

Urban Greenspace: Prospects & Paradoxes



Urban Green Commons? Privatization? Egalitarian?

OP-ED LIVABLE CITY OPINION

Paving the Los Angeles River wasn't an egalitarian idea. The plan for revitalizing it should be

By WILLIAM DEVERELL JAN 04, 2018 | 4:00 AM



Heaven's Gate water samples from the L.A. River in Los Angeles, Calif. on Aug. 6 (Los Angeles Times)

The shape and soul of the Los Angeles River will change in the coming years and decades. Dynamic alteration of the riverscape has already begun, and by most indications, the pace of transformation will soon increase.

We often hear that the river once was — and could again be — a resource for all. To realize this vision, the planning process will need to be inclusive, not born of elitism or private design wishes. Indeed, it is one thing to have the political means that Los Angeles



BEYOND GENTRIFICATION

Can we green the hood without gentrifying it?

By Brentin Mock on Feb 9, 2015

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Now that we have established that gentrification is a thing, at least for those impacted by it, it's worth noting that there are good and bad sides to it, and that includes when neighborhoods get environmental makeovers.

Can we green cities without causing gentrification?

Trina Hamilton and Winifred Curran
Monday, March 26, 2016 - 12:35am



Small boats unload Newtown Creek.

Many indexes aim to rank how green cities are. But what does it actually mean for a city to be green or sustainable?

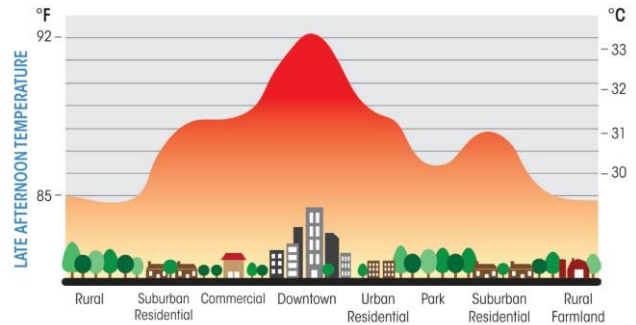
We've written about what we call the "parks, cafes and a riverwalk" model of sustainability, which focuses on providing new green spaces, mainly for high-income people. This vision of shiny residential towers and waterfront parks has become a widely shared conception of what green cities should look like. But it can drive up real estate prices and displace low- and middle-income residents.

Sources: <http://www.latimes.com/opinion/livable-city/la-oe-deverell-la-river-history-20180104-story.html> & <https://grist.org/cities/can-we-green-the-hood-without-gentrifying-it/> & <https://www.greenbiz.com/article/can-we-green-cities-without-causing-gentrification>

Urban Ecology

When cities and towns are constructed, the natural landscape is dramatically altered:

- Vegetation and soil are replaced with hard, impervious surfaces and buildings
- Buildings and dark pavement materials absorb heat, leading to the Urban Heat Island effect
- Evaporation decreases in urban areas, due to reduced vegetation cover
- Flooding increases, because of changes to urban hydrology from paved surfaces and roof tops
- This leads to the development of unique urban climates that are quite different from those of surrounding natural environments
- Common results: increased air pollution, modified rainfall patterns, and higher air temperatures



Functions & problems of parks and green infrastructure

Potential functions, e.g.

- Air quality regulation
- Temperature regulation
- CO₂ absorption
- Water management
- Noise filtration
- Conservation, habitat
- Recreation, human health
- Aesthetic improvement
- Food/fuel production
- Economic development (e.g. real estate value)

(Luque & Duff)

Potential problems, e.g.

- Implementation & maintenance costs (Naumann et al. 2010)
- Expectations of economic returns
- Eco-gentrification (Wolch et al. 2014)
- Failure to meet diverse needs of local residents (Campo 2013)



[New York High Line](#),
[David Berkowitz, Flickr](#)

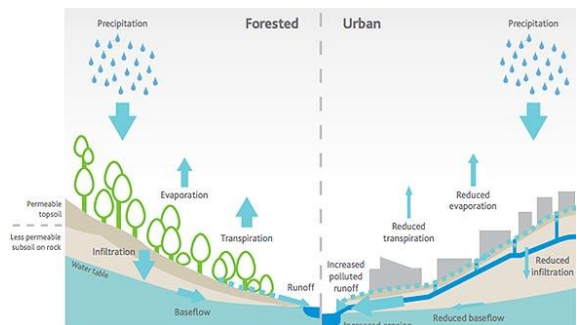
Is Green Infrastructure a Solution?

- An approach to water management that protects, restores, or mimics the natural water cycle
- Increases water capture and infiltration to recharge groundwater
- Decreases urban heat island by increasing evapotranspiration (vegetation)
- Filters pollution
- Can be applied at multiple scales, from the home/building to the street-level to the neighborhood to the entire city



Urban Stormwater Management

- Traditional urban design tries to drain stormwater out of the city as fast as possible into nearby water bodies (ex. rivers, ocean, lakes)
- But, the capture and treatment of urban stormwater, through green infrastructure, represents a major water source for cities and simultaneously would help to protect waterways from pollution





Idea: South Los Angeles Urban Wetland Park



“Gentrifying the LA River” Article Discussion

1. Is the LA River Revitalization plan *“a Trojan horse for gentrification?”*
 2. Why is the LA River Revitalization an environmental justice issue?
 3. Why does Khafagy describe the LA River as a symbol of economic divide and social marginalization?
1. Do you agree/disagree that the river could become an engine of prosperity? An urban oasis?

