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June 6, 2009

Ms. Karen Footner, Executive Director
Baltimore Efficiency & Economy Foundation, Inc.
P.O. Box 16281
Baltimore, MD 21210

Dear Karen:

I enclose two copies of the report that the Johns Hopkins Institute for Policy Studies (IPS) was engaged to perform for the Baltimore Efficiency & Economy Foundation.

As we agreed, we provide demographic data and the results of multiple interviews and site visits to suggest vending opportunities in Druid Hill Park, Patterson Park, and Riverside Park. Without park usage data requested from the Department of Recreation and Parks (R&P), we were limited in the precise recommendations we could make. Similarly, questions about existing vendor arrangements went unanswered and hampered our ability to form concrete conclusions. You will note several highlighted passages where we continue to have questions.

We were able to review the organizational structures in other cities, and benefited greatly from previous analyses of R&P special facilities and swimming pools undertaken for BEEF.

Our presentation of options for management of concessions focuses heavily on the preconditions for any decisions about concessions – the development of a vision for Baltimore City Parks and of individual parks that reflects the City's and its parks' constituents values; establishment of concrete objectives in pursuit of the vision; the need to improve the "product," most particularly its maintenance; and the formulation and execution of a marketing program.

I am available to answer questions about the report after June 26. In the meantime, if we receive additional information, I will incorporate it then. Thank you for the opportunity to undertake this fascinating study.

Very truly yours,

Marsha R. B. Schachtel

Marsha R. B. Schachtel
Senior Fellow

cc: Shreya Pillai
Michelle Swift

MANAGEMENT OF PARKS & RECREATION CONCESSIONS

A report to
Baltimore Efficiency and Economy Foundation
Funded by The Abell Foundation

June 2009

Marsha R. B. Schachtel, Senior Fellow
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I. INTRODUCTION

The Johns Hopkins Institute for Policy Studies (IPS) was asked by the Baltimore Efficiency and Economy Foundation (BEEF), the Mayor's Office, and the Baltimore City Department of Recreation and Parks (Rec & Parks) to examine the management of concessions in Baltimore City, and make recommendations. At the request of the Mayor's office and Rec & Parks, concession possibilities in two large parks – Druid Hill Park and Patterson Park – that draw patrons from their neighborhoods and beyond because of special facilities, and a smaller neighborhood park – Riverside Park – were examined, as well as management approaches used by other localities around the country.

The team focused not only on vendors of food and goods, but also on other entities under contract to provide management or other services in the parks and special facilities.

Advisors to the project as it unfolded over the past 16 months include Morgan Amaimo (former Baltimore City budget analyst and Howard County Rec & Parks), Wanda Darden (Rec & Parks), Chris Delaporte (former Rec & Parks), Portia Harris (Rec & Parks), Nan Rohrer (Downtown Partnership of Baltimore), Thomas Stosur (Mayor's office and Department of Planning), Chris Thomascutty (CitiStat), Mark Warren (special facilities consultant), and Tracy Williams (CitiStat).

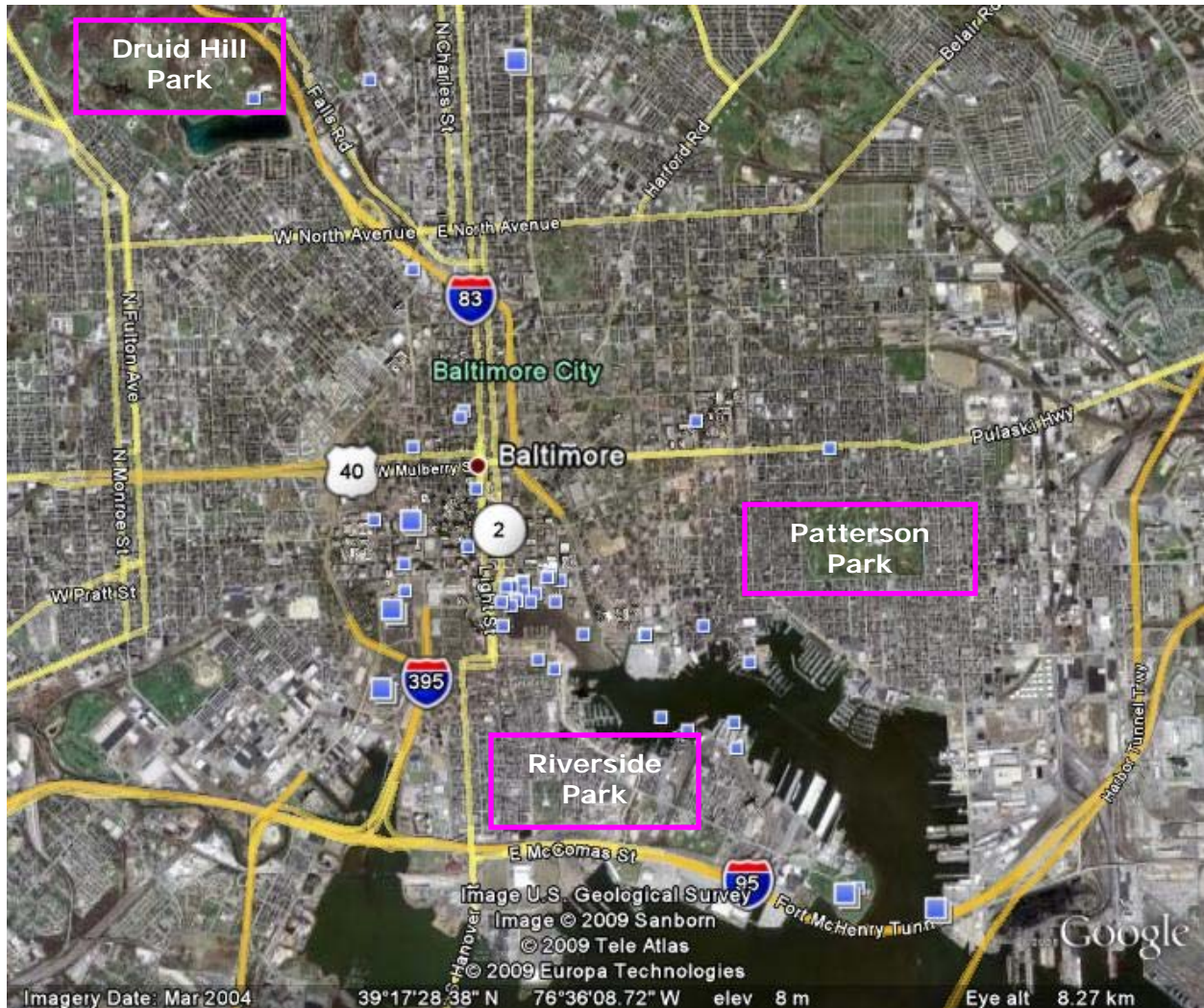
The Johns Hopkins Institute for Policy Studies (IPS) team was comprised of the principal investigator, Marsha R. B. Schachtel, a senior fellow, and her research assistant, Shreya Pillai, a second-year graduate student in the IPS Master's of Arts in Public Policy program. The project was funded by The Abell Foundation.

II. ANALYSIS OF CURRENT OPERATIONS AT SPECIAL FACILITIES

A previous analysis of operations at the City's special facilities – Mt. Pleasant Ice Arena, Dominic "Mimi" DiPietro Ice Arena, William J. Myers Soccer Pavilion, Howard Peters Rawlings Conservatory and Botanic Gardens, Cylburn Arboretum, Carrie Murray Nature Center, and Baltimore Rowing and Resource Center – was conducted in 2008 by Mark T. Warren of SMART Business Advisory and Consulting, LLC (now at Gorfine, Schiller & Gardyn, P.A). The report was previously submitted to BEEF and Rec & Parks. Mr. Warren participated in deliberations of the project team and his work was used in the formulation of recommendations in this report.

III. CONCESSION OPPORTUNITIES IN SELECTED BALTIMORE CITY PARKS

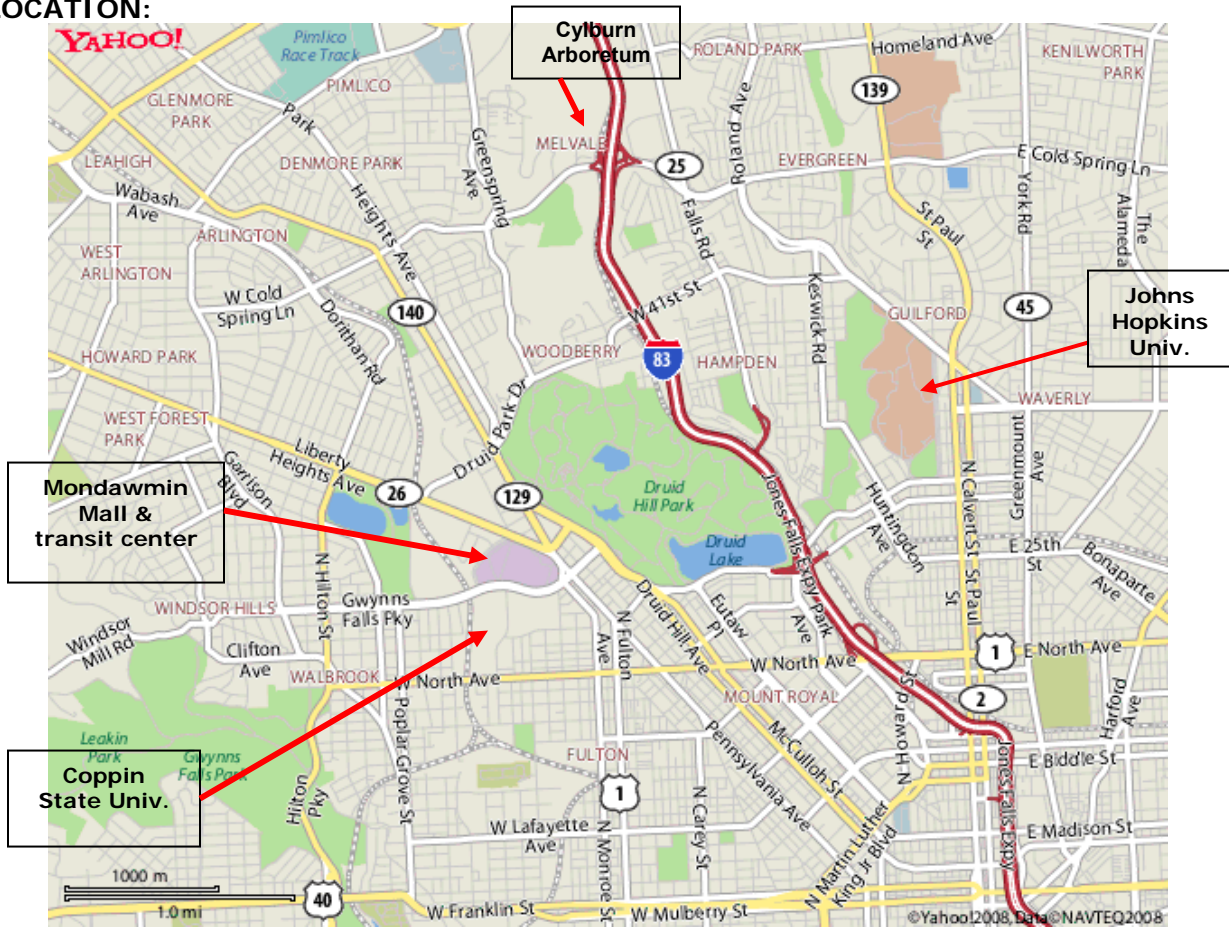
Three Baltimore City parks were selected by the Mayor's office and Rec & Parks for investigation. Druid Hill Park on the west side in the Mondawmin neighborhood, Patterson Park in East Baltimore, and Riverside Park in South Baltimore represent a range of catchment areas, demographics, and special facilities, both existing and planned.



The IPS team first looked at existing concessions in the parks and at the demographics of the Community Statistical Areas in which they are located. Neighborhood (Community Statistical Areas) demographic data from the Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance was obtained from the University of Baltimore's Jacob France Institute where it is housed. Parks patronage data was not obtainable from Rec & Parks, but a user survey by Friends of Patterson Park/Rec & Parks provided insights for their park. Similarly, it proved impossible to meet with Rec & Parks line staff who might have provided information about concession opportunities that had been considered in the past.

IIIA. Druid Hill Park

LOCATION:



NEIGHBORHOOD STATISTICAL AREAS: Upton/Druid Heights; Penn North/Reservoir Hill; Sandtown Winchester/Harlem Park; Greater Mondawmin

DEMOGRAPHICS (2000 US Census):

Total Population	48,882
Male	22,055
Female	26,827
% Black	96.6
% White	1.7
% Hispanic	0.7
% 0-17	28.6
% 18-24	9.3
% 25-44	27.5
% 45-64	13.8
% 65+	13.8
Households	19,340
Children under 18	13,980
Avg household size	2.32-2.73

745-acre Druid Hill Park is separated by highway and topography from the neighborhoods to its east, and a sparsely populated area to the north. The neighborhoods to the west and south are overwhelmingly African American and have large concentrations of children and young adults (25-44).

Household Income (2000 U.S. Census)	
% hh \$0-\$25,000	59.0%
% hh \$25,001-\$40,000	18.0%
% hh \$40,000-\$60,000	11.5%
% hh \$60,000-\$75,000	5.2%
% hh \$75,000 +	6.4%

Median household income:	
Upton/Druid Heights	\$14,487
Penn North/Reservoir Hill	\$22,287
Sandtown-Winchester/ Harlem Park	\$18,924
Greater Mondawmin	\$27,105

The residents of the areas that border the park are very poor. The federal poverty rate for a family of four is \$20,000, but most experts agree that a subsistence income level is about two times that, or \$40,000. The unemployment statistics presented below only reflect those individuals who are not employed but who are looking for work. The numbers who are not employed and not looking for work (not in the labor force) are substantially larger.

Labor-related	Official unemployment rate	% or population 16-64 <u>not</u> in the labor force	% of population 16-19 <u>NOT</u> working or in school
Upton/Druid Heights	21.17%	42.03%	32.2%
Penn North/Reservoir Hill	19.47%	35.54%	30.1%
Sandtown-Winchester/Harlem Park	18.52%	43.37%	23.3%
Greater Mondawmin	14.44%	36.96%	19.7%

This snapshot of older teenagers who are not working or in school provides insight into the large percentages of young people who are idle. It is clear, however, that beyond the expected percentages of working-age women who are choosing to stay home to care for children,¹ there are significant percentages of adult residents who are not in the labor force.

This portrait of the demographics of the areas around the park reveals the paradox of Druid Hill Park. It is a neighborhood park for high-poverty nearby neighborhoods, and at the same time a regional attraction for middle and upper income families visiting the zoo and the conservatory, attending concerts and other special events, exercising, or picnicking with family and friends at the pavilions. Many residents of Greater Mondawmin, even those who are active members of Friends of Druid Hill Park, say that they do not use the Park.²

CURRENT CONCESSIONS: [information shared with the team and on R&P website conflicts]

- Seasonal mobile (trucks) vendors in the park are licensed for a specific location on a first-come, first-served basis by Rec & Parks; \$140 for 1-29 days; [redacted] for the entire season (April 1 – October 31)
- Seasonal mobile (trucks) vendors within the swimming pool fence are licensed for a specific location on a first-come, first-served basis for one day or for a season by Rec & Parks; \$10 per day for 1-29 days; \$500 for the entire season
- Concessions associated with 4-5 festivals and special events (e.g. Stone Soul Picnic, which had 200 vendors and 200,000 attendees), are permitted and coordinated by Rec & Parks (\$450 for a booth)
- Permit fees for use of the Howard Peters Rawlings Conservatory & Botanic Gardens for weddings, parties, meetings and conferences (36.3% of total revenues) as well

¹ The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that in 2005 70% of married mothers of children were employed or looking for work.

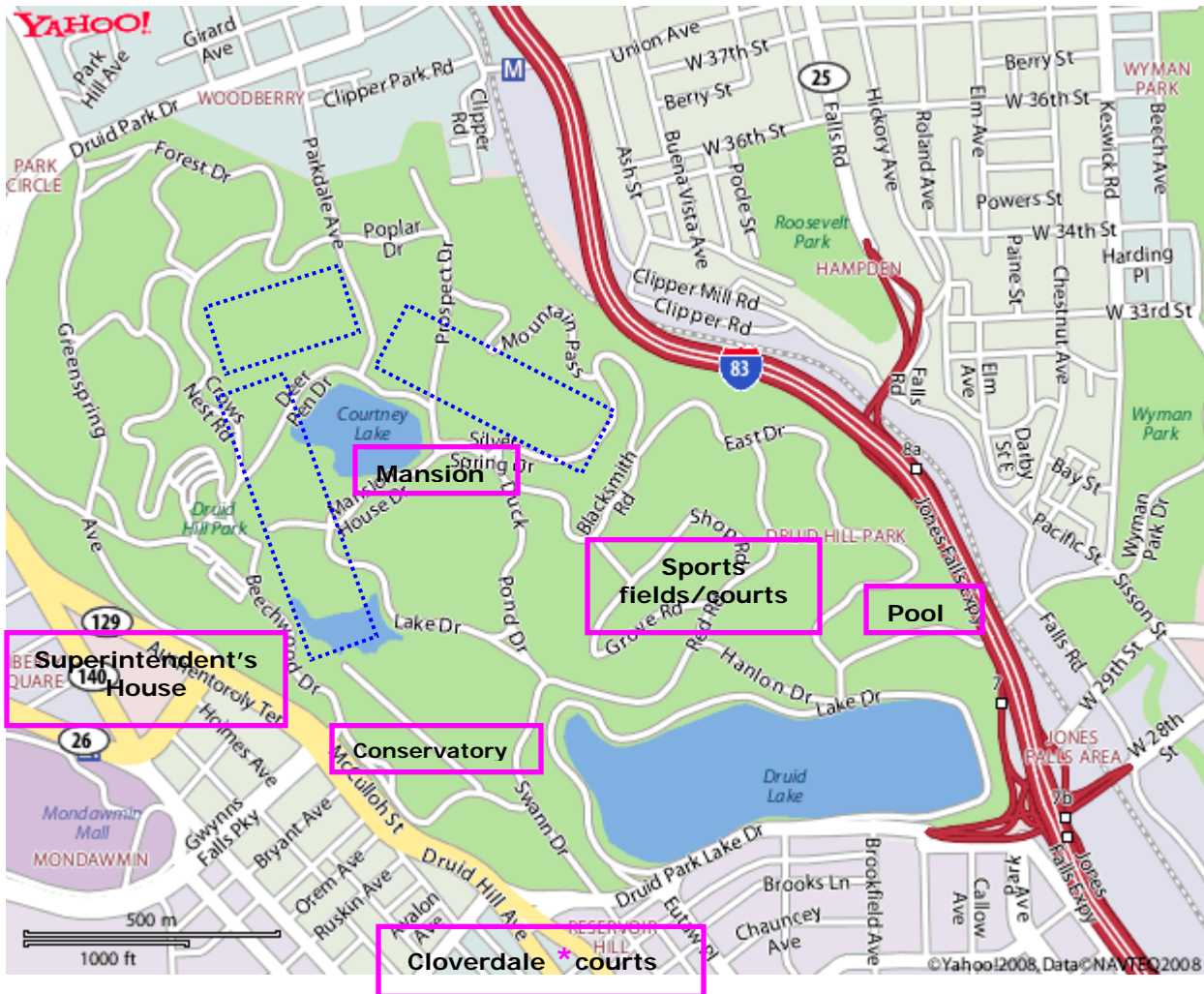
² Telephone interview with Parks and People's community organizer and Druid Hill Park volunteer, 6.1.09.

as plant sales (37.5% of total revenues) are currently handled by Rec & Parks employees.

- Sports leagues bring and sell their own refreshments

CURRENT CONTRACTS: None

OTHER: The Maryland Zoo in Baltimore, which occupies 150 acres of the Park, is a separate nonprofit corporation and handles its own permanent concessions and temporary event-related vending. For example, the “Brew at the Zoo and Wine, Too!” event expects 6,000 attendees, and vendors are charged \$150 for a table. See area outlined in **dotted blue** below.



OPPORTUNITIES: The Baltimore City capital plan for 2010³ includes \$2 million for renovations of the Druid Hill Park Pool Bath house and wading pool. They will include interior renovation of the pool bathhouse to allow year-round use (restrooms, locker rooms,

³ All information about the Baltimore City Capital Budget from www.baltimorecity.gov/government/finance/downloads/0509/050809_2010_Capital_Plan.pdf, with clarifications from telephone interview with Gennady Schwartz, Capital Planning, Department of Recreation and Parks, 6.1.09.

and staff offices). Winterizing the building may permit programming that could include tennis instruction in spring and fall, and a fitness center. Explorations of contractual arrangements with for-profit businesses that offer these services (like discussions underway by Friends of Patterson Park) could focus on ways to scale fees to income. A healthy-drinks bar might be included in a fitness center contract.

The Druid Hill Superintendent's House on Auchentoroly Terrace, designed by George Aloysius Frederick, who also designed Baltimore City Hall, was donated to the City years ago and has burned more than once. The evolving Master Plan for the Park calls for it to be turned over to a nonprofit that will be responsible for its renovation. The landscape and park features near are to be rehabilitated by the City in 2010 to complement the renovation and expansion of the historic building proposed by the Parks and People Foundation and improve access to the Park. Parks and People is seeking private funds to match financing from state bond funds, federal transportation monies, historic tax credits, New Market Tax Credits, and Baltimore City bond funds for turning the building into its new headquarters.



photo by Avagara

Passive and active areas of the park are scheduled to be renovated in FY2010, with a focus on lighting, signage, trash receptacles that enable recycling, benches, and renovated walks. Also to be renovated are playgrounds and nearby basketball courts in the Cloverdale area of the Park, just outside the door of Rec & Parks offices on Madison Ave. Under the leadership of volunteer Mike Plater and his friends who formed the Baltimore Basketball Association and Kevin Anderson who is committed to carrying on the tradition, these lighted courts are some of the best in the City and have given birth to teams that play up and down the eastern seaboard and spawned NBA stars like Sam Cassell and Carmelo Anthony. Anthony has brought his three-on-three charity tour to the courts for the last three years. The site, like the Superintendent's House, is just outside the perimeter of the Park, but its leaders have been able to engage the older youth of the neighborhood, a key constituency for improving the well-being of the area and the park's ability to attract patrons.

The City has approved a conceptual Master Plan for expansion of the Howard P. Rawlings Conservatory and Botanical Gardens (see below). The plan, by Mahan Rykiel Associates, would add an orangery north of the Conservatory to serve as a venue for private functions and educational programs. A formal garden would be added to the south of the Conservatory. See next page for the vision.



Mapping eateries in the vicinity of the Park on the west side of the Jones Falls Expressway – a manmade and mental-map boundary – reveals that only carryout and fast food (including the Mondawmin Mall) are available nearby. While this is not a high-income neighborhood, a sit-down healthful family-friendly café, with counter service and take-out coffee, juices, and sweets for commuters and exercise enthusiasts, could be explored as part of continuing planning for the Conservatory. The site is not too far uphill from the trail around the lake which, now that it makes a complete loop, has become popular with walkers, joggers, runners and bicyclists. Exercise stations further enhance the workout. Today, there is nowhere nearby to obtain a cool drink afterwards. The Conservatory location has good visibility from a heavily traveled road and a café with seasonal outdoor seating could be accommodated in either the planned northern (orangery) or southern (formal garden) areas. In temperate weather, umbrellas at tables would attract the attention of drivers passing by.

All three⁴ of the similar botanical or conservatory attractions in other cities profiled by Mark Warren in the 2008 study of special facilities include a “garden café.” The indoor/outdoor Garden Café at the Sculpture Garden of the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. suggests the kind of limited fare that could be appealing to adults and to their families. Special care will need to be taken to create an environment, pricing, and menu that is welcoming to neighbors as well as visitors from elsewhere in the area. Coordination with City Farms’ community gardens elsewhere in the Park, the school system’s efforts to promote healthy eating, and nearby restaurants Woodberry Kitchen and Dogwood (Hampden), which source their ingredients locally, could enable the café to serve as a showcase for “green” living and eating.

Depending on car and foot traffic patterns, in addition to a café, rentals of folding chairs (such as those promoted by Urbanite Magazine at the free Friday concerts at Belvedere Square), water and juice stations near benches, and other low-impact concessions could be added, perhaps using bicycle vendors.

The Baltimore Conservancy Association, a 501(c)(3) member-supported nonprofit organization, and the Reservoir Hill Improvement Council and the Greater Mondawmin Coordinating Council represent key institutional assets. Nurturing the Friends of Druid Hill

⁴ Cleveland Botanical Garden, Missouri Botanical Garden (St. Louis), Garfield Park Conservatory (Chicago)

Park organization could enable it to multiply the impact of its efforts to bring life to the Park, much in the way the Friends of Patterson Park, Inc. has done in southeast Baltimore. The Parks and People Foundation is supporting the growth of the Friends of Druid Hill Park organization, which was created as a local branch of the New York-based Greensward Foundation to take care of trees in the park, went dormant for a time, and was revived in 2007. FODHP has applied for 501(c)(3) tax exempt status and plans to apply for grant funding for part-time staff.

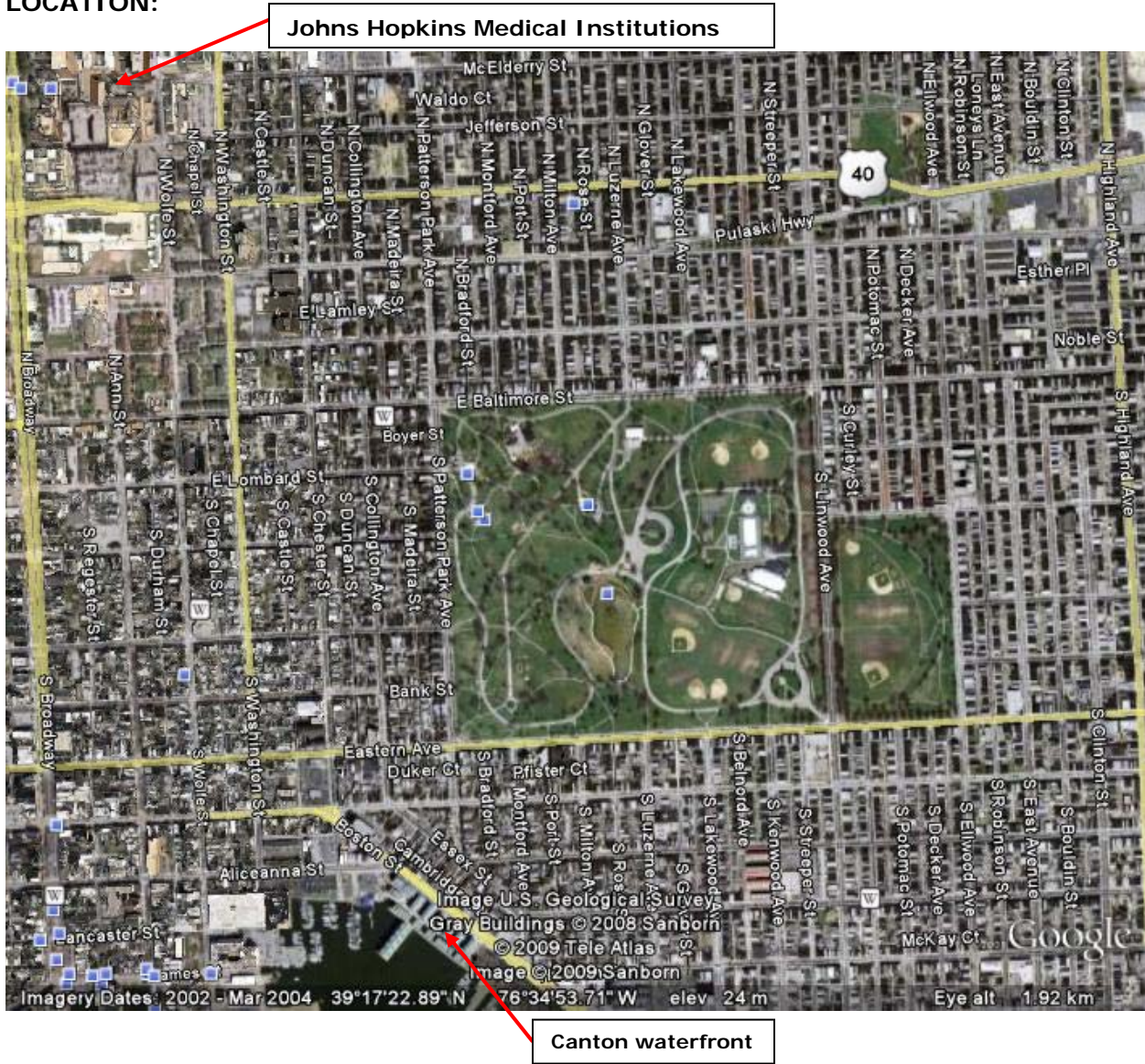
All partners, including Rec & Parks, can contribute to a dramatic increase in marketing the Park. Patterson Park, has capitalized on the arts-related identity and events sponsored by the Creative Alliance and will augment nature themes with the expansion of Audubon's presence (see following section), Druid Hill Park is ideally suited to "green" themes, particularly if promoted jointly with Cylburn Arboretum, where a new "green" 10,000 sq. ft. visitors center is to be completed in 2009, and the Maryland Zoo. Conservation of animals and plants, participatory sports, walking, biking, exercising, clean air, healthy food, "green" design and construction of any new assets, quiet contemplation in nature – all these are attractions. The Conservatory provides a formal complement to the 207-acre nature preserve of the arboretum, which is supported by the Cylburn Arboretum Association, Federated Garden Clubs of Maryland, and the Horticultural Society of Maryland. It is administered by the Horticultural Division of the Baltimore City Department of Recreation and Parks. The Cylburn Arboretum Association, a volunteer organization, maintains an office in the Cylburn Mansion, which has become the City's horticultural headquarters.



CYLBURN ARBORETUM ASSOCIATION

III.B Patterson Park

LOCATION:



Patterson Park is surrounded on all four sides by rowhouse neighborhoods, with the largest homes on the streets that face the park on the bordering streets. The land is rising in elevation northward from the waterfront south of the Park. On the southern and eastern sides of the park, new restaurants and taverns have opened in the past three to five years, and older establishments have received face-lifts. Johns Hopkins Bayview campus is twenty blocks to the east, off the right edge of the map above.

NEIGHBORHOOD STATISTICAL AREAS: Patterson Park N&E; Canton; Highlandtown

DEMOGRAPHICS (Census 2000):

Total Population	28,965
Male	13,835
Female	15,130
% Black	30.0
% White	62.6
% Hispanic	5.5
% 0-17	23.4
%18-24	7.2
% 25-44	33.9
% 45-64	20.2
% 65+	13.3
Households	12,142
Children under 18	6,789
Avg household size	1.84-2.82

The 155-acre car-free park is bounded by relatively integrated neighborhoods on the west and north, and overwhelmingly white neighborhoods on the east and south. The area is home to a significant minority of Hispanic citizens. Once again, the population age 18-24 is small. The majority of the population is of working age (25-64). The relatively low number of young children and average household size suggest a combination of elderly and childless couples or singles. Canton and Highlandtown have high concentrations of senior citizens, and Patterson Park N&E has high percentages of Hispanics and young children.

Household Income (2000 U.S. Census)	
% hh \$0-\$25,000	40.8%
% hh \$25,001-\$40,000	20.9%
% hh \$40,000-\$60,000	17.2%
% hh \$60,000-\$75,000	7.7%
% hh \$75,000 +	13.5%

Median household income:	
Patterson Park N&E	\$27,663
Canton	\$40,235
Highlandtown	\$28,180

Nearly two-thirds of the residents around the Park are living at subsistence level or below, but many of their neighbors are quite comfortable. Like Druid Hill Park, Patterson Park also attracts patrons from throughout the City and region for adult and youth sports, special events such as the Halloween Lantern Parade, special facilities, and arts-related programming.

Labor-related	Official unemployment rate	% of population 16-64 not in the labor force	% of population 16-19 <u>NOT</u> working or in school
Patterson Park N&E	10.96%	35.21%	40.66%
Canton	6.25%	26.25%	41.13%
Highlandtown	5.51%	29.23%	10.67%

The employment statistics reveal that not only are the well-to-do residents of Canton working, but also the blue- and pink-collar residents of Highlandtown east of the Park. Even more than in the Druid Hill Park area, however, the older teens are not in school or working. The percentage of idle youth in Highlandtown is astonishingly low.

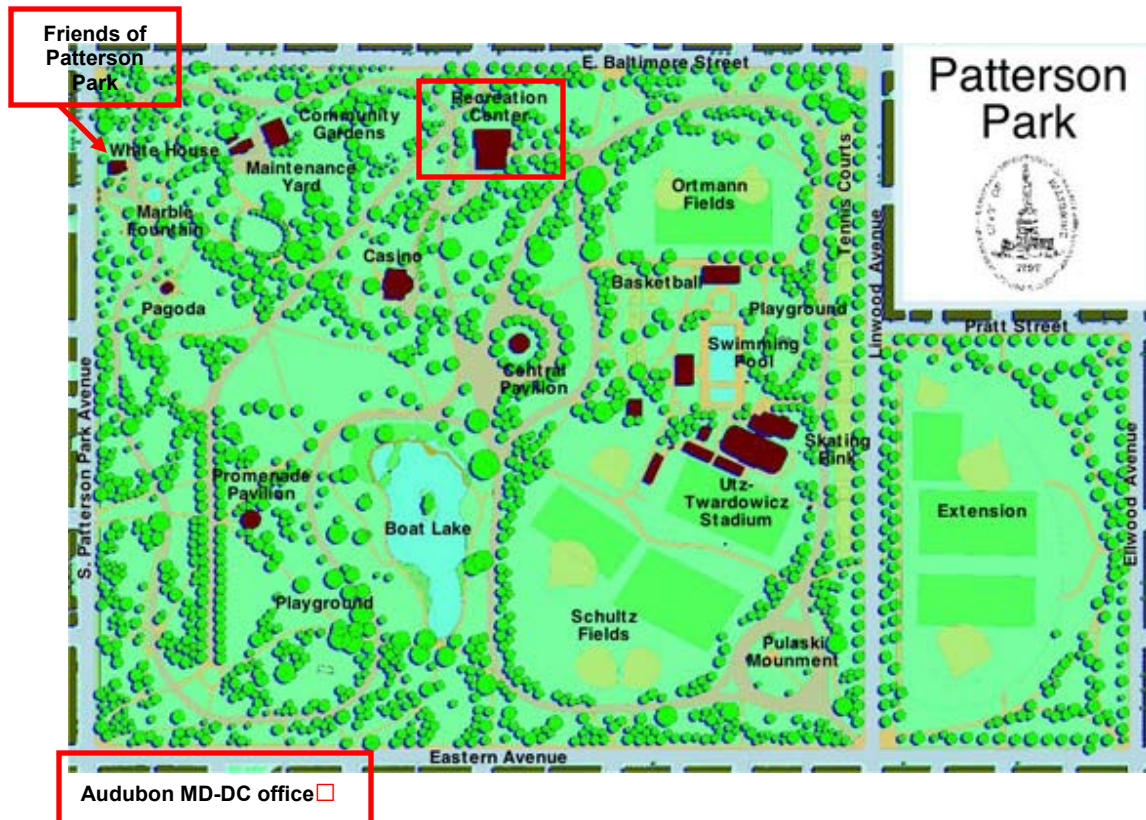
CURRENT CONCESSIONS:

- Rec & Parks manages the Dominic “Mimi” DiPietro Family Skating Center facility (\$4.00 entry fee), rents skates, sells food, and rents the facility for parties (ice rental, \$180 per hour)
- Vendor trucks provide snacks within the boundaries of the swimming pool; vendors at the pool and within the park acquire licenses on a first-come, first-served basis from Rec & Parks. The neighborhood opposes large vending trucks in a park where vehicle traffic is prohibited, and only one vendor was licensed late in the summer of 2008.
- Weekly early evening Family Fishing Fun on the Boat Lake is managed by Rec & Parks staff. The Boat Lake is a combination of open water and a wetland habitat for fish, waterfowl and songbirds.
- Sports leagues bring and sell their own refreshments.
- Food is sold and bought by the participants in the Ecuadorian community get-togethers and sporting events on weekends on the unused tennis courts in the northeast corner of the Park.
- Friends of Patterson Park’s concert series includes food and drinks provided by a local catering company, which acquires its own permits.
- Ethnic festivals – Polish, Latino, West African, and Ukrainian – bring their own vendors.

CURRENT CONTRACTS: None

FUTURE: National Audubon Society (environmental center operation and programming)

OTHER: The Park contains the Virginia Baker/Patterson Park recreation center. The area is also served by the Ralph Young Rec Center approximately five blocks northwest of the Park.



OPPORTUNITIES: The Baltimore City capital plan for FY2010 includes renovation of passive and active areas of the park. The Park contains a large swimming pool, the DiPietro Family [ice] Skating Center, two playgrounds, the Utz-Twardowicz Stadium used for football and soccer, tennis courts, baseball fields, community gardens, and walking/jogging/running trails. Its heaviest daily use is for walking, particularly with dogs. Previous city capital improvements enhanced lights within the Park; FY2010 renovations will focus on walks, steps, and signage.

The 2008 Patterson Park User Survey conducted for Rec & Parks and the Friends of Patterson Park by the University of Maryland's Urban Studies and Planning Program garnered 440 responses, primarily from white (89%), childless (80%) nearby neighbors of the Park in Butchers Hill (107 respondents), Baltimore Linwood/Patterson Place/Patterson Park (157), and Fells Point/Upper Fells Point/Fells Prospect (70). No responses were received to the Spanish version of the questionnaire, and only 11 Asians, 8 Hispanics, 7 African Americans, and one Native American responded. This may explain why few of the respondents knew about the Recreation Center.

The Baltimore City Capital Plan for 2011 includes \$2 million for improvements to and expansion of the Virginia Baker Recreation Center in Patterson Park to create programming space for an environmental education center. It will be operated by the National Audubon Society.

Virginia Baker is the only recreation center to be located within a city park and offers summer camp and after-school programs for children. While advertised on the website, its other programming -- boys <10 basketball league, cardio workouts, karate club for all ages, mens 30+ basketball open play, step aerobics, and weight lifting -- is sporadic or non-existent. Its facilities include a large multi-purpose room, meeting room, kitchen, gymnasium, game room, kitchen, and computer lab. Charges for use of these rooms are prohibitively high (\$150/hour for a meeting room) for most community organizations.

Park pavilion rental and sports league participation is managed centrally by Rec & Parks headquarters, which permits real-time electronic tracking of reservations and payments; managers of the Recreation Center collect and manage fees for use of the Center.

The renovation and modest expansion of the Virginia Baker Recreation Center to include augmented programming by the National Audubon Society may provide opportunities to attract an adult population to the Park beyond the outdoor sports and exercise enthusiasts. The plans for the building have not yet been formulated, and challenge funding must be raised by Audubon. It is likely that the spaces will provide a staging area for Audubon programs that will continue to be primarily outdoors, as well as perhaps some exhibit space.⁵

The Patterson Park Audubon Center's (PPAC) offices are currently at 2437 Eastern Ave., across from the Park's southern boundary at S. Milton Ave. (see map above). PPAC's existing programs in the Park include the *Mean, Green and Growing Summer Camp* for rising K-2nd graders (two one-week sessions, \$150 per week with scholarships available), Youth Volunteer Day, Earth Day Community Picnic, Ladies Night (different activities -- such as a "night of knitting" -- several times a year, often held at nearby restaurants); Fishing Festival; Family Scavenger Hunt; seasonal programs for tiny tots (ages 2-5); and monthly bird walks. The PPAC also operates school programs for six area elementary schools,

⁵ Telephone interview with Jackie Bonomo, Director, Audubon Maryland-DC, May 27, 2009.

offering fieldwork that complements the science lessons included in the Maryland Voluntary State Curriculum and the Core Knowledge Curriculum. Its programs also serve middle and high school students. Field trips to and from Audubon Maryland-DC's other two sites on the Eastern Shore⁶ could provide enriched urban/rural interchanges, a key goal of the chapter.

Expanded adult participation in activities in or near the Virginia Baker Recreation Center may augment the existing concentration of weekend users of the Park's northern area, as identified by the Park Users Survey (p.10). Addition of food concessions, however, was felt to be "no improvement" by 50% of the survey respondents, the majority of whom were interested in "additional trash cans" [to reduce trash] as a top priority. As described above, the survey respondents may not represent the preferences of the entire community.

For residents of all incomes, the perimeter of the Park is well-served by restaurants, particularly to the east. While the changing demographics of the area and its role as a destination for arts-related special events might suggest a "Tavern on the Green"-type restaurant possibility, the park is too small, traffic must continue to be restricted, and any offering would be in competition with the eateries currently operating in the vicinity and pose parking challenges.

The recreation center building offers the primary opportunity to generate Park users and maximize use of one of the key built assets of the Park. The respondents to the Park User Survey (only 4% of whom currently use the Center) suggested programs at the Center that could include classes in home improvement, gardening,⁷ meditation, self-defense, crafts, pottery, flower arranging, knitting, music, computers, chess, bridge, art, and cooking and lectures on nature, local history, and the Park.

Friends of Patterson Park, Inc., located in the White House just inside the Park's western boundary, has begun to explore partnerships with fitness and home improvement companies that may be willing to offer classes (including equipment) in the evenings or on weekends. Cooking classes might utilize the recreation center kitchen and could provide a bridge among the cultures of the surrounding neighborhoods, as each learns the cuisine of the others. Gardening classes could be offered by City Farms personnel in the Center and at the community gardens, which are nearby. Audubon already provides information about local birds and conducts monthly bird walks, and could provide nature and park history lectures in an indoor/outdoor Park venue.

A common vision could be articulated for the building and the exterior made more inviting. See photos below – the brick box reads as a fortress, an impression reinforced by the entry. Management of programming for late afternoon/evening hours (which is very limited today) could be contracted to a nonprofit organization. The building could provide space for classes and indoor sports activities. Samples from Friends of Patterson Park, Inc.'s online bookstore and gift shop and other nonprofit partners' sales items could be showcased, and instant connections for purchases and donations provided using the computer lab. As improvements to the building are made, consideration could be given to a small vending operation with an indoor/outdoor fold-out, walk-up capacity to serve Park users. The south side of the building would orient the service to park users and be on level ground (see photo below). Offerings could include healthy drinks and snacks, perhaps expanding to light fare.

⁶ Pickering Creek Audubon Center (Easton) and Jean Ellen duPont Shehan Audubon Sanctuary (Bozman/St. Michaels).

⁷ Note that there are well-used community gardens within the Park, part of Rec & Parks Horticulture Division's City Farms initiative.

The Park User Survey found that 81% of respondents were interested in “additional seating at athletic facilities,” raising the possibility of a chair-rentals or lending operation,⁸ at least during sports events, as well as tennis and soccer ball rental/sales.



Recreation Center from Baltimore Street



Recreation Center entrance, building's east side



Recreation Center, south side



The 2008 Special Facilities study of the DiPietro Family Skating Center found that the ice rink pro shop had limited inventory, the concession stand hours do not coincide with all events and has a limited menu, the operations are manual and time-consuming, and lessons for the programs offered are not available. Similar facilities in Washington, DC and St. Louis served far more skaters and generated much greater revenues than DiPietro. The study recommended that a nonprofit organization either operate the facility or manage and maintain the programs. It also recommended that a Rec & Parks-chosen vendor operate the skate shop and food concessions.

Staffed organizational/institutional partners already in place include Friends of Patterson Park, Inc., Audubon Maryland-DC, and the Creative Alliance.



⁸ See Druid Hill Park section for a possible model.

III.C Leone-Riverside Park

LOCATION:



Leone-Riverside Park is a neighborhood park at the right-angle “heel” intersection of Federal Hill to the north and Locust Point to the east in the boot-shaped South Baltimore peninsula. Its pagoda at the foot of Riverside Avenue and the large swimming pool are its more recognizable features.

NEIGHBORHOOD STATISTICAL AREAS: South Baltimore, Inner Harbor/Federal Hill

**DEMOGRAPHICS
(2000 U.S. Census):**

Total Population	18,145
Male	8,935
Female	9,210
%Black	11.1
% White	85.3
% Hispanic	1.5
% 0-17	15.4
%18-24	8.3
% 25-44	41.2
% 45-64	21.3
%65+	13.9
Households	8,630
Children under 18	2,794
Avg HH size	1.97-2.34

The 17-acre neighborhood park is bounded on the south by railroad tracks and I-95. On the other three sides, dense neighborhoods of small rowhouses predominate. Riverside Park's neighborhoods are predominantly white, with almost 2/3 of the population made up of adults of working age (25-64). It has by far the lowest percentage of children of the three parks examined and relatively low average household size, particularly in Inner Harbor/Federal Hill CSA. Unlike the other two park areas, the male and female populations are nearly equal.

Median Household Income

% hh \$0-\$25,000	28.7
% hh \$25,001-\$40,000	15.0
% hh \$40,000-\$60,000	18.1
% hh \$60,000-\$75,000	11.3
% hh \$75,000 +	26.9

Median household income:

South Baltimore	\$39,354
Inner Harbor/Federal Hill	\$51,615

Labor-related	Official unemployment rate	% of population 16-64 <u>NOT</u> in the labor force	% of population 16-19 <u>NOT</u> working or in school
South Baltimore	7.22%	25.88%	23.3%
Inner Harbor/Federal Hill	4.19%	21.57%	23.0%

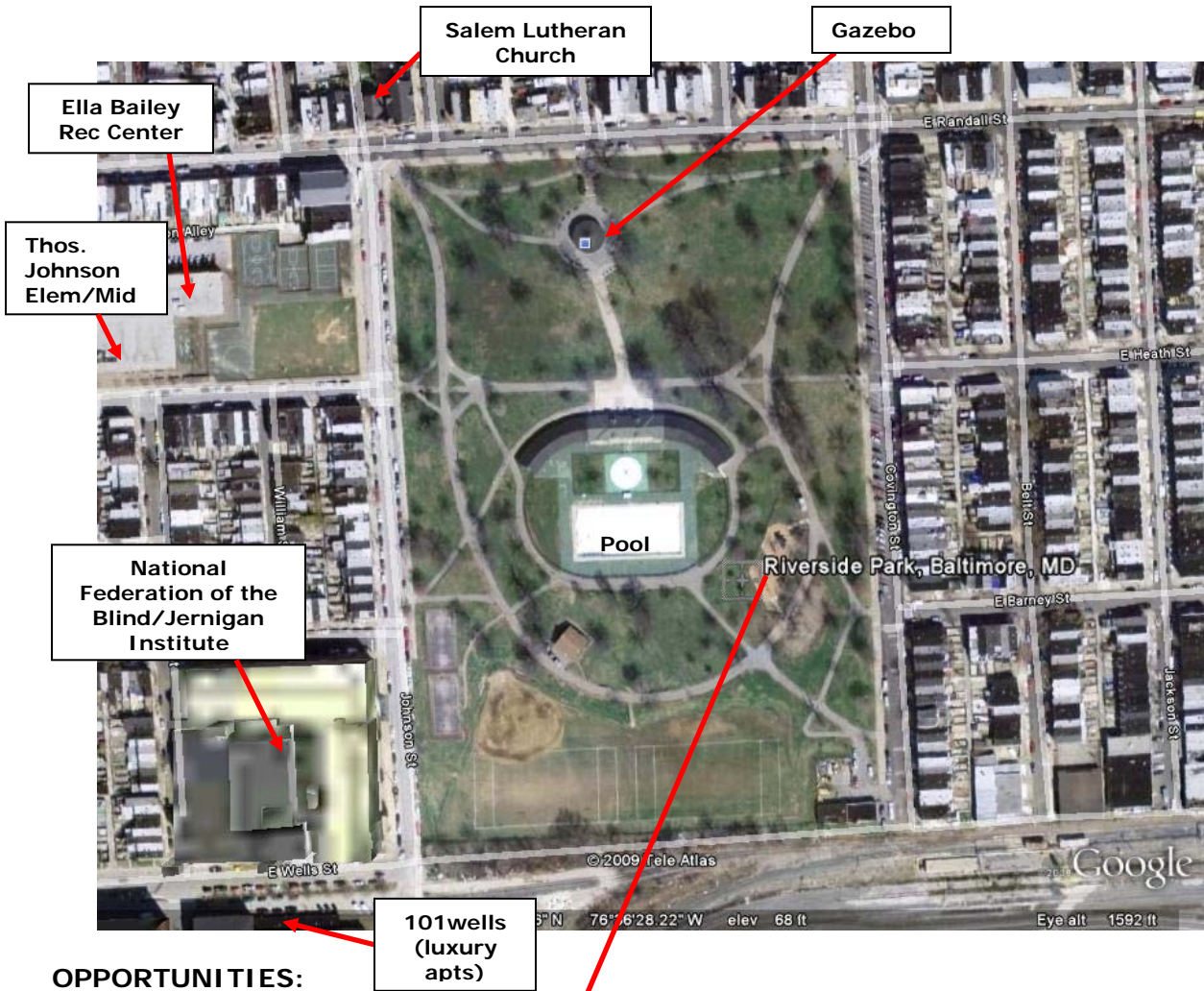
Almost all of the residents of South Baltimore and Inner Harbor/Federal Hill are working or looking for work. The percentage of idle teens is the lowest of the three parks.

CURRENT CONCESSIONS:

- Permanent concession stand, open during swimming season, a separate cost center, staffed by Rec & Parks



CURRENT CONTRACTS: None



OPPORTUNITIES:



The Park is used for walking dogs, playing and watching sports, or strolling on well-paved and lighted paths. In addition to the swimming pool, wading pool, and gazebo, it has one usable basketball court (the other is unmaintained), baseball diamond, soccer/football field,

and a new fenced-in playground. Along the path from the gazebo to the pool, a vintage but operational water fountain provides free refreshment for humans and animals.

In Baltimore City's Capital Plan, passive and active areas of the park are scheduled to be renovated in FY2010. A major renovation of the pool was completed within the last five years. The Rec & Parks master planning for the park that is currently underway involves the community in deciding on priorities for the renovations.

At 1800 Johnson Street (entrance on Wells Street) on the Park's southwestern perimeter, the National Federation of the Blind (NFB) established its headquarters in 1978 in a 4-story reused factory building. In 2004 NFB opened the adjacent \$20 million, 180,000 sq. ft. 5-story (with parking) National Federation of the Blind Jernigan Institute, the first research and training center in the United States for the blind led by the blind. Approximately 90 employees work at NFB, which also hosts training, advocacy, and technology transfer meetings throughout the year. The Riverside Neighborhood Association/Friends of Riverside Park have approached NFB about improving access to and within the Park for vision-impaired residents and visitors.



NFB Jernigan Institute



101 Wells: views from Johnson St. (left) and Wells St. (right)

Across Wells Street, a complex of five factory buildings built for the National Enameling and Stamping Company was converted into one- and two-bedroom luxury apartments by PMC Property Group, which also manages the property. The 101 Wells development also includes parking on site, an indoor fitness center for residents and a basketball half-court. Young adult players from the 101 Wells complex as well as long-time neighbors enjoy pick-up games at the outdoor court in the Park. Bicycle vendors may be welcome on league or regular pick-up game nights if usage justifies, although a neighborhood park by definition is never too distant from one's own refrigerator.

In general, this park is so small that the concessions opportunities are very limited. Vendors at the pool and refreshments brought by sports leagues are meeting demand. Two blocks to the west of the Park, Light Street is lined by numerous restaurants and shops. An ice cream parlor/sandwich shop is located opportunistically on Heath Street, ½ block west of the Park and across the street from the school and the recreation center. Supporters of the Park include nearby retail developments that include restaurants and carryout.

The all-volunteer Riverside Neighborhood Association (RNA) meets monthly at Salem Lutheran Church opposite the Park's northwestern corner and maintains a robust online newsletter. RNA incubated the Friends of Riverside Park (FORP), which in 2003 became a separate but allied organization. Corporate partners of FORP include the National Federation of the Blind, Southside MarketPlace, and Merritt Properties.



IVA. CONCESSION MANAGEMENT BUSINESS MODELS: Other Cities

Management of Concessions (private businesses operating under contract)

City	Concessions	Concessions managed by	Other noteworthy
Atlanta	4 18-hole golf courses operated by American Golf Corporation (one 9-hole managed by Bureau of Parks, one 9-hole junior training golf course managed by Atlanta-Fulton County Recreation Authority) Oakland Cemetary – substantial % of budget contracted out	Dept of Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Affairs (DPRC) DPRC	4 natatoriums, 5 tennis centers, civic center, cyclorama all run by Dept of Parks, Recreation & Cultural Affairs. Civic Center and Cyclorama are enterprise funds within the Dept.
Boston Total budget \$16m FY09		Boston Parks & Recreation Dept. (NOTE: City provides grounds maintenance, and burials at three active cemeteries and grounds maintenance at 16 historic cemeteries)	Metropolitan District Commission (now part of MASS Dept of Conservation and Recreation, specifically its Bureau of Urban Parks & Recreation) manages parks, including Charles River Basin and Harbor Island Parks in Boston. Boston financed Post Office Square, \$80 million downtown park thru revenues from parking garage underneath. Fund for Parks and Recreation } George W. Parkman Trust Fund } \$6.4m Park Floodlighting Fees } FY09 Ryder Cup Trust Fund } (Country Club of Brookline donated tickets, proceeds to fund, income supports youth golf programming & youth recreation activities)
Chicago CPD largest parks agency in U.S.	(Mayor Daley has extensively contracted out public services, including six within CPD) Parking; ice skating (contractor required to offer 40% of hours – times of lower demand – free); boat mooring rentals, Soldier Field (Chicago Bears), Lincoln Park zoo, golf, lakefront concessions, rental of facilities for private functions, capital construction (everything but recreation and open spaces)	Master concessionaire, under contract to Chicago Parks District (CPD)	CPD is operated as an independent authority (1934), bd apptd by mayor and confirmed by city Council; has its own taxing authority CPD gets 30% of its revenues from non-tax sources; owns Soldier Field and huge parking garage under Grant Park, also parking under Lincoln Park Established Parkways Foundation for private philanthropic donations

City	Concessions	Concessions managed by	Other noteworthy
Cleveland	Stadium, parking in city facilities (including convention center/stadium garage)	Dept. of Parks, Recreation, and Properties (DPRP) (responsibilities include golf courses, cemeteries, greenhouse, city-owned parking facilities, markets, and Cleveland Convention Center and Stadium)	City employees operate all but Stadium and some parking Revenue from cemetery, golf, parking facilities, convention center, stadium fund and markets support 1/2 of DPRP \$84 m budget
Indianapolis	Maintenance of 24 neighborhood parks contracted to seven churches, which hire local hard-to-employ individuals to mow and pick up trash; neighborhood clean-up days supplement the effort, which in some cases is compensated through reduction or forgiveness of fees for neighborhood residents at summer camps or pools.	Indy Parks and Recreation Department	Resp for 189 parks, 121 tennis courts, 93 basketball/multi-use courts, 25 family centers, 22 aquatic facilities, 13 golf courses, 18 spray grounds, 4 nature centers, 4 disc golf courses, 3 dog parks, 2 ice rinks, arts center, beach, BMX complex, conservatory, mountain bike trail, skate park, velodrome 17.6% funded from non-tax sources (2006) GAPS program (grants, alliances, partnerships, sponsorships); Indianapolis Parks Foundation
Minneapolis	Golf operations (enterprise fund) net income \$1m 2007; Parade Complex (sculpture garden, Cowles Conservatory, athletic fields) operating agreement with Walker Art Center 25 yrs; Skating lessons at Parade Ice Garden privatized Parking at Parade, regional parks, and on street meters (unclear if contracted) Concessions \$783,000 FY2008* see below	Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (created in 1883)	Operated as an independent authority, levies taxes on property along with City of Minn, Hennepin Co, school district and other special districts. Park levy is ~ 8% of the total property tax payment Can cross-subsidize within dept. Parking from Guthrie Center special events had supported some activities until 2006; fees generated by athletic fields retained to support cost of staff that schedules the fields
New York Higher % of land in parks than any other US metropolis	Management of Central Park (CP Conservancy), 13 golf courses, skating rinks (in most places not a money-maker), marina, tennis complexes, park restaurants	Dept. of Parks and Recreation (NYPDR)	NYPDR gets 22% of budget from non-tax revenues; owns Shea Stadium and receives parking revenue City Parks Foundation Concessions fees go to GF by charter (Mayor Giuliani made a one-year deal to increase budget by the amount brought in above the current budget)

City	Concessions	Concessions managed by	Other noteworthy
Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority	Holiday light show at Bull Run was put on until 2005 by a vendor; in 2007 taken over by Authority		\$10.5 million agency gets 16% of revenue from tax payments from 6 member cities and counties (Cities of Alexandria, Fairfax, Falls Church and Arlington, Fairfax, and Loudoun Counties)
Portland	Portland International Raceway – self-sustaining, multi-year concession agreement for exclusive rights to sell food & beverages 5 public golf courses Golf concessionaires collect greens fees; sell golf equipment, clothing, food & beverage; cart and club rentals; golf lessons; club repair; starter and marshalling	Portland Parks & Recreation	Golf course maintenance provided by city workers Voters approved parks levy in 2002; not renewed by Portland City Council this year in deference to children’s levy City supports only about 50% of budget, raising \$29m from fees, and \$22 m (up fr \$670K in FY 06) from local sources in FY 2008-9. Special 5-year parks levy approved by voters in 2002 exhausted by FY2009-10
San Francisco			Takes in 38% of its budget from fees
Seattle	Golf, marinas, restaurants, zoo, aquarium, maintenance of new 50-acre park	Seattle Parks and Recreation Department (SDPR)	Created Seattle Parks Foundation Received donations of conservation easements (donor gets property tax reduction) In each community recreation center, Citizen Advisory Councils operate fee-supported educational, artistic, cultural, and recreational programs offered by paid professionals. Use grown rapidly, may impinge on use of facilities for free programming
Washington DC	None (per W. Darden)		

City	Concessions	Concessions managed by	Other noteworthy
Wheeling, WV (pop. 34,000)	Zoo, 3 golf courses, fishing, paddle boats, indoor and outdoor tennis courses, ski slope (becomes par-3 golf course in summer) with chalet, <u>212-room hotel and conference center</u> , 20 deluxe and family cabins, 10-acre re-creation of 1915 farm-garden, swimming pool, waterslide, pavilion, ballroom, ice skating, miniature golf, traditional sports fields	Playing fields turned over to leagues for programming – pay an overall fee or make a contribution	Wheeling Park Commission gets only \$190,000 of \$20 million budget from City. 400-acre Wheeling Park in center city and 1600-acre Oglebay Park two miles from downtown were donated to the City by their owners. Midwinter Festival of Lights attracts one million viewers. Contributions to the Oglebay Foundation’s endowment fund now generate sufficient interest to cover all park maintenance costs.

***MINNEAPOLIS PARK BOARD**

2007 Major Permit Events	Event Date(s)	Participants	Fees
Pond Hockey	Jan. 19-21	1,500	\$14,510
Loppet	Feb. 4	1,500	\$6,576
Get in Gear	Apr. 28	5,000	\$16,251
March Of Dimes Walk	Apr. 29	1,500	\$6,823
Walk for Animals	May 5	3,000	\$5,057
MS Walk	May 6	3,000	\$4,230
Minnesota AIDS Walk	May 20	7,000	\$9,888
Stone Arch Art Festival	Jun. 15-17	80,000	\$14,809
Triathlon	Jul. 14	2,700	\$46,257
Aquatennial	Jul. 15-22	95,000	\$10,955
Uptown Art Fair	Aug. 3-5	400,000	\$12,290
City of Lakes 25K	Sep. 9	1,500	\$8,116
Twin Cities Marathon	Oct. 7	8,000	\$108,294
TOTAL		609,700	\$264,056

Concessions

Historically, the Board has contracted with concessionaires for a wide range of services, from poem sales, a pony track, excursion boats and warming house attendants to food vending, boat rentals and bicycle rentals. Operator contracts issued by the Park Board in 2008:

Bike and boat rental operations	Fred Wells Tennis Center	Lake Harriet Yacht Club	Nicollet Island Inn
Bohemian Flats excursion boat	Lake Calhoun concessions	Lake Nokomis concessions	Nicollet Tennis Center
Coca Cola agreement	Lake Calhoun Yacht Club	Minnhaha Falls concessions	Trolley operations
Columbia Manor	Lake Harriet concessions	Nicollet Island pavilion	Wirth Chalet

A mobile concession operation was added to Lake Calhoun in 2007 and generated new income to the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board. In 2008, we will expand mobile concessions by 1-2 units. A request for proposals for the Lake Harriet concession will be issued in 2008 for the 2009 season. A market survey will be conducted during 2008 to determine what park users would like to have provided in the Lake Harriet concession. A feasibility study and market study for expanding concession operations at Lake Nokomis will also be completed in 2008.

Major Concession Agreements	Concession Structure	Annual Income
Nicollet Island Pavilion	Percentage of Sales	\$350,000
Nicollet Island Inn *	Base Rent & % of Sales	\$121,000
Lake Calhoun	Percentage of Sales	\$73,000
Lake Harriet	Base Rent	\$34,000
Lake Nokomis	Percentage of Sales	\$10,000
Minnehaha	Percentage of Sales	\$103,000
Boats and Bicycles	Percentage of Sales	\$54,000
Excursion Boat	Percentage of Sales	\$35,000
Mobile Concessions	Percentage of Sales	\$3,000
TOTAL		\$783,000

*budgeted in the tax fund, managed by the enterprise area

Source: *Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board 2008 Annual Budget*, www.minneapolisparcs.org/default.asp?PageID=768

A 1998 analysis by the Trust for Public Land⁹ of fees found that the largest source of recreation and parks (R&P) revenue across the country was, ironically, automobile parking, either associated with R&P-owned stadiums (New York Department of Parks and Recreation owns Shea Stadium) or under parks (Chicago Park District receives parking revenues from Soldier Field stadium and underground parking at Grant Field). Golf is the second largest revenue source, followed by tennis (particularly indoors), boat marinas, weddings and special events, and restaurants. Less lucrative activities are swimming pools, ice skating rinks, ballfields, and bike trails.

In Chicago, the city with the most significant amount of contracting-out, the master concessionaire, Urban Retail Properties (Urban), is a development company with a concession management arm. Urban has helped the Chicago Parks District attract private investment to its lakefront, to “upgrade the quality of the asset.” Its website cites negotiations in which it has been involved, including:

- Finalized negotiations with an operator to convert an abandoned city bus turn-around location into The Green at Grant Park, an 18-hole putting course and casual dining restaurant;
- Concession permit agreement and development services for a two-story fine dining seafood restaurant at Montrose Harbor. The total project budget is estimated to exceed \$7,000,000; and
- Finalized negotiations with a restaurateur to build out the Park Grill, a restaurant, café and retail shop at the new Millennium Park in downtown Chicago. The total project budget was approximately \$6,000,000.

At the North Pond in Lincoln Park, Urban transformed a former ice skating warming station into a fine dining, white tablecloth restaurant that received a three star review from the Chicago Tribune. After the renovation of the North Avenue Beach Boathouse was completed in 1999, Urban negotiated permit agreements with three new concessionaires: Castaways restaurant and café; Bike Chicago rentals; and North Avenue Beach News. The results are an increase in concessionaire sales of 347% and the subsequent increase in revenue to the Park District. Urban also introduced new retail uses that greatly expanded the lakefront’s offering in its product, services and entertainment mix: jet ski, canoe, kayak and boat rentals; sunglass retailer; balloons; kites and beach toys; Crunch Fitness center and in-line hockey rink; pedicab transportation services; skate park refreshments; and a children’s carousel ride.¹⁰

This master concessionaire would only be interested in a similar arrangement in Baltimore if it included the Inner Harbor.

⁹ Financing Local Parks, 2, Fees, www.tpl.org/tier3_cdl.cfm?content_item_id=1113&folder_id=826.

¹⁰ Urban Retail Properties, success stories, www.urbanretail.com/urpweb.nsf/ssfm.htm.

IVB. CONCESSION MANAGEMENT BUSINESS MODELS: Options for Baltimore

Concession management options cannot be debated before several other key prerequisite issues are resolved.

VISION and OBJECTIVES: For the parks system overall and for each of the parks targeted for this study, a vision is needed that articulates key values. These serve as touchstones for making decisions about issues large and small.

The Chicago master concessionaire example cited above illustrates a key issue, the resolution of which is a reflection of the parks system's vision – is the concessionaire being charged with enhancing revenues or with serving the maximum number of Chicagoans as cost effectively as possible? Can only the well-off pay to play? Can fees be collected from those who can afford them while continuing to offer free services to those who cannot?

Does a city choose to promote items for sale that a parent is hard-pressed to purchase for a clamoring child? Should a public park be a place that provides a respite from the buy-buy-buy soundtrack of our citizens' lives?

Is Rec & Parks management allied with the Baltimore City Health Department and the Baltimore City School System in pursuit of healthy lives not only for children but also for adults? What does that say about the food concessions permitted in parks? Is it possible to eliminate sugary drinks and salty snacks from the offerings? What are the options for providing access to clean free drinking water in each park? If this is not possible, what are the best (from a financial and environmental point of view) options? In the short run, to serve patrons of adult events indoor vending machines (locked during the day) limited to water and juice might be considered, with a revenue-sharing plan such as those made with schools.¹¹ San Antonio's Fit City initiative, which is managed by the YMCA for the Bexar County Community Health Collaborative, includes healthy vending guidelines for negotiations with vending companies.¹²

All three of the parks studied serve multiple constituencies. Even among their local, walk-to clientele, each of the parks' hinterlands include oldtimers and new arrivals who are of different races or ethnicities, different incomes, different ages, or even different sexual preferences, any or all of which can lead to underuse of the park by some groups at best or schisms and conflict at worst. Is it the role of parks managers to not only serve all its varied constituencies but also to intentionally provide opportunities for them to interact productively, to promote "the beloved community"?

While these three issues are overarching, for each of the three parks studied, a unique vision must be articulated and must guide decisions. What are the objectives for each park? Increase usage (some are overused at some time periods)? Strike a balance between increasing service to neighborhood residents and maximizing revenue, as in the case of the Chicago master concessionaire agreement? Stimulate interactions among diverse populations – racial, ethnic, age – or create specialized formal or informal (through programming) zones for seniors or youth so that each can enjoy the Park without interaction with the other? Rec & Parks' strategy to use the master planning process for each park as a means of convening all interested parties has given rise to

¹¹ San Diego-based YoNaturals Corporation (www.yonaturals.com) is the leading firm in healthier food and beverage vending and has experience with in-school vending.

¹² See <http://www.healthcollaborative.net/assets/pdf/vendingcriteria.pdf>.

several "Friends of _____ Park" organizations that have become active advocates for their parks. The question is whether this democratic process will yield clear visions that answer the tough questions posed above.

Two of the parks, Druid Hill and Patterson, serve not only their immediate neighborhoods but also a citywide or regional public. It has been suggested that Druid Hill Park is not heavily used by the residents of Greater Mondawmin. In both these cases, a vision of and implementation objectives for how these two places balance the need to be a "neighborhood park" for some and a precious resource for the rest of the region's citizens should guide decisions about concessions and many other details.

PRODUCT IMPROVEMENT: The Special Facilities report recommends for each facility that marketing and media support be improved (see below). However, the users attracted by a sales pitch will not return if the parks and facilities within them are poorly maintained and operated. In Baltimore City, the dollars spent per capita on parks and recreation maintenance is one of the lowest in the nation.¹³ No marketing program can gloss over this fundamental investment deficiency.

MARKETING: In today's environment of increased interest in the parks – particularly the three studied for this report – and also of limited City resources, the nonprofit advocates, volunteers, and donors have been required to fill in as well as they can. The City must, however, provide the citywide marketing foundations on which these partners can build. Without willing parks volunteers and an informed public that good marketing can generate, there are no customers for concessions, no matter how well managed.

Particularly with scarce resources for expensive advertising and promotion campaigns, the Web offers an opportunity to provide up-to-date information and, with a higher upfront investment in site design, opportunities with interaction with Web users. Keeping a website up to date is not cost-free by any means, but it is a powerful outreach and marketing tool. The Rec & Parks website lacks any information about the three parks other than a history of Druid Hill and Patterson Parks; a click on "Riverside Park" yields "no information available." There are no maps of any of the three parks on the Rec & Parks website. The online Patterson Park map is a product of Friends of Patterson Park but there is no link to it on the Rec & Parks website. The Druid Hill map is a less easily accessed but stunning effort by Green Map. Again, no link to it from the Rec & Parks site. As to Riverside Park, the only alternative is MapQuest or Google Earth.

Nothing on the Rec & Parks website suggests what activities and facilities are available at each park. The nicely illustrated online program guide lists activities by type, but not by park. Phone numbers rather than web links are provided, which is a costly way to provide information.

As concerning as the lack of information about the parks is the absence of links to the "Friends of ..." groups. If they are partners of the department, it is in everyone's interest to highlight the collaborations, the improvements they have produced, and the City's gratitude for these citizens. This kind of internal marketing to these groups will help preserve the enthusiasm of their members and recruit new volunteers.

The 2008 Operation Review suggested increased sales and marketing efforts for each of the special facilities analyzed. For the Conservatory, the recommendations were:

¹³ Baltimore City Comprehensive Plan PLAY p. 137.

- Market facility throughout communities and schools through advertisement, banners, flyers, etc. highlighting current offerings
- Modify rental fees for special events (e.g. weddings) by increasing rental fees for prime dates and decreasing rental fees for non-prime dates to increase facility utilization and revenue
- Provide marketing and media support /personnel whose main focus is on the Conservatory for quicker turn-around time on flyers, banners, brochures, etc. In addition, allow the facility the flexibility to market and advertise as needed.
- Enhance the website with up-to-date information, programs and offerings, contact information, employment and volunteer opportunities, video tours, and calendar of events

Some of these activities, particularly the website, are provided by the Baltimore Conservatory Association.

In the case of the Di Pietro Family Skating Center, the 2008 study recommended enhancement of the current website to allow an online reservation system with the capacity to take electronic payments, perform electronic billing, and accept online donations.

MANAGEMENT: A 2000 analysis of the concessions program in the National Park Service (NPS) by the General Accounting Office highlights some of the management challenges faced by the Baltimore City Department of Recreation and Parks as well as possible solutions. The three NPS challenges identified were:

- "Inadequate qualifications and training of the agency's concessions specialists and concessions contracting staff,
- The agency's out-of-date practices in handling its contracting workload..., and
- A lack of accountability within the concessions program."¹⁴

The report concluded that the National Park Service's concessions management needed improvement. The options presented were 1) to professionalize the staff, requiring higher credentials or more training, or 2) to contract for professional contract management. Further, it recommended that concessions management should use best practices, especially performance contracting. Finally, it recommended that concessions management needed to improve accountability, including regular random inspections.

In Baltimore City, concessions management needs attention on two levels – the cash transactions, and the management structure.

Financial: In the three Baltimore City parks (and special facilities within them that were the subject of the 2008 study), it is clear that financial operations need to be improved. Centralized operations, such as reservation of and payment for pavilions and sports facilities work well – an electronic trail is created and delivered to payees for confirmation. In-park recreation center space and facilities rentals should be priced and handled centrally using the same system as park pavilions and ballfields/courts. Greater predictability may increase patronage, giving rise to the need for low-intensity concessions.

The remaining operations – vendor sales, rec center fees, admissions – are all cash. While the amounts are small, previous Baltimore Efficiency and Economy Foundation

¹⁴ *Park Service: Need to Address Management Problems That Plague the Concessions Program*, GAO/RCED-00-70, March 31, 2000, <http://www.gao.gov/archive/2000/rc00070.pdf>

studies have revealed that there is leakage and made recommendations for improved cash handling procedures.¹⁵ As technology continues to improve and drop in price, cashless admissions and concessions solutions should be investigated. Tickets, receipts, RFID-enabled wristbands, tokens, membership cards may be sold and accepted without human cashiers. Less technologically advanced may be vending machines that generate machine-readable tickets in exchange for a cash deposit.

For all cash receipts, Rec & Parks may consider contracting with a bonded agent to collect money on its behalf, account for it, and be subject to an annual independent audit.

An annual review of capacity and usage of parks facilities, particularly sports fields and courts, may suggest opportunities to produce more revenue. Reduced rates can be set for groups that serve low-income participants.

Management: The 2008 Operation Review recommended that nonprofits (existing or new) either manage each of the special facilities or at least manage and maintain its programs. It did not address other concessions within the parks where the special facilities are located. Both Druid Hill and Patterson Parks enjoy programming provided by nonprofit partners – the Baltimore Conservatory Association in the former and the Friends of Patterson Park and Audubon MD-DC in the latter.

“Concessions” in this study is not limited to sales of food and gifts, but includes contractual arrangements with a third party to provide programs, good, or services to parks users. After analyzing previous reports and conducting further investigation, the following two management options are being presented. The first is similar to the status quo, but with a larger role for nonprofits. Either of the options might be pursued on a trial basis in the three parks studied.

1. Central Rec & Parks provision of:

- Vision and quantifiable objectives for the Baltimore Park System
- High level marketing of all facilities, including upgraded Rec & Parks gateway website
- Negotiation of citywide contracts for supplies, equipment, food to achieve economies of scale
- Scheduling and fee-collection for use of all facilities within all parks Community consensus on vision and quantifiable objectives for each park
- Licensing (to include sales item approval, location approval, quality monitoring, and financial accounting) of all vendors, based on the vision and objectives adopted for the park by its stakeholders
- Contract administration of performance-based agreements with independent nonprofit entities in each park to provide programming, management (including marketing of the park), or both

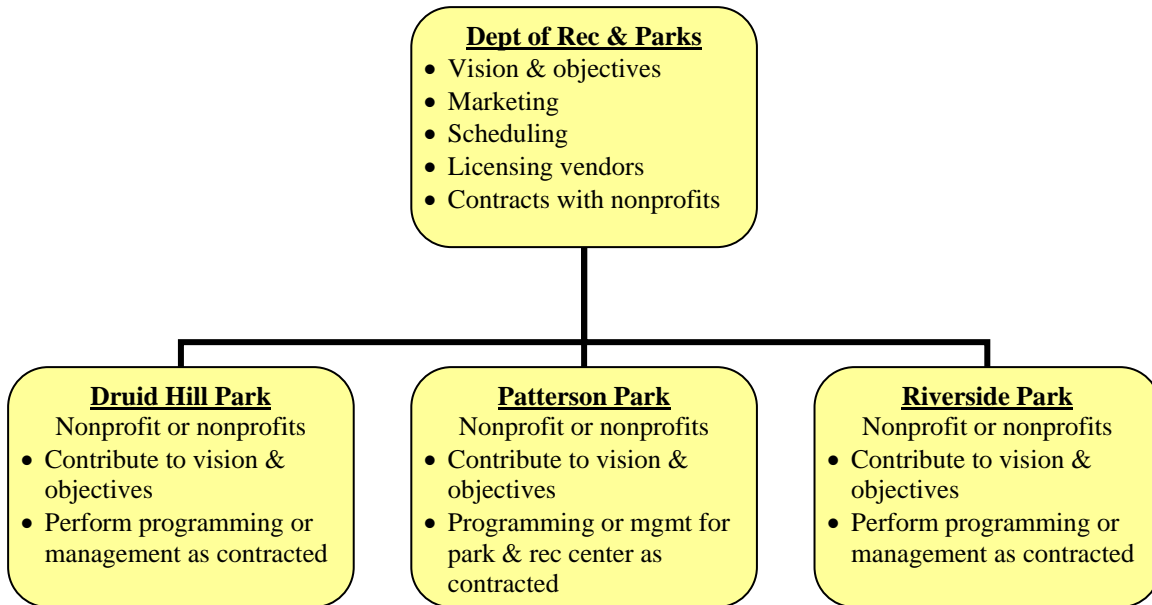
2. Central Rec & Parks provision of:

- Vision and quantifiable objectives for the Baltimore Park System
- High level marketing of all facilities, including upgraded Rec & Parks gateway website
- Scheduling and fee-collection for use of all facilities within all parks
- Community stakeholder consensus on vision and quantifiable objectives for each park

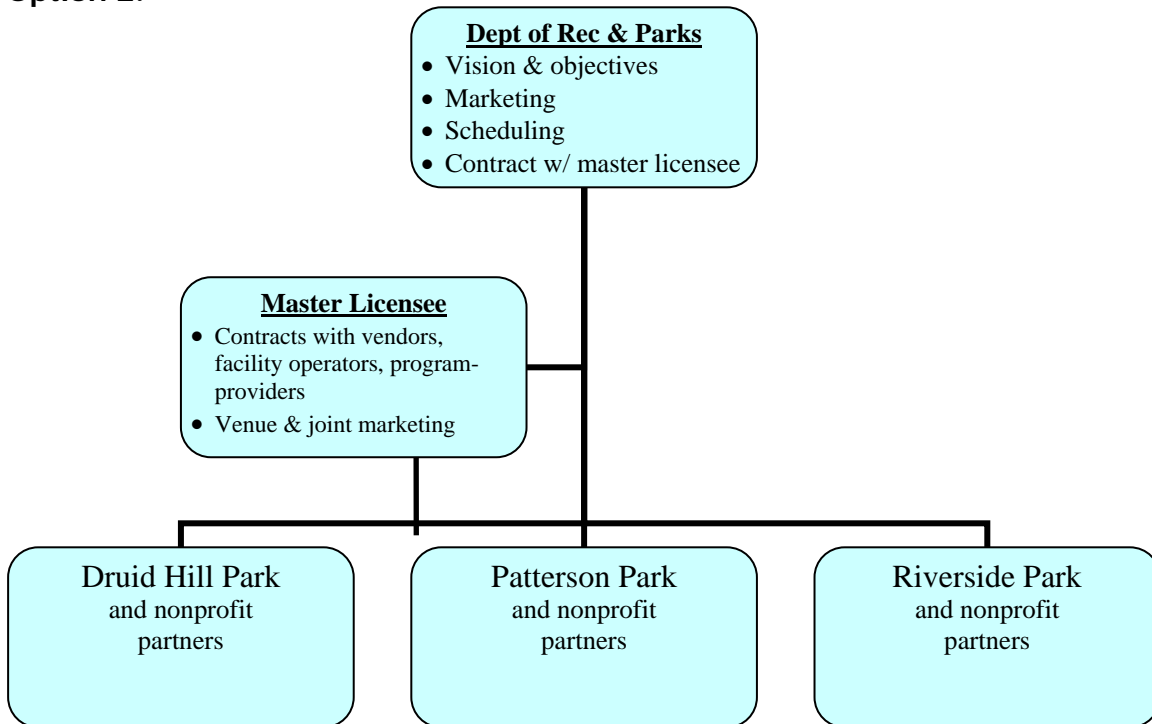
¹⁵ Finkelstein & Geser, LLC, *Baltimore City Aquatics Division: Report Prepared for Baltimore Efficiency and Economy Foundation, Inc*, November, 2003, <http://www.beefbaltimore.org/pools.pdf>

- Contract administration of agreement with master licensee, which is responsible for negotiating, executing, and monitoring performance-based contracts with all third parties – vendors, facility operators, program-providers, venue marketing, cross-cutting promotions (e.g. one ticket for multiple attractions) and discounts. Contract administration to include performance of master licensee in achieving consensus quantifiable objectives for the parks as well as independently audited financial statements and activities, including cash management.

Option 1.



Option 2.



In order to implement either option, the GAO report on the National Park Service is instructive. Rec & Parks staff hiring and training in contract management must be enhanced, particularly in the case of Option 1. Specialty help from within City government or outside it will be needed to structure the master licensee agreement in Option 2, including in particular procedures for monitoring performance. Additional requirements for success are included in an earlier report for BEEF,¹⁶ and an outsourcing paper by the Trust for Public Land:

- "The contracts must be bid properly. Considering the risk of turning over public lands and services to a private, [profit-making] institution, it is crucial that all the details of the work product be meticulously spelled out in advance...
- The facilities and programs must be of high quality. City parks and city recreation programs are in competition with numerous other private spaces and providers. Only by being as good as or better than competitors will a program thrive. As Wheeling Park Commission CEO Randy Worls said, "There are two important principles that apply to any system: that first-class facilities will attract paying customers and, secondly, that local park systems can entice out-of-town users if they offer a quality experience."
- Fees must be set at an appropriate level. This is probably the easiest of the four factors to get right, since pricing schemes can be tested and fine-tuned. Consultant Leon Younger uses as his rule of thumb the fact that, on average, one hour of private recreation in the U.S. in the late 1990s costs about \$3.50. "A movie, for example, is 2 hours at \$7 a ticket," he says. "Golf is a four- or five-hour experience which typically costs about \$15-\$18 to play. The skating rink or the bowling alley is usually a \$3-an-hour experience." That number can be modified by location, quality, competition and other factors.
- Agency oversight must be maintained. It's not enough for the park agency to sign the contract, collect the concession [or management] fees and close the file drawer. Contract performance must be continually monitored and evaluated by the park agency. (If the agency fails at that task, the job will inevitably be assumed by the local media and/or the local citizen park-watcher organization, probably to the embarrassment of the city.)"

The advantages of nonprofit organization responsibility for programming and/or management:

- Ability to attract funding from individuals, foundations, other nonprofits
- Flexibility to change staffing levels and skills to meet changing needs
- (in the best circumstances) inclusion of residents in governance

The advantages of a master licensee (with nonprofit programming and/or management of individual facilities) include:

- All of the above
- Reduction in Rec & Parks' burden of small transactions and cash management
- Reduction in Rec & Parks' burden of multiple contract management
- Economies of scale that individual licensees cannot achieve
- Accountability

¹⁶ Schachtel, MRB & Sahmel, DR (2000) *Competitive Governance Strategies for Baltimore City: Lessons from Other Cities*, September.