

# West Fairmount Park Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

A ULI Advisory Services Panel Report

May 1–6, 2022



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Urban Land Institute  
2001 L Street, NW  
Suite 200  
Washington, DC 20036-4948  
[uli.org](http://uli.org)

# About the Urban Land Institute

**THE URBAN LAND INSTITUTE** is a global, member-driven organization comprising more than 45,000 real estate and urban development professionals dedicated to advancing the Institute's mission of shaping the future of the built environment for transformative impact in communities worldwide.

ULI's interdisciplinary membership represents all aspects of the industry, including developers, property owners, investors, architects, urban planners, public officials, real estate brokers, appraisers, attorneys, engineers, financiers, and academics. Established in 1936, the Institute has a presence in the Americas, Europe, and Asia Pacific regions, with members in 80 countries.

The extraordinary impact that ULI makes on land use decision-making is based on its members sharing expertise on a variety of factors affecting the built environment, including urbanization, demographic and population changes, new economic drivers, technology advancements, and environmental concerns.

Peer-to-peer learning is achieved through the knowledge shared by members at thousands of convenings each year that reinforce ULI's position as a global authority on land use and real estate. In 2022 alone, more than 2,800 events were held in cities around the world.

Drawing on the work of its members, the Institute recognizes and shares best practices in urban design and development for the benefit of communities around the globe.

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# About ULI Advisory Services

**THE GOAL OF THE ULI ADVISORY SERVICES PROGRAM** is to bring the finest expertise in the real estate field to bear on complex land use planning and development projects, programs, and policies. Since 1947, this program has assembled well over 700 ULI-member teams to help sponsors find creative, practical solutions for issues such as downtown redevelopment, land management strategies, evaluation of development potential, growth management, community revitalization, brownfield redevelopment, military base reuse, provision of low-cost and affordable housing, and asset management strategies, among other matters. A wide variety of public, private, and nonprofit organizations have contracted for ULI's advisory services.

Each panel team is composed of highly qualified professionals who volunteer their time to ULI. They are chosen for their knowledge of the panel topic and are screened to ensure their objectivity. ULI's interdisciplinary panel teams provide a holistic look at development problems. A respected ULI member who has previous panel experience chairs each panel.

The agenda for a five-day panel assignment is intensive. It includes an in-depth briefing day composed of a tour of the site and meetings with sponsor representatives, a day of hour-long interviews of typically 50 to 100 key community representatives, and two days of formulating recommendations. Long nights of discussion precede the panel's conclusions. On the final day on site, the panel makes an oral presentation of its findings and conclusions to the sponsor. A written report is prepared and published.

Because the sponsoring entities are responsible for significant preparation before the panel's visit, including sending extensive briefing materials to each member and arranging for the panel to meet with key local community members and stakeholders in the project under consideration, participants in ULI's five-day panel assignments are able to make accurate assessments of a sponsor's issues and to provide recommendations in a compressed amount of time.

A major strength of the program is ULI's unique ability to draw on the knowledge and expertise of its members, including land developers and owners, public officials, academics, representatives of financial institutions, and others. In fulfillment of the mission of the Urban Land Institute, this Advisory Services report is intended to provide objective advice that will promote the responsible use of land to enhance the environment.

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## Summary

**THE CENTENNIAL DISTRICT OF WEST FAIRMOUNT PARK** is home to some of the Philadelphia region's most beloved cultural institutions and directly serves several adjacent neighborhoods. Despite its storied history, the area has been beset by decades of neglect, and the park has long lacked amenities like playgrounds or adequate seating. Advocates recognize the park's potential to provide quality-of-life benefits for the local community and the Greater Philadelphia region.

While formally managed by Philadelphia Parks and Recreation, more than 33 community organizations, five cultural institutions, two performing arts centers, and five police districts all participate in the ongoing stewardship of East and West Fairmount Parks. Within West Fairmount Park, the Centennial District occupies 700 acres and includes the most popular of the cultural institutions: the Philadelphia Zoo, Please Touch Museum, and Mann Center for the Performing Arts.

Seventy thousand Philadelphians live within a half-mile of East and West Fairmount Park, and nearly 7 million people visit the parks and cultural institutions each year. Yet, as a result of Fairmount Park never having been “planned,” these users continue to have fragmented experiences that foster limited connection to the district itself. Despite proximity to Center City and University City districts, the neighborhoods bordering

the Centennial District have struggled with poverty and disinvestment, and the area faces key challenges in relation to mobility, access, and navigation.

To deliver a high-quality park that supports equitable access to green space and cultural amenities, new partnerships, and funding and public engagement strategies are necessary. That is the subject of this Advisory Services panel report.

During the five-day engagement, the panel identified opportunities and possible future actions for the Fairmount Park Conservancy (FPC), while acknowledging and addressing existing challenges, such as the overwhelming scale of the park, the lack of sufficient funding for maintenance, operations, and programming, the inconsistent and fragmented nature of community engagement in the surrounding area. The panel also heard and identified

issues related to the functionality of the park for stakeholders—including institutional tenants and local and regional park users—regarding public safety, parking, wayfinding, traffic flow, and pedestrian safety. The panel made recommendations to enable FPC to develop, fund, and move toward implementation of a unifying vision for the park.

## West Fairmount Park Guiding Principles

Given the importance—and potential—of the park to the surrounding neighborhoods, the panel formulated an overarching set of guiding principles that are intended to help inform future decision-making by FPC. These principles also establish a guiding framework for the individual actions that the panel recommends.

- **Center the communities.** View and understand the park and its future through the experiences of members of the various surrounding neighborhoods.
- **Embrace the place.** Elevate the unique people, history, culture, and natural assets that make the park so special.
- **Intentionally communicate, collaborate, and coordinate.** Be proactive in advancing community co-creation efforts and sharing information related to the park.
- **Build trust with incremental successes.** Demonstrate progress through regular small, but impactful investments and programs.
- **Focus on processes and outcomes.** Ensure that decision-making processes to envision, plan, and implement all park improvements are clear and collaborative.
- **Work to prevent displacement.** Prioritize evidence-based strategies to ensure nearby residents will reap the benefits of park improvements.

## Prioritized Panel Recommendations for the Fairmount Park Conservancy

The following recommendations emerged as the prioritized actions for FPC to pursue. These actions seek to build momentum for the conservancy to engage the surrounding neighborhoods and institutions in developing, funding, and implementing a unifying vision:

- **Context.** Pay renewed attention to West Fairmount Park's historic significance and both its community and regional roles.
- **Vision.** Develop a unifying vision representing the park's future that meets community and regional expectations.
- **Stewardship.** Expand the number of “invested stewards” that are accountable for ensuring the park is high quality and meeting local needs.
- **Organization and funding.** Establish a new organizational partnership to advise and consent on park priorities and fund development, including those related to deferred maintenance and capital improvements.
- **Facilities.** Establish a new on-site community center as a “Hub of Opportunity” with diverse programming, including recreation, community services, and links to economic growth opportunities; ensure that the community center is prioritized as an institutional stakeholder on par with other park institutions and hosts programs identified in collaboration with neighborhood residents.
- **Programming.** Assign scheduling for park programming to the FPC along with the responsibility of ensuring all events are compatible with neighborhood and park operations.
- **Communication.** Assign and hold FPC accountable for ongoing, consistent, and documented communication with park and community stakeholders.



ALBERT YEE FOR FAIRMOUNT PARK CONSERVANCY

## Background

**THE FAIRMOUNT PARK CONSERVANCY** is a nonprofit organization that works with the city of Philadelphia and its communities to steward the city’s parks and nurture its shared environment, cultural resources, and public health. The conservancy has invested more than \$40 million in the Philadelphia parks system while increasing public awareness of the role of parks in contributing to the Greater Philadelphia region’s health and vibrancy. FPC’s mission and work have evolved beyond fundraising to position it as a collaborative leader and partner within the park system, focusing more strategically on planning and executing major capital projects, program development at key civic spaces, and citywide community engagement. Improving West Fairmount Park is a major focus area for FPC.

The Centennial District of West Fairmount Park sits on 700 acres originally identified by Frederick Law Olmsted as the location for the city’s first purpose-built urban park. It hosted the Centennial Exposition in 1876 and today is home to anchor institutions that attract 2 million visitors each year. The park is the green fabric connecting the Philadelphia Zoo with the Please Touch Museum, Mann Center for the Performing Arts, Shofuso Japanese House and Garden, and the Fairmount Park Horticultural Center. Despite the robust visitorship, this has not translated into strategies that capture value for users for the surrounding park or adjacent communities.

Since 2012, FPC has been working in partnership with local community members to build capacity and steward investments in West Fairmount Park. This partnership, organized through the framework of Reimagining the Civic Commons—a pilot Philadelphia-based effort to transform shared civic assets to foster engagement, equity, environmental sustainability, and economic development that has since gone national—has included investments of over \$5 million in capital, maintenance, programming, and activation.

Dating back to 2005, the Centennial District has been the subject of numerous planning exercises seeking to leverage the site’s incredible location, cultural institutions, and natural



Centennial District study area.

assets to create a civic campus, welcoming to neighbors and visitors alike. Shared among all the plans is recognition of the district's challenges: limited direct transit access, parking and user conflicts, unsafe streets and pedestrian access between institutions, limited park amenities, lack of wayfinding, ongoing shortage of maintenance and operations funds, and disinvestment in the surrounding community-owned retail.

Philadelphia Parks and Recreation—which works to protect over 10,200 acres of public land and waterways and manages hundreds of recreation, environmental, and cultural centers—

is an essential partner alongside FPC and local neighbors and stakeholder groups in exploring how to leverage Fairmount Park's history, location, and existing amenities to serve area residents first, while also identifying opportunities for the park to be a greater draw for the region and visitors alike. This effort seeks to understand, in the near, medium, and long terms, how the anchor institutions, including the Fairmount Park Conservancy, should work together in partnership with the city and Philadelphia Parks and Recreation to equitably create value for the surrounding neighborhoods and create a high-quality visitor experience that benefits all.

## History of the Study Area

Fairmount Park was established by the city of Philadelphia, beginning in the 1840s, from parcels of land that were former estates, to protect the watershed of the Schuylkill River.

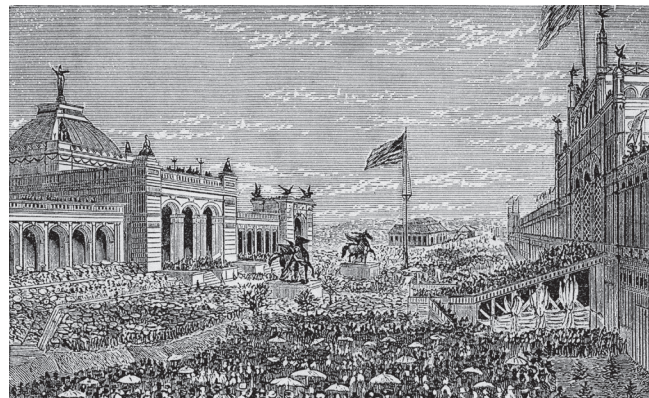
In 1876, West Fairmount Park hosted the Centennial Exhibition, a celebration of the country's 100th birthday and a showcase of America as the most productive industrial economy in the world, with Philadelphia its centerpiece. The event lasted for six months, drawing more than 9 million visitors—a fifth of the total U.S. population at that time. More than 200 buildings were constructed and a temporary “golden city” that included the 1,876-foot-long Main Exhibition Hall and the 1,000-foot-long Machinery Hall dominated the streetscape of today's Concourse Drive.

The exhibition was always meant to be temporary. When it closed in November, its structures were dismantled and shipped to New York, Washington, D.C., and elsewhere, and West Fairmount Park reverted to its former role as a park, freshly carved by roadways and pocked by empty parcels of land.

In the end, only three buildings remained: Ohio House, FPC's present home; Memorial Hall, the first home of the Philadelphia Museum of Art until 1927 and home to the Please Touch Museum since 2009; and Horticultural Hall, which stood until Hurricane Hazel destroyed it in 1954. Today, the Fairmount Park Horticulture Center stands in its place. The site of Machinery Hall became an artificial lake (Concourse Lake), while the site of the Main Exhibition Hall became a series of recreation fields centered by the Welsh Fountain, which is located at the original center of the building.

Beginning in 1897, the Smith Memorial Arch was erected on Avenue of the Republic, a memorial to Pennsylvania veterans of the Civil War. The memorial creates a gateway to the area formerly occupied by the Main Exhibition and Machinery halls. Another road, South Concourse Drive, was added, giving up more parkland to automobiles and commuter traffic. Traces of the historic events that took place in the district remain embedded in the landscape, but the connections between them and their meanings are lost. Revealing these traces would enrich the environment, connect today's community to the past, and make the experience of the park more meaningful.

During and after Centennial Exhibition, from 1870 to 1890, the city's population nearly doubled from 674,000 to just over 1 million. Center City was congested, open space was at a premium, and West Philadelphia held promise. The University of Pennsylvania moved to West Philadelphia in 1873, the Philadelphia Zoo (America's oldest zoo) opened on West Girard



*Opening-day ceremonies at the Centennial Exhibition, Philadelphia, 1876.*

Avenue in 1874, and the Philadelphia Museum of Art opened in Memorial Hall in 1887. Trolley lines connected the old Centennial grounds to the rest of the city in the late 1890s. In the space between the art museum and the zoo and across the road from the site of the exhibition, the Parkside development began to emerge in the early 1900s, a community of wealthy German Americans with homes that reflected the grand architecture of the exhibition.

The moment was fleeting, as the neighborhood remained largely isolated, the art museum moved away to the Fairmount neighborhood, the demographics shifted to middle class (largely Eastern European Jewish) following World War I, and ultimately the Great Depression hit.

Following World War II, the Great Migration coupled with “white flight” transformed Parkside into a predominantly African American neighborhood. Landlords found the big houses difficult to maintain as multifamily residences and either abandoned or neglected them, and the commercial corridor that had sprung up on Girard Avenue slid into decline. The neighborhood's ensuing decades of struggle were amplified by citywide disinvestment and decline.

The tide slowly began turning in 2005, when the Girard Avenue trolley service was restored, followed by the opening of the School of the Future at the edge of the park in 2006 and the opening of the Please Touch Museum at Memorial Hall in 2009. In 2010, the Philadelphia Historic Commission designated East Parkside a local historic district, granting its structures stronger protection against demolition and alteration. Also in 2010, FPC participated in a strategic plan for the Centennial District, the primary outcome of which, as of 2022, is FPC's Parkside Edge project, completed in 2022, which improves pedestrian safety in the area.

Potential Park Zones



TAYLOR SCHENKER

## Focus on West Fairmount Park

The panelists decided to focus on West Fairmount Park as a whole (1,400 acres), rather than just the Centennial District. The reasons for this decision include the following:

- West Fairmount Park is a known and distinctive geographic entity comprising park-oriented uses.
- Within West Fairmount Park, there are no formal physical boundaries between the Centennial District portion of the park and the rest of the park. Park users are unlikely to be able to recognize distinctions between the Centennial District and other areas.
- Revenues from the Centennial District can be used to sustain other portions of the park, to the benefit of all.
- West Fairmount Park contains exciting and underused recreational assets, including the Schuylkill River, that could be enhanced with additional investment.

One of the panel's overarching recommendations is to adopt strategies to enhance the feeling of cohesion and sense of identity for West Fairmount Park as a whole. However, given the size of the park, the panel recommends identifying distinctive zones or districts within the park. The recommended zones should include the following:

- Centennial;
- Entertainment;
- Plateau;
- Active;
- River; and
- Chamounix.

What is more, the panelists encourage park leaders and stakeholders to see West and East Fairmount Parks as interconnected parts of a whole regional park and believe FPC and other stakeholders should work to better link and connect these two park areas so that they provide coherent recreation and ecosystem benefits to the region. Transportation links in the area need to be enhanced, with safety between the park and neighboring communities prioritized.

Although the panelists chose to focus on the entire West Fairmount Park, the newly designated Centennial Zone should still be considered the priority investment area.

Drawing the boundaries around the park itself removes revenue-generating opportunities, such as tax increment financing, from consideration in the commercial and residential portions of the Centennial District beyond the park. Private development is not

encouraged—or possible—on park land, eliminating property tax growth potential as a source of revenue. However, the panel believes that sufficient revenue opportunities exist within the park itself to offset this theoretical revenue loss.

## The Panel's Assignment

FPC asked ULI to convene an Advisory Services panel to focus on developing a unifying vision for the Centennial District within the context of East and West Fairmount Park and the surrounding neighborhoods. The panel was asked to consider how governance and partnerships could inform this vision and how infrastructure investments and improvements can equitably support local priorities without accelerating displacement of nearby residents.

Specifically, FPC asked the panel to address the following questions:

### 1. The Centennial Campus

- a. Should the Centennial District be understood and operated as a discrete campus within the larger system of West Fairmount Park?
- b. What opportunities and incentives lend themselves to this approach? What are the barriers?

### 2. Governance

- a. How might the institutional partners and the city best organize themselves around a shared vision and structure with the capacity to sustain interest and investment?
- b. Should a formal partnership and governance structure be established? What are the optimal roles for parties to that agreement?

### 3. Park Experience

- a. What digital and physical infrastructures (or amenities) are needed to make the Centennial District more accessible to residents and would encourage visitors to extend their experience on site?
- b. How might the district's existing assets—including historic homes, horticultural gardens, watercourses, lakes, and monuments—be managed and activated to create a relevant, vibrant, and welcoming experience for 21st-century park-goers?

### 4. Capturing the Value and Sharing the Benefits

- a. How might the neighborhoods of East and West Parkside capture benefit from visitors to the district and their own proximity to the park?
- b. What improvements, investments, and partnerships are needed to ensure that benefits accrue equitably and do not accelerate the displacement of residents?

## 5. Park Mobility and Circulation

- a. How might the city, institutions, and the conservancy work together to provide a future-oriented approach to mobility in the district that prioritizes safer access into and throughout the district for pedestrians and cyclists?
- b. What off-park assets should the city consider leveraging to minimize the impact of event parking on the park and with neighbors?

## Key Panel Observations and Considerations

Through briefings, a tour, and stakeholder interviews, the panel noted that West Fairmount Park is an incredible community and regional asset but is significantly under-resourced. Specifically, the panelists observed the following:

### 1. Physical conditions are poor, and programmatic offerings are conspicuously lacking.

- a. Conditions will continue to deteriorate in the face of inadequate investment, and the park needs funding at four or five times the current level.
- b. There are too few amenities given the park's scale and market reach.
- c. Lack of rules and enforcement adds to neglect of systems and destructive behavior.

### 2. Neighboring communities are underserved by the park.

- a. Communities do not feel heard or prioritized in decisions related to the park.
- b. Neighborhoods are negatively affected by recreation center closures and reduced programming, and, in some cases, citizens are picking up the slack.
- c. There is a lack of communication and coordination related to event scheduling and notifications, often resulting in inconvenience, frustration, and lack of trust.
- d. There are examples of meaningful local engagement, but these processes are not consistent, systematized, or well documented.
- e. Uses focused on regional park visitors are more prevalent than those focused on local communities; in consequence, residents bear the associated burdens and reap few of the benefits.

### 3. The park is disconnected internally and externally.

- a. The park lacks a cohesive identity, and a unified vision is needed.
- b. Key stakeholders are insulated from one another, resulting in minimal collaboration.
- c. Many park assets are physically fenced off, discouraging engagement.

- d. Roads within and connecting to the park are viewed as unsafe for all users, whether walking, bicycling, or driving.
- e. History is not adequately reflected in park assets, which is a missed opportunity.
- f. There is no connection to the river or regional networks, other than for cars.

### 4. New structures and approaches are needed to ensure the park and neighborhoods thrive.

- a. Accountability lines are unclear: Who is responsible for what?
- b. Stakeholders, including FPC, are committed to addressing park needs and opportunities but limited by resource and capacity constraints.
- c. The city must have effective partners if the park is to reach its potential.

The panelist's observations led to the development of a set of potential priorities for stakeholders to bear in mind when creating a unifying vision for the park, whose goals include the following:

- Establishing the park as clear source of pride and understanding its role as a regional park with a local emphasis;
- Securing unequivocal commitment by city leaders and park stakeholders to value the park and ensure that it is a best-in-class asset for the surrounding communities, as well as a regional centerpiece;
- Honoring the park and the area's unique history, people, and place;
- Demonstrating actions that prioritize opportunities for neighbors;
- Ensuring outcomes benefit and pay tribute to local communities;
- Amplifying history by using effective storytelling;
- Prioritizing active uses, green space, safety, and sustainability;
- Highlighting inclusive and equitable engagement and outcomes;
- Improving key connections to neighborhoods, local natural resources, and activity centers to link surrounding communities to exceptional park amenities and programs that reflect the area's culture, singular history, and desired uses; and
- Valuing quality spaces that are safe, clean, and joyful.





## Creating an Organizational Structure to Prioritize West Fairmount Park

**ALTHOUGH LOCAL COMMUNITY MEMBERS** and many organizations and institutions value West Fairmount Park, no single entity has the capacity, knowledge, authority, or accountability to establish a unifying vision. Further coordination and collaboration among stakeholders and area residents is needed to develop a guiding vision, prioritize investments, and capture and generate funds for the park.

The panelists identified the need to prioritize establishment of a new organizational partnership to advance these goals, with a strong focus on fund development to support locally identified park priorities. A significant amount of legwork has already been completed through various planning efforts that will help inform the needed partnership structure.

### Past Efforts

During the site visit and interviews with local stakeholders, the panelists recognized several key planning efforts and physical improvements to West Fairmount Park that have occurred in recent years:

- FPC invested \$40 million in the Philadelphia park system overall.
- FPC took the lead in beginning to form multidirectional communication channels with various neighborhood groups and community organizations.
- Multiple plans concerning the park and associated economic development studies were prepared throughout the past 20 years, with useful recommendations that remain relevant today.
- Keystone Opportunity Zones and Federal Opportunity Zones were set up to attract private investment to the area surrounding the park.
- The historical Ohio House was remodeled and repositioned as the new FPC headquarters office in 2022.
- Incremental street improvements were completed along Parkside Avenue in 2022, and trails were built in the park.

- Planning for the 250th birthday celebration for the United States that will be held in Philadelphia has started to create political will and public awareness for the need to improve West Fairmount Park.

## Organizational Structure

Ultimately, the various stakeholders in and around West Fairmount Park will need to collaborate to determine the most useful organizational structure to sustain and improve the park. However, the panel developed a suggested framework to consider.

The panel recommends that FPC serve as a convener to bring various other stakeholders together to form a “West Fairmount Park Funding District.” The Funding District board would be composed of members from the surrounding communities as well as institutional stakeholders, including organizations with operations in the park. City leaders would make up the remainder of the board, including two City Council members and leaders from Philadelphia Parks and Recreation. City leaders on the board would provide political will and support and act to improve communications between the West Fairmount Park Funding District and other city departments.

The panelists recommend creating the Funding District in recognition of the need to prioritize enhancements to West Fairmount Park among the many significant park needs across the city that are the responsibility of Philadelphia Parks and Recreation and other municipal departments. Because of

the number and scale of park investments needed across Philadelphia, an entity like the proposed Funding District would help concentrate needed attention and resources for West Fairmount Park and would bring together cross-sector leaders to commit to identifying and securing funding to supplement and leverage city commitments.

Overall, the Funding District board would make decisions on issues such as governance, communications, programming, fundraising, and—potentially—public/private partnerships. FPC would act as the convener that brings the board together and builds on the day-to-day support for the park it is already providing. It makes sense for FPC to play this role because of its expertise, existing relationships with the community, and experience in managing cross-sector partnerships.

Additional potential roles for FPC would be to manage permitting and oversee certain maintenance and security issues for the park. By prioritizing maintenance and security and documenting issues identified by community members and recording formal responses to those issues, FPC could further demonstrate its commitment to following up on the concerns of local residents. Examples of current quality-of-life concerns the panel heard from residents include park vandalism, illegal parking, and informal after-hours events that create noise for park neighbors.

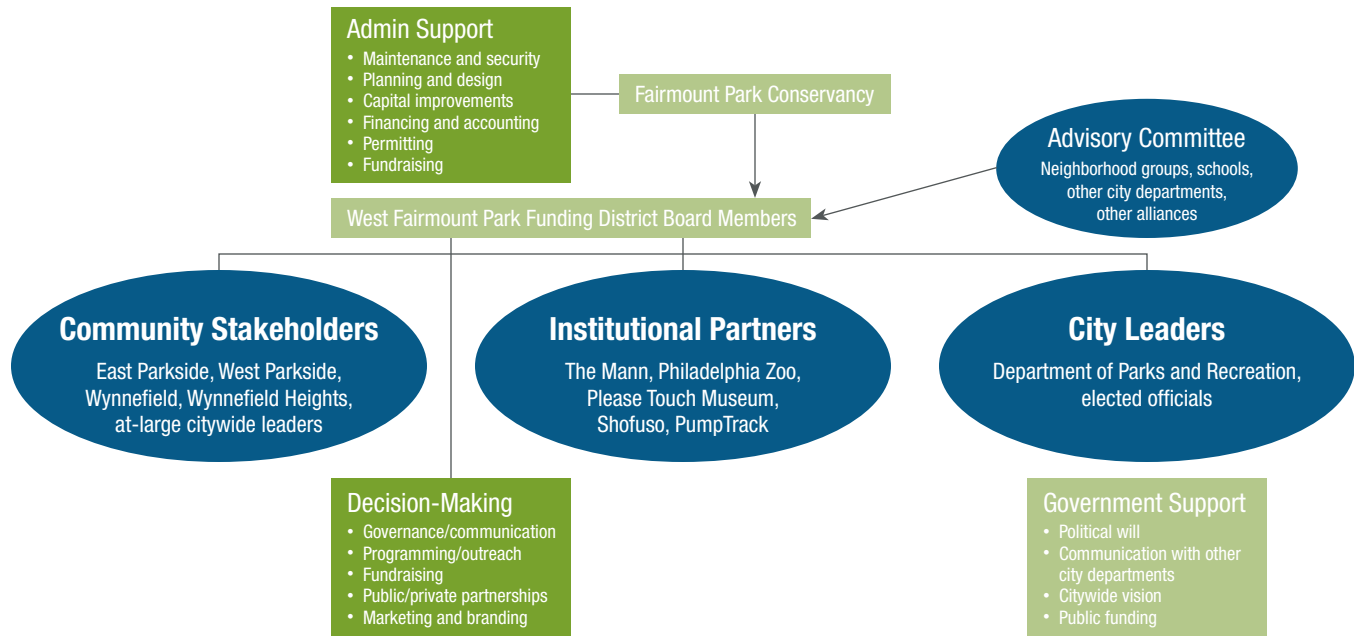
An advisory committee would include additional neighborhood groups, local schools, and other city departments. Further alliances could include additional nonprofit partners, such as arts and sports organizations.

## Challenges and Obstacles

While the preceding efforts are significant, the panel discovered multiple challenges and obstacles in generating consensus and harnessing momentum to create lasting change for the park. Challenges and obstacles include the following:

- Without a clear identity, the park does not attract as many users as it could, leaving it as an underused asset.
- Although multiple plans and studies have been completed since 2002, very little has been executed.
- It is often unclear which entities are responsible for various aspects of park operations, planning, and investment. Responsibilities among city departments, FPC, and other organizations are not well defined, and clear roles and a cross-organizational structure are needed.
- An updated communication management system for the park is essential. Communication is not well coordinated among city departments and the community, institutional stakeholders and FPC, city departments and FPC, or among various government agencies. As a result, events may overlap, not be as successful as they could be, and can create significant and unexpected disruptions for local neighborhoods.
- Because of scarce resources, the park is currently not maintained at a high level. Safety in the park is also largely insufficient.
- The community is frustrated by a lack of transparency in decision-making, leading to a loss of trust in institutional stakeholders.

## Organizational Chart



A major goal of the West Fairmont Park Funding District would be to bring all interested parties to the table and to have an equitable and efficient mechanism to make decisions and to unify the overall vision for the park. It would also provide a mechanism to ensure that revenue-generating park resources could be leveraged to invest back into the park and surrounding neighborhoods—and that this would be done in a transparent way. It would also clarify and define responsibilities for who is responsible for what, keeping them accountable within the new structure.

The organizational chart illustrates a possible structure for the West Fairmont Park Funding District. Proposed roles for Funding District partners include the following:

### Fairmount Park Conservancy

- Convenor, leverages existing role as trusted ally for many in the community
- Fund administrator and provider of oversight on large capital improvement projects
- Grant manager supporting community programming
- Organizer and coordinator of community volunteers
- Maintains database of park assets

### Community Stakeholders

- Engagement and sharing information within the community so that partners and neighbors understand what is happening
- Advocacy for new and improved park programming that reflects the community

- Participation in park programming, cleanups, and beautification projects

### Institutional Partners

- Attracting people to the park and neighborhood businesses via attractions, events, and other programs
- Serving the surrounding communities by creating locally relevant events and opportunities
- Generating funds for park operations and maintenance
- Sponsoring community events and programming

### Elected Officials

- Representing constituents' interests and ensuring actions reflect their needs
- Facilitating community-led visioning sessions
- Identifying government cross-sector funding opportunities and sharing information with other partners and community members

### Department of Parks and Recreation

- Landowner and lessor of land for park development
- Providing accountability, including by enforcing park access, maintenance, and security
- Identifying and deploying public funds
- Collaborating on park operations agreements

## West Fairmount Park: Proposed Responsibilities

	Philadelphia Parks and Recreation	Fairmount Park Conservancy	West Fairmount Park Funding District
Governance and communication	Consulted	Consulted	Responsible
Private and corporate fundraising	Consulted	Execution	Decision-making
Public/private partnerships	Consulted	Execution	Decision-making
Project planning and design management	Consulted	Execution	Decision-making
Capital construction	Consulted	Responsible	Consulted
Programming/engagement	Consulted	Execution	Decision-making
Marketing and branding	Consulted	Responsible	Consulted
Security and maintenance	Co-responsible	Responsible	Consulted
Public funding	Responsible	Co-responsible	Consulted

Source: ULI panel.

### Responsibilities

The panel developed the accompanying table to provide more context on suggested responsibilities for FPC, Philadelphia Parks and Recreation, and the West Fairmount Park Funding District. Under this scenario, the Funding District would primarily be focused on decision-making, while FPC would be charged with implementation of various activities, including fundraising, partnerships, project planning and design management, marketing and branding, and programming. Philadelphia Parks and Recreation would remain responsible for providing funding and supporting security and maintenance.

### Ensuring Effectiveness

The panel recommends taking the following steps when creating a partnership organization like the proposed West Fairmount Park Funding District. Under this arrangement, the anchor institutions and community-based organizations located in the Centennial District would work in partnership with the city of Philadelphia to equitably create value for the park and the surrounding neighborhoods.

The proposed Funding District would generate resources to support on-site recreation programs, park infrastructure investments, maintenance, and upkeep of the park, and to spur business development and concession opportunities for community-based entrepreneurs. The Funding District would

also provide a platform for the city, the park anchor institutions, and the community members to work together on projects that benefit the park and the surrounding communities.

The panel recommends that FPC use the best practices from the Trust for Public Land's 2015 report *Public Spaces/Private Money* to develop a successful Funding District.

#### Develop a Memorandum of Understanding

The panelists note that the success of the Funding District is contingent upon Parks and Recreation entering a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to give management of the park operations to the Funding District. Responsibilities would

#### Essential Considerations When Organizing a Funding District Partnership

<b>1</b>	Develop a Memorandum of Understanding
<b>2</b>	Develop an Effective Board of Directors
<b>3</b>	Hire Program Staff
<b>4</b>	Fundraise Dollars to Support the Fund

Source: *Public Spaces/Private Money*.

potentially include permitting (including for picnics and festivals), park security, and contracting (including for lawn mowing, pool repair, tree trimming, and restoration of historic properties).

It is essential to clearly articulate expectations of each partner and to document these in a formal agreement, such as an MOU. In the park context an MOU can “cement the partnership by detailing authorities and responsibilities for fundraising, park planning, design, construction, maintenance, and other matters,” as noted in *Public Spaces/Private Money*. An MOU can both **provide legitimacy and endorsement** by the government while delineating responsibilities. An MOU can also protect **public interest in the park** and defend against unexpected influences.

While each agreement must be tailored to the specific needs of a particular park, an **agreement** between the city of Portland, Maine, and the Portland Parks Conservancy provides a useful example. This example highlights many of the most important components, such as outlining guiding principles, expectations, and roles and responsibilities. This is a great example to start from but should not be replicated verbatim. The MOU should be tailored to fit the unique needs of the park.

As noted in *Public Spaces/Private Money*, in crafting the MOU, it is important consider the following:

- Who are the stakeholders and how much say will they have in planning and implementing the agreement?
- Which partner will handle the bidding and manage the construction on capital projects?
- How will maintenance be divided between the partners?

## — Fund Development Roles and Considerations —



### PIEDMONT PARK CONSERVANCY, ATLANTA, GEORGIA

The Piedmont Park Conservancy was created in 1989, in partnership with the city of Atlanta, as a donor-funded nonprofit organization, to ensure that Piedmont Park is an iconic park for all neighborhoods of Atlanta. In 1992, the conservancy and the city entered a formal public/private partnership memorialized in an MOU, which outlined the mutual goals to rehabilitate and maintain Piedmont Park. Although it was a long road to consensus around the MOU, caused by distrust among the community, once in place the conservancy has become the powerhouse of Piedmont Park, implementing its master plan and overseeing all aspects of capital improvements.

You can review the MOU (updated in 2012) [here](#).

- What will protect private dollars from being misspent?
- How will donors be recognized?

### Develop an Effective Board of Directors

Selected roles for the Funding District board of directors include (from Trust for Public Land’s *Public Spaces/Private Money*):

- Fundraising;
- Strategic guidance;
- Advocacy; and
- Political connections.

Board members should be committed to solving problems related to the park using financial resources, technical expertise, their communication skills, and/or motivating other stakeholders to act in the interest of the park. Members should ideally have not only financial wealth or valuable connections, but also expertise in parks. Multiple perspectives, including voices of residents, anchor institutions, and others **should be balanced** to provide a strong and balanced advocacy base for the park. It is also essential that members of local communities play prominent roles on the board.

### Hire Program Staff

When hiring program staff, the Funding District must prioritize staff reflecting the surrounding communities. Only with local, diverse, representative, and qualified expertise can the Funding District identify and implement transformative projects that serve



*Prospect Park, Brooklyn, New York.*

community needs. Hiring people with backgrounds that reflect the neighborhood will also help the Funding District uncover valuable information and gain influence.

### Fundraise

The backlog of needs and desire to provide multiple community-serving amenities and features at Fairmount Park, coupled with the lack of sufficient public funding, makes fundraising an essential role for the Funding District. Without sufficient funding and a predictable revenue stream, progress will be stymied. Funding strategies may include donations and/or concessions where a portion of revenue flows back to fund park improvements. **Common concessions** for similar partnerships across the United States include golf courses, skating rinks, restaurants, boat or bike rentals, and other food services.

Although concessions could potentially help generate revenue for the Funding District, incorporating too many services that require payment in the park could also run the risk of being controversial by being perceived as expensive, elitist, or signaling a shift in the park's image. Yet, since Fairmount Park has over 2 million visitors to the park in any given year and the park includes few concessions, increasing the number could provide needed revenue and opportunities to support home-grown entrepreneurs from the surrounding communities and other parts of Philadelphia. Currently park patrons visiting the park do not have access to concessions, so this could serve as a great revenue model for the park.

### CONCESSIONS AT PROSPECT PARK, NEW YORK CITY

The Prospect Park Alliance, the nonprofit manager of Brooklyn's Prospect Park, has operated the park's concessions for many years, after obtaining the right to run the concessions from the city's Parks Department. Over the years, the **alliance has been able to secure concessions** that are open year-round with consistent hours to increase amenities and food options for park visitors. Although historically park concessions have not been a major revenue generator, they allow the alliance to improve the park quality, provide a community resource and amenity, and increase the amount of time users are able to use the park.



## Funding

**WEST FAIRMOUNT PARK** suffers from chronic underfunding and a fragmented maintenance and investment framework, which distributes responsibilities for basic functions, such as mowing, road repair and repaving, tree canopy trimming, lighting, and more across several agencies and organizations, including the Department of Parks and Recreation, the Fairmount Park Conservancy, the city Streets Department, and the state Department of Transportation.

Many interviewees cited a lack of resources and investment as a key challenge facing the park. Several said, “Philadelphia is America’s poorest big city.” The panel recognizes that, in a city with many competing needs, public allocations and appropriations will continue to be inadequate to meet the funding needs in the park.

With day-to-day maintenance a challenge, it is no surprise that more intensive capital projects that serve the park and neighboring communities are seldom attempted or executed. Many of the investments recommended in this report—such as more robust connections to the river, safer and slower streets, upgrades to community facilities, and new programs—will not be possible without more predictable, robust, and diverse funding.

### Funding Overview

Most maintenance and capital spending for the park is drawn from the city’s Parks and Recreation or Streets budgets.



City resources are constrained.



Institutional users such as the Mann, Please Touch, and the Zoo contribute revenue to the city budget, but resources are not directly available to the park for maintenance and operations.



Without dedicated, predictable, and sustainable revenues, it will be impossible to make necessary investments in the park’s physical plant, operations, and programming.

## WHERE PHILADELPHIA STANDS ON PARKS

### ParkScore Ratings (out of 100)

- Overall: 32
- Access: 93 (toward top)
- Equity: 67
- Amenities: 61
- Acreage: 45
- **Investment: 31 (toward bottom)**

On a per capita basis, as of 2021 Philadelphia spends less money maintaining its parks than the 10 largest cities in the United States, aside from Houston. Baltimore spends nearly twice as much per person, and D.C. nearly three times as much. According to the Trust for Public Land's ParkScore rankings of the 100 most populous cities across the country, [Philadelphia ranks 78th](#) in park maintenance and 46th when it comes to programming per capita. In addition, although 95 percent of Philadelphia residents can walk to a park in 10 minutes, Philadelphia spends only \$73 per person on parks, 25 percent [below the national average](#). The city does invest directly in park institutions, such as the Mann Center, and this spending is likely not included in these figures. Although its investments are significant, additional resources are clearly needed to support park enhancements.

The panel also notes that, while institutional users such as the Mann Center, the Please Touch Museum, and the Zoo contribute

public dollars to the city's budget, these resources are not directly available to or captured by the park for maintenance and operations uses. In particular, cars that use park land for parking for Mann Center events can cause damage to the fields and roads, but parking revenues are not invested directly back into the park.

## Funding Benchmarks

To determine the amount of funding that might be needed in an annual budget for West Fairmount Park, the panelists considered multiple scenarios based on benchmarking from the National Recreation and Park Association and made the following key budget assumptions:

- The West Fairmount Park operations and maintenance budget is currently substantially under-resourced.
- Additional revenue sources are required to close operations and maintenance budget deficits that would support needed park investments.
- Using benchmarks, the panelists recommended a target budget range of \$3 million to \$5 million annually for operations, maintenance, and general programming.
- [Benchmark data](#) sourced from the National Recreation and Park Association informed general budget ranges, which are for discussion and context only.

## Addressing Funding Gaps

To address park funding gaps, the panel recognizes the need for dedicated and predictable revenue streams. FPC and other stakeholders should shift away from a donation-based revenue

### West Fairmount Park Funding Benchmarks

Funding Benchmarks	Minimum	Maximum
Operating costs per acre (1,400 acres)	\$4,000	\$10,000
<b>West Fairmount Park – estimated operating costs</b>	<b>\$3,600,000</b>	<b>\$9,000,000</b>
Community operations per person (pop. 70,000)	\$40	\$98
<b>West Fairmount Park – estimated operations costs</b>	<b>\$2,800,000</b>	<b>\$6,900,000</b>
Community-based full-time employees (FTEs) per 10,000 residents	5	9
<b>Total possible FTEs dedicated to park</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>63</b>

Sources: ULI panel and [National Recreation and Park Association](#).

Note: According to benchmarks, annual spending in West Fairmount Park should be \$2.8 million to \$9 million. Current annual city funding for West Fairmount Park is about \$900,000 and from FPC is \$100,000.



model and instead embrace a diverse set of revenue streams that capture revenue from park users for reinvestment in the park.

Considerations include the following:

- Traditional charitable donations should be augmented with a diverse set of revenue streams that capture revenue from park users for reinvestment.
- Revenue sources can be built upon and grown over time.
- Revenues can be used to enhance services, programming, and infrastructure—generating further revenue.

The panelists note that a solid funding base, once established, can be built upon over time; investments in the park can build on themselves to create a virtuous funding cycle, with revenues

being used to enhance services, programming, and infrastructure. Over time, a robust annual budget with funding from a variety of sources can be built.

## Suggested Revenue Sources

To accomplish the goal of a sustainable and diversified budget for the park, multiple sources must be assembled. The accompanying chart outlines categories of revenue sources and specific funding amounts that span the budget ranges identified through benchmarking. A key aspect of this funding scenario is that Philadelphia Parks and Recreation needs to continue making significant investment in the park.

### Key Funding Recommendations

1	Use dedicated, diverse revenue streams to incrementally improve and invest in the park.
2	Key operational funding sources for the park include city allocation, leases, concessions, events, and surcharges on institution revenues.
3	Capital improvement dollars come from philanthropic, private, city, state, and federal sources.
4	Reinforce economic development and opportunity in the communities through park investments.

### Budget Scenarios for \$3.6 Million to \$9 Million

(line item allocations per National Recreation and Park Association metrics)

Sources	Minimum			Maximum		
	Parks & Rec (66%)	West Fairmount Park (34%)	Total	Parks & Rec (66%)	West Fairmount Park (34%)	Total
General revenue	\$2,196,000		\$1,750,000	\$5,490,000		\$5,490,000
Earned income*		\$828,000	\$828,000		\$2,070,000	\$2,070,000
Dedicated levies	\$288,000		\$288,000	\$720,000		\$720,000
Other dedicated taxes	\$108,000		\$108,000	\$720,000		\$720,000
Grants		\$72,000	\$72,000		\$180,000	\$180,000
Sponsors		\$36,000	\$36,000		\$90,000	\$90,000
Other			\$72,000			\$180,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$2,592,000</b>	<b>\$936,000</b>	<b>\$3,600,000</b>	<b>\$6,930,000</b>	<b>\$2,340,000</b>	<b>\$9,000,000</b>

Sources: ULI Panel and National Recreation and Park Association.

\*including surcharge on institutional uses

Budget Scenario for \$5 Million Annual Spending, Supporting 900 Acres of Non-Venue Spaces

Sources	Percentage	Parks and Recreation	West Fairmount Park	Total
General revenue	35%	\$1,750,000		\$1,750,000
Earned income*	35%		\$1,750,000	\$1,750,000
Dedicated levies				\$0
Other dedicated taxes	15%	\$700,000		\$700,000
Grants	3%		\$200,000	\$200,000
Sponsors	10%		\$500,000	\$500,000
Other	1%	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$100,000
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$2,500,000</b>	<b>\$2,500,000</b>	<b>\$5,000,000</b>
<i>Spending per acre</i>				\$5,556

Sources: ULI panel and [National Recreation and Park Association](#).

\*including surcharge on institutional uses

The accompanying chart outlines the same budget source categories for the \$5 million middle-range benchmarked budget that the panelists recommend. The budget would accommodate spending of roughly \$5,000 per acre spread across West Fairmount Park.

The panelists identified the following additional considerations when determining specific funding sources within the presented categories:

- **Continued allocation of public dollars.** The city's Parks and Recreation Department has done an admirable job stretching scarce resources to address ongoing maintenance needs in the park. These resources could be transferred on an annual basis to the Funding District for basic park upkeep and other uses as specified in the MOU. The allocation for

the park should be based on the current expenditures, indexed for inflation, or a per acre spending benchmark based on average expenditures across city parks.

- **Surcharge on ticket or sales revenues.** All users in the park will benefit from the enhanced visitor experience that will result from sustained investment. To provide a sustained source of revenue, a surcharge of 1 to 3 percent of ticket sales or revenues for the Mann Center, Zoo, Please Touch Museum, and potentially the Shofuso Japanese House or other institutions could be levied for park investment and maintenance. The chart estimates the potential revenue that could be generated through a surcharge of 1 to 3 percent on either total revenue or ticket sales.

Estimated Revenue from Surcharges on Ticket or Sales Revenues

	Revenue (estimated)	Ticket sales (estimated)
Philadelphia Zoo	\$25,000,000	\$12,500,000
Mann Center	\$23,000,000	\$11,500,000
Please Touch Museum	\$2,000,000	\$1,000,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$50,000,000</b>	<b>\$25,000,000</b>
With surcharge of 1%	\$500,000	\$250,000
With surcharge of 2%	\$1,000,000	\$500,000
With surcharge of 3%	\$1,500,000	\$750,000

Sources: ULI panel and [National Recreation and Park Association](#).

Surcharges on individual tickets would be minimal and likely not cost prohibitive. Just as one example, a standard adult ticket to the Philadelphia Zoo was \$24 as of 2022. A 3 percent surcharge would be \$0.72 and a 1 percent surcharge, just \$0.24.

- **Revenue from leases, concessions, and permits within the park.** Events and programs can help activate the park, bring in users and visitors, and provide revenues that can be reinvested in programs and physical plant needs. At the current time, leases and events are not leveraged to provide revenue and optimize the user experience. In addition, panelists heard about the lack of coordination and communication among the community, FPC, and the Department of Parks and Recreation regarding large-scale events (such as the Pokémon Go festival).

Opportunities include the following:

- Using historic buildings and their surrounding lands in more strategic and coordinated ways for concessionary uses, leasing, and revenue generation (additional suggestions are included in the appendix on page 35).
- Using small-scale concessions, like boat rentals, and mobile concessions, like ice cream trucks.
- Permitting fees from large-scale and multiday events:
  - Develop a regular cadence of local and signature events that engage visitors and generate revenues from ticket sales, vending, and other uses.
  - Delegate permitting authority for major events (as distinct from athletic field permitting) to FPC or another local entity, with permitting fees that reflect impacts on the park, revenues generated by events, and other considerations.
- Reinforcing and reflecting neighborhoods with community-serving events, local vendors, etc.

To ensure that events and programs engage and benefit the local community to the maximum extent possible, strategies can include fees charged on a sliding-scale basis, prioritization of events that lift local businesses, and other approaches.

- **Stormwater.** The city plans to spend \$2.4 billion over 25 years on stormwater infrastructure as part of a goal to capture one-third of the city's overall stormwater through impervious surfaces. Stormwater funding can be part of the pot of money used to upgrade roads and invest in stormwater capture strategies.



*Entrance to the Philadelphia Zoo.*

- **Parking.** Currently, apart from the Please Touch Museum and event parking during Mann Center programs, parking in the park is unregulated and unmanaged. As part of the overall investment in the park's transportation infrastructure, designated parking locations and hours could be identified. Monetization is possible by using apps or on-your-honor parking boxes. Over time, electric vehicle charging stations—perhaps powered by solar energy—could be built in strategic locations throughout the park, with the park receiving leasing fees from the city or other sources.
- **Transportation.** Transportation-related park improvements could potentially receive funding through the Department of Streets, PennDOT, and/or the TIFIA program (Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act provision for federal long-term, low-interest-rate loans).
- **Other.** Other sources of funding to make park-supportive neighborhood improvements could potentially come from State Keystone Opportunity Zone and Federal Opportunity Zone funds.



## Considering Potential Park Investments

**THROUGH TOURING THE PARK** and engaging in conversations with community members and other stakeholders, the panelists found that West Fairmount Park lacks the cohesive identity it needs to serve residents and draw additional visitors.

The panelists recommend the development of a mission and vision for the park, co-created with the community and institutional stakeholders. This should inform the creation of a brand that is reflected in park signage and communications, which elevates the park's unique history, buildings, features, and other elements making it special.

Investments in all park initiatives and programs should be consistent with the park's mission, vision, and branding. Physical improvements should enhance both physical and visual connectivity within the park, and programmatic enhancements should support a sense of pride and ownership from nearby residents through continual community engagement and communications. All programs should be included in a new

annual programming calendar and should occur at a predictable cadence that meets both local and regional needs.

### Preparing Anti-Displacement Strategies

The phenomenon of “**green gentrification**” can be defined as “the process by which environmental greening leads to increases in perceived local desirability that result in higher property values and rents.” With the proposed additional investments in West Fairmount Park, green gentrification and the associated displacement it could potentially produce are a concern. However, various strategies can be used to mitigate the risk of displacement and ensure that current residents will reap the benefits of future park investments.

## GREENWOOD COMMUNITY PARK, BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA

Greenwood Community Park is the largest park in the Recreation and Park Commission for the Parish of East Baton Rouge (BREC) system, comprising 660 acres in the North Baton Rouge neighborhood. BREC has engaged in extensive community engagement to develop a [Greenwood Community Park Master Plan](#) in collaboration with area residents to guide investments centered on health, wellness, and economic opportunity.

The North Baton Rouge neighborhood is a predominantly African American community. Due to decades of disinvestment compared to the rest of the parish, North Baton Rouge has experienced long-term demographic shifts caused by out-migration and loss of area institutions. As a result, the neighborhood has continually underperformed in key socioeconomic indicators. Despite this history, the tides have begun to turn because of incredible community leadership through the redesign of Greenwood Park and the Baton Rouge Zoo.

The zoo was at risk of relocation from the park and neighborhood to the southern part of the parish as a result of pressure from the core philanthropic community that funds the zoo. Instead of giving in to the pressure, community leadership took local outcry as an opportunity to reinvest in the neighborhood by reimagining the public space, engaging with the local community, and leaning into the existing skepticism of the community by starting with listening before offering solutions.

The project leadership used a long list of strategies to bring as many voices into the process as possible and facilitated more than 4,000 points of engagement over nine months in 2019, including through the [following methods](#):

- Designing engagement opportunities to a range of preferences, locations, and capacities of participation;
- Holding open houses in different neighborhoods at various times of the day to allow more residents to be able to attend;
- Using online surveys;
- Furnishing online maps and data to provide consistent updates to the public; and
- Conducting door-to-door surveys across the parish.

The resulting master plan includes guiding principles created with community collaboration:

1. Celebrate Louisiana's Nature: Embracing the ecology of Greenwood Park and creating sustainable opportunities for people to experience the landscape; and
2. A Park for Everyone: Providing a balance of everyday neighborhood amenities and destination activities that are a regional draw.

These principles are guiding current and future [investments in the park](#), including a [\\$40 million investment in the zoo](#), which was underway as of 2022. Additional [details and plans for the park can be found here](#).

Now presents the best opportunity to prevent displacement from new investments coming to West Fairmount. Important considerations include the following:

- Conducting extensive public engagement at regular intervals to learn and document local needs and observations;
- Collecting and monitoring data on rent, property taxes, and turnover within community stakeholder areas;
- Reviewing and following best practices learned in other cities;
- Advancing collaboration among housing- and park-focused organizations;
- Encouraging community developers to pursue affordable housing projects and seek affordable housing funding; and
- Integrating anti-displacement strategies and requirements into local policy, laws, and funding requirements wherever possible.



ALBERT YEE FOR FAIRMOUNT PARK CONSERVANCY

Getaway at the Greenhouse, Fairmount Park Horticulture Center

## 11TH STREET BRIDGE PARK, WASHINGTON, D.C.

Eleventh Street Bridge Park in Washington, D.C., aims to create a first-class park over the Anacostia River that serves existing residents and preserves the neighborhoods they call home. To achieve this goal, the Bridge Park staff worked with community stakeholders to create an [Equitable Development Plan](#) in 2015, which was updated in 2018. The plan aims “to ensure that the park is a driver of inclusive development—development that provides opportunities for all residents regardless of income and demography.”

The plan took shape after year-long intensive engagement with residents, which was essential to overcome skepticism and cultivate trust. The community-led process uncovered that the Bridge Park could serve as a “connection between a booming area of the city and one that has long been excluded from the city’s economic progress.” The park is positioned to be a catalyst for equitable economic growth and is advancing affordable housing, creating local jobs, and strengthening the bonds of culture that hold neighborhoods together. As of 2021, over \$60 million had been invested into the community, nearly matching the capital costs of building the Bridge Park.

Source: <https://nextcity.org/urbanist-news/can-a-park-prevent-gentrification>.

Note: Quotations are all from <https://bbardc.org/equity/>.

## GREENING WITHOUT GENTRIFICATION

*Greening without Gentrification* is a policy report from the UCLA Institute of Environment and Sustainability. The policy report provides park and planning strategies including the following:

- Park and planning displacement-avoidance strategies should involve collaborations between park and housing organizations.
- Community engagement can create opportunities for residents to educate local governments about challenges and opportunities for solutions.
- Combine the creation and preservation of affordable housing with initiatives to create better-paying jobs for residents.
- Integrate a requirement for displacement avoidance strategies into policies, laws, and park funding implementation at all levels of government.

[You can read the full policy report here.](#)

1	Improve communication, both within the park and between visitors and relevant stakeholders.
2	Allow history to guide the park narrative.
3	Create transitional areas for engagement between public and restricted institutional park spaces.
4	Prioritize special events that serve the community, the park brand identity, and the historic narrative.

## Pillars of Programmatic Success in West Fairmount Park

The panelists identified four pillars of programmatic success in West Fairmount Park. These pillars can help inform decision-making on investments in future programming to ensure they are reflective of local needs and park history, while also leveraging the substantial historical, environmental, and institutional assets found in the parks.

**Improve communication, both within the park and among visitors and relevant stakeholders.** To foster a cohesive identity that reflects the park’s mission and vision, all signage, branding, and communications need to be aligned and integrated to orient park users. Information should be included about public restrooms, water fountains, concessions, and picnic areas. The programming calendar previously mentioned and general information on the park should be publicly available through a coordinated and comprehensive website that offers the ability for public forums to crowdsource community feedback, concerns, and recommendations for the park and associated programs. Communication via social media should seek to expand the audience of those who are aware of park events and enhancements, while recognizing that some residents and potential visitors will find it easier or have a preference to receive communications via other methods.

**Allow history to guide the park narrative.** The history of West Fairmount Park is a unique and incredible asset that should be further prioritized. The park’s role in hosting the 1876 Centennial Exposition is generally well known, but related interpretive information is underrepresented in the park. More specifically, the role of women and Black Americans in the Centennial Exposition is lost and should be reflected via signage and exhibits.

The history of the surrounding neighborhood should also be prioritized. Panelist recommendations include the following:

- Reflect local history in park assets from the lens of residents.
- Tell the story of historic buildings while using them to serve multiple functions and generate revenues.
- Prioritize hiring of community members for skilled, unskilled, and seasonal jobs related to the park’s history.
- Establish community-based safety programs, such as ranger or park police programs, that are informed by the history of the park.

**Create transitional areas for engagement between public and restricted institutional park spaces.** West Fairmount Park features several important institutional uses, including the Mann Center, Please Touch Museum, the Philadelphia Zoo, and the Shofuso Japanese House; however, access to these institutions does not always serve local residents, and connections among these institutions and nearby park spaces are underused. The panelists recommend the following:

- Allow institutions to activate nearby public space with interactive installations.
- Encourage fence removal around park assets whenever possible.
- Run a branded internal shuttle on the weekends.
- Open some institution restrooms to the public during business hours and/or invest in a fleet of portable restroom trailers, possibly owned and operated by FPC.
- Establish a new on-site community center as a “Hub of Opportunity” with diverse programming, including recreation, community services, and links to economic growth opportunities.

**Prioritize special events that serve the community, the park brand identity, and the historic narrative.** Many park spaces are widely used for uniquely Philadelphia traditions, such as picnics at Belmont Plateau. Such uses are the essence of a successful park, but many other park areas see limited use and would benefit from organized, coordinated strategies to activate the park through community-serving programs. Panelist recommendations include the following:

- Create outdoor programming and activation at Welsh Fountain as a marquee space for relaxation.
- Implement a sliding scale for events at the Mann Center, with a focus on including local residents.
- Strategically convert selected park streets to pedestrian-only uses on the weekends or a few times a month.
- Prioritize events that include opportunities for local businesses to connect with residents and visitors from across the region.
- Offer daycare, and after-school and morning care programs at selected indoor and outdoor community spaces.
- Consider recurring events, such as
  - Baseball tournaments honoring the historic Negro League, including the Philadelphia Stars who played at 44th and Parkside ballpark from 1936 to 1952;
  - Community Day/Parkside Day;
  - Food truck festivals;
  - Farmers markets, ideally including local makers; and
  - Music and art festivals.

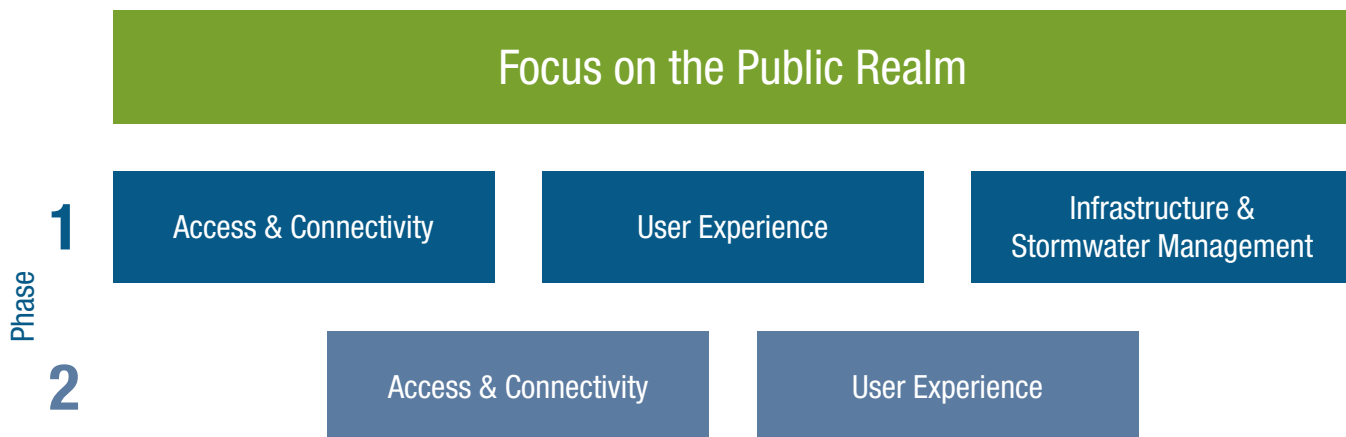
## Physical Investments: Focus on the Public Realm

The panelists recommend that FPC consider several near-term park investments in collaboration with community members and other stakeholders. The public realm should be the initial priority since public spaces and rights-of-way are shared spaces that concern all park users. In the public realm, the panelists recommend investments in access and connectivity, user experience, and infrastructure and stormwater management.

After these initial public realm investments, FPC and partners should focus on recreational amenities and conservation and natural and cultural resources management. These are potentially big-ticket items, require more consensus building, and need concerted strategies that go beyond day-to-day maintenance.

In phase one, it is important that FPC and partners identify criteria for project selection and investment. Suggested considerations include ensuring that projects are

- Identity-building;
- Human scale;
- Highly visible;
- High impact; and
- Can be completed with near-term funding opportunities that accomplish multiple goals (e.g., stormwater projects may be eligible for funding that can be leveraged to improve rights-of-way for park users).





## Phase One: Access and Connectivity

Safe and convenient access to West Fairmount Park and the Centennial District is difficult—particularly for pedestrians and bicyclists—because of the presence of multiple roadways in the park with automobile traffic that moves at unsafe speeds, including South Concourse Drive, Avenue of the Republic, and Belmont Avenue. The Amtrak rail lines on the south and west edges of the park present another barrier to access.

Investments should prioritize safe access to, and movement through, the park for users from the surrounding neighborhoods, as well as those reaching the park from the surrounding Philadelphia area. Connectivity to and among key institutions and recreational and cultural amenities in the park should be enhanced for users on foot and using a bicycle or public transit.

Improvements that support pedestrian and bicycle movement will make transportation in the park safer and more pleasant for all users—including drivers—and can also support investments in wayfinding. There is an opportunity to capitalize on park amenities, key sites, and areas that host activities and programs by making it easier for people to move throughout the park.

Specific goals recommended by the panelists follow:

- Improve neighborhood walkability through a focus on access, crossings, and safety.
- Build out a safe, robust, and separated pedestrian and bicycle circulation network within the park.
- Reduce the impact of automobiles on the park using road diet—and where possible, road closures.
- Invest in assets that highlight points of arrival and special physical “moments” in the park.
- Create new connections to the Schuylkill River.

Specific projects to consider include the following:

- Advancing Philadelphia 2035 Plan intersection improvements and prioritizing the creation of formal entrances to the park at the key intersections identified in the plan;
- Improving park roads, intersections, and road striping, establishing of new sidewalks and trails, and implementing an overall wayfinding and signage plan;
- Installing bike share and/or rental stations at key locations;
- Adding bicycle amenities, including fix-it stations, bike stands, and seating and signage at trail heads;

- Implementing the planned bike lanes on Concourse Avenue and Chamounix Drive;
- Coordinating with the ongoing route study on Phlash bus service to refine bus routes and shelters, prioritizing local resident use while accommodating visitors;
- Adding benches and shelters at existing transit stops;
- Coordinating a West Park shuttle or internal transportation system to connect park and institution users;
- Running a weekend circulating shuttle connecting to downtown;
- Developing an action strategy to implement the 2019 Trolley Plan; and
- Supporting the reestablishment of the 52nd Street transit station.

## Phase One: User Experience

Current amenities in the park are not meeting the needs of local residents and other park users. FPC and other stakeholders should prioritize improvements to, or the addition of, bathroom facilities, water stations, lighting, public art, location markers, shade structures, pavilions, comfortable seating (e.g., benches, bleachers, and picnic tables), and safety features (e.g., blue-light phones).

Balancing the needs of residents of the surrounding area with those of regional visitors is key. Both are important, but investments in user experience should first prioritize the needs of the neighborhoods surrounding West Fairmount Park.

Specific goals recommended by the panelists are as follows:

- Using signage to build the identity and branding of West Fairmount Park;
- Coordinating the development of small gathering places, water fountains, seating areas, and shade structures with playgrounds, ballfields, and other recreational amenities that can be used synergistically;
- Prioritizing areas for family picnics, gatherings, and other permitted and nonpermitted passive recreation events;
- Extending the hours of comfortable park use—especially for children and seniors—through the improvement of facilities that draw in additional users and create an atmosphere of safety; and
- Developing a parking management strategy that considers the spatial implications of all public realm investments.

## PARK ACCESS AND LEVEL OF MAINTENANCE, RALEIGH, NORTH CAROLINA

“The City of Raleigh Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources [System Plan](#) is a long-range planning document that is meant to help shape the direction, development, and delivery of the city’s Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources services over a 20-year period. The System Plan was adopted in 2014 and is planned to be updated approximately every five years to keep the document relevant to the current needs of city of Raleigh residents.”

The goals of the update are to:

- Increase connectivity;
- Promote equity;
- Improve access; and
- Provide a progress report.

In partnership with the National Recreation and Park Association and other partners in the [10 Minute Walk campaign](#), Raleigh developed a new [Park Access Level of Service](#) model that will help guide future park and greenway planning decisions. [This effort considers](#) (1) how far residents must travel to reach the nearest public park, (2) distance from the nearest greenway trail, (3) how many acres of park land are accessible nearby, and (4) the number and variety of park experiences available nearby. Overarching goals include providing all citizens with safe and convenient access to a park or greenway trail and linking parks, neighborhoods, schools, and other destinations via trails.

Source: <https://raleighnc.gov/greenways2020>.

Specific projects to consider include the following:

- Completing improvements to Welsh Fountain, and considering adding nearby portable restroom facilities, kid-focused areas, wi-fi, water stations, and spaces for food trucks and concessions;
- Identifying locations for multiple playgrounds throughout the park, prioritizing locations for community use and coordination with park institutional uses;

- Defining the key locations for small and large family or group gatherings, including picnics; adding signage to identify and direct users to these locations; and prioritizing these areas for maintenance, expansion, and enhancement—including adding picnic pavilions and pergolas;
- Developing and implementing a public art strategy, with emphasis on children, neighborhood identity, and local history, and procuring local artists to implement this strategy;
- Operating a fleet of portable bathroom trailers;
- Assessing fences and removing them as necessary; and
- Supporting the development of “outside the gate” facilities and amenities to create free and low-cost activities that build identity while engaging the parkland, the surrounding community, and park visitors.

### Phase One: Infrastructure and Stormwater Management

Park infrastructure should provide a resilient and reliable foundation for the planned use of the park. Improvements to wi-fi, utilities, water, and sewer services can better support institutional uses and other developed areas of the park.

Stormwater management structures should be incorporated into the design and installation of all new infrastructure elements, to improve the overall functioning of the parkland, including park roads, which can be designed with swales, curbs, gutters, and guardrails where appropriate. New bioretention and best management practices for stormwater can lessen incidents of flooding, erosion, sinkholes, and washouts, which will in turn save money and reduce the amount of time that facilities are offline.

Parking areas should be planned, designed, and constructed to complement major institutional or recreational uses, while encouraging shared or alternative programming during nonpeak times.

Specific goals recommended by the panelists include the following:

- Developing and maintaining the infrastructure necessary to support the reliable operation of the park;
- Supporting and enhancing park use by local residents through site improvements;
- Syncing major infrastructure improvements to include enhancements to the stormwater management systems and improvements to the public realm; and

- Identifying opportunities for funding and grants centered on infrastructure that can be leveraged to support the other park uses.

Specific projects to consider are as follows:

- Identifying small site improvements to areas that are heavily used by local residents, including picnic areas and playgrounds;
- Formalizing and maintaining parking areas for major uses, such as the Mann Center and Please Touch Museum, and investing in stormwater management systems, lighting, and pathways for safe crossing; and
- Defining the key roads and adjacent activity areas for strategic investment, including the establishment of maintenance boundaries, curb and bioswale installation, and pads for mobile bathroom trailers.

### Phase Two: Recreational Amenities

Recreational amenities such as sports fields and courts, aquatic facilities, and natural and hard surface trails should be available and responsive to the recreational needs of the adjacent communities—especially given the deficit of neighborhood-serving recreation facilities in the area surrounding the park.

The *Philadelphia2035: West Park District Plan* details the poor condition, advanced age, and poor distribution of playgrounds and recreation centers in the area. In response, West Parkside residents raised funds to develop their own vacant lot pocket playgrounds, separate from the city’s park and recreation system. New facilities should first complement the resident-created space and reflect the needs of local neighborhoods and, second, include opportunities for efficient use by regional user groups. Determining the specific set of recreational amenities to invest in requires a high degree of consensus-building and long-range planning.

The fact that the park institutions draw users from across the region and beyond means opportunities may exist to identify funding for new recreational amenities that serve this visitorship. This strategy should be explored, but only in collaboration with local residents and stakeholders to make certain that any investments are first serving their needs and are not creating undue burdens on the park or local infrastructure.

New recreational amenities should be placed strategically to prioritize the surrounding neighborhoods, areas of the parks

### BIOSWALES IN GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN

In 2015, Grand Rapids voters approved the Vital Streets Fund to fix city roadways and improve stormwater management. The [program focuses on](#) the renovation and reconstruction of roads, trails, and sidewalks to be not only functional and safe but also attractive and to restore natural water systems. Since the fund was adopted, over \$66 million has been invested in the streetscapes of Grand Rapids.

You can learn more about the [Vital Streets Fund here](#).

already being used by children and seniors (e.g., the Kelly Pool), and locations near institutional uses that are already well used. Leveraging these areas will likely have the greatest impact.

Specific goals recommended by the panelists include the following:

- Providing recreational amenities—including fields, courts, and playgrounds—should first leverage existing uses and reduce recreation space deficits in the area, and second, serve regional users;
- Upgrading or converting existing fields to meet local and regional sport demands;
- Aligning facility upgrades with programmatic opportunities; and
- Supporting the overall health of residents by improving recreation in the park.

Specific projects to consider follow:

- Establish a new on-site community center as a “Hub of Opportunity” with diverse programming, including recreation, community services, and links to economic growth opportunities.
- Actively engage in [Project REBUILD](#) for the Carousel Park Recreation Center and grounds, ensuring a focus on local residents and the inclusion of amenities tailored to those with disabilities, including outdoor improvements, a universally accessible playground, and public art.
- Consider water play opportunities near the Welsh Fountain or another appropriate location.
- Partner with the city to enhance the existing fields for games and tournaments, including improving field and turf conditions, seating, and shade availability.



*View of Ohio House as originally constructed, Fairmount Park, 1876.*

- Identify locations for multiple playgrounds, strategically locating them for community use near institutions and key park areas, such as the Please Touch Museum, Carousel House, and Belmont Plateau.
- Define key locations for small and large family or group gatherings, including picnics; add signage and highlight these locations for maintenance, expansion, and enhancement including establishing pads for portable restrooms.
- Invest in fields and sports facilities so people do not need to travel for tournaments and the like.
- Consider opportunities to further leverage [Chamounix Drive](#) assets, including the Trolley Trail, Belmont Plateau, Treetop Quest Philly, and Chamounix Drive Meadow, with improvements and additional signage to encourage further use and exploration.

## Phase Two: Conservation, Natural and Cultural Resource Management

Fairmount Park serves a vital role in the natural ecosystem functions of the entire West Philadelphia area—the park has several key streams and waterways, including the Schuylkill River and the East Park Reservoir. In fact, Fairmount Park was the city’s first watershed park created to protect the Schuylkill River. At the

same time, the West Parkside and Wynnefield communities lack significant tree canopy, and the park’s large, intact tree canopy provides necessary shade and reduces the heat island effect in the surrounding area.

The park also features significant historical resources, but these generally have not been interpreted to reflect the stories of park users from the local area. The panelists recommend that historic buildings in the park be used more strategically than just for special events and note that they need to connect local people and visitors to the area’s rich history.

Specific goals recommended by the panelists include the following:

- Preserving and enhancing the park ecosystem;
- Protecting the rare and endangered species found in the park;
- Identifying and protecting wildlife corridors;
- Providing nature education to park users;
- Interpreting and curating the historic resources using an inclusive lens—reflecting the current residents and users; and
- Protecting the viewshed to Center City from the Belmont Plateau and the Mann Center.

Specific projects to consider are as follows:

- Complete a comprehensive historic assessment and maintenance strategy, prioritizing making the buildings watertight and protecting the foundations.
- Establish a tree planting, trimming, and maintenance strategy.
- Build a relationship with an arborist to provide regular maintenance and storm cleanup when necessary.
- Identify a coordinated investment strategy consistent with the park vision and mission.

For example, several historic buildings exist throughout the park—many of which are not currently in regular use. The panelists suggest that FPC conduct a condition assessment of these buildings to determine what renovations are needed and what the associated maintenance costs would be. At that point, a redevelopment schedule should be elaborated to move forward with uses that support the park vision, mission, and identity. The condition assessment should determine where it makes the most financial sense to renovate and restore the structures based on

maintenance costs and future use potential. Suggested potential uses for historic buildings include the following:

- An area/park welcome center;
- Funding District meeting and office spaces;
- Conservancy community outreach team offices;
- Spaces for community meetings and special events;
- Museums;
- Park security/ranger housing;
- Plant nurseries, spaces for community gardener programming;
- Workforce training/skill-building spaces;
- Bunkhouses for use by educational and youth overnight programs; and
- Health services.

Additional information and recommendations on the use of specific historic structures in West Fairmount Park can be found in the appendix on page 35.

## BURNHAM WILDLIFE CORRIDOR, CHICAGO

“The [Burnham Wildlife Corridor \(BWC\)](#) is a 100-acre ribbon of urban wilderness running through Burnham Park. The corridor is composed of three main natural areas including the Burnham Centennial Prairie, Burnham Nature Sanctuary, and McCormick Bird Sanctuary. The corridor spans both sides of Lake Shore Drive and is the largest stretch of natural area along Chicago’s lakefront. Its native prairie, savanna, and woodland ecosystems provide healthy, diverse habitat for migratory birds and other wildlife, and offer opportunities for visitors to meaningfully connect to this revitalized public green space in ways that inspire nature exploration, enjoyment, and stewardship.”

The Park District began [rehabilitating the Wildlife Corridor](#) in 2000 by building trails and removing invasive species—replacing them with native plants. The Park District partnered with the Field Museum and multiple area nonprofits to start

the Roots and Routes Initiative, which aims to sustain wildlife and to improve access to nature for nearby communities. Since 2013, Roots and Routes partnerships have led to multiple Wildlife Corridor programs, including art installations and youth engagement opportunities.

“The Burnham Wildlife Corridor is home to [five unique ‘gathering spaces,’](#) which have been designed and created—and will be activated—by teams of local artists and community-based organizations from the Chinatown, Bronzeville, and Pilsen neighborhoods. The BWC Gathering Spaces are artistic installations and seating areas, reflective of nature and culture, that serve as assembly grounds and resting points for people exploring this part of the lakefront. They are located on both the east and west sides of Lake Shore Drive.”

Source: [www.chicagoparkdistrict.com/parks-facilities/burnham-wildlife-corridor](http://www.chicagoparkdistrict.com/parks-facilities/burnham-wildlife-corridor).

## EVALUATING PARK QUALITY

Evaluating park quality and understanding neighbor and stakeholder expectations regarding maintenance, amenities, and visitor experience are important steps in prioritizing investments in West Fairmount Park. Using ULI's [park quality framework](#) could help park stakeholders refine future investment criteria and assessment approaches.

The framework can also help leaders collect data, measure aspects of park quality before and after investments, and learn from other parks about how to make their evaluations comprehensive and methodical. The ULI park quality framework includes the following principles.

### Characteristics of High-Quality Parks and Key Evaluation Questions

Many cities are in the early stages of defining and evaluating park quality; this framework can help them refine their definitions, criteria, and assessment approaches. Other communities are further along, collecting data and measuring some aspects of park quality, and can take cues from this framework to make their evaluations more comprehensive and methodical.

1

#### HIGH-QUALITY PARKS ARE IN EXCELLENT PHYSICAL CONDITION

- Is the park well maintained?
- Are park amenities in good condition?

2

#### HIGH-QUALITY PARKS ARE ACCESSIBLE TO ALL POTENTIAL USERS

- Can people of all ages and abilities get to and around the park?
- Do people know about the facility and what they can do there?
- Is it free or affordable to use?

3

#### HIGH-QUALITY PARKS PROVIDE POSITIVE EXPERIENCES FOR PARK USERS

- Does the park provide a diverse range of amenities and activities?
- Do all community members feel welcome and safe in and around the park?
- Is the park comfortable to spend time in?

4

#### HIGH-QUALITY PARKS ARE RELEVANT TO THE COMMUNITIES THEY SERVE

- Does park design and programming reflect the culture and interests of community members?
- Does the surrounding community actively use the park?
- Do user demographics reflect the community?
- Are community-based organizations involved in park decisions and operations?

5

#### HIGH-QUALITY PARKS ARE FLEXIBLE AND ADAPTABLE TO CHANGING CIRCUMSTANCES

- Does the park accommodate a variety of uses?
- Are park features adaptable to evolving circumstances?
- Does the park enhance environmental sustainability and resilience?



## Priority Actions and Conclusion

**WEST FAIRMOUNT PARK** is an incredible asset for the surrounding neighborhoods and broader region; however, it requires stakeholder alignment and investment to meet its full potential. The park has the potential to support community cohesion and recreational needs, while also providing world-class amenities and facilities. With additional sustained funding, a cohesive and inclusive vision, and new governance structures, the park can become a place that celebrates its unique history, preserves the ecosystem, and brings people together.

The plans that already exist concerning the park are a great place to start, but the park requires organization, oversight, and funding—and an inclusive process that prioritizes community co-creation is key.

To move forward, the panelists recommend that the conservancy and the Philadelphia Parks and Recreation Department meet with community members to discuss, decide, and prioritize moving forward with panel recommendations. If any of the recommendations do not resonate, they should be modified.

The panelists also recommend that the Funding District is set up in the near term, again with community members as

partners throughout the process. Initially priorities should be to identify capital improvement priorities. In 2023, an operations and maintenance budget should be created to identify needs consistent with the Funding District budget.

Perhaps most important, the panelists recommend always referring to the “Guiding Principles” when making decisions and asking, “Is this action consistent with these principles?”

Recommended actions and specific timelines are included in the accompanying chart.

Actions and Timelines

Recommendation	90 days	18 months	2025–2027
	May–July 2023	August 2023 to February 2025	March 2025 to December 2027
<b>Agree on potential Parks and Recreation and FPC roles and guiding principles</b>	X		
<b>West Fairmont Park Funding District (WFPFD) Stakeholder Discussions</b>	X		
Initial discussion – City/FPC	X		
Institutions/community discussions	X		
Discussions with 2023 mayoral candidates about park opportunity	X		
<b>Prepare WFPFD incorporation documents (501[c][3] status)</b>		X	
Prepare MOU		X	
Identify board members and form board		X	
Develop and finalize mission and vision		X	
Hire FPC program staff		X	
Hold initial meeting		X	
<b>Identify 2023–2027 capital priorities</b>		X	X
Develop funding strategy		X	
Implement funding strategy		X	X
<b>Receive proposed operations/maintenance (O&amp;M) budget from FPC</b>		X	
Deliberate on and approve O&M budget		X	
<b>Community Center programming</b>	X	X	X
FPC/Project REBUILD develop engagement program	X	X	
Identify potential programming/design elements for consideration	X	X	
FPC/Project REBUILD finalize concept/initial programming		X	
<b>Establish Centennial/entertainment parking management program</b>		X	
<b>Additional traffic calming improvements</b>		X	X
<b>Condition assessment of historic park structures</b>		X	
<b>Development initial stormwater management plan</b>		X	
Identify first phase stormwater improvements			X
<b>Formalize communication program</b>	X	X	



# Appendix: Potential Uses for Historic Structures in Fairmount Park

## Fairmount Historic Homes

### Assessment and investment process:

- Conduct a condition and repair/maintenance cost assessment on all properties within West Fairmount Park.
- Assess future use potential, including the market need for new education uses.
- Based on renovation and maintenance costs, and future use potential, develop a redevelopment schedule.
- Strategically renovate buildings as needed, develop uses, and market to applicable parties.

## CASE Building

**Current use:** Parks and Rec Building

**Current lease:** n/a

### Proposed uses:

- West Fairmount Park/Centennial District Welcome Center
- Group meeting space/office
- Office spaces available for community meetings

### Potential funding sources for regular expenses:

- Special event rentals
- Meeting space rentals
- FPC



FAIRMOUNT PARK CONSERVANCY

## Letitia House

**Current use:** Centennial Parkside CDC (CPCDC) meeting and outdoor gardening space

**Current lease:** FPC leases to CPCDC

### Funding source for regular expenses:

- Centennial Parkside CDC has a triple-net lease



FAIRMOUNT PARK CONSERVANCY

## Sweetbriar Mansion

**Current use:** Informal workspace for Mural Arts Philadelphia, a local nonprofit

**Current lease:** None

**Proposed uses:**

- Bunkhouse for use by educational and youth overnight programs
- Missing health services (ex. dentist, women’s health, etc.)

**Funding sources for regular expenses:**

- Nominal fee from overnight guests/groups
  - Discount for youth organizations located within Centennial District
- FPC



FAIRMOUNT PARK CONSERVANCY

## Cedar Grove

**Current use:** Interpretation and school tours

**Current lease:** Philadelphia Museum of Art with the city of Philadelphia

**Funding source for regular expenses:**

- Philadelphia Museum of Art has a triple-net lease and is responsible for all expenses



FAIRMOUNT PARK CONSERVANCY

## Shofuso Japanese House and Garden

**Current use:** Cultural center

**Current lease:** City of Philadelphia to Japan America Society of Greater Philadelphia

**Proposed use:**

- Attraction with additional support for FPC for concessions/gift shop if needed and wanted

**Funding sources for regular expenses:**

- Ticket sales
- Existing donors
- Concessions/gift shop revenue



FAIRMOUNT PARK CONSERVANCY

## Fairmount Park Horticulture Center

**Current use:** Occasional event venue

**Current lease:** None, concession by Constellation Culinary Group; Philadelphia Parks and Recreation managed and operated building

**Proposed uses:** N/A

**Funding source for regular expenses:**

- Event rental fees



FAIRMOUNT PARK CONSERVANCY

## Ohio House

**Current use:** FPC office

**Current lease:** FPC

**Proposed uses:**

- FPC offices
- Park programming meeting location
- Event space (outdoor only, pending landscape renovation)

**Funding sources for regular expenses:**

- FPC
- Event rental fee (outdoor only, pending landscape renovation)



FAIRMOUNT PARK CONSERVANCY

## Belmont Plateau Utility Stand

**Current use:** None

**Current lease:** None

**Proposed use:**

- Concessions/food

**Funding source for regular expenses:**

- Concessions/food sales (weekends/special events)

## Belmont Mansion/Underground Railroad Museum

**Current use:** Museum and event space

**Current lease:** Historical group

**Proposed uses:**

- Museum (study history, exhibits; additional marketing for this museum to see if outreach can be expanded)
- Event space

**Funding sources for regular expenses:**

- Museum revenue
- Event rental fee



FAIRMOUNT PARK CONSERVANCY

## Ridgeland Mansion

**Current use:** Office and meeting space for the Cancer Support Community

**Current lease:** FPC long-term lease to the Cancer Support Community

**Proposed use:**

- Event venue

**Funding sources for regular expenses:**

- Cancer Support Community has a triple-net lease and is responsible for ongoing expenses
- Program fees
- Event rental fee



FAIRMOUNT PARK CONSERVANCY

## Ridgeland Sheep Barn

**Current use:** Headquarters of FPC field operations teams

**Current lease:** Philadelphia Parks and Recreation to FPC

**Proposed use:**

- Site for FPC programming and field training

**Funding source for regular expenses:**

- FPC operational revenue



BRIAN W. SCHALLER, FAL, VIA WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

### Chamounix Mansion and Carriage House

**Current use:** Hostel with accommodations for groups of 20 to 70

**Current lease:** City of Philadelphia to Chamounix Mansion and Carriage House

**Proposed use:** N/A

**Funding source for regular expenses:**

- Revenue from use as hostel



FAIRMOUNT PARK CONSERVANCY

### Lilacs House

**Current use:** 20-bed bunkhouse for Outward Bound staff

**Current lease:** Short-term caretaker license to Outward Bound

**Proposed use:** N/A

**Funding source:** N/A



BRYAN W. SCHALLER, FAL, VIA WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

### Boelson Cottage

**Current use:** Empty

**Current lease:** None

**Proposed use:** N/A

**Funding source:** N/A



FAIRMOUNT PARK CONSERVANCY

# About the Panel

## Mike Higbee

Panel Chair  
Indianapolis, Indiana

Higbee is at heart a community builder. He does not shrink from solving complex community development challenges. In fact, he has made a career of it. From helping rebuild downtown Indianapolis to constructing new affordable and market-rate infill homes in low-income blighted neighborhoods, Higbee is a pioneer in urban redevelopment. He relishes using his creative and innovative insights to solve challenging development dilemmas. He has enjoyed a 40-year career that has involved playing several roles in the community and economic development arenas. His primary focus has been on development and redevelopment, implementation, and public/private partnerships. He has helped create plans and developments that benefit urban and rural communities in the United States and abroad.

Higbee served as the director of metropolitan development for the city of Indianapolis from 1985 to 1991, where he oversaw the city's economic development and affordable housing initiatives. Premier projects he led for the city were the Circle Centre Mall development, the Lower Canal Improvement Project, Pan Am Plaza, and negotiations for the United Airlines Maintenance Facility at the Indianapolis International Airport. He founded and served as president of Development Concepts Inc., a development planning and real estate consulting firm, from 1991 to 2018. His company worked across the country, planning and in many cases implementing downtown and neighborhood master plans. Higbee also partnered in large-scale developments, including an infill housing project and the redevelopment of the 150-acre historic Central State Hospital site. Most recently he led an Economic Development Team at Thomas P. Miller and Associates, building a national practice in housing, opportunity zones, and economic recovery and resiliency.

Higbee has served as a faculty member for the Rose Center for Public Leadership and is often invited to participate in or chair panels in cities across the country on behalf of the ULI Advisory Services program. He recently founded OBE Advisors LLC. OBE Advisors will partner with public- and private-sector leaders to identify investments and/or projects that enhance the economic opportunities and quality-of-life assets for community residents and businesses.

## Dionne Baux

Chicago, Illinois

As vice president of urban development, Baux plays a key leadership role to expand technical service offerings to neighborhood commercial districts, lead the retention and growth of UrbanMain (UM)/MSA City Coordinating Programs, the UM network, and designated UM districts. Specifically, she works to build economically vibrant neighborhood commercial districts and community leaders through the National Main Street Center's UM four-point approach. Before this role Baux served as the director of UrbanMain, an initiative developed by the center four years ago to broaden its offerings and engagement in urban neighborhood commercial districts.

Baux has over two decades of experience in project coordination in the fields of urban economic development and commercial district revitalization. She has extensive expertise engaging community stakeholders, identifying and implementing projects in conjunction with community-based organizations, government institutions, and real estate development, as well as supporting capacity-building opportunities. Before joining the center in 2016, she served as senior program officer for Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) Chicago where she managed economic development initiatives for the Chicago office, developed and led the award-winning Business District Leadership program and the nationally recognized Smart Communities demonstration. Before LISC Chicago, Baux served as a financial planning analyst for the city of Chicago's Department of Community Development where she administered the tax increment finance interest subsidy program for developers, rehabilitation grant programs to eligible Chicagoan residents and small business owners.

Baux holds a master's degree in public administration from Roosevelt University and a bachelor's degree in communications from the University of Illinois at Chicago. She is a board member of the Small Business Anti-Displacement Network, a community of practice committed to preventing small business displacement in gentrifying neighborhoods. She also serves as an advisory board member to the Center of Technology in Government, University of Albany, SUNY IMLS research project "Enabling, Smart Inclusive and Connected Communities: The Role of Public Libraries" to provide strategic advice to the research team. She has also served on several ULI Advisory Services panels across the country.

Locally, Baux serves in the executive leadership board capacity locally to Chicago Cares and Equiticity. In addition, she serves as an advisory board member for the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning Economic Development Committee.

## Sonja Ewing

Prince George's County, Maryland

Ewing, AICP, leads Park Planning and Land Acquisition for the Prince George's County Parks Department of the Maryland–National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC). She has a rich background and extensive experience as an urban planner, urban designer, college professor, and consultant in both urban and suburban settings. Her work focuses on community engagement, placemaking, participatory design, and sustainable development.

Previously with the Fairfax County Office of Community Revitalization, Ewing served as the revitalization program manager and urban designer for the Silver Line transit stations in Reston, Virginia. Earlier, as a planner coordinator for the Prince George's County Planning Department, also a part of M-NCPPC, she led a master plan for Subregion 4, the "Heart of Prince George's County." The plan encompasses an area where new and older suburban neighborhoods are balanced by planned development that is more urban in character near the study area's eight metro stations. Ewing was also responsible for preparing the land use, resource prioritization, and urban design elements of the Plan Prince George's 2035 General Land Use Plan. In addition, she served as the liaison to the park department's Formula 2040 Master Plan.

Ewing is a member of the 2016 Class of the ULI Washington Regional Land Use Leadership Institute. She holds master's degrees in urban design from the Washington University School of Architecture in St. Louis and in community planning from the University of Cincinnati School of Design, Architecture, Art, and Planning. She also has a bachelor's degree from Washington University in Architecture and African American Studies. Ewing has instructed courses in urban planning and urban design at Catholic University, the University Detroit Mercy, and the University of Cincinnati.

## Rachel MacCleery

Washington, D.C.

MacCleery is senior vice president at the Urban Land Institute, where she leads the organization's Building Healthy Places Initiative as well as its Infrastructure Initiative.

Under the Building Healthy Places Initiative, MacCleery is spearheading ULI's efforts to leverage the power of its global networks to shape projects and places in ways that improve the health of people and communities. The initiative seeks to advance understanding of and action on connections between the built environment and health. Recent Building Healthy Places Initiative reports spearheaded by MacCleery include the *Building Healthy Places Toolkit* and *America in 2015*. The ULI Healthy Corridors project, also led by MacCleery, is working to transform underperforming urban and suburban arterials as healthier places.

MacCleery is a dynamic leader with extensive knowledge of land use, environment and sustainability, social equity, and infrastructure policy and practice issues. She has a deep and demonstrated commitment to improving the places where Americans live, work, and play. MacCleery has worked at the global, national, and local scales, and has a mix of work experiences which span U.S. and international contexts. She brings a strong understanding of both public- and private-sector perspectives to discussions about how to make communities better.

MacCleery has both local and international experience and has served on the World Economic Forum's Global Agenda Council on Infrastructure. She began her career as a transportation planner for the city of Washington, D.C., where she worked from 2001 to 2004. She consulted on infrastructure and planning projects in China while working for global infrastructure provider AECOM from 2004 to 2008.

MacCleery speaks Mandarin Chinese and has lived off and on in China since 1994.

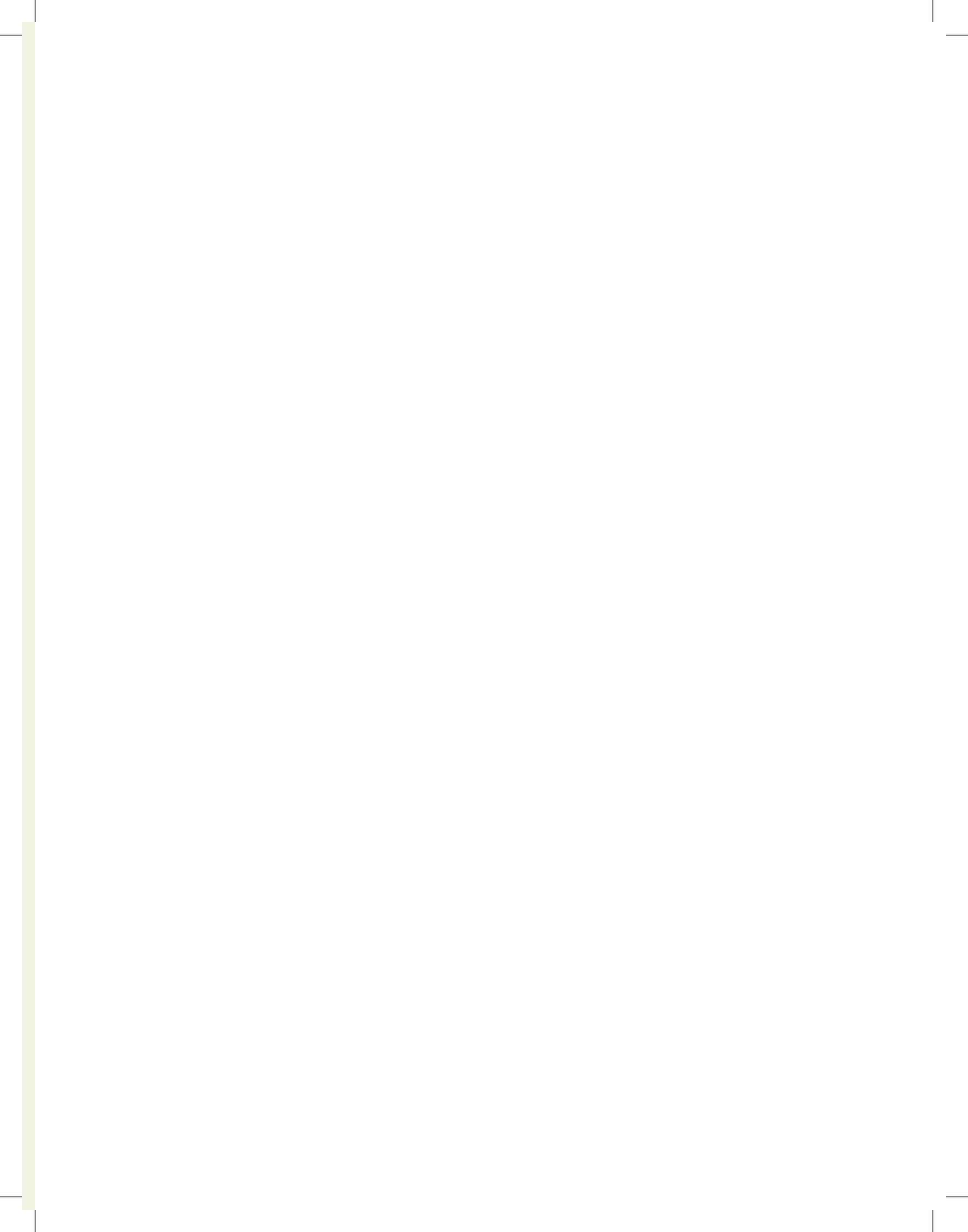
## Taylor Schenker

Asheville, North Carolina

Schenker is an analyst with Urban3 in Asheville, North Carolina. Before joining Urban3, she worked as a landscape and urban designer on resiliency issues in Charleston, South Carolina. She was also a professor of the Urban Foundations course in the Master of Resilient Urban Design program. When she was not teaching, she worked as an urban and landscape designer at Surculus. Past projects include Dutch Dialogues, the City of Charleston Land Use and Water Impact Assessment, and the Church Creek Flood Storage and Resiliency Project.

Schenker grew up on the coast of Maine, where she found her passion for environmentally friendly and equitable design. She found her way to South Carolina to attend Clemson University where she earned a BS in economics with a minor in architecture. During this time, she worked and studied in the Tres Brazos Valley, Panama; Washington, D.C.; and Genoa, Italy. She is an alumnus of the inaugural class of the Master of Resilient Urban Design program.











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