“Cannot a Monument that Breathes be Built?”
East and West Fairmount Park is the first municipally protected watershed park in the United States. This allows for a rare connection to nature in the middle of the city.
Unlike Prospect Park or Forest Park, which are 19th-century parks fashioned whole-cloth to stimulate the real estate market, East and West Fairmount Park was never “designed,” in terms of how a user would experience the whole. Rather, it was conceived as working landscape that evolved as the city government acquired many summer estates along the Schuylkill River. It was Philadelphia’s counter to Manhattan’s Central Park, providing respite from what was then Philadelphia’s denser, more industrial urban core.

Today as a result of never having been cohesively “planned” as a park, Philadelphians, visitors and stakeholders continue to use and develop East and West Fairmount Park on an ad hoc basis to this day. Trails do not connect to one another. Few gateway or visitor services are available. Complementary institutions often toil in isolation. Communities feel disconnected from the park. Old infrastructure such as the road network from the Centennial Exposition and the right-of-way from the former Park Passenger Railway trolley causes fragmentation.

Assembled over many decades, the park is used as many small parks and needs better design to allow the user to experience the whole. This improvement plan recommends design changes that will allow the park to better serve residents.
Walking access to Randolph Creek is visible just a few hundred feet from Strawberry Mansion’s main connection to East Fairmount Park, Joseph Mander Recreation Center.

Creating gateway and access improvements in this area can go a long way toward better engaging a North Philadelphia community with nature.

While many local residents experience the park through Mander, there is nothing to guide them to the beautiful slice of nature deeper within the park.

Randolph Creek begins in an understated manner, marked by a small wetland and limited pedestrian access.

A stretch of the Boxers’ Trail hugs the creek but veers left before the Schuylkill River, as there is no way to safely cross the high-speed traffic and use the river trail.

Randolph Creek is channeled under Kelly Drive before it flows into the Schuylkill River.
Existing Site
MUST CHORUS GIRLS BE PLAYGIRLS?
Now I have seen monuments:
Great geometric heaps of stone,
Lifeless towers raised to keep alive the dead;

But I ask,
Cannot a monument that breathes be built?
A grateful people are bigger than all the tall piled stones
In our wide and waiting world;
A grateful people are wise
When their living grows into a growing monument.
And I ask,
Will not a monument breathe for Mander?

Spring out of the hearts of people who
Have grown wise in the ways of brotherhood
As taught by brave dead Mander?

And I ask,
When you walk through the spring that won't come this year for
Joseph E. Mander, Senior
Will you turn those fingers that point to say
“That's where a hero died”
Back to yourselves —
Point to your heart
Saying,
“But this is here he lives!”

excerpt from “To some millions who survive Joseph E. Mander, Senior Sarah E. Wright”
May 1952
Mander is a place to...
Collages with interpretive diagrams
#1. Activate 33rd Street, including north side
#2. Bring People IN to the campus
#3. Clear Loop Around the Fields
Connections

to Edgely Fields

to Fairmount Park North

to Randolph Creek

to Susquehanna

to 33rd South

to 33rd North
Memory Plan

- Picnic shelters recalling Mander canopy
- Mander canopy
- Garden walk
- Inscriptions in amphitheater seating recalling hill play memories
- Mander grove
- Legacy of running and jogging loops
- Memorial garden walk
- Tennis courts honoring legends
- Inscriptions along paths
- Inscriptions in amphitheater seating
- Legacy of family cookouts
- Playground recalling legacy of play
- Coltrane-inspired paving pattern
- Basketball courts honoring local legends
Coltrane’s Paving Pattern
Mander Memorial Grove
“Cannot a Monument that Breathes be Built?”