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Front Image: From the 11st Street Bridge Park Project;
Anacostia Crossing: BOARDWALK AND DOCKS
Rendering courtesy of OMA+OLIN

Smithsonian
Anacostia Community Museum
1901 Fort Place SE
Washington, D.C. 20020
202-633-4820

Newsletter Staff
Katrina Lashley - Editor
Portia James - Senior Curator
Corryanne Setzer - Designer
Introduction: Community Engagement Along Waterfronts
Katrina D. Lashley, Project Coordinator
Portia James, Senior Curator

This past March, the Urban Waterways Project gathered its local and national collaborators: environmentalists, community leaders, civic leaders, educators, and scholars for a symposium to discuss the role of environmentalism in education and recreation, the need for grassroots leadership in advocating for communities’ environmental rights, and the necessity of community voices being acknowledged and respected in discussions, debates, and development of urban waterfronts and sustainable neighborhoods.

While the integral role resident input plays in assuring healthy, viable communities along urban waterways is an undeniable fact for many residents, activists, educators, and scholars, Hyon Rah points to another powerful, if not disturbing, fact. The driving political and economic forces behind development do not work toward the encouragement of community involvement. The focus of these forces is on profit in a very traditional, immediate sense. Such a narrow definition of developmental success doesn’t allow for the understanding that investing in the strength of healthy communities lends itself to enduring economic and social viability. For Dwane Jones of the University of the District of Columbia, community engagement works best as a process, and an outcome whose success can be evidenced by such projects as the development of Louisville’s Waterfront Park whose driving force was a continuous dialogue with the city’s residents, which resulted in a park that serves as a gathering place over which the city’s residents claim a communal ownership, or the efforts of the 11th Street Bridge Park organizers to ensure the future park is an engine of inclusive development. The payoff on the human level can be attested to by the personal experiences of Christina Bradley in her work with Baltimore residents as part of Baltimore Parks and People’s efforts to revitalize and activate spaces in the city and the changes in neighborhoods in Northeast LA, as experienced by Dayana Molina of The City Project.

In order to reconcile the seemingly disparate forces of economic success, political power and community engagement, stakeholders must decide on how the value of urban waterways and the communities along their banks should be measured. Is their value found in the immediate return of financial gain, or is it found in the creation of civic spaces which serve as tools in the larger investment of time and resources necessary in community engagement? Such investment serves to strengthen existing communities, preparing them to play a meaningful and enduring role in the economic, educational, and social lives of their cities.
Finding the right angle for community engagement in urban waterfront developments

Hyon Rah, Hybrid Designer-Engineer

The role of urban waterfronts in industrialized countries used to be a mere vehicle for moving goods and materials and a resource for water-intensive industries. While there was no arguing their economic value, urban waterfronts were gloomy, stinky corners of town people wanted to avoid.

They have come a long way since then. It is almost impossible for us to picture, for example, the delightful Inner Harbor in Baltimore as derelict, post-industrial wasteland it used to be only a few decades ago.

As one could imagine, planning and implementing such a development is not exactly a walk in the park. It is a complex process that involves a multitude of stakeholders, such as those who set the tone through a framework/policy (i.e., city officials), fund the development (i.e., developers), and solidify the vision for the project (i.e., urban designers, architects, engineers). As a designer and an engineer, one of the most important things for me in navigating this process has been to understand what drives the key players; it is easier to get through to people when you connect to them based on the things they care about. It is a delicate dance. On one hand, you have to be clear about the motivation of those who set regulatory and budgetary boundaries for the project so you can keep moving forward. On the other hand, you need to clarify the project goals and priorities with practitioners from related yet different backgrounds, which is a huge challenge. When orchestrated right, however, it results in an amazing collaborative effort towards a shared goal. It also comes with surprising moments of enlightenment. I still remember the shock of realizing that someone might actually care more about the capacity of the water pump than the look and the feel of the water feature it served - it was an eye-catching centerpiece I was sure no one would miss! But I digress.

To add even more to this already complicated matrix seems absurd, and explains why the feedback and the input from the end users for which the space is developed is consistently absent from the actual practice. Somewhere in the midst of catering to the clients’ wishes, balancing the project budget, and juggling the different disciplinary priorities, the need of the actual users of the space starts appearing as an inconvenient burden that can simply be shelved away. Still, the lack of community representation in defining the vision for the waterfront is something I have always found troubling. Why should the people who are directly affected by the new development not have more say in how it unfolds? What happened to equitable development? Who is the development actually for?

Following the many precedents where the polish of the newly developed waterfronts replaced the existing character unique to the location and, eventually, displaced the community itself, the “how” of community engagement has been in the spotlight for some time. Different ways to encourage early and continuous community engagement for waterfront developments have been formulated and shared to best reflect the will and the need of the community, while collaboratively exploring what comes after the development.

Hyon K. Rah is a hybrid designer-engineer who has worked around the world, specializing in sustainable architectural and urban design, and water resource management projects.
So what is the problem, one might ask. True, there are many ways in which the community can have a hand in the direction of the development. Incorporating a sense of place to each new development by drawing from the history and the spirit of what already exists also makes a lot of sense, in theory.

The disturbing truth is that the main motivations that drive these developments, namely political and economical, do not align with encouraging community engagement. In an era where external agencies and organizations are constantly rating individual cities on their destination-worthiness, rejuvenated waterfronts make for glamorous showcase pieces for a city, and the human dimension and sense of place do not photograph very well. Another factor is the economics behind the development. A once-through, “big bang” style of development tends to yield the fastest payback for the investors, and such an approach has proven economically successful in many cases. So what would be the incentive for adding more to it?

Until this issue of alignment is resolved, it will be difficult to see the political and economical drivers reaching out to the community as a priority. So, perhaps, the real question I should have been asking all along, before getting ahead of myself with how to engage the community, is this: How do we make community engagement pencil out?

As a designer and an engineer, one of the most important things for me in navigating this process has been to understand what drives the key players.

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**Waterfront Development involves...**

**Political Drivers**
- local government
- federal government
- planning authority

**Economic Drivers**
- developer
- investor
- land owner

**Practitioners**
- architect
- urban designer
- landscape architect
- hydrological engineer
- infrastructure planner
- utilities specialist
- transportation planner

**Realizers**
- contractor
- construction manager

**Social Drivers**
- existing community
- future residents
- existing users
- future users

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The Vital Role of Community Engagement in the Development of Louisville Waterfront Park

“If You Build It, They Will Come”

Louisville Waterfront Development Corporation

The Louisville Waterfront Development Corporation (WDC) was created in 1986 to plan and coordinate the development of Louisville’s downtown waterfront. From the very beginning, project leaders realized public acceptance and support would be critical to the success of redevelopment efforts. A glimpse at the city’s history reveals why this is so.

The Ohio River was Louisville’s very reason for being. The city’s location was the result of a natural barrier called the Falls of the Ohio, which caused cautious river craft to land and port around the rapids before continuing on up or down the river. The town sprang up in response to the demand for supplies, lodging, and support services for river travelers. Louisville was established in the late 1700s, and river commerce was the focus of urban life for the next 150 years.

As rail service matured, and then roads and highways were built, these faster modes of transportation began to replace steamboats and barges as the preferred method of travel and cartage. Rail lines and roadways began to dissect the riverfront. By the late 1960s, with the construction of an elevated highway and heavy industry lining the riverbanks, the final barrier to public access to the river was in place. Louisville had turned its back on the river.

Throughout the years, a number of plans and proposals were created for redeveloping Louisville’s riverfront, including one in 1929 that would have moved City and County government operations into two Art Deco towers facing the river. Each plan was touted to the community before languishing into obscurity and becoming a footnote in the city’s history of what-might-have-been.
By 1986, a jaded public was understandably skeptical of WDC’s charge to redevelop the downtown riverfront. Project leaders knew their work was cut out for them to win over and gain the support of the community. The corporation’s mission was eminently flexible:

The purpose of the Waterfront Development Corporation is to plan, coordinate and cause the development of projects that will enhance the usefulness, economic value and attractiveness of Louisville’s waterfront. The Corporation is the sole agency ... representing the City of Louisville, Jefferson County, and the Commonwealth of Kentucky in waterfront development along the Ohio River ...

No specific mention of a park was included; it was left to WDC and its board of directors, made up of representatives of all three governments as well as the private sector, to come up with the best plan for Louisville. And this is where the community played a vital role in setting the foundation for what has become a beautiful, highly programmed and used, award-winning urban public park. Throughout the life of the project, feedback from public meetings and presentations was used to fine tune park features and designs.

In the first two years of WDC’s existence, a series of public forums were held in various neighborhoods across the city to ask what residents wanted their waterfront to be. Forum participants were enthusiastic but also somewhat guarded, with a healthy skepticism that this plan would be any different from all the other non-realized plans that had come before. While a number of different ideas were proposed, the overwhelming response was, “We want it green. We want it to be a gathering space. We want it to be for everyone.”

“We want it green. We want it to be a gathering space. We want it to be for everyone.”

- participants of public forums in early development phases of WDC
Armed with this mandate, a program for development was crafted, and the search began for a firm to create a master plan, and a young but up-and-coming firm from San Francisco called Hargreaves Associates was selected. (HA has gone on through the years to design and develop projects all over the world, including such high-profile venues as the London 2012 Olympic Park and a number of venues for the Sydney Olympics in 2000.) After an intense period of research into best-and-worst-case practices of waterfront development projects across the nation, project leaders knew a master plan would provide a blueprint for a cohesive development, which would be vital to the success of such a long-term project.

WDC hosted a second series of more than 20 public forums throughout the design phase of the Louisville Waterfront Master Plan, providing an opportunity for attendees to give feedback directly to the designers. As planning progressed and drawings and site plans became available, WDC staff began making presentations to community groups, churches, corporate gatherings, and garden and Kiwanis club meetings, averaging more than 120 presentations per year over the first three (3) or four (4) years of the project. To this day, WDC staff continues to do 25-30 presentations per year, both to local clubs and organizations and to groups from other cities seeking information for their own waterfront development projects.

As park planning progressed to park construction, WDC continued to reach out, presenting project updates and slide shows to groups large and small. As the landscape transformed from blighted to green and from scrapyards and heavy industry to playgrounds, lawns, and groves of trees, the public’s skepticism began its own transformation to anticipation. A well-known film coined the phrase, “If you build it, they will come.” This became Waterfront Park’s mantra, as vision became reality, and the community flocked to its new gathering space by the river.

Soliciting community input throughout the project was a win-win: It ensured the public would get the park they wanted, but more importantly, it endowed the community with a feeling of ownership. This feeling of ownership was vital to successful fundraising, which stretched over three phases of park development, 20+ years, and more than $40 million (more than 1/3 of the total budget) in donations from individuals, foundations, and corporations. It was critical not only to the success of project development but also to the universal and ongoing feeling that “this is MY park,” which to this day brings park users from every neighborhood in Louisville Metro.

Louisville Waterfront Park today enjoys more than 2 million visitors per year. The park hosts more than 120 special events each year, including concerts, festivals, charity walks and runs, the Ironman Triathlon, which draws participants from all over the world, and Forecastle Festival, which was lauded as “one of the coolest festivals in America” by Rolling Stone magazine.
How Community Engagement Works as a Critical Component of Urban Sustainability and Design Curriculum

Dwane Jones, **Director at the Center for Sustainable Development**

"Community engagement and urban design is concerned with the arrangement, aesthetics, and social usefulness of a place - particularly public spaces like walkways, plazas, street space, and gathering areas" (Hodgson, 2011). The nature of community engagement has changed extensively since the period when Architect and Planner Robert Moses (1888-1981) single-handedly implemented public infrastructure projects in New York without public consideration or inclusion. Prominent works such as Jane Jacobs' "The Death and Life of Great American Cities" (1961) fundamentally changed the manner in which urban planning and urban design incorporate community engagement. Today, virtually all urban planning and design projects include community engagement as a critical component.

This article offers key principles for integrating community engagement in urban design and the planning of public spaces. Community engagement is defined in terms of both a process and an outcome. A Washington, DC case study is used to illustrate these principles.

**Principles for Community Engagement**

The Project for Public Spaces (PPS) provides guidance and information to help people create and sustain public spaces that build stronger communities. PPS, through its Heart of the Community Program, offers three guiding principles for Placemaking, but we will use them here for a case example of the relationship between community engagement and urban design:

- Help communities across the country bring new life to their public spaces, transforming them into vibrant places that connect people and strengthen communities
- Raise mainstream awareness of placemaking as a defined social cause and a catalyst for building sustainable, healthy, inclusive and economically viable communities
- Encourage participation and volunteerism that benefits public spaces in local communities

Recently, the University of the District of Columbia (UDC), an urban land-grant institution of higher learning, partnered with the DC Housing Authority (DCHA), Urban Waters Federal Partnership (UWFP), DC Builders Industry Association (DCBIA), DC Commission of the Arts and Humanities, and several other partners to develop a model, temporary urban farm on three acres of property directly adjacent to a metro rail stop in southeast Washington, DC. Our approach to this project embodies these principles.
A Case Study: Ward 7 Urban Farm in Washington, DC

UDC signed a lease agreement in February 2015 with the District of Columbia Housing Authority that granted UDC permission to operate an urban farm and aquaponics facility across the street from the Capitol Heights Metro Station. The three-acre site promotes urban agriculture, improve food access and nutrition through community-centered farmers markets, provide job skills and entrepreneurship training, implement stormwater management best practices, and establish a nature playscape for neighborhood youth to play outdoors. There will be educational components for local schools, residents and UDC students.

Project partners had plans to engage residents and stakeholders from the initial conception phase. We envisioned the vacant, underutilized parcel as a transformative catalyst to improve quality of life in the community. Our goal is to bring new life to the space by participating in all opportunities to: (1) bring awareness to the project, its purpose, and need; and (2) engage community residents and stakeholders at all phases of project development and operations.
To date, in the planning phases, we have participated in five community meetings. Our community engagement process is as follows:

- We advertise the project through all possible venues: social media, community meetings, elected officials, website, emails, distribution of flyers, and word of mouth
- At community meetings we discuss the historical context of the site ask open-ended questions for community feedback + respond to community questions
- Community feedback is incorporated into design charettes hosted every two weeks by the DCBIA. All partners and stakeholders participate in the charettes.
- Design charettes are also conducted in the neighborhoods where the subject parcel is located.
- A feedback loop continuously refines the site design. Site programming (community events on site; festivals; cook-outs) take place prior to build day (September 26, 2015) as we attempt to raise awareness to build a sustainable, healthy, inclusive and economically viable community.
- Community participation is encouraged at all levels and in all phases with the goal that the community will assume site operations after the project elements are constructed.

Summary

By engaging communities at every phase of public project planning, construction, and operations, communities can influence their own future. Community engagement should be considered as a process and an outcome - both necessary to ensuring urban sustainability. Our experience in Washington, DC reinforces the notion that engagement at a local level is key to enhancing quality of life in our communities, and ensuring urban design of physical spaces always include positive experiences for its stakeholders. The Ward 7 project is a model for community engagement and urban design. UDC students and others are applying these principles as part of course curricula in the College of Agriculture, Urban Sustainability, and Environmental Sciences (CAUSES) of the University of the District of Columbia.

References


11th Street Bridge Park Project
Scott Kratz, Director

Civic spaces are increasingly defining their cities - Chicago's Millennium Park, Los Angeles' downtown Grand Avenue Park or Houston's Discovery Green have quickly become successful gathering spaces for residents and tourists alike. As cities look to create new spaces, government agencies and non-profits are transforming aged-out infrastructure into inventive new parks such as New York City's High Line, Dallas' Klyde Warren Park or Atlanta's Beltline project. These innovative green spaces support nearby residents' economic, environmental, cultural and even physical health. But these parks can also increase surrounding property values which benefit existing home owners but can also make an area less affordable. At the 11th Street Bridge Park, these are topics we've been thinking deeply about for the last year - how do we ensure that the thousands of people who have helped shape this project benefit from it?

A first step is to engage the community ensuring the space responds to stakeholder values. For more than two years, Bridge Park organizers and the D.C. Office of Planning led hundreds of meetings with local residents, business owners, church leaders and city council members to identify programming needs. These concepts include: performance spaces; public art that tells the rich history of the region; an environmental education facility; urban agriculture; a 21st century playspace for those of all abilities; and kayak/canoe launches on the river below. These ideas were included in a nation-wide design competition in 2014. At the end of a seven-month competition, community stakeholders and a formal jury were unanimous in selecting the stunning design by designers from OMA+OLIN.

Moving forward, we must ensure the Bridge Park can be a driver of inclusive development. Last fall we established an Equitable Development Task Force to provide opportunities for all residents in neighborhoods surrounding the Bridge Park, regardless of income and demography. While the Bridge Park's design strategies will increase the connectivity and interaction between those living on both sides of the Anacostia River, more must be done to ensure those currently living nearby will benefit on a continued basis from the success of this signature new civic space.
The Equitable Development Task Force is working with nearby residents, government officials, business owners, and policy experts to identify actionable recommendations that the park and its partners can take in three areas: affordable housing; workforce development; and small business enterprise. In late June, staff will hold a series of public meetings for continued input, recognizing the deep expertise and knowledge that exists in the community. The final output of the Task Force will be an Equitable Development Plan comprised of detailed recommendations and timelines for implementation ready by early November.

The 11th Street Bridge Park has the potential to represent more than just an innovative public space with a direct physical link between two neighborhoods and the river. In particular, the park can symbolize a new unity and connection between a booming area of the city and one that has long been overlooked and excluded from the city’s economic progress. By acting intentionally, transparently and early, we can create a new model for how cities invest in infrastructure, parks and, most importantly, residents.

About the 11th Street Bridge Park

The 11th Street Bridge Park is a collaboration between the D.C. Government and the Ward 8 based non-profit Building Bridges Across the River at THEARC to transform an aged-out freeway into a new park over the Anacostia River. A critical link connecting regional initiatives along the river, it will be a place for gathering and entertainment for neighboring communities, a playful destination for some and a pedestrian or bicycle link for others. And for everyone, the 11th Street Bridge Park has the potential to be an iconic architectural symbol celebrating the Anacostia River, its environmental restoration, and the culture and history of the communities alongside it.

For more information on the 11th Street Bridge Park, please visit: www.bridgepark.org

Scott Kratz, Director, 11th Street Bridge Park
A Project of Building Bridges Across the River at THEARC
Successful Strategies for Community Engagement: A Reflection

Christina Bradley, Assistant Director of Green Infrastructure & Design

The Parks & People Foundation is an organization focused on revitalizing and activating recreation spaces in Baltimore City. I came to work here because I felt in my heart the design process for public space was going through a large and important shift: from being a series of decisions made by officials and hired consultants in a back room, to one being made by the user. After all, they’re the expert on the space and its needs. I was hired to implement more than 40 projects that not only treated stormwater but also enhanced open space while giving people a chance to interact with their watershed’s processes. Most importantly noted, the initiative couldn’t revitalize and activate recreation spaces without the community. We work with groups to identify opportunities that can help achieve their goals through direct assistance and partnerships, then aid in taking the next steps to see tangible action.

It may not be obvious to everyone, but Baltimore has a stormwater problem. Baltimore is a major city with a mandate to control water pollution, but unlike many nearby major cities, its stormwater doesn’t flow to a treatment plant. Common sense may say that’s disgusting; I certainly wouldn’t want to swim in everything that gets washed off our buildings and streets (sorry, wildlife!). Let’s be clear; the only way we’re going to have healthy waterways is by spreading awareness, solutions, and action. That takes everyone! That takes a lot of engagement. My favorite question: What can be done, collectively and individually, to reach this goal? It gets people thinking outside of the box and bringing many more individuals into the process.

What does success look like at Parks & People? It looks like a community being empowered. Empowered with opportunities for positive social behavior – a trash or recycling bin nearby, places to play and engage with others, urban farms to grow their own food, easy access to parks. Empowered with access to nature, where residents can observe their fellow creatures – environmental education programs, clean waterways, green spaces that are imagined by and cared for by the community. Parks & People supports this change by meeting community members where they’re at through an array of different programming, from greening grants, to youth sports, to summer camps, to volunteer events, to workshops on greening and water quality practices. Our multi-faceted approach to community organizing has been the strongest tool to creating visible and lasting change on a limited budget.
Community engagement isn't necessarily common sense. I highly recommend taking training, such as those offered by the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2), and other professional organizations. I'd say the biggest factors are to be open, listen and figure out what someone's values are before you speak, always accept someone else's reality, and use methods your audience can identify with to make the decision.

Be open and listen:
When I first moved to Baltimore, its neighborhoods were exciting to me – it was the big city, but it had a strong sense of community that felt more like a small Southern town, where so many people knew each other and could spot a newcomer in an instant. To get to know the communities you're working in, start off by going to the community events they're holding, rather than trying to get someone new to come to your meeting. Get to know them, and really listen. Don't talk about the issues you're passionate about until they ask. They'll tell you what really matters to them. When you feel like you have a good sense of that, you can then start talking about the health of our watersheds in a way that resonates with them.

At Parks & People, if we're working with a youth sports league, we talk about the land and water in relation to active sports. If we meet someone who is concerned about crime, we can talk about how having a well-maintained neighborhood that's free of trash can go a long way toward sending a social message to criminals that people care and chaos is unacceptable (like the broken windows theory). We also talk about how bringing community members together to clean up or care for a green space can get strangers knowing each other and looking out for one another; and we can fund some of these small steps to get them started.

Accept someone else's reality:
If someone offers their opinion, it doesn't matter if you think they're making a mountain out of a mole hill. Everyone's opinion comes directly from their own experiences, perspectives, or teachings. Acknowledge their feelings as fact. Make sure you understand WHY they feel the way they do before leading questions or recommendations in a new direction.

In one case, Parks & People was working with a partner and business to create a large green space on a vacant lot. The designs were beautiful, but the community had concerns about planting an area of the lot as a forest. We asked the community to elaborate, and it turned out they would be perfectly happy with the forest as long as...
trees were limbed up for better visibility and the leaves were cleared from the alley in the fall to avoid the nearest drain clogging. Problem solved! You can find something that everyone can live with.

You don’t have to be living the same lifestyle as the communities you’re serving to understand them, but I’m not going to lie, it really helps them trust that you get their experiences. People just like to know you’re a member of their community, however that may be defined, and that you’ve fought their fight. Get out there and do some work in your own community, if you can, so you know what it’s like to walk in their shoes.

Use methods they identify with:
When engaging someone, use methods that they understand. When talking to someone on the street who didn’t know what heat island effect was, I thought for a moment and asked if he’d heard the phrase, “it’s so hot out you could fry an egg.” We’ve all heard that one. “Well, where are they talking about frying that egg?” I continued. The gentleman got excited that he actually knew the concept really well from that old saying. He could easily visualize the problem and the solution, as he was sitting under the comfortable shade of a tree on a hot day.

Another example. Never, I repeat, NEVER give a community engineer plans to review. I know well-educated adults who will sit through an entire presentation of a beautifully-colored plan and wait until the end to ask what the green circle is (it’s a tree). And if they didn’t know it was a tree, you can bet they didn’t understand the rest. Bring something three dimensional. Or even bring a picture of the current condition, then draw over it with what the proposed design could look like.

To conclude, like any problem, there is no single solution. Nature is not a clock; just as parts can’t simply be changed out, we can’t easily troubleshoot issues by making one revision and waiting to see the individual outcome. You must assume that any problem is THE problem. The health of our waterways will never be met with green infrastructure technology alone – it requires a holistic approach. We are all the solution, and we must work together.
Dayana Molina is the Organizer at the The City Project, Los Angeles. She is also a Dreamer. She immigrated to the United States from Mexico with her family when she was eight years old.

Engaging Communities for Healthy, Equitable Development

Dayana Molina, Organizer at the The City Project

I started to advocate for green open spaces in Los Angeles at the age of thirteen. This was before I knew what marginalized communities, community participation, or sustainable communities meant. What I did know was I was part of a diverse community-driven coalition that advocated for the creation of what is today the Los Angeles State Historic Park and the Rio de Los Angeles State Park. The journey to create both of these state parks was long and bumpy but ultimately successful. It was so successful it kicked started a much bigger urban greening movement in Los Angeles that included the greening of the Los Angeles River. Through this long process, I learned community engagement not only matters, but also is essential for the creation of healthy and equitable development that benefits all residents. I know this is true because I lived it.

I have lived in northeast Los Angeles for the last 20 years of my life, and never more than a mile from the Los Angeles River. My family immigrated to this country when I was eight. We lived in Glassell Park where rent was affordable at the time. Growing up, I knew I was different from many of the kids in my neighborhood and had more in common with those whose families had also left their countries in search of a better life. For the past few years, my role in my community has been to coordinate activities for local youth right in their back yard, the Los Angeles River. These are opportunities I never had as a child. It was through my involvement with the urban greening of Los Angeles that I not only found my voice, but whole communities found theirs. I have witnessed my community become a more desirable place to live because those voices were heard - but it was not always this way.

The northeast Los Angeles of my childhood is very different from what it is today. The youth in my community didn’t have many choices for extracurricular activities, and though we had small neighborhood parks, they were not enough and were often the site of gang territory disputes. The gang culture could not be escaped; my neighbors, and even some of my childhood friends, were affiliated with gangs. The community was made up of low-income, Latino and immigrant residents. Many residents wanted more for their children, including my parents.
Over the years, I learned this was about more than just soccer, it was about community empowerment, health, and bettering the lives of all families in Los Angeles.

At the age of thirteen my parents decided I needed an activity to take up my spare time and enrolled me in a youth soccer team with Anahuak Youth Sport Association (Anahuak). I soon learned Anahuak was, and continues to be, more than just soccer. Anahuak engages and encourages their members to participate in community projects. But beyond just participating, Anahuak emphasizes the importance of having a voice in those projects. I was one of the many Anahuak youth who advocated for the creation of more green space in Los Angeles because we had few safe places to play soccer. Over the years, I learned this was about more than just soccer, it was about community empowerment, health, and bettering the lives of all families in Los Angeles.

In the early 2000’s, Anahuak, The City Project, and diverse community leaders advocated for the creation of two state parks as an alternative to proposed warehouses in two of the last, vast open spaces in Los Angeles. Families in northeast Los Angeles were not in favor of more dead-end jobs. Instead, they wanted what they knew would better serve community needs - more accessible places in Los Angeles for children and their families to enjoy.

After attending many community meetings and visiting various elected officials to advocate for the creation of two state parks, we celebrated our first victory. In December 2001 then Governor Gray Davis announced the purchase of the two lots that would become Los Angeles State Historic Park and Río de Los Angeles State Park. It was not until years later that I realized the importance of this announcement. This victory, however, was short lived. It was soon announced the two state parks would be passive recreation only - this meant no soccer. The families who had advocated for these parks were disappointed and ultimately felt cheated. But once again, communities' members came together to advocate for a complete park that better served the needs of the community and included both active and passive recreation.

In the end these two victories were and continue to be about more than just parks. The creation of Río de Los Angeles State Park is a victory I hold close to my heart. I remember asking my parents for permission to leave school early to attend the groundbreaking for the park. In many ways I feel a piece of that park is mine, and a piece of me is with the park. This park helped start a much needed healing process for the community I grew up and continue to live in.
The community had input in the way the park was designed, and I believe this is the main reason why the park is beautiful today; the community feels invested and wants to protect what they created.

The original park design incorporated landscaping and sidewalks to prevent drive-by shootings. Río has never been the site of a drive-by shooting, but when it first opened this was a real threat.

Since the park has opened, gang activity and crime has gone down, and now more families feel safe. This was not due to increased policing, it was due to a park. Río is a beautiful park and serves the needs of many families. The community had input in the way the park was designed, and I believe this is the main reason why the park is beautiful today; the community feels invested and wants to protect what they created. This is a park by and for the families who advocated for so many years to make it a reality.

Today there is a buzz around forthcoming plans and pending funding for projects along the Los Angeles River. These projects will have a direct effect on the lives of the people who live along the river, predominantly low-income and Latino. Despite the successful campaign for two state parks to serve these families, there is still a need for more green open spaces and access to these spaces. The greening of the Los Angeles River will alleviate some of the need and will provide green spaces close to home for many families. However, as communities become greener and more desirable, they also become unaffordable for the families who fought to make them green.

The revitalization of the Los Angeles River has the potential for economic, environmental, and social benefits for all residents of Los Angeles. Yet, this better quality of life can only be realized by engagement that promotes healthy and equitable development along the river. This means engaging low-income communities and communities of color every step of the way.

Many of the Anahuak families and diverse allies who advocated for Los Angeles State Historic Park and Río de Los Angeles State Park have the experience and desire to be involved. The key to success is to get families invested in the revitalization of the Los Angeles River; their voices need to be heard.
Noteworthy Events

Urban Waterways Symposium


The gathering of environmentalists, community leaders, civic leaders, educators, scholars, and DC metro area residents was the culmination of one of the driving forces of the Urban Waterways Project whose primary goal is the exploration of the various relationships between urban rivers and the people living along their banks.

This emphasis on communities... people, proved to be a re-occurring theme throughout the day’s discussion. The various emerging visions of how cities are structured can and should be driven by the needs of those living in areas which are the most impacted by issues surrounding the redevelopment of urban waterways and their environs. Panelists also emphasized the fact that careful attention must be paid to ensure all city residents have access to urban waterfronts, the distribution of resources must reflect the communities sharing their lives along urban rivers and polices are needed to provide a framework for change.
**Noteworthy Events**

**Opening of**

*Bridging the Americas: Community and Belonging from Panama to Washington, D.C.*

**April 13, 2015 - Indefinitely**

Using images and narratives, this exhibition presents the various ways in which Zonians and Panamanians in the D.C. metropolitan area think about home and belonging in and in-between Panama and Washington, D.C.

The exhibition uses as a historical backdrop the formal ties established between the U.S. and Panama since the California Gold Rush through the 100th anniversary of the Panama Canal in 2014. In addition to new research and contributions from metro area residents with varying ties to Panama, the bilingual presentation incorporates the museum's archival material and images from a variety of sources, including donations from community members, the collections of other Smithsonian units and the Smithsonian affiliate Museo de Canal Interoceánico de Panama. Among those persons profiled to demonstrate human ties between the U.S. and Panama is the late Panamanian sociologist Roy Bryce-Laporte, the founding director of the Smithsonian's Research Institute on Immigration and Ethnic Studies.
Noteworthy Events

Citizen Science Project Updates

Total number of school participants for the 2014-2015 school year has been 245 students

Water Quality Monitoring
April 20-27

Four teachers and 205 students from Robert Gray Elementary School, Walker Mill Middle School, Chesapeake Math and IT Academy (6-12) and Parkdale High School in Prince Georges County Maryland took part in a Water Quality Monitoring program. Students were involved in the biological protocol sampling macro invertebrates from Lower Beaverdam, Cabin Branch and the storm water feed to Cabin Branch, Saddle Creek in Laurel, Briar’s Ditch and Dueling Creek, respectively. Two samples were collected from each tributary. One sample was sent to the Maryland Biological Stream Survey/Waders program for inclusion in the States’ data bank, and the other sample was retained by the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center (SERC) to be used with the students for identification purposes.

End of the year program
May 4-6

Nine graduating seniors in the Citizen Science Program took part in a three-day excursion which extended their freshwater monitoring activities into a brackish water environment. Students traveled to Annapolis for the first part of the program, a water quality engagement aboard the Chesapeake Bay Foundation’s Skipjack the ‘Stanley Norman.’ They were engaged as deckhands aboard this original oyster harvesting vessel, raising/lowering sails, moving hatches, collecting water and oyster bed samples, analyzing all samples and comparing their data to freshwater data from the Anacostia Watershed.

The second day of the program engaged students in a shoreline restoration project, facilitated by the Rhode/West River River keeper - Joe Ports. YMCA Camp Letts in Edgewater, MD is in the process of a major shoreline restoration project that is divided into two phases, with the first phase being completed. Photos, architectural designs/plans, discussions and physical inspections were used to present the project to the students. The afternoon was filled with a wave break project that addressed the erosion of the shoreline, causing a loss of land. Students were given the opportunity to observe the conditions and propose solutions.

On the final morning of the program, students canoed from Camp Letts to SERC where the group was met by Mark Haddon, Director of Education SERC; Alison Cawood, Citizen Science Coordinator, SERC, who then directed them to a research site where they conducted water quality test at three different locations and were able to compare the data to the Bay and the freshwater of the Anacostia. After a tour of SERC’s educational quarters, students were given an opportunity to observe researchers at work in the field, collect samples of fish, shrimp and crabs with a seine net, and observe several fish species’ characteristics, while learning of their importance within the food chain in the waterway.
Noteworthy Events

Citizen Science Project Updates

Looking forward to a new cohort

The targeted number of participants for next school year is projected to be up to 500 students, covering all the major tributaries in the Anacostia Watershed. The next cohort will begin by learning about the systems of a watershed. Next, they will be trained in biological and chemical protocols. Students will participate in various restoration projects through various Anacostia Watershed Collaborators. Upon completion of this six year program, students will have produced student-generated research projects, become proficient in the research process to the point of being boots-on-the-ground, research assistants for any scientist conducting research on the Anacostia River or any watershed and knowledgeable activists, advocates and stewards of their watershed.

Sailing on a Skipjack- an oyster fishing boat

Cleaning out the sein after a big catch
**Summer Forums**

**Community Forum: Park and Land Improvements Along the Anacostia**  
*Saturday July 11th 2-4, Program Room*

Join community park and land improvement activists and supporters as they discuss current projects such as the Anacostia Park & Kenilworth Park, the Pepco Plant at Benning Road, the Bower’s commitment Reservation 13, Plans for RFK Stadium site (Capitol Youth Sports Park Project) and other planned developments. Which side of the fence are you on regarding these or other projected developments? Panel moderator will be Doug Siglin of the Federal City Council and the Anacostia River Trust.

Panelists include Javier Barker, Eastland Community Gardens, Bob Coomber, ANC Commissioner 7D01, Arrington Dixon, Anacostia Coordinating Council, Ann Honius, National Capital Parks-East.

Also on view will be plan's for a new vision of Anacostia Park done by Landscape Architect, Iris Miller’s Catholic University’s Undergraduate Studio class.

**Claiming Our Seat at the Table: Diversifying the Green Movement**  
*Saturday August 15th, 2-4, Program Room*

This forum will bring residents together in order to explore the traditional image of environmentalists, the assumptions made about communities of color in regards to environmental and sustainability issues, and the truth behind such prejudgments. Do minorities feel represented? Is there a lack of trust between traditional environmentalists and communities of color? How do communities define environmentalism and their relationships to urban waterways? What steps have been taken to make the table more inclusive?

The discussion will be moderated by Vernice Miller-Travis of Skeo Solutions, and panelists include Dennis Chestnut of Groundwork Anacostia, DC and Jorge Bogantes Montero of the Anacostia Watershed Society.
New Projects

Twelve Years that Shook and Shaped Washington: 1963-1975

Against a national background of anti-war protests, black power, and feminism, Twelve Years that Shook and Shaped Washington will focus on events and challenges that transformed Washington DC, as well as other cities nationally and provided the social, cultural, physical, and political bases for the city as we know it today. The project will open as an exhibition in December 2015.

Neighborhood Change

Neighborhood Change is a broad-based initiative that looks at change in urban neighborhoods and communities from the perspective of community residents and stakeholders. The Neighborhood Change Initiative investigates, documents, and presents research on how residents engage with stakeholders and decision makers around changes in their immediate urban environment. Community-based documentation and research efforts for the project include oral history interviewing and community survey and mapping projects. An important part of the work is to build networks to share perspectives and discourse about historical and cultural dynamics that are seen and felt at the local level. Museum research into issue and themes of change that resonate within urban communities seeks to encourage and facilitate residents in urban neighborhoods to make links and connections between their communities and other urban centers.
Contributors

Christina Bradley, Assistant Director of Green Infrastructure and Design, Parks & People Foundation, Baltimore

A licensed landscape architect, Christina Bradley oversees staff in the outreach, project management, implementation, and construction management of more than $8 million in watershed restoration projects. Ms. Bradley is a graduate of the landscape architecture program at the University of Maryland, College Park, with over seven years of experience in the field.

The majority of Parks & People's projects are located in Baltimore City's Watershed 263 for demonstration purposes, but they reach across the city. Improvement types vary, including urban tree canopy efforts, but all engineered facilities are small-scale, ultra-urban retrofits .01–.5 acres in size. Projects focus on green infrastructure approaches that not only treat stormwater, but also improve quality of life for users of vacant lots, schools, and parks. Parks & People works to coordinate these efforts with city and state agencies, community groups, residents, not-for-profits, and consultants through progress and partnership meetings, briefings, technical assistance, and environmental education.

Portia James, serves as the Anacostia Community Museum's Senior Curator. She oversees the museum's research department and the development of research-based programs, museum exhibitions, and publications. She has developed numerous exhibitions on various topics, including The Real McCoy on African American invention and innovation, Down through the Years on the Anacostia Museum collection, and Black Mosaic: Color, Race, and Ethnicity among Black Immigrants in Washington, D.C.

Dwane Jones, Director Center for Sustainable Development, University of the District of Columbia, Washington, DC

Dwane Jones is director of the a division of Center for the College of Agriculture, Urban Sustainability, and Environmental Sciences Sustainable Development, (CAUSES). Dr. Jones and his colleagues conduct research and teach courses in urban sustainability, urban design, urban planning public policy and health, research and ethics and low-impact development. He has degrees in urban planning, environmental planning, and urban design.

Scott Kratz, Director, 11th Street Bridge Park, Washington, DC

For the last four years, Scott Kratz has been working with the DC Office of Planning and the Ward 8 not-for-profit Building Bridges Across the River at THEARC on the 11th Street Bridge Park, transforming an old freeway bridge into a park above the Anacostia River.

Mr. Kratz has lived in Washington for the past 8 years. He has worked in the education field for over 20 years and began his career teaching at Kidspace, a children's museum in Pasadena, CA, and later as associate director of the Institute for the Study of the American West at the Autry National Center in Los Angeles. While at the Autry, he supervised a staff that planned and implemented programs including theater, film, music, festivals, family programs, lecture series, and academic symposia. Most recently, Mr. Kratz was vice president for education at the National Building Museum in Washington, DC.
Katrina Lashley is Project Coordinator of Urban Waterways at the Anacostia Community Museum. She received her B.A. in English Literature and Italian at Rutgers University. In 2011 she completed an M.A. in History (Public History track) at American University with a focus on the British Caribbean. Katrina has worked on projects for the National Museum of American History and Arlington House. In addition to her public history work, Lashley was a teacher of English Literature and Language for twelve years.

Louisville Waterfront Development (WDC) was established in 1986. It plans, coordinates, and implements strategies to revitalize Louisville’s Waterfront. WDC was created by an interlocal agreement between Jefferson County, the City of Louisville (now Louisville Metro), and the Commonwealth of Kentucky to oversee redevelopment of Louisville's waterfront from a blighted and underutilized area into a vibrant, active area. The result is Waterfront Park, which has improved the quality of life of Louisville residents and has also been a catalyst for business and residential redevelopment in the Waterfront District and connecting areas of downtown Louisville.

Dayana Molina, is an Organizer for The City Project. Prior to working at The City Project, she was a volunteer organizer and community advocate for Anahuak Youth Sports Association. Dayana immigrated to the United States from Mexico with her family when she was eight years old. She was undocumented here until May 2013, when she received dreamer status under the temporary federal program for young undocumented residents.

Hyon K. Rah is a hybrid designer-engineer who has worked around the world, specializing in sustainable architectural and urban design, and water resource management projects. She serves as an interdisciplinary expert who integrates function, aesthetics, economics, and equity. Hyon received her Master of Architecture degree from the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, and a Master of Science in Water Management and Hydroinformatics through the European Commission's EuroAquae Programme, a consortium of five EU-based universities.

She is currently based in Washington, D.C., where she is Sustainability & Water Consultant at Baumann Consulting, a German-American engineering consultancy.