



Great City Parks Alan Tate

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*Location of New York
parks*

- 1 New Jersey
- 2 Central Park
- 3 Paley Park
- 4 Bryant Park
- 5 Manhattan
- 6 Long Island
- 7 Prospect Park



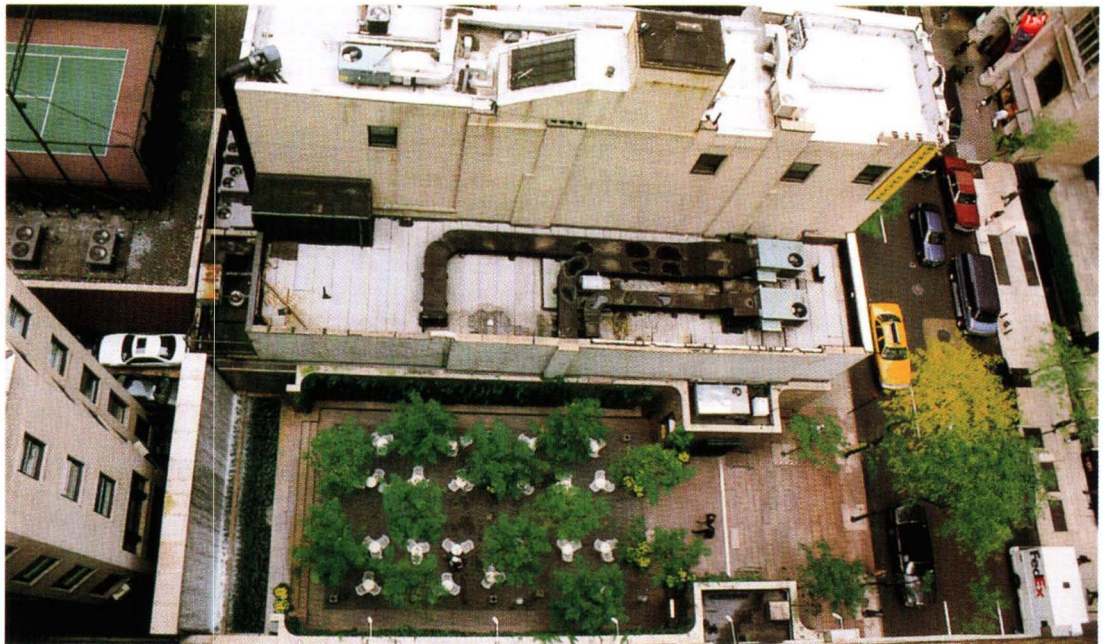
1 Paley Park, New York

4200 square feet (390 square metres)

INTRODUCTION

Paley Park was completed in 1967 and completely rebuilt to the same design in 1999. Privately owned, privately built and privately run for free public use, it is the model pocket park. Located on the north side of East 53rd Street in midtown Manhattan, between Fifth Avenue and Madison Avenue, Paley Park is the product of a concept promoted by landscape architect Robert Zion (1921–2000) and taken up by William S. Paley (1901–90). Paley, the

founder and Chairman of the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS), established the park as a memorial to his father, Samuel Paley (1875–1963). It was not a result of 'Incentive Zoning', a policy commenced in 1961 that permitted developers 'to install paving around their buildings, call them plazas, and collect their 10:1 or 6:1 floor area bonus as of right'. Paley Park was a philanthropic donation to the people of New York. Few human-made places provoke such unequivocal praise. It 'has become one of Manhattan's treasures,



*Paley Park and 53rd
Street from above
(October 1999)*

2 Village of Yorkville Park, Toronto

0.36 hectares (0.9 acres)

INTRODUCTION

The Village of Yorkville is an upmarket commercial and residential district in downtown Toronto. Yorkville Park occupies a 150 by 30 metre strip of land directly above a subway line, just north and one block west of the intersection of the city's two major streets – Yonge and Bloor. It is designed as ten individual gardens each representing a different type of natural Canadian landscape. The gardens are aligned north-south and interspersed with three pathways between Yorkville and Bloor Street. The design was prepared by San Francisco-based landscape architects Schwartz/Smith/Meyer in collaboration with Toronto-based architects Oleson Worland, winners of an international competition launched in July 1991. Construction commenced in spring 1992 and was completed in spring 1994. It

cost C\$3 million. Creation of the park reflects the emergence of Toronto, the fifth largest city in North America, as a place that is committed to investment in its public realm. First the city had the integrity to proceed with the construction of the competition-winning design. Then it withstood a barrage of scathing comments in the local and national press. The hiatus revolved around the cost of cutting and transporting to site the natural granite rock that is now the focal point of the park.¹⁷

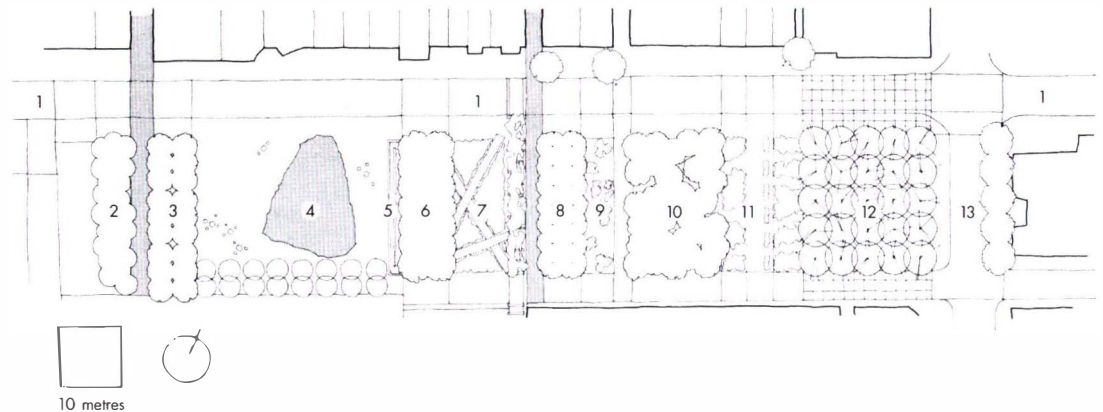
HISTORY

Designation as a Park

The Village of Yorkville developed in the 1830s on 'Farm Lots' north of Bloor Street. The village was incorporated in 1853 and annexed to the City of

Village of Yorkville Park,
Toronto

- 1 Cumberland Street
- 2 Amelanchier Grove
- 3 Herbaceous Border Garden
- 4 Rock in Canadian Shield Clearing
- 5 Water Curtain
- 6 White Alder Grove
- 7 Ontario Marsh/BC Douglas Fir Boardwalks
- 8 Crab Apple Orchard
- 9 Fragrant Herb Rock Garden
- 10 River Birch Grove
- 11 Prairie Wildflower Garden
- 12 Scots Pine Grove/Fog Emitters
- 13 Bellair Street



3 Freeway Park, Seattle

5.2 acres (2.1 hectares)

INTRODUCTION

Freeway Park, like Yorkville Park, is primarily a roof garden over a transport route. It spans the Interstate 5 (I-5) highway as it passes directly east of downtown Seattle, the largest city in the Pacific Northwest of the United States. The I-5 runs from the US–Canadian border 110 miles (176 kilometres) north of Seattle to the US–Mexican border, more than 1300 miles (2000 kilometres) to the south. The park covers most of a 460-metre-long,

ten-lane-wide stretch of the highway at its closest point to the downtown. The highway was constructed through Seattle between 1959 and 1965. The park is a prime example of the exploitation of 'air-rights' over a highway. It was built in three stages during the 1970s and 1980s. Two of these stages involved the construction of substantial buildings.

Numerous freeways were built to and through the hearts of urban areas in the United States in the twenty-five years after the Second World War. Freeway Park set a precedent as a noise-reducing



Freeway Park and Interstate Highway 5 from Eighth Avenue (November 1999)

5 Parc de Bercy, Paris

13.5 hectares (33 acres)

INTRODUCTION

Built between 1992 and 1997, Parc de Bercy was the third of three major new parks completed in the 1990s on former industrial sites in central Paris. The other two are Parc de la Villette, built by the French national government, and Parc André-Citroën, like Parc de Bercy, built by the City of Paris. They were the first major parks to be built in central Paris since the completion of Parc des Buttes-Chaumont in 1867. The designs for all three new parks resulted from open international competitions. The design and development of Parc de la Villette and Parc André-Citroën became something of a bragging

match between leftist President François Mitterrand (presided 1981–95) and rightist Mayor of Paris Jacques Chirac (mayor 1977–95 and Mitterrand's successor as president). The design and development of Parc de Bercy were more low key. Architect Bernard Huet and his team of architects and landscape architects eschewed monumentalism in favour of smaller scale, site-derived proposals.⁶²

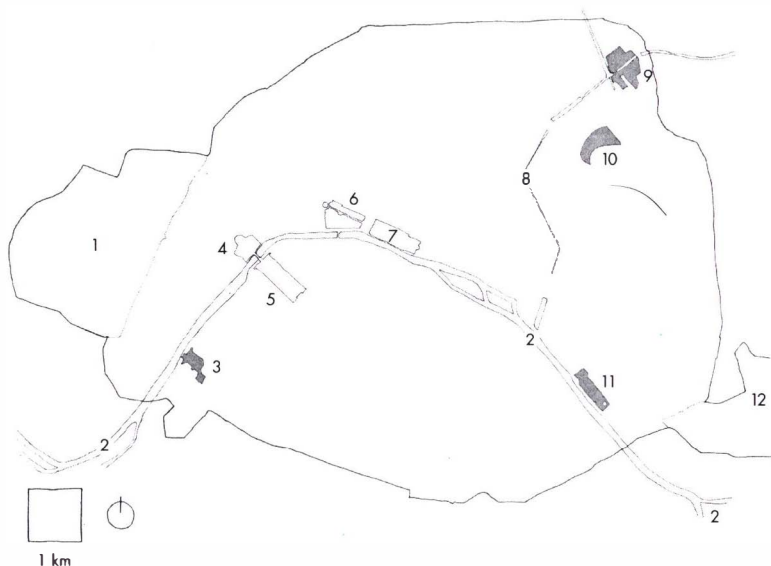
HISTORY

Designation as a Park

Until the seventeenth century Bercy was part of the

Location of Paris parks

- 1 Bois de Boulogne
- 2 River Seine
- 3 Parc André-Citroën
- 4 Jardins de Trocadero
- 5 Champs-de-Mars
- 6 Champs Elysées
- 7 Jardin des Tuileries
- 8 Canal St Martin
- 9 Parc de la Villette
- 10 Parc des Buttes-Chaumont
- 11 Parc de Bercy
- 12 Bois de Vincennes



7 Parc des Buttes-Chaumont, Paris

24.7 hectares (61 acres)

INTRODUCTION

Sublime and seductive, the Parc des Buttes-Chaumont is the most acclaimed product of the design team directed by engineer Jean-Charles Adolphe Alphand (see location map on page 32). Supported by horticulturist Jean-Pierre Barillet-Deschamps, architect Gabriel Davioud and, latterly, landscape architect Édouard-François André, Alphand was responsible for the reshaping of the Bois de Boulogne and the Bois de Vincennes, and articulation of the Champs-Élysées. His team also created the Parc Montsouris and the gardens of the Champs-de-Mars and twenty-four other gardens and squares across Paris. These parks were part of dramatic plans for the remodelling of Paris that were called for by Napoléon III (Emperor 1852–70) and executed under the direction of Baron Georges-Eugène Haussmann, Préfet of the Seine (1853–60) and Minister for Paris (1860–69).⁹⁴

Haussmann's remodelling brought about the boulevards, the building lots, the promenades and street planting that remain inimitably characteristic of Paris. He also arranged the development of city-wide systems of water supply and sewerage. Alphand and his team created at Buttes-Chaumont a paisley-shaped park enclosed by new roads and traversed by railway tracks. Layers of flat and falling water, exotic planting and curvaceous paths were superimposed on the reshaped landform of a worked-out gypsum quarry. Punctuated with rustic structures, false wood fencing and metal site furniture, the park reflects synchronous developments in engineering and botany. Picturesque and poetic, sublime and seductive, it sits between late romanticism and proto-modernism in the stylistic lexicon of

European urban parks. Completed in 1869, the design remained virtually unchanged for the rest of the nineteenth century and throughout the twentieth. Procedures for restoration of the park were commenced in November 1999.

HISTORY

Designation as a Park

Napoléon III began his programme of improvements in Paris with the donation in 1852 of the Bois de Boulogne to the city, so that it could be redesigned for public use in the style of the Royal Parks in London – particularly Hyde Park. His ideas for the city had therefore begun to take shape before he called on Haussmann in 1853 to direct its remodelling. Indeed, Loyer suggested that the model which Napoléon and Haussmann adopted had been initiated by Louis XVI (reigned 1774–92). Louis XVI, in turn, had sought to introduce to Paris the type of baroque radial plan developed in the city of Rome by architect Domenico Fontana for Sixtus V (Pope 1585–90). The 17.54-metre height limit for the cornice of new buildings was set in 1784. It gave rise to a building typology that remains the norm in central Paris.⁹⁵

Following the French Revolution (1789) and the execution of Louis (1792), a call was made to the artists of the Parisian academies to make proposals for development of the city. This resulted in the *Plan des Artistes*. Conceived in 1796 – it too was based on classical models – but focused on the Seine. Between 1800 and 1859 the population of Paris grew from 547,000 to 1 million. Compulsory purchase legislation was established in 1841 and

8 Parc de la Villette, Paris

35 hectares (86 acres)

INTRODUCTION

Proclaimed the urban park of the twenty-first century since its conception in the 1970s, Parc de la Villette is a major production by the French national government. (see location map on page 32). It is an event-driven cultural quarter in three main parts on the site of a former abattoir. Thirty-five of the 55 hectares of the site are allocated to public open space – the park proper. The remainder is occupied by La Cité des Sciences et de l'Industrie – a national science museum primarily located in the converted 1960s' abattoir building, and La Cité de la Musique – a purpose-built national centre for the study and performance of music and dance. The 35 hectares of the park include the converted nineteenth-century Grande Halle (Great Hall). It is the largest public park in central Paris. The three parts of la Villette are under the direction of three different organizations – each separately answerable to different ministers of the French national government.

The design of the park was the outcome of an international design competition staged in 1982–83. It attracted 472 entries from thirty-seven different countries, overwhelming the panel of twenty-one judges. The panel called for second submissions from nine short-listed joint winners. The eventual winner was French-Swiss/American, Architectural Association-educated architect Bernard Tschumi. His submission was an essay in the architectural theory of 'deconstruction' or 'disjunction'. The design comprised three layers – a grid of 'points' (bright red metal *folies*) and a series of 'lines' describing a set of (what turned out to be very flat, geometric) 'surfaces'. It derived more from

postmodern literary analysis than from landscape or architectural design precedents. And it reflects the emergence of computer technology capable of representing this type of layering.¹¹⁰

Tschumi stated that the urban park 'can no longer be conceived as an undefiled Utopian world-in-miniature, protected from vile reality' and that his park 'could be conceived as one of the largest *buildings* ever constructed'. He proclaimed that it flew in the face of the conventions of modern architecture and the emerging tenets of postmodern architecture. His design treated the site as a *tabula rasa* whose only context was urbanity. It kicked sand into many landscape architect's faces and it probably became the most written about and mimicked urban park since Central Park, New York. Anglo-Saxon commentators have described the organization of the competition as 'daft' and the park itself as 'silly'. Geoffrey Jellicoe observed that English landscape architects would have placed Tschumi's design last out of the nine second-stage submissions – 'and indeed wondered why it was placed at all'. English, also AA-educated, architect Piers Gough proclaimed that 'hell will be like this; a place where vicious intellects deny natural pleasures; where time off will be more mechanized than time at work'.¹¹¹

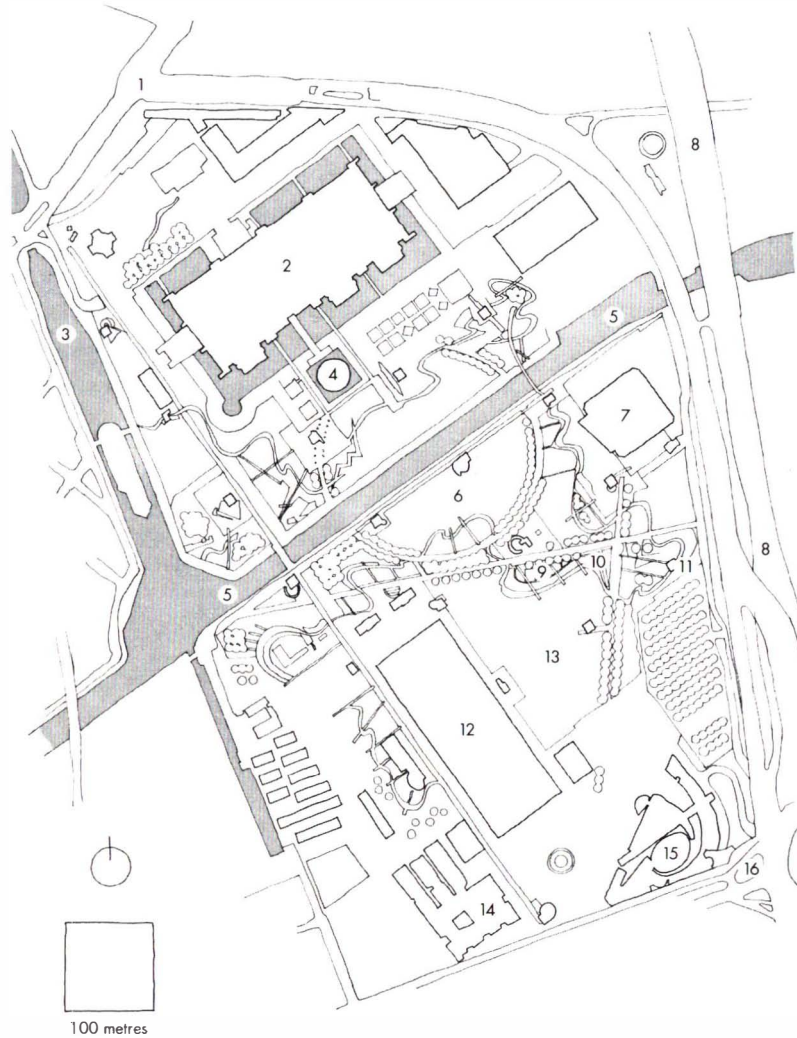
HISTORY

Development of La Villette

La Villette (literally 'small town') is on a plain between the hills of Buttes-Chaumont and Montmartre. There were Roman and then medieval settlements in the area. It was also a resort

Parc de la Villette, Paris

- 1 Porte de la Villette
- 2 Cité des Sciences
- 3 Canal St Denis
- 4 Géode
- 5 Canal de l'Ourcq
- 6 Prairie du Cercle
- 7 Zénith
- 8 Boulevard Périphérique
- 9 Bamboo Garden
- 10 Sound Garden
- 11 Café Hot Brass (Triangle Rouge)
- 12 Grande Halle
- 13 Prairie du Triangle
- 14 Conservatoire de Paris
- 15 Cité de la Musique
- 16 Porte de Pantin



destination from the fourteenth century for royal and ecclesiastical dignitaries, and a source of wine, cereals and market produce for the City of Paris. By the sixteenth century the area had 400 inhabitants. La Villette continued to perform resort and agricultural functions during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It was constituted as a municipality in 1790 following the erection in 1785 of the city wall. La Villette remained a separate market town with tax-free status and a thriving entertainment industry. Early in the nineteenth century shortage of water in Paris prompted Napoléon I (Emperor 1802–15) to order the construction of the 25-kilometre-long Canal de l'Ourcq to bring drinking water from the River Ourcq to an 800 metre by 80 metre rectangular reservoir – le Bassin de la Villette. The Canal was opened in 1808. It was improved in 1812 to allow navigation and extended

southward in 1821 (Canal St-Martin) and northward in 1827 (Canal St-Denis) to create a direct link to the looping River Seine. By 1840, 15,000 boats per year were using the canals. The reservoir still provides 60 per cent of Paris's non-potable water.¹¹²

Between 1800 and 1859 the population of Paris grew from 547,000 to 1 million. In 1853 Napoléon III (Emperor 1852–71) authorized Haussmann to orchestrate the complete reorganization of the City of Paris. In 1860 the city was expanded from twelve to twenty *arrondissements* (districts); eleven whole communes and parts of thirteen others were annexed. La Villette was annexed to the 19th *arrondissement*. This coincided with the construction of new military defences on the line of the current Boulevard Périphérique and the concentration of particular industrial activities into specified zones.

9 Parque de María Luisa, Seville

39 hectares (97 acres)

INTRODUCTION

The Parque de María Luisa was converted in the early twentieth century from a private royal park to a public park. Designed in its current form by French landscape architect Jean-Claude-Nicolas Forestier (1861–1930), it was named for Princess María Luisa de Borbón y Borbón (d. 1897), Duchess of Montpensier and sister of Queen Isabella II of Spain (reigned 1843–68). It remains an enchanting product of a skilful mediation converting the pre-existing park into, first, the site of an International Exposition and, then, a public park. Forestier achieved this transition through adherence to two of the principal paradigms of landscape architecture – respect for existing site qualities and respect for nuances of regional design, history and climate. He converted an already well-treed site with a number of historic settings into an essay in Moorish landscape design for a public park. The park has a strong rectilinear layout punctuated with tile-studded *glorietas* (arbours dedicated to local literary figures) and shaded from the intensity of the Andalusian summer by a canopy of deciduous, principally plane, trees. To the south and east the subtle intimacy of Forestier's landscape design gives way to the bombast of architect Aníbal González's designs for the Plaza de España and the Plaza de América. These two exhibition spaces were formed as extensions to the park so that it might host the Ibero-American Exposition in 1929. Forestier's original design, prepared in 1911, was intended for an Exposition to be staged in 1914 but that was postponed because of the outbreak of the First World War.¹²⁸

HISTORY

Designation as a Park

The site was designated as a public park a few years before its selection as the site for an Exposition. The principal reason for its allocation in 1893 for public use was as part of an arrangement to create better commercial transport links between the River Guadalquivir to the west and the railway station to the north-east. The need for healthy urban living conditions and opportunities for public recreation were also seen as secondary justifications for the park. There had, however, already been public parks in Seville since the 1830s when a Jardín de Acimatación (botanical and zoological garden) and the Jardines de las Delicias (Gardens of Delights) – between the river and the site of the Parque de María Luisa – were established. The Jardines de las Delicias were extended in 1869 to 7.5 hectares according to designs prepared in Paris by horticulturist Jean-Pierre Barillet-Deschamps. In common with other European cities, Seville experienced rapid population growth during the nineteenth century. And in common with other Spanish cities, there was demand for public use of royal land.¹²⁹

The site formed part of the estate of the Palace of San Telmo which had been allocated in 1849 – by virtue of a law passed by Isabella II – for the use of the Duke and Duchess of Montpensier. On 13 March 1893 the municipal government of Seville arranged with María Luisa that she should retain the palace and immediately adjacent gardens but that the city would take over the land that was attached to the palace to the south of the new avenue. The agreement stated that the site should 'offer to the city an extensive and pleasant park to serve the

Central London from
Primrose Hill (July 1993)



covering it with inadequate topsoil. Large sums have had to be spent over the past 150 years on invisible investment in subsoil drainage throughout the park.

PLANNING AND DESIGN

Location

John Fordyce and John Nash, in turn, went to extraordinary lengths to achieve the creation of the new processional route between the park and Westminster. 'Nobody, it seems . . . believed that the new street would ever be built. Things like that did not happen in London.' This is a reflection of the sense that existed of the distance between the heart of London and the park. Now, of course, the park appears ridiculously central in any map of London. It is, however, on the north side a major east–west road, the Marylebone Road, which is designated an Inner Ring Road. It therefore remains, to some extent, on the 'wrong side of the tracks' and is used as much by local residents as by visitors from outside Greater London. Just as the park sits on the outside of the highway system, it also lies outside the Circle Line of the underground rail system – the line outside of which business London tends to give way to residential London. Beyond Nash's Terraces to the north-east and east of the park are lower-lying relatively poorer residential areas. These include Camden Town and the predominantly public housing estates towards Euston, St Pancras and King's Cross railway stations and yards. To the north-west and west are inner suburbs of predominantly private,

high-priced housing, particularly St John's Wood. So, just as Nash located Regent Street and Langham Place along a line of social cleavage, Regent's Park and Primrose Hill still continue that line northward. As far as the park itself is concerned, Nash stated that as it 'increases in beauty it will increase in value, and the occupiers will stamp the character of the neighbourhood'. In this he was prescient of Jane Jacobs' observation in 1961 that 'far from uplifting their neighbourhoods, parks themselves are directly and drastically affected by the way the neighbourhood acts upon them'.¹⁷⁵

Original Design

The principal physical elements of the park are the vehicular circulation system comprising the Outer Circle and, subtended by the Chester and York Roads, the Inner Circle; the Broad Walk; the Boating Lake, the isolated gardens within the Inner Circle; the northern parkland and the Zoo. Despite the various changes and embellishments that these elements have undergone, they remain much as Nash designed them. The only problem is that he never designed them as elements in a unified public park. They are the remnant framework of an abandoned exercise in property development. The park does, however, reflect the fact that Nash developed a great deal of understanding of the relationship between buildings and their settings from his work with Repton. Chadwick suggested that Nash acquired from Repton the idea of 'appropriation' – whereby each villa had a 'pleasant prospect' without being visible from other villas – and management of

the lake – with its ends concealed by bridges and planting. The lake has a long shoreline relative to its surface area; the curve of the shoreline and the careful placing of the six islands create serially revealed views and obscure the full extent of the water.¹⁷⁶

The Nash terraces remain more or less continuous from Hanover Terrace in the west to Gloucester Gate in the north-east. The only breaks are where the Colosseum was replaced by the chateau-style terrace of Cambridge Gate in the 1870s and the scalpel-sharp Royal College of Physicians – designed in the 1960s by Denis Lasdun, architect for London's National Theatre. St John's Lodge and The Holme are leased as private residences. The only footpath other than the Broad Walk that remains as Nash designed it, is the one through Cumberland Green installed in 1832.

Nash originally intended the Broad Walk as the continuation northward of Portland Place into The Regent's Park. It takes full advantage of the natural landform of the site and offers an uplifting, if firmly directed, walk with a sequence of views between blocks of trees – westward into the major space in the park and eastward to the later Nash terraces. It is difficult to tell from surviving drawings whether Nash was simply following an already established line of former field boundaries and the extension of Portland Place, or whether works were undertaken to create these effects. The re-creation in the 1990s of Nesfield's design for Avenue Gardens at the southern end of the Broad Walk and the restoration of the Readymoney Fountain at its northern end have created some uncomfortable contrasts of scale. Avenue Gardens feels far too wide and distinctly short of benches. The Mall in Central Park, New York, also restored in the 1990s, demonstrates a more appropriate density of seating. The Fountain is too 'stumpy' to act as an effective focal point on such a major axis.¹⁷⁷

Trees now obscure views between the lake, the park west of the Broad Walk and the terraces. Nash's framed views from the buildings have largely been obscured – albeit temporarily. Constant review of the growth of the trees in the park is necessary for the full impact of the surrounding buildings to be effective. The pattern of tree planting in the park is generally independent of the park circulation except for the Broad Walk and the cherry avenue along Chester Road. Trees are generally located in a continuous but relatively narrow fringe around the perimeter of the park. An often broader band of trees wraps around the lake and adjacent residences. These fringes and bands are comprised of deciduous forest trees infilled with smaller ornamental species. Constant attention is also needed to ensure the consistency and condition

of footpath surfaces and of the extensive hawthorn hedges. The visible evidence suggests that maintenance leans towards horticultural apoplexy at the centre and anaemia at the edges.

It is also regrettable that such a large park so near the centre of a metropolis prohibits wheeled recreation. Over the past twenty years, however, the park has become a major venue for casual (and not so casual) summer evening softball games. One effect that Nash certainly would not have sought to create is the (now) ironic symbolism of the plan form. The similarity of the shape of the lake, Inner Circle and Broad Walk to a baseball bat, a ball and a catching glove is uncanny.

MANAGEMENT AND USAGE

Managing Organization

Since 1993 London's Royal Parks have been managed by the Royal Parks Agency, an executive agency of British national government – first under the Department of National Heritage and latterly under the Department of Culture, Media and Sport. The Royal Parks Agency took over responsibility for the parks from another ministry of central government, the Department of Environment. Under that ministry, the parks had remained somewhat secretly run by civil servants with relatively little interference from their political bosses. The post of Bailiff of the Royal Parks – formerly a royal gift, offered perhaps to a suitable military figure (now superseded by the post of Chief Executive of the Royal Parks Agency) and the majority of the superintendent posts were held by horticulturists. Other professional services were either provided from other agencies of the Department of Environment or bought in by them on an as-needed basis.¹⁷⁸

Direct labour teams under the direction of the superintendents of the respective parks undertook horticultural maintenance and minor new works. Before Prime Minister Major's realignment of responsibilities in 1993, the status quo had been radically disrupted in 1985 by proposals from the government of then Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. She introduced proposals to 'privatize' a wide range of government services, including maintenance of the Royal Parks. Until that time there had been little or no public consultation over the running of the parks and no formal mechanism for local residents or other park users to communicate with the parks' managers.

Privatization was widely perceived as a means of reducing the cost of maintaining the Royal Parks with little concern for any effect on their quality. This perceived threat spawned 'Friends' groups for



Performance of Bad Penny by the boating lake (June 1993)

Triton Fountain, Queen Mary's Garden, Inner Circle (October 1993)

each individual park. It now appears to be accepted that procuring maintenance services by competitive tender from outside contractors was less detrimental than originally feared. It has, however, led to loss of familiarity with the parks and loss of the training ethos that could be generated with an in-house workforce. The 'Friends' groups – which are generally dominated by vociferous and articulate local residents – remained in existence and continue to act as unofficial consultative bodies for the park managers. Prime Minister Blair's government (elected in 1997) also required that reviews be made to try and achieve cost-efficient delivery of public services. Establishment of the Royal Parks Agency was intended to distance the running of the parks from central government functions. As part of that move an independent 'Royal Parks Review Group' was appointed in July 1991 to provide recommendations on the future direction of the parks.

The Royal Parks Agency currently manages the parts of The Regent's Park that are public park. The Agency shares responsibility for the Outer Circle with another agency of central government, the Crown Estate Paving Commission. The Commission is responsible for cleaning roads and maintaining sidewalks and terrace gardens. Crown Estate areas that are leased to other occupiers are the responsibility of those occupiers.¹⁷⁹

Funding

The majority of the funds for the running of the Royal Parks comes direct from central government. In the financial year 1997–98 central government covered 82 per cent of the cost of running them. The remaining 18 per cent was earned from direct events (e.g. leasing of sites) and services (e.g. franchises and car parking charges). About 200 events take place in Regent's Park each year and the park is often used for commercial film, television and still photography – with a proviso that a true representation of the park is given. The budget for works and maintenance for the park in 1998–99 was £2.2 million. The 1999–2000 budget for the Royal Parks as a whole was raised – on a one-off basis – by £5.4 million to £26.4 million. This was the first increase in four years. It was to allow for commemorative capital works and repair work in the wake of the death in August 1997 of Princess Diana.¹⁸⁰

Usage

The Royal Parks Agency undertakes annual surveys of the usage of all the Royal Parks. Sizes of the Royal Parks in central London and estimated numbers of visitors in 1995 are given in Table 11.1.

commercial projects in New York. In May 1856 Vaux dissolved the partnership with Withers and moved to New York.³⁰³

Egbert Ludovicus Viele (1825–1902) had been appointed Chief Engineer for Central Park by the Democrat-led City Council's commissioners – the Mayor and his Street Commissioner. In early 1857 a layout plan prepared by Viele was adopted. The plan was widely criticized in the press for its lack of imagination. Vaux campaigned against it, declaring it 'a disgrace to the city and to the memory of Mr. Downing'. The Republican-led State Legislature stepped in that summer and appointed its own nine-person commission. Vaux petitioned them to stage a design competition for the park. They retained Viele as Engineer; began an immediate search for a Superintendent and announced a design competition in August 1857. Meanwhile, Olmsted had moved to New York in 1855, migrating from 'scientific farming' on Staten Island to become part-owner of a publishing firm. The following year he made his second trip to England – this time as a literary agent – and returned to find the firm on the verge of bankruptcy. By summer 1857 he was looking for another job. In short, Olmsted's 'political connections and a bit of résumé padding won him the post of Superintendent'. He was appointed, under Viele, in September 1857.³⁰⁴

Vaux and Olmsted had first met in 1851 at Downing's nursery in Newburgh. Vaux encouraged Olmsted to join him in the competition for the park because he knew that Olmsted was in favour with the commissioners and because his post made him familiar with the large and varied site. Olmsted was reticent about entering the competition because it might strain already difficult relations with Viele. Viele was indifferent. Still in debt from his publishing venture and believing that victory would bring not only the prize money, but also more control of the project – and thus, a higher salary – he agreed to join Vaux. They spent winter evenings and weekends working on the awkward-shaped drawings for the awkward-shaped site. In April 1858 'Greensward' was awarded first prize by a jury comprised solely of the commissioners. Their choice 'reflected the preference of the board's Yankee Republican majority for the English naturalistic design tradition'.³⁰⁵

Olmsted was appointed 'Architect-in-Chief' and Vaux was named his 'Assistant'. This 'laid the foundation for the persistent but erroneous belief that Olmsted was principally, if not solely, responsible for the design of Central Park'. This is ironic given that 'a precedent was established in the assembling of a team of specialists to deal with the technical questions raised'. Those specialists included

Austrian-born horticulturist Ignatz Pilat (1820–70) who worked on the park from 1858 until his death from tuberculosis, caused by overwork; drainage engineer George Waring (1833–98); and, also English-born, architect Jacob Wrey Mould (1825–86). Mould has been acknowledged as an innovative designer, song writer and opera translator – and described as 'ugly and uncouth' and having 'an unfortunate propensity for shady business dealings'. He also had the virtue of being able to work equally well in metal, brick and stone – which accounts for the exotic carved stonework at the Bethesda Terrace and many of the bridges that he designed with Vaux. Mould, by all accounts also helped with the competition drawings – a skill which Olmsted had not acquired at that stage in his career. In fact, Vaux and this team of co-designers were 'Architect-in-Chief' Olmsted's first instructors in landscape architecture and Central Park was his very first project.³⁰⁶

PLANNING AND DESIGN

Original Design Concept

Central Park was built largely in accordance with the principles and layout established in the Olmsted–Vaux plan. That plan represented a continuation of the social attitudes expressed by Downing, that users of whatever social class, 'would enjoy together the same music; breathe the same atmosphere of art, enjoy the same scenery, and grow into social freedom by the very influences of easy intercourse, space and beauty that surround them'. One of Olmsted's fullest statements about the design of Central Park, and the purpose of parks generally, was his 1870 address 'Public Parks and the Enlargement of Towns' to the Lowell Institute. He mocked the *Herald* newspaper for an editorial in 1858 that questioned the social programming and made the observation, even in 1870, that 'the Park is not planned for such use as is now made of it, but with regard to future use, when it will be in the centre of a population of two millions hemmed in by water at a short distance on all sides'. Olmsted's vision of the future of American cities – before the motor car had even been invented – was exceptional. His social views were more paternalistic.³⁰⁷

Franklin Park, Boston became Olmsted's ultimate vehicle for expressing his views on the purpose and appropriate nature of urban parks in nineteenth-century North America. In his account of the plan for that park he noted that the 'various evils of town life' had been 'so well contended with' that 'much less time is now lost to productive industry; the average length of life much advanced, and the value

Opposite: *Allée through
centre of Conservatory
Garden (April 2000)*

*Cast iron bridge near the
Reservoir (October 1999)*

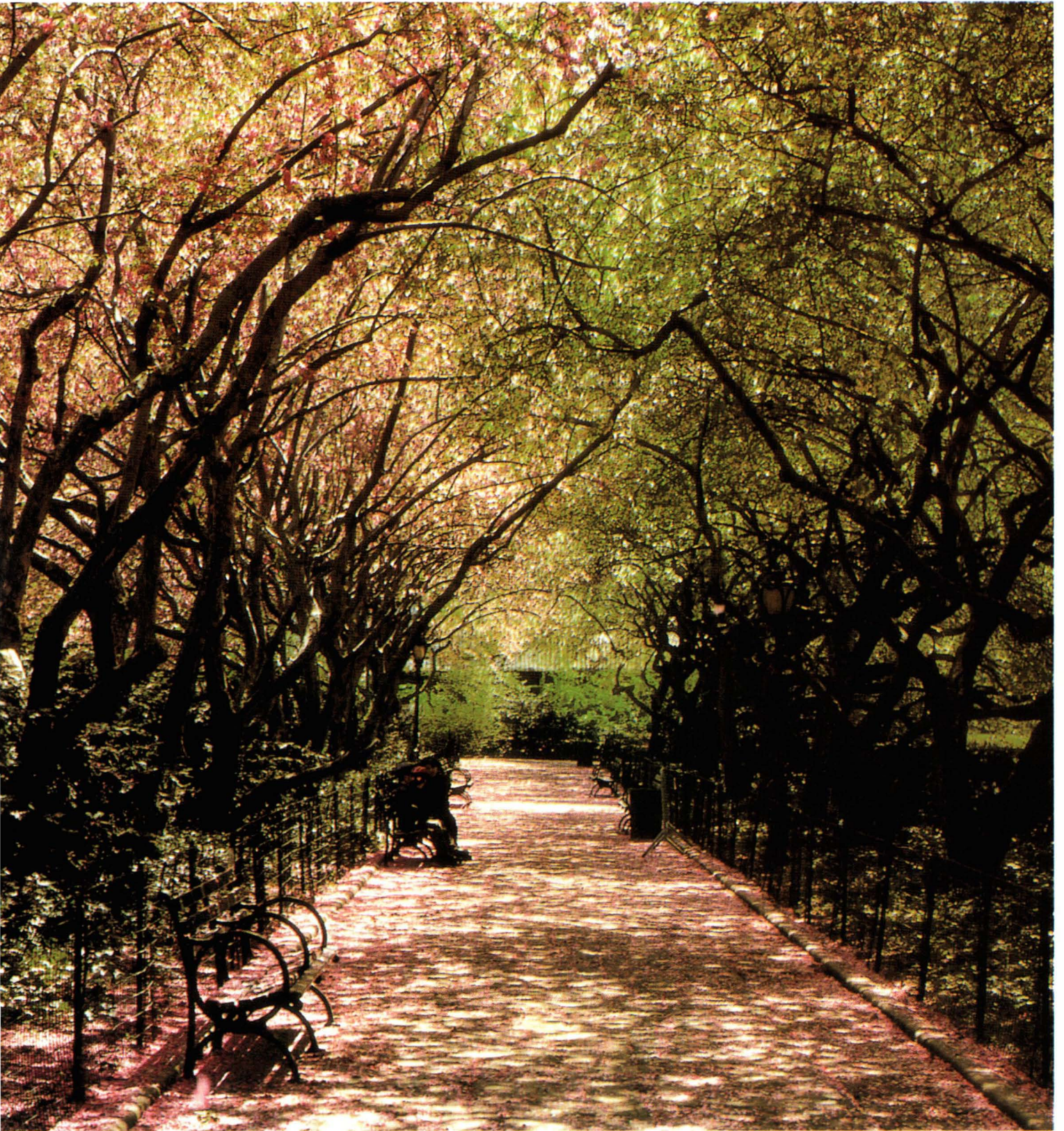


of life augmented'. Olmsted therefore suggested another reason for establishing large urban parks. As he put it – 'a man's [sic] eyes cannot be as much occupied as they are in large cities by artificial things, or by natural things seen under obviously artificial conditions, without a harmful effect, first on his [sic] mental and nervous system and ultimately on his [sic] entire constitutional organization'. In short 'the beauty of rural scenery' is a restorative antidote to the artificiality and oppression of urban conditions – and this view was 'too well established to need argument'. Such statements support the view that Olmsted never abandoned his anti-urban sentiment.³⁰⁸

Olmsted's paternalism was already apparent in his description in 1858 of the purpose of Central Park being 'to supply to the hundreds of thousands of tired workers, who have no opportunity to spend their summers in the country, a specimen of God's handiwork'. Accordingly, the Greensward Plan made minimal provision for active recreation or for buildings that did not contribute directly to the primary purpose of the park. Beveridge noted, however, that 'Olmsted always wished to satisfy the need of users of his large parks for refreshments, and felt that by serving beer and wine he could forestall the proliferation of bars nearby'.³⁰⁹

The Olmsted–Vaux plan 'conceived of the park as a place where the city dweller could find refreshment from the sights and sounds of urban life and enjoy scenery that would seem both limitless and natural. To this end, the park boundaries were thickly planted . . . the southern part of the park was pastoral; the northern part . . . was more heavily wooded. But there were constant scenic effects in both halves. The only formal element in the park was the Mall, planned for fashionable "promenading" . . .'. The boundary planting and the Mall were two elements that other competitors did not propose. But it was the circulation system that was the real 'standout' feature of the Olmsted–Vaux plan. First their transverse routes would keep extraneous cross-town traffic out of the park. Then, internally, their segregation of routes for different modes of movement through the park allowed adoption of 'the Reptonian principle of appropriation . . . by freeing the user of a particular system from the necessity of conflict with other users'.³¹⁰

Vast amounts of rock were blasted and moved or removed from site; an extensive drainage system was installed and huge volumes of topsoil were brought in from New Jersey. The design, nevertheless, retained a strong reflection of the natural conditions of the site. Water bodies like the Lake and the Reservoir (and later, the Harlem Meer) occupied the five natural drainage basins; rockier



to the Minneapolis park system as a whole between 1982 and 1999. This is shown in Table 20.4.

PLANS FOR THE MINNEAPOLIS PARK SYSTEM

Understandably, a large park system with a large and reliably recurrent budget has a large ongoing programme of new works and improvements at any one time. The Superintendent's Annual Report for 1997 listed under the Planning Division's project involvement, eighteen completed projects – at a total cost of \$2,086,900; twenty-eight projects in progress – at a total cost of \$14,890,645, and eighteen pending projects – at a total cost of \$3,817,000. It is significant that the approach to new works normally includes high levels of public consultation through the establishment of Citizen Advisory Committees. There is an 'up front' attitude towards informing residents about the availability of funding and possible sources of money for works, including private donations and a strong tendency to refer back to the precedents set by Cleveland and developed by Theodore Wirth. Wirth's *History of the Board of Park Commissioners*, published in 1945, still has a strong influence on the work of the Planning Division. It is noticeable, however, that recent

planting – like that on the island in Loring Park around the Lake of the Isles – is tending to favour the use of a higher proportion of native species, and that larger proportions of the parks – like the Glen in Minnehaha Park – are being planted and managed as wildlife habitat.⁴⁰⁷

The park system contains relatively few sculptural or art installations – apart, of course, from the Sculpture Garden at the Walker Art Center. This is a reflection of two factors. First, the need for all such installations to undergo in-house staff review, for them to meet Board policy and procedures, and for them to be approved by the Board; and second, the fact that the Board still adheres to the view put forward by Cleveland that 'the city itself should be a work of art'. One area in which the Board – and other agencies in the city – does have a very strong record is the hiring of 'name' landscape architects for the design of major open spaces. Among the accomplished practitioners undertaking projects there are Garret Eckbo – invited by the Board in 1971 to conduct a review of the parkway system; Lawrence Halprin – urban designer for the Nicollet Mall in the late 1960s; Paul Friedberg – designed Peavey Plaza and the Loring Greenway in the mid-1970s; Michael van Valkenberg who designed the extension to the Sculpture Park; Diana Balmori who was appointed for the reshaping of Loring Park, and Jones and

Table 20.3 Total number of visits to the Grand Rounds (1995–99)

Park facility	Total 1995	Total 1997	Total 1999
Cedar Lake Trail	–	165,700	538,500
Central Mississippi Riverfront	365,500	623,100	865,400
Chain of Lakes	2,222,100	2,307,100	5,524,300
Minnehaha Park	618,900	663,000	864,400
Minnehaha Parkway	456,500	728,300	2,701,300
Mississippi Gorge Park	469,100	708,100	2,399,000
Nakomis-Hiawatha Parkway	827,800	831,500	1,305,200
North Mississippi Park	25,900	32,100	61,300
Theodore Wirth Park	293,500	172,500	267,700
Wirth Memorial Parkway	339,400	321,700	1,000,000
Totals	5,618,500	6,555,000	15,527,200

Source: Annual Use Survey of Metropolitan Regional Recreation Open Space System/MN Office of Tourism

Table 20.4 Total number of visits to the Minneapolis Park System (1982–99)

1982	1988	1995	1997	1999
3,621,400	5,133,400	5,618,500	6,555,000	15,527,200

Source: Annual Use Survey of Metropolitan Regional Recreation Open Space System

Great City Parks

Great City Parks is a celebration of some of the finest achievements of landscape architecture in the public realm. It is a comparative study of twenty significant public parks in fourteen major cities across western Europe and North America. As a collection they give a clear picture of why parks have been created, how they have been designed, how they are managed, and what plans are being made for them at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

The twenty parks are documented in ascending order of size. Each park is examined in terms of the condition of the site at the time of designation, the reason for its designation and the key figures behind the decision to build it. The principal designers are profiled in terms of their backgrounds and the values that they brought to the projects. Each park is then examined in terms of its planning and design, and the original design concept is reviewed in terms of spatial structure, circulation systems and intended character. The current status of the parks is reviewed in terms of the organizations that manage them: how they are appointed; how they canvass users' views; how the parks are funded and how they are used. The final section on each park looks at current plans for them. The study concludes by considering whether there are clear planning, design and management criteria for successful city parks.

Great City Parks is based on unique research including extensive site visits and interviews with their managing organizations. The text is amplified by new plans and photographs of each park. This book reflects a belief that well-planned, well-designed and well-managed parks remain invaluable components of liveable and hospitable cities. *Great City Parks* will appeal to practitioners and students of landscape architecture, architecture, urban planning and park management, and to people who appreciate the special role of parks in urban environments.

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The parks covered in this book are:

Paley Park, New York
Village of Yorkville Park, Toronto
Freeway Park, Seattle
Bryant Park, New York
Parc de Bercy, Paris
Parc André-Citroën, Paris
Parc des Buttes-Chaumont, Paris
Parc de la Villette, Paris
Parque Maria Luisa, Seville
Birkenhead Park, Merseyside
Regent's Park, London
Grant Park, Chicago
Stadtspark, Hamburg
Landschaftspark, Duisburg-Nord
Prospect Park, Brooklyn, New York
Tiergarten, Berlin
Central Park, New York
Stanley Park, Vancouver
Amsterdamse Bos, Amsterdam
Minneapolis Park System

"This Marvellous book screams to be read. Well-researched and beautifully presented, Tate considers the management and future prospects of some of the public parks of Western Europe and North America, as well as their history and design".

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