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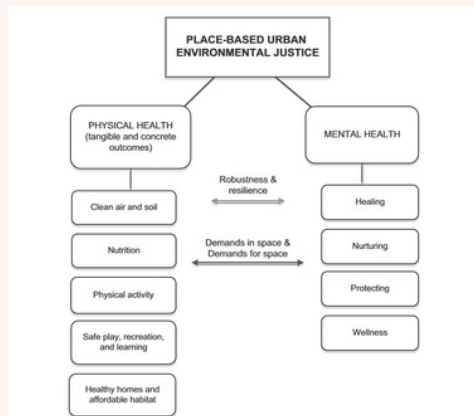
Achieving Green Space Equity in Marginalized Urban Communities

Alexa Busby

Socioeconomic Disparities in Green Space Access

Compared to Those in Wealthy White Neighborhoods, Green Spaces in Low- Income Communities of Color Experience:

- Reduced green space coverage
- Fewer parks per resident
- Unsafe park conditions
- Lower quality parks
- Fewer green space amenities
- Poorly maintained green spaces



What do marginalized communities lose along with green space access?

- Physical Health Benefits
- Mental and Emotional Health Benefits
- Community Wellbeing
- Ecosystem Services

Figure: Connections between environmental justice, community development, and health. Credit: Anguelovski, 2013.

Historical Context

What mechanisms have caused urban green space inequities?

- Exclusionary Land Use Regulations
 - Limit amount of land in low-income neighborhoods of color that can become green spaces
- Legacy of Racist Housing and Lending Policies
 - Initially segregated low-income people of color to neighborhoods of low environmental quality with few parks
- Original placement of Large, Well-Maintained Parks in Wealthy White Neighborhoods
 - Increased property values of these areas, preventing access by low-income people of color
- Disproportionate Political Influence
 - Wealthy, white residents have more political influence and persuade public officials to provide their neighborhoods with green space funding

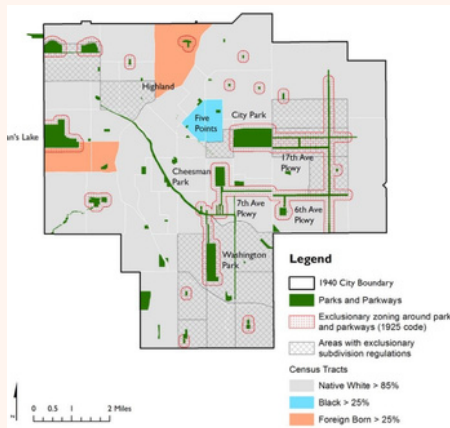


Figure: Map of Park Distribution in Denver in 1940 as it relates to racial/ethnic background. Credit: Rigolon & Németh, 2021.

Urban Green Space Activism: Commonalities and Successes

Counter - Narratives to Propel Equitable Green Space Policy

Rationale that challenges what is dominantly assumed as true in order to advocate for policies to end marginalization and oppression

- Utilized by marginalized communities to ensure their ideas are included when public officials make green space policy decisions
- Expose racial inequalities surrounding green space policy that are perpetuated by the dominant narratives

Coalition Building

Creation of broad, interdisciplinary partnerships between neighborhood activists, university researchers, non-profits, and youth networks to achieve green space equity

- Collaboration brings activists additional technical knowledge not previously available because of their marginalized status
 - Persuasion of public officials with research findings
 - Direction on obtaining government funding
 - Guidance on best practices of fundraising efforts
 - Direct monetary aid for projects
 - Legal assistance regarding discriminatory policies and inequity of access

Bottom to Bottom Networking

Flexible connections with people both inside and outside the neighborhood activists use for specific tasks in order to advance the completion of green space projects

- Creation of mutually beneficial political relationships
 - Public officials gain the political support of an entire neighborhood while the marginalized neighborhood receives funding or resources for their green space project
- Recruitment of community volunteers
 - Allows green space creation to be accomplished in the face of little to no government funding
 - Allows for community gardening and park stewardship to ensure prosperity of accomplished projects unrecognized by government entities
 - Provides more protestors during demonstrations, sit-ins, and picketing creating increased media attention

Engaging Marginalized Groups Throughout The Planning Process

Conversations with public officials and organization of community wide surveys to ensure voices are heard and needs are met

- Engagement by marginalized groups in green space funding decisions prevent limited funds from being directed towards wealthier, white neighborhoods
- Ensures marginalized perspectives are heard when designating where green spaces will be located to avoid replacement of community landmarks with unfamiliar green space leaving residents feeling uprooted



Bottom to Bottom Networking: Youth volunteers maintain a community garden in Roxbury. Credit: Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative



Engaging Marginalized Groups Throughout the Planning Process: Various Boston residents speak about the need for increased urban green space at city hall. Credit: Boston Park Advocates

Strategies in Action: The American City Coalition

Roxbury Neighborhood: Boston, MA

Roxbury Arbor Day



Roxbury Arbor Day Promotional Materials. Credit: The American City Coalition

Goal: Increase green canopy cover in the Roxbury neighborhood to combat green space injustice.

- Coalition Building
 - Bringing together Roxbury residents with environmental non-profits (Speak for the Trees Boston), local business non-profits (Roxbury Main Streets), and financial supporters (Delta and NCF)
- Bottom to Bottom Networking
 - Recruitment of neighborhood residents as volunteers in hands-on green space creation through tree planting
- Engaging Marginalized Groups Throughout the Planning Process
 - Working with Roxbury residents to determine planting locations and community engagement with the project

Result: 50 trees planted by residents, increasing green canopy cover and fostering green space activism in minority residents.

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