

Comparison of parks: central park and forest park



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The Central Park Construction began on 1858, continued during the American Civil War, and was completed in 1873. New York as the most important economic center in Eastern United States, rises and falls several times, and the Central Park rises and falls as well. And today it is one of the most successful park in the city. The Forest Park, which opened in 1876, more than a decade after its proposal. St Louis as big city locate in Mid-Western United States, plays a very important role in the US history, The Forest Park changes several times, also rises and falls in its history. These two parks participate a very important role in the city, both of them are very large parks, and built contemporarily. In this paper, I will compare the similarities and differences between these two parks and try to find out the reason by using the urban design knowledge based on the development of the city.

“ Forest Park was originally designed as an English Romantic park with open, flowing spaces and diverse environs. Today it retains much of that character, especially in the eastern half of the park. Many of the spaces envisioned in the original 1876 plan, which designed by M. G. Kern, and 1904 World’s Fair plan remain in some capacity, with a range of modified uses. The park’s topography changes a lot after River Des Peres brailed into concrete sewer tubes.

In 1876, Forest Park already had a prepared plan and was established. The park was envisioned as a great romantic landscape, with winding trails and carriageways through deep woods and pastoral fields surrounded by informal water bodies and naturalistic streams. At that time, the land had several owners and was primarily the site of farms and coal mines. The River Des

Peres wandered through the northern and eastern parts of the area and a major east-west thoroughfare, Clayton Road, passed through the property. The first park commissioners authorized a plan for the new park, “ To preserve the natural beauties of the ground, so that it will always appear in fact as well as in name, a Forest Park.” The plan called for a hippodrome, floral decorations, a bandstand, and a Forest Park Zoo.

In preparation for Opening Day, June 24, 1876, 19 miles of roads and 20 miles of walkways were built along with some bridges, water and sewer pipes, including Round Lake, Pagoda Lake and a portion of Peninsula Lake. Other facilities included a restaurant, bandstand, a large race track, and superintendent’s home. A small zoo was built and later a fenced area for five buffalo became a major park attraction. By 1891, there was a variety of animals to be viewed by the public at no charge.

In 1876-77 St. Louis City and St. Louis County separated, with Forest Park remaining part of the City. By 1894 the park had 2. 5 million visitors, brought there by street car and improved roadways. Park activities were diverse, including annual bicycle race, carriage rides, boating, cricket, lacrosse, baseball, tennis, croquet, golf, and harness racing.

The most significant changes to the park came as the result of the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition, which was held over much of the park’s western half. To accommodate the fair, most of the trees in the western part of the park were removed, except for what today is Kennedy Forest. Large portions of the park were land-filled to accommodate the new structures. The River Des Peres was rerouted, channeled and sections of it were placed

underground. The Art Museum and the Zoo's Flight Cage were remained. Grand Basin and Post-Dispatch Lake were reshaped from Peninsula Lake. The plan for the fair required that the park be returned to its original condition after the conclusion of the fair, but too many trees had been cleared and the added wear and tear of the fair left an indelible mark on the park's natural systems. In addition, after the fair, the park became the home for cultural and recreational facilities – the Jefferson Memorial, Zoo, and World's Fair Pavilion were soon added- all done in a piecemeal fashion that did not adhere to any comprehensive plan.

In the years following the World's Fair, up until the late 1920s, Forest Park underwent a series of changes which altered the shape, design, and use of many areas of the park. Many of these changes involved the addition of active recreation facilities in the park, under the guidance of Park Commissioner Dwight Davis. The changes, while greatly expanding the attraction of the park for many citizens, resulted in a park whose natural systems and linkages were disturbed, a condition that exists to this day.

The park continued to change, as new facilities, institutions, and amenities were built. In 1930, the River Des Peres disappeared from the park as it was buried in two underground sewer pipes. More and more of the park's passive green space was replaced by buildings, athletic fields, golf courses and paths. Highway 64/40 and the Forest Park Parkway were routed through the park's perimeters during this time. Some attempts were made to plan for the park's continued growth during this period, but none had any significant physical impact.

The 1983 plan was adopted by the Community Development Commission of the City of St. Louis as the only comprehensive plan for the park since the 1904 plan for the fair and the original plan of 1876. However, it was not significantly implemented. There have been a number of changes to the park subsequent to the 1983 plan. The most significant have been a number of road removals, road re-surfacing and in-fill of the lagoons around Post-Dispatch Lake.

In Fall 1993, a plan was prepared by the New York firm of Kelly/Vernell Landscape Architects to augment the 1983 plan's landscape component. However, it was never adopted or implemented. " [1]

A comparison between the 1983 and 1993 plans reveal different approaches to the park. The most significant differences are: different attitudes regarding Grand Basin/ Art Hill and Post-Dispatch Lake area in terms of active recreation and access, circulation and parking; the 1993 Plan incorporating a more extensive lake and lagoon system; different resolutions for the cultural institutions expansion needs; and some differences in roads and paths.

“ Central Park is of great importance as the first real park made in this country – a democratic development of the highest significance and on the success of which, in my opinion, much of the progress of art and esthetic culture in this country is dependent. “

- *Frederick Law Olmsted, August 1, 1858*

The creation of Central Park is the beginning of the nation's urban landscape park tradition. It plays a role of open space on the island of Manhattan: "the dynamic tension between pavement and pasture, between city noise and rural quiet, between fresh air and foul; between private and public land, between city and state government; between city square and urban park."

[2] It shows how an extraordinary work of public art emerged from the crucible of New York City politics.

By 1800 New York City's burgeoning commercial future was clear. The Central Park was not a part of the government's plan until 1855, which the population of the New York City get four times than 1811's. The City officials recognized the need to plan for the growth which to build a big park to makes more open space. In 1857, Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux won the Central Park Design Competition.

Before the construction of the park, the original inhabitants of the land inhabited need to leave, however most of them are low income African-American, German or Irish immigrants, which lived in a relatively small village (such as Seneca Village), around 1, 600 residents occupying the area at the time. In 1857, by public land expropriation legislation was imposed, the lands were recovered, while Seneca Village and other communities were demolished to make room for the construction of the park. In 1860 by the effort of park commissioners, theyfinalize the negotiations for the purchase of an additional 65 acres at the north end of the park, between 106th and 110th Streets. Between 1860 and 1873, most of the major hurdles to construction were overcome, and the park was substantially completed.

“ Following completion, the park quickly slipped into decline. One of the main reasons for this was the lack of interest of the Tammany Hall political machine, which was the largest political force in New York at the time. Around the turn of the 20th century, the park faced several new challenges. Cars were becoming commonplace, bringing with them their burden of pollution, and people’s attitudes were beginning to change. No longer were parks to be used only for walks and picnics in an idyllic environment, but now also for sports, and similar recreation. Following the dissolution of the Central Park Commission in 1870 and Andrew Green’s departure from the project, and the death of Vaux in 1895, the maintenance effort gradually declined, and there were few, All of this changed in 1934, when Republican Fiorello La Guardia was elected mayor of New York City and unified the five park-related departments then in existence. Robert Moses was given the task of cleaning up the park. Moses, about to become one of the mightiest men in New York City, took over what was essentially a relic, a leftover from a bygone era.

Despite the increasing numbers of visitors to the park, Robert Moses’ departure in 1960 had nevertheless marked the beginning of a twenty-year period of decline in its management. The city itself was also experiencing economic and social changes, with some residents fleeing the city and moving to the suburbs in the wake of increased crime. The Parks Department, suffering from budget cuts and a lack of skilled management that rendered its workforce virtually ineffective, responded by opening the park to any and all activities that would bring people into it—regardless of their impact and without adequate management, oversight, or maintenance

follow-up. Some of these events nevertheless became milestones in the social history of the park, and in the cultural history of the city.

Management of the restored landscapes by the conservancy's "zone gardeners" proved so successful that core maintenance and operations staff were reorganized in 1996. The zone-based system of management was implemented throughout the park, which was divided into forty-nine zones. Consequently, every zone of the park has a specific individual accountable for its day-to-day maintenance. Zone gardeners supervise volunteers assigned to them, (who commit to a consistent work schedule) and are supported by specialized crews in areas of maintenance requiring specific expertise or equipment, or more effectively conducted on a park-wide basis."

[3][4]

Central Park which is the first park made in US, leads the American parks movement that occurred in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. It did not change a lot after it was built, but the different management could lead a very different result in this Park. A good maintenance makes it more vibrant and serves people well in the city

Forest Park is a unique land asset that seems caught between the need for reform and the need for revolution. It requires reform to correct the inadequate copy of the plan for New York's Central Park, to redress damage from massive deforestation and earth moving for the 1904 World's Fair, and to adjust the park to the automobile and other realities of the world of 1976.

To compare those two parks we can find:

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The designer of the Forest Park probably was influenced by the Olmsted-Vaux plan for Central Park. Several of the features of the original design of Forest Park, the Grand Drive, the Promenade, the Sheepfold, the irregular lakes, reflect similar features in Central Park and other parks such as Prospect park in Brooklyn, which designed by Olmsted and Vaux as well. To compare the Forest Park and Central Park, we can find Olmsted and Vaux solved the problem of crossing park traffic brilliantly with four grade-separated east-west crossing and so successfully screened these from view. However the Forest Park visitors are acutely aware of the north-south commuter traffic passing their park. Kern's curves and loops were designed to serve only a single system of traffic, whereas the designers of Central Park built into its infrastructure four grade-separated movement system: the transverse roads already mentioned plus pedestrian paths, bridge trails, and carriage drives. Unfortunately, lacking grade-separated transverse roads and because of the location of certain traffic-generating uses deep within the boundaries of the park, we cannot at the present time as in Central Park ban the automobile altogether on certain days and turn the entire park over to cyclists and pedestrians.

Forest Park today is the result of these various plans as they were overlaid on each other over time. It is clearly apparent that the park is essentially split down the middle, with the eastern section being more reminiscent of the pre-World's Fair design approach and the western section reflecting the post-World's Fair design approaches.

“ Prosperous cities of that period sought to display their municipal pride with civic adornment, and parks ranked high as a cultural expression of the new
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wealth.” [2] In addition, the dynamic of intense urban growth which had been set in motion by Post-Civil War industrialization brought about a change in the contemporary attitude toward land use: the rapid obliteration of so much open space caused civic leaders to put a value on openness itself. Parks were viewed as therapeutic and often referred to as the “ Lungs of the city,” More demonstrable perhaps than their effect on the health of the constituent populace was their effect on adjacent land values, an argument that was often candidly advanced by park proponents of the period. It was not accidental that, as in New York baronial mansions began to march up Fifth Avenue in response to the creation of Central Park, The fashionable quarter of St. Louis grew up at about the same time on the perimeter of Forest Park. Nor was it accidental in either of these cities that their chief cultural resources clustered in or near their premier parks.

In sum, Both Central Park and Forest Park are the treasures of their cities. For the government the park is also the very important cultural resources, and a good maintenance could makes the park more valuably. As the development of the city, the park may needs to be changed to match the people’s developing requirements , but the main idea of creating a great Park is never changed, which makes people living a better place.

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