

Name _____
Park Name _____
Location _____

My Favorite Park: Case Study

The town planning board has just announced that they are redesigning your favorite park and they are holding a public hearing to allow community members to voice their concerns. The next day you go to the park, all you and your friends could talk about was how upset they were about the new plans for the park. It's their favorite place to spend time together and they don't like the plans to change it. After a heated discussion about how upset they are about the planned changes the group all agrees to show up at the hearing next week to complain and make their voiced heard.

That night as you walk home you think about what your friends had to say and you realize that the angry approach may not be the best approach. You are reminded of the things you have learned as a young architecture student and decide to make your argument by using the tools you have learned in school. You realize the most important thing for the planning board to recognize is the unique character of the park and how people in the community make use of it.

The next day you go to visit the park to observe and document. You spend your first half hour describing what you see about the physical characteristics of the park, the layout, the materials, the trees and how it relates to the street and the community and during the second half hour you watch as people come to the park and you keep a running dialogue of their interactions with each other and with the park.

Your plan is to make a compelling argument by reading your observations aloud and presenting illustrative drawings at the meeting to let people truly see the unique value your favorite park has to you, to your friends and to your community.

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Inventory – Public Park Observation Report

Inventory: *is a detailed or itemized count or list of property or goods compiled during a survey. The report usually includes a description and quantity for each item.*

Directions: *In this writing assignment you will write 2 separate pieces. Together they will provide us with an description of the nature of a public park space and how it is used.*

*You will complete this assignment **twice**, once **as a group** visiting a space close to school and a second time **on your own** visiting a public park space in your own community with which you are already familiar.*

Arrange to spend a minimum of 30 minutes in the "Public Space" as an "observer". Come prepared to write, photograph or sketch what you see.

1. **Inventory Observation Writing:**

For the first 10 minutes write down your observations of the physical space only. Do not include the description of people. Where is the park located? What do you see there? Are there benches and trees? What materials do you see? Is the park paved with cobble stones, asphalt, rubber mats or grass areas? What activities are the spaces designed for? What condition is it in? Is it clean, in need of repair, under construction, etc? In addition to your writing, you can include sketches, drawings, a map or images from Google earth to help you.

Sample inventory observation:

I am visiting a park that is a smaller playground located inside of Prospect Park. It is located behind the band shell and is visible through the trees when walking along Prospect Park west. The band shell is the location of "Celebrate Brooklyn" a concert series that brings music to the park each summer. The playground is titled the "Harmony" playground and is based on a theme of music which fits well with its location behind the band shell. There is an entrance to Prospect Park on 9th street and also on 11th

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street. Each of these entrances will bring you to opposite ends of the playground. The design and shape of most of the play equipment in the park is based upon the music theme. The playground is surrounded by a fence with three entrances, one on the north and two on the south. The playground includes 7 swings, a sprinkler shaped like a trumpet...

2. Running Observation Writing:

For the second 15 minutes write a continuous running observation of how people make use of the space. Include the time, the weather, what they are wearing and what activities they are engaged in. Are people there when you arrive? Do they come or go while you are observing? Are they alone or in groups? How do they interact? Do they know each other, do they say hello or are they meeting for the first time?

Sample Running Observation:

- 9:30 am *I arrived at the park on Saturday just after it had stopped raining and the park was empty. It was a comfortable 70 degrees and I am wearing a tee shirt and shorts. I sit down on the first bench closest to the entrance which has dried as it is in the sun.*
- 9:34 am *Two women still wearing lightweight raincoats in their 30's arrive with 3 small children, two girls and one boy ages 3 – 4. One of the women is pushing a stroller and the second woman is holding the hand of the youngest girl. The two older children run off to the monkey bars and the women sit on the bench closest to the playground. The youngest girl stays close to the women.*
- 9:35 am *An older man in his 50's walks in with a newspaper. He is wearing a baseball cap, a red tee shirt and blue jeans. He walks across the park to sit at a bench in the shade. He takes some sheets from the newspaper and uses them to dry the bench which is still wet from the rain. As he passes the women he says hello although they do not appear to know each other.*
- 9:38 am *.....*

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Presentation Guidelines

– Public Park Observation Report & Drawings

Inventory Observation Writing:

Both should be included as part of your presentation and will be presented in two forms. First on 8.5 x 11 write out the complete observations reports. Second select one or two key statements from the reports that you feel are most descriptive of your favorite park and format these excerpts to be part of your pinned up drawing presentation.

Required Drawings:

Create a site plan of your favorite park using a scale that fits on an 11 x 17 sheet. Using this site plan create a series of overlays that illustrate the following information:

- Circulation Routes
- Climate & Microclimates
- Uses (how are spaces utilized)
- Vegetation & Site Features (includes trees, benches and other site furniture)
- Key views to and from
- Other (any other relevant data like sound, adjacencies, etc. that are important)

Your entire presentation will be judged as a complete graphic presentation & on how good an argument you can make to explain the importance characteristics of your favorite park. Consider including an illustrative section.

On the Titleblock includes: your name, the course name, the professors name the park name and location

You may also find it helpful to include a larger key map to show the location in context.

