1. Action Items

a) Blake Yard Property
b) Consideration of commercial to be filmed in Central Park

appeals & assistance

"If a person decides to appeal any decision made by the Commission with respect to any matter considered at such meeting or hearing, he/she will need a record of the proceedings, and that, for such purpose, he/she may need to ensure that a verbatim record of the proceedings is made, which record includes the testimony and evidence upon which the appeal is to be based." (F. S. 286.0105).

"Persons with disabilities needing assistance to participate in any of these proceedings should contact the City Clerk's Office (407-599-3277) at least 48 hours in advance of the meeting."
Requested Action

The City Commission has requested that the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board provide an opinion on the proposed disposal of the city owned property located at 301 W. Comstock Avenue, known as the Blake Yard.

Applicable Rules

Staff Recommendation

- Staff would not recommend the retention of this property solely for the purposes of a mini park because of its location.
- Staff would support usage of the property as a trail head/parking area if a trail could be established between New York and Fairbanks for bicycle and pedestrians.
- Staff would request that if the property is sold, the proceeds would be designated for park property acquisition.
### subject

Consideration of disposal of city owned property located at 301 W. Comstock Avenue known as the Blake Yard

### motion | recommendation

Recommend directing staff to proceed with an administrative Future Land Use change and rezoning prior to an appraisal and issuance of a Notice of Disposal for the property.

### background

At the City Commission work session on August 31, 2015, the Commission asked staff to bring forward information about the city owned property known as the Blake Yard, located at 301 W. Comstock Avenue. The Electric Utility Department has used this property as a lay-down yard until recently. The city allowed David Weekly Homes to store construction materials on the property during the redevelopment along Lyman Avenue. After that project was finished, David Weekly left that gravel for easier city maintenance.

The property currently has a Future Land Use of Institutional and a zoning district of PQP. Public uses that have been previously considered for the property include continuing to use it as a lay down yard, repurposing it for parking or developing it as a small park site for the neighborhood. The city’s Electric Utility has stated that they no longer need the site for a lay down yard. Staff evaluated the use of the site for parking prior to the expansion of the City Hall lot and found that the configuration of the lot does not work well for parking. Access is also a considerable problem since Comstock is a cul-de-sac. The last option is to develop the property as a park site. Access again becomes an issue as well as maintenance and security.
If the City Commission decides to dispose of the property, staff would recommend changing the Future Land Use and zoning designation to one that fits the intended neighborhood development. Staff is recommending that the Commission consider either Single-family Residential with an R-1A zoning district or Low Density Residential with an R-2 zoning district. Either are compatible with the surrounding development.

Staff would recommend direction from the City Commission to proceed with a Future Land Use Map amendment and rezoning prior to any appraisal of the property. Once an appraisal is complete, staff would recommend issuing a Notice of Disposal (NOD) on the site. The NOD is required since the property is located within the CRA.

**alternatives | other considerations**

The City Commission can continue to hold the property.

**fiscal impact**

There is minimal fiscal impact for notification of a small Future Land Use change and rezoning.
BLAKE YARD ANALYSIS

Background
The city-owned Blake Yard property at 301 W. Comstock Avenue is 19,325 square feet in size with 38 feet of paved frontage on Comstock Avenue. The current Future Land Use is Institutional and the zoning is PQP. This property has historically been used as a lay down yard for material storage by the City’s Electric Utility.

Public uses which have been discussed in the past include keeping it as a material storage yard, converting it to parking or using it as park. With the redevelopment of the residential to the north and west of the parcel, a storage yard seems to be an inconsistent and possibly nuisance use to the property owners. The city addressed the parking issue by removing the former Public Works building and creating significantly more parking around City Hall which serves other employees in the downtown area as well as the Farmer's Market on Saturdays. The other public use option would be to develop it as park. A park in this location would be an amenity to a small group of residents but based on its location would not be easily accessible to the community. The property and the surrounding area are highlighted in the attached photos.
To be consistent with the surrounding area, staff would recommend the City Commission consider a Future Land Use change to either Single Family Residential (up to 5 DU/acre) with a zoning district of R-1A or Low Density Residential (up to 10 DU/acre) with a zoning district of R-2.

**District Analysis**

**Single Family (R-1A):** The R-1A zoning requires 8,500 square foot lot size minimums, so this property would yield two (2) conforming single family home lots. The existing character of Comstock Avenue is single family homes on smaller lots. The adjacent properties to the west are the two new David Weekly single family homes on 50 foot wide lots of 6,250 square feet. It could be possible to rezone to R-1A and provide a variance to the lot size of 6,440 square feet for each future lot to then yield three (3) single family homes that would be on lots of comparable size to the existing homes on Comstock Avenue. Each lot then would yield a maximum house size of 2,769 square feet including garage under the R-1A maximum FAR of 43%.

**Low Density (R-2):** The R-2 zoning allows up to a maximum of one unit for each 4,000 square feet of land area, so the Blake Yard property could yield a maximum of four (4) units. Those four (4) units could be in one unified building or two duplexes. To the rear of the Blake Yard property are the David Weekly duplexes (attached townhomes) of eight total units built as four duplexes. Based on the maximum 55% FAR in the R-2 zoning, the future townhouse units could be up to 2,657 square feet in size including garage. Given the shape and dimensions of the Blake Yard property it may be very difficult to site plan the full four units, each with a two car garage and access to them via common alley and to provide space for storm water retention for the driveway/alleys, plus two visitor parking spaces. Three units may be a more realistic yield given those development limitations.

Either option may require a shared driveway access from Comstock for any future redevelopment, either a common driveway or an access alley as was done for the David Weekly homes.

**Process**

The City Commission can direct staff to change the Future Land Use Map and zoning district prior to any further action on the property. This process should take approximately 60 days.
BLAKE YARD PROPERTY  
301 W. COMSTOCK AVENUE  
WINTER PARK

RE: USE OPPORTUNITIES
As reported in the Orlando Sentinel, October 1, 2015, the City is looking for viable options for the use and possible sale of this triangular piece of land. I am a resident of Winter Park and as an Architect and Planner, I offer the following thoughts and observations:

1. WINTER PARK WEDDING CHAPEL (WPWC)
   a. With the recent relocation of the WPWC to the adjacent site, it is obvious that their use of this site may be the logical solution
   b. The City could either sell or lease the Blake Yard (BY) property to the WPWC for occasional use as a wedding and/or reception site
   c. The City could also find a financial means to rent the site to the WPWC, and others, on an as-needed basis, thus still producing income for the City
   d. Music sources could be restricted to being oriented away from the new residences, toward the south and east across the train tracks
   e. Trees or Bamboo, planted at the perimeter of the BY site to provide shade and sound abatement from trains and on-site sounds, and could still accommodate parking between their spacing

2. PARK/OPEN GREEN SPACE
   a. A small and odd-shaped site, this would provide a welcome green and open buffer for the recently built townhomes and existing residences adjacent to Blake Yard
   b. As a Flexible Use Space, this area could be:
      i. A Park-added green space + water detention/retention area
      ii. Reception Site for Winter Park Wedding Chapel
      iii. Temporary parking for Farmer’s Marker + multiple users

3. PARKING FOR FARMER’S MARKET
   a. Valet parking- use of land as parking for Saturday Farmer’s Market and other scheduled events held at Farmer’s Market
   b. Public parking- creative use of landscape as visual queues of where not to park could be fashioned to control where public can park
   c. Temporary parking- with use of proper subsurface stabilization and turf grass, this area could be left green and used effectively for temporary short term parking and other residents’ needs
   d. A Turf Block paver system could be considered for a primary 20’ wide drive surface, so long as the use is consistent with the paver material used

NOTE:
The Blake Yard property appears to be virtually the same size and configuration as the open paved area of the Farmer’s Market, if not a bit larger. That area is used regularly for the Farmer’s Market and successfully as public parking.
I am NOT proposing the Blake Yard site be used as a permanent paved parking lot. But rather as a more flexible open green space for public and private uses and events.
Susie Weiss, of Wonderful Weddings, states that there is a definite need for additional wedding reception sites in Winter Park and these are profitable uses of open land.
Primary use by the Winter Park Wedding Chapel makes good sense, in that it is a dedicated and appropriate use and its Clients can contribute to Winter Park’s economy.

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Comstock Garden Circle & Market Trail
(Proposed for Winter Park’s PQP zoned “Blake Yard” site)

There are many approaches for the public use of this .45 acre triangular public lot (the former Blake Yard zoned PQP), and we are focused on two park oriented approaches. As a neighbor one concern in the area is crime and a lack of recreation. The need to address the impact of crime, while having recreational opportunities, is to consider a garden oriented park for the neighbors with a secure yet attractive aluminum 4’ fence. Neighbors could socialize and grow vegetables and plants while controlling the drug-oriented user’s access. Now there is no place for this recreation nearby – all of the parks are too distant.

The gardeners could work with the Parks Staff and Board to establish the Rules, such as at other community gardens in the city (Mead Gardens, etc.) and could even invite the participation of nearby restaurants, the wedding business, etc. Also the City’s Pedestrian and Bicycle Connectivity Plan shows a multiuse trail here and this park is a perfect “bike ped” Trailhead for the community and neighborhood. See the two approaches below and the attached maps:

**Approach A— Keep all the greenspace for the public** (Preferred by commenter)

1. Keep the public land for the public serving the West Comstock Avenue residents, a residential oriented street.
2. A neighborhood-scaled mini park and needed trail access for both local and citywide bicycle and pedestrian circulation.
3. Neighborhood food growing and social gathering with a low 4’ ht. aluminum fence to mitigate drug related activity still active in this area.
4. A Park Facility with 18 raised garden beds; with tool, shelter and compost areas.
   - No benches outside of the fence for security (A crime ridden area).
   - No parking spaces (15 minute only for drop-off) with bicycle and walking access.
   - Identity sign facing cul-de-sac and railroad informing residents of opportunities.
5. A cure for a blighted neighborhood edge on the railroad - City lot in the CRA Plan.
6. Potential stormwater recycling and a bioswale for reuse in the garden.

**Needs from the City for this approach –**

1. Park development costs (Approx. $125,000 with some in-kind works).
   - The new neighboring townhome revenues to the City will more than offset this cost in a short time.
   - Might be able to offset some costs with a local granting foundations.
2. Parks provides management (Sign ups at the Community Center, and oversight).
3. Market Trail costs by others (Possibly the Public Works Department tbd / grants)

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(See larger map at 11”x17” or 24”x36”)

Forest Michael, 358 West Comstock Avenue, Winter Park, Florida 32789, michaelplanning@gmail.com
**Approach B** — **Sell one lot and have a smaller park (Commenter doesn’t like selling)**

1. **Sell one (1) lot at R-1A or R-2A zoning** with the proceeds paying for park expenses.
   a. Similar to nearby homes.
2. **Serves the neighborhood providing subsistence foods and gathering**, all fenced.
3. **A Park Facility with 9 raised garden beds**; with tool, shelter and compost areas.
   a. No benches outside of the fence for security (A crime ridden area).
   b. No parking spaces (*15 minute only for drop-off*) with bicycle and walking access.
   c. Identity sign facing cul-de-sac and railroad informing residents of opportunities.
4. **A cure for a blighted area/City lot in the CRA Plan.**
5. **Potential stormwater recycling and a bioswale** for reuse in the garden.

**Needs from the City for this approach** —

1. **No park development costs** but these activities would need to be bid per city policy (If approx. $125,000 is dedicated by the lot sale).
2. **Parks provides management** (Sign ups at the Community Center, and oversight).
   - **The new neighboring townhome revenues to the City will more than offset management cost in a short time.**
3. **Market Trail costs by others** (Possibly the Public Works tbd / grants)

See map on next page
(See larger map at 11"x17" or 24"x36")
Potential neighborhood interaction – Let’s all learn how to...

Social sustainability for all neighbors

The Hannibal Square
Neighborhood has a high number of bicycle riders who do not own cars

Connect

In the Hannibal Square
Neighborhood number of Rollins and Valencia student residents are increasing

“8 – 80”
A planned bicycle route to the 9th Grade Center and downtown Winter Park...PBAB Winter Park

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Sustainability Action Plan compliance

By supporting the elements of the Sustainability Action Plan for target years 2020 and 2030, the proposed Comstock Garden Circle and Market Trail helps Winter Park:

- Increase the quality of life while improving individual and community health.
- Become more energy independent.
- Protect and enhance air quality, water quality, and natural systems.
- Save money. Increase economic value.

This proposed initiative corresponds with the following “Highlights and Accomplishments to Date:”

- Complete Streets Resolution stating all future city road projects be designed to accommodate all modes of transportation equally (passed 2011)
  - The proposed Market Trail supports bicycle and pedestrian circulation along New York Avenue and ultimately SR 426 Fairbanks Avenue.
- 100% of all residents within half mile of public green space
  - The location of this proposed mini park allows residents not to be required to cross busy Pennsylvania and New York avenues to access Central Park (Community) and Hannibal Square (a community square) respectively, neither providing community gardening.
- Neighborhood Green Space Grants for Community Gardening and Native Landscaping (KWPB)
  - This proposed project is a candidate for these types of grants.
- Volunteer Environmental Cleanups and Tree Plantings
  - This proposed project is a candidate for these volunteer efforts.
- Tree City USA Designation
  - This proposed project will add .45 acres of trees to the equation.

Basic definition of sustainability: “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs” (Brundtland Report, Our Common Future, 1987) and the City of Winter Park’s definition: “…responsible and proactive decision-making that minimizes negative impact and maintains balance between social, environmental, and economic growth to ensure a desirable planet for all species now and in the future.”

| Community Engagement and Green Economy (CEGE) Pg. 10 | Actions: (If this project is approved…)
| --- | --- |
| 2015 – (3) Explore funding option for maintenance and upkeep of existing Community Gardens  
  - This project will seek funding from local foundations from inception.  
| 2015 – (4) Facilitate sustainability education workshops…  
  - This project will implement Community Garden sustainability workshops with neighbors.  
| 2015 – (5) Continue participation in America In Bloom…  
  - This project will show forward progress to the selection committee for neighborhood community gardening and trail and environmental enhancement and stewardship from inception. |

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2015 – (6) Continue volunteer opportunities including...gardening and invasive species removal.
  o This project will be available for regular volunteer opportunities.
2018 – (8) Create and install Env Ed. Opportunities at parks and green buildings.
  o This project is available and will seek grants to facilitate from inception.
2020 – (9) (Program) Develop Green Neighborhood program...to support eco-friendly behavior.
  o This project will mentor eco-friendly behavior in the Hannibal Square Neighborhood from inception.

OTHER POTENTIAL ACTIONS:

Objective (1) Communicate, educate and motivate the low income and upper income neighbors who will naturally come together in a garden environment to improve Winter Park’s quality of life supporting the Sustainability Action Plan.

(1) OPEN HOUSE PRACTICE – This project will seek to embrace local neighbors and other visitors with a weekly open house every Saturday morning where everyone can come in and be provided with surplus vegetables and volunteer or learn about the community garden. This practice will embrace all.

(1) Seek a large local foundation’s participation (A neighbor to this West Comstock project) for engagement to assist with the funding and development of this public garden, park and trailhead, to become a “green partner.”

(2) Reduce city wide carbon footprint from transportation and solid waste.

(2) “Green Transit Corridor” engages the Central Florida Rail Corridor/FDOT to join in establishing a green corridor a through Winter Park and the Region.

Waste Diversion & Recycling (WDR) Pg.13

2016 – (5) Promote composting case studies...
  o This project will qualify as a case study.
2018 – (6) Increase recycling to all City owned facilities and parks.
  o This project will provide special events recycling location and signage.

OTHER POTENTIAL ACTIONS:

Objective (1) Zero (0) net total organic wastes generated from the garden from inception by using a composting recycling system.

(2) Zero (0) net organic wastes removed to the landfill, following an EA by the City (Environmental Assessment Phase 1) from inception reuse the existing gravel versus hauling it to the landfill. The proposed community garden activity is ideal for this with the incorporation of raised planters atop the gravel.

(3) Reduce the greenhouse gas impacts from inception by revegetating 50% of site with native species and bioswales. This same principle was used on the Rose Garden in Central Park though the species mix has changed over time.

Mobility & Urban Form (MUF) Pg. 17

2016 (2) (Project) Identify policies ...“Green Neighborhood Development;” community garden.
  o This project assists qualification for a Green Neighborhood Development with a community garden and multiuse trailhead and trail.
2016 (4) (Project) ... VMT Vehicle Miles Traveled and GHG Greenhouse Gas Emissions at select intersections.
  o The quicker access to LYNX and SunRail and Amtrak for bicycle and pedestrian traffic generated by this project will reduce VMT at the Lyman-New York avenue intersection...This intersection is a CRA project underway.
  o This project reduces VMTs and GHG emissions since it is a ped-bike destination, and not a vehicular destination.
2017 (5) (Project) Evaluate...
  o A neighborhood(s) SunRail access route, 9th Grade Center route, and is a regionally important project to connect with the Orlando Urban Trail and eventually to Maitland and Eatonville.
2020 (13) Enhance pedestrian and bicycle wayfinding.
- This project will seek to integrate wayfinding at the earliest. Many out of town visitors already use this route and are confused without direction.

OTHER POTENTIAL ACTIONS:
- **Create walkable and bikeable neighborhood(s)** with direct access to transit as a part of the developing City bicycle network, reinforcing the connection of Hannibal Square Neighborhood with Downtown Winter Park (Since 1882). This is a logical connector from Orwin Manor and the Mead Garden Neighborhood via the Pennsylvania Trail.
- **Create enhanced visibility to regional and national transit** passengers and locals alike, seeing a beautiful park versus a blighted lot or more homes. This practice was initiated by Loring Chase, Charles Morse, and Robert Bruce Barbour (Casa Feliz).

### Buildings, Energy and Water (BEW)
Pg. 23

- 2017 (9) **Develop a plan for converting streetlights and public space lighting to LEDs.**
  - This project will comply from inception, and use solar energy, and downcast illumination to reduce atmospheric light pollution.
- 2018 (14) **Develop policy and rebate...rain water reuse.**
  - This project will comply and be a test bed for water reuse for irrigation purposes in public parks. Use solar energy to transfer stormwater from below grade cisterns to trees and community garden beds.
  - Work with the City for a water cistern at the low point (cul-de-sac at the inlet) to catch surface water and reuse for drip irrigating new trees. Also seek to collect cleaner water in other ways to reuse to irrigate the vegetables.
  - Consider an above grade water tank to store water for the dry season.

### Natural Systems & Resources (NSR) (Conservation)
Pg. 27

- 2018 (2 and 4) **Project** Work towards establishing a Green Infrastructure Plan addressing stormwater with light impact development best management practices including Rain Gardens, Bioswales...
  - This Project integrates including Rain Gardens, Bioswales and more.
- 2020 (10) **Program** Continue to develop long term reforestation plan to increase tree canopy coverage.
  - This .45 acre site will be covered approximately 50% in native trees.

OTHER POTENTIAL ACTIONS:
- **Natural Systems** will be advanced by this project which is currently 100% gravel with potential contaminants. Stormwater will be decreased as follows improving the ecology of the Howell Creek Watershed / the Chain of Lakes.
  - Bioswales filled with pollinator species will be integrated in strategic locations.
  - Flora will be 100% indigenous to Winter Park increasing fauna. While community gardening will be a primary activity, the ecology of the site is a primary concern. We see this former landfill or materials yard as being rejuvenated by the bioswales and other indigenous areas around the site.
  - Fauna is an important consideration since parks are often ecological islands. As well, the existing 80’ wide railway right of way can also be considered a State of Florida taxpayer resource and might be available for ecological enhancement. A goal of this enhancement of both the railway right of way and this triangular project site: 1) increase pollinator species; 2) increase birdlife and the availability of this site for the fall and spring bird migrations; and 3) increase the trees to decrease the urban heat impacts.
  - PRIORITY - The Railroad (CSXT and former) had a side track which later evolved to Blake (cut through). It is not known what lies beneath the surface but it is known that when FDOT removed the asphalt of Blake, they did not remove the limestone subbase material – an environmental issue at this point since there is zero percolation and excessive stormwater runoff.
  - CRITICAL: it is critical to resolve the ecology of this area due to the previous "industrial type uses" and potential contaminants and other issues.
  - IT IS NOT RECOMMENDED A LOT BE SOLD UNTIL THESE SUBSURFACE CONDITIONS ARE SCIENTIFICALLY DETERMINED.
- Other "Intrinsic Resources:" Scenic – enhance views from the railway transit viewer. Recreational – enhance local walking and bicycling connectivity per the Pedestrian and Bicycle Connectivity Plan to and from downtown, and gardening as physical exercise. Historic – seek to interpret the "Oldest and Longest Railroad in the State of Florida," Cultural – and interpret the African American culture (This Hannibal Square Neighborhood) connection to the Lake Monroe to Orlando Railroad train entities, and the current community garden and value of West Comstock Avenue.

Local Food & Agriculture (LFA) Pg. 29

- LFA1 % of Residents within ½ mile of local/healthy food.
  - This project meets this indicator for this portion of Hannibal Square.
  - This community garden can be represented.
- 2015 (2) (Project) Create a map identifying additional city-owned locations for edible landscaping.
  - This community garden qualifies as a highlight on the map and trail.
- 2016 (3) (Program) Continue Community Garden Projects via KWPB grant program.
  - This community garden effort needs this KWPB grant program.
- 2020 (5) (Policy) Explore residential, commercial, and public space urban agricultural design guidelines.
  - This park and community garden may be used as a model.
- 2020 (6) Pilot an urban farm.
  - This community garden can be another test model to establish a "mentoring" track record of success to attempt a larger urban farm.

OTHER POTENTIAL ACTIONS:
- The MARKET TRAIL will be located on the eastern edge of the triangle to increase connectivity of the ENTIRE CITYWIDE BICYCLE NETWORK with access by all. This is the closest community garden to the WINTER PARK FARMER’S MARKET and in time there could be collaboration and economic opportunities.
- A community garden function is proposed using primarily organic farm (Raised bed) best practices. Engage other local community garden participants in this activity.
  - None of the existing gravel, which is potentially nutrient deficient and non-organic, will be used as a growing medium.
- Focus on sustainable subsistence locally grown healthy foods and the mentoring of and by residents to increase this.

Local Governmental Operations (LGO) Pg. 31

- 2018 (4) (Policy) Shift from potable to non-potable water resources for parks irrigation while increasing efficiency.
  - This project will reuse stormwater for the majority of irrigation. Seasonal usage of potable water will be minor initially until the reuse system is in place.

OTHER POTENTIAL ACTIONS:
- Minimize local government operational requirements for this site and activity
  - Reduce mowing substantially, control stormwater on site as feasible, use solar energy for lighting as feasible, and more.
- Use existing staff at the Community Center to control fees and sign-ups.
Connectivity:

With two colleges, Rollins and Valencia, within a mile of this site and both having residents nearby (Due to many recent acquisitions this last decade) this site has many potential benefits regarding education and partnerships and connectivity. And with so many commercial areas (Orange Avenue, West New England and Park Avenue) as neighbors, the essentialness of this “Blake” bicycle connection route (The Market Trail) is evident. The proposed Market Trail has many connection potentials for these entities, and for local business, employees and customers. And, the regional SunRail and the national Amtrak trains are nearby. Also, the residents of the Hannibal Square Neighborhood have been crossing at West Comstock Avenue for 125+ years but when SunRail came they/we did not formalize this crossing, why not? Where are the many residents and students and employees and all others to walk safely – the Market Trail project proposes that connectivity, sustainably per the Commission approved Sustainability Action Plan.

CRA New York Avenue

The current CRA funded design project for New York Avenue is underway with the CRA consultant and a designated CRA Task Force managed by the Planning and Community Development Department. The Pedestrian and Bicycle Advisory Board are participants and are working on these connection potentials. This Market Trail route is on the City’s plan AND IS ESSENTIAL TO CIRCULATION. The Comstock Garden Circle trailhead is proposed to facilitate that connection. New York Avenue is constrained and needs any feasible supplementary bicycle route to and from downtown, the Market Trail.

The simple analogy, 1 + 1 = 5 portrays the many benefits of the Blake Yard site receiving consideration as a neighborhood mini park, (Public Quasi-Public), for a garden and trailhead.

Please think of this as if it might be in your neighborhood, where you live and care for loved ones and neighbors and others as we do, and how you might view your favorite small park nearby. We are proposing to enhance our neighborhood + our community. We have removed the large crack house and drug/prostitution ring, the bike theft ring and have curbed commercial traffic impacts to a high degree. Now we seek the small “mini park” as a means of bringing our long broken neighborhood together again. We seek this “Blake Yard” to assist in that effort, and to reverse its long-standing negative impact (Major utility truck and equipment traffic, etc.) to our neighborhood, and for this public land to now give something back to our neighbors. We have no other viable options for parkland within a reasonable walking distance. Thank you for any consideration and support and guidance you may provide. Forest

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Creating Mini-Parks for Increased Physical Activity

INTRODUCTION

Providing quality park and recreation space for inner city residents is increasingly challenged by the limited amount of available park space in urban areas. As a result of the diminishing access to parks and open spaces, the physical and recreational needs of urban youth often go unmet. To meet these growing needs, park and recreation agencies are in a position to play an important role in the conversion of unused areas and abandoned spaces into what are being called mini or pocket parks. These unique parks are often created out of vacant lots, rooftops and otherwise forgotten and unused spaces.

WHAT IS A POCKET PARK?

A pocket park is a small outdoor space, usually no more than ¼ of an acre, usually only a few house lots in size or smaller, most often located in an urban area surrounded by commercial buildings or houses on small lots with few places for people to gather, relax, or to enjoy the outdoors. They are also called vest pocket parks, a term first used in the 1960’s. Pocket parks are urban open spaces on a small-scale and provide a safe and inviting environment for surrounding community members. They also meet a variety of needs and functions, including: small event space, play areas for children, spaces for relaxing or meeting friends, taking lunch breaks, etc.

Successful “pocket parks” have four key qualities: they are accessible; allow people to engage in activities; are comfortable spaces and have a good image; and finally, are sociable places: one where people meet each other and take people to when they come to visit.

BENEFITS OF POCKET PARKS

It is important to note that pocket parks are not intended to service an entire city in the same way as a neighborhood or city park. Each should be created with the specific interests and needs of the contiguous community—that is, the nearby individuals and families for whose use it was originally intended (Olmos, 2008). continued >
ACQUISITION/IMPLEMENTATION MECHANISMS

Many pocket parks have been created as a result of community groups organizing and rallying for more open space within the urban environment. Leftover spaces and other urban eyesores present opportunities for conversion to pocket parks, offering important and desirable amenities to communities. These are often purchased and owned by cities, with the agreement that they will be run and maintained by a foundation or other organization if the city is unable to maintain the park itself. The benefits of these unique urban spaces often include one or several of the following:

- Support the overall ecology of the surrounding environment
- Help protect and conserve local wildlife, landscape, and heritage
- Reduce pollution, traffic, and consumption of resources, such as oil
- Empower local residents to make decisions that affect their community
- Make communities safer and more sociable
- Improve fitness and health
- Regenerate run-down areas
- Reinforce relationships between local authorities and communities

Though pocket parks vary according to specific purposes and locations, there are numerous characteristics that the majority has in common. For example:

- Pocket park users should not have to walk more than 5 to 10 minutes to reach their destination.
- Since parking may or may not be provided, the parks should be accessible by both foot and bike, and should not require the use of a car.
- Parks should serve a resident population of approximately 500-1000 persons.
- Parks should strive to accommodate as many different users as possible, prioritizing the needs of surrounding neighborhoods.

Community gardens are a popular choice when creating a pocket park that is being designed for neighborhood interaction by people of all ages. Unlike playscapes, they typically do not include play structures; instead they provide the land, resources, and informational support necessary to grow food for local sale and consumption. Community gardens have a variety of purposes for the people they serve; they unite residents of all ages in fun and productive outdoor activities and facilitate the growth of community solidarity and neighborhood revitalization.

FUNDING POCKET PARKS

There are many possible funding sources for the development of pocket parks. The Trust for Public Land is one organization that offers assistance with private and public funding for mini-parks (Trust for Public Land, 2009). At the local level, public-private ventures, individual contributions, and philanthropic support are often solicited to underwrite start-up and equipment costs.

While some parks are financed almost entirely with private funds, many are typically financed by a combination of various funding sources. For example, capital support for the acquisition, design, and development of the 6th Avenue NW Pocket Park in Seattle, Washington consisted of joint contributions from the Pro Parks Levy, the Neighborhood Matching Fund, and the local community. These organizations continue to contribute towards enhancement of parks including: large lawn areas, landscaping, paths, neighborhood gathering areas and interactive features for children's play.

CREATING A POCKET PARK

In organizing pocket parks, designers must often work out a delicate balancing act so that all groups can use the space in peaceful co-existence. There are no set designs for pocket parks; each one is different depending on the size and use of the space, but because space is restricted and user needs are both diverse and vary throughout the day, conflicts can sometimes arise between different groups. Thus, park and recreation agencies can fulfill the community’s vision for the parks by assisting in the development of an implementation strategy, beginning with small-scale, doable improvements that can immediately bring benefits to public spaces and the people who use them. More importantly, park and recreation agencies can help design parks to provide the maximum benefit to the community. Since mini-parks cannot provide all the benefits of large parks, park and recreation agencies can help identify what trade-offs may be necessary. As with any new park or recreation innovation, there are challenges in the development of pocket parks.

Some of the more commonplace examples of issues typically faced in the development of pocket parks include:

- Limited money and staff time
- Insufficient Pocket Parks to meet high demand
- Insufficient support for training and ‘networking’
- Too few volunteers
STEP-BY-STEP PLAN FOR CREATING A POCKET PARK

The following steps can help your neighborhood get started in creating a beautiful oasis of green for all to enjoy!

1. Secure the community’s commitment. The more inclusive the decision-making, the more successful the park will be. Start talking to as many neighbors as possible and secure them to help you throughout the process. Think about those in your neighborhood. Is there someone who is an expert gardener, someone who knows what’s going on at every block or someone that can let you use their spigot for water? Seek these people out and get them involved.

2. Convene a steering committee. You will need local leadership for the project. One of the best ways to accomplish this is to create a committee with divided responsibilities in terms of planning and working on the project.

3. Choose a site. Think about how the site will be used. What kinds of improvements are needed? Keep in mind how much the neighborhood can realistically take on to address issues such as the creation and maintenance of the plan and make sure the space suits all expectations.

4. Plan. Determine a site plan either with the help of a landscape architect. Begin to strategize how the landscaping will be installed, how it will be funded, and how the neighborhood will maintain it in the long run.

5. Identify and secure potential partners. Partners should be local businesses, nonprofits and other organizations available in the city. Identify the roles of each partner and secure a written understanding if possible.

6. Secure long-term and short-term funding. Begin to look at various resources for funding in the form of grants, in-kind materials and money from businesses. Consider corporate sponsorships and be sure to think long-term about funding and saving money for maintenance and repairs in the future or to cover other necessary items including liability insurance coverage.

7. Schedule work days in advance. Assign a project manager and plan out what activities need to occur in what order. Can everything be done in one day, or will it take multiple work days?

8. Plan a big work day/dedication/celebration event. This is a very important part of the process to the neighborhood and to the partners. This is a chance to possibly garner media attention, as well as involve as many people as possible.

9. Implement a maintenance plan. Before any plants go in the ground, the neighborhood should agree to a maintenance plan and document it in writing.

10. Pursue consistent engagement. Just as maintenance is a never-ending job, so is everything else involved. On-going communication with the neighborhood especially should keep them interested and involved in your project.  

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ROUNDS

Location: Long Beach, California

Description: Rotary Centennial Park, a new Mini Park is located on the corner of Pacific Coast Highway and Junipero Street. The park was first constructed when the Rotary Club approached the department with the idea of collaborating on the construction of the new park in celebration of the 100th anniversary of Rotary International in 2005.

Challenges: Develop a viable plan converting the city-owned undeveloped land along the former Pacific Electric right-of-way that is surrounded by a densely developed area with nearly 80 percent of the residents living in apartments with no backyards.

Outcomes: To celebrate the 100th anniversary of Rotary International in 2005, the Long Beach Rotary Club raised $300,000 to help design and construct a 1.2-acre park at Pacific Coast Highway and Junipero Avenue. Long Beach Rotary involved the public and stakeholders throughout the design process. Community input was translated into plans that incorporated a solar system theme with art installations of planets, a sundial sculpture, benches, turf, trees, playground equipment, and a shade shelter. These creative elements have made the Rotary Centennial Park one of the most unique and inviting parks in the city and a welcome addition to a park-poor neighborhood. Custom engraved “Community Bricks” were sold at $50 and $100 each. The additional funds went to help pay for educational public art. The park was dedicated on May 21, 2005 on Rotary International’s 100th anniversary.

Lessons Learned: Continuing support from the park’s partner became a critical aspect of the project continuing success. The Rotary’s involvement didn’t stop with the park’s creation and every month since the park opening, Long Beach Rotarians have held work parties to help clean, repair and maintain the park.

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THE FARM-A-LOT PROGRAM

Location: Detroit, Michigan

Description: Detroit has more than 28,000 vacant parcels owned by the city almost half of them residential plots—that generate no significant tax revenue and cost more to maintain than the city can afford. Finding new uses for this land has become one of the most pressing challenges for a city that lost a quarter of its population in the past decade. There are groups and individuals all around the city who have begun to use vacant land — some privately owned, some city-owned — as personal gardens, community gardens and even full-scale farm operations.

Challenges: While gardens are widespread throughout the city, they are generally small in scale and comprise only a tiny fraction of the total number of vacant lots. Inadequate city resources are an obstacle to conscientious land use and effective community management of open space. In addition, gardeners are faced with a lack of long-term security and the issues of liability and insurance are not addressed.

Outcomes: The City of Detroit Recreation Department created and manages the Farm-A-Lot program whose goal is to facilitate the reuse of vacant city-owned lots for agriculture. Farm-A-Lot provides soil tilling services and free seeds to residents interested in using vacant lots in their neighborhoods for growing vegetables. When the Farm-a-Lot program which tills 500 to 600 urban gardens, hit the dirt, several of the city’s most active “green” organizations came together to fill the void. These organizations, Grooming of Detroit, Detroit Agricultural Network (DAN), Michigan State University Extension and Earthworks Urban Farm, banded together as the Detroit Garden Network and each group brings its urban gardening partners one piece of the puzzle needed to get started and keep going.

Lessons Learned: Urban agriculture (UA) programs like Farm-A-Lot help the City of Detroit by reducing urban blight, providing educational opportunities, and improving access to fresh produce. Annual costs for maintaining city park space are much higher than the cost of maintaining an urban garden and cities can save 100 percent on maintenance costs of the parcels when community groups and non-profits pay the costs of their own activities and upkeep.
CASE STUDIES

Baltimore Open Spaces

Location: Baltimore, Maryland

Description: Baltimore City covers approximately 80 square miles, is designated a separate county and has at least 12,000 vacant houses and 14,000 vacant lots which have been difficult for the City to maintain.

Challenges: As Baltimore City struggles to manage its 6,000 acres of formally designated parkland, effective management of approximately 14,000 vacant lots and small spaces is hampered by such things as the lack of a central database, property maintenance standards and schedules, the ineffective use of liens to ensure regular property maintenance and the lack of formal coordination among city agencies and non-profit organizations.

Outcomes: Despite its dwindling population and shrinking tax base, Baltimore City Recreation and Parks (BCRP) department has often been regarded as an innovator and leader in managing open spaces. The BCRP, Housing, and Community Development, and Public Works have had a positive impact on the urban environment by supporting neighborhood open space initiatives. Many community groups in Baltimore along with BCRP are committed to transforming vacant vacant lots in their neighborhoods to attractive green spaces.

Lessons Learned: While community management is not an appropriate strategy for every vacant lot, it can be an important component in managing vacant lots and neighborhood open spaces. An example is Baltimore's Vacant Lot Restoration Program started by the Parks and People Foundation. The program has provided training, technical assistance, and site improvement funding for 23 neighborhood-managed open spaces. While the successes and failures of the projects are in many ways unique to the sites themselves, they can also illustrate the challenges commonly experienced by communities everywhere.

Adequate maintenance of community parks and gardens has emerged as the major issue facing many Baltimore sites. Park and recreation agencies can be the best resource for the planning and organization of such efforts whether community based or managed by public agencies.

CONCLUSION

A research team from the University of Pennsylvania's Perelman School of Medicine has found that distressed neighborhoods where vacant lots have been converted into small parks and community green spaces are associated with reduced crime when compared to neighborhoods with unimproved vacant lots.

In some sections of the city, residents of neighborhoods with improved vacant lots also reported "significantly less stress and more exercise," suggesting that the improvements had an effect on residents' perceptions of safety outdoors. The team also noted that studies have shown that the presence of urban green space is linked to lower rates of mortality and health complaints and to mental health benefits.

It undoubtedly takes more than increased, tended green space to cure crime, improve general health, increase exercise and other issues associated with distressed neighborhoods and vacant lots. Pocket parks have been successful because they are able to respond to the needs of local communities but their success requires careful planning, local empowerment and significant local support. The benefits of these parks go far beyond their communities, and positively impact the well-being of the city and region in which they are located.

The creation and implementation of a written constitution and management plan are important to ensure park sustainability. However, in order for a pocket park to be truly successful, it is imperative to involve community interest, support, and participation in the planning and maintenance process (Project for Public Spaces, 2009b).

The active investment facilitated by community groups fosters a sense of ownership, which, in turn, creates a strong incentive for them to protect and preserve their park (Project for Public Spaces, 2009b).

REFERENCES


Alison Blake, Pocket Parks: Designing our future: Sustainable Landscapes, High Line Park, New York City, New York, U.S.A.


Neighborhood Open Space Management: A Report on Greening Strategies in Baltimore and Six Other Cities, The Parks & People Foundation, Sponsored by the National Urban and Community Forestry Advisory Council (NUCFAC), 2000

Peter Hamil and Ben Welie, From Fitness Zones to the Medical Mile: How Urban Park Systems Can Best Promote Health and Wellness, The Trust for Public Land, 2011

Pocket Parks Research Brief, Kronkosky Charitable Foundation, 2009


National Recreation and Park Association

800.626.NRPA (6772) | www.nrpa.org
Requested Action

Consider request of applicant to film a commercial in Central Park for International Delight Coffee Creamer. October 20-24, 2015

Applicable Rules

- Paid admission/controlled access is not permitted in the east side of Central Park.
- Restrooms are required, two for every 125 guests.
- A permit for placement of a tent is required.
- Amplified sound must cease by 10 p.m.
- A fee in the amount of $3,300 is required. This represents the setup days at $412.50 each and the actual rental day of $1650.00 for a group of 400 to 2000 people. It would be $550 for the actual rental day if the group will be less than 400 people.

Rollins is holding Sunset Yoga in the park on Friday October 23rd, north end of the park. Cows and Cabs is in West Meadow on Saturday, October 24th and the Doggie Costume Party is on Sunday, October 25th in the north end of the park.

The only available option for the film crew is the south end of the park.

The commercial may not interfere with the Art in the Park displays in any way.
Hello again, gentlemen!

I have received an updated request for this International Delight event - wanted to do my due diligence and run it by you as they are IN LOVE with Central Park.

I've attached an updated doc from the production team (please excuse the "Lake County" mention at the top. the rest of the information is up-to-date). To address the Genius Foundation deed restriction issue, this is a commercial event, but it will be open to the public. In fact, the company is looking to feature the public in the commercial (of course after obtaining all proper waivers, etc.).

Details (see attached for full details):

- Prep Days: Tuesday October 20 - Thursday October 22
- Filming Day: Friday October 23
- Wrap Day: Saturday October 24
- Location: they have identified their top three ideal locations within Central Park. They are all indicated in the attached.
- Production company does recognize that there will be some inevitable damage to the grass and are 100% willing to replace it at their expense directly after the event. A larger conversation can be had about this directly with the production company as I know how important it is for the park to look pristine at all times.

Thank you again for your assistance with this. If approved, I will of course submit a completed permit for everything. Please let me know if there are any specific questions, if you need any further details, would like to set up a call, etc.

Have a great afternoon!

Lindsey Fuller Sandrin | Associate Director of Film & Digital Media Orlando Film Commission A Division of the Orlando Economic Development Commission
301 E. Pine Street, Suite 900 | Orlando, Florida 32801
Lindsey@FilmOrlando.com | 407.422.7159 x216 | 440.289.4632 | 407.425.6428
ADDENDUM FOR LAKE COUNTY, FLORIDA FILM PERMIT OCTOBER 6, 2015

Jamberry Films, Ltd.
24 Algonquin Drive
Chappaqua, NY 10514
917-767-9269
Stacey McGillis - Location Manager 407-718-3831 (c)
staceylocations@gmail.com

Production Location:

Central Park, W. Morse Blvd, Winter Park, FL 32789

Production Schedule:

Prep days: Tuesday, October 20th, Wednesday, October 21st & Thursday, October 22nd
From Approximately 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM

Shoot day: Friday, October 23rd
From Approximately 12:00 PM to 12:00 AM

Wrap day: Saturday, October 24th
From Approximately 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM
*** In the event of rain on Saturday, wrap would move to Sunday, Oct 25th

***Saturday, October 24th is an alternate shoot day. In the event the shooting moved to Saturday, everything would shift forward one day.

Production Activity:

Production company proposes to set up a surprise "Winter Wonderland" for residents to enjoy. Production company would like to build a winter wonderland set. The set would include fencing off an area of the park, hanging cafe lights over the area and bringing in evergreen trees and fake snow. The production company would cover the ground with plastic sheeting before placing the fake snow to ensure ease of clean up. The production would also like to create a real snow slide (approx 6' tall, 12' wide and 15' long) and snow man. This accomplished with an ice chipper/snow making trailer. This trailer will need to cross sidewalks and park on the grass next to the set. The production would also like to create a fire pit to roast chestnuts over. The fire pit would be gas with porcelain logs. Additional set pieces would include a sleigh and an International Delight Coffee Cart. Production Company has identified three options in the park for the set. (Please refer to map below for desired options in the park)
**Please note that the grass will undoubtedly see some form of damage over the entire footprint and that the production company will repair, replace and restore it. Is there irrigation that may be damaged? Can this irrigation be turned off?**

**Production Activity (Cont):**

Prep days: Production would begin to bring in fencing, fake snow, trees and set pieces. The production company will hire security guards overnight to watch the set.

Shoot day: Production would bring in the ice chipper/snow making truck and finish up the set before shoot. At shoot time the production would invite the public from nearby areas to come and enjoy the Winter Wonderland.

Wrap day: Production would wrap the set and restore the park.

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**Cast & Crew:** The public we invite would be considered our “cast”. Approximately 50 crew members.

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**Production Vehicles:**

Trucks:
- 24’ grip box truck
- 15’ camera truck
- 24’ prop/art box truck
- VTR pick up truck with trailer
- 15’ sound van
- Motorhome
- Caterer
- Craft service pick up truck and trailer
- Generator

30 crew cars

**Support Vehicles:** 15’ Ice Maker/Snow Maker box truck

**Temporary Structures:** Fencing, cafe lights, sleigh, fire pit, evergreen trees

**Special Effects:** The production company would like to create a fire pit over which to roast chestnuts. The production company would also like to use a ice chipper/snow maker truck to create real snow for the snow slide and the snow man.

**County Services:** None Requested

**Traffic Control:** None Requested
Parking for Option 1:

SHOOT DAY: Production Company requests the use of the parking spaces on the North side of W. New England between New York and Park Ave for support trucks as well as the Farmers Market Parking Lot. Production Company requests the South East portion of the grassy lot at New York and Morse for crew parking.

PREP & WRAP DAYS: Production Company requests the use of the parking spaces on the North side of W. New England between New York and Park Ave for prep trucks. Production Company would need to pull a truck and trailer over the sidewalk and onto the grass to spread the fake snow the day before shooting.

ACTIVITY/PARKING MAP (Option 1):
Parking for Option 2:

SHOOT DAY: Production Company requests the use of the parking spaces on the North side of W. Morse Ave between New England and Park Ave for support truck parking and use of the South East portion of the grass lot at Morse and New England for ancillary truck parking and crew parking.

PREP & WRAP DAYS: Production Company requests the use of the parking spaces on the North side of W. Morse to the train tracks for prep truck parking. Production Company would need to pull a truck and trailer over the sidewalk and onto the grass to spread the fake snow the day before shooting.

ACTIVITY/PARKING MAP (Option 2):
Parking for Option 3:

SHOOT DAY: Production Company requests permission to use the North East Corner of the grassy lot at Morse and New England for truck parking. Production company requests the use of the South East corner of the same lot for crew parking.

PREP DAY: Production Company requests to use the North East side of the grass lot to park 3-4 prep trucks. Production Company would need to pull a truck and trailer over the sidewalk and onto the grass to spread the fake snow the day before shooting.

ACTIVITY/PARKING MAP (Option 3):