Improving Community Use of Harrisburg’s Reservoir Park

PUBPL 304 White Paper No. 1

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PENN STATE HARRISBURG
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¹ The opinions and arguments put forth in this report are not endorsed or representative of the Pennsylvania State University. They are the product of student and faculty research. Any errors are our own.
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Executive Summary

Reservoir Park is in the Allison Hill community of Harrisburg, connecting two of the city’s most used streets, Walnut and Market. However, the park is under-utilized and in need of updates to increase foot traffic. The Harrisburg City Council and city government will play a vital role in the implementation of suggested changes regarding park infrastructure, safety, community relations, and competition with Front Street.

Key Findings

This report has found that the under-utilization of Reservoir Park is primarily due to the negative perception of both the park itself and the surrounding Allison Hill community. The issue of existing physical infrastructure has contributed to this perception, as the lack of activities for users and the inadequacy of existing playgrounds, walking trails, sports courts, and other areas have made the park less desirable to potential users. There are also multiple safety concerns that have contributed to the negative perception of the area. This includes inadequate lighting and the lack of policing, which is troubling considering the high crime rate in the Allison Hill area. The issue of community relations suggests that the overall image of the park has also led to its under-usage. Finally, the park must compete with other popular and better-situated event venues like Front Street and Fort Hunter. Front Street is seen as more desirable by vendors so they, along with potential users, are more likely to hold and attend events there, which further contributes to Reservoir Park’s under-utilization.

Assessment of Solutions

Infrastructure: While the obvious solution of demolishing existing structures in favor of new ones is attractive, it is doubtful the city’s finances would allow for something so costly. Building onto existing infrastructure is also an option, and would be less expensive than starting from scratch, but it would still require substantial funding. Therefore, repairing and maintaining the existing structures would be the most sensible option.

Safety: The solutions for improving the perception of safety include the installment of lights and removal of unflattering sights, such as graffiti, implementing policing efforts, and improving the local perception through strengthening community ties. While the first solution may prove costly, the benefits would likely outweigh the costs. Additionally, the last two solutions have little to no financial cost and have enough evidence to be considered viable options.

Community Relations: The solutions for improving community relations include focusing on children’s activities, cultural events, and converting part of the park into an environmental sanctuary. Putting focus on children’s activities would likely necessitate an alteration of the playgrounds, but, as discussed previously, the most sustainable solution would be repairing and maintaining existing structures. Putting focus on cultural events would have favorable optics but would be a costly endeavor. Converting the park to an environmental sanctuary would create an enjoyable atmosphere but would require planning and advertising.
Competing with Front Street: Solutions include conducting surveys, advertising to promote the usage by vendors, and altering the physical layout of the park. Conducting surveys and promoting the park are viable solutions but would require sufficient local participation. Altering the layout of the park may make it easier to navigate and would support larger events but would presumably require a large financial budget.

**Recommendations**

**Infrastructure:**
- Demolishing existing playgrounds and creating safer and more visually appealing playgrounds.
- Adding a gazebo and seating area with vending machines for families.
- Revitalizing the existing greenhouse to provide food for financially burdened individuals in the community and food insecurity organizations.

**Safety:**
- Improving and increasing lighting throughout the park, including motion sensors and sound detecting Smart Lights.
- Increasing the presence of park rangers, law enforcement, and community police within the park and surrounding community.

**Community Relations:**
- Adding small playgrounds near the greenhouse.
- Directing the park to be used for cultural events such as food truck events, local vendor sales, and sports leagues.
- Remodeling the park into an environmental sanctuary with more walking trails, exercise stops, and sports equipment.

**Competing with Front Street:**
- Improving trails and walking paths throughout the park.
- Fixing the existing pavilion and adding more with additional seating.
- Surveying locals and conducting community town hall meetings to gather data on what residents would like to see in the park.

**Evaluation**

To evaluate the effectiveness of these recommendations, data collection through surveying the community is recommended. Through this, City Council and Harrisburg city government could gather opinions, and gain a better sense of the impact the suggestions would have on a user’s individual park usage and perception. Recommendations could also be implemented slowly, with data being gathered throughout the process, to monitor levels of foot traffic before and after changes were made to the park.
Introduction

Reservoir Park’s history as a beautiful overlook of downtown Harrisburg and the Susquehanna River can be traced to 1845 when the city first set this part of Prospect Hill aside for the enjoyment of city residents. A 30 million gallon below-ground water reservoir and two six million above ground holding tanks became part of the city’s water system in 1872, ultimately contributing to the park’s name when it was formally established in 1890 as part of the City Beautiful movement. At 85 acres, the park remains the city’s largest (Dapp 2016). The park has had a tumultuous history, with highs including the development of key infrastructure such as the Levitt Performing Arts Pavilion (i.e., the bandshell), a playground, tennis and basketball courts, a greenhouse, arts cottages, and pavilions, and subsequent lows as many of these pieces of infrastructure have aged and exhibit signs of vandalism and the surrounding Allison Hill community struggles with a high rates of poverty and crime. Then there is the National Civil War Museum, a point of controversy since even before its opening in 2001. Many ideas have been floated for improving the park, but all tend to agree that in its present form the park is underutilized and not user-friendly (Vendel 2015a, 2017, Binda 2017). The City commissioned a study of the park and a Master Site Development Plan that was issued in draft form in 2017\(^2\), but remains in draft form to date. Figure 1 presents a map of the park and some of the improvements included in the Master Plan.

The purpose of this white paper is to offer a fresh look with a different set of eyes at the major issues surrounding Reservoir Park’s underuse and recommendations for improving the park. This white paper was developed as part of the course requirements for PUBPL 304 Public Policy Analysis at Penn State Harrisburg. Students in the course learn about the policy process, policy analysis, and policy writing and this report is the culmination of an entire semester’s work that was disrupted, but not destroyed, by the COVID-19 pandemic. With the help of Harrisburg City Councilman Dave Madsen and Harrisburg City Clerk Kirk Petroski, the topic of Reservoir Park was chosen among several options. Though the issue of the park’s use has been studied previously, culminating with the Master Plan, the city has not moved forward with finalizing or implementing many of the proposals in that plan. There is still much interest in increasing daily and periodic event use of the park by Harrisburg city residents and the greater Harrisburg region.
After developing the topic of study, students worked with the professor for the course, Daniel J. Mallinson (Assistant Professor of Public Policy and Administration) to identify what they thought were the key dimensions of the park’s challenges. With research and deliberation, the students arrived at four topics: infrastructure, safety, community relations, and competition from Front Street for events. Students then worked in four teams to research and perform a policy options analysis for these topics. The entire class also visited and walked around the park in February 2020.

The following report presents each of the group’s findings and recommendations. Each section has a similar structure. Following a brief introduction, the students evaluated the formal and informal actors that must be engaged to help solve their facet of the problem of underutilization of the park. Formal actors are those with formal governmental positions, like the Mayor and City Council. Informal actors can be wide ranging, but can include the public, community groups, and businesses, among others. After establishing the key actors, each section discusses possible solutions to the identified problems. The solutions are evaluated for their potential benefits and costs and formal recommendations for action are made based on that analysis. Finally, the students offer advice on how the city can evaluate the success of the recommendations as they are being implemented. Such program evaluation is vital to ensure that new policies are working and to identify and fix problems that may arise. Each section has been lightly edited by the professor, but they largely appear as the students wrote them. This is being presented as the work of the students and the professor. Nothing herein is the official opinion of the Pennsylvania State University. This report is intended to spark additional discussion about the future of this vital Harrisburg resource.
Infrastructure
Authors: Kaci Keller, Bradley Ruhl, Owen Shank

Initially utilized as a vantage point for viewing 18th century Harrisburg and notable for its architecture and nature, Reservoir Park has since evolved to assume a variety of roles for the city of Harrisburg and surrounding area. First came the addition of the three reservoirs the park is named after and later the Works Progress Administration brought recreational facilities including the Levitt Performing Arts Center (Dapp 2016). With these additions, the park as provided enjoyment and a variety of recreational uses to the Harrisburg-area from the breath-taking views it has to offer, to the sport and playground facilities, the community events hosted at the Performing Arts Center, the Art Village, the Civil War Museum, and a natural retreat from the surrounding city. Situated in the upper center of the city in Allison Hill and connecting two of the most used streets in Harrisburg, Reservoir Park is the hidden gem of the city.

Recently however, the park has struggled with decreasing use and the city of Harrisburg has looked for ways to attract people back to the park and increase the park’s functionality (Vendel 2015a, 2017). Some of the park’s facilities, such as the arts village, the playground area, and the greenhouse, suffer from vandalism and are under-maintained, which leads to these facilities not being used at all or sparingly. Other parts of the park, such as the stunning views it has to offer of the city and the Blue Mountains (Figures 2 and 3), the walking path and seating along the path, are underutilized by the park to attract people and could be expanded upon to create more attention and provide the park more casual use. Certain areas of the park are completely unused, specifically the backyard of the Civil War Museum is a large grass field that, aside from the walking path through it, is completely unutilized. Reservoir Park has a large variety of resources and facilities to offer residents however, a general lack of maintenance has created a substantial barrier to attracting use of the park.
Figure 2. View of the Blue Mountains from Reservoir Park

Image Source: Daniel J. Mallinson
Relevant Actors

With changes being made to the park, it is important to keep in mind all the people and entities it will affect and how they will perceive the changes being made. Members of city government will be those making the final decision and executing the policy that is made. They have interest in the park being revitalized to compliment the city and bolster the work of the city government. Also, representing the constituents of Harrisburg, members of the city government will want their work to be meaningful to the people they serve and to meet constituent demands.
Non-profit groups and local businesses have unique resources and capabilities that can be utilized in cooperation with government to provide services they specialize in. For example, the Foundation of Enhancing Communities is a philanthropic organization located in Harrisburg that specializes in capital campaigns and could be a candidate to assist in resource pooling for the park renovation project. Such organizations want to be contributing members of the community, as they care about their customers and clients as much as the government cares about its constituency. These groups take a lot of care and pride in the unique service(s) that they provide.

Residents and park visitors are the clientele for the improvements being proposed and recommended. They will be providing feedback that helps assess the success of the renovation effort. With their investments of time and money to either come to the park or live in the city, residents and park visitors will have the expectation of gaining a pleasant experience from their park visit. A pleasant experience hinges on how the park renovation effort plays to their interests and offers them a reason to come to the park.

**Infrastructure Problem Areas**

Several key infrastructure problems have developed in the park due to neglect and vandalism. The problems of the park span multiple different jurisdictions and the infrastructure group focused on four specific areas that need improvement: the playground, the arts village, the old greenhouse, and underutilized open space.

*The Playground*

The playground area is an older set that has a few different parts missing, such as parts of the tic-tac-toe board on the side of the set and some of the painting and finishing is either sun-

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damaged or rusted. Earlier last year, the city entered into a professional contract with Thomas J. McLane and Associates, Inc. to design and build a shoots-and-ladder playground set that utilizes the hilly topography as an addition to the current playground set although there are no dates on funding or construction yet (Benscoter 2019). The Master Plan developed by the city, includes adding a splash pad to the front of the playground, which is near Walnut Street (City of Harrisburg 2017). Both ideas will attract people to the park, however they do not address the shortcomings of the original playground.

These shortcomings could be leveraged as an opportunity for a community event where the city brings volunteers into the park for a restoration of the original playground set. This restoration would include repainting the areas that have chipped or been sun-damaged, matching areas for aesthetic appearance, applying rust converter to any parts that have exposed rust or corrosion, replacing broken or damaged parts like the tic-tac-toe board, and creating paths and transitions from the original playground set to the newly added shoots-and-ladder playground set and splash pad. Instead of renovating the original playground, the park could also demolish the playground, seeing that they are adding the Chutes and Ladders, and use the existing area to build a gazebo for parents to sit and watch their kids play. Vending machines with healthy snacks and drinks could also be added, which could be ideal with the basketball courts being relatively nearby.

**The Art Village**

The Art Village’s problems of external wear and damage could be solved similarly to the proposed community event solution for the playground set (see Figure 4). At least four of the five Art Village buildings appeared to be vandalized and this could be reversed through a community event where volunteers come out and help repaint and refinish the outside of the
buildings. The park could also add an encased bulletin board between the last building of the Village and the Family Life Center where notices are posted for classes and events held at the Art Village. The display could also showcase some of the artwork made from these classes and events. The buildings within the village could also be decorated with murals on the outside. This could be accomplished by Sprocket Mural Works, like the events they held in 2017 and 2019 at the Harrisburg Mural Festival.⁴

Figure 4. Art Village Building with Graffiti on the Door

Image Source: Daniel J. Mallinson

⁴ http://www.sprocketmuralworks.com/
The Greenhouse

The Greenhouse suffers from similar lack of use and could be revitalized to attract people and to increase the overall food security and nutrition of the local area. Replacing the glass and renovating the interior would probably be costly, as greenhouse equipment is expensive, so the park could utilize the surrounding area instead. The ground around the greenhouse could be tilled, fertilized, and divided into small plots to create a community garden. Community gardens have been successful in smaller communities across the state. This is a chance for to utilize the greenhouse space constructively, like Braddock Farms that assists communities and schools in developing or maintaining community gardens to help create sustainable gardening programs.5 A community garden would be open to anyone in the public to grow whatever crops they want, but the city could also section out certain portions to be utilized specifically for food security organizations like the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank or the Ecumenical Food Pantry6, which serves the surrounding community. Another option would be to simply set aside a public section of the garden that anyone could take from. Finally, this could be a good opportunity to partner with the new Allison Hill Farmer’s Market to sell the produce to members of the community at reduced prices. The AHFM will allow residents to use SNAP benefits and Farmers Market Nutrition Program vouchers to purchase these goods and matches $10 of EBT spending with another $10 of goods, multiplying the benefits for residents (White McNaughton 2020).

Vandalism and resource protection would be a concern considering the community garden and other facilities would be exposed to the public throughout the day. To combat this,

5 https://www.growpittsburgh.org/about-us/locations/braddock-farms/
6 https://ecumenicalfoodpantry.wordpress.com/
the park could enlist an organization like Pennsylvania Crime Stoppers that helps pool money to implement a volunteer community-watch program.\(^7\)

The community garden would be used primarily from March until October when the harvest season concludes. Understanding this, the park could do both, create a community garden and renovate the greenhouse to create a large community agriculture center that could be operated year-round. The park also could take crops that are not harvested by a certain date or ask people to give a certain amount of their harvest to food security organizations to help create a meaningful partnership that assures this resource is dispersed to those who need it the most.

One challenge for using the greenhouse space is the lack of sidewalks from the main park. If you want to walk from the front of the park where the playground is, to the viewing point by the pavilion, and then walk to see the back of the park, at least half of the trip will be spent walking on the road. For greater ease of use and to let people know these amenities exist, the park could build a sidewalk that circles the entire park with the road starting at the intersection of Concert Drive and National Civil War Museum Drive and wrapping all the way back using Chamberlain Drive. Along this sidewalk they could add lights and signs that show where everything is relative to the sidewalk. The city could also add signs to inform park visitors on the history of the park from its humble beginnings as Prospect Hill and the nature that inhabits the land. This sidewalk on Concert Drive could include an access sidewalk from the hill of the Civil War Museum to the Greenhouse/Community Garden to provide ease of access to people on the hill of the park and to increase use of the facility.

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\(^7\) [https://www.crimewatchpa.com/crimestoppers/316/content/about-us](https://www.crimewatchpa.com/crimestoppers/316/content/about-us)
Undeveloped Area

There is a large plot of land behind the Civil War Museum that is largely unused. It has an ascending slope up the hill and is separated from the flat portion of the backyard that is directly behind the Civil War Museum. The Master Plan developed by the city of Harrisburg plans on using this land to develop a dog park that is exclusive to the back of the park. In this dog park they would certainly want to add many pet-waste disposal stations along with dog water fountains and possibly some dog playground set materials such as modular stairs and slides, plastic beds, and dog agility equipment such as tunnels, weave poles and competition jumps.8

The space could otherwise be used to increase the sports options at the park. Putting greens could be installed to help people practice their short game, a multi-purpose sports field for soccer, lacrosse and field hockey, or any combination of these. The hills of the park could even be used to host a disc golf course. The park could also add to the single monument present in the area to create a historical touring site, featuring a timeline of the city of Harrisburg from it is initial founding with John Harris Jr., through the Harrisburg Conference, obtaining statehood, and the civil war. This historical information would be a compliment to the presence of the Civil War Museum and may entice visitors of the museum to use other parts of the park.

Recommendations
The recommendations for infrastructure related issues are as follows:

- Repaint and repair the existing playground equipment
- Renovate the Art Village buildings
- Repair the greenhouse and implement a community garden program

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8 For examples see [https://puppyplayground.com/accessories](https://puppyplayground.com/accessories)
Develop the open spaces by adding a sports field or similar project

Recommendation 1: The Playground

After determining what solutions should be recommended, each solution must be evaluated to determine the relative advantages and disadvantages. The first solution is to address the current state of the playground. The playground provides small children a dedicated place to play and interact with other families. Comparatively, renovating the playground will be a cheaper and easier project than some of the other areas of need. It will also take advantage of existing infrastructure and does not require entirely new parts. Updated and refurbished equipment would attract people who were unsatisfied with the previous equipment quality. This does come with some drawbacks though. Repairing equipment instead of updating the equipment could cause issues in the future regarding safety and liability.

Recommendation 2: The Art Village

The Art Village is an area in need of severe attention. Currently the buildings are in poor condition and reduce the overall quality of the park. With the proper amount of support and attention the Art Village could be transformed into a valuable part of Reservoir Park. Renewed exteriors and interiors would encourage people to use the homes instead of them becoming victims of graffiti. This will come at a cost though. The foremost concern is the cost of renovation. Depending on the level of renovation needed, this could become a moderate amount of the budget. Also, the renovations do not guarantee utilization. There is a possibility of spending time and resources fixing the village only for it to remain underused.

Recommendation 3: Community Greenhouse

A community greenhouse and garden would provide a great opportunity for the communities surrounding Reservoir Park. In addition to creating a bond between members of the
community, a community greenhouse would allow financially burdened people to grow food of their own. This would also utilize existing infrastructure at the park. Like the Art Village, the community greenhouse has the potential to be one of the most expensive portions of the renovation. The state of the greenhouse is unknown. It could be potentially unsafe and a financial drain. More study of this option is necessary.

Recommendation 4: Undeveloped Area

There are many potential ideas for the undeveloped land within the park. Ideas include a dog park, disc golf course, skate park/obstacle course, another playground, grill-out areas with picnics nearby and multi-sport fields. These can attract people from all over to use the park. Ideally these solutions would be less expensive while also seeing great use from the community. Conversely, adding infrastructure will limit the amount of open space dedicated to impromptu use. If the park is filled with areas dedicated to certain activities, it lessens the area for general use, possibly limiting the ability for visitors to create their own tailored experience at the park based on what they want to accomplish.

Policy Evaluation

When looking at the recommendations that have been laid out in the previous section of this report there are a few things that should be kept in mind when determining how effective these recommendations are for the people involved in these projects. Price, public interest, and potential for future ventures are three things to pay attention to when evaluating the recommendations. Price is probably the most important of these since it is important that the projects are not costing more than they are worth. When looking at price, evaluators should examine not just how much a project costs in the short term but also in the long term. Are the recommendations things that will save money in the future or are they things that might prevent more costs, such as legal fees?
The second metric to evaluate is public interest. A question to ask is “Will these recommendations get more people interested in the park?” If more people are interested in going to the park, more people will be invested in its development. Making the park a community space that people can invest in would help future phases of development for the park. If regular people are interested in the park that could lead to more commercial interest in the park.

Finally, potential for future ventures is an important part of evaluating plans for the park. Do these recommendations improve the park, and do they show an opportunity for further growth? As the city evaluates these recommendations, the future of the park should be at the forefront. They should be asking will these generate not just an interest in the park, but will they make it a project that citizens of Harrisburg want to invest in. The best way to measure the success of these recommendations would be to monitor foot traffic in the park and see if there is an increase in private and public group investments into the park.

**Conclusion**

Harrisburg’s reservoir park is a beautiful space that, if utilized properly, could be a wonderful place for community growth. The park, however, suffers from a multitude of problems. Some of the biggest infrastructure issues are the state of the playground, the Art Village, the greenhouse, and the plethora of underutilized space in the park. The recommendations of this group include getting the community involved in the restoration of the existing infrastructure with the goal of limiting spending as much as possible while fostering a sense of community among park users.
Safety

Authors: Gabrielle Brassart, Kathryn Compton, Sofia Siddiqui

A question of safety surrounds Reservoir Park, largely due to its location. Reservoir Park is located on the outskirts of the Allison Hill community in the city of Harrisburg, a place that is perceived to be an unsafe part of the city. The crime rate for robbery and assault in Allison Hill and East Harrisburg is 99% higher than the national average, and 8 out of 9 homicides in Harrisburg in 2019 took place in the area (Onboard Informatics 2017, Vendel 2019). These statistics lead to legitimate physical safety concerns for visitors, especially for those unfamiliar with the area. Due to this lack of perceived safety, the park is underutilized.

There are pre-existing safety measures, such as lights and cameras, in the park, but they are not entirely functional. Additionally, a park ranger is already employed, but does not always have a strong presence within the park. To increase park usage and improve the public perception of the park and the surrounding community, Reservoir Park must be made safer for its visitors both in reality and perception.

Relevant Actors

Formal and informal actors will have different roles and interests in improving the safety of Reservoir Park. Formal actors include the Harrisburg city government, local police, and park rangers, as they will ensure the park is well maintained and that crime rates are reduced. The city government will do this by attempting to increase foot traffic and creating an environment that deters crime. The park ranger will act as a security measure for the park by patrolling and reporting suspicious activity to the local police. This is in the best interests of the informal actors, who are potential park users outside of the community and Allison Hill residents. Park users from outside the area and residents value having a visually pleasing and safe park to use and play an important role in both improving perceptions of the park and in increasing its usage.
**Solutions**

There are multiple options that may be implemented to improve both the physical safety of the park, as well as the perception of safety by park users and members of the surrounding community. These options have the potential to not only improve safety, but also to increase the utilization of Reservoir Park.

Increasing physical safety may be accomplished through the installment of lights and removal of unflattering sights. Studies reveal that improved lighting, “has shown to lead to… reduced fear of crime, [and] greater use of the streets at night…, [leading to] more positive opinions of the local authority” (Boyce et al. 2000, 79). There is encouraging evidence to support this theory using ‘smart lights.’ A park in Chattanooga, Tennessee installed these motion-detecting lights in a notoriously unsafe park. Over time, “gangs scattered and… the city eventually reclaimed the park” (Schiffler 2017).

Additionally, the removal of graffiti and replacement of broken and/or outdated fixtures also have the potential to increase the level of safety. “Disorder is theorized to make neighborhoods vulnerable to crime and instill fear in residents, and is often measured through the presence of incivilities—things such as broken windows that remain unfixed, or graffiti that is not painted over” (Zuberi 2018, 92). Further, a “higher level of satisfaction with the neighborhood environment [will lead] to high levels of perceived safety” (Austin, Furr, and Spine 2002, 419, Baba and Austin 1989). By physically cleaning up both the park and the surrounding community through removing indicators of crime and fixing broken or outdated fixtures, park users will likely perceive the area as safer and more comforting, thus contributing
to its utilization. This, in combination with crime prevention measures, like lights or security cameras, may contribute to crime reduction and improve the overall safety of the park.

Additionally, if potential park users outside of the immediate community perceive the park as safe, they may be more likely to visit. This depends on the implementation of measures to improve physical safety. When addressing the physical safety concern of lighting, it was “found that fear heightened among women when they were exposed to places,” such as dark spots or concealed areas, “where in which an attack could be launched” (Austin, Furr, and Spine 2002, 419). Studies find that “lighting can bring [the] perception [of safety at night] close to what it is during the day” (Boyce et al. 2000, 83). This evidence reveals that addressing physical safety concerns may improve the perception of safety of the park by potential users, which could contribute to its utilization.

Increasing the amount of staffing and policing may also aid improving the perception of safety among potential park users. Fears, specifically “about crime, traffic safety, becoming injured, or being caught up in gang violence,” and perceived threats “have all been cited as reasons some people avoid parks” (Cohen et al. 2016, 230). Additionally, “the degree to which parks are staffed, schedule programming and events, and maintain conditions, landscaping, and renovate facilities potentially plays a large role in drawing users to parks and potentially overcoming perceived threats” (Cohen et al. 2016, 231). Franklin Park in Boston provides further evidence of this, as the government “worked to bring multiple law enforcement officials together to coordinate their coverage of the park and to share ideas and information. As a result, the local community no longer sees Franklin Park as dangerous” (Hilborn 2009, 15). This indicates that increasing the presence of police and park rangers may lead to the increased usage of the park, as they will be a reassuring presence for park users and deter crime.
Improving the safety of the park and its usage may also be accomplished through bettering community relations. Efforts to improve the connections of members of the community through social programs may “assist neighborhoods to minimize future incivilities… [and] improve local conditions,” and may have a “positive effect on perceived safety.” (Austin, Furr, and Spine 2002, 426). If the community begins to implement programs, like a neighborhood watch, crime may be deterred, and the area will be perceived as safer. Additionally, this will strengthen the social ties of members of the community, which may contribute to the usage of the park. Research indicates that “social ties may buffer the negative effects of violence for residents” (Zuberi 2018, 91). Further, “positive community level social factors may reduce fear if park users have confidence that community members are looking out for each other” (Cohen et al. 2016, 231). This was demonstrated through an effort recently implemented in New York City, which “empower[ed] residents of high-crime communities to help shape the city’s public safety agenda within their neighborhoods and build partnerships with city agencies and community organizations” (Pearl 2019). Through trusting each other and coming together for a common goal, the community reduced crime rates. This led to the increased usage and improve perceptions of the area.

Assessment of Solutions
While the installation of lights might be costly, the benefits would likely outweigh the costs. Not only could installing lighting improve the park’s usage, but it would also decrease crime. The reduction of crime in the Allison Hill community, an area known to be dangerous, makes this solution well worth the investment. The resources of the city should go into reducing crime in this specific community in order to not only attract visitors to the park, but also to improve the image of Harrisburg as a whole, and to encourage people to move to the area.
Renovation and cleanup of the park would also significantly improve the perception of safety in the park and deter crime. This cleanup would involve painting over graffiti and removing or refurbishing old and outdated infrastructure. However, this may prove to be costly. Thus, focusing primarily on removing indicators of crime, like graffiti, may be a better, more cost-effective solution.

The implementation of policing efforts and strengthening of community ties also provide enough evidence to be considered as viable solutions. Increasing the staffing will likely help park users to overcome their fears (Cohen et al. 2016). This indicates that increasing the presence of authorities, like police and park rangers, may lead to the increased usage of the park. Although it may be costly, the effects that police and ranger presence will have on the reduction of crime will, once again, be worth the investment. Implementing community programs, like a neighborhood watch program, would have virtually no cost, and would have similar benefits of deterring crime and improving feelings of safety through the strengthening of community ties (Cohen et al. 2016).

Recommendations

To improve the overall safety of Reservoir Park and increase foot traffic, the following recommendations are made:

1. Improve and increase lighting throughout the park. This includes the installation of motion sensors and sound-detecting Smart Lights.
2. Increase the presence of the existing park ranger to improve the perception of safety. Adding additional park ranger(s) should also be a top priority.
3. Increase the presence of law enforcement within the park and the surrounding community to reduce crime and improve the perception of safety. The Allison Hill Police Substation
is a good first step but adding a presence closer to Reservoir Park should also be considered.

4. Take additional measures to clean up the park and indicators of crime, such as graffiti and broken windows or fixtures, to improve the perception of safety within the park.

5. Create social programs, such as a community watch program, to strengthen community ties and deter crime within the park and surrounding area.

**Policy Evaluation**

To justify the funding of improvements and installation of new infrastructure to the park, changes must be made slowly and in stages, with each step being evaluated as it is implemented. This will allow for funding to be properly budgeted and spent only as needed to conserve costs. All these recommendations may be evaluated through reviewing crime rates and monitoring the usage of the park.

These recommendations may also be evaluated through conducting community surveys and town hall meetings, where constituents are able to give their opinion on the changes that have been made. This will give the Harrisburg city government and City Council the opportunity to ask questions of the local community and gain a better understanding of whether these changes are improving the perceived safety of the park and increasing its usage. Forums will enable park users to give input on additional changes they would like to see implemented at Reservoir Park.

**Conclusion**

If the recommendations and solutions provided are implemented, the physical safety of Reservoir Park will increase. Additionally, both park users outside of the immediate area and members of the surrounding community will perceive the park as safer. These effects will lead to an increase in foot traffic and improve the park’s usage by both tourists and local community
members. Improving the safety of Reservoir Park has proven to be the most important factor in promoting its utilization and should be given top priority.
Community Relations

Authors: Harrison Creer, Brenden Koppenhaver, Katie Taylor

Reservoir Park is the largest municipal park in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania with 85 acres of recreational space. The park has tennis and basketball courts, a concert area, a section of the twenty-mile trail known as the Capital Area Greenbelt and is home to the National Civil War Museum. The park is in the Allison Hill neighborhood which has a crime rate 99% higher than the national average (Onboard Informatics 2017). Many of the park’s facilities have been vandalized. As a result, the park is underutilized because the community views it as unsafe. Further detracting from the park’s image is the fact that it has become a shortcut for drivers going from Walnut Street to Market Street (Vendel 2017, 2015b). The problem addressed here is how to rehabilitate Reservoir Park’s public image so that it becomes a desired location and enjoyed by the community.

Relevant Actors

Initially, the formal actors needed to rehabilitate Reservoir Park’s public image are the Mayor’s office, Harrisburg City Council and State Representative Patty Kim who announced in November 2019 that the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources awarded a $250,000 grant to the city for the purpose of rehabilitating Reservoir Park (Kim 2019). This grant is intended to improve Americans with Disabilities Act accessibility, but perhaps these improvements can be leveraged in support of our recommendations. The Board of Directors for the National Civil War Museum is also a formal actor in the efforts to rehabilitate the park. Implementing a recommendation to limit access to the park from Walnut Street as a shortcut to Market Street will require the involvement of the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation. The informal actors needed to help rehabilitate the park’s public image include Harrisburg’s residents, local businesses owners, local schools, and landscape architects.
Options to Change Community Perceptions of Reservoir Park

Rehabilitating Reservoir Park’s image will require a public relations campaign and implementing repairs and improvements to the park’s facilities. The public relations campaign would begin by announcing that the park is going to be renovated. Flyers with the message “New and Improved Reservoir Park Coming” would be distributed to residents, schools, and churches. The next step would be to hold an event at the park, hosted by the mayor’s office and Representative Kim. At the event the mayor would discuss the plans to rehabilitate the park and solicit input as to what people see as the problems with the park and changes that they would like to see made. After the mayor's meeting in the park, the next step would be to retain a park planning consultant who would come to the park, inventory the existing conditions, review the population demographics and the input from residents then provide suggestions on rehabilitating the park (Landes 2004). A plan to rehabilitate and improve the facilities at the park would be selected and implemented. A grand reopening of the park would follow completion of the improvements.

Demographics reveal that 28% of the residents of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania are under the age of 18. In the Allison Hill neighborhood, where the park is located, 33% of the residents are under the age of 18. Twenty five percent of Harrisburg residents live below the poverty line while the majority of Allison Hill residents live below the poverty line (Review 2020). These demographics establish that there are many children and young adults who would utilize an improved Reservoir Park. In addition, with a significant percentage of these residents living below the poverty line, access to recreation at no cost would be a significant benefit to the community. The benefits of having a park where Harrisburg residents would feel safe spending
time is clear. Parks bring people together providing social interactions as well as provide awareness of employment opportunities (Kaźmierczak 2013).

There are several options to improve the facilities at the park and thereby change the negative perception it has, each focusing on making the park more appealing to different segments of the population.

Option #1: A Family Focus

Focus on making the park more appealing to children, families, and young adults by adding facilities that would appeal to this group as well as address concerns that the park is unsafe. This option is consistent with the plans for the park proposed in 2017 (City of Harrisburg 2017). This option would include improvements to the playground and the basketball court and adding picnic tables, grills, a water spray park, and a dog park near the playground making the area a total destination (see Figure 5 for current playground area). Modern parks feature clustered amenities, picnic tables near playgrounds so families can cook while watching their children play (Vendel 2015a). Additional lighting would be added near the playground area. Access to the park from Walnut Street would be permanently blocked to prevent the park from being used as a shortcut to Market Street from Walnut Street. This option includes proposals made in the Reservoir Park Master Plan created in 2017.


Figure 5. The Current Playground

![Image Source: Daniel J. Mallinson](image)

**Option #2: A Cultural Center**

Focus on making the park a cultural center in the area. The central piece of this plan would be to rehabilitate the bandshell and add permanent seating. The plan would also include building permanent bathrooms in or next to the Pavilion. An area of the parking lot closest to the bandshell would be designated for food trucks. Harrisburg would advertise that the bandshell area could be used for musical or stand up concerts as well for plays (Figure 6). As the demographics reveal a large percentage of the residents live below the poverty line, the park would have designated free admission nights and discounts for residents in the immediate
neighborhood. This solution would include additional lighting in the parking lots near the bandshell and near the Pavilion.

Figure 6. The Bandshell

Image Source: Daniel J. Mallinson

Option #3: Environmental Sanctuary

Focus on making the park an environmental sanctuary destination. The nature trail in Reservoir Park is part of the 20-mile Capital Area Greenbelt. The trail could be improved with exercise stations as well as tree and plant identifications like the Jonathan Eshenour Memorial
Trail in Hershey, Pennsylvania. This solution would include improvements to the Pavilion including vending machines and a park ranger’s station inside with maps of the area.

**Assessing the Options Proposed**

The first option, making the park more appealing to children, families, and young adults, would likely appeal to a significant percentage of residents. Demographics establish 28% of Harrisburg families have children under the age of 13 and 33% of Allison Hill residents are under the age of 18. In addition, except for the National Civil War Museum, the park appears to have initially been designed for children. This solution may be achievable with the $250,000 grant funding obtained in 2019, as it does not include any major construction. The benefit to the community would be significant. The park could provide a free and safe environment for the children and young adults in Harrisburg in the congested neighborhood of Allison Hill (Statistical Atlas n.d.). The park could also be a venue for schools in the Harrisburg School District. It should be noted that blocking access to the park from Walnut Street would require a feasibility study by PennDOT to determine if this would cause traffic problems. As the entrance to the park from Walnut Street is so close to the playground, which will be developed as a total destination, it would seem advisable to block that access.

Making the park a cultural center would likely be the most expensive option with the rehabilitation of the bandshell, installation of permanent seating and the construction of permanent bathrooms. This option would also require a budget to maintain the new facilities. The Mayor’s Office would need to be contacted to determine if this expense could be included in the budget. This solution should be acceptable to the Civil War Museum Board of Directors,

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9 [https://www.derrytownship.org/resident-services/jonathan-eshenour-memorial-trail](https://www.derrytownship.org/resident-services/jonathan-eshenour-memorial-trail)
local businesses, and entertainers. The Civil War Museum Board of Directors may even be interested in a partnership with Reservoir Park to rehabilitate the park and provide additional funds for the project. This solution is more likely to be most acceptable to local businesses and elected officials than to the public in the neighborhoods near the park. A significant number of the residents may not see venues that require them to purchase tickets as an advantage. However, to address this concern, the park could designate admission free days and reduced tickets for those in the neighborhoods close to the park.

The third option, making the park an environmental sanctuary, would be the least expensive of the three options. This option would also be the easiest to maintain. It would likely be acceptable to the Department of Parks and Recreation, residents, local businesses that offer hiking and camping equipment, and the schools in the Harrisburg school district.

**Funding**

Funding in addition to the $250,000 grant obtained in late 2019 could be obtained from several sources. The Department of Natural Resources Bureau of Recreation and Conservation provides local governments with funding for projects related to parks including rehabilitating public parks. Funding may also be available from the state through the Keystone Recreation, Park, Conservation Fund, created in 1993, which provides funding for improvements to and the rehabilitation of parks.\(^\text{10}\) Funding for the rehabilitation of the park could also come from grants provided by organizations including the National Park Service’s Community Assistance in Conservation and Recreation\(^\text{11}\), Scotts Miracle Gro\(^\text{12}\), the National Association of Realtors\(^\text{13}\),

\(^{10}\) https://keystonefund.org/
\(^{11}\) https://www.nps.gov/orgs/rtca/apply.htm
\(^{12}\) https://scottsmiraclegro.com/responsibility/foundation/
\(^{13}\) https://www.nar.realtor/about-nar/awards-and-grants
Home Depot\textsuperscript{14} and Wells Fargo\textsuperscript{15}. The Mayor’s Office should also be consulted to determine how much money is in the budget for Reservoir Park’s rehabilitation.

\textbf{Recommendations}

Changing the way people view Reservoir Park will require a public relations campaign and physical changes to the park. The first step in the public relations campaign is to get the word out that Reservoir Park is being rehabilitated. Flyers announcing “New and Improved Reservoir Park Coming” and inviting people to an event in the park would be distributed to residents, schools and businesses in Harrisburg. The event in the park would be hosted by the Mayor. Those attending would be invited to express what they see as the problems with the park and what changes they would like to see made. Following the event in the park a park design expert would be consulted to give advice on rehabilitating the park.

The physical rehabilitation of the park would take place immediately after the public relations campaign. The options outlined above would appeal to different segments of the population. The recommendation is that the options be implemented in phases. The initial phase would be to make the improvements outlined in \textbf{Option #1}, which focuses on making the park safer and more appealing to children, families, and young adults. The additional lighting and the elimination of the park as a shortcut would aid in rehabilitating the image of the park as unsafe. The second phase would be to make the improvements outlined in \textbf{Option #2} and would be implemented immediately after \textbf{Option #1} if finances permit. The improvements outlined in \textbf{Option #2} would create a revenue stream from the concerts and plays that could be performed once the bandshell is rehabilitated and permanent seating is in place. The improvements outlined

\textsuperscript{14} \url{https://corporate.homedepot.com/foundation/communityimpactgrants}
\textsuperscript{15} \url{https://www.wellsfargo.com/about/corporate-responsibility/community-giving/local/}
in **Option #3** would be the last phase of the rehabilitation of the park. Rehabilitating the trail would make the park appealing to outdoor enthusiasts and hikers. Once the trail was rehabilitated it could be maintained by volunteer groups with local schools or Scouting organizations.

Following the completion of the rehabilitation there would be a grand reopening of the park. Another public relations campaign would advertise the reopening of the park. The reopening would include special events including a concert, a 5K race, and the opening of a community garden near the current greenhouse. The community garden would consist of raised planting beds available for residents to plant vegetables. Community gardens have been shown to have a positive impact on urban communities, creating an awareness of the benefits of healthy food and bringing a community together (DeMuro 2013). This public relations campaign, combined with these three phases to rehabilitate the park would meet the goals of the May 2017 Master Plan for Reservoir Park to increase overall use of the park, attract a wider and more diverse group of park users, build new and lasting park user groups, and create reasons to return to the park (City of Harrisburg 2017). Once rehabilitated, the park would be a source of pride for the community, creating a feeling of respect for the park which would, in turn, reduce crime.

**Policy Evaluation**

Evaluating the effects of implementing Option #1 and determining whether the recommendations have changed the way people view the park could be done by tracking the number of people who visit the park. Additionally, the crime rate in the park, like incidents of vandalism, could be tracked and compared with police statistics prior to the park’s renovation and after. Finally, a follow-up neighborhood meeting could be held with residents expressing their opinions on the new and improved park, or in the alternative, what they feel is still missing and whether their use of the park has changed. Tracking how many people visit the park to hear
concerts or visit the Civil War Museum could be used to evaluate Option #2. Tracking the number of people who visit the rangers station to obtain a trail map as well as which schools had activities in the park, scouting events held at the park, or volunteer activities in the park could be used to evaluate Option #3.

**Conclusion**

For Reservoir Park to realize its potential and provide social interactions it must be viewed as a safe venue and be well maintained. Currently the park has a bad reputation due to misuse and the fact that it is in an area that experiences a high degree of crime. Changing the way residents view the park, by offering a rehabilitated and safer park could change people’s perceptions. A public relations campaign followed by implementing changes to the park to make it safer and more appealing to many residents could change the way people view the park and bring them back to it.
Competing with Front Street  
Authors: Wentling (Scot) Holmes, Alex Lardarello, and Jeremy Mumma

The Competing with Front Street section of this report has been developed to address the desire of the city of Harrisburg to increase foot traffic at Reservoir Park. We believe that the best way to accomplish this is to make Reservoir Park a more desirable venue for local community and city events and festivals. A large hurdle that needs to be overcome is the fact that most the city’s most popular events are well established on Front Street.

This section will discuss some history of the park and its current state. It will also provide many possible solutions based on best practices from other park revitalizations. A brief assessment of the possible solutions will follow. We will provide our recommendations to increase the utilization of the park as well as options for evaluating the recommendations if adopted. We will also introduce the relevant actors whose involvement we believe would be constructive, if not critical, for any of this to move forward with success.

Background

Reservoir Park is part of the Capital Area Greenbelt. This is a twenty-mile greenway surrounding parts of Harrisburg. It is the largest park in the municipality, covering approximately 85 acres. On its acreage, Reservoir Park is home to the National Civil War Museum and hosts several of the city’s festivals and performances. The park is nestled in the Allison Hill neighborhood of Harrisburg. The park’s lineage can be traced back to 1845, and in 1872 a reservoir for the city was built outside the city on Prospect Hill (Shelly 2018). The site boasts views of the State Capital, the Susquehanna River, and the Blue Mountains. In 1880 the site was officially established as a city park.
Despite its storied history as an integral part of the culture of the city, the park has fallen into disrepair. This could be attributed to budget constraints to some extent. Although the current state of the park’s facilities is a contributing factor to its underutilization, it is not the only one. The physical terrain and layout of the park are not conducive to large events. Parking availability is limited and there is inadequate space for vendors to set up to support large events. Finally, the location is not as desirable as Front Street. The Allison Hill neighborhood has a negative stigma in the city. Although the stigma may not be deserved, the neighborhood may be considered more of a pass-through area than a destination by those outside of the city limits. If we are to increase the utilization of the park, we must change that perception.

Relevant Actors

Harrisburg City Council is one of the formal actors that has an interest in this project. The council is a body of seven elected members with a President that is elected by the council members. Their interest in this project resides in the conduct of their duties. As part of their duties they must consider and evaluate matters that include Community and Economic Development, Parks, Recreation and Enrichment, Public Safety, and Public Works.¹⁶

Also, within the city government there is the Bureau of Parks and Recreation. Their mission is to enhance the lives of City of Harrisburg residents and visitors by offering programs, services, and activities that encourage participation in recreational activities, leisure services and cultural experiences. The Bureau’s website also states that its goal is to have a public park system that provides a variety of recreation and special event programs.¹⁷ This is in line with what we will propose in how to compete with Front Street as a venue.

¹⁶ www.harrisburgpa.gov/city-council/
¹⁷ www.harrisburgpa.gov/bureau-of-parks-recreation/
For a relevant actor outside of government, we need not look much further than the borders of the park itself. The Bridge is a real estate development startup company and its founder and CEO Garry Gilliam, along with Jordan Hill, the Chief Community Officer are both former NFL football players who are from the Harrisburg area. The company’s goal is to transform old abandoned buildings into “eco-villages.” The company’s first project is the old Bishop McDevitt High School building that borders Reservoir Park (Figure 7). The plan for the building is for mixed use with housing, commercial/retail space, co-working, urban agriculture, innovation/education center and entertainment (Piper 2020). The company seems to be very community oriented and could be a good partner for mutually beneficial events held at the park.

Figure 7. Concept Art for The Bridge at the Old Bishop McDevitt High School

Image Source: Published with Permission from The Bridge (www.thebridgeecovillage.com)
Other relevant actors include the National Civil War Museum (Figure 8), vendors and performers from events held on Front Street, and of course the local community. Educational events and displays could be coordinated with the Civil war Museum; any foot traffic at the park could also benefit the museum. Vendors also have a key interest here; more utilization of the park and increased foot traffic would provide vendors and entertainment groups with more opportunities for their business.

**Figure 8. National Civil War Museum**

Image Source: Daniel J. Mallinson
Lastly, and possibly the most important of the relevant informal actors, is the local community itself. Community events such as basketball games and tournaments, sports banquets, local religious group events, and fundraisers could be held at the park. Meetings with the local community should help to gauge what types of events they would like to see in the park, and what type of events would be most successful in the community.

**Possible Solutions**

Many solutions can be offered on how Reservoir Park can compete with Front Street. Most importantly, we do not believe the park should compete with Front Street at all. We think complementing the events on Front Street would be the best way to go. There are ways to get the vendors to set up at the park along with setting up on Front Street. Vendors can set up at the park throughout different times of the year to supplement events and offer opportunities to vendors and performers that were unable participate in the events on Front Street.

*Get the Community Involved*

Reservoir Park can offer similar solutions to that of FDR Park used in Philadelphia. FDR Park had to rebuilt after a major flood. They engaged community members in numerous ways to develop a master plan and repaired and revitalized the park. One of the ways that the city got community members involved, which Harrisburg can do as well, is conducting surveys. FDR park surveyed community members to see what was most valued by people in a park, how people will utilize the park, and the most desired programs and activities. They also conducted community meetings to discuss fixing up the park, including activities and items that community members will use (Fairmount Park Conservancy 2019).
Community meetings would be an opportunity to get relevant actors, such as City Council and the Bureau of Parks and Recreation, involved with the community on this project. Community meetings are also a great opportunity to introduce The Bridge to the project. As they are an emerging part of this community, this project could be mutually beneficial to all involved. The Bridge hopes to have commercial space in their “eco-village” and adding those vendors to events at the park would help local businesses and help events held at the park have more of a local community feel.

*Survey Vendors & Groups*

Outside of surveying community members, the city can survey vendors from events held on Front Street, local bands or small theatre groups, recreational sports leagues, and church groups. The purpose of the surveys would be to figure out what these specific groups would need from the park to utilize the space available. Some sample questions that could be included in the survey are: “Why is Reservoir Park currently not a space used by your organization?” “What changes would your organization need to personally see to use the space provided at Reservoir Park?” “If those specific accommodations are met, will you consider using Reservoir Park in the future?”

*Personal Interviews*

The city can also send park personnel out to conduct personal interviews of the target audience, such as the vendors, sports leagues, churches, etc. That way, there is a face to face discussion about getting the specific group to utilize the park’s space. Similar questions can be asked that were included in the surveys, but the interviews are more personal and come across in
a more positive fashion. A personal interview makes the interviewer and interviewee more credible and provides valid and credible responses (Fairmount Park Conservancy 2019).

**Local News Media**

The local news media can be used to get the word out about the ideas for bringing people to the park. Earned media can help attract positive attention to the park while costing the city nothing. It is a great way to advertise the spaces and resources available at Reservoir Park. Places that can be advertised and discussed on the local news can be the basketball courts, the bandshell, open space by the Civil War Museum, pavilions, and the art buildings. The price for permits can be advertised as well so the groups know how much it is to use space at the park. This will work to the park’s advantage because it will be more affordable for vendors than Front Street or other areas.

**Infrastructure Improvements**

Other solutions that can be brought to the table are ideas discussed in the master plan put out by the city. Lawrence Binda (2017) writes that the master plan will be broken into seven phases. The first phase will cover all expensive items such as security and lighting. After that, phases will include adding new restrooms, handball courts, pavilions, more parking, and areas for food trucks to pull off (see Figure 1 above). The city’s plan is another option that could get the park to compete with Front Street.

Reservoir Park can also implement solutions that were found by Deborah Cohan and Kristen Leuschner from the RAND Corporation. In 2014, the RAND Corporation conducted a study of 174 parks in 25 major cities. The pair wanted to focus on “target” areas of parks, such as sports areas, picnic areas, skate parks, and seating areas. They found that skate parks and sports
areas are great for youth. However, to be successful, a park must be accessible to all age groups, to include seniors. Better walking trails, seating for concerts, and picnic areas are great for seniors and families. The two also concluded in their study that the parks having well paved and lit walking trails had higher usage of community members (Cohen and Leuschner 2017).

Additional physical solutions such as these can be incorporated into the Reservoir Park Master Plan. More seating can be added to the basketball courts by converting the tennis court area (see Figure 9). Additional seating for the basketball courts opens the opportunity to work with local recreational leagues to hold tournaments there. Also repurposing the tennis courts could allow for a food truck area where vendors could offer concessions for such tournaments.

**Figure 9. Basketball (Left) and Tennis (Right) Courts**
Certain spots of Reservoir Park have a decent amount of open area. A skate park could be a positive option for one of these spaces. Youth enjoy skating, and if there is a local area for them to do so that is safe, it could increase usage of the park. Though the city will have to work though the liability exposure for such an option. Finally, the park can update the walking trails. Reservoir Park provides a very scenic view and would be a great place for a hike. More updated and better lit walking trails will indeed attract more users (e.g., Figure 10).

Figure 10. Example Lighted Park Path

Source: Peakpx, CC0
For all these physical alterations to the park, acquiring the proper permits from the city to dig, grade, or pave areas of the park, along with environmental considerations would have to be considered.

Summary of the Options

In all, there are many solutions that can be offered to get groups to utilize the space available at Reservoir Park, even if they attend events on Front Street. The park can collect information from specific groups such as Arts Fest vendors, recreational leagues for sports, small theater or bands, and church groups to find out what to include in the master plan to get these groups to the park. The information can be collected from surveys, like what was done for FDR Park in Philadelphia. It also can be collected through personal interviews. The park’s Master Plan offer other potential options, such as park security and lighting, new restrooms, handball courts, pavilions, more parking, and food truck pull offs. Additional physical solutions can also be implemented such as skate parks, more seating and better paved and lit trails. All these ideas will increase foot traffic to the park and allow it to be utilized to its full capacity.

Assess the Solutions

While there are many potential solutions to solving the issue of the usage of Reservoir Park, each of them presents their own challenges. In large part, the solutions presented involve shoring up the available infrastructure based on the previous Master Plan and community outreach. As we have learned, Master Plan can be used as a guide for moving forward.

Changes to the park itself such as the construction of seating could present an economic hurdle. To determine the size of this hurdle, first we took into consideration the cost of grading the land to accommodate the construction. Grading a slope of the size of Reservoir Park, or even
the area near the bandshell to allow for stadium seating could prove quite costly. According to
thumtack.com, a website used to provide high level estimates and connect consumers with
professionals who can complete projects, grading of a slope is generally charged by the cubic
yard of dirt (between $1 and $15 per yard). In this case, we would imagine this being on the
higher end of the scale, given the location and accessibility. Just as a rough estimate and using
the high end of the scale, the cost to grade about 2,000 square feet of Reservoir Park to
accommodate seating would be approximately $30,000. Then on top of that we can estimate a
10-row elevated bleacher to cost upwards of $14,000.00, this would however accommodate
people with disabilities. In November of 2019 State Representative Patty Kim announced a
$250,000 grant to help Reservoir park become compliant with the Americans with Disabilities
Act (Kim 2019). The stadium seating would include a ramp and area for handicapped people to
safely watch any show, the cost could then be taken from the $250,000 grant being provided to
Reservoir Park to ensure that it can be brought into compliance with the ADA.

Permits would also need to be acquired for a project of this scale. According to the
Central Keystone Council of Governments website, commercial building permits follow a “per
square foot” Construction Cost Table using the formula: (Square Ft. of Construction Cost/Use
Group X Square Footage X .0066).\(^{19}\) Using the same 2,000 square foot estimate, permits would
add an additional 200.00 dollars to the cost of the construction.

For the most part, the walking trails should be covered under the grant procured by
Representative Kim, however some of the other projects, such as creating a more usable space by
grading the rather substantial slope of most of the park, could prove costly. The advantage of

\(^{19}\) https://www.ckcog.com/services/building-permits/
spending the money to grade this area and construct seating would seem to be a net positive, allowing better accessibility, with the addition of an accessible area that is graded and with ramps for the disabled so they need not be excluded from events on an otherwise insurmountable hill. Increased visitor comfort and, ultimately, increased usage, could very well be a positive side effect of these improvements.

To determine the best solution to increase the utilization of the park we are proposing a two-part outreach. First, we are proposing contacting the vendors, individuals and artists who take part in other festivals in the area. There are challenges associated with both public surveys and canvassing. Suspicion of the survey would be a large hurdle for anyone surveying the Allison Hill area. The public may fear what their neighbors might think, and they may fear retribution by the city if they are honest. Further, door to door canvassing would likely result in a “Hawthorne effect” in which the respondent is responding to subconscious queues given by the surveyor (Spencer and Mahtani 2020).

It is important to conduct outreach not only on parties that currently utilize other local outdoor venues, but also reach out to segments of the business community that may potentially be interested in an outdoor event. This can be done through the Chamber of Commerce. The city may want to focus on newer companies that recently joined the Chamber or businesses with low exposure. It would also be valuable to examine the list of vendors who either applied or were rejected for a permit to Reservoir Park as well as Front Street or Fort Hunter and why they were rejected. With this information, a targeted outreach could be conducted to propose Reservoir Park as a venue rather than Front street. Additionally, information regarding single year vendors could be used for outreach. Understanding what may have caused a vendor to be involved with a festival one year and then decide not to participate in future festivals would be valuable when
determining how the park can be utilized as an alternative to the more prominent outdoor venues in the Harrisburg area.

**Recommendations**

*Building Relationships & Information Sharing*

Our first recommendation is to conduct town hall style meetings in the community. These meetings would serve as an introduction of the relevant actors to one another. They should include at least one City Council member, a Bureau of Parks and Recreation official, a National Civil War Museum representative, a representative of The Bridge LLC, and any local community members who would like to attend. At the meeting the discussion should include topics such as what is most valued by the local community in a park, how people will utilize the park, and the most desired programs and activities. Government officials can communicate what they can bring to the park and discuss what has already been laid out in the city’s Master Plan. The Bridge LLC and the Civil War Museum representatives can discuss with government officials and the local community members how they can be better integrated into events held at the park.

The second phase of this first recommendation would be to canvas vendors that have participated in other events in the area. This canvasing should be aimed at determining what these vendors would need from the park to utilize the space available. Other groups, such as local bands or small theatre groups, recreational sports leagues, and church groups, should also be canvased to discern the level of interest in using Reservoir Park as a venue for their events.
Physical Changes

After collecting the data mentioned above, the city could move to this second recommendation. Physical changes to Reservoir Park would help it compete with Front Street as a desirable venue for events. Any specific data gathered from the first recommendation should also be considered here, but there are additional things to consider.

First, using the grants mentioned in the Assess Solutions section of this document, improve the trails throughout the park. Permanent seating for the bandshell should also be added. Additional pavilions would provide more shaded seating to support events as well. Improvements to the existing pavilion would make it a viable option in any weather condition or season. The basketball courts should be updated, and the adjacent tennis courts would serve the park better if they were repurposed. The tennis courts are underutilized and take up space that could be put to better use for the community as well as a source of increased revenue for the city. The tennis courts could be made into an additional seating area for the basketball courts and a food truck area. This would allow for basketball tournaments with youth and recreational leagues that food truck vendors could provide concessions for.

Second, and related, two food truck areas should be established at the park. The first food truck area was already mentioned above, it would be located on what is currently the tennis courts. The second should be near the bandshell. Both food truck areas would require water and electricity to be available. All these physical changes to the park would require proper permitting and would have to meet ADA and environmental standards. This would be at an additional cost to the physical upgrades themselves.
Advertising

Lastly, we recommend a well thought out media strategy to generate earned media, so as not to add to budgetary constraints.

1. The local news is one way to advertise. Push information out to local reporters about the town hall meetings, about collaborations The Bridge and local Vendors, and about planned physical changes to the park.

2. There is also opportunity on the internet. Government websites, pennlive.com, explorehbg.com, or visityersheyharrisburg.org to name a few examples. Social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter are great as well.

3. The City could advertise directly to the vendors, theatre groups, local bands, recreational and youth sports leagues, and church groups themselves. A good place to start would be records of vendor applications from other events around the city. Phone calls or flyers via email could be sent out at no cost.

4. Lower park fees or offer a discounted rate when advertising to groups for at least the first year. This could incentivize these organizations to use the park and see what it has to offer them. We have provided a side by side comparison of fees for similar usages of Reservoir Park (Figures 11 and 12) and Fort Hunter (Figure 13), which is outside of the city. Also provided are the current rates for Food Trucks at events on Front Street such as Arts Fest (Figure 14) and Kipona (Figure 15). You will see that there is room for discounts on the current prices.
**Figure 11. Reservoir Park Vendor Permit Fees, Part 1**

**Special Events Permits**
Charge for vendor permit depends upon space and utility needs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reservoir Park Pavilion (no electricity or water available)</th>
<th>Nonresident</th>
<th>Resident</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.</td>
<td>$230</td>
<td>$100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extra picnic tables (6 provided)</td>
<td>No. of tables x $15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charging admission/registration fee/fundraiser or event</td>
<td>$50</td>
<td>$25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operating concession (no electric or water available)</td>
<td>$50</td>
<td>$25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reservoir Park Bandshell (bandshell power only)</th>
<th>Nonresident</th>
<th>Resident</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.</td>
<td>$250</td>
<td>$150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charging admission/registration fee/fundraiser or event</td>
<td>$100</td>
<td>$50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operating concession (no electric or water available)</td>
<td>$50</td>
<td>$25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For music/drama productions sound is available for a fee. Any sound vendors hired by a permit applicant must be preapproved by the Director before a permit is issued. Permit holder must show proof of insurance covering sound vendor or production company equipment used. For non-City-produced events, additional staff time may be charged at $100 per hour.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reservoir Park, Large Fountain, or Evolution Sculpture Area</th>
<th>Nonresident</th>
<th>Resident</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All day, no electric, restrooms, or water available</td>
<td>$50</td>
<td>$25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charging admission/registration fee/fundraiser or event</td>
<td>$50</td>
<td>$25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reservoir Park Basketball Court</th>
<th>Nonresident</th>
<th>Resident</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m., per court</td>
<td>$50</td>
<td>$25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of additional consecutive days x $15 (nonres. and res.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charging admission/registration fee/fundraiser or event</td>
<td>$125</td>
<td>$75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Editor's Note: This ordinance stated that fee changes would be implemented effective 1-1-2014.

Image Source: City of Harrisburg Administrative Fees

**Figure 12. Reservoir Park Vendor Permit Fees, Part 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reservoir Park Tennis Courts</th>
<th>Nonresident</th>
<th>Resident</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m., per court</td>
<td>$75</td>
<td>$50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of additional consecutive days x $15 (nonres. and res.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charging admission/registration fee/fundraiser or event</td>
<td>$50</td>
<td>$25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operating concession (no electric or water available)</td>
<td>$50</td>
<td>$25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reservoir Park Mansion Porch, Garden and Other Areas</th>
<th>Nonresident</th>
<th>Resident</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mansion porch and gardens</td>
<td>$150</td>
<td>$75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charging admission/registration fee/fundraiser or event</td>
<td>$100</td>
<td>$50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brownstone fee</td>
<td>$250</td>
<td>$150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other area</td>
<td>$100</td>
<td>$50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Image Source: City of Harrisburg Administrative Fees
Figure 13. Fort Hunter Facility Rental Fees

Facility Rental Fees
(check off facility below that you would like to rent)

Pavilions:
☐ Fort Hunter West Pavilion (river side) - Susquehanna Township ------------------ $50/day
  Seats 48 people - has grill, has electricity
☐ Fort Hunter East Pavilion (barn side) - Susquehanna Township ------------------ $100/day
  Seats 60 people - has grill, has electricity
☐ Wildwood Olewine Pavilion - Harrisburg ---------------------------------------- $100/day
  Seats 64 people - has grill, has electricity
☐ Wildwood North Pavilion - Harrisburg ----------------------------------------- $50/day
  Seats 32 people - has grill, no electricity
☐ Lykens Glen Small Pavilion - Lykens ------------------------------------------ $50/day
  Seats 48 people - has grill, no electricity
☐ Lykens Glen Large Pavilion - Lykens ---------------------------------------- $100/day
  Seats 160 people - has grill, has electricity
☐ Wiconisco Creek Pavilion - Millersburg -------------------------------------- $50/day
  Seats 35 people - has grill, has electricity

Image Source: Dauphin County Facility Rental Form

Figure 14. 2020 Arts Fest Food Vendor Fees

Vendor Fee and Space Requirement
☐ 10’x10’ vendor fee: $300
☐ 20’x10’ vendor fee: $450

*Dimensions should be just for your tent.
*Do NOT include any support vehicles or auxiliary items in your dimensions. Support vehicles and trailers must be parked off site (see page two).

These fees will increase by $50 if you submit your application after March 9.

Image Source: City of Harrisburg
Policy Evaluation

Our first recommendation of town hall style meetings and canvasing of vendors and organizations is difficult to evaluate. However, one way of doing so is simply tracking the number of attendees to the meetings as well as the number of people reached in the canvasing. Along with tracking the number of participants, we also recommend tracking the amount of feedback given in these exchanges.

To track the usage of the park by the community, the city could have park staff do periodic spot counts at predetermined and comparable times. This data could then be measured against data obtained prior to the changes. It is important to have sufficient data before and after the policy changes to see if they work. Also, the number of reservations for individual areas of the park, such as the bandshell, pavilions, and basketball courts should be recorded.

Evaluating vendor interest is as simple as tracking the number of applications requested or downloaded and submitted for events held at the park. This would also gauge how well the
advertising is working. The city could track visits to its website, especially visits to any section of the site that have to do with events advertised, and again applications downloaded from the site.

**Conclusion**

We do not believe Reservoir Park should be in direct competition with Front Street. Instead, the city should invest in physical improvements to Reservoir Park that make it more appealing as a venue, engage in community outreach to local businesses and residents, and make a concerted effort to incentivize and make it easier for vendor to utilize the park in support of events. A strategic scheduling plan should be developed for events held at the park to work around dates that compete directly with Front Street events, and act as more of an annex to those events. This could help vendors and event goers who may have missed out on a Front Street event.

Finally, a strong advertising campaign of the physical changes to the park, as well as the connection to local businesses and the incentives that vendors, groups, and organizations can take advantage of would greatly increase the overall usage of Reservoir Park.
Acknowledgements

I (Dr. Mallinson) would like to thank several individuals for their support of this project. First, I must thank Councilman Dave Madsen for his support in developing this partnership with the city. We piloted this approach to offering my public policy students the opportunity to provide meaningful research to the City of Harrisburg in my 2019 course. This report effort builds on that experience and ongoing relationship. I am grateful for the Keystone Chapter of the American Society for Public Administration for recognizing this relationship, as well as others between Penn State Harrisburg’s School of Public Affairs and the City of Harrisburg with the 2020 Innovative Public Service Partnership Award. I would also like to thank Kirk Petroski for his help in developing a project topic. A thank you to Kevin Sanders for speaking with my students outside on a cold and windy February day when we visited the park. Thanks go to our librarian Emily Reed for cultivating great resources for my students and helping them learn how to be better researchers. Finally, I would like to thank my students. They got excited about this project just in time for us to be forced to remote learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic. They persevered and provided an admirable product given all the constraints the situation threw their way.
References


[https://worldpopulationreview.com/](https://worldpopulationreview.com/).


