Public investment is complicated.

The spaces, structures, utilities, programming, and financial systems that public money builds and maintains have been used to both empower and weaken communities. Publicly-funded highways decimated low-income neighborhoods during urban renewal; public investment in social services has successfully mitigated some of the worst effects of poverty in communities that have received public funds. Public investment in struggling urban centers has resulted in economic upturns for some areas; it has also prompted massive displacement and cultural erasure for some of the people who lived in those communities.

Very recently, our physical public spaces have become grounds for ideological battles. Millions of protesters marched - and continue to march - across roads, highways, parks, and public transportation after the 2016 presidential election. These explosions are the latest in a lineage of protest about how city, state, and federal governments spend public money: the last decade has seen massive civic responses to military spending, taxation, education reform, and brutality exacted against communities of color by publicly-funded police.

It’s obvious that decisions made today about how to spend public money will affect our built and social environments - and the well-being of our communities - for decades to come; and that the goal of public investment shifts depending upon the politics and prejudices of decision-makers. But at Hunter, we believe that public investment is for the public good - for constructing physical spaces that encourage different people to gather together, for creating opportunity and social services have successfully mitigated some of the worst effects of poverty in communities that have received public funds. Public investment in struggling urban centers has resulted in economic upturns for some areas; it has also prompted massive displacement and cultural erasure for some of the people who lived in those communities.

We hope that these perspectives will help readers aim a critical lens at public investment choices, and to ask questions about who benefits - and who loses - when public investment determines our social and built environments.
IN MEMORIAM

PETER KWONG

I want to first admit that I did not know Peter Kwong for very long. I started my Master’s in Urban Planning at Hunter in the fall of 2016, and I took Peter’s Politics of Gentrification class, focusing on Chinatown, in my first semester. Even in that short time however, knowing Peter and learning from him had a profound effect on me. That is one of many testimonials to how great, how brilliant Peter Kwong was.

Peter’s class was one that I looked forward to every week, one that made me feel in my first semester at Hunter that yes, I had made the right decision in choosing this program. Unlike many academics, who speak as if they are far away from their subject matter, Peter was refreshingly real. He spoke about topics that he knew, and knew intimately, and he did not - as he would say - talk bullshit. This sincerity came through in his teaching style. He took our entire class on a tour of Manhattan’s Chinatown on a Sunday morning early in the semester, because he wanted us to understand experientially - and not just theoretically - the topic we were studying. Along the trip, he asked us to observe the elderly folks gathered in Columbus Park, the herbal shops and clothing shops that Asian people from all over the NY metro area were coming to visit, the hustle of the grocery stores and small businesses, the incongruous art galleries and newly built hotels. He wanted us not to think as though they were all taken for granted - as part of some natural and unavoidable economic process, but are the product of a particular political and policy environment - zoning laws, tax abatements, real estate lobbying, tenant protection laws or lack thereof. By deepening our understanding of Chinatown, we learned how to see its gentrification not as an abstract, immutable concept but rather a process that is subjective, evolving, felt, and most importantly preventable.

I also learned from Peter that Chinatown reflects a part of American history - a history of racism, exclusion, immigration quotas, and exploitation - that the dominant Anglo-centric narratives of history and, particularly, the current administration, would rather forget. In the days after Peter’s death, searching for his voice as a film-maker, I came across a recording of Peter speaking on a panel at an event called “Chinatown is Not For Sale”, hosted by the Chinatown Art Brigade. In the midst of Q&A with the audience, Peter suddenly interjects another speaker: “I have to stop this conversation,” he interjects emphatically. “People are constantly thinking that Chinese are new immigrants, which is not true. Chinese came here in the middle of the 19th century, one of the earliest immigrant groups in the United States...so don’t make us to think somehow we are newcomers! The reason we are newcomers is because of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882...people think, ‘Oh, you guys are new immigrants.’ Forget it! We are one of the earliest ones.”

Peter’s words - and more than his words, the emotion behind them - struck me, and stayed with me for days. The urgency in his voice was a powerful and poignant testament to why we need Peter and his work, his knowledge now more than ever - to remind those who wish to make America “great” again that this country is not, and has never been, a country of “natives-born” white Anglo-Saxon Christians; to remind our current President that to be a person of color in America is not synonymous with non-citizen, with new arrival, with criminal. This is the message we need. Peter and his work, his knowledge now more than ever - to remind those who wish to make America “great” again that this country is not, and has never been, a country of “natives-born” white Anglo-Saxon Christians; to remind our current President that to be a person of color in America is not synonymous with non-citizen, with new arrival, with criminal. This is the message we need.

As with his scholarship and journalism, Kwong’s journalism appeared in such outlets as The Nation, Village Voice, International Herald Tribune, and Philadelphia Inquirer. He was frequently interviewed by the New York Times and other major news outlets. His essay on multi-cultural race riots in Los Angeles, published in the Village Voice in 1992, merited the Sidney Hillman Foundation Prize, the George Polk Award, and was nominated for the Pulitzer Prize. His 1990 article in the Village Voice on Chinese drug cartels, co-authored with Dušanka Miscevic, was also nominated for a Pulitzer.

Kwong and his wife “Douska” reciprocated in their relationship. “People are constantly thinking that Chinese people who come here in the middle of the 19th century, one of the earliest immigrant groups in the United States...so don’t make us to think somehow we are newcomers.”

Joseph P. Viteritti
Thomas Hunter Professor of Public Policy Chair, Urban Policy and Planning Department

Members and Friends of the Urban Policy and Planning Community mourn the loss of Professor Peter Kwong, who passed away on Friday, March 17th. Professor Kwong had been a member of the Hunter faculty since 1993, where he was a Distinguished Professor in the Urban Policy and Planning Department and a Professor of Asian-American Studies. He was also a member of the doctoral faculty in Sociology at the CUNY Graduate Center. In our department, he regularly taught a workshop for incoming students in the graduate program in Urban Policy and Leadership, and courses on immigration and the gentrification of Chinatown. Over his career, he taught as a Visiting Professor at Fudan University in Shanghai, the City University of Hong Kong, and the People’s University of China, as well as Princeton, Oberlin, Yale, Columbia, Berkeley, and UCLA.

Peter Kwong was born in Chungking China in 1941. He came to this country to attend Whitman College in Walla Walla, Washington, where he received a B.A. in math and physics. He subsequently earned a B.S. in Civil Engineering at Columbia University before enrolling at Columbia to get a certificate in East Asian Studies and a Ph.D. in political science.

Kwong had a passionate commitment to issues of social justice and a long record of activism concerning conditions in the Asian-American community. His career spanned the fields of scholarship, journalism and film-making, all directed to improve the lives of people who were marginalized by discrimination or social deprivation. A recent article in New York Magazine referred to him as the “Dean of Chinatown Studies.”

Kwong was the author of five books and hundreds of articles. Among them were Chinese America: The Untold Story of America’s Oldest New Community, which he co-authored with his wife, Dušanka Miscevic, a historian and frequent collaborator; Forbidden Workers: Illegal Chinese Immigrants and American Labor; and The New Chinatown. Kwong challenged the notion that Asians are a minority, revealing in his research widespread class divisions, poverty, exploitation, drug abuse, and organized crime -- all of which were exacerbated by decades of discrimination by a majority white society. At the time of his death, Kwong and his wife were completing a history of Chinese immigration in the western United States, and he was beginning to work on an autobiography.

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Eliza Hetterly
Hunter MUP Candidate
Like so many American cities, Baltimore has suffered from the decline of the manufacturing industry. Until the 1950s, Baltimore’s port area and waterfront area were vital to the city’s economic development, municipal expansion, and industrialization. However, when America’s manufacturing industry declined in the 1940s, Baltimore’s waterfront, commonly known as the Inner Harbor, was abandoned. The erosion of the waterfront served as a stark indicator of the city’s health after deindustrialization and white flight emptied the urban center.

Economic development efforts began in the 1950s with the construction of the Charles Center, Maryland Science Center, M&T Bank Stadium, and several offices and residential developments. In 2009, the Urban Land Institute awarded the Inner Harbor the prestigious Heritage Award, declaring it a model for post-industrial waterfront development.

Today, the Inner Harbor continues to be the focus of economic revitalization efforts as Baltimore officials and business owners attempt to both expand and protect waterfront development. Operating under the belief that investment in Inner Harbor could have a positive “trickle-down” effect on Baltimore, the Inner Harbor was chosen as a protest space. The effects of such inequality are disastrous. On April 25, 2015, Baltimore exploded in violent protests after Freddie Gray, a young African-American man, sustained fatal injuries while in police custody. His death was one of many recent controversial instances of African-American men dying after confrontations with the police, such as Eric Garner, Trayvon Martin and Michael Brown, Jr. Freddie Gray was a resident of Sandtown-Winchester/Harlem Park, a neighborhood where household poverty and unemployment rates are about three times higher than the rest of the United States.

During the Baltimore riots, the Inner Harbor experienced a high concentration of violent incidents, as evidenced by Figure 2. While the unrest started at Mondawmin Mall on April 25, 2015, after youths and rioters called for a “purge” (reference: the movie The Purge where crime is legal for one day) on social media, rioters ultimately organized to march and vandalize the Inner Harbor. Rioters, many of them young, black, and poor, destroyed a local CVS in the Inner Harbor as an act of protest against wealth inequality, prompting the mayor of Baltimore to call the protesters “thugs.”

The Freddie Gray riots prompted four important questions that will be discussed:

1. Were the Freddie Gray riots driven by issues beyond race and police brutality?
2. Why was the Inner Harbor chosen as a protest space?
3. Has there been unequal investment in the Inner Harbor, respective to rest of Baltimore?
4. Were the protesters correct that the Inner Harbor benefited unfairly?

AN ANALYSIS OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PRACTICES

BY SERIN CHOI

Within these 600 articles, several words were analyzed. Two words were used to provide context to the narrative—police brutality and racism. To assess if the narrative behind the Freddie Gray riots was indeed focused on economic inequality, the words poverty, inequality and jobs were counted. For the purposes of this article, the words job and inequality were only counted when it directly referred to the state of Baltimore’s economy.

METHODS

To answer these questions, the following research methods were administered:

1. Were the Freddie Gray riots driven by issues beyond race and police brutality?
A quantitative analysis of national newspaper coverage was conducted to assess the common narrative of the protesters and the perception of the Freddie Gray riots. All articles that were published by newspapers with a national audience from April 25, 2015 to May 5, 2015 that mentioned the words Inner Harbor for a total of 41 times. Those articles were analyzed to determine the popular narrative behind Inner Harbor during the Freddie Gray riots.

2. Why was the Inner Harbor chosen as a protest space?
A fiscal analysis of all corporate subsidies given to companies in Baltimore from 2005-2014 was conducted. This time frame was chosen to establish the city and state’s economic development trends, directly leading up to the riots. Data from the Good Jobs First (a non-profit watchdog of corporate subsidies in the United States) was analyzed. For the purposes of this paper, only subsidies made in amounts of over $100,000 were studied. Smaller state and city subsidies were discounted because they were often not tied to jobs/training slots. The following data points were examined:

• Subsidies are defined as tax breaks, low interest loans, tax abatements, and tax rebates awarded by city or state agencies.
• Total number of jobs or training slots promised in return for the subsidies.
• Total amount of subsidies made by state and city agencies for companies in Baltimore that are not located in the Inner Harbor.

3. Has there been unequal investment in the Inner Harbor, respective to rest of Baltimore?
A qualitative media analysis was done to examine the context of how the Inner Harbor was discussed from April 25, 2015 to May 5, 2015. Within the 600 national articles that discussed the Freddie Gray riots, 36 articles mentioned the words Inner Harbor for a total of 41 times. Those articles were analyzed to determine the popular narrative behind Inner Harbor during the Freddie Gray riots.

4. Were the protests correct that the Inner Harbor benefited unfairly?

The data indicates that the Freddie Gray riots were substantially driven by economic inequality. Furthermore, Inner Harbor is rightfully chosen as a protest place. The results are discussed below.

1. Were the Freddie Gray riots driven by race beyond race and police brutality?

The Freddie Gray riots were significantly driven by economic inequality. In the examination of the national coverage of the Freddie Gray riots, the worse news and police brutality were the two most common words mentioned. Figure 4 indicates that the poverty word was mentioned in six more articles than the words police brutality.

A. Protesters viewed the Inner Harbor as a physical manifestation of unfair investment by the city.

In response to the destruction of a CVS, a drug-store in the Inner Harbor, a New York Telegraph article said: “It isn’t always the same people who are the victims”.

At the Mondawmin Mall – closed and guarded on Tuesday after looters ransacked stores and knocks Monday – Baltimore’s mayor, Stephanie Rawlings-Blake, answered the damage and spoke of how few local officials had worked to bring Target to the mall and CVS to the corner of West North and Pennsylvania Avenues [Inner Harbor]. The CVS is not able to endure.

“Too bad all that work up in smoke, it’s painful. It’s very painful,” she said. But for some residents, the development the mayor cited as achievements only emphasized the paltry prospects for poor neighborhoods.

“This is the land that time forgot,” said Akins Smol, who grew up in West Baltimore.

“They want it as easy the CV-S is the Taj Mahal. They have dilapidated buildings everywhere. They have never been in the plantation. In fact, it’s deserted. They take every red cent they can from poor black people and put it into the Inner Harbor.”

“Whether the protest is a leader and sought-after speaker during last week’s rallies.

The Boston Globe reported of young organizer on May 4, 2015. It had been a week since the start of the riots, and Baltimore had lifted its curfew. The organizer discussed what message he hopes was conveyed!

Kawane Rose stood with a balloon in his hand in the middle of a crowd that has gathered for a 2.5 mile walk from Gilmore House, a public housing project where Gray grew up in West Baltimore, to City Hall.

“Are you estimated? Excited for protest? Excited for change?” the 20-year-old shouted at a row of cheer and applause. Rose, who was home-schooled by his father, quickly became a leader and sought-after speaker during last week’s rallies.

“The youth of Baltimore answered that we are called demand change,” he said. “We want the same funding going into the Inner Harbor going into these houses.”

B. Protestors were frustrated by the city and state’s focus on the security of the Inner Harbor.

On April 28, 2015, a Major League Baseball game at Camden Yards in Baltimore’s Inner Harbor was cancelled due to concerns about fans’ safety. The Los Angeles Times covered the governor’s decision to send in National Guard to Baltimore.

As protests and outbreaks of violence continue to rumble Baltimore after the death of Freddie Gray, the city’s suburb showed their extra finals against the White Sox in the public, an unprecedented event in major American sports. officials worried about the safety of the fans and clashes between fans and protesters. Camden Yards sits near the densest suburbs of Inner Harbor’s Inner Harbor, which has undergone a renewal starting in the 1990s, and the poorer neighborhoods of West Baltimore, where much of the violence has occurred.

Three days after the protest started, a reporter from the Washington Post spoke to Reverend Frank Reid, a prominent local pastor. A local community was destroyed during the riots, and the Reverend Reid spoke about his frustration with the police protection in his neighborhood.

Reid, in obvious frustration, raise some uncomfortable questions. “If the malfunctions had gone to the Inner Harbor, would we have seen that burning? The police would have prevented it.” The Inner Harbor is the tourist district. Some communities seem more expendable that others.

2. Were the protestors correct that the Inner Harbor has been the recipient of unequal investment?

The protesters were correct that the Inner Harbor received a disproportionately larger amount of public investment. According to Good Community Jobs, from 2005-2014, $988,863 of corporate subsidies were awarded to businesses in Baltimore. Figure 5 indicates that of the near billion dollars of subsidies, 94.6% went to businesses located in the Inner Harbor and only 5.4% went to companies located outside of the Inner Harbor neighborhoods.

This unequal investment had a significant impact. While not all corporate subsidies were tied to jobs creation, more jobs were promised in the Inner Harbor than for the rest of Baltimore. As Figure 6 indicates, 24,866 jobs were promised because of the city and state’s investment into Inner Harbor companies, but only 2,239 jobs were promised to the rest of Baltimore. This is especially impactful when examining job growth in the Inner Harbor and the rest of Baltimore. As discussed in Figure 7 between 2005-2010, the number of jobs in the Inner Harbor increased by 9,489 jobs, while the rest of Baltimore only saw an increase of 2,487 jobs. As discussed above, the disparity of job growth between the Inner Harbor and the rest of Baltimore could be attributed to the additional $880,000 of corporate subsidies that the Inner Harbor received between the period of 2005-2014.

B. Disproportionate amount of new jobs went to suburban communities.

Between 2005 to 2014, the city of Baltimore had an increase of 24,163 jobs. Of those jobs, 29,861 went to commuters from outside the city limits. To complicate matters, since the 1970s, the number of jobs in downtown Baltimore has more than doubled to 60,000, but the majority of those jobs have gone to suburban commuters. Employment in the city is down by almost 50% compared to employment rates in the 1970s. The effects are not racially blind – today, almost 50% of Baltimore’s working-age black males are unemployed, and 38% of 20-24 year-old black males are neither in school nor employed.

CONCLUSION

Although the initial development efforts of the Inner Harbor began more than 60 years ago, investments into the Inner Harbor have been continued under the city’s and businesses’ promises that the concentrated economic growth will radiate out to the rest of the city. However, it is clear that the purported goal was not accomplished – while the number and strength of jobs in the Inner Harbor has grown, the rest of Baltimore has had no such luck. On April 25, 2015, Freddie Gray’s death prompted a citywide call for change. For too long, Baltimore has engaged in racist and exclusionary economic development efforts, with disastrous consequences for the black residents. While the city provided a moveable feast for the large corporations and wealthy white suburbanites, the rest of the city suffered.

Although the city of Baltimore should absolutely address criminal justice and citywide poverty issues, the first step they should take is to reallocate investment efforts from the Inner Harbor to other parts of the city. The symbolic destruction of the Inner Harbor should serve as a catalyst for Baltimore to redeploy its economic development efforts to neighborhoods outside of the Inner Harbor.
In the early decades of the twentieth century, extreme housing inequality motivated American reformers to advocate for the direct government provision of housing. The public housing programs that emerged provided affordable housing on an unprecedented scale, resulting in over one million units throughout the country (and nearly 150,000 in New York City alone).

Nevertheless, the program had been compromised at its inception by a series of legislative battles that impacted financing, development sites, and public housing tenancy. Design and construction shortcuts, along with defeating rent rolls, contributed to many buildings’ rapid decline; urban disinvestment and its embrace of a holistic approach to revitalization. With its Choice Neighborhoods Initiative, presenting the $3 billion (and counting) Plan for Transformation, the Obama Administration responded to the expense of former site tenants. In 2010, the Obama Administration responded to these failures with the introduction of the Choice Neighborhoods Initiative, presenting it as a departure from HOPE VI. While HOPE VI ostensibly sought to revitalize the nation’s most distressed public housing, it suffered from many of the same vulnerabilities and persisting poverty.

The dismantling of public housing began with the 1971 demolition of Pruitt-Igoe in St. Louis, Missouri, and continued in the 1980s with the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) passively supporting de facto demolition, whereby local housing authorities would abandon properties through neglect and enforced vacancy. During Bill Clinton’s first term, however, Henry Cisneros “became the first HUD secretary to advocate openly for the demolition of public housing,” a policy that came to be embedded in HOPE VI. While HOPE VI ostensibly sought to revitalize the nation’s most distressed public housing stock, it was sharply criticized for its net loss of units and for facilitating gentrification at the expense of former site tenants. In 2010, the Obama Administration responded to these failures with the introduction of the Choice Neighborhoods Initiative, presenting it as a departure from HOPE VI. With its commitment to one-to-one unit replacement and its embrace of a holistic approach to community reinvestment, Choice was heralded as a fundamental shift that incorporates lessons learned from experiences of HOPE VI.

In this article, I will first examine the HOPE VI approach and the particular form it took with Chicago’s Plan for Transformation. I will compare this approach with that of Choice Neighborhoods, and I will show that Choice, much like its predecessor, failed on a similar, and similarly problematic, scale.

The Chicago Housing Authority’s Approach to Mixed-Income Redevelopment

Chicago is home to the second-largest housing authority in the country, at one point responsible for 34,099 physical units and nearly the same number of Section 8 vouchers. Its high-rise towers were constructed in a way that reinforced residential segregation, and its largest developments were later “mythologized” at sites of violence, drug use, and social decay that “deserved[ed] to be demolished.” Chicago’s “innovative” public housing (some of which was situated close to downtown and the lakefront) also served as a barrier to Mayor Richard M. Daley’s efforts at “tourism-led urban development.”

These spaces were psychologically, if not physically, remote from centers of wealth and power, and their mixed-income redevelopment was heralded as a strategy to address persistent urban poverty. The explicit rationale for the CHA’s Plan for Transformation was integration – “eradicating the barriers that have left public housing residents isolated in racially segregated, severely economically disadvantaged neighborhoods” – but it must also be understood within the larger context of urban redevelopment. It is hardly a coincidence that Chicago’s leaders fixed on a “solution” for public housing - mixed-income redevelopment – that also serves as an effective tool for revitalizing prime, but underutilized, inner-city land. The $3 billion (and counting) Plan for Transformation, which was designed according to HOPE VI principles and funded in part with HOPE VI dollars, encompasses voucher-based dispersal, demolition, and mixed-income private redevelopment. Since 1998, the Plan has displaced tens of thousands of CHA residents – in part because less than half the public housing units have been replaced. It is worth noting that this is by design. As Lawrence Vale and Erin Graves highlight in their assessment of the Plan for Transformation, less than 8,000 of the 25,000 units planned for revitalization were ever intended to be located in the mixed-income developments. “that relatively few 10-1999 [the term for original site tenants eligible for return] will end up in the new mixed-income communities,” they argue, “is therefore not a failure of the Plan; it is, rather, a premise of the Plan.”

And what of those replacement units that were built? Many were built with too few bedrooms to house larger CHA families, and returning residents have to re-apply for admission, pass background and drug tests, submit to regular apartment inspections, and be employed for more than 30 hours per week in order to gain entry.

In the name of integration, then, CHA tenants have frequently been displaced to different segregated, high-poverty neighborhoods. In the name of integration, many of those who have been permitted to return on redeveloped public housing sites are strangers on their own land, treated as third-class citizens and subjected to rules around behavior and tenancy from which other tenants are exempt. For these CHA tenants, the outcome resembles “incorporated exclusion, in which physical integration reproduces marginality and leads to withdrawal and alienation rather than engagement.” The Plan for Transformation raises significant questions about the role that mixed-income redevelopment plays in addressing persistent poverty.

Let us now consider the role that mixed-income redevelopment plays in urban regeneration. The area around the former Cabrini-Green project is illustrative. The development was situated a mere ten-minutes’ walk from the tony Gold Coast and bordered Chicago’s working-class Old City neighborhood. Since Cabrini has been demolished and redeveloped, the new mixed-income row houses compete with newer high-rise luxury condos. Xavier Apartments, one of the more recent developments, stands sixteen stories tall (undercutting arguments about the inherently problematic nature of high-rise design). It features a pool with cabanas, roof deck gym, indoor dog walk, and screening rooms for residents. If they wish to live the luxury and comfort of their apartment building, Xavier residents can walk to nearby Old Town, where the

Photo courtesy of Creative Commons

BY KATIE BRENNAN

Urban Review Spring 2017
main commercial strip has undergone significant upsizing in recent years. There, they can spend $35 on a spin class at theboutique fitness chain SoulCycle, and then another $6 on a latte at the neighboringIntelligentsia Coffee. And while Xavier is home to a handful of affordable units, private developers building onthe former Cabrini-Green site are not oblige to include them; Chicago’s Affordable Requirements Ordinance (ARO) “allows developers to pay into a pool in order to avoid building affordable units on site.”

Former site tenants have been ill-served bythis particular mixed-income approach allowed by HOPE VI, but the private sectorstands to profit tremendously. Through its HOPE VI-driven Plan for Transformation, the city facilitated the clearing and site preparation that survived slum clearance, the NPHM is abuts portions of Little Italy neighborhood of the CHA’s Jane Addams Homes. While it stands to profit tremendously. Through its HOPE VI, and Chicago’s Plan for Transformation. It is a Right of Return, nearly eighteen percent, that ever benefit from redevelopment; and the large number of Cha “10-1-1999 households” with a Right of Return, nearly eighteen percent, that likely “lost their housing assistance due to the Plan for Transformation.”

In response to these criticisms, the Obama Administration introduced the Choice Neighborhoods Initiative in 2010. Invoking the “persistence of Chicago, dating back to ‘back to an urban apartheid’,” Conte and Li argue, “the University of Chicago, merely promoting the interests of low-income many low-income Black residents.”

Cabrini-Green redeveloper Peter Holstein announced he was close to defaulting on his financial obligations, the state stepped in with a financial bailout. Holstein’s bailout package included early payment of a $3.4 million public subsidy, ironic considering the extent to which public housing has been depicted as a drain on public coffers. Other parcels, though, remain vacant for years after demolition. The future site of the National Public Housing Museum (NPHM), for instance, is the last remaining building of the CHA’s Jane Addams Homes. While it abuts portions of Little Italy neighborhood that survived slum clearance, the NPHM is surrounded by the rest of the Jane Addams site — empty land upon which no housing, market-rate or affordable, has been built, but from which Cha tenants were displaced. They will be redeveloped, it is assumed, once the housing market has rebounded sufficiently to ensure developers’ profits.

CHOICE NEIGHBORHOODS INITIATIVE

HOPE VI, and Chicago’s Plan for Transformation in particular, have been studied in great detail. Marking the tenth anniversary of HOPE VI, and Chicago’s Plan for Transformation in particular, have been studied in great detail. These studies and evaluations highlight the challenges faced by community housing developments associated with loss of affordable units; the lack of resident counseling services; the persistent uncertainty over how many original residents will ever benefit from redevelopment; and the large number of CHA “10-1-1999 households” with a Right of Return, nearly eighteen percent, that likely “lost their housing assistance due to the Plan for Transformation.”

In response to these criticisms, the Obama Administration introduced the Choice Neighborhoods Initiative in 2010. Invoking some of the same language of HOPE VI, Choice provides “flexible resources for local leaders to help transform high-poverty, distressed neighborhoods into mixed-income neighborhoods.” Unlike HOPE VI, however, Choice mandates a one-to-one unit replacement, and situates the mixed-income redevelopment within a more holistic approach to community revitalization. In Choice Neighborhoods, federal dollars drive public-private partnerships that work to “build affordable housing, provide social services, care for and educate children and youth, ensure public safety, and revitalize the neighborhood’s commercial opportunities and infrastructure.”

In 2011, the Woodlawn neighborhood of Chicago was named a Choice Neighborhood, and the team lead for the revitalization effort, Preservation of Affordable Housing (POAH), received $31 million of the $260 million needed to achieving these goals. According to POAH, the plan was born of resident opposition to the planned demolition of Grove Parc Plaza, a severely depressed SRO property. In its application to HUD, POAH promises new and replacement rental and for-sale housing; the revitalization of commercial corridors; employment and economic self-sufficiency services; and increased opportunities for youth. POAH’s plans include an exhaustive laundry list of services for current residents. Health services, for example, will include individual case managers, mobile health units, and family health programs that focus on children’s dental services, adult fitness, chronic condition management, post traumatic stress disorder. Workforce development services will include adult education, job coaching, and individualized financial counseling. The University of Chicago, which will implement a community jobs program, will dedicate a full-time staffer to “serve as a community hiring liaison between hiring managers in various University departments, community residents seeking employment…”

This has a ring quite distinctive to that of HOPE VI, but there are still concerns. In Woodlawn, for example, the community has a historically antagonistic relationship with the University of Chicago, dating back to “back to an urban apartheid.”

While Choice Neighborhoods appears to seek the economic and racial composition of poor communities. They purport to be doing for the poor themselves, but under HOPE VI, this has resulted in displacement and “incorporated exclusion.”

While Choice Neighborhoods appears to be an improvement, the program nevertheless continues to rely on social theories that sound sensible and logical but are supported by no empirical evidence. Mixed-income redevelopment may or may not offer improved outcomes for the poor, but it has a proven track-record for absorbing gentrification and private gain on formerly public property.

CONCLUSION

In their book Public Housing Myths, Bloom, Umbach, and Vale point to the “persistence of crime, poverty, and other social problems…even after the elimination of most public housing projects associated with those ill” and the questions this raises about “earlier scholarship and public policy that primarily blamed housing projects for a range of urban problems in poor neighborhoods.” Nearly all of Chicago’s high-rise public housing has been eliminated, “but this did not stop the city from becoming the murder capital of the United States in 2011.”If it was not the buildings themselves that caused the problems, the reasoning went, perhaps it was the people who lived in them. In particular the way these particular people lived when they lived together, the “concentration effect” that resulted from them being neighbors. This is what the mixed-income approach promises.

POAH’s plans include an exhaustive laundry list of services for current residents. Health services, for example, will include individual case managers, mobile health units, and family health programs that focus on children’s dental services, adult fitness, chronic condition management, post traumatic stress disorder. Workforce development services will include adult education, job coaching, and individualized financial counseling. The University of Chicago, which will implement a community jobs program, will dedicate a full-time staffer to “serve as a community hiring liaison between hiring managers in various University departments, community residents seeking employment…”

While Choice Neighborhoods appears to be an improvement, the program nevertheless continues to rely on social theories that sound sensible and logical but are supported by no empirical evidence. Mixed-income redevelopment may or may not offer improved outcomes for the poor, but it has a proven track-record for absorbing gentrification and private gain on formerly public property.
An Interview With

DR. LILLIAM BARRIOS-PAOLI

How did your career in government begin?

I started almost by accident. I was teaching at Rutgers, and had been there for two years. The commute was long and I wanted that to change. I had just gotten my PhD two years before, and was junior in the department, so it was really difficult. I needed a change, and I had a job offer to teach in Manhattan, but that fell through — that’s when the Koch administration offered me a job. I did not know what to expect, but I really liked it. I was very fortunate.

Where did you study for your undergraduate, and did you have an interest in policy then?

I did my undergraduate studies at the Universidad Iberoamericana in Mexico City. I have always had an interest in public policy.

You have worked under several administrations. What accomplishments are you most proud of?

There are a number of things I am very proud of. When I was commissioner of aging, we were able to redefine the programs in the senior centers and reallocate resources. In the Giuliani administration we did an extensive severance and redeployment program to streamline the municipal workforce. We also did the merger of the three existing police forces. I believe that I have been able to move agencies ahead and make changes for the good, and still work well with the advocacy community and with unions.

What was it like to transition from one administration into the next, when the incoming mayors didn’t necessarily agree with your values?

I never really went from one Mayoral Administration to the next, except from Bloomberg to De Blasio. I left the Koch administration and worked in the not for profit sector for 4 years. Then I joined the Giuliani Administration, but left after 5 years, and went back to the not for profit world for the next 10 years. However, I know that if you’re part of an administration and you believe that many things have been done to improve life in the City, if a new administration comes in and starts reversing the policies, it can be quite painful. I really liked working for Koch and I really liked working with Bloomberg. Bloomberg gave everyone a lot of freedom and a huge opportunity to make a difference.

What do you think is the most pressing issues facing New Yorkers today?

Income inequality, I think is the biggest issue. Poverty and income inequality. Homelessness is a symptom of that.

Why did you leave the De Blasio administration?

I felt that for different reasons I was not being as effective as I would have liked to have been, so it made no sense to stay.

Do you find it’s easier to effect change inside or outside of government?

Well, government is unique because of the scope. You can really have an impact on policy. In academia you have much more time to think and reflect on the changes you want to bring about. In government you spend a lot of time doing crisis management and damage control.

What led to you start teaching at Hunter?

I’ve had a long term relationship with Hunter. I began teaching here back in 1992 and taught on and off for twenty something years in the Urban Planning and Policy department. The day I resigned as Deputy Mayor I received a message from President Raab, and I knew that Hunter would be the next best step for me.

What projects are you currently working on?

I’m working primarily on a project called All in East Harlem. We are working on enhancing the presence of Hunter in East Harlem. The idea is to look at how can Hunter contribute to the well-being and betterment of the neighborhood and have a real impact. There are various projects to address issues surrounding health, chronic disease, cancer, and education in the community. There’s another project dealing with the East Harlem waterfront. We are working with planning groups and elected officials, and the idea is to make that area into a recreational area in the neighborhood that is accessible to all. There are going to be a lot of internship opportunities for students. The school of education and the school of urban planning will have internships, as well as other schools.

Is there any piece of advice that you would like to give to students?

Yes. If you’re really interested in policy, then everyone should spend some part of their career in government because it gives you a very unique experience.

Is there a must-read book you would recommend to students?

Yes -- Evicted by Mathew Desmond

Where do you think New York City is headed?

It is difficult to know where the City is heading. With the new Administration at the Federal level, there may be big cuts to the health and social services safety nets, and things may get even worse for poor people. Immigration has been a powerful driver for the city economy. The new immigration laws will undoubtedly jeopardize that. There are many unknowns ahead of us.

Is there anything else that you would like to add?

No.

Photo courtesy of Hunter College

Photo courtesy of Kimberly Cusumano
Sure, I’ll even go back to what inspired me to go to grad school. I got to travel quite a bit in my twenties, I had a seasonal job and I was able to travel during the off-season. I got to see all these amazing cities, one would have amazing parks, another would have amazing street life, another would have great transportation, and I wondered, “what makes for a good city?”

I think bike share is a catalyst, just in the awareness it brings to cycling. The visibility of it, the media coverage of it, most of the cities we are doing are already have some bike share infrastructure in place. Phoenix did not even have bike share infrastructure, but since they launched they’ve been expanding it. Hamilton, Ontario put in their first protected bike path the year that we launched and that has been hugely traffic. What’s interesting is that we can actually look at the data, because they do their own cycle counts on that bike lane.

Advocates in the community felt like the counts seemed low, so somebody actually looked at our data and showed the people using the lane was actually higher. They did a longer sampling on it and then a mile and a half down the road. The data showed what was that people would use it they would only use it for a few blocks. They would hop on the protected bike path and go on for it a few blocks, maybe half a mile, and then jump off of it. Usage was actually higher than they would record in the data. You were able to see that utilization was higher than what would have been identified.

To this day I think we are the only company that has real time GPS data, and not just the data but an easy way of viewing it in our browser, and exporting it into GIS tools. Most of our systems, the data is publicly available.

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I first read The Death and Life of Great American Cities when I was living in the historic center of Madrid. I picked up the book, translated into Spanish, at a nearby library, and I stopped at a street café on my way home to begin reading. Occasionally glancing beyond the paperback as I read, I quickly recognized the intimate urbanism that Jacobs describes so vividly within Manhattan’s human-scale, pedestrian-oriented streets. I had much more to do in my hometown of Chicago. While every page of Jacobs’ book carefully deconstructs the many social components and mechanisms of traditional city streets, I had left behind in Chicago.

Jane Jacobs was a brilliant urban thinker who not only produced powerful, commendable, and lucid interpretations of city design, life, and economics, but also successfully organized her community against large-scale, destructive urban projects and altered the path of urban planning. Upon further investigation, however, it becomes clear that her interpretations of the city—and her prescriptive cures for the ills that New York City faced—are not as well-founded or practical as one would expect given the prominent stature her work enjoys in the field of urban planning.

In this essay, I discuss two problems inherent to Jacobs’ The Death and Life of Great American Cities, and challenge its conclusions as applied to both Jacobs’ era and the present. First, I argue that Jacobs’ work fundamentally misunderstands the social forces underpinning the landscape-changing mega-projects that the author despised and rallied against. I also argue that Jacobs’ conclusions are premised on the existence of a cooperative community of individuals sharing similar values, when in fact the Madison city is often mired in pervasive contentiousness, distrust, and institutionalized racism.

SHAPING THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

In the introduction to The Death and Life, Jacobs states that the book “is an attack on the principles and aims that have shaped modem, orthodox city planning and rebuilding.” The focus of her attack is on the government planning apparatuses of American cities, which she believes were responsible for the urban renewal projects that razed old sections of cities and replaced them with dull modernist towers that “sealed off from and killed the streets. I also argue that Jacobs’ conclusions are premised on the existence of a community against large-scale, destructive urban projects and altered the path of urban planning. Upon further investigation, however, it becomes clear that her interpretations of the city—and her prescriptive cures for the ills that New York City faced—are not as well-founded or practical as one would expect given the prominent stature her work enjoys in the field of urban planning.

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With so many spindly new skyscrapers rising out of New York’s skyline in recent years, many residents have cried foul, claiming that the city is losing its soul. That these towers aren’t in keeping with New York’s architectural tradition. But New York has long been a place where old and new collide. Decade after decade, the old and antiquated are swept aside to make room for the newer, the bigger, the taller. Woodframe country estates and farmhouses were replaced by brick Federalist townhomes, which were in turn replaced by brownstone mansions, which were themselves replaced by highrise hotels and apartment blocks, which are now being replaced by glass-and-steel skyscrapers stretching more than one-thousand feet into the clouds. Right or wrong, this sense of change and the trepidation it brings is not a new phenomenon. Because of centuries of building and rebuilding. New York’s cityscape is a Rosetta Stone of architectural styles and urban development schemes unlike virtually any city on earth. New York has no one true architectural tradition, aside from change and chaos. The contrast is what makes this city what it is.
Located in a highly trafficked area and surrounded by community institutions and public transportation, Sohncke Square should be a lively public square. Instead, it is nothing more than a glorified median with a few low fences and a few benches. Pedestrians hurtle through it on their way to the 61st Street–Woodside 7 Train station or to church or school without pause. Woodside lacks open space, yet residents have one small Square. Residents have poor access to parks.

The city’s programming of public space drove the community to pursue a public square. Instead, it is nothing more than a glorified median with a few low fences and a few benches. Pedestrians hurtle through it on their way to somewhere else. Over the course of several days, 1.9 acres of park per 1,000 people, Woodside falls below the open space standard of 2.5 acres of park per 1,000 people set by the Mayor’s Office of Environmental Coordination. The average park to people ratio for New York City is 2.83.

Despite the lack of park options, very few residents use Sohncke Square as a public space. Most people use the square as a space to walk through on their way to somewhere else. Over the course of several days and at different times, I conducted observed how people used the space. At any given time, I never saw more than four people sitting in the square. For most of the time, only one person occupied the square. Most people used the space for less than 10 minutes on average. People read newspapers, talked on the phone, smoked a cigarette, or simply sat. At night, two teenagers used the square to skateboard and practice their stunts on the planters. These observations were conducted in November and December. As a resident of Woodside, I have observed that the square is often empty even in warmer months.

The case for a market

Communities have used outdoor markets to activate underutilized public space with great success. San Francisco, Vancouver, Richmond (British Columbia), Seattle, Orlando, Seattle, and Chicago have transformed public space into bustling and livable public spaces. Outdoor markets are popular and common in each of these countries. Unlike in neighbors in Sunnydale and Jackson Heights, Woodside currently does not host any type of outdoor market. I propose a vendor market to care for and with spouses who work long hours, this flexibility is especially important. Some undocumented immigrants prefer self-employment over working for an employer that exploits their undocumented status. The adaptability of the trade also helps vendors respond quickly to spatial changes in the local retail market. A vendor market might revitalize an underutilized space, attract new people to the neighborhood, and create a haven for low-income, undocumented vendors.

New York City has a long-standing policy of supporting the local food economy and increasing access to food. The city’s current considering legislation that would add 600 permits each year for a seven-year period but would also increase permit fees. The proposed legislation would potentially shut out the poorest food vendors from the formal vending economy. These changes have created an informal market of vendors selling food to                                                            customers.

I am proposing the market as an unofficial intervention because of the city’s strict permit laws. To operate legally in the city, vendors need permits, but New York City strictly limits the number of vendor permits. For food vending, there are 3,000 citywide permits, 1,000 seasonal citywide permits, and 1,000 Green Cart permits—all issued by the Department of Health. For general merchandise, there are 853 permits through the Department of Consumer Affairs, with a waiting list of thousands. The City Council is currently considering legislation that would add 600 permits each year for a seven-year period but would also increase permit fees. This could potentially shut out the poorest food vendors from the formal vending economy. These changes have created an informal market of vendors selling food to customers who are unable to access capital because they are undocumented, or have a low credit score, street vending is convenient because start-up costs are low. For instance, most vendors in Elmhurst use pushcarts found at wholesale discount stores or as secondhand items. Vendors can create their own schedules and vend in locations convenient to them. For immigrant women with children to care for and with spouses who work long hours, this flexibility is especially important. Some undocumented immigrants prefer self-employment over working for an employer that exploits their undocumented status. The adaptability of the trade also helps vendors respond quickly to spatial changes in the local retail market.

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The vendor market will create a node of street vending activity that attracts new customers to the area, benefitting both street vendors and small local businesses. To support the local food economy and increase access to food. The city’s current considering legislation that would add 600 permits each year for a seven-year period but would also increase permit fees. The proposed legislation would potentially shut out the poorest food vendors from the formal vending economy. These changes have created an informal market of vendors selling food to customers who are unable to access capital because they are undocumented, or have a low credit score, street vending is convenient because start-up costs are low. For instance, most vendors in Elmhurst use pushcarts found at wholesale discount stores or as secondhand items. Vendors can create their own schedules and vend in locations convenient to them. For immigrant women with children to care for and with spouses who work long hours, this flexibility is especially important. Some undocumented immigrants prefer self-employment over working for an employer that exploits their undocumented status. The adaptability of the trade also helps vendors respond quickly to spatial changes in the local retail market.

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**INTRODUCTION**

Prior to New York City raising part of Mulberry Bend in Lower Manhattan and converting the land into Mulberry Bend Park, it was a run-down neighborhood ripe with tenement housing, crime, and disease. Calvert Vaux’s park design, championed by the muckraking photojournalist Jacob Riis, intended to remedy the social ills and worsted of the neighborhood. Riis, Vaux, and other reformers perceived the slum environment as the source of negative impulses of greed, despair, moral laxity, and filth. The razing of Mulberry Bend successfully created capacity for community activity and recreation, demonstrated by the park’s current status as a gathering space for a largely Chinese American population. However, the creation of Mulberry Bend Park was not a case of “positive environmentalism”—the elimination of the tenements did not singularly allow the area to blossom into a center of community. In reality, profiting landlords and insufficient government safeguards, sensationalized by class perception and xenophobia, produced and exacerbated the harsh conditions of Mulberry Bend.

In the first half of the nineteenth century, the Five Points area of New York emerged as one of the most infamous neighborhoods in the city; housing high population densities, dangerously constructed buildings, disease, high infant and child mortality, unemployment, prostitution, and violent crime. The area, at the time bounded by Mulberry, Baxter, Worth, Bayard, and Park, featured a significant immigrant population, particularly from Ireland, as well as an African American population. As the nineteenth century progressed, U.S. immigration patterns changed. Starting in approximately 1880, the immigrant wave was composed of Jews, Poles, Russians, and Slavs—moved to American cities. As the immigrant wave progressed, U.S. immigration patterns changed. Starting in approximately 1880, the immigrant wave was composed of Jews, Poles, Russians, and Slavs—moved to American cities.

The Five Points area of the city, known as Mulberry Bend, date back to the eighteenth century and are known as Mulberry Bend, which Riis referred to as the “sinful core of New York City” and “the wickedest of American slums.” Riis and other reformers noted that Mulberry Bend was a place of destruction, destroying lives and hope for a better future for the primarily Italian immigrants. In particular, Riis and other reformers perceived the dilapidated tenements and physical environment as the cause of the problems for the tenement neighborhood—crime, vice, unemployment, moral laxity, disease. The slum was the breeding ground for social ills, a type of negative environmentalism that could only be corrected by restructuring the physical. As a result, Riis launched the modern attack against New York’s tenements, passionately arguing through his photographs, lectures, and writings that the only solution for the worst tenements was complete removal.

No tenement section was worse than Mulberry Bend, which Riis referred to as the “sinful core of New York City” and “the wickedest of American slums.” Riis and other reformers noted that Mulberry Bend was a place of destruction, destroying lives and hope for a better future for the primarily Italian immigrants. In particular, Riis and other reformers perceived the dilapidated tenements and physical environment as the cause of the problems for the tenement neighborhood—crime, vice, unemployment, moral laxity, disease. The slum was the breeding ground for social ills, a type of negative environmentalism that could only be corrected by restructuring the physical. As a result, Riis believed that through the destructive clearance of Mulberry Bend, a more positive use of space, a park, could enliven and uplift the immigrants of the slum.

Riis’s advocacy of demolition as creative reform found receptive ears as the ineffectiveness of the 1879 dummell regulations became more widespread, the immigrant population grew exponentially in the 1880s, and the powerful example of urban reform in Europe created a case for creative destruction. Additionally, the 1900 Tenement Housing Commission, chaired by Robert de Forest and Lawrence Voller, successfully passed the Tenement House Act of 1901 that fundamentally affected the way of new tenements by limiting lot coverage to 70% and requiring new and old tenements to have toilets on each floor, fire escapes, and rooms with windows. The newly created Tenement House Department would enforce these and other codes, sharpening the contrast between the age “old-law” tenements and “new-law” tenements in and around New York City. Ultimately, the conversion of Mulberry Bend into Mulberry Bend Park was a culminating of the rising tide of indignation toward slums as well as a concerted institutional effort.

**HOW THE BEND FESTERED**

Was Riis’s belief that the physical environment was the source of environmental ills of the neighborhood accurate? If not, what was the real cause for the unsafe, unhealthy, and dangerous conditions that led to Mulberry Bend’s status as the “wickedest of New York’s tenements” and the “sinful core of New York City”? Riis believed that the physical environment was not adequately suitable for such a large population, but the shanty condition of Mulberry Bend was more a result of programmatic urban failure rather than its cause.

**CREATIVE DESTRUCTION** & **TENEMENT REFORM**

Two mutually non-exclusive impulses rested at the core of the tenement reform in New York City during the 1880s and 1890s; one, providing better conditions for the worst-off citizens, and the other, to destroy the undesirable city as an entity. Shanty clearance proposals for the Five Points area, including the three-acre strip known as Mulberry Bend, date back to as early as 1829; yet it took 67 years for a proposal to materialize. Jacob Riis launched the modern attack against New York’s tenements, passionately arguing through his photographs, lectures, and writings that the only solution for the worst tenements was complete removal.

The razing of Mulberry Bend successfully created capacity for community activity and recreation, demonstrated by the park’s current status as a gathering space for a largely Chinese American population. However, the creation of Mulberry Bend Park was not a case of “positive environmentalism”—the elimination of the tenements did not singularly allow the area to blossom into a center of community. In reality, profiting landlords and insufficient government safeguards, sensationalized by class perception and xenophobia, produced and exacerbated the harsh conditions of Mulberry Bend.

The end result was less advocacy, aid, and effort to address the needs of the five hundred people per acre. Riis argued that Mulberry Bend was a case of programmatic urban failure rather than its cause.

**ETHNICITY, RACE & CLASS**

A number of planning biases are evident in the case of Mulberry Bend. Worth noting is the non sequitur between the physical tenement and the tenement dweller as the cause for the dangers and ills of the slum. In Riis’s proselytizing for slum clearance and the conversion of Mulberry Bend into a park, the complexity behind Riis’s argument and his personal institutions unfolds. His 1890 account How the Other Half Lives was a plea for understanding and sympathy through photography to convince middle class Americans to join the assault against the degrading influence of poverty and the tenement environment upon the individual. His Christian upbringing and ideals instilled within his worldview a desire for individual and communal redemption, optimism, and betterment. Riis delivered lectures that offered a strange mix of spirituality and rough humor that “made the invisible feel visible” by inspiring the audience to feel its responsibility to act right the social wrong. However, racism and condescension were also components of Riis’s ideology. Riis referred to his subjects as “sweepstakes,” and his articles also exposed condemnation and racist disdain, stating tenement dwellers were “shiftless, destructive and stupid... they are what the tenements have made them.” Additionally, he believed in a type of individual survival of the fittest; if he was able to earn his nature in America by work alone, others should be able to do the same.

A second bias exists around immigration. Xenophobic reactions and racism were connected with numerous major social and economic issues of the 1880s in the United States; tenement reform was no exception. On the West Coast, the fear of Asian workers immigrating in masses and threatening Americans’ job security, the emergence of the anti-Catholic American Protective Association, and the anti-Semites of agricultural producers against Jewish bankers, all represented a growing sentiment shared by Americans of different regions, industries, and classes that viewed immigrants as a threat. The immigrants, increasingly foreign and more often originating from eastern and southern Europe and Asian countries, and the powerful example of urban reform in Europe created a case for creative destruction. Additionally, the 1900 Tenement Housing Commission, chaired by Robert de Forest and Lawrence Voller, successfully passed the Tenement House Act of 1901 that fundamentally affected the way of new tenements by limiting lot coverage to 70% and requiring new and old tenements to have toilets on each floor, fire escapes, and rooms with windows. The newly created Tenement House Department would enforce these and other codes, sharpening the contrast between the age “old-law” tenements and “new-law” tenements in and around New York City. Ultimately, the conversion of Mulberry Bend into Mulberry Bend Park was a culminating of the rising tide of indignation toward slums as well as a concerted institutional effort.
community expanded into the Italian neighborhood adjacent to Columbus
Park. The park was to serve as a conduit to restore the nature of the community and
the individuals within the community, representative of the class-divide and condescension
elevated by middle class reformers to elevate and to assimilate the immigrant. Riis, in particular, believed the park, the
school, and the playground had the ability to Americanize the immigrant, reconstruct the neighborhood, and lessen the need for social control or governmental intervention. The slum and tenement reform movement reflects many values of the sentiment house movement: enlightening, middle-class individuals and their lifestyles had the capacity and moral duty to improve immigrant neighborhood life through every channel of personal influence and environmental reform.\footnote{20}

\section*{EVOLUTION}

When Mulberry Bend Park opened in 1887 it featured an expansive grassy area lined with curved walkways. Despite Riis’s personal preferences for active recreation, the park was intended for contemplative leisure and the connection to nature. In 1911, the park was renamed Columbus Park and a paved playground replaced the central lawn, reflecting contemporary urban park philosophy oriented towards more active play. Park management added physical improvements and plantings over the course of the following decades. Throughout the 20th century, New York City’s Chinese community expanded into the Italian neighborhood adjacent to Columbus Park. In 1939, The New York Times commended the Chinese presence, authored by an annual community event, as “symbolic of the Chinese assimilation in America.” Since the end of the twentieth century, Columbus Park has received new playground equipment, a new basketball court, upgraded playground facilities, and a restored north-end pavilion that has existed since the park originally opened. The park is of particular importance to the Chinese American community in Chinatown and the greater New York metropolitan area, referred to as “Chinatown’s communal backyard.” Chinese Americans play Chinese chess, practice tai chi, and play on the playgrounds. During work days, the park hosts lawyers, jurors and probation officers from the Criminal Court building across Baxter Street along with other professionals working in Civic Center and the Financial District. Columbus Park is a communal and recreational space for all, yet Columbus Park holds particular importance beyond recreation. In 1982, Columbus Park served as a rallying site for a massive strike during which 20,000 mostly female Chinatown garment workers protested against benefits cutbacks, culminating in a march through the streets of Chinatown. Columbus Park is a pillar of both work and play in Chinatown.

CONCLUSIONS

Placing urban problems on the intrinsic characteristics of a group rather than acknowledging the contributing factors and holistic situation in which the group lives can be a crutch for a shortsighted governing body or authority. Reformers advocated for Mulberry Bend Park, believing it would cure the slum at its core. Racism, xenophobia, and classism were all biases that influenced the impetus behind the planning process and reform movement, yet the success of Columbus Park today is not a direct result of the intentions of Riis and others. Rather than assimilating, Americanizing, or “civilizing” immigrants, the park has served as a platform for the gradual process of neighborhood change among minority communities. The area’s various historical and contemporary monikers – Five Points, Mulberry Bend, Little Italy, Chinatown, Columbus Park – exemplify immigration’s profound role in shaping an evolving city like New York.

Over eight years after the height of the financial crisis in 2008, myths about what caused the financial system breakdown have still not been put to rest. Volumes of research from pundits across the political spectrum, as well as official federal government inquiries, have studied and documented the main causes of the crisis – chiefly, the private sector-led proliferation of subprime mortgages. Nonetheless, a vocal and unrelenting segment of the political right still propound what popular economic blogger Barry Ritholtz has called “the Big Lie” - the idea that the U.S. government caused the financial crisis through federal housing policies, such as the 1977 Community Reinvestment Act or CRA, aimed at ending housing discrimination and expanding homeownership to historically disenfranchised groups. This myth, debunked by various economists and industry experts, has not only been perpetuated in fringe circles of the political right, but has recently reemerged in political discourse among Donald Trump’s economic advisers and cabinet picks. In this paper, I outline the events leading up to the 2008 financial crisis as a backdrop to highlight the flaws in the Big Lie narrative. I argue that the perpetuated myths about what caused the 2008 recession seriously hinder our ability to prevent another crisis from happening, as well as undermine efforts to advance racial justice and fair housing laws. Finally, I connect the Big Lie to the policies of the current administration, arguing that if the Big Lie becomes institutionalized under President Trump, instead of being firmly squashed once and for all, it is highly likely that efforts to prevent housing discrimination and limit the power of Wall Street will be halted and reversed.

CAUSES OF THE 2008 FINANCIAL CRISIS

In order to debunk the falsehoods of the Big Lie, it is important to first understand the context of the events leading up to the 2008 financial crisis, particularly regarding the explosive growth of subprime mortgages during the housing bubble in the early 2000s.\footnote{21} After the slowdown of the U.S. economy during the dot-com bust in 2000, the Federal Reserve, under the leadership of Chairman Alan Greenspan, cut interest rates dramatically – a typical monetary policy response during periods of slow growth. The lowered interest rates, however, encouraged millions of U.S. consumers to take out mortgages, adding to household debt and inflating house prices. Housing price increases quickly grew into a bubble, as Greenspan kept interest rates low and assured markets that the Fed would not burst the bubble but rather facilitate new avenues of growth if the housing market imploded. Raghuram Rajan, former chief economist at the International Monetary Fund, discusses this move by the Federal Reserve in his book \textit{Fault Lines: How Hidden Fractures Still Threaten the World Economy}, writing, “if ever financial markets need a license to go overboard, this was it.”\footnote{22}

Banks, as well as increasingly common non-bank lending institutions, which are unregulated by the federal government, began to give out mortgages recklessly, even predatoryly, as the potential to profit...
As income inequality continued to increase, U.S. politicians were all too willing to assure the woes of their constituents through easy credit
couched in the aspirational rhetoric of homeownership, the pinnacle of the
American dream. In these heady times, an array of factors contributed to
the conditions of the early 2000s leading up to the crisis. Rajan writes,
“When easy money pushed by a deep-pocketed government comes into contact with the profit motive of a sophisticated, competitive, and
amoral financial sector, a deep fault line develops.” The final piece to
this puzzle is the irresponsible financial sector that Rajan describes, the
linchpin that triggered the fault lines under the surface.

Indeed, it was the financial sector overall and specifically the
“shadow banking system” of largely unregulated private hedge funds and
investment banks that transformed subprime mortgages (typically
extremely risky investments) into highly profitable venture. Wall Street
firms packaged subprime loans into securities, masking the true extent of
the risk involved using complex derivatives such as collateralized
debt obligations and credit default swaps. These securities could then be
sold off to investors for high profits. Even though they were relatively
worthless, because unqualified homeowners were left to default on their
mortgages, credit rating agencies nonetheless gave junk securities
AAA ratings. Issuing more mortgages meant that more securities
could be sold, which increased pressure to lend money to unqualified
homebuyers. Unregulated non-banking lending institutions began giving
out subprime loans simply for the purpose of turning around and selling
them to Wall Street. These profit-seeking ventures were all predicated
on inflated housing prices, however. As the bubble was about to burst before the
bubble burst and the housing economy crashed down.

The housing prices that investors naïvely believed would continue
rising indefinitely began to decline in early 2006. Suddenly, homeowners
found that the prices of their homes were not as great as they thought.
By early 2008, the New York Times reported that “nearly 8.8 million
homeowners, or 10.3% of the total” were underwater, a proportion not
seen since the Great Depression. Because many mortgages were not
not traditional, but rather adjustable rates or other flexible mortgage
options, interest rates began to rise significantly on the traditional, fixed-rate
mortgages, but instead adjustable rate or other types of flexible mortgages, interest rates began to rise significantly on
these adjustable rates.

The Big Lie argues that policies like the CRA required banks to give loans to people who would not be
able to repay them. Thus, banks are portrayed as faultless victims of the
financial crisis, but rather a host of interrelated factors predominantly
national to international, triggering the worst global recession since
the 1930s.

What makes the arguments offered by those conservative
commentators not only debatable but, in fact, a “Big Lie,” is that they have
continuously stand behind it despite significant evidence to
the contrary. Economic blogger Barabara Butterfield defines a Big Lie as a lie
so colossal that no one would believe that someone could have
been part of the lie. Indeed, numerous federal investigations, as well as research put forth by economists and
pundits from across the political spectrum, have thoroughly proved
the arguments of the Big Lie to be false. Most significantly, the
final report of the Federal Crisis Inquiry Commission, the official government
group charged with investigating the causes of the 2008 financial crisis,
contends that the CRA was not a significant factor in subprime
mortgaging or the crisis.” The commission points to research that only 6%

The main target of this narrative has been the 1977 Community
Reinvestment Act or CRA, which aimed to end the discriminatory
lending practices against poor low-income neighborhoods and communities
of color, a practice known as redlining. The Big Lie argues that policies
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The views contained in the Big Lie have been reinforced by a number
of conservative pundits. Peter Wallison, a scholar at the
nonprofit American Enterprise Institute and frequent commentator in the
media, argued in a 2010 article that “mismanaged government policy”
was the root cause of the crisis, arguing that the CRA instigated the
affordable housing mission of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. “Preventing a recurrence of the financial crisis we face today does not require
new regulation of the financial system,” he stated. “What is required instead
is an appreciation of the fact that U.S. housing policies are the root
cause of the current financial crisis.” Talk show hosts such as Rush Limbaugh and Sean Hannity have regularly advocated the Big Lie on
their programs, in the aftermath of the crisis as well as years later after
the myth had been thoroughly debunked. A contributor to Fox News, Monica Crowley, even went as far as to say on a 2011 episode of Your
World with Neil Cavuto, that the Community Reinvestment Act “put the
gun to the banks’ heads and said, ‘You have got to do these subprime
loans…’”

The Development of the Gowanus Canal: Within the Context of the
Brooklyn Sewer System

INTRODUCTION

One of the most infamous water bodies in the country, the Gowanus
Canal is known for its wretched odor, grotesque landscape, and the tales of
mutant species that have been found living within its confines. The canal
courts its infamy to the continuous dumping of raw sewage that has been
occurring for over a century and a half, as well as its use as a depository of
industrial waste. The Gowanus Canal has been described as “the
coldest, most polluted water body in America. In 1636, two Englishmen, William Adrianse Bennet and
Jan Pieterszoon Brevoort, purchased the land and began to purchase land - very cheaply - from the Algonquin Native
Americans. In 1638, Dutch settlers under the command of
first appointed Director-General, purchased nearly four
thousand acres of land in North Brooklyn. Kieft quickly tweaked the area
of New Amsterdam’s settlement policy to make it easier for Europeans to
acquire land. The new policy allowed for free trade between anyone who
desired to, for every man to buy as much land as he could afford and work
on, and for settlement from any “respectable” farmers who arrived on the
land. “This news of this policy spread quickly across Europe, attracting
an influx of settlers embarking to New Netherland.”

Because of its convenient location near the bay, Gowanus soon became
an important waterway. Natural transportation methods were quickly developed in order to transport goods to the Island of Manhattan across the river. By 1642, the Dutch West India Company founded a public ferry to run between Brooklyn and Manhattan. A simple convey boat would alert a near farm worker to retrieve a hidden boat and tow the passenger across the river for a small fee.

In 1660, Jacques Cortelyou was hired by the town’s Council Committee
to survey the land of Brooklyn. The intention was to find the optimal
site for the town’s first tide mill. With its ideal geographic and
navigational characteristics and a great manufacturing base, the town of Brooklyn, under the leadership of
Peter Stuyvesant, who had recently oversaw Kieft’s position as Director-General, built the tide mill on the Gowanus Canal. Freer’s Mill, owned by John C. Freerke, was dug out and constructed over the next year by African slaves. During this time, Adam Brower, the

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The positive commercial effects of the Erie Canal Upon his arrival, to Brooklyn in 1832 after living in Upstate New York and witnessing markets, distilleries, and taverns. The growing population in Brooklyn swim across. Many, at this point, fearing the high waters, strayed into the ability to pass over the creek while his men were safe on the west shore. was Colonel Ward’s attempt to save his own troops by restricting British that passed over the creek. There lay a mess of burnt wood at the head quickely crept up on the settlers of Brooklyn. On August 27, 1776, the THE BATTLE OF BROOKLYN The concerns of the canal were halted as the Revolutionary War quickly crept up on the settlers of Brooklyn. By August 27, 1776, the Gowanus Creek played an important role in the Battle of Brooklyn. As the British crossed the second ward over the Prospect Range and towards the Gowanus Creek, American Colonel Artemus Ward burned the only bridge that passed over the creek. There lay a mess of burnt wood at the head of the creek that once crossed Freake’s millpond. Torching the bridge was Colonel Ward’s attempt to save his own troops by restricting British ability to pass over the creek while his men were safe on the west shore. Unfortunately, it was mislabeled and ultimately restricted the Patriots tailing behind from crossing, trapping them on the east side of the creek with the enemy. As more Patriots approached the creek and discovered the bridge’s charred fate, they were forced to jump into the water and swim across. Many, at this point, fearing the high waters, strayed into the woods and hid from the British. However, many of these attempts to swim across the creek did not make it either. Some drowned in the creek’s high tide and rain-swollen canal, while others were shot by the British mid-swim. MODERNIZATION OF BROOKLYN By 1830, fifteen-thousand people resided in Brooklyn. Gowanus was flourishing: commerce and industry were thriving with factories, markets, distilleries, and taverns. The growing population in Brooklyn was welcoming to businesses of all kinds. Colonel Daniel Richards moved to Brooklyn in 1832 after living in Upstate New York, witnessing the positive commercial effects of the Erie Canal. Upon his arrival, Richards immediately saw a business opportunity and bought a piece of land known as the Van Dyke property. Already a successful businessman with projects shipping up north, Richards founded the Atlantic Dock Company in 1839 with the intention of exploiting the shore of Brooklyn. The shores of Manhattan were overwhelmingly crowded with ships and he saw profit opportunity in the understudied shores of Brooklyn. In line with Richards’ vision for developing Brooklyn’s commerce and trade, the Atlantic Docks had a huge impact on the city, and were perhaps one of the main reasons that Brooklyn’s population reached 100,000 by 1850. Richards also saw opportunity in his newly purchased land. An active member of local government and the Common Council Street Committees, Richards hired men to survey the Gowanus Creek in 1847, and he was not something to be easily moved. By 1850, two-and-a-half-foot-wide path. However, residents continued to request further widening throughout the late 1700s. THE NATION’S FIRST SEWER SYSTEM In October 1856, the city published a plan to extend the Bond Street Sewer even further to empty into the Gowanus Canal. The sewer’s banks had long back up and was a source of complaints for years. With the ever-increasing need for a more modern sanitation system — the current cesspools, privies, and drainage areas, Brooklyn’s Water Board was upgraded to the Brooklyn Sewage Commissioners. With the new commission immediately passed an act that pushed forward the development of sewers and drainage in Brooklyn, prompting the Bond Street sewer extension.5 Julius W. Adams, a famous railroad engineer, was engaged to survey Brooklyn’s streets and land to create a plan for the nation’s first modern sewer system. The plans that Adams drew up, based on Edmund Chadwick’s design in London, would be the basis for New York’s sewer system for more than two centuries later for creating a persistent nuisance to the city — especially the Gowanus Canal.2 Adams’ sewer design was a single-pipe system that would convey both rainwater and stormwater through the same pipe. This became known as a combined sewer system and many cities across the country would soon implement a similar sewer systems based off of Adams’ and Chadwick’s plans. In retrospect, the pipes Adams designed in Brooklyn were far too small in capacity based on the actual amount of waste that was being generated. Some sewer pipes were as small as 12 inches in diameter.3 Before the completion of the sewer system, the streets of Brooklyn were infested with trash, refuse, and garbage. Residents had shared privies or cesspools, or emptied their personal chamber pots into a nearby privy yard. Sometimes privy yards or individual privies were directly emptied into water bodies like the Gowanus Canal.4 With a need for an emergency stormwater outlet, and considering that in 1856 there was no scientific research connecting bacteria and germs of fecal matter to the spread of disease, it was no surprise that Adams’ design consisted of discharge points that expelled sewage into water bodies. On the other hand, there seemed to be some understanding between the relationship of the lack of clean water available and the increasingly unsanitary conditions. In fact, when the state of New York introduced Brooklyn’s sewage act, it also introduced an act to develop a public water works system. Still, nothing was done to prevent the raw sewage from building up in and along the edges of the canal even after it was first recognized as a problem. As the discharge wasted increased, complaints of stench and disgusting began to pile up. As early as 1861, just several years after the sewer system was completed, the Gowanus Canal’s foul odor and appearance became the talk of the town.2 A NUISANCE TO GOWANUS In 1861, a “Mr. Peters” filed a lawsuit against the city of Brooklyn. He claimed that sewer discharge onto his land and the resulting stench of the odor and presence of raw sewage had killed his father-in-law, severely degraded the health of his wife, and damaged the value of his property.8 In response, the city filed counter complaint of the canal. Another century a half filled with more complaints would follow. One of the most notable complaints is Dr. J.H. Raymond’s formal report of the state of Gowanus Canal made in 1877. The Eagle published an article in 1877 with the headline: “VERY VILE: The Disgusting Condition of Gowanus Canal” in large, block letters. The canal was affecting the health of South Brooklyn and the residents were concerned. “The condition of the Gowanus Canal is so abominable that disease and death from the sewers which empty into it has long been a source of complaint to the citizens of South Brooklyn,” it said.9 Requesting immediate action, the Eagle released a report from Dr. J.H. Raymond, the Sanitary Superintendant, regarding the state of the canal. At a meeting with the Board of Health on August 30, 1877, preceding the article’s publication, Dr. Raymond presented his investigative report. The new Gowanus Canal at this time was essentially a channel for sewage flowing from discharge points at the ends of Bond Street, President Street, Sackett Street, and Centre Street. Dr. Raymond insisted, “No sewer should be permitted to discharge into this canal, and I would most earnestly recommend that the Board of Health place the bond of the earliest possible moment.” Dr. Raymond’s words were eerily far ahead of the time and the government’s ability to solve this problem. In the release of Dr. Raymond’s report, the sewers were already discharging thousands of pounds of sewage into the canal every day. Among the many street sewers, the Bond Street sewer was infamous to the neighborhood because of its massive overflow and terrible odor. It discharged 8,000 pounds of sewage and 10,000 gallons of untreated sewage into the canal every day. Combined, the street sewers discharged 5,917 pounds of feces and 10,688 gallons of unfiltered sewage into the canal with an annual total of 1,676 tons of feces and 16,000 tons of sewage. Dr. Raymond described what it was like to stand at the mouth of the Bond Street sewer: as material was discharged, gases coming from decomposing substances at the bottom of the canal, come to the surface, carrying with them the nauseating stench which is so offensive a stench among the causes of disease.”10 This was one of the first acknowledgments of the relationship between sewage in the canal and the potential for disease and death in the communities that surrounded it.21 In response, Mayor Dr. Crane, the President of the Board of Health, agreed that the canal was indeed a vile nuisance. SEE GOWANUS, PG 34
JACOBS

knew her personally or from the media, but it soon became apparent that she disrupted them. “They were draft dodgers,” one of the men said of the two who shook her head in disapproval and said she knew Jacobs – that she could tell me the whole story – but that she didn’t want to get into it. Jacobs didn’t save the neighborhood, they all attested, and she didn’t deserve an honorary street sign, either.

For the social sphere beyond that Hudson Street sidewalk, Jane Jacobs’ legacy has been shaped not only by her writing but also by her community activism, most notably the cancellation of Robert Moses’ plan to pierce through Greenwich Village with the Lower Manhattan Expressway in 1968. Jacobs’ success in this area contributes to her stature in urban planning circles, but it obscures the underlying problems within her work. Jacobs’ victory against Moses also raises larger questions about the power structure in this country. While Jacobs and other educated white groups were able to view her work with skepticism and call attention to the areas where she was mistaken. Today, planners must face the destructive realities of racism and inequality that Jacobs, despite being such a keen observer and thinker, somehow never fully grasped, and which continue to divide our cities today.

MARKETS

Woodside and community groups have expressed concern about disproportionate small businesses by large chains. The Sohncke Square Pop-up Market would allow local businesses and vendors to occupy these high traffic areas temporarily without having to pay exorbitant rent. Finally, I believe a pop-up market at Sohncke Square would be able to attract enough customers to be successful. Sohncke Square occupies a central location between institutions and businesses, and garners significant foot traffic, all of which makes it an appropriate location for a market. On opposite sides of the Square are St. Scholastica’s Church and Catholic School, which educates 400-450 students from grades K-8. The church offers very popular masses in Spanish and translates its website into Spanish, Korean, and Tagalog. Donovan’s Pub, a cornerstone Irish Pub, occupies another corner. The 41st Street Woodside 7 Train station, just 3 blocks away has an average weekday ridership of 17,000 people. The square is also a bus stop for the Q32 that travels from Jackson Heights to Penn Station. On a Saturday, I observed approximately 220 people per hour walked through the square. That number does not count people who walked on either side of the road and might be drawn to a market in the Square. Pedestrian traffic is also more frequent during weekday rush hours, which is when I propose the market happens. A market from 3pm in the Square. Pedestrian traffic is also more frequent during weekday rush hours, which is why I propose the market happens. A market from 3pm to 7pm on a weekday could capture the foot traffic of parents walking their children from schools and home from work. The church, school, local restaurants and bakeries could all be involved in programming or vending at the market.

MARKETS AND EVERYDAY URBANISM

A pop-up market at Sohncke Square has the potential to revitalize an area working to better urban communities reveals a failure to understand the largely American social structure. Jacobs’ focus on questions of the built environment draws attention away from the powerful influence of white, middle-class taste and capital, and an America rigidly split along racial and class lines. In essence, Jane Jacobs made urban planning the apogee for much larger societal problems, and to great effect. As the years roll by, and as Jacobs’ work assumes a more central position in the urban planning canon, it becomes ever more important to view her work with skepticism and call attention to the areas where she was mistaken. Today, planners must face the destructive realities of racism and inequality that Jacobs, despite being such a keen observer and thinker, somehow never fully grasped, and which continue to divide our cities today.

BIG LIE

An open sewer. “The stench is perfectly awful,” he explained. “All part of the city is afflicted with material troubles.” The agreement throughout Brooklyn at the time was a need for dredging or removal of the raw sewage from the canal. However, no ideas for cleaning the canal were ever brought forward. “The dredge could not be used successfully as the fifth slides from the shoveled back into the water as soon as it is displaced. In my opinion, the Bond Street sewer should be carried through to the foot of Wolcott Street, East River.” Dr. Crane’s response illustrates the complete misunderstanding of the issue during this time period. The assumption that draining the sewage into a different water body would have ultimately solved the problem was wholly wrong, but it seemed that nobody could suggest a more feasible plan. A resident by the name of Mr. Bergen, however, seemed to have more solved the problem was wholly wrong, but it seemed that nobody could suggest a more feasible plan. A resident by the name of Mr. Bergen, however, seemed to have more
surrounding residents’ drains. Considering the filth of the stagnant water throughout the canal, lush backup was yet another nuisance in the Gowanus neighborhood. The backup water was muddy and greasy, with a sickening stench.19 “The present underground sewers are too small for the passage of water during severe storms,” Mr. Bergen noted. Disagreeing with Dr. Crane’s suggestion to extend the Bond Street sewer to the East River, he explained that the project would not only be expensive, but additionally would not have the desired effect. He suggested, in contrast, that the canal be completely filled in below Third Street.20 A project like this would have turned the canal into a closed sewer, perhaps alleviating the neighborhood and surrounding land from the symptoms of an abused waterfront. These were just some of the slew of early suggestions on how to solve the nuisance of Gowanus.

LITCHFIELD’S CANAL

While all of the drama from the sewers ensued, Litchfield was busy developing his new brainchild, the Brooklyn Improvement Company (BIC). Founded in 1866, the BIC was a new investment created to fund Litchfield’s attention on developing Brooklyn further through Industrial Revolution. Litchfield began constructing bridges, docks, and wharves along the canal as a way to attract more commerce and production. His vision for an industry-laden corridor essentially ignored the fact that the canal was, at this point, an open sewer. And so, factories that burned coal for gas production began to sprout up around the corridor. The improper disposal of coal added more pollution to the mix of sewer water. But, as Litchfield continued, “the canal was, at this point, an open sewer.”21 And so, factories that burned coal for gas production began to sprout up along the corridor. The improper disposal of coal added more pollution to the mix of sewer water. But, as Litchfield continued, “the canal was, at this point, an open sewer.”

During this time, not only did the canal become a bed for an infestation of industrial bacteria and pollutants, but also, “as [a] legend has it, [was] a final resting ground for murder victims.”22 The canal’s appearance looked the same, the water had turned black. But considering the filth of the stagnant water throughout the canal, lush backup was yet another nuisance in the Gowanus neighborhood. The backup water was muddy and greasy, with a sickening stench.19 “The present underground sewers are too small for the passage of water during severe storms,” Mr. Bergen noted. Disagreeing with Dr. Crane’s suggestion to extend the Bond Street sewer to the East River, he explained that the project would not only be expensive, but additionally would not have the desired effect. He suggested, in contrast, that the canal be completely filled in below Third Street.20 A project like this would have turned the canal into a closed sewer, perhaps alleviating the neighborhood and surrounding land from the symptoms of an abused waterfront. These were just some of the slew of early suggestions on how to solve the nuisance of Gowanus.

The Gowanus Canal's long-time negative reputation and foul odor were constant scrambling for funds to fix it. In 2010, the canal was still so polluted and hazardous that the US Environmental Protection Agency declared it a Superfund site. The City of New York, New York City Department of Environmental Protection, the New York City Housing Authority, the New York City Public Housing Authority, Public Housing (Chicago University Press, 2009), 58.

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