This is by Kaitlyn Millspaugh, our Conservation Program Coordinator from 2011 through 2014, a graduate student in the Rutgers Blaustein Sustainable Communities Division of the American Planning Association, and is reprinted with her permission.

Cities around the world are embracing opportunities to transform obsolete infrastructures, such as rail lines and brownfields, into new land uses. As cities pursue economic development via larger, high-end redevelopment projects, they are sacrificing affordability and pushing out low- and middle-income residents. Developers and affluent residents have come to define large-scale parks as “green spaces,” and the creation of new green space is perceived as beneficial to their community. Developers and green space advocates often overlook the negative impacts on low-income residents and neighborhoods. This paper discusses the pros and cons of creating green space in low-income neighborhoods, and the role that residents play in creating a successful project. The development of green space must prioritize the needs of the community and its residents.

Environmental Gentrification: The Jersey Shore

Environmental gentrification is the process by which an improvement to the local environment, the cleanup of brownfields or pollution, the creation of parks, or other green space projects attracts new or affluent residents to an area. This paper will analyze the Jersey Shore region, a place that has been characterized as an environmental gentrification case study, and will provide a developer’s perspective. The paper will focus on the Jersey Shore because it is an area that has undergone significant development changes and has experienced economic and environmental gentrification.

Drivers of Infrastructure Redevelopment

For decades, most cities lost their industrial and manufacturing bases and began focusing on service industries (Checker 2011). Redevelopment emphasizes the creation of parks that provide green space while maintaining the character and culture of the neighborhood. The development of green space is reprinted with her permission.

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Drivers of Infrastructure Redevelopment

For decades, most cities lost their industrial and manufacturing bases and began focusing on service industries. This transformation of the urban environment is often seen as a strategy for future urban growth. Additionally, the reclamation and reduction of brownfields or pollution is cleaning up the pollution left behind by previous uses (Curran and Hamilton 2012).

Many cities are adopting a “sustainability” paradigm to address this post-industrial legacy in future growth, focusing on the “three Es” of environment or ecology, economy, and equity (Elkins 2012). Clean up existing pollution and promote future environmental health is often seen as a strategy for future urban growth. Additionally, the reclamation and reduction of brownfields or pollution is cleaning up the pollution left behind by previous uses (Curran and Hamilton 2012).

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Sparta Mountain Logging Plan: Guise or Disguise

(Continued from pg. S1)

ESSAY

Conclusion

In transforming obsolete industrial land uses, equity and preserving a community’s character must be a priority to ensure existing residents are best served. Neighborhoods lacking environmental amenities are rejecting the construction of crucial improvements, out of fear of environmental gentrification. Residents and planners can develop techniques and tools to create green spaces while protecting a community’s quality of life and affordability. Increased community participation, smaller parks, and equity policies can all be used to convert derelict industrial and manufacturing infrastructure into needed green spaces in our urban areas while ensuring working class residents are not displaced.

Bibliography


From a Press Release issued by our Trenton Staff on March 31, and edited by Joe Testa

The Jersey Sierra Supplement: July–September 2016

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Report from Trenton

Sparta Mountain Logging Plan: Guise or Disguise

The NJ Sierra Club has submitted comments on the NJDEP’s destructive “Forest Stewardship Plan” that would allow logging on Sparta Mountain. The proposal, under the guise of providing habitat for one bird species, is a really a guise to log an environmentally sensitive forest. It would destroy critical natural resources, violate the objectives and goals of the Highlands Act, and threaten the high quality waterways and critical headwater areas.

Sparta Mountain must be preserved so that its natural resources can be enjoyed by millions of people. In the past, we’ve seen irreparable damage in forests from logging machinery that create runs and galleys that persist decades after the project has ceased. In the past, streams near logging operations have run brown for years afterward and the runoff cannot be controlled. We are most concerned because it will remove important 300 ft. buffers near streams that protect high quality waterways and critical headwater areas.

The DEP should not destroy an entire ecosystem to create habitat for one bird species when they can do this someplace else. There are 75 different species of neo-tropical song birds, along with endangered bats, that would be impacted by logging on Sparta Mountain.

The DEP should be protecting our preserved forests, not logging them. With this plan, instead of hiking trails on Sparta Mountain, we will have logging roads. This horrible sell-out to our open space for private logging companies is part of Governor Christie’s plan to privatize our parks. If they do it here, they can do it anywhere in the Highlands or Pinelands, which together hold the drinking water supply for millions of people. Sparta Mountain must be preserved so that its natural resources can be enjoyed today and by future generations. We cannot turn Sparta Mountain over to commercial logging operations.