
Bankside Urban: An Introduction

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Renewal Rethought

The impetus for this book was the pervasiveness of a tangible change in our nation's urban riverfronts. Riverside city lands previously devoted to heavy industry and shipping were being converted to housing, open space, and parks. Concrete bulkheads and embankments were being removed and replaced with restored wetlands, marshes, and beaches. Warehouses, highway overpasses, and other structures that formerly crowded the waterline were being torn down or set back to allow greater public access. Urban rivers, formerly the open sewers of our cities, were increasingly identified as resources needed to support waterfowl, fisheries, and canoeing.

This change was made possible by multiple factors that rendered lands along city rivers less economically viable for former industrial or maritime uses. These factors included shifts in international travel from passenger ship to aircraft, shifts in domestic cargo transport from ship to truck and rail, a change from port-based commercial fishing to deep-sea trawlers, maritime freight containerization that could not be handled at cramped downtown docks lacking modern loading and off-loading facilities, the decline of heavy industries located on urban riverfronts and the relocation of such industries to suburban or rural sites or abroad, and the demand of riverside community residents for increased public parkland.¹

The recent changes on the riverfront, however, carry echoes of a previous period of transformation in American cities—the urban renewal of the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s. These echoes can be found not only in many of the physical riverside structures now targeted for removal but also in

debates over the process by which urban bankside land-use decisions should be made.

Slum clearance was the term commonly used to describe the urban-renewal policies implemented following the passage of the federal Housing Acts of 1937 and 1949 and the federal Highway Act of 1956. These laws worked in close tandem, expanding on policies first put into place by the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) in 1934.²

The Federal Housing Administration adopted criteria that denied mortgage insurance to most older buildings in urban neighborhoods with high-minority, low-income residents.³ For instance, under FHA standards 50 percent of Detroit and 33 percent of Chicago were blacked out as ineligible for mortgage insurance.⁴ Without such mortgage insurance, people wishing to purchase or restore such buildings could not obtain financing, which led to a decline in the value and condition of such properties in the late 1930s and 1940s. These same neighborhoods were then declared slums under the 1937 and 1949 Housing Acts, and the deteriorating buildings (the homes and business of the people in these neighborhoods) were acquired cheaply through eminent domain and demolished. The cleared lands were then often used for multistory public housing or for freeways built with funds provided under the 1956 Highway Act. This, in abbreviated form, was the paradigm for slum clearance and urban renewal in the midtwentieth century.

It was a paradigm, however, in which the residents living in the areas subject to urban renewal often ended up the victims rather than the beneficiaries of this clearance. As Richard Moe and Carter Wilkie note in their 1997 book, *Changing Places: Rebuilding Community in the Age of Sprawl*, "Federal home mortgage insurance policies helped to guarantee the conversion of once sound urban areas to urban slums. In existing neighborhoods, the effect was further declining property values, which means fewer taxes to the city treasury, which stretched the city's budget and led to a decline in services, which encouraged more residents to move out only to be replaced by residents of lower means."⁵ Moe and Wilkie continue: "By clearing slums from the urban landscape, such reasoning went, the conditions that produced the slums in the first place could be eliminated. . . . All too frequently, the results were something else: monstrous housing projects of faulty design, poorly planned neighborhoods that were seldom integrated with surrounding areas, and, in most cases,

the displacement of residents without the provision of alternative housing.”⁶ Their conclusion: “Though urban renewal gave some fading locations new leases on economic life, many others were left in ruins, typically those with the poorest and least politically connected constituencies.”⁷

Even urban historian Jon C. Teaford, generally considered a defender of and apologist for slum-clearance policies, refers to highway construction, urban renewal, and redlining by financial institutions in midcentury America as the “trinity of evil,” noting: “The first and second would kill the neighborhoods through a quick blow from the bulldozer. The third would slowly cut off the financial lifeblood of the community by denying mortgages and home improvement and business loans in neighborhoods that bankers deemed undesirable.”⁸ Teaford concedes, “In the early 1960s renewal was already beginning to lose its appeal; by the 1970s it had become a dirty word, and because of this stigma urban renewal agencies were changing their names to departments of community development.”⁹

The previous experiences with urban renewal and slum clearance are a necessary backdrop for understanding the current discussion regarding urban river restoration. Many of the freeways and housing constructed in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s are along city rivers. On the one hand, therefore, today’s urban river-restoration efforts offer an opportunity to address the mistakes and consequences of the earlier urban-renewal period by removing certain structures and giving the local community a meaningful role in land-use decisions going forward. On the other hand, however, current river-restoration efforts may also lead to an unfortunate repeat of urban renewal, by once again upending, dislocating, and politically marginalizing current residents in the name of redevelopment. Although the official language of most urban riverfront-restoration plans is now couched in terms of “community development,” at times the substance of these plans seems like blight-removal redux. The new blight may be public housing and industry, and the replacement for this new blight may be gentrified office, retail, and residential space, but for the residents and workers in these blighted areas, “community development” can still seem like yet another program to move them out.

The current debates over the use of urban riverside lands therefore raise questions that are of particular concern in the post-urban-renewal era. If parkland and open space are going to be created, who will be the primary users and beneficiaries of these new resources? Will new

riverfront proposals come from within the community where these lands are located or from developers outside the community? What role will governmental agencies and policies play in this process?

These dynamics are evident in riverfront cities across the United States. Take, for example, the 2001 mayoral race in Los Angeles. During this campaign, the candidates came together in September 2000 for a forum at Occidental College near downtown to discuss the urban environment in general and the Los Angeles River in particular. The event was broadcast on local public radio station KCRW. During the forum, the candidates spoke repeatedly on the need for residents living near the river to participate in decisions affecting riverside lands.

Mayoral candidate and Los Angeles city councilmember Joel Wachs explained his opposition to a proposed manufacturing and warehouse complex to be built on Chinatown's Cornfield property near the Los Angeles River: "I voted against it because I thought the project was bad for the city—it ignored the needs of the community—and I voted against it because the process was incredibly flawed. It is a process that left the people most affected out. . . . There was no voice for the very communities that are going to have to live there and be affected by it."¹⁰

Mayoral candidate and U.S. Congressman Javier Becerra concurred with Wachs, adding: "You need to reopen the process; you need to be able to have full accountability on the way the process was conducted. You also have to make sure that there's input by those who live in and around the area. Those are the folks who are going to be most impacted and they deserve to know exactly how things are being done."¹¹

Mayoral candidate and speaker of the California State Assembly Antonio Villaraigosa also came out against the riverside manufacturing and warehouse project: "All of the organizations that have been working to revitalize that river should be heard and listened to. The communities in and surrounding the Cornfield need to be taken into account. . . . We need warehouses, but we don't need them in the optimum space where we can green up this city."¹²

Whether Villaraigosa (who lost the 2001 mayoral race to James Hahn but came back to defeat Hahn in 2005) and the other candidates at the Occidental College forum live up to this rhetoric remains to be seen. The pervasiveness of this rhetoric by the candidates, however, is telling in and of itself. It suggests that there is now a widespread perception among

politicians that much of the public believes something is fundamentally wrong with urban land-use redevelopment policies that run roughshod over the needs of residents for greater open space and parkland. This perception suggests that the terms of the public debate have shifted—from both environmental and participatory standpoints—since the days of urban renewal. This shift can be seen not only in the case of the Los Angeles River but also with the other urban waterways covered in this book—the Anacostia River in Washington, D.C., the Chicago River, Salt Lake’s City Creek, and the Guadalupe River in San Jose.

Landscape’s Undergrowth

Beyond an appreciation of the legacy and lessons of the urban renewal and slum clearance period, analysis of the changing American riverfront requires integration of different academic and professional disciplines. Such analysis involves economics, city planning, environmental and land-use law, racial politics, fisheries biology, restoration ecology, botany, real estate markets, hydrology, civil engineering, urban design, housing policy, and landscape architecture. Collectively, the essays in this book draw from these varied disciplines, but for purposes of establishing an introductory framework for the book, it makes sense to begin with the historical debates within the field of landscape architecture, which offer a particularly strategic entry point for the current debates regarding urban rivers.

Two of the seminal figures in landscape architecture in the United States are Jens Jensen and Frederick Law Olmsted. Jensen and Olmsted both held strong (and often similar) opinions about urban landscaping, but these opinions were grounded in a somewhat different set of assumptions about cities and their inhabitants.¹³ A comparison of these assumptions reveals common themes that surface in the essays that follow.

Sifting through Jensen

Jens Jensen was an immigrant from Denmark whose most productive years as an urban landscaper were from 1906 to 1920, when he served as superintendent for the West Chicago Parks Commission.¹⁴ During this period, he designed Chicago’s landmark Humboldt and Columbus Parks, published his open-space study entitled *A Plan for a Greater West Park System*, and founded the conservation organization Friends of the Native

Landscape.¹⁵ Jensen is the leading figure in the Prairie School of landscape architecture, which, like the buildings of Prairie School architects Frank Lloyd Wright and Dwight Perkins, stressed adapting design to a site's natural setting rather than adapting a site's natural setting to accommodate design.¹⁶ In this regard, his work has influenced many ecological restoration efforts on urban rivers and riverfront lands.¹⁷

In 1939, Jensen published a series of essays in a book entitled *Siftings*. In *Siftings*, he presents a passionate case for the Prairie School approach to landscaping: "To produce mechanical and scientific effects in plant life is foreign to the true purpose of the landscaper and to the finer feeling of mankind. . . . The skill of the landscaper lies in his ability to find the plant which needs not be maimed and distorted to fit the situation. . . . Straight lines are copies from the architect and do not belong to the landscaper. They have nothing to do with nature, of which landscaping is a part and out of which the art has grown."¹⁸ Passages such as this provide philosophic sustenance for persons now working to tear down the hard edges of our city rivers and restore riverfronts to a condition that is more reflective and supportive of natural ecosystems. Jensen's continuing stature is evidenced by City of Chicago's formation of the Jens Jensen Legacy Project in 2000 to document and celebrate his contributions to the fields of conservation and urban design.¹⁹

Siftings, however, can be a complex and at times unsettling read. For alongside his articulation of a naturalist approach to landscape architecture, Jensen also candidly shares his sentiments about cities and the people who populate them. After praising the admirable qualities of rural communities in the United States, Jensen states: "Contrast these expressions of our rural country to those of the city . . . where . . . dark corners encourage vice and dishonesty. . . . In this entanglement of masonry the growth of cunningness and trickery, conceit, and jealousy and hatred is much greater than in the free and open country."²⁰ In *Siftings*, Jensen continues in this vein, adding that "It is from the rural country, from the farming communities and the small towns and villages, that the real American culture will eventually come"²¹ and concluding that "Most of our large cities throughout the land are raging in cunning, trickery and chaos. . . . In the city man develops mob psychology and with that his freedom goes. He is no longer a single individual but a tool to be used. His whole view of his community becomes warped."²²

Hence, while Jensen devoted much of his life's work to improving landscape design in our cities, he undertook this work with a certain disdain for urban people. What lay at the root of Jensen's antiurbanism? Several passages in *Siftings* suggest that it might be traced to Jensen's views about the relation between the effects of environment on ethnic traits and about the threat posed by foreign, nonnative species.

In his introductory essay in *Siftings*, Jensen comments: "The farther south a northern people migrate, the more degenerating are the influences of the environment, due of course to the climatic conditions which have changed their mode of living. Yet, in the mountains of Virginia, Kentucky and Tennessee the strong characteristics of a northern people have remained untouched. . . . The mountainous influence has made them more daring than their neighbors in the lowland."²³ This passage takes on an even more interesting hue when read in conjunction with Jensen's later observation in *Siftings* (in regard to disturbances caused by the introduction of the Japanese honeysuckle into the United States): "This shows the ultimate danger of transplanting plants to soil and climate foreign to their native habitat. The great destruction brought to our country through foreign importations must prove alarming to the future."²⁴

While these passages from *Siftings* by themselves may not establish that Jensen's antiurban beliefs can be attributed to his efforts to preserve the "strong characteristics" of the United States' native ethnic rural stock, other Jensen writings make this connection more explicit. For instance, in 1937, when the National Socialists (Nazis) held power in Germany, Jensen published an article in the German journal *Gartenkunst* in which he explained that the gardens he designs are "in harmony with their landscape and the racial characteristics of its inhabitants. They shall express the spirit of America and therefore have to be as free of foreign character as far as possible. . . . the Latin and the Oriental crept and creeps more and more over our land, coming from the South, which is settled by Latin people, and also from other centers of mixed masses of immigrants. The Germanic character of our race, of our cities and settlements, was overgrown by foreign elements."²⁵ Statements like this, from a man who was himself a first-generation immigrant to the United States, make it difficult to read Jensen's denunciations against the Japanese honeysuckle without suspecting that perhaps his complaint had as much to do with the Japanese as with the honeysuckle. Such passages also raise



Figure 1.1

Chicagoans in Jensen's Humboldt Park, circa 1910. Photograph courtesy of the City of Chicago Park District.

the question of whether his founding of Friends of the Native Landscape may have been prompted in part to help preserve what Jensen perceived as the native Northern European stock of the region.

Jensen is rightfully credited for creating eloquent translations of prairie landscapes into the urban park setting and for inspiring other park designers to take their cues from the regional vegetation and terrain of the surrounding environs. As Charles E. Little, editor of the Johns Hopkins University Press's American Land Classic series, observed in his foreword to the most recent reissue of *Siftings*, "Jensen's view that we should make our designs harmonious with nature and its ecological processes was to become the preeminent theme in modern American landscape architectural practice."²⁶ Yet Jensen's legacy in the urban park landscaping field is complicated by the xenophobia that seems to lurk close beneath his naturalist and ecological design approach. He pursued his efforts to green our nation's cities despite his apparent dislike of the people who increasingly lived there.

Yeoman Olmsted

Frederick Law Olmsted's work predated that of Jensen. Olmsted's career as a city planner and park designer spanned roughly from 1850 to 1900. Although he designed many landmark urban parks in North America—including Prospect Park in Brooklyn and Mont Royal Park in Montreal—Olmsted's most acclaimed city park project is Central Park in New York City.

As planning for Central Park began, Olmsted made clear that he did not envision the park simply as a playground for New York City's rich. Rather, he hoped to create a surrogate wilderness experience for those who were not rich. As he explained to the New York City Park Commission in 1858: "It is one of the great purpose of the Park to supply to the hundreds of thousands of tired workers, who have no opportunity to spend their summers in the country, a specimen of God's handiwork that shall be to them, inexpensively, what a month or two in the White Mountains or the Adirondacks is, at great cost, to those in easier circumstances."²⁷ For Central Park, he wanted rolling hills and meadows—not flowerbeds. Olmsted fought hard for this vision, often clashing with Park Commissioners Robert Dillon and August Belmont, who pressed for inclusion of a straight, two-mile manicured carriage promenade.²⁸

Through his advocacy and defense of naturalist landscapes for urban parks, Olmsted laid much of the aesthetic and ecological groundwork that underpinned Jensen's approach. However, the two men were far apart in the social beliefs that guided their park-design criteria. Unlike Jensen, who built urban parks notwithstanding his low opinion of many of persons who were likely to use them, Olmsted's interest in the welfare of these same persons helped motivate him to build urban parks. Whereas Jensen recoiled from the "mixed masses," Olmsted hoped that these masses would be the primary users and beneficiaries of his landscaped city creations.

Despite his vision for the park's primary users, Olmsted shared some of the prejudices that were prevalent in the era in which he lived. Growing up primarily among white, affluent, educated New Englanders, Olmsted had little initial contact with people outside this racial and economic class. His views evolved through his life experience, however, and although perhaps underpinned by somewhat paternalistic assumptions, Olmsted came to embrace a philosophy of urban public park design that gave great consideration to the needs of the underprivileged.

Olmsted's evolving notions in this regard were shaped by events that occurred prior to his career as a park designer. In the early 1850s, when Olmsted still thought that perhaps his professional future was as a tree farmer, he spent six months working on Fairmount—a 300-acre upstate New York farm owned by George Geddes.²⁹ Geddes, who became a mentor to Olmsted, was not the typical farmer of the day. He had studied the law and was an outspoken abolitionist who equated the cultivation of his land with the need to cultivate freedom and end slavery in southern states.³⁰ By Geddes's moral and religious beliefs, there was no justification for a system that deliberately stunted the development of America's blacks.

At the time he worked with Geddes at Fairmont, Olmsted likewise found the institution of slavery objectionable but believed that the South could be persuaded by economic reasons to phase out the practice over time.³¹ He preferred not to frame the issue in Geddes's stark moral terms. Olmsted's gradualist approach to the slavery question began to give way in 1852, however, when he was commissioned by the *New York Daily-News* to write a series of travel articles (in the form of letters) on the cotton economy and culture of the American South.³² In these newspapers letters, later published collectively in book form as *The Cotton Kingdom: Traveler's Observations on Cotton and Slavery in the American Slave States*, Olmsted adopted the nom-de-plume of Yeoman.³³

Yeoman's early dispatches said little about the brutality of the slave plantation system but instead emphasized the lack of economic incentives for slaves to work hard or efficiently and contrasted this with the greater productivity of the northern workforce.³⁴ As Olmsted's travels through the American South continued, the tone and focus of Yeoman's letters shifted. He began to comment on the underdevelopment of white civic society where slavery predominated—the lack of libraries, colleges, and concert halls and literacy rates (among whites) that lagged far behind those in the North.³⁵ Yeoman's final letter published in the *New York Daily-News* shows little trace of the restraint of his early dispatches: "The North must demolish the bulwarks of this stronghold of evil by demonstrating that the negro is endowed with the natural capacities to make good use of the blessing of freedom; by letting the negro have a fair chance to prove his own cause, to prove himself a man, entitled to the inalienable rights of man. Let all who do not think Slavery right, or who do not desire to assist in per-

petuating it, whether right or wrong, demand first of their own minds, and then of their neighbors, fair play for the negro.”³⁶

These notions of equity and fairness found later expression in Olmsted’s approach to urban park planning. His focus was not so much on preserving native landscapes as it was on creating a naturalist setting that could provide a wilderness-type experience for those city citizens who lacked the means to experience more remote wilderness firsthand. At times, this meant Olmsted called for limiting recreational activities and people on park grounds to preserve wilderness-like elements—an insistence that in certain respects was arguably at odds with his pronouncements about how his parks would provide persons of lesser means with greater access to naturalist open space.³⁷ Therefore, notwithstanding his views about the social role of parks, on some occasions Olmsted’s topographical concerns took precedence.

On the ground, the urban parks of Jensen and Olmsted may often look alike. The naturalist elements of Humboldt Park in Chicago and Central Park in New York City have much in common. But the philosophic and political soils from which the designs of these two parks grew are dissimilar, and this dissimilarity is relevant to current debates about urban rivers. In particular, this dissimilarity points to contrasting perceptions about who should control the urban river-planning process and about the interests of adjacent riverfront communities. These contrasting perceptions, in turn, factor heavily into the assessments of Moe, Wilkie, and Teaford concerning urban renewal’s failings and into the statements of Villaraigosa and the other mayoral candidates at the September 2000 Occidental College forum.

The dissimilarities in the views of Jensen and Olmsted highlight the question of the beneficiaries of the greening American urban riverside lands. For whom is this greening being undertaken: For the minority and low-income residents who presently live and work near the riverfront where maritime and industry were formerly located? For the affluent white residents and workers who will move in following the gentrification that riverside parks will make possible? For the people who will come to revive themselves in a wilderness-like setting or for those who will engage in recreational activities like soccer, baseball, and frisbee? For the birds, fish, and mammals that will benefit from the habitat provided by restored wetlands and new woodlands? Our instinct may be to answer

in the affirmative to all of these questions, but this instinct ultimately evades the reality that hard choices need to be made and that these choices may help some and hurt others.

A Poor Understanding

Proposals for urban river or creek ecological restoration projects in neighborhoods where primarily low-income and minority residents live are often dismissed as being unsupported by local residents. For these sites, the argument goes, the community's immediate interest is in creating new jobs and not in creating new parks in which residents can appreciate nature. If this claim is accepted at the political decision-making level, public resources for creekside or riverside restoration and parkland are redirected toward other communities (often with a different demographic composition), and land uses in low-income and minority neighborhoods continue to impair river and river-adjacent ecosystems.

This claim fits comfortably into Jensen's suggestion that most people who live in dense urban settings are incapable of appreciating native landscapes and natural resources. But this claim is disputed by many people presently involved in urban river-restoration efforts. As A. L. Riley notes in her 1998 book *Restoring Streams in Cities: A Guide for Planners, Policymakers and Citizens*, "An easy mistake to make is to assume that economically depressed, low-income neighborhoods, communities, and business districts have more pressing concerns. As a manager of the State of California's Stream Restoration Program, I saw some of the most innovative restoration projects occur in economically disadvantaged areas. These projects were not unique and isolated events but statistically significant. Such communities were using the cleanup and restoration of their inner-city creeks to improve their property values, attract businesses into the area, and strengthen older, centrally located business districts that had been on the decline."³⁸ Riley adds, "The greatest value of a restoration project may be the new sense of community identity or neighborhood pride created for the participants in the project."³⁹

Riley's observations here are corroborated by findings in the 2004 report by the American Planning Association, *Ecological Riverfront Design: Restoring Rivers, Connecting Communities*. This report is primarily a technical guide to implementing ordinances, engineering approaches, and

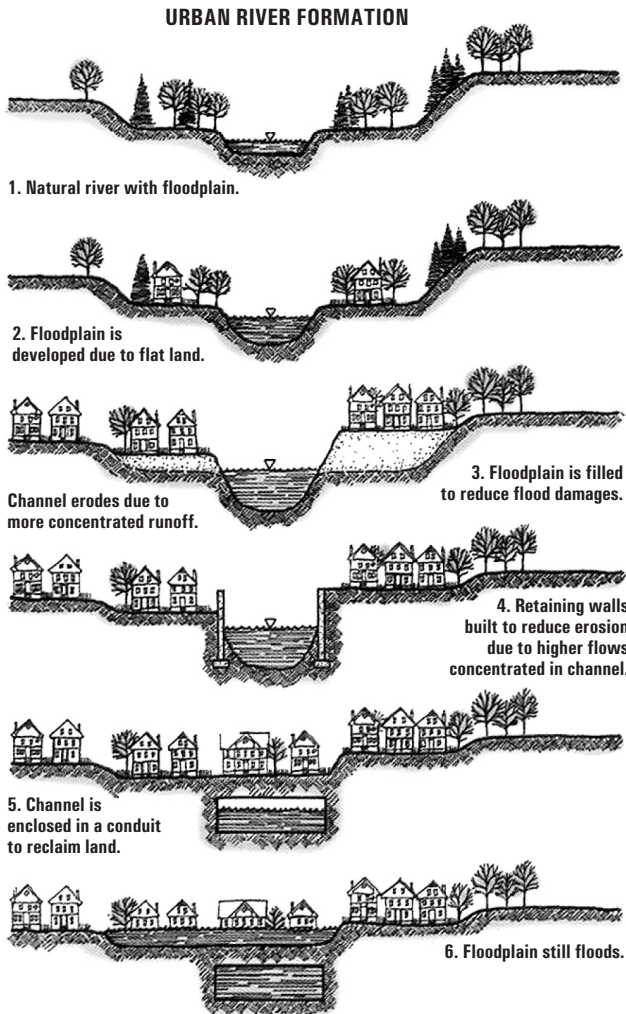


Figure 1.2

Diagram of urban river alternatives presented in the American Planning Association's *Ecological Riverfront Design*, 2004. Reprinted with permission of the American Planning Association; originally published in James Grant Mac Broom, *The River Book* (Hartford, Ct.: Natural Resources Center, 1998), 148.

design criteria for urban riverside lands. In addition to providing practical information on the zoning and ecology of urban rivers, however, the document also includes numerous case studies of low-income, minority urban districts taking the lead in efforts to reclaim degraded waterways and waterfront land, including communities along the Bronx River in New York City, the Swansea neighborhood along the South Platte River in Denver, and the Ravenswood neighborhood along the North Branch of the Chicago River.⁴⁰

The restoration project on Berneau Street in Ravenswood helps put Riley's point in a more concrete context. The origins of this project, in one of Chicago's more economically challenged and racially diverse areas, was the collapse of a poorly engineered embankment where Berneau Street meets the water.⁴¹ This collapse created an extremely steep drop-off along the river's edge, which made this area of bank susceptible to yet further erosion.⁴² One option was to replace the earthen bank with a concrete wall. After consulting with ecologists, however, a group of neighbors chose instead to cut back the dense tangle of overhead vegetation, which would provide additional sunlight for groundplants and help improve soil conditions, and then to build terraces from dead trees and scrap wood to minimize bank erosion.⁴³ Additionally, the residents worked with nearby Water Elementary School to start a local environmental education program that used the Berneau Street restoration project to teach children about riparian plants, animals, and ecosystems in their neighborhood.⁴⁴ On this heavily urbanized stretch of the Chicago River, river restoration played a role in strengthening and stabilizing the Ravenswood community.

Another example of Riley's point is Augustus Hawkins Natural Park in the South-Central Los Angeles neighborhood of Compton. The park opened in December 2001 and was named after the first African American who was elected to Congress from California. In their initial discussions about converting an 8.5-hectare former municipal water-pipe disposal site to a park, many city planners assumed that the predominantly lower-income African American and Latino residents who lived near the park would be interested primarily in basketball courts and soccer fields. Consultations with residents, however, showed that this assumption was wrong.

What the residents near the Hawkins Park wanted, aside from a space that was safe and free of gang activity, was a place where they could connect

with nature.⁴⁵ The Pacific Ocean and the San Gabriel and Santa Monica Mountains were too far away for many local residents. In the tradition of Olmsted, Hawkins Park became a place not to preserve nature but to create nature for the benefit of inner-city residents who may lack the means to visit more remote wilderness. In designating Hawkins Park as a Great Public Space, the national nonprofit Project for Public Spaces explained: “As one drives down Compton Boulevard, trees become visible on the horizon. As you get closer to the park, the greenery stands out like a living beacon in a sea of concrete. There is ample seating along a path that circles the park. One of the main features of the park is its undulating topography, with hills and swales mimicking a native California setting. At the top of the hill, river rocks line a running stream, whose water is pumped by a windmill atop a hill, with water coursing down a small concrete spillway reminiscent of the L.A. River.”⁴⁶

In a 2002 article in *Landscape Architecture* magazine (published by the American Society of Landscape Architects), Trini Juarez, one of the landscape architects involved in the project, notes the prevalent yet misguided view that “underserved ethnic groups have no affinity for the outdoors.”⁴⁷ The article’s author comments, “Hawkins Park is a tangible rebuttal of many stereotypes about nature and the poor.”⁴⁸

All seven of the essays that follow in this book consider the questions of who makes decisions about our urban rivers, who pays to implement these decisions, and who ultimately benefits from or is burdened by these decisions. Therefore, to a certain extent, these essays pick up where Villaraigosa, Jensen, Olmsted, Riley, Ravenswood’s Berteau Street neighbors, and Hawkins Park’s creators left off.

The essays included were commissioned and selected based on four main criteria: geographic diversity so that the book was national rather than regional in scope; ongoing urban riverside land use disputes with uncertain outcomes to ensure the book’s timeliness; varied institutional approaches, stakeholders, and problems to avoid redundancy; and authors with firsthand knowledge and involvement in the subject matter of their chapters. Without sacrificing scholarship, contributors have dirt beneath their nails, which allows their analyses of urban river-restoration efforts to reflect real-world experiences and not just library research.

In chapter 2, Robert Gottlieb and Andrea Misako Azuma of Occidental College’s Urban Environmental Policy Institute introduce us to the strange

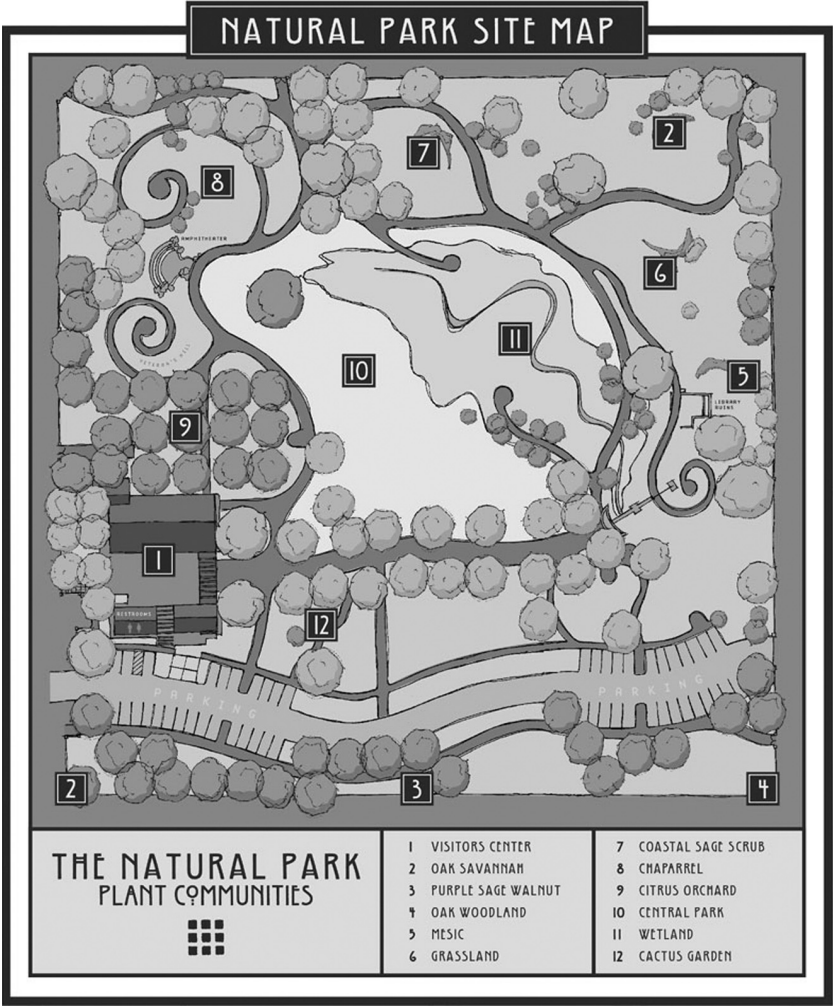


Figure 1.3
Informational poster for Hawkins Natural Park in Los Angeles, 2001. Courtesy of the City of Los Angeles and the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy.

and evolving relationship between the City of Los Angeles and the Los Angeles River (formerly known as the Rio de Porciuncula). Once a naturally flowing waterway with a tendency to overflow its low banks and inundate large portions of the Los Angeles Basin, the river was paved and straightened by United States Army Corps of Engineers in the early 1950s, which transformed it into what has been described as a water freeway. In recent years, however, calls have increased to unentomb stretches of the Los Angeles River for the benefit both of riparian ecology and riverside communities. Gottlieb and Azuma describe the critical role that a local nonprofit group and a local academic research project have played in reenvisioning what the river is and might be.

Chapter 3, by Uwe Steven Brandes, former manager of the Anacostia Waterfront Initiative for the Office of Planning in the District of Columbia, discusses the lands along the Anacostia River. Unlike those along the Potomac River, the Anacostia's banks have been largely by-passed by the district's previous major planning efforts, such as the McMillan and L'Enfant plans. The waterfront areas and primarily African American neighborhoods along the Anacostia River have instead been the location of federal highway and urban-renewal projects that caused social disruptions that continue to this day. Within this setting, the Anacostia Waterfront Initiative has emerged as a vehicle for bringing attention and funding to this neglected section of the nation's capitol. Brandes provides an insider's account of the forces and processes that led to the Initiative's creation and analyzes its structure and operations to date.

Christopher Theriot and Kelly Tzoumis (in chapter 4) offer a case study of human interventions along with Chicago River, which naturally flows eastward through the City of Chicago toward Lake Michigan. The Chicago River lies just east of the westward-flowing waters of the Illinois River, which (unlike the Chicago River) is part of the Mississippi River watershed. In the early 1900s, Chicago city officials came up with an ingenious engineering solution to the problems of the city sewage overflows that were contaminating Lake Michigan. The Chicago River's flow into the lake was dammed, and a canal was built between the Chicago River and the Illinois River, thereby causing the river to reverse direction and sending the city's sewage overflows toward St. Louis along the Mississippi River. As Theriot (of Roosevelt University) and Tzoumis (of DePaul University) detail, this was the first in a long series of engineered

interventions along the Chicago River, some of which are now being implemented to deal with the ecological consequences of the canal linking the Mississippi River and Lake Michigan watersheds. Although this chapter is focused more on instream impacts than most of the other essays in the book, its analysis of engineering-based solutions and effects on downstream communities picks up on common themes.

While the Los Angeles River may have been placed in a concrete straightjacket, this engineering solution seems mild compared to what happened in Salt Lake City. City Creek, a tributary to the Jordan River, had the misfortune of being located in an area slotted for downtown expansion. To facilitate this expansion, in the early 1900s City Creek was buried underground and for the past 100 years has been invisible. In part because of federal funding made available through brownfields programs and the new Urban Rivers Restoration Initiative, plans are now in the works to daylight this long-submerged waterway. In chapter 5, Ron Love of Salt Lake City's Public Works Department sheds light on the origins, agencies, and logistics involved in this daylighting effort.

Chapter 6, by attorney Richard Roos-Collins of the Natural Heritage Institute in San Francisco, looks at the Guadalupe River watershed. The Guadalupe and its tributaries make their way through Silicon Valley and the City of San Jose in California, eventually emptying into the south end of San Francisco Bay. Through his representation of a local resource conservation district, Roos-Collins was involved in litigation and an innovative settlement that seeks a long-term cooperative framework to address the problems of instream flow and water-quality impairment. The components of this settlement may serve as models for other urbanized areas facing similar river-related problems.

In chapter 7, Melissa Samet (senior counsel with the conservation group American Rivers) turns her attention to the federal agency that is at the center of much of this country's urban-river politics—the United States Army Corps of Engineers. The Army Corps planned and financed many of the large urban flood-control projects that channelized city rivers. Given the historical role played by the Army Corps in flood-control work, urban-river advocates are now looking to the agency to play a new role—that of restoring the rivers that it previously damaged. Samet gives us a sense of what has changed and not changed at the Army Corps on the urban-river policy front.

Finally, Mike Houck, in chapter 8, recounts the origins of the Coalition to Restore Urban Waterways (CRUW) and its Trashed Rivers conferences in the 1990s. As director of the Urban Greenspaces Institute and as the Portland Audubon Society's urban naturalist for more than twenty years, Houck is a veteran of efforts to restore bankside and instream wilderness along the heavily urbanized stretches of the Columbia and Willamette watersheds in the Portland, Oregon, metropolitan area. He was also part of a cadre of urban-river activists that coalesced a little over a decade ago to form a national movement. As Houck recounts, while CRUW and the Trashed Rivers conferences have disbanded, the legacy of these undertakings remains evident around the country.

Mike Houck's piece provides an apt theme on which to conclude. As Houck recalls, at the 1993 founding meeting for CRUW there was consensus that "although the urban stream movement would focus on urban waterways in general regardless of their location, this new organization would pay particular attention to streams and rivers in low-income, economically depressed areas. This nascent urban stream movement set its roots deeply and resolutely within an environmental justice matrix."⁴⁹ This movement can perhaps be viewed as a direct response to the urban-renewal experience, wherein the most immediately affected community residents were kept outside the land-use decision-making process.

The phrase *environmental justice*—the call for equal distribution of environmental benefits regardless of race or income—was not part of Olmsted's vocabulary when he undertook his city park projects in the 1800s. Yet it is not difficult to imagine Olmsted as a presenter on one of the Trashed Rivers conference panels, speaking against the elevated horseless-carriage promenades (highway overpasses) on our city riverfronts and insisting on a fairer allocation of urban riverside parkland resources. The terminology and technology would be new to Olmsted, and CRUW's activist rhetoric might strike his more paternalistic sensibilities as strange. The political landscape, however, would be all too familiar.

Notes

1. Beth Otto, Kathleen McCormick & Michael Leccese, *Ecological Riverfront Design: Restoring Rivers, Connecting Communities* 2–3, 97 (2004).
2. See generally Martin Anderson, *The Federal Bulldozer: A Critical Analysis of Urban Renewal 1949–1962* (1964).

3. Jon C. Teaford, *The Rough Road to Renaissance: Urban Revitalization in America 1940–1985* 17 (1990).
4. *Id.* at 18.
5. Richard Moe & Carter Wilkie, *Changing Places: Rebuilding Community in the Age of Sprawl* 50 (1997).
6. *Id.* at 57.
7. *Id.* at 68.
8. Teaford, *supra* note 3, at 245.
9. *Id.* at 232.
10. Transcription of September 2000 Mayoral Candidates Forum at Occidental College (on file with author), at 8–9.
11. *Id.* at 9.
12. *Id.* at 10.
13. Anne Whiston Spirn, *The Authority of Nature: Conflict and Confusion in Landscape Architecture*, in *Nature and Ideology: Natural Garden Design in the Twentieth Century* 249–62 (Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn, ed. 1994).
14. Julia Sniderman Bachrach, *Jens Jensen: Friend of the Native Landscape*, Chicago Wilderness Magazine, Spring 2001, available at <http://chicagowildernessmag.org/issues/spring2001/jensjensen.html> (last visited Nov. 5, 2005).
15. *Id.*
16. *Id.* See also Charles E. Little's *Jens Jensen and the Soul of the Native Landscape*, in *Jens Jensen, Siftings* xiii (1939).
17. Robert E. Grese, *Jens Jensen: Maker of Natural Parks and Gardens* (1998).
18. Jensen, *supra* note 16, at 37–38.
19. Bachrach, *supra* note 14.
20. Jensen, *supra* note 16, at 28.
21. *Id.* at 30.
22. *Id.* at 96.
23. *Id.* at 26.
24. *Id.* at 60.
25. As discussed and quoted in Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn's introduction to *Nature and Ideology*, *supra* note 13, at 3.
26. Jensen, *supra* note 16, at xiii.
27. Witold Rybczynsky, *A Clearing in the Distance: Frederick Law Olmsted and America in the Nineteenth Century* 177 (1999).
28. *Id.* at 173.
29. *Id.* at 64–66.
30. *Id.* at 66.
31. *Id.* at 107, 116.

32. *Id.* at 115–19; Frederick Law Olmsted, *The Cotton Kingdom: A Traveler's Observations on Cotton and Slavery in the American Slave States* 48, 171, 230, 262 (1953) (1861).
33. Rbyszynsky, *supra* note 27, at 119, 196.
34. *Id.* at 116.
35. *Id.* at 119.
36. *Id.* at 121.
37. *Id.* at 362–64; Frederick Law Olmsted, *Notes on the Plans of Franklin Park and Related Matters, The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted, Supplementary Series*, Vol. 1, *Writings on Public Parks, Parkways and Park Systems* 478 (Charles E. Beveridge and Carolyn F. Hoffman eds., 1997).
38. Ann L. Riley, *Restoring Streams in Cities: A Guide for Planners, Policy-makers and Citizens* 13 (1998).
39. *Id.* at 31.
40. Otto et al., *supra* note 1, at 34–35, 62–63, 125.
41. *Id.* at 125.
42. *Id.*
43. *Id.*
44. *Id.*
45. Kim Sorvig, *The Wilds of South Central: In South Central L.A., A New Park Tests Stereotypes about What Minority Groups Want from Parks*, *Landscape Architecture Magazine*, Apr. 2002, at 66–75.
46. Available at http://www.pps.org/gps/one@public_place_id=545 (last visited Aug. 19, 2005).
47. Sorvig, *supra* note 45.
48. *Id.*
49. Mike Houck, *infra* chapter 8.

