

**MARKET SQUARE PARK
BRINGING LIFE TO THE CROSSROADS
OF A HISTORIC DISTRICT PARK**

DRAFT REPORT

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August 2007

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Report prepared for:
Main Street Redevelopment Authority
Reinvestment Zone Number Three
City of Houston, TX

Report prepared by: Project for Public Spaces

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I. INTRODUCTION

In spring 2007, Project for Public Spaces (PPS) was called upon by the Main Street/Market Square Redevelopment Authority (MSRA) and Reinvestment Zone Number Three (TIRZ 3) to guide the future development of Market Square Park. PPS began a community-driven process to gather information on Market Square's neighborhood – the Historic District – and on the existing conditions of Market Square itself. Through this process, an overall vision emerged—Market Square Park will be a place where...

- All people - residents, families, downtown workers, out-of-town visitors - feel welcome and have a reason to be there
- Market Square's history is celebrated, experienced and told
- Vibrancy abounds – people, art, eating, socializing and thriving businesses surrounding Market Square
- Various attractions of downtown Houston will connect to and feed off of, creating a more vibrant historic downtown district.

Market Square Park will connect various attractions of downtown Houston as it will be a central respite for communities of downtown Houston.

I. PROCESS

PPS conducted an initial site analysis of Market Square Park and its surrounding environs that was presented to stakeholders and residents alike, through 7 focus group meetings and 2 Placemaking workshops. Extensive community outreach was done by MSRA to populate these meetings and workshops gathering a good cross-section of the park's stakeholders. Across the focus groups and workshops, approximately 70 Market

Square stakeholders were able to speak on the opportunities available to Market Square and the valuable resources that the park already possesses.

FOCUS GROUPS

We conducted focus groups with each of the following stakeholder groups:

- Property Owners
- Residents
- Organizational Representatives
- Restaurant/Bar Owners
- Residents & Organizational Representatives (mixed)
- Realtors/Brokers/Retail team
- Past Stakeholders

PLACEMAKING WORKSHOPS

Two Placemaking workshops were held – one in the evening on June 25th and the other in the afternoon on June 26th. All the stakeholders that were invited to focus groups were represented. Flyers were also posted throughout the neighborhood advertising the two workshops.

The purpose of these workshops was to understand the issues and opportunities facing Market Square Park. Additional objectives were to see if there was consensus among the various stakeholders and to build support for the effort to revitalize Market Square Park. Workshop attendees were given a presentation on PPS Placemaking concepts and the initial site analysis to help prepare attendees for the workshop exercises.

QUALITIES OF A GREAT PARK

In studying how public spaces are used, PPS has distilled the qualities that make a great place into the following four basic ingredients:

- **Activities and Uses:** A good park has a range of destinations and activities that attract a variety of community members, for exchanges, companionship, play or relaxation. The activities keep the park lively, inviting and safe at all times of day.
- **Access and Linkage:** A good park is easy to get to and see in. Linkages and open sight lines should connect different destinations and help create a people-friendly environment that encourages interaction among neighbors and people of different ages. Institutions on the edges of the park should be open to it, provide easy access, but also have their own activities and be linked to one another through walkways and signage.
- **Comfort and Image:** Good parks are comfortable to use and help give a neighborhood a unique identity. Amenities, such as benches, picnic tables, shade trees, play equipment, places offering food, bike racks, and bulletin boards, well-designed and in the right place, are essential in any good park. Carefully designed and well-maintained amenities can have a powerful effect – they signal to people that someone took special care in making a place welcoming and comfortable.
- **Sociability:** A sociable place is one where people want to go to observe the passing scene, meet friends and interact with a wide range of people that are different from themselves. Neighborhood parks can easily become a sociable place, where neighbors come for a variety of reasons, where information and skills are shared among residents informally, where young and old interact comfortably and in a meaningful way.

II. SITE ANALYSIS

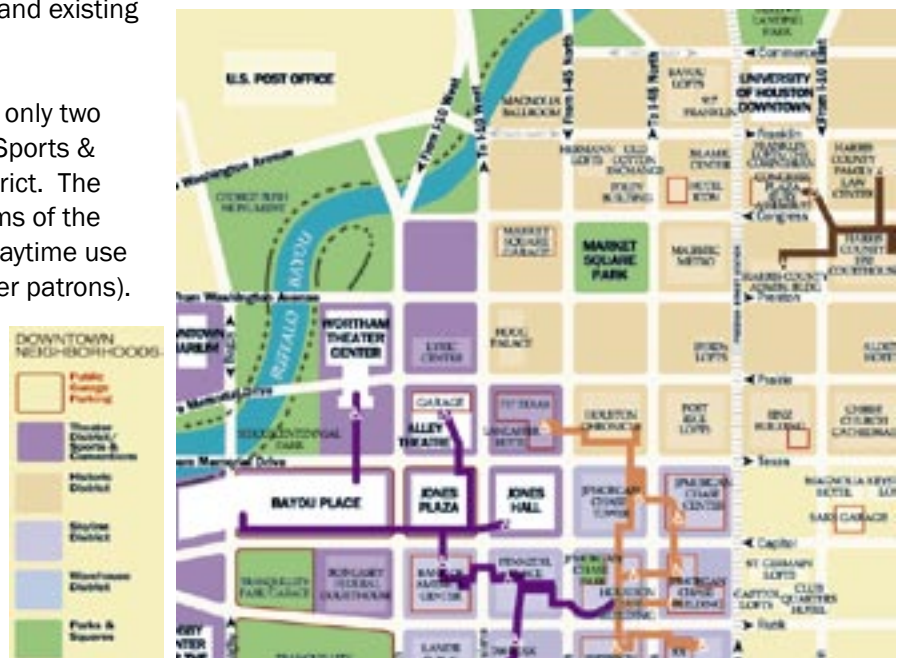
Given the PPS approach to cities and places and the nature of downtown Houston, a few different lenses were applied to the City of Houston in order to achieve a thorough site analysis. The “lenses” applied included: The Power of Ten, Access and Linkages, Site Conditions (Inner & Outer Square), Sidewalks, Signage, Public Art, Utilities, Amenities, and Uses & Activities.

POWER OF TEN IN HOUSTON

The idea is that the City of Houston should have at least 10 great destinations. If Downtown were one of those destinations, it should have at least 10 great places. If Market Square were one of those 10 great places, it should have at least 10 things to do there.

The Power of Ten is a concept to think about places, whether entire cities or corner plazas, beyond singular uses, activities and features - with the idea that the layering of multiple uses, activities and features creates a richness that all great places have, and an exponential synergy that breeds and complements new and existing ones.

Market Square is in the Historic District, but only two blocks away from both the Theater District/Sports & Conventions and the Skyline (business) District. The proximity of these districts are assets in terms of the critical mass they provide for morning and daytime use (downtown workers) and evening use (theater patrons).



MANAGING PUBLIC SPACES SUCCESSFULLY

A well-designed public space must be well-managed and well-programmed. Principal park management tasks are as follows:

- **Maintenance** – The more used and loved a park is, the more maintenance it requires. Not only are regular cleaning and repair of a park to high standards essential, prompt attention to items that could be easily deferred, such as a broken drinking fountain or removal of graffiti or upkeep of landscaping, is necessary and more than repay the cost. A particular benefit of good park maintenance is that the apparent care and investment for these parks have been found to deter negative use and activities of parks.
- **Security and Hospitality** – If a park is well-designed and well-used, security measures can be visible and comforting without being intrusive. Security and maintenance workers should be ambassadors. Personnel, who have a friendly demeanor and are informed and helpful to users, can go a long way towards maintaining the balance. If people feel “hosted” and “welcomed,” they don’t feel the need to be “protected”. The more people feel secure in a park, the more users the park attracts, and the more secure it will be.
- **Programming** – “Programming” refers to the wide variety of planned activities and to all the facilities and equipment related to them: operating a retail program with vending carts or a seasonal cafe; hosting a community gathering; or operating a regular farmers market. However, programming can also be something as simple as providing benches or installing a historical plaque or exhibit. Programming can be undertaken by community organizations (like youth clubs) that may be given the responsibility for operating a portion of or a specific facility within a park.
- **Marketing and Promotion** – Promoting the events and activities that take place in the park is an important adjunct to programming, particularly for a space that is coming back to life after a period of neglect and under-use. Especially for neighborhood parks, residents need to be made aware ahead of time of events planned at the park.
- **Coordination with Adjacent Uses** – Parks and surrounding commercial, educational and civic uses should be seamlessly integrated. The activities of nearby buildings and facilities should spill right into the park, and streets and outdoor activities and circulation should move smoothly through these buildings. In the case of neighborhood parks it is especially important to connect the park to other appropriate area destinations, such as community and youth centers, playfields, schools, libraries, and other parks.



Market Square is situated in the center of many destinations (some performing better than others) that are opportunities to strengthen and support each other.

This includes the University of Houston, Houston Grand Opera, Houston Symphony, Alley Theatre, Jones Plaza, Jones Hall, Angelika Film Center, Bayou Place, and the commercial strip on Main Street. Immediate open spaces include Buffalo Bayou, Allen's Landing, Sesqui-centennial Park, Fish Plaza, Jones Plaza, and Harris County Plaza.

Market Square should be one of the ten great places in Downtown Houston.

Many of these destinations, though, feel separated. One reason is that surface parking dominates the downtown fabric in the immediate area around Market Square (shown in red).

Surface parking is one of the most inefficient land uses, especially in an urban context. They create experiential voids for both pedestrians and drivers alike. Include other vacant properties and blank ground floor facades, and the experience is further deteriorated and fragmented. This has resulted in little reason for people to walk and more reason for vehicles to go fast.



East commercial edge of Market Square: Char Bar, Warren Inn, Market Sq Bar & Grill and Treebeards.



North commercial edge of Market Square: La Carafe, Les Grival's and Sophia's.



Allen's Landing



Sesquicentennial Park



Some downtown surface parking is buffered well by landscaping.... some aren't at all.





ACCESS & LINKAGES

Public transportation is fairly well connected to the park (bus routes shown in blue). There are six bus stops along the periphery of Market Square. The seven-mile light rail line along Main Street (in yellow) has a stop between Preston and Prairie, a block and a half from Market Square. There are also designated bicycle lanes (in red), although not striped, along Congress and Preston that tie that mode to Market Square.



Above: The light rail stop on Main Street is a block and a half off of Market Sq.



Left: There are bus stops on all four corners of Market Sq.



A 5–10 minute walk from Market Sq (approximately ¼ mile) captures a lot of downtown assets. Things aren't as far apart as they seem.

But these downtown assets and destinations are disconnected due to harsh climate conditions and the fragmented fabric of downtown, i.e. inactive uses and edges, inefficient land uses (surface parking lots), lack of street trees and shaded sidewalks.

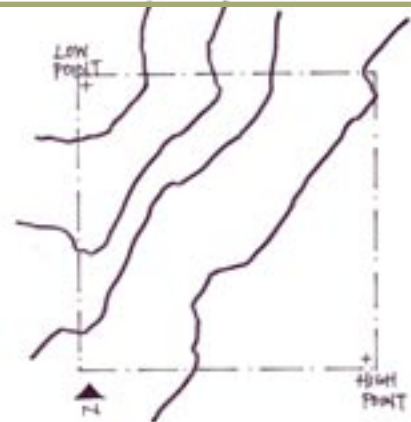
Strengthening existing destinations, developing the experiential voids aforementioned, and filling in the gaps between those destinations will start to make the area around Market Square more walkable and bikeable.

Expanding the radius to a 15 minute walk would include even more destinations, like the Downtown Aquarium, Hobby Center for the Performing Arts, Texas History Museum, Houston Public Library, what else?

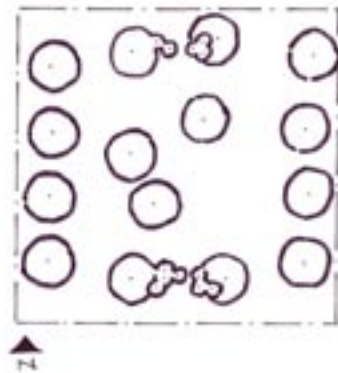
SITE CONDITIONS - INNER SQUARE

The existing Market Square site presents many physical issues (along with the lack-of-programming issues) that contribute to the park's underutilization and under-performance.

With a high point in the SE corner, low point in the NW and insufficient drainage/catch basins, the central plaza collects a lot of standing water, from small ponds to the entire plaza flooded with water.

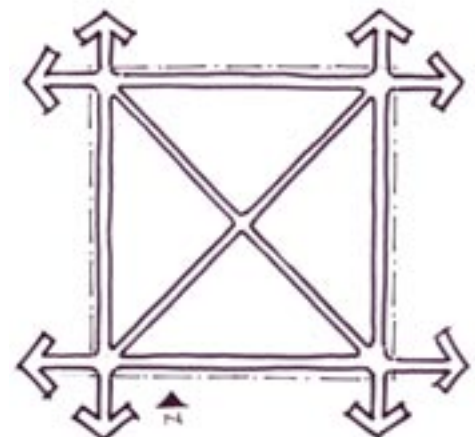


Mature trees line each edge of the square's interior, with three trees closer to the center and within the raised grass sections. These trees provide needed shade for the rather harsh climate in Houston. Twelve smaller trees flank the north and south tiled benches.



Pedestrian Circulation is extremely limiting with wide (10-15 feet wide), channelized, criss-cross paths. Factoring in the lack of things to do in the park further makes pedestrian cut-thru traffic all that more prevalent. The raised, grass triangles formed by the circulation, subsequently but not entirely, become unused "islands."

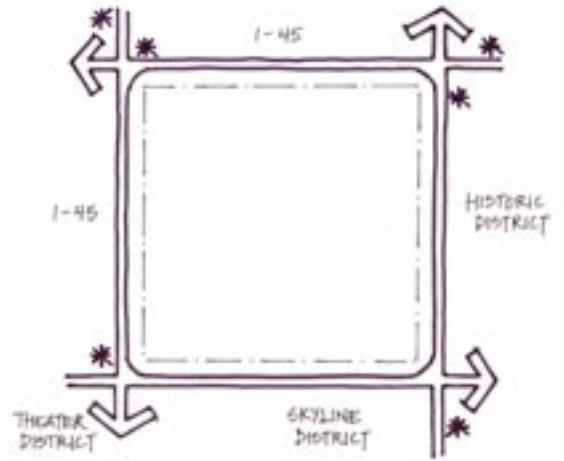
The sunken center and pathways not only create deposits for litter and rainwater, but create poor visibility in and out of the park and an inability to get out of the park center easily.





SITE CONDITIONS - OUTER SQUARE

Vehicular Circulation around Market Square is a series of one-way streets, varying from two to three travel lanes. Crosswalks are decoratively defined and parallel parking flank all sides of the street except one (west side of Milam). Six bus stops are on or just off Market Square. Six bus stops are on or just off Market Square.



Congress Street



Travis Street

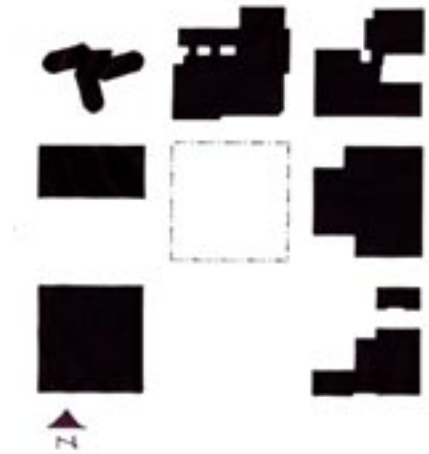


Preston Street



Milam Street

The surrounding blocks around Market Square show not only a lack of density (especially for a Downtown Historic District) but also the lack of positive uses that support the park (fenced off green space with the Clock Tower, three parking garages with blank ground floors, four surface parking lots, drive-thru bank).



Treebeards, Market Sq Bar & Grill, Warren Inn and Char Bar are popular eateries defining the eastern edge of the park.



La Carafe is a local bar housed within the old Kennedy Trading Post building. It is on the National Register for Historic Places.



Parking, both surface and garages, define approximately 50% of the uses facing Market Square. The garages don't have active ground floor uses, while some of the surface lots are slated for development.



Parking garages encompass the north-east and south-west corners across Market Square - prime real estate spots that don't have active ground floor uses.

SIDEWALKS

The sidewalks across the street to the east are awkwardly accessible and inaccessible (ADA) to the north.



The north sidewalk across the street is not ADA accessible.

SIGNAGE



There are two directional/information signs in the NW and SE corners of Market Square.



The east sidewalk across the street could be reconfigured to be more gracefully accessible.



The interpretive plaque for Market Square is situated in a dead corner and not oriented with the park circulation.



Some signage is extremely "heavy" and does not convey the sense of place and history of Market Square.

PUBLIC ART

Four art pieces (Malou Flato's tiled benches) are placed mid-block along each sidewalk. The north/south pieces have a circular fountain in the middle of them. The benches relate well to the sidewalk, but not well to the park or each other. The tall backs of the bench somewhat limit views into the park, even with openings in the middle of each piece.

A central plaza is defined by continuous seatwalls with photo plaques (documenting the square's history) embedded into their backs. The placement of photo plaques are in locations where people need to bend over to view, and the story is not clearly told.

One art piece ("Points of View") is situated in the center of the plaza space.



Center art piece, "Points of View", by James Surls.



Curved tile benches, with circular tile fountain in the middle of north & south pieces, by Malou Flato.



The tile benches don't physically connect to one another through the park or to the center plaza.



Photo history tiles by Paul Hester line the built-in seating that defines the central plaza.



The photo tiles have been subjected to vandalism and neglect.



Salvaged and surplus bricks, tiles and other masonry materials from buildings at one time on or around Market Sq are inset in the paving in and around the park. Their stories or significance, though, are not explained to park users.

UTILITIES



Utility boxes, electrical and irrigation, are not visually buffered, sometimes awkwardly placed in the sidewalk.

AMENITIES

There are numerous seating opportunities between the fixed seatwalls that define the paths and central plaza and the tiled seatwalls, but no other seating in the grass areas or under the mature trees in the grass areas.

There is one drinking fountain along Travis Street, which is an asset to build upon.

There are no bike racks within Market Square (although there is a rack on the south side of Preston Street), which doesn't support the fact that Congress Street and Preston Street are designated bike routes.

Poor lighting makes the park feel unsafe at night.



Overhead lines are suspiciously low and cut thru the north-east section of the park.

USES & ACTIVITIES

Visitors are not drawn to Market Square Park – there are no weekend and evening attractions to bring people to the park and the downtown – restaurants close early and/or are closed on the weekends.

Dog walkers are a big user group in Market Square. While “doggie bags” are available on site, there is an inconsistent supply. Along with the lack of a defined area specifically for dogs and lack of people in Market Square, dog excrement and urine is found throughout the grassy areas and is an acknowledged problem.

With little to do in Market Square, loitering is a frequent activity, which makes the park feel unsafe at night.



Dogs and their owners are frequent users and ambassadors of the park. However, dog excrement and urine is a problem in the grassy areas.

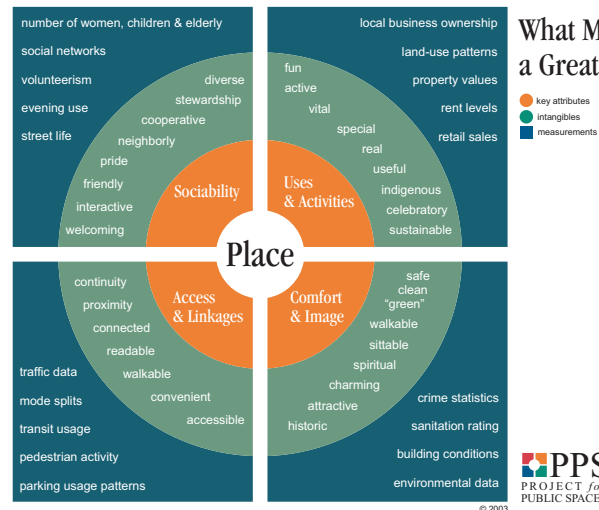
FOCUS GROUPS AND PLACEMAKING WORKSHOP PROCESS

After a briefing of PPS concepts and preliminary site analysis, the following topics were covered at the focus groups:

- How does each group feel about the redesign of Market Square Park?
- What elements would the group like to keep?
- What improvements would the group like made?

At the workshops, the following questions were posed:

- What do you like best about Market Square Park?
- What kinds of uses and activities would attract people to use Market Square?
- List things that you would do to improve this place that could be done right away and that wouldn't cost a lot.
- What changes would you make in the long term that would have the biggest impact?
- What local partnerships or local talent can you identify that could help implement some of your proposed improvements?



Workshop participants were asked to frame their suggestions for Market Square improvements on the PPS Place Diagram.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

Through numerous discussions during the group sessions and workshops, several suggestions were made that helped form the vision for Market Square.

Market Square Park will be a place where...

- All people - residents, families, downtown workers, out-of-town visitors - feel welcome and have a reason to be there
 - Market Square's history is celebrated, experienced and told
 - Vibrancy abounds – people, art, eating, socializing and thriving businesses surrounding Market Square
 - Various attractions of downtown Houston will connect to and feed off of, creating a more vibrant historic downtown district.
- o Wine bar in evenings, or
 - o Food provided from the adjacent restaurants;
 - A unique (and ethnic) Farmers Market, when local farmers have the capacity for another location;
 - Informational and/or interpretational signage for Art;
 - Historic District interpretation, including signage and art to tell of the park and area's history ;
 - Links to nearby downtown destinations, such as Buffalo Bayou, the Theatre District, Allen's Landing, Courthouse Square, Sesquicentennial Park, Downtown festivals, the upcoming Ballet Academy, and more, through streetscape, coordinated programming and more attractive uses (both building and open space) that can bridge the gap between destinations;
 - A Newsstand and/or A Lunchtime Library;
 - A Play Area/Element;
 - Amenities and Passive enjoyment, including:
 - o Different types of seating, in the shade,
 - o Water feature,
 - o Free Wi Fi, and/or
 - o Bike racks;
 - "Soft" programming and events, including:
 - o Small concerts & performances - featuring local schools, ballet and theater students, puppet shows, choirs, small music quartets, etc.,
 - o Serialized events, such as Christmas market, Flower market, Movies, Film Series,
 - o Exercise classes such as Yoga, Tai Chi, and
 - o Historical tours;

With this vision and participant suggestions, the following recommendations were made.

PROGRAM ELEMENTS

Participants agreed that the following program elements should be included in the park:

- A Dog Run/Park, with covered seating and drinking water for dogs;
- Flower displays or gardens, possibly maintained by the community, University of Houston Downtown, Urban Harvest, or a garden club;
- Food, provided by vendors or in a small kiosk, could include:
 - o Unique lunchtime food,
 - o Ice cream,
 - o Coffee and snacks ,

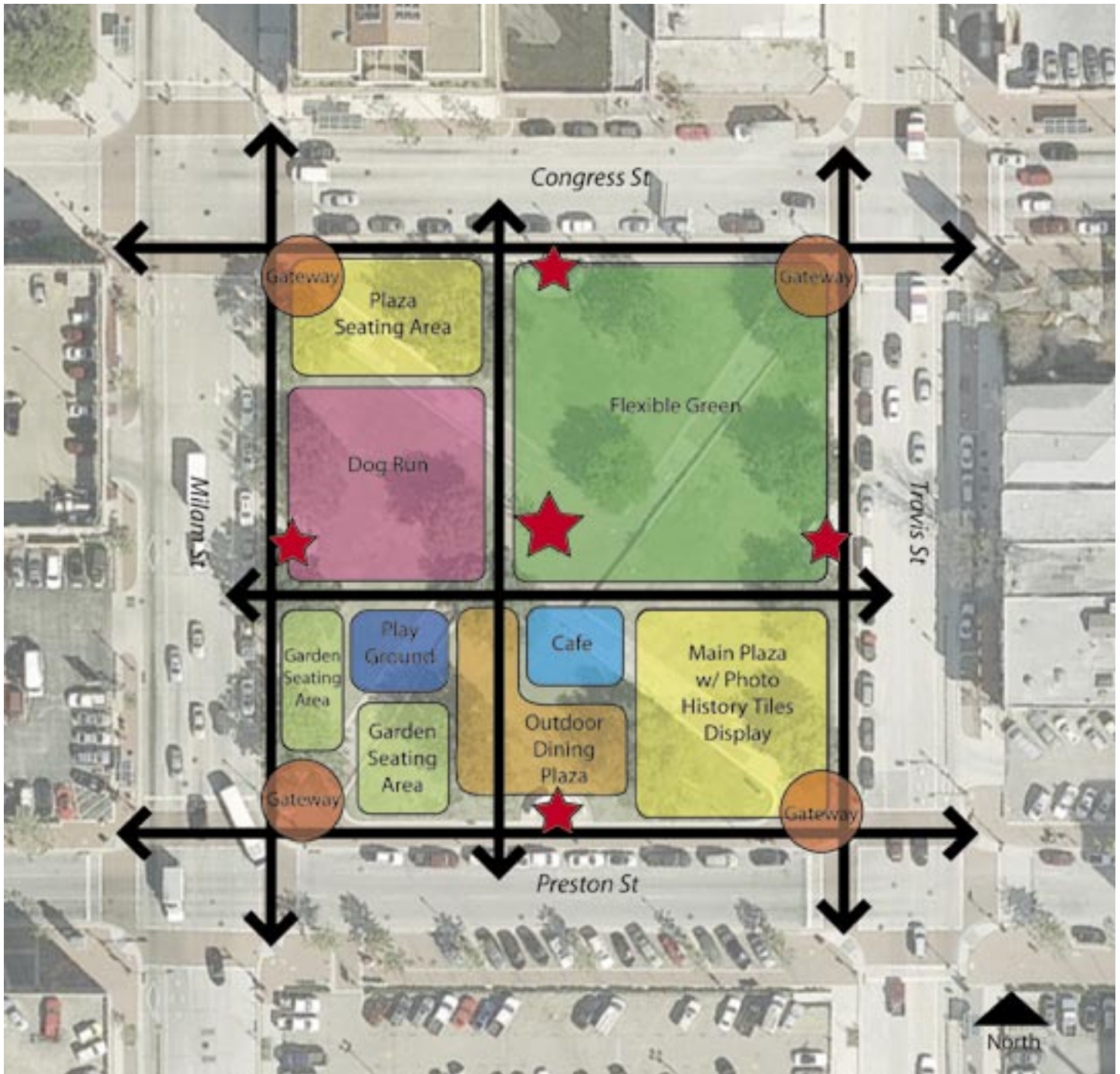
PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENTS

Common ground was also found around the following participants' suggestions:

- Re-grading to remove channeled walkways, improve visibility, safety, and drainage;
- Possible adjustments of art locations: central sculpture, paving remnants, photos to showcase and tell story better;
- Increasing seating opportunities using moveable benches and/or chairs;
- Additional paved or gravel areas, for outdoor seating moveable tables and chairs;
- Better lighting;
- Surrounding façade improvements;
- Landscaping, flowers, maintenance, restoration - keeping the mature trees;
- Water feature;
- Visually buffering existing surface parking lots - street trees and shrubs;
- Kiosk or structure for food and shade; and
- Bike Racks.



CONCEPT DIAGRAM#1



CONCEPT DIAGRAM#1

This concept preserves the location of the center art piece and four tiled benches. The lawn is consolidated into the northeast corner of the site for flexible use, seating under the trees, passive recreation and small scale programming. The corner at Congress and Travis has gateway prominence and complements the historic Clock Tower across the street.

A more formal plaza encompasses the southeast corner. This area would have a water feature, ample seating and a display of the history photo tiles (maybe on small free standing stand, pedestal, base or plinths – see photos). Likewise, the salvaged and surplus bricks, tiles and other masonry materials (from buildings at one time on or near Market Sq) that are inset in the paving would be consolidated and showcased in this plaza, almost like a historic “patchwork quilt”, with interpretive signage to explain the story.

A future café or food kiosk is located along the main circulation paths of the square, with its respective outdoor café area (moveable tables and chairs) spilling into the adjacent main plaza.

The southwest corner has more decorative gardens (with ample seating and shade) that buffer and serve a children’s playground. The playground similarly is adjacent to the outdoor café area, for parents to have a cup of coffee and be able to watch their kids playing.

The northwest corner has a smaller hardscape plaza, with seating and possibly another “patchwork quilt.” The dog park/run is in this quadrant.

Each corner gateway has “welcome” signage and interpretive signage regarding Market Square’s history.

PROS:

Larger consolidated lawn area for more flexible uses, i.e. small scale recreation, bigger programming & events.

Art pieces maintain their location.

Main plaza at corner is more visible, integrated with the sidewalk, and likewise a better area to showcase the history photo tiles and remnant masonry materials.

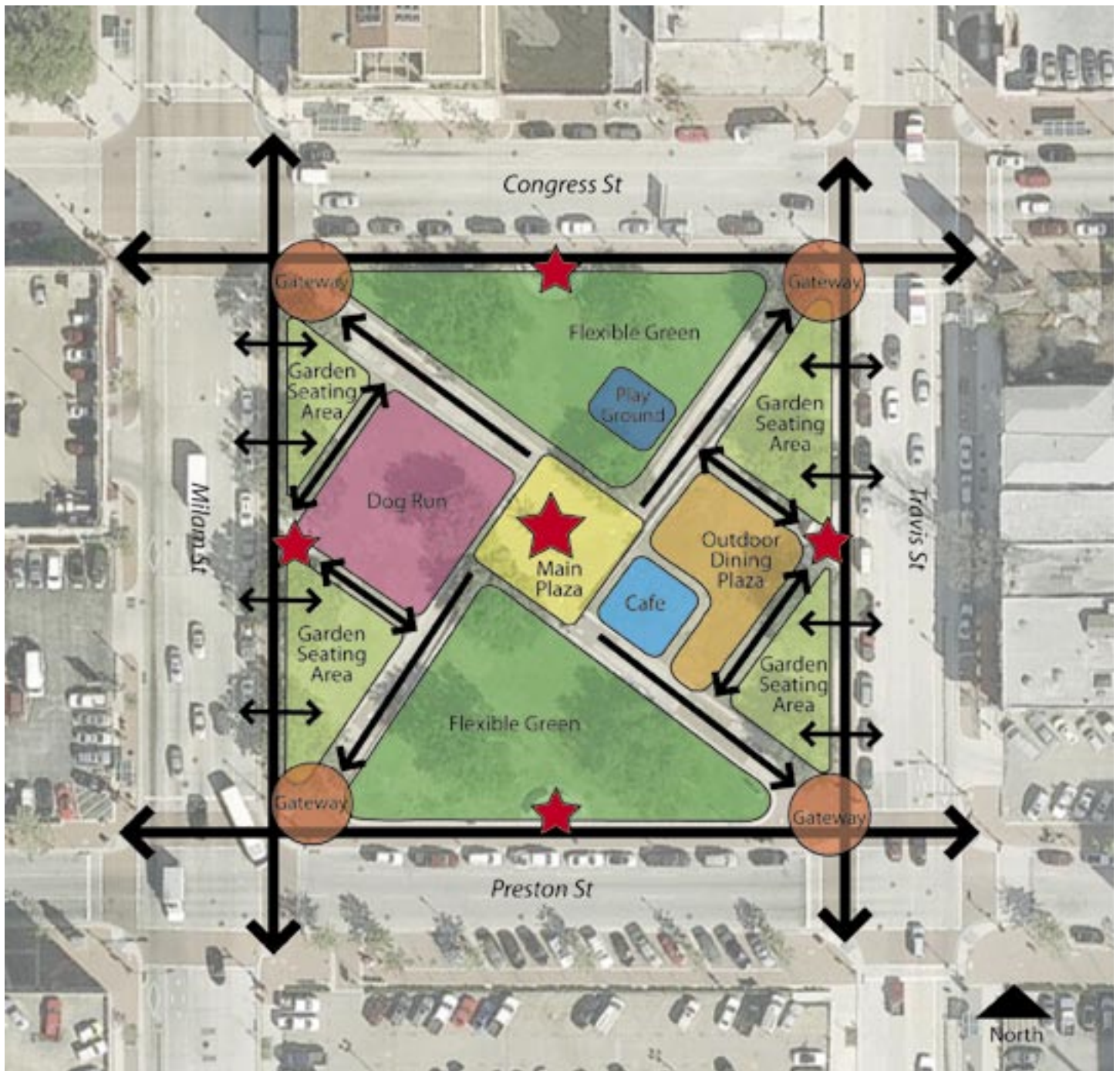
CONS:

Formal “center” and symmetry is lost.

Some corners of the park have more prominence than others.

Highest activity area is closest to Preston Street redevelopment site. Potential future construction may cause disturbances and pollution on this high activity area.

CONCEPT DIAGRAM #2



CONCEPT DIAGRAM #2

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This concept preserves the existing circulation (criss-cross paths, albeit not sunken and channelized), location of the center art piece & tile benches, and the main plaza area (again, not sunken).

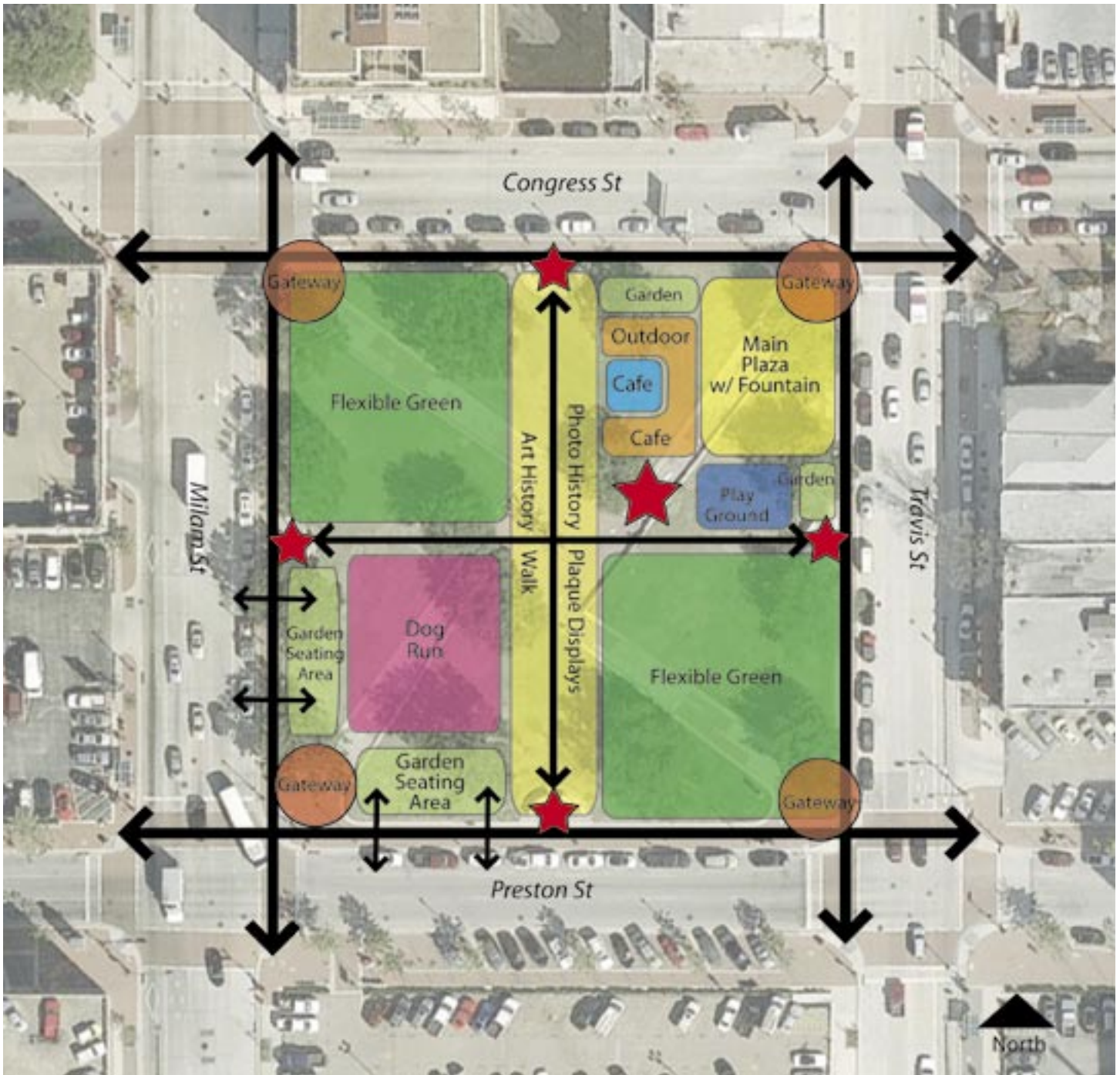
The north and south lawn areas are kept for flexible use, seating under the trees, passive recreation and small scale programming, with the addition of a playground in the north lawn.

In the east and west areas, secondary paths from the tile benches define a dog park/run area in the west area and a café/food kiosk/outdoor café area to the east.

Areas that result from these secondary paths create decorative garden/seating areas, each one with the history photo plaques scattered among them (again, on some sort of base). These garden areas would be very permeable, easily accessible from many points along the sidewalk and thru into the park.

Each corner gateway has “welcome” signage and interpretive signage regarding Market Square’s history. The “patchwork quilt” (the salvaged and surplus bricks, tiles and other masonry materials from buildings, at one time on or near Market Sq, that are inset in the paving) is divided into four smaller “quilts” at each corner.

CONCEPT DIAGRAM #3



CONCEPT DIAGRAM #3

This concept has a north-south/east-west path system. The location of the four tile benches remain and become focal point termini to the paths. The north-south axis is a widened, almost promenade, with the history photo tiles and salvaged and surplus bricks, tiles and other masonry materials (from buildings at one time on or near Market Sq) embedded into the pathway. These would be consolidated and showcased along the path, with interpretive signage to explain its story.

The lawn area is split into two areas in the northwest and southeast quadrants for flexible use, seating under the trees, passive recreation and small scale programming.

The northeast quadrant contains the main plaza, with a corner gateway treatment, ample seating, water feature, and flanked by a café/food kiosk w/ outdoor café, playground and gardens. The center art piece is offset from its current location to become more a part of the main plaza area.

The southwest quadrant contains the dog park/run, buffered, but still visible, from Milam and Preston Streets by decorative garden/seating areas.

Each corner gateway has “welcome” signage and interpretive signage regarding Market Square’s history.

PROS:

Re-interprets the four equal quadrants of the current design.

More greenspace overall, although divided into two areas.

Active plaza is in highly visible location that supports existing retail concentration.

Four art tiled benches maintain their locations, and are showcased more as focal points with the new circulation patterns.

A north-south promenade showcasing the history photo tiles and remnant masonry pieces become a major attraction of the park.

CONS:

Slight relocation of center art piece deviates from original concept of artists.

Lawn space divided - less opportunity for bigger recreational and/or programmatic activities.

SHORT TERM CONCEPT

The long term planning and design of the park should not preclude some immediate and temporary actions that can bring some positive uses and activities to the park sooner than later.

One of the major items workshop participants desired was a dog park/run. The numerous dog owners in the area currently use the park, but merely to walk their dogs around the periphery of the park or to use the grass as a bathroom.

Sectioning off a piece of one of the grass triangles, with chain link or nicer fencing (the west quadrant) would instantly provide a defined place for them. Adding benches, especially under the existing trees, and relocating a consistently-filled doggie bag dispenser in the dog park/run would enhance the area and create a place, not only for dogs, but dog owners to meet and socialize with one another. (See Appendix for dog park/run information.)

With a defined area for dogs, hopefully, the bathroom issues on the grass will start to go away. Adding benches underneath existing trees along the perimeter of the other grass areas could also help start make the grass areas much more comfortable to be on.

A play structure could also be added in the short term, possibly next to the dog park/run. This would provide a place for families with kids, complement the dog park/run and be easy to move to another location in the park or elsewhere in the future.

IV. NEXT STEPS

Market Square Park's revitalization, including the above recommendations, can only happen if the community and its resources work together. Based on our interviews, workshops, and analysis, certain steps should be taken to facilitate implementation. We suggest reaching out to potential partners to help achieve select improvements and conducting additional research to increase feasibility of the vision.

IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS

At the suggestion of stakeholders and with subsequent discussion regarding partnerships, the following organizations and local talent should be contacted:

- Arboretum, Forestry group, Garden Clubs, and the like can plant and manage the gardens and flower beds.
- Arts organizations, such as the Art Alliance and Diverse Works, and the historic and preservation organizations, such as the Greater Houston Preservation Alliance, Historic Preservation Society, and Historical Advisory Committee, can be involved in the creation of art works in and around the park.
- Buffalo Bayou Partnership and organizations of nearby downtown parks and plazas, such as Sesquicentennial Park, Allen's Landing, Discovery Green, and Jones Plaza, can collaborate to organize a well-balanced events calendar and to draw park visitors to each and every other park.
- Chefs/culinary community can help drive the branding of a culinary district and to potentially operate the park's food kiosk.
- Houston Parks and Recreation Department can increase maintenance, security, and landscaping of the park.
- Houston Convention and Entertainment Facilities Department can provide increased seating and increased amenities maintenance.
- Mayor's Office of Special Events can help produce events, such as a film series and small performances in coordination with larger festivals.
- Central Houston, Houston Downtown Management District, Houston Downtown Alliance, Corporations, such as Chase Bank, Bank of America, and others can assist in the implementation of the revitalization and the development of neighboring sites.
- Coalition for the Homeless, Christ Church and others can provide guidance and increased promotion of their services to the stragglers in Market Square Park.
- Cotswold Project can extend their streetscape project through and past Market Square connecting it to other destinations in downtown Houston and its Historic District. It can be a partner in the plans to create a shadier, cooler pedestrian environment for downtown Houston.
- Developers can help invigorate the edges of Market Square, not only through ground-floor retail, but also through design that is sensitive to the small-scale, open space nature of Market Square Park.
- Discover Houston tours can offer a Historic District tour that has a stop at Market Square highlighting its many milestones.
- Houston Public Library can operate a public library kiosk in the plazas of the park.
- Junior League, Local Merchants and businesses, and/or a residents "Friends of Market Square" group can lead or form volunteer groups to help steward the park through maintenance, manage-

ment, and marketing.

- Local Schools, such as University of Houston Downtown, and underground theater troupes can be asked to organize and perform small acts within the park.
- Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County, Texas (METRO) can provide bike racks along the park increasing usability and accessibility of the bike network and Market Square Park.
- Museums and the Theatre District can be partners in the effort to link cultural destinations in downtown Houston.
- Urban Harvest and Farmers Market operators can be asked to help organize a Farmers Market in Market Square Park contingent on the results of additional research.
- Residents using the dog run can form a Friends Group to manage upkeep and maintenance of the dog run. It could also serve as a liaison of the city so that requests and necessities are handled efficiently.
- American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) can organize animal/pet adoption events at the park.

ADDITIONAL RESEARCH NEEDED

Aside from contacting the above potential partners, additional steps are necessary in order to implement some of the recommendations. The following research is needed in order to bring the community's vision to fruition:

- Food vending ordinances or restrictions must be learned, as currently it is unclear whether food vendors or a food establishment can be located in the park. If it is permissible, the retail niche for the park must be determined. Operating a café/kiosk

will only succeed if there is an audience and niche for it.

- Feasibility of farmers market should be studied and followed. Do local farmers have the capacity to run another farmers market? Is there enough of a critical mass to justify having a farmers market?
- Dog run specifications appropriate for Market Square need to be decided. What size and design for the dog run is appropriate? How would it be managed? (See appendix for dog run case studies.)
- Canopies and covered walkway options must be investigated. What types of covered walkways exist connecting destinations in a city's downtown? What types exist in cities with similar climates to Houston? Which were successful?
- Agreements guiding development of adjacent properties should be explored. Can guidelines be made and their acceptance encouraged amongst developers? What agreement can be made with adjacent developments to improve facades and to develop certain uses, e.g. retail, hospitality, mixed-use residential?
- Potential managing and volunteer groups and partners should be examined. Outreach should be conducted to bring more residents, artists groups, schools, downtown Houston management entities on board. Who can help implement, manage, and corral efforts and energy surrounding Market Square?

V. CONCLUSION

Houston Market Square Park can become the park that connects key attractions of downtown Houston. At the same time, it should be an anchor and oasis for the developing downtown residential and retail community. These communities, along with the city and downtown organizations, are the potential leaders to drive the implementation of the park's improvements. These constituents can be built into a group of supporters and volunteers by presenting to them the ideas and the vision created in the placemaking process and showing them the commitment of Main Street/Market Square Redevelopment Authority (MSRA) and Reinvestment Zone Number Three (TIRZ 3). With the momentum of all these stakeholders, Market Square will blossom into the hub that it once was for historic downtown Houston.



APPENDIX A

Dog runs are more than just places for your dogs to run around off-lease, and more than just places for your dogs to go to the bathroom. They are communities for dogs and their owners. It is a place for them to socialize, play, and participate in their own events, much like how humans get to socialize, play, and participate in events in parks. Most dog runs are operated by a member organization. Maintenance, upkeep, and event programming are organized by members (dog owners) and are funded usually by donations.

This appendix provides case studies on a few dog runs in New York City, and also provides a sample membership application for a more restrictive dog run, sample dog run rules, the executive summaries of a couple dog run studies and policies, and a news article on potential dog run issues.

For information on dog runs in Houston, TX, please visit the following websites:

<http://www.houstondogpark.org/>

<http://www.houstontx.gov/parks/DogParks.html>

<http://www.ecoanimal.com/dogfun/texas.html>

The First Run, Tompkins Square

LOCATION

North East corner of Tompkins Square, manhattan, ny

AFFILIATE PARK

Tompkins Square Park

SIZE

approx. 9,400 sq. ft.

AGE

Begun informally in mid 1980s

HOURS

Dawn to Dusk

STAFF

Maintained entirely by volunteers, “the Friends of First Run”

MAINTENANCE SCHEDULE

Occasional clean-ups, ongoing maintenance tasks

YEARLY BUDGET

Currently attempting to raise \$50 thousand towards extensive renovations

NUMBER OF USERS

At least 30 dogs/owners during a 6pm week-day visit

CONTACT

Large Dog Run:
garrettrosso@nyc.rr.com

Small Dog Run:
smalldogrunfolks-owner@yahoogroups.com

The First Run was the first dog run established in Manhattan. While it is well used, the park’s current facilities are in need of renovation. The current surface is wood chips, which is problematic from both an economic and environmental standpoint. With renovations, the surface will be replaced with decomposed granite, which does not choke the trees, decompose, carry disease, or necessitate frequent replacement. Strong points of the run include ample seating (including picnic tables) and shade, a water spigot, and two separate runs for small and large dogs (under and over 23 lbs.).

There are rakes for maintenance and numerous trash receptacles. While poop bags appeared scattered on several benches, no centralized dispenser was apparent. Uses adjacent to the park include basketball courts and a playground, a plaza, and greens. There are numerous events related to the dog run, such as an annual Halloween dog parade, obedience training classes, an annual dog prom, and a summer lecture series on canine-related issues.



Union Square Dog Run

LOCATION

15th Street & Union Square West-
manhattan, ny

AFFILIATE PARK

Union Square

SIZE

7,000 sq. ft.

AGE

Begun in 1996, renovations com-
pleted in 2003

HOURS

6am-Midnight

STAFF

Friends of Union Square Dog Run
Volunteer on sign-up board for half-
hour shifts.

MAINTENANCE SCHEDULE

Monthly gravel raking and clean-up.

YEARLY BUDGET

Over \$2,500

NUMBER OF USERS

4,000 dogs/ month

CONTACT

Friends of Union Square Dog Run
902 Broadway, Suite 1603
New York, NY 10010

Dog Run

udognyc@hotmail.com

Maintained by a core of dedicated volunteers, the Union Square Dog Run is a clean, well-used space, despite its modest size. Seating lines the circumference of the run, with benches credited to donors who have contributed to Friends of Union Square Dog Run. Trees at each end provide ample shade on a hot day. The gravel surface of the run is clean, and owners pick up after their dogs immediately. There are poop bag dispensers at several points along the high fence (about 4.5 ft.) A wrought iron, double gate offers added security, so that new dogs and owners may enter without worry of other dogs escaping. There is also a water spigot, so that dogs may drink, and trash bins for poop disposal. Finally, a message board keeps owners and volunteers up-to date, while a small white board acts as a sign-up sheet for daily, half-hour maintenance shifts.



“George’s” Dog Run (Washington Square Dog Run)

LOCATION

Corner of W. 4th street and MacDougal
Manhattan, NY

AFFILIATE PARK

Washington Square Park

STATS

Approx. 12,000 sq. ft.

Built in ?

Hours: dawn till dusk seven days a week

MAINTENANCE

NYC Parks and Recreation and
Washington Park Dog Run Association

FUDNING

Donation only to Dog Run Association

NUMBER OF USERS

15-20 dogs at any given moment

LAYOUT

- 1 double-gated entrance/exit, 2 closed
- Pea-gravel surface, 4 ft fence around
- Flowers, vines, and other plants
- Trees: oak, ginko, beech; make shade
- Trees/benches around edges
- Open space in middle of park
- Clearly posted rules on tree
- Poop receptacles and tools in corners

CONTACT

Washington Square Dog Run Association
7 E. 8th street, Suite 341

New York, NY 10003

(212) 560-4345

groups.yahoo.com/group/wsdogrun/

[http://www.pawspot.com/park-profile/
v/park/12/](http://www.pawspot.com/park-profile/v/park/12/)

Top Right: Plenty of gravel and room for the dogs.

Middle Left: Rules of the Run sign.

Bottom Left: Room for even large dogs to play.

Bottom Right: Flowers and plants surround the run to add aesthetics to the layout and design.



RULES OF THE RUN

1. For the safety of your children, and our dogs, no children under the age of 12 are allowed.
2. Poop-scoop law is in effect every where in the city.
3. Dogs must have all shots and tags.
4. No spike or pinch collars.
5. No aggressive dogs.
6. No female dogs in heat.
7. No food or glass bottles.
8. No running - of people, that is.
9. No dogs left unattended in the Dog Run.

Enforced by the NYC Parks Department.



“George’s” Dog Run (Washington Square Dog Run)



AMENITIES

- Plaques on round benches – labels for major donors we believe
- Leash rack near gate
- Hose and communal water dish
- Benches – 16 free standing and 3 around trees
- Cans on back of all benches – treats? Poop bags?
- Signage, community bulletin board, post with lost dog flyers
- Trash cans and trowels, shovels – 2 locations, for dog poop.
- Bathrooms in pavilion nearby
- Light from buildings aimed at the run
- Food and drink at carts throughout and around park
- Music, artists, performances that owners can enjoy while at the run

USES

- 9:00am – 12 ppl, 16 dogs
- 9:15am – 10 ppl, 14 dogs
- Half of benches in use at all times
- People sitting with coffee and papers, talking on benches
- Cell phone usage, PDA, blackberry, etc.
- Socializing with others, either on benches or standing in middle of the run
- Socializing/petting other dogs, not just their own pet
- Sonitoring interactions between dogs
- Quiet environment – humans moving slowly
- Man photographs other dogs



Above: Lease holder near entrance gate.

Middle Left: Dog Run bulletin board.

Right: Lost Dog posters and communication on nearby lamp post.

Bottom Left: Cans on back of benches, use still unknown.

“George’s” Dog Run (Washington Square Dog Run)

SKETCH AND LAYOUT

Right: Dog Run location in relation to rest of Washington Square Park and its landmarks.



Below: Sketch of dog run with amenities and landmarks labeled.



MERCER-HOUSTON DOG RUN ASSOCIATION, INC.

532 LaGuardia Place #178, New York NY 10012 www.mhdra.org

INSTRUCTIONS FOR APPLICANTS

Dear Applicant,

To complete your membership application please follow the steps below.

- 1) Complete the household member release agreement (p. 1) with all signatures () ;
- 2) Complete the membership application form (p. 2) [info on children and dog(s)];
- 3) Provide clear vaccination records, from a licensed veterinarian, showing proof of current Distemper, Parvo, and Rabies vaccinations (must be a copy or original of the veterinarian certificate of vaccination); [NOTE: If titers were used to assess immune response, we must have a copy of the titer results for our records.]
- 4) Complete the New Member Questionnaire (p. 3);
- 5) Provide a photocopy of your dog's (dogs') New York City (or other locality) license;
- 6) Write a check for annual dues of \$50.00 made out to The Mercer-Houston Dog Run Association [Seniors (62 or older) \$25.00]; and
- 7) Complete the Dog Walker release form with appropriate signatures () (p. 4, if applicable).

NOTE: The membership year is from January 1 through December 31. If you are applying late in the year, dues are not prorated.

Important: Incomplete applications will be returned, thus delaying your access to the run. Even though your dog may be a member, no one may bring your dog into the run unless he or she has signed the membership application or a dog walker's release form. Additional forms can be found on the web site, if required, at www.mhdra.org.

Please read the enclosed rules (last page) of the run as they are strongly adhered to by the dog run community and all members are expected to know the rules. These rules and the governing bylaws may be read on the website. If there are further questions please email the run at info@mhdra.org or mail us at the address above. When your application is complete and approved by the Board, you will be contacted to schedule an orientation to the run. We are looking forward to seeing you and your dog again in our clean, safe, and fun space!
The Board of the Mercer-Houston Dog Run Association

NEW MEMBER APPLICATION

OWNER INFORMATION (Print clearly, difficult to read applications will be returned)

Owner name:
Street:
Apartment:
City, State, Zip:
Home phone:
Work phone:
Email:
Cell phone:

On the lines below, print the names and get the signature of any household member (including the person completing this application) who you are registering to bring your dog(s) to the run. These registered household members must be 16 years or older. Non-household members, whether hired for pay or not, who you are authorizing to bring your dog to the run, must sign the Professional Dog Walker release agreement.

RELEASE AGREEMENT

I hereby fully and completely release and discharge the Mercer-Houston Dog Run Association, Inc., and any officer, employee, agent, or representative thereof, for any liability or injury or damages to my person or property or injury resulting in death while upon the dog run or any other facilities of the Mercer-Houston Dog Run Association, Inc., whether caused by negligence or otherwise, and agree that neither I nor my heirs, executors, administrators, or assigns will ever institute suit or action at law or equity for any such relief.

I further agree to release the Association against any and all losses, including but not limited to judgments, settlements, or claims, expenses, and attorney's fees, resulting from any claims, proceedings, lawsuits, by any member of my family or any person accompanying me to the dog run or any person caring for my dog(s).

I further agree to release the Association against any and all losses, including but not limited to judgments, settlements of claims, expenses, and attorney's fees, resulting from any claims, proceedings, lawsuits, or government enforcements or prosecution, arising out of my acts or any acts of any person or dog accompanying me to the dog run, or the acts of any person or dog to whom I permit access to the dog run.

By signing below, I state: 1) that I have read and agreed to the Release Agreement above ; 2) that I have read the Rules of the Run and the Bylaws of the Association, and agree to abide by said Rules and Bylaws; and 3) that I will not bring anyone under the age of 12 into the run.

Date: _____
 Name: _____ Signature: _____
 Name: _____ Signature: _____
 Name: _____ Signature: _____
 Name: _____ Signature: _____

Due to insurance requirements, children under 12 are not permitted in the run under any circumstance. Children between 12 and 16 can enter the run when accompanied by one of the registered, adult (18 or older) household members listed above.

Does your household have children under the age of 16? Yes No
 If yes, print their names and birth dates below:

Name Birthdate
 1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____
 4. _____

DOG INFORMATION

1. Dog name: _____ Male / Female (Circle one) Neutered / Non-neutered (Circle one)
 Breed : _____ Color: _____
 Veterinary documents attached.
 Photocopy of dog license or license application attached.
2. Dog name: _____ Male / Female (Circle one) Neutered / Non-neutered (Circle one)
 Breed : _____ Color: _____
 Veterinary documents attached.
 Photocopy of dog license or license application attached.
3. Dog name: _____ Male / Female (Circle one) Neutered / Non-neutered (Circle one)
 Breed : _____ Color: _____
 Veterinary documents attached.
 Photocopy of dog license or license application attached.

New Member Questionnaire

Owner's name:

Dog's name:

Please answer all questions honestly and accurately. If you are applying for more than one dog, please submit a separate New Member Questionnaire for each dog.

Note: Your application will not be considered unless this form is filled out in its entirety.

1. How many times a week are you planning to use the dog run? _____

2. Does your dog get along well with other dogs? (Circle one) Yes No
If you answered no , please explain (i.e. possessive of toys, etc.):

3. Has your dog ever bitten a human being for any reason? (Circle one) Yes No
If you answered yes , please explain:

4. Has your dog ever injured another dog in a fight? (Circle one) Yes No
If you answered yes , please explain:

5. Has your dog ever had a problem in any other dog run? (Circle one) Yes No
If you answered yes , please explain:

6. Have you ever consulted a behaviorist for your dog? (Circle one) Yes No
If you answered yes , please explain:

7. The dog run is a cooperative organization and relies your volunteer participation in addition to your everyday responsibility to keep the run clean and safe. Please indicate how you are willing to volunteer (check all that apply):
Daily maintenance Quarterly clean-up New member orientations
Tennis ball acquisition Board membership Mailings Other (please describe)

RULES OF THE RUN

Please read the dog run rules. All members must do their part to ensure that the run remains a safe, clean place; familiarity with these rules is the basic requirement for that condition. Everyone who is registered to bring your dog(s) to the run must be familiar with these rules. If you use a dog walker, he or she must be familiar with the rules and must complete the Professional Dog Walker Information And Release Form before bringing your dog(s) to the run.

1. Do not bring non-member dogs in the run. Violation of this rule results in a 30-day suspension of membership; a second offense will result in a 6-month suspension. All member dogs should have the MHDR tag on their collar/leash.
2. Do not leave both gates open at the same time. Leash and unleash in the entry area take off prong and/or choke collars before entering the run.
3. No children under 12 in the run under any circumstances. No children between 12 and 16 without parent or other adult registered household member. You will receive a 1-year suspension of your membership for violation of these rules.
4. First priority in the run is to watch your dog at all times so you can clean up after him or her and to prevent problems with other dogs or people. Therefore, do not use cell phones, socialize, read or sunbathe unless you are able to watch your dog carefully.
5. No tolerance of aggression. If your dog gets in a fight, it is your responsibility to break it up. If your dog gets into fights frequently, then you must use the run during low use times.
6. The 15-minute rule must be followed when invoked by a member. It applies when there are known problems between individual dogs.
7. Do not pick up small dogs in the run. Picking up a dog puts them in a dominant position in relation to dogs on the ground can aggravate a face-off or fight between dogs. It also exposes their stomachs to dogs on the ground (that is, they are vulnerable).
8. One person (member or registered dog walker) can bring in no more than 3 member dogs at one time.
9. If you use a dog walker, remember that when the dog walker is in the run, it is the same as if you are in the run. You are responsible for making sure your dog walker knows and follows the rules. An infraction by the walker could effect your membership privileges.
10. Do not use the run to get your dog to eliminate. But if your dog does go while in the run, clean up immediately after your dog pees or poops. Bring your own paper or plastic bags for poop clean-up.
11. Do not bring food of any kind into the run applies to treats for dogs or human food.
12. Watch your dog if it jumps on people, especially older members of the run.
13. Personal dog toys are not allowed.
14. No bitches in heat are allowed in the run.
15. If your dog is sick (e.g., vomiting, diarrhea, dragging its bottom), do not bring it to the run until healthy.

16. Grooming and/or bathing of dogs are not allowed at the run.
17. No roller blades or skates, bicycles or skateboards are allowed in the run at any time.
18. If you add a dog to your household during the year, you must supply the run with a copy of his or her shots record (including rabies) and city license prior to using the run.

If you have questions or suggestions, please ask a Board member or contact the run at info@mhdra.org.

LEICHHARDT COUNCIL

ACCESS TO OPEN SPACE STRATEGY FOR DOGS

Access to Open Space Strategy

Aims: The aims of the Open Space Access Strategy are:

- To develop a process to determine appropriate levels of access to open space areas for dogs.
- To provide recommendations concerning access to open space for dogs to major open space areas within the LGA to be implemented through this Plan and Council's open space planning processes.

Principles: The following principles have been adopted to assess the level of access to open space for dogs:

1. Dog owners are a significant part of the community and should have equivalent levels of access to open space areas in the LGA where this access will not unreasonably impact on the use of these areas by other persons.
2. There are statutory and practical constraints to the level of access to open space areas for dogs, which need to be addressed in any plan.
3. Recommended provisions concerning access to open space need to be easily understood and implemented.

Methodology: The following methodology has been used to develop the strategy:

1. Establish a list of constraints to access to open space areas by dogs.
2. Apply these to the major open space areas throughout the LGA.
3. Prepare maps based on this assessment.
4. Review distribution of open space areas throughout the LGA identifying areas that are over or under-supplied.
5. Identify works required to increase access and separate these areas from conflicting uses.
6. Consider areas that have potential as dedicated 'free-run' areas. Consider locating these in areas that are under supplied or reduce off-lead areas in over supplied areas if appropriate. Access to Open Space Strategy for Dogs

The Strategy: The strategy consists of 2 parts:

- Part A – Developing a list of criteria identifying constraints and opportunities for access by dogs to significant open space areas within the LGA.
- Part B – Strategic assessment of specific open space areas and LGA wide assessment.

For Entire Document, go to:

<http://www.leichhardt.nsw.gov.au/downloaddocument.aspx?DocumentID=1243>

GUIDELINES FOR ESTABLISHMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF SUCCESSFUL OFF-LEASH DOG EXERCISE AREAS

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GUIDELINES FOR ESTABLISHMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF SUCCESSFUL OFF-LEASH DOG EXERCISE AREAS

General Comments

There are many perspectives and types of information that need to be taken into consideration when developing and managing off-leash dog parks that are successful in terms of harmony with the surrounding community as well as with the park users. Community support and involvement is integral to this process, especially in promoting a harmonious relationship with the neighbors of the park. Maintenance, along with the proper selection of a location, is essential in the continued success of a park. Indeed, our research, based on a study of 17 off-leash dog parks, profiles maintenance of the park as probably the single most important determinant of success. Although our research did not show a statistically significant correlation of dog park club involvement and perceived success, the correlation was positive. Managers of parks repeatedly stressed the importance of an active dog park club, and we strongly recommend that these clubs be involved in the planning process, as well as helping to maintain an ongoing relationship with the management of the park. The lines of communication must remain open between the municipality or organization managing the park and the community to

promptly address actual or perceived problems, and to profile the benefits that a dog park can bring to the community. Under various headings below, we describe suggested guidelines that should be considered in establishing and managing an off-leash dog park. The specific recommendations are a reflection of conclusions from data analysis of our study of off-leash dog parks, as well as a reflection of repeated comments from interviewed managers and park users.

The topics discussed first involve the primary concerns expressed by community officials, namely safety to humans and other dogs, noise generated from a concentration of barking dogs, and sanitation problems from the build-up of feces. As it turns out, these concerns do not represent the issues deserving of the most attention, because problems in these areas appear to be relatively infrequent, at least in the dog parks that we visited.

Some community decision-makers and park managers mentioned a concern about possible disturbance of wildlife or native plants. Our study focused mainly on urban parks and disturbance of wildlife in these parks did not appear to be an issue. This topic could be addressed in a study that includes more parks established within natural reserves or nature areas.

Finally, in the way of general comments, we strongly encourage communities seriously considering establishing or modifying a dog park to retain a professional consultant knowledgeable in helping to prevent and resolve problems or concerns about off-leash parks.

For Entire Document, go to:

http://www.vmeth.ucdavis.edu/home/beh/Dog_Park/Dog_Park_Management_Guidelines.pdf