Public Engagement in Urban Park Restoration Planning

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Background

- Ecological restoration is the process of improving damaged ecosystems through human intervention
- Urban parks are important community spaces and need to be maintained through restoration
- But citizens need to be involved in the planning to ensure that the project is what the community wants
- Therefore citizens should give input during ecological restoration planning

Question:
What are the best practices for community engagement in urban park restoration projects?

Internship/Methods

- Interned with Friends of Discovery Park on restoration design (See fig. 1 and 2)
- Conducted independent research which included a literature review and a series of interviews

Results

- Best practices include:
  - Translating materials
    "Taking the time to come out and provide perspective can be challenging, especially when people don’t speak the same language as you."
  - Offering different input media types
    "It can’t just be in person, we have to diversify how we are doing our engagement."
  - Partnering with community organizations
    "We partnered with an organization that had ambassadors who would do outreach and have their community come to open houses that we did."

Significance

- Steps to further include the community in urban park restoration planning include:
  - Incorporating the feedback from the community into the project plan (See fig. 4)
  - Participatory budgeting processes
  - Volunteer programs such as the Green Seattle Partnership

"As people do more work, as we get to be in the space, there’s ownership and this preciousness about space."

Fig. 2 - A restoration planting design created for my internship.
Fig. 3 - One effective form of community engagement is partnering with community organizations to reach people where they are gathering. (Image from agingkingcounty.org)
Fig. 4 - A flow chart of best practices for community engagement in restoration planning as found in my research.

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