Green Cities Initiative Focuses on Parks and Open Space

The Trust for Public Land (TPL) has launched a national program, The Green Cities Initiative, to increase the quantity and quality of urban parks. The Initiative plans to acquire more than 200 properties for parks, focusing its efforts on twelve cities: Atlanta, Austin, Baltimore, Boston, Cleveland, Los Angeles, Minneapolis/St. Paul, New York, Providence, Portland, San Francisco Bay area and Seattle. TPL's target cities were selected based on their "readiness to expand and improve their urban parks systems," explained Kathy Blaha, who oversees the program. "We based our decisions on available lands to protect for parks, commitment on the part of local leadership to more parks and open space protection and the potential for public and private initiative on funding and management solutions. We are focusing our initial efforts in twelve cities, but we are also exploring opportunities to expand the program," said Blaha.

TPL explains that it "plans to generate up to $2.5 billion for city parks by deploying technical support to communities interested in undertaking bond initiatives and other public funding efforts. The need to demonstrate the economic contributions of recreation and parks to a community is recognized as a critical step. TPL continues to document ways that urban parks can galvanize neighborhoods and bolster city coffers by increasing property values and attracting tourism, business and investment."

"There are critical links which need to be established between housing, transportation, education, crime prevention and parks in order to begin solving the problems of American cities," says TPL President Martin Rosen. "We need to take seriously the evidence that open space counts in human lives and that the places where we live can be places of hope." (See related story from Baltimore, Maryland.)

In 1993, TPL conducted a survey of 38 cities, which found that "the need for new parks and open spaces is as common as the need for better care for existing parks." The study, funded by the Lila Wallace-Readers Digest Fund, documented inadequate and overcrowded park lands, inequitable distribution of public open space that leaves low-income communities underserved, a need to protect watersheds and natural areas against population growth and a need for more youth recreation.

A separate TPL study found that "many law enforcement professionals, community activists, psychologists and elected officials believe that parks and recreation help keep kids out of trouble." The report gives evidence from around the country that "urban parks and recreation programs are cost-effective in preventing crime."

These reports repeat what earlier studies have found. TPL notes a 1978 study by the Interior Department and a study ten years earlier by the National Commission on Civil Disorders, which linked urban violence to the decay of inner-city recreation facilities.

TPL is a nonprofit land conservation organization, founded in 1972, that specializes in conservation real estate. The group works with private landowners, communities and government agencies to help acquire land for people to enjoy as parks, playgrounds, community gardens, recreation areas, historic landmarks and wilderness. See Publications for information on ordering the report. Contact: The Trust for Public Land, 666 Broadway, New York NY 10012, 800 714-LAND.
Vice-President Remarks on FLO as First Great Environmentalist

The Wyoming Valley Friends of Olmsted-Kirby Park passed along this remark by the Vice President of the United States, Al Gore, Jr., "Frederick Law Olmsted was one of the first great environmentalists. He understood the necessity of balancing natural areas with man-made environments. He saw environmental preservation as an integral and necessary part of development. Understanding that communities should come together, not fall apart, in addressing environmental issues, Frederick Olmsted's vision and spirit challenges all American to join with the new Administration in working to preserve the quality of our environment and at the same time improve the quality of our lives."

Weissman Rates Best Parks in U.S.

Weissmann Travel Reports says the best urban parks in the United States are:
1. Balboa Park, San Diego
2. Golden Gate Park, San Francisco
3. Central Park, New York
4. Oglebay Park, Wheeling WV
5. Belle Isle, Detroit
6. Boston Commons and Public Garden, Boston
7. Fairmount Park, Philadelphia
8. Forest Park, St. Louis (tie)
9. Rock Creek Park, Washington DC

One observer, a zoo director, has commented that all these parks except the Boston Commons and Public Garden contain a zoo or an aquarium. But which ones have an Olmsted connection? Look for the answer in the next issue.

NAOP Encourage Use of Sample Form Letters

NAOP has developed form letters to deal with issues that arise repeatedly around the country. This one addresses any proposal to build a school, library or other structure in a park. Readers of Field Notes are welcome to use and adapt this form letter for local situations.

Dear

We are writing to urge that [city or other agency] consider very carefully the wisdom of placing [proposed construction] in [park]. Of course, the [proposed construction] is important and [the city] wishes to build it with the least possible cost. But it is important to remember that a park is not just an empty space. It is a place of recreation, of refuge from the stresses and strains of city life, a place for the people of the neighborhood to come together and see and enjoy each other. A park, in fact, often defines a neighborhood, with larger parks serving larger neighborhoods, some stretching beyond the city boundaries.

Because the park is a thing in itself, serving special purposes within a city, it can easily be destroyed by having an incompatible use in or even near it. Few people would put a school playground in a library reading room or a hospital on an airport runway. These are all important facilities to have in a city, but they must be carefully located so their uses do not conflict. Similarly, a ___ should not be located in a park.

A ___ is an important community resource and its location must be carefully chosen. It might be just the needed ingredient to help a changing neighborhood, where the city already owns land from tax forfeiture, or could purchase the needed land without undue expense. The ___ Friends of Olmsted Parks would like to work with you to find a location that will benefit both the ___ and the park, thus serving the community well.

Sincerely,
NEWS FROM THE REGIONS

EAST
District of Columbia, National Peace Garden
The National Park Service has set aside ten acres at the end of Hains Point, where the Potomac and the Anacostia Rivers join, as the site for the National Peace Garden. The garden's design by Robert Royston, has been given preliminary approval by the appropriate commissions, including the National Capital Planning Commission and the Fine Arts Commission. Jill Lucas, the project's executive director, emphasized that "the Peace Garden will not preempt any of the existing uses of Hains Point, but will add a beautiful public garden to the bare plain which composes Hains Point at the present time." An estimated $8 million must be raised from private donors to pay for the shade trees, paths, benches, views and meeting places of the design.

Maine. Survey of Historic Public Landscapes
Olmsted groups don't always confine their efforts to landscapes designed by the Olmsteds and the Olmsted firm. Last year the Maine Olmsted Alliance for Parks and Landscapes completed its survey of designed public landscapes in Maine. In the process, the group discovered the history of New England commons, greens and squares—terms that are often used interchangeably. The commons was and often is still closely associated with a religious (almost always Congregational) body, which may still own the land. The green was, by contrast, owned by the town. Squares were set aside by real estate developers in order to increase the value of surrounding residential real estate. Usually the developer donated the land to the town or city. If the town didn't maintain the square properly, the developer or his heirs might have the right to reclaim the land.

Maine, Portland. Post Office Park
The era of park-building isn't over. The dedication of Post Office Park marked the successful conclusion of a planning process that stretched over almost ten years. The park land became available after the United States Postal Service moved to a new building. In 1965 the Governmental Services Administration (GSA) demolished the building and replaced it with a paved parking lot. The city purchased the land in 1985, after the administration of President Ronald Reagan identified it as a surplus federal property that could be sold to reduce the deficit. The original park construction estimate far exceeded available funds. A scaled-back plan used salvaged materials, including used bricks, curbstones and Belgian paving stones. This recycled material was carefully fitted to the site, and the new open space has now completed its first summer of operation.

Contact: Maine Olmsted Alliance for Parks and Landscapes, PO Box 6176, Falmouth ME 04105.

Maryland, Baltimore. Gwynns Falls Greenway
In 1904 the Olmsted firm recommended that Baltimore acquire the stream valley known as Gwynns Falls. In 1994 the city is doing so, with help from The Trust for Public Land. The Gwynns Falls Greenway is envisioned as a linear park extending out from Camden Yards (now the home of the Baltimore Orioles). The Sun in Baltimore reports that areas "that now are strewn with tires and discarded furniture will be transformed into a landscaped pathway for nature lovers and urban commuters" who want to walk or bike to work. The design team for the Greenway is headed by Diana Balmont, landscape architect from New Haven CT and Meg Webster, environmental sculptor from New York. The Trust for Public Land is working on acquiring the parcels necessary for a connection between the Greenway and Camden Yards. The $1.9 million for the first phase of construction is in hand. The total needed, estimated at $4.5 million, will be covered by public and private funding. Designer Balmont hopes the Greenway is only the beginning of a network of linear parks radiating from the central city.

Contact: Parks and People Foundation. (410) 448-5663
LATE?
Did you ever notice that the
Columbian Exposition (the Chicago
World’s Fair, which commemorated
the first voyage of Christopher Columbus
to the Americas) was held in 1893? And
the Louisiana Purchase Exposition (the
St. Louis World’s Fair, which commemor-
ated the 1803 Louisiana Purchase)
was held in 1904? Does that make you
feel better about your to-do list?

PUBLICATIONS

* Healing America’s Cities cites evidence
  from cities nationwide that crime
goes down when young people have
something positive to do. For example,
in Phoenix when basketball courts and
other facilities were kept open until
2:00 am, police calls dropped by as
much as 55 percent. Trust for Public
Lands, 666 Broadway, New York NY
10012. (800) 714-LAND.

* Saving Brooklyn’s Lost Forest is the
  sale version of the 25-year plan for the
  stabilization of the Ravine, the wood-
lands area of Prospect Park in Brooklyn.
The complete study is also available. A
short description of the work to be
done is in News from the Regions. $5
for the sale version; $30 for the com-
plete study to Prospect Park Alliance,
95 Prospect Park West, Brooklyn NY
11215. (718) 965-8951.

* Rocky Mountain Legacy is a half-
hour videotape that tells the story of the
creation and revival of Denver’s city
beauty of parks and parkways.
The program was originally produced
by KPMA-TV, Denver’s public television
channel, NAOP board member
Don Eeter, KPMA host Jim Fleet and
other capsule 105 years of the city’s
loss decade of green. A VHS version is avail-
able for loan upon request.
Contact Phyllis Knowles, National
Association for Olmsted Parks, 7315
Wisconsin Ave., Suite 504 East, Bethes-
da MD 20814. (202) 362-9511, fax
(301) 469-3841.

NEWS FROM THE REGIONS

Massachusetts. 1994 Preservation Award Winners
The Massachusetts Historical Commission has announced the 1994 Preservation
Award winners. Several have connections with open space and recreation, including
the Holyoke Merry-Go-Round (recently restored by the Friends of the Holyoke
Merry-Go-Round and Holyoke Heritage State Park), the Boston Historic Burying
Ground Initiative and Rock House Reservation.

New York, Buffalo. Conservancy Study
Members of the Buffalo Friends of Olmsted Parks are studying a draft of the Buffa-
lo Olmsted Parks Conservancy Study. Consultant Susan West screened more than
fifty organizations and chose five as study models. Recommendations include: “The
Conservancy must work closely with the City of Buffalo while at the same time
remaining autonomous in the conduct of its affairs;” and “The Conservancy must
establish itself as a long-term steward of the Buffalo Olmsted Park and Parkway sys-
tem and create an endowment to support and sustain that stewardship.”

The second volume of the report explores “the economic benefits, tourism
potential and market opportunities for Buffalo’s Olmsted Park and Parkway sys-
tem.” It found that city officials generally consider tourism important but sec-
doary to the provision of green space and recreation for residents. The report also
outlines opportunities for revenue production in parks while continuing to make
parks available to residents without charge.

New York, New York. Prospect Park
Significant funding is now available for the stabilization of the last forest in Brook-
lyn, Prospect Park’s Ravine. The city will spend $3.2 million to restore the wood-
land’s infrastructure, including the water system, paths and bridges. The Prospect
Alliance will contribute $700,000 (in addition to its $2 million regular budget) to
pay for the woodlands crew, materials and machines. The 25-year stabilization plan
is for sale. See Publications for information. In addition, the City Council has allo-
cated $960,000 for the design and restoration of some of the parks Perimeter Sid-
walks, including new tree plantings, historic light poles and luminaires, historical
signage and new benches. The new signs will include the park rules and regulations,
a map and photographs of significant destinations. They will also inform visitors
about the history of the park as a manmade, naturalistic space and will use a variety
of themes to draw visitors through and across the park. The park’s rehabilitated
1912 carousel is unique in the country because of its dragon chariots, which are
designed to accommodate wheel-chair users. A new Imagination Playground is slated
for construction this fall.
Contact: Prospect Park Alliance, 95 Prospect Park West, Brooklyn NY 11215.
(718) 965-8951.

New York, Niagara Falls. Gorge View Park and Rainbow Bridge
The New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation is planning
for Gorge View Park as a supplement to the 1982 plan for Niagara Reserva-
tion. A public meeting brought out differing opinions about the plan. Opinions on
parking included, “Parking is not enough,” “Parking should be minimized or elimi-
nated,” “Increase in parking falls far short of the need for more convenient parking
in the downtown area,” and “Question the need for any additional parking at Gorge
View.” The planning process continues.

Plans continue for the toll booth and office building on Rainbow Bridge. The
Buffalo Friends of Olmsted Parks supports “the concept of an international review
to preserve and protect Niagara Falls and the surrounding environment.”
Contact: Buffalo Friends of Olmsted Parks, 2318 Main St., Buffalo NY 14214.
(716) 838-1249.
**THANK YOU**
The National Association for Olmsted Parks is grateful to these individuals and groups for their memberships at the Donor level or above.

**SUSTAINERS**
- Eleanor G. Ames, Cumberland ME
- Beacon Hill Garden Club, Boston MA
- Janet O. Cross, New York NY
- Susan Klaus, Washington DC
- Olmsted Parks Society of Atlanta, Atlanta GA

**DONORS**
- George L. Batchelder, North Beverly MA
- Dr. Charles Beveridge, Washington DC
- Mr. and Mrs. Thorn Goodfellow, Gladwyne PA
- Clyde Eiler, Buffalo NY
- Sally R. Harbaugh, Atlanta GA
- Tupper Thomas, Brooklyn NY

**PUBLIC ORGANIZATIONS**
- City of Montreal, Myriame Beaudoin, Montreal Canada
- Fairmount Park Commission, Philadelphia PA

**CORPORATIONS**
- Charles R. Brown, Technology Park/Atlanta, Atlanta GA
- Du-Mor, Inc., Millisnton PA
- The Halvorson Co., Inc., Boston MA
- Quennell Rothschild Associates, New York NY

**NON-PROFIT CORPORATIONS**
- All Hallows Guild, Washington National Cathedral, Washington DC
- Buffalo Friends of Olmsted Parks, Buffalo NY
- Canadian Centre for Architecture Library, Montreal Canada
- Central Park Conservancy, New York NY
- Druid Hills Civic Association, Decatur GA
- Francis Loeb Library, Harvard University, Cambridge MA
- Frederic Law Olmsted Society, Riverside IL
- Friends of Maryland’s Olmsted Parks & Landscapes, Baltimore MD
- Friends of Planting Fields, Oyster Bay NY
- Friends of Seattle’s Olmsted Parks, Seattle WA
- Greenacre Foundation, New York NY
- Olmsted National Historic Site, Brookline MA
- Riverside Historical Commission, Riverside IL

**NEWS FROM THE REGIONS**

**New York, Watertown. Thompson Park Conservancy**
The Thompson Park Conservancy received over $60,000 in grants this year, bringing the 10-year total for rehabilitation of John C. Thompson Park to $2,000,000. This is a relatively large sum for a small northern New York community with a 555-acre Olmsted Park. One of the most significant grants in 1993-94 was from the Rural New York Grant Program, administered by the Open Space Institute with support from the J. M. Kaplan Fund. The grant, along with a matching in-kind services donation by GYMO Architecture, Engineering and Land Surveying, P. C., and Project Architect E. G. Olley, Jr., R. A., of Watertown, is being used to develop an action-oriented masterplan for the Park, including recommendations for its four and one-half miles of paved walkways, an Auto-CAD plant plan using the original Olmsted drawings for the Park’s extensive wooded areas and sweeping meadows, renovation of the Park’s Zoo and creation of an Olmsted Nature Trail.

Park improvements and seasonal operations are coordinated between Conservancy and City Staff through a newly-created volunteer Park Advisory Committee consisting of the Conservancy’s Executive Director and one Conservancy Board Member, two members of the City Council, City Planner Ken Mix and one assistant, the Superintendent of Public Works and the Parks Superintendent. This Advisory Committee is also active in the Master plan process. The Conservancy is using its professional staff in cooperation with dedicated Board members and municipal officers, to develop a strategic management and economic development plan for short-term and long-term operation of the Conservancy, and should finish this dynamic business plan by the end of 1994.

**Contact:** Donald E. Moore, III, Executive Director, The Thompson Park Conservancy, 1 Thompson Park, Watertown NY 11601.

**Pennsylvania, Wyoming Valley. Olmsted-Kirby Park**
Dr. G. M. Reisinger reports from the Wyoming Valley Friends of Olmsted-Kirby Park, “Over 200 million dollars will be spent over the next five years to upgrade the Valley levee system and also implement an inflatable dam to improve the river’s recreational assets. We will be working closely with the Federal, State and county officials so as to preserve as much of the Olmsted history as possible. The firm Quad 3 has offered their services ‘pro bono’ so that we may achieve our preservation goals.”

**Contact:** Dr. Gerald Reisinger or Richard Hoose, 6 Gershom Place, Kingston PA 18704-4850, 717 283-5194.

**CENTRAL**

**Illinois, Chicago. Japanese Garden in Jackson Park**
Volunteers will be caretakers for the Japanese Garden in Jackson Park, an Olmsted-designed park. Six organizations are working together to recruit park stewards: Friends of the Parks, the Chicago Park District, Chicago’s Sister Cities program, the University of Illinois Master Gardener’s Program, the Chicago Botanic Garden and the Museum of Science and Industry. For example, Henry Bort, a specialist in Japanese gardening at the Chicago Botanic Garden, is training volunteers and park district employees to prune the shrubbery into shapes appropriate to the Japanese design. The Japanese Garden was built for the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition (the Chicago World’s Fair). The City of Osaka, a Chicago sister city, has committed $250,000 for a new entry gate to the garden.

**Missouri, St. Louis. Forest Park**
Citizens to Protect Forest Park is pushing the city of St. Louis to acquire more than 20 acres adjacent to Forest Park. A city agency took title to the Arena when construction began on a new downtown arena for hockey, basketball and concerts. The new arena is finished, and the city agency is hoping to sell the land and building. The agency has said that it the sale price must be at least enough to cover the bank loan on the property. The Arena, which opened in 1929, has a lamella roof that covers more than three acres without interior supports. The remainder of the land
is an asphalt parking lot.

The Saint Louis Art Museum, located in Forest Park, has expressed interest in the building for a satellite operation. The History Museum, whose exhibit space is also in Forest Park, has expressed a need for space to house major touring exhibitions. Advocates point out that this need could be met in the Arena. In addition, the parking lot could ease pressures for additional parking in the park, especially for the Saint Louis Zoo and the Saint Louis Science Center.

Contact: Pat Waterston, Citizens to Protect Forest Park, 6349 Alamo, St. Louis MO 63105 or Caroline Loughlin, 800 Kent Rd., St. Louis MO 63124 314 994-0361, fax 314 994-9903.

WEST

Colorado, Denver. Park and Parkway System
NAOP board member Don Etter is featured on a new videotape. See Publications for information.

Washington, Seattle. Park System
The group is watching developments on a number of issues: 1) proposal and funding for planting in Colman Park, 2) initiating and completing a master plan for the arboretum, 3) the selection of a citizens' committee to oversee the design of high-occupancy vehicles (HOV) lanes on highway 520 between the arboretum and the University of Washington, a project of the Washington Department of Transportation, 4) participating in the planning and design of the Harbor Avenue project, a segment of the West Seattle-Alki Corridor, part of the Olmsted-designed boulevard system, 5) completion of the Volunteer Park Water Tower interpretive exhibit, a series of panels tracking the history of the Olmsted involvement with Seattle, 6) running a tour/outreach/education project, including a recent tour for the Seattle conference of the American Preservation Technology group and 7) looking for people with experience or knowledge in the field of constructing landscapes using never-implemented Olmsted plans.

Contact: Jay Rood, 2 Nickerson St., Suite 105, Seattle WA 98109, 206 283-7090.

Washington, Seattle. Olmsted Boulevard System
Seattle's Olmsted Boulevard system receives Seattle Design Commission "Streets That Work" award. Seattle Design Commission's 1994 awards program focused on "Streets That Work." Nominations were solicited from the community and four of Seattle's Olmsted Boulevards were nominated. The Design Commission chose to recognize the entire legacy of the Olmsted Boulevard system in Seattle, giving special recognition related to landscape and urban design. As the Olmsted Brothers said in 1903, "comparatively few cities... have what can be called a comprehensive, well-planned and well-developed system of parks, a connected system of parks and parkways is manifestly far more complete and useful than a series of isolated parks." Seattle is fortunate to have such a "connected system of parks and parkways." The award was presented to the Friends of Seattle's Olmsted Parks on October 6, 1994.

Washington, Seattle. Park Foundation Inquiry
There is interest in Seattle in establishing a foundation or nonprofit group to support park-related programs and activities. The Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation is interested in hearing from you if you have good examples or cautionary tales of park foundation groups.

Contact: Catherine Anstett, Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation, 2911 Second Avenue, Seattle, Washington, 98121-1079. (206) 684-7046