

## HOW CITY PARKS CAN IMPROVE WELL BEING AND PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE ACTIONS

Session: A, Breakout Room #4

Jessie Gilbert\*, @\_jessie\_gilbert, Program on the Environment, University of Washington

Site Supervisor: Garrett Esperum, Friends of Discovery Park

Faculty Advisor: Kristi Park, Program on Built Environments, University of Washington

As the human population increases, urbanization is growing across cities and with it comes added infrastructure and a demand for space, causing a significant decrease in natural areas and green spaces. Incorporating more city parks could reduce the harmful environmental effects of urbanization and improve human well being while promoting sustainable actions. This study focused on the negative environmental effects of urbanization, how we can avoid them, and the benefits we would gain from doing so. I interned with Friends of Discovery Park, a volunteer-run group that works to restore and protect Discovery Park. During the internship I performed extensive research in order to analyze the role city parks play in an urban environment. I also developed a survey to measure connectedness to nature in people at Discovery Park vs people in my hometown without a major city park nearby. My results showed that people who regularly visit city parks and have access to city parks, show a higher connectedness to nature and a better state of well-being. The people who didn't visit city parks often showed less desire to take action in protecting the environment. Increasing the amount of city parks can allow for communities to destress from the city life and build their connection with nature. This could also lead to an increase in support of environmental restoration activities to conserve and protect wildlife in city parks in this generation and the ones to follow.