

**Surveying the Challenges to Funding: Urban Parks in Portland, Oregon**

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**Abstract:** In this thesis I explore the various methods of urban park funding in Portland, Oregon. Furthermore, I seek to know if white, high-income communities are favored in terms of park funding, and the extent which public-private partnerships are influential in park funding. To make my assessment, I utilize reports, demographics, and cost estimates compiled by Portland Parks and Recreation, interview data with Parks and nonprofit personnel, and public statements. I conclude by acknowledging that Portland Parks and Recreation saying that projects that serve new households, while representing only about 1/10 of the total households served, represent almost ½ of total expenditures on park projects. Next, low-income and minority populations are slated to receive projects that serve new households and have more park projects planned for their areas. Projects that serve low-income populations in particular represent 77% of total project costs. Finally, my research reveals that public-private partnerships account for >1-100% of park funding and that pivotal public-private partnerships range from citizen/community involvement to the involvement of for-profit and nonprofit companies.

## Introduction

Globally, the urban environment is evolving. More people live in cities than ever before, and current trends predict that 86% the population of developed countries will live in urban centers by the year 2050.<sup>1</sup> This same global urban population will be in want of urban public spaces like parks, natural areas, trails, and recreation centers in order to fulfill their needs for relaxation and recreation. In addition, urban governments have changed since the 1970s to include a broader group of decision makers, widely termed “public-private partnerships”. This new type of city governance is a fluid, market-oriented type that incorporates the broadest range of actors, including citizens, community organizations, for profit, and nonprofit companies to get the job done, whatever it may be. While this type of governance may represent a power shift towards the interests of the elite,<sup>234</sup> it is becoming increasingly prevalent, and so its efficacy must be studied. Even if urban centers are increasingly being run by an elite group of decisionmakers, it is still possible that the services and legislation they provide are oriented towards sections of population that are less elite.

There are several purposes to this thesis. The first is to understand how park funding is produced and used in Portland, Oregon. The second purpose is to use an understanding of park funding to assess who is getting “the goods”. The third purpose is to understand how influential the public-private partnership is in determining park funding and who ultimately gets served. I predict that the overall funding profile of

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<sup>1</sup> “Urban Life: Open-Air Computers | The Economist.” *The Economist*, October 27, 2012.

<sup>2</sup> Harvey, David. “From Managerialism to Entrepreneurialism: The Transformation in Urban Governance in Late Capitalism.” *Geografiska Annaler. Series B. Human Geography* 71, no. 1 (1989): 3–17.

<sup>3</sup> Molotch, Harvey. “The City as a Growth Machine: Toward a Political Economy of Place.” *American Journal of Sociology* 82, no. 2 (1976): 309–32.

<sup>4</sup> Swyngedouw, Erik, Frank Moulaert, and Arantxa Rodriguez. “Neoliberal Urbanization in Europe: Large-Scale Urban Development Projects and the New Urban Policy.” *Antipode* 34, no. 3 (July 2002): 524–77.

urban parks in Portland will reveal a bias towards white majority, high income communities, with fewer parks in high minority, low income areas receiving funding. Next, I predict that partnerships play an important role in urban park funding, but hope to illuminate the details of how these partnerships are important.

## **History**

In Western park culture the oldest form of urban park dates back to 1837 when royal parks in England were opened to the public during Queen Elizabeth's reign<sup>5</sup>. Before that time, parks existed in the form of gardens, which existed exclusively for the leisure of royals and the eminently wealthy<sup>6</sup>. The main difference between the leisure grounds of the ancients and those of modern society is that modern parks are designed for everyone's benefit and ancient gardens were designed for the exclusive benefit of the elite. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, parks became open to the public so that the working classes would have places for leisure in their off hours. These parks were financed by the sale of parklands to wealthy citizens for the construction of their houses on the peripheries of parks.<sup>7</sup>

Parks in the United States were directly based off this English landscape and park tradition. Andrew Jackson Downing introduced the English landscape to North America in his *Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening, Adapted to North America*. It is important to note how financial constraints were conceived of in these early days of North American landscapes. Downing proposed that landscape architecture

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<sup>5</sup> Chet Orloff, compiler., *Urban Parks to 1900: Early American and Oregon Landscape Traditions*. 2002.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid*

<sup>7</sup> *ibid*

could take place on any scale of magnitude, even though he illustrated its application only in the case of dozens of acres and the presence of plentiful financial resources. Perhaps coming to terms with reality, Downing rethought this “accessible by all” paradigm later in life, when he questioned the financial viability of maintaining thousands of square feet of turfgrass, one of the primary components of his design and by then a fundamental aspect of parks.

English parks were also influential in the values they imputed to urban parks. It was the English landscaping tradition that inspired Frederick Law Olmsted, who designed the plans for Central Park in New York City.<sup>8</sup> Olmsted designed the park and premiere American park spaces in the English fashion of large, naturalistic, and monoculture open spaces whose purpose was to promote communal activities, community interaction, and moral sociability.<sup>9</sup> With these precepts, Olmsted and others began to design urban open spaces across the country.

While Frederick Law Olmsted was designing parks across the nation, the new city of Portland was beginning to acquire parkland. It is important to understand the role of individual citizens in the acquisition of parkland in the early days. Notable Portlanders such as James Terwilliger, William Chapman, Captain John Couch, and Ben Holladay all donated land in the 1850s to be used for city park development. At that time, the city also bought its first parkland in the west hills and named it “City Park”. Although it was completely inaccessible when it was purchased, the city soon renamed “City Park” Washington Park, which stands today complete with a zoo, rose test garden, children’s

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<sup>8</sup> *ibid*

<sup>9</sup> Robbins, Paul. *Lawn People: How Grasses, Weeds, and Chemicals Make Us Who We Are*. Temple University Press, 2007. <http://www.amazon.com/Lawn-People-Grasses-Weeds-Chemicals/dp/159213579X>.

museum, arboretum, and Japanese gardens, and much, much more. (Orloff class reader)

Recognizing the need for planning, Portland hired Frederick Law Olmsted's brother-in-law, John Charles Olmsted, to outline a comprehensive system of parks designed to meet Portland's needs far into the future. Though the new plan was by all accounts a great one, it was also by many accounts too costly to implement. Similar to other parts of the country, cost was an immediate issue with parks. And like parks in England, America's park development was often contingent on the cooperation and support of elite upper classes.

### **Issues of Social Justice and Inter-Urban Competition**

There is reason to believe that the parkscape in Portland, Oregon might favor high-income, low-minority populations. First, racism and historical segregation have resulted in- despite the best efforts of some- the "sedimentation of racial segregation"<sup>10</sup>, meaning American urban areas are racially divided. Suburban development itself has become a symbol of white dominance and racial exclusion, with white communities sectioning themselves off into affluent neighborhoods.<sup>111213</sup> White neighborhoods, therefore, sometimes have better schools, more stunning parks, and lower rates of crime. Whether or not Portland bucks this pattern is a major question of this paper.

Another issue to consider is the concept of investment competition. Investment competition is a kind of race between cities to see who can get the most money from the state, the most money from nonprofit organizations, and the most money from Chevron,

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<sup>10</sup> Oliver, Melvin, and Thomas M. Shapiro. "Black Wealth/White Wealth: A New Perspective on Racial Inequality." *The Independent Review*, 1995, 242.

<sup>11</sup> Kantor, Paul. "The Two Faces of American Urban Policy." 839.

<sup>12</sup> Pulido, Laura. "Rethinking Environmental Racism: White Privilege and Urban Development in Southern California." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 90, no. 1 (2000): 12–40.

<sup>13</sup> Molotch, Harvey. "The City as a Growth Machine: Toward a Political Economy of Place." 309-32

Walmart, Wells Fargo, and other “charitable” for profit corporations.<sup>14</sup><sup>15</sup> This is vital to park development because of the aforementioned public-private partnerships which might influence park development in profound ways. These agreements between government and private organization, which David Harvey calls “accumulation strategies”, are flexible and dynamic but do not always create lasting positive benefits like increased employment, investment, or tourism.<sup>16</sup> While some of these benefits are indeed transient at best, I am still interested in pursuing the knowledge as to how they are effective in Portland. The important thing to recognize is the strategic pattern in play. Every jurisdiction in America, spurred by investment competition, is in one way or another using an accumulation strategy to increase its share of the American economy, and Portland is no exception. From this perspective, the relationship between park development and public-private partnerships cannot be ignored.

Partnerships have always been functional in public park development, but have come into prominence in the U.S. since the 1970s. Although partnerships ostensibly result in subsidies for corporations, power shifts in favor of the landed elite, and a loss of democracy for the underclass, they are lauded by city boosters and development advocates and may provide benefits for parkgoers. They tap into market discipline, commercialize problems, utilize mixed resources for public use, and promote power sharing. Perhaps the most benign form of modern partnership is between government and the wealthy individual, or between government and the small, traditional, public-

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<sup>14</sup> Smith, Jacquelyn. “America’s Most Generous Companies.” *Business. Forbes*, July 16, 2013.

<sup>15</sup> Kantor, Paul. “The Two Faces of American Urban Policy.” 839.

<sup>16</sup> Harvey, David. “From Managerialism to Entrepreneurialism: The Transformation in Urban Governance in Late Capitalism.” 3–17.



spirited, grassroots organization.<sup>17</sup> One advocacy group writes: “Parks partnerships are successfully combining the assets of the public and private sectors in novel ways to create new and refurbished parks, greenways, trails, and other community assets in our cities—often in the face of municipal budget constraints.”<sup>18</sup> We know that advocates see partnerships as valuable tools to accomplish a goal. Additionally, it is important to understand the reasons that Americans have valued urban parks and why they continue to ascribe them value. Their cultural value as an economic good ultimately determines their funding in terms of why they are funded and how much they are funded.

Historically, the value of an urban parks system grew out of the plight of newly industrialized cities and dense inner city populations<sup>19</sup>. This is essential because park valuation leads to park cost assessment, as well as the desire in communities to have parks nearby. Parks were seen as beneficial to moral development, citizenship, psychological and physical health, urban aesthetics, and economic growth<sup>20,21</sup>. Recently, specific research has illuminated more detailed information regarding parks as they are nested in human systems. Studies have shown that accessible green spaces have positive effects on quality of life, on reducing body fat percentages and chronic diseases in general, and on extending the lives of older citizens<sup>22,23,24</sup>. Exercising in green areas is

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<sup>17</sup> Linder, Stephen. “Coming to Terms with the Public-Private Partnership: A Grammar of Multiple Meanings.” *American Behavioral Scientist* 43, no. 1 (1999): 35–51.

<sup>18</sup> “Revitalizing Inner City Parks: New Funding Options Can Address the Needs of Underserved Urban Communities.” *National Recreation and Park Association*, n.d.

<sup>19</sup> Pincetl, Stephen. “Nonprofits and Park Provision in Los Angeles: An Exploration of the Rise of Governance Approaches to the Provision of Local Services.” *Social Science Quarterly* 84, no. 4 (December 2003): 979–1001.

<sup>20</sup> *ibid*

<sup>21</sup> Orloff, Chet. “If Zealously Promoted by All...” In *The Portland Edge: Challenges And Successes In Growing Communities*, 1–16. Island Press, 2004.

<sup>22</sup> Heynen, Nik, Harold Perkins, and Parama Roy. “The Political Ecology of Uneven Urban Green Space: The Impact of Political Economy on Race and Ethnicity in Producing Environmental Inequality in Milwaukee.” *Urban Affairs Review* 50, no. 2 (September 2006): 3–25.

more beneficial than exercise in a slum<sup>25</sup>, and property is more valuable next to green spaces<sup>26</sup>. All of these thought processes are now vital in thinking about the costs and benefits of building a new urban park. A normative statement about urban parks could read: because of the social, health, and economic benefits of parks, all American citizens should have walking access to a park. While this thesis is not specifically concerned with what percentage of Portland's neighborhoods has access to parks, it is wise to consider that every neighborhood should when considering the outcomes of my research.

Speaking normatively, the largest issue with parks is that we simply do not have enough high-quality park spaces in safe and "thoughtful" communities.<sup>27,28</sup> Within this deficiency there is the constant theme of social injustice. In Los Angeles, two out of three children did not have access to green spaces in 2004.<sup>29</sup> In urban areas of Wisconsin, racial and ethnic minorities in urban areas experience the least amount of tree cover.<sup>30</sup> In Baltimore, areas with *greater* social and economic need had *less* park acreage, representing an environmental injustice.<sup>31</sup> A national study of the distribution of recreation facilities found that areas of lower socioeconomic status and high minority had

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<sup>23</sup> Lau, Clement. "Alternative Approach to Meet the Recreational Needs of Underserved Communities: The Case of Florence-Firestone." *Public Works Management & Policy* 19, no. 2 (April 2014): 388–402.

<sup>24</sup> Walker, Chris. "The Public Value of Urban Parks." *The Urban Institute, The Wallace Foundation*, 2004, 1–7.

<sup>25</sup> Pretty, Jules, Jo Peacock, Martin Sellens, and Murray Griffin. "The Mental and Physical Health Outcomes of Green Exercise." *International Journal of Environmental Health Research* 15, no. 5 (2005): 319–37.

<sup>26</sup> Walker, Chris. "The Public Value of Urban Parks." *The Urban Institute, The Wallace Foundation*, 2004, 1–7.

<sup>27</sup> A "thoughtful" community might be one that is developed in such a way that people actually like living there. People who like the area they live in are more likely to assume ownership of that community and thus use the facilities of that community.

<sup>28</sup> Turner, Margery. "Urban Parks as Partners in Youth Development." *Urban Institute*, 2004, 1–8.

<sup>29</sup> Lau, Clement. "Alternative Approach to Meet the Recreational Needs of Underserved Communities: The Case of Florence-Firestone." *Public Works Management & Policy* 19, no. 2 (April 2014): 388–402.

<sup>30</sup> Heynen, Nik, Harold Perkins, and Parama Roy. "The Political Ecology of Uneven Urban Green Space: The Impact of Political Economy on Race and Ethnicity in Producing Environmental Inequality in Milwaukee." *Urban Affairs Review* 50, no. 2 (September 2006): 3–25.

<sup>31</sup> Talen, Emily. "The Spatial Logic of Parks." *Journal of Urban Design* 15, no. 4 (2010): 473–91.

less access to PA facilities.<sup>32</sup> Older African American populations often fail to attain the minimum recommended level of exercise, calling into question the extent to which they feel comfortable being outdoors in their communities.<sup>33</sup> It is especially important to increase park acreage in areas where it will do the most good.<sup>34</sup> Children, elderly, and minority populations, for example, seem to benefit more from proximity and access to green spaces. Because studies show that the social conditions around a community are just as important as the physical landscape in determining people's visitorship, the communities around parks are equally worthy of our consideration.<sup>35</sup> Ultimately, I will assess a few of these variables (households without service, low-income populations, and high-minority populations) in Portland to test my hypothesis that white, high income communities are receiving the lion's share of projected park funding.

The purpose of this thesis is to test my hypothesis that private firms play a pivotal role in determining park funding and implementation, and that communities and individuals play a lesser role. Furthermore, my aim is to see if low-income, minority populations with high park need are being justly served in this system. In the rest of this thesis, I will lay out my methodology for attaining and analyzing data, present my results, and then interpret the information in a discussion that will hopefully illuminate less talked about aspects of urban park funding in Portland.

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<sup>32</sup> Gordon-Larsen, Penny, Melissa C. Nelson, Phil Page, and Barry M. Popkin. "Inequality in the Built Environment Underlies Key Health Disparities in Physical Activity and Obesity." *Pediatrics* 117, no. 2 (February 2006): 417–24.

<sup>33</sup> Hannon, Lonnie, Patricia Sawyer, and Richard M. Allman. "The Influence of Community and the Built Environment on Physical Activity." *Journal of Aging and Health* 24, no. 3 (2012): 384–406.

<sup>34</sup> Maas, J, RA Verheij, PP Groenewegen, S de Vries, and P. Spreeuwenberg. "Green Space, Urbanity, and Health: How Strong Is the Relation?" *J Epidemiol Community Health* 60, no. 7 (2006): 587–92.

<sup>35</sup> Lo, Alex Y.H., and C.Y. Jim. "Differential Community Effects on Perception and Use of Greenspaces." *Cities* 27, no. 6 (2010): 430–42.

## **Methodology**

### **Quantitative Data**

The most quantitative data for this project is a listing of information on park projects that was compiled by PP&R (Portland Parks and Recreation) in 2013. The list is a sample of projects that were either unbuilt or partially built at the time, and PP&R considered these projects to be the most economically feasible and likely to increase the city's park service area. Other projects that appeared less promising were omitted from the list. Nonetheless, the list includes almost fifty unbuilt or partially built park projects. Included in this data for each project is: a description of the project, the total estimated project cost, income, race, and age structure for each park service area, and a map depicting the park location and service area.

### **Interview data**

In addition to park project data, I conducted phone interviews with Jeff Shaffer from PP&R, Tony DeFalco from Verde, a non-profit based in Portland, and Laura Niemi, coordinator of PP&R's community garden program. I recorded these interviews and conducted them casually, beginning with a statement of my interest in the current environment of park funding in Portland and then allowing the conversation to unfold from there. I found Jeff Shaffer's contact information on the Portland Parks and Recreation website (<https://www.portlandoregon.gov/parks/35300>), Tony DeFalco's contact information on Verde's website (<http://www.verdenw.org/>), and Laura Niemi's contact information also on the Portland Parks and Recreation website.

## Understanding words and graphs

Because the park project data incorporates various terms, I will provide definitions of the important terms that I use later in the results and discussion sections.

1) Service area: refers to an area that extends a half-mile from a park or natural area's boundary in every direction. People *in* the service area, then, live within a half-mile from a park or natural area. For community centers, the service area is defined as households living within 3 miles of the community center.

2) Households served: means the number of households that are within the service area.

3) Number of new households served: means the number of households within the service area not previously served by another park.

4) Total cost to implement master plan, master plan project costs, or project costs: refers to cost estimates (\$) as provided to me by Portland Parks and Recreation. These amounts are marked with an asterisk, which refer the reader to a footnote that reads: "Preliminary, low confidence cost estimate." A preliminary, low cost estimate is a rough estimate that can mean several things. One type is a "ballpark" figure with enormous variability. This type of estimate provides fiscal context for decision-makers, but is often inconsistent and ultimately, incorrect. Or, it can be a figure that has been scoped and assembled by a PP&R project manager. This type of estimate is more accurate, as it is based on current-day figures and factors in contingencies to some extent. The difference between the two types of preliminary, low cost estimates could look like \$5,000,000 for the first type and \$6,320,000 for the second, more accurate type. The slides that I have access to were prepared by PP&R's Capital Project team and are in 2014 dollars. What distinguishes these costs from the variable ballpark figures is the use of PP&R's own methodology of

assessment, and not the methodology of a private consulting firm. An estimated cost takes partnerships into account, where partnerships can account for a certain percent of the total costs.

**5) Partnership:** any collaboration between two parties (public/private, public/public) that defrays project costs or responsibilities.

**6) Percent Minority or non-white population in the service area,** for my purposes, is a single aggregate number representing the combined Hispanic, Black, American Indian/Native Alaskan, Asian, Hawaiian Pacific Islander, “Other”, and Two or More Races populations, as stated on the packet provided to me by PP&R (based on 2010 census data).

**6) Percent of service area population in low or very low income levels, or just low income.** Low income is defined as \$25,000-\$40,000 and Very Low Income is defined as \$0-\$25,000. “Low income” as I use it refers to both of these populations combined (according to 2010 census figures).

All of the parks I studied can be characterized as unbuilt, partially built, or built.

### **New households served**

In a shifting balance between growing populations and deficient park service, I am first looking at projects that serve new households. This will help understand the costs and demographics for projects that serve new households.

Figure 1: # of New Households Served (x axis) vs. Project costs in dollars (y axis)

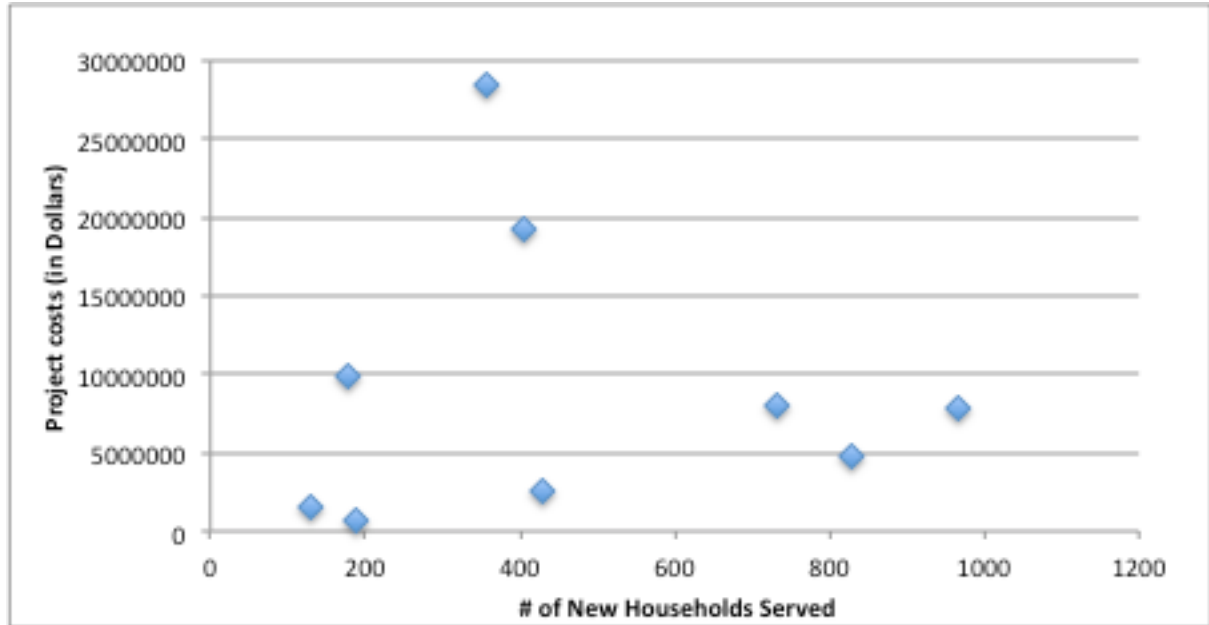


Figure 1 shows a positive correlation between # of new households served and master plan project costs at the base of the graph. There are three projects that appear as outliers on the graph. These are-- in ascending order-- Clatsop Butte (\$9,806,000), Cully Park (\$19,303,766), and Whitaker Ponds Natural area (\$28,373,000).

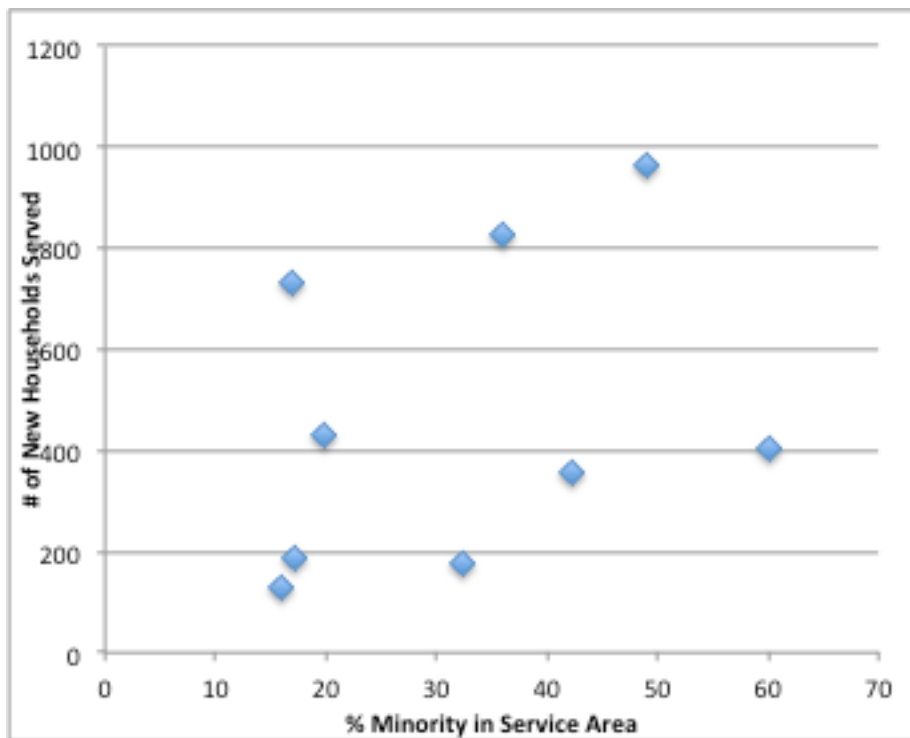
After the positive correlation between # of households served and project costs, it is important to understand some numerical information on projects that serve new households. This numerical data will reveal some relativistic data about new households served, number of households served, and the costs of these projects. The number of projects that serve new households is 9, the number of projects that do not serve new households is 17. Therefore, the percentage of projects that serve new households is 35% of the total number of projects. Furthermore, the total number of new households served is 4,208, while the total number of all households served is 45,179. Therefore, the total number of new households served is 9.3% of the all of the households served. However, the total cost for facilities that serve new households is 48.4% of the total cost of all of

the park projects. This fraction ( $\sim 1/2$ ) is significant when compared to the number of new households served over the total number of households ( $\sim 1/10$ ).

### High minority and low-income communities

Next, it is necessary to understand some of the relationships between project costs, number of new households served, types of facilities, and low-income and/or high minority populations. Being able to say there is a relationship between the two is vital for understanding how low-income and high minority populations are being served in Portland.

Figure 2: New households served by project (y) vs. percent minority in service area (x)



This graph shows a slight positive correlation between minority population in the service area and the number of new households served.



Figure 3: New households served (y) vs. % of population in low or very low income strata (x)

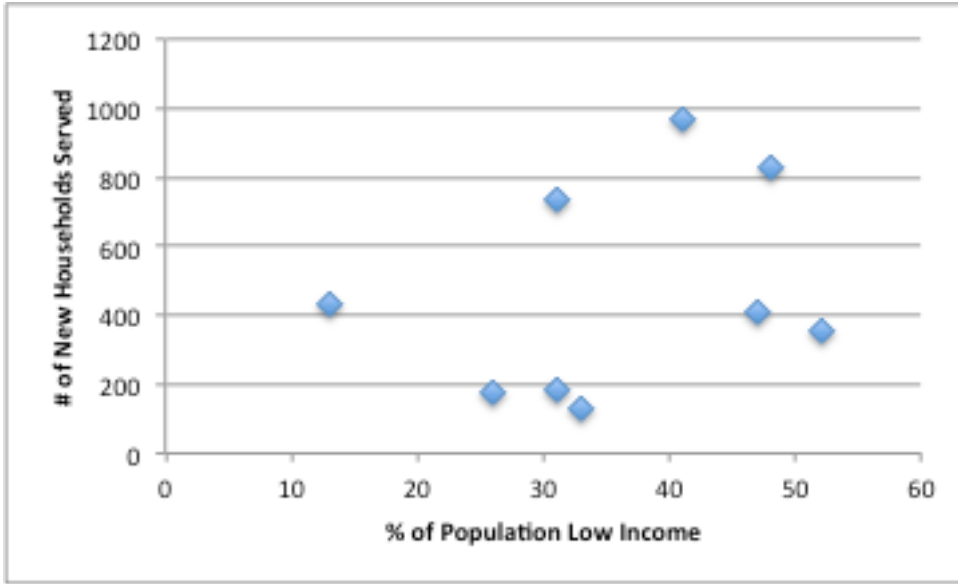


Figure 3 shows a very slight correlation between the percent of population in low income and the number of new households served.

Figure 4: Master plan project costs in dollars (y axis) against % of minority population in service

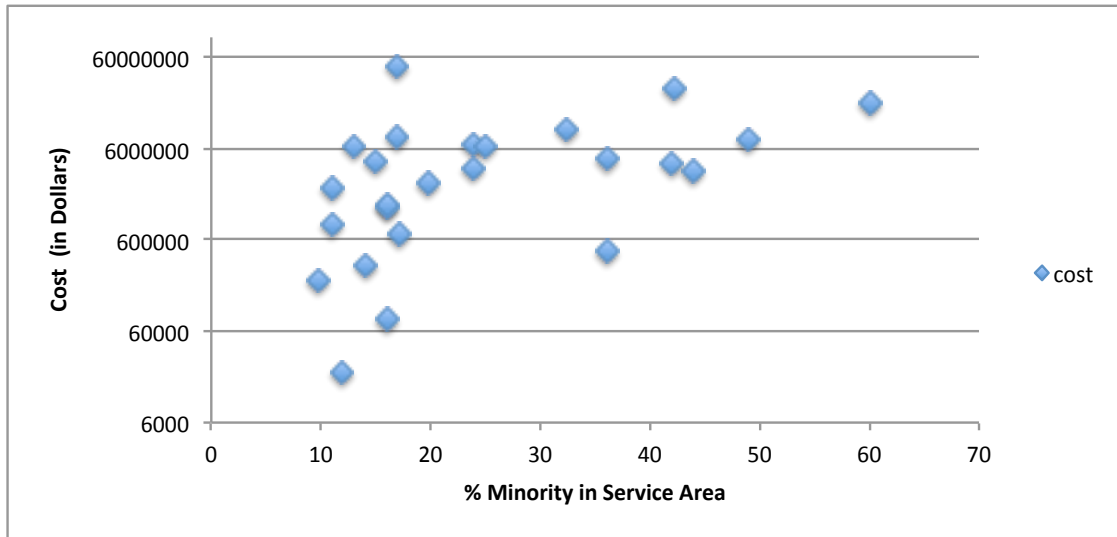


Figure 4 shows another positive correlation, this time between % minority in service area and project cost. This graph also has a diagonal boundary with no projects to the right or below.

In addition to figure 4, we know that the average percentage of minority population in project areas that serve new households is 32%, while the average for projects that do not serve new households is 20.3%. This is a significant difference.

Figure 5: Master plan project costs in dollars (y) vs. % of service area population with low or very low income (x)

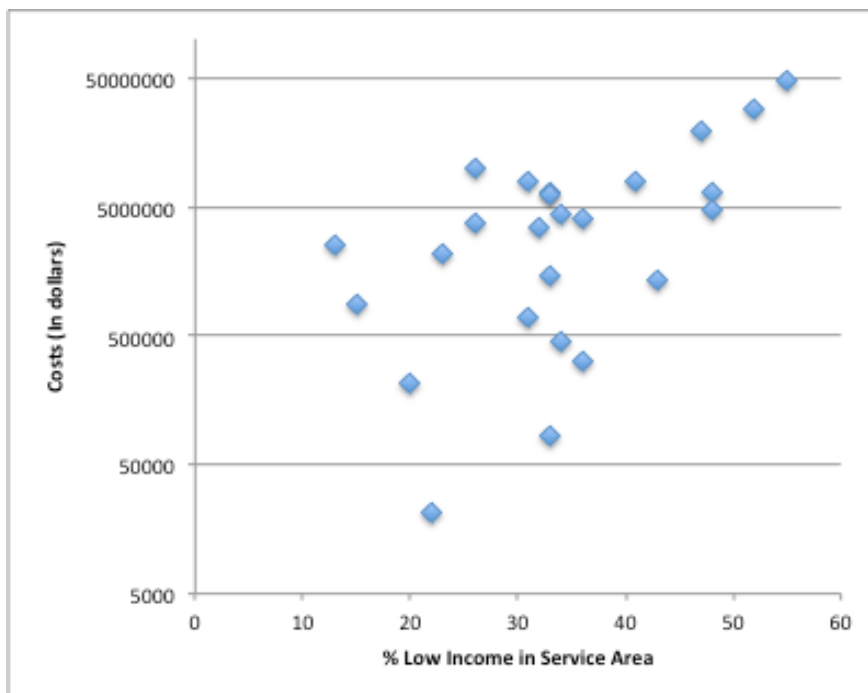


Figure 5 shows a positive correlation between the percent of low-income population in the service area and the total costs of projects.

Figure 6: Number of total facilities planned for each category of % low-income population in service area. The categories are 13-23%, 23-33%, 33-44%, and 44-55%

low income (x axis). The number of facilities (y axis) is further divided by type of facility (legend).

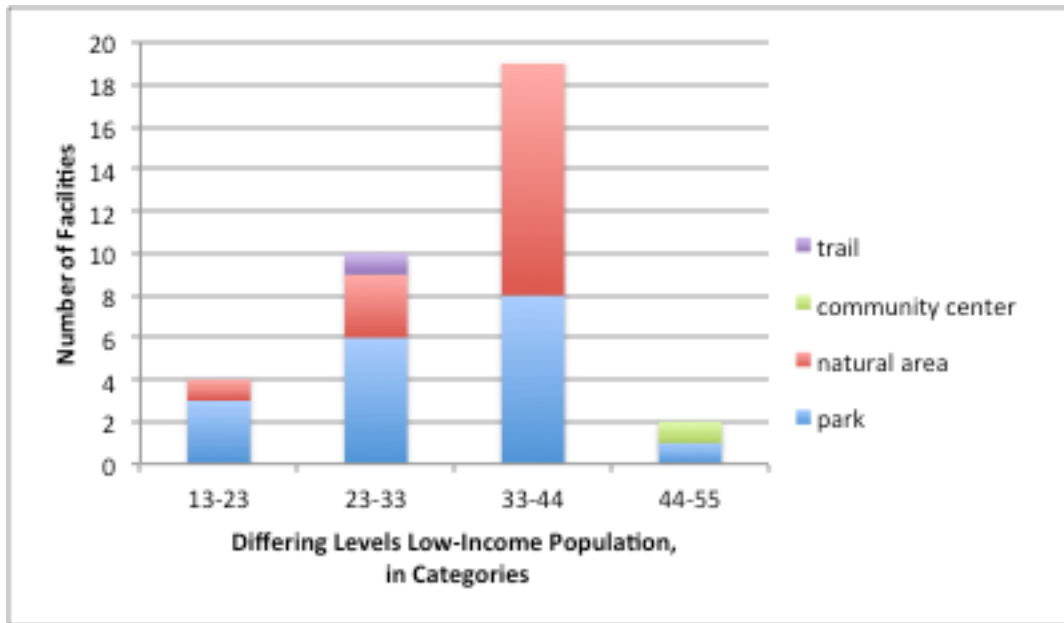


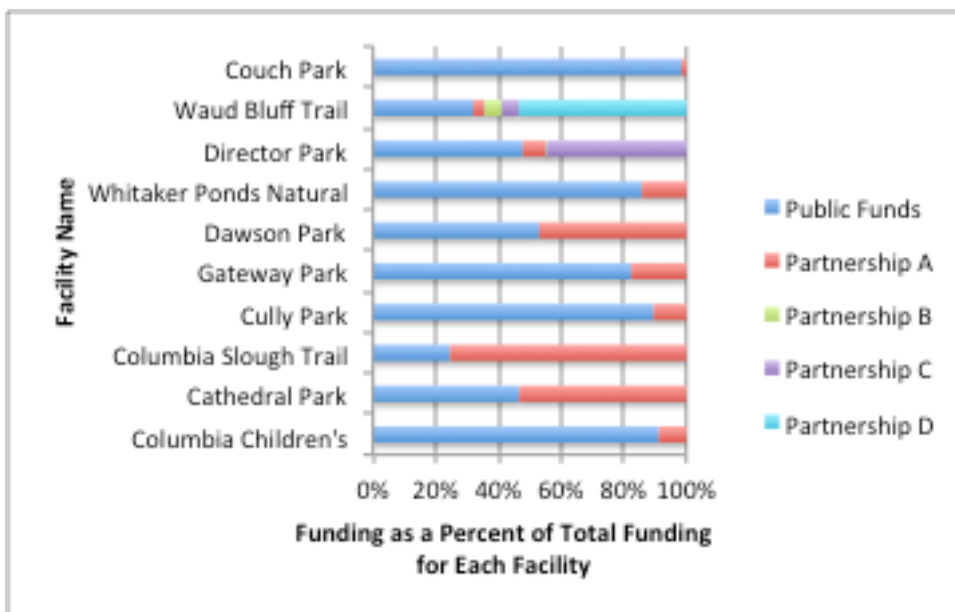
Figure 6 shows that the greatest number of facilities is in the 33-44% range, and within that category there are many natural area projects. The second greatest number of facilities is in the 23-33% range. This category is constituted of parks, natural areas to a lesser degree, and a trail. The third greatest number of facilities falls in the 12-23% range, and is mostly parks with one natural area. Finally, the fourth greatest number of facilities is in the 44-55% range. Up until this category, each category had increased in number of facilities as percent low income also grew.

In addition, it is important to know how much of the total project costs are intended for low-income communities. The following demonstrates this idea. The total cost for projects that serve areas between 13-34% low income is \$39,412,633, whereas the total cost for projects that serve areas between 35-55% low income is \$131,370,198. Thus, the cost for projects that serve areas with higher percentages of low-income residents equals 77% of the total project costs.

## Partnerships

Partnerships are an important piece of the puzzle of this paper. The following graphs and bits of data should explain their importance to urban parks funding. I picked these projects to portray on a bar graph because they all show a numerical percentage of park funding divided between the public and other partners.

Figure 7: Bars representing percentages of funding (x axis) for several park projects (y axis)



Each bar represents 100% of the total funds used or to be used for the project. For every project listed, the funds can be broken up into public funds and funds rising out of a successful partnership. The graph shows that each facility has between 2 and 78% of its costs funded by partnerships. While all the projects listed have two funding sources, several of the projects have more funding sources (public funds with the addition of two or more partnerships).

Public narratives (found online) can facilitate an understanding of the types and motivations of different partnerships. Below are three statements that illustrate this idea.

If relevant, each statement will be followed by demographic info on low-income population, minority population, and number of New households served for the specific project. Some

1. Columbia Children’s Arboretum: "Before long, the creation of a garden and arboretum became a community project"; "The land started out as a tangle of blackberries in 1965, but by 1970, students and families had planted 8,000 trees."<sup>36</sup>

2. Cathedral Park: “In the early 1970s, Howard Galbraith, the "honorary mayor" of unincorporated St Johns, got tired of the junkyard state of the area under the eastern end of the bridge. He organized a drive that eventually raised \$7.5 million to build a park. After eight years of community fundraising, combined with state, county and city funding, the park was dedicated at a community celebration on May 3, 1980.”<sup>37</sup>

3. Errol Heights Park. “In 2011, The Friends of Portland Community Gardens (FPCG), in partnership with PP&R and the Brentwood-Darlington Neighborhood Association, acquired funding from the Community Watershed Stewardship Program to support the development of a community garden in Errol Heights Park.”<sup>38</sup> The Errol Heights has a service area with 31% low-income and 14% minority in it’s population.<sup>39</sup>

Interviews with public officials are helpful in widening the picture about the different types of The following three statements are paraphrased from public officials at Portland Parks & Recreation, and are useful because they further illuminate different

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<sup>36</sup>“Columbia Children’s Arboretum.” Government. *Portland, Oregon*. Accessed May 9, 2014.

<sup>37</sup>Portland Parks & Recreation. “Cathedral Park.” Government. *Portland, Oregon*. Accessed May 9, 2014.

<sup>38</sup>Portland Parks & Recreation. “Errol Heights Community Garden.” Government. *Portland, Oregon*. Accessed May 9, 2014.

<sup>39</sup> PP&R Project Data 2013

types of partnerships—including private companies, nonprofits, and communities—and the extent to which these partnerships are important for parks funding.

1. From Jeff Shaffer at PP&R: Private corporations and nonprofits can and do play a part in park funding. The Chinese and Japanese garden sites, while owned by PP&R, are actually operated by and receive capital infusions from nonprofit organizations. Daimler-Chrysler pairs up with the PP&R Summer Concert Series and has written checks for \$50,000 for concerts in Washington Park. Nike has donated synthetic surfaces for basketball courts in Northeast Portland. To put things in perspectives, PP&R is a \$60M bureau with \$1M coming from private contributions.

2. From Laura Niemi at PP&R: The first step to creating any community garden is identifying the funding source. The cost of community gardens is typically raised through grants and donations that cover 50% of the total cost and sometimes 100% of the cost. Communities write the grants and receive funding, not PP&R. PP&R engages in the political process to lobby the city for money when there is a garden that has already received grant or donation money.

3. From Tony DeFalco at Verde: The Cully community advocated for 25 years for the development of a park in their neighborhood. Verde (a nonprofit involved in social justice) got involved in 2006 to bring additional funding to the table for the inclusion of Spanish speaking residents in the master plan process. In 2010 Verde secured funding for the community to raise its capacity to build a park. Verde basically told the city, “Let us build the park.” Their mission is to engage the community in ways that would add value to their lives in the form of having greater stewardship over a new neighborhood asset. This involved letting the neighborhood design their own playground area and their

own community garden. It's about changing the model of park development to one that is much more community based.

Verde has done all of their work in partnership with PP&R. PP&R often wants to engage in new models of community engagement, but does not as often have the resources and money to do so. Over 1,200 people have been directly involved in planning Cully park and community garden, with a lot of input from the Native American community, low income, and minority community. Cully is one of the most diverse neighborhoods in the state, and this work builds on a lot of other work with the city and with the state to address the needs of communities of color. For demographic reference, the Cully Park project area has a 45% low income and 60% minority population.

### **Discussion**

The first results section speaks to the costs and demographics of projects that serve new households. Figure 1, other than the three outliers, shows a positive trend between number of new households served and project costs. This indicates that projects that serve more new households are planned to be more costly, which in turn could mean that the city plans to serve new households in a more extravagant way. The costs for these projects could be high because of the absence of existing park infrastructure, making it more costly to build a park (if building from scratch).

In addition to figure 1, the number of projects that serves new households represents 35% of the total number of projects—a sizeable fraction. Although the total number of new households served is 9.3% (~1/10) of the total number of *all* households served, the total cost for facilities that serve new households is 48.4% (~1/2) of the total

cost of all the park projects. This shows, in relative terms, that costs incurred from facilities that serve new households are prominent in the funding picture.

The next section is important for explaining the relationships between project costs, number of new households served, types of facilities, and low-income and minority populations. Figure 2 shows a slightly positive correlation between minority populations in the service area and the number of new households served. This gives minor evidence that minority populations are preferenced for projects that serve new households. Figure 3 echoes this result, as it shows a slight (yet more scattered) positive correlation which again gives minor evidence that populations of low income are preferenced for projects that serve new households.

There is a positive correlation between the percent minority population in the service area and project costs, demonstrated by figure 4. This adequately shows that the cost of projects is tied to the percentage of minority population in the service area, indicating that minority populations are preferenced for higher spending. Furthermore, the average percentage of minority population for projects that serve new households is higher than those that do not (32% vs. 20.3%), which adds credence to the idea that minority populations could be first in line for projects that serve new households.

Just like with minority population, the next step is to test project costs against percentage of low income in the service area population. Figure 5 (% low income vs. cost) demonstrates a strong positive correlation between these two variables. Since project costs go up as percent low-income population in the service area goes up, it is safe to say that low income populations have the more expensive projects planned for their neighborhoods. This could also mean that, because there are few parks already in



these areas, building entirely new ones is a costly venture. We have established that projects are more costly in areas that have more minority and low-income populations in the service area. Now, figure 6 can be helpful. Figure 6 clearly demonstrates that the number of facilities goes up as the percentage of low-income population in the service area goes up. Although there is a severe drop-off in the 44-55% range, this can be considered an outlier range because of its extreme high low-income percentage and due to its nonconformity with the existing trend. So, low-income populations have more park projects planned for their areas.

The results thus far have demonstrated that low-income and minority communities are slated to receive projects that serve new households, and that low-income populations have more park projects planned for their areas. Next, it is important to look at how much of the total project costs are intended for low-income communities. After splitting the range of low-income communities into half, the upper half (more population in low-income strata) accounted for 77% of the total project costs. This demonstrates that low-income communities also take up most of the project costs, compared to higher-income communities.

Next, I will look at the results section for partnerships. Partnerships are an important piece of the puzzle for Portland's parks, as shown by figure 7. Figure 7 clearly demonstrates that parks can have multiple influential partnerships (as in the case of Director Park) that can account for close to 80% of a park's costs. Adding in Laura Niemi's account of funding for community gardens—which get between 50-100% of their initial costs covered by the communities where they are—then the role of partnerships in funding is only amplified.

The role of communities in parks partnerships should not be understated. In the 1960s, citizens were planting thousands of trees and doing other landscape work on the Columbia Children's Arboretum. In the 1970s, Cathedral Park came into existence because of citizen fundraising and a wealthy patron that organized massive funds with the help of the state, county, and city. Furthermore, in 2011, the Friends of Portland Community Gardens (a nonprofit) and the Brentwood-Darlington Neighborhood Association worked to acquire funding for Errol Heights Park. These examples show that citizen involvement has been one crucial element in park funding in Portland. Important, too, are the roles of for profit and nonprofit companies.

Interviews with Parks personnel and Tony DeFalco from Verde, a nonprofit, help to illustrate the central importance of for profit and nonprofit companies in parks partnerships. Jeff Shaffer identified the Chinese and Japanese Gardens as being operated by nonprofits. The Washington Park Summer Concert Series is supported by Daimler-Chrysler, a for-profit corporation. In addition, Nike donated the funds and materials to resurface basketball courts in Northeast Portland's parks. Verde's played a crucial role in bringing park service to a neighborhood that had lobbied for 25 years for park development, coming in to supply funding and leadership for park development in a low-income, high minority community. These examples serve to further illustrate the point that parks and the communities they serve benefit from the partnerships between the city and with nonprofit and for profit organizations

I think that the evidence about partnerships points to a couple of different things. Firstly, partnerships can and do account for a huge range of funding for parks—from >1-100%. Secondly, partnerships include community organizing and fundraising that

directly benefits parks, as in the case of community landscaping at the Columbia Children's Arboretum in the 60s, community fundraising at Cathedral Park in the 70s, and neighborhood association fundraising for Errol Heights Park in 2011. Finally, for-profit and nonprofit organizations play a role in parks partnerships, as shown by the involvement of Daimler-Chrysler, Nike, the Portland Chinese/Japanese Gardens, and Verde.

### **Conclusion**

In Portland, Oregon, the need for park infrastructure, and the methods to acquire it, is a central theme of urban planning. My research on park funding and partnerships indicates three things. Firstly, the city spends more money on projects that serve new households. The projects that serve new households, while representing only about 1/10 of the total households served, represent almost 1/2 of total expenditures on park projects. Next, low-income and minority populations are slated to receive projects that serve new households and have more park projects planned for their areas. Projects that serve low-income populations in particular represent 77% of total project costs. Finally, my research reveals that public-private partnerships account for >1-100% of park funding and that pivotal public-private partnerships range from citizen/community involvement to the involvement of for-profit and nonprofit companies.

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