—that still block the view of the bay. To make matters worse, because the Bayfront Trust was mandated to cover most of its costs through earnings from events, the entire character of the park was changed from free-flowing public space to a confusing layout of fenced outdoor theaters screened by thorny bougainvillea bushes. Large lockable gates were erected, making a walk in the park an aggravating exercise in avoiding dead-ends. The Pepper Trust has been successful in staging as many as 200 concerts and shows per year, but the only difference between Bayfront and a completely private outdoor theater is that Bayfront has a small slice of unlocked open space and that the Pepper Trust's excess revenues allow it to stage a few free events a year for all Miami residents.

Except for Bayfront, the city's parks are operated by the Miami Parks and Recreation Department, perhaps the most financially strapped of all the park agencies studied in this book. With an annual adjusted operating budget of under $13 million (or about $36 per resident, the third lowest of the 25 cities covered), Parks Director Alberto Ruder is hampered in every direction—park maintenance, recreation programs, planning, administration, and even public information. Financially, Miami's principal salvation is the $15 million to $20 million the city is slated to receive from the 1996 Miami-Dade County Safe Neighborhood Parks Bond Act, a measure carefully written to attract support from the normally tax-averse Hispanic community (and titled to reflect residents' concerns about crime and the need for young people's recreation). The city began spending the funds in 1998, constructing new tot lots with state-of-the-art equipment, repaving bicycling and walking paths, bringing in sand for an eroded beach, building a recreation center in underserved Liberty City, and renovating swimming pools (and keeping them open until December rather than only during the summer).

Miami's other potential source of revenue assistance is the Florida Communities Trust, perhaps the nation's most far-reaching state program designed to help city parks. Through
A small budget and a shortage of staff force Miami's Department of Parks and Recreation to close many of its parks on a revolving basis, often without notice to the public. The agency has erected miles of fencing in an effort to stem graffiti and vandalism.

the Communities Trust, which has quotas to ensure that a portion of the money will go to the urban core of big cities, $72 million worth of bonds is sold every year for land acquisition. Miami's first use of the money was in 1999 for Spring Garden Point Park, a one-acre parcel along the Miami River that had been designated for 64 townhouse residences. Created through private citizen initiative in the historic Spring Garden neighborhood, the property will be revegetated with mangroves and native plants and will serve as an ecological teaching site for the 22 schools in the surrounding area.

Best of all, Spring Garden Point Park may signal the breakthrough of the emerging new vision for the Miami River, a busy 5.5-mile waterway that could become the centerpiece of Miami's first greenway system. The driving force behind river revitalization is the need to dredge the waterway, but that economic catalyst is facilitating a community-wide dialogue about both pollution cleanup and park creation; in 1997, the state created the Miami River Commission to consider all three goals. The successful reopening of Lummus Park, now the scene of a lively program for senior citizens, gives activists a glimmer of hope.

Another positive sign was the extraordinary campaign to save the Miami Circle. Located at the mouth of the Miami River, the Miami Circle is the site of an exceptional archaeological find, a 2,000-year-old carved limestone circle, seemingly aligned with the stars on the day of the equinox, and believed to be a Tequesta Indian ceremonial temple. The Circle was discovered during a routine exploration just before two high-rise buildings were to have been erected, and only several lawsuits and an International outcry prevented Miami from allowing the construction project to proceed. Ultimately, when the city refused to take action, Miami-Dade County moved to acquire the land, buy out the developer, and preserve the site as an archaeological heritage park and museum.

Whether Miami has learned any lessons from Bayfront Park and from the Miami Circle will soon be tested at Virginia Key, the one large piece of green space left in the city. With a sewage treatment plant, an abandoned marine stadium, a popular aquarium, and more, Virginia Key is by no means a pristine wilderness. Yet the 1,000-acre natural barrier island is still a treasure that features nesting grounds for sea turtles, tidal mud flats with mangrove forests, rare spoonbills normally seen only 60 miles away in the Everglades, and a breeding ground for manatees; plus the historic beach that was reserved as the only swimming spot for Miami's African Americans until the 1950s. Truly a slice of what southern Florida was like 150 years ago, Virginia Key is one of the few locales capable of sustaining a coalition of African American and environmental activists under the rubric of the newly formed Public Parks Coalition of the Urban Environment League. Nonetheless, a wide variety of developers is intensely interested in Virginia Key as the site of more hotels, apartment buildings, or even a pricey "eco-campground." Theoretically, about half the island is protected by historical parkland.
Miami represents only 18 percent of the population of Miami-Dade County (see figure 3). With the county and the state of Florida itself playing a more active role in the city, Miami's two-fisted politics may become somewhat moderated in the future. Of particular interest is the voluntary "Eastward Ho!" initiative of southern Florida's Regional Planning Council, designed to provide more ecologically for the 2 million new residents expected in the region. Through Eastward Ho! developers are being lured away from the delicate, western fringes of Dade County alongside the marshy Everglades and toward the "high ground" (by 12 feet) along the Interstate 95 north-south spine. This program could have a profound impact on places like Miami's impoverished Overtown neighborhood, where almost half the land is currently vacant.

Equally significant, under pressure from environmentalists, in late 1999, the city finally abided by its own charter and created a Parks Advisory Board. The long-overdue board, which has both appointed and elected members—including, uniquely, a required high school student representative and a historian—is expected to help the department prioritize its decisions and raise additional private funds for the system. If the board is successful in raising the public's consciousness about the value (and shortage) of parks, it may also spur the appropriation of more public money too. (At about the same time, the Urban Environment League became much more active and began a high-profile campaign to save Bicentennial Park from the Marlins' stadium.)

Miami is redeveloping as dramatically as any other city in the country. If construction follows the old model, Miami will stay at the bottom of U.S. park statistics lists for a long time. If development is carried out with proper planning and with real community input, and if the city's environmental consciousness continues to grow, a lively new network of pocket parks and greenways could emerge in Miami.
Baltimore has often been called the Cinderella of American cities because of its Inner Harbor, shimmeringly re-created from desolate, abandoned warehouses. This epithet may be true, but the city's park system has yet to attend Prince Charming's ball. Once the envy of mayors all over the country, Baltimore's park and recreation programs have been relentlessly underfunded, undermined, and underappreciated. And now, like Cinderella's slipper, they have been tried for a fit on other agencies like the Department of Public Works and the Police Department.

The outcome of the experiment could have an impact nationally. After all, Baltimore is a city more than willing to embark on new ideas, and in the past 30 years, at least four of them set the standard for the nation. It was Baltimore that went beyond the melting pot by pioneering jubilant ethnic festivals and the multicultural city fair; it electrified the country with its "abandoned-house-for-a-dollar" urban homesteading program; it jumpstarted a "gritty city" tourist economy with the highly successful renewal of the Inner Harbor; and it revolutionized sports marketing with the profoundly influential Orioles' stadium at Camden Yards, the first human-scale, walkable baseball park built anywhere in a generation.

None of those ideas included parks, however. In fact, transforming the ideas into reality seemed to leave fewer resources for park maintenance and recreational programs. (In 1998, only five of the 25 large cities spent less money per capita on parks and recreation than Baltimore.) Baltimore is not without greenery, however; of the densely populated metropolises the city is slightly above average with 7.5 acres of parkland for every 1,000 residents. Nevertheless, Baltimore does not seem all that green, and the

The Pagoda in Patterson Park is fenced off from the public as the park awaits a multimillion-dollar renovation. Years of deterioration are finally being reversed thanks to the emergence of an energetic citizens' organization, Friends of Patterson Park, but Baltimore's fractured park bureaucracy makes revitalization difficult and slow.
Baltimore's network of parks and open space.

city's fabled rowhouses—with their marble steps—are more famous than 650-acre Druid Hill Park, even with its zoo, conservatory, woodlands, lake, hiking trails, ballfields, pool, city farm, archery range, and picnic areas. In fact, one reason those marble steps may be so memorable is that too often they gleam brilliantly on sidewalks that are unshaded by a single tree.

More so than many cities, the history of Baltimore's parks is intertwined with the history of its transportation systems. It was Mayor Thomas Swann, former president of the B&O Railroad, who in 1860 imposed an unprecedented trolley tax that was dedicated to parkland acquisition. For 80 years, the levy generated millions of dollars, enabling the Park Commission to purchase and develop large tracts of land and also to hire top-notch landscape architects like Frederick Law Olmsted's firm. Swann also bucked controversy and led the effort to acquire Druid Hill Park.

But what transit gave the automobile took away. In the 1950s, the highway engineers commandeered the wooded Jones Falls Valley and constructed the Jones Falls Expressway (Interstate 83). In the process, they eliminated Mount Royal Park, severed Druid Hill Park from The Johns Hopkins University, relegated the venerable Jones Falls to the status of a hidden spillway, and eliminated the best opportunity for a park connection from the city to its harbor. Fortunately, a tenacious, multiracial citizens' alliance, called Movement Against Destruction, prevented the wildest of the freeway proposals, including one skyway literally over Fort McHenry National Park.
Fortunately, the Jones Falls Expressway was contorted through downtown so as to miss Baltimore's most attractive urban plaza, Mount Vernon Square, with its Washington Monument (predating the one in Washington, D.C.) and its elegant surrounding brownstone mansions and apartments. The Interstate highways also bypassed the Inner Harbor and Federal Hill Park; the former has become the revitalized heart of the city, the latter a historic, beloved green space high on a steep hill overlooking the sports, culture, and shopping (not to mention the July 4th fireworks) found by the water.

Both Mount Vernon Square and Federal Hill Park clearly improve their surrounding neighborhoods, but not all green spaces in Baltimore are as successful. Carroll Park, in west Baltimore, needs extensive renovation and relandscapeing as well as restoration or removal of a huge abandoned Montgomery Ward warehouse that looms over the trees and the unkempt fields. In east Baltimore, Patterson Park, an exceptionally striking and beloved 144-acre oasis, is showing the effects of undermaintenance, with its historic Chinese pagoda fenced off to the public, its pond infested with cattails and algal blooms, and its $9.6 million renovation plan largely unfunded. Tragically, it is almost impossible to sit in Patterson, the classic sitting park, with its winding pathways and unique vistas. After devoting a two-person full-time crew year-round to repair and paint vandalized benches, the Recreation and Parks Department gave up and removed them. Recently, however, through an intensive planning process, an energetic friends group has been formed, and the city has programmed $1.7 million to begin refurbishing the park's perimeter, its courts, and its three-acre waterway, the Boat Lake.

The Baltimore City Department of Recreation and Parks was created in 1948 through the merger of the Parks Department with the Department of Public Recreation. What should have been a strong, productive marriage turned out not to be; the intervening 50 years have witnessed not only a slowdown in the acquisition of land but also an erosion of facilities and infrastructure as well as a lack of momentum in the recreation program. Mayor William Donald Schaefer's administration (1971–1986) missed a critical opportunity when the department failed to land a role in the operation or event programming of the Inner Harbor. Later, under Mayor Kurt Schmoke (1987–1999), significant chunks of the recreation program were turned over to the Police Athletic Leagues, which were flush with funds from the U.S. Department of Justice. (Under Schmoke, from 1988 to 1998, the Department of Recreation and Parks lost more staff—453 people—than any other agency in the city, even while the Police Department picked up 223 employees.)

In 1998, Mayor Schmoke, responding to a scathing report by a citizens' review team, removed the department's director and, in an attempt to save money, transferred more than 200 park maintenance staff to the city's Department of Public Works. The review team protested that the department needed more money, not fewer workers, but Schmoke justified the consolidation on efficiency grounds, because the move eliminated duplicate mowing, trimming, and trash removal functions. Of the big cities, only one other—Pittsburgh—has chosen this path; most managers believe that park values are lost when Public Works staff maintain green spaces. (Significantly, nearby Anne Arundel County, Maryland, made the same move in 1994 but switched back four years later, citing the large number of complaints about the reduced quality of park maintenance.)

Baltimore's problem is that it has not yet turned the corner in its economic transformation from grit to glitz. With a declining population, abandoned houses keep reverting to city ownership, and many of the 14,000 properties have become the responsibility of the Department of Recreation and Parks. As in Cleveland, Detroit, Philadelphia, and elsewhere, this scattered, unplanned inventory places a huge maintenance and cleanup burden on the department.
Baltimore City Department of Recreation and Parks

Address: 3001 East Drive
Zip Code: 21217
Telephone: (410) 396-7931
Fax: (410) 396-7931

Agency Age in City: 5,040
Agency Acres as Percent of City: 9.8%
Acres per 1,000 Residents: 7.2
Number of Regional Parks: 7
Number of Neighborhood Parks: 384
Number of Recreation Centers: 47
Number of Pools: 24
Number of Golf Courses: 5
Number of Tennis Courts: 110
Number of Sports Fields: 362
Number of Marina Slips: 0
Number of Beaches: 1
Miles of Bikeways/Greenways: 4
Number of Skate Rinks: 3
Number of Full-Time Employees: 291
Number of Seasonal Employees: 531
Number of Volunteers: 672

Adjusted Budget for Fiscal Year 1999

Revenue
General Funds: $16,655,000
Dedicated Taxes: 0
Fees Retained by the Agency: 1,332,000
Private Grants and Donations: 0
State and Federal Support: 2,896,000
Capital Income: 4,586,000
Total: $25,469,000

Expenditure
Grounds and Facilities Maintenance and Repair: $4,708,000
Recreational Programming and Activities: 16,176,000
Capital Construction and Acquisition: 4,586,000
Total: $25,470,000

Expenditure per Resident: $38

*Not tracked separately; included with fees retained by agency.

Some of the lots have been turned over to the community for gardens or play lots, but most have simply become littered wastelands.

Not everything at Baltimore City Department of Recreation and Parks is bleak. On the bright side, the city has come to recognize that the Inner Harbor needs greening, and it now has a long-range plan to create pocket parks and a continuous five-mile greenway along the waterfront from Canton to Fort McHenry. The department now has a role in Baltimore’s spotlight. Second, during the tenure of Director Thomas Overton, the department improved its working relationship with other city agencies and even with private organizations. Private groups were minor actors in Baltimore for years, but park partnerships are now becoming pivotal. Leading the way in the late 1980s was the Urban Resources Initiative, a remarkable program connected with Yale University. The program generated some of the most dynamic new thinking about parks since Olmsted and Sons proposed a sweeping park and boulevard system for the city in 1903. The Urban Resources Initiative, in fact, revived several of the Olmsted firm’s unfinished ideas, including a trail and greenway along the Gwynns Falls, one of the city’s three principal streams. In 1991, the local Parks and People Foundation and the national Trust for Public Land adopted and sold the concept to the city. More than just a park effort, the greenway was considered an outstanding opportunity to revitalize neighborhoods and link communities to the Inner Harbor.

The two groups and the city’s Planning Department went to work writing proposals and seeking to leverage funds for the Gwynns Falls Trail, and the results were spectacular—a $8.4 million from Congress, the state of Maryland, the U.S. Department of Transportation, and a variety of private sources for the project. Slated to stretch 14 miles from the Baltimore County line to the Inner Harbor, the Gwynns Falls Trail is also expected to open up Leakin Park, Baltimore’s beautiful but largely deserted 1,100-acre urban forest, to a populace that is only dimly aware of its existence. The first phase of the greenway opened in June 1999.

Other partnerships have followed suit. Capitalizing on the Gwynns Falls effort, a citizens’ campaign coalesced around the mistreated Jones Falls. Operating out of the Greater Homewood Community Corporation, this plan seeks to provide the missing link in a rail trail greenway that will eventually run between the two capital cities of Annapolis, Maryland, and Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. A different group of well-
heeled park lovers set its sights on a major renovation of the Druid Hill Park Conservatory and raised $5 million in public and private money for the task. And in the middle-income neighborhood of Bolton Hill, the department is experimenting with a contract for the United Skates of America, a private organization, to renovate and operate a major skating facility.

Baltimore is at a crossroads. Most of the white-led private groups care more deeply about conservation values than about services for residents, such as midnight basketball; but the residents of this majority-African American city are more interested in high-quality recreation programs than in pristine parklands. Now that the department has been dismembered, it is overwhelmingly recreation oriented, but because of years of neglect, the recreation program has lost the confidence of Baltimore’s citizens. Furthermore, the city has no effective outside recreation advocacy group to show up at city council meetings at budget time.

Parks and recreation can go hand in hand, something that the Gwynns Falls Trail advocates recognized when they renovated a large playing field alongside the stream and named it after local Negro League baseball star Leon Day. An endeavor like this requires a strong leader, however, and the agency has not had one for years. (Even visionary Director Chris Delaporte, who in the early 1980s built an indoor soccer arena, a boathouse, and an environmental center and who launched the city’s effort to land the Olympic Games, was criticized for ignoring the average Baltimorean.) Baltimore’s corporate leadership, with occasional exceptions like the France-Merrick Foundation and the Abell Foundation, is noticeably disengaged from activities involving parks and recreation. And, unlike Philadelphia and Washington, D.C., Baltimore even lacks a vocal constituency agitating for bicycle trails.

This situation puts pressure on the Gwynns Falls and Jones Falls Trail efforts, not only to create outstanding new facilities but also, more important, to provide the physical, economic,
and psychological linkage between the Inner Harbor's vitality and the authenticity of the neighborhoods. Many Baltimoreans were disappointed with the results of the 12-year Schmoke administration, but their hopes were raised when a new mayor, Martin O'Malley, took office in late 1999 and immediately solicited recommendations from park and recreation advocates. At the top of the list were the tasks of reassembling the dismembered Recreation and Parks Department and giving it a higher level of funding.

Baltimore may be hurting, but it still has plenty of spunk. In 1998, when a few bicyclists asked that the Jones Falls Expressway be shut down on a Sunday morning, the Public Works Department was surprisingly supportive. As a result, 5,000 delighted bicyclists, runners, skaters, and baby stroller pushers got to enjoy the city from an unprecedented vantage point, many discovering Jones Falls—the creek, not the highway—for the first time. With cooperation like this and the pleasure of reexperiencing their city's natural values, Baltimoreans might be on the verge of a new period of innovation in the city's park system.
Of the American Dream is a single-family house on a quarter-acre lot with a two-car garage and a couple of television sets, does that dream include any room for parks? Nowhere does this question have more relevance than in Los Angeles. By almost any measure, Los Angeles is an extraordinarily successful city. In 1982, it surpassed "Second City" Chicago in population; many years earlier, it had passed both Chicago and New York in physical expanse. Los Angeles is a leader in the entertainment, music, fashion, and aircraft industries; the Port of Los Angeles/Long Beach is the nation's busiest; and in the 1990s, the city created more new jobs than any other city did.

The city's primacy does not extend to its parks, however. With only 10 percent of its total city land devoted to parks and open space, Los Angeles's park system trails all the other big cities of the West Coast (see figure 4 on page 61) and even scores below New York and Philadelphia. Moreover, the open space in this far-flung city is distributed very unevenly, with the bulk contained in the city's difficult-to-reach, mountainous midsection: Topanga State Park (9,470 acres), Santa Susana Mountains Park (1,026 acres), Franklin Canyon and its surrounding lands (2,753 acres), and Griffith Park (4,171 acres). (Of all this land, most is semiwilderness operated as state or federal parks or as watershed land; only Griffith Park is designed for heavy public use.)

Griffith Park is justifiably held out as one of America's great city parks. But a grand park

America's largest city park for 40 years, 4,171-acre Griffith Park is a recreational wonderland for the nation's second largest city, serving more than 12 million visitors a year. Besides bridle paths, the park has four golf courses, two nature camps, an observatory, a zoo, gardens, a bird sanctuary, and much more—all rising to a 1,625-foot, chaparral-covered peak.
Los Angeles's network of parks and open space.

Alone does not constitute a system, and there are not many medium-sized and regional parks to provide backup for Griffith Park. The millions of residents of center-city and south central Los Angeles and of the San Fernando Valley must travel miles to reach even small park parcels. The 24-mile stretch from San Pedro on the south to Beverly Boulevard on the north has only a single city park larger than 100 acres. This lack of parks does not mean that Los Angeles's Department of Recreation and Parks does not provide the city with a great array of services, including 127 recreation centers, meals for 175,000 low-income seniors, a summer camp program for 1,400 boys and girls, a holiday light festival, more than 700 baseball and softball teams, jazz concerts, a senior citizens' rose garden, and much more. But the city needs more public open space that is easily accessible.
With hindsight, it is clear that Los Angeles's spectacular location and innovative lifestyle undermined the political will to create a quality park system, despite the efforts of George Hjelte, the internationally known playground and park advocate and innovator who first ran the city's Playground Department and later the Recreation and Parks Department on and off for 22 years between 1926 and 1962. For one thing, the city had the magnificent Pacific Ocean beach in addition to a seemingly endless stretch of mountain wilderness to the west, north, and east. In the 1940s and 1950s, it was hard to imagine that those natural resources would ever become overused or depleted and would need to be supplemented with artificial parks. In addition, there were all those backyards; Los Angeles seemed well on its way to becoming the first city with so much private lawn space that public parks would be unnecessary. Finally, there was Griffith Park, a glorious retreat so huge and varied that it seemed able to meet Angelenos' park needs forever.

In 1896, when self-made millionaire Colonel Griffith J. Griffith donated his 3,500-acre Rancho Los Feliz to the city, it was an isolated mountainous property several miles outside the city limits; Angelenos were so suspicious of his motives that they almost rejected the offer. For more than 40 years as the nation's largest municipal park (it has since slid to eighth), today Griffith Park lies in the center of the vast urban expanse and is visited annually by more than 12 million people, who delight in its bridle trails, car-free roads for walking and bicycling, four golf courses, two nature camps, a world famous observatory, a zoo, museums, gardens, a natural theater, a bird sanctuary, and "Shane's Inspiration"—a playground for all children with special swings that can accommodate wheelchairs. The park hosts the annual Jimmy Stewart Marathon, and from a different corner sells "Top-Gro," recycled greenwaste made ultra-potent by the addition of composted animal manure known locally as "zoodoo." The terrain is rugged, rising from relatively flat edges to a lofty 1,625-foot, chaparral-covered peak. Designed as an automobile-oriented facility with dramatic hairpin turns reminiscent of a national park, Griffith Park has experienced a growth in bicycling since the 1991 closing of several long stretches of internal roadway. (Earlier, in 1973, a successful car-free Sundays-in-the-Park program was terminated when money for the free transit shuttle dried up.) Even people who have never been to Los Angeles have most likely seen Griffith Park, because it is the location of the famous white Hollywood sign and is also a favorite filming spot; for example, in March 1995 (to pick a single month), the park hosted shoots for four movies, five television shows, two music videos, five advertisements, and four magazines. (The Los Angeles Recreation and Parks Department earns about $300,000 a year in fees from all these activities.)

Griffith Park is not perfect. For one thing, California state transportation planners used it as a convenient location for two freeways, paving over 260 acres (one-fifth of the park's level area) and permanently reducing the quality of hundreds more adjoining acres because
of noise and air and visual pollution. Moreover, the freeways irreparably separate the park from the Los Angeles River. Griffith Park also suffers from hundreds of millions of dollars of deferred maintenance, from potholed roads to invasive species, from a deteriorated irrigation system to sagging buildings, from eroded hillside to washed-out trails. In addition, the park is the site of a 90-acre landfill crammed with 16 million tons of trash. (Sealed and seeded in 1985, the dump is gradually settling and should be available for public use in 2015.) The situation would have been even worse had it not been for the extraordinary defense of the park by Colonel Griffith’s son, Van, and later descendants. Without the family’s dedication, the park could have suffered the fate of nearby Elysian Park, which lost hundreds of acres to a police training academy, Dodger Stadium, and other encroachments.

A shortage of funds is not unique to Griffith Park. The entire recreation and park system in Los Angeles has, until recently, been starved of capital appropriations. Even with so-called Quimby Funds paid by developers to mitigate the loss of open space resulting from new housing construction, the Department of Recreation and Parks purchased less than 1,000 acres between 1972 and 1998, and repairs of recreation centers fell woefully behind. Recognizing that elected officials were not taking responsibility for the loss of open space, the conservation and environmental community sought to place matters directly in voters’ hands. The first effort to pass a large, countywide park bond measure in 1990 failed. After the civil unrest following the Rodney King trial, however, the revamped campaign picked up many new proponents who felt that inadequate recreation outlets in south Los Angeles might have contributed to the riot. Supporters included Richard Riordan, a self-made millionaire, who was chair of the Recreation and Parks Commission at the time. Riordan threw himself into the effort enthusiastically. In 1992, Los Angeles County passed Proposition A, a $550 million assessment measure for parks (the largest ever county park authorization in the United States), of which $126 million was earmarked for the city.

In 1996, again with the support of Riordan, who by that time was mayor of Los Angeles, the coffers were opened even wider as recreation bond issues were passed in both Los Angeles County ($319 million) and Los Angeles city ($25 million a year for 30 years). This time the leader was the new president of the Recreation and Parks Commission, Steven
Soboroff, an enthusiastic and outspoken real estate professional, committed to pushing the department out of its old way of doing things. It took several years to get the money flowing, with no funds earmarked for the purchase of new land, but by early 1999, 100 construction and reconstruction projects were underway.

Capital expenditures are only half the picture, however. The city's yearly operating budget is equally important, and it is tight as well. Unlike most city agencies, the Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks has a guaranteed source of income under the city charter (a direct payment of $0.13 for every $100 of city property valuation, for a total of $51.7 million in 1999) plus the authority to keep all fees that it receives. Nevertheless, even adding a $22 million appropriation by the city council, the department is still underfunded with per-capita spending of only $35 per resident, less than every other full-service park and recreation agency described in this book, except that in Indianapolis.

Not only is Los Angeles short of parkland, but also it seems to be short on a vision for parkland, at least in the area south of the Hollywood
Hills. The compelling dream and driving force for open space in the region is focused north and west of the city in the Santa Monica Mountains, and that effort, led by the state-chartered Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, seems to have grabbed and channeled most of the conservationist energy and commitment of the residents of greater Los Angeles. The Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area is a laudable project, but it will do relatively little for the more than million lower-income people of color—and particularly their nondriving children—who live south of Hollywood.

One area that holds promise for new parkland lies along the Los Angeles River, which is mile for mile perhaps the nation’s most maligned waterway. The area is now largely a concrete channel that was publicly suggested for highway use in the dry season, but the 51-mile river was once the centerpiece of a diverse riparian community. Breaking up some of the concrete, planting vegetation, reintroducing a community of animals, installing riverside trails, and creating a string of small and medium-sized parks along the waterway is a vision that, despite the average Angeleno’s incredulity, is gaining momentum. More than half the river’s length is within the city of Los Angeles (it also runs through 12 other jurisdictions), and the river has attractive, soft-bottom sections that support vegetation and over 200 species of birds. A potpourri of private organizations—including North East Trees and the Trust for Public Land—is taking the lead on saving the river and working under the umbrella leadership of the Friends of the Los Angeles River. So far, the only government agency that has successfully produced results is the city’s Department of Transportation, which coordinated three miles of bikeway construction along the river and plans four more.

Thus far, virtually all projects along the Los Angeles River involve small parcels of land and incremental improvements (like sprucing up street stubs as they intersect the corridor), but one large tract holds promise: the Taylor Yard, an unused, 174-acre Union Pacific rail yard. The city is studying the site for a mixed-use development with housing, industry, retail, and 66 acres of parkland—the first significant new parkland to be created downtown in generations. If designed sensitively, the project could do for Los Angeles what the new Commons (also a former rail yard) promises to do for Denver, but the city must first find the political will to spend the $25 million to $30 million the land will cost.

With big parcels so expensive, some park advocates are setting their sights on microsites. In low-income communities, these frequently isolated abandoned properties could be used for basketball courts, baseball diamonds, or simply neighborhood picnicking and gathering places. Historically opposed to miniparks, the Recreation and Parks Department has recently bowed to pressure from citizens and the city council to do something—anything—for communities with almost no open space. (The department is also seeking to work with the school district to cooperate on the use, management, and maintenance of school properties, but the two bureaucracies have not yet succeeded in making the program work.) Another possible source of recreation fragments is the city’s Department of Water and Power, which has several abandoned reservoir sites and also owns about 3,000 acres underneath its 100-plus miles of power lines in the city.

In downtown Los Angeles, a few developers are beginning to fashion public/private deals similar to those pioneered in New York City. Most dramatic was the 1993 renovation of the Los Angeles Public Library, which included a complete redesign of its adjoining park, plus the creation of the striking, five-story Bunker Hill Steps, a parklike pedestrian space inspired by the Spanish Steps in Rome. Maguire Thomas Partners privately financed the entire open-space scheme in return for the right to gain additional height for a new office tower and to construct a parking garage under the library’s park.

As a result of that successful effort, Maguire Thomas is now turning its sights to Pershing Square, the city’s second oldest park, which has fallen on protracted hard times. Once a lovely, forested square surrounded by exclusive hotels and shops, the square has been gradually denuded, de-benched, and paved over with concrete in a falling effort to control vagrants and panhandlers. Through a public/private partnership, the park was again redesigned in 1994, but thus far the effort has been unsuccessful. (However, the erection of a temporary ice skating rink during the 1998 Christmas season attracted thousands of delighted skaters, many of whom had not been downtown in years, and prompted much favorable coverage for the park and the department.)

Another lovely downtown space teetering between failure and rejuvenation is 32-acre MacArthur Park, once a center of family Sunday recreational promenading and boating but now surrounded by a low-income Central American
community plagued by crime and drugs. The MacArthur Park neighborhood is the beneficiary of a station location on the city’s new subway, offering the opportunity for park and economic development advocates to work together to create a vibrant, attractive urban village with jobs, opportunities, and hope. This will not happen without a strategic plan, however, and the department at present does not have one.

The consequences of operating without a plan have been twofold. First, the uncoordinated political requests of the 15 members of the city council have repeatedly buffeted the department. Instead of big, bold agency initiatives, park programs are reduced to small, “divided-by-15” miniprojects aimed at preserving parity among the council districts. Second, other public agencies have begun stepping into the void. The city’s first rail-to-trail effort, the Exposition Boulevard Greenway, was undertaken not by the Recreation and Parks Department but by the Department of Environmental Affairs, which got the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, the Department of Transportation, and the University of Southern California to join in. Moreover, the lead agency on the Los Angeles River Bike-way, one of the mayor’s pet projects, is the Department of Transportation.

After years of weak leadership, things may be changing in Los Angeles. For one thing, the Recreation and Parks Department spent much of the year 1999 undertaking an extensive Community Needs Assessment program, holding outreach meetings with each neighborhood to determine what people want, as a precursor to producing a plan of action. Recreation and Parks Commissioner Soboroff, who wants to move the agency forward expeditiously, asked that the much-delayed 1996 bond money be spent in 24 months instead of the 25 years the agency was planning on. Also, in June 1999, Mayor Riordan appointed a new general manager, Ellen Oppenheim, who has experience with both parks and event marketing.

The task of filling in a park system in such a large, underserved metropolis is too big a responsibility for any single department, and it would be preferable for the open-space needs assessment to be coordinated by a multiagency task force, or even directly out of the mayor’s office. The effort requires a partnership of public and private agencies working on recreation, parks, water courses, roadways, trees, beaches, clean air, brownfields, community gardens, rail trails, school yards, utility corridors, and more—in short, every agency concerned with people and spaces in the city. Despite the challenge, if any American city has a “can-do” spirit, it is Los Angeles. Given the right leadership and tools, Los Angeles parks could thrive in the 21st century.
Part II
Medium-Density Cities
I F CITIES WERE STARS, 20th-century Detroit would be a supernova, lighting the heavens with the flash of its brilliance and then collapsing in on itself in a mass of dark embers. Between 1920 and 1950, the Motor City's population ballooned from 993,000 to 1.8 million; but by 1999, it had tumbled back down to the 1 million mark. The industrial metropolis that has been credited with leading America to victory in World War II, today Detroit has a downtown that is stagnant, and large areas around the core are abandoned and vacant. Regionally, Detroit still has many strengths—a large, well-educated, and prosperous population in the surrounding suburbs, a felicitous location in the heart of the Great Lakes, and a border crossing with Canada—but the city's leaders are struggling to define a new image and a new economy to replace the one the automobile industry left behind.

Part of the struggle is to define the role of Detroit's parks, particularly Belle Isle. An island in the Detroit River, Belle Isle is the nation's only major city park that is surrounded by water instead of by neighborhoods. Rather than the usual dozens of park entryways, Belle Isle has only one, MacArthur Bridge, and instead of being accessed by foot, bike, or skates, the park is overwhelmingly reached by car. As much a sylvan urban icon as Forest Park in St. Louis, Fairmount Park in Philadelphia, and others, Belle Isle resonates deeply in the hearts and collective memories of Detroiters. From family picnics to cultural outings to sports leagues to...
cruising, Belle Isle is the destination of about 7 million users a year, including not only residents of greater Detroit but also virtually every out-of-town visitor who tours the city.

Master planned in 1883 by America's preeminent landscape architect, Frederick Law Olmsted, the 982-acre oasis has forests, fields, picnic areas galore, the Whitcomb Conservatory, the mammoth Scott Fountain, a yacht club, the nation's oldest rowing club, the Livingstone Lighthouse, a zoo, an aquarium, two lakes, a lagoon, a golf course, a model yacht basin, and terrific views of both downtown Detroit and downtown Windsor, Ontario. Unfortunately, it also has the Detroit Grand Prix auto race. One three-day weekend each year, Belle Isle becomes "Bellow Isle," as more than 150,000 fans pay up to $150 each to watch 30 Indy-style cars battle it out at speeds of up to 200 miles per hour over a 2.4-mile course on the western quarter of the park, spewing exhaust, rubber dust, and deafening noise across what should be the city's premier retreat from the rat race. The racers use roads that were straightened and widened in 1991, when the Grand Prix was moved from downtown to Belle Isle, and the fans sit in stadium stands that take six weeks to erect and six more weeks to dismantle. In all, the race takes a big chunk of Belle Isle away from the public for three months of the year.

Even without the Grand Prix, over the decades Belle Isle has been pulled more and more out of the Olmstedian natural concept into the orbit of the automobile culture. Only 2.8 miles
long, the island is encircled and crisscrossed by 15 miles of roadways, some of them as many as six lanes wide. Because of the roadways, much of Belle Isle's shoreline has no pathways for strolling, skating, or fishing. Even bicycling is difficult: during weekdays the straight, wide boulevards become virtual expressways; on warm weekend evenings, when the park is packed with recreationists and picnickers, car traffic is so intense that the island becomes gridlocked with double-, triple-, and quadruple-parked auto-socializers, forcing the police to close the entrance. Belle Isle, like all other big parks in the country, could accommodate far more than 35,000 users, but the Full sign goes up at the entrance because of the 13,000 cars needed to deliver the people. On the other hand, no other city park is as totally devoid of neighborhood-versus-outsider turf issues as Belle Isle, a public space that truly welcomes all in Detroit. In a city whose parks are often considered unsafe, Belle Isle is lauded for its perceived security.

Detroiter's love affair with their park blinds many of them to how much better Belle Isle could be. According to a detailed study carried out for the Detroit Recreation Department from 1996 to 1999, Belle Isle needs at least $180 million worth of infrastructure repair and replacement, building renovation or removal, forest and field improvement, roadway modification, shoreline stabilization, drainage corrections, pathway upgrades, graffiti removal, and much more.

Some of the work—such as unblocking and reestablishing the canals that Olmsted designed to drain the waterlogged island—has already been done. But much more money is needed, and everyone—from Mayor Dennis Archer to the Detroit City Council to Recreation Director Ernest Burkeen—is focusing on ways to fund such a massive program. Even though Detroit's economy seems to be climbing out of its 20-year slump, the upturn is too fragile to bear the full weight of fixing Belle Isle. (In other cities, a case can be made that park spending will boost surrounding property values and ultimately return higher tax proceeds to the city's coffers, but this argument does not work for Belle Isle because it does not have a surrounding neighborhood.) Many residents feel that Detroit's three newly established gambling casinos should devote a portion of their profits to city improvements, but the line of deserving applicant organizations and agencies is so long that Belle Isle would probably receive only a small part of the amount it needs. Heavy reliance on the private sector—following the example of conservancies in New York, Pittsburgh, Atlanta, and elsewhere—does not offer a solution either, because Belle Isle does not have immediate neighbors willing to invest themselves totally in the park.

Faced with these realities, Recreation Director Burkeen supports an approach that is simultaneously obvious and shocking: putting up a tollbooth at the bridge. According to his consultants, a $3-per-car toll (with hefty reductions for senior citizens and purchasers of annual passes) would yield $14 million in annual revenue, enough steady income to pay the interest on $132 million in bonds for capital improvements. (The remainder would come from the state of Michigan, the federal government, and private grants and donations.) The concept of a fee mirrors the recent trend in national parks as well as in the respected Huron-Clinton Metropark System (which has facilities in Detroit's suburbs and from which Burkeen was hired).
Detroit

The Detroit Grand Prix attracts more than 150,000 fans to watch Indy-style cars scream through Belle Isle at up to 200 miles per hour. Park lovers are horrified, but race enthusiasts (including Mayor Dennis Archer) counter that the event is good for Detroit's economy and that it also introduces millions of television viewers to the beauty of Belle Isle.

but Belle Isle would still become the first major city park to charge an admission. When asked if they would be willing to pay to use Belle Isle as it is today, residents overwhelmingly said no. When they were shown the long-range, 15-year vision—which includes beautifully upgraded facilities, fewer roads, more promenades, better flower gardens, an attractive welcome center, and much more—they said yes, as long as those improvements were made.

Failing city council approval or a massive philanthropic effort, the only other feasible alternative would be a substantial increase in the charges for corporate use of Belle Isle and its facilities, beginning with the Grand Prix. Although Grand Prix sponsors reimburse the city for its police and sanitation costs, pay reparations for physical damage, and provide an annual cash contribution of about $80,000 to the Recreation Department, park lovers, led by Friends of Belle Isle, maintain that those payments massively underrate the park values that are lost to the race. Park advocates point out that race promoters moved the Grand Prix from downtown Detroit to the park because of cost: the original location was too expensive and the park should be no cheaper. Race enthusiasts, including Mayor Archer, counter that the race is good for the city's economy and image, because it introduces thousands of suburban and out-of-state spectators to a park they might otherwise never visit, and millions of television viewers get to see lovely Belle Isle as the backdrop for the thundering cars.

Of course, there is more to Detroit's park system than simply Belle Isle. Rouge Park, on the city's far west side, is actually the biggest park (1,200 acres) and the site of a major golf course, plus a largely undeveloped oasis of floodplain, wetlands, wooded valleys, and lovely upland areas. With significant improvement in the water quality of the once heavily polluted Rouge River, Rouge Park is attracting increasing attention and use. The Recreation Department is experimenting with alternatives to traditional park mowing by seeking to re-create the type of prairie ecology that existed in southeastern Michigan before modern cultivation. In addition, the city has three other major parks and dozens of smaller ones. The Detroit Recreation Department also has responsibility for a built-in web of roadway medians dating all the way back to the radiating series of boulevards laid out in 1805 by Judge Augustus Woodward (a friend of President Jefferson and admirer of Pierre L'Enfant), who wanted Detroit to reflect the design of Washington, D.C.

True to its name, the Recreation Department also operates a wealth of recreation programs for the city, including gymnastics, rowing, ice
and roller hockey, a teen fashion show organized entirely by teenagers, an athletic team for persons with physical disabilities, weight training, swimming, and bowling, among others. Nevertheless, compared with other big cities, Detroit's park and recreation system could use a boost. Statistically it ranks low in parkland as percent of city land, dollars spent per resident, number of swimming pools, miles of bikeways, and particularly the amount of total city parkland per capita (5.9 acres per 1,000 residents, below all others except Chicago, Cleveland, and Miami). The city is about average only in the number of golf courses and recreation centers, although a recent foundation analysis revealed that the aged recreation centers need repairs that will cost hundreds of millions of dollars.

One area where Detroit is way above average is in the commitment and involvement of its professional basketball team. Through the corporate Piston Palace Foundation, the Detroit Pistons have donated $3.7 million and raised another $8 million from scores of companies and foundations. The funds were used to renovate 33 smaller parks and playgrounds and to establish a permanent endowment to provide light maintenance in the parks forever. The Pistons' staff participated in over 2,000 community meetings and events to help build neighborhood confidence and competence and to empower communities to resist vandalism, graffiti, and park misuse (but the road back to civic health remains long: at one tree-planting event the only persons to show up were students from suburban Ann Arbor). Pistons' owner William Davidson grew up in the city and lived near some of the playgrounds the team is refurbishing. No other big-league team is doing as much for its hometown as the Pistons.

The Detroit Recreation Department is also beginning to work more closely with its county counterpart, Wayne County Parks Department. In 1997, when the county took a proposed tax increase for park improvement to the voters, it announced that part of the proceeds would be used for two city projects: building an $8 million water park in Chandler Park and refurbishing Mariner's Park. Voters approved the rate increase, and Detroit got its first partnership with Wayne County.

For many years, Detroit's park advocates have had a long-term vision of greening the downtown Detroit riverfront from "bridge to bridge"—the four-mile stretch between MacArthur Bridge and Ambassador Bridge—and in the late 1970s the idea seemed on the verge of reality. Advocates hoped that the high-profile...
construction of the gleaming Renaissance Center in 1977 signified the "return of Detroit," and a park-filled riverfront seemed the perfect stimulus for additional downtown development. Unfortunately, the city's continuing economic distress, plus the lack of a clear civic vision, hampered most efforts. Under the leadership of a small group of dedicated Detroit boosters, including Peter Stroh (who kept his 150-year-old brewery downtown), three small riverfront parks were painstakingly established, but are not connected yet, and the predominant land use in the area continues to be the surface parking lot.

A new opportunity for the riverfront emerged in 1999. In the process of planning the celebration of Detroit's 300th birthday in 2001, a public/private consortium announced plans to raise $15 million for the Legacy Project, which consists of a new downtown waterfront promenade as well as a spruced up Heart of Downtown tree-lined concourse from Hart Plaza to Grand Circus Park. The commitment (which also included tree planting and beautification in ten neighborhood parks around town) involved raising enough extra money to create a permanent maintenance endowment so that the Legacy Project would never become a burden to the city.

Goals that Detroit has not been able to accomplish on its own may get a boost from the surrounding region, the state, and even the federal government. Thanks to Michigan's growing statewide trail movement, activists in greater Detroit have been promoting a seven-county Southeast Michigan Greenway Initiative that is designed to link the Detroit River to many other features and sites, including streams, abandoned rail lines, and parks. This effort overlaps a campaign to create a national heritage area, which would teach about and celebrate the automobile industry. These combined efforts have resulted in the federal government's designation of the Detroit River as a Heritage River (one of only 11 in a briskly contended national competition). The designation allows the government, including the National Park Service, to devote additional money and attention to the riverfront.

In early 1998, a momentous event took place. Bowing to pressure, Mayor Archer and the city council approved the establishment of casino gambling in the city. That one vote changed the entire development equation for the downtown area. On the positive side, the plan boosted an ambitious redevelopment scheme for Campus Martius, the old central business district that dates back to the very early days of Detroit. The plan depends on eliminating some roadways and reestablishing a central Campus Martius Park, which will be the focal and economic development engine for the whole project. On the other hand, the casino decision was not entirely helpful to parks, because it caused land prices to skyrocket. Soon after the vote, the increased cost of land acquisition caused Michigan Governor John Engler to pull the plug on the state's development of an important six-acre waterfront park.

High land values do not necessarily preclude park creation (as demonstrated in Boston, Chicago, and New York), but overcoming the challenge caused by the expense requires more than a free-market, laissez-faire approach. It remains to be seen if Detroit residents will rise up to demand a first-class park system and if Mayor Archer will exert the needed pressure on developers, casino owners, transportation planners, and others to build green space into their development schemes.
Bitterly cold in the winter, hot and buggy in the summer, allergenic in the spring and fall, Minneapolis could be forgiven for simply writing off parks and recreation entirely. But, far from it, the city may come closer to urban park nirvana than any other metropolis in the United States. Compared with sunny Los Angeles, Minneapolis spends four times as much per capita on parks. Compared with the park agencies in balmy Tampa, the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board owns almost four times the proportion of the city's land. Per capita, Minneapolis has twice as many public golf courses as retiree paradise San Diego, four times as many recreation centers as sports-crazed Portland, Oregon, and

Unlike most 19th-century cities, which filled in wetlands to squeeze in more housing, Minneapolis dredged swamps and ponds to form Lake Harriet (shown here) and the rest of the famous Chain of Lakes. Today, the waterway continues to generate property value and tax revenue across a swath of the city's west side.
seven times the bikeway mileage of Olympic Games host Atlanta. And it is not worth trying to find a city that has more skiing or ice skating opportunities.

Why? The success of a park system has less to do with weather and topography than with community cohesion and leadership. Perhaps Minneapolis's harsh climate offers the unifying challenge (and the long winter evenings needed for endless planning meetings) that balmier towns like Dallas and Tampa do not provide. Or perhaps Minneapolis's historically homogeneous population, culture, and economy have made it easier to reach political consensus on parks. Whatever the reason, from sparkling Lake Calhoun with its summertime windsurfers and wintertime iceboaters, to the auto-free Stone Arch Bridge across the Mississippi River, to the expansive sculpture garden near Loring Park, to the oldest wildflower garden in the country,
to Minnehaha Falls (immortalized by Longfellow), Minneapolis offers something for all its residents and visitors.

Minneapolis got started on its park system early. In 1883, when the city barely extended a few miles from St. Anthony Falls, an enlightened board of trade pressed not only for the creation of a park system but also for an independent, elected board to run it. That board structure, complete with its own taxing authority, survives today and gives Minneapolis park officials more autonomy and accountability than their peers in every other big city in the country. The board quickly made some good decisions, hiring landscape architect H. W. S. Cleveland (who had worked on New York's Prospect Park and Chicago's South Park Commission) to create a plan, and then bringing on Theodore Wirth as superintendent. (Wirth's extremely productive 29-year career set the tone for long tenures at the agency, which has had only eight superintendents since 1906.)

In modern times, the Park and Recreation Board has had to turn to the city to bolster its revenue stream but still retains an unusual level of independence. In the late 1960s, for example, reacting to the use of some of its property for freeway construction, the board adopted a policy of "no net loss of parkland"—an unimaginable concept in any other city. Minneapolis also set (and has virtually achieved) a goal unattained elsewhere: providing a park within six blocks of every resident of the city. (This was particularly important for a city that abolished community schools in the 1970s; for two decades community parks and recreation centers were the primary sites for neighborhood interaction.)

Minneapolitans started out on the right foot by thinking creatively about the land. Instead of filling all their natural wetlands, they dredged and shaped some of them into lakes. While other growing cities were obsessed with creating as much buildable land as possible and then building on it, Minneapolis set aside more than 1,000 acres of lakes and parkways to build next to, across from, and down the street from. In other cities, parkland was considered an expendable amenity that merely decreased the taxable property base. To the contrary, Minneapolitans felt that parkland added value to adjoining property and increased the tax base. The results are today's Chain of Lakes and the Grand Rounds Parkway system, areas that have virtually come to define the city.

Of the principal lakes in the chain, only Lake Harriet is completely natural. Lake of the Isles and Lake Calhoun were shaped and deepened, and Cedar Lake was created from marshland. A complex set of pipes and channels was created to keep the water level steady; during droughts, water is piped in from the Mississippi River; during wet periods, lake water is piped out back to the Mississippi River through Minnehaha Creek. Over the years, increasing money and effort have been put into keeping the water quality high, and the city recently began creating artificial wetlands around the lakes to help filter and purify the water flowing in. The lakes are so popular that the Park Board has instituted one-way trails as well as separate thoroughfares for bicyclists, roller skaters, and runners. The city has also passed height restrictions to protect the lakes from becoming entirely encircled by high-rise buildings.

The city's other circle is much larger. The 53-mile Grand Rounds Parkway system makes an almost complete loop, joining most of the larger parks plus the Mississippi River to most of the city's residential and business neighborhoods. Although the parkways are not as wide, well landscaped, or attractive as the boulevards of Kansas City—another parkway city—Minneapolis's system as a whole is better linked and more successful. In fact, noting that some of the most problematical neighborhoods are those not connected to the Grand Rounds, the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, in cooperation with Hennepin County, is engaged in a high-risk experiment to buy and tear down some housing in low-income northern Minneapolis.

### Minneapolis | 77

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City Profile for Minneapolis, Minnesota</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>City Population (1996)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City Area in Acres (1990)</td>
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<tr>
<td>City Population Density Level</td>
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<td>County in Which City Is Located</td>
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<tr>
<td>County's Population (1996)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Metropolitan Area Population (1996)</td>
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<td>City Relative Cost of Living (base =100)</td>
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<td>Number of Publicly Owned Vacant Lots</td>
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<td>Does the City Have a Developer Impact Fee for Parks?</td>
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<td>Municipal Park Acres in City</td>
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<td>National Park Acres In City</td>
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<td>State Park Acres in City</td>
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<tr>
<td>County Park Acres in City</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Park Acres in City</td>
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By building a new parkway, the city hopes to beautify and strengthen the neighborhood, and thereby stimulate private reinvestment.

Even though the auto-based Grand Rounds is still preeminent, auto-free trails and greenways—including the Stone Arch Bridge, recreational trails around the lakes, and the high-speed Cedar Lake Trail commuting bicycle path—are gaining ascendancy in Minneapolis. In winter, scores of miles of cross-country ski trails are fashioned out of the Park Board’s golf courses.

The history of Cedar Lake Trail is particularly instructive. When the Burlington Northern Railroad put up for sale 28 acres of an old switching yard in 1986, the Park Board was not interested, because the attractive but unremarkable land was located on the west side of town, which had, if anything, more than its share of parks. However, the neighbors, who had come to love the area for its peaceful solitude, opposed plans to build houses there and sought to raise money privately. Then, to the residents’ dismay, the railroad added a lengthy panhandle-shaped parcel—an abandoned railroad track—significantly raising the land’s cost and dimming chances for a purchase. Up to that point, the park effort had been purely a neighborhood endeavor; the addition of the panhandle, however, got the attention of commuter bicyclists, who brought with them the political clout to deliver federal transportation money. Observing the gradual coalescing of these disparate forces, the Park Board began to see the value of the new park and agreed to seek funds to match any raised by the community. Ultimately, after scores of meetings and consultations with outside landscape designers from as far away as Seattle and Connecticut, the board created a unique new park combining top-of-the-line bicycling, skating, and running lanes with, among other things, contemplative forests, restored prairie and wildlife habitat, and memorial groves. Cedar Lake Trail will eventually link directly to the Stone Arch Bridge—railroad baron James J. Hill’s historic gateway to the Pacific Northwest—and it has also spawned the creation of other trails to suburban jurisdictions.

In fact, trails and greenways have become so important to Minneapolitans that the city is trying to use them as tools for the economic revitalization of the city’s poorer near south and near north neighborhoods, in some cases with no reliance on the Park Board. For instance, when the Park and Recreation Board was reluctant to take the lead on the 5.5-mile Midtown Greenway, another trail based on an abandoned

---

Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board

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<tr>
<td>Zip Code</td>
<td>55401</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone</td>
<td>(612) 661-4800</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fax</td>
<td>(612) 661-4777</td>
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<td>Acreage as Percent of City</td>
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<td>Number of Seasonal Employees</td>
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Adjusted Budget for Fiscal Year 1997–1998

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<td>State and Federal Support</td>
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Expenditure per Resident | $153 |

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*Includes transfers from other agencies and pension fund payments.
*Includes one-time $2 million payment from the Federal Emergency Management Agency for storm damage.
*Does not include additional $3.5 million spent on managing street and boulevard trees.
railroad, the Public Works Department took on design and funding responsibilities, in cooperation with the private Midtown Greenway Coalition and Hennepin County (which owns the right-of-way).

An even more important current trend in Minneapolis is the gradual shift of emphasis from the lakes to the Mississippi River. Since 1976, the Park Board has been busily acquiring riverfront land, and from downtown to the city’s southern border, virtually everything on both sides of the Mississippi is owned by either the board or the University of Minnesota. The city is now turning its attention to the two miles of river that lie north of downtown, the so-called Upper Harbor. In the early days, when Minneapolis’s elite sought views of the water, they would not consider locating near the polluted river, with its banks blanketed by industry. Today, however, most of the grain mills have closed, the shipping terminals are fading, and the river is cleaner; in contrast, the prestigious lake-fronts are congested and expensive.

Once again practical economic calculations are tilting the equation toward parkland on the Mississippi. It turns out that riverside parks in Minneapolis actually provide what economists call a “higher and better use” than commerce does. Whereas port facilities currently employ about one person per acre along the Upper Harbor, new light industry set back from the river and served by parks and parkways could provide 17 jobs per acre. The addition of upscale housing, offices, and entertainment and retail establishments might generate as much as $10 million annually in tax revenue for the city, about four times the amount generated now. In fact, the Park Board’s research indicates that, over the past 30 years, for every $1 the public has invested in green space along the river, private developers have invested $10. As of 1998, nearly $1 billion of private funds had been spent or programmed along the new Mississippi River Park frontage acquired since 1970. Interestingly, relatively little of that money has gone toward hotels, convention centers, stadiums, museums, monuments, or other glamorous tourist-oriented facilities that commonly take advantage of—and often overwhelm—riverfront locations. The Mississippi River Park is designed for the use of the people of Minneapolis.

Compared with other big-city park agencies, the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board consistently comes out at or near the top. This does not mean that the system is trouble-free, however. Auto traffic, particularly around the lakes, is a contentious issue because of conflicts with other users as well as street runoff, which is the primary source of the lakes’ pollution. In addition, a lively debate is ensuing over the conversion of dozens of park sites from turf, which is neat but expensive in both staffing and chemicals, to native grasses and plants, which are more ecologically sound but appear unkempt to
Built in 1883 to carry the Northern Pacific Railroad across the Mississippi River, the Stone Arch Bridge was closed to trains in 1981. The bridge now serves bicyclists, roller skaters, and pedestrians travelling between downtown Minneapolis and the University of Minnesota. Its conversion mirrors the gradual evolution of the city’s entire waterfront from industrial uses to recreational ones.

...political pitfalls, which had damaged other park agencies during the years when most cities were going through painful transition and decline. (Minneapolis is not immune to urban decline, but it is somewhat shielded by Minnesota’s Fiscal Disparities Act, which partially balances the economies of the older cities and the newer suburbs of the Twin Cities region. In fact, as an official regional facility, Minneapolis’s Grand Rounds Parkway system gets some funds from the region.) Fisher retired in 1999 and was replaced by Mary Merrill Anderson, a 26-year veteran of the agency, who came up primarily through its recreation ranks rather than the park side. Anderson is the first female, African American superintendent in Minneapolis (mirroring Sharon Sayles Belton, the city’s first female, African American mayor), which is appropriate for a community that is belatedly moving toward greater racial and ethnic diversity.

Nevertheless, as other cities have found, a diversity of users can produce enormous strains on a park system. It will be interesting to see if the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board’s strong team and historical successes can transcend these growing strains, or if the board will fall victim to them.

Note

1. For a detailed narrative on the creation of the Cedar Lake Trail, see Alexander Garvin et al., Urban Parks and Open Space (Washington, D.C.: ULI—the Urban Land Institute, 1997), p. 58.
AFTER A FOUR-DECADE population slide that claimed half its residential population and almost darkened its downtown, Cleveland is starting to blossom again. Housing starts are higher today than any time since the 1930s, the striking Great Lakes Science Museum and the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame twinkle on the lakefront, and the historic five-theater Playhouse Square complex has been beautifully renovated. But for a city that was first laid out around ten-acre Public Square in 1796, the role of parks and open space will play in the city's revitalization is still open to question.

Parkland within the city is overseen not only by the Cleveland Department of Parks, Recreation, and Property (with 1,394 acres) but also by two other agencies: Cleveland Metroparks, operator of a large multicounty system (1,017 acres of which are in the city), and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources with 476 acres along Lake Erie. Even taken together, however, Cleveland's park statistics are near the bottom of the big cities in two critical categories— acres of parkland per person (23rd out of 25) and parkland as a percent of city area (20th). Given its recent success at attracting new residents, one can only imagine the ability of a revitalized local park system to contribute to the city's rejuvenation.

Cleveland has rebounded from a deficiency in open spaces once before. In 1890, the city's park commission reported that Cleveland stood "at the foot of the list" of the then biggest cities when it came to parks. By 1916, thanks to an
invigorated commission, substantial state and local appropriations, wealthy citizens' generous donations of land, and the leadership of legendary Mayor Tom Johnson (who built pools, playgrounds, dance halls, and skating rinks and ordered the removal of all Keep off the Grass signs), the system had mushroomed to 2,160 acres, 12th largest in the United States.

Unfortunately, the renaissance did not last. To score a second rebound Cleveland will have to resolve issues about the development of open spaces in three specific areas: the Erie lakefront, the Cuyahoga riverfront, and the neighborhoods.

It is instructive to compare Cleveland with Chicago. Both cities have similar lakefront topography, both were industrial powerhouses and are in the midst of an economic transition; and, from the standpoint of parks and recreation, both have similarly challenging weather caused by their proximity to the Great Lakes: long, snowy winters that take their toll on facilities. However, sightseeing trips on Lake Michigan and Lake Erie on sparkling weekends reveal dramatic differences. Chicago's lakefront, draped in almost continuous greenery, is teeming with park users, bicyclists, museum visitors, and tourists. In contrast, Cleveland's few shorefront park parcels are broken up and partly blocked by highways, railroad tracks, an airport, port facilities, sewage treatment plants, and private boat clubs. The parks have a handful of users, most of whom drive to a particular location to catch the view. Cleveland is trying to catch up by gradually establishing a shoreline bikeway and planning to create a new park, but a visionary lakefront plan that was put forth in the 1970s has never been implemented. In addition, the impact of the lakefront parks goes far beyond their capacity to provide fun and games. Standing over much of Chicago's waterfront is a phalanx of apartment buildings that house tens of thousands of middle- and upper-class residents, who help provide an economic base and support a retail core in the central city. The sparse housing behind Cleveland's lakefront is run-down and attracts almost no middle-class residents.

The combination of physical impediments, fiscal constraints, and political crosscurrents makes greening Cleveland's 14-mile lakefront difficult. About two miles currently consist of a collection of six parks known as Cleveland Lakefront State Park.
State Park, which has been operated by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources for the past two decades. Statistically, Lakefront Park is the most heavily used park in the state's system, yet, in recent years, these lands have not received the investment or staffing that their high usership demands. Happily, Dike 14, an 80-acre parcel of newly filled land, is likely to be added when the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers completes a dredging project. With luck, converting this wild landscape into an attractive park will serve as a catalyst for increased development of lakefront parks, including completion of the partially finished Cleveland Lakefront Bikeway.

The second opportunity to expand green space in Cleveland lies along the Cuyahoga River. The Cuyahoga made national headlines in 1969, when a floating oil slick caught fire and burned a bridge, but since then, the river has been significantly cleansed. Upstream from the city, the river now even serves as the center spine of a 30,000-acre bucolic national recreation area. Within Cleveland, the Cuyahoga valley could not be more centrally located. The combination of natural, historical, and cultural resources along the river—most prominently the well-preserved Ohio and Erie Canal, built between 1825 and 1832—along with the gradual diminution of industrial uses in the river valley, has led to increased interest in new parks and trails.

The parks effort is proceeding from two directions. On the south, Cleveland Metroparks has established a new 325-acre Ohio and Erie Reservation, which provides a link to the city from the Cuyahoga Valley National Recreation Area. Park advocates are working to extend the reservation northward and to connect it to a city park (and the striking 45-foot Mill Creek waterfall) through trails, on-street bicycle lanes, and the reclamation of an old slag heap and an abandoned hospital site. On the north, near the mouth of the river at Lake Erie, local nonprofit organizations, in cooperation with the National Park Service, have proposed the creation of a ten-acre Canal Basin Park near the

City Profile for Cleveland, Ohio

| City Population (1996) | 498,000 |
| City Area in Acres (1990) | 49,280 |
| City Population Density Level | 10.1 |
| County in Which City is Located | Cuyahoga |
| County's Population (1996) | 1,402,000 |
| Metropolitan Area Population (1996) | 2,233,000 |
| City Relative Cost of Living (base = 100) | 112.6 |
| Number of Publicly Owned Vacant Lots | 20,000 |

Does the City Have a Developer Impact Fee for Parks? No

| Municipal Park Land in City | 1,394 |
| National Park Land in City | 0 |
| State Park Land in City | 476 |
| County Park Land in City | 1,017 |
| Total Park Land in City | 2,887 |

*Land held by Cleveland Metroparks.

In 1999, 25,000 people turned out to celebrate the ribbon cutting for the first trail segment along the Ohio and Erie Canal within the city of Cleveland.
The largest (at 130 acres) and best-known park in the system is Rockefeller Park. Acquired as part of a seven-mile chain of green space from Lake Erie to Shaker Heights, the park was paid for by John D. Rockefeller with a stipulation that, if it were not properly maintained, it would revert to him or his heirs. For the first half of the 20th century, the park was nationally famous for its handsome carriage roads and a unique set of cultural gardens that celebrates through horticulture the heritages of Cleveland's many different ethnic groups. By the late 1970s, however, the park had deteriorated to the point that one portion was turned over to the state and another was managed in partnership with University Circle, Inc., a private, nonprofit consortium of cultural institutions in and around Wade Oval. Community-wide discussions about the rest of the park revealed that money from the estate of a former landowner, William Holden, was being erroneously spent elsewhere; the city of Cleveland sued and, in the resulting settlement, a new Holden Trust was established to benefit Rockefeller Park specifically. The trust generates about $300,000 a year to assist the city with facility rehabilitation, stream erosion control, repair of the cultural gardens, and more. The most significant improvements have been an attractive bicycle path constructed along the length of the park, the narrowing of the park roadway, and the reduction of its speed limit. By 1995, the Holden Trust and the city had put $4 million into Rockefeller Park (with estimates that another $10 million was needed).

In the recreation arena, Cleveland's performance is at or above big-city standards for provision of recreation centers, tennis courts, and swimming pools. Although the infrastructure is old (several recreation centers are actually converted bathhouses from the 1940s), one major new recreation center was opened in the 1990s, and another is scheduled to be dedicated in 2001. The park department also has a program to renovate and modernize the city's 114 playgrounds, installing state-of-the-art safety surfaces around all play equipment. There is no formal bond program for renovation of facilities, but the department has about $3 million a year to spend on emergency repairs when they

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### Cleveland Department of Parks, Recreation, and Property

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<tr>
<th>Address</th>
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<tr>
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<td>44114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone</td>
<td>(216) 664-2487</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fax</td>
<td>(216) 664-4086</td>
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<tr>
<td>Agency Acreage in City</td>
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#### Adjusted Budget for Fiscal Year 1998

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Expenditure per Resident: $62

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*Does not include Highland Park Golf Course, Seneca Golf Course, Camp George Forbes, Raus Playfield, and Washington Park, all located outside the city boundary.

*Excludes the Convention Center, East Side Market, West Side Market, public parking, and funds used to clean up vacant lots. The figure includes only the park-oriented activities of the Division of Property Management (45 percent of the division’s budget).
are needed. Because of the small land base, there is also a severe shortage of ballfields.

One reason for the predicament with Cleveland's parks is that the city lacks a single-purpose agency to carry out the task. The huge Department of Parks, Recreation, and Property not only manages parks and playgrounds but also runs the municipal parking garages and parking lots. The department is also responsible for keeping the city's 20,000 tax-defaulted vacant lots clean, for operating the football stadium and the convention center, and for overseeing the construction of a new convention center. Identifying the department's core mission is

---

**Cleveland Lakefront State Park**

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<tr>
<td>Zip Code</td>
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<tr>
<td>Telephone</td>
<td>(216) 881-8141</td>
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<td>Fax</td>
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**Adjusted Budget for Fiscal Year 2000**

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<table>
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<th>Expenditure</th>
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<td>Recreational Programming and Activities</td>
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<td>Capital Construction and Acquisition</td>
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**Expenditure per Resident**

$10
Cleveland was unveiled, the metamorphosis of an existing nonprofit organization, which had successfully beautified a railroad corridor, planted trees, and built playgrounds. With the goal of increasing the resources devoted to the city's open space, ParkWorks' first major initiative was "School Yards as Community Parks," modeled after Chicago's School Park Program. The initiative will result in about 200 acres of additional neighborhood park and recreation facilities by greening and redesigning some 80 elementary school grounds.

Many Clevelanders believe that the city should have three priorities for its park system: making the lakefront network cohesive and continuous, extending the Towpath Trail to Lake Erie and creating feeder connections, and improving the pocket parks and playgrounds. Unfortunately, there is no overall agreement on this program and no plan for achieving its goals. It will be up to the mayor to fashion an agreed-upon vision for open space in Cleveland and then to build the coalition that can make it happen.

**Note**

1. To keep comparisons accurate, all the agency's expenditures and staffing that do not involve parks and recreation activities have been eliminated from the statistics used in this book.
IN THE VAST AREA that is Appalachia, 200,000 square miles of craggy uplands from central New York to northern Alabama, there is only one big city—Pittsburgh. Like the rest of the region, Pittsburgh struggles daily to maintain its critical mass. From Appalachia, it is downhill in all directions, and normally everything—including water, wood, coal, wealth, and people—flows out of the highlands. (In fact, the city has suffered a greater percentage of population loss since 1950 than any other city covered in this book, except St. Louis. See figure 5.) But Pittsburgh has one great survival advantage: its location. Positioned on a rugged triangle where the Monongahela and Allegheny Rivers converge to form the Ohio River, Pittsburgh's site has been called one of the nation's three most natural locations for a city (along with New York and San Francisco).

Back in the early days—when Pittsburgh's around-the-clock blast furnaces belched so much soot and noise that the street lights stayed on 24 hours a day and the city was known as "hell with the lid off"—parks were a minor sidelight to the mercantile struggles of industrial titans and unionized workers. Today, with heavy industry so diminished that the city's air quality is better than that of Washington, D.C., and with the city frequently topping lists of the best places to live, Pittsburgh's dramatic parks and miles of increasingly green riverfronts might emerge as the city's salvation.

The operative word is "might," because, when it comes to park and recreation numbers, Pittsburgh is not yet there. Compared with Cincinnati (whose topography is similar and whose population is almost identical), Pittsburgh has fewer recreation centers, fewer tennis courts, and fewer swimming pools. Cincinnati has seven
public golf courses, whereas Pittsburgh has only one. More significant, per capita, Pittsburghers have about one-third the park acreage that Cincinnatians have. Even taking into account Pittsburgh's smaller physical size, Cincinnati is almost twice as "green," with 15 percent of its area covered by parks, compared with only 7.7 percent for Pittsburgh. Worse, Pittsburgh spends less than half as much on parks and recreation, per capita, as Cincinnatians do (and, in fact, spends less per capita than every other medium-density big city).

The numbers, though challenging, do not give the full picture, however. Under the leadership of Mayor Tom Murphy, Pittsburgh is scrambling to make up for lost time and for some unfortunate past decisions regarding resource allocation. A runner and bicyclist whose lifestyle matches his political rhetoric, Murphy sits on the board of the national Rails-to-Trails Conservancy. In 1999, he took five days off from his busy schedule to join the bike team inaugurating a 320-mile off-road trail linking Pittsburgh with Washington, D.C. Murphy is so committed...
to an uninterrupted system that he has been known to call corporate chiefs to ask them to redesign planned buildings to make room for trails. When the Three Rivers Heritage Trail is completed, it will form a 15-mile network using all the riverfronts to link parks, stores, schools, housing, two new planned sports stadiums, and downtown offices.

Trails are not the way Pittsburgh used to think. This city had a magnificent potential promenade frontage on three rivers, yet methodically walled off virtually all the opportunities with railroad yards, massive industrial tracts, highways, and parking lots. Stream valleys that could have linked neighborhoods were filled with tons of industrial slag instead, and islands in the rivers housed dumps and slaughterhouses rather than parks. However, Pittsburgh is the city that invented reinvention, and no amount of change seems impossible. Beginning in 1943, the city's corporate leadership, led by Richard King Mellon, began to recognize that Pittsburgh's famous extraction-based, "environment-be-damned" economy was not sustainable and that the city would need a new vision of itself.

Italy needed only one Renaissance to emerge from its Dark Ages, but Pittsburgh needed three. Its first renaissance, an unprecedented partnership between Republican corporate leaders and Democratic Mayor David Lawrence, took place from the 1950s through the 1970s and was primarily a slum-clearance program that resulted in a glittering downtown with a great new urban focus, Point State Park. The second renaissance, under Mayor Richard Caliguiri, resulted in more and bigger corporate high rises, even as a fledgling preservation movement began raising awareness about the wealth of historic resources that needed protection not demolition. Only in the 1990s, under Mayor Murphy's leadership, did a third renaissance shift the focus to the city's 88 neighborhoods and to repair of the city's parks.

Pittsburgh's park system, while small in total acreage, has a mythology almost larger than life. Schenley Park came into being in 1889, when an agent of the public works director raced
by steamship to London to personally ask Mary Schenley to donate the land, arriving just before a rival land developer who was offering to buy it for housing. (Even though the citizenry had just voted down a park bond issue to pay for the land, Schenley was generous to give it to the city.) Frick Park came into being through the entreaty of the young daughter of steel tycoon Henry Frick. Before her debut into society, when her father offered her anything she desired as a gift, Helen Frick asked him to donate his spectacular wooded hilltop holdings to the people of Pittsburgh for a park. (However, when deciding where to leave his great art collection, he chose his mansion in Manhattan in order to protect the paintings from Pittsburgh's smoke, much of which came from his factories.) Finally, Point State Park, at the tip of the Golden Triangle, is a living testament to perseverance. Originally proposed in the inaugural speech of Pittsburgh's first elected mayor on March 31, 1836, the park was finally dedicated 138 years later, on August 30, 1974.

The extraordinarily difficult creation of Point State Park required not only the acquisition and demolition of hundreds of run-down structures but also the replacement of two long bridges and the complete redesign of the downtown traffic system. The project resulted in 36 acres of open space, but more than that, it revolutionized the city's relationship with its rivers. For the first time, Pittsburghers could physically get to the water. With its fountain, fireworks display, myriad festivals, and pedestrian proximity to Three Rivers Stadium, the Point quickly and appropriately became the city's civic gathering place. Moreover, its success later prompted the Allegheny Conference to commission a study of Schenley Park, formerly the city's flagship green space but in relentless decline since World War II, a shadow of its former greatness. The 1991 study revealed significant deferred maintenance as well as some management problems and estimated a repair bill of $20 million. Although modest when compared with similar park studies done in Detroit, St. Louis, and elsewhere, the figure frightened Mayor Sophie Masloff, and the report was never officially released.

During the Masloff administration, the city's tight finances led to another decision that continues to affect Pittsburgh's parks today: the entire 202-person park maintenance staff was merged into the Public Works Department. The theory behind the move seemed elegant—the combined maintenance staff could mow grass and trim trees in the summer, then sweep...
snow and fix potholes in the winter, when it was assumed that nothing was happening in the parks—but the reality has turned out to be quite different. In today's big cities there is no off-season for parks; they may be more or less busy at various times, but they always need attention. Unfortunately, Pittsburgh's parks are now regularly found second in line behind streets and other responsibilities of the Public Works Department. In addition, it turns out that a large number of park maintenance and repair projects can only be taken care of when facilities are not heavily booked. With maintenance in a separate agency, it became more difficult to coordinate the work of the parks staff and the recreation staff—that is, the people who prepare the fields and the people who program their use. The departmental transfer (which has since been emulated by the city of Baltimore and may be considered elsewhere) has not been entirely negative—the staff now has the use of better equipment than was available from the Parks and Recreation Department—but observers believe that park maintenance has deteriorated, and the city has agreed to study whether the arrangement should be continued or reversed.

Tom Murphy's inauguration as mayor in 1994 was like a breath of fresh air for city parks, but his tenure began with a tragedy. Soon after the election, a dilapidated playground slide fell over and killed a young girl. Emergency meetings in the neighborhoods revealed that run-down playgrounds—what Murphy calls "the most tangible thing to touch the families of Pittsburgh"—were at the top of residents' grievance list. In response, he launched a $20 million program to replace all of the city's 169 playgrounds; the project is scheduled to be completed in 2001.

Between playgrounds and rail trails, residents suddenly discovered a new parkland optimism that transcended city government. Influenced by private park advocacy groups in New York, Atlanta, and elsewhere, a group of east-side activists formed the Schenley Park Conservancy, which Mayor Murphy then proposed to expand to cover all four of the city's regional parks—Schenley, Frick, Highland, and Riverview. Thus was born the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy, which in its first year raised $300,000 in cash and $400,000 in in-kind contributions. Under a guiding principle of taking on achievable projects and completing them to the
Herr’s Island in the Allegheny River, a former brownfield site of rail yards and a slaughterhouse, has been renamed Washington’s Landing and completely redeveloped. Thanks to its location, amenities, and park system (including a car-free trail bridge to the mainland), housing on the Landing is selling briskly.

With the Conservancy focusing on the four large regional parks, the Department of Parks and Recreation itself created a Partners for Parks program to mobilize volunteers for the 152 neighborhood parks and playgrounds that are, if anything, suffering even more from lack of maintenance. Through the Partners program, which began in 1992, more than 2,800 volunteers have undertaken 600 projects, including restoring historic bridle trails, picking up litter, planting trees, and pruning bushes. The successful program has helped keep up the parks, although union officials and some others question whether the use of so many volunteers merely takes the pressure off the city to provide a sufficient number of paid workers. (Because of these concerns, certain tasks, such as painting, are not assigned to volunteers.)

Even though existing parks need attention, Pittsburgh has been seeking to increase its total resource base by building parks and trails into most of its urban redevelopment projects. An island in the Allegheny River that formerly held rail yards and a slaughterhouse was acquired by the city’s Urban Redevelopment Authority, renamed Washington’s Landing, and redeveloped with housing, low-rise office buildings, restaurants, a marina, and even a special bicycle and pedestrian bridge to the mainland. Because of its great location and a lovely new park and trail system (funded in perpetuity through a permanent endowment), the Landing...
ing’s houses are selling as fast as they become available at top-of-the-market prices. Downtown, a new strip of green is being created by way of the Allegheny Riverfront Park between Point State Park and the planned new Convention Center. The park is being squeezed out of frontage that had formerly been a parking wharf as well as through the relocation of Fort Duquesne Drive (after the state’s Department of Transportation refused the city’s request to close the drive entirely). The new park is being built as part of a new walkable downtown arts district spearheaded by the Pittsburgh Cultural Trust.

Near the Monongahela River, a much larger effort is underway to combine new housing, a park, and the restoration of a badly mistreated stream. For more than a century, the steep Nine Mile Run valley had been considered nothing more than a good place to dump millions of tons of slag left over from steelmaking. When the steel mills closed, the city purchased the 238-acre dump and initiated an ambitious project to create forests and wetlands and restore the ecology while constructing a new community and providing a trail linking the river to landlocked Frick Park. Ultimately, Frick will be enlarged by about 100 acres. Although it is unclear if the city will ever recoup all the public funds invested in the project, the gain from property and other taxes will at least significantly cover the ecological cleanup costs that would have been required in any case.

By their very nature, citizens of Pittsburgh fight rather than switch: one study has shown that, of all the cities in the country, Pittsburgh residents have the lowest relocation rate. In the past, the fight was to build a city; later, it was to re-create downtown and to clean the air and water; today, the task is to build a top-notch park and trail system.