



Crossing Sectors to Create Parks

Session 4 | March 12, 2026

Crossing Sectors to Create Parks

Session 4 Agenda

- Session 3 Recap
- Navigating Land Use
- Presentations
 - Center for Justice Innovation
 - Mead Up, Salt Lake City
- Q&A

Transition

- Breakout Groups
- Next Steps



VISION
Unlock
Lands for
Parks and
Greenspaces



1- Identify Park Gaps



2- Ground in Community Values



3- Navigate Land Use



4- Activate the Shared Space

Assessing Community Context

Understanding the space's current conditions, community context, and historical/political backdrop:

- What is this space now, and who currently uses (or avoids) it?
- What histories or stories shape this site?
- What does each stakeholder know or hold (data, memory, access)?
- Where do we need each other to deepen understanding?



Defining a Shared Vision

Aligning around a shared, values-driven vision that responds to community needs and imagines new use.

- Who are the current stakeholders and adjacent communities?
- What values (e.g. belonging, joy, health) do we want this space to reflect?
- Who is positioned to lead or facilitate community voice?
- How do we balance institutional goals with grassroots input?



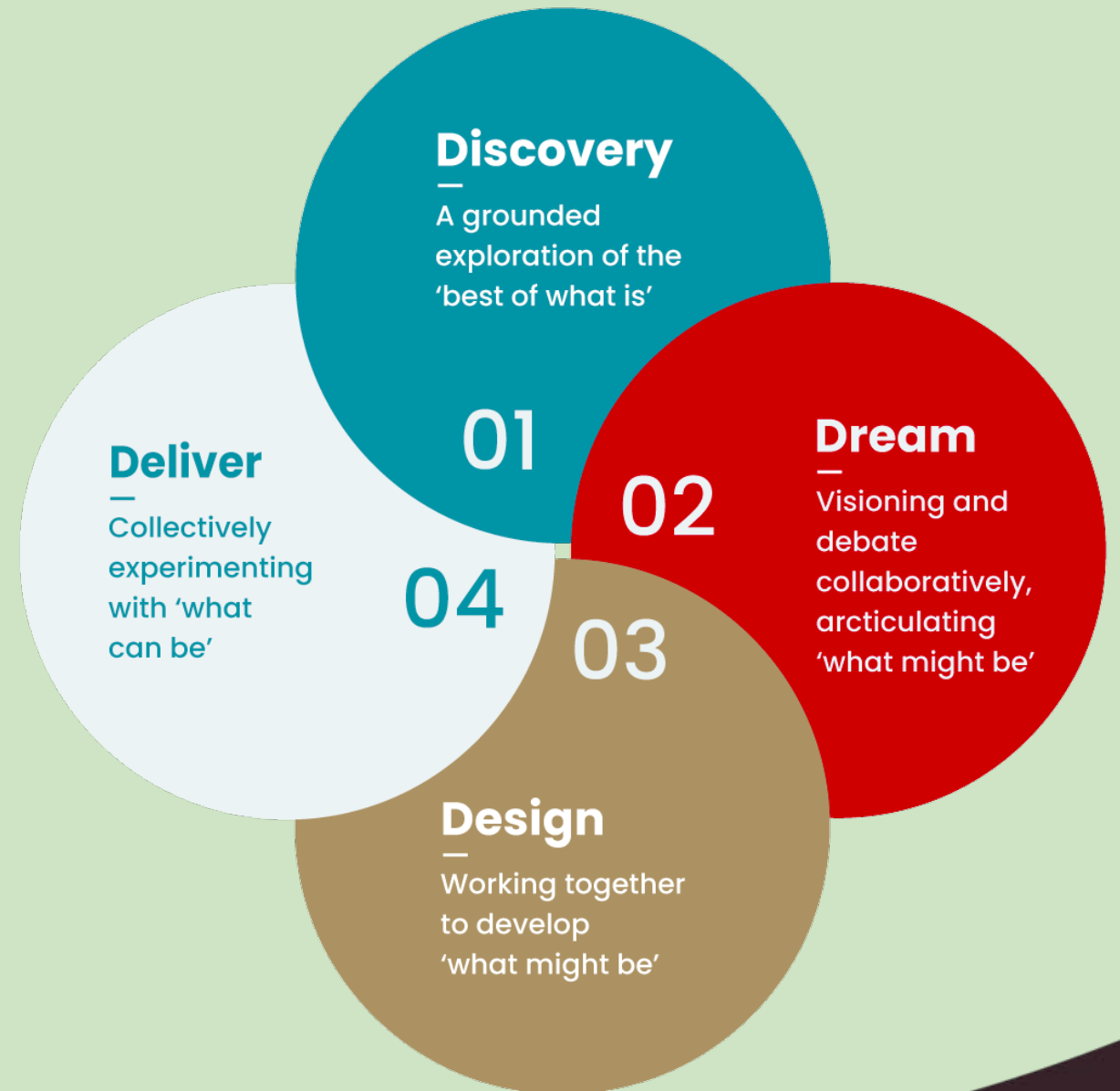
Appreciative Inquiry for Park Project Assessment

Discover: Identify what works well

Dream: Imagine the best possible future

Design: Co-create improvements

Deliver: Implement and sustain changes



Appreciative Inquiry

Starts with **what works** and builds on strengths.

Focuses on **possibilities and aspirations**.

Generates **positive energy and collaboration**.

Assumes systems grow toward their **best images of the future**.

Problem-Solving

Starts with **what's wrong** and seeks to fix deficits.

Focuses on **gaps and root causes**.

Can create defensiveness or **blame**.

Assumes systems **improve by eliminating problems**.

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1- Identify Park Gaps



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4- Activate the Shared Space

Policies & Partners

Understanding the land's legal, regulatory, and ownership realities:

- Who owns or controls the land?
- What mechanisms for partnership exist with this landowner?
- What policies or agreements shape what we can do?
- What are the important legal considerations for different land types?
- What maintenance models fit this space and partnership?



Possibilities

Using intel to align strategy with opportunity:

- What are each entity's priorities?
- How can this space serve multiple needs and users?
- What role can each partner play in stewardship or maintenance?
- How do we share credit, labor, and responsibility long term?
- How do we build accountability and shared power?
- What structures support us going forward?



Case Studies

Mead Up, Salt Lake City

Center for Justice
Innovation &
NYCHA, NYC





**A community-led project to transform land
beneath an underpass**

Doug Flager, Central Ninth Community Council Chair

Kerri Nakamura, Underpass Subcommittee Chair

Tyler Murdock, Deputy Director, Salt Lake City Public Lands Department



A community divided by
infrastructure



Central Ninth: A Neighborhood on the Rise

Central Ninth & Ballpark Neighborhoods at a glance

Median Age: 35.2 Years Old

Median House Hold Income: \$44,932

Poverty: 27.2% Below the Poverty Line

*Double the rate of Salt Lake City

Race: 62% White, 28% Hispanic, and 6% Multiracial

Place of Birth: 13.2% Foreign Born

Education: 80% High School Graduates and 28.6% Bachelor Degrees

Veterans: 6.5% Have Veteran Status





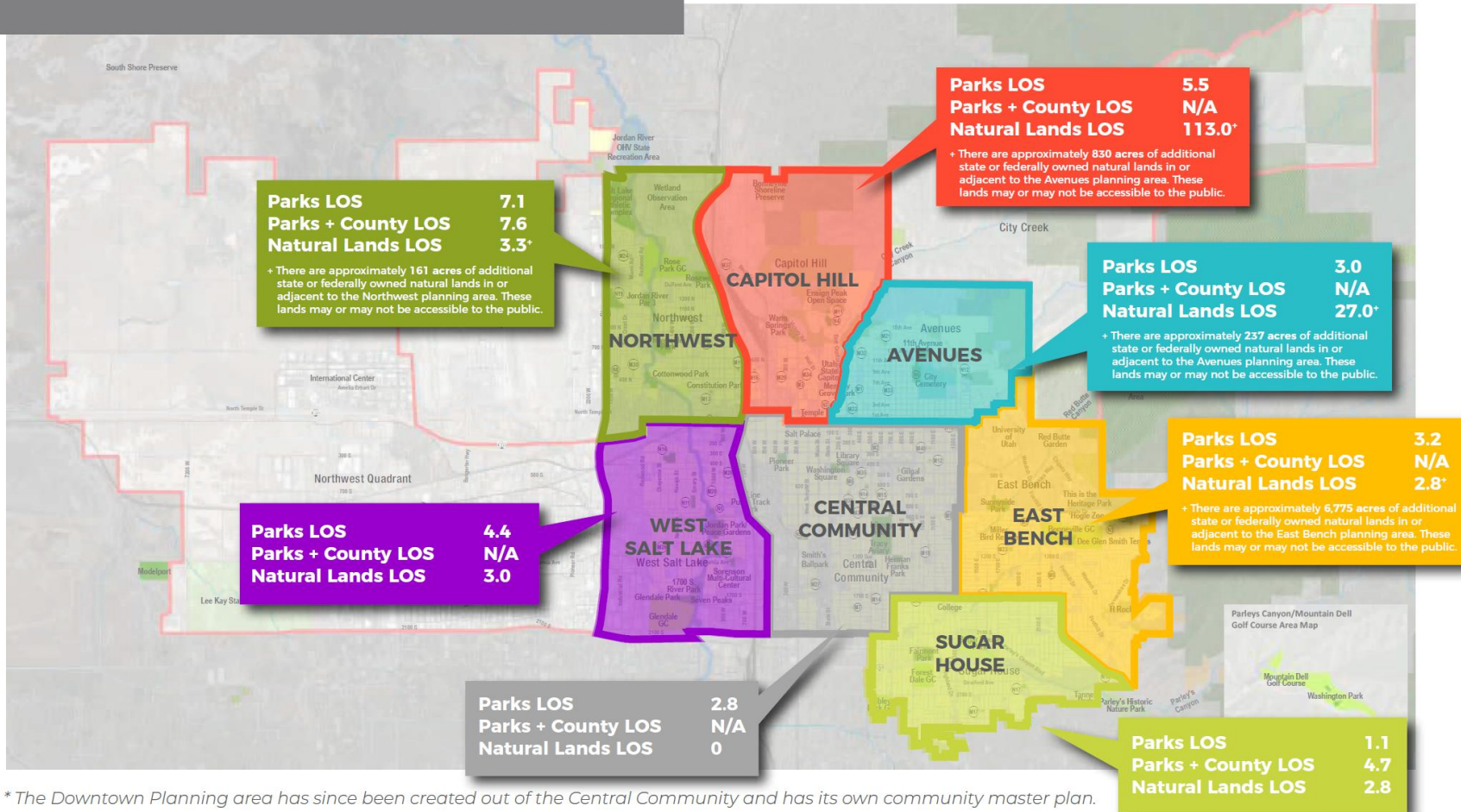
An area where no one wants to be in a neighborhood that is historically underserved

LOS by Planning Area

Planning Areas

The city comprises ten unique planning areas, established by the city's Planning department. Three of these areas—the Northwest Quadrant, Airport, and City Creek—are predominantly non-residential and make up nearly 60% of the city's area. The remaining seven, which are highlighted in the figure below, encompass significant residential neighborhoods and are the focus of this study.

The Central Community has the lowest park LOS and no natural lands within its boundary. This area is slated for most of the future growth within the city. Sugar House Park dramatically impacts existing LOS in the Sugar House planning area, raising it from 1.1 to 4.7 acres/1,000. Four of the seven planning areas have significant state or federal natural lands within or adjacent to their boundaries, enhancing their natural lands acreage.



Laying the Groundwork

- Applied for a Love Your Block Grant. This \$2,000 grant seeded our efforts.
- Pitched our project idea to students at the University of Utah Master's of Metropolitan Planning program.
- Organized the community and work days.
- Applied for more grants.
- Sought private donations.
- Successfully sought a grant from Salt Lake City's Community Reinvestment Agency.
- Caught the attention of architects with deep ties to the community.



Preparing the Community Council to Be the Project Manager

- Created a 501c3 for our community organization – opened the door to philanthropic funding
- Secured liability and officers/directors insurance – harder than it sounds
- Enter three way agreement with Salt Lake City and UDOT allowing community council to lead the development
 - The community council will exit the agreement once construction is complete and Salt Lake City will continue to maintain the asset although it is on UDOT property





UDOT agreed to move the fence



- October 2024 Community work day – led by our University of Utah student as part of his project



So many volunteers



Proud Crowd





First meet up at MeadUP and the launch of our brand! – April 2025



Community work day
April 26, 2025



May 10, 2025
activation and concert



What a difference a year and community love makes

- We built it and the kids came



Next Steps

- We will break ground on a second futsal court in the next few weeks – funded by a successful Tourism/Recreation grant from Salt Lake County.
- In May we will apply for another Tourism/Recreation grant to complete the site construction.
- We continue to fundraise and engage the community in the project!



Crossing Sectors to Create Parks

Community of Practice

3.12.2026

Patterson Houses, Bronx

Neighborhood
Safety
Initiatives

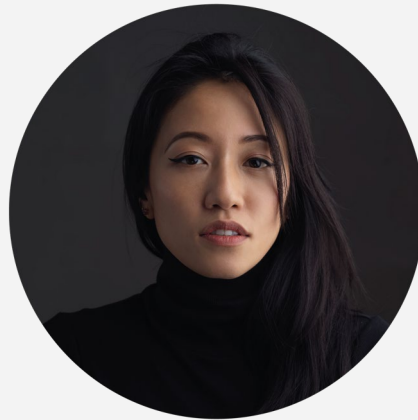


Who We Are



Aren Castro

Associate Project Director
Neighborhood Safety
Initiatives



Layman Lee

Senior Project Director
Neighborhood Safety
Initiatives



Vaidehi Mody

Senior Planning Consultant
New York City Housing Authority



- Who we are
- Initiatives
- Case-studies
 - Impact
- Strategies
 - Community engagement + co-design
 - Quick wins
 - Cross-sector collaboration
- Strategies for Success

Neighborhood Safety Initiatives



NSI is a project under the Center for Justice Innovation which aims to improve community justice and well-being through policy change, investment in resident networks, and the transformation of public spaces into equitable, vibrant, and safe environments.

We are a team of community organizers, changemakers, and designers who collaborate within communities across 33 public housing developments to enhance safety and community well-being.

Since 2017, NSI has engaged over 50,000 public housing residents and executed more than 700 public meetings, community events, participatory design sessions, capacity-building training, workshops, and placekeeping projects.



New York City Housing Authority

Established in 1934, NYCHA has served as a vital and precious resource of affordable housing in New York City for nearly a century.

NYCHA is a home to 1 in every 16 New Yorkers, over 510K people. NYCHA is a steward of over 2400 acres of open space and 1000 acres of tree canopy.

Largest public-housing agency in North America, larger than the next 11 combined. If NYCHA were a city, it would be the 37th largest city in the country, larger than Atlanta or Miami. However, NYCHA does not have the tax revenue that those cities have to operate.

Decades of disinvestments have led to critically insufficient funding to maintain the buildings, leading to the capital needs surpassing \$75 billion.

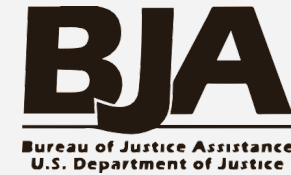
Initiatives

Neighborhood **STAT**

MAP NeighborhoodStat, a New York City mayoral initiative lead by the Office of Neighborhood Safety, is a process that brings together neighbors, community organizations, and agencies to support safer, more vibrant communities.



Green Space Connections is an initiative by the Design Trust for Public Space and Public Housing Community Fund aimed at enhancing, creating, and activating sustainable, community-designed open spaces in New York City



East Harlem Community Safety Initiative (EHCSI) aims to improve gang and gun violence through youth-led place-based strategies and cross sector partnerships

Connected Communities

NYCHA's Connected Communities Program advances its participatory design practices, site planning and policy, and implementation of public-private partnerships.



Case Studies

Wagner Houses, Bronx

"Connection Park"

Partnership: NYCHA, Office of Neighborhood Safety, NSI, Wagner Houses Tenant Association, Wagner Houses NeighborhoodStat Team, and Grain Collective

Photo: Grain Collective



Castle Hill Houses, Bronx

"Castle Hill Dog Park"

Partnership: NYCHA, NSI, Castle Hill Houses Tenant Association, Public Housing Community Fund, and Grain Collective

Photo: Tameek Williams

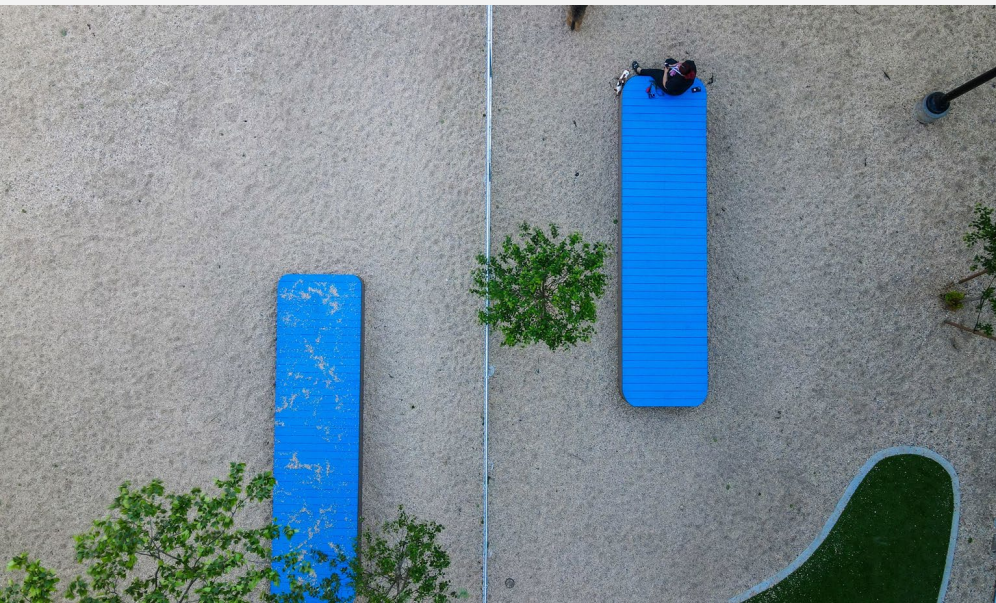


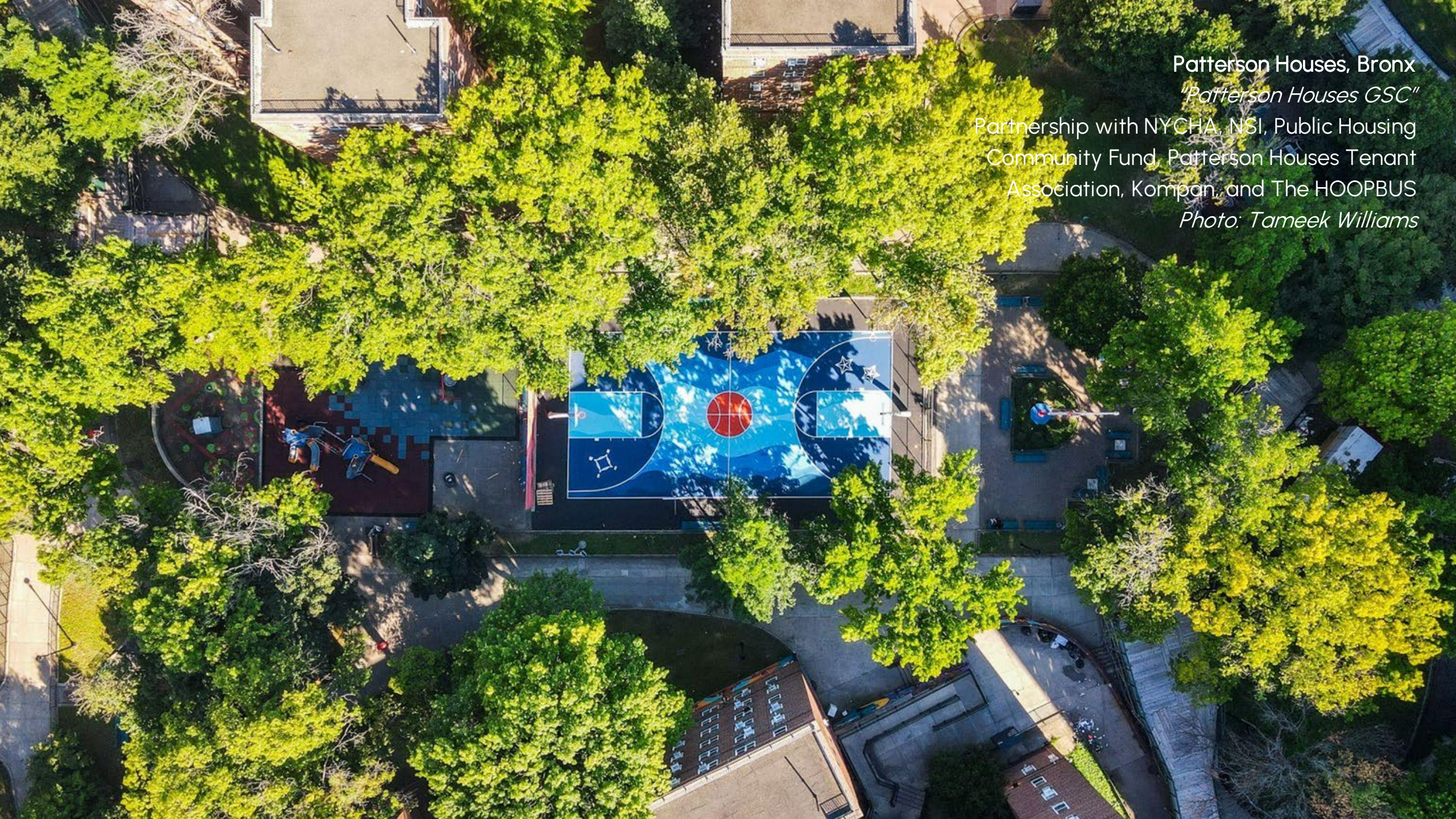
Dog Park Castle Hill Houses

40+ acres | 4375 residents

The dog park and barbecue area project was selected after more than 800 residents voted during an over year-long participatory design process in which community members provided input on specific plans and priorities for the reimagined open space.

The Castle Hill dog park — which includes two enclosed areas for small and large dogs to play and run off leash, turf mounds, seating, and water access — is complemented by 32 dog waste stations throughout the campus, which are decorated with art by local residents.





Patterson Houses, Bronx
"Patterson Houses GSC"
Partnership with NYCHA, NSI, Public Housing
Community Fund, Patterson Houses Tenant
Association, Kompan, and The HOOPBUS
Photo: Tameek Williams



Patterson Houses

15+ acres | 3684 residents

NYCHA Open Space Masterplan

- The study revealed much about the types of open spaces that residents desire. A closer look at the Authority's open spaces showed that most of the active spaces available are for children under the age of 12, while 73 percent of NYCHA residents are over the age of 18.

Green Space Connections:

- The basketball court's wave mural was envisioned by local community members, who collaborated with the nonprofit Hoopbus to bring the design to life. Hoopbus, which transforms basketball courts into inspiring works of art.
- Kompan worked with residents to reimagine decades-old playgrounds. Recreation enhancements include two renovated playgrounds for three different age-groups, and an accessible fitness zone.





Polo Grounds Towers, Manhattan

"Sprout"

Partnership with NYCHA, NSI, DYCD and Office of Neighborhood Safety,
Polo Grounds NeighborhoodStat Team, and the Urban Conga

Photo: The Urban Conga



Sprout

Polo Grounds Towers

15+ acres | 3467 residents

Sprout has transformed what had been an aging outdoor space into a vibrant, inclusive “playscape” designed to bring the community together. This multisensory playscape, created through a thoughtful and intentional collaboration with the Polo Grounds community, represents an important new approach to public space design. It not only provides a space for play but also fosters connection, inspiration, and dialogue among residents of all ages and abilities.

It has become an Inspiration for future NYCHA projects.



Morris Houses, Bronx

"Common Corner"

Partnership with NYCHA, NSI, Public Housing Community Fund, Morris Houses Tenant Association, Morris Houses NeighborhoodStat team, and the Urban Conga

Photo: The Urban Conga



Morris Houses

17+ acres | 4336 residents

The Common Corner serves as a flexible gathering place where people can connect socially, exercise, rest, imagine, or even perform. We worked with the Morris Houses community to co-design the space through a variety of community workshops that used play methodologies to create a safe place for people to share and open up about their dreams, desires, and hopes for their community.

The Common Corner is a part of New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) Connected Communities program, which focuses on transforming and modernizing open spaces through public-private partnerships. One of our quickest implementations, when public private partnerships work well, there is room for extreme efficiency in this work.





Project Impact

MAP NeighborhoodStat Action Plan Survey Results

Perceived Program Impact:

- 91% of surveyed participants reported that the NSTAT program is making public spaces more inviting for the community.
- 94% of surveyed participants said they feel safe attending this NSTAT Program
- 91% said they think programs like this positively impact safety issues in the development. This level of positive feedback on NSTAT programming suggests that NSTAT is accomplishing their mission of making the community a safer place.
- 82% of surveyed participants said that participating in NSTAT programming has contributed to their increased level of trust towards community members, suggesting community endorsement of the program's effectiveness with those surveyed.

Strategies for Success

- Deep Community Engagement
- Co-Design + Quick Wins
- Cross-Sector Collaboration





Thank You!

Neighborhood
Safety
Initiatives



Aren Castro, acastro@innovatingjustice.org | Layman Lee, leela@innovatingjustice.org | Vaidehi Mody, Vaidehi.Mody@nycha.nyc.gov

Q&A

Please share your questions in the chat!



May 14
Activating the
Shared Space
and Partnership

Sign up for
our next
webinar!

Committed
Cohort

Stay on the line
We will split into
peer discussion
groups shortly!



Since 1972, TPL has protected 4 million acres of public land; created 5,364 parks, trails, schoolyards, and iconic outdoor places; raised \$93 billion in public funding for parks and public lands; and connected nearly 9.4 million people to the outdoors.

To learn more, visit tpl.org.

Connecting everyone to the outdoors™

Thank you!

Sophie Neuhaus

Sophie.Neuhaus@tpl.org



Connecting everyone to the outdoors™

Crossing Sectors to Create Parks Breakout Session

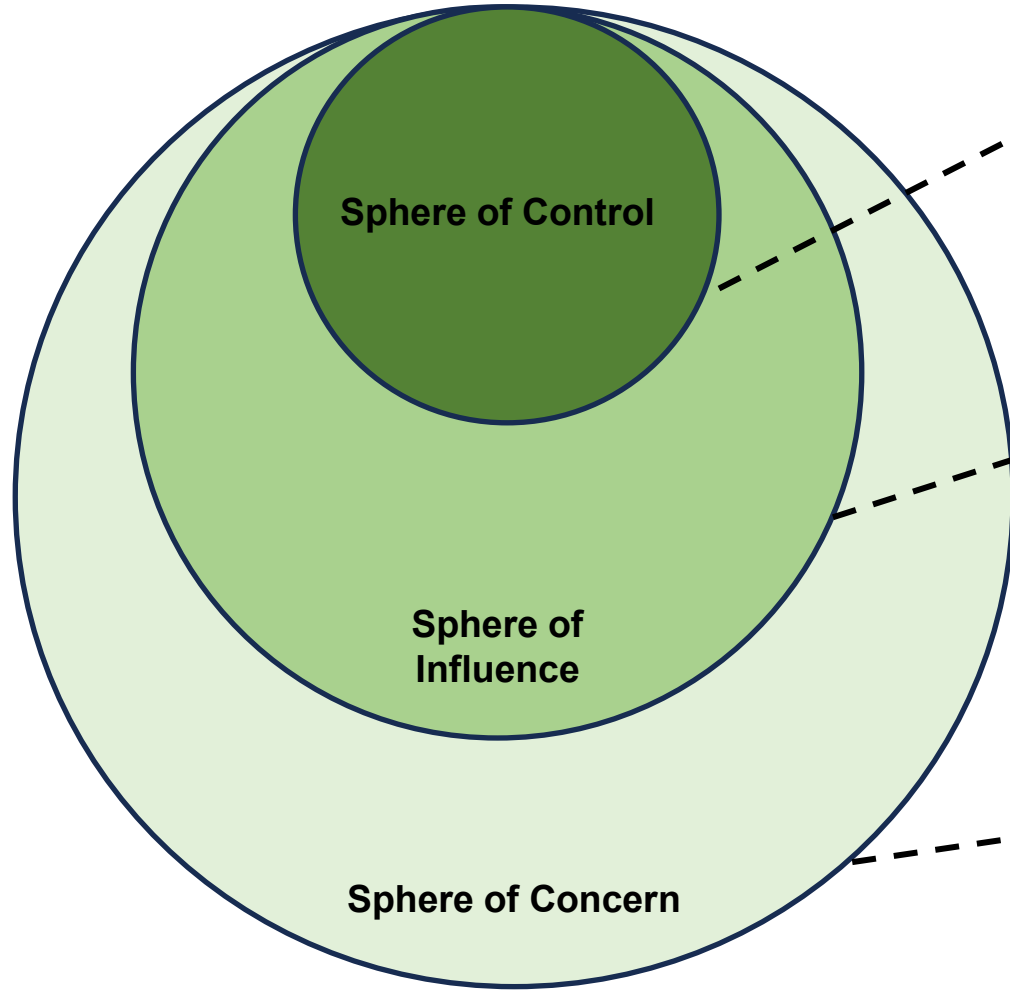


Welcome!

In this committed cohort, we will...

1. Meet every other month, over 5 sessions
2. Engage in peer exchange, knowledge sharing, and circulating resources
3. Share feedback (via exit tickets) to inform topics for subsequent sessions

Spheres of Influence



Things you or your department can decide or do directly—you have the authority to take action or move the process forward.

“We can utilize our existing Park Needs Assessment to identify where new park and open space needs align with underutilized properties in our city.”

Things you can shape or advocate for, but others have the final decision. You play a key role, but change depends on relationships, timing, or external buy-in.

“We want to develop a formal agreement to activate another agency’s land. Our department can propose the terms, but approval depends on the partner agency.”

Things that matter deeply but are currently outside your control or influence. You may need to monitor, respond to, or build long-term strategy around these.

“Our partners have specific legal and land use requirements for managing their spaces due to environmental conditions.”

Opportunities for Navigating Land Use

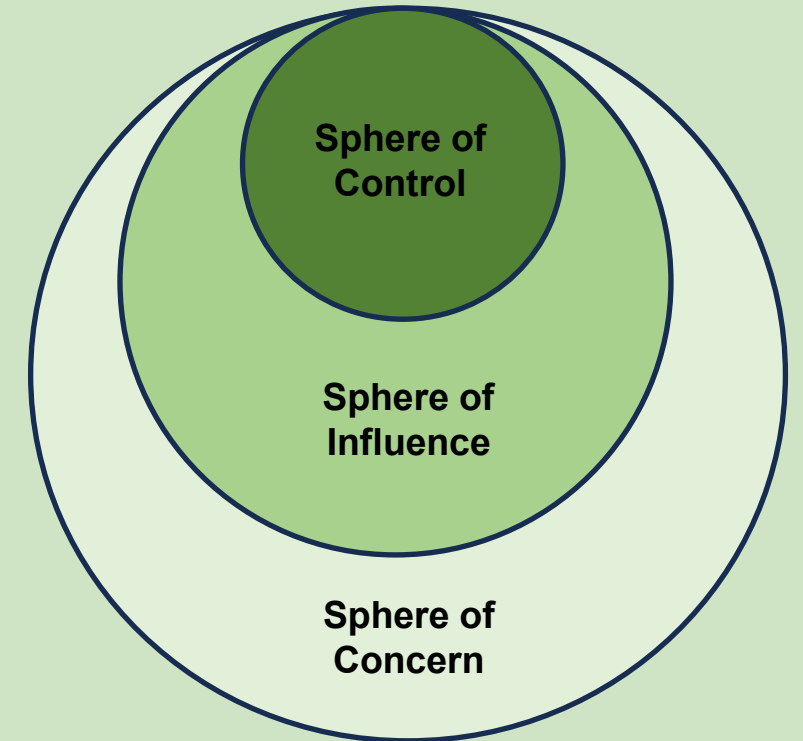
15 minutes

Independent Work (5 min.)

- Think back on the site(s) you explored during the last session.
- Based on the strategies and processes you heard today, consider:
 - What action items are in your sphere of **control**?
 - What action items are in your sphere of **influence**?
 - What action items are in your sphere of **concern**?
 - How can you use the things in your sphere of control or influence to react/adapt to what's in the sphere of concern?

Small Group Discussion (10 min.)

- In small groups, discuss:
 - What tools, strategies, or data could help expand your influence?
 - How might you shift the boundaries of what's currently possible?
 - Who do you need to partner with to move this forward?



Crossing Sectors to Create Parks: Session 4 Exit Ticket



Complete your Exit Ticket!

Click the link below or the QR code to complete your exit ticket before you log off today:

<https://forms.office.com/r/JrvFSy8Pmt>