

# A Tale of Two Cities: Preserving the Olmsted Brothers Legacies in Seattle and Spokane, Washington

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*Figure 1. The Mount Baker stairs along a segment of the Olmsted Brothers-designed Lake Washington Boulevard, Seattle, Washington. Photo by Chrisanne Beckner, view north, 2016.*

## The Olmsted Brothers in the Pacific Northwest

While Frederick Law Olmsted made his name as the father of landscape architecture in the East, his nephew and stepson, John Charles Olmsted (JCO), made his name in the West, where young cities, newly connected to the rest of nation by railroad, were suddenly expanding across miles of previously undeveloped wilderness. On JCO's recommendations, local governments raced to preserve natural areas before they were consumed by development. JCO prepared a citywide park plan for Seattle in 1903, and another for the City of Portland, Oregon, (also completed in 1903) and, later, one for the City of Spokane, Washington (completed in 1908). Together, the Olmsted Brothers completed a dozen such metropolitan park plans before the First World War.<sup>1</sup> In them, the Olmsted Brothers, and particularly JCO, revolutionized not only park design but also park funding, acquisition, and management. Engaging with cities of the Pacific Northwest in their youth, he was able to design citywide park systems ahead of sprawling construction; identify key locations and drive their acquisition before they were lost; and leave these systems in the hands of skilled, autonomous commissions that could oversee the creation of these massive public undertakings. The resulting park systems define these cities today.

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<sup>1</sup> Charles E. Beveridge, "The Olmsted Firm—An Introduction," National Association for Olmsted Parks, accessed November 30, 2016, <http://www.olmsted.org/the-olmsted-legacy/the-olmsted-firm/an-introduction>.

## Olmsted Principles for Citywide Park Systems

JCO joined his father's firm in 1875, where he worked closely with Olmsted Sr. until his retirement in 1895. JCO then formed a partnership with his younger half-brother, Frederick Olmsted Jr. The pair went on to manage an era of expansion, growing the small family firm into "the largest landscape architecture and planning office in the United States."<sup>2</sup> As noted by historian Arleyn Levee, JCO's approach to design was:

...innovative yet pragmatic; reflective of the aesthetic tenets of his stepfather, yet responsive to the new social, economic, and political demands of twentieth-century cities. His advice to clients, whether for public, private, or institutional projects, was to plan for the future, to acquire as much land as possible to enable a cohesive design, protecting scenery and yet fulfilling the functional requirements...<sup>3</sup>

While preparing the Portland plan, JCO compiled a list of guiding principles for his municipal clients. They reflected the needs of young cities, garden cities, park cities, cities that preserved the lands on the edges of waterways, and those with views of distant mountains. These principles were simple, but potentially radical, focusing on the importance of municipal parks,

... All agree that parks not only add to the beauty of a city and to the pleasure of living in it, but are exceedingly important factors in developing the healthfulness, morality, intelligence, and business prosperity of its residents...

the duty of citizens toward parks,

... It is constantly becoming more generally and more clearly realized that every inhabitant of a city owes to it, in return for benefits and advantages derived from it, certain duties not specifically compulsory according to law. Among such duties is that of aiding in every possible way to make the city more beautiful and more agreeable to live in and work in, and more attractive to strangers. While there are many things, both small and great, which may contribute to the beauty of a great city, unquestionably one of the greatest is a comprehensive system of parks and parkways...

and that parks and park purposes should be defined in advance,

... As in the case of almost every complex work composed of varied units, economy, efficiency, symmetry, and completeness are likely to be secured only when the system as a whole is planned comprehensively and the purposes to be accomplished defined clearly in advance...<sup>4</sup>

JCO's insistence on cohesion, inclusion, and connectivity of all park types (public squares, playgrounds, boulevards, etc.), and that those parks be located to take advantage of natural scenery and sanitation were not revolutionary. He saved his most radical ideas for park management, declaring,

... A city having many or extensive opportunities for parks and parkways should promptly avail itself of them even at serious financial sacrifice... the land for parks

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<sup>2</sup> Amy Brown, "Nature in Practice: The Olmsted Firm and the Rise of Landscape Architecture and Planning, 1880–1920" (PhD diss., Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Department of Urban Studies and Planning, 2002), 193, <https://dspace.mit.edu/handle/1721.1/8170#files-area>.

<sup>3</sup> Arleyn Levee, "John Charles Olmsted: Landscape Architect, Planner (1852–1920)," National Association for Olmsted Parks, accessed November 9, 2016, <http://www.olmsted.org/the-olmsted-legacy/john-charles-olmsted>.

<sup>4</sup> Portland, Oregon Park Board, "Report of the Park Board, Portland, Oregon, 1903, with the Report of Messrs. Olmsted Bros, Landscape Architects, Outlining a System of Parkways, Boulevards, and Parks for the City of Portland," 13, accessed December 15, 2015, <https://www.portlandoregon.gov/shared/cfm/image.cfm?id=93560>.

should be paid for by long-term loans... Parks are a better asset, when the loan by which they have been acquired becomes payable, than school buildings, fire engine houses, city halls, street improvements and most other things for which cities borrow money..<sup>5</sup>

With the assumption that the land would continually rise in value and increase taxes by raising the value of adjoining lands, JCO purported parks should be “both occasionally and continuously” improved by loans, special assessments, and annual taxation..<sup>6</sup>

JCO also insisted parks be treated differently than other city assets. The expense of creating a park system necessitated management by a small board of independent, unpaid commissioners. These individuals should have experience; insist that only trained professionals improve parks; and protect the park system from the politics of rotating administrations..<sup>7</sup> It was this practical approach to management, in addition to an inherited sense of design and an innate appreciation for the water, mountains, hills, native plants, and shorelines of the region that made JCO the most significant park designer of his era in the Pacific Northwest.

### **Park Development in Spokane**

JCO’s principles of park management could only be implemented by progressive local governments. In Spokane, JCO found a young city with nearly endless park potential, and a local government actively preserving park lands.

In 1878, Spokane had a population of only 54. The city was founded on mining, agriculture, and timber transported via a network of railways that connected the inland empire to urban centers in the East. Incorporated as Spokane Falls in 1881, Spokane’s system of parks began with private developers and an early iteration of civic management heavily influenced by the City Beautiful Movement of the Progressive Era. In 1891, the Spokane City Council officially accepted a gift of the city’s first park. Coeur d’Alene Park was one of a series of jewels in the centers of expensive residential developments designed to increase the value of the residential lots in its vicinity.

By 1897, spurred by the City Beautiful Movement, parks were a common topic for articles and editorials in the *Spokesman-Review*.

The city without public parks is not up to date. It is deficient in one of the modern attractions which men of means and taste consider in choosing their places of residence. Progressive cities compete with each other in their park systems as in their systems of public schools, and thus it has come to pass that all the prominent cities have five to 50 parks each, with a combined area in many cases mounting up into the thousands of acres..<sup>8</sup>

In 1907, a newly appointed Board of Parks Commissioners took control of 173 acres of parklands, two-thirds of which had yet to be improved. Aubrey White, who was named president of the board, had spent a great deal of time in New York City, and was familiar with Central Park and other works associated with the famed Olmsted name. White invited JCO, who by then had already designed the 1903 Lewis & Clark Exposition in Portland, Oregon, the Portland parks plan (1903), and the Seattle

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<sup>5</sup> Portland, Oregon Park Board, “Report of the Park Board, Portland, Oregon, 1903,” 14–32.

<sup>6</sup> Portland, Oregon Park Board, “Report of the Park Board, Portland, Oregon, 1903,” 14–32.

<sup>7</sup> Portland, Oregon Park Board, “Report of the Park Board, Portland, Oregon, 1903,” 14–32.

<sup>8</sup> “City Parks,” *Spokesman-Review*, August 31, 1897.

parks plan (1903). White listened and adhered to JCO's radical park management plans. Although the Olmsted Brothers completed the plan for Spokane in 1908, White did not release the plan to the public until 1913. This afforded the city time to acquire land before real-estate developers and landowners could raise prices based on the plan's recommendations. By doing so, White oversaw the acquisition of hundreds of acres of new parks for Spokane.

In Spokane, located within Washington's inland empire, JCO found a city perched on the edge of a wide, picturesque river. There, the Olmsted Report recommended a park system devised of several park types, including large destination parks, medium-sized local parks, parkways and boulevards, playfields, and viewpoints and beauty spots. Spokane's large and strikingly picturesque landscapes were ideal oases from the noise, sights, and smells of a busy city, particularly for the lower and middle classes.

The greatest good parks can do in the direction of exercise for the mass of the visitors, is to offer inducements for the people to walk reasonable distances amid agreeable, nerve-resting surroundings. In this respect, large parks are much more worth while [sic] than small parks, because in them the attractions can be more numerous and varied and can be scattered as to lead to nerve-soothing walks amid pleasant surroundings.<sup>9</sup>



Figure 2. View of Spokane and its surrounding mountains and forests from Lincoln Park. Photo by Chrisanne Beckner, 2015.

To pursue the goal of a comprehensive parks plan, the city needed the help of not only the Olmsted Brothers but also a skilled parks superintendent. In 1909, White recommended John W. Duncan, who had been Boston's assistant parks superintendent. (Olmsted Sr. designed Boston's Emerald Necklace park system in the late 1870s.<sup>10</sup>) Together, Duncan and the board embraced the Olmsted Brothers' approach to park design during the early 1900s, leaning away from formal gardens and toward the city's natural and unique topography and flora. By the time the Olmsted Report was released to the public in 1913, the park system had grown to 1,934 acres.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Spokane Board of Park Commissioners, *Report of the Board of Park Commissioners, Spokane, Washington, 1891–1913* (Spokane: n.p., [1913]), 72.

<sup>10</sup> Boston Parks Department & Olmsted Architects, NPS Olmsted Archives, Public Domain, "Olmsted Park System," National Park Service, accessed March 13, 2022, <https://www.nps.gov/places/olmsted-park-system.htm>.

<sup>11</sup> Spokane Board of Park Commissioners, *Report of the Board of Park Commissioners*, 7–8.

The 1913 report, however, included more than just the Olmsted Brothers' recommendations. Park Superintendent Duncan noted the extensive projects that had been completed since the plan was received. Playground Supervisor B. A. Clark also contributed to the report. Other noteworthy contributions to the growing parks system came from the staff of architects and engineers working with Duncan. These included Rowley J. Clarke, an early officer of the Board of Park Commissioners and the park engineer; and C. A. Houghtaling, who appears to have provided the details for buildings constructed throughout the park system.<sup>12</sup>

The City of Spokane did not separate park planning from city planning. City planning was an evolving discipline during the early 1900s, and Spokane soon took a more formal approach to its own city plan. Just as Spokane's Board of Park Commissioners and its city parks plan had followed on the heels of similar programs in larger cities in the East, so did its city planning efforts. According to a biography of White, "Hartford organized one of the earliest planning commissions in 1907, Chicago in 1909, Baltimore and Detroit in 1910, Newark, Saint Louis, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, and Lincoln in 1911. Spokane established its planning commission in 1918, but for the first six or seven years, it seemed merely an adjunct of the park board."<sup>13</sup>

In the years following the release of the Olmsted Brothers' plan, Spokane diversified its recreational opportunities, adding playgrounds, public pools, and golf courses. By the late 1920s, the city was believed to hold the greatest amount of parklands per capita in the nation.<sup>14</sup> Through the budget shortfalls of the Great Depression, Spokane persevered in its parks agenda, often via donation of both natural park areas (such as Deep Creek Canyon) and of local labor.<sup>15</sup> Federal programs, such as the Works Progress Administration (1935–1939) and Work Projects Administration (1939–1943), known collectively as the WPA, also provided labor for parks, playground, and street improvements.<sup>16</sup> By the time of World War II, the Spokane economy was rebounding.

While previous parks superintendents had risen through the ranks of the department and/or were landscape architects by training, Spokane welcomed its first formally trained parks director, William S. Fern, in 1965.<sup>17</sup> Development initiated by private donations and state and federal funds were among the chief accomplishments of the City Parks and Recreation Department in the modern period.<sup>18</sup> Federal and state funds were also vital to park development, and a 1965 parks and open spaces study served to help the city both qualify for such funds and guide park development.<sup>19</sup>

The park system continued to evolve and, in the 1970s, the city completed one of the Olmsted Report's most important remaining recommendations by creating a riverfront park near the falls in downtown Spokane. One of four large parks recommended in the 1907 Olmsted Report, Gorge Park, was meant to reclaim the partially "improved" (as one might ironically say) river gorge from the

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<sup>12</sup> Spokane Board of Park Commissioners, *Report of the Board of Park Commissioners*.

<sup>13</sup> John Fahey, "A. L. White, Champion of Urban Beauty," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 72, no. 4 (October 1981): 170–78.

<sup>14</sup> Aubrey L. White, "The Spokane Parks," *The Quarterly* 20, no. 3 (June 1932): 25–26; and "Beauty Spots Dot City of Spokane," *Spokane Daily Chronicle*, June 5, 1928, pp. 2.

<sup>15</sup> Lawrence Hamblen to the Spokane Park Board, n.d., 2, Folder 29, Box 2, Parks Records Collection, Washington State Archives-Eastern Regional Branch, Cheney (hereafter WSA-ERB). This letter is undated, but references reports from park staff to the board of park commissioners covering the period between 1913 and 1931.

<sup>16</sup> J. J. O'Donnell, District Supervisor of Education and Recreation Projects, Work Projects Administration, to L. B. Hamblen, President of Spokane Park Board, May 7, 1940, Folder 16, Box 10, Parks Records Collection, WSA-ERB.

<sup>17</sup> "Funding Cuts Push Parks Into Holding Pattern," *Spokesman Review*, July 29, 1979.

<sup>18</sup> "Park Report: Gains, Problems Listed," *Spokane Daily Chronicle*, January 1, 1970.

<sup>19</sup> "Park Report: Gains, Problems Listed," *Spokane Daily Chronicle*, January 1, 1970.

commercial development that had claimed the banks in the central city.<sup>20</sup> In the 1970s, as some of the railroads into Spokane merged, it was suddenly possible to accomplish envisioned improvements to the city's riverfront, remove tracks and depots, and convert the waterfront to a city park. At the same time, city hall realized that Spokane's centennial was swiftly approaching.<sup>21</sup> Instead of a local celebration, Spokane leaders opted to pay for its new park by hosting the 1974 World's Fair. Although Spokane was the smallest city to ever host a world's fair, Expo '74 was considered a success, and it provided the impetus needed to clear land around Spokane Falls and prepare the landscape for a future park site. The City of Spokane gained a beautiful public park in the heart of the city—which likely would have pleased the early parks board and other supporters of the original Olmsted plan.<sup>22</sup>

### Park Development in Seattle

Euro-American emigrants arrived in Seattle in 1851. Land for Seattle's first cemetery, today's beloved Volunteer Park, was donated in 1861. With the discovery of gold in Alaska and the coming of transcontinental rail, Seattle experienced explosive growth in the late 1800s. The city's earliest attempts at citywide initiatives, such as providing water, power, hospitals, and transportation were, as one historian noted, "designed to meet some urgent need of the rapidly expanding city."<sup>23</sup>

Beginning in 1902, the Seattle Board of Park Commissioners, via correspondence to Percy Jones and JCO, laid out urgent goals for parks: to secure adequate appropriation to acquire land for parkways and boulevards, perform necessary land surveys, and hire a consulting expert:

to advise us in the proper laying out of a system by which we can not only improve the land owned by us for park purposes, situated in the different portions of the city, but also to devise a series of roadways and parkways which will tie these isolated tracts together, as well as suggest an improvement of the squares and open places under our control.<sup>24</sup>

JCO and Jones, concurrent with a trip to Portland, ventured to Seattle in April 1903. After receiving a map of Seattle that included a proposed parkway system, JCO and Jones arrived with a partially designed system in mind, a rudimentary plan for parkways, and a map of existing parks. They also carried with them a healthy skepticism, as JCO inferred many of the parkways were chosen in part to benefit real-estate schemes.<sup>25</sup>

By June 1903, when the Olmsted Brothers submitted their final parks report, JCO's outlook had shifted. In a personal note accompanying the report, the Olmsted Brothers wrote,

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<sup>20</sup> Spokane Board of Park Commissioners, *Report of the Board of Park Commissioners*, 72.

<sup>21</sup> Willis B. Merriam, "Spokane: Background to Expo 74" (Pullman: n.p., 1974), 12, brochure, Special Collections, Washington State Library, Olympia.

<sup>22</sup> Jim Kershner, "President Richard M. Nixon Presides over the Opening of Expo '74, Spokane's World's Fair, on May 4, 1974," HistoryLink.org Essay 5133, last updated May 20, 2014, [http://www.historylink.org/index.cfm?DisplayPage=output.cfm&File\\_Id=5133](http://www.historylink.org/index.cfm?DisplayPage=output.cfm&File_Id=5133).

<sup>23</sup> Mansel G. Blackford, "Reform Politics in Seattle during the Progressive Era, 1902–1916," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 59, no. 4 (October 1968): 177–85.

<sup>24</sup> Seattle Board of Park Commissioners to Frederick Law Olmsted Jr., December 16, 1902, Job 2690, Reel 95, MSS52571, Olmsted Associated Records.

<sup>25</sup> John Charles Olmsted, "Conference with Mr. J. C. P.—19th, March, 1903," Job 2690, Reel 95, MSS52571, Olmsted Associated Records.

The work has interested us very much, and we have derived a great deal of pleasure, not only from our intercourse with the commission and city officials, but from an examination of the extraordinarily beautiful landscape and the delightful woods...<sup>26</sup>

JCO and Jones were clearly impressed with Seattle's natural features. As such, the Seattle plan recommended a comprehensive system, a plan with which all future private and public land subdivisions should conform, with individual approaches to some parks based on the specific natural landscape...<sup>27</sup> The firm submitted its Seattle report, *A Comprehensive System of Parks and Parkways*, in 1903. As with other savvy city governments, Seattle kept the report under wraps until it could acquire a great deal of the land identified for future parks.



Figure 3. Vistas and natural features played an important role in the Olmsted Brothers' design for the Seattle system of parks and boulevards, as in this view (east) from Lake Washington Boulevard to the Cascade Mountain Range. Photo by Natalie K. Perrin, 2016.

Unlike in Spokane, the Seattle Board of Parks Commissioners faced an uphill battle in securing funding through the city council. After wrestling unsuccessfully for executive authority, the board requested independence by securing 3,000 supporting signatures that would bring a new city charter amendment to a public vote...<sup>28</sup> In March 1904, what became known as the "Park Amendment" passed by 140 votes, and the park board was suddenly free to take firm control of funding, acquiring, and improving the city's parks, just as JCO recommended...<sup>29</sup>

The Seattle Board of Park Commissioners stayed in regular contact with the Olmsted Brothers, resulting in a 1908 supplemental report in which JCO provided additional recommendations for park acquisitions in newly annexed areas of the city; new principles for future development; and a strong emphasis on playgrounds and playfields...<sup>30</sup> In 1909, the Seattle Board of Park Commissioners, as part of the city's promotion of the upcoming Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition, reviewed the 1903 and 1908 Olmsted reports, along with all their detailed and various recommendations for existing and proposed

<sup>26</sup> Olmsted Brothers to E. F. Blaine, July 3, 1903, Job 2690, Reel 95, MSS52571, Olmsted Associated Records

<sup>27</sup> JCO, "Conference with Mr. J. C. P.—19th, March, 1903."

<sup>28</sup> Charles W. Saunders to JCO, February 5, 1904, Job 2690, Reel 95, MSS52571, Olmsted Associated Records.

<sup>29</sup> Charles W. Saunders to JCO, March 11, 1904, Job 2690, Reel 95, MSS52571, Olmsted Associated Records.

<sup>30</sup> Seattle Board of Park Commissioners, *Parks, Playgrounds, and Boulevards of Seattle*, 124–29.

parks, and released an annual report that celebrated the broad history of the park board since its founding in 1884. Of note, the 1909 report congratulated the City of Seattle for following Olmsted recommendations and acquiring parklands early.<sup>31</sup>

Seattle had followed an aggressive plan of parks acquisition and development in 1908 and 1909, not only to meet JCO's recommendations but also to prepare the city for what proved to be a world-class event, the long-awaited Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition, the 1909 world's fair. In the years following, the Olmsted Brothers remained in contact with Seattle's park planners, made a number of visits, drew up a number of plans, and authored a number of reports.

In 1917, the Olmsted Brothers' James Frederick Dawson (JFD) returned to Seattle and made new recommendations to the park board. Ironically, the city's parks were becoming victims of their own success, and the board lamented that people had little respect for public property.<sup>32</sup> After JCO's death in 1920, a series of staffing changes, limited budgets, the Great Depression, political bickering, and various other factors, the link between the City of Seattle and the Olmsted Brothers weakened. However, through it all, the City espoused the general principles of Olmsted design.<sup>33</sup> JFD continued to aid the City of Seattle through the maturation of Seattle's Olmsted park system until his death in 1941.

Although much of the work previously planned for Seattle's parks stalled during World War II, by 1946, the city's park board was preparing a postwar plan for park improvements. By the mid-1950s, the Seattle region was again enjoying population growth, and the city's park board called for increases in acquisitions. One new park opportunity emerged when the US military recommended Fort Lawton be designated surplus property: citizens advocated for a park in this location as JCO had once recommended.<sup>34</sup> In 1968, King County voters approved Forward Thrust, a \$118,000,000 bond measure that would increase Seattle park area by over a third.<sup>35</sup> While those implementing Forward Thrust kept the Olmsted Brothers designs and recommendations in mind, particularly for early Olmsted parks, the program was not designed to implement the firm's vision. Changes in park administration, coupled with the shift in park planning as implemented via Forward Thrust, served to close the Olmsted period of park design in Seattle.

Local advocates for Seattle's Olmsted parks note that Olmsted-designed landscapes were taken somewhat for granted in the mid-1900s. However, because of their careful work with Forward Thrust projects in Olmsted-designed parks, the Parks Department began to re-engage with JCO's plans. By the 1980s, Seattle was rediscovering the value of their Olmsted Brothers parks and boulevards. This led to new public interest in protecting and restoring these landscapes.<sup>36</sup> In the 1980s, members of the Seattle Parks Department used their management history with Olmsted-designed parks to help found the National Association for Olmsted Parks.

As noted by historian David Williams, JCO and the Olmsted Brothers left a great legacy in Seattle: a citywide parks and boulevard system that protects so much land, is so complete, and is so well

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<sup>31</sup> Seattle Board of Park Commissioners, *Parks, Playgrounds, and Boulevards of Seattle*, 11.

<sup>32</sup> Seattle Board of Park Commissioners, *Seattle Board of Park Commissioners' Report, 1922* (Seattle: Lowman & Hanford, 1923), 21–27.

<sup>33</sup> "New Park Architect Discusses Plans," *Seattle Daily Times*, October 4, 1925, 21.

<sup>34</sup> Duane Colt Denfeld, "Fort Lawton to Discovery Park," HistoryLink.org Essay 8772, September 23, 2008, [http://www.historylink.org/index.cfm?DisplayPage=output.cfm&file\\_id=8772](http://www.historylink.org/index.cfm?DisplayPage=output.cfm&file_id=8772).

<sup>35</sup> Mullins, "Persistence of Progressivism;" Friends of Seattle Olmsted Parks, "Regreening of Seattle: The Development of Seattle's Park System," a system of interpretive panels displaying parks history in Seattle, on file with Friends of Seattle Olmsted Parks.

<sup>36</sup> Anne Knight, interview by Chrisanne Beckner, December 31, 2015, Seattle, WA.



designed, that it has remained intact for more than one hundred years. “Equally as important is that the Olmsteds also gave the city a philosophy that protecting our natural scenery was and still is important.”<sup>37</sup> Seattle’s Department of Parks and Recreation continues to protect that legacy today.

### **The Future of the Olmsted Brothers’ Legacy**

In 2015, the City of Spokane contracted Historical Research Associates, Inc. (HRA), to prepare a multiple property document (MPD) for the city’s system of parks and boulevards. Spokane’s comprehensive legacy of parks and city planning acknowledges not only the Olmsted Brothers’ influence but also the people, policies, and practice that came both before and after the 1907 report. The MPD, *City of Spokane Parks and Boulevards (1891-1974)*, tells the city’s entire story of park development, establishing property types and registration requirements that cover not only Olmsted-designed and recommended parks but also parks with significant associations with local leaders and local city planning efforts.

HRA listed Spokane’s Manito Park and Boulevard as a historic district under the MPD. The Manito Park and Boulevard Historic District includes 39 contributing resources, including the park and boulevard; buildings constructed in a distinctive basalt rubble rock style typical of early City of Spokane park development; and recreational structures, water features, and remnants of historic-period trolley lines. Used as a park as early as 1886, the site was already a beloved destination by the time JCO visited. The Olmsted Brothers provided recommendations and, under Park Superintendent Duncan with the guidance of the Olmsted plan, Manito Park and Boulevard flourished.<sup>38</sup>



*Figure 4. Peak-a-boo views leading from the formal Duncan Gardens to the natural Ponderosa pine landscape in Spokane’s Manito Park. Photo by Chrisanne Beckner, 2015.*

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<sup>37</sup> David B. Williams, *A Brief History of Seattle’s Olmsted Legacy*, Friends of Seattle’s Olmsted Parks, accessed July 8, 2016, <http://www.seattle.gov/friendsofolmstedparks/FSOP/history.htm>.

<sup>38</sup> Natalie K. Perrin and Chrisanne Beckner, with research from Lynn Mandyke (Spokane Landmarks), National Register of Historic Places Registration Form: Manito Park and Boulevard, 2015.

Following completion of the City of Spokane MPD, HRA completed a similar document for the City of Seattle. In partnership with local advocacy groups such as the Friends of the Olmsted Parks, HRA was directed to confine the document to those parks that were directly associated with the Olmsted plans for Seattle parks and boulevards. The context for the Seattle MPD does acknowledge the important work of planners who predated the Olmsted Brothers, including a much-maligned parks director who proposed the system on which the Olmsted plan was built. However, resource types and criteria for National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) listing were confined to those with a direct association to the Olmsted plans. The resulting MPD, *Seattle's Olmsted Parks and Boulevards (1903–1968)*, provided guidance for the evaluation of the collection of park resources in Seattle specifically associated with the Olmsted influence.

The Olmsted legacy in Seattle spanned over 30 years, included 37 parks and playgrounds, and resulted in an Olmsted park system that is one of the best preserved and best designed in the United States.<sup>39</sup> In Seattle, HRA listed Lake Washington Boulevard as a historic district under the MPD. Lake Washington Boulevard is the city's prime example of a boulevard and parkway, a designed historic landscape that links small parks and views by a drive that creates a single aesthetic experience. The boulevard was in part designed by the Olmsted Brothers and was directly influenced by JCO's design recommendations. JCO first envisioned Lake Washington Boulevard as a pleasure drive for horses and carriages, bicyclists, and later, automobiles, with adjacent pedestrian pathways. The boulevard was a key element of the 1903 Olmsted Brothers plan for Seattle. Because Seattle acquired lakeside land early on JCO's recommendation, Lake Washington Boulevard has, for more than 100 years, provided users with access to some of Seattle's most dramatic geographic features and views, connecting many city parks along its route.<sup>40</sup>



Figure 5. The maturing landscape of Lake Washington Boulevard, view north. Photo by Natalie K. Perrin, 2016.

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<sup>39</sup> Williams, *Brief History of Seattle's Olmsted Legacy*.

<sup>40</sup> Chrisanne Beckner and Natalie K. Perrin, National Register of Historic Places Registration Form: Lake Washington Boulevard, 2016.

The comprehensive nature of the Olmsted influence on landscapes varies with each city. However, the role of the Olmsted Brothers in furthering the principles founded by Frederick Law Olmsted Sr., are clearly visible on the landscape of those communities that benefitted from their planning expertise. The Olmsted Brothers designed park systems to harmonize with the wild spaces and open landscapes, highlighting the visible distance and those lake or mountain views, as a means of giving visitors a deeper park experience that can only be seen in the geography and topography of the Pacific Northwest. However, it was their emphasis on designing citywide systems of parks and boulevards, publicly paid for and independently managed, that has allowed these park systems to grow with each city, providing a legacy that both cities hope to preserve for the next 100 years.

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