

Reflection

Why is Riverside significant today? As seen in the community comparisons, key elements of Riverside's design have been used as the formative structure of communities throughout the twentieth-century. Olmsted and Vaux's use of expansive, public open space is one element that has been repeated successfully over time. Advances in ecological restoration and preservation have made it possible to improve upon Olmsted's design principles while maintaining his and Vaux's design intent. Current efforts in Riverside, led by Riverside's forester, exhibit these advances and provide an encouraging future for the ecological health of Riverside. Riverside is also significant today because it still exhibits most of the qualities that Olmsted and Vaux envisioned in 1868. The curvilinear design of the road responding to topography and encouraging leisure, large trees and expansive green space accessible to the public, choreographed views and experiences as one moves through the landscape, and connections to the city of Chicago are all evident today.

The survey we administered to residents of Riverside reveals the strong appreciation that the residents have for the beauty of the Riverside landscape and for the passive recreational opportunities that it provides. The survey posed questions that specifically addressed the resident's preferences for landscape features, which enabled us to begin to understand what areas or views of the landscape residents perceived as their favorite or least favorite. From the responses, we investigated how the spaces and views mentioned by the respondents related to Olmsted's design principles. In general, the spaces and views most preferred by residents strongly exhibit the design principles. Spaces and views that are least preferred by residents are incongruous with the overall design and feeling of Riverside. Although the results are not statistically significant due to the low response rate, the feedback we did receive from the residents emphasizes that the residents do appreciate the unique elements of Olmsted and Vaux's design of Riverside.

The fact that Riverside has survived for over 130 years is significant for several reasons. Is it the high degree of community pride exhibited by most of its residents? Did Olmsted show

foresight by designing roads that were able to accommodate changes in transportation? Or is it the vast amount of open space that exists throughout the community, promoting a healthier lifestyle? The answer is that Riverside's success relies on all of these things.

Olmsted created a framework at Riverside that has adapted successfully to changing technologies and populations. This is his true accomplishment. If there is a lesson to be learned from Riverside and subsequent developments it should be that proper planning and consideration of the intended community, along with an informed vision, and multidisciplinary collaboration will help designers build upon previous successes and minimize failures.

So, is Riverside a special place to live? Of course it is. And as long as Riverside continues to address the challenges and opportunities that modern society offers, it will continue to be a special place to live. Current initiatives, such as the National Park Service's work to document the cultural landscape of Riverside, will contribute to the strength of Riverside as a community and as a successful model for future community design. It is the hope of this master's project group that our contribution will provide a richer understanding and a broader historical context to all of Riverside's residents, its leaders, and the design community at large.

Revisiting Riverside: A Frederick Law Olmsted Community