PLAYTIME PRESERVATION:
PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS IN PUBLIC LAND MANAGEMENT

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Emily Mae Phillips Neal

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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science in the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences of Northeastern University, January 2010
One of the enduring questions that have vexed public officials and private individuals in the United States as long as the country has existed concerns the way in which communities provide services to citizens, especially when those services are costly. What is the proper role of government in providing these services? A variety of this problem has plagued US parks officials and other managers of public land for as long as there has been land to manage. Should the government manage public land? If so, what activities should managers allow to take place there? How can the various uses of public parks be balanced against one another in a way that ensures the health and availability of this resource to future generations? Moreover, how can public managers finance these uses, given the declining availability of public funds? In recent years, public land managers have increasingly turned to the private sector to aid in the administration and management of public parks. The major aim of this study is to discover the conditions under which public-private partnerships for public land, public parks in particular, are effective in aiding in the provision of public recreation opportunities. This study considers partnerships between public land managers and the private sector in terms of their consistency with the broader aims of public land management. The effectiveness of public-private partnerships in managing public parks is assessed at the start-up, growth, and mature/institutionalized stages of partnership development. Partnership success is found to be contingent upon the availability of resources, both at the start-up and growth stages of development, the organizational environment in which the partnership operates, partner characteristics, the relationships between partners, and characteristics of the partnership organization.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

_Glamis, California_. It is hot in the desert today. Students are running tape measure and laying it down for land transects, as the sun beats down upon them. Off in the distance are the watery patterns of a mirage and, on occasion, a revving motor cuts through the quiet. The students are organized in groups: half of them work on one side of California Highway 78, within the North Algodones Dunes. The other half work on the dunes on the opposite side of the highway, in Mammoth Wash. Today, explains the students’ conservation biology professor, the objective is to count the number and types of plant and animal species encountered within each transect on either side of the highway.

The dunes being studied are a part of the Imperial Sand Dunes, California’s largest expanse of dunes. They are 45 miles in length and 6 miles in width, and the area is a spectacular sight and can be seen even from space. As far as the students can tell, there is no difference between the two areas, save the fact that the 25,818 acres comprising the North Algodones Dunes side has been closed to motorized use since 1994, when the California Desert Protection Act was enacted. Mammoth Wash on the south side of Highway 78, is open to recreational use, in particular, off-highway vehicles (OHVs).

This is an all day field trip. Or at least it was supposed to be. Students studying the Mammoth Wash side of the Imperial Dunes finish first. Working in teams, the
students are quick to discover that there is nothing for them to count, save grains of sand. Those working on the North Algodones side however, grow tired. “It has been three hours and we are only through four transects!” the students complain. It turns out that their side of the highway features a multitude of shrubs, cacti, and small plants, including dozens of species that are endemic only to the Imperial Dunes. Pierson’s Milkvetch (Astragalus magadalena var. piersonii), for example, is classified a threatened species by the federal government and an endangered one by the state of California and is found rarely outside this desert environment and even then, only when there has been enough rain. This vegetation, along with several species of lizards means that it will take the students quite some time to finish counting everything that appears in their research area.

Later, as the sun sets, the students begin cooking camp food while discussing the day’s research with their professor. What might explain the great disparity in the number of species found on the two dune sites? Why is there a great number and diversity of species found in the North Algodones transects while there nothing found in the Mammoth Wash transects? What is the limiting factor? Scientists who have studied the dunes before have suggested a possible link between the dearth of living things on the Mammoth Wash side of the dunes and the motorized activity allowed there. In fact, explains the professor, one study showed that the population of Pierson’s Milkvetch grows in 3.5% of the total dune area and that approximately 73% of the observed population occurred in areas that were closed to OHV activity (McKinney 2006). The students are left to wonder: could human activity be the reason for this difference and, if so, what ought to be done about it?
Coronado National Forest, Tucson, Arizona. “It is so nice to gain elevation – it is such a respite from the desert,” comments a former park ranger-turned-professor. He says this to a small group of students, his mentees for the semester, as they hike up a steep incline. This is an educational field trip, with plans to visit a number of recreational sites in the Coronado Forest. The first site the group visits is a former off-highway vehicle recreation location. Students note that the area is marked by compacted soils and noticeable erosion. Exposed tree roots jut arthritically from the soil and virtually no underbrush is seen. Members of a local wilderness organization, the Sky Island Alliance work nearby to restore this now-roadless area.

The Sky Island Alliance members tell the students that areas such as the Coronado National Forest serve as *de facto* storehouses for important and sensitive animal and plant species. In the future, these species may prove crucial to the overall health of the ecosystem, perhaps even to the health of the human community. Some students ask, is it ethical to place the health and well being of the nonhuman environment above human recreational opportunities? Is it fair to restrict the activities of humans in their environment?

The students continue their hike, moving away from the better-known trails toward the backcountry area. Here, the students see a wide variety of trees, shrubs, and brush as well as the season’s first wildflowers. The soil is rocky, but porous with no exposed tree roots presenting walking hazards. This part of the world has never heard the sound of a motor. One student wishes that her grandparents could see this place and
understand why she wants so badly to protect it. Another answers, “Your grandparents couldn’t make it up here! It is one thing to oppose roads and motorized recreation, but how can we get people to care about the environment if they are physically unable to access it?”

*Boston, Massachusetts.* It is a beautiful day in downtown Boston; still early enough that the sun bounces off of the Charles River, temporarily blinding the people walking, running, or biking down the Esplanade. This is the stuff of postcards and Chambers of Commerce websites – a beautiful city bordered by an impossibly green park. Maintaining this area has not been an easy task, in fact government officials have had to supplement their revenue with private donations to keep their commitments. Between tax revenue and private donations, the city has maintained its part of the Emerald Necklace, however not all of the city’s parks have enjoyed the same level of attention.

The Belle Isle Marsh Reservation in East Boston, for example, has only one employee to maintain all of its 260 acres. This has meant a sharp decline in the number of educational opportunities available to local schools. The Southwest Corridor Park near Roxbury and Jamaica Plain was once maintained by over 20 personnel. Now, the nearly 5 mile park has only 3 maintenance officials servicing it. Many of Boston’s lesser-known parks are inaccessible via public transportation and require crossing busy thoroughfares to get to them. Most distressing is that researchers at the Harvard School of Public Health found that park and playground conditions varied by socioeconomic conditions. “[Public]
playgrounds in areas with a greater proportion of black residents tended, on average, to have lower safety scores” (Cradock et al. 2005).

The Debate over Managing the Commons

What does each of the narratives above have in common? Each one represents a variety of the problem that has plagued US parks officials for as long as there has been land to manage. Should the government manage public land? If so, what activities should managers allow to take place there? How can the various uses of public parks be balanced against one another in a way that ensures the health and availability of this resource to future generations? Moreover, how can public managers finance these uses, given the declining availability of public funds? Why do some park management and financing strategies work in urban locales while they fail in larger parks found in the rural West?

These questions spur on much heated debate within the parks community. While fascinating, the debate is not unique. Those charged with governing are faced with a question that has vexed public officials and private individuals in the United States for as long as the country has existed. How should communities provide services to its citizens, especially when those services are costly? Moreover, what is the proper role of government in providing these services?

Land managed in the public interest, parks in particular, is one service that public officials have struggled to maintain in the face of rising administrative and maintenance costs. Indeed, the very notion of public land hearkens to Garret Hardin’s seminal article
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(1968) about the tragedy of the commons. Deborah Stone notes that parks and other common pool resources require government intervention to curb rational private actions that lead to deleterious effects for the entire polis (2002). However, criticism of public management of parks and other public lands has led to calls for reform. Though some critics have called for full privatization of public parks in both urban and rural areas, most have eschewed turning public management over to the private sector, wholesale. Instead, many scholars have called for the establishment of partnerships between the public and private sectors, with an eye toward bringing together the best aspects of both.

In the United States, there has been an historic separation between the public and private sectors. Despite this separation, Linder and Rosenau (2000, 2) argue that “the definition of what [is] private and what [is] public has [not] been stable over time.” In fact, much of what we consider to be within the purview of the public sector today was provided by the private sector in the past. During the early 19th century, basic sewerage systems and water supplies were attended to by private citizens. Fire and police protection was provided to the citizenry through private companies (Fosler and Berger 1982). Public officials of the period found that even prisons could be profitable and therefore some states allowed private firms and individuals to build prisons as well as to manage them on a day-to-day basis (Schneider 2000).

As the 19th century drew to a close and the United States became increasingly urbanized, the role of government in society grew larger. Physical infrastructure was required to accommodate the increasingly dense population, and since such infrastructure required a lot of investment but did not generate much profit, the job of building it fell on
the shoulders of government. The state also took more responsibility in ensuring a minimum amount of protection from the unforeseen. When water supplies became polluted, governments built the dams and laid the pipeline necessary to stem it. As widening economic, ethnic, and racial divisions created unrest, governments took responsibility for training and maintaining police forces. The public sector assumed responsibility for these civic functions because “private sector organizations were assumed to be less committed [and it was believed] they [would not] do as good a job” (Linder and Rosenau 2000, 3).

Current Critiques of Private Management

Today, the tone of the critiques against the private provision of collective services remains much the same. One reason scholars and practitioners of public policy are wary of the private provision of collective goods is that a private entity might initially gain a contract for services (with a local government, for example) by “low-balling,” or bidding on a contract at a level lower than the actual cost required to gain the contract. Once the entity has secured the contract, making the locality dependent upon the privately-provided services, the contractors may raise the price to recover their losses (Poole Jr.

1 Linder and Rosenau (2000) explain that many individuals in the late 19th century and early 20th century did not have faith in the private sector’s ability to provide essential services. The authors discuss private sector armies, mercenaries, as an example of the ways in which privately-provided services can fail. A soldier of fortune might agree to serve a particular government when inducements like citizenship are offered. However, since mercenaries have historically placed their own interests above any allegiance to a ruler or government, many power elites would prefer to rely on an all-voluntary, government-regulated army for national defense.
and Fixler Jr. 1987a). Since the private entity now has a monopoly on the service provided, it becomes much more difficult to prevent the entity from increasing prices.

Criticisms of the private provision of collective services also focus on the issue of corruption. Citing a study by the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), Poole and Fixler note that there are dozens of examples of corrupted contracting processes, such as kickbacks, bid-rigging, price-fixing, and payoffs. A basic solution to this problem, the authors argue, is to make use of clearly defined Requests for Proposals and to engage in an open and rigorous bidding process (1987b). Still, despite the use of these procedures corruption may remain a problem, especially when contracting collective services out to private entities. Corruption is particularly prevalent in the contracting process because there are frequently large sums of money at stake, not to mention a considerable amount of discretion given to contracting officers. Hence, “the stakes for private parties are often high, and they may be willing to go to the edge of the law” to achieve their goals (Moe 1987, 458).

The private sector is also criticized for providing lower quality services when it becomes responsible for providing them. In the absence of clearly defined expectations or specifications, service quality may decline. Profit motives can keep private entities overly focused on curbing costs, which in turn might require cutbacks in services offered or in the frequency of service delivery. Some scholars posit that this can be remedied when monitoring and reporting systems are in place to keep government officials aware of service quality (Poole Jr. and Fixler Jr. 1987a).
A related issue is that of *accountability*. Public officials are accountable, directly or indirectly, to the electorate whereas private officials are accountable only to their shareholders. If something goes wrong with the private delivery of a collective service, who is held accountable? What guarantees are in place to ensure that a locality is not left in the lurch by a failed private endeavor? As with the issue of service quality, a solution may be to improve the systems used to monitor contracts and service provision. Even so, accountability or blame is less easily assigned when private entities provide collective services.

Finally, private provision of collective services raises questions of *equity*. In particular, services provided on a “pay-as-you-go” or “pay-to-play” basis can restrict access for those least able to pay and perhaps those most in need. In the case of access to public parks, equity should not be interpreted merely as the redistribution of recreational opportunities. Instead “fairness and equal opportunity are part of the issue” (Pack 1987, 529). Private entities have every incentive to deny services to individuals who would require assistance to pay for those services. Given the nature of collective goods and services – they are perceived to belong to everyone or that they ought to go to everyone – the question of service denial based on ability to pay is particularly controversial.

**Critiques of Public Management**

In the debate over the proper way to provide for the public, criticisms of pure public provision of services are just as important. Advocates of moving more collective services into the purview of the private sector, as well as policy scholars in general, have
argued that the public sector is inefficient. The chief reason for this is that the government is charged with the responsibility of making sure the distribution of resources and services is equitable. In trying to ensure equity, efficiency suffers. This so-called “equity-efficiency trade-off” happens for several reasons. First, if the chief motivation for people to work is need, then “equality eliminates the differential rewards necessary to motivate people to be productive.” If government insures an equal distribution of goods and services, the argument goes, what incentive do people have to work to achieve those goods and services (Stone 2002, 80)?

Second, efficiency suffers when the government insists on equity because it must interfere constantly in policy decisions to attain its goal. Interference for the sake of equity prevents innovation and experimentation. Moreover, the policy of equality requires a large bureaucracy to enforce it and, in enforcing equality, the organization might suppress policy innovations meant to increase efficiency. Related to this is the third reason – the waste argument. The machinery required to enforce a policy of equality is a loss of valuable resources. The labor and materials necessary to ensure equity could be used in a more efficient manner (Stone 2002). Moving collective services out of the public sector allows the private sector to provide more of them, leading to an increase in economic efficiency (Tuckman 1985).

Increased economic efficiency theoretically leads to budget savings. When resources are used more efficiently, costs are kept low, keeping budgets in the black. Critics of the public sector look specifically at the public budgeting process when making the argument for more private provision of public goods and services. If the bureaucrat is
assumed to maximize utility based on rationality and survival arguments, then expanding the bureaucratic budget is crucial to the bureaucrat’s survival (Niskanen 1971; Blais and Dion 1990). When budgets are maximized, efficiency suffers because resources are used to inflate the importance of the bureaucracy. While this may save the jobs of those within the bureaucracy, it also drives up deficits (Wildavsky 1964, 1978).

Another important critique of public sector management is that public officials might make decisions about collective services based on short term political need and not on a thorough survey of all policy options. It may well be “pragmatic,” in fact, to base decisions on politics. After all, decision makers in government, while accountable to the public, are also reliant on the cooperation of other decision makers. Bargaining and compromise can lead to the inefficient distribution of resources and services in the long-term even if it serves political needs in the short-term. Moreover, government officials such as those with seats in the United States House of Representatives face the specter of re-election frequently enough that they must convince their constituencies of their value. What better way to do so than by bringing resources and services back home? Again, this is a politically expedient decision but it is also one that can result in sub-optimal service delivery and resource distribution over the long term.

Public sector management of public goods may also be made difficult by the fact that “the constraints on public managers are tremendous – certainly greater than on private managers” (Bailey 1987, 141). Bureaucratic constraints are typically greater because there are much more elaborate rules on how public servants operate, versus the private sector. Public managers must consider the reactions of the citizenry and the press
as well as labor (union or otherwise) – and elected officials – when making their decisions. The public sector is held to a higher standard of accountability than the private sector. (E.g., Congressional or legislative rules on reporting, public records laws, sunshine/sunset provisions, etc.) Additionally, when choosing amongst policy alternatives, “no homogeneity exists in the criteria of policy choice as there is in the private sector” (Ibid.). Rarely can a rigid line be drawn between what is fact and what is an ideological interpretation of fact. This means that coming up with an objective way to decide how best to manage collective resources or services is difficult, if not impossible.

Critiques of public sector management move beyond notions of efficiency, politics, and cost savings when advocating for the private management of collective services. Competition and choice, they argue, will expand the options available to individuals seeking a service while continuing to serve the essential functions of traditional public programs (Starr 1987). Indeed, increased choice may promote equity. For example, while wealthy neighborhoods tend to have meticulously kept parks and recreational areas, many poor neighborhoods do not. Proponents of the partial privatization of public parks argue that by creating partnerships between the public and private sectors to fund parks maintenance projects, more poor neighborhoods will have access to high-quality recreational opportunities.

(Rainey et al. 1976) suggest that while critiques of the public and private sectors are abundant, the sectors are simply different. Moreover, the “differences in public and private organizations…have implications for their management” (Ibid., 233). In their review of the public administration literature, the authors conclude that public and private
sector organizations may be distinguished from one another in three important ways: the environmental factors affecting organizational performance and decision making, the transactional factors affecting the relationship between the organization and its environment, and the internal structures and processes of organizational decision making (Ibid.; Nutt and Backoff 1993; Nutt 1999).

An organization’s *environment* includes factors external to the organization itself but that nonetheless have influence over what the organization can do and what policies or programs it may produce. Nutt and Backoff (1993) classify environmental factors into market, legal and formal constraints, and political influence categories. Public organizations lack economic markets to provide them with resources. Given that markets enforce “relatively automatic penalties and rewards [thus providing] incentives to cost reduction, operating efficiency, and effective performance,” it is not surprising that public organizations are often perceived as less effective than their private counterparts (Rainey et al. 1976, 235). Instead, public organizations receive their resources from various appropriations processes and are therefore more likely to avoid cost reduction on the basis of political influences or on the basis of pressure from one “public interest” or another. Moreover, because they are financed by appropriations, managers of public organizations are likely to seek organizational growth through budget maximization, which reduces operating efficiency (Wildavsky 1964, 1978). Finally, the lack of a defined market means that public organizations do not have as ready a source of customer or client demand, of goals, or of performance measures like prices, sales, and profits. This information is helpful in achieving operating efficiency because it clarifies what
organizational objectives should be and how best to measure performance (Rainey et al. 1976).

Another environmental difference between public and private organizations is the legal and formal constraints that affect the autonomy and flexibility of the organization. Private organizations, of course, must obey the law as well as agency regulations, yet public organizations tend to be much more constrained. Public organizations have less choice with regard to rethinking service delivery, to adding services, or to removing services. “Court rulings…enabling legislation, and newly elected administrations all produce directives that public organizations must accept…this creates significant constraints on action” (Nutt and Backoff 1993, 216). This “legalism” or “legal habit” (Rainey et al. 1976) keeps public organizations from engaging management processes that could increase the efficiency of service delivery.

Political influence is another environmental factor affecting public sector performance. Beyond popular elections, political appointments, and other formal influences, public sector decision makers are influenced by interest group lobbyists and by interventions by members of Congress. Since public organizations must base their decisions on multiple, diverse interests, public agencies have to build support for their organization and services by building broad coalitions. In reaching out to diverse interests, organizational objectives and decision making criteria become much more complex (Rainey et al. 1976). Whereas a private organization might make its decisions based on a series of specific, closely-related factors, a public organization grapples with a much larger range of issues.
In dealing with environmental factors, public organizations develop important relationships with both governmental and non-governmental entities. These transactional relationships are the subject of much public scrutiny and are mediated by public ownership (Nutt 1999). Unlike private organizations, public organizations are unable to keep their strategic decision making secret. Open meetings laws and other legislation aimed at keeping the public aware of government decisions prevent public organizations from holding back information. Even in cases of national security, where sunshine laws may not apply, oversight mechanisms are in place, allowing organizational decisions to be reviewed by outsiders.

The fact that “public” implies ubiquitous ownership shapes the nature of the transactional relationships public organizations have with various stakeholders. Since everyone “owns” a public organization, everyone has a stake in it. As such, citizens expect public organizations to be responsive, accountable, fair, and honest, while they place much fewer demands on private organizations. Making decisions in ubiquitously owned agencies requires public managers to take into account the desires and expectations of the public when delivering services. Public comment periods, public announcements, community task forces, and other such mechanisms help to define a public organization’s mission. In addition, public organizations must coordinate their efforts with other governmental and non-governmental organizations, complicating the process of program or service delivery. “As a result, strategic decisions in public sector organizations create a complex web of transactions” that private sector organizations do
not have to take into account when engaging in decision making processes (Nutt 1999, 314).

A final difference between the public and private sectors are internal processes such as goals, the limits of authority, and performance expectations. Nutt (1999) argues that public organizations have multiple goals that are often in conflict. Additionally, public sector programs often lack benchmarks to measure performance based on agency goals. Instead, public organizations must find a balance between the demands of interest groups, the flux in organizational missions, and organizational manipulation by important stakeholders and third parties. The fact that public organizations lack autonomy and flexibility in decision making means that they have weaker power bases and less authority to make broad changes quickly. Thus a public parks manager might have ideas for improving the quality of recreational experiences on public land, but that manager is likely unable to implement those ideas without the approval of a legislature or another public body.

Since the goals of public organizations are ambiguous, it is difficult to set performance expectations (Dahl and Lindblom 1992). When performance expectations are unclear, it becomes difficult to recognize success and therefore to identify those people and processes that were instrumental to that success. If successes are hard to find, then so are failures. When performance expectations are vague, it is difficult to detect and rectify a failure early on. Also, unspecified performance expectations can result in a reduced sense of urgency in the public sector. There are elections held periodically, of course, resulting in the installation of new agency heads, however, it also creates a sort of
“inertia” where “scheduled interruptions lead to cautiousness, inflexibility, and low rates of innovation” (Nutt and Backoff 1993, 224; Rainey et al. 1976).

### The Collective Action Problem

This discourse on public versus private management of public programs and services is informed by the literature on collective action.

**Role of institutions:** During the early part of the 20\(^{th}\) century, economists of the institutional school, so named because, in an effort to explain how groups of individuals arrive at a collective decision, argued that institutions are “collective action in control, liberation and expansion of individual action” (Commons 1931). The institutional unit, a manifestation of collective action, be it a family structure, trade union, corporation, or bureaucratic agency, necessarily constrains some individual’s actions and liberalizes others. Institutional economists emphasized the social constraints institutions placed on human behavior, enabling or disabling individual choice.

**Rational choice perspectives:** Another perspective on the collective action problem is most famously argued by Mancur Olson (1965), who likened decision-making in the polis to decision-making in the market. Olson’s work fills in an important gap that institutional economists were not able to fill with modeling – values and goals. The “fuzziness” of individuals’ values and goals makes measuring them particularly difficult. Institutional economists and policy scientists dealt with the problem of measuring values and goals by leaving them largely out of the equation. Olson instead ignores all of the institutional constraints on (as well as institutional enabling of) human behavior and
focuses on only self-interested individuals who lack any formal social bond (Miller 1992).

From Olson’s “strong” approach to rational choice, institutions and institutional constraints are viewed as products of rational action themselves – institutions are the result of collective action, rather than the other way around. Using the assumption of the free-standing rational actor as a starting point, Olson then asks what must happen to induce individuals to act collectively. Unless the size of the collective is very small, the individual has very little influence over large-scale collective decision-making. This means that without some kind of coercion to force self-interested individuals to act in their collective interest, “rational self-interested individuals will not act to achieve their common or group interests” (Olson 1965, 2; Hardin 1968).

**Types of goods:** When making collective decisions, several scholars have argued that individual behavior will depend on whether the decision involves private or public goods (Buchanan 1968; Samuelson 1954). Private goods are goods that can be divided up and sold. By contrast, Samuelson (Samuelson 1954, 387) explains that public goods are “common in the sense that each individual’s consumption leads to no subtractions from any other individual’s consumption of the good…” In *The Logic of Collective Action*, Olson also distinguishes between public and private goods, and explains how rational, self-interested individuals might act one way when making decisions about public goods while they might act differently with regard to private goods. One factor at work in this case may be the size of the group itself. When dealing with large groups, for example, Olson argues that the rational, self-interested individual does not work to further the
interests of the collective unless coerced to do so. Yet perfect rationality in Olson’s sense is an ideal that is often approximated but rarely achieved, and there may be certain situations in which the individual seems to act more rationally than in others. Similarly, there may be times when a decision is rational from the group perspective, but not from the individual perspective.

Such is the case with public parks. Given that the costs of maintaining public parks are usually distributed broadly across the taxpaying public, the individual acting independently has every incentive to enjoy the parks but has no incentive to contribute to their maintenance, either by paying for upkeep or by enacting certain policies to ensure multiple and fair use. Garrett Hardin argues that as long as “[public lands] are open to all without limit…the values that visitors seek in the [lands] are steadily eroded. [If we continue] to treat the parks as commons…they will be of no value to anyone” (1968, 1245).

Beginning with the Articles of Confederation and later under the Constitution, territories not contained within the boundaries of the 13 original colonies were designated as public land. Today, public lands comprise about one quarter of the total land area of the United States and are found in most states, but with heaviest concentration in the western states. Agencies charged with the oversight of U.S. public lands, in particular the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), are mandated to “sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations” (Bureau of Land Management 2004).
Public lands pose a challenge to government for two reasons. First, they constitute what political economist James Buchanan terms “impure public goods,” that is, goods that are neither purely public nor purely private (Buchanan 1968). A pure public good is non-divisible, but the unregulated use of public lands can result in crowding, affecting the both the quality and quantity of the lands still available, making the goods partially divisible, in the sense that the amount of pristine landscape is potentially diminished by each use. Furthermore, while a pure public good (think of clean air) is non-excludable, users of public lands may have to pay for specific services, such as access to recreational sites located on public land, so the goods are therefore subject to exclusion (Lowry 1998).

Second, public lands can be thought of as “intergenerational goods”, or goods that belong to both current and future generations. Continued delivery of this particular kind of impure public good is difficult for several reasons. Divisibility of public lands involves both present and future generations – use of public land by today’s recreation enthusiast can impact the opportunities available to future consumers of public land. Moreover, because future generations are not yet born (or are newly born), calculating eventual demand for these goods is problematic. Finally, costs associated with the provision of such goods are borne, for the most part, by current generations (Ibid.). Those having to pay for recreation in the present may resist fee increases meant to insure the availability of public lands in the future.

Despite the difficulties in assuring the availability of intergenerational goods like public lands, most U.S. citizens do wish to provide them to their children and grandchildren. Lowry finds that a state’s ability to supply intergenerational goods to its
citizenry is “determined by the interaction of demand and supply conditions” (1998). These conditions are shaped by the input of supportive advocacy coalitions (Sabatier 1999) and the impact of a relevant public agency. Over its history the United States has satisfied both of these conditions, with several advocacy coalitions supporting the provision of public lands to current and future generations and with a public agency, the Department of the Interior or in the case of a municipality, the Parks Department, given the official mandate to oversee land management. Even with the satisfaction of these conditions, furnishing intergenerational goods like public parks by the government remains difficult.

How to Manage: Ideological differences between land managers have made the administration of public land in the public interest a complicated task. Prior to the nineteenth century, artists and writers were primary agents of environmental thought, and works by existentialists and transcendentalists like Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau, along with Hudson River artists George Catlin and Alfred Beirstadt encouraged Americans to think differently about the relationship between humanity and nature. Whereas nature had previously been thought of as a savage thing – evil, according to some – in need of taming, Emerson et al described nature as something necessary both for survival and spiritual enlightenment (Smith 2004).

Environmentally-minded individuals did not make resource degradation a political issue until the latter part of the nineteenth century. Wealthy men of the time (and they were men, for the most part), most notably John Muir, labeled themselves “conservationists” – today they would be called “preservationists” – and lobbied to set
aside certain tracts of land to keep them from human encroachment. The Conservationists were successful early on, establishing parks at Yosemite and Yellowstone and, according to Smith (2004), by the time the National Park Service was created in 1916, 137 parks fell under its jurisdiction.

The victories of early environmentalists were hard won. Some insisted that the only thing that the land set aside for preservation was good for was sightseeing, while other more “valuable” land could be settled or developed for other uses. Perhaps the two most prominent adherents to this view at the time were Theodore Roosevelt and Gifford Pinchot. Both men believed in the importance of resource conservation, redefined to mean “multiple use or the management of resources so as to return the maximum benefits for people” (Ibid., 16).

This schism in early environmental thought played itself out in the political arena, with Gifford Pinchot being appointed to head the Forestry Division of the Department of Agriculture. Even with his appointment, however, the debate between preservationists and conservationists continued. While Muir and the preservationists believed that there were values and uses associated with public land that did not necessarily lead to direct human benefit, Pinchot and the conservationists disagreed, instead adopting a more anthropocentric view of resource management. The utilitarian perspective of the managers of the Forestry Division demanded that the nation’s resources be managed in a way that does the most good for the most people. Preservationist critics argued that such a policy could result in the discounting of some of the public’s needs to make way for
other, more immediate uses. In fact, “the frustrated advocates of wilderness preservation had no choice but to call Pinchot a ‘deconservationist’” (Nash 1972, 71).

“Deconservationist” or not, Pinchot effectively shaped American thought on forestry and public land management as head of the Forestry Division (Gonzalez 1998). Unlike the “no use” attitude preservation-minded opinion leaders had at the close of the nineteenth century, “multiple use” has become the norm in modern public land management. However, this has not stopped current-era preservationists from protesting some land management decisions, especially those aimed at ameliorating the declining budgets of land management agencies. The Wilderness Society, for example, has its origins in a reaction to New Deal era road building and other economic development programs (Bosso 2005). It and other preservationist-oriented organizations seek to “save from invasion that extremely minor fraction of outdoor America which yet remains free from mechanical sights and sounds and smell” – a goal that is not always consistent with multiple use (The Wilderness Society 2006).

The debate over how exactly to use and manage public lands, parks in particular, continues today in a context of increasing clientele and decreasing budgets. In recent years, there has been a tremendous increase in the use of some 261 million acres of public land managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). Overall recreation on public land increased 94 percent between 1981 and 1994, with an approximate 65 percent increase in visitations to BLM land and an 80 percent increase in visits to National Wildlife Refuges. The Department of the Interior has said that between 1985 and the present the Bureau of Reclamation received 90 million visitors to the 288 lakes under its
jurisdiction (Bureau of Land Management 2004). The number of visitors to the National Forest Service system reached 214 million in 2002 and is expected to increase dramatically over the next century given the growth of the American population (US Forest Service 2006). Finally, the National Park Service, which is responsible for 391 areas in all states except Delaware, reports that well over 272 million people visited the 81 million acres it manages in 2006 (National Park Service 2007). That many people are moving to areas that are only a 1 to 2 hour drive from a national park, forest or other public land area has contributed to the increased use. Higher levels of demand have created a serious problem: how to protect and finance the increased maintenance costs of public parks now as well as in the future.

At the same time demand for public recreational services have increased, the funds necessary to provide those services has declined. Policies that came into vogue during the 1970s and 1980s have had a lasting impact on the agencies and programs that service the public. Between 1960 and 1980, federal aid to state and local governments increased by about 15 percent per year (Haider 1983). 1960 saw the federal government allocate about $7 billion to state and local governments through approximately 130 grant programs. By 1980, the federal government administered 400 grant programs costing $90 billion. The money allocated through these grant programs amounted to about 25 percent of all state and local spending (Cole and Taebel 1986).

Increased aid was accompanied by a steep increase in cross-cutting requirements imposed by the federal government as a condition of its support. This era of “creeping
conditionalism”² left many public administrators to sort through confusing and sometimes even conflicting rules and regulations. In essence, government was perceived to have grown too big. According to critics of the public sector, big government not only curbs personal freedom but it also has an effect on real, per-capita income. During the 1970s, while government programs continued to grow, real per-capita income increased by only 22%, compared with 35% during the previous decade. It was argued that the size of government ought to be reduced, then, because it inhibits income growth of private citizens. Tax revolts that occurred in many states during the 1980s were a reaction to the growth of government and reflected citizens’ desire to reduce its size (Pack 1987, 526).

During this era of “creeping conditionalism” many citizens felt disenchanted with government and some critics argued that the public sector had a monopoly on the provision of services, keeping private competitors out (Linder and Rosenau 2000). The public sector was also criticized for lacking innovation, for being susceptible to political pressures, and for failing to be held accountable to the customers it served (The Economist 1998). Proponents of divesting government from the provision of services argued that by introducing competitive bidding by profit-maximizing firms, management of public services could be done cost-effectively (Pack 1987).

Some critics of government management of programs and services were also proponents of “New Federalism.” They called for the return of federal administrative

² Cole and Taebel (1986, 4) explain that “creeping conditionalism” is a phrase coined by David B. Walker to describe the actions of the federal government between 1960 and 1980. Walker identified 57 regulatory initiatives that had to be addressed by state and local governments as a condition for receipt of aid.
power to the states and aimed to reduce the federal government’s role in domestic programs. Supporters of this ideology and some public servants argued that the federal government was dysfunctional, overburdened, and inefficient when it came to providing needed services. McGowan and Stevens (1983) argue that the ideology of New Federalism, coupled with tax revolts like Proposition 2 ½ in Massachusetts, left public administrators with few options when looking for ways to continue to provide services and amenities, especially those involving common-pool resources.

Despite calls for a reduced role for government, most scholars and citizens agree that government does have a role to play in the management of goods and provision of services. Whereas government provision of services is seen as inefficient and ineffective, private provision of services is seen as inequitable and sometimes inadequate. Profit-maximizers have little incentive to distribute goods and services equitably. Government is often the only entity that can provide services in enough quantity to meet community needs. Government also provides a means of redress of grievances such that equity questions might be answered.

Proponents of various privatization and partial privatization schemes posit that the market is more efficient than government, however some scholars argue that the market can be inefficient too, necessitating government. At times, only a few suppliers of needed public services exist. These suppliers can dominate the market, creating unfair prices. Additionally, private firms might conceal information they deem too technical for public consumption, making it difficult for citizens to make informed decisions. Inefficiencies result also from externalities, or bad side effects felt by third parties resulting from an
exchange between a supplier and a consumer. Finally, as is the case with public parks, under a private sector-controlled system, citizens have no incentive to pay for their use of collective goods (Stone 2002, 81).

Pure public provision of goods and services has its problems, just as purely private provision of goods and services does. The optimal vehicle for goods and service delivery might then involve some combination of government and private sector efforts. Partnerships between the public and private sector are becoming an increasingly popular method of service delivery and management across many policy areas.

Public-private partnerships (PPPs) were first used as a policy tool by the Carter Administration. The tool was meant to help combat domestic problems that stagflation – a period of economic stagnation and high inflation – had made difficult to address. Stagflation, combined with budgetary deficiencies resulting from limitations placed on state and local taxes, severely curbed the ability of local governments to provide services without “defaulting on their financial obligations. New York City, Detroit, Cleveland, and many other cities struggled with ‘the urban fiscal crisis’” (Lyall 1986, 4). At the time, the federal government considered proposals to provide additional federal assistance to America’s cities and towns, but such proposals were never approved. This left many local governments with little choice but to make substantial reductions in public services and to delay maintenance on essential infrastructure like sewers, roads, and bridges.

While money was unavailable for many new domestic programs aimed at improving urban life, the need for such programs was manifest. The majority of American people, money, and jobs were (and still are) located in the cities. However,
cities were faced with homelessness, with urban decay, and with families displaced due to previous urban renewal efforts. For the policymakers of the Carter Administration it made sense to address these problems perceived to affect the overall health of the United States through a national urban policy.

PPPs were meant to be a tool that allowed government to address these and other pressing concerns without requiring a substantial increase in taxes or spending. PPPs were part of a package of policy reforms proposed by the President’s Urban and Regional Group in a report published in 1978. The group’s report argued that many of the problems faced by urban America could be ameliorated by targeting existing federal programs and monies to the individuals and areas exhibiting the most need. Additionally, the group proposed that federal money be leveraged with money from state and local government as well as the private sector, where possible. Lyall (1986, 5) notes that PPPs “were not seen as a substitute for Federal initiatives and responsibility...but as a new policy tool in the Federal portfolio for addressing domestic problems.”

PPPs have been put to use in parks management at both the national and local levels. At the city or municipal level, public parks are seen as an amenity that attracts and keeps young people in the region. However, declining revenue available to cities and towns to provide recreational opportunities and other amenities to attract economic development requires “increasing the overall fiscal capacity of cities and towns,” a goal that is “central to the future prosperity” of many states (Bluestone et al. 2006). To combat declining revenue available for capital parks projects and general maintenance backlogs, New York City, Boston, and other cities have formed PPPs to leverage public dollars
with private investment. In the case of New York City, where groups like the Riverside Park Fund and the Central Park Conservancy have helped to clean up the city’s world-class parks system, city officials have turned over management of some parks to the PPP altogether. In the case of Boston, the Emerald Necklace Conservancy has played an important role in restoring and maintaining the city’s historic landscapes, but city officials still retain their official management role.

Public land managers charged with maintaining parks located primarily in the western United States have also made use of PPPs. PPPs established for the larger, federally-managed parks differ from those instrumental to the management of municipal parks. Partnerships between the government and private sector for the former usually take the form of privately-managed concessionaires responsible for providing food, lodging, and retail services to people visiting the parks (Office of Management and Budget 2007). Many National Parks Service officials tout PPPs, arguing that partnerships between state and federal entities as well as private land owners and developers lead to more comprehensive and better land management.

Critics of the arrangements argue that PPPs are simply the beginning of a slow progression toward the total privatization of our national parks. Several scholars have offered critiques of efforts to close the fiscal gap left by declining revenue afforded to federal and municipal parks management agencies. Wildavsky (1964) argued that use of fees to supplement agency income enhances agency autonomy, making it easier for managers to administer land in the “public interest,” but with greater freedom to define what, exactly, the “public interest” means. By contrast, scholars like Lowry argue that fee
assessments result in decreased agency autonomy (Lowry 1993). Moreover, the “marketization” of services provided on public lands may not be an optimal solution for dealing with budgetary shortfalls in the public sphere because of the nature of public goods themselves (Loomis 1993). Contrary to arguments advanced by proponents of some kind of privatization of public services, Starr (1987) argues that public administration of those services is vital to their nature. The administration of justice through public comment periods, decisions to allow logging or the development of a recreational site, determining whether to designate a tract of land a wilderness area are all decisions that have the potential to affect the quality and quantity of public land available for future generations. “The very appearance of buying and selling undermines the claim of the state to be acting impartially on behalf of the entire community – and, indeed…the practice of buying and selling may undermine the capacity for disinterested judgment” (Ibid., 133).

**Purpose of this study**

The major aim of my research is to discover the conditions under which public-private partnerships for public land, public parks in particular, are effective in aiding in the provision of public recreation opportunities. This study will consider partnerships between public land managers and the private sector in terms of their consistency with the broader aims of public land management. Additionally, whether such partnerships achieve synergistic outcomes (Lasker et al. 2001) will also be considered.
I hypothesize that public-private partnerships result in an enhanced capacity to maintain public land and its associated facilities. However, given the diversity of interests that public land managers must accommodate, such partnerships may result in the sacrifice of some uses for others and may elevate the needs of some subsets of the “public interest” above others. For example, some local experiments with PPPs have revealed class disparities in parks management. In Boston, PPPs exist to assist with the management of certain parks, but not others. Parks located near wealthy areas are adequately maintained through a combination of public and private efforts, whereas parks located in less advantaged areas are not. Even so, I argue that lessons learned from municipal experiments with public-private partnerships may still prove helpful to those charged with managing public lands.

This study is informed by several bodies of literature, in particular the rational choice literature from economics and political science, as well as the policy studies and urban and environmental policy literature. This study contributes to theoretical discussion of the utility and limits of common pool resource management, as well as to the rational choice and policy studies literature. Along the way, I hope to provide practical insight into how PPPs best function and under what conditions.

**Overview of the Study: Outline, Methods, and Cases**

Following this introduction, chapter 2 provides an overview of public-private partnerships, what they are, and how their various forms may be categorized. Next, chapters 3 and 4 present the cases of the Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area
and the Riverside Park Fund, respectively. Chapter 5 provides a critical evaluation of the case study chapters. Two evaluative methodologies are employed. First, Yin’s (1993) partnership stages approach views partnership effectiveness through the stages of partnership development. Second, I use Lasker et al.’s (2001) partnership synergy framework to gain a better idea of what organizational characteristics lead to effective partnership outcomes, or synergy. Finally, the concluding chapter presents the study’s findings and reinterprets the theoretical groundwork laid down by the authors discussed here in light of the study’s results.
Chapter 2

Public Private Partnerships Reviewed

Introduction

This chapter gives a brief history of public-private collaboration and then examines the rationale for engaging in PPPs. Constrained budgets and other fiscal realities faced by many local governments have lead to an increased reliance on public-private partnerships (PPPs). Increasingly, the private sector (both for-profit and non-profit) has been asked to partner with government to deliver services that have been traditionally provided by the public sector. Necessity has led local governments to be creative – so creative, in fact, that “public-private partnership” remains a nebulous term. The gamut of institutional arrangements given the PPP moniker is vast. Everything from informal agreements to one-time corporate donations to contracting out services or facilities to fully-established and legally-recognized units of governance potentially fit into the PPP category. As a result, this chapter also explores the various definitions of PPPs and presents several ways to categorize them. Issues of accountability that arise in PPP arrangements are also taken into account.

Public-Private Cooperation in the United States: A Brief History

In the United States, cooperation between the public and private sectors is nothing new. Common practice during the colonial era was to place the poor or indigent in a private home at the public expense. For example, in 1806, the New York Orphan Asylum
Society opened a facility for 200 children with the help of a government subsidy. Furthermore, an 1889 survey of 17 major private hospitals found that 13 percent of their collective income could be traced to government sources (Monsma 2004, 9). Even some prisons of the time were subject to public-private collaboration in their construction and sometimes even in their day-to-day management and maintenance (Fosler and Berger 1982).

Social welfare was considered a partnership; private philanthropy complemented public aid (Linder and Rosenau 2000; Schneider 2000; Schaeffer and Loveridge 2002). Minow (2003, 1238) writes that in the 1800s, all levels of government “used land grants, tax exemptions, and corporate antitrust laws to stimulate private efforts in the service of public aims.” Other times, private individuals provided the government with needed funds to begin a particular project or program. For example, in 1829 the United States government received $500,000 in seed-money from John Smithson to found a Washington, D.C. organization whose purpose was to further knowledge. In 1846, Congress used the contribution to charter the Smithsonian Institution (Link 2006). This tradition of collaboration is very much alive and well in the United States today. Public efforts continue to receive support from private entities and frequently, public-private ventures are funded, at least partially, with government money (Minow 2003).

While such public-private partnering continued as the United States matured, the 20th century brought with it an increased role for the federal government in the provision of goods and services. Grants-in-aid from the federal government to state and local governments were used to accomplish certain purposes deemed in the public interest.
This phenomenon of an ever-increasing role for the federal government in the provision of goods and services peaked during the 1960s and 1970s. This is understandable given that, at least according to some views, the period between “1964-80 was marked by political instability and economic volatility, and sweeping changes in values and attitudes. Great hopes of solving social ills under [the] Great Society programs were followed by much disillusionment, a divisive war, and social turbulence” (Haider 1983, 167). The period between the New Deal and the end of Johnson’s Great Society was seen as the apogee of public provision of services and management of public goods, yet the administrative strings attached to their programs and grants led to calls for reform.

The expansion of the fiduciary role of the federal government was seen as a means to solve the domestic strife that plagued many communities across the nation. As such, aid to states increased substantially from 1960 to 1980. In 1960, the federal government allocated about $7 billion to cities and states via 130 grant programs – an amount that represented about 10 percent of state and local government budgets. By 1980, federal aid to state and local governments had increased to $90 billion via some 400 programs, meaning that about 25 percent of state and local budgets were funded by the federal government (Cole and Taebel 1986). Increased aid to states was accompanied by regulations that attached conditions to the receipt of aid. This left local elected officials as well as administrators to sort through a confusing network of often-conflicting rules.

Presidents Johnson, Nixon, Ford, and Carter each attempted to fix what they perceived to be a broken grants system. Their reform attempts were incremental in nature
and included calls for a reduction in federal grants, a turning back of responsibility for
social welfare programs to the states, a move away from categorical grants with their
many regulations to block grants with fewer rules, and a reorganization of administrative
to-central agencies. They also worked at the recipient level and advised those receiving federal
money, as with President Johnson’s federal assistance review (FAR), chief executive
review and comment (CERC) and other audit programs. However, “such reforms
invariably swam upstream. Devoid of a strong central management agency to pressure,
monitor, or otherwise compel federal agency compliance with presidential directives,
White House firefighting and hand-holding entangled the president and his staff in the
Intergovernmental [sic] thicket” (Haider 1983, 169). Moreover, these reform efforts were
met “with stiff resistance and congressional inaction” (Cole and Taebel 1986, 5).

Congress acted as the vanguard of the existing federal grant system during the
1960s and 1970s, increasing the number of categorical grants to local governments,
expanding the scope of regulations attached to federal money, and increasing the federal
presence in the administration of programs. Even so, the tenor of the debate over
intergovernmental relations changed during the 1970s due to a sluggish economy,
changing public attitudes about taxing and spending, the cutting of public sector
expenses, and fiscal stress at the federal level due to increased demand for entitlement
payments. The momentum of spending from the 1960s carried through to the 1970s
despite changing economic circumstances because the continued expenditures were made
possible through deficit financing (Haider 1983).
Reagan’s New Federalism

It is unsurprising, then, that a 1980 poll of American government scholars found that many academics were confident that the future directions of intergovernmental relations would remain stable and relatively predictable. The scholars polled identified four trends they expected to continue throughout the 1980s:

1. The *increased* flow of federal dollars to state and local governments.
2. The *growing* dependence of local governments, particularly cities, on federal aid.
3. The *increased* federal regulation of the use of shared revenues.
4. The *broadening* of federal aid so as to reach almost all local governments. (Cole and Taebel 1986, 3).

While students of federalism seemed confident that the domestic role of the federal government would increase (Reagan and Sanzone 1981), very few of these “safe bets” lasted beyond Ronald Reagan’s first term as president. Some attribute this to the fact that Reagan’s ascent to the presidency in 1980 coincided with the release of a report by the Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations. *The Federal Role in the Federal System* found that the relationships forged between the federal government and state and local governments were financially unstable. Low economic growth, coupled with high inflation, *stagflation*, meant that expenditures soon outpaced revenues, legitimating earlier calls for reform (ACIR 1980; Haider 1983).

Others assert that Reagan’s philosophy toward government is what fundamentally changed intergovernmental relations in the U.S. Beyond concerns about the federal grants system, Reagan believed that government could be improved by making management

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3 Emphasis found in the original.
more efficient and by bringing private sector values to bear in the administration of domestic programs. Essentially, the president wanted to redefine what governments do “while significantly lowering the overall commitment…to provid[e] financial aid to local governments” (Cole and Taebel 1986, 5). Reagan’s brand of federalism, called New Federalism, advocated the idea that many federal powers ought to be decentralized such that there would be a clear division of responsibilities between levels of government. In his 1982 State of the Union address to Congress Reagan said, “It is my intention to curb the size and influence of the federal establishment and to demand recognition of the distinctions between the powers granted to the federal government [and] those reserved to the states” (Reagan 1982).

Haider (1983) identifies three stages in President Reagan’s New Federalism program, that were instituted between 1981 and 1982. “These programs reduced federal aid, altered state and local government’s tax and debt-management policies, and otherwise transferred many responsibilities to these [state and local] governments” (Ibid., 174). First, Reagan proposed the consolidation of 90 categorical grant programs into 7 block grants. Congress ended up approving of consolidating 57 categorical grants into 9 block grants. Block grants, by grouping the aims of several categorical grants under one heading, allowed the president to commit to a program of deregulation in addition to grant consolidation. This was accompanied by substantial budget-cutting and multiyear tax cuts. Federal aid to state and local governments was reduced by $3.5 billion between 1981 and 1982. The aggregate effect of this first stage of New Federalism was an increased demand on lower levels of government for the provision of basic goods and
services. Moreover, lower levels of government, with their own budgets closely linked to federal aid, found themselves looking at increased demand for tax-exempt debt.

Pressures on state and local governments only increased with the second stage of Reagan’s New Federalism. Beginning in 1982, the president proposed the transfer of federal programs to state and local governments in an amount totaling $50 billion, over an 8-year period. Arguing that the costs to state and local governments could be offset by a $28 billion trust fund to be financed by taxes on cigarettes, alcohol, and oil and gas, Reagan wrapped his intergovernmental reforms into one comprehensive package that he believed would fundamentally alter public service delivery in the U.S. This plan drew considerable fire from those who had helped to shape extant intergovernmental relations over the previous 20 years. Democrats and Republicans, governors and mayors, liberals and conservatives all worried that state and local governments were unable to assume the new responsibilities the president wanted them to take on. Of chief concern amongst critics was the issue of equity. If the federal government did not preside over resource allocation and redistribution to those states and communities that are the most vulnerable, who would? Poor individuals, poor communities, and poor states would suffer under Reagan’s proposed realignment of governmental responsibilities.

In an effort to address the concerns of his critics, stage three of Reagan’s New Federalism was essentially a pared-down version of his earlier proposal. While he was not able to turn back responsibility for welfare to state governments Reagan “was at least partially successful in achieving a reduction in the overall amount of federal funds available…” (Cole and Taebel 1986, 6). As a result, state and local governments were left
to make up for the gap between revenues and expenditures. Haider (1983) notes that state
governments increased taxes by $4 billion in 1981, the highest increase in state taxes in
10 years.

Still reliance on increased taxes as a way to offset cuts in federal aid was not a
sustainable strategy as public opinion about government changed dramatically with
regard to taxes, regulation and general trust in government from the 1960s to the 1970s.
One manifestation of public dissatisfaction with government was the tax revolt that took
place in states across the country. Citizens in California voted to limit property taxes in
1978 through Proposition 13. Massachusetts citizens soon followed suit, passing their
own initiative limiting property taxes in 1980, Proposition 2 ½. That limitations were
placed on taxes is not surprising given that the belief of many Americans that government
wastes tax dollars rose from 48 percent in 1964 to 79 percent in 1978 (Ibid., 171).

James Musselwhite, Jr. (1986, 113) argues that “a fundamental tenet of the New
Federalism [was] that many social welfare programs are a result of federal usurpation of
responsibilities belonging to those institutions nearest the people.” So, Reagan’s program
of turnbacks, tax relief, and federal budget cuts was an attempt to return power to state
and local government. Meanwhile, state and local governments, struggling to deliver
required goods and services with little federal assistance had to look to alternate means of
providing for their citizens (even as those same citizens were also rebelling against
paying state and local taxes, especially property taxes [e.g, Proposition 13 in California]).
One way that these governments used to ensure continued delivery of goods and services
was to look to the private sector. In State and Local Government and Public-Private
Partnerships, Coleman makes the point that one of the big changes taking place in the era of New Federalism “was the growing injection of private funds into public activities and public money into private ventures” (1989, 5).

The Rationale for Public-Private Partnerships

In his study of public-private partnerships in Sweden, Sven-Olof Collin argues that partnerships between a local government and the private sector are one of the many ways for a municipality to satisfy the needs and desires of its citizens. A PPP is an organization that is unique because it is positioned between the public and private spheres. The public sphere in a democratic society is characterized by citizen participation, transparency, and monopoly production. Meanwhile, the private sphere is characterized by competition, the price system, and ownership. “A public-private partnership could gain advantages of its location in the twilight zone, overcoming institutional obstacles and using qualities from both spheres” (1998, 272). An exploration of motivations for becoming involved in public-private partnerships reveals that there are pros and cons for both sectors of society in entering such arrangements.

Generally, collaboration makes most organizations better off if they are able to obtain efficiencies by pooling their resources – that might mean better access to a market or to certain resources, for example. Public and private interests also benefit from inter-sectoral collaboration when it allows for an expansion of their organizational mission and activities. In fact, some organizations seek to collaborate because it reinforces their organizational mission and is in line with organization members’ beliefs and values. Still
another benefit of cooperation “is that each participant gains some measure of influence over the decisions of all other participants” (Schaeffer and Loveridge 2002, 172).

More specifically, governments engage in PPPs for many reasons. Chief among them is that, sometimes, the public sector lacks a resource of some sort. Typically, the resource in question is monetary capital. As the previous section explains, money available to state and local governments is often in short supply due to dwindling support from higher levels of government and difficulties in raising taxes. Lyall (1986, 4) argues that frequently, “times [are] not ripe for the introduction of a large number of new money-program initiatives…yet the needs [are] manifest,” as with the case of local economic development. In such times, public collaboration with the private sector can help to accomplish critical public policy or economic development aims.

Other times, the resource the public sector lacks is a specific competency. Sometimes, this competency might be a technical skill, such as knowledge of information systems, other times it might be certain fund-raising or managerial skills. While it is possible for an organization to hire an employee who possesses the desired resource, some resources can be better used through collaboration (Collin 1998). “Rather than using external relations as a temporary mechanism to compensate for capabilities an [organization] has not yet mastered, [organizations] use collaborations to expand all their competencies.” Through collaboration and interdependence, organizations are able to sustain the ability to learn. Relations between public sector and private sector organizations can be mutually beneficial when “new mechanisms for providing resources develop in tandem with advances in knowledge” (Powell et al. 1996, 143).
Another rationale for PPPs is tied to President Reagan’s New Federalism, discussed above. In 1982, when speaking at one of the first events of the New York City Partnership, a PPP committed to economic development and affordable housing, among other things, President Reagan “made it clear that many traditional…programs were going to be cut back or eliminated and he expected the private sector to play a far greater role” (Rockefeller 1986, 6). His argument was that if government organizations are burdensome and otherwise bloated, injecting private sector values into the public sector realm can transform it such that aspects of commercial culture become the norm. Among these aspects of commercial culture is the ability to reduce costs, improve service, raise revenue, and increase innovation (Dilger et al. 1997). These values are expected to help with the project of “reinventing government” (Osborne and Gaebler 1993) to make it more responsive and suited to public needs.

Martha Minow organizes the aforementioned private sector values and others into four reasons that governments ought to explore PPPs. First, she mentions quality and effectiveness. Advocates for small government argue that publicly-provided goods and services do not always achieve their stated goals and objectives. “Given disappointment with failures in public systems, allowing others to take a turn makes sense” (2003, 1242). Since private sector organizations are motivated by profit, partnering with them can improve service quality. It makes sense from a profit perspective to invest in providing quality goods and services up front so as to avoid the costs of customer dissatisfaction later. For example, if a government partners with a for-profit organization to construct a visitor’s center in a public park, bearing the risk of a failed investment “gives [the private
partner] strong incentive to control those risks through careful and high quality construction” (de Bettignies and Ross 2004, 139).

A second reason for governments to partner with private sector partners is it can infuse the delivery of public goods and services with competition and incentives for improvement (Minow 2003; Monsma 2004). Market-style competition places power in the hands of the consumer – be they a government or the ultimate user, the individual client. Rival organizations are motivated by competition to provide information to potential clients so they can compare their options. This means that private organizations partnering with government have incentive to constantly seek to improve the quality of their products to prevent losses. Still, Minow cautions that “whether these benefits of competition work well outside purely private markets remains a subject of much academic and political debate” (Ibid., 1243). Pressure for information from potential clients might elevate some concerns above others. For example, it is easy to measure the number of all-terrain vehicle (ATV) trails that a particular park partnership manages, but it may be more difficult to quantify the value of the ecosystems conserved by deciding to refrain from constructing additional trails.

A third reason for engaging in PPPs is that it enhances pluralism. The United States is a large nation and it therefore makes sense to rely on group dynamics to help accomplish purposes in the collective interest. People make meaningful connections with their neighbors, with their fellow church-goers, with their peers in similar demographic circumstances. If public officials look to these community and cultural associations as well as to commercial firms to assist in addressing public concerns, more productive, less
costly resolutions will result. Moreover, “group affiliations can encourage virtues of participation, self-governance, mutual aid, and care for others, while allowing freedom from the controlling force of a powerful government” (Ibid., 1245).

Governments should consider partnering with the private sector for a fourth reason – the ability to generate new knowledge and infrastructure. Minow (2003) notes that these are generated because people are being drawn into enterprises that had previously been under the auspices of government only. Bringing new people in to address a problem can bring a fresh perspective, leading to policy experimentation and innovation. New knowledge and infrastructure, in turn, can promote learning and participation which is important for a democratic society.

In sum, a key purported strength of PPPs is that the public and private sectors each bring complementary contributions to the table that make good sense and that offer benefits to all parties. Government brings things like infrastructure (both in terms of tangible assets and intellectual property, like scientific expertise and institutional memory), financial support, and hopefully accountability into the partnership that is put toward the accomplishment of a specific objective. Meanwhile, the private sector brings with it access to capital, access to leading-edge technology, and operating and marketing expertise among other assets to the partnership (Chang et al. 1999). In testimony before the U.S. House of Representatives Subcommittee on Highways and Transit, Tyler Duvall, then-Undersecretary for Transportation Policy for the U.S. Department of Transportation summarized the benefits of PPPs thusly:
“The basic opportunity is for the public sector to allocate various project risks to the private sector that may be in a better position to manage and reduce those risks, and the ability to shift various risks to private operators increases the public sector’s ability to manage a large number of projects while also reducing strains on government budgets and the taxpayer” (Public-Private Partnerships: Innovative Financing and Protecting the Public Interest (110-7) 2007).

Beyond these general reasons for public-private partnering, there are some rationales that are specific to public parks. In the 21st century, “responsibility for protection [of public land] is no longer thought of as only a governmental matter. Individuals, regional and global organizations, and businesses now must share this responsibility” (Whiting 2001, 4). Partnering with the private sector can bring flexibility and, by extension, efficiency to the management of public parks. Parks partnerships can be more flexible with their staff and budget. For example, a park partnership could elect to hire staff on an as-needed or emergency basis only. This way, the organizational structure can be adjusted in response to the changing needs of the park and to the changing demands of park users, potentially saving money at the same time (Madden 2000). For example, the Emerald Necklace Conservancy, a PPP that aims to help the cities of Boston and Brookline, Massachusetts maintain and preserve the string of parks designed for the region by Frederick Law Olmsted, has a staff that consists of very few paid personnel. This has enabled the organization to spend relatively little on operational costs, allowing the Conservancy to focus instead on its maintenance, restoration, and advocacy projects and programs.

Another reason for PPPs in parks has to do with advocacy. “If politics is the process by which scarce public resources are allocated, a partnership soon finds itself
deciding how to respond to that process” (Gifford 1986, 75). Public sector officials may feel that advocating for specific park policies is unethical. For example, if a park partnership’s board has a mayor amongst its members and if the mayor was supposed to decide whether to give funds for a junior ranger program that the partnership runs, the mayor might feel conflicted. On the other hand, the partnership’s private sector members (especially those representing nonprofit organizations) may have the freedom to agitate for budget increases or for acquiring new park resources, whereas a city’s parks department “is constrained by and allied to a city’s priorities” (Madden 2000, 9). For example, the Central Park Conservancy, pointing to its own successes, began to advocate in the late 1990s for improved maintenance of four of Harlem’s historic (and frequently neglected) parks, including Marcus Garvey, Morningside, Jackie Robinson, and St. Nicholas parks. Meanwhile, the Emerald Necklace Conservancy has advocated for safer pedestrian access to Jamaica Pond (a part of Olmsted’s Emerald Necklace), for increased seasonal park ranger positions across the entire park system, and for certain parkways and other roads to remain under the management of the Department of Conservation and Recreation.

The ability to fundraise and accept donations for parks provides another motivation for engaging in PPPs. Private donors often dislike giving money to the public sector because they do not have control over the way the money is spent. This is linked to the more general distrust of giving money to public bureaucracies, especially when those bureaucracies are already given funds through the power of taxation. As such, state and local parks departments are powerfully motivated to enter into PPPs for the purposes of
raising additional funds for the parks in their jurisdiction. For the private, for-profit or nonprofit partner, aligning with a government entity can lend their organization credibility and can go far in assuring potential donors that their gifts will be handled with accountability (Madden 2000).

Partnerships for parks can also make sense because they have the ability to bring focus, community ties, and consistent leadership to the management of a park. Whereas a PPP frequently views a park as being a part of a neighborhood, the parks department will sometimes view it as only one small part of the entire system it has responsibility for. Additionally, a public agency might face political or financial constraints in trying to carry out individual improvements for one park, whereas a PPP is less likely to. Partnerships can enhance community ties by bringing key groups together and sometimes, more mature PPPs can provide more continuous leadership for a park, since public agencies are subject to politics and elections (Madden 2000).

Parks partnerships may even help to reinvigorate the democratic function that municipal parks once served. During the late 1800s, parks often served social missions, in addition to ecological or aesthetic ones. Neighborhood parks were places where immigrants could take classes in English or learn about how to navigate the American government system. For example, Chicago’s Pulaski Park and San Francisco’s Funston Park were created to organize activities for working class citizens. Then, those with “leisure time” were often in fact unemployed. Hence, neighborhood parks were often selected as the location of libraries, gardening programs, and dental clinics to benefit the unemployed or indigent. Today, with more citizen involvement in the design,
maintenance, and programming of parks, via their participation in PPPs, such places become fertile ground for the seeds of participation and community sensibility can grow (Cranz 1982). In fact, the Riverside Park Fund, a PPP that aids in the management of Riverside Park in New York City, provides environmental education programs in line with the City’s “Elementary Science Scope and Sequence,” with the goal of engendering environmental awareness in elementary school-aged children.

Schaeffer and Loveridge (2002) argue that just as there are good reasons for the public sector to partner with the private sector, there are plenty of reasons not to. First there may be laws that keep governments from working with the private sector. Second, the private sector may find that it does not understand or cannot adhere to the requirements of public sector decision making. For example, the fact that public sector decisions must be transparent to the public can be a disincentive for the private sector to participate. Where public sector officials might see transparency, accountancy standards, and disclosure requirements as necessary in a democracy, private sector officials may interpret it as a lack of confidentiality surrounding trade secrets (Kaul and Conceicao 2006). Finally, working with nongovernmental entities can lead to new inefficiencies, even as partnering is supposed to erase the inefficiencies of the public sector. Grants and contracts may be awarded based on political influence and long-term relationships, rather based on a rational set of criteria. “In the absence of such standards, inertia, long-standing and comfortable networks and political favoritism may play major roles,” leading to lower service quality (Monsma 2004, 16).
What is a Public-Private Partnership?

A review of the partnership literature reveals that there is considerable variation amongst the many definitions of what constitutes a PPP. While a unifying theme of these definitions is that all arrangements involve at least one public partner and one private partner, frequently that is where the similarities end. “The widespread use of the term public-private partnership hides important differences between different forms of public-private collaboration and…the emotional connotation of the term partnership conveys an image of egalitarian and conflict-free decision making” when in fact differences between the public and private sectors ensure that conflict will happen (Schaeffer and Loveridge 2002, 185). This section explores the many definitions of PPPs and identifies the definition used in this study. In addition, various ways of categorizing PPPs are also investigated.

Most basically, a public-private partnership is a collaborative arrangement between one or more governmental agencies and one or more nongovernmental entities, be they for-profit or nonprofit. These organizations collaborate to provide a good or service that has been deemed as being in the public interest (Monsma 2004). It is important to note, however, that the notions of “public” and “governmental” are not the same. Sometimes, nongovernmental organizations can be public organizations offering a public service. A good example of this is a public restroom. While a private, nongovernmental organization owns and operates the restroom, they are providing a service that is open to the public. Another example is that of schools. When we think of “public schools,” we typically have state- or government-run schools in mind. However,
if we think of education as fulfilling a public purpose – providing for an educated society – independent, nongovernmental schools are then engaged in the same public function as their government-run counterparts. “The state has no monopoly over the public square. It shares that space with other institutions which have equally valid claims” (Lugo 1998, 19).

As discussed above, in the United States the government has frequently shared responsibility for pursuing the public interest with various nongovernmental actors. Perhaps this helps to explain why PPPs elude explicit definition. For example, longtime privatization advocate E.S. Savas defines a PPP as “any arrangement between government and the private sector in which partially or traditionally public activities are performed by the private sector” (2000, 4). Yet, his definition of pure privatization is not much different: privatization is characterized by “relying more on the private interests of society and less on government to satisfy people’s needs” (Ibid., 3). While Savas’s definitions of PPPs and privatization are similar, other scholars point out that PPPs are not the same as traditional contracting or outsourcing.

Chang et al define a PPP as “a collaborative arrangement between government and one or more private parties. PPPs specify joint rights and responsibilities, which implies some sharing of risks, costs, or assets. In a PPP there is a mutual leveraging of each partner’s strengths…” (1999, 2). In their study looking at the ability of PPPs to meet the future needs of the U.S. Army, the authors point out the fact that traditional contracts differ from public-private partnerships because the former does not involve the leveraging of private sector expertise or resources. Furthermore, outsourcing should not
be confused with PPPs, either as in those cases, the government is essentially the buyer and the private supplier is the seller. However, the authors point out that some outsourcing agreements can include elements of PPPs. For example, the state of Connecticut and IBM had an outsourcing agreement during the early 1990s for data processing. This agreement included stipulations requiring state officials to have access to IBM’s new e-commerce institute. The idea was to introduce e-commerce to state government operations (e.g., shift auto registration from Department of Motor Vehicles offices to the state website). In exchange for the contract, IBM educated state officials on the new system. So the cost to IBM for the creation of the e-commerce institute was lower, thanks to the government contract and, the benefit to the state was considerable.

That there is often confusion between privatization and PPPs is not surprising, given that some authors argue that privatization schemes like outsourcing or contracting constitutes a form of public-private partnering. “The relationship [between the public and private sectors] is established – either through formal collaboration or simply via a market⁴ – to produce or distribute a particular good or service” (Pace et al. 2000, 16). Other definitions of PPPs include stipulations regarding decision making that sit outside traditional privatization efforts. The Government Accountability Office, defines PPPs such that they are “a contractual agreement formed between public and private sector partners, which allows more private sector participation than is traditional…While the public sector usually retains ownership…the private party will be given additional decision rights…” (Public-Private Partnerships: State and User Perspectives (110-46))

⁴ Emphasis added.
Similarly, “public-private partnerships go beyond mere contracting across actor lines. They typically entail some joint decision making and sharing of responsibilities, opportunities, and risks. They are, as the name suggests, about partnering” (Kaul and Conceicao 2006, 219).

If public-private collaborations are viewed as being on a continuum, “public-private partnerships lie somewhere between simple *contracting out* and a *fully private market*...” (de Bettignies and Ross 2004, 138). PPPs, according to this view, are extensions of contracting out. Traditional contracting usually involves a private firm that has responsibility for project design, financing, building, or operation and maintenance. PPPs, by contrast, will typically bundle two or more of those tasks and assign them to a private partner while the government partner handles other tasks. Most PPPs allocate the financing task to their private partner(s). The advantage to bundling tasks together is that it creates complementarities across duties. If a private partner in a PPP is responsible for both the building and maintenance of a visitor’s center, for example, and the partner’s reputation is dependant on quality, then the partner has a strong incentive to see that the visitor’s center is well-designed.

That contracting out is considered a PPP by some academics (de Bettignies and Ross 2004) serves to underscore Schaeffer and Loveridge’s (2002, 170) assertion that there is a “lack of an agreed-upon vocabulary for describing different cooperative efforts.” In fact, it is problematic that short-term collaborations – like some contracting arrangements – are considered PPPs. Such collaborations can be handled by a “temporary ad hoc task force with members representing the cooperating organizations.” A PPP, by
contrast, is concerned with “sustained cooperative efforts that require a significant commitment of human and/or financial resources, which may take place over an extended period” (Ibid., 172).

Categorizing Public-Private Cooperation

Students of public administration and public policy have attempted to categorize the many forms that public-private partnerships take. The form that works best is dependant “on the nature, scope, and risks of the projects” in question (Schaeffer and Loveridge 2002, 175; Pace et al. 2000). One way to categorize PPPs is according to the level of coordination each organizational form takes. This coordination can range from informal efforts to formal agreements to a complete merger of efforts.

On the informal end of the organizational coordination spectrum are leader-follower relationships (Schaeffer and Loveridge 2002). These can be characterized as a form of intersectoral cooperation that arises as an effect of experience. Leader-follower associations tend to emerge as a result of trial and error, though sometimes they are formalized with a contract. This widely-used form of public-private collaboration is most likely to occur in situations where one participant has significantly more resources or power than the other. For example, a municipal government that wants to engage in community redevelopment will often assume a leadership role by making infrastructure investments up-front. Public officials make the investment believing that the private sector will soon follow suit. Having an initial government investment can reduce the risk of private commitments. Otherwise, “if only one private property owner makes
improvements in a run-down neighborhood the value of [the] investment is reduced by the poor state of the other properties” (Ibid., 176). This constitutes a form of collaboration because governments must be responsive to the needs and demands of their private sector counterparts so that goals and objectives in their mutual interest can be met.

Another form of public-private collaboration can be described as an exchange relationship, or a buyer-seller relationship. These group efforts are defined as voluntary exchanges in which both the buyers and sellers are better off afterwards. These are distinguished from traditional transactions in that they require explicit cooperation between parties to the transaction. (In purely private markets, coordination between buyer and seller is less important.) For example, in the case of economic development, the goods exchanged, like infrastructure investments, commitments to create jobs, and tax incentives are incredibly complex and hence necessitate coordination. The contracting out of public services, such as the building and maintenance of a prison, also falls under the buyer-seller category. The firm contracted to design, build, and/or maintain the prison must cooperate with the public sector to coordinate their plans, since citizens will hold the public sector responsible for service quality and for the cost of the project (Schaeffer and Loveridge 2002; Bloomfield et al. 1998).

Some relationships between the public and private sectors, while resembling exchange relationships, are joint ventures. Joint ventures differ from exchange relationships in that the former center around a specific issues or projects and, outside the subject of the relationship, allow the sectors to maintain their independence. Unlike some
economic development initiatives, joint ventures are not open-ended. Instead, projects have a clearly defined scope and public officials and their private sector counterparts will make project-related decisions together. However, once the project is completed, the joint venture no longer exists. As such, commitments of resources by each participant are limited by the scope of the project, with each sector agreeing to make certain investments and to take certain actions. Any continuance of the relationship beyond the project in question represents an organizational shift from one form of public-private collaboration to another.

If collaborations shift such that there is “an open-ended agreement to work together” and participants “are open to new developments and opportunities,” the organization is a partnership (Schaeffer and Loveridge 2002, 180). Beyond the indefinite duration of these associations, partnerships are also characterized by the fact that partners from both sectors can act on behalf of the organization. Moreover, partnerships can also be characterized by their benefits. PPPs can be used to reform management strategies, to shift perceptions of the populations being served by the organization, to encourage an appreciation of the goods or services being provided, and to facilitate risk-sharing between the public and private sectors, among other benefits. Partnerships require at least one participant to fully bear the risks and rewards that come with partnering. When risks and rewards are shared and organizational decisions are made by all partners, the relationship is a full partnership. However, when risks and rewards are not shared equally, that is, when one partner agrees only to a certain amount of liability while the
other backs the endeavor with their full faith and credit, the relationship is a *limited partnership*.

In their study of the various forms of public-private collaboration, Schaeffer and Loveridge assert that actual public-private partnerships are relatively rare. The authors argue that this is due to three related factors. First, cooperation over long periods of time requires more effort than short-term collaboration. Finding agreement on goals and objectives is an easier task with a project that has a defined scope and limited duration. Second, full partnerships require that all partners bear the risks and rewards of working together. In the private sector, business partnerships are not the norm for that reason – all firms must share liability equally – PPPs in public service delivery are similarly uncommon. Third, the demands of partnering keep such collaborations scarce. Often officials participating in PPPs have other priorities, making long-term collaboration more likely if there is an existing record of “ongoing interdependence” (2002, 181).

Characteristics of the forms that various public-private collaborations take based on the level of coordination and cooperation required for each are summarized in Table 2.1.

Pace et al (2000) also distinguish between the various forms PPPs can take by looking at the relationship between the entities involved. *Team partnerships*, first, are a kind of PPP where the government enters into an exclusive agreement with a different organization – be it a for-profit firm, a university, a nonprofit organization, or another government agency. This kind of collaboration requires clearly-defined roles and decision making structures. Team members work closely together and share risks, rewards, costs, and trust though not always equally.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Leader-Follower</th>
<th>Buyer-Seller</th>
<th>Joint Venture</th>
<th>Partnership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Likely to be specific (e.g., refurbishing a</td>
<td>Limited, specific (e.g., business recruitment)</td>
<td>Limited and specific (e.g., construction and/or operation of a facility)</td>
<td>Broad, general, open-ended (e.g., planning a strategy for a city park system)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>monument in a city park)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision making</td>
<td>Independent (leader), dependent/conditional (follower)</td>
<td>Negotiated and competitive</td>
<td>Coordinated or joint, cooperative, may also be egalitarian</td>
<td>Joint, cooperative, egalitarian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rewards</td>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>Individual, distribution depends on market strengths</td>
<td>Shared, usually strong correlation between rewards of participants</td>
<td>Shared, strong correlation between rewards of partners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risks</td>
<td>Individual but correlated, limited</td>
<td>Individual, distribution depends on sequencing of actions and market strengths, limited</td>
<td>Shared, usually unevenly; distribution of risk depends on the agreement that established the joint venture; strong correlation between the risks of all participants, limited</td>
<td>Shared, usually unevenly distributed but strongly correlated, limited or unlimited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal agreement</td>
<td>Depends on size of necessary investment by the leader</td>
<td>Depends on complexity of transaction</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.1: Characteristics of Different Forms of Public-Private Cooperation

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5 Table adapted from (Schaeffer and Loveridge 2002, 184).
A second category of PPP is the collaboration. This is a cooperative arrangement involving multiple organizations, usually of different types. As is the case with some parks partnerships, these organizations can include federal, state, and local government officials (both elected officials and unelected bureaucrats) as well as for-profit and nonprofit firms and universities. Collaborations involve more complex interactions between partners. While members of the organization come together to for the purpose of sharing their strengths and resources, different member motivations can lead to distrust and a lack of group cohesion.

While teams and collaborations are forms of cooperative partnerships, Pace et al (2000, 24) assert that there are also non-cooperative partnerships – markets. “Many would not normally call markets partnerships and many governmental relationships that are referred to as partnerships are really markets.” In a market, buyers and sellers meet

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6 Table adapted from (Schaeffer and Loveridge 2002, 184).
but they do not share. Actors in the market do not need to have a history of interdependence to work together. In the case of PPPs, a market-type partnership is one in which the government buyer elects to acquire something from the private seller. For example, a government may elect to purchase the construction of a restroom facility from a private seller. The association between the public and private sectors is short-term and defined, similar to the buyer-seller relationship. Even so, market partnerships differ from simple market transactions in that the level of coordination required between the buyer and seller is much higher in a market partnership. Constructing a restroom facility via a market PPP requires communication and coordination between the government and the firm responsible for building. On the other hand, if the government purchases a single item for the facility, little coordination is needed between the buyer and seller. As such, whether markets constitute a form of PPP or are merely a financial transaction remains the subject of considerable debate (Pace et al. 2000; de Bettignies and Ross 2004; Schaeffer and Loveridge 2002).

Another way to classify partnerships is by their purpose. Four classifications arise when examining PPPs by what they do for government: rivalrous property partnerships, service partnerships, non-rivalrous property partnerships, and process partnerships. *Rivalrous property partnerships* involve physical property and exclusivity of use. For example, governments will partner with private firms so that the private company can share a facility or equipment. Meanwhile, service partnerships are based on the performance of a service, such as running an environmental education program for public school students at a city park. *Non-rivalrous property partnerships* involve intellectual
property, such as a partnership to complete metadata for recently-digitized maps showing changes in land usage. Finally, a *process partnership* is one in which the governmental and nongovernmental partners focus on processing information for the purposes of enhancing an existing asset. This might take the form of members of the PPP working on a study together, or it might take the form of adding signage to a newly-refurbished monument (Pace et al. 2000).

Public-private partnerships can also be classified by their outputs. Pace et al. (2000) distinguish between partnerships that produce goods versus those that produce services. Some PPP outputs are primary products while others are enhancements of existing products. For example, a PPP might focus on the creation of a national park (a primary product) or it might focus on bringing ferry service to an existing park (a process that improves upon an existing product). Moreover, PPP outputs can be rivalrous or non-rivalrous. Rivalrous outputs can be affected by consumption, where one person’s consumption of the output reduces the ability of another person to enjoy the output. Campsites at a public park are an example of a rivalrous output. By contrast, one person’s consumption of a non-rivalrous PPP output does not detract from the ability of another person to consume the output. Hiking trails in national parks are a good example of this. If one person hikes the trail, that person is not taking the trail from another person who wishes to hike it. (Though, one could make the argument that if a person were seeking pristine wilderness, additional people on a trail would indeed take away from the former’s ability to enjoy the output.)
Several types of outputs are produced, based on these distinctions. PPPs can produce rivalrous products that are goods, such as campgrounds. Rivalrous products can be services as well, for example K-12 environmental education programs. PPPs can also produce rivalrous processes. An example of a rivalrous process that is a good is the installation of additional toilets at a campsite. An example of a rivalrous process that is a service is individual wilderness training. Some PPPs produce non-rivalrous products that are goods, such as a new sewage treatment plant while others produce non-rivalrous products that are services, such as establishing monitoring standards to ensure clean waters. PPP outputs that are non-rivalrous processes can be goods, like upgraded trails, while other non-rivalrous processes can be services, such as the installation of trail signage. Partnerships themselves can be traditional or non-traditional. Traditional PPPs are characterized by a government that partners with only one or a few private organizations. These organizations tend to focus on a clearly-defined service or product. Non-traditional PPPs are characterized by the fact that government is only one player amongst a network of consumers and providers. These organizations focus on the provision of multiple goods and services in attempting to achieve their goals (Ibid. 2000).
Figure 2.1: A Map of Public-Private Partnership Structures. Adapted from Pace et al. (2000) and modified such that it applies to PPPs with functions other than gathering and processing science data.

Figure 2.1 presents a map of public-private partnership structures put forth by Pace et al (2000). The solid lines represent traditional partnerships, where the government works together with a private organization. The dashed lines represent non-traditional partnerships, where a government partners with more than one private organization and/or with other levels of government. Boxes 1 and 7 are examples of traditional PPPs, in that the government participant is working with a for-profit firm. Boxes 2 and 5 are examples of public-quasi-private partnerships, in that the public sector is partnering with a private, nonprofit organization. Boxes 3 and 6 are examples of quasi-public-private
partnerships in that a private, nonprofit participant partners with private, for-profit organizations. Finally, box 4 is an example of a quasi-public-quasi-private partnership, where private, nonprofit organizations partner with other nonprofits and/or with various levels of government.

Certain organizational structures receive the moniker “quasi-public” or “quasi-private” because they involve private, nonprofit organizations. “…A non-profit firm is quasi-private in that it produces an (arguably) public good and quasi-private to the extent that it receives indirect public subsidies through the tax code” (Pace et al. 2000, 30).

Again, even while a nonprofit organization is private, or nongovernmental, frequently its purpose is to provide a public good or service for charitable or religious purposes (Monsma 2004).

The foregoing PPP classification schemes are generalized such that they can be applied to PPPs with various purposes. Other scholars have developed ways of thinking about public-private partnerships set up specifically to deal with public parks. Madden (2000) discusses 5 common types of parks partnerships, including assistance providers, catalysts, co-managers, sole managers, and citywide planners. PPPs that are assistance providers are organized to assist, support, or to act as public advocates for a particular park or parks department. These groups are typically staffed by volunteers who are not professional park officials. Frequently referred to as “friends groups,” assistance providers usually have very small operating budgets and have no responsibility for the park itself. Such organizations are essentially public interest groups that work on behalf of residents living near a particular park. They have the power to rally their constituency...
for a park (e.g., these groups are very good at organizing volunteer trash removals on weekends) and the ability to garner outside funds for capital projects. It is important to note that participants in assistance provider-type PPPs are not considered peers by the public sector, even though they help the public sector by providing labor as well as community outreach. Sometimes, these organizations will redefine themselves such that they can take on additional park responsibilities.

Sometimes, parks PPPs will redefine their mission such that they help to create a vision of the future of the park. Catalysts are organizations sometimes formed by citizens with a common vision and other times by the public sector in an effort to coordinate several groups. Catalyst PPPs raise awareness about a park, build community and political support for a park, locate funding for the park through private donations, and create new networks among the key players they work with, like parks departments, other government agencies, nonprofit community organizations, and private, for-profit firms. Catalysts engage in the aforementioned activities in an effort to see a park project realized from start to finish. Catalyst organizations have formed to create greenways, monuments within larger parks, and even an entirely new national park. Catalysts are typically transitional in nature. Once they complete their original mission, they redefine their purpose in relation to the public sector. (Madden 2000, 18).

Parks PPPs that have truly collaborative relationships with their public sector partners are examples of co-manager organizations. These organizations must abide by policies set by the public sector and responsibilities within the park are shared. Co-managers will sometimes formalize their working relationship with government by
sharing a joint position to help to minimize confusion and to coordinate plans. In an effort
to ensure public accountability, the government partner still retains policy responsibility
for the park, even when the park PPP has taken on additional tasks, such as maintenance
and park programming (Ibid.).

Some municipalities will make a PPP the sole manager of a park. Sole manager
PPPs are almost fully-independent organizations and act with minimal involvement from
parks departments. These groups differ from other PPP types in that they have the power
to develop and change park policies. As such, sole manager PPPs become heavily
involved in day-to-day park maintenance and operations by definition. Sometimes sole
manager PPPs will receive a public subsidy for the services they provide, though not
always as the PPP also solicits donations from private sources. Finally, citywide partners
are PPPs that focus on all or most of the parks and open spaces in a city, instead of only
one park. These organizations are fundamentally different from the other PPP types
outlined above because they “bring existing expertise to neighborhoods and lend
technical assistance in the formation and sustaining of new parks” partnerships (Ibid.,
22). Citywide partners are, in essence, a kind of meta-PPP in that they are a set up to help
create new park partnerships.

Based on the foregoing discussion, public-private partnerships are defined in this
study as long-term collaborative organizations composed of at least one public partner
and one private partner. The risks and rewards of collaboration are shared, though not
always equally. The recent proliferation of PPPs is due in part to the shrinking role of the
federal government in domestic affairs, changing attitudes about the role of government
and the legitimacy of taxation, and a renewed belief in local government. The reliance on these forms of governance raises important issues regarding accountability to the public. Students of public management worry that organizations like PPPs will “seek to replace political power derived from legal mandates or elected office with an entrepreneurial style of leadership” (Peters and Pierre 1998, 228). The following section therefore considers questions of accountability in PPPs.

**Accountability in Public-Private Partnerships**

In testimony before the U.S. House of Representatives Subcommittee on Highways and Transit, Frank Busalacchi, Secretary of the Wisconsin Department of Transportation asks:

“Can we responsibly delegate some or all…public sector accountability to the private sector? If we can, how do we integrate the needs of the private sector into what has traditionally been a public sector system? There will be considerable problems with integrating private sector financing with public sector policy goals...” (Public-Private Partnerships: Innovative Financing and Protecting the Public Interest (110-7) 2007, 6-7).

Secretary Busalacchi’s question is a prescient one. After all, if public-private partnerships blend the strengths of the public and private sectors, does accountability now require a consideration of private sector values in addition to public sector values? Now that governments are doing more with less and are emphasizing innovation and efficiency as important policy values in governance, where do ethics and accountability fit in?

In thinking about accountability in PPPs, it is important to note that public-private partnerships are a form of governance, as opposed to an effect of the New Public
Management (NPM), because in PPPs, the state is not entirely hamstrung. While systems of governance keep at least some political control over public resources and work to make government better suited to respond to citizen preferences and demands, NPM aims to remake the public sector in the image of the private sector. Furthermore, NPM seeks to inject competition into public management by downplaying the role of the elected or appointed official and by emphasizing discretion for department managers in an effort to make government more competitive and efficient. Meanwhile, governance is more concerned with increasing the government’s capacity to act by creating coalitions across agencies and with actors in the external environment. Governance therefore shifts the state’s role from one of direct control to one of influence. Hence, “government organizations remain a part of the networks in these emerging models of governance, but they are conceptualized as dependent on the other actors to the same extent those actors are dependent on government” (Peters and Pierre 1998, 226).

Accountability in governance remains an unresolved issue. Since governance emphasizes entrepreneurial leadership, two problems arise. First, if elected officials do not have direct control over organizations that implement public programs, deliver public goods, or provide public services, should we hold them accountable for the decisions of the administrators that do? In democratic societies accountability rests with elected officials so that citizens may express satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the actions of government. If elected officials are not accountable under PPPs, who should be?

Second, under governance theory, traditional accountability is replaced by stakeholderism, that is, decision making by those who can demonstrate a “stake” or
financial interest in the problem or policy in question, and consumer choice. Stakeholderism and consumer choice are not always effective means of keeping governance structures accountable, especially when the goods or services being provided are financed with collective resources. Citizens frequently pay for services without ever receiving them – public parks are an excellent example of this. “Further, it is often difficult to identify the appropriate customers of the service – prisons, customs and immigration,” education and perhaps even public land are examples (Peters and Pierre 1998, 228). Mechanisms for guaranteeing ultimate responsibility are just as important for “non-stakeholders” and “non-consumers” as they are for citizens receiving services.

Opponents of the various forms of public-private collaboration argue that the profit motive may cause private companies partnering with government to “cut corners” in order to keep costs under control (Dilger et al. 1997, 24). This critique underscores the importance of understanding the ethical dimensions of PPPs. Ghere posits that the actions of PPPs can be viewed from two ethical standpoints: a “managerial ethics standard” and a “policy ethic standard” (1996, 599). Managerial ethics are concerned with the individual and, under this standard, elected officials and bureaucrats are subject to rules of individual conduct. Program managers, agency heads, and elected officials are supposed to avoid apparent conflicts of interest, the appearance of overly-cozy relationships with the private sector, and other improprieties. In PPPs, these ethical standards extend beyond officials employed by the government to private and nonprofit actors that work with public officials to accomplish public purposes. As a system of governance, PPPs often act “in an entrepreneurial culture of deal-making” (Ghere 1996, 601).
The partnership context means that individuals in government and individual corporations work together. When government officials have long-term relationships with members of the private sector, such associations are often perceived as improper when viewed from a managerial ethics perspective. One response to this has been to replace hierarchal rules with the contract as a means for ensuring accountability. However, are contracts a good mechanism to guarantee the ethical behavior of nongovernmental actors in a PPP? As previously noted, sometimes PPPs are simply informal collaborations, rather than legally-established partnerships. If there is a contract between governmental and nongovernmental partners, “public officials may be dependent on [private officials] who possess better knowledge of the marketplace… [Therefore] they will need to defer to the expertise of their nongovernmental partners” on some occasions, which will invariably raise some eyebrows (Ibid., 602-603).

Policy ethics, unlike managerial ethics underscores “the administrative obligation to work toward social justice for future generations” (Ibid.). In the PPP context, as with managerial ethics, policy ethics require the engagement of actors in the private sector as well as in the public sector. For example, PPP efforts to improve existing public parks and to build new ones represent a commitment to the future public by both governmental and nongovernmental organizations. Still, “group egoism in human relations” can restrict efforts to keep PPPs accountable to the public. It is difficult for government to foster ethical standards across sectors because relations between private groups and public groups are determined by “the proportion of power which each group possesses at least as much as by any rational and moral” standard. So, on the one hand, as citizens, we expect
officials to flex their political muscles to accomplish certain goals and objectives while we expect them to adhere to standards of morality that are vulnerable to “political give-and-take” at the same time (Niebuhr 1960, cited in Ghere 1996)

The apparent conflict between managerial ethics and policy ethics can also be framed as a conflict between market values and public values. Does partnering with the private sector result in a dilution of accountability in government? When shifting responsibility for public purposes to private hands, the forces of public control and review are diminished. Yet, as previously discussed, bringing together the public and private sectors allow decision makers to draw on the strengths of both. Given that PPPs bring together both governmental and nongovernmental actors, they “afford a chance to…stimulate competition and innovation and to embrace pluralism and tolerance as important public values” (Minow 2003, 1236).

Even while scholars recognize the promise that PPPs offer for improving public service delivery, there are reasons for concern. First, PPPs and other forms of public-private collaboration can lead to a weakening of public norms and values. Governments are not merely purchasers of goods and services – they are also “guarantors of freedom and equality.” One such value that is often jeopardized in public-private efforts is guarding against the misuse of public finances. The federal budget is subject to public debate in an effort to prevent an inappropriate use of taxpayer dollars. However, when already federally-appropriated public money is placed in the hands of private sector actors via a PPP, the ways the money is spent is not necessarily open to public scrutiny. When the private sector helps to provide public services and those providers are not
effectively monitored, the opportunity to bypass accountability requirements often takes precedence over ensuring that public services are delivered in an ethical manner. “The result may improve efficiency and reduce costs, but it may also vitiate public values” (Ibid., 1246-1247).

A second reason for concern is that PPPs underscore a “potential mismatch between competition and social provision.” The interests of the public sector and those of the private sector may be fundamentally incompatible. If private investment in public services is seen as visibly enriching the private sector more than it enhances, say, recreational opportunities for a local population, citizens may object. The interests of government and nongovernmental entities also diverge when the market is not truly competitive. In trading a government monopoly for a private monopoly, the private entity can decide to charge exorbitant prices for service provision, leaving the most vulnerable communities to suffer.

The pairing of public sector ends with private sector means also serves to underscore profound differences between competition and social provision. For example, in managing an intergenerational good like public parks, private sector actors may choose to discount the needs of future generations in order to meet the demands of current generations and to generate a profit. While objective measures of effectiveness like frequency of trash removal and deferred maintenance backlogs might improve, are those measures helpful in determining whether the public interest is being met? What about the interests of future publics? Similar examples underscoring the problem of attempting to achieve public ends via private means can be found in education, criminal justice, and
health service provision. Minow therefore concludes that “some functions seem to demand public identity” (Ibid., 1248)

Moving toward public-private partnerships in the provision of public goods and services raises a third important concern. Without appropriate government regulation, such arrangements can serve to increase divisiveness in society and can lead to a loss of common institutions (Minow 2003). In the case of parks, if stakeholderism replaces traditional decision making, citizens unable to prove they have a compelling interest in park policies may be excluded from important conversations concerning the park’s future and by extension, their own future. More basically, injecting private sector values into the public sector may retard the ability of citizens to even recognize the public realm, let alone participate in it. “As basic human needs are met increasingly through relationships of sale and consumption…individuals lose chances to take part…to act like citizens concerned with the welfare of others…” If we as a society choose to move more public decisions into private hands we may see diminished collective will and reduced citizen interest in the protection of the public good. Furthermore, “will there even be a public forum to ask or discuss whatever happened to public commitments to meet basic human needs, redress inequalities, and strengthen democracy” (Ibid., 1254)?

One of the most urgent questions raised in this dissertation as well as in other investigations of PPPs is how to ensure accountability to the public that is both authentic and enduring. On the one hand, government should facilitate competition and innovation in an effort to promote efficient service delivery with effective outcomes. On the other, government must also guard the law, or the official rules of the game, such that they
continue to promote the public values of fairness, transparency, neutrality, and equality.

As such, in PPP scenarios, government must make certain that both public and private partners are answerable to the public, the ultimate authority in a democratic society.

“Thus, a government that contracts with a corporation…should be held responsible for the consequences resulting from such contracts” (Minow 2003, 1260). That is not to say that governments should eschew PPPs and other public-private collaborations altogether. Instead, such arrangements should be taken on with the understanding that decisions affecting the collective require openness and debate.

The differential ways that government, for-profit firms, and nonprofit organizations frame accountability serves to further illustrate the need for an engaged public sector in keeping institutions like PPPs answerable to the citizenry. Democratic governments provide accountability to the public via transparency. The proceedings of Congress and many state legislatures are available to the public and public hearings and press conferences are held with enough frequency to enable public debate regarding collective decisions. Open meetings, sunshine and sunset laws, and the Freedom of Information Act are also examples of government mechanisms of accountability. Regular election cycles also offer citizens an opportunity to approve or disapprove of elected officials. Finally, and perhaps most fundamentally, the federalist structure of U.S. government provides for additional democratic accountability. The division of power between a national government and state governments as well as the separation of powers at each level of government into executive, legislative, and judicial branches “creates opportunities for one sector of the government to check another” (Ibid., 1263).
In the marketplace, accountability finds its basis in supply and demand. Products, services, and programs are deemed “good” or “effective” if they become profitable by attracting and maintaining purchasers. Thus, if a product or service is unable to attract demand sufficient enough to cover costs and generate revenue, it is no longer produced or provided. Presumably, if the quality of service delivery is low, the service provider will have a low number of consumers. In this way, the market itself is the mechanism for accountability. Private firms are also accountable to their shareholders and in regulated economies like the U.S. companies must comply with environmental regulations and antitrust laws.

Nonprofit organizations are accountable to their boards of directors. Also, because nonprofit organizations require outside funding in order to carry out their objectives, the organizations are answerable to their funders. Governments are one of the largest supporters of nonprofit organizations, meaning that nonprofit accountability is often tied to public sector accountability. Given that government is frequently pressured to reduce its size and its budget, public officials may closely scrutinize the activities of nonprofits in an effort to pass on spending cuts (Musselwhite Jr. 1986). So while nonprofits “lack the demands of a profitable bottom line,” they remain accountable to those that provide them with resources, including for-profit firms they may have contracted with and government (Minow 2003, 1263).

Given the differences in approaches to accountability of government, for-profit firms, and nonprofit organizations, what does accountability look like when responsibility for the provision of public goods and services is shared between them? Minow (2003)
offers some helpful suggestions in this regard, arguing that there are three frameworks of public accountability that can be applied to PPPs and other privatization systems. Contract law, for one, essentially guarantees public enforcement of private promises. Contract law can facilitate accountability in PPP situations if the facts surrounding the contracting process between government and the private sector are open to the public. This way, citizens can watch government officials in an effort to prevent a skirting of overarching statutes or constitutional law. If there are benefits to providing legal exceptions to private firms in exchange for contracting with government, those benefits must be placed up for public debate.

These requirements need not impede the legitimate actions of private actors. Instead, contract law offers protection to citizens while guarding public coffers against inappropriate expenditures. Still, it should be noted that not all scholars are as optimistic that contract law will keep PPPs accountable to the public. “The fear is that the perfect contract can never be written and that, even if it could, performance cannot be perfectly monitored.” As such the challenge to government officials is to carefully craft the contract “so that there is no misunderstanding (or deliberate exploitation of incomplete contracts) between parties” (de Bettignies and Ross 2004, 144-145).

Another method of providing for accountability in PPPs is constitutional law. When governments enter into agreements with nongovernmental agents, they must adhere to constitutionally-proscribed rules. Governments are constitutionally bound to ensure equal protection and due process under the law. Constitutional law also guards against those organizations and individuals that would use PPPs and other contracting
situations to enrich themselves. As such, public officials should not enter into PPPs with
the express purpose of getting around these fundamental duties. To prevent such
violations, contracts with private partners must carry explicit requirements guaranteeing
equal treatment, due process, and deal-making without conflicts-of-interest and other
improprieties. Additionally, when partnering with the private sector, government officials
should retain space for the public to notify authorities of noncompliance with
constitutional requirements and to address other grievances.

Minow (2003) offers administration as the third model of accountability in
partnership situations. That administration is suggested as a solution to the problem of
ensuring accountability is interesting in light of the fact that many of today’s partnering
and privatization efforts grew out of the assumption that administration, or bureaucracy,
is the problem. “Yet administration need not descend into bureaucracy – and if it does, it
can do so to ensure systematic collection of information needed to assess results and
practices and deter abuse.” In other words, some paperwork and government machinery
is necessary when it is used to evaluate the performance of systems of governance (Ibid.,
1268). As long as administration does not slide into mindless reporting and a substitution
of ends for means, as has long been the critique of public bureaucracies, it is free to
pursue the enforcement of public values.

A lack of state oversight of PPPs is wasteful and risky. As illustrated by their case
study of a public-private partnership to finance and build a prison in Massachusetts,
Bloomfield et al. (1998, 467) conclude that while it is tempting to blame partnering
efforts for program or service delivery failures, that explanation is a bit too simplistic.
The author’s argue that had the Commonwealth of Massachusetts delineated specific reporting and enforcement mechanisms, it may have avoided the cost overruns resulting from the partnership. Instead, their case “illustrates the potential hazards of employing these methods on a public project without strong, effective safeguards protecting taxpayer interests.” At the same time that PPPs have the promise to aid in the pursuit of the public interest, their potential should not be overstated. While no one has said that PPPs are a panacea for domestic problems, some scholars worry that the public is convinced that shrinking the public sector does not matter because PPPs will step in to fulfill public purposes. Moreover, partnerships “cannot by themselves solve major social problems and we should not act as if they can...Even in their aggregate...partnerships will fall far short” of such a standard (Woodside 1986, 151) So even as moving the pursuit of public purposes to the private sector raises serious concerns, there is still potential for good policy outcomes as long as PPPs are accompanied by strong public accountability. The changing roles of both governmental actors and nongovernmental actors must be contingent on and subject to the rules of democratic governance. “In this light, public and private institutions can and should be viewed as partners, serving larger and multiple interests” (Minow 2003, 1236)⁷.

⁷ Emphasis added.
Chapter 3

The Case of the Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area

Introduction

In his account of the Boston Harbor Islands David Kales describes the evolution of the archipelago as “a history of islands on the edge” (Kales 2007, 9). While Kales was referring to the fact that the islands are at the edge of a drumlin field intersecting with the coastline, the islands have also been home to people and organizations living and operating at the edges of society. In recent years, the Islands have come under a new administrative scheme that skirts traditional public management. With its new designation as the Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area, the islands are overseen by a public-private partnership responsible for its upkeep and maintenance. Management by members of both the public sector (at the municipal, state, and federal level) and private sector (including non-profit organizations) means that the park’s overseers must walk the line between the broader community interest and the interests of individual partners as well as balance the requirements of city, state, and federal government. The islands are indeed on the edge.

The case of the Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area illustrates the potential for success and failure for public-private partnerships in the context of public land management. This chapter examines an experiment with public-private partnerships that may serve as a template for future public land management.
The Harbor Islands in History

People have lived on and around the Boston Harbor Islands for thousands of years, beginning with natives who first settled the area and spent summers on the islands for hunting and fishing. Such patterns of use by Native Americans by did not change immediately with the first wave of Europeans colonization. By the late 1600s, however, European settlers had begun to wage an all-out war against the indigenous people who first called the islands home. King Philip’s war, named for Metacom, the Wampanog sachem whom the English called “King Philip,” was one of the bloodiest in early U.S. history and resulted in the interment and death of more than 1,000 Native Americans (Kales 2007; National Park Service 2008b).

Over the centuries the islands were used as Civil War prisons (Fort Warren’s most famous prisoner was the vice-president of the Confederacy, Alexander Stephens), places to quarantine Irish immigrants fleeing the potato famine, home to infectious disease hospitals and sanitariums, as well as to training facilities for the United States military (Kales 2007; National Park Service 2008a). The islands were also seen as convenient repositories for unpleasant things that nobody wanted near their own homes, like landfills and rendering plants. The fact that the islands were the site of such a diversity of uses means that current park officials must be sensitive to the management and interpretation of island resources, particularly those associated with the massacre and mass burial of American Indians (National Park Service 2008b).

While the islands had been the site of a variety of uses through the first half of the 20th century, they fell into a period of neglect following World War II. “By the 1960s,”
Kales notes, “the federal government had declared Fort Independence and Castle Island surplus and deeded the property to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The exterior batteries were demolished… The city of Quincy proposed to buy Long Island for the 1975 World’s Fair, and a proposal for a federally operated oceanographic institute was announced. Neither proposal came to fruition” (Kales 2007, 129). Other islands were abandoned of their previous uses. Rainsford Island, for example, was the site of a smallpox hospital during the early 19th century. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts seized the property in 1852 and converted it into an almshouse before abandoning it in 1866. By the late 1800s, the city of Boston had transformed the island into a home for destitute women before finally renovating the building so it could function as a school for boys. The school was closed in 1920 and today, only the foundation holes remain (City of Boston 2008).

When asked about the polluted Boston Harbor, former Massachusetts Governor Michael S. Dukakis said, “In the 1960s, the Harbor was a sewer.” In fact, by May 1968, the Federal Water Pollution Control Administration held an enforcement conference regarding the polluted Boston Harbor, which was out of compliance with the federal Clean Water Act. The attendees observed that the greatest source of pollution in the harbor was 460 million gallons of raw or partially treated sewage coming from the two treatment plants operated by the Metropolitan District Commission (MDC). The sewage as well as other industrial wastes discharged into the harbor forced the Commonwealth to

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8 Governor Michael S. Dukakis, interviewed October 6, 2008, Northeastern University.
place heavy limitations on fishing and swimming. In fact digging for clams and other shellfish was prohibited in some 89% of available shellfish habitats.

While Boston Harbor and the Harbor Islands had deteriorated due to poor infrastructure, poor management, and a lack of public interest in beaches, the Commonwealth did take steps to preserve the islands for recreational use. In 1970, the state legislature put the Harbor Islands under public ownership through the establishment of the Boston Harbor Islands State Park. The state continued to acquire additional islands (Peddocks Island from private owners; Georges, Lovells, Bumpkin, Calf, Little Calf, Gallops, Grape, Greater Brewster, Middle Brewster, Outer Brewster, Green, Hangman’s, Raccoon, Sheep, and Slate Islands from the U.S. government) and placed them under the jurisdiction of the MDC, its successor the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA), or the State Department of Environmental Management (DEM), each agency having some responsibility for the management of the state park.

The deplorable state of Boston Harbor was a campaign issue during the 1974 Massachusetts gubernatorial campaign. Michael Dukakis was elected to his first term as Governor of Massachusetts because, among other campaign promises, he had come to office with a pledge to reform the MDC. The organization was considered by many to be a bloated, poorly-managed bureaucracy subject to very little oversight. A state-funded agency, the MDC was subject to the ebb and flow of the state budget, which meant that Harbor projects proceeded when funds flowed freely but slowed when stagnated. While Dukakis failed to reform the MDC (in fact, his pledge came back to haunt him during the 1978 gubernatorial primary, when the MDC withheld their backing of the incumbent as
punishment for his efforts to improve the organization), he was successful in securing federal funding to begin the work necessary to get the Harbor back into compliance with federal standards. The Commonwealth’s hired consultants recommended that the state use enhanced secondary treatment to clean the Harbor, but little came of it when Dukakis lost his re-election bid to Edward J. King during the 1978 Democratic primary. “Ed King took over as governor and nothing happened,” Dukakis remembers. “Then-EPA Administrator] Anne Gorsuch didn’t care about cleaning the Harbor and Reagan didn’t either…nothing happened.”9

By 1982, the sewage plants on Deer and Nut Islands were in such bad shape that breakdowns were a common occurrence, and the discharge of raw sewage continued to make its way into the ocean. Pipes leading to the plants were old and prone to leaking and the plants themselves were seriously understaffed. Ultimately, the city of Quincy sued the state after the city’s solicitor found human waste and grease washing up on the shores of Wollaston Beach (Dolin 2004).

Toward Intergovernmental Management: The Boston Harbor Project

In sum, by the 1980s the Boston Harbor Islands were considered both a treasure and an eyesore. Deplorable conditions resulting from inadequate treatment of sewage and other environmental hazards discouraged residents and tourists from visiting. In fact, conditions were bad enough that city beaches remained closed during half of the summer months. Many islands once teeming with life were now home to a scant one or two species. Indeed, conditions had become so bad that the Harbor and islands gained

9 Ibid.
national attention during the 1988 presidential race between then-vice president George H.W. Bush and Massachusetts Governor Michael Dukakis. The Republican nominee used the dirty Boston Harbor to call into question Dukakis’s ability to govern the nation, blaming the Governor for the 500 million gallons of scarcely treated sewage being dumped into the water. Bush argued that the Harbor, once a historical and environmental treasure was a virtual wasteland. “I should have met him at the Harbor,” Governor Dukakis opined.\(^{10}\) Even though the Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Justice had sued the Commonwealth in 1985 for its failure to comply with the 1972 Clean Water Act, the harbor remained polluted giving Bush fodder for his campaign (PBS 2008).

As a result of the lawsuit, Governor Dukakis created a commission during his second term that recommended the MDC be reformed. The newly created Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA) was made responsible for getting the state’s sewage system up to federal standards. Since the MWRA was a public authority, and not a wholly-funded state agency, the entity was not dependant solely on public funds to carry out its purposes. Still, embarking on one of the nation’s largest public works programs – cleaning up Boston Harbor – was no small feat. The Harbor clean-up project was large and complex enough to deserve its own dissertation. Other authors (Whelpley 2007; Dolin 2004) discuss the project in greater detail; for my part I will note a few of the major milestones of the Harbor’s restoration.

\(^{10}\) Ibid.
As part of the clean-up process, the primary sewage treatment plant at Nut Island was decommissioned. This action required the MWRA to construct an inter-harbor tunnel running from Nut Island to the location of a new, secondary treatment plant on Deer Island. In 1988, construction began on what would become the second largest sewage treatment plant in the United States. Today, the secondary treatment facility at Deer Island purifies some 380 million gallons of raw sewage each day. Sludge produced in the treatment process is now recycled into nitrogen-rich fertilizer instead of being dumped directly into the harbor as it was a few decades ago. The construction of the new sewage plant has had positive effects on the harbor ecosystem. By 1991, the color and smell of the water had improved and people began to report sightings of fish and other species returning to the area.

Massachusetts was back in compliance with the federal Clean Water Act by 1997. In September 2000, an outfall pipe designed to carry treated sewage out of Boston Harbor into Massachusetts Bay was completed. More than 300 technical reports and 1,000 scientific papers published by MWRA scientists and other scholars have shown that no bacteria associated with human wastes are affecting water quality in Massachusetts Bay. The wastewater is so diluted that even water temperature and salinity, two variables that can have huge consequences for fragile ecosystems, are of little concern. “Meanwhile, the beaches and ecosystems of Boston Harbor have rebounded” (Massachusetts Water Resources Authority 2008).

With cleaner waters came renewed recreational use. Urban dwellers returned to island recreation as activities like swimming, fishing, and boating became popular again.
In 1993 state and federal officials kicked off a $250,000 year-long study to determine whether the harbor islands could be added to the national park system. Massachusetts Representative Gerry Studds, a long-serving Democrat and prominent promoter of adding the islands to the list of U.S. national parks, brought then-US Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt to the islands as a way to argue the case for the long neglected islands. “This, [the Harbor Islands], may be among the very paramount places for consideration in the land,” Studds said at a press conference. “There are 3 million people within easy shot of [the islands].” Unfortunately, only six islands were accessible via public boat and then only during the summer months. Moreover, many of the islands’ facilities, including many of the historic military forts and camps, were in need of maintenance. Studds and his supporters saw the establishment of a national park as a necessary condition if the islands were to remain protected and cherished in the future (Allen 1993).

Following the tour through the islands, Secretary Babbitt stated that he supported the creation of a new national park and met with federal judges and members of Congress to discuss the future of the islands (Allen 1994). Given the contentious nature of national park management, it is unsurprising that Babbitt sought the legal approval of federal judges and officials before proceeding. With the approval of federal judges, plans for the new Harbor Islands national park could proceed.

Early negotiations about how best to establish such a park were derailed early in 1994 by a personnel controversy within the National Park Service (NPS) itself. A NPS “streamlining plan” called for a 25 percent reduction in administrative staff nationwide, with Boston’s NPS office one of 10 regional offices marked for cuts. The move came as a
response to President Clinton’s mandate to reduce the size of the federal government and involved the creation of “one large Atlantic region that would include about 100 parks from Maine to West Virginia and for housing the regional office in Philadelphia.” Some park employees suggested that locating the NPS regional office in Philadelphia could compromise efforts to create the new Harbor Islands national park because “it would probably fall by the wayside.” Park Service spokespeople denied those claims pointing out that having the regional office located in Boston had not hurt parks in New Jersey (McFarling 1994c). Officials promised that cutting more than 100 jobs from the 220-employee Boston office would have no effect on the decision to create a new national park near the city.

While many feared that the battle “would turn political and pit the New England congressional delegation against Pennsylvania’s” the controversy ended in compromise (McFarling 1994b). Directors of the regional offices affected by the earlier proposal each agreed to take a staff cut of 25 percent rather than allow the Boston office to bear the heavier burden. Moreover, many of those administrative personnel who were affected by the plan were shunted into job vacancies within parks. Ultimately, the North Atlantic regional office of the Park Service was moved to Philadelphia. In September 1994, Secretary Babbitt approved the plan to merge the regional offices in Boston and Philadelphia, creating the Northeast Region, and assured concerned parties that the shift would not affect plans for the Harbor Islands (McFarling 1994a).

The NPS staffing controversy notwithstanding, plans to make the Boston Harbor Islands a new national park faced additional challenges. An early draft proposal by the
NPS called on the city of Boston to turn over its property at Long Wharf, a long-time source of revenue for the Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA) which leased the property to various commercial interests. The plan also called for the nearby Customs House to be moved into federal hands even though the BRA still owed $10 million on the property, and would still have to pay the debt off even if it were sold to the NPS (Walker 1994a). The Park Service had planned to use Long Wharf as a starting point for better and more reliable shuttle service to and from the islands and it wanted the Customs House Block for office space. Boston mayor Thomas Menino, while expressing his approval for the national park, rejected handing over the Custom House or Long Wharf to the Park Service without compensatory revenue to offset the city’s loss (Walker 1994b).

Concerns about the future of the park did not just arise out of local controversies and NPS personnel shifts. In late 1994, many Massachusetts officials and citizens were coming to a harsh realization that Republicans – a long-time minority in the Commonwealth – were about to take over the U.S. Congress, with obvious impacts on the Massachusetts’ congressional delegation’s hold on key committee chairmanships. Representative Gerry Stuuds was about to lose his chairmanship of the House Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee, a position which many in Massachusetts hoped he could parlay into the creation of a new Harbor Islands National Park. Vivien Li, executive director of the advocacy group the Boston Harbor Association claimed that the change in leadership in Congress put “the whole thing in jeopardy” (Gosselin 1994).

An even larger issue arising from the change in the partisan make-up of Congress was that “Washington may [have been] on the verge of a sharp contraction in federal
power.” This contraction was to take the form of considerable cuts in federal funding for state and local projects and programs, as Republicans had campaigned on deep tax cuts and a significant reduction in the federal budget. The Commonwealth at that time received more federal funds per capita than most other states (largely in the form of grants won by its R&D sector, versus funds to combat poverty, for example), so the change in congressional leadership was cause for worry. Environmental interests in the state were concerned that federal money for the new national park, as well as for continued harbor cleanup efforts and local water and sewage projects would dwindle, leaving the state to search for funding alternatives (Gosselin 1994).

An alternative funding source for the proposed Harbor Islands national park came just in time. Once installed, the newly-elected 104th Congress considered a bill that looked to the nation’s parks in an effort to find politically palatable places to cut spending. Among the parks being considered for federal funding cuts were 12 facilities located in Massachusetts. Even though the NPS had named the 30 islands in Boston’s harbor as its priority for addition to the national park system, House Republicans argued that “the park system [was] already too big and they want[ed] to identify parks and historic sites for possible closure.” On September 19, 1995, the night before a vote was scheduled that would have created a special federal commission to review which U.S. parks could be closed, Bank of Boston made a $10,000 contribution to the Harbor Islands national park cause. Ira Jackson, a vice president of the Bank of Boston said, “We’ve made a[n]…investment in the future of this city. It’s now time to leverage this
investment not only for economic development, but for the cultural and recreational benefit of our people” (Allen 1995).

The bill before the House of Representatives was defeated in mid-September 1995, as critics of the proposed parks review board said the measure was part of a larger plan to roll back the national park system. Representative Bill Richardson (D-NM), a leading opponent of the bill remarked, “No one is calling us and saying we’ve got too many parks…” ("House Rejects Creation Of Parks Review Board" 1995). Even though the House proposal was defeated, assuaging fears that federal funding for parks would be gouged, other local businesses also lent their financial support to the Harbor Islands. Gerald L. Millet, the head of Lehman Millet medical advertising, organized the Island Alliance, a group dedicated to raising money for projects on the islands, and was the one to collect the initial Bank of Boston donation. Businesses and other local interests wanted to be sure that their investment was protected and therefore supported the efforts of the Massachusetts congressional delegation to form a new national park on the islands.

In December 1995, Massachusetts Representatives Gerry Studds, a Democrat, and Peter G. Torkildsen, a Republican, announced at a press conference that they would file legislation in a bipartisan effort to preserve the Boston Harbor Islands by adding them to the national park system. The legislation called for the 50 square miles of Boston Harbor to be managed by the NPS in cooperation with state and local officials as well as with private owners. The new national park required some $40 million in start-up capital and up to an estimated $8 million for its yearly operations. Studds and Torkildsen, perhaps in an effort to prevent congressional Republicans from balking at cost of the new park, were
quick to point out that the legislation did not depend on federal funding alone. Instead, the bill required that funding come on a matching basis, where every $1 in federal funds would be matched with three non-federal dollars. The resulting funding would come through a public-private partnership including state and local government as well as local businesses and advocacy organizations. Representative Studds argued that the new management approach was not following convention – the federal government would not be required to purchase a lot of land. “Instead, it relied on those who already own the property to work cooperatively with the National Park Service for the best interests of the public” (Vaillancourt 1995).

Legislation filed by the Massachusetts congressional delegation won initial support from a key member of the House of Representatives. Representative Jim Hansen, a Utah Republican and then-chairman of the Resources subcommittee on parks and public lands, said he favored the Boston Harbor Islands national park initiative ("Harbor islands' cause gets boost; NATIONAL BRIEFS" 1996). Representative Hansen was not exactly the darling of environmentalists. Some speculated that he supported the Harbor Islands national park because its enabling legislation called for the majority of its funding to come from state government or private sources. Sierra Magazine, the major publication of the Sierra Club, argued that Hansen “[was] doing his best to match the destructive grandeur of [former Interior Secretary James] Watt’s schemes to turn the public lands to private profit” (Rauber 1995).

The bill got its first hearing in a Congress dominated by Western state Republicans in April 1996. Many of the newly-elected conservatives opposed creating
new parks when, according to their view, the federal government had a hard enough time managing and maintaining the parks already under its charge. The fact that the bill received a hearing at all in the new, GOP-controlled legislature was partially attributed to the “goodwill that [Rep. Gerry] Studds, its major proponent, ha[...] engendered in his 24 years in Congress.” The bill’s other saving grace amongst its fiscally conservative detractors was the fact that it did not require the federal government to bear the bulk of the costs accrued from acquiring land for the park and maintaining it. The proposal required that the federal government “provide only a third of the roughly [$8] million annual budget and an estimated $40 million in upfront capital costs” (Scales 1996).

Despite support from the well-respected and long-serving Massachusetts congressional delegation, some legislators voiced their skepticism about the Harbor Islands national park. In particular, Senator Craig Thomas (R-WY) thought that federal money was already spread too thin and that, by adding more parks to the NPS system, existing national parks – especially the large national parks located in western states – would suffer: “I don’t want to see localities looking around to find something to preserve and then say, ‘Let’s let the feds do it’” (Black 1996). Government, business, and non-profit organization representatives from Massachusetts presented a bipartisan argument that the proposed new national park would not, in fact, break the bank. Many of the islands had already moved into public hands during the 1970s when the state purchased land for the Boston Harbor Islands State Park. Other islands were owned by non-profit organizations, so advocates for the national park legislation argued that congressional Republicans need not worry, as the proposal had no land acquisition costs.
Opposition to the new national park idea also came from within Massachusetts. Sam Sapiel, a member of the Penobscot Indian tribe in Maine, and his constituency objected to the use of the term “recreation” for proposed park because of the fact that the islands were used for a program of alleged genocide by European colonists during King Philip’s War. Sapiel made the case for having Indian representatives on any park advisory boards established by the new legislation. “We have been left out so long. The bill must be amended to the likings of the Indian people.” Federal and state officials and non-governmental organizations said they were willing to work with the Penobscots on a solution (Black 1996).

Word that the Boston Harbor Islands would become a part of the National Park System first came after the Senate gave the effort its unanimous support in October 1996. Since the legislation had already passed in the House, President Clinton promised to sign the Omnibus Parks and Public Lands Management Act of 1996. NPS officials said that the new recreation area had the potential to attract as many as 500,000 visitors per year, to provide as many as 700 new jobs, and to bring in some $200 million a year to the local economy. The act called for the Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area to be governed by a 13-member board that would represent agencies from the city and state, the NPS, as well as private landowners like the Outward Bound Education Center on Thompson Island (Allen 1996).

Still, citizens were advised to be patient as major changes were not likely to come for several years. Even though many of the islands were already a part of a state park, many others remained inaccessible by public transportation and some even lacked
potable water. Hopes still ran high however, due to the groundwork laid by Gerald L. Millet and the Island Alliance. In the two years since officials first mentioned drafting legislation establishing the new national park, the Alliance had held fund-raisers for the new recreation area and successfully garnered the money necessary to get the park’s early programs off the ground.

According to its enabling legislation, the Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area was to be managed “in partnership with the private sector, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, municipalities surrounding Massachusetts and Cape Cod Bays, the Thompson Island Outward Bound Education Center, and Trustees of Reservations, and with historical, business, cultural, civic, recreational and tourism organizations” (Omnibus Parks and Public Lands Management Act 1996). The partnership was kicked off with another pledge from Bank of Boston, this time $50,000 donated at the press conference held to celebrate the establishment of the new park. U.S. National Park Service administrators noted that while some other facilities maintained by NPS had involved private funding and local government, none were as extensively involved as those in the Island Partnership.

**Intergovernmental Management, Management by Partnership**

At its inception it was not clear how this new partnership would work and what kinds of uses would be permitted on the islands (Chandler 1996). Indeed, only a week and a half after the press conference celebrating its creation, a *Boston Globe* reporter asked, “What now for the Boston Harbor Islands?...Who’s in charge out there if it’s a federal park? What’s it going to cost and who’s going to pay?” (McLaughlin 1996)
Officials who had championed the new park said that a general management plan would be unveiled within three years of the creation of the park, in accordance with the park’s enabling legislation.

The issues they confronted were many and complex. While the federal government would not take ownership of the islands, all 31 islands and a number of harbor front access points as well as visitor services and general maintenance were to be handled by federal managers. The islands themselves were to be used in a variety of ways: some would remain pristine, others would have access to refurbished historic facilities, and still others would be devoted to recreational activities like boating and swimming. Over time, access to the islands was to be improved, with increased ferry service expected.

By mid-October 1996, the Park Service projected an operating budget of at least $8 million, with the federal government responsible for 25 percent and state and local officials and private partners responsible for the rest. Boston’s financial community leaders felt that the 75 percent could “come largely from ‘revenue generators’ like gift shops, boat concessions, [and] perhaps even rental of a projected conference center” (McLaughlin 1996).

The bulk of the decision making for the new park was to be made by the Island Partnership and its Advisory Council, with the Secretary of the Interior having the ultimate authority over the Harbor Islands. The Partnership was to be comprised of 13 members, with one each representing the National Park Service, U.S. Coast Guard, Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management, the Metropolitan District
Commission, the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority, Boston’s Office of Environmental Services, the private nonprofit Thompson Island Outward Bound Education Center, the private nonprofit Trustees of Reservations, and the Island Alliance. Two others were to be appointed by the Governor of Massachusetts, and two drawn from a newly created Advisory Council (see below), to be appointed by the Secretary of the Interior (McLaughlin 1996). According to the Park’s enabling legislation, Partnership members would serve three-year terms and each member could be reappointed for one additional term. Members of the Partnership were to receive no compensation outside of travel expenses and a per diem in lieu of subsistence when members work away from their regular places of business. The legislation also specified that the Partnership was to seek out donations from corporations, foundations or individuals in the form of services, property, or funds to carry out its purposes, which might include obtaining property (through purchase or rental) or entering into cooperative agreements “with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, any political subdivision thereof, or with any organization or person” to enhance the island experience (Omnibus Parks and Public Lands Management Act 1996).

The Omnibus Parks and Public Lands Management Act of 1996 (§ 104-333) was formally enacted on November 12, 1996 and the Partnership had three years from that date to submit a general management plan to the Secretary of the Interior. Managers of the new Boston Harbor Island National Recreation Area were required to create a coordinated administrative scheme that would assign responsibilities to governmental actors at the municipal, state and federal level as well as to private and nonprofit
interests. In particular, the legislation focused attention on the need to develop a strategy to:

“finance and support the public improvements and services recommended… including allocation of non-Federal matching requirements…and a delineation of private-sector roles and responsibilities. [Moreover the legislation required] a program for the coordination and consolidation…of activities that may be carried out by Federal, State, and local agencies having jurisdiction over land and waters within the recreation area, including planning and regulatory responsibilities” (Omnibus Parks and Public Lands Management Act 1996).

The general management plan was to lay the administrative groundwork to develop appropriate policies and programs for the variety of activities that would soon take place on the Harbor Islands. In particular, the Partnership was to be responsible for protecting Native American burial grounds located on the islands, enhancing outdoor recreation, improving public access to the islands, conserving or otherwise protecting the cultural, historical, and natural assets of the islands, as well as locating potential sources of revenue and recognizing existing economic activities within the recreation area. In doing so, the Park’s enabling legislation stipulated that the Partnership must consult with appropriate government officials as well as with interested members of conservation, business, professional, and community organizations. The Partnership was also required to provide for public comment on matters addressed by the plan via public hearings and meetings. The general management plan was then to be submitted to the Governor, who would have 90 days to review the plan and make any recommendations. Once the Governor’s recommendations were taken into account, the Partnership was to submit the plan to the Secretary of the Interior who, in turn, would have 90 days to approve or
disapprove the plan based on the following criteria: sufficient public participation, satisfactory regulatory and financial tools in place to implement the plan, and guarantees from state and local officials that the plan would be implemented.

The enabling legislation also established an 18-member Boston Harbor Islands Advisory Council whose purpose was to represent groups or organizations with an interest in the recreation area and to make recommendations to the Island Partnership. Members were to be drawn from interested municipalities, environmental organizations, business and commercial interests, Harbor advocacy organizations, Native American organizations, and other educational and cultural groups, with at least three individuals representing each category. All members were to be officially appointed by the Secretary of the Interior through the Director of the NPS. By law, all Advisory Council meetings were to be open to the public to bring transparency to the planning process (Omnibus Parks and Public Lands Management Act 1996).

Implementing the Plan

“Just about the first thing I did after President Clinton signed the legislation was to ask for some patience from everyone…. There’s been a tremendous amount of work going on over the winter, but it’s been mostly behind-the-scenes stuff so far. What the federal legislation did was call for [the] creation of an entirely new way of setting up and running a park facility, and you just don’t turn a loose conglomeration into a unified body overnight”

-- Gerald Millet, the Island Alliance, April 1997 (McLaughlin 1997).

Concerned citizens and advocates alike probably expected the momentum that brought the national park designation to the Harbor Islands to extend to the general
management planning process. And, indeed, initial stages went quickly. Founder of the Volunteers and Friends of the Boston Harbor Islands, Suzanne Gall Marsh said of the planning process, “It feels like working at full speed even though we’re still setting up the machinery” (McLaughlin 1997). Much of the winter months between the enactment of the enabling legislation and the beginning of the park’s first season were spent seeking out the leadership of the Island Alliance as well as nominees to the Island Partnership. The Island Alliance chose William Whelan, of Spaulding and Slye, a Boston real estate management firm, as one of the co-chairs for its board of directors and Katherine Abbot, former Secretary for the state Executive Office of Environmental Affairs as its executive director. Once the Island Alliance and other planners had filled the seats on the Partnership, they planned to turn their attention to the Advisory Council. The first major event related to the national park status was set for June 29, 1997, when park officials planned to hold an official opening gala. Park planners promised that additional events, projects, and programs were to come later (McLaughlin 1997).

Long simmering issues soon complicated planning. One particularly contentious matter was a debate over the way to memorialize the death of Native Americans sent to die on Deer Island by European settlers in 1675. Deer Island, soon to house a massive new sewage treatment plant managed by the MWRA, was set to open to the public in 1999. A number of gravesites for Native Americans and a later generation of Irish immigrants were found on the island by construction workers. MWRA spokespeople assured the public in 1997 that they would consult with local Indian groups in deciding the best way to mark the deaths that had occurred on the island. However, some Native
Americans were skeptical and claimed that they were not told that the MWRA had planned to tear down buildings on Deer Island, under which local indigenous groups hoped to find additional bodies. On behalf of an intertribal group of Native Americans who were closely monitoring the project, spokesman Gary McCann said, “We don’t believe a word the MWRA says; they have changed their stories so many times. Deer Island is a symbol for what the tribes see as an effort of ethnic cleansing against them” (McKim 1997).

Controversy over the appropriate use of the Harbor Islands was not limited to those seeking recognition of Native American or Irish heritage. Following the first meeting of the Island Partnership in June 1997, The Boston Globe reported that a $350,000 Police Department shooting-range reconstruction project on Moon Island was about to be approved. Park advocates and environmental organizations argued that the range should be located off the island saying, “For generations, we put the things we didn’t want to see on the Harbor Islands – prisons, landfills, psychiatric hospitals. It’s time we put the degradation behind us” (Radin 1997b). The shooting range on Moon Island had been there for almost 40 years and some state officials argued that the public had passed by the range during that time, without incident. The Partnership clearly had its work cut out for it when it came to striking a balance between the diversity of uses of the Harbor Islands.

The opening gala for the Boston Harbor Island National Park Area, held on June 29, 1997, showcased the new national park’s innovative ownership and management plan. The NPS had never before given national park status to land that it did not own.
However, New England and the rest of the East Coast had historically seen experimentation in land management practices because it generally lacked larger tracts of public land like those located in the West. Given this, George Price, a cultural anthropologist with the NPS said, “This is a great example of reinventing government. We’ve come together as a partnership because a number of people were able to put aside individual needs to focus on the greater good.” Meanwhile, Lawrence Gall of the NPS New England office said, “This part of the country will have to show cooperation between land owners and government agencies. The Harbor Islands are the manifestation of this idea” (Paul 1997).

Not everyone who advocated for the Islands had faith in the new management plan. Some expressed concerns about sustaining financial support despite the fact that the Island Alliance had raised approximately half of the funds needed for the 1998 budget. According to this view, it would take at least a year to determine whether the public-private partnership would work and, according to environmentalists, the important question to ask with regard to the parks “is whether funding can be sustained, not for 10 years, but forever” (Paul 1997).

Another concern was representation. On July 30, 1997, the chair and vice chair of the Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area were appointed. Peter C. Webber, then-commissioner of the DEM and Cathleen Douglas Stone, then-chief of environmental services for the city of Boston, were appointed as chair and vice chair, respectively, by a park board that had no representatives of citizens’ groups that had helped pave the way for the park’s creation. Following the announcement of the appointments, spokespersons
from activist organizations like Friends of the Boston Harbor Islands, Save the Harbor/Save the Bay, and the Boston Harbor Association complained that they had been misled by federal officials as well as others about the leadership plans for the park. In particular, activists were upset because they had been told that only interim leaders of the park would be appointed until the chair and vice chair seats were filled. “To see them appoint a chair and a vice-chair without any inclusion of the public is appalling,” said Jodi Sugerman, policy director of Save the Harbor/Save the Bay. “We were assured that this would be a public process and that people who have been involved for years would have a chance to be represented and considered [for leadership positions]” (Radin 1997a).

While environmental activists and other community groups had been invited to attend the meeting announcing the appointments, they were not allowed to voice their concerns until the board had completed its business meeting. Park Service official and board member Terry Savage explained the board’s actions, but was conciliatory saying, “We allowed public comment at the end and they made their comments. We will be discussing that amongst ourselves. Whether we’ve done everything perfectly to this point could be questioned.” Meanwhile, Island Alliance head and board member Gerald Millet told citizens’ group representatives that deciding whether to wait for the public seats on the Advisory Council to be filled before picking Partnership leaders had been a “major topic at our nominating committee meeting. We reached the conclusion that the governing board needed to move forward… We felt we could not stall.” Citizens’ group representatives said they would have pressed interim leaders for a shorter timeframe for the creation of the Advisory Council, had they known that the Partnership’s leadership
positions would be decided without their involvement. Boston Harbor Association executive director Vivien Li remarked that the Partnership’s action had been “absolutely outrageous. Members from advocacy groups, boat operators, neighborhood activists, people of color, park users have not been given a chance” (Radin 1997a).

The fact that representation had become a contentious issue was unsurprising to many. While giving his remarks at the opening gala for the park, Island Alliance President Gerald Millet thanked a long list of businesses and corporate executives for their support of the national park effort. Glaringly absent from his speech were the names of the citizens groups and environmental organizations that “were advocating restoration of the islands long before his own group – which he claims inspired passage of the park legislation – was conceived” (Radin 1997d).

The innovative governing and financing structure employed at the Boston Harbor Islands was recognized as having potential as a national model for future park management or, as more cynical observers opined, “[it] could be just another grand idea that falls victim to bickering and distrust” (Radin 1997c). The Island Alliance, the fundraising group trying to speak for the many nongovernmental organizations concerned with the park, was an alliance in name only. By August 1997, a year after Congress had created the park, the Alliance had yet to come up with a plan that would merge the varied and sometimes contradictory goals of the groups it represented. In fact, the management framework outlined in the Harbor Islands’ enabling legislation was potentially vulnerable to turf wars, with the public sector pitted against the private sector, local government
against federal government, and economic interests and businesses against environmentalists.

Particularly divisive were the different visions interested parties had for the national park. Mayor Menino believed the park could become the Tivoli Gardens\textsuperscript{11} of New England, an amusement park with a sophisticated twist. He also called for the New England Aquarium to play a major educational role on the Harbor Islands and argued for an expansion of the social programs already helping needy populations there. Meanwhile, the National Park Service Act of August 25, 1916 gives the agency it created the mandate to “preserve the resources for the use and enjoyment of the people and yet leave the resources unimpaired for future generations” (Rogers 1987). As such, officials at the National Park Service saw both the amusement park and the social programs as inconsistent with the purposes of a national park.

Some city officials, like then-secretary of environmental affairs Trudy Coxe supported the pristine future for the Harbor Islands advocated by the Park Service: “My vision would be to keep the islands in the most natural state possible. I see them being real places of refuge for people who need moments of quiet, solace, and solitude.” Community groups, on the other hand, saw the Islands as key not only to their own future, but to the future of Boston Harbor, too. Save the Harbor/Save the Bay argued that “the only way to protect the harbor cleanup is to make sure that the public has access to

\textsuperscript{11} Tivoli Gardens in Copenhagen, Denmark is one of the oldest amusement park to survive to present day. Modelled on the tradition of London’s Vauxhall Gardens, the amusement park was once a place of respite and pleasure for the wealthy. Today, the park attracts a wider array of tourists and is the site of cultural activities from roller coasters to pantomime shows to music festivals.
the resources and can see the return on their investment. The Harbor Islands national park is the best constituency-building tool for the cleanup…” (Radin 1997c).

Disagreements between stakeholders over competing visions for the future of the Harbor Islands were exacerbated by the financial realities facing the park’s governing board. The tension between preservation and development was particularly acute because city and state officials as well as their private partners were responsible for the majority of the park’s budget. While the money could come in the form of state or city budget appropriations, in light of cutbacks in federal funding, most stakeholders agreed that those appropriations were not enough to sustain the park into the future. Funding needs were so substantial that some park advocates argued that one of the Harbor Islands must be set aside for money-making purposes only.

In an effort to make the Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area financially sustainable, the Island Alliance modeled itself according to the example set by the Golden Gate National Park Association, the fundraising group for San Francisco’s Golden Gate National Recreation Area. While the parks are similar in that both are managed by a public-private partnership representing interested parties from the public and private sectors as well as community organizations, there are some differences between the two. The Golden Gate National Recreation Area has more land to work with, fewer islands to manage and a year-round season. Meanwhile, the Harbor Islands enjoy the benefit of relatively cleaner waters and better transportation to and from (as well as within) the park.
Perhaps the biggest difference between the Harbor Islands and Golden Gate national park is the existence of a reliable and on-going source of income. Alcatraz, the infamous island prison closed in 1968, was handed over to Golden Gate officials in 1972. The site brings in millions of tourist dollars each year that goes directly to the park’s coffers, “solving for San Francisco the revenue question that Boston [was] just beginning to confront” (Radin 1997c). Initially, park officials thought interest in Alcatraz would dwindle. By 1986 however, there was more interest in the former prison than ever even while cutbacks in federal spending meant that the park had to reduce the number of rangers available to show the island. To address this challenge, the Golden Gate National Park Association began a program of self-guided audio tours that it produced and sold itself to avoid the cost of hiring an outside concessionaire. The association solicited local residents as well as former inmates and guards of Alcatraz for help by asking them to recount their memories of the prison. This effort brought a human element to the project in addition to saving the association the cost of hiring a tour narrator.

The Golden Gate National Park Association’s efforts were a great success. While fewer park service employees staff Alcatraz, they have given way to new jobs in souvenir shops, the audiovisual department, and other programs. The audio tour is now available in more than six languages and has generated a lot of profit – about $2 million Alcatraz dollars go to the park annually. Officials working to showcase the Golden Gate National Recreation Area were quick to offer advice to their Boston counterparts. Many parks using concessions to generate revenue seldom see the profits. Park Service employees in San Francisco cautioned administrators of the Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation
Area that they need to determine the income potential of any proposed concessions and make sure that those profits are reinvested in the park.

One private organization that was up for immediate consideration as a concessionaire on the Islands was the New England Aquarium. Boston mayor Menino had already expressed his eagerness to see the aquarium play a major on-island role. As such, Gerald Millet, President of the Island Alliance and aquarium officials began to draft a proposal for a new conference and educational center to be run and staffed by aquarium employees. In addition, plans were in the works to create a marine animal rescue center. The center was to be equipped to accommodate overnight guests as well as to conduct research with the many colleges and universities local to the Boston area and to develop K-12 educational programs for children. Brian MacDonald, then a lead Harbor Islands planner for the aquarium and a member of the Island Alliance board, said that his organization “would do a good job of running the visitor center, the gift shop and the boat dock…It would be a terrific attraction for the islands, a great educational resource and…a benefit to the park” (Radin 1997d).

While the Island Alliance and prominent members of the Island Partnership began to draft development proposals, community organizations and environmental groups felt they were being left out. Some were angry that the park’s movers and shakers seemed to be lining up projects and purposes for the Harbor Islands before first sending out a request for proposals. These organizations believed that the islands would benefit from a competitive pool of proposed projects. Others were critical of the people spearheading the planning process. Suzanne Gall March of Friends of the Boston Harbor Islands
remarked, “You hear the term Island Alliance, but it is not an alliance. They have a board of directors, a lot of people from business, but it’s not an alliance of organizations. It’s misleading” (Radin 1997d).

Perhaps most disturbing to community and environmental organizations was the lack of diversity amongst the park’s governing board. Vivien Li of the Boston Harbor Association said, “Everyone loves the aquarium [but] the Partnership board is all white, almost all big business. The whole thing feels corporate, suburban, tourist oriented…I don’t see the blue-collar people, the harbor rats, the ethnically diverse” (Radin 1997d).

In an attempt to coordinate the various visions for the Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area as well as for the city of Boston’s waterfront, the Boston Globe organized a Boston Harbor Conference in May 1998. Panelists at the conference were drawn from various community organizations, local colleges and universities, and local business interests. The conference resulted in several recommendations for both the waterfront in general and the Harbor Islands in particular. Conference panelists recommended that the recreation area be funded by a “tax increment financing district” that would tax new waterfront developments to create several trust funds that would provide for transportation improvements and special events at the Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area (Flint 1998).

Another major proposal that came out of the conference was that a new Massachusetts Convention Center be built on the waterfront. It was also proposed that revenue from the convention center, managed by the Convention Center Authority, be made responsible for financing much of the Harbor Islands national park operating
budget. Still, Convention Authority chair Gloria Larson pointed out that frequently convention centers are not “cash cows.” Instead, they often lose revenue and operate with a deficit (Flint 1998). That such funding and development proposals were controversial is unsurprising. As one Boston Globe reporter remarked, “Rapid change [on the Islands] was unlikely in a park run by a hybrid of city, state, federal, and private groups, none of which has a pot of money” large enough to finance the national recreation area (Allen 1998).

Eventually, park planners decided that Spectacle Island, a place that ended up with approximately one-third of the dirt that came from moving Boston’s Central Artery underground – the Big Dig project – would serve as the official gateway to the Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area (Goldberg 1999). Three organizations won contracts to operate activities on Spectacle Island, the New England Aquarium, Urban Harbors Institute, and Modern Continental Companies, owner of Boston Harbor Cruises. The contractors as well as local conservation organizations like the Spectacle Island Park Advisory Committee viewed the island as the best place to welcome large numbers of visitors, despite its relatively pristine conditions, because the other islands were seen as much more fragile, given the bird and marine wildlife populations residing there (Lewis 2002b). Even though many of the organizations involved with the creation of the Harbor Islands national park agreed that Spectacle Island should serve as the gateway to the area, disagreement over the size and scope of visitor facilities remained contested.

So controversial were the early stages of planning for the new national park that the first general management plan for the Harbor Islands was not released until 2002 –
three years later than the park’s enabling legislation stipulated. The delay was caused partially by the information-gathering process, which took at least four years. Next, a draft management plan was submitted to the National Park Service for agency review and was also issued to the public for comment. At a July 2001 meeting of the Boston Harbor Islands Partnership, Linda Haar, of the Boston Redevelopment Authority announced that the final draft of the general management plan was ready to go out, saying that community groups’ and Native Americans’ concerns had been addressed. The planning committee responsible for drafting the plan had already taken a formal vote on the plan and endorsed the final draft as the general management plan for the park (Boston Harbor Islands Partnership Meeting Minutes 2001).

Not everyone agreed that all concerns had been addressed. Members of the Harbor Islands Advisory Council, a group representing municipalities, environmental organizations, business and commercial interests, Harbor advocacy organizations, Native American organizations, and other educational and cultural groups with an interest in the future of the Islands, still had concerns about several aspects of proposed management plan. At the same July 2001 meeting Edith Andrews, a member of the Advisory Council said that she would not approve the plan because even after public comment the plan did not adequately address how Native American history would be portrayed. Members of the general public present at the meeting also raised concerns around the representation of Native Americans. Gary McCann of the Muhheconneuk Intertribal Committee on Deer Island said that the Partnership had not lived up to its legislated responsibility to consult with federally-recognized tribal groups. Without such consultation, McCann warned,
regional indigenous groups would be forced to lobby the governor, Congress, and the Secretary of the Interior, something that could undermine the approval of the Partnership’s general management plan. Moreover, Advisory Council member Claudia Smith Reid argued that there were several additional concerns that had yet to be resolved: “memoranda of agreement do not exist among the Partners and there is no mechanism for dispute resolution; stronger language is needed regarding minority and woman-owned businesses; and gateways should be near urban neighborhoods” (Boston Harbor Islands Partnership Meeting Minutes 2001).

The Partnership agreed to amend the final draft management plan to incorporate changes that addressed the concerns brought up by Advisory Council members. Partnership members committed to creating a mechanism for dispute resolution as well as for developing memoranda of agreement. Additionally, the group amended the wording of the general management plan to include specific language addressing the need to encourage development of minority and women-owned businesses consistent with the practices of federally- and state-funded programs. Finally, the Partnership reaffirmed its commitment to Native American groups to be sensitive regarding the portrayal of their histories and, before the close of their meeting, unanimously approved of the final draft general management plan (Boston Harbor Islands Partnership Meeting Minutes 2001).

Conclusion

The Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area exists because of cooperation between federal and state government and between the public and private sectors. Securing national park status for the Harbor Islands in the 1990s required
compromise to gain the support of the fiscally-conservative congressional Republican majority. Given the GOP’s original plan to scale back the national park system specifically and the role of the federal government generally, the fact that the Massachusetts delegation came back to their constituency with an approved plan for the Islands is impressive. The GOP-controlled Congress backed a plan that, at first blush, expanded a federal program. In reality, as Anderson (1960) observed, the expansion of the national park system to include the Boston Harbor Islands has enhanced the state and local government role in administering the place.

In the face of declining revenue, federal officials, state officials and municipalities, together with community groups and businesses, formed a partnership for managing and funding what many hope will become the crown jewel of Boston Harbor. Collaborative intergovernmental relations certainly do exist in the case of the Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area, but that does not mean that interactions between partners are not contentious. Much of the early planning stages were spent debating what constitute suitable uses for a national park, the most protected class of public land. Even when partners agreed on a use for an island the extent of use is often cause for argument. For example, Harbor Islands planners long agreed that Spectacle Island ought to be the gateway to the park and that a visitor center would be located there. However, partners disagreed vehemently about who should manage the visitor center and how large or small the facility ought to be.

Additional controversies came out of the fact that the Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area is being administered using “place-based management.” Place-
based management emphasizes and prioritizes the meanings such landscapes give to the people who visit and who may have a history there. As a method of management, it attempts to define the land by its *social* meaning in addition to its ecological and geographical significance. As noted earlier, the Harbor Islands have been home to many things and many people – from the Native Americans exiled and massacred there to the Irish immigrants forcibly quarantined, from the Thompson Island Outward Bound Education Center to the Boston Police Department’s shooting range – and making sure those people and organizations have their histories represented and concerns responded to is an on-going challenge.

The Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area is an example of the dispersion and diffusion of authority other students of public administration have observed (White 1989). The federal government has expanded the parks system, but has passed management responsibilities on to local government. As Agranoff (2001) and Wright (1988) suggest, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts as well as local governments saw the establishment of a new national park as beneficial to them if they were to secure the legacy of the Harbor Islands and, as such, were willing to work with federal officials in drafting a management plan. That authority and responsibility are shared by federal, state, and local governments, with help from the private sector, has complicated the implementation of the park’s legislation. Even after the passage of the general management plan for the Harbor Islands and its approval by the National Park Service and Secretary of the Interior, the many visions for the future of the islands remain diverse and often at odds with one another. For example, some park partners support
increasing the visibility of the Islands by launching a massive marketing campaign and eventually building more tourist attractions (perhaps a casino) and expanding restroom facilities and access for the elderly and disabled. Other partners see this as directly contradictory to the spirit of national parks legislation and hope to keep the Islands as pristine and primitive as possible.

The Boston Harbor Islands Partnership must consider each of these visions fairly. Since decision making and management authority is shared with the private sector it is especially important. While the federal government and the Commonwealth save money as they are not responsible for the majority of the park’s operating budget, they share administrative duties with their for-profit partners. Business owners and lawyers work with park rangers and city officials and this has had consequences for the public. Native American groups, community organizations, and environmental activists have complained that their voices rarely rise above the din of those park partners who work in government or for profit-seeking organizations. While the Boston Harbor Islands Partnership is in closer touch with the regional community and can make more informed decisions based on the preferences of residents and visitors, the concerns of underrepresented groups raise questions about accountability.
Chapter 4

The Case of the Riverside Park Fund

Introduction and Early History

Riverside Park and Riverside Drive (RP&D) in New York City received Scenic Landmark designation in 1980 from the New York Landmarks Preservation Commission. This weighty title was given to the land largely due to its status as a Frederick Law Olmsted designed landscape. Originally consisting of 191 acres running along the shore of the Hudson River from 72nd Street on the south to 125th Street on the north, RP&D remained undeveloped until the 1840s, when it was made to accommodate the Hudson River Railroad, which ran from Albany to New York City (Riverside Park Fund 2009c). The first proposal to make the land double as a city park was not put forth until nearly twenty years later, during the 1860s. The evolution of this once rural landscape into a thriving city park progressed in several stages, beginning with the aesthetic of nature espoused by Frederick Law Olmsted and his contemporaries, followed by the City Beautiful movement of the early 20th century, and eventually the recreation-focused planning of Robert Moses between the 1930s and 1960s.

As with many U.S. cities during the Industrial Revolution, New York City experienced high growth during the 1850s. Immigrants making their first try in the United States initially swelled the city’s population. Housing shortages proliferating across all classes of people provided a rationalization to develop the northern sections of Manhattan, which at that time were still largely rural. To encourage residential development in a less congested part of the city, Central Park Commissioners were made
responsible for planning the city streets to the north and west of Central Park. “The ‘right’ sort of developers were to be encouraged to build up the area as a new residential district for middle-class families, and... a new magnet for the wealthy” (Cromley 1984, 240).

Parks Commissioner William R. Martin first suggested turning the land along the Hudson River into a park and drive in 1865 in an effort to encourage development and migration to the then-sparsely-settled area. Combining a carriage drive with a city park would allow potential new residents to take in the grand vistas provided by the land and water while simultaneously viewing the lots available for purchase. Martin and other commissioners “foresaw a string of picturesque villas along the drive, establishing the well-to-do character of Manhattan’s West Side” (Cromley 1984, 240; Riverside Park Fund 2009c).

The city approved of this vision and the New York State Legislature authorized the purchase of the precipice above the Hudson River for the purposes of constructing a drive. In fact, two properties were acquired by the city – one for the drive, bought in 1866, and one for the park, obtained through condemnation in 1872. Originally, designers proposed a carriage drive that would look similar to the large avenues found in the heart of the city. The drive would be straight and about 100 feet wide. However, planners soon discovered that constructing a straight drive in the rough and topographically diverse West End was difficult and expensive. Land would have to be leveled to keep the road straight and a large retaining wall would be necessary to buttress the leveled land. Not only would this kind of engineering be expensive, but the wall would have to be so high
it would obstruct the very vistas the drive was meant to feature. Would-be architects of the new park and drive were puzzled by what they saw as two separate projects on two separate parcels of land. As such, the retaining wall proposed to allow for the construction of the drive on one parcel would have “cut off the sloping hill below from use as a park” on the other parcel (Cromley 1984, 241).

New York City found the solution to this problem in a man to whom they had turned for designing Central Park – Frederick Law Olmsted. Olmsted’s design philosophy was rooted in the idea of an aesthetic of nature that is, recognition that nature’s beauty constitutes art in and of itself. If nature is art, it needs little by way of human improvement. His vision for the landscape therefore turned previous plans for the drive and park on their ear. Instead of viewing the drive and the park as separate projects, he treated them as one and proposed a landscape design that included a winding drive that would work with, instead of against, the land’s topographical idiosyncrasies. Olmsted essentially “saw that the problem was not what to do with two recalcitrant pieces of land but how to make the already existing landscape more useful” (Ibid.). Indeed, Olmsted and others of his period also saw parks – nature – as having a civilizing effect on immigrants and others of the lower classes who could not easily escape to the country. Parks were seen as a sort of method of social engineering.

Olmsted created a conceptual plan for the new park and road that was accepted by park commissioners in 1873. In 1874, however, an administrative conflict between two city agencies threatened to stop Olmsted’s plan before it came to fruition. The New York State Legislature was set to vote to approve of the new park and drive, but the Senate
Committee on Cities could not pass the plan. While the committee agreed with most of the plan, there was a conflict of jurisdiction between the Parks Department and the Department of Public Works. Whereas the Parks Department presided over the park land, the Department of Public Works held sway over the land used for streets. As such, the fact that Olmsted’s plan combining the two parcels of land, “raised legal questions of departmental control” (Ibid., note 13). The jurisdictional conflict was eventually resolved and soon construction of Riverside Park and Drive began.

Olmsted’s landscape design ranged from 70 to 150 feet above the Hudson River shore and the park and drive together were about three miles long. The carriage drive bordered the land to the east and was named Riverside Avenue (it became Riverside Drive in 1908). Between 1875 and 1910, architects, designers, and horticulturalists shaped RP&D “according to the English gardening ideal, creating the appearance that the Park was an extension of the Hudson River Valley” (Riverside Park Fund 2009c). While Olmsted himself did not include horse trails or pedestrian paths in his original design, contemporaries like Calvert Vaux and Samuel Parsons made the additions in the 1880s.

So the original purpose of RP&D was to encourage development of the northern parts of Manhattan. Olmsted’s design, based on an aesthetic of nature, promoted “nature for nature’s sake,” or at the very least nature as an ideal English garden. Olmstead and his contemporaries often found the city to be a dirty, immoral place and thought that natural places could offer respite from such conditions. Moreover, they believed that such landscapes would have a civilizing effect on new immigrant populations and poorer folks who could not afford a single home, let alone a second home in the country.
The City Beautiful movement, with its origins in the 1880s, flourished during the early 20th century and led to changes in the RP&D landscape. A central concern of the movement was how to facilitate a functional and humane society by creating spaces for people to meet and intermingle. Loewenstein and McGrath, Jr. note that the City Beautiful movement in general represented a style of urban planning and architecture that:

“...was concerned primarily with the design and aesthetic nature of municipal artifacts. The street patterns were dominated by the location of broad avenues and boulevards which were designed primarily for beauty [rather] than traffic flow. Public construction was focused on…transmit[ting] monumentality and not necessarily [on] facilitat[ing] the daily operations of government” (1973, 16).

The City Beautiful movement, then, sought to embellish cities with grand monuments heralding the accomplishments of important people and events set against a picturesque backdrop. Unlike adherents of Olmsted’s aesthetic of nature, proponents of the City Beautiful did not create new parks and improve upon existing ones because of an aversion to city life and a desire to return to rural innocence. Rather, the reasons for creating and improving upon city parks “reflected more a cosmopolitan ‘love of city life’ than an idealized ‘love of nature.’” In fact, “in city after city the most enthusiastic proponents of parks were also the most aggressive boosters of the city itself” (Bluestone 1987, 530). The City Beautiful movement made appeals to citizens’ sense of civic pride and duty. Given the rapid demographic change brought on due to immigration and rapid
industrialization, advocates of the City Beautiful viewed public parks as having the promise to unite an increasingly diverse community.

Riverside Park and Drive underwent several changes at the tail end of the 19th century and early 20th century as a result of the City Beautiful. Efforts of RP&D’s early planners were successful in that the West Side had become an established neighborhood. As such, changes to RP&D were now marked by the increased presence of residents and commercial interests in park planning efforts. One such change was the erection of several sculptural monuments around the landscape. Most notable was Grant’s Tomb, a grand monument to President and General Ulysses S. Grant, who was buried in the park near an estate called the Claremont. A temporary monument to the popular hero was constructed out of simple brick in 1885, to be replaced in 1892 “classical grand tomb, the Grant Memorial,” designed by architect John Duncan (Cromley 1984, 243).

In 1902 a Soldiers’ and Sailors’ Monument was constructed and dedicated to residents of New York City who had died during the Civil War. The plaza included Corinthian columns and ornamental stone terraces and it stood out in contrast to the pastoral views of the park (Trager 2004). The Hamilton Fountain was built in 1906, and was closely followed by the statue of Franz Sigel in 1907. Four more monuments were subsequently built before the close of the 1920s. According to Cromley:

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12 The Claremont is believed to have been built around 1806 and was one of the first estates built on Manhattan’s West Side. Already in use as a travelling inn, the Claremont was located on a hill near 129th Street. Frederick Law Olmstead incorporated the Claremont Inn and the hill on which it was situated into his design for Riverside Park and Drive. The building was ultimately demolished in the 1950s.

13 The monument to Ulysses S. Grant, officially called the Grant Memorial, is popularly referred to as Grant’s Tomb.
“While a carriage drive and a park grounded in an aesthetic of nature had encouraged the first neighborhood development in the 1880s, by the turn of the century [it was clear that] residents [were] inclined to improve upon nature. At least, they raised no objection as uplifting and educational monuments began multiplying in the park...[The monuments] mediate between the architecture of the street and the vegetation of the park, superimposing a layer of ‘high’ culture on the nature that Olmsted’s era provided.” (1984, 243).

RP&D also evolved during the height of the City Beautiful movement because New York City officials purchased land on the Hudson River shore, abutting the Hudson River Railroad property. The 1894 land buy was carried out in an effort to control the spread of pollution from the rails. However, the Hudson River Railroad company expanded its facilities, adding four new tracks to its existing two and placing loading platforms and coal storage bins on the lot as well. This was an illegal move – the Hudson River Railroad company had intruded onto the land purchased by the City. The City was hamstrung by the fact that the Railroad provided one of the few, if not only, means of moving goods and people in and out of the City.

While commercial uses of the riverfront were taken as a matter of course during Olmsted’s era, they were viewed very differently by the City Beautiful generation. Residents of the West Side “remarked indignantly that there was a railroad in their park, offensively sited along the Hudson shore.” When viewed from an aesthetic of nature standpoint, being cut off from the river is not problematic – the park is a discrete treasure, lovely in its own right. When viewed as a part of the City Beautiful, however, the borders separating land from river, park from drive, and urban from rural are blurred. Thus, “the early conception of the park – as small, circumscribed, and cut off from the water by
commercial development – changed into one that incorporated the whole river into its space” (Cromley 1984, 243-244). The City was seen as an interconnected whole as versus discrete parts.

Under City Beautiful ideals, the unsightly railroad would have to go if RP&D were to reach its full potential. Several landscape designers proposed disguising the rail lines behind additional landscape. At the same time, the West End Association, a neighborhood group that advocated on behalf of residents, proposed a more aggressive approach: suing the Hudson River Railroad company. Given that the company had built additions to its facilities on publicly-owned property, the West End Association was confident that these actions were illegal and presented their case to the New York Legislature in 1913.

Even though it was easy to see that the railroad company was out of compliance with the law, coming up with a workable solution proved difficult. If the railroad was removed, who should pay for it, the government that owned the land or the company that had illegally built there? Moreover, if the railroad was removed, how would goods and people be moved to and from the city? Ultimately, perhaps to compromise with the city and to avoid an expensive lawsuit, the Hudson River Railroad company agreed to roofing over the tracks. “At last it seemed that the two [parcels comprising] Riverside Park could join” (Cromley 1984, 245).

Deciding to treat the two parcels of land making up RP&D as one and roofing over the railroad tracks led to another vexing question: how could park planners and West Side residents best make use of the roofed-over tracks and thus incorporate it into the
landscape? During the 1910s and 1920s, park commissioners considered several plans calling for the railroad’s roof to be made into a road suitable for the increasing number of automobiles coming into the city. Other plans also called for a highway, but instead sited it atop a landfill along the edge of the Hudson. That way, the roofed-over tracks could be made to serve another park purpose, like a playground or a promenade in the tradition of the Boston Mall. The city had so many proposals to consider and, with continued bickering between the Parks Department and the Department of Public Works, agreement was hard to come by. Meanwhile, it was business as usual for the Hudson River Railroad company and “by the late 1920s, its dirt, smells, and noise made much of the park unfit for use as a pleasure ground” (Cromley 1984, 246).

Finally, a team of architects was hired in 1930 to design a highway on the roofed-over railroad tracks. Marking the end of the City Beautiful phase of development for the park, the designers of the highway placed it on a wall that echoed the Roman aqueducts – the wall’s arches were ornamental, yet functional, and provided for ventilation of the railroad tracks beneath. Construction of the highway and wall between 72nd Street and 79th Street began in 1931. The architects created the wall in an effort to provide a visual base for the city – in fact, the wall looked like a monument itself when viewed from the opposite shore of the Hudson, with the city’s skyline rising above it (Ibid.).

In sum, the City Beautiful changed the direction of development for RP&D. The park was now considered a continuation of the metropolis, instead of merely a place to seek refuge from it. As such, problems that had not bothered the park’s original designers were at odds with City Beautiful goals. A railroad that had once been taken for granted –
it was not technically a part of RP&D, after all – was now considered an eyesore, as the borders between nature and development blurred during the City Beautiful. Parks were not for eschewing city life – they were for celebrating city life. Furthermore, parks were seen as places where citizens could see and be seen and perhaps even learn to understand one another. Since the park was now considered an extension of the city, RP&D’s administrators and designers began to turn their attention to the ways that park could provide the best and most useful experiences for City-dwellers.

The Move to Recreation

Now viewed as benefitting the entire city instead of only a neighborhood, Riverside Park and Riverside Drive entered a phase of development that emphasized recreational uses of the land. This stage of development was headed by the planners and engineers of the Parks Department, under Commissioner Robert Moses. Having taken office in 1934, one of Moses’ first acts as head of the Parks Department was to complete the roof over the railroad tracks and to relocate the partially completed highway to a right-of-way adjacent to the water. Moses made room for the highway by creating a shoreline landfill that nearly doubled the area of the park. The area between the highway and the roofed-over railroad and wall were sited as the location for several recreational sports facilities created by architects Gilmore D. Clarke and Clinton Loyd – baseball diamonds, basketball and tennis courts, and several playgrounds were among the new additions (Riverside Park Fund 2009c). Moses’ tenure as chief administrator of the Parks Department was remarkable in that he directed RP&D toward recreational uses and in
that he managed to do so in a span of time much shorter than the earlier phases of the park’s development. Cromley writes:

“Cutting through the old tangle of administrative and financial problems that had delayed the development of the park for four decades, he marshaled the resources to complete landfill, railroad roof, highway, playgrounds, and replanting, all in a mere three years from the time he took office” (1984, 246).

Moses’ vision for RP&D was shaped by his belief that the land needed to serve future generations of park users. During the 1800s, popular modes of recreation included horseback riding, walking, and bicycling. In the 1930s, those recreational preferences had shifted toward ball sports, playgrounds, and boating. Furthermore, while the horse-drawn carriage had informed Olmsted’s original plan for Riverside Drive, in the era of Robert Moses, the automobile played an equally important defining role. Not only was the automobile then viewed as a source of recreation in its own right, it also served to connect West Side residents to Manhattan, to other boroughs of the city, and to Upstate New York. This work was completed in 1937, under the leadership of Moses and with federal dollars supporting his vision. Very little changed with RP&D, save a few basic repairs, after Moses’ 26-year tenure as Parks Department head was over.

Robert Moses left his mark on Riverside Park and other New York City parks. Moses reshaped what citizens wanted from their city park experience – instead of expecting places of solitude and quiet reflection, citizens expected recreation, from ball fields to educational programs. City parks were already considered important resources to be left to future generations, where possible. What Moses did as Parks Commissioner was to change attitudes as to what, exactly, future generations need. No longer was
pristine (as “pristine” as an English garden gets, in any case) nature enough. Future
generations, according to the Moses paradigm, needed more than that. City parks
remained an extension of cities themselves, as with the City Beautiful, however, under
Moses, city parks became an extension and expression of the self as well. Good
recreational opportunities lead to good citizens. What he counted as “good recreational
projects” and whom he counted as a “good citizen” has drawn criticism. Yet, controversy
notwithstanding, his leadership fundamentally changed the look of RP&D as well as
citizens’ expectations of it.

The Modern Riverside Park

As a matter of fact, it was not until 1985, 25 years after Moses, that any major
new plans for RP&D were unveiled. At the time, developer Donald Trump was lobbying
to build a large skyscraper in the city and, to secure approval from New York City
officials, he agreed to build a 21.5-acre park, Riverside Park South. The first of a
planned seven phases of the addition to RP&D began in 1998, with the construction of a
7-acre landscape that built on Moses’ recreational tradition [on new land?]. As a result, a
new soccer field, new handball courts, and new basketball courts opened to the public in
2001 between 72nd Street and 68th Street. Phase II of Riverside Park South – located
between 66th and 68th Streets – opened in 2003 and boasts several plazas near the river’s
natural riprap shoreline, while Phase III was built atop the decked-over former rail yard.

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14 These types of indemnification payments became widely used in the 1980s as city
governments used their leverage – control over permitting processes, etc. – to get private
developers like Trump to fund public facilities.
When the latter opened in 2006, the sound of train whistles could be heard between 65th and 62nd Street – in homage to the land’s longtime previous use. Phase IV opened in August 2008, bringing additional recreational opportunities to city dwellers living close to the southernmost waterfront section of the park. Meanwhile, the last few sections of Riverside Park South are still in the conceptual design phase (Riverside Park Fund 2009c).

**Riverside Park Fund: Structure and Status Overview**

The Riverside Park Fund was founded in 1986 by residents of the Upper West Side neighborhood of Manhattan in an effort to preserve the historic nature of Riverside Park and to lead citizens in becoming active stewards of a public resource. The Fund is recognized as tax exempt nonprofit organization under section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Service Code (Riverside Park Fund 2009b) and therefore, all donations made to the Fund are tax deductible. The organization has no formal agreement or memorandum of understanding with the City of New York. Still the organization has forged close ties with city parks personnel. In particular, because city employees cannot engage in lobbying activities in accordance with the law, the Riverside Park Fund takes on an advocacy role as an organization positioned outside of government. The Fund frequently pressures public officials to remain engaged with city parks in an effort to prevent future budget cuts.

Beyond organizing volunteers and accepting donations for various park projects, the Riverside Park Fund also produces free educational programs for children and for K-
12 teachers. The Fund also counts acting as a catalyst for other neighborhood park friends groups as part of its organizational mission. In addition, the Fund underwrites the cost of seasonal park staff from playground attendants to professional gardeners (Riverside Park Fund 2006).

The organization had its inception during a period of fiscal austerity for the City of New York. Reports in the New York Times documented the deterioration of the once great New York City parks system (please see the brief discussion in the following section) and anecdotal evidence provided by area residents painted an unflattering picture of Riverside Park. The beautiful Olmsted-designed landscape had become a blight upon the neighborhood due to lack of necessary funding. Trash piled up without enough personnel to pick it up, park benches were vandalized or even stolen, and crimes from prostitution to drug use soared. Upper West Side residents, realizing that they would have to contribute their own time and money to return the landscape to its former glory founded the Riverside Park Fund initially to address these problems. The Fund has since seen its role grow from one that emphasized maintenance and support to one that includes wielding political clout with the city and with developers.

The Riverside Park Fund’s administration consists of a staff and of a board of directors. Staff members handle the day-to-day operations of the Fund. Staff positions include President, or executive director, North Park Outreach Coordinator (“North Park” refers to the northern parts of Riverside Park, not to another city park), School and Family Programs Coordinator, Director of Communications, Director of Development and Planning, Volunteer Program Assistant, and Administrative Assistant. The Fund’s
Board of Directors is responsible for providing it with direction and keeps the organization focused on its mission statement and therefore carries a lot of weight in setting organizational policy. The Board has ex officio leadership positions for the Commissioner of the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation, the Manhattan Parks Commissioner, the Riverside Park Administrator, and the Manhattan Borough President. The number of board members without leadership positions tends to vary – in 2006, there were 16 people with board positions, in 2009 there are 17 (Riverside Park Fund 2009c).

Riverside Park Fund: Making the Case for Partnership

The Riverside Park Fund’s mission is to “preserve and improve New York’s classic waterfront green space…From seasonal attendants to rehabilitated playing fields, from horticultural projects to creative playgrounds,” the Fund engages in several programs to make Riverside Park and Riverside Drive “cleaner, greener, safer and better...” (Riverside Park Fund 2006, 28). By the end of the 1970s, it had become apparent to many living on the Upper West Side that Riverside Park was deteriorating. The park, along with many other locations in New York City’s 38.5 square miles of parkland, green space, playgrounds, beaches, and other recreational facilities, had “…become a dirty, unkempt, vandalized shadow of its former self” (Quindlen and Goodwin 1980). Riverside Park’s decline was marked by shabby playgrounds, by park benches ripped from their assigned areas, leaving only their metal bolts in place, and by crumbling stairs and eroding pathways (Riverside Park Fund 2009a).
Poor conditions at Riverside Park and other New York City parks stemmed from the broader financial crisis facing many cities and towns across the nation. With the federal funding stream slowly sputtering out, many municipal governments had to make spending cuts in areas like parks and recreation to avoid making cuts in essential services, like police and fire protection. During its glory days under Robert Moses, the New York City park system employed as many as 30,000 people to work in the park system on everything from basic maintenance to zoo keeping to social programming. By 1980, even as the park system grew larger and its upkeep more complex, a mere 2,779 people made up the permanent workforce and the revolving, seasonal workforce included fewer than 1,500 men and women. Twenty years of budget cuts and reallocations had taken their toll. Moreover, it is also possible that city parks had lost their political clout as more affluent and middle class white folks fled to the suburbs. When discussing newly-completed capital projects and the parks system’s ability to maintain them, then-Parks Commissioner Gordon J. Davis remarked, “I’m not sure if I’ll have enough people tomorrow to pick up the garbage in the parks,” let alone maintain recent projects (Quindlen and Goodwin 1980).

In 1983, Riverside Park received an outlay of $910,000 from the city’s capital budget to remove graffiti, to improve ball fields and other recreational facilities, and to carry out basic landscaping and erosion control (Carmody 1983). However, as the park system was preparing for the busy summer season in May 1984, the work of park employees had to be supplemented with volunteers who did much of the springtime brush-clearing and who removed the garbage that had accumulated in parks over the
winter. It became clear to many Upper West Side residents as well as to many park workers that “recreating [Riverside Park’s] rustic Olmsted landscape” and maintaining it was a task that the parks system was unprepared to handle on its own (Carmody 1984). Indeed given that the city had gone bankrupt during the mid-1970s, the parks system was an easier target for budget cuts, compared with fire and police protection, schools, etc.

The realization that the New York City Parks Department did not have the resources or staff necessary to engage in regular maintenance activities prompted some residents to take action. At Union Square Park, for example, broken benches and lights facilitated the nighttime presence of drug dealers and, in some cases, prostitutes, discouraging passers-by from walking through the park. Residents who lived adjacent to the square formed the Union Square Park Community Coalition to clean up the park and to complete basic maintenance, freeing up the city to focus on larger capital projects within the park. The group raised $25,000 for tools and equipment and plantings for the park and also received foundation grants and private donations for larger renovations and entertainment. The new Parks Commissioner Henry J. Stern, praising the success of Union Square public-private partnership said, “We want to learn from Union Square Park so we can do it elsewhere…[W]e can learn the lessons and use them to change the social fabric of other parks” (Carmody 1986).

In 1986, a group of Upper West Side residents banded together and determined that perhaps Riverside Park could benefit from an arrangement similar to the one that had helped to clean up Union Square Park. As with other New York City parks, Riverside Park suffered from the lack of city funding to carry out even simple maintenance, let
alone major renovations of the many monuments and landscapes located there. During a conversation among neighbors sitting together at a kitchen table in early 1986, residents resolved to undertake some “clean up” and “green up” activities on their own (Riverside Park Fund 2009a). The Riverside Park Fund was born, nurtured by the belief that “…a public park, through public-private partnership can work” (Anderson 1987b).

The Riverside Park Fund garnered its initial resources from the many housing co-operatives located in the neighborhood and from foundation sources. As one neighbor and founding member of the Fund, Peter M. Wright, recalls:

“A lot of things aren’t getting done in the park. So, I called up presidents of co-ops on Riverside Drive [in 1986] and asked them to pony up money for an executive director and matching grants for a park organization. Fourteen co-ops said ‘yes.’ I called the J.M. Kaplan Fund and they gave us money [later that year]” (Anderson 1987a).

By soliciting various philanthropic organizations around the city, the Fund managed to raise $250,000 in its first 18 months of operation (Riverside Park Fund 2009a). With its seed money, the Riverside Park Fund spent much of its first year of operation gathering the people and resources necessary to form a board of directors and hire an executive director. The group facilitated a discussion on park security between the police and park users, began a volunteer program for basic landscaping and trash removal, refurbished one of the park’s 12 playgrounds, assisted in park planning efforts, and sponsored an arts festival at the park during the summer (Riverside Park Fund 2006).

These activities heartened Parks Department officials, who argued that, when a community unites to help a local park, interest in the park is heightened overall. Parks Commissioner Stern, commenting on the initial projects undertaken by the Riverside Park
Fund said, “When the city sees that a group of people are putting in their own money, that’s a compelling argument for the city in deciding where to spend its money.” In fact some Parks Department employees, including then-administrator of Riverside Park, Charles McKinney, view such organizations’ development efforts as supplementing the city parks budget. This worries opponents of public-private partnering because supplementary income from groups like the Fund may cause the parks department to lose some of its city-allocated funding (Anderson 1987a).

The Riverside Park Fund held one of its first major fundraisers in October 1987, a black-tie barbeque that attracted nearly 250 attendees, and proceeds from the event were put toward the Fund’s first few projects. Many attendees came to the event looking to do something about the alarming die-off of Riverside Park’s many elm trees due to anthracnose and Dutch Elm Disease. Roger Grimsby, a recently-retired anchor of a local television news network opined, “We used to drive by the park and ignore it. Suddenly, we realized we shouldn’t.” Grimsby, like other residents of the West Side felt that Riverside Park was “a community park where everyone chips in,” and by financing the Riverside Park Fund’s activities, they were doing their part (Dullea 1987).

Such early successes inspired Fund members to organize similar groups around other city parks and green spaces. Founding member and then-chairman of the Riverside Park Fund, Peter Wright, for example, created the Margaret Mead group, or Friends of the Museum Park, Inc., to beautify Margaret Mead Green – city-owned land that had become so dilapidated that a little rainfall would result in the entire area becoming a muddy puddle. Wright built a coalition consisting of neighborhood co-op heads, the
American Museum of Natural History, and the managers of several buildings surrounding the Green. Wright and his group first inquired into refurbishing the Green via a traditional design-build project through the Parks Department. One landscape architect estimated that the project would cost more than $1 million and take more than 5 years to complete.

By instead electing to begin the project through the Friends of the Museum Park group, Wright and his friends immediately raised $10,000 – enough to buy flowers, trees, soil, mulch and sod for the Green. The outpouring of financial support for the Green led the Parks Department to begin working on the space immediately. Remarking on the speed with which both the Margaret Mead friends group and the Parks Department acted, Peter Wright said, “This neighborhood has the money, but not the time…This is a sociological study of what is happening on the West Side. People are working all the time for their six-figure incomes…so they give money. You can’t just sit back and think the city will do it. If you want to do something, you have to do it yourself” (Anderson 1988).

Resistance to Partnering

Despite these favorable results of the Fund’s early efforts, other communities around New York City remained wary of public-private partnerships. For example, community and environmental groups in Queens rejected plans for restoring Jacob Riis Park – a part of the Gateway National Recreation Area – that included the construction of various profit-making attractions in exchange for the developer financing most of the renovations. These groups worried that such public-private collaboration would represent
a “giveaway” of public parkland (Fried 1989). In their view, part of the job of a parks department is to ensure adequate protection of land held in the public interest. By allowing such concessions as described above, the parkland becomes merely another source of revenue, rather than a valuable natural and recreational resource in its own right.

That some groups felt uneasy with the increased presence of private interests in the pursuit of public purposes did not stem the general optimism toward public-private collaboration. In the spring of 1989, Riverside Park was awarded a $300,000 grant from the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. The grant came as a result of the 1986 Environmental Quality Bond Act, which raised $1.45 billion in public funds for environmental efforts, including land acquisition, preservation, and improvement projects. The Riverside Park grant was the largest of 11 such grants given to New York City and was for the Riverside Park Viewing Pavilion, a scenic viewpoint that had fallen into disrepair due to weathering and vandalism. Even while the Bond Act represents a public commitment to parks and recreation, the private, nonprofit Riverside Park Fund helped to draft documentation attesting to the pavilion’s history and purpose. Then-executive director of Riverside Park Fund, Susan Angevin, viewed the collaboration as a sign of things to come. “We hope that the pavilion’s preservation will serve as a catalyst for additional restoration…” (Dunlap 1989).

Acquiring the government grant for the rehabilitation of Riverside Park Viewing Pavilion did indeed prove a harbinger of things to come. Continued collaboration between the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation and the Riverside Park
Fund resulted in even more revenue raised for Riverside Park. Beginning in the spring of 1989, the partners held the first of several park tours in an effort to engage residents of the Upper West Side, nascent donors to Riverside Park Fund, and to tout the park’s historical, environmental, and architectural assets (Yarrow 1989). Later that year, the Fund organized the Riverside Park Festival to raise awareness and money for park maintenance and restoration. These and other efforts resulted in the Fund raising over a quarter million dollars in 1989. Speaking about the early days of the Riverside Park Fund, then-executive director Susan Angevin said, “…We’ve forged a strong working relationship with the Parks Department, especially with Riverside Park Director, Charles McKinney. We’ve also found a groundswell of support from the community for this lesser known landscape masterpiece designed by Frederick Law Olmsted” (New York City Department of Parks and Recreation 2001).

Formalizing Public-Private Partnerships

Even while some groups criticized public-private partnerships, at least for parks, then-New York City Mayor David N. Dinkins believed in their promise. In April 1990, Dinkins created a committee comprised of business interests to work closely with City Hall in an effort to facilitate volunteer efforts and private fundraising around public purposes. The Mayor’s Committee for Public-Private Partnerships would collaborate with the government Office of Partnership Programs to act as a catalyst for future partnership arrangements (Barron 1990). Among other programs that varied from economic development to recycling efforts, Dinkins suggested that the Committee might work to
create partnerships for the City’s underserved parks. The effort was hailed by a New York Times editorial as being an effective strategy for dealing with expensive and complex “problems [while also facing] the same revenue shortfall felt throughout the Northeast…” In the face of changing attitudes about government and dwindling public finances, the Times argued “there’s more to leadership than [public] management [and] with this initiative to coordinate and expand private assistance, the Mayor offers a welcome lead” (The New York Times 1990).

Opinions of public-private partnerships varied widely across New York City, especially when the partnerships centered on parks and land use. A particularly illustrative example of this division of opinion is the contentious debate over what to do with a development proposal – referred to first as “Television City” then later as “Trump City” – located between 59th Street and 72nd Street, the latter being the terminus of Riverside Park. The development, proposed by real estate magnate and financier Donald Trump, called for the construction of 7,600 residential units, a shopping mall, a building that would headquarter NBC television, and what would be the world’s tallest building on this 72-acre site (Goldberger 1990).

This proposal drew fire from many community and environmental organizations, including the Parks Council, the Municipal Art Society, and the Riverside Park Fund, among others. One result of the community opposition to Trump’s development proposal was NBC television’s determination not to relocate there – a decision reflected in the new nomenclature for the site. Trump’s plan was lambasted as denying “the fabric of New York, ignor[ing] the scale of the Upper West Side and do[ing] violence to the city’s
spirit…It [was viewed as] a mutated version of one of those new suburban high-rise clusters, an ‘outtown’ built around a shopping mall…” (Goldberger 1990). The coalition of opposing civic organizations – referred to disdainfully, some would say, by Trump as “the civics” – proposed a scaled back version of Trump City that was about one half the size of the original design at 7.5 million square feet. In addition, they argued that Riverside Park and Riverside Drive should extend into Trump’s property, adding acres to the sprawling waterfront park (Finder 1991).

Other critics of the proposed Trump City development were disappointed by the decision to rebuild the West Side Highway as part of the plan. The West Side Highway was built as a temporary solution to the city’s growing traffic problem. However, the road’s presence was much more long-term than that of most temporary structures. Some of the parks advocacy organizations that had agreed to work with Trump on his development project did so to encourage the relocation and possibly the eventual removal of the highway. Without relocating the highway, they argued, pedestrian access to the waterfront would remain blocked.

If Trump’s original plan had gone through with the West Side Highway intact, “the biggest loser will, of course, be the public,” wrote Roberta B. Gratz, urban critic and author of “The Living City” in a New York Times editorial. A better choice, according to Gratz, was to move the highway inland so that city dwellers could access the waterfront park proposed by the civic groups challenging Trump City. While the plan to relocate parts of the West Side Highway promised to be a boon to environmental, political, and planning interests around the city, those charged with protecting the public interest
remained indecisive about the development. “State and city officials resist[ed] and point[ed] fingers at one another…The result [was] abdication all around” (Gratz 1991).

Ever-savvy – or perhaps just broke, since the empty waterfront property was costing him close to $20 million per year – Donald Trump responded to his critics by making significant concessions to the civic groups that had opposed his Trump City plan. Not only did he agree to remove his name from the development, he in fact adopted the “Riverside South” plan put forward by local community and environmental organizations, which halved the size of the profit-making portions of the development. Dismissing suggestions that he made the concessions because he could no longer afford the underutilized parcels of land, Trump instead asserted that “…Trump City [was] a plan of the 80s. This is a plan of the 90s.” Still, Peter Wright, then-chairman of the Riverside Park Fund, having watched Donald Trump accept buttons and literature from preservation-minded organizations like Westpride, was cynical saying, “It’s amazing what happens to a guy when he’s broke” (Tierney 1991a).

In April 1991, six of the environmental and neighborhood groups that had opposed Trump City joined Donald Trump in forming a corporate partnership to oversee future planning for the site. The Riverside South Planning Corporation, in addition to Trump, was comprised of representatives from the Riverside Park Fund, the Municipal Art Society, the Natural Resources Defense Council, the Parks Council, Westpride, and the Regional Plan Association, with former head of the New York State Urban Development Corporation, Richard A. Kahan serving as its chair. Organizational decisions were to be made by consensus, with the caveat that Trump could withdraw in
the case of irreconcilable differences as he was bankrolling the Corporation’s budget. Viewed as “an alternative process to combat,” the civic organizations and Trump realized that such an arrangement had its benefits and its drawbacks.

From Trump’s point-of-view, involving community groups in the planning phases of the development process might help to streamline the review process by addressing neighborhood concerns early on. Additionally, the collaboration carried with it the promise of less litigation. However, by involving civic groups, Trump had to abandon any illusions of total control. The development site would not become home to multi-story apartment buildings in an area known for its “pre-war” architecture. The civic groups, for their part, recognized that joining with Trump could cause them to lose credibility with their constituents. Moreover, now that the organizations were a partner to the planning process they would have to “give up their detached, critical role.” Even so, in joining the Riverside South Planning Corporation, groups like the Riverside Park Fund were confident that Trump’s earlier call for skyscrapers would be replaced with an extension of Riverside Park (Dunlap 1991).

The creation of the Riverside South Planning Corporation did not put all fears of Trump’s development to rest. Some city dwellers continued to worry that the development would not compliment the existing building density of the Upper West Side. Others remained concerned about the availability of affordable housing – if Riverside Park South was going to be large, the space available for the construction of reasonably-priced residential units would necessarily be smaller. Still, Paul Goldberger, a reporter
who covered urban planning and architectural issues for *The New York Times*, was optimistic on the whole:

“We have a chance for splendid, even sumptuous, urban design, and generous, perhaps even important public open space. In a city whose public realm has been pushed to the wall by private greed over the last decade, the Riverside South plan offers the promise of turning things around” (1991).

That there were lingering concerns surrounding the Riverside South development plan, despite the involvement of several civic organizations in the planning oversight process points to a broader reality faced by Riverside Park and its advocates. While the most famous sections of Riverside Park are located on the tony Upper West Side – particularly the part given historical landmark status, 72nd Street through 129th Street – the Park serves a variety of populations, with various backgrounds. Two populations of Riverside Park users that were particularly controversial during the 1990s were a small tent city community of homeless women and men and a community of boaters that lived year-round at the 79th Street boat basin. Both groups had made a public park their private home. When city officials decided to reclaim the park for recreational use, “a clear difference between the two groups emerged. The city evicted the homeless people in the summer [of 1991]. It is letting the boat dwellers remain…” (Tierney 1991b). The City allowed the boaters or “live-aboards” as they referred to themselves, to remain at the boat basin, despite the fact that they frequently went on rent strike for months at a time. The live-aboards, many of whom were affluent and even wealthy – paid less than what it cost to rent a parking space for moorings that could support a three-story home. The vast majority of boaters never left their spaces, meaning that there was little room for visitors
who would have to pay a fee to dock at the boat basin. Then-Riverside Park Fund chairman Peter Wright was disgusted by the community of boaters saying, “The people in the boat basin are squatters on public land…we have an eyesore…and the city is subsidizing it. Why?” Meanwhile, then-administrator for Riverside Park, Charles McKinney defended the city’s support for what some characterized as “rent control squatters,” arguing that the residential character of the boat basin, not the political clout or economic resources of residents, had prevented the city from cutting funding for utilities at the marina or evicting the residents altogether. One homeless man, saddened, but not surprised by the city’s treatment of the park’s homeless population said “It ain’t fair. Nothing we can do about it. They [the live-aboards] got money and authority, and we don’t. Money talks in politics. If you got a dollar and I don’t they’re going to take care of you” (Ibid.).

If park users viewed plans for Riverside Park differently based on their backgrounds, so too did the advocacy groups representing them. In planning the new Riverside South development, organizations like Riverside Park Fund were confident that Upper West Side residents would get a fair deal due to the participation of the Fund and other civic organizations. However, while involving several community groups in the planning process certainly broadened support for the project, “numerous local leaders insist that this not be mistaken for community approval or acquiescence. Indeed, the Coalition for a Livable West Side has charged that Westpride [a member of the Riverside South Planning Corporation] ‘betrayed our community’” (Dunlap 1992).
In agreeing to collaborate with Donald Trump and his team of developers on deciding the fate of Riverside South, civic groups faced more scrutiny than usual. The case for Westpride’s “betrayal” was based partially on the appearance of an overly-cozy relationship between the nonprofit and the development corporation. A former executive director of Westpride stepped down and became vice president of the Riverside South Planning Corporation and a former executive director of Westpride became one of the Corporation’s consulting architects. Meanwhile the other community organizations participating in the planning, including the Riverside Park Fund, faced tough questions from their memberships as well as from the broader park constituency.

Rich Park, Poor Park

What would the new park look like? What uses would be permitted there? Should park modernization and restoration efforts in the original Riverside Park be restricted to areas conceived of by Robert Moses? Would the Olmsted-designed sections of parkland remain more or less pristine? Would the West Side Highway remain where it was or be moved to facilitate access to the waterfront? Where would the tenants of the new residential units come from? How many below-market rate housing units would be available to the poor? What mass transit modifications, if any, would need to be made to accommodate increased traffic and new residents? While these questions are not unusual, they serve to illustrate the difficulty in managing a public resource in a way that serves the public interest, whatever that might be (Ibid.).
When faced with revenue shortages, such questions, essentially amounting to a discussion of “who gets what, when and how” (Lasswell 1936) become especially important. During the 1990s, public parks across the nation as well as around New York City were grappling with the problem of how to combat the massive die-off of elm trees due to the scourge of Dutch Elm Disease. In 1993, then-Riverside Park Fund vice chairwoman Pat Sapinsley reported that Riverside Park had lost 14 mature trees to the disease. She and advocates for other New York City parks pressed the Department of Parks and Recreation and the City Council to dedicate a steady revenue stream toward treating trees, but the city made no guarantees. Subsequent pressure from motivated and organized groups of concerned citizens led the city to pony up a little extra cash to deal with the tree problem in the city’s flagship parks, but no funding for fighting the disease was earmarked for the following year (Hays 1993; Pollan 1993). Public-private parks partnerships made up the difference in some cases, as with Central Park and Riverside Park, but not every public park in the city had that luxury.

The fact that not all of New York City’s parks have a dedicated public-private partnership composed of people with the financial wherewithal, time, and motivation to volunteer, to raise funds, or to keep pressure on public officials is a matter of concern for many residents and observers. The Riverside Park Fund, for example, can continue its activities and begin new projects and programs because it draws its membership primarily from the wealthy West Side. In fact, though the organization is public-private partnership, the vast majority of its activities are possible because of private donations, and, of those private donations, the majority come from individual citizens or area
corporations (Riverside Park Fund 2006). The Riverside Park Fund’s private donors enabled the partnership to accomplish a lot within its first 8 years of operation, with project costs totaling approximately $2,800,000 (Kennedy 1994).

While Riverside Park enjoyed the benefits of public-private partnering and philanthropy, other parks, like High Bridge Park in Washington Heights foundered during the 1990s. Though High Bridge Park did not lack volunteers – three Little League organizations met regularly to clear trash and remove graffiti – their efforts did little to assuage concerns that the park was unsafe. Given that the city park staff continued to shrink, it proved difficult to engender a safe environment with the presence of people. Unlike Riverside Park, where emergency phones had been installed to improve public safety thanks to money from the Riverside Park Fund raised in the first year of its existence, prospects for High Bridge Park, years later, seemed grim (Martin 1994a).

A 1994 *New York Times* report further revealed the disparities between parks and the connections between socioeconomic class and access to public green space. A problem that affected all New York City parks was that “budgets [were] slashed and burned and slashed again” (Martin 1994b). Less funding meant less maintenance, fewer personnel, and a near elimination of parks and recreation programming. However, the effects of the shrinking parks budget were not shared equally:

“Given that New York’s park problem is essentially an economic one, [sic] the overall picture is far from uniform and far from democratic. The pain is felt most acutely in those parts of the city that lack the private money and political know-how that have brought places like Central Park and Prospect Park so vibrantly back to life in recent years” (Ibid.)
Even the various parts of Riverside Park experienced the stresses of the new financial reality in different ways. The Riverside Park Fund had raised money and volunteers to refurbish landmarks and gardens in the area of the park in the Upper West Side, while the northern areas of the park closer to Harlem continued to suffer from faulty plumbing, benches that were in serious disrepair (in cases where benches were even present), and vandalism. David R. Jones, president of the Community Service Society lamented the poor conditions saying, “I don’t think middle-class and upper-class people have any conception of how important parks are for the stability of families” and neighborhoods (Ibid.).

Many park advocates, like the Parks Council and then-parks commissioner Henry J. Stern, viewed public-private partnerships like the Riverside Park Fund as holding the key to the future prosperity public parks. The model of such governance was, and remains, the Central Park Conservancy. By 1994, its 13th year of existence, the organization had attracted donations of both time and money from some 50,000 individuals, corporations, and foundations. The Conservancy was directly responsible for underwriting the majority of the Central Park capital budget and at least half of its operating budget. Still, officials had to admit that this “formula [would] work best in wealthier parts of the city” and, as such, “the city [could not] pull out of the parks game” (Ibid.). Moreover, it would be disingenuous to suggest that a partnership exists if the public partner has essentially withdrawn.

Still, trends toward increased private involvement in Riverside Park “clean-up and green-up” efforts continued. Public park managers were shifting upkeep responsibilities
to residents living near the Riverside Park and Riverside Drive, saying that such a move was “the wave of the future in parks.” Such efforts were especially successful between 72nd Street and 125th Street, where there was “a long tradition of community involvement, with enough residents with the time and [financial] wherewithal to make things happen” (Martin 1995). Hence the volunteer work sponsored by the Riverside Park Fund and other groups was concentrated in the older, wealthier section of the park.

In 1995, then-executive director of the Riverside Park Fund, Winston J. Dong, Jr. admitted that private volunteer efforts had not changed circumstances in the areas of the park near Harlem, where residents were poor and need was most dire. Additionally, the lack of uniform care for Riverside Park may have been compounded by the fact that then-Riverside Park Commissioner Charles McKinney tried “to fulfill requests for things like garden mulch or fences in areas where groups are active, ahead of those with no involvement” (Ibid.). This approach to parks maintenance – responding to need where constituents are most active – served to disadvantage citizens living in poor areas of the city. Commissioner McKinney suggested that this policy was merely “positive reinforcement,” because the city wanted to “try to help people who help themselves” (Ibid.). However, shabby parks may be less an indictment of people framed as being poor and therefore uninvolved in public affairs (if not simply lazy), and more a reflection of the fact that the poor must often prioritize other activities and needs above public parks – like working.

Differences in conditions between parks in wealthy communities and those in poor communities persisted. The Reverend Wendell Foster, former civil rights leader and
chair of the City Council’s Committee on Parks, Recreation, Cultural Affairs and
Intergroup Relations, held a hearing during the summer of 1997 to address the problem.
A major issue discussed at the hearing was the fact that Parks Commissioner Henry J.
Stern had spent much of his three years in office working with private organizations
placing animal art in parks – like the whimsical hippopotamus fountain installed in
Riverside Park at the 91st Street Playground. This was upsetting to Foster who said,
“There are still communities where the parks are not up to par.” Interestingly, James
Dowell, who had recently become executive director of the Riverside Park Fund praised
the art, noting that “it lifts us from the mundane,” even as the Parks Department was
struggling to perform basic maintenance functions in the face of a 30 percent decline in
the city’s park budget over the previous decade. Stern responded to Foster’s concerns
with a dismissive quip, “Some people don’t like art. They are called philistines” (Martin
1997).

That some of the city’s most crucial green space was being neglected by the Parks
Department in favor of those areas possessing strong private support for park projects did
not stop citizens from working to refurbish poorer parks. In the fall of 1998, Frank
Ombres, a National Guardsman, and 75 of his soldiers, in addition to 100 people from his
union, Laborers Local 731, volunteered to rehabilitate the dilapidated northern areas of
Riverside Park from 135th to 151st Streets. Working in the Washington Heights
neighborhood, the group of volunteers spent a weekend clearing out trash and brush,
repairing crumbling walls, scrubbing graffiti, and fixing park benches. Remark ing on
the work his group had done, Ombres said “We had union members from the five boroughs,
and they spent the weekend there with no pay…Our work usually causes disruption to citizens, so it was nice to give them something back” (O'Shaughnessy 1998).

Ombres and his group planned to remain involved in landscaping and maintenance efforts for the foreseeable future. When The New York Daily News announced that it would award Ombres $500 for his actions – he was their “Hero of the Month” – Ombres donated his award to the Riverside Park Fund. The Fund’s executive director, James Dowell, praised Ombres and his group and said the $500 donation would be used to purchase equipment and garbage bags for its many volunteers (Breen 1998).

If the problem with public-private partnerships for parks is that they are most successful in wealthy communities, the Riverside Park Fund attempted to address it by supporting volunteers. For example, when residents of 150th Street and Riverside Drive, the building that author Ralph Ellison had called home and died in, approached the Fund about building a small monument to the Ellison’s memory, the Fund listened. Working through its connections in the Parks Department, the Fund helped to secure a $250,000 outlay to landscape the strip of parkland proposed as the location of the Ellison monument. Additionally, the Fund worked with residents of 150th Street and Riverside Drive as well as Random House Publishing to garner seed money for a trust fund dedicated to the upkeep of the “Invisible Man” monument (McGee 1999).

One resident of Ellison’s former home, Ann Dobson, said “There are only three or four monuments to African-Americans in New York City. I want school children to come here and learn about this great figure” (Ibid.). Plans for the Ellison monument were unveiled in November 2001. Sculptor Elizabeth Catlett was commissioned to do the
piece, a metal cut out of a walking figure through which one can view the Hudson River and the monument was installed the following spring. Residents of Harlem held jazz concerts and readings of Ellison’s work as well as the work of other, prominent black authors to raise $150,000 to put toward the project. Combined with the city’s allocation of $250,000 toward landscaping the space, Harlem residents and the Department of Parks and Recreation came up with 40 percent of the required $1,000,000 for the project. The rest of the money came out of City Councilman Stanley E. Michaels’ allotment of council revenue and from the Riverside Park Fund’s membership (Matloff 2001).

Another volunteer effort in a lesser-traversed section of Riverside Park that the Riverside Park Fund supported was located near the Morningside Heights neighborhood near 113th and 114th Streets. A doorman working at a Riverside Drive apartment building, Michael Ryan, adopted a traffic island that had once been home only to concrete. Over the course of four years, 1995-1999, Ryan used his own money to transform the island into a flower garden. The Riverside Park Fund worked with Ryan and was able to secure city support for his efforts. The Parks and Recreation Department installed protective boulders around the island, to keep people from parking there, and also provided some plantings and shrubs. The Fund supported a similar effort a few blocks away by raising $50,000 as part of its effort to refurbish Kosseth Island, a slice of Riverside Park dedicated to Hungarian-Americans. The money came from the Fund’s 4,000 members and from Hungarian-Americans living around the city (Siegal 1999).

Recognizing the role that individual park users could play in refurbishing all sections of Riverside Park – even the poorest – the Riverside Park Fund solidified its
commitment to volunteers in 2000. That year, the Fund began construction on the Peter Jay Sharp Volunteer House, located near 107th Street. The Volunteer House is an expansion of a 100-year-old existing limestone building that was riddled with graffiti and could only hold a handful of people at a time (Lee 2000). The project was made possible by donations from the Peter Jay Sharp Foundation, the LuEsther T. Mertz Advised Fund at New York Community Trust, other philanthropic foundations, and individual contributions by private donors.

Renovations completed in 2003 resulted in a facility that was enlarged with a mezzanine level and a second story and that had year-round access to heat and water. More room allowed for a space to house young plants being nurtured from seed, storage space for gardening and trash removal supplies, and a small kitchen. The Riverside Park Fund notes that the Volunteer House now “serves as the hub for Riverside Park Fund’s extensive Grassroots Volunteer Program. The building is the only public facility in New York City dedicated solely to encouraging and sustaining volunteer park work” (Riverside Park Fund 2009c). Today, the Volunteer House is home to regular open houses for groups and individuals wishing to adopt different landscapes or monuments in Riverside Park. Executive director of the Fund, James Dowell, said of the accomplishment, “Our hope is that the building becomes a stimulus” for similar programs in neighborhoods besides the Upper West Side (Dunlap 2003).
Conclusion

By the early 2000s, the Riverside Park Fund had established itself as a crucial player in the New York City parks game. Not only did the Fund support grassroots volunteer efforts around the sections of Riverside Park given historic landmark status, the organization made concerted efforts to spread its influence to all park areas. Moreover, the Riverside Park Fund had become a key player in the Riverside South Planning Corporation, a group that had successfully won key concessions for environmental and neighborhood groups in making plans for a large scale development involving an extension of Riverside Park. The first few phases of Riverside Park South were completed in 2001, making the waterfront park abut the water for the first time in recent memory (Dunlap 2001; Colangelo 2001).

In 2002, the organization took on additional responsibilities. The Fund created maps of the 323-acre Riverside Park and the phases of Riverside Park South that had been thus far completed. The $20,000 map project, under the leadership of executive director James Dowell, resulted in the production of more than 10,000 long and narrow maps, mirroring the shape of Riverside Park. The Riverside Park Fund raised the money necessary for the map project and charges nonmembers $2 per copy (Radomsky 2002).

Today, the Riverside Park Fund produces all promotional publications for the Park. The organization is also responsible for organizing special events, booking performances, and advertising them to the public. Additionally, the Fund recruits, organizes, and trains all volunteers. The partnership provides the park with approximately
$200,000 per year in donations, and sometimes more. The Project for Public Spaces\(^\text{15}\) found that, since its inception in 1986, “RPF has raised over $8 million for the Park; notably, RPF lobbied for $2.4 million in federal funding for the construction of Riverside Walk, a four-mile pedestrian and bicycle path along the river.” Still, it is important to note that with an operating budget of $1 million and a capital budget of $1.5 million, the City of New York remains Riverside Park’s largest source of revenue (Project for Public Spaces 2009).

Though the Riverside Park Fund has successfully shined the shoes of Riverside Park between 72\(^{\text{nd}}\) and 129\(^{\text{th}}\) Streets, some areas of the northern section of the park remain in bad shape. Adrian Benepe, the New York City Parks Commissioner who took office in 2002 said that while “there is no formal two-tier system when it comes to maintaining city parks…some are better cared for than others.” A commonality between all of the thriving parks around New York City is that they are managed in part by public-private partnerships. Meanwhile, struggling parks like the University Woods in the Bronx are left to rely on government funding alone, which is, as the previous discussion suggests, insufficient, given persistent budget cuts (Williams 2005). Another reason parks like University Woods struggle is that area residents often do not have the free time to dedicate to volunteerism that their wealthy counterparts in other neighborhoods do.\(^\text{16}\)

\(^{15}\) A nonprofit organization dedicated to the establishment of public-private partnerships for the purposes of creating and maintaining public parks and other public green space. \(^{16}\) Still, it should be noted that in 2006, a young woman named Brandy Cochrane from the University Heights neighborhood in the Bronx organized a group called “Friends of the Woods.” The group’s mission is to clean up and green up the University Woods Park and to improve community perceptions about the park through various outreach and
Such disparities between neighborhoods in terms of the quality of public parks tend to fuel tensions between the various communities around the city, pitting the rich against the poor. Geoffrey M. Croft, president of the New York City Park Advocates said of the inequitable situation, “It is completely outrageous that poor communities are given this type of service when other parks are given adequate service. Having prostitutes and drug users fill a park when a community needs parks, goes against everything government is supposed to do in terms of providing services and protecting people.” Meanwhile Commissioner Benepe seemed nonplussed by the situation saying, “This is a big system and you can’t address every little problem” (Williams 2005). While the occasional mud hole or overflowing trashcan may not seem like a big problem, it is a symptom of a larger disease. A strong private role in some parks can distort the park maintenance process and budget. When parks departments concentrate their funding and repair efforts in areas that already receive a lot of private friends’ group money and attention, poor parks remain as they have been – poor.

The challenge for the Riverside Park Fund and other public-private partnerships for parks around the city, it would seem, is to work to ensure the availability of high quality public green space for all city dwellers. But can it? As a nongovernmental organization that solicits donations from individuals and corporations, is it within the means of the Fund to ensure such accountability? It is worth remembering that the Fund is a public-private partnership, not merely a private one. Even though the Fund is a programming efforts. More information can be found at: http://www.uniwoods.com/index.htm (Friends of the Woods 2009).
partnership focused on a specific public park, not all areas of the park are equally or even adequately serviced. As such, the public partner, in this case the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation, cannot forget that holding down standards of accountability and equity is its legitimate role.
Chapter 5

Comparing and Evaluating the Cases

Introduction

In Chapter 2 I presented an overview of public-private partnerships (PPPs), the rationale for their use, the history of their use as a policy tool, and a discussion of the many ways PPPs are defined and categorized. In a similar vein, this chapter presents some of the myriad ways of evaluating PPPs, ending with a discussion of the two methods used in this study. Ultimately, an approach based on partnership synergy (Lasker et al. 2001) and the stages of partnership development (Yin 1993) is used to critically examine the effectiveness of the partnerships discussed in the Boston Harbor Islands and Riverside Park case study chapters.

Evaluating Public-Private Partnerships: Many Approaches

The Boston Harbor Islands and Riverside Park case studies examine non-traditional or collaborative public-private partnerships for public parks. Pace et al. distinguish between two partnership forms, traditional and non-traditional. They note that while traditional PPPs are team partnerships in which a government partners with one or a few private organizations and focus on a clearly defined service or product, non-traditional partnerships are collaborations in which government is but one of a group of service providers that focus on providing a suite of goods and services to the public
In addition to discussing ways of categorizing PPPs, the authors come up with metrics for evaluating partnership effectiveness, including resource acquisition, efficiency, client satisfaction, and goal attainment.

Echoing Frank Fischer (1995), Pace et al. argue for a comprehensive approach in measuring effectiveness that incorporates multiple criteria and perspectives in determining whether PPPs are effective. The authors suggest three “effectiveness components” aimed at understanding how well a PPP works – resource acquisition, efficiency, and goal attainment. Resource acquisition is measured by looking at the partnership’s profit margin, or capital investment as a percentage of total revenue. Similarly, efficiency is operationalized as costs as a percentage of revenue. Meanwhile, goal attainment is described as a three step process involving, first, identifying the organizational mission, second, identifying goals compatible with the mission, and third, measuring attainment of those goals (2000, 64).

Other approaches to evaluating PPPs are more qualitative in nature. Rockefeller suggests four ingredients of a successful partnership: 1) a strong and comprehensive private sector organization, 2) personal participation of the chief executives involved in the PPP, 3) a clear organizational mission, and 4) a receptive and supportive public sector (1986, 122). First, strong, comprehensive private sector organizations are important for PPPs because sometimes the private sector is highly fragmented, with many business groups pursuing similar goals. In such situations, similar organizations representing narrow interests compete with one another. If the private sector partners are in such disarray, their ability to partner equally with government is stymied by diminished
political clout. Therefore, a strong and comprehensive private sector partner can help to
organize the various interests under one unifying goal. In other words, a regulated private
monopoly is a key element of a successful public-private partnership.

Second, the personal participation of the chief executives involved is vital because it lends credibility to the PPP and more importantly, because of the leadership they provide. After all, it is the organization’s Board of Directors (or board of trustees, in some cases) that make the difference in terms of key decisions, commitments, and influence. Moreover, the leadership of executives is necessary because “certain jobs are too important to be delegated…delegation is infectious – quickly leading to yet more delegation and the loss of institutional potency” (Rockefeller 1986, 123). Engaging chief executives by providing them with interesting and challenging assignments helps to ensure dedicated leaders remain a part of the partnership organization.

Third, a clear organizational mission is essential for success. An organization’s mission establishes its goals and sets the stage for the creation of organizational objectives to attain those goals. The efforts of PPPs with unfocused missions are often thwarted by the fact that any single organization simply cannot be all things to all people. In the case of public parks, for example, the task of revamping a city’s entire park system is so big as to be almost irrelevant. A successful PPP is said to clearly identify objectives based on its goals and works to create a “blueprint” that orients it to the accomplishment of its objectives. This is not something to be done once, and then forgotten. Successful partnerships continually define and redefine their objectives. In the process, “hard
choices are frequently necessary, but without them, it is easy for an institution to stagnate, become flabby, and lose relevance” (Rockefeller 1986, 124).

Fourth, a receptive and supportive public sector partner is an important ingredient for successful PPPs. Public sector partners should work to engender good communication, to remove disincentives for cooperation, and to create incentives encouraging private sector participation, where appropriate. Communication is of foremost importance due to the fact that the public and private sector have different strengths and weaknesses (recall chapter 1). In other words, as Rockefeller notes, “businesses do not often think in political terms and politicians do not often think in economic terms” (Rockefeller 1986, 124-125). As such, PPPs lacking effective communication frequently experience confusion over roles and responsibilities and the constituent partners often have unrealistic expectations of one another, which in turn leads to buck-passing and finger-pointing. Improved communication can alleviate such problems by helping partners to understand each other better. When a PPP’s constituent organizations spell out their individual motives for becoming involved and clearly define their goals and objectives, they eliminate the guesswork. Their motivations are no longer left to the imaginations of their partners and the PPP can focus on the task at hand.

As mentioned, receptive and supportive public sector partners also remove disincentives for cooperation and create incentives to encourage private sector participation. Modifying certain regulations or traditional bureaucratic decision making processes to include private sector and nonprofit partners can serve to encourage cooperation. For example, some partnerships give their private partners a vote or even a
veto when it comes to deciding the direction the organization will take. Additionally, the public sector partner can incentivize cooperation by awarding grants or, in the case of public parks, creating a policy emphasizing the rehabilitation of existing parks, rather than the construction of new ones (Rockefeller 1986).

In a study of housing and community development public-private partnerships Riggin et al (1992) identify two reasons why evaluating PPPs is difficult. First, the availability, accessibility, and validity of evaluation data can impede partnership assessment. The authors argue that, when the public and private sectors come together to accomplish a certain purpose, it can be difficult to get access to needed data. One reason for this is that, sometimes, records kept by the public sector are not maintained once the government is no longer the exclusive provider of a good or service. Another explanation is that if the public sector turns over record-keeping duties to its private sector partner, data might not be accessible to the general public. Often, federal grant programs do not carry with them requirements to insure that data is collected, stored, and maintained as a condition of aid receipt.

This reality serves to underscore the importance of establishing a formal agreement or memoranda of understanding between public and private sector partners. Such arrangements can make certain that information-gathering, storage, and maintenance is a part of the partnership deal. However, even if data are available and accessible to the public, questions of validity can continue to obstruct partnership evaluations. When PPPs operate in a politically sensitive context, both the public sector and the private sector partners are interested in limiting negative press and therefore
“…much of the information that is available on partnership projects is promotional in nature,” necessitating the retrieval of data from multiple sources (Riggin et al. 1992, 41).

Perhaps even more fundamentally vexing than information access and validity is the question of whether observed impacts are the result of PPP programs and projects or whether they are actually attributable to other causes. Evaluations of PPPs cannot always connect the contributions of partners from one sector (public or private) to a particular result. Since partnerships by their very nature involve individuals and organizations from the public, private, and nonprofit sectors, it is difficult to determine whose actions led to which outcomes. For example, a PPP project often involves “a series of policy decisions by local government…and investment decisions by both private for-profit and private nonprofit organizations.” Who, then, is responsible for the project’s effects, good or bad? In order to attribute project achievements to the PPP, evaluators would need to analyze what could have happened without the collaboration of the public and private sectors (Riggin et al. 1992, 42).

Given the challenges that evaluators face, Riggin et al. present another framework for evaluating partnership projects based on three categories of criteria: needs criteria, process criteria, and outcome criteria. Needs criteria is a category of measures that essentially focuses on what specific needs to which the PPP is responding. One such criterion is the magnitude of need. In the case of public parks, questions should center on the quality and availability of clean and safe spaces for relaxation and recreation. Have public or private efforts stemmed the problem? Another criterion for evaluating a PPP is the duplication in meeting that need.
Questions in this case should center on whether there is more than one approach to dealing with the declining quality of city parks. Is the government addressing the problem? If so, what levels of government? What about the private sector? In working with government at the federal, state, and/or local level, public sector agencies and private groups “should avoid duplication of effort while identifying and taking advantage of opportunities to leverage additional funds to maximize results.” Still, it should be noted that the avoidance of duplication of effort may contravene the goal of combining the financial and human resources of multiple organizations. As such, perhaps a better question for evaluations to explore is whether a park program would have been implemented without the PPP. In this case, the question is “not whether the [partnership] project duplicates other projects…but whether the project would be implemented even if the public (or private) sector were not involved” (Riggin et al. 1992, 43).

The second category of evaluative criteria proposed by Riggin et al is that of process criteria. Process criteria are divided into issues of planning, partnership structure, management of PPP operations, and acquisition and management of resources. Planning, unsurprisingly, refers to the process of initiating a project and getting it off the ground. If a partnership’s programs are closely tied to the resources, skills, abilities, and other assets of its constituent organizations, an effective planning process has occurred. Related to this is the second criterion, the structure of the partnership. Questions regarding the composition of the organization – the number of participating member groups, their respective affiliations, and their skills or specific competencies – are useful for
understanding the dynamics at work in public-private collaborations. The stability of the PPP, both in terms of its membership and leadership, is also worth considering.

Another important process criterion is the management of PPP operations. Here, questions of leadership, accountability, and coordination both inside and outside the partnership organization come to the fore. Accountability is particularly important due to the fact that public-private partnerships involve public resources “and there is the potential for abuse when public resources are mixed with private resources.” Evaluations should therefore consider what reporting requirements are in place to check the activities of PPPs. Additionally, compliance with the requirements imposed is also important, as well as the extent to which partners are aware of the requirements and any sanctions in place to discourage noncompliance (Riggin et al. 1992, 44).

The last process criterion is that of resource acquisition and management. Echoing other proposed PPP evaluation methods this criterion “focuses on the financial and other resources necessary for implementation of a project.” Indicators include the PPP’s financial resources, its nonfinancial resources and their quality, and how the organization manages them. Evaluators can determine what nonfinancial resources are available to a partnership by assessing the number, quality, and stability of staff; the availability of technical resources, and the amount of in-kind donations received (Riggin et al. 1992, 44).

A final category of criteria for evaluating PPPs is outcome criteria. Outcome measures get at the effects, intended or unintended, of the partnership project. These criteria help evaluators assess how a partnership project or set of projects “affects the
public and private sectors, community residents, and the partnership organization itself, and how much it costs in financial, political, or social terms.” If a PPP program achieves its stated objectives, as measured by changes in need, the partnership evaluation is likely to be positive. For example, if a parks partnership sets forth a program aimed at rehabilitating existing city parks, one way to measure success is to compare, say, the frequency of maintenance before the promulgation of the effort and afterwards. If maintenance efforts increased, park needs changed in the direction intended by partnership action – there are fewer parks with significant maintenance problems.

Another aspect of outcome criteria is secondary or unintended effects. Successful efforts by existing PPPs, for example, can spur on the creation of new PPPs with a similar focus. Finally, the costs of the partnership project are important to consider when evaluating a PPP. What did the project cost the public sector and private sector partners? Could the resources of the member organizations be better applied to other policy interventions (Riggin et al. 1992, 44-45)?

Recent comparative studies (Jacobson and Choi 2008; Trafford and Proctor 2006; Laffin and Liddle 2006; Diamond 2006; Friend 2006) of PPPs found here in the United States and in Europe also present interesting metrics for evaluating the effectiveness of such collaborative organizations. In particular, Jacobson and Choi identify several important factors that contribute to a partnership’s success: 1) unifying specific vision and commitment; 2) open communication and willingness to compromise; 3) community outreach; 4) respect, clear roles and responsibilities, expert advice and risk awareness and; 5) political support.
Trafford and Procter (2006, 122) argue that “many ‘strategic alliances’ lack ‘alliance strategies’.” As such, successful PPPs recognize that the creation of a unifying specific vision “is one of the first steps of partnering. This vision includes the development of a partnering agreement addressing mutual objectives and timetables” (Jacobson and Choi 2008, 644). Based on the visioning process, partnerships can keep track of their progress toward organizational goals. An outgrowth of creating a specific organizational vision is partner commitment, which is “a logical result of monitoring and fine-tuning the…vision throughout the sometimes challenging process of planning and project or program implementation (Jacobson and Choi 2008, 648). Each member of the partnership is expected to help see the unifying specific vision through. While all partners are unlikely to agree on all aspects of the PPP’s work, they can prove their commitment to the PPP by actively participating in discussion and debate concerning the group’s current and future direction.

In order to facilitate such conversations, the partnership structure should allow for open communication. Communication, according to Jacobson and Choi, is essential to establishing trust between member organizations which, in turn, leads to a greater willingness to compromise. “Open and honest communication mechanisms engender trust when change is necessary; while trust underlies the …team’s ability to compromise or collaborate to attain mutual…objectives” (2008, 650). Organizations simply function better if communication is open. “Ineffective communication can reduce the effectiveness of a strategic alliance and thus lead to conflict between partners” who are left to speculate about one another’s motives (Trafford and Proctor 2006, 121). The collaborative
advantage is thus enhanced by open lines of communication because in the process of
discussing concerns a constituent organization has with any particular aspect of the PPP’s
operation or functioning, problems get defined and redefined and partners gain a deeper
understanding of one another and learn to trust one another in the process. After all, “trust
inevitably requires some sense of mutuality, of reciprocal loyalty” (Handy 1995, 48) and
successful partnerships foster that feeling.

Successful PPPs reach out to the community. Community outreach can, on the
one hand, be considered a part of the organization’s commitment to open communication.
On the other hand, community outreach is an important pursuit in and of itself. When
PPPs engage in the visioning process to set long-term goals and objectives, including the
public enables them to consider the positions of all community stakeholders, not just
those represented by the partnership. Involving the community in discussions from the
outset “reduces the likelihood of insurmountable opposition” later on and gives the PPP a
greater chance of achieving the aims of the unifying vision (Jacobson and Choi 2008,
651).

Respect, clear roles and responsibilities, expert advice and risk awareness is the
next criterion for success introduced by Jacobson and Choi. “Respect is engendered
through understanding each participant’s roles, responsibilities and risks” (2008, 651).
Each member group of the partnership organization has at least a basic understanding of
their own strengths and limitations. These help to define the roles that each partner must
fill and their responsibilities therein. The explicit definition of member organization roles
and responsibilities assists in the development of mutual goals, a necessary step in the
definition and redefinition of the PPP’s unifying vision. Moreover, “as a part of the visioning process, it is important to make a practical analysis of the risk factors,” (Jacobson and Choi 2008, 652), which in turn underscores the importance of obtaining expert advice.

Finally, political support is another key determinant of PPP success or effectiveness. “Without continuous political support, there would be no expenditure approvals for...[the] public portion of PPPs.” Successful partnerships endeavor to keep their organizational processes transparent to the public. After all, public funds require an accounting of how they are spent. PPPs can foster political support for their goals and objectives by frequently communicating with key stakeholders and decision makers outside of the partnership and by making their meeting minutes, reports, and other records available to the public. Obtaining and maintaining political support is an important success factor for PPPs because, in some cases, the government partner in a PPP will look at the financial contributions of its private sector and nonprofit partners and take it as a signal that continued public financial support is no longer necessary. By keeping its operations transparent to the public, the PPP may find it has community allies willing to take the government partner to task, should it ponder the reduction of public funds (Ibid.).
Evaluative Methods Employed in the Harbor Islands and Riverside Park Case Studies

Criteria for Evaluation – Determinants of Partnership Synergy

While each of the methods of evaluating PPPs discussed in the foregoing section is useful, they do not specify the device that ultimately allows a partnership to accomplish more as a collectivity than any of its constituent organizations can accomplish on their own. Hence, another approach to evaluating the effectiveness, or relative success, of PPP organizations – an evaluative method employed in this study – focuses on the concept of partnership synergy. Synergy is defined as “the proximal outcome of partnership functioning that gives collaboration its unique advantage” (Lasker et al. 2001, 183). If human beings collaborate because we believe doing so will allow us to improve our individual and collective capacity to achieve goals, the same logic underpins organizational collaboration. Synergy is essentially the capacity to combine the differential strengths of partnership members – their skills, resources, and perspectives – to achieve a goal. Synergy allows PPPs to gain an advantage over a single organization acting alone, and its determinants are comprehensive proxies for partnership effectiveness.

Partnership synergy goes beyond a simple exchange of resources, though that can be a component. Rather, the partnership organization creates something of value that would not arise without multiple perspectives – the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Collaboration results in an increased capacity to address problems. One way that collaboration fosters this increased capacity is by nurturing creativity. Bringing organizations from the public, private, and nonprofit sectors together allows for an
“exploration of differences” that can be potentially path-breaking. “People involved in partnerships have the potential to [pioneer] new ground, challenge accepted wisdom, and discover innovative solutions to problems” (Lasker et al. 2001, 184). Such thinking is sometimes even described as transformative, when exposure to various points-of-view causes an organization to rethink its position on key issues. At the societal level, PPPs that bring together “diverse people, organizations, and sectors can change the way communities conceptualize and solve problems” (Lasker et al. 2001, 185).

Bringing many heads together can also result in thinking that is comprehensive and even holistic. Instead of only one group viewing a problem, many groups view the problem and together they can promote wider understanding of the problems and potential solutions the PPP must contend with. Furthermore, when PPPs include academics as well as practitioners and clients, they have the potential to produce programs and policies that align better with local conditions. In coming up with strategies that link theory with actual, recorded experience, partnerships spur on this kind of practical thinking (Ibid.).

Synergy is also manifest in the actions of PPPs. Partnership actions are strengthened when constituent organizations are similar and can provide similar services. For example, some PPPs centered on public parks count amongst their member organizations several different environmental advocacy groups. While a lot of land use decisions are focused on development pressure and other financial concerns, environmental organizations place conservation and sometimes even preservation at the forefront. Several similar organizations working toward the same end can increase the
“critical mass” need to push their respective points-of-view. Actions are also strengthened when diverse partners are brought together. In the case of the latter, diverse partners allow problems to be tackled using a multifaceted approach that utilizes the competencies of the various groups and individuals involved. The result is a “coordin[ation of] a variety of reinforcing services, strategies, programs, sectors, and systems” (Ibid.). In theory then, more heads are better than one, and more diverse heads are better than less diverse ones.

While partnership synergy sounds like a worthwhile pursuit on several dimensions, it is not easy to reach. At the same time that a PPP’s diverse make-up brings an assortment of perspectives and approaches to the collaborative effort, such “diversity can lead to tension and conflict…Considering the difficulties involved, it is likely that many partnerships do not achieve high levels of synergy” (Lasker et al. 2001, 186-187). A PPP is said to have attained synergy when the complementary qualities of each partner serve to further the group effort.

Lasker et al. (2001, 187) acknowledge the fact “partnership synergy” is a fuzzy concept. Still, they argue that “partnership synergy can be assessed in concrete, practical ways.” Partnership synergy is evident in the way the partners think about the goals and plans of the partnership – thinking becomes creative, comprehensive, and practical. Synergy also underpins the actions undertaken by the PPP and is reflected in the relationship it fosters with the larger community. Synergistic partnerships are able to carry out complex policy interventions that connect clients to the programs and services available in various sectors. They address the concerns of multiple stakeholders, not just
the target population, and effectively communicate their strategy to maintain public support.

A framework for understanding the determinants of partnership synergy created by Lasker et al is reproduced in Table 5.1. The author’s framework “identifies elements of partnership functioning that are likely to influence the ability of partnerships to achieve high levels of synergy” (2001, 188). These elements include resources, partner characteristics, relationships among partners, partnership characteristics, and the external environment. A brief discussion of each determinant is presented here.

Resources, both monetary and nonmonetary, are the cornerstone of partnership synergy. Combining the resources of the partnership’s member organizations in various ways allows it to do more than any one group could do on its own. Extending beyond fiscal and infrastructure assets, resources also include the skills and expertise of individuals working within member organizations. These individuals also bring intangible assets, like access to information and connections to other people and organizations to the PPP. Additionally, the partnership’s constituent organizations often have the ability to obtain community endorsements, “lending the partnership credibility and legitimacy with various stakeholders,” and to bring stakeholders together for meetings and other purposes (Lasker et al. 2001, 190).

As the above discussion suggests, “partners are the source of most partnership resources” (Ibid.). This means that successful PPPs will work to recruit and retain partners that bring needed resources to the organization – be they financial, in-kind, or intangible. Of particular importance when looking at partner characteristics in
Determining partnership synergy is the heterogeneity and level of involvement of the member groups. These influence synergy in a complex way. A PPP with many actively-involved member organizations is not guaranteed success. Instead, it is the mix of organizations (e.g., which organizations, from where, and when) and the ways in which they involve themselves in the PPP that may or may not produce synergistic outcomes.

PPPs represent groups of individuals or organizations. Therefore, it is unsurprising that the relationships among partners are important in analyzing partnership synergy. If the whole is to transcend its component parts, group members must be able to communicate with one another and be willing to coordinate their various activities. This is not an easy task when partners come from diverse racial, economic, and professional backgrounds. In some instances, member organizations remain wary of each other’s motivations and are not ready to share either resources or power. Ironically, too much homogeneity amongst partnership organizations can raise its own set of issues, particularly competition to provide similar services.

There are several aspects of the relationships between partner organizations that influence synergy. The first aspect is trust. To work together effectively, partners “need to be confident that the other partners will follow through on their responsibilities and obligations and will not take advantage of them” (Lasker et al. 2001, 192). Second is respect. After all, if member organizations cannot see the benefits that other groups bring to the PPP, how can it succeed? Third, relationships between partners will often bring conflict to the PPP. This is not, in and of itself, a bad thing. Conflict can be useful when it encourages a healthy debate about the problem the PPP works to address. However,
conflict between member organizations can be an impediment to synergy if “healthy debate” is stifled by counterproductive arguing. Finally, some of the partnership’s member groups wield more power than others. Power imbalances tend to impinge partnership synergy because they restrict “who participates, whose opinions are considered valid, and who has influence over decisions made” (Israel et al. 1998 cited in Lasker et al. 2001, 193).

If the characteristics of and relationships between individual partners are important determinants of partnership synergy so, too, are characteristics of the partnership as a whole. Leadership, administration and management, governance, and efficiency can either promote or impede the PPP’s ability to engage its member groups in a meaningful way, to provide a working environment that encourages discussion and debate, and to combine the individual competencies of member groups. First, “partnerships…need boundary-spanning leaders who understand and appreciate partners’ different perspectives, can bridge their diverse cultures, and are comfortable sharing ideas, resources, and power” (Lasker et al. 2001, 193). Quality leaders can communicate reasons for partnering and are able to show member groups that they can accomplish more in partnership than they can on their own. Leaders of high-synergy PPPs build organizations that foster trust and respect, develop lines of communication free of jargon, combine members’ best ideas in an effort to promote creativity, and strive to synthesize the resources of constituent groups.

A second important characteristic of partnership organizations that helps to facilitate synergy is administration and management. For a PPP to achieve synergy,
partnership management should not conform to the traditional, bureaucratic mold. Instead, administrative and management efforts ought to be flexible and supportive, rather than rigid and controlling. Administrators of the PPP must also keep lines of communication open so that partners can effectively coordinate strategy. Moreover partnership administration and management should require analysis and documentation of PPP activities not only to assist member groups with making timely decisions but also to assess partnership functioning. Such structures act as “the ‘glue’ that makes it possible for multiple, independent people and organizations to work together” (Lasker et al. 2001, 194) in a way that produces synergy.

*Governance* is another partnership characteristic that is critical to partnership synergy. Depending on what the partnership’s organizational make-up looks like and on what problems or policy areas it addresses, governance forms will vary. When a PPP’s member organizations are comfortable with the decision making structures of the collaboration, when the decisions of the PPP are endorsed by its constituent groups, and when the PPP’s decisions are timely, governance is contributing to partnership synergy. “Through procedures that determine who is involved in partnership decision making and how partnerships make decisions and do their work, governance influences the extent to which partners’ perspectives, resources, and skills can be combined” (Lasker et al. 2001, 195).

Finally, *efficiency* is also an important partnership characteristic that can aid in realizing partnership synergy. In this context, “efficiency connotes how well [the PPP] optimizes the involvement of its partners.” Efficiency in this sense includes tailoring the
roles and responsibilities of each individual partner organization to match its particular strengths. In addition, efficient partnerships make good use of their members’ financial resources, in-kind donations, and time (Ibid.).

The last determinant of partnership synergy identified by Lasker et al is the external environment. Unlike the other determinants of partnership synergy, the external environment is something over which a PPP has little, if any independent control. Evaluations of PPPs should therefore consider the question of whether the community in which the partnership operates is open to the kind of work it does. After all, “recruiting and retaining partners…may be considerably more difficult in communities in which there is little history of cooperation and trust.” Cooperation is also challenging when there are scarce resources leading to competition over clients or when key members of the community resist partnership activity. Sometimes, too, public and organizational policy barriers will inhibit partnership synergy. For example, external partnership funding, when it is at levels adequate to accomplish partnership aims, tends to be short term in nature and grant requirements can often direct the actions of PPPs instead of the organizational mission. Performance and reporting standards imposed by different levels of government and externally-imposed promotion and tenure requirements can shift a partnership’s focus away from substantive action as well as turn away interested people and organizations from the PPP (2001, 196).
Table 5.1

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<th>Determinants of Partnership Synergy</th>
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<td><strong>Resources</strong></td>
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<td>● Skills and expertise</td>
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<td>● Information</td>
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<td>● Connections to people, organizations, groups</td>
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<td>● Convening power</td>
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<td><strong>Partner characteristics</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Relationships among partners</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Partnership characteristics</strong></td>
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<td>● Efficiency</td>
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<td><strong>External environment</strong></td>
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<td>● Community characteristics</td>
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<td>● Public and organizational policies</td>
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Criteria for Evaluation – Stages of Partnership Development

Another way of analyzing public-private partnerships used in this study comes from research on case study methodology. An examination of four distinct stages of partnership development – the start-up stage, the growth stage, the mature stage, and the institutionalized stage – reveals important insights about the effectiveness of the public-private collaboration (Yin 1993). In reviewing the start-up stage of a PPP, evaluators should ask how the partnership started – was it due to internal or external forces? In its early stages of development, did the PPP’s members engage in a strategic planning

17 Reproduced from (Lasker et al. 2001, 189).
process? Whether or not the partnership engaged in strategic planning, how did it decide on its initial programs and projects?

Sometimes public-private partnerships centered on parks are focused only on the accomplishment of one project goal. For example, PPPs often form around a desire to refurbish one particular monument in one particular park and, once the project has been completed, the PPP dissolves. Other times, however, PPPs will enter a growth stage and move beyond their initial organizational mission. In evaluating partnership performance, scholars must therefore determine whether the partnership was able to identify the resources necessary for its growth. In order to grow, PPPs formalize their partnership agreements and work to stabilize their staff resources. The growth phase requires a partnership to obtain more public support and, as such, researchers should ask whether PPP “park activities broaden the partnership’s constituency” (Ibid., 37).

If a partnership survives its growth stage, it enters the mature stage. Effective partnerships manage to serve the self-interests of their constituent organizations at the same time they push the broader agenda of the PPP. In order to justify its existence to the community within which it operates, parks partnerships need to have produced visible results for the park. This legitimizes its activities and provides evidence to the community that the park needs its PPP.

Finally, some partnerships grow beyond the mature stage and actually become an institutionalized unit of governance. Yin argues that institutionalized partnerships survive the turnover of key partners and are often marked by “resource infusion from an institutionalized source” (Ibid.). In addition, at the institutionalized stage, successful
parks partnerships are empowered to repeat their activities within the park they traditionally serve or, sometimes, in new parks. When effective PPPs expand their activities in this way key outcomes are repeated in new jurisdictions. In sum, from this perspective, a parks partnership is considered successful if it has: 1) achieved incremental successes in its early stages that broaden the partnership’s constituency; 2) survived initial staff and resource turnover to produce visible results for the park; 3) attained broad community support by successfully repeating its activities and outcomes and, in some cases, secured institutional sources of funding for its purposes and projects.

The approach to partnership evaluation taken in this study is based on the partnership synergy framework established by Lasker et al (2001) and the partnership stages approach furthered by Robert K. Yin (1993). These bases for evaluation are preferred because they incorporate the effectiveness criteria of several of the studies discussed above. For example, resource acquisition, efficiency, and goal attainment, identified by Pace et al (2000) are included in the partnership synergy framework in its consideration of the resources and partnership characteristics necessary for effectiveness. In addition, the stages approach to partnership evaluation takes into account questions of goal attainment in listing visible results for the parks in question amongst its assessment criteria.

Rockefeller’s (1986) discussion of the ingredients for successful partnering focuses on the relations between partner organizations, making the partnership synergy framework and the partnership stages approach appropriate. Similarly, the needs, process, and outcome criteria for PPP evaluation proposed by Riggin et al (1992) are reflected in
the resources and partnership characteristics determinants of partnership synergy.

Meanwhile, Yin’s partnership stages method adds in the linear element suggested by the Riggin study – partnerships develop over time, after all. Finally, Jacobson and Choi’s (2008) suggested evaluation criteria, while comprehensive, can be organized elegantly within the partnership synergy framework. Furthermore, surveying PPPs with the partnership stages method addresses Jacobson and Choi’s prescient argument that obtaining and maintaining political support is crucial to successful public-private collaboration.

Evaluating the Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area

The Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area, when viewed from an evaluative perspective based on Yin’s (1993) partnership stages method, is an example of a successful public-private partnership. Unlike many public-private partnerships, the Boston Harbor Islands Partnership has entered the institutionalized stage, with a revenue stream coming from the public sector. However, when viewed from the partnership synergy perspective, a more complex picture emerges, lending credence to Lasker et al.’s assertion that “it is likely that many partnerships do not achieve high levels of synergy” (2001, 186-187). While the Harbor Islands PPP certainly has synergistic elements, relationships among the constituent partners are sometimes strained, with some partners wielding more power than others, which inhibits the development of trust and respect between partners, in turn, inviting conflict. Additionally, despite the fact that the partnership receives a budgetary outlay from government, generating the revenue
necessary to fund the park is a difficult task, especially given the concerns some partners have about the acceptable uses of public parkland. The following section uses Yin’s approach to assess this partnership. Next, the partnership synergy framework is used to gain a fuller picture of the partnership’s successes and failures.

*Stages of Partnership Development*

**Start-up stage**

The impetus for the creation of the Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area, a national park managed and partially financed by public-private partnership, came from both internal and external forces. Given the deterioration of Boston Harbor, the lack of interest in public beaches, poor management of island resources, insufficient transportation options and dilapidated infrastructure, it was clear by the 1970s that the Harbor Islands required additional attention. The Massachusetts State Legislature moved to purchase some of the islands to conserve them as a state park, but it was not enough to bring renewed interest to the Islands. Even though community organizations and environmental advocacy groups had pushed the Commonwealth for action because the Harbor Islands “had been shrouded from public view and appreciation for generations by commercial and industrial development…and by the poor quality of Harbor water” (National Park Service 2002, 1) these internal forces were not sufficient for meaningful reform.

External forces brought attention to the problem and forced action. In 1985, Boston Harbor was recognized as the most polluted in the nation and the Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Justice sued the Commonwealth for its lack of
compliance with the 1972 Clean Water Act (Public Broadcasting Service 2008), even though Governor Dukakis and other Massachusetts policymakers were working on the issue. By the 1988 presidential race, the Harbor had captured the attention of the U.S. public, with Republican candidate George H.W. Bush admonishing Democratic candidate Michael Dukakis for failing to remediate the Harbor during his tenure as Governor of Massachusetts.

These external forces – national public attention and a federal lawsuit – ultimately led to a cleaner Boston Harbor with an extensive remediation effort continuing through the mid-1990s. Suddenly, the 34 islands dotting Boston Harbor no longer seemed so far away. Citizens and state officials interested in protecting the Boston Harbor Islands, with the help of Representative Gerry Studds (D, 5th MA), began an investigation of the islands in 1993 to determine their fitness for addition to the national park system. Ultimately, Studds and his colleague Representative Peter Torkildsen (R, 6th MA) filed legislation to create a Harbor Islands national park. Their legislation stipulated that the park was to receive $3 non-federal dollars for every $1 dollar of federal funding. The majority of the funding would be raised by a public-private partnership comprised of federal, state, and municipal government, as well as various civic groups and Native American representatives. The partnership would also be responsible for the management of the park (National Park Service 2008a; Omnibus Parks and Public Lands Management Act 1996).
The establishment of the national park and its managing PPP was not a result of formal strategic planning. Instead, the park and partnership were more the result of traditional long-range planning. According to Denhardt (1985, 175):

“Strategic planning may be differentiated from more familiar long-range planning…Traditional planning activities are concerned primarily with establishing goals or objectives for performance over a period of time, but less concerned with specific steps that should be undertaken to achieve those goals. Strategic planning, on the other hand, implies that a series of action steps will develop as part of the planning process and that these will guide activities of the organization in the immediate future. Strategic planning takes the future into account, but in such a way as to improve decisions in the present.”

The Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area’s enabling legislation carried provisos as to how the partnership should operate. The legislation established the Boston Harbor Islands Partnership, required the creation of the Advisory Council to represent diverse interests ranging from municipal governments to business to Native American groups, and charged the nonprofit Island Alliance with the task of generating private funding for the park (National Park Service 2002; Omnibus Parks and Public Lands Management Act 1996). Again, while the legislation laid out a sketch for the park’s operation and management, it did not stipulate what the Partnership ought to do in the immediate future. The result was that Island improvements were slow in coming, while the particulars of management were sorted out.

**Growth stage**

The Boston Harbor Island Partnership’s growth phase was marked by conflict and dissention, leaving many citizens to wonder when they could expect to see changes take
place at their park. One problem faced by the Partnership was in trying to secure the financial resources necessary for growth. More than a year after the official opening of the park, the Partnership found that it received “precious little money from members of Congress” and that it needed additional funding to sustain itself, not just for the year, but into the foreseeable future (Allen 1998).

Yet, partnership members remained deeply divided over how to “properly” generate revenue on the Islands. Some partners suggested placing commercial retail outlets on the islands. Rick Nolan of Boston Harbor Cruises said, “You could have a little Au Bon Pain” on the islands. Other representatives of the Partnership’s member organizations wanted the islands to remain a hodge-podge of historical and natural features where isolation reigns supreme. “We are not going to take our islands…and turn them into Route 1,” said Rick Lombardi of the Department of Environmental Management, invoking the swath of development and signage that runs along one of Massachusetts’ major highways (Ibid.).

To grow into its new role, the Boston Harbor Island Partnership also needed human resources. During its growth stage, the Island Partnership concerned itself with formalizing partnership agreements (Yin 1993), in accordance with its enabling legislation. The PPP managing the park is comprised of 13 members, four representing state agencies or authorities, two representing the city of Boston, two representing the federal government, three representing local nonprofit groups, and two representatives
In attempting to settle and stabilize its management structures and staff, the Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area encountered a new set of controversies.

One major concern arose out of the way leaders for the Partnership and its Advisory Council were chosen. Many members of the community and environmental advocacy groups long-involved with Boston Harbor and Harbor Islands matters were disappointed by the fact that the leadership for the Partnership was chosen without their input. The Island Alliance, responsible for raising private money for the Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area, along with representatives of National Park Service formed a nominating committee “that met secretly, and approved unanimously, with no public discussion,” the chair and executive director of the Partnership (Radin 1997a).

Individuals involved with the selection process thought that establishing leadership was necessary before proceeding with the formation of the Advisory Council. Meanwhile, the organizations left out of the process said they would have pushed for a shorter timeframe for the creation of the Council, had they known that leadership decisions would be made without them. Instead of strengthening itself during its growth phase by settling staff resource issues, the Island Partnership raised questions of impropriety and diversity. Furthermore, Island Alliance president Gerald Millet appeared to prefer exchanges with members of the Boston area business community and had a

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18 Please refer to chapter three for a full accounting of Island Partnership member organizations as well as the organizational make-up of the Advisory Council.
history of “nasty private exchanges with some veteran harbor advocates.” This did not do much to boost the Partnership’s – or the park’s – image (Radin 1997d).

Hence, while staff resources were stabilized, the controversies outlined above meant that securing additional public support for the Island Partnership to broaden its constituency proved difficult. Furthermore, although progress was made in terms of setting up the Harbor Islands’ innovative management scheme, “scores of questions remain: Which of the islands should be open to the public and which kept wild? What sort of public water transportation will be available at what price? While increased use of the harbor islands is desirable…it is important [to] take into account the limitations of each location” (The Boston Globe 1998).

These questions seemed to divide rather than unite the community served by the Island Partnership. Some folks wanted to place a convention center complex on the harbor front to fund the Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area. Others opposed the notion saying, “it is clear that sources of funding must be found to ensure that our new national park fulfills its vast potential, [but] a convention center is probably not the best way…such large-scale development…seems misguided at best” (Leonard III 1998). Members of the Advisory Council worried that the Island Partnership was not tapping into “potential for generating desperately needed revenue to sustain the park” (Lindberg 1998) due to the fact that many islands were still inaccessible by public transportation. Given the conflicts between the various levels of government and between public and private interests with a stake in park management, very little had changed on the Harbor Islands by December 1998.
The Partnership settled on a plan to make Spectacle Island serve as gateway to the Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area. In 1999, the Harbor Islands Discovery Center opened in the federal courthouse on Fan Pier. Member organizations of the Island Partnership began offering programs and free tours on various islands, finally producing visible results for the park (Sege 1999). However by the following summer, concerns about the fragility of the vegetation on Spectacle Island and asbestos contamination on Gallops Islands delayed the unveiling of new parks projects. John Lewis of the Sierra Club said, “It’s a public relations disaster for the national parks. People go there and expect to see [progress.] It’s counterproductive. It makes it hard to get public [support] for open spaces” (Stockman 2000).

**Mature stage**

Recall that the mature stage of partnership development is demarcated by results that serve the self-interests of PPP members at the same time that they push the broader agenda of the partnership as a whole. One of the biggest accomplishments of the Island Partnership as it entered its mature stage was the establishment of a general management plan. The General Management Plan for the Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area was not released until 2002, three years beyond what the park’s enabling legislation had required. One reason for the delay was the information-gathering process, which took four years. Additionally, since the federal government is a member of the partnership, the rules established in the 1970 National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) apply. In accordance with NEPA, the plan had to take into account concerns raised in the course of
drafting the Environmental Assessment and Environmental Impact Statement for the park.

Interestingly, the General Management Plan says “an extensive participatory process…characterized the development of [the] plan” (National Park Service 2002). Even so, at this mature stage of development, the partnership did not satisfy all the self-interests of its member organization. For example, several members of the Advisory Council, Native American groups in particular, believed that the plan never did deal adequately with the their concerns, especially the issue of preserving their histories (Boston Harbor Islands Partnership Meeting Minutes 2001).

That some groups felt their concerns went unaddressed may be due in part to the very general nature of the General Management Plan. According to the Final Environmental Impact Statement for the plan, “the approach taken here is general; the plan is not detailed, specific, or technical in nature, nor are their detailed or site-specific proposals to analyze…Public and agency review and comment did not result in substantial modifications” to the plan (National Park Service 2003).

What the General Management Plan does is designate particular “management areas” for the Islands. The Island Partnership specified the conditions that ought to exist on each Island and the reasons for maintaining them. The idea was to strike a balance between the preservation of resources – ecological, historical, or cultural resources, for example – and visitor use. Ultimately, 6 management areas19 were created

19 Management areas include: Mainland Gateways, Visitor Services and Park Facilities, Historic Preservation, Managed Landscape, Natural Features, and Special Uses.
to cover “the full range of desired conditions for the park” (National Park Service 2002, vi). In this sense, the Island Partnership worked to address the concerns of its constituent groups – some wanted commercial development, others wanted managed landscapes, and still others wanted to keep the islands as pristine as possible – while at the same time attempting to address the needs of the park holistically. Under traditional management, the Harbor Islands sat neglected and many project proposals never came to fruition. Even though project development under the management of the Island Partnership was slow, the designation of management areas facilitated discussion of appropriate uses for the islands and allowed park managers to begin taking bids for the construction of the Spectacle Island visitor center (Lewis 2002a), legitimizing the Partnership.

**Institutionalized stage**

The Boston Harbor Islands Partnership is currently in an institutionalized stage of development. Most obviously, the PPP has reached an institutionalized stage because of the fact that the park it manages receives a yearly appropriation from government sources. In fact, since 2000, the Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area has seen its public funding increase steadily. In 2000, the park received $385,000 and by 2006 it received $934,000 (National Park Service 2006). Increased funding from the National Park Service is an indication of the Island Partnership’s success because the Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area does not receive a dedicated revenue stream every year. Rather, federal funding is contingent upon the funding the Island Alliance
manages to raise from private sources – recall that the federal to non-federal funding ratio
is 1:3.

Moreover the PPP survived despite the turnover of key partners and shifts in partnership structure. In 2003, citing redundancies between the two agencies, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts folded the Metropolitan District Commission and the Department of Environmental Management into one administrative agency, the Department of Conservation and Recreation. The state named Katherine F. Abbott, then-president of the Island Alliance, to head the newly-established agency (Lewis 2003). The community of business, civic, and environmental groups that comprised the Harbor Islands’ management supported Abbott’s appointment as well as the creation of the new agency.

Not all changes were so well-supported. In 2004 some members of the Island Partnership as well as the broader Harbor Islands community were disappointed by the fact that the visitor’s center on Spectacle Island was to be delayed. The Massachusetts Turnpike Authority had used Spectacle Island as a receptacle for contaminated dirt unearthed by the Big Dig project. The Authority had created a drainage system on the island to keep polluted water from reaching Boston Harbor. Unfortunately, the problems with the system made it incapable of handling the additional wastewater coming from a busy visitor’s center (Ebbert 2004).

Spectacle Island’s unveiling as the “emerald gateway to the Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area” did not happen in 2004, nor did it happen on schedule during summer 2005. Instead, “bickering between the Department of Conservation and
Recreation and the Turnpike Authority” kept the visitor’s center there empty (Levenson 2005). In fact, it was not until a year later, in 2006, that Spectacle Island opened to the public. Still, the eventual opening of the Spectacle Island visitor’s center and park was well-received, prompting calls for similar projects on other Harbor Islands.

From the perspective of Yin’s partnership stages approach to PPP evaluation, the Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area is a success. First, the Partnership achieved incremental successes in its start-up stage that broadened the partnership’s constituency. The Partnership and its fundraising arm, the Island Alliance, secured the private funds necessary to convince federal law makers to add the Harbor Islands to the national park system. Second, the partnership persevered through conflicts between its many constituent member groups and succeeded in developing a General Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement for the park, albeit a few years late. Third, the Island Partnership survived initial staff and resource turnover to produce visible results for the park, even though disagreements between some of the agencies involved with the park delayed the opening of the Spectacle Island gateway visitor’s center. Finally, the Partnership attained broad community support by successfully getting parks programs off the ground and, in recent years, the organization has turned its attention to repeating its activities and outcomes on other islands. These results are summarized in Table 5.2 below.
Table 5.2: Stages of Partnership Development: Evaluation of the Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stages of Partnership Development</th>
<th>Start-Up Stage</th>
<th>Growth Stage</th>
<th>Mature Stage</th>
<th>Institutionalized Stage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Internal forces</td>
<td>PPP identified resources for growth</td>
<td>Partner self-interests satisfied</td>
<td>Institutionalized source of revenue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>External forces</td>
<td>Formalized agreement between partners</td>
<td>Broader partnership agenda pursued</td>
<td>PPP activities repeated in its park or other parks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strategic planning process</td>
<td>Staff resources stabilized</td>
<td>Visible results produced for the park</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+/-</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Partnership Synergy

Evaluating the Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area from the partnership synergy perspective produces a picture of the Island Partnership that indicates "success" or "effectiveness" remains elusive. While the Island Partnership and its constituent organizations have indeed accomplished goals that may have taken longer had they acted alone, the relationships among the partners are often strained. A review of the organization from this perspective reveals that barriers to synergy remain, but the possibility of achieving it down the road is not lost.

Note that a “+” indicates that the PPP has fulfilled the evaluative criterion, a “-” indicates that the PPP has not fulfilled the criterion, and a “+/−” indicates that results are mixed.
Resources

The Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area is not lacking in the area of human resources. Since the clean-up of the Harbor and even before that, the Islands had the support of advocacy organizations and well-connected individuals seeking to protect the islands. It was the Islands’ advocates that successfully pushed for the creation of the Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area. Representatives Gerry Studds and Peter Torkildsen endorsed the Harbor Islands and, using their influence, they convinced the rest of the Massachusetts congressional delegation to support adding the land to the national park system. Their work in Washington D.C. ultimately persuaded the fiscally-conservative, Republican-controlled Congress to give the effort their full backing. The individuals involved in the early development of the park possessed necessary connections to people, organizations, and groups that aided in securing protection for the Islands. Moreover, high-profile Harbor Island advocates at the local, state, and federal levels had the convening power necessary to marshal organizations with seemingly divergent missions and unite them under the national park idea.

Financial and in-kind resources flowed relatively freely to the Harbor Islands when officials were still working to add them to the national park system. Donations from Bank Boston and other Massachusetts businesses inspired the organization of the Island Alliance. The Island Alliance was so successful early-on, it managed to raise

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21 Please see chapter three for a detailed account of the various individuals and organizations that advocated for the Harbor Islands for more than 30 years.
approximately half of the funds needed for its first yearly operating budget. At the same time, state agencies like the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority and businesses like Boston law firm Hale & Dorr frequently donated their office space to serve as the site for Island Partnership and Advisory Council meetings.

Sustaining the financial resources necessary to fund the national park has proven difficult. Part of the fundraising problem has to do with the fact that there is a lot of disagreement among members of the Island Partnership as to what islands ought to be used for which purposes. Although some of the costs of park operation could be funded by the “astronomical cost of parking near Long Wharf and the $14 roundtrip ferry ticket required to...enjoy a day at the beach on Spectacle Island,” concerns over transportation equity and the ability for low-income citizens to enjoy the Islands and all they offer continue to bother many Harbor advocates (The Boston Globe 2008).

From a resources perspective, the Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area and its governing Partnership express elements of synergy. Certainly, many of the individuals and groups involved possess the information, skills, and clout necessary to publicize and legitimize park activity. However, the principal question to ask with regard to park finances has not changed since the park’s opening gala in 1997. The question “is whether funding can be sustained, not for 10 years, but forever” (Paul 1997).

Partner characteristics

Lasker et al (2001, 190) assert that “partners are the source of most partnership resources.” Their framework points to the heterogeneity and level of involvement of
partnership members as an important determinant of partnership synergy. The Boston Harbor Islands Partnership is made up of a great diversity of organizations, by design (see chapter 3), and the 28-member Advisory Council has representatives from municipalities, educational and cultural groups, environmental advocates, business and commercial interests, Boston Harbor-related advocacy organizations, Native American groups, and community organizations (National Park Service 2002, 2009a, 2009b).

The members of the Harbor Islands Partnership and the Advisory Council are actively involved with the planning and management of the Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area. For example, the Island Partnership’s members are divided into committees that work on various functional areas for the park including planning, operations, events and marketing, finance and legislation, education and programming, among others. Partners have also created subcommittees to deal with important issues such as environmental stability and educational opportunity. Advisory Council members are also actively involved, in part because all of their meetings are open to the public. As such Council members will often hold workshops or “study sessions” for the public in an effort to educate people about issues to be raised in upcoming Council meetings.

**Relationships among partners**

While the number and diversity of organizations involved with the Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area can set the stage for partnership synergy, a heterogeneous mix of committed partners is not enough. Rather, it is the ways in which partners relate to one another and involve themselves is the various aspects of park
management that can promote or restrict synergistic outcomes. As discussed earlier in this chapter, PPPs represent groups of organizations and therefore, it is the relationships among organizations that can foster an environment based on trust and respect. On the other hand, the same relationships can lead to conflict, especially if there are perceived power differentials between partner groups. This aspect of partnership synergy is where the Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area is most lacking. The Island Partnership members have had a history of conflict and distrust, with some partners feeling less respected than other partners.

The seeds of distrust amongst partner organizations were sewn early on in the Partnership’s history. Some partners believed that certain groups were being privileged in the process of forming the partnership and in determining the best uses of the Harbor Islands. For example, Native American groups resented the fact that the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA) had uncovered a number of Native American gravesites during the Deer Island sewage treatment plant construction process. MWRA officials promised to consult groups representing the descendents of American Indians sent to die on Deer Island. However, Native American representatives said they had never been told of MWRA plans to tear down the buildings under which the gravesites were found in the first place. One representative of an intertribal group said, “We don’t believe a word the MWRA says; they have changed their stories so many times…” (McKim 1997).

Another factor that strained the relationships between partners was the way in which the initial leadership of the Island Partnership was chosen. A group that was
deeply involved in the selection of the leadership for the Harbor Islands Partnership was the Island Alliance. The Island Alliance, charged with raising private funds for the park, is an organization made up of individuals representing city and state government as well as a few community groups. Most of the Island Alliance’s Board of Trustees represent corporate and business interests and many of those sitting on its Board of Directors also represent foundation, corporate, and business interests (Boston Harbor Islands Alliance 2009). Once the Island Alliance had selected its own leadership in 1997, it and Park Service officials formed a nominating committee that met in secret and appointed the chair and vice chair of the Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area. Members of community organizations said they had been misled by the Park Service and the Island Alliance, as they thought only interim leadership would be appointed until the full Partnership, including Advisory Council members, had been convened. Jodi Sugerman of Save the Harbor/Save the Bay said, “We were assured that this would be a public process and that people who have been involved for years would have a chance to be represented and considered…” (Radin 1997a).

Establishing trust between partners also proved difficult because leadership decisions were made without all interested parties. Additionally, many of the community, environmental, and Harbor advocacy groups felt that there was a lack of respect for the assets they brought to the Partnership. During the opening gala for the park, then-Island Alliance president Gerald Millet made sure to thank the large number of corporate and

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22 The Boston Harbor Island’s Board of Directors also has representatives from community, Native American, and parks advocacy groups, however, the majority of Directors come from corporate and philanthropic organizations.
business organizations that had given their financial support to the effort. Yet, he made no mention of the many other groups that “were advocating restoration of the islands long before his own group – which [Millet] claimed inspired passage of the park legislation – was conceived” (Radin 1997d).

That trust and respect were perceived to be lacking served to foster conflict between partners. A unifying specific vision for the Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area was thus hard to come by and the financial realities facing the Partnership served to exacerbate this. Boston Mayor Thomas Menino advocated dedicating one or a few islands to entertainment in the tradition of old-style amusement parks found in Europe. Environmental advocates argued that the Harbor Islands should be protected to ensure their ecological splendor would be available for future generations to enjoy. Organizations dedicated to social equity missions argued that “the only way to protect the harbor cleanup is to make sure that the public has access to the resources” made available by the Boston Harbor environmental remediation process (Radin 1997c). Even when members of the PPP agreed on uses for certain islands, they often remained conflicted over the details. The decision to make Spectacle Island the gateway to the Harbor Islands and to site a visitor’s center there is an example. During the design phase, partners disagreed as to the size and scope of the visitor facilities to be located there. Once the center was built, inter-agency conflicts delayed for years the island’s opening to the public. Certainly, one can argue that this level of disagreement is hardly unusual given the number, proximity to diverse populations, and potential appeal of the islands – politics happens.
However, conflict is problematic when, it appears to arise out of a perceived power imbalance. Such an imbalances inhibit partnership synergy because they affect the opinions partnership members have of one another and the contributions they can make to the overall effort. As the Boston Harbor Islands case study chapter indicates, early draft proposals for development of the various Harbor Islands came mostly from the Island Alliance and prominent members of the Island Partnership. Several proposals, such as plans for an on-island role for the New England aquarium, were considered prior to sending out a general request for proposals to the community-at-large. That the Island Alliance was spearheading the Harbor Islands planning process seemed wrong to some community organizations. “They have a Board of Directors, [composed of] a lot of people from business, but it’s not an alliance of organizations. It’s misleading” (Radin 1997d).

**Partnership characteristics**

The leadership, administration and management, governance, and efficiency in terms of determining member duties of a PPP can either promote or prevent synergistic outcomes. The enabling legislation for the park, its formal agreement with the public sector, specifies that the park is to be administered and managed by the Islands Partnership. The Partnership is tasked with “the development and implementation of a management plan for their islands and the national park as a whole.” According to the Partnership bylaws, leadership consists of a chair and vice chair, each elected by a majority vote of member organizations and serve terms of one year. The group meets a
minimum of four times a year on dates and times established by the PPP and member organizations must be given written notice of the meetings five days prior. In terms of voting, only voting members of the Partnership or voting alternates are entitled to cast a vote at regular or special meetings of the PPP.

The bylaws also specify that “all meetings of the Partnership and its committees shall be open to the public, except” in the case of certain closed executive sessions. Such closed sessions are permissible when the Partnership’s leadership needs to discuss the individuals serving the organization (such as in the case of an allegation of criminal misconduct), when the Partnership must consider purchasing or leasing property and any such discussion thereof may impact “the negotiating position of [a] governmental body and a person, firm or corporation,” and when the Partnership must meet to discuss compliance with a law (National Park Service 2009b).

One recent Boston Globe editorial explains that the governance structure of the park, the PPP and its Advisory Council, is part of the reason that financial stability is hard to achieve. Under the arrangement “small communities…and nonprofit groups are expected to raise funds…on par with the Park Service and the state Department of Conservation and Recreation…[However], per capita spending on parks in Massachusetts falls well below the national average…That sad fact threatens the Harbor Islands…” (The Boston Globe 2006).

The Advisory Council is tasked with making sure that park managers take into account public concerns in park planning and decision-making processes. “With membership representing several segments of the greater Boston Harbor community, the
Council is the primary mechanism used by the Partnership” to raise public concerns about the park (National Park Service 2009a). According to the 2008 Amendment Charter for the Advisory Council, “the duties of the Council are solely advisory” and the groups represented by the Advisory Council may make recommendations to the Partnership, though the Partnership may vote against the recommendations. Members of the Council serve 3-year terms and can be reappointed for one additional three year term.

Leadership of the Advisory Council is handled by the chair and vice chair, elected by the members of the organization. Council members chosen to sit on the Partnership are nominated by the Secretary of the Interior and are required to “represent the views of the whole and not just the views of the representatives. The two representatives shall report back to the Advisory Council and seek advice and counsel as to how to vote” (Ibid.). Council members are required to meet a minimum of four times per year, like the Island Partnership. Once a year, the Advisory Council holds an “annual meeting” wherein members vote on leadership and decide whether to adopt the Council’s annual report to the head of the National Park Service.

Unlike the Partnership, in terms of governance, “the Advisory Council shall at all times encourage and accept public input, opinions and participation…The Chairperson, in his or her discretion shall set an overall limit of time for public involvement” (Ibid.). In addition to the required four meetings that must take place each year, the Council may decide to hold “study sessions” for the purposes of insuring that the Council membership has a clear understanding of the issues it must contend with as a part of the Harbor

23 Emphasis added.
Islands management structure. When the time comes to make official decisions, each Council member has one vote and decisions are based on majority rule. Finally, members of the Advisory Council are often assigned to committees and sub-committees established by the Island Partnership for the purposes of being better advisors to the organization. The decisions of such committees are not required to be accepted by the Partnership.

If “efficiency connotes how well [the PPP] optimizes the involvement of its partners,” the Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area’s administration and management structure does a fairly good job (Lasker et al. 2001, 195). Citizens with connections to the corporate and business world work through the Island Alliance to garner private support for park projects. The Island Partnership has drawn on the expertise of its membership to come up with a General Management Plan that recognizes the diversity of experiences the Harbor Islands can offer and the organization has created mechanisms for debating issues and for dealing with conflict when it arises. The Advisory Council’s membership, drawn from groups that are traditionally underrepresented in development and land use decisions, functions to keep a watchful eye on Partnership activities and to make sure Partnership activities are in the best interests of the public.

That the Harbor Islands PPP achieves efficient management results may be due in part to the fact that the National Recreation Area is just that – national. The federal government, acting through the aegis of the Secretary of the Interior and the National Park Service can influence the Partnership through nominations processes and through
agency review of the park’s General Management Plan. As such, this particular example of a public-private partnership may be more prone to synergistic outcomes than PPPs that do not count the federal government amongst their members.

**External environment**

The last determinant of partnership synergy is something over which the Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area has very little control – its external environment. Two elements of the Island Partnership’s external environment enable synergistic effects. The first is the characteristics of the community that the Harbor Islands serve. Massachusetts, Boston in particular, with its wealth of colleges and universities, is no newcomer to collaborative efforts. Frequently, institutions of higher education will partner with community groups to conduct research and sometimes that research will lead to legislative action (Carman et al. 2005). Additionally, the region has seen public, private, and nonprofit groups come together in the past to work on policy issues as diverse as parks, public health, prisons, and violence against women, among others.

The second characteristic of the Islands Partnership’s external environment that enables synergistic outcomes is the public and organizational policies that structure the behavior of the PPP. For example, unlike other PPPs that rely on short-term government grants or private and foundational funding alone to finance its activities, the Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area is guaranteed to receive some amount of money from the federal government each year. Though the specific amount of money is
dependent on how much private support the Island Alliance and other Partnership member organizations can bring to the effort, the federal government always allocates money to the park each year. Moreover, the fact that the federal government spends public money on the Harbor Islands means that the PPP is subject to the same rules, regulations, and oversight that other publicly-funded programs are subject to.

While PPPs that do not receive a regular federal appropriation are less likely to keep their meetings open to the public, the Island Partnership must keep the majority of its meetings open to the public, with the exception of the situations discussed above (National Park Service 2009b). Given the purpose of the Advisory Council, as indicated in the Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area’s enabling legislation (*Omnibus Parks and Public Lands Management Act* 1996), all of its meetings are open to the public. In addition, the federal government outlined the promotion and tenure policies of the Harbor Islands PPP and its Advisory Council in an effort to encourage transparency (National Park Service 2009a, 2009b). Such regulations can help to build trust between partners from the public, private, and nonprofit sectors. While an optimistic researcher might hope that all PPPs would adhere to such requirements voluntarily, the realities of the public and organizational policies of the Harbor Islands Partnership ensure that it must. Furthermore, since the islands are out in the Harbor and not in a particular neighborhood means that the politics of managing the park can become contentious. Public and organizational polices underpinning the management of the Harbor Islands ensures that all voices are heard, if not necessarily heeded.
Hence, from the *partnership synergy* perspective, the Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area has been a mixed success thus far. The PPP possesses some synergistic elements. For example, the human resources available to it allow the partnership access to the skills and expertise necessary to evaluate each of the Harbor Islands to determine their historical, cultural, and ecological significance. Additionally, many of the individuals involved with the organization bring connections to important decision makers inside and outside of local, state, and federal government. In fact, this is what made the establishment of the park possible – members of the Massachusetts congressional delegation used their influence to convince a Republican-controlled Congress to *add to* not *subtract from* the U.S. national park system.

Still, the partnership suffers from an inability to generate a steady stream of private or foundational revenue for the Harbor Islands. Whereas some partners are willing to designate an island or two to commercial purposes, others fight such efforts tooth-and-nail. Furthermore, power imbalances between constituent members of the partnership sometimes foster feelings of distrust and can lead to conflicts that serve to stall park program efforts. Based on both the *partnership synergy* framework (results summarized in Table 5.3 below) and Yin’s partnership stages method, the story of the Boston Harbor Island National Recreation Area is one filled with both success and failure.
Table 5.3: Partnership Synergy: Evaluation of the Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resources</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Money</td>
<td>+/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-kind (space, equipment, goods)</td>
<td>+/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connections</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Endorsements &amp; convening power</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Partner characteristics</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Heterogeneity</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of involvement</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationships between partners</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict inhibits PPP synergy</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power differentials perceived</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Partnership characteristics</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leadership (formal agreement)</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration &amp; management</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governance aids PPP synergy</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Efficiency</td>
<td>+</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>External environment</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community characteristics</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public &amp; organizational policies</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Evaluating the Riverside Park Fund**

The Riverside Park Fund has had a lot of success. The PPP managed to turn a historic landmark – parkland developed by Frederick Law Olmsted between 72\textsuperscript{nd} and 129\textsuperscript{th} Streets in Manhattan – that had once been plagued by graffiti, drug use, and prostitution into a recreational jewel. While that is no small feat, it is important to note that Riverside Park’s boundaries extend northward beyond 129\textsuperscript{th} Street to 158\textsuperscript{th} Street,

24 Note that a “+” indicates that the PPP has fulfilled the evaluative criterion, a “-” indicates that the PPP has not fulfilled the criterion, and a “+/-” indicates that results are mixed.
past Harlem and into the Bronx. Progress in these areas of the park has been slower than
in the areas of parkland near the fashionable West Side. When viewed using the
partnership stages method, the successes of the Riverside Park Fund are highlighted. The
PPP has achieved a mature stage of development, having identified necessary resources
for growth and having survived turnovers in leadership. The partnership synergy
framework, however, presents a more mixed picture of the Riverside Park Fund. While
the partners that make up the Fund tend to work with one another in a functional way,
realities of the organization’s external environment and a lack of heterogeneity amongst
partners inhibits synergy. Moreover, securing resources for the non-Olmstedian areas has
proven challenging. The following section examines the Riverside Park Fund from Yin’s
partnership stages approach. Then, the PPP is assessed using the partnership synergy
framework.

Stages of Partnership Development

Start-up stage

Riverside Park Fund arose out of one neighborhood’s concern for their
deteriorating city park. Prior its founding, Riverside Park administrator Charles
McKinney “began entrusting small areas of the Park to individuals in 1981” (Project for
Public Spaces 2009). In 1986, residents living along Park Drive sat around a kitchen table
brainstorming ways to branch out their volunteer efforts to preserve the historic nature of
Riverside Park. The organization’s most recent annual report indicates the kind of
thinking that informed the partnership’s early development. Quoting Stephen R. Covey,
the Fund calls on people to “‘work on the things they can do something about…’” The report goes on to amend that perspective quoting Marion Wright Edelman saying, “‘We must not, in trying to think about how we can make a big difference, ignore the small daily differences we can make which, over time, add up to the big differences that we often cannot foresee’” (Covey and Edelman in Riverside Park Fund 2006, 1). The Riverside Park Fund thus began as a clean-up and green-up organization, handling basic maintenance that the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation could not, due to other priorities and budgetary shortfalls.

Although the impetus for starting the Riverside Park Fund came primarily from internal sources – residents living adjacent to Riverside Park wanted a safe and clean place to go for relaxation and reflection – the successes of another PPP, the Central Park Conservancy, provided some external motivation. Perhaps it is not coincidental that in the same year that the Central Park Conservancy launched its first major fundraising campaign, Campaign for the Central Park Conservancy, the Riverside Park Fund got its start (Central Park Conservancy 2008). The Fund secured grants from several foundation sources as well as donations from the many housing co-ops located on the Upper West Side. “Within its first year, the Fund had refurbished one of the Park’s twelve playgrounds, sponsored the Riverside Park Arts Festival…and started a volunteer group to help clean up the Park.” In addition, the group raised $250,000 in its first 18 months of operation (Riverside Park Fund 2009a).

Like the Island Partnership established to manage the Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area, the Riverside Park Fund did not use a strategic planning
process in deciding on its initial projects and programs. Rather, the Fund’s initial activities were directed by the perception that there were certain projects that the city Department of Parks and Recreation was simply unable to get to. As noted elsewhere in this study, by the 1980s, a scant 2,779 people made up the permanent parks workforce and only 1,500 people were available to do seasonal work (Quindlen and Goodwin 1980). Hence, the Fund directed its early efforts toward mobilizing and training volunteers to do the work that the Department of Parks and Recreation was ill-equipped to handle.

Using seed money gathered from the J.M. Kaplan Fund and from 14 housing co-ops, the Riverside Park Fund also spent much of its first year of operation getting its organizational house in order. The Fund formed a Board of Directors, hired an executive director, and established itself as a 501 (c) (3) tax exempt nonprofit organization (Riverside Park Fund 2009b). The Fund also organized a public discussion on park security between city police and Riverside Park users and initiated several restoration studies “aimed at specific Park improvements” (Anderson 1987a; Riverside Park Fund 2006, 3).

**Growth stage**

An advantage of being located near a wealthy neighborhood, is that it makes identifying resources for growth easier than it would be were the Park’s constituency drawn from poor backgrounds. In fact, during the growth stage of development, the Riverside Park Fund was made aware of the differences between park users living near the Upper West Side and park users living near Harlem and the Bronx. Even with this
realization, however, this stage of partnership development was marked by a privileging of maintenance and restoration efforts taking place in the Upper West Side sections of Riverside Park.

The Riverside Park Fund’s initial fundraisers (as well as many of its fundraisers today) were held in the homes of wealthy folks on Riverside Drive. Such events were often an odd mix of the casual activities one would associate with parks and park use and the chic lifestyles six-figure incomes can support. The organization held a black tie barbeque for 250 people one summer, an event that even drew the attention of local celebrities like retired news anchor Roger Grimsby (Dullea 1987). By fostering these kinds of connections to influential individuals, the Riverside Park Fund found itself in a position to advocate for increased spending on parks by New York City government.

As Gifford argues, “If politics is the process by which scarce public resources are allocated, a partnership soon finds itself deciding how to respond to that process” (1986, 75). According to the Fund, “one of the unsung but crucial roles [the organization] plays is advocacy with elected officials for allocations for major capital projects” (Riverside Park Fund 2009b). In looking to secure resources for growth, Riverside Park Fund worked to direct money from the 1986 Environmental Quality Bond Act which had raised $1.45 billion in public funds for public land initiatives. As a result, in the spring of 1989, Riverside Park was awarded a $300,000 grant to restore the Riverside Park Viewing Pavilion a scenic viewpoint at 122nd Street that offered views of the Hudson River (Dunlap 1989). Hence, the Fund’s earliest advocacy efforts resulted in the restoration of landmarks in the historic – and wealthy – section of the park.
A success for the group that resulted in a broadening of the Fund’s constituency was its effort to keep real estate mogul Donald Trump from going forward with his mega-development, “Television City.” Television City’s proposed location was between 59th and 72nd Streets. Early designs included constructing 7,600 residential units in high rise apartment complexes, a sprawling shopping mall, the headquarters for NBC television, and what would be the world’s tallest building (Goldberger 1990). Riverside Park Fund banded together with other organizations to oppose Trump’s plan and offered their own scaled back version of the development, about half the size of Trump’s original design. In 1991, the Fund joined with other community and neighborhood organizations and park groups to form the Riverside South Planning Corporation, alongside Trump. While partnering with Donald Trump did not prevent the development altogether, it insured that the Riverside Park Fund was consulted before plans went forward (Tierney 1991a).

Meanwhile, government revenue for park maintenance continued to dwindle during the 1990s. As such, the Riverside Park Fund worked to increase its volunteer program efforts, particularly in the historic sections of the Park. At 84th Street volunteers maintained Mount Tom and improved the Bird Sanctuary between 116th and 120th Streets as well as the Native Plant Project at 108th Street (Riverside Park Fund 2006). Additionally, the Fund assisted the Department of Parks and Recreation with the treatment of trees affected by Dutch Elm Disease. In 1993, then-vice chair Pat Sapinsley pressured city officials to dedicate a steady stream of revenue to prevent the spread of the disease (Hays 1993; Pollan 1993) with limited success.
By 1995, New York City was supporting the efforts of the Fund by allowing them to handle maintenance efforts in sections of the park adopted by their volunteers. While no memorandum of understanding was established between the city and the Riverside Park Fund, “the city grant[ed]…volunteers jurisdiction over a particular area if they sign[ed] an agreement acknowledging Parks Department authority and waiving worker's compensation…They [also had to] agree not to deny anyone access to their areas, to check all plantings with park horticulturalists and to give the agency authority over anyone they hire[d]” (Martin 1995).

At the time, Winston J. Dong, Jr., the Fund’s executive director, admitted that the volunteer activities supported by the Riverside Park Fund were most successful in the areas of the Park that abutted wealthy neighborhoods. While some moved to attribute this disparity to a lack of motivation amongst residents living in Harlem and the Bronx, then-Riverside Park Commissioner Charles McKinney confessed that he tried “to fulfill requests for things like garden mulch or fences in areas where [private volunteer] groups are active, ahead of those with no involvement” (Ibid.). This did little to change perceptions that the work of the Fund served only the affluent.

**Mature Stage**

The successes the Riverside Park Fund achieved in its growth stage expanded the group’s member base. Recognizing that the majority of its efforts were concentrated in the Olmsted-designed sections of Riverside Park, the Fund looked to expand its volunteer programs and restoration efforts to the northern sections of the Park beginning in the late
1990s. In fact, the Fund added a North Park Outreach Coordinator to its “staff to increase volunteer involvement in horticultural restoration north of 135th Street (Riverside Park Fund 2006). Jenny Benitez, a West Harlem resident who lived on Riverside Drive for more than 45 years took the North Park Coordinator posting. Along with other residents living near the historically-neglected areas of Riverside Park, Benitez successfully rehabilitated the Riverside Valley Community Garden at 138th Street. The garden, once the only bright spot in an area overrun by garbage and graffiti is now thriving.

Other Park improvements the group helped to bring about include the River Run Playground at 83rd Street and the launching of an environmental education program for school children and families. In addition, dog runs located at 87th and 105th Streets were restored by dog owners and other animal lovers who volunteered their time. Today the runs are maintained with support from the Fund. Plans for a monument to famed author and onetime Riverside Drive resident Ralph Ellison were announced in 2001 – a significant development when, at the time, there were only “three or four monuments to African-Africans in New York City” (Matloff 2001). Residents of Harlem raised $150,000 for the monument, refuting claims that residents living near the northern sections of Riverside Park lacked the will to engage in park planning and restoration efforts.

One of the most significant projects the Fund championed as it entered a mature stage of development was the addition of new riverfront parkland to the southern area of the Park. As discussed in chapter 4, the additional parkland was an important result of discussions between the Riverside Park Fund, Donald Trump, and other nonprofit
community and environmental activists. In 2002, the organization took responsibility of mapping existing sections of the Park as well as the phases of the Riverside Park South that had been completed up to that point. The project was made possible by private and foundation donations made to the Fund.

Another significant development made possible by the Riverside Park Fund was the construction of the Peter Jay Sharp Volunteer House at 107th Street. Indeed, for an organization that provides assistance to its public partner by backing volunteers, the Volunteer House was a visible recognition of the role that individual park users play in making the park a place for all citizens to enjoy. Construction on the building began in 2000 and, while the original building only had space for a very small group of people, renovations completed in 2003 had transformed it into a “hub for Riverside Park Fund’s extensive Grassroots Volunteer Program. The building is the only public facility in New York city dedicated solely to encouraging and sustaining volunteer park work” (Lee 2000; Riverside Park Fund 2009c).

The Fund’s mature phase was notable for the fact that it managed to produce visible results for Riverside Park, both inside the historic landmark area and in the historically-neglected areas near Harlem and the Bronx. The partnership organization worked to increase volunteerism and outreach efforts north of 135th Street. The Fund did so not only through scheduling events in those areas, but also by adding a staff person whose principal duty is to encourage such efforts. These endeavors aided in broadening the partnership’s community support network. They also served the self-interests of the Riverside Park Fund partners – with an annual budget of nearly $2 million the Fund
could effectively supplement the Department of Parks and Recreation’s investments in the Park. Each year, the partnership provides the Park with approximately $200,000 in donations, and sometimes more. Individual donors received recognition for their contributions each year in the Fund’s Annual Report and foundations and corporations that gave to the cause could legitimately claim to be proactive stewards of the environment, in particular public green space in urban settings (Project for Public Spaces 2009). These activities served to push the partnership’s broader agenda. However, whether the Fund successfully balanced its attention between all areas of Riverside Park to create a unifying vision – even with the addition of a North Park Outreach Coordinator – is still the subject of debate.

**Institutionalized stage?**

Although the Riverside Park Fund does not receive resource infusion from an institutionalized source, the public-private partnership – now more than 20 years old – is in an institutionalized stage of development. In 2005, the Fund’s volunteers logged “the equivalent of 915 forty-hour work weeks [and]…an established environmental education program now serves 1,500 children annually through the school program and scores of others through monthly family programs” (Riverside Park Fund 2006, 4). Early in the partnership organization’s history, Milton Norman, chairman emeritus of the Fund would “stay up nights worrying about having enough money to pay the executive director” (Whitt 2006). Meanwhile, as previously mentioned, the group has an annual budget of $2 million at present.
The Riverside Park Fund’s activities have expanded to include the northern areas of the park. However, restoration and maintenance efforts occurring above 125th Street have not yet reached parity with those occurring below it. Park areas located between 59th and 125th Streets count “among [their] highlights immaculate lawns, sand volleyball courts, a preserve for bird watching, and tennis courts and baseball and soccer fields that have been resurfaced.” This is in sharp contrast to the ball fields located between 125th and 158th Streets which are plagued by divots “so deep that they remain full of water for days after rainstorms, leading children to place sections of cardboard over them in order to play baseball” (Williams 2006). William Castro, Manhattan borough commissioner for the Department of Parks and Recreation said that differences in the socioeconomic position of citizens living in the northern and southern sections of Riverside Park did not explain the way the city handled maintenance and restoration in the park. The president of the New York City Park Advocates, Geoffrey M. Croft, disagreed with that sentiment in an earlier interview saying, “it is completely outrageous that poor communities are given this type of service when other [communities] are given adequate service” (Williams 2005).

This disparity in park maintenance is what inspired Brandy Cochrane, a long-time resident of the University Heights neighborhood in the Bronx to organize her own park friends group in 2006 (Friends of the Woods 2009). Even though the Riverside Park Fund, now a well-established PPP, has been as yet unable to bridge the gaps in volunteerism, maintenance, and restoration that exist between the northern and southern areas of Riverside Park, it has inspired the creation of similar organizations in
underserved areas. Given the recalcitrance of Parks Department leaders who have said that the northern section of the park “is safe” despite the fact that “sex and drug trades in the [Park’s] northern tier has been a problem for years,” it is unsurprising that less-affluent neighborhoods are now looking to PPPs for help (Williams 2006). So while the Riverside Park Fund’s activities have not been successfully repeated throughout all areas of Riverside Park, the fact that new partnership organizations have emerged to address issues in underprivileged neighborhoods is encouraging. Key outcomes yielded by the Fund’s efforts are being repeated elsewhere, an indication that the partnership has become an institution, if not institutionalized (Yin 1993).

From Yin’s partnership stages approach to evaluation, the Riverside Park Fund has been mostly successful (see results summarized in Table 5.4 below). Achievements of the PPP in its start-up stage allowed the organization to broaden its constituency amongst residents of the Upper West Side. Restoration of recreational facilities and community gardens in the 1980s encouraged an expansion of partnership activities. As it grew, the Fund began facilitating discussions between city officials and park users on issues ranging from public safety to public support for capital restorations. As the organization matured, volunteer activities were expanded so as to supplement the limited staff resources of the Department of Parks and Recreation. Construction of the Peter Jay Sharp Volunteer House was the ultimate expression of the Riverside Park Fund’s commitment to volunteerism. Although its efforts to make Riverside Park a safe place for residents to relax are not evenly distributed throughout the Park’s 330 acres, its activities have inspired the creation of similar friends groups in underserved sections of the Park
and elsewhere. The Fund has survived leadership changes and resource turnover and remains financially solvent even in lean economic times. Yet, the Riverside Park Fund remains a grassroots organization at heart (Whitt 2006).

| Table 5.4: Stages of Partnership Development: Evaluation of the Riverside Park Fund
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Start-Up Stage</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Internal forces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• External forces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Strategic planning process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Growth Stage</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• PPP identified resources for growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Formalized agreement between partners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Staff resources stabilized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Activities broadened PPP’s constituency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mature Stage</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Partner self-interests satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Broader partnership agenda pursued</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Visible results produced for the park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Institutionalized Stage</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Institutionalized source of revenue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• PPP activities repeated in its park or other parks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Partnership Synergy*

When viewed from the *partnership synergy* perspective suggested by Lasker et al (2001), the strengths of the Riverside Park Fund are tempered by its weaknesses. The organization benefits from its individual donors’ and members’ affluent backgrounds. Still, that characteristic is not shared by all people who make use of Riverside Park.

25 Note that a “+” indicates that the PPP has fulfilled the evaluative criterion, a “-” indicates that the PPP has not fulfilled the criterion, and a “+/−” indicates that results are mixed.
Moreover, the fact that the Fund’s public sector partner, the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation, prioritizes maintenance in areas of the park that have active volunteer involvement, tends to sew the seeds of distrust between communities sharing a public resource. In recent years, the Riverside Park Fund has made a concerted effort to address these disparities however the fact that they persist serves to stall synergistic outcomes in the meantime.

**Resources**

The majority of the financial resources that the Riverside Park Fund receives are from individuals. Individual donations make up about 47 percent of the Fund’s budget while the donations of corporations, foundations, nonprofit organizations, and local business groups make up 36 percent. Many of the Fund’s corporate donations come from the group’s matching gifts programs where companies like American Express and others will match the donations made by their employees. Fundraisers contribute 14 percent of all income and the remaining 3 percent is earned through investment dividends and interest (Riverside Park Fund 2006). In 1987, the Riverside Park Fund raised $250,000. By 2001, the organization had a budget of approximately $1,750,000. Its budget peaked at $2 million in 2005 but by 2006, the date of the Riverside Park Fund’s most recently published report, the Fund’s budget had dropped back down to 2001 levels.

James B. Rogers, the host of the Riverside Park Fund’s first fundraising event, remarked that the financial resources provided by the Fund’s Upper West Side members would be an asset to the Park. “The Fund has enormous potential as a source of money
and as an advocate. There’s nothing like having your own money to make people listen to you” (Anderson 1987a). However, the Riverside Park Fund is an organization that can marshal more than mere monetary resources. The Fund also benefits from a wealth of human resources that can aid in achieving its goals. The Upper West Side is home to professors working at Columbia University, New York University, and other Manhattan colleges and universities. Such individuals bring knowledge of ecology, horticulture, art and art history, social science and other disciplines to bear on Fund activities. Additionally, famous residents of the neighborhood bring both publicity and money to Riverside Park. Bette Midler, for example, pays a 10-person crew to pick up trash near her 83rd Street apartment (Martin 1995). Furthermore, the Fund’s corps of volunteers have dedicated hundreds of hours of time weeding, planting, scrubbing graffiti, and removing trash.

Some of the Riverside Park Fund’s members are plugged into wider New York City networks, as well. Chairman Emeritus Milton Norman, for example, brings years of park advocacy work to the Fund. He is connected to other important park advocates, like the Project for Public Spaces and the Parks Council. Meanwhile, the late Linda Davidoff, a longtime parks activist who worked with the Riverside Park Fund through her work with the Parks Council, was a former classmate of Manhattan Borough President Ruth W. Messinger who helped the Fund fight Donald Trump’s “Television City” mega-development. Hence, members’ connections to people, organizations, and city networks lends legitimacy to the partnership and can bring together the people and groups
necessary to attain the goals set by the Riverside Park Fund (New York City Department of Parks and Recreation 2004).

**Partner characteristics**

Unlike the Harbor Islands Partnership, the Riverside Park Fund does not boast a heterogeneous mix of partners. The chair of the group’s Board of Directors Robert L. Weigel, for example, is an attorney with New York Law Firm Gibson Dunn & Crutcher. Treasurer Ray E. Newton, III is the Senior Managing Director of the Private Equity Group. Meanwhile, many of the Board’s regular members work within the finance industry. David H. Glaser, for example, recently became a top-paid executive at Bank of America Merrill Lynch after sitting at the helm of Bear Stearns (Financial News Online 2009). Other board members are drawn from law firms, investment firms, and philanthropic organizations and the majority live on the Upper West Side.

Also on the Fund’s Board of Directors in an *ex-officio* capacity is Adrian Benepe, the current Commissioner for the Department of Parks and Recreation, William T. Castro, the Manhattan Borough Parks Commissioner, John F. Herrold, the Riverside Park Administrator, and Scott Stringer, the current Manhattan Borough President. Commissioner Benepe has a long history of service to New York City parks, starting as a seasonal helper as a teenager, moving on to become a park ranger in Central Park, then becoming involved with nonprofit work to raise private funds for parks and historic landmarks. Commissioner Castro has a similar background, having worked for the Parks Department in various capacities for more than 20 years. John F. Herrold took over as
Riverside Park Administrator after serving as administrator of Van Cortlandt Park, New York City’s fourth-largest park. Scott Stringer was a New York Assemblyman from 1993-2005 before becoming the current Manhattan Borough President (New York City Department of Parks and Recreation 2009; Riverside Park Fund 2009a).

Volunteers, unlike the Fund’s Board of Directors and even its staff, come from a more diverse set of backgrounds and are actively involved on the operational frontlines of park projects and programs. In fact, in response to perceptions that the Riverside Park Fund is not a particularly diverse organization, the partnership added a North Park Outreach Coordinator to the staff, Jenny Benitez, to increase volunteer activism in the northern areas of Riverside Park. Ms. Benitez is one of the only residents of Harlem serving the Fund in an official capacity (Riverside Park Fund 2006; Whitt 2006).

The Riverside Park Fund’s partners are actively involved with the partnership organization, particularly the organization’s corps of volunteers. Individual volunteers may take on a variety of roles within the park. “ParkTenders,” for example, make a commitment to care for a section of the park on a regular basis. “PlacePartners” are individuals that also make a commitment to care for a particular area of the Park, but who are unable to volunteer regularly. The PlacePartner program allows such folks to assist ParkTenders or other volunteer groups when their schedules permit. “ParkRovers,” as the name implies, rove around Riverside Park and commit to volunteering in whichever areas need work (Riverside Park Fund 2009c).

Partners to the Riverside Park Fund are also actively involved with fundraising. For example, the Fund’s FastForward campaign is a program in which every dollar
donated is matched by the Fund’s Board of Directors. Additionally, the organization encourages its members to sponsor a park bench and to adopt trees, an effort that not only raises money for Riverside Park in the long term but also allows for beautification in the short term (Ibid.).

For the Riverside Park Fund, grassroots volunteers set the stage for synergistic outcomes. However, a lack of diversity among the partnership’s Board of Directors, staff, and funders impedes the ability of the organization to aid in the delivery of uniform park services in all areas of Riverside Park.

**Relationships among partners**

The relationships among Riverside Park Fund’s partners are generally functional, but sometimes strained. The Department of Parks and Recreation remains the major source of revenue for Riverside Park – the Park has an operating budget of $1 million per year and a capital budget of $1.5 million per year (Project for Public Spaces 2009). Even so, the Parks Department has slashed the number of full-time park workers it pays to conduct maintenance and other routine projects in Riverside Park. In a 1998 letter-to-the-editor, the chair of the Riverside Park Fund’s Board of Directors, Milton Norman (now chair emeritus) wrote that partnerships between government and private organizations such as his were becoming “strained…because the private arm is continually asked to lift more of the load. Increased city funding for our parks is essential to encourage both volunteers and financial supporters” (Norman 1998). In other words, the Riverside Park
Fund and similar PPPs for New York City parks have become less confident that the city will “follow through on their responsibilities and obligations” (Lasker et al. 2001, 192).

Reporting in city newspapers has not stemmed this lack of confidence. In a 2008 investigation, The New York Post commented on the declining public revenue allocated to city parks and the lack of sufficient personnel to maintain them (Calder 2008). This has fostered a lack of trust between Riverside Park Fund partners. While it is relatively easy to raise revenue for capital projects, like the restoration of the Warsaw Ghetto Memorial (Siegal 1999), securing funding for routine maintenance and park programming is more difficult. Although the cornerstone of the Fund’s activities include doling out sections of the park to interested and committed volunteers, such a strategy may not be sustainable for all of the city’s parks because “with a patchwork quilt approach to maintenance, you could carve the whole park into special interest features” (Martin 1995).

A lack of trust between the public and private partners of the Riverside Park Fund has encouraged conflict. Such conflicts are exacerbated when the Parks Commissioner Adrian Benepe is quoted as saying that some of the parkland the city owns is not conducive to maintenance and that to attempt to maintain them “would be a waste of money” (Williams 2005). A chief conflict has to do with the differential levels of attention that New York City parks officials pay to the northern and southern sections of parkland, respectively. While private volunteers working with the assistance of the Riverside Park Fund can maintain the areas they have adopted, it is “the department which decides how often horticulturalists visit and what capital projects to pursue” (Ibid.). According to the Post, “the city virtually abandons many of its parks and lets
others fall apart until they're so rundown that funds can legally be borrowed through the capital budget to fix them.” While this strategy does not foster respect amongst the Fund’s partners and park users, it is a politically savvy move, considering the fact that in typical cases, using capital spending for the purposes of general maintenance is illegal (Calder 2008).

That the northern section of Riverside Park is less well cared for than the sections near the Upper West Side may be due in part to a power imbalance between partners. The Fund’s private donors generally come from wealthy backgrounds and have the resources to spend on projects that deliver visible results to areas near their homes. Meanwhile, the cash-strapped Parks Department tends to fulfill request for supplies in areas where volunteer groups are already active before doing the same in areas where volunteerism is lower. The policy is meant to be “positive reinforcement” for citizens “who help themselves” (Martin 1995). This leaves people living near sections of Riverside Park that run from 125th Street to 158th Street to suffer the consequences. The southern “area of the park has been neglected for decades – not weeks, not months, not years – decades” (Williams 2006).

**Partnership characteristics**

Strained partner relationships may be explained in part by the characteristics of the Riverside Park Fund partnership. The leadership of the organization, its administration and management, its governance, and its efficiency (or lack thereof) in optimizing the contributions of its partners produces outcomes that are sometimes
anything but synergistic. Particularly concerning from a partnership synergy perspective is the Riverside Park Fund’s leadership structure. Lasker et al explain that synergistic PPPs have “boundary-spanning leaders who understand and appreciate partners’ different perspectives [and who] can bridge their diverse cultures” (2001, 193).

With few exceptions, the Board of Directors and staff of the partnership organization are white, wealthy, and, in cases where their positions are part-time, have day jobs in the private sector – usually in finance and law, but some also work in higher education and in development. In fact, perceptions that the Riverside Park Fund was most focused on providing support for parks projects and programs in the southern section of the park near wealthy neighborhoods led to the creation of a North Park Outreach Coordinator position in the late 1990s. However, it should be noted that the coordinator position is unpaid (Riverside Park Fund 2009c).

In terms of the partnership’s administration and management, as discussed in chapter 4, the Riverside Park Fund is recognized as tax exempt nonprofit organization under section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Service Code (Riverside Park Fund 2009b) and therefore, all donations made to the Fund are tax deductible. The organization has no formal agreement or memorandum of understanding with the City of New York (Project for Public Spaces 2009). However, because city employees cannot engage in lobbying activities, the Riverside Park Fund pressures public officials to remain engaged with city parks in an effort to prevent future budget cuts.

Aside from organizing all volunteers and accepting donations for various park projects, the Riverside Park Fund produces free educational programs for children and for
K-12 teachers. The Fund also counts acting as a catalyst for other neighborhood park friends groups as part of its organizational mission. Additionally, the Fund underwrites the cost of seasonal park staff from playground attendants to professional gardeners (Riverside Park Fund 2006). The organization produces all of Riverside Park’s publications and puts together many of the special events that not only draw people to the park, but that also act as fundraisers for the Fund’s support activities.

The Riverside Park Fund’s governance structure consists of a staff and of a Board of Directors. Staff members handle the day-to-day operations of the Fund. The Board of Directors for the Fund is responsible for providing it with direction and advice. It also keeps the organization focused on its mission statement and therefore carries a lot of weight in setting organizational policy. The number of board members, not including leadership positions, tends to vary – in 2006, there were 16 people with board positions, in 2009 there are 17 (Riverside Park Fund 2009c)26.

The Riverside Park Fund does a moderate job of optimizing the involvement of its partners. Given the differences in the commitment the Parks Department has made to the southern tier of the park versus the northern tier, the Fund could push harder for parity. While the Parks Department is “constrained by and allied to the city’s priorities,” partnership organizations like the Riverside Park Fund have the freedom to push for funding increases for basic maintenance (Madden 2000). What is more, the fact that the Manhattan Borough Administrator for the Parks Department, William T. Castro, sits on the Fund’s Board of Directors in an ex-officio capacity belies Castro’s insistence in a

26 Please see chapter 4 for a detailed discussion of staff and board positions.
2006 interview that he was “unaware of many of the trash and maintenance problems at the northern end of the park” (Williams 2006). If, in fact, Castro was truly unaware of those issues, that speaks to a problem with the Riverside Park Fund. The Fund’s mission is to “preserve and improve New York’s historic waterfront green space…[and] provide recreation and relaxation for a uniquely diverse population” (Riverside Park Fund 2009c). Thus, an organization that cannot communicate park problems to its public partner to optimize its involvement, has not achieved partnership synergy.

**External environment**

The external environment in which the Riverside Park Fund operates tends to inhibit partnership synergy. Lasker et al (2001, 196) argue that attaining partnership synergy is difficult when “there is little history of cooperation and trust” amongst community members. The Riverside Park community has had a history of division along socioeconomic lines. A 1980 investigative report on the state of New York City parks found that middle class residents of the city were “increasingly seeking recreation outside the city limits, and the poor complain that because the parks have increasingly become their oases, the parks are no longer taken care of” (Quindlen and Goodwin 1980).

Observations that parks in poor communities were receiving less attention than parks in affluent communities were confirmed for some residents when Central Park was targeted for “an ambitious rehabilitation effort” by the city. Moreover, the majority of private gifts given to the Department of Parks and Recreation at the time of the report were earmarked for Central Park. Given this, many young people growing up in
neighborhoods with poorly-maintained parks said they “have known the parks only as disreputable gathering spots and see no reason to protect or preserve them” (Quindlen and Goodwin 1980).

Deplorable conditions at some parks were not the only source of conflict between neighborhoods around New York City. Racial tensions also fostered schisms within the community. Addressing the 1986 Howard Beach case, in which three black men were brutally beaten by a mob of white people, Representative Charles B. Rangel wrote:

“The message is that Howard Beach reflects larger problems in the city as a whole. The frustration, anger and desperation felt by New York’s urban underclass is very real and not to be taken lightly...We still have a widening chasm between the haves and have-nots, most often racially defined. Put simply, New York City is in the midst of a social crisis. This crisis, which some of us choose to tune out, is the sense of hopelessness and helplessness of those perched at the lower end of the ladder” (Rangel 1987).

This apparent lack of trust is exacerbated by resource scarcity. As mentioned (Calder 2008), “the city-funded portion of the Parks Department's budget is about half of 1 percent of the city's entire $59 billion budget.” Moreover, city parks near affluent neighborhoods with active friends groups tend to receive first consideration by the Parks Department maintenance crews, which helps to explain the stark differences between the northern and southern tiers of Riverside Park. Riverside Park Fund, if it truly advocates for the entire park, must work to address this disparity in order to achieve partnership synergy. After all, synergistic outcomes are difficult to attain when tensions within the community run high.
A final characteristic of the external environment in which the Riverside Park Fund operates that limits partnership synergy is the public and organizational policies that direct it. For example, individual funders and foundations often attach stipulations to their donations as a condition of receipt. As Trager discusses in his case study of the Fund’s failed 2002 rehabilitation of the Soldiers’ & Sailors’ Plaza, the requirements an anonymous donor attached to his contribution were stringent. The donor’s plan “was elegant but practical and corresponded to some of the recent plaza work installed in Central Park. [Yet] the donor made it clear that he would not maintain his commitment to the project if the design were modified significantly” (2004, 3).

The Landmarks Preservation Commission, a group charged with determining whether such renovations are appropriate for historic monuments like the Soldiers’ and Sailors’ Plaza did not approve of the anonymous donor’s design. As a result, in the summer of 2002, the donor withdrew his support for the renovation and “by September, the project was withdrawn by the Parks [Department] and the Riverside Park Fund…and formally abandoned” (Trager 2004, 4). Hence, by virtue of the rules set by its donors, the Riverside Park Fund’s actions are sometimes guided by motives other than its organizational mission.

Public policies also serve to shape the actions of the Riverside Park Fund. Unlike the Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area and the partnership that manages it, the Riverside Park Fund receives no dedicated or regular stream of federal funding. Therefore, rules governing the oversight of public expenditures do not apply to the Fund. Furthermore, the fact that the Riverside Park Fund does not have a memorandum of
understanding or other, similar formal agreement with the city means that the partnership’s public partner exerts less influence. Hence, the Riverside Park Fund is not required to keep meetings of its staff or its Board of Directors open to the public. Open meetings allow the public to see what goes on inside the organizational black box, fostering trust. With no such rules in place for the Riverside Park Fund, coupled with a poor record of maintenance in the northern tier (Williams 2006), it is unsurprising that many view the organization as only serving the affluent southern section of Riverside Park.

From a partnership synergy perspective, then, the Riverside Park Fund has not been particularly effective (see results summarized in Table 5.5 below). Certainly, the PPP has synergistic elements (e.g., monetary and human resources). Unfortunately, while the northern tier of the park has residents willing to donate their time to the Fund’s efforts, they do not necessarily have the money to give that residents living near the southern tier do. Still, the Riverside Park Fund’s staff and Board of Directors are well-connected, allowing the PPP to call upon other organizations dedicated to parks and green space for guidance. Also, since the Fund’s Board of Directors work in highly lucrative jobs in finance, law, and development, the group is plugged in to a network of potential donors.

Relationships between the PPP’s public and private sector partners are strained. The fact that the Department of Parks and Recreation continues to cut the number of full-time workers available to conduct basic maintenance is interpreted by the Riverside Park Fund as a lessening of the public sector commitment. Given that money is more easily
raised for capital projects and major renovations, it is difficult for the Fund’s private
donors to make up the difference. Moreover, even with a dedicated corps of volunteers, it
is hard to substitute privately the work of a public Parks Department. All this, coupled the
fact that the PPP’s management and administration structure does not always optimize
the contributions of the Fund’s partners, adds to the existing social divisions present in
the organization’s external environment.

In a city with a tradition of distrust between racial groups and with a widening
gap between the rich and the poor, it is important that an organization like the Riverside
Park Fund work aggressively to break down such barriers. By holding its public sector
partner accountable in terms of its commitment to all areas of Riverside Park, the Fund
could achieve synergy. Hence, when viewed from Yin’s partnership stages approach, the
Riverside Park Fund’s successes are underscored, producing a generally positive
evaluation of the PPP. Yet, the partnership synergy framework highlights important
problems with the Fund that inhibit its ability to improve one of New York City’s most
treasured parks.
Table 5.5: Partnership Synergy: Evaluation of the Riverside Park Fund

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resources</th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Money</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• In-kind (space, equipment, goods)</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Information</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Connections</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Endorsements &amp; convening power</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Partner characteristics</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Heterogeneity</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Level of involvement</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationships between partners</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Trust</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Respect</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Conflict inhibits PPP synergy</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Power differentials perceived</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Partnership characteristics</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Leadership (formal agreement)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Administration &amp; management</td>
<td>+/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Governance aids PPP synergy</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Efficiency</td>
<td>+/-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>External environment</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Community characteristics</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Public &amp; organizational policies</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conclusion

When viewed from the stages of partnership development evaluative approach (Tables 5.2 and 5.4), both the Boston Harbor Islands Partnership and the Riverside Park Fund have been successful experiments in public-private partnership. Internal forces were crucial to the start-up of each partnership organization. The two cases differ in that the

27 Note that a “+” indicates that the PPP has fulfilled the evaluative criterion, a “-” indicates that the PPP has not fulfilled the criterion, and a “+/-” indicates that results are mixed.
Boston Harbor Islands received quite a lot of external attention due to the poor condition of Boston Harbor, which had been a campaign issue in the 1988 presidential race. By contrast, the Riverside Park Fund’s start-up stage was spurred-on for the most part by residents of the Upper West Side. Still, the fact that the Central Park Conservancy had already built up a record of success as a public-private partnership provided some external motivation for starting the Riverside Park Fund. Neither partnership organization employed a strategic planning process in its start-up stage.

Each organization’s growth stage was marked by a mix of success and failure. One of the Island Partnership’s biggest challenges was identifying resources for growth. Whereas the Riverside Park Fund was successful in this endeavor – the Fund’s membership was drawn largely from wealthy neighborhoods and its staff and Board of Directors were well-connected – the Island Partnership had a difficult time determining the best way to sustain revenue for its future. Some of this difficulty can be explained by the fact that the Island Partnership had a formalized – and legally binding – agreement between partners. Meanwhile, the Fund’s agreement with its public sector partner was formalized only to the extent that volunteers tending to certain areas of Riverside Park could not purposefully keep anyone out.

Both partnerships settled their staff resources. However, the Harbor Island’s leadership was chosen without the input of community organizations, which, in turn, did little to broaden the PPP’s constituency. Furthermore, the fact that the Island Partnership had a difficult time securing resources for growth meant that many of the programs and projects anticipated for on the islands were slow in coming. The Riverside Park Fund, on
the other hand managed to broaden its constituency – at least amongst residents of the Upper West Side. However, the majority of the Fund’s activities were concentrated in the southern tier of Riverside Park, raising equity issues.

Each PPP was effective enough to reach a mature stage of development. Both cases produced visible results for their parks. Additionally, both partnership organizations managed to satisfy the self-interests of their constituent organizations. Though, it should be noted that some members of the Harbor Islands Advisory Council felt that the Boston Harbor Islands national park was not being used properly from a historical, cultural, and ecological perspective. The Riverside Park Fund, in terms of pursuing its broader partnership agenda was less effective than the Island Partnership. The Fund was organized around Riverside Park, a 330-acre resource, yet the majority of its activities target only the southern area of the park and the northern tier of the park remains neglected and in disrepair in certain areas.

The Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area receives revenue from the federal government each year. The Riverside Park Fund does not collect money from an institutional source. Still, both case study partnerships have extended their activities within the park they serve. The Riverside Park Fund has inspired the creation of other parks partnerships. In particular, communities that have been historically underserved by both the public and private sectors have are coming together to create their own PPPs.

When viewed from the partnership synergy framework (Tables 5.3 and 5.5) each PPP is successful in some respects and unsuccessful in others. Early on, both partnership organizations garnered the funding necessary to get off the ground. Both the Island
Partnership and the Riverside Park Fund also had the human resources necessary to carry out their purposes. Each organization has access to well-connected individuals with the ability to lend the PPPs credibility. In addition, both PPPs’ constituent groups are heavily involved with the partnership’s programs and projects. The organizations differ in terms of their ability to sustain resources into the future, with the Island Partnership faring slightly worse than the Riverside Park Fund. Additionally, the Island Partnership’s partners are more heterogeneous than the Riverside Park Fund’s. In the case of the former, this is by design. Since the Island Partnership receives money from the federal government each year, it is required to engage a diverse set of partners in an effort to ensure that many voices are represented by the PPP.

Relationships between the partner organizations in each case study PPP are strained. Trust and respect are lacking and conflict tends to impede synergistic outcomes. Conflict tends to be a barrier to partnership functioning rather than a vehicle for exploring competing visions for the parks being served. This conflict arises out of perceived power imbalances between the member organizations of the partnerships, with wealthy and well-connected interests seen as taking precedence over less-affluent ones. The partnership characteristics of each PPP and the external environment in which each case study organization operates tend to either promote or impede partnership synergy.

Leadership of the Harbor Islands Partnership is diverse, while that of the Riverside Park Fund is homogenous. With regard to the former, even when partnership outcomes are not to the liking of all park users, the leadership structure of the PPP ensures that most interested voices are heard. Meanwhile the fact that the Riverside Park Fund does not
have a formal memorandum of understanding with its public sector partner inhibits the ability of the PPP to make efficient use of its partners’ strengths. The Island Partnership on the other hand was created by an act of Congress and, while the PPP makes good use of its partners, rules of governance keep only some meetings open to the public. While meetings of the Riverside Park Fund’s staff and Board of Directors are never open to the public, the organization was not created by the federal legislature, so expectations for governance are different.
Chapter 6

Conclusion

The major aim of this study was to discover the conditions under which public-private partnerships for public land, public parks in particular, are effective in aiding in the provision of public recreation opportunities. I hypothesized that PPPs result in an enhanced capacity to maintain public land and its associated facilities but, due to the diversity of interests that managers of public land must accommodate, the needs of some subsets of the “public interest” are elevated above others. The two case studies presented in the dissertation support the hypothesis.

In the case of the Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area and the Island Partnership that manages it, frequently, the voices of community activists, environmental organizations, and Native American groups were left out of the planning process. In addition, the PPP sowed the seeds of distrust when members of the business community and government set about choosing initial leaders for the Partnership without first appointing the Advisory Council, the group that was to represent traditionally marginalized groups.

In the case of the Riverside Park Fund, many communities that make use of Riverside Park argue that the PPP serves the interests of wealthy neighborhoods first, often to the detriment to poorer neighborhoods. The majority of parks projects undertaken by the Riverside Park Fund are located in the wealthy Upper West Side neighborhood. Only recently has the PPP made an organizational commitment to the poorer north side of the park by hiring a North Park Outreach Coordinator.
Facing the realities of declining public revenue and increased demand for services, governments have turned to public-private partnerships to aid in service provision. The historic separation of the public and private sectors has given way to public-private cooperation. Public parks, a collective good, are no exception. Differences in the ways in which the public and private sectors operate are a matter of concern for some scholars and practitioners, especially when the private sector is asked to play a larger role in the provision of a collective good. This dissertation has shown that these concerns have merit but even so, public-private collaboration can produce successful park management outcomes.

Review of the Dissertation

Chapter 1 provides a review of the political science literature as it relates to this study of public-private partnerships in the management of public parks. The provision and maintenance of public parks is a service that communities expect, despite the fact that providing them is costly. Even as administrative and maintenance costs rise, citizen demand for quality parks remains. The question of what the proper role of the public sector is in providing such a service becomes more prescient as increasingly budget-conscious governments begin to look to the private sector for assistance with service provision.

Mancur Olson (1965) argued that collective action requires some kind of coercive force to compel rational, self-interested individuals to rise above their own particular needs and desires to act in the interest of society as a whole. Garrett Hardin extended this
analysis to parks and other public lands. Without rules or some other institution
governing the commons, individuals are free to exploit such lands without having to
shoulder the costs incurred from such treatment of the land. Eventually, lands where
unfettered usage prevailed “will be of no value to anyone” (1968, 1245).

Whether such coercive forces need come from the public sector or the private
sector is also subject to debate. A common critique of government is that it is inefficient.
In ensuring that the distribution of resources, services, and benefits is equitable,
efficiency suffers. A policy of equity requires a bureaucracy to administer it. Such a
bureaucracy, according to critics of government is a waste of resources that could be
better applied elsewhere. Furthermore, the pathologies of government bureaucracies, such
as the “use it or lose it” mentality, may serve to protect the bureaucrat, but it also drives
up budget deficits. Critics of government service provision argue that moving more
goods and services into the hands of the private sector will lead to budget savings

The private sector is not without its critics. When a private firm makes a bid for a
government contract, some scholars argue that the firm may submit a bid at an amount
lower than the actual cost of the contract. Governments looking for ways to save money
will give the contract to the lowest bidder then, when a community becomes dependent
on the private firm for a good or service, the firm will raise prices in order to recover
their initial losses. Citizens without the ability to pay for the service are forced to go
without (Poole Jr. and Fixler Jr. 1987a). Corrupt practices, such as price-fixing,
kickbacks, bid-rigging, etc. are other potential effects of moving more service provision
into the hands of the private sector. As Moe demonstrated, “the stakes for private parties are often high, and they may be willing to go to the edge of the law” in working toward their goals (1987, 458).

These and other criticisms may suggest that a better way to manage and administer services like public parks is to combine the efforts of both the public and private sectors. Government managers have increasingly turned to public-private partnerships since President Carter first used them as a policy tool in the 1970s. Such arrangements theoretically allow public administrators to provide goods and services to citizens without requiring a substantial increase in spending or taxation. Public park managers in Boston, New York City, and other U.S. communities have formed PPPs to leverage public budgets with private dollars. Although many of these experiments in public-private partnering have been successful in garnering adequate funding for the maintenance of existing parks and even the construction of new parks, some critics of PPPs are not satisfied. Some PPPs for public parks employ such tactics as “clean-up and green-up” projects in which a park’s public sector administrators will allow a private sector group to adopt a section of parkland and take on the financial responsibility of maintaining it. However, “the very appearance of [the public sector] buying and selling undermines the claim of the state to be acting impartially on behalf of the entire community – and, indeed…the practice of buying and selling may undermine the capacity for disinterested judgment” as it pertains to the appropriate use of parks and other public lands (Starr 1987, 133).
Chapter 2 offers an overview of the literature on public-private partnerships. In addition to giving a brief history of the development of PPPs as a valuable policy tool, the chapter also investigates the various ways of categorizing PPPs. U.S. history is replete with examples of public-private cooperation. From almshouses and museums to prisons and economic development corporations to health care networks and public parks, public-private cooperation has existed in various forms for a long while. Even so, it was not until the 1970s and 1980s that PPPs were considered a serious alternative to traditional government funding and administration.

The Reagan Presidency and the New Federalism, in particular, laid the groundwork for the increased use of PPPs at the state and local level. In a major shift, the Reagan administration consolidated many categorical grants-in-aid into several block grant programs. Additionally, the federal government reduced aid to state and local governments overall and committed to multiyear tax cuts. The effect of this effort was increased pressure on lower levels of government to maintain funding for goods and services, despite the reduction in the federal government’s financial commitment.

A phenomenon occurring in tandem with the New Federalism was a decrease in public confidence in the federal government. Public opinion data at the time suggested that many Americans thought that government imposed too many taxes and that government regulation was excessive. These data showed that the percentage of Americans who believed that government wastes tax dollars increased from 48 percent in 1964 to 79 percent in 1978 (Haider 1983, 171). Thus the idea that the federal government was usurping the powers of the duly-elected governments closest to the people (e.g., state
and local governments) soon became another fundamental tenet of the New Federalism (Musselwhite Jr. 1986). This left state and local governments searching for alternative means for providing their citizens with goods and services. One option available to these governments was to turn to the private sector. Instead of turning all goods and services over to the private sector wholesale, many public administrators began to explore the potential of public-private partnerships.

PPPs take on a variety of forms and have several definitions. Based on the longer discussion put forward in chapter 2, public-private partnerships are defined in this study as long-term collaborative organizations composed of at least one public partner and one private partner. The risks and rewards of collaboration are shared, though not always equally. The recent proliferation of PPPs is due in part to the shrinking role of the federal government in domestic affairs, changing attitudes about the role of government and the legitimacy of taxation, and a renewed belief in local government. The reliance on these forms of governance raises important issues regarding accountability to the public. In PPP scenarios, government must make certain that both public and private partners are answerable to the public, the ultimate authority in a democratic society. “Thus, a government that contracts with a corporation…should be held responsible for the consequences resulting from such contracts” (Minow 2003, 1260). That is not to say that governments should eschew PPPs and other public-private collaborations altogether. Instead, such arrangements should be taken on with the understanding that decisions affecting the collective require openness and debate.
Chapter 3 is a case study of the Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area. In the face of declining revenue, federal officials, state officials and municipalities, together with community groups and businesses, formed a partnership for managing and funding what many hope will become the crown jewel of Boston Harbor. Collaborative intergovernmental relations certainly do exist in the case of the Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area, but that does not mean that interactions between partners are not contentious. The early planning stages were spent debating suitable uses for the new national park. Even when partners agreed on a use for a particular island, the extent of use is often cause for argument. As noted, the Harbor Islands have been home to many things and many people – from the Native Americans exiled and massacred there to the Irish immigrants forcibly quarantined, from the Thompson Island Outward Bound Education Center to the Boston Police Department’s shooting range – and making sure those people and organizations have their histories represented and concerns responded to is an on-going challenge.

The Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area is an example of the dispersion and diffusion of authority other students of public administration have observed (White 1989). The federal government has expanded the parks system, but has passed management responsibilities on to local government. As Agranoff (2001) and Wright (1988) suggest, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts as well as local governments saw the establishment of a new national park as beneficial to them if they were to secure the legacy of the Harbor Islands and, as such, were willing to work with federal officials in drafting a management plan. That authority and responsibility are
shared by federal, state, and local governments, with help from the private sector, has complicated the implementation of the park’s legislation. Even after the passage of the general management plan for the Harbor Islands and its approval by the National Park Service and Secretary of the Interior, the many visions for the future of the islands remain diverse and often at odds with one another.

The Boston Harbor Islands Partnership must consider each of these visions fairly—in fact, it is required to by law. Since decision making and management authority is shared with the private sector it is especially important. While the federal government and the Commonwealth save money as they are not responsible for the majority of the park’s operating budget, they share administrative duties with their for-profit partners. Business owners and lawyers work with park rangers and city officials and this has had consequences for the public. Native American groups, community organizations, and environmental activists have complained that their voices rarely rise above those park partners who work in government or for profit-seeking organizations. While the Boston Harbor Islands Partnership is in closer touch with the regional community and can make more informed decisions based on the preferences of residents and visitors, the concerns of underrepresented groups raise questions about accountability.

Chapter 4 is a case study of the Riverside Park Fund and its efforts to preserve and beautify Riverside Park in New York City. By the end of the 1970s, it had become apparent to many living on the Upper West Side that Riverside Park was deteriorating. The park, along with many other locations in New York City’s 38.5 square miles of parkland, green space, playgrounds, beaches, and other recreational facilities, had
“…become a dirty, unkempt, vandalized shadow of its former self” (Quindlen and Goodwin 1980). Riverside Park’s decline was marked by shabby playgrounds, by park benches ripped from their assigned areas, leaving only their metal bolts in place, and by crumbling stairs and eroding pathways (Riverside Park Fund 2009a).

To address this problem, the Riverside Park Fund was founded in 1986 by residents of the Upper West Side neighborhood of Manhattan in an effort to preserve the historic nature of Riverside Park and to lead citizens in becoming active stewards of a public resource. The Fund is recognized as tax exempt nonprofit organization under section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Service Code (Riverside Park Fund 2009b) and therefore, all donations made to the Fund are tax deductible. The organization has no formal agreement or memorandum of understanding with the City of New York. Still the organization has forged close ties with city parks personnel. In particular, because city employees cannot engage in lobbying activities in accordance with the law, the Riverside Park Fund takes on an advocacy role as an organization positioned outside of government. The Fund frequently pressures public officials to remain engaged with city parks in an effort to prevent future budget cuts.

While much of Riverside Park has benefitted from the activities of the Riverside Park Fund PPP, not all of New York City’s parks have a dedicated public-private partnership composed of people with the financial wherewithal, time, and motivation to volunteer, to raise funds, or to keep pressure on public officials. The Riverside Park Fund can continue its activities and begin new projects and programs because it draws its membership primarily from the wealthy Upper West Side. In fact, though the
organization is public-private partnership, the vast majority of its activities are possible because of private donations, and, of those private donations, the majority come from individual citizens or area corporations (Riverside Park Fund 2006).

Even the various parts of Riverside Park experienced the stresses of the new financial reality in different ways. The Riverside Park Fund had raised money and volunteers to refurbish landmarks and gardens in the area of the park in the Upper West Side, while the northern areas of the park closer to Harlem continued to suffer from faulty plumbing, benches that were in serious disrepair (in cases where benches were even present), and vandalism. David R. Jones, president of the Community Service Society lamented the poor conditions saying, “I don’t think middle-class and upper-class people have any conception of how important parks are for…” neighborhoods (Martin 1994b).

The challenge for the Riverside Park Fund and other public-private partnerships for parks around New York City is to work to ensure the availability of high quality public green space for all city dwellers. But can it? As a nongovernmental organization that solicits donations from individuals and corporations, is it within the means of the Fund to ensure such accountability? It is worth remembering that the Fund is a public-private partnership, not merely a private one. Even though the Fund is a partnership focused on a specific public park, not all areas of the park are equally or even adequately serviced. As such, the public partner, in this case the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation, cannot forget that holding down standards of accountability and equity is its legitimate role.
Chapter 5 is a critical evaluation of the Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area and the Riverside Park Fund case studies. Table 6.1 below summarizes the evaluations of the Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area and Riverside Park case studies. The table synthesizes results based on Yin’s partnership stages approach to evaluating PPPs (Yin 1993) and Lasker et al’s (2001) partnership synergy framework. This evaluative approach shows that both partnerships have been a mix of success and failure.

<p>| Table 6.1: Partnership Effectiveness: A Comparison of the Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area and Riverside Park Fund Cases |
| Stage of Partnership Development | Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area | Riverside Park Fund |
| Start-Up Stage | |
| Resources | |
| • Endorsements &amp; Convening Power | + | + |
| • Information | + | + |
| • Connections | + | + |
| Organizational environment | |
| • Community Characteristics | + | - |
| Partner Characteristics | |
| • Heterogeneity | + | - |
| • Level of involvement | + | + |
| Origins | |
| • Internal forces | + | + |
| • External forces | + | +/- |
| • Strategic planning process | - | - |
| Growth Stage | |
| Resources for growth | |
| • Money | +/- | + |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage of Partnership Development</th>
<th>Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area</th>
<th>Riverside Park Fund</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Growth Stage</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources for growth</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• In-kind donations</td>
<td>+/-</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Staff resources stabilized</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships between partners</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Trust</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Respect</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Conflict</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Power differentials</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational environment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Public &amp; organizational policies</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Activities broadened PPP’s constituency</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mature/Institutionalized Stage</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnership Characteristics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Leadership (formal agreement)</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Administration &amp; mgmt</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Governance aids PPP synergy</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Efficiency</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Broader partnership agenda pursued</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Visible results produced for park; PPP activities repeated</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Environment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Institutionalized source of revenue</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Implications

Table 6.1 indicates that both the Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area and the Riverside Park Fund PPPs had success in their respective start-up stages of development. Neither organization lacked resources early on. The partnerships were initiated by individuals and groups that had used, admired, or advocated for their parks long before budgetary and maintenance shortfalls led to calls for leveraging public dollars with private support. As noted in chapter 5, the support of organizations and well-connected individuals seeking to protect the land gave the groups the connections and information necessary to make the case for public-private partnership. Furthermore, the early boosters of the Harbor Islands national park and of the Riverside Park Fund possessed the endorsement and convening power necessary to bring together interested parties in discussing the future of the parks. For example, it was the Islands’ advocates that successfully pushed for the creation of the Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area. U.S. Representatives Studds and Torkildsen endorsed the Harbor Islands and, using their influence, they ultimately persuaded the fiscally-conservative, Republican-controlled Congress to give the effort their full backing. Moreover, high-profile Harbor Island advocates at the local, state, and federal levels were able to attract organizations with seemingly divergent missions and unite them under the national park idea. Meanwhile, founding members of the Riverside Park Fund, most of whom lived in

29 Please see chapters three and four for a detailed account of the various individuals and organizations that have advocated for the Harbor Islands and for Riverside Park for many years.
the Upper West Side neighborhoods possessed similar convening power by virtue of their being university professors, philanthropists, Wall Street financiers, celebrities, etc.

The PPPs diverge in the start-up stage in terms of the receptivity of their prospective organizational environments to the creation of such partnering organizations. As discussed in chapter 5, Massachusetts, Boston in particular, with its wealth of colleges and universities, is no newcomer to collaborative efforts. Frequently, institutions of higher education will partner with community groups to conduct research and sometimes that research will lead to legislative action (Carman et al. 2005). Additionally, the region has seen public, private, and nonprofit groups come together in the past to work on policy issues as diverse as parks, public health, prisons, and violence against women, among others. Meanwhile, New York City has had a history of division along socioeconomic and racial lines. A 1980 investigative report on the state of New York City parks found that middle class residents of the city were “increasingly seeking recreation outside the city limits, and the poor complain that because the parks have increasingly become their oases, the parks are no longer taken care of” (Quindlen and Goodwin 1980). Observations that parks in poor communities were receiving less attention than parks in affluent communities were confirmed for some residents when Central Park was targeted for “an ambitious rehabilitation effort” by the city. Moreover, the majority of private gifts given to the Department of Parks and Recreation at the time of the report were earmarked for Central Park. Given this, many young people growing up in neighborhoods with poorly-maintained parks said they “have known the parks only as disreputable gathering spots and see no reason to protect or preserve them” (Ibid.).
The case studies also yield different results when examining the characteristics of the partner organizations. Whereas the Boston Harbor Islands partners are a heterogeneous group – a requirement of the enabling legislation that created the national park – the Riverside Park Fund’s membership is instead quite homogenous. As noted in chapter 5, a heterogeneous group does not necessarily lead to partnership synergy when individual organizations’ preferences are distinctly at odds with one another. The Riverside Park Fund was able to garner enough support in its first year of operation to successfully attract new members and attend to other park projects even while the partners to the organization were quite similar. The fact that both organizations were successful in their start-up stage may have less to do with the types or kinds of organizations participating in the PPP and more to do with the level of involvement put in by each partner. Both the Boston Harbor Islands Partnership and the Riverside Park Fund boasted a membership that was willing to be actively involved in park projects, fundraising, and advocacy.

During the growth stage of development, each partnership organization again experienced a mix of success and failure. The Island Partnership, for example, found itself with plenty of private-sector resources, most of which could come from the construction of various recreational and for-profit concessions on the islands. However, given the structure of the organization’s leadership and the fact that the PPP’s enabling legislation required environmental impact statements and consultation with environmental and indigenous groups before proceeding with any park project, many of these potential sources of revenue remained unexplored. Similarly, the use of in-kind
donations from public or private sources had to undergo the rigors of organizational scrutiny before they could be added to the park’s resource roster.

The Riverside Park Fund and the Island Partnership both had difficulty during their growth stages in establishing healthy relationships between partnership organizations. Frequently, partner organizations lacked the sense that they could trust one another. Many residents of the poorer neighborhoods that abut Riverside Park were unsure whether they could ever expect their wealthier partners to focus on the needs of the northern tier of the park. In the case of the Boston Harbor Islands, the Advisory Council, staffed largely by environmental and community activist groups worried that their for-profit and government partners would forsake a pristine island landscape in order to make the park profitable. In a similar vein, the traditionally-marginalized partners in both PPP case studies indicated that their wealthier, better-connected counterparts did not always respect the strengths and skills they brought to the partnership organization.

Finally, in the growth stage of development, public and organizational policies served to enable synergistic outcomes in the case of the Harbor Islands while they served to limit them in the case of the Riverside Park Fund. For example, unlike other PPPs that rely on short-term government grants or private and foundational funding alone to finance its activities, the Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area is guaranteed to receive some amount of money from the federal government each year. Though the specific amount of money is dependent on how much private support the Island Alliance and other Partnership member organizations can bring to the effort, the federal
government *always* allocates money to the park each year. Moreover, the fact that the federal government spends public money on the Harbor Islands means that the PPP is subject to the same rules, regulations, and oversight that other publicly-funded programs are subject to. While PPPs that do not receive a regular federal appropriation (e.g., the Riverside Park Fund) are less likely to keep their meetings open to the public, the Island Partnership must keep the majority of its meetings open to the public. In addition, the federal government outlined the promotion and tenure policies of the Harbor Islands PPP and its Advisory Council in an effort to encourage transparency (National Park Service 2009a, 2009b).

In the case of the Riverside Park Fund, individual funders and foundations often attach stipulations to their donations as a condition of receipt. As Trager discusses in his case study of the Fund’s failed 2002 rehabilitation of the Soldiers’ & Sailors’ Plaza, the requirements an anonymous donor attached to his contribution were stringent. When a redesign of the donor’s plan was announced, the donor withdrew his support for the renovation and “by September, the project was withdrawn by the Parks [Department] and the Riverside Park Fund…and formally abandoned” (Trager 2004, 4). Hence, by virtue of the rules set by its donors, the Riverside Park Fund’s actions are sometimes guided by motives other than its organizational mission. Public policies also serve to shape the actions of the Riverside Park Fund. Unlike the Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area the Riverside Park Fund receives no dedicated or regular stream of federal funding. Therefore, rules governing the oversight of public expenditures do not
apply to the Fund. Furthermore, the Riverside Park Fund is not required to keep meetings of its staff or its Board of Directors open to the public.

The Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area and the Riverside Park Fund have each entered the mature/institutionalized stage of partnership development. In this stage, the Harbor Islands Partnership has had more successes than the Riverside Park Fund. Two factors that allow for successful outcomes in the case of the Harbor Islands are the characteristics of the partnership itself and the organizational environment. In terms of the latter, the Island Partnership can be described as truly institutionalized because it is a part of the federal, state, and local government structure and is given a regular appropriation each year. The PPP has an institutionalized source of revenue and is recognized as a legitimate agent of the public sector, in other words. The Riverside Park Fund, on the other hand, remains an organization located in the “twilight zone” (Collin 1998) outside of government and outside of the profit-seeking private sector.

In terms of the characteristics of the case study partnerships, the Harbor Islands have benefitted from the fact that the PPP has a formal agreement or memorandum of understanding with its public sector partners. The agreement clearly spells out expectations for all partners, sets requirements for meetings and for membership and generally guides the administration and management of both the national park and its PPP. The Riverside Park Fund has no such agreement with the City of New York. This may help to explain why the leadership of the Fund remains so homogenous despite the fact that New York City residents and the neighborhoods surrounding Riverside Park are quite diverse. Still, as discussed above and in further detail in chapter 5, a homogenous
leadership team is not unequivocally undesirable. The fact that the Fund’s Board of Directors and Trustees are very similar tends to streamline the decision making process. In the case of the Island Partnership, the inclusion of many voices from many organizations, each with a different mission and with a different vision for the future of the islands means that the planning sessions, while more frequent, are often contentious and end before a decision – let alone a consensus – is reached.

Both PPPs have produced visible results for their parks. Residents of the communities surrounding the Boston Harbor Islands now enjoy better-maintained campgrounds and recreational facilities and can expect regular and reliable ferry service to the park. In New York City, Riverside Park is not the haven for drugs and prostitution that it once was, particularly in areas of the park that receive frequent volunteer attention.

Even while both partnerships have produced visible results for their parks, the Island Partnership has done a better job of pursuing its broader partnership agenda than the Riverside Park Fund. A key aim of the Harbor Islands national park’s enabling legislation was to engage in an extensive and participatory process when drafting the park’s general management plan. Although not all of the member organizations’ preferences were accommodated, the broader goal of including multiple perspectives in the planning process was followed. The Riverside Park Fund, on the other hand, has not been as effective in sticking to its broader organizational goal. The mission of the organization is to “preserve and improve New York’s classic waterfront green space…From seasonal attendants to rehabilitated playing fields, from horticultural projects to creative playgrounds,” the Fund engages in several programs to make
Riverside Park and Riverside Drive “cleaner, greener, safer and better...” (Riverside Park Fund 2006, 28). Despite this, the Fund has concentrated the majority of its efforts on rehabilitating the portions of the park that are adjacent to the Upper West Side. Only recently did the Fund made a commitment to the poorer, northern section of the park by hiring a North Park Outreach Coordinator.

Finally, in assessing the case study partnerships, it is important to note that while both organizations have entered a mature stage of development, only the Island Partnership can be described as “institutionalized.” The Riverside Park Fund, for all the assistance it provides to the New York City Parks Department, does not receive a regular stream of funding from a public sector source. The organization has, of course, received government grants, but grants are one-time funding arrangements made for specific purposes. The Island Partnership, however, is institutionalized, as one-quarter of its budget is provided by the federal government. For all intents and purposes, the Island Partnership PPP is not positioned outside government at all, rather it is a fully-sanctioned agent of governments at the municipal, state, and federal levels.

**Suggestions for Further Research**

This dissertation has shown that public-private partnerships have great potential as a means of providing safe and clean public parks at the municipal level of service provision. Even so, measures must be taken to ensure accountability. The case studies presented here suggest that a formal agreement between the public sector and private sector partners may be necessary to ensure that this important public resource is
maintained in an equitable manner. One area of research to explore in the future is whether the form of municipal government present in a particular community either aids or inhibits the establishment of public-private partnerships. A related question is whether the form of municipal government can either promote or prevent partnership synergy and therefore partnership success. Are strong-mayor-council governments better equipped to partner with the private sector and maintain accountability than city commission forms of local government?

What about the larger tracts of public land located primarily in the Western United States? Is public-private cooperation appropriate for all national parks or for public land managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) or the U.S. Forest Service? Another interesting avenue for future research on the potential of public-private partnerships as a form of governance would be to investigate the PPP arrangements made for maintaining and managing public land out West. The BLM and the Forest Service have experimented with PPP arrangements at specific recreational sites located on certain tracts of public land through the Recreation Fee Demonstration Program, first implemented in 1996. A longitudinal study examining public-private cooperation on public land recreational sites could yield important insights on the effects of letting the market determine which recreational activities ought to proliferate there, given the reality of finite resources. After all, if public land is supposed to be managed in a way that allows for multiple use now as well as into the future, some popular yet destructive forms of recreation may not be appropriate for our most treasured landscapes.
Political scientists have investigated the effects of charging entrance fees to national parks. One study found that such fees aid land management agencies in maintaining park facilities in the face of declining budgets, however the same fees can also serve to disproportionately impact those who are least able to pay (Lowry 1993). If the trend toward public-private partnering continues in smaller national parks (such as Golden Gate Park or the Boston Harbor Islands), the expansion of such arrangements to include the larger parks out West may be inevitable. An interesting future line of research is to investigate whether a formal agreement between public and private sector partners leads to more sustainable management of public land than partnerships with no such agreement in place. As discussed in the case study chapters, a legitimate role of the public sector is to maintain standards of accountability – even if the public sector contracts with a profit-seeking organization. Although increased private sector involvement in governance is a reality, citizens should still be able to expect the public sector to look out for the public interest, especially those subsets of the public interest that are most vulnerable.
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