The Fate of Lawrence Halprin's Public Spaces: Three Case Studies

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Presented to the Faculties of the University of Pennsylvania in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Science in Historic Preservation 2005.
Advisor: John Dixon Hunt

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THE FATE OF LAWRENCE HALPRIN’S PUBLIC SPACES: 
THREE CASE STUDIES

Alison Bick Hirsch 

A THESIS 
in

Historic Preservation

Presented to the Faculties of the University of Pennsylvania in 
Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE IN HISTORIC PRESERVATION

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Introduction

The park systems of American cities should offer a range of opportunities for people to interact with their environment. Since each park generally reflects the tastes, values and attitudes of the era during which it was created, entire park networks represent the gradual layering of these cultural documents over time.¹ A city’s park system inevitably reflects the evolution and history of the place and therefore offers the public a diversity of experiences from which to choose. Today, because undeveloped open space is scarce, parks and planning officials must focus their attention on parks that already exist. Rather than being adapted to fulfill current needs, many of these spaces that together represent the historic continuum, are being scraped and redesigned to reflect today’s single point in time.

Lawrence Halprin is an environmental designer that understands the value of a rich urban experience. Yet because he was most active in the 1960s and 1970s, a period too recent to have yet inspired widespread public appreciation and one often associated with the evils of urban

¹ According to Galen Cranz, “The most important lesson in park history is that [park] form always reflects immediate social goals, an ideology about order, and an underlying attitude toward the city. Park history can be divided into identifiable periods of thirty to fifty years, each with a discernable beginning, middle, and end. But no model has died out” (see “Changing roles of urban parks: from pleasure garden to open space,” Landscape 22, n. 3, Summer 1978, p. 18).
renewal, many of his designs are currently threatened. The following chapters focus on three Halprin sites: Heritage Park in Fort Worth, which is threatened by neglect and new development, Skyline Park in Denver, which has already been demolished and redesigned, and Seattle Freeway Park, which is deteriorating and threatened by a partial redesign that would diminish the value of its experience. These three designs successfully fulfill Halprin’s lifelong interest in the experiential quality of landscape. Today, however, city officials justify the sacrifice of each of these spaces, because of their generally introverted nature, which contrasts the current emphasis on open access urbanism. Halprin believes that both kinds of public spaces must exist within cities:

The life of cities is of two kinds – one is public and social, extroverted and interrelated. It is the life of the streets and plazas, the great parks and civic spaces and the dense activity and excitement of the shopping areas… There is, too, a second kind of life in the city – private and introverted, the personal, individual, self-oriented life which seeks quiet and seclusion and privacy. This private life has need for open spaces of a different kind… It needs enclosure and quiet, removal from crowds and a quality of calm and relaxation. The city should respond to both needs and both kinds of activity for they are equally important parts of the urban environment we are seeking… Our open spaces are the matrix of this two-fold life. It is largely within them that we can find for ourselves these variegated experiences which make life in a city creative and stimulating…

He explains, “By creative, I mean a city which has great diversity and thus allows for freedom of choice; one which generates the maximum of interaction between people and their urban surroundings.”

Clearly, Halprin, unlike many other “Modern” designers, did not produce “look-don’t-touch” spaces. Though he worked under Thomas Church, developing a style largely in-

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2 Other Halprin designs that have been demolished or are currently threatened include: Nicollet Mall in Minneapolis, Manhattan Square Park in Rochester, New York, the East Campus of the Washington State Capitol grounds in Olympia, U.N. Plaza and Justin Herman Plaza, both in San Francisco.


4 Ibid., p. 7.
tune with the modern California School visual aesthetic, his design concerns became increasingly more focused on stimulating social interaction and creative behavior than beautifying leftover land fragments, designing corporate headquarters or creating private gardens.\(^5\) His designs and his process demonstrate a drive to enhance urban life aesthetically, emotionally and psychologically through environmental experience.

In fact, Halprin has been compared to Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr., partly because of their shared interest in social enhancement through environmental design in the public arena. “For Olmsted, the vision was one of pastoral relief from smoke and crowding; for Halprin, one of celebration of the city’s rambunctious vitality. Both viewed city parks and open spaces as a meeting ground for people of all classes.”\(^6\) Neither limited their designs to the pleasant or the comfortable, often incorporating areas evocative of the sublime. Both designers published writings about their works and their views on ecology, city planning, and social needs of urban dwellers. Halprin has also been compared to other powerful figures involved in the world of environmental design and planning, such as Lewis Mumford. “A reason for bringing [Halprin and Mumford] together… is to consider the unexpected ways in which Halprin managed to bring

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5 Halprin’s involvement within the Modern movement differed from many of his contemporaries. In a letter to Patrick Condon he stated, “To be properly understood Modernism is not just a matter of cubist space but of a whole appreciation of environmental design as a holistic approach to the matter of making places for people to live. It was as a part of a Modern approach to design that I included Ecology, Psychology, and social values in my process,” (see “Commentary” in Landscape Journal 8, n. 2, Fall 1989, p. 151). According to Melanie Simo, after a conversation with Halprin in 1992: “For him, modernism in landscape architecture has always implied, among other things, dealing existentially with issues of our times, emphasizing people (all people) and their use and enjoyment as the major purpose of design, accepting change and anticipating it, and viewing landscape architecture as an art form interactive with and influenced by the other art forms” (from Walker and Simo, Invisible Gardens, Cambridge, MIT Press, 1996, p. 10).


7 In the video documentary Lawrence and Anna Halprin: Inner Landscapes by Charles Pearson and Joan Saffa (San Francisco, KQED-TV, 1991), Halprin claims “memorable and intense and passionate are words that I prefer rather than pretty when I make places for people.”
into existence one of Mumford’s ideals – if not ‘the city as work of art,’ then the city as a place for people to realize their own creative potential.”

Halprin encouraged active participation in his creative process, always adhering to the RSVP-cycle format. He carefully “scored,” or choreographed, “Take Part” workshops that cultivated a common language of experience in order to encourage creative consensus among participants. Some may charge that Halprin manipulates the outcome of his design workshops to cultivate a consensus based on his own ideals. In fact, Halprin does use his own visions to guide potentially opposing and confused participants into agreement, allowing these individuals to discover for themselves what Halprin might have already preconceived. Thomas Balsley, landscape architect in charge of the redesign of Skyline Park, is also interested in public process, but because he had no such guiding principles, the end product is a soulless mix of elements meant to appease everyone and ultimately pleasing no one.

Halprin’s work during the 1960s and 1970s is of particular importance because of its connection with and response to the widespread urban renewal programs in the country’s downtowns. Freeway construction caused the destruction of significant portions of the established city grid. The rapidity of sweeping demolition of older built stock and the erection of homogenous corporate high-rises, caused a public disorientation and uncertainty. As a response to such rapid and unsettling change, Halprin created spaces that recalled the history, the prehistory, the native ecology and the essence of the individual place, evoking a sense of genius loci and reestablishing a sense of order.

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8 Walker and Simo, p. 145.
An advocate of historic preservation himself,10 Halprin’s designs were largely in sync with the renewed preservation movement that emerged in response to this time of unrelenting change and instability. His designs are meant to offer a sense of place to the public who were losing all such sense owing to the vast destruction of what had developed slowly over generations. Rather than fight a hopeless battle against unexorable change, Halprin worked in conjunction with the renewal programs, trying to ease the discomfort they inevitably produced. Yet Denver officials over the past decade, for example, considered Halprin’s Skyline Park a symbol of the destruction of urban renewal, rather than an amenity meant to counteract the relentless disorientation of the time. Therefore, Skyline Park was demolished as part of the city’s widespread attempt to erase this entire urban renewal chapter from their history, unwittingly imposing a form of “cultural amnesia” on the future of Denver.

Halprin’s innovative fountain sequence in Portland, Oregon (Illus. I.1-I.8) has faced the same problems as many of his currently threatened designs: neglect and resulting diminished usership, as well as rapidly changing contextual settings. Yet Portland has also set a precedent with which to approach these spaces and their problems. Largely through the collaboration of private organizations and individuals, the cascades of water falling over the “cliffs” of the Ira Keller Fountain and the serene intimacy of Pettygrove Park have been rehabilitated with active input from Halprin. Though often efforts driven predominantly by private agencies represent limited public concerns, Halprin’s involvement ensured the project would benefit the entire community. On a sunny day at the Ira Keller Fountain, one will see families with enthusiastic children canon-balling themselves into the pools, people spectating from the grass sidelines or dangling their feet over the concrete ledges, a gathering of peaceful homeless youth, and perhaps

10 In the mid-1960s, in fact, Halprin served on the first president-appointed Commission on Historic Preservation. In Cities, he claims “The creative city environment evolves as a result of both new and old buildings and a recognition that the city is a continuum, relating both to our past and our future” (p. 9).
a dog or two wading in the lower pools. In Pettygrove, though much less active, and weaker as
an isolated design, couples old and young sit on benches made private by the earthen turf
mounds and clustered trees. Lovejoy Plaza, however, the site of the “source fountain,” is the
least maintained and is often empty. Neglect and insensitive adjacent development most clearly
affects this park’s diminished usership.

Physical deterioration and the resulting dwindling presence of a healthy cross-section
of society often fuels the demolition rationale. According to Louise Mozingo, associate
professor of landscape architecture at the University of California at Berkeley,

Studies have shown that physical characteristics of environments – poor
maintenance, vacant lots, traffic, graffiti, empty storefronts, trashy streets
– play a significant role in the perception of threat, though they have little
to do directly with personal safety. Environmental psychologists refer to
these as physical ‘incivilities’ and in time of shrinking municipal budgets
these have increased, along with their consequent effect… Assiduous
maintenance of the physical infrastructure of public space, whether park or
street, is immeasurably important in fostering a sense of security and
frequent use by the public.11

Though many Halprin public spaces are currently endangered, Heritage Park, Skyline
Park and Seattle Freeway Park represent three of his most successful aesthetic, intellectual,
emotional, psychological and sensory experiences. Preservation of these “experiences” is what
is most important and may be accomplished even in conjunction with updates to the physical
material. However, because the strength of each site is in the whole of the experience they
provide, preserving fragments of the physical form could easily be equivalent to demolition, as is
evident by Skyline Park. Each space presents a different approach to dealing with periods of
rapid change; each recalls the individuality of the site’s regional geography and history and each
reflects a social idealism and an intellectual art. Despite these broader similarities each space is

unique from the others, all three together providing a cross-section of Halprin’s work that
demonstrates the potency of his most successful designs and his ability to generate a diversity of
experiences and moods. In the following chapters, preservation recommendations are tailored to
each site’s individuality. Most importantly, however, before any such recommendations are
presented, the unique significance of each site is interpreted as a design and as an essential
representation of its time and place in an ongoing social and historical process.
Chapter One: Heritage Park, Fort Worth, TX

Situated on the bluffs overlooking the confluence of the Clear and West forks of the Trinity River, Upper Heritage Park is a space to reflect on the history of Fort Worth from its founding in 1849 to current history-in-the-making. The site is at the location of the original fort for which the city is named,\textsuperscript{12} which was situated there to command the sweeping views of the converging river and the land to the east, west and north (Illus. 1.2 & 1.3). Heritage Park is made up of Upper and Lower Heritage. Upper Heritage refers to Lawrence Halprin and Associate’s plaza on top of the bluff, only a couple hundred yards from the nineteenth-century courthouse building, and Lower Heritage consists of trails that extend down to the water’s edge and along the river’s banks (Illus. 1.4). On the lower trail, just west of the plaza, one can find ruins of stone and brick that are not identified, rather left to the visitor’s imagination to

\textsuperscript{12} The fort was abandoned in 1853, as the troops pushed westward and settlers promptly moved in and readapted the timber structures. The original fort complex, however, did not survive long, according to Salo, Green and Wurtz’s \textit{Detailed Archival Research Regarding Potential Archaeological Remains at the Ripley Arnold Housing Development} for the Army Corps of Engineers in June 2002, p. 6. This same report claims: “Several interrelated factors contributed to the demise of the fort for use as a military post. Although its purpose was to guard the frontier, Fort Worth was never linked to other forts by a military road, and the post was not on the proposed route for the southern transcontinental railroad that the War Department was planning in the 1850s. The location of the fort therefore resulted in its being loosely connected to the larger military defense strategy…” (also p. 6). This statement is ironic because the argument for why Heritage Park “fails” is only a slight adaptation of these factors of location and disconnectedness
determine their significance and enjoy their aesthetic delight (Illus. 1.5). The focus of this chapter is the upper plaza, from which water once gushed. Today, however, its fountains remain dry, and their aural pleasure will not drown out the $360 million-worth of redevelopment that is about to explode along the river banks in a city plan called the Trinity River Vision (Illus. 1.6 & 1.7). Already, corporate headquarters have sprung up along the banks of the river as part of the “vision.” The rapid construction of the Radio Shack suburban-style corporate complex demonstrated no mercy for the 1930s housing development it replaced (Illus. 1.8 & 1.9).14 Heritage Park, whose existence is known to only very few, is not currently under active threat, but due to the city’s record of neglect of the site where the original fort once stood, the possibility of it being lost in the shuffle of construction and redevelopment is quite real. Without voices to speak out for its cultural value, the site is in danger of disappearing. Also, after this past summer’s tragic drownings in the active fountain portion of Phillip Johnson’s Water Garden on the south side of the city, issues of liability could easily cause the city to reconsider municipal water features, especially if they are isolated from public view.15

The plaza is amazingly unknown and underused considering the significance of its location. Its physical deterioration and the fact that it has been surrendered to the homeless population causes some to perceive it as a crime-ridden place.

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13 After some time, I discovered that they are most likely remains from the barrio La Corte and are perhaps unmarked because this is not a mainstream aspect of celebrated Fort Worth history. In fact, there is next to nothing written about the built fabric of barrio culture in Fort Worth. Even Detailed Archival Research Regarding Potential Archaeological Remains at the Ripley Arnold Housing Development, Fort Worth, Texas mentions nothing about barrio remnants, which I note because it is exactly on this old barrio site that the housing development was erected. For reference to the exact locations of each compare the maps in the Salo, Green and Wurtz publication with the 1892 Rand, McNally and Co. map on page 8 of the book Stories from the Barrio: A History of Mexican Fort Worth (Fort Worth, TCU Press, 2003) by Carlos Eliseo Cuéllar. This is the only book written about this virtually unknown aspect of Fort Worth history, but it says nothing about the built fabric.

14 I am referring to the Ripley Arnold Housing Development, the first public housing in Fort Worth, which was constructed in 1939 as part of the New Deal program.

15 Four people, three children and one adult drowned in the active pool of the Water Gardens (completed 1975) in the summer of 2004.
Yet Heritage Park plaza cannot be considered with any “activation” formula, despite the fact that urban theorist William H. Whyte and Fred Kent, President of Project for Public Spaces, a New York-based organization that consults on public space creation and “enhancement,” are often referenced by Fort Worth city planning and parks officials when conveying the status of the site and reasons it “fails.” Upper Heritage is not a site intended for active recreation. It is a contemplative, intimate, meditative space, commemorating the history of the city, celebrating its natural, scenic and cultural resources and presenting a launching point from which to explore the array of historical artifacts scattered along the water’s edge. The plaza represents a unique attempt at celebrating and commemorating history without commercialization or privatization. No entrance fee is required, no t-shirts sold; all are welcome to enter and experience the view of the river’s fork, which was the reason for which the city developed where it did.

In the late 1960s, Lawrence Halprin and Associates was commissioned by the newly formed Streams and Valleys Committee, a local group dedicated to reclaiming the Trinity River as a historic, scenic and ecological resource that had been too long abused, to develop a plan to fulfill their mission. Ruth Carter Stevenson, Amon Carter, Sr.’s daughter, played a major role in the committee. The Carter Foundation was, and still is, active in local philanthropy, especially in the arts and culture and has historically commissioned the best designers from all over the country to work on the projects they were funding. In fact, Randle Harwood, assistant director of the City of Fort Worth Parks and Community Services Department, explained that Fort Worth has been “a great beneficiary of good works of the Carter Foundation throughout the park system – parks have been developed through their donations and [Heritage Park] is one part of that

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16 For example, Phillip Johnson designed the Amon Carter Museum, which opened in 1961.
legacy”¹⁷ (Phillip Johnson’s Water Garden is another part¹⁸). Mr. Harwood also explained that currently most of the money for Fort Worth parks comes from private donations.

The result of the Streams and Valleys Committee commission was a product called the Halprin Plan of 1970, referenced by city officials and local journalists today as the inspiration for the current Trinity River Vision.¹⁹ For good reason too, since many of Halprin’s ideas are finally being implemented, such as the development of an urban lake (Illus. 1.6), increased recreational opportunities along the river and the encouragement of downtown businesses to turn and face and embrace the river.²⁰ Some aspects of the Halprin Plan did materialize in the 1970s, however, such as the plaza, low water dams to maintain the river flow, more trees along the river banks, bicycle trails and an annual celebration on the riverbank, Mayfest, which has been successful in raising money for implementing his plan in these modest increments. Otherwise, the plan fell victim to the economy of the 1970s when Fort Worth voters rejected two major

¹⁸ Interestingly, Mr. Harwood claims that Phillip Johnson was hired by Ruth Carter Stevenson to design the water gardens but in a form that was “modeled on Halprin’s plan for Portland in a way unique to Fort Worth.” According to Harwood, Halprin was expecting that contract, but most likely due to “ticking off” Ruth Carter Stevenson, she turned to Johnson who designed their museum.
¹⁹ Conversations with Randle Harwood, January 7, 2005 and City of Fort Worth planning director Fernando Costa, January 5, 2005. See also Bob Ray Sanders, “A city, time and the river,” Fort Worth Star-Telegram, January 11, 2002 & “Visions for Trinity finally being realized,” Fort Worth Star-Telegram, December 5, 2004. Many ideas presented in the Halprin Plan were formulated as a result of scoring activities and workshops involving the local community. In fact, the Fort Worth plan is quoted by Jim Burns of Lawrence Halprin and Associates as the first outcome of the firm’s initiation of such activities (see “The How of Creativity: Scores & Scoring,” Lawrence Halprin: Changing Places, San Francisco, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 1986, p. 57). A document explaining the Fort Worth community workshop can be found in the Halprin Archives housed in the Architectural Archives of the University of Pennsylvania, 014.I.A.4158, box 127. Also, the Halprin Plan came upon the heels of the famous 1956 Gruen Plan for Fort Worth, which proposed the transformation of the entire downtown into a pedestrian-only environment to compete with the development of shopping malls outside the downtown. The plan is referenced in Jane Jacobs’ The Death and Life of Great American Cities (New York, Random House (Vintage Books edition), 1992 (originally published in 1961), pp. 344-346 and 350-351) quite extensively and most elaborately explained in “The Gruen Plan for a Greater Fort Worth Tomorrow,” a 1956 publication, a copy of which can be found in the files of Historic Fort Worth, Inc.
²⁰ See Fort Worth Trinity River Report, prepared for the City of Fort Worth with the cooperation of The Streams & Valleys Committee, November 1970 and The Fort Worth Central Business District Sector Report, October 1971, copies of which are housed in the Halprin Archives, 014.I.B, box 362.
park-and-recreation capital improvement propositions.²¹ Because so much of the Halprin Plan is finally being implemented today, Mr. Harwood rightfully claimed: “[Heritage Park] was the first time that Fort Worth really faced the river. [His plan] was really about thirty years before its time. I mean, we’re ready to do that now through the Trinity River Vision.”²²

The plaza itself was completed due to the strong involvement of the Streams and Valleys Committee and the local Bicentennial Committee. The park was conceptualized by Halprin, but primarily designed and planned by associate Satoru Nishita, as indicated by the office documents.²³ Therefore, when Lawrence Halprin and Associates disbanded in 1976, much of the correspondence reveals confusion regarding with whom Fort Worth officials should consult. The newly formed Carter Hull Nishita McCulley Baxter (CHNMB) seems to have been the primary contact after the Halprin and Associates breakup. Perhaps due to this final confusion, very little reference to this design exists.

**Site Description**

Heritage Park presents a sequence of guided experiences (*Illus. 1.1*). The intimacy of the isolated experiences is enhanced by the composition of volumetric spaces terraced along the bluff. The sequential process anticipates Halprin’s now-celebrated FDR Memorial, another

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²³ In a report summary of the “Meeting with Lawrence Halprin concerning the Heritage Park Plaza and Fountain Design,” April 1, 1976, with participants: Lawrence Halprin, Ruth Johnson, Phyllis Tilley, Poly Phillips, James Toal, Jack Tuomey and Uria Lester, it is stated: “… Mr. Halprin sketched out a plaza concept which he envisioned appropriate for the bluff overlook area. In summary, his sketch included a series of plaza levels with a sequence of water cascades running along and down the various plaza levels…” The short document in its entirety was extremely informative in understanding how Halprin became involved in the project. A local engineering firm, Carter & Burgess, Inc., had initially proposed a design that Halprin rejected. The engineering firm eventually became the local consultants to Halprin’s design. This document can be found in the City of Fort Worth Parks and Community Services Department’s files on Heritage Park. I attribute Satoru Nishita as primary designer because the majority of correspondence was between he and Fort Worth officials and many of the drawings bare his initials.
commemorative space that is carefully choreographed. The well-funded FDR Memorial occupies a more sprawling area, however, and its interpretation of history is more literal due to the inclusion of figurative sculpture and statuary and the abundance of inscriptions. Perhaps because Heritage Park’s reference to history is abstract and conceptual, rather than literal, even some historians do not recognize its significance. For example, the proud local historian, Richard Selcer, who has studied, in excruciating depth, the exact location and configuration of the original fort, claims: “The only on-site recognition honoring the historic location is a bronze plaque on an irregular block of granite. This insignificant monument… incorrectly refers to Fort Worth as Camp Worth…” 24

The water in Heritage Park has been shut off. The following site description recreates the experience as if the water features were still operating, since without water, one can hardly argue for the significance and purpose of the space. Heritage Park is isolated from the city by a road system quite unfriendly to pedestrians and, therefore, potential visitors. In fact, Fort Worth is, itself, a city entirely unfriendly to the pedestrian. Very few street level shops and restaurants exist 25 and corporate office buildings looming above make the city feel cold and inhospitable. Consistent with such a pedestrian-unfriendly context, no crosswalk exists between the downtown and the entrance to the park (Illus. 1.10). If the water was turned on and worked properly, it would fall over a concrete wall facing the courthouse and the downtown and would potentially lure the curious to try and dash across the street, careful to avoid fast-moving vehicles coming off the historic Paddock Viaduct. The first step in a preservation plan for the site must simply be the creation of a pedestrian crossing. Once the visitor successfully survives the far-from-pleasant approach, one is confronted with an interpretive sign explaining the significance of the location

25 Apparently these amenities are found mostly in the malls off the radiating freeways.
and the merits of Fort Worth as a city concerned with quality of life (*Illus. 1.11*). Just beyond this sign are letters mounted on the concrete wall indicating that behind it is HERITAGE PARK. A flaw noted by today’s city officials is that this wall creates a barrier from the street to the space within and prevents potential users from even realizing the park’s existence. Perhaps, but again, if the water were turned on and cascaded over the street-side of the wall as designed, the aesthetic effects would certainly lure the curious. Also, if the city made any attempt to publicize the park’s existence in the abundance of tourist material, visitors who come to view the city’s other cultural icons, such as Louis Kahn’s Kimbell Museum, Tadao Ando’s new modern museum, the stockyards, Phillip Johnson’s Water Garden, etc., might add another site to their itinerary: the commemorative park that was thirty years before its time in the attempt to open the downtown to its historic waterfront.

Once one enters the site, the modern city disappears, as the senses are overcome with falling and running water, breezes off the river through the leaves of the gridded live oaks and structural volumes block the view to the outside world (*Illus. 1.12*). To the right is a wall of water falling over the words “Embrace the Spirit and Preserve the Freedom which inspired those of Vision and Courage to Shape our Heritage” (*Illus. 1.13*). These are the only words inserted into the site,* and they are meant to transform one’s consciousness to the spiritual power of the place. Just beyond is a source fountain under a concrete pavilion, reminiscent of stone water

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*26 Another site well-worth noting due to its sublimity, enhanced by the patina of age, is the much more modestly-scaled Water Garden that Halprin and Associates designed for the Washington State Capitol grounds in Olympia (completed 1972). Another walled space, one is overcome with similar sensations provided by the water effects and carefully selected plantings. Though the site commemorates nothing, the enclosure and forms and engulfing vegetation offers a similar spiritual experience (*Illus. C.8-C.13*). The water features have not been operating since 1992 and there are plans to remove the garden as part of the capitol grounds’ redesign. However, due to activism by users (users who had more clout than the homeless, the only real users of Heritage Park), the firm in charge of redesigning the campus, EDAW, Inc., is proposing to their client the possibility of restoring it. This information is derived from a conversation with and materials from State Capitol grounds redesign lead landscape architect, Michael Romero of EDAW, Inc., February 10, 2005.  
27 Except for a small plaque at the base of the westernmost water wall mentioned later.*
basins, *chozubachi*, placed in Japanese gardens as a means to purify oneself before entering a shrine (Illus. 1.14). In fact, much of the restrained sequential quality displayed in the design is reflective of Zen gardening principles, as well as some of the details, such as the stepping-stones (or, in this case, stepping-concrete slabs). In fact, Sutherland Lyall, in *Designing the New Landscape*, states: Lawrence Halprin and Associates “[thought] of landscape in somewhat Zen terms, as a sequence of carefully evoked sensual experiences, a combination of such elements as wind, water, sun, lightning, shade, heat, cold, sound, enclosure, form.”28 Though few visitors will recognize such cultural references, the message is nonetheless clear: that this is a site for quiet contemplation and meditation to reflect on the history of the city and region. As is additionally noted by designer and critic, Kevin Sloan, the drawings of this site by Lawrence Halprin and Associates, in Satoru Nishita’s hand, depict people visiting the site in solitude, with appropriate space between visitors who are there to absorb the meaning of the site’s location and program (Illus. 1.16-1.21).29 Crowds or clusters are not depicted within the open, flat areas, as they are in drawings of the other two case study sites.

One catches glimpses of the open sky ahead from within the deep shade of the live oaks (Illus. 1.15), which have not been pruned since they were planted thirty years ago, adding to the dark and isolated quality of the site and perhaps exacerbating a sense of fear that might deter the wary visitor, one catches glimpses of the open sky up ahead. Water flows over the wall to the west, inspiring curiosity to discover its source. On the other side of the wall, the mysterious water source is not revealed (water is pumped up through the wall), but an abstract plan of the original fort complex and the forking river is found inlaid into the concrete over which more

29 Because these drawings demonstrate the firm’s interest in experience, Sloan claims: “Today, when image is everything and experience counts for very little, these drawings are vivid reminders of a time when the experience of a place was more highly valued in the design of public spaces” (Kevin Sloan, “Second Man Missing.” *Landscape Architecture* 93, n. 4, April 2003, p. 85).
water falls (*Illus. 1.22*). A small plaque at the visitor’s feet interprets the significance of the depicted plan. Openings in the park’s enclosing wall offer tempting glimpses of the “water wall” and historic plan from the trail up from Lower Heritage Park. One can actually enter the plaza through one of these openings, which is framed by cedar elms (*Illus. 1.23*). When a visitor enters at this location, arriving *after* an experience in Lower Heritage Park, one’s response will be different than if the visitor entered through the primary entrance and encountered the site as a gateway through which to ultimately approach the trail along the river, lined with ruins of the city’s past.31 Because the plaza is being overtaken by plant growth, and the water system is not operating and the materials are being allowed to deteriorate, the plaza itself has become another ruin along the trail, though evoking a different time in the city’s history. Though the plaza designers anticipated the water would continue to operate and the city would provide some basic maintenance over time, the ruin aesthetic was probably intentional, since early drawings by the Halprin firm depict vines growing up and over the walls as nature slowly reclaims the site. If entered after returning from a walk, jog or bike (apparently popular activities in this lower section of the park) along the Trinity River trails, then the plaza becomes a quiet space to cool oneself from the hot Texas sun and linger before re-entering the city beyond. If entered from the street through the primary entrance, then the visitor enters a world through which their experience is carefully choreographed in a process of purification before walking down along the bluff to the water’s edge.

Whichever way one enters, the channeled water runs downgrade toward the river, leading the visitor’s movement in pursuit of the historic view of the river’s fork. After stepping

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30 As labeled on the construction drawings and site plan (*Illus. 1.1*).
31 Because the sign at the main entrance says “Heritage Park,” this seems to indicate that this entrance was intended to serve as a gateway through which to access all of Heritage Park, Lower and Upper.
down to the next level of the terraced site, one discovers an intimate “garden”\textsuperscript{32} area, planted with sculptural native evergreen yaupons (Illus. 1.24). From the “garden,” one can view the river through an opening in the concrete wall. As one descends through the space, the plantings become less formally situated and more wild and native to the region (Illus. 1.31). In fact, along the switchbacks descending towards the river’s edge, the pre-existing native vegetation was largely retained when the site was constructed (Illus. 1.37 & 1.38).\textsuperscript{33} We are going back in time, from the gridded formality of the modern city, or the planted grove or “garden” space behind, to the untamed lands that were originally discovered by Major Ripley Arnold in 1849. The watercourse leads one to the edge of a belvedere (Illus. 1.18 & 1.21), which echoes the belvederes that jut from the adjacent 1914 Paddock Viaduct (Illus. 1.27), a Texas Historic Civil Engineering Landmark, which is proudly celebrated in Fort Worth as the first reinforced concrete arch bridge in the nation to use self-supporting reinforcing steel. The lookouts protruding from the bridge face the plaza and the bluffs, creating a dialogue between the early nineteenth-century structure and the commemorative park. The park’s belvedere is directly across the river from TXU Power’s North Main Street Steam Electric Generating Station, which was erected in 1912 by the Fort Worth Power and Light Company (predecessor to Texas Electric Service Company) on the site of the former light plant, constructed in 1890.\textsuperscript{34} The power plant was instrumental in the early development of the city and therefore its presence within the viewshed of Heritage Park represents a portion of the park’s historical narrative (Illus. 1.29 & 1.30). The structure of the

\textsuperscript{32} Labeled as such on the 1977 site plan that can be found in color on p. 84 of Kevin Sloan’s article in Landscape Architecture or in graphite in the flat files of the Halprin Archives (Illus. 1.1).

\textsuperscript{33} In a letter, dated August 5, 1976, from designer Satoru Nishita to Presten M. Geren, chairman of the Streams and Valleys Committee, he says: “Because we are interested in preserving as much of the existing vegetation as possible in order to carefully place the switchback path to the river, we have asked Mr. Jones to provide us with the existing tree information (location, size, variety, quality)…” , City of Fort Worth Parks and Community Services Department, Heritage Park files.

plant, with its towering smokestacks, was recognized in Halprin’s 1970 plan for Fort Worth as a “powerful architectural form”35 and “an enhancing and positive visual element” along the Trinity River,36 which acts as an orienting landmark from much of the downtown. It was recently “retired,” as indicated on the website,37 and reclaimed by Tarrant County College as part of the Trinity River Vision. Apparently, the college intends to retain its form, but adapt its use, though senior planner in charge of historic preservation for the city, Julie Lawless, claims the stacks might come down38 (which would seriously undermine the commemorative park’s historic viewshed).

Beyond the power plant the distant stockyards are visible just off North Main Street. The early development of Fort Worth depended largely on the meat-packing industry, particularly after the establishment of the railroad in 1876. When the city’s stockyards closed their doors in the 1960s, plans were made to develop the historic landscape into a landmark tourist destination, which opened in 1976, just before the completion of Heritage Park. Today, the stockyards are more of a theme park than a heritage site, but they attract tourists from all over, continuing to play a key role in the economy and image of Fort Worth. Therefore, the view to these historic remains from Heritage Park is quite significant and plays a powerful role in the historic narrative experienced within the park. Kevin Sloan points out that the bridge which guides the visitor away from the belvedere and parallel to the bluff “can be perceived as a poured-in-place abstraction of the wood trestles once used by beef traders to view from above the cattle pens of the stockyards.”39 This seems quite possible, particularly since letters from Sat

36 Ibid., p. 7.
38 Conversation with Julie Lawless, January 5, 2005.
39 Sloan, p. 84. The article includes comparative photographs of the site’s trestle bridge and stockyard structures.
Nishita reveal that he had the chance to explore the city and surrounding area and since Halprin had spent substantial time in Fort Worth developing his reports for the business district and the river in the late 1960s.

Once the suspended walkway leads one back toward the main plaza along the directional ramps, the water falls from a runnel in the handrail (Illus. 1.32) to one along the ground (Illus. 1.19) and is channeled straight ahead to the grotto, into which water cascades (Illus. 1.33). The water is then directed toward a pool of water in which stepping stones have been placed to guide one’s movement and interaction with the water (Illus. 1.34). Following the stepping-stones around the corner (if you do not trip on the stones pulled out so maintenance personnel could find a leak) is another grotto form that acts as the terminus to the water sequence (Illus. 1.35 & 1.36). The path then leads the visitor out of the plaza space and down the stairs to begin one’s journey along the switchbacks to the river’s edge (Illus. 1.37 & 1.38).

The water that directs the visitor’s experience within the site is apparently pumped from the Trinity River.\textsuperscript{40} Using nature as inspiration, it acts as a wandering stream working its way down in search of the larger water. The plaza celebrates the Trinity River by its plentitude of water scored through weirs, falls, runnels, cascades and pools. Actually, if the Trinity River Vision is fully realized, a system of canals will be established within the land across the river, echoing the park’s system of channels and controlled water flow (Illus. 1.6 & 1.7).

The archetypal forms, such as the grottoes, groves and various water elements evoke an undeniable sense of spirituality. The space was mainly intended to present a controlled processional experience, rather than a place to hang around and eat or gather. This is particularly evident by the lack of obvious benches, as well as by the firm’s drawings, which depict solitary

\footnote{\textsuperscript{40} Pat Svacina, “It began here, pilgrim; Nearly finished park honors pioneers,” The Dallas Morning News, September 30, 1979, Fort Worth Metro section (clipping without page indicated in the City of Fort Worth Park and Community Services Department, Heritage Park files).}
people moving sequentially through the space, stopping to take in the view and then moving down to the stepped switchbacks that lead one to the foot of the bluff and the water’s edge (*Illus. 1.16 & 1.18*). In a 1982 master plan conducted for Upper and Lower Heritage Park, the planners addressed the plaza’s anonymity by seeking a theme to unify the park. In response to the nearby confluence of the river forks, the planners chose the concept of “union,” revering in their plan the park’s experience as a union of urban hardscape and natural resource.41 Though some alterations and additions to the lower park suggested in the master plan have been implemented, the plaza’s anonymity persists.

**Current Usership**

Today the park has been surrendered to the homeless, due to widespread perceptions that this population is universally violent and dangerous. In fact, there were two men living in the park this past January: one in the plaza itself and one below, under the belvedere and bridge. They were both quite gentle, one having left the local shelter out of fear himself. The other, a friendly man who lived under the plaza’s pavilion, carefully folded his blanket each day, making his bed. Educating others that not all homeless people are thieves will be necessary in any preservation plan for this park. These men should not somehow be designed out of the space, as has been done in other redesign projects, such as at Skyline Park. The goal for all these spaces should be to come up with a plan that will include all users, as Halprin had originally intended. Conversely however, the fact that currently one visiting the space might like he/she is invading someone’s personal space is not appropriate either. Even the man living under the plaza, who arrived later than the man living within the plaza, clearly understood and respected the other’s

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41 See document entitled: “ASLA Professional Awards Category 2: Landscape Planning and Analysis: Heritage Park Master Plan, Fort Worth, Texas” in the Heritage Park files of the City of Fort Worth Parks and Community Services Department.
territory. Though usership and awareness is low, the site is partially so interesting because one must seek it out. It is a pilgrimage site, visited by those who pursue understanding of the city’s founding and origins. The opportunity to experience the spirituality of the site in solitude intensifies the power of the environment.

Unfortunately, locals do not seem to spend much time in any downtown public parks. The few public spaces that do exist downtown do not seem to be used by anyone but tourists. The Water Garden is frequented mainly by tourists and Burnett Park, designed by Peter Walker, is merely a transitional space (though this is mainly due to the lack of benches). Middle-class people in Fort Worth seem generally to spend the workday indoors and return home each day to spend time in their suburban backyards if they seek an outdoor experience. Perhaps the Trinity River Vision will be successful and there will be more residents living downtown, taking active interest in its amenities.

**Context**

The plaza’s developing surroundings are also unfortunate. In the late 1980s, the vacant lot to the west of the site, adjacent to the Criminal Court building and owned by Tarrant County, was developed as a parking garage for county employees (Illus. 1.21 & 1.29). The site could have been developed into practically anything else and benefited the park enormously: an

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42 This territorial claiming of public space is called “spatial appropriation” by Setha Low in her analysis of Parque Central in Costa Rica, where when “spatial appropriation by socially marginal groups was successful, the park was briefly closed down and redesigned in such a way as to discourage its continued use by ‘undesirables.’” See Low, *On the Plaza: The Politics of Public Space and Culture*, Austin, University of Texas, 2000, p. 201. The other extreme is Lafayette Square in Oakland designed by Walter Hood, which was also a redesign project, but worked with the past (predominantly homeless and unemployed men) and potential new users in devising a plan that would accommodate both groups. This was a redesign, however, where the original design was not consulted or referenced. For Heritage Plaza, on the other hand, simply developing a venue to enable interaction between these communities, without any major alteration to the design, would most definitely increase public awareness and activism, making it a more equally shared space.
office building, social service facility, housing, all of which generate “eyes upon the street” (or park, in this instance).43 Instead, empty cars sit above the park. According to Kevin Sloan, “in an attempt to enliven the environment, the architects designed the first floor of the garage to accommodate a daycare center… Unfortunately a daycare provider never materialized, and the new development, merely a garage, betrayed the opportunity to reverse the reputation of Heritage Plaza as a walled refuge for criminals and indigents.”44

The development of the Trinity River Vision could easily affect the park as well. Because the goal of the project is to increase recreational opportunities along the river’s banks and to open the entire downtown up to the river, once implemented, there might be more chances to promote Heritage Park’s presence as a place to enjoy the view and commemorate the founding of the city. The proposed “urban lake” will be situated at the river’s confluence below the plaza (Illus. 1.6), perhaps adding more visual stimulation and incentive for the potential pilgrim. Yet, first the plaza’s presence must be indicated on maps of the redevelopment project or included in the distributed updates on the project’s progress. Its absence from tourist materials (maps, brochures marketing “Attractions,” “Things To See,” etc.) that are widely distributed in a city where heritage and cultural tourism supports a substantial portion of its economy, is additionally unfortunate.

It seems likely, however, that the city excludes Heritage Plaza from these disseminated materials to avoid funding the park’s maintenance. Assistant parks director, Randle Harwood, said himself: “Park people don’t like fountains because of the maintenance – the maintenance budget gets blown by one kid with soap and we have to drain it.”45 Fort Worth planning director, Fernando Costa, claimed Johnson’s Water Gardens served the function of

44 Sloan, p. 86.
“water-filled oasis” and maintenance staff could not afford to upkeep both. It is astounding that the Water Gardens would be selected as the recipient of the city’s care. Though this space is fun and interactive and obviously quite well-funded, it says little about Fort Worth’s culture, geography or history. It is so completely different from the space designed by Lawrence Halprin and Associates that it is baffling that they are judged against one another in a battle for funding and maintenance. The Water Gardens and adjacent Convention Center were placed right on top of what was once “Hell’s Half Acre,” the city’s red-light district, with saloons, brothels, casinos, dance halls made available to cowboys passing through along the historic Chisholm Trail, which led to meat markets in the north. The redevelopment of this area was meant to erase this aspect of the city’s fabric and history. Though the city, perhaps justifiably, did not want to perpetuate its association with this seedy part of town, it is now trying to capitalize on its image as “Cowtown,” through such tourist attractions as the stockyards. By scraping Hell’s Half Acre, however, it erased a significant chapter of this history. Of course, the redevelopment was encouraged by Halprin himself in his 1970 plan, which complimented the progress of the Water Gardens and played a role in the then evolving image of the city from “Cowtown” to “Nowtown.”46

A motivating force behind the Trinity River Vision is the lack of downtown open space. And yet this evocative transition between urban fabric and natural resource, is actively neglected. The city is trying to develop a transit-oriented public square, Hyde Park, located on the site of the city’s 1870s public square, to celebrate the history of Fort Worth’s first public space. To connect this historically located park somehow with the park on the bluff, situated at a

46 To clarify, the city in the 1970s rejected its image as “Cowtown” in favor of a modern, “civilized” city, “Nowtown.” However, because, more recently, the city realized it could economically capitalize upon a caricatured version of its heritage, they have re-embraced their identity as “Cowtown.”
location with an even earlier historic significance, would enhance the city’s display of pride in its history, origins and development.

Due to the more than 800 acres of redevelopment projected for the next many years, the park’s viewshed will change quite dramatically and, if Radio Shack is an indication of how the process will evolve, the view will not overlook a place for which to feel pride, but, rather, shame (Illus. 1.9). Apparently Radio Shack, a substantial local employer, threatened to move out of the city if it did not allow them to develop their headquarters on the Trinity River. As a result, the low income Ripley Arnold housing development of two-story brick structures lined with some more than 100-year-old trees (Illus. 1.8), was demolished with little consideration for the people that were displaced or the site’s rich history. Of course, one cannot be so naïve to think that this form of blackmail necessarily left the city any other choice, since it could not afford to sacrifice the employment of hundreds of residents, but certainly more consideration should have been given the people and history being scraped off the land. If city officials and developers are not careful, the view from new construction on the bluffs will not overlook a rich, palimpsestial landscape, but this single point in time, which, so far, lacks any sense of quality. With $360 million of construction, and dollar signs in people’s eyes, the threat of oversight to the culturally rich plaza that has been surrendered to “undesirables,” a population that the city will certainly not want as a visible aspect of the middle-income-focused project, is a realistic concern. Randle Harwood even stated, “it may be there, it may not be there” when the redevelopment project reaches fruition. He continued by saying that for the time-being his “feeling is that we

48 In a January 7, 2005 conversation with Paula Briggs, engineering technician for the City of Fort Worth Parks and Community Services Department, she conveyed the department’s remorse for having somehow overlooked the presence and demolition of some of these prize trees.
would take pieces of it and keep it. From a preservation perspective, I know that’s not favorable, but from a park use – from our perspective – that’s the way park systems are. There’s very little we will ever preserve. They are dynamic and changing.\(^{50}\) Unfortunately, though the careful consideration of public safety and the perception of security is a necessity, taking down elements that define the sequential spaces would entirely destroy the design. The city will decide whether maintaining a unique sense of place or developing a generic, but safe, open area for lunch or recreation is most important, though most likely the former option will only be considered fleetingly.

None of the $360 million will, most likely, go into the revitalization of the plaza. This is not surprising, however, because currently there is no one, with any clout, to take any sort of responsibility for the site and there is little foresight that future development, if handled sensitively, might enhance the site’s potential.

**Integrity**

Though always considered most important in preservation planning, prioritizing integrity is more complicated when addressing public open spaces, which are meant to keep up with evolving user needs, as well as consist of materials that grow, wither and die.

The plant material in Heritage Park is mostly intact, particularly the most sculptural volumetric trees and shrubs that define the spaces. Some exceptions exist however, including the current absence of a single red oak (*Quercus rubra*), defining the lower “lawn.”\(^{51}\) Though its corner placement would have defined the space and protected it, its removal permits more light into the highly shaded space. Replacing it with a smaller specimen would have been the most

\(^{50}\) Ibid.

\(^{51}\) Labeled “lawn” on the site plan drawing that can be found in color in Kevin Sloan’s article in *Landscape Architecture*, p. 84 or in graphite in the flat files of the Halprin Archives.
successful compromise, but pruning upkeep would have been required and the city is clearly not equipped for any additional maintenance responsibilities. Interestingly, the layout and planting plans of 1977, indicate that a single weeping willow (*Salix babylonica*) was to be planted in the upper lawn area to the northeast of the live oaks, however, early photographs illustrated on *The Cultural Landscape Foundation* website reveal that, at least at the time these photographs were taken, no such tree had been planted (*Illus. 1.40*).\(^{52}\) Because weeping willows can reach over fifty feet, the decision not to plant it or to remove it if it was ultimately planted, was most likely appropriate. However, the tree would have given the open lawn area some more definition and its form would have even further enhanced the site’s variety and offered pleasant protection under its drooping canopy. Again, this is a city park and fantasizing about the romantic possibilities of the plant material is not practical since budgets are tight and straight-forward security limitations must constantly guide proposals. The St. Johnswort (*Hypericum calycinum*) and ballerina raphiolepsis, or pink lady (*Raphiolepis indica ‘Ballerina’*) that were originally planted in the “garden” are no longer maintained, though these flowering species would certainly have lent it a more garden-like ambience. With the sculptural yaupons on each side, however, the space remains special nonetheless (*Illus. 1.24*), and with the shade cast by the new garage and maturing trees, these flowering plants might not even survive today. Saucer magnolias (*Magnolia soulangiana*) were originally planted in front of the terminal grotto, once enclosing the intimate space within the grotto. The plants, however, either died or the space they enclosed was considered unsafe and they were pulled out.\(^{53}\) Finally, some cedar elms and various shrubs

\(^{52}\) Unfortunately these photographs are not dated, but can be found at: http://www.tclf.org/landslide/2002/halprin/heritage_history1.htm.

(Japanese star jasmine and common crapemyrtle) were thinned over the years along the edge that separates the plaza from the cars on the Paddock Viaduct.

To rehabilitate the site, extensive pruning, especially of the thick-canopy of the live oaks, would be necessary. The plantings in front of the main entrance were not part of the Halprin and Associates contract and, though nice specimens, should be removed to reveal the water wall and sign indicating the park’s presence. The turf throughout the site is in a poor condition and could use some reseeding. Dead brush should be cleaned out of the area between the “bridge” and the plaza. Otherwise, revitalizing the vegetation would only require some basic regular maintenance.

The construction drawings indicate there was an elaborate lighting scheme that is not in operation. Kevin Sloan claims the copper wiring for the system has been stolen.\(^5^4\) Of course, reinstating a lighting system would be costly, but would most likely encourage enhanced use, particularly since the goal of the Trinity River Vision is to offer increased recreational opportunities, in which people mainly participate before or after work when natural light is often low.

Another concern for all three case study sites is the complications presented by the pump system. Fort Worth park officials claim there is a leak in the system that cannot be located and that is why some pavers have been torn up and orange cones, caution tape and plywood are scattered in the area by the terminal grotto (Illus. 1.41). The repairs are most likely being conducted inexactly and should be addressed by appropriately trained personnel. The water can be turned on and is, apparently, at certain points during the year. Updating the system would be

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\(^{54}\) Sloan, p. 88.
most ideal, but costly, indicated by other Halprin fountains that have been recently receiving attention.\textsuperscript{55}

Much of the concrete is stained by the once constant flow of water, though such stains add a desirable patina to the site, making it appear unified with the ruins below and enhancing the fact that this is a historic site. Many of the paver tiles are loose, particularly near the entrance (\textit{Illus. 1.42}). Because this site has been largely neglected for at least a decade, however, the overall design has been altered very little and maintains a high degree of integrity.

**Summary of Recommendations**

Rehabilitation is the preservation intervention most appropriate for this site. Below is a summary of rehabilitation recommendations, as well as some suggestions for “activation.”

**General Recommendations**

- Most importantly, the city should create a crosswalk across the Paddock Viaduct exit ramp.
- Increasing public awareness of the site’s existence is another high priority.

Without substantial usership, no argument for future conservation of the physical

\textsuperscript{55} For example, restoration of the Water Garden within the East Plaza of the Washington State Capitol grounds would cost $1,609,000. Because most of the hardscape material is intact, much of this sum is allotted for revamping the pump system. Demolition and redesign, as originally planned, would cost $846,000 and, interestingly, complete reconstruction would be only a fraction more expensive than restoration at $1,703,000 (of course, this is not a favored option, since no historic fabric would be retained). Because the Water Garden is built over a subterranean garage, these figures are higher than they would be if the Heritage Park system was updated. In 1996, Portland completely upgraded the Ira Keller fountain at a cost of $1 million. This included the installation of a treatment system (not necessary in Fort Worth since no one will be swimming in the water features), replacement of all plumbing, electric and lighting systems as well as some of the concrete troughs (according to \textit{Water Garden: Lawrence Halprin and the East Capitol Campus}, a report by the Washington State Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation and the Washington State Arts Commission, October 2004, p. 13).
material or spatial relationships will be considered. Therefore, including it on
tourist maps and brochures, as well as installing directional signs nearby
indicating the site’s whereabouts, would be another simple step in increasing
awareness. According to Kevin Sloan, an employee at the city’s Visitors and
Convention Bureau said, “We don’t even tell anyone about it because it’s just a
place full of homeless people.”\(^{56}\) It is such attitudes that will perpetuate the site’s
anonymity and abandonment.

- Cooperative programs, such as a volunteer community cleanup, that include all
  stakeholders (homeless, local workers, new residents, etc.) could be facilitated by
  a local community outreach organization, providing an opportunity for interaction
  and reevaluating stereotypes.
- If Hyde Park is developed, the city should create an interpretive plan linking its
  historically located public places.

**Program Recommendations**

“Activation” of the site is also a necessity, to increase stakeholders and inspire public
interest in implementing preservation recommendations. The intricate model of the Trinity
River Vision on display at the Fort Worth Community Arts Center (*Illus. 1.7*), presents
Upper Heritage Park with its belvedere as a loading and unloading point for a cable car that
extends across the river to the TXU power plant (*Illus. 1.43*). Though this was only “thrown
around” as a “fun” idea, according to Randle Harwood, it would certainly increase usership,
awareness and interest, though, most likely, change the experience of the site as a meditative

\(^{56}\) Sloan, p. 88.
space. This is a unique, intriguing idea, however, unlike the formulaic “activation” recommendations consistently proposed by William H. Whyte “followers.”

- As a historical site that may be too conceptual for the general public, the city should consider inserting some non-intrusive interpretive signs, particularly on the belvedere, explaining what can be seen, where and the significance of each element within the viewshed, in order to inspire interest and understanding.

- Introducing a rotating exhibition of sculpture responding to or referencing local history might also enhance interest.

- To supplement such an exhibition or the insertion of interpretive signs, the city might hire a part-time a guard or docent to act as a “mayoral” figure within the space, providing a sense of security to the wary visitor and answering questions about the site’s design, geography, context and history.

- To appease traditionalists, the introduction of one removable picnic table to the open portion of each of the two “lawns” might encourage quiet occupation during lunchtime. Also a seat or bench on the bridge would offer the weary visitor an opportunity to rest while absorbing the powerful view.

- Also, since there is nowhere nearby to buy lunch, the presence of a vendor in the undefined space between the garage and the plaza (Illus. 1.39) might

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57 Project for Public Spaces, Inc. claims to perpetuate the teachings of William H. Whyte, though instead of emulating his valuable process of careful site examination in order to understand the individual intricacies of each place, the group has simply made a formula from some of his recommendations for specific places such as Bryant Park, including the development of a café and the introduction of movable furniture.

58 The idea of “mayors” in public spaces originated during John Lindsay’s New York City mayoral administration, which assigned such individuals to settle turf conflicts between groups in certain city parks (according to Nancy Lindsay’s “Drawing Socio-Economic Lines in Central Park: An Analysis of New York’s Cultural Clashes.” Landscape Architecture 67, n. 6, November 1977, p. 520). The idea was then perpetuated by Whyte in his studies of small urban spaces.
activate the site with lunchtime users (the vendor should not be visible from within the plaza).

- The city should sponsor cultural events and lectures within the space. The site and view would provide a powerful backdrop particularly for talks given by local historians, natural resource managers or design professionals.

Specific Recommendations

Conservation and rehabilitation of the physical material should also be included in a preservation plan.

- Pruning should be the number one priority for physical improvement of the site. The shade cast by the thickening canopy is making the spaces feel more enclosed, but also more intimidating to enter.

- Brush, weed and debris removal is another activity that is low cost and could involve volunteers.

- Some reseeding of the grass would make the space seem more inviting, since deterioration of physical infrastructure often intensifies one’s perception of threat and fewer people are likely to take interest in what has been neglected.

- Pavers that are loose need to be reinstalled appropriately.

- The trees in front of the main entrance should be removed to open views from the downtown to the water wall and HERITAGE PARK sign.

- By looking to active philanthropic sources, an update to the pump system should be carefully evaluated. Though the water can be turned on currently,
the supposed leak might have long-term detrimental effects if not addressed soon.

- Reinstalling the lighting system would also encourage more active use, the funding for which could come from similar philanthropic sources. In the interim, non-obtrusive light fixtures sensitive to the park’s design, experience and aesthetic might be added to the site to make it more welcoming and less intimidating.

Whether the site “fails” due to its highly conceptual nature, its isolation or general attitudes towards the homeless, its unique response to place and history makes it well-worth republicizing, reactivating, reconsidering and revamping.
Chapter Two: Skyline Park, Denver, CO

A consideration of Skyline Park presents a completely different and even more puzzling situation. Built during the same era as Heritage Park, as part of the movement counteracting widespread suburban sprawl and auto-focused retail, Skyline Park is centrally located within Denver’s downtown. This now demolished park, three blocks long by a half block wide, was constructed in the earliest phase of downtown Denver’s redevelopment program.

The idea for Skyline Park was conceived in the late 1960s when the Denver Urban Renewal Authority (DURA)\(^59\) devised a plan to address the city’s neglected core, a 113-acre area the agency called Skyline (Illus. 2.3). Typical of urban renewal efforts, once the federally-assisted Skyline Urban Renewal Project was approved by voters in 1967,\(^60\) “one of DURA’s first jobs was to raze deteriorated structures so the land could be made available to those interested in

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\(^{59}\) DURA consisted of a group of non-salaried mayoral appointees (the executive director received a small salary).

\(^{60}\) Voting yes must have been enticing considering information distributed about Skyline advertised the fact that the $40 million of urban renewal costs had “ALREADY BEEN PAID FOR!” (See “Vote for Skyline May 16” 1967 pamphlet, from the Files of Connie Wanke). The majority of funds were provided by the federal government, apparently due especially to the June 1965 Platte River flood, the worst flood in the area’s 100 year history, which affected much of the Skyline Renewal Area (according to Paul J. Foster with Barbara Gibson, Denver’s Skyline Park: A History, 2001, p. 6). The remainder was paid for in the form of credit for the construction of the $13 million Convention Center. As a result, no new taxes or bond issues were necessary.
As a result, historic resources were lost and Denver residents today reflect on this period with a strong sense of regret and recognizable embarrassment. Ironically, in an attempt to deny or hide the urban renewal chapter of their history, the city repeated their mistake, destroying a culturally significant resource that symbolized the story of an era.

What Lawrence Halprin and Associates had developed in the early 1970s was a destination for downtown visitors, workers and residents inspired by local resources, such as the red rock formations of the nearby foothills. Skyline Park was another choreographed processional space that could be experienced sequentially, but the intimate diversions discovered along the main path could also be enjoyed and appreciated in isolation. The linearity of the site allowed the designers to introduce the concept of a mountain stream into the urban environment. Though the park certainly had flaws, especially considering today’s standards of safety and accessibility, the overall design was unique, evoked the regional essence of Denver and provoked response. When the park’s demise was on the horizon, Halprin wrote a letter to Charles Birnbaum of the Cultural Landscape Foundation:

Skyline Park was an important open space design for its time. It remains an early example of how to bring nature into the city – not as a romantic visual image, but as a living presence. I designed the park as a quiet refuge but one which would also allow a special kind of participation in nature. Water was introduced as a primary element to be experienced in many different ways; for its sound, for its spray, as a fountain to walk in and through and enjoy experientially. Most importantly, I specifically designed Skyline Park to echo an aura that would express the fact that it was in Denver. I wanted it to be a unique symbol of Denver – no other place!62

A variety of factors led to the park’s demise. Those interested only in generating revenue and homogenizing the downtown populous, wishing to hide all reminders of any social

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61 See “Skyline / Denver” brochure, circa 1976, p. 8, a copy of which can be found in the Files of Connie Wanke.

problems that plague the city, list a number of unsubstantiated reasons why the park should have been demolished. Unfortunately, but not surprisingly, the input of these individuals powerfully dictated the decision-making process. Though determining the future of the park took years, the process was tainted by politics, biased in favor of capitalistic concerns, and the park became a battle for turf, resulting in an irresponsible use of dwindling city funds to implement a mediocre design that carefully follows the formula for developing “successful” middle-class spaces.

Halprin was actually consulted during the process of determining the park’s fate, but his input was ultimately ignored. Because the park was destroyed, the following pages will present the design and its original context, the evolution of that context and the park’s usership and, finally, explain why the park was ultimately demolished. The reader will then be guided through the convoluted process that dictated the park’s tragic fate. Most importantly, this chapter will end with what can be learned from this experience and how these lessons might be applied to saving such places as Heritage Plaza and Seattle Freeway Park.

**Park Development**

The urban design scheme for the entire Skyline area was initially established by the firm Baume, Polivnick and Hatami in the late 1960s, with Marvin Hatami as primary designer. The idea for the park’s narrow three-block configuration was first proposed by Mr. Hatami. In his plan, he developed a design scheme for the park, which was supposed to serve as the “focal point” of the Skyline renewal area.63 It included a “formal alignment of trees and a three-block-long reflecting pool [that] would follow the classical City Beautiful design traditions found in

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63 See the 1966 report issued by the Real Estate Research Corporation (RERC) who were hired by DURA to develop a Land Use and Marketability Study of the Skyline area in which the RERC stated “We believe it would be highly desirable to establish a park which would serve as a focal point of the area” and suggested the park be developed using the whole block in which the D & F Tower is situated. This is quoted by Paul Foster in his history of the park, p. 6.
many of Denver’s parks, especially along its parkways\textsuperscript{64} and would be constructed over three blocks of subterranean parking structures. Once the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) officially authorized the Skyline project in February 1968, Floyd Tanaka, of the local planning firm, Tanaka and Associates, joined Hatami to prepare an \textit{Urban Design and Development Study} (published in 1970) for the Skyline area.\textsuperscript{65} The study proposed a system of elevated pedestrian walkways and plazas and the park design evolved to include a “Towersquare,”\textsuperscript{66} a large above-grade plaza surrounding the Daniels & Fisher Tower, which is situated within the park’s middle block. The Hatami design was slightly adapted as part of this plan, but the formal layout was maintained. As expressed by Jim Creighton, the psychologist consulting the Halprin team, the park proposed by Hatami and Tanaka design would have served as only a transitional space that would have given visitors little reason to linger. He claimed: “My reaction to this design is that is merely a passageway to move people from one place to another. As Gertrude Stein once said: ‘There is no there there.’ My feeling is that the park should be a \textit{place} by itself, with an identity of its own.”\textsuperscript{67}

In 1970, DURA initiated the request for proposals process to select a firm to refine and implement the park’s design. Of the twenty-five firms invited, three were interviewed, each internationally acclaimed: a team made up of Hatami with Sasaki Dawson DeMay Associates,\textsuperscript{68} Lawrence Halprin and Associates and Eckbo Dean Austin Williams (EDAW, Inc.), with Denver architect Victor Hornbein. DURA selected the Halprin firm, indicating their interest in

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{64}Foster, p. 8.
\textsuperscript{65}Ibid., p. 11.
\textsuperscript{66}Many references to the proposed, but not-then-approved Towersquare space can be found within the office documents of the Halprin Archives. The proposal for this space can be found in flat file 014.II.A.255 and more notes in box 149, 014.I.A.4672. Later reference to “Tower Square” simply indicated the portion of the park at the tower’s base.
\textsuperscript{67}See document in Halprin Archives, box 149, 014.I.A.4660.
\textsuperscript{68}The original Hatami plan, as well as the Hatami-Tanaka plan, had retained the Sasaki firm as landscape consultants (see Foster, pp. 8-11).
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developing a unique scheme quite different than that proposed by the Hatami-Tanaka plan. The Halprin concept introduced forms inspired by the local natural environment into the downtown, since rapid development was forcing Denver to lose touch with its broader regional context of vast and dramatic mountain landscapes. In a talk delivered by Halprin in 1983 at the Denver Public Library he claimed: “Buildings in Denver don’t relate well. They all seem to be bumping into each other. Denver has lost its indigenous character and looks like everywhere else.”

At the selection meeting, DURA Executive Director, Robert (Bob) Cameron stated: “The park has special significance for DURA because it is the only visible and enduring part of Skyline being developed directly by DURA. All other projects are being designed and built by other public and private agencies.” The park was developed directly by DURA as the “heart,” “focal point” and symbol of the renewal area. Unlike most of the Skyline area, which was sold to private developers, this portion of land was retained by the Authority and developed as a public amenity to serve as an “oasis” from surrounding construction and the chaos of a burgeoning downtown.

**Existing and Anticipated Context**

Because Skyline Park was one of the first completed elements of the vast redevelopment project, the designers had to anticipate the contextual surroundings according to contracts being negotiated and the guidelines established by the Hatami-Tanaka report. The Halprin firm could only hope DURA would appropriately manage adjacent development and the

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69 In contrast, during the large-scale city development that occurred in the early 1900s, as the City Beautiful movement was making its vast imprint upon the Denver landscape, views to the mountains were retained and celebrated by maintaining the horizontality of the city. In fact, “downtown Denver in 1950 was still a horizontal town of mountain views before the eruption of skyscrapers between the 1950s and the 1980s” (from Tom Noel and Barbara Norgren, *Denver: The City Beautiful and its Architects, 1893-1941*, Denver: Historic Denver, Inc., 1987, p. 177).

70 Quoted in Tom Noel, “End of Skyline on the horizon?” *Rocky Mountain News*, August 4, 2001, p. 6E.

architects would demonstrate appropriate sensitivity to the pre-existing park. Unfortunately, many of the firm’s hopes and expectations went unfulfilled. One aspect of the Skyline project was to develop the system of second-story pedestrian walkways, “skyways,” to separate those on foot from the busy traffic below. This network was only partially realized, perhaps due to evolving urban theories opposing such segregation, but most likely due to DURA’s limited control over rapid private developments. However, in the letter from Bob Cameron to Halprin and Associates informing the firm that it had been included on the short list of organizations to be considered for the Skyline Park design contract, he claims:

An outstanding feature of [the Skyline urban design concept] is the separation of pedestrian and vehicular traffic by means of an elevated pedestrian plaza. This second level plaza will extend over a major portion of the project, with interconnecting pedestrian cross-overs between blocks. Centrally located on these blocks will be the ‘gem’ of the whole project, that is, the Skyline Park.72

Skyline Park was going to be one of the only parcels of open space that would be at street level, though the concept for a 16th Street pedestrian mall was part of the Hatami-Tanaka plan, but was not implemented until the early 1980s. Other open spaces were to be provided by private developers in the form of these second-story plazas, which were then to be interconnected by the skyways. Today, one can find only bits and pieces of this vision for an above-ground culture. As indicated by Halprin and Associates drawings, however, circulation schemes within and around the park were largely dictated by access to and from adjacent above-grade plazas and skyways, including a pedestrian bridge across Arapahoe (Illus. 2.5, 2.6, 2.7). In fact, when the Halprin firm insistently requested the city create a sidewalk along Arapahoe, which would have narrowed the street by one lane, DURA refused, hoping to limit pedestrians to the skyway

72 Letter dated March 11, 1970 found in the office documents of the Halprin Archives, box 159, 014.IA.4920.
system. Because these skyways were not realized, however, limited pedestrian access between the park and the street was used later to fuel the demolition argument.

Another condition established before Halprin’s involvement was the park boundaries. The linearity of the park echoes the narrow verticality of the Daniels & Fisher Tower, a graphic version of which was used as the logo for the Skyline project. The Tower was completed in 1911, during the time Denver was implementing recommendations published in Charles Mulford Robinson’s 1906 report, Proposed Plans for the Improvement of the City of Denver, which applied the City Beautiful ideology to civic Denver. During this period, planner George Kessler, hired by Mayor Robert W. Speer, began instituting a network of parks connected by parkways and boulevards, triggering the birth of Denver’s pride in its public open spaces. Built during this period by architects Frederick J. Sterner and George Williamson, the tower, which was inspired by the campanile in Piazza San Marco in Venice, was then the tallest building in Denver, and one of the tallest buildings in the nation, at approximately 330 feet, taller including the spire (Illus. 2.40 & 2.44). Due to its powerful visual impact and orientating presence, it immediately became a celebrated Denver monument and its height and design “served as a beacon to draw customers to the five-story department store at its base.” The adjoining main retail structure was demolished in the early 1970s under the direction of DURA, so only the

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73 The city finally agreed to narrow Arapahoe, in order to add a sidewalk, as part of the recent redesign process.
74 In Denver: The City Beautiful and its Architectes, 1893-1941 Noel and Norgren call Robinson the “national champion of the City Beautiful,” p. 12.
75 In fact, over thirty Denver parks and parkways are listed on the National Register, including Civic Center Park, City Park, Washington Park and Cheesman Park.
76 The Tower was the third tallest building in the country after New York’s Singer and Metropolitan Life Buildings and it remained Denver’s tallest building until 1953, when it was surpassed by the twenty-three story Mile High Center (now part of the United Bank Center) at 17th and Broadway (according to Noel and Norgren, p. 107).
77 Foster, p. 1.
The park is narrow and linear and its horizontality gracefully balances the verticality of the tower and gives it appropriate setbacks from the surrounding claustrophobic development.

The Halprin park was originally flanked by an additional historic structure, the Central Bank Building, which was another one of the few old buildings preserved during the 1960s and 1970s renewal process. The building, designed by Jacques Benedict in 1911, served as the visual anchor for one end of the park (Illus. 2.43). Notes in the Halprin archives indicate the firm’s desire to maintain a relationship with Denver’s historic resources, as well as the region’s indigenous natural formations and native inhabitants. In fact, in a May 6, 2002 letter to Connie Wanke, founder of the Friends of Skyline Park, Halprin claims:

I always felt that it was important to capture the regional character of areas where I was planning and designing. I wanted to bring an ‘experiential equivalent’ of the local quality and local materials into the city. I wanted to acknowledge important views and historic buildings and take advantage of memory and our innate sense of “rightness.”

In 1990, however, the Central Bank Building was demolished and became an at-grade asphalt parking lot, stripping the park of its southwest anchor (Illus. 2.44). The demolition of

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78 After the tower was named a Denver landmark in 1969, a renovation by Gensler and Associates used a different color brick as infill repair where the store once touched the tower to memorialize the demolished structure.

79 See notes such as those found in the Halprin Archives office documents, box 149, 014.I.A.4665: “The textures and materials of the whole park should be studied to retain original downtown and tower feeling (seen at Larimer Square)” and “Try to retain the original downtown feeling with using rough cut stone and bricks mainly. Texture of the paving concrete should not be too smooth and hard. Softer, rougher will be better solution. All materials should match the tower” (Halprin and Associates proposed using red sandstone, marble and granite, but these materials could not be accommodated by DURA budget. Mr. Balsley’s redesign, however, uses these materials, despite barely existent city funds). Also scattered throughout the notes files was information on the material culture of local indigenous tribes, including the Arapahoe, with particular emphasis on beadwork and weaving patterns. The firm’s original hope was to use colored brick pavers set in configurations reminiscent of these patterns (Illus. 2.8 & 2.9).

Unfortunately, funding restrictions limited such extravagances.

80 Friends of Skyline Park was citizens group “dedicated to the renewal of Skyline Park in a manner which respects and preserves the original purpose for which the park was dedicated, as well as the original design integrity created by Lawrence Halprin,” according to their “position paper” (Files of Connie Wanke).
this neo-classical “gem” ultimately resulted in the formation of the Downtown Denver Historic District. The completed park successfully knit together the old and the new, reflected by the presence of the tower and the adjacent Central Bank Building within a context largely consisting of new development. The park originally evoked a dialogue between the two major periods of the city’s growth: the City Beautiful movement and the urban renewal era.

DURA directed the design and construction of Skyline Park at an early stage of the 113-acre redevelopment project, in order to entice private investors to buy valuably situated property near this unique public amenity. Therefore, instead of the more typical landscape projects where the design must be conceived with sensitivity to the pre-existing architectural and cultural context, since most everything had been scraped clean off the landscape, the surrounding new architecture should have been designed with sensitivity to the conceived Skyline Park, the heart and symbol of the entire project. In fact, in response to the poorly managed development that was occurring in Denver at such a rapid pace, the Halprin firm requested they be granted design rights over the first stories of park-facing buildings, in order to control their appearance, ensure sound-protection and prevent over-abundant shade. Because this would have perhaps deterred developers restricted under too many guidelines, the firm’s request was declined. However, the Hatami-Tanaka report had established some design guidelines for parkside

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82 Notes written by Satoru Nishita indicate the desire to control building design surrounding the park. For example, in the May 21, 1970 “Questions for DURA,” Mr. Nishita states: “We would like to look forward to have chances to negociate [sic] with you and developer(s) on the matter of designing lower frontal area of parkside of buildings adjoining to the park site for establishing better relationships between park, buildings and plaza, and let space flow through to give a great feeling of real three dimensional space for the people” (see Halprin Archives, 014.I.A.6565). Stepped buildings that sloped back away from the park were proposed in a May 19, 1970 document found in box 150, 014.I.A.4677 in the Halprin Archives (Illus. 2.10). Also, in the May 21, 1970 “Questions for DURA” document, an “Acoustical” section includes drawings of how sound might bounce off vertical buildings versus stepped, set-back buildings (Illus. 2.11). Finally, in Lawrence Halprin and Associates’ Program presented to DURA on June 30, 1970, having this control is conceived as part of Option III (an “Advance Print” of this program can be found in the Halprin Archives, box 149, 014.I.A.4660).
development, including height restrictions and had recommended the first story include an arcaded space for pedestrians that would extend the width of the park, providing shade and shelter and enhancing the human scale. The Hatami-Tanaka report required all the buildings along the park’s northwest edge be “compatible in scale, height, bulk, and character with the civic scale and nature of Skyline Park.” However, when developers did not quickly buy land within Blocks 16 and 17, to entice interest, all restrictive guidelines were abandoned and the eventual resulting context was constructed with no sensitivity for the park. Instead, most pedestrian-scaled development in downtown Denver is concentrated along the 16th Street Mall. The Park Central Building on Block 18, however, designed by local architect George Hoover of William C. Muchow and Associates, was completed in 1973, the same year as this first portion of the park. Because the building was developed early and on a similar construction schedule as the corresponding portion of the park, the recommended first story arcade was implemented and the building creates a subdued modernist backdrop that does not detract from the impact of the park and the nearby D & F Tower. Because buildings were not erected on either of the two other blocks until after the park had been completed in 1976, Satoru Nishita’s early presentation drawings simply include anonymous arcaded buildings that fulfill the Hatami-Tanaka design criteria (Illus. 2.12, 2.13, 2.14).

DURA had also anticipated underground parking structures beneath all three blocks, imposing load limitations that dictated the Halprin firm’s use of berms and raised planters to

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83 Buildings bordering the park were to be no less than six stories and no more than ten to twelve stories, according to Foster, p. 17.
84 Quoted by Foster, p. 17, from Hatami and Tanaka’s Urban Design and Development Study, volume 2.
85 In the plans for the Skyline renewal area, the blocks were designated numbers. The three blocks of the park, include: Block 16 (between 17th and 18th Streets), Block 17 (between 16th and 17th Streets) and Block 18 (between 15th and 16th Streets). Unfortunately, the numbers do not correspond to the streets, easily causing confusion.
86 See flat files in Halprin Archives (014.II.A.255-256).
allow for the development of root systems of large trees. A parking facility was only ultimately developed under Block 18, however.

**Later Contextual Development**

The designers had to trust DURA would carefully manage development so the park’s context would emerge according to the Hatami-Tanaka plan and any details agreed upon by both DURA and Halprin. The Halprin firm anticipated cafés and retail situated beneath arcaded spaces lining the park, animating its edge. In 1978 construction of Energy Plaza, now Bank One, began within Block 16 (closest to 17th Street). Block 16 deviates most noticeably from the context Halprin and Associates expected would develop. The firm envisioned shops and a sidewalk café, as well as a grand staircase opposite the Block 16 fountain, leading up to a second-level plaza (*Illus. 2.16*). Except for a restaurant that was constructed mid-block, none of the anticipated retail spaces developed (*Illus. 2.38*). Instead, parking garage was erected closest to 18th Street, above which is a restricted private second-story plaza87 connected to one of the few existing skyways, extending across Lawrence Street.

The 16th Street Mall, designed by I.M. Pei and Partners, was completed in 1982. The idea for a pedestrian retail corridor located along 16th Street had been conceived early in the renewal planning process,88 but Arapahoe Street had always been the intended terminus, as indicated in the 1970 Hatami-Tanaka plan. Therefore, the park would have offered a final refreshing and “renewing” experience after a long day of walking and shopping.89 Instead, the

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87 A staircase up to the plaza blocked by chains and “No Trespassing” signs (*Illus. 2.39*).
88 According to Foster (p. 5), the first written proposal for the 16th Street Mall concept was printed in the January 1957 “Planning of the Central Area” document produced by the Denver Planning Office, the Denver Urban Renewal Commission (which evolved into the Authority in 1958) and Downtown Denver Incorporated.
89 The 1973 dedication plaque for Block 18 states: “This park was created as a place where people may pause a while to enjoy its beauty and to be themselves renewed.”
mall was extended into Lower Downtown Denver (LoDo), bypassing the park and terminating at the Market Street Station of the Regional Transportation District (RTD) (*Illus. 2.2*).

Finally, construction of the Tabor Center and Westin Hotel, which also front 16th Street, began in 1983 in the middle block (Block 17). Other than the restaurant that overlooks the park, the building relates most to the 16th Street Mall. Therefore, by the mid-1980s, development along the park was complete demonstrating little sensitivity or even acknowledgment of the public amenity at its base. John Temple, editor of the *Rocky Mountain News*, recently claimed:

> The park is forlorn. But the buildings around it are even worse. They’re grim. If you had the chance to build a house along a mountain stream, you’d think you’d treat it with respect. Might even put on a porch overlooking the rippling water. Well, I promise you respect isn’t in the vocabulary of most of the buildings along Skyline Park.*

**Park Design and Construction**

Designing Skyline Park was a collaborative affair. Quite obviously DURA played a strict role,* imposing controls on the Halprin firm dictated largely by the limited funds allotted for the project.* In addition to DURA’s involvement in the park’s design, sculptor Herb

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91 Galen McFadyen was DURA’s project manager for Skyline Park who acted “as intermediary between the Halprin design team, the park’s contractors and DURA” (according to *Denver Renewed: Denver Urban Renewal Authority, History of DURA 1958-1983*, Denver, The Denver Foundation, 1992, p. 339). According to the same source, McFadyen was extremely interested and involved in the park’s plantings.

92 To reiterate, though DURA and the Halprin firm were collaborating in an effort to achieve a common goal, the designers insisted upon the following items that were ultimately refused by DURA: narrowing Arapahoe Street by one lane to accommodate a sidewalk, generating funds for the use of native stone materials, such as red sandstone and Yule marble, and brick pavers in the patterns of the beadwork and weaving of local Native American cultures (*Illus. 2.8 & 2.9*) and granting the Halprin firm control over the development of park-facing façades. Also, Halprin strongly desired both 16th and 17th Streets be closed to vehicular traffic. However, despite extensive lobbying and varying schematic plans presented by the Halprin firm to the Authority, the streets remained open at all times and the park had to be linked using other, more conceptual means (*Illus. 2.17-2.20*).
Goldman consulted on the Block 18 “organic” fountain and psychologist, James L. Creighton was retained to “advise on the psychological and sociological implications of the program.”

The firm engaged a soil laboratory, various engineers and construction services, and notes in the archives indicate Jean Walton developed much of the planting plan. The Halprin design team listed in the June 30, 1970 program included Satoru Nishita, design principal, Junji Shirai, designer, Richard Vignolo, Byron McCulley and Dai Williams, ecologist.

As already indicated, Block 18 was built first (dedicated in October 1973) due to funding distribution and the fact that adjacent development of the Park Central Building was established simultaneously. Though the park was designed as a single composition in the early 1970s, plans for Blocks 16 and 17 were almost abandoned. According to the publication on the history of DURA,

> the decision to build the remaining two [blocks] was made in 1975 in spite of the fact that DURA policy called for the developers of Blocks 16 and 17 to purchase the entire block. However, the recession of 1974-75 continued, and no firm contracts had been signed for development on either block. [DURA project manager Galen] McFadyen had estimated that as much as $80,000 could be saved by moving ahead with the construction of the parks. And quite likely, the parks would become a lure to entice prime development.

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93 See documents about Herb Goldman’s involvement in box 159, 014.I.A.4920 of the Halprin Archives.
94 Quotation from June 30, 1970 Program (box 149, 014.I.A.4660). Also in this file, see James Creighton’s conclusive memo on “Who will use the [park], and what are their needs?” which he describes the predominant stakeholders (office workers, shoppers and residents) and how the park should accommodate them.
95 See box 149, 014.I.A.4658.
96 *Denver Renewed*, p. 340. According to the same source, Berglund-Cherne Construction Company of Denver built Block 18 and Western Empire Construction, Inc. of Lakewood, CO built Blocks 16 and 17. I note this because according to preservationists active in saving Skyline Park, Halprin praised the quality of work executed by the local construction companies and, according to Ann Komara, Professor of Landscape Architecture at University of Colorado at Denver, the demolition crew reported the high quality of construction was making their work more difficult, more costly and more time-consuming (as reported by Komara in her talk “Skyline Park (1973-2003)” presented at the VIIIth International DOCOMOMO conference *Import-Export: Postwar Modernism in an Expanding World, 1945-1975*, September 26-October 2, 2004).
Site Description

The designers composed a cohesive park, using materials and themes to link the spaces, an impressive feat considering the site’s challenging configuration. The park’s pinkish-red cast stone forms and sunken walkway, both inspired by Halprin’s tour of Denver’s Red Rock Mountain Park, as well as the brick paving, water elements and plantings linked the spaces formally and experientially. Each block featured a fountain “of different character, allowing for different types of human interaction.” The park’s long, narrow configuration inspired the introduction of a meandering stream into the dizziness of new construction, which was causing Denverites to lose sense of their regional ecology. The park became a stylized version of an arroyo, an erosive formation native to the southwest, including Colorado, resulting mainly from excessive rainfall. The reference to a mountain stream was particularly appropriate, because the park was also designed as a site for storm water retention, a priority after the destructive Platte River flood of 1965. Seven to ten-foot perimeter berms and an elaborate planting scheme were manipulated to control noise and pollution, and the white noise created by the movement of water through the park’s fountains additionally drowned out the sounds of construction and traffic.

97 Tom Noel, in his article “End of Skyline on the horizon?” indicates Halprin explained this source of inspiration at his 1983 talk at the Denver Public Library.
98 From “Denver Skyline Fountains” document, attributed to Simon Nicholson and dated November 13, 1970, found in the office files of the Halprin Archives (box 149, 014.I.A.4658). It is also noted in this document: “The basic purpose of all three fountains is primarily social: the social function can be described in terms of human involvement, (i.e., the specific kinds of human interactions and experiments that can take place in each of the fountain areas): These interactions include visual perception, listening to the noise of the water, playing with pools, cascades, and waterfalls, experimenting with splashing, floating, waves, reflection, bubbles, and many other phenomena, each and all of which combine to form what we call an aesthetic experience.” A chart of the ways people can interact with fountains, turned both on and off, is also attached to this document.
99 Frederick Law Olmsted used perimeter berms for a similar effect at Prospect Park and Central Park. I point this out to demonstrate that Halprin’s use of berms, bitterly attacked by those fighting for redesign, is not a dated concept from an isolated period in time, but was used by a designer whose work is being recognized and restored nationwide.
Block 18 (Illus. 2.21), which had previously been a surface parking-lot (Illus. 2.4),\textsuperscript{100} contained the source fountain. Developed primarily by Halprin, it was fabricated by applying gunite over a steel frame, a technique established by the consulting sculptor, Herb Goldman.\textsuperscript{101} The resulting “organic” form is reminiscent of tumbled rocks smoothed by water erosion, as well as packed earthen architecture of southwestern indigenous cultures (Illus. 2.22). Water was carefully scored, manipulated to run over, through and in the fountain and, originally, people were encouraged to climb and splash in it.\textsuperscript{102} Halprin and Associates devised a dramatic lighting scheme to attract visitors after dark. Light was partly cast from vertical concrete elements, which echoed the D & F bell tower (Illus. 2.40). This block was the least shaded of the three with ash and honey locusts planted along the edges to block out the sights and sounds of surrounding construction and downtown traffic. Flowering crabapples (\textit{Malus hopa} and \textit{Malus ‘Jay Darling’}) and a few Austrian pines (\textit{Pinus nigra}) added variety to the color, forms and textures of the space. Brick pavers extended centrally through the length of the block, but the site’s linearity was broken up by irregularities in the concrete retaining walls on either side of the central pathway and intimate spaces sculpted by battered-concrete walls (Illus. 2.23 & 2.24). The Park Central Building, with its varying elevations, complemented the irregularity of the park’s forms. The berms that accommodated the mature root systems of the honey locusts, pines and ash trees, served additionally as noise and wind protection, as did the trees themselves.\textsuperscript{103} The understory of this block was mainly turf and early photographs show visitors lounging on the grass, enjoying the fountain and open skies. The sun originally hit these wind-protected open

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{100} See USGS aerial photographs in the Halprin Archives, box 149, 014.I.A.4670.
\item \textsuperscript{101} See booklet of photographed examples of Herb Goldman’s work in box 150, 014.I.A.4682 of the Halprin Archives.
\item \textsuperscript{102} Just before demolition, however, signs plastered all over the structure warned people not to attempt any such interactive activities fundamental to the park experience (Illus. 2.47)
\item \textsuperscript{103} Harsh winds do blow through this area. Wind protection was considered a major factor in the park’s design as indicated by numerous documents in the Halprin Archives. Today, however, because of safety requirements and a less sensitive design, the wind blows forcefully through the park.
\end{itemize}
spaces and, according to documentation in the Halprin Archives, the firm suggested the trees be replaced every ten to twenty years to maintain this desired effect. Carved out of the sides of the canyon walls were bench-lined alcoves, which were additionally protective against the strong winds and gave visitors spaces to gather intimately or have some privacy without complete invisibility (Illus. 2.23 & 2.24).

In the publication on the history of DURA, the author claims “the park captures the essence of Colorado’s rugged beauty” and gives a poetic synopsis of this initial portion of the park that “reclines on the doorstep of the Park Central building:”

A deeply recessed walkway flows through the block like a maverick mountain stream, cutting ledges and outcroppings, steps and stones, on its rhythmically irregular course, now and then swirling into intimate crannies surrounded by clusters of shade-giving trees. The pathway leads from a massive, elongated, boulder-strewn fountain from which rushing water cascades over and into caverns of its craggy form.

**Block 17** was designed with an amphitheater space at the base of the tower for public events and programmatic activities. To balance the dominating presence of the tower, the fountain on this block was situated in the opposite corner and was constructed primarily of rectilinear vertical elements (Illus. 2.28). The fountain, which has been incorporated into the redesign, is reflective of the surrounding developing cityscape (Illus. 2.29 & 2.30). Its vertical blocks of varying heights and few random horizontal blocks and slabs that create bridges, arches and paths, invite a visitor to walk through, in, above and under the interplaying forms.

Numerous presentation drawings in the Halprin Archives demonstrate the kind of human

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104 See December 10, 1970 notes about “Meeting with Parks Dept” in Halprin Archives, box 149, 014.I.A.4673.
105 *Denver Renewed*, p. 338.
106 As had been suggested by the Halprin firm early on, a skating rink was even situated in this space in the winter of 2001-2002. This area served as the main stage for performances during events such as the city’s annual Shakespeare Festival.
interaction anticipated for the fountain (*Illus. 2.31 & 2.32*). The fountain had multiple associations, including references to rugged mountain rock outcroppings, and, most importantly, to the surrounding burgeoning cityscape and chaos of new development. Water poured forth from within the vertical elements and fell into a pool below the footbridges. Though this fountain still remains, it has been modified by the new park’s elevation of grade. Luckily, the burial of the fountain base is reversible if the city ever decides to rescind any of their most recently rushed decisions.

As described previously, Block 17’s 1980s Tabor Center development paid little attention to the park. Its restaurant, The Palm, tried to limit patron interaction with the park and its “questionable” users, by fencing off a portion of public space for private seating. The D & F Tower never became the headquarters for public service organizations, such as “Keep Colorado Beautiful,” an ecological center, Denver’s Chamber of Commerce and Visitor’s Bureau or a local radio station, as envisioned and campaigned for by the Halprin firm. Instead, the tower houses private offices.

The plantings were denser in this block than Block 18, with more deciduous trees, such as Norway and Amur maples (*Acer platanoides* ‘Emerald Green’ and *Acer Ginnala* respectively) and red oaks, concentrated along the block’s northern length. The visitor moved

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107 According to a 1999 article by Joanne Ditmer, “The Palm and Palomino pay very little for their dining areas in the park space. In 1996 The Palm paid $3,500 a year; with an annual increase it's now $3,850. Palomino paid $10,000 in ’98, $10,500 in ’99 and $11,000 due in January, 2000. But those figures are misleading. If Palomino plants flowers it gets a $ 2,500 credit; if it hosts a non-profit event it gets a $750 credit, up to a credit ceiling of $10,000” (“Denver pursues mediocrity,” *The Denver Post*, August 8, 1999, p. I-02). The city should have been demanding much more if it was going to allow the privatization of portions of the park. The money could have been used for much-needed maintenance.

108 See June 1970 program, p. 7 (Halprin Archives, box 149, 014.I.A.4660).

109 Perhaps in anticipation of noise and unsightliness due to future construction projects, since neither Block 17 nor Block 16 were developed yet, the Norway maples planted along the northwestern edge were additions to the tallest portion of the canopy.
from the open amphitheater at the tower’s base, through a narrow gully and into the basin that contained the craggy fountain and offered open views of the tower overhead (Illus. 2.1).

**Block 16** contained the most integrated fountain, a stepped design that would have offset the grand stairway up to the second-story plaza anticipated for the abutting development. Drawings in the Halprin Archives demonstrate the firm’s careful scoring of water’s movement over the angular design to evoke a cascading mountain waterfall (Illus. 2.37). Its stepped design was intended to invite visitors to climb the falls. In the November 1970 document entitled “Denver’s Skyline Fountains” Simon Nicholson states: “The final fountain is situated at a 6’0” change in ground level, and the fountain for this site will use this natural feature by creating downhill cascades of water.”\(^{111}\) This indicates that movement from the source fountain in Block 18 to the cascades of Block 16 was responsive to the actual park topography.

The plantings are the most dense and the most varied in Block 16.\(^{112}\) An understory shrub layer was introduced near the entrance from 17th Street, consisting of red twig dogwood (*Cornus stolonifera coloradensis*) and rock cotoneaster (*Cotoneaster horizontalis*). Colorado blue spruce (*Picea concolor glanca*) was inserted as a mid-height tree, enhancing the richness of the “forest” canopy.

The buildings lining Block 16 were the most troubling. As already indicated, construction of Energy Plaza began in 1978 without any sensitivity to the park, since recommendations in the Hatami-Tanaka plan had long-since been abandoned. Adjacent to the office tower and attached by a second-level walkway is a single-story structure that once housed a popular restaurant called Zenith. However, due mainly to the deterioration of the park, the

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\(^{112}\) Approximately 130 trees were planted in this block, which is almost three times as many planted in Block 18.
space has been vacant for years. Adjoined by another second-story walkway is the parking
garage that fronts this block of the park for one third of its length (Illus. 2.38). To make matters
worse, stairs up to the lushly planted second-story plaza over the garage are chained off with
signs stating “No Trespassing – Private Property” (Illus. 2.39). If this plaza had been developed
appropriately, permitting public access, visitors peering over this portion of the park, would have
served as proper “eyes upon the park.” Instead, like Heritage Park, an opportunity was wasted to
satisfy the need to have a place to store one’s car.

Though it is necessary to understand the unique characteristics of each block, the park
must be considered as a whole. The idea of a mountain stream cutting a canyon through the city,
which was rising higher and higher, linked the spaces into one conceptual experience.
Movement was carefully scored and guided by views, paths and materials, though pleasant
diversions along the way invited the visitor to linger. Brick ran through the length of the park
and the reddish concrete forms gave the space its dynamic three-dimensionality. The concrete
was treated with a variety of finishes and textures and its aggregate matched the red brick
paving. The planting transitioned from a basic scheme to a more complex and denser plan,
simply building on the plant palette of the previous block. Each block offered a distinct fountain,
which invited the most active participation and interaction of all the elements in the park. Water
was carefully scored through the fountains, as it reacted to the variety of forms and change in
topography. In only 3.2 segmented and oddly configured acres, a stimulating, varied landscape
offered a rich sensory, aesthetic, emotional and psychological experience.
Recent Challenges to Halprin and DURA’s Vision

Attitudes towards cities have changed, largely for the better, since the urban renewal era. Despite Halprin’s interest in creating links with the commercial environment, the park was ultimately developed isolated from retail, since then-contemporary trends imposed strict functional segregation on the city fabric. However, with the growing consumerism of today’s culture and the resulting abandonment of environments that do not directly generate revenue, Denver politicians and business-owners were able to manipulate the process so the park was ultimately demolished. The richness of the experience of Skyline Park is not matched by the current redesign which was developed for today’s “emphasis on commercialism.”

Though the park was a symbol reflective of its time, its significance should have increased potency today, since as retail takes over the city, little space remains simply for passive recreation.

Skyline Park is situated between Civic Center Park to the south, developed in the early 1900s, and Commons Park, which is predominantly greenspace, to the north, completed in 2001. Skyline Park is the only public space along the entire length of the 16th Street Mall. Therefore, its presence between Civic Center Park and Commons Park at either end of 16th Street, establishes a perfect timeline along this axis. Most of Denver’s other parks, such as City Park, Cheesman Park and Washington Park, are more classically arranged and are primarily softscaped. The Denver Parks Department even claimed that they did not know how to maintain Skyline Park, since it was so unlike other parks within their system. Since Skyline Park was

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113 In his essay published in Preserving Modern Landscape Architecture: Making Postwar Landscapes Visible (Charles Birnbaum with Jane Brown Gillette and Nancy Slade, eds., Washington, D.C., Spacemaker Press, 2004), Lawrence Halprin discusses the evolving attitudes of city development, claiming “Cities, streets, plazas, and parks, which were designed in revolutionary ways, are now under attack for not solving the requirements of modern downtowns with their emphasis on commercialism” (p. 41).

114 Commons Park, designed by the local firm Civitas, though well-received, has been accused of being a “yard for pricey condos in the reclaimed Central Platte Valley” (Voelz Chandler, Landscape Architecture, p. 85). Therefore it does not serve the same mixed downtown population as Civic Center Park and Skyline Park.
neither a greensward nor a plaza surrounded by retail, the city considered it alien, rather than intriguingly unique, partially because it was also associated with a period of Denver’s history that many wished to forget. Commenting on the public’s general fear and distaste of the unfamiliar, Denver councilwoman Susan Barnes-Gelt stated in The New York Times: “The park was never loved... Denverites do not warm up to modernism… We don't really get the built environment, and we for sure don't get it if it's not red brick and at least 75 years old. Against that, Halprin's esthetic was not respected or frankly, enjoyed.”115 This statement can be supported by examples beyond just the ultimate demolition of Skyline Park. I.M Pei’s 1950s Zeckendorf Plaza, a skating rink and structure that had glass walls supporting a hyperbolic paraboloid or “floating roof,”116 was demolished to make room for a portion of the Adams Mark Hotel despite the popularity and uniqueness of the original structure. Most recently, Currigan Exhibition Hall, which, upon completion in 1969, won a number of prestigious awards for its design and engineering, was replaced by the latest expansion of the Colorado Convention Center. The city’s emphasis on consumerism and blind-sighted economic development has led Denver to make some of the same mistakes the city made during the urban renewal process.

A series of factors within the larger city fabric began affecting the park’s fulfillment of DURA’s and the Halprin firm’s collaborative vision, some of which have been previously discussed. Later development was not constructed with any sensitivity to the park which was supposed to represent the heart and focal point of the downtown, isolating it and exaggerating the canyon effect to the point that the atmosphere began to feel disquieting. Though unsettling, the resulting effect was also powerfully sublime, as one walked within the stream-cut canyon whose walls loomed far above the treetops. But, like Olmsted’s Ramble in Central Park, evoking the

116 Guide to Denver Architecture, p. 381
sublime often presents a tricky security issue within urban public parks. The demolition of the Central Bank Building on 15th Street and its replacement with a surface parking lot, affected the park’s sightlines, circulation and enclosure and the diversity of the park’s original context (Illus. 2.43 & 2.44).

The development of the 16th Street Mall had the most detrimental effect on the park’s evolution (Illus. 2.45). Though the mall had been anticipated since the late 1940s, Arapahoe Street was the expected terminus, as already indicated. In the Hatami-Tanaka 1970 plan it extended from Broadway to Arapahoe, linking Civic Center to the heart of the downtown with Civic Center Park on one end and Skyline Park on the other. Instead, the adaptive rehabilitation of the historic 1400 block of Larimer Street into the retail-oriented Larimer Square, incited visions of extending the 16th Street retail corridor even further into historic Lower Downtown. Therefore, the mall, built by the Regional Transportation District (RTD) with funds from the U.S. Department of Transportation, was extended to Market Street Station, just beyond Larimer Square. In years since, it has been extended even further into the Central Platte Valley.

Though the revenue-generating mall is a success in its aesthetic appeal, pristinely maintained by the Downtown Denver Business Improvement District (BID), it bypasses the park with little indication or recognition of its presence and purpose. Therefore, the park has been somewhat eclipsed by the mall, with its open retail and easy access urbanism. The park’s

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117 Larimer Square was designated the city’s first historic district in 1971 after it was spared demolition as part of the Skyline Urban Renewal area. It contains over twenty structures built between 1870 and 1890 and has been adapted into an area of upscale retail and dining.
118 According to Foster, p. 28.
119 The BID is a management organization privately-funded by local property owners, whose “purple-uniformed crew removes trash, sweeps the sidewalk and transitway, removes graffiti, installs banners and holiday decorations and keeps the Mall clean, safe and attractive seven days a week” (see the Downtown Denver Improvement District’s website on the 16th Street Mall, [http://www.downtowndenver.com/bid/16thstreetmall.htm](http://www.downtowndenver.com/bid/16thstreetmall.htm)). However, it was never directed or funded to stray off the mall and contribute to the upkeep of the intersecting park, until the park’s redesign. Also, the Downtown Ambassador Program for seasonal employees to “guide visitors and report wrongdoing” was initiated in the summer of 2004, the first summer the redesign opened (according to Kris Hudson in “Renovated Skyline Park opens to plaudits,” [The Denver Post](http://www.denverpost.com), July 25, 2004).
presence, however, added an element of diversity and richness into the now endless commercial environment of downtown Denver.

**Usership**

Skyline Park was well-used and loved through the end of the 1970s, as indicated by written accounts and photographs. Stakeholders were identified and written into the Halprin firm’s June 1970 program for the park. According to the program, office workers needed a place for coffee breaks and lunchtimes; shoppers needed the park to provide a “visual relief” and “mental refreshment,” while women shoppers needed a “place their children will enjoy, yet require minimum supervision and be free from street traffic,” and “spaces which lend themselves to play and imagination.” Residents particularly needed “night activities” and finally, conventioneers\textsuperscript{120} needed both night activities and a park that would “serve as a memorable visual experience so that the conventioneer remembers Denver as an attractive and interesting place.”\textsuperscript{121} Another note in the Halprin Archives indicates that “the park has to accommodate all kinds of requirements of people such as a place to sit, rest, talk, have lunch, gather, sing, dance, see, play, take a nap, enjoy, skate.”\textsuperscript{122}

After the mall’s development, and the subsequent building of the Tabor Center in Block 17, which created an unpleasant backdrop for park visitors during the years of its construction, usership by the intended stakeholders declined. The economic downturn fueled by the oil crisis plunged Denver into a recession in the second half of the 1980s and maintenance of the park started to drop off. A combination of the poor economy and ensuing unemployment,

\textsuperscript{120} The Skyline renewal project was made possible largely by the development of the Convention Center.
\textsuperscript{121} See Halprin firm’s June 30, 1970 program (Halprin Archives box 149, 014.I.A.4660), p. 8.
\textsuperscript{122} Halprin Archives, box 149, 014.I.A.4672. “Skate” indicates the intention to erect a seasonal skating rink within the park.
and the lack of funds for social services and proper maintenance resulted in a severe spatial appropriation of the park by homeless youth. The situation was eventually so extreme that the park had become a major outreach location for youth social service organizations such as Urban Peak and StandUp for Kids, who had distributed clothes, food, bleach kits to sterilize needles and medical treatment. Though social service agencies fought for the preservation of the park since it had enabled workers to reach a large number of this troubled population, to preserve it for this purpose is too narrow a focus for a public park. The restaurants, the Palm and the Palomino, both of which had negotiated a way to fence off portions of this public space for private dining, complained about the presence of such youth and their interaction with clientele. As stated by Denver Post journalist, Carol Kreck, “In the war between street kids and the Downtown Denver Partnership, Skyline Park is ground zero. On the 16th Street Mall at Arapahoe, Palomino’s flower-bedecked patio seats businesspeople and well-dressed ladies who lunch. On the other side of the patio’s fence are kids who sometimes panhandle, use drugs and relieve themselves in the cozy sunken park.”¹²³ The winner of this “war” is not difficult to guess. Following a common national trend, the park was redesigned to exclude these youth and serve the kind of public that frequent the restaurants along its length. Fortunately, this blatant naïveté that the design was to blame for a severe social problem, which was only addressed by under-funded public agencies, sparked an aggressive debate, much of which was publicized in the press as these extracts suggest:

Denver should rehabilitate this distinctive park, whose design was inspired by local landscapes and materials, not sacrifice it for a generic, sanitized setting for palmy "power" lunches. Upscale patrons at Palomino and the Palm might find it instructive to watch secretaries, college students, street

¹²³ Carol Kreck, “Downtown truce at Skyline Park; businesses funding resource center to ease problems with street youths.” Denver Post, June 30, 2002. The Downtown Denver Partnership (DDP) represents local businesses, including the restaurant owners, and was the power behind the demolition debate.
people and unruly youths who fancy Skyline Park and use it for brown bag dining… Street people without money to spend need their space, too.  

Adhering to the dominant trend in park design of the past 15 years, the new plan bears the stamp of clear sightlines and a ground plane devised to prevent homeless from sleeping, teenagers from congregating, and anyone from having privacy. A major addition is commerce in the form of kiosks at the entrances selling coffee, sandwiches, and various knickknacks, based on the idea that this mercantile activity will attract people to the park. But such defensive design has severe limitation, ‘I think it is important to ask yourself what you’re designing a landscape for,’ says Halprin. ‘Do you design based on fear? So that drug dealers can’t come? Teenagers? I think it’s important to recognize that teenagers and drug dealers are citizens. We should have a generalized approach and treat [public parks like Skyline] as a place for everybody.’

Redesigning Skyline won’t change its social makeup, because the park’s design has nothing to do with why certain people – in this case, teenagers – are there. Here’s an analogy: Think about the Civic Center and some of the people who congregate in that park. Many are a lot more menacing than the Skyline kids. In fact, some of the kids at Skyline are probably there because they’re afraid of the Civic Center crowd. Would anyone argue that the neo-classical style of Civic Center Park is what attracts such a threatening group? I don’t think so.

There is some truth to the “analogy” presented in the final quotation by Michael Paglia, who wrote adamantly in favor of saving the park throughout the acrimonious process. Civic Center Park is a gathering site of older homeless people and other older “undesirables.” The youth are probably not welcome there due to this different form of spatial appropriation. The population at Civic Center Park should have clarified the obvious notion that design does not cause social problems, but city officials refused to consider such obvious notions. Interestingly,

125 Paul Bennett, “Lost in Translation: Modernist landscapes of the 1960s and ‘70s reflect the idealism of the times. Now they are being replaced with designs for a less hopeful age” *Preservation* 56, n. 3, May/June 2003, p. 38.
as indicated by surveys conducted by the Downtown Denver Partnership (DDP) in June 2002, park users seemed more diverse than most of the politicians and business-types proclaim. Seventy-one percent of the “park user” respondents were between the ages twenty-five and fifty-five, with only nineteen percent below twenty-five. Of those park users, eating lunch, walking in and through the park, relaxing and sitting and visiting with friends, were their predominant activities. As an interesting aside, of those surveyed, eighty-eight percent of the park users felt safe in the park, sixty-nine percent of the passersby felt safe there and only twenty-nine percent of downtown residents and twenty-six percent of downtown employees felt safe there. Less than half of the residents and employees ever entered the park, however, demonstrating the power of perception and the blatant ignorance and prejudice of these privileged respondents.\textsuperscript{127}

**Programming**

Also indicated in the June 1970 program, Halprin’s firm was well-aware that the park would only succeed if the proper programming was established for its location and function.\textsuperscript{128} Since the mid-1980s, Denver public schools have organized an award-winning kindergarten through twelfth-grade Shakespeare Festival that is staged almost entirely in Skyline Park.\textsuperscript{129} Opening ceremonies and ongoing performances occurred within the Olde Globe Theatre, situated in the amphitheater at the base of the D & F Tower. If more events for children had been

\textsuperscript{127} The survey was conducted from June 11 to June 25, 2002 at 11-2 pm and 4-6 pm, by distributing forms that were collected anonymously.

\textsuperscript{128} See p. 9 of program: “This analysis also clearly demonstrates that the physical facilities of the park will not themselves provide all the needed activity: clearly a continuing program of coordinated activities will need to be established – setting up open air musical concerts, plays, fountain activities, light/sound experimental demonstrations, open air markets, arts and crafts shows, speeches, civic events – to maintain the human excitement of the park” (Halprin Archives, box 149, 014.I.A.4660).

\textsuperscript{129} The festival has been honored by the U.S. Department of Education, National Diffusion Network and the Folger Library, when it was named a demonstration site for the teaching of Shakespeare in 1993-1995. In 1993, the festival received an Arts in the Marketplace Award and in 1994 the Mayor’s Award for Excellence in the Arts. In 2002 it was awarded for distinguished service by the Alliance for Colorado Theater.
established in this environment which appealed to one’s playful nature, the park could have been reclaimed as a space for more than just the “undesirables.” The park was also historically a site for the city’s international “Buskerfest,” a celebratory festival for professional street performers. For a city that strongly promotes culture and the arts, the success of the space to host such affairs should have been a lesson upon which to capitalize.

**Maintenance**

The increase of “undesirable” population caused a decreased interest in maintaining the site. Yet, more importantly, the converse is true: when the site was not maintained, it became less inviting to people who had other places to go, surrendering it to populations that did not. Because of its unique design, parks personnel were not knowledgeable about its maintenance needs and the city made no attempt to provide proper training. Though a maintenance plan should have been established originally, developing one later with the input of the original designers, would have lengthened the park’s lifespan. The trees were never replaced, nor even properly pruned, creating a thick impenetrable canopy. Much of the understory layer was shaded out as a result and the shrubs, groundcovers and sod were replaced with bare dirt, then simple mulch chips. Ironically, though grass no longer existed on the site, “Keep off Grass” signs were installed in the areas covered in mulch (*Illus. 2.46*). Restrictive signs were even pinned to the fountains to prevent climbing and other “undesirable” activities (*Illus. 2.47*). In fact, “the park [was] filled with so many ‘NO’ signs it might be just the place to put up those Ten Commandments that militant Christians keep trying to erect in public places.”  

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130 From Noel, “End of Skyline on the horizon?”
scheme was allowed to deteriorate and the concrete cracked and spalled (Illus. 2.49 & 2.50).\textsuperscript{131} Most importantly, the water was often turned off. The Palomino complained that the Block 18 fountain, the design in which Halprin was most directly involved, caused unpleasant vibrations inside the restaurant. The fountain was built as part of the parking structure beneath and apparently its repair would have been costly.\textsuperscript{132} This, therefore, gave the city reason to demolish the fountain during the redesign process. The fountains, which were designed to have purpose and presence even when the water was not operating,\textsuperscript{133} were often shut off during drought conditions despite their use of recycled water. Ironically, the redesign by Thomas Balsley includes large swaths of grass that require constant watering, a contrast to the largely xeriscaped Halprin plan.

**Determining the Park’s Fate**

The decision to redesign the park ultimately came down to the alignment of politicians with local businesses in the drive to privatize and commercialize the downtown and drive out or scatter any portions of the public that do not conform to middle-class expectations. Why business-owners were given the power to make design decisions is outrageous, but preservation in Denver seems to have always been dictated by economics, rather than an interest in culture and diversity, as demonstrated by the demolition of Pei’s Zeckendorf Plaza, replaced by the Adam’s Mark Hotel, and the reuse of Larimer Square as an upscale retail center.

\textsuperscript{131} The coarse aggregate concrete was victim to Denver’s extreme number of annual freeze-thaw cycles. Though DURA refused to fund Halprin’s desire to use native stone, they would have much better withstood these climatic factors.

\textsuperscript{132} Though, as I will discuss soon, the projected cost of preservation and rehabilitation of the entire park was much less than its redesign.

\textsuperscript{133} See “Denver Skyline Fountains” in the Halprin Archives (box 149, 014.I.A.4658).
The deteriorated state of Skyline Park became increasingly more conspicuous, and its future became the issue of debate beginning in the mid-1990s. The local firm, Design Workshop, held a charette for Denver’s University of Colorado landscape architecture students to address the issues at Skyline. Expanding on the ideas presented during the charette, an *Inventory and Assessment Report* was developed, in which park problems were identified and corresponding “improvements” were recommended. Little was said about the park’s unique design and its historical significance. Subsequently, Design Workshop was commissioned by Denver’s Parks and Recreation Department to prepare the *Skyline Park Master Plan*, which was released in 1997 (*Illus. 2.51*). This plan recommended the complete demolition of the existing park and the installation of grass lawns and volleyball and basketball courts. Fortunately, this plan was widely opposed. Unfortunately, however, because the initial report and Master Plan only emphasized Skyline Park’s problems and none of its strengths, interested Denverites tended “to conclude that the park [was] a compendium of problems.” Officials and business-owners were able to latch on to these problems and perpetuate the perception that the park was a failure. These powerful individuals had already decided the park’s ultimate destiny, but, in a public relations attempt, they made the public feel as if they had a voice in the process. Though many people caught on quickly, they were ultimately unable to save the park.

In 1999, Urban Strategies/Greenberg Consultants of Toronto, Canada was commissioned jointly by the city and the Downtown Denver Partnership to develop another design and programming study, which was completed in 2001 (*Illus. 2.52*). This overly programmed plan

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135 Ibid., p. 46.
called for “flexible and simple spaces” to accommodate such events as “chili cook-offs” and “petting zoos”\textsuperscript{136} and it assigned the park the slogan “Experience Denver.” Again, this scheme was rejected, but did ultimately lead to a request for applications process in 2002, directed by the city and DDP, to select a designer for the new Skyline.

Five design teams were chosen by the city and DDP to participate in Phase II of the selection process. In their proposal documents, Ken Kay Associates claimed Skyline Park was “a blemish on a downtown that is otherwise blossoming,” claiming “Skyline Park has retarded progress on the streets and private spaces it touches.” Hargreaves Associates called for complete demolition and redesign and claimed that the result of any adaptive reuse and any form of preservation “would always beg the question of ‘was the design saved or butchered?’” EDAW, Inc. was interested in involving Halprin in the “preserving,” “enhancing” and “adaptation” process. Thomas Balsley Associates chose to remain vague and proposed a public process approach that would explore the preservation, adaptation and redesign options. Finally, a team consisting of Denver’s DHM (Denten, Harper and Marshall) and CTLK of San Francisco, which was founded by Don Carter, an associate in the Halprin firm for many years,\textsuperscript{137} submitted a proposal that included a commitment from Halprin to assist in the design process.\textsuperscript{138} DDP chose Thomas Balsley Associates, deliberately passing up an opportunity to use a local firm that encouraged input from the original designer. According to a local law firm, the park did not have a viable claim under the Visual Artists Rights Act of 1990 (VARA), nor other relevant provisions of the copyright act.\textsuperscript{139} However, including the original designer in the process of

\textsuperscript{136} Mary Voelz Chandler, “High plains burial,” \textit{Landscape Architecture} 94, n. 11, November 2004, p. 87.
\textsuperscript{137} Dave Carpenter of DHM and Lisa Leeming of CTLK were to be lead designers.
\textsuperscript{138} Application proposals from the Files of Connie Wanke.
\textsuperscript{139} See April 15, 2003 letter from Thomas J. Overton, of The Overton Law Firm, to Connie Wanke (from the Files of Connie Wanke).
updating the site, would have set an ethical precedent for the future of landscapes created by still-living designers.

Because the public had largely been excluded from the decision-making process up to that point, the University of Colorado at Denver’s Department of Landscape Architecture hosted a symposium originally scheduled in 2001, but rescheduled upon protest from city officials to May 21, 2002, this time including involvement from city officials, such as Councilwoman Elbra Wedgeworth.\textsuperscript{140} In April 2001, meanwhile, the DDP released a statement that Halprin endorsed complete redesign of the park. Feeling misrepresented, Halprin subsequently claimed that such rumors were “a lot of bullshit, and you can put that in the paper.”\textsuperscript{141} Heated response to the process thus far led to the establishment of the Design Advisory Committee. The eighteen members of this committee included Thomas Balsley and members of the business, preservation, design and political communities. The committee met monthly from March through December of 2002 and its goal was to reach consensus about the future of Skyline Park. The committee developed three schemes: Scheme A involved preservation by rehabilitation, called the “Retro-fit Plan;” Scheme B, which was the first to be rejected, but ironically most closely reflects what was ultimately implemented, involved a redesign incorporating fragments from the original park and Scheme C involved complete redesign. The DDP promised to contribute $3 million to the park, though only if Scheme C was chosen. Committee co-chairs Elbra Wedgeworth, councilwoman for District Eight, and parks manager James Mejia, both puppets of the DDP, ultimately took control of the “public” process and presented a combination of Scheme B and C to the Park and Recreation Advisory Board of Denver, by whom it was quickly approved. The city wasted no

\textsuperscript{140} Ms. Wedgeworth is the councilwoman for District Eight which includes Skyline Park.

time and bulldozers were onsite by May of 2003. Actually, officials had hoped to start
demolition even earlier, but time was granted for documentation of the original park.

The quick decision to demolish the park was made even after May of 2002 when
enlightened members of the committee were able to convince the city to send four members,
including Balsley, to meet with Halprin to discuss the possible redesign of the park. Halprin,
with his office manager Dee Mullen, structured an RSVP-formatted day to come up with a plan
based on a “creative consensus.” According to Ann Mullins, “Halprin described his experience
in the design and construction of Skyline Park as one of his more gratifying and fun projects.
Fun because the city residents were so supportive and enthusiastic about the project and
gratifying because the quality of construction was so exceptional.” The list of modifications
the group established during the day included adding a sidewalk along Arapahoe, preserving the
fountains, while improving the mechanical and electrical systems as appropriate, re-establishing
a pedestrian passage along the northern length of the park, making berm cuts to increase access
from the new sidewalk, thinning the tree canopy and raising the sunken plaza below the tower
and replacing it with a turf lawn. When the plan was virtually ignored, Halprin reacted strongly:
“This group came out and we had a very nice, very productive workshop. I thought that after 30
years there should be some changes [to Skyline Park]. We discussed how to modify the design
and agreed upon a scheme that to my view didn’t compromise the aesthetics, but that addressed
new needs. Everybody left. And then, the next thing I know, bulldozers are knocking the whole
thing over.”

142 The three other committee members were: Ann Mullins, ASLA, parks director and committee co-chair
James Mejia and local architect, David Tryba.
143 Ann Mullins, “Skyline Park: Public/Private Partnerships Aim to Preserve Modern Landscape,” Vineyard
5, n. 2, Summer 2003, p. 10.
144 Bennett, p. 36.
Using money granted from the Colorado State Historic Fund, a funding source for preservation of revenue generated by gaming in the state, photographs, drawings, a plant survey, concrete rubbings and a video have been compiled for the Historic American Landscape Survey (HALS), to be housed in the Library of Congress.

Preserving the concept that these spaces serve public needs is the most urgent priority. One must understand this before attempting to address the physical material, so as not to forget that these places are, first, public amenities and next, works of art. The physical design did need to be updated, particularly since many of the original contextual expectations were never realized. However, the city was, and still is, experiencing a recession, suffering from a severe budget deficit.\(^{145}\) As stated by journalist Michael Paglia,

> It’s hard to believe, especially considering the budget shortfalls the city is facing that the Webb administration just committed $3 million to demolish Skyline Park and replace it with another park! What makes this situation so incredible is it’s happening at the same time that city-employee furloughs and layoffs are being contemplated. When the Denver Public Library is considering closing some of its branches. When selling or taking second mortgages on police and fire stations is being discussed.\(^{146}\)

Commissioning a redesign was, therefore, irresponsible, when preservation by rehabilitation would have resulted in a better space for much less money.\(^ {147}\) Embarrassingly, parks manager James Mejia tried to pass a measure in 2003 that would have allowed private

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\(^{145}\) In fact, in 2002, according to Peggy Lowe of the *Rocky Mountain News*, the city owed $404 million to be paid between 2002 and 2006, which “will come from general obligation funds, meaning tax dollars. And the debt won’t be paid off after five years, as most of the bond paychecks run the next 25 years.” In the same article, Councilwoman Elbra Wedgeworth, who played a major role in seeing through the park’s demolition and the extravagant redesign, is quoted as saying “We really need to start tightening our belts” (July 18, 2002, p. 11A).


\(^{147}\) In fact, the cost estimates for each scheme revealed that preservation (Scheme A, “Retro-fit plan) would have cost (with streetscaping) $5,341,240, Scheme B would have cost $6,990,000 and Scheme C would have cost $7,635,000 (none of these costs estimates include the cost of waterproofing the parking structure beneath Block 18). See document entitled “Charlie Hudson_CostEstimate_forCommittee_08260” from the Files of Connie Wanke.
advertising within the park in order to raise funds for the completion of Balsley’s design. Luckily this has not yet happened. Now, because the city cannot pay to complete his design, except for the fragments retained from Halprin’s design, the park is meaningless and generic, attracting no one and saying nothing of the environment in which it is situated. Homeless youth relocated themselves to the 16th Street Mall during the demolition process and currently panhandle in front of storefronts. Even if “Phase II” is ever completed, Balsley’s design, other than the extravagant use of some native materials like Lyons sandstone and Yule marble (the granite is from China), could be located anywhere. In response, Paglia claimed: “Halprin’s Skyline is now only a memory and a few fragments… These fragments, detached from their original context, look like ruins, but in fact, they’re the only things about the new Skyline worth seeing.”

However, strangely, the city, the DDP and Balsley all claim the new park is a form of preservation. Preserving landscape is complicated and complex. When circulation, layout, plantings, grade and concept have all been severely altered, it is hard to consider as preservation any of what has been implemented. The fragments of Halprin’s design have become sculptural and unrelated and Balsley has made little attempt to incorporate them into his own scheme, perhaps with the hope that they will ultimately be eliminated. Yet these fragments should remain on the landscape, however unrelated and irrelevant they may seem, because they are reminders of the rich landscape that once was and their sharp contrast to the new surroundings demonstrates the genericism that plagues contemporary culture. Perhaps so sharp a contrast will awaken us to our inanity.

Lower cost alternatives should have been explored as soon as the park evaluation process began. Though a sidewalk along Arapahoe should have been implemented as part of the original design, its creation more recently could have been the first step in a low-cost rehabilitation process. Adding a sidewalk and a few more berm cuts to increase access, as well as organizing some programmed events and community service cleanups, could have increased usership and saved the park at minimal cost. The powerful DDP was ignorant enough, however, to believe that the *design* was to blame for the existence of homeless youth, so such obvious, pro-active, low-cost options were never explored. The DDP, and the many city officials that must maintain its support, want to homogenize the downtown because of their fear of anything or anyone unfamiliar or different.

The preservation debate was overly focused on Halprin’s involvement as “author,” making it too easy for opponents to accuse preservationists of “idol worship,” ignorant of public needs. Too many editorials and scholarly essays claimed the park should be saved because it was designed by Halprin and the only reason it “failed” was because of the short-sighted involvement of DURA. Such claims did much more harm than good. The park was significant partly because it was a *collaborative* affair between a local government agency and a design firm of talented individuals. The intention behind including this case study was partly to demonstrate that the park had significance far greater than simply by *whom* it was authored. Preservationists should have conducted a critical analysis of the design, interpreting the park’s significance and emphasizing its value as a unique and diversifying environment in an increasingly homogenous downtown. Ideally, such critical assessments and interpretation should occur before any real threat exists. Skyline Park should serve as a lesson to all those who understand the importance of the built environment and how it both serves and enriches the public and tangibly conveys the
historical continuum. Its demolition demonstrates that cultural resources should be consistently
identified, inventoried, assessed and interpreted and, most ideally, documented, in case of any
sudden and immediate threat. Acting early and with foresight is the most simple, yet most
important lesson to be learned from the demise of Skyline Park.
Chapter Three: Seattle Freeway Park, Seattle, WA

Strangely enough, the precedent-setting Seattle Freeway Park is a site almost as contested as Skyline Park. Freeway Park has, however, been updated throughout its history, unlike Skyline Park, so future interventions will hopefully not be as immediate nor nearly as destructive. If the situation in Denver taught the design and preservation fields anything, however, it is to have foresight and act early. Identifying and publicizing the significance of these sites and the consequences of their irreversible alteration or removal, should be made a priority well before their fates are called into question. It has become increasingly clear that Freeway Park needs to be addressed before it is lost by neglect, deterioration and abandonment. Currently, the site is threatened by alteration through gentrification, since the commissioned Project for Public Spaces recommends introducing a multi-level café and stripping the site of its exciting concepts by reworking it into a generic form reflective of the trends of our age. Though the site needs a rehabilitation plan that is more aggressive than the one recommended for Heritage Park, strict conservation guidelines must be imposed to prevent irresponsible alterations dictated by security, lack of funding, gentrification and widespread commercialization. The nomination to landmark Freeway Park should be accepted and the Seattle Landmarks
Preservation Board should monitor the introduction of some of the necessary changes proposed in the final recommendations listed at the end of this chapter.

Freeway Park demonstrates the optimism of the Halprin firm as they recognized the creative potential underlying the widespread destruction caused by freeway construction, made possible by the Federal Highway Act of 1956. The time was one of rapid and irresponsible change, when the automobile truly established itself as an American symbol of individual freedom. As indicated by Halprin’s 1966 book, *Freeways*, the massive and complex roadways being developed in that “age of motion”\(^\text{149}\) were often oppressive and destructive to the city fabric and its pedestrian scale. However, instead of surrendering to their inevitably careless development, Halprin celebrates their “form-giving potentials and their inherent qualities as works of art in the city.”\(^\text{150}\) In fact, in reference to the project in Seattle, Halprin stated: “the trick is to perceive the freeway as part of the cityscape and tame it, rather than complain about it.”\(^\text{151}\)

**History of the Site**

In 1966, more than a decade after the construction of the Alaskan Way Viaduct, a double-decked elevated roadway along the city’s downtown waterfront,\(^\text{152}\) Seattle completed a twelve-lane depressed freeway extension of Interstate 5 adjacent to its downtown, severing residential neighborhoods to the east from the central business district and imposing a deep gash upon the established city grid (*Illus. 3.2 & 3.3*). Though the freeway was widely contested when

\(^{150}\) Halprin, *Freeways*, p. 5.  
\(^{151}\) Lawrence Halprin: Changing Places, San Francisco, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 1986, p. 139. Halprin’s Justin Herman Plaza and Fountain counteracts the violent force of the surrounding Embarcadero freeway, another example of accepting the freeway and using it as inspiration for creativity.  
\(^{152}\) The Alaskan Way Viaduct was completed by 1953. There are currently plans to tunnel it underground in order to open up pedestrian access and offer recreational opportunities along the city’s waterfront.
it was proposed in 1961, local architect Paul Thiry, who fiercely opposed its construction, presented as a compromise a seven-block concrete “lid” to ease the effect of the disruptive chasm. Funds for such an endeavor were never secured, however, so when federal money became available for freeway construction in 1965, the roadway was built without any intentions of adding such creative easements. By 1977 the freeway had become the busiest single highway in the state carrying an average of 133,290 vehicles per day during the week. At peak hours, more than 13,000 cars an hour passed through Seattle on it.153 In reaction to the region’s sprawling development,154 local attorney James R. Ellis organized the civic group called Forward Thrust, which formulated a $2 billion list of civic improvements, proposing $800 million of which come from local contribution. Apparently, “the proposal was the largest single program ever attempted at one time by any American metropolitan region.”155 In 1968, though the rapid transit measure lost, voters of King County approved $334 million in bond resolutions, $65 million of which was dedicated to parks and park facilities in Seattle. Softening the wound inflicted by the twelve-lane depressed freeway, completed in 1966, was a priority even before the Forward Thrust funds became available. Though the city did not have funds or expertise enough to implement Thiry’s lid, it was able to develop a small plaza on the west side of the Seneca Street off-ramp, completed in 1967. The plaza was funded by a $75,000 donation from Floyd Naramore of Naramore Bain Brady Johanson Architects (NBBJ) who designed it with landscape

153 Initial “Seattle’s Freeway Park” publicity brochure of 1976 issued by “Your Seattle Parks and Recreation” (found in the Seattle Municipal Archives).
154 In response to the sprawl occurring as a result of the freeway’s construction, the city launched a media campaign to encourage downtown living. The city began “a series of public service radio and television commercials that “celebrate” the city and its rich cultural and ethnic diversity. As scenes of congested traffic and frustrated drivers play across the screen, the viewer is reminded that ‘if you lived in Seattle, you’d be home by now.’ Another ad features all kinds of distinctive neighborhoods and houses – old, new, grand, modest. The pitch: ‘Suburbia is white, young and middle class. But Seattle? Seattle’s like America – it’s for everybody!’” (from Neal Peirce, “A Burial in Seattle And… New Life!” Seattle Post-Intelligencer, September 24, 1976, p. 5).
architect William Teufel, around a central fountain by local sculptor, George Tsutakawa (Illus. 3.4 & 3.5).\textsuperscript{156} Architect Perry Johanson subsequently proposed the extension of the park to the block bounded by Seneca, 6th, University and the freeway, but due to lack of immediate funds, this proposal was absorbed into the Forward Thrust measure.\textsuperscript{157} James Ellis, often called “the father of Forward Thrust,”\textsuperscript{158} thenceforth committed himself to seeing a linear park along the freeway fully realized, partially since he had watched the freeway construction from his office windows within the IBM Building at 5th Avenue and Seneca Street. The following year, once the Forward Thrust funds had been secured with $2.8 earmarked for this park beside the freeway, Ellis presented the idea of extending the park \textit{across} the freeway on a bridge one block wide.\textsuperscript{159} Mayor Floyd Miller pledged his support almost immediately and the city council, the parks commission and the planning commission additionally endorsed the concept. Governor Dan Evans offered his support, but it was largely as a result of the efforts of State Highway Director, George Andrews, that federal and state funds were secured to finance construction of a lid over the freeway between Seneca and University Streets. The cost for the bridge structure amounted to $2.99 million, ninety percent of which was paid by the federal government and ten percent of

\textsuperscript{156} George Tsutakawa designed many fountains scattered throughout the city, including one still situated at the Seattle Public Library, earning himself the name “Bernini of the Northwest” (see the undated \textit{Seattle Times} clipping entitled “Bernini of the Northwest” in the Seattle Municipal Archives’ Don Sherwood Parks History Collection, series 5801-01, box 27, folder 3).

\textsuperscript{157} This synopsis of the pre-Halprin plans comes largely from the October 6, 1969 “Script for Slide Program on Proposed Freeway Park in the Central Business District of Seattle” to be presented in the Mayor’s conference room on the following day. Document found in Construction and Maintenance, Department of Parks and Recreation, Facilities Maintenance Division, series 5804-05, box 23, folder 2 in the Seattle Municipal Archives.

\textsuperscript{158} “Seattle’s Freeway Park” 1976 brochure.

\textsuperscript{159} Various accounts do not clearly indicate if Ellis was yet influenced by Halprin’s \textit{Freeways} publication released in 1966 or if his suggestion to extend the park over the freeway was simply an extension of Paul Thiry’s “lid” concept. Most likely, with the timely appearance of Halprin’s book just before and the idea of a lid already proposed, both played a role in this first serious presentation of such an intriguing concept.
which came from the state. As the idea matured, additional highway funds were added for another lid south of Seneca totaling $2.5 million with the same federal and state participation.¹⁶⁰

As plans for this extended park over the freeway were being discussed, a private developer, R.C. Hedreen was simultaneously finalizing property rights to the block bounded by Seneca, 6th, University and the freeway in order to construct a twenty-one story office building and parking garage. Needless to say, the plans collided, but the parties were able to strike what became a mutually beneficial compromise which included both the development of Hedreen’s building and the park upon this block. Understanding the potential positive impact on his property values, Hedreen agreed to reconsider the location and configuration of his development. The city persuaded Hedreen to shift the office tower to the northwest corner of the block to avoid obstructing afternoon light and to build his intended garage underground, so the park could be built above it. Hedreen also agreed to review the design of his office building with the not-yet-selected park architect. Over his garage, he agreed to provide plants and flowers for the park. The building, called Park Place, completed in 1971, cost approximately $9.6 million. After the Hedreen project was settled, the city began to consider using another portion of the site for a public parking garage to “intercept downtown bound freeway traffic before it [entered] the central core.”¹⁶¹ The $4.2 million¹⁶² necessary to construct the proposed 600-car underground garage, developed by the city’s new Parking Commission, was provided by city council bonds which were repaid over time with garage revenue.

¹⁶⁰ According to Polly Lane in “More park for less,” The Seattle Times (undated news clipping found in the Municipal Archives’ Don Sherwood Parks History Collection, series 5801-01, box 27, folder 3).
¹⁶¹ From a 1975 informational sheet entitled “Freeway Park – Environmental Sensitive Park Design at Work” found in the Seattle Municipal Archives, Construction and Maintenance, Department of Parks and Recreation, Facilities Maintenance Division, series 5804-05.
¹⁶² The 1976 park brochure provided this sum and, according to Polly Lane, the bonds totaled $3.5 million, with $696,000 in interest, totaling approximately $4.2 million.
The funds for the park, itself, were provided by a diverse group of city, state and federal agencies. $2.8 million was available from the Forward Thrust bonds, as already indicated; $340,000 came from the Department of Housing and Urban Development’s (HUD) community block grants; $60,000 came from federal urban-arterial improvement funds (Federal Aid Municipal – highway funds); $19,000 came from the newly developed public transit agency, called Metro, for the 8th Avenue stairway; $180,000 came from federal interstate highway funds; $209,000 came from HUD’s open-space grants; $424,000 came from the State Interagency Committee for Outdoor Recreation and $35,000 was donated by the American Legion for the development of a children’s wading pool and fountain.\(^{163}\)

The complexity of funding sources is noted because it represents the extraordinarily impressive and successful collaboration of governmental agencies to develop this public amenity. The result of the tireless fundraising efforts was a park that cost the public only $9.5 million or $45 per square foot, as compared with the projected $50 per square foot it would have cost for land acquisition alone had it not been built using public air-rights.\(^{164}\) The costs were so low because the city did not need to purchase the land, since the state contributed the air space over the freeway and some of the land on the east side was already in public ownership.

Property taxes generated from the Park Place Building and its garage amounted to $175,000 as compared to $50,000 for the previous buildings on that site.\(^{165}\) According to the landmarks nomination form produced by local landscape architects, Brice Maryman and Liz Birkholz,

\(^{163}\) See 1976 park brochure and various correspondence between the city and the American Legion in the files housed at the Municipal Archives, series 5804-05.
\(^{164}\) In Lane, “More park for less,” a variety of such calculations have been published.
\(^{165}\) Alan Tate, *Great City Parks*, London, Spon Press, 2001, p. 19. He cites these figures from a press handout dated July 16, 1976 collected from the Seattle Municipal Archives. However, the property taxes collectable for the Park Place Building is elsewhere cited as $130,000 (see Lane’s “More park for less” and Peirce’s “A Burial in Seattle And… New Life!”). The buildings previously on the site were the Normandie Apartments, constructed circa 1910 and demolished in 1974.
Hedreen’s Park Place achieved a 95% occupancy rate even in the sluggish 1970s economy, demonstrating the park’s positive impact on the value of his property. Such background illustrates that this project was not the product of a single designer or firm; an enormous number of agencies and local individuals were involved long before a design firm was even selected.

**Halprin’s Involvement and Park Development**

Various sources indicate that Halprin’s book *Freeways* initially inspired park officials to consider extending the original linear park into a multi-acre amenity that would bridge the freeway. The book came out in 1966, the year the freeway was completed and just before the Forward Thrust parks measure was approved and was most likely discovered by Seattle officials during this period. Halprin had worked on the grounds for the 1962 Seattle World’s Fair and later developed a master plan for Seattle Center. Therefore, in August of 1970, the Halprin firm was included on a list of firms to be considered for the park’s design. Because the city was additionally impressed with the success of the Portland fountain sequence, the Halprin firm had signed an agreement with the city by December 1, 1970. Angela Danadjieva was appointed principal designer, owing to the impressive nature of the work she did developing the Auditorium Forecourt in Portland.

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167 On p. 44 Pastier states that an official in the Seattle Park Commission saw the book and realized the original plans were under-conceived. The landmarks nomination supports this view on p. 22.
168 See August 1970 letters between city officials indicating the favored designers for the park. Other firms briefly considered were Sasaki Dawson DeMay Associates, local firms of Sakuma & James and Paul Thiry. Richard Haag and Paul Friedberg were also briefly considered.
169 A copy of the agreement contract is housed in the Halprin Archives, box 148, 014.I.A.4655.
170 Danadjieva, previously Angela Tzvetin, was born in Bulgaria and studied architecture at the State University in Sofia, Bulgaria. She worked as a movie set designer within the Bulgarian State Film industry, then studied at the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts. She moved to the United States in 1965 and joined Lawrence Halprin and Associates in 1967.
Danadjieva was project designer, Byron McCulley project manager, Dai Williams job captain, but not mentioned were Robert (Bob) Mendelsohn, who quite clearly played a role in project administration and is listed as a member of the team in other Halprin firm documents, and Jean Walton, associate and horticulturalist within the firm, who was referenced in numerous sources as a major player in the development of the planting plan. In fact, in her 1979 article in *American Forests*, Elisabeth (Betty) C. Miller, Freeway Park horticultural consultant, claimed “Halprin, his project designer Angela Danadjieva, and longtime associate Jean Walton, a landscape architect and horticulturalist, led the design team.” In addition to the collaborative creative process applied by the Halprin firm and the complex and impressive collaboration to generate park funds, the park and its various components were also the result of a network of consultants working under the Halprin firm. The consultants included:

- Sakuma & James (became Sakuma James Peterson), landscape architects, Seattle
- Edward McLeod & Associates, landscape architects, Seattle
- Gilbert Forsberg, Diekmann & Schmidt (G.F.D.S), structural engineers, San Francisco
- Beamer Wilkinson and Associates, mechanical and electrical engineers, San Francisco
- Richard Chaix, mechanical engineer, park’s fountain consultant, Oakland, CA
- Engineering Enterprise, lighting consultant, electrical design of fountains and site lighting, Berkeley, CA

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171 See p. 3 of the “Seattle Freeway Park Factsheet” (undated), found in the Halprin Archives, box 298, 014.I.B.1251.
172 Including an earlier document entitled “Seattle Freeway Park: New Dimensions for Freeways,” found in a manila envelope in the Halprin Archives, box 70.
173 Jean Walton, who apparently was the first to join Halprin in 1949 (see Nilo Lindgren, “A Radical Experiment in Reorganization,” *Landscape Architecture* 64, n. 3, April 1974, p. 136), was also involved in the development of the planting plan at Skyline Park.
Elisabeth C. Miller, horticultural consultant, Seattle

George Bell, irrigation design\textsuperscript{175}

Also, Peter Keiwit Sons built the bridge and park structures south of Seneca and David A. Mowat Company built the bridge and park north of Seneca. Prior to park development, in addition to the development of Naramore Plaza, which was integrated into the Halprin firm’s design, NBBJ “was responsible for the design of the East Garage, coordinated the park design with the state Department of Highways’ bridge design and provided coordination and construction management assistance to the City of Seattle.”\textsuperscript{176} Van Slyck, Callison, Nelson of Seattle designed and built the Park Place Building, garage and associated plaza. Structural engineers with Victor Gray of Seattle consulted NBBJ on the construction of the East Garage and the Washington State Highway Department Bridge Division oversaw the construction of the structural portion of the park built over the freeway.

An October 13, 1970 draft of “Work to be performed by Lawrence Halprin & Associates” lists primary tasks to be undertaken by the firm.\textsuperscript{177} Phase I, “Reconnaissance and Program,” includes environmental studies of air pollution, acoustics, wind, weather, shadow patterns and horticultural requirements. In addition, a “Visual analysis of site and surrounding area,” was proposed, which involved studying views from the site as well as views from the street and adjacent buildings onto the site (\textit{Illus. 3.7}). Part of this analysis also included assessing topography, access, pedestrian and vehicular traffic and movement patterns, as well as defining the character of the area, inventorying local construction materials and, finally, studying

\textsuperscript{175} The location of George Bell’s firm is unknown. His name and purpose appears on the cover sheet of Lawrence Halprin and Associates construction drawings housed at the Seattle Parks Department.

\textsuperscript{176} “Seattle Freeway Park Factsheet,” p. 3 (Halprin Archives, box 298, 014.I.B.1251).

\textsuperscript{177} Halprin Archives, box 148, 014.I.A.4655a.
“existing patterns of behavioral and human uses of peripheral area.” Survey questionnaires developed by Simon Nicholson of the Halprin firm were distributed within the IBM Building, the Exeter, a retirement complex abutting the site, the local Garfield High School and the adjacent Olympic and Hilton hotels. According to Bob Mendelsohn, those surveyed gave the firm “a reasonable cross-section of the groups likely to use the park (area residents, many of them aged, young people, office workers and hotel guests).” In the same report, which was directed to the city’s project coordinator for Freeway Park, Jim Hornell, of the Department of Community Development, Mendelsohn states:

The questionnaire was designed to probe reactions to existing areas of open space in Seattle and to seek ideas as to what kind of park facilities would have most appeal… Perhaps [most] important than any specific response was the fact that the questionnaire pointed up people’s awareness of, sensitivity to, and involvement in the environment in a creative way. Some of the concepts for the design of the park that evolved from the questionnaire included the following: that the park must have regional as well as community appeal, accommodate young children, the elderly and infirm, and that it should include some dynamic water feature (for which there was overwhelming support).178

In a letter to Jim Hornell, Simon Nicholson reports on his surveys of the IBM Building workers and some of the hotel samples: “perhaps the best suggestion is the one that put forward the hypothesis that undesirable people may be attracted by particular types of park, and that if this should be so, an attempt should be made to find out the needs of this group so that they can be satisfied.”179 This statement is noted because, as the reader will discover, today’s

179 Letter dated December 29, 1970 found in the Seattle Municipal Archives’s series 5804-05, box 23, folder 3.
“undesirable” presence in the park is no longer tolerated. In the Garfield High School surveys, Nicholson asks the students to create “A drawing of the kind of park that I would like.”¹⁸⁰

From the early analyses, the firm was able to identify the moods that they were most interested in evoking.

Within the park we will seek to achieve several moods – utilizing the existing dynamism of the site, matching this with dynamic elements within the park, and, in other areas, opposing all of this with more passive and introverted spaces. To achieve these different effects we will use to the utmost our broad palette of plant material, physical elements, water, views, sounds, light and movement.¹⁸¹

The Halprin firm considered this park only a piece of the system they hoped would eventually develop along the freeway and down to the waterfront. In the Halprin firm document entitled “Seattle Freeway Park: New Dimensions for Freeways,” the project is described as one that would

connect sections of the city rent asunder by the construction of the freeway, and, if the designers achieve their ultimate goal, will act as the energizing element in an eventual large-scale system of landscaped plazas, walkways, and terraces interrelating many areas of Seattle over the freeway and streets down to the waterfront… If it can continue to proliferate in size and be realized as an eventual living green skein of terraces, parks, recreation areas, and planted overhangs integrating many areas of Seattle and its waterfront over the freeways and streets, an extremely important statement about returning to a vital relationship between men, the city, and natural things will have been accomplished, and other cities will take heart and follow Seattle’s example.¹⁸²

¹⁸¹ Quotation from January 25, 1971 letter from Bob Mendelsohn to Jim Hornell found in the Seattle Municipal Archives’s series 5804-05, box 23, folder 4.
¹⁸² Document found in the Halprin Archives in an uncatalogued manila envelope in box 70. The document is undated.
At the time, there were no major parks in Seattle’s downtown. The courtyard to the Seattle Public Library and the United States Courthouse lawn a few blocks south, the firm discovered, were the only outdoor gathering spaces in the nearby vicinity. The density and construction of the central business core was increasing dramatically during the 1960s and 1970s, so creative planning for open space was crucial during this period. With the construction of the Alaskan Way Viaduct and the rapid development of the business core, the firm recognized the possibility of the city losing the connection to its dramatic natural sea setting.

The establishment of a network of green spaces is consistent with earlier plans for the city created by the Olmsted firm in the early twentieth-century. The Olmsted firm planned for a network of park spaces linked by boulevards and parkways, and envisioned a “Green Ring” around the city. In his 1903 report, John C. Olmsted recommended a twenty-mile landscaped boulevard linking most of the city’s existing and planned parks and greenbelts. During this period, the more sprawling and multi-use Woodland Park and Green Lake Park were developed. In a synopsis of the Garfield High School survey question “We are wishing to find out what people like to do in parks: are there any parks in Seattle that you particularly like? Which is your favorite?” Simon Nicholson summarizes: “Unlike adults in downtown Seattle, who preferred Woodland/Green Lake, and residents of the Exeter, who preferred Volunteer Park, most students at Garfield High prefer the Arboretum; however, the Arboretum was rated very high on the IBM

183 See “The Emerging Downtown: Central Association of Seattle” annual report document released in May of 1970 for an understanding of the contemporary economic development, expectations and plans for downtown Seattle and its relationship to the region. A copy of this booklet can be found in the Halprin Archives, box 70, 014.I.A.2473.
return, and this fact is extremely interesting because it is not a ‘park’ in the traditional sense.”¹⁸⁵

Perhaps this justified the untraditional nature of the park Halprin and Associates wished to develop.

**Context**

In addition to the surveys, the firm studied the character of the adjacent neighborhoods, most specifically First Hill and the central business district, since the park was meant to most immediately connect these two neighborhoods (*Illus. 3.1 & 3.6*). The First Hill Improvement Club was the only group organized in protest against the freeway route when it was initially proposed. The route was justified, however, because, according to the decision-makers, “With few exceptions, this area contains older and less desirable buildings and is the beginning of the separation of the apartment house, clinic and residential area from the central business district.”¹⁸⁶ As indicated in the landmarks nomination form, shortly after the first settlers arrived on Elliot Bay in the 1860s, the old growth forest upon First Hill was cleared and milled. After the fire of 1889, the area became an elite suburb, particularly because of its plethora of seeps and springs. Mansions and churches sprang up, but were soon crowded and largely replaced by more modest middle-class housing which developed mainly as a result of the streetcar extension into First Hill. In 1966, about eighty-one percent of the almost 10,000 dwelling units, most of which only contained one or two rooms, were built before 1940.¹⁸⁷

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¹⁸⁷ See p. 2 of April 6, 1966 “Summary of Analyses Phase of First Hill Study presented at working committee meeting 3/25/1966” attached to a memorandum dated September 19, 1969, found in the Seattle Municipal Archives.
1966 “Summary of Analysis” document appended to the September 19, 1969 memo regarding the development of a First Hill Neighborhood Plan stated:

Little by little First Hill’s elegant houses with spacious grounds and mature landscaping have been giving way to apartment houses, institutions and parking lots. Large buildings are obstructing distant views. Traffic is invading the once quiet streets. The neighborhood, already deficient in public open space, becomes more so with each addition of working and dwelling population. With each improvement in City transportation, the unique amenity of close proximity to CBD employment becomes less significant.  

By the 1970s First Hill was home to six major medical institutions, earning itself the name “Pill Hill.” In the same 1966 document, it is stated:

All together, the medical-oriented facilities on First Hill dominate perhaps 40% of the crown of the hill and its western slope. These facilities account for about 75% of the employment and at least 50% of the locally generated traffic and parking in this part of the neighborhood. In addition, about 20% of the area’s housing is occupied by medical employees. Two new retirement homes containing 410 dwelling units will rely upon nearby hospitals in lieu of providing their own infirmaries… The proportion of this area used directly by medically-oriented facilities may not amount to more than 50% but they may dominate perhaps 60% to 70% of the area’s activity.

Because of the abundant medical facilities, retirement complexes, such as the adjacent Horizon House and the Exeter, were established locally. First Hill in 1970 was characterized by apartment buildings, retirement homes, hospitals and churches. Seattle University, which was at the time the largest private school for higher education in the state, and the central campus of Seattle’s First Community College, were also nearby. The effect of the

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188 See p. 4 of the same attached “Summary of Analyses Phase of First Hill Study… 3/25/66.”
189 Landmark nomination form, p. 18.
190 See p. 1 of the “Summary of Analyses Phase of First Hill Study… 3/25/66.”
191 Information regarding Seattle University and Seattle’s First Community College from “Manner of goals which the city has for the neighborhood as seen by the general public (the Planning Commission)” document also attached to the memorandum dated September 19, 1969 found in the Municipal Archives.
freeway construction on the substantial elderly population was no doubt disorienting and disruptive. The park was envisioned as a pleasant environment through which to access the central downtown and was meant to offer an inviting and interactive experience to the diversity of its projected users.

Site Description

Seattle Freeway Park is significant and worth serious preservation consideration, partly because it is an incredible example of the kind of collaboration that Halprin always stressed was integral to the creative process. The engineering innovations were not to be underestimated as part of this creative development. The Washington State Department of Highways oversaw the design and construction of the bridges. The two bridges were built in two stages and under two contracts. The supporting precast prestressed girders ranged from thirty-four feet long and 24,000 pounds to 133 feet long and 168,000 pounds, some of the largest in the state. According to a 1977 article appearing in *The American City and County*, “park configuration resulted in girder cantilevers of up to 11 ft. In addition, some park elements cantilevered out from the side of the exterior girder as much as 16 ft. Some girders were located at abrupt changes in elevation. Others were placed on a slope exceeding 20%.”

Load restrictions ranged from 100 to 700 pounds per square foot and as a result, soil depths range from twelve inches under turf areas to seventy-two inches under large trees. Fifty-three holes through the deck slab accommodated cylindrical precast concrete tree planters that are visible to the freeway driver extending below the upper deck (*Illus. 3.8*). A lightweight

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192 See 1976 park brochure.
193 “Downtown park quiets a freeway,” *American City and County*, June 1977, p. 76.
194 “Downtown park quiets a freeway,” p. 76.
195 Miller, p. 46.
soil with good drainage qualities was required for the entire site and consisted of two-thirds fine sand and one-third peat moss. An automatic irrigation system which injected fertilizer directly into the water maintained a constant level of nutrients in the soil.\textsuperscript{196} The soils were drained throughout the site by an underground network of perforated drain lines, including individual drains for each tree pit.\textsuperscript{197} To allow root development and promote drainage, the park’s walkways were constructed over a layer of sand rather than directly on the structural slab.\textsuperscript{198}

The conditions of the site made the plantings vulnerable to harsh winds and higher than normal pollution levels. Therefore, the plant list was selected largely depending on pollution tolerance. Some of the pollution tolerant trees planted include Bradford pear, deodar, Douglas fir, littleleaf linden, English oak, red oak, sweet gum and several species of magnolia and maple. A variety of cotoneasters and masses of broad-leafed evergreen shrubs, such as rhododendrons, Japanese photinia (\textit{Photinia glabra}), English laurel (\textit{Prunus laurocerasus}), Oregon grape (\textit{Mahonia aquifolium}) and David viburnum (\textit{Viburnum davidii}) were also part of the original scheme. English ivy (\textit{Hedera helix}) tumbles from the planter boxes and over the hard concrete forms.\textsuperscript{199} Plants were selected for their variety of textures and colors throughout the four seasons. According to the 1976 park brochure, 195 evergreen trees, 279 deciduous trees and 1,980 shrubs were planted. Bright annual displays were also part of the original concept, funds for which were originally donated by park neighbors, Seattle-First National Bank, Rainier Bank, Unico Properties, Family Life Insurance, R.C. Hedreen and Washington Mutual Savings Bank. This group called themselves the Friends of Freeway Park.\textsuperscript{200} In the 1970s, the Parks

\textsuperscript{196} Information about the treepits, soil and irrigation system from “Downtown park quiets a freeway,” p. 76.
\textsuperscript{197} Miller, pp. 46 and 49.
\textsuperscript{198} Miller, p. 46.
\textsuperscript{199} In the landmark nomination form, the authors express concern regarding the invasive qualities of the English ivy that seems to be choking out some of the other intended plantings, p. 29.
\textsuperscript{200} See “Bloomin’ Delight” newspaper clipping dated June 7, 1978 found in the Seattle Municipal Archives’ Don Sherwood Parks History Collection, series 5801-01.
Department changed the flower displays three times a year to provide summer, fall and spring plantings.201

The plantings, particularly dense along the park’s edges, provide the visitor with protection from wind, noise and pollution. Structural elements and landforms were also manipulated to protect the visitor from the harsh conditions of the vulnerable location. In “Danadjieva on the creative process,” she says “To help reduce pollution I designed walls and berms to block the penetration of fumes from the Freeway. These elements are composed to allow the fresh breeze from the waterfront to enter the park… To buffer the noise of the traffic the walls on the edge of the park are configured [sic] to form a multiplane sound barrier.”202

The lighting in the park also provided a dramatic experience for the night visitor.203 The site was originally lit by seventy-two quartz lighting fixtures mounted on five 100-foot poles.204 The fountains contained fifty-four submerged lights that dramatically illuminated the water and the sculptural forms. The lighting scheme for the park’s main water elements were featured in Janet Lennox Moyer’s *The Landscape Lighting Book*.205

Other park “accessories” include nineteen concrete benches topped with clear cedar which were discreetly integrated into the sculpture of the design. There were originally three drinking fountains and nineteen trash containers which were also worked into the concrete forms. Schematic designs for a pedestrian canopy were submitted by the firm to the city in hopes of

201 After the park’s first decade the annual planting displays dwindled due to budget constraints, though have recently been partially reinstated and gardeners have been assigned to upkeep the park through daily care.
202 Danadjieva, pp. 404-405.
203 Today the park is closed at night and the original lighting scheme has been allowed to deteriorate.
204 From the “Seattle Freeway Park Factsheet,” p. 2. In this document, the poles are quoted as eighty-feet tall rather than 100 feet. Other park documentation, however, indicates these lights are actually mounted on 100-foot poles. Once the park matured, however, the high lights cast shadows that were considered disorienting and scary, so additional twenty-foot fixtures were inserted into the space.
including a structure that might protect park visitors from frequent rains. Unfortunately, the city determined that the shelter was beyond the scope of available funds and abandoned the idea “until adequate funds were made available.” No such structure was ever erected.

The configuration of the original park was 1,300 feet long and its irregular width varied from 400 feet to less than sixty. There were ten entrances to the park north of Seneca and three entrances to the southern portion of the park. The park was designed with an emphasis on circulation through the park’s length, as a stimulating transitional space between the residential neighborhood and the downtown. A path runs through its length, but on either side of the meandering trail are spaces that offer a variety of interactive experiences and evoke a complexity of contrasting moods, which will be described in the following pages. The 1976 park brochure states:

Freeway Park possesses the kind of grandeur one usually associates with natural wonders. It encompasses many moods and balances the extremes of dynamic motion and peaceful reflection… [the park] is filled with contrasts and surprises. Sometimes noisy and dramatic, sometimes calm and peaceful, it brings a new range of experiences to Seattle’s already diverse downtown.

In the document entitled “New Dimensions for Freeways,” the Halprin firm states:

The plan for the Freeway Park emphasizes a number of contrasting elements: swift motion of cars and calm movement of strollers; noisy atmosphere of the freeway and streets and the peaceful sounds of water, wind, and trees; hard edges of freeway concrete and automobile metal and the soft outlines of landscaping and changeable nature of water shapes.

206 See October 22, 1974 “Freeway Park Project Progress Report,” a copy of which is housed in the Seattle Municipal Archives.
207 According to the 1976 park brochure.
208 See 1976 park brochure.
209 See uncatalogued manila envelope in the Halprin Archives, box 70.
Danadjieva planned for dramatic contrasts in emotional experience most likely due to her experience as an art director for movies, “[composing] the sets for the motion of the camera.”\textsuperscript{210} In “Danadjieva on the creative process,” she describes how she worked with the concept of motion in the park.

For the Freeway Park I attempted to relate the design to the motion of city traffic (pedestrian and vehicular). Motion changes the perception of the scale of the city texture. The scale appears different from a driver’s viewpoint than from that of a pedestrian. My effort in the design of the Freeway Park was to relate these two different scale impressions. The frame of the park is a heavy form (vehicular perception), while the scale of the configuration of the park elements in the interior of the park is smaller in scale (pedestrian perception).\textsuperscript{211}

Halprin, quoted in Jim Burns’ essay entitled “The Hanging Gardens of Seattle” states: We “enlarged on our experiences in Portland to transform a blighting influence into a choreographed sequence of varied spaces and uses in the heart of the city.”\textsuperscript{212}

\textbf{Naramore Plaza and the “Great Box Garden”}\textsuperscript{213} consist mainly of the teardrop shaped plaza around the Tsutakawa fountain (Illus. 3.12) and the giant concrete planter boxes that cascade towards the freeway below (Illus. 3.13). This portion of the park was developed mainly to enhance the experience of the automobile driver. As indicated in the landmark nomination form, “the large planter boxes took the language, forms, and materials of the park, and translated them to a scale fit for the automotive experience, providing an amenity for freeway users.”\textsuperscript{214} The planter boxes and tall mature trees floating above the road present an

\textsuperscript{210} Danadjieva, p. 405.
\textsuperscript{211} Ibid., p. 405. \textit{Illustrations 3.10 and 3.11} demonstrate “vehicular perception.”
\textsuperscript{212} See p. 2 of the essay written by Jim Burns entitled “The Hanging Gardens of Seattle,” a copy of which can be found in the Halprin Archives box 298, 014.I.B.1251.
\textsuperscript{213} This portion of the park is referred to as the “Great Box Garden” in the cover story “Seattle’s ‘tomorrow park’ opens July 4. It’s built on top of a freeway.” \textit{Sunset: The Magazine of Western Living}, July 1976, pp. 52-55.
\textsuperscript{214} Landmark nomination form, p. 10.
unforgettable approach into or through the downtown (*Illus. 3.14 & 3.15*). The dramatic experience offers the driver a sense of arrival into the region’s economic and cultural hub.

Crossing over Seneca and the freeway’s off-ramp, one approaches the plaza above the Park Place garage, referred to as the **West Plaza**. Because this property is privately owned, its rotating horticultural displays are more elaborate and better-maintained than the rest of the park (*Illus. 3.16 & 3.17*). In the nomination form, Maryman and Birkholz rightfully consider the West Plaza “aesthetically and economically disjunct from the rest of the park.”\(^{215}\) According to park critic, John Pastier, “Halprin now finds [the West Plaza] weak as a passage between the city and the park center. ‘If I were designing it today, I would celebrate the way in better – now you ooze in…”\(^{216}\) The context of this quote is unclear, but the statement is not lacking some element of truth. As an entry, there is little indication of the pleasures within. However, the brilliantly colored, impeccably-maintained displays do act as a lure. Danadjieva states: “both entrance areas (the West and East garage roofdecks) are designed as quiet passive areas in contrast to the existing dynamism of the Freeway environment.”\(^{217}\)

Once one is lured in off the street by the bright colors, the sound of moving water overtakes the senses. The “white noise” of water flowing through the **Central Plaza**’s two fountains, which have been sculpted to represent a cascade and a canyon, drowns out one’s sense of the park’s urban surroundings and the magical qualities of the forested site envelop the visitor. The cascade fountain is situated in the western portion of the Central Plaza adjacent to the Park Place Building (*Illus. 3.18-3.21*). Water in this feature pours over a tumbled rock formation and visitors are encouraged to walk within the fountain, surrounding themselves on all sides by the falling water. As indicated by numerous office documents and articles responding to the park’s

\(^{215}\) Landmark nomination form, p. 11.
\(^{216}\) Pastier, p. 46.
\(^{217}\) Danadjieva, p. 405.
development, a restaurant had been originally intended for the ground floor of the Park Place Building, which was supposed to have opened up to the park and filled in the space between the building and the cascade.218

To the east of the cascade is the true centerpiece of the park: the Canyon fountain (Illus. 3.23 & 3.24). The top of the structure to the bottom of the canyon floor, which rests upon the freeway’s median strip, measures thirty feet. Over the feature’s sheer “rock face,” many thousands of gallons of recirculated water plummeted per minute (Illus. 3.25).219 Sharply angled stairways invite the visitors to hike to the canyon floor and peer out the large window which frames views of the cars rushing by on the freeway at almost eye level (Illus. 3.26 & 3.27). This effect was supposed to be most enjoyed at night, though today traveling to the canyon floor is nerve-wracking enough during the day due to feeling trapped and vulnerable. The 1976 park brochure describes the canyon fountain: “The freeway has been silenced, bested on its own terms, its power and scale matched and opposed by the natural force of churning water.”220 Danadjieva worked out the sculptural form in various clay models (Illus. 3.28 & 3.29), carefully considering its three-dimensional qualities and emotional and psychological effects on the visitor. To the east of the fountain, a path meanders through a wooded section vegetated most densely at the edges, almost entirely blocking out the city beyond (Illus. 3.30). The sound of falling water follows the visitor through this section of the park.

218 See p. 3 of January 12, 1971 memorandum written by Danadjieva (“From: Angela Tzvetin”) to the “Seattle Freeway Park Design Team” on “Design Notes on Freeway Park” found in the Halprin Archives, box 148, 014.I.A.4655a, where she suggests the café and see the “New Dimensions for Freeways” for another reference to the planned café.
219 27,000 gallons per minute was printed on the initial park brochure and in a variety of articles covering the park’s opening. In the “Seattle Freeway Park Factsheet” (Halprin Archives, box 298, 014.I.B.1251), however, it is stated: “The central plaza fountain’s water is recirculated by three-125 horsepower pumps which have a total capacity to circulate water at a rate of more than 30 million gallons/day (or 22,650 gallons/minute). Normal operation, however, uses two of the three pumps for a recirculation rate of 15,100 gallons/minute.”
220 Today, the water is often turned off to save money in utility costs, taking away the dynamic quality of the park almost completely.
An expansion joint just before the 8th Avenue overpass delineates the edge of the East Garage’s roof (Illus. 3.31). The east side of the joint is considered the East Plaza and includes amenities such as the elevator to the garage below and restrooms (Illus. 3.32). The meandering path continues through this section which is now somewhat confused by the later Convention Center and Pigott Corridor developments. The 1976 brochure states:

Away from the canyon, grassy retreats and unexpected spaces open among the concrete cliffs. Small spaces restore a sense of human proportion, and shrubs, trees and grass create softness and a sense of belonging. Occasionally the city reasserts itself and architectural details outside the park demand attention – a row of arched windows, the geometry of a downtown tower, the white dome of a church, or the arch of the 8th Avenue overcrossing.

This area is the most pastoral of the plazas; the open lawn is often referred to as a mountain meadow. It includes the American Legion’s Freedom Plaza, composed of a fountain and a series of pools with riverstone bottoms meant especially for children to wade (Illus. 3.33). This area is now an access point to the newer Washington State Convention and Trade Center, opening up onto a large concrete-paved plaza fronted by the structure’s irregular glass façade (Illus. 3.36). As one travels east, the legion’s motto is inscribed in a bench dually serving as a retaining wall (Illus. 3.34). The incorporation of the inscription and the plaque attributing the plaza to the American Legion was a condition required to secure the $35,000 they offered to donate to the park.221 Just beyond this inscription is the final west to east egress point. This exit is oddly disorienting, however, since a concrete wall appears to block the path. Only when one gets extremely close to this seeming obstacle, is the sharply angled staircase visible (Illus. 3.35).

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221 According to 1974-1975 correspondence between the American Legion and the city, including a fifty-foot flagpole in the park was another part of the agreement. See such correspondence in the Municipal Archives series 5804-05, box 23, folder 23.
The Pigott Corridor and the Convention Center were developed as later additions to the park, with mixed aesthetic and experiential results. Just after the park was completed, Danadjieva left Lawrence Halprin and Associates and established the firm Danadjieva and Koenig. Danadjieva and Koenig was largely responsible for the park’s two major additions. In 1984, the firm designed the Pigott Memorial Corridor, which accommodated the change of grade in a series of switchback ramps, as well as short flights of corresponding stairs, with a watercourse flowing along one side (Illus. 3.37 & 3.38). Continuous concrete walls line the ramps and tall trees emerge from the hillside below. The corridor was constructed as a handicapped-accessible amenity that made the park more manageable for the substantial nearby elderly population. Though designed and constructed with good intentions, the corridor is somewhat dizzying, owing to blind corners resulting from excess concrete and tall dense vegetation.

The Washington State Convention and Trade Center is a sprawling mass that also uses the same patterns of form and material as the original park. In 1988, Danadjieva and Koenig, working as associate architects for the Convention Center, another air-rights development over I-5, designed the plaza extending from the American Legion portion of the park, as well as the interior landscaping of the glass-encased structure (Illus. 3.36). The concrete block-paved plaza is flat and almost completely open with border plantings to soften the glass hard-angled façade.

Concepts that unify these areas of the park include the association of plantings, landforms and water features with the indigenous ecology of the region. The cascade and canyon fountains, as well as the irregular terrain of the entire site, were meant to reference the

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222 The Pigott Corridor was funded by Paul Pigott, former chief officer of the PACCAR Corporation, to honor his mother who was a resident of Horizon House and enjoyed the park.
nearby Olympic mountains that are visible across Puget Sound. As described by Walker and Simo in *Invisible Gardens*, “the plantings were opulent, recalling the ancient forests of the Pacific Northwest.”223 The wooded site is also a direct reference to the forests of First Hill that were milled into planks in the late nineteenth-century. In fact, whether conscious or not, the milled timber board forms used to cast in place the site’s concrete structures reference this exploitation of timber in the immediate region. As already indicated, after the fire of 1889, residents of Seattle moved into First Hill because of the abundance of water available in the form of seeps and springs. The abundant celebration of water within the park is an allusion to this indigenous resource. The park’s open spaces have been referred to as “glades” within a forest and meadows within a mountainscape. Sutherland Lyall in *Designing the New Landscape*, says “If Seattle Freeway Park has a unifying metaphor it is that of a peak and meadow mountain landscape. Halprin has planted rhododendrons, azaleas and alders among the lower levels of the scheme, Douglas fir and upland trees in the higher zones.”224 In other words, the zones of plant life correspond to the park’s varying altitudes.

There is a ninety-foot difference between the park’s highest and lowest elevations.225 This range is exploited through the vertical concrete forms and the sloping landforms throughout the park. The sharp changes in elevation throughout the site reference the drama of Seattle’s topographic extremes, as well as the heightening cityscape that was fast developing during the time of the park’s development. The elevated Alaskan Way Viaduct and the depressed canyon of I-5, stretching endlessly to the north and south, enhanced the drama of Seattle’s elevation extremes. This freeway “canyon,” often referred to as a “dry concrete riverbed,” inspired the

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225 Tate, p. 22.
abundant water used within the site, while the park’s concrete forms respond to the concrete of
the freeway below and the city around.

**Usership**

After the park opened as part of Seattle’s July 4, 1976 bicentennial celebration, it was
an immediate success. Journalists following the development of this innovative park wrote
statements such as:

In summer and in winter, with water and without water, the Freeway Park
has captured the hearts of Seattle, its neighbors, its tourists. Last summer
18,000 persons a week made the park one of their Seattle stops. This
spring the daily count during lunch hours, 11 a.m.-1 p.m., has been 1,500.
Such pre-birth descriptions as “freeway lid” and “bridge over concrete,”
while still true, have softened to “people park,” “miracle park” since its
July 4 Bicentennial Year opening. Its fans include all types:
brownbagging Downtown office workers; skinny-dipping youngsters;
nearby apartment dwellers on their way to Downtown shopping; hospital
visitors taking a break in vigils at the bedsides of sick relatives; moms
with tots meeting business-suited dads for weekday picnics; people
watchers, relaxing loners, strolling lovers, awed tourists.226

The hottest new attraction has to be the thundering falls and huge concrete
slabs of the Freeway Park. The innovative park… has drawn raves from
Sunset Magazine and, it seems, most Seattleites. On sunny noon hours,
hundreds of officeworkers pour into the park, brown bags in hand,
covering almost every inch. One of the proprietors of a nearby sandwich
shop said her business has swelled since the park opened. Tourists, toting
cameras and bewildered looks, seem fascinated by the falls… In addition
to a lunch spot, the park is also being used as an open-air concert hall. I
once wandered over and discovered a four-piece jazz band playing to an
attentive audience… [A] word of caution: Get there early or late. The
park fills fast. If you arrive at about 11:30 a.m. or a little after 1 p.m., you
stand a better chance of squaring off a little lounging room and a view of
the falls.227

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226 See article “Freeway Park – a Real People Place” in Downtown Seattle – The Newsmaker dated May 22,
1978 in the Municipal Archives’ Don Sherwood Parks History Collection, series 5801-01, box 27.
B1.
This year’s drought has permitted unusually hard and enthusiastic use of the park. To those watching the urban mountaineers plunging fully clothed into the waterfalls and scaling the canyon walls, the children frolicking in the lower fountain, and the elderly evening strollers, the parks seems a complete success.\textsuperscript{228}

The following is particularly amusing due to its contrast to current attitudes:

Freeway Park has its own mix of people along with the brown-baggers – older people, classes of day-care preschoolers, mothers with children (some of their own, some obviously come-alongs from the neighborhood), appreciative tourists and people young and old with either the luxury or the misfortune, depending on circumstances, of having time on their hands and nothing better to do than finding a spot in the sun and watching the lunchtime crowd arrive and depart. Some spring days irresistibly bring a seasonal element to Freeway Park – business-suited types who consider themselves a cut above carrying a sack lunch to the office. They buy lunch to go in monogrammed boxes at small delicatessens and restaurants on their way. They add a picturesque element as they sit and allow the sun and fresh air to relax them and air the stuffiness out of their executive images. They tend to sit on the benches while most regulars prefer the lawn, or sitting next to the running water where the kids play, or perching on concrete crags above the waterfall. But as long as they are well-behaved and put their papers in the waste cans, the regulars don’t mind having them around at all.\textsuperscript{229}

In contrast to such positive initial response, recent commentators, ignorant of the park’s history, make careless claims such as “the park has barely been used, except by drug dealers and street alcoholics.”\textsuperscript{230} Such statements perpetuate the current image of the park as a place only for transients. Though admittedly, one may see needles and people sleeping (Illus. 3.39), a diversity of users are typically discovered within the current park, including elderly couples, school groups (Illus. 3.40), families, tourists exploring the canyon and peering through its viewing window, as well as a handful of policemen on horseback and bikes.

After the park’s first decade, it was struck with the plague from which all downtown parks that do not serve directly as money-generators suffer: neglect and resulting deterioration, misguided perceptions and ultimate abandonment. “Out to Lunch” concerts and other programming that the park had been designed to accommodate were either discontinued or moved to other venues within the city.\footnote{The Seattle Symphony Orchestra once held annual concerts in the park (see Charles Brown, “Menu at Freeway Park: Sandwiches and Sousa,” \textit{The Seattle Times}, September 16, 1978, p. A12). On St. Patrick’s Day in 1977, the water in the fountains were dyed green (see “Waterfall to flow green,” \textit{The Seattle Times}, March 16, 1977). A Japanese folk art performance was hosted at Freeway Park as part of the Smithsonian Institution on Tour program (see “Japan’s ancient past lives at Freeway Park,” \textit{Seattle Post-Intelligencer}, August 28, 1976, p. A14).} Ignorant of real statistics, which indicate the park has a generally low crime rate,\footnote{See Mark Hinshaw, “A Hideaway hiding in plain sight – Freeway Park is a secret garden requiring some effort to enjoy comfortably,” \textit{The Seattle Times}, April 25, 1999, p. F1: “The Seattle Police Department reports that Freeway Park has one of the lowest crime rates in the city” and Tate, p. 23: “…contrary to popular perception, Freeway Park is relatively safe according to city statistics” and p. 6 of the February 24, 2005 Board of Park Commissioners Meeting Minutes: “Although actual crimes in the park have not been numerous…” The meeting minutes can be accessed online at: \url{http://www.cityofseattle.net/parks/ParkBoard/minutes/2005/02-24-05.pdf}.} an irresponsible journalist recently published the article “Topography of Terror” claiming “Seattle’s Freeway Park is a garden of earthly delights – for the city’s crazed murderers and inhuman rapists! A sprawling maze of dark corners, towering manmade cliffs, and menacing bathrooms, Freeway Park is the stuff of nightmares.”\footnote{Charles Mudede, “Topography of Terror,” \textit{The Stranger} 11, n. 49, August 22-28, 2002, found at \url{http://www.thestranger.com/2002-08-22/feature.html}.} Almost amusingly, John Desmond of the Downtown Denver Partnership distributes copies of this ridiculous article to anyone who doubted his view that Skyline Park should be demolished.

**Past and Recent Interventions**

The original park has been consistently updated and altered since the early 1980s. This gradual layering of updates, reflective of the evolution of attitudes and needs over time, makes Seattle Freeway Park a rich cultural document that any change too sudden or too vast could easily destroy. The “Integrity” section of the Seattle landmark nomination form offers a
clear and detailed summary of past interventions. The 1984 and 1988 additions of the Pigott Corridor and the Convention Center affected the circulation, access, planting and some of the concrete forms within the East Plaza. Shade cast by more recent high-rise development, particularly the fifty-six story Two Union Square on the southeast corner of 6th Avenue and Union Street, has affected the plantings and the site’s unique microclimates. According to the landmark nomination form, the irrigation system was improved in the early 1980s when critical flaws were discovered. In 1992 leaks that had been raining on freeway drivers for years were corrected, though some were irreparable because they were the result of natural concrete expansion and contraction. Tree thinning operations, most substantial in 1985 and 1995, resulted in the removal of 100 trees by 1999. The park designers anticipated some such removals, however, since it was deliberately overplanted for immediate effect.

Since the early 1990s more attempts at park improvements have been instated, particularly owing to the development of Friends of Freeway Park (more recently known as Freeway Park Neighborhood Association or FPNA), consisting of leading members of surrounding businesses. When the fountains were turned off in the early 1990s, to save money in utility costs, the Friends group paid for the water to be restored, though the fountains only operate for limited hours today and at reduced capacity. The Friends group raised funds to install a series of twenty-foot light poles in 1994, since the light from the 100-foot poles were

236 This number is quoted in various sources, including Tate, p. 23.
237 See Jean Godden, “Fountain brings joy to shoppers once again,” The Seattle Times, August 7, 1991, p. D1. According to the article, the Washington Convention and Trade Center, Horizon House and Friends of Freeway park each donated $2,500 to turn the fountains back on at Freeway Park and the Pigott Memorial Corridor.
238 According to the parks personnel cited in the landmark nomination form, the original designers intended for two of the three existing pumps to operate at all times. However, the city later reduced it to one pump and then reduced the capacity of that one pump by thirty percent (p. 29).
apparently casting spooky shadows (Illus. 3.41). FPNA also donated a significant sum to widen and revise the 8th Avenue underpass in 1995. As a result, one planting bed was removed and a storage area and manager’s office was integrated into the bridge structure on either side of the underpass (Illus. 3.42). During the development of the Convention Center, emergency alarm buttons were installed in the park (Illus. 3.43). A recently installed security camera watches the restroom, which was the location of an unfortunate rape in 2002. In fact, Mike Evans, president of the FPNA, and longtime law enforcement officer at the University of Washington and currently a security guard at the nearby Horizon House, has been recommending and instituting a policy of Crime Prevention Though Environmental Design at Freeway Park since the early 1990s. FPNA has spent $30,000-40,000 yearly on security patrols. Today police ride through the park on bicycles and overlook on horseback (Illus. 3.44). The funds have been used for a private security company to make frequent walks around the park in their blue and yellow uniforms and call the police if they observe any problems.239 All these increased security measures have been instituted despite the fact that the Seattle Police Department “reports that Freeway Park has one of the lowest crime rates in the city.”240 Unfortunately for people who value the park as historically significant for its unique design and innovation, the president of the influential FPNA considers the ideal park to be “one that is totally open, with no hidden corners, no cover, no opportunities for intimate self-discovery or random encounters.” He is apparently pleased with only one part of the park, “a small patch of sunny grass.”241 In 1999, the parks department entered a partnership with the recently expanded Seattle Downtown Business Improvement Area to promote “twenty-four/seven” use of the downtown.242

239 See February 24, 2005 Board of Park Commissioners Meeting Minutes, p. 10.
240 Hinshaw, “A Hideaway hiding in plain sight.”
241 Mudede, “Topography of Terror.”
242 Tate, p. 24.
Cobblestone paths have been recently introduced to increase access, including one at Hubbell Place and Seneca Street, which is bordered with oddly disjunct plantings (*Illus. 3.45 & 3.46*). Parks personnel have widened portions of the original concrete paths with new pours that do not match the original concrete (*Illus. 3.30 & 3.41*). According to the landmark nomination form, a concrete wall was flattened to open up views to the waterfall at 6th Avenue and Seneca Street and a concrete wall was also removed to increase visibility at the Seneca Street and Hubbell Place stop sign.\(^{243}\) To prevent people from sleeping in the park, since such behavior is apparently considered offensive, parks personnel have installed bars across the surface of the benches (*Illus. 3.44*). Unattractive chain-link fence has also been installed around the Canyon Fountain to block off “hiding areas” (*Illus. 3.47*). Finally, planters that were left over from a nearby plaza now litter the space (*Illus. 3.48*).

**Evolving Context**

The development of Town Hall, which is visible from the park (*Illus. 3.46*), as a venue for performances and lectures,\(^{244}\) as well as the enhancement of other local nightlife and increased housing nearby, have created additional pressures to update the park. The Jensonia Hotel, which is within view as one approaches the 8\(^{th}\) Avenue underpass from the west, recently burned and was evacuated (*Illus. 3.49*). This facility had apparently been major drug dealing headquarters\(^{245}\) and, because it was evacuated, the presence of drug-related individuals in the park has largely declined.\(^{246}\) A childcare service is currently stationed on the first floor of the Park Place Building in the rooms

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\(^{243}\) p. 27.

\(^{244}\) Town Hall was recently developed in a building that was once the Christian Scientists’ Fourth Church of Christ, constructed between 1916 and 1922.

\(^{245}\) Information about the Jensonia Hotel came from a variety of sources, including David Brewster, Director of Town Hall and member of FPNA and Susanne Friedman, project manager with the Seattle Parks Department, both in February 2005.

facing the cascade. However, there is currently no way to directly access the park from the building. Creating such access should be a priority to enliven the park with kids and expose the children to a playful, interactive environment from which lessons about horticulture and native ecology, environmentalism and design can be learned. The new Seattle Public Library was designed by Rem Koolhaas and designers have flocked to the city to view this exciting structure. As a result, interest in seeing the Halprin-designed Freeway Park has also presumably increased.

Future Plans

As indicated, forms have recently been submitted to seek Seattle landmark status. If the nomination is accepted, careful reviews of proposed changes to the historic design would be required. Such a measure is essential, particularly after the release of the Project for Public Spaces (PPS) report, commissioned by the FPNA and the Seattle Parks Department and released in January of 2005. The PPS report makes a few worthwhile and interesting suggestions, including increased horticultural displays that would entail partnerships with local organizations such as the arboretum and used books sales in collaboration with the new library only a few blocks away. However, in general, the plan aims to transform this unique site into one that fulfills their generic formula for creating “successful” middle-class spaces.247

Justifiably, accessibility was a major issue considered by PPS. Before the Pigott Corridor, there seems to have been little connection between First Hill and the downtown, the park’s main goal, but this was due largely to the unavailability of critical land upon initial park development. The means by which PPS suggests access should be addressed seem oversimplified

247 These two spaces are referenced in almost every PPS report as the ideal end goal, regardless of the park under examination. More recently the private Post Office Square in Boston has been additionally included.
and would be highly detrimental to the integrity of the original design. Some concrete walls could indeed be removed, if carefully and sensitively considered, to open up sitelines and potentially draw more people in from the street. Thinning trees, also if done sensitively, might work to increase usership. However, the PPS plan also recommends the city tear out the Cascade Fountain and Naramore Plaza and suggests “removing/redesigning the [Canyon] fountain, [since] the costs of operations and liability do not justify this structure’s continued existence.”248 In replacement, the report recommends the introduction of a multi-level café and more “traditional” fountains, bocce courts, open lawns for sports, interactive sculpture, an aviary, a dog run, and so on. Without the Naramore Fountain, a critical piece of the historical narrative of the park’s development would be forever lost. The reason the study claims this portion of the park should be torn out seems blatantly prejudiced and unfair: “Remove park and plantings and concrete because they are not used as a park – only as a housing for transients.”249 According to released meeting notes, when the PPS study was presented to the Board of Park Commissioners in February, Richard Haag, who designed Seattle’s Gas Works Park, which has been recently nominated as a Seattle landmark, asked if Parks staff have consulted Mr. Halprin on this project. [Parks Department project manager] Ms. Friedman answered that she hasn’t spoken with him directly… [Haag] believes that parks are under siege with gentrification [stating:] “Be careful when removing benches and shelters where the down and out gather. This process started with Regrade Park. Where are these displaced people being put? Are the homeless represented here this evening?” He also believes it is illegal to close parks at 11:00 pm and would like to see the ACLU get involved with this. He urged that Parks go forth carefully with this project. He stated that if residents at Horizon House want privacy from the park, they should close their window blinds.250

Landmarking Freeway Park is strongly opposed by the parks department and the FPNA, which is in sharp contrast to Skyline Park’s Friends group, who worked against the gentrification of the park in favor of preserving the design and increasing social services in the area. However, the

248 p. 60.
249 p. 66.
250 February 24, 2005 Board of Park Commissioners Meeting Minutes, p. 9.
FPNA mission is more typical of Friends groups, such as the Bryant Park Restoration Corporation (BPRC), who want to control usership by introducing activities that would exclude potential undesirables and by tearing out any physical areas that might attract undesirable presence. The landmark nomination is extremely important at this stage. To have a governing body carefully regulating proposed changes is crucial. Because the Seattle Landmarks Preservation Board oversees another modern-designed park (Gas Works Park) and other city parks, such as Volunteer Park, its members are becoming increasingly familiar with landscapes where change is necessary and inevitable, but must also be carefully monitored.

**Critique**

Because the park now offers the surreal sense of a thickly wooded forest, the visitor experiences the thrill of the sublime. The unsettling sense of walking through the park is very similar to an experience in the Ravine in Prospect Park and the Ramble in Central Park, both designed by Frederick Law Olmsted, to whom Halprin has been compared. The recent renovation of these two Olmsted designs indicate that such an environment can exist within urban settings and they add an element of diversity to the experience of the city. Though Rem Koolhaas’ library sticks out as if it just landed upon the city grid from outer space, it enlivens the street and diversifies the city. The library is an interactive explosion of color, light, video art and level changes. The floating forest in the heart of Seattle’s downtown offers an experience that engages the senses in a more primeval manner. The complementary contrast is quite powerful.

The park has won a slew of awards since its completion, including the Grand Award for Environmental Improvement from the Associated Landscape Contractors of America, Inc.; a Merit Award for the Highway Planning category in the 1977 Professional Design Competition of the
American Society of Landscape Architects; the Outstanding Civil Engineering Achievement in the Pacific Northwest from the American Society of Civil Engineers, Pacific Northwest Council in 1976; a Civil Engineering Award of Merit from the American Society of Civil Engineers in 1977 and the Washington State Precast Concrete Industry Award in 1977. The precedent-setting, award-winning park symbolizes the inspiring possibilities of large-scale collaboration between a diverse group of private and public agencies and individuals to improve the quality of life in a rapidly developing city. James Ellis, prime mover of the park concept, said:

“This project was successfully built because it did not become a casualty of the war between freeway fighters and freeway lovers. This project did not suffer the attrition of lengthy lawsuits between environmentalists and developers. To the surprise of many, Freeway Park was enthusiastically undertaken as a joint project by imaginative private owners, by sensitive highway officials and by a city determined to stay livable. The result was a successful private investment, a successful public investment and a demonstration of use to other cities.”

Not until recently has Freeway Park been emulated, probably due to cities’ inability to replicate such complex relationships and to compile funds and interest from such a diversity of motivated bodies. Boston’s “Big Dig,” still in progress, includes parks above the newly tunneled Central Artery. Even in Seattle, the mayor announced in 2004 that the Alaskan Way Viaduct will be tunneled and development over it will include pedestrian promenades along the historic waterfront.

Though Freeway Park has set a high standard to which only recently cities are aspiring, the park itself is not without problems that must be addressed. However, to forget what the park represents would be catastrophic to its future. As Alan Tate states in his book *Great City Parks*,

With its angular, blocky, board-marked concrete forms and its regularly replicated palette of primarily evergreen plants, Freeway Park clearly reflects the age in which it was conceived and built. It is an essay in late

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251 This list of awards is largely derived from the landmark nomination form, pp. 35 and 37.
modernism. In some respects it is little more than a Band-Aid over the deep gash of the I-5. In a broader perspective it signaled the start of an urban revival in the United States after a postwar orgy of highway construction.\textsuperscript{253}

In other words, the park represents a powerful symbolic gesture to repair destruction caused by the rapid and careless development of the post-war era.

**Summary of Recommendations**

In order to save the park from irrecoverable loss, the following recommendations should be implemented:

- Access is the number one priority for the park, since many of the entrances are hidden or unknown (*Illus. 3.50*). The following are suggestions to address this major problem:
  - Firstly, ask Angela Danadjieva and Lawrence Halprin how access might be enhanced. Apparently, Danadjieva is resistant to consider any potential changes,\textsuperscript{254} so perhaps a conversation with Mr. Halprin would be more fruitful, since he has been flexible in the reevaluation some of his other designs. Just as Portland’s fountain sequence influenced the original development of Freeway Park, Halprin’s creative involvement in readdressing his designs there should serve as an additional example and influence for those currently trying to “update” Freeway Park.

\textsuperscript{253} Tate, p. 19.
\textsuperscript{254} According to conversations with David Brewster, Director of Town Hall, Susanne Friedman, parks department project manager and Brice Maryman and Liz Birkholz, authors of the park’s landmark nomination form, all in February 2005.
o Establish a competition for local designers or, most ideally, get Danadjieva and/or Halprin, to rework the entrance off Seneca Street and 6th Avenue, since it is the main access point from the downtown. More consideration should be given to luring people in off the street by allowing glimpses into the Central Plaza and the pleasures within.

o Open up the Pigott Corridor. This later addition is maze-like and disorienting and should be reworked by either a designer selected through local competition (see above) and/or again, most ideally, with input from Danadjieva and/or Halprin.

o Institute a standardized signage scheme, designed with consideration for the park’s concepts, themes and intended use and place signs at each entrance and perhaps at key intersections near the park to attract users. Included on these signs should be a brief history of the park’s development, as well as a description of the conceptual aspects of the park’s design. They should also include a map of the interior of the park. This form of education will most definitely stimulate interest. Since the early 1980s, few such attempts to publicize the impressive nature of the park have been made.

- Include the same information suggested for the signage scheme in tourist brochures. Hotels, such as the Crowne Plaza, surround the park and information about the nearby amenity should be circulated to route awareness.

- Within the park, maps should be inserted at a few points of potential directional confusion. These maps should illustrate the different sections of the park and
what might be discovered within the park’s many spaces. The park exits should be illustrated on these maps. The maps should be designed using the same standards established for the access signage scheme recommended above.

- Allow food vendors in the park. Currently, city policy forbids vendors from stationing themselves within downtown parks to avoid litter cleanup and potential competition with local restaurants. This policy is currently under reevaluation.\(^{255}\) Having removable vendor carts within the park only at lunchtime would no doubt enliven the park without detriment to the physical material and, if stationed appropriately, without effect on the current visitor experience.

- Support the recommendation by PPS to use the Convention Center Plaza for an outdoor café, since it is isolated from the main park and might attract more people (Illus. 3.36). Currently, the plaza has no use and is only an expanse of concrete pavement with border plantings. Situating a pedestrian canopy, perhaps over tables and chairs, within this space will also offer a place to shelter oneself from rain.

- The doors from the Convention Center that lead out onto the plaza are currently locked and used only as fire exits. These should be full-time access doors that invite visitors to discover and enjoy the park.

- Reinstating the annual horticultural displays in the intended areas will demonstrate that the park is well-maintained and should be treated with respect by all its visitors. These displays have already been partly reintroduced (Illus. 3.31). Relying on nearby businesses to supply funds for these plantings was long

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\(^{255}\) According to Brice Maryman and Liz Birholz, a Downtown Parks Task Force has been recently developed to address such issues.
encouraged by James Ellis. This policy should be reinstated. In 1976, park superintendent David Towne “[hoped] to recruit several of the retired men and women who live in apartments nearby as part-time staff members, identifiable by a shoulder patch. They [would] be on duty in the park during certain hours to answer questions, perhaps garden a little, and set a housekeeping example by picking up litter.”

Because a lot of the nearby elderly population apparently love the park, attempting such a program might be successful. The Horizon House advertises potential opportunities for gardening in their “Secret Garden,” demonstrating that there is interest in this hobby.

- Reinstate the “Out to Lunch” concerts and other programming similar to that which once enlivened the space. The discovery of the park through attending one of these events, might encourage future park regulars.
- According to the PPS study, Horizon House members proposed organizing a regular “Walk around the Park” on a designated route for health and exercise and to increase people presence. Implementing this program should be encouraged.
- Descending into the Canyon fountain presents the only truly scary experience in the park, owing to blind corners and little opportunity to escape if a problem should arise. The sound of falling water overtakes one’s sense of sound, decreasing the ability to retain full awareness. Reversible additions such as mirrors reflecting around corners might alleviate potential risky situations or simply relieve some fears.

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257 As indicated by the PPS document, as well as David Brewster and Susanne Friedman, both involved in public workshops in which these park users participated.
• For the fountains, if the city can only afford the operation of a single pump at a time, it should run at full capacity. On special occasions and for special events, the city should consider increasing the operation to two pumps.

• Remove the metal mesh over the viewing window at the bottom of the Canyon fountain (Illus. 3.27). The window, situated upon the freeway’s median strip, was a critical element within the original design, since it made the visitor aware of the park’s engineering ingenuity and to what the park was responding.

• Relight the fountains to their original dramatic schemes. Photographs of the fountains in their early life reveal the incredible illumination of the cascading water and the shadow patterns reflected as a result of the submerged lights.259

• Remove the planters left over from other parks (Illus. 3.48). The planters are not compatible with the park’s design.

• Rework the base of the Park Place Building so the daycare facility has access directly onto the park. Children accompanied by teachers and adults will enliven the space and the park can serve as an educational and interactive experience for the children.

• Remove the chain-link fencing preventing access to the “hidden” areas (Illus. 3.47), address any drainage or irrigation problems in these spaces and simply fill in with soil and plant densely using compatible species. This intervention is reversible, more aesthetically pleasing and just as effective.

• Establish pruning guidelines for dense vegetation. Pruning operations should occur regularly to avoid the future need for large-scale tree removals.

259 See Moyer, pp. 169 and 262.
Because the Freeway Park Neighborhood Association (FPNA) has had a generally positive effect on the park, their continued work and presence could be encouraged, but these individuals must broaden their representation (and find a new president).

These suggestions should demonstrate that, yes, the park has some problems, but attempts to solve them should not genericize the space or design people out of it. The purpose of the recommendations is to encourage the diversity of usership the park once attracted. The park should be preserved as a symbol, a gesture addressing a major social and environmental issue and its varied design should be respected and celebrated as an element of diversity within the city fabric, a place that is unique and worth preserving. According to Halprin:

When we learn to recycle and utilize the many resources our cities have to offer, instead of just complaining and being victimized, then we can get on with a truly creative job of making great cities. We have made a park and a large scale piece of sculpture for people to move in and through – a stage set for creative involvement and citizens’ use.\(^\text{260}\)

\(^{260}\) Quotation from Burns’ “Hanging Gardens of Seattle,” p. 4.
Conclusion

Halprin’s parks offer a diversity of interactive experiences that add character and stimulation to the increasingly homogenous downtown environment. However, not all his designs are worth preserving or rehabilitating. Remaining cautious when there is a potential for drastic change is essential, since often the consequence, in a country interested in low-maintenance, low-expense and, therefore low-quality, is change for the worse and often results in the displacement of portions of the population that do not conform to the middle-class norm.

The public is both obsessed with change and “advancement,” as well as disoriented and unsettled by it, a tension best illustrated by the urban renewal era when the drive to modernize provoked a stronger interest in historic preservation. Change to the urban fabric is obviously often quite necessary and should be welcomed if a thoughtful management plan is developed prior to implementation. There are some Halprin public spaces that should be fully or partially redesigned due to either weak design, diminished experiential integrity or changing contexts. The fountain in San Francisco’s U.N. Plaza, the pedestrian promenade connecting City Hall to Market Street, the main downtown thoroughfare, is an awkward uninspiring design for what was supposed to memorialize the founding of the United Nations in 1945 (Illus. C.1). Because the area became a gathering place for homeless, as well as a site for illegal activities, the
benches were pulled out to prevent sleeping\textsuperscript{261} and the fountain was recently fenced off to prevent washing and toileting. However, with no benches and a chain fence with offensive “No Trespassing” signs surrounding the central feature (\textit{Illus. C.2}), the park welcomes almost no one except social outcasts who have no other place to go. A public market is situated within the park twice a week to prevent full surrender of the space to this single portion of the population. The plaza is being redesigned with the retention of the fountain and the replacement of its fence with another more “attractive” barrier.\textsuperscript{262} However, the fountain is only weakly related to what it is supposed to memorialize and its meaningless spouts of water and bulky granite blocks are contrived. The rest of the plaza is relatively generic or “flexible.” If there were funds and insight enough to conduct a careful study of the area and its relationship with the surrounding civic buildings and with the establishment of the international institution, then a full redesign should have been recommended.

The Justin Herman Plaza, the site of the Armand Vaillancourt fountain, is another Halprin public space that is currently threatened, yet might benefit from partial redesign (\textit{Illus. C.3 & C.4}). The plaza was conceived as a response to the elevated Embarcadero freeway that separated the city from its waterfront. The fountain, which at one time recycled 30,000 gallons of water per minute, has provoked dialogue and debate since its completion in 1972. While the plaza in its entirety was meant to serve as a public amenity to balance the oppressive freeway, the concept of the fountain was to directly respond to and echo its violent energy. The water falling from angular steel and concrete forms, the same materials used in freeway construction, muffled the noise of the elevated traffic. The remainder of the plaza is relatively open and

\textsuperscript{261} The benches were removed in April 2001.
\textsuperscript{262} According to the March 9, 2005 press release on the “United Nations Plaza Transformation,” issued by the City and County of San Francisco Office of the Mayor (http://www.sfgov.org/site/mayor_page.asp?id=30529), the plaza is being redesigned with the retention of the fountain, removing one wall and replacing the fence with a more permanent “attractive” design.
“flexible” and was altered in 1982 by the development of an outdoor theater, landscaping scheme and the addition of moveable tables and chairs. Since the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake, which led to the destruction of the freeway, the city has been trying to tackle redevelopment of its waterfront. Without the backdrop of the structure to which it responded, the fountain is considered by some irrelevant and too awkward to be integrated into a redesign. Redesigning the plaza would not be a significant loss, since except for the fountain it is simply an open area once meant to host events, but to tear out the fountain would be a travesty. The fountain, instead of responding to the freeway, now memorializes it. In addition to serving as a reminder of the destructive forces that effect cities at an alarming pace, the fountain offers a micro-experiential landscape that stimulates the senses and invites interactive behavior. Though visually awkward to many, the fountain’s form and monumentality provokes stimulating debate, as well as serves as a playful environment within which one may walk and climb, both when the water is on and off (Illus. C.5, C.6, C.7). Therefore, unlike what should have been done at U.N. Plaza, which, instead of retaining the fountain as is currently planned, needs complete redesign, the Justin Herman Plaza could be redesigned, but the fountain retained. As illustrated by the study of Skyline Park, however, simply retaining fragments of past designs is not universally a means of successful preservation. The only distinct meaning and significance of the Justin Herman Plaza is generated by the fountain, whereas at Skyline Park, all the pieces contributed to a cohesive whole and now the few that remain act as fragmented ruins whose quality of form exaggerate the soulless character of the new design.

Yet there are also threatened Halprin spaces with an experiential quality similarly as potent as the three case studies, such as the Water Garden on the East Plaza of the Washington

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State Capitol grounds in Olympia. Though less complex than the case study sites, this intimate space is a meditative walled garden once animated by spouting and cascading water and now serving as an overgrown ruin within which one may find calm refuge (Illus. C.8-C.13). 264 However, its state as a ruin does not fit the image the state government wants to portray, so the garden did not initially appear on plans for the East Plaza’s redesign being undertaken by EDAW, Inc. Luckily, however, saving this space is currently a favored possibility, since some state employees and local residents voiced dissent and designer Rick LeBrasseur published an article in *Landscape Architecture*, 265 inciting broader protest, particularly by individuals trained to evaluate the quality of landscape design. In addition, the Department of General Administration commissioned the State Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation and the Washington State Arts Commission to issue a report, which favors restoration despite the fact that the cost is almost double what is anticipated for demolition and redesign. 266 Due to education efforts, public activism and pressure from design professionals nationwide, the state is currently considering restoring the garden. In fact, thus far, the process to save this site should serve as a precedent for other attempts to save other public spaces designed in the modern era.

In contrast to Portland, where funding and activism was largely initiated by one wealthy individual, 267 the approach to Olympia’s Water Garden has been a broader public process,

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264 The water was shut off in 1992 due to a leak from an unidentified location.
265 LeBrasseur, “Sublime neglect: On Washington’s state capitol grounds, years of neglect have turned a vintage Halprin garden into a soulful shrine,” *Landscape Architecture* 93, n. 6, June 2003, pp. 140, 138-139.
267 According to Marcy McInelly of Urbsworks, Inc., in her article on “The Lawrence Halprin Landscapes Conservancy, Restoration Master Plan & Tree Rejuvenation Project, Portland, Oregon” (from The Cultural Landscape Foundation website: http://www.tclf.org/halprin_portland.htm), “John Russell, a local real estate developer whose offices overlook the parks, decided to act upon his conviction that these landscapes were worth the investment of his time and resources. In the summer of 2001 Mr. Russell retained Urbsworks,
involving early efforts by local stakeholders, design and preservation professionals and government agencies.

As should be evident by each of the site analyses, there is no single formula to apply to Halprin’s threatened spaces, however. The sites share some similarities, the result of being generated by the same office, but each responds to the individual needs and requirements of the place, and each, therefore, deserves a uniquely tailored preservation and management plan. However, some interventions and methods of activation will certainly overlap. Halprin should be consulted in the process of reclaiming these sites, since he has proven himself open to change and has the required insight about how to work within the parks’ conceptual frameworks. His public process methodology could be employed to encourage active input from today’s public. Educating present and potential stakeholders on the experiential value and conceptual nature of these parks will inspire interest if none yet exists. With a widely represented public interested in the park and its historic, social and aesthetic significance, volunteer programs and public events will contribute to saving these sites from a fate of destruction. Most importantly, in order to save these designs, the public must understand the site’s significance within the broader historical and physical context, rather than view it through the lens of today’s limited attitude toward public space.

Inc. to oversee a survey of existing conditions, research the original design documents, meet with Halprin's office to ascertain the design intent, and develop an implementation plan for the ultimate restoration of these iconic pieces of American landscape design. He says ‘This plan will be the culmination of a dream of mine going back at least a decade that these parks have the “tender loving care” that they deserve.’"
Illustrations

1.1 Photograph of Lovejoy Plaza, Portland, OR. Photograph by the author, August 2004.

1.2 Photograph of Pettygrove Park, Portland, OR. Photograph by the author, August 2004.
1.3 Photograph of Auditorium Forecourt (now the Ira Keller Fountain), Portland, OR. Photograph by the author, August 2004.

1.4 Photograph of Auditorium Forecourt (now the Ira Keller Fountain), Portland, OR. Homeless youth are gathered just behind the children, demonstrating the contrast of stakeholders. Photograph by the author, August 2004.
1.5 Photograph of Auditorium Forecourt (now the Ira Keller Fountain), Portland, OR. Photograph by the author, August 2004.

1.6 Photograph of Auditorium Forecourt (now the Ira Keller Fountain), Portland, OR. Photograph by the author, August 2004.
1.1 March 1, 1977 Heritage Plaza site plan. From the Halprin Archives at the University of Pennsylvania. Formerly housed in tube box 867, now in the flat files. Text in green written by the author over same annotations by original draughtsman.
1.2 1995 map of downtown Fort Worth. Map by William Potter illustrated as the frontispiece in Robert Selcer’s *The Fort that Became a City*. Fort Worth: Texas University Press, 1995 (with two notations by the author).
1.3 March 2001 aerial photograph of Heritage Park, Paddock Viaduct, TXU power plant and the Trinity River fork. Photograph by Paula Briggs.

1.4 March 2001 aerial photograph of Heritage Park, courthouse, criminal justice building and associated parking garage (to left of park). Photo by Paula Briggs.
1.5 Photograph of the ruins just west of Heritage Park along the Trinity River with the criminal justice building parking garage in the background. Photograph by the author, January 2005.

1.7 Photograph of Trinity River Vision model on display at the Fort Worth Community Arts Center. Photograph by the author, January 2005
1.8 March 2001 aerial photograph of Ripley Arnold Housing Development with Paddock Viaduct in background. Photograph by Paula Briggs.

1.9 Photograph of new Radio Shack headquarters on the bluffs of the Trinity River. Part of the Trinity River Vision development. Photo by the author, January 2005.

1.11 Photograph of the primary entrance to Heritage Park with interpretive sign in the foreground. Photograph by the author, January 2005.
1.12 Photograph of the primary entrance into Heritage Park. Photograph by the author, January 2005.

1.14 Photograph of the pavilion and “source fountain.” Photograph by the author, January 2005.

1.16 1977 elevation drawing of Upper Heritage Park with the switchbacks to Lower Heritage Park in the foreground. From the Halprin Archives at the University of Pennsylvania. Formerly housed in tube box 867, now in the flat files.

1.18 1977 drawing of the approach to the park’s belvedere and bridge. From the Halprin Archives at the University of Pennsylvania. Formerly housed in tube box 867, now in the flat files.

1.19 1977 drawing of visitors experiencing the view. Notice the water that falls from the runnel in the handrail to one along the ground. From the Halprin Archives at the University of Pennsylvania. Formerly housed in tube box 867, now in the flat files.
1.20 1977 drawing of the bridge and lookouts. From the Halprin Archives at the University of Pennsylvania. Formerly housed in tube box 867, now in the flat files.

1.21 1977 drawing of Heritage Park and path to Lower Heritage Park (the draughtsman is looking east over the park). Notice the anonymous building drawn adjacent to the plaza. In 1977 this land, owned by Tarrant County, was undeveloped, but has since been developed as a multi-story parking garage. From the Halprin Archives at the University of Pennsylvania. Formerly housed in tube box 867, now in the flat files.
1.22 Photograph of the plan of Fort Worth inlaid into the water wall (water used to cascade over the wall). Photograph by the author, January 2005.

1.23 Photograph of the view through the park’s enclosing wall to the inlaid plan of Fort Worth. Photograph by the author, January 2005.
1.24 Photograph of the “garden.” Plants are evergreen yaupons. Photograph by the author, January 2005.

1.25 Photograph of the upper level of Heritage Park. Very little sunlight can penetrate the park’s thick canopy. Photograph by the author, January 2005.
1.26 Photograph of the view as one approaches the “belvedere.” Photograph by the author, January 2005.
1.27 Photograph taken from the Paddock Viaduct of Heritage Park and its context. Notice the lookout platform jutting from the viaduct. Photo by the author, Jan. 2005.

1.28 Photograph taken from the Paddock Viaduct of Heritage Park. Photograph by the author, January 2005.
1.29 Photograph of the TXU power plant and the Paddock Viaduct. Photograph by the author, January 2005.

1.30 Photograph of the TXU power plant and the West Fork of the Trinity River. Photograph by the author, January 2005.
1.31 Photograph of the “wild” plantings near the edge of the bluff. Photograph by the author, January 2005.

1.32 Photograph of the “bridge” and the water channel along the handrail. Photograph by the author, January 2005.
1.33 Photograph of the first grotto within the park sequence. Water once cascaded down the grotto wall. Photograph by the author, January 2005.

1.34 Photograph of the “stepping stones” to the terminal grotto. Water once pooled in the dry basin. Photograph by the author, January 2005.
1.35 Photograph of the terminal grotto and steps down to Lower Heritage. Water once cascaded in the grotto and over the wall to the right. Photo by the author, Jan. 2005.

1.37 Photograph of the switchbacks descending to Lower Heritage Park. Photograph by the author, January, 2005.

1.38 Photograph of the switchbacks descending to Lower Heritage Park. Photograph by the author, January, 2005.
1.39 Photograph of the area between the park and the adjacent parking garage (taken from the west edge of the park toward the garage). Photo by the author, Jan. 2005.

1.41 Photograph of the attempts to locate a leak in the pump system. Photograph by the author, January 2005.

1.42 Photograph of detached pavers. Photograph by the author, January 2005.
1.43 Photograph of a detail of the TRV model showing a cable car extending from the park to the TXU power plant. Photograph by the author, January 2005.
2.1 Skyline Park site plan. From the files of Connie Wanke, with annotations by the author.
Circa 1969 DURA map of Skyline Urban Renewal Area. From the Skyline Park office documents of the Halprin Archives at the University of Pennsylvania.
2.4 Circa 1969 USGS aerial photograph of downtown Denver. Skyline Park blocks are outlined in red. From the Halprin Archives at the University of Pennsylvania, box 149, 014.I.A.4670.
2.5 January 22, 1972 schematic drawing of the planned pedestrian bridge over Arapahoe Street into Block 16 of Skyline Park. From the Halprin Archives at the University of Pennsylvania, flat file 014.II.A.256.

2.6 January 22, 1972 schematic drawing of the planned pedestrian bridge over Arapahoe Street into Block 16 of Skyline Park. From the Halprin Archives at the University of Pennsylvania, flat file 014.II.A.256.
2.7 January 22, 1972 schematic drawing of the planned pedestrian bridge over Arapahoe Street into Block 16 of Skyline Park. From the Halprin Archives at the University of Pennsylvania, flat file 014.II.A.256.

2.8 Sketches presenting various schemes for brick paving patterns inspired by the artwork of local Native Americans. From the Halprin Archives at the University of Pennsylvania, flat file 014.II.A.256.
February 25, 1970 notes regarding the proposed brick paving patterns derived from the art and crafts of local Native Americans. From the Halprin Archives at the University of Pennsylvania, box 150, 014.I.A.4677.
IF we cannot change any master plan given to us, perhaps:

→ We try to solve the problem of level crossing of feet at 17th & Arapahoe in own site.

→ We try to relate nicely to adjoining plaza levels, which are elevated about 1 or 2 stories high.

→ We try to avoid a strong feeling of being separated from major plaza.

NOT THIS

BUT PERHAPS LIKE THIS, OR SOMETHING ELSE

2.10 May 19, 1970 ideas for the design of parkside buildings. From the Halprin Archives at the University of Pennsylvania, box 150, 014.I.A.4677.

ALTHOUGH the surface of the pavement will be rough and soft, the sound will be reflected on the surface then reflected on the wall of building surrounding the park. The noise should be absorbed by trees (after trees partially grow up), and partially by the shape of buildings.

2.11 Notes on acoustical effects of adjacent development. From the Halprin Archives at the University of Pennsylvania, box 149, 014.I.A.4665.
2.12 September 17, 1970 presentation drawing of Block 16 by Satoru Nishita. From the Halprin Archives at the University of Pennsylvania, flat file 014.II.A.256.

2.13 September 17, 1970 presentation drawing of Block 17 by Satoru Nishita. From the Halprin Archives at the University of Pennsylvania, flat file 014.II.A.256.
2.14 September 17, 1970 presentation drawing by Satoru Nishita of the area at the base of the D & F Tower. From the Halprin Archives at the University of Pennsylvania, flat file 014.II.A.256.
2.15 Studies of the park in clay. From the office files of the Halprin Archives at the University of Pennsylvania.

2.16 October 16, 1970 schematic plan for Block 16. From the Halprin Archives at the University of Pennsylvania, box 149, 014.I.A.4676.
2.17 Sketch illustrating circulation if neither 16th nor 17th Streets were closed to vehicular traffic (this is the scheme that was eventually adopted). From the Halprin Archives at the University of Pennsylvania, flat file 014.II.A.256.

2.18 Sketch illustrating circulation if neither 16th nor 17th Streets were closed to vehicular traffic, but a “pedestrian overbridge” was constructed over both. From the Halprin Archives at the University of Pennsylvania, flat file 014.II.A.256.
2.21 2003 photograph of Block 18 taken from the D & F Tower. CO-HALS 001, photograph by Gifford Ewing.
2.22 2003 photograph of Block 18 fountain. CO-HALS 001, photograph by Gifford Ewing.
2.23 2003 photograph of Block 18. CO-HALS 001, photograph by Gifford Ewing.

2.24 2003 photograph of Block 18. CO-HALS 001, photograph by Gifford Ewing.
2.25 2003 photograph of Block 18. From Mary Voelz Chandler’s article “Downtown landscape will lose ‘70s-era Skyline Park.” Rocky Mountain News (May 17, 2003): 5D.
2.26 Photograph of Block 18 after redesign. Photograph by the author, January 2005.

2.27 Block 18 schematic of Balsley’s redesign.
2.29 2003 photograph of the Block 17 fountain. CO-HALS 001, photograph by Gifford Ewing.

2.30 Photograph of the Block 17 fountain. Photograph by the author, January 2005.
2.31 June 20, 1972 drawing of human interaction with the Block 17 fountain. From the Halprin Archives at the University of Pennsylvania, flat file 014.II.A.256.

2.32 June 20, 1972 drawing of human interaction with the Block 17 fountain. From the Halprin Archives at the University of Pennsylvania, flat file 014.II.A.256.
2.33 Photograph of Block 17 after redesign. Photograph by the author, January 2005.

2.34 Block 17 schematic of Balsley’s redesign.
2.35 2003 aerial photograph of Block 16. CO-HALS 001, photograph by Gifford Ewing.

2.37 Analysis of workflow over the Block 16 fountain. From the Halprin Archives at the University of Pennsylvania, flat file 014.II.A.256.

2.38 Photograph of Block 16 parkside development: the now-abandoned restaurant is on the left and the parking garage (and its roof plaza) is on the right. Photograph by the author, January 2005.
2.39 Photograph of the “No Trespassing - Private Property” sign blocking off the stairs to the plaza on the roof of the garage along Block 16. Photograph by the author, January 2005.

2.41 Photograph of Block 16 after redesign. Photograph by the author, January 2005.

2.42 Block 16 schematic of Balsley’s redesign.

2.44 Photograph of the D & F Tower, Block 18 and the surface parking lot that replaced the Central Bank Building just beyond Block 18. CO-HALS 001, photograph by Gifford Ewing.
2.45 Photograph of the 16th Street Mall. Photograph by the author, January 2005.
Photograph of the “Keep off the Grass” signs staked into mulch. Photograph taken by Connie Wanke, circa 2002.
2.47 Circa 1998 photograph of prohibitive signs mounted on the Block 18 fountain. Photograph by John Dixon Hunt.

2.48 Photograph of park sign after the redesign. Photograph by the author, January 2005.
2.49 Photograph of the cracked concrete. Photograph by the author, January 2005.

2.50 Photograph of Block 17 fountain concrete deterioration caused by freeze-thaw-cycles. Photograph by the author, January 2005.
HISTORY AND CONTEXT

Skyline Park was built at its dedication in 1973 as a modern urban amenity for Downtown Denver. The 3.2-acre park at the foot of the historic Daniels & Fisher Tower was the street-level counterpoint of the “Skyline Center” initiative, an urban renewal project that set out to replace 79 blocks of blighted buildings with new offices and apartment high-rises. Based on each person square foot, it was the most expensive park that had ever been built in America.

Designed by renowned landscape architect Lawrence Halprin, Skyline Park’s signature feature is its sunken and elevated spaces. The sunken piazza was created to visually balance park views from the street level between surface parking lots, construction sites and vacant buildings that surrounded Skyline Park when it was built.

The high barriers and walls that separated the park from vehicular traffic on Arapahoe Street orient park activity inward.

In recent years, the use of Skyline Park has declined because of the park’s isolation from adjacent streets, inadequate pedestrian access and misleading hard surfaces. Many people do not recognize it as a public park. Coupled with insufficient lighting and numerous hidden spaces, the park’s lack of pedestrian activity has added significant safety, crime and maintenance problems. The landscape surrounding Skyline Park has changed dramatically in the past 25 years, and it is now time to re-energize this critical downtown space back into the city fabric. Simply put, the park’s private orientation must be re-designed in a more public and by increasing its visibility from the street, using its open spaces to urban level to encourage use and enhance safety, and improving its linkages with adjacent streets and sidewalks to invite pedestrians.

The Skyline Park Master Plan envisions a beautiful and vibrant urban park designed for year-round use. The following design principles were established as a framework for pedestrian-oriented, visually cohesive, durable and user-friendly public space:

1. Create a beautiful civic park: i.e. open lawn
2. Optimize safety and accessibility: i.e. lighting
3. Provide pedestrian connections: i.e. promenade
4. Encourage the success of adjacent uses: i.e. cafes
5. Create space for special events: i.e. events plaza
6. Provide a variety of experiences: i.e. children’s area

As the range of Downtown users grows increasingly diverse — including residents, employees, tourists, families, the elderly and children — the need for quality, inviting and safe public spaces has never been more important. As Skyline Park enters the new era in Downtown, its design must better the energy that exists at the crossroads of Arapahoe Street and the 16th Street Mall.

PEDESTRIAN ACCESS

There are sidewalks on Arapahoe Street for its three-block stretch alongside Skyline Park, making it one of the most pedestrian-friendly streets in Downtown. Pedestrian access and linkages into the park’s sunken areas are blocked, significantly decreasing public activity and safety.

To improve public safety and pedestrian access, the Skyline Park Master Plan proposes removing the walls and barriers that line Arapahoe Street. A wide sidewalk would be added with a double row of shade trees, creating a promenade with a strong pedestrian setting. An adjacent traffic lane on Arapahoe Street would also be converted to parallel bike lanes, adding another pedestrian buffer from auto traffic and offering more access to the park.

OPEN LAWNS

25 child-friendly lounges and improve park use patterns, the Skyline Park Master Plan calls for demolishing the park’s hardwood clusters and raising the sunken spaces to grade level.

The raised areas would be redesigned with open lawns while incorporating an active events plaza and children’s play area at 16th Street. Adjacent businesses would be encouraged to provide and manage movable seating and outdoor areas. New pedestrian paths would be placed throughout for increased security at night. Other possible uses for the raised park space include a public marketplace, on-site dressing and temporary art displays.

Skyline Park Master Plan
5 The Concept for Skyline Park

The concept plan for Skyline Park establishes a comprehensive design framework. It identifies a set of design parameters and inter-relationships, to guide the transformation of the Park from an underutilized and forgotten place, to one of Denver's most exciting, inspired and active places - a civic stage within the heart of Downtown.

2.52 April 2001 scheme presented by Urban Strategies/Greenberg Consultants on p. 23 of “Skyline Park Revitalization Initiative.”
**General Notes:**

The following modifications, if sensitively implemented, will not compromise the essential and core design principals of the original design concepts of the HALPRIN design for Skyline Park.

1. Sunken central areas & raised perimeter conditions should be maintained except as noted below.
2. Fountains are to be retained and retrofitted with improved mechanical & electrical systems as appropriate.
3. Add new sidewalk along Arapahoe.
4. Reestablish continuous pedestrian passageway along northern building edge of the park.
5. Retain existing berms along Arapahoe (all 3 blocks) but interrupt berms with pathway connections between the new sidewalk and the interior areas of the park.
6. Remove raised planters fronting 18th St. & 15 St. Retain raised planters fronting 17th St. Remove raised planter on west side of 16th St.
7. Add single row of street trees along new Arapahoe sidewalk.
8. Raise sunken plaza east of the tower and replace with lawn area.
9. Selectively thin tree canopy to improve light penetration. If trees must be removed for health reasons they should be replaced in kind to maintain design intent.
10. Annual flower displays may be added but concentrated into single display area and NOT dispersed throughout park.
11. Keep parking along Arapahoe away from pathways entering the park.
12. Install special paving treatment at pedestrian crossings @ 16th & 17th Streets
13. Additional night lighting as deemed necessary should be consistent with the original design approach.

*These notes and the plan/diagram above are an outgrowth of our workshop of 5/31/02 in San Francisco*

- Lawrence Halprin

2.53 Final document generated from the RSVP-cycle workshop on Skyline Park.
3.2 Circa 1970 photograph of Interstate-5 dividing downtown (left) from First Hill (right). Photograph from the Seattle Municipal Archives, series 5804-04, box 1.

3.3 Map of Seattle showing the location of I-5. The Alaskan Way Viaduct is in red along the waterfront. From www.mapquest.com.
3.4 Circa 1970 photograph of Interstate-5 with the original Naramore Plaza pictured in the lower right. Photograph from the Seattle Municipal Archives, series 5804-04, box 1.

3.5 1971 photograph of the original Naramore Plaza. Photograph taken by William H. Wainwright. From the Seattle Municipal Archives, series 5804-04, box 1, folder 38.
3.7 Analysis of views into and from the park. From the Halprin Archives at the University of Pennsylvania, flat file 014.II.A.261a.
3.8 Photograph of tree planters extending below the park “lid.” Photograph by Brice Maryman and Liz Birkholz.

3.9 Photograph of the original 100-foot light poles. Photograph by the author, January 2005.
3.10 Drawing of the park from the perspective of the freeway. Drawing by Danadjieva. Scanned from slide housed at the Seattle Municipal Archives.

3.11 Photograph of the heavy frame of the park (vehicular perception). Photograph by the author, February 2005.

3.13 Drawing of the “Great Box Garden.” Scanned from slide housed at the Seattle Municipal Archives.
3.14 Photograph of the Seneca Street exit ramp and the “Great Box Garden.” Photograph by the author, August 2004.

3.15 Photograph of the cantilevered “box garden.” Photograph by the author, February 2005.
3.16 Photograph of West Plaza entrance. Photograph by the author, February 2005.

3.17 Photograph of a portion of the West Plaza’s horticultural display. Photograph by the author, February 2005.
3.18 Early drawing of human interaction with a cascade fountain scheme. From the Halprin Archives at the University of Pennsylvania, flat file 014.II.A.261a.

3.19 Early postcard of the Cascade fountain. From the Seattle Municipal Archives.
3.20 Photograph of the Cascade fountain with the water operating (at low capacity). Photograph by the author, August 2004.

3.21 Photograph of the Cascade fountain with the water off. Photograph by the author, August 2004.
3.22 Early drawing of people within the Central Plaza and views to the city beyond. From the Halprin Archives at the University of Pennsylvania, flat file 014.II.A.261a.

3.23 Early drawing of Canyon fountain. From the Halprin Archives at the University of Pennsylvania, flat file 014.II.A.261a.

3.25 Photograph of the Canyon fountain with the water turned on. Photograph by the author, August 2004.
3.26 Photograph of the bottom of the Canyon fountain (the viewing window is to the photographer’s immediate left). Photograph by the author, August 2004.

3.27 Photograph of the viewing window upon the freeway’s median strip. Photograph by the author, February 2005.
3.28 Early drawing of the Canyon fountain. Scanned from slide housed in the Seattle Municipal Archives.

3.29 Detail of clay model by Danadjieva. Scanned from slide housed in the Seattle Municipal Archives.
3.30 Photograph of the upper portion of the Central Plaza. Photograph by the author, August 2004.

3.31 Photograph of the 8th Avenue underpass (taken from the east). Notice the horticultural display. Photograph by the author, August 2004.
3.32 Photograph of the restroom facilities within the East Plaza (the elevator to the parking garage is in the back of this structure). The Horizon House is in the background. Photograph by the author, February 2005.
3.33 Photograph of the American Legion’s Freedom Plaza. Photograph by the author, February 2005.

3.34 Photograph of the American Legion inscription and plaque. Photograph by the author, August 2004.
3.35 Photograph of the original easternmost exit (onto 9th Avenue). This does not look like an exit until the visitor walks within a couple feet of the concrete wall straight ahead. Photograph by the author, February 2005.

3.36 Photograph of the Convention Center and the Convention Center plaza (taken from the American Legion plaza). Photograph by the author, February 2005.

3.38 Photograph looking down the Pigott Corridor. Photograph by the author, February 2005.


3.42 Photograph of the new office beneath the 8th Avenue underpass. Photograph by the author, February 2005.
3.43 Photograph of an Emergency Guard Call box in Freeway Park. Photograph by the author, August 2004.

3.44 Photograph of policemen on horseback surveying the park and benches upon which crossbars have been installed to prevent sleeping. Photo by the author, August 2004.
3.45 Photograph of the new entrance at Hubbell Place and Seneca Street bordered with incompatible plantings. Photograph by the author, February 2005.

3.46 Photograph of the recently-installed cobblestone path at Hubbell Place and Seneca Street. Town Hall is in the background. Photograph by the author, February 2005.
3.47 Photograph of chain-link fence installed to prevent people from accessing “hidden areas.” Photograph by the author, February 2005.

3.48 Photograph of the Central Plaza littered with planters from other city parks. Photograph by the author, February 2005.
3.49 Photograph of the 8th Avenue underpass with the Jensonia Hotel in the background (double-arched windows). Photograph by the author, February 2005.

3.50 Photograph of the hidden entrance/exit to the east of the 8th Avenue underpass. Photograph by the author, February 2005.
C.1 Photograph of the U.N. Plaza fountain. Photograph by the author, August 2004.

C.3 Photograph of the Justin Herman Plaza before the freeway was demolished. From: Benjamin Forgey’s “Lawrence Halprin: maker of places and living spaces.” *Smithsonian* 19, n. 9 (December 1988): 163.

C.5 Photograph of people walking within the Andre Villaincourt fountain. Photograph by the author, August 2004.
C.6 Photograph of people interacting with the Andre Villaincourt fountain. Photograph by the author, August 2004.

C.7 Photograph of children playing within the Andre Villaincourt fountain. Photograph by the author, August 2004.


C.12 Pre-1992 photograph of the water operating within the Water Garden on the East Plaza of the Washington State Capitol grounds in Olympia. Photograph courtesy of Michael Romero, EDAW, Inc.

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