

SKYLINE PARK
1500-1800 Arapaho Street
Denver
Denver County
Colorado

HALS CO-1
HALS CO-1

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

FIELD RECORDS

HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY
INTERMOUNTAIN REGIONAL OFFICE
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
12795 West Alameda Parkway
Denver, CO 80228

HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY

SKYLINE PARK

HALS No. CO-01

- Location:** 1500-1800 Arapahoe Street
City and County of Denver, Colorado
- USGS Englewood Quadrangle (7.5 minute series)
Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates:
WGS84 / NAD83
- Date of construction:** 1973-75. Demolished 2003.
- Present Owner:** City and County of Denver, Colorado
Department of Parks and Recreation
- Significance:** Lawrence Halprin (b. 1916) is an internationally acclaimed landscape architect and urban designer. His firm, Lawrence Halprin Associates of San Francisco, California, produced numerous designs revered for their attention to principles of interactive human use, attention to ecological predicates, and inventive sculptural forms and spaces. Skyline Park, a small linear park located in the heart of downtown Denver, exemplifies Halprin's theoretical positions and reflected these ideals through its careful orchestration of sculptural concrete forms. As a contextually specific pedestrian system, the unique spaces also addressed the goals of urban renewal in downtown Denver, serving as the focal point of the Skyline Redevelopment Plan and as the nexus of a pedestrian and open space system. Although run-down at the time of demolition, Skyline Park exhibited nearly complete integrity of form and structure, and its three signature fountains, and brick and concrete walking and seating surfaces and finishes were largely intact.

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Introduction

Skyline Park (1973-2003) arose during a period of intense urban change in the City of Denver; much was at stake in renewing the vitality of the city. Under the auspices of the Denver Urban Renewal Authority (DURA), the park was conceived as the catalyst and focal point of large redevelopment area in the center of the city, where it was slated to be a destination for downtown workers and visitors alike. This history introduces Lawrence Halprin, the designer hired to accommodate this weighty challenge; it describes the political genesis of the park; and it concludes with a summary of the design of the park as it was conceived and as it appeared in May 2003, just two weeks prior to its demolition by the City and County of Denver. Also included in this history are two appendices, including a full research bibliography of Lawrence Halprin, who is now recognized as one of the pre-eminent designers of his generation.

Halprin's Skyline Park dates from the 1970s and reflects attitudes, conceptual and theoretical predicates, and design innovations from that period. The design exemplifies Halprin's theoretical position, which relates to two seminal publications from that era that frame contemporary issues in urban design: Kevin Lynch's What Time is This Place (1972) and William Whyte's The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces (1980).¹ Like Halprin, both authors address design and planning issues of urban identity and use. Lynch articulates relationships between the temporal processes of the environment and the effect of the quality of the environment on the individual. Prefiguring Whyte's time-lapse study of people's behavior in urban spaces, Halprin's study and notations for how people interact with each other and move within spaces established the framework of his linear choreography of the Skyline Park's sequence of spaces and events. Interestingly, Whyte's work became an incisive tool for identifying the failings of Skyline Park as an urban space, and his precepts for what made "good" urban spaces formed a baseline for the redesign of Skyline Park begun in 2003.²

The story of Skyline Park's brief thirty-year life bears witness to changing tastes in design, and to the evolution of downtown Denver. This Historic American Landscapes Survey (HALS-CO-001) would never have been possible without the efforts of many people. Heading the list is Ann Mullins, whose initiative secured through Colorado Preservation, Inc. the Emergency Grant from the Colorado State Historic Fund to

¹ Kevin Lynch, What Time is This Place (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1972); William H. Whyte, The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces (Washington, D.C.: The Conservation Foundation, 1980).

² Whyte made extensive studies of the design and social conditions of New York's Bryant Park. His studies deeply influenced the redesign of that park in the 1990s by Laurie Olin of the Olin Partnership, a Philadelphia based landscape architecture and urban planning firm. This redesign project has, in turn, catalyzed similar efforts to reclaim outmoded or marginalized urban spaces in other cities.

document the site mere weeks before the demolition. I respectfully dedicate this project to her.

Ann Komara
Assistant Professor of Landscape Architecture
University of Colorado – Denver
September 2005

Chapter 1: Lawrence Halprin, Designer of Skyline Park

Through his extensive roster of built work, publications and public appearances, Lawrence Halprin challenged the paradigms of landscape architecture; he is particularly noted for his work inspired by ecological paradigms, and for his emphasis on design process and the study of movement and the experience of place. Halprin rose in the practice in the decades after World War II, when landscape architects embraced new theories and areas of practice as designers passionately pursued the social, environmental and cultural agendas of the era. The profession's scope expanded to include new project types such as office parks, corporate headquarters, airports, roof decks, and freeways. Landscape architecture through the latter half of the twentieth century also included large scale regional and environmental planning as well as urban planning and design. These foci of practice arose to address not only industrial growth and development pressures, but also the socio-economically induced needs of the rising middle class. Suburban and residential design and site planning addressed new social behaviors surrounding leisure time, such as "outdoor living," recreation parks, and greenways. Urban theory and design, a major component of Halprin's practice, reflected the growth of the automobile suburb and concomitant goals for urban renewal which sought to address what Jane Jacobs coined as the "death and life of the great American city."³

Although some of the landscape designs produced in the post-war era remained traditional in approach, a number of key designers pushed practical or conceptual boundaries.⁴ Some landscape architects explored spatial ideas drawn from film and the fine arts, such as temporal "space/time" theory, transparency and abstract expressionism. Like Halprin, other designers developed design approaches that drew inspiration from fields like ecology, sociology, and the psychology of spaces and human interaction. Lawrence Halprin, landscape architect for Skyline Park, is now recognized as one of the most influential practitioners from the last half of the twentieth century.⁵

³ Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Random House Vintage Books, 1961).

⁴ Following is a selected list of key modernist landscape architects practicing mid-century: A. E. Bye, Garrett Eckbo, M. Paul Friedburg, Dan Kiley, James Rose, Hideo Sasaki, John Simonds, and Robert Zion. The full roster of landscape architects in practice from that era is extensive; a list can be obtained from the archives of the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) in Washington, D.C.

⁵ American Society of Landscape Architecture, Press Release, Washington, D. C., May 12, 2003. The press release states, "Lawrence Halprin, FASLA, has been selected as the first recipient of the new ASLA Design Medal recognizing an individual landscape architect who has produced a

In 1992, landscape critic William Thompson published an essay in Landscape Architecture magazine that introduces Halprin and his position within the history of landscape architecture at that time:

Halprin's work awaits a serious critical evaluation; yet, for many, his landscapes and urban designs constitute the greatest body of work by any 20th-century landscape architect. While his work is extraordinary in its range – it encompasses the suburban gardens of his early career, the exurban Sea Ranch and planning studies – its core canon addresses the re-animation of the center city. Like Olmsted before him, Lawrence Halprin succeeded in articulating a compelling social vision for the city. For Olmsted, the vision was one of pastoral relief from smoke and crowding; for Halprin, it was one of celebration of the city's rambunctious vitality.⁶

Recent scholarship on Halprin is beginning to amend the critical history, yet much remains to be studied and written. Following is a summary of Halprin's background, training, and design practice to set the stage for understanding Skyline Park within his approach to the design of urban spaces, and indeed of cities themselves.

Lawrence Halprin was born July 1, 1916 in Brooklyn, New York, the oldest child of Samuel W. and Rose Luria Halprin.⁷ While attending Brooklyn Polytechnic Preparatory for Boys from 1929-1933, Lawrence Halprin cultivated his leadership and artistic abilities as the pitcher of his baseball team and as an aspiring painter. As a teen, he also spent three years on an Israeli kibbutz, an experience to which he attributes his passion for collective ways of working.⁸ He received his Bachelor of Science degree from Cornell in 1939 and his Master of Science in 1941 from the University of Wisconsin. Halprin later reflected, "At both institutions [I] put together an unusual assortment of courses – botany, geology, geography, landscaping – that transcended the

body of exceptional design work at a sustained level for a period of at least ten years." This is only one of many national design awards or recognitions that Halprin has received.

⁶ William Thompson, "Master of Collaboration," Landscape Architecture 82/7 (July 1992) 64. Landscape Architecture is the professional publication of the ASLA.

⁷ Lawrence Halprin: Changing Places (San Francisco: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 1986) 114. Halprin's father was president of Landseas scientific instruments, and his mother was "president of Hadassah, the women's Zionist organization, and chairperson of the American branch of the Jewish Agency for Palestine." Halprin has one sister, Ruth (b. 1924). For highlights in Halprin's life through 1986, the year of the SFMOMA exhibition, see "Chronology," 114-149.

⁸ "Process Architecture No. 4: Lawrence Halprin (Tokyo: Process Architecture Publishing Co. Ltd., 1978) 247.

norms of the time. I studied what amounted to ecology . . . but of course nobody called it that."⁹

While attending the University of Wisconsin, Halprin met his wife, fellow student Anna Schuman, whom he married in September 1940. They had two daughters, Daria (b. 1948) and Rana (b. 1952). Throughout their long marriage, Anna Halprin enjoyed a distinguished career as a pioneering dance choreographer.¹⁰ Her work in modern dance sought to break down or blur the barriers between performer and audience by removing dance from the theater and placing it into the city streets. Halprin often collaborated with his wife on projects and workshops, and he credits her with developing his design interest in exploring people's movements through space.

In 1942, Halprin entered Harvard's Graduate School of Design from which he received his Bachelor of Landscape Architecture (BLA) in 1944. He took a hiatus from school in 1943 to enlist in the U.S. Navy and serve a tour of duty in the Pacific. While at Harvard, Halprin consciously developed his already strong foundations with coursework and research in architecture and urban planning. He studied with many influential designers and theorists including Christopher Tunnard, and Walter Gropius and László Moholy-Nagy, who both espoused the Bauhaus notion that the arts were not disparate endeavors, but parts of one whole. About this, Halprin later wrote, "the Bauhaus itself in Dessau had included dance, theater, costume, design . . . there [were] no pieces in the arts – they [were] all one thing."¹¹ Halprin regards Tunnard as the "most profound thinker on landscape architecture around at that time."¹² From these pioneers he obtained an understanding that the quality of design was multifaceted and that design and social issues did not have to exist as separate entities. At Harvard, Halprin also felt the influence of fellow students such as the architects Philip Johnson, Paul Rudolph, Edward Larrabee Barnes, and William Wurster, who became a close friend and later, a partner in design collaborations.¹³

In 1945, Halprin moved to California and his interest in avant-garde practices nurtured during his academic studies flourished in the post-war years in San Francisco. He began his career in landscape architecture with a four year run in the office of noted

⁹ Benjamin Forgey, "Lawrence Halprin: Maker of Places and Living Spaces," Smithsonian 19/9 (Dec 1988) 162.

¹⁰ Changing Places, 116. In the 1960s, Anna Halprin became " . . . a major force in the dance world for her staging of avant-garde performances." See also: Anna S. Halprin, ed. Rachel Kaplan, Moving toward life : five decades of transformational dance (Hanover, NH : University Press of New England for Wesleyan University Press, 1995).

¹¹ Thompson, "Master of Collaboration," 64.

¹² Process Architecture No. 4, 247.

¹³ Wurster became a leading figure in the movement known as the "Second Bay Tradition." Later, they were both in practice in California, and they collaborated on a number of projects.

California landscape architect Thomas Dolliver Church (1902-1978).¹⁴ Although much of this early practice focused on residential design, Halprin's strong environmental and ecological thinking soon became evident. He opened his own practice in San Francisco in 1949, which became Lawrence Halprin and Associates in 1961. His firm "... attracted many of the best and the brightest designers from around the world who were intent on joining the high energy . . . interdisciplinary group of planners, landscape architects, architects, ecologists, designers and photographers devoted to evolving experimental work that [addressed] broad issues of environmental design as well social and political issues in regions, cities and public spaces."¹⁵

The firm received numerous design commissions, and through his practice Halprin continued to develop and test his theories and design ideas. In the 1960s, Halprin began publishing books about his thoughts and works, and he continued to study often through sketching—the environment, places, and design ideas. (See Appendix B: Research Bibliography.) In his first book, *Cities* (first published in 1963 and revised in 1972), Halprin introduced his ideas about urban form and movement. He wrote, "... the city comes alive through movement and its rhythmic structure. The elements are no longer merely inanimate. They play a vital role, becoming modulators of activity juxtaposed with other moving objects. Within the spaces, movement flows, the paving and ramps become platforms for action, the street furniture is used, and the sculpture in the street is seen and enjoyed. And the whole city landscape comes alive through movement as a total environment for the creative process of living."¹⁶ Halprin's interests in cities and people generated a lifelong focus for his work.

In the 1960s, Halprin's projects and publications on design processes and principles galvanized his practice and garnered international acclaim. One early project was Ghirardelli Square, San Francisco, which he did with 1962 with Wurster, Bernardi and Evans. Today, it is acknowledged as "... the first of the major center-city success stories to pair preservation with new economic uses, . . . Halprin's contributions may have been the most important part of the puzzle – a site plan that takes advantage of San Francisco's slopes, and a sequence of buildings, stairwells, pathways and open spaces to keep every visitor happily moving."¹⁷ This innate respect for site and emphasis on interaction and movement are Halprin trademarks.

¹⁴ Halprin worked closely with Church, becoming an associate in the firm in 1947. In addition to their design collaborations, they co-authored articles such as "Backyard Gardens" published in 1947 in *House Beautiful* magazine. For more on Thomas Church, see: *Modern Landscape Architecture: A Critical Review*, ed. Marc Treib (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993) and Thomas D. Church, *Gardens are for People: How to Plan for Outdoor Living* (New York: Reinhold Publishing Corp., 1955).

¹⁵ Forgey, 165.

¹⁶ Lawrence Halprin, *Cities* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1972) 9.

¹⁷ Forgey, 166.

This attention to site emanates from Halprin's ecological approach. He honed his environmental awareness and sensibilities through observation and sketching during his many walks and trips in California, as well as throughout the United States and abroad. One of his most important early projects, the Sea Ranch Master Plan (1962) for 5,000 acres along California's northern coastline, epitomizes his sensitive approach. The pioneering project is "... acknowledged as a breakthrough in basing a community's development on ecological principles and calling for as little intrusion as possible into the native environment."¹⁸

Subsequent projects reflected two of Halprin's design approaches that stand out as particularly innovative and influential: "Motation" and the "RSVP cycles." Both emphasized ideas of process and participation. Halprin conceived the idea of *motation* – movement notation – as "... an alphabet of symbols indicating the principal characteristics of a given place and the speed and direction of movement through it."¹⁹ He employed motation as a basic design tool, from which he could then "... imagine how esthetic and human needs, such as skyline and other views, might be met in the design." Halprin's designs use movement to facilitate interaction between the visitors and the space. He wrote, "... it is only when people are inside my design and move through them that my design has any meaning. It is not what the design looks like that I am interested in; it is what it does [to] the people in it – how it interacts with them [sic]."²⁰ These design ideas are very much in evidence in the development and resolution of projects such as the Portland Open Space Sequence and Lovejoy Plaza (1961-1970), the Nicolett Mall, Minneapolis (1968-81), Levi's Plaza in San Francisco (1978) and, not surprisingly, Denver's Skyline Park (1973-75).²¹

Halprin's design philosophy suggests that fostering interactions and revelations in the city is a dynamic process that is deeply imbued with experiential opportunities:

The provocative city results from many different kinds of interrelated activities where people have an opportunity to participate in elegant, carefully designed art and spontaneous, non-designed elements juxtaposed into what might be called a folk idiom, a series of unplanned relationships – a mixture of what is considered beautiful and what is considered ugly. These relations are often subtle and even disturbing. It is an environment which should provide those random and unforeseen opportunities, those chance occurrences and happenings which are so

¹⁸ Changing Places, 125.

¹⁹ Forgey, 164-65.

²⁰ Process Architecture No. 4, 241.

²¹ Forgey, 166. Of Nicolett Mall, Forgey wrote "... [it was] another exercise in urban reclamation . . . one of the early major efforts to [successfully] return a traditional decaying city-center to pedestrians."

vital to be aware of – the strange and the beautiful which no fixed, preconceived order can produce. A city is a complex series of events.²²

Thus, for Halprin, creative opportunity was embedded within the landscape. His emphasis on the processes of thinking and creating, as grounded in his early ecological and human relationship biases, proved influential in the field of landscape architecture. His focus on design process, and the workshop approach that he developed, legitimized these ideas and practices for other designers.

One of his earliest ventures in this arena came in 1966, when Halprin and his wife conducted a joint workshop that encouraged participation in the exploration and creation of artistic experience. Building from this, Halprin soon began conducting public “Take Part” workshops to facilitate communication and common goals for the design of community spaces.²³ Halprin stated, “... the way of going about things is as important to reveal as the products themselves . . . You can view process as a way to arrive at a solution in which case it is a means toward an end or you can perceive it as important and valid in itself – full of twistings and turnings, unknown explorations, reactive to many different inputs and influences along the way and lacking a clear image of what the end product is or should be. What emerges then is, in fact, ‘part of the process’.”²⁴ The outcome of this approach, which “... gave rise to the conviction that people in communities could become important influences on how those communities evolve,” leads to design solutions like Charlottesville, Virginia’s Downtown Mall (1976).²⁵

The “Take Part” work owed allegiance to Halprin’s notion of “scoring,” meaning “a symbolization of processes which extend over time,” which had origins in musical scores, dance choreography, and environmental processes.²⁶ Halprin adapted scores as a system for eliciting and recording **how** people create, and also as a system to notate various parts and moments within a design in response to a visitor’s experience. His 1969 book, The RSVP Cycles: Processes in the Human Environment, explains the idea and offers a method of design creativity that allows creative community participation to

²² Halprin, Cities, 9.

²³ Idem.

²⁴ Process Architecture No. 4, 10-11.

²⁵ Changing Places, 57. Originally constructed in 1976, Charlottesville’s downtown “pedestrian mall underwent a facelift in the 1990s that includes new street furniture, signage and an expanded plaza at the center of the pedestrian mall. The mall has evolved to become the cultural heart of downtown, with more than 130 shops and 30 restaurants supported by a healthy level of foot traffic.” <http://www.greatstreets.org/MainStreets/MainCharlottesville.html>

²⁶ Lawrence Halprin, The RSVP Cycles (George Braziller, Inc., New York, 1969) 1.

occur.²⁷ RSVP stands for “Resources, Scores, Valuation and Performance,” which are four interconnected parts of a system Halprin created to visually define a participatory and cyclical creative process, and which he suggests are necessary in combination for a positive result. He defines these four parts as follows:

R Resources are what you have to work with. These include human and physical resources *and* their motivation and aims.

S Scores which describe the process leading to the performance.

V Valuation which analyzes the results of action and possible selectivity and decisions. The term ‘valuation’ is one coined to suggest the action-oriented aspects of V in the cycle.

P Performance which is the resultant [sic] of scores and is the ‘style’ of the process.²⁸

The RSVP cycle is thus a method of symbolizing ideas and serves as a common language for all participants, thereby creating better comprehension of the collective goals and the creative process.²⁹ For Halprin, the environment critically impacts the lives of everybody and so free and equal community participation, regardless of social, economic, and political status, is fundamentally important to the design of the environment. He valued the participatory process as one that was relevant to contemporary concerns, as shown when he wrote, "... planners are beginning to realize along with designers, that their function is to guide change; not to develop static form. The search in our time is for valid processes, and our urban forms will evolve and change as part of our process of development and in response to the changing technological discoveries of the future."³⁰ These design principles and practices profoundly influenced the work that came out of Halprin’s office; they designed and constructed numerous significant projects and garnered national recognition for their work. The roster of works and Halprin’s and the firm’s estimable but “hip” reputation no doubt helped them to secure the commission for Skyline Park, as explained in the next chapter.

Today, Lawrence Halprin – landscape architect, ecologist, environmentalist, city planner, urban designer, writer, theorist, and artist – revels in his roles as grandparent, mentor, and reigning dean of design. His continuing professional practice reflects his signature design ideas and expressions. The Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial in Washington, D.C., completed in 1997, is regarded as one of his finest projects in his career, caps a long lineage of significant works and projects that have ultimately

²⁷ The RSVP Cycles is dedicated to his wife, his partner in the development of this approach. See also: Jacques Leslie, “A Profile of Lawrence Halprin,” <http://www.well.com/user/jacques/lawrencehalprin.html> (1996). During Leslie’s interview, Halprin noted that of the five books he has published on design, The RSVP Cycles is the one of which he is most proud.

²⁸ RSVP Cycles, 2.

²⁹ *Idem*.

³⁰ Halprin, Cities, 9.

challenged and made evident our interactions with our environment.³¹ Halprin continues his involvement in a few projects: the Stern Grove Concert venue in San Francisco, the Letterman Digital Center in “The Presidio” in San Francisco’s Golden Gate National Recreation Area, and the fifty-two acre approach to the Falls in Yosemite National Park.

Testimony to Halprin’s lifetime of achievement is a lengthy list of awards and citations and honors. These include: the American Institute of Architects (AIA) medal for Allied Professions, 1964; appointment to the first National Council on the Arts by President Johnson, 1966; appointment to the first Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, 1967; elected fellow in the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA), 1969; delivered the annual lecture for the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), 1971; elected honorary fellow of the Institute of Interior Design, 1970; awarded the ASLA Gold Medal and elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1978; and awarded Thomas Jefferson Gold Medal in architecture by the University of Virginia, 1979.³² President George W. Bush awarded Halprin the Medal of the Arts in 2003. The American Society of Landscape Architects awarded him the association’s highest honor, the ASLA Medal, in 2003. Halprin was the first American to receive the Bavarian Academy of Fine Arts’ prestigious Friedrich Ludwig von Sckell Golden Ring for his contributions to landscape architecture.

In April 2005, the Construction Specifications Institute (CSI) announced that Lawrence Halprin, FASLA, had been selected to receive its inaugural Michelangelo Award, which pays tribute to an individual for a lifetime of distinguished, innovative service to building design and construction.³³ The award nomination stated that Halprin “... creates open spaces designed to perform ecologically for the good of the community. There is a happy confrontation of people and architecture in his designs, which emphasize the beauty of the urban landscape and the participation and enjoyment of those who experience it.”³⁴ Lawrence Halprin – a pre-eminent international figure in landscape architecture, was hired in 1972 to design Denver’s Skyline Park. The origins of that project are the subject of the next chapter.

³¹ Leslie, “Profile of Lawrence Halprin” provides more detailed information on the memorial. Also see: Lawrence Halprin, The Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1997).

³² ArchINFORM, <http://www.archinform.net/arch/6621.htm?ID=K3w5fxTLMjijwxhPb> (2005).

³³ LAND Online, , <http://www.asla.org/land/040405/halprin.html> (2005).

³⁴ The Construction Specifications Institute Weekly, http://www.csinet.org/s_csi/sec_CSIWeekly.asp?TRACKID=&CID=1291&DID=10676 (2005).

Chapter 2: The Genesis of Skyline Park

Denver joined numerous other American cities in urban renewal efforts conceived in the 1950s and 1960s to revitalize and develop attractive downtowns. Denver's efforts included a 36-block zone slated for demolition and rebuilding, which became the Skyline Redevelopment Area (also referred to as the Skyline Urban Renewal Project) under the auspices of the Downtown Denver Urban Renewal Authority (DURA).³⁵ The idea for a downtown park surfaced in the 1950s among local business leaders, and the 1966 Land Utilization and Marketability Study restated this desire. The concept first appears as a linear park lining the edge of three blocks along Arapahoe Street in 1968 design development sketches by Marvin Hatami, the architect hired by DURA to create the Urban Design and Development Guidelines.³⁶

In April 1970, DURA commissioned the preeminent national landscape architectural firm Lawrence Halprin Associates to design the park. Embracing the intentions of the Master Plan, Halprin's team developed the design concept for the 3.2 acres linear park to reflect the local natural environment in a cool microclimatic contrast to the surrounding buildings, and to create a hub, gathering places, and an exuberant urban promenade. Skyline Park opened with fanfare in 1973; demolition and construction of the design by Thomas Balsley Associates of New York was completed in the 2003. Skyline Park occupies the street edge of three blocks of Arapahoe Street and straddles the 16th Street Pedestrian Mall, seen as the centerline of this 2003 downtown Denver plan.

³⁵ DURA was formed in 1958, an evolution of the 1955 Denver Urban Renewal Commission. Its first head was J. Robert Cameron. See: Paul Foster and Barbara Gibson, Denver's Skyline Park – A History (Denver, Colorado: City and County of Denver, 2000) 5. Note: A copy of this manuscript has been included in the Field Notes submitted with the Historic American Landscapes Survey (HALS – CO – 01).

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 8-13.

Figure 1: Downtown Denver from Civic Center to Union Station (2003) *removed*

The genesis of the park and Halprin's design arose during a critical period in Denver's development. Ten years of national economic depression in the 1930s, followed by four years of world war and the immigration to family housing in the suburbs, left many of the country's central business districts with declining populations. As a result, tax revenue needed to support even the most basic maintenance dropped. Families continued to flee the cities as automobiles and improved roadways made the suburbs, with their lawns and single-family homes, more accessible. Technological innovation in newer structures left many of the older buildings functionally obsolete. Denver's built environment was no

exception and by the mid 1950s, lower downtown – the blocks between Champa Street and the Platte River valley and from Cherry Creek to Broadway – was in a serious state of decline. For many decades, retail activity centered on 16th Street. Major entertainment attractions like the theatres along Curtis Street, Denver’s “Great White Way,” lost much of their patronage as newer and better movie houses and entertainment venues developed elsewhere. Once-great edifices such as the Tabor Block, the Tabor Opera House and the Windsor Hotel, lost their luster, becoming dilapidated shadows of their former grandeur.

At the center of Denver’s declining lower downtown area stood the Daniels and Fisher department store and its famous tower. At 372 feet, the tower was Denver’s tallest structure until the 1953 construction of the twenty-three-story Mile High Center at 17th and Broadway. Designed by architects Frederick J. Sterner and George Williamson, the D & F Tower is a grand example of Renaissance Revival architecture and an inexact replica of the celebrated Campanile of St. Mark’s Basilica in Venice. When completed in May 1911, the tower was praised in Denver newspapers as “. . . a monument by which Denver will be known,” and “a distinctive feature of a beautiful city.”³⁷ It also served as a beacon to draw customers to the five-story department store at its base. In 1957, the May Company acquired the Daniels and Fisher Company, consolidated operations, and moved the May Department store uptown to a location at Sixteenth Street and Champa Street. Lower downtown was without a major department store, and the D & F building and its iconic tower stood empty.³⁸

Area experts predicted that the population of the Denver metropolitan area would reach one million within twenty years from 1950. It exceeded that figure in 1961. Capital improvements fell behind the demands of growth, and available funding went to accommodate the country’s growing appetite for more and more automobiles. In late 1954, the Downtown Denver Improvement Association, a group created by Mayor Will Nicholson, met with concerned business leaders to discuss the ongoing deterioration of lower downtown and its serious detrimental effect on the entire Central Business District.³⁹ Over the next several years, numerous studies and seminars sought to find solutions to the problem. One of those studies, conducted by the Urban Land Institute, presented a list of recommendations to cure the “Downtown Blight.” Charles Phelen, the executive director of the Downtown Association of Memphis, spoke to a group of Denver’s prominent downtown leaders about the successes of urban renewal in his city. Regis College held a seminar on “Building a Greater Denver,” and the University of Denver held a business conference focused on solving the problems of downtown Denver. These presentations

³⁷ C.H. Johnson, Jr., The Daniels and Fisher Tower: A Presence of the Past (Denver, Colorado: Tower Press, 1977) 22.

³⁸ In 1969, DURA filed for condemnation of the Daniels & Fisher building at Sixteenth Street between Lawrence and Arapahoe Streets. Local preservationists mounted a strong objection, and the decision was reached for the tower was to remain as part of the urban renewal plans. In December 1969 the Daniels and Fisher/D & F Tower was listed on the National Register of Historic Places. In 1970, the Denver Landmark Commission granted it status as a Denver Landmark.

laid the groundwork for a 1956 idea for a mile-long Larimer Street expressway. The proposal included a large, square-shaped pedestrian plaza positioned above the expressway between 16th and 18th and Market and Lawrence Streets, the potential site of Denver's Centennial Celebration in 1959. The plan indicated that as the expressway was constructed, an area midway between Speer Boulevard and Broadway was to be covered over, creating a new Civic Center Park with multilevel parking underneath.

A park in the lower downtown area of Denver's central business district was first conceived in 1956 as plans for Denver's 1959 Centennial Celebration took shape. The new city offices would be directly northwest of the Daniels and Fisher building, with a block-wide by block-and-a-half-deep park north of the city office building. The planners imagined the private sector would develop new offices, hotels, and retail stores surrounding this civic complex. The idea soon expanded to include a landing pad for futuristic vertical take-off and landing aircraft. The city expected the State and Federal Highway Department to finance the land acquisition and the construction costs. However, this idea fizzled when a mere two years proved inadequate time to prepare for a Centennial Celebration of 1959, and this first vision for a "modern downtown" never progressed beyond initial planning.

In January 1957, the Denver Planning Office, the Denver Urban Renewal Commission, and Downtown Denver Incorporated produced a publication called "Planning of the Central Area." It included the first written proposal for the 16th Street Mall. As with the 1956 plan, it proposed a lower downtown expressway running below a new park, north and west of the D & F store. The park would be constructed on top of a major parking reservoir, which in turn would be connected to the proposed expressway. This futuristic park proposal included an airpark to accommodate vertical take-off aircraft of all types.

The Downtown Master Plan Committee created an ordinance passed by the Denver City Council with the support of Mayor Richard Batterton. The sole purpose of the ordinance was to unite private and public interests to produce future city planning guidelines. In 1963, the Committee produced the Development Guidelines for Downtown Denver. It proposed financing the urban renewal effort using bonds. By a resolution dated January 23, 1964, Denver Urban Renewal Authority (DURA) (formerly the Denver Urban Renewal Commission) requested federal funds to cover surveying and planning for the proposed urban renewal area named "Skyline." The guidelines and request were presented to Mayor Thomas G. Currigan when he took office in 1964.⁴⁰

In 1965, DURA hired Real Estate Research Corporation (RERC) to study the area. In September of 1966, RERC published the *Land Use and Marketability Study*. Among the study's many specific recommendations for land uses and absorption rates in the Skyline area, the report also recommended a public park at the site of the old Daniels and Fisher store. Historically, downtown land was so costly and sold at such high premiums that creating a large-scale park had been considered too costly. However, in their report published on October 15, 1966, RERC declared that an urban park was a necessary amenity

⁴⁰ Foster and Gibson, 5-7.

if Denver were indeed planning for a city of the future. The proposed park would occupy approximately one-block, or 100,000 square feet. The Daniels and Fisher department store would be torn down and the tower would remain. Closing Arapahoe Street from 16th to 20th Streets would create the opportunity for a larger park. RERC considered the entire block between 16th and 17th Streets and between Arapahoe and Lawrence Streets the ideal location for a park. The DURA commissioners, however, disagreed. They believed that a square-block park should not occupy one of the prime locations for a commercial project, even if it included underground parking.

During the completion of the RERC study, Denver experienced a devastating natural disaster. On June 16, 1965, the South Platte River overflowed its banks in the worst flood in the area's 100-year history. Flood damage extended into the area of Skyline Urban Renewal. This disaster opened the doors for federal funding and created a more favorable atmosphere for public approval of the renewal program. In this new climate, a more feasible proposal emerged from a study by the Real Estate Research Corporation of Denver's urban renewal area that included a full block park surrounding the venerable Daniels and Fisher Tower. This idea transformed the configuration into the three-block long, half-block deep, linear configuration that we know today as Skyline Park. Though differing in scope and scale, all of these Skyline development proposals recognized that Denver's lower downtown area was deteriorating and dramatic measures would be required to reverse the trend. In addition, common to all of the proposals was the idea to enhance vehicular circulation through the lower downtown area and accommodate vast new parking requirements. The final result was to be a new Master Plan including a new park and central civic space to provide the catalyst and focus for the renewal process.

The Hatami Plan

In November 1966, the Denver firm of Baume, Polivnick, and Hatami was selected from a list of six firms to begin preparing initial design concepts for the Skyline area. At their presentation to the DURA board, Marvin Hatami indicated that, if selected, they would retain the landscape and planning firm of Sasaki, Dawson DeMay Associates of Watertown, Massachusetts, designers of the nationally known Constitution Plaza Renewal Project in downtown Hartford, Connecticut. DURA commissioned a ninety-day, \$15,000 study that was to focus on the appearance of the buildings and of the open spaces for parks, walkways, and sculpture, although it also included traffic circulation, parking, landscaping, and land use.⁴¹ The D & F Tower remained the focal point of this plan.

The Hatami plan included a generous landscaped setback, running from 16th to 18th Streets along the northwest side of Arapahoe Street. Marvin Hatami showed this as a three-block-long linear park running along Arapahoe from 15th to 18th Streets. DURA readily accepted this new idea as it left one of the key project blocks, (the D & F block), partially available for commercial development. Hatami's vision, with its formal alignment of trees

⁴¹ Feasibility Study for Skyline Park and Convention Centers Parking Structures [Skyline Urban Renewal Project, Colorado No. R-15] (Denver, CO: Prepared for Denver Urban Renewal Authority (DURA) by Marvin Hatami, and Associates, and Tanaka and Associates, Denver, CO, 1969).

and a three-block-long reflecting pond, would follow the classical “City Beautiful” design traditions found in many of Denver’s parks, especially along its parkways. This scheme would also introduce a complex set of below-grade parking structures, accessed through a series of ramps connecting to the Denver grid. The park would terminate on the southwest end by the beautiful façade of the old Central Bank and Trust Building, a Jacques Benedict masterpiece, and at the northeast end by a new office structure facing the park. Office and commercial buildings would anchor the northwest edge of the park, and the retail and commercial spaces would line the other side of Arapahoe. The proposed Skyline Parkway was moved farther northwest to align with Market Street. The roadway would be separated from the Skyline project by a landscaped area, which might also contain surface parking.

The Hatami/Tanaka Plan

Figure 2: Hatami/Tanaka Illustrative Plan (Skyline Urban Renewal Plan 1: 30). *removed*

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) officially authorized the Skyline project on February 27, 1968. In the spring of that year, DURA commissioned another study. Floyd Tanaka joined Marvin Hatami to prepare an Urban Design and Development Study for the Skyline project.⁴² In the new association, Sasaki, Dawson, Demay Associates continued as landscape consultants, and Alan M. Voorhees and Associates, of McLean, Virginia, were added as traffic and parking consultants. The Hatami/Tanaka study continued to pursue and refine the idea of a three-block linear park, integrating this idea with an increasingly intricate fabric for the overall design of the Skyline project. The Skyline Parkway and a grade-separated plaza were key components of the plan affecting the design of the park in many significant ways. The entire central area of the Skyline project, from 16th to 18th, and from the alley between Larimer and Market Streets to the alley between Arapahoe and Lawrence Streets, was to be elevated above grade. The park became the key transition element, integrating the above-grade plaza with the historic at-grade grid of the downtown area.

As with the earlier Hatami scheme, the D & F Tower served as the park’s focal point. A large plaza space surrounding the tower was added, to serve as the primary

⁴² Urban Design and Development: Skyline Urban Renewal Project, Denver, Colorado. Project Colorado No. R-15, 2 volumes (Denver, CO: Prepared for Denver Urban Renewal Authority (DURA) by Marvin Hatami, and Associates, and Tanaka and Associates, Denver, CO, 1970).

transition point to the elevated pedestrian plaza. Grade separation between the pedestrian and the automobile, conventional wisdom of the time, was implemented in such places as the Nicolett Mall and Skyway in Minneapolis, the Golden Gateway development in San Francisco, and Constitutional Plaza in Hartford, Connecticut.

In addition to the transition to this above-grade plaza at the D & F Tower, the plan suggested three major grade-change transitions: one on the opposite side of 16th Street, one near 15th Street, and one near 18th Street. These suggestions were reflected in the specific guidelines developed by Hatami/Tanaka for each block. Automobile access and egress ramps at three locations along Arapahoe Street had a major effect on the design of the park. These ramps, located at the perimeter of the proposed Skyline Park and connecting Arapahoe to the below-grade parking structure, were elements that had to be integrated into the overall plan.

While the park design maintained much of the same spirit of the initial Baume, Polivnick and Hatami design, it became more refined, suggesting two, very formal double rows of trees running the entire length of the park. One double row was to run along the edge of Arapahoe Street. The other double row would bisect the center of the park space. To the northwest of this center row, a linear reflecting pond was proposed for each segment of the park. West of the D & F Tower, a wider reflecting pond, placed as part of the composition, led pedestrians up to the above-grade plaza level. Terminating structures at either end would extend above the park to Arapahoe Street, with at-grade pedestrian space extending beneath them.

Along the edge of the reflecting ponds was a series of low benches. By creating a bi-level promenade along the major axis of the park, the design took advantage of the natural topography of the site. Running adjacent and parallel to Arapahoe Street, the upper level of the park contained long linear planters for the trees, separated by the upper promenade walkway on direct axis with the D & F Tower.

Adjoining the lower level promenade was an arcade space, created by the buildings edging the park. Little Leaf Lindens spaced at twenty feet apart were to form the tree canopy, and Andorra Juniper was to be the ground cover in the planters. The surface of the park was essentially all hardscape (paved or solid surfaces); with raised planters, linear ponds, concrete benches, and pedestrian-scaled light fixtures providing visual relief.

As early as 1968, DURA began sending out Requests for Proposals (RFPs) for development of Block 26, directly across Arapahoe Street from the D & F Tower. Five proposals were received, and on March 29, 1969, the DURA board announced that Del E. Webb Corporation of Phoenix, in concert with the Prudential Life Insurance Company, would develop a twenty-two-story, 450,000- square-foot office tower for Prudential. In addition to the office tower, the plans included a two- to three-story commercial building along 16th Street. Following the preliminary design guidelines, this lower structure would be set back fifty-five feet from the edge of 16th Street to allow an open view of the D & F Tower, leaving a space landscaped in accordance with the Hatami/Tanaka plan.

At an earlier meeting on March 12, in order to facilitate the plans of a developer who proposed a full-block project on the Block 18 (located between 15th and 16th Streets and Arapahoe and Lawrence), the DURA Board voted five to one to eliminate the linear park from this parcel. Five of the commissioners were absent when the vote was taken. The advantages of the full-block development were an economic trade-off, a ready sale, and a benefit to the taxpayers. The one dissenting vote to change the park concept was voiced by Commissioner Barkley Clark. Clark said, "I am dead set against the change. It shows a tendency in this authority to treat the whole project on an ad hoc basis. We get interest by a developer for Block 18, and so we change the plan to cut down the park."⁴³

In early April 1969, a prominent local architect, James Sudler, and a local businessman, Rike D. Wotten, sent a letter to the DURA Board requesting the purchase of the former Federal Reserve Bank building at the northwest corner of 17th and Arapahoe Streets. They suggested, once again, developing the full block at the D & F Tower site into a park, per the RERC study of 1966. They proposed to acquire the bank building and the parking area behind it for \$155,000. They would invest an additional \$150,000-\$200,000 to remodel the space for office use. Since the Board had already amended the park plan by eliminating the park between 15th and 16th Streets, Sudler and Wotten argued that a further change should be considered. Mr. Sudler pointed out that the full-block proposal could be developed with underground parking and the surface devoted to a public park. He compared his proposal with the famed squares and plazas of Europe.

On April 23, 1969, DURA's board met again and rescinded the previous action of March 12th to eliminate part of the park. In addition to its restoration of the three-block linear park as a part of the plan, the Board officially set the width of the linear park at one hundred feet from the curb line at Arapahoe Street.

When the Hatami and Tanaka Urban Design and Development Study was finally published in March 1970, the two-volume report contained not only specific suggestions for the overall urban design of the Skyline area, but also implementation standards and criteria in Volume 2. The design of the buildings, which were to form the northwest edge of the park, was carefully studied and given considerable significance, especially at-grade. All of the buildings that joined this park edge were to be "... compatible in scale, height, bulk, and character with the civic scale and nature of Skyline Park," and were to be parallel with and "extending not less than 80% of the entire length of Arapahoe Street."⁴⁴ Though some minor variation would be allowed, depending on which block was being developed, these park-edge buildings would be not less than six stories, nor more than twelve stories high. The drawings, plans, sections and perspectives suggested that the building edge at-grade should be developed as an arcade space, providing shade and shelter for pedestrians, further enhancing the pedestrian scale and extending the depth of the park space.

⁴³ Dick Johnson, "DURA Votes to Cut Part of Skyline Park," Denver Post (April 25, 1969) 10.

⁴⁴ Hatami and Tanaka, Urban Design and Development: Skyline Urban Renewal, Vol. 2, 50.

Additional guidelines dealing with the D & F Tower block suggested that in the half-block area surrounding the D & F Tower, extend the northwest boundary of Skyline Park approximately one-half block down Arapahoe Street to form the basic design element of a square or plaza around the D & F Tower. A large staircase at the northwestern corner of this "Tower Square" was intended to make the main connection to the upper level plaza, the point of primary transition from the historic grid of the city to the pedestrian-only plaza area. This block eventually became the first block of Skyline Park to be developed under the name of the Park Central Project, which extends between 15th and 16th Streets and between Arapahoe Street and Lawrence Street. Buildings not less than six or more than ten stories and were to edge the park for a distance of not less than 50% of the length of Arapahoe Street. Once again, the grade-level portion of the structure was to be developed with a fifteen-foot-deep pedestrian arcade. At the corner of 15th and Arapahoe Streets, a building constructed on air rights above the park was to terminate Skyline Park.⁴⁵ The grade level of this structure was to be open, allowing for the unrestricted movement of pedestrians.

Of all the projects developed in the Skyline Urban Renewal area, the Park Central Project, initiated in January 1970, best complied with the completed guidelines developed by the Hatami/Tanaka report. The Denver economy was vibrant, and the developer chose an excellent local architectural firm, William C. Muchow and Associates, with George Hoover as lead project designer. For many people the park and the D & F Tower represented the heart of the renewal area. The Park Central Project offered great promise that the overall Skyline effort would, indeed, follow the overall Hatami/Tanaka plan with an arcade at grade level, well-scaled facades, plaza gateways, and pathways. Such was not to be the case.

The Halprin Plan

In April 1970, DURA announced the selection of a landscape firm to provide the detailed design and contract documents for the linear park. DURA sent invitations to twenty-five firms, and twenty submitted proposals. Three were interviewed: the Hatami/Sasaki team; the firm of Lawrence Halprin Associates of San Francisco; and Eckbo, Dean, Austin` and Williams, with Denver architect Victor Hornbein. With the great success and attention the Halprin firm had received for their public squares and fountains in Portland, Oregon, the Nicolett Mall in Minneapolis, and Ghirardelli Square in San Francisco, they were the clear favorite of the DURA Board. By a vote of six to two, with one abstention, the Halprin firm was awarded the commission. DURA Executive Director Bob Cameron said at the selection meeting, "The park has special significance for DURA

⁴⁵ http://www.merchandisemart.com/marchitecture/air_rights.html. The concept of air rights today, which includes unused, zoned air space above a building, differs from the concept in the 1920s, which pertained solely to air space above railroad tracks and facilities. Air rights were defined in 1927 by Joshua D'Esposito, the consulting engineer for the [Chicago] Daily News Building, as "the space above a plane of clearance over railroad tracks and facilities, capable of utilization for the construction of streets and buildings in the same manner as if the railroad facilities did not exist."

because it is the only visible and enduring part of Skyline being developed directly by DURA. All other projects are being designed and built by other public and private agencies.”⁴⁶

The selection of the Halprin firm indicated that the Board was seeking a design for Skyline Park other than the formal and classical design of the Hatami/Tanaka scheme. In fact, the choice of Lawrence Halprin led to a very different kind of park, one that would draw its inspiration from nature and encourage extensive integration of uses and interaction with structures in the park, especially water elements.

When Lawrence Halprin began the design for the park, it was his intention to contrast the park with the buildings and to let the natural environment into the park. He found the landscape outside Denver very exciting. Halprin was deeply impressed with the rock formations and the color of the stone at the “great amphitheater” in Red Rocks Park in the foothills west of Denver.

As the Halprin firm commenced work on the project, the team analyzed the Hatami/Sasaki plan and began to recognize some limitations. A psychologist, James Creighton, hired as part of the Halprin team, felt that the Hatami/Sasaki scheme was little more than a “passage way to move people from one place to another.” He felt that the park should be more of a “phase by itself.”⁴⁷ Creighton and the Halprin design team “envisioned the park as a hub for a variety of people activities, to be enjoyed by office workers, shoppers, conventioners, and residents.”⁴⁸ The team also identified needs and set design goals for each of these use groups:

Office Workers need a place for coffee breaks and lunch times. This means places to eat, (tables and seating), places to obtain food, (restaurants in the adjoining plazas, movable kiosks, food stands within the park), and interesting activities to observe and hold interest (amphitheater-like space, movable canopy).

Shoppers need the park not only for visual relief but also as a place for short breaks, for sitting down and relaxing in a distinctive environment, and mental refreshment from their shopping activities (small intimate space separated from street traffic, comfortable benches). Shoppers may also need a place children would enjoy, requiring minimal supervision and free from street traffic, while parents rest (spaces which lend themselves to play and imagination).

⁴⁶ “Halprin Firm Named Skyline Park Designers,” Denver Post (April 24, 1970) 28.

⁴⁷ Foster and Gibson, 19-25, citing Halprin Design Notes, Halprin Collection, The Architectural Archives, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA, [archives unprocessed at the time of research].

⁴⁸ *Idem*.

Residents require all the amenities above, but also seek nighttime activities. This again suggests the need for an amphitheater-like space which can be adapted to a wide range of presentations and activities, meeting rooms for organizations and social groups, as well as “night-life” activities such as restaurants, nightclubs, and theaters in the adjoining plaza. Denver residents who do not live in the development area could use the park as a place for picnicking, a place to take visitors, a place that symbolizes Denver with an attractive visual experience. Distinguishing the park, an important emphasis will be on action — moving water, cascading water, water in which people can wade or otherwise interact.

Conventioneers have needs roughly similar to those of residents – primarily nightlife activities as a break from convention life. Again, needs can be met by both activities in the park and establishments in adjoining plazas. The park should serve as a memorable visual experience so that conventioneers remember Denver as an attractive, interesting place.⁴⁹

As the Halprin team conducted this analysis, they were well aware that the physical facilities of the park alone would not provide all of the needed activity. They clearly recognized that an ongoing, coordinated programming function would be essential to provide the animation in the park they imagined. If the human excitement of the park was to be maintained, some entity would need to produce and manage the open-air concerts, plays, light/sound experimental demonstrations, arts and craft shows, open-air markets, speeches and civic events. It is unclear which agency would have held the responsibility to continue to facilitate such uses, but for a while both the City and the Downtown Denver Partnership operated to this end. In 1991, the Denver National Bank Plaza, Metropolitan Life Insurance Company and local KDHT Radio were co-sponsoring a series of eight free summer lunchtime concerts called “Showtime in the Park.”⁵⁰ Thus, the early levels of programming continued for a number of years but eventually efforts dissipated as interests focused elsewhere, and eventually most such uses shifted from the park entirely.

As Halprin and his team studied the urban design recommendations, they recognized additional limitations of the site. Building a park atop a parking structure would severely limit the loads they could impose, and the height of existing and future buildings would cast undesirable shadows on the park. From the beginning they felt that, though the park should be the focal point – the heart – of a new downtown, it seemed like “left over space” and that the “gravity of importance was much on the plaza area.” They were especially concerned with the number of times vehicular elements, like streets and parking ramps, impacted the park space.

⁴⁹ Foster and Gibson, 20. See also: Halprin Collection, University of Pennsylvania.

⁵⁰ “Showtime in the Park” Playbill, 1991. Skyline Park Archives, property of Ann Komara.

To address the vehicular conflicts, the Halprin firm explored numerous options including: closing 16th and 17th Streets to automobiles, closing Arapahoe Street, narrowing Arapahoe Street, removing the parking ramps from Arapahoe Street and relocating them, and ramping up and over 16th and 17th Streets. All of these options were ultimately turned down by DURA.

Halprin's team also explored schemes to reduce the impact of adjacent structures on the park and to better integrate the park space with the proposed upper-level plaza. One idea suggested that buildings on the edge of Skyline Park be built in terraced fashion, stepping back and away from the park to allow for more sun and to mitigate a canyon effect. To better integrate with the plaza space, they turned to the Hatami/Tanaka plan and suggested a deeper park around the D & F Tower, extending a half-block toward 17th Street. These ideas were also rejected by DURA.

One of the more interesting ideas the Halprin team offered was the creation of a tide pond around the base of the D & F Tower as an effort to reconnect the busy downtown office worker with one of the nature's most fundamental rhythms. High tide would occur at the beginning of the workday, low tide would occur at noon, and high tide would occur again at the end of the workday, with low tide at midnight. The cycle would repeat throughout the week, except on weekends when the tide machine would not operate, leaving the plaza available for festivals, flea markets, concerts and other events. In all of the Halprin schemes, the D & F Tower remained the focal point, the icon of the park and the urban renewal area, and the marker for the new downtown.

Finally, at a meeting between the designers and the client on August 25, 1970, the overall park concept was confirmed. It consisted of three different but linked parks, one for each block, each dominated by different design elements but connected by structural elements, design themes and detailing. Each block would contain a unique fountain. The major fountain was to be located in the second block with the D & F Tower, a decision later changed.

At the 16th Street end of the first block, a plaza space would provide a counterpoint to the D & F Tower and a staircase would transition up to the grade-separated plaza. In the second block, the D & F Tower, with its surrounding plaza and major connection to the elevated plaza, would dominate the south end of the park, a fountain, the major fountain of the whole ensemble, completed the second block. The third block, from 17th to 18th Streets, would take on the character of a forest, with a third fountain at the corner of 18th and Arapahoe Streets. Between these major elements, a wide variety of minor spaces with seating would be created and connected by a walkway system. By such a plan, a variety of settings would be created to address the diversity of park users imagined by the Halprin team. Earthen berms and soil contained in concrete planters would mound up the edges in order to create an adequate buffer against the noise and dust of the streets.

With the general scheme established, the Halprin team turned its attention to the design of the fountains, especially the fountain in the Park Central Block. The developer and architectural firm (Muchow and Associates) for this property had been selected, and

the design work was underway. Once into the effort, the Halprin team struggled with the question of which fountain was to be the major fountain. After exploring a number of ideas, and largely because it was to be the first fountain undertaken, the Park Central location held the major fountain.

On February 2, 1972, DURA awarded the contract for the construction of the first park segment to the Berglund-Cherne Company for \$587,0000. On October 8, 1973, the first section of Skyline Park between 15th and 16th Streets was dedicated as a public park. Satoru Nishita represented Lawrence Halprin Associates at the ceremony. In 1973, the Park Central Project was completed, and the Central Bank of Denver opened the doors of its spectacular new bank to the public. The park was a huge success when it first opened and remained so for many years. Office workers, shoppers, and residents flocked to the park to eat their lunches and bask in the warm Denver sun.

However, as the newness of the park wore off the park blended into the fabric of the city; its initial success slowly faded as the energy and focus turned to the increasingly bustling 16th Street Mall. Fewer special events were planned for the space and visitors drifted to other more active spaces. Even the Park Central Bank building tenants turned their backs to the park space as they added curtains and interior walls to block the views to the park from the first floor spaces. Still, the space remained a popular spot along the 16th Street Mall for the annual Denver Public School's annual Shakespeare Festival.⁵¹

Unfortunately, at about the same time the Park Central Project was being completed, Denver's economy weakened, and developers showed little additional interest in the Skyline project. On July 15, 1975, at the urging of Mr. Galen McFayden, Park Project Manager, the DURA Board elected to initiate construction of the final two blocks of the Skyline Park. McFayden determined that starting construction immediately could save \$80,000. McFayden and the DURA Board also believed that the development of these two park segments might enhance the potential for the sale of these two blocks to developers. The parking structures below the park were eliminated from the plan, and the Halprin firm was paid an additional \$16,000 to modify its drawings. The lowest bidder, Western Empire Construction, Inc. of Lakewood, Colorado, completed the remaining park sections. On November 13, 1976, the final two blocks were dedicated and turned over to the city.

With the energy boom of the late 1970s, development within the Skyline area began once again. In 1978, L. C. Fulenwider began construction of Energy Plaza, now called Bank One. Having opened a Denver office to capture some of the market for all of the new development, the nationwide firm of Skidmore, Owings and Merrill was selected as architects. By now, however, the notion of an above-grade plaza was beginning to fade, and the Hatami/Tanaka guidelines were essentially forgotten. The staircase designed for

⁵¹ The Shakespeare Festival was the last event held in Skyline Park in May 2003, just days before the construction fences went up to begin the demolition. Many of the images found in the Field Notes for the HALS-CO-01 submittal show this final event. See also "The Mall is a Stage and School Kids are the Players ...," Rocky Mountain News, (Friday May 3, 2003): Section D.

the corner of 18th and Arapahoe Streets to provide pedestrian access to the above-grade plaza was eliminated. In its place, the project developed a bi-level parking structure. Likewise, the idea of an arcade with retail uses along the park was no longer viable. A restaurant built at approximately mid-block enjoyed great success for a number of years, but in recent years it has stood vacant.

In October 1982, the 16th Street Mall (an idea around in various forms since 1948) opened. The commercial street, now devoted to pedestrians and the innovative, free *Mall-Ride* shuttle buses, bisected the park with a flow of people that would reach upwards of 20,000 per day by the 1990s. When initial planning for the Skyline area was undertaken, the proposed pedestrian mall was to extend along 16th Street from the junction of Broadway Street at Colfax Avenue to Arapahoe Street, as shown in the Hatami/Tanaka plan of 1970s. When designing Skyline Park, the Halprin firm assumed that this mall plan would be followed. But the mall that was built was very different. Designed by the now-world-famous architect, I. M. Pei, and built by Denver's Regional Transportation District with funds from the U.S. Department of Transportation, it extended from Broadway all the way to Market Street and terminated in the Market Street Station. Today, it extends westward beyond this into the heart of the old railroad yards as Denver continues to redevelop the Platte River Valley. The 16th Street Mall was a huge success and dramatically shifted the use of the Skyline Park as downtown Denver's premier people space.

In 1983, development of the central blocks of the Skyline project as a whole finally commenced with the construction of the Tabor Center. Built by Williams Realty Development, Inc., of Tulsa, Oklahoma, and designed by the Urban Design Group of Tulsa, and Kohn Pederson Fox Associates of London and New York, the project included an 116,000-square-foot festival market place by the Rouse Company, a 400-room Westin Hotel, and a 557,047-square-foot office tower. When completed in 1984, this development was a first-class project, one of Denver's best, and it met with enthusiastic approval. However, like the Energy Plaza project, the Tabor Center reflected little of the original notion of a grade-separated plaza and pedestrian arcade along the edge of Skyline Park. The retail uses, though exciting and in many cases new to Denver, were designed to relate to the new 16th Street Mall and not, as once imagined, to Skyline Park. Some of the uses at the end of the development, near 17th and Arapahoe Streets, did relate to the park, but they were not the intensely pedestrian type of retail imagined by Halprin. The park and its surrounding development were now complete.

In 1975, the Park Central building won an Honor Award for Excellence in Design from the American Institute of Architects. Writing about this project in the February 1980 issue of the *AIA Journal*, John Pastier commented on the park next to the award-winning building: "For the 9-5ers, lunch hour is a high point of the day and Park Central gives them a good place to spend it. Skyline Park is part of a view corridor centered on the 70-year-old D & F Tower... Lawrence Halprin Associates produced a design that is pleasant and respectable, but one which lacks the force and panache of the firm's Portland Fountain or

Seattle Freeway Park. But like those more daring works it seems well used, judging from the turnout on a sunny autumn day.”⁵²

In 1986, the Denver economy fell into a severe recession with the bust of the oil boom. The focus of the city turned to recovery, and budgets were tight. Maintenance in the Parks and Recreation Department was limited to basic needs and concentrated on parks in residential neighborhoods. As any asset ages, it requires increased maintenance and rework, neither of which were bestowed upon Skyline Park. Around this time, the City of Denver and the Downtown Denver Partnership began creating a vision for the long-term economic and physical development of central Denver. The result, the 1986 *Downtown Area Plan*, became the blueprint for future planning for the city.

The July 1990 demolition of the Central Bank building at 15th and Arapahoe Streets left behind a block-size surface parking lot instead of a classic historic building as the endpoint to Skyline Park.⁵³ The park felt empty, less comfortable, and less inviting. That same year a newly revitalized Cherry Creek Shopping Center opened south of the Central Business District, continuing to pull retail and shoppers from the downtown area. The Denver economy boomed again in the early 1990s. The Lower Downtown historic district was transformed. Now known as “LoDo,” the area was becoming a mixed-use neighborhood of residences and nightlife, situated between newly built Coors Field baseball stadium and the Pepsi Center arena.

In 1996, Design Workshop, Inc., a local landscape architecture, land planning, and urban design firm, developed a plan that recommended demolishing the three-block park to replace it with street-grade expanses of open turf and paved or hardscape athletic courts. The plan would convert the fountains into children’s play areas and planters. The Skyline Park Master Plan Study was intended to attract support for a bond proposal on the November 1998 ballot to begin the funding process.⁵⁴ Though the plan resulted in the inclusion of \$2 million for the renovation of Skyline Park as part of a \$100 million general obligation bond issue passed by Denver voters in November 1998, community support for the proposed changes was not assured.

In May 2000, the City of Denver and the Downtown Denver Partnership again undertook a planning process for the renewal of Skyline Park. Called the Skyline Park Revitalization Initiative, the coalition’s stated goal was not to produce a new design for the park, but “to develop a program and design guidelines to serve as the foundation for the redesign of the Park.” The group included representatives from downtown and city agencies who met monthly. The process was completed in April 2001. Toronto-based

⁵² “Evaluation: singular structure in Denver: Park Central Building, 1973; Architects: W. C. Muchow and Partners,” AIA Journal 69 (February 1980): 30-37.

⁵³ Michael Romano, “All Quiet as Bank Demolition Starts,” Rocky Mountain News (July 10, 1990) 10. The demolition was contested by preservationists, and there had been rallies and protests at the site, as well as petitions and vocal objections at public hearings.

⁵⁴ Skyline Park Master Plan, Denver, Colorado (Denver: Design Workshop, Inc., September, 1997). A copy of this report has been submitted in the Field Notes – HALS-CO-01.

Urban Strategies and Greenberg Consultants proposed an approach to the park focused on developing programming for the short term before looking at a complete redesign of the park and plans for long-term programming. It recommended complete revitalization of the park with emphasis on flexible spaces, town-square-type activities, a stronger relationship to Denver cultural/physical identity, and better management.

Opposition to the Greenberg plan developed in the preservation community because of its recommendation for complete redesign of the park. Preservationists viewed Lawrence Halprin as a premier modernist landscape designer and Skyline Park as a prime representation of his work.

Requests for Qualifications (RFQs) were sent out to landscape firms nationwide. Out of nearly forty firms who expressed interest, the City contacted five finalists including DHM Design Corporation of Denver, in association with Cater, Tighe, Leeming and Kajiwara; EDAW, in association with the Jerde Partnership International; Hargreaves Associates of San Francisco; KenKay Associates; and Thomas Balsley Associates of New York. Following interviews, Balsley's firm was selected.

Realizing that the preservation constituency had never officially been involved in any of the previous planning sessions, the Skyline Park Revitalization Committee was expanded to include representatives from all stakeholders in the design review committee in March 2002. The lengthy, and sometimes contentious, public process included many opportunities for comment on the evolving plan.⁵⁵ A "User Intercept Study" was conducted. Alternative design proposals were produced, presented, and reviewed. Ultimately, the City and County of Denver made the decision and demolition of Halprin's design for Skyline Park began in May 2003.

⁵⁵ Key people and groups involved in the decision making process are provided in Appendix A. A copy of the "User Intercept Study" has been included in the Field Notes for HALS-CO-01.

Skyline Park - A Timeline

- 1958 Denver's Downtown Urban Renewal Authority [DURA] is established to promote downtown redevelopment.
- 1966 Real Estate Research Corporation of Denver studies the downtown area for redevelopment. Their document, Land Use and Marketability Study, includes a proposal for an urban park, eventually known as Skyline Park.
- 1966 Nov. Architectural design firm Baume, Polivnick and Hatami selected to begin conceptual design studies for the Skyline area.
- 1968 Skyline Urban Design and Development Study developed by Hatami/Tanaka Associates introduces a Master Plan showing the first formal design ideas for Skyline Park. Their final study was published in 1970.
- 1969 Three block area along Arapahoe Street slated for Skyline Urban Renewal Project is vacant land – a sea of empty lots and surface parking.
- 1970 DURA commissions Muchow Associates, Architects to design the Park Central Building at the corner of 15th and Arapahoe Streets, flanking the future Skyline Park.
- 1970 DURA commissions The Office of Lawrence Halprin Associates from San Francisco to design the flagship landscape space, Skyline Park.
- 1972 DURA hires Berglund-Cherne Company to construct Phase I of Skyline Park.
- 1973 Skyline Park's first block is completed and opens to fanfare. Park Central Building opens.
- 1975 DURA initiates Phase II - the final two blocks of Skyline Park – and hires Western Empire Construction to complete the work.
- 1976 Skyline Park is completed.
- 1982 16th Street Mall opens
- 1983 Tabor Center work further anchors the Skyline redevelopment initiative.
- 1986 The Downtown Denver Partnership and the City of Denver work to produce the Downtown Area Plan, envisioning long-term economic and physical development for central Denver.

- 1990 The Central Bank Building, the western anchor for the park across 15th Street, is demolished.
- 1990s Skyline Park begins to decline; programmed activities decline.
- 1990s Denver Mayor Wellington Webb (in office from 1991-2003) sponsors numerous planning, design, and building initiatives. Skyline Park comes under scrutiny as an urban space that could benefit from a facelift in order to better support local businesses.
- 1997 Design Workshop generates a proposal to redesign of Skyline Park. It is published as Skyline Park Master Plan.
- 1998 Denver residents pass approval for a \$100 million general obligation bond issue, which includes provisions to renovate Skyline Park.
- 1998 Inventory and Assessment Report conducted leading to a new proposal published as the Skyline Park Master Plan.
- 2000 The City of Denver and the Downtown Denver Partnership form a coalition and initiate a planning process called the Skyline Park Revitalization Initiative.
- 2001 The City and County of Denver and the Downtown Denver Partnership commission Urban Strategies / Greenberg Consultants to study the site; findings published as Skyline Park Revitalization Initiative (April, 2001).
- 2001 Lawrence Halprin writes to Charles Birnbaum, Director of The Cultural Landscape Foundation, regarding the future of Skyline Park.
- 2001 The City of Denver opens a national Request for Qualifications to redesign Skyline Park. Over 40 firms submit material; they select five finalists to be interviewed.
- 2002 Denver preservationists contact the Historic Landscape Initiative [HLI] about the imminent threat posed by the design RFQ and initiative to Skyline Park, describing the park as a “modern masterwork of landscape architecture.”
- 2002 May University of Colorado – Denver sponsors the “Skyline Park Symposium,” which includes local politicians, preservationists, and representatives of several constituency groups
- 2002 March The City of Denver forms an 18 member Skyline Park Advisory Board to conduct monthly meetings regarding the evolution of Skyline Park’s design alternatives.
- 2002 May The City of Denver sends three members of the Advisory Board and landscape architect Tom Balsley to meet with Lawrence Halprin in San Francisco. They

participate in an RSVP styled “Taking Part Workshop,” led by Mr. Halprin, to consider alternatives for Skyline Park. Participants return home with three alternatives: a preservation strategy with minor changes sanctioned by Mr. Halprin; a combination alternative with some changes and new design features; and a redesign alternative that largely removed the Halprin design.

- 2002 Aug. Consensus still not reached by the Advisory Board about the design alternatives, despite pressure from the City. The combination alternative has been largely abandoned. Plan presented to City of Denver shows major redesigns.
- 2002 Sept. Public meeting held to present two of the design alternatives – the preservation revision plan and the full redesign.
- 2002 Dec. Plan presented publicly that shows the park as redesigned, with a few pieces of the original Halprin fountains and walls and some trees preserved.
- 2002 Dec. Plans presented to the Advisory Board – no consensus.
- 2003 Plan presented to the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board – approved.
- 2003 Ann Mullins, FASLA and Ann Komara, Assistant Professor and Principal Investigator, submit an Emergency Funding Grant request through Colorado Preservation, Inc. to secure funding from the Colorado State Historical Fund for Emergency Documentation of Skyline Park. Grant awarded.
- 2003 May HALS documentation by Ann Komara and University of Colorado students begins. Photographer Gifford Ewing documents the site for the HALS team.
- 2003 May Demolition fences erected around Skyline Park; final documentation occurs.
- 2003 June Demolition commences. Phase I construction for Thomas Balsley Associates redesign commences as demolition nears completion.
- 2003 Lawrence Halprin receives Medal of Arts from President George Bush.
- 2004 Skyline Park reopens. Construction on the redesign is incomplete due to lack of funds.
- 2006 University of Colorado – Denver Department of Landscape Architecture sponsors an exhibition, “Skyline Park 1973-2003,” featuring the drawings, photographs, and field notes for the Historic American Landscapes Survey (HALS) documentation. Exhibition co-sponsors include the National Park Service and Colorado Preservation, Inc.
- 2008 Aug. The two remaining Halprin era fountains in Skyline Park are turned on for the Democratic National Convention.

Chapter 3: Skyline Park - Design and Materials

When the crew of students from the University of Colorado-Denver entered Skyline Park one hot morning in early May 2003, they found a park that was structurally sound with minimal visible damage to any of the major features, elements, or surfaces. The major exception to this proved to be in the planting. Given the dire haste required to accomplish the measurements and field documentation within the two and a half weeks prior to the onset of the demolition (and this time frame overlapping with the University's finals week!), some method invested with efficiency and accuracy was critical. The solution was to obtain from the City of Denver a set of full size reproductions of the construction documents created by Lawrence Halprin and Associates – and then measure for differences. The marked up prints are included in the field notes submitted with this package. [HALS-CO-01 Field Notes] The following description of the park's materials and elements is based on the inventory conducted during those two weeks, supplemented by reference to field photographs and slides, and the archival photographs taken by Gifford Ewing in May of 2003. A logical order to present this material commences with the layout and circulation, then moves to fountains and features, surfaces and walls, and planting, and concludes with elements such as lights, drinking fountains, and trash receptacles.

Where appropriate, the description will address the entire three block lengths of the park; otherwise, it will proceed according to the block numbering sequence established in this text and shown in the HALS measured drawings. Block 1, the first completed, lies at the western end of the set between 15th Street and the 16th Street Pedestrian Mall. Block 2, between the 16th Street Mall and 17th Street, contains the Daniels & Fisher (D & F) Tower at its westernmost end. Block 3 spans from 17th to 18th Streets.

Design concept

Although the functional and social bases for Halprin team's design of Skyline Park are cited earlier in this document (see pp. 22-24), it is equally important to note the inspiration for the design. In their history, Paul Foster and Barbara Gibson noted Halprin's references to and drawings of the local Colorado landscape.⁵⁶ Halprin was particularly impressed with the red sandstone rock formations typical of the Rocky Mountain foothills that he found around Red Rocks Amphitheatre. Halprin's interests in ecology and water systems also prompted his understanding of the foothill arroyos: deeply cut channels created by water that formed a cooler moister microclimate supporting trees and shrubs. These local references influenced the selection of materials and color for the park, and arguably influenced the experience offered to a visitor through the layout and distribution of elements within the sequence of the three blocks.

⁵⁶ Foster and Gibson, History of Skyline Park.

Layout and circulation

Skyline Park spans three urban blocks fronting along Arapahoe Street; it is laid out parallel to the street with a uniform 100' depth from this street edge covering approximately one third of each block. Because of the street crossings, the park is three physically separated spaces; nonetheless, the conception and execution of the design treat these spaces as unique individual units within a unified whole. To create a coherent linear park linking these separated parts, the designers employed several strategies. As a result of this, the design of Skyline Park demonstrated coordinated spatial and circulation systems where the structure and sequence of the spaces was established by a uniform palette of materials and elements: concrete and brick, trees and groundcovers, and seating and lighting.

The structure of the park's spaces and circulation patterns was established primarily through the layout of concrete walls and planting beds, with walking surfaces alternating between scored concrete and brick pavers. Aerial photographs and the plan views and analyses contained in the HALS drawings reveal the sequence of spaces and materials supporting the coherence developed across the three blocks.⁵⁷ [See HALS CO-01 Sheets 2-5] Pedestrian movement was a key concept for linking the blocks, and the layout supports two main paths of movement: a direct route and an experiential route.

The direct route flanks the fronts of the buildings along the interior edge of the park. Its consistent concrete pavement, scored in a large grid pattern, and the generous width of this path allowed for direct movement across each block. Originally, this route was unobstructed, but in the 1990s restaurants in all three blocks enclosed seating areas off their entrances. This necessitated a shift of pedestrians away from the buildings, and it effectively slowed this "rapid movement lane." The seating area was particularly detrimental to fluid pedestrian movement alongside the Park Central Building in Block 1.

Reflecting Halprin's design ideas about designing variations into pedestrian experiences, movement pattern flowing through the interior spaces of the park followed a generally centralized path whose modulated sequence was punctuated by large gathering spaces and smaller seating areas in all blocks. [See HALS-CO-01 Sheets 2-5 and 8-9] The width and elevation directed the path of movement and offered shifting views along the lengths of the park and into side pockets. A split or division of the central path into two parts directed towards the sides of the park was typically found at the street ends of each block. This facilitated access to the street crossings and allowed pedestrians to feed in and out of the park in a more diffuse pattern.

The interior path or route can be understood as a choreographed experience along which people's movements eddied and flowed, gathered and spun off. For instance, in Block 1, a visitor entered an open space around the fountain by descending along a slightly graded ramp from the corner of 15th Street and Arapahoe Street. [See HALS-CO-001 Sheets 1-3] A large level space embraced the fountain, its streetside edge formed by a retaining seat wall and sloped berm area for planting and trees. The path was then modulated to offer the choice of a seating area nestled within raised planting beds or along

⁵⁷ Several aerial photographs are included in the set of archival black and white photographs by Gifford Ewing. Some aerial slide images included in the field notes.

a wide opening leading into a gathering space just below the level of the 16th Street Mall. The visitor could then choose to move up a set of stairs to the Mall at the corner of Arapahoe Street, or off to the side and around another large planter onto the Mall itself.

Upon crossing the pedestrian mall the visitor entered Block 2, where the entire Arapahoe Street edge was a raised berm created by a retaining wall, and planted with trees; this provided a consistent base line for the experience. Upon entering the block the visitor's path descended from street level via either a few steps, or down a slight ramp, to where the park opened out onto a performance space below the D & F Tower. After traversing the space, the path then rose slightly as it necked down into a compressed space between walls and raised planters, only to open out again in a gathering space around the fountain before rising up steps to meet the grade level at 17th Street. [See the longitudinal section on HALS-CO-01 Sheets 3-4]

From there, a visitor crossed at a traffic light on 17th Street and descended a gentle ramp flanked by raised planting beds to enter Block 3. In this block, the pedestrian path stayed at this lower elevation until arriving at the final fountain located at the end of the block at the 18th Street entrance. The movement system's variation was developed through shifts in the width and seating opportunities offered adjacent to the movement system, and the side edges, which varied from seat walls to terraces, which merged into the layers of the fountain's cascade. [See HALS CO-01 Sheets 4-5 and 7]

Fountains and features

Halprin incorporated fountains in many of his urban parks and plazas, designing them as integral pieces of each site's image and experience. The individual, sculptural designs reflected Halprin's study and drawings of water in natural settings – streams, cascades, and tides. Halprin understood that water attracted visitors, and he expected people to interact with the fountains, moving through and over them. Skyline Park contained three unique fountains that mediated the climate with cooling water, enhanced the visitor's sensory experience of the site, and provided signature features for each block. Although individual in design, each fountain was constructed of concrete. As a set, they became lively focal points within Skyline Park and reflected the conceptual idea of creating highlights or moments within the sequence of movement and experience linking the blocks.

In terms of conceptualization and implementation, the fountain in Block 1 was the most experimental. [See HALS-CO-01 Sheets 2-3, 6] Halprin commissioned the sculptor Herb Goldman, from Manhattan Beach, California, to design the fountain as an interactive feature of the park.⁵⁸ Goldman first created a 5/16" scale model of clay to convey the sculptural idea; from this he then created a 1/2" scale model in fiberglass.⁵⁹ This larger model served as the "construction document" to build the fountain. The fountain's shell

⁵⁸ For more information on internationally renowned Herb Goldman, see <http://www.herbgoldman.com> (2005).

⁵⁹ Letter of March 15, 1971 from Lawrence Halprin to Herb Goldman, "Re: D.U.R.A Skyline Park Project," University of Pennsylvania - Halprin Archives, Box 159, 014.I.A.4920.

was fabricated as a steel frame set on a cast-in-place concrete plinth holding the pump mechanisms and fountain works. These internal mechanical parts were accessible through a small maintenance door that was framed into the structure. The final step was spraying the steel frame with gunnite, a cementaceous concrete material, to create a textured surface.⁶⁰ The fountain became a sculptural feature through which people could see and move over and around. The water flowed over the top of the central portions to create veils of water. By 2003, water had not been running in the fountains for some time, due to both breakage of some pump elements as well as to maintenance issues. However, a test of the fountain in Block 1 occurred in May of 2003, and there are some images in the archival photographs and the Field notes showing that fountain in operation. This fountain, the most innovative of the three in terms of form and construction, has been demolished.

Halprin oversaw the development of the other two fountains designed in collaboration with his assistants, Satoru Nishita and Junji Shirai. [See HALS CO-01 Sheets 3-7] These became features of their respective blocks, each reflecting the conceptual ideas appropriate to their location in the design sequence. The fountain in Block 2, which is extant and integrated into the 2005 redesign of the park, is a freestanding composition of cubic shapes that were constructed of board-formed cast-in-place concrete. The drawings reproduce a 1:1 texture rubbing of the board form pattern. The water flows down the sides of cubes after bubbling out of the top of the forms. The fountain in Block 3 is largely extant and integrated into the 2005 redesign of the park. Also originally designed by Halprin's office, the feature is integrated into the berm and wall at the entrance to the block from 18th Street. The cast-in-place concrete fountain features water cascading over the angular, layered forms of the structure.

Walls, planters, and walking surfaces

Paralleling the sophistication evidenced in the fountains, the wall and planter components and walking surfaces of the park demonstrate the mastery of materials and construction associated with the office of Lawrence Halprin. Walking surfaces of the ground plane throughout the park were either brick or concrete, and all walls were cast or poured-in-place concrete. As noted in the layout description, walls and planters comprised the major structuring elements of the park.

The major entrance off 15th Street is marked by a large cast-in-place concrete planter and seat wall; this signature feature remains in 2005 as part of the redesign. Formed into the concrete planter facing 15th Street face are the words "Skyline Park" in Helvetica narrow font. [See HALS-CO-01 Sheet 1] At the opposite end of the park, the 18th Street entrance is also marked by a large raised, planting bed framed by concrete walls, and each intervening street juncture is marked by similar structures for planting trees and groundcovers. While this design vocabulary is a functional response to the construction of the park over parking structures, these beds also served to frame the ends of

⁶⁰ "What is gunnite?", <http://www.sangerssilo.com/Gunnite.html> (2003). Site notes: "Unlike conventional concrete, which is first placed and then compacted (vibrated) in a second operation, gunnite undergoes placement and compaction at the same time due to the force with which it is projected from the nozzle. Because of this it is more dense, homogeneous, strong and waterproof than any other process. Gunnite is not placed in forms, it can be impacted onto any type of shape of surface, including vertical or overhead."

each block and direct pedestrian views and movement within and into the park. Some of these planting "boxes" and a few parts of walls have been preserved as isolated elements within the fabric of the redesigned park.

The planters and retaining walls throughout the park were carefully detailed to support the conceptual ideas and design inspiration of the Colorado foothills. The concrete matrix and color were consistent throughout the park; recalling the native red Colorado sandstone, it was a cement mix with a reddish rosy tint and a matrix of local red sandstone fines, 1/4" to 1/2" in size. All of the steps, benches, trash receptacles, and even light fixtures were contained within this concrete mix; concrete for the fountains also had this matrix. The concrete work was typically board formed and cast-in-place. One example showing the board form pattern on the concrete is the fountain in Block 2. [See HALS-CO-01 Sheet 7] Other vertical surfaces reflected the board form as horizontal bands the width of a board, shown in pattern of the wall's battering. As the wall increased in height in increments of a board width, the wall stepped back by increments of 3/4". This formwork patterning, reflective of the indigenous layers of foothills sandstones, was used throughout the park. Thus, the forming, patterning and coloration of the concrete provided continuity between the three blocks.

Also linking the schema of the three blocks was the surface treatment of the concrete and the use of brick pavers. A kind of "coding" became apparent in the application of brick and concrete, and in the treatment of the various sandblasted finishes of the concrete surfaces. Walking surfaces were sandblasted heavily to provide a finish with traction, vertical wall surfaces were medium sandblast finished, and seating surfaces were sandblasted but almost smooth in finished surface texture. Brick paved surfaces were generally those areas of high traffic, or the gathering spaces such as the "stage" area near the D & F Tower. The pavers used were red to rosy brown coloration, with a smooth wire cut finish, size 8.0" x 4.0" x 1.3" thick, and laid in a running bond pattern. The location of the brick paving typically indicated a gathering space or moment of pause in the sequence between spaces of the park, as is evident in the measured drawings. [See HALS-CO-01 Sheets 2-5] All other walkways were concrete, scored and with expansion joints.

Planting

Planting was the least intact aspect of the park in 2003, reflecting both a natural cyclical process of plant life as well as conditions of neglect. An analysis of the planting design is presented in the measured drawings, which shows the difference between the park's condition then versus the planting indicated in the Halprin Office's file construction drawings. [See HALS CO-01 Sheets 6 and 8, and Field Notes] These drawings reflect the various surfaces of grass, mulch, and bare dirt found in 2003. Plants were typically located on berms along Arapahoe Street, in large "planter boxes" constructed in concrete, or, in the area near the tower, in tree pits surmounted by tree grilles flush with the pedestrian surface. Many areas that originally had been planted with grass or groundcover were barren patches of earth which the City of Denver had covered with a layer of shredded bark fiber wood mulch, in a layer usually about 3" thick.

Trees were overgrown, missing, or in a few instances, left as stumps. Field notes contain documentation of the location, species and condition of the trees in 2003. The tree palette remained much as established by Halprin's office: a limited list that reflected a systematic use of deciduous street trees along Arapahoe Street, deciduous shade trees, ornamental trees for visual and seasonal interest, and evergreen coniferous trees to mark entrances. The major tree species were:

<u>Street trees:</u>	Honeylocust - <i>Gledetsia triacanthos inermis</i>
<u>Shade trees:</u>	Green Ash - <i>Fraxinus pennsylvanica lanceolata</i> Norway Maple - <i>Acer platanoides</i> Red Oak - <i>Quercus borealis / rubra</i>
<u>Ornamental trees:</u>	Crabapple - <i>Malus</i> species Japanese Maple - <i>Acer ginnala</i> Ornamental Plum - <i>Prunus</i> species
<u>Coniferous trees:</u>	Austrian Pine - <i>Pinus nigra</i> Norway Spruce - <i>Picea concolor abies</i>

The plant materials varied on each block to reflect the conceptual idea of moving through a forested shady, contemplative grove in Block 3, to a more open block where the trees frame the open gathering spaces, to Block 1, where the dominant planting surrounded the space along the edges.⁶¹ This could be understood as an abstracted reference to the foothills arroyos, where the water conditions begin within with streams arising out of the ground and through channels, as in the fountain in Block 3, and gradually move through an urban condition leading towards the openness of Block 1 and its freestanding fountain and more open grassy banks for sitting under specimen and street trees. Halprin's design used trees to create a microclimate and signature for that particular block, with a consistent use of the street trees (Honeylocusts) as a consistent link.

Elements and Fixtures

A roster of elements and fixtures throughout the park supported the comfort and experience of the visitor. These included benches, drinking fountains, garbage cans, and lights, all of which show up throughout the measured drawings and photographs. Since the 1970s, the City and County of Denver Department of Parks and Recreation had added a variety of signs, several trashcans, and some additional lighting.

Benches, versus seat walls, were attached to walls in areas of each block. Their locations, and a detail of these wood slat benches are shown in the drawings. [See HALS-CO-01 Sheets 2-5 and 11] The drinking fountains in the park, one per block and attached to vertical concrete surfaces, were a standard basin and fixture manufactured by Haws of Berkeley, California. These simple round basins appeared numerous times in

⁶¹ The planting in Block 1 was limited to constraints of limited bearing loads for weight over the below-grade parking structure.

advertisements in Landscape Architecture magazine, for instance in the April 1972 issue.⁶²

Several elements were designed as integral components of the wall system. For instance, trash receptacles were built into seat walls with their lids flush to the surface of the wall. One of these can be seen in a detail drawing on Sheet 11, and there are close-up views of them in the archival photographs as well as in the slides submitted in the Field Notes. Lighting fixtures were also built into the seat walls and flank walls of various ramps, stairs and passages. Tall, freestanding cast concrete light standards appear throughout the three blocks, and several remain in Block 3. Their locations are shown in the plan and section drawings, along with a detail. [HALS-CO-01 Sheets 2-5 and 11]

The restrained palette of materials used throughout the park, from consistent concrete coloration and treatment to street trees to lights and other elements, allowed for the park to read as a connected set. Although each of the three blocks reflected a unique character, the design by Halprin's office created a unified whole. It was not a traditional, pastoral park; it was an experience of place, a choreographed sequence of spaces in a sculptured landscape.

⁶² "Thirsty People Pleasers - Haws Drinking Faucet Co., Berkeley, CA," Landscape Architecture 56/3 (April 1972): 192.

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Project credits and information

This project was administered by Colorado Preservation, Inc., and the University of Colorado at Denver/Health Sciences Center [UCD/HSC] Department of Landscape Architecture. Ann Komara, UCD/HSC Assistant Professor of Landscape Architecture, was principal investigator and project coordinator. The project was completed under the guidance of Thomas G. Keohan, historical architect, Intermountain Regional Office, United States National Park Service.

Field documentation, including video footage by Eric Altman [Q + A Films] and archival photography by Gifford Ewing [Ewingphoto.com], was completed two weeks prior to the start-up of demolition of the park in May 2003. Under the direction of Ann Komara, the following University of Colorado students carried out field work: Manish Chalana, Yi-Ping Fang, Kristen George, Arina Habich, Simone Howell, Erik Husman, Casey Martin, Carol McClanahan, Joey Noobanjong, Leanne Vielehr, Pearl Wang, Susan Whitacre, and Eugene Yehyen-Chun. The drawings were produced under the direction of Ann Komara and prepared by five students: Jon D. Hunt, Zachary Peterson, E. Max Reiner, Mark Sullivan, and Sebastian Wielogorski. Research assistants were Jon D. Hunt, Carol Slocum, and Christine Taniguchi. Ann Komara wrote the report; Barbara Gibson contributed a chapter, and Lysa Wegman-French, historian at Intermountain Regional Office, United States National Park Service, provided editorial assistance.

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Appendix A

People/Groups Involved with the Redevelopment of Skyline Park

The following lists reflect the make-up of these committees, teams, and task forces. Errors or omissions are the fault of the author.

1. Skyline Park Master Plan Inventory and Assessment (1996)

This design charette and symposium included a number of public sessions with local design consultants, advisors, and constituents. It laid the foundation for subsequent redevelopment ideas. Participants produced a report, a copy of which has been included in the HALS-CO-01 Field Notes. This report formed the basis of a more refined document by Design Workshop (1997) that has also been included in the field notes.

Team members included:

- Design Workshop, Inc. – Project lead (team included staff members and summer interns)
 - Downtown Denver Partnership
 - City and County of Denver
 - Lowe Enterprises/One Park Central
 - Colorado Chapter American Society of Landscape Architects
 - Westin Hotel
 - Holtze Executive Place

2. Skyline Park Revitalization Initiative (2000-2001)

This effort involved Urban Strategies and Greenberg Consultants working with the City and the Downtown Denver Partnership. Participants produced a report, a copy of which has been included in the HALS-CO-01 Field Notes.

3. Skyline Park Master Plan Steering and Selection Committee (2001)

The following people participated on the committee charged with selecting the designer/firm to redesign Skyline Park. Members included:

Barnes-Gelt, Susan – Councilmember at-Large, Denver City Council

Barsocchi, Edward – Lowe Enterprises, Property owner representative

Bressi, Todd – Consultant (Non-Local Expert)

Bressler, Gene – Chair, Department of Landscape Architecture, University of Colorado at Denver

Chadwick, Bar – Project Manager, Denver Department of Parks and Recreation Planning

Desmond, John – Downtown Denver Partnership, Project Manager

Gibson, Barbara – Historian (Historical Consultant Representative)

Hunt, Don – Downtown Denver Resident

Orr, Elizabeth – Mayor's Office, Project (City Administration Representative)

Schluntz, Roger L., FAIA – Professor, University of New Mexico, and Process Consultant

Tryba, David Owen – Architect

Whitman, Karen – Manager, Pioneer Courthouse Square (Non-Local Expert)

4. Skyline Design Review Committee (2002)

The following people participated on the committee charged with reviewing the options for preservation and/or the redesign of Skyline Park.

Committee facilitator: Chadwick, Bar – Denver Department of Parks and Recreation

Committee Co-Chairs;

Mejia, James E. – Manager, Denver Department of Parks and Recreation
Wedgeworth, Elbra – City Councilor, District 8, and Skyline Park Design
Committee Members:

Barsocchi, Edward – Lowe Enterprises Colorado Inc. (property owner)
Betts, Don – Downtown Denver Residents Organization
Bishop, Tina – Chairman, Denver Landmarks Commission
Brooker, Kathleen – President, Historic Denver
Desmond, John – Director, Downtown Denver Partnership
Elfenbein, Sharon – Administrative Assistant to City Council President Joyce Foster
Fry, Susan – Assistant Director, Denver Department of Parks and Recreation
Gibbs, Tyler – Director of Urban Design, Denver Community Planning & Development Agency
Gibson, Barbara – Executive Director, LoDo District, Inc.
Hawkey, Tom – Project Manger, Denver Department of Parks and Recreation
Mitchell, Bill – Director of Government and Community Affairs, Denver Metro & Convention
Visitors Bureau
Mullins, Ann – Principal, Civitas, Inc., and former Board Member, Colorado Preservation, Inc.
Najarian, Mark – Senior Engineer – Department of Public Works
Pahl, Barb – Director – Mountain-Plains Region, National Trust for Historic Preservation
Proctor, Rob – Artistic Director, Denver Botanic Gardens
Rudolph, Dick – Senior Vice President at Means Knaus
Schutt, Jeff – St. Charles Neighborhood Group
Wanke, Connie – President, Friends of Skyline Park

5. Skyline Park: A Public Symposium (May 2002)

The purpose of this symposium held at the University of Colorado – College of Architecture and Planning, was to engage in public discourse on the history and condition of Skyline Park, and to provide information to the Skyline Park Master Plan Steering Committee and Project Design Team. Speakers included:

Bressi, Todd – Editor, *Places, A Forum of Environmental Design* and Project Consultant
Bressler, Gene – Chair, Department of Landscape Architecture, University of Colorado at Denver
Foster, Paul – Former Director, Denver Department of Parks and Recreation
Hunt, Don – President of Antero Co.,; Chair, Downtown Denver Partnership Civic Ventures Board
Komara, Ann – Landscape Architect and Assistant Professor, University of Colorado at Denver
Lesh-Laurie, Georgia – Chancellor of the University of Colorado at Denver
Wedgeworth, Elbra – City Councilor, District 8, and Skyline Park Design Committee Co-Chair

6. Participants in the "One Day Skyline Park Workshop" (May 2002)

This was a "Taking Part" Workshop held May 31st at the Office of Lawrence Halprin in San Francisco, CA. Participants produced a report, a copy of which has been included in the HALS-CO-01 Field Notes. Participants included:

Balsley, Thomas – Landscape Architect and Principal, Balsley Associates. Lead designer for redesign
Halprin, Lawrence – Office of Lawrence Halprin
Mejia, James – Manager, Denver Parks and Recreation, Project manager for Skyline Park redesign
Mullen, Dee – Office of Lawrence Halprin
Mullins, Ann – Landscape Architect, representing Historic Denver and Colorado Preservation, Inc.
Scardina, Paul – Office of Lawrence Halprin
Tryba, David Owen – Architect and member of the Skyline Selection Committee

Appendix B

Research Bibliography

This research bibliography pertains to the life and work of Lawrence Halprin (b. 1916). It addresses works authored by Halprin and his offices, as well as works about Halprin by others. In addition to document citations, it contains media and interview references. The citations for websites are representative rather than exhaustive. While not claiming to cite every known source, this bibliography compiles an annotated bibliography (1981) with bibliographies from scholarly works and adds recent materials through September 2007. Much of Halprin's office archives are at the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA. It is our hope that scholars researching Halprin will benefit from this effort and continue to add to scholarship on this important designer.

Ann Komara, Bibliographer

Denver, Colorado. September 2008

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