

Column for Manila Bulletin
MANNY VILLAR
August 21, 2012

Of Trees and Forest

Would We Sell Central Park?

THIS second part of a series about selling public lands, our heirlooms, was not published last week for unexpected circumstances. My apologies.

A shuddering thought came to my mind when I started this series about selling what remains of our public lands, especially in Metro Manila. I wondered: if Central Park were here, would we have sold it, too?

The Central Park of New York, probably one of the most famous parks in the world, is seen by millions without going to the United States because it is often featured in movies, books, and other print and visual media.

Central Park, according to Wikipedia, is located at the center of New York City, which initially covered 770 acres (about 3.1 square kilometers), then expanded to 843 acres or about 3.41 square kilometers (our Rizal Park is just a very tiny speck in comparison).

Central Park was opened in 1857 and was expanded and improved even during the American Civil War.

Every year, more than 35 million people visit the Central Park (more than nine times the tourist arrivals to the whole Philippines), and it has served as model for many urban parks including in Japan and in Europe.

One thing that adds to the uniqueness of the Central Park is that while it sits on public property, management is done by the private sector, the Central Park Conservancy, which was founded in 1980 by a group of dedicated civic and philanthropists in an effort to stop the park's decline in the 1970s and restore it to its former splendor as the first and foremost major urban public park in the United States.

Since its founding, the Central Park Conservancy has overseen investments of more than \$600 million, the bulk from private donors to run and care for the park. The area and facilities to take care of are astounding: 250 acres of lawns, 24,000 trees, 150 acres of lakes and streams, 130 acres of woodlands, 9,000 benches, 26 ball fields, 21 playgrounds, 55 sculptures and monuments, and 36 bridges. Park personnel must also collect tons of trash a year and remove graffiti 24/7, as well as provide services to other city parks.

The conservancy's success at Central Park has logically extended its mission to help other parks. It has been providing technical management and funding advice to other parks in the US as well as in other countries.

So, I wondered whether we have

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LINK:

<http://www.mb.com.ph/articles/370472/would-we-sell-central-park#.ULMJf-SsjTo>