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Green Design and the City

Chicago Lincoln Park – Nature paper

It is important to incorporate nature into large metropolitan areas such as Chicago, Illinois. Chicago's Lincoln Park not only brings visual pleasure through its extensive gardens, but also offers to be an oasis for those daily engaged in the busyness of city life.

Lincoln Park started off as a small public cemetery in the northern end of Chicago in the mid 1800's. Shallow graves were used to bury those stricken by cholera and small pox. By the 1850's the public became aware of the health risks associated with these diseased bodies. They wanted the bodies removed to turn the area into a park. Although the bodies were not yet removed, in 1860 the city of Chicago did allocate 60 acres of unused land and named it Lake Park. The city then started to construct plans to turn this area of Chicago into a large park, giving \$10,000 for improvements. Shortly after President Lincoln was assassinated, the park was renamed in his honor. Finally in 1869 the Lincoln Park Commission removed the bodies and placed them in other near by cemeteries. In conjunction with this, the city expanded Lincoln Park south to North Avenue and north to Diversey Parkway. In 1934 it was expanded northward to Foster Avenue. The final expansion of Lincoln Park took place in the 1950's which brought it to its current size of 1,208 acres. ("Parks") Today Chicago's Lincoln Park is the largest metropolitan park in the United States, ("Chicago").

Today Lincoln Park has an incredible array of facilities and opportunities for many recreational activities. The facilities include baseball diamonds, a golf course, a driving range, basketball courts, tennis courts, volleyball courts as well as public beaches, paths used for many activities, several field houses, a fitness center, harbors with boating amenities, landscaped gardens, a conservatory, a theater on the lake as well as the renowned Lincoln Park Zoo. ("Lincoln", "Parks", "Chicago") The park is open from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. everyday of the week, ("Chicago"). Here is a picture of a concert at the outdoor theater around 1907, ("Lincoln").



In addition to all of these wonderful facilities that the park has set in place, the community has also brought a good deal of activity to the park on their own. On a sunny day you will see people bring their barbeques to the park for an afternoon of picnicking and relaxation. They will lay out beach blankets on the grassy meadows in the park and enjoy the escape it provides from the busy city life. The park is also a great escape for dogs who live in the city, with lots of grass to roam and go wild in. The paths are often used by inline skaters and those who like to play a game or so of pick up hockey. The park is also enjoyed during the winter. Cross country skiers make their way around the flat fields of Lincoln Park once the snow has accumulated. (“Chicago”) Locals and tourists alike use Chicago’s Lincoln Park to their full advantage.

Perhaps one of the most fascinating aspects of the park is the zoo. It got an early start in 1868 when 2 mute swans were donated to the park, (“Lincoln”), and it has grown dramatically since. The Lincoln Park Zoo is completely free to all visitors and is open year round. It is home to many different animals such as polar bears, penguins, gorillas, reptiles, monkeys and many more. In total there are nearly 1,250 animals residing in the zoo. (“Lincoln”) This picture, (“Letter”) shows the way the zoo is set up within the park.



The Farm-in-the-zoo section is particularly fascinating. It is sponsored by John Deere, (“Lincoln”) and gives children and adults alike a chance to experience a farm within the middle of the large city of Chicago. Here is a picture I took when I was there, it shows the main set up of the farm.



It is a small farm with pigs, cows, horses and other animals which children can touch and feed. There is also a daily demonstration where a worker will show and explain all the

steps it takes to milk a cow. (“Lincoln”) It is a wonderful contrast from the busy urban life within central Chicago.

I feel that there are some negatives to the Lincoln Park in Chicago. For one, it is a very large area which needs to be maintained. This is not only very time consuming but also incredibly costly. Some might say that it is too big and it has taken too much land out of the city that could be used for commercial and business endeavors instead. Another down side of the park is that it is not completely a relaxing, stress free escape from the hustle and bustle of the city. There is so much going on in the park, and with so many people taking advantage of it, it gets quite busy and sometimes crowded as well.

However, I believe that the positive aspects that the Lincoln Park brings to the city of Chicago greatly outweigh the negatives. For one, it is an immense area of greenery. There is vegetation and life all around. It is a beautiful site to see when all the gardens are in bloom. And it does provide an escape from the noisy streets of the city. One can get lost and relax in Lincoln Park once they find that niche that best suits them. There are so many opportunities for sports and recreational activities within the park. Although one might live in downtown Chicago, they can go to Lincoln Park and engage in almost any outdoors activity they could want. Overall, Lincoln Park adds to the appeal of Chicago.

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