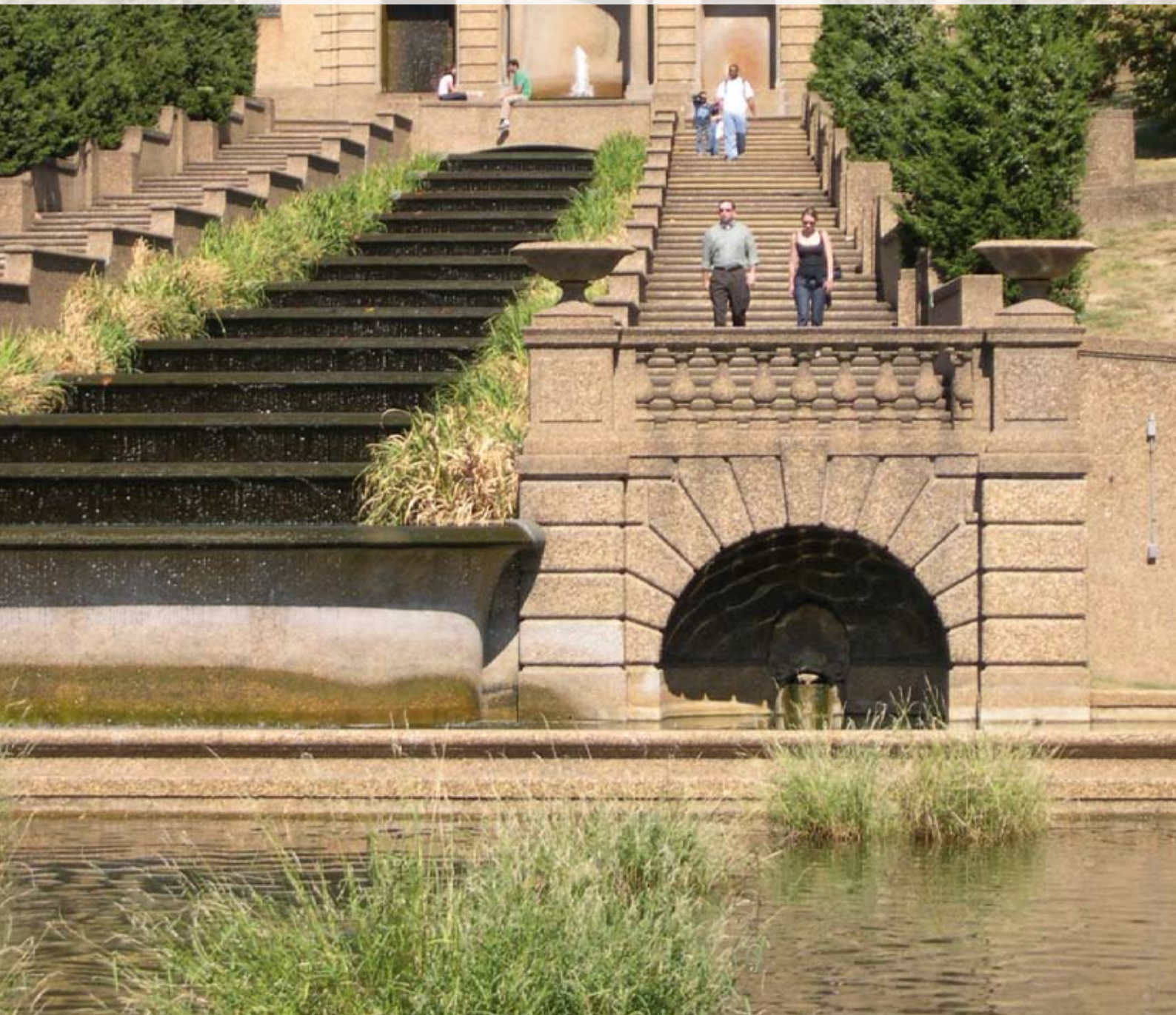


Historic Urban Landscapes Restoration for Today's Communities

Sally Prothero

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Historic Urban Landscapes: Restoration for Today's Communities

Introduction

The restoration of historic buildings is a widely accepted activity, either re-using them for different activities, or restoring them as landmarks and visitor attractions in their own right, and TV programmes like 'Restoration' have further helped to popularise the adaptive reuse and protection of old buildings.

Designed historic urban parks and landscapes on the other hand are generally lower down the list of priorities when it comes to the field of historic preservation or conservation of our built environments.



Landscapes are sometimes more difficult to characterise. Erosion of the original design and loss of individual features, through numerous reasons, usually makes it hard for the general public to identify that these places were actually 'designed' at all. Public perception is often that these urban landscapes were just bits of land that weren't built upon or left over bits of countryside that escaped development, and were kept as such for public recreation.

After decades of post war, and then post compulsory competitive tendering neglect, the Heritage Lottery Fund has funded the restoration of many of our urban parks through the Urban Parks Programme. This has started to reverse the decline and has resuscitated many of our urban parks both restoring their value as cultural resources within our communities as well as enhancing their recreational value. Still, however, listing does not give it any statutory protection, as is the case with the listing of buildings. Examples such as at the grade II listed Stanley Park in Liverpool, where Liverpool's football stadium is currently planned to be constructed are testament to this.

What then can we learn from our American counterparts about the subject of historic urban landscape restoration? What are the problems, issues and solutions and how can we learn from them? With no such funding programmes such as our HLF there are many examples of successful restoration schemes which we can look to as examples of innovation, good practice and good design in the rehabilitation of these places, which both respect the original design but also respond to and are relevant to today's communities. Moreover, some cities have realised the assets of their designed (& neglected) landscape legacy and not only restored them, but continued in the tradition of park building to complete the design intention of the 19th century landscape architects for the 21st century cities. When done successfully, with a combination of sensitivity, good design and good future stewardship this can achieve both the conservation of our built landscape environments, as well as the provision of meaningful, beautiful and robust new landscapes to cater for our changing and expanding communities. This report looks at examples of two cities and three parks which have in different ways faced and overcome the various



Top left: Insensitive planning and development can ruin designed and composed views within our cities. Olmsted's view interrupted by high rise.

Top right: The Interstate 90 dwarfs the first naturalistic section of Boston's Emerald Necklace

Bottom Right: Buildings in parks are more likely to be vulnerable to under funding and neglect. Pavilion in listed Derby Arboretum.

challenges of neglect, under funding, and the ensuing spiral of abuse and under-use common to many designed urban landscapes.

Louisville

City of Parks

The population of Louisville now stands at nearly 700,000 covering 386 square miles, along the Ohio River in Kentucky. In the 1980s, however, it was another declining industrial town in the Mid West. It was then that Louisville recognised the value in its park network designed by Frederick Law Olmsted and one of only five in the world, as being vital for the city's ecological health, economic growth and for improving the quality of life for its dwindling number of inhabitants.

The network was designed in 1891, to provide an escape from the industrial city into the healing world of nature. Since World War II, Louisville's public parks, like most of our own, had been falling into decline, with lack of investment, over-use and natural disaster in the form of tornados taking their toll. This decline caused the inevitable breakdown in the relationship between the community and its landscape. The spiralling cycle of disrepair and subsequent reduction of use became damaging for both the parks and their users, and further neglect followed.

A group of concerned citizens formed the 'Friends of Louisville's Olmsted Parks' in the early 1980's, and prepared a report on park conditions. In the late 80's Mayor, Jerry Abrahamson set about creating the Louisville Olmsted Parks Conservancy to stop the rot, and turn the parks around in an attempt to make their park system the best of them all. The Conservancy was set up to act as a non profit, sister organisation to the City Parks Department, now known as 'Metro Parks', to assist in the planning and funding of this massive renewal programme to both preserve and enhance this great work of landscape art. The city's commitment



to this process was the investment of \$1million in setting up the Conservancy as a separate but complementary organisation to the City funded parks department. The initial funding not only established the conservancy but paid for a Masterplan to be drawn up for all the 2,000 acres of parks and 15 miles of connecting parkways, to set the stage for the future private investments in the parks improvements.

In 1995 the masterplan document was finalised and set out a practical plan for making this happen. It pulled together specific projects, management strategies, and new maintenance techniques, all

designed to work together to enhance all the parks in the system. Frederick Law Olmsted, in 1891, urged the people of Louisville to 'Adopt an Ideal,... and to let it guide all planning and actions'; The Conservancy's masterplan reiterates this ideal and continues to set out the way forward for Louisville's Olmsted parks.

Before looking at the efforts of Louisville's resuscitation of its park networks, a quick reminder of Olmsted's concept of a park may be useful. Before he started work on Louisville's parks he made the following classic statement.



Partial restoration of the veiled view from the top of Iroquois Park through the trees towards Louisville



New Oak savannah meadow and shelter on top of Iroquois Park



New Barringer Hill Lookout point in Cherokee Park

'My notion is that whatever grounds a great city may need for other public purposes, for parades, for athletic sports, for fireworks, for museums of art or science such as botanic gardens, it also needs a large ground scientifically and artistically prepared to provide such a poetic and tranquillising influence on its people as comes through a pleased contemplation of natural scenery, especially sequestered and limitless natural scenery'

He was quite clear that while provision for sports for example was important, it should not take over sections of the park at the expense of the majority of park users, and should only be included where it could be accommodated within the park and not permanently take over sections of it. This is an early recognition of the benefits of flexible use of space.

This commission in Louisville was his last, and represents his most mature work, 34 years after he and Calvert Vaux won the competition to design Central Park in New York. Since then his ideas had evolved and his concept of the role that the park system would play in the development of the city had led to several projects, in Buffalo, Chicago, Boston and Washington. His systems comprised of parkways which would connect the separate parks with each other, and the downtown to them, thereby structuring the growth of the cities. They were to be planted with trees creating a park like feel, and separating the modes of transport used on them. The most complete an example of these is Boston's Emerald necklace. This unfortunately is not even registered as a National Historic Landmark, and is itself suffering from serious under funding and areas of neglect.

The restored view from Barringer Hill



Louisville's Park System: Original Design Intent

In a similar way that Prospect Park in Brooklyn is composed of three distinctly different landscape types, long meadow, Ravine & Forest and lake areas, Louisville's park system is composed on similar lines with three distinctly different landscape types.

Louisville's natural landscape and scenery were the starting point for Olmsted's design. He took the distinctly different terrains and landscape characters of the three sites to create Shawnee, Cherokee and Iroquois Parks. These were to be the three principal parks and he planned

their uses and designs to be compatible with the scenic experiences they could provide.

Shawnee was situated adjacent to the Ohio River and took advantage of its river views both in their own right and as a backdrop for the concert stage. It provided access to the river for boating and bathing, and the rest of the park was created as a large open area of rolling meadow interspersed with shade trees, which could be used as a major site for recreations and sport. Thus he provided the recreational elements which Olmsted knew to be necessary in city landscapes, but always wanted to prevent



Shawnee Park 1970's Aerial photograph: The landscape dominated by ballfields



Restored Christensen Fountain, Cherokee Park



Section of the Beargrass Creek under restoration

from interrupting his composed 'natural' scenes which could be designed in his other parks.

Cherokee Park was almost exclusively dedicated to the enjoyment of scenery, and designed to exploit the setting of its location in the stream valley, and contained less provision for formal activities than any other he had designed.

The third major park was Iroquois. Sited on a steep hill, It had originally been known as the 'Burnt Knob' due to the original savannah vegetation which was managed by a cycle of burning and regeneration by the native American Indians. Its steep terrain was deeply forested. Olmsted proposed that this site should be treated as a scenic reservation as its topography, character and vegetation was unsuitable to providing open parkland, which was in any case, amply provided by the other two. In the same way that the ravine in Prospect Park was designed and built to be reminiscent of the Adirondack mountain range, Iroquois was to represent the forest scenes of the Appalachian Mountains, experienced on the journey from the Mississippi south, to Virginia.

The last major element of Olmsted's design was the parkways connecting the parks with each other and the Downtown. The construction of these was carried out in a piecemeal fashion, and some were never finished as Olmsted had planned. This is another part of the master plan which is now being implemented, bit by bit, adding to the original vision. As well as the major parks and parkways, several smaller, neighbourhood parks were designed by Olmsted and later the Olmsted brothers, all 18 contributing to the overall network.

The decline

Over time many of the character defining features of the parks have been lost. Physical and spatial elements have been overlaid, replaced with contemporary elements or altered. The onset of the car, over use, natural disaster, installation of contemporary structures, flytipping, malfunctioning equipment, general disrepair and invasive species had all led to the erosion of the original vision and structure.

The parks were originally designed specifically to have the quality of 'ease'. This meant that the visitors should be able to move through the landscape and enjoy the different views and scenes while pursuing their passive or active recreation with ease. Routes would guide you through the gently unfolding and ever changing scenery, whether on foot, bicycle, car or horse. The circulation system became fragmented and dysfunctional as the agents of change took their toll, making layouts confusing and movement difficult through some areas leading to perceived dangers and fear for personal security. Ease of use was lost.

Shawnee Park, originally designed with recreation in mind had become a victim of its success and was covered with baseball fields and associated fencing, which had obliterated its naturally inspired landscape and led to the exclusion of most other uses and users.

Aerial Pic of ballfields

The topography of Iroquois Parks had been taken advantage of as a natural lookout point, first by the American Indians and later, as Olmsted had intended. The summit became a desirable vantage point for drivers, and it became

over trafficked as a result. The large open grassed 'Summit Field' at the top of the park, 'The Knob' was often to be found covered in cars. Over time, this became a poorly drained, muddy field, leading to further run off from the summit and erosion of the forested slopes and circulation systems contained within.

Vegetation erosion and loss, as a result of car parking on the edges of the scenic drives, and damage done by the 1974 tornado, has been a major agent of decline of Cherokee Park. The tornado felled 2000 trees in its 20 minute crossing, and subsequently allowed an invasion of alien species to colonise, causing dark masses of impenetrable vegetation. Blocked off views limited the public's natural wayfinding ability and led to desire lines, further degrading the visual quality of the designed landscape and creating physical problems with storm water runoff. The characteristic long vistas through the stream valley with meandering paths through the landscape had largely disappeared as a result. Sports pitches and bland, functional, but ugly structures had been placed around the park, further interrupting the composition of the various scenes. Combined sewer outfalls into the Creek degraded water quality and increased flow, thus reducing the creeks natural ability to withstand flood erosion of its banks.

Restoration

The strategy for the Olmsted Parks, as is common with such restoration projects was to first define the 'period of significance' within the life span of the parks history. In this case it was defined as being mostly from the 1890s to 1916, and partially into the 1930s, when the parks were designed and built.

Its significance, as a designed historic landscape, is recognised through the designation of the Louisville system as being listed on the National Register of Historic Places. This designation recognises its importance as a cultural resource for its citizens in the same way that our Register of Parks and Gardens lists designed sites of historic importance. It also, more importantly, offers it some protection from federally funded projects that may impact on these historic resources. It may seem ironic that publicly funded and internationally famous works of landscape architecture need protection from publicly funded agency projects. If an example is needed to illustrate why this protection is necessary, however, take a look at the 'sensitive' placing of the Interstate 90 over the first naturalistic section of Olmsted's Emerald Necklace, which is not on the national register. (pic of I90 flyover)

The Recommendations for each park are broken down into separate strategies, each a key part of the holistic rehabilitation of that park as a whole:

Key Master Plan

- Landscape Management Areas
- Infrastructure and Features
- Planning Considerations & connections with the wider surroundings
- Key Renewal Projects (New structures)
- Detailed area plans
- Backed up and informed by a comprehensive Historic Landscape analysis

As the three separate parks were designed to be distinctly different from each other it stands to reason that the rehabilitation strategies are also distinctly different for each. Importantly, the concept of 'ease of use' was one of the major and constant considerations to be taken into account by the Olmsted Parks Conservancy with the rehabilitation strategy for this project.

Shawnee Park's formal sports provision has been condensed into one area, thus restoring the informal landscape and therefore the parks pastoral quality. Strategic views to the river have been restored by vegetation clearance and land form alterations, overcoming physical and visual barriers created by flood defences. Problems of car domination at the top of Iroquois have been overcome by redesigning the former muddy grassed field into a native Savannah wildflower meadow. This has transformed the car



Top: Work underway. Interpretation is an integral part of all restoration work to raise public awareness

Bottom: New Portland Wharf Park includes the revealing of previous land use and structures covered by flood waters and spoil from over a century ago

dominated mud bath into a flowering oasis, while also saving on annual maintenance costs. It is now managed by burning on a 3 year rotation, a technique used by the American Indians, with only grass paths mowed regularly. The flowing lines, vistas and routes of the river valley landscape have been restored to Cherokee Park. Additional new paths have been created, establishing access to a long derelict stonework seating area surrounding the seasonally running Barringer Springs, re-interpreting both the natural and designed aspects of the park.

The preservation and rehabilitation strategies contained in the master plan and in the other park programmes designed by Louisville Metro, are in the process of reversing decline. They will allow the people of Louisville to receive full benefit of the Olmsted legacy, while having the need for current and future recreational needs met, through sensitive design and siting of new facilities which do not compromise the original vision.

Beyond Historic Park Restoration

The mission of the Louisville Conservancy is not just confined to 'restore, enhance and preserve' the Olmsted historic system. Its mission is also to extend the

legacy throughout Greater Louisville for generations to come.

The extension of Olmsted's legacy is being carried out to make Louisville 'The City of Parks' the long term vision adopted by the Mayor of Louisville in 2005. Its aim is to build upon the groundwork laid down over 100 years ago, to ensure, as the community grows, that all residents have access to quality parks and open space. The delivery mechanism for this is a significant public private partnership consisting of several organisations. This includes Metro Parks themselves, (the parks department), the Olmsted Parks Conservancy, Louisville Metro Government (the rest of the local government), 21st Century Parks (A new not for profit organisation established to accept donations for land acquisition and for development of new parks) and the Trust for Public Land, (a national not for profit group which works to conserve land for the public to enjoy) This partnership is working together to accomplish three major projects:

- Acquire land which will become a new interconnected system of parks
- Create a 100 mile, green loop and trail around Louisville's perimeter to

Top left: Waterfront Park re-connecting Downtown with the Ohio River

Top right: New amphitheatre and viewing points across the river

Bottom: New features incorporated in to the new Waterfront Park



tie together its diverse parks and communities, and control sprawl, (a bit like a usable greenbelt) Invest in improving the existing parks So how is this all funded? So far, the local government has earmarked \$20million over a multi-year initiative with \$1million pledged in the 2005-6 budget. \$38million was secured from federal funds in 2005, and with private contributions, the total raised by December '05 was \$60million. The setting up of the '21st Century Parks' organisation has meant that it can accept tax deductible donations.

The City of Parks initiative, while mostly acquiring land and building new parks, is also crucial, in helping with the 'restore, enhance and preserve' mission of the Conservancy. The Olmstedian 'Ease of Use and accessibility' philosophy is being continued and expanded aiding access to the original as well as new parks.

Examples of major new parks are Waterfront Park and Extreme Park. The new parks can incorporate new requirements, such as state of the art skateboard facilities and interactive water features, rather than having these facilities shoehorned into landscapes which weren't designed to accommodate them. 'Extreme Park' skateboard and cycling park is just such a facility, located in downtown Louisville, an extension of Waterfront Park. This is a brilliant resource

for the city, owned and run by the parks service and nationally renowned. Facilities such as bike hire are being provided in the new sites, which increases visitors to all of the parks. The new Waterfront Park, designed by George Hargreaves is a fantastic collection of activities, ecologies and spaces. It contributes to the richness of Louisville's collection of parks and contains those required facilities which can leave the Olmsted Parks free to provide the beauty and tranquillity also vital to the inner city dweller.

Waterfront Park's success as an economic regenerator is backed up by the '2005 Economic Impact Study', which shows how Waterfront Park has helped to jumpstart the downtown area. Over \$350million has been invested in the downtown riverside area since 1994, when phase I of the park was opened, with another \$50m earmarked. The park itself, still under phased construction will cost £100million; a good investment for the city by anyone's calculations. Historic buildings have been retained and re-used within the development zone, and the history and character of Louisville has been respected as people are re-connected with their waterside. Job numbers in that area stood at 400 in 1986, they now number 5,300.

Olmsted's original concept of parkways is also up for a revamp. The forward thinking Metro Parks dept are developing new parkways to add further connections from the downtown to the parks, increasing accessibility and use of the system.

Louisville's early recognition of its value, over and above being a burden on its resources, has enabled it to stop, and then reverse the spiral of decline, and resuscitate this resource on a massive scale for the benefit of the city. In doing so, it has helped in continuing to define the city's form, preserve the rich native landscape and improve property values.

Indeed the people of Louisville when I visited in autumn 2005 were collectively and undoubtedly the most extraordinarily friendly people in the US I came across. They also seemed to be remarkably well informed about their parks. It proved to be a common occurrence for people from as diverse an occupation as bar tenders to bus drivers to be as familiar with the history of their Olmsted system as your average landscape architect would be in this country about, say, Birkenhead Park. Maybe this inherent happiness of the Louisville folk is in part due to their ever expanding parks and parks system! Or maybe, back home, I just drink in the wrong pubs.

The next phase of the park will incorporate historic facades and a disused railway bridge, connecting Louisville with Clarkesville over the Ohio river



Right: Extreme Park caters for new users and reduces pressure on the existing historic landscapes



Chicago

Historic Preservation and the Greening of Chicago

Chicago has a long tradition of investment in its public spaces. The land situated on the shore of Lake Michigan, which was to become Chicago's premier Grant Park, was declared in 1837 'Forever to remain Free and Clear.' Soon after, in 1846, Chicago's motto 'Urbus in Horto' or City in a Garden was born.

Early influential developer John S Wright saw the economic benefits of parks when he proclaimed his vision in 1849:

'Of these parks I have a vision. They are all improved (designed) and connected with wide avenues extending to and along Lake Shore on the north and south, and to surrounding the city with a magnificent chain of parks and parkways that have not their equal in the world' To this end three park commissions were established and park designs were commissioned. The South Park commission employed Frederick Law Olmsted who practiced his American naturalistic style after the English tradition, and created the vast Washington Park. This was connecting to the equally vast Jackson Park via a block wide boulevard or parkway, originally designed to be a water course so you could boat into the inner parks from the lake. This contained Olmsted's characteristic open meadows, serpentine paths, broad views and vistas. Mystery and suspense was included in the form of ravines countered by intimate spaces.

The land which was to accommodate the West system was described as 'Flat dreary and swampy' and William Le Baron Jenny first planned 585 acres in a kind of hybrid combination of a naturalistic and French architectural styles, incorporating the formality of French style terraces and geometric flower beds



Jens Jensen surveying the native 'Wilderness' landscape from which he took his design inspiration

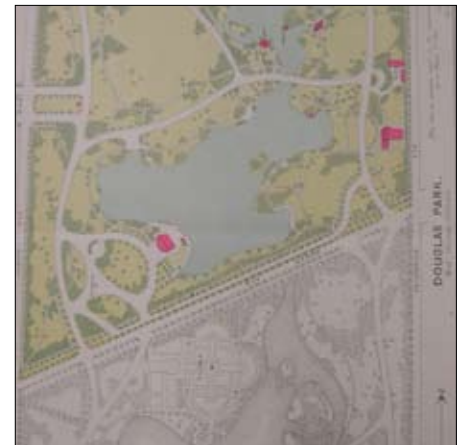
within the wider naturalistically designed landscape. Only one quarter of Jenny's plans for the system was implemented, then neglected, leaving the canvas free for the later work of Jens Jensen, a Danish immigrant, who was to develop and bring the Prairie style of design to Chicago.

Design Development

Since the late 1800's Chicagoans were starting to go to the countryside as a form of recreation and a new appreciation of the regional landscape was founded. Jensen originally worked for the West Park System but was sacked for refusing to become involved in the entrenched political corruption within the organisation. After setting up in private practice, Jensen, was able to consciously develop his style which took its inspiration from the native prairies as its leading motive. Once the political corruption in the West Park administration had been eradicated, Jensen was re-hired and able to weave his designs through the now neglected earlier phases of park building and complete the unbuilt sections in his own style. Originally planned wide lakes



Buildings restored within the park system



Original plans used to verify original construction



Naturalistic, designed 'Prairie River' in Humbolt Park



Historic Preservation Officer surveys the newly establishing Prairie Meadow



One of Jensen's restored Counsel Rings



Original construction of stratified rockwork and waterfall

were redesigned to become narrower, meandering 'Prarie Rivers' designed with hidden water sources to replicate

those found in nature. The 'rivers' were surrounded in native perennial wildflower meadows, and subtly designed features such as the counsel ring, bathing pools, and elevated sun clearings with camp fires intended for outdoor gatherings. These, he called 'players greens' which he said, were designed in the spirit of Indian lore. He was able to practice all his design techniques in the creation of Columbus Park. Here he encircled the park with a series of 'glacial' ridges which contained all his designed interpretations of the native Illinois landscape, restoration of local colour, repetition of horizontal lines of land, sky and water running over and through arrangements of stratified stones and transplanted meadows.

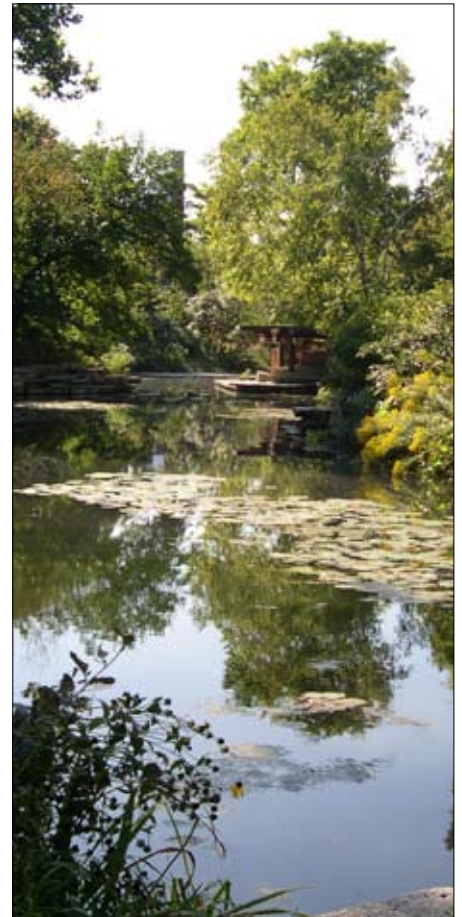
Jensen also promoted the idea of outdoor classrooms and community gardens for adults and children in smaller neighbourhood parks, and advocated that aesthetics should always be considered most important and that it should not be compromised by filling it with equipment for play and recreation, but this should be included within the design of the space as a whole. Jensen considered the stewardship or management of the parks equal in importance to that of the design 'the caretaker must be in thorough sympathy with the plans of the designer and to be so, he must be an artist himself.' While Jensen's influence was shaping the west system and the expansion of it at Columbus Park, his friend OC Simonds was helping to shape Lincoln Park, the northern part of the system. He continued the prairie style, setting 'Prairie

School' architecture low in the landscape. This style of architecture promoted a philosophy of harmony between buildings and the landscape and was largely a response to the rise of overcrowding, slum conditions, and disease in Chicago by producing simple houses with little ornament, which maximised the amount of sunlight and fresh air. These structures, like the style of landscape, also exhibited an emphasis on horizontal lines, being subservient and respecting the landscapes which they inhabited. The Prairie School of Architecture became well know as an architectural style, promoted by Frank Lloyd Wright. It is interesting to note, however, that although similar in form and detail, the park structures of this period were hardly ever referred to by its advocates, nor was the prairie style of Landscape Architecture. It was as if they weren't aware of the parallel landscape movement and therefore never really made reference to, nor promoted it.

A 1930s injection of cash into the Chicago Parks district was to be the system's last major investment for some years. This last phase of the Prairie movement was mostly carried out by Alfred Caldwell, who had spent 5 years at Jensen's practice and later went on to work with Mies van der Rohe. His work at Lincoln Park continued the spirit of Jensens earlier works, and included a redesign of the Victorian lily pool, using the signatory stratified rock formations, not just to describe a river course, and create a nature garden but also as a geological statement, the limestone laid to symbolise the glacial waters of millennia gone by, cutting through the rock. He also created a complementary pavilion influenced by the style of Frank Lloyd Wright, waterfalls with hidden water sources and counsel



Reconstructed waterfall



Reconstructed Pavilion and Lily Pool in Lincoln Park



Photos of the initial construction of Grant Park from the Chicago Park District Archives



Restored Boulevard Marker with new Park signage



The newly acquired National Historic Landmark Status on display for all to recognise its significance

rings as observation points. Soon after this final episode in their early and unique design history, Chicago's parks started to go downhill.

New pressures & decline

As with many urban parks in the U.S. and in Britain, pressures are all too familiar. Accommodating the rise in car use, pressure on space through the requirement for ball fields, introduction of concrete furniture, changing management techniques to save money and car based leisure facilities provided at the expense of the parks, or built within parks in insensitive locations, are all common ingredients in the demise of the original design intent and quality of the parks. Once these additions are part of the furniture, the original design concept is forgotten. Separate, surviving elements of the original layout often seem meaningless and without purpose. The Lily pool, located in Lincoln Park as one example, had been taken over by the neighbouring zoo. Over the years captive birds had polluted the waters with droppings, eroded the banks and vegetation had blocked out the sunlight creating what Caldwell himself described in 1990 as being a 'dead world'

Restoration Strategy

In the 1980s things had got so bad in Chicago's parks that the Chicago Park District decided to carry out a Comprehensive Inventory of its historic parks, just to see what it was that their park system actually comprised. Chicago was luckier than most cities in this task when their efforts were much boosted with the 'discovery', of all the old historic plans dating back to the early days of the three original park commissions, which were otherwise not known to exist. This discovery, made in a long forgotten store



Lorado Taft's 1922 Fountain of Time 'Time Stays, we go..' under restoration. through funding from the National Treasures Fund.

room deep in the archives meant that the history and changes throughout the 20th century could be catalogued, analysed and periods of significance within their design history determined and compared with the remnants left on site. The find led to the setting up of the Preservation Planning Department which by 1990 had created a Historic Resources Report on the city's parks. This was an important step in that the report:

- Provided the historic context for the parks which was otherwise unknown

- Indicated the significance of the parks, as well as that of the designers
- Led to the designation of several parks by the Chicago Landmark Commission, up until then, only used for the designation of buildings
- Raised the status and importance of the designed landscape within the city officials and the community
- Helped with the listing onto the National Register of Historic Places, and then onto the National Historic Landmarks Register, the highest level of recognition of a sites



New uses in keeping with Jensen's original vision for Garfield Park are popular with all sections of the community

importance within the U.S.

- Led to public: private partnerships, to renovate and run buildings in parks as profit making enterprises, as well as community facilities
- Allowed for future plans to be undertaken to further preserve the historic core while reclaiming underused areas, to provide for new park uses and demands
- Put the parks onto the cultural agenda and on a par with other cultural resources such as art galleries and theatres.
- Raised the public's awareness of ecology, design and natural systems.
- Interpreted the social history and cultural traditions of an area and its people.

From the citywide report, separate framework plans for each park were and still are being developed. These, (similar to our Conservation Management Plans for HLF submissions) set out detailed strategies for the treatment of each. The balance of Preservation, reclamation and Intervention is determined to the best result, in invigorating the parks for the next century in a way that the most significant historic characters of each can be preserved or rehabilitated while contemporary needs and uses are accommodated through sensitive and innovative design.

Examples of this can be seen in several sights. The new Millennium Park within the historic Grant Park is the latest and most expensive of these, at \$475million, and has been well documented (refer Landscape Design 2004) Other examples can be seen in the wider context of the greening of Chicago initiative, as improving accessibility to the parks, by building new transit stations next to them. Not only does this increase use of the park but also provides better transport

provision for the local community itself. In Garfield Park, new gardens have been built adjacent to the existing original glasshouse structures. A portion of these can be rented out for private functions, but otherwise remains open to the public. The new design also encompasses small garden plots for local people to use, which are extremely popular with the surrounding multicultural community. The renting out of the contemporary garden raises much needed income for the park. At the same time the combination of contemporary garden and allotment plots provides a new, well designed, 21st century layer; a practical but sympathetic design intervention, in keeping with the community gardens promoted by Jensen a century earlier, and enriching the landscape legacy.

The early preservation efforts of the Chicago Park District has been taken up and backed by the politicians. Mayor Richard M. Daley has supported this initiative, re-creating and reinforcing the legacy of parks and boulevards which are both serving their neighbourhoods as engines for economic revitalization, as well as becoming destinations for visitors. This legacy of parks and boulevards and their revitalisation has sparked the wider Greening of Chicago Initiative, and turned Chicago from being another rust belt town with declining population in to one of the greenest cities in the U.S. with an ever increasing number of inhabitants.

For those of you, who think work in historic landscapes is just about replacing a few old railings and copying old details, think again.
www.chicagoparkdistrict.com



The restored Music Court a popular destination



New garden is rented out to aid fundraising



Formal Gardens restored along with Sculptures



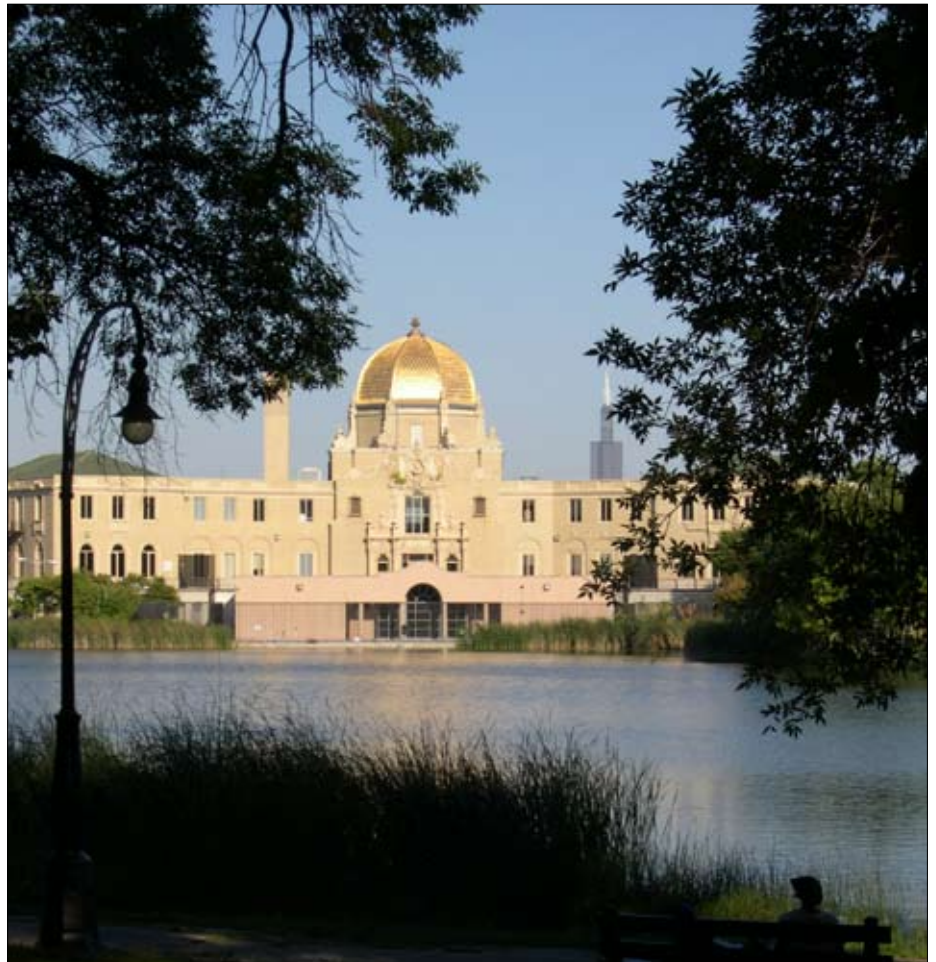
Grant Park's Monumental Fountain



'Cloud Gate' Anish Kapoor's new sculpture in Millennium Park which is located within the overall structure of the wider Grant Park



New interactive sculpture and water feature in Millennium Park



The newly restored 'Gold Dome Building'; Garfield Park Fieldhouse, is used for extensive Community Programmes which accounts for a large percentage of the park budget

Prospect Park, NY

Design

Prospect Park is masterpiece of Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux, undertaken after the pair had completed, (and some say practised with) the design for Central Park in Manhattan. At 585 Acres, (that's the size of nearly three Battersea Parks), its scale is immense and home to naturally inspired elements such as the 90acre, one mile long 'Long Meadow', 60 acre lake and Brooklyn's only forest. Through the forest runs the Ravine, designed to exploit the rugged terrain of the site and create a scene and sense of the Adirondack Mountains right at the heart of Brooklyn. Its 100 foot waterfalls and exposed geological features certainly do that.

The park also supports numerous activities, from numerous sports to concerts and events, childrens play, ice skating and all the pastimes associated with the natural environment such as fishing birding, boating etc. This description paints a rosy picture, but things haven't always been so.

Decline

Similar to the stories people have heard about Central Park in the 70's and 80's, Prospect Park had been in steady decline since the post war years. Not all due to financial hardship and neglect however. The 1950s saw the birth of the era of 'Recreational Facilities'. The concept of enjoyments of natural beauty was overtaken, and then forgotten in the drive to provide facilities. A new modern skating rink was constructed in 1960 over part of the original formal stone edged lake concourse and Music Island within the lake, where bands once played. Baseball courts were installed and covered a large percentage of the Long Meadow, destroying the 'natural' scene.

Key buildings started to fall into disrepair and decay. The boathouse - one of the architectural gems of the park - was given its demolition sentence by city officials in 1964.

Maybe this was the first spark to fire the long rehabilitation programme for the park, as well know local people stopped the demolition with 48 hours to go, and started the first phase of its restoration. Lewis Mumford, renowned social philosopher and Architectural critic, cited the cities planned demolition of the boat house as 'Commercial vandalism' and likened it to the demolition of the original and splendid Penn Station in New York. Despite the early efforts to save and repair the boat house the rest of the park was not to receive such attention. The waterfall in the ravine had been steadily washing soil down into the watercourses and on into the lakes, causing silting up and loss of the 'river' scenery.

A century of overuse of the Ravine and Forest led to soil compaction and erosion, and in turn, as the soil washed down to fill up the smaller ponds and watercourses, tree roots became exposed and understorey began to be lost. In 1980 the Prospect park Landscape Management Office was formed to study the area and plan for the large scale restoration effort. This led to the start of the Design and Construction Office, consisting of in house Architects and Landscape Architects to prepare the Restoration Master Plan.

Rescue

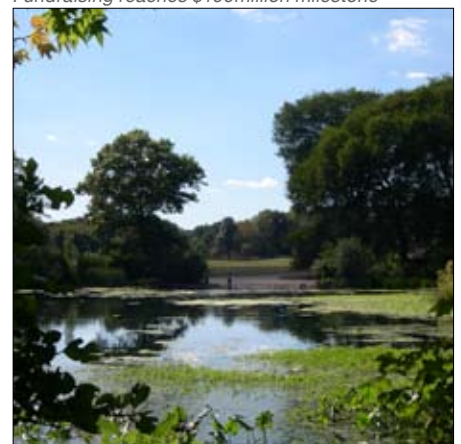
The Prospect Park Alliance was formed in 1987 with a mission to restore the park after years of budget cuts and steady decline in use and natural diversity. The Alliance's aim was to supplement the



Boulders the only barrier to the 20' drop from the bridge down to the ravine below.



Fundraising reaches \$100million milestone



Dog access is restricted to a new 'dog beach' protecting the newly reconstructed lake edges



Entry to the meadow is via these tunnels, gateway to another world



The long meadow, a world away from the urban surroundings of Brooklyn, just outside the boundary



Section of restored lake

basic operations budget supplied by The City of New York Parks and Recreation Dept, by private funds to carry out a variety of capital and community projects which the City budgets would not allow. By carrying out both community projects as well as physical improvements, public awareness of the role of Prospect Park has been raised and in turn, expectations of management and care for the landscape. This profile raising then bought about the reinstatement of the park as a cultural institution. It is now as common to see people getting married in the park as it would be in a local church.

The original designs for the park did not include separate play areas for children. In 1994 a 25 year restoration plan was launched for the parks natural areas. This has been a monumental project, involving the reconstruction of water courses, dredging and excavation of filled ponds, soil stabilization, replanting. Areas have been fenced off to allow the vegetation to establish and opened only for limited periods after a few years. In 2002 the first phase was reopened permanently

The boat house has recently undergone its third, and hopefully final restoration project and now houses the first urban Audubon Centre in the country; the American equivalent of the RSPB, as well as a café and toilets together with an information centre, making it a destination in its own right.

Long Meadow restoration has included \$200,000 renovation of its paths, which do cross the site, but through the careful design of Olmsted and Vaux are never visible as you walk along in the seemingly continuous and unbroken meadow, the longest in any US park. A long term tree planting and removal strategy has



Restored boathouse, now the Audubon Centre is a popular wedding venue

been implemented to, in the long term, re-create the designers original vision but without felling large and substantial, popular trees in the immediate future and through this long term tree planting strategy, create a 9/11 commemorative Grove.

Raising the Profile

Cultural institutions such as art galleries and concert halls are common recipients for corporate support and philanthropic donations alike, but with parks this is not normally the case. Prospect Park however, has become a master of both, in the drive to forward its cultural

and community initiatives, alongside its physical rehabilitation, and has, in doing so become an agent for the wider regeneration catalyst for Brooklyn. Since 2001 the park has raised over \$100million from public and private sources for its restoration and in 2004 carried out 3,300 days of volunteer help. Visitor numbers are standing at over 6 million annually. Brooklyn is an area not normally renowned for being high on the tourist trail for visitors to the Big Apple. Next time you're in NY, make sure it's on your list.

Meridian Hill, Washington DC

Grass Roots Restoration

When I worked in DC in the mid 90's I was told by my fellow landscape architects and colleagues at the National Park Service not to go to Meridian Hill Park. Its in a bad area, people get murdered there, etc etc. So of course I went. I vaguely knew it had some historic interest, but I was astounded by its architectural splendour, its coloured aggregate structures and the vision of its creators, in creating a French neo-classical 'Villa for the people'. It didn't feel too bad, maybe a bit dodgy, a couple of dealers, a few street drinkers, a few rough sleepers, but this was a park in the 90's in DC, nothing new. I was unaware at that time of the existence and work of an organisation called 'Washington Parks and People', and the inroads they had already made into the improvement of the park since the late 80s. At this time DC was just as commonly known for being the murder capital of the world, as it was for housing the seat of power for the world's richest nation.

While I was back in DC in 2005, I went to check them out and see how the park was getting on. First a brief history. Meridian Hill was built as a stylised version of the Villa Borghese Gardens, by the Office of public Works (after an initial design by George Burnap) in 1914. Its strategic location within the town is important. Pierre L'Enfant's plan for Washington is set out on an axial arrangement around the cardinal points with the Washington Monument as the Centre piece within the Mall, around which the other national landmarks, The White house, The Capitol Building, The Lincoln and (later) the Jefferson Memorials are focussed. Thomas Jefferson,, the 3rd president drew a line due north, up the hill from the White

House and proclaimed it to be the Meridian for the Planet, from which all time was to be measured. Unfortunately for him, Greenwich in London had got there first. Nevertheless, the hill was named after the failed Meridian bid and the park, 150 years later named Meridian Hill Park. Situated a mile and a half from the White House , it was designed so its paths pointed towards the Monument, another reinforcement of L'Enfant's spatial plan set out over a hundred years earlier. Money, ever an issue in park building, was limited and led to the first use of exposed aggregate concrete as a composite structural, and decorative material for all the parks infrastructure and hard landscape. From the 50ft retaining walls, to the paths to the finely detailed fountains and figureheads, the same material is used. The only variation being the colour and size of the aggregates, all local product of the Potomac River and a few million years of weathering. This technique had negated the need for separate balustrading, ornamentation, and led to a harmony and durability which even 50 years of neglect could not totally destroy.

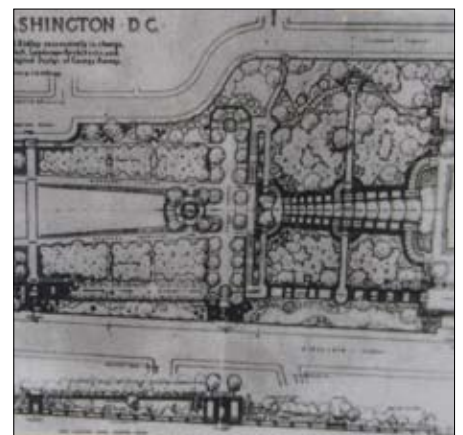
By 1990, Meridian Hill had the title of being The Most Violent Park in DC, and after a murder within the neighbourhood surrounding it, local people met to try and make sense of the killing and to try and regain control of the area. This was soon to become the Friends of Meridian Hill. At that first meeting they took advice from a group of grandparents in the south of the city who had themselves, carried out safety patrols in their own neighbourhood. Their advice was: don't carry anything that could be mistaken as a weapon, work in multiracial groups and say hello to everyone. Despite being urged by the police not to go outdoors after the murder, and whatever you do, don't



Detail of the coloured aggregate paving



The Grand Cascade



Section of the Original Plan , layout still intact



Fountain inset into walls of the grand Cascade, showing fine detail of the exposed aggregate structure



View south towards the Washington Monument, (obscured by the A.C. unit) from the Upper Terrace



Sunday morning

enter the park, they started their patrols there. The park was seen as the centre of the violence, but in starting with the park they also realised that the broader issues of the wider neighbourhood had to be addressed, the entire historic and run down hilltop, less than a mile and a half from the White House. The work was not only to carry out patrols, in response to the recent murder, but to start work on revitalising the 'hidden landscape' as Steve Coleman, the founder of the Friends of Meridian Hill and now director of Parks and People explained. They started by enlisting the help of the regulars, who had cared about the park for years, but had been unable to make inroads against the seeming abandonment by the park service. The group started with small things in addition to the regular patrols, local events, work days for local people, planting a few things, cleaning the place up. They also started putting pressure on the custodians, the national park service, who after years of hearing nothing about the park suddenly started to be inundated with calls for action to be taken. By 1994 the parks crime statistics had dropped by 98% and the group had helped in achieving National Landmark status for the park, the highest accolade of historic significance of national importance. This was the same park which had, a few years earlier been considered for demolition by its custodians. The group continued its work and in 1998 moved into a derelict, 18,000 sq foot renaissance revival style ,ex embassy building adjacent to the park as legal squatters. On Christmas day '98 they mobilised 125 volunteers and started renovation. In 1999, this was to become, after many hours of skilled and unskilled volunteer labour, the base for the organisation as well as what they call the 'Greenhouse', a starter home, renting out office space

for small businesses and not for profit organisations. They secured a loan to buy the building and large function rooms are also rented out for weddings and corporate events, and the income generated by rent pays for the staff and equipment for Washington Parks and People. There are now 7 paid staff on the payroll, including 2 gardeners, and one landscape designer. The park is now a bustling place with team games taking place on the upper grass mall, duck feeding in the lower pools and every other park activity in between. Apart from ongoing maintenance, and structural repairs which the park service are now funding, the renewed interest and occupation had led to the park largely looking after itself. Parks and People are moving on to other more challenging projects (see Green Places article 'Lets Get it On, 2005) Two projects remain outstanding however. The first is a problem largely created by the success of the park restoration itself and a timely reminder to our own plight in London regarding the current controversy surrounding our 'Protected Views'. The regeneration of Meridian Hill Park, and the social regeneration of its surroundings has resulted in other building projects taking place. The view from the upper parapet looking towards the Washington Monument is now obscured by recently erected air conditioning units, located on top of the luxury apartments created from a former derelict hotel. No laws exist in the U.S. to protect historic views. The second project is one which the organisation sees as 'finishing the park' which was never actually completed. Originally there was supposed to be a pavilion located on the upper grass mall, but this never got built. Parks and People want to complete the original design, and erect the pavilion to serve as café

and toilets. Unfortunately for them and the park users, the National Park Service takes a more purist historic approach to the parks restoration and won't allow it. As Steve says; 'A Park is not just something you look at, it is a place, a hub of activity. It doesn't have to be about just preserving what once was. The past can be a prologue, a jumping off point.' Maybe when I return to DC in another 10 years I'll visit the park again and be able to get my cup of tea, while enjoying its past and current activities. www.washingtonparksandpeople.com



Restored benches and fountains, Upper Terrace



Parks and People's HQ in their restored building

Cal Anderson Park Seattle

Lincoln Park to Cal Anderson Park, Seattle.

Tightened security measures in the wake of 9/11 meant difficult challenges for some of the most treasured of America's landscapes. Concrete barriers are now commonplace around many of the memorials on the National Mall in Washington DC and other historic sites around the country. For the old Lincoln Park in Seattle, however, new security regulations have been the catalyst for the rebirth of one of the smaller inner city parks in the Downtown neighbourhood of Capitol Hill.

I was interested to visit this park as an example of a listed park which has been rehabilitated initially through necessity, but one in which the landscape's heritage has been successfully integrated and interpreted to its current audiences.

Through good design, and working with the heritage of the site, its amenity value is increased, its cultural and physical accessibility improved and the neighborhood surrounding it starting to undergo an economic revival.

Originally designed by the Olmsted Brothers in 1904, it was one of many small parks to contribute to the wider park system designed by the firm, and one of the first playgrounds in Seattle. John C Olmsted was commissioned in 1903 to prepare a report on how to beautify the city with a system of parks and boulevards. One month later (!) he had developed a list of projects for Seattle to undertake. He had developed a master plan for the entire future system and the first Park Bond was planned to be issued to fund the development works.

An important element of Seattle's system was to combine function with beauty. The water system was designed to intertwine with the park system, for the benefit

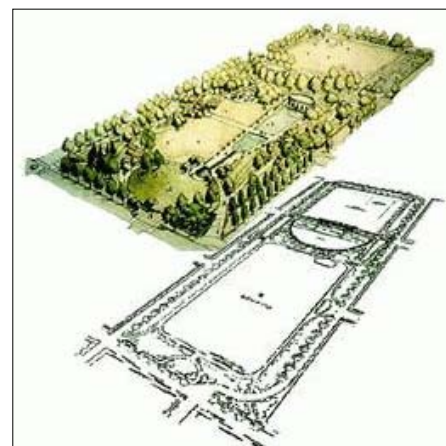
of both utility and landscape amenity. Reservoirs were designed as park pools and lakes, and water towers and pump houses were designed as landmarks and features.

Of the design for Lincoln Park J.C. Olmsted made the following comment "We have already begun and nearly completed a revised study for Lincoln Park, devoting the greater part of it to a simple rectangular field for field sports, and the remainder (south of the reservoir) to arrangements for the exercises and amusements requiring less areas and special provisions"

The reservoir provided a place for walking, and the remainder to the south given over to informal and formal recreation. As in the plans for Louisville, we see resistance to the over dominant provision for sport within the design by the Olmsteds.

"Although in accordance with your instructions our plan will include provision for baseball, we wish to urge in the strongest possible manner the policy of restricting the use of such baseball to boys of the grammar school age, its seems unjust that a few men or full grown boys should occupy such a large portion of the park for their own amusement and the practical exclusion of the far larger number of visitors who could otherwise enjoy the lawn games and the comfort and beauty of the shade trees on the borders of the area"

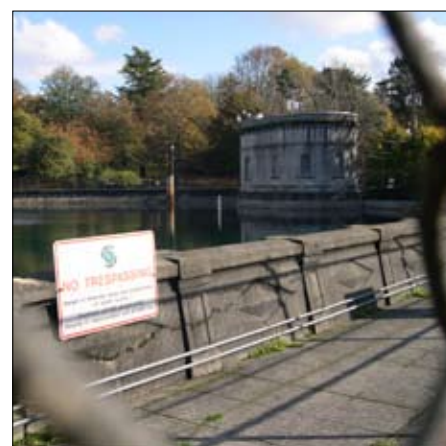
A hundred years later, the park was still structured and functioning more or less as originally designed. Its veteran status within the city meant it had been designated as a Seattle Historic Landmark, giving it a certain amount of protection that this distinction affords. But not all was well with the park, and the usual agents of decline had taken their toll.



New design overlaid on the former reservoir plan



Pump house restored



Similar existing reservoir fenced off in Volunteer Park



New water feature with pump room in the background



Re-constructed section of the old reservoir walls defines the space and reflects the former design



New amenity lawn built on top of the underground reservoir

Its reputation was more commonly associated with open air drug dealing, as opposed to being a place for everybody's recreation and enjoyment. Vandalism was a big problem and fears of personal safety had led to under use. The 4 Acres of reservoir was still in existence, but now had a 3m high chain link fence around it, It was now visually obtrusive, as well as occupying a large area of the park which was inaccessible.

New federal laws passed after 9/11 required that all reservoirs should be 'lidded'. For Lincoln Park, this created a great opportunity for redesign and renewal.

Community organisations and individuals secured funding for much of the design process, and Seattle firm of Landscape Architects, 'The Berger Partnership' together with Artist Douglas Hollis was appointed. This included extensive consultation, not only with local people but with the historic preservation lobbies. The different lobbies themselves had mixed opinions as to the extent which the new design should respect the original. The opinions ranged from the desire to create a replica, but shallower structure on top of the new underground reservoir, (historians perspective), to partial retention, to total eradication of visible water on the site.

After an intensive design and consultation period, the final solution, combining elegance and function was approved. The original division of the park between formal sport to the south and informal recreation on the site of the reservoir was retained, but with the functioning reservoir now underground, there was more usable space. The northern part of the park is, in effect, a large roof garden constructed over the top of the reservoir. As water was important to the history and meaning of the site, both to the historians and locals,

its inclusion was a key part of the new design.

A large, conical fountain clad in granite emits a powerful water surge which flows into two pools, the sound and force of flow symbolising the powerful water source, reminiscent of the functional utility located underneath. The physical form of the old reservoir walls is retained in places and reconstructed in others, where the poor condition of the existing walls and new levels on site dictate. Their presence acts as the shadow of the reservoir's former existence. The walls on the upper level are semi submerged around the edge of the new water sculpture and grass amenity area. They function on a physical level, as seating edges and retaining walls, while at the same time retaining the essence of the past as a visible layer of the parks history. The pump house remains a listed structure and is re-used as a control room for the new underground utility. New sports pitches, restrooms and changing room facilities were constructed and the park completed in September 2005, with big celebrations attended by consultants and community alike.

In addition to the initial community and private contributions, the construction works were made possible by a number of sources, including the Utilities Company, the next door Community College, and the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund. The largest funding, however, was from the Seattle 'Pro Parks Levy'. This form of 'parks tax' was approved by voters in November 2000 and will raise up to \$198.2 million over a period of up to eight years, plus anticipated interest earnings of \$1.98 million. It is paid for by property owners, the annual cost being approximately \$.35 per \$1000 assessed property value. The levy funds are strictly in addition to current levels of parks and



New ramped , accessible entrances to the park



Original details adapted and sensitively integrated

recreation funding; it cannot supplant them.

So, 90 years on from the Olmsted Plan, Seattle through the Pro Parks Levy, is continuing to acquire land and build parks to complete and extend its historic network. Thus it is also helping to rejuvenate and preserve some of its important historic districts, just as the restoration of Occidental and Pioneer Square did for the ailing downtown district in the 1970's, now the trendiest part of town.

Summary

It is clear that investment in historic landscapes, together with good design and restoration strategies together with a solid understanding of the future management requirements can improve not only the parks themselves but also their surrounding communities; Their restoration can improve the physical and economical health of the city as well as preserving a built art form for future generations to appreciate and enjoy. The examples I have included in this report have shown that a coordinated approach to restoration can:

- make the park more beautiful, usable, meaningful and valuable to its surrounding community in the short term and for future generations.
- make economic sense, and can bring economic regeneration to blighted areas.
- put forgotten places and cities on the map, both locally, nationally and internationally.
- lead to wider, city strategies for urban regeneration and re-investment
- reduce population migration from inner cities to the suburbs
- bring about the wider preservation of historic buildings, structures or whole areas which would not be possible without first focussing on the landscape.
- inform new development while retaining evidence of previous communities and land uses, enhancing the diversity and retaining character.
- help to bring about social cohesion and restore civic pride
- help with future funding for parks, by raising their profile, putting them on a cultural level with art galleries and other cultural institutions
- re-integrate ecological diversity with designed landscapes for the mutual benefit of both, while reducing future maintenance cost

- raise the profile of designed landscapes as an art form.
- increase awareness of parks as being a crucial part of our designed and built environment, and the fragility of them.
- increase awareness of the contribution of parks to the health of a community.

These are just some of the benefits, brought about by the conservation of our built urban landscapes and, in turn, the wider reinvigoration of our urban environments and communities.

Gas Works Park Seattle, Industrial Heritage preserved as a landmark structure in Rich Haags famous 1980s park



Economic regeneration brought about by the extension of the existing park system in Louisville



Preservation of craftsmanship and buildings brought about by park restoration projects, Prospect Park, NY



Preservation of old piers in the new Hudson River Park, NY creates sense of continuity while providing new facilities and destinations.

