CIVIC INFRASTRUCTURE

A Model for Civic Asset Reinvestment

PENNPRAXIS FOR THE WILLIAM PENN FOUNDATION

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over the next six years, The City of Philadelphia's Rebuilding Community Infrastructure Initiative (Rebuild) will remake its civic assets with a $500 million of reinvestment in the city's libraries, recreation centers, and parks. The goal of this research is to help contextualize Rebuild by reconceptualizing the challenges and opportunities of such large-scale reinvestments, and by presenting lessons from other North American cities, including New York, Seattle, Detroit, Minneapolis,Los Angeles, Chicago, and Montréal.

OUR PRIMARY RESEARCH QUESTIONS ARE STRAIGHTFORWARD AND AMBITIOUS:

How can a city provide high-functioning civic assets for all its residents?

What kinds of investment in engagement, programming, design, and maintenance does a municipal government and its partners need to marshal for a truly equitable distribution of civic assets?

Reinvesting in civic assets requires adequate funds and good design, but the challenge is not simply a matter of design and finance. Our research shows that building a robust

network of civic assets requires deeper, longer-term, more abiding changes in four areas of common practice: community engagement; institutional makeup and leadership; maintenance and programming; and measurement. Improving a city's public spaces—including how they are defined, made, connected, sustained, and shared—requires innovation in all four areas. It also requires thinking more fully about the value of creative placemaking and about the standard operating procedures for civic assets.

To sharpen our analysis and underscore the need to reimagine how a city builds and maintains its public spaces, we advance the ideal notion of civic infrastructure. **Civic infrastructure encompasses the physical spaces, buildings, and assets themselves, as well as the habits, traditions, management, and other social, political, and cultural processes that bring them to life—two realms that, together, constitute a whole.** Similarly, the concept of civic infrastructure draws attention to the ways in which assets should work as a resilient system of spaces and processes, rather than a collection of discrete buildings and places. Thinking of reinvestments as projects of civic infrastructure will help identify material, social, and networked aspects of urban spaces and provide guideposts for successful reinvestment. These investments should result in quality natural environments, providing educational and recreational opportunities, advancing economic inclusion, and supporting citizens' senses of spatial, historical, and social identity.

This paper raises questions about, and provokes a longer-term conversation on, public space and civic culture. It precedes a series of more in-depth papers forthcoming over the next year, on specific areas of practice that researchers have not sufficiently studied. While this review does not offer policy solutions, it does conclude that a city must overcome many entrenched challenges to create civic infrastructure. Community engagement must begin early in the reinvestment process, and stake-holding and decision-making must thoroughly integrate knowledge generated through community engagement. Civic institutions must forcefully represent the public's interests to their private partners, and dedicate themselves to long-term maintenance of civic assets, small and large. Lastly, measurements of effectiveness must directly address the performance of civic assets: whom they serve, how they connect, how they're sustained, and how they enrich the quality of life for citizens over time.

INTRODUCTION

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PART A

Our Research

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In spring 2016, Philadelphia announced Rebuild, a $500 million reinvestment plan for the city's libraries, recreation centers, and parks, joining a growing list of North American cities dedicating significant resources to their public spaces and civic life. Undertaken by the City with the support of the William Penn Foundation, the Knight Foundation, and other partners, Rebuild Philadelphia aims to be transformative, in part by investing intensively *beyond* Center City—targeting public spaces and facilities in neighborhoods throughout the city—and by improving existing infrastructure more than building anew.

In light of the city's reinvestment, our research investigates the experiences of other North American cities undertaking similar, substantial civic asset reinvestment projects, including New York, Chicago, Minneapolis, Detroit, Seattle, and Montréal. This is not a simple

case-study report on what other cities have tried. We explore conceptual underpinnings and systemic problems of similar reinvestments around the country, identify critical issues and markers of success, and develop a concept of "civic infrastructure" to guide our analysis and research. Specifically, we aim to survey, understand, and critique the design, civic engagement, institutional makeup, programming, maintenance, and evaluation methods for measuring impacts of reinvestment projects. The ultimate goal is to provoke a broader conversation on how best to reinvest in a city's public realm and yield returns for all citizens.

Rebuild Philadelphia is launching at a time of increasing interest in urban parks and public spaces—and a moment of strategic shift, pivoting focus from charismatic, centrally located parks to modest, quotidian neighborhood civic spaces. Over the past two decades, high-profile, landmark parks—like the High Line in New York City, Chicago's Millennium Park, and others—have fueled center-city redevelopments and promoted rediscovered water-fronts and reused industrial infrastructure.[1] These projects have unabashedly catalyzed downtown redevelopment and have contributed greatly to the current moment of urban resurgence in the United States. In many cases, they have also contributed to growing inequality, gentrification, and unequal access to public spaces.[2]

Philadelphia's reinvestment in neighborhood parks and civic spaces presents an important contrast *and complement* to these landmark park investments, because the public spaces that the Rebuild initiative targets tend to serve local residential populations rather than tourists and commuters. Likewise, the decentralized reinvestment strategy directly addresses issues of social equity, citizen participation, and neighborhood change: issues that public spaces and civic assets shape, if not determine.

Minneapolis's reinvestment program, for example, clearly frames the opportunity to shift focus to smaller civic assets:

> " Neighborhood parks are small parks that serve the nearby community. They tend to have the greatest number of physical assets, including wading pools, recreation centers, athletic fields,

1   Gilfoyle, 2006. Millennium Park: Creating a Chicago Landmark. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
2   Laura Bliss, "The High Line's Next Balancing Act," Citylab, Feb 7, 2017. Accessed at http://www.citylab.com/cityfixer/2017/02/the-high-lines-next-balancing-act-fair-and-affordable-development/515391

tennis and basketball courts, playgrounds, and waterparks, that require greater resources to operate and maintain. While regional parks (which are larger, natural-feature based, and serve the entire Metro area) like the Chain of Lakes, Theodore Wirth Park, and the Central Riverfront receive funding from local, regional, state, and federal tax dollars, our neighborhood parks rely heavily on local dollars.[3] **"**

Building on the geography of neighborhood parks, the scale of the investments—spread out across a whole system, rather than invested in one or two big projects with high-profile designers at the helm—marks a different intention and approach. Instead, these investments target equity and engagement, and spread the benefits of environmental conservation and quality design.

Why are many cities investing in civic assets now? First, in broad terms, waves of public attention and investment (spanning public and private sectors) have strengthened North American city centers over the past generation. This movement has many parents: stretching back decades to celebrations and analyses of street life by William Whyte, Jane Jacobs, Jan Gehl, and others; extending to the critiques of suburbia by New Urbanists and others; gathering economic development force with the "branding" of urban migration as the arrival of the "creative class"; and maturing with the consumption-city arguments of Edward Glaeser and others. This movement has evolved from a conception of urban growth rooted in economic production to models centered on consumption of quality environments and "authentic" experiences.

Given the resurgence of city centers and their surrounding neighborhoods,[4] Philadelphia and other city governments are framing the next generation of urban investments, at least in part to address growing inequity. After years of ramping up investment in central public spaces, cities are recognizing the need to attend more directly to a broader set of neighborhoods, including long-neglected and underserved populations. Municipalities argue that investing in civic assets is a means of improving quality of life and access to economic opportunity for citizens living in more marginal parts of large, increasingly segregated cities.

3   Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, "Closing the Gap: Investing in Our Neighborhood Parks." Accessed at https://www.minneapolisparks.org/park_care__ improvements/park_projects/current_projects/closing_the_gap_-_investing_in_our_neighborhood_parks
4   Birch and Wachter, 2009. The Shape of the New American City. The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science Series. New York: Sage

Another impetus for civic asset reinvestment is deferred maintenance. The physical condition of civic assets in many cities, particularly in these disadvantaged neighborhoods, is reaching a breaking point. In 2014, Seattle's parks department faced a $279 million maintenance backlog. The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board faces deferred maintenance costs of $400 million. Philadelphia, New York, and Chicago face similarly neglected park and public space infrastructures. Foundations have recognized this need, too; recently, four national foundations—the JPB Foundation, the Knight Foundation, The Kresge Foundation, and The Rockefeller Foundation—announced a $40 million investment in the public spaces of four cities: Akron, Chicago, Detroit, and Memphis. This project, Reimagining the Civic Commons, began as a pilot in Philadelphia in 2015.[5]

This history of poor maintenance has led to deteriorating civic assets and contributed to antagonism between residents in poorer neighborhoods and city officials. After years of neglect, residents in many cities—from New York to Philadelphia to Detroit to Los Angeles—don't trust City Hall, and are (understandably) skeptical that city agencies will follow through on providing needed services or that these new investments will, in fact, benefit their neighborhoods. This, in turn, fuels residents' sense of alienation and makes community engagement and trust-building that much more difficult—and more important.

In light of these trends, the guiding research questions of this project center on the issues, concepts, and examples that can best contextualize Rebuild's efforts. We develop several lines of argument that connect public asset reinvestments across the country, including Rebuild. We focus on improving existing infrastructure, but do not exclude programs that create new civic infrastructure; our interest is the ideas, partners, and conditions that build or renovate civic infrastructure and account for its maintenance over time. Further, we constructively critique practices of the past two decades in North American cities, including creative placemaking, public-private partnerships, and civic engagement. The audience for this paper includes informed professionals and public officials engaged in decision-making, design, planning, and maintenance of civic infrastructure. Our methods are straightforward: surveying the literature that documents infrastructure projects and examining new reinvestment programs across the country.

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5   Reimagining the Civic Commons focuses on many of the same issues as Rebuild Philadelphia and other civic asset reinvestment projects: citizen engagement, equitable access, public space programming, partnership building (across sectors and parts of the city), and design excellence.

The next sections of the introduction explore our concept of civic infrastructure and then introduce five underlying, cross-cutting themes that strongly shape civic infrastructure projects: equity and access, neighborhood identity, sustainability and resilience, privatization, and design excellence. In Section 2, we develop five categories of urban intervention or practice that relate to civic infrastructure work across the country: creative placemaking; civic engagement; institutional reform and privatization; programming and maintenance; and methodologies for measuring impacts. In Section 3, we present reports on investments by six cities and two organizations that relate most directly to Philadelphia. Finally, Section 4 considers forward-looking questions for cities carrying out reinvestment projects and plots next steps for this research project.

Civic Infrastructure: A Diagram
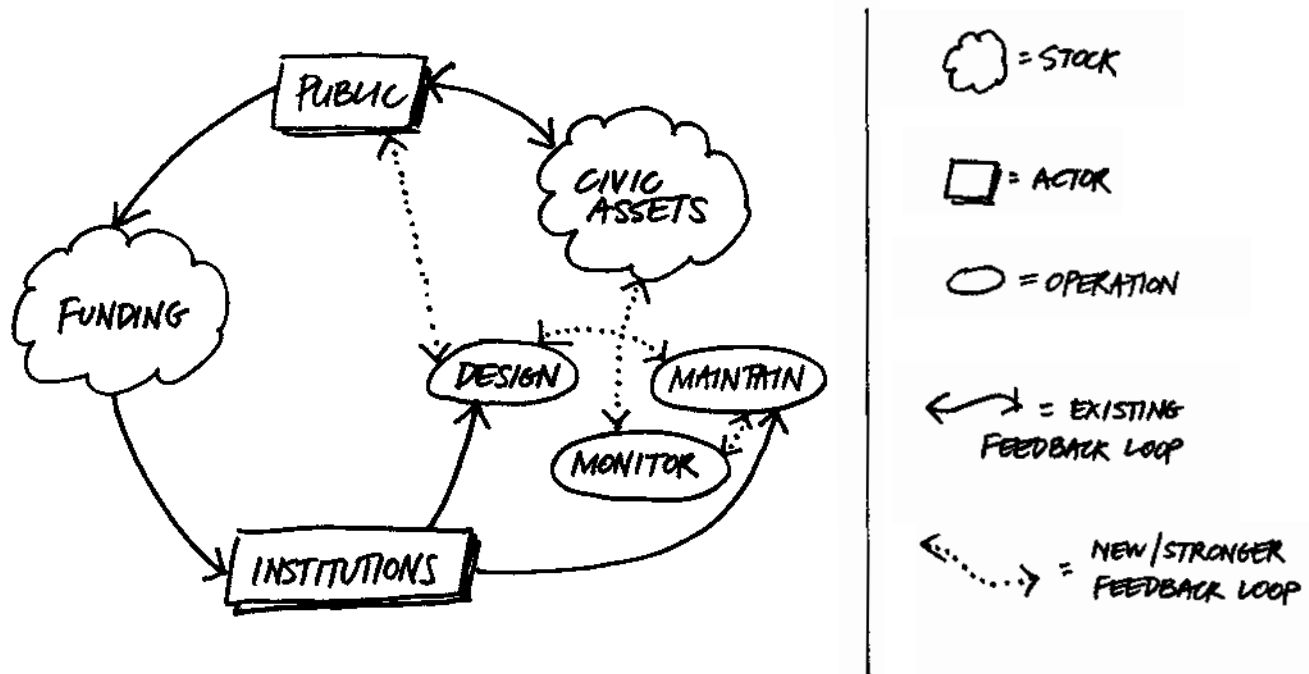
A dynamic network of actors, processes, and "stocks" of resources produce, maintain, and enrich civic infrastructure. Every part of the network must operate and adapt to increase accessibility and maintain quality. Ideally, the network depends on interconnected public spaces, institutions, and publics, as well as a culture of responsibility and accountability. In reality, the connections, processes, or resources are often weak, missing, or neglected. This diagram abstracts civic infrastructure to a small number of elements; the main elements of this diagram (institutions, the public/audiences, funding, design and maintenance, civic assets themselves, and ways of measuring/monitoring change) correspond directly to the research themes and areas of practice this study addresses. A robust civic infrastructure requires that these main elements be intact and must also cultivate the web of relationships and feedback loops between them. The work of improving civic infrastructure is to sustain these elements over time (including spaces, audiences, and institutions) while building more feedback loops (thereby building accountability, responsibility, and trust).

Conceptualizing Civic Infrastructure

THE CONCEPT OF CIVIC INFRASTRUCTURE IS CENTRAL TO THIS PAPER'S GOAL:
to identify how a city can produce the most robust, state-of-the-art, durable, resilient, and equitably shared public environment.

We present the concept of civic infrastructure as part of an ongoing conversation on the importance and functions of public space, and how the public environment meets demands for resilience, open access, equity, and good design. We conceive of civic infrastructure as an ideal (rather than as a descriptive concept), one that will: (1) inspire a radically holistic perspective on the reimagining of and reinvesting in the public realm; and (2) clarify how cities should aspire to reinvest in public assets and where they may often fall short.

The simple definition of civic infrastructure is a city's public spaces and civic assets (collection of physical sites and buildings) *as well as* the social processes and cultural practices animating those places. That is, it encompasses both hard elements and soft elements.

HARD ELEMENTS OR PHYSICAL ASSETS	SOFT ELEMENTS OR SOCIAL ASSETS
• Parks and squares • Recreation centers • Libraries • Schools • Other public buildings • Conserved open space • Streets and sidewalks • Trails	• Governing institutions and politics • Community groups and users • Arts and culture programming • Sports and recreation programming • Heritage and memorial programs • Social and cultural activities (active and collective—such as barbeques, reunions, holiday celebrations—or passive and solitary, such as walking, reading, enjoying nature) • Economic activity and other contributions to urban vibrancy (retail, job-creation, tourism)

A city's civic infrastructure is more, however, than this list of assets and the uses and values one can attribute to them. It is the meshing of public environment and public life in the most holistic, encompassing sense: places and processes, assets and habits (small and large), in all parts of the city. Civic infrastructure represents the city in an aspirational sense, while also serving clear functional needs. It is a whole that's greater than the sum of its parts.

We propose this concept as an alternative to traditional, narrow conceptions of infrastructure as the "gear" that makes a city work. Civic infrastructure may encompass some "traditional" infrastructure projects like rail, street, or water-sewer systems, but more pointedly it also includes social and cultural institutions such as public schools, libraries, and community centers; neighborhood parks, small parklets, and destination parks; and conserved open spaces. It does not, for instance, consist merely of a library building, but of the educational institution that manages it, the citizens who use and inhabit it, and the functions that take place there.

Furthermore, it is an overarching category that encompasses "public space," "creative placemaking," "civic commons," and other names for the raft of cultural and economic development practices that have greatly influenced the discourse and design of urban public spaces for the past twenty years. We believe this concept of civic infrastructure is suitable for this project because, unlike other terms, it captures the empirical challenges of designing, building, and managing complex systems to perform specific functions for society (the basic definition of infrastructure), *while at the same time* capturing the political, social, and creative challenges of making infrastructure meaningful to public life.

Civic Infrastructure redirects attention to aspects of public space that other terminologies tend to neglect:
- the physical, material aspects of these spaces,
- their life over time (including their deterioration and maintenance), and
- the ways in which these built forms intersect with cultural dynamics, politics, and social issues (including economic opportunity, access to education, violence and crime, neighborhood change, and the connection between citizen engagement and governance).

Parks—both big and small—attract public and private interest and investment in part because of the theoretical and historical understanding of them as central to democratic practice and society.[6] Truly open public spaces, scholars argue, provide places for people to be part of a broader community and recognize and define shared values, concerns, and experiences.

Our concept of civic infrastructure reflects a rising interest in infrastructure in many senses. The country's traditional infrastructure—bridges, roads, and public transit—is crumbling, too, prompting promises from politicians across the political spectrum to invest billions in infrastructure.[7] Similarly, The Pew Charitable Trusts notes the need to "Restore America's Parks" and tackle an estimated $12 billion in deferred maintenance.[8] Meanwhile, political debates simmer on how public and private sectors might share responsibility for infrastructure. After all, given that **everyone—rich and poor, young and old—relies on infrastructure in some (although different) ways, everyone should have access to it**. At the same time, infrastructure's public-ness doesn't exclude relationships with private markets. Traditional infrastructure, from railroads to highways, has always been connected to private enterprise. A recent report by the Global City Initiative cites a need for an estimated $57 trillion in international infrastructure spending over the next eighteen years to support economic growth and urbanization. The primary reasons are growing urban populations, aging infrastructure, and financially stressed government budgets.[9] Civic infrastructure also has economic functions, enabling and sustaining urban activity, providing livelihoods, and preserving amenities that shape investment decisions; we should acknowledge these economic aspects but not let them take priority over civic infrastructure's fundamentally public value.

6   For a sample of the robust literature on urban public spaces and democracy, see Hayden, 1995, Low, 2000; Sennett, 1977; and Zukin, 1995, among others.
7   Russell and Dougherty, 2016. "America's Infrastructure Is Getting Worse." *New York Times*.
8   The Pew Charitable Trusts started its Restore America's Parks program to attend to these maintenance backlogs.
9   Dobbs et al., as cited in GCI 2015.

The dimension of time in civic infrastructure is important. Civic infrastructure coheres around a base of physical assets—many of them inherited from early generations. These hard assets were often built to serve civic audiences of another era, and therefore we should expect to adapt them to meet contemporary needs. For the civic infrastructure to remain relevant and effective, we must continually cultivate the soft elements. These elements don't just take place in the physical spaces; they constitute a network of relationships, responsibilities, and rights that we must nurture, invest in, and sustain. In practice, civic infrastructure is an extensive system of essential services and public goods—including open space, nature, recreation, and libraries—that must receive continual investment from public, philanthropic, and private sectors. **Like other kinds of infrastructure, civic infrastructure is not created within weeks or months; rather, cities must re-create and maintain it for the long-term.**

CIVIC INFRASTRUCTURE, THEN, IS MORE AMBITIOUS THAN TRADITIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE.
It enables a city to function, and it symbolizes the polity.

It affords spaces for the reproduction of society that are beyond the economic or logistical function that suffices for traditional infrastructure. It provides a platform for citizen engagement. It invokes a range of professions that are essential to its realization. Implicit in the term civic infrastructure are ways of animating and programming existing spaces, as well as the processes of producing and maintaining them, including historic preservation. The concept signals an ongoing need for care and maintenance to ensure that it provides for existing communities.

As projects yielding social, cultural, economic, and design benefits, civic infrastructure reinvestments should meet a number of standards. They should:
- have public support, from the government and communities (a civic dimension);
- meet clear contemporary and future needs (a logistical dimension);
- be well-designed and physically durable
- be ongoing over time rather than one-off projects;
- advance sustainability and promote resilience in the broadest sense;[10] and
- be something the city can measure and routinely re-assess.

10. Rodin, 2014. *The Resilience Dividend: Being Strong in a World Where Things Go Wrong.*

Underlying Themes

What are the issues and aspirations connecting projects to make and remake civic infrastructure across American cities? This section elaborates on a handful of issues that underlie reinvestments in civic infrastructure, and that distinguish civic infrastructure as an ambitious, cross-sectoral effort to create high-performing public goods (spaces, institutions, processes) that address urgent and long-term social challenges. In our research, we identified five interconnected themes that occupy central roles in the meanings and impacts of civic infrastructure: equity and access, neighborhood identity, sustainability and resilience, privatization, and design excellence. All North American cities face these challenges; these challenges give civic infrastructure meaning and urgency. We explore them here as the conceptual underpinnings of the topics that follow.

Equity and Access

Many of the cities reinvesting in neighborhood parks and civic assets (including Seattle, Minneapolis, Chicago, and New York as well as Philadelphia) are striving to make their city more equitable across racial and class boundaries. They hope that creating equitably funded and maintained park systems will help make the city more equitable, too, in part because parks and public spaces promote healthier, safer neighborhoods and outlying neighborhoods need greater access to quality civic assets. Equity includes equal access to civic infrastructure among residents of different races, classes, and genders, as well as official recognition and efforts from the city to redress past discriminatory practices and imbalances in its distribution of resources, opportunities, and quality environments.

Questions of equity also intersect with what happens to neighborhoods *after* reinvestments. There is growing awareness and fear that investments in parks and libraries may spur gentrification and raise rents, thereby making a city more inequitable. Equity, then, engages with reinvestments in

complex, sometimes contradictory, ways. It relates to the sharing of power to shape public environments, as well as the sharing of the benefits produced. Equity also matters at smaller scales, including individual projects, and to economic inclusion. When a city rebuilds or repairs a park or rec center, who's involved in planning it? For whom exactly is the city rebuilding it? Questions of equity underscore both the contemporary needs for the reinvestments and the hopes for what those reinvestments may be able to achieve.

Neighborhood Identity

Questions of collective identity are especially important in "legacy cities" like Philadelphia (which is fond of calling itself "a city of neighborhoods"). This local scale of spatial identity looms large in the perspective of disadvantaged and privileged communities alike. Every community deserves a sense of belonging and ownership over its place, and yet there are conflicts embedded in the differences between neighborhood identity and civic aspirations. Protection of local identities can sound parochial in the face of civic aspirations; to threatened communities, civic projects can smack of arrogance and gentrification. **Despite neglected civic infrastructures, neighborhoods always have rich histories and traditions, and impending changes in the built environment (even a new school or a rebuilt library) can raise fears that the changes will threaten these histories.** Moreover, when the changes arrive, residents often feel intense loss. For these reasons, a city will sometimes pair reinvestments with efforts to preserve histories and rituals, and to help public spaces enhance, rather than erase, these traditions. Questions of neighborhood identity relate to concerns over the speed of change, who's leading the changes, who "owns" a local public space, processes of historic preservation, and cultural aspects of gentrification.

Sustainability and Resilience

Better ecological performance of buildings and infrastructure (under the guise of being "green") is an abiding concern across the country and the world. Climate change and the transition away from a reliance on fossil fuels have challenged cities to become more sustainable, and many see urban ecology as central to that effort. Greening projects overlap with the goals of sustainable development, which the *Brundtland Report* defines as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."[11]

11 Brundtland, 1987.

Questions of sustainability also connect to ecological racism: Because many cities have maintained their existing infrastructure so inadequately, **poorer neighborhoods are often more susceptible to environmental or climate-related disasters.** Some cities, including New York and Los Angeles, employ new parks and green spaces to help ameliorate climate-related threats. Concerns about systemic damage, resource exhaustion, anthropogenic climate change, and the economic and social crises these factors provoke have informed a growing interest in "resilience." In the strictly environmental sense, this refers to the ability of a system to respond to disruption and retain its integrity—that is, continue to function and maintain its qualities as a system. Increasingly, the term is being applied across sectors, professions, agencies and other silos as an adaptive capacity of society and society's relationships with the natural world. Judith Rodin's recent book, *The Resilience Dividend*,[12] models society and environment as one grand, inter-connected system that we can understand and manage as such. She weaves together issues such as natural disasters and social cohesion on a foundation of systems thinking.

CIVIC INFRASTRUCTURE EMERGES AS A KEY PART OF THE SYSTEMS OF SOCIETY'S RESILIENCE

In our formulation, resilience is not confined to natural processes, but rather deals with adaptation to human disturbances of social systems (including poverty, education, and wealth inequity.)

Privatization

How does a city implement infrastructure? Who builds and manages it? Over the past half century, relationships between public and private enterprise—and more broadly, the role of the philanthropic/NGO sector in mediating these relationships—have fundamentally shifted; officials increasingly look to market forces to fund and manage more and more of a municipality, which was once the realm of the state. Reinvestments in civic assets intersect with this shift towards the market in important ways, largely because the premise of infrastructure still relies on some notion of being public. Concerns over access to and rules concerning civic infrastructure often reduce to concerns over privatization. Likewise, people's desires to

adapt to or take advantage of the encroaching power of the market can sometimes fuel civic reinvestments.

Increasing privatization in cities affects every aspect of reinvestments, from institutional oversight and design to maintenance and programming. When privatization works, it acknowledges the creativity, wealth creation, and nimbleness of private firms, but city officials must still hold privatization to the standards of the commons: shared use and benefit without exhaustion—that is, sustainability. Ultimately, there must be some complementarity between the three sectors (public, private, and philanthropic) and a healthy tension inherent to this interplay. Relationships between the sectors are not a given; they are contested and negotiated, and subject to political ideals and aspirations, as well as to profit and rent-seeking. The script for the complementarity between sectors is always being rewritten and has to be diligently monitored.

Design Excellence

Good design is essential to the ways in which parks, libraries, rec centers, and other public spaces serve their communities. That is, design is an important component of how a place does or does not function, and what a place means. In addition, design is an equity concern. Everyone—not only the wealthy—should have access to well-designed public spaces.

However, well-designed buildings and playgrounds aren't necessarily expensive or luxurious. Over the past couple of decades, as awareness of and debate over what constitutes good design has infiltrated pop culture—from "starchitecture" to the iPhone— the field of design has increasingly come to be associated with high-end, luxury goods and experiences. There is a prevailing sense that the better-designed a product or building is, the more it should cost. Alongside this conventional wisdom is the idea that more modest, regular products or places aren't designed at all—that their form and appearance are simply the byproducts of regulations, codes, and cost-effectiveness. Design excellence can help break and reframe such flawed associations between design and luxury and replace them with ethics of social-impact design, infusing principles of beauty (however desirable) with those of "enduring value" and "rich legacy" inherent to civic projects.[13]

13 We borrowed these terms from the federal General Services Administration renowned Design Excellence Program, inspired by the late Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan. See https://www.gsa.gov/portal/content/104455

AREAS OF PRACTICE

PART A

Creative Placemaking

GUIDING QUESTIONS:

What is Creative Placemaking? How has it reframed city planning and urban design practice? What are its successes, and what claims are open for question?

As cities reinvest in public spaces and assets, many are employing a shared language and set of goals. They strive to make their public spaces livelier and safer, accessible to diverse groups of people. They want to "reinvigorate" public spaces—to "activate" them. This language, and the design interventions it correlates with, reflect the contemporary interest in creative placemaking (CP), one of the most prominent urban design and planning strategies of the past few decades. It's a strategy of embracing arts and culture, often as part of temporary installations that cost less than permanent spaces and programs,

to spur economic development and make cities feel more vibrant. The goals and claims of CP are notably ambitious and far-reaching. Can cities achieve all of these goals at scale in an encompassing, integrated approach? As it has matured, CP has strengthened the connections between arts-and-culture investment and economic (and community-development) outcomes.

CP is, in many ways, a re-packaging and re-deployment of already-existing project types and strategies:

- commissioned public art (installations as well as events);
- aggressive programming of public spaces;
- instant streetscaping, such as street furniture, gardens, and sitting areas; and
- pop-up or other temporary uses of public space, like beer gardens.

Other hallmarks of CP are cross-sector partnership, mixed financing streams, and community engagement.

In this section, we explore the rise of CP and the critiques it has generated. As more cities and foundations have funded CP initiatives, proponents point to the new activity public spaces generate, bringing benefits ranging from community engagement and beautification to safer pedestrian environments and local economic development. Critics argue that CP focuses too much on physical space, instead of people, and helps create inequity by advancing gentrification processes and bypassing existing communities for wealthier tourists. Others call attention to CP's tendency to create temporary change—either praising the "tactical" character of CP interventions, or dismissing them as one-off projects. Reports from around the country suggest the most promising CP investments satisfy needs (as opposed to creating new demand) and prioritize existing communities.

Establishing CP as an Area of Practice

In an influential 2010 whitepaper for the National Endowment for the Arts, Anne Markusen and Anne Gadwa define the central tenets of CP, including cross-sector partnerships and smaller, less expensive interventions oriented towards "livability" and "economic development outcomes."[14]

14   Markusen, Ann, and Anne Gadwa. 2010. Creative Placemaking. National Endowment for the Arts Washington, DC. www.terrain.org/columns/29/CreativePlacemaking_NEA.pdf

> In creative placemaking, partners from public, private, non-profit, and community sectors strategically shape the physical and social character of a neighborhood, town, city, or region around arts and cultural activities. Creative placemaking animates public and private spaces, rejuvenates structures and streetscapes, improves local business viability and public safety, and brings diverse people together to celebrate, inspire, and be inspired.[15]

Markusen and Gadwa emphasize local interventions, but with an eye towards shaping broader citywide and even regional economic and social well-being. Their definition is intentionally broad, in part to appeal to the range of stakeholders that projects tend to require. Programs that fall under the rubric of CP include mural arts programs, theater and music performances, turning vacant lots into gallery spaces, artist housing and artist workspaces, and visual art and performance installations.

Richard Florida has significantly informed the concepts and foundational thinking behind CP, particularly his ideas that the creative economy and creative class spur economic growth in cities these days as much as, if not more than, corporations do.[16] The idea is that cities looking to encourage economic growth should work to appeal to workers in the creative economy, including artists, as well as lawyers, consultants, designers, and other highly educated professionals. The adoption of amenity-based economic development, as contrasted with production- or export-based economic development, marks a significant shift behind the rising urban fortunes of cities across the globe. Using artistic/creative interventions to remake public spaces and street life inscribes this hoped-for transition in the spaces themselves (such as squares, parks, and sidewalks). This basic strategy seems to rely on a kind of environmental determinism ("more artistically inflected public environments will attract the more artistically disposed, to work, play, and consume"). And the by-now-somewhat-formulaic packages of CP interventions emphasize the importance of a certain aesthetic-design approach that is not necessarily in communication with local culture. This raises questions about the authenticity of CP.

The primary funding mechanisms for CP are foundations and public agencies. For example, between 2011 and 2013, the top two funders of CP—the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and ArtPlace America (a collaboration between thirteen foundations and six

15   Ibid.
16   Florida 2002, *The Rise of the Creative Class: And How It's Transforming Work, Leisure and Everyday Life.* New York: Basic Books; 2005. Cities and the Creative Class. New York: Routledge.

banks)—made a combined 232 grants in all 50 states, investing $41.6 million.[17] These and other foundations frequently work with, but also have the power to bypass, city institutions, a feature that informs many of CP's strengths and weaknesses. Advocates celebrate the speed with which CP programs can materialize and effect change, because programs don't necessarily require lengthy bureaucratic reviews. Critics point out that bypassing city institutions can mean, among other risks, less oversight, assessment, and inclusion.

One of the positive outcomes of this kind of institutional flexibility is an increase in partnerships and planning work across silos, including disciplines as well as sectors. CP isn't the first time that municipalities have partnered with artists; In 1959, Philadelphia was the country's first city to require developers building on public land to commission art as part of their development process, under the auspices of the One Percent for Art Program.[18] But CP has encouraged more cities to incorporate art programming into a range of existing offices and departments, given the modest costs and speed of CP programs:

- ArtWorks Cincinnati partnered with city transit for a photography project.
- In Boston, the Office of Urban Mechanics has recently hired artists to do photography installations in subway stations.
- The Kresge Foundation funded Creative CityMaking Minneapolis,[19] which "embeds" artists in city planning departments to help bring more marginalized groups into city discussions. Nine artists from the city were assigned to five departments involved in planning. One project included interactive surveys, with maps that asked people to draw where they came from rather than check off a box. Of nearly two thousand people who participated, 90 percent were new to planning processes and feedback.[20]

Foundations are employing CP programs and strategies, too. The Trust for Public Land celebrates its approach to creating parks as embodying a "creative placemaking strategy," which it defines as a "cooperative, community-based process that leads to new and rejuvenated parks and natural areas reflecting local identity through arts and culture." The Trust directly attributes this strategy to its success in protecting 3.2 million acres of land.[21]

17   Gadwa, 2013. Several national and regional foundations have made significant investments: The Kresge Foundation, the Knight Foundation, the William Penn Foundation, ArtPlace America.

18   https://www.philadelphiaredevelopmentauthority.org/percent-for-art

19   http://www.intermediaarts.org/creative-citymaking

20   Non-Profit Quarterly, September 8, 2015.

21   Trust for Public Land website. https://www.tpl.org/our-work/creative-placemaking.

In multiple ways, CP is a fundamental critique of traditional thinking about infrastructure, including with regards to institutional flexibility and decreased costs. The underlying hypothesis is that temporary, ephemeral interventions can be as valuable as permanent, durable systems. In some ways, CP argues, these interventions can be even more valuable: they may be better, cheaper catalysts; they may better reflect public sentiment and cultural expression; and they may allow for prototyping ideas and revising programs as they unfold.

CP's contrast to traditional infrastructure is, in fact, central to Markusen and Gadwa's definition of CP:

> "Today's placemaking efforts celebrate and stabilize distinctiveness with modest-scale investments, a dramatic change in American economic development. Cities and neighborhoods used to compete for major infrastructure commitments, aspiring to move up an urban hierarchy of look-alikes. In the new century, sponsors look beyond physical alterations, paying more attention to the animation of places with economic and cultural activity.[22]"

As CP has redirected attention, and funds, from major infrastructure to less expensive (and often less long-term) interventions, people have come to associate it with an array of pop-ups, parklets, beer gardens, and other temporary installations. These may not always include art or culture, per se, or identify as CP, but they nonetheless benefit from a broader appreciation of such programs as valuable and impactful. The extent to which CP advances or erases the idiosyncrasies of local culture, history, and environment remains unsettled.

As underutilized spaces become "activated" —which clearly aligns with the goals of civic infrastructure and civic asset reinvestment—CP raises broader questions about who is activating them (existing or new residents) and in what combination. Artists, designers, and cultural entrepreneurs often breed innovation, but such innovations can work against greater equity, access, or inclusion. If and when CP spurs people to undertake genuine

22   Markusen and Gadwa, 2010.

community involvement—as makers and producers, as well as consumers and patrons—it certainly can raise the quality of life for disadvantaged communities. But how often does this happen, and how sustainably?

Critiques and Possible Resolutions

As CP has grown, critiques have also emerged, primarily around three interrelated points, namely that:

- its initiatives exacerbate the same inequalities and differences that it aims to ameliorate;[23]
- it resists measurements and evaluations by being too vaguely defined;[24] and
- it diverts attention from longer-term, more expensive, structural forms of investment (relying too much on pop-up approaches, and sacrificing sustainability).[25]

Many of these criticisms overlap with critiques of Richard Florida's creative-class, economic-development arguments. In particular is the charge that "creative city" visions ignore marginalized communities and help create cities that leave less and less space for the poor and working class. Mark Stern[26] observes that "creative class strategies are likely to divert resources from programs that benefit less-prosperous and less-cool residents of a city. At its worst, this approach confuses the arts' potential for social development and social animation with its role as a hook for upscale consumerism."[27] This is a key observation: **Diverting resources from public agencies and projects that require long-term planning often means diverting resources from agencies that help marginalized populations.** The public sector provides important shared benefits to marginalized populations in the form of public assets, like rec centers (as opposed to private-sector gyms) and libraries (as opposed to coffee bars). In this (and other) ways, "cool" is discriminatory and exclusive; the presence of "cool" implies that other people, places and cultures are "uncool."

Stern and others suggest that advocates of CP haven't duly considered the negative consequences of its interventions, partly because they have failed to properly define

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23 Bedoya, 2012; Stern, 2014; and Webb, 2014
24 Stern, 2014; Urban Institute for the National Endowment for the Arts, 2014.
25 Stern, 2014.
26 Markusen and Gadwa cite Stern on the opening page of their white paper
27 Stern, 2014. "Measuring the Outcomes of Creative Placemaking." presented at the Transatlantic Symposium. The Role of Artists & the Arts in Urban Resilience, Baltimore, MD, May.

and measure those consequences.[28] They argue that there has not been enough discussion or research to differentiate between programs that relieve differences and inequality and those that contribute to them. Indeed, Gadwa and Markusen call CP a "fuzzy concept," which they argue is part of both CP's appeal and its limitations.[29]

Critics also point out that the kinds of measurements matter, and that economic measurements are not sufficient to assess CP's full impact. In 2014, the Urban Institute studied measurement indexes for CP programs and found the measurements to be too narrow.[30] Recently, in the U.K., the Cultural Value Project reported on a years-long research effort to understand how art and culture changes individuals, society, and the economy.[31] The report argued that addressing inequality (in the arts and cities) requires measurements that go beyond quantitative health and economic data to consider: (1) reflective individuals, by measuring empathy, and (2) engaged citizens, by measuring the diversity and representativeness of voices and opinions.

One of the most-referenced critics of CP echoes this latter point. Roberto Bedoya, former director of the Tucson Pima Arts Council, describes "the troubling tenor" of CP not only to avoid projects that address social, racial, and economic inequality, but also to contribute to these kinds of exclusions.[32]

> " If Creative Placemaking activities support the politics of dis-belonging through acts of gentrification, racism, and real estate speculations all in the name of neighborhood revitalization, then it betrays the democratic ideal of having an equitable and just civil society. Is the social imaginary at work in Creative Placemaking activities the development of enclaves of privilege where the benchmark of success is a Whole Foods Market?[33] "
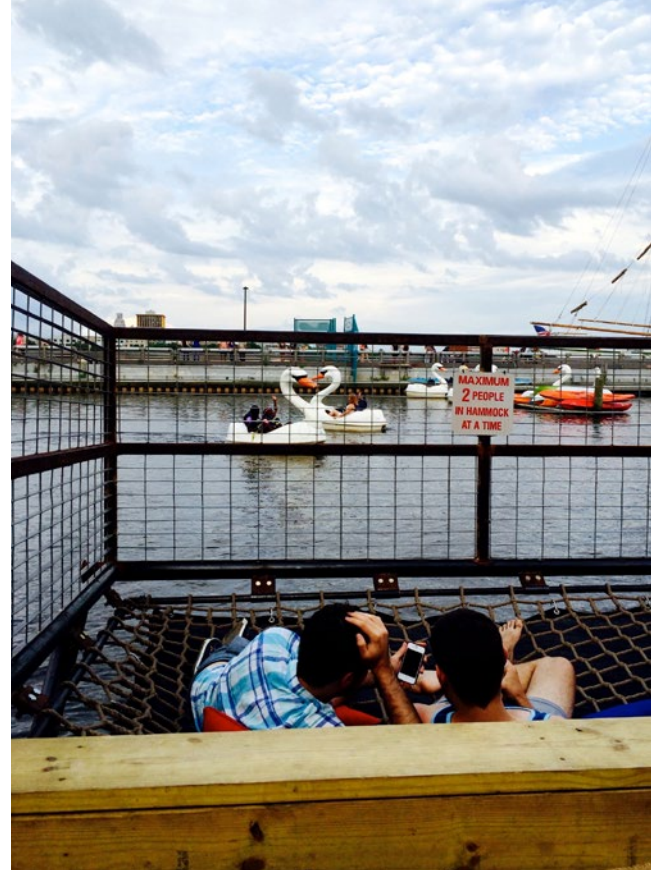
28   Schupbach, 2012. "Defining Creative Placemaking: A Talk with Ann Markusen and Anne Gadwa Nicodemus." NEA Arts 3: 3–7.
29   Gadwa, 2013.
30   Urban Institute for the National Endowment for the Arts, 2014.
31   http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/research/fundedthemesandprogrammes/culturalvalueproject/
32   Bedoya, 2012.
33   Bedoya, 2012.

Many of the concerns over CP today relate to concerns over gentrification: the fear that CP and the arts contribute more generally to a rise in property values and rents, as well as to the displacement of existing communities.[34] Causal relationships between CP and gentrification are difficult to measure, but more researchers are beginning to investigate specific connections. Grodach et al., writing in the *Journal of the American Planning Association*, find that the presence of commercial arts, including music and film, correlates with gentrification.[35] Bedoya's critique raises this issue, too, but one of the reasons his critique stands out is because it doesn't rest solely on the degree to which these interventions raise property values. Instead, Bedoya raises broader questions over the degree to which CP projects address concerns of local communities and their struggles, histories, and needs—that is, whether CP is *for* existing communities. Many have pointed out that the term CP is problematic because it implies not only that spaces don't exist as meaningful before interventions unfold, but also that outsiders will and should remake a place in their image.[36]

Rick Lowe, an artist whose work CP advocates frequently celebrate, dislikes the term *placemaking* because it inherently privileges real estate and profit over communities.

> The challenge is to try to prioritize the people of lower-income communities rather than to use placemaking to pave the way for gentrification. A lot of investment in creativity and in the creative class is about creating a place that seems hip and cool, where people will go out in the evenings and have their lattes on the weekends. That's about generating economic investment. That's needed and that's fine, but there has to be a way in which we can do that while bringing people up in the neighborhood who are already there, rather than pushing them out.[37]

Lowe's distinction between an equitable development model and gentrification-fueled displacement intersects with the efforts of Theaster Gates and Place Lab at the University of Chicago, which works to demonstrate "urban ethical redevelopment strategies initiated through arts and culture."[38] These programs strive to harness the power of creativity and cool via economic development to strengthen weakened communities directly; they do not subscribe to the trickle-down assumptions that fuel many urban economic development models. These art-led strategies—whether "equitable development" or "ethical redevelopment"—are important critiques of gentrification.

34 Grodach et al, 2014; Cameron and Coafee, 2005; Zukin, 1989
35 Grodach et al., 2014.
36 Mehta, 2012.
37 Lowe, 2014.
38 Place Lab website. Accessed at http://placelab.uchicago.edu

In light of these critiques, some advocates of public space reinvestments have pivoted toward a new variation: "place-keeping," an approach that speaks to concerns over placemaking's embrace of the temporary and avoidance of grappling with inequity. For the past six years, the Place-Keeping Group, based in the U.K., has advocated for the prioritization of maintenance of public space alongside its creation or reinvestment in it. "What is surprising is the lack of priority given to the place-keeping, or long-term management of such spaces, once place-making has occurred."[39] These scholars envision placemaking as a smaller component of a broader project of "place-keeping," and of maintaining public spaces for use over time. They argue that this kind of project tends to take more planning and funds than initial placemaking projects or outgrowths, like pop-ups and parklets. **"Place-keeping is not simply about the physical environment, its design and maintenance, but also encompasses the interrelated and non-physical dimensions of partnerships, governance, funding, policy, and evaluation."**[40] As CP discourse and practice have evolved in the U.S., practitioners like Bedoya and even Markusen have signaled support for place-keeping (rather than placemaking). This is because of both its literal emphasis on long-term planning and the more metaphorical understanding it suggests of keeping neighborhoods for existing communities, and therefore fighting against rising housing costs.[41]

Conclusion

The move towards "place-keeping" marks an important acknowledgement of the weaknesses of placemaking, including too great an emphasis on ephemeral projects and too little attention to maintenance and long-term visions for a city. In other words, place-keeping highlights the ways in which maintenance ("keeping") is just as profound as "making."[42] However, neither go far enough to reconceptualize cities' reinvestments in civic assets, which is why a notion of "civic infrastructure" is necessary. Unlike place-keeping, a concept of civic infrastructure underscores the ways that public spaces and civic assets are valued as parts of a network.

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39   As per the group's website. [per https://placelab.uchicago.edu/# See Dempsey and Burton, 2010.

40   Dempsey and Burton, 2010. Also see The Maintainers, a network of scholars working to elevate maintenance and debunk the importance afforded to "innovation," at http://themaintainers.org/

41   (Still other scholars have advocated for "place guarding"—that is, guarding a community against place-making.) See Pritchard, 2016.

42   Russell and Vinsel, 2016.

Understanding civic asset reinvestments in terms of a network directs attention to the multiple scales at which people experience civic assets (on your block, in your neighborhood, at the police station, in the park, at city hall).[43] Doing so also directs attention to the ways that assets: (1) require sustained financial commitments and institutional oversight, and (2) should benefit entire urban populations. We should regard maintenance as one among many complex processes—including community engagement, governance, and funding—that are producing and reproducing the civic realm. We turn to these topics in the following sections.

PART B

Civic Engagement

GUIDING QUESTIONS:

How have civic engagement efforts evolved over time?

What new methods are cities and foundations employing?

How do questions of trust factor into civic engagement efforts and, by extension, the civic reinvestments themselves?

Civic engagement practices have been part of city planning practice for decades, and an expectation embedded in our democratic society. But today, as cities are reinvesting in civic assets, civic engagement expectations are rising, and the methods and tools are changing as well. Residents and neighborhood groups have clear and demonstrated beliefs that cities undertake civic engagement as part of planning, development, or infrastructure projects. Experts and elected officials regard community engagement measures as obligatory, at the very least, and at best, they use them as central parts of their decision-making processes. Related fields, including public health and education, are developing sophisticated engagement methods, too. Civic engagement is no longer an option, an enhancement, or an add-on to planning and design processes. Innovation, exploration, and evaluation are needed now more than ever.

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43   Also of note is the Studio Gang project on The Polis Station (see http://studiogang.com/project/polis-station), which was included in the Cooper-Hewitt exhibit "By the People: Designing a Better America" (September 30, 2016–February 26, 2017; see https://collection.cooperhewitt.org/exhibitions/404735407).

In this section, we examine the history of and contemporary trends in civic engagement in planning, including ambitious efforts to engage citizens in actual decision-making as well as more modest efforts to engage citizens in conversations. The most effective approaches to civic engagement conceive of it not simply as a way for officials to communicate with the public, but as an early and essential step in defining a reinvestment project, its function, and programming—and as a two-way dialogue. We examine the state of engagement methods in general and explore the recent civic engagement efforts in Detroit regarding its Future City initiative in 2012, in which officials executed an innovative program both to listen to what people wanted and to create a means to repair trust between city officials and residents.

There are numerous potential benefits of community engagement, perhaps foremost the inclusion of a greater variety of voices and opinions in planning and decision-making processes, which ideally results in a city that better serves all of its residents. Engagement efforts can create open lines of communication between citizens and government, which helps keep government more accountable to citizens and helps maintain relationships, thereby fostering greater trust and responsiveness. But there are also risks to community engagement. If poorly managed, through hasty or insincere outreach efforts, community engagements can foster greater anger, mistrust, and cynicism among residents and undermine efforts to be more inclusive.

History

Civic engagement in planning has an uneven track record and reputation. Its origins are radical and grassroots-based. The idea of including the public in city planning dates in part to the 1960s, in the wake of many cities' damaging urban renewal programs and the persistent disadvantage, poverty, and racism that framed the problems of postwar U.S. cities. Jane Jacobs's path-breaking book valorizing the street life of dense urban environments was also a paean to the wisdom of everyday use and citizenship. As Jacobs battled Robert Moses, and Denise Scott Brown and Robert Venturi designed for the "everyday," Paul Davidoff championed "advocacy planning," in which planners worked on behalf of underserved populations.[44] Gradually, formal efforts to include citizens' voices

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44   Davidoff, 1965; Jacobs, 1961.

into planning practices became mainstream, and public review periods, comment periods, town halls, and citizen advocacy became a routine part of public, private, and grassroots participants in planning processes.

As years passed, both the public's and planners' satisfaction with these programs has waned, contributing to a shared ambivalence about civic engagement. Residents have doubted that their comments and feedback were informing projects on the table, and planners have doubted that residents value their expertise.[45] This ambivalence overlaps with a broader deterioration in civic life, which Robert Putnam famously described as "bowling alone."[46]

In the face of weak institutional networks and social ties, all parties often perceive formal civic engagement processes as more perfunctory than substantive. The standard public meeting has become a caricature: a thinly attended evening gathering, with more yelling than conversing and listening. The public is burned-out, jaded, disaffected; experts feel a responsibility to listen, record, and respond, but they often lack the resources, know-how, and tools to respond meaningfully.

Over the past ten years or so, city officials, with the participation of nonprofits and other citizen groups, have sought to acknowledge these flaws and rehabilitate civic engagement in planning more generally, and in reinvestments in civic assets specifically.[47] In a 2004 review in Planning Theory and Practice, Judith Innes and David Booher chronicle the decline of civic engagement over the past decades and advocate for "collaborative participation."[48] They argue that engagement should feature ongoing, multifaceted

45   Innes and Booher, 2004. "Reframing Public Participation: Strategies for the 21st Century." Planning Theory & Practice 5 (4): 419–36.
46   Putnam, 2000.
47   Faga, 2006. *Designing Public Consensus: The Civic Theater of Community Participation for Architects, Landscape Architects, Planners, and Urban Designers*. New York: Wiley.
48   Innes and Booher, 2004.

dialogue, and that we should conceived of it as a systemic rather than episodic process. As they define it:

> Instead of seeing participation as citizens and government in a formal, at most two-way, interaction where citizens react to proposals from government, this article contends that participation should be seen as a multi-way interaction in which citizens and other players work and talk in formal and informal ways to influence action in the public arena before it is virtually a foregone conclusion.[49]

This approach to engagement goes beyond conceiving of it as processes of "output" with clear, defined beginnings and endings. Instead, this might mean that certain components of the engagement have completion dates, like town halls and interviews, while other practices continue, like focus groups, review sessions, and sharing results of engagement efforts with the public. Social-media and digital platforms have also enabled experimentation by putting data directly in citizens' hands ("data stewardship"), and even enabling them to collect it themselves (via wiki platforms)—thus truly decentralizing information through participation.

New Approaches

As planners and officials have reconceptualized engagement, the public's expectations have grown, too, particularly pertaining to large-scale urban developments, including civic asset reinvestments and memorializations. Projects—from the rebuilding of the World Trade Center site, to memorial design competitions in Oklahoma City, to rebuilding in post-Katrina New Orleans or Sandy Hook, CT—have generated expectations among citizens that cities won't simply inform them of the plans, but will actively consult and include them in multiple stages of the planning processes.[50] To be sure, participants' satisfaction varies—as does the degree to which decision-makers incorporate public feedback—but these high-profile, charged projects have, at the very least, demonstrated residents' often strong desire to make their voices heard in rebuilding, planning, and designing projects.

Nonprofits and startups are responding to this need. New expectations and practices include The Orton Foundation's Heart & Soul program—which works in small towns, helping a community take time to know itself as preparation for making long-term

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49   Innes and Booher, 2004.
50   Linenthal, 2003; Greenspan, 2013; Jacobs, 2016; and Sagalyn, 2016.

decisions—as well as experiments with digital engagements, including social media, apps, and virtual reality games. These digital projects are often highly ambitious, highly preliminary, or both. In Louisville, city officials are contracting with Living Cities to develop a digital tool to increase low-income residents' engagement in city planning, although it appears to be in the planning stages still. Five years ago, the nonprofit Code for America began working with local governments to improve online transparency; the organization introduced the idea of "civic hacking," in which tech-savvy citizens volunteer to create digital programming that helps governments provide services. Among other things, Code for America developed a set of "Principles for Civic Engagement," measurement standards to evaluate the reach and impact of different civic engagement apps.[51] Thus far, the insights are basic but nonetheless good reminders. They found, for instance, that platforms and apps "that have a more tailored audience and are looking for feedback on causes that are already pending have a higher likelihood of fostering engagement where citizens can affect real change."[52] The more specific, focused, and timely, the better.

One of the most intriguing models of community engagement is participatory budgeting, in which citizens directly shape the public budgets that impact them. Participatory budgeting began to take off in Latin America in the 1990s and has since spread throughout parts of Europe, Africa, and Asia.[53] In the United States, New York, Boston, Chicago, and other cities and towns, have adopted participatory budgeting in some capacity, often aided by The Participatory Budgeting Project, a nonprofit that promotes the method as a means of community empowerment.[54] A growing literature celebrates the method as a direct, grassroots engagement in government planning, but scholars are also beginning to caution that poor planning and governance can undermine programs, as is true of civic engagement more broadly.[55] There is also a discernable trend toward including capacity-building for leadership in the goals of engagement processes; this means actively working to change who leads these processes, and not just who ratifies the results of a government or NGO initiative. An example of this in action is the Reimagining the Civic Commons projects in Philadelphia and elsewhere.

51   McHarg, 2015. "Engaging Citizens: A Review of Eight Approaches to Civic Engagement." *User Experience*, November.
52   Ibid.
53   Baiocchi and Ganuza, 2014. "Participatory Budgeting as If Emancipation Mattered." *Politics & Society* 42 (1): 29–50.
54   Lerner, 2014. *Everyone Counts: Could "Participatory Budgeting" Change Democracy?*
55   Ganuza, Nez, and Morales, 2013; Weber, Crum, and Salinas, 2015; Pimentel Walker, 2015.

Part of the shift in thinking on civic engagement is the idea that it should inform reinvestments from the beginning, as part of the conceptualization of the entire project. Engagement should put some resources and power at risk (as with participatory budgeting, for example). Indeed, the best civic engagements address the complete "lifecycle" of an investment—from planning to spending to programming to maintenance—and recognize that every aspect or "stage" of civic infrastructure creation should include some sort of public interaction and dialogue. In other words, engagement should be fully integral to decision-making and potentially should have real effects on decision outcomes. Rather than separating understanding of our public spaces and assets into distinct realms of practice—social versus material, or engagement versus design, for example—it's important to conceive of processes of engagement as just as central as the physical "stuff." They inform one another.

The need for genuine, authentic engagement is particularly acute when designing and reconstructing parks and rec centers in neighborhoods that cities have historically excluded from decision-making. Some cities are recognizing this importance, too. As reinvestment projects evolve to emphasize equity, economic inclusion, and geographic equality as cornerstones of the project, some cities are employing civic engagement techniques to reach often-excluded groups. In Minneapolis, the Park and Recreation Board contracted with Voices for Racial Justice, a statewide advocacy group, to direct a racial equity impact assessment. Engagement methods included listening sessions, neighborhood roundtables, interviews, questionnaires, public hearings, and advisory meetings. This kind of engagement is part of One Minneapolis, a broader city effort to include citizens in decision-making.

Civic Engagement as Trust-Building: Lessons from Detroit

One of the most noteworthy, progressive civic-engagement campaigns in recent years comes from Detroit, and it's worth considering their efforts in some depth. Questions of civic assets are what prompted The Detroit Future City plan, but it came to envision the future of the entire city; consequently, the civic engagement component was quite

ambitious in scale. Even though the scale of the engagement is larger than might be possible for a city program investing in public parks, libraries, and rec centers, this effort illustrates a number of sound approaches, including how and why civic engagement must address pre-existing, longstanding questions of trust and skepticism.

The Detroit Works Project was a nearly three-year engagement conducted between 2010 and 2012 to inform Detroit Future City's "2012 Detroit Strategic Framework Plan." That is, Detroit designed the engagement to inform the framework the city adopted to guide its future—the very first step in a long planning effort. Written as a case study in the journal *Buildings*, it included a number of partnering groups: academic institutions, local consulting groups and community groups, and volunteer groups. Together, they defined four guiding principles, many of which overlap with conceptualizations of "collaborative participation":

1. addressing profound challenges of culture, race, and politics by deliberately building trust;
2. elevating community expertise by fostering a sense of ownership of the process;
3. blending technical and community expertise; and
4. viewing civic engagement as an ongoing two-way conversation, rather than a series of large-scale episodic events.[56]

These groups employed a range of communication methods, which they organized partly as "information out" and "information in." "Information out" included a regular e-newsletter, project website, and social media posts; canvassing and distribution of materials; and coverage in print, radio, and television outlets. "Information in" included conversations and dialogues at meetings, at events, and in one-on-one conversations; story-gathering; and other methods. In addition, the engagement included town halls, open houses, knocking on doors, an online planning game, social media, and a video history project. The engagement partnered with Detroit Public Schools and youth groups and also set up computers in libraries. The online planning game, called "Detroit 24/7," was designed by Community PlanIt, at Emerson College's Engagement Lab, and funded by the Knight Foundation. The game generated 8,400 comments, particularly from young people ages 10–24.

56   Griffin et al., 2014. "Detroit Works Long-Term Planning Project: Engagement Strategies for Blending Community and Technical Expertise." Buildings 4 (4): 711–36.

The civic engagement effort squarely addressed issues of trust. Rather than ignoring or pushing aside citizens' mistrust of city projects—and of civic engagement itself— to complete the engagement, officials integrated questions of trust directly into their forums. "Detroiters were not new to civic participation, but they had certainly been let down by hollow public commitments of inclusion numerous times before. A healthy amount of skepticism was present,"[57] the case study recounts. Residents were skeptical of the city's interest and ability to help, largely because of the decades of neglect and poor communication that generated the need for the referendum in the first place. As the study explains: "There was a sense of collective cynicism about systemic change" (it doesn't happen); "The insider-outsider dynamic was racially based (black versus white populations, which sometimes translated to class differences); geographically-based (city versus suburbs versus out-of-town); and tenure-based (recent versus long-standing residents)."[58] It reflected broad suspicion of who was behind the change, and whom it would benefit.

Officials first held five town hall meetings, which drew larger turnouts than expected— 5,000 people total—and generated immediate tension. As often happens at civic engagement events, many arrived at a meeting with the intention to discuss concerns that fell outside the defined topics. "It was immediately apparent that the community was not yet ready to turn its attention towards visioning Detroit's future in the face of urgent day-to-day challenges and inefficiencies," writes case study author Toni Griffin. "Many attendees wanted to talk more or first about pressing problems in their neighborhoods such as vacant property, crime, and unreliable trash collection."[59] **Officials' response here is instructive. Instead of pushing forward, they paused the engagement and created two tracks, one dedicated to immediate, short-term needs, and a second to the long-term vision and ideas they'd originally planned. In short, they responded immediately and changed course based upon feedback.**

In addition, officials took pains: (1) to define more carefully the role of the public in the process and (2) not to oversell their power. As the case study notes, "the thousands

57   Ibid.
58   Ibid.
59   Ibid.

of people who participated and provided significant input still represented only 15% to 16% of Detroit's total population. Still fewer of this number were signed up to receive ongoing project communications and updates via email, so the project was unable to stay connected over time with most participants." To help calibrate appropriate expectations, officials differentiated between "citizen-shaped" and "citizen-driven" planning. It's a subtle change, but was important in accurately defining participants' role in the process. This kind of shift reflects an understanding that overpromising the power communities have can undermine trust, as well as a neighborhood's commitment to future public spaces.

Part of the effort to accurately frame citizens' influence and participation also included an integration of "top-down" approaches (technical, expert knowledge) and "bottom-up" approaches (engagement-based community knowledge). Rather than suggesting the process had to be one or the other, organizers "explored how to involve community members deeply in participating in the process and influencing its outcomes without misleading the public into thinking that all decisions would stem from the ground up."[60]

According to the case study, the results were mixed. "The technical work was at least two to three months ahead of the engagement due to gaps in the civic engagement process to redesign more effective approaches."[61] In other words, experts were at times already moving forward, making decisions, as residents and other community members were still formulating their understandings and input. Efforts to address trust were challenging, too. "This trust building felt at times like a case of one step forward and two steps back," the case study authors report.[62] These acknowledgements remind us that: (1) a single civic engagement effort—even a sophisticated, in-depth one—is unlikely to repair residents' deep distrust, and (2) civic engagement is an ongoing process. Still, the Detroit Works Project provides a strong template for other cities, because of both the breadth of the outreach and the positive impact on participants' opinions of the city's planning. The meetings, town halls, and focus groups generated more than 30,000 conversations with city residents, connected with people over 163,000 times, and incorporated more than 70,000 surveyed responses and comments from participants. By the end of the civic engagement initiative, an assessment showed that "more than 60% of [the Detroit Works Project Long Term

60 Ibid.
61 Ibid.
62 Ibid.

Planning] survey respondents indicated that they felt 'more hopeful' after participation in the initiative."[63]

Conclusion

The Detroit case study highlights the degree to which civic engagement efforts— and the civic reinvestments themselves— depend upon questions of trust. The ability of reinvestments to meet residents' needs (not to mention successfully engage their interests, traditions, and shared cultural practices) depends upon open, honest engagement efforts in which all participating parties can trust one another, regardless of differing opinions on the projects.

Civic infrastructure strives to create places that engage the full social, cultural, and political lives of citizens, and this can only happen through ongoing civic engagement— engagement that is fundamentally about shifting the power relations as well as the optics of reinvestments in civic assets. These power relations and optics pertain to trust, transparency, authentic conversations, and ownership. This means that civic engagement should be embedded and systemic, not just episodic. It must begin as soon as possible in the reinvestment process, before stakeholders make the most important decisions, and must clearly identify the power and role of citizens in decision-making. Acknowledgement of historic contexts is a must (given the legacies of distrust, disenfranchisements, corruption, etc.). The work must also facilitate communication that goes beyond information exchange, to prioritize the repair and maintenance of relationships between communities and officials, alongside efforts to collect feedback and inform.

Institutional Reform and Privatization

> **GUIDING QUESTIONS:**
>
> *Given that civic infrastructure spans traditional concepts and involves a wider range of disciplines, what kinds of institutions are best poised to direct and oversee reinvestment and maintenance of civic infrastructure?*
>
> *Is privatization of public-sector functions and the proliferation of public-private partnerships (PPPs) the only story?*
>
> *What are the strengths and limits of these reforms?*

Civic assets are mostly the responsibility of the public sector. Or are they? The general model for thinking about governance of the built environment distinguishes between actors in public, private, and nonprofit/philanthropic sectors. Traditionally, organizations in these three sectors complement one another, have distinct mandates, and bear different kinds of risks and responsibilities. The public sector provides governmental services, including traditional infrastructure, to the entire populace and has the ability to tax; the private sector provides goods and services through markets and looks to make a profit; and the nonprofit sector is mission-driven, supporting both public and private sectors through private giving and fundraising directed to specific kinds of non-state, non-market benefits. Parks and libraries have long been supported by a mix of public, private, and philanthropic actors.

Ideological beliefs tend to dictate how these organization/sectors should relate to one another. In the last several decades, however, there has been a marked shift in these relationships, a re-sorting of responsibilities, missions, and, correspondingly, sources of funding and jurisdiction. A host of economic processes supports this shift, including the rise of neoliberalism, the waning of the public sector (and its concomitant effort to monetize assets), and a general declining sense of confidence in government to provide basic services—or even to govern at all. As functions across these three political-economic sectors shift, it is less clear whether there are corresponding changes in the mission of institutions that govern civic assets: Do they still tend to be single-purpose (maintaining parks, pursuing ecological conservation/nature reserves, developing affordable housing)?

Or is there a mixing across sectors, issues, and disciplines? Does the public-private mix of institutional actors necessarily align with who benefits from their actions? (That is, do private-sector actors benefit private investors, and do public-sector actors benefit the public as a whole, or the disadvantaged?) Moreover, is genuine philanthropy still a tenable model of action?

In this section, we explore the changing organization and functions of public, nonprofit, and public-private partnerships as they relate to overseeing and funding civic assets and public spaces. Our basic argument is that it is critical to investigate how local, district, and citywide government agencies structure (or fail to structure) their partnerships, and to explore how agencies might strengthen these cross-cutting ties and relationships to better fund and manage civic assets.

An Era of Conservancies, BIDs, and Nonprofit Partners

In the last generation, discussions of park governance begin (and practically end) with public-private partnerships (PPPs). As per the Trust for Public Land's 2015 report "Public Spaces/Private Money," "In an age of abundant private wealth and a constrained public sector, parks seem like a logical area of the public realm to benefit from private support."[64] In a recent regional planning thesis on parks and public-private governance structures, Amanda Wilson explains that parks are shifting from a hierarchical governance structure to a networked governance structure, in which there is a great deal of overlap and collaboration between the government and other parts of civil society.[65] She explains that mayors and foundations are creating new entities and NGO partnerships to manage new and restored parks, and that these NGOs typically have greater freedom than public agencies, and thus greater autonomy in design, construction, and programming. They also rely more significantly on sponsorships and private donations.

A look at cities around the country reveals how much parks and other public spaces have come to depend, in particular, upon nonprofit governance over the past 30 years. In New York City, "friends of" organizations have adopted 50 percent of the city's parks.[66] Chicago

64   Harnick and Martin, 2015.
65   Wilson, 2011. "Public Private Partnerships in Urban Parks: A Case Study of Five U.S. Parks." http://ecommons.cornell.edu/handle/1813/29010.
66   Ibid.

has roughly 100 "parks advisory councils," composed of community members that support their neighborhood park. Boston, San Francisco, Philadelphia, and Washington, DC, all have formalized management partnerships between NGOs and their parks and recreation departments. Perhaps the most notable type of governing body is the conservancy, which is increasingly taking on expanded management capabilities in addition to its more traditional fundraising efforts. The Central Park Conservancy, the most cited example, was founded in 1980 by local residents after Central Park fell into disrepair during the 1960s and '70s, when city agencies failed to maintain it. The conservancy succeeded in implementing a comprehensive renovation of the park. Today, it oversees all operations and restorations, raises 75 percent of the park's annual budget, and shares management and decision-making responsibilities with the city. In Philadelphia, the Fairmount Park Conservancy was formed in 1997 to raise funds to support the largest municipally operated, landscaped park system in the United States. In 2010, the conservancy began to take on management roles, too, and in 2015, it expanded further, merging with the Fairmount Park Historic Preservation Trust to oversee historic resources as well.

When examining PPPs and parks, it is necessary to distinguish between these nonprofits (and their philanthropic goals) and the for-profit businesses that cities also partner with to run, program, and finance their civic assets. An encompassing term such as "public-private partnership" often obscures this difference. Cities increasingly work with local businesses and corporate sponsors to oversee public spaces; everything from small concession stands and large advertising programs to financing capital improvements falls under these kinds of partnerships. Private developers also help fund nearby public spaces. In contrast to conservancies, these private partners almost always structure their involvement to ensure a profit, which means they tend to invest in spaces that are centrally located, support high property values, and see lots of tourists—exactly the opposite of the goals of many cities' civic asset reinvestment programs.

However, even *this* distinction between nonprofit and for-profit private partners doesn't quite capture the complexities and crisscrossing alliances and objectives that govern public spaces. Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) mix nonprofit and for-profit interests: They are nonprofit organizations that for-profit businesses create to raise funds for area improvements, including nearby park maintenance and trash collections. With a

BID, for-profit businesses create a nonprofit to provide services that the municipality may once have covered but that the businesses are interested in funding to their specifications, to support economic development. What is at stake with the rise of BIDs? In short, creating and empowering mini-governments to manage what were formerly public assets. BIDs, in particular, raise questions about whom particular civic assets serve, and whether PPPs amount to another form of trickle-down policymaking: that what's good for the downtown BID is good for the whole city.

A 2004 Urban Institute report on parks and public value provides a thorough, though not necessarily exhaustive, portrait of the range of PPPs that may govern a park system today. It offers the example of the Portland Parks and Recreation Department, which "shares facilities and programs with several school districts; collaborates with regional parks, water, and environmental agencies on land acquisition, watershed education, and resource protection;

solicits donations of equipment and other products from corporations, and earns product-placement and advertising fees.[67] It adds that Portland Parks and Rec partners with "friends" groups on park maintenance, renovation, and programming; works extensively with youth-serving organizations; and works with scores of individual volunteers, who "represent the hourly equivalent of nearly 200 full-time staff." [68]

Thus far, these sorts of nonprofits most typically operate and shape the programming and use of large "charismatic" parks. At Chicago's Millennium Park, the city government paid for the park's parking garage, two pavilions, metro infrastructure, landscaping, design, and management; private firms paid for artworks, plazas, gardens, and fountains (in part because those firms can also brand or better employ these structures—unlike, say, trees or landscapes—to advertise products).[69] Today, a site-specific nonprofit manages Millennium Park and works closely with multiple government agencies, including the Chicago Park

67   Urban Institute, "Parks as Public Value," 2004.
68   Urban Institute, "Parks as Public Value," 2004.
69   Chen, 2013.

District, Chicago Transit Authority, Chicago Department of Planning and Development, and Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events (which gives $9 million of its annual budget to the park for programming). Another model for large parks is the Brooklyn Bridge Park, in New York, in a setup that functions somewhat like a large BID: a non-profit corporation operates the park and allows developers to develop a portion of the public park land in exchange for taxes that maintain the park.

Over the past few years, foundations have become increasingly involved in park maintenance efforts, too. The Knight Foundation, the William Penn Foundation, Surdna Foundation, and Kresge Foundation, among others, have funded both research and capital investments in civic assets, and they often serve as the umbrella for the development corporations, parks and rec departments, and conservancies. The Trust for Public Land (TPL) fits into this model as well. Once primarily offering financing and organizational support, the TPL is now making and renovating urban parks with partners.

To be sure, PPPs are hardly new. Some of the earliest models include "public corporations," such as the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, which was created in 1921 by the two states to oversee and build regional infrastructure, like the George Washington Bridge. It funded such efforts by issuing bonds and attracting private investments. Typically, elected officials appoint board members to these corporations (the two state governors appoint them at the Port Authority), which means the corporations are not directly accountable to the voting public. Insulation from electoral politics is one of the principal designs and primary criticisms of such institutions.

Still, even considering these historic public private-partnerships, today's PPPs introduce a level of complexity that suggests the need for greater scrutiny and discussion. One of the questions that these trends in public-private governance raise is whether and to what degree PPPs can assist or help oversee reinvestments in civic assets—including, in particular, small neighborhood parks and rec centers outside the city center. It's a central question for many reasons. Will private investors want to invest? That is, will they see potential for profit in these less-central spaces? And, conversely, will the public accept private investment in their neighborhood spaces (given the specter of gentrification)? This question is critical partly because the neglect that recent invest-ments in civic infrastructure intend to address has occurred

as conservancies, BIDs, and other PPPs have fueled the growth of large, primarily downtown/center city parks. In other words, these reinvestments have come about partly to address some of the equity problems associated with PPPs.

For example, PPPs correlate with unequal funding streams that reinforce "rich" parks and "poor" parks (which these reinvestment programs now aim to correct). Conservancies tend to pool and concentrate resources in wealthy areas, leaving geographically peripheral and poorer neighborhoods with inadequate resources. Wealthier residents and businesses will donate to maintain parks that are near their homes and work, and if conservancies are a primary method through which cities fund their civic assets, they leave areas that lack wealthy benefactors without public resources.[70] In addition, PPPs also correspond with rising prices and gentrification, since they often aim to increase economic development. Finally, PPPs often come with restrictions on public access. Certain venues close when they are rented out for private events, which are an essential part of fundraising activities needed to maintain the space.

Can these sorts of PPPs ameliorate the inequities that they helped to advance? Will PPPs bring these sorts of consequences from the city center to neighborhoods?

Public Partners

Most American cities, including New York, Philadelphia, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Atlanta, have a parks department that oversees the budgeting, maintenance, operations, programming, and administration of public spaces. To varying degrees, these cities are routinely investing in civic assets through bond measures and PPPs, but some cities are creating new public institutions rather than, or in addition to, conservancies and BIDs, to better attend to their park systems and help oversee their reinvestments.

In 2014, Seattle residents voted to create a new Park District to work alongside Seattle Parks and Recreation, primarily to raise money for services and maintenance.[71] The impetus for the vote was the city's $267 million major maintenance backlog. (The measure grants the district the power to raise residents' property taxes to up to $0.75 for each $1,000 of assessed value. This small tax, e.g., $330 on a $440,000 property, gives the parks system a dedicated revenue stream that is beyond the reach of the general operations budget). Over the past ten years, Seattle residents voted three consecutive times to increase their taxes to fund parks by $380 million. These funds went primarily to the construction of new parks; it's common for there to be no funds allocated for maintenance. Particularly in the past, but still today, parks and rec agencies have a record of issuing bonds to acquire new parkland, while at the same time overseeing a decreasing budget for operations and maintenance.[72]

Importantly, the Seattle Park District does not own any park property; it all belongs to the City of Seattle. Anything the Park District purchases in the future will also belong to the city. In addition to the maintenance backlog, the district will fund the improvement and rehabilitation of community centers, the Green Seattle Partnership's efforts to save the urban forest, and the implementation of the encroachment resolution program and major maintenance at the Seattle Aquarium and Woodland Park Zoo. The mayor and city council determine the annual park's budget (but they can't divert funds to the general fund—they must use it for all the parks). The district has an oversight committee made up of four park board members (members of city council), seven members representing each of the district councils, and four additional members appointed based on recommendations by city commissioners.

Having a separate, public-sector district does not itself mean that a city won't neglect its civic assets, of course. Minneapolis has had an independent Park and Recreation Board for more than a century, yet it, too, recently determined a $400 million maintenance backlog. In 2014, the Park Board passed a bond measure and increase on taxes, generating $400 million over 20 years for neighborhood parks. The Park and Rec Board elects nine commissioners every four years, making it more directly accountable to voters. The Park Board does not set its own tax levels; the Board of Estimate and Taxation does this. City

71   http://www.seattle.gov/seattle-park-district
72   Thompson, 2014. "Poll Shows Support for Permanent Parks District." *Seattle Times*, February 11.

council approves the share of city revenue paid to the Park Board (so, theoretically, the council could not approve this part of the Park Board's funding). Chicago also has a separate Parks District, but unlike the Seattle or Minneapolis park districts, it doesn't have the power to tax.

In this era of PPPs, even the public agencies overseeing park projects are increasingly operating more like corporations, focusing on profit maximization, cost recovery, competitive bidding, cost-benefit analysis, performance-targeted salaries, and demand-driven investments.[73] But what is significant about cities' reinvestments in neighborhood parks, as overseen by either city departments or parks districts, is that cities seem to be recognizing that they need funds not to create new parks but to reinvest and reuse existing spaces. We can see Seattle's decision to create a separate entity to raise and protect park funds as burgeoning recognition of the importance of planning for maintenance, and the public sector's role in it.

Improving PPPs

PPPs have demonstrated they can do excellent work, implementing large and complex public-space projects. These successes raise equally substantial questions about the implications of their success for other, smaller, existing public spaces and civic assets. There seems to be an emerging consensus among public policy and urban planning scholars that the solutions to the challenges and inequity that PPPs trigger lie in the public sector—and its ability to push back against private interests, or to more forcefully assert with private partners the public's needs. In a 2012 review of the literature on PPPs and government projects, Lynne Sagalyn, a leading scholar of PPPs, concludes that PPPs rarely live up to their promise, as evidence by the fact that governments often "end up sharing significant financial risk."[74] However, Sagalyn acknowledges that PPPs are here to stay, given the limits of fiscally strapped municipalities and the "modest efficiencies and innovation" that PPPs provide. Consequently, she argues, the public sector needs to better protect residents from unequal power structures.

Two of the greatest challenges are questions of transparency and acting in the public interest. Sagalyn points out that the very concept of "public interest" indicates that we

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73   Macdonald and Ruiters, 2006. "Rethinking Privatisation: Towards a Critical Theoretical Perspective." *Municipal Services Project*.

74   Sagalyn, 2012. "Public Private Engagement: Promise and Practice." In *Planning Ideas That Matter: Livability, Territoriality, Governance, and Reflective Practice*. MIT Press.

don't expect the private sector to act in the public's best interest without incentives, and yet we do expect elected officials to act in the public interest. This tension or contrast is most significant when pertaining to confidentiality and transparency, she says. Private corporations tend to demand confidentiality when forging a deal involving financial risk—confidentiality that is not always in the public interest. In other words, sharing risk and transparency do not go neatly together. "Because the policy strategy leverages private capital, PPPs are biased toward market-based investments and only secondarily, if at all, address social equity concerns," Sagalyn writes. She recommends governance protocols for PPPs, particularly when it comes to negotiating transparency and confidentiality. "Confidentiality need not be total," she argues.[75] **Cities need to elect public officials that can negotiate better with the private sector, and we need continued research on the effectiveness and outcomes of PPPs.**

Legal scholar Sheila Foster also emphasizes the role of the public sector in better managing PPPs. In a recent study on "the commons," Foster argues that BIDs and conservancies provide an important bridge between fully public and fully private sectors. This is also true of more informal groups, such as foot patrols and community gardens, that "pool efforts to maintain, oversee, and manage a common urban resource."[76] These BIDS and conservancies can help address problems of equity and access. However, she notes, the state must monitor these groups; government hasn't given up ownership control, which means it can and should intervene when necessary.

> " The line between the day-to-day management of resources and policymaking can be murky and, in practice, the two can shade into one another. Where this happens, an important aspect of the relationship between public authorities and these collective efforts is the ability of the local government to intervene in management of the resources, scale back the functions of the group, and/or disband the collectivity if necessary.[77] "

Foster underscores the importance of government in supporting these nonprofits, or "collective action enabling" (as she calls them). She also charts degrees of reliance on government, from minimal (simply allowing community gardens to occupy land) to maximal (special legislation that creates the BID, or city offices that co-manage resources

75   Ibid.
76   Foster, 2011. "Collective Action and the Urban Commons." *The Notre Dame Law Review* 87 (1): 57.
77   Ibid.

with a conservancy).[78] She cautions that **it's best to understand these groups as "supplementing not supplanting the goods and services that local government traditionally provides."[79]**

There is some emerging recognition on behalf of city agencies that they can and should more forcefully step in and address inequalities that are intrinsic to conservancies and BIDs. In New York City, Mayor Bill de Blasio has worked with the city's wealthiest conservancies to donate 15 percent of its privately raised funds to neighborhood parks outside the city center.[80] Similar discussions are ongoing in Chicago. San Francisco's Recreation and Parks Department[81] is working with transit agencies (which have a *priori* strong equity/access mandates) to improve park access across the city.

One of the most ambitious efforts to build and reimagine public spaces, while also combating inequalities intrinsic to PPPs, is the Atlanta BeltLine project[82]—which also, unfortunately, appears to reveal the difficulties of realizing such ambitions. It's an enormous project: a network of 22 miles of parks and trails, totaling roughly $4 billion, funded partly through special property taxes and PPPs.[83] Because of organizers' widespread understanding that this kind of reinvestment would likely increase property values, it has included plans from the beginning for the Department of Parks and Recreation and the Office of Housing and Community Development to build affordable housing alongside the trail, to help counter reinvestment-spurred gentrification. It also

78   Ibid.
79   Ibid.
80   http://www1.nyc.gov/office-of-the-mayor/
81   http://sfrecpark.org/about/
82   http://beltline.org/about/the-atlanta-beltline-project/
83   Fausset, 2016. "A Glorified Sidewalk, and the Path to Transform Atlanta." *The New York Times*, September 11.

included plans for new transit to ensure that a range of people can access the parks. Both the transit and affordable housing components of the project are behind schedule, and funding for these pieces remains uncertain. Most recently, two board members, including one of the project's founders, Ryan Gravel, resigned over the project's struggles to adequately address equity concerns.[84] "We believe that whom the Atlanta BeltLine is built for is just as important as whether it is built at all," Gravel wrote in his widely shared resignation letter.[85] He explained that leaving the board would enable him to dedicate his energy more fully to questions of inclusion and equity in Atlanta.

It's too soon to understand how the BeltLine will change Atlanta and therefore what lessons it will provide to other cities remaking civic assets. On the one hand, it and other large-scale civic asset investments reveal the depth of the challenges facing projects that intend to address equity and access from the outset, particularly when the project is large and multifaceted. On the other hand, they reveal the degree to which those involved in such projects are pushing back against insufficient attention to equity and equality, and holding public and private partners accountable to their stated equity and inclusion goals.

Conclusion

Cities aspiring to build better civic infrastructure (that is, reinvesting in civic assets to improve their material, social, and networked performance) must begin to rethink how they negotiate and share power among the increasingly complex sets of groups involved in overseeing public-space and civic-asset reinvestments. For a city to ensure that it equitably shares its civic assets—and undoes divisions between "rich parks" and "poor parks"—conservancies and other private, nonprofit partners must work closely with city agencies. Similarly, PPPs must further invest in the maintenance of civic assets. At the same time, city officials and agencies should negotiate more resources from their private partners—particularly large corporate and real estate partners—and be strict about when to cede public power. In particular, they must investigate how city governments can rewrite some of the rules around transparency and accountability to better protect public interests.

84   Mortice, 2016. "A Beltline Champion Walks Away." Landscape *Architecture Magazine*, October 10.
85   Gravel, 2016. "Resignation Letter from the Board of Directors," September 27. https://ryangravel.com/2016/09/27/faq-why-did-you-leave-the-abp-board/

Programming and Maintenance

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Maintenance consists of more than the physical care and improvement of "hard" assets like a park or library building; a robust definition of maintenance must also include the human and social investments to animate and use the assets, including programming and managment. The kinds of governance structures overseeing parks and public civic assets greatly inform the nature and method of maintenance and programming. Waning public budgets and looming fiscal crises magnify the importance of rethinking maintenance—and of governance writ large. The rise of public-private partnerships (PPPs) goes hand in hand with the rise of creative placemaking (CP) as a means of activating and programming. Cities are increasingly adopting CP-style programming efforts, such as markets, pop-ups, and artistic projects/events, to make underused parks and plazas into lively spaces. This kind of programming serves as a reminder that maintenance is not only about repair, mowing, painting, and other kinds of upkeep, but also about renewing the use and meaning of places. CP draws attention to the fact that cities' public spaces always communicate particular histories and meanings. Embedded in discussions about maintenance are critical questions about whose stories are being told, whose are not, and who decides.

In this section, we explore the ways in which cities are maintaining existing civic assets, physically and socially, and what kinds of programming they are developing. We argue that reinvestment programs should prioritize long-term maintenance and long-term programming, in part to compensate for the current era's embrace of more temporary installations. What seems particularly

significant in these ambitious efforts is to engage residents' own understandings of what maintaining a space means, and to define together the rules and activities that will govern the space. A city defines its public spaces **not only by who builds them or who has rights of access, but also by who takes responsibility for sustaining them physically, socially, and economically, over time.**

Links between Maintenance and Programming

Many of the neighborhoods targeted for civic asset reinvestments in Philadelphia, New York, Minneapolis, Chicago, and other big cities have histories of disinvestment, abandonment, and discrimination, resulting in vacant land and empty public spaces that feel unsafe. Indeed, the impetus for many cities' ambitious reinvestments in civic assets today is a failure to properly maintain existing resources, such as playgrounds, parks, and rec centers. Sheila Foster defines this failure, which afflicts cities around the country to varying degrees, as "regulatory slippage," which, she writes, "bears witness to a decline in the management or control of a common resource over which public authorities have formal governing authority."[86] The rise of conservancies, BIDs, and other groups of "collective efficacy" has been a direct response to this neglect. While these PPPs have resurrected center city and downtown public spaces, outlying neighborhoods continue to suffer from poorly maintained and, consequently, underused and empty spaces.

Foster analyzes the maintenance work of conservancies and BIDs—that is, of various kinds of institutions—and the problems associated with not maintaining public spaces. She subtly challenges one of the more insidious trends among many creative placemakers and urban designers: ignoring or bypassing questions of maintenance in the service of prioritizing activity. Public space advocate and architect Jan Gehl, in a 2011 essay on "The Safe City," doesn't discuss maintenance, but focuses instead on generating crowds. "If we reinforce city life so that more people walk and spend time in common spaces, in almost every situation both real and perceived safety will increase," he says. "The presence of others indicates that a place is acceptably good and safe."[87] This idea is sound; as Jane Jacobs writes, more "eyes on the street" often makes a place safer,[88] but emphasis on "eyes" and activity shouldn't preclude or substitute for attention on the long-term

86   Foster, 2011.
87   Gehl, 2011.
88   Jacobs, 1961.

maintenance that public spaces also need to be safe. **Part of managing civic assets means providing sufficient funds and paying sufficient attention to sustaining these assets over the long term, so that they do not fall into neglect after the initial outlay.**[89]

Cities routinely address maintenance in part by designing master plans and creating capital investment plans that anticipate ongoing and likely maintenance costs.[90] Both Minneapolis and San Francisco design ten-year capital improvement plans, and they publish and share them with the public; Seattle creates a five-year capital improvement plan. These plans and funds are essential, but they tend to fall short, particularly when it comes to less-centrally located neighborhoods, which partly explains why so many cities are now reinvesting so heavily in their neighborhood parks.

This broader story of cities' insufficient maintenance funds connects to a growing trend in programming urban spaces: Cities are increasingly turning to programming to generate the funds for maintenance. Chicago recently started two such programs. (Confusingly, both use the term "activate.") One, called ACTIVATE, is a temporary, pop-up-based initiative in the summer and fall, focusing on music and dance, to help better maintain Chicago's alleys. The other, ACTIVATE! Chicago, is a new partnership between Latent Design and the city to transform underutilized public plazas into cultural and economic hubs. While these and similar programs create capital through contracts with vendors and renting out advertising space (which the city can then use to support plaza maintenance and programming), they tie maintenance and programming to private interests, raising many of the concerns surrounding CP initiatives. They effectively attract more people to public spaces, and attract more resources to design and maintenance, but at what cost or effect vis-à-vis the whole system of civic assets? One of the criticisms of ACTIVATE! Chicago is that Latent Design has the right to select advertising companies without going through an open bidding process; Latent Design is allowed to bypass measures that public agencies would otherwise have to use to ensure transparency and prove that taxpayers are getting the best deal. In addition, these programming-maintenance deals often concentrate in downtown areas, given that private partners are more interested in advertising in central areas with tourists and workers. This translates into an inequitable distribution of

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89   Foster, 2011; Garvin et al, 2013 "More Than Just An Eyesore: Local Insights And Solutions on Vacant Land And Urban Health." *Journal of Urban Health* 90 (3): 412–26.

90   Harnik, 2006

maintenance (and the programming to which it is tied).[91] These partnerships also result in periods of restricted access, when private funders hold private events and fundraisers in the public spaces.

Cities are aware, to some degree, of these problems. In Chicago, the "Neighborhood Opportunity Bonus," which the city council passed in May, 2016, plans to take money the city raises from new downtown zoning and development fee regulations and use it for economic development in poorer neighborhoods.[92] In New York, the Neighborhood Plaza Partnership works to assist community nonprofits in poorer neighborhoods to maintain neighborhood parks and plazas. Through the program, which is part of the Horticultural Society of New York, the city's Department of Transportation creates a plaza from underutilized streets, and then contracts with a local nonprofit to maintain it. According to the city's webpage, about half of the reclaimed plazas are in "neighborhoods where resources are scarce." The Neighborhood Plaza Partnership offers maintenance subsidies (among a few other methods of support) to groups in these neighborhoods, to help offset the disadvantages that nonprofits in poorer neighborhoods are more likely to experience.[93]

Public-private programming and maintenance ventures don't only tend to concentrate resources, though. They may also, often unintentionally, tap into broader racial and class prejudices, even when the spirit of the program is grassroots- and community-based. Take, for example, the increasingly popular phenomenon of parklets: programming of urban spaces that began as a grassroots effort to reclaim space from cars and has transformed into widely adopted PPPs. Parklets began in San Francisco roughly ten years ago, when the arts collective Rebar filled a parking spot with grass and trees, turning it into a miniature park. (Activists filled the parking meter with coins to legally "occupy" it.) Soon, "PARK(ing) Day" was born, as Rebar called on residents of San Francisco, and then cities throughout the country all over, to take over local parking spots for a day. The project highlighted how much space cities protect for cars and revealed the power of small, green spaces to make city neighborhoods more interesting, active, and pedestrian-friendly. The concept proved so popular that San Francisco began funding parklets around town through a program it calls Pavement to Parks. The city partners with small nonprofits and businesses

91   Ulam, 2013 "The Murky Ethics and Uncertain Longevity of Privately Financed Public Parks." *CityLab*, May 13.
92   City of Chicago Department of Planning and Development, "Neighborhood Opportunity Bonus: Leveraging Downtown Zoning to Foster Neighborhood Development and Central Area Growth." Accessed at: https://www.cityofchicago.org/city/en/depts/dcd/supp_info/realigning-zoning-with-neighborhood-growth.html
93   Neighborhood Plaza Partnership website, accessed at http://neighborhoodplazapartnership.org/about/

that then sponsor and maintain the space.[94] Over the past few years, Boston, Philadelphia, Austin, and Minneapolis, among others, have created parklet programs of their own.

These spaces provide seasonal, relatively cheap, small public spaces that also, at times, feature arts and cultural programming. They often feature tables and chairs for outside dining. By and large, parklets often align with, and reside on top of, parking spaces located directly in front of restaurants and cafés. For the cafés, parklets provide additional, yet public patron seating, and, for the city, the cafés perform maintenance. Although signs on parklets often notify pedestrians that these spaces are not exclusively for café patrons, passersby can easily mistake them as extensions of private businesses.

The PPP sponsorship model can have other negative consequences too. It translates into greater uncertainty for a city's public spaces; if a sponsoring business moves or a restaurant changes owners, the parklet may very well also disappear. Parklets can also correlate with, and perhaps even unintentionally reinforce, racial and ethnic prejudices. In a 2016 article in the *Washington Post* on tactical urbanism, Amanda Kolson Hurley speaks with Eric Shaw, director of the DC Office of Planning about parklets and other kinds of small, do-it-yourself planning efforts. "I've told my staff that PARK(ing) Day is really nice," he says. "But if five black males took over a parking spot and had a barbecue and listened to music … would they last 10 minutes?"[95] Shaw's comments are provocative because they highlight some of the unspoken biases often incorporated in placemaking and other sorts of officially welcomed urban-planning "disruptions." In the same article, a consultant tells Hurley that lower-income communities have been practicing tactical urbanism for years: "It's called graffiti," she says.[96] These responses to parklets and similar programs highlight ways in which planning and designing, broadly speaking, always intersect with culture and identity. These responses also reveal the ways in which small, decentralized, privatized planning efforts in

94   Pavement to Parks, "Parklets," accessed at http://pavementtoparks.org/parklets/
95   Hurley, 2016. "DIY Urban Planning Is Happening All over the Country. Is It Only for White People?" *The Washington Post*, October 27.
96   Ibid.

particular can unintentionally reinforce stereotypes and prejudices, perhaps because there is less institutional oversight to examine or correct for inequities.

Stewardship

Cities also supplement public-sector maintenance of public spaces with stewardship programs, in which cities directly engage the public to participate in caring for their own neighborhood civic assets. Numerous cities, including New York, San Francisco, Seattle, Memphis, and Atlanta, have active adult and youth steward initiatives that combine park maintenance with educational programs. In New York City, the US Forest Service helped create the Stewardship Mapping and Assessment Project (STEW-MAP), an online mapping tool that doubles as a database of existing stewardship groups caring for the city's natural environments, to (among other tasks) help identify stewardship gaps in the city.[97] While these programs often educate local kids about their parks and the natural world, they also create demand for programming at parks, libraries, and rec centers. One of the most widespread stewardship programs is tree planting, which many describe as an antidote to Putnam's "bowling alone" thesis as well as a way to make a city greener and more sustainable. NYC Parks' MillionTreesNYC, started in 2007, aims to plant one million trees in the city by 2017.[98] The recent book *Urban Environmental Stewardship and Civic Engagement: How Planting Trees Strengthens the Roots of Democracy*[99] highlights the link between stewardship and tree planting (through its pun-filled title alone).

More recently, Seattle's and San Francisco's parks departments have begun to encourage community groups to apply for funding to support their community parks. Seattle's project is called the Major Projects Challenge Fund. "The application process is set to prioritize community-initiated projects that have a parks-and-recreation mission, encourage public access, leverage non-City funds, and are on a Seattle Parks and Recreation property and/or a Seattle Parks and Recreation owned facility."[100] These programs support existing neighborhood groups. Recently, the California Center for Sustainable Communities at UCLA proposed a Neighborhood Urban Stewards program. It explains that an "existing garden maintenance workforce"—funded by what it calls "voluntary 'Neighborhood Main-

97   https://www.nrs.fs.fed.us/nyc/focus/stewardship_mapping
98   https://www.nycgovparks.org/trees/milliontreesnyc
99   Fisher, Svendsen, and Connolly 2015.
100   OConnoK, "Community Groups Encouraged to Partner with Seattle Parks and Recreation on Facility Expansions and Improvements," January 14, 2016. Accessed at http://parkways.seattle.gov/2016/01/14/community-groups-encouraged-to-partner-with-seattle-parks-and-recreation-on-facility-expansions-and-improvements/

tenance Districts'" (modeled on BIDs)—"could provide individual and community nature's services benefits that would greatly enhance environmental quality in neighborhoods."[101]

Stewardship-as-volunteer efforts in some regard are a way to patch over lack of public funds for maintenance, which means we should ask how much work cities can expect their own citizens to perform, especially in underprivileged neighborhoods. However, stewardship models dovetail with civic engagement, which is itself part of maintenance and management practices. The best civic engagement efforts partner early with local (often volunteer) groups to reach residents; these efforts sometimes evolve into longer-lasting volunteer initiatives to help plan and oversee the spaces. Cities and nonprofits should strive to discern the difference between stewardship as a burden upon residents and stewardship as a meaningful, reciprocal civic-engagement practice. This difference will likely vary across neighborhoods, and it will be important to discuss with residents what kinds of stewardships are appropriate.

Given the fluid boundaries between stewardship, civic engagement, and maintenance, it is perhaps not surprising that many CP efforts have begun to adopt stewardship as a buzzword. The San Francisco Planning Department recently commissioned the Street Plans Collaborative to design a "Public Space Stewardship Guide," which it calls a "toolkit for funding, programming, and maintenance."[102] The guide focuses on ways that the city can work with private partners to make spaces more lively, often through markets and pop-up beer gardens and "special assessment districts" (using the BID model), as well as grassroots volunteer efforts. These evolving lines between stewardship and PPPs, and between civic engagement and

101   California Center for Sustainable Communities at UCLA.
        [https://ccsc.environment.ucla.edu/]
102   http://publicspacestewardship.org

more burdensome volunteer requirements, raise broader questions about how to develop ambitious stewardship programs that reach a wide-range of residents and workers, and how to build a sense of community ownership over the space.

Co-Location

A range of cities and towns across the country are also making a new push to co-locate facilities—such as a rec center combined with a library—to help reduce costs of acquisition, construction, and maintenance, and to develop innovative programming. Maryland's Montgomery County Planning Department commissioned a 2015 white paper on co-location that defines the practice as two or more organizations of public interest sharing physical space on a regular basis.[103] The paper explores cases like a community center and library in Washington, DC; an elementary school, community center, and library in Omaha, NE; a large new rec center with a public library in Alberta, Canada; and an affordable housing project on top of a county parking garage and adjacent to a community center with retail in Arlington Mills, VA. There are other, newer projects, too. The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia recently partnered with the city to build a community health and literacy center; it includes a primary care treatment center, a broader health center, a library, and a rec center.[104] The architecture firm Studio Gang, with funding from the Knight Foundation, recently published a project envisioning a police station that doubles as a community center with public green spaces and retail.[105]

The key to successful co-locations, the white paper argues, is strong leadership and a collaborative framework. "Co-location is all about collaboration amongst municipal agencies/ stakeholders,"[106] which underscores the need for institutions to take on the demanding communications and organizing that these collaborations require. The study found that co-location can offer significant savings through efficient use of land and construction economies (if building a new space) and through decreases in operating costs. There is less space to care for and lower utility costs, but co-locating doesn't necessarily provide "half" the savings: A combined facility can require more resources than one, because more people are using it, creating greater wear-and-tear.[107]

103 Bolan Smart Associates, 2015. "Colocation White Paper for the Montgomery County Planning Department." Montgomery County Planning Department.
104 http://www.chop.edu/news/chop-and-city-philadelphia-break-ground-health-and-literacy-center
105 Cooper-Hewitt exhibition.
106 Bolan Smart Associations, 2015.
107 Ibid.

It's easy to see the appeal of these combined facilities for the public: They unite services that many people use, and therefore bring together a potentially larger group of people. Like all good public spaces, they mix people and purposes. It also helps generate and maintain activity in these spaces over the longer term. Seattle Parks and Recreation is partnering with a preschool to open nine classrooms in the city's parks in fall 2017.[108] The preschool will be cheaper than average in Seattle ($7,000 a year, compared with an average of $12,000 a year), partly because there are no building costs for the school. In New York City, the New York Restoration Project's Haven Project is rehabilitating parks and green space in the South Bronx, with an emphasis on health programming and green infrastructure.[109] The Haven Project made decisions to focus on health and physical activity after extensive conversations with local residents about what they believed was missing from their neighborhoods. Residents overwhelmingly voiced a desire for outdoor spaces that both kids and adults could use for walking, running, biking, and other exercise.

Conclusion

As cities aim to prioritize the long-term maintenance of civic assets, they need to balance physical and social measures. Cities should look for ways to complement the strengths of CP, which means investing in more permanent programming that caters to all generations, from kids and teens to parents and the elderly. Applying a concept of civic infrastructure to programming and maintenance also provides opportunities to engage residents' own understandings of what it means to own and maintain a space, and define, together, the rules that will govern the space. Agencies and nonprofits should regularly consult residents about the programming they need and want, often in advance of the reinvestments, so the city can design (or redesign) a space with these specific needs in mind. **Civic infrastructure must sustain civic life across generations, across political terms, and across the service life of its individual components. A city should make civic infrastructure to last, with intentional, long-lasting programming.**

108 Turner, 2015; Campbell and Weisen, 2009.
109 https://www.nyrp.org/about/programs/the-haven-project

Methodologies for Measuring Impacts

> **GUIDING QUESTIONS:**
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> *How are cities currently measuring the impact of their reinvestments?*
>
> *How do cities tend to define "impact" in order to measure it?*
>
> *What are the values, but also the drawbacks, of focusing on measurement?*
>
> *Why is measuring impact important?*

Many of those investing in civic assets—including mayors, city agencies, community groups, and foundations—are integrating evaluation or impact studies into their investments. Foundations in particular, including the Knight Foundation and The Kresge Foundation, are funding measurements to assess the strengths and weaknesses of interventions and to justify further investments. Over the past five years, measurements of creative placemaking (CP) have highlighted both the importance and the challenges of thoughtfully assessing how investments affect residents and shape the city.

This section explores the recent interest in measuring and analyzing the impacts of CP and civic asset reinvestments. We argue that it's vital to hypothesize what civic assets do and do not well, and to measure these carefully. One of the flaws of CP is that it has become oversold as the latest cure-all to the ills plaguing many cities, and the growing interest in civic assets suggests the potential for a similarly loose framing here.

It's also essential to keep methodologies and modes of analysis up-to-date, and to share this research with the public, so the public can engage in discussions over what the data means and how to use it, as well as—perhaps most importantly—what it should measure and assess in the first place. Furthermore, we argue that, while quantifiable data or indicators matter, not all urban phenomena and processes submit well to quantification. It's vital not to exclude or dismiss the aspects of civic asset reinvestment that we cannot neatly break down into numbers. Some of the most significant components of civic infrastructure, including its local meanings and histories, need to be documented and explored through qualitative methods.

On Measuring Creative Placemaking

As the primary funders of creative placemaking (CP), ArtPlace America and the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) have both emphasized the need to measure how their investments and initiatives change cities. They have also developed their own metrics to do so, which have been subject to varying degrees of critique.[110] ArtPlace America has come under perhaps the greatest criticism, for its efforts to measure the value of CP programs through a "vibrancy index," as well as for its decisions to define vibrancy through (among other factors) an area's cellphone activity, independent businesses, and "creative industry" jobs. In a 2014 paper on what he calls CP's "outcomes problems," Mark Stern argues that ArtPlace's measurement approach relies too heavily on Richard Florida's creative class strategies and concomitant lack of attention to gentrification.[111] In an entertaining riff in *The Baffler*, Thomas Frank takes the critique one step further, suggesting that "vibrancy" is basically code for gentrification and highlighting the circular logic such measurement systems employ. "Every city is either vibrant these days or is working on a plan to attain vibrancy soon," he writes. "The reason is simple: a city isn't successful—isn't even a city, really—unless it can lay claim to being 'vibrant.'"[112]

These critiques underscore the importance of critically and thoughtfully identifying not only the indicators (cell phone activity) but also the goals of the initiative itself (vibrancy). Scholars more favorably review the NEA's effort to measure "livability" as an outcome of CP, partly because it employed a greater and more sophisticated set of indicators. Still, critics find the measurements somewhat limited, as does an Urban Institute study the NEA funded to assess its own measurement system.[113]

None of this suggests, of course, that empty public spaces don't have negative impacts. The abiding question is: What valid and useful measures can we create? Just as researchers strive to measure the impact of the arts, doctors and epidemiologists are increasingly investigating links between environmental factors and health outcomes, including between a neighborhood's vacant land and its residents' happiness or heart rates. A 2012 epidemiological study in the *Journal for Urban Health* documents residents' concerns about and understanding of the ways in which vacant land negatively affects

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110   Stern, 2014; Morley and Winkler, 2014.
111   Stern, 2014.
112   Frank, 2012. "Dead End on Shakin' Street." *The Baffler*.
113   Morley and Winkler, 2014.

their wellbeing and physical and mental health. Respondents associate vacant plots with greater fears of crime and concerns over safety. They also express anger at the buildup of trash, powerlessness to change the landscape, and worry and anxiety about the safety of children. They acknowledge the social stigma of living in a decaying neighborhood.[114] A related pilot study by the same researchers suggests that greening vacant lots in a neighborhood may lead to decreases in crime.[115]

Still, the question remains: If vibrancy and livability are not the best or most measurable goals for CP initiatives—and perhaps, by extension, for reinvestments in civic assets—then what are? What should measurements that aim to study public spaces and parks strive to assess? What are the outcomes that matter?

On Measuring Public Spaces

A range of researchers and foundations are investigating more complex planning strategies; some are working to strengthen quantitative analyses, while others are proposing a shift from cost-benefit analyses to more qualitative measurements, including focus groups, interviews, and ethnographic analyses. The most promising research brings these methods together to assess the impact of civic asset reinvestments upon an entire neighborhood system. Just as civic infrastructure aspires to engage the multiple social, cultural, political, and economic aspects of a neighborhood, so, too, must measurements assess these complex, intersecting variables.

Some of this work has developed around efforts to improve CP. Mark Stern argues that CP should focus on a "neighborhood's cultural ecology rather than one type of asset."[116] That is, studies should more fully investigate the neighborhood whole: the complete system. Stern and Susan Seifert have developed the Social Impact of the Arts Project (SIAP), which aims to measure how the arts affect poverty and neighborhood change, using both quantitative and qualitative measures. This method incorporates the socioeconomic status of the neighborhood into assessments of the impact of the arts on wellbeing. SIAP maps the cultural asset index, which collects statistical data on nonprofit, commercial, and residential cultural resources and assets, onto geographic areas, and correlates with

114   Garvin et al, 2013.
115   Garvin, Cannuscio, and Branas, 2013.
116   Stern, 2014.

other measures of wellbeing, including child welfare and economic development. The project then pairs these quantitative analyses with interviews and observations.

Among Stern and Seifert's key findings are that districts with high concentrations of arts are "more likely to experience declines in poverty, population growth, improved housing markets, and rising property values than [are] similar neighborhoods with fewer cultural assets."[117] They also found "strong and durable connections" between the arts and public health as well as child welfare. "The arts and culture continue to have a demonstrable impact on measures of social wellbeing in Philadelphia, particularly in the city's least advantaged areas," they conclude. "One wonders, however, if economic inequality continues to undermine the strength of cultural programs in low-wealth neighborhoods, whether the arts can continue to mitigate the effects of social injustice."[118]

The recent Cultural Value Project, published by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) in the U.K., comes to similar conclusions.[119] It argues that cities need to use more sophisticated measures of social wellbeing: the Stiglitz/Sen measures.[120] It also suggests that programs need to: (1) go beyond quantitative health and economic data to consider more abstract values—such as reflective individuals (including capacities for empathy) and engaged citizens (including expressions of a broader political imagination and expressions of minority voices)—and (2) address the challenges of inequality in arts more directly. This desire to measure empathy and engagement suggests a broader concern, namely: Are all benefits (of the arts, of civic life) measurable? Should they be?

At City Observatory, which is funded by the Knight Foundation, urban economist Joe Cortright has spent the past two years developing much-needed, more rigorous

117   Stern and Seifert, 2010; see also Stern and Seifert 2013.
118   Ibid.
119   Crossick and Kaszynska, 2016. "Understanding the Value of Arts & Culture." The AHRC Cultural Value Project.
120   Stiglitz, Sen, Fitoussi, 2009.

quantitative analyses of a range of urban phenomena, including not only housing and transportation but also a city's "distinctiveness." To measure the latter, Cortright's analyses compile Google Search data aligned with different cities to present key stereotypes and associations. ("While hardly scientific, the Google Search data do provide an insight into widely shared perceptions of city differences," the website states.)[121] While City Observatory focuses primarily on interpreting data and sharing it with the public, other groups and institutions are experimenting with new modes of data collection and analysis.

Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) and its cousin, the Sustainable Sites Initiative, define performance standards for green buildings and landscapes respectively, measuring everything from materials used in initial construction to water efficiency. The Gehl Institute employs a method that combines pedestrian-counting with behavioral mapping and photographic documentation, to quickly assess how busy public spaces are (or are not) and how much time people tend to spend in them. Preservation Green Lab, an office of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, has experimented with geographic information system (GIS) techniques to assess a range of relationships between cities and their built environments. In *Older, Smaller, Better*, a 2014 study on the impact of historic buildings on cities' social lives, Preservation Green Lab researchers (in a collaboration with a range of groups, including Gehl Institute and Joe Cortright) document the ages of buildings in Seattle, San Francisco, and Washington, DC, and correlate them with "40 economic, social, cultural, and environmental performance metrics."[122] It finds, among other things, that older, mixed-use neighborhoods are more walkable than neighborhoods with new buildings, and that city streets with "mixed-vintage" buildings have better nightlife. Researchers also expressed dissatisfaction with some of their own metrics and said it was particularly difficult to assess questions surrounding diversity, including women and minority-owned businesses, because public data was not complete.[123]

This robust interest in data, measurement, and visualization has produced what one might call a "metrics aesthetics": design layouts that feature numerical indexes and trends, which can at times convey a more rigorous approach to park maintenance and operations than may otherwise be present. San Francisco Recreation and Park Department developed

121   City Observatory website, accessed at http://cityobservatory.org/distinctiveness/#1
122   National Trust for Historic Preservation: Preservation Green Lab, 2014.
123   Ibid.

its 2016–2020 Strategic Plan in partnership with the Harvard Business School, which helped define a series of numerical indicators and targets for each of its objectives. For example, objective 1.2—"strengthen the quality of existing parks and facilities"—contains two performance indicators: (1) the percentage of residents who rate parks and facilities as "excellent" or "good"; and (2) percentage of parks scoring at or above the "well-maintained" standard in the annual Park Maintenance Standards report. The objective is more specific than vibrancy or livability, but it is still broad. Questions remain: What defines "quality"? And quality of what? The buildings? The programming? The performance indicators suggest that quality in this instance translates to maintenance, but the indicators are vague as well. In addition, it's not clear how the strategic plan numerically defines and measures these indicators and targets.

While the interest in and desire to improve quantitative analyses is welcome, it doesn't address the fact that some phenomena, goods, and benefits do not submit well to quantification. In their book *Priceless: On Knowing the Price of Everything and the Value of Nothing,* Frank Ackerman and Lisa Heinzerling explore (to darkly comical effect) the shortcomings of cost-benefit analysis and efforts to quantify risk. "The basic problem with narrow economic analyses of health and environmental protection," they say, "is that human life, health, and nature cannot be described meaningfully in monetary terms; they are priceless."[124] One might make a similar argument about the civic value of truly open, public spaces. They help define the city and, ideally, enable its residents to see and better know people from a range of ethnicities, races, religions, genders, ages, and classes. They help people learn to be comfortable with difference. They also provide spaces for people to collectively express their concerns and frustrations, and to organize for political change.

These vital but less numerical values of public spaces are inspiring a growing body of qualitative research on cities, and more specifically, on public spaces. Researchers at Penn State have developed a method that combines surveys, observations, and focus groups to assess the impact of park investments; they recently completed a study of Fairmount Park in Philadelphia, funded by the William Penn Foundation.[125] Another method, rapid ethnographic assessment procedures (REAP), combines participant observations,

124 Ackerman and Heinzerling, 2004.
125 "A Systematic Evaluation of Centennial Commons: Pre-Renovation Study Result," Penn State Department of Recreation, Park, and Tourism Management.

interviews, focus groups, and mapping to provide an in-depth, qualitative investigation of a park or public space, including difficult-to-measure concerns over cultural representation and history. In a 2002 paper, researchers Dana Taplin, Suzanne Scheld, and Setha Low explore the strengths and weaknesses of this approach, and conclude that though REAP does not provide the kind of nuanced understanding of long-term ethnographic research, "rapid ethnography" does indeed provide insight into the complex ways that groups use urban spaces and contest their meanings.[126] (The National Service, for instance, continues to use REAP.)

Conclusion

The research on public space performance—from more quantitative values to harder-to-define humanistic meanings—highlights the richness and complexity of civic infrastructure, and the ways in which its design, institutional governance, and programming intersect in myriad ways. The most promising research aspires to measure a neighborhood holistically—in terms of social and spatial "ecology"—to best understand how civic assets are (or are not) contributing to residents' wellbeing. It bears repeating that questions of measurement overlap with civic engagement. We inevitably filter notions about what a civic asset should provide—and how we should measure its performance—through questions of what a neighborhood needs and wants. One of the most pressing challenges facing civic-asset reinvestment is devising ways to better include residents in determining what civic assets and public spaces should contribute to civic life in the first place. At the same time, researchers and practitioners should continue experimenting with qualitative and quantitative methods for data collection and analysis, and with new hybrid ways of analyzing and visualizing effects.

126 Taplin, Scheld, Low, 2002. "Rapid Ethnographic Assessment in Urban Parks: A Case Study of Independence National Historical Park." *Human Organization* 6 (1): 80–93.

REPORTS

We present a series of case reports to illustrate how big cities are reinvesting in civic assets and working to realize their own versions of civic infrastructure. These brief reports on six cities and two organizations highlight connections between community engagement, public-private partnerships, maintenance and programming, and systems of measurement.

Minneapolis

Closing the Gap, Minneapolis's planned park revitalization program, is a 20-year, $400 million investment in 157 neighborhood parks. The figure of $400 million comes from an estimate of future underfunded maintenance and past deferred maintenance, adjusted for inflation. The gap funding, appropriated by Minneapolis City Council,[127] is needed to cover specific capital upkeep projects, staffing needs, and general maintenance. The

Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board intends to implement this program concurrently with a recreation center revitalization program known as RecQuest and a series of Service Area Master Plans. In large part, racial inequity concerns drive spatial distribution of improvements in both parks and rec centers.

Closing the Gap came about after years of deferred maintenance. The Park Board described a confluence of factors that led to the funding gap: "Park attendance, usage, and demand for enhanced programs and services have all been increasing on an aging park system, while at the same time, budget reductions were enacted to manage funding shortfalls and rising expenses."[128] In 2007, the Park Board published a comprehensive plan for 2007–2020,[129] and the board is currently in the middle of a large-scale effort to create Service Area Master Plans pursuant to the comprehensive plan.

The city conducted simultaneous engagement campaigns for Closing the Gap and RecQuest. This included a survey of 500 randomly selected city residents, to produce a statistically useful sample of opinions regarding all aspects of the Closing the Gap plan. The survey asked subjects about their opinions concerning park quality, facilities, and programming. Most interestingly, the Park Board asked citizens to indicate their level of support for different funding mechanisms, and for specific types of programs or capital improvements. This served as a bit of instruction for the board—an elected body separate from city council and other appropriating entities—and indicated which funding proposals would be politically viable.

The Park Board also undertook a more qualitative investigation of community sentiment through a range of outreach methods. The board convened 31 community meetings and conducted informational "intercepts" at 24 public events. They disseminated paper and online surveys and met with key stakeholder groups. Citizens had the opportunity to suggest funding mechanisms and offer their opinions on hypothetical proposals. Suggestions ranged from the sale of naming rights to property tax levies. Respondents indicated strong support for raising property tax revenue for maintenance of existing services and facilities, and moderate support for raising taxes to fund enhanced services and facilities.[130] In deploying the funds, Minneapolis provides citizens the ability to

128 Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board, 2015
129 Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board, 2007
130 Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board, 2015

analyze and visualize expenditures, using an open data dashboard on the city website that offers additional transparency to the process.

The board determined the spatial arrangement of investment based on a weighted set of criteria that prioritized investment in areas of concentrated poverty. The 2007 comprehensive plan invoked one of the "Vision Themes"—a need to "meet diverse community needs"—as the basis for this weighting. The Park Board gave each park an overall score, according to its physical characteristics and the characteristics of the surrounding community.

The Park Board described enhanced service levels (e.g., trail miles repaired per year, length of mowing cycle in days) and the costs associated with achieving them,[131] and estimated the funding needed to bring services up to those levels, system-wide. The cost of service enhancement, when added to the cost of infrastructural improvement in parks and targeted using a known ranking criteria, adds up to a funding level required to close the gap.

In April 2016, the Park Board reached a deal with the city council to appropriate $10.5 million per year towards the Closing the Gap capital program.[132] Property tax increases make up 82 percent of the funding. Government entities approved the deal after three unsuccessful proposals for park funding formulae—the result of a political aversion to putting a tax increase on the ballot as a referendum. The annual appropriation is equivalent to the gap that the Park Board reports identify.

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PART B

Seattle

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In September 2014, Seattle Parks and Recreation published "The Parks Legacy Plan's Strategies and Goals." This document contains a wide-ranging plan for the city's entire system of 465 parks. In particular, it details a backlog of repairs, estimated to cost $267 million and growing.[133] Parks and Recreation's Six-Year Spending Plan includes "Legacy Goal Statements" for each spending category, implying an integration of the

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131 Ibid.
132 Callaghan, 2016
133 Seattle Parks and Recreation, 2014

planning effort into capital expenditure. The Spending Plan includes a "Fix It First" list of high-need capital fixes, which is currently the priority. Knowing the condition of the parks, and knowing the number of hours worked in the past, the Legacy Plan identifies the labor gap necessary to improve conditions.

The implementation of the Parks Legacy Plan will take place as Seattle employs a brand new governance and funding scheme for its parks. One month prior to the publication of the Parks Legacy Plan, Seattle voters approved Proposition 1, creating a new government entity: the Seattle Park District. The Park District has taxing authority and a $48 million annual budget derived from a 0.33 percent increase in the property tax millage rate.[134] Seattle Parks and Recreation will provide services on behalf of the Park District. One of the district's major tasks is executing the vision enumerated in the Parks Legacy Plan.

This new governmental structure was controversial. Some believed that the creation of a Parks District would give voters less control over tax rates, while others believed it was necessary to create a more aggressive funding mechanism to counteract the city council's tendency to defer maintenance.[135] The referendum was the subject of over $400,000 in campaign spending.[136] The success or failure of the Parks Legacy Plan will reflect, in part, the effectiveness of the new governance structure.

Seattle's broader commitment to equity in government programming will influence the distribution of resources to support the Parks Legacy Plan. Seattle's Race and Social Justice Initiative (RSJI), a citywide effort, informs the community engagement component of the Parks Legacy Plan. The purpose of the RSJI is to "ensure racial equity in City programs and . . . work with community-based organizations to support the movement to end structural racism."[137] Functionally, this means that the city needs to distribute plans like the Parks Legacy Plan—and its resultant programs, funds, and services—according to a formula that considers racial equity.

Community engagement for the Parks Legacy Plan included phone, online, mail, and in-person surveys. Through a partnership with the Seattle Department of Neighborhoods,

134   Q13 Fox News Staff, 2014
135   Tan, 2014
136   Berger, 2014
137   Seattle.gov, 2016

Parks and Rec translated the questionnaire into nine languages. Six public outreach meetings took place in 2013. The overall survey pool was large: 400 random phone surveys and over 3,000 online or intercept surveys. The surveys were wide-ranging and highly detailed; the city collected ninety surveys from "representatives of historically underrepresented communities."[138] These 90 subjects reported different priorities and lower park usage levels than the overall population. However, these same subjects reported higher usage of community center facilities. The Seattle Park District and Planning Department continue to engage the public by posting regular updates regarding the parks' project funding and construction status on their respective websites.

The broader planning process for the Parks Legacy Plan is in mid-stream. In the first phase of planning, Parks and Rec formulated a vision for the future of the park system and clarified a mission statement. Second, Parks and Rec undertook a fact-finding effort that included an internal inventory, a nation-wide survey of practices, and a community outreach program. Furthermore, the city created a Parks Legacy Citizens' Advisory Committee to present the recommendations to the mayor and the public. These parts of the planning process are complete; they represent the "Goals and Strategies" Parks Legacy Plan of 2014. Third, Parks and Rec is creating an analytical framework for a "sustainable parks and recreation system [created] through innovation, efficiencies, and secure funding."[139] Lastly, the Advisory Committee will give its recommendations to the Mayor. The next phase includes the development of an implementation plan. The next few years will be a trial run for Seattle's new parks administration.

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PART C

<u>Los Angeles</u>

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Los Angeles has multiple, simultaneous park initiatives designed to increase the city's open space. It's most notable initiatives aren't designed to introduce capital improvements or address deferred maintenance. Instead, L.A. is focused on retrofitting densely built areas with pocket parks and other green spaces. The city aims to build 50 new parks of 5,000–20,000 square feet through the 50 Parks Initiative. It plans to build these parks

138 Seattle Parks and Recreation, 2014

139 Ibid.

quickly, with less than a year between site acquisition and opening. L.A. has also created "Green Alleyways" to capture stormwater and provide greened public space in back alleys. This has already been the subject of a pilot program. Both programs will operate using a public-private partnership (PPP) model. The city has stated its willingness to "identify alternative, non-traditional sources of funding" for such projects.[140]

L.A.'s 2009 "Community Needs Assessment" found that its parks were not equitably distributed throughout the city.[141] These programs emerged to improve residents' average access to greenery, even to small spaces. Many of the large developments built immediately after World War II did not include enough small-scale parks or ball fields,[142] leaving many residents without immediate access to park space. The Department of Recreation and Parks realized that there were few opportunities to create large parks without displacing existing businesses or residents, so it designed the 50 Parks Initiative as a quick, uncontroversial way to decrease the average distance Angelinos lived from park space. The city sited many of the parks on blighted properties, so the new small parks provide the additional benefit of increasing safety, and civic pride by removing this blight.

The Green Alleyways program, a PPP between the city and the Trust for Public Land, aims to turn alleyways into parks that capture stormwater and provide passive green space. Post–World War II developments have an abundance of alleys, and Los Angeles has roughly 900 miles of alleyway.[143]

L.A. has not yet well documented the community engagement and fact-finding process for the 50 Parks Initiative. The Department of Recreation and Parks describes its method as a general survey of suitable properties in areas it identified as being relatively park-poor. It then engaged with local partner organizations to conduct outreach and work with local communities through the design and development process.[144]

The Department of Recreation and Parks recruited partners to assist with acquisition, design, and construction costs for the 50 Parks Initiative. Partner organizations, including the Trust for Public Land, the Los Angeles Neighborhood Initiative, and the Los Angeles

140   City of Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks, 2015.
141   Ibid.
142   Stephens, 2015
143   UCLA Luskin Center for Innovation, 2014
144   City of Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks, 2015

Parks Foundation, have thus far contributed an average of $500,000 per park.[145] This average donation amount is roughly the median estimated cost of a park project.[146] The city did not use donations for site acquisition, but this means that private money makes up a substantial proportion of the total cost. Alley demonstrations have taken place in several areas of the city (e.g. Hollywood East, Boyle Heights) on a limited scale. The Avalon Green Alleys demonstration is the largest of these, detailed in a thorough report by UCLA's Luskin Center for Innovation[147] and the Trust for Public Land.

Community outreach for the Avalon Green Alleys demonstration began in 2009—with the project not due to commence in earnest until 2015. These efforts have been particularly sustained, with ongoing tree-planting, mural-painting, and other events promoting a consistent and long-term participation with the Green Alleys partners. As of 2016, the 50 Parks Initiative's website lists 39 acquired sites and an additional 11 sites in the active acquisition phase.[148] The South Los Angeles Green Alley master plan was published in 2016,[149] and the city is currently using the Green Alley concept as part of an additional alley makeover project in Downtown L.A.[150]

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PART D

New York

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New York City has several recent or ongoing parks improvement and renovation programs, including some major waterfront park renovations, but the New York program most relevant to Philadelphia's current capital improvement drive is the Community Parks Initiative (CPI). CPI is a 2014 plan to revitalize roughly 150 neglected neighborhood parks to improve equity in the city. The Initiative uses $285 million from city capital funds to improve infrastructure and offer free programming. Some parks receive complete renovations, while others receive smaller upgrades. Mayor Bill de Blasio's administration describes CPI as part of its OneNYC equity initiative because investment targets "New York City's most densely populated and growing neighborhoods where there are

145   Stephens, 2015
146   City of Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks, 2015
147   http://innovation.luskin.ucla.edu/
148   Ibid.
149   http://www.lastormwater.org/green-la/south-la-green-alley-master-plan
150   Newmark, 2016

higher-than-average concentrations of poverty."[151] Partnerships with non-governmental conservancies are designed to help fund these efforts, and state funding has increased the total available pool of resources. The plan is currently in the implementation phase; 60 parks have received upgrades as of September 2016.

As with many older cities, New York has a backlog of deferred maintenance for much of its infrastructure. New York City Councilmember Mark Levine, Council Parks Committee chair, told the magazine *Parks and Recreation* that the park system's underfunding has been chronic since the budget cuts of the 1970s. Levine says that the overall share of the city budget dedicated to parks is one-third of what it was before the cuts. He attributes the revival of parts of the park system to a shift towards private funding and park-specific conservancy organizations.[152] As such, the quality of New York City's parks is uneven, with some parks receiving improvements due to private money and others in less affluent areas left to decay. All the while, New York has grown, with the less affluent outer boroughs of Queens, Brooklyn, and the Bronx all increasing by roughly 5 percent between 2010 and 2015.[153] Mayor de Blasio won his office by campaigning for a more equitable distribution of resources, and part of his platform involved new investment in parks in low-income areas.[154] In 2014, the de Blasio administration published a document called "NYC Parks: Framework for an Equitable Future." The Community Parks Initiative is the first phase of a nine-step framework—essentially a move to "stop the bleeding" of capital deterioration. The framework includes such next steps as standardized needs assessments, streamlined capital program processes, and system expansion, culminating in a "Regional Parks Strategy" that utilizes "the Community Parks Initiative approach."[155]

To determine which parks would receive improvements, NYC Parks used site-selection criteria that focused on "high-need" communities that could be deemed "Community Parks Initiative Zones." (The expansion of the intervention philosophy to the "Zone" beyond the park is indicative of the desire by NYC Parks to extend programming impacts beyond the borders of the parks themselves.) The department examined catchments that it attached to parks and had received $250,000 or less in capital investment between

151   Office of the Mayor, 2015
152   Dolesh, 2014
153   NYC Department of City Planning, 2015
154   Dolesh, 2014
155   NYC Parks, 2014

1992 and 2013. "High-need" communities were defined as "geographic areas with above [city-wide] average density, evidence of recent population growth, and an above-average percentage of residents living below the federal poverty line."[156]

Following site selection, NYC Parks engaged in a detailed community engagement process. This process for the Community Parks Initiative appears to be consistent with the NYC Parks' standard community engagement protocol, in which Parks "conducts a scope meeting with key community stakeholders (i.e., elected officials, community board members, neighborhood user-groups, members of the public) to determine the priorities and park elements for a project site."[157] If a project is an "in-kind replacement," such meetings may not occur. Parks personnel undertakes part of the engagement process, and CityParks Foundation's Partnerships for Parks program provides complementary support. Meanwhile, the parks department has a dedicated "outreach coordinator" for each project, who handles the public engagement process. In addition to these on-the-ground engagement measures, NYC Parks' website has a fairly detailed but intuitive primer for citizens on the capital project process. The site also features interactive maps to allow tracking the progress of projects, both in individual neighborhoods and citywide.

According to the de Blasio administration's time-line, numerous parks programs will coalesce into a citywide parks plan with a consistent framework for evaluation, upkeep, and renovation.[158] The Community Parks Initiative is one of several major programs presently underway in New York. A city of New York's size needs to simultaneously implement a diverse portfolio of interventions. The 2016 Parks Without Borders summit showcased many of the new waterfront and neighborhood parks under development, including many that take advantage of cutting-edge sustainable design features or innovative public-private development financing structures.

156 Ibid.
157 NYC Parks, 2016
158 NYC Parks, 2014

Chicago

The Chicago Park District (CPD) and its partners are responsible for several recent and future improvement and renovation programs. These programs have a range of scales and scopes. First, CPD is renovating 325 playgrounds as part of a 2013 initiative known as the Chicago Plays! program. This initiative uses $38 million in existing capital funds to conduct minor projects—mainly upgrades of playground surfaces. Second, the CPD cooperated with several city agencies and private partners (including the Trust for Public Land) to renovate a three-mile former rail line known as the Bloomingdale Trail (or "The 606") into trails, parks, and recreational space. This project cost $95 million in federal, local, and private money and was handed over to CPD upon completion. Third, Mayor Rahm Emanuel recently announced Building on Burnham. This initiative invokes the name of Chicago's planner-patriarch Daniel Burnham to call for new investment in lakefront, riverfront, park, and garden areas, as well as new development of additional parkland and rail-to-trail conversion. Building on Burnham coalesces several existing or planned large-scale projects along rivers and railways into one thematic group.

The Chicago Plays! program is the most diffuse and modest of these projects (and the most equity centered). It is largely born of the idea that children are the "most important customers" of the CPD.[159] Epidemic levels of childhood obesity (nationally) and criminal violence (locally) are the primary motivators for the CPD's determination to create safe and modern facilities that are attractive for productive, affordable children's programming. Observers described Chicago Plays! as an attempt to do more with less. John Byrne of the *Chicago Tribune* reported that Mayor Emanuel's announcement was packed with references to Daniel Burnham's vision to "make no little plans."[160] Byrne portrayed the program as an attempt to complete necessary playground upgrades at a fraction of previous costs, by using only prequalified builders and lower-quality materials (e.g., mulch instead of rubberized padding). The last of 327 renovations under the Chicago Plays! banner took place in fall of 2016, with the total price tag amounting to roughly $44 million.[161]

159   Chicago Park District, 2012
160   Byrne, 2013
161   Wetly, 2016

The city announced the Building on Burnham planning process in March 2016 as a strategic investment in Chicago's lake and river frontage, recreational assets, and programming and natural areas.[162] The Riverwalk and the Bloomingdale Trail projects serve as the inspiration or prelude for a grand vision that includes large, visible interventions. The Bloomingdale Trail/The 606 is Chicago's take on the "High Line" concept, first demonstrated on Manhattan's west side and now being replicated in several cities. The Riverwalk is the last phase of a decade-long pedestrian redevelopment of areas along Wacker Drive and the Chicago River. The final phase will connect the downtown core to the lakefront. The Chicago Department of Transportation is at the helm of the Riverwalk project. Mayor Emanuel describes the unifying theme of these projects as pedestrian appropriation of the city's industrial transportation network—lakes, rivers and railways.[163] These projects seem to be coalescing somewhat post-hoc into a program or plan, with under-coordinated planning processes, funding, lead agencies, and engagement processes.

The next phases in Chicago's planning process likely involve incorporating these new programs into the Strategic Plan and updating performance measures and goals. The first (2012) iteration of the plan "contains forty eight goals [broken] out into over two hundred and fifty performance measures [that the CPD uses] to proactively and productively manage [its] performance. A living document, the strategic plan is updated every two years."[164] In 2014, the CPD released an update, which indicates that online community engagement has begun regarding revisions to strategic plans,[165] but it does not mention the formal incorporation of any of the aforementioned projects into the plan. It is unclear if the Building on Burnham theme will result in a new round of planning.

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PART F

Montréal

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In commemoration of the 375th anniversary of the city's founding, Montréal plans to refurbish or transform many notable civic spaces around the city and create numerous neighborhood-level projects. In total, the anniversary projects comprise $329 million

162 Office of the Mayor, 2016
163 Moser, 2016
164 Chicago Park District, 2012
165 Chicago Park District, 2014

(Canadian Dollars, CAD) of the city's three-year capital plan, approved in 2015. The anniversary celebrations themselves will take place in 2017. The list of projects is long and varied. Some are renovations of large park areas that are notable for their civic properties; for example, the city proposed for the sites used during the 1967 "Expo" World's Fair. One project involves creating a connected, greened corridor from the St. Lawrence River to the top of Mount Royal. Other projects are unrelated to parks or infrastructure; public multimedia projects and corridor improvement projects also fall under the "anniversary" mantle. The full 2015–17 capital plan, in total, is $5.2 billion CAD. The projects slated for upkeep and improvement of parks, playing fields, and green space in the capital plan total $662 million CAD over three years. Much of this parks money overlaps with the anniversary project budgets.[166] [167]

The ambitious campaign of public space improvements (and perhaps the explicit invocation of Montréal's history) has some fearing a reprise of the cost-overruns and complications related to the 1967 Expo and 1976 Olympics (also celebrating its 40th anniversary). There has been a fair amount of public concern regarding the feasibility of these projects, either individually or as a whole. Some of the anniversary projects were cancelled, others have stalled because of uncoordinated planning and financing, and still others were criticized for cost overruns.[168] [169]

While the anniversary celebrations are an exercise in civic pride, they also speak to Montréal's dismal quantity of green space; the city ranks last among major Canadian cities in per-capita parks.[170] A few of the projects in the anniversary portfolio aim to increase accessible green space in highly trafficked areas of the city. The most notable project is the Fleuve-Montagne (River-Mountain) project, which creates a 3.8 km walking trail from the riverine area in Old Montréal to the foot of Mount Royal, by creating green linkages, lighting, and signage along thirteen streets.[171] The capital plan also calls for $21 million CAD to create and implement a plan increasing Montréal's tree canopy from 20 to 25 percent, while generating effective solutions to preserve green parkland in the face of an epidemic invasion of the emerald ash borer pest.[172] These efforts dovetail with the redesign

166   Shingler, 2015
167   Birkbeck, 2015
168   Gyulai, 2016
169   Shingler, 2015
170   Oljemark, 2016
171   Gyulai, 2016
172   Montréal, 2014

or improvement of the concrete, modernist spaces that were built during the mid-twentieth century and are due for renovation under the anniversary plan, provided that the designs include enhanced greenery.

The City of Montréal categorizes capital expenditures as "protection" or "development" expenditures—essentially a measure of reinvestment. Between 2015 and 2017, the proportion of "large park" expenditure dedicated to "protection" has increased from roughly 60 to 70 percent of total expenditure.[173] Furthermore, the 2015–17 Capital Plan sets aside $45.7 million CAD for the "elaboration" of a strategic plan for short, medium, and long-term investments.

PART G

The Trust for Public Land

Municipal governments often cooperate with institutional, private, and non-profit partners. These public-private-partnerships (PPPs) take a range of forms, with private partners aiding in fundraising, outreach, design, advocacy, operation, vending, or other services. The Trust for Public Land (TPL) is a national NGO that works in partnership with governments across the country. Traditionally focused on acquiring natural lands and facilitating financial transactions to conserve open space parcels by getting them into public ownership, the TPL has pivoted in the last decade to aggressively pursue urban park-making. "We create parks and protect land for people, ensuring healthy, livable communities for generations to come," reads the headline on their website.

The TPL's park-making and creative placemaking (CP) efforts often focus on small-scale projects in a neighborhood context. CP has become a particular focus, acknowledging that community engagement through arts and culture programming rivals environmental performance as a public good. Notable urban projects this report mentions, including the 606 in Chicago and the Green Alleyways in Los Angeles, benefit from the TPL's expertise. A quick survey of TPL's projects, goals, and methods provides a good sample of innovative practice in park design and creation.

173   Ibid.

The TPL utilizes quantitative methods to target capital improvements to maximize impact. The TPL spatially assesses "need" by finding the people most in need of parks or green space; it pins need to the principle that everyone should live within a 10-minute walk of a park. The TPL conducts this needs assessment by determining the priorities of those in a given geography, using information derived from community engagement, and by analyzing demographic and spatial information. The TPL's publicly available tool for such analysis is Park Score. One can spatially match available green space and possible areas of expansion to the areas in need. The Green Alleyways project was a demonstration of such methods; using Geographic Information Systems (GIS), the project inventoried exploitable alley space using a set of criteria and then prioritized for intervention according to the need of the surrounding area.[174]

CP goes hand-in-hand with this small-park-making strategy, offering a suite of tools and strategies for increasing the quality and engagement with the new parks being created and the existing parks being renovated. Their highly adaptive toolbox approach to CP aims at enriching local parks—making them more than open space, more than recreation facilities—and thereby extending access/equity and sustainability through time.

The phrase the TPL uses to describe its engagement process is "participatory design." This brings local stakeholders into the design process at its early stages, and does site assessments and community meetings under the "participatory design" mantle. The TPL has been involved with a number of visible projects that incorporate high-quality design features or innovative designs. Many of these projects are in traditionally underserved areas. The long-term involvement of community organizations in such projects amplifies the impact and ownership associated with the delivery of public goods that have a "downtown" level of quality.

The Green Alleyways project is an example of the TPL "participatory design" community outreach process. It engaged community members at several junctures during the project's formulation and execution (2009–15). TPL assembled a volunteer team from local community groups, to help with a range of tasks throughout the process; ultimately this Avalon Green Alley Green Team participated in an array of unrelated community

174 http://www.latimes.com/local/cityhall/la-me-small-parks-20140823-story.html

activities, including neighborhood watch and mural painting. During the design process, local schoolchildren and community members had the opportunity to choose between alternative designs at various phases of the process and also to contribute their own art to some designs.[175] Community members provided labor for tree-planting and beautification during construction. This far-reaching community engagement model is one of the TPL's hallmarks.

The TPL already has a presence in the Philadelphia area; their Parks for People program has worked on five completed park or schoolyard renovations since 2012.[176] Upcoming TPL projects aim to transform many similar asphalt schoolyards. One such project, the Conestoga Community Playground in West Philadelphia, is typical of the TPL's recent work on small sites. The park was renovated as a part of a multi-organization partnership in a park-poor area. It incorporates several locally sensitive design features, including art and greenery, is driven by community input, and has features of green stormwater infrastructure.

PART H

National Park Service

The recent history of the National Park Service (NPS) offers two primary insights on civic asset reinvestments: on the one hand, it underscores the pressure imposed by a long-developing, overwhelming backlog of deferred maintenance (of buildings as well as landscapes); on the other hand, it illustrates a flexible policy can better serve urban areas and cultivate more diverse urban park users. Both of these developments, in their opposing ways, have challenged the resources, management systems, and engagement efforts of NPS.

NPS manages an enormous park system. When we hear the words "national park," most Americans think first of the big, charismatic western parks, but in the last decade, NPS has launched a multifaceted effort to develop parks in cities. This "urban agenda" is NPS's version of how to rethink what a park is, and how it works in terms of equity, access, diversity, and different geographic scales. It aims to bring both more intimate and more

175   UCLA Luskin Center for Innovation, 2014
176   https://www.tpl.org/our-work/parks-for-people/parks-people%E2%80%94philadelphia

extensive park experiences to metropolitan areas, connect more diverse user groups to them, and change its own staffing and policies to be more engaged and inclusive.

> The NPS, through its many programs and parks, has much to offer the urban dweller: a sense of place, an escape from cubicle confines, recognition that everyone's history is important, a restored and accessible waterfront, and a threshold experience to a greater outdoors. … It is time that the NPS strategically organize its many urban parks and programs towards building relevancy for all Americans, to connect with their lives where they live, rather than only where some may spend their vacation. Extraordinary innovation is already out there, with mayors and city leaders, businesses and NGOs all investing in new parks, new park designs, and new ways to engage communities in creating healthy and livable cities."[177]

The NPS is pursuing this agenda through intensive partnership-building and collaboration, rather than through acquiring or building more parks. NPS has become more flexible in terms of co-managing park spaces with other government agencies, elected officials, and PPPs; NPS is programming them more gregariously and looking for partners and audiences outside government and inside the urban communities it wishes to reach. The successful broadening of NPS's impact is evident at the largest scale— in regional-metropolitan park networks, like Golden Gate National Recreation Area in Northern California and Gateway National Recreation Area in New York and New Jersey— and at the most human scale, by making NPS personnel more diverse and therefore more reflective of the communities it serves.

NPS, which turned 100 in 2016, manages 413 sites and 879 visitor centers of varying ages spread across 84 million acres, and their backlog of capital improvements has begun to mount.[178] The problems of NPS reflect infrastructure decay nationwide, but federal agencies have a different set of constraints and priorities than municipalities. Interestingly, in an attempt to stabilize its capital improvement situation, NPS is seeking to learn from the financing and partnership arrangements that some states and cities use, which may result in an increased degree of privatization of NPS's parklands.

The scope of NPS's maintenance backlog is wide. As of 2015, NPS had amassed nearly $12 billion in deferred capital improvements.[179] This figure represents a 4-percent increase

177   National Park Service, "The Urban Agenda," accessed at https://www.nps.gov/subjects/urban/urban-agenda.htm
178   National Park Service, "Overview," accessed at https://www.nps.gov/aboutus/news/upload/NPS-Overview-09-01-2016.pdf
179   Nathan Rott, "National Parks Have a Long To-Do List but Can't Cover the Repair Costs,"NPR's *Morning Edition*, March 8, 2016, accessed at http://www.npr.
      org/2016/03/08/466461595/national-parks-have-a-long-to-do-list-but-cant-cover-the-repair-costs

from the previous year. As NPS infrastructure ages, visitation continues to rise; it is up more than 50 percent since 1980, generating even more wear-and-tear and maintenance needs.[180] Furthermore, some parks have unique natural and cultural resources that need careful ecological or historic preservation in the face of increased use. Yosemite, one of the jewels of the NPS system, is an example. The park hosts four million annual visitors—double its visitor numbers from 50 years ago. The park's infrastructure includes 747 NPS buildings, 214 miles of paved roads, 27 vehicle bridges, 90 footbridges, 4 road tunnels, 800 miles of hiking trails, 8 lodges, and 1537 campsites.[181] NPS constructed many of these facilities during the Depression and the mid-20th century. The park's roads need $220 million in repairs, the trails need $17 million, the sewers $73.6 million, and the structures $127 million.[182] Other legacy parks face similar strain: Grand Canyon National Park has amassed over $370 million in deferred maintenance; Yellowstone has amassed over $600 million.[183] In addition, the NPS controls some of the most important transportation infrastructure in Washington, DC.

While some recent appropriations have cut into the backlog, and the NPS received a boost of several hundred million dollars of discretionary funding tied to the NPS 2016 centennial, these increases are far from enough.[184] For example, roughly 50 percent of the $12 billion NPS backlog is in transportation costs. Some NPS capital funding is tied to general federal transportation appropriations and subject to the same deferred maintenance problems threatening roads and bridges nationwide. The NPS is now turning to some of the same mechanisms that municipal parks use to raise ongoing funds and finance projects.

To maintain long-term stability in an uncertain political environment, NPS has tried to combine traditional appropriation funding with private dollars to make up the gap. The National Parks Foundation and various benefactors conduct philanthropic fund-raising on behalf of the parks. Friends groups can defray the cost of programming by acting as partners. However, these funds amount to a pittance in context of the $12 billion backlog.

180   National Park Service, "Overview," accessed at https://www.nps.gov/aboutus/news/upload/NPS-Overview-09-01-2016.pdf
181   National Park Service, "Yosemite Park Statistics," accessed at https://www.nps.gov/yose/learn/nature/park-statistics.htm
182   http://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/fact-sheets/2016/09/yosemite-national-park
183   National Park Service, "NPS Deferred Maintenance by State and Park," September 30, 2015, accessed at https://www.nps.gov/subjects/plandesignconstruct/upload/FY-2015-DM-by-State-and-Park.pdf
184   National Parks Conservation Association, "Victory: Reauthorize Funding for National Park Transportation," accessed at https://www.npca.org/advocacy/10-reauthorize-funding-for-national-park-transportation#sm.0000dafy1v41jewqzjy1vp97fdpd0

Congress recently suggested that NPS pursue "donor-recognition" sponsorships, generally known as "branding deals." Bloomberg News said that the prospect made some wary of turning the nation's great natural temples "into college bowl games, each with a corporate sponsor."[185] NPS has a long history of working with private operators and conducting general "fee-for service" operations. Many parks have had privately operated lodges going back to the origin of the park system. The introduction of "donor-recognition" sponsorships and sponsorship of public-private operational partnerships fits within that milieu. Perhaps NPS could minimize the "Disney-fication" of the parks so long as it forces "donor-recognition" to fit within the generally low-key concession presence that already exists in the parks. New public private concessionaire/operator partnerships are increasingly en vogue in state park systems,[186] providing a range of examples from which NPS can draw.

In 2013, Department of Transportation's John A. Volpe National Transportation Systems Center suggested using more creative financial tactics to address costs, rather than the typical "fee for use" structure.[187] The Volpe Center recommended a flexible approach to public-private construction arrangements, but noted that federal statutes limit arrangements such as "Build-Own-Operate" (e.g., full privatization). The center proposed the idea of an "Infrastructure Bank" designed specifically for the financing of federal projects, as a means by which NPS could leverage further financing for expensive projects.

One of the Volpe Center's more unusual and untested ideas is tax increment financing (TIF), frequently used for real estate projects.[188] In this approach, a municipal entity finances a private development or piece of infrastructure through issuing a bond. The bond is then paid back with future tax revenue above the year-zero tax revenue (the increment) generated in a fixed geographic area. The creation of a TIF zone would be complex, because the NPS isn't the entity recouping property or sales taxes, and perhaps for this reason, the idea has not yet been tried. But with $15.7 billion spent at or near national parks each year, there exists a possibility for recouping an increment associated with significant new projects that are under agreement with adjacent municipalities.

185 Op ed, "A Little Commercialism Can Help National Parks," *Bloomberg*, June 7, 2016, accessed at, https://www.bloomberg.com/view/articles/2016-06-07/a-little-commercialism-can-help-national-parks

186 Leonard Gilroy, Harris Kenny, and Julian Morris, "Parks 2.0: Operating State Parks Through Public-Private Partnerships," from *Conservation & the Environment: Conservative Values*, New Solutions, November 2013, accessed at www.leadingwithconservation.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/CLC_III-Gilroy_Kenny_Morris_1.3.13.pdf

187 National Park Service, Department of the Interior, "NPS Transportation Innovative Finance Options," accessed at https://www.nps.gov/transportation/pdfs/NPS_Innovative_Finance.pdf

188 Ibid.

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CONCLUSION AND NEXT RESEARCH QUESTIONS

THE GUIDING RESEARCH QUESTION FOR THIS PROJECT IS:

What are the most important questions, considerations and innovations for cities reinvesting in civic assets?

This question directs attention to how to be most effective—to maximize the benefit of the network of civic infrastructure—in choosing means of financing, managing, designing, organizing around, and maintaining civic assets.

This paper, the first in a series, draws an overview of these issues. Subsequent research efforts will pursue more detailed understanding in the four areas of practice we've used as an organizational framework: civic engagement; institutional reform and privatization;

maintenance and programming; and methodologies for measuring impacts. The following questions, sorted by area of practice, are among the prompts that will guide the next phases of this work.

Community Engagement

Community engagement should be envisioned as a process and a set of products—a systemic operation, not an episodic event. Given this:

- Which cities have most successfully embedded community engagement as a routine process, and how has it worked?

- To what extent should "building trust" be an explicit focus of community engagement processes? Are there other ways to address trust between communities and officials?

- What is the influence of the scale of a community in managing an effective engagement process? That is, when are citywide engagements preferable to neighborhood engagements, and vice versa?

- When should community engagement initiatives begin, to ensure that residents and community groups participate in the most important decisions?

- What are the most effective or most attractive mechanisms through which communities communicate with officials, and vice versa? Does this change in dealing with professional staff as opposed to elected officials?

- How, specifically, will officials use the information—the ideas, concerns, and questions— they collect from communities over the course of the engagement? And how will they explain these purposes to the public?

- What practices of long-term engagement have been effective?

- How do city agencies inform residents and groups of events and forums? What channels of communication work best? In particular, how effective have social media or other digital platforms (participatory GIS, for example) been in bringing greater equity to the process of engagement?

- How do agencies share the collected information and community engagement findings, both short-term and long-term, with each other and the public?

Institutional Reform and Privatization

- What new institution(s) will oversee and manage the reinvestments? Are new institutional forms appearing? What are the trends or reforms?

- How do municipalities structure their public-private partnerships? Strategically or opportunistically?

- How are cities redistributing revenues from resource-rich areas/conservancies to resource-poor areas/conservancies? What are the responses to and impacts of these interventions?

- How do scholars understand and monitor the success of PPPs? Do they ever go out of business? Have cities defined or discovered any optimal private-public "divisions of labor"?

- What have been the pitfalls (if any) in the PPP tradeoffs (effectiveness and flexibility versus accountability and access/equity)?

Maintenance and Programming

- Through what mechanisms will agencies and nonprofits engage with neighborhoods to learn and discuss the kind of programming that is most needed?

- How will agencies approach stewardship in ways that facilitate residents' engagement with public spaces, rather than burden residents with their own upkeep? What kind of stewardship efforts can be realistically expected in low-wealth communities?

- What are the latest trends in design? More specifically, how are designers responding to needs to better address long-term maintenance of facilities, and co-location?

- What kinds of programming fuel the greatest participation or attachment? Which do double-duty as citizen engagement?

- What programming ideas have proven most culturally relevant or socially useful (involving returned citizens, integrated with local schools, youth sports, and public art that taps into local narratives)?

- What new or novel financing methods are being applied (to any kind of public good, not only public spaces and civic assets)?

Measurements

Measurement and monitoring should aim at civic assets themselves (their use, condition, resource requirements, etc.) and also at the roles of the institutions/actors, users' satisfaction, and overall assessments of effectiveness or attachment. It will also be essential to explore emergent methods in economics, social indicators, and other allied fields. Given that:

- At what scale should cities measure civic assets' impacts? That is, does impact extend solely to the immediately surrounding neighborhood, or to adjacent communities as well? To best understand how civic asset reinvestments impact residents and the city more broadly, what are the relevant levels or scales of measurement?

The primary objectives of the reinvestments are varied (e.g., more equitable access to civic assets across the whole city; more equitable sharing of resources and funding; improving residents' sense of wellbeing; improving residents' health and safety), so measurement/monitoring methods should vary, too (surveys, passive data collection, performance measures, etc.). Given that:

- What qualitative research methods have researchers employed to complement quantitative research, particularly to gain insight into neighborhood's senses of identity and history as they pertain to existing civic assets?

- Can measurement and stewardship efforts go together, so citizens' engagement with civic assets can seamlessly provide personal benefits while yielding useful data?

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