



Urban Park Paths and Their Impact on Community:
A Study of Washington D.C.'s 11th Street Bridge Park

Abstract

In 2019 the 11th Street Bridge Park will open in Washington, D.C., linking the Anacostia neighborhood with the rest of the capital. Although parks have the capacity to facilitate community, lower-income residents are sometimes displaced; the construction of park paths expedites gentrification (Jacobs 1961, Logan and Molotch 2007, Littke et al. 2016). This paper discusses urban parks and their relationship with gentrification and increased housing costs. The study design uses two park paths, the 606 in Chicago and the High Line in New York City, to consider their influence on their respective neighborhoods. It then analyzes the 11th Street Bridge Park's planning and equity plan in conjunction with patterns of gentrification in D.C. to determine if the park can prevent displacement while simultaneously facilitate joint community usage. Because D.C. has undergone so many socioeconomic transformations and Anacostia is still 90% Black and low-income (median household income is \$34,000) (Hurley et al. 2016), it is imperative to determine if this park can avoid the undesirable outcomes of urban developments that harm community.

Keywords: Urban, gentrification, displacement, development, housing, park paths, race, inequality, environment, community

I. Introduction

This project focuses on residential displacement because of rising living costs and related causes due to large park path projects in cities. Elevated trail parks are being constructed in cities to join communities, create profit, and increase green space (The High Line Network 2017).

While there is research on the effects of certain park projects on community well-being and gentrification, they have not been studied together comparatively. These park projects have the potential to increase real estate prices (via higher rents and property taxes) in the surrounding area, which can cause lower-income residents to move away (Loughran 2014, Smith 2016, 4).

Poorer neighborhoods are at the greatest risk of displacement caused from gentrification. Washington, D.C. underwent major demographic changes in the past two decades and the 11th Street Bridge Park project is actively attempting to avoid displacing Southeast residents (Logan and Molotch 2007, Hyra 2017, Bogle et al. 2016).

This project investigates the wider question: do large-scale park projects have the ability to revitalize or produce community in changing urban areas? More specifically, this research will determine if the 11th Street Bridge Park project has the capacity to push back against segregation and the lack of unified community within D.C. A literature review of parks in relation to community and gentrification, contextualization of the 11th Street Bridge Park, and analysis of the New York and Chicago case studies are presented before the D.C. park's plan is evaluated.

II. Literature Review

The Importance of Urban Parks

In her seminal work *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, published in 1961, Jane Jacobs warns her audiences “to junk the false reassurance that parks are real estate stabilizers or community anchors. Parks are not automatically anything...” (1961, 92). Parks depend on people for their function and potential to be fulfilled (Jacobs 1961).

Residents must be able to observe their park if they want to make sure the space is safe. Having “eyes on the street” requires that the space be constantly viewable (Jacobs 1961). This approach, formulated by Jacobs, refers to community surveillance over local parks and streets. Mindy Fullilove, M.D. finds “it is the neighborly eye that governs what is happening on the street,” or within and surrounding the park. Local observation shows commitment to place (2010, 74). “Eyes on the street” can cause lower crime rates (Harris et al. 2017). Public responsibility must be maintained because when private groups revitalize parks, people may feel less welcome (Low 2005, 196).

Public art in parks also forms community. For unfamiliar visitors, seeing a certain mural conveys certain messages. As Jacobs states, “art done for art’s sake is outside economic life.... community things are done not for livelihood and not for power” (Jacobs 2016, 379). Local art gives voice and autonomy to the community.

Communities must be actively engaged with their parks for parks to reach their ideal form. Agrarian philosopher Wendell Berry emphasizes that the relationship between people and the land is codependent. Strong relationships with places, Berry explains, can be achieved through localism. Successful spaces will only be maintained if citizens are connected neighbors (2015, 62). Yet, the maintenance of neighborly relations may become strained from gentrification. Park paths are unique because they are larger than traditional parks. Still, these

parks can function as public spaces, which allow marginalized groups to become “legitimate political subjects, but also in nudging issues and conflicts into the realm of democratic politics,” as Alexander Reichl from Queens College articulates (2016, 908).

Green Space and Walkability

Walkability and use of green space contribute to community. Walkability refers to high-quality walking and accessibility in certain areas (Jacobs 1961, Speck 2012, Gilderbloom et al. 2014). Accessible areas provide social structure for genuine interactions (Jacobs 1961). A study of 44 American cities found that an increased percentage of land in urban parks increases community well-being (Larson et al. 2016, 1-5). The authors suggest, “parks may...help to facilitate the construction of social capital and subsequent perceptions of community wellbeing” (Larson et al. 2016, 11).

People also rely on parks as “points of reference,” as Jamie Lerner, Mayor of Curitiba, Brazil, explains (2010, 190). Parks end up “providing territories that people can relate to, and interact with” (2010, 190). For example, Zuccotti Park in New York City’s financial district could be enjoyed during lunch breaks. But, to those involved in the Occupy Wall Street movement, the park signifies the crux of the resistance; a space where thousands of protestors risked arrest while calling for major economic reforms in 2011 (Dawson 2017, 6).

Areas around parks may change without entirely altering parks’ identities and visitor bases. Meridian Hill Park in Washington, D.C., also known as Malcolm X Park, became a space for resistance during the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s. Then, “riots erupted in 1991 after a D.C. police officer shot a Latino man, the park turned into a staging area for law

enforcement.” (Cox 2015). However, non-profits like “Friends of Meridian Hill” and residents implemented their “eyes on the street” and engaged with the park’s maintenance (1961).

Still, while the park was predominantly visited by Black and Latino individuals before the 1990s, it now sees many Whiter and wealthier individuals who moved nearby. The affects of increased living costs in the area altered the visitor base and those who claim it as their territory (M. Fennelly personal communication 2016, Cox 2015).

Because of parks’ potential as community spaces, neighborhoods must remain affordable for long-term lower income residents to stay. Jacobs warns, “there is no point in bringing parks to where the people are, if in the process the *reasons* that people are there are wiped out and the parks *substituted* for them” (1961, 101). Parks should not overpower focal points of communities.

The Consequences of Green Space and Environmental Gentrification

Minorities lack green space in cities and the Center for Disease Control sees this as a major contributing factor to high obesity rates among minorities (Acevedo et. al 2013, 1).

Improving green, walkable spaces in underserved communities is objectively good, but it may increase costs of living.

Wealthier individuals visit parks more frequently than lower income individuals and changes in neighborhood costs can exasperate this phenomenon (Shahzad et al. 2017, p. 53). Urban planners also use parks to raise property values in the area (Littke et al. 2016, 360). Still, low-income individuals use city parks (Larson 2010) and these places can still remain “territories” even after areas become drastically more expensive (Talen 1999, 1362, Lerner 2010,

190). Many parks remain places of refuge for city residents, functioning as escapes from city life (Shahzad et al. 2005, 53). Who uses certain parks depends on area's identities and histories.

Gentrification is defined as the influx of wealthy individuals into a traditionally lower-income area. Followed are increased rents, new high-priced stores and restaurants, and potentially displacement, which is the forced or involuntary removal of individuals from their homes because of inability to pay for housing or from a feeling of no longer belonging (Logan and Molotch 2007, 115). As Mindy Fullilove, M.D. explains, entire neighborhoods were razed in cities like Roanoke, Virginia and Newark, New Jersey. City-dwellers most affected were Black. When areas became too expensive for existing residents, they were given housing vouchers (Fullilove 2004, 79). But, monetary offerings cannot compensate for neighborhoods' abolition, or "collective assets – the social capital created by long-standing community [which] were not considered in the assessment of property values" (Fullilove 2004, 79). Fullilove calls this "root shock", or "the traumatic stress reaction to the destruction of all or part of one's emotional ecosystem" (2004, 11). When an individual's home is taken, parts of their identity are taken away (Lerner 2010).

Park developments can stimulate environmental gentrification, which occurs when improvements are made to existing spaces or when new green spaces are created, but these changes force low-income populations to leave because of increased costs of living (Cole et al. 2017). Ashley Dawson of the City University of New York explains, parks and environmental urbanism are "used to attract wealthy professionals... [and] help drive up property values, displacing the long-time residents of such areas..." (2017, 38). Regardless of the ambiguity in gentrification's impetus, vulnerable communities are often apprehensive of waterfront and park

projects because of the consequences (Anguelovski 2016, 31). Improving parks is good in theory, but they can be destructive when tarnishing areas' affordability. Literature on environmental gentrification does not account for effective *long-term* solutions that prevent displacement associated with urban green growth.

Jacobs warns “that self-destruction of diversity is caused by success, not by failure” (1963, 251). When popular attractions like park paths open in cities, they appeal to various groups (Maher 2015). Jacobs mentions how “parks... add great attraction to neighborhoods that people find attractive for a great variety of other uses” (1961, 111). When an area has economic opportunity, it will attract those with the capacity to live and work there. These people tend to be wealthier, more educated, and whiter (1961, 251).

Gentrification and Racial Inequality in Washington, D.C.

The historical inequalities in Washington, D.C. in relation to this park project are significant. Young adults' desire to live cities instead of suburbs and rural areas is increasing and affects housing demands and development projects (Hyra 2017). For example, 13,000 “upwardly mobile Whites” move into D.C. every year (Howell 2016). D.C.'s population in 1980 was 70% Black, compared to 2010 when it was only 51% Black (Bogle et al. 2016).

Since 2006 D.C. lowered its number of affordable housing units by 50% (Howell 2016, 211). A 3,000-person Urban Institute study on the city and surrounding suburbs reveals how these changes impact residents (Taitian et al. 2017). Out of the respondents who moved in the past year, 58% moved because they could not afford their residence. 34% left the D.C. area

(Tatian et al. 2017, 18-19). These individuals and their families are uprooted from their community because of rising costs of living (Fullilove 2004, 11).

Racial inequality within the D.C. area is noteworthy. White households have a net worth 81 times that of Black households in the DMV area (Tatian et al. 2017, 16). Only 9% of White families have annual incomes below \$75,000, while 67% of Black families do. The child poverty rate is 3% for White children and 19% for Black children in D.C. The Black unemployment rate in the city is also almost three times higher (10.9%) than it is for Whites (3.8%) (Hendey 2017, 9-11). The city's "lowest income residents" spend up to 80% of their monthly income on housing. 70% of these low-income residents are in the labor force and 91% are Black (Zippel 2016).

There is successful resistance to displacement in D.C. due to tenants' rights laws. The Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act (TOPA) allows tenants to purchase their buildings before being sold to developers. Organizers and attorneys do protect D.C. tenants from eviction and ensure their TOPA rights are protected (Howell 2016, 215). This policy gives agency to tenants, but they are often forced to live in poor conditions because of neglect from landlords (Howell 2016, Zippel 2016).

Policies like redlining and covenant agreements amplify the racial inequalities within D.C. An organization put together a project called "Mapping Segregation in Washington, DC" throughout the 20th century. Playgrounds throughout the District were racially segregated and there were none in Ward 4 for Black children until 1954. Until the playgrounds were desegregated, Black children were forced to play on old civil war forts and traffic circles

(Cherkasky and Shoenfeld 2018). While these policies no longer exist they contributed to segregating Black populations east of the Anacostia River (Bogle et al. 2016).

Despite the history of segregation, Washington, D.C. has high park accessibility. The Trust for Public Land's "ParkScore Index" ranks D.C. 4th out of 100 American cities for citizens' accessibility to parks within a 10-minute walk of their residences. Only 3% of DC residents who earn less than 75% of the city's median income (\$50,000) are "not served" (Trust for Public Land 2017). In terms of providing adequate parks, Washington, D.C.'s Parks and Recreation Department succeed.

D.C.'s abundance of green space provides an overall good for the city, but its high cost of living does not. The history of racial inequality in Washington, D.C. explains the significance of Black families leaving areas at high rates because they can not afford to stay. Justin Maher of the University of Massachusetts, Amherst conducted an ethnography in the Columbia Heights neighborhood of Washington, D.C. and found that long-term and newer residents praise the area's diversity. However, he also noticed longtime residents saw "lack of respect and engagement" in the historically Black and Latino neighborhood (Maher 2015, 996).

Derek Hyra of American University investigates gentrification in the Shaw and U Street neighborhoods in Washington, D.C. in *Race, Class, and Politics in the Cappuccino City* (2017). Increased rents forced many long-time Shaw/U Street residents to leave. In the 1980s the area was 90% Black and in 2010 it was only 30% Black (Hyra 2017). Many long-time Black residents who remain in D.C. fear that they will be displaced, even with tenant rights because their home is no longer the "The Chocolate City" (Evert 2015).

Some Anacostia residents used to live in the Shaw and U Street neighborhoods, but were forced out from increased rents (Hyra 2017). Now, Anacostia, the site of the Bridge Park project, is undergoing development. Recently Anacostia and the adjacent Congress Heights neighborhood were ranked first and third respectively in price appreciation across the District (O'Connell 2016). Major projects like the new Department of Homeland Security building “have already made the dwelling places of historic Anacostia residents attractive to housing speculators” (2016, 5). The neighborhoods east of the Anacostia River are separated from the rest of city. This division is what Jacobs calls a “border vacuum” (1961); the river isolates Anacostia from the hub of the nation’s capital. The patterns of gentrification in tandem with Anacostia’s rising property values make many residents concerned about their long-term stability in the neighborhood (Evert 2015).

Developers are looking at Anacostia in Southeast D.C. to be the next area to redevelop. Previous research shows that waterfront development causes residents to worry about changes in neighborhood livability (Evert 2015, Zippel 2016, Cole et al. 2017, Dawson 2017). From George Washington University, Alice Hamilton Evert emphasizes that any projects east of the Anacostia River “should be mindful of the concerns and goals of the existing community” (2015, 286). She also noted, “the evidence is, they [low-income minorities] are increasingly living east of the river... where poverty and racial segregation are really, really high” (2016). To note the difference, in 2014 the median household income in the Navy Yard (west of the Anacostia River) was \$91,000 while in Anacostia it was only \$34,000. Anacostia is also over 90% Black, revealing that concentrations of poverty are also correlated with race (Hurley et al. 2016).

Patterns of gentrification and segregation suggest that many low-income Black Anacostia residents are at risk of displacement if property value in the area continues to rise.

The 11th Street Bridge Park

Under the leadership of The National Building Museum's Scott Kratz, the nonprofit organization Building Bridges Across the River will construct a \$45 million bridge park starting in the Navy Yard neighborhood and extending across the Anacostia River into existing Anacostia Park (Hui 2017). The bridge will rest on piers from the former 11th Street Bridge (O'Connell 2016). The project aims to literally bridge two socioeconomically separate communities (West of the river a home has a median value of \$648,259, while east of the river a home has a median value of \$255,553) (Bogle et al. 2016) without displacing people. No independent professional studies have been conducted on the development plan comparing it to the outcomes of other park paths. This lack of research makes it difficult to determine if the plan is likely to protect the residents from gentrification.

The planners aim to make Anacostia's first community land trust, which would create permanent affordable housing in Anacostia. The land trusts will be community controlled (Hui 2017). It should also be noted that average first-time White homebuyers can afford 67% of homes in DC, while the average first-time Black homebuyer can afford only 9.3% of the city's homes (Bogle et al. 2016). This difference is significant because it reveals that Black residents may not be able to purchase their homes in order to avoid displacement, especially as price appreciation rises (O'Connell 2016).

Hypothesis

The changes in neighborhood identity near New York's High Line area and D.C.'s many neighborhoods show that physical changes to neighborhoods alter community (Littke et al. 2016, Hyra 2017). Although the park planners made efforts in protecting residents, it is unclear if the proactive plans will mitigate the effects of other development projects in the area (Bogle et al. 2016).

The Urban Institute did not compare 11th Street Bridge Park plan to other parks' plans (not just the outcomes) to predict how equitable it will be (Bogle et al. 2016). Examination of other park paths' effectiveness in mitigating displacement is needed (Hui 2017).

I hypothesize that the 11th Street Bridge Park's design and planning process make it the most progressive out of the three park paths studied in this research paper. By "progressive," I mean the planners consideration of undesirable outcomes of development and their adequate attempts to mitigate those outcomes. However, the park will have some inauthentic features that are likely to attract tourists and nonlocal visitors because of its placement outside of residential communities. Still, the park will not cause as much displacement as other park path projects have.

Rival hypotheses suggest that the park path will cause gentrification and displacement without community; or the park path will contribute to no gentrification and displacement and instead will foster community. Both of these rival hypotheses ignore the increases in housing prices near the Chicago and New York park paths and the lack of affordability in the areas. These hypotheses also ignore the patterns of gentrification present in Washington, D.C. for the past 20 years. These rival hypotheses ignore the equitable development plan and millions of dollars

being used for affordable housing near the 11th Street Bridge Park. These hypotheses will be disproven throughout the essay.

III. Study Design

This project compares the planning process of three parks to consider how each contends with the risks of displacement, demographic change, and community. The High Line in New York City and The 606 in Chicago will be used because they are park trails constructed in developing neighborhoods with low-income populations within cities, are walkable, privately funded and designed, and directed at public revitalization (Smith et al. 2016, Roy 2014, Loughran 2014). The 11th Street Bridge Park project shares these characteristics (Building 2015). Details on each park are available in articles, studies, and the parks' websites. I compare these plans and levels of community engagement throughout their respective processes to the 11th Street Bridge Park to determine the likely consequences of the project on the communities it is purported to serve. Since the Chicago and New York City projects are built, peer-reviewed studies show how and to what degree they contributed to gentrification in their neighborhoods. I also look at community usage and nonprofit programming in the existing parks.

In addition to existing material, I also include literature on environmental gentrification, development, walkability, green space, and community in cities. Applying Jacobs' sociological research to a current project aiming to transform a city will assist in determining if a community can be equitably reformed and if the two sides of a city can be brought together.

Key terms are defined. Displacement is measured through longitudinal comparisons of the neighborhoods of these parks by looking at changes in rent, price appreciation, affordable

housing, property values, race, and average median income of residents in the long-term community. Long-term community is the people who lived in the park projects' radius prior to construction. This community is compared with the current community, the residents residing in the park areas post-construction. Comparing these two factors determines if genuine social relationships exist because of these parks. Diversity is the existence of individuals from various income statuses who are of different races, ages, and ethnicities. Community engagement is measured with records on equity plans, outreach efforts, and community meetings. Joint community usage will be operationalized by looking at non-profits' involvement and community programming in the park spaces. Information on the existing parks provides insight into the effectiveness of community engagement by analyzing who uses the park. Walkability is defined using Jeff Speck and Jane Jacobs' descriptions of public sidewalks and pathways (2012, 1961).

The independent variables used are low-income areas, publicly directed parks, trail parks' accessibility (measured by numbers of entrance points, the design of entrances, and usage rates), walkability, equity plans (attempts and actual outcomes of public housing, and maintaining affordability), and community engagement throughout the planning processes. The dependent variables are displacement and joint community use via the parks themselves. The data for these variables is publicly available from the park planners, newspaper articles, and academic studies. The cases of New York, Chicago, and D.C. will be studied from their initial plans up until present-day. Because the 11th Street Bridge Park will not be built yet, existing resources and research on the park will be used along with the evidence of the two other park paths in order to answer the research question.

I look at how the park plans and processes sustain affordability, protect local businesses, and prioritize long-term residents' desires. If certain cases lack these features, I will note how their absence affects the outcomes on the neighborhoods. I compare the 11th St. Bridge Park with urban theories in order to determine if the park will create unscripted interactions between two neighborhoods currently separated from the Anacostia River.

This project shall determine if the 11th Street Bridge Park will facilitate community or further add to the increased cost of living in Southeast Washington, D.C. In order to efficaciously determine what this park will do to the community, comparative analysis with existing trail parks and scrutiny of existing material on the 11th Street Bridge must occur.

Summary of Variables and Characteristics of Park Paths

	New York City “The High Line”	Chicago “The 606”	Washington, DC “The 11th Street Bridge Park”
Number of Annual Visitors	4.8 million	1.3-1.46 million	N/A
Length	1.5 Miles	2.7 miles	900 feet
Design	Elevated trail on unused rail road tracks	Elevated trail on unused rail road tracks	Intersecting bridges built on top of old support beams across Anacostia River
Cost of Construction	\$65 million	\$95 million	\$45 million
Property Value Change	103% increase (between 2003 and 2011)	48.2% increase (in housing prices between 2013 and 2016)	N/A
Equitable Development Plan; Pre-Construction	None	None	Yes
Affordable Housing part of Equity Plan	None	No, but \$1 million funded by city of Chicago	Yes, comprehensive
Non-profit role	Friends of The High Line	Friends of Bloomingdale Trail; other local community organizations	Building Bridges Across the River; dozens of other local DC organizations

Role of City Government	Supported project once profit was guaranteed by Friends of the High Line	Supported from beginning, part of Mayor Emanuel's push for green space in city	Approved of plans early on, spent \$8.4 million on construction
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New York City – The High Line

The High Line's construction began in 2005 and was completed in 2014. The path extends for 1.5 miles down the west side of Manhattan in Chelsea (Littke et al. 2016, Loughran 2014). Two Chelsea residents, Joshua David and Robert Hammond, formed the nonprofit Friends of the High Line (FHL) to prevent former railroad tracks from being demolished (Reichl 2016, 906). David and Hammond had a large amount of social capital established in the community and used celebrities and local art gallery owners to persuade the city to keep the structure by arguing that the space could be transformed into an attraction (Littke et al. 2016, 355, Lang and Rothenberg 2016, 1751). The park had 4.8 million visitors in 2013 alone and continues to be one of New York City's most visited tourist locations (Littke et al. 2016, 358).

FHL is criticized for being an elitist group that made executive decisions throughout the planning stages without establishing support and communication with the lower-income residents in the neighborhood (Loughran 2014). Prior to this project, The High Line was in an area of New York known for crime, nightclubs, and a large LGBTQ population (Loughran 2014, 54). Throughout the 1990s, wealthier professionals moved in and art galleries opened. Some newcomers grew tired of looking at the old, dilapidated railroad structure and wanted to beautify it. However, newcomers separated themselves from lower income residents in the neighborhood. This multi-million-dollar project was built instead of transforming abandoned parking lots into playgrounds and parks, which had "been on the community's wish list for decades" (Littke et al.

2016, 359). FHL's decision to not appeal to the lower-income residents' requests shows lack of communication with less privileged residents.

No evidence suggests that the nonprofits reached out to the 5,000 low income residents located in the two public housing properties next to the park (Lang and Rothenberg 2016, 1755). FHL picked an architectural company that "publicly acknowledged that catalyzing economic growth was the first priority" (Lang and Rothenberg 2016, 1745). The planners created a study to show how the High Line project would create revenue; the construction would cost \$65 million, but would generate \$140 million in tax revenues through retail, luxury apartments, and dining (Lang and Rothenberg 2016, 1752). The focus was on the financial gain.

There are eleven entrance points to the High Line (six are handicap accessible) (Friends of the High Line 2018). Elevated above bustling Manhattan streets, the park serves as an escape for visitors. Observations of the park reveal visitors' slow-paces while walking as they take in the scenery. This is a positive benefit of walkability that Speck observes in walkable spaces (2012). However, much of the greenery on the path is fenced off, creating a separation from nature (Littke et al. 2016, 358). This serves as a "border" that Jacobs talks about, creating an inorganic gap between concrete and nature (1961).

There are also food and art vendors along the High Line. Many of the owners of the food stands complain about FHL's strict rules; for example, napkins are given out if visitors ask in order to reduce trash in the park (Loughran 2014, 58). In 2011 Friends of the High Line created "High Line Food," which provides sustainable, high-end, and organic food options (Friends of the High Line 2018).

The park is also connected to the Whitney Museum, which opened just as the park was completed. Admission to the Whitney is \$25, a price that impedes many from visiting (Friends of The High Line 2018). Despite the park's free entrance, it has a high-income identity. Although the space is still open to all individuals, its identity and connection with expensive stores and high-end companies make many feel unwelcome. Community cannot be fostered in environments where residents do not use these types of spaces.

Ethnographies studying the High Line provide evidence of who feels like they belong there. In 2012 FHL conducted outreach to investigate why lower-income residents near the park felt that the space was not for them. The 800-person survey targeting individuals from the two public housing complexes revealed that residents did not go because they did not see it as their park. FHL's heavy regulation of the space, such as limiting only five art vendors onto the park every day, restricts citizens' ability to act freely (Loughran 2014, 61). They also did not like how FHL banned activities like dog walking, biking, and barbecuing; activities that are popular at many other parks (Lang and Rothenberg 2016, 1756). Individuals must feel that a park is built for them if they are actually going to use it (Low et al. 2005). Only when individuals establish a connection with parks can the latter can become a point of reference for the former (Lerner 2010). Instead, many residents near the High Line were unable to create such a connection because the goal of the park was not community, but profit. The High Line became a tourist destination instead of a local community park.

The High Line's relationship with gentrification in Chelsea also reveals the consequences of park projects' demand for unregulated growth. Property values surrounding the High Line increased 103% between 2003 and 2011 (Littke et al. 2016, 363). Tenants' rights and the

preservation of affordable housing in New York City protect lower- income residents from being displaced, but only to a degree. A certain number of affordable housing units are guaranteed, but this does not mean that every low-income resident will receive subsidized rent (Lang and Rothenberg 2016, 1759). Many local businesses had to shutdown because of increased rents and they were replaced with more expensive and luxury retailers (Littke et al. 2016, 363). Because the overall cost of living in the area increased, residents now prefer more luxury dining and retail options, compared to the middle-income stores that once thrived.

Witnessing this transformation, low-income residents are uncertain of their long-term ability to afford daily costs of living beyond housing payments (Lang and Rothenberg 2016, 1756). A 2014 survey reveals that 83% of High Line visitors were White, while only 4% were Black and 2.9% were Latino (Reichl 2016, 911). This is even more significant considering that over a third of Chelsea's population is made up of people of color (Reichl 2016, 915). While the High Line is incredibly popular, it cannot be defined as a democratic space. The planners did not create a community park; rather, they created a tourist destination that attracted wealth into the neighborhood.

The FHL did not focus on preserving affordable housing. There was no open forum for the 5,000 public housing tenants or other Chelsea residents to contribute their qualms or opinions (Loughran 2014, 63). Equity was not a priority throughout the construction. Instead, FHL convinced New York that the park would bring in revenue (Lang and Rothenberg 2017). The FHL surveillance and strict regulations of vendors along the park path also discourage the organic interactions that should happen in these spaces (Loughran 2014, 52, Ellin 2010). The park does have various access points and allows visitors to walk and view the magnificence of

Manhattan. However, the visitor base remains predominantly White, revealing the park's limitations in creating a shared democratic space.

Chicago – The 606

Formerly the Bloomingdale Trail, Chicago's rebranded "606" (named after the city's zip code) park path officially opened in 2014. 2.7 miles of abandoned railroad tracks were converted into the \$95 million park (Loughran 2017, 1960, Nolan 2015). The creators state how "Community input into design and function has been a hallmark of The 606 process. Numerous public meetings brought community input into the park and trail system's design, function, and aesthetics of the parks, trail, and event spaces" (The 606 2018). The city government approved of the park plans from the beginning of the process; Mayor Rahm Emanuel fully supported The 606 project since 2013 because of his initiative to increase green space across the city (Thiel 2015).

The park's design is like the High Line's. There are 16 ADA accessible entrance points (Gobster et al. 2017, 84). The path also connects six parks on the ground. Unlike the High Line, bicycles are allowed and running is encouraged on The 606 (The 606 2018). Half of the \$95 million funding came from the federal Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality program and one of the stipulations for receiving the money was to ensure that bicycles would be allowed along the path. Dog walking, which was also banned on the High Line, is allowed on The 606 (The 606 2018). The city's commitment to making more open green space was realized through the creation of the park path.

Public art is also popular along The 606. Sculptures and other installations are on view along the path. Nonprofits arrange murals for children to create (The 606 2018). Over 200

species of trees and plants cover the path (Gobster et al. 2017, 84). The 606 is a popular location for Chicagoans. Surveys show between 1.3 and 1.46 million people use the park annually (Gobster et al. 2017, 90). These are lower than visitation at the High Line, but they are still high, as Gobster et al. explain “few urban trails where systematic use data have been collective have recorded volumes that exceed that level of use” on The 606 (2017, 90). The 606 is used much more by locals Chicagoans than the High Line is (Gobster et al. 2017, 90).

The 606 runs through both lower income and wealthier areas of Chicago. The Institute for Housing Studies at DePaul University studied The 606’s effect on real estate in nearby neighborhoods. The researchers split up the two main areas into “606 East” and “606 West” (Smith et al. 2016). Although their research was conducted after the park opened, the neighborhoods’ demographics were similar (Loughran 2016). 606 East is made up almost entirely of high-income White families with high rates of homeownership. Comparatively, 606 West is lower- income, majority Latino, and made of primarily renters. The median household income in 606 East is \$115,924, while in 606 West it is \$49,701 (Smith et al. 2016, 5). Renters are more vulnerable to displacement than homeowners because of how quickly rent prices can increase (Evert 2015).

While there is less information on the demographics of park users compared to the High Line, interviews reveal the tensions between residents in 606 East and West. Journalist Martha Bayne has lived nearby the trail for over a decade and notes that

the bright murals that marked the passage from Humboldt Park to Logan square – whose neighborhood boundary the trail passively polices – have been sandblasted away in the name of lead abatement. The quiet man who lived underneath the overpass all last summer has moved on. If you trespass on the trails these days you’ll get a ticket (2018, 177-178).

The park's transformation into a more formal space makes some people feel unwelcomed. Even though its hours of use are limited between 6 am and 11pm, this park has far less rules than The High Line (The 606). However, these rules help keep the park safe from illegal activity. Also, even though old art murals were erased during construction, there are newer art projects made by the community.

Lucy Gomez-Feliciano is a community worker and resident of 606 West and fears she may need to move if her property taxes continue to increase. Gomez-Feliciano expressed that Chicago "failed to think about holistic planning to preserve diversity. At the end of the day, the people making decisions, they are not looking out for people like me and my neighbors" (Bergen 2016). Data shows in 2016 buyers paid a 22.3% price premium for properties located in one-fifth of a mile radius of the path after the 2012 construction. This equals a \$100,000 premium for a single-family home. Housing prices increased 48.2% in 606 West since the park's groundbreaking (Smith et al. 2016). Because the residents of 606 West earn less than their 606 East neighbors, they are concerned about such high increases.

While The 606 lists no equitable development plan on their website, efforts were made to combat displacement from the increasing rents and property taxes surrounding the park path. Local organizing groups like the Logan Square Neighborhood Association are working on tax abatement programs to mitigate the effects of development. These programs "grant reduction or exemption from taxes for a specific time period of time to ease financial burden for longtime home owners" (Thiel 2015). The city of Chicago also spent \$1 million on a loan program that would assist renters and property owners near The 606 (Bergen 2016). However, with the high

number of low-income individuals in The 606 West facing increased rents, much more money will be needed to prevent displacement.

While it is too early to make a comparative analysis of the breakdown in visitors, The 606 is much more locally oriented and community-based than the High Line. As mentioned, art is a significant part of The 606's identity. Local Chicago artists remain involved since the park's construction in creating temporary installations, murals, and other projects (The 606 2018). The support of neighborhood associations also shows the community involvement to the park (Thiel 2015).

The increases in property around The 606 are not as exorbitant as they were around the High Line, but lower-income residents worry about their capacity to stay in place. While the city offers some guaranteed affordability, more comprehensive planning was needed during the development of the park. The creators of The 606 made a public space that is open to all, but they did not ensure the surrounding space would remain equitable enough for all existing residents.

Still, the 606 benefits the surrounding community. There is more green space and crime rates substantially declined in the park's vicinity. Crime statistics from 2011 (before the park was completed) compared to 2015 (when the park was open to public use) reveal that violent and nonviolent crimes in neighborhoods near the park decreased significantly. The authors of the crime study posit that such a drop could be due to the "eyes on the street" theory that Jacobs puts forth, suggesting that residents demarcated the park as their territory and survey it prudently, deterring criminals (Harris et al. 2017, 65-68). However, the researchers also suggest decreases in crime could be attributed to gentrification, which "has been shown to significantly reduce

violent crime” because more resources and economic growth replace abandoned areas that foster disorder (Harris et al. 2017, 77). This scenario reveals the complex effects of gentrification throughout cities. And although there are increases in property values and costs of living near the park, community members organized themselves to try and ensure they can remain in place (Smith et al. 2016). The park has drawn in residents and offered them a place of recreation.

Analysis of the 11th Street Bridge Park

Similar to the other parks, the 11th Street Bridge Park is going to be built atop repurposed materials; however, this park will cross a body of water. Since its inception, the 11th Street Bridge Park aims at unifying the neighborhoods east and west of the Anacostia River. Yet, its planners and Building Bridges Across the River (the nonprofit in charge of the project) (BBAR) are aware of the risks from a large-scale project.

Although no actor or institution is legally responsible for preventing displacement, BBAR is committed to avoiding Anacostia residents from being displaced. The organization devoted millions of dollars towards equity programs to ensure that all residents will stay in place. The park’s “Equitable Development Plan” is the most comprehensive equity plan of the cases in this project. Scott Kratz, the director of the project, held over 200 community meetings between 2011 and 2013 to see if residents would want the abandoned 11th Street bridge turned into a park (Bogle et al. 2016, 6). Anacostia’s BBAR then took over the project in 2013, allowing Anacostia residents and local non-profits to have a voice in deciding the final design for the project by suggesting what features should be on the park (Bogle et al. 2016).

Similar to Chicago's 606, the 11th Street Bridge connects two distinct neighborhoods with drastically different identities. West of the river, the Navy Yard and Capitol Hill neighborhoods have an unemployment rate of 6.63% (one percentage point above the national average), a child poverty rate of 20.46%, and median home values of \$653,737. East of the river, Anacostia has an unemployment rate of 20.71%, a child poverty rate of 53.18%, and median home values of \$262,601 (Bogle et al. 2016, 11). The major increases in housing costs in the lower-income 606 West reveal that less affluent areas are at risk of major increases in costs of living when park projects are built (Smith et al. 2016).

The other case studies emphasize the importance of community engagement surrounding the parks. The High Line lacked engagement and failed to create an inclusive space (Loughran 2014, Littke et al. 2016). The 606 plan moved quickly because of Mayor Emanuel's support, which may be why community groups only became greatly involved after the park's construction (Thiel 2015). The 11th Street Bridge process is far more inclusionary. The Urban Institute has commended Kratz and BBAR for "engaging a wide range of stakeholders, especially residents, in designing the park and in setting equitable development goals" (Bogle et al. 2016, 19). BBAR held over 700 meetings since 2014 (2018). The extensive outreach efforts will likely contribute to residents viewing the project as something built for them, as opposed to it being built for profit, as was the case of the High Line.

BBAR's Equitable Development Plan focuses on three main areas: Housing, Workforce Development and Small Business Enterprise. The Workforce Development section emphasizes job opportunities during construction and after completion. A "Community Workforce Agreement" was made that guarantees the majority of construction jobs to go to residents in the

park's impact area. The positions will be short-term once the park is completed. Maintenance jobs for the park are also guaranteed, but the number of these positions for will not be high (Building 2015). The Small Business Enterprise focuses on having local businesses sell their goods on the park (Building 2015). The push to have local vendors on the bridge is crucial for creating an inclusive environment because the High Line case shows how having elite vendors can make lower income residents feel unwelcome (Loughran 2014, 58).

The park planners included various activities and uses. An area for launching kayaks into the Anacostia River, an environmental education center, a hammock grove, waterfalls, and play areas are spread throughout the space (Building 2015). The versatility of these features will appeal to people of all age groups and identities. Along with its many activities, the park also has two paths that extend its length, one of which allows bicycles (Hui 2017). This trail will be an opportunity for bikers and pedestrians to enjoy the views of the park and river. The bicycle paths are popular features of The 606, suggesting that this park will also see many bikes (The 606, Palardy et al. 2017). As Jeff Speck emphasizes, these walkable spaces are imperative for cohesion and genuine interaction within neighborhoods (2012). It is too early to tell if the walkable path will encourage interactions between two communities. Also, there is no data showing differences in preferences between Anacostia and Navy Yard residents concerning what park features they want. The only evidence of favorable activities come from the agreed upon choices made with those who attended the community meetings.

The complicated question is whether or not the park will facilitate continuous community interaction between the current residents of Anacostia and the Navy Yard. The bridge is branded as a physical connection between the two areas (Urban Institute 2016). So much attention has

been spent by the planners in clarifying what the project aims to do. While this shows objective, it also fails to allow the residents from creating an original identity for the park itself once it opens.

As various scholars note, the construction of green spaces can lead to the influx of wealthier individuals (Anguelovski 2016). These green spaces can cause increases in property values (Dawson 2017, 38). The High Line and 606 were associated with increased cost of living in the adjacent areas. Therefore, it is logical and rational for lower-income residents east of the Anacostia River to be concerned about their ability to stay in the area as other development in occurs (O'Connell 2016).

However, unlike The 606, the planners of the 11th Street Bridge Park stated their equitable development goals and put them into action before construction. BBAR already acquired \$50 million from the Local Initiatives Support Corporation to secure affordable housing and JPMorgan has donated \$10 million, \$5 million of which will be devoted solely to affordable housing in Anacostia, “\$3 million will go toward a community land trust, \$1 million toward support for neighborhood businesses and the remainder for construction-skills training and program evaluation” (O'Connell 2017). The funding already led to the purchasing of 53 homes for Anacostia residents, ensuring those families will be able to remain in place even if costs of housing increase, although property taxes may still rise (O'Connell 2017). 80% of residents in Anacostia are renters, so they would be unaffected by the money being put into home-buying programs for current homeowners. The community land trust will attempt to fix this, though, by creating “permanently affordable housing” in the area. Two of the land trusts will be future single-family homes sold or rented to individuals earning no more than 50% of the area median

income (Nonko 2018, Hui 2017). Because of the impact these projects have on real estate in their neighborhoods, actions focused on preserving and adding equitable housing are imperative to avoid displacement (Dawson 2017).

Its comprehensive equitable development plan makes the 11th Street Bridge Project the most progressive of the park paths studied in terms of its commitment to keeping existing residents in place. While the High Line branded itself as an elite space, the D.C. park included the suggestions of lower-income Anacostia residents through outreach efforts (Urban Institute 2016). The 606 planners failed to address the differences in incomes between the 606 West and 606 East and the effects on property values prior to construction (Smith et al. 2016). The 11th Street Bridge Park planners publicly note the racial inequality and the income disparities between the two neighborhoods. BBAR shows awareness into the effects of the park on marginalized residents. The millions of dollars in corporate donations also show more funding is being put aside for equitable growth in DC than in the case of Chicago.

The Navy Yard and Southwest Waterfront are already popular, but their development led to the demolition of public housing and increases in rent (Rybczynski 2010). These projects alongside the ongoing development and construction east of the river are warning signs that the cost of living in Anacostia will increase (O'Connell 2016). Local commitment to the park path still exists; dozens of nonprofits are associated with the construction and many residents are excited for its completion (Hui 2017). Still, as Jane Jacobs warns, a park serving as a destination via "civic and cultural-center design" (1961, p. 101) makes it unable to function as a local, community-oriented space. Even though public space is open to all people, the branding of these park paths as such impedes the chance of them becoming hearts for the local community itself.

The park's projected completion in late 2019 prevents judgments to be made on its final form, but analysis can be done on its architectural renderings and images.

Image 1:



The photo above shows an image of Frederick Douglass, a former resident of Anacostia, paired with one of his famous quotes on the abolition of slavery. Because of the large Black population east of the river and Douglass' residence there, this symbolism is quite powerful. With decline of the Black population in D.C. in recent decades, it is important to have public recognition of the city's Black culture in the park (Hyra 2017). Publicly recognizing the history of surrounding area in parks is essential in maintaining cultural significance (Low et al. 2005).

The image below shows a café and lounge area under the area where the two bridges intersect. The covering over this space seems like it would encourage use on rainy days. The area also seems like it has the potential to offer the refuge and sense of security that Low et al. mention as imperative in creating a welcoming space (2005). However, the design does appear to be sterile and modern, which may feel inauthentic.

Image 2:



Image 3:



This image above depicts the environmental education center located on the bridge. The park planners say the Center will offer children the opportunity to learn about the Anacostia River and on the weekends will “become the backdrop for green infrastructure demonstrations,

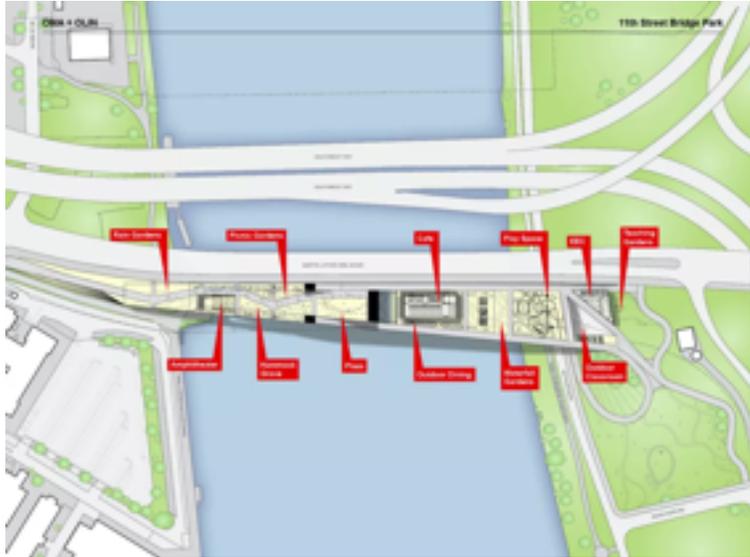
interactive workshops, job trainings and presentations” (11th Street Bridge Park n.d.). The potential for various uses of this space is great, but the planners also note it can be used “for a special event space that could be rented out for fundraisers, weddings or conferences...” (11th Street Bridge Park n.d.). The goal of a park should not be to create exclusive spaces, even if temporarily. The actual use of this space will affect feelings of inclusion and authenticity at the park.

Image 4:



Situated right next to the Martin Luther King Jr. Ave SE Bridge, the park and its visitors will face the noise from traffic. Parks are meant to create sense of refuge and escape (Jacobs 1961). The High Line and The 606 allow visitors to escape the at times chaotic speed of the cities. There is a significant difference in being above the traffic of bustling streets (in the cases of Chicago and New York) compared to being right along side of it (in the case of D.C.).

Image 5:



These are the entrance

points. From the Anacostia side, visitors enter through paths extending to the Anacostia Riverwalk Trail. When entering from the Navy Yard side, visitors face a parking lot property of the U.S. Navy to their right and the MLK Jr. Ave Bridge to their left. Jacobs frequently observed this absence of integration between parks and cities. In order to close the gap between streets and parks, Jacobs states that popular park activities “should be brought right up to the border of big parks, and designed as links between the park and its bordering street” (1961, 266). Creating these “seams,” unifies the street and park to create an “intricate mixed city fabric” (1961, 269). While the Anacostia side of the park organically blends in with the Anacostia Riverwalk Trail, the Navy Yard side has a border between the Navy Yard. The designers plan to put “river gardens” at the Navy Yard entrance, but these should extend further into the neighborhood to draw visitors into the path (Building 2015).

The Anacostia Riverwalk Trail passes under freeway bridges, but side trails will extend right to the bridge park’s entrance. Even with the trails, Anacostia residents will navigate around the Anacostia River Park to get to the park. Local roads connect to Anacostia Park, but driving to

the park may discourage everyday local use. While both sides of the park have Metro stops, they are a mile away from the park's entrances, which may make it difficult to rely on public transportation to reach it. Parks are accessible to residents if they are located within neighborhoods (Jacobs 1961). The High Line and The 606 have millions of visitors a year and are imbedded within city streets (Littke et al. 2016, Gobster et al. 2017). In D.C., people will not be able to use "eyes on the street" from their residences (Jacobs 1961). The distance factor could encourage driving to the park, meaning people from outside the immediate neighborhoods would be visiting – making it less of a local space.

The comprehensive equitable development plan in tandem with millions of dollars in donations from corporations goes beyond the efforts of the other two park paths in ensuring that people are not displaced (Building 2015, O'Connell 2017). Scott Kratz has stated: "If the people who helped to shape this can't afford to live there, then we will have failed" (O'Connell 2016).

The concern is whether the residents who live in Anacostia now will be able to remain there throughout gentrification (Evert 2015, Bogle et al. 2016). Mentioned earlier, D.C. is ranked 4th in American cities for park accessibility, so there is not a need for green space in the area (Trust for Public Land 2017). If this park does inadvertently contribute to displacement, people may question why it was chosen as a plan.

The park design functions as a unifier; the intersection of the two bridges in the center of the Anacostia River is symbolic (Building 2015). The plan's goals to "reconnect the neighborhoods on both sides of the river" are for a social good, but also depend on an elevated park to overcome hundreds of years of segregation and separation (Building 2015). Funding for

employment, housing, and recreational opportunities are extensive, but it is the park itself that planners expect to achieve this unification, which is idealistic.

The park's features suggest it will be appealing, especially because residents influenced the design. However, the park should exist as a local space instead of an amusement center for tourists if it is going to be a bridge between Anacostia and the Navy Yard. Chicago and New York's park see millions of visitors annually since opening, which suggests that the D.C. park will attract far more than the 43,000 DC residents located in a one-mile radius of the park (Building 2015, Bogle et al. 2016).

Nevertheless, when Jeff Speck and Jane Jacobs speak about walkability and great urban parks, respectively, they refer to neighbors and local relationships (2012, 1961). Wendell Berry stresses that people's connection with places relies on localism, which is associated with communities and neighborly relationships (2015, 62). However, this park project has already received so much national attention that it is unlikely to remain just a community park between the two neighborhoods (Hui 2017, The High Line Network 2017). Becoming a focal point for tourists is not necessarily bad for the park's identity, but it will possibly fail to create the localism that "provides territor[y] that people can relate to, and interact with" (Lerner 2010, 190).

The analysis of the two existing park paths in comparison to the progress on the 11th Street Bridge Park does show that the latter case is far more equipped to prevent displacement than the former two. The park has borders between its entrances on the Navy Yard and Anacostia sides, is not located near (under a mile) metro stops, is located next to noisy automobile bridges, and is being built during the beginning stages of gentrification in Anacostia. The first of these

issues can be ameliorated, but the other three cannot. Because the Park will not be located within residential communities, people may drive to it and others may be less inclined to.

Even with the comprehensive equitable programming in place, it is unlikely every resident in Anacostia will be able to afford the costs of living five to ten years from now. The Navy Yard and Anacostia will continue to become more expensive. The 11th Street Bridge Park will transform into a public space for joint community use, but the neighborhood composition will change as Southeast D.C. continues to gentrify.

Conclusion

America's economy requires development in order for institutions to survive. It is not only capitalism, but the notion of American that encourages people to build, change, and improve the spaces in which we exist. However, these improvements do not occur evenly. The racial and economic inequality within our nation's capital reflect the consequences of a system that does not offer equal opportunities (Tatian 2017, Maher 2015).

Yet, there is great hope in parks and other public spaces because they offer individuals the potential to act as engaged citizens. The works of Wendell Berry, Jane Jacobs, and Thomas Jefferson remind us how local connection to specific places foster democratic spirit. Hannah Arendt emphasized the need for public participation beyond voting every two or four years in elections. People need public spaces that encourage them to deliberate and debate (Arendt 1963, 255). Meridian Hill Park became Malcolm X Park throughout the 1960s because it served as a meeting space for organizers. Renaming the park after a civil rights leader shows the importance of community voice in shaping spaces' identities (Low et al. 2005). When the park became

notorious for crime in the 1990s, the community turned it back into a usable space. While the neighborhood near the park underwent gentrification, the space remains home to weekly drum circles and diverse visitors (Cox 2015). Perhaps the 11th Street Bridge will also become a heart of the community, but it will require the residents, not large donors or organizations, to nurture it.

Parks can serve as public spaces that allow people to engage collectively. However, the risk of displacement for lower income residents near parks is a concern. Yet Jane Jacobs points out we should not avoid building these large parks, but rather “recognize that they are mixed blessings. If we can counter their destructive effects, these facilities will themselves be better served” (1961, 265). The 11th Street Bridge Park’s activities, outreach, and equitable plan are counters to the risks that large structures pose.

This study looks at methods planners use to avoid displacement. The focus on equity throughout the project must be emulated in the future construction of park paths. The millions of dollars set aside for equitable growth suggests the park will allow residents to foster community, but the patterns of gentrification in D.C. are a warning sign. In cities across the United States, those displaced from gentrified areas are frequently Black (Fullilove 2004, Hyra 2017). When people are forced to move they lose parts of their identities. As Dr. Fullilove poignantly puts, “human communities, like the tree, cannot produce their ‘crown’ without the massive network of connections that move nourishment from the earth to the entire organism of the group” (2004, 191).

Limitations & Future Research

Because this paper was completed in the spring of 2018, I was unable to analyze the park in its final form. There should be ethnographies and surveys completed. Long-term research must be conducted on the park and its visitor base through surveys in order to obtain unbiased evidence on who is using the space.

Another limitation is comparing three parks in different cities because each neighborhood is unique. However, all of these cases are function within urban spaces. Other park paths are being built across the country, several of which are part of “The High Line Network,” an organization that “is a group of infrastructure reuse projects” in cities States (2017). My study included the demographics and inequalities present in the cases used to articulate how these projects affect the neighborhoods in which they were built.

Researchers must continue to study park paths. While longitudinal and ethnographic studies require extensive resources, they show transformations of public space. Scholars must analyze the effectiveness of programs attempting to alleviate gentrification’s negative outcomes (Logan and Molotch 2007). Because these park path projects can contribute to the increased cost of living in neighborhoods and displacement, planners and citizens ought to know what makes a city truly whole (Building 2015).

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