Halprin Open Space Sequence is a non-contiguous historic district that includes individual multiple elements designed as a cohesive group by noted landscape architect Lawrence Halprin. The district is located just south of downtown in Portland’s South Auditorium District. It consists of four public parks connected by a system of pedestrian malls. The South Auditorium District was developed in the 1960s as the city’s first urban renewal district. Halprin’s landscape spaces are an integral part of the design and development of that district. The three larger parks [Lovejoy Fountain, Pettygrove and Ira Keller Fountain] are each approximately one acre in size. Each park is unique and designed for a specific function; all are meant to be interactive. The southernmost park, Lovejoy Fountain Park, is located approximately at Hall Street between Second and Third Avenues. It is hardscaped with fountains, pavilion, and plaza. The center park, Pettygrove Park, is located approximately two blocks north at roughly Montgomery Street, also between Second and Third Avenues. It features a softer design with a cluster of treed hillocks separated by asphalt pathways. The final and northernmost park is also about two blocks north of Pettygrove and is located just west of the Keller Auditorium. That park was originally known as Auditorium Forecourt, but is now named Keller Fountain Park. It is located between Third and Fourth Avenues and Clay and Market Streets. The park is defined by a tiered concrete fountain that creates an 80-feet wide, 25-feet tall waterfall that drops from west to east to a sunken plaza. The design includes landscaped berms at the north and south to shield the waterfall and plaza from the traffic and street noise. It also includes landscaping at the west with plantings and stream-like pools. Connecting these parks are pedestrian malls. These pedestrian malls consist of two primary north-south paths that align with Second and Third Avenues, and a series of shorter east-west malls connecting the parks and pedestrian-only interior to the surrounding streets. At the south end of the Second Avenue Pedestrian Mall is the fourth park, Source Fountain Plaza. This park is a 2,200 square-foot hardscaped plaza with a central low-rise brick fountain where water bubbles to the top. Throughout, Halprin’s design work includes not only major design elements (e.g., plazas and fountains), but lesser details that include lighting, benches, curbs, drains, etc. All of the resources within the district are contributing; none are non-contributing. The district and the individual parts within have a high degree of integrity.
Lecturer of Landscape Architecture at Harvard University, best frames Halprin’s place within his profession in an essay from Where the Revolution Began: The ‘transitional figure’ in history is a well-worn cliché, but in Lawrence Halprin’s case, the term emphatically and revealingly applies. Halprin is widely recognized as one of the preeminent designers of the postwar era, when landscape architecture finally reckoned with the formal, social, and spatial implications of modernism. Like his slightly older colleagues Garrett Eckbo, Dan Kiley, and James Rose, Halprin utilized a language of streamline forms, asymmetrical geometries, and spatial ambiguity characterized by a modernist artifice that obscured their transformative potential for nature. Because of what was later termed the ’1950s moment in the landscape, which characterized a phase of world-wide interest in and support for landscape architecture, Halprin left his mark on the field.

Halprin was born in the midst of the Great Depression. By the time he was thirteen years old, his family had relocated to Oakland, California, where he attended high school and later the University of California, Berkeley, studying philosophy and architecture. After graduating from Berkeley in 1943, Halprin joined the United States Army and was stationed in Potomac, Maryland, where he worked on a project to improve the aesthetics of the Marine Corps headquarters and the Truman White House. In 1946, Halprin joined the firm of Louis Hart Associates, and in 1948, he opened his own office in Berkeley. Halprin’s earliest projects were for the construction of homes and small urban parks. He also was involved in the design and development of the University of California at Berkeley’s campus. In 1953, Halprin was awarded a fellowship from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, which enabled him to travel to Europe to conduct research on European urban design.

Halprin’s career was marked by a series of groundbreaking projects, including the design of Pioneer Courthouse Square in Portland, Oregon, in 1960. The square was the first major public space to be developed in Portland since the 1940s, and it marked the beginning of a series of urban design projects that would come to define the city’s identity. In 1962, Halprin designed the Lovejoy Fountain in downtown Portland, and in 1966, he designed the Forecourt Fountain at the Portland State University. These projects were among the first to incorporate the concepts of movement, sequence, and experience into public space design. Halprin’s work was characterized by a focus on the development of public spaces that were both aesthetically pleasing and functionally effective.

Halprin’s work was widely influential, and his influence can be seen in the development of public spaces throughout the United States. His projects included parks, plazas, and other public spaces that were designed to encourage social interaction and to improve the quality of life in urban areas. In 1969, the first of the three major urban design projects that Halprin was involved in——Pioneer Courthouse Square, Portland——was completed. In 1971, he completed the second project——the Portland Open Space Sequence——which consisted of three major urban design projects——Lovejoy Fountain, Pettygrove Park, and Forecourt Fountain——all completed between 1963 and 1966. These projects were among the first to incorporate the concepts of movement, sequence, and experience into public space design. Halprin’s work was characterized by a focus on the development of public spaces that were both aesthetically pleasing and functionally effective.

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interactive fountain pool enormously popular with young families, while also incorporating bocce courts, sculptures, and restaurants. In contrast, Tanner Springs Park, three blocks north of Jamison, was completed in 2005, designed by Atelier Dreiseitl and Greenworks as a quiet, naturalistic space with a waterscape. Finally, the Fields, two blocks north of Tanner Springs and scheduled for completion in 2013, completes the arc of park types needed in a dense urban environment that is keen to attract and provide different types of parks for all spectrums of users. Randy Gragg’s twenty-five years of observing and critiquing Portland’s urban landscape perhaps places him in the best position to assess Halprin’s influence on the City’s parks: By the 1990s, Halprin’s once-revolutionary blend of nature, theater, and urbanism would be institutionalized in a growing collection of plazas and parks that, in each case, set the stage for major new enlargements of central city. To the north, two interconnected fountain plazas and a park—Jamison Square, Tanner Springs Park, and soon-to-be-completed, The Fields—echo Halprin’s watershed-inspired sequence as they follow the path of a long-buried historical creek. Gragg concludes, the sequence marks “an important, early step in Portland’s celebrated tradition of humanistic, environmentally conscious urbanism.” Halprin’s design concepts for the sequence establish the format for what Portland and many American cities expect of today’s public spaces. Generally the Portland parks feature those qualities, though rarely with the same verve as Halprin’s designs.

**RESEARCH INFORMATION**

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**Bibliography:**