

Mount Vernon Place



Rebuilding a Neighborhood

Prepared for: Friends of Mount Vernon Place
Baltimore, MD

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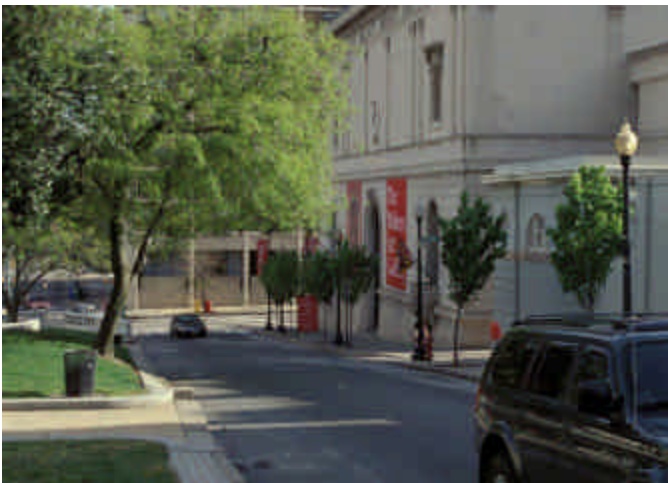
Rebuilding a Neighborhood

I. INTRODUCTION

Mt. Vernon Place and the Washington Monument are the symbolic and historic heart of Baltimore. The area houses the City's most prestigious cultural institutions including the Walters Museum, the Peabody Institute of the Johns Hopkins University, the Engineering Society of Baltimore, Inc., Center Stage, the Maryland Historical Society, the Eubie Blake National Jazz and Cultural Center, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the School for the Arts, the Enoch Pratt Free Library, and so on. The Mount Vernon Place parks were designed by some of America's most esteemed architects and park planners, including Frederick Law Olmsted and the firm of Carrère and Hastings.



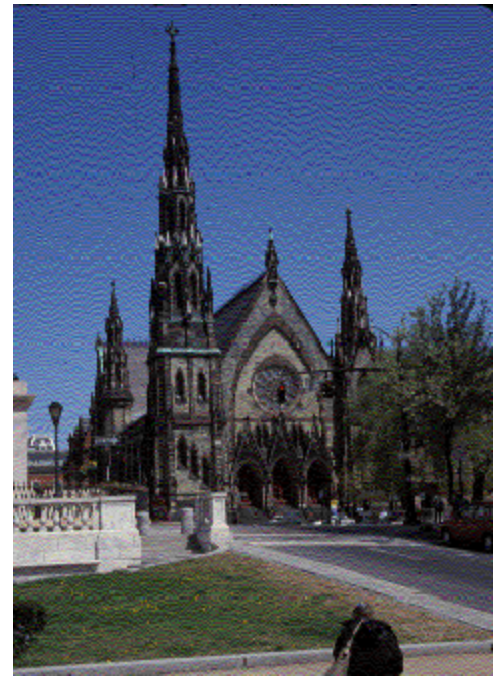
Mt. Vernon Place is also a neighborhood of people who have devoted their time and energy to reviving the area and making it a good place to live, work and visit. In 1999, the Midtown Community Benefits District led a grass roots effort to form a group uniquely entitled "Our Front Yard". Our Front Yard was co-sponsored by the Midtown Plan, the Mt. Vernon Cultural District, and the Mt. Vernon-Belvedere Association. Each of these groups put up money to bring Project for Public Spaces to Baltimore the first time. The desire to focus on Mt. Vernon Place came out of the work of the Streetscape Committee of the Midtown Plan, which did considerable work on the design of residential streets but recognized that Mount Vernon Place was very different and deserved a separate study with professional expertise.



By the year 2000 the group, renamed Friends of Mount Vernon Place, held meetings, developed a vision and worked with partners, including the Midtown Cultural District, on a series of events. The group even bought movable chairs to provide additional places to sit in the parks and as an outward symbol of their commitment to making people welcome in Mt. Vernon Place. But there is still more to do.

In July 2001, Project for Public Spaces began a planning process to create a plan for the parks (Phase I) that would guide the efforts of the Friends of Mount Vernon Place, the city and others whose work will impact Mt. Vernon Place in the future. This report, initiated and financed by the Friends through private funding efforts, led to consultations with a number of key agencies, organizations, and neighborhood groups, including Friends members, Midtown Community Benefits District, Mount Vernon Cultural District and their members, Baltimore City Department of Planning, Baltimore City Department of Recreation and Parks, and others, such as Preservation Maryland, Mount Vernon Belvedere Association, and Jubilee Baltimore.

The presentation of this report is, of course, only one early step in the rejuvenation of Mount Vernon Place and its environs. The next vital planning step (Phase II, Part A) is a *cultural landscape report* that will research the historic setting in terms of what features, landscapes and materials made up the original Carrère and Hastings plan. Following that, a phasing/implementation final step (Phase II, Part B) will be developed to restore and revitalize Mount Vernon Place. However, these future steps should not hinder the Friends, Midtown Community Benefits District, the Parks Department, the Cultural District, and other partners from moving ahead with the majority of the recommendations in this report. While some of the recommendations for permanent changes will depend on more study, such as the suggestion to add sidewalks, most recommendations are programmatic in nature and could make an immediate impact on how the parks are used.



II. KEY ISSUES

Most people agree that, while Mt. Vernon Place has many assets, there are specific issues that need to be addressed for the area to reach its full potential. While addressing issues specific to the square is a place to start, revitalizing the parks is also an opportunity to catalyze improvements in the neighborhood as a whole. To deal with these issues will depend not only on *physical improvements* to the park, the surrounding streets, and neighboring cultural institutions, but also on the *management* of the area, including the right mix of programs, activities, and outreach that addresses the deeper causes of people's negative perceptions. The following is a synopsis of the major issues that affect the parks and the neighborhood.

- **Creating a pedestrian environment.** Currently vehicle traffic dominates the neighborhood as a whole, particularly on the streets that surround Mount Vernon Place. And the one-way streets that cut the parks off from the rest of the historic district (including St. Paul and Cathedral Streets) are the antithesis of what a walkable urban neighborhood is all about. In the future, to make people feel safe and comfortable in the Mount Vernon area, traffic will need to be slowed down and improvements made that give a clear signal that it is a pedestrian-friendly area.
- **Integrating cultural institutions into the community.** Despite the very impressive cultural, educational and religious institutions in Mount Vernon Place, one could easily walk through without realizing that they are there or what is going on inside of them. This project provides an opportunity for the cultural institutions to join forces with the residential, commercial, government, and corporate communities in the area to develop a unified strategy.
- **Preserving Mount Vernon as a historic cultural district.** Residents and visitors alike lavish praise on the district for its ambience and quiet character—it is important that this character be respected. One important issue to address is how to upgrade the area to attract more people, including residents, into the parks and surrounding streets on a day-to-day basis, creating a safer, more inviting environment, without destroying the existing character that is the most important asset in the community.
- **Managing the parks more effectively.** Although many people care about Mount Vernon's parks and make significant contributions, there is no organized management program or single entity that takes overall responsibility for its day-to-day functioning. This issue will need to be addressed in the near future, if the park is to reach its full potential.
- **Improving landscaping to be an attraction to the parks and to the area.** The landscaping plan developed by Carrère and Hastings (and modified where necessary to meet the goals of the master plan) could become a major attraction in itself if a coordinated management plan was developed.

III. A New Vision

A. Creating a pedestrian friendly environment and enhancing the neighborhood as a cultural destination

With its wealth of cultural institutions, historic character, and singular pedestrian scale, the Mount Vernon neighborhood could become one of the most desirable places to live in America. The parks of Mount Vernon Place can become the crown jewel and a catalyst for revitalizing this entire district. *However, for this to occur, people must feel safe and comfortable walking.*

To create a good pedestrian environment, vehicle traffic issues, of which there are many, must be dealt with head-on, forcefully, and consistently by the city and neighborhood groups. Among the central issues that emerged during the course of this study were: speeding traffic (exacerbated by the one-way streets and the wide roadbed around the monument); exhaust, especially from buses speeding through the circle; poorly marked crosswalks and wide intersections that make streets uninviting and difficult to cross; cars parking in front of park entrances, blocking access; and a sense that there is insufficient visitor parking on weekdays. [The Cultural District is currently doing a parking study to address the latter, along with the possible need for more residential parking and places for tour buses to offload and park.]

TRAFFIC CALMING OPPORTUNITIES:

The parks, streets and overall neighborhood ambience would be well served if there were a concerted effort to transform the area into a pedestrian friendly environment, a destination, and a gateway into the city. To do this, a variety of traffic calming measures should be considered with the intent of reducing vehicle speeds overall and signaling to drivers that they are entering a pedestrian zone, especially along Charles, St. Paul, Cathedral, and Centre Street.

- **Create a stronger sense of neighborhood by converting all perimeter streets around Mount Vernon Place (including Madison, Centre, Cathedral, St. Paul, and Charles Street) into two-way roadways.** Research and experience in other cities has shown that one-way streets do not contribute to creating walkable urban communities for many reasons. Converting them to two-way will slow (not reduce) traffic, double the opportunities that commuters have to patronize the shops on a given street, reduce driving by creating more direct routes, and vastly improve pedestrian access across the street and through the rest of the neighborhood. It will help connect the neighborhood's centerpiece (Mount Vernon's parks) to the rest of the historic district.
- **Create pedestrian-friendly gateways to the district from all sides, with special treatments to intersections and crosswalks.** Curbs should be extended at street corners to create shorter distances for pedestrians (without reducing vehicle lane space); the crosswalks should also be made more prominent. Changing the texture of the roadway at these locations will also signal to cars and people that they are entering a special pedestrian-friendly zone. It will also improve the overall image of the area. Although we would advocate improving intersections throughout the district in this manner, the key intersections in the short term are Charles and Centre, Charles and Madison, St. Paul and E. Mt. Vernon, and Cathedral and W. Mt. Vernon. All entrances and crosswalks should be designed to conform to ADA standards for accessible design.

- **Enhance and increase access** to the Mount Vernon Place area through better **use of mass transit**, by improving and adding bus stops, building on Dash shuttle services linked to downtown, and advertising mass transit options to large events. If Charles Street becomes a two-way street, then a second bus stop should be added on the edge of the West Park for southbound buses. The existing bus stop on the circle at the East Park should be upgraded to become a place that serves bus riders and the larger public alike, with a widened sidewalk to accommodate a bus shelter that reflects the historic character of the area, an information kiosk which highlights the cultural district and its activities through an area map, posters with area activities, seating, waste receptacle and possibly a telephone. Marketing for large events should advertise mass transit options.
- **Increase the pedestrian space around the Washington Monument** and use this space for events and displays that give identity to the monument as a place to go to learn about the history of the area and of Baltimore. A wider circular sidewalk will not reduce traffic flow, since only one lane is used by cars going around the circle. Recommendations are outlined in the “specific recommendations by area” section of this report.
- **Extend the park sidewalks around the outer circle of the monument** to accommodate activities in these locations and generally improve pedestrian comfort. For example, a larger sidewalk would accommodate an improved bus shelter, with seating and a kiosk on the east side (see below).
- **Restore the brick paving on all streets within Mt. Vernon Place**
- **Modify traffic light timing on Mount Vernon Place** so turning cars do not speed to make the green light at Charles Street.
- **Add plantings to all intersections** listed above to reinforce the sense that one is entering a special zone. Dramatic plantings are especially needed in the South Park facing Centre Street. Along with the above measures, this will be a forceful reminder to drivers that this is not an area for speeding.
- **Improve bicycle circulation in the area in general** by introducing a bike lane along Mt. Vernon Place East and West, past the parks and connecting to the Jones Falls Greenway and Seton Hill Park.
- **Improve pedestrian circulation into and around the parks.** Our analysis of current circulation patterns shows that most foot traffic circulates around the circle, along park edges, and, other than the fountain in the West Park, rarely into the parks, in part because there are few “places” in the parks to go. There are opportunities to enhance preferred park entrances and pathways with lighting, plantings, crosswalks, by prohibiting parking in front of park entrances, and in some cases by modifying the entrances. This can be accomplished in several ways, including:
 - **Installing new sidewalks on the perimeter** of all parks, where foot traffic is fairly heavy already and is destroying the planting. This will encourage pedestrians to use the parks more in their daily commute by incorporating them better into the general circulation patterns of the neighborhood. Olmsted understood this in his design, which showed much better connections to adjacent sidewalks. Inviting more people into the parks will also improve the community’s appreciation of the parks and bring new activity to them.

- **Realigning certain park entrances to relate to adjacent institutions.** For example, the East Park entrance on Mount Vernon Place could be moved slightly to the west and widened (to 18 feet) to align with the new Peabody Institute entrance. West Park and North Park side entrances could also be widened to 18 feet: in the West Park these entrances would help accommodate small receptions (see West Park section below) and wider North Park entrances would encourage the use of a new gathering place with games recommended just north of the existing flowerbeds.
- **New crosswalks should be marked, preferably in brick pavers of a contrasting color to the bricks in the restored street surface.** Key locations for crosswalks are at the improved entrances listed above and at the South Park across Charles, both from the Walters and from the Peabody.
- **Consideration should be given to the benefit of opening entrances in the balustrades** at the East, West and North Parks. Based on our observations of how the parks are and are not used, new entrances would considerably enhance the functionality of the parks. Of course, the historic landscape must also be respected, and balanced with these functional issues.
- **Phase in improvements to the mews and alleys.** These hidden spaces, located throughout the neighborhood, could become much more appreciated assets. Such improvements could include historic style lighting, landscaping, repaving streets (preferably with brick) and sidewalks, upgrading facades and building structures, and even considering certain alleys as alternative programming spaces (for food, music, small events, perhaps even for children to play).
- **Create a bus parking area** under the expressway where tour buses can park after they drop their passengers at their destination on the square.

B. Integrating cultural institutions into the community

The ground floor uses of many of the cultural institutions fronting on the parks could be improved to improve their “curb appeal” as well as beautify the area around the parks. Most of these buildings have a weak physical relationship to the parks. One can walk through Mt. Vernon Place without ever noticing the museums, performance spaces, and other assets that would place this area on a par with any cultural district in the country. And the depth of these resources may not even be evident to people who live and work in Mt. Vernon Place.

OPPORTUNITIES

- **Improve the visibility of cultural and other institutions and highlight their entrances.** The gray colors and the solid facades of the buildings contribute to what people who participated in the survey and the evaluations felt was an overall monochromatic look. To change this perception, while still maintaining the historic character of the period cityscape, the following types of changes could be considered: up-lighting of facades emphasizing entrances; adding large banners to the facades of certain buildings publicizing current exhibits; removing curtains from first floor windows; and adding exterior plantings and flower boxes in windows, at entrances, etc. Another very good suggestion was to encourage the use of flags around the squares: “The National, Maryland, Baltimore City flags are all very colorful, and each club and institution could have a specially designed flag for their use. As a precedent, this would recall the paintings of the American Impressionists who showed New York cityscapes full of flags (Hassan, among others) and it is exactly our period.”
- **Encourage new businesses along the edge of the parks,** particularly along Charles Street near Centre Street along the park, where there are museums with blank walls – the Peabody could even explore the possibility of retail uses at the street in their Elderhostel buildings on Charles.
- **Highlight the activities that are going on inside the institutions outside and in the park.** For example, musicians from the Peabody Institute could be encouraged to perform informally in the park (they could seek a blanket permit from the city to allow music students to play in the park for pocket change). The West Park fountain area should be improved so that the Walters could hold some small events in the park. Temporary sculpture exhibits and art shows could occur in front of the Walters and/or in the park.
- **Improve the street and sidewalk presence of retail services** within the institutions. Although there are cafes and gift shops within some of the institutions in the area, none are located where they are visible to passersby. For example, a sidewalk cafe could be developed by the Walters Museum on Charles Street.

C. Improving the parks as an attraction for people.

Currently, Mount Vernon Place parks are not attracting the level of regular positive activity and street life necessary to keep them feeling safe and desirable. Despite its historic character, distinctive architecture, and beautiful spaces, Mount Vernon Place is not a frequent destination among neighborhood residents, employees from adjacent institutions or visitors. Mostly, it functions as a destination on three major occasions: the Flower Mart, the Monument Lighting and the Book Fair. At most other times, the area has a feeling of being underused—especially on Sundays when few of the surrounding shops and services are open. There are few attractions or mini-destinations in the park or the amenities to support use.

OPPORTUNITIES

- **Create special “places” within the parks** to accommodate specific activities. For example, one area, possibly near the church could be developed as a place for wedding photos; the Barye Lion, already a positive attraction for children could be enhanced along with the pool in the West Park.
- **Improve and increase amount of seating and other amenities** in the parks, expanding the number of movable chairs and benches in key locations. Replace existing benches with a higher quality bench (suitable to the historic plan) and focus new seating areas around the fountains and other important features.
- **Develop opportunities for retail activity** within and around the area. Food and drink is one of the most common reasons why people go to and remain in a public space.
 - **Add a café kiosk** or even simply an attractive cart in at least one of the parks to add “eyes on the street.” It would increase the sense of security and management, and utterly suit the European character of the place. Several locations for such a kiosk are discussed in this report, but these additions can be phased in sensitively and slowly so that the right scale and location are discovered through experimentation. For example, a food cart could be located in the West Park for a week or two and then moved to the East Park for comparison. In long term a more substantive structure may be desirable that can handle more people and that would be designed in a historically appropriate style.
 - **Encourage eating in the park**, for example, through organized lunchtime socials for staff of the different institutions to meet each other.
 - **A program for recruiting desirable destination retail businesses for the vacant storefronts on Charles Street should be developed.** For example, a row of antique stores could create a mini-destination district in and of itself.
- **Identify recreation activities and partnerships in the greater neighborhood** that could result in bringing additional activity into Mt. Vernon Place. Some of these opportunities are described below in the programming section.
- **Make the landscaping an attraction in itself.** While most people agree that Mt Vernon Place is quite beautiful, a closer look reveals many problems that relate directly to the landscape management.

This is especially evident in highly visible locations such as around the circle, at vehicular and pedestrian entrances to the area, on balustrades, at edges, and around fountains. Currently there is a noticeable lack of color or variety that would make the landscape itself an attraction. A proposed study of the original landscape plan will hopefully reveal opportunities to improve the planting scheme and create a destination for gardeners. However, some preliminary ideas are outlined in this report including the following:

- **Use planting beds and border treatments to reinforce existing pathways and to guide people along the preferred paths.** The considerable erosion of the lawns, especially at pathway intersections, suggests that pedestrian circulation could be better directed by using plantings along the paths in key locations. In addition, in some areas, the entrances would function better if they were widened or realigned slightly to accommodate current circulation patterns.
- **Develop a planting scheme that includes seasonal variations and changing exhibits, perhaps three or four horticulture exhibits per year.** Many parks, including Bryant Park in Manhattan, have won the hearts of area residents and employees by keeping the park interesting through temporary plant displays. Perhaps this could be done in partnership with the Cylburn Arboretum, the University of Maryland's horticulture program, or Johns Hopkins University. A large and very popular demonstration flower garden in Prescott Park in Portsmouth, New Hampshire was managed for years by the University of New Hampshire, with labor provided by students in horticulture.
- **Initiate special planting projects with community members to commemorate a special place or event.** A recent example is the Daffodil Project in New York, a citywide volunteer effort to plant one million daffodil bulbs as a tribute to those who lost their lives on September 11th. Other such plantings have frequently taken place without any association with a tragic event. The main point of them is that a public place is beautified while building stronger ties between residents in that community and the place they live in.
- **Relocate and redesign the existing fencing.** The black fencing installed in recent years should be rethought, after reviewing the original Carrère and Hastings plan. The existing fence is problematic in that its recurrent openings (to accommodate trees, apparently) have become de facto entrances encouraging pedestrians to tromp through flowerbeds and erode new paths in the grass. Planting beds and fences should reinforce one another, and the fence should only open at proper park entrances. In a few special cases, entrances should be widened or a new entrance added (see plan).
- **Develop a landscape management plan to ensure the sustainability of the improvements.** Obviously, one cannot spend time and money planting bulbs in places that will get trampled by foot traffic after an event. A plan should be developed that coordinates plantings with events, designates areas for dog walking (not a dog run, simply a lawn where dogs are welcome as long as owners clean up), indicates special children's areas, etc. A neighborhood dog run should also be considered elsewhere to take pressure off the parks from dog owners who have no other place to go. (One possible location for a dog run that has been suggested is at Centre Street and Guilford.)

D. Information and Communication

In addition to the issues outlined above concerning the inadequacy of the information about the cultural and other attractions, there is also no information at Centre Street about the institutions and activities “up the hill” and why a pedestrian might be interested to go there.

OPPORTUNITIES

- **Relocate existing and/or add signage in several key locations.** Signs should be located at the edges of the parks, at building entrances, and on retail streets so that window shoppers nearby realize there is a further destination ahead. The Cultural District is currently implementing a signage plan that will help alleviate many problems. Key sign locations are at Charles and Centre, Charles and Madison, and the four corners that face the circle to provide pedestrians with information about the cultural offerings in the area.
- **Install information kiosks** Consideration should be given to adding information kiosks specifically for the Cultural District: one could be located near the bus stop in the East Park across from the monument and another at the foot of the hill on the Charles Street sidewalk at the intersection of Centre Street. In the latter location, without a very prominent and informative kiosk, it is unlikely that many shoppers along Charles Street would cross Centre and climb the hill, since there is no more retail and they only see a difficult climb up the hill ahead. There will be room to install a kiosk after the sidewalk has been widened at the corner, as recommended.
- **New plantings and other accents should be visible from the bottom of the hill at Centre Street.** This might include new planting in the South Park near the top of the hill and the improvements suggested for the Peabody Mews (see South Park section below).

E. Managing Mt. Vernon Place

The success of any public space depends, above all, on its management. However, most parks departments do not have the ability to perform the level of management that a good park requires. As a result, partnerships have been formed in many cities to address a variety of management related issues. In Mount Vernon Place, the lack of a park management program is exhibited in several ways:

In terms of maintenance, although the Horticulture Department is doing whatever possible given their limited resources, overall *the parks need a higher level of care*, especially given their historical prominence. The parks also need a more specialized crew that can cut the grass without damaging ornamental plantings and keep *fountains clear so they do not clog and flood*. *Garbage* is often a serious problem, especially on weekends.

Some events are inadequately managed or coordinated and event sponsors are not always held accountable for damage and clean-up (see attached sample events policy). Another major need is to develop a *program of uses*, including smaller events, that attract people at different times of day. And physical park improvements, such as plantings or the wrought iron fence installed recently, as well as a plan for events, are not coordinated with an *overall vision for the parks and the surrounding streets*. Additionally, there is no *signage* inside the parks to help clarify what is and is not appropriate behavior. *Dogs* using the parks are at times in conflict with children and other users.

From a security perspective, *inappropriate behavior* is not uncommon in the parks, including use of the park as a bathroom or bedroom. At certain times, those involved in these activities outnumber other user groups, creating an uncomfortable feeling for others. *Lighting* in certain areas of the parks is not sufficient; in some cases new lights need to be installed, while in other cases light bulbs simply need replacing. *Car break-ins* are common along the West Park.

Looking more broadly, to include other considerations that bear on how the parks interact with the neighborhood at large, one could summarize the necessary management activities into the following categories:

- Community outreach
- Pedestrian and vehicular circulation and accessibility
- Integrating cultural institutions
- Retail integration
- Security
- Activities, programs and events
- Maintenance
- Landscaping and horticulture
- Marketing
- Amenities and other physical improvements

Current Responsibilities:

To deal with these many concerns, the following entities are *currently* involved to varying degrees in Mount Vernon Place:

NONPROFIT SECTOR

- **Friends of Mount Vernon Place:** plays a catalyst role, as the first group to initiate and sponsor a planning study for the square in recent years (the PPS planning study), resulting in a commitment from the Departments of Planning and Recreation and Parks to create a master plan; liaison to community residents and associations; organizes special events and programs. Member of Urban Renewal Committee.
- **Midtown Community Fund, Inc:** serves as the 501(c)(3) fiscal sponsor for the Friends of Mount Vernon Place
- **Mount Vernon Cultural District:** represents cultural institutions; organizes a program of events and programs together with the Friends; markets programs and events; sponsored a recent signage study to improve wayfinding in the whole district. Member of the Friends board.

SEMI-PUBLIC SECTOR

- **Midtown Community Benefits District:** Clean Team cleans adjoining sidewalks and streets of trash; Safety Team includes the park area during their Mount Vernon patrols (from 2:30 to 10:30 PM, Tuesday through Saturday), gives the North Park special attention on Saturday afternoons during the Mount Vernon Methodist's Soup Kitchen operation. The Safety Team is responsible for securing the folding park chairs provided by the Friends, in partnership with the Walters Art Museum and the Stafford Apartments. Midtown launched the Friends of Mount Vernon Place and provides them with office space, use of equipment, and partial administrative and accounting support. Head of Urban Renewal Committee, member of Friends board.

PUBLIC SECTOR

- **Baltimore Department of Recreation and Parks:** coordinates and markets some events with the Downtown Partnership of Baltimore; issues event permits; lodges complaints; acts as community liaison; does some maintenance; manages the Washington Monument. Horticulture Department provides horticultural maintenance. Capital improvements are the responsibility of the Parks Department Capital Division.
- **Baltimore City Department of Planning:** planning for Mount Vernon Place, built upon a first phase initiated by Friends with private dollars. Member of Friends board.
- **Baltimore Department of Public Works, Bureau of Solid Waste:** empties garbage cans placed at the sidewalk edge.

OTHERS

- **Cultural institutions** participate in the parks in many ways and will play a more prominent role in the future, as activities and programs are better coordinated to serve all the constituencies in the neighborhood. For example, the Walters Museum and Stafford Apartments help set up and put away the movable chairs in the parks; the Mount Vernon Belvedere Association publicizes the Friends' progress and events; and the Baltimore chapter of the National Association of Olmsted Parks is represented on the Friends board.

The participation of this fairly broad group of players points to the potential for stepping up management to cover some of the key tasks that are currently falling through the cracks. This will depend, however, on each group strengthening its capacity and commitment over current levels.

OPPORTUNITIES

A stronger management presence is needed to help overcome the negative perceptions associated with the area, maintain the parks at a higher level, manage events, and have a larger, more encompassing vision for the future of Mt. Vernon Place. As in many other parks throughout the U.S., finding an entity to focus day to day on the park, rather than the more sporadic visits of an overburdened parks department, can be a dramatic step toward better accountability, planning and coordination, and fundraising.

The most likely candidates for assuming these responsibilities in other cities are private, nonprofit organizations that have more flexibility and focus on a particular area than citywide parks departments. In some cities, parks departments make an annual contribution to such a nonprofit: in the case of Mount Vernon Place, that contribution should be more than the average amount the city has spent annually in Mt. Vernon Square in recent years.

Nationally, there are several models on which a new management organization could be based, chief among them the Central Park Conservancy. This is not because the Conservancy is the foremost and best-known example, but because of the similar challenges and opportunities the park was facing when the Conservancy was established, and the limited resources of the parks department. Reestablishing the primacy of maintenance in Central Park required instituting training programs and new management structures, raising the level of commitment, developing a sense of ownership, and creating new standards of care. And according to Elizabeth Barlow Rogers, the Conservancy's first president, "I had to make the people of New York City see the park in the same light as the Museum of Natural History, or the Bronx Zoo, or the Botanical Gardens. I wanted them to see it as a major cultural institution, with the trees and lawns as our collection." To achieve this, the conservancy had to do more than show how beautiful the park could become, they also had to demonstrate that the park was a precious institution in New York, and that it could benefit every sector of the city.

Another possible model is Forest Park Forever, the nonprofit associated with Forest Park in St. Louis, especially because of how well the conservancy works with the public sector in a coordinated park master planning process. Whereas in Baltimore the Friends have thus far led the planning process, in the St. Louis example the Department of Parks, Recreation and Forestry led a two-year, highly inclusive master planning process that included a summit meeting, interviews with community representatives, and a series of public meetings and forums. Forest Park Forever participated in the city's master planning

process both as part of the oversight and final decision-making executive committee appointed by the mayor, and as one of the 69-member Forest Park Master Plan Committee.

The approved Forest Park Master Plan has served as a foundation upon which the partnership between Forest Park Forever and the parks department is built. "By clearly identifying specific capital improvement goals, the master plan has provided a clear agenda for both public and private partners," according to Jim Mann, Forest Park Forever's fourth and current executive director. The development of the master plan has brought other benefits as well. The plan has inspired a major capital campaign for the park.

Additional detail on both these examples is provided in the attached case studies (Appendix D) from PPS' recent publication, Public Parks, Private Partners.

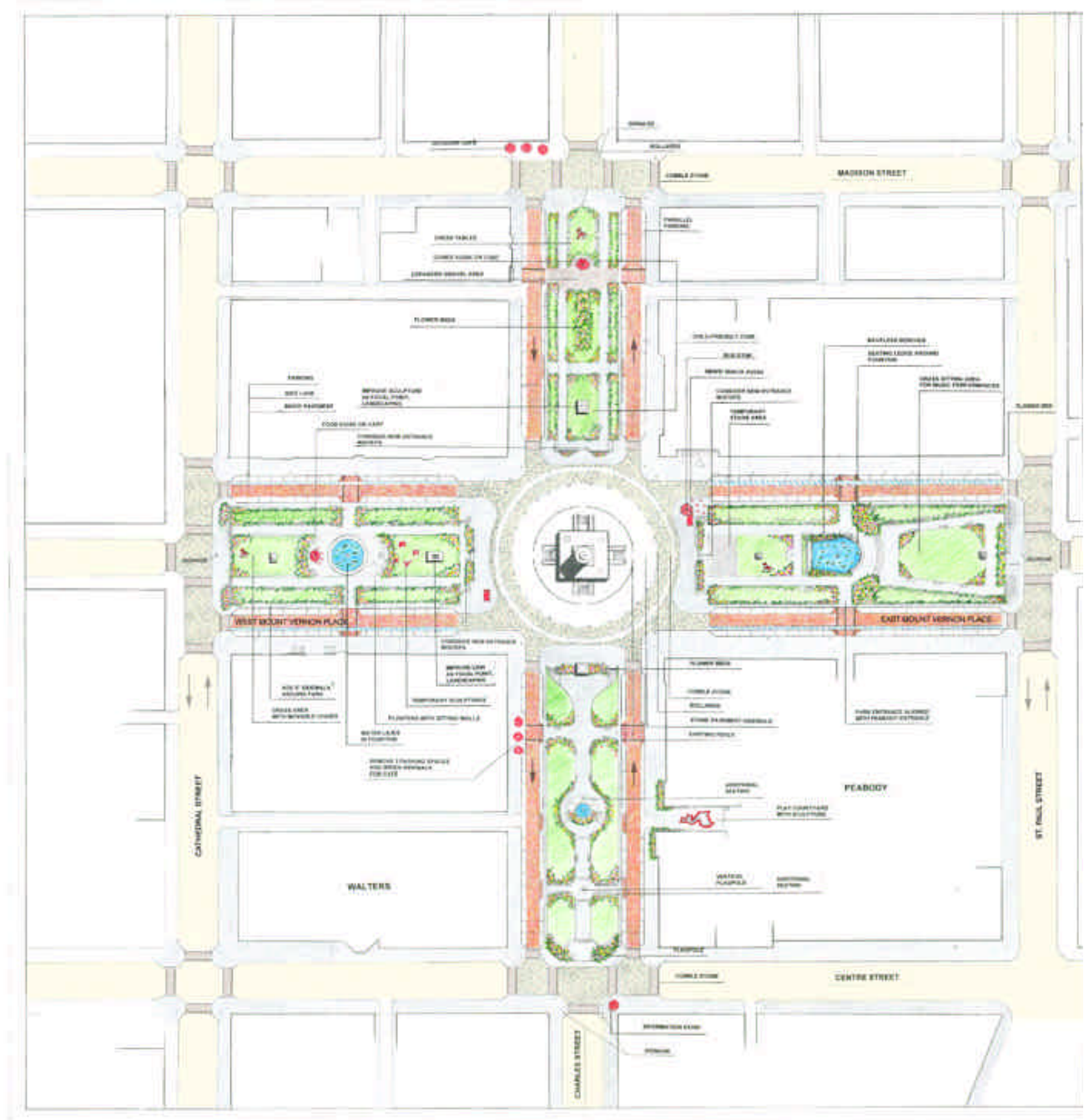
While determining the exact roles and responsibilities of future collaborators to restore and revitalize Mount Vernon Place should evolve locally, through a series of meetings, the following breakdown could serve as a starting point for discussion to iron out a final management plan:

PROPOSED OUTLINE OF FUTURE RESPONSIBILITIES (FOR DISCUSSION)

ENTITY	WORKSCOPE
New conservancy (evolving from Friends)	Be the official park manager; landscape/horticultural care; participation in master planning; co-guidance of park restoration; fundraising for park restoration, improvements, and endowment; oversee park restoration endowment; advisement on event permitting; design and implementation of small-scale capital improvements; design consultation on larger projects with Parks Capital Planning Division; retail relations and recruitment; development of new programs, in partnership with Cultural District; implement Recommendations for Enhancing the Parks' Vitality report; event publicity.
Midtown Community Benefits District	Provision of security and maintenance, litter and cleaning, in coordination with Conservancy. Member of Conservancy board.
Mount Vernon Cultural District	Development of new programs and events; event publicity; fundraising; member on Conservancy board.
Department of Recreation and Parks	Final approval of all physical, permanent changes to the parks; participation in master planning; co-guidance and co-funding of park restoration; event permitting and control, with agreement from conservancy; event publicity; planning and implementation of department events and programs; implementation of large capital improvements as agreed upon with conservancy and Planning Department; makes annual payment to MCBBD for basic services; contributes revenues from restoration endowment fee to Conservancy (see Appendix C); participation on Conservancy board.
Department of Planning	Guidance of master planning, in cooperation with Conservancy; liaison to other city agencies; participation on conservancy board.
Department of Public Works, Bureau of Solid Waste	Garbage pick-up

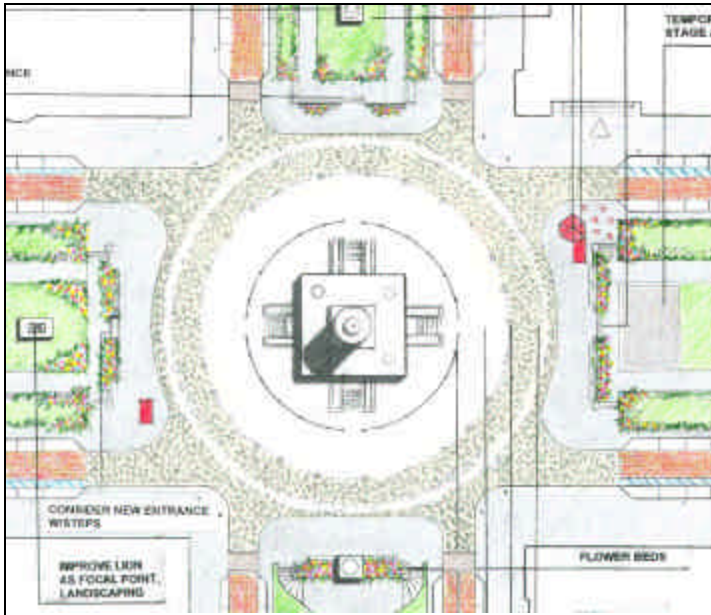
Several issues should be discussed among the key entities listed above to determine how roles and responsibilities could be shared. Currently, the Friends of Mt. Vernon Place is the only group focused solely on the square and the myriad issues associated with its revitalization. In addition, the Friends have already lined up most of the key stakeholders and have established relationships with the city. The group also has a capable and respected board, which could be further developed to meet anticipated future needs. What now needs to happen is to determine their role for a future that anticipates more active management and a major restoration. Certainly, the group does have the potential to evolve into the role of a conservancy, when additional funding to do so is in place and an Executive Director can be hired. But for the conservancy to function well, the evolution will need to be far-reaching, and it will depend on a much closer relationship with the Departments of Planning and Recreation and Parks than the Friends have had in the past. Making the transition to a conservancy may also depend on assistance from the Cultural District and Midtown Community Benefits District during the short term.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS BY AREA



Note: The recommendations have been illustrated on a plan drawing of Mount Vernon Place, which locates the suggested improvements. The plan does not depict existing trees only because their location had not been accurately mapped in existing base plans. We do not mean to imply by the plan that any trees should be removed!

WASHINGTON MONUMENT



Goal: *To develop the area around the Washington monument as an attraction and central focal point both within Baltimore and within the Mt. Vernon community.*

In order to create more of a “sense of place” and to give a stronger identity to the monument (as well as to slow the traffic down around the circle), the width of the roadway should be reduced and the sidewalks widened on both the park and monument sides of the circle. The widened circular sidewalk area could be used for exhibits related to the history of Baltimore and for temporary markets, such as a Saturday flower market. As part of this effort, Charles Street should be made two-way.

To do this, the following specific modifications should be considered

- **Improve pedestrian access** to the monument. This can be done by reducing the distance a pedestrian has to cross to the monument and opening the gates in the circular fence on all sides, particularly during events.

- **Extend the sidewalk around the monument** (outside the fence) to 30 feet to give a stronger pedestrian identity to the monument and to accommodate events and exhibits (e.g. “Art at the Monument,” art exhibits on the outside or inside of the fence). Extend the sidewalks on the four corners that face the circle to accommodate specific activities in those locations. This would restore the sidewalks and roadway closer to their original width and configuration, if historic drawings are accurate. (Observations and marking left by vehicle tires make it very clear that only a small part of the wide circle, equivalent to one lane, is used by traffic now).





Photo showing the large amount of space currently available to vehicles, with tire marks indicating where the majority of traffic travels. These trucks and machinery spent much of a day in the circle without hindering traffic.

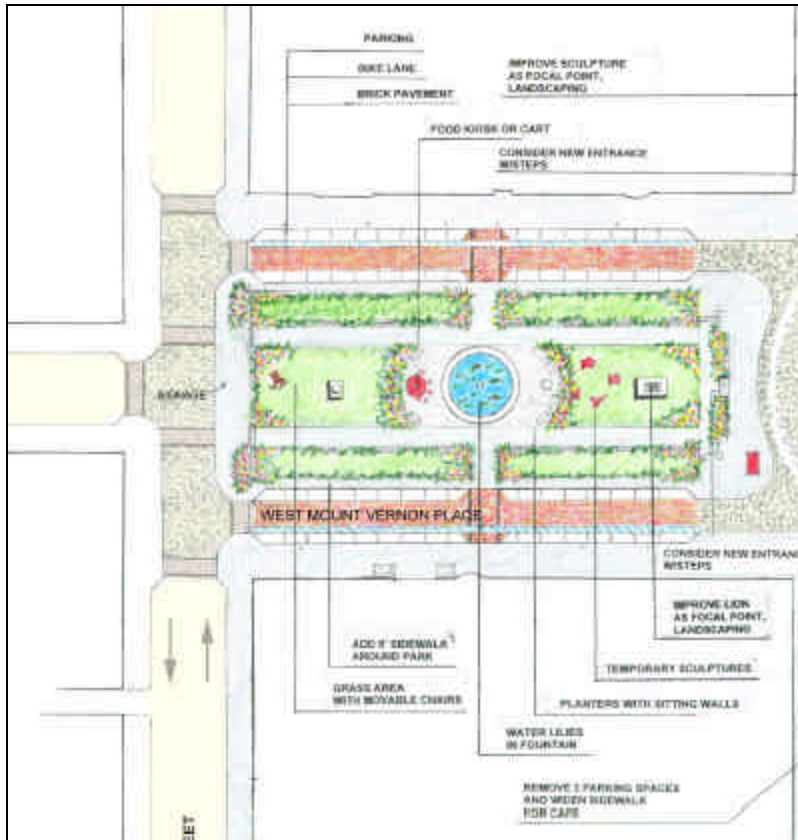
- **Consider adding a band of contrasting material (e.g. brick)** around both the inner and outer edges of the circle to indicate to motorists that the roadbed width has been reduced in this area. Bollards can also help stake out the new pedestrian area.



Mount Vernon Place in its current form (left), with an example of how bollards could help stake out new pedestrian areas from vehicle traffic (right).

- **Indicate the priority for pedestrians** at intersections around the circle, possibly by using bands of cobblestones with brick pavers at crosswalks.
- **Provide information about the monument**, including information that it is open and what times, as well as historical information either on a freestanding sign or on the fence. Some interpretive information could be located inside the vestibule of the monument.
- **Open the monument more often and develop more programs and events** in and around it (see programming section).

WEST PARK



Goal: *The goal of improving this park, which is already a successful attraction, should be to build on the fact that it is a friendly oasis protected from traffic, suitable for small receptions, after-work socializing, and children, as well as informal uses.*

The West Park is better endowed with features to attract people for lunch and it may have a larger constituency of users that live and work in the area than the other parks. We observed that school

groups come here to touch the lion and play at the fountain; dog walkers tend to meet here; benches are often-used; and the moveable chairs recently placed in this quadrant are well used. Additionally, this park is the front yard for many important institutions, including the Engineers Club, the Clarion Hotel, and the Walters Art Museum. However: the grass in parts of this park sees more wear and tear than any other quadrant; new “entrances” have been created through garden beds wherever there is a break in the fence; and parents complain about dog droppings that prevent their children from enjoying the grass.

- **Improve and develop amenities and attractions in the park**

- **Continue the use of movable chairs**
- **Use a consistent bench** that is both comfortable and that reflects the historical character of the area.



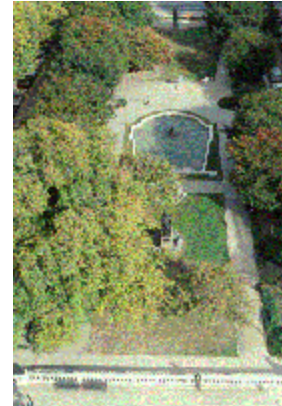
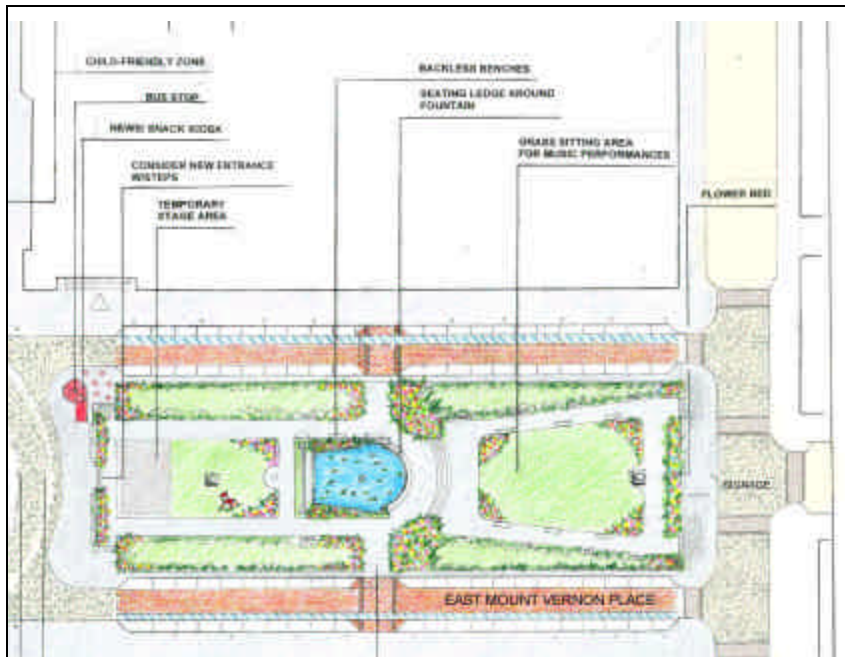
- **Install an attractive, European-style food kiosk or cart**, located in tandem with the movable seating. The kiosk operator would also supervise the use of the chairs in the park and bring them in at night, as well as keep the area clean.
- **Encourage the Walters and other groups to use the area around the fountain** for small receptions, wine-tastings and other properly managed and tasteful events. The park should also be a site for temporary art installations and/or small exhibits, with occasional tie-ins to children's interests (for example, temporary play sculptures or exhibits of children's art).



Example of a food kiosk from New York City

- **Encourage adjacent institutions to improve the ground floors of their buildings**, especially entrances, which could be made more welcoming by adding window displays, flower boxes, awnings, sidewalk seating, etc.
- **Improve pedestrian circulation** into and around the park:
 - **Add sidewalks around the perimeter of the park** and relocate existing or add new iron fences along its edges
 - **Extend the sidewalks at intersections** and create cobblestone edged crosswalks
 - **Create new crosswalks from the park to the sidewalks both to the north and south sides**
 - **Prohibit parking at park entrances**
 - **Consider improving access to the park** by removing the center section of the balustrade opposite the monument, on the East, West, and North Parks.
- **Improve the landscaping** in the park overall
 - **Add trees along the edges of the park** and consider removing or moving some of the trees that have been added to the center grassy areas.
 - **Remove the weeds and shrubbery** along the edges of the park and develop a more attractive border along it.
 - **Add colorful accent plantings along the edge of the paths**, sidewalks and entrances to help keep people from eroding new paths in the grass, with low hoop fences to protect them
 - **Add flower beds in the extended sidewalks** around the ends of the balustrade
 - **Add more defined flowerbeds around the bases of the statues and at fountains**

EAST PARK



Goal: Create a space that highlights culture, music, films, and small events, taking advantage of the fact that it faces the Peabody and is protected from traffic.

In the survey, the East Park elicited the fewest comments of all, which might mean there are fewer problems, or might also mean it has a smaller constituency that vocalizes its concerns. But our observations show that it is used as much as the West Park. One user commented that a higher proportion of users here are “unemployed men” that spend long stretches on the benches. And as one survey said: “The South and East Parks are not given the attention in terms of plantings found in the West and North; especially the East Park needs help.” Erosion of grass is a common problem here, especially around sculptures and at the breaks in the perimeter fence. At the same time, the fact that the park faces the Peabody Institute is a major opportunity.

- Improve and develop amenities in the park:

- **Add movable chairs to lawn areas and around the fountain**
- **Use a consistent bench** that is both comfortable and that reflects the historical character of the area.
- **Develop the area around the fountain as a focal point for activities**

Use the concrete surface as a staging area for small performances. Temporary stages could be added for larger concerts. The area should be equipped with proper electricity and lighting to make events and films possible.



Musicians could make a valuable contribution to the vitality of Mount Vernon Place

Remove at least some of the grass around the fountain so that people, especially children, can touch the water

Add benches around the perimeter of the fountain and along the lawns to the west, to accommodate audiences for performances

Develop an interesting lighting scheme for the fountain to enhance its prominence in the park; consider flowers in pots

- **Improve the landscaping** in the park overall

- **Plant lawns with hardy grasses** to withstand audiences that may sit on them for film screenings, concerts, etc.
- **Add trees along the edges of the park** and consider removing or moving some of the trees that have been added to the center grassy areas.
- **Remove the weeds and shrubbery** along the edges of the park and develop a more attractive landscaping border along it.
- **Add colorful accent plantings along the edge of the paths**, sidewalks and entrances, with low hoop fences in some locations to protect them.



East Park fountain in its current form (left), compared to an example from Butchart Gardens in Victoria B.C. that has been treated with dramatic border plantings and serves as a natural gathering place and focal point.

- **Add flower beds in the extended sidewalks** around the ends of the balustrade
- **Add more defined flowerbeds** around the bases of statues and at fountains.

- **Improve the transit stop** and develop it into a more important destination

- **Install a beautiful and functional transit shelter/kiosk** on the widened sidewalk that fits into the historic character of the surrounding area. Seating, a waste receptacle, pedestrian lighting and a map of the area should be included.
- **Locate a tourist information kiosk at the shelter**, which could be used for selling newspapers, magazines, and tour books of Baltimore and the region, and explaining the cultural offerings on the square. Snacks and beverages, such as coffee, could also be available for sale.



New Haven example of bus shelter that echoes historic surroundings and incorporates area information.

- **Improve pedestrian circulation** into and around the park:

- **Add sidewalks around the perimeter of the park** and relocate existing or new iron fences along it
- **Extend the sidewalks** with bulb-outs at intersections and create cobblestone crosswalks
- **Reinforce pedestrian crossings** with bollards, preferably of masonry, that suit the character of the neighborhood and the Carrère and Hastings park plan
- **Create new crosswalks from the park to the sidewalks both to the north and south sides**
- **Prohibit parking** in front of park entrances
- **Consider improving access to the park** by removing the center section of the balustrade opposite the monument, on the East, West, and North Parks.

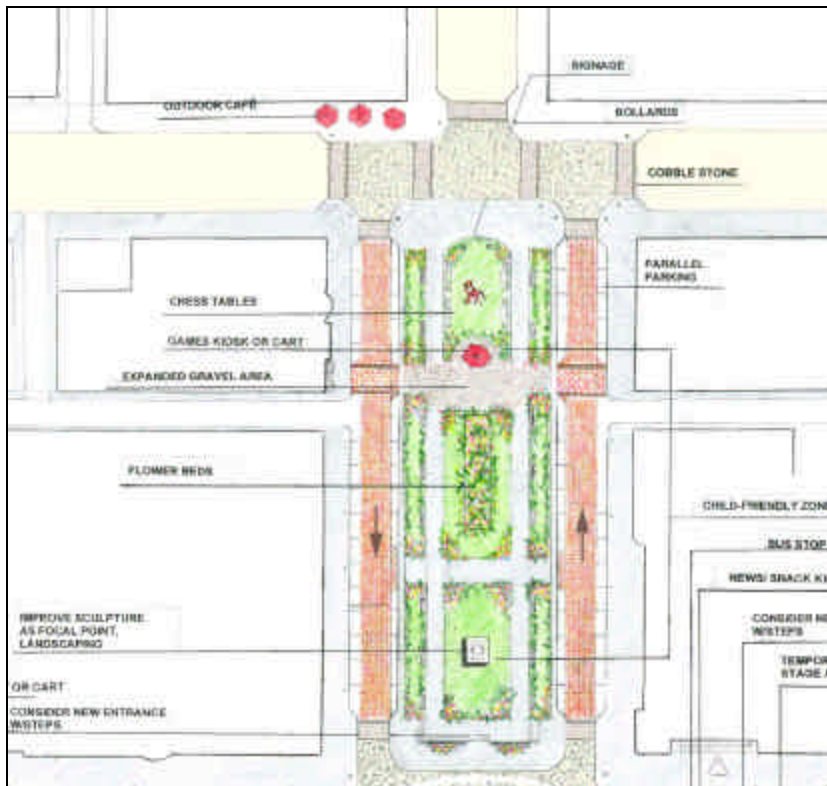
- **Create a more prominent entrance** to the park on St. Paul

- **Consider changing traffic** on St. Paul Street to two way
- **Extend the sidewalks at the corners** to reduce the distance pedestrians have to cross the street and add flower beds at both the St. Paul and monument ends of the park



- **Make the ground floors of the Peabody and other buildings more welcoming** through techniques such as window displays, flower boxes, awnings, sidewalk seating, etc.

NORTH PARK



Goal: This area is perhaps best treated as a flexible passive space, friendly to children and residents and off-limits to dogs. With an overall upgrade, it could quickly become a favorite refuge.

Both the South and North Parks have been described as “dull and sparse.” Certainly the North Park lacks the kind of features like a fountain or the Barye lion sculpture. On the other hand, it has more ambitious plantings. The North Park should benefit from the higher density of residents facing it, as well as commercial frontage, yet use is actually lower than the protected West and East Parks.

Use is more concentrated toward either end—near Donna’s Café at the one end and the monument at the other. As with the West Park, walking or cutting through is a larger proportion of the activity here than in the other quadrants. Wear patterns in the grass indicate that large numbers of people walk along the outside border, going north-south, treading on the plantings as they try to use the cobblestone edge as a de facto sidewalk. Grass is also eroded around the statue at the monument end of the park.

- **Improve pedestrian circulation into and around the park**
 - **Add sidewalks around the perimeter of the park**
 - **Extend the sidewalks at intersections and creating cobblestone crosswalks**
 - **Create new crosswalks from the park to the sidewalks both to the east and west sides**



Park edges are not built with sidewalks although some are used intensively by pedestrians

- **Prohibit parking at park entrances**
- **Consider improving access to the park** by removing the center section of the balustrade opposite the monument, on the East, West, and North Parks.
- **Make Charles Street two-way**
- **Improve the landscaping in the park overall**
 - **Add trees along the edges of the park** and consider removing or moving some of the trees that have been added ad hoc to the center grassy areas.
 - **Remove the weeds and shrubbery along the edges of the park** and develop a more attractive border along it.
 - **Add colorful accent plantings along the edge of the paths, sidewalks and entrances** to help keep people from eroding new paths in the grass, with low hoop fences to protect them
 - **Add flower beds in the extended sidewalks** around the ends of the balustrade
 - **Add more defined flowerbeds** around the bases of the statues and at fountains



Accent planting atop balustrades in Luxembourg Gardens, Paris.



Landscaping can become an attraction, especially when integrated with other amenities, such as the movable chairs in this example from Luxembourg Gardens

- **Improve and develop amenities and attractions in the park**
 - **Add movable chairs to lawn areas and around the fountain**
 - **Use a consistent bench** that is both comfort able and that reflects the historical character of the area.
 - **Schedule a series of children’s programs** (storytelling, environmental education programs, art programs, etc.) in the park.
 - **Enhance the center planting bed as a focal point** by widening the east-west pathway at the north end of the park into a larger gathering space.

Consider additional seating in the widened area and encourage activities such as chess and other games

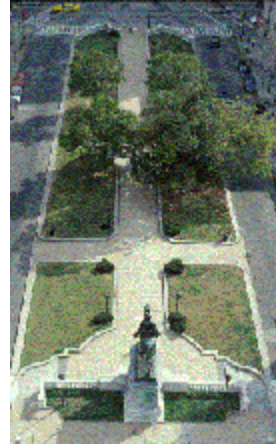
Consider a “game kiosk” that lends board games to anyone who can provide a valid I.D. as collateral

- **Encourage adjacent institutions to improve the ground floors of their buildings**, especially entrances, which could be made more welcoming by adding window displays, flower boxes, awnings, sidewalk seating, etc.



Games kiosks, like this one in Bryant Park, New York City, are growing in popularity and are an attractive way to make parks more usable for adults and children alike.

SOUTH PARK



***Goal:** The south park should accentuate the fact that it is the major gateway into the Mount Vernon Place neighborhood and improve its image for pedestrians.*

The South Park, like the North Park, is less used than the East or West Parks, probably due, in part at least, to the fact that there are almost no benches. Much of its use is focused on the center axis and the fountain in the center. The

southern end, near the Monument Café, sees less use than the monument end. With fewer users, the grass in most areas is less eroded here. Since the Walters and Peabody currently orient their entrances to the other quadrants, the south park has the feeling of a side yard, rather than a front yard, although it is the main entrance to MVP for most vehicles.

- **Improve pedestrian circulation** by signaling to northbound vehicles that when they cross Centre Street they are entering a cultural zone:
 - **Extend the sidewalks at intersections** and create cobblestone crosswalks
 - **Create new crosswalks** from the park to the sidewalks both to the east and west sides
 - **Use dramatic plantings at the south end** to remind drivers that this is not an area for speeding
 - **Install a vertical element**, such as a flagpole or sculpture, inside the park near the south end

- **Install a very prominent information kiosk** beside the Monument Cafe, after the sidewalk has been widened at the corner. It should focus on cultural offerings of the district and possibly even sell tickets to performances at certain times
- **Add sidewalks around the perimeter of the park**
- **Widen the sidewalk** along the Walters Museum side of the park.



An example from England of a centrally located, well-designed information kiosk

- **Improve and develop amenities and attractions in the park**

- **Add benches along the east-west walkways** near the entrances to the park
- **Use a consistent bench** that is both comfortable and that reflects the historical character of the area
- **Add movable chairs to lawn areas and around the fountain**
- **Develop the areas around the fountain as a focal point for activities**

- **Improve relationship between park and adjacent buildings**

- **Consider installing a play sculpture** (such as a dinosaur), with seating and potted plants in the Peabody Mews, across the street, behind the Peabody Institute.



Peabody Mews, left, with an example from the Paris Botanical Gardens of how a play sculpture can fit into unusual places

- **Encourage appropriate retail businesses**, such as a bookstore, in the Peabody's street frontage facing the park
 - **Encourage the Walters to open its café onto the Charles Street sidewalk**, once the sidewalk has been widened
 - **Encourage adjacent institutions to improve the ground floors of their buildings**, especially entrances, which could be made more welcoming by adding window displays, flower boxes, awnings, sidewalk seating, etc.
- **Improve the landscaping** in the park overall
 - **Add trees along the edges of the park**
 - **Add colorful accent plantings along the edge of the paths** and entrances to help keep people from eroding new paths in the grass, with low hoop fences to protect them
 - **Add flower beds in the extended sidewalks** around the ends of the balustrade
 - **Add more defined flowerbeds** around the bases of the statues and at fountains

IV. PROGRAMMING

The work of the Friends of Mount Vernon Place and the Cultural District is invaluable in giving a voice to area residents and institutions and creating new opportunities and programs around their participation. The following are strategies that these groups could use in further developing activities to attract people:

A. Develop a strategy to target untapped audiences.

There are already many different groups that come to the Mt. Vernon neighborhood for specific activities, but currently have no reason to lengthen their stay in the neighborhood after their specific task is completed. These untapped audiences include:

- **Employees**, who use the parks for lunch but could easily be given to use them at other times, if there were after-work activities to attract them
- **Visitors to institutions** who pass through in large numbers to visit a specific building, but are given no reason at all to linger. For example, church members leaving church on Sundays, museum visitors and Elderhostel residents, described as "urban pioneers who love things that are seductive, interesting and not too far away"
- **People cutting through** on their way to downtown, who might stop for a coffee or pastry, a newspaper, or enjoy an after-work concert
- **Families and children** who live in the area
- **Students from the Peabody and other schools**
- **Seniors** from the senior center and who live in the area in general

B. Develop joint programs with institutions, focused on the visible outdoor spaces of Mt. Vernon Place.

Many member organizations of the Cultural District offer programs in their own spaces, but a concerted effort is needed to showcase these programs in public spaces so that a broader spectrum of the community can enjoy these programs. In addition, these offerings could be approached in a way that encourages cross-fertilization: for example, young musicians at the Eubie Blake Institute or students from the School for the Arts might be encouraged to interact with Elderhostel residents or to perform with Peabody students in the park.

C. Develop children's programs

Ideas for children's programs might be generated through a "Kids Committee" organized by the Friends of Mount Vernon Place. Some preliminary ideas include:

- **A designated child-friendly zone** - simply designating one area grass specifically for kids (and free of dogs) would satisfy many parents. We recommend the North Park as this zone
- **Small-scale Saturday afternoon children's festivals** could encourage families to come with picnics and enjoy performers and story-telling, possibly in partnership with the Downtown Baltimore Children's Center
- **Day camps and organized games**
- **A more active play area could be accommodated in other areas**, perhaps through a partnership with Grace and St Peter's Episcopal Church, who might be convinced to open their playground to the public if residents helped them raise money to improve it. Or a play sculpture (such as a dinosaur) could even be installed, along with seating and potted plants, in the Peabody employee entrance alley off of Charles Street. Other small play sculptures could be added in various parts of the park.

D. Encourage after-work activities

Targeting employees working in the neighborhood as well as young professional residents is an obvious way to improve use of the area and stimulate economic activity. Some examples are:

- **Wine tastings and small jazz and/or classical concerts** ("Downtown After 5")
- **Evening programming in partnership with cultural institutions and churches.** The Walters, Peabody, and other institutions aimed at young people develop programming. For example an evening enjoying art, architecture, gardens, and music, perhaps with a drink or dinner at a park side café would be of far more interest and highlight the native ambience of Mount Vernon Place.

E. Encourage smaller, more frequent programs and events

Frequent small-scale events are preferable to more large-scale events because they do more to reinforce the perception that something is always happening at Mount Vernon Place, they are easier to organize and can be implemented by all kinds of neighborhood groups, and they do less damage to the landscape (see Appendix C: Special Event Policies).

Some examples of these programs include:

- **Concerts**, a very popular suggestion in the surveys. The Peabody Institute and the Eubie Blake Institute, and other groups such as church choirs, should be tapped. Many concerts would require a basic infrastructure to be added, such as a small removable stage and electricity for sound. Summer Sunday jazz brunches could be very popular, without becoming a noise nuisance.
- **Informal concerts and performances** should also occur: the music institutes could seek a blanket permit from the city to allow music students to play in the park for pocket change.
- **Films and film festivals**
- **Architectural tours and events**
- **Vending of food from local restaurants, in conjunction with concerts or other events**
- **An amateur or children's art fair**
- **A weekly Flower Market on the circle roadway** at the base of the monument (best on a weekend when one could close the street to traffic)
- **Performances by community theater groups**
- **A "Dogs of Mt. Vernon Place" exhibit**
- **Dog obedience classes** and possibly dog shows
- **After-church events**, such as picnics, concerts, or even a church dance in the park
- **Elderhostel programs, offered outdoors**
- **Seasonal events, such as a Christmas fair**
- **Exercise classes**, such as yoga, tai chi, and so on.

F. Develop tourism at the monument

- **Locate a tourist information kiosk facing the monument** at the bus stop for the purpose of selling newspapers, magazines, and tour books of Baltimore and the region, and explaining the cultural offerings in Mt. Vernon Place. This could be designed to be staffed only in the warmer months at first. Snacks and drink could also be available.
- **Use and market the monument as a departure point for historic tours:** tour-guiding outfits should also be queried as to what amenities would make the area, and the monument, more attractive to tourists. Parking for buses could be located under the Jones Falls Expressway

Appendix A: Process

PPS and the Friends conducted a study of existing conditions in the study area and elicited the community's opinions, perceptions and suggestions for making improvements. The process was designed both to bring forth needed information and to help build interest, cooperation, commitment and understanding of the positive potential for improvements on the part of the area's diverse businesses, residents, and institutions.

PPS identified the issues that are of concern to the Midtown community and began to develop recommendations for enhancing the Mount Vernon Place parks in ways compatible with current local residents and the long term economic and social health of the neighborhood, with attention to: upgrading the physical appearance of the park and surrounding streets; design elements such as landscaping, lighting, signage, and pedestrian amenities; programs, events and other uses that would attract more visitors; and recommendations related to better management and maintenance of the park.

This process included several components that are reported on in this report (detailed findings are reported in Appendix F):

An open *community workshop* in April 1999, attended by approximately 50 people, to identify issues and brainstorm potential actions and key stakeholders.

A *focus group of area stakeholders* was held over breakfast in April 2001, which convened 30 people representing groups as diverse as the Goldseker Foundation, Emmanuel Episcopal Church, the Engineers' Club, City Council, Preservation Maryland, the Baltimore Police Department, the Architectural Review Committee, Enoch Pratt Free Library, and several local businesses.

Interviews with individuals and institutions identified at the breakfast. This included the Walters Art Museum, Peabody Institute, Mount Vernon Cultural District, Department of Parks, Midtown Community Benefits District, Office of Planning, Parks Division.

Photographic documentation of existing conditions in the parks and surrounding area, including land uses, conditions of open spaces, building contextual relationships and exterior appearances, parking areas, landscape elements, vehicular and pedestrian circulation, sidewalks, signage, lighting, and amenities. Prior studies and plans conducted by the city and the Cultural District were also collected.

Surveys of park users and occupants in the surrounding buildings, including employees, students and residents—the Stafford, the Walters Museum, the School for the Arts, the Hamilton Club and Time Group. About 1/3 were users interviewed in the parks or walking by. Surveys were meant to determine perceptions and sensitivities to issues such as safety and security, events and programs, traffic, retail, appearance of the study area and also to generate recommendations. 136 surveys were collected in all. This information built on a previous survey conducted by Frank Kennedy.

Park user behavior was studied and mapped on five separate days, including weekdays and weekend days, to analyze exactly how the park is currently being used at different times of day. Factors that were

considered included, What types of people were using the park? What were they doing? Which areas of the park were they using? Who were they with?, etc. The Friends of Mount Vernon Place conducted most of the mapping after training from PPS.

A *focus group* was conducted with the Mount Vernon Cultural District in September 2001 to further explore the ideas and interests of the institutions in the neighborhood and to see if there were opportunities for new programs and events in the park, especially frequent and small in scale.

A *presentation of the preliminary findings and recommendations* was given to the Friends of Mount Vernon Place in October 2001 to provide another opportunity to discuss issues and receive feedback on PPS' work so far. Approximately 50 people attended this meeting.

Distribution of a draft report that generated additional comments and suggestions that have been incorporated into the final report.

Appendix B: Overview Of Park Use: Patterns And Perceptions

HOW THE MOUNT VERNON PLACE PARKS ARE USED

The majority of the 136 survey respondents said they are frequent users, using the park daily, weekly or several times per month. Almost half of the respondents use the park both on weekday and weekends.

The most common things that people say they do in the park are sitting and enjoying the scenery (50%) and eating (43%). 18% of the responses were related to park events. Behavior mapping confirmed that the park is used for mostly passive enjoyment, most of it confined to the sidewalk edges where the benches are located. Mapping also showed that there are far more people who walk past or through the parks than there are people who actually use the parks. These people walking past en route to somewhere else should be treated as a potential user group that could be more actively engaged in the park. Socializing is a much more common activity on weekends (25% of users).

Mapping showed that more than 60% of people using the park are men, mostly between the ages of 21 and 40. It is worth pointing out that a small presence of women is generally a signal that a space has the appearance of being unsafe or in some way undesirable, since women tend to be far more particular than men about their environment. We also noticed that very few children or teens were observed using the park, compared to any other age group, and only 6% of users were over 60 (ages are based on estimates made by the observers).

A full 41% of survey respondents said they use Mount Vernon Place parks at least 2-3 times per week; many of them use it every day (in good weather). Our mapping showed that Mount Vernon Place parks are somewhat busier on weekends than weekdays, but only during the mornings. Both weekends and weekdays see use peak at about lunchtime (with 26 people counted at noon on a weekday and 46 on a weekend, not counting those people just walking through). Use is fairly evenly split between solitary users and those in groups, however use by families (as with children) is quite low.

In the survey, people reported that they used the West Park the most (62% of respondents), and the North and East Parks least (16% and 17%). Only 4% reported that they ever used the monument, which was studied as a fifth section of Mount Vernon Place. Our mapping revealed a slightly different pattern: in reality use is somewhat more evenly spread out over the four parks, although the West and East Parks were used slightly more.

GENERAL PERCEPTIONS OF MOUNT VERNON PLACE PARKS

Positive perceptions: Our surveys showed that there are many characteristics about the parks that people cherish. When asked, What do you like best about Mount Vernon Place, 72% of the responses remarked on the beauty of the setting, including natural and architectural elements. 14% of responses related to how convenient the parks are to home or work.

Ratings of the parks among users were slightly better than average. Most categories were rated good with just a few poor ratings. The parks received the highest overall ratings as a source of civic pride, for overall attractiveness, and flowers and plantings (at the same time many respondents suggested in their open answers that in terms of landscaping, flowers and grass, the parks are dull, colorless, and in need of better care). Two categories that received a significant number of poor ratings were information and signs, and comfortable places to sit.

Negative perceptions: In the survey, what people liked least was “undesirable” behaviors or characters in the parks (44% of responses); 18% of complaints related to garbage.

SURVEY RECOMMENDATIONS

The most common suggestions for physical improvements were better (and more) seating (31%), more flowers (28%), and better maintenance (27%). More activities and security measures, such as lighting followed, with 13% each (note that activities are not a physical improvement, yet they were still a significant part of the recommendations).

The most popular suggestions for future activities in the parks were concerts (36% of total). Suggestions for more frequent activities, not necessarily large scale, were also popular, at 24% of the total.

Appendix C: Special Events Policies

In order to address the complex issues of special events in the Square, events permitting policies as well as a manual for event sponsors and organizers should be developed. These policies should have the goals of minimizing the environmental impacts of events on the Square itself as well as on surrounding neighborhoods, clarifying the permitting process and fee system, and promoting the Square as a healthy green space and a peaceful experience. In turn, special events can ultimately be considered assets to the Square and its surrounding communities.

The following guidelines are based on PPS' research into other successful management programs, particularly the guidelines developed for Piedmont Park in Atlanta, Georgia. However, they should be further discussed and developed specifically for Mount Vernon Place, in collaboration with the Department of Recreation and Parks, the Friends of Mount Vernon Place, the Cultural District, and event sponsors.

SAMPLE EVENT POLICY

1. Events should be restricted in size, number and frequency. Events should be controlled to prevent overuse of and damage to the Parks and disruption to neighborhood residents.
 - Size - There are currently three large events per year and more than that is probably not acceptable to the surrounding residents.
 - Frequency - A limit to the frequency of small events should also be determined: for example, during a given week, no more than 3 days of small events would be permitted. Some policies also state that no more than half of the Saturdays and Sundays in any month should be permitted for small events.
 - Duration - In order to preserve the Parks' natural areas and to limit disruption to the surrounding neighborhood, events should be limited in regards to days and time. For example, large events should have a maximum duration of two or three days, not including setup and breakdown. Additionally, events should last a maximum of 12 hours in a single day. The preferred length for most events is 8 hours.

Maximum setup times should be restricted: for example, a limit of 48 hours setup time, except for major events, which might have 4 days to setup. Most events should be able to breakdown within 24 hours of the event, except for major events, which might have 48 hours to breakdown.

2. Small and medium-sized events should be rotated among different areas of the parks, when those areas are available and healthy. This will spread out the impact of events on areas of the Parks and will preserve some of the Park areas for activities by non-event park users. The parks department could exclude a park area from being permitted for an event whenever drainage, grounds maintenance or other needs take priority. Event permits should only be granted for the park area(s) deemed necessary for the size and purpose of the event.
3. While large events should be accommodated, smaller events should be specifically encouraged. While large events may be restricted to the existing three events, opportunities for other event sponsors

could expand through evolving a traditional of smaller, sustainable events on a frequent basis.

4. Events should use turf protection. In order to minimize damage to the Parks' natural areas during events, as well as during set-up and breakdown of events, turf protection should be required of all event sponsors and organizers. Professional turf cover should be required over any natural turf where heavy foot traffic is expected. However, it does not need to be required on natural turf where a crowd sits for a performance. Professional turf cover is a synthetic mesh specifically designed to be rolled onto natural turf; this is the only material that highly protects turf during events. Another surface, such as a plywood walkway, can be placed on top of the turf cover, as this would not damage grass underneath. Turf cover should be placed before the setup of any event object and remain until the end of the event. It is very durable, reusable for 10 years or more, easy to roll out, and simple to store. Furthermore, it can be shared by multiple events.
5. Event object placement should be managed so as to minimize damage to the Square. Events should be required to improve the planning and location of event objects (i.e. tents, stages & platforms, equipment, vending set-ups, toilets, etc). Following are recommendations for the placement of event objects:
 - Event objects should be placed on existing hardscape areas or exterior roads; in some cases (see below) objects may be placed on raised platforms over natural turf, or on professional turf cover over natural turf (see above)
 - Non-vending event objects can be located on the lawns of each park, provided event organizers use professional-grade, synthetic turf cover or platforms for these objects. Examples of non-vending objects include: art objects, temporary stage and sound equipment, first aid, safety booths and water stations and sponsor tents or booths.
 - Trash barrels and small receptacles can be placed throughout the Parks.
 - Dumpsters should be restricted to hardscape.
 - Port-o-johns should be located on hardscape and should not impede the pedestrian traffic flow or accessibility of emergency vehicles.
 - Large-scale vending (i.e. food and non-food trucks, tents and booths) should be located in hardscape areas of the Square or on perimeter roads.
 - Pushcarts can be allowed on interior pathways and hardscape anywhere in the Parks.
 - Vendors on foot can be allowed anywhere in the Parks.
 - Event objects should never be placed over exposed tree roots, plants or flowers, even with a platform or professional turf cover over them.
 - Vehicles should not be driven onto or parked directly on natural turf. During event set-up, professional turf cover should be used to temporarily travel and park on natural turf during setup and break-

down, subject to weight limits. Areas where vehicles may be driven and parked during the setup and breakdown periods should be established.

6. Vending should be managed during events to ensure high-quality vendors are chosen and to minimize damage to the Parks and disruption to existing retail. The number, location and design of vending setups should be approved by the Special Events Coordinator.
 - Large-scale vending should be restricted to the perimeter roads and secondarily to the hardscape areas of each park. If the hardscape still does not provide enough space for all vending objects, and some large objects must be placed on the turf, then turf protection must be utilized and the object should be set up near one of the many interior pathways, so that patrons can line up on the hardscape/pathways. Food vending should not occur directly in front of residential properties.
 - Vending objects should not be placed directly in front of or blocking access to existing retail outlets. Additional consideration should be given to distributing vending objects in a way that avoids putting competing goods near existing retail (so that a food cart should not be located too near one of the neighborhood cafés).
 - Non-food vendors should be encouraged to store all their goods and materials inside their tents or vehicles. Any goods stored in the rear area of the tent should not extend out beyond the tent by more than three feet and should be stored on pallets or some other type of turf protection. Food vendors should not be allowed to cook or store goods and supplies outside of their tents.
 - Vendor tents should be well spaced. Additionally, the Event Organizer should communicate and guarantee compliance by food vendors to an approved process of grease disposal. Vendor Monitors should be assigned to supervise vendors for compliance.
 - The Event Organizer should be held responsible for any damage that results from grills, hot coals and/or improper disposal of hot coals including injury to other festival attendees, damage to turf, tree roots or vegetation. It should be clear to Event Organizers where in the Parks grilling is allowed (i.e. in which designated areas). Open fires should not be permitted.
 - Creative small-scale vending such as pushcarts and vendors on foot should be encouraged throughout the Parks.
7. Large events should be required to improve public transportation and traffic planning. In order to minimize the impact of auto traffic and parking problems on the surrounding neighborhood, large events should be required to submit a traffic plan that addresses the following issues:
 - Transit - All large events that advertise should advertise mass transit as the preferred mode of transportation in all of their marketing.
 - Shuttle Buses - Major event sponsors may be encouraged to contact the transit authorities well in advance of the event to request shuttle bus service from downtown & the waterfront to the Square.
 - Bicycles - The number of bicycle racks in the Parks should be increased during events to encourage

bicycling as alternate transportation. Additionally, all major events should provide a bicycle parking area as part of the transportation plan.

- Cars - A passenger drop-off zone for events should be implemented, if feasible, by the Traffic Department.
 - Parking - All events that advertise should also identify and advertise nearby private parking that is available during the time of the event. The Event Organizer should identify other possible parking venues.
8. Guidelines need to be developed for electrical infrastructure & amplified sound in order to minimize the impact of events on the surrounding neighborhood and other park users. Event stages and speakers for amplified sound should not directly face residential areas. Amplified sound should only be allowed with a permit issued in advance, should never exceed the city's legal decibel level, and should be limited to certain hours.
9. Permits and bonding requirements should be added for events in the Parks. Friends of Mt. Vernon Place and the Special Events Coordinator should evaluate prospective events for the Parks with regards to their potential effects on the environment, public health and safety, their potential inconvenience to the Public and/or benefits to the community and the history, if any, of event applicants. A Park Permit Application, which clarifies the permitting and bonding procedures, should be developed for all event applicants. The application should include the event's projected attendance as well as the extra personnel hours needed during the event itself and for set-up and breakdown. All fees and bonds should be pro-rated according to these projections (see sample application below). The following fees and bonds should be developed and required of all event applicants:
- Application Fee - a charge for handling an event application, regardless of whether or not the event is approved. The application fee could go to the recommended Conservancy (or to the Friends of Mount Vernon Place) for development of small-scale, neighborhood-friendly programs.
 - Permit Fee - this could go into the General Fund to compensate for city expenses.
 - Performance/Damage/Sanitation Bond - paid as collateral to ensure that the event proceeds as agreed to. If the city found violations or damage from an event, all or part of the bond could be deposited into a Park Trust Account; Funds could then be dispersed from the trust account to repair or clean the park if necessary. If no violations or damage occurred, the bond should be returned in full.
 - Restoration Endowment Fee - a separate non-refundable fee that could be deposited into the Park Trust Account to build an endowment for the restoration of the park. The nonprofit conservancy should oversee the use of these funds for park restoration.

Table 1. Sample Application from Atlanta's Piedmont Park

Attendance	Extra Personnel Hours	Festival Class	Application Fee	Permit Fee	Resoration Endowment Fee	Performance/ Damage/ Sanitation Bond
50,000+	100-300	A	\$50	\$6,000	\$5,000	\$10,000
20,000-50,000	50-100	B	\$50	\$2,000	\$3,500	\$7,000
10,000-20,000	25-50	C	\$50	\$1,500	\$1,500	\$3,000
2,000-10,000	3-25	D	\$50	\$500	\$600	\$1,200
100-2,000	3	E	\$50	\$75	\$125	\$125

Event Sponsor Responsibilities - A manual of special events procedures should be designed to aid enforcement of the above guidelines. Event organizers, city and Friends of Mt. Vernon representatives and community members should all provide input into the development of these procedures. These rules would apply to every Event Organizer, including the City, the Friends (or Conservancy), and the Cultural District.

Operational Plan - The Event Organizer of any major event (i.e. more than 20,000 attendees in the Piedmont Park example) should submit an operational plan to the City of Baltimore Parks Department at least 60 days prior to the event, which would indicate intent to comply with all regulations. This should be completed before the event permit would be issued. The Conservancy or, in their absence, the Friends of Mt. Vernon Place representatives should be included in the site plan review.

The Operational Plan should provide a site plan for the location of all event objects and a schedule and traffic plan for servicing port-o-johns. The Plan should also outline the trash collection method and location of receptacles. [The Event Organizer should be encouraged to recycle and to use volunteers to assist with trash collection and recycling during the event.]

Compliance - The Event Organizer should designate a specific individual for each event to serve as the contact person from the organization. This person would thoroughly understand the special event guidelines, and act as the 'park representative' for the event from set up to take down. This individual's sole responsibility would be to work with the special Events Coordinator and event personnel to ensure compliance with Special Event guidelines and procedures and to prevent damage to the park.

It should be the responsibility of the Event Organizer to communicate the regulations to all event staff, vendors, and sub-contractors, and to make every reasonable effort to inform festival attendees to assure full compliance. Any damage that occurs during an event that is directly related to the event (excluding any acts of God) would be the financial responsibility of the Event Organizer.

Damage Control & Restoration - It is the responsibility of the Event Organizer to return the area used to the same condition it existed in prior to the event, and to restore any damaged areas. The Event Organizer should submit a rain and mud (bad weather) plan, as well as a repair plan. Restoration can include resodding, regrading, aerating, fertilizing and/or other necessary measures, and should be completed within ten days.

Appendix D: Case Studies

CENTRAL PARK CONSERVANCY NEW YORK CITY, NEW YORK

Management has always been the decisive issue for Central Park. Upon the park's completion, Frederick Law Olmsted wrote, "So far as my judgment or wishes are entitled to any respect in the management of the Central Park this will be regarded as the most critical and important work remaining. The value receivable for all that has hitherto been expended depends upon the skill with which it is done."¹ He would have been pleased to hear that, in the 1940's, though it had undergone many changes, the park was described as being "more carefully tended than at any other time in its history."² However, in the 1970s, during the city's dramatic fiscal crisis, Central Park experienced a period of serious neglect, during which time the park's elegant fountains were turned off, its lawns allowed to turn to dust, and Calvert Vaux's stone bridges languished as graffiti-covered eyesores. The park was infamous for illicit activity and residents feared its under-populated pathways.

The Department of Parks and Recreation was anxious to improve the park, and in 1973 it attempted a large master planning effort to restore it, but the city's budget was so bereft of funds that the plan was scrapped. By the late seventies, the maintenance of and facilities in the park had deteriorated so badly that New York Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan publicly called the park's condition "a disgrace," and proposed turning it over to the National Park Service.

Throughout this troubled period, several citizen groups united to establish the Central Park Task Force, an organization that began to encourage the direct involvement of the public as park volunteers and donors. In 1979, the group incorporated itself as the Central Park Conservancy, and Elizabeth Barlow Rogers, the head of the Central Park Task Force and the author of a biography of Olmsted, assumed the presidency.

Concurrently, Parks Commissioner Gordon J. Davis was approached with the idea of appointing someone to run the park, in the belief that a centralization of power would address long-term park planning and facilitate fundraising efforts. With a good measure of strategic calculation, Commissioner Davis appointed Rogers the first Central Park Administrator. Though Davis gave Rogers no budget to fund her position or additional staff, he did give her the authority to make changes. Additionally, in a show of support, Davis launched the first major capital restoration project in the park in years—to restore the 22-acre Sheep Meadow.

Thus the Central Park Conservancy became an organization with one foot in the private sector and one in the public. With limited funds but a broad portfolio, the conservancy set out to change the culture of the parks department and the perception of the park among politicians and city residents. They focused first on raising the standard of park maintenance. Tim Marshall, Rogers' deputy administrator and vice president for capital projects and operations, notes that the parks employees were working with poor equipment and little support. "They had their hands full just emptying trash cans and cleaning up broken glass," he added. So the conservancy's first emphasis was on re-establishing the maintenance skills that

had been lost from years of mismanagement and budget cuts. This strategy turned into a wholesale emphasis on upkeep and proper maintenance. For example, in the old system, says Marshall, anti-graffiti teams removed the graffiti from the statue of Christopher Columbus once a year, probably right before Columbus Day. “The kids would just wait in the wings to tag it again,” he added. Marshall was in charge of initiating a new, stricter policy. In the new system, graffiti had to be removed within 48 hours. Marshall found that once the battle was waged and won on a few fronts, parks employees upped the deadline themselves to 24 hours.

According to Marshall, reestablishing the primacy of maintenance in Central Park required instituting training programs and new management structures that would allow the maintenance workers to recognize that they were instrumental in ensuring the health of the park. “Raising the level of commitment, developing a sense of ownership, and new standards of care by the people who are responsible for the day-to-day care of the parks is essential,” he added.

Managing the park was a huge task, but Rogers had another role for herself in mind. “I had to make the people of New York City see the park in the same light as the Museum of Natural History, or the Bronx Zoo, or the Botanical Gardens,” she said, adding, “I wanted them to see it as a major cultural institution, with the trees and lawns as our collection.” To achieve this, the conservancy had to do more than show how beautiful the park could become, they also had to demonstrate that the park was a precious institution in New York, and that it could benefit every sector of the city.

Getting support from the city’s large corporations was vital, and Rogers made it a priority to have a board chairman who was a CEO and could reach out to other CEOs. Much of New York’s prime residential real estate is focused around the park, due in no small part to the magnitude of Olmsted’s vision. This simple fact has allowed the conservancy to reach hundreds of very wealthy donors. The conservancy’s largest fundraising event, an annual luncheon hosted by the women’s committee in the park’s Conservatory Garden, raised \$2 million last year.

Like many organizations, the conservancy originally limited itself to the design of capital projects, because it couldn’t afford to actually make the renovations. A master plan, though not formally adopted by the city, nevertheless became the blueprint for projects in the park. As the organization grew in budget and political clout, the conservancy began funding major capital improvement projects itself, and now provides two-thirds of the park’s \$22 million operating budget, accounting for most of its gardeners and horticulturists, as well as staffing the park’s programming and visitors centers.

By 1995, after fifteen years of leadership under Rogers, the conservancy had raised more than \$110 million to restore and reclaim the park from its nadir in the 1970’s. During that time, Rogers developed the conservancy into a premier fundraising and support organization, expanding exponentially from 3 to 175 employees. In October, 1995, Rogers resigned as park administrator and the city appointed Karen Putnam to replace her.

But the conservancy has discovered that raising money for the park, and raising the image, use, and stewardship of the park among all city residents are different things. Erana Stennett, the conservancy’s vice president for government and community relations, notes that restoring a park’s image is about more than giving rich people a better view from their penthouses. “We try to articulate the benefit of the park to everyone, from the politicians and business community, to the schools and churches,” said Stennett.

By making the case for the park, she continued, businesses saw that a healthy, vibrant park could help attract top executives and companies to Manhattan, or keep them from fleeing, and schools saw that their needs for curriculum enhancement could be fulfilled with park programming.

Partnerships with schools, faith-based organizations, neighborhood groups and many others bring volunteers and users. “The conservancy concept can be replicated,” Stennett insists. “It’s not just about people living on 5th Avenue. It’s about getting buy-in from the residents, businesses, schools, any industry that are around the park, to see that it is a resource for them.”

To increase public involvement in the park and the planning process, the conservancy has stepped-up outreach and marketing, as well as its commitment to programming. Public advisory committees evaluate conservancy programs, review capital improvements, and recommend new management and restoration strategies. In addition, these groups advise the conservancy on trends and issues of concern to park users. New programs have also broadened audience diversity through collaborations with community groups and neighboring institutions, bringing entirely new audiences to public events in the park. For example, the fishing derby at the Harlem Meer attracts over 2,800 people from New York City’s five boroughs, New Jersey, and Westchester County to a section of the park that abuts East Harlem, one of the city’s poorest neighborhoods.

In 1998, the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation and the conservancy signed a long-term contract that formalizes their relationship. The contract allows for the city to contract directly with the conservancy for virtually all of the park’s maintenance responsibilities including: cleaning of facilities, playgrounds, drains and walkways; landscape maintenance; repairs and painting (including monuments); and capital improvements, which will continue to undergo public review and review by the parks commissioner. Under the terms of the agreement, the city pays the conservancy an annual fee based on the amount of money the conservancy raises and spends on the park, and on the amount of income the city generates from concessions in the park. Another change is in the structure of the organization. Now, the conservancy’s senior vice-president for operations and capital projects, not the president, also works for the city as the Central Park administrator.

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FOREST PARK FOREVER ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI

Dirt is flying in St. Louis' Forest Park, as craftsmen restore its historic buildings, volunteers and horticulturists plant tens of thousands of trees and other flora, and engineers reestablish a river's natural course in an astonishingly bold \$86 million restoration project. The project, jointly funded by the city of St. Louis and private sector donations, is the result of a hard-won consensus master plan among the residents of St. Louis, the city government, and many cultural institutions that inhabit the park. Forest Park Forever, a nonprofit organization that has raised most of the private funds to restore the park, is helping to facilitate the park's revitalization along with the St. Louis Department of Parks, Recreation and Forestry.

The long process began in the late 1970's, when the mayor of St. Louis and the director of the Department of Parks, Recreation and Forestry became concerned about the deteriorating conditions in Forest Park and hired a consultant team to develop a master plan. The planning process, which involved extensive public outreach at the time, was completed in 1981, but approval of the master plan was interrupted by a mayoral race and did not occur until 1983.

The Forest Park master plan included recommendations for the creation of a park manager/administrator position in the city government, as well as the formation of a private partner to help raise additional money for improvements. The approved plan did not include a landscaping scheme, the thought being that a plan would be prepared as part of a next stage for detailing necessary park restoration improvements.

In 1985, Nancy Rice, the director of Parks, Recreation and Forestry, created the position of Forest Park Manager within her department with the task of developing a nonprofit entity and managing its relation with the city. At the same time, Mary Stolar, an attorney, former alderman, and park advocate with strong connections to the constituencies surrounding the park, approached Rice about getting involved. Rice hired her as the first manager of Forest Park.

As Forest Park Manager, Stolar enlisted the help of Evelyn Newman, a well-known neighborhood resident with fundraising experience to chair and bring together members of the new nonprofit's first board of directors. With an official announcement of their role by the mayor to spur them on, the two set to work and in 1986, Forest Park Forever was founded to work with the city toward "making Forest Park the premier park in the United States." Stolar served as the executive director. Once a board of directors was in place, the nascent organization developed by-laws and applied for 501(c)(3) status with help from the parks department. Stolar and the board president went to talk with Betsy Barlow Rogers at the Central Park Conservancy to see what they could learn from her that could be applied to Forest Park.

However, an audit conducted by the state of Missouri in 1989 flagged the dual role of the Forest Park Manager and Forest Park Forever executive director as a violation of a state law preventing the use of private funds for public projects. As a result, the city split up the position. The park manager, a city employee, would be responsible for day-to-day operations and maintenance of the park, and liaison activities to the cultural institutions in the park. The director of Forest Park Forever became primarily

concerned with fundraising and capital improvements.

Initial fundraising campaigns launched by the fledgling nonprofit focused on renovating existing facilities. For example, the park's famous King St. Louis statue was restored, the Victorian Bridge was repaired, new benches and picnic pavilions were installed, and "Turtle Park," a children's playground featuring huge sculptured turtles, was designed and installed by artist Bob Cassilly. Several of these projects, funded solely by private donations, were managed entirely by Forest Park Forever, which paid for the design costs, contracted and oversaw the construction, and continues to pay for the maintenance of these various facilities.

In 1989, Forest Park Forever commissioned the firm of Kelly-Varnel to study park conditions and to develop a landscape plan for the park. This effort turned into a full revision of the 1983 master plan. When the completed document was sent to the city for review and approval in the midst of an election year, the plan fell by the wayside.

However, capital improvements were a priority of the newly elected mayor, and one of his first acts in office was to facilitate the passage of a long attempted state legislative bill that allocated a half-cent portion of the state's sales tax to the city for capital improvements. Passed in 1993, the mayor allocated 17% of the generated revenue from the state sales tax for capital improvements in the city's parks. Forest Park received \$1.9 million the first year.

Concurrent with the mayor's activities, the city decided that a fresh start was needed for Forest Park and its plan. Instead of hiring an outside consultant, the Department of Parks, Recreation and Forestry used the new funds to lead a highly inclusive public master planning process for the park by itself. According to Forest Park Manager Anabeth Calkins, the city began to build community support for the master plan in 1992, formally launching the city-led community design and development process with a summit in December 1993. The final document declared that the master plan was instituted "based on the notion that the design [of the park] and the design process itself should be the mechanism for conflict resolution, public education, empowerment of the stakeholders and citizens, and the recognition by the public of what constitutes design excellence." Armed with the dedicated source of \$1.9 million from the new state sales tax, the master planning process for Forest Park gained momentum, generating greater confidence among the public as well as from the philanthropic community that the plan would be implemented.

The two-year master planning process involved considerable public input through a summit meeting, interviews with community representatives, and a series of public meetings and forums. The final Forest Park Master Plan was produced and ultimately approved by the city in 1995. Forest Park Forever's third executive director, Sue Clancy, hired in 1993, participated in the city's master planning process both as part of the oversight and final decision-making executive committee appointed by the mayor, and as one of the 69-member Forest Park Master Plan Committee.

The approved Forest Park Master Plan has served as a foundation upon which the partnership between Forest Park Forever and the parks department is built. "By clearly identifying specific capital improvement goals, the master plan has provided a clear agenda for both public and private partners," says Jim Mann, Forest Park Forever's fourth and current executive director. The development of the master plan has brought other benefits as well. The plan has inspired a capital campaign for the park of breathtaking proportions—\$86 million is the target sum, and the nonprofit will split this effort with the city, which has

pledged its \$43 million.

In the four years since the approval of the plan, Forest Park Forever has raised \$37 million in payments and pledges. In 1999 alone, it received nearly \$10 million in contributions towards the capital campaign. Additionally, the Forest Park Trust, a private maintenance endowment, currently has \$3,200,000 in funds. (For a discussion of Forest Park Forever's extensive fundraising plan, see Chapter 3.) Anabeth Calkins credits "the groundwork of enormous community support laid during the process of developing the master plan" as an important reason why the fundraising efforts for Forest Park have been so successful. Completion of the capital projects identified in the master plan is targeted for the anniversary of the World's Fair in 2004.

Fundraising, however, is only half the struggle, as Forest Park Forever and the parks department have begun the massive effort of actually renovating the park's facilities based on the recommendations of the master plan. There is an agreement between the parties that all projects will be financed equally with private and public money. Once the design of a project is approved, Forest Park Forever transfers its portion of the funds into a holding company, and the city issues the construction contracts.

The partnership is in the process of repaving the park's roads and closing others, which is never an easy task. A new lighting program has been put into place, the intent of which is to replace the park's ubiquitous "cobra head" lights with fixtures that are more sensitive to the historic character of the park. Another project just underway is the construction of a second path next to the park's extremely popular paved bike path. This, along with the road closings, should go a long way toward reducing conflicts between bikes, cars, skaters, and runners.

But these projects pale in comparison to the river and wetlands restoration program underway. This project attempts to re-create the effect that the River Des Peres had on the park. The river, which originally flowed through Forest Park, was completely covered up for the World's Fair. Regular flooding in the areas where the river used to be has plagued Forest Park for nearly a century. The master plan's solution to the floods was to bring the river back. Though the original river will remain channelized underground, a new river is being dredged along the general route the old one took through the park. This massive project, currently flirting with a \$20 million price tag, has involved a complete overhaul of the park's sewer and drainage systems, the relocation of a parking lot, the construction of several bridges, and the planting of thousands of new plants and trees. The new waterway system will eventually connect most of the park's water bodies to one another, dramatically improve the water quality in the park (because water will now circulate instead of lying stagnant in pools), and create wetland environments that the city and the organization hope will attract wildlife. Moreover, these wetlands will be significantly easier to maintain than the current mowed fields that are frequently wet and often in need of repair as a result.

Other capital projects include a new boathouse and golf clubhouse, the restoration of several structures such as the Art Deco "Jewel Box" plant conservatory, and a reconfiguration of 27 holes of golf.

Further demonstrating its intention to actively offer support, the city of St. Louis has issued \$17 million of Forest Park Improvement Bonds, to be repaid through the city sales tax. This money is currently going directly into the park. Once the bond has been repaid, in approximately 25 years, the revenue from the same city sales tax will be directed towards the park. In addition, the Missouri Department of Natural

Resources has contributed \$1.2 million towards needed improvements on the park's waterway systems.

However, the 50/50 joint-funding arrangement between the city and Forest Park Forever is not perfect, and it is currently under renegotiation. One major problem relates to timing. The city bureaucracy moves quite a bit slower than the nonprofit would like when arranging for a new project. As a result, Forest Park Forever is actually raising money quite a bit faster than the city can spend it, and in some cases has raised the entire amount necessary to fund certain improvements. The organization would like to be able to move ahead on these projects with city approval. "In projects where we raise all the cash, we want to be more involved," said Jim Mann. Occasionally, to speed a project along, the nonprofit has paid for an architect to design an improvement by itself, and sent that through the city approval process, instead of waiting for the city to go through its normal design process. This process is risky, because the city could reject the design, but, says Mann, "If a donor pays for a project, the donor ought to be able to see and approve the design before it is constructed." Since the completion of the new master plan, one major project—the \$1.1 million renovation of the World's Fair Pavilion—has been financed and built entirely with private funds.

The nonprofit also has spearheaded the development of a new maintenance plan for the park. The plan recommends the establishment of a dedicated maintenance staff that would work exclusively in Forest Park. Increased staff levels for park maintenance would be funded by the nonprofit. The plan also recommends a zone maintenance strategy, much like the one currently in place in New York City's Central Park (see Chapter 2, Sec. 7, Routine Maintenance).

With several grants from national foundations, Forest Park Forever has also launched a program that brings schoolchildren into the park on a regular basis to learn about the environment through a mobile ecology classroom known as the "EcoLab." The lab also is used during events, such as a recent Earth Day celebration. The organization also has developed informational materials and maps, and manages several volunteer programs for members to participate in plantings, clean-ups, and events. Forest Park Forever has also developed a series of brochures on wildlife and plants in the park to increase awareness and stewardship among park users.

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Appendix E: Findings

