



Parks play an interactive role in our built environment

Published: Friday, July 06, 2012, 1:55 PM



By **Staten Island Advance**

BY: AIA, Staten Island Chapter

Staten Islanders may complain about a lot of things, but one thing you'll never hear them complain about is their parks. They treasure them and visit them religiously for physical and spiritual renewal.

Where Europeans have piazzas in every part of their towns, we have parks. Here on Staten Island we're fortunate to have many of them ranging from very large, with roads, lakes and streams, swamps and creeks, to the smallest containing just a playground. With the population growth here in the last two decades, park usage has risen and parks have become a necessity in every neighborhood.

Where parks are located around residences, they become extensions of family homes, functioning as outdoor living rooms we democratically share and support with our neighbors.

Today we'd like to look at the value of parks and their interactive role in a built environment using several Island examples. □

WESTERLEIGH PARK

Westerleigh Park has a rich history dating to the 19th century when it was owned by the National Prohibition Campground Association. Many political gatherings were held there, including a visit by President Theodore Roosevelt.

The architecture of the park as an urban element strongly ties in with the homes and neighborhood that surround it. Like a well-woven piece of fabric, the scale of streets and sidewalks provide links between them.

The houses in this community smartly pay homage to the park, their front elevation designed with porches and generous windows to capture the green view. □

VETERANS PARK



Enlarge

Staten Island Advance

The fountain monument to E.Putnam, a principal of PS 20, doubles as a bird fountain in Port Richmond's Veterans Park. (Photo Courtesy of AIA)

Parks gallery (6 photos)

Veterans Park, established in Port Richmond in 1836, is the oldest park on the Island. The scale of its streets is modestly larger than Westerleigh Park, the addition of religious buildings, a public library and PS 20 shifting its use to a broader civic participation.

Because of these buildings' diversity, the park is frequented by local residents as well as those from nearby communities.

Many of the older homes that surround this park display large wrap-around porches for climatic convenience and pride of place.

□

TAPPEN PARK□

Stapleton's Tappen Park differs greatly from the two already mentioned in that it is located in a higher density area, surrounded by heavily traveled roads and hosts a variety of mixed uses.

Here, too, we find a rich history; the park dates to the immediate post Civil War period and once was known as Washington Square. Situated here is the Edgewater Village Hall (1889), which is designed in Romanesque style. The park also houses a comfort station and a gazebo for performances.

All the buildings that surround the park are for commercial usage and most have residences above them. Because of its bustling nature, Tappen Park is frequented at all times by shoppers, bus and train commuters, as well as local residents. The Stapleton Public Library on Canal Street currently is going through an enlargement project, adding to the rich architectural nature of this park.

The differences among these examples demonstrate that parks serve multiple functions in various settings. Whether used for exercise, walking the dog, chasing a ball, a romantic meeting, musical performance, or simply to find shelter from the heat, they are inextricably connected to the architecture that surrounds them. □

Architect's Corner, written by members of the Staten Island Chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA), appears twice a month in Home.