

## TOWARD A DEFINITION OF OLMSTEDIAN PRINCIPLES OF DESIGN

### *"The Seven S's"*

- SCENERY:** Design of "passages of scenery" even in the small spaces and in areas intended for active use. Creation of designs that give an enhanced sense of space: indefinite boundaries, constant opening up of new views. Avoidance of hard-edge or specimen planting, creating instead designs that have either "considerable complexity of light and shadow near the eye" or "obscurity of detail further away."
- SUITABILITY:** Creation of designs that are in keeping with the natural scenery and topography of the site: respect for, and full utilization of, the "genius of the place."
- STYLE:** Designing in specific styles, each for a particular effect. Primarily in the "Pastoral" style (open greensward with small bodies of water and scattered trees and groves) for a soothing, restorative atmosphere, or in the "Picturesque" style (profuse planting, especially with shrubs, creepers and ground cover, on steep and broken terrain), for a sense of the richness and bounteousness of nature, with chiaroscuro effects of light and shade to produce a sense of mystery.
- SUBORDINATION:** Subordination of all elements, all features and objects, to the overall design and the effect it is intended to achieve. The "Art to conceal Art."
- SEPARATION:** Separation of areas designed in different styles, so that an "incongruous mixture of styles" will not dilute the intended effect of each: separation of ways, in order to insure safety of use and reduce distractions for those using the space; separation of conflicting or incompatible uses.
- SANITATION:** Provision for adequate drainage and other engineering considerations, not simply arranging of surface features. Planning or designs so that they promote both the physical and mental health of users.
- SERVICE:** Planning of designs so that they will serve a "purpose of direct utility or service;" that is, will meet fundamental social and psychological needs: "So long as considerations of utility are neglected or overridden by considerations of ornament, there will be no true Art."

*Charles E. Beveridge, January 1986*

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