The Value Proposition of New Urban Parks in Small Cities: Exploring Newburgh, New York as a Prototypical Case Study

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SAFE HARBORS GREEN
Newburgh, NY
NOW SOON
Research Questions

● How can high-performing, context-appropriate parks be defined and programmed in small to medium-sized city comprehensive or master planning processes?

● How does the delivery of high-performance urban open space represent a strategic catalyst to comprehensive economic and community development?

● What regulatory requirements and other environmental policies can serve as incentives for creating parks that provide ecosystem services and other sustainable outcomes?
Research Methodology

- Two year, five meeting, 250-person community engagement process
- Interviews with key Newburgh stakeholders
- Interviews with national experts in park development
- Desktop research and demographic analysis of case studies
- Questionnaires distributed to managing entities of case studies
- Aggregation of findings and development of key recommendations
Limitations of Research

- Five case studies is a small pool
- Inconsistent population range: 15,000-275,000
- Only northeast and southeast regions represented
- Project budgets larger than typical capacity of smaller cities
- Metrics borrowed blend from other models for evaluation
ADJACENT AMENITIES
Site Details

- Waterfall
- Rain gardens
- Art installations
- Meandering paths
- Community garden
- Native plant palette
- Educational signage
- Permeable pavement
- Local blue stone seat walls
- Flexible indoor/outdoor performance space
Projected Outcomes

- **Economic**
  - Increase in adjacent property values
  - Catalytic investment
  - Visitor spending
  - Job creation

- **Environmental**
  - Stormwater management (with anticipated $10-50K savings)
  - Soil quality improvement
  - Habitat generation

- **Social**
  - Accessibility: universal design
  - Food production
  - Education
# Safe Harbors Green: What to Measure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Economic</th>
<th>Environmental</th>
<th>Social</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>● Property value increase for adjacent properties</td>
<td>● Gallons of stormwater managed</td>
<td>● # People educated about the environment</td>
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<td>● Savings for City due to stormwater management</td>
<td>● Soil quality improvement</td>
<td>● # Annual visitors</td>
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<td>● # New businesses</td>
<td>● Number and type of insect/animal species inhabiting site</td>
<td>● Bike/Ped/Transit Connectivity</td>
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<td>● Revenue generated on-site</td>
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<td>● Decrease in neighborhood crime</td>
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<td>● Visits generated to nearby tourist sites: Washington’s Headquarters, art galleries, etc.</td>
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<td>● Surveys on mental and physical wellness</td>
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<td>● Pounds of food grown on-site</td>
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The Way Forward: The Quassaick Creek Corridor
Case Study Selection Criteria

- Small to medium-sized post-industrial city
- Waterfront park development
- Significant economic, environmental, and social outcomes
- Recipient of at least one prestigious design/performance award
- Played a major role in establishing sense of shared identity or history
Metrics for Evaluation

Economic
- Property Value Increase
- Operations and Maintenance
- Commercial Development
- Visitor Spending
- Job Creation
- Space Rental
- Tourism

Environmental
- Urban Heat Island
- Flood Prevention
- Stormwater Management
- Habitat Restoration
- Soil Remediation
- Waste Reduction
- Water Quality
- Air Quality

Social
- Bike/Ped/Transit Connectivity
- Social Cohesion and Equity
- Cultural Preservation
- Educational Value
- Mental Wellness
- Physical Health
- Food Access
- Recreation
CASE STUDIES

- Long Dock Park - Beacon, NY
- Mill River Park - Stamford, CT
- Railroad Park - Birmingham, AL
- Renaissance Park - Chattanooga, TN
- Riverfront Park - Newark, NJ
LONG DOCK PARK
Beacon, NY
MILL RIVER PARK
Stamford, CT
RENAISSANCE PARK
Chattanooga, TN
RIVERFRONT PARK
Newark, NJ
## Case Study Metrics Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BENEFITS &amp; CASE STUDIES</th>
<th>Prop. Value</th>
<th>O&amp;M</th>
<th>Econ Devel</th>
<th>Visitor Spend</th>
<th>Jobs</th>
<th>Space Rental</th>
<th>Tourism</th>
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<th>Flood</th>
<th>Storm water</th>
<th>Habitat</th>
<th>Soil</th>
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Principles of Successful Park Strategies in Post-Industrial Cities

- Enhance pre-existing amenities
- Reorient towards the waterfront
- Consider your context- or redefine it
- Have ten things to do at any given time
- Start small: social capital builds community investment
- Create connective nodes: greenways, bike lanes, sidewalks, etc.
- Make a master plan; be willing to revise based on opportunities
- Maximize tourist appeal by enhancing culturally significant places
- Identify open space opportunities provided by environmental regulations
- Integrate green infrastructure with community development and planning
The Small Post-Industrial City Challenge

- Change-averse culture
- Revitalizing without gentrifying
- Cost: public-private partnerships key
- Maintenance and programming of site
- Perception: grey infrastructure > green infrastructure
- Need quantified and documented small-city precedents
- Lack of resources → lack of long-term strategic thinking
- Erosion of federal and state funding (Transportation Bill, LWCF, etc)
Opportunities for Newburgh

- Business growth
- Property values
- Safety
- Unity/sense of community
- Tourist destination
- Stormwater management through green infrastructure
- Downtown vitality
- Connectivity
Recommendations for Newburgh

- Conditional zoning: buildings around park designed to complement it
- Make a parks and green infrastructure master plan
- Establish a baseline before park development begins
- Track the triple bottom line impacts of Safe Harbors Green
- Convert vacant lots into temporary or permanent green spaces
- Take advantage of funding and technical assistance opportunities:
  - Smart Growth America
  - American Planning Association
  - Rockefeller 100 Resilient Cities
  - Project for Public Spaces
  - ArtPlace
  - the National Endowment for the Arts
- Develop incentives for developers tied to open space development
Next Steps

● Present findings to Newburgh City Council

● Charrette with Newburgh community members

● Advise on metrics and methods for evaluating Safe Harbors Green

● Evaluate park performance: site, neighborhood, and/or city-scale

● Explore opportunities for conducting research on successful small, post-industrial city parks
Thank you:

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Newburgh Planning Department
The Benwood Foundation
Mill River Park Collaborative