



Actualizing Equity 2019: From Principles to Practice

Going Green without Gentrification

Parks, green infrastructure and sustainable development bring a range of social, cultural, health and environmental benefits. But too often the public, private and non-profit sectors do not appropriately address the 'unintended consequences' of these improvements. How do we ensure that communities most impacted by environmental harms historically reap the benefits of new and ongoing investments? Where do we have leverage to engage community and embed their priorities

in conversations about green development, and where are leaders in different types of organizations seeing success? At our **July 2019 Actualizing Equity** event, we discussed these issues with **Sam Grant** from the Public Policy Project / Environmental Justice Coordinating Council; **Seema Kairam** from the Trust for Public Land; **Shruthi Kamisetty** from Parks & Power; **Mira Klein** from the CREATE Initiative; and **Stephen Klimek** from the Towerside Innovation District.

Transformation

We center indigenous and impacted residents. In all policy, we honor indigenous self determination. In development, we start from those who have been impacted by what's been done on the land over the past 100 years. We center the dreams of people who have been impacted – and those who have stewarded it before us.

We start from interconnection. We recognize we're all family and connected and the land is not to be just owned. We understand that we're all visitors on this land and humble ourselves in the work we do.

We boldly pursue a post-growth city. Cities privilege economic growth to increase the tax base and that bias continues the pattern of ecological violence. We create different models that shift our economic paradigm.

Organizing

Parks & Power is **canvassing around parks that have received public investment** to discuss anti-displacement measures and envision a rent control policy that can counter the effects of green gentrification. They're also working toward a **participatory budgeting** process that shifts power and funding decisions, so community has control over priorities and specific pots of money for park investments.

Community must have the opportunity to provide input on specific parks projects and have **voice around and access to leaders who can impact policy**, from parks to housing to economic development.

To advance sustainability, Towerside Innovation District is creating a model that **works at a neighborhood scale**. While developers and policymakers often think parcel by parcel, Towerside is considering how those parcels relate to each other, and engaging community to ensure development is driven by, rather than happening to, community.

The Trust for Public Land is **recognizing a park is more than land**. It's an asset in the community and significant financial investment but it's also often the first time community members interact with city officials. It's an opportunity to build and elevate community leadership, and shift institutional power and resources to the neighborhood level.

Grounding

The CREATE Initiative believes that **green gentrification is not inevitable**. When we accept the premise of our economic system and its approach to land speculation, ownership and exploitation and try to mitigate it's negative impacts, we limit our capacity to imagine and work toward *different ways* of investing in parks and enjoying green spaces.

For Sam Grant, community development should meet three criteria: take care of the earth, take care of *all* our relatives (human and others) and nourish a convivial future. We can't be creative as egotistical individuals. **We have to be co-creative as relatives dreaming healthy life on the planet.**





Our minds are colonized. We no longer know how to think outside of the context we've received, the assumptions about the civilization that we're in. We need to rethink what we want our futures to be. With the Upper Harbor Terminal project, what's the coolest thing that could happen on that 48 acres to catalyze the best possible future for North Minneapolis as a whole? What does this piece of land want to be that's nourishing the dream of the broader landscape and who do you ask about that dream? A transformative vision asks those questions and creates a public dialogue where people learn how to connect their dreams together. Then we can address the steps we have to take to open up the horizon of what's possible and what's necessary to shift politics so we make different choices. But we don't have the necessary radical imagination. The critical work right now is in your family, on your block, in your faith community, we need to be nourishing the radical imagination all day long.

Sam Grant, Environmental Justice Coordinating Committee

Resources

LOCAL resources

Anti-Green Gentrification Toolkit

CREATE Initiative's [anti-green gentrification toolkit](#) is an intervention in the green infrastructure planning process to lend a critical lens to how and for whom green infrastructure is built, while contextualizes greening alongside housing and within systems of racism, capitalism, and displacement.

Community Capacity Building Toolkit

In the Twin Cities, the Trust for Public Land created a tool specific to parks development that builds intention and aspiration around not only engaging neighbors about park design but actively cultivating new community leaders and building capacity. [Read more about the toolkit.](#)

Environmental Justice Coordinating Committee

In 2017, Public Policy Project organized and created the Environmental Justice Coordinating Council, composed entirely of African American residents and agents of change in North Minneapolis. In 2019, they are working with residents around the Upper Harbor Terminal project. [Follow their work.](#)

Parks & Power

Parks & Power has created engaging resources for popular education around the Parks' Board budget as it moves toward a vision for participatory budgeting that shifts power to the community in identifying priorities and allocating resources at a neighborhood level. [Follow their work.](#)

Towerside Innovation District

Towerside is the only designated innovation district in the Twin Cities region with the intent to bring together entrepreneurs, residents, researchers, developers and businesses within a new, equitable, restorative, healthy and arts-inspired community. [Follow their work.](#)

NATIONAL examples

Los Angeles Regional Outdoor Space and Affordable Housing (LA ROSAH) coalition

In a recent paper, LA ROSAH proposes a framework for advancing the understanding of the nexus between urban greening and affordable housing for equitable, sustainable growth.

Emancipation Park

In Houston, a \$34 million redevelopment of Emancipation Park centered community needs and ongoing authority in the priorities and programming on the public land.

Near Westside Initiative

The mission of the Near Westside Initiative is to combine the power of art, technology, and innovation with neighborhood values and culture to revitalize Syracuse's Near Westside.

Learn more about and access additional resources from the Actualizing Equity series at thealliancetc.org/actualizing-equity