

Chapter V      Potrero del Sol

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CHAPTER V

Potrero del Sol

Because a worthy and prosperous dry-goods merchant can bid a cash-boy run an errand, it by no means logically follows that he can order a statue carved or a picture painted or a park designed in the same way. This inability to appreciate the value of taste and training is the very essence of vulgarity, and men of coarse fibre can never be made to understand by argument what anyone with any refinement of mind knows by intuition.

C.S. Sargeant, "Park Boards and Their Professional Advisers," Garden and Forest Magazine, November 21, 1894, as cited in Galen Cranz, The Politics of Park Design, M.I.T. Press, 1982.

Yes, we're talking about a participatory planning process, but it's totally absurd to be involving people in something they don't know anything about. For example, I'd say that 95 percent of the people in these communities are not aware of the fact that there is earth underneath that concrete. That is why the symbolic act of having the National Guard lift the concrete and liberate the earth is so important. That could begin a real participatory process and get their juices going.

People are out of touch, there's no question about it. This is an incredibly brutal neighborhood.

Bonnie Sherk, 1978

### Introduction and Background

In November 1977, Linda Rhodes of the design firm of Esherick, Homsey, Dodge, and Davis (EHDD) phoned to ask if I'd be willing to be part of the firm's team seeking to win a contract for the design of a park. San Francisco's Recreation and Parks Department's request for proposals for the park specified that each proposal submitted had to demonstrate the firm's ability to conduct a "community participation process." My experience seemed right, Linda said. She also intimated

that EHDD's location adjacent to the site might prove advantageous in Rec Park's eyes.

Joe Esherick, the firm's senior partner and a colleague of mine in UC Berkeley's Department of Architecture, months earlier had regaled me with the story of having to move his offices briefly from a convenient address just outside San Francisco's financial district while his landlord refurbished the building. When the work was completed, Joe discovered that his firm was expected to pay a huge rent increase. Instead, they decided to stay in the temporary location in the Mission District, in a gigantic block of a building miles away from the downtown action.

I was informed a few weeks after Linda's call that our Proposal had won the contract. I visited the firm and was shown the site from the office's second story windows: four and a half acres of broken concrete, vandalized cars, and anonymous piles of trash all rimmed with a few industrial buildings, the largest labeled "The Farm."

It was a minor relief to see the site. In fact, when Linda had described it to me, I had invented a picture of a much more pinched setting. I was operating from some image of the Mission concocted from friends' comments, television and newspaper accounts of poverty, crowding, crime, and the like. I also roughly understood that the Mission was textured and lively: a complex area of Central American immigrants, blacks, young white professionals, good food and music. But the Mission, like most of San Francisco, was a mystery to me, despite the fact that I have lived in the Bay Area for eight years and had done extensive observational studies in San Francisco--including the Mission--on the social impacts of the Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) system.

A small city, San Francisco is made up of districts with names like Sunset, Bay View/Hunter's Point, and Castro. Students of the city and city officials can readily locate these on the map. On the ground, however, district boundaries and the experience of distinctiveness do not always cohere, except in the minds of locals. Such is not true of the Castro district, with its profusion of gay people, nor of the Mission.

Despite my ignorance about the area,<sup>1</sup> I agreed to participate in this project for several reasons. My students constantly challenged the sociology I was trying to make relevant to their practical concern with building. Teaching from case situations improved my classes, and cases

had constantly to be accumulated to keep the classroom fresh. Also, identifying myself as an applied sociologist confronted me with the need for practical experience. If I was to be of professional use, it was necessary to exercise that part of my knowledge.

Designers must act on the best summary of what is known about a highly complex set of variables. Sociologists are seldom required to act or to condition the acts of others. I have been shocked but fascinated by comments from some clients: "We don't want sociology. We want your expert opinion." What a thing to hear! Nonetheless, new work increased my expertise and my reputation as an expert. It also supplemented my income.

Ultimately, I was intrigued by the Mission project because it was a perfect combination of elements fitting my personal abilities and commitments. The chance was there to do some good; to assist people in assembling something in their own interests; something useful, pleasant, lasting.

Not long before this episode began, San Francisco's Recreation and Parks Department had introduced a requirement that design firms directly involve residents in the design of neighborhood parks. Potrero del Sol<sup>2</sup> was the third park affected by Rec Park's new policy that contracts for design firms were to be awarded in two parts. The first contract included the design of a plan for community participation and its implementation through schematic design of the park. The second contract--awarded only upon satisfactory completion of the first--included design development and construction, and a continuing role for the neighborhood in monitoring the process.

Thus, it was expected that a professional would be paid to identify and assemble the relevant groups, design productive encounters between them and the design firm and, somehow, shepherd the process toward the realization of a designed place. I was a paid professional.

"Paid professional." A specter hung over the role and the very idea. In the critiques written during the 1960s of professionalism in affairs of the poor, in education, and the like, citizen participation in planning of the environment emerged as a goal almost antithetical to professional management. Technical-rational expertise, it was argued, had become a service manipulated by the powerful and privileged for the achievement of their ends. The poor were unserved. The countering force of "advocacy" planning was the solution (Davidoff, Goodman). The

argument had significant impact, on the design fields (Comerio; Sommer:8-13; Hester), and these impacts had been radically expressed in San Francisco (Castells:106-137; Kramer: 25-67).

Now, in San Francisco, participation had been routinized in a city bureaucracy. Professionalism had returned, this time mediating community processes and articulating them with the expertise of design professionals. I was being asked to participate in these affairs in one of the most activist areas of the city: a place where the legacy of the 1960s was most alive, I thought.

### Planning Participation

Suppose that all your life you have been trying to be a good planner, doing your duty as you see it and seeking to do what was for the good of the various persons who would be affected by your plans. Suppose, also that you had become convinced that this duty can be best served by trying to be a "participatory" planner. Suppose, further, that you had been chosen to design a new public facility, but with limited time and fiscal resources. Suppose, finally, that you know that many community groups had very different perceptions of what this facility "ought to be" and, yet, other groups, although certain to be affected by what is built, are seemingly disinterested in the project, or unorganized to do anything about it. How should you go about it? Which model of participation should you choose? Should it be that which promotes a sense of community; that which is democratic; that which is practical? Are there any principles which would help you decide? These are the issues which a planner increasingly faces in these times of "local control," pluralistic politics and rising entitlements. (Ouye and Protzen: 304)

Having the job meant designing an approach to it. That was weighty in prospect. Bounded by hills on three sides and a major freeway to the east, the inner Mission (map) contained roughly 52,000 residents, a density twice the city average and exceeded only in Chinatown. These features, the area's complex demography, and a class structure confounded by a burgeoning gentrification made the task vast, even overwhelming.

Large-scale participatory projects immediately raise several strategic questions. What constitutes the relevant population? How do you get their attention? How do you motivate them to participate? How do you distill, over time, a representative group from the legitimately involved population? This last problem is particularly important in

participatory design, because there must be a finite group empowered to supervise the conceptual and detail work of translating wishes into built form. In ordinary political life it is difficult to negotiate conflicting interests into policy. A form that reflects group wishes is harder to specify than a policy that reflects negotiated interests. In both cases the lobby-less lose out. Those who do not have a plan, enthusiasm, influence, or knowledge will not have an impact on the outcome. An honestly managed participatory process will motivate the inactive, reduce their ignorance, and insure that their ideas are heard and have weight.

But the honesty of the process is a problem in large-scale projects. Faced with the facts of time and budget, the easy escape of putting the best face on a difficult situation is always attractive. Baldly put, it is easier to conduct apparent participation or "consultation" than the time-consuming real thing. And, in truth, architects and paying agencies will often settle for--some may even prefer--apparent participation if the consultant can pull it off.

Another, and related, problem is the meaning of designing a group's experiences. Small, clearly-defined advocating groups, such as the Peralta parents, want someone to facilitate the realization of ends they already have in mind, not to design the experience of their participation. They want to win. The legitimacy of participation offsets the legal and authoritative fact that an official organization controls outcomes. The consultant's role is to help the participants to articulate their ideas and communicate these to the architects and the relevant responsible agency--to guarantee that the group's ideas are reflected in the design.

In the complex constituency of a larger population, the problems differ. How they will meet, begin, discuss, divide the labor, relate to each other, the architects, the funding agency, and so on, all have to be thought out and arranged--with humility. It is impossible to anticipate outcomes. I comforted myself with the fact that the site was tucked away in the southeastern-most corner of the Inner Mission. That, I thought, would at least reduce the range of interests focused on the site. I was distressingly right.

The team's participants, collectively, certainly had the experience to pull this job off.<sup>3</sup> EHDD had several projects under its belt (Santa Cruz, Stanford, and so on) that had entailed elaborate programming. CHNMB, once the firm of Lawrence Halprin, marketed itself

as distinctively structured to work with community groups. Kathy Carrick, whose title in our proposal was "community liaison" was especially qualified to work on this project by reason of experience and training in Mission community politics.

Our initial team meetings produced a relatively simple approach to the job. Our first task was to insure that every organized group in the Mission was contacted about the impending project. Since we wanted information to flow in multiple directions, Mission children were employed to leaflet the entire area with notice of our first meeting.

Special attention was paid to the fact that a few local groups had been continuously active in the politics of the park's realization. Our flyers would say "Continue the Park Planning Process," to avoid the perception that we assumed the real process began with the award of a contract, and, positively, to acknowledge the role these groups had played in bringing the project to this point.

We proposed a series of large meetings. During the first session the team would be introduced, our commitment to work with the community would be made clear. All those attending would see each other and would witness the director of Rec Park making a commitment to community participation and the building of the park. An initial exploratory discussion would elicit a range of ideas on what the park might be like or, at least, what ought to be considered in its conception.

The whole affair would be videotaped. I had learned in previous participatory projects to get recorded commitments from directors, presidents, and so on, agreeing to the process. This commitment--written, taped, or otherwise--I would prominently display to participants at various times, to boost their motivation when they became depressed or cynical and to lock the responsible authority into the process. Such a device protected me. And the promise, if broken, would cost the authority credibility. Few events have more devastating ramifications than an invitation to participate the results of which are ignored.

In subsequent meetings we planned, gradually, to identify leaders from the larger group who could form a representative site committee with the power to make interim decisions on behalf of the larger group and for subsequent review by it. All written and graphic materials would be on prominent display in the architect's office, conveniently located in the community.

Kathy and I agreed to stay flexible in the face of unknown developments. This was wise.

### Getting Started

The inviting flyers were in Spanish, Tagalog, and English. The logo for our flyers was a map outline of the four and a half acre site on which the park was to be built (photograph). On June 3, 1978 the day of the first meeting at Buena Vista Elementary School, adjacent to the park site and the architect's office, the walls were covered with the logo, large photographs of the site, and so on. This was done to keep some sense of the actual project alive to the participants. We drenched the Mission with calls to the first meeting. The gathering was a participatory dream. People of varied ages, races, ethnicities, sizes, arrived to meet the architectural team and learn of its duties as servants of the community, and to hear explicit statements from the director and associate director of the Recreation and Parks Department that the city was committed to the process being undertaken, that the money was in hand, and that a park would be built.

Our team was arrayed before this mixed crowd and we were as mixed as they: Latino, Filipino, Japanese, black, white, male, and female. Kathy began the meeting with great delight. She explained the plans and acknowledged the history of the community's prior involvement.

Kathy and I knew from our respective experiences that community participation is not easily plannable, even when groups are small, coherent, and in general agreement on ends. As this meeting unfolded, we discovered individuals and groups behind groups and they did not like each other, concretely or in the abstract.

Jack Spring, director of the Recreation and Parks Department, explained the origins of the money being used for the park. His explanation of the public referendum that made the money available proved confusing, especially to the group of twelve mainly elderly participants from Utah Street. These people were the most active of a settlement of Italians who lived just north of the park site. Working class, largely retired, they saw themselves as an island of respectability in a sea of crime and dirt produced by violent minority youth. They were slightly irritated and also overwhelmed by Spring's



discussion of Proposition J, which San Francisco voters had passed in November 1974. "Ten cents on every 100 dollars," explained Spring, "produced three million dollars a year for the purchase of open space in high-need neighborhoods." An Open Space Advisory Committee had been appointed to monitor the use of this money, he said. "Who is the Open Space Committee? Who do they work for?" Aggressively calm, Spring described how the San Francisco supervisors had each appointed two members to this committee. Its responsibility was to monitor the expenditure of taxpayer's money. "How do we find out about these things?" "Do they advertise it?"

Tom Malloy, Jack Spring's executive assistant and successor, picked up the theme we had hoped would reinforce past community-based planning efforts and reduce resentment that the project was now in the hands of a professional team: "Kathy mentioned that we are getting started. In a formalized way that's true. But I can't think of a single project that your Recreation and Parks Department has been involved with in recent years that has had more creative input, more community thinking about the opportunity to provide a great park here in the Mission District."

Knowing glances and dismissing smirks were passed back and forth among a small group of representatives of The Farm. Alternately referred to as "The Crossroad Community" by its members, this group managed an experimental project near the park site and had been very influential in helping the city acquire land. Bonnie Sherk, founder, director, and visionary leader of The Farm, had only recently come to San Francisco from New Jersey. But she came with an idea about which she was absolutely certain and dedicated to achieving. The first part was accomplished. In an assembling process strikingly similar to that of the Bootstrap leaders, she had gathered friends, common dreamers, money, and support to lease a large industrial building and grounds directly under the freeway exchange that formed the southeastern boundary of the Mission.

Bonnie and her colleagues saw The Farm not just as a small program on a piece of land but, like Bootstrap, as the seed of new life invigorated through the enlightened disposition of urban land. Harold Gilliam, environmental editor of the San Francisco Examiner and strong Farm advocate, described The Farm exactly as they would themselves:

Standing in jarring juxtaposition in the Mission District near the southeast corner of San Francisco are two monuments--one to the city of the past and the other to what might be the city of the future.

The first is the Army Street freeway interchange, arches of concrete against the sky, supporting roaring rivers of cars, trucks, and buses. It represents the freeway-building era of the immediate past, when a dominant purpose of the city, preempting other purposes, was to speed the flow of traffic, a monument built by machines for other machines.

Below and partly beneath the freeway interchange is another kind of monument, the Crossroad Community, better known as The Farm, founded on the assumption that the purpose of a city, in Lewis Mumford's words, is "The care and nurture of human being." It consists of recycled warehouses and parking lots, green plants and trees and flowers and animals and people, all interacting together, a model for what the city might undertake on a large scale in the future. It is also a monument to ingenuity, and consequently it is in trouble with people who look suspiciously on innovation of any kind.

As you come off the freeway you can easily miss the entrance to The Farm at 1499 Potrero, just where the ramp ends. But if you park on Potrero and walk back to the entrance, you'll see a plot of lawn, garden, and some trees in front of white-painted buildings on which some vines are beginning to grow. On most days you will be likely to encounter such scenes as these:

People of all ages and races tending vegetables, flowers, and small fruit trees.

Ducks and geese and chickens "performing" in the Raw Egg Animal Theater, a barnlike arena where the audience consists mostly of your children getting acquainted with the animals, listening to their sounds, drawing pictures of them.

Demonstration lectures by an expert on gardening, showing neighborhood people how to grow more vegetables in their own yards.

(There will be a one-day home-gardening workshop in French-intensive biodynamic gardening on July 28.)

The impresario of this multiverse spectacle is a small, dark-haired, quietly intense young sculptor named Bonnie Sherk.

In 1974 she and some Potrero Hill neighbors developed the idea of recycling several acres of unused land and vacant warehouses near and under the interchange. The goal was what she calls a life-scale sculpture, a unique multi-cultural, agricultural and environmental learning and gathering center, where people can experience the connection between art, health and nutrition and the earth.

In the five years of The Farm's existence, she estimates, it had been used by 10,000 people, including not only residents of the immediate community but classes from some fifty public and private schools, colleges, and universities.<sup>4</sup>

I was to learn later, during a phone call from Gilliam before this article was published, that I was, in his reckoning, among those "People who look suspiciously on innovation of any kind." But my membership in this category was a consultative accident. The real culprits were Rec Park, Utah Street, and a few scattered Sherk enemies. Thus, Malloy, noticing The Farm glances, went on to say: "What we're hoping to do now is capitalize on this creativity and bring it together and reach decisions together so we can, in fact, achieve the great park we all envisage."

Malloy was acknowledging Bonnie Sherk's contribution. But there were other angers to be salved. Walking over to a handwritten sign on the door of Buena Vista Elementary School's cafetorium, Malloy said:

. . . there's a fairly ominous little sign over here . . . it's kind of a sign of the times: "There's no more free milk for teachers or students." I think a lot of us might be concerned about what is the fate of our project if in fact there is a cut in the level of services our Recreation and Parks Department currently provides. I want to assure you--to assure you--that we're gonna build this park, and we're going to build it as quickly as possible. . . . It costs about

two thousand dollars an acre to build a park. We have four and a half acres over there and approximately nine thousand dollars in hand, including all of our design costs and any overhead that might be involved.

Malloy went on to explain the Proposition J tax override, stressing that this was "the first significant purchase" with that money, and that this would be the most challenging and interesting park to be built in the city in many years. He then described the elaborate interview process Rec Park had launched to find "the most professional design team possible," pointing out all the members with accompanying accolades and emphasizing how seriously Rec Park took the project: "They're first rate. They're experienced. They're pros. They're not lightweights, they're heavyweights."

There was an unspoken issue here. Bonnie and her backers had led a campaign to have the city purchase the future park site from the Trust for Public Land (TPL). TPL had then donated an additional acre, with the understanding that at least this acre, and perhaps the entire plot, would be devoted to Sherk's dream of urban gardens. But Sherk, immediately after city purchase of the land, had managed to assemble a strategically representative collection of Mission community groups in one park planning body called GROWING (Group Responsibility of Wonderful Work in Nature Green), ingeniously leading herself and others to believe they were to be the planning group. Now, apparently, out of nowhere, and endangering her dream, came this group of professionals: the enemies of innovation.

Sherk had been aware enough to recognize the inevitable necessity of including the Utah Street representative in GROWING, but the relationship had soured badly. By Utah's account, the Farm people were high-handed and condescending. Julie Rabigliati, one of the most outspoken Utah Street members, never forgave Sherk for what she saw as a slight--Rabigliati had been excluded from a couple of important meetings. On top of this, Utah Street people objected to being downwind of compost heaps and goats. Many were migrants from midwestern farms. They had come to the city for a different life and objected to The Farm both as a nuisance and for symbolic reasons. And the people attracted to The Farm seemed unsavory to them. The Utah Street people wondered out loud about "what really goes on at The Farm," and suspected that it was being illegally financed with public monies. They had launched a

quiet campaign to eliminate The Farm and had come to the first meeting vigilant for opportunities.

So, Malloy's subsequent comments were designed to address separate and conflicting sets of concerns:

Now, where does your Recreation and Parks Department fit in all this? Surprisingly, we're going to kind of take a back seat and kind of get out of the picture for a little while. We want to create an atmosphere where, to the greatest extent possible, you--the people--can talk directly to these professional designers. The Recreation and Parks Department has no secret agenda on this site. We have not told them what must be there or what cannot be there. It's a *tabula rasa* (sic), to use a Latin phrase, a clean blackboard. I should qualify that in one regard. We told the team that we probably do not need a recreation center because we are going to build one directly across the street at Rolph [Park] and that's going out to construction this summer to replace that small building with something far better. But that's about the only thing we've told them. Our staff has merely tried to gear up to this process; the creative process in which you the people will decide on the type of park we want. There are no secret agendas anywhere, and to prove that point and to maximize and to make easy your direct working relationship with the team, our office will probably come to most of the meetings just to see what's going on, but we're not going to take any active role. As long as the Recreation and Parks Department sees that there is something important going on, that there is a meaningful dialogue, that there is creative back and forth, we're not saying when this process must come to a conclusion. Sometimes it works fast. Sometimes it takes a little longer. Take as long as you need to do the job right.

The crowd responded with a mixture of polite and generous applause: polite from the small knot of Farmers at the back of the room. Malloy's diplomacy addressed several problems. Utah Street's anger at The Farm had hardened into a vendetta. Their hostility to The Farm had generalized into suspicion of the park project. But hiding behind the Utah front were a variety of instrumental interests. For example, one woman with a small ceramics firm just east of The Farm lobbed occasional questioning and disruptive comments into the discussion. Her concern was that any change that brought more people to the site would result in increased youthful vandalism that would endanger her business.

More significant, however, were the political possibilities of the situation. San Francisco voters, in a spirit of participation, had in 1976, changed the makeup of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors, from at-large representation to district representation. A gentleman name J. Pat Reeves sat conspicuously in the front row of the meeting. He had run unsuccessfully for the board as a candidate from the Mission and was repositioning himself for the next election. He had worked with groups of Mission youths, including an influential organization called Centro de Cabio, to rehabilitate a local Mission basketball gymnasium. The dynamic leader of that group, Edgar Quiroz, was in the room. Now Reeves had begun quietly insinuating himself into other Mission black clubs and organizations, including Utah Street, whose conservative endorsement could be crucial. Reeves' task here was to be pro-park for Quiroz's constituency, anti-Farm for the Utah constituency, and pro-Utah for their political value.

Malloy's comments--designed to comfort everyone by providing assurances that no interests were being favored--were encouraging to the vast majority of those in the audience, but unconvincing to The Farm and Utah Street. The meeting took a peculiar turn.

As the last speaker, I lectured on the team's approach to the participation process and then opened the meeting for general discussion of the participant's views of how we might proceed. To avoid the inevitable hostility that would be directed at Bonnie, Ruth Karsh ("My husband's name is Kardon"), a Farm member, immediately raised her hand for recognition and walked to the front of the room: "I live on Potrero Hill and I am a member of The Farm family. I represent the Crossroads Community and I am very upset that The Farm is not on the agenda of this meeting to make a presentation. The Farm is very much a part of the design team."

She rambled over The Farm's merits and contributions to the local community and then, receiving no response, sat down. She was followed by an adult male representing a group of preteen kids who had come to advocate the inclusion of a skateboard rink in the park design. Then Mr. Mateoni, cantankerous spokesman for Utah Street, raised his hand. Recalling Malloy's earlier efforts to assure everyone that the money for park construction was in hand, Mateoni asked me, "Is he talking about the milk program or the park program? Which is it?" Barely attending the explanation of Malloy's reference to the sign on the school door, he turned to Malloy: "I live up the street here and I'm a property owner and I want a few answers. You say you want to build a new recreation

center. Did you ever see the recreation center they have there now? How it's all dilapidated, busted up and vandalized? They're drinking beer, smokin' grass. . . . What, are you gonna have the same thing here? Are you gonna build them a new place to wreck?"

Malloy admitted the problem and tried to be encouraging: "What we find is that when we have quality facilities that are not rundown there is less vandalism. Essentially, vandalism is an irrational act."

In quick succession, two older Utah women shouted: "They're animals!" "It's a lack of respect!"

Mollifying in the general tumult that followed, I interjected loudly, ". . . and we've got to work it out so that people are using the new park in a respectful way." A gentle, nonaligned woman in her sixties volunteered to great applause:

One way you can get respect is to get the teenagers involved in designing and building the park. I was brought up in the country. We were very good children and we went to church every Sunday, but we would play games. We would take a tree and throw stones at it. But if kids do that to a tree on a city street, you know what happens. Twenty kids attacking a little tree is different from ten kids attacking a four hundred year old tree. So you have to give the kids a place where they can be rough. It's part of growing up.

The idea took root in the subsequent discussion because it

was a positive way of acknowledging a difficult problem: difficult because the unspoken fact was that the disrespectful, animalistic vandals referred to were primarily Latino youths. The coded epithets hid racial implications. In a final burst of enthusiasm, one nonaligned man concluded: "The only way to have a park that is vandal-proof is to include the vandals, but, more than that, to include the solid members of the community. That's why I am happy to see so many people here. When you design that park, design it to enclose the vandals."

Somehow, except for a brief but rigorous cross-examination of the design team by Utah Street on exactly what was included in the site map of the proposed park--questioning motivated by their suspicion that The

Farm might benefit--two and a half hours of discussion avoided the major conflicts inherent in the situation. Disruptive youth and their management was our topic. Edgar Quiroz raised his hand: "First off, my name is Edgar Quiroz. I'm the chairman of the Mission Youth Project. I've been listening to people talking about young people being the vandals; young people drinking beer and smoking grass; young people being animals and it all falls on the parents, you know. I'm really annoyed by sitting here having to digest that, because I'm the youngest person here."

Bonnie Sherk, speaking for the first time, voiced her approval of Quiroz's comments. A Utah Street woman murmured audibly, "It's true," increasing Quiroz's anger:

The reason it's true is that you don't even look at the root of the problem. Look at Rolph Park.<sup>5</sup> It's a beautiful green area with two [baseball] diamonds. Who is using that park at nighttime? It's clubs, not only from the Mission but the Outer Mission, Excelsior, North Beach. They come to our neighborhood to use that park to play organized, competitive sports. Those young people who are out there smoking grass and drinking beer, the reason why they're annoyed, the reason why they're breaking things up is because they are not part of the activities that are going on in that park. You can call them animals, you can call them animals as long as you want. If they are part of the activities, if there is an organized sports thing that that's going to give them t-shirts, and trophies and hot dogs, whatever it takes, like the adults who drink the beer at the games. . . . I go to the games at night sometimes and I see cases and cases of beer; drinking by the adults themselves. Young people are mad because they don't have nothing to do with that and they can't play there. So. Like, I'm really upset.

Quiroz continued with an impassioned discussion of the unemployment problems in the Mission, criticizing advantaged whites for their failure to understand the desperate economic circumstances of many Mission families. He never referred to ethnicity but concluded: "Take a look at [these facts] before you start making decisions about who's an animal, who's a delinquent, and who's a youth. We're all human beings and we all need to live here together; here in the Mission District and enjoy the same land."



General applause filled the room, led by Bonnie Sherk and Pat Reeves. Utah Street was not impressed and had peppered Quiroz's statement with little dissents. The discussion ended with a touching observation by a tousled blond boy--a skateboard rink advocate: "Some of the children that vandalize the park know that they're doing something wrong, but to them, sometimes, they think it's fun."

Utah Street was moved. Kathy and I ended the meeting by collecting lists of suggestions for the possible character of the park, announcing the time and intention of the next meeting, and inviting everyone to visit the architect's office next door and then to an elaborate fiesta on the park site.

The fiesta was a wonderful scene, promising in its age and multicultural makeup. A popular local band played Latin music. Priests, politicians, and public figures gave brief encouraging speeches. Scattered "cholos"\* drank beer and smoked grass. Low riders observed from their clean cars on the periphery of the event. Photographers delighted as a small Latino child in the arms of his mother fed Mayor Moscone a piece of cake cut from the larger cake designed in the shape of the park map. People danced. The mayor went to the bandstand and made assurances:

Take a good look at this place today. I mean it was a great piece of courage for somebody to go up and dance a pretty good boogie up here a little while ago in an

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\*Latino street person, usually a gang member.

area where it wouldn't be very difficult to break your leg. So take a good look at it today because in not

too long a time this is all going to be transformed into an area where everybody can boogie, where everybody can have a good time and where the kind of leisure time that we've strived for in this city can be enjoyed in decent facilities. It was not the mayor, it was not the board of supervisors, it was the people of this city and particularly the people of this area that made that possible.

"The People of This Area"

Mayor Moscone's attribution of the successful acquisition to area residents was both wise and obligatory, in light of the Mission's recent years of neighborhood activism.

San Francisco's Community Action Program briefly institutionalized the Mission Area Organizing Committee (MAOCO) in 1965 (Kramer:42). In 1966, this tip of an unstable ethnic iceberg was displaced by the Mission Council on Redevelopment (MCOR), which fought a dramatic and successful defensive campaign against the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency and the San Francisco County Board of Supervisors to stop formal redevelopment plans for the area. A later proposal from city hall to apply federal Model Cities funds to Inner Mission changes galvanized formation of the Mission Coalition Organization (MCO) in 1967. For the subsequent five years the MCO was hugely successful at maintaining coalition pressure on agencies of city government--particularly the mayor's office--against planning intrusion into the Mission and on behalf of programs and developments favorable to the maintenance of Mission character, increased employment, and so on.

Even though much of this effective community-based political organization had disintegrated, Moscone had still to be aware of the critical political importance of the Mission Planning Council, successor to that activist period. MPC members had been active lobbying the San Francisco Planning Department on behalf of the Mission. The Department's 1973 Comprehensive Plan ( ) reflected the effects of that lobbying in its Recreation and Open Space Element. And, in 1975, the MPC issued its own thoroughgoing study of Inner Mission open space needs, anticipating distribution of Proposition J funds.<sup>6</sup>

Malloy was familiar with the Mission's history. He had been in the planning department during the 1960s in its wildest, even chaotic, period of community participation. The little world of conflict apparent in this first meeting for the park was, in microcosm, exemplary of the Mission, although conditions had changed. Now, the city came offering participation rather than responding to demand. Some participants resentfully confided to me their opinion that Rec Park was using participation and, especially, professional consultants as a buffer against community hostility. Rec Park knew better than to try to do the job themselves. While the buffer theory may have had some merit, the overall criticism was not supportable--two previous park projects had been constructed through a similar process introduced by the experienced Malloy. And, indeed, MPC's own study had called for maximum participation and acknowledged Rec Park's practice:

Citizen's participation in planning and operating public recreation facilities is already possible somewhat through the Advisory Councils of The Rec Park Department, through the Mission Liaison and Recreation Specialist in the City Planning Department, and the hearings and citizen's input for spending Prop J funds.

Citizen's participation can be improved if the opportunities for it are publicized more by the involved private and public agencies; if early notices of meetings are given and if meetings are held in evenings, weekends, or whenever is most convenient for the concerned residents.

Increased incorporation of Mission Community suggestions in planning for the recreational uses of public schools and playgrounds is especially needed.

Interested Mission community group, MPC and the Block Club Organization could help identify specific agencies or institutions which need increased citizen's participation and for what reasons and then help increase the participation.<sup>7</sup>

Increase participation in what? Rec Park invited everyone to consider the four and one-half acres of land purchased with Prop J funds, but the MPC study, evaluation the Inner Mission for high-need areas, had described what it saw as a high priority park:

At the far southeast corner of the Inner Mission next to the intersection of Potrero, Army and the James Lick (Bayshore) Freeway, there is a 6.5 (sic) acre area of vacant land which is for sale. Next to the vacant land are 2 acres of warehouses, some of which are for sale.

Several Mission District artists now work in 2 of the warehouses and have a small garden next to them. The artists have presented a preliminary proposal for placing on the vacant land a combination amphitheater/playing field (including for soccer), several community gardens, ponds, lawns, a waterfall and pasture for farm animals. The

outdoor areas and arts center in the warehouses would be called "The Farm" . . .

The artists have said that they want to help build The Farm's park area if the land is bought by the City. The artists hope to get the help of Mission District residents in building and running The Farm, thus reducing costs for the City. ("Parks and Recreation Needed . . .":21-22)

Bonnie had done her homework!

Berkeley is approximately thirty-five driving miles from the Inner Mission but a thousand social miles. It is safe to guess that none of the Utah Street participants had ever been to Berkeley. As the "community participation expert from UC Berkeley department of architecture," I was the only team member truly separate from the community, and I benefited from the neutrality implied by that separation.

As I returned home from that first meeting, it was clear that I was colossally ignorant of the situation for which I was planning. The mood of the first meeting seemed to hide myriad competing points of view. I had no confidence that all possible factions were represented by the contestants who had appeared. It is usual that such early meetings are devoted to the airing of contending perspectives on the basic characteristics that should determine the schematic design. Here it was not even clear that the group would shape itself into a body that could begin conceptualizing a form for the park. And what new tensions might appear at subsequent meetings?

At the professional team's next meeting, we decided to forge ahead with the participation scheme we had designed and to focus heavily on presentation of visual examples of park possibilities to excite participant's imaginations. I would step forward in guiding the discussion and try to tease the group process in the direction of forming a site committee or, at the very least, show them the advantages of such a committee. The goal was to "turn the process over to the community."

## Conceptions and Sophistications

The second meeting began, in substance, with the playing of a videotape of the first meeting. I had carefully edited the tape to show newcomers what had taken place, including official promises and all the conflicts.

Sat Nishita led us through images of play, earth forms, landscaping, water, and so on, referring repeatedly to the ideas participants had listed on forms handed out at the end of the first meeting. Bonnie Sherk summarized the truly desirable: rivers ("Did you know that a natural stream once flowed through this land? It still runs underground. We can retrieve it."), ponds, plants and animals, gardens all developed and maintained by local labor--human energy." Amid the mumbled responses, Diane Davis, the ceramics factory woman, tried to make her query anonymous. "Do we really need a park?" Attaching her to the question, I announced that we were beyond it. The decision to build had been made.

Despite the first meeting and the videotape portraying Spring and Malloy explaining all, the Utah Street contingent exploded with questions. Is there money for this park? Where does it come from? It soon became apparent, however, that sharp questions were Utah Street's way of being angry, and they were angry at Bonnie's park imagery. They had no competing images of their own. Kathy helped me regain some order with the question, "What is a park? Let's get away from standard images." A Farmer responded, "We have to look at world parks. Russia, China, France . . ." Hearing the names of communist countries, a Utah Street member responded with confirmed suspiciousness, "All we need to look at is Golden Gate Park." A neutral participant suggested that we do that and we managed our first meager agreement. Someone else offered his library on parks. A Farmer said, "Whatever we do, let's stay open and entertain ideas."

The comment drove a wedge down the middle of the meeting. On either side of the rift were differing levels of vision, conceptual agility, and sophistication. "Staying Open" and "entertaining ideas" was uncomfortable for Utah Street. Neither idea had content for them. Any content they could conceive involved what The Farm was already doing. They could only envision more of the same when any Farmer spoke. All Farm speech was suspect. Professional experts were, perhaps, to be trusted, but Utah Street was not sure to what degree we might be under

the influence of The Farm. Thus they stayed secure in an angry simplicity of negation.

The Farmers, on the other side, had slowly nurtured their vision toward realization. This vision was an urban critique, attacking concrete, asphalt, ignorance of sources of human life and sustenance; revealing the interrelatedness of all living forms, the relation of the earth to grand cosmic forces. They had no respect for professionals. The very term implied for them a trained rigidity responsible for the urbanscape their park would begin to undo by example.

In between stood a large body of others there to participate but continually forced to abide interchanges between the two groups throughout the planning process.

Trying to build on her associate's idea of taking the design process away from the professional team, Bonnie asked for an exact accounting of the sources and amounts of money available for the park. How much was the design team being paid? Utah Street responded with a demand for the same accounting for Farm money, stopping that thread of discussion despite Bonnie's announced willingness to respond.

Utah: Never mind the Farm. Give us the park and fix it the way it's supposed to be.

Farm: You seem to be against building this park, really.

Utah: (A chorus) No. We're for the park.

Utah: What I was against is having animals in the park.

Neutral

Person:<sup>8</sup> Okay then, what is a community park? Who will have access? What about transportation, local schools? How will it be different from other parks in the city? My kids can't even play at Rolf. I have to get on a bus to find a park where they can play soccer.

Evidently it took a public announcement of Utah Street's objection to animals to open up the discussion and elicit the participation of the unaligned members of the meeting. And, finally, Utah Street had endorsed the idea. A park was in the future but the present

conversation continued in a crazily contorted fashion. Two hours into the meeting, I suggested--having failed earlier--that the group consider how they might eventually form a representative group to work on their ideas:

Neutral

Person: It's too early to come up with an advisory committee. Many groups are not here. Let's look at types of parks. Let's see how far our money will go. (Applause).

Quiroz:I agree, but some of us have been working for three years trying to get this park built.

Farm: Let's dig up the concrete and let the earth breathe. The National Guard has already agreed to do this for free.

Utah:No. We'll have dust storms around here. What you want is a bunch of animals running around, which is what you got now and what we don't want.

Farm:If we dig up the concrete we can develop the soil.

Utah:Why do we have to have these meetings? Why can't we just start the park and do it?

Kathy:We want to be part of the park. Someone who works at McLaren Lodge\* and lives in Mill Valley\*\* does not know what we need here. The city and the state are aware of this. By law we have to meet. We have to work together and compromise.

Utah:(Fiercely, to George Homsey, project architect) How many people in your office working on that park. That's what you're supposed to be doing, ain't you.

George: (Lists project team) . . . and if you look around here there are another forty-five of you. We have to be patient. We have to do a lot of listening. You don't want a cracker-box park out there. We have to know how it's going to be used and who's going to use it. What do you want? We'll put it down and work on it.

"(Including for Soccer)" and Kids

A well-dressed Latino gentleman stood up and volunteered to work on a committee to develop ideas for the park. He chastised

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\*Headquarters building of Recreation and Parks Department.

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\*Wealthy suburb of San Francisco.

the group for its lack of discipline. His name was Rick Olivas. He was an immigrant from Central America and ran a wholesale clothing store a few blocks from the park site. His little factory produced various items of wholesale women's clothing, unique printed teeshirts, and the like. Rick was a soccer fan. He was reasonable, respectable and, above all, Latino.

This was a moment of convergence. I leapt to affirm his comments. Cathy suggested that we call the proposed group a "work committee" rather than "advisory." Things were coming together just a bit. We had Utah's announced acceptance of the park, the acceptance of a focused work group, and the first hint of legitimate leadership. The quiet code of Olivas's ethnicity and his gentlemanly bearing released some of the unacknowledged pressure built up around the first meeting's oblique discussion of "vandals." But, it turned out, there was more to his importance than that.

Rick's wife, Lucy sat on the board of The Farm. Open to the florid image of the park that the Farmers pushed, she nonetheless carried another message to the discussions: Latino youth like to play soccer. It was truly difficult to reconcile The Farm image with that of a soccer field, especially a regulation-sized field that would dominate the site. But the realities of community participation had to be acknowledged and the Mission Planning Council report parenthetically did so: "The artists have presented a preliminary proposal for placing on the vacant land a combination amphitheater/playing field (including for soccer)..." Rick Olivas was known to the Farmers to be congenial to an intermediate-sized soccer field. He was a bridge to the Latino community, to The Farm's interests, and to the general concern for kids. As the meeting continued, this latter theme took shape:

Neutral

Person: (To Utah) What would you use the park for?



Utah:I want it for the kids, not me. I'm too old to go in the park.

Neutral

Person:You can go with your wife and sit down with some papers and talk. If it's sunny, you can watch the kids play.

Utah:If I have to walk into a park like that across the street (Rolf) I'll stay home. They close them [children] out of Rolf. I want to see kids roll in the grass, get dirty, get sloppy, whatever he wants, not to be told, "Hey, get out of here, this is for grownups." I want to see things for the kids.

In an inexplicable and dismaying diversion, several Farmers again raised the issue of removing the thick concrete skin that had once been the floor of a gigantic Knudsen Dairy building and which still covered a very large area of the site. They repeated, the National Guard would do the work for free, the soil would be liberated, soil conditioners could be worked into it.

Utah:Let's do what the architects said and not do any digging until things are planned. Why are you being premature?

Farm:(Bonnie) It'll be an inspiration for all of us!

Utah:(Chorus) Ah baloney!

Quiroz:Can we get some order?

Kathy:Are you going to take responsibility or leave it in our hands?

Neutral

Person:Let's have work committee volunteers.

I Immediately made a sign-up sheet available and collected twenty signatures.

Utah:This is a committee for the park and not The Farm!

A young Latino noticed that the ceramics woman signed up.

Neutral

Person: There's a contradiction I don't understand. Certain people have signed up to work on the park committee who said they were against it. It should be clear that this committee should work for the park.

Utah: What's this committee for?

### A Contest of Images

At our first meeting the neutral, motherly woman had advised that kids needed "a place to be rough, that's part of growing up." The meeting had ended with the confession of a totally cute boy that, in their roughness--what the adults were calling vandalism--kids his age were doing things they thought of as fun. Others had agreed that it was important to harness that roughness to the purposes of the park. Now, Utah Street crowded behind the image of a park for kids; kids tidied of violence, but active and dirty from play appropriate to their age: a traditional image of healthy youth. Most important, Utah Street had assented to the Park. Utah Street's discovery of an acceptable park image was an unhappy event for The Farm. The traditional image of healthy youth could not be argued against but was competitive with their own: children dirty with soil and compost, digging in the land to plant crops, tend animals, learn about the cycles of seasons and edible foliage. And The Farm image implied flexibility and change over time. Bonnie saw a park in constant flux. Utah Street saw traditional play structures, arguing, "if it's not permanent it'll be wrecked in a month." With fixed play structures on one side and a soccer field of indistinct size on the other, Bonnie felt the peril to her dream and sought a new approach.

The work group set itself the task of assembling a wide assortment of slides showing parks of all types and sizes. Somehow, a young Farmer was given the responsibility for assembling the presentation and designing a questionnaire with which the participants could rate their preferences. While this was being prepared, the agreed-upon meeting to learn about the history and character of Golden Gate Park took place.

Things went badly at this meeting. The presentation was by an old gentleman who had spent his life as a gardener in the park. He was a

thoroughly informed student of the park. But he tried to cram all his knowledge into his presentation, which dragged on for hours in the dim light of his slide show. The Farmers were congenial to this presentation because it would inevitably include images of the natural landscape they advocated. But, in the discussion that followed, a core Farm ideologue closely questioned the sincerity of an older Utah Street woman. His style, typical of the Farmers, was that of encounter-group candor so common in the 1960s and early 1970s. It seemed truly anachronistic in the setting. The Utah Street Woman's husband, a retired Italian laborer, sensed an attack on his wife. His manhood demanded a response. Raising his voice and himself from his seat, he warned the man from The Farm to watch himself and his manners, or . . . This hint of impending violence dimmed an already depressed meeting, which ended with a hard-edged agreement that there would be no site committee. We would function solely as a committee of the whole. The architects would listen and take what they learned to the drawing boards. They would return with drawings that would be evaluated exclusively in plenary sessions.

### Manipulations

I was pleased by the decision. I was gradually coming to dislike the Farmers' moral superiority, and I had seen Bonnie-type leaders before. Despite an elevated conception of "participation," such visionaries often meant participation that resulted in their goals. From the beginning, Bonnie had sought to skirt the process. At the very first meeting she had mentioned a "windfall" of money from a large National Endowment for the Arts grant, money that could be used in designing the park. Of course, her proposal to NEA had been for her version of a park. Now she sought and got a separate meeting with the professional team to which she brought an NEA representative.

Prospects for funding were good, it appeared, but the concrete should be removed, Bonnie asserted and the man from NEA reinforced. The professional team pleaded with the Farmers to understand that a large community of people was involved and that The Farm would have to compromise and be part of the participatory planning process. Exasperated, Bonnie affirmed, with anger:

Yes, we're talking about a participatory planning process, but it's totally absurd to be involving people in something they don't know

anything about. For example, I'd say that 95 percent of the people in these communities are not aware of the fact that there is earth underneath that concrete. That is why the symbolic act of having the National Guard lift the concrete and liberate the earth is so important. That could begin a real participatory process and get their juices going.

People are out of touch, there's no question about it. This is an incredibly brutal neighborhood.

In a safe setting, without the hovering hawks of Utah Street or the affrontable ears of Latino participants, Bonnie's superior attitude was explicit. Her statement was followed by that of a male colleague:

We understand that people are involved by law, but not all of the relevant people are involved. We know that your client is a bureaucracy and that they're used to doing things in a particular way, but your responsibility is to go beyond old techniques. Kathy and Russ are being paid to watch. They should clarify the roles they're being paid for. . . . We're talking about a park where people are aware of the earth's cycles. This park should be a demonstration of what a neighborhood can do. It should be educational for the whole city.

Bonnie leapt on the involvement issue, recognizing that she was blocked by Utah Street's hostility to The Farm's existence and goals. It would be necessary to have more people involved, she said. "With more people we can balance the influence of these factions." To reinforce her point she presented to our team an old petition with 1,800 signatures that Farmers had collected to convince the Open Space Committee to purchase the Knudsen-Bloom property. The man from the NEA countered that there seemed to be more than enough involvement and a lot of ideas. The point was to get rid of the concrete. A female Farmer, embarrassed by Bonnie's "brutal neighborhood" comments said: "We do have to acknowledge that we are intruders on people who have lived here all their lives. You guys haven't seen a bad city. I just came from New York. Here, I keep looking for the ghetto. Everybody has a garden in their yards here."

Bonnie ignored the comment and asked with emphasis: "What are the possibilities of an archaeological excavation on the site?" Bonnie's

arrogance and manipulativeness put me in a manipulative frame of mind. Advantages had accumulated. There were "reasonable" voices in her own camp. She could not possible make her opinion of "95 percent of the people" known in a public meeting. Utah Street could be relied on to keep her in check. More importantly, everyone was now in favor of some form of park. The one uncontested agreement was now in favor of some form of park. The one uncontested agreement was that it would be a park "for kids." Candidates for "the kids" role had quietly been attending our meetings. While I sought to bring them to center stage, a vicious battle was going on back stage.

### Modes of Battle

The political aspirant, J. Pat Reeves appeared only periodically--and briefly--after our first community meeting. He remained active, however. One of his tasks was to help Utah Street articulate its opposition to The Farm. Bonnie was an absolute master at advocating the cause of The Farm in the upper reaches of San Francisco's political and social influentials. The attractiveness of her idea for the park made it a natural for news and television media. Indeed, one of Sherk's frustrations was that this effective access to the top did not translate into influence at the local level. Community participation was actually interfering with her efforts.

Reeves sought to fight Bonnie in the arena of her strength. His aims were instrumental. He was assembling a constituency for the next city election and now began to represent the angry interests of Utah Street against The Farm. Firing off a letter to Mayor George Moscone, Reeves wrapped himself in the righteous cause of block clubs, neighborhood improvement, open community processes, and "disadvantaged minorities," and he leveled a strange accusation at Sherk. She had, he claimed, hired a private investigative firm to intimidate those who had sought actively to participate in Mission community affairs:

The director Ms. Sherk and the Jack Webb private investigation firm have a list of neighborhood people which, during the course of the interrogation, are asked about the personal habits and character of their neighbors. This is an invasion of privacy and misuse of federal funds. Funds that would better serve the minority people of the East Mission.

Being on this list of people to be investigated, gives me a personal satisfaction. I shall continue to be an advocate of the open neighborhood process and feel it is my constitutional right to involve myself in the betterment of my neighborhood.<sup>9</sup>

Forty-eight people were sent copies of the letter. Included were the media, all members of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors, state legislative representatives, members of community, city, and state planning bodies, and known influentials in San Francisco. In other words, Reeves attacked Sherk at the heart of her constituency. From the state, Sherk had relied on the sympathy of the press and planning officialdom to the idea of The Farm, its ecological soundness, its benefits to the underserved minority community.

Here, now, was an accusation of misuse of federal funds for underhanded purposes, carefully disseminated in the world of her advantage. As future events would reveal, the letter did not affect her favorable access to these constituencies, but it did, in its bold penetration of the mysterious world of influentials and decision-makers, reveal to Utah Street that this avenue of attack was open to them: an avenue they later learned to exploit with a vigor that did indeed blunt Sherk's attempts to circumvent the local planning process.

Sherk countered cleverly. She used the occasion to re-educate people to the history of The Farm's role in helping bring about the park and to reaffirm the merit of The Farm as an enterprise. She admitted employment of the private investigator, explaining that it was necessary to get at the root of acts of vandalism on The Farm and of assorted additional anonymous efforts to undermine it. Her beautifully wrought letter to the mayor outdid Reeves' in the number and influence of those who received copies.<sup>10</sup>

A new arena of battle was engaged and was to rage throughout the rest of the planning process.

Pictures and Progress

The mutually distrustful stalemate on the formation of a site committee proved productive. The angry fights exited the meetings and took the form of letters, phone calls, and name-calling in the public arena. Through some odd logic, Utah Street was able to accept a "work group." Rick Olivas' centrality was important, despite the fact that a few Farmers did most of the work at first.

Slides of various parks were assembled and presented at two meetings. The slide shows had gone well. This small knot of mission people traveled the nation and the world through slides of parks. The Farm was mainly responsible for this exciting tour and the bias of presentations undoubtedly moved everyone's imaginations away from concrete and fixed structures.

The accommodation was odd. In important respects, the entire group was dependent on The Farm (and the architects) for the richness of images from which to select those that might work in this park. At the same time, Utah Street people were increasingly alienated by the Farmers' style and ideology. So, while Utah sat with doubting equanimity before scenes of streams with trout, grain silos, floating gardens, vegetable gardens, and green hills with fruit-bearing trees, they were, in fact, being educated to possibilities. However, they were moved to groans and "Oh, Jesus Christ" when one Farmer tried to enlighten the group with his environmental biography:

I came west in 1960. I was impressed with the expanse of the land. It was so different from what I had known. Later, the human potential movement began and I began to see things more intimately; more clearly. We began to live together among strangers, as friends. We formed new families, celebrating equinoxes and solstices. . . . Pretty soon we got tired of living in the city and went out into the country to find out what all that (urban) confusion was about. We went away from the roads, deeper into the woods. There we lived with the Indians. They taught us that the land was sacred.

All of this was supported by an interesting series of slides documenting each step, including the time spent with Indians of the Pacific Northwest. Utah Street was profoundly irritated by all this "irrelevant stuff." The Farmers were like dangerous Martians to them.

Rhodes Hileman, the young Farm associate who, with Farmer Danny Arcos, had designed the slide presentations, had done an excellent job

of organizing them so that all participants could record on a simple form their preference for the images shown. In fact, the slide shows worked. It was agreed that everyone would bring in their favorite images from any source. And they came in: photos from vacations, montages from popular magazines, including advertisements with interesting backgrounds, and the like. We were underway, and, under the protective mantle of the stalemate, the architects could begin to work.

### Pivotal "Kids"

J. Pat Reeves had made elaborate claims about his close relationship with Inner Mission youth. Distrusting him, I approached Edgar Quiroz and Rick Olivas for their opinions. I knew that Edgar was a central figure and I had kept in mind the organization of which he was symbolic head: Centro de Cambio. Also, a young, vigorous black man named Timothy Jones ("T.J.") had spoken articulately a few times in meetings about the needs of local youth, repeating some of Edgar's concerns. He seemed a promising contact.

Centro de Cambio was located on 24th Street, the cultural spine of the Mission. Low in architectural scale, festive and funky, 24th Street is dotted with shops, markets, and restaurants that give the flavor of a place outside the United States. It leans toward Central America. On weekend nights it is the concourse for cholos on parade in their low-slung cars. It is also a thriving drug market. Centro de Cambio was a youth-managed program devoted to drug education, detoxification, counseling, and vocational rehabilitation.

Arriving at Centro de Cambio for my appointment with T.J. in the second floor bay-window office overlooking the 24th Street action, I felt like Methuselah. The bustling room full of old couches, file cabinets, and a teeming, ethnically mottled crowd of teen-agers seemed to contain no one over sixteen years old. Happy to see me, T.J. showed me around, introduced me to a few people, and then we settled into the purposes of my visit. He agreed that factionalism in the park group was slowing the process and that the voice of young people--those most interested in and likely to use the park--was not being heard. "Yes," he said to my proposal that a group of teen-agers might go on a tour of Bay Area parks just to develop some ideas for the park. "We'll need a good ride, though." He wanted an air-conditioned bus, preferably one with a sound system and good music. I would do my best.



A group of fifteen systematically hip teen-agers happily and patiently rode out the many miles separating the ten parks scattered throughout the East Bay and San Francisco, frequently forgetting their hipness to descend into childlike play on the ramps and bridges of the parks we visited. Drenched in experiences, somehow their only catch of the day was a clever, circular basketball court at Kosland Park, the first community-designed park under Rec Park's new policy. The real catch, of course, was the authority of experience added to their youth and ethnic relevance to the park process.

When the young group entered the process in force, the process had been broken down into workshops in which smaller groups presented their ideas and critiqued the work of Sat Nishita and George Homsey, who were now confidently full tilt into schematic designs. Julie Rabigliati, now the clear leader of Utah Street, was spending a great deal of time at the architects' office a short distance from her home. She chaired subcommittee meetings, volunteered to do mailings and, in general, had become fully invested in the work of the park. The cantankerous Mr. Matteoni had rounded up a group of preteens and taken them on a tour of skateboard rinks. The teen adventurers insinuated a basketball court and a teen clubhouse into the schematics. Later, in an act of highly visible reasonableness, they readily surrendered both ideas in the interests of space constraints and overall park coherence.

The Farm was increasingly uncomfortable in planning meetings and tried, with little success, to lobby through separate sessions with the architects and through a major letter campaign that grew to amazing proportions as the schematics approached final validation by the community group. Art critics, bishops, state officials, school board officials, journalists, university professors, architects, commissioners, and the like sent almost identical letters to the architectural firm or c.c.'d the firm on letters sent to influential others. The letters criticized the emerging schematics as insensitive to the needs of The Farm. With less and less influence on the design process, Bonnie increased her pressure at higher levels, especially Tom Malloy and Rec Park.

Panhandle Wars

Memorandum

22 May 1979

TO: Tom Malloy

FROM: George Homsey

REFERENCE: Community Park, Knudsen-Bloom Property

My daily noon walk to the sandwich store takes me past some houses on Utah Street where some of the more vocal residents live. Today was a particularly noteworthy encounter. I usually talk with the white-haired, stocky retired man who has attended most of the meetings we have had. Usually we exchange pleasant views and comments. Today was much more polarized in that he stated categorically that he was opposed to any participation of "The Farm" in the determination of what will be done in the "panhandle" area (adjacent to The Farm) and that he will be attending any future meetings for that area with the purpose in mind to oppose any participation by The Farm. I pointed out that The Farm is also part of the community which has a legitimate right in the park and entitled to their views, but this did not have any affect on his feelings on the subject.

Tom, I ask that you be present for these forthcoming meetings wherein we will continue to develop the design of that panhandle area. You may be aware that the Episcopal Diocese is very interested in the community garden aspect of that area, and intends to be an active part of the future planning efforts. I have spoken to Rollie Jones who is heading up that effort for the Bishop, and he has already made arrangements with The Farm to become involved in their efforts to develop a community gardening effort which Rollie Jones hopes will include a part of the panhandle area. The next round of meetings to finalize the panhandle will be very important. It will be helpful if you can attend these meetings.

This was a little cry for help. Many things had happened. The architects had completed the first version of schematic design. It was attractive to some eyes,--a rolling hill capped by an orchard of trees falling to the south to an open amphitheater for which the hill provided the seating. North of the hill was a large play area that happened to conform to a regulation intermediate-sized soccer field, and where Utah Street dead-ended at the northeast end of the park, and a sunny seating area. On the panhandle abutting The Farm was a large storage shed

doubling as an administration building and clubhouse for young people, adjacent to an open seating area around a large pond. But it ended in a hard, closed edge separating the park from The Farm.

The panhandle was The Farm's last battle ground. In the bitter participatory process, the vision for an urban farm had been contracted to hopes for the panhandle, which was to be an extension of The Farm's demonstration gardening projects. But now the dream ended at the hard border of the panhandle: a fence with a gate. Utah Street did not want the gate; just the fence.

Bonnie fought hard. Her letter campaign had elicited one that Tom Malloy could not ignore, but which outraged him. It was directed to George Homsey and came from Russell Cahill, director of the State Department of Parks and Recreation, an agency with which the city department had delicate and dependent relations. Indeed, the state department had been crucial in the funding of the Knudsen-Bloom park. The letter read:

December 7, 1978

Dear Mr. Homsey:

Recently I had the opportunity to visit "the farm" at the Crossroads Community next to the proposed Community Park Project at Army Street and Potrero Avenue. I was very impressed with the opportunities offered neighborhood children by the farm and dismayed to learn they may be terminated as a result of future park development. This is rather ironic since the Crossroads Community was responsible for the purchase of the site by the City.

While I realize the final decision on the master plan will be made by the community at large, I would appreciate it if you will make my views known before the farm is eliminated.

I would hope the activities desired by the rest of the community can be developed while still retaining the farm.

Sincerely yours,

Russell W. Cahill

Director

Since the letter worried about the elimination of The Farm, which was not a prospect, the design team could afford to ignore it. So, we went ahead with our plans to hold festivities on the site, and there the schematics were displayed to all.

Over the succeeding months, as the schematics were refined under the vigilant eyes of Utah Street, we prepared for our presentation to the San Francisco Recreation and Parks Commission. But how were we to make a final presentation in the midst of a social process that could not reach finality? Rumors were abundant that The Farm was planning to pack the final presentation with supporters who would object to treatment of the panhandle. Utah Street lay in wait for any changes favorable to The Farm. There were even rumors that J. Pat Reeves was organizing a delegation that would arrive with some indistinct objections to the design.

I recommended that the final presentation be organized spatially in such a way that no single "stage" would be available on which contending points of view could be focused. We decided to use a large gymnasium across the street from EHDD. Four identical displays of plans and perspectives were mounted in the corners of the gym. Design team members and Rec Park staff--including Malloy--sat at four separate tables beneath the displays to explain the design and collect community concerns. Thus, quietly, our "final" schematic plan was presented. The only theater left to contending parties as the Recreation and Park Commission.

On April 19th, 1979, the commission approved the schematics. The commission chambers were packed, primarily by Sherk invitees. Prominent among these was Mr. Sandy Walker, an architect and Farm board member. The pasteurized commission minutes summarized the struggles.

4. I. KNUDSEN-BLOOM PROPERTY:

Mr. Thomas Malloy, Executive Assistant to the General Manager, introduced Mr. Barry John Baker, representing the Architectural Firm of Esherick Homsey Dodge and Davis.

Mr. Baker presented the schematic plans for park development of the Knudsen-Bloom Property, located at Potrero Avenue near 25th Street. He described the process of the extensive community involvement leading to today's presentation before the Recreation and Park Commission. Mr. Baker called attention to the changes made to the drawings previously brought before the Commission; namely, on the southern portion of the site. He noted that the major change was made in the building housing the community room, meeting room arts and crafts work area, director's office and restroom. The new design, which will occupy less area, calls for a two-story level, rather than a single story building.

Mr. Larry Manning, San Francisco Attorney, speaking on behalf of The Farm, noted that he was the Counsel for the Trust for Public Land during the acquisition of the Knudsen-Bloom property. The Farm provided the idea that persuaded Knudsen Corporation to sell the land at a bargain. Mr. Manning urged the Commission to look upon The Farm as a conduit for a wide variety of community interest. The design should integrate in its final rendering the role of The Farm. Mr. Manning submitted for the record a copy of a letter dated April 17, 1979, from Mr. Phillip Wallin, Vice President, The Trust for Public Land, addressed to Ms. Bonnie Sherk, Crossroad Community, Inc., detailing the issues raised by a lease or management agreement, between the City and County of San Francisco and the Crossroads Community, Inc.

Mr. Norman Berryessa, representing the Diocese of California, expressed support of the Crossroads Community and their work at The Farm.

Commissioner Ezquerro asked Staff to describe the area of the existing entity known at The Farm. Mr. Malloy explained The Farm occupies private property immediately south and contiguous to the park site.

Commissioner Harris stated that it should be clearly understood that property is not being taken away from The Farm.

Mr. Sandy Walker Architect and Board member of The Farm, explained that The Farm needs more land for expansion. The present plan calls for land being used for a service entrance. He recommended a more favorable location on San Bruno Avenue.

Mr. John J. Spring, General Manager, stated it is not intended that the service road be used excessively. The road will have limited use by department maintenance vehicles, only.

Mr. Satoru Nishita, Landscape Architect, emphasized the necessity of an access road for servicing the area in question.

Mr. Sandy Walker requested that a lease agreement be entered into by the City and County of San Francisco and The Farm to accommodate the expanding activities of The Farm.

Ms. Sandy Gong, representing Mission Y.M.C.A., spoke in favor of Farm expansion. She recommended incorporating The Farm activities into the design for the Knudsen-Bloom property.

Mrs. Florence Kelly, friend of the neighborhood, and Farm proponent, expressed support of proposed use of the park, as designed by Mr. Satoru Nishita, Landscape Architect. She felt the area in question should be used for environmental experimentation, agriculture, planting, etc. Mrs. Kelly submitted copies of petitions circulated and signed in 1975, soliciting the acquisition of the open space property at Potrero Avenue and Army Street, for use as a multi-purpose recreation area, with farm animals and meadow, community garden space and outdoor amphitheater.

Mrs. Diane Davis, representing the East Mission Improvement Association, Inc., expressed opposition to any formal lease agreement between The Farm and the Recreation and Park Commission. She felt this

would be the first step in losing the land. The Association opposes any proposal by an individual or private organization to exercise control or use of public lands.

Ms. Beth Coffman, Program Supervisor, Community College District, asked that the design of the park be complimentary to the program now being given by The Farm. She expressed opposition to the entrance, as presently proposed.

Mr. Robert Lopez, Landscape Supervisor for the Youth Chance Program, sponsored by the Y.M.C.A., expressed support of The Farm community in their effort for expansion. Mr. Lopez also suggested relocation of access roads to provide more room for The Farm.

Dr. S. Loren Cole, representing Inquiring Systems, Inc., strongly supported the needs of The Farm. He pointed out several inadequacies of the proposed plan. Dr. Cole felt that the City and County of San Francisco and The Farm should collaborate on such an important project.

Ms. Pat Lugo, representing Companeros Family Day Care, emphasized the importance of children experiencing Farm activities.

Mr. O. G. Matteoni, representing East Mission Improvement Association, expressed opposition to farm animals at this site. He also felt a lease agreement with The Farm would violate public rights to public land.

Mr. Steven Lome, representing Crossroads Community, felt there is a definite need for expansion of The Farm. He expressed support for an integrated urban park design. Mr. Lome submitted petitions with over 500 signatures requesting that The Farm be included in the Park design for the Knudsen-Bloom property. The petitioners also asked for farm animals and room for community gardens. Mr. Lome submitted copies of a thirty-seven page report on the Crossroads Community (The Farm), detailing its purpose, history, accomplishments, leadership, long-range plan, budget, layout, option description, articles, and Internal Revenue Service Tax Exemption Status.

Mr. Michael Rollie Jones, speaking on behalf of the Rt. Rev. C. Kilmer Myers, Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of California, expressed support of the Crossroads Community. The unique value and character of an integrated Farm-Park at the south entrance of the property is a direct experience with the balance of nature to those not normally able to experience farming. Since this is not usually available to city dwellers, Bishop Myers supports implementation of such a plan.

Ms. Bonnie Sherk was asked to speak for Mr. Bob Jimenez, who left the Commission meeting early. Mr. Jimenez would very much like to see an integrated Farm-Park on the Knudsen-Bloom property.

Dr. Lenore Sorenson, representing the California Arts Council, expressed support to the present land use of The Farm and would like to see expansion of this program. Dr. Sorenson would like to recommend on-site teaching at the facility.

Mr. Sanford Siegel, representing Buena Vista Children's Center, expressed confusion on the issue.

To Mr. Siegel's question on the true issue at hand, Mr. Thomas Malloy, Executive Assistant to the General Manager, explained that the designers were asked by the Department to work closely with all parties of interest. Mr. Malloy stated that the Recreation and Park Commission and the Department are under a Charter mandate to implement the Plan for Open Space. The Mission District was deficient in meeting the general recreational needs of the neighborhood. It was designated as a high-need neighborhood. Mr. Malloy noted that the Knudsen-Bloom property is the largest acquisition to date under the Open Space Program. Mr. Malloy expressed confidence that the Plan has made a conscientious effort to satisfy the two most immediate neighbors contiguous to the Knudsen-Bloom property. This public project has to meet the general recreational needs of the Mission District. Mr. Malloy explained that the item under consideration today is approval of the schematic concept, which implies the Plan is still subject to refinement. Mr. Malloy emphasized that there will be an extended process of working out each



detail. In conclusion, Mr. Malloy commented that the Plan is a long way from completion.

The intent is to work with various members of the community and all affected parties concerning all sections of the Park. Mr. Malloy expressed satisfaction that the schematic plan reflects as close to the consensus of varying parties as is possible.

Mr. Stanford Siegel thanked Mr. Malloy and expressed his support of the Schematic Plan for the Knudsen-Bloom property.

Ms. Carol Blumenfeld found it necessary to leave the meeting early and appointed Ms. Bonnie Sherk to be her spokesperson.

Ms. Blumenfeld supports Farm Expansion.

Mr. Rick Olivas representing himself, thanked the members of the Recreation and Park Commission, the Utah Street Block Club, and Open Space Committee, and all the involved community who helped keep this program going. Mr. Olivas expressed his positive attitude on the outcome of the community project. He hoped all individuals, both pro and con, would work together to settle their differences.

Mr. Eugene Pulley, representing the Y.M.C.A. Youth Chance, left the meeting early and asked Ms. Bonnie Sherk to speak on his behalf. Mr. Pulley felt that a portion of the Park should be used for Farm expansion.

Commissioner Ezquerro said that it is very important at this time to maintain a reaffirmation of the original intent of the Community and the Recreation and Park Commission, to develop a creative and multipurpose Community Park.

On motion of Commissioner Eickman, seconded by Commissioner Ezquerro, the following Resolution was adopted:

RESOLUTION NO. 11616

RESOLVED, That this Commission does hereby approve the schematic plans for park development of Knudsen-Bloom property, located at Potrero Avenue near 25th Street.

Utah Street and The Farm left the meeting in outrage. Who were these strangers with fancy titles who so outnumbered the community participants, wonder Utah Street. And, why was the process being left open to changes in the design? This was supposed to be final. Something fishy was going on, they suspected. The clever Sherk took a moderate stance and handed The Farm's outrage to Sandy Walker. Capitalizing on the opening for further design negotiations she wrote:

Dear George and Sat,

According to the suggestions of the Commissioners at the April 19th Recreation and Parks Commission meeting, I am writing to you requesting that we meet again in order to make it possible to further integrate Crossroads Community (The Farm) into the new park. I am very pleased that we will continue to work with you in a positive community direction and I look forward to hearing from you soon, as to when a good date will be available for our meeting. (3-25-79)

This pleasant note arrived five days after Sandy Walker expressed the Farm's outrage:

20 April 1979

Mr. Thomas Malloy

San Francisco Rec. & Park Headquarters

McLaren Lodge

Golden Gate Park, San Francisco, Ca 94117

Dear Tom,

After leaving the meeting Thursday I was struck with a great feeling of sadness and anger over what had transpired.

The Farm offers the city a fantastic service unique to San Francisco at no cost. The endorsements of the program are incredible, by any standard, and yet this program has been met with constant foot dragging where it should be embraced with enthusiasm and joy. Never has there been any creative input from the Staff or the Design team that would take advantage of this offered service, instead the designers go on having meetings and then doing the same old plan, counting the meetings like merit badges. It seems the only input from the Staff is a promise to never allow animals on the property, (creative?)

Instead of recognizing an inventive program and helping it, Staff and Design team seem to have come up with a sort of copy-cat me too-ism offering to duplicate The Farm's program itself even to the construction of a Crafts building adjacent to the Farm Crafts building. Such a duplication, (in fact a stealing of ideas) would require supervision by City employees in a sense creating a new job need while existing work requirements are undemanded. How can this be justified when a privately funded program is available and proven? (As a taxpayer I am outraged.)

Elements of the plan are just plain not good. Instead of hiding behind such jargon as "conscientious concern" and "mandates" why not just locate the bathrooms near the playground or overpass to the other playground. Any first-year design student could have done better in terms of functional location.

Finally, the attitude of one Commissioner seemed so prejudicial and outrageous prior to the complete public presentation that he should have been asked to abstain if not resign outright. I have not been to as many commissions as you have but I have been to quite a few, (Art, Port, Planning) and I have never heard a Commissioner (who's job includes listening to the public in meetings) to interrupt the testimony to state his position in an attempt to cut off debate and I suppose influence other Commissioners to his totally unimaginative pre-Prop. 13 way of thinking.

What should have happened?

The Staff could have offered a scenario whereby The Farm might use the "Panhandle." It might have run like this:

Enter into a lease similar to the lease on the Children's Zoo or other public properties for the 3/4 of an acre in the Panhandle.

Make the lease three or five years. The risk is minimal and potential is fantastic.

Design the park to coordinate with this concept.

How simple and how fair and the Rec. and Park will reap the rewards of recognition for its creativeness. To quote Alfred Frankenstein, "if you do not support this program you are fools."

If in fact this program is not supported The Farm will still exist. Some buildings, (perhaps the Amion building) will be razed to provide the additional garden space leaving The Farm and its clone to then exist side by side as a monument to the bureaucracy.

Sincerely,

John C. Walker

Sherk's strategy worked. In stark violation of community participation rules, the design team and Tom Malloy agreed to meet at Rec Park office to negotiate changes in the panhandle design. Utah Street got wind of these meetings. On his daily walk, George Homsey found a cold reception.

In late May of 1979, a group of Utah Street residents came to the architects' office. They were livid. Why, if the schematics had already been approved by the city, were changes made in the design of

the panhandle? Why weren't they (Utah Street) included in the discussions that produced these changes? We waffled and bent the truth, somehow managing to suggest, without saying it directly, that budget and Rec Park's ideas had produced the changes. The contingent was especially displeased that design barriers between The Farm and the panhandle had been removed. Then came the threat: most of the local merchants were against the idea of the park. They had once been opposed themselves and if these secret changes continued they would bring the whole project to a halt. We could only listen and mollify.

In response, Bonnie Sherk escalated her public campaign. I received an angry phone call from Harold Gilliam, environmental editor for the San Francisco Examiner. Why were we trying to destroy The Farm, he asked? We're not, I responded. The final design was the outcome of a process involving local people. The Farm was just one group. After nearly an hour of my defending and his questioning the participation process, the conversation ended with Gilliam screaming, "I guess you'd let 'the people' redesign the wilderness." A few weeks later, Gilliam wrote a scathing article characterizing the city and the design team as "people who look suspiciously on innovation of any kind" and subtly demeaning the participation process:

The job of ascertaining the "desires of the community" went to a committee of the design consultants, including sociologist Russell Ellis. "We wrote to about 700 individuals and organizations, asking them to come to meetings and help plan the park. We had excellent participation from all elements of the community. We encouraged people--Latinos and others--who had been voiceless to register their opinions. People who had never talked to each other worked together. And naturally we got a wide variety of opinions."

The Farm forces expressed their displeasure last March when some 500 people signed statements to the Rec Park Commission endorsing an urban farm park. Some concessions were made by the designers, and the chief differences have been narrowed to these:

The design plan now calls for an 18- by 40-foot field house along the north side of the quarter-acre garden area, to contain park offices, restrooms and a craft center. The Farm people would prefer to see the land devoted to gardens and offer to make space available in existing

Farm buildings for the same purposes, presumably saving the taxpayers the expense of building.

Bonnie feels that certain areas, such as a planned pond, should be more "naturalistic" in design, with an "edible landscape" including more fruit trees and vegetables beneath them.

The Farm wants a lease-management agreement to operate the garden, with community participation. Rec Park officials find all kinds of legal and practical obstacles in such an arrangement, although there is now a similar set-up at Fleishhacker Zoo. They contemplate the garden will be run by city employees.

Despite our nervous agreement to separate meetings with Sherk and Sandy Walker, Gilliam had been fed a new demand: no structures at all should occupy the panhandle. It should be leased to The Farm. Not only was the fact of our concessions there in print for all to see, Gilliam went on to paint a picture of the panhandle that doomed Bonnie's cause:

These problems can probably be resolved if they are seen in a larger context, which would include some serious thought about the future of this city and cities in general. It is no secret that metropolitan cities, which have been the centerpieces of western civilization, have fallen on evil times. If they are to survive and prosper they must again become attractive places that can provide ample opportunities to satisfy basic human needs for satisfying working relationships with other people as well as with plants, trees, animals and green spaces. . . .

We may hope that in the attainment of this overriding goal, everyone concerned may be able to submerge personal differences, past bitterness and bureaucratic obstacles to make these contested acres at the interchange a showplace for this city and for the nation.

Utah Street's bitterness increased. However, they did not attack the park. They attacked The Farm through their own public campaign; they managed among other things to convince a local television station

that enough seedy activity was going on at The Farm to merit a critical feature during prime time.

Clearly, Sherk was insatiable and bent on winning her ends in the media while keeping a pleasant negotiating face toward us. Still on surprisingly good terms with Utah Street, I had frequently been able to keep them invested in the accomplishment of the park and had often been able to deflect them from serious attacks on The Farm. I determined now to step out of their way. Pleased--and somewhat smug--that we had managed to pull off a park with the participation of the least sophisticated, I was, none-the-less, stung by the criticisms of me which began to accumulate in my professional circles: How could Russ be against such a wonderful idea as The Farm? My wounded ego was no longer available for protective service to The Farm.

### The Compost Raid

Further concessions were made to The Farm. Design development was completed. A construction contract was awarded. Soon after this, I arrived at the architects' office and saw from their window piles and piles of dirt and compost spread across the panhandle. Slowly, over subsequent months, after the land was being graded and terraced by the contractor, the Farmers colo-nized the panhandle with lovely little gardens in which groups of school children were invited to work and play. When it became necessary to attend to drainage problems, the San Francisco Chronicle blared, "Drainage Project: Growing Threat to S.F. Farm," over the influential by-line of Maitland Zane:

A park being built in the Potrero District is threatening the community garden next to it, situated beside the Army Street interchange.

The Farm, as the breath of countryside is known, is the brainchild of Bonnie Sherk, 35, the conceptual sculptor who invented "portable parks" a decade ago.

It's so bucolically tranquil that one soon forgets the roar of traffic on the nearby James Lick Freeway, for there are vegetable and

flower gardens and an idyllic little barnyard where toddlers feed chickens, rabbits, ducks, and a goat called Gabriella.

Sherk said yesterday she fears the place will be ruined because the city wants to lay two big drain pipes from the adjoining park through to Potrero Avenue.

"We'll be wiped out," she said. "We've been told we'll have to move out while they bulldoze 30-foot swaths through our growing areas."

After a period of tense bickering, Tom Malloy drafted a resolution for the Rec Park Commission's approval:

WHEREAS, Section 3.552 of the Charter grants to the Recreation & Park Commission "... the complete and exclusive control, management and direction of the parks, playgrounds, recreation centers and all other recreation facilities, squares, avenues and grounds which are in the charge of the commission..."; and

WHEREAS, the City purchased certain property commonly known as the Knudsen-Bloom site as part of its Open Space Program: and

WHEREAS, the Department has engaged in the most extensive community design participation process in its history to develop plans for the improvement of this property; and

WHEREAS, the Recreation and Park Department and Commission has repeatedly worked with representatives of The Farm to assure that various design elements incorporated in the park will reflect the Commission's desire that the new facility serve not only the general recreational needs of the Mission District, but function as a good neighbor to adjacent properties, including The Farm and Buena Vista Annex School; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that this Commission does find as a matter of record that it was fully aware of the contents of the plans and specifications



for Phase II for which it did authorize the award of a construction contract; and, be it,

FURTHER RESOLVED, that this Commission does find that its staff did reach agreements with representatives of The Farm, regarding the design of the gardening area on the property, which are now repudiated by these representatives; and, be it

FURTHER RESOLVED that the construction plans mandated certain site grading, including grading of the gardening area now existing on the property, and both the drainage of the property and other desired improvements would be imperiled if this grading were not done; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, that this Commission did never relinquish its authority by granting to any group the right of approval, written or oral, over plans and specifications for Knudsen-Bloom, which would be illegal under the Charter; and, be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, that this Commission does desire the contractor to proceed as expeditiously as possible so that this important new park may be completed for public use as soon as possible and without further unnecessary costs and delays; and, be it

FINALLY RESOLVED, that the Phase II plans for Knudsen-Bloom have always contemplated an interim disruption of the community Gardens, which are to be restored as part of the completed park.

This resolution provided final notice to Bonnie and the Farmers that side negotiations would cease. While Bonnie's lobbying would not decrease in intensity, the Commission-backed position effectively froze the design into place. Rec Park and the designers, over the next many months, fine-tuned particular elements of the park design. The Farm's attempted interventions were met with civil neglect. Utah Street celebrated the outcome as a victory for their anti-Farm position, even though access from the panhandle to The Farm was retained in the final design.

The completed park was dedicated in a formal ceremony in the summer of 1984.

### Potrero del Sol: Synthetic Participation

I call the Potrero del Sol episode one of "synthetic" participation and must contrast it with the earlier cases to establish my meaning.

It is easy to see that most of the people involved in the making of Operation Bootstrap were motivated by social ideals, ideologies of social change or, at worst, guilt or mere do-gooder-ism. The times certainly sustained the desires of those participants to capture the world-changing impetus of the civil rights movement and deposit it--transformed--into a local setting. Bootstrap is the purest example of placemaking based on raw ideals. The participants were following a vision of new social relationships independent of existing public institutions. Help from the apparatuses of federal and local government was explicitly rejected in favor of a self-reliance supported by resources from various small worlds of people attracted to the ideals portrayed by Bootstrap's core protagonists.

Kilimanjaro's central people were similarly idealistic, but sought to strike a deal with public institutions. Suspicious that supportive federal and local school bureaucracies had rushed to envelope the movements with which Kilimanjaro identified, they nonetheless claimed some right to the resources those movements had shaken free, confident that their participatory ideals could survive the entanglement and move their project forward toward a changed Berkeley and, eventually, America.

Peralta's people held no exalted vision of new social life. They sought only to save a community school. Their efforts were conducted in the name of participation which--if achieved--held some promise for their new school. But participation held primarily a strategic and symbolic value in their dealings with a public school bureaucracy. Peralta's people did not question the legitimacy of this bureaucracy's existence, but saw it as an institution to be manipulated to their ends. The participation of the sixties still reverberated to their advantage in the arena of their struggles, but the Peralta people were neither

idealists nor ideologues. They were practical people who, without cynicism but with much guile, effectively draped themselves and their project in the cloak of a legitimate term and cleverly articulated their meaning of it with that of their equally instrumental adversary.

In each of the first three cases, the core group's existence predated the emergent opportunities of which they took advantage. In the activist city of San Francisco in the late 1970s, participation had become a routine assumption, risen, to the offices of the managers of the public weal.

I call the Potrero del Sol case synthetic, then, because the participants were assembled through the mandate of a public bureau. People were brought together who would otherwise not have had occasion to gather, plan, compromise, and act in concert. Some groups existed that were moved by participatory ideals similar to those of our previous cases. But here the call to participation was from the top down, bringing into the process many people who did not have the inclination or experience to engage in the long and arduous give-and-take so far outside the round of their familiar daily routines. The problem in this situation, then, was not one of charter-based pursuit of a vision or practical end. Nor was it one of clarifying internal group meanings and processes as a project approached realization. Here, the nature and desirability of the end was at issue. Enmity was internal to the participatory process, rather than functioning as an external organizer of group energies. Values and lives differed radically:

Probably the most important lessons in this experience for me were the insights into the sheer stamina the community planning process requires as it is currently practiced. An assistant to a local state legislator pointed out that the factions involved with this park represent two precincts with the most extremely radical and conservative voting patterns, respectively, of any in the city. They just happen to live right next door to each other. I saw that with such strange bedfellows even the greatest designs or proposals could sink into oblivion. There wasn't even any significant corporate pressure involved! I'm used to fighting corporations, but old time feuding is a real challenge.<sup>11</sup>

This lament summarizes one effect of publicly instituted participation on placemaking. Synthetically assembled groups gathered around such a task can result in randomly divergent (or convergent)

attitudes, experiences, and interests. When these are divergent in synthetic situations, professional and bureaucratic mediation and shaping of process and outcomes appear inevitable. The Potrero del Sol case is, of course, an extreme one, but instructive nonetheless. Farm visionaries brought forth from the 1960s an ecological goal reminiscent of Bootstrap's expansionist dream. Their Place was to grow and instruct the city (and world) about sensitive and responsible disposition of the land, much as Kilimanjaro was meant to function in education. In an earlier time The Farm's plan and access to influential elites might have been joined to realize the vision.

Mandated participation brought "the people" into the process. For the people of Utah Street the ethnic and consciousness movements of the 1960s were anathema. The evidence was all around them and was a threat to their conception of a good and safe place. A park at the hub of their lives had to be rendered safe and recognizably what their lives were about. Their cautious trust was that professionals knew best. The participatory sophistication they most thoroughly developed was methods to fight an intrusive life vision. But, Potrero del Sol exists, is used, and all participants are more knowledgeable about the complexities of public action in a democracy.