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| **Discipline:** All | **Type:** Reading; In-class exercise | **Time Commitment:** 35-45 mins. | **Category:** Green Infrastructure, Community Engagement |
| **Big Ideas:** [Sustainable Urban Development;](https://serve-learn-sustain.gatech.edu/big-idea/sustainable-urban-development) [Inequality, Poverty, & Sustainable Development;](https://serve-learn-sustain.gatech.edu/big-idea/inequality-poverty-and-sustainable-development) [Infrastructure: Physical, Technological, Social;](https://serve-learn-sustain.gatech.edu/big-idea/infrastructure-physical-technological-social) [Community Asset Mapping](https://serve-learn-sustain.gatech.edu/big-idea/community-asset-mapping); [Asset-based Community Development;](https://serve-learn-sustain.gatech.edu/big-idea/asset-based-community-development) [Mutually Beneficial Partnerships;](https://serve-learn-sustain.gatech.edu/big-idea/mutually-beneficial-partnerships) [Collaborative Community Innovations](https://serve-learn-sustain.gatech.edu/big-idea/collaborative-community-innovations) | | | |
| **OVERVIEW:**  In-depth community engagement shapes green infrastructure projects and their impacts on communities. Use this tool to explore the role of community engagement and local knowledge in green infrastructure planning processes. Students will learn the importance of engaging communities in green infrastructure planning for incorporating local knowledge of community assets, needs, and priorities. The discussion questions will aid students in examining the potential opportunities and threats associated with green infrastructure; the importance of community engagement and knowledge sharing in shaping project outcomes; and how green infrastructure planning processes might be designed to prioritize local knowledge of community needs and priorities and to draw on community assets in order to support more sustainable and equitable outcomes.  This tool was contributed by Jessica Fisch. | | | |
| **INSTRUCTIONS:**  This tool includes a reading assignment, small group activity and discussion, and an in-class discussion. See below for detailed instructions. | | | |
| **SLS STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES & ASSESSMENT:**  The Serve-Learn-Sustain toolkit teaching tools are designed to help students achieve not only SLS student learning outcomes (SLOs), but the unique learning outcomes for your own courses. Reflection, concept maps, rubrics, and other assessment methods are shown to improve student learning. For resources on how to assess your students’ work, please review our [Assessment Tools](http://serve-learn-sustain.gatech.edu/tool-category/assessment).  **This tool achieves SLOs 1 & 3. See the end of this tool for further details.** | | | |

**Worksheet 1: Comments from Residents and Stakeholders in Westside Atlanta Green Infrastructure Planning Process**

***Instructions:*** *Read through these comments from residents and community stakeholders regarding green infrastructure planning in Atlanta’s westside neighborhoods. Comments come from interviews conducted as part of research focused on the impacts of green infrastructure. Interviews took place from 2016 to 2018.*

*As you read, consider 1) common themes surrounding the environmental, economic, and social opportunities and threats associated with investments in green infrastructure, particularly in low-income communities of color and 2) the value of local knowledge such as these comments to green infrastructure planning processes and implementation in communities. Then, in small groups, use the discussion questions, the comments from residents and stakeholders, and the reading to guide your discussion on community engagement in green infrastructure planning.*

***Comments from Residents and Stakeholders:***

“The community felt fatigued. It felt like we’ve been studied; we’ve talked about all of these problems. The Corps of Engineers and the City come in, and as soon as we get flooding, it’s not proactive. They still relocate the community. The only approach that seems to happen when a community like Vine City or English Avenue…or the communities around Grove Park, when people get flooded out, they get moved. Why can’t we do something proactive, so that the people don’t get moved? And in order to do that, we need to highlight, ‘why should we want to stay?’, ‘what’s good about it?’ Like, the first thought is, ‘well, you’ve been flooded out. You don’t want to stay, so you don’t have to stay’…moving shouldn’t be the only option, if that makes sense.”

“I think sort of everyone’s sense is we know that these two projects [the Proctor Creek Greenway and the Westside Reservoir Park] are really going to greatly affect the economics and housing prices in the neighborhood, but since we feel like we’ve been cut out of the conversation, there’s no sense of recourse or opportunity for us to raise awareness or get support or policy decisions being made. That could help this kind of feeling of hopelessness around [the Proctor Creek Greenway and Westside Reservoir Park], or frustration, really.”

“Gentrification is a huge concern on the westside. I mean, we all saw what happened on the East Side, around [Old] Fourth Ward Park, and the BeltLine, so it's at the top of everyone's minds. English Avenue, I will say, is a little different in that they have about a 60% vacancy rate. So there is more than enough space for people to move into the community. What their concern is is that people want to move into the neighborhood and make it a new neighborhood, and not really engage those that were already there. So I think by having community members more involved in these green spaces, and in these development plans, then they feel like they have a role and a voice in the changes in their neighborhoods…I don't think that these parks are in any way going to solve gentrification in the long-term, but what I do think is that they are empowering residents to understand that they can participate. That they don't have to feel like they're stuck waiting on this thing to happen to their neighborhood, which I think is sort of how a lot of people perceive the force of gentrification. It's something that happens to them and is put onto their neighborhood. When you are instead involved in the plans that are coming for your community, and you are helping to lead the charge on that, and you know all the things that are going on, and you're educated about how you can be involved in planning, then you feel a little more empowered.”

“I mean we take a lot of people on tours there from other places…and they’re shocked that footsteps from downtown you have some of the highest vacancy rates, poverty rates, massive stormwater flooding…you name the problem and they have it…It’s difficult, and I think it’s a problem that basically has unfolded over many decades of disinvestment and different things have caused it, so it’s really difficult to think about how you approach it in one project or even a short time period because the reality is that a lot of families, especially working-class families, and schools and things are gone. I mean they left long ago. And so, those neighborhoods have really suffered from a lack of investment over time and that’s in infrastructure and addressing stormwater flooding, and so it’s really difficult.”

“Those are decisions that the way the city government operates, they’re gonna simply say, “We did X amount of community engagement meetings. We let the people know X, Y, and Z. And they’re gonna say they did their due diligence. That’s the bottom line. That’s the way the system works…an individual citizen has limited amount of impact in the face of a municipality that has decided that they’re gonna put in a multi-million, hundred million dollar project.”

“We’ve seen how development comes in and just totally eviscerates communities, such as the one like in Old Fourth Ward. Old Fourth Ward was a very thriving community of people of color, particularly black people, working class people, and folks of lower income. Since the inception of the BeltLine and its development there, it has totally wiped out the lower income folks over there, and the black folks. You may have, it used to be maybe 94 percent African American, and now it’s maybe 87 percent white. And all of this is from the development of the Atlanta BeltLine.”

“We can’t afford to hope that [residents] get to stay, cause we saw on the East side that they didn’t get to stay, and in a lot of places, they’re not able to stay, in a lot of cities that are implementing green infrastructure.”

“Unfortunately, what’s been happening with the City especially is that they’re not including Grove Park in the conversation. So for example, the Proctor Creek Greenway trail, there’s no access from the neighborhood onto the trail. There’s no spur trail built out. So anybody from the neighborhood who wants to access the trail has to go down to the Bankhead MARTA station and access it like anyone else in the city would. So there’s a sense among Grove Park residents that the trail was not built for them, it was built for future residents who don’t live here yet, and that it’s just another example of an investment that isn’t meant for the existing residents. Which is frustrating, and for them points to signs of displacement.”

“My grandfather had to get out of Buttermilk Bottom for the creation of the Civic Center, which has now been sold. Then we moved a little north up, and moved into the Old Fourth Ward, and to be displaced again by the highway, over into the Summerhill area, only to be displaced again by the Atlanta Fulton County Stadium. And then, once we have finally found some type of stabilization, we also are being threatened again by the redevelopment of Turner Field, and also this BeltLine. So, we see this happen over and over again, and everybody, there's a lot of chitter chat, there's a lot of talk about it. But there isn't any responsible policy put in place so that this doesn't happen again.”

“[Even though the creek is polluted], people still fish. You can put the signs up, but if people don’t have food, they’re going to go where they can get food, and it’s a food desert out there.”

“Proctor Creek needs to have…a conservation district, maybe based on the consent decree. Something that says we’re going to be uber restrictive in this watershed, for these reasons. Because of the sensitivity of the water quality, because of the environmental justice legacy, disenfranchisement of the residents. I would like to see a stacked deck that says, “We’re gonna do the Proctor Creek development so critically, radically different because of these social and environmental issues because we have the opportunity to slow things down.” And hopefully take that approach to see that green infrastructure is rolled out, that housing is deployed, that jobs are created in a very different way that is not haphazard, it’s not scattershot. That it’s really done from a much more informed plan.”

“[One of residents’ main concerns] was around preserving the character and the history of the neighborhoods. So, historically, these were African-American neighborhoods. At one point they were pretty vibrant, and great leaders came out of these neighborhoods, musicians, et cetera. So a lot of it was, we don’t want all that blown away either. So there was a real emphasis on preserving the historical character of the neighborhoods, and the historical landmarks, et cetera, was another big theme…There are no design standards in the Old Fourth Ward, right? You can just do what, that’s why most people go in there. They knock down a home, then they buy two pieces and build up...right? It’s all goofy, right?”

**Discussion Questions**

1. How do residents’ and community leaders’ comments demonstrate the potential environmental, economic, and social implications of investments in green infrastructure? What opportunities and threats associated with green infrastructure came up most frequently?
2. What does local knowledge such as this bring to green infrastructure planning efforts? What are the risks of leaving community-specific knowledge out of green infrastructure planning processes? Why is in-depth community engagement important for shaping the outcomes of green infrastructure?
3. How might you as a leader of a green infrastructure planning effort design planning processes to ensure that community knowledge and needs are integrated and prioritized, and that existing community assets are drawn upon to support sustainable and equitable development? Use the comments, reading assignment, and your own ideas to inform your answer.

**Instructions**

1. This activity is best done following the Introduction to Green Infrastructure and the 11th Street Bridge Park Case Study. The 11th Street Bridge Park Case Study could also be used as required reading for this activity, with a brief discussion of the case study occurring as an introduction to this in-class activity.
2. Before class, ask students to read:

Wilker, J., Rusche, K., & Rymsa-Fitschen, C. (2016). Improving participation in green infrastructure planning. *Planning Practice & Research*, 31(3), 229-249.

1. Divide students into groups of 3 to 4.
2. Distribute Worksheet 1: Comments from Residents and Stakeholders in Westside Atlanta Green Infrastructure Planning Process. Ask students to take about 5-10 minutes to read over the resident and stakeholder comments individually.
3. Ask student groups to take about 15 minutes to discuss the comments from the planning process using the discussion questions below. Prioritize questions based on the learning needs of your class. Rotate around the room as students are discussing the comments to further prompt their discussions.
4. Finally, come back as a group and have teams report back to the entire group their key findings and recommendations (about 15-20 minutes). Use the key points on the following page to guide the students in discussion.

**Discussion Questions (with Key Points for Instructors)**

1. **How do residents’ and community leaders’ comments demonstrate the potential environmental, economic, and social implications of investments in green infrastructure? What opportunities and threats associated with green infrastructure came up most frequently?**

Key points:

* Opportunities:
  + Address flooding in neighborhoods using green infrastructure; reduce displacement of residents due to flooding
  + Improving water quality in Proctor Creek so that residents can use the creek to fish
  + Addressing decades of disinvestment in needs such as neighborhood infrastructure
  + Conserve existing ecosystems and do development differently on the westside
  + For green infrastructure to support the creation of affordable housing and jobs
  + Preserving the historic character of neighborhoods
* Threats:
  + Increased housing costs in neighborhoods surrounding new green infrastructure amenities
  + Lack of community engagement in green infrastructure planning processes; some residents feel that they are not able to shape projects or relevant city policies
  + Gentrification, including new residents moving into the area and changing it, while existing residents have not had opportunities to participate in the changes
  + Displacement of historic communities of color, with low-income residents forced out due to rising housing costs, while wealthier, white residents move in
  + Some residents have the view that government agencies have already decided what they are going to do, and that any community engagement is just for show
  + Stakeholders have witnessed the rising housing costs that occurred when green infrastructure was implemented on the eastside of Atlanta (and similar scenarios in other cities) and are afraid that the same thing will happen on the westside
  + Not including residents in planning processes has led to a lack of access to green infrastructure projects, as in the Grove Park neighborhood, which does not have an access point to the Proctor Creek Greenway, which passes through the neighborhood.
  + Residents may view displacement due to rising housing costs surrounding new green infrastructure projects as a continuation of historic displacement of low-income communities of color from urban renewal projects such as stadiums and highways.

1. **What does local knowledge like these comments bring to green infrastructure planning efforts? What are the risks of leaving community-specific knowledge out of green infrastructure planning processes? Why is in-depth community engagement important for shaping the outcomes of green infrastructure?**

Key points:

* Local knowledge brings up important neighborhood concerns and local issues that project planners may not otherwise be aware of, making it so that projects are more likely to benefit residents of surrounding neighborhoods. For example, if the Proctor Creek Greenway had completed in-depth engagement with the residents of the Grove Park neighborhood, it’s unlikely they would have neglected to provide the neighborhood with an access point to the trail.
* In-depth community engagement and leadership can provide neighborhood residents and stakeholders with greater ownership over projects and allow them to directly shape the projects to meet community needs. If the Bridge Park Case Study was used, a good example is how residents on the Community Land Trust Advisory Committee shaped the land trust to focus on the needs of the lowest-income residents and renters.
* Projects that don’t engage residents and stakeholders in knowledge-sharing will not have a full understanding of the opportunities and threats posed by green infrastructure projects in low-income communities. Thus, these projects will likely not fully address community needs and may also exacerbate threats, such as displacement of existing residents.

1. How might you as a leader of a green infrastructure planning effort design planning processes to ensure that community knowledge and needs are integrated and prioritized, and that existing community assets are drawn upon to support sustainable and equitable development? Use the comments, reading assignment, and your own ideas to inform your answer.

Key points:

* Possibilities may include, among other things, providing opportunities for community leadership in projects (e.g., advisory committees, putting residents in key decision-making roles), in-depth community engagement through workshops, focus groups, charrettes, planning processes around environmental, economic, and social impacts of green infrastructure, supporting citywide policies that address residents’ needs such as housing affordability, prioritizing feedback from residents and stakeholders in planning and implementation of green infrastructure, devoting resources and staff to issues of concern to residents

**Resources for Further Reading**

**Defining Green Infrastructure/ General Overview**

Rouse, D. C., & Bunster-Ossa, I. F. (2013). [*Green infrastructure: A landscape approach*](http://caeau.com.ar/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/46.GREEN-INFRAESTRUCTURE.pdf)*.* American Planning Association Planning Advisory Service Report Number 571.

Benedict, M. A., McMahon, E. T. (2006). *Green infrastructure: Linking landscapes and communities*. Washington, DC: Island Press.

**Environmental and Health Impacts of Green Infrastructure**

Tzoulas, K., Korpela, K., Venn, S., Yli-Pelkonen, V., Kaźmierczak, A., Niemela, J., & James, P. (2007). Promoting ecosystem and human health in urban areas using green infrastructure: A literature review. *Landscape and Urban Planning*, 81(3), 167-178.

Lee, M. (2017, July 7). [Two parks, multiple benefits on schedule for westside next year](https://saportareport.com/two-parks-multiple-benefits-schedule-westside-next-year/). *Saporta Report* [Atlanta]. Retrieved from https://saportareport.com/two-parks-multiple-benefits-schedule-westside-next-year/

**Green Infrastructure and Economic Development**

Daniels, T. (2008). Taking the initiative: why cities are greening now. In Birch, E. L., & Wachter, S. M. (2008). *Growing greener cities: Urban sustainability in the twenty-first century.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

**Green Infrastructure and Community/ Social Capital**

Tidball K.G., Krasny M.E. (2009). From risk to resilience: what role for community greening and civic ecology in cities? In Wals, A. E. (Ed.). (2007). *Social learning towards a sustainable world: Principles, perspectives, and praxis*. Wageningen Academic Pub.

**Environmental Gentrification**

Sisson, P. (2018, July 17). [Can high-profile park projects, catalysts for development, play nice with neighboring communities?](https://www.curbed.com/2018/7/17/17581456/park-high-line-606-affordable-housing-development) *Curbed*. Retrieved from https://www.curbed.com/2018/7/17/17581456/park-high-line-606-affordable-housing-development

Abello, O. (2019, March 7). [Why history matters in equitable development planning](https://nextcity.org/daily/entry/why-history-matters-in-equitable-development-planning). *Next City*. Retrieved from https://nextcity.org/daily/entry/why-history-matters-in-equitable-development-planning

Bogle, M., Diby, S., & Cohen, M. (2019). [*Equitable development and urban park space: Results and insights from the first two years of implementation of the Equitable Development Plan of DC’s 11th Street Bridge Park project*](https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/99850/equitable_development_and_urban_park_space_1.pdf). Retrieved from Urban Institute website: https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/99850/equitable\_development\_and\_urban\_park\_space\_1.pdf

Anguelovski, I. (2015). From Toxic Sites to Parks as (Green) LULUs? New Challenges of Inequity, Privilege, Gentrification, and Exclusion for Urban Environmental Justice. *Journal of Planning Literature*, 0885412215610491.

Immergluck, D., & Balan, T. (2018). Sustainable for whom? Green urban development, environmental gentrification, and the Atlanta Beltline. *Urban Geography*, 39(4), 546-562.

Curran, W., & Hamilton, T. (2012). Just green enough: Contesting environmental gentrification in Greenpoint, Brooklyn. *Local Environment*, 17(9), 1027-1042.

**Sustainable and Equitable Development**

Agyeman, J. (2013). *Introducing Just Sustainabilities: Policy, Planning and Practice*. Zed Books.

Zavestoski, S., & Agyeman, J. (Eds.). (2014). *Incomplete Streets: Processes, Practices, and Possibilities*. Routledge.

SLS Student Learning Outcomes

1. Identify relationships among ecological, social, and economic systems.
2. Demonstrate skills needed to work effectively in different types of communities.
3. Evaluate how decisions impact the sustainability of communities.
4. Describe how to use their discipline to make communities more sustainable.\*

\* *Note:* SLO 4 is intended to be used by upper division, project-based courses such as Capstone.