

5 Operations and Partnerships

Operations

Partnerships and How to Achieve the Vision for Downtown Parks

Programming Models

Case Studies

OPERATIONS AND PARTNERSHIPS

INTRODUCTION

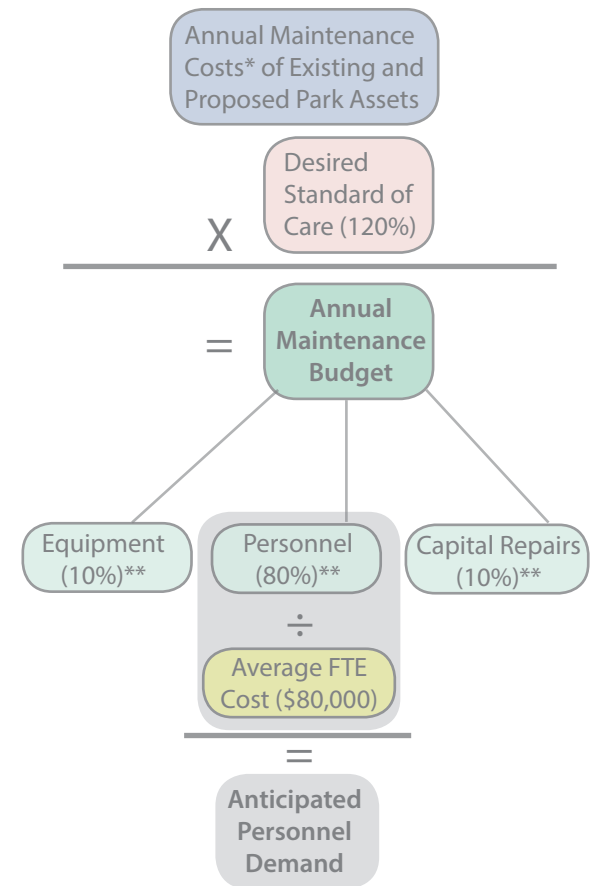
Unlike other service areas, the Downtown Service Area Master Plan proposes significant new neighborhood park amenities to accommodate the growing population in areas that were previously industrial. Therefore, this chapter is structured differently. In addition to projecting costs of existing parks, it works to project costs associated with the addition of new facilities. In addition, it suggests potential models for many aspects of operations, including programming, maintenance, and partnerships.

OPERATIONS

The quality of park operations is equal in importance to park design. The MPRB is establishing an operating structure for the park system based on geographic service areas within the city. In conjunction, budgeting practices are being altered to accurately reflect revenues and expenditures on the basis of service areas. Creating master plans for each service area of the city is a critical step in the overall structure because the master plan establishes a design vision, investment framework, and partnership model that form the basis for sound operations.

The operating structure for the Downtown Service Area is approached somewhat differently than with others. The main reason is that downtown is an emerging mixed-use neighborhood with higher density, greater range of land uses, a wider audience (resident, worker and visitor), and a demand for brand new park spaces. These factors led to the “Constellation Model” described earlier in the master plan. It led to park programs and designs that are approached differently than those seen through much of the rest of the city. And, importantly, it is expected to compel an operating model that accommodates greater crowds, more events, unique partnerships, and more integration between parks and surrounding urban spaces.

The term “operations” refers to the full spectrum of ongoing demands of a park including maintenance, partnerships, programming, public safety, resource consumption/conservation, capital repairs, and a financial model. Like other elements of the master plan, this chapter depicts a preferred future for each aspect of operations and outlines actions necessary to reach that future.



* Based on present value of money.

**Guidelines based on industry standards.

Figure 1.53 Basic Equation for a Maintenance Budget

Maintenance

Maintenance is critical for two primary reasons. First, robust maintenance maximizes the longevity of investments in park assets. A tennis court, for example, where pavement cracks are filled, topcoat is regularly redone, and fencing is kept stretched and repaired will last years longer than one left to natural forces of weather, use, and time. Second, the standard of care achieved through maintenance directly impacts the amount of use and the quality of experience. People are inclined to extend their stays and revisit well-cared-for parks. Beyond these primary factors, the standard of care demonstrated in a park will cause a cascade of results (positive or negative).

Because a master plan is intended to depict a preferred future and the actions necessary to reach it, the basic equation for maintenance should solve for three things (Figure 1.53):

- » Desired standard of care.
- » Ongoing personnel, equipment, and capital repair resources needed to match the desired standard of care with the park features/amenities/assets proposed in the master plan.
- » Translation of personnel, equipment, and repair resources into an annual operating budget.

To express the information as coherently as possible, this master plan uses important data gathered through the South Service Area Master Plan that quantifies annual maintenance costs by park asset (Figure 1.54).

Asset Type	Asset Name	Current Quantity	Park Plan Quantity	Change in Quantity	Units	Annual Operating Cost Per Unit	Change in Annual Operating Cost
Buildings	Recreation Center	12,379	16,879	4,500	sf	\$ -	\$ -
	Bandshell	572	3,572	3,000	sf	\$ 10	\$ 30,000
	Maintenance Building	504	1,704	1,200	sf	\$ 5	\$ 6,000
	Picnic Shelter	112	118	6	capacity	\$ 30	\$ 180
	Booth	0	1	1	each	\$ 2,000	\$ 2,000
	Kiosk	1	4	3	each	\$ 500	\$ 1,500
Fields	Premier Field - Artificial	1	1	0	each	\$ 5,000	\$ -
Play	Playground	5	10	5	each	\$ 7,500	\$ 33,750
	Adventure Play	0	1	1	each	\$ 7,500	\$ 7,500
	Adult Fitness	0	1	1	each	\$ 2,500	\$ 2,500
	Skate Park - Neighborhood	1	2.0	1.0	each	\$ 7,500	\$ 7,500
	Off-Leash Recreation Area	0	1.5	1.5	each	\$ 15,000	\$ 22,500
Courts	Basketball	2	3	1	each	\$ 1,500	\$ 1,500
	Half-Court Basketball	2	1	-1	each	\$ 1,000	\$ (1,000)
	Horseshoes	12	6	-6	each	\$ 100	\$ (600)
	Shuffleboard	8	8	0	each	\$ 50	\$ -
	Tennis	4	4	0	each	\$ 1,500	\$ -
	Bocce	0	5	5	each	\$ 50	\$ 250
	Multi-Sport Court	0	1	1	each	\$ 1,500	\$ 1,500
Winter	Refrigerated Rink	0	1	1	each	\$ 80,000	\$ 80,000
Aquatics	Wading Pool	2	1	-1	each	\$ 15,000	\$ (15,000)
	Splash Pad	1	2	1	each	\$ 35,000	\$ 35,000
Features	Decorative Fountain	2	3	1	each	\$ 80,000	\$ 80,000
	Public Art	2	14	12	each	\$ 1,500	\$ 18,000
Circulation & Gathering	Pedestrian Path	115,660	146,420	30,760	sf	\$ 0.05	\$ 1,538
	Bike Path	0	3,358	3,358	sf	\$ 0.20	\$ 672
	Multi-Use Path	132,822	139,065	6,243	sf	\$ 0.20	\$ 1,249
	Service Area Paving	5,000	5,000	0	sf	\$ 0.20	\$ -
	Visitor Parking Lot	2	0	-2	stall	\$ 40	\$ (80)
	Stage (open air)	1	1	0	each	\$ 1,000	\$ -
	Ped/Bike Bridge	1	1	0	each	\$ 500	\$ -
	Dock	1	1	0	each	\$ 3,000	\$ -
	Stairs	20	66	46	step	\$ 200	\$ 9,200
	Event Lawn	0	0.6	0.6	ac	\$ 20,000	\$ 12,000
	Plaza	15,000	41,504	26,504	sf	\$ 1	\$ 26,504
	Seating/Picnic Furnishings	73	296	223	each	\$ 25	\$ 5,575
Furnishings	Drinking Fountain	2	10	8	each	\$ 1,500	\$ 12,000
	Performance/Event Electronics	2	2	0	ls	\$ 2,000	\$ -
	Bike Rack	50	240	190	loop	\$ 20	\$ 3,800
	Lighting	69	188	119	each	\$ 200	\$ 23,800
	Wayfinding/Signage	0	8	8	ls	\$ 2,000	\$ 16,000
	Receptacles	0	8	8	each	\$ 1,000	\$ 8,000
Landscape	Lawn - Unirrigated	21.49	22.43	0.94	ac	\$ 4,500	\$ 4,238
	Lawn - Irrigated	0	0	0	ac	\$ 10,000	\$ 3,100
	Trees	420	1,102	682	each	\$ 25	\$ 17,050
	Tended Landscaping	3	3.3	0.3	ac	\$ 20,000	\$ 5,840
	Tended Garden	0.5	2.25	1.75	ac	\$ 120,000	\$ 209,631
	Shoreline	4,000	4,000	0	lf	\$ 2	\$ -
	Naturalized Landscape	0	0.80	0.80	ac	\$ 1,500	\$ 1,200
	Urban Agriculture Area	0	0.17	0.17	ac	\$ 15,000	\$ 2,479
	Lake/Pond	1	1	0	each	\$ 10,000	\$ -

Figure 1.54 Annual Operations Estimate for the Downtown Service Area

Curated Programming

The current model for events and activities in Downtown Minneapolis, and within park sites, is largely focused on large scale and infrequent events. Certain types of events, particularly festivals and competitive or fun runs/walks/rides, gravitate toward downtown due to the central, high-visibility location. These large scale events are significant, both economically and in their impacts to the growing community of residents downtown. Diversifying the set of activities that happen in the downtown area should be a targeted exercise in moving beyond the model of big, city- or region-wide events to smaller more reliable programmed activities.

Moving toward this model will require not only more programming, but an expanded approach to generating it. In addition to waiting for event applications (which will typically be for larger events and programs), the MPRB would either staff or partner to develop a “curator” role. This curator would be responsible to identify activities and small events that contribute to the aims of this Master Plan, developing opportunities to serve the different motivations for downtown park use across the Downtown Service Area.

The constellations provide a way to unify the identity of several park and park-like sites and to emphasize the connections (physical and thematic) between them. The ideas in Figure 1.55 are examples of how the context of each constellation and the sites within it could be used to identify small scale programs that could activate sites within each constellation.

Public Safety

There are many indirect ways to establish public safety in parks including connections to surrounding neighborhoods, design strategies, and running programs and facilities that draw people – all elements that are hopefully well addressed in this plan. Because the Downtown Service Area is the part of the city where the number of parks and park visitors are expected to grow substantially, the need for direct public safety or policing is also anticipated to grow. The MPRB Park Police currently cover parks in the Downtown Service Area by sharing officer and patrol needs with surrounding service areas. However, resources are stretched thin and as the number of park events and visitors has grown and will continue to grow, it is recommended that officers and patrols are dedicated to the Downtown Service Area just like other service areas across the city. Through

Constellation	Context or Theme	Program Ideas
ELLIOT	Health and Medicine	Yoga in the park, Themed movies (Patch Adams, Awakenings)
	Neighborhood History	Elders speak about local history
GATEWAY/MILLS	Industrial Past	History talks
	River Life	Loop walks
	Bike Commuter Route	Breakfast in the park, End of week happy hour music
LORING	Art and music	Plein air painting, busking program
	Bike Commuter Route	Breakfast in the park, End of week happy hour music
NORTH LOOP	Warehouse to Residential/Office	Outdoor coffee shop/ gatherings
	Underground River	Temporary art that traces the path of the river
COMMONS	Active Urban	Celebrations, concerts, art, activities
TWINS	Baseball/Sports	“Cheap Seats” picnic, Skateboard Skills Demonstrations

Figure 1.55 Curated Programming Ideas by Constellation

consultation with Park Police representatives, it is anticipated that with current service levels, two FTEs in the officer ranks and three park patrol FTEs will be needed for the Downtown Service Area.

Resource Conservation & Energy Generation

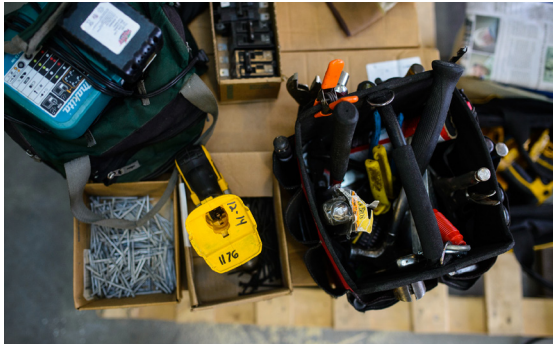
Through efforts like solar arrays, energy efficient facilities, composting, recycling, and altered procedures to reduce consumption, the MPRB has demonstrated tremendous conservation leadership. Efforts like the recently installed solar array and high-efficiency equipment in the Parade Ice Garden can have substantial impacts on operational expenses as well as carbon footprint. Opportunities for reduced consumption (especially garbage and water use) and renewable energy generation should be continually evaluated as components of park operations.

Capital Repair

When financial resources are tight and tough choices have to be made about how to spend limited dollars, maintenance that can be deferred is often viewed as the best of bad options. The danger in this situation if it continues for years is that the assets upon which the visitor experience is established fall into disrepair and a vicious cycle of asset decline, “emergency” capital replacement, lack of repair, and decline becomes the norm. This cycle can be devastating to a parks organization and public trust. It can also be a challenging hole to dig out of.

Savings for routine capital repairs (things like replacement of building roofs and mechanical equipment, broken pavement, damaged equipment, etc.) needs to be part of the operating model of a park and in this case, a service area. For this reason, the service area finance model suggests annual contribution to a capital sinking fund where funds would be built up as reserves for capital repair needs. The finance model suggests an annual contribution of 0.75% of the initial capital investment cost. There will inevitably be lean years when contributions must be diminished. This is okay as long as it doesn’t become the norm.





Financial Model

As a general guideline, the full spectrum of annual operating costs range between 5% and 15% of the park's initial development cost. Some parks with unique assets may require extra-ordinary development expenses that push the operating costs to the lower end of the range while some parks with lower development costs will accommodate large crowds that push operating costs to the high end of the range. In most cases, budgeting below the range will result in premature decline of park assets and/or an inadequate customer experience.

As a working tool in determining annual budgets, an annual finance model has been created for the Downtown Service Area. The model provides a platform from which to project the full range of operating expenses and revenues. It incorporates the knowledge and experience of past MPRB practices in combination with new innovations to be tested. This is an internal model that will be used by staff to help predict ongoing costs.

PARTNERSHIPS - HOW MIGHT THE VISION FOR DOWNTOWN PARKS BE ACHIEVED?

This master plan sketches the downtown's constellations of parks, recognizing the MPRB can only deal with parts of the picture. The plan underscores the value of an urban experience bolstered by a robust public realm experience that includes parks and park-like spaces, especially one where each is considered a part of the whole—making it important that the constellations are sketched over the fabric of downtown. Making each constellation real is more difficult than the sketch. It's a process that relies on opportunity, coordination, and partnering. As each piece is ready for more studied review, it should be considered relative to its constellation. When each piece is programmed with activities intended to breathe life into its spaces, those programs might be best aligned with what happens in nearby spaces—to enrich, not duplicate experiences. Where each piece might evolve independently, partnerships must be considered as a way of expanding prospects for a more satisfying public realm in downtown. To assist in future development of this model, the following section provides examples and ideas for future discussion.

Many agencies tap into the capacity of partner organizations to assist in the enhanced management and programming needs of urban parks. The flexibility and intensive focus necessary to effectively manage and program vibrant downtown spaces is often beyond the means of large park agencies responsible for balancing resources across many park sites. This fact led to experimentation by urban park agencies across the country in new models of management and operations of individual and clusters of parks. There are six primary models for operating this type of programming:

Independent Operation

An independent operation is when a park agency maintains and programs only the property it owns.

Joint-Use or Other Inter-Governmental Agreements

With a joint-use agreement, there is a sharing of property (often two-way) between public agencies where the responsibilities are clearly delineated in an agreement. This is most common with parks and school districts where both offer programming and maintenance services and each benefit from using the other's facilities/property.

Contracted Services

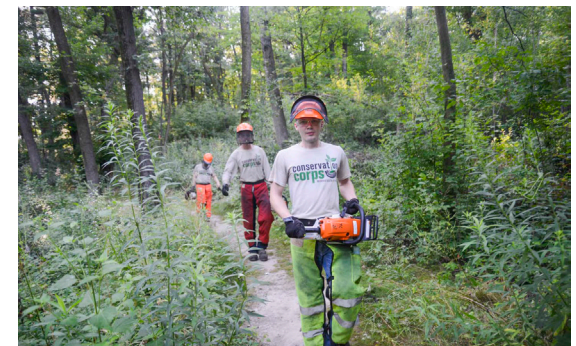
With this model, a public agency acquires services from private or non-profit providers (including business improvement districts). Services can range from cleaning/maintenance to event programming to complete management.

Conservancy

With a conservancy model, a non-profit organization is contracted to provide some or all of the services/programming on a site or set of sites. This differs from just contracted services because conservancies also engage in advocacy and fundraising.

Public/Private Partnership

A public-private partnership (P3) is a contractual arrangement between a public agency (federal, state or local) and a private sector entity. Through this agreement, the skills and assets of each sector (public and private) are shared in delivering a service or facility to be used by the general public.





Coordinator

A coordinator is an entity that helps event producers (markets, concerts, etc.) find an appropriate location and navigate the process even if that location is not controlled by the entity.

Because of the unique qualities of the Downtown Service Area, partnerships within and beyond park boundaries are expected to be robust. Figures 1.56 and 1.57 include examples of partnerships created around the country that prove as models for downtown.

PROGRAMMING MODEL

The program of a park (or any place) is the spectrum of activities that take place there. The program model is simply an articulated strategy for a particular park's activities. Traditionally, park program is an embedded component of park design and communicated through the physical features of a park.

Articulating a program as distinct from design prompts a purposeful approach to the way "place" is experienced that can drive park success. A program model is akin to a business plan – a new business may

be wildly successful without one but the odds for success greatly improve with one.

Service Area Master Plans do not direct programming for recreation centers or parks, as this is the role of an allied planning effort called RecQuest. The unique challenges and opportunities of downtown from other service areas, however, warrants a description of a potential programming model for downtown parks that would be further developed through RecQuest. The Constellation Model, therefore, is rooted as a strong collaboration between multiple entities (public and private) to provide active park spaces across an array of properties (public and private). This model recognizes that intentional and thoughtful programming is one of the most dynamic and sustainable ways to achieve the guiding principles of downtown.

The public process highlighted the impact that small, place-based programming has had in downtown Minneapolis and the possibilities for sustained regular programming have generated tremendous excitement. Potential partners have been identified and important conversations have begun around how best to move forward. These conversations

continue past the completion of this master plan to create a downtown Minneapolis that includes a dramatically new and exciting set of programs in the coming years.

The physical improvements to downtown parks create the stage for an enhanced set of activities serving downtown audiences. Recreation programming within these parks advances the idea of supporting activities and creates regular, positive, and attractive ways to enjoy these public spaces. In addition, providing a curated experience through programming and activities is a key part of the constellation concept—not only should parks host internal activities, they should be part of a carefully considered package of programs that make downtown Minneapolis a vibrant place to live, work, and play.

As a part of this master plan process, the MPRB has already begun discussions internally and with potential partners about shifting the focus of programming downtown public spaces. Starting with a program of regular activities within recreation centers, supplemented with special events, programs and activities (produced by the MPRB and partners)

the MPRB is exploring a more distributed model of programming. These events, programs and activities would take place in more of the existing parks and extend to other publicly owned and partner sites within the constellations, as partnerships and funding allow.

As the MPRB and potential partners proceed down this path, they can use the best practices of urban park agencies, conservancies, and Business Improvement Districts (BID) across the country to create small scale, replicable program opportunities that match the identity and role of the specific parks and the larger constellations.



Activating Downtown Spaces: Chicago Loop Alliance

The Chicago Loop Alliance is a Business Improvement District Service Provider with Associated Foundation that manages a range of programs to improve and enliven the Loop.

Programs: ACTIVATE (pop-up experiences in urban alleys); #CitySeats (placing flexible seating based on Twitter requests); actively managed parks/plazas such as the Gateway and Pritzker Park including seating, food and performances; public art in pop-up storefronts and highly visible commissions; Street Team (utilizing highly trained ambassadors to connect individuals in need to supportive services and addressing aggressive, illegal panhandling).

How it is done: Using resources from a local assessment district, known as Special Service Area (SSA) #1, partnerships, sponsorships and other funding sources, the Chicago Loop Alliance serves a defined downtown area that includes several formal spaces and other areas of the public realm. The CLA provides programs (directly and through partnerships) in the Loop area focused in four areas: beautification and enhanced services; planning and advocacy; placemaking and management; and economic development.

Seattle Downtown/Center City Parks: Citywide Parks Agency as Park Manager

Type of organization: City Department of Parks and Recreation

Programs: The 2015 summer season included dancing in the park, outdoor movies, mini concerts, drop in fitness classes and games (bocce, chess, ping pong), and dog days in the park.

How it is done: Breaking out of the typical recreation center based programming, Seattle Parks and Recreation staff creatively utilize a small budget to maximize the number of events happening in parks downtown. By focusing on flexible physical features (such as a movable dance floor), a dance program could be modified quickly and easily to create multiple types of similar events. An organized busking program (drawing on a pool of talent from Pike Place Market and the music scene) brings everything from jugglers to classical harp to downtown parks. These performers are supported with a stipend and also collect tips from the audience. Parks staff play an active role recruiting, coordinating and promoting programs that have become a regular part of the downtown Seattle experience. The City staff also provides flexible seating at downtown parks.

Dig deeper: <http://www.seattle.gov/parks/downtown/>

VIVA Vancouver: City Transportation Department as Program Facilitator

Type of organization: City Department of Transportation (City of Vancouver, BC)

Programs: Robson Redux summer plaza (street closure), the Granville Social (a one weekend event), parklets, street murals, seating and street activation activities across downtown.

How it is done: In collaboration with community groups, local businesses and regional partners, VIVA facilitates short-term street closures throughout the year, creating public spaces for walking, lounging and lunching. The events, programs and installations are part of the City's integrated transportation system efforts to support walking and bicycling. These spaces enhance the city's sense of community, encourage active forms of transportation (walking and cycling) and benefit local businesses. Art installations such as the urban reef and picnurbia are selected through a competitive process and installed in the plaza created by closing Robson in front of the art museum each summer. Additional projects are application-based or created in partnership with supporting organizations.

Dig deeper: <http://vancouver.ca/streets-transportation/reducing-cars-on-city-streets.aspx>

Figure 1.56 Partnership Examples: Chicago, Seattle, and Vancouver

MJM Management Group (MJMMG): Private Contractor/ Partner as Full Service Operator

Type of organization: Private Event Management Company

Programs: Customized operational planning, management services, event and activity programming under contract or in partnership with public agencies, improvement districts and private property owner/developers including Yerba Buena Gardens and Union Square in San Francisco as well as Pearl Brewery on San Antonio's Riverwalk.

How it is done: MJMMG applies best practices and two decades of experience from projects around the nation to achieve unique client and community goals. Values and practices focus on inclusion, partnerships in the community, long-term operational focus and sustainability. MJMMG is typically engaged by the property owner either during the planning stages for the development or renovation of a public space, or responds to a request to create a management plan and take responsibility for an existing space. The objectives and performance measurements are established in the contract with the owner or partnership responsible for the public space. From there, MJMMG handles all operations of the site as determined by the contract, including maintenance, programming and financial management, as well as ongoing coordination and collaboration with neighbors, partners and other stakeholders. Ongoing communication with the property owner is a key part of contract oversight, ensuring that the public needs are met.

Dig deeper: <http://mjmmg.com/about/>

Partnerships for Parks: Information Resource, Volunteer Training and Coordination

Type of organization: Public/private partnership between NYC Parks and the City Parks Foundation a (501)(c)(3)

Programs: Volunteer service projects, fundraising assistance, workshops/trainings and network building through outreach coordinators.

How it is done: The Partnerships for Parks is well positioned as the first call for information about getting involved and enhancing parks in NYC. The focus is on building, supporting and advocating for a network of community based park champions that take on a variety of projects. Providing an entry point for individuals and organizations interested in improving local parks, Partnerships for Parks staffs a team of outreach coordinators who train, inform and guide park champions.

Dig deeper: <http://www.cityparksfoundation.org/partnerships-for-parks/>

Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy: Focused Funding for On-Site Staffing and Programming

Type of organization: Non-Profit Conservancy, 501(c)(3)

Programs: Full site management and programming (e.g. Schenley Plaza); enhanced maintenance, horticulture and reinvestment; fundraising; volunteer stewardship; and programs, concessions and event management.

How it is done: PPC manages the on-site operations at Pittsburgh's four regional parks (funded by a regional sales tax and private fundraising). PPC-driven improvements at Schenley Plaza include an on-site manager and several seasonal or year-round businesses that provide regular activity at this popular site. Lessons learned at Schenley Plaza are being applied elsewhere in the system as funding permits. In recent years, the PPC extended its reach to Mellon Square in downtown Pittsburgh. Capital improvements and programming at Mellon Square have focused on recurring small activities that draw park users up into the square from street level.

Dig deeper: <https://www.pittsburghparks.org>

Figure 1.57 Partnership Examples: Event Management, P3 Partnership, and Conservancy

