

Three municipal park system case study:
relative comparison of public participation/volunteerism
impact on park system vision, budget, and operation

by

Benjamin Timothy Williamson

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Department of Landscape Architecture, Regional and Community Planning
College of Architecture, Planning, and Design

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Approved by:

Major Professor
Howard Hahn

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Abstract

Volunteers provide enormous benefits to organizations and charities in the United States and throughout the world. In many different areas there has been a surge or research to better understand the value and impact that volunteers have on the organizations that they serve but little is known about volunteer impact on municipal park systems. To study and analyze how volunteers are impacting municipal park system, three individual case studies were conducted. A case study framework was used to help organize, analyze, and present the data collected, and a cross-case analysis was conducted to compare the impact of volunteers across three municipalities. Findings revealed that each of the three municipalities rely heavily on volunteers and are greatly benefitted by volunteer efforts.

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INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 1

Dilemma

Volunteers provide enormous benefits to organizations and charities in the United States and throughout the world. According to the Independent Sector, in 2019 volunteers contributed “\$187.7 billion to the United States through their time, talent, and effort...” (“Independent Sector” 2020). This is based on the value of volunteer time being \$27.20 per hour which equates to 6.9 billion hours of work. Volunteer labor is a very valuable commodity that is the life blood to many good works (Ibid.). In many different areas there has been a surge of research to better understand the value and impact that volunteers have on the organizations that they serve. According to surveys completed by the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) in 2020, volunteers contributed over 10,000 hours to their local parks and recreation department (NRPA 2020). In reviewing the parks departments of the largest 100 cities in the United States, the Trust for Public Land (TPL) found that in 2017 a selection of 39 urban park conservancies raised a total of nearly \$250 million for improving and maintaining public parks (an average of \$6.2 million per park) (TPL 2017). The Portland Parks and Recreation Department produced the “Volunteer Impact Report” to share with their residents and volunteers just how much help they provide to support their community. In fiscal year 2018-2019, residents of Portland donated 446,502 hours which is valued at \$5.7 million (Portland 2020). These are marvelous gifts of time, talents and money given to improving local parks and communities but is it enough? “Whenever there is a government revenue shortfall..., somebody will propose eliminating ‘unnecessary’ activities and services or cutting operating budgets, and parks are the usual victims (Garvin 2011, 164).” With many entities vying for public-fund dollars, how can parks thrive and remain a benefit to their local community? Is relying upon the help of volunteers a cost effective and long-term solution considering the many issues involved with recruiting and managing volunteers?

Project Intent and Response

With budget shortfalls an ever-increasing reality, cities have gravitated toward relying more heavily on public participation in the management and funding of municipal parks (Garvin 2011, Miller 2009). The multi-dimensional aspects of public participation in municipal park systems need to be more deeply examined, understood, and communicated. Case study analyses, reviews of current efforts by municipal parks and recreation departments, and recent history can all elucidate the benefits and shortfalls of public participation in funding and maintaining park assets in times of perpetual financial hardship.

The intent of this thesis is to investigate to what extent volunteers can help relieve some of the pressure that public parks face when experiencing budget shortfalls. Volunteerism is a valued asset to any community but do they provide significant support for park operations or would most park departments be better off completing operational tasks without them considering administrative requirements and other issues associated with volunteerism?

Research Question

To what degree can public participation, in its various forms, offset financial and operational shortfalls associated with municipal park systems? Is this a sustainable model?

Proposed Approach

To answer these questions, this thesis will perform a case-study analysis of three successful park models for the cities of Portland, Oregon; Denver, Colorado; and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Among other items, the case studies will examine the following factors:

1. Volunteer contribution to parks (labor, financial, etc.)
2. City involvement/effort in coordinating a volunteer labor force
3. City/Parks Department financials

Relevance to Landscape Architecture

Landscape architects like Frederick Law Olmsted who designed New York City's Central Park with his business partner, Calvert Vaux, often envision and shape great parks which add great ancillary financial value to cities and contribute to the physical and mental health of its inhabitants (Spirn n.d., 93). There are many documented examples where parks and open spaces catalyzed city-transforming redevelopment: New York City's "High Line", Chicago's "The 606", "The Beltline" in Atlanta, "The Rose Kennedy Greenway" in Boston, and "Klyde Warren Park" in Dallas to name a few (Barber 2017). Unfortunately, when competing against building, utility, and social infrastructure costs, parks are often relegated to a lower priority. Capitalizing park development and financially sustaining ongoing park maintenance are recurrent issues. Without exploring alternate financing/support models, many designed landscapes, and parks specifically, will be transitory and benefits will be lost.

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BACKGROUND

CHAPTER 2

Historical Perspective of Park Capitalization and Operational Financing

Building and maintaining public parks takes money and a workforce. The funds for public parks can be broken into two main categories: capital and operational. “Capital funds are used for major park restorations, construction of new facilities, and similar improvements. Operating funds... are annual allocations for parks from the overall city budget, and these are the funds that keep parks alive and functioning” (Miller 2009, 150). To help illustrate these two funding types and their impact on parks, Central Park in New York City will provide a historical and current example.

In 1853 the New York State Legislature provided the first capital investment into Central Park by approving the use of \$5 million to purchase land and eventually start construction. After many years of work and nearly \$14 million dollars in construction costs, Central Park was completed in 1876 (Central Park Conservancy-C 2020). From this capital investment, New York City took over providing the operational costs to operate and maintain the park.

“By the early twentieth century, vicissitudes of social, political and economic climate threatened the fabric of Central Park and caused its first serious decline.” (Central Park Conservancy-A 2020). For many years Central Park was the place to be and provided much of the entertainment for New Yorkers. When the subway opened in 1904 it supplanted Central Park as the predominant leisure activity because New Yorkers could now easily travel to farther destinations (Rosenzweig & Blackmar 1992, 386-387). During this time there were several park advocacy groups that were formed that attempted to preserve the character of the park (Kinkead 1990, 115-116) and fought “for the maintenance of city parkland... .” (NYAM 2020)

After years of decline, mismanagement, and shrinking budgets, it was Robert Moses who helped reverse the trend. Appointed as NYC Parks Commissioner in 1934, Moses utilized federal funds to complete numerous projects around the city as well as several capital improvements within the borders of Central Park (e.g., playgrounds, ballfields, etc.) (Central Park Conservancy-A 2020). Apart from receiving federal funds for many projects, Moses also took full advantage of having laborers from the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) to help beautify and bolster Central Park (Rogers 2001). While Moses did much to rejuvenate Central Park, when he resigned in 1960 Central Park was left without any plan for ongoing maintenance and quickly fell into decay again.

By the 1970s, after years of “neglect, mismanagement and economic decline... a national treasure turned into a national disgrace.” (Central Park Conservancy-A 2020) In 1979, Elizabeth Barlow Rogers was appointed the Central Park administrator and eventually formed the Central Park Conservancy. The conservancy began raising private funds from various donors to support their efforts in restoring the park while working and coordinating with New York City. “Rogers attacked the problem by appealing to New Yorkers’ pride in their city and their love for its best-known park.” (Miller 2009, 10) In 40 years of operation, the Central Park Conservancy invested nearly \$1 billion dollars in restoring and revitalizing Central Park (Central Park Conservancy-B 2020). While Rogers and her followers were tirelessly raising funds for capital improvement projects, they did not neglect the day-to-day maintenance and operations funds. In 2013 the Central Park Conservancy was spending \$58.3 million dollars on maintenance, of which only \$8.7 million came from New York City (Central Park Conservancy-B 2013). Today the Conservancy raises the nearly \$85 million dollars required to operate and maintain Central Park each year (Central Park Conservancy-A 2020).

From the example of Central Park (Figures 2-2 through 2-11), some of these issues will be examined in more detail in subsequent sections.



Figure 2-1. *Belvedere Castle, 1980s*



Figure 2-2. *Belvedere Castle, Present Day*



Figure 2-3. *Charles A. Dana Discovery Center, 1980s*



Figure 2-4. *Charles A. Dana Discovery Center, Present Day*



Figure 2-5. *Aerial View, 1982*



Figure 2-6. *Aerial View, Present Day*



Figure 2-7. *East Meadow, 1980s*



Figure 2-8. *East Meadow, Present Day*

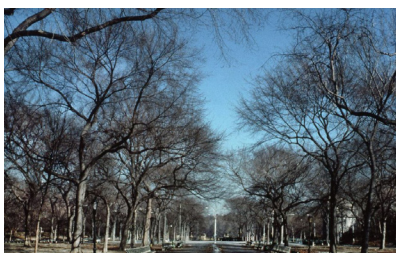


Figure 2-9. *The Mall, 1980s*

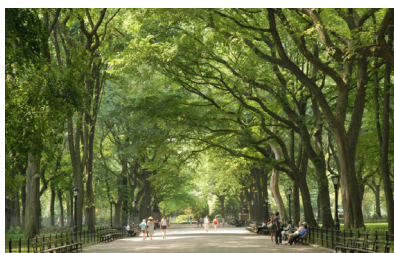


Figure 2-10. *The Mall, Present Day*

Contemporary Perspective & Challenges

The National Parks and Recreation Association (NRPA) is a national organization dedicated to advancing public parks, recreation and conservation. The NRPA comprises 60,000 members that represent communities across the United States in both urban and rural areas. As part of their mission to advance parks, recreation and environmental conservation, the NRPA conducts research on effects and benefits of parks, current state of, and public engagement with parks (NRPA-1 2020).

One of the publications that the NRPA produces is the “NRPA Agency Performance Review” (also released as the “Field Report”). This review is based on surveys that the NRPA conducts with its member organizations. Among the information presented in the report are sections on agency funding and budgets. In presenting the data from their research, the NRPA organizes the data with mean, lower quartile (lowest 25 percent) and upper quartile (highest 25 percent). Organizing the data this way helps individual organizations by allowing a comparison to “typical” agencies while also presenting data on the full spectrum of agencies at both high and low quartiles which provide more understanding between different sized agencies.

According to the data collected by NRPA, from 2015 to 2020 (Figure 2-12-1), the mean parks and recreation agencies consistently collected around 60% of their operating budget from the city general fund. After the general fund, most parks departments receive the majority of their financing from earned/generated income. Aside from the general fund, many agencies have access to other sources of income such as dedicated levies or special taxes, sponsorships and grants which help meet budgetary needs. The five year average for each category is as follows:

	Lower Quartile	Median	Upper Quartile
General Fund	43.1%	64.6%	86.6%
Dedicated Levies	0.0%	0.2%	29.1%
Other Dedicated Taxes	0.2%	0.2%	5.0%
Earned/Generated Income	14.1%	26.7%	44.1%
Grants	3.3%	1.2%	3.7%
Other	0.0%	0.9%	5.6%

Figure 2-11-1. *Percentage of Member Agencies Total Operating Expenditures*
(Graph Data: NRPA 2020)

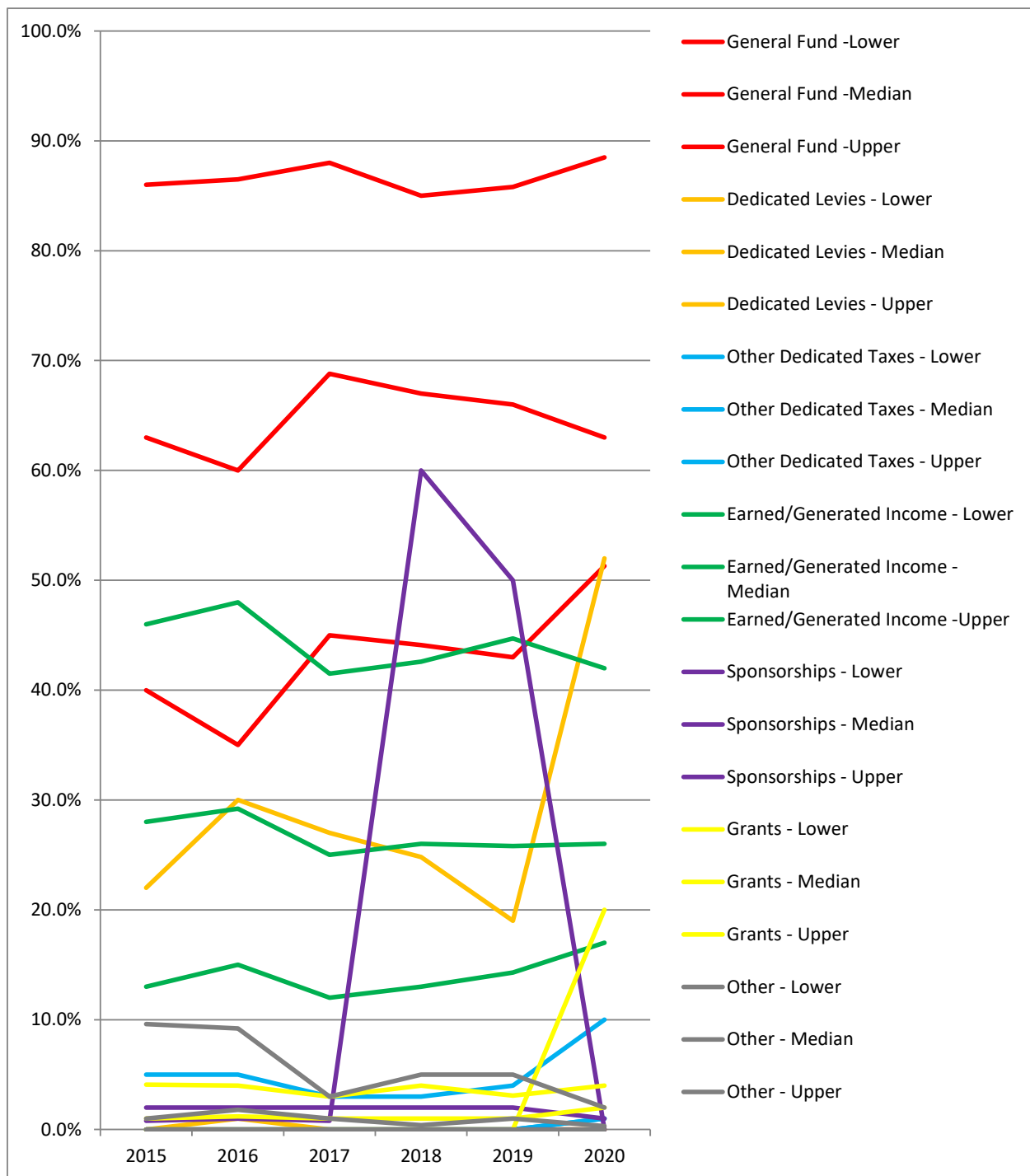


Figure 2-11-2. Percentage of Member Agencies Total Operating Expenditures
(Graph Data: NRPA 2020)

Annual Operating
Expenditures vs
Annual Non-Tax
Revenue

With tax revenue as their primary source of income it is not surprising that, as shown in Figure 2-13, after the 2008 Great Recession parks and recreation agencies annual operating expenditure dropped significantly. Member agencies in the upper quartile saw the most dramatic swing in their annual operating expenditure while both the mean and lower quartile agencies were more consistent in expenditures. Over the past 12 years, the average of these operating expenditures is: Upper Quartile - \$15,092,989.77, Mean - \$5,282,928.15, and Lower Quartile - \$1,716,024.77. Comparing the operating expenditure to Figure 2-14, the NRPA data on non-tax revenue (such as grants, etc.) shows that a similar drop occurred over the same time period. The 12-year average of non-tax revenue is: Upper Quartile - \$4,621,070.08, Mean - \$1,764,312.85, and Lower Quartile - \$508,326.92.

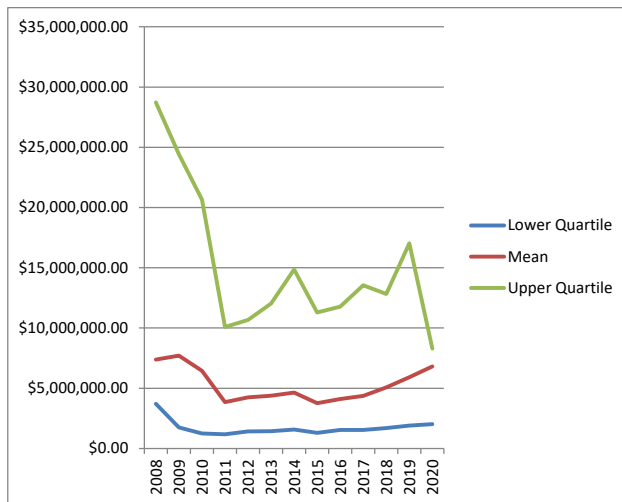


Figure 2-12. Agency Annual Operating Expenditures
(Graph Data: NRPA 2020)

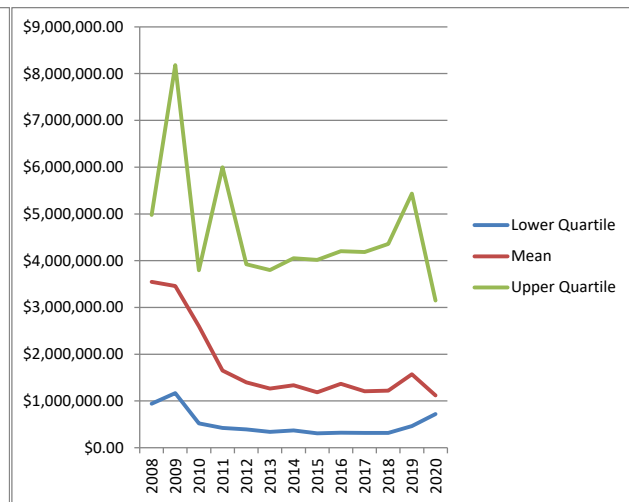


Figure 2-13. Agency Annual Non-Tax Revenue
(Graph Data: NRPA 2020)

Operating
Expenditures
vs Revenue -
Per Capita

Breaking down the data further, Figures 2-15 and 2-16 show the annual operating expenditures and revenue per capita respectively. Per capita expenditure peaked in 2009, dropped significantly and have generally been on the rise. As in the other data graphs, the upper quartile shows the most dramatic swing per year.

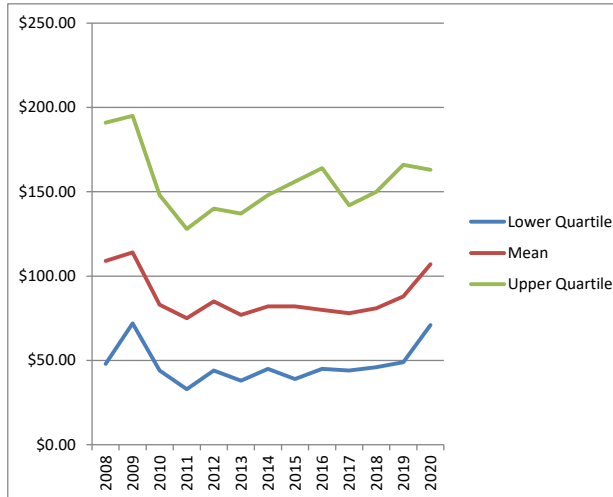


Figure 2-14. Agency Operating Expenditures per Capita
(Graph Data: NRPA 2020)

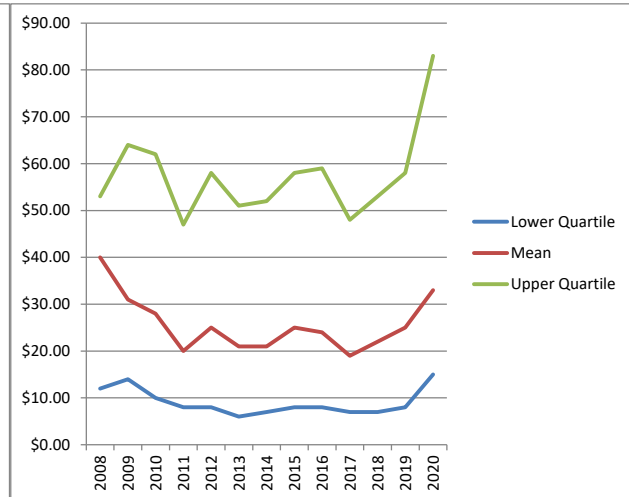


Figure 2-15. Agency Revenue per Capita
(Graph Data: NRPA 2020)

Total Revenue to
Total Operating
Expenditures

Figure 2-17 compares total revenue to total expenditure as a percentage ratio and shows how much agencies can recapture and be self-sufficient. Averaging the past 12 years (Upper - 48.2%, Mean - 31.5%, Lower - 17.1%) the graph shows that agencies are able to recapture significant portions of their budgets but not by a consistent majority even in the best years.

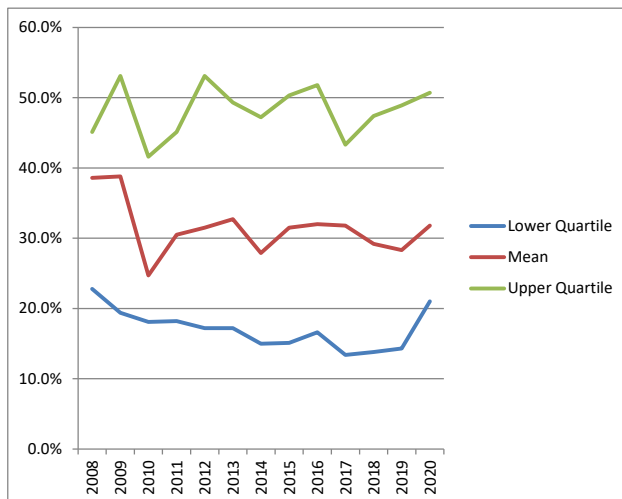


Figure 2-16. Total Revenue to Total Operating Expenditures
(Graph Data: NRPA 2020)

Operating Expenditure Breakdown

As important as it is to understand where parks and recreation agencies get funding, it is just as important to understand where it is spent. As shown in Figure 2-18, according to respondents from 2015 to 2020, the main consistent expense that agencies faced was in personnel services which include salaries/wages and benefits for all employees, full- and part-time (NRPA Agency Performance Review 2020). Operating expenses are the next highest cost which is used to “fund agency operations, including operational support for force-accounted employees.” (NRPA Agency Performance Review 2020, 20) Capital Expenses are the third major category of expenditure for agencies. Capital expenses are items that are not included in the capital improvements plan and may be lawn mowers, office equipment and furniture, or debt services paid from operating funds (NRPA Agency Performance Review 2020).

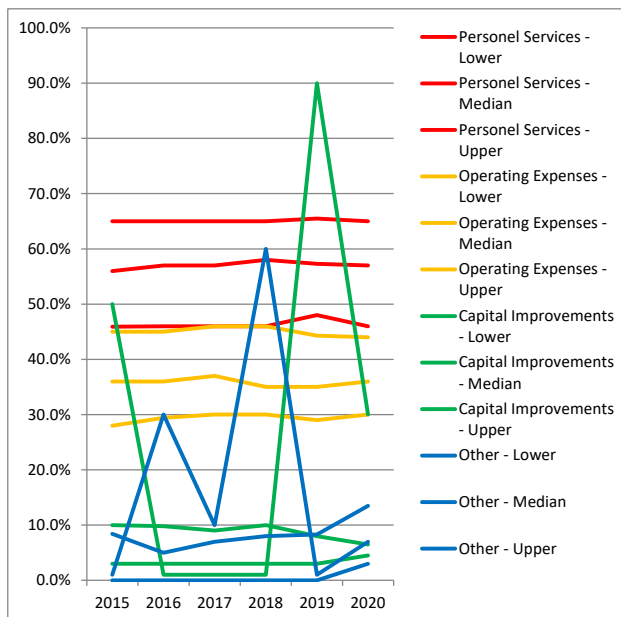


Figure 2-17. Percentage of Agency's Total Operating Expenditures
(Graph Data: NRPA 2020)

Capital Budget Breakdown

According to the 2020 NRPA Agency Performance Review report, the median parks and recreation agency have “\$5 million in capital expenditures budgeted for the next five years” (NRPA Agency Performance Review 2020, 23). The typical areas in which agencies spend capital expenditures (capital improvements) are renovation, new development, acquisition, or other. See Figure 2-19 for typical percentages spent on these areas from 2015 to 2020.

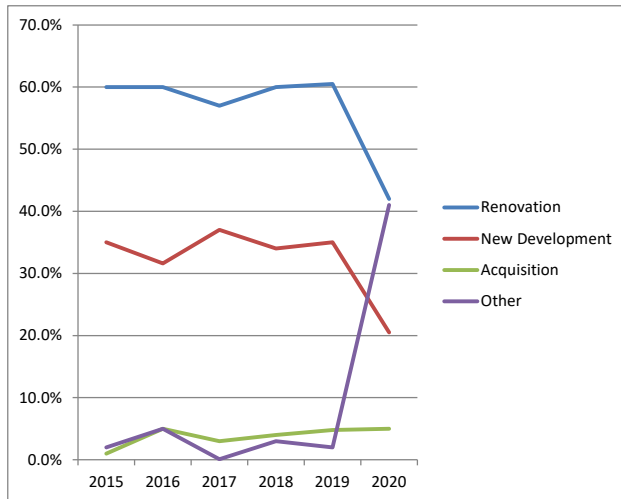


Figure 2-18. *Percentage of Agency's Current Fiscal Year's Capital Budget Designated for Renovation, New Development, Acquisition, and Other (Median).* (Graph Data: NRPA 2020)

Operating Expenditures - Parks vs Recreation

Finally, parks and recreation agencies provide recreation services as well as maintained parks. Figure 2-20 shows a breakdown of the percentages spent by agencies on parks and recreational services from 2015 to 2020. Other than 2017, the data shows that agencies generally spend a greater percentage of their budget on recreation services. Average percentage for the five-year period is "Recreation" claims: Lower Quartile - 43.4%, Median - 62.4%, and Upper Quartile - 65.5% while "Parks" claims: Lower Quartile - 25.2%, Median - 26.0%, and Upper Quartile - 39.4%.

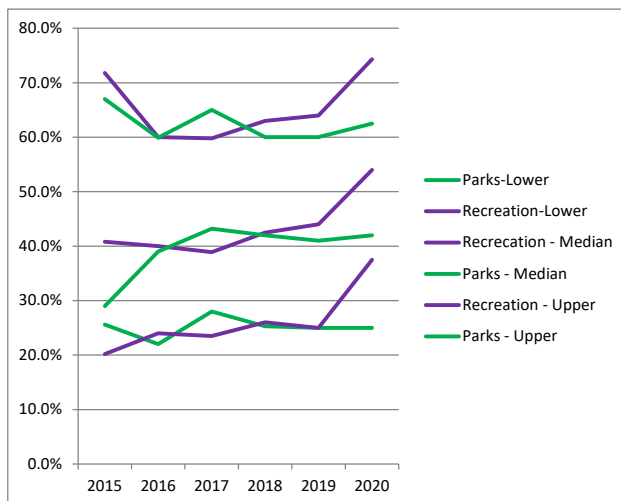


Figure 2-19. *Percentage of Agency's Total Operating Expenditures for Parks and Recreation.* (Graph Data: NRPA 2020)

Impact of Volunteers

Research on the impact of volunteers specifically related to parks and recreation is scarce. However, volunteers have had a dramatic impact on charitable and other organizations in which they serve. Hager (2004) reported on surveying 215,000 charitable organizations where 80% reported they used volunteers and 90% claimed they benefited by volunteer work. Much research has shown that volunteers can help organizations save money (Brudney 1993; Hager 2004; Handy & Srinivasan 2004; Bowman 2009; Hotchkiss, Fottler and Unruh 2008; Salamon et al. 2011; Grant 2020) and often the financial benefits are the main indicator that volunteers have a positive impact on an organization. Other ways research has shown that volunteers benefit an organization is through increased end-user satisfaction (Hotchkiss, Fottler & Unruh 2008; Haski-Leventhal, et. al 2011); maintain, improve and expand on programs offered (Brudney 1993; Cordery et al. 2013; Worker 2020); organization marketing and advertising (Andrews & Lockett, 2013); attracting new users and volunteers (Grant 2020; Worker 2020); and providing supplies and money to the organization (Grant 2020; Haski-Leventhal 2011). Worker (2020, 22) surveyed volunteers of 4-H programs and cited the importance that no participant “explicitly discussed their contribution as economic value, how they helped the organization’s bottom line, or replaced paid staff labor.” There are many ways in which volunteers may assist and enhance their specific organization.

Despite many of these positives, Budney (1990) cautions that if volunteers are not managed effectively the volunteers will become a burden on the organization. In using volunteers, it is important for organizations to examine the costs and benefits of using this “free” workforce. “A cost-benefit analysis of volunteerism is useful in order to provide a practical understanding of program costs and outcomes” (Handy and Mook 2011, 415). Organizations using volunteers often face costs associated with attracting, training and managing volunteers. Emanuele (2007) and Handy and Srinivasan (2005) both found that the use of volunteers had a negative relationship to the costs per volunteer hour. As the cost of using volunteers rose, fewer volunteers were used. A method for calculating the cost-benefit analysis was developed in the United Kingdom and is called the Volunteer Investment and Value Audit (VIVA). The method examines inputs from organizations using volunteers and creates a ratio (VIVA Ratio) to show the return on volunteer investment: “For every pound invested in volunteers, there is a return of X pounds in the value of the volunteers’ work” (Gaskin 1999, 36). In the study by Gaskin it was found that the ratio ranged from 1.3 to 13.5

showing that volunteer use is generally cost effective. In a study of 31 Canadian hospitals, Handy and Srinivasan (2004) calculated the costs and benefits of using volunteers. They found that the costs of using volunteers averaged \$2.62 per volunteer hour. Using the value of hours donated to tabulate the benefits, it was found that for every dollar invested into the volunteer program, the return on investment was \$6.84, a 584% increase.

Specific to parks, the National Recreation and Parks Department (NRPA) compiled the 2018 NRPA Engagement Survey in which it was revealed that “two in five Americans make some sort of contribution of time or money in support of their local parks. (p. 17)” The survey also found that the most widely reported ways to contribute were volunteering (providing maintenance services), financial donations, advocacy (lobbying for improvements), and sharing feedback (attending community meetings) (NRPA Engagement Survey 2018). Data collected by the NRPA on volunteer personnel numbers used by municipal park systems from 2008 to 2020 is shown in Figure 2-21 below. The graph shows a steep decline after 2008/2009 and then relatively consistent numbers through the 2010s. The average number of volunteers used from 2008 to 2020 is: Lower Quartile: 83.2; Mean: 272.2; Upper Quartile: 1353.0. To complement this information, Figure 2-22 shows the number of hours worked by volunteers to support parks and recreation systems. The total hours graph closely mimics the number of volunteers graphed over the years. The average number of volunteer hours from 2008 to 2020 is: Lower Quartile: 2,020.2; Mean: 7,996.0; Upper Quartile: 31,208.1.

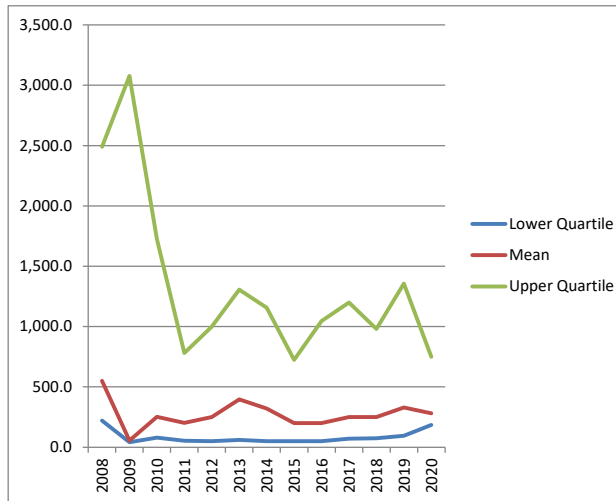


Figure 2-20. Number of Volunteers.
(Graph Data: NRPA 2020)

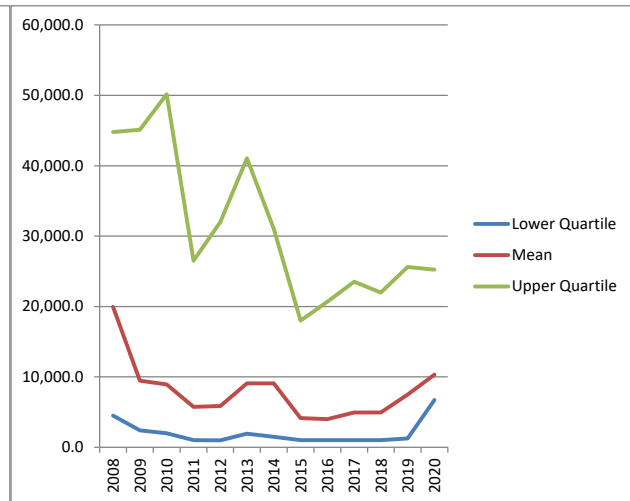


Figure 2-21. Total Hours Worked by Volunteers.
(Graph Data: NRPA 2020)

The Trust for Public Lands (TPL) produces the Park Score Report which rates and summarizes key aspects of the 100 largest cities in the United States of America (Trust for Public Land 2020). From the information collected for the Park Score Report they also produce a report entitled “City Park Facts.” Beginning in 2015, the City Park Facts report has a section entitled “Spending by Selected Urban Park Conservancies”. The report defines conservancies as non-profit organizations that financially support public parks. The amounts shown include both operating and capital expenditure. Shown in Figure 2-23 below, conservancy spending is on an upward trend from 2015 through 2017.

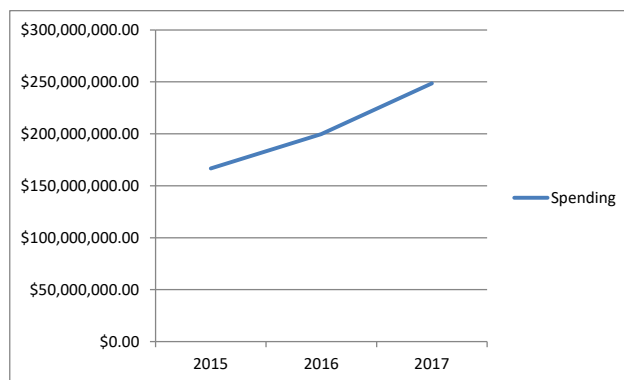


Figure 2-22. Spending by Selected Urban Park Conservancies
(Graph Data: TPL 2020)

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Research Question

To what degree can public participation, in its various forms, offset financial and operational shortfalls associated with municipal park systems? Is this a sustainable model?

Case study analysis was the primary mode of research for this master's thesis as described by Demming and Swaffield (2011,180). I collected data from three municipal park systems, analyzed and compared them, and drew conclusions to apply to other municipal park systems. The data was collected from several sources and by different means described below.

City Selection

To explore the impact of volunteerism on municipal park systems, case-study cities of Denver, Colorado; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; and Portland, Oregon were selected based on the following criteria: (1) the park system serves a major city of at least 500,000 people; (2) the park system has a volunteer coordinator on staff; and (3) the park system has a formal volunteer effort that has been in existence for at least five years.

Major City

For the purposes of this study a "major city" is defined as a population of more than 500,000 residents, including suburbs. Three reasons guided the selection criteria: the first being that park systems serving a larger population are more likely to turn to volunteers to help them provide services to their residents (Brudney and Kellough 2000). Second, the accessibility of data for city and park budgets being readily available online is more likely for larger cities and park systems. And finally, larger park organizations, supporting larger cities, are likely to have a greater history of volunteer organizations working in connection with parks.

Volunteer Coordinator on Staff	Having a volunteer coordinator on staff shows that the park system actually seeks volunteers and uses them to a degree that requires coordination (Brudney and Kellough 2000). Having a volunteer coordinator on staff also gave me a direct contact to connect with and begin my research. Other than being the volunteer coordinator, there was not specific requirements to identify this individual.
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Formal Volunteer Effort for Five or More Years	By only examining park systems that have been using volunteers, formally, for five or more years will likely produce more information as well as be a sufficient time frame to reveal potential problems, lessons or trends (Brown 1999).
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Data Collection

Data came from publicly available sources, in addition to inquiries and interviews that were conducted as part of this effort.

Literature Search to Establish Research Base of Larger Issues/Context	An initial literature search was conducted to establish a base knowledge of volunteer impact. The literature review provides definitions for key terms, ideas, and understanding of impact measuring for volunteers. The literature search was used to gain a greater understanding of the strain that many municipal city park systems are feeling as they continue providing their various services to the community.
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City Information from Publicly Accessible Sources	Through online searches and phone conversations with municipality personnel, data collected from the selected cities included municipal park budgets, expenses and revenue streams, and volunteer contributions.
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Interviews	Research methods included targeted interviews with key individuals within the municipal park system ranks. Key individuals within the park system are (but are not limited to) the Volunteer Coordinator, Maintenance/Operations Personnel, Department Managers and others identified within the municipal park system. Interviews with these individuals followed the Kansas State University Internal Review Board (IRB) protocols (see Appendix A for transcribed interviews, Appendix B for introductory letter, and Appendix D for IRB approval). Interviewees received a copy of the questions prior to the interview.
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Survey Input from volunteer organizations was sought to provide additional insight into the impact of volunteers via survey. Volunteers are connected with organizations posted on the websites of selected cities. Initial contact was made with the head group member on file with the city, and an online survey link was emailed to gather their responses.

The survey questions are designed to help understand respondent demographic, financial contributions, motivation, and involvement (amount and activities) by answering both qualitative and quantitative questions. Response types are multiple choice, open ended, Likert-scale (strongly disagree, somewhat disagree, neutral, somewhat agree, strongly agree).

See Appendix C for survey questions submitted for IRB review and case studies for the posted lists of friends or volunteer groups associated with each selected city.

Data Analysis

A comparative case study approach (Demming and Swaffield 2011, 180) and qualitative discussion based on interviews (Creswell 2009, 181) were used to interpret the data collection.

Case Study Framework The case study framework began development as part of organizing the interview questions. Questions were organized into the following four overall categories: (1) Attracting & Recruiting Volunteers, (2) Volunteer Organizations, (3) Potential Park Adjustments, (4) Fundraising.

After conducting the interviews and transcribing the conversations, individual questions within the overall topics were further categorized into the following subtopics to help with cross-case review.

- (1) Attracting & Recruiting Volunteers
 - (A) Volunteer #s & Tasks
 - (B) Marketing Efforts & Constraints
 - (C) Capacity
- (2) Volunteer Organizations
 - (A) Length & Lifespan
 - (B) Value Research
- (3) Potential Park Adjustments
 - (A) Staff vs Volunteers
 - (B) Impact
- (4) Fundraising
 - (A) Public & Private Money

Building the Case Study	When transcription work was complete, interviews were reviewed and organized to align with the case study framework.
Cross-Case Review	After the drafts of the case studies were created, the cross-case review began. Following the categories and sub-categories of the framework, case study summaries were compared for unique traits and similarities between cities. A matrix was created to provide a summary of findings.

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Each case study also includes information about each city to help understand the use of volunteers. This information includes data collected from 2015 to 2020 in the following areas:

- A list of conservancies and friends/stewardship groups from the city parks website
- Graph: City Budget
- Graph: Parks & Recreation Agency Spending
- Graph: Conservancy/Private Spending
- Graph: Full Time Employees
- Graph: Volunteer Hours
- Graph: Value of Volunteer Hours
- Graph: Parkland Area
- Graph: Number of Parks

<u>CATEGORY/SUBCATEGORY</u>	CORRELATING INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
<u>ATTRACTING & RECRUITING VOLUNTEERS</u>	
VOLUNTEER #S & TASKS	1,2,5
MARKETING EFFORTS & CONSTRAINTS	3,4
CAPACITY	6
<u>VOLUNTEER ORGANIZATIONS</u>	
LENGTH & LIFESPAN	7,8
VALUE RESEARCH	9

Figure 3-1. Case Study Framework (Benjamin Williamson)

<u>CATEGORY/SUBCATEGORY</u>	CORRELATING INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
<u>POTENTIAL PARK DEPARTMENT ADJUSTMENTS</u>	
STAFF VS VOLUNTEERS	10,11,12,18,20
IMPACT	13,14,15,16,17,19
<u>FUNDRAISING</u>	
PUBLIC & PRIVATE MONEY	21,22,23,24,25,26

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FINDINGS:

CHAPTER 4

CASE STUDIES

Introduction

The following three case studies, one for each city in the study, will now be explored in detail and presented in alphabetical order:

DENVER, COLORADO

PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA

PORTLAND, OREGON

Each case study will open with information about each city to help understand each city's use of volunteers. This information includes data collected from 2015 to 2020 in the following areas:

- A list of conservancies and friends/stewardship groups from the city parks website

A series of graphs showing:

- City Budget
- Parks & Recreation Agency Spending
- Conservancy/Private Spending
- Full Time Employees
- Volunteer Hours
- Value of Volunteer Hours
- Parkland Area
- Number of Parks

Case studies are built on information collected from interviews, city websites, and third party research. Transcripts of full interviews can be found in Appendix A.

As an introduction to the individual case studies, below are graphs representing data collected by the Trust for Public Land for the 2020 ParkScore Report. This information is shown to highlight where each of the case study cities fall among the largest 100 cities in the United States. Each of the following graphs below, “Full-time Employees”, “Agency Spending”, “Conservancy/Private Spending”, “Total Volunteer Hours”, “Value of Total Volunteer Hours”, “Number of Parks” and “Parkland Area (acres)” show where the case study cities are within the 100 city sample. Each of these graphs is reproduced as part of the individual case study for the specific city.

According to the 2022 ParkScore Report, which looks at more areas than this thesis is concerned with, has scored each city as follows:

- #11 - Portland
- #18 - Denver
- #32 - Philadelphia

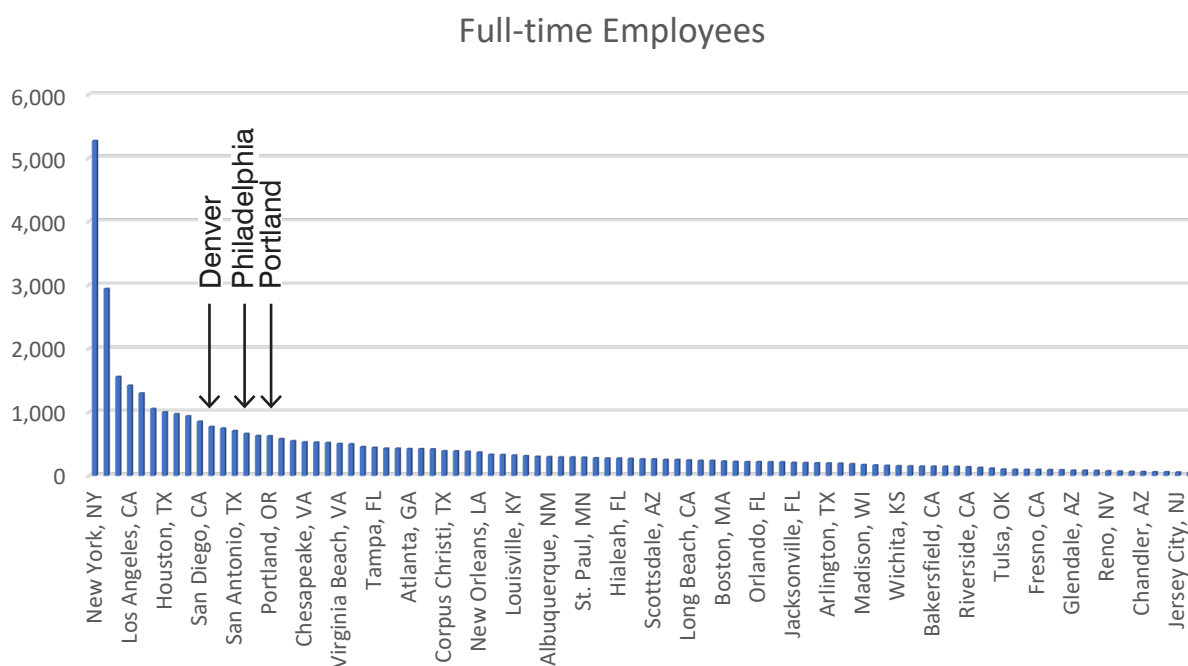


Figure 4-1. Full-time Employees.
(Graph Data: TPL 2020)

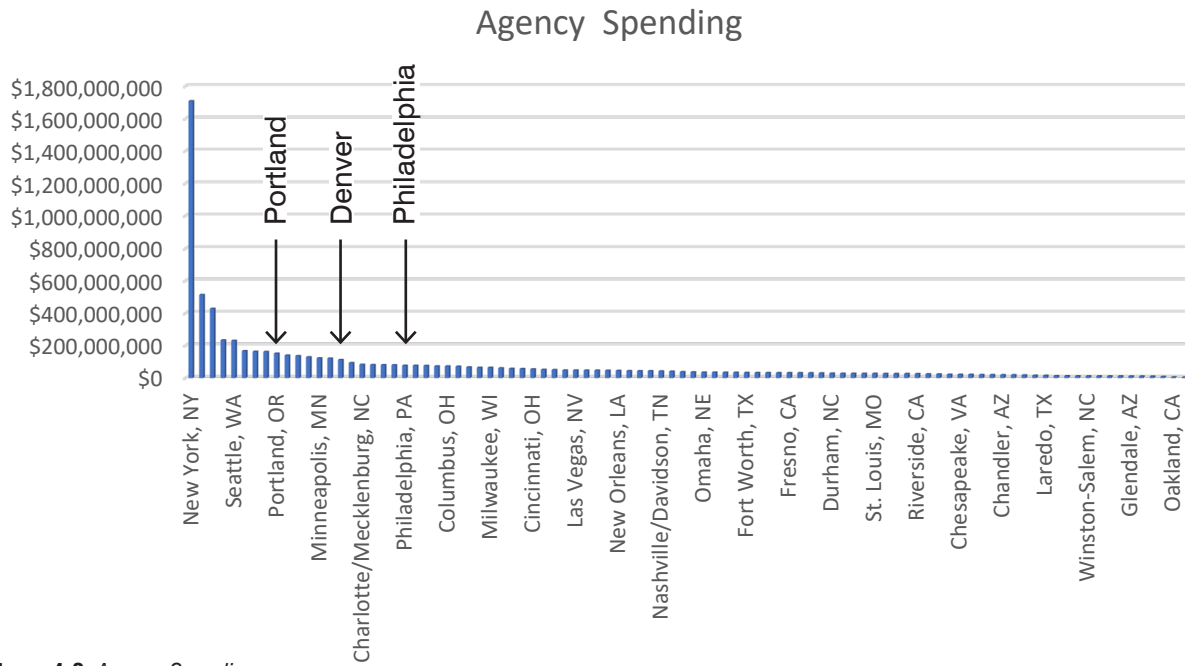


Figure 4-2. Agency Spending
(Graph Data: TPL 2020)

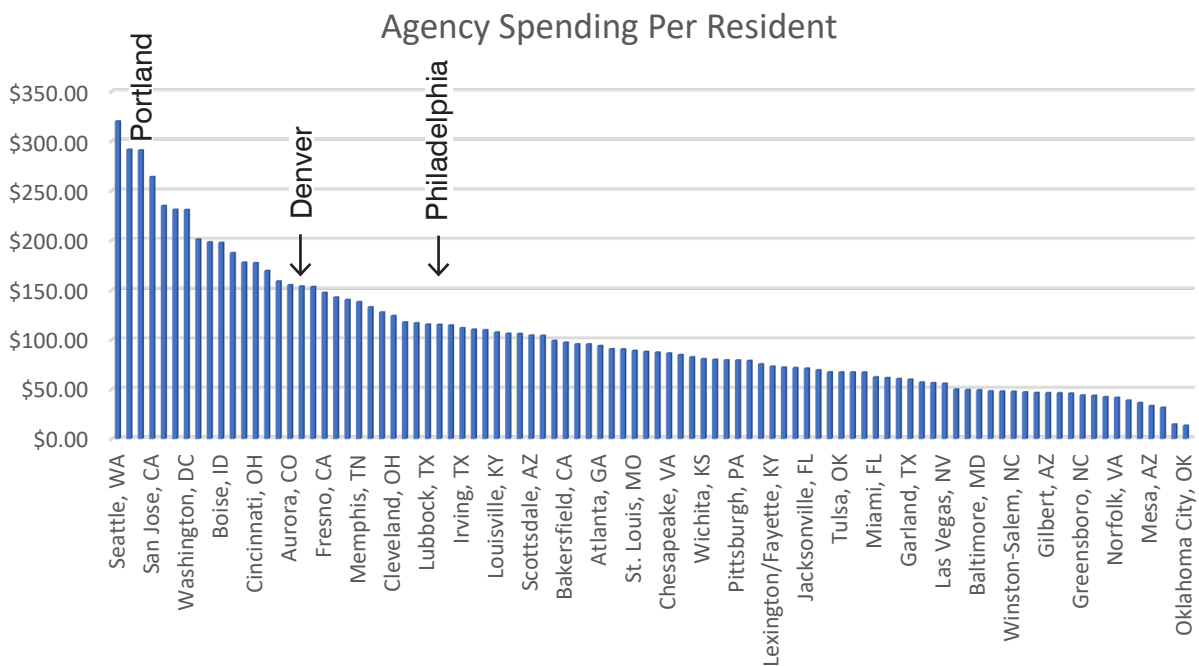


Figure 4-3. Agency Spending Per Resident.
(Graph Data: TPL 2020)

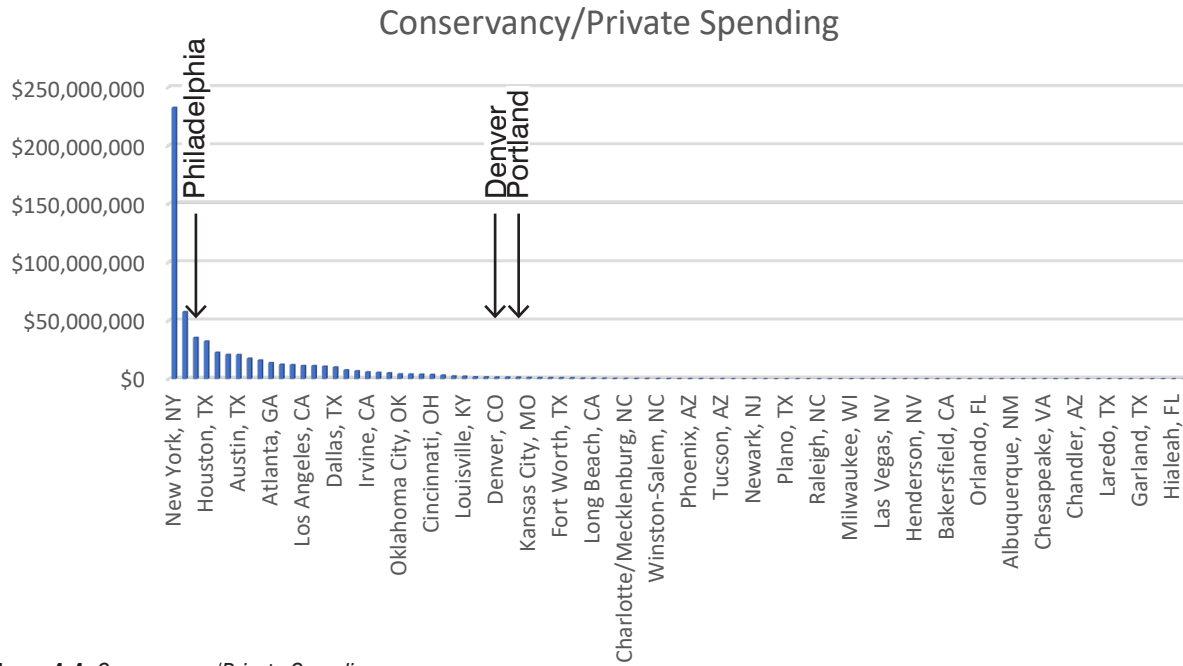


Figure 4-4. Conservancy/Private Spending
(Graph Data: TPL 2020)

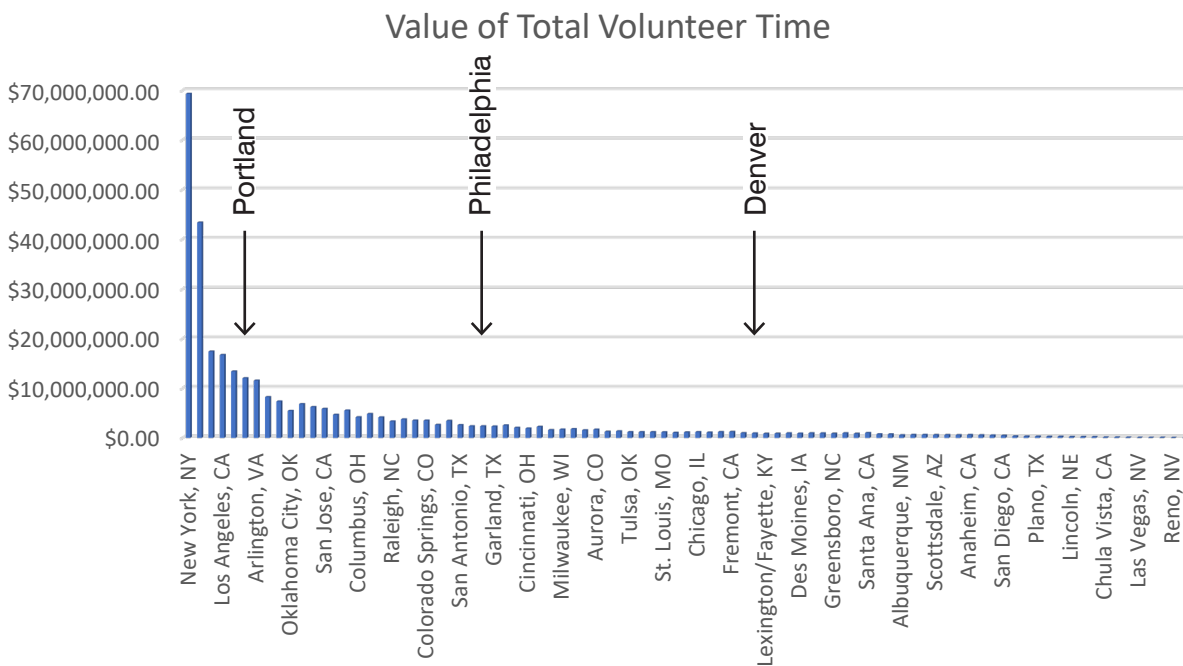


Figure 4-5. Value of Total Volunteer Time.
(Graph Data: TPL 2020)

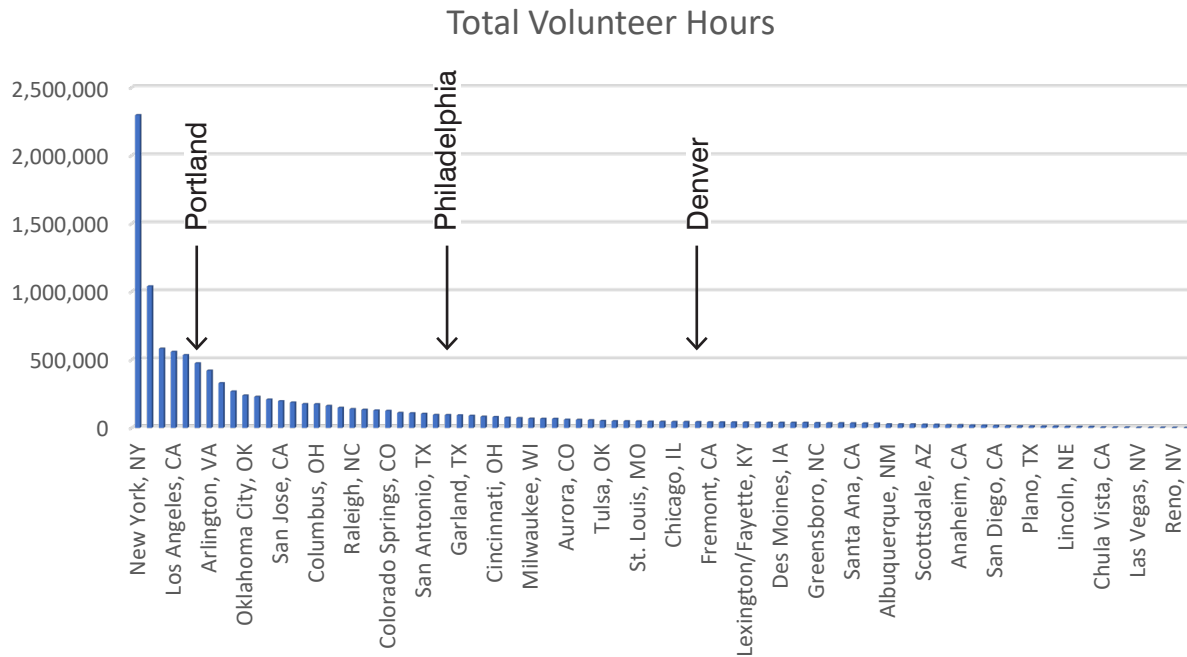


Figure 4-6. Total Volunteer Hours.
(Graph Data: TPL 2020)

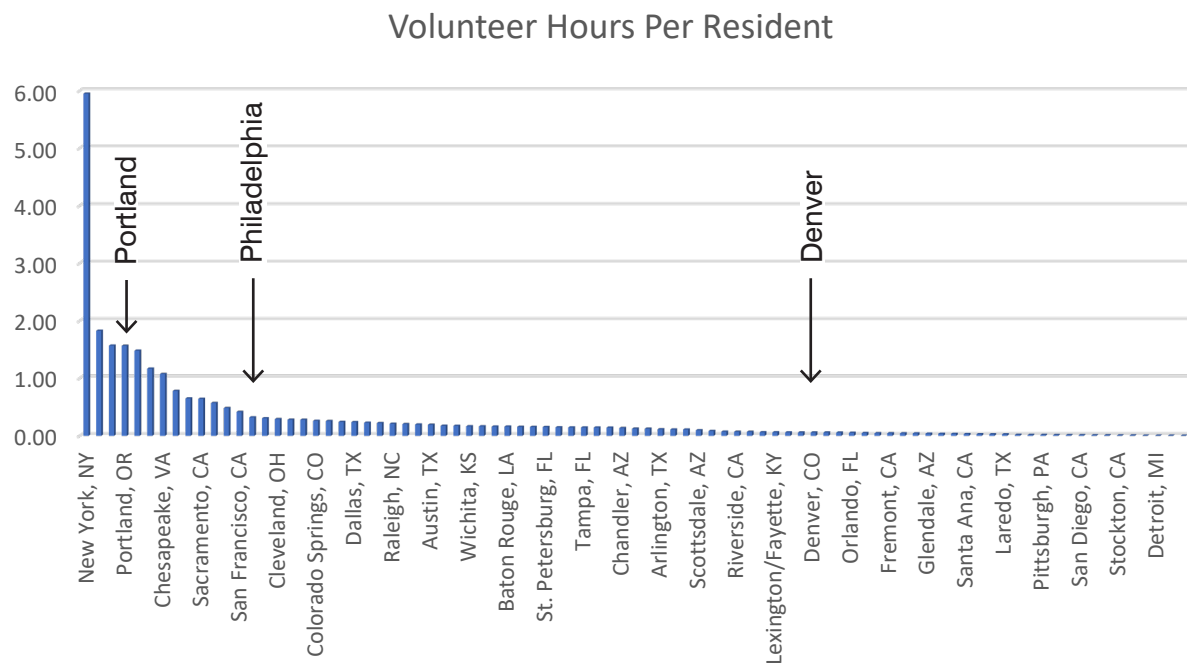


Figure 4-7. Volunteer Hours Per Resident
(Graph Data: TPL 2020)

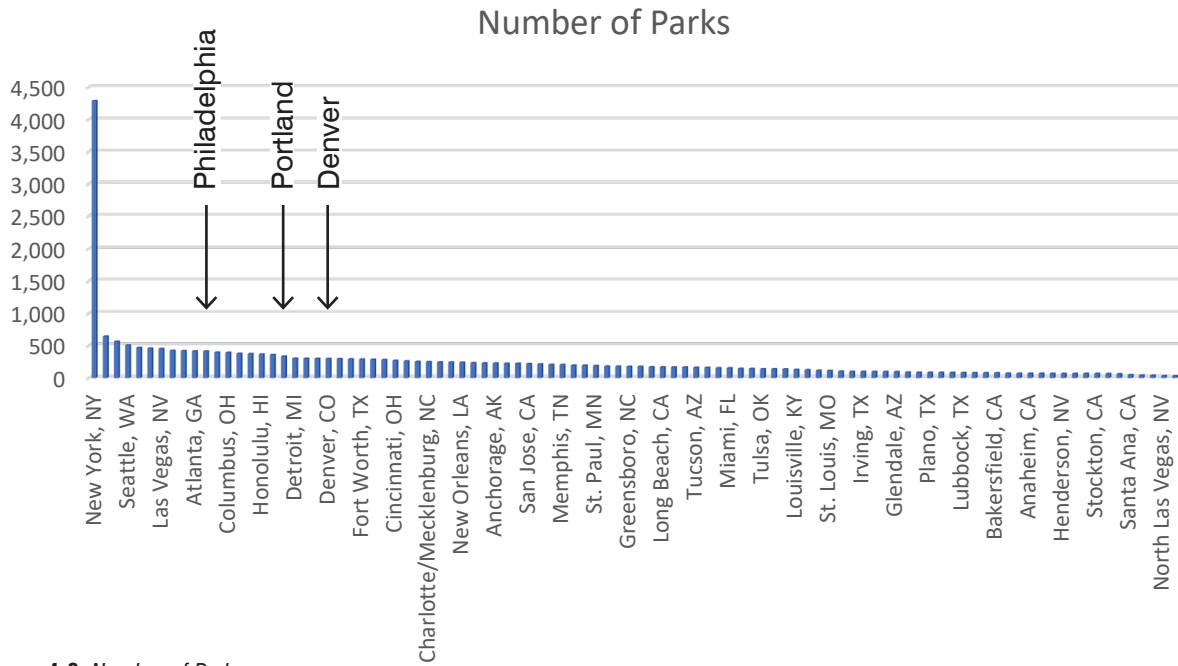


Figure 4-8. Number of Parks.
(Graph Data: TPL 2020)

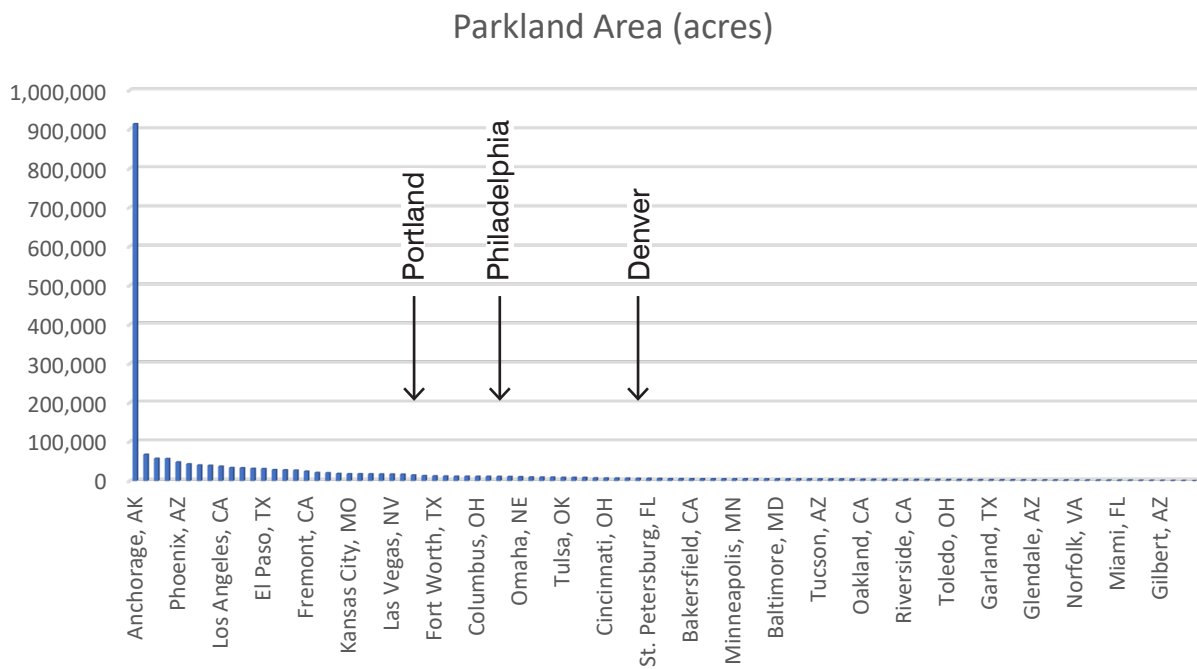


Figure 4-9. Parkland Area (acres).
(Graph Data: TPL 2020)

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DENVER

Denver area parks that have been adopted by park stewardship groups:

Bear Valley Park
Bluff Lake Trail
Buchetl Boulevard Trail
Centennial Garden
Cherry Creek Trail
Children's Playground (25th & Stout)
City of Potenza
City of Takayama
Commons Park
Confluence Park
Crestmoor Park
Cuernavaca Park
Garfield Park
Gates Crescent Park
Harvard Gulch Park
Jefferson Park
Johnson Habitat
Nettie Moore
Northfield Pond
Red Rocks
Rocky Mountain Lake Shore
South Platte River Trail
Sloans Lake Park
Speer & Wewatta Playground
"The Grove" at the Commons
Washington Park
Berkeley Dog Park
Fuller Dog Park
Kennedy Dog Park
Rail Yard Dog Park

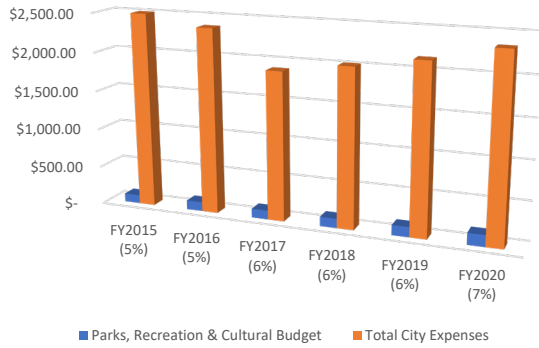


Figure 4-10. Denver City Budget (in millions)
(Graph Data: Denver 2015,2016,2017,2018,2019,2020)

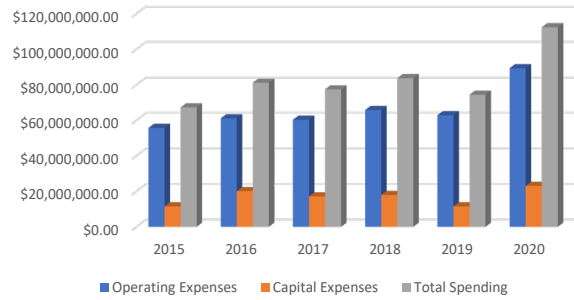


Figure 4-11. Denver Parks & Recreation Agency Spending.
(Graph Data: TPL 2015,2016,2017,2018,2019,2020)

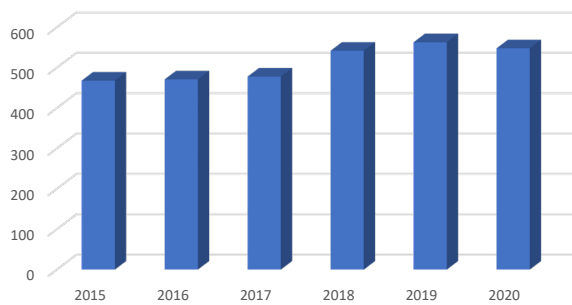


Figure 4-12. Denver Full Time Employees.
(Graph Data: TPL 2015,2016,2017,2018,2019,2020)

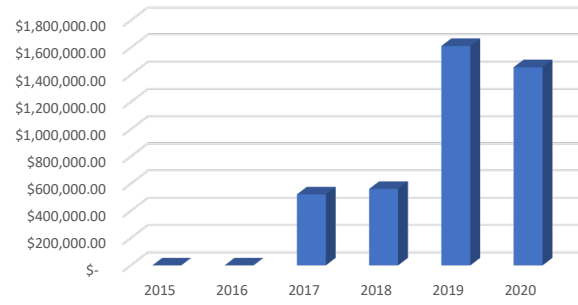


Figure 4-13. Denver Conservancy/Private Spending.
(Graph Data: TPL 2015*,2016*,2017,2018,2019,2020)

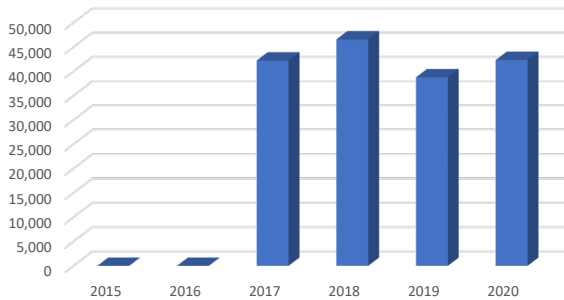


Figure 4-14. Denver Volunteer Hours.
(Graph Data: TPL 2015*,2016*,2017,2018,2019,2020)

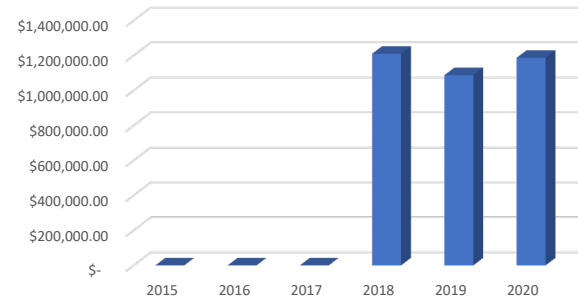


Figure 4-15. Denver Value of Volunteer Hours.
(Graph Data: TPL 2015*,2016*,2017*,2018,2019,2020)

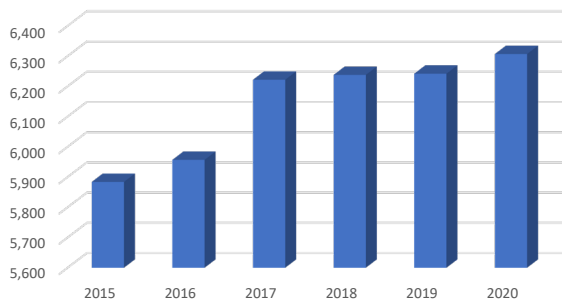


Figure 4-16. Denver Parkland Area (acres).
(Graph Data: TPL 2015,2016,2017,2018,2019,2020)

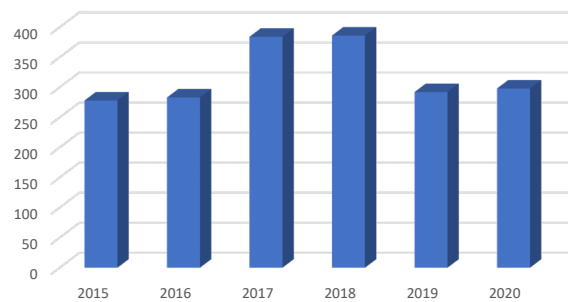


Figure 4-17. Denver Number of Parks.
(Graph Data: TPL 2015,2016,2017,2018,2019,2020)

* Data is unavailable

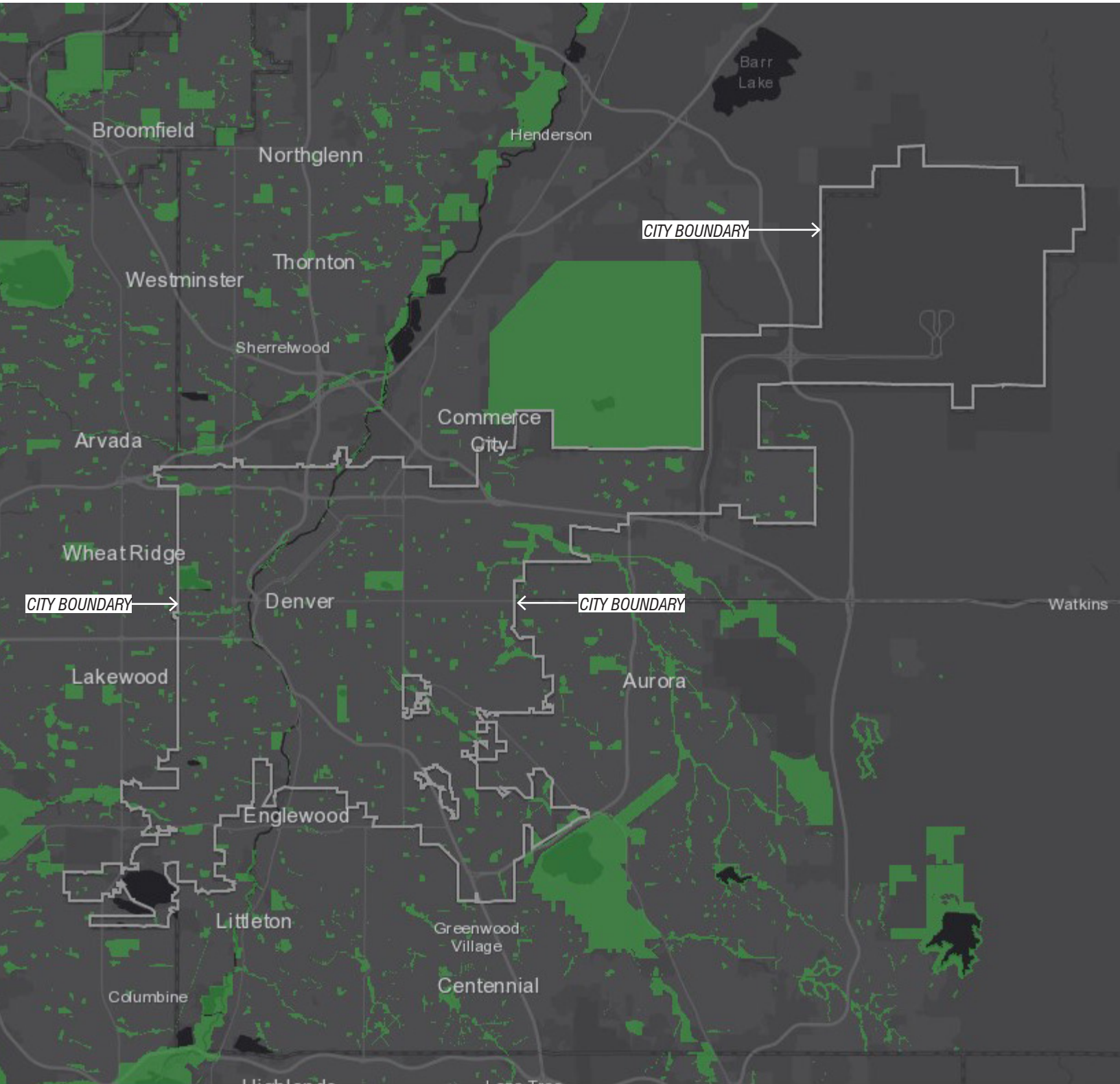


Figure 4-18. Denver Area Parks Map.

Information Derived from Interviews (applies to all subsequent sections)

Attracting and Recruiting Volunteers

Volunteer #s & Tasks

Denver Parks and Recreation (DPR) hosts six major annual events, two park stewardship days along the South Platte River, “Put the Beds to Bed”, Starbucks Day of Service, Trails Day, and Arbor Day to beautify the Denver area parks. Apart from these events, there are many single events which allow volunteers to give back. Volunteers typically are involved in mulching trees, general debris removal, painting and cleaning sidewalks, or removing invasive plant species. For trail specific projects (there are over 100 trail systems cared for by DPR) volunteers typically help by painting railings and general trash removal. At many of these events, the activities are the same, but each is important and necessary in caring for area parks and trails. The year 2020 was a difficult year for everyone with COVID-19 shutting down many things. In 2019, DPR hit close to 40,000 volunteers. With the restrictions placed because of COVID-19, in 2021 DPR had around 1,000 volunteers. Due to the restrictions, they were only able to have 10 volunteers at a time. COVID-19 was difficult for many reasons but it certainly leveled a huge hit at the number of volunteers the DPR was able to engage with.

Marketing Efforts & Constraints

DPR uses a vast array of social media and the internet to connect with and engage volunteers in caring for DPR parks. Apart from these efforts, recruitment done by volunteers has a great impact on bringing in more help. Word of mouth or referrals help to keep people calling. Friends’ groups will sign an agreement to provide services for a park or area of the park. These groups will typically contact the department directly, especially returning partners. While the DPR works hard to attract individuals and groups to help care for the local parks, there are always outside forces that have an impact on these groups. However, none have hindered the efforts of the DPR in using volunteers to assist them in beautifying and caring for the area parks.

Capacity

The biggest event hosted by DPR is the Starbucks Day of Service. This event will typically draw around 600 volunteers who are usually assigned to the largest park (while the specific park was not identified during the interview, it is assumed it is City Park) in Denver because it can accommodate the entire group. 600 people is a lot and roughly the maximum number of people that the department can coordinate at a single event.

Volunteer Organizations

Length & Lifespan

Volunteer organizations or friends' groups have been assisting with the care and cleanup of DPR parks since around the year 2000. For the past 20 years numerous groups have been continuously working with DPR to beautify their neighborhood parks and have kept coming back. Each year the groups sign a new commitment agreement with the department stating what park or area of the park they will help care for.

Value Research

DPR does conduct research on the dollar value that volunteers bring to the organization using numbers from the Independent Sector website. This information is then used to help guide the DPR and their volunteer attracting and coordinating efforts. Unfortunately, the researcher could not collect this information.

Potential Park Department Adjustments

Staff vs Volunteers

When volunteers help with maintenance efforts in Denver area parks, overall maintenance staff/jobs are not redirected because volunteers efforts are usually due to a shortage in staff. They are doing a lot of projects/jobs that the staff would not have been able to get to and would otherwise not have been done. By using volunteers, the DPR can stretch their efforts and make everything much better. Even with staff shortages, at each of the events there is consistent oversight by park staff to help and make sure that all needed supplies are available to get the work completed.

Impact

In the past five years, DPR has completed around 900 projects and of these 900, roughly 500 would not have been possible without the help and aid of volunteers. Volunteers have a significant impact on the DPR. Often before and after pictures are taken so that the department may showcase their work. Volunteers have a great impact in the lower or neglected neighborhoods as well. Volunteers are a great asset to the DPR and the DPR “always needs work so, [they] will always accept them....”

Fundraising

Public & Private Money

The DPR does not actively seek private money through fundraising efforts. There are times when private donations are made, and that money is readily accepted, but there are no friends’ groups providing enough financial resources to cause shifts in the DPR budget or to care for their specific parks. Typically the money that is raised or given by an individual or friends group is applied to a specific project (ex: bench or tree purchases).

PHILADELPHIA

Philadelphia area parks that have been adopted by park stewardship groups:

Aviator Park	Harrowgate Park	Penn Treaty Park
Bainbridge Green	Hart Park	Pennypack Park
Bardascino Park	Hawthorne Park	Philly Pumptrack
Beck Park	Hissey Playground	Pleasant Hill Park
Belmont Trails	Hope Park	Poquessing Creek
Ben Barkan Park	Howard Street Park	Powers Park
Benson Park	Hunting Park Community	Pretzel Park
Black, Coyle & McBride (Pop's) Playground	Garden	Price Street
Campbell Square	Inn Yard Park	Pulaski Park
Carpenter's Woods	Ivy Ridge Green	Rainbow de Colores Handball Court
Cedar Park	Jefferson Square	Ridgway Park
Centennial Lake	Julian Abele Park	Rittenhouse Square
Chew Playground	Konrad Square	Royal Gardens
Cianfrani Park	Lardner's Point	Ryerss Museum & Library – Burholme Park
Clark Park	Lemon Hill (Lemon Hill Neighbors Association)	Saylor Grove Wetland
Cliveden Park	Lotus Gardens	Schuylkill River Park
Cloverly Park	Loudoun	Sedgley Woods
Cobbs Creek North	Louis I. Kahn Park	Seger Playground
Columbus Square	Malcolm X Park	Shevchenko Park
Concourse Lake	Manton Street Park/Communi- ty Garden	Shot Tower Recreation Center
Connell Park	Marconi Plaza	Starr Garden Playground
Courtesy Stables	Mario Lanza Park	Stephen Girard Park
Coxe Park	Market Square Park	Stinger Square
Cresheim Trail	Matthias Baldwin Park	Tacony Creek Park
Dickinson Square	McMichael Park	Titan Park
Fairhill Square	McPherson Square Park	Triangle Park
Fairview Park	Mifflin Square	Upper Roxborough Reservoir Preserve
FDR Park	Monastery Stables (Board- ers & Stewards of Monastery Stables)	Vernon Park
Fernhill Park	Morris Park	Wakefield Park
Fisher Park	Ned Wolf Park	Wissahickon East Project
Fitler Square	Overington Park	Wissahickon Valley Park
Fotteral Square	Palmer Park	Wissinoming Park
Fox Chase Farm	Palumbo Park	Woodford Mansion
Frankford Park	Paolone Park	Woodside Park
Gilbert Stuart Park	Papa Playground	
Gold Star Park		
Gorgas Park		
Hagert Street Playground		

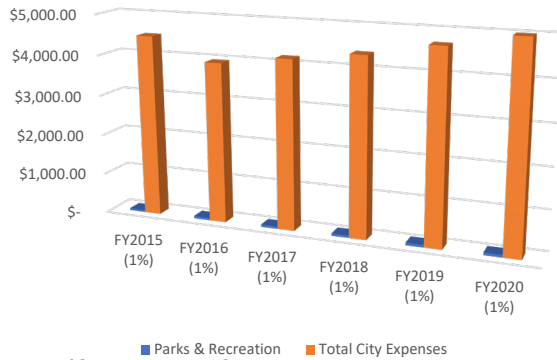


Figure 4-19. Philadelphia City Budget (in millions)
(Graph Data: Philadelphia 2015,2016,2017,2018,2019,2020)

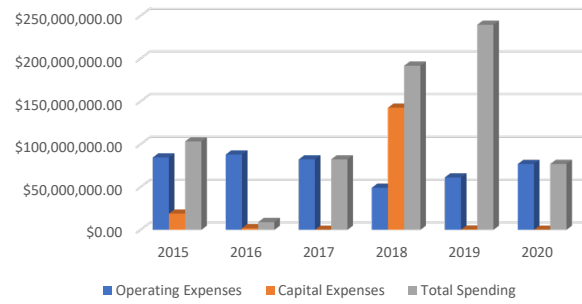


Figure 4-20. Philadelphia Parks & Recreation Agency Spending.
(Graph Data: TPL 2015,2016,2017,2018,2019,2020)

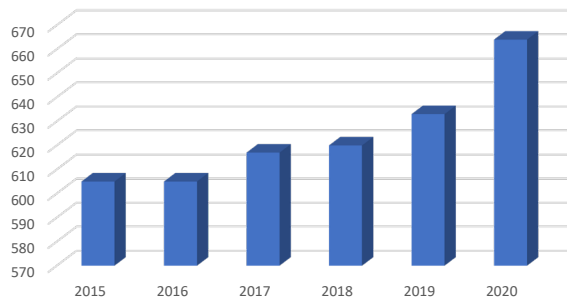


Figure 4-21. Philadelphia Full Time Employees.
(Graph Data: TPL 2015,2016,2017,2018,2019,2020)

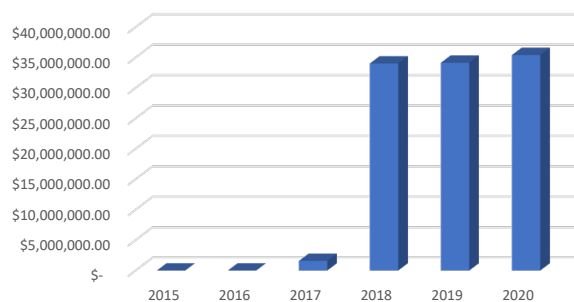


Figure 4-22. Philadelphia Conservancy/Private Spending.
(Graph Data: TPL 2015*,2016*,2017,2018,2019,2020)

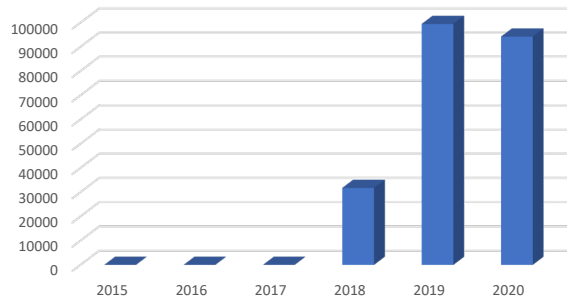


Figure 4-23. Philadelphia Volunteer Hours.
(Graph Data: TPL 2015*,2016*,2017,2018,2019,2020)

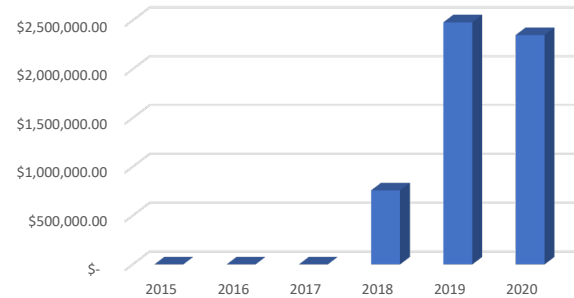


Figure 4-24. Philadelphia Value of Volunteer Hours.
(Graph Data: TPL 2015*,2016*,2017*,2018,2019,2020)

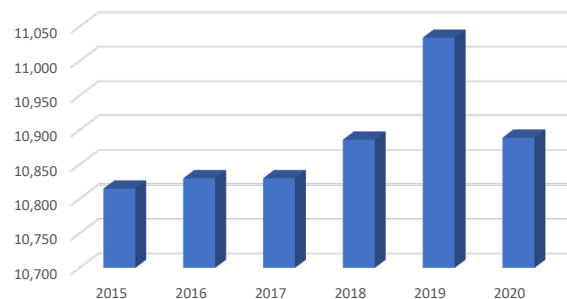


Figure 4-25. Philadelphia Parkland Area (acres).
(Graph Data: TPL 2015,2016,2017,2018,2019,2020)

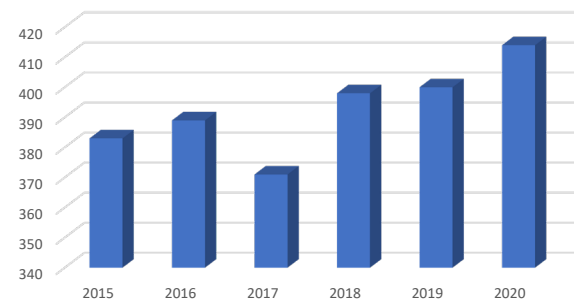


Figure 4-26. Philadelphia Number of Parks.
(Graph Data: TPL 2015,2016,2017,2018,2019,2020)

* Indicates data is not available

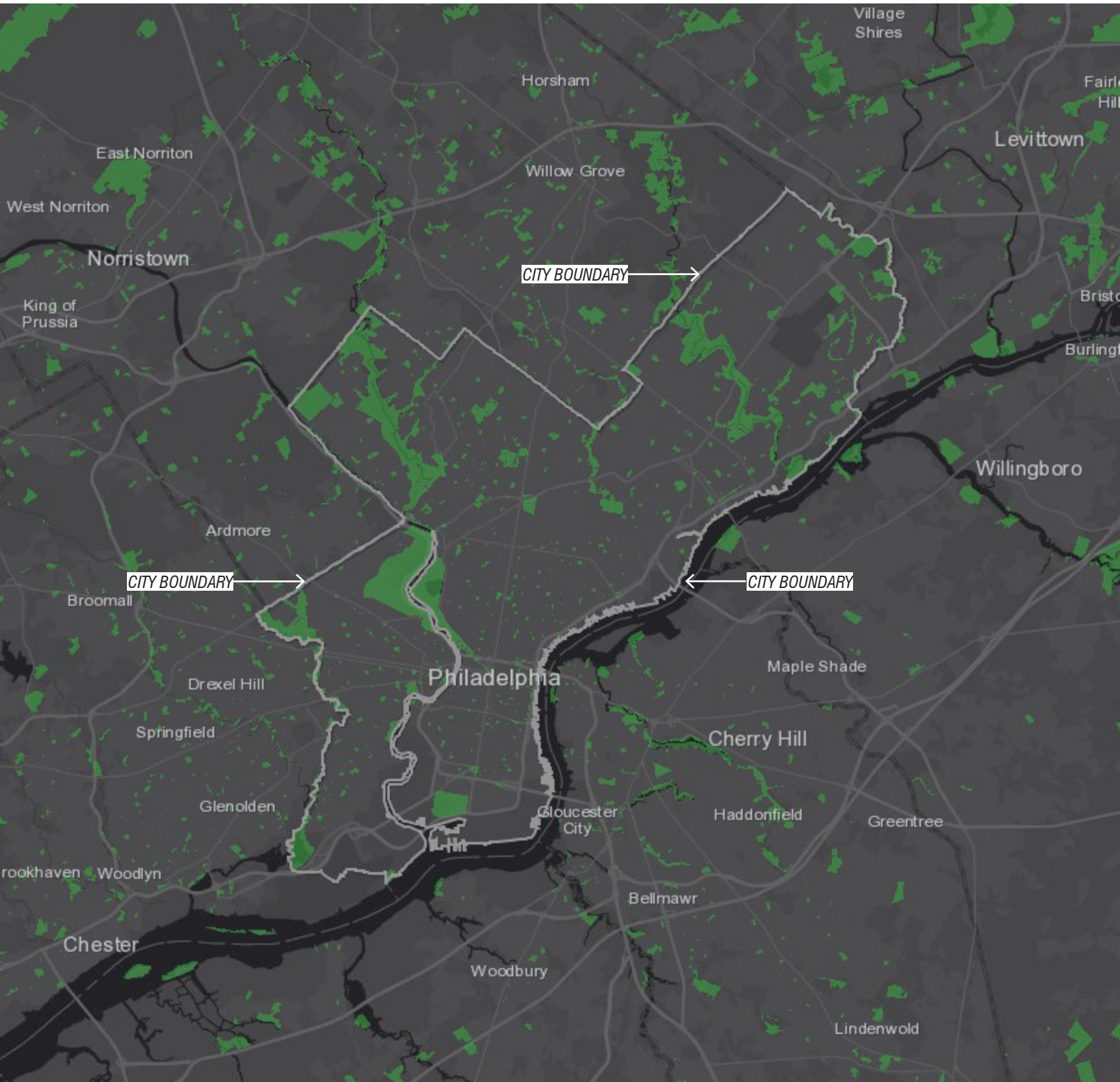


Figure 4-27. Philadelphia Area Parks Map.

Information Derived from Interviews (applies to all subsequent sections)

Attracting and Recruiting Volunteers (Information derived from Interview)

Volunteer #s & Tasks

For the Philadelphia Parks and Recreation Department, it is difficult to quantify the number of volunteers that they have assisting the parks department each year. While the department hosts many activities throughout the month and year, there is a strong park friends' network that provides support to individual parks that the department doesn't track, or various civic or corporate groups hosting individual activities. Events hosted by the department draw anywhere from five to 400 volunteers at a time and the various friends groups have memberships ranging from five to 3,000 individuals, all committed to beautifying parks. While no exact number was discussed during the interview, it is obvious that there are many individuals committed to helping Philadelphia area parks. Services provided by volunteers throughout the year range from programming or hosting events to general park maintenance (i.e. trash cleanup, weeding, planting native trees/shrubs, trail maintenance, etc.).

Marketing Efforts & Constraints

Around the year 2000 the parks department received a grant to engage volunteers to help with natural lands restoration work. Through the recruitment efforts of the parks and recreation staff, more and more Philadelphia residents began to provide assistance. According to the interviewee, at this time, around 90% of their time was taken up with recruiting efforts. Today, through this groundwork and current social media technologies, very little time is spent actively recruiting; activities are announced, and residents sign up to help. Apart from individuals turning out to help parks, many of the friends' groups have grown organically from park neighbors seeing a need (ex: littler, weeds) and contacting the parks department to help. Some of the friends' groups are formed by like-minded volunteers meeting at events and then taking it upon themselves to provide additional work and support to specific parks. And, apart from social media, a primary method of marketing for volunteers, is the volunteers themselves. Many invite friends and family to attend events to help care for their park.

Although the volunteer marketing efforts have been very successful through the years, in the beginning these efforts were faced with stiff opposition from outside sources. Labor unions and other entities were against the parks department seeking the help of volunteers and "free labor" because this

was taking away paid work. While this opposition has almost completely disappeared, there are other issues that have arisen from relying on volunteers so heavily. In the interview it was stated that the parks department is underfunded and understaffed and therefore works with volunteers out of necessity, which has been both positive and negative. While many of the parks are receiving more care than they would if not for the help of volunteers, there are many public spaces that are now seen as private or personal property because of the assistance given.

Capacity

The Philadelphia Parks and Recreation Department is eager for the continued support of individuals and friends' groups in caring for Philadelphia parks. But even if the department were able to attract tens of thousands of volunteers each month, the limiting factor is coordinating staff. Currently there are four staff personnel assigned to overseeing and managing volunteers for the department. Each of these staff has an area of responsibility and works to coordinate projects and the friends' groups located within that area and each is nearly exhausted on what they are able to manage.

Volunteer Organizations

Length & Lifespan

Philadelphia has a rich history of volunteer organizations caring for public parks. The oldest organization, Friends of the Wissahickon, has been partnering with Philadelphia Parks and Recreation (PPR) for nearly 100 years to care for the park. While most of the organizations are not nearly this old, many have been working with PPR 10 years, and each year brings additional individuals forming groups to care for parks (typically one to three). As stated in the interview, the main key to these organizations lasting and thriving is leadership. Some of the groups have one individual who takes the lead in organizing and communicating and when that individual leaves, the organization tends to flounder until either someone else takes charge or the group is totally disbanded. Many of the organizations are sophisticated and have full boards to share the workload which greatly helps in creating an enduring relationship.

Value Research

In recent years, the PPR has begun conducting research on the value that volunteers and groups bring to their organization. While they don't yet track the efforts of the friends' groups, they have started to do more to show the value of volunteers in annual reports or budgeting, also when applying for grants to show that they can match with in-kind services. Unfortunately, the researcher could not collect this information.

Potential Park Department Adjustments

Staff vs Volunteers

Stated earlier, the parks department is underfunded and understaffed. This has created a need for and reliance upon volunteers. With as much work as volunteers do, they have not caused the PPR to adjust their work efforts with the parks though. With only "skeleton crews" supporting the parks, volunteers are doing work that would not otherwise have been done, especially in the natural land areas. Using volunteers allows the department to keep their park spaces at a higher standard than they would be able to on their own. With this help has also come changes to the PPR, mainly that there is now a unit tasked with organizing and managing volunteers. While the stewardship unit helps recruit and organize volunteer events, it does not oversee all the events hosted by the individual friends' groups which allows for more to get done without direct supervision.

Impact

In the past five years it is estimated that PPR has completed around 400 projects to improve their parks by completing various activities or tasks including general cleanup, planting native plants, or edging sidewalks. Of these 400 events, it was estimated that roughly half would not have been able to be completed without the help of volunteers. This is a significant impact provided by volunteers to the PPR. Because of this level of involvement, is it difficult to identify specific areas where volunteers make the most significant impact, but it was made clear that there are many parks within the PPR system that would not function without the help of volunteers and if more volunteers were available they would gladly be put to work doing "everything".

Fundraising

Public & Private Money

Stated earlier, the parks department is underfunded, but this has not caused them to reach out for significant private donations to cover day-to-day operations. When completing capital projects there may be private donations made and even some of the more robust friends' groups will seek out money from the community but this is not something that PPR puts resources into. Donations that are made are typically for very specific things, like redoing ball fields, benches, play equipment, etc. And while there are several large friends' groups that care for many of the parks, there are none that provide all of the finances needed to maintain the individual parks they are associated with. The donations made have not caused the PPR to adjust their funding and the park budget is not broken down to individual parks, so funding is not reallocated if individual parks are receiving private money. So while there are private donations made, they are typically for capital projects and any that are for maintenance purposes, are not in amounts large enough to have a significant impact on the park budget or budget allocation decisions.

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PORTLAND

Portland area friends groups:

Columbia Slough Watershed Council
The Forest Park Conservancy
Friends of Baltimore Woods
Friends of Columbia Children's Arboretum
Friends of Errol Heights
Friends of Gabriel Park
Friends of Marquam Nature Park
Friends of Mt. Tabor Park Weed Warriors
Friends of Oaks Bottom
Friends of Powell Butte
Friends of Tideman Johnson
Friends of Terwilliger Parkway
Friends of Woods Park
Hoyt Arboretum Friends
Johnson Creek Watershed Council
SW Trails
Tryon Creek Watershed Council

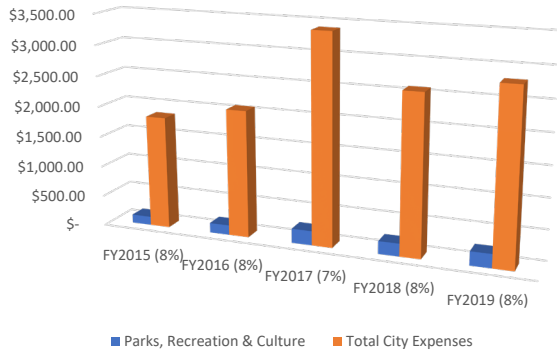


Figure 4-28. Portland City Budget (in millions)
(Graph Data: Denver 2015,2016,2017,2018,2019,2020)

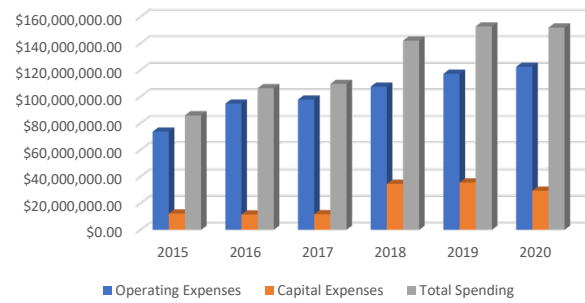


Figure 4-29. Portland Parks & Recreation Agency Spending.
(Graph Data: TPL 2015,2016,2017,2018,2019,2020)

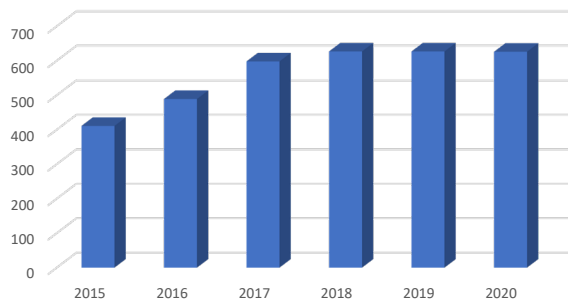


Figure 4-30. Portland Full Time Employees.
(Graph Data: TPL 2015,2016,2017,2018,2019,2020)

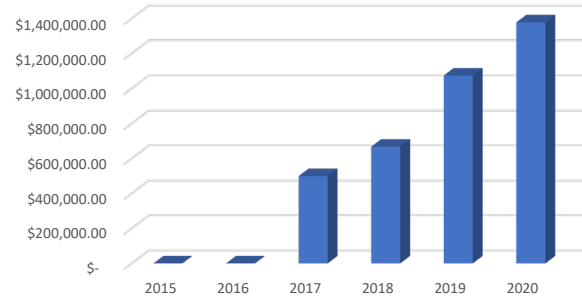


Figure 4-31. Portland Conservancy/Private Spending.
(Graph Data: TPL 2015*,2016*,2017,2018,2019,2020)

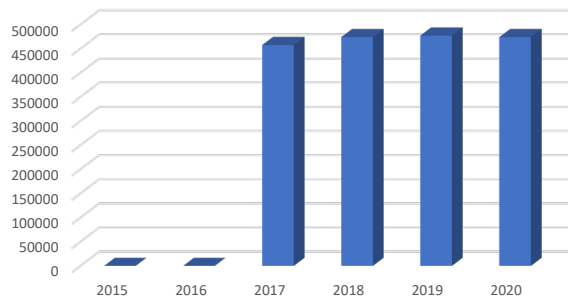


Figure 4-32. Portland Volunteer Hours.
(Graph Data: TPL 2015*,2016*,2017,2018,2019,2020)

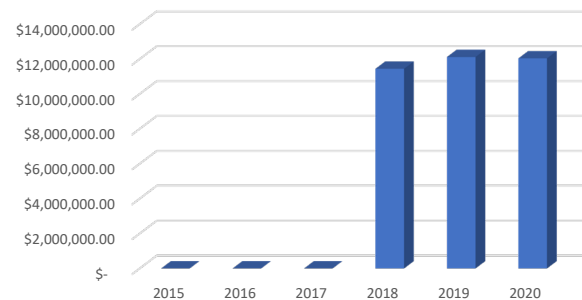


Figure 4-33. Portland Value of Volunteer Hours.
(Graph Data: TPL 2015*,2016*,2017*,2018,2019,2020)

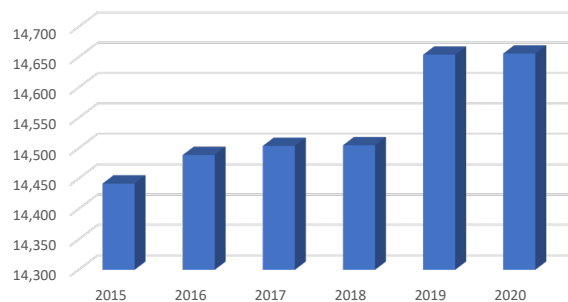


Figure 4-34. Portland Parkland Area (acres).
(Graph Data: TPL 2015,2016,2017,2018,2019,2020)

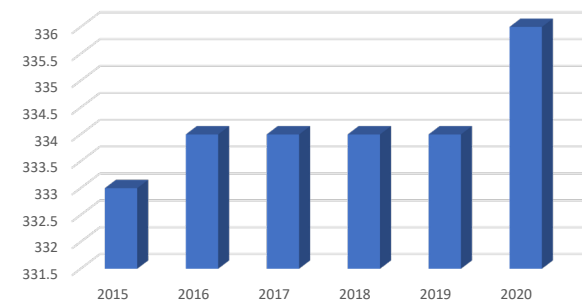


Figure 4-35. Portland Number of Parks.
(Graph Data: TPL 2015,2016,2017,2018,2019,2020)

* Indicates data is not available

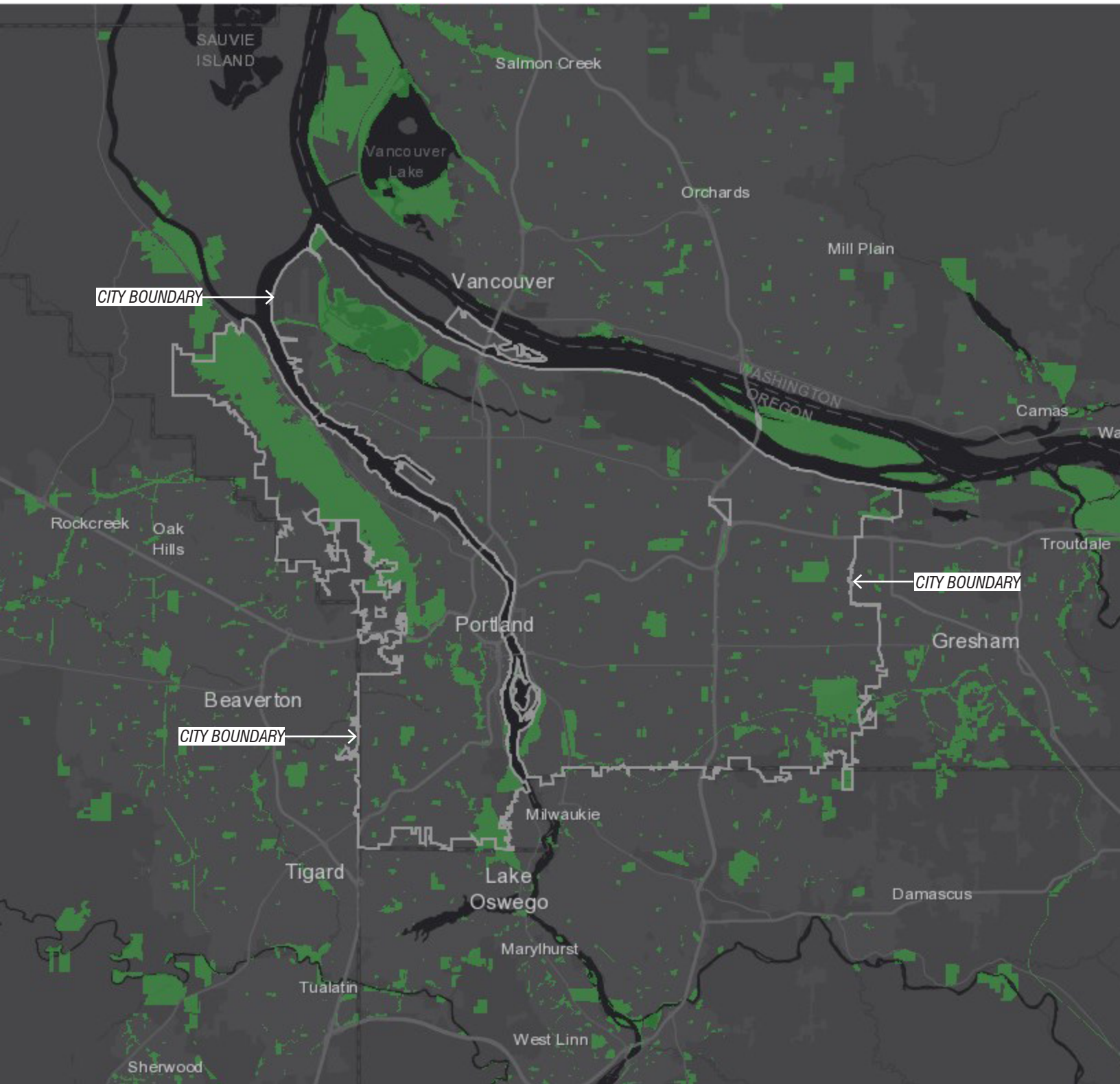


Figure 4-36. Portland Area Parks Map.

Information Derived from Interviews (applies to all subsequent sections)

Attracting and Recruiting Volunteers

Volunteer #s & Tasks

In a typical year, Portland Parks and Recreation (PP&R) will have 12,000 to 16,000 registered individuals volunteer to help care for their parks, individuals who have filed paperwork with the department and regularly attend events. PP&R draws groups and individuals to come to various activities hosted throughout the year, many happening each Saturday. The range is large because, as PP&R put it, they are in the “stone age” and track individuals with simple, paper sign-in sheets and don’t correlate between sheets to see if individuals have shown up at multiple events. PP&R has invested in volunteer management software to help better track the actual number of volunteers.

When volunteers come out in support of parks, they do help in many of the usual ways, cleaning trash, caring for gardens, habitat restoration, but they are also participating on advisory boards, safety park watches, and park patrols.

Marketing Efforts & Constraints

PP&R relies on a combination of methods for volunteer outreach: social media, email, newspapers, and local media apart from their webpage. They will reach out to target groups or individuals who have previously volunteered to invite them to upcoming events. PP&R did say that volunteers are probably the biggest recruiting tool they have, by spreading information about upcoming activities to their friends and organizations. While PP&R has had great success in activating a strong volunteer support base, occasionally PP&R will have individuals or groups bring a volunteer project to the department for coordination and PP&R will have to decline the event/activity because it is not something the department handles (projects that take them out of their work realm). External constraints have not really been an issue on the work that PP&R has volunteers provide but they have learned over the years what to not have them do. Labor unions have been a small issue but mainly direction on projects and activities has come from internal sources. The PP&R representative I interviewed said that it was made clear they do not use volunteers to clean restrooms. Apart from the many chemicals and cleaning solvents used, and the training necessary, that is an employee’s responsibility, and PP&R works hard to make sure that they do not replace employees with volunteers.

Capacity

The main limitations discussed in the interview were those of materials and staffing. There is no cap or limit to the number of volunteers that the PP&R is willing to work with. The trouble comes in ensuring that there are enough staff to assist in overseeing or coordinating the various projects and providing enough “tools, gloves, plants, and materials” for the volunteers creates a limit. The same is true for working with friends’ groups, making sure there are enough staff to manage and liaison with the different groups.

Volunteer Organizations

Length & Lifespan

Portland has a long history of engaging volunteers with parks. Back in the 1800s people were helping to build parks and beautify their city. Since the 1950s volunteers and friends’ organizations have been working with PP&R to care for public parks. Friends’ groups serving the people of Portland typically have a lifespan of 18 to 25 years. There are numerous groups that last for a few months or never “get off the ground” but those that do will typically provide care and assistance for many years. Many groups start out as few neighbors collecting trash or park patrols and grow into quite sophisticated friends groups, serving many years. To help these groups start or continue their work, P&R will provide some help, possibly even a little seed money, but it is really up to the group to work things out. Once they are organized and operational, PP&R will help coordinate work efforts and even help in transitional events between new and old groups or combining groups.

Value Research

PP&R does conduct research on the value brought to the organization by the work and effort of volunteers. Using the volunteer hours data collected at events, PP&R finds a corresponding wage for the work performed to calculate a dollar amount. They use this information to show the work provided by volunteers by translating it into the equivalent number of full-time employees. Periodically this information is compiled into a report on the impact provided by volunteers. Apart from the impact report, PP&R is working on developing a method to track the private donations provided by the friends’ groups in caring for parks.

Potential Park Department Adjustments

Staff vs Volunteers

With the use of volunteers there has been a shift in the activities and duties of park personnel. Not only are park personnel able to focus on other tasks rather than litter cleanup, but they are also gaining new skills and experience by managing and coordinating the volunteer help. Many of the horticulturalists and park technicians are able to gain valuable leadership experience by overseeing these groups. Volunteers have allowed PP&R personnel to stretch their work and provide better care for the parks. While the work provided by volunteers is great, there will typically be a park employee on site while activities are happening to help coordinate efforts, but that also depends on the group and the activity. In the natural areas, there will likely be a park employee leading the restoration effort; for a city park, often groups are left to carry out the work after getting started by a member of maintenance.

Impact

Understanding the impact of volunteers on the PP&R is difficult because volunteers are involved in so much. When asked about the number of projects involving volunteers in the past five years, the interviewee stated that they probably use volunteers on more than 1,000 projects a year, stating that there are multiple events every Saturday for most of the year, weekly events at the rhododendron garden, multiple weekly events at Forest Park, etc. None of these events would have been possible without the help of volunteers. The impact and importance of volunteers is enormous to PP&R. Among the many, probably the most significant effort volunteers are providing is in habitat restoration and nature-scaping the city. Volunteers have been involved in caring for the natural areas as well as removing the dying turf under many of the city trees. Because of volunteers the city boasts of having a wonderful rhododendron and botanical garden. The Leach Botanical Garden was on the verge of being sold for development but was saved by the effort of volunteers who continue to provide services for it. Volunteers are greatly needed and are providing wonderful services to the city of Portland and the PP&R. Because of volunteers, the PP&R has an advisory board and park safety volunteers. Volunteers provide almost all the work in maintaining several rose gardens by helping the few staff to deadhead and showcase beautiful flowers longer. If PP&R were able to get more volunteers, they would be put to work doing more of what they are doing in different parts of the city and providing the same great service.

Fundraising

Public & Private Money

“... We do not currently accept donations for community initiated projects in parks.... The Portland Park system has a lot of competing needs and limited funding, so we have to be very thoughtful about funding decisions and community driven fundraising efforts. All park projects are ranked for equity, likelihood of failure, and consequence of failure, and PP&R focuses efforts on addressing the most critical repairs and identified service gaps, with equity at the forefront. Every major project goes through an extensive community engagement process, and we collect input about what community members need the most. We do not accept donations for specific improvements in the park from individuals or community groups because these types of projects divert staff resources from the more critical repairs and service gaps that have been identified in the park system through extensive reviews and community engagement. We do accept donations through our Legacy Giving Program (Bench Program and Rose Bed Program), but those donations go directly to trust funds for the care of park benches and roses in the Washington Park Rose Garden respectively. We can also accept donations directly to support the work of the bureau. In other words, a person can donate funds to support a program, or community center, but we don't accept funds to do something that hasn't already been identified as a need. The Portland Parks Foundation raises funds for specific park projects in partnership with PP&R, and some of these efforts have been significant in making a major project come together. “

Survey

A survey was prepared and distributed with the help of the park department interviewees. The survey was intended to gather feedback from volunteer group leaders (individuals registered with the parks department) about their thoughts, feelings, and ideas on their contributions to the parks department through volunteerism.

Despite several distribution attempts, only two survey responses were received which does not constitute a large enough sample size to be significant to better understand potential contributions to parks departments from the perspective of volunteers. Therefore, no survey data or findings relative to the volunteers themselves will be presented.

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ANALYSIS

CHAPTER 5

Cross-Case Analysis

Introduction

The following cross-case review will compare the responses of each of the three city personnel to identify similarities and unique traits. The cross-case review is organized using the same framework as the individual case studies. Located after the review is a cross-case review matrix, Figures 5-1-1 - 5-1-3 on pages 62 - 67, which provides a summary of the review.

Attracting and Recruiting Volunteers

Volunteer #s & Tasks

As expected, all three interviewees stated that their respective parks departments rely on thousands of volunteers each year to accomplish tasks to beautify and maintain their parks. The volunteers come to many events that the three departments host either monthly or annually. The tasks that volunteers do was similar between the three city park departments: weeding, trash cleanup, planting trees/shrubs, trail maintenance, etc. Each city also said that if they had more volunteers, they would all be put to work.

While each of these cities works hard to track the individual numbers and specific efforts of volunteers, until they invest in systems that allow for better management and tracking (Portland was the only city to say they are investing in tracking software) they will not know the true benefit(s) received from volunteers. They will not be able to definitively say the actual amount they are receiving from volunteers to help them offset any financial and operational shortfalls and they will not know the true cost of attracting this labor force.

Marketing Efforts & Constraints

When it comes to marketing volunteer activities, each department stated that they relied heavily on social media platforms to distribute upcoming activity information. Portland also includes other media outlets such as local news, newspapers, and email to disseminate information. While all of these outlets are important and vital to attracting volunteers, each interviewee made it clear that the volunteers themselves were the best advertisers and marketers for increasing volunteerism participation.

Portland and Philadelphia both mentioned that in the past each received pushback from outside forces for using volunteers. Portland shared that their “outside” forces were actually government employees, worried that volunteers would do tasks that individuals are paid to complete, such as cleaning restrooms. Once it was understood that volunteers would not be handling these tasks, the pushback went away. In Philadelphia, entities were against “free labor” as well because it was seen as taking paid positions. In time this opposition also ceased but relying on volunteers so heavily has also produced other problems. Philadelphia shared that because many of the friends’ groups grow organically from neighbors seeing their park in distress and working to rescue it, the volunteers now have a sense of ownership and forget that it is still a public park, not a private yard.

Attracting volunteers is difficult at the best of times, but when there are various forces working against the departments it makes it that much harder. If parks departments work with these forces to create a dialog of understanding, it is possible that they could become an asset instead of a hinderance.

While each city had many commonalities on their advertising of events, they did not share if they asked or track which method worked for volunteers. All interviewees “knew” that the greatest way to get additional volunteers was from existing volunteers bringing friends. If data was collected on the effectiveness of the various marketing methods employed, including word of mouth, departments would have a better understanding of where to put their limited resources, especially when employing marketing means with a financial cost. Without this information it is likely impossible for departments to understand the true impact of volunteers in offsetting financial and operational shortfalls.

Capacity

When questioned on their capacity to oversee volunteers and if they were at the maximum number of volunteers, the responses from each city were to the point that they would welcome more volunteers for events but they are limited by the number of staff available to oversee activities or materials for volunteers to use while working.

It isn't clear if the departments interviewed have any organizational structure for their volunteers. If there are “captains and co-captains” leading and assisting smaller groups in their work efforts. If a limitation on the maximum number of volunteers is caused by the available staff for overseeing them, it may be necessary, and beneficial, to create a formal volunteer structure to help provide needed oversight and direction to ensure that work is completed as desired. By engaging volunteers in this way it can enlarge the capacity of the parks department and help with any financial or operational shortfalls they may experience.

Volunteer Organizations

Length & Lifespan

All three cities have partnered with friends or conservancy groups to help maintain their parks. Philadelphia and Portland both gave ranges for the lifespan of these groups as 10 to 25 years and 18 to 25 years respectively. Philadelphia and Portland also reported that volunteers or friends groups have been assisting with city parks for roughly 100 years.

While Denver did not share a life span for friends groups, they did share that formal groups have been helping since around the year 2000 and that each year the groups will sign a new commitment document with the parks department to care for their respective park.

All three cities partner with friends or conservancy groups to help care for parks. It was unclear how much support, training, or coordination that the parks department provided to these groups but based on the information provided from Philadelphia and Portland, these groups can provide valuable help for years, even decades. If parks departments develop systems and strategies to help keep the friends and conservancy groups operational it is possible that these groups can help parks departments offset any shortfalls in manpower and budget.

Value Research

Each city stated that they did conduct research on the value of the impact that volunteers provide. Denver shared that they get their monetary hourly rate from the Independent Sector website to calculate the financial contribution provided by volunteers. Neither Philadelphia nor Portland shared where they get the hourly rate but they do calculate the same information as Denver. Philadelphia shared that the information from this research is used in annual reports, budgeting, and when applying for grants. Portland shared that they will occasionally produce a volunteer impact reports to share with the community, highlighting the significant impact that volunteers have on their local parks.

Each city stated that they conduct research to better understand the value and impact that volunteers bring to their parks departments. It will be difficult to get a clear and accurate understanding on the real benefit provided by volunteers until the departments have systems (software or other) in place to accurately track volunteers and volunteer hours.

Potential Parks Department Adjustments

Staff vs Volunteers

Volunteers help each city provide a better park system. By showing up to work, volunteers are an amazing asset and help Denver and Philadelphia shore up staff shortages. Both Denver and Philadelphia reported that because of staff shortages, they are reliant on volunteers to get many tasks done that staff do not have time to do, such as trash cleanup. Portland did not share that they had staff shortages, but they did say that volunteers allow their staff to focus on other activities. Because the Portland staff are involved in overseeing the activities of volunteers, valuable management type learning and training are being provided to employees who may not have received it otherwise.

Each department shared the wonderful things that volunteers did for their respective organizations. Each city stated that it was because of volunteers that they were able to accomplish many things, some of which would not have happened without the use of volunteers because there isn't enough staff to provide services. It was clear from the conversations that volunteers do help to avoid operational shortfalls in areas where volunteers were used

Impact

When asked about the impact of volunteers on their parks system, both Denver and Philadelphia shared that of projects completed within the past five years, nearly 50% would not have been completed without the help of volunteers. Portland, in responding to the same question, said that volunteers are involved in nearly every activity that they do and no project would be possible without the help of volunteers. Each city also stated that if they had more volunteers they would happily put them to work doing more of what they are currently doing.

Fundraising

Public & Private Money

Each city stated that they do not actively seek private money for fully funding projects. Denver and Philadelphia do accept private donations which are made for specific items (ex: benches, trees, etc.). Portland does not accept donations for community-initiated projects but residents may make donations to city sponsored organizations which may then use the money to further the parks department vision. Philadelphia was the only city to share that some of the friends/conservation groups will seek out donations. Since each department does not actively solicit donations for projects the primary impact from volunteers will be measured in donated time and the financial amount associated with that time.

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DENVER

ATTRACTING & RECRUITING VOLUNTEERS

VOLUNTEER #S & TASKS	• <i>Thousands of volunteers annually</i> • <i>Many organized events annually</i> • <i>Volunteers perform general clean up and beautification activities</i>	
MARKETING EFFORTS & CONSTRAINTS	• <i>Rely on social media for information distribution</i> • <i>Volunteers recruiting friends is a major source of help</i> • Formal agreement with groups	
CAPACITY	• <i>Nearly maxed out at what existing staff volunteer coordinators can oversee</i>	

**Italics indicates similarities across cities.*

Figure 5-1-1. Cross-Case Analysis Matrix (B. Williamson)

PHILADELPHIA

PORTLAND

	• <i>Thousands of volunteers annually</i> • <i>Many organized events monthly and annually</i> • <i>Volunteers perform general clean up and beautification activities</i>	• <i>Thousands of volunteers annually</i> • <i>Many organized events monthly and annually</i> • <i>Volunteers perform general clean up and beautification activities</i> • <i>Invested in software to help track volunteer numbers better</i>
	• <i>Rely on social media for information distribution</i> • <i>Volunteers recruiting friends is a major source of help</i> • <i>Faced stiff opposition from outside sources when they first started recruiting volunteer help</i> • <i>Volunteer may have forgotten that they do not own the public park</i>	• <i>Rely on social media, email, newspapers, and local media for information distribution</i> • <i>Volunteers recruiting friends is a major source of help</i> • <i>Initial opposition helped to guide what tasks volunteers participate in (volunteers do not replace employees)</i>
	• <i>Nearly maxed out at what existing staff of 4 volunteer coordinators can oversee</i>	• <i>There is no cap to volunteer numbers, but they are limited by the number of supervisory staff and tools/materials they can provide</i>

DENVER

VOLUNTEER ORGANIZATIONS

LENGTH & LIFESPAN	• Formal groups have been assisting since around the year 2000 • Sign a new commitment document each year with the department	
VALUE RESEARCH	• <i>Conducts research on volunteer contributions</i> • Uses data from Independent Sector website to assign monetary value to volunteer hours	

**Italics indicates similarities across cities.*

Figure 5-1-2. Cross-Case Analysis Matrix (B. Williamson)

PHILADELPHIA

PORTLAND

	• <i>Typical lifespan of 10 to 25 years, life span is dependent on volunteer commitment and leadership</i> • <i>One group has been partnering/ volunteering with Philadelphia for nearly 100 years</i>	• <i>Typical lifespan of 18 to 25 years</i> • <i>Volunteers and groups have been helping Portland for over 100 years</i>
	• <i>Conducts research on volunteer contributions to show value for annual reports, budgeting, and grant applications</i>	• <i>Conducts research on volunteer contributions</i> • <i>Occasionally produces a published report to show impact and value of volunteer work partnerships with the parks department</i>

DENVER

POTENTIAL PARKS DEPARTMENT ADJUSTMENTS

STAFF VS VOLUNTEERS	• <i>Staff shortages necessitate the use of volunteers</i> • <i>Volunteers do tasks/jobs that staff would not be able to do</i> • <i>Staff provide consistent oversight at all events</i>	
IMPACT	• <i>Around 50% of completed projects would not have been possible without the help of volunteers</i> • <i>Denver Parks and Recreation “always needs work, so [they] will always accept [volunteers]....”</i>	
<u>FUNDRAISING</u>		
PUBLIC & PRIVATE MONEY	• <i>Does not actively seek private money</i> • <i>Private donations are typically made for specific project/items (ex: benches, trees, etc.)</i>	

**Italics indicates similarities across cities.*

Figure 5-1-3. *Cross-Case Analysis Matrix (B. Williamson)*

PHILADELPHIA

PORTLAND

	• Parks department is underfunded and <i>understaffed</i> • <i>Volunteers do tasks/jobs that staff would not be able to do</i> • Rely on volunteers to get many things done	• Park personnel are able to grow as leaders by helping coordinate and oversee volunteer groups • Staff are able to shift tasks from things that volunteers do (ex: litter cleanup)
	• <i>Around 50% of completed projects would not have been possible without the help of volunteers</i> • <i>If more volunteers were available they would gladly be put to work doing "everything".</i>	• Volunteers are involved in nearly all departmental work activities and none would be possible without the help of volunteers • Because of volunteers the city has a botanical garden, rhododendron garden, and several rose gardens • <i>If there were more volunteers they would be put to work</i>
	• <i>Does not actively seek private money for day-to-day operations but may for capital projects</i> • Some friends/conservation groups will seek out donations • <i>Private donations are typically made for specific project/items (ex: benches, trees, etc.)</i>	• <i>Does not actively seek private money or accept money for community initiated projects</i> • Private donations may be made to Legacy Giving Programs and are put into a trust to used as the department deems necessary

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CONCLUSIONS

CHAPTER 6

Impact of Volunteers

In studying the use and impact of volunteers of three municipal park systems, several significant findings emerged. First, all three park systems rely heavily on volunteers to maintain their various parks. Second, despite budget constraints, none of the park systems are actively seeking private donations for park projects. Third, all three systems conduct research on the impact of volunteers to their respective park systems.

First, it became clear early on that volunteers provide immense support to sustain municipal park systems (see Figures 4-13, 4-14, 4-15, 4-22, 4-23, 4-24, 4-31, 4-32, and 4-33). During the interviews, it was stated multiple times that volunteers do work that would otherwise not be done which allows the park system to function at a higher level. Each city reported that without volunteers most projects involving volunteers would not have been completed. It is clear that volunteers provide significant assistance in carrying out the work and mission of these municipal park systems. This value is not very well understood though because of the lack of accurate tracking and recording methods to compile data.

Second, with budget constraints being ever present, the case studies revealed that none of the park departments are actively seeking private donations for day-to-day operations. Only Philadelphia reported that some of their friend groups will seek out private donations to aide their efforts. Currently, all three park departments are relying on their allotted budget to keep moving forward.

Third, each studied park department is conducting their own research on the value of volunteers. While the research presented here may be limited to dollar amounts it is still important to recognize this contribution and use it to help shine the light on departments' needs and potential gaps in services. Again though, without better tracking and recording

systems, the data collected will only reveal a portion of the impact.

While volunteers provide important work to assist park departments in providing services to their citizens, without appropriate data, it is impossible to establish to what degree public participation is able to offset financial and operational shortfalls. Due to the length of time that many of the friends/conservation groups have been working with various parks, the relationship appears to be sustainable. However, the exact magnitude of wide-ranging impacts is indeterminate. What is known is that volunteers provide a great support to the community.

Limitations to the Study

There were three notable limitations to this study. First, park personnel were selected because of their direct connection with volunteers and being engaged in recruiting volunteers and directing their efforts. Interview invitations were sent through the contact information links provided on the park website where contact was made. While the primary contact individuals were knowledgeable about the work of volunteers within their park system, engaging with additional volunteer coordinators or personnel would have brought additional perspectives and insights into the study.

Second, while it is clear that volunteers have a great impact on the three municipal park systems studied, expanding the case studies to include more municipalities would provide more substantiation or expand the range of benefits provided by volunteers.

Finally, it was unfortunate that the survey of actual volunteers did not provide sufficient data for study. A robust response rate would have provided valuable insights from the perspective of volunteers. This would include both the range of volunteer tasks undertaken and the motivation/satisfaction gained from volunteerism.

Future Research Needs

Future research on this topic will greatly enhance the information available to municipal park systems and help volunteer coordinators better understand what other park systems are doing and where they may use their time and resources better. Conducting more case studies on municipal park systems will add to the pool of information from which to draw. Gaining feedback from volunteers via surveys will directly guide volunteer engagement and help invigorate volunteer workforces.

Summary

In summation, this study confirms initial speculation that in a time of budget pressures experienced by park departments, volunteers make substantial contributions to supplement park operations and activity programming. This study also provides essential groundwork for future efforts intended to better understand the impact of volunteers on municipal park systems.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

DENVER

Question 1: About how many people per year volunteer time to assist parks within your city?

DENVER: Okay, so BEFORE COVID HIT IN 2019 we have HIT close to 40,000 volunteers. Yeah, so there's a lot of volunteers that give back to the community. Of course, 2020, our numbers really WENT down because nobody was around to volunteer and then 2021 I DON'T HAVE THE EXACT NUMBERS right now but I would say that we're close to over 1000 people, BECAUSE THEY LIFTED THE RESTRICTIONS AND THAT'S WHEN VOLUNTEERS STARTED COMING BACK BUT And we COULD only allow 10 volunteers AT A TIME. BUT BEFORE COVID IT WAS 40,000 VOLUNTEERS.

Question 2: What are different ways they volunteer their time?

DENVER: We have six annual events that take place every year. And those events are two park stewardship days along the South Platte River. We have "Put the beds to bed" in October, which removed the flowers and turn the soil. We have the Starbucks day of service, which is about 600 volunteers. And then we have the trails day and Arbor Day. So the six annual events and then we have the one day volunteer projects, which include volunteers coming and the projects could consist of mulching trees, debris removal, even painting and cleaning sidewalks, spreading crusher fine, thinning out willows about the lakeshore. So, we have over 200 parks, and over, I would say over 100 trails. So between the parks and the trails, where we invite volunteers, on the trails, it's usually like debris removal and painting railings but pretty much, I would say 90% of its trade, removing debris along the trail. So, so with all the parks that we have in Denver, I know a lot of the projects are repetitive, but we send groups to different locations, and a lot of the projects consist of the same assignment which is the mulching and you know everything that I just mentioned.

Question 3. How do you attract volunteers or partners like friends groups?

DENVER: Okay, so a lot of partners are returning volunteers. So, you know, working with them in the past, they know to contact us directly and they know what to expect. So those are our returning partners. As far as attracting volunteers, we have our social media to Facebook and we have our volunteer website, www.Denvergov.org volunteers and on there, it's some, you know, all the volunteer opportunities we have.

Question 4. Are there any outside forces, such as labor unions, etc. that influence the use of volunteers in your community?

DENVER: NO

Question 5. Do volunteers attract additional volunteers?

DENVER Yes. There's WORD OF MOUTH And THERE'S TIMES THAT A VOLUNTEER GROUP WILL CALL ME and say "so and so recommended you" so yeah there's a lot of word of mouth. That gets out there, regarding our agency.

Question 6. Do you have a cap for the number of volunteers/friends groups that you are willing to oversee/coordinate with?

a. If so, what is it?

b. Are you at your limit?

DENVER Actually, our biggest event is the Starbucks Day of service and that's with 600 volunteers. And so I would say that we do cap off at 600 because, you know, staying at one park we usually assign them to the largest park here in Denver, where we're able to accommodate the entire group. I would say 600.

BENJI: 600 people at an individual event. What about like friends groups?

DENVER: I would probably say again depending on the location, probably 120.

Question 7. How long have volunteers or volunteer organizations been assisting with individual parks?

DENVER: Oh well. I think the program started before I started with them, I would say, I think they started in 1999. I've been with them since 2003.

BENJI: Okay, so what I will say more than 20 years.

Question 8. What is the typical lifespan of local friends groups?

a. What steps, if any, do you take to help invigorate them?

DENVER: Okay, so the typical lifespan of the local friends groups, I have some that are going on, actually like 20 years, those program started, and they've been volunteering every year. And usually the steps that we take it so there's an agreement signed between us and them. And it's a yearly commitment but they continue to repeat the agreement every year.

Question 9. Do you conduct research on or calculate the value that volunteers bring to your organization?

DENVER: I do. I use independentsector.org and that gives me the dollar value that volunteers bring to the organization.

Question 10. Are overall maintenance jobs redirected to other priorities because of volunteer efforts?

Denver: No Not at all. The volunteer efforts are usually due to the shortage of staff. Usually there's a lot of projects that they cannot get to. So what they do is when we assign volunteers to that location, then the volunteers will go ahead and work on the tasks that that the park staff can't get to

Question 11. Do volunteers do jobs that would not otherwise be done by park personnel?

DENVER Yes.

Question 12. Are Park administrators or other maintenance personnel able to shift work to other areas that would not have been attended to but are now able to because of volunteer efforts.

DENVER: Do you mean like to shift their work schedule.

BENJI: I mean like if you have volunteers that are helping in your office, similar to the park maintenance question like as far as like, could they shift their efforts. Or if you have volunteers working in your office. Do you shift your efforts because you can hand the job off to a volunteer.

DENVER Yes.

Question 13. How many projects have you used volunteers on in the past 5 years?

Of those projects, how many would not have been able to be completed without the help of volunteers.

DENVER: Okay, so in the past five years, I want to say that we had probably like 900 projects. And out of those projects I would say probably, I don't know, maybe 500.

BENJI: Okay, so a little bit more than 50%.

DENVER: Yeah.

Question 14. What types of different projects or activities have volunteers made contributions?

DENVER: So I would say like more towards tree plant teams. Okay, a lot of the volunteers, make a contribution to help purchase the, the trees

BENJI: to purchase trees, not just plant trees.

DENVER: Yeah, they purchase trees and they plant the trees.

Question 15. What has volunteered assistance/maintenance allowed the parks department to accomplish?

DENVER: Oh, they've helped them accomplish a lot. Again, being repetitive, it's helped them get to a lot of the tasks that park staff have not been allowed to get to. It's made an impact on the community. Sometimes we take pictures, before and after pictures and it shows the difference that they make. It's the playground that was needed repainting or whatever. The before and after picture show the impact that the volunteers have made. So anything that volunteers assist in the parks, it really does show how much they accomplished and the community is always grateful for what they do. So a lot of times if the communities out there and volunteers are out there working they come in. If they're passing by walking or live across the street, they come and thank the volunteers for the work that they're doing.

Question 16. In what area(s) do you see the most significant impacts/contributions from volunteer efforts.

DENVER Oh, I would say probably a lot of the volunteers want to make a contribution or the impact to the lower neglected neighborhoods.

BENJI: So it's not so much that they're not focusing on just one park in their area they're going everywhere.

DENVER: Yes, they go everywhere

Question 17. Are there any parks within the park system that would not function without public assistance?

DENVER: Oh, no I don't think so.

Question 18. How much oversight during activities is provided to volunteer groups?

DENVER: We are there throughout the duration of the project so if they're there for three hours or eight hours we have park staff on site with them to assist them and make sure that they have all the supplies needed to get the tasks accomplished.

Question 19. Have volunteers altered the designs/vision of the parks department?

DENVER: There've been a few groups that have had suggestions of what they would love finishing in the park. So initially when that takes place. That's really out of my hands so what I do is I just go ahead and refer them to the appropriate person in another department.

Question 20. If you could get more volunteers, what additional work would you want them to do?

DENVER: I would say probably just doing a lot of trail building in the parks. We need help with that. I would say just, you know, making sure like on the playground or up to date. And painted and safe for the kids. And looking, you know, all looking colorful for the kids.

BENJI: Right.

DENVER But we always need work so, we'll always accept them no matter what

21. How has private fundraising affected the park system?

a. What has the support allowed the Parks Department to do so?

DENVER: Okay, we don't, I don't do a lot of the fundraising. Okay. any money that is given to us like from a volunteer group that's like regarding their specific project that they're working on. So for example if I get a group that says we want to help purchase trees we want to make a \$600 donation, then that's the funding for that specific project. That money will be used to purchase the trees.

Question 22. In addition to contributing time/labor, how many volunteer groups or individuals also make direct financial donations or participate in fundraising activities?

DENVER I would say individuals that make a financial donation maybe four.

Question 23. Do any organizations raise the money to completely pay for all aspects, or most, of their various parks?

DENVER: Not that I know of.

Question 24. Has the overall park budget been adjusted because of public contributions to individual parks?

DENVER: NO

Question 25. If Park A is receiving private contributions, are saved park resources reallocated to other, less supported parks?

Denver: NO

Question 26. If the parks department accepts financial donations, how many are contingent upon being used for a specific use? (Not at discretion of parks department)

DENVER Yeah, just like I mentioned earlier, if there's a specific group working at a specific park, then if they give me a \$200 donation, then that fund will be used to purchase paint, you know, for their park.

BENJI: Purchase materials and things

DENVER: Yeah

END

PHILADELPHIA

Question 1: About how many people per year volunteered to assist parks within your city?

Philadelphia: That's actually a really difficult number to quantify, for a few reasons. We have volunteers working in various capacities throughout our whole park system and I don't manage all of them.

I am in the stewardship unit of parks and recreation and one of the things we do is we work directly with volunteer groups, whether they're "Joe Public", a Boy Scout troop, a college group, or a corporate group. We do volunteer projects with them from organizing them to actually physically carrying them out. We work with groups anywhere from five people to the largest project that we've done has been like 400 people at a time. So, we do that all year round and on a monthly basis, I'd say we work with like, maybe like 40 volunteers a month on average but some like I said sometimes that could be way more.

In addition to that, one of the things we do is support our park friends network. We have about 130 park friends groups and they're made up of individuals that basically come together to care for their unstaffed neighborhood park. Those groups could be anywhere from as small as three people to you know Friends of the Wissahickon which is our largest friends group, has 3,000 members. All of those friends groups are always out doing volunteer work in our parks. I don't track that, or have any sense of what those numbers look like.

We also hold several large events a year like our spring and fall "Love Your Park" where we support all our whole network of park friends groups by providing them a lot of materials like in the spring will provide them with mulch and compost, and things like that for the parks, and in the fall we provide trees and leaf removal and other things. We recruit volunteers for them on those "Love Your Park" days. We'll get close to 2,000 people out on a single day on those days, so I guess it's just so hard to estimate how many volunteers we have.

Question 2: What are different ways they volunteer their time?

Philadelphia: A whole variety. Some may be volunteering to help with programming in a park, like running an event. Some may assist with promotion of an event. I'd say those that's kind of on the smaller end of things. A lot of our volunteers are just helping with general park beautification or maintenance. A lot of picking up trash, sweeping pathways, picking up downed limbs, weeding of garden beds around park benches, things like that. And then we also have a whole lot of volunteers that would do more of our natural lands restoration work. Some that will be getting into the natural areas, doing a lot of invasive vegetation control, planting native trees and shrubs, doing trail work. Things of that nature.

Question 3: How do you attract volunteers? Partners?

Philadelphia: We've been working with volunteer groups and parks for really a long time. To reference them again our Friends of the Wissahickon and they're 95 years old. We have a very long history of working with volunteer groups. The majority of our other friends groups started maybe 25 years ago. I should say we started having a friends group network about 25 years ago. There were much less of them for sure, but we are constantly, each year, you know, getting more friends groups.

A lot of times those friends groups just grow organically, it's just like citizens coming together

to care for their neighborhood park. A lot of times that arises out of an issue, like someone's calling "my parks always trashed you know, we want to go out, and you know, I'll clean it or help us get this cleaner whatever, it might be just as an example. And so a lot of times, once we start seeing some like interest in that space, and people feel invested in it, and we like, approach them about. "Hey? would you guys be interested in forming a friends group? Here's what friends, groups do. Here's how we can support you." As I said, we work with a lot of school groups and corporations and things of that nature. And again we've been doing that for a good while now that for the most part they come to us, we don't have to do much recruiting anymore.

I've been in the parks for 20 years now, and when I first started I did a lot of recruitment, just getting the word out, letting people know we were there, probably spending maybe 90% of my time doing that at the beginning. Now it's very, very minimal especially with social media. Our communications team can just put out, "Hey we've got a volunteer day coming up!"

We pre-register people when we do our regularly occurring volunteer days. For example, we do "The second Saturday" every second Saturday, where we're in a different part of the park. And that's really that work is really like natural lands based. People have to sign up online for that, and we accept 35 people per event and every event sells out. We have a lot of that kind of stuff.

We also have a new program we started just over a year ago called Philly Forest Stewards, where we engage people that already have a little bit of experience in natural lands restoration work. They apply to become a Philly Forest Steward. They're essentially applying to become a volunteer with us, and it's a one-year requirement, and that's been a fantastic program that we started. We started doing COVID, because these people, you know, they already have a little experience so we just kind of meet with them, set them up with an area that they kind of adopt, and then let them go. So they're kind of working out there on their own for a year by themselves, and periodically checking in with us to make sure we're on the same page and they're filling out event reports so we know what they're doing up there.

So we've got some like long-term individual volunteers, and then we have a whole bunch of one-time volunteers that come out for just a couple of hours at a time.

Question 4. Are there any outside forces (labor unions, etc.) that influence the use of volunteers in your community?

Philadelphia: I guess I'm not a 100% sure how to answer that, I'll start by saying so when I first started it in the Park I started, for I was actually a grant at the time that the sole purpose of this grant was to engage volunteers to help with natural lands restoration work. This was like 2000. Basically, we started really intensely working with volunteers on a regular, almost daily basis. And at that point in time, you know. It was still new to a lot of the Parks people, and we actually had some pushback from a lot of union workers basically not liking the fact that volunteers were coming in and doing all this labor for us. So there used to be a lot of conflict around that. I'd say that's almost completely gone away.

I mean honestly to be like perfectly honest, our parks department in Philly is extremely underfunded and extremely understaffed, so we work with volunteers out of necessity. You know we don't have the people to upkeep our parks system the way we would like to. So, we have to rely on volunteers and it's kind of a beauty and a curse at the same time right. I mean it's awful to have to rely on volunteers for this type of work. It's also pretty unique to Philly I think with just how closely we work with so many of our citizens. They come to feel like their neighborhood park space is an extension of their property. You know what I mean. They care for these spaces with like heart and soul. Which is awesome for the most part, and can also

cause areas of conflict, too. "This isn't your property, this is public land."

5. Do volunteers attract additional volunteers?

Philadelphia: Yeah, for sure. A lot of times at our events and stuff, when people see a whole group of people out volunteering, if they're passing by stop and say, "Hey, what's going on here? How can I get involved?"

6. Do you have a cap for the number of volunteers/friends groups that you are willing to oversee/coordinate with?

a. If so, what is it?

b. Are you at your limit?

Philadelphia: We're definitely not as I said, there's a ton of need in our parks for all kinds of work. So, we could easily utilize more volunteers. Our limiting factors are staffing and our ability to manage the volunteers.

We are pretty close to maxed out on that. So our park system is over 10,000 acres, and it's spread all throughout the city of Philadelphia, so matter where you are in the city you are less than a half mile for sure of some piece of our parks and recreation system, and we only have 4 of us that manage the volunteers.

Question 7. How long have volunteers or volunteer organizations been assisting with individual parks?

Philadelphia: Our oldest group, Friends of the Wissahickon is 95, maybe 96 now years old.

So they're definitely our oldest and longest standing friends group. Every year we get another like anywhere from one to 3 friends groups, but I'd say the bulk of our friends groups are between 10 to 25 years old.

8. What is a typical lifespan of local friends groups? (16:44)

a. What steps, if any, do you take to help invigorate them?

Philadelphia: So, kind of already, answered the lifespan but they can be very fluid, I guess. With any friends group.

It really depends on the leadership, and some friends groups are very much run by, like one person who handles most of the and the bulk of the communications are the organizing or things. And it's those types of groups where once that person leaves they kind of, you know, flounder for a while till someone else kind of rises to that.

You know we certainly have lots of groups that are more sophisticated and have full boards and things like that where they really share the workload, and those tend to be more stable

In stewardship we have stewardship coordinators and I mentioned there's basically like 4 of us, essentially and so each one of us gets a suite of friends groups kind of broken up geographically but not totally. In essence, someone has South Philly Parks, someone has Northwest Philly Parks, and so on, and so forth. And so each of us has a suite of like 30 parks, or whatever it is, and friends groups that we stay in regular communication with. We are their direct liaison to the parks, and so they communicate to us when they need most things.

You know, if trash cans are not getting emptied, if there are some illegal vendors in the park, if a tree branch comes down, if they need help organizing a meeting, if they are working on a master plan for that park, whatever the case may be. We try to stay in touch, and we attend they're friends group meetings when we can. And so we do our best to keep them energized and moving forward.

Question 9. Do you conduct research on or calculate the value that volunteers bring to your organization?

Philadelphia: Yeah, that's something I feel like we're starting to do more of but we definitely can put a monetary value on the annual hours that our friends groups and our volunteers in general give us. I forget what the rate is now. It's very high. It's ridiculously high, it's like almost \$19 an hour, or something like that. And so you know we use that in our annual reports and our budgeting, and also other grants that we may be going for where we can match with in kind services so can't say yeah, we definitely utilize that.

Question 10. Are overall maintenance jobs redirected to other priorities because of volunteer efforts?

Philadelphia: I would say no. Again, we basically have skeleton crews out there. So, the majority of our operations staff are out there like picking up trash and emptying trash cans and only working on other projects kind of as directed, but it's because there's like there's so few of them.

So yeah, I wouldn't say that our volunteers have taken any work away from them, or really altered their workflow that much.

Question 11. Do volunteers do jobs that would not otherwise be done by park personnel?

Philadelphia: Yes. So specifically, around our natural lands work we do with volunteers, we don't have any other staff that would be doing that work. That is almost solely done with volunteers. Having said that, we do have a couple folks that work in the natural lands division, and they basically, you know, they'll work with contractors to do some natural lands work and they'll get some interns and that sort thing, but a lot of the work we do with our natural lands volunteer projects wouldn't be done otherwise.

Question 12. Are Park administrators or other maintenance personnel able to shift work to other areas that would not have been attended to but are now able to because of volunteer efforts.

Philadelphia: Not really. We don't have staff that would be doing that work anyway.

Question 13. How many projects have you used volunteers on in the past 5 years?

a. Of those projects, how many would not have been able to be completed without the help of volunteers.

Philadelphia: I don't know. 400, probably something like that. I'm sure it's somewhere around there. The projects are anything from picking up trash to edging a sidewalk to sweeping the pathway to planting native trees and stuff. I'd say, easily 50% wouldn't have been done otherwise.

Question 14. What types of different projects or activities have volunteers made contributions?

Philadelphia: So, all those things (see previous answer).

Question 15. What has volunteered assistance/maintenance allowed the parks department to accomplish?

Philadelphia: Well, it allows us to keep our park spaces up to a higher standard than we would be able to on our own.

You know we couldn't maintain all spaces without the volunteer support.

Question 16. In what area(s) do you see the most significant impacts/contributions from volunteer efforts.

Philadelphia: It's a hard question to answer, because they are involved in so many different things that all feel impactful that it's hard to single anyone one of them out.

Question 17. Are there any parks within the park system that would not function without public assistance?

Philadelphia: Yes, many.

Question 18. How much oversight during activities is provided to volunteer groups?

Philadelphia: Yeah, that's all over the board. A lot of times our friends groups are out there by themselves without any support from park staff. But then the service days that, like my division runs, we are there, you know shoot the nuts for everything you know. We detail the work, we bring all the tools, we educate and guide the volunteers through the projects and are there through the end of it.

19. Have volunteers altered the designs/vision of the parks department?

Philadelphia: Yes, and no. I wouldn't say they've really altered the structure of the parks department. I mean, we have a unit, a stewardship unit, because of volunteers, and the need to be able to organize and manage them. So I guess maybe we wouldn't have a stewardship unit if we didn't have volunteers like we do.

20. If you could get more volunteers, what additional work would you want them to do?

Philadelphia: I mean everything.

21. How has private fundraising affected the park system?

a. What has the support allowed the Parks Department to do so?

Philadelphia: We'll have a lot of capital projects that may include some like private funding, and a lot of times, and again, some of our more savvy friends groups really know how to garner money from the communities, or from donors or things like that. So yeah, a lot of times special projects in the parks, like redoing the ball field or you know, kind of re-landscaping an area, or something like that, will come from some private funding. So, I wouldn't say that equates to like a big part of our budget, or anything like that but it certainly allows for projects to happen that

wouldn't otherwise.

22. In addition to contributing time/labor, how many volunteer groups or individuals also make direct financial donations or participate in fundraising activities?

Philadelphia: Yeah, a lot of our friends groups do fundraise. Several of them are 501c3s, and so again, they will raise money to buy a bench, buy a new trash can, fix a playground, put on a movie night. Things of that nature.

23. Do any organizations raise the money to completely pay for all aspects, or most, of their various parks?

Philadelphia: No. I'd say it'd be very rare for a group to raise all of the funding themselves. It's usually a mix of things if something like that were to happen.

24. Has the overall park budget been adjusted because of public contributions to individual parks.

Philadelphia: No.

25. If Park A is receiving private contributions, are saved park resources reallocated to other, less supported parks?

Philadelphia: It's a kind of tough one to answer. I mean yes, and no. Each park doesn't have its own budget or anything like that so It's all just kind of one big pot.

26. If the parks department accepts financial donations, how many are contingent upon being used for a specific use? (Not at discretion of parks department)

Philadelphia: Most of the time it's for something very specific.

END

PORTLAND

Question 1: About how many people per year volunteered to assist parks within your city?

Portland: So, I guess we could kind of give you a general idea I mean, typically we say 12,000 to 16,000 people, individuals every year volunteer. And just background on that the reason we say it is we know how many registered volunteers we have people that do it frequently. But we also do a lot of episodic volunteer events pretty much every Saturday. There's two projects going on in city nature, then we will also have businesses and schools that will come out, where individuals volunteer. But we're still in the stone age. We record the people's names by sign in sheets. And so we don't have a system yet that can tell us you know if maybe you know John Goodheart came out and volunteered as part of a Nike group. He may have come out another weekend on Saturday and volunteered with this with the city nature crew, we wouldn't know the difference. We wouldn't know that he did, and we would think of it as two distinct individuals, as opposed to one. So that's why we give the range of 12,000 to 16,000 individual volunteers.

Benji: So it's possible that people are getting double counted, triple counted but at least you have a good range.

Portland: Hopefully that will get fixed up. We just invested in a proper volunteer management software. And so hopefully if you call me back in a year and a half will be able to tell you NO! 13,957 individuals volunteered with us. So, we'll see.

Question 2: What are different ways they volunteer their time?

Portland: That I can limit to parks. So it's gonna be advisory boards. It's going to be direct service so that would be cleaning parks, caring for gardens, habitat restoration and safety park watches and a few park patrols. That's on the, on the maintenance side of things on the park, the land stewardship side of things we call them stewardship. Those are the, those are the main ways volunteers participate.

Question 3. How do you attract volunteers or partners like friends groups?

Portland: So, we have a webpage that we do it on, we do some social media posting on, in conjunction with that web page. I notify by emails and other processes, different businesses and schools. And once in a while we'll put ads in newspapers or some of the local news agencies will pick up on one of the volunteer events we are doing, and they'll come out that way. But primarily is our webpage. Direct contact by me or another volunteer or volunteer manager or social media, from the volunteers will spread the word amongst themselves.

Question 4. Are there any outside forces, such as labor unions, etc. that influence the use of volunteers in your community?

Portland: Yeah sure there's a ton of outside forces. Labor unions to some degree, but not terrible. But we do have some, some agreements with volunteers, only stretch services. They don't ever replace employees. And I think we have a pretty good track record of that. And many of the people that use volunteers, that manage volunteers in the park maintenance side and land steward side are in fact shop stewards so they can keep a good eye on it that way,

they know what's going on. And I'll say we do things like, when I first came on, one of the labor shop stewards was real clear to me, said, "Listen, don't use volunteers to clean restrooms. That's an employee's job." I don't have to recruit volunteers to clean restrooms.

Benji: That would probably be a hard sell anyway.

Portland: Well, and there's other good reasons for it's not just a matter of being a job. We're using some pretty strong chemicals and industrial cleaning solvents when we're cleaning our restrooms. So, unless we want to give the volunteers, unless the volunteers want to get to full on time to get chemical training, it's not appropriate for them. They just need to be used properly, mixed properly. But then also community involvement and communication is huge for us. Some parts of the city really say hey we need help here and they come up, they get us. Our elected officials have a big influence on what we're doing. And then we have businesses that come in and offer new ways to to volunteer or to give back to the community and sometimes we have to say no, what you're asking us to do takes us out of our work realm, we're not we're not supposed to do that. You know, we're not going to set up a food station in a park and call it a parks and rec program. You need to talk to one of them, one of the other agencies that developed to serve food to homeless people. And we will work with you to get them the permits for free, so they can use the park but we're not going to manage that program. So I think those are some of the outside forces, just the public in general. Sometimes they come up with great new ideas that fit right in with what we're doing, sometimes they try to stretch us into new areas that are not traditional PP&R or even regional PP&R you know are working.

Question 5. Do volunteers attract additional volunteers?

Portland: Probably. All told, they're probably our biggest recruitment tool.

Question 6. Do you have a cap for the number of volunteers/friends groups that you are willing to oversee/coordinate with?

a. If so, what is it?

b. Are you at your limit?

Portland: So, no we don't have a hard cap. But we always have to be receptive to capacity. So, how many, how many volunteer projects can our people accommodate and put to work. Just because you have 100 people that want to clean up a park, doesn't mean that you can provide tools, gloves, plants and materials for a hundred people. So there's limitations that way. Friends groups, I guess the only limitations would be competing interests. I can only think of one time that's ever happened in 30 years and that was a very odd situation. So if there's a Friends of Tanner Springs Park, and another group wants to be Friends of Tanner Springs Park. You know, we tried to fold them together. But other than that, it's just our staff capacity to work with and manage, and liaison with groups that is really the only limiting factor and I couldn't give you a hard cap number on that. So it's always always changing.

7. How long have volunteers or volunteer organizations been assisting with individual parks?

Portland: Portland has a long history of volunteer engagement. And, in fact, back in, in the 1870s, volunteers were building parks. So if you include that it would go right back to 1871 is the earliest one that I could find. But with a really formal volunteer program we start advertising

it would go back to one of our, well she was a recreation director, Dorothea Lensch, went back to 1950s. And then. But that was the recreation side. Park maintenance side though, Crystal Springs Rhododendron garden opened in 1951. And that was a partnership with the American Rhododendron Society, Portland chapter and Portland parks and recreation and the volunteers are still out there caring for the park, caring for the garden in the collection. Not today because it's winter but they will be back on February 19. So I guess you on this, on the stewardship side I'd be really comfortable saying, since 1951.

Benji: That is awesome and personally I do count the 1800s.

Portland: And that was pretty consistent, all the way through. We could identify parks all through the system that were built or developed or set aside what have you. With volunteer engagement and involvement, not just advocacy for something turning into a park but really shovel turning to make it a park.

Question 8. What is the typical lifespan of local friends groups?

a. What steps, if any, do you take to help invigorate them?

Portland: That's a really, really, really tough one to find a typical lifespan. But I would guess that, if we limit it to friends groups that really get off the board and run, not just ideas that you know peter out within eight months. But if we look for a group that really gets established we're looking at, 18 to 25 years is a typical run from volunteer groups. Yeah when you get something established, it tends to stick around for quite a while. Some of them become quite sophisticated Forest Park Conservancy, Friends of, but smaller local and just all volunteer efforts. The Friends of Mount Tabor Park they've been going now for 15 years, and they started out just as a parks patrol. And expanded out to include that disposal for safety side expanded out to include habitat restoration. And now have opened up a visitor center in the park. Once they get up and going, they really get going.

To invigorate them we try to get our park employees, there's always a park employee designated liaison with the groups. And so they will try to look at new ideas or, or what groups are wanting to do and find new ways to work or bring new systems into the park. Good examples of that about 15 years ago, we started bringing in building awfully cherries in parks, so that brought a whole new rash of volunteers into dogs, and that got them involved in a lot of the friendships that are out there. Other than that we don't do much. It really depends on, we turn it around and say, it's your organization. You need to do the bulk of the groundwork. Because we really don't have the staff time to rebuild those, except now we don't have staff time. But we will give assistance to, guidance to, and will introduce a new group that's trying to form with an existing group and get them working into a mentor relationship. We can provide seed money to some degree, especially now that we have a parks foundation. But, the responsibility for staying an active viable group really comes back down to the individual group and their board members.

Question 9. Do you conduct research on or calculate the value that volunteers bring to your organization?

Portland: We do it on a very simple level. So we look at the hours volunteers put in. And then we try to associate that with a corresponding wage. We don't really like to use the word wage because we are trying to keep the difference between employees and volunteers. We don't want to blur the line, but we do look for that at the level. So for example, the amount of money now I'm not gonna be able to pull it up on my mind, but we'll have you know for in a typical

year, and the last two years being very atypical we'd be looking at 460,000 hours of volunteer service per year.

And, and then when we record those hours, we try to record the hours by program, so location or programs. Basketball is a program not a location for example. And then we would assign and say okay coaches we give them a value of, I think recently, they're \$12.40 an hour, and it's just multiply that out. And we record to the dollar hours, I can dig back to some old records that email the most recent numbers. But we do do that to a degree, what we've got to have more recently is saying, How many employees does that equate to?" Yeah, so when we're at 460,000 hours. That's basically 219-221 full time employees, but we are but we also always remind people that, but they're not full time employees because our volunteers will be, you couldn't hire 220 volunteers to cover all of the aspects that our volunteers do. So, we try to work it out that way.

Benji: Actually that makes a lot of sense because one of the reasons that I wanted to talk to you about Portland parks is that I've seen your kind of the report that you guys put out a couple years ago. Like here's the volunteers and here's, you know, what you guys did for your parks. One thank you for doing that because that's what kind of brought me to you but I do think that it is very important and very awesome that you guys are recognizing the value that they provide to you.

Portland: Sure. And you know I'm gonna throw in two more things to consider that we've talked about ways to capture, but frankly we haven't had the time to dedicate to it. Especially with volunteer groups. They spend money for their groups that we don't know about. So we used to catch it and would say to them, hey look, we want to know we want to know how much money your organization spent that you didn't pay to us the city of Portland. Because a lot of times they'll give us kind of just you know they would give us a check for \$500 for a load of mulch or something. In the old days, so that you didn't write to the city of Portland or that we didn't give you a grant. So it's everything else you spent to operate. And, you know, that's going to be things like snacks for volunteers. It's going to be tools for volunteers. So we don't capture that anymore.

And then the other really huge one is, And I'm sure you know this, volunteers tend to contribute their treasure as well as their time and talent. So you know we don't track how much money has been donated to Portland Parks and Recreation city of Portland, or to the Portland Parks Foundation. By volunteers specifically for volunteers. You know I can think of three park benches that are out there that were donated by the families of particular volunteers. And you know those are easily five grand each, we don't we don't we don't relate that back to the volunteer program.

Benji: Okay, Interesting. Yeah, that would probably be, depending on the year, it could be a very significant number.

Portland: Yeah can be it can be. Also it's also kind of a goldmine for development directors. You know I've been involved with several service agencies, and, you know, their most generous, well, maybe not the most generous donors, but a big part of their donation base is coming from people who also donate their time. You find that with churches, you find that with schools. I'd happen to be involved feeding homeless people, and you know every volunteer I work with is a member of the \$10 a month plate club or they call it the plate club. You give \$10 a month to receive session number people.

Question 10. Are overall maintenance jobs redirected to other priorities because of volunteer efforts?

Portland: Yes absolutely there's no question that the one thing that they are redirected to is supervision of volunteers so that's something that shouldn't be forgotten. Okay, so now we have horticulturalists and park techs, who are gaining valuable leadership skills by managing and overseeing a group of 10, 20 Even 100 volunteers on a given day. That's a real skill that can be huge for them.

But, more, more precisely I think your question is yes, absolutely. When we have volunteers coming out every time they do litter patrol that frees up a park technician 45 minutes a day that he could be spending in shrub beds weeding them out, or just adjusting and fine tuning the sprinkler heads. He doesn't have to pick up the litter that the friends groups are doing. Though the Rose Garden, Washington Park rose garden and Peninsula Park Rose Garden between them we have about 18,000 Rose bushes and only two full time Horticulturalists assigned, one to each of those gardens actually one is only there three days a week. And if you know roses you know you have to deadhead all the summer to keep them blooming. We have about 250 to 300 volunteer dead headers to come and take care of that. So that allows the Rose Garden curators, to be thinking about things like the pests that are getting at the at the roses, or the irrigation systems or planting the beds or expanding the beds putting new beds and changing out a variety of rose because it's susceptible to disease, it needs a lot of chemicals to protect it with a with a new hybrid rose that doesn't need, that is less susceptible to bugs and doesn't need the chemicals applied. So, there's no doubt that wherever volunteers work, again they stretch our services that frees up the park maintenance time.

Question 11. Do volunteers do jobs that would not otherwise be done by park personnel?

Portland: The big ones on that would be the advisory boards, and out park safety volunteers. So, park patrol and park watch. You can look at it a little differently too. There's no way in the world we would have either. There's no way in the world we would have Crystal Springs Rhododendron garden or Leach Botanical Garden if it weren't for volunteers. Both of those programs were pushed by and gotten by volunteers and now they're self-sustaining. So I guess you can look at it that way too.

Those could be considered traditional parks, I mean they're gardens, traditional park sources, but we would not have gotten those if not for volunteers. And another good one to put out is, I don't know if you know this, but the city owns three vintage steam locomotives. And two of them are operational, one has been put in operation or being worked on now being renovated and retrofitted. And they're at a place called the Oregon Trail Heritage Foundation, orhf.org. The city's response when these were donated, these local artisans put them off to the side of parks and so they were stacked displays. These folks got them off of those stack displays and kind of up and running. We do not hire steam locomotive engineers in parks and recreation, but we do have volunteers that do it.

Question 12. Are Park administrators or other non-maintenance personnel able to shift work to other areas that would not have been attended to but are now able to because of volunteer efforts?

Portland: I can't think how that would fit in. Typically the administrative types might be asked to work with a friends group or a volunteer group. They would shift their duties away from it.

I can't think of any, you know, might help me have your other interviews, have they had any examples of that. I don't know how we would do it.

Benji: Not necessarily it's more that the personnel help in the field, not. Yeah, I mean maybe like a receptionist or that type of thing.

Portland: Oh I see what you mean. No we don't. We can't use receptionists even on the recreation side, because our receptionist has to be working at the front desk area. The front desk area has computers that are tied into our visa system so we're not allowed to put volunteers back there unless they go through a special training and screening. We've decided it's not a good idea to do that so we don't put volunteers there. So no, I can be pretty clear on that one.

Question 13. How many projects have you used volunteers on in the past 5 years?

a. Of those projects, how many would not have been able to be completed without the help of volunteers.

Portland: Yeah, I couldn't even begin to tell you I, as I say, the city nature team alone runs two volunteer projects every Saturday. For at least 45 weeks a year. And then, that's not including the groups that they work with during the week. Our park maintenance programs, we have volunteers that come out to the crystal springs rhododendron garden. The friends have a work party, every Tuesday, February 19 through the first week in November. Forest Park Conservancy has volunteer crews out three to four times a week. I couldn't begin to tell you that number, it's gotta be. it's got to be more than 1000 a year, probably more than that. But pretty darn close to 1000 a year. And, again, so, and none of those would have been completed without volunteers. You know, it's kind of one of those things that we've kind of carved out. What do we want volunteers to do? Let's have to do it, so we're not putting employees into that place.

Question 14. What types of different projects or activities have volunteers made contributions?

Portland: Okay, well I already told you they think they literally built Crystal Springs rhododendron garden. They brought Leach Botanical Garden back from, it was going to be sold for development. And it was, it was brought back to becoming a botanical garden. We have volunteers that one of our best volunteer projects is to get people to go out and refresh soccer pitches and ball diamonds. We call ball for softball softball fields or baseball fields. And they refresh. We refresh awfully cherries with new wood chips. Go awfully sure is by ripping out plants. They've replanted the Peninsula Park Rose Garden 1000 rows of rose bushes went in. Well the old ones came out and the new ones went in with volunteer labor. So, I guess that's it. Park building, make changes to park use. Just make changes to work use. Okay. I'm not sure how to say more about how to really explain that better.

Benji: A lot of different ways.

Question 15: What has volunteer assistance or maintenance allowed the parks department to accomplish?

Portland: So first of all, it's. It gives our parks a cleaner and higher level of cleanliness and tidiness. Okay, so, parks volunteers could go in and spend more time doing litter patrol, they can they could do a thorough deep cleaning once a week instead of our scheduling and once a month. When I say thorough deep cleaning, I mean, look at the shrub edge and getting out

cigarette butts. Just the small stuff. So if it really does access the level of cleanliness of the park. Park patrols, and park watch programs have jumped up our safety and security in parks not so much, well I guess it is to a degree against crime, but against vandalism and illicit park use. So where Mount Tabor where we have those crews walking through the park, we saw drastic reduction in vandalism because parks crews are out there. They also, by the way, go through the park and lock up restrooms later at night during the summer than we normally would. Our crews would go through and lock up restrooms at six in the evening, because they're getting off work they have to lock them before they go home. But with the park with the park patrol, they're able to stay open until 10 o'clock. when the park closes and lock the restrooms up at that time so people use the park, 7,8,9 o'clock still have a restroom.

Question 16. In what area(s) do you see the most significant impacts/contributions from volunteer efforts.

Portland: Currently, its natural areas landscape. Okay so city nature crews. That's restoring habitat into the natural areas, that's the one I mentioned two projects every Saturday plus weekday projects. And then also tied in with that we've gone into nature scaping and nature patches and pollinating patches. This can all come together, where we take generally kind of open spaces in parks that are under trees where grass grows, a couple months a year when there's enough sun and then it dies out. And we're replanting those with a more of a natural look; they're more engaging for your sightlines. They're more relaxing to walk through and they're more interesting. They bring in the plants that were in Portland 120 years ago, prevalent in Portland 120 years ago, and bring them back into view. And that attracts the birds, bugs, and the other critters that live in them as well.

So, I think, really right now if we're looking on the maintenance side, our biggest impact is on habitat restoration and naturescaping in the city. Urban forestry has a tremendous program, urban forestry takes care of trees, not only trees in parks, but street trees around the city. And they have a tremendous, really cool volunteer manager out there. She's great. They did a big swing a picture going on 1 tree inventory so we knew what our canopy was so they trained and got volunteers to go to the city and identify every tree in Portland, by its type and its condition. And it's location they put it onto a map and stuff like that so we got some really great information about learned things like what's the most common tree, and it really shook their head when we found out it was plums and Holly's not not duck firs like everybody expected. So, it told us we had some work to do. It also told us what areas are tree deficient, and they typically tend to be lower income areas and for our social justice we want to get more trees planted in those areas. So they did a great job of that. And then they have tree stewards, who actually take usually around their own neighborhood, about a four block area, and they monitor the trees for health and notify us If a neighbor has a tree, and is wondering how to do proper pruning, they can give him advice on pruning or who to solicit more advice from. If a tree seems to be failing, they spot it, and they notify the property owner. And they say your tree here, it's showing the signs Dutch Elm. You want to get an arborist out there even in the city because you don't want Dutch Elm disease to be spreading or we don't want Dutch Elm Disease to be spreading. Something that a neighbor wouldn't. It's not coming back like it does every year you know and and so they've done a very very good job and so our care for our urban canopy, or a tree canopy is huge too.

Benji: That is a massive undertaking. I've been involved with that type of thing and that is, I've never done on a city scale, but that is ginormous.

Portland: What always cracks me up is they did this project for street trees. They didn't do it for

parks. So then we looked at well how come we don't know how many trees are in the parks So, they said "Oh we'll do that!" so they got after that as well.

Question 17. Are there any parks within the park system that would not function without public assistance.

Portland: Yes. I think I mentioned it already. Or the main ones: Crystal Springs rhododendron garden and Leach botanical garden. And I may think of others too. But right now, those really are the two ones because they still have those nonprofit organizations that continue to serve them. And neither one of those would have been PP&R property wouldn't have been city property if it weren't for the volunteers. Leach botanical garden was named after the Leaches. He was a pharmacist, she was a botanist in their will they left their house, and their five acres to the city if we would operate it as a botanical garden. And if not, it was to be given to I think was the YMCA, who could sell off and develop it. And after about seven years after her death, the YMCA started making noises hey you know, we want this property. And so a group of volunteers worked really hard. The city had no interest in it. They worked really hard to just get the parks director to agree to come out and view the site.

And then for two weeks before he came, they went in the middle of the night and jumped over the fence because it was locked and cleaned the place up. And when he showed up, he said wow this is in terrific condition, they actually broke into the house, so they could change the locks so they could let him into the manor house. So, and then they start telling the story about what a great botanical collection it is because they had uncovered all of these species. The Leaches would go on camping trips in the Cascades and bring back different species of plants and up and be with the Olympic peninsula, and bring them back and plant them around their home. And it really was a botanical garden. But over the years it got, you know, overgrown by blackberries and ivy and holly and all the other plants. So they uncovered the collection so the director could see it. And then, then he saw what a jewel it was and he said we ought to make this a botanical garden. So that would not have been there if it weren't for that.

I guess another one would be the Japanese garden, although that was I mean, that was a big professional organization that came up in Washington Park City, you've got this canyon here that is not used would make a wonderful Japanese garden. But that was your nonprofit Crystal Springs though was just a bunch of volunteers and people that identified it and they had a benefit they gave to the parks director, and said, there's this canyon over here, off of Reed College. Let's make that into a rhododendron test garden. And they had a big plus because at the time the park director was the immediate past president of the Portland chapter of roadie society, and a board member of the National Association. So he said, What a great idea and he donated two of the three is roadies from home, and they put it in. After a few years, it became evident that they were able to make it into a test garden because it could provide proper security, but they made it into a public garden.

Question 18. How much oversight during work activities is provided to volunteer groups?

Portland: There's a range, it depends on the volunteer group, what park they're at, and what they're doing. It could be from zero to full supervision by a park staff person. In the natural areas for example, aside from litter patrol, on sidewalks, parking lots, and clear pathways; if there's any work that's being done by volunteers in the park, a park employee has to be with them leading the project. And that's because it's a natural area so we're trying to restore them.

They're very sensitive areas. What looks like a weed to some people, is actually a native plant that we really want to propagate. Or you might not be aware that the crowd you're walking on has the early sprouts of a native plant we've been trying to propagate so in the natural areas we have to have people on site, leading the project. In neighborhood parks, where we expect people to walk and play on playgrounds and, you know, kick a soccer ball and bat a softball around, we have neighborhood groups that will come in and work on their own. Usually the maintenance supervisor of the park will meet with them and talk with them about what roles they could play in the park and what they should do whether weeding a certain area, keeping a fence line clear of debris, painting, dugout benches, before the start of Little League season every year. She'll lay that groundwork, they go out and they do the work. And she has a park tech just kind of keep in touch with them to see how they're doing and there's a little bit of communication and everything we could really use more paint to meet more of these bleachers. You know, we provide the paint for them and they do the work. So there's a I guess what I'm trying to say is, it's a wide range from complete supervision, to complete direct eyesight supervision, to more delegation of authority and responsibilities.

Question 19. Have volunteers altered the designs/vision of the parks department?

Portland: Yeah. When we're talking about altering the design of a park that of course is a huge, huge undertaking. We can't just ask volunteers; volunteers can come up with ideas, but we have to put it to the neighbors around the park users to see what they agree to. So they, they're now in these days, they're more of a catalyst for new ideas and parks than the developers of the parks. They certainly are a catalyst of new ideas. I guess they come up with good ones. You just don't get the diversity of opinions and diversity of ideas and all of a sudden you've got, you know, instead of having 50 people for the parks planning department to get about what you can do at the park, you've got 750 people who visit the park every day. It gives better ideas about what could happen at the park.

Question 20: If you could get more volunteers, what additional work would you want them to do?

Portland: You know, I think that maybe on the maintenance side, they would be doing more of the same. We've really kind of stretched our limits about what's reasonable for volunteers to do, how they could do it when they could do it. We can replicate what's going on at last edition gardens or, or Peninsula Park Rose Garden, we can replicate that in different parts of the city, but it's not it's not new work. It's still rose and flower bed care or habitat restoration, things like that we can replicate. But it's not new, different types of work. Our focus on what we're doing with volunteers in new ways has really turned to the recreation side because we're a big, really big social justice agency, and we're working hard to find more ways to get more people involved. Portland has a significant and growing population of recent immigrants to the area, and we need to find more ways to provide them with the recreation services that they appreciate and like so they don't just have to do what I did when I was growing up. And we need to find ways to offer that in a long time satisfying involving volunteers. So on the maintenance side. I think we're pretty much at capacity for the different tasks. Now I say that somebody may come up with a new idea but I think we're, we're capacity for the, for the tasks, but on the on the on the on the recreation side really we're we're broadening out there the types of volunteer service.

Questions 21 – 26 were answered via email.

21. How has private fundraising affected the park system?

a. What has the support allowed the Parks Department to do so?

22. In addition to contributing time/labor, how many volunteer groups or individuals also make direct financial donations or participate in fundraising activities?

23. Do any organizations raise the money to completely pay for all aspects, or most, of their various parks?

24. Has the overall park budget that adjusted because of public contributions to individual parks.

25. If Park A is receiving private contributions, are saved park resources reallocated to other, less supported parks?

26. If the parks department accepts financial donations, how many are contingent upon being used for a specific use? (Not at discretion of parks department)

I can offer a general response to your fundraising questions, but we do not currently accept donations for community initiated projects in parks, so it is difficult for me to give you specific answers to your 6 questions. The Portland park system has a lot of competing needs and limited funding, so we have to be very thoughtful about funding decisions and community driven fundraising efforts. All park projects are ranked for equity, likelihood of failure and consequence of failure, and PP&R focuses efforts on addressing the most critical repairs and identified service gaps, with equity at the forefront. Every major project goes through an extensive community engagement process, and we collect input about what community members need the most. We do not accept donations for specific improvements in the park from individuals or community groups because these types of projects divert staff resources from the more critical repairs and service gaps that have been identified in the park system through extensive reviews and community engagement. We do accept donations through our Legacy Giving Program (Bench Program and Rose Bed Program), but those donations go directly to trust funds for the care of park benches and roses in the Washington Park Rose Garden respectively. We can also accept donations directly to support the work of the bureau. In other words, a person can donate funds to support a program, or community center. But, we don't accept funds to do something that hasn't already been identified as a need.

The Portland Parks Foundation raises funds for specific park projects in partnership with PP&R, and some of these efforts have been significant in making a major project come together.

END

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APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW INTRODUCTORY LETTER

Recipient Address

Date

Dear (INSERT NAME):

I am a graduate student at Kansas State University pursuing a Master's Degree in Landscape Architecture. For my master's research I would like to partner with (INSERT PARKS DEPARTMENT) to complete this research. The purpose of my research is to investigate to what degree volunteers extend park resources and services to the public, and help relieve the pressure that municipal parks face when experiencing budget shortfalls.

I am reaching out to you because in reviewing your website it is apparent that (INSERT PARKS DEPARTMENT) already has a strong volunteer presence and many parks have support from friends groups or "adopt-a-park" programs. I hope to be able to set up a time to talk with you about your efforts to facilitate and coordinate with individual and volunteer groups. I am including a copy of the questions I intend to ask.

(INSERT PARKS DEPARTMENT) is already devoting resources to the recruitment, training and supervision of volunteers and by working with me on this research project you will better understand the value that these efforts are bringing to you in achieving the goals and mission of the (INSERT PARKS DEPARTMENT).

Please feel free to contact me with any questions or comments you have. I am excited to hear back from you and hope to set up a meeting soon. Any feedback I receive will critically impact my research. In return, I hope that I can provide useful information for you about the volunteer impact in your area.

Thank you in advance for your time and assistance in my research efforts.

Appreciatively,

Benji Williamson

Graduate Student // Landscape Architecture

Kansas State University

p: 801.913.4534

e: btw28@k-state.edu

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APPENDIX C: VOLUNTEER SURVEY

INTRODUCTORY LETTER

To Whom it May Concern:

I am a graduate student at Kansas State University pursuing a Master's Degree in Landscape Architecture. For my master's thesis I am partnering with (INSERT PARKS DEPARTMENT) to complete this research. The purpose of my research is to investigate to what degree volunteers extend park resources and services to the public, and help relieve the pressure that municipal parks face when experiencing budget shortfalls.

You are receiving this invitation because you are providing great assistance to help (INSERT PARKS DEPARTMENT) in their efforts to create a great park system. Below is a link to a survey seeking information on your efforts in caring for your local parks. Your responses are anonymous and can not be traced to you in any way.

https://kstate.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_9AjVX7bVbEo5HUO

I am excited to have your help with my research. Any feedback I receive will critically impact my research. In return, I hope that I can provide useful information for you about the volunteer impact in your area.

Please note that you must be 18 years or older to participate in this study.

Thank you in advance for your time and assistance in my research efforts.

Appreciatively,

Benji Williamson
Graduate Student // Landscape Architecture
Kansas State University
p: 801.913.4534
e: btw28@k-state.edu

SURVEY QUESTIONS

How long have you been volunteering with the parks department?

- ☐ Less than 6 months
- ☐ 6 months to 1 year
- ☐ 1 year to 5 years
- ☐ 5 years to 10 years
- ☐ More than 10 years
- ☐ Don't know

Why did you decide to volunteer with the parks department?

How did you learn about the volunteerism opportunity?

- ☐ Friend/family
- ☐ Advertisement
- ☐ Solicitation from parks department
- ☐ Solicitation from conservatory/friends group
- ☐ Other:
- ☐ Don't know

How frequently do you volunteer?

- ☐ Weekly
- ☐ Monthly
- ☐ Semi annually
- ☐ Annually
- ☐ Other

Typically, how long are your individual volunteer sessions?

- ☐ Less than 1 hour
- ☐ 1-2 hours
- ☐ 2-3 hours
- ☐ 3-4 hours
- ☐ 4-5 hours
- ☐ More than 5 hours

Over a 3-month period, how many total volunteer hours do you donate to the park(s)?

- ☐ 1-5 hours
- ☐ 5-10 hours
- ☐ 10-15 hours
- ☐ 15-20 hours
- ☐ 20-25 hours
- ☐ 25+ hours

How many people usually attend your volunteer sessions?

- ☐ 1-5
- ☐ 6-10
- ☐ 11-15
- ☐ 16-20
- ☐ 21+

What kind of contribution(s) do you make? (Please select all that apply.)

- ☐ Service/time
- ☐ Money
- ☐ Material goods
- ☐ Other:

What type of activities do you participate in during your volunteer sessions?
(Please select all that apply.)

- ☐ Tree/shrub pruning
- ☐ Weeding
- ☐ Deadheading flowers/removing dried stalks or leaves from perennials
- ☐ Perennial flower planting
- ☐ Annual flower planting
- ☐ Spring cleanup
- ☐ Fall cleanup
- ☐ Shrub planting
- ☐ Tree planting
- ☐ Applying mulch
- ☐ Garbage collection
- ☐ Volunteer coordination
- ☐ Volunteer recruitment
- ☐ Volunteer training
- ☐ Volunteer newsletter creation/distribution
- ☐ Social media marketing effort
- ☐ Non-social media marketing effort
- ☐ Fundraising efforts
- ☐ Tour guide
- ☐ Other:

My volunteer efforts are very effective.

Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

My volunteer/service time is being used effectively.

Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

My volunteer efforts are very effective.

Strongly disagree

☐

Somewhat disagree

☐

Neutral

☐

Somewhat agree

☐

Strongly agree

☐

My volunteer/service time is being used effectively.

Strongly disagree

☐

Somewhat disagree

☐

Neutral

☐

Somewhat agree

☐

Strongly agree

☐

If the city allocated more funds/staff to support the park, would you adjust your volunteer effort (eg. increase or decrease it)?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ I don't know

How would you adjust your volunteer effort?

☐ Increase time/effort

☐ Decrease time/effort

☐ Stop

☐ Other

Do you agree with the mission statement of the park organization?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ I don't know the park organization mission statement

Do you receive regular communication from the parks department?

☐ Yes

☐ No

What is your main source of information from the parks department?

- ☐ Website
- ☐ Social media
- ☐ Personal contact (eg. volunteer coordinator)
- ☐ Newsletter
- ☐ Other:

Do you agree that the work of the parks department is effective at your volunteer park?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I don't know

Why do you continue volunteering with the parks department? (Select all that apply.)

- ☐ Personal satisfaciton/fulfillment
- ☐ Friends/Social connections
- ☐ Exercise
- ☐ My continued help is needed to maintain the park/garden at a level it should be
- ☐ Service to the community
- ☐ Court ordered
- ☐ Other:

What factors, if any, limit your volunteer efforts? (Select all that apply.)

- ☐ Lack of support from the parks department
- ☐ Lack of volunteer helper support
- ☐ Physical limitations
- ☐ Time commitment
- ☐ Schedule conflicts
- ☐ Transportation issues/concerns
- ☐ Poor communication
- ☐ None
- ☐ Other:

Do you spend leisure time at the park(s) you volunteer at?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

How many leisure hours per month do you spend at the park(s) where you volunteer?

- ☐ 0-2 hours
- ☐ 3-5 hours
- ☐ 6-10 hours
- ☐ More than 10 hours

What recreational activities do you participate in at the park(s)? (Please select all that apply.)

- ☐ Walking/jogging/running
- ☐ Bicycle riding
- ☐ Art/painting/drawing
- ☐ Bird watching
- ☐ Music/movie events
- ☐ Boating
- ☐ Camping
- ☐ Dog walking
- ☐ Picknicking
- ☐ Photography/videography
- ☐ Star gazing
- ☐ Group exercise
- ☐ Group/family events
- ☐ Pickup sporting event(s)
- ☐ Organized/league sporting event(s)
- ☐ Child play
- ☐ None
- ☐ Other:

My financial contributions/donations are being used effectively?

Strongly disagree

☐

Somewhat disagree

☐

Neutral

☐

Somewhat agree

☐

Strongly agree

☐

Have you ever been solicited for donations to the parks department or conservancy/friends group that support parks?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ I prefer not to say

Have you ever received special recognition or an incentive for your donation?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ I prefer not to say

What recognition did you receive?

If the city allocated more funds to support the park, would you adjust your financial contribution(s), either increasing or decreasing it?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ I don't know

How would you adjust your financial contribution(s)?

☐ Increase donations

☐ Decrease donation

☐ Stop

☐ Other

Do you have friends and family who also donate to the parks department or specific conservancy/friends group?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I don't know

Do you also donate to other parks within the parks department?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

How many other parks do you donate to?

- ☐ 1
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 3
- ☐ 4
- ☐ 5
- ☐ More than 5

What gender do you identify as?

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Non-binary / third gender
- ☐ Prefer not to say

What year were you born?

- ☐ Year:
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

Please specify your ethnicity.

- ☐ African-American
- ☐ Asian-American
- ☐ Caucasian/White
- ☐ Hispanic/Latino
- ☐ Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- ☐ Native American
- ☐ Two or more
- ☐ Other/unknown
- ☐ Prefer not to say

What is the highest degree or level of education you have completed?

- ☐ Some high school
- ☐ High school
- ☐ Bachelor's Degree
- ☐ Master's Degree
- ☐ Ph.D. or higher
- ☐ Trade school
- ☐ Prefer not to say

What is your annual household income?

- ☐ Less than \$25,000
- ☐ \$25,000 - \$50,000
- ☐ \$50,000 - \$100,000
- ☐ \$100,000 - \$150,000
- ☐ \$150,000 - \$200,000
- ☐ More than \$200,000
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Are you married?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Prefer not to say

How many children do you have?

- ☐ None
- ☐ 1
- ☐ 2-4
- ☐ More than 4
- ☐ Prefer not to say

How close do you live to the park you volunteer/donate to?

- ☐ Less than 1/2 a mile away
- ☐ 1/2 - 1 mile away
- ☐ 1 - 5 miles away
- ☐ 5 - 10 miles away
- ☐ More than 10 miles away
- ☐ Prefer not to say

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APPENDIX D: APPROVED IRB



University Research
Compliance Office

TO: Howard Hahn
Landscape Architect & Urban Planner
Manhattan, KS 66506

Protocol Number: IRB-10715

FROM: Sara Rosenkranz, PhD, Chair
Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects

DATE: 07/07/2022

RE: Approval of Your Proposal Entitled, "Three Municipal Park System Case Studies: Relative Comparison of Public Participation/Volunteerism Impact on Park System, Vision, Budgets, and Operations."

Federal regulations stipulate that human subjects protocols can be approved by IRB's for only one year, and require "continuing review" and approval to continue past the expiration date.

On the basis of the IRB "continuing review," your project is classified as follows:

Active. The activity is pending or in progress, and there have been no changes that have occurred or are contemplated that would affect the status of human subjects.

EXPIRATION DATE: 08/04/2024

If the activity persists, it will be eligible for continuing review several months prior to the new expiration date.

Electronically signed by Sara Rosenkranz, PhD on 07/07/2022 4:19 PM ET