

Chicago Illinois, USA

Noelle Higgins & Betsy Severtsen

City in a Garden

- City motto



Millenium Park, opened in 2004
URSCorp. http://www.urscorp.com/URS_Division/projectsDetail.

Ogden Park Chicago, <http://www.chicagoparkdistrict.com/index.cfm/fuseaction/custom>.

Chicago is a magnificent city famed for its thriving arts, friendly people, celebrated architecture and tasty deep-dish pizza. World-renowned open space may soon top this list of famous components of the city. While many American cities have completed open space plans, Chicago is exceptional because the proposed open space components have been largely implemented. In spite of several cycles of open space deterioration in the past, the city's green space has once again been turned around through innovative and effective strategies organized under the strong, focused agenda of "nature in the city."



"Loving Chicago is like loving a woman with a broken nose"
 -Nelson Algren

City Statistics

City Population: 2.8 million

City Area: 145,408 acres

Density Level: 19.3 people/acre

Park Acreage: 7000 acres

Park acreage per 1000 residents:

Governing bodies: Chicago Parks District & Mayor Richard M. Daley

Expenditure per person: \$108

Source: Harnik, 1997

Context

Chicago has a rich history in terms of open space. In 1893 the Columbian Exposition was held in the city. Frederick Law Olsted and Daniel Burnham were the key players in the design of the "white city," which contributed greatly to the City Beautiful Movement. The first comprehensive open space plan was published in 1909 by Burnham. The first suggested greenbelt for the city was proposed by Jens Jensen during his tenure as chief landscape architect for the city in 1905. In the 1960s community groups within the city began reclaiming vacant lands for use as community gardens. In 1993 Mayor Richard M. Daley targeted the Chicago Parks District for a complete overhaul. Through initiatives and reforms of existing entities, the mayor strived to fully address the many different dimensions of greenspace that are needed to have a holistically green city.



Above Image Sources: <http://www.chicagohs.org/AOTM/oct98/burnham.html>, <http://www.marymount.k12.ny.us/marynet/StudentResources/LSintranet/centralpark/htm/history.htm>, http://www.national-trust.org/magazine/archives/arch_story/051603.htm, <http://www.citymayors.com/usa/chicago.html>

Park Map System, Chicago. Source: Harnik, 1997



Diagram of Chicago Park System

552 Parks on 7000 acres

"The White City"
source <http://www.roosevelt.edu/chicagohistory>



Major Components

a. Anchors

- Grant Park, Gold Coast and Shoreline Parks
- Recreational areas (31 beaches, 5000 marina slips, trails within Washington Park, Lincoln Park Zoo (with bike path), Navy Pier.

b. Civic, downtown and social spaces

- Grant Park, Soldiers Field

c. Connective corridors-

- Lakefront Parks, Boulevard between Washington & Jackson Park, Chicago River trail.

d. Neighborhood Park

- West of Lakefront, smaller and much less connected



Park map system, Chicago. Modified from Harnik, 1997



Funding Mechanism for Chicago Park District

Chicago has the largest open space operating budget in the nation, in 1997 it was nearly \$307 million.

The Chicago Park District is a fully freestanding entity, chartered by the state with authority to levy its own taxes.

While the mayor appoints the Park District's board, it out of all other government agencies is least subject to political variances and fiscal uncertainty than any other U.S. park agency.

70% of the Park District's operating budget came from business and residential property tax, the remaining 30% comes from fees and contributions.

Above image source: <http://www.louisville.com/loumag/apr98/bet.shtml>

Bottom Image source: <http://www.chicagoparkdistrict.com/index.cfm/fuseaction/root.home/in-tHomeLink/1/home.cfm>



Issues and/or Initiatives

The mayor is striving towards "nature in the city" as a policy for the future. This agenda has many different initiatives working towards this goal.

Zoning changes include the modification of existing zoning designations and the creation of new zoning types including: parks and open space districts, pedestrian streets, mixed use and a new category that will encourage residential density near mass transit stops.

The Chicago Standard is a new set of green design, construction and renovation standards for all public buildings. The goal of this initiative is to provide healthier indoor environments, reduce operating costs and conserve resources for all municipal buildings. One of the major green building techniques being utilized is green roofs.

The city established the Brownfields Initiative to purchase, remediate and redevelop under-utilized industrial sites .

The Campus Park Program addresses the shortage of parkland in Chicago neighborhoods by targeting public school grounds for parkland improvement.

The Chicago River Agenda has revitalized the city's "Second Shoreline."

Source: <http://www.cityof-chicago.org/Environment/>

Navy Pier, Chicago.
Source: <http://www.navy pier.com/>



Lessons Learned

Currently, the city is in a restorative phase in terms of parks and open space. But in the past it has had cycles of deterioration and restoration.

There is a strong commitment now to sound environmental design and stewardship of public space. This seems to have proven the mayor's theory that civic pride is helped by stewardship.

Improving the quality of life of people in the city has attracted new residents and employers (like Boeing).

Many other cities have published green space plans, Chicago's success stems from its action in implementing the plans.

For the open space system's longevity, proper budgeting and implementation of maintenance is an essential step.

"As schools lost their effectiveness as community anchors, the same thing happened to parks, libraries and other public spaces. People stopped using them, and the City stopped taking care of them. Or maybe people stopped using them because the City stopped taking care of them."
- Mayor Daley

NeighborSpace

Since the 1960s, community groups across Chicago have used vacant or untended lots as opportunities to create green open spaces in their neighborhoods. These sites become important community assets that provide residents with opportunities to socialize with each other, plant and grow food, or simply be outside.

"In the mid-1990's studies showed that Chicago ranked 18th out of 20 cities of comparable size in the ration of open space acres to population." In 1996 Neighborspace was created as a non-profit organisation, to help preserve small community developed gardens. Neighborspace is a community based non profit that was part of the comprehensive response by city leadership, to the need to support valuable community gardens sites in the city and help protect them form development. Its mission is also to help to expand green space in the city.

Source: <http://neighbor-space.org/about.htm>



NeighborSpace logo
source:<http://neighbor-space.org>

"It helps to have a crisis" – Forrest Claypool



source: <http://neighbor-space.org/history.htm>

Stewardship in Chicago -Jens Jensen(1860- 1951)

In 1903, Jensen created a map entitled "Proposed System of Forest Parks and Country Pleasure Roads." He incorporated this concept into the Special Park Commission's report, published the following year. The report identified significant natural areas. It also recommended the creation of a belt of natural lands at the perimeter of Chicago. They suggested a new system of boulevards that would link the nature reserves with the city's existing park and boulevard system.

Henry Ford Estate designed byJenson
source:<http://www.henryfordestate.org/trailgardens.htm>



Resources

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