

Learning Places Fall 2018

SITE REPORT #1A

Zuccotti Park



Zuccotti Park uncrowded and peaceful on a rainy afternoon.

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INTRODUCTION

What were your expectations of the place, before arriving? Did your experience of the place match your expectations? How did it, or did it not, live up to your expectations? What did you notice about the place that you didn't already know from reading or previous visits?

I've never been in this park, but I've passed it walking to the Oculus Transportation Hub and around that area in general. The park never really caught my attention to go actually go in and just relax, because I would not have time to stop while I was walking to my destination. Since it was my first time visiting the park itself, my expectations of the place before arriving was that it would be occupied with many people, because that's what I saw the couple of times I passed by the park. It failed to live up to my expectations, because there was not much going on. The pictures I had seen online before visiting the park seemed to be more appealing than real life. What I noticed about the place that I didn't know from readings and the glimpse I saw is that it has more greenery than it looks. I observed the significant amount of trees uniformly placed, but not the small areas of gardens.

SITE OBSERVATIONS

Insert 3 photographs and provide a title for each image. The title should be a word or short phrase that sums up the subject matter of the photo or a visual theme present in the photo.



Zuccotti Interactions



Bold Art Piece



Vendors Everywhere



Why did you choose these images? Do they summarize a feeling you have for the place? Do they focus on prominent objects or features of the place? Explain.

I chose these images because they represent and summarize the feeling I have for the urban design of the place. The first picture represents the park as a whole, people interacting and enjoying their time in the park, either with their family, co-workers or strangers. I also noticed a group of tourists learning about the history behind Zuccotti Park and the area.

I chose the second picture because it makes a bold statement in the space. Art is constantly exhibited throughout New York City with eye-catching sculptures. This piece of art specifically catches one's eye and has a deeper meaning behind it. It's a 70 foot tall bright red sculpture which represents the Occupy Wall Street movement and symbolizes the surrounding skyscrapers. As I was doing research on this park, I noticed that there was a statue of a businessman sitting on the bench which was removed. If that statue were still there, it would be a great representation of the area since it's a financial district full with working people.

The third picture demonstrates the constant vendors in the area. There are vendors on the side of the park daily, selling from a variety of food to clothes. I went back to the site another day and noticed there was a market taking place besides the park. The streets on both sides were blocked off and different food trucks and booths were stationed.

Describe the sizes and shapes of buildings in this area. Is there general uniformity or heterogeneity among structures?

The buildings surrounding the park are mostly skyscrapers. The Brooks Brothers building is located across the street, towards the north side of the park. The building is 743 feet tall and takes up the entire block. There is another tall, narrow and rectangular building to the east of the park. Those buildings are modern with a mostly glass facade, whereas the building across Cedar Street on the south side is a historical building. There is a drastic height difference and appearance between the buildings on the north and east side. Also, the World Trade Center, 9/11 Memorial and Oculus Transportation Hub are within walking distance from Zuccotti Park. There is general heterogeneity among the structures surrounding the park. The buildings vary from modern skyscrapers to historical and traditional.

Describe the patterns, textures, colors, and ornamental features of the surfaces of the buildings and structures in and around the place.

The Brooks Brother building is a tall 54 story structure with black exterior, which is right besides the park. This is the building that was allowed to build taller if they gave the space for the 33,000 square foot public park. One could notice that the building base and sidewalk transitions smoothly from the park to across the street, because they use the same granite marble material. One Liberty Plaza is the other skyscraper across the street from the park which is similar to the Brook Brothers building because they both have a black steel and glass facade. The historic building besides the park is made of concrete and has ornamental detailing on its facade. One could observe the variety of textures and colors throughout the area when in the space.

How is the natural world integrated into the built environment? Were trees, plants, lawns, and bodies of water established *around* existing architectures, or were the buildings and walkways built to observe preexisting “wild” areas? Describe patterns and methods of integration.

The way the natural world is integrated into the built environment is by having specific areas with greenery. There are a couple circular areas designated for plants, mostly aesthetic. There is no grass like lawns where people could lay on, the floor is completely made of concrete and granite marble material. The trees were aesthetically pleasing as well because they were spaced out uniformly, which gave a great sense of organization and strategy throughout the space. There were 54 honey locust trees places with 500 in-ground white lights surrounding them. As opposed to having trees beings placed randomly, that wouldn't make sense in this area. Zuccotti Park is right in the middle of the large bodies of water. If one were to walk towards the east side they would eventually hit the piers facing the East River, and to the west side is the Hudson River. Both are within a few minutes of walking distance. The buildings and walkways were built to observe preexisting “wild” areas. Manhattan is ultimately a concrete jungle, meaning that the buildings take up most of the space and they have little green areas here and there, other than the famous Central Park.

Other than buildings, what are the functions of the designed / built structures (walkways, seating, etc)?

The functions of the built structures that were designed in the park worked well with the design and accommodations of the area. There was built in tables and seating such as benches for people to take a break and relax for a bit. The backless benches were made with intentions to be uncomfortable, because there is no arms rests or back for people to lean on. The backless benches even have dividers every few feet, so people won't be able to lay on it comfortably. This would prevent homeless people from sleeping on designated seating areas in the park. The seating was placed in a way where there still is plenty of walkway space on both sides, because people would be constantly entering and exiting the park.

What public amenities are offered to users of the space (water fountains, wheelchair access and other supports for the disabled, public telephones, phone charging stations, WiFi, subway and bus stations, etc.)?

There are a limited amount of public amenities offered to the users of the space. I noticed outlets were located by some trees, so people would be able to charge their electronics while relaxing or taking their lunch break. There are ramps on either side of the park making it ADA/wheelchair accessible. The closest subway stations are located within a few blocks. The Oculus transportation hub is within a 2 block distance, which is the Fulton Street station. There are also bus stations on the same block as the park. There are also many commercial stores and restaurants nearby, which creates a greater diversity. Oculus is not only a transportation hub, but a retail shopping area as well so there are many individuals constantly shopping and walking around in the city. The disadvantage of this park is that there is no public restrooms available on the site, but one is able to go into nearby restaurants if needed.

How have the planners and architects communicated the purpose of the place, via signage or design elements?

The planners and architects communicated the purpose of the place with the design elements and signage. Since Zuccotti Park is a privately owned public space, it was intended and designed for use by the general public for passive enjoyment. Furthermore, the park was designed to be a place where workers can take their lunch break, or people can casually pass by and relax while walking around in the city. The space the architect created was not meant for individuals to stay for a while. Although, the park is in fact open 24/7. There is lighting on the floor that guides people throughout the park, so one is able to clearly see in the night time. There is different types of seating, such as a circular bench meant for people to interact with one another. There's also backless benches with tables attached for quick eating, resting or one on one conversating. Quennell Rothschild & Partners and Cooper Robertson Architects were the masterminds behind this efficiently functioning design of the park.

Are there any restrictions or rules (either explicit or implied) about how to use the space or interact with other people? Do you see anyone using the space in a manner that exceeds or violates the intentional design? Describe.


There's a sign at the north entrance of the park which states the rules and regulations that one must follow. These rules were created due to the Occupy Wall Street Movement. During that time, people were setting up tents, camping out overnight, laying down, and protesting which is why these specific regulations were made. No personal storage or objects can be placed in the walkways which can interfere with the use of the park by others. The sign had also stated that the use of bicycles, skateboards and rollerblades are not allowed in the park. However, I saw an individual skateboarding through the park, which ultimately violates the space and intentional design. I also noticed another individual resting with his head down on the table. This doesn't necessarily violate the regulations stated, but I'm sure if he was resting for more than a few hours then he would be forced to exit the park.

How do people generally interact with the environment? Is this place crowded? Walkable? Easy to navigate? Comfortable?

Since the park is located in a populated area in the city, it does tend to get crowded with businessmen and women, as well as tourists and residents. The day I visited the park it was not that crowded of people, due to the fact that it was a cloudy/rainy day. As I was observing the park and activities people do there, I noticed a tourists group of about 10 people besides me. The instructor was educating everyone on the Occupy Wall Street Movement which occurred in 2011, and about the history of the area itself. When I visited Zuccotti Park again it was a nicer day, substantially crowded with people because of the market taking place at the time. It was a Friday and the streets on the north and south sides of the park were closed off to allow for trucks and booths to be set up for selling food and other necessities. This then became a major attraction during the day, because one would pass by and notice something is happening by the park which will intrigue them to enter. Overall the park is walkable and easy to navigate through. Instead of walking along the sidewalk, one could enjoy a little walk through the park.

I don't necessarily find the park comfortable because it didn't seem like the design aspect of it was intending to have any comfortable seating for many reasons.

What is your personal experience of the place? Think about sound/smell/touch, your body's movement, contact with the ground and physical comfort. How does the place make you feel?

My personal experience of the place was overall great. It would've been more enjoyable if the weather was cooperating during my first visit, so I could've stayed in the park for a longer period of time. Zuccotti Park didn't necessarily feel like a traditional park area where you could picnic and do activities as such. This park felt more like a plaza area where individuals go to sit and relax. Zuccotti Park is generally a peaceful and quiet space where one could just enjoy their time in the park either having lunch, reading or interacting with others. Personally, I would not go out of my way to travel to the city merely to visit the park, however, if I was in the area and wanted to go to a quiet place I would have this place in mind. 

ANALYSIS/DISCOVERIES

Use this section to reflect on your observations. Remember to refer to your observations when drawing general conclusions.

Thinking about the neighborhood in which the place is embedded, who is this space designed for and for what general purpose?

The park is embedded into a fitting neighborhood.  It relates to the surrounding materials and buildings, but it is not too powerful or overwhelming of a park or urban public space. If this park were to be placed in a rural area, it would seem out of place and not make sense. Zuccotti Park properly adapts its surroundings and reflects that through the space. The park was originally built in the 1970's but was newly designed, emphasizing the pedestrian movements throughout the space and around. This space is in the middle of the Financial District, so it is specifically designed for the business people who are on a strict time schedule, with limited amount of time to have lunch or make business calls. It's also designed for people who are casually walking by such as tourists or other New Yorkers. Overall, the general purpose of Zuccotti Park is to maximize the personal and small-scale activities done on a day to day basis. During the movement, the space served more of a purpose than just relaxing, but now due to the regulations it's seemed as if that's all one could do in the space. 


More specifically, what kinds of social interactions does the place encourage or support? How do noise and light affect social interaction? What about the proximity of design elements (walkways, benches, etc.)? Mention specific design elements in your answer.

The place encourages small-scale interactions with individuals because of the way the space is designed. The city is always very busy no matter the time, so there is no way to avoid the noise or lights that come from the nearby streets and into the space. The noise of the vehicles honking may affect social interactions, because one may feel as if they need to yell over it to be heard by the other person. Even though that may happen once in a while, the trees are a great way to absorb the sound which makes the space a quieter area for conversations with little to no yelling. Design elements have a major impact on the social interactions that take place in the park. There are these backless benches creating a circle, which creates a great gathering space for intimate interactions. There is plenty of walkway space for a large group to comfortably walk to the other side.

How might you use the space in a creative way that exceeds the intended use of the designers? Think about behavior, physical movement and organization, numbers of people, etc.

The space could be used in a creative way that exceeds the intended use of the designers by having events more often that would attract a greater amount of people. Events such as markets where people are able to sell items they designed. It would also be interesting to see more art incorporated into the area. There is already a bold red sculpture, but if there is more attention grabbing art then it would attract people to go in the space. Also, have more activities to do in the park once one gets there such as games of chess on the tables, or other board games.

QUESTIONS for FURTHER RESEARCH. Write down questions that require further research to answer. These should follow directly from your analysis section and be complex and specific enough to serve as the basis of a research project; do not include questions you can answer with a quick google search.

1. **Question?** How did Zuccotti Park become the way it is designed? What was the inspiration behind it? 
2. **Question?** What if Zuccotti Park never existed? How would that have changed history and the space today?
3. **Question?** How has Zuccotti Park developed or changed over the years from the beginning stages?

SITE REPORT #1B

FURTHER RESEARCH

Choose and revise one of your questions for further research from part 1A of this report.

Revised Research Question:

Find a book, government document, or newspaper article that could help you answer your question.

MLA Citation for Book, Government Document, or new article:

Why did you select this source? How does it address all or part of your research question?

Describe the process you used to find this source including any keywords and the search engine or tool you used to search.

What other sources or further information would you need to answer your question? Where would you look for them?