COMPARING URBAN SPACE:
A REFERENCE GUIDE

MONTGOMERY COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT
8787 Georgia Avenue Silver Spring, MD 20910  www.montgomeryplanning.org
## INTRODUCTION

The business of parks is to provide a compilation of urban space, playgrounds that can be enjoyed by all, and parks that are designed to be enjoyed by all. This principle is reflected in the work of planners, designers, and those who manage parks. All areas are presented in a uniform scale and graphic format. While this approach may not be the most effective for some parks, it is the best approach for those who wish to understand the general character of the park within its context. A comprehensive list of elements is provided on this page while specific elements to the quality and character of each park and the role it plays in its urban context. A sample table is shown below.

All plans are presented at a uniform scale and graphic convention that includes markets, performances, and informal recreational uses. Depending on size, plazas may support larger groups of visitors. These are paved areas of ¼ to 1 acre in size that may include some street programming, such as kiosk retail, concerts, festivals, and outdoor art exhibits. Depending on size, plazas may support larger groups of visitors. These are paved areas of ¼ to 1 acre in size that may include some street programming, such as kiosk retail, concerts, festivals, and outdoor art exhibits.

## PROS SPACE TYPLOGIES

### Pocket Parks

Pocket parks are informal island green spaces that are located within pedestrian streets and are often located at the intersection of streets, along pedestrian paths, or adjacent to the pedestrian walkway. They provide a sense of enclosure and are often perceived as a recreational and/or social focus of a mixed-use neighborhood. Depending on size, plazas may support larger groups of visitors. These are paved areas of ¼ to 1 acre in size that may include some street programming, such as kiosk retail, concerts, festivals, and outdoor art exhibits.

### Market Space

Market spaces are collecting spaces for a variety of uses, including markets, performances, and informal recreational uses. Depending on size, plazas may support larger groups of visitors. These are paved areas of ¼ to 1 acre in size that may include some street programming, such as kiosk retail, concerts, festivals, and outdoor art exhibits.

### Common/Green:

Common/Green spaces are family gathering spaces that include islands, adjacent open space, and are often perceived as a recreational and/or social focus of a mixed-use neighborhood. These are designed for casual use and serve people and groups in a variety of settings, such as a recreational and/or social focus of a mixed-use neighborhood. These are designed for casual use and serve people and groups in a variety of settings, such as a recreational and/or social focus of a mixed-use neighborhood.

### Neighborhood Park

Neighborhood parks are designed to accommodate the needs of residents from a large area. They are designed to accommodate the needs of residents from a large area, attracting residents from a large area.

### Community Park

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### URBAN SPACE ELEMENTS

Local parks are designed to accommodate the needs of residents from a large area. They are designed to accommodate the needs of residents from a large area, attracting residents from a large area.

### CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>BETHESDA ROW FOUNTAIN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>JOHN F. COLLINS PARK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>BETHESDA LANE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>COLUMBIA HEIGHTS PLAZA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>DAVIS SQUARE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>ELLESHURF SQUARE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>EUCLID PARK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>FOUNTAIN PARK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>GRAMERCY PARK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>GUTHRIE GREEN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>HAYMARKET SQUARE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>LARGE SQUARE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>MARKET STREET PLAZA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>MAIN STREET PARK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>MARSEY SQUARE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>MARRIOTT SQUARE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>MINNEAPOLIS SQUARE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>NELSON SQUARE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>O’DONNELL SQUARE PARK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>POST OFFICE SQUARE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>PLEASANT PARK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>POST OFFICE SQUARE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>PERSONAL SQUARE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>PLEASANT SQUARE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>ROCKVILLE TOWN SQUARE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>ROCKVILLE TOWN SQUARE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>ROYAL STREET TASK FORCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>ROYAL STREET TASK FORCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>ROCKVILLE TOWN SQUARE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>ROCKVILLE TOWN SQUARE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>ROYAL STREET TASK FORCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>ROYAL STREET TASK FORCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>ROCKVILLE TOWN SQUARE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>ROCKVILLE TOWN SQUARE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>ROYAL STREET TASK FORCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>ROYAL STREET TASK FORCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>ROCKVILLE TOWN SQUARE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>ROCKVILLE TOWN SQUARE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>ROYAL STREET TASK FORCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>ROYAL STREET TASK FORCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49</td>
<td>ROCKVILLE TOWN SQUARE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>ROCKVILLE TOWN SQUARE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**PALEY PARK**
New York, NY

Paley Park, commissioned by CBS Chairman William Paley, was designed by landscape architect Robert Zion and built in 1967 as a prototype for a privately owned but publicly accessible pocket park. Located off East 53rd Street in New York City, this inviting space is framed by walls on three sides with a gate and a food kiosk at the front. Two of the walls are covered with ivy and the third features a 20-foot tall backlit waterfall at the rear. The waterfall creates a visual marker and an auditory mask to the street noises. Seventeen locust trees, planted in a grid within the seating area, create a high, airy canopy providing shade and light. The serenity of the falling water and the intimate scale of the park create a peaceful oasis in the dense environment of Midtown Manhattan.

**JOHN F. COLLINS PARK**
Philadelphia, PA

Designed by landscape architect John Collins and constructed by the William Penn Foundation in 1979, this privately owned, public mid-block pocket park links Chestnut Street to Ranstead Street in the heart of Philadelphia. The project was proposed by local philanthropist Dorothy Haas following her visit to Paley Park in New York City. This linear park centers on a sculptural, cascading fountain and is framed by ivy-covered walls with mature, native shade trees dispersed throughout the space. The park creates a calm and serene retreat from the bustle of the city. It is a popular lunch and meeting spot, and occasionally used to host weddings, wine tastings and social events.

**THE PLAZA AND FOUNTAIN AT THE CORNER OF BETHESDA AND WOODMONT AVENUES, BETHESDA ROW FOUNTAIN**

The plaza and fountain at the corner of Bethesda and Woodmont Avenues were built in the late 1990s during the first stage of the Bethesda Row revitalization, one of the first contemporary, mixed-use developments in Montgomery County. Since the angular plaza was completed, it has become one of the most popular public gathering places in Bethesda. Although the site is too small to host large events or markets, the plaza has become home to public art sculptures, landscaping and seating, and often informal performances by local musicians.

**BETHESDA ROW FOUNTAIN**
Princeton, New Jersey

Named after Edgar Palmer, heir to a zinc fortune, this square and its original surroundings were created in the 1930s by architect Thomas Stapleton in the Colonial Revival style to complement the adjacent Princeton University campus. More recently, the square has become part of a mixed-use development on either side of Nassau Street that forms a collection of shops, restaurants, offices and residential spaces.
COLUMBIA HEIGHTS PLAZA
Washington, DC

This triangular plaza serves as the focal point of a mixed-use development in the heart of Columbia Heights. Designed as part of a larger urban renewal effort initiated in 1999, the Plaza was completed in 2009, reinvigorating the area after years of neglect. It serves as a gathering place for the community and is used to host farmer markets and festivals.

DAVIS SQUARE
Somerville, MA

Davis Square is the town's primary civic center, as well as a transit hub for both bus routes and the Red Line of Boston's subway system. The paved plaza at the northern edge of the square features a calming water feature and a tree-covered place to sit and gather. The square primarily serves the surrounding commercial area, with the plaza often full of shoppers and commuters. It is a frequent site for outdoor concerts drawing large crowds, as well as impromptu performances by local street musicians.

LOUISBURG SQUARE
Boston, MA

Louisburg Square is a private, residents-owned square on Beacon Hill in Boston, Massachusetts. Located in one of the wealthiest neighborhoods in the nation, the space is bordered by stately, 19th-century row houses that have been converted into condominiums. Although the beauty of Louisburg Square can be appreciated by owners and visitors alike, only surrounding residents can access the interior of the wrought-iron fenced park. The narrow lawn is framed with gardens at each end and is well shaded by a canopy of trees, a landscape that matches the quality of the historic brownstones and brick sidewalks surrounding the square.

ELLSWORTH SQUARE
Silver Spring, MD

Ellsworth Plaza is a privately owned public space nestled between mixed-use buildings along Ellsworth Drive and framed by storefronts and restaurants. Additional elements defining the space include an artistic monumental stair and elevator tower, and water spray jets that entertain children and parents alike during the summer months. The balconies, walkways and restaurants with outdoor seating contribute to the lively street scene throughout the day and into the evening.

Silver Spring's Ellsworth Plaza is a privately owned public space nestled between mixed-use buildings along Ellsworth Drive and framed by storefronts and restaurants. Additional elements defining the space include an artistic monumental stair and elevator tower, and water spray jets that entertain children and parents alike during the summer months. The balconies, walkways and restaurants with outdoor seating contribute to the lively street scene throughout the day and into the evening.

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### Bethesda Lane
Bethesda, MD

- This landscaped green space at the north end of Bethesda Row
- Served by adjacent local bus stops and nearby metro station
- Social
- Private
- Lawn
- Moveable Seating
- Food Vendors

Bethesda Lane is an enclosed, internal, privately owned, publicly accessible alley framed by buildings with ground-floor retail and restaurants, and residential apartments situated on the upper stories. The narrow lane, part of Bethesda Row, is similar to a traditional commercial streetscape in an historic town center and brings the activity of the restaurants and shops into the public realm. Illuminated at night, the space hosts abundant strolling, café seating, exhibits, concerts, fashion shows and holiday celebrations.

### Market Commons
Arlington, VA

- Community Park
- Public
- No public transit
- Contemplative/Social
- Pavilion
- Passive Fountain
- Seating

This landscaped space lies at the heart of the Market Commons mixed-use development in the Clarendon area of Arlington, VA. The square is framed by a street-oriented retail mall which is fronted by Clarendon Avenue to the north and by apartments and townhouses to the east, west and south.

### Rockville Town Square
Rockville, MD

- Plaza
- Public
- Served by adjacent local bus stops
- Social
- Private
- Lawn
- Pavilion
- Moveable Seating
- Food Vendors

The centerpiece of the Rockville Mall redevelopment, this privately owned public town square opened in 2000. It features a central lawn, winter skating rink, a pavilion, retail kiosks and is surrounded by several shops and restaurants, as well as the public Rockville Library and the VisArts Community Arts Center. The turf lawn and plaza provide space for dining, relaxing, people-watching, reading and general enjoyment. A spray feature within the plaza provides a cooling amenity in the summer and the space is used for public events and concerts all year round.

### Sheridan Circle
Washington, DC

- Community Park
- Public
- Served by two adjacent local bus stops
- Contemplative/Public
- Lawn
- Sculpture

Sheridan Circle in Washington, D.C., is situated on Embassy Row at the intersection of Massachusetts Avenue, 23rd Street and R Street, and just west of the larger Dupont Circle. It is used to host diplomatic and other official gatherings, but more frequently serves local residents as place for dog-walking and other types of quiet relaxation. At the center of the circle is a statue of Philip Sheridan, Union general of the American Civil War, on horseback.
O’DONNELL SQUARE PARK
Baltimore, MD

CROWN PARK
Gaithersburg, MD

THAMES STREET PARK
Baltimore, MD

FOUNTAIN PARK
Chestertown, MD

O’DONNELL SQUARE PARK is the community neighborhood park at the heart of the O’Donnell Street Market District just outside downtown Baltimore. The two-and-a-half-acre park provides a tranquil location for resting, socializing, and enjoying the urban environment.

CROWN PARK is centrally located at the main crossroads of the Crown development in Gaithersburg to provide a common green space for residents of this active, mixed-use community. The 1.14-acre park is framed by five-story, mixed-use buildings, one- and two-story retail uses and three to four-story townhouses.

THAMES STREET PARK is a neighborhood space for the historic Thames Street neighborhood in Baltimore. The small community park, with a gazebo and small playground, is popular with parents and kids and is an active green space among the cobblestone streets.

FOUNTAIN PARK is the primary green space of Chestertown, a small, historic community on Maryland’s Eastern Shore. The 2.53-acre park is located within the town’s historic district at the primary commercial intersection of High and Cross Streets, near the town hall and county courthouse.
Savannah, GA

Madison Square is one of the 24 public squares in historic downtown Savannah, GA. It was laid out in 1839 and, like all the city's squares, features large shade trees covered in hanging moss, lawns, benches, flower beds and a monument named for a local hero. The centerpiece of this park is a statue of Sergeant William Jasper who died in the battle for Savannah during the Revolutionary War. Tall, old trees shade the whole square to cast dappled light onto visitors. As a tourist destination, the square is used for private parties and weddings, and calm retreats for reading a book or chatting with a neighbor.

Silver Spring, MD

Veterans Plaza fronts the Silver Spring Civic Building at the intersection of Ellsworth Drive and Fenton Street in downtown Silver Spring. Opened in 2010, the plaza and building are designed by Boston-based Machado Silvetti Architects. The plaza mediates between the civic building and the downtown shopping district at Ellsworth Place. The plaza is used for concerts, festivals, ethnic and farmer markets, and features a highly popular ice skating rink during winter months. The plaza is particularly scenic at night when the building is illuminated and the pavilion roof is lit with multi-colored lights.

Arlington, VA

Pentagon Row Plaza

The plaza and buildings of Pentagon Row are connected by a network of sidewalks and pedestrian routes to central Arlington. The plaza is adjacent to the Ballston Metro station and served by a variety of local bus stops and railroad stations. The plaza provides a place for public events and gatherings, and is a key part of the mixed-use urban fabric of this vibrant neighborhood.

Washington, DC

Pentagon Row Plaza

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Savannah, GA

Main Street Park

Main Street Park is a community park located in historic downtown Savannah, GA. The park features a variety of amenities including benches, trees, and a fountain. The park is a popular destination for visitors and residents alike, providing a place to relax and enjoy the beauty of the city.

Silver Spring, MD

Veterans Plaza

Veterans Plaza is a public park located in downtown Silver Spring, MD. The park features a variety of amenities including benches, trees, and a fountain. The park is a popular destination for visitors and residents alike, providing a place to relax and enjoy the beauty of the city.

Arlington, VA

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**Santa Fe Square**
Santa Fe, NM

The plaza lies at the center of historic Santa Fe, on the site of the city’s original fort dating to the early 1600s. Its design, following the Laws of the Indies codifying city planning in the Spanish colonies, evokes a timeless quality and a sense of historic significance. The park is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is surrounded by historically significant sites and one- to two-story arcaded structures. The plaza features an American Indian War Memorial, hardscape and manicured lawn areas, abundant seating and a concert stage offering daily performances during summer months.

**Strawberry Park**
Montclair, VA

Once a dilapidated suburban strip mall with a theater, drive-through retail and acres of asphalt parking lots, the Mosaic District in Merrifield, VA has become an urban destination with narrow, tree and building-lined streets, and the central Strawberry Park. The park is located immediately adjacent to the Angelika Film Center and has quickly become the social and cultural center of this new community. Surrounding the space are four- to six-story mixed-use buildings, street-facing retail and restaurants, and the three-story film center. The park is used to host farmer markets, group fitness events, film nights and community events on the lawn. A large viewing screen mounted on the film center turns the park into an outdoor movie theater on summer nights.

**Seaside Amphitheater**
Seaside, FL

This square is at the center of the New Urbanist town of Seaside and designed by Miami architects Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk. It is framed by the coastal highway connecting all the beachfront towns along the Florida panhandle and located one block from the Gulf of Mexico. The space centers on an amphitheater and is surrounded by a mix of retail, office and apartments. It is used year-round for festivals, markets, movies and concerts.
PIONEER COURTHOUSE SQUARE
Portland, OR
The renovation of the Ralph 16th Street Plaza in downtown Cleveland, OH was part of a broader plan to update the city’s public spaces and make them more welcoming for pedestrians.

PERK PLAZA
Cleveland, OH
The renovation of the Ralph 16th Street Plaza in downtown Cleveland, OH was part of a broader plan to update the city’s public spaces and make them more welcoming for pedestrians.

MARKET STREET PLAZA
Fort Worth, TX
A central gathering space within a new mixed-use district, it features a multi-functional, glass-enclosed pavilion at one end and a dynamic, inviting spray fountain at the other. The park is surrounded by existing office towers and a citywide master planning effort to complement the area.

SUNDANCE SQUARE
Fort Worth, TX
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Baltimore, MD

University Square Park lies adjacent to the University of Maryland’s Baltimore campus and several blocks northwest of the Inner Harbor. The park is framed by four- and five-story institutional buildings, and is a popular lunch spot for office and medical staff who work nearby. Its landscape features many different raised flower beds and seasonal flowers, shrubs and trees. The public space is used to host food trucks and other vendors around its periphery, and is within walking distance of Baltimore’s central business district and several residential neighborhoods.

Seattle, WA

Westlake Plaza
This urban plaza is located in central Seattle at the core of the shopping district and at the end of the iconic Monorail transit line and Lake Union light rail line. Considered the city’s town square and a forum for political demonstrations and civic events, the paved space was designed by Philadelphia landscape architect Olin Partners and opened in 1988. The plaza traverses Pine Street and its geometry and intricate paving patterns reflect the shifting street grids in this part of the city. Since 2015, the Downtown Seattle Association has funded a successful revitalization effort that has introduced new street furniture, game boards, Zumba classes, a speaker’s podium and food trucks.
The historic Post Office Square, now called Norman Leventhal Park, is located in the heart of Boston’s financial district over a subterranean parking lot capable of accommodating more than 2,000 cars. Prior to 1988, an above-grade parking garage occupied the entire space. Today, the park is privately managed by the Friends of Post Office Square and maintained with funds from the garage for public use. The passive green park is framed by a long vine-covered pergola running along the eastern edge and focuses on a water fountain within a central lawn that is used as a lunch destination and for concerts and public events throughout the warm months.

This public square with its statue of David Farragut, a Union admiral in the Civil War, was originally established as an open space in Pierre Charles L’Enfant’s 1791 urban plan for Washington, DC. It was formally developed as a park in the 1870s. Located in the heart of downtown Washington on K Street, the grassy space with paths and benches is used to host yoga classes, movie nights, Friday picnics and has become an outdoor workspace in good weather.
**GRAMERCY PARK**
New York, NY

**Guthrie Green**
Tulsa, OK

Guthrie Green was created from a polluted freight yard and designated in 2012 by the Trust for Public Land as one of the Best of the Brady Arts District in Tulsa, OK. Now the garden and event venue is filled with a mix of public and private elements. There is an area to relax, socialize and enjoy the outdoors. Guthrie Green is served by nearby local bus stops. Contemplative Private Seating Sculpture Walking Paths

Gramercy Park is one of the best-known parks in New York City and gives its name to the surrounding neighborhood. This private, green amenity was originally purchased and designed by Samuel Ruggles in 1832 to stimulate future development around it. By 1839, trees were planted and the wrought iron fence erected around the park with access only granted to residents of the adjacent townhouses, a condition that remains today. Located between East 20th and 21st Streets near Park Avenue, the gated park is listed on the National Historic Register and is still an important symbol of the neighborhood and city.

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PLACE GEORGES POMPIDOU
Paris, France

Public Space

Adjoined by two major transportation hubs and a central waterway, this urban space is a lively hub of activity. The pavilions and restaurants are surrounded by lively pedestrian scenes. This famous plaza is filled with lawns and trees and a central fountain designed by Henry Bacon with sculptures by Daniel Chester French. The park is frequented by cyclists, joggers and walkers, as well as people reading, napping and socializing.

DuPont Circle is one of the most popular public spaces in Washington, DC and anchors a busy neighborhood of residences, retail, restaurants, art galleries, government offices and cultural institutions. The bench-encircled park is sited within a traffic circle at the intersection of Massachusetts and Connecticut Avenues, two of the busiest streets in the city, and near a Metrorail station that contribute to an active pedestrian scene. The famous circle is filled with lawns and trees and anchors a busy neighborhood of residences, retail, restaurants, art galleries, government offices and cultural institutions. The park is frequented by cyclists, joggers, and walkers, as well as people reading, napping and socializing.

Regional Park

Served by nearby local bus stop and subway stations

Social

Adjacent subway and local bus stops

Contemplative/Social

Adjacent subway and local bus stops

Washington, DC

Public

2.39 acres

2.72 acres

Paris, France

Public

2.72 acres

3.8 acres
Located in Dallas, Texas, this park sits above the previously long-forgotten Trinity River, and is an example of urban renewal in the city. The park was designed by OJB Landscape Architects in 2012. The central pavilion is a stage for the warm-weather concert series that draws crowds large enough to fill the length of grassy lawn with beach chairs and blankets. Fountains and wading pools are popular features with families, while shady pathways with chess tables and benches provide a more intimate, relaxed environment. The park is situated near the Dallas Museum of Art, with which it is closely associated.

**KLYDE WARREN PARK**

**TYPE:** Regional Park

**AREA:** 5.7 acres

**EXPERIENCE:** Social/Active

**ELEMENTS:** Active Fountain, Pavilion, Lawn

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**CANAL PARK**

**TYPE:** Community Park

**AREA:** 2.8 acres

**EXPERIENCE:** Social/Active

**ELEMENTS:** Lawn, Hardscape, Market Space

The site was once a canal but was paved in the 1870s, and for an extended period was paved in gravel. In the early 20th century, the park was redesigned by C. L. Smith, who added a network of paths and a pavilion with a fountain. The park is now a popular site for social and cultural events, festivals, and markets.

**TYPE:** Regional Park

**AREA:** 5.7 acres

**EXPERIENCE:** Social/Active

**ELEMENTS:** Active Fountain, Pavilion, Lawn
Located in the Wooster Square neighborhood of New Haven, CT, the park is surrounded by historically significant and architecturally important buildings. The Wooster Square Conservation District was the first in the nation to be designated a conservation district, and the park itself is a cherished landmark, drawing more than 30,000 people to the park. The square is home to the Wooster Square Community Garden, the Wooster Square Park Historical Society, and other local organizations that work to preserve and maintain the park’s historic and cultural significance.

WOSTER SQUARE

New Haven, CT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYPE</th>
<th>Access</th>
<th>Ownership</th>
<th>Experiences</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tr>
<td>Park</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>Contemplative</td>
<td>Lawn, Seating</td>
<td>5.25 acres</td>
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