Bringing New Life to Historic Urban Parks: Identifying the Key Elements of the Restoration Process

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BRINGING NEW LIFE TO HISTORIC URBAN PARKS:
IDENTIFYING THE KEY ELEMENTS OF THE RESTORATION PROCESS

Andrew Marc Goldfrank

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A host of people have helped to produce this document, from park restorers, fellow students, politicians, informed laymen, to academic advisors. Yet perhaps the most significant aid was from my family -- all of its four generations, to be exact -- who encouraged me to complete my task even as Europe, the Middle East, and Asia repeatedly distracted me. Thank you.
Chapter One: History of the Urban Landscaped Park

Conventionally, neighborhood parks or parklike open spaces are considered boons conferred on the deprived populations of cities. Let us turn this thought around, and consider city parks deprived places that need the boon of life and appreciation conferred on them. This is more nearly in accord with reality, for people do confer use on parks and make them successes -- or else withhold use and doom parks to rejection and failure.

Jane Jacobs, The Death and Life of Great American Cities

Preface

The decline of historic urban landscapes, symbolized by vandalized park benches, barren dustbowls where green meadows once flourished, and trash everywhere but in garbage cans, has transformed many of America's city parks from picturesque oases into problem-ridden wastelands. Parks over the last half a century have been plagued by a drying-up of municipal, state, and federal funds, and inappropriate use that qualifies as abuse. These factors, combined with well-intentioned but misguided parks operations efforts,
have collectively led to "dozens of dispirited city vacuums called parks." The 1980s has seen the rise of an ideological current which recognizes that urban natural landscapes are significant assets for cities. Now, an increasing number of municipalities are in the process of attempting to arrest the disintegration of their natural resources via public and private mechanisms. The goal of these efforts, whether political, ideological, or physical in origin, has been loosely termed "restoration."

In reality, the various revitalization strategies are a combination of traditional rehabilitation, renovation, and restoration endeavors. Regardless of the exact term for this process, the focus of urban park advocates throughout the United States is a return to the original nineteenth century concept of parks as natural areas in urban centers to be utilized primarily for passive activity. This philosophy reverses the trend in the role of the park that had been increasingly oriented toward active recreation.

The recent change in park ideology does little for the improvement and maintenance of the physical condition of urban parkland. The reforestation of park woodlands, the improvement of irrigation and drainage, the dredging of waterbodies, the returfing of meadows, the restoration of historic structures, the implementation of cleaning
programs, the creation of safer parks through policing, the marketing of the parks, the removal of non-conforming facilities and uses, and many other improvements, require a tremendous layout of capital improvement funds and an increase in annual maintenance and operations budgets. While funding is crucial, throwing money at a park without a master plan and strong leadership, in the presence of a receptive political climate, a supportive public constituency, and numerous other factors is tantamount to building a skyscraper without architectural or engineering plans.

* * *

The intent of this thesis is to illuminate the various mechanisms needed to organize and implement successfully the restoration of historic urban parks. This will be accomplished in three parts: a broad analysis of data, a specific case study, and a discussion of critical factors in a restoration model. The first phase will identify the key elements of a park restoration common to a number of cities. The next portion will be a detailed examination of restoration efforts within Fairmount Park in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The third and concluding section will assess the key factors for the restoration of historic urban American parks.
The Political Evolution of Urban Parks

The parks that exist in virtually every city in the United States were the result of intensive political lobbying by individuals concerned with intellectual democratic ideals of nature as a great equalizer and healer. During the 1840s and 50s, Andrew Jackson Downing was a fierce advocate for municipal parks while editor of The Horticulturist, a popular gardening and landscape magazine. Downing's early efforts were part of an intellectual reform movement intent on improving the social and economic lifestyles of the common man. This movement "established the large pastoral park as a permanent feature of the American cityscape."

The works and writings of Frederick Law Olmsted are representative of the park ideology that ensued and lasted until the end of the nineteenth century; his endeavors created "convenient opportunity to enjoy beautiful natural scenery and to obtain occasional relief from the nervous strain...of city life."

The notion that nature is a palliative for the stress of the city embodies the very force that spurred the development of urban parks in the second half of the nineteenth century. As Galen Cranz, author of The Politics
This far reaching movement was one of the principal achievements of liberal reformers who, like Olmsted, strove to cure ills that vastly enlarged commerce, industry, and population inflicted on America's cities...The systematic disposition of recreation [space] accessible to all...[in] a scheme to bring the healing power of nature into the lifeblood of the city were...antidotes to the poisons of congestion and disorder. In the new age of Urbanism, he [Olmsted] and his like-minded partisans saw these pernicious forces threatening material and moral health as well as the survival of democratic ideals.6

Recreation was considered to be passive in nature, involving strolling and picnicking; Olmsted wrote of "moving...among scenes that should be gratifying to their taste or imagination." Recreation was defined in literal terms as the "re-creation" of one's physical and mental health. The seventy hour work week of the average nineteenth century laborer further emphasized the passive use of parks because few had the time -- or energy -- for active recreation. Eventually, as leisure time increased a greater number of individuals participated in active recreation.

In response, municipalities turned meadows into tennis courts, golf courses and baseball diamonds; ponds and lakes into ice-skating rinks and swimming pools; and paths into speedways. General maintenance was kept up, and the parks
remained popular as centers of both passive and active recreation. This period, from the mid-1890s until the Depression, incorporated active recreation into a changing park philosophy. Although this development was not entirely responsible for the destruction of the parks, the change in purpose laid the foundation for future destructive tendencies.

The Great Depression and the 1930s signaled the end of this reform movement. Instead, the government needed to keep the unemployed masses busy, and, where else, but in the parks. With the help of the Civilian Conservation Corps and the Work Project Administration, thousands of unskilled people turned to the parks as a source of employment and pleasure. Recreation departments were formed in every city, some in conjunction with parks departments. Ultimately, both focused on the same land, creating conflicts of use and management. The parks became an active recreation service requiring economy and standardization under the guidance of a formidable bureaucracy. By the 1950s, the parks were subject to facilitation and re-organization based on economy and ease of management. Urban parks were made efficient with wire mesh, cyclone fences and economical, 10-ton sanitation trucks encroaching on beautiful open fields and winding pea gravel paths.
This streamlined, service-oriented trend continued into the 1960s. However, a lack of funding, poor staffing levels, an inability to satisfy a plurality of users, and changes in the socio-economic structure of cities helped to make parks another urban crisis instead of a cure. The crux of these problems was the insufficient political support leading to a dearth of funding. At inception, urban parks were one of the first successful social reform projects which captured the majority of funding for social reform. The expansion of the reform movement into other avenues, such as daycare, public housing, education, hospitals, and unemployment compensation, undermined the primary philosophical need and the economic support for urban parks. The displacement of parks as a primary reform project brought not only a loss of idealism, but also a "loss of authority and prestige, and this was reflected in park budgets." While funding for social reform programs grew tremendously, the percent share for the parks dramatically decreased, failing to keep pace with cost increases. Furthermore, the budget shortages of the Depression and World War II, caused urban parks to go into a downward spiral of decay that in some cases has been impossible to reverse even to this day.
By the early 1960s, urban park systems were entrapped in the urban crisis quagmire. The advent of endless suburbia depleted cities of the white middle-class, removing the core of many municipalities' tax base. This further aggravated the urban stigmas that had initially encouraged the abandonment of cities and deprived the parks systems of essential funding. Also, parks as the sites of rallies, protests, and riots became identified with the social and political turmoil of the era, making "parks virtually synonymous with battlegrounds." This had two effects: a decrease in general use of the parks by the public and a further reduction in park budgets, since few individuals were willing to visit or fund a forum of open expression of anger and violence.

The development of urban parks as "no-man's land" was intensified by the decline of public transportation. The increased dependence on automobiles, and the inadequate budgets of ageing mass transit systems resulted in worsening public transportation. This was significant because, as studies undertaken in the 1960s showed, the "percentage of use at established city parks seem to bear out the affinity between public park use and public transportation. Where transportation [near a park] declines or is terminated, park use falls off accordingly."
As parks were abandoned the connections with crime, vandalism, and moral filth transpired. Movies and television shows of the 1960s and 1970s, such as *Serpico* and *Kojak*, depicted urban parks as the places where illicit activities took place. This struck a deep, negative chord in park users and policy makers alike. After all, "crime in parks is particularly troublesome because of the legacy of parks being solutions to and havens from urban problems. The split between real urban environments and ideal park environments makes parks' offenses outstanding." The media's heightened coverage of crime in urban parks does not mean that there has been "an unprecedented decline of civilization." Historically, the police officer has been a fundamental element of parks since their inception.

Attempting to respond to the concern over crime, the park planners of the 1960s figured that increased use would ameliorate these stigmas.

The movement to generate new interest in the parks led to a shift in expressed ideology that attempted to redefine the parks as open space limitless in use. Virtually any activity became permissible in the effort to jumpstart the parks back to life. Across the United States, "anything went: hot mulled wine, rock music, and bluegrass dancing in the snow for a collective New Year's Eve Celebration or Check-A-Child, a low cost child care program."
Ultimately, these forms of popular use led to the destruction of landscapes, turning massive fields, like Central Park's Sheep Meadow in New York, into barren dustbowls.

The paradox was that the plurality of users who were reattracted came to use the park as originally intended, for strolling and picnicking. However, they were often displaced, disgusted, or frightened by the destructive tendencies or the sheer numbers at these gatherings. Furthermore, these problems were not addressed at the policy level due to a lack of ideological conviction and persistent municipal budget crises.

This undirected park policy was the result of two conflicting charges stemming from the need for greater park awareness: the aforementioned "happenings" and the declaration of a number of historic urban parks as National Historic Landmarks. It is ironic that the desire for heightened park awareness led to a bureaucratic quandary. On the one hand, abusive tendencies could not be avoided and actually were aggravated in the craving for park users. On the other hand, park landscapes could not be altered to adapt to such destructive use because of an enlightened historic preservation perspective. Eventually, the first policy was labeled a failure when the attendees of mass
events abused the parks to such an extent that it became impossible to accommodate even these "happenings." The disrepair and surveys that discovered that the majority of the parks visitors are interested in passive use have led to a shift in park ideology that reflects the original concepts of Downing and Olmsted.

This recent swing of the park policy pendulum suggests that "pleasure grounds continue to be valued for their original purposes -- a soothing contrast to the city." Studies in New York's Central Park and Prospect Park indicate that over three-quarters of these parks' constituents use the open space passively, demonstrating a tremendous and, until surveyed, silent majority. The designation of many urban parks as historical natural landmarks further emphasizes that these open-spaces are aesthetic objects worthy of appreciation, either as historic material, or as an experience. Either view illustrates that urban parks have a broad constituency and thus potential social (and political) benefits.

In addition, the economic power of successful urban parks can not be underestimated since "beautiful parks make a city more attractive, which is to say, they make a city more of an attraction." However, the ability of parks to act as a magnet for tourist dollars and wealthy residents is
tied into Jacob's theory that parks need "appreciation conferred on them" in order to be successes. In other words, although a well-kept park attracts and retains its surrounding residents, if the park does not have these caring neighbors, it is relegated to becoming one of Jacob's "borders" or "vacuums." In turn, if a park is already abandoned, then it has no ability to attract appreciative locals. This analysis dissolves into a quandary analogous to the "chicken-and-egg" question of which comes first; in this case, attractive parks versus appreciative neighbors?

Attempting to address this question, as part of a larger program to boost America's inner cities, the Carter Administration encouraged reinvestment in cities' historic open-space through the Urban Parks and Recreation Recovery Program (UPRRG). Starting in 1978, the UPRRG funneled monies to various cities with deteriorating parks as part of the National Parks and Recreation Act. Unfortunately, the program never received the monies suggested by Congress, so the total appropriation for UPRRG was $185 million. To put this amount in perspective, according to the Central Park Conservancy, New York's Central Park alone needs $150 million for a complete restoration. This federal initiative was economically weak and short-lived due to the program's elimination during the Reagan Administration's first term.
In spite of this, in its first six years of existence the program encouraged the blossoming national initiative for the planning and undertaking of park restoration efforts.
Park Restoration Ideology

At the end of the 1970s, landscape preservation was a relatively new concept in the United States. By 1991, historic landscape preservation and restoration had made tremendous strides, with acknowledgement by a large proportion of municipalities and their residents. In order to understand the prevailing park ideology, an examination of restoration philosophy and practice would be helpful.

The need to take drastic steps toward rejuvenation creates problems for administrators. First is the imposition of historic preservation concepts, combined with the continually evolving nature of landscape. Another is the finding of practical means of dealing with the variety of modern recreation uses in parks. Lastly, current policy being geared toward recreating passive pleasure grounds in the Olmstedian tradition, it may not be historically accurate to "passify" a park that was designed in the active recreation era just after the turn of the century. These issues seem to be intertwined, since landscape preservation places great emphasis on nature's fluidity; for example, an environment can represent one ideology while being used in a seemingly contradictory manner. A concrete example would be Prospect Park's Long Meadow, designed by Olmsted as a pastoral landscape. After rehabilitation the Meadow
provides baseball diamonds and a playhouse, yet is considered "restored" by a majority of urban park preservationists.

A renowned preservationist, James Marston Fitch, recognized the problematic nature of restoring an evolving object, by labeling any restoration effort of historic designed parks as the "curatorship of a landscape." One reviewer of Central Park's restoration and management plans wrote in the Landscape Journal, how the repeated use of the term "restoration" raises query:

The word "restoration" is used differently in this work than is typical in preservation practice today. Fitch explains its application somewhat apologetically in terms of providing an "extended life for a noble old organism." The philosophy is further clarified when Barlow [the Central Park administrator] speaks of restoring "in the spirit of the original, if not absolutely to the last detail." However, reality seems even more heavily weighed to the needs of present users and to the political realities of retaining existing active recreational uses, even though most were not present in the original design.

The end result is that the uses that have evolved as part of park policy are sometimes just as significant as the original plan for the park. Just as the removal of an 1835 addition to a 1790 house museum would be inappropriate, it would also be deemed inexcusable to remove a Victorian period bandshell from a New England town green laid out in
the eighteenth century. Recreating and reinstating exact landscapes, as originally planned and constructed, is just not feasible or realistic.

One landscape architect and preservationist, Catherine Howett, in an issue of *Landscape Architecture* specifically devoted to natural historic landmarks, discussed the concepts of preservation and restoration when applied to buildings or objects in contrast to landscapes:

The analogy between the museum and the historic landscape breaks down when we must recognize that, in the first place, historic landscapes are not so much discrete objects as networks of dynamic processes, so there is no possibility of restoring some static ideal form that corresponds to the moment at which the artist laid down the brush or chisel, pronouncing the work finished. Secondly, historic landscapes have to function as contemporary environments -- we have literally to enter and become involved with them. With intentions enlightened to whatever degree, we must deliberately manipulate and determine the form of historic works, and almost always force them to accommodate new demands -- our need for rest rooms, litter receptacles, lights, paths, parking, additional buildings or whatever. This reality makes every landscape restoration a kind of "adaptive reuse" whether we like it or not.

Thus, it becomes the responsibility of park restorers to identify the original design intent and then incorporate the realities of the twentieth century as well as the future. These dual charges are administered by first targeting
specific original landscape features and park structures for restoration, rehabilitation, and reconstruction. Secondly, modern features necessary for management, use, economics, safety, security, and other relevant issues must be carefully incorporated with the "spirit" of the original design. The restoration must bridge the gap between nineteenth or early-twentieth century ideals and the addition of appropriate modern features, to attract and maintain a satisfied constituency.

However, it is the belief of many park administrators that crisis management, rather than park restoration, is the primary concern in current times of urban fiscal troubles. It is exactly such perceptions that have allowed the proliferation of abuse and neglect in many urban parks.

This negative attitude, in spite of contradictory evidence such as New York's and San Francisco's initiatives, continues to exacerbate the plight of urban parks throughout the United States. Furthermore, successful park restoration is directly related to the ability of park revitalization advocates to alter municipal and park policy. Examining the park rejuvenation strategies in cities across America will help identify critical elements for the successful restoration of historic urban parks.
The great things of the Park have been done. Its future value is now chiefly a question of nature's rule, and of protecting what has been and what may be secured...Invaluable though this possession is, it is a possession that may easily be lost...without incessant care, and intelligent and studious care.

Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr., New York Evening Post

An examination of the means and mechanisms of how some cities have overcome adversity, and are fulfilling the visions of park leaders and their constituents will identify some key elements in park restoration. Los Angeles, Chicago, and New York have developed successful restoration efforts using different systems. Three smaller cities, San Antonio, St. Paul, and Newark, have discovered ways more in keeping with their demographics that are also successful. The unique qualities of each city are significant, but more important to this analysis are the commonalities of their rejuvenation efforts.
Los Angeles, California

The historic parks of Los Angeles are relatively new when compared to East Coast cities' open spaces. The County and City of Los Angeles control about 70,000 acres, the largest municipal park system in America. About 4,500 acres fall into the historic landscape category, having been constructed in the 1930s during the Works Projects Administration.

This parkland deteriorated rapidly as a result of cuts in management, labor, equipment, and funding. In 1978 California voters staged a tax revolt and adopted Proposition 13, a statute that severely curtailed taxation and public expenditure. The direct consequence in the Los Angeles park system was a 17 percent per capita cut in funding, forcing massive labor layoffs of over 50 percent and leaving a workforce of only 1,098. Maintenance and staffing problems resulted in extensive decay and in selected area shutdowns. Also, to meet budget gaps the County and City transferred some land to the state and federal government.

In 1980, Ralph Cryder was appointed director of the Los Angeles County Parks and Recreation Department on account of his advocacy of "innovative entrepreneurial strategy" that
could "make the county a leader in the movement" of creative financing. Cryder hypothesized that the only means of surviving the fiscal crisis was to revive the parks by instituting a corrective capitalism approach to management.

Cryder teaches his approach that parks can be virtually self-sufficient at an annual summer "revenue school" for parks administrators sponsored by North Carolina State University. Appropriately, the school is in Wheeling, West Virginia at Oglebay Park, which is a landscape-architect designed park that operates almost entirely without taxing city residents.

By implementing his theories Cryder managed within five years to generate "more than a third of the $36 million used to operate the Los Angeles County Parks Department." He accomplished this via the creation of a water park, the improvement of the county's 18 golf courses, and proper care of other facilities such as campgrounds, and through strong marketing.

The City of Los Angeles has also adopted this revenue-enhancing strategy by profitably operating a motel and restaurant on the Pacific Coast Highway. In addition it has marketed its fee-generating recreation programs. In 1983, the City Parks and Recreation Department developed a profit-
making Equestrian Center, complete with extensive stables, grandstand, and banquet hall, in a corner of historic Griffith Park.

In contrast, the City currently is restoring 66 neighborhood parks and field houses with budget and voter-approved bond funding, combined with corporate sponsorship. This latest focus illustrates a strategy of capturing revenue via concession and user fees, but it also demonstrates that it may not be possible to support the entire park system in this manner. Traditional revenue sources will probably always be required.

Initially, Cryder "was encouraged to put his ideas into practice over...extensive opposition" that felt a commercialized business approach would deny the use of the parks to poorer constituents. Interestingly, while his innovative approach has reaped benefits for the parks, in recent years this strategy has been moderated and diversified in the wake of objections.

The 1984 Olympics held in Los Angeles allegedly became an example of excessive sponsorship, commercialization, and profiteering at the expense of those who were supposed to benefit, namely the public.
A primary example was the Pershing Square "facelift" restoration undertaken by the Pershing Square Management Association (PSMA) for the Olympic Games. Over a million dollars were raised through what was then referred to as "enlightened self-interest" helping to rejuvenate a park. The hastily-enacted restoration plan was to create an international food bazaar that would allow the park to be self-sufficient. Yet within a year, the PSMA stopped providing promised services, most importantly security, maintenance, and entertainment, thereby, essentially abandoning the park. The result is that "drug dealers and derelicts again dominate the historic downtown park and the hopeful, festive renaissance launched amid much fanfare...has fizzled."

Resources to finance the project properly were never available from the start. Christopher Stewart, the director of PSMA, stated, "we just didn't realize how big an undertaking it was to get that thing ready." Yet the "rejuvenation" idea was pursued, since it was assumed that market forces would respond and allow the future to pay for accumulated debt. However, as Stewart informed the public at a press conference in 1984, "when we got done, we realized we didn't have a long-range plan to implement."
At this same press conference, the PSMA unveiled a new plan that seemed based on the premise that bigger is better. The group proposed a $12 million retail plaza similar to Rouse's "urban festival" developments in Baltimore and Boston, even though the initial, smaller-scaled PSMA project still had a substantial unresolved debt. Los Angeles' Mayor Bradley, riding the wave of the commercialization spirit ushered in by the Olympics, gave approval to this second plan, until a deluge of criticism killed the project. The primary concern was that the ultimate goal of the project was to create a shopping mall, rather than to revive a historic park.

Since then, the County and City of Los Angeles' Parks and Recreation Departments have pointed to this experience to illustrate the need for site appropriate revenue from diverse sources. The Parks and Recreation departments have pushed the development and passage of state and local bond issues, encouraged an alliance with park advocacy groups, engaged in attracting site and event specific sponsorship, and endorsed other means of expanding park funding. This multi-faceted approach, with an emphasis on corrective capitalism, has allowed the Los Angeles parks system to achieve restoration aims and ensure a bright future.
Chicago, Illinois

Chicago's historic park system, in contrast, fell prey to a corrupt city and parks bureaucracy. After the great fire of 1871 "visionaries...planned a system of beautiful urban parks," which were carefully crafted over the next 40 years. However, by the mid-1980s the city's 7,000 plus acres of historic landscape struggled to retain the spirit of the original designs, having fallen victim to willful neglect and uncaring management.

Chicago's problem was not the inability to garner funding since the park system was created with the power to levy taxes. Furthermore, these tax monies were clearly being collected, because for almost three decades Chicago has had one of the nation's highest municipal parks budgets.

National studies show that by the 1980s the Chicago park system was, in theory, spending over $19,000 more per acre than the national municipal average of $3,894. Nevertheless, while the district tax system collected annually upwards of $300 million and supported over 5,000 employees, the parks actually decayed.

The monies were apparently not getting to the parks. The problem was political:
The park system became one of the most bloated patronage mills in town, with two of every three employees a direct political appointment, precinct payrollers good for collecting party dues and getting out the vote and not much else. Conditions in the parks declined, crime rose, gracious vistas became... denuded...show[ing] the machine's capacity for contempt of the past and disregard for the hopeful dreams of the founders of modern Chicago.18

Political corruption led to a paralysis of creativity and reform efforts. This prevented any resolution of the ailments that eventually became incurable in the public's mind. The antidote was likewise destructive. The resultant political infighting, after the death of Mayor "Boss" Daley, in 1976, started the dismantling of the Cook County Democrats organization.

Chicago's political turmoil has yet to subside. A 1986 court decision placed the Park Districts under Federal supervision because of racially discriminatory policies and poor management. This prevented the park system's neglectful leadership from doing additional damage.

Another blow to the political machine entrenched within the parks was the appointment of a new president. The approval was the culmination of a three-year struggle between the black Mayor Harold Washington and the remnants of machine politicians on the all-white City Council. The new administrator vowed to reform the Park District and
started by removing many "bossism" appointees including the parks superintendant.

The new leader was Walter A. Netsch, Jr., a well-known architect and planner, who brought desire and courage, along with the savvy to amend "the harm done to the City by bossism and machine politics." Changes have been widespread. From 1989 to 1991 marketing and revenue services and departments of preservation and oversight have been set up.

Part of the federal government's oversight involves correcting the racially-motivated neglect of parks by mandating the expenditure of district funds in minority area open-space. As this parkland improves there have been gains in the number of minority events held at parks, increases in volunteer hours by minority organizations and individuals, and a boost in general park usage by minority constituents.

These changes have motivated wealthier constituents, who until recently felt it ethically impossible to develop a partnership with a corrupt park administration. This constituency is initiating a private-public alliance to help maintain and restore historic areas of the park not covered by the court-ordered minority "open space improvement" decree. While the restoration of the Chicago park system
is just beginning, the reform and refocusing have had a profound effect on the park system's diverse supporters, from the city's minorities to its Lake Shore Drive residents.
New York City

The problems of decay, vandalism, crime, and filth that pervade many municipal parks today reached epidemic proportions during the 1970s in New York City. By 1972, New York was on the verge of bankruptcy. The fiscal crisis became so severe that the state-sponsored Emergency Financial Control Board rescinded the city budget and assumed monetary authority. The historic, 26,220 acre city park system, already understaffed from ineffectual cost-cutting measures and overwhelmed by abusive park use, was administered additional drastic budget and staffing cuts.

The Parks Commissioner at the time, Richard Clurman, examined the increasing deterioration and generated a master plan, carefully outlining strategies to restore and revive the landscapes of the parks. Clurman's inability to discover monies or a political will to protect the parks is illustrated by his ultimate solution to the plight of the parks: "Let the communities take care of their parks, and where they are indifferent and allow them to become derelict, we'll close them down." It is unclear whether this was a tactical decision to instigate the public or a "practical" solution to a seemingly unsolvable problem. Nevertheless, it would take a decade to reverse this policy.
Meanwhile, as park use throughout New York City declined, Central Park continued to attract upwards of 13 million people a year. This threatened to destroy Central Park, causing national concern. Many individuals, including New York State Senator Daniel Moynihan, assumed that the only means of relief would be to turn Central Park, and the likewise noteworthy Prospect Park, over to the National Park Service. In fact, what rescued Central Park and, in turn, the entire New York City Park System was the empowerment of the parks' advocates and the appointment in 1978 of the highly committed Gordon Davis as the Parks Commissioner.

Early on, Davis learned that dedication and desire were not enough to alter the cycle of decline, and that results required still non-existent funding. The additional city monies that did arrive were barely able to recover some staff positions and maintenance funding previously cut. The new Parks Commissioner diligently fought for every City Hall funding increase and simultaneously sought other resources.

Davis recognized that private groups had managed to address some of the park needs even when the city had been unable to sustain its load. Additionally he saw the ability of local grass-roots leaders to foster a community's political will. During the 1970s friends' organizations
focusing on neighborhood parks developed. The most prominent were the Central Park Community Fund, the Central Park Task Force, the Friends of Central Park, and the Parks Council.

These groups generated enthusiasm and money for basic maintenance, volunteer programs, equipment, and even restoration of park facilities. The same was true of other parks in Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, Staten Island, and the Bronx.

One of Davis' first step was to create the positions of local Park Administrators, whose responsibilities were to manage and oversee their particular parks' maintenance, programming, and improvement, focusing on serving and attracting the local constituency. It is still unclear whether the conception of the Offices of Park Administrators was Davis' attempt to capture the spirit of successful local organizations, or an effort to bridge the public and private distrust, or simply a venture to decentralize the New York City park system. Nevertheless, the development of the Park Administrator positions -- along with his appointment of Elizabeth Barlow (now Barlow-Rogers), the former head of the Central Park Task Force, as the Central Park Administrator -- were the first keys to rejuvenating the parks.
It was at this time that Davis was also trying to
capture city and national attention with the Park System's
first major restoration, the resodding of the barren Sheep
Meadow. Yet, even as this powerful example of restoration
was being completed the parks' woes were being highlighted
in a series of New York Times' articles entitled "Paradise
Lost?"

By 1980 the park system had lost over a third of its
already restrictive budget and half of its skilled laborers
30 to the city budget axe. Rehabilitation efforts seemed
doomed:

The parks are only part of a previous
inheritance that this bankrupt generation
of New Yorkers is doomed to neglect.
Commissioner Davis has done what he can
to resod and to rebuild with a budget and
workforce that will keep losing ground
every season...New York's leaders have to
help their people choose priorities -- of
decline.31

Ironically, the Sheep Meadow even seemed to reflect the
newspaper's views as it turned brown, for lack of water,
just after its restoration.

Self-examination, such as that suggested by the New
York Times, generated a search for solutions. Historically,
progress and success are often the children of crisis and
disarray. As the problems of urban indifference and
demoralization became more apparent to New York's residents, the political will to reverse the city's destructive lethargy, as represented so aptly by the parks, started to blossom.

Sparked by the hardy parks' friends groups of the 1970s, a conviction to interrupt the cycle of public vacillation developed, inspiring the creation of a powerful public-private partnership, the Central Park Conservancy, to actualize the rejuvenation of Central Park.

The municipal financial instability revealed two important factors: first, the City's inability to finance adequately the restoration of the parks, and second, the will of the general public to undertake such efforts. Hidden was the burgeoning notion that parks are not just another municipal service, but rather an important urban cultural institution, equal to other renowned cultural fixtures such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the New York Public Library, or the Metropolitan Opera Company. The creation of a public-private alliance not only allowed the targeted goal to be undertaken -- here the restoration of Central Park -- with both public and private funding, but also stabilized the institution in the face of future adversity by assuring diverse political and financial support.
Structurally, the Central Park Conservancy is directed by the City-appointed Park Administrator, insuring government ties and oversight. Additionally, like any other cultural institution, the Conservancy has a board comprised of community leaders, corporate executives, and "ex-officio" municipal government members, including the Park Administrator, the Parks Commissioner, the Manhattan Borough President, and three appointees representing the Mayor.

The board's ability to attract private sector revenues hinged on overcoming the fears of philanthropic and corporate donors that the City might abandon funding for the Park proportional to the amount of private revenues. To placate this distrust, Barlow and Davis presented to possible donors the City's written commitment that "the Park would continue to enjoy the same proportionate amount of the city's annual [Parks and Recreation Department] budget regardless of how much was forthcoming from the private sector." This was significant because the restoration could not be accomplished by the private or public portion of the partnership alone. Ultimately, "private philanthropy was construed as providing 'the critical difference' between simply maintaining the Park and managing it as a first class institution."
In October, 1990, as financial troubles again burdened New York, the Conservancy "is not only weathering the latest tides of urban decay but is flourishing." In 1980 the Central Park Conservancy raised $576,269, an amount that has been eclipsed with each passing year, totalling $64 million over the first decade of the group's existence. In fiscal year 1990 alone, $10,926,000 in contributions, not including services such as free consulting time, was raised -- in a notably weakened economy. Furthermore, as the Department of Parks and Recreation's monies are trimmed in the Dinkins' Administration's need to meet budget gaps, the Central Park Conservancy continues to assume more responsibility. During the 1990 budget year, the Conservancy was providing half of the Park's operating budget. All this effort has paid off, for as a New York Times' editorial stated, "Central Park is back, a place of pleasure and beauty. A renaissance has taken place. It's time to spread the news."

Former New York City Parks Commissioner Henry J. Stern pointed out that parks' friends groups:

...can be enormously helpful in raising funds, in increasing the level of interest and in leveraging capital budget funds. When the City sees that a group of people are putting in their own money, that's a compelling argument for the City in deciding where to spend money.
This political force was a major reason the municipal government initially increased funding for the parks in the mid-1980s. By 1989, as New York's economic outlook improved, the park system's expense budget expanded by $76 million and capital spending multiplied from $8 million to over $149 million.

The resurgent desire to live in New York -- as evident in the real estate market boom -- would likely not have grown as much without the vast improvements that occurred in the parks that helped to make New York more "livable." Connected to this real estate growth were the various fundraising organizations that raised the "park consciousness" of New Yorkers in every borough. In order to reach all residents rich and poor, black and white, educated and unschooled, Hispanic and Asian, the egalitarian origins of the parks were heavily publicized and emphasized. This policy strengthens the connection to historic restoration since this "new" philosophy of park use reiterates the worthy historic and philanthropic beginnings of the parks and generated public and private support for continued revitalization.

Tupper Thomas, the Prospect Park Administrator who works with the Prospect Park Alliance -- in a scheme based upon the Central Park Conservancy -- vigorously pursues
these egalitarian ideas integrating both historic and cultural significance. Thomas is a leader who has been able to promote this policy to politicians and the general public alike, without over-intellectualizing the solution:

The park's major use patterns in the 1980s are largely the same as those of the 1880s. Restoring the historic fabric of the park -- turf, woods, and water -- translates into preserving those features most important to the people who use the park today.42

Another course of action by the restoration leaders and organizations is the nurturing of various interest groups for political backing, volunteers, event sponsorship, education programs, and many other types of support. For example, the Road Runners Club of New York has cared for the jogging paths and cross country trails, indirectly enhancing adjacent areas in virtually every major park in the city. The sources of the Club's direct and indirect support (i.e., more budget dollars, private donations, volunteer hours, publicity, sponsors, etc.) have been the New York City Marathon and the Fifth Avenue Mile, in addition to other national races held in New York.

Similarly, volunteers from special interest and friends groups have helped to slash dollars from the Park expenses. The 50 New York Community Boards voiced their interest in this growth by prioritizing park maintenance as their first
concern, ahead of drugs, crime, or education. This indicates that apathy towards the parks has been overcome even with a limited amount of physical restoration. Park restorers have created a desire and a force for additional rehabilitation.

The Central Park Conservancy laid the groundwork for starting other restoration initiatives. The outpouring of support is evident by the flow of private sector aid and by the increase in park usage in the outer boroughs.

Interestingly, as Central Park's restoration has enabled this Manhattan park to cope with its 14.4 million visits a year, the revitalization of New York's other major historic parks -- Van Cortland Park and Pelham Bay Park in the Bronx, the Greenbelt on Staten Island, Flushing Meadows Park in Queens, and Prospect Park in Brooklyn -- has resulted in a 100 percent increase in the number of users. This is significant for restoration efforts in other cities, since a lack of patrons is often taken as indication of disinterest and abandonment, secondary to the dismay or fear it actually portrays.

The extensive success in Central Park is directly correlated with the Conservancy's ability to immediately tap the substantial number of users and transform them into a politically educated group. The problem of the parks in the
other boroughs -- like Prospect Park, which averaged less than 1.7 million visitors yearly in the 1970s, down from close to 12 million users at the turn of the century -- was the lack of perceivable constituents.

Prospect Park's problem was how to convince the city's political and economic leadership that restoring the park would uncover a park constituency -- not merely coordinate one as in Central Park's circumstance. The diplomatic achievement of the Central Park Conservancy and Davis to enact public policy that supports restoring urban parkland as an act of social awareness was an essential step in developing open-minded municipal government policies for the entire park system.

The cause of Prospect Park was further helped by the preservation of a number of historic park structures, especially the Park's Environmental Center, with both private and public funds. While initially this had little impact in absolute numbers to show to revenue allocators, the Center was an attraction to bring children back into the park to use programs and facilities, helping to remove a major stigma that the park was unsafe for children. Over the years since the revitalization of the Center, thousands of children have regularly visited the park.
As Prospect Park is slowly restored it is gradually attracting more users. By the late 1980s the Park was visited by over 5 million annually, up nearly 300 percent in less than a decade. The lack of monies and constituents has been slowly overcome through the sustained promotion of a plan to restore this cultural institution to the urban oasis it once was when it was labeled "America's most beautiful park," in King's Views of 1905.

While the ravages of prior decades are still apparent in New York's parks, the unprecedented restoration efforts have allowed for improbable gains in the recovery of these city institutions. In the early 1980s, Barlow-Rogers often exclaimed, in the battles to muster political and economic support, that, "If the nation's first and most famous municipal park could slip into irreversible decline, what hope might there be for other ageing and deteriorating parks elsewhere?" If imitation is the highest form of a compliment, then Chicago's Grant Park Partnership and the State of Massachusetts' Olmsted Historic Landscape Preservation Program are fine measures of New York's restoration stature. Furthermore, New York has "riveted the attention of park administrators around the country, drawn by the scope of ambition and the ingenuity of tools." The amount of literature and the many books and
articles by Thomas, Barlow-Rogers, and other New York park restorers, are further affirmation of the impact on New York parks and on national urban landscape restoration efforts.

The achievements of Los Angeles, Chicago, and New York are often viewed as unobtainable to all but the wealthiest and politically powerful cities. Many administrators label these models as impractical or unrealistic for their parks. Rapid revitalization, as illustrated in Central Park, is not always the model for them to draw upon. A number of cities in different financial, demographic, and regional environments are examples of ongoing, slow but stable, restorations.
San Antonio, Texas & St. Paul, Minnesota

The park system of San Antonio, Texas illustrates both the weaknesses that park administrators emphasize as overwhelming hurdles and the strengths that administrators tend to ignore. Faced with serious budgetary problems that have resulted in 10 percent cuts annually in 1988 and 1989, the 6,314 acre system would -- at best -- be expected to be fighting to maintain a steady state. However, resourceful municipal leaders and a growing public political will have stabilized the system.

The San Antonio Parks Foundation has generated strong support including many government officials. In 1989 Mayor Henry G. Cisneros discussed the issues:

Despite this serious shortage, our parks have become an integral part of the city's economic development and growth. They play an important role in our thriving convention and visitor industry. Equally important is the part our parks play in recruiting efforts to attract new businesses and industry to San Antonio. Livability for employees is a growing consideration by business executives seeking new locations...All great cities have great parks and if we are to compete...we must be prepared to expand and enhance our parks system. The Parks and Recreation Department has limited funds for the acquisition and improvement of parks. Therefore, in order to meet the recreation needs of our dynamic city, it requires a partnership between the City, the corporate community, and all our citizens.
San Antonio has attempted to overcome its problems with a two-fold approach — corrective capitalism and private philanthropy. Using creative financing through a HUD grant and the sale of bonds, a joint $200 million public-private urban development project called River Center was opened in February, 1988. This project financed extensive renovation of the Riverwalk, one of the city's scenic highlights. The Riverwalk is not a true historic landscape, since it was created by the Army Corps of Engineers in the 1930s and overhauled in the 1960s by the federal Urban Renewal Agency. But its renovation is an illustration of business-oriented rejuvenation efforts that are being applied throughout the city.

The mechanism of private fundraising was initiated in 1981. This non-profit organization, the San Antonio Parks Foundation, has garnered millions of dollars in donated funds and grant aid. Recently the Foundation has attempted to publicize the need for non-traditional sources of money, by publishing "Wish List" and "Gift Ideas" packets to be given to potential donors. They have also increased advertising and started a city-wide speakers campaign to heighten park awareness.
Through diverse political and economic support San
Antonio has off-set crisis management as it continues its
park rehabilitation program.

St. Paul, Minnesota's Como Park, often described as the
"gem of St. Paul," is in the process of a substantial
restoration effort that started in 1976. This project has
been steady due to a strong Division of Parks and Recreation
combined with adequate funding from diverse sources. These
contributors include the Metropolitan Council Park and Open
Spaces Program (which also serves St. Paul's sister city,
Minneapolis), state and federal highway funds, philanthropic
and corporate sources.

When this park was placed on the National Register of
Historic Landscapes, it was already heavily damaged by
blights familiar in other city parks. Restoration was
undertaken because park advocates fostered a political
environment which accepted "the unique character and
historical significance of Como Park." Como Park
restoration's aim was to emphasize again the historic design
intent of the park as a passive "bucolic setting in the
city."
Restoration and renovation are progressing as funding becomes available. As a result of a concerted effort to guide the city's economic and social direction the regional economy has grown moderately. However, since 1970, the City of St. Paul has lost 45,000 residents, a large portion of whom were wage earners, and its ability to collect sufficient municipal tax revenues has been hampered. Therefore, as costs have risen, the city has been unable to allocate large amounts of capital improvement funds.

St. Paul's efforts demonstrate two important restoration elements. First is the creation of a political climate that regards parks as a significant city asset on par with police, fire, and education and worthy of expenditure. Second is a patient outlook that accepts that landscape restoration is a long-term process.

St. Paul and San Antonio demonstrate that large, wealthy, and growing municipalities are not the only ones capable of undertaking historic park rehabilitations. St. Paul is a still shrinking, though stable, city of 260,000 that has limited funds. Meanwhile, San Antonio is a growing city but has decreasing per capita income due to large increases in the number of residents living at or below the
poverty level. Most importantly, both have established the rehabilitation of parks, and specifically historic parks, as being significant policy issues.
Newark, New Jersey

Newark has adopted a similar strategy, with the cooperation of the state. Newark is one of the most troubled cities in the country, with a high crime rate, an extremely poor economy, a weak tax base, a dismal school system (recently taken over by the state), hyper-segregated populations, and one of the nation's highest unemployment rates.

In its battle to become an attractive and livable city again, the state of New Jersey and municipal leaders have developed a park restoration program. The majority of funding has come through 75 percent loan/25 percent grant monies underwritten by the state via the voter-approved Green Acres Program. Parks have attained an elevated status in Newark, most noticeably with the improvements in its parkland, and the significantly larger municipal budget line for parks maintenance and repayment of Green Acres' loans. As former-Governor Kean of New Jersey stated, the restoration of "these open spaces demonstrates our love not only of nature, but of our future."
Collectively these restoration efforts illustrate that there are few urban or park characteristics that prevent successful rejuvenation. The "level of success" of any restoration is often measured by its obstacles, weaknesses, and inefficiencies. However, this may be too analytical, since the heart of this "success" is in great part the implementation of a physical rehabilitation. Debunking and destroying park policy myths that foster the perceived lack of public support and the view that parks are fiscally insatiable has allowed cities from New York to San Antonio to achieve success. The problem is how to amend conditions in other cities, where attempts have resulted in little impact and demoralized the advocates.

The perception that a city's economic and political power, or its size and demographics, or a park's specific character, heavily influence the success of a restoration is accurate. Yet, in some cities, other factors prevent park restorations, or even the initiative to focus on the parks. Often the failure of an effort results from an inadequate political strategy. Municipal leaders attempt to redress "popular" problems to appease voting constituents creating a warped sense of priorities. This has increased funds for headline-grabbing items like more street police, and the
construction of community centers, while relegating items such as public transportation, and the parks, to secondary budget status. The emphasis on a limited list of priorities that is immediately gratifying fails to solve a city's fiscal problems and assures continued deterioration of those systems considered less important.

For example, raising funds to replace often vandalized benches is a worthy renovation step; but, to do so without altering destructive patterns -- by increasing ranger patrols, improving lighting, and banning alcohol -- is illogical. Yet, in many cities with problem-ridden parks, this pattern has often been repeated, encouraging negative perceptions. Overcoming the urge for such "quick-fix" solutions and developing a focused vision are difficult tasks. As Ron Watson, Jacksonville, Florida Deputy Director of the parks discussed, "the trend in government over the past few years is to try to do whatever you can to get the biggest bang out of your bucks," ultimately without concern for causality or future solutions.

Fighting mismanagement by a city's administrators is the crux of the challenge in park restoration. The issues of funding and/or public will determine how parks are prioritized as a political policy. Throughout the United States, cities have elevated the status of parks to the same
policy level as education and crime prevention -- while even an excessive parks' budget would command only a fraction of a police or fire department's funds. Those cities that fail to realize the importance of parks consistently lack citywide priorities and have stagnant political environments, much like Chicago in the recent past. Thus, the solution is to create a political will and, either by vote, or by public education, enhance city's managers' understanding of the worth of parks.

Changing public perceptions, altering political policy, and locating funding to improve urban historic parks require dedicated park administrators and diligent open-space advocates with a long-term commitment. Since the construction and development of these historic urban landscapes took many years, rejuvenation is impossible to achieve in a short span of time.

In the context of this broad analysis of park rejuvenations across the United States, a case study focusing closely on Fairmount Park in Philadelphia, may offer a test of the factors herein identified as essential for a successful restoration.
Chapter Three: Fairmount Park, Philadelphia

The law doth punish man or woman,
That steals the goose from off the common,
But lets the greater felon loose,
That steals the common from the goose.

Anonymous poem, English, 18th Century

The history of urban planning in Philadelphia is well documented. This extends from William Penn's urban grid in the 17th Century to the creation of the Waterworks and Fairmount Park in the 19th Century and into the 20th Century with the "Center City" redevelopment plans. As another century approaches new visionary plans have been created to rejuvenate the City's parkland and urban environment. However, a faltering local and national economy along with disabling municipal budget and policy problems have exacerbated attempts at problem solving. Ultimately, a visionary plan is an important tool, but, just as significant is the logical implementation of its strategies.
The historic open-space of Philadelphia has been compromised by political and budgetary crisis, compounded by a cycle of urban park decline. Restoration efforts have been hindered by the fact that the Fairmount Park system has served as a ground for policy battles drawn upon racial and political lines. Presently, Fairmount Park is similar to a historic handmade quilt that has some of its landscape fabric undergoing quality patchwork repairs, while other squares continue to be devoured by the moths of abuse and inadequate care. Understanding the current struggle for rejuvenation of the Park can be gained by examining the origins and evolution of Fairmount Park.

Creation of the Park

Fairmount Park is actually 61 parcels comprising 8,700 acres of land that sprawl to all corners of the city as squares, boulevards, plazas, parkways, waterways, natural reserves, and pastoral landscapes. Individual street trees also fall under the jurisdiction of the Fairmount Park Commission. The park system began in 1812 when the City of Philadelphia purchased the present-day site of the Philadelphia Art Museum and the Fairmount Waterworks for a facility to draw healthy municipal drinking water from the
Schuylkill River. Overlooking the pumping station is a bluff, which was commonly referred to as "Faire Mount," that first served as the platform for a reservoir and now is capped by the Philadelphia Art Museum. By the 1820s the Waterworks served a dual purpose providing not only potable water but also a healthy environment for the public as a popular garden. As the city expanded its initial holdings, the name of the first purchase became synonymous with all of the city's public open-space, as Fairmount Park.

Expansion of the park was spurred by two reform movements of the period that encouraged governmental responsibility in providing drinkable water and large landscaped parks. Philadelphia municipal legislation in 1854 authorized funds for the purchase of "areas of ground as open public places, for the health and enjoyment of people forever." This is the first legislative record in Philadelphia of the impact of A.J. Downing's landscape ideals that were sweeping the country. Initially, the land along the Schulykill was not considered to be part of this statement of public park policy.

Earlier, in 1844, the city purchased a large portion of the east bank of the Schulykill River -- now called East Park -- ostensibly to protect the city water supply. At that time a number of strolling grounds and beer gardens
were operating on the former country estates that lined the east bluff of the river. The most prominent was Lemon Hill, which functioned as a garden with greenhouses and a carousel -- and, perhaps more importantly, served beer. In light of these pleasure grounds (and possibly the influence of the Philadelphia-based Pennsylvania Horticultural Society) it would be naive to assume that this 1844 purchase was solely to develop a protected watershed.

Finally, an Act of the General Assembly of Pennsylvania on March 26, 1867 fully articulated a two-pronged reform movement. The entire purchased land was:

...to be laid out and maintained forever, as an open public park, for the health and enjoyment of the people...and the preservation of the water supply of the City of Philadelphia.7

This granted the City of Philadelphia retroactive legislative approval for the west bank purchases of the previous year and also sanctioned condemnation proceedings needed to obtain the industrialized Wissahickon Valley.

When the First Annual Report of the Commissioners of Fairmount Park was published in 1869, over 4,200 acres had been procured "to supply what had long been felt as a great public want." The Fairmount Park Committee on Plans and Improvements was formed to mold "the ample space for recreation and rural surroundings." The park planners
debated design methods, whether to rebuild an "ideal" environment as Olmsted was doing in Central and Prospect Parks in New York, or to "find" and adopt the existing "natural character and topography of the grounds."

Ultimately, the public pressures for immediate access, combined with the costs involved, directed the Commission to a natural design methodology. As the Park's planners wrote, while the picturesque "well-considered rules of art" may not have been carefully followed, the results nevertheless managed "to commend themselves to a person's common love of the beautiful in nature."

Concern over the municipal water supply along with recreational needs resulted in the procurement of close to 90 percent of the park system lands. Cobb's Creek Park, Pennypack Park, and Tacony Creek Park were all tributary and watershed areas that became municipal property just after the turn of the 20th century. Added to the East and West Parks obtained in the middle of the 19th century, these five major areas account for close to 7,000 acres of the Fairmount Park System.

The stature and structure of Fairmount Park have often mirrored the fate of Philadelphia and illustrate its history. As Philadelphia grew physically, politically, and economically, so did the Park. The city's 19th century
expansion is shown by the fact that the remnants of elite country manors now comprise the heart of a landscape that is surrounded by a late 1800s and early 1900s urban grid. Those structures that exist are representative of the more than 3,000 buildings that occupied current parkland in the past. At one point the Wissahickon Valley was laden with industrial facilities and the West Park was the site of the massive National Centennial Exposition of 1876.
PHILADELPHIA'S FAIRMOUNT PARK
Spiral of Decay

The glories of the past and the beauty of the its setting have not prevented Fairmount Park from also reflecting the deteriorating condition of the surrounding city. After World War II Philadelphia's industrial core disintegrated and over the next forty years, 400,000 of its residents -- along with needed tax revenues -- left the City. Politicians searched for mechanisms to control rising unemployment, crime, and apathy. Massive urban renewal, greater popular control through a more representative City Council, and an emphasis on "powerful" police did little to halt the cycle of urban decline.

Public policy and its consequences again echoed within the parks during this era. In the 1950s a winter storm damaged the beautiful glass, iron, and marble Horticultural Hall of the Centennial Exposition. The solution was removal rather than repair.

The condition of Fairmount by the early 1980s was virtually identical to that of parks in other cities from New York to Los Angeles. The social and economic tensions that had undermined urban life in Philadelphia had been similarly ruinous to Fairmount Park. Just as the abandonment and eventual arson fire that destroyed Connie
Mack Stadium signalled the demise of North Philadelphia, the abandonment, looting, and burning of Fairmount Park's historic structures announced the level of disaster within the park.

Generally, by 1991, the majority of Fairmount Park has suffered some physical damage and substantial passive use abandonment. The author observed during a ten-month period of recorded field visits, from September 1989 until May 1990, the vast disparities in use and condition of the different areas of Fairmount Park. Nevertheless, clear patterns of management, maintenance, and even public perception emerged during this observation period.

Throughout the system park roads are used as speedways, rather than as "parkways" to drive slowly through a natural environment. People who do stop -- often to do auto maintenance -- pull their cars onto the grass creating barren roadside fringes. These problems are endemic to the entire park system.

In East Park and Cobb's Creek Park, rarely do the occupants stroll from their cars unless with a large group. These large groups typically are there for family picnics or sports gatherings -- leaving charcoal piled up at the base of trees and rarely-emptied trashcans overflowing with
garbage. On the other hand some areas, like the Wissahickon Valley, East River Drive, and portions of Pennypack Park, are used by individuals and small groups consistently.

In the Germantown-Chestnut Hill section of the City joggers and equestrians regularly travel the trails of the Wissahickon. In recent years, this use has grown and maintenance of the trails has improved. Residents and/or users have joined the Friends of the Wissahickon group bolstering these efforts. Pennypack Park in the Northeast has similar use patterns.

Yet, the removal of garbage and the timing of mowing remains a systemic problem. During the height of the growing season a four to five-week cycle is the fastest that can be attained. This compounds trash removal as garbage is obscured by high grass, resulting in shredded, irretrievable trash.

Throughout, the Park's edges are used by neighborhood children daily as playground. In East and West Parks, along with Cobb's Creek Park, the author observed children playing within stripped cars and atop discarded kitchen appliances, rather than on seatless swings and twisted jungle gyms. The physical condition of park facilities, such as playground equipment, tennis and basketball courts, seating, and picnic
pavilions, is generally poor. Vandalism, from grafitti to fire damage to total destruction, is evident throughout Fairmount Park.

The most apparent pattern is the nexus between the landscape and its surrounding community. Fairmount Park today mirrors the plight of its neighborhoods, both stable and disintegrating. While a large proportion of the Park is bordered by rapidly decaying environments, those areas that are not have also been affected but to a lesser degree. The destructive use patterns and the Park's disintegrating structures illustrate the consequences of years of urban chaos and poor municipal government commitment.

Following the Civil War, and well into this century, manipulation of urban politics by a select few, solely for personal gain, was commonplace in virtually every American city. After San Francisco was levelled by the earthquake of 1906, it was rebuilt along pre-quake boundaries, bypassing the potential for enlightened and functional city plans (including the solicited effort of Daniel H. Burnham) due to the imperial whims of the city's political machine leader, Abe Reuf. In New York the Tweed Ring charged taxpayers over $14 million for the construction of a courthouse that cost only $4 million. Interestingly, these systems were
predominantly Democrat controlled with the an exception being in Philadelphia.

During the same time span, and until the 1950s, Republican machine politics firmly controlled Philadelphia and all of Pennsylvania. The passage of a new city charter in 1951, combined with the election of a Democratic mayor, ended the Republican hold on municipal government. Actually, the demise of the "Machine" had begun two decades earlier when adherence to party lines by city leaders forced the residents of Philadelphia to cope with the Great Depression on their own. As one historian, Jeanne Lowe, discussed,

...the hard-hit city refused aid from the Democratic administration in Washington, D.C. Powerful bankers and industrial and business leaders, living for the most part outside the city, favored this form of government because it kept taxes low, imposed little or no regulation on business, and maintained an aura of social calm through benign neglect or quiet but forceful repression.24

The administration of Fairmount Park, however, has remained a structural, psychological, and behavioral remnant of the Republican machine days.

Fairmount Park is administered by the Fairmount Park Commission, which is responsible for policy direction. There are sixteen Commissioners, ten appointed members and six ex-officio representatives. The ex-officio and non-
voting Commissioners, representing city government, are the Mayor, the President of the City Council, the Commissioner of Public Property, the Commissioner of Recreation, the Chief Engineer, and the Commissioner of the Water Department.

Justices of the Common Pleas Court appoint the ten voting Fairmount Park Commissioners to their nominally five-year positions. Until recently, the Court was stocked with judges, sworn in by the ousted Republican administration. In determining the Commissioners, these judges chose along party lines and picked Philadelphia's conservative "social and political elite, sometimes even selecting themselves." As the older judges died and as the bench has become comprised of Democratic appointees, this practice has scarcely been altered.

The appointed Commissioners, as of 1991, included Rosanne Pauciello, a former part-time aide to Senator Vincent J. Fumo and a school truant officer; Herbert S. Levin, a former Common Pleas judge; F. Eugene Dixon, Jr., executive of the Philadelphia Phillies baseball team, and a resident of Lafayette Hill outside the city limits; Frank G. Binswanger, a real-estate developer; Jume H. Brown, a black school district official; Robert N. C. Nix, III, the son of a former Common Pleas judge; William J. Marrazzo,
former ex-officio member as Commissioner of the Water Department; and Ernesta D. Ballard, former President of the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society. City Hall has not lobbied for more park advocates, greater minority representation, or even city residence as criteria for appointment as a Commissioner.

The Fairmount Park Commissioners meet ten times a year at Memorial Hall in West Park to direct and oversee the management of the Park. According the Fairmount Park Commission Annual Report this includes finalizing budgets for the various divisions including Operation and Landscape Management, Recreation and Programming, Engineering, Management and Development, and other related services. Other agenda items that require Commission approval are major capital improvements, budget allocations, major purchases, creation of new staff positions and hirings, grant projects, and special events. While the day to day running of the Park is the responsibility of the Executive Director, and his staff, significant changes must be mandated by the Commission.

In the 1950s, part of the Democrats' success in turning out the Republican "Machine" was due to the empowerment of the black vote. To a great extent, the minority support of the charter revision and the Democrats themselves was based
on the desire to remove the Republican administration. The relationship between the newly enfranchised minority and the old guard Commissioners became increasingly more combative as the Fairmount Park Commission remained one of the last Republican strongholds. Many minorities viewed -- and still do -- the Park as a showplace of white elitism and oppression with its displays of ancestral homes and busts of "robber barons and land grabbers," along with its private sports clubs. As one black civic leader recently wrote, "Fairmount Park is the last bastion of white, Republican power." Eventually, the response of the black community was to abandon the Park and, instead, emphasize the growth of the Recreation Department, which could be controlled by City Hall.

The response of the Fairmount Park Commission has been to continue present park administration policies. While the Commission often discussed its lack of funds, the alternative of pressuring City Hall for additional monies was -- and still is -- viewed as inappropriate. Conservative doctrine is that the city has overextended its resources already and additional taxation is unconscionable. This may be true, but the other option -- perhaps unfair, as suggested by the Mayor's Office -- of rerouting neighborhood and district monies is equally undesirable to Republican
(and Democratic) Council members and leaders. Fairmount Park has never been a focal agenda point for the Republican members of the municipal government.

The Democrats, whether as Mayor or Council members, seem to have failed to address adequately the needs of the Park. The explanation given is that the city suffers from more pressing issues. Furthermore, Democrats are inclined to develop and fund neighborhood projects rather than support Fairmount Park as a whole.

It is a political reality that, since City Hall neither can, nor desires to, control the running of Fairmount Park, park monies will remain scarce. According to Fitz Eugene Dixon, Jr., President of the Fairmount Park Commission, park conditions are in large part the fault of the Administration and the City Council since "our ability to meet the responsibility with which we are charged hinges on our public funding."

On the other hand, the Commissioners have not been willing to challenge the budgets created by the City Council. Convincing legislators that constituents are enlightened enough to recognize that funding heading for Fairmount Park will benefit every city resident is an unsavory political battle. According to Peter Odell, Fairmount Park's Management and Development Administrator,
this is especially difficult for Commissioners who generally 
"do not believe in park advocacy."

Fairmount Park Commissioners, imply that their role is simply to "cope" -- in other words, accept whatever public funds are made available to Fairmount Park and allocate the monies to run, maintain, and protect the park. The results of this policy appear to be that the attempts to rejuvenate the Park are stymied. The Commission's record when forced to make high-profile and/or political decisions often seems to have been detrimental to the park.

Two critical precipitating events, as handled by the Fairmount Park Commission in the mid-1970s, added to the disintegration of Park structures and landscapes in West and East Park, and elsewhere.

In 1972, Mayor Rizzo, a former Police Commissioner elected upon a "law and order" platform, attempted to control growing budget gaps while allaying the fears of city residents. He proposed a cost-cutting and crime-fighting measure that required the approval of the Fairmount Park Commission: the abolition of the century-old Park Guard, with its rank and file joining the Philadelphia Police force. In the view of supporters, this plan would eliminate the costs of maintaining two police forces while strengthening the remaining force.
The following year the Fairmount Park Commission approved the proposal. In an often repeated analysis, "the effect [was] to turn the park over to vandals" since "neighborhood police officers who are overworked as it is...are hardly inclined to spend...much time patrolling an empty park."

Prior to 1972 the Park Guard had served as passive guardians of a "green" peace, much like Rangers in the National Parks. The woes of the city had psychologically stopped at Fairmount Park's borders. Then the public's perception of the parkland changed. With the loss of the Guard the park was no longer an oasis separate from the violent chaos of the surrounding streets.

Five years later, in 1977, the Fairmount Park Commission was again faced with the task of making policy changes, this time as a result of its own practices. For decades it had been tradition for Commissioners, park employees, and city officials to live rent free in park structures. A series of articles in the Philadelphia Daily News exposed this alleged abusive practice forcing the Commission to publicly administer a solution.
The Fairmount Park Commission's response was a delayed one. Three years later the executive director of the Park System, Robert C. McConnell, who had lived in a Fairmount Park mansion rent-free, resigned as a result of this scandal. The Commission then began charging a minimal rent at some structures while it allowed other buildings to fall vacant.

The vacant structures became targets for vandals, who pilfered copper piping and historic architectural fixtures, such as Delft tiles and hand-wrought hardware. Eight years after the expose, three of Fairmount Park's historic homes were burned to the ground by arsonists. The first two, Greenland and Wakefield, were gutted within a period of two weeks in July, 1985. The third, the Cliffs, dating from 1753, blazed fiercely six months later as firefighters helplessly watched. The access road to the house was blocked by mud that flowed out of a dump created by the city and state around "one of the most important historic properties in the park."

Members of the Fairmount Park Commission did not assume any responsibility for the vandalism and destruction of these historic buildings. Instead, they blamed the newspaper for the vacancies from the resulting publicity of the Commission's housing system.
Restoration Efforts

In early 1983, prompted by outside park advocates and funding, the initiation of a massive study of the entire Fairmount Park System was given approval by the Commission. Wallace Roberts & Todd, an architectural and planning firm, was selected as the coordinating consultant to examine the Park and to produce a feasible Master Plan. In December, 1983, the Fairmount Park Commission endorsed the resulting vision.

Prepared by an eminent group of architects, historians, financiers, scientists, engineers, archaeologists, and planners, the Fairmount Park Master Plan was "intended to establish goals, policies and guidelines for preservation, restoration, land acquisition and disposition, development, maintenance, operation, administration, and financing of the Park System through the year 2000." It encompassed nineteen major reports from the principal and secondary consultants covering vegetation, hydrology, financial analysis, historical and cultural resources, circulation, access, parking, and signage, user demand, civil engineering, archaeological resources, and others. The Master Plan was, and is, an extraordinary vision, full of opportunity.
The document presents concrete ideas, goals, recommendations, and priority actions, for the Fairmount Park Commission to restore and care for the park properly. It also "calls for the Fairmount Park Commission to add to its traditional policy-making responsibilities," by "serving as advocates for the Park with City Council, the Administration and the community at large." Currently, neither of these roles has been fully assumed by the Commission.

In evaluating the state of Fairmount Park, the Master Plan stresses that "the major problems are fiscal." However, the real problem of Fairmount Park -- unstated in the Master Plan -- is that the Commission has not challenged budgetary politics nor pursued alternative funding aggressively. Therein lie the reasons for the Plan's and the Park's continued neglect. Since the Master Plan defines Fairmount Park's problem as financial, the Commission -- which has no control over budget allocation -- is absolved of blame and in turn unmotivated to change.

Additionally, the Master Plan, inadvertently or not, supports the slow policy and decision-making process of the Fairmount Park Commission. The Plan states that, "a radical change in direction is neither required nor appropriate. Rather, we should think in terms of incremental
improvements." In a city limited by physical and fiscal constraints, a slow, calculated restoration effort is proper. However, promoting such a method in Fairmount Park essentially endorses the existing approach of the Commission.

A potentially confusing aspect of the Master Plan is the premise that the Fairmount Park System was healthy:

By any standard the Park System is a success and is integral to the quality of life in Philadelphia today. It is widely used, and most who use it clearly appreciate and respect the Park. Although there are problems...the fundamental condition of the natural areas, open spaces, and recreational areas is good.

This analysis of the Park's condition is in contrast to the Plan's suggestions for the system requiring a minimum of $6.6 million in "priority action" funds and a doubling of annual expenditures, an increase of $8.8 million.
Garnering Support

The Fairmount Park Commission established an Office of Management after the release of the Master Plan in order to oversee its implementation. The new Administrator of this Office, Peter Odell, discerns a political polarization that removed Fairmount Park simultaneously from the public's eye and the municipal coffers, thereby limiting most efforts to initiate the Master Plan.

Therefore, the Office's efforts have been twofold, with the first to slowly build a popular, representative will, and the second to develop alternative funding sources. Presently, there are over 85 friends' groups helping to steward virtually every area and significant structure of the Fairmount Park System. As the Master Plan discussed, these growing organizations represent a large constituency that is essential to rally political support for the rejuvenation of Fairmount Park.

However, the diversity of friends' groups also has its disadvantages. The majority are narrowly focused, interested in addressing specific neighborhood problems. In addition, three different groups, the City Parks Association, the Fairmount Park Council for Historic Sites, and the Friends of Philadelphia Parks, aspire to coordinate
city-wide park advocacy efforts. While the Office of Management and Development needs to foster a visible and vocal park constituency of friends' groups, the fragmentation of political and financial resources has proven to be an obstacle to the development of a coordinated and integrated park voice that can speak for the whole park.

One solution to this problem would be for the Fairmount Park Commissioners to assume their roles as the Park's primary advocates, voicing the cumulative concerns of these friends' groups. The chance that mounting public pressure on the Commission will force its members to accept greater responsibility is a credible possibility. While Odell diplomatically demurs from stating that this is a strategy adopted by the Office of Management and Development, there is no doubt that Odell would prefer a more active Commission.

On the other hand the Commissioners have endorsed the creation of a Development Committee to find funding for implementing the Master Plan. One of the Commissions guiding tools, in addition to the Master Plan, has been the Funding Alternatives for the Fairmount Park Commission put together by the Pennsylvania Economy League in 1987. This report was intended to supplement the Master Plan's analysis of the Park's fiscal condition, and to focus primarily on
"new sources of non-tax revenue." Based upon the findings of this report and the Master Plan, the Commission endorsed attracting private sector donations.

The joint Office of Management and Development has encouraged the commitment of philanthropic groups. As with New York, San Antonio, and Chicago, such funding -- and its unstated implication of poor or unresponsive government policy -- successfully leveraged additional political and fiscal municipal aid. In Philadelphia, the Office of Management and Development's success in drawing high-profile philanthropy has not generated municipal government support.

Since 1972, Fairmount Park's municipal budget appropriation has fallen from 1.4 percent of the City's General Fund to less than 0.8 in 1990. While, in absolute dollars, the Park has received greater allotments, the inflationary impact on materials, personnel and other park line-item cost increases has negated these increases. After the release of the Master Plan, funding for Fairmount Park did increase from $13.9 million in 1983 to a high of $20.4 million in 1985. Yet, in the following years, City Hall, prompted by massive annual deficits and overall fiscal instability, slashed the Park System's budget to pre-1978 levels.
Ironically, one of the reasons for Fairmount Park's disproportionate funding cuts stems from the relative success by the Office of Management and Development in capturing private money. As the Office has managed to secure grants, some upwards of $10 million, City Council and the Administration have redirected park funds. According to Alexander L. Hoskins, former Executive Director of Fairmount Park, the initial increases and then subsequent cuts in City Hall funding have resulted in a government "contribution to the Park System [that] has been flat throughout" the 1980s.

Private donors believe that the expectation of Philadelphia politicians seems to be that if the City neglects some of its responsibilities then the private sector "will come to the rescue." As the Mayor of Philadelphia, Wilson Goode said, "government should not be responsible for providing more than 25 percent of the funds needed to restore such things as the Waterworks and the Park mansions." Whether this is fact or not, the need for support has become more apparent with each year of budget cuts.

Debate about the legitimacy of such public policy seems to have been outweighed by the plight of Fairmount Park. Philadelphia's major foundations and trusts are supporting
crucial restoration projects. One example is the Pew Charitable Trusts which have donated millions to the Park System, principally for reforestation efforts and restoration of historic structures, tasks otherwise stalled by City Hall's funding cutbacks. The Executive Director of the Pew Trusts, Fred W. Billups, in reference to the Trusts' $1.5 million support for restoration of the Waterworks stated, "it was at a point where you either do something about it or you watch it fall in the water." It is under such dire and controversial circumstances that the Office of Management and Development has managed to extract aid from Philadelphia's private sector.

Contributions from the private arena, since the release of the Master Plan in 1983, have totalled over $15 million to the beginning of 1990. The Office of Management and Development solicits most of this money for specific restoration projects, courting foundations, corporations, individuals, community or civic associations, trusts, and friends' groups. Also, the Office encourages organizations, such as the Junior League of Philadelphia, or the Friends of Historic Rittenhouse Town, to collect, independently, funds to undertake park restoration tasks that concern their particular group. In either case, the vast majority of these monies has come from the City's largest philanthropic institutions, predominantly the Pew Charitable Trusts and
the William Penn Foundation and, on a smaller scale, other organizations such as the William B. Dietrich Foundation, the McLean Contributionship, and the Stockton Rush Bartol 65 Foundation.

In 1987, the Pew Trusts responded to the landscape restoration needs expressed in the Master Plan and to Philadelphia's general problems of diminishing street trees and "green space" by donating $3.65 million to Fairmount 66 Park and the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society.

The Park's share of $1.3 million has since been used at sites targeted for landscape restoration in the 1983 Master Plan and in follow-up studies. The most visible effort was the $600,000 replacement of 219 oak trees lining the Benjamin Franklin Parkway that had succumbed to disease, 67 pollution, and inadequate maintenance. This much travelled collonaded boulevard joins Center City to the heart of Fairmount Park, a visual expression of the Park System's physical condition. Other projects include the rehabilitation of the compacted and barren spectator viewing area along the Schuylkill River near the Upper Boat Launch, new plantings in the Centennial Arboretum, and the restoration of landscape at Belmont Plateau in West Park.

The aid given by the Pew Trusts to underwrite the Horticultural Society's "Green Program" has also benefited
Fairmount Park. The $300,000 facelift of the Azalea Garden on Kelly Drive near the Waterworks was coordinated and funded through the Society's Program. The Pew Trusts have also helped support other restoration endeavors, including studies addressing the repeatedly ignored problems of the Park's historic homes. Lastly, as mentioned, the Pew Charitable Trusts have donated over a million dollars to the restoration of Fairmount Park's beginnings, the Waterworks.

The William Penn Foundation has also supported the ongoing restoration of the Waterworks. Nearby, at Boathouse Row, the Penn Foundation donated $148,000 to repair the lighting which outlines the shape of each boathouse. Much like the replantings of the Benjamin Franklin Parkway, the repair of the lighting restored another important visual gateway of Fairmount Park and the City.

The Penn Foundation has also committed over $10 million to create the Philadelphia Ranger Corps. This grant provided for every conceivable expense to establish Rangers within Fairmount Park, from candidate selection and education, to designing and purchasing uniforms, equipment and vehicles, and even renovating the Ohio House for the Corps' headquarters. Developing the Rangers program is critical step in rejuvenating the Park System.
While the necessity of urban Park Rangers was outlined in the Master Plan, the Fairmount Park Commission viewed the creation of such a program as a fiscal impossibility without outside aid. Odell's Office of Management and Development, along with the Penn Foundation, advocated for "goodwill ambassadors, information sources, interpreters and educators about Fairmount Park" which were needed to initiate as well as maintain restoration efforts if they were to actually progress. A study by Odell's office pointed out the success of urban park rangers in other cities and emphasized the applications for the Fairmount Park system.

In 1987 the opportunity to create an urban Park Rangers program was presented to the Fairmount Park Commission. The National Park Service gave $45,000 -- to be matched by the Commission -- to lay the foundation for a Ranger program. This money was provided to prepare a Park Ranger handbook and master plan. The funds were also used for drafting a legal agreement regarding management, control, purpose, and funding between the Fairmount Park Commission and the Philadelphia Ranger Corps. It was at this time that the Penn Foundation affirmed its intentions to underwrite the first three years of this program.
Private Sector Concerns

The generosity and commitment of these private organizations have not accelerated restoration efforts by Philadelphia's government sector. The supporting foundations and trusts allege that City Hall, with a passive park policy, continues to assume that the private sector will underwrite the "rescue" of Fairmount Park.

The development of the Ranger Corps and the need for full financial support from a private source illustrates the concerns of the giving sector. First, from a historical perspective, the Corps was created to fill the void generated by "crisis management" that disbanded the Park Guard in 1972. Secondly, this example of philanthropy demonstrates the Commissioners' political ineffectiveness and possibly their apathy. The establishment of a park-oriented police force had been repeatedly stated as critical to Fairmount Park's revival hopes, yet the Commissioners were unable to communicate this need to City Hall.

Between 1982 and 1988 Philadelphia's foundations and trusts were willing to donate funds in the wake of the Master Plan, the initial increase in the Fairmount Park's budget, and the industriousness of the Office of Management and Development. Yet, with the downturn in City Hall's
political and fiscal commitment to Fairmount, a period of critical assessment may have arrived for these donors. Since 1988, donations have slipped, with no large multi-

million dollar grants. This may be the result Fairmount Park Commission's inability to solicit matching City Hall funds.

Nowhere else in the United States have private revenues entirely subsidized a large-scale park restoration. Private sector funds should be merely the "critical difference." The Office of Management and Development's inability to capture corporate sponsorship, or even restricted grants, highlights the new hesitancy of the private sector to fund Fairmount's restoration entirely. Generally, corporations rarely give aid without a reciprocal relationship that guarantees marketing or promotional gains. This conflicts with the Fairmount Park Commission's public relations philosophy.

The Commission's attitude toward attracting a broader constituency -- and thus more incentive for corporate funding -- is unclear. There is no advertising and promotion budget, any such allocation is made exclusively from specific projects or grants. While there is a Park Promotion Director, Richard R. Nicolai, his primary responsibility, until recently, has been issuing permits.
According to Nicolai, his mandate is to keep Fairmount Park, and the Commissioners, "out of the media." Avoiding negative press is the Park Promotion Director's primary public relations philosophy.

Ultimately, corporations are the most conservative of all potential donors. Corporations will withhold donations in the face of political conflict or project failure. Good publicity is a must, and the lack of it in Fairmount Park may indicate why corporate gifts total less than one percent of all private sector restoration donations.

Concerned with the lack of significant progress in implementing the Master Plan, the philanthropic organizations are now funding less expensive research projects to uncover alternative long-term solutions. A prime example was the Fairmount Park Historic House Study, funded in 1988 by the Stockton Rush Bartol Foundation, the William Penn Foundation, and the Pew Charitable Trusts.

This report was undertaken to discover mechanisms and concepts of restoration, management, and potential use for these historic structures. However, the report fails to address the current problems of insufficient funds to maintain these houses. They continue to decay at a rate that will render this study ineffective if not addressed.
soon. The real need is for money to stabilize these structures — action expressed in the Master Plan five years earlier.

The change in perspective from funding Master Plan concepts to supporting studies for alternative solutions signals the private arena's lack of faith in the ability and desire of City Hall and the Fairmount Park Commission to implement the Master Plan.
The Future of Fairmount Park

Fairmount Park's successful restoration is on the verge of happening but lacks the agitating sparks of a coordinated, empowered coalition of advocates. The critical factor is making it happen during the current restoration initiative so that momentum is not lost.

Coordinating the efforts of the friends' groups would enhance public investment and, possibly, increase pressure on city government and the Commission. Equally important are the Office of Management and Development's efforts which have garnered political and monetary aid from the private sector. The Master Plan and the Funding Alternatives Report, useable tools, articulate the necessary vision and provide the framework for change.

For the aims of the Master Plan to succeed, the goal of restoring Fairmount Park must be made a municipal priority. In Fairmount Park the level of private support -- even as it diminishes financially -- is a sign of expressed need plus political will, and a solid foundation to build upon. Part of any restoration's success lies in the ability of a few, well entrenched, restoration leaders within the municipal government to challenge public park policies, as shown in the case of Newark, New Jersey. Philadelphians must force
the Commission to learn to act politically by advocating for the park system.

The plight of Fairmount Park may seem complex, yet the timing is ripe for change. Since 1988 to 1991 the City of Philadelphia has been running at a deficit, culminating in a fiscal crisis so severe it can barely maintain its bond rating and is on the verge of bankruptcy. As the City reorganizes its government makeup and financial priorities, Park advocates and restoration leaders could assume a greater role.

Ernesta Ballard, a present Commissioner believes that the Fairmount Park Commission system of member selection and appointment "should be changed and it should be done in Harrisburg in the Legislature." The intent would be to have Commissioners with greater commitment to the public trust. As park restoration leaders from New York to California have shown part of a city's future rest with the rehabilitation of its parks.
Chapter Four: Undertaking a Restoration

Any landscape is a condition of the spirit.

Henri-Frederic Amiel,
Fragments D'Un Journal Intime

The problems of urban America, whether in the country's most livable cities like San Francisco or in the worst of the nation's urban environments, such as in East St. Louis, are a staggering burden on our society. Nowhere else in the United States are the inequities of people's social, political, and economic status and opportunity more apparent. In the 19th century Olmsted and Downing preached for landscaped parks as a physical and spiritual venue to relieve these stigmas of the city. At the end of the 20th century, park advocates are again encouraging municipalities to adopt this ideology.

The mixed and varied response of municipalities to restore urban historic parks to realize this renewed ideology mirrors the general direction of the United States'
cities. The analysis of urban policy experts as to the significance of parks, and the like, is straightforward:

Cities need to maintain basic services, even during difficult periods of economic transition. A city's amenities and services are an important part of its competitive advantage. Places that convey an image of excitement, safety, beauty and history...make cities more livable.1

Simply, parks are as significant as other municipal fixtures like police, education, and sewage systems. Cities that have failed to recognize this are, in many cases, caught in a spiral of decline.

The plight of urban historic parks is the result of a hundred years of changing park policy that attempted to respond to the political and social evolution of society. However, by inadequately addressing society's growing needs, the parks lost both their funding and their constituents. This scenario has been repeated in cities across the United States, perhaps most visibly in New York's Prospect Park. The resurgence of urban parks hinges on the advocacy of a park ideology that promotes the restoration, rehabilitation, and rejuvenation of historic landscapes while incorporating both passive and active recreation.
Numerous restoration efforts throughout the United States have produced dramatically opposing results. Some endeavors in prime economic climates can only be labeled failures such as in Chicago until the federal courts intervened. Others in fiscally bankrupt and politically unstable environments have flourished, as demonstrated in Los Angeles.

When the decision makers of a municipality amend anachronistic park policy and inadequate funding, successful park rejuvenation occurs. Yet, as events in Philadelphia have indicated there appears to be limited incentive for a politician to risk becoming an advocate of parks. Inner-city politicians question whether, strained budgets should be restructured to increase funding for parks that consume the funds already provided seemingly without results.

Overcoming political barriers and regaining the public trust in the parks (and cities) are crucial to any restoration effort. However, there are a number of factors that must be integrated for success: strong and long-term leadership, clear vision of purpose, proper coordination and management, broad-based advocacy and support, initial capital funding outlays and sustained operational funding. All are pieces necessary to complete the puzzle -- a restored and vibrant park.
Urban park administrators and advocates have adopted a multitude of mechanisms to overcome the many hurdles, borrowing strategy from the environmental and historic preservation movements, cultural institutions, foundations, and the business sector. The methodology for developing park restorations has differed from one city to the next. Some efforts originate out of grassroots lobbying, while others are "in-house" products of inspired parks departments.

The large number of struggling restoration efforts, from Buffalo to Cleveland, illustrates the fledgling state of urban park restorations as a politically acceptable national issue. In addition, the absence of a national sense of purpose forces a city's restoration initiative to be a costly, isolated skirmish, instead of being part of a coordinated, efficient effort. As long as the focus of the federal government is not on urban environments, cities will continue to flounder and, in turn, so will the parks. A few states, such as New Jersey with its Green Acres Program, have assumed greater responsibility for rehabilitating urban historic open space. Most states have not initiated plans for park restorations.
Reversing the current conditions of many parks requires a stronger, educated, and more defined popular political will. At the local level, public understanding of "park" significance is often instigated by looming development encroaching upon urban parkland.

In New York City, thousands of people turned out in Central Park to denounce the impact of a proposed real estate development on the park's periphery by assembling in the shape of the designed structure's shadow. Another Olmsted designed landscape, in Atlanta, was "rediscovered" by the public when the government proposed that a super-highway replace large portions of the famous Ponce de Leon Parkway and parklands. A park's recovery depends upon constructive public political action. The responsibility of building and maintaining this process resides with leadership that has the ability and desire to turn the initial public outcry into a farsighted vision of park rejuvenation.

At other times, the absence of an obvious threat may make a leader's job more difficult, requiring a public relations campaign to expose selected dire needs and promote the worth of the parks, thereby generating greater support. Concern over the proliferation of illegal drug traffic in a few public parks, in Los Angeles, Cleveland, and Baltimore,
was utilized by parks departments' heads to generate city-wide support for renovation of these areas and many other parks, as well. Barlow-Rogers emphasizes that park leaders must communicate and actually market longterm renovation plans with ethically responsible public relations mechanisms.

Park restoration leadership can be established within the municipal government, as the executive director of the parks department like Los Angeles, or as a special administrator, similar to Chicago. An alternative places leadership at the helm of a non-profit organization having a symbiotic relationship with the parks departments, as developed in New York's Central Park. Regardless of the type of management hierarchy chosen, the success of the restoration depends on the ability, creativity, wisdom, and fortitude of the individuals guiding the effort. Without making these directors into mythical individuals, they, nevertheless, must be "inspired change agents capable of realizing a vision" and, ultimately, they "are crucial to the future of urban parks in America". Only if these leaders are able to translate their vision to staff, city residents (constituents and non-constituents), politicians, corporations and philanthropic institutions will deterioration be reversed.
This "vision," ideally, must be the selling point for constituent development and physical restoration. While different political and economic environments lend varied conceptions of the appropriate "vision," there is a generally accepted view as written in Landscape Architecture:

Historic public landscapes are valued as expressions of the past and aggregates of change. To survive and thrive in today's world, these landscapes must be relevant, functioning as integral aspects of everyday life by intertwining past, present and future. To effectively integrate historic American landscapes... into the fabric of current experience, decisions must embody a vision for another 100-year cycle... The charge is indeed altruistic: to preserve a heritage and legacy crucial to our society and quality of life.7

This is a park restoration, as presently defined by those working to rejuvenate parks.

The different enactments of this ideal need to nurture a favorable political climate within the municipal bureaucracy and with the public. Creating a readily understandable master plan fosters this environment, since it is a comprehensive written expression of the vision. Furthermore, when the municipal leaders accept this vision, then the park administrators are given the authority to make changes in management, use, funding, marketing, and ultimately direction. In San Diego, the city's oldest
historic open space, Balboa Park, is being restored in large part due to the support garnered after the release of the 8 Master Plan.

The restoration of a park might seem simple, yet, in reality building momentum with the necessary forceful leadership is difficult. The development of a master plan or even the creation of a friends-of-the-park group without leadership will not suffice. Initiatives to restore the historic Olmsted-designed South Park in Buffalo were abandoned even after a large advocacy group, the Friends of Buffalo's Olmsted Parks, had funded and developed a master plan. In this case, the demise of the rejuvenation effort was not the oft-blamed financial woes of the city but the lack of politically-astute restoration leadership able to challenge a well-entrenched bureaucracy filled with patronage appointees. Similar falterings happened in in St. Louis and Buffalo, and has the possibility of occurring in Philadelphia.

The parks are an accurate barometer of a city's current and future condition. Park practitioners, like Cranz, believe that "whatever is decided about the function of parks will largely derive from some vision of the city." The fate of many troubled cities rests in the hands of infirm or corrupt bureaucrats elected by populations
resigned to urban demise. Therefore, it is the responsibility of individuals and groups to recognize the issues and communicate that "above all cities must make choices about their futures rather than depending on accidents of nature and the market." Historically, there is no evidence that urban growth or decline in any region is inevitable or irreversible. No city need be consigned to the junk heap.

While there is no formula or step-by-step methodology for rejuvenation, the solution to the plight of cities and parks is the same:

A city cannot change its location. But it can, and must, make choices about what it does and how it does it.

This is especially true in the face of little or no federal or state aid.

Those restorations that are succeeding illustrate that the ability of the leadership to generate a restoration movement able to withstand political opposition, funding cuts, or negative publicity is imperative. A dedicated management can guide events previously thought to be unachievable and attract a pleased public. As Cranz says, "the same kind of entrepreneurial talents that created the parks in the first place are needed to make things move now." The instability of the Fairmount Park restoration effort, for example, partly stems from a lack of effective
leadership to coordinate the voices of the Park's many advocates into that of a solid, unified front.

In Los Angeles, San Antonio, Newark, Chicago, New York and other cities, the political concept of parks as a needed part of an urban environment requiring rehabilitation has been similar, although accomplished utilizing different vehicles. Meanwhile, the general formula is the same: promote a program and ideology to reattract people in turn generating financial and political support.

Creating the definitive model or methodology fails to adequately address and illustrate the intangibles of human nature and the unique complexities of each city. The physical process of restoration is simple, but the essential ingredient in the formula is quality leadership possessing a vision and the patience to accomplish the task.

Many Park directors may never believe restoration is possible in light of their particular financial and political quagmires. Yet, like the Chinese character that represents misfortune as well opportunity, fiscal crisis has proven a boon in reorganizing municipal priority lists, park policy, and even bureaucracy.
The restorations of cities' historic urban parkland that are succeeding are doing so because the message of worth has been heard by the public. This has helped overcome the voices of special interest or status quo politicians, the rigidity of bureaucracies, and the municipal divisions only concerned about budget allocation.

Perhaps, as we now look to the ideas of Olmsted for guidance, we should also look at the politicians and park creators of the 19th Century. As the Fairmount Park Commissioners stated in 1869:

As with most other pioneers in social progress, the great difficulty was not in doing things that had been liberally devised, but in getting clear of the hindrances ingeniously set up by the obstructive members of the community. But perseverance brought success.16

Those same Commissioners ultimately stated the reason that park restoration is needed today. Everyone gains, the city, the municipal government, and especially the people when a park is rejuvenated with the original spirit:

Viewed even in a selfish light, this Park must become an advantage to the revenue, viewed in the far nobler light of its importance to the health and happiness of long-coming generations its value is beyond price.17
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