Historic Park Management
A Survey of Other Cities

Phoenix Parks, Various, AZ
Local Designation: Yes
Design Guidelines: No

Papago Park, Eastlake Park, Phoenix Indian School and Encanto Park are all listed on the Phoenix Historic Property Register. Papago Park is listed as a historic district, Eastlake Park is listed as an individual property, Phoenix Indian School is listed as a landmark historic district, and Encanto Park is listed as part of the larger Encanto-Palmcroft Historic District. However, for all intents and purposes, the properties are treated the same. There are not design guidelines for each of the parks; instead, alterations to significant historic elements within the parks are governed by the standards in Section 812.D of the City's Zoning Ordinance as well as the City's General Design Guidelines for Historic Properties.

Typically changes to park structures are reviewed by the Landmark Commission, rather than landscape features. New additions are reviewed, including things like new bathrooms. Many of the reviews occur administratively and take only one to two days. Larger projects take a bit more time for review but the process is not seen as a hindrance to park management. The designation has no bearing on how the parks are used (permitted). Papago Park is home to the local zoo, which is included in the designation and so is supposed to go through the same design review process as other park elements.

Boston Parks, Various, MA
Local Designation: Yes
Design Guidelines: Yes

The city is home to historically designated parks including Boston Common, Commonwealth Avenue Mall, Emerald Necklace Park System, Franklin Park and the Public Garden. Study reports for these individual Landmarks are posted on the website.

Each Landmark has its own guidelines. In all Boston parks with Landmark designation, additions to existing facilities and new construction require review and approval. The same application process applies to open space as to buildings.

Franklin Park is home to the Zoo, and while expansion is not anticipated by the guidelines there is review for zoo projects visible from the park.
**Prospect Park, Brooklyn, NY**
Local Designation: Yes
Design Guidelines: No
Size: 585 Acres

Prospect Park is designated as a city landmark, and as a result all capital improvements are reviewed by the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission. This includes changes to structures, but also changes in foot paths, landscape features, etc. The decisions of the Commission are binding on other city departments. There is a concerted effort to work from the historical, in this case Olmstead, documents, when making decisions about modifications, changes or additions to the park, but there are no specific design guidelines. Decisions can take a long time, depending on their scope, but they did recently add a contemporary skating rink on a former carriage lot/parking lot. The general philosophy is “to revert to the Olmstead landscapes whenever possible.” Because they have an internal design office, they often do “mini-master plans” for specific park areas. All capital projects that include plantings, such as trees, go through the review process that involves Parks, NYC Landmarks Commission and then NYC Public Design Commission. However, they have established an “umbrella” review for a woodland restoration project so that plantings in particular zones can be approved at one sitting and not have to go back with each small project. The park does include a Zoo, which is run by the New York Zoological Society, but because it is within the limits of Prospect Park it is required to go to the Landmarks Commission and the NYC Public Design Commission for any alterations.

**Battery Park, NY**
Local Designation: No
Design Guidelines: No
Size: 25 acres

Battery Park is more than 150 years old, as a fort (Castle Clinton) was built onsite in 1812 and a park grew up around it by 1855. Castle Clinton, now located within the park, was designated a National Monument in 1946 but there is no further designation for the park on the state or local level. The Battery Conservancy was founded in 1994 and has a legal agreement (MOU) with the city Parks Department, authorizing the Conservancy to do planning, construction and programming in the park. Like Central Park, the head of the Conservancy also officially serves as the Park Administrator.
In New York there is a Public Design Commission, which reviews permanent changes to public assets that are not landmarks. There is a fairly extensive public process and includes first sending schematic design concepts to the Department of Parks, then sending the design to a Community Board, which is advisory, and then taking the plan to the Public Design Commission, which looks at it three times, first in schematic, then preliminary, then final design stages.

Due to its small size and location, the park is dedicated primarily to strolling/passive recreation, but they are in the process of upgrading a 5 acre “oval” which can be used passively or for public events, such as concerts. It will accommodate 5,000 people and includes a concrete pad for loading and unloading, etc. The park has 460,000 neighbors and 6 million visitors per year. According to the Executive Director of the Conservancy, “always changed during its 400 year history to accommodate the needs and aspirations of its citizens so I feel it should continue doing it.”

**Branch Brook Park, Newark, NJ**

Local Designation: No  
Design Guidelines: No  
Size: 360 Acres

Branch Brook Park is the first county-park in the US, and was designed by the Olmstead firm. Because it is a county park and not a city park, is has no local designation but is on the National Register and State Registers of historic places. Fifteen years ago a group of citizens became concerned about the condition of the park and formed a strong friends group, the Branch Brook Park Alliance. This group developed an MOU with the county that requires that the friends group review and approve changes in the park. In return, the friends group raises significant dollars (nearly $50 million over the years) to support park improvements. The first thing the friends group raised funds for was an extensive historical assessment.

Then the group developed a Cultural Landscape Report, Treatment and Management Plan (CLR) for the park. The multivolume document is intended “to provide a detailed roadmap for how the restoration and maintenance of the park should proceed. Projects include the restoration of waterways, plantings, pathways and structures in keeping with Olmsted’s vision for open bucolic landscapes to serve as antidotes to the overcrowded, unhealthy and unsightly conditions of industrial urban life.”

New additions to the park have been completed in recent years, most notably the addition of large ball fields with “scoring pavilions.” Additionally, an older under-utilized structure was replaced with a new visitor center. In both cases preserving the footprint of the original open
space was important. The State Historic Preservation Office is given the opportunity to have a courtesy review of plans and changes.

The CLR provides fairly specific guidance on landscape features, such as trees/groves, and there is also a Legacy Tree program that identified and protects a few specific trees

**The Presidio, San Francisco CA**
Local Designation: No
(But it is a National Historic Landmark District, National Park Site and a California Historical Landmark)
Design Guidelines: Yes
Size: 1,480 acres

A decommissioned Army base, the Presidio had been a military base since 1776. The Presidio is managed by the Presidio Trust, a federal agency that was founded by Congress in 1996, after the decommissioning of the Army base. The National Parks Service also jointly manages the coastal aspects of the park. As of 2013, the Presidio Trust is entirely self-funding. More than half of the Presidio’s 700+ buildings are on the National Register of Historic Properties. The Presidio Trust has rehabilitated 300 of them, adapting them as visitor destinations, homes, and workplaces.

The Trust is guided by an extensive Management Plan, which articulates current uses and provides a vision for future uses of the land in the Presidio. As it states in its introduction, “the Plan is not an implementation plan, but a statement of policy that is intended to guide future implementation decisions.” The Management Plan was created through an extensive public process, and dictates that future decisions also be made through a public process.

The Management Plan created “planning districts” throughout the park based on the different characteristics of each district and articulating different goals for each area. The historic buildings in the park, mainly relating to the military base (including military housing, field hospitals and an air fields), are discussed at length in the Management Plan. There are also design guidelines for the Mid-Crissy Air Field and the Letterman Air Field Complex. The goal of the Management Plan is to reintroduce natural wildlife and habitats back into the park, which requires the gradual removal of non-historic buildings.

The Management plan also briefly addresses any new construction, limiting it to the areas of the park which are already developed.

**Austin Parks, Various**
Local Designation: Some
Design Guidelines: No
The City of Austin recently started more active work to address historic and cultural assets in its parks system, after public criticism about the condition of some parks and assets. Their first action was an inventory of the designated or eligible (either locally or on the National Register) parks and structures/assets within parks. This survey work is available on the Austin Historic Survey Wiki (on-line). A staff person was hired by the City to conduct the survey and then came on board as a Project Coordinator, and it is her job to work with community groups interested in park improvements (such as friends groups).

In Austin projects on National Register properties as well as locally designated property are reviewed by the Landmark Commission, although this has not always happened regularly and they are working to educate city departments. The parks department now gets “National Register Permits” for work on designated structures/elements, and the parks department is not self-permitting. The Secretary of the Interior Standards are used for evaluation. Often the reviews are done informally through relationships between city employees (maintenance staff and preservation staff). However, they acknowledge they have a lot of room for improvement and hope to develop a Cultural Resources Management Plan in the future.

Rehabilitation, not restoration, is their general policy so that the parks can evolve and change.