

# THE LANDSCAPE OF GENTRIFICATION

*The debate roars on in cities across the country: is the work of landscape architects in urban communities “revitalization” or “gentrification?” Many U.S. cities have been making significant investment in urban green space, but is the after-math of these investments greater or worse for the social, economic, and environmental conditions of city neighborhoods? This panel discussion will examine the mutual relationship of landscape architecture and gentrification and consider how we can improve communities without displacing the very people we are working to help.*

## Gentrification

The process of a renewal and rebuilding accompanying the influx of middle-class or affluent people into deteriorating areas that often displaces poorer residents

## Environmental Gentrification

## Green Gentrification

## Political Ecologies of Gentrification

## Eco-Gentrification

The phenomenon of gentrification through sustainable urban development.

## Learning Objectives

Understand the causes of gentrification.

Learn about the current arguments for and against gentrification.

Understand the potential role of landscape architecture in gentrification and displacement, and the ethical questions it raises.

Learn about key strategies to limit and/or slow project impacts on community socioeconomic and/or race/ethnic status.

## Categories

Instructional Level: Intermediate

Primary Topic: Social and Environmental Justice

Secondary Topic: Community Engagement

### Investment without Gentrification?

Three to Four years ago Detroiters thought gentrification was many, many years away. Some people would say: We did not have anything to worry about with regard to gentrification. Today, this thinking has changed. Now, the question is - how can we obtain the amenities that come along with gentrification without being displaced or relocated? Can a neighborhood or a district have the investment gentrification brings without the displacement?

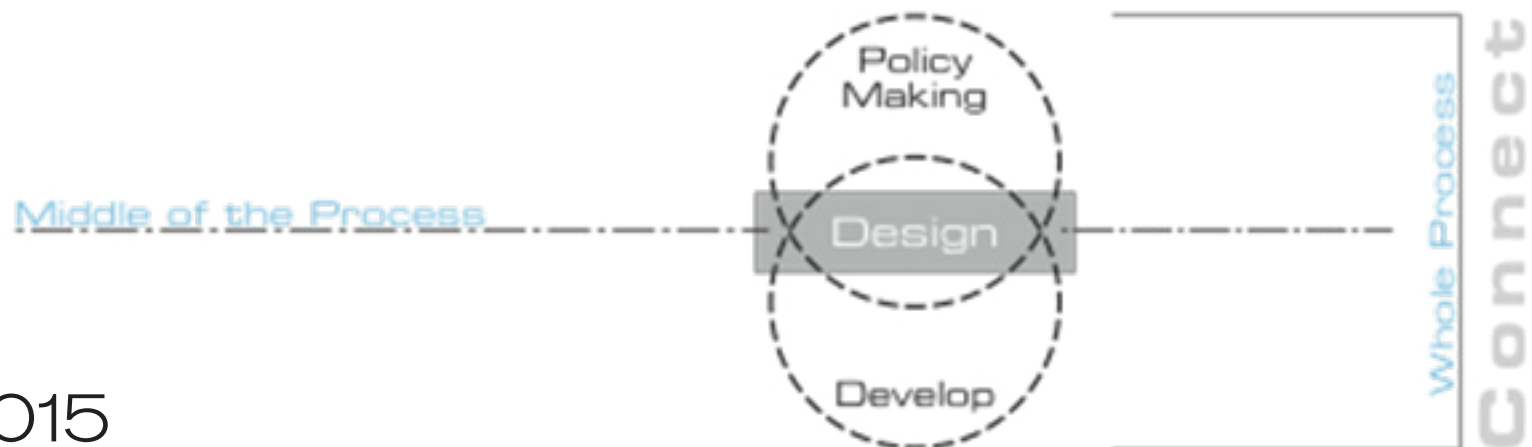
### Mosaics and Tapestries

Tiles in a mosaic have both individual identities while connecting with other tiles to make a bigger picture. Like the tiles in a mosaic, each person in a community influences and connects with other people to create a bigger picture of the community. Each person still retains her individual identity while creating larger community impact. Mosaic of Civic Engagement Tactics for a Mosaic of People.

When considering the engagement and participation process in an area that is seeing or is going to see gentrification, civic engagement tactics should be designed that connect newcomers and existing residents so they better understand each other.

### Thinking Beyond the Design of Buildings

Designers should always remind themselves that all policies ultimately create designed places that touch people's hearts and stimulate their minds. But even though policies create places, beautifully designed places cannot happen without thoughtful policy. It is important for designers to engage the whole process of making cities and spaces—from influencing policy decisions, to design to creative ways to develop community driven projects.



## **Displacement is central to the experience of gentrification.**

That has been the central tenet of the term since it was coined by Ruth Glass in 1964. Displacement may take many forms and need not only be physical.

**Environmental gentrification** is a more recent phenomenon that may look different from previous waves of gentrification but accomplishes the same thing. Checker (2011) defines environmental gentrification as “the convergence of urban redevelopment, ecologically minded initiatives and environmental activism in an era of advanced capitalism. Operating under the seemingly a-political rubric of sustainability, environmental gentrification builds on the material and discursive successes of the urban environmental justice movement and appropriates them to serve high-end redevelopment that displaces low-income residents.” e.g. New York’s High Line and Chicago’s 606 trail

## **For development to be sustainable, it must be equitable.**

Environmental gentrification is not sustainable because it results in the displacement of long-term residents and other land uses.

## **An alternative: “JUST GREEN ENOUGH”**

Accomplish clean up without gentrification and, therefore, displacement.

### **HOW TO BE “JUST GREEN ENOUGH”**

- Intensive community outreach and involvement
- Respect for context/ history
- Smaller scale interventions
- Rethink what counts as “green” and “environmental”

Landscape architects face a quandary: how can we enhance the public realm in low income neighborhoods with the greatest need for additional green space, without fueling gentrification and displacement? Several strategies should be considered, involving meaningful community engagement, proposing 'just green enough' projects and projects with multiple goals that support low income communities, programming spaces to serve intended user groups, and simply avoiding projects that will

## Strategies for Designing without Displacement

1. **Involve community members** and organizations to understand the range of their needs and concerns as first step of design process.
2. Make projects '**just green enough**' to meet community needs without attracting developer attention.
3. Design projects to yield **multiple-benefits**, such as environmental remediation, job preservation, affordable housing, or food security.
4. **Program** as well as design projects, with programs that appeal to intended users rather than gentrifiers.
5. **Walk away** and let professional colleagues know why.



**Dan Pitera** - Executive Director | Detroit Collaborative Design Center

Dan Pitera, FAIA is a political and social activist masquerading as an architect. He views the design profession as an essential force in establishing human relationships and engagement. He co-led the Civic Engagement process for the Detroit Works Project initiated by Mayor Bing, which released its framework titled: Detroit Future City. Mr. Pitera was a 2005 Harvard University Loeb Fellow. The DCDC won two Dedalo Minosse International Prizes and was included twice in the Venice Biennale in Architecture, US Pavilion.



**Winifred Curran PhD** - Associate Professor of Geography | DePaul University

Dr. Winifred Curran is an associate professor of geography at DePaul University. Her research has focused on understanding the effects of gentrification on the urban landscape, looking at labor, policing, education, environmental gentrification and the gendering of urban policy in New York, Chicago, London and Mexico City. She is currently working on a book about gender and gentrification. She received her PhD from Clark University.



**Jennifer Wolch PhD** - William W. Wurster Dean; Professor of City and Regional Planning | UC Berkeley

Jennifer Wolch is a scholar of urban analysis and planning. Her past work focused on urban homelessness and the delivery of affordable housing and human services for poor people. She has also studied urban sprawl and alternative approaches to city-building such as smart growth and new urbanism. Her most recent work analyzes connections between city form, physical activity, and public health, and develops strategies to address environmental justice issues by improving access to urban parks and recreational resources.



**Kathleen King** - Landscape Designer | Design Workshop, Inc.

Kathleen King is a landscape and urban designer at Design Workshop's Denver office. She earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Michigan and a Master of Landscape Architecture from the University of Colorado at Denver, where she continues to serve as a research mentor. She has a strong interest in the role of community engagement and emerging social media technology in urban design and planning processes. Kathleen's projects emphasize the possibility of public spaces to be reflective of the people who use them while providing long-term benefits for cities, their environments, businesses, and character.

## Recommended Reading

1. Beattey, Timothy and Kristy Manning. *The Ecology of Place Planning for Environment, Economy, and Community*. Washington, DC., Island Press, 1997.
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3. Byrne, J. (2012). When green is White: The cultural politics of race, nature and social exclusion in a Los Angeles urban national park. *Geoforum*, 43(3), 595–611.
4. Byrne, J. (2013). Greenspace planning: Problems with standards, lessons from research, and examples of best practice. *CityGREEN*, 6, 50–55.
5. Checker, M. (2011). Wiped out by the Greenwave: Environmental gentrification and the paradoxical politics of urban sustainability. *City and Society*, 23, 210–229.
6. Curran, Winifred. “From the Frying Pan to the Oven’: Gentrification and the Experience of Industrial Displacement in Williamsburg, Brooklyn.” *Urban Studies* July (2007) 44: 1427-1440. doi:10.1080/00420980701373438
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8. Fainstein, Susan S. *The Just City*. Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 2010.
9. J. DeSena, & T. Shortell (Eds.), *The World in Brooklyn: Gentrification, immigration, and ethnic politics in a global city*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.
10. Hester, R. T. (2006). *Design for Ecological Democracy*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
11. Malizia, Emil E. and Edward J. Fesser. *Understanding Local Economic Development*. New Brunswick, NJ, CUPR Press Rutgers, 2000.
12. Robertson, Margaret. *Sustainability Principles and Practice*, New York, NY, Rutledge, 2014.
13. Wolch, Jennifer R, Jason Byrne and Joshua P. Newell. (2014) “Urban green space, public health and environmental justice: The challenge of making cities ‘just green enough.’” *Landscape and Urban Planning*. 125: 234-244.



