



GARFIELD PARK CULTURAL LANDSCAPE REPORT

Chapter I: Introduction, Project Scope & Methodology

A. INTRODUCTION

Garfield Park is a valued, irreplaceable historic public park serving the Indianapolis community as both a city and neighborhood park. The park is a significant cultural landscape recognized for its history, its design influence, and its place in the Indianapolis parks and boulevards system. Heritage Landscapes was commissioned by the Friends of Garfield Park (FOGP) to develop a cultural landscape report investigating the history, chronology, existing conditions and use of the Garfield Park landscape and to recommend a preservation approach that respects its heritage while accommodating current and future directions. Garfield Park stands as a testimony of over a century of use, support and patronage by the neighborhood and the Indianapolis community. This *Garfield Park Cultural Landscape Report* honors that legacy while it seeks to insure the vibrancy and value of this important park into the future.

B. INTRODUCTION TO CULTURAL LANDSCAPES & REPORTS

A cultural landscape is one that has evolved over time from its natural origins through a series of historic layers created by human design and use, interacting with the environment and ecology. These factors are dynamic and constantly in flux. Cultural landscapes are created, modified or managed by people, taking many forms and scales. The National Park Service defines a cultural landscape as “a geographic area, including both cultural and natural resources... associated with a historic event, activity, or person or exhibiting other cultural or aesthetic values”.¹ Four cultural landscape types are listed in *The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes, (Guidelines)*:

- A *historic designed landscape* has been “consciously designed or laid out”, usually by a professional, “according to design principles” or within a “recognized style or tradition.” Aesthetic values play a significant role in these landscapes. In Garfield Park the landscape encompassing the Conservatory and Sunken Gardens is in this category. The park as a whole was specifically influenced by two noted landscape architects in the 1895 work of John Charles Olmsted, and the work of George Edward Kessler from 1908 through 1915 with implementation of his design continuing until 1939.
- A *historic vernacular landscape* has “evolved through use by the people whose activities or occupancy shaped it.” The landscape “reflects the physical, biological, and cultural character of everyday lives” and “function plays a significant role in vernacular landscapes.” The evolution of Garfield Park is the development of park features to meet the recreational needs of the local community and the city.

GARFIELD PARK CULTURAL LANDSCAPE REPORT

Chapter I: Introduction, Project Scope & Methodology

- An *ethnographic landscape* contains either “natural or cultural resources that associated people define as heritage resources”. A case could be made for Garfield Park based on the Central European immigrants who populated the neighborhood prior to and during the developmental period of the park, whose taste and traditions influenced the development.
- The category of *historic site* is defined as a landscape associated with a specific historic event such as a battle, or a famous person. Garfield Park contains several memorials to such events and persons but is not a historic site in its own right.

While principally a designed landscape, carrying the clear imprint of the Kessler park design, Garfield Park possesses strong elements of vernacular landscape. The original landscape and the improvements of many hands over the past century are visible in the patterns and numerous park features that remain from the early history of the park. In addition, the park monuments honor historic events and people, functioning as historic sites for remembrance.

A Cultural Landscape Report (CLR) serves a valuable purpose in providing a comprehensive study of a historically significant property and creating a sound basis for a treatment that addresses contemporary needs while preserving the landscape’s cultural heritage. A Cultural Landscape Report assesses a landscape for its cultural and historic values and their change over time, identifying the significant historic periods of development and their character-defining features. An assessment of the integrity or change in those characteristics is then made based on presently existing conditions. On that basis the CLR selects the appropriate landscape preservation treatment and provides guidance for the implementation of the treatment plan.

C. SCOPE OF WORK AND METHODOLOGY

Heritage Landscapes has approached the Garfield Park Cultural Landscape Report for the Friends of Garfield Park (FOGP) in accordance with federal guidance for cultural landscape preservation. The primary references used are the Secretary of the Interior’s *Standards for Historic Preservation with Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes (Guidelines)* and NPS [Bulletin 28, Cultural Resource Guidelines](#). The purpose of this Cultural Landscape Report is to plan a future for the Park that balances its history, environment, use, and maintenance, while continuing a harmonious relationship with its past. The scope of work covers research and documentation of the history, presentation of the historic character, and analysis of the evolution of Garfield Park. The report then documents current conditions and existing character, with analysis of the integrity of the historic elements in the landscape. Finally, the report recommends the appropriate treatment to preserve the cultural heritage while addressing contemporary needs. The process incorporates the following tasks:

- Research and study in detail the evolution of Garfield Park
- Record and assess the existing physical conditions
- Observe everyday park use
- Gain information from users with a survey conducted with the assistance of the FOGP
- Summarize current maintenance operation and responsibilities

GARFIELD PARK CULTURAL LANDSCAPE REPORT

Chapter I: Introduction, Project Scope & Methodology

- Analyze the historic integrity of the landscape
- Explore options and approaches to landscape treatment
- Select and describe the most appropriate landscape treatment alternative
- Recommend phasing in an Action Plan
- Develop schematic level cost estimates

The Report incorporates the elements of accepted practice for a CLR based on the *Guidelines*. The first part of the CLR includes: History, Existing Conditions, and Analysis; Part 2 includes: Exploration and Explication of Preservation Treatments with related recommendations.

The process for creating the Garfield Park Cultural Landscape Report included several steps. Foremost was the undertaking of archival research to gain a full understanding of the property and its evolution over time. Heritage Landscapes reviewed the writings and drawings of other design professionals who have studied the park landscape or have been actively involved in recent development and intervention projects for Garfield Park. Heritage Landscapes built on those findings by consulting a range of primary source repositories including: the Indiana State Library, the Indiana Historical Society, the Indianapolis Public Library, Indy Parks & Recreation, the Indianapolis Department of Metropolitan Planning/Historic Preservation Commission, the Kansas City Public Library's Missouri Valley Special Collections, and individual oral history contacts of persons associated with the property. A wide variety of materials including published and unpublished texts, annual park reports, sketches, historic photographs, historic aerial photographs, maps, plans, surveys and property boundary plans provided evidence of property character, physical conditions and land uses over time. By comparing and contrasting the evidence, the early character of the Garfield Park landscape was pieced together and the evolution of the property revealed.

Study of the documentation allowed the identification of landscape periods based on design and maintenance in the park, and the resulting changes to landscape character.

In defining the character of the property through these periods it is helpful to delineate a series of landscape areas or units. In studying the character of the Garfield Park landscape from the late-19th century through the present, Heritage Landscapes discerned six landscape units that appear in all of the periods. The character-defining features of these units include land use and spatial organization, views and visual relationships, topography, vegetation, circulation and structures.

The investigation into the history and existing conditions of the Garfield Park landscape provided a basis for assessing the period of significance. The period of significance is defined as the span of time during which a historic property achieves all the aspects that will make it historically significant. For Garfield Park this begins with the acquisition of the park land and continues through the reshaping of the landscape to create a public park. The end of the period of significance occurs at the point in time when the final landscape changes are made that contribute to its history and character, and subsequent changes erode and alter the historic character and features. Once the period of significance has been identified, a comparison of the significant historic character of the property and the existing conditions is carried out. This comparison highlights the degree of continuity and change, and allows assessment of the

GARFIELD PARK CULTURAL LANDSCAPE REPORT

Chapter I: Introduction, Project Scope & Methodology

integrity of the property. Integrity is the degree to which the historic character and qualities of the cultural landscape are present today.

Heritage Landscapes developed a Garfield Park User Survey (see Appendix B), which was reviewed and refined with the FGOP. Surveys were distributed to solicit public input and assessment of the existing park landscape and facilities. Survey questions requested demographic information; current types of park use; condition of the park landscape, features and facilities; the best and least liked park elements; feeling of safety or danger; and desired improvements.

As the final CLR report is developed, this information is analyzed as a foundation for testing workable preservation approaches and recommending a preservation treatment for Garfield Park. The potential preservation treatments identified in the Guidelines include Preservation, Restoration, Rehabilitation or Reconstruction. The application of these treatments to the Garfield Park landscape is discussed and the implications tested in a narrative and plan. The mission of the historic property, its current conditions, visitation, maintenance and management and the future goals for the park are considered in the selection of the recommended preservation treatment for Garfield Park.

Heritage Landscapes has established a collaborative relationship with the Friends of Garfield Park, Indy Parks & Recreation, and interested park users through community meetings and a user survey as well as more casual contacts. The long-term value of this cultural landscape report relies on a collaborative process with active participation and communication among all those who steward, value and are committed to Garfield Park, a shared community resource.

CHAPTER I: ENDNOTES

¹ *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes*, (1996). Patricia M. O'Donnell, Heritage Landscapes principal, served on the NPS committee that developed and reviewed this document.