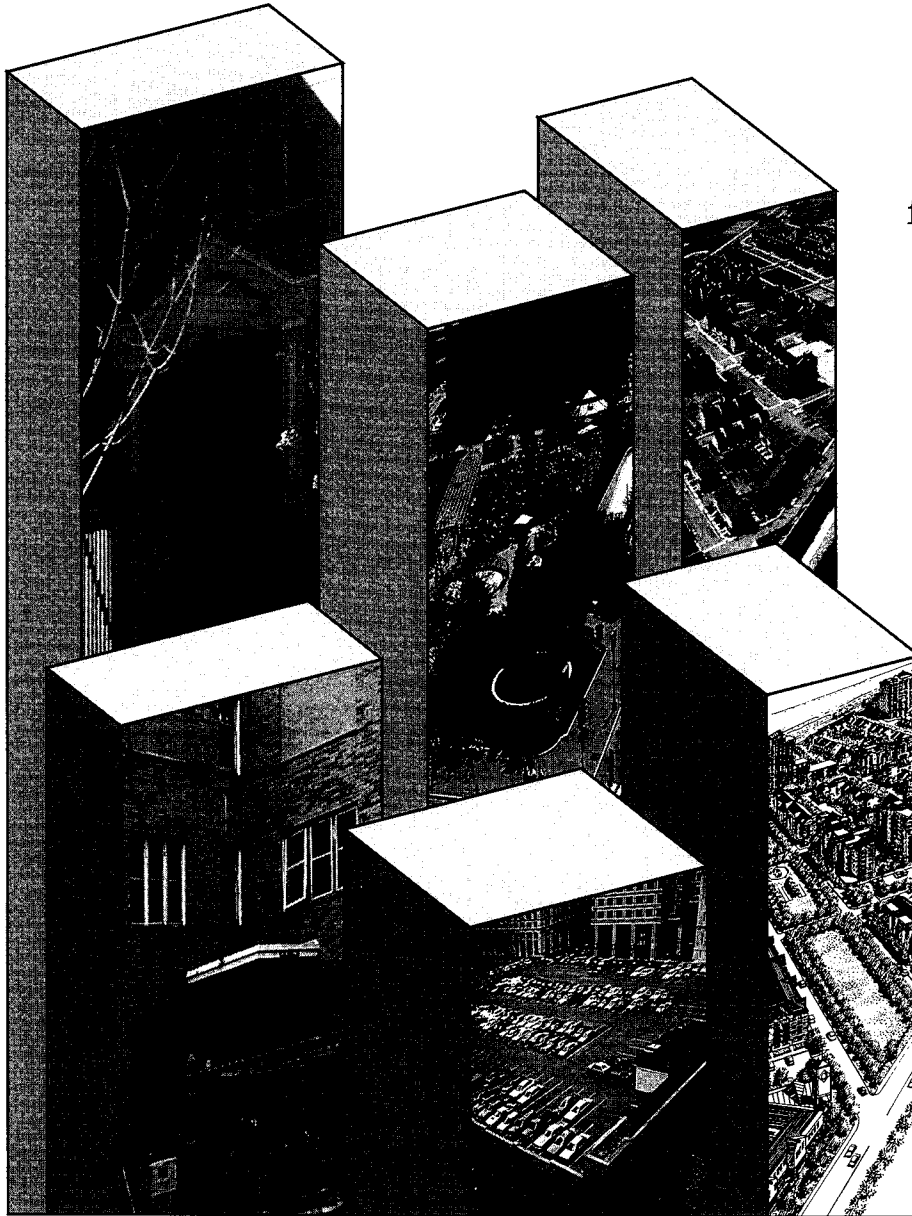


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1993
Rudy Bruner Award
for Excellence in the Urban Environment

REBUILDING COMMUNITIES: RE-CREATING URBAN EXCELLENCE

Jay Farbstein and Richard Wener



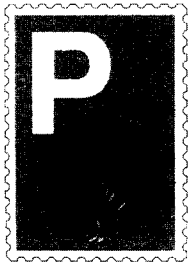
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THE PARK AT POST OFFICE SQUARE Boston, Massachusetts

SUMMARY OF SELECTION COMMITTEE DISCUSSION

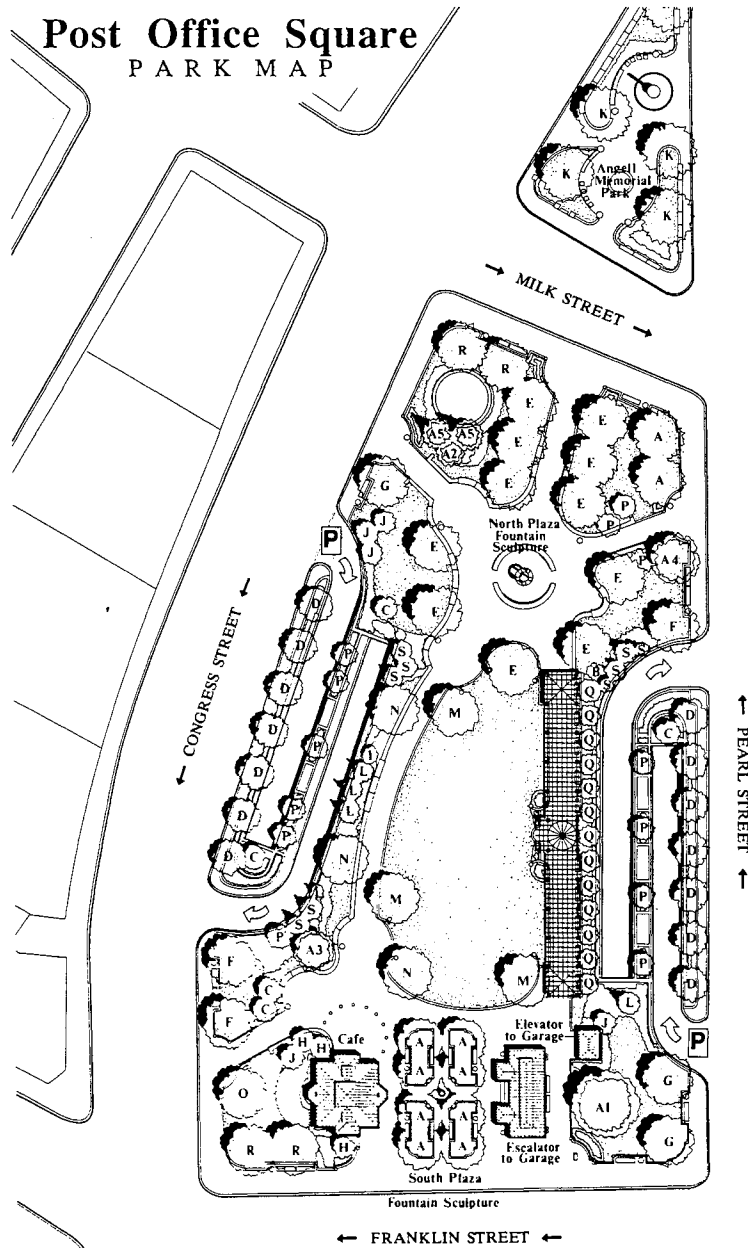
Initial Reasons For Including The Park at Post Office Square as a Finalist

- An existing “monstrosity” (the old parking garage) was turned into an urban park in a dense section of downtown.
- While other downtowns are deteriorating, this park helps to draw people there.
- A downtown park serves everyone who is there, including shoppers, office workers and executives.
- It is unusual to find a park developed by a public-private partnership. This could be a model for creating needed downtown open space.
- Its revenue will contribute to supporting neighborhood parks.

Selection Committee Concerns and Questions

- What is the history of the site and the area? Are or were there historic uses or buildings? Is the history reflected in the park’s design?
- Was there a participatory component in the park design? Whose idea was it?

- What alternative plans or projects were there for this site? Was an office building with parking under it planned? If so, why wasn’t it built and why was the park built?
- Was the project mainly done by businesses to enhance the value of surrounding properties?
- What are the economics of the project? How much income does the parking generate and how is it used? When will the financing be paid off and how will the income be used then? Who controls the money and its uses? How does the cost of parking in this garage compare to other garages in the area?
- What is the project’s impact on traffic — to improve it or make it worse?
- What is the impact of the park on the surrounding neighborhood?
- Who manages the park?
- Who uses the park — just yuppies, or a broader segment of the population?
- How are people responding to the project?



THE PROJECT AT A GLANCE

What It Is

- A 1.7 acre urban park over a 1,400 space parking garage.
- The park is intended mainly for passive activities (walking through it, sitting, eating lunch).

Who Made Submission

- Friends of Post Office Square (FOPOS), the developers and owners of the project.

Major Goals

- To remove a blighted garage which filled the square.
- To create a high quality urban park as an amenity for the downtown and its users.
- To replace parking that would have been lost with removal of the garage, add parking for underserved surrounding buildings, and use the parking revenue to support this park and other neighborhood parks.
- To enhance the value of surrounding properties and the attractiveness of the area for office workers.

Accomplishments

- The entire project is complete.
- It was built privately — without public money.
- It already contributes financially to the city which was paid for purchase of the site and gets ongoing property tax revenues; when it passes the breakeven point, all surplus funds will go to the city.
- It is reported to be intensively used (depending on weather), very well liked, and important symbolically and visually.
- The creation of a prized and pleasant open space in the core of the city is an achievement which some feel brings a sense of hope and positive energy to what is often despair about urban problems.

- It improved traffic in the area — despite adding 450 parking spaces.

Issues That Could Affect Selection As Winner

- This project was very well conceived, planned, designed and executed — and is very well managed.
- The distress of the Boston economy and real estate market have kept the project from making money. While it is financially stable, it does not yet contribute to the support of other city parks.
- The question of relative social benefit in comparing the importance of this project to other finalists can only be addressed by the Selection Committee.

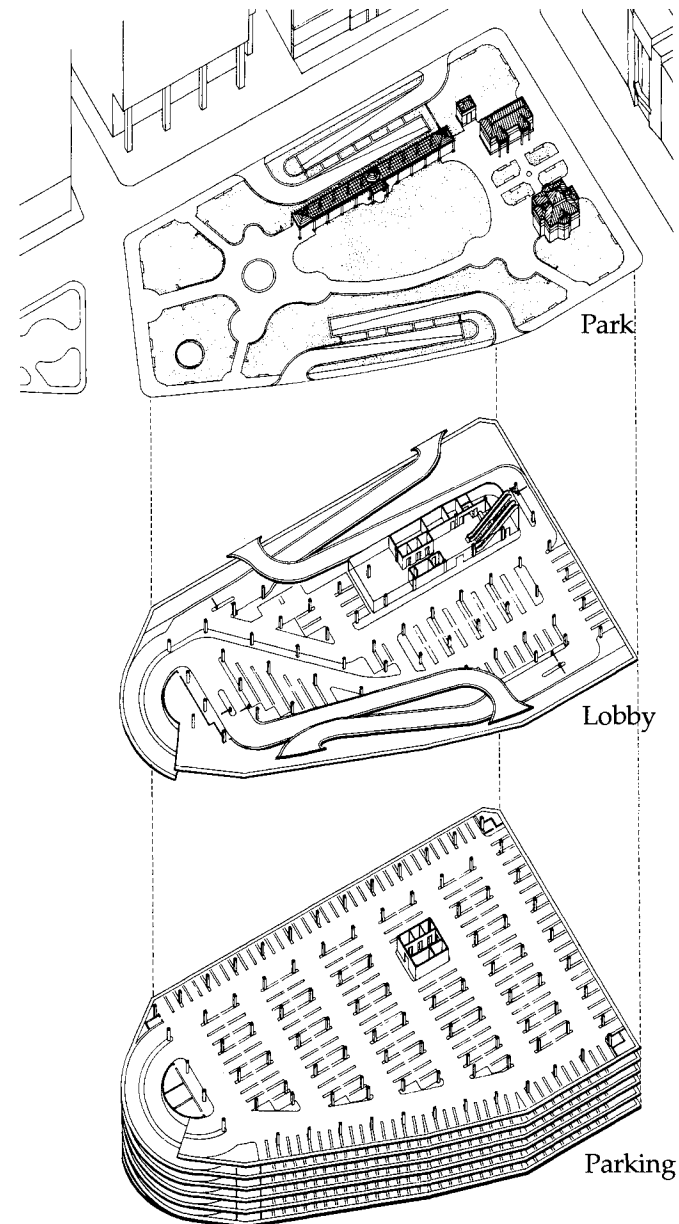
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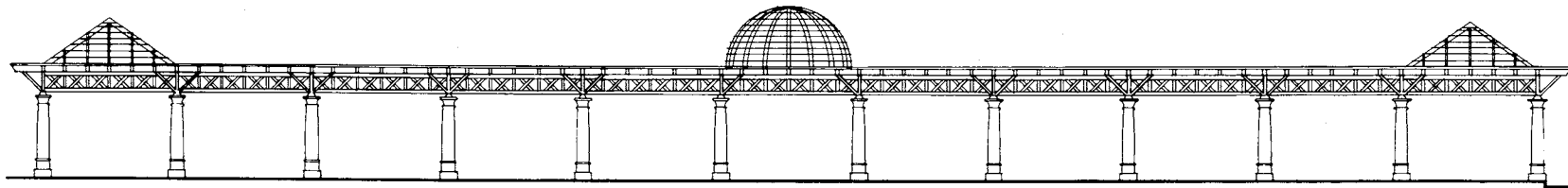
Key Participants

(people we interviewed are indicated with an asterisk *)

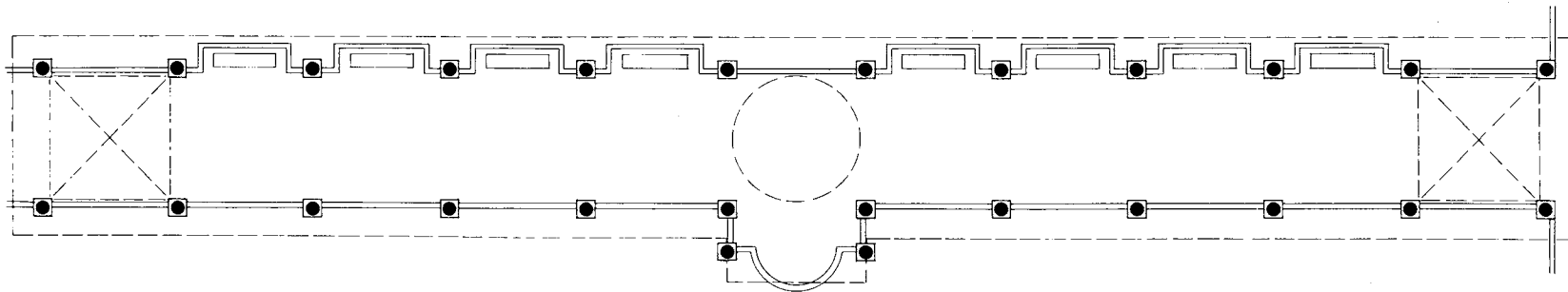
Friends of Post Office Square is a private civic corporation, incorporated under a state law granting it eminent domain power but limiting its profit making potential. It bought the site, developed the project, and now owns and operates the park and garage. FOPOS had many committees and consultants who played important roles, a selection of which are named here:

- Board of Directors. Eleven members of which we met with: Norman Leventhal*, Chair; William McCall, Jr.*; Gerhard Freche*, ex-chief executive of New England Telephone. Leventhal, Chairman of the Beacon Companies (a major development and real estate holding firm) provided the leadership for this project, galvanizing the support of area businesses.
- Park Program (and Design) Committee. John Connolly*, Mayor's Office; Yu Sing Jung*, architect; Charlotte Kahn*, Boston Urban Gardeners; Justine Liff*, Boston Parks and Recreation; Shirley Muirhead*, Boston Redevelopment Authority Landscape Architect.





Trellis elevation



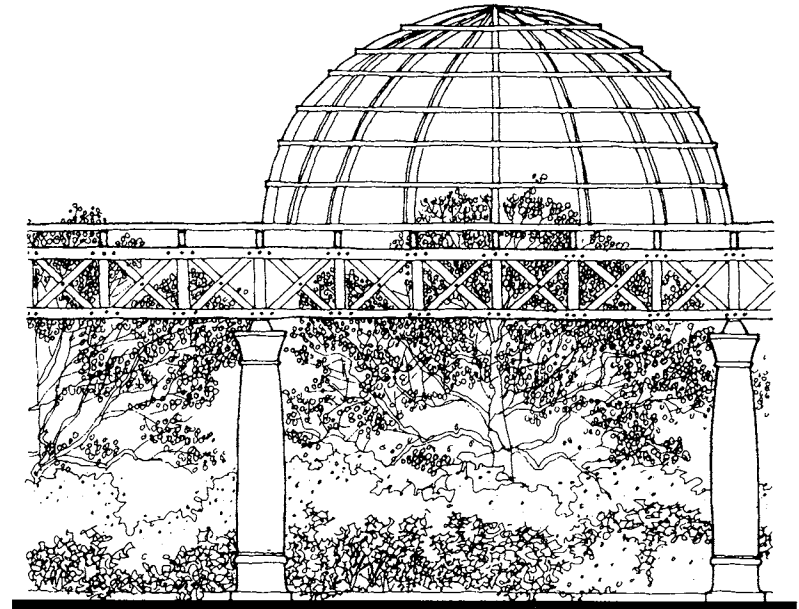
Trellis plan

- Technical Advisory Committee; Operations Committee; Marketing Committee.
- Staff. Robert Weinberg*, President; Paul McGinn*, Vice President. Staff contributed greatly to implementing the project, guiding the process, and working with all the committees and consultants.
- Stockholders. 19 major corporations with offices within two blocks of the square, including the Bank of Boston, Beacon Companies, Cabot, Cabot & Forbes, Fidelity Investments, Harvard Community Health Plan, New England Telephone, Olympia & York, Shawmut Bank, and State Street Bank. See the section on Financing for what they put in and what they got.
- Consultants
 - Master planning and programming: Skidmore, Owings & Merrill. (principal-in-charge: Karen Alshuler; Ali Rizvi*, architect and planner).
 - Garage design team: Parsons, Brinkerhoff (engineers); Ellenzweig Associates (architects for garage and park structures; Harry Ellenzweig*); LeMessurier (engineers).
 - Park designers: The Halvorson Company (Craig Halvorson*, landscape architect).
 - Artists: Ross Miller* (lighting); Howard Ben Tre (fountains); Richard Duca (ornamental metal).
- City Agencies
 - Mayors (Kevin White; Raymond Flynn; John Connolly*, aide to Mayor Flynn). Connolly was actively involved throughout and negotiated the very difficult deal with the prior garage owner who controlled the site via his lease with the city. The mayor appointed members of the program and design committee.
 - Boston Redevelopment Authority (Shirley Muirhead*, Landscape Architect). Had approval rights over the park design.

- Boston Parks and Recreation (Justine Liff*).
- Boston Transportation Department (Richard Loring*).
- Others
- Richard Heath*; ex-director of the Franklin Park Coalition, a neighborhood park group that supported Post Office Square and got support from it.
- Mark Primack*, ex-director of the Boston Greenspace Alliance.
- Robert Campbell*, architecture critic for the Boston Globe.
- Marc Epstein*, operator of the park food service concession.
- Jane Pritzker*, director of marketing for the Hotel Meridien (borders Post Office Square).

Chronology

- 1981: When Norman Leventhal held the opening ceremony for his Meridien Hotel, he commented to Mayor Kevin White that “the parking garage has to go.” The mayor agreed.
- 1982: Neighbors (predecessor of Friends) of Post Office Square organized. \$120,000 in seed money raised. Initial design studies by MIT architecture professor Bill Porter.
- 1983: Friends of Post Office Square is organized and staff (Bob Weinberg) hired. Application filed for 121A Corporation status (with eminent domain power). Said Weinberg “at this point the project seemed impossible; we had no money, no site and a powerful adversary.”
- 1984: 121A Corporation approved by the city.
- 1985: Deal with garage owner negotiated by John Connolly; deal closed in March 1987.
- 1986: Hired project manager; design process started in 1987.
- 1987: Park design program completed.
- 1988: Garage construction started. Park design competition completed.
- 1990: Garage construction finished in October.



- 1991: Park open to public.
- 1992: Fountains completed; dedication ceremony in June.

Planning/Implementation Process

This project's process was extremely well conceived and executed. Strong leadership was provided by Norman Leventhal, who, however, ensured broad participation and excellent professional support. Quality and attention to detail were important goals throughout and it was recognized that, in order to achieve them, careful planning and input from many parties were needed. Leventhal assembled a powerful board of corporate supporters, worked closely with government agencies and elected officials, created broadly representative advisory groups, and hired highly competent staff and consultants.

The process of acquiring the site was complex and difficult (see section below). Once the arrangements for getting the site were finalized, the design phase began. Consultants supported the efforts for both the garage and park. Working with the advisory

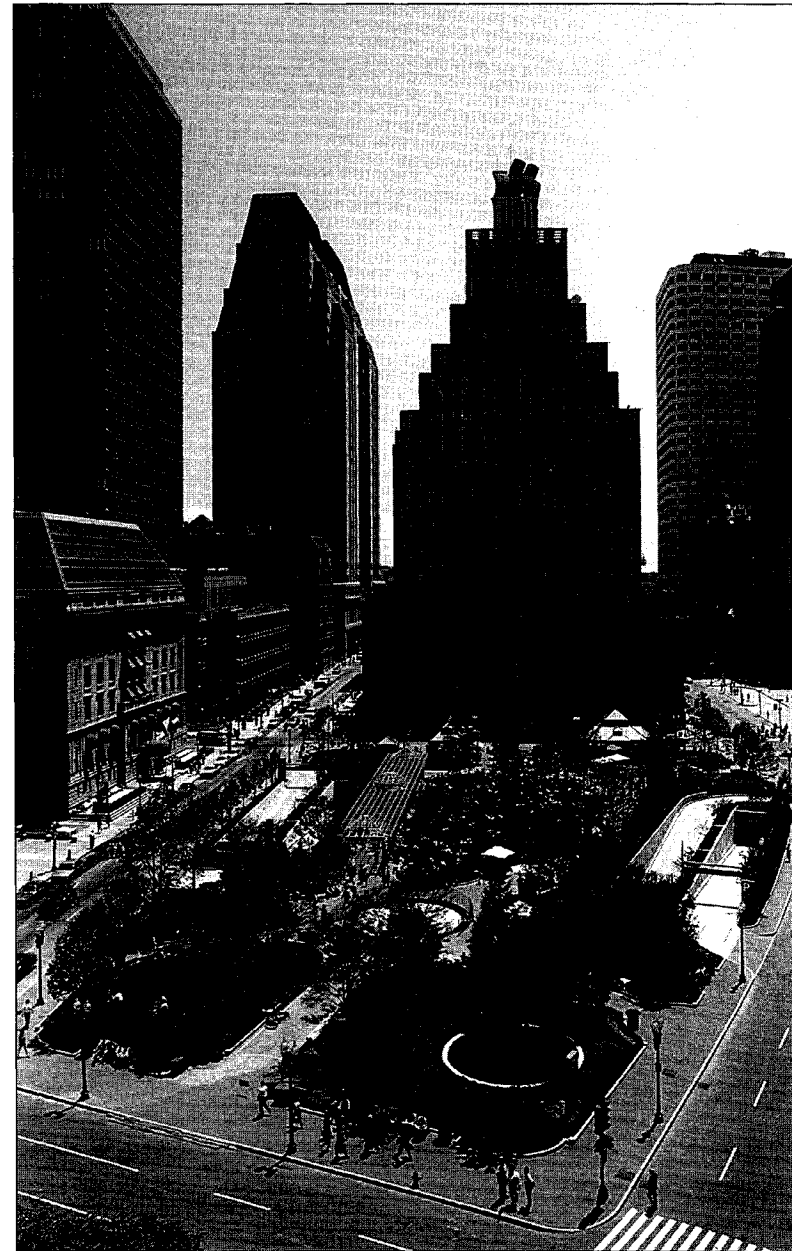


Old Garage

FOPOS

groups, they carefully articulated issues, objectives, options, and requirements. This was done with particular care for the park. The consultants visited approximately 100 parks around the country and prepared a briefing book which compared the parks with plans at a consistent scale. They showed slides to the advisory committee as a so called "armchair tour". Then, about two-thirds of the committee participated in a tour of four cities with urban parks felt to be most relevant to this project: San Francisco, Portland, Oregon, New York and Toronto. On the tour they examined design, operations, use and maintenance. Pioneer Courthouse Square in Portland was felt to be a particularly good example. The team learned a great deal on these tours; for example, they learned that water features had to be designed to look good even when the water was turned off (e.g., winter).

The committee debated every aspect of the park, partially because they realized that, as a high visibility public project, it would be thoroughly scrutinized by many factions. The intention was to explore and resolve as many issues as possible in order to make the project more defensible and less controversial. An example of this is the question of providing children's play areas which were consid-



FOPOS

ered but found to be inconsistent with the central objective of the park as a place for passive activities. This question was raised during public review and the committee referred back to the design program to resolve it. Interestingly, the program document itself is quite brief and relies almost exclusively on words to express objectives and requirements. However, it was very successful in capturing and communicating the key requirements.

The use of a competition to select the park designer is another special feature of the process. This approach can be fraught with risk, especially if the competition is structured in a way that eliminates dialogue between the client and the designers. Those involved felt that the process succeeded because the competition was used to “select a designer rather than a design” and because the winning submission followed the program very closely.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Context

Post Office Square is in the heart of Boston’s financial district. Sixty-six thousand people work in the buildings which face the park and many thousands more work within a few blocks. The square itself consists of about 1.7 acres, but including the streets, sidewalks and a small preexisting triangular park (Angell Park), the perceived space is about 4 acres. This space has been called an “urban room” because it is surrounded by mostly highrise buildings which define its edges. Some are significant historically and architecturally (e.g., the Telephone Company building which is Art Deco). Buildings cast shadows which are an important issue for park design, especially on its southern edge.

Four streets (none parallel) bound the project site which is somewhat truncated. The streets carry significant traffic, but are not very busy or loud. Angell Park, a small triangle surrounded by streets, is to the north. Other open space in the general area includes the plaza at Government Center (several blocks away, it is an entirely paved space), the Boston Common and Garden, and Waterfront Park. There was a lack of high quality, pleasant open space in the area, especially in the financial district.

Prior Conditions

The old garage had a number of problems. Three stories above grade and built in 1954, it was an eyesore at best. It was in very poor condition, including structural deterioration. The old garage was laid out and managed in a way that exacerbated traffic and congestion problems. As a result of pricing that favored commuters over shoppers, a large percentage of patrons arrived in the early morning. However, the price structure changed at 8 am and required that a ticket be taken very close to the street, with no space for off-street queuing. These factors resulted in early morning traffic backups that blocked intersections and made it difficult for pedestrians to cross the street. Given the unpleasantness of the view, buildings turned their backs on the square, entering from side streets or parallel streets a block away.

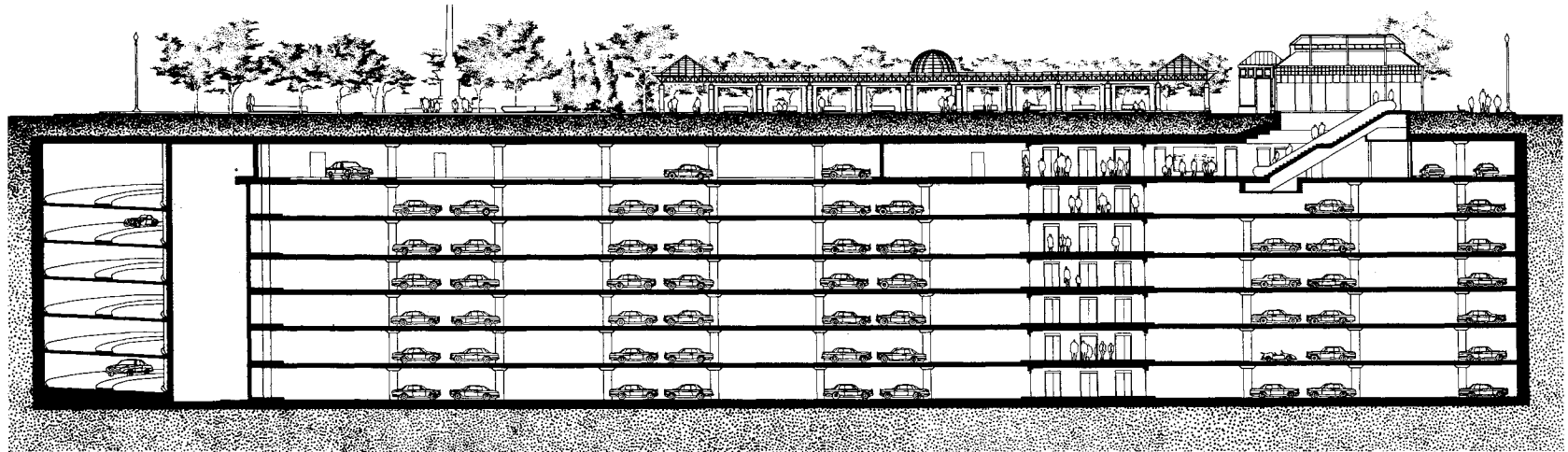
Garage Design

FOPOS recognized that a successful park design would require much input and take a relatively long time. Therefore, design of the garage proceeded before the park in order to shorten the time before revenues would be generated. This created a challenge since FOPOS did not want to constrain the park design any more than necessary by fixed elements of the garage (including ramps, pedestrian entrance, air intakes and exhausts). These were placed where they would least constrain park design. Two sets of long vehicular ramps were included in order to reduce or eliminate cars queuing on the street. The pedestrian entrance was located where it would generate pedestrian movement through the park. The structure was planned to allow for an average four foot depth of soil over the entire garage (though this was more costly), allowing trees and other plantings to be placed anywhere on the site. Where they were sure that large trees would be located, the soil depth was increased.

The garage itself was designed to allow the user to feel safe and comfortable, as well as remain oriented underground. All circulation is routed through a single lobby so that all people coming and going are observed. A flat floor structure with a separate ramp was chosen so that users could see all the way across it — even though the more typical ramped floors would have provided 10% more parking spaces. Lighting is relatively bright and the perimeter walls are illuminated so that the garage feels bright. Graphics are easy to



BILL HORSMAN WITH PERMISSION OF FOPOS



FOPOS

remember and identify. Redundant visual and auditory cues help users find the exit elevators, and names of the streets that bound each side of the site are indicated in the garage to aid in orientation. The overall effect of these design features is that the garage, though entirely underground, is one of the most pleasant and comfortable that any of the site visit team had experienced.

Park Design

The park designer took the program very seriously. At the final selection interview, he showed slides from his submission boards while reading from the program document, illustrating how he had responded to its requirements. This impressed the committee.

The designer used many design features to make the park inviting and attractive. Green is brought all the way to each corner and walkways offset a little so that the park looks as big as possible. For safety, plantings are arranged so that all areas of the park are visible from a street. Planting beds and lawns are tilted up away from the walks so that green areas appear more extensive. A wide variety of plant materials is used so that the park constantly changes and plants are showing colors during as much of the year as possible (when we were there in late winter with snow on the ground, with

hazel was already in bloom). This was important because many users visit the park frequently and can enjoy the changes from week to week. Harvard's Arnold Arboretum donated (technically, loaned) several mature and unusual specimen trees which are planted in special locations.

Detailing in the park is handled with great care and sensitivity. An attempt is made to echo materials and themes from surrounding buildings and the neighboring park. For example, a similar granite is used. The wrought iron fence, which incorporates images of foliage, is whimsical, yet historically appropriate. Lighting and benches are traditional, in keeping with downtown Boston. The low walls containing planting beds are the right height and depth for seating. Stone bollards and corner blocks incorporate an incised decorative pattern picked up from a neighboring building. Care is paid to how brick walkway paving meets the granite walls, with a band of granite softening the transition. Even the drain grates and supports for the vines which will climb the trellises are carefully detailed.



FOPOS

Architectural elements in the park consist of the garage entrance, a glass pavilion housing the cafe, and a 140 foot long trellis that helps define the main pedestrian walkway. The architect's intention was to "dematerialize" the buildings, keeping them light and unobtrusive.

Artworks are also incorporated into the park. A competition was held to select the artists, and three were chosen from 300 entries. All art projects are so integrated into the park design as to seem part of it. Ross Miller designed a subtle, computer controlled lighting scheme which edges the trellis and is programmed with changing patterns which can respond to passing pedestrians. Howard Ben Tre designed two fountains of bronze and green glass, planned to look good even when the water is turned off, as it was when we saw them. The larger one makes a "water dome" above a circle of columns and was described by art critic Lynda Morgenroth of the Boston Globe as "arguably Boston's most compelling contemporary fountain, a sculpture with water as one of its elements, public art utterly at home where it is." Richard Duca designed the iron fences and grates.

Park Users

We visited the site in early March when weather was sunny but quite cold and the snow was deep. Uses of the site consisted mostly of people walking rather briskly through it (rather than using the sidewalks along the streets). Even then we saw some people sitting on the wooden and metal benches and granite walls.

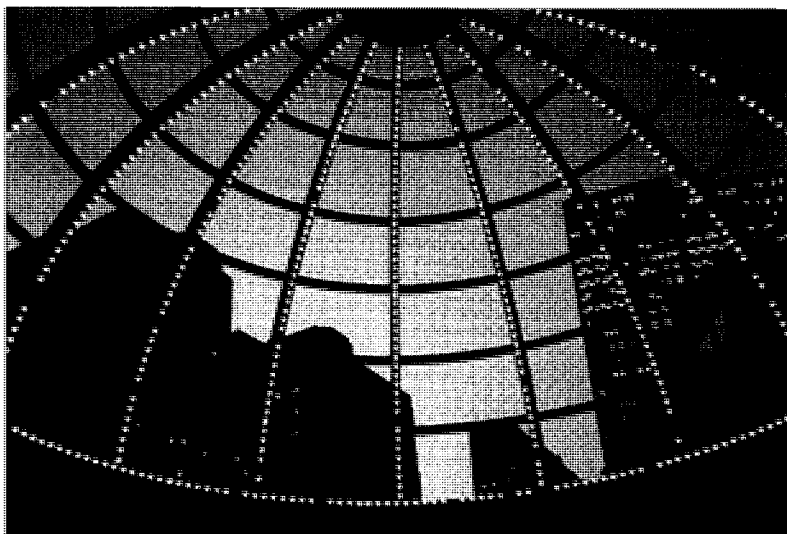
We understand from photos, formal interviews and talking with people in the area, that the park is intensely used in fine weather. Apparently it is often filled to its perceived capacity at lunch on warm days when upwards of 1,500 people may be there.

Users include all types of people who work in the surrounding buildings: maintenance workers, clerical staff, professionals and executives. There is occasional use by families and children. Female users of the park and the garage uniformly expressed that they feel safe there at all hours. This is a clear result of design and management practices.

Impact on Surrounding Buildings and the Neighborhood

The park has had an important impact on the neighborhood and surrounding buildings, some of which have made special improvements to the facades which face the park. The Art Deco Telephone Company building has been extensively renovated since the park opened, including its façade, building sculpture, banners, lighting and paving. Several buildings have opened or improved their entrances which face the park. For example, 50 Federal Street whose address is on a parallel street has installed a banner with its address on its park side entrance. Other buildings are reported to have changed their nominal addresses to the streets on the square or even use the name of the square as their address. The Meridien Hotel has refurbished its park facade, added signage and planters, and operates a seasonal cafe facing the park. Its management reported that weekend occupancy has increased since the park made the neighborhood attractive. It also uses photos from the park and references to the park in its brochures (see Themes section below for quotes).

The park improves the view from office windows and provides an important and appreciated amenity for area workers. Arguably, the park and added parking have increased the value of the buildings



that surround it and will contribute to increasing tax revenues. This, however, is impossible to establish since the real estate market dropped severely during the time the project was being completed. Perhaps the project has slowed the decline in values for surrounding properties or will contribute to their more rapid rebound when the market turns around.

Financing

Financial arrangements for this project are complex and rather unusual. Financing was entirely private. Seed money totaling about \$1 million for plans and studies was solicited by Norman Leventhal from an informal group called Neighbors (forerunner of Friends) of Post Office Square. When the site was to be acquired, the group arranged a \$7 million mortgage on the property and used the money to pay the city, buy out the garage owner's lease and cover the balance of predevelopment costs. For construction and startup expenses, a \$60 million line of credit was obtained privately (it is non-amortizing, interest only). To date, \$45 million of this line has been drawn for construction, to pay back the initial \$7 million loan, and to cover operating deficits (which are projected to continue for

some time). Additional capital consists of \$29 million in equity contributed by stockholders — surrounding businesses who paid \$65,000 per share for 450 shares, each of which carried the right to lease one parking space at market rates. The total cost of the project to date is approximately \$75 million (with an eventual total of about \$80 million required as future operating deficits are capitalized).

Parking fees are set slightly below market to keep utilization high (it is about 80% overall and essentially full at mid-day during the week). However, costs for operations and debt service currently exceed revenues by about \$900,000 per year. This is attributed to the poor economy which has prevented raising parking fees due to somewhat soft demand (there is a 20% office vacancy rate in downtown Boston). Since utilization of the garage is high, rates will be able to be raised as the market improves. Management believes that parking demand will improve before office space demand, since employers who let staff go will rehire and fill already leased space before new space is leased. If the project were not so heavily capitalized, it would be facing difficulties as a result of these significant operating deficits — and park maintenance might suffer. Management, however, is of the opinion that it will be able to continue operations and the current high level of maintenance until the market allows them to reach profitability.

According to terms of the land lease, the city can take over the site after 40 years. However, FOPOS believes that it will not be in its interest to do so if the garage continues to be well managed, since the city will already be receiving all of the net profits, and the take-over would require it to pay \$29 million to the garage stockholders, who will not yet have been paid back their principal.

Management

FOPOS oversees a contractor who operates the garage, which appears to be professionally run and is kept very clean. FOPOS itself manages the park, which is unusual for a space that appears and functions as if it were entirely public. The FOPOS board sets policies, which refer back to the original design program in terms of goals for maintenance and allowable activities (events, such as concerts and weddings were not anticipated and are not allowed). Park maintenance is at a very high level in terms of pruning, lawn care, planting of annuals, trash pick up, snow removal, and so forth.

FOPOS manages the food concession contract. Milk Street Cafe was chosen to provide food service because of their ability to deliver quality food (from a kitchen nearby) and willingness to work with FOPOS on menu, prices and hours. For example, they are required to be open Saturday, though they get little business, in order to keep the park attractive to users. They were selected despite the fact that a franchise operation would have generated more revenue — illustrating the public service values that FOPOS pursues.

Acquiring the Site

Key participants described this as an “impossible project that nevertheless happened.” It was impossible because the owner of the lease on the garage refused to sell out his rights. While the city owned the land, it did not control it. The lease ran until 1994 and the owner was reportedly making a very significant profit on operations. Beyond this, the owner was self made, very wealthy, very well connected politically, had powerful lawyers, and had a reputation for never selling anything.

Before FOPOS began work, the Federal Reserve Bank and the Bank of Boston, institutions with enormous resources, had tried unsuccessfully to buy out the lease so that they could build an office building on the site. Therefore, it was critical that FOPOS obtain eminent domain powers in order to have sufficient leverage to be able to pressure the leaseholder into negotiations. Although he fought the granting of such status, the city did confer it on FOPOS and assisted in negotiating the buyout. In the end, a deal was struck where FOPOS would pay \$3 million for the lease and the garage owner would be allowed to raise his parking fees for an interim period prior to demolition (which may have generated an additional \$3 million). This creative solution allowed part of the cost of the buyout to be paid by parking users rather than FOPOS.

Would the City Forego Revenues from a Major Development?

This site could, eventually, have been used for a major office building. Even while FOPOS was trying to acquire it, a major developer had a design prepared for the property and took it informally to the city. The theoretical value of the site upon taking or expiration of the lease is difficult to determine, especially since the market has since collapsed. However, with the ability to build a large office building on it, the site could have been worth as much as \$35 mil-

lion to the city. Property tax revenues would have generated perhaps \$1.5 million per year. By the time the developer's project was proposed, however, the mayor was committed to the park and did not encourage the developer to proceed.

THEMES AND LESSONS LEARNED

Building a Network of Support

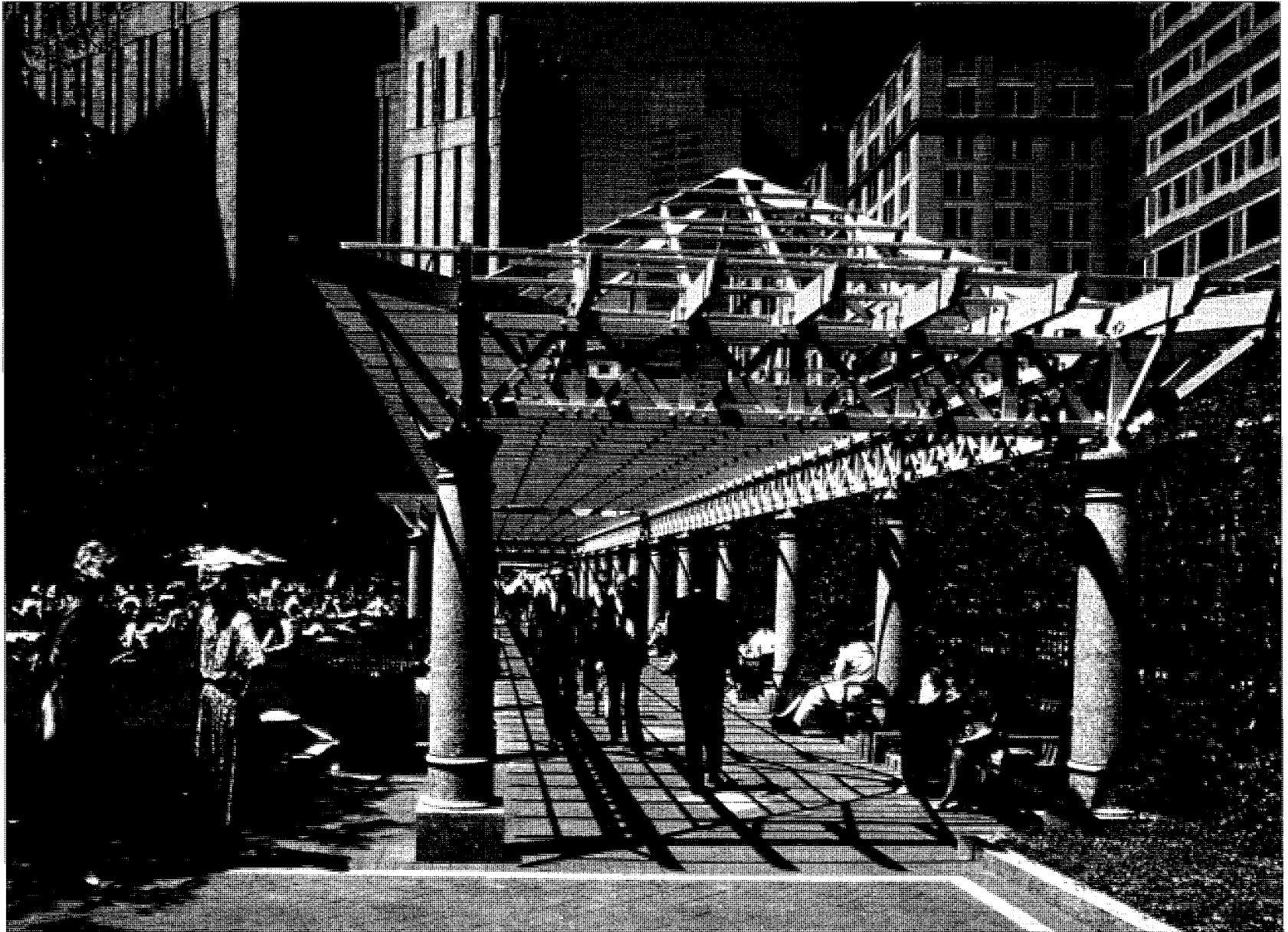
This project “broke down the wall of mystique around corporate Boston” said Richard Heath of the Franklin Park Coalition. Very early on, Norman Leventhal and Bob Weinberg made a special effort to get to know Heath and visit Franklin Park, where Leventhal had grown up. They asked Heath to support the park at Post Office Square. Heath was skeptical at first, but his board agreed to support the downtown project, recognizing that many people who lived in the neighborhood worked downtown and would benefit from the park. His skepticism was overcome when the downtown business community reciprocated with support for Franklin Park. Both groups learned that they could help each other. Connections such as these not only helped build support for their project, it also contributed to the creation of the Boston Greenspace Alliance which united the previously fragmented and competing world of Boston park advocates.

Quality in Design and Maintenance

Quality is the hallmark of every aspect of this project, from design to construction to operations. “They wanted the best park that money could buy,” said Richard Heath. “There is so much that is interesting, it is a park of incredible beauty,” said Mark Primack of the Boston Greenspace Alliance.

An Excellent Program is Critical to a Successful Design

“The park program made this project a success,” said Norman Leventhal, Chairman of FOPOS, who felt that the program constrained the problem but left the solution free. And Craig Halvorson, the landscape architect who won the competition, said “the program was the reason we decided to enter the design competition. It wasn't slick. It was serious and well thought out. It is uncommon to find a clear, well developed program.” The design



FOPOS



FOPOS

committee referred back to the program when controversies arose since it represented their fundamental agreement about what was needed.

Study Similar Projects and Learn as Much as You Can

The visits to and comparative analysis of other parks allowed the design team to learn about what works, what doesn't work and what is possible in an urban park. This contributed greatly to the quality of their discussions and to their understanding of what they wanted.

Open Space as Orientation Device

In Boston's dense financial district, where the streets do not follow a grid, an open space provides a landmark for orientation and allows the surrounding buildings to be seen.

Build It and They Will Come

Within one week of completion, the public had "taken over" the park. Many people are said to be habitual users and these "regulars" are observed to pick up trash as needed. "I almost cried the first time I saw people on the grass" said Charlotte Kahn, of Boston Urban Gardeners. With tongue in cheek, Mark Primack of the Boston Greenspace Alliance said "the park is so crowded they should charge admission."

Marketing a Hotel Because it is Next to a Park

"This beautiful park has made a great difference to our hotel" said Jane Pritzker, Marketing Manager of Le Meridien. In its marketing brochure, the upscale hotel features a view of its building from across the park. The brochure's text features the park twice: "Overlooking the beautiful Park at Post Office Square..." and "The Cafe Fleuri, with its view of the Park at Post Office Square..." The hotel attributes an increase in its weekend business to the opening of the park, since the economy has remained poor during that period. They market to horticultural groups to hold meetings there, so that they can see interesting species of plants in the park. And, when they market to weddings, they point out that the park provides a special setting for taking pictures.

Why a New Urban Park is So Important

It is very difficult to establish a new open space in a dense urban area. But creating a new urban park "fights despair" that cities can't do anything really good for their citizens, said Charlotte Kahn of Boston Urban Gardeners, who "come(s) here for my mental health." Mark Primack agrees, saying that "the park is a symbol of civic culture; it shows that the city is viable; it shows what business can do for the people."

The Garage Subsidizes the Park

As John Connolly from the mayor's office pointed out, putting a parking garage under a park can be a strategy for gaining and paying for new urban open spaces. The revenue from the garage pays for the construction and maintenance of the park.

Enlightened Self Interest as the Basis for Creating a Public Benefit

"No one got hurt; everybody won." said Richard Heath, who felt that there was a good balance of self interest and the public good. While the leaders of this project probably do or will derive some economic benefit from it, their efforts (and probably their motivation) was principally to create a public amenity. "This park is the greatest gift to the city since Faneuil Hall" said Mark Primack.

Making an Impossible Project Happen

"This project was impossible," said Bob Weinberg, president of FOPOS. Gerhard Freche, member of FOPOS board and former CEO of New England Telephone, added that "it looked so hopeless 12 years ago. I can't count the number of meetings we had. You find out that you can do something if you hang in long enough. There were a lot of different obstacles."

ASSESSING PROJECT SUCCESS...

...BY ITS GOALS

To remove a blighted garage and create a high quality urban park.

The replacement of the old garage with the Park at Post Office Square represents a significant achievement. It provides a place of beauty in a crowded part of Boston.

To replace and add parking, and use parking revenues to support the park.

The garage added about 450 spaces beyond replacing those lost. While revenue is not yet sufficient to support operations, it should be within a few years. Then, revenue will support this park and contribute to maintaining neighborhood parks.

To improve traffic and circulation.

Traffic problems in the square which were caused by the old garage have been eliminated, despite the 50% increase in parking spaces. Garage ramp design allows space to queue and requiring payment prior to reclaiming the car reduces waiting and queuing time. Most pedestrians choose to cross the park as they pass through the square.

To enhance the value of surrounding properties and the attractiveness of the area.

The parking provision apparently makes space easier to lease in this area (particularly for older, underparked buildings). The park is a great amenity which has generated improvement of the surrounding buildings. This is said to enhance property values (but in a way that cannot be measured).

...BY SELECTION COMMITTEE CONCERNS

Who uses the park — yuppies, or a broader segment of the population?

The park is reported to be used by a broad spectrum of users, mostly drawn from the surrounding buildings. These include all levels of office workers from maintenance staff to clerks and runners to secretaries to analysts, stock brokers and lawyers. Use by executives is reported to be less common. There is limited use by families with children (no specific facilities are provided for them), though this group is not thought to be heavily represented in the area.

What is the impact of the park on the surrounding neighborhood?

Many improvements to surrounding buildings are attributable to the park. Buildings have opened entrances on the park and the hotel has a cafe on a previously unused terrace facing the park.

Was the project mainly done by businesses to enhance the value of surrounding properties?

While the park has enhanced the surrounding properties, the motivation for most business leaders appears to have been more civic pride and a desire to contribute to the city than personal gain. Enlightened self interest may describe the attitudes of some contributors, while for others it was probably entirely a civic contribution.

Was there participation in the park design?

Yes. Most participation was by the design committee which represented a wide variety of interests and expertise. Designs were displayed and comments invited from the public.

Replicability

The project's circumstances and financing are unique. However, there are features of the project which should be replicable. If land can be obtained in a downtown area with high parking demand, the parking revenue could be used to finance a park above the garage. Raising capital by selling the rights to parking spaces might also be replicable.

The process used for this project was exemplary and has several aspects which can be profitably emulated by a variety of other kinds of projects. Some of these include strong leadership, building coalitions between downtown and neighborhood interests, inclusion of representatives of a broad spectrum of interests in the planning process, use of volunteer advisory boards for technical as well as design issues, visiting and learning from other similar projects, careful programming and articulation of design requirements, structuring a competition to select a design team rather than a design, careful attention to detail, and excellent management of the project after completion.

SELECTION COMMITTEE COMMENTS

The Selection Committee felt that this project was truly excellent in all respects, from conception, to planning, through execution and management, stating that they did excellent planning at a level you rarely see — at every stage it was remarkable...They did an excellent job of programming and then accomplished all the goals they established....they put it all together." Financing was innovative and even ingenious, making no use of public funds. It impressed the committee that the project will eventually return significant sums to the city, including funds to aid other parks. Post Office Square was seen as a needed, safe and attractive parking garage crowned by a beautiful and well used public park. The Selection Committee saw this as a solution which might find application in other cities.

The Selection Committee found no faults with this project. It was ranked below the winners only because the committee felt that, while it dealt with the important problem of creating needed open space in the dense urban core, this was perhaps a less pressing problem than the winners faced (even if they were not wholly successful in solving them).

For More Information...

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