LIBRARY PARK
Main and Second Streets; Richmond, Virginia

When renowned urban landscape designer Lynden Miller, spoke in Richmond (February 1996) about the extensive restoration of the north end of New York City's Central Park, no one had any idea her presentation would spark an extraordinary restoration in downtown Richmond. Shortly thereafter, a grass roots effort spearheaded by concerned downtown business and property owners called the Downtown Neighborhood Association (DNA) joined the Friends of the Richmond Library and developed a plan to raise $210,000 to revamp the worn-out green space behind the main branch of the library. Both DNA and the Friends share a compelling interest in revitalizing the park as a means of beautifying the neighborhood and encouraging greater use of the amenities downtown. Nearly two years later, over $200,000 has been raised through a public/private partnership with concerned civic groups, individuals, and the City of Richmond. The monies fall into three categories: bricks and mortar, a programming endowment, and a maintenance endowment. The Boxwood, James River, Three Chopt, and Tuckahoe Garden Clubs seek to support the existing Maintenance Endowment for long-term care of the park with a gift of $5,000 from the Common Wealth Award.

The Library Park was designed twenty-five years ago with no mechanism in place to address the inevitable wear and tear on public property. Consequently, it fell into disrepair and became a haven for transients. The Three Chopt Garden Club's initial gift was immediately matched by the Boxwood, James River, and Tuckahoe Clubs for a total of $16,000, the largest single civic group gift. To protect the clubs' substantial investment, the Park Advisory Committee incorporated a Maintenance Endowment into the budget so that trees, seating, and lighting would be reviewed annually. Interest from the endowment monies would be used for refurbishment. Twenty-five years from now, the park will remain a vibrant green space, providing a cultural oasis in the heart of downtown Richmond.