

# *New York City's High Line: Participatory Planning or Gentrification?*

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## *Abstract*

In the last fifty years, participatory planning methods have been utilized by practicing urban planners because they emphasize citizen involvement and equitable representation of disempowered community members. This paper analyzes the degree to which the nonprofit organization and self-proclaimed community group Friends of the High Line facilitated citizen input during remediation of an abandoned elevated freight-car railway, the High Line, into a public park in West Chelsea, New York City. Findings suggest that the High Line is an atypical example of a community driven urban revitalization project and that the participatory planning model may need to be redefined when applied to affluent communities.

## **Introduction**

The innovative and sleekly designed public High Line park running from Gansevooort St. to West 20<sup>th</sup> St. in Manhattan, New York was once considered to be nothing more than an unsightly relic of New York City's industrial past. Property developers viewed the elevated idle freight car line as a hindrance to potential economic development for the neighborhood while most West Chelsea residents paid little attention to the massive metal structure that had simply morphed into the mundane, industrial urban landscape (High Line History 2010).

However, once discussion about demolishing the High Line began amongst members of the Chelsea Property Owners, a group seeking to develop real-estate below the railway, and the former New York City Giuliani administration, two West Chelsea community residents Robert Hammond and Joshua David initiated a grassroots nonprofit organization known as Friends of the High Line. Friends of the High Line saved the railway from demolition and remediated it into the thriving public park it is today. Hammond and David founded this nonprofit in order to save an intriguing piece of New York City history that would not only increase tax revenues for the entire city of New York, but more specifically enrich the West Chelsea community financially with the implementation of new business and increased property values resulting from the new real-estate developments (David 2002). However, Friends of the High Line is not only recognized for revitalizing the West Chelsea area; their efforts to maintain the park as a community-initiated project and to continue to cultivate the dynamic surrounding community of West Chelsea have also been critically acclaimed by external onlookers (p. 127; Friends of the High Line).

For example, the Rockefeller Foundation bestowed the Jane Jacobs Medal to Hammond and David as a way to recognize their innovative creation of a “more diverse, dynamic, and equitable city” (Itzkoff 2010; Jane Jacobs Medal). Due to such positive feedback, cofounders Hammond and David, go so far as to define the High Line as being a bottom-up project (2011, p. 127). Despite this affirmative publicity, further research and explanation of Friends of the High Line’s efforts for community engagement is necessary. By questioning their methods of community involvement, I intend to analyze the group’s role in incorporating citizen participation in the High Line project. When installing future projects in urban public spaces, this analysis of the High Line can serve as a model for further innovation in the participatory planning method that continues to be a dominant topic of conversation within the field of urban planning.

In the last fifty years, participatory planning and its implementation within American urban planning have reshaped the theoretical discussion of urban design as well as its impact on the built environment in communities. Emerging out of widespread community activism during the 60s and 70s, participatory planning generally alludes to the inclusion of everyday, ordinary people within the planning decisions of their communities (Innes 1995). Most notably, the 1961 publication *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* by Jane Jacobs, a charismatic community activist, is generally identified as the cornerstone of participatory planning that ignited the discussion about optimal methods of citizen inclusion and if such attempts should be a priority in the urban planning profession (1961).

In the years leading to Jacob’s writing of *Death and Life*, World War II American cities had been transformed by the top-down approaches of urban renewal. Federal legislation such as the Housing Act of 1949 and the Amending Act of 1954, endowed urban planners and local governments with abounding and irrevocable authority to clear entire neighborhoods deemed as “blighted” (Hall 2002, p. 247). However, as destruction of neighborhoods in New York City, Chicago, and numerous other cities occurred, local residents became increasingly enraged at their displacement from their homes and neighborhoods. Excluded from paramount planning decisions that drastically altered community structure and ignored neighborhood values, residents finally protested and compelled urban planners to reevaluate their top-down planning methods (Hall 2002, p. 249).

Planners such as Robert Moses, the “Master Builder” of 1940s-60s New York City, was the most distinct example of a top-down planner whose decision-making techniques as an uncontested expert sparked an outcry from concerned residents. Jane Jacobs, a resident herself of Greenwich Village, assessed the possibility of her own neighborhood being destroyed as a repercussion to Moses’ urban renewal proposal for a Lower Manhattan Expressway project (Hall 2002, p. 253). With the looming threat of her own neighborhood’s destruction, Jacobs’s noteworthy book came at an opportune moment in which her ideas inspired community activism among local citizens and planners across the nation. Specifically, her challenge to Moses and the visions he had for developing lower Manhattan have had a lasting impact on the participatory planning discussion that continues to pervade the urban planning profession to this day.

As such, her ideas signaled the beginning of a dynamic conversation germane to the nature of participatory planning and the best tactics for its execution. Varied terms such as “advocacy planning,” “communicative planning,” and “transformative planning” emerged (Klemeck 2009, pg. 76; Fainstein 2000, pg. 456; Friedmann 2011). Despite variations in terminology, all planners who abide to community participatory methods strive to authentically include citizens in the planning process of their urban localities.

While the planning profession has evolved over time due to its history and the ongoing discussions that have ensued, a closer analysis of nonprofit organizations' roles in further facilitating resident participation in urban revitalization projects is necessary for improving how planners, government officials, and residents interact to create truly public open spaces for the entire community. This paper will analyze, through Jacobs' lens of planning, the extent to which the nonprofit organization, Friends of the High Line, utilized participatory planning methods to engage the West Chelsea community in the planning and design decisions for the New York City public park, the High Line.

## **Literature Review**

To begin, a discussion of the literature regarding the evolution of participatory planning theory and its physical practice will provide a basis for discerning the Friends of the High Line's effective utilization or lack thereof of participatory planning methods meant to facilitate community input in the planning of the public park, the High Line. A brief explanation of the role of urban planners and the two main ways in which they can approach urban communities during the planning and design phases of a project will additionally be included. Furthermore, the role of nonprofit organizations in relation to community planning will be discussed. Finally, I will provide brief background about the origins of Friends of the High Line and its motive for saving the High Line from demolition and repurposing it into a public park. This information will provide the context necessary for examining the group's status as a community-oriented organization within the urban planning structure of New York City.

According to Damon Y. Smith, an Assistant Professor of Law at Rutgers School of Law-Camden, the average community planner has two options of top-down planning or bottom-up planning. Top-down planning disregards the needs and wants of the local citizens within particular communities. Instead, more focus is centralized around the methods of eminent domain and tax abatement (2009, p. 245), precisely tactics that Robert Moses employed during his reign (Hall 2002, p. 249). Therefore, rather than listening to residents' concerns, officials who engage in this hierarchical system of structuring city spaces enforce changes based on their assumed knowledge as professional experts. Top-down planners view cities as homogenous systems that can be shaped into a clearly defined vision while ignoring the particularities of each distinct space. According to Jacobs, they ignore the interconnecting factors that constitute the inherently complex system of a city. Rather than seeking residents' colloquial and informal knowledge of the spaces in question, top-down planners treat the city as a simple entity that has a one-size fits all solution and a generic set of infallible rules (Jacobs 1961, pg. 432-435).

Jacobs, by contrast, described cities as diverse entities that cannot be shaped by a solitary formula because they possess an inherent fabric of "unaverage," distinct markers (Jacobs 1961, p. 443). She argued that the most appropriate way to account for these significant markers is to apply the alternative approach of bottom-up planning, which, according to Smith, consists of working with municipal officials and local residents to collaboratively develop revitalization plans attuned to particular communities (2009, p. 245). These local residents can ideally identify unusual people or events within their neighborhoods because of their daily encounters with them. Every day, ordinary people's frequent interaction and knowledge of the normal rhythms of their neighborhood suggests their perception of their roles in the community, thus making their delineation of significant city markers more valuable than the offhanded analysis of the expert planner (Jacobs 1961, p. 443). This second approach of bottom-up planning facilitates and

advocates for participatory planning, a method which incorporates residents' perspectives in the planning phases of city plans (Smith 2009, pg. 245).

As already indicated, participatory planning emphasizes the roles of the citizen and the resident within the planning process of urban community plans, which ultimately benefits the community residents and contributes to the success of a final urban project. Day, for example, recognizes that most of the literature credits participatory methods for compelling administrative powers to be more responsive and democratic, a practice of which Jacobs called for when criticizing the anachronistic administrative and planning structure of the 1960s New York City Planning Commission (1997, pg. 424; Jacobs 1961, pg. 407). Additionally, citizen participation allows for community residents to become educated about issues directly affecting their lives. Day argues that once they become aware of pressing concerns, citizens feel more connected to the community and personally assume the neighborhood issues as their own (Day 1997, pg. 424). Ideally, future enacted policy should be representative of citizen desires as a result of initial citizen inclusion in the preliminary planning phases of urban public projects. Urban plans can then possess a finer chance of reflecting true resident sentiment, as participation enables residents to obtain and to perform substantial control over the environments they themselves inhabit (Day 1997, pg. 424).

More importantly, Sherry R. Arnstein, a former U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development official, specifies participatory planning's fundamental goal of incorporating disadvantaged citizens, or those generally excluded from political and economic processes, as being the paramount reason for its utilization in the profession (Arnstein 2007, p. 216; Checkoway 1994, p. 139). According to Michael Rios, Assistant Professor in the landscape architecture department at the University of California Davis, presenting "multiple publics" or groups with "diverse values and rhetoric" is also significant when employing participatory planning methods (Rios 2004, p. 122). He further argues that commonalities can be discovered among differing social groups only when such groups precisely articulate their salient differences. However, this type of dialogue can only be achieved when all social groups or "multiple publics" are included in the public realm of participation (Rios 2004, p. 121). Therefore, citizen participation is not legitimate unless all groups, the disempowered and the affluent are equitably represented and sincerely regarded.

While the positives of participatory planning are admirable, there are drawbacks that coincide with the underlying nebulous notion of democracy. There is no clear consensus about the potential that democracy as a system of governance holds for urban planning and community participation because fundamental and ideological differences undoubtedly remain amongst various sectors in a representative society (Grant 1984, p. 202). For example, dominant cultural values and beliefs can pervade a diverse community of differing social systems, and thus expose the fact that there are multiple perceptions of what constitutes a "good community" (Grant 1984, p. 4). Therefore, the "multiple publics" that Rios suggests should be fairly recognized when making planning decisions, can also pose the problem of amplifying dissent among groups with alternative backgrounds and values (Grant 1994, p. 9).

In addition to multiple groups' differing prerogatives and end goals, the prospect of certain groups wanting to exclude others from the planning process is another negative of the participatory planning model (Grant 1994). Susan S. Fainstein, Professor of Urban Planning and Design at the Harvard Graduate School of Design, claims that whether deliberately or unintentionally, the group deficient of "money, access to expertise, effective organization, and media coverage," generally suffers from being underrepresented and ignored. Only when these

resources are available does the intended transparency of participatory planning truly emerge and create constructive citizen participation (2000, p. 461).

Another negative of citizen participation in urban community plans can be the daunting amount of time that passes with little tangible action occurring after hours of dialogue. Fainstein (2000) states that the extensive time spent formulating plans representative of various community facets disillusion participants who were initially inspired to generate designs beneficial to their community (p. 460). Citizens may eventually view the entire planning process as pointless, as many of their objectives are pushed to the side for long periods of time (Fainstein 2000, p. 460). As a result, they tend to view their role and contributions to the planning process as ineffective and nugatory (Grant 1994, p. 13). Residents become jaded and uninspired about the leverage they actually possess in a representative community founded on democracy.

Furthermore, participatory methods often produce manufactured consensus among groups (Rios 2004, p. 123). In other words, feigned agreement among groups of varying interests may be established through inauthentic dialogue and seemingly rehearsed conversation that culminates in a predetermined decision (Jacobs 1961, p. 406). Whether or not, residents articulate their concerns or suggestions, planners, developers and bureaucratic officials enter community council meetings often already resolute in their planning ultimatums (Jacobs 1961; Rios 2004, p. 123).

Yet while the ever-shifting model of participatory planning has a great deal of imperfections, its general implications and intention of citizen engagement make it the preferred approach among community organizations and nonprofit collectives, such as Friends of the High Line. These nonprofit organizations serve as the intermediate bodies between residents and planners and aim to bolster residents' involvement in community decisions, as well as provide assets necessary to achieving community objectives (Hum 2010, p. 462). For example, Tarry Hum, Associate Professor of UCLA School of Public Policy and Social Research, indicates that nonprofit organizations supply resources of organizational skills and professional networks that a community may not have had access to on its own (Hum, 2010 p.462). In other words, these nonprofit community groups should ideally provide the very resources of "money, access to expertise, effective organization, and media coverage" that Fainstein proposes as being the necessary tools for truly effective citizen participation from diverse groups within the community (2000 p. 461). If such resources are available, multiple publics' diverse values stand a better chance of being lucidly conveyed, understood, and, most importantly, accounted for in finalized community projects (Hum 2010, p. 462).

However, even if such tools are provided by nonprofits there is still a chance that members of the disempowered group will be excluded by "urban elites" who often constitute nonprofit collectives (DiMaggio 1990, p. 140). Paul J. DiMaggio, a Barton Hepburn Professor for Sociology and Public Affairs at Princeton University, stated that "urban elites" can either intentionally or unintentionally marginalize the disempowered in an attempt to maintain "upper-class solidarity" (DiMaggio 1990, p. 140). Due to DiMaggio's observation of nonprofits' capacity to advance exclusion of the marginalized group, Michael Cataldi (2011), who possesses a Masters in Urban Planning from the City College of New York, has suggested that the High Line is only a public park in name, and rather than benefitting the whole public, it solely generates private capital for Friends of the High Line (p. 377), which distinctly challenges the extent to which Friends of the High Line included the West Chelsea community when planning the park.

As Cataldi suggests, Friends of the High Line and the surrounding West Chelsea community may very well be overrun by urban elites wishing to sustain and expand their upper-

class influence. For example, David Harvey, Marxist geographer, criticizes the High Line and New York City Mayor Bloomberg for transforming Manhattan into “one vast gated community for the rich” (Morenas 2012, p.21). Additionally, West Chelsea possesses a rich history of working-class people who heavily depended on blue-collar manufacturing jobs at factories, warehouses and the nearby Hudson River docks (Doyle 1984). Yet, the only reminder of the community’s extensive past emanates from West Chelsea’s industrial built environment of old warehouses and manufacturing warehouses.

As for West Chelsea’s social landscape, it has altered vastly since the late 80s as “relative increases in socioeconomic status” initiated gentrification of the area (High Line History 2010; Doyle 1984; p. 203; Freeman 2004, p. 43). This general escalation in socioeconomic status directly resulted from the migration of former SoHo art galleries to West Chelsea where the prospect of lower rent prices and larger residential and exhibit space enticed artists affected by the infiltration of retail and commercial developments in the SoHo area (Molotch 2009, p.524).

The eventual success of New York City’s new thriving art gallery district abetted West Chelsea gentrification, and consequently the New York City Department of City Planning rezoned the area to be more mixed-used rather than solely industrial (West Chelsea Zoning Proposal). The 197-A proposal (1995) and the Special West Chelsea District (2005) rezoning proposal facilitated West Chelsea’s transformation from a neighborhood of industrial manufacturing uses to a community comprised of artsy, upper-class commercial and residential developments (West Chelsea Zoning Proposal). Thus urban elites possessing considerable influence and networks pervaded the West Chelsea neighborhood as more opportunity for them to exhibit their power emerged. These urban elites’ inevitable influence in the nonprofit Friends of the High Line reinforces the possibility that the High Line has become not only a source of economic development, but an amplifier of upper-class status and a physical representation of the gentrification that began in the late 80s.

## Methods

With this provided context and the observable occurrences of West Chelsea in the last twenty years, the implication that the neighborhood’s evolving social landscape affected the manner by which Friends of the High Line employed participatory methods when planning the High Line is a logical assertion. However, in order to further analyze the extent to which this nonprofit engaged the West Chelsea community I used the method of textual analysis to develop final conclusions about Friends of the High Line’s methods of participatory planning.

While there is not necessarily a single set of guidelines for reading texts in geography, critical analysis and the deconstruction of the “multiple meanings” within the various mediums of text is elucidatory to the depiction of human beings’ relationships with the built environment (Hay 2000, p. 128). Such a representation of human society is the main objective of human geographers (Hay 2000, p. 124), thus I deconstructed Friends of the High Line’s community engagement methods through my interpretations of various sources of public media, website sources, Hammond and David’s coauthored book, *High Line: The Inside Story of New York City’s Park in the Sky* (2011), and my own personal observations of the High Line. This textual analysis, descriptive study will provide an empirical basis for future innovation of the participatory planning model in order to make it applicable to already affluent and empowered communities. In addition, analyzing the example of the High Line and the Friends of the High Line serves as model to view how urban revitalization public projects in other cities can replicate

or modify their planning methods to more fully incorporate the surrounding communities during preliminary phases of construction.

## Discussion

Robert Hammond and Joshua David, cofounders of the nonprofit organization, Friends of the High Line, attribute the park's success to the supporters and professionals who aided in the railway's successful transformation. In fact, they write in their coauthored book, *High Line: The Inside Story of New York City's Park in the Sky*,

“Our lack of expertise was a key to the High Line's success. It forced us to ask other people to help us. It was these others, who rallied around us, guided us, and did the work we did not know how to do, who made the High Line possible” (2011).

Clearly, they recognized that the fruition of the vision they held for the High Line necessitated a collaboration of expertise, enthusiasm, and networks of people who shared the common goal of creating a unique, public park for the West Chelsea community. Thus, Friends of the High Line initiated community engagement by knowing how to best utilize the resources they had available to them.

Firstly, Friends of the High Line introduced community engagement methods to West Chelsea by appealing to the residents' imaginations and by then gaining their support for the project. They held an Open Ideas Competition that encouraged residents to create design concepts they wished to see implemented in the future park (Hammond & David 2011, p.53).

As such, Friends of the High Line mandated that design submissions for the Ideas Competition be entered by April 25, 2003 with specific focus addressing access and safety issues of the park (Community Input 2012). Friends of the High Line were very explicit in what they hoped to see illustrated in the designs and when the time came for review of 720 submissions, the eleven jurors chose three top winners and ten honorable mentions. These thirteen designs, in addition to about 150 others, were showcased for the public in Vanderbilt Hall at Grand Central Terminal Station from July 9 to July 23, 2003 (Weiz 2003). This exhibit only further sparked awe and excitement from the community about the potential the High Line had as a public park, which was exactly the Friends of the High Line's intended goal. Friends of the High Line believed that it was especially important to approach the design process in such a way that created a “special and unique experience [for the community] as the High Line itself” (Hammond & David 2011, p. 73).

Once widespread support from the community and political officials were solidified, Hammond and David were able to take more definitive steps toward the park's completion. Following the 2003 Open Ideas Competition, Friends of the High Line facilitated a community input meeting of about 400 participants at the Metropolitan Pavilion, an event space in West Chelsea that hosts a variety of social functions (Hammond & David 2011, p. 66). Forum participants were divided into groups of ten with a discussion facilitator being a Friends of the High Line staff member or volunteer. Distinguishing this particular community input meeting as an effective way for “everyone to be involved” (Hammond & David 2011, p. 73), Friends of the High Line allowed for the groups to talk about what they liked and disliked about the submitted design entries from the Ideas Competition. The facilitator then presented the groups' main points to the entire audience. This meeting was videotaped and watched by a note-taker who later distributed the notes to those who had attended, as well as those on the mailing list via an emailed newsletter. Specifically, notes on the October 28, 2003 community input meeting

outlined that the majority called for a design that encouraged slow-paced movement, incorporated the community's industrial past, and enhanced the neighborhood's identity and thriving economic activity. A telling quote made by a meeting attendee asserted that the High Line project should demonstrate "community-based, organic, and heterogeneous planning" process (Community Input Forum 2003, p. 8). As conveyed, in the beginning stages of the park, both residents and Friends of the High Line emphasized the significance of community engagement and of the utilization of planning methods that best served the particular essence of the West Chelsea neighborhood.

In order to fulfill this prerequisite for transparency and inclusive community planning, Friends of the High Line staff regularly emailed community residents interested in the organization's progress with confirming financial sources, design plans, and the final public-private partnership with the New York City Parks and Recreation Department (Hammond & David 2011, p. 110). Many of the newsletters provided detailed information about the topics discussed at the meetings, as well as planned fundraising events and future opportunities for community input. Although, a noble attempt to update West Chelsea community residents through these emailed newsletters, the indubitable problem arises from the prospect that not all community residents may have had access to the internet or email services. Therefore the loss of a valuable perspective of the High Line from an underrepresented sector of the community is highly probable.

In addition to this certain West Chelsea sector's unaccounted status, Friends of the High Line sometimes ignored suggestions made by the community residents who did participate in the community input forums. However, the distinction between these two circumstances is that Hammond was very candid about the nonprofit's inattention to some of the community's suggestions. For example, he stated, "We didn't always listen to the community at all. It was dialogue, and when we didn't do something the community wanted we explained why" (Beyond the High Line podcast 2011). Hammond's frankness demonstrates the honest manner in which he ultimately attempted to employ inclusive citizen planning methods and sometimes sacrifice residents concerns in order to progress in constructing the High Line. Community engagement methods and resident suggestions were incorporated to a certain degree, yet Friends of the High Line generally decided upon final actions that they deemed best served community interests and moved the process along.

As discussed earlier, appeasing all residents' suggestions is impossible within the participatory planning model, but Friends of the High Line certainly made valid efforts. Even with the possibility of deviating from participant suggestions, Friends of the High Line remained committed to including the community in the final park design. Although the landscape architecture firm James Corner Field Operations and architects Diller Scofidio + Renfro were mainly chosen as the High Line design team by Friends of the High Line and the Bloomberg administration, the Friends of the High Line exhibited four of the narrowed down designs to the public in the Center for Architecture from July 16 to August 14, 2003. During this period of time, residents were able to visit the exhibits and view the finalists' proposed designs (Four Teams Four Visions 2003). The final design team was decided by voting at City Hall.

Once the decision was made and the time came for James Corner Field Operations and Diller Scofidio + Renfro to begin designs for the park, Friends of the High Line prioritized taking the design team into the community routinely (Hammond and David 2011, p. 95). Nicolai Ouroussoff, former architecture critic for *The New York Times*, praised the High Line as a community-initiated project. Specifically, he praised the final park design as a representation of

Friends of the High Line's "genuine sensitivity...to the public realm" (Ouroussoff 2004). Ouroussoff commended Friends of the High Line for its concern for West Chelsea residents' values through the creation of a urban space that served the public of New York City.

Additionally, once the design team publicly presented their tentative designs, Friends of the High Line held a community input meeting on May 3, 2005 in which residents asked questions about the project. Four hundred residents attended this meeting at the Bohemian Foundation in the Meat Packing District. During the meeting, residents asked questions and wrote any lingering ones they had down on a piece of paper that was later collected by Friends of the High Line.

In the following newsletter, Friends of the High Line along with insight from the design team and the City of New York, answered the community's questions with concise detail and straightforward assertions of the following steps that would be undertaken. For example, one particular question touched upon whether or not there would be a section of the High Line that would remain untouched in order to celebrate its "rusty and ruined" beauty (Question & Answer Session 2005, p.4). The newsletter precisely explained that structural remediation and restoration would be necessary in order to allow for pedestrians to safely walk on it, once completed. In sum, the newsletter displayed detailed responses to the residents' questions and provided logical explanations as to why the design team proposed the plans that they did. The design team's meeting with the West Chelsea community is another example in which Friends of the High Line exemplified community engagement methods during the design process of the park.

Another example of Friends of the High Line's commitment to engaging the West Chelsea community is their call for someone to fulfill the position of Community Engagement Manager. This job title was featured in the March 12, 2004 newsletter. Friends of the High Line explicated that one of the main responsibilities of the position was to serve as the principle liaison between the design team and the overseeing committee consisting of Friends of the High Line and representatives of the City of New York. Additionally, the position was described as necessitating a coordination of community input meetings with the design team and community representatives. Seeking such an employee who was expected to fulfill these duties, demonstrates Friends of the High Line's dedication and value of nurturing and engaging the existing West Chelsea community into the High Line project (E-Mail Newsletter 2004).

## **Conclusion**

In summation, the above discussion conveys that Friends of the High Line implemented participatory planning methods that facilitated involvement from the West Chelsea community and fostered a community-driven public park installment. Their primary use of community input forums and emailed newsletters to West Chelsea residents demonstrate the nonprofit organization's efforts of incorporating citizen perspective in the planning phases of the public park the High Line. Friends of the High Line and, specifically, Robert Hammond and Joshua David executed a visionary urban design project with tremendous focus paid to the West Chelsea community and its residents. However, implications that the High Line may be a physical representation of the urban elite that currently exist in the West Chelsea neighborhood and the Friends of the High Line remains a convincing possibility.

Although created as a public space meant to engage the entire community, the High Line is a product of the collaborative efforts of an already affluent community steeped in favorable resources. Friends of the High Line cleverly mobilized these preexisting resources; they did not

necessarily provide them to a disempowered community. Therefore transforming the long-abandoned High Line into a sleek new public park was a relatively seamless process for Friends of the High Line, as they did not spend time supplying resources to a community, rather they skipped that step to simply enact their objectives with assets they already had available to them.

While Friends of the High Line's intentions were noble and seemingly authentic, the finished High Line and its transformative effect on both the physical and social landscape of the neighborhood demand further questioning and analysis. A neighborhood that had already been greatly impacted by sweeping gentrification since the late 80s may have experienced an increase in gentrification since the installment of the High Line, as the area is overrun by new real-estate developments of high-end condominiums, hotels, and loft conversions in expensive new residential spaces.

Additionally, the High Line remains an indicator of the strong and indelible industrial past of New York City, but the urban elites who reside in the neighborhood may have amplified the marginalization of the working-class population still residing in the West Chelsea neighborhood. Such conclusions are strictly based off of my interpretations of the Friends of the High Line cofounders Robert Hammond and Joshua David's coauthored book *High Line: The Inside Story of New York City's Park in the Sky* (2011), in which their assessment of the park since its inception conveys that they had sufficient help from people possessing funding assets, expertise and knowledge, and advantageous connections with high-status individuals in society.

Although the two former West Chelsea residents, Hammond and David, initiated the High Line project and maintained it as a community-based undertaking, this particular urban planning project directly challenges how urban planners and urban designers need to think about applying the participatory planning model to affluent communities, or in other words, communities already robust in resources. While their methods of including the affluent sectors of the community may facilitate genuine citizen participation, the potential of exclusion of the working-class population is unquestionable.

Since the most basic definition of participatory planning advocates for the involvement of everyday, ordinary people within the planning decisions of their community, empowering the often marginalized sections of a neighborhood is generally associated with its essential definition. Therefore this generally presumed delineation of participatory planning has resulted in inadequate research devoted to effective application of participatory planning methods to affluent and gentrified neighborhoods. Innovating this method of urban planning in such a way that allows for collaboration with both the affluent people of a community as well as the disempowered could allow for more genuine participatory urban planning projects in neighborhoods with similar evolving social landscapes and built environments to that of West Chelsea, New York City.

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